

# The BOYS' FRIEND 2a

SIXTEEN BIG PAGES!

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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

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## Jimmy Silver & Co. Out West!



### ONLY BILLY BENSON!

As the "road-agent" sprawled on the rough prairie, Jimmy Silver jerked the handkerchief mask away, and the countenance of Billy Benson, the chore-boy, was revealed!

#### The 1st Chapter. Out West!

Jimmy Silver sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes in the blaze of sunshine from the window. For a moment or two Jimmy expected to find himself in the old dormitory at Rookwood School: with its washed wall, and high windows, and long rows of beds. He had been dreaming of Rookwood. But he had awakened to very different surroundings. He was in a room ten feet by six, with walls of bare pine, and a window three feet by three. From without came unaccustomed sounds—unaccustomed to the ears of a Rookwood junior. He could hear a trampling of horses and a jingling of harness, and a creaking of heavy wheels. It was yet early in the morning, but sunshine blazed in at the little window. Jimmy, blinking in the light, viewed a snow-capped mountain-peak in the far distance from the window. Then he remembered where he was. He tossed the blankets aside, and jumped actively out of the little camp-bed. He looked from the window. At a short distance from the shack

hotel the Windy River gleamed in the sunlight. Far away to the west loomed the great mountain ridge of the Rocky Mountains against the blue sky. From the window he could see almost all the buildings of the little Alberta township—not more than a dozen and all built of timber. Below the window was what the inhabitants of Mosquito called "Main Street." It was a rough and rugged trail, winding in from the boundless Alberta prairie, and winding out again on the other side of Mosquito town, along the Windy River. It was tramped hard by hoofs of horses and cattle and the heavy boots of the cattlemen, treading where, in earlier days, moccasined Indians had trod. "Oh, ripping!" murmured Jimmy. He drew in deep breaths of the clear air, pure as crystal. "Real Canada at last!" he murmured. It was not Jimmy's first day in Canada, by any means. The Rookwood party had landed at Quebec, on the St. Lawrence, far away to the east. The railroad had borne them westward, long hundreds of miles. From Calgary the cars had carried them northward into Northern Alberta. Then the railroad had been left far behind.

Mosquito was the last stage of the journey, the last stop before arriving at the Windy River Ranch, the home of Jimmy's Canadian cousin, Hudson Smedley. After a rough journey by prairie trails, Jimmy Silver & Co. had slept like tops in the lumber hotel. Mr. Smedley was going on to the ranch that day, and starting at sunrise, which he called sun-up. But it was long past "sun-up" now, and Jimmy wondered whether the Canadian rancher had over-slept that morning. Mr. Hudson Smedley was so extremely energetic that he seemed the last man in the world to over-sleep; but certainly it was long past sun-up. There was a bang at Jimmy's door, and it flew open, and Arthur Edward Lovell presented himself, half-dressed. "Hallo! You up, Jimmy?" "Looks like it," said Jimmy cheerily. "Seen Mr. Smedley yet?" "No." "Where does a chap wash?" Jimmy grinned. "Better ask downstairs," he answered. "We're roughing it here, old bean." "Oh, I guess I can rough it, some!" said Lovell. Arthur Edward Lovell had begun to "guess" even before landing in Canada.

"The other chaps up yet?" asked Jimmy. "No. Let's rout 'em out." Raby and Newcome were routed out—rather unwillingly. They were tired after the hard journey of the day before, and still sleepy. But Lovell had no mercy on them. "You see, we're up first," he said. "Mr. Smedley's still snoozing somewhere. I guess we shall take a rise out of that galoot by being ready to start before he's turned out of his bunk. He thinks we're rather soft because we're tenderfeet from the old country. I guess we shall have the laugh of him this morning." "I guess I'd rather have my snooze out!" argued Raby. "Rats!" "You see—" began Newcome. "Bow-wow!" Accommodation was limited at the Mosquito Hotel. Raby and Newcome had shared a straw palliasso on the floor of Lovell's room, with brown blankets to cover them. But they had slept soundly for all that. The Fistical Four of Rookwood had plenty of "horse-sense," and they did not expect home comforts in an outlying region of North-Western Alberta. A narrow stair, a good deal like a ladder, led down to the lower regions. The lumber hotel was very quiet, and

seemed deserted. But in the doorway, meditatively chewing a plug of tobacco, they found the landlord—a big, burly, much-whiskered gentleman with a mahogany complexion and very keen twinkling eyes. He turned his head slowly, and bestowed a nod on the juniors. "Good morning, Mr. Bunch," said Jimmy Silver politely. "Mornin'." "Where does a chap wash?" asked Lovell. Mr. Bunch jerked a stubby thumb in the direction of the back-door. He seemed to be a man of few words. "Come on!" said Jimmy. In the yard behind the lumber hotel were a pump and a trough. Evidently the "outfit" at Mosquito was primitive. But the Rookwooders performed their ablutions cheerily; they had not come to Alberta to grouse. They came in to breakfast with cheery faces and keen appetites. Breakfast was substantial, and Jimmy Silver & Co. did it full justice. Still they saw nothing of Mr. Smedley, and they grinned at the idea of the rancher coming down at last, and finding that they had already breakfasted. Kind and considerate as Hudson Smedley was to his young charges, the juniors realised that the rancher

(Continued overleaf.)





## Jimmy Silver & Co. Out West!

By Owen Conquest

(Continued from previous page.)

regarded them as "greenhorns," and doubted whether they were quite equal to roughing it in the Western way. It really was a great joke, as Lovell declared, to be all ready and waiting for the resumption of the journey, when the rancher should turn out of bed at last. Doubtless he supposed that the four tenderfeet would sleep on till about noon, if they were not called up.

Breakfast over, the juniors strolled out of the lumber hotel. They found Mr. Bunch at the front, leaning against a post, and still chewing a plug of tobacco in a meditative way. "Lovely morning, Mr. Bunch," said Jimmy.

Mr. Bunch nodded. "Didn't Mr. Smedley ask to be called?"

Mr. Bunch stared. "I believe it's a good distance from here to the ranch, isn't it?" asked Raby.

"Sure."

"Well, then, hadn't Mr. Smedley better be called?"

"I guess he wouldn't hear."

"Eh! Why not?" asked Jimmy in surprise.

Mr. Bunch swept a hand towards the western horizon.

"I reckon Hudson Smedley is twenty mile on his way," he said.

"Gone!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Sure."

"Gone, without us?" asked Lovell blankly.

Mr. Bunch's mahogany features wrinkled into a grin.

"Lit out at sun up!" he answered.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood looked at one another. This was rather a surprise to them. It seemed that the rancher had turned out earliest, after all.

"But what has he left us behind for?" exclaimed Raby. "Didn't he leave a message?"

"Yep!"

"If it's not too much exertion, Mr. Bunch, you might hand out the message," said Lovell, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Sure! Mr. Smedley reckoned that you 'uns, being kid tenderfeet, would be tired, and he figured it out for you to rest here to-day. He's sending the buggy over for you to-morrow."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What utter rot!" exclaimed Lovell, in disgust.

"I guess that's the message!" said Mr. Bunch stolidly.

And he opened a six-inch knife to cut a fresh plug of tobacco.

### The 2nd Chapter. On Their Own!

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked down Main Street in a state of wrath and indignation.

It really was too bad. They were agreed upon that.

Possibly the rancher was right. They were fatigued from their long journey. Doubtless a day's rest at Mosquito would not have done them any harm. Probably it would have done them good. But the chums of Rookwood were far from seeing it in that light. The imputation of being tenderfeet, who needed more rest and repose than native Canadians, was not to be borne.

"Utter rot!" said Lovell. "If your blessed cousin could go on at sun-up, Jimmy, we could go on."

"Of course we could!" said Jimmy.

"Does the blessed man think we're made of putty at Rookwood?" exclaimed Raby. "I believe it's only about thirty miles to the ranch, too."

"Nothing, if a chap had a bike," remarked Newcome.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"A bike would get rather rough going over these trails," he said. "But we could ride it. Mr. Smedley knows we can ride."

"I've told him that I can ride as well as any giddy cow-puncher on his ranch!" said Lovell warmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyhow, we could ride thirty miles," said Jimmy. "Look here, you fellows, we're not going to hang about all day in this one-eyed camp. There's no need to wait for the buggy to come to-morrow. Let's go on."

"Good!"

"What about horses?" asked Raby doubtfully. "We couldn't walk it."

"We can beg, borrow, or steal horses here. There seem to be plenty about," said Jimmy Silver. "Let's ask Bunchy."

The juniors turned their steps back to the lumber hotel. Mr. Bunch was now seated on a bench outside, chewing tobacco; but he was not alone. His companion was a man, who drew curious glances from the juniors.

He was a man of lithe frame, with a dark face and extremely dark and glittering eyes. He was not an Indian, but the juniors could see that he was partly of Indian blood—what they had already heard called a "breed."

He was dressed in shabby moleskin trousers and shirt, with a ragged Stetson hat on his thick, black hair.

The expression on his dark, bronze face was far from amiable as he stood before the landlord of the Mosquito Hotel. Mr. Bunch was jerking his thumb towards the trail.

"That's your way," he was saying, as the schoolboys approached. "I guess it will be healthier for you to levant, Pequod. I guess you're not forgotten in Mosquito."

The half-breed muttered something under his breath that the juniors did not catch.

"Oh, git, do!" said Mr. Bunch. "You're too well known around hyer for it to be healthy for you."

The half-breed fixed his black eyes on the burly Canadian, and his dusky hand slipped to the belt behind his moleskin trousers. It was evident that he carried a weapon there.

Mr. Bunch saw the movement, but did not trouble to stir.

The contempt and indifference of the white man seemed to quell the half-breed. He muttered savagely in French, and, turning away, tramped along the dusty trail.

Mr. Bunch shrugged his broad shoulders scornfully.

"Who's that merchant, Mr. Bunch?" asked Lovell.

"A galoot that you 'uns had better keep clear of, I guess," answered Mr. Bunch. "He's a breed."

"A half-Indian?" asked Jimmy.

"More'n half, I guess; bad Injun and bad white mixed," said Mr. Bunch. "I guess he would get the end of a trail-rope round them trousers of his'n if the boys caught him around. There's too many steers and horses missin' when Pequod le Couteau is around, I guess."

"Le Couteau!" said Jimmy.

"That means the 'knife,'" said Mr. Bunch nodded.

"That galoot is powerful handy with the knife," he said. "I guess he will end on a rope some day. But I don't want to see him hanging over my porch, I reckon. Good for him he's gone. They say that he's killed more men than he's got fingers and toes. The Mounted Police will have him some day."

Jimmy Silver glanced after the active figure of the half-breed—moving swiftly out on the dusty trail with all the lithe activity of a wild animal. Pequod le Couteau disappeared on the prairie, and Jimmy turned to the lumber hotel-keeper again.

"We're going on to the ranch to-day," he said.

"I guess you're waiting for the buggy to-morrow."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"No; we're going on. I suppose we can hire some horses in this town?"

"I guess you could hire them," said Mr. Bunch, with a grin. "But that ain't saying that you could ride them."

"We'll chance that," said Jimmy good-humouredly. "We want to hire four horses to ride to the ranch, and they can be sent back later. Where can we get them?"

"I guess I can lend you the critters if you're set on it," said Mr. Bunch. "But if you'll take advice you'll hang on where you're safe."

"I guess you can guide these tenderfeet to the Windy River Ranch, Billy?" said Mr. Bunch.

"Sure, boss!"

"You'll find a trail-rope somewhere, and tie them on the hosses," added Mr. Bunch humorously.

The chore-boy grinned.

"Sure, boss," he answered.

"Oh, come off!" said Lovell, "we can ride all right. Trot out the gee-gees, and you'll see, Mr. Bunch."

Mr. Bunch gave directions to the chore-boy to fetch round the horses, and Jimmy Silver & Co. went into the lumber hotel to get their

Them pararies ain't the place for little tenderfeet what don't know their way about."

"No Redskins on the warpath, I suppose?" asked Lovell sarcastically.

"Nope! You'll get lost," explained Mr. Bunch. "You'll be sleeping to-night on the pararie, most eaten up by skitters."

"Skitters!" exclaimed Lovell. "Sure!"

The Rookwooders eyed Mr. Bunch. They had thought that they were well up in such matters, but they had never heard of a wild animal called a skitter before. Bears and wolves might be found in the hills, and deer and coyotes elsewhere, but skitters—

"What is a skitter, Mr. Bunch?" asked Jimmy, wondering whether the burly gentleman was amusing himself by pulling the tenderfoot leg.

Mr. Bunch stared.

"Skitters?" he replied. "Skitters is skitters, of course."

"We don't have them in England," explained Jimmy. "We haven't happened to come across them so far."

"You'll come across them fast enough if you sleep out on the pararie," said Mr. Bunch, "specially if you camp in a hollow, as, being tenderfeet, you're 'most certain to do."

"Are they dangerous?" asked the puzzled Jimmy.

"I dunno 'bout dangerous, but they bite powerful hard."

"Well, we're not afraid of the skitters, whatever they are," said

"truck": they had already learned to call their baggage "truck." The Rookwood juniors were travelling light, each of them having his possessions packed tight in a handy "grab."

There were five horses roped to the rail outside, when the juniors came out. Mr. Bunch had considerably picked out quiet horses—restraining a humorous desire to "take a rise" out of the tenderfeet by giving them skittish animals to ride. Billy saddled and bridled the horses, and the Rookwooders mounted quite smartly. Mr. Bunch stood staring at them, apparently expecting them to fall off. But they did not fall off.

"Ready, gents?" sang out Billy.

"Yes, rather."

The chore-boy mounted, and the five riders clattered down the trampled trail of Mosquito and out upon the prairie. They turned their faces to the west. Jimmy Silver spoke to the chore-boy as they rode out of camp.

"Have you ever seen any skitters about here, Billy?" he asked.

Billy blinked at him.

"Skitters! You bet."

"What are they like?"

"Like," said Billy, "well, I guess they're like skitters."

"Lucid!" marmured Lovell.

"Are they common in these parts?" asked Jimmy.

"Specially later in the summer," answered Billy.

"And they bite?"

"Like thunder."

"Well, I shall be glad to see a skitter, whether they bite or not," said Lovell, not wholly convinced.

question with regard to the "skitters" had given the finishing touch, as it were, to Billy Benson's opinion of them. In the chore-boy's opinion they were greener than the greenest "hayseed" from "way-back"; and when the township was left behind the chore-boy proceeded to pull their leg to his heart's content. Mosquito was less than a mile behind when Billy waved his hand suddenly to the juniors, and yelled in tones of wild alarm:

"Injuns! Ride for your lives!"

"What?" shouted Lovell.

Billy lashed at his horse and went helter-skelter over the prairie at a wild gallop. Jimmy Silver & Co. rode after him hard for a few minutes, staring round them for the Indians. There were no Indians to be seen, however; and Jimmy slackened down.

"Ease off, you fellows," he called out. "We shall tire the horses at this rate."

"But the Indians——" exclaimed Raby.

"Gammon!" answered Jimmy.

"There are Indians in Alberta, you know," said Raby doubtfully.

"That young ass is pulling our leg," answered Jimmy. "Let's see what he does, anyhow. I can't see any Indians."

The juniors rode on at a steady trot. Billy Benson glanced back over his shoulder and waved to them. As they did not increase their speed the chore-boy slackened down for them to come up. His first little joke at their expense had fallen flat.

"Well, where are the Indians?" grinned Jimmy Silver.

Master Benson did not answer that question. He looked rather disappointed, and rode on in silence. These tenderfeet were not so easy to "draw" as he had supposed.

After a time, however, Billy, who was riding a little apart, drew in closer to the Rookwood party.

"I suppose you galoots are heeled?" he asked.

"Heeled?" repeated Jimmy.

"Yep!"

"I don't catch on. Do you mean our boots?" asked Jimmy puzzled.

"They're both soled and heeled."

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Billy; "I mean armed."

"Oh, heeled means armed, does it?" said Lovell.

"Where was you raised?" asked Billy, in profound contempt for a tenderfoot who did not know that heeled meant armed. "Have you got a shooter apiece?"

