

Grand New Year's Number, Packed with Good Things!

The BOYS' FRIEND

No. 1,021. Vol. XX. New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending January 1st, 1921.

Gentleman Jim's Christmas Visit!



CAPTURING THE CRACKSMAN!

Gentleman Jim struggled wildly, but in vain, and he was at length secured, bringing his Christmas holiday to an ignominious end.

GREAT NEW COMPETITION! £10 in Prizes Every Week!

Gentleman Jim's Christmas Visit!



A COMPLETE ROOKWOOD YARN BY OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

The Awful Adventure of Reginald Muffin!

"Help!" Jimmy Silver fairly jumped out of bed.

"Help!"

It was a loud yell, and it rang through Priory House from end to end.

"What the thump—"

"Hallo—"

"What's that?"

"My hat!"

Four voices clamoured at once. Jimmy Silver stumbled out of bed in the dark, caught his foot in a chair, and sat down with a bump.

It was Christmas night.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were home for the holidays. The Fistical Four of the Rookwood Fourth occupied a large room, with four beds in a row. Tubby Muffin, who had dropped in for Christmas without giving Jimmy the trouble of requesting him to do so, had the next room—whence his snore had been audible in the earlier watches of the night. His snore was not audible now—it was Tubby's voice that was ringing through the house in a series of frantic yells.

"Help! Yoop! Oh dear! Help!"

Jimmy scrambled to his feet. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were all out of bed now. Raby groped to the electric light and turned it on.

"What on earth's happening?" exclaimed Lovell. "That's Tubby's voice—"

"Bother him!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Can't be burglars—"

"He's downstairs, bless him!"

"What the thump is he doing down-

"He ought to be boiled in oil!" growled Jimmy.

"Oh dear!" gasped Tubby. "The— the ghost—I—I was just—just going into the pantry—"

"The pantry!" ejaculated Mr. Silver.

"Might have guessed that," came Lovell's voice from above again. "Where else would Tubby go?"

"I—I—I got hungry," gasped Tubby. "I—I was dreaming about the Christmas-pudding, and I woke up as hungry as anything. So I—I came down quietly, you know. I—I was going to look for the pudding, and—and a few mince-pies, and—and—"

"Then what?" snapped Jimmy.

"I saw it."

"You saw what, ass?"

"I—I don't know what," stammered Tubby Muffin. "I—I thought it was a ghost for a minute. It—it was something—"

"Nonsense," said Mr. Silver. "You were frightened by a shadow in the dark."

"It—it wasn't a shadow—it touched me," gasped Muffin. "A— a horrid, dark something, and it rushed by—it was in the pantry—"

"You howl at ass!" said Jimmy Silver, in measured tones. "Ghosts don't go rooting after Christmas-puddings."

"It was a burglar, then—"

"Burglars don't, either, you fat-head. Do you think burglars burgle mince-pies, you dummy?"

"I—I—"

"I knew Muffin was over-doing it at supper," came the cheery voice of Arthur Edward Lovell over the banisters. "I told him so. I know that nine mince-pies of turkey wouldn't agree with a fat boy."

"You had better go back to bed, Muffin," he said. "You have been dreaming, and you were frightened in the dark. I will look round the house."

"But—but I saw—"

"Well, if you saw anything, I shall see it, too," said Mr. Silver patiently. "Go back to bed now."

"You e-come up with me, Jimmy," mumbled Tubby.

"Come on, fathead."

Jimmy, holding his blanket on with one hand, took Tubby Muffin's fat ear with the other, and led him upstairs. Mr. Silver made a round of the house, and found the doors and windows secured as usual, and returned to bed. But Tubby was not in a hurry to return to bed. He came into the room occupied by the Fistical Four.

"I'll sleep in here, you fellows," he announced. "I don't want to sleep alone after that."

"There's no bed for you in here," growled Raby.

"You can go into my room, Raby."

"Rats!"

"If you think we're going to have you snoring in this room, Muffin, you're mistaken," said Newcome, in measured tones. "I give you one minute to clear off."

"I say, Jimmy—"

Newcome picked up a poker from the grate, and advanced upon the fat junior. Tubby backed to the door.

"I say, Jimmy, old chap—"

"Give him one on the napper, Newcome," said Jimmy Silver heartlessly.

"Yaroooh!"

Tubby Muffin backed out, and Newcome closed the door on him. The fat junior retreated reluctantly to his own room, and the Fistical Four heard him lock the door.

Then they returned to bed.

"The silly owl!" growled Jimmy Silver. "It was indigestion, of course. He's been dreaming ghosts. Poof! If we were at Rookwood now, I'd slaughter him for waking up the house in the middle of the night."

"He hasn't woke up Captain Digby," remarked Lovell. "He must be a jolly sound sleeper if he hasn't heard Muffin's yells."

"All the better for him. Good-night!"

Jimmy Silver laid his head on the pillow, and closed his eyes.

"I say, Jimmy," said Lovell, after a pause.

"Hallo!" came sleepily from Jimmy Silver. "Wharrer marrer? You seeing ghosts now?"

"I was thinking—"

"Think quietly, old chap, at this time of night," murmured Raby. "You can tell us the result tomorrow."

"Fathead! I was just thinking about Captain Digby—"

"Bother Captain Digby! Good-night!"

"You know when Digby was at Rookwood there was a ghost scare, because he was walking in his sleep," persisted Lovell.

Jimmy Silver started, and sat up in bed.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

"It's just possible Tubby did see something, if the merry captain has been doing ghost-walks in his sleep again," said Lovell.

"I—I never thought of that," muttered Jimmy.

"We shall have to keep an eye on him," said Lovell. "We got him here for Christmas to look after him really, and if he's doing sleep-walking stunts again—"

Newcome gave a deep yawn.

"We'll think about that tomorrow," he said. "I'm going to sleep, unless you're learning from the little brook, Lovell, and going on for ever."

"Ass!"

"Good-night!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. settled down to sleep again. But it was some time before Jimmy slept. Lovell's suggestion had startled him, and he was thinking about Captain Digby, in a rather worried mood, until at last slumber sealed his eyelids again.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Captain Stays!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were down rather late to breakfast the next morning. Captain Digby was already at the breakfast-table with Mr. and Mrs. Silver, and cousin Phyllis, when the juniors came in.

Jimmy glanced quickly at the captain as he bade him good-morning.

The young man was looking clouded and troubled. Mr. Silver's next remark showed that he had been reading the previous night's incident at the breakfast-table.

"Have you quite recovered, Muffin?" he asked, with a smile. "I have just been telling Captain Digby of the ghost in the pantry."

Tubby Muffin grimaced feebly.

"It wasn't a ghost, sir," he said. "But it was something—I'm jolly sure it was something! It touched me, and I touched it."

"Was it a goose?" asked Lovell.

"There's a goose in the pantry, I believe. You told me so yesterday."

"It was something," persisted Muffin. "Chap walking in his sleep very likely, now I come to think of it."

And Tubby blinked very significantly at the captain. Evidently the fat junior had remembered the strange episode at Rookwood, when Mr. Bootles's nephew, the captain, had been discovered to be a somnambulist.

Captain Digby coloured slightly, and kept his eyes on his plate. Jimmy could see that the same thought was in his mind.

Jimmy could have kicked Tubby at that moment. It was not the only moment, in fact, that he had felt inclined to kick Muffin during that bright youth's stay at Priory House.

Christmas is the season for good will; but it was very hard not to get exasperated with Reginald Muffin, even at Christmas.

The captain was silent during breakfast, speaking hardly a word after the Rookwood juniors arrived at the table. It was evident that he was thinking deeply.

After breakfast he proposed to Jimmy Silver to walk with him to the village post-office, and Jimmy joined him at once. He knew that the captain wanted to speak to him quietly.

Outside, in the grounds, the earth was carpeted with snow, and snow ridged thickly over the house. A few light flakes were still falling. Jimmy turned up his collar against the wind as he walked with the captain down the drive.

It was not till they were near the gate on the high road that Frank Digby spoke.

"Jimmy—his voice and manner were constrained—"I rather think you made a mistake in asking me to share your Christmas festivities here."

Jimmy coloured uncomfortably.

"You're not enjoying it?" he asked.

"That isn't what I mean. I'm enjoying myself no end," said the captain, with a smile. "It was a good idea of yours, so far as that went. Mr. Bootles, my uncle, had me at Rookwood, hoping that change of scene might help me to recover from the effects of shellshock. It did me some good. It was pleasant to be in the old place again, where I had been a schoolboy. But—"

He paused.

Jimmy did not speak.

"But you know what happened," resumed the captain. "Shellshock is a curious thing, and it takes curious forms. I'd never been subject to sleep-walking in my life, but it took that form. I was found somnambulating about the school at night, and the boys took me for the phantom abbot of Rookwood. It made me feel no end of an ass when it came out."

"But—"

"Every day I've been here," said the young man, "I've felt better. I was thinking that I was quite my old self again. And now this happens!"

"What?"

"Muffin ran into somebody last night when he was raiding the pantry. Can't you guess who it was?"

"I—I did think for a moment—"

"There can't be much doubt about it," said the captain moodily. "As soon as I heard what had happened it came into my mind at once. And from Muffin's remark, it's come into his."

"You didn't wake last night?" asked Jimmy.

"No; I am a very sound sleeper naturally, and now my health is good again I sleep like a top. Whether I was walking around, or lying in bed, I did not wake, and I hear that Muffin made plenty of noise."

"Well, he woke us," said Jimmy. "But your room's farther off, up in the south turret. He mightn't have woke you up there."

The captain stopped and looked at him.

"Don't you think it was I that Muffin ran into?" he asked abruptly.

"I—I suppose it was, if he ran into anybody," said Jimmy Silver reluctantly. "But—but he's such an ass, he might be frightened at a shadow. Most likely it was that."

They walked on in silence for a few minutes, down the high-road through the snow towards the village.

"I'm afraid, Jimmy, that it was I," said the captain at last. "It was jolly good of you and your father to have me here, in the circumstances. But I can't stay in a house causing alarms in the middle of the night. I think I ought to leave you."

Jimmy frowned thoughtfully.

"It wouldn't have done any harm if that pig Muffin hadn't been rooting about for mince-pies," he said. "I—I wish you'd stay, Mr. Digby. We're getting on fine, and there's a dance to-night, and some people are coming. Muffin won't go rooting about at night after this. He'll be too scared. And so it's all right."

"I'd like to stay, kid," said the captain frankly. "I wanted to know your views really."

"Stay, then," said Jimmy, at once. "I'll speak to the pater, if you like, and tell him what you've said. But I know he wants you to stay. And—and it may not happen again."

"Let it go at that, then!" said the captain, and Jimmy noticed that his face brightened. It was clear enough that the young man was quite keen to stay in the society of the Rookwood juniors over the Christmas holidays. As he had said to them more than once, they made him feel like a Rookwood boy again himself.

Thud, thud, thud!

The beating of a horse's hoofs in the snow made them look up suddenly. A mounted policeman, in helmet and cape, was riding towards them, and he drew in his horse as he came close up, and signed to them to stop.

"Hallo! Something's up!" said Jimmy, in astonishment. "First time I've seen a mounted bobby in these parts."

The horseman eyed them sharply.

"Have you seen a man in convict clothes about?" he called out.

"A convict?" repeated Jimmy.

"An escape?" asked the captain, with interest.

"Yes. Number Twenty, from Blackmoor. He got away yesterday, and has been traced in this direction. Have you seen anything—"

"Nothing," said Jimmy Silver.

The captain shook his head.

"What sort of man is he?" he asked.

"A slim, gentlemanly-looking fellow, in a flashy way, when he's in his

own clothes," said the officer. "Now he's in the broad arrows. You'd know them if you saw them. I reckon. Of course, he may have got some other clothes by this time."

"What's his name?" asked Jimmy.

The mounted officer laughed.

"I dare say he's got a dozen, but he's generally called Gentleman Jim."

He rode on.

"My only hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Captain Digby glanced at him. Jimmy's face was startled.

"You've heard the name before, Jimmy?"

"Yes. I—I—Jimmy hesitated—"I suppose it's the same—a slim, flashy fellow called Gentleman Jim. He was at Rookwood once—"

"Rookwood?"

"I mean, he came there," said Jimmy. "There's a chap in our Form at Rookwood—you met him, he was here for some days—Erroll—"

"I remember. He came here with Mornington, and they went home together for Christmas Day."

"I'm glad of it now," said Jimmy. "This would have given poor old Erroll a turn if he'd been here and heard about it."

"What on earth can Erroll of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, have to do with a crackman called Gentleman Jim?" exclaimed the captain in astonishment.

Jimmy Silver smiled faintly.

"I know it sounds queer," he said. "But Erroll's rather a queer-fish in some ways. He was stolen when he was a kid, and brought up by that villain, Gentleman Jim, who tried to make a thief of him. The rascal was sent to prison when he was caught, and it all came out. He's supposed to be there still. That must be the man who's got away now. If Erroll was here—"

Jimmy drew a deep breath as he thought of that. "I'm glad he's not here, as it happens. It would be a shock to him to hear that that villain was loose again. Of course, he couldn't do Erroll any harm now. But it would be a shock."

"They'll have him soon, probably," said the captain. "In this weather he is bound to get shelter of some kind, so he must show himself sooner or later."

Jimmy nodded.

"He must be sheltered somewhere already," he said. "I should think he'd be frozen to death if he passed last night out of doors."

The captain was silent, and they walked on to the village together without exchanging any further words. Jimmy Silver stole a glance or two at his companion, and he saw that the captain's face was frowning and thoughtful. He guessed that the young man was thinking of the incident with Tubby Muffin, and that it was troubling him.

But when they walked back to the priory the captain came out of his thoughtful mood.

"I shall stay on, Jimmy," he said. "If agreeable to you and the rest, of course, I mean."

Jimmy smiled.

"No need to specify that," he said. "Then I'm staying on. I don't think it may be so serious, after all. I think it may turn out that my somnambulism hasn't returned." He checked himself. "At least, I hope so."

And they walked back to the priory very cheerfully.

The 3rd Chapter.

The Deserters!

"Gentleman Jim?"

"A giddy convict!"

"There's a job for us!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

That was the effect of the news on the Rookwooders. The information that Kit Erroll's old enemy was in the neighbourhood excited them at once, and Lovell voiced the thoughts of the others.

"That's it!" said Jimmy. "Our day's work is marked out. We're going to look for the beast!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm jolly well not!" said Tubby Muffin promptly. "Catch me grubbing about in the snow and frost looking for escaped convicts! No jolly fear!"

"Well, you wouldn't be any good, anyhow," remarked Lovell. "You can stick over the fire till you melt!"

"Yah!" was Tubby's rejoinder to that.

But the Fistical Four had made up their minds on the spot. If the escaped convict was lurking in the neighbourhood, they were the fellows to help in cornering him.

Had the man been a stranger to them they would not have felt called

upon to "take a hand" against him. But the fact that he was Gentleman Jim was enough.

He was the kind of man, as Lovell observed, who was better under lock and key, and safer. And he was a dangerous customer to have loose in the neighbourhood.

"Might knock Phyllis on the head!" said Lovell thoughtfully. For reasons best known to himself, the possible danger to Jimmy's cousin Phyllis occurred to Arthur Edward Lovell at once.

Jimmy chuckled. "Phyllis isn't very likely to meet him," he remarked.

"You never know," said Lovell. "Suppose he burgled us! Besides, he ought to be collared, because he was such a rotter to Erroll. Hallo, that's Phyllis. Going out, Miss Phyllis?"

Cousin Phyllis smiled brightly. "I'm going to the village—"

"Better let me come, too!" said Lovell at once. "There may be danger—"

Phyllis laughed merrily. "What danger could there be?"

"Escaped convicts, and things," said Lovell. "I'll get a stick, in case it's wanted."

"Now for the hunt!" said Jimmy Silver.

George Raby appeared to hesitate. "Suppose those girls met the convict—"

"What rot! Convicts don't walk up and down a high road in the daylight when they're dodging the bobbies!"

"They—they might—"

"Ass! Beside, Lovell's with them and—"

"I—I—I feel as if they ought to be protected," said Raby. "You fellows hunt for the giddy convict—and I—I'll help Lovell."

Raby scudded off as he finished speaking, and Jimmy Silver gave a grunt.

"Us two left to search for the giddy criminal," he said. "Come on, Newcome!"

To his surprise, Newcome had a deeply thoughtful look.

"There's something in what Raby says," he remarked.

"Nothing at all," said Jimmy. "Come on!"

"If—if they should meet—"

"They won't!"

"But in case they did—"

"What rot!"

"I—I think I—I ought to help Lovell and Raby," murmured Newcome.

"Look here—"

"See you later, old chap. Tell me if you catch the convict!" And Newcome sprinted away across the snow.

He joined the party as they turned out of the distant gate, and Jimmy Silver stared after them in disgust.

He thought of Captain Digby, however, and went to look for that young gentleman. The excitement of hunting for the convict might help to dispel gloomy reflections on the subject of sleep-walking, Jimmy thought. Besides, he wanted somebody to keep him company.

The 4th Chapter.

Captain Digby Looks Round!

Captain Digby did not seem easy to find. He had disappeared after lunch, but Jimmy learned from his father that the captain had made a remark about exploring the haunted turret. So to the haunted turret went Jimmy in search of his guest.

The "haunted" turret was half in ruins, and there he found the captain, smoking a cigar, and looking about him with great interest. He nodded, and smiled to Jimmy Silver.

"Jolly old place, this," he remarked. "Some parts of the building must be very old."

"No end old," assented Jimmy. "The turrets belong to the Plantagenet times, I believe. There used to be a secret passage, but it's blocked up now. I was going to ask you if you—"

"A very interesting place," said the captain. "This part seems quite open to anybody; you might have tramps dropping in here for a night's lodging."