"No," answered Jimmy. "Mr. Smedley told us it wasn't necessary to carry arms in Alberta."

"That's all very well if you was with his party," said Billy, shaking his head. "But if we drop on a road-agent——"

"A-a-what?"

"A road-agent is a highwayman," said Lovell. "Do you mean to say that there are robbers here, young fellow?"

"Well, if you ain't heeled, jest put up your hands if you're called on to do it," said the chore-boy. "I guess it will be safest."

"We shouldn't do anything of the kind," said Lovell warmly. "Catch me putting up my hands."

"You watch out!" answered Billy.

Jimmy eyed the chore-boy as they rode on. He had not forgotten the alarm of Indians. Billy Benson eyed the plains on right and left, and peered suspiciously into every thicket or fringe of low trees they passed, and Jimmy wondered whether there really was danger of meeting some lawless character on the solitary prairie. The four juniors became rather serious. They were unarmed, and it would be no joke to meet some lawless ruffian who might present a revolver at them with the order to "shell out!"

Billy drew in his horse suddenly on the edge of a patch of straggling thickets in a hollow of the prairie.

"You 'uns hold on here a few minutes," he said; "I guess this here wants looking into. Don't make a sound."

And Billy rode into the thickets, and dismounted there and disappeared. The juniors waited in a bunch looking at one another. The Canadian boy's manner had been so serious that they could not help being impressed.

"Is the young ass trying to pull our leg again?" grunted Lovell.

"Blessed if I know," confessed Jimmy Silver. "He looked pretty serious this time. After all, he's our guide, and we can't go on without him."

"There can't be danger," muttered Newcome. "Mr. Smedley would have told us——"

"Well, he expected us to wait at Mosquito to be sent for," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "I wonder where that cheeky young ass has got to."



**LUNCH ON THE PRAIRIE!** After tethering their horses, Jimmy Silver & Co. unpacked the lunch they had brought from the lumber hotel at Mosquito, and sat down to enjoy their meal with the keen appetite of fellows who had ridden far!

Jimmy Silver, not at all convinced, as a matter of fact, of the real existence of such fearsome beasts. "We'll chance their bites."

"I guess it's your own business," said Mr. Bunch. "The hosses is hyer if you're set on it. I guess it's a free country. You'll want a guide."

"We'll be glad of one," said Jimmy. "Can we get a guide here?"

"I guess I'll lend you my chore-boy."

Mr. Bunch gave a shout.

"Billy!"

"Hallo, boss!"

A rather lanky youth, with his red flannel shirtsleeves rolled up, came round the lumber building. This was Billy, the chore-boy, otherwise a man-of-all-work.

"I guess you can guide these tenderfeet to the Windy River Ranch, Billy?" said Mr. Bunch.

"Sure, boss!"

"You'll find a trail-rope somewhere, and tie them on the hosses," added Mr. Bunch humorously.

The chore-boy grinned.

"Sure, boss," he answered.

"Oh, come off!" said Lovell, "we can ride all right. Trot out the gee-gees, and you'll see, Mr. Bunch."

Mr. Bunch gave directions to the chore-boy to fetch round the horses, and Jimmy Silver & Co. went into the lumber hotel to get their

"Is it safe to meet them unarmed?" asked Raby.

The chore-boy blinked at him.

"Unarmed," he repeated. "You're a tenderfoot, you are. Unarmed! Haw, haw, haw!" And Billy roared with laughter as he rode along the trail; and the Rookwood juniors—not being at all desirous of adding to his merriment—let the subject drop. Apparently there was something mysterious about those fearsome creatures, the skitters, which the tenderfeet could not yet fathom—they could only hope to be enlightened when they knew Canada better. In the meantime, they rode on cheerily over the rolling prairie, under a sunny sky, quite pleased—tenderfeet as they were—to be making the journey to the Windy River Ranch "on their own."

### The 3rd Chapter. Across the Plains.

Billy, the chore-boy was, what he would have described himself as, a "humorous guy." Finding himself guide to four tenderfeet from the Old Country, Billy allowed his sense of humour a loose rein. As an old hand, he felt himself entitled to take a rise out of a gang of greenhorns. Jimmy Silver & Co. were not specially green, not nearly as green as Billy Benson supposed; but they were in a new land, where most things were strange to them. Their



The juniors waited impatiently. There was no sign of the chore-boy. He had vanished into the scrub, leaving no trace behind.

A quarter of an hour passed, and the chums were beginning to feel uneasy. If there were enemies lurking in the scrub it was possible that the chore-boy had fallen a victim to them.

"Hallo, here's somebody!" exclaimed Lovell, as there was a sudden rustle in the thicket.

A figure sprang into view, and the sunlight glinted on the barrel of a revolver flung up to a level.

"Hands up!"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors stared blankly at the newcomer. His form was almost hidden by a rough blanket wound round him and circled by a belt, and a mask made of a dirty handkerchief covered his face, with two rents in it for eye-holes. Over the masked face a Stetson hat was jammed down low.

The stranger's hand gripped a revolver, levelled at the four riders.

"Hands up!" he rapped out again. "Light down and pony up your dollars, or I guess it's you for the cemetery."

"Oh, gad!" gasped Lovell. The four juniors jumped off their horses. There was no arguing with a levelled revolver.

They put up their hands, standing in a startled row in front of the masked enemy.

But a sudden glint came into Jimmy Silver's eyes.

The handkerchief mask and the belted blanket hid the road agent almost entirely from view; but the ends of his trousers and his boots could be seen. They were boots sadly in need of repair; and Jimmy Silver had noticed them before that day—on the feet of Master Billy Benson, the chore-boy.

Jimmy understood in a flash. He made a stride towards the masked robber.

"Stand back! Hands up, I tell you!"

The revolver was pointed straight at Jimmy Silver's head.

"Jimmy!" gasped Lovell. "Jimmy, old chap—"

Jimmy Silver did not heed. He made a jump at the road-agent, who did not fire! He grasped the knight of the road, and sent him spinning to the ground.

"Ow!" roared the masked one, as he sprawled on the rough prairie.

Jimmy jerked at the handkerchief mask.

It came off, revealing the rather sheepish countenance of Billy Benson, the chore-boy.

"That blessed kid!" roared Lovell. "Pulling our leg again!"

Billy Benson sat up. "Wal, I'm durned!" he remarked. "You young ass!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "How many more silly tricks are you going to play before we arrive at the ranch, I'd like to know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Benson picked himself up, looking rather sore. He whistled, and his horse came trotting out of the scrub.

"I guessed I should scare you stiff, sure!" he said.

"My dear chap, you couldn't scare us in a month of Sundays!" said Arthur Edward Lovell loftily.

"Not in your lifetime!" chuckled Raby.

Billy Benson grunted, and unbelted the blanket, and rolled it up and replaced it on his horse. He was evidently disappointed. The juniors grinned as they rode on with their guide. The chore-boy's face was deeply thoughtful, and they could guess that he was revolving in his mind some new scheme for "taking a rise" out of the tenderfeet. They came past the belt of scrub, and trotted out cheerily over the open prairie, which stretched vast and boundless on all sides.

"Look out hyer!" called out Billy Benson.

Lovell chuckled.

"What is it now, Indians, or road-agents?" he asked.

"Grizzly bear this time!" grinned Newcome.

"Or wolves?" asked Raby.

"I guess it ain't," said Billy Benson. "But there's rabbit holes in the prairie, and if you don't watch out, you'll lame your horses. Savvy?"

"Oh, that's a bit more serious!" said Jimmy Silver, with a smile.

"Trust a tenderfoot to stick his horse's leg into a prairie rabbit's hole!" grinned Billy Benson. "I guess it's about ten dollars to a red cent that one of you lames his horse afore we're through."

"Careful, you chaps!" said Jimmy Silver.

"What ho!"

"Better string out jest behind me, and keep in my trail," said Billy Benson. "I don't want you all landed on my hands to carry home to the ranch. Haw, haw, haw!"

The juniors obediently strung out behind the chore-boy. The rabbit-holes were difficult to perceive, and they did not want to take risks of laming their horses. Being stranded on the prairie without a horse was a decidedly serious matter.

All of a sudden Billy Benson's horse was seen to plunge almost over, and the chore-boy was nearly hurled from his saddle. He clung on, however, and jumped clear as his horse fell.

The juniors drew rein.

"What's the trouble now?" asked Lovell.

Billy Benson did not answer. He stood looking at his horse, with a most extraordinary expression on his rugged, sunburnt face.

"Well, aren't we going on?" asked Jimmy.

The chore-boy shook his head slowly.

"I guess not!" he answered. "Why not?"

"Can't be did!"

"But why—"

The crimson showed through the tan on the chore-boy's face. It was obvious that he had a difficult confession to make.

"I guess my gee ain't up to a run of thirty miles," he said slowly. "I kinder guess that he—he—"

"That's the size of it."

"We're jolly well not going back," said Jimmy decidedly.

"No fear!"

"If you'd been thinking a little less of japes on strangers, and a little more of business, this mightn't have happened, young 'un," said Lovell. "You can walk your horse home if you like. We're going on."

"I guess you'll get lost, then," said Billy.

"We'll chance it."

"Better come back," said the chore-boy. "You'll wander over the Rockies into British Columbia, or else meander into the Blackfoot reservation and get chewed up, you pesky tenderfeet—"

"Give us directions as well as you can, and we'll chance it," said Jimmy Silver. "We're certainly not turning back."

"I guess I'll look at the hoss."

Billy Benson proceeded to attend to his hapless steed. The juniors watched him; they were not able to help. The horse was lamed, and obviously could not finish the journey.

"I guess Mr. Bunch will be mad about this," said Billy Benson dolefully. "Can't be helped, I reckon. I'm going to walk him home. If you tenderfeet are set on keeping on—"

"We are!" said Lovell.

"Yes, rather."

"Wal, you keep steady on from here, and keep that peak in your eye," said Billy, with a wave of his

the chore-boy, to make his way back to Mosquito Camp.

"I guess we shall find our way all right," said Arthur Edward Lovell, as they trotted contentedly on. "We don't really need a guide."

"Easy enough to ford a creek—or a creek—and then follow a cattle-trail," remarked Raby.

"Easy as falling off a form."

Jimmy Silver & Co. rode on, keeping their eyes well about them. The peak Billy had pointed out was a good guide, so long as the weather remained clear for them to keep it in sight, and there was hardly a cloud on the blue expanse of the sky. Mile after mile vanished under the trotting hoofs. A glimmer of water in the sunshine ahead caught their eyes at last.

"The giddy creek!" exclaimed Lovell.

It was past noon when the school-boys rode on to the bank of the creek. The water came from the slopes of the Rocky Mountains, in winter probably a deep and roaring torrent. But now only a couple of feet of water flowed between high, muddy banks. At the bottom of its channel the creek wound away over the prairie, to join the Windy River at a great distance.

"We feed here," said Jimmy, jumping from his horse.

"I'm ready!" grinned Lovell.

They led down the horses through crackling mud to give them drink, and then camped on the bank, where

watched the juniors in silence, a great deal like a wild animal preparing to spring. Apparently he had been resting in the timber when they arrived, after a long and weary tramp over the prairie trail.

"This beats Rookwood—what?" asked Lovell, as he impaled a chunk of cheese on the end of his pocket-knife.

"Yes, rather!" said Raby. "I'm blessed if I'm keen on going home for the new term, either. Jimmy, old man, can't you persuade your jolly old cousin to give us jobs on the ranch and keep us out in Canada?"

Jimmy chuckled.

"Just what I was thinking of," he said.

"After all, we should learn more here than in a term at Rookwood," argued Lovell. "I'm willing to go home for the winter term. I believe it's a bit parky out here in the winter."

"By the way, where are the skitters?" said Newcome. "That kid Billy said there were skitters around the creek."

"Can't see anything around, except a few mosquitoes," said Jimmy Silver, slapping one of those troublesome insects on his knee, and slaying it instantly. "There goes one! Blessed if I believe in the existence of the skitters, whatever they are."

There was a rustle in the timber. Lovell jumped up.

"Something's there!" he exclaimed. "It may be a skitter. Great Scott! It's the half-breed!"

Pequod le Couteau stepped out of the timber and stood before the startled juniors. His hand rested on a hunting-knife in his belt, which he had hitched round to be within easy reach. There was a grim, mocking, threatening look on his dark face that struck rather a chill to the school-boys. They remembered Mr. Bunch's warning with regard to the breed. Certainly they had not expected to fall in with him on the prairie.

"Bonjour, messieurs!" said the half-breed, grinning, and showing a double row of sharp, white teeth that flashed in the sunshine.

"Good-morning!" said Jimmy Silver, rising to his feet.

He could not help seeing that the man meant mischief.

"I think I saw you in Mosquito this morning?" said Pequod.

"We saw you," answered Jimmy.

"You saw me turned out of the camp," said Pequod, showing his teeth again, not in a grin this time.

The juniors did not answer. They drew a little closer together. Mr. Smedley had told them that they did not need to go armed in Alberta; but this was evidently an occasion when a gun would have been useful. On the solitary prairie trails a man like Pequod le Couteau was not a safe man to meet.

"You are travelling alone?" said Pequod, apparently puzzled by finding the four boys there at all.

"We're going to the Windy River Ranch," said Jimmy. "Mr. Smedley is my cousin."

"Rancher Smedley your cousin? I have been whipped off the Windy River Ranch with cattle-whips!" said the half-breed, his black eyes gleaming.

"What on earth for?" asked Jimmy, in astonishment.

The breed shrugged his shoulders. "There had been horses missing," he said.

"Oh! And you had taken them?"

Another shrug.

"Well, if you're a blessed horse-thief, you got off cheap!" said Lovell. "Down in the States they might have lynched you."

The half-breed looked at him and smiled. He did not answer Lovell, but crossed over to where the horses were tethered, and began to cast loose the trail-ropes.

Jimmy Silver started forward. "Let that rope alone!" he exclaimed.

"What the thump is the fellow doing with our horses?" exclaimed Raby.

Pequod glanced at them over his shoulder.

"You will do well to keep clear of me," he said quietly. "I do not wish to harm schoolboys. I am taking the horses."

"Do you mean to say that you're going to steal our horses, and leave us stranded on foot?" exclaimed Lovell blankly.

"Sure!"

The juniors looked at one another. The man was a lithe, active rascal, but he was not likely to be a match for four sturdy schoolboys. Jimmy Silver & Co. had no idea of submitting patiently to a barefaced robbery. But there was the ruffian's knife to

(Continued overleaf.)



**BILLY BENSON COMES A CROPPER!** All of a sudden Billy Benson's horse was seen to stumble, and the chore-boy was nearly hurled from the saddle. He clung on, however, and jumped clear as his horse fell. "What's the trouble now?" asked Lovell sarcastically, as the Rookwood juniors drew rein.

"He what?" asked the puzzled Lovell.

"I guess he's trod in a rabbit-hole," confessed Billy, "and—and—I reckon he's dead lame."

The juniors stared at the guide for a moment. Then they burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

**The 4th Chapter.**

**An Outcast of the Prairie.**

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. roared. They could not help it. They were sorry for the horse, and sorry for Billy's mischance; but they could not help laughing. The "old hand," who had looked on the tenderfeet from such a lofty standpoint, had been the one to come to grief.

Billy Benson's face was very red. He felt his humiliation deeply. Not one of his scares had come off, and now here he was, stranded, like the veriest greenhorn, with a lamed horse, and the tenderfeet enjoying the joke. He blinked at the juniors, and he blinked at the juniors.

"What rotten luck!" said Lovell. "I'm sorry, kid! Ha, ha, ha! How are you going on if your horse is lame?"

"I guess I ain't going on," answered Billy gruffly. "I guess we're going back to Mosquito. Lucky it ain't far."

"Going back!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

hand towards the distant mountains. "Keep on you strike the crick—"

"The what?"

"The crick."

"Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy. "We—we don't quite know what a crick is!"

"Jerusalem!" said Billy Benson. "A crick's a crick. You'll know it when you see it, I guess—a crick, with a lot of skitters round about, I reckon."

"But what does a crick look like?" demanded Lovell.