Jimmy laughed. "It has happened in the summer-time," he said, "but I fancy the toughest tramp would find it rather cold now, with the place smothered in snow."

"That's so. But it might be possible to get from the ruined wing into the inhabited part of the house, mightn't it?"

"No fear! There's some doors, but they're kept locked," said Jimmy, shaking his head.

"Always kept locked?"

"Always."

"Let's see them," said the captain.

"Oh, all right."

Jimmy had come there to enlist the captain in the convict-hunt. But politeness compelled him to place a guest's wishes before his own, and he acceded at once to the captain's request. He was glad to see Mr. Digby interested in the ruined wing of the ancient house, though it rather surprised him; the captain had shown no antiquarian tastes before, so far as Jimmy had observed.

Jimmy stopped at a solid oak door, and tapped on it.

"This lets you into the other part of the house," he said. "It opens on the passage leading to the south turret, where your room is. It's covered by some hangings on the other side."

"Ah, that's why I haven't noticed it from within," remarked the captain. "It's locked now fast enough. I suppose if I were an accomplished cracksmen I could pick that lock."

"Not without tools, I suppose," said Jimmy.

"I believe an accomplished cracksmen can pick a lock with almost anything—a bit of wire, or anything of that kind," said the captain. "If I were a cracksmen of that kind, and wanted to get through that door, that's what I should think of, if I arrived without any tools. I should manage to snip a piece of strong wire from one of your barbed fences round about."

Jimmy laughed, but he could not help looking rather curiously at the captain. Mr. Digby's remarks were curious enough, and Jimmy felt a trifle uneasy. He wondered whether the young man was so completely

"Lots," said Jimmy. "There's a whole range of rooms over the bedrooms, never used."

"What do you do with them?"

"Nothing. They're garrets, really. Some of them have lumber stacked in them," said Jimmy carelessly.

"Are they kept locked up?"

"Most of them."

"It's quite an interesting old place," said Captain Digby. "I'm very glad you asked me here for Christmas. Well, don't let me keep you from tracking down Gentleman Jim. If you find him, let me know, and I'll help you get him to the nearest police-station."

The captain went indoors, leaving Jimmy Silver staring.

"I suppose he's pulling my leg," murmured Jimmy. "Never mind, perhaps I shall track that beast, and that's better than rooting about silly old ruins. I can't help feeling afraid he's got his trouble coming on again. Blessed if he doesn't seem to be almost wandering in his mind."

And Jimmy shook his head seriously as he walked away, with his stick under his arm.

That evening there was to be a Boxing Night dance at Priory House, and there were some preparations to be made. But Jimmy Silver had the afternoon to himself, and he spent it in hunting for the convict. Exactly how he was going to deal with Gentleman Jim if he encountered him, Jimmy had not thoroughly decided. Perhaps it was fortunate that he did not encounter him.

When he came in from his fruitless quest, the winter dusk had fallen

Tubby carried his forgiveness so far as to dance with Clara, Marjorie, and Phyllis that evening, at least three times each. But he found those young ladies remarkably elusive, and was reduced to consoling himself in the refreshment-department—which he did extensively.

The 5th Chapter. Caught!

Jimmy Silver wore a thoughtful look when he went up to his room with his chums that night. The hour was late, and the last guest had gone, excepting those staying in the house, and they were gone to bed. During the merry evening Jimmy had forgotten about everything but the merriment around him; but now he was thinking again. And in the room he shared with his chums he sat on his bed and thought.

"Mince-pies?" asked Lovell.

"Eh?"

"Or turkey, or goose?" asked Raby.

"Or too much jazz?" asked Newcome.

"Fatheads!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I was thinking—"

Crash!

There was a sudden uproar from downstairs. There was the sound of a brief, but fierce, struggle, and a heavy fall. Then a voice—the voice of Captain Digby:

"I've got you, my man! Quiet, you scoundrel!"

"What?" panted Lovell.

Jimmy Silver rushed breathlessly down the stairs, with his chum at his heels.

at that moment—was helpless in the grasp of three pairs of hands.

Lovell and Jimmy Silver had hold of his wrists, and Captain Digby was kneeling on his chest now. The captain glanced round at his astonished host.

"Can you find me something to secure the rascal with?" he asked.

"Bless my soul! Certainly, certainly!"

Mr. Silver hurried away, and returned with a cord, Gentleman Jim made a feeble resistance as it was knotted round his wrists, and then round his ankles. Then the captors rose, leaving the ruffian on the floor. Gentleman Jim sat up, and scowled at them with bitter rage.

"You've got me!" he muttered hoarsely. "I'll remember this! You've got me!"

"Looks like it, old top!" said Lovell cheerily.

"But—but what has happened?" asked Mr. Silver blankly. "You—you have not been to bed, Captain Digby. Did you know—guess—that this—"

"I guessed," answered the captain, with a smile.

"You guessed!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Exactly! When I heard that an escaped convict was in this neighbourhood, I thought at once of what had happened in the pantry last night—"

"But—but that—that was—"

stammered Jimmy.

"No, it was not I—though I feared so at first, as you did. When I heard of the convict, it put a new idea into my head," said Mr. Digby. "I thought of the possibility that he might have hidden himself in the ruined wing of the house; and, knowing him to be an accomplished cracksmen, there was the further possibility that he had penetrated into the inhabited portion of the house, and concealed himself somewhere in the rambling garrets—"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Silver, aghast.

"I determined to find out," said Mr. Digby, with a smile. "It was useless to alarm you all for nothing, so I decided to watch."

"It was the affair happening in the pantry that made me most suspicious," the captain went on. "If the ruffian had obtained concealment here, that was not all he needed. It was certain that he must be starved for food. What more natural than that he should creep out in the middle of the night and search for it? Muffin—on the same quest—ran into him—"

"G—"

"He slipped away in the dark, in a hiding-place. That was what I worked out in my mind as probable. I determined to watch to-night. For if the man was there, and had suffered hunger for another twenty-four hours, it was certain that he would make another attempt to get food. Of course, I might have instituted a search of the garrets and attics; but that would have been a very long and alarming proceeding, and might have proved only that I was mistaken. It was simpler to watch. You see the result. I posted myself near the pantry, and he groped his way fairly into my arms."

Captain Digby laughed merrily.

"Mr. Silver, if you have a safe room where this scoundrel can be secured till morning—"

"We will take care of that!" said Mr. Silver grimly. "And I will telephone to the police at once. They will be here for him at dawn."

And Gentleman Jim passed the remainder of Boxing Night rolled in a warm rug, but with his hands still tied; and in the wintry dawn he quitted Priory House before Jimmy Silver & Co. were out of bed, with a gentleman in blue walking on either side of him.

Captain Digby was the hero of the hour the next day. Arthur Edward Lovell even thought that Cousin Phyllis admired him more than was absolutely necessary. As for the admiration of Marjorie and Clara, that did not worry Lovell—for reasons best known to Arthur Edward himself.

Jimmy was mightily relieved of his uneasiness regarding the captain. It was evident that Frank Digby was quite recovered. And Jimmy was more than thankful that the young man had come to the priory for Christmas.

Perhaps it was Tubby Muffin who longest remembered the startling episode of Gentleman Jim's Christmas Visit!

THE END.

(Make a point of reading "Trouble for Four!"—a grand complete Rookwood yarn—in next Monday's Boys' Friend.)



TUBBY'S AWFUL ADVENTURE! "I—I was feeling hungry, so—so I came down to the pantry, and there was a g-ghost there!" stammered the terrified Tubby to Mr. Silver, who had just arrived on the scene.

cured of shell-shock as he believed. Certainly his thoughts seemed to be wandering in strange directions.

A mass of snow on a ledge of the ruined turret dislodged itself, and fell with a crash into the courtyard below.

Mr. Digby started at the sound, and spun round on his heel swiftly, his hand tightening on the thick stick he carried.

"Only some snow," said Jimmy.

"Ah! It startled me."

Jimmy tried to smile, but he was inwardly feeling the greatest dismay. That start at a sudden noise showed that the captain's cure was far from complete—so it seemed to him, at least.

"I think I'll go in now," said the captain.

"I was going to ask you if you'd care to come with me and look for the escaped convict, sir," said Jimmy.

Captain Digby laughed.

"You and your friends are going?" he asked.

"The silly duffers were coming, but they've walked off with the girls," answered Jimmy.

"I think I'd rather keep near the fire indoors for a bit, if you don't mind," said the captain, after a pause.

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy, though he was more and more surprised. This was the first time Mr. Digby had given any sign of being a "slacker."

The captain glanced up at the extensive facade of the house, as they came round it.

"Plenty of empty rooms, even in the inhabited wing, I should say," he remarked.

thickly, and Jimmy found his chums at tea in the glow of a big log fire, and all of them looking cheery and comfortable—excepting Tubby Muffin. Tubby seemed to be labouring under a grievance.

"Found the giddy convict?" demanded Lovell, with a chuckle.

"No!" grunted Jimmy.

"Dear me! You haven't—"

began Mrs. Silver, looking up in alarm from the teapot over which she was presiding.

"Oh, only taking a look round, mater!" answered Jimmy.

"How very fortunate you did not come near that dreadful man!" said Mrs. Silver. "We must hope he is miles away!"

"Most likely," said Lovell. "Poor old Jimmy! We were going to help you get him to the station—if you left him alive."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bow-wow!" said Jimmy Silver.

"You-kids enjoyed your walk?"

"Kids!" exclaimed Lovell. "Why, you ass—h'm!—h'm!—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Silver!"

"I didn't!" snorted Tubby Muffin. "I'm quite sure they heard me call to them, but they wouldn't stop for me. I saw Clara look back and laugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Clara looked rather guilty.

"D-did you?" she ejaculated.

"Yes, I did, and—"

"Won't you try this jam-roll, Muffin?" asked Mrs. Silver hastily.

And Tubby Muffin tried the jam-roll—all of it—and allowed himself to forget his grievance. Indeed, perhaps under the influence of Christmas,

Jimmy groped for the switch of the electric light. In the darkness near him the sound of struggling had recommenced, with a scuffling of bodies and feet, a panting of breath.

The light flooded on suddenly. A startling sight met the gaze of Jimmy Silver and Lovell.

Captain Digby, fully dressed, was struggling on the floor with a slim but powerful man, who was fighting desperately. The flood of light showed the man's close-cropped head and unshaven chin, and the hideous "broad arrows" on his soiled and tattered garb.

"The convict!" yelled Lovell.

"Gentleman Jim!" panted Jimmy Silver.

Amazed as they were, the juniors rushed instantly to the captain's aid.

Captain Digby was sturdy and strong, but he evidently had his hands full with the convict, who was fighting like a tiger. The help of the chums of Rookwood was very welcome to him.

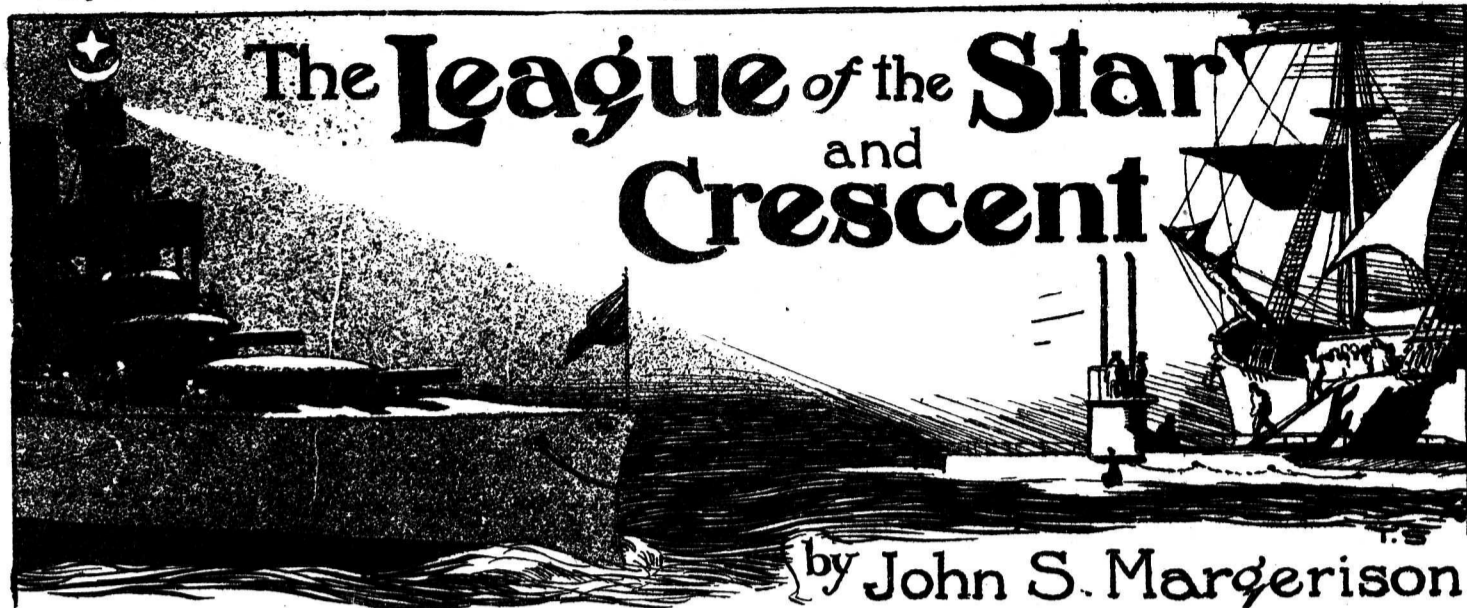
The house was alarmed by this time. Mr. Silver came dashing down the stairs, and Raby and Newcome followed in their pyjamas. The terrified voice of Tubby Muffin was heard squeaking alarmed inquiries in the distance.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Silver, as his eyes fell upon the startling scene in the hall. "What—what, the convict?"

"And we've got him, sir!" panted Lovell.

They had got him, there was no doubt about that. Gentleman Jim—who did not look very gentleman-like

A Splendid Tale of Adventure in all Parts of the World!



The League of the Star and Crescent

by John S. Margerison

INTRODUCTION.

DICK MURRAY, midshipman on board H.M.S. Firecat, has orders to bring a derelict yawl safely to Gibraltar. With his second, an Irishman of the name of CASEY, and a crew of some eighteen British sailors, he mans the salvaged vessel, the Maria Dolorosa. They find some plans to a secret hoard of money, deposited by the Kaiser in the late war, which documents are eagerly sought after by a secret society whose sign is the Star and Crescent. The crew of the Maria Dolorosa land on the coast of Africa, where they discover is situated the headquarters of the league they are trying to avoid. They capture the fortress and defend themselves against a fearful attack by tanks.

(Now read on.)

A Scouting Adventure!

Casey, a smile on his face, greeted Dick.

"'Tis not such bad work the lads are doing with the little peashooters, sor," said the affable giant. "Though it's a great pity we haven't got enough hands to man all the weapons. 'Tis a regular Donnybrook we'd have of it if there was a dozen of them 'ere," and 'tis hard 'twould go with tanks, I'm after thinking."

"Why shouldn't you and I take a gun into act?" said Dick. "Come along, Casey, here's one ready cast loose, with plenty of ammunition stacked in its rear. Let's get that talking before they blow the place down around our ears. There's another shutter gone."

The Irishman grinned. "'Tis a torpedoman I am, sor," said he. "But 'tis a sailorman as well; and, though I couldn't do any shooting worth the trouble, if ye'd glue yerself to the sighting-telescope, I'll put the shells into the little gun for ye."

It only needed a little imagination to turn the combat into a real sea-battle.

Dick was irresistibly reminded of the simile as he squinted through the sighting-telescope and pressed the trigger time and time again. He was devoting the whole of his energy to the leading tank, which was well away to the right of the line. This seemed to be directing the others, and Dick, after a careful sighting, was just about to press the trigger when the uncanny thing, approaching one of the bomb-holes made by the aeroplane and not realising its danger, suddenly unreared on end, and, falling over itself, went to the bottom of the crater with a crash that could be heard above the din of the firing.

"That chap's sunk, anyway," said Dick, as he slewed his gun-muzzle to the right and picked up a fresh target. "And here's another fellow going the same way. Casey, suppose we have a burst of rapid? Hallo, Atkins! What's the matter with you?"

Atkins, with his head tied up in a handkerchief, had suddenly appeared and attached himself to the gun crew.

"Sorry to have to report, sir," he said. "But Chalmers and McNab's both gone under. They found our gun with one of their shells, and, though it hit me, I don't suppose my name was written quite plainly on it. So, as that gun's out of action, I thought I'd come and help you. Shall I take over at the sights, sir?"

"Rather!" said Dick, stepping back, for he knew that the seaman was a trained gunlayer, and could shoot better with such a weapon than himself. "I'll load. We'll have some

rapid fire, I think. See what you can do to that tank with the rusty bow, Atkins."

"I owe him something, anyway, sir," was the reply. "That's the chap that put it across us. If you'll load swift, I'll give him a peppering!"

He did. He pumped shells out of that gun at the rate of twenty to the minute, and every three seconds the rusty-bowed tank received a stinging shock that shook it considerably.

It turned like a wounded thing, intending to withdraw from the fight till such time as it could again shoot, and as its side showed a plain target to the gunlayer, he ripped the shells

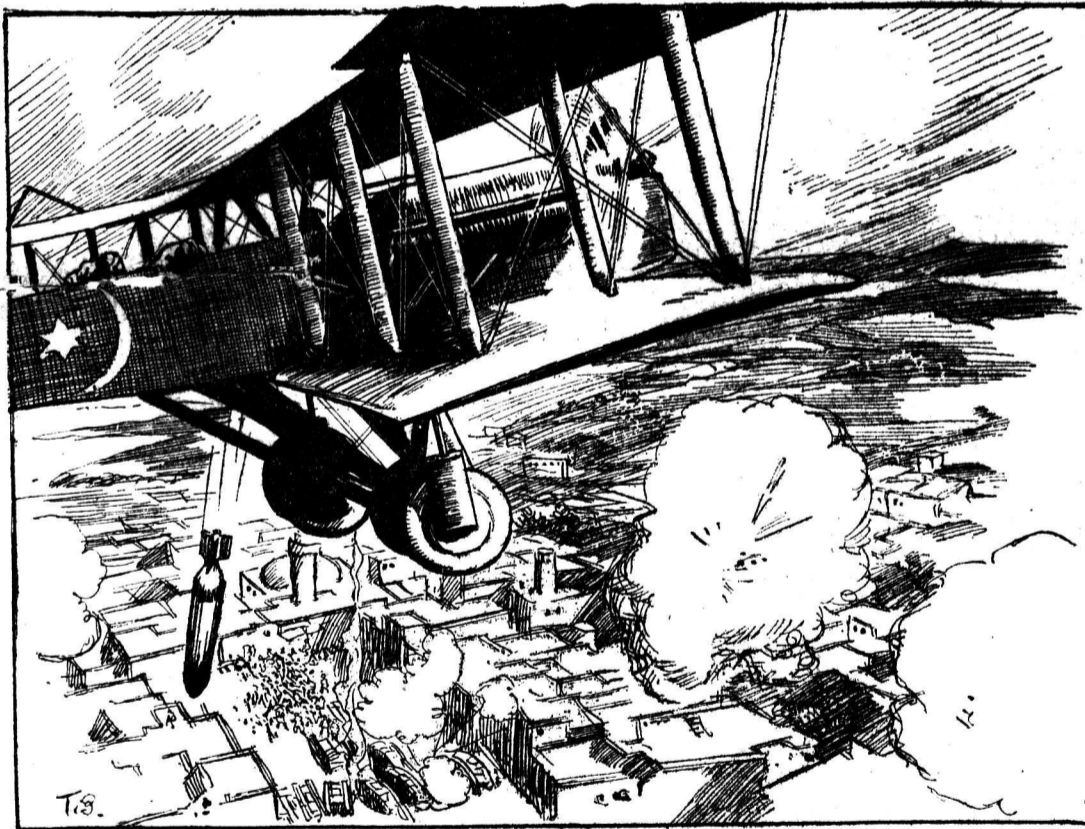
sion on the fort, compelled the tanks to turn tail and withdraw from the light.

Seven out of the forty-seven tanks, however, remained silent and abandoned, and Dick noted with delight, as his guns sent shells after the others to hurry them along, that several of those who could still move trailed along well behind their comrades, obviously hurt.

"Cease firing!" he called, when the last of the cripples had withdrawn within the city's streets. "You've given them a good pasting, lads, and they've hurt us nothing much to speak of. Chalmers and McNab, I understand, are both killed. Are

The guns were cleaned out and re-loaded, sentries and watchers were set at the look-outs, and then all hands went to their mid-day meal. And it was only then that Dick and the others discovered that their fight, instead of lasting about thirty minutes, as they had thought, had occupied well over four hours, for their watches unanimously said three o'clock in the afternoon.

"I don't suppose there'll be any more fighting to-day," said Dick presently. "And now that they've had such a dose, they'll give us a wide berth to-night. But we'll keep the guns manned, also the machine-guns, in case. After dark I'm going to try



TAKE COVER!

The large plane with the sign of the League of the Star and Crescent slowly came into view. Then came a deep boom and a second and a third as a succession of bombs fell around the fortress.

into it faster than ever. No sooner had the breech slammed than the trigger was pressed, and Dick found himself working harder and faster than ever in his life before to keep the piece fed. And, like bullets through tissue-paper, the shells tore into the tank's interior through its thinnish side-plate.

Then, quite suddenly, there was a huge roar and a great sheet of flame, and when the smoke cleared away, the rusty-bowed tank was a mere heap of scrap iron. One of Atkins' shells had found its store of explosives, and, bursting among them, had wrecked the machine.

A great cheer went up from the fort as the defenders paid tribute to the seaman's effective shooting, and then all fell to work again. But the loss of their leader, the fate of the rusty-bowed one, combined with the fact that they had expended almost all their ammunition without making anything like a real impres-

there any more casualties at the other guns?"

"Hellings is dead, sir," said No. 3 gun. "A splinter laid his head open. Murphy's got a slash across the arm, but nothing much."

Four other men had also received minor wounds, mostly from shell splinters, and Dick was relieved to find that none had broken bones. Casey knew sufficient of first aid to bandage and dress the men's injuries, and then the three dead bodies were laid aside to await burial.

to get outside and find a burial-place for these three lads, and I want half a dozen of you to come with me."

"'Tis a good job ye brought me with ye, sor," Casey said, "for 'tis a man with brains—saving yer presence, sor—that this party needs. No longer is it necessary for ye to go outside of the fort to bury the three good lads that's been taken this afternoon, for I've discovered another of them subterranean passages—one that seems to run downhill and communicate with the beach where we first

landed. 'Tis a good find for ye, sor, since it will maybe come in useful for helping us to escape from this place of battles and bloodshed."

"How far have you explored it, Casey?" demanded Dick, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Right out into the place where it leads to the open road, sor," he replied. "And that some open road is the tunnel up which we came in the electric trams when we first landed in this place, and our touring party was conducted by Ould Whiskers himself. 'Tis indeed a great find!"

"I thought as much," said Dick. "Well, it'll be useful to-night, as you say, and maybe we'll presently use it to try and capture one or both of those fast motor-boats the Cadi owns. But just now I must perform a sadder task. Keep your eyes open, Casey, till I come back, and if they attack—well, you know what to do."

"Ay, ay, sor!" said Casey, saluting. The half-dozen being ready, Dick signed to them to take up their burdens, and while the remainder of the party stood at attention, mourning the loss of their comrades, the little procession stole down Casey's recently-discovered tunnel. And presently, without being discovered, they had accomplished their task, not without sadness and a few strong men's tears.

It was a black night—as black as the inside of a wolf's throat. The tunnel itself—the main tunnel, into which Casey's passage led through a door cut in the rock and apparently forgotten, since it would have made a fine rallying place for a Moorish attack upon the citadel—was deserted. The electric cars were all at rest—indeed, since Casey had pulled a few wires out of a circuit they had not been able to run at all. Not a soul seemed about, yet the darkness seemed full of whispers and moving shadows. But the party were unchallenged, and remained undiscovered.

Suddenly Dick had an idea.

"Well, lads," he said, at last. "That job's done. But it strikes me that while we're here, we might as well do a bit of scouting. The moon isn't due to rise for about another half-hour, and by that time we can be pretty closely hidden. I want to see if there's any chance of capturing either one of those boats or the old Maria Dolorosa. I'm getting a bit fed up with this place; and maybe we can find out something to our benefit. Forward, lads, keep your guns handy, and don't make more noise than you can help!"

The party, their hearts leaping at the prospect of further adventure, and just a little elated because they were visiting the enemy in his own camp, stole forward, keeping to the shadows as they went. Once or twice the party halted at a low warning hiss from their leader, and once or twice a solitary Moor, his face wrapped in his burnous, passed them in the darkness. But they remained undiscovered.

"Steady, lads," whispered Dick, as they at last won to the mouth of the cave, and saw overhead the stars flashing in the purple velvet sky. "Don't make a false step, or we'll all be caught. I don't think the old Cadi will be very nice to us in that case, so we'll be careful not to give him the chance. There are shadows moving about down there. I expect they are sentries the old Moor always keeps on the alert. This way, and hug the rocks."

Like the shadows of ghosts, the little band stole forward, Dick edging ever towards the place where he remembered the fast motor-boats to have been hidden. And twice he was compelled to fling himself flat against the face of the rock and pray that he might escape discovery. He breathed deeply on both occasions when the danger passed.

Suddenly he stopped, frozen with horror. For, just ahead of him in the pitchy darkness, a voice spoke. And the voice was that of Ahmed Ben Adeem.

"The foreign dogs may break out of the fort in the darkness," said the old Moor, "and, aided by the powers of evil, who are their masters, steal down here and take to the sea in their old ship. Therefore must that old ship be removed. Hadji, my son, and thou, Yussuf, take ye each one of the motor-boats, and fetch from the side of the ship the two 'camels' that the infidels used to lift her from the seabed. Then shall she be filled again with water and founder, and if the midshipman and he of the loose tongue require her, they may raise her with their bare hands. Haste now, for there are those who will soon be here, and if they see ye at work, it may be that they will ask questions I feel not disposed to answer."

Dick flattened himself against the rock, and with a wide sweep of his hand motioned the next man astern to

The best New Year's Gift for any boy or girl is:

**THE GREYFRIARS
HOLIDAY ANNUAL.**

ON SALE EVERYWHERE.

hide himself. And this man passed it on, so that presently the whole of the seven were snugly ensconced behind a rock each, their automatics gripped ready in their hands in case they should be discovered and called upon to pay for their daring with their lives.

And scarcely had they securely hidden themselves when the moon raised a full, round face above the horizon, and sent a slanting beam of silver light across the water, lighting up the harbour and all it contained.

Dick scarcely dared to breathe when his eyes took in all that was offered to them. Ten yards below him, surrounded by his guard, was Ahmed Ben Adeem, his crafty fingers stroking his beard. And, issuing out of the mouth of the little cove, where the protecting grating was being held up by two men armed with rifles, were the twin motor-boats which had called forth the midshipman's trained admiration on a previous occasion. And even as he looked, eyes a-goggle, Hadji stood up in the stern of the nearest boat, and waved his hand.

Dick and his half-dozen followers lay like stone through the moments that passed afterwards, their eyes alternately watching the Cadi and the speeding boats. They watched the latter draw up alongside the deserted Maria Dolorosa, and involuntarily there flittered through each watcher's mind the remembrance of the days he had spent aboard that craft, of the trouble, and work he had expended upon her during the salvage period, and of the hope of ever seeing her again, which he had long since lost.

And as they lay they saw the two motor-boats' crews working on the long cylindrical "camels" which alone supplied the ruptured craft with the buoyancy necessary to keep her afloat. It was almost with a sigh of anguish that they saw first one and then the other craft draw away, towing the "camels." Thereafter they had no eyes for anything but the murder of a good ship which was being committed before their eyes—the murder of a ship in which they had served, and met with a few adventures; and it was nothing short of a severe physical effort which prevented Dick from calling upon his men to fall on Ben Adeem where he stood. But to have done so would have been inviting certain death, not only for themselves but for the fortress defenders, since search must have revealed the existence of the old corridor leading into the powerhouse, and made the capture and killing of Casey and the others thereafter a mere matter of time.

But Dick, before he restrained himself, went so far as to level his automatic at the sheik; his finger almost tightened on the trigger. The Cadi was never nearer death than in the first five minutes after the motor-boats had left the ship. Maria Dolorosa gave a queer lurch as she felt the weight of the water within her, and her crutches ruthlessly torn away; then she bobbed a little, as if resigning herself to her fate. After that her end was a matter of minutes. Foot by foot she sank, till only her decks were visible, then, as if making a last bid for life, she raised her stern out of the water and waved it in the air for a moment. Then she felt back with a queerly sounding splash, her back broken, and, with a final thud, went down to her long rest on the sea-bed. And this time not ever her masts remained to show where she had been wrecked—murdered.

"So that's the end of all hope of escaping in her," Dick told himself.

The lad's heart was hot within him, and he nursed bitter thoughts as the twin motor-boats, each now moving but slowly by reason of the heavy weight towing astern, came into the little jetty. He watched Yussuf and Hadji—both of whom seemed to be the Cadi's trusted lieutenants—as they cast off the camels and made them fast to a buoy, as they trudged up the shore and reported to their chief.

"Ye have done well," said the Cadi. "Perhaps better than ye or I know. And now, lest there be those who would steal them from us, replace the motor-boats in their house, and when ye have made them fast, bring me pieces of their machinery that those who have them unlawfully may not be able to run them."

Hadji and Yussuf saluted and returned to their craft, and not a movement of the boats or of those who guarded the grating gates which closed the cove were lost upon the lad. But when the two coffee-coloured gentlemen returned to their leader, his heart sank. For each had brought away from his craft the magneto, without which the motors would never be able to drive the propellers. And, as if fearful even

of the fidelity of his lieutenants, Ahmed Ben Adeem took the instruments and wrapped them in the folds of his burnous.

"Hope number two slithered to smithereens," said Dick to himself. "Even if we could overcome the guard over the boats, we'd be done without the magnetos. Hallo! Who's this hooker coming over the horizon?"

His question was aroused by the sudden appearance of a long, low, rakish craft, who, with three funnels smoking hard, and a white bow wave at her forefoot, seemed to be eating up the miles as she sped towards the little harbour.

"A warship," said Dick. "I wonder if she's one of ours? If so, and she anchors in the harbour, she'll be bound to send a boat ashore, and in that case I'll just get the drop on Old Whiskers with my gun, and have a chat with the officer in charge of her. Then it'll only be a matter of minutes before I have Casey and the others down here, and it'll be strange if the British Navy can't manage to extract from the Cadi and Elcazar the papers there's been so much fuss about."

He grinned to himself, and could scarce restrain his impatience as the three-funnelled cruiser—she could be no other from her build and shape—plunged onwards. Her advent seemed to be causing considerable commotion among the Moors on the road below. The Cadi despatched several messengers, giving them orders in low tones that Dick could not hear, and, of course, speaking in Moorish. He consulted long and deeply with Yussuf and Hadji, ever and anon looking anxiously to seaward.

Then, just as she was outside the harbour, as if seeking to avoid recognition, all her lights were suddenly switched off, and she appeared a mysterious silhouette against the moonlight. There was a crash as her cable rattled through her hawsepipe and her anchor sought the ocean-bed, and after that, silence. Dick's heart gave a great bound as he saw a boat put out from her side and make for the shore.

"Ten minutes, Cadi, my lad," he said, "and I'll spring a surprise on you."

The thought had hardly formulated itself within his mind ere he gave a slight groan and sank once more utterly disheartened, to the friendly cover of the rocks; for the cruiser lying out there had suddenly switched on a cluster of lights at her mast-head. And that cluster of lights destroyed all the lad's hopes, and betrayed her nationality, for it was nothing more nor less than the badge of the League of the Star and Crescent.

He lay silently pondering the situation for ten full minutes, while the cruiser out in the bay made herself snug at her anchorage, and the boat she had dropped into the water fussed across to the shore. And, thanks to this boat, it was Ahmed Ben Adeem who solved Dick's most urgent problem for the lad, solved it by taking himself and all his followers, save only the pair of armed rascals who guarded the gates of the motor-boat cove, down to the water's edge to meet it.

Dick would have liked to linger, on the off-chance of hearing whatever plans the Cadi and the ship's officers made, but he might by doing so rob himself and his men of every chance of their ever regaining the safety of the fortress. Therefore, he reluctantly signalled his little band to retire as soon as Ben Adeem was well out of earshot. The little party, stunned a little by the sudden turn their fortunes had taken, were silent as they swiftly walked along the corridor tunnel, and regained the fortress, Dick carefully barring the way with the rock door, and placing a sentry over it to prevent surprise attack from that quarter.

Then he called a hasty council of war of all hands.

One of the men suddenly stiffened in a listening attitude.

"Take cover, sir!" he said. "There's aeroplanes about."

In the silence that followed the general scramble of the men as each jumped to his fighting station at the guns the whir of an aeroplane's propellers could be plainly heard overhead. Then came a deep boom, and a second and third, as the aircraft dropped a succession of bombs.

They had successfully defended themselves against attacks on land and sea, but how would they fare under this ruthless assault from the air?

(Mind you don't miss next week's grand, long instalment of this exciting adventure yarn in the Boys' Friend.)

A TOPPING FOOTER YARN WITH A STRONG PLOT!

THE MINERS' ELEVEN.



INTRODUCTION.

JACK VERNON is a lad of eighteen and nephew of STEPHEN BULFORD, a mine-owner of considerable wealth, gained through rank profiteering. Bulford's latest stunt for extorting money is to double all prices of admission to his football club, the Coalham F.C. Jack Vernon resigns in consequence of this, warning Bulford that he intends to set up an opposition team in the coalmining town. LAKE, a pessimistic trainer, joins up with Jack, and the pair go recruiting for the new eleven. The first player they attempt to press into their service, a youngster of the name of BUNNY SCRUTTON, refuses point-blank, much to Jack's astonishment.

(Now read on.)

Winning Bunny Over!

Harry Lake removed his hat, and passed a hand over the highly-polished surface of his bald head.

"So there's nothing doing?" he asked, addressing Bunny Scrutton in his customary tearful tone.

The youthful skipper of Coalham Thursday shook his tousled head.

"You ain't got an earthly, gov'nor!" he declared stolidly. "As I told you before, I wouldn't sign forms for Aston Villa—no, not if they went on their bended knees at this very moment!"

Harry Lake shot a hopeless glance at Jack Vernon, who was smiling quietly to himself.

"Now, look here, old man!" protested the youngster. "Don't you think you've been a trifle hasty in your decision? You've not had time in which to give the matter a thought!"

A stubborn expression settled upon Bunny's face.

"If joining your club means deserting the lads—well, the matter don't need much thought," he returned, almost truculently. "Still, I'm a dead sport, and I'd like to hear about this new club of yours."

Jack's smile broadened. "That's the talk, old man," he said heartily. "Now, it's a jolly long story, and you'll catch cold if you stand about here. What do you say to coming back to my digs and having a cup of tea?"

Scrutton hesitated and looked doubtful.

"It's very nice of you to ask me," he said at last; "but you've backed a loser—a rank outsider—if you think it's going to make any difference to my decision!"