"Eh? It looks like a crick," said Billy Benson. "You'll have to ford it—"

"Ford it?" said Jimmy Silver. "Then it—it's water?"

"Course it's water. What did you think a crick was?"

"Oh, I know!" yelled Lovell. "He means a creek."

"Oh! A creek!" exclaimed Raby. "I guess that's what I said—a crick," said the chore-boy. "You keep on till you strike the crick, and ford it. From the crick you'll see the cattle-trail running, and you'll follow it till you sight the river ag'in. Foller the river till you sight the ranch. That clear?"

"Clear as daylight," said Jimmy Silver. "We'll get on. Come on, you fellows!"

"Good-bye, Billy!" chuckled Lovell. "Be more careful next time you're showing off to tenderfeet."

The juniors rode on leaving Billy,

a clump of trees grew in a patch of scrubby thicket. The shade of the trees was a welcome relief from the sunshine. Jimmy Silver was very careful to tether the horses, and the juniors unpacked the lunch they had brought from the lumber hotel at Mosquito.

They sat down, leaning their backs against tree-trunks, and enjoyed their meal with the keen appetite of fellows who had been riding for some hours over the open prairie.

Round about them, as far as the eye could reach, stretched the boundless plains, bounded only on the west by the range of mountains, beyond which lay British Columbia and the Pacific Ocean. The level of the prairie seemed broken only by the winding channel of the creek. Immense solitude surrounded the juniors.

But the patch of timber by the creek was not so deserted as they imagined.

As the juniors sat chatting over their meal a hidden figure moved in the thicket, with the caution of a wild animal, and a dark face looked out on the campers. Had the juniors seen it they would have recognised the half-breed who had been talking to Mr. Bunch, in Main Street at Mosquito that morning. It was Pequod le Couteau who was watching them from the thicket, with scintillating black eyes—Pequod the Knife, as he was nicknamed by his "breed" associates.

For some minutes the half-breed



be reckoned with, and the chums of Rookwood were unarmed.

Jimmy drew a deep, hard breath. "We're not standing this, you fellows?" he said.

"No jolly fear!" said Lovell emphatically.

"Come on!" The juniors advanced towards the half-breed. He dropped the trail-ropes and stood up, his dusky hand on the handle of his knife.

"Stand back!" he said, showing his white teeth.

"Let those horses alone!" said Jimmy Silver determinedly.

Pequod laughed. He jerked the knife from his belt. It was a long, keen hunting-knife, the blade a good foot in length. It was a terrible weapon in the hand of a desperate and unscrupulous outcast.

"I am called Pequod le Couteau!" grinned the half-breed. "I have killed men in my time—before the railway came. I will spare your lives if you keep your distance."

He made a threatening circle in the air with the flashing blade, and the juniors involuntarily jumped back. Bare hands were not of much use against that weapon.

"You awful villain!" panted Lovell.

"Back!" snapped the half-breed.

The juniors backed away from the sweep of the knife. And Pequod le Couteau, with a laugh, proceeded to cast the horses loose.

### The 5th Chapter.

#### The Fight!

Jimmy Silver set his teeth.

He realised—rather late—that the Rookwooders would have done well to wait at Mosquito till Mr. Smedley sent the buggy for them from the ranch. There were rough characters in Alberta, as well as everywhere else, and the Rookwood juniors had happened upon the hardest case in the whole province.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. were not beaten yet.

The half-breed evidently concluded that he was finished with them, for he did not even glance at them again. His contemptuous indifference to their presence while he took possession of their horses was a bitter pill for the schoolboys to swallow.

Jimmy's eyes glinted.

He stooped quietly and picked up a heavy stone bottle which had held cold coffee among the supplies brought from the Mosquito lumber hotel for the midday meal. It was the only weapon that came to hand, and an effective one enough if used at close quarters. He held it in his hand behind him as he stood watching the half-breed.

"Jimmy—" breathed Lovell.

Jimmy's face was tense. He knew that the chums would be making life itself in a struggle with the ruffian.

But Jimmy Silver did not falter. "You fellows are game?" he whispered.

"Yes. But—"

"We're not going to be robbed," said Jimmy quietly. "We couldn't turn up at the ranch and tell them that we let a rough rascal take away our horses and leave us to hoof it—four of us! We've got to handle that rotter!"

"We're game!" muttered Raby.

Jimmy moved towards the half-breed again, his hand behind him. His face was steady.

Pequod was securing the horses in a string, intending to ride the foremost and lead the others after him. He glanced round as the juniors approached and made a threatening gesture.

"Keep your distance if you wish to be safe!" he snapped.

"Look here—"

"Enough! Get back!"

"You're not taking our horses," said Jimmy resolutely. "I warn you to let them alone!"

The half-breed gave an angry snarl, and turned from the horses towards the Rookwood junior, his hand on his knife.

"Is that so?" he said between his teeth. "Well, I will take not only the horses, but what money you have also. Put up your hands, all four of you, and if you make a movement I will use the knife."

He strode right towards the juniors, the knife gleaming in his hand and his black eyes scintillating. Jimmy set his teeth hard. It was now or never—and Jimmy decided upon "now." His hand came from behind him like a flash, and the heavy stone bottle was hurled full in the dark face of the half-breed.

Pequod le Couteau was taken utterly by surprise. He had not looked for resistance.

Before he knew what was happening the stone bottle crashed full in his

face, hurling him backwards like a bullet.

A hoarse cry broke from the half-breed as he staggered back and fell.

"Back up!" panted Jimmy Silver. He leapt forward like a tiger.

There was not a second to spare; the knife was still gripped in the breed's sinewy hand, and if he were given a chance to use it—

Stunning as the blow had been, it was only for a moment or two that Pequod le Couteau was dazed; he was already attempting to rise as Jimmy Silver leaped on him.

Crash!

It was no time for standing on ceremony with life at stake, and Jimmy dealt with the savage half-breed as he would have dealt with a poisonous reptile. His boot crashed in the dusky, bruised face as Pequod lifted it, hurling the ruffian back again. The next instant Jimmy's knee was on his chest and both his hands gripped the ruffian's right wrist to keep him from using his knife.

"Quick!" he panted.

His chums did not need telling. They were already springing on the ruffian. He was down—and unless he was kept down grim murder would have been done under the timber by Windy Creek.

Lovell grasped the rascal's left wrist and captured his arm. Raby stamped recklessly on his sprawling legs. Newcome grasped his thick, black hair with both hands and held on tenaciously.

A hoarse growling came from the half-breed, struggling frantically under the desperate grasp of the juniors.

He strove furiously to free his right arm—and had he freed it the keen knife would have done the rest. But Jimmy Silver knew what was at stake, and he did not weaken. With both hands he held on to the sinewy wrist and twisted it without mercy, till the half-breed yelled with anguish, and his relaxing fingers let the knife drop. The next instant Jimmy Silver had grasped it, and its keen edge was shoved against the panting, dusky throat.

Not for worlds would Jimmy have used the knife on his enemy. But Pequod le Couteau fully expected a thrust now that the weapon was in Jimmy Silver's hand. His struggling ceased as if by magic, and he lay inert in the grasp of the juniors.

Only his black eyes glittered up at them like the eyes of a serpent, full of rage and hatred and malice.

"You rotten hound!" panted Jimmy Silver. "Keep quiet, or—"

He pressed the sharp edge of the knife to the bronze skin.

It was merely a threat; but it had its effect.

"You have beaten me," said Pequod, panting. "Morbien! I am in your hands, mon petit!"

"Looks like it, by gum," chuckled Lovell breathlessly. "My hat! You're going to have a beautiful nose, Mr. Pequod!"

The half-breed ground his teeth. His nose was swollen and bleeding from the crash of the bottle upon his face, and both his eyes were blackening.

"Hold the brute tight," said Jimmy. "The rotter would turn on us at once if we let him loose!"

"We'll take jolly good care he doesn't," panted Raby.

"Take off his belt and fasten his paws with it."

"What-ho!"

The half-breed made no resistance. His leather belt was taken off and his wrists dragged forcibly together, the belt buckled tight round them to keep them secure.

Then the breathless juniors rose. The half-breed lay in the grass, breathing hard and snarling like a wild animal.

"Better get off now," said Lovell.

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors saddled the horses again. They were not disposed to linger in that perilous spot.

"You are leaving me like this, mon petit?" called out the half-breed, wrenching in vain at the belt which secured his wrists.

Jimmy Silver looked at him.

"We've got no choice," he said.

"You can wriggle yourself loose in the long run. Serve you right, you thieving rascal."

"I shall remember you, petit!" said the breed, grinding his teeth. "Pequod le Couteau has a long memory."

"Remember as long as you like, my pippin," said Jimmy Silver. "But you'd better change your jolly old name to Pequod sans Couteau—I'm taking away your knife!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors rode through the ford, and rode up the muddy bank on the opposite side of the creek, and started at a trot across the prairie, leaving Pequod wrestling savagely under the timber with the leather belt.

"I guess we're well out of that," remarked Lovell.

"I jolly well guess we are," said Jimmy Silver. "I fancy we were rather asses, now I come to think of it to start out on our own at all. We've had a jolly narrow escape. The sooner we see the Windy River Ranch the better I shall be pleased."

"Hear, hear!"

And the juniors rode on under the sinking sun. From the ford the trail was marked by countless trampling hoofs of cattle, and they followed it easily enough across the prairie. Jimmy Silver tossed the long, keen "couteau" he had taken from Pequod into a rift in the plain as he passed it, and the knife vanished from sight. It was safer there than in the hands of the half-breed.

The sun sank lower to the high ridge of the distant Rocky Mountains as the juniors rode on. They looked anxiously ahead for a sight of the river, which was to be their next guide. From a hollow of the prairie a horseman emerged, riding directly towards them.

### The 6th Chapter. Home at Last!

Jimmy Silver & Co. drew rein.

Before the meeting with Pequod le Couteau it would not have occurred to them that the horseman ahead on the plain might possibly be an

enemy. But now they were very much on their guard.

The man sighted them, and they saw him pull down his Stetson hat a little to shade his eyes and stare at them. Then he urged his horse to a greater speed, riding straight towards them.

"Some giddy cowboy, I suppose," said Raby.

"Or a blessed road-agent," remarked Lovell.

"May belong to the ranch," said Jimmy Silver hopefully. "We'll keep our eyes open, anyhow."

The horseman rode up. He was a burly fellow with a sunburnt face, wearing fringed "chaps" and a flannel shirt open at the neck. His face looked good-natured enough, and he was evidently surprised.

"Say!" he ejaculated, as he drew rein. "Where did you 'uns blow from?"

"From Mosquito," said Jimmy Silver. "Can you tell us whether we're far from the Windy River Ranch?"

"I guess I can," said the cattleman, eyeing them.

"Perhaps you belong to the ranch?" asked Jimmy.

"P'raps I do," assented the rider. "Well, where will this trail lead us?" asked Lovell, rather impatiently.

"That depends," drawled the rider. "If you keep on far enough, it will lead you across the Rockies into British Columbia—"

"Look here—"

"And if you keep right on arter that, it'll land you in the Pacific."

"But—"

"Arter that, you'll have to swim, and I reckon you'll get to Japan if you keep right on."

Jimmy Silver laughed. Apparently the cattleman had recognised the juniors as "tenderfeet," and was disposed to be humorous.

"We're not going quite so far as that to-night," said Jimmy good-humouredly. "We're stopping at the Windy River Ranch. If you know the place, you'll know my cousin, Hudson Smedley."

The horseman started. "Waal, carry me home to die!" he ejaculated. "Are you 'uns the kid greenhorns that was left at Skitter?"

"At—at where?"

"The boss told me about four kid tenderfeet left behind at Skitter, what was to be fetched in the buggy to-morrow."

"At—at Skitter?" gasped Lovell.

"The mystery of that fearsome animal was explained at last 'Skitter' was the local pronunciation of Mosquito. The mysterious skitters that Mr. Bunch had alluded to were mosquitoes."

"So you're the kids?" said the cattleman, staring at them.

"How did you wander out of Skitter?"

"We didn't wander out," said Jimmy warmly. "We decided to come on to the ranch without giving Mr. Smedley the trouble of sending for us. If you belong to the ranch, then—"

"I guess I'm Mr. Smedley's fore-

**HEALTH and SPORT!**  
Conducted by  
**Percy Longhurst.**  
The feature that will keep you fit.

**Resistance Exercises.**  
The resistance exercises for the strengthening of the arm muscles are numerous and most effective, but I want to point out that the use of these exercises will not produce that abnormal muscular development made familiar by the poses of "strong men" of the music-halls. That is all right for show and a few special, but not particularly valuable, feats. Resistance movements develop toughness, endurance, and strength, which ought to satisfy anybody.

**Upper Arm.**  
Exercise one arm at a time, not forgetting that the left arm will probably need more work than the right. Hold right arm by side and a little away from it. Don't forget that during the movement the position of the upper part stays as at the beginning. The fist is clenched; palm facing forward. Set the arm muscles, and bend elbow so that the fist approaches the shoulder. Resistance is provided

by the left hand which is placed across the inside of the wrist, and pressing downwards.

When the return movement, straightening the arm, is made, the left hand is transferred to the back of the wrist, and the pressure is then towards the body.

Vary above by altering position of the forearm, so that at the beginning of and throughout the movement the thumb edge of the fist is uppermost. Position of resisting hand is likewise altered, to the outside or inside of forearm as required.

**Forearms.**  
The following exercises affect not only the forearm muscles, but those of the wrists and hands, including the fingers.

Bring hands to front of the chest, the fingers pointing upwards, with the palms and all the finger-tips touching. The left hand resists while the right forces it over backwards as far as convenient.

The return movement is made by left hand forcing the right backward. With hands in same position, but only the finger and thumb tips touching; hands in line with forearm, fingers straight and well apart. Press tips strongly against each other, forcing downwards until rest of fingers are at a right angle with lowest joint.

With the left-hand palm upwards; lay right hand across it, fingers flat on left palm, thumb holding across back of hand. Set left hand and wrist muscles, and resist strong outward turning movement until right

finger-tips point to floor. Go to work gently, to avoid painful wrenching of left hand at wrist.

Reverse movement, with left hand above right and turning outwards.

With right hand clenched and the knuckles pointing outwards, right hand bends towards wrist against pressure provided by forcing butt of left hand against right fingers.

Exercise left hand similarly.

**Arms, Shoulders and Chest.**

Lock the hands in front of chest by placing right thumb across left palm and closing all the fingers. Both forearms should be horizontal, with elbows lifted to height of shoulders. Hands are a few inches from chest. Right arm forces left arm to left until right hand is opposite left shoulder. Return movement made by left arm forcing other towards right.

Similar movement, but arms lifted until locked hands are level with forehead.

Again, but with the forearms no longer horizontal, with locked hands at level of abdomen.

Again, with locked hands at back of head.

With all of these movements pressure must be slow and steady; no jerking.

*Percy Longhurst*

(Another helpful article next week.)

man," drawled the big man. "Name of Pete Peters, at your service, kid. Lucky I found you wandering—"

"We weren't wandering!" roared Lovell.

Mr. Peters laughed. "Lucky I found you," he repeated.

"Gee! You'd have got lost for good on the prairie, if some rustler hadn't dropped on you and chawed you up for supper. Haw, haw, haw!"

"A rustler might have found us rather tough," said Lovell, with dignity. "We've met what you'd call a rustler. Ever heard of a half-breed chap called Pequod le Couteau?"

"Sure!"

"Well, he tried to steal our horses, and we knocked him out and left him tied up in the timber by the creek."

Pete Peters stared at Lovell blankly.

"You're giving me that?" he ejaculated.

"Eh? I'm telling you!"

"Good for you," said Mr. Peters cordially. "I've met a few liars in my time, but you cap the stack, young 'un. You lay over every story-teller I've ever heard. You've knocked out Pequod le Couteau. Oh, Jerusalem!" Mr. Peters roared with laughter.

"That's good! The toughest rustler this side of the Rockies. Haw, haw, haw!"

The juniors glared at Mr. Peters.

"It's true!" roared Lovell.

"Haw, haw, haw!" yelled Mr. Peters.

"We did it!" shouted Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We took away his knife!" howled Lovell.