"Don't worry about that, my lad," returned Jack laughingly. "You'll come along?"

"Lead on!" said Bunny, and the trio turned on their heels and made for the town. It was not a long walk to Jack's lodgings, and the matter of the new club was not discussed on the way. Sport—and football in particular—was the topic of conversation, and it was soon obvious that Scrutton was a thorough-paced little sportsman.

"Here we are!" said Jack, mounting the steps of a small villa, and opening the door with his key.

"Follow your uncle!" he led the way through the passage to a cosily-furnished sitting-room in which tea had been set for two. Another place was soon prepared for the newcomer, and in less than ten minutes Jack and his guests were doing justice to a substantial "high tea."

The meal came to an end at last, however, and the three drew their chairs away from the table and grouped themselves round the blazing fire.

"This is good!" declared Jack Vernon, stretching himself luxuriously.

"Top hole," said Bunny Scrutton, who had filled himself to repletion, and was feeling at peace with all the world. "I feel like a dook!"

"It's not too bad," was Harry

Lake's grudging comment. "Still, I expect I shall get indigestion after eating those muffins. I once knew a chap—feller named Brown—"

"I've heard the name before," put in Jack, with a sly grin.

"I once knew a chap," continued Lake, ignoring the interruption, "who ate a lot of muffins—about as many as I had—and he began to swell and swell until he burst—"

"Burst!" gasped Scrutton incredulously.

"Yes." He burst into laughter, and—

He dodged adroitly as Jack Vernon sent a cushion hurtling in his direction.

"Stop rotting, Harry," he said, with mock gravity, "and let's get down to business." He turned to Bunny Scrutton. "Now, Scrutton, the position of affairs is this. Mr. Bulford, my uncle, runs the town club, as you know. It practically belongs to him, and he makes a jolly good thing out of it, you can bet.

"Well, he wasn't satisfied, and he doubled the prices of admission, and I kicked."

"So would I!" interpolated Bunny, with feeling. "You kicked?"

"Yes," returned Jack Vernon, with a wry smile; "and so did he. He kicked me out!"

"And you want to start a rival club?" asked Scrutton.

"Exactly!" returned Jack at once.

"I want to get together all the best players in the district and start in opposition. What's more—"

The youngster broke off, and looked over his shoulder as the door opened to admit his landlady.

"There's three young men wants to see you, Master Jack," she said. "One's Mr. Brant."

"Old Brant—our tame American!" he laughed. "Send 'em in, Mrs. Harris!"

The old lady withdrew, and a moment later there came the tramp of heavy feet, and Brant, Greay, and Jackson, all members of the town club, came into the room.

Jack was on his feet in a moment.

"Come in, my merry men!" he cried hospitably. "Squat down wherever you can find a seat. There are a couple of empty chairs, and the coal-box will do for old Brant. Let me introduce you to Mister Bunny Scrutton! He's skipper of Coalham Thursday!"

Introductions having been carried out with a regard to the niceties of social etiquette, the three youngsters made themselves at home.

"Now," said Jack, looking from one beaming face to another, "why am I honoured in this way?"

Brant and his chums grinned somewhat doubtfully.

"It's like this," began Jackson. "We've come to see you about this new club of yours. There's been a deuce of a row at the club this afternoon, and we got to loggerheads with your precious uncle and all his bright money-grubbing pals!"

Jack's eyes glinted with excitement.

"Do you mean to say that—"

"We've chucked the whole crowd!" Green put in.

"Sure!" supplemented Brant, in what he imagined to be an American accent. "Old man Bulford sure fired us—good and hard! Told us to beat it for the woods!"

"And you want to stand in with me?" asked Jack Vernon, who was veritably bubbling over with suppressed excitement. It seemed too good to be true; the youngster could hardly believe the evidence of his own ears. And yet—

"Sure!" said Brant, popping a wad of chewing-gum into his mouth.

"That's about the strength of it! Now, what proposition have you got to put up to us guys?"

"I'll tell you right now," said Jack, using the Americanism for the benefit of Brant, and thus bringing a grin to the faces of his hearers. "You all know the Old Manor Ground?"

A Magnificent
New Football
Serial by
WALTER EDWARDS.

He looked round, and five in tormented heads nodded.

"Well, John Maynard owns the place, and I'm going to ask him to let us use it for our home matches. Now—"

Harry Lake held up a hand at this stage of the proceedings.

"One moment, my lad—one moment," he said, in protesting tones. "That ground hasn't been played on since Pitmarsh United used it, and that's more years ago than I care to remember. Since then it's gone to rack and ruin. The playing-pitch is over-run with weeds and grass. The place is a dust-heap, a home for tins and old boots! And cats—why, they all go there to die! It's a moggies' cemetery!"

He looked round at his listeners with inguibrarious satisfaction in his eyes.

"And the stand!" he said, holding his hands aloft in awe. "Why, it's a scrap-heap! There's great holes in the roof, a few rusty girders, and some rotting wood that used to be seating accommodation! And yet you talk about playing home matches on the pitch!"

Jack nodded his head with studied patience.

"I know all about that, my gentle Job," he returned, with a smile. "I admit that the place is in a pretty bad condition, but there's no reason why it shouldn't be put in ship-shape order, is there?"

Harry Lake smiled acidly. "No," he returned, in cutting tones, "there's no reason whatever so long as you've got about five or six thousand pounds to spend on the place!"

He sat back in his chair, placed his hands upon his hips, and waited to see what effect his words had upon his listeners. There appeared to be a deal of wisdom and hard logic in what he said, and the youngsters looked very grave, with one exception.

Jack Vernon was smiling blandly. "Are you sure that six thousand pounds will be enough, my dear old wet blanket?" he asked the trainer.

Harry Lake rubbed his bald head and pondered.

"No," he said doubtfully, "perhaps it might cost a bit more than that. Repairs run into a heap of money nowadays."

Jack nodded.

"Harry, old man," he said impressively, leaning towards the trainer, "I don't care if the repairs cost twenty thousand pounds! We're going to have the Old Manor Ground, or burst!"

"Then you'll burst!" was Lake's comforting prophecy.

The others, meanwhile, were regarding Jack Vernon with a mixture of incredulity and frank amazement.

"Look here, old scout," said Green at last, "what's in the wind? What's up your sleeve?"

"Say, tell us what's tickling your elbow?" put in Brant.

"Just this," returned the youngster. "I know perfectly well that I've got on the right side of John Maynard, who is a sportsman to the backbone. He's a bit gruff, and most people don't understand him; but I do! I intend to go along on Monday and to put the whole thing before him."

"That's right, kid!" drawled Brant nasally. "You go right in!"

"Yes," said Harry Lake dolefully, "and you'll come right out—on your neck!"

Jack Vernon laughed happily. "We'll wait and see about that," he said, in a confident voice. "The next thing we've got to decide upon is the team. There's you three chaps and me—"

"And me," put in a voice quietly, and every eye turned upon the sturdy form of Bunny Scrutton.

"You!" gasped Jack incredulously. "Well, and why not?" asked Scrutton easily. "I reckon there's going to be a pretty tough fight—a

THE MINERS' ELEVEN.



(Continued from the previous page.)

tion at first, but when Bulford remained adamant, the club's supporters had bowed their heads to the inevitable.

Bulford's high-handed and revolutionary move still rankled, however, although he did not realise the fact. All Stephen Bulford knew was the fact that the "gates" at Slag Heap had not fallen off—and the fact made him smile.

He then thought of his nephew, who had defied him and was morally responsible for the other three players leaving the club.

"Vernon, Green, and the other two traitorous hounds!" he muttered savagely, as his car ate up the miles to Coalham. "I can do without 'em, and if they came crawling back to me on their hands and knees, I'd kick 'em out! The ungrateful—"

His pleasant soliloquy came to an abrupt end as his eyes rested upon the dilapidated grandstand of the Old Manor Ground, which he could see away to his right.

He slowed down, and a perplexed look crept into his eyes.

body building a factory, or something?"

The foreman shook his grey head, but not too graciously.

"No; we're rebuilding the ground—renovating it. We're—What's the matter, sir? Ain't you feeling well?"

Stephen Bulford's face had flushed crimson and his mouth had gaped open.

He pulled himself together with an effort, and tried to smile.

"I'm all right," he said hurriedly. "I was somewhat surprised, that's all. And what team is going to play on the ground when it's ready?"

He tried to keep the anxious note out of his throaty voice.

"The Miners' Eleven, sir," answered the foreman, shooting a strange glance into the other man's heavy features.

"But—I've never heard of them!" protested Bulford. "Who are they, what are they, and where did they get the money for these repairs?"

"Hold up, guv'nor!" said the foreman. "Not so fast. If you want to know, Mister Maynard's footing the bill, and the eleven was started by Jack Vernon, who used to—"

"Jack Vernon!"

The two words were spat out with venom, and every vestige of blood fled from Bulford's face. His eyes stared fixedly into those of the foreman, and his whole body remained rigid.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked

And his concentrated hatred was centred upon Jack Vernon.

"The cub! The cub!" he muttered, with blazing eyes.

And then, rounding a curve, a snarl escaped his lips, a cry of gloating satisfaction.

For walking towards him was the object of his thoughts—Jack Vernon!

The youngster, together with Jackson, was on his way to the Old Manor Ground.

Jackson was the first to see the big car race round the corner, and he gave a yell of warning.

"Let's separate, Jack!" he cried quickly. "Let this road-hog have the whole of the earth!"

He darted across the road and clambered up the bank, although the precaution was unnecessary.

For Stephen Bulford had no eyes for him. His fixed maniacal stare was upon the face of Jack Vernon, and, increasing his speed, he swerved the car across the road and tore straight at his nephew.

Jackson saw his chum's dire peril in a flash.

"Look out, Jack! Jump for your life!"

On, on rushed the monster, and Jackson gave a scream of fright, and closed his eyes.

Jack Vernon, his face pale and set, watched the madly-rushing car bearing down upon him, and gave a quick glance to his left, to find that he was standing parallel to a five-barred gate.



A MURDEROUS ATTEMPT! Jack Vernon realised his peril in an instant. He vaulted a five-barred gate at the side of the road, so saving himself from the on-rushing car driven by—his uncle!

regular monkey and parrot affair—between you and your uncle, and I just love a scrap! What's more, I'll bet every fellow in the Firsdays team would jump at the chance of turning out for you!"

Jack Vernon was positively beaming.

"By Jove, Bunny, you're a brick—a whole cartload of 'em!" he cried enthusiastically. "And if we can't find room for all your fellows in our first eleven, there's no reason why they shouldn't form the second string!"

"Not a bit!" returned Scrutton. "I don't suppose you'll want 'em, though, for there are plenty of good players in the district who want a chance to show what they can do!"

"That's so," broke in Harry Lake, forsaking his hopeless, dismal outlook upon life for the moment. "I know where to find plenty of good lads, and I'll train 'em! I can turn a one-legged man into an International when I put my mind to it!"

The others laughed lightheartedly, for they had all entered into the spirit of the thing.

"And now you chaps have been fired, you'll have to find another job, I suppose?" grinned Jack, looking at Brant and his chums.

"We're not worrying much about that," said Green. "We can always get a job of some sort in the pits. It's pretty hard work, and it'll come as a bit of a shock after the soft time we've been having in old Bulford's office, but that don't matter."

"Of course not!" grinned Jack. "Hard graft will keep us in condition."

There was silence for a moment, and then the youngster brought his fist down upon the arm of his chair.

"I've got it, you chaps!" he cried excitedly.

"Got what?" asked Lake, his mind flying to human ailments. "A pain?"

"No, nothing like that!" laughed Jack. "I've been wondering what we can call the new club!"

"Well?"

The interrogation came from his listeners.

"We'll all be miners very soon, so why not call the team the Miners' Eleven?"

The suggestion met with instant approval.

"The very thing!" cried Green and Jackson in one voice.

"Bully!" jerked Brant, chewing steadily at his gum.

Harry Lake nodded his bald head, and a troubled look smouldered in the depths of his eyes.

"Look here, Jack," he said steadily, "young Scrutton was right when he said there's going to be a fight between you and your uncle. I've known Bulford for years now, and he's an ugly customer when he's roused. Once we get the new team under way, and begin to make a difference to his gate receipts, it'll be war to the knife, you mark my words!"

"I think you're right, Harry," concurred Jack solemnly. "Stephen Bulford won't stop at anything to gain his own ends!"

Jack Vernon was soon to learn the truth of those words.

Getting On!

Stephen Bulford's fleshy features creased into a self-satisfied smile as he drove his powerful car along the main Coalham road. He had been to London on business, and he was amusing himself by running his mind over the events of the past week or so.

The first link in the chain of affairs that had led up to the resignation of four of his best players had been his doubling the prices of admission to all parts of the ground.

There had been marked dissatisfac-

"What the deuce are they doing there, I wonder?" he muttered. "The place hasn't been touched for years, and yet it looks as though some men are working on it."

His curiosity aroused, he turned off to his right and ran along the narrow road which led up to the disused football ground.

And as he approached the place, he knew that his eyes had not deceived him, for a veritable army of workmen were distributed over the ground, some of them employed on the stand, others upon the asphalt embankments, whilst a score or more were busy with picks and shovels upon what had once been the playing-pitch.

His broad brow corrugated in a frown, Stephen Bulford brought his car to a standstill, hoisted himself stiffly from the driving-seat, and walked ponderously towards the big wooden gate which was hanging precariously from its rusty hinges.

He walked into the ground and gazed upon a scene of almost feverish activity. The workmen appeared to be toiling against time, and the din of hammers meeting metal and wood was almost deafening.

Stephen Bulford, whose interest was thoroughly aroused, walked across to a little shed which he took to be the foreman's office.

A typical artisan was inside, busy with a rule and some paper. He looked up as Bulford approached.

"Excuse me," said the managing-director of Coalham Town F.C., "but what's happening here? Some-

the artisan anxiously. "Going to have a fit?"

Bulford gave an unpleasant, mirthless laugh.

"Jack Vernon!" he muttered, his small, close-set eyes glinting with hatred. "So he's carried out his threat, after all! And he's got round Maynard, eh? By Heaven, he shall pay for this! I'll break him—break him! The hound! The insolent puppy!"

Quivering with rage, Stephen Bulford turned upon his heel and strode away towards his car, whilst the foreman removed his bowler hat, and scratched his grey head in perplexity.

"Well, he's a nice, quiet little feller," he muttered, as he watched Bulford clamber into the driving-seat—"I don't think!"

Bulford, meanwhile, had backed his car, and was speeding towards the main road, his brain seething, his eyes blazing with homicidal light.

"The impudent cub! I'll smash him—smash Maynard—smash 'em all!" he muttered again and again, working himself into a fury.

He swung into the main Coalham road upon two wheels, and was quite oblivious of the fact that he almost capsized.

Driving like a man in a trance, Stephen Bulford wrenched the wheel round and set the car in the direction of the town.

He was mad with rage and mortification, and the one idea that raced through his working brain was to harm—to destroy, if necessary.

TRICKS OF A CHAMPION

By Stanley Hooper.

The Wonderful Frenchman.

The romantic rise of the popular French idol, Georges Carpentier, from pit-boy to champion boxer is one of the wonders of this wonderful age. This remarkable Frenchman's exploits, recounted from boyhood days onwards, would fill with interesting reading the thickest volume that was ever published.

At a very tender age Georges, the pit-boy, endeavoured to partly support his parents in the necessities of life on a weekly wage of five shillings. At that time the sport of boxing was just becoming popular in France. Georges, quick to scent anything in the nature of "over-weight" to his weekly earnings, made his way to the proprietor of a newly-opened gymnasium in Lens, and with childlike urbanity requested to be taught boxing. The proprietor-instructor humoured the child by allowing him to don the "mitts," and straightaway received the shock of his life. The frail weakling, adopting an orthodox pose, soon struck terror to the hearts of the professor's pupils. His sublime indifference to punishment and the ferocity of his attack astonished the proprietor, who was none other than Francois Descamps, Carpentier's guide and philosopher of the present day. Thus Georges advanced to the first step on the ladder of fame.

At the age of thirteen, long before most boys leave school, he made his first professional ring appearance at the Maisons Lafitte.

His opponent was a boxer by the name of Salmon, one of the best paper-weights in France, and a terribly tough customer. The contest was one of twenty three-minute rounds, and poor little Georges' chance looked hopeless. His form, however, was a revelation to the spectators. Boxing in phenomenal fashion, this "blue-eyed baby" out-boxed and outfought his burlier antagonist for thirteen rounds, when an unintentional foul was committed.

So impressed with his boxing ability was a certain "scribe," that he wrote columns and columns about the little Frenchman in the English press. That journalist was Mr. P. Hurdman-Lucas, now Carpentier's lifelong friend.

Carpentier's "Deadliest" Manœuvre.

It is an undeniable fact that the Frenchman's chief "stock-in-trade" is his brains. Carpentier's principal hobby is to study assiduously the methods and style adopted by prospective opponents, and to discover some means whereby he can counteract and defeat these methods.

Before his recent match with Beckett, and from "information received," he came to the conclusion that whirlwind methods were of most value to upset the calculations of the English champion, whose style was more of the slower, bulldog order. That his assumptions proved correct is now world-wide knowledge.

To sum up, it may be said of Carpentier that the dizzy heights he has attained and the fame he has achieved in the boxing world are attributable to pluck and self-confidence combined with skill and brains. His work and manœuvres are of all-round excellence, and do not comprise any extra special "tricks of the trade." However, for the benefit of BOYS' FRIEND readers I will detail a punch cultivated to a fine art by Europe's heavy-weight champion—one that has spelt disaster for many a British champion. It is typical of the Frenchman's ingenuity.

He bores in, leaving face apparently exposed to entice his opponent to lead with the left. A deft slip of the head to the right as the expected left comes out, and Carpentier hooks with his left to his opponent's jaw with all the force he can command.

If he has been successful in his project, his opponent will lurch from the weight of the stinging blow right into the Frenchman's following-up right hand, which is delivered with unerring accuracy to the point of the jaw, bringing about a complete collapse.

This is a punch that aspirants to boxing honours would do well to cultivate.

(Mind you read next Monday's grand, long instalment of this thrilling yarn in the BOYS' FRIEND.)

A Ripping Tale of the Adventures of a Boy Multi-Millionaire!



The BOY with FIFTY MILLIONS!

BY VICTOR NELSON.

A TOPPING TALE OF SCHOOLBOY ADVENTURE!

INTRODUCTION.

DON DARREL, a lad of fifteen, inherits from a stranger, whose life he saves, the stupendous fortune of fifty million pounds. With this he gives up his ranch in Mexico, and comes to Britain to school. The disinherited heir to the fortune, RANDOLPH GURNEY, is plotting to do away with Don, and so secure the money for himself. On arriving in Britain with his faithful half-caste servant CHUTA, and his dog, SNAP, Don goes to Eaglehurst School. Several attempts are made on his life by emissaries of Gurney, but all are in vain. Don makes himself extremely popular with the boys at Eaglehurst and Heywood, the footer captain, decides to try Don as a footballer.

(Now read on.)

A Cowardly Blow!

Philips won the toss, and chose the goal that was favoured by the very slight wind that was blowing. The teams lined up, and soon after the kick-off Grierson trapped the ball and set off in a dashing, individual sprint, which carried him past the halves, before he was tricked out of it and a kick sent it into touch. "That's where he makes a bloomer—in being so boastfully selfish!" whispered Philips to Don Darrel, as they ran to where the throw-in was to be made. "If he had passed to old South, on his right wing, who was covering him well, they'd have very likely scored. They are getting fed up with him in the first eleven, between you and I."

For a time the play was of a ding-dong nature, and neither team seemed able to gain much advantage over the other.

As yet, Don Darrel had had very little opportunity to show how well or otherwise he could play. But his chance came at last.

After a throw-in and a piece of scrambling play near the touch-line, which Mr. Farmer watched closely, the feather came ballooning towards him.

Don saw Grierson bearing down upon him, a grim look about his heavy face; but he waited coolly, trapped the ball, and, just as the bully hurled his whole weight at him in a shoulder charge, side-stepped cleverly with the ball at his toes.

To Grierson's chagrin, he fell flat on the grass, which was wet and muddy, and, ere he could pick himself up, Don Darrel was away like lightning, leaving the opposing forwards behind in less time than it takes to write, and tricking the halves with the skill and judgment one would only expect to find in an adult professional player.

A surprised silence descended upon the crowd of watching boys. They saw the backs rushing for Don, saw him dodge one with the leather still dribbling at his toes, and just at the right moment sling the ball to Philips, his inside left.

The second back collided with Don, and before he could steady himself and hope to reach Philips, the latter had taken a pretty shot for goal.

Out came the goalkeeper in a desperate leap, and caught the leather in his outstretched hands; but it was to find Don Darrel sprinting for him, and, as after his second stride he bounced the ball and tried to clear, it was only to discover he had no chance.

Don was upon him, and had got his chest to it. It fell at his feet, and,

even as the backs came at him like a whirlwind, he quickly but deliberately tapped the ball over the line and into the net.

"Goal!"

The yell that went up was deafening. Hands were clapped, and a delighted cheer came from those who had predicted the "whites" would win.

"It was all a fluke!" Grierson was heard to mutter. But others knew better.

On all sides was being asked the question: "Where had Don Darrel learned to

scrambled to his feet unaided. Then the thing that happened next was like a thunder-clap.

The bully "saw red." He forgot his wholesome respect for Don Darrel when it came to a bout, forgot everything except his blind rage and hatred.

With a snarl, he clenched his fist and drove it full under Don's chin, and, as the blow was totally unexpected and unguarded, it dropped the Boy with Fifty Millions like a ninepin.

Mr. Farmer's whistle shrilled, and he came striding up to them.

"Leave the field, Grierson!" he

crowds of boys of all ages who crowded about the touch-lines. Now, however, storms of hisses and boeing broke out, showing how bitterly the bully's cowardly and unsportsmanlike action had been taken.

"Yah! Rotter! Cad!"

"Bully Grierson!"

"Wait until he meets you off the field!"

"Buck up, Darrel, old chap!"

Grierson ground his teeth and clenched his hands. He felt that his ill-tempered blow at Don, combined with the fact that the Boy with Fifty Millions had been plainly showing that as a centre-forward he out-classed him, probably meant the end of him as a footballer at Eaglehurst.

"I'll get my own back on him, you screeching little prigs!" he muttered to himself as he disappeared from view beyond a hedge, and the hisses and groans began to die into silence.

"Yes, after this I'll do anything—anything to get even with him, and perhaps I'll do it sooner than any of them expect!"

He heard footfalls on the road behind him, and, flinging a glance over his shoulder, saw that a man, who must have been watching the match from over the low bushes, was following him.

He saw the fellow make a sign that he wanted to come up with him, and, rather surprised, waited.

"What do you want?" he asked surlily as the other—it was the carelessly-dressed individual who had previously shown interest in Don Darrel—quicken his step and approached.

"A word with you," the man answered quietly. "You don't like that boy you knocked down and got sent off the field for, my young friend—eh?"

"Like him!" Grierson uttered a snarling laugh. "I hate him—hate him like poison!" he answered, with a scowl. "But what business is it of yours, anyway?"

Don Darrel to within an ace of his death.

"Well, I suppose that a kid of his beastly wealth is sort of interesting to chaps in your line," Grierson said. "But if you're thinking of trying to get an interview with him for your paper through me—"

"I was not," Carson interrupted. "Let us walk towards the dressing-room together—I take it, naturally, that you are bound there?—and I will tell you something that I guarantee will surprise you."

This seemed true, for a moment later, as the man and the boy moved away towards the dressing-room, which lay fifty yards away across a stretch of grass, something that Carson said caused the bully suddenly to utter an amazed cry.

Had anyone been watching they would have seen Carson lay an eager hand upon his shoulder and speak quickly, animatedly, his lips close to Grierson's ear, as though keeping his tones low. When Grierson reached the trim, red-brick building Carson followed him in.

Meanwhile, away on the footer-field, Don Darrel had picked himself up.

He swayed for a moment, his hands held to his aching jaw; then, with his eyes gleaming, he turned swiftly, and would have darted from the field.

Mr. Farmer shot out a hand to his shoulder and checked him.

"Where are you going, my boy?" he demanded sharply.

"Shucks, sir—after him!" Don declared. "I guess a guy like that can't knock me flat and get away with it!"

"No!" Mr. Farmer tightened his grip. For a moment, indignation getting the better of him, Don struggled to get free, then, with a shrug, he bowed to the inevitable.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said. "But I'll be shot if I would not like five minutes with him!"

"As a man, I should love to see you thrash him, as he so richly deserves, Darrel!" Mr. Farmer admitted frankly. "As a master, I must forbid you to fight, for it would be right against the discipline of the school. Do you feel equal to going on with the game, my lad?"

"Oh, sure, sir!" the Boy with Fifty Millions answered promptly. "I feel a little shaky, but it will soon pass off, I guess."

Mr. Farmer nodded and picked up the ball.

"Ready, lads?" he exclaimed. And the players gathered about him.

He bounced the ball, and it was quickly sent from the toe of Don to Philips, his inside left; but, as finding himself hard-pressed, the latter slung it to his partner on the wing, a misjudged kick hurled it into touch.

Then Mr. Farmer's whistle sounded for half-time.

The players did not trouble to return to the dressing-room, or they would have found Grierson deep in conversation with his new acquaintance.

For the time of year the evening was warm, and the lads of both teams remained on the field, chatting in little knots. The whistle shrilled out at length, and the teams changed over, the side in the school colours still a man short.

Don Darrel showed signs of the blow he had received for a while. He missed a good chance after the re-start of play, putting in a misjudged kick that gave the ball to one of the "coloured" backs, when he might quite likely have scored.

"Hard luck!" came good-naturedly from more than one of the onlookers, and presently Don began to show signs of bucking up.

The leather came to South on the opposing right wing. He headed it neatly, beating a "white" half who darted for it at the same time.

A swift charge sent the latter player out of the way, and South bounded upon the ball as it fell, trapping it, and setting off with it in a speedy sprint.

Then, with the three other lads remaining in his forward line covering him well, South went rushing goal-wards.

A back tackled him, and he ballooned the leather right away to the lad on the opposite wing. The latter was a clever little player, and, trapping it like lightning, he swiftly changed feet, and bore the ball right into the goal mouth.

Bang!

It went hurtling for the net. Just in time, the "white" goalie reached it and caught the whizzing ball in both hands. He cleared swiftly, and it came to Philips in mid-field.

Here there was a good deal of



A TIMELY INTERVENTION! The light was suddenly blotted out by the head and shoulders of the bully of Eaglehurst. "Get help!" shouted the Boy with Fifty Millions. "Get it quickly, too, unless you want to have murder on your conscience."

play footer of a class and skill like this?"

Soon after Grierson had kicked off, Don got the ball yet again; but, pressed by Grierson, he made to pass to the right wing.

The bully already had visions of Don Darrel replacing him in the first eleven, and he was filled with a hatred even greater than his habitual one for the multi-millionaire.

He fairly flung himself at Don just as the latter was in the act of kicking the ball, with a result that the muddy leather struck him full in the face and sent him sprawling upon his back.

"Oh shucks! I'm sorry, Grierson!" Don exclaimed involuntarily, though it had been a pure accident and no fault of his.

He shot out a hand to help the bully to rise; but Grierson, disregarding it,

thundered, his voice unsteady with contempt and anger.

"I—" Grierson began, realising he had made a bad hash of matters.

"I—"

Mr. Farmer flung up his hand, his eyes flashing.

"Leave the field!" he ordered again. "I order you to do so, not as a master, but as a referee who loves fair play and cannot countenance the action of a coward and cad!"

Chosen for the Eleven—Grierson's Hatred!

Quailing before the master's scorn, Grierson turned upon his heels and went dejectedly towards the exit of the footer field.

Until he had obeyed Mr. Farmer's order, an almost dead silence had reigned over the players and the

The man darted a quick glance over his shoulder, as though afraid of being overheard.

"I am a newspaper reporter," he said. "My name is James Cairns, and just at the moment I am staying at the Crown and Anchor in the village here. Would you be surprised to learn that it is this boy, with the hitherto unheard-of fortune, that has brought me to these parts?"

Grierson, looking at the man's style of dress and the bulky notebook he carried, believed him.

The bully little dreamed that he was really one of the most clever and unscrupulous criminals who ever crossed to England from America—in other words, Julian Carson, ex-bank thief, and the man who had made-up as Dr. Harding, and with the help of others as secondarily as himself sent

Then, with the three other lads remaining in his forward line covering him well, South went rushing goal-wards.

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Here there was a good deal of



THE BOY WITH FIFTY MILLIONS!



(Continued from previous page.)

jugglery, ending with a swift, low pass to Don Darrel, in the centre of the "white" forwards.

It was seen instantly then that the Boy with Fifty Millions was himself again. He did not pause a moment, but, dribbling rapidly away, he swept the opposition as if it had not existed, and, bringing the ball to close quarters, shot quickly and hard.

The goalkeeper dropped full length, and just managed to save, but, even as he bounded up, Don Darrel had dodged one of the backs and was upon him.

A fair but lightning-like shoulder-charge hurled the custodian flat in the goal, the ball still in his hands, and a roar of mingled appreciation and amusement went up, whilst sure that the ball was well over the line Mr. Farmer awarded the score.

"Bravo! Well played, Darrel!"
"Well done, Shucks! Goal! Goal!"

After the enthusiastic cries had died down and play had recommenced, nothing seemed capable of stopping the young millionaire from Mexico.

True, the team in the school colours scored twice, once skilfully, once luckily, but, when it wanted some ten minutes to time, Don scored once more for his side with a splendid long shot from a seemingly impossible angle, and hardly had the ball been set in motion afterwards than he secured it again.

He simply made rings round those of the opposing team who tried to check or rob him, ending by grassing a back, and sweeping into the penalty area.

Don had the light of battle in his eyes. Swiftly he dodged this way and that, getting the "coloured" custodian in such a state of nervous tension that he scarcely knew what to do.

Then as the goalie moved a trifle towards one side of the goal, Don Darrel shot smartly for the other, and the force behind the kick almost drove the leather through the net as it crashed into it.

"Goal, goal, goal!"
Yell after yell went up. The hand-clapping was deafening, and went echoing and re-echoing far across the footer ground and the surrounding fields.

As soon after the ball had been centred and played again Mr. Farmer's whistle ended the match, the crowds of juniors who had been watching the game came rushing on to the field to shake Don by the hand and pat him on the back.

But the players were round him first, those of both sides alike, and by the time he had done wringing their hands and that of Mr. Farmer, who warmly congratulated him on his brilliant play, Don's fingers felt useless and his arm was aching.

"You wretched leg-puller!" Heywood, the captain of the first team, said, when at last he could make himself heard above the cries of enthusiasm. "You fooled me into thinking you a novice—or little better—and you play like a young Steve Bloomer! But where on earth did you learn to shape like this—out in Mexico?"

"Oh, my father could play, you see, and taught me, as well as most of the men on the ranch," Don explained, flushing and smiling confusedly in modesty.

"Your pafer? But if he coached you like this, he must have been a crack himself!" Ned Heywood declared, still puzzled. "Was he, Darrel?"

It was a pity Grierson had been sent off the field in disgrace, or he might have overheard Don's reply. As the bully was fond, when he dared, of pointing out that, in spite of his colossal wealth now, Don Darrel must be of lowly birth to have lived on a ranch, he would have been not only surprised, but would have seen that he had been making rather an idiot of himself.

"I guess the poor old dad could play some," Don had to admit. "He was at Oxford, you see, in his younger days, and got his Blue for soccer. It was just a roving disposition, I reckon, that made him drift to Mexico later on—preferred cattle-raising to swotting in his father's office, I have heard him say."

Ned Heywood and the few boys who had overheard stared at Don Darrel in amazement.

"Why didn't you come and tell me you could do things with a ball like this?" Heywood asked. "You chump! I'd have put you in the first eleven, as I mean to do now, and we would not have started off with losing to those airs-giving grammar-school kids!"

"You want me to turn out for you, then?" Don asked.

"Rather! First game next Saturday afternoon against the village team. They're mostly older than any of us, and rough and hefty, but we'll give them something to think about with you in the centre of our forward-line, Darrel! But I am saying too much. You'll get a swollen head."

"Shucks—not I!" Don laughed. "Though I know someone who will when I meet him!"

"Grierson, eh?" Philips grinned, after making sure Mr. Farmer had moved out of earshot.

"Sure!" Don agreed, his eyes smouldering angrily. "I allow no one to knock me down without finding out if I cannot return the compliment."

"For which I don't blame you," Philips said. "It was a dirty blow that took you right off your guard—a mean and contemptible action, though it just about fits that rotter. I hope you'll give him beans!"

"I guess I'll try," Don Darrel answered simply.

As, having dressed, the Boy with Fifty Millions returned to the school, he found that the news of Ned Heywood having decided to play him as centre-forward in the first eleven in place of Grierson on the following Saturday had preceded him.

There is nothing like brilliance in footer to make a lad popular at a public-school, and Don found fellows whom he hardly knew congratulating him and shaking hands.

Of Grierson he could find no trace, and concluded that the bully was keeping out of the way.

In this he was correct. The lads who had turned out for the football match had been excused prep, and, just before Don had turned in at the great iron gates of the quad, Grierson had slipped from where he had been conversing with Phelps in the Fifth-Form class-room, and hurried away out of sight behind the school stable buildings.

It must not be thought, however, that he remained on this account in ignorance of the captain's decision regarding Don. Phelps, Grierson's one-time toady, had been one of the first to hear that Heywood was playing Don in the team on the following Saturday. Encountering Grierson, he acquainted him with the fact, and watched his obvious rage in secret delight and amusement.

As Grierson went off and concealed himself from Don Darrel, he was hard hit.

Although day after day other lads at the school might plainly show they were under no illusions as to his lack of charms, the bully thought an immense amount of himself, and his pride was bitterly wounded.

"If I cared to exert myself in their silly team, I could play as Darrel never will play, no matter how long he tries!" Grierson muttered, his face livid, and his teeth gritting in his rage.

He clenched his hands in sudden fury.

"Get me turned down, will he?" he snarled. "We'll see! He'll not play in the match next Saturday, if I know anything about it. I'll do what that newspaper Johnny, Cairns, suggested—yes, I'll not hesitate now! It will teach the uppish little rotter a lesson!"

The bully snatched a pencil from his pocket, then rummaged in others until he found a piece of paper. Lowering himself upon an upturned bucket, which stood near the stable door, he began slowly and thoughtfully to write.

Half an hour later Don Darrel was handed a sealed and tightly-folded note.

"Hallo! Say, who's this from?" he asked of the diminutive Third-

Former, who had been the messenger. Evidently-obeying instructions, however, the youngster had turned and hurried away, taking no notice of the query. And Don opened the missive.

"The time has arrived"—he read—"when you and I have got to decide definitely which of us is the better. I do not want to fight you in the dormitory. If you licked me, I should be laughed at and chipped afterwards, and I couldn't stand that. But I will fight you any time we can meet alone, and suggest that you slip away to the old mill across the fields as soon as you have read this message."

You beat me by a fluke before, and if you don't come, I shall know what to think you—a coward!

Yours, G."