"Got it with you?" asked Mr. Peters.

"I—I chucked it away, in a rift," said Jimmy Silver.

"Course you did," chuckled Mr. Peters. "You couldn't have kept it to show, sonny, cause why—you've never tetched it, and you've never even seen Pequod le Couteau; only heard tell of him at Skitter Camp."

"I tell you—"

"Can it, kid; can it!" said Mr. Peters soothingly. "Wait till you've been in the country a bit longer, and then spin them yarns to newcomers. Catch on? Now you foller me on, and I'll take you to the ranch, this side up with care. I reckon I came out looking for lost steers, but I kinder guess the boss will be better pleased with me for finding lost greenhorns, and toting them safe home."

"We can find our way without help," exclaimed Lovell angrily. "You can go and eat coke, Mr. Foreman."

But Mr. Peters only chuckled. "Foller on, you 'uns," he said.

And he wheeled his horse and started at a gallop. The juniors decided to follow. The ranch foreman was evidently taking the shortest cut to the ranch, and they were fatigued with the day's riding, and anxious to get in to supper and rest.

"Cheeky ass!" growled Lovell. "The silly chump fancies we're gassing about handling that half-breed rotter."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Perhaps he'll know us better later on," he said. "I'm jolly glad we've met him, anyhow. I want to get in."

Dusk was deepening over the prairie. Night was closing in when the juniors caught a glimmer in the distance of the Windy River, and they rode up, tired but cheerful, to the ranch-house.

A tall, stalwart figure appeared there, with an exclamation of surprise.

"Jimmy! Why—"

"We thought we'd come on, cousin Hudson," said Jimmy Silver, cheerily.

Hudson Smedley stared at them.

"You young duffers!" he said. "Thank goodness you've landed safely, anyhow. Where did you pick them up, Pete?"

"Found 'em wandering on the prairie, five miles out, boss," grinned the foreman.

"We weren't wandering!" roared Lovell.

"We were coming straight here, Mr. Smedley. We know our way about."

The rancher smiled.

"Well, now you're here—and thank goodness you're here safe—trot in," he said. "I guess you'll be wanting supper, and bed."

"You guess right," said Jimmy Silver.

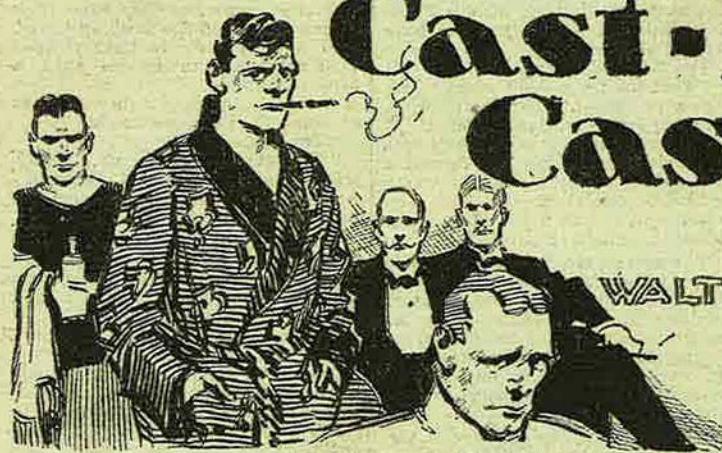
And the Rookwood chums gladly followed the Canadian rancher in, under the hospitable roof, at last, of the Windy River Ranch.

THE END.

(Breathless incidents galore in "The Rookwood Tenderfeet"—next Monday's stunning story of Jimmy Silver & Co. Out West. Order your BOYS' FRIEND in advance and make sure you read it!)



HEAPS OF THRILLS IN THIS GREAT BOXING YARN!



# Cast-Iron Cassidy!

BY WALTER EDWARDS

But for the intervention of "Boy" McGarth, Rollo Dayton would have had a very rough time of it at Starland where he is forced into a fight!

### The 1st Chapter.

#### The Big Night at Starland!

Like most champions, Boy McGarth made a pile of money; and, unlike most champions, he saved it. Then, at the height of his fame, when he had handed a neat knock-out to every man of his weight in Europe, he retired from the game and built Starland, a hall in which he staged an attractive boxing programme three times a week—on Monday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Starland stands in a quiet side street in Stepney, and here Boy McGarth reigns supreme. Born a child of the people, he became famous and returned to the people, and it would have fared ill with anybody who dared whisper a word against him.

The fight "fans" down Stepney way were proud of the Boy, and they considered that he hit the high lights when he took a financial interest in Cast-Iron Cassidy, the American fighting-machine who left his native Kansas City to clean up all the heavy-weight material in Europe.

Boy McGarth pulled the strings on this side of the Atlantic, of course, with the result that the American had been boosted to the skies by the time his liner berthed at Liverpool.

And here Cassidy received a shock. He expected the lord mayor and a brass band or so to be upon the quay to welcome him, but there was not so much as a reporter to give him the glad hand.

So Cast-Iron, profoundly chagrined, journeyed to London and met Boy McGarth, and the two spent many days in discussing suitable opponents.

"The scrap that would get 'em all by the ears," declared the Boy one morning, as they sat in the office at Starland, "is one between you and Rollo Dayton, the fellow who shoved it across Justin Schwaab, the Kafir, for the light-heavy-weight championship of Europe."

"Well, fix it, bo!" grinned the boxer from Kansas City. "Go right ahead! I'm out for business this trip, and I tell you that I've got a beaut of a wallop in each mitt!"

He snapped off the end of a long, black cigar and lit up, whilst McGarth eyed him with strong disapproval.

"They don't do you no good, y'know!" declared the Boy, who was the most conscientious of boxers. "Bad for the bellows!"

"Aw! Shucks!" laughed Cast-Iron. "I put a weed on every time I climb through the ropes! It gives the other guy the willies! Sure, sir! Anyway, write to this Dayton feller, and I'll show you somethin'!"

McGarth lost no time in approaching Rollo, who replied that he was in no wise eager for a contest at the moment. He pointed out that the Cup Final was to take place in less than a fortnight, and that he, as Chelsea Villa's centre-forward, did not feel justified in running the risk of an injury which might keep him out of the team.

"That guy's sure got cold feet!" drawled Cast-Iron, after he had scanned the letter. "But I guess we'll get his goat somehow or other, for it's got to be a slick feller who can side-step me! We'll get him where we want him, bo', don't worry! And who's the next victim on the list?"

"Harry Brettel, who won on points to Dick Rodd," returned the Boy. "He's a useful lad, so you'd better watch out, especially for his right hook! It's sudden death!"

"Aw! Shucks!" drawled the American contemptuously. "I've got 'em all in my pocket, son! Anyway,

fix this guy, 'cos I want to show the fight fans on this side of the Long Drink just what a heavy-weight should look like!"

Boy McGarth had no difficulty in fixing a match between Harry Brettel and Cast-Iron Cassidy, and the night of the contest found a stream of cars lined up in the neighbourhood of Starland.

The much-bested boxer from Kansas City was the attraction, of course, and a full hour before the time for the big fight found the hall packed from the ringside to the last row of the gallery.

The spectators, for the most part, were typical East Enders, so the well-groomed men in the ringside seats struck a somewhat incongruous note.

However, everybody seemed to get on quite well, even though a certain amount of personal remarks came from the cheaper parts of the house.

Two preliminary contests—six-rounders—had been staged when the Hon. Rollo Dayton and Dr. Dagnall arrived, and no sooner was the former recognised than the hall rang with his name.

Deafening yells and shrill whistling made a barbaric din, and it was not until Rollo, smiling and happy, dropped into his seat that the uproar died down.

The youngster was as immaculate as ever, for he looked as though he had been poured into his dress-clothes. His fair hair had been brushed until it was as smooth as the surface of a billiard-ball, and his gold-rimmed monocle gleamed like a heliograph.

Dagnall gazed round Starland with interest, but his gaze was soon recalled to the ring by the appearance of two middle-weights, who were received with hoarse yells and a sprinkling of cat-calls.

"Good old Nobby!" "How goes it, Izzy?"

The M.C., a portly, clean-shaven man, with a voice like a megaphone, climbed through the ropes and held up a podgy hand for silence; and such was his control over the rowdy crowd that the din subsided almost immediately.

"A six-round contest," cried Mark Samuels, the M.C., "between Nobby Slone, of St. Look's, and Izzy McNutt, of Mile End! Hon my right, Nobby Slone!" He paused as a round of cheering rang out. "Hon my left, Izzy McNutt!"

"Izzy—Izzy!" yelled a score of voices.

"No, 'e ain't!" shouted a wag.

It was quite obvious that Mr. McNutt was a hot favourite, but the fact did not seem to worry Nobby Slone, who appeared to have a perpetual grin.

"They're ready, sir!" declared the M.C., slipping through the ropes.

"Seconds out! Time!"

Still wearing the disembodied smile of a Cheshire cat, Nobby Slone skipped out of his corner, touched gloves, and lashed out with a terrific right swing which threatened to decapitate Izzy had it landed. But McNutt ducked in a flash, slammed home a hard punch to the body, and backed away.

The blow, which was anything but a caress, seemed to amuse Nobby, for his grin turned to a laugh as he went after his man.

Izzy gave ground for a moment or so; then with a clever feint he drew his man's left glove, ducked, and ripped home another punch to the body.

"Well done, Izzy, boy!" yelled McNutt's supporters, in a frenzy of excitement. "It 'im downstairs!"

Whether McNutt heard the sound advice is open to question, of course;

but the fact remains that he suddenly waded into his man like a human cyclone, using both hands with pretty judgment and driving him back to the ropes.

And still Nobby smiled as he covered up and crouched, and never once did he attempt to land a blow. He appeared to be made of oak, for the amount of punishment he absorbed in the first round would have put the average boxer down for the count of ten.

He looked comparatively fresh as he skipped jauntily to his corner.

"I've got an idea, old egg," said

features as he read signs which told him that Slone was weakening.

The crowd also read the signs, and the packed building was soon in a state of uproar.

"You've got 'im, Izzy!"

"Finish 'im off!"

"Pull yourself together, Slone!"

"Hi, Nobby, you're wanted on the phone!"

Swerving unsteadily, with a lowered guard and half-closed eyes, Nobby Slone was knocked round the ring, and all the while his opponent was waiting for an opening to land the blow which would put his man down for the count.

Izzy rushed the other boxer into a corner; but scarcely had Nobby's broad back touched the ropes than every vestige of lethargy dropped from him like a mantle, and so swift and unexpected was his punch that McNutt scarcely saw it.

The glove crashed against the clean-cut jaw with a click which told its own story, and the next moment Izzy sagged at the knees, toppled sideways, and fell to the canvas.

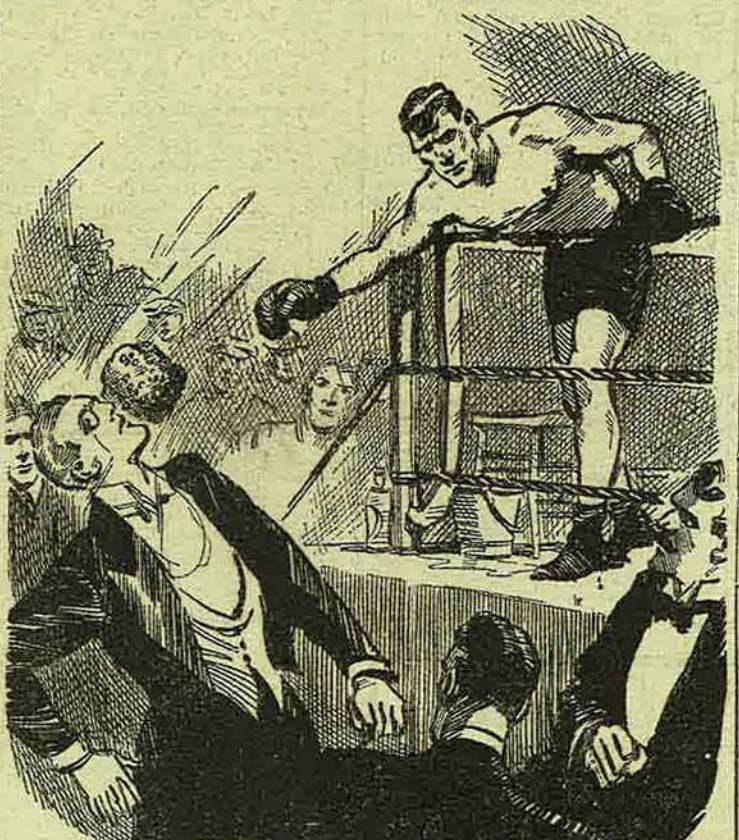
"One—two—"

It was the boxers' deathknell which was being tolled, and Izzy McNutt, of Mile End, was still unconscious when the fatal word "Out!" rang through the hall.

### The 2nd Chapter.

#### The Event of the Evening!

A ten-round contest, which went the whole distance, followed the Slone-McNutt clash, and then the special lights over the ring burst into life and sent a wave of excitement through the hall.



THE INSULT! Snatching a big sponge from a bucket, Cast-Iron Cassidy hurled it straight into Rollo Dayton's face!

Rollo Dayton, turning to his companion, "that the precious Nobby has got something in hand for Izzy—a little surprise-package, you know!"

"He's certainly pretty strong," returned the doctor; "but what the dickens he's got to grin about I don't know!"

"Wait, old egg!" counselled Rollo, fixing his mild blue eyes upon Slone.

Clang! The single note of the resonant gong brought the boxers from their respective corners, and Izzy McNutt lost not a moment in setting to work upon his opponent. Taking a risk, he again waded in, with both arms working like piston-rods.

Left, right, left, right—the succession of blows was almost monotonous, and Nobby Slone was forced to give ground.

Izzy gave him no peace, however, but followed him up, and a grim smile overspread McNutt's aquiline

For the big fight was on hand! Great activity reigned in the vicinity of the ring, where obese, white-sweated men were making everything ship-shape for the event of the evening.

Boy McGarth was the referee, and the sight of his swarthy features sent the whole house into a state of uproar. The King of Stepney, as he had been dubbed, climbed into the ring and smiled round at his cheering subjects; and the cataclysm of sound did not abate until Harry Brettel, the Newcastle heavy weight came striding down the gangway from the dressing-room.

A dark-skinned, dark-haired man of twenty-five or so, he wore a grim, unsmiling expression which gave him a formidable appearance, and not a flicker of emotion crossed his set features as a tumultuous cheer of greeting made the arc-lamps quiver.

Taking not the slightest notice of the spectators, he slipped through the ropes and walked across to his corner, where he seated himself and looked straight ahead, gazing into space, and he might have been a figure of stone, so still was he.

Half a dozen seconds were

fussing round him; but he appeared to be oblivious of their presence, and they, understanding their man, did not speak to him.

A full minute passed before Cast-Iron Cassidy put in an appearance, but no sooner did he do so than his reception made the roof-beams dance.

It was not that the patrons of Starland felt particularly amiable towards him personally. It was merely the fact that he was backed by their idol Boy McGarth which swayed them in his favour.

Cassidy was wearing a vivid purple dressing-gown and smoking a long black cigar as he swaggered towards the ring, and the smile which he bestowed upon the yelling sportsmen was condescending and rather contemptuous.

"What a queer beast, old man!" murmured Dagnall, with a note of disgust in his voice.

Rollo nodded his fair head, but he made no comment. He was too busy studying the man from Kansas, as a matter of fact.

Halting by the ringside, the American grinned round at the blur of faces. Then, moving very leisurely, he hoisted his big frame through the ropes.

Standing in the middle of the ring, he fixed his small eyes upon the statueque figure in the opposite corner.

"Say, Brettel," he drawled in a voice which carried through the hall, "do you know that I've come all the way from Kansas City to knock your block off?"

The Newcastle boxer regarded the American intently, but his dark-skinned face remained masklike, inscrutable.

"I don't think the gentle Brettel is likely to fall for Cassidy's cheap bluff, old egg!" declared Rollo Dayton, with a smile. "Now I've set eyes upon the man, I almost wish I'd signed articles with him!"

"Well, it's not too late," returned Dagnall. "But I advise you to leave it until after the Final."