Don Darrel whistled in amazement. "Gee! This is cool, my dear Grierson," he muttered. "Anyway, I reckon you've more pluck than I thought, and I'll oblige you right enough!"

The young millionaire had been returning from a visit to the porter's lodge, where he had been discussing with the worthy Briggs the obtaining of the necessary "tuck" for yet another dormitory feast on the following night.

The quad was practically deserted. As Don looked about him he felt sure no one had seen him receive the note, and that no one would notice him go to keep the appointment.

He looked at the handsome wrist-watch he wore—a present from his trustee and guardian, Mr. Ponsoby. There was a good hour and half before the bell would sound for the light supper that was allowed after prep.

"If we can't settle our difference in that time, we'll be almighty slow," Don murmured, as he swung on his heels.

Little thinking that he was being decoyed into a carefully-planned trap, he walked swiftly to the gates and slipped through them into the road.

Grierson Realises the Truth!

An hour ago, the short winter's afternoon had waned, and the moon was rising as the Boy with Fifty Millions crossed a field some quarter of a mile from the school, and came in sight of the mill Grierson had referred to in his note.

With the moonlight behind it, throwing its towering shape into silhouette, the structure with its partially-ruined sails looked grim and ghostly.

The mill had ceased to be occupied and worked long since, and was falling into decay. The great wheel that stood half submerged in the dark waters of the stream by its side was clogged with weeds and green with slime.

Don Darrel looked about for Grierson when he neared the rendezvous, and, after the bully's message, was not a little surprised at finding no signs of him in evidence.

"Where is he, I wonder?" Don murmured. "I guess he'll turn up in a moment or two. Gee! It's not a pleasant place even to scrap in, and gives one the creeps! Grierson!" he called, raising his voice. "Hallo, hallo!"

"Oh, shucks, I guess I'll not play a lone hand here much longer!" Don exclaimed, as no answering hail reached him in spite of repeated shouts. "I'll make him sorry for himself in the dormitory to-night, whether he likes it or otherwise, if he doesn't soon show up!"

He approached nearer the base of the windmill, and again called to his challenger. Around the foot of the windmill itself and its adjoining ruins there were endless shadows, whilst beyond it was a stretch of desolate-looking woodland, so that there was plenty of cover in which Grierson, perhaps funking the encounter at the last moment, might be lurking.

"Grierson, you silly guy!" Don cried. "Grier—"

From round the curved wall of the windmill a dark figure suddenly hurled itself at the young millionaire. At once Don saw that it did not

belong to Grierson, and with the instinct of self-preservation, he flung up his hands, but, he had been taken unawares, and before he could hope to do much in the way of protecting himself, the attacker was upon him.

Don Darrel had just time to see that his enemy had the yellow skin and slit-like eyes of a Chinaman before other hands gripped him from behind and a quick trip hurled him at full length upon the grass.

Even then he struggled like a madman to fling off his two antagonists and regain his feet; for instinctively he felt that the men were of the gang that had thrice previously attempted his life, and that matters for him were desperate.

But, strong lad though he was, what could he hope to do against two unscrupulous and powerful men? For, even though the Chinaman was slenderly built, he was wirily muscular, and his yellow fingers were fastened about Don's throat like a vice.

The Boy with Fifty Millions felt his arms being forced behind his back, then the touch of cords upon his wrists. They were suddenly dragged tight and knotted, and, with his throat too dry and bruised as yet to make any serious outcry, he was left for a moment upon the grass, whilst his assailants rose to their feet and stood over him.

"Well, the kid didn't prove a wash-out after all, Li Fang. He got him here for us all right!"

It was the white man of the two who spoke—he was Carson—and the words sent a thrill of horrified surprise through the breast of Don Darrel.

So Grierson had deliberately sold him—tricked him into coming here and walking into the very arms of his enemies, he realised.

Yes, it must mean that! Yet how could the bully have been so dastardly? Don felt he did not want to believe such villainy even of Grierson, but there seemed no other explanation of the triumphant words.

Li Fang fell upon his knees beside the young millionaire, and, avoiding a desperate kick Don aimed at him, the Chinaman passed a further length or cord about the boy's legs, drew his ankles together, and secured them as tightly as his hands.

Carson stooped and picked Don bodily up in his arms. He carried him into the ruined mill and flung him down in one of the small chambers on the ground floor, which had probably been used in the past as an office or store-room.

It was quite bare of furniture now, and, as Carson entered with the lad, and flung him unceremoniously upon the rotting floor-boards, several rats scampered away to their holes.

"The others will be here soon, and the captain will decide what to do with him," Carson said to Li Fang, who stood in the doorway.

"Bettel gag him!" the hisping tones of the Celestial suggested. But Carson gave a grunt of dissent.

"No need," he answered. "No one is likely to come here, and Captain Raymond will be along with the car almost at any moment. We'll slip this new bolt we put on the door, and leave him to interview the rats until we're ready to take him away."

Don Darrel shuddered as the two men withdrew. The door slammed, and he heard the sound of the bolt Carson had referred to being driven home.

The Boy with Fifty Millions was plucky enough, but a feeling of despair seized him now. By the sheerest luck he had escaped when these desperadoes, who were evidently working in the interests of Randolph Gurney, had captured him before; but he could hardly hope to do so again.

They would show him no mercy. Of that he was sure enough. Their aim was to sweep him from the path of Gurney that he might inherit his vast fortune, and he—Don Darrel—probably had less than an hour to live.

With a burning rage seizing him, Don wrenched at his bonds; but they held fast, and only seemed to grow tighter and to cut more deeply and agonisingly into his flesh as he strained at them.

Breathing hard, he desisted in his efforts, and lay looking about him. There was a small, barred window some six feet from the ground, and through this the moonlight streamed into his prison.

As he lay staring towards it the light was suddenly blotted out by a human head and shoulders, and next moment Don heard Grierson's sneering laugh.

"I felt I must come along and make sure they'd got you, you cad!" the bully jeered. "You'll not give

yourself airs on the footer ground again for a fortnight or three weeks, at least!"

"I hope you are satisfied, Grierson," Don answered, very quietly. "though I guess I don't know what you mean. I reckon I shall never play footer or any other sort of game again!"

"Why?" the bully demanded, in a surprised voice. "They'll only keep you about a couple of weeks to work up excitement, and—"

"They mean to kill me—silently, quickly, so that it looks like an accident, and an enemy of mine can inherit my money, you idiot!" Don cried. "You have as good as murdered me, Grierson, and—"

"What?" Grierson gave a gasp of horror, and evidently stumbled off whatever he was standing upon to reach the window, for his grinning face abruptly disappeared.

As a matter of fact, he was not grinning after he heard Don Darrel's words. He had gone grey to the lips, and his eyes were scared.

In a moment he was back again on the other side of the bars.

"You're trying to frighten me, you—you rotter!" he faltered huskily. "The chap who has got you is a newspaper reporter after a 'scoop' for his rag, that's all! He told me he meant to kidnap you, and keep you hidden until excitement was worked up to fever-heat. Then his paper would run down the police and their methods, pretend to organise a great search for you, and in the end find you, and take the credit and the advertisement."

"You have been tricked—fooled!" Don cried desperately. "I tell you these scoundrels mean to murder me! I doubt if I shall be alive half an hour from this moment!"

"Oh, good gracious!" Grierson groaned, having to believe him as he heard Don's earnest words. "Darrel, I—I had no idea of this! Oh, what can I do—what can I do?"

He began to tear madly at the iron bars before the window, but he might as well have attempted to break into a convict prison. They did not give the fraction of an inch.

Grierson fell back with an articulate moan of terror and remorse.

"There's only one hope!" Don Darrel said quickly, as the bully's face reappeared. "Rush for all your worth to the school, if you really have been tricked into this, and want to save my life. Tell Chapin, my servant, what has happened, and he'll help you. He'll come to me like the wind on his horse!"

"I'll go—go now!" Grierson said shakily. "Oh, how I hope I'll be in time! I—"

"Wait!" Don rapped sternly. "If you've a pocket-knife open it and toss it to me! If I can get my hands free I'll have a chance to fight for my life, if it comes to it!"

"I have—I have!" Grierson declared eagerly, now almost insane with fear and horror at what he had done. "Hist! There's someone talking just round the other side of the wall!" he added, in a hoarse whisper. "Look out!"

The pocket-knife the bully had produced and opened fell by Don Darrel's side, and Grierson's head again vanished, this time for good.

Knowing that seconds might count if he was to gain a chance of fighting for life and freedom, Don Darrel rolled over quickly upon the knife, and fumbled for it with his hands.

His fingers touched and gripped upon its handle, and, crooking his hand, he began frantically to saw at the cords about his wrists. As he presently strained at them they parted with a snap, and his hands were free. But, scarcely had he struggled to a sitting posture and unknotted the cords lashing together his ankles than he heard the sounds of a car pulling up in a rough roadway at no great distance from the mill, whilst, simultaneously, footsteps approached the door of his prison.

The bolt was drawn and the door opened, and just for a fleeting second Don Darrel found himself looking into the astonished face of Li Fang, the Chinaman, as he stood framed on the threshold. Then, with a bound, Don was at the man, and had driven both his clenched fists into the evil, yellow face.

Down on to his back thudded the Chinese. Don leapt over him, and made a rush for the main door of the mill, which he checked as he found several men entering.

Startled cries broke from them, and, quick as a flash, the Boy with Fifty Millions wheeled round and ran in the opposite direction.

(Don't miss next Monday's long instalment of this brilliant story in the Boys' Friend.)

A LONG, COMPLETE TALE OF THE CHUMS OF CEDAR CREEK SCHOOL!

THE CEDAR CREEK PANTOMIME

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



The 1st Chapter.

Preparing for the Panto!

"Where do I come in?" Chunky Todgers asked that question.

It was not immediately answered. Frank Richards & Co. were busy.

There were nine or ten Cedar Creek fellows in the dining-room at the Lawless Ranch, and most of them were busy, and all of them were talking.

It was Frank Richards' idea—in which he was loyally backed by his chums, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc.

The performance was to be given in the big school-room at Cedar Creek—

The snow that covered hill and valley, creek and timber, was not likely to keep away the audience.

Frank Richards & Co. were busy with the costumes now. Frank had assigned all the parts, and had coached the panto performers—the preparations had been going on ever since Frank's return from his trip in the north-west.

"BOXING NIGHT!!!"

GRAND PERFORMANCE OF THE WONDERFUL PANTOMIME "THE THREE BEARS!!!" BY THE CEDAR CREEK THESPIAN SOCIETY.

In the School-Room at Cedar Creek.

6 p.m. sharp.

Admission 50 cents."

That notice was read by nearly all the inhabitants of Thompson, and nearly all had decided to pay their fifty cents and come.

Frank Richards had written the "book" of the panto. That was quite in his line, for was he not already an author?

The skin of a gigantic grizzly, shot by Mr. Lawless long ago, was for the Great Huge Bear, and two smaller skins were available for the Middle-Sized Bear and the Little Wee Bear.

The room at the Lawless Ranch was in a buzz of voices; and costumes, and materials for costumes, covered the long pinewood table and most of the floor.

Bob Lawless was trying on the grizzly skin; and Frank Richards the Little Wee Bear—which was the most desirable part of the three, really, as the skin required less padding for the Little Wee Bear.

Vere Beauclerc was going to be Prince Charming—a part for which his good looks fitted him.

Chunky Todgers was looking on. Somehow or other—it was inexplicable to Chunky—no part had been

assigned to him. Chunky had mentioned that fact several times, without obtaining any satisfaction; and now he mentioned it again, emphatically.

It was really Chunky's own fault. He had cheerfully laid claim to the part of Prince Charming, and announced that if it wasn't given him, the Thespians needn't expect any support from him.

"Where do I come in?" "You don't come in at all, old chap," answered Frank, without looking up from his needle and thread.

Chunky Todgers snorted.

Bob slackened down, and grinned at the Hillcrest trio.

"Coming to the panto?" he asked. "Six, sharp, and fifty cents admission. All are welcome—if they pay at the doors."

"My dear chap, if you're acting, I guess I'd rather pay a whole dollar to stay away," answered Dicky Bird.

"Of course, you'll be expected to wash your faces if you come," went on Bob Lawless. "We're rather more particular at Cedar Creek than you are at Hillcrest."

"Why, you cheeky jay—" began Blumpy.

"You're really going to spring a pantomime on the folks?" asked Dicky Bird, looking up curiously at the occupants of the buggy.

"Haven't you seen the notice in Gunten's Store?" asked Frank

easy expectation of snowballs as he sighted them.

"No larks, you fellows!" he said. "Don't you play any tricks!"

"Tricks!" repeated Dicky Bird, in mild surprise, as he stooped for a handful of snow. "What tricks?"

"Look here, you beast—" "Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Chunky Todgers, as the snowballs rained on him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Cedar Creek pantomime exasperated the Hillcrest fellows a little.

Then up the trail from the direction of the ranch came Tom Lawrence, and Dawson, and Hopkins, and half a dozen other Cedar Creek fellows.

"Hillcrest rotters!" shouted Tom Lawrence. "Give 'em socks!" "Look out!" gasped Dicky Bird.

The Hillcrest trio spun round, to stand on their defence, and there was a collision in the trail.

"Pelt them!" roared Lawrence. "Oh crumbs!" "Groooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Cedar Creek crowd gathered



THE GREAT HUGE BEAR RUNS AMOK! Dicky Bird, in the huge bear's skin, went about his business of breaking up the Cedar Creek pantomime in a very business-like manner. The Thespians were astounded, but the audience shrieked encouragement to the intruder.

"I'm going to wash my hands of the whole affair," he said loftily. "It's bound to be a failure, I guess. I'm going—"

"There's pie for dinner!" said Bob Lawless.

Chunky Todgers paused in the doorway.

"Oh!" he said thoughtfully.

And Chunky's departure was postponed. He was not going to bewitch the Cedar Creek audience with his remarkable histrionic powers; but there was solace in the pie.

The 2nd Chapter.

Dicky Bird is Not Pleased!

"Hallo!" "Hallo, Dicky!"

Three youths on snowshoes came to a stop on the trail through the timber. The Lawless Ranch buggy, driven by Bob Lawless, was progressing along the trail in the direction of Cedar Creek.

Dicky Bird, Blumpy, and Fisher, of Hillcrest School, stopped as they saw it, and hailed the occupants.

Bob was driving, and Frank Richards sat beside him. Vere Beauclerc and Molly Lawrence and Kate Dawson were in the buggy, with bundles galore of "props" that were to be used in the Cedar Creek pantomime.

Richards, with a smile. "And there's a whole column advertisement in the 'Thompson Press,' too."

"I guess I've seen it. And you've really got the neck?" said Dicky Bird. "You should have asked us for help. Even a panto is improved by a little good acting."

"That's why we didn't ask your help, old scout."

Bob Lawless cracked his whip, and the buggy ran on. Dicky Bird & Co. raised their caps very politely to Molly and Kate. It was the presence of the Cedar Creek girls that saved the buggy from a volley of snowballs.

"We're done this time," remarked Fisher, as the buggy disappeared towards the backwoods school by the creek. "You ought to have thought of getting up a panto, Dicky."

"Does Dicky ever think of anything?" remarked Blumpy, in a decidedly disparaging tone.

Dicky Bird grunted.

He was feeling a little annoyed. In the rivalry between the two schools in the backwoods, Frank Richards & Co. had certainly come out ahead this time.

"Hallo; here's Fat Jack of the Bonehouse," observed Fisher, as Chunky Todgers came along the trail. Chunky blinked rather suspiciously at the Hillcresters. He had an un-

round, and hailed snowballs on the hapless three as they struggled in the drift.

Then they sped on after the buggy, laughing merrily, leaving Dicky Bird & Co. to sort themselves out.

Snowy and rumped and breathless, the chums of Hillcrest crawled out of the snowdrift.

"Oh dear!" gasped Blumpy.

"Oh crumbs!"

"The cheeky rotters!" gasped Dicky Bird. "They—they took us by surprise—"

"Somebody's always catching you napping!" snorted Fisher.

"Br-r-r-r! Nice state we're in, and those Cedar Creek jays chortling at us!" howled Fisher. "You're no good, Dicky!"

"If you want your nose punched, Fisher—"

"Yah!" retorted Fisher. He jerked off a dislocated snowshoe, and tramped away. His temper appeared ruffled.

"Silly ass!" said Dicky Bird. "You see, Blumpy—"

"Rot!" said Blumpy. "You're no good, Dicky! You let Cedar Creek beat you all along the line. Yah!"

And he followed Fisher. "My hat!" murmured Dicky Bird. He followed his chums, with a very ruffled countenance. Dicky Bird's prestige was at a low ebb just then.

"Look here, you fellows—" he said, as they came out into the Thompson trail.

"Br-r-r-r!" said Fisher.

"I've been thinking—" "You couldn't! Dry up, old scout!"

"About their pesky pantomime that—"

"Bother their pantomime, and bother you!" said Fisher morosely. "They score all along the line, and we're no good! You're no good! Rats!"

"Listen to me, you jay!" said Dicky Bird impatiently. "Don't you tramp off to Thompson. We're not going home."

"Why not, ass?"

"We're going to Cedar Creek!"

"I guess I'm not going for their pesky panto!" roared Fisher. "They can bring it off without my paying to see them do it."

"Fathead! I've got an idea—"

"Take it away and bury it!"

"It's no end of a stunt—"

"There's no end of your chinwag, you mean! Cheese it!"

Evidently there was something like mutiny in the Hillcrest camp. But Dicky Bird did not "cheese it." He persisted in explaining the remarkable "stunt" which had dawned into his fertile brain.

Fisher and Blumpy interrupted him from time to time with scornful snorts and sniffs. But they listened.

Finally, an appreciative grin dawned upon their faces.

"Might be something in it!" admitted Blumpy, when Master Richard Bird had finished.