Rollo again turned his mild blue eyes upon Cast-Iron Cassidy, to find that the fellow was grinning down at him.

"It's a bit chilly this evening, Dayton," drawled the American, with studied insolence. "Perhaps you've noticed that your feet are cold!"

There was a hidden insult in the words, and it was only with the utmost difficulty that the youngster held himself in check. Every impulse urged him to leap into the ring and punch the sneering words down the fellow's throat, and it was only Dagnall's hand upon his coat-sleeve which restrained him.

"That can wait, old man," said the doctor quietly. "We don't want a row here!"

Rollo nodded and watched Cassidy as he swaggered to his corner, where nine seconds were waiting for him.

There followed a long discussion about gloves and bandages, but again this ruse had not the slightest effect upon Harry Brettel's nerves.

He just sat in his corner, calm and unmoved.

Cast-Iron Cassidy declared himself satisfied at last, and Boy McGarth raised his hand for silence.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I beg to announce a special twenty-round contest—three minutes each round—between one of the greatest American heavy-weights the game has ever known and Harry Brettel, who is a coming champion!"

"The American has fought thirty battles during the past nine months, and of these he has won twenty-seven by the knock-out route."

Quite half of the thirty battles had been against "has-beens" and chopping-blocks, but the victories looked very impressive upon paper.

"Gentlemen," continued Boy McGarth, pointing a rigid finger into the American's corner, "Cast-Iron Cassidy!"

This announcement was the signal for a further outburst of cheering and whistling, of course. And then Harry Brettel was introduced.

He did not trouble to rise from his chair, but nodded shortly as an acknowledgment of the plaudits.

The business sped up from that moment, and only a matter of seconds elapsed before the gong brought the boxers from their respective corners.

They touched gloves and crossed, and Cast-Iron Cassidy grinned into Brettel's mask-like features.

"Watch out, son," he drawled, "for I'm sure going to knock your block off!"

He rushed straight at his man.

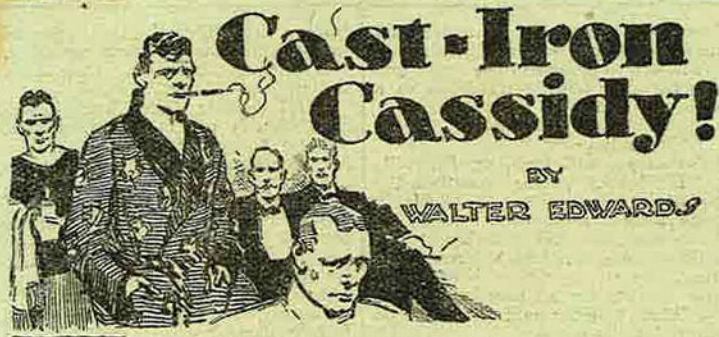
(Continued overleaf.)

# ANSWERS

EVERY MONDAY PRICE 2

The great event of the football season—"THE FINAL!" next Monday's stunning Cuptie story, featuring Rollo Dayton and the sinister Duke!





# Cast-Iron Cassidy!

BY  
WALTER EDWARDS

(Continued from previous page.)

### The 3rd Chapter. Badly Beaten!

Harry Brettel was quite prepared for the wild attack, and the easy manner in which he side-stepped proved that he was just as cool as when he first entered the ring. Furthermore, his right glove shot out and caught the American behind the ear as he rushed past to be brought up by the ropes.

The Newcastle man was after Cassidy in a flash, and even as he got within striking distance he fell into a trap, for the American swung round with incredible speed, bringing over a terrific right as he did so.

His glove smashed against the side of Brettel's head, and sent him reeling, and the next moment the Newcastle boxer was battling for dear life, being rushed across the canvas before a deadly hail of punches, which seemed to crash through his guard and find any part of his head and body.

He crouched and tried to fight back, but all the while he was shipping most gruelling punishment; and when he did manage to get away from the ropes he found that the American was still displaying his gold teeth in a mocking smile.

"I'm goin' to smash you, Brettel!" he drawled, circling round his man with the stealth of a panther. "And I'm goin' to wallop you so hard that your little brother in China will feel the shock! Watch out, you boob!"

He leapt as he said the words, his left shot out, and again Brettel found his guard pierced and himself reeling before a terrible punch to the mouth. Rollo, watching every move, was the first to admit that Cast-Iron Cassidy was anything but a novice; he was, indeed, a most dangerous opponent, and a man who probably did not know his own strength.

He again had the sphinx-like Brettel on the run, but he did not have matters all his own way on this occasion.

The boxer from Newcastle had taken some sort of measure of his man, and time and again he pushed out a snappy left which connected with the American's flat nose and brought tears to his eyes.

And this, happening on at least half a dozen occasions, caused the grin to die from Cassidy's face. He replaced the grin with a scowl, his small eyes narrowed, and his thin-lipped mouth drooped at the corners. And then he gave a grunt, and commenced to fight with a ferocity such as had never been witnessed within the walls of Starland—and quite a number of rousing battles had been fought in the place.

Throwing all thought of defence to the winds, Cast-Iron Cassidy set his mind upon one thing, and one thing only—the destruction of the man who was already tottering before his fierce onslaught.

Tireless, merciless, he pounded Brettel with lightning rights and lefts, and all the while he muttered savagely to himself.

The audience, of course, was in a state of uproar, for this was the type of "mill" which appealed to the greater part of the sportsmen present; and a wild cheer, which almost raised the roof, rang out for Brettel when he suddenly rallied and tore into the American, causing him to cover up and give ground.

"Into him, son!"

"Use your left!"

"What a beauty!"

Harry Brettel seemed to have become possessed of some of the American's ferocity, and for the next minute the two men stood up to each other and exchanged blows which would have knocked a hole through a brick wall.

The two big men were engaged in what was a veritable slogging match, and their spirited performance pleased even Boy McGarth's patrons, most of whom were inclined to be acutely disappointed if they did not get something very like slaughter in exchange for the shilling or so they parted with at the pay-box.

Standing rock-like upon their feet, with legs apart and chests almost touching, Cassidy and Brettel used both hands with a speed and strength which made many a hardened spectator wince as the sound of the devastating blows rang through the hall; yet neither boxer would give

in nor fall into a clinch for a brief respite.

It was a terrible test of doggedness and endurance, and the crowd was soon yelling its wild admiration.

For sheer grit was appreciated at Starland, and a vanquished warrior who had put up a game fight never left the ring without receiving a shower of silver and copper to compensate him for having lost the long end of the purse.

But the man who shirked punishment, who gave in without a struggle—well, that was an entirely different matter, for Starland had no use for a quitter.

Both Cassidy and Brettel were fighting in a manner which pleased the sportsmen down Stepney way, and the big boxing-hall was soon rocking with the din of voices.

"Stick it, Brettel!"

"You've got 'im, Cassidy!"

Thud, thud, thud!

The men were still slamming away at each other when the gong went, and the fight "fans" were quick to notice that the American had landed two blows to his opponent's one during the last minute of the round.

### A Great Cuptie Yarn! "THE FINAL!"

Featuring Rollo Dayton and the Duke in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Order your copy to-day, and make sure you read it!

"Two to one against Brettel!"

"Two to one against!"

Brettel, as well as the fight "fans," was also aware of the fact that he had shipped more punishment than Cassidy, and his hard features were pale and twisted as he swung round somewhat dazedly, and swayed across the canvas to his corner, where his "seconds" lifted him bodily and placed him in his swivel-chair.

Listless, with his deep chest heaving convulsively, and his muscular arms resting limply upon the top rope, he closed his eyes as his attendants sponged his moist body and flapped cool air between his parted lips.

He was undoubtedly in a bad way, but so was Cassidy, for the American had received the shock of his life when his man had suddenly rallied, and waded into the battle with a cold fury only second to his own.

Cassidy had no fears as to what would be the outcome of the contest, yet he did not look forward to the punishment which he knew would come his way before he put Brettel down for the count of ten.

"Brettel ain't exactly a Gentle Annie," he confided to one of his "seconds," a baldheaded, raw-boned

fellow, who was massaging his arms. "He's sure got a real wallop in his right mitt; but I figure to get him just where I want him in the next shake-up. He'll think it's his birthday, and that all the presents have arrived at once!"

The "second" chuckled. "That tha feller don't exactly look like a man-eater, boss," he drawled, glancing across at Harry Brettel.

This was true, for the boxer's eyes were closed, and his lips formed a grim, straight line, yet there was an inflexible look about the lean jaw which spoke of an indomitable determination to fight to the last gasp.

The contest meant a great deal to him, for the boxer who could gain the verdict over the much-boasted American would find himself well on the way up the ladder of fistic fame.

The minute intermission soon came to an end, and both men looked refreshed when the gong brought them to their feet.

Cassidy was grinning once again, but the grin did not suit his particular style of beauty, for it seemed to accentuate the vulpine expression which lurked in the depths of his close-set eyes.

As for Harry Brettel, his bruised and cut features might have been carved out of stone. One eye was already closed, an old wound upon his cheekbone had been opened, and the discoloured patches upon his body bore testimony to the punishment he had taken. Yet he looked fearless as he left his corner for the second round.

The American crouched and attacked at once, and the terrific right he sent over crashed through the other man's guard and connected with the jaw, and a second later Brettel was again reeling before a fusillade of blows which rained upon him from all sides and dazed him.

To Brettel the American seemed to be possessed of a dozen hands, and the manner in which those hands found head and body was almost uncanny.

Instinctively Brettel covered up and tried to avoid punishment; but Cassidy would not be denied, and the latter's grin changed to a mocking laugh when a swinging blow caught his man full upon the temple and sent him reeling from one side of the ring to the other.

"Now to knock your block off, Brettel!" he shouted, darting after his swaying opponent, who was trying to steady himself against the ropes. "Watch out!"

The next moment a lightning upper cut flashed through the air and connected with Brettel's iron jaw, lifting the big fellow clean off his feet and sending him toppling over the ropes. And a wild yell broke from all parts of the house as he clutched feebly at space, overbalanced, and crashed to the floor with a thud which

seemed to shake the whole building to its foundations.

The force behind the mighty punch was prodigious, unheard of, and the spectators gasped as they fixed their staring eyes upon the writhing boxer, who was fortunate to have escaped with nothing more serious than a severe shaking.

A toneless, dispassionate voice was counting the passing seconds.

"Two—three—"

"Up Harry! Get up, man!" cried Brettel's wild-eyed "seconds," making a dash for their principal and hauling him roughly to his feet.

"That's right, you guys!" drawled Cast-Iron Cassidy, grinning down from the ring. "Just shove him through the ropes, because I ain't finished with him yet!"

"Come on, 'Arry!" coaxed Brettel's attendants anxiously.

The boxer from Newcastle was still dazed as he was lifted bodily and rolled under the bottom rope.

"Get up, Brettel!"

"Take yer time, 'Arry!"

The wild shouts penetrated to the pugilist's numbed brain, and something prompted him to get to his feet before he was counted out.

Rallying every ounce of his remaining strength and will-power, he scrambled to his knees; then, grasping the ropes in his gloved hands, he managed to get to his feet, where, with closed eyes and aghast features, he swayed from side to side, helpless, at the mercy of the American, who was gloating at his impotence.

"Didn't I promise to knock yer block off, you boob?" taunted Cassidy, with an ugly grin.

"Sky the rag!" shouted a score of hoarse voices.

"Chuck in the towel!"

"He's beat!"

The indignant shouts caused Cast-Iron Cassidy to act without delay, for he did not mean to be deprived of his knock-out. So, callously and deliberately, he measured the semi-conscious Brettel, paused for a brief second, and then brought over a terrific left which crashed against the unprotected jaw with a force which threatened to smash the bone.

Harry Brettel made no sound as he swayed forward and fell to the canvas.

A breathless silence followed the knock-out, and then a clear voice rang through the packed hall like a clarion note:

"You unsportsmanlike cur!"

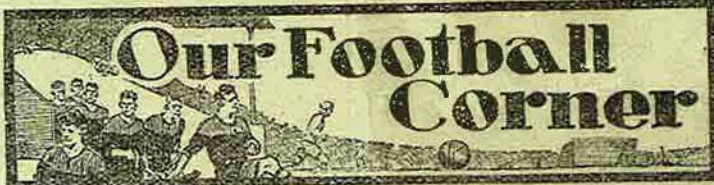
### The 4th Chapter.

#### Cast-Iron Cassidy Loses his Temper!

Every eye in Starland turned to the immaculate, fair-haired youngster standing by the ringside, his handsome face flushed, his blue eyes flashing scorn and disgust.

"It's Dayton!" shouted a dozen voices, for the famous Chelsea Villa

(Continued on the next page.)



## Our Football Corner

### The Long Season.

Quite a lot of people are of opinion that the football season is too long, and that we ought to get back, at least, to the pre-war custom of confining the big games to the last four and the first four months of the year. It is quite certain, of course, that the players of many teams get more than a little bit tired of the game before the first Saturday in May is reached, but a reduction of the length of the season would also entail a reduction of the number of matches, and this is an idea which would not be regarded favourably by the various clubs in these times of financial stress.

### Promotion and Relegation.

But though some players can now afford, in a manner of speaking, to rest on their oars, there are others for which the last two or three weeks of the season are absolutely vital so far as their future is concerned. Right through the campaign it has been pretty clear that there would be a very grim struggle indeed among the First Division clubs to avoid the last two places, which carry with them the descent into the Second Division. Perhaps even more thrilling has been the fight to gain one of the two top places in the Second Division, and thus to earn the right to go into the top class when the fixture lists are

next made up. Several of these problems of promotion and relegation are as yet undecided, and it may well be that we shall go to the very last kick of the season before it is finally settled which clubs will go up and which shall go down.

### Concerning This Season's Campaign.



JOHN CRISP  
(Blackburn Rovers).

has run a fairly normal course. Also, that most of the clubs which were expected to do well have lived up to—or very nearly up to—the general expectations. Take Liverpool as a striking example. They won the championship of the First Division last season, and right through the present season have faithfully held on to a leading place in the League table. It is a place which they won by consistent football played by fellows who are not too scientific, but who have proved very effective.

Then, again, it was generally anticipated that Sunderland, in view of their expensive team-building near the end of last season, would play an important part in the competition, and all along they have been the most serious challengers to the supremacy of Liverpool. On the other hand, we should include Middlesbrough as among the most disappointing teams of the campaign. They started well, and seemed to have enough good players on the books to be able to keep it up. But accidents and illnesses came along, and from a high place in the table, the Teessiders have fallen to a comparatively obscure position. The fact that Notts Forest and Stoke have had such a big struggle all along the line proves that it is almost as difficult to keep a place in the First Division as it is to get such a place. These two clubs were the promoted from the Second Division last season, but they have not set the country on fire with their doings in the top class.

Neither have those famous fighters of other days—Blackburn Rovers—done anything wonderful, and for a long time their footsteps have been dogged by misfortune and anxiety. This was plainly evident in March, when they signed on two new players

just in time. One of them was Dixon, of Newcastle United, and the other John Crisp, of West Bromwich Albion. Not always do players return to their new masters such good interest for money expended as did Crisp, for in his first two matches for



DAVID JACK  
(Bolton Wanderers).

his new club he scored two goals. One of them enabled the Rovers to draw, and the other to win, and these valuable points now stand the Rovers in good stead.

### Unlucky Wolves.

In the Second Division the most tragic time has been spent by that famous old club, Wolverhampton Wanderers, and unless something extraordinary happens they must now spend one season at least in a lower circle. One does not like to see a

team with much tradition behind it dropping out of the Second League, but this football business always was a case of the survival of the fittest.

### Men of Bolton Wanderers.

Any failings of the Bolton Wanderers' Club in the League contests was largely compensated for by their fine run in the Cup competition. For the latter they owe a great deal to their left-wing pair—Smith and Vizard, and to the fact that on the right wing they had a man in David Jack who has proved himself capable of using to the full the chances made for him by his colleagues on the left. Jack is, of course, the son of the present manager of the Plymouth Argyle Club, and, as a matter of fact, young David was actually born in Bolton while his father was playing at outside-left for the Wanderers. The recent encouragement which the Trotters have given to talent which learnt football in the district is a good sign, and one is pleased to note that it has been accompanied by a fair measure of success. There is always a certain risk that managers of football clubs may go tearing up and down the country hunting for players, when the right sort of material is to be found on their doorstep.