"Lots in it, tons in it!" said Dicky Bird loftily. "Now, you fellows, come along to Cedar Creek—"

"If they spot us—"

"We're not going to let them spot us. Besides, they're too jolly busy with their pesky panto to think of us. Come on!"

And the Hillcrest trio changed their direction, and headed for the backwoods school.

The 3rd Chapter. The Pantomime!

Lights glimmered from the windows of the lumber schoolhouse at Cedar Creek.

The early dusk of the Canadian winter was falling. Deep shadows lay over the snow that covered the playground of the backwoods school. But inside the schoolhouse all was light and activity.

Frank Richards & Co. were very busy.

The plank stage had been fixed up, and trestle seats made to accommodate a numerous audience. Additional lamps had been hung up, as well as a row to serve as footlights. The stage was adorned with a festoon of coloured Chinese lanterns, bought by the dozen at Gunten's store in Thompson.

There was holly on the walls of the schoolhouse, and the whole effect was, as Bob Lawless declared, O.K.

Behind the stage, screened off by "scenes," was the ladies' dressing-room, where Molly Lawrence was already transforming herself into Princess Silverhair. Kate Dawson and Clara Hopkins were also there, and Miss Meadows, the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek, was kindly lending a helping hand.

The little door at the end of the lumber schoolhouse gave access to the gentlemen's dressing-room, which was more crowded. A covered way led to a shed, and that shed was the dressing-room. It was rather cold and a little draughty, and the oil-lamp that illuminated it smoked a little. But

Advertisement for 'THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY 1921 ANNUAL 1921 FOR BOYS AND GIRLS' with an illustration of children and the text 'Now On Sale'.



(Continued from the previous page.)

these were only minor discomforts, disregarded by the enthusiastic Thespians.

Vere Beauclerc was already complete as Prince Charming, and he was chatting behind the scenes on the stage with Dick Dawson, who was a halberdier. Harold Hopkins was a dumb page, but he was chatting, too. He had to be dumb when he went on. Frank Richards had not felt disposed to decline the Cockney school-boy's services. But 'Arold's weird accent would have been quite out of place on the histrionic boards, so Frank had had the brilliant idea of making him a dumb page. Having written the panto himself, Frank was able to extend it here or lop it there, to fit the characters, costumes, and scenery, which was a great advantage.

Frank Richards came along the passage, and joined the schoolboys behind the scenes. He was in his garb of the Little Wee Bear, only his face being visible through the open jaws of the bear's head. Frank's good-looking face peering out from the bear's fur had a curious effect, and he was greeted with a chuckle.

"You'll 'ave to shut up that 'ead before you go hon!" remarked Hopkins, and there was another chuckle. Hopkins' liberties with the aspirate always tickled the Canadian schoolboys.

"That's all right," said Frank, with a smile. "It shuts when I want it. But the bears don't come on in the first scene. Where's the Wicked Old King?"

"Here!" said Bunker H. Honk, who was in all the glory of a gorgeous robe, studded with precious stones—not genuine—and a gilt-paper crown. "I guess I'm ready to mosey on, Richards!"

"For goodness' sake don't guess when you're in front!" said Frank Richards uneasily. "It will spoil the effect. Kings don't guess."

"I guess I know my lines all O.K.," answered Bunker H. Honk confidently. "You leave it to this infant!"

"You and Beau and Princess Silverhair are wanted in the first scene, with the halberdiers. Where are the halberdiers?"

"Here you are!"

"And the giddy Dumb Page—"

"Ere!" said Hopkins.

"Mind you don't speak! You're only to hold up the Princess' train when she sweeps off the stage—"

"Orlright!" said Hopkins. "But couldn't I say just a word? S'pose I jest said 'Ere you are!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or 'Old my 'aud, madam!" suggested Hopkins.

"Not a word!" said Frank severely. "You're a Dumb Page, you ass! It's a—a quite romantic character. If you fellows crack on your lines I'll scalp you! Where's the Princess?"

The Middle Bear came in from the passage from the dressing-room, and he looked quite an alarming object. Big glass eyes glittered from the bear's head. But Tom Lawrence looked out from an opening left in the muzzle.

"I expect the Princess will keep you waiting," chuckled the Middle-Sized Bear. "She always keeps me waiting starting for school!"

"Stuff!" said a sweet voice, and Molly Lawrence came out of the dressing-room, smiling and charming as the Princess.

"Ripping!" said Frank Richards heartily. "Now buzz on! The audience are coming in, and it will soon be time for the curtain to go up!"

front seat, with a crowd of the Lawless cattlemen, and their stentorian voices could be heard all over the building.

Frank Richards peeped through a slit in the curtain, and nodded his head with satisfaction.

"Nearly full already. Here come the Smileys!"

"Good!"

"Mr. Peckover's come, and Mr. Penrose. Penrose will put a good report of this in the 'Thompson Press' next week. You fellows, remember there's a representative of the Press present," said Frank, laughing. "Now, then, all ready?" he asked.

"Yes, old scout!"

"Ring up the curtain!"

Frank returned behind the wings, and the curtain was rung up, and disclosed to the enraptured gaze of a crowded audience the first scene in the Cedar Creek pantomime.

The 4th Chapter.

Dicky Bird Takes a Hand!

Bob Lawless was busy. The grizzly bear's skin was about six sizes too large for the rancher's son, and the difference had to be made up with padding.

Bob had plenty of time to finish his preparations in the shed—or, rather, dressing-room—before he was wanted on the stage. He could hear the voices of the players as the first scene progressed, and the applause of the audience. Prince Charming and Princess Silverhair were making a good impression on the audience, whatever the Wicked King and the Wicked Prince were doing.

Bob Lawless was so busy that he did not observe three faces that looked in at the window of the shed. He had no eyes for the window.

He would have been interested, however, if he had seen the grinning features of Dicky Bird, Fisher, and Blumpy, of Hillcrest.

Through the window they watched Bob Lawless at work, and noted, too, that he was the sole occupant of the dressing-room.

"What scrumptious luck!" whispered Dicky Bird. "Couldn't be better!"

"Any of the jays may come in any minute!" muttered Fisher.

"We've got to risk that," answered Dicky. "Anyhow, they're busy. The play's started."

"That's so."

"Strike the iron while it's hot!" said Dicky Bird. "He won't be able to put up much trouble with all that rubbish on him. Come on!"

Dick stole round quietly to the door of the shed and opened it.

The three Hillcresters ran in.

Bob, who was struggling with the big bearskin, stopped to stare at them.

"Hallo, you jays!" he ejaculated. "This isn't the door for the audience. You go round to the big door at the other end. Why—what—Oh crumbs!"

Fisher and Blumpy rushed on him, and in a moment the Great Huge Bear was on the floor, with the two kneeling on him.

Dicky Bird had dashed at once to the other door of the shed, which opened on the passage leading into the schoolhouse.

He closed that door quietly and quickly.

Then he stooped and jammed a wedge of wood under it. The door could not open from the other side now. The three adventurers from Hillcrest were safe from interruption, for a moment at least.

Then Dicky Bird ran to help his comrades.

Bob Lawless was struggling furiously, but, cumbered by the bearskin, his struggles were not of much avail. He had opened his mouth to yell, but Blumpy had a hand over his mouth with a grasp like iron.

"Keep him quiet!" panted Dicky Bird.

"I'm keeping him!" chuckled Blumpy.

"Grooooooh!" came in muffled tones from Bob Lawless.

Dicky Bird knelt over him, and coolly and methodically rammed a

handkerchief into his mouth, and tied it safely with a length of twine. Bob Lawless glared up at him in helpless and silent wrath.

As yet he could not guess the object of the raiders, but he did not need telling that they meant mischief.

"Off with that bearskin," breathed Dicky Bird, "sharp! There isn't a second to lose!"

The costume of the Great Huge Bear was jerked off Bob Lawless. As soon as he was freed from it he began to struggle fiercely. But he was powerless in three pairs of hands, and in less than a minute his wrists were tied together behind his back.

"Get him away!" snapped Dicky Bird.

Bob Lawless' eyes spoke volumes, though unfortunately his tongue could say nothing.

Fisher and Blumpy hurried him out of the shed into the darkness, but before he was gone, Dicky Bird was getting to work—slipping into the big bearskin that Bob had been deprived of.

Then Bob Lawless understood, but he was powerless to interfere. With his hands tied behind him, and Blumpy and Fisher gripping either arm, he was hurried away.

Dicky Bird gave a breathless chuckle.

Luck had befriended him at last. For a couple of hours the Hillcrest chums had lurked about the building, watching for a chance, and it had come more completely than they had dared to hope.

With almost feverish haste, Dicky enveloped himself in the bearskin, and closed down the mighty jaws over his face.

He could see now through a slit in the great red muzzle armed with terrible-looking teeth. But he could not have been recognised by any of the Thespians.

With hurried hands he stuffed in the padding. There was a footstep in the passage, and Dicky jumped to remove the wedge he had put under the door. It was not needed now.

Frank Richards came in unsuspectingly.

"Nearly ready, Bob?"

"I guess so," came in muffled tones from the head of the Great Huge Bear.

Frank glanced at him.

"Your voice sounds a bit muffled, old chap," he said. "Perhaps you've got the head closed a bit too tight. Voice must be clear. What the thunder have you got the outside door open for? Cold enough, I should think."

Frank Richards closed the outer door, little dreaming that his chum had been walked through it a few minutes before by a couple of Hillcrest fellows.

"Well, if you're ready, come on. The first scene's nearly over, and it's going as strong as anything. Audience no end delighted. Come on, old scout!"

Dicky Bird grinned inside the bear's head, and followed Frank Richards along the passage to the stage.

The 5th Chapter.

Unrehearsed!

The curtain rose upon the second scene in the Cedar Creek pantomime. It disclosed the den of the Three Bears, in which the Princess Silverhair was to take refuge. The Three Bears were seated round a little table, upon which stood the porridge-dishes containing their breakfast.

There was a general chortle from the audience at the sight. Bears in the Thompson Valley did not sit up to porridge for breakfast. According to the "book" of the panto-

mime, the Three Bears were to go out hunting after breakfast, and then Little Silverhair was to appear.

But there was destined to be an unrehearsed development in that scene. Not for an instant did it occur to Frank Richards that the skin of the Great Huge Bear concealed anyone but Bob Lawless, and when the Great Huge Bear departed from the programme, Frank wondered whether Bob had taken leave of his senses.

The Three Bears rose from the table, and the Great Huge Bear picked up his porringer, and with a sudden movement, jammed it down on the head of the Little Wee Bear. There was a howl of astonishment from Frank Richards.

"Bob, you ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted the audience.

The Great Huge Bear seized the end of the table and up-ended it, sending it crashing across the stage. The Middle Bear dodged it just in time.

"You jay, Bob!" shrieked Tom Lawrence.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The audience took this for part of the performance, and they shouted approval. Frank caught hold of the Big Bear's shoulder.

"Bob! Are you potty?" he shouted. "Get off the stage—quick! Yarooooop!"

Frank broke off as one of the Great Huge Bear's paws smote him, and he landed on his back.

Tom Lawrence seized the Great Huge Bear, in utter consternation, to drag him into the wings. The Big Bear closed with him, and the astounded audience were treated to the view of a wild and whirling bear-fight on the stage.

The Great Huge Bear was victorious. The Middle Bear was bundled through the footlights, and rolled among the audience, gasping.

Frank Richards sat up, dazed and gasping. He could only suppose that Bob Lawless had gone suddenly insane.

"Bob!" he spluttered.

He squirmed out of the way as the Great Huge Bear charged at him. The huge paws were laid on him, and Frank was sent whirling after Lawrence. Yells of merriment from the audience greeted him as he rolled down.

The wings were crowded with the Thespians, now, staring at the scene on the stage in wonder and alarm.

They backed and scattered as the Great Huge Bear turned and charged at them.

"He's mad," gasped Dawson—"mad as a hatter!"

"Bob!" called out Beauclerc anxiously. "Don't play the goat!"

"Don't play the goat!" shouted a dozen voices in the audience, echoing Beau's words. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank staggered to his feet, treading on the toes of Mr. Penrose as he did so.

"Put the curtain down!" he gasped.

Two Cedar Creek fellows were in charge of the curtain. They lowered it hurriedly.

But as it came within the reach of the Great Huge Bear, he seized it and dragged it with terrific vim, and the curtain came down bodily.

It enveloped Frank Richards and Lawrence as it fell, as well as the two fellows who were handling it.

The audience shrieked.

The Great Huge Bear, exhilarated by his success with the curtain, turned and charged at the "scenes," and sent them all whirling. The remainder of the company were exposed to the view of the audience as the scenes went down. The stage by that time looked a good deal as if a cyclone had struck it.

The audience were all on their feet, staring breathlessly. It was evident that something was wrong now, and that these proceedings could not possibly have been part of the programme.

Frank Richards struggled out of the rumpled curtains.

"Get him off!" he shouted.

He sprang on the stage and rushed at the Great Huge Bear. They closed in combat.

"Go it!" roared the audience.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bob, you potty idiot, come off!" gasped Frank. "You're ruining everything, you—you—you— Help me, you fellows!"

Prince Charming and the Middle Bear rushed to his aid, as well as the Dumb Page and the Wicked King, and the Wicked Prince and several other members of the company.

The Great Huge Bear put up a terrific fight.

To judge by the roars of laughter that rang through the backwoods school, the audience were just as well

pleased with this remarkable entertainment as with the pantomime. They roared and shrieked and yelled.

Round and round and over, and over the combatants swayed and rolled, and the grizzly skin suffered very considerably in the struggle. Prince Charming had hold of the head, and it suddenly came off. And then, as a flushed face was revealed, the mystery was explained.

"Dicky Bird!" yelled Frank Richards.

"Dicky Bird! Where's Bob, then?" gasped Beauclerc.

"Squash him!"

The Cedar Creek Thespians fairly piled on Dicky Bird. The Great Huge Bear was dragged bodily off the stage, through and over the crumpled scenes, and down the passage into the dressing-room.

"Let up!" gasped Dicky Bird. "Only a stunt, you know—just helping you with your panto—"

"Where's Bob?" shrieked Frank Richards.

Dicky gasped.

"He's in the stables. Blumpy and Fisher are looking after him."

"Go and bring Bob in, some of you!" gasped Frank Richards. "The ass, to let these rotters— Jump on that brute! Bump him! Rag him! Squash him!"

"Yarooooh!"

The bearskin was stripped from Dicky Bird. He was bumped and shaken and smacked with great vigour, and finally a dozen boots assisted him into the outer darkness. He collapsed in the snow, gasping, and wondering dizzily whether he was still all in one piece.

Three Hillcrest youths fled into the night a few minutes later, chuckling—though Dicky Bird's chuckles were breathless and spasmodic. Bob Lawless had been found in the stables and released, and Fisher and Blumpy promptly fled. In the Cedar Creek dressing-room, as on the Tiber banks of old, there was "tumult and affright." The audience were roaring with laughter, and their roars could be plainly heard. But the Cedar Creek Thespians were not laughing.

"It's all mucked up!" gasped Frank Richards. "The curtain's down, the scenes are all knocked over. You can't wear that dashed bearskin in this state! Oh, my hat! What's going to become of the panto?"

"I'm going after that villain Bird!" spluttered Bob Lawless. "Where is he? I'm going to scalp him! I'm going to—"

"Never mind him now, ass! What about the audience? What about the panto?" groaned Frank Richards.

"We must go on—can't effect it in the second scene," said Beauclerc. "We—we must manage somehow!"

"Good Lord!" groaned Frank.

They did manage somehow.

Much credit was due to the members of the Cedar Creek Thespian Society for the way in which they "carried on." After Dicky Bird's miniature tornado, it required a lot of hard work and time to right the stage. Scenes had to be re-erected, and most of the players had to spend much time in the dressing-rooms attending to their costumes, which had suffered badly in the conflict.

Frank Richards went on the stage, and, in a little speech to the laughing audience, explained that there had been a "little hitch" in the programme, but that the performance would proceed in the course of half an hour or so.

Most of the audience had guessed at the real cause of the "hitch," and took the delay all in good part. Many rumours as to the identity of the intruder got about, foremost among these being that it was the return of Alf Carson and his band of rustlers who had swooped down on the Thompson Valley again, and had started at Cedar Creek School with the first of a series of daring raids on the peaceful ranchers.

Yells of laughter greeted the actors when they showed up on the stage again, and there was a ripple of laughter all through the remainder of that unfortunate pantomime. Not only the comic business, but all the other business was greeted with merriment.

How they ever got through the performance the performers hardly knew; but they did get through it—somehow. And when it was over, the audience were still chortling—and they were chortling as they departed—there was no doubt whatever that they had been entertained that evening.

So from that point of view, at least, success had attended the Cedar Creek Pantomime.

THE END.

(Make a point of reading "The Thousand-Dollar Prize!"—a grand yarn of Frank Richards & Co.—in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)

Billy Bunter

writes **FOUR**
PAGES OF FUN
For this week's "MAGNET"

in which he gives his own ideas on how a paper should be run. "Billy Bunter's Weekly" is a screamingly funny feature no one should miss. See TO-DAY'S issue of

The Magnet 1 1/2

The Famous School Story Paper.

HEALTH AND
EXERCISE.

Japanese Physical Training.

Let two chaps face each other, the attacker's thumbs on the throat and his fingers on the back of the neck. With this hold the defender, resisting, is pulled forward. This done, the defender forces himself upright and then backwards as far as he can comfortably bend. The feet are not to be moved.