(Another splendid article next week.)



centre-forward was known to the crowd.

Cast-Iron Cassidy swung round at the sound of Rollo's voice; and as he glared down at the clean-cut features, a wave of angry blood mounted slowly to the roots of his close-cropped hair.

A curious hush descended upon the spectators as they waited for the American pugilist to speak. The situation was full of dramatic possibilities, and a strange tension was in the air.

"D'you mind saying that piece again, Mister Side-Stepper?" drawled Cassidy, who had become ominously calm.

Rollo jammed his gold-rimmed monocle into position before he replied.

"Not at all," he said at length, and very deliberately. "I called you an unsportsmanlike cur, though why I should libel a decent dumb animal, I don't know!"

A roar of laughter greeted the remark, and Cassidy, whose big frame was quivering with rage, took a couple of steps across the ring, grasped the ropes, and thrust his ugly face forward.

"Look here, Dayton," he ground out, "let me tell you right now that it don't pay to get fresh with Cast-Iron Cassidy! I eat better men than you before breakfast!"

"Really!" murmured Rollo Dayton, with a quiet smile. "And I might eat you, only I'm not fond of pork!"

Another shout of laughter rang out, and a red light glinted in the American's small eyes.

"Say, you boob!" he shouted wildly. "You've got a lot of hot air, but why don't you step up here? Have you still got cold feet?" He turned away from Rollo and addressed the house. "Say, you folk, just listen here for a moment! I've already challenged this guy with the ironed hair to a twenty-rounds contest, but he's turned me down; yet he's got the nerve to trot along to the hall and hand me a lot of rough stuff! Is that sportsmanlike? Eh? Answer that!"

"That it ain't!" shouted a voice from the gallery; and the hall was soon in a state of uproar, opinions being divided upon the point which Cassidy had raised.

"He funks it!" "He's got cold feet!" "Now then, Dayton!" "Shove it across 'im, Rollo!"

The youngster waited patiently for the din to subside, and when he could make himself heard his mellow voice carried to every corner of the building.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "there are three reasons why I will not meet Wooden-Head Cassidy—I beg his pardon, Cast-Iron Cassidy—to-night. The first is that he has already had a pretty gruelling time with Brettel; the second is that the thrashing can wait; and the third is that I do not wish to run the risk of getting even a minor injury until after Chelsea Villa has played in the final, and, I trust, retained the Cup! After April the twenty-eighth, gentlemen, I shall be pleased to meet Cassidy for any purse and over any distance; and I shall be willing to fight him in this very hall."

The crowd had listened to what the youngster had to say with rapt attention, and no sooner did his mellow voice die away than the air was split with a roar of shouting, whistling, and catcalls.

Cast-Iron Cassidy, however, did not join in, but continued to glare down at Rollo Dayton's imperturbable features.

"I guess you think you've been all-fired funny, you big-boob!" he snarled, as the din commenced to subside. "But let me hand you a lemon right now! You've got cold feet, and you're afraid to meet me! Ain't that it?"

"Not at all, old egg!" returned the youngster quietly. "I'm not afraid to meet you, though I must confess that I don't get much pleasure in doing so, for your face doesn't please me. But perhaps you caught it in the door when you were young?"

There was not the suspicion of a smile upon Rollo's face as he put the question, and for the moment the enraged American did not know whether to take him seriously or not. But the titter which ran round the ringside convinced him that the fair-haired giant was pulling his leg.

"I'll make you fight me—and right now, you big boob!" he shouted, his eyes blazing with a wild light. "D'yer hear that, you side-stepping galoot?"

"No," answered Rollo. "Please speak up!"

"Are you goin' to fight me, or ain't you?" roared Cassidy, in a voice which must have been heard outside the hall.

"No, not until it suits me!" returned the fair-haired amateur.

"Then take that, you side-stepper!" shouted the American, snatching a big sponge from a bucket and hurling it straight into Rollo Dayton's face.

The 5th Chapter.

A Fight Under Strange Conditions!

Rollo Dayton, in the ordinary way, was a young man of equable temper, cool under all circumstances, a sort of human iceberg, yet no sooner did the dripping sponge strike him in the face, blinding him and drenching the front of his dress-shirt, than something seemed to snap in his brain, and he "saw red."

He did not shout wildly nor threaten, but gripped the top rope, hauled himself upwards, and took a flying leap into the ring, a feat which spoke of a perfectly-trained body.

Cast-Iron Cassidy was waiting for him—on the doorstep, as it were—and the vicious punch he aimed would have knocked the youngster senseless had not Boy McGarth intervened in the nick of time. The champion leapt forward and gripped the American's thick wrist, wrenching it in a manner which made the fellow wince.

"None o' that, Cassidy!" he growled, with a black scowl. "The

throw himself upon the figure in evening dress; but again Boy McGarth intervened.

"Pull yourself together, confound you!" he snapped. "You're askin' for a riot, you are! If you and Dayton want to scrap to-night you can do it, but I won't have a rough-and-tumble in my 'all, and that's straight!"

Cast-Iron, who was quivering like a hound upon the leash, kept his burning gaze upon Rollo Dayton, who was wiping his knuckles with a silk handkerchief. Cassidy's sharp teeth had broken the skin.

The youngster glanced down at Dr. Dagnall.

Star Programme

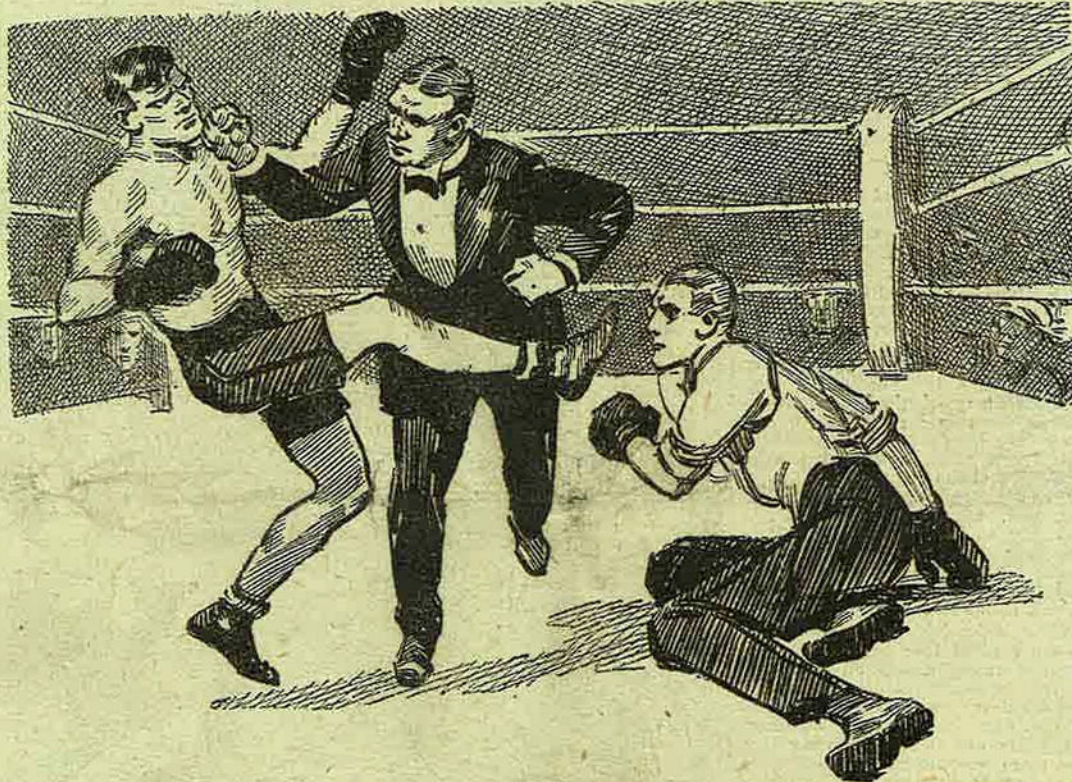
Every Week in the BOYS' FRIEND!

TELL ALL YOUR PALS!

"I wish you could cauterise the bite, old egg," he drawled. "I have a horror of hydrophobia!"

"Dorn me! There he goes again!" shouted the American pugilist, turning a nice shade of purple. "Let me get at him! I'll knock his block off!"

"You shall certainly have the opportunity, my dear Cassidy,"



THE REFEREE INTERVENES!

As Cast-Iron Cassidy aimed a kick at Rollo Dayton's chin, the referee leapt forward and brought over a right hook which sent Cassidy crashing to the boards!

boys won't stand for that sort o' thing. That slick stuff may be all right in Kansas, but it won't wash at Starland. You didn't give Dayton time to put his 'ands up!"

A hot flush mantled the American boxer's evil features as he shook himself free of the restraining hand. "Aw! Shucks!" he snarled. "Mister Side-Stepper insulted me, ain't?"

Rollo, who was looking as amiable as a Bengal man-eater, walked up to the big fellow and tapped him upon the chest in anything but a gentle manner.

"Let me hear a little less about the side-stepper, Cassidy," he said, very quietly—too quietly to be pleasant, thought Dr. Dagnall, who could read the signs.

"Aw! Out that stuff out!" blazed the American. "You are a blamed side-stepper, or you would fight me right here and now!"

And as he said the last words, he struck Rollo a resounding blow on each cheek with his open glove; and this unexpected and cowardly act proved to be the last straw.

Rollo's famous left shot out with incredible speed, crashed against Cassidy's mouth, and sent him reeling, to clutch wildly at the air and lose his balance. He fell in a heap in the opposite corner of the ring.

"Now, then, lazy!" shouted a wag from the gallery. Get up!"

Fuming like a madman, Cassidy scrambled to his feet and prepared to

drawled Rollo Dayton, slipping out of his tail coat and handing it down to Dagnall. "I feel sure Mister McGarth will be able to accommodate me with a pair of gloves!"

Rollo although appearing to be frivolous, was inwardly burning with anger and indignation, for he could not forget the brutal manner in which the American had treated Harry Brettel. The man from Newcastle, who had been lifted into his corner, had only just regained consciousness; but even now there was a dazed expression in his dark eyes.

Cassidy showed his gold teeth in a gloating grin.

"So you're ready to collect what's comin' to you, eh, Mister Side-Stepper?" he sneered. "Boy, fix the boob with some mitts!"

McGarth, who looked rather worried at the turn of events, crossed to Rollo.

"I can let you have some shorts, Mister Dayton," he said. "Why not slip along to the dressing-room and change?"

"No, no, that's all right," smiled Rollo. "I've an idea that I can manage; and I don't want to keep the gentleman from Kansas City waiting!"

Dropping into a swivel chair, he placed himself in the hands of a couple of "seconds," who at once commenced to fix his bandages. The youngster had no particular wish to fight in his evening clothes, but he decided to do so because he had taken

a measure of the American pugilist, who was of the school which bluffed and tried to beat the other fellow before a blow had been struck. He had studied the mentality and temperament of the average American fighter, and in meeting his man at once, without troubling to change, he knew that he would get Cast-Iron Cassidy, a past-master in the art of bluffing, guessing.

And such was a fact, for the Kansas City pugilist looked anything but happy as he sat in his corner, with his eyes fixed upon his opponent.

Brettel had already been assisted from the ring, and the excitement was at fever heat when Rollo Dayton, who was sitting with his gloved hands upon his knees, nodded to Boy McGarth to intimate that he was ready.

"Gentlemen," cried the owner of Starland, "a twenty rounds contest—three minutes each round—between Cast-Iron Cassidy, of America, and Rollo Dayton, of London."

A burst of cheering and whistling rang out and slowly subsided.

"What's the purse?" shouted a number of voices.

"What's the stake, Boy?" came a cry from the ring-side.

Boy McGarth gave a little twisted smile, and glanced from Rollo to the American.

"Say, Side-Stepper," cried Cassidy, half rising from his chair, "will you fight for anything I like to name?"

Rollo did not hesitate. "Anything," he returned quietly.

human tornado, and the youngster greeted him with a straight left, which shot out with the force and speed of a piston-rod, catching him on the nose.

Blinded by rage and tears, Cassidy gave a grunt and came up for more. And he got it. Timing the rush to a fraction of a second, Rollo again shot out that terrible left, following it up with a right which crashed against the side of the American's hard head, and sent him slightly off his balance.

This was anything but a propitious start for the man who thought he was going to eat Rollo, and his brain was working at top speed as he tucked himself away behind his gloves and gave ground, seeking for an opening.

Cassidy knew that there were few men in the game who possessed anything like his strength, and the fact that he was already feeling the effects of Rollo Dayton's three blows gave him food for thought.

Not that he was worried about the result of the contest, for he was fully convinced that he would win in the long run. All he had to do was to land a couple of blows to the youngster's smooth jaw, and then—

Thud, thud, thud! Left, right, left came Rollo's gloves, and such was the force behind them that Cassidy was sent flying back against the ropes; and scarcely did the hemp touch his flesh than he seemed to lose every vestige of sanity. His eyes flashed, and he bared his gold teeth, and then he leapt with the ferocity of a tiger.

"Watch out!" he breathed; and such was the fury of his sudden attack that Rollo was forced to use the ring.

And it was whilst he was giving ground that he stepped upon a wet patch in Cassidy's corner, slipped, tried to retain his balance, and fell forward upon his hands and knees.

"Stand back, Cassidy!" commanded Boy McGarth; but the American took not the slightest notice of the warning.

"Get up, you side-stepper!" shouted Cast-Iron Cassidy.

And even as Rollo was in the act of rising, he rushed forward, raised his boot, and aimed a terrific kick at the youngster's ribs.

Rollo, acting in a flash, threw himself sideways, and the kick missed by a matter of inches; but, even so, he did not have time to scramble to his feet before Cassidy was rushing at him again.

"Play in the Cup Final, will you?" shouted Cast-Iron, who was mad with rage; and once again he lashed out with all the power of his leg.

This time he aimed for Rollo's chin; but the kick did not reach its billet. Instead, Boy McGarth leapt forward, and brought over the right hook which had carried him from victory to victory.

Click! The sound—unmistakable—rang through the packed hall like the staccato crack of a whip, and Cast-Iron Cassidy, having given a curious grunt, became limp in every joint, and slowly crumpled up, his knees sagging, his arms falling limply to his sides.

It seemed an age before he pitched forward upon his face, but once he struck the canvas he did not move a muscle.

There was no need to count him out.

The silence which had settled upon the hall was now shattered by a tumultuous furor, and the name of Rollo Dayton and Boy McGarth burst from all sides of the house.

McGarth had turned to Rollo, and the two were gripping hands.

"I'm real sorry this should have happened, Mister Dayton," declared the owner of Starland. "When I decided to run Cassidy I didn't know he was this sort of skunk, and you can be sure that I'm through with him after this!"

"That's all right, old egg," smiled the fair-haired amateur. "I've got to thank you for saving me from a few broken ribs and a smashed jaw, and—"

"Forget it!" smiled McGarth. "Still, if you think you are indebted to me, there's something I want very badly."

"Name it, old egg," said Rollo readily.

"I want to see the Cup Final."

"My son," declared Rollo, "you shall have the best seat in the grandstand!"

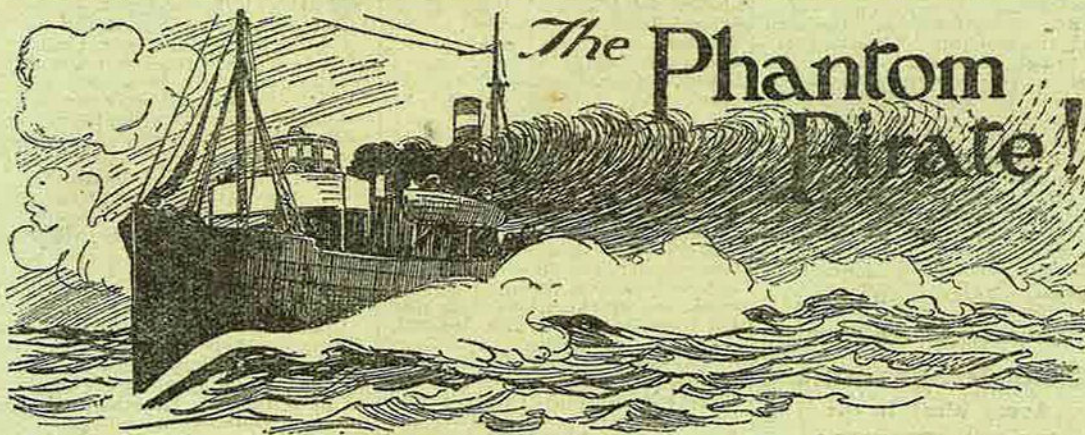
And Boy McGarth did.