The next is hard work, which is not to say the previous exercise isn't. The pupils face each other—if there's a great difference in their heights this exercise may be omitted—the attacker taking a grip from above the other's shoulders, over the collarbone. The finger-tips are behind the shoulder, the thumbs in front. Against the defender's resistance, the attacker tries to press him downwards, so that he is forced to sink on one knee. From this point, without any help from his hands, the defender must then try to shove himself back into the standing position, the other chap trying to keep him in his place.

Strength.

You'll have heard, perhaps, of Samson, the chap, I mean, who persuaded thousands of persons to come and see him snapping thick iron chains simply by the expansion of his chest and biceps muscles. Most of you will certainly have heard of Sandow, who was the most magnificently-developed man—as far as muscle goes—on the music-hall stage or off it, and some of you will call to mind his wonderful feats of strength. But it was his show of muscle that so astonished everybody. Thousands of chaps wanted to show as much.

Well, they made a mistake. But I'm not going to make the mistake of trying to persuade you that such muscle as Sandow had is necessary, or that to be strong you must have just such muscles, or of instructing you how such muscles may be forced.

Those enormous muscles don't mean health, they don't even mean strength in every case, and it is health and a reasonable degree of physical strength I want to help you all to get. You won't get them by working to produce a Sandowlike development. You're better without it.

Big muscles aren't of necessity strong muscles. A chap isn't strong just because he has a huge muscular development. Very often he's downright weak as a result of having it. He has used up his energy and vitality in creating those useless lumps of cast-iron muscle.

Big muscles may be made quickly, but they don't last. They haven't the enduring strength of a lesser but a naturally obtained development. What's the good of enormous biceps if the heart is too weak for a severe strain to be endured, or the lungs are so unhappy that a big effort produces breathlessness?

None at all.

Increasing Height.

With hands drawn up to armpits, and elbows turned wide out, expand and loosen the shoulders sideways. Stand sideways near a wall and so far away from it that the fingers when extended in line with the shoulder can just touch the wall. Now move from the wall an inch, and, still keeping upright, not moving the feet, thrust out the arm just a bit more so that the fingers touch the wall again. Then another inch away with the feet, and try again. Having given one side a turn, then similarly exercise the other side. You might not believe it, but two months' daily practice of this exercise will increase one's reach by a couple of inches.

Stand back flat to wall, arms extended sideways. Stretch out arms at level of shoulders, and then, by moving the shoulders, try to add a bit to the stretch. Continued practice thus will secure a slackening of the stiff wrist, elbow, and shoulder-joints.

With one foot well advanced from the other stoop, keeping back straight, and extend to floor the arm on same side as advanced leg, stretching for all you're worth. Then the same with other foot advanced.

These exercises help to increase height.

By Ross Harvey

(Do you want to keep fit? Then read "Health and Exercise" every week in the BOYS' FRIEND.)

THE ADVENTURES OF A TROOP OF BOY SCOUTS!

THE MISSING SCOUTMASTER!

BY
ROSS HARVEY

INTRODUCTION.

TED MARTIN, patrol-leader of the Otters, and his second in command, KITTO, with the patrol rescue a blind sailor named CAPTAIN BOWERS from a small island, where he is cut off by the tide. Mr. Hendron is rescued by the Otters from the hands of his unknown kidnappers, and a MR. QUAIPE, owner of White Gull Island, is strongly suspected. The latter turns out to be a maniac. Captain Bowers dies after giving information as to the hiding-place of some treasure on the island. The Otters wash their hands of the whole matter and return to camp to find a telegram to the effect that they cannot return to their school on account of an epidemic which has broken out there.

(Now broken on.)

Christmas Under Canvas!

"Well, this just about puts the tin-hat on things!" exclaimed Mr. Hendron in his laughing, free, and easy way. "It's all right for the rest of the masters and boys, but it is rather startling news for us. Let's see, Wilson, your home is the nearest of any of ours, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," grinned the tenderfoot. "But it's in Canada all the same!"

Mr. Hendron laughed outright at that, for what had been said was perfectly true. The scoutmaster himself came from South Africa, while Ted Martin and Jack Kitto hailed from quite close to him, and, as Wilson had said, he was a Canadian. The rest of the Otters were Anglo-Indians, their people all living out in India, so they hadn't a home between them to go to. Presently Ted's eyes sparkled with enthusiasm.

"Doesn't it look as if we shall have to stay here and spend Christmas in the camp, sir?"

"But Christmas under canvas—"

"Oh, we'll be able to make it cheery, sir," went on Ted eagerly. "Really, it isn't at all cold for the time of the year, and with good fires going—isn't it the only thing to be done, sir?"

Mr. Hendron looked very puzzled indeed.

In a way it did seem as if there were no alternative, for in these days it was going to be altogether too expensive an affair to put up at an hotel—especially for Mr. Hendron.

He had only a junior master's salary to keep things going on, and that didn't run to a Christmas at an hotel, or anything like it, for in the usual course of events he would have spent the entire vacation at the school.

The epidemic of scarlet-fever had prevented that, though, and it was making his return there now utterly impossible. Mr. Hendron knew he would not be allowed inside the place even if he turned up there, so he faced the patrol quietly.

"Yes, it's the only thing to be done," he exclaimed. "What holly we are going to hang up will have to be hung in our tents, and we shall have to cook our own Christmas dinner."

"Hooray!"

"Yes, cheer away," laughed Mr. Hendron. "We'll see what sort of a cheer you raise when the snow comes and our tents collapse on us. Anyway, boys, it's up to us to wangle a real cheery Christmas somehow, and you can get out what programmes you like."

The Otters greeted the news in the greatest of enthusiasm, and everybody began to get busy at once.

Tent pegs were drawn up and put down again in fresh places; sensible little trenches were deepened round the tents, and everything done that was possible to make the camp capable of withstanding a possible gale or a probable snowstorm.

Then preparations were commenced for Christmas itself, and Ted Martin hit upon a brilliant idea.

"We shall have to give some sort of an entertainment," he exclaimed, "and I vote for a variety show"

"Phew!"

"You mean each of us get up and give a turn of some sort?" exclaimed Mr. Hendron. "Yes, that is just the thing, and every turn is to be limited to ten minutes. It'll be heaps better than trying to act a play without costumes."

"That's what I thought, sir," answered Ted. "We needn't work out a programme of any sort, but each of us will have to get up and do something to amuse the rest."

"We needn't say what it is we're going to do, either," added Sprucer Kitto, with a chuckle. "Better let our turns come as surprises."

"What about rehearsals, though?"

"Can't have any," declared Kitto. "We should all get bored to death if we listened to each other before the night of the show. Anybody who wants to rehearse must go and hide himself in the sandhills and do it alone."

"Splendid!"

Mr. Hendron spoke with just as much enthusiasm as the others, and for the next few days there was a distinct air of mystery hanging over the Otters' camp.

Every now and then one of the scouts would saunter away as if he were going for an ordinary sort of stroll, then anyone who happened to be crossing the sandhills would stumble upon him doing the most extraordinary things.

Tenderfoot Wilson, for instance, wasted three valuable days trying to learn to juggle with five stones before he had mastered doing it with three, until he thought of something better, while Pearson had to give up his notion of singing "Where do Flies go in the Winter-time" simply because he couldn't stand his own row himself.

Still, preparations were going on apace, and with success, too, to judge from the eager faces of all concerned, and when Christmas was very close everybody was looking eagerly ahead to it.

The show was to take place on Christmas Eve, starting at seven in the evening, and the Otters had decided to have late dinner for, of course, the Robins had been invited, and a real, fine spread was to await them. Jack Kitto could be depended upon to attend to that, for he not only had the cook's badge up, but he had thoroughly earned it.

There was the usual last-minute rush on Christmas Eve to get everything shipshape and ready before the girl guides arrived on the scene, and there were one or two minor accidents, of course; but as the clock in the church tower not so far away struck seven, Ted Martin was able to report to Mr. Hendron:

"Everything ready, sir."

"Good!" came the crisp answer. "Ah! I can see our guests coming along the sands now, so you and Kitto had better go and meet them."

Ted and Jack darted away at once. With a cheery "hoi-oi-oick!"—the cry of the Otters—the two chums raced over the sandhills to meet their girl chums, the guides from Glenchurch.

A Merry Christmas!

"Oh, I say! How ripping!" Those were Betty Hanson's words as she and the rest of her patrol came in sight of the Otters' camp, and Ted and Jack chuckled.

"Not so bad, is it, Betty?"

"It's just splendid!" declared their girl chum in real enthusiasm. "I never thought you could make your camp look so nice!"

Truly the Otters' camp was a revelation. Four roaring wood-fires blazed away, each of them built in a position, which allowed the smoke to be carried by the wind away from the tents.

Behind the fires, as it were, some planks had been fixed up on home-

made trestles, and this excellent table was simply loaded with good things to eat. Right in the centre of it was a fine Christmas-cake, the inside almost black with the richness and the outside a mass of coloured sugar, but that was the only thing that had been bought. Everything else to be served up for this Christmas Eve was camp-made, and one had only to look at Jack Kitto's face to show that he had no misgivings on that score.

The cooking department had a clear conscience, for only one tray of scones had got burnt, and they had been smuggled away to the sea to feed the fish.

Christmas decorations had not been forgotten, either, for each of the tents was a mass of holly and evergreen, and so to the girls, coming upon it all suddenly, it was like some fairy scene.

Mr. Hendron came forward at once, cheery and as keen as the youngest present.

"A merry Christmas to everybody!" he sang out in his bovisish way. "Really, this ought to be the best Christmas any of us have had. That end tent has been prepared for you girls to leave your mufflers in, if you wish to."

Betty led the way to the tent pointed out to her, to find that it was lighted by nearly a dozen coloured candles, and that bunches of flowers smothered the place.

The Otters had seen to it that there were mirrors hanging to the pole—an idea suggested by Jack Kitto, who had two sisters across the sea in his South African home and there was actually warm water in the camp "wash-stands," in case it was wanted. In fact, the Otters had left very little undone that could be done to make their guests comfortable.

The Robins were not long in their tent, though, and when they came towards the table again, it was to find that Tenderfoot Wilson and young Pearson had fixed up a camera, and that Wilson had the lid of a biscuit-tin upon which there was a little pile of powdered magnesium.

"We are going to take a flashlight photograph of the table and all of you," the tenderfoot said in his keen way. "Please let us know when you are all ready."

The girls laughed, and Mr. Hendron and Ted Martin showed them to their correct places at that table, everything being arranged in the correct manner with a scout next to a guide; then Jack Kitto and his assistant hurriedly brought up the chief portion of the Christmas fare from the cooking department some little distance behind the camp.

The dishes and things had been borrowed from a friendly farmer close by, but the two turkeys, the geese, and the duck had all been cooked by Kitto, and cooked to a turn, too. Everyone knew that at a glance, but then they might have known it before, for Jack had served a fine apprenticeship at cooking when he had often had to prepare his own meals on the veldt.

The moment the first course was placed on the table, Mr. Hendron gave the word for the flashlight photograph to be taken, though he had his doubts about the success of the experiment.

Tenderfoot Wilson hadn't the faintest doubt though, and he struck a match excitedly and applied the light to the magnesium powder.

What should have happened was a blaze of brilliant white light, which would take the place of daylight for an instant—just long enough for the photograph to be taken. What actually took place, however, was nothing at all.

(Mind you read the concluding chapters of this grand scouting yarn in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)



The shot which is straight at the goalkeeper is easy for him; of course, and the low shot away from the custodian may see him dive and turn it round the post. But the rising ball, as I say, is particularly difficult to deal with effectively.

Shoot Hard.

The "shoot hard" principle applies to shots which have to be taken from a fair distance out, but there come to most forwards opportunities which are so easy that there is no necessity to shoot hard, and when it is ever so much safer to take deliberate aim. It is no part of the business of the forward who gets the ball close in to try to kill the goalkeeper.

Suppose a player is half a dozen yards or so from goal when the ball comes to him. Quite a gentle kick, with the ball well directed, will be quite good enough to beat the goalkeeper, and the advantage of the comparatively gentle kick arises from the fact that the ball is much more likely to find its desired haven than it is when the forward takes a wild lunge. I have seen many a goal scored by experienced players who have simply guided the ball into the net with the side of their boot. Propelling the ball in this way means that you are much more likely to take any spin from it, and with the side of the boot covering a greater area of the ball than the toe could possibly do, it is ever so much easier to guide the object just where you want it to go.

Deceive the Goalie.

As far as possible, too, I want you to get into the habit of deceiving the goalkeeper as to which part of the goal you intend to put the ball. These men between the sticks are often adepts at defining a forward's intentions, and if the goalkeeper gets the least inkling of where the forward intends to put the ball he will probably be on the spot to prevent it from going into the net. A glance at one side of the goal and a deft kick to the other side will often deceive the goalkeeper completely, and the ball will be in the net before he is able to get across to it.

People often wonder why, even in first-class football, so many penalty kicks are missed. On the average, something like one in three fails to produce a goal, and I am sure that many penalty kicks are saved by the goalkeepers because the men who take those kicks give away the secret of where they mean to put the ball. Bear in mind, then, that a goalkeeper deceived is generally a goalkeeper beaten.

Dodging the Offside Trap!

Later on I hope to give you some more hints on scoring goals, but before doing so I think it advisable to say a few words about that troublesome football regulation—the offside rule.

As every player of experience knows, the offside rule is the cause of quite a lot of stoppages in the average game, and, incidentally, one reason why goals are not scored so frequently as they otherwise would be.

I have heard people say that as the offside rule prevents goals from being scored very often, it ought to be dropped altogether, or, at any rate, altered so that it would be easier for forwards to find the net. With this idea I do not agree. When the offside rule was first framed it had a definite object in view, and that object was to encourage the forwards of a team to play a combined game.

In the days before there was any offside rule, combination among forwards was also practically unknown. A team used to send one or two forwards well up the field—right into their opponents goal-mouth in fact, and then concentrate all their efforts on giving the ball to one of those waiting players. This, as I say, meant that there was very little real combination indeed. And I submit that of all football, the prettiest to watch, and the most effective, if done properly, is a line of forwards working together in perfect harmony—passing and repassing the ball. If you abolished the offside rule you would also abolish this essence of real football.

(More on the off-side rule in "How to Play Football" in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)



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."

In presenting this number of the Boys' Friend before my readers, I am giving you the Green 'Un's "new leaf for the New Year"—1921.

I have every confidence that this number will be received with a right royal welcome, as usual. This confidence is based upon the wonderful material with which this number is built.

Next week I am enlarging the instalment of

"THE MINERS' ELEVEN!"

By Walter Edwards, as this yarn has made such a hit with you all. I really don't wonder at this, for when I first secured this famous boys' author for the Boys' Friend, I predicted to myself—a scoop. But the noise made by this fine, sporting tale has broken all records, and soared far above my most optimistic hopes.

"TROUBLE FOR FOUR!"

By Owen Conquest, is the title of the next Rookwood yarn. You will find the Fistical Four back at school on Monday morning when you open your copy, and, as the title of the story suggests, they get into "hot water" within the first twenty-four hours of their return. However, you can read it for yourself on Monday, and I won't spoil the surprise by a synopsis here.

"THE THOUSAND DOLLAR PRIZE!"

By Martin Clifford, is the next backwoods yarn. Yes, you're right—it is a competition; but not for you to enter. The competition in this story is hardly of the kind tolerated over here. But more of this on Monday.

As you know the titles of all the other fine serials, I will not waste valuable space here in repeating them. Suffice for me to say that

they will all be represented fully in next Monday's number by grand, long instalments.

Results of Telephone Competition Nos. 3 and 4.

In competition No. 3 the prize of 10s. for the best and neatest

answers has been awarded to Leonard Turvey, 49, Coleridge Road, Hoe Street, Walthamstow, Essex. The lucky winner of T.C. No. 4 is, R. Bassett, 96, Melbourne Grove, Dulwich, S.E. 22.

SPLENDID NEW COMPETITION.

1st Prize, £5. 3 Prizes of Splendid Tuok Hampers. 8 Prizes of 5s. each.

On this page you will find a picture-puzzle, dealing with some famous boys' heroes, which you are invited to solve. Bear in mind that each of the pictures may represent part of

a word—one, two, or three words, but not more than three words. There is nothing unusual about the wording, and the sense of the sentence will guide you. Solutions containing alternatives will be disqualified.

When you have solved the pictures to your satisfaction, write your solution in ink on one side of a clean sheet of paper, then sign the coupon beneath the picture. Cut out the picture and the coupon—do not sever the coupon from the picture—pin your solution to the picture, and post to:

Large puzzle area with text: ADMIRAL TAS 1 of the HA HA HA BILL iii 3 Rem St of Cow-boys. Every KN OO the John Brown of HRD, as VILLA VILLA This SUPERS coat £10 Per. Includes a coupon: B.F. I enter this competition and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final. Name..... Address..... Closing date of Competition—January 5th.

"Boys' Heroes Competition No. 2," Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than Wednesday, January 5th, 1921. This competition is run in conjunction with the "Boys' Herald," and readers of that journal are invited to compete.

Read These Rules Carefully.

The First Prize of £5 will be awarded to the competitor who complies with the above conditions, and sends a solution exactly the same as the Editor's original paragraph. In the event of no competitor's solution being exactly the same as the original paragraph, the prize will be awarded to the competitor whose solution is the nearest.

The second and other prizes will be awarded to the readers whose solutions are next in order of merit.

In the event of ties, the right to add together and divide any or all of the prizes is reserved, but the full amount will be awarded. No competitor will be awarded more than one share of any prize.

No responsibility can be undertaken for any effort lost, delayed, or mislaid, and proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery or receipt.

The Editor reserves the right to disqualify any competitor's solution for reasons which he considers good and sufficient. The decision of the Editor must be accepted as final and legally binding in all matters concerning the competition, and entries are only accepted on this express condition. Correspondence must not be enclosed with efforts, neither will any be entered into in connection with this competition. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

Your Ed.

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