THE END.

(The greatest football fixture of the season—"The Final!"—featuring the Hon. Rollo Dayton and the Duke, in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. On no account miss it. Order your copy to-day!)



A STORY OF MODERN BUCCANEERS—WRITTEN BY MAURICE EVERARD!



To discover the strength of the pirates Dick Polruan enters their stronghold, and later makes friends with one of the enemy!

### The 1st Chapter.

Hearing of the mysterious loss at sea of more than twenty ships within a month, Captain Joe Tremorne, the Polruan cousins, Frank and Dick, and Harry Rawson, their chum, set out in the *Defiance*, a camouflaged high-speed destroyer, to discover the modern pirate to whom the loss of the vessels is attributed. With them is Pieface, their negro servant, the crew of the *Enchantress*, Joe's old ship, and Bunjie, Pieface's baby elephant. When they have been at sea some weeks, they come upon a derelict vessel, the *Octoroon*, of New Orleans, and find that the passengers and the crew have been murdered, and the officers are missing. The ship's papers, log, and valuables have been stolen. Suddenly time-bombs explode on the *Octoroon*, sending her to the bottom without a trace. Later when making for the Gulf of Mexico, the *Defiance* encounters a tidal wave which carries her into an inland lake of a mysterious South Sea Island. On the island the marooned seamen come upon one of the lost cities of the Spanish Main, and discover it is being used by the modern pirate as his headquarters. At night Frank and Dick and Harry Rawson visit a Spanish galleon, which is at anchor in the harbour of the city, and Frank has the good fortune to recover the ship's papers of the *Octoroon*. Joe Tremorne then plans to attack the pirates' stronghold, and he and his party take possession of one of the island forts. To discover the strength of the pirates, Dick Polruan and a young seaman named Rogers visit the fortress occupied by the enemy. Here they find that a room beneath the one in which the pirates are discussing their plans contains a number of infernal machines. These Dick Polruan decides to lay hands on, thus hoping either to capture the enemy or to blow them to smithereens.

### The 2nd Chapter.

#### The Vault of Doom!

"Blowing the fort to smithereens is all right so long as we don't go up with it," said Rogers. "It's one thing to make an explosion, and quite another to get clear of it. You're not going to do anything dangerous to yourself, I hope, Master Richard."

Dick knew that Rogers was not thinking of himself. It was but the natural caution of an older and more experienced man.

He smiled confidently. "Don't worry; I know what I'm doing. Those fellows up there have got the store of time-bombs which Frank heard being discussed on the galleon. From something one of them let fall I rather imagine we shall find them here. Talk about careless beggars!" as a door yielded under his hand. "They're pretty confident of no one suspecting their game. However, perhaps it's not to be wondered at, considering all things. Now, you keep guard over there in the shadows, Rogers, and if anyone comes along, give me the signal."

"I'd like to know a bit more about your plan, Master Richard," the sailor protested. "What are you going to do, anyway?"

"Find their store of explosives," came the whispered reply. "If the bombs are worked by time-fuses and can be exploded, say, within an hour, I'll wait fifty-five minutes, and then give these scoundrels five minutes to put their hands up, surrender everything and march out, thus leaving us in possession!"

Rogers looked aghast. He had

always known Dick Polruan to be something of a reckless boy, but the daring nature of this project fairly took his breath away.

"You are taking on a pretty tough job, aren't you?" he remarked. "Mind, I don't want to interfere, and I know I'm under superior orders, but I'm only thinking—"

Dick was inclined to become impatient. The prospect of bringing off such a tremendous coup had fired his imagination.

"Leave the thinking to me, my friend," he retorted. "If only you'd do as you're told everything will work out all right. Just get into that recess and keep eyes and ears open. I shall listen for your signal."

He had no thought of danger as he pushed back the heavy wooden portal, which creaked rather perilously on its rusted iron hinges. But the instant he let it go the unexpected happened. At that end the wall of the vault had sunk towards one corner, and under its own weight the door swung slowly back and locked with a clang that echoed eerily through the gloomy chamber.

Dick spun round, the beam from an electric torch in his free hand, and there for a long minute he stood with the ribbon of light trained on the intricacies of the huge iron lock.

"That's torn it from the start," he muttered, a fever of apprehension suddenly seizing him. "If I bang the door to let Rogers know the plight I'm in they'll collar both him and me. No, that won't do. Perhaps there's some other way."

He examined his prison critically. It consisted of four stone walls, immensely thick, a vaulted roof supported by two stone columns, and a flagged floor powdered with the dust of centuries. There were, however, footprints everywhere, showing that the place was frequently used. On this fact Dick, with the boundless optimism of youth, began to build hopes.

A teak board raised on trestled legs formed an extemporised table, and on this were a number of metal boxes. All were of a uniform size, some, apparently, finished, others in a partial state of completion. Putting the torch on the table, Dick picked up one and examined it carefully. Its construction was of the most elementary nature—a rectangle of stout sheet metal, partly filled with high-explosive powder, the rest of the space being occupied by a mechanical arrangement worked by clockwork, and so contrived that when the mainspring was sufficiently run down the powder would explode.

Attached to each was a dial and moveable hand operating a small spring hammer, which on release smashed a thin glass tube containing a brownish-looking fluid. It was quite obvious that the release of the fluid caused, on contact with the powder, the desired explosion.

"Very interesting, very interesting indeed!" muttered Dick. "And, I should imagine, highly dangerous."

"My young friend, you are quite right. They are all highly dangerous!"

The partially finished bomb dropped from the boy's fingers, and the marvel was that the force did not cause an explosion. He wheeled round, and found himself face to face with an old grey-bearded man dressed in a flat pancake-shaped cap and a long black garment with loose sleeves, something like a college lecturer's gown.

"The professor!" leaped in a scarcely audible whisper to the boy's lips.

The old man bowed over his interlocked hands.

"I am glad, my young friend, you do me the honour to recognise my rank. Perhaps I may be allowed to introduce myself to a perfect stranger—Professor Helferrich, late of Bonn University."

"I see—a Bocho!" snapped Dick, regarding the other fiercely. "You

the advantage. Our more mature judgment allows us to overlook such petty offences. If the mind is all right, then nothing else matters. And from but a very fleeting acquaintance with you, I gather that your mind is very alert. You are doubtless greatly interested in these, my children, the pet products of my brain."

And, leaning forward, he picked up one of the infernal machines, handling it in such a spirit of loving care that Dick's last lingering doubt as to his sanity vanished.

It was a question of brain against brain, with the same mind playing for an opening, but against it, the boy had yet to learn was pitted the amazing cunning of the professor.

"I agree your work appears very wonderful," said Dick, reaching out in the hope of gaining possession of the bomb. "But what I don't quite understand is, how to render them ineffective."

The professor coolly sat down on the opposite side of the table and faced his questioner. And all the while his deeply-sunken eyes glowed unaturally.

"My young friend, nothing is to be gained by rendering them ineffective. To begin with, their component parts are ineffective. The steel by itself, the powder by itself, the clock by itself, are powerless; but then comes along the master mind, and by making a just-so combination of all three, one has but to set the hand, release the spring to put the clock into

it could be arranged for you to witness these explosions."

"Ah! But you proceed too fast, my friend," murmured the professor, his small eyes glinting evilly. "I find you here alone in my private laboratory, and as yet you give no account of yourself. I do not permit myself to enlist the aid of strangers."

Dick began to feel his sang froid slipping away. It was quite evident the professor was not easily to be bamboozled.

"I'm afraid I can't enlighten you as to my identity," he said. "I must therefore ask you to open that door. No doubt you have the key, or—"

His hand went down again, and an instant later he would have presented the muzzle of his automatic to the other's head. But with the slightest gesture of the forefinger of his right hand the professor stayed him.

"My friend, you are young and inexperienced. Let us exchange sweet words of wisdom—the gift of the old to the unripe of years. You have in your pocket a peculiarly ineffective weapon. Here is something before which its powers pale into insignificance—a harmless-looking lead hammer poised above a length of glass tube. I take the hammer end so, raise it scarcely an inch. Beneath it is a steel spring which gives force to its downward thrust. The moment I release the weight—well, to pieces go you and I."

Dick whitened a little about his lips, but forced his voice to an unnatural calm.

"And you mean to say, professor, that if that bomb explodes you and I would both perish?"

The professor inclined his grey head.

"Certainly. Surely that is the true scientist's ultimate fate, the noblest height of self-sacrifice to which he can attain, to surrender his own unhappy existence on the altar of science. One day in the course of an experiment I shall do something which will unwittingly put an end to my mortal career. But I shall have made a stupendous discovery, and for countless generations those who come after will revere the name of Dr. Helferrich the greatest of scientific martyrs."

"Yes, that's all very well," agreed Dick bluntly. "But, you see, I'm not a scientist, and I've no wish to die before my time."

"Science, my young friend, claims its toll willy-nilly. However, there is no reason to precipitate a crisis at this particular moment, only I thought it best to warn you that should you venture to use your pistol against me, I shall retaliate by blowing both myself and you into eternity."

"In which case," retorted the boy cleverly, "science would lose its most valuable exponent."

The professor started and reflectively stroked his long beard.

"Yes, that is true. I must confess that aspect of the case had somewhat escaped my attention. I presume your friend outside is in no hurry?"

It occurred to Dick in his desperation, it wouldn't be a bad idea to try humouring.

"Oh, no! He can wait a little while. What do you want to do?"

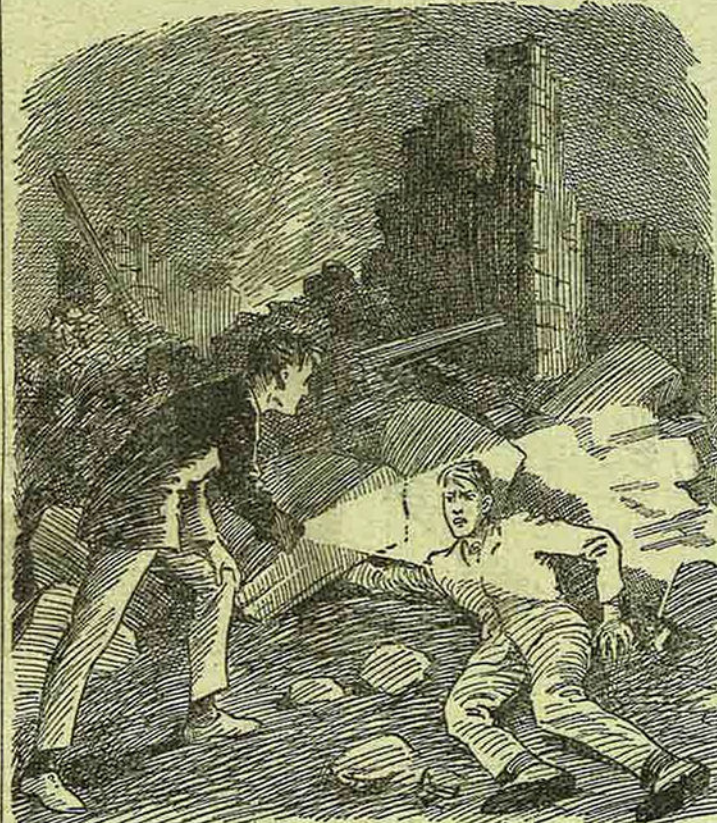
The professor gathered up the loose folds of his gown.

"I was going to suggest you might care to see how these things are made. In deference to the wishes of others I am going to make an alteration in the composition of the powder. They insist I am making them too strong—as if it is not better to blow up a ship with one charge instead of—Ah! What was I saying?" Passing his hand over his wrinkled forehead. "Did I mention a ship? No? That is well. At times I forget what I'm saying. You must not take me too literally. Shall we proceed?"

He motioned to the boy to bring one of the finished machines stacked against the opposite wall. Dick obeyed, watching with all eyes for the slightest chance to take advantage of his companion. The professor was not, however, to be caught napping. Even while he sat at the table he kept one hand poised over the spring-hammer.

As Dick set the bomb before him, however, he appeared to lose sight of immediate danger, for, opening a drawer, he produced a small screw-driver, with which he removed four screws and lifted the lid.

"My work at the moment is to reduce the explosive force of this powder," he said, taking some of the grey stuff and allowing it to trickle through his fingers. "This can best be done by subjecting it to great heat—the very opposite to the process by which it is fired. I think I mentioned in the first place that it is its



**DICK POLRUAN'S DISCOVERY!** The ray of the torch came to rest on a prostrate figure, and Dick Polruan found himself bending over a young fellow whose right wrist was pinned to the earth by a large block of stone!

appear to be in your right sphere, mixed up with such scum of the sea as you were talking to a few minutes ago."

A slow smile flitted over the other's face.

"Ah! So you have been listening to our conversation. I congratulate you on your daring. But, my young friend, you have not yet introduced yourself—a flagrant error of good manners in the presence of an old and highly-respected savant such as I."

The curious choice of words was not lost upon the quick-witted boy. It provided him indeed with a key to the mentality of this wizened-up old fellow. He swiftly formed the opinion justified a few moments later, that, except on his own pet subject, the professor was crazy.

"I apologise," he said, allowing his pistol hand to drop once more to his pocket. "I had no thought of meeting so august a personage. You must forgive my apparent rudeness, professor."

The professor waved a thin hand airily.

"It is really nothing at all—nothing at all. You are young and very inexperienced, and in these days of super-culture, it seems to be the fashion for the young to despise and ridicule the old. But in this we have

motion, and in due course the hammer falls upon the glass, smashing it to powder and releasing the liquid which causes the explosion. For me this is the moment of greatest triumph. And yet—would you believe it?—those for whom I labour, at whose service I place these products of my wonderful brain, deny me the privilege of looking upon the results of my own handiwork. I have argued with one more powerful than myself, begged him to allow me to see these great machines of destruction at work, but always his answer is: 'Professor, you serve both me and yourself better by continuing your work and remaining where you are.' Now, I ask you, my young friend, do you consider that quite fair?"

Dick shook his head and tried to appear sympathetic.

"Most certainly not. You are being abominably treated. Your brain, backed by science, produces these marvels. Surely you should be allowed to get some satisfaction from your labours? Now, I have a friend waiting for me outside—a friend who would be even more interested in all this than I have been. Perhaps you would care to have a word with him? It is probable he might be able to bring influence to bear on the gentleman whom you call your chief, so that



combination with liquid which brings about the instantaneous explosion."

"You did say something of the sort," Dick agreed, leaning over the table with his arms folded. "Ah, I begin to understand now how the thing works! If you set the hand of the clock to a quarter of an hour, in fifteen minutes' time the hammer will fall, release the liquid, and the explosion will take place. My hat, that's a very brainy idea!"

The professor leaned back, his face suffused with pleasure.

"A very simple process, and yet I, the great Professor Helferrich, was the first to invent it. However, we digress somewhat. I have here a Bunsen flame and a crucible. I set the flame going—so. You know the principle of course, from your chemistry lesson at school."

Dick bent nearer, but this time his right arm slipped down.

"How much powder do you heat at a time?" he asked, staring in pretended fascination at the tiny metal receptacle.

"Only a very little—the merest trifle. Perhaps an ounce—not more. We will take so much—"

He dipped a metal spoon into the powder, and was in the act of transferring it, when Dick's hand rose, gleaming brightly, and the next moment the muzzle of the automatic was pressed against the professor's temple.

"One sound, and you lose your life!" he hissed.

The professor turned, and disengaging his right arm, brought his clenched fist down on the hammer. Dick heard the splintering of the tube, a sudden hiss as a powerful gas was given forth, and, leaping back, dropped flat on his face behind the huge stone pillar. There was an instant's deathlike stillness, followed by a roar like the discharge of a thousand guns. He saw nothing but an immense flash of flame—heard nothing, for the concussion of the explosion scattered his senses.

An Unexpected Ally.

A hundred nightmares rolled into one could not have produced a more oppressive sense of suffocation than assailed Dick during his fierce struggle back to consciousness.

Eyes that were red-lidded and swollen opened with difficulty. He drew a long breath, and the effort threatened to tear his lungs. He struggled to rise, but, overcome by weakness, dropped faintly back, and for a little while lay to all appearances dead.

But beneath the mask of a sheer physical inability to rouse himself, an understanding mind began to grope fitfully. Where stone walls and a groined roof had shut him in was the open, free space of heaven. He blinked up into the deep blue of a night sky out of which every star had crept as the moon climbed to its zenith.

In a dim, subconscious sort of way he realised that considerable time must have elapsed since the explosion. Then he remembered the professor, the falling of the hammer, and the breaking of the glass tube which had brought about the catastrophe—and Rogers, keeping solitary vigil, mercifully at a distance—and Tremorne and his friends, who would be regarding him as long since past all human aid.

He lifted an aching hand, and, rubbing the dust from his eyes, stared curiously round. In place of the solid walls, blocks of shattered masonry were sharply silhouetted against the skyline.

Stone flags that had covered the floor were heaped in grotesque positions like a house built of cards that had been blown down.

And from one side to the other of the scene of ruin stretched the thing that had saved him probably from death—the immense supporting central column to the roof. This had toppled from its base when the walls blew out, and must have crushed him had not its carved capital come to rest on a huge block of stone. So near, however, had Dick come to being flattened out that only with difficulty could he move that side of his body nearest the base of the pillar.

The breathless feeling of oppression left him, however, when he drew out of his providential shelter and stood up. There was blood on his face and hands, and every bone and muscle ached with an intensity that caused the most exquisite pain. Yet he began to realise, with a deepening sense of thankfulness, that he was not seriously hurt.

A cut on his forehead, caused by a flying splinter of metal, and a bruise on his temple the size of a pigeon's

egg, represented the worst of his hurts. Still dazed, and trembling from weakness, he sank down on a slab of stone, and relapsed into a state of physical helplessness.

When, at the end of an hour, he essayed to move, the moon had dropped behind a thick bank of cloud, and the darkness of the pit closed him in.

He moved slowly forward, and saved himself from dropping into a deep hole only by clutching at a boulder for support. A little avalanche of dislodged fragments fell with a far-away sound to the bottom of the pit, warning him that he stood on the brink of a long-disused well.

The discovery warned him of the need for caution. He worked cautiously to the left, made easy progress for some yards over a level surface, and then drew up with a sharp cry as his foot stubbed painfully against a heavy object which gave out a dull, metallic sound.

The recollection of the electric hand-torch in his pocket came as a happy inspiration. He snapped over the spring, and, in the instantaneous transition from darkness to light, had a momentary glimpse of a length of bluish-grey metal. When he focused the rays of the torch upon it there was nothing to be seen.

Too bewildered to understand the curious phenomenon, Dick went down on his knees, and passed his hand over the spot where the bar had been.

In the deep night silence that hung over the sleeping island, Dick could plainly hear the rapid beating of his own pulse, quickened beyond the normal, by the possible importance of this amazing discovery.

Was it possible he had stumbled upon the secret of the pirate vessel? Supposing she were constructed of just such material as this. Then it was obvious that when light was directed on her she ceased to be a target for observation. This might explain many things: the ease with

which the pirate had escaped, the power of altering her course unseen and of attacking and pursuing an unsuspecting vessel from an unsuspected direction.

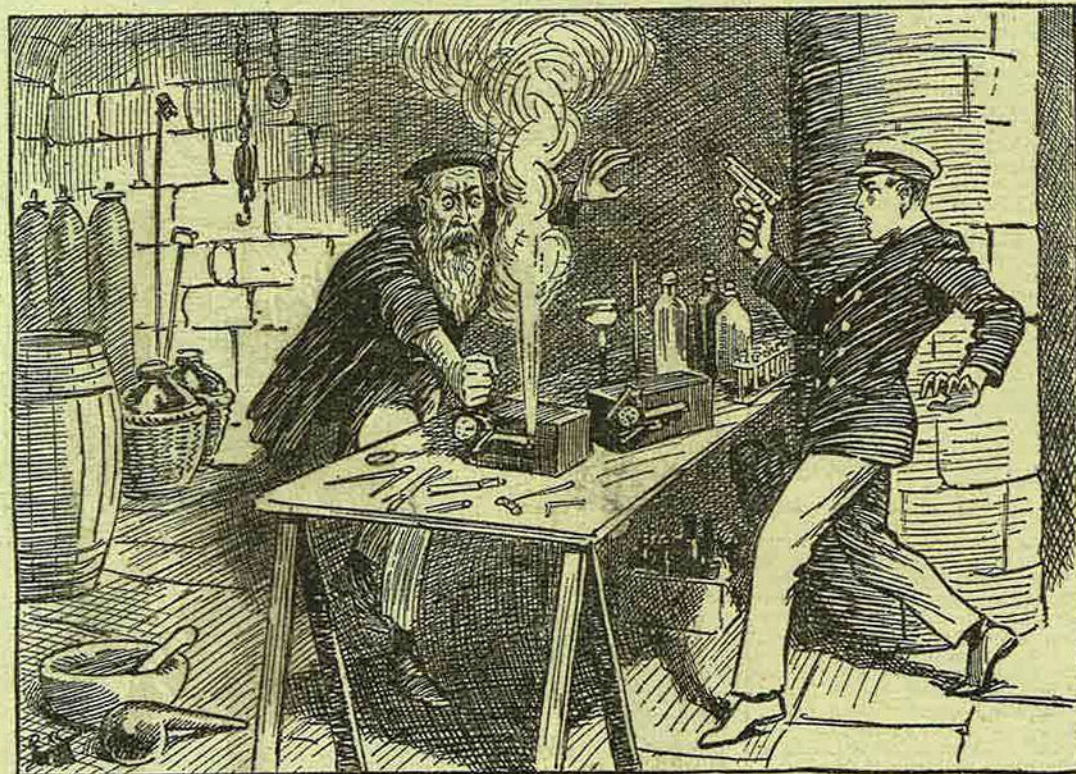
In calm reasoning the notion was feasible enough; in fact, here to his hand was a practical demonstration of its efficacy. The same clever brain that produced high explosive and timed bombs for the use of the pirates of the Cayos, might also have produced such a marvel as this.

WHO IS TONY THE RAT?

Watch Boy's Friend Chat, Details soon!

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THE PROFESSOR RETALIATES! There came an immense flash of flame as the professor brought his hand down on the hammer of the machine!

His fingers came to rest on the cold surface, he felt its depth and breadth, and yet under the powerful ray of the lamp could see nothing. But in the moment of switching off the light the outline of the metal was faintly discernible.

The curious nature of the discovery stimulated his imagination as nothing else could have done.

He recalled a similar experience when the object under examination was not a bar of metal, but a fully-equipped ship steaming at high speed—when in the night gloom it had shown as a black mass perceptibly moving, but had vanished under the artificial glare of the Defiance's searchlights.

At last, it seemed, the ceaseless efforts of weeks were meeting with some measure of concrete success.

The natural desire to impart his discovery to Tremorne and the rest prompted the impulse to carry off the bar as a trophy. He tried to lift it, only to find that one end was firmly wedged beneath the enormous weight of the marble column.

Switching on the light again, Dick picked his way cautiously out of his prison.

In one corner lay the professor's flat cap and a portion of his black gown red with blood. But of the man himself, dead or alive, there was no sign.

This also was a mystery not to be

solved by idle speculation, nor was Dick in the mood to bother much about the fate of the misguided savant. He strode into the open to take his bearings and to look for Rogers, and was on the point of moving away when a faint cry as of someone in pain arrested him.

With little difficulty he located the direction from which the sound had come; it was repeated in the form of an audible request before he had gone a dozen yards.

"I say, whoever you are, do you mind giving me a hand? I'm afraid my arm is broken."

The swivelling ray of the torch came to rest on a prostrate figure, and Dick found himself bending over a young fellow of about his own age, whose right wrist was pinned to the earth by a block of stone.

"Keep still and I'll release you," he said, and, setting his torch on the ground, he bent down, and with some difficulty raised the block.

"My arm is numb. I reckon it's gone west," said the stranger, as he wiped cold beads of moisture from his forehead with his free hand. "I guess you fellows were a rotten lot to leave me like this."

Dick stared.

"Are you anything to do with the crowd on this island?" he questioned.

"Sure," was the prompt answer.

"Aren't you?"

Dick became cautious.

Dick shot a critical glance at the youthful, dissipated face. And yet, with all the marks of recklessness and wild living, there was something rather winning about the man he had befriended.

"I reckon you've thrown in your lot with a pretty bad set," he muttered tersely. "Did they know you were here like this?"

The other laughed mirthlessly, while he continued to rub his swollen limb.

"Know? Clitheroe laughed when he saw me, and said something about the vultures cleaning my bones dry before three days were out. He wouldn't let anyone touch that stone. That comes of putting your back up against a man more powerful than yourself. It doesn't pay in this life to make enemies."

"You're learning rather too late," retorted Polruan. "Clitheroe! Isn't he the fellow in charge of the galleon's crew?"

The wounded man heaved his racked body into a more comfortable position.

"You seem to know a great deal more about us than I do about you. If you aren't one of us, who the deuce are you?"

"Never mind!" was the sharp retort. "I've befriended you, and, as you said a moment ago, one good turn deserves another, perhaps you won't mind doing something for me."

"Sure, I've said it, and here's my hand. I can tell you, among that crowd of toughs and hoboes, good turns are pretty rare. I wish to Jupiter I'd never chucked in my lot with them. I can see my end—a chair in Sing Sing. I shouldn't be surprised if Clitheroe guessed I was framing a get-away."

"You mean, you were trying to get off this island?"

"You've hit it, matey," laughed the other. "I don't know, but somehow I wasn't cut out for a blood and thunder game. They told me, when I first joined 'em, they were out bootlegging—you know, spirit running off the Florida coast. Instead, they're nothing less than a gang of cut-throats. Jove—covering his eyes with his hand and shivering in the cool wind that blew down from the hills—I've seen sights that make my blood run cold."

Polruan was not slow to read a man's character or to see the advantage to be gained by this chance acquaintance.

"Look here, old top," he said, softening. "Play square with me and I'll go straight with you. I'm not with your lot; I'm against them. Why not come in with me?"

The other's lip curled.

"You've got pluck, if nothing else. But what could we two do against Clitheroe and someone else, more powerful and brutal than he? No! I want to get away, back to the States, to a town where I'm not known and where I can go square. D'you think I want to have other men's blood on my hands. I tell you it's rotten, and I'm not for it. I've a boat cached somewhere down the coast, but, staggering weakly to his feet, "I guess I'll never make it, feeling as I do now. I haven't the strength of a kitten."

Dick reached out and steadied the fellow. He was shaking like an aspen.

"Sit there a bit till you feel better. There's no hurry as long as darkness holds."

"No hurry!" returned the other. "I guess my only chance of salvation to-night lies in carrying out orders. Clitheroe will be here at daylight to try and salve a few bombs for the chief. The yacht returns at daybreak, and I've had instructions to be aboard her—sort of breaking me in for the work I'm supposed to tackle. That was my quarrel with Clitheroe; he said I needed a sight or two more of high seas piracy to put my nerves straight. Because I protested was one reason why he left me here."

"I see," Polruan was thinking hard. "You don't seem altogether happy about the job you've got to do."

"I'm not," came the quick answer. "I'd give half my life to get out of it."

"Then, supposing you sign up with me," said Dick suddenly. "I've a notion we might do good business together. But before we discuss terms, I want to know what brought you here."

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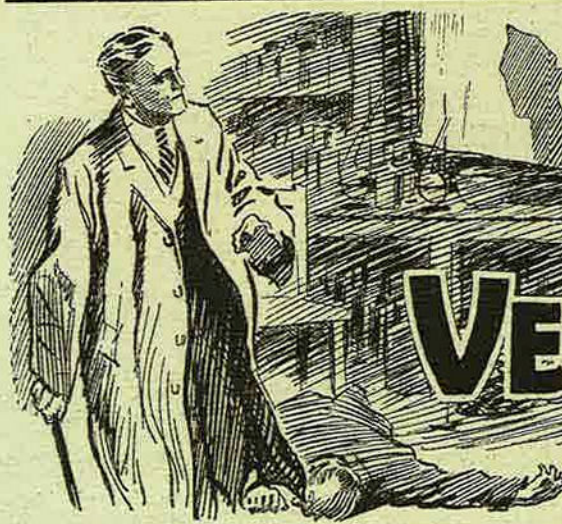
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"BULLDOG" HOLDFAST REAPPEARS IN THIS STAR STORY!



# The MEN OF VENGEANCE!

The ingenious method by which  
Paul Smartley tries to obtain

possession of a poor man's invention proves futile when "Bulldog" Holdfast butts in!

## The 1st Chapter.

A Riverside Adventure—The Cowled Shadow.

"Help!"

Harry, otherwise "Bulldog" Holdfast, dropped the cigarette he had been about to light and stood rigid, listening.

"Help, help, help!"

The cry that had come from out of the deep shadows of an alleyway leading down to the river was repeated thrice more, rising to a positive shriek of terror.

The "Bulldog" crammed his box of matches into his pocket, broke into a run, and went into the darkness of the uninviting byway like a hare.

Someone was, obviously, in trouble—perhaps even in danger of losing his life.

It was a neighbourhood where more than one mysterious crime took place in the course of a year, culminating in the body of the unfortunate being found floating down the dark waters of the Thames.

Harry Holdfast had come to Limehouse to-night with his friend, Detective-Sergeant Dempster, of Scotland Yard.

He had been bored stiff for want of some sort of adventure, when the C.I.D. man had dropped in at his rooms in St. James' and mentioned that he and a body of picked men were due to raid an opium den in Limehouse's Chinatown.

Holdfast had gone with the detective and his subordinates. But he had been somewhat disappointed.

The Chinese proprietor of the place had given in without the least resistance, and the one man who had made a fight had proved almost too easy to knock out.

Harry had left Dempster with his prisoners and, as it was a beautiful moonlight night, and the neighbourhood of the docks always fascinated him, he had decided to walk at least part of the way home.

Down the alley went the "Bulldog," his elbows pressed into his sides and his always firm jaw set hard.

He rounded a bend in the narrow, evil-smelling street and came in view of some seven struggling figures that swayed this way and that in the yellow light cast by a wall lamp.

It was six to one. Holdfast saw that as he dashed up.

A middle-aged man, prematurely gray, had been forced to his knees in the midst of the others, who looked like foreigners, and one of the latter was holding something that gleamed wickedly as he held the victim by the throat and stooped over him.

It was a knife, and the kneeling man cried out in terror as he saw it.

Harry Holdfast went in amongst the man's assailants like a whirlwind. He drove his left to the jaw of one, stretching him flat on his back. His right swung to the head of a second and knocked him to the wall, against which he struck his forehead ere he sagged down in a huddled heap.

A third man whirled up a heavy stick to strike at the "Bulldog." Harry flung up a hand and caught the weapon as it descended. He wrenched it from the swarthy-skinned ruffian's grasp and hurled it, lengthwise, in his face.

The fellow reeled back, tripped over his fallen companion who lay against the wall, and went down backwards, striking his head with stunning force upon the pavement.

The middle-aged man, who had been on his knees, staggered up as the dark-visaged scoundrel with the knife released his throat. He seemed

almost frantic with fear—as though he had completely lost his head—and, spinning round on his heels, he dashed away into the black shadows, heading riverwards.

The foreigner with the knife—he looked like an Italian—leapt at Holdfast, his weapon flashing upwards.

Harry sidestepped adroitly, so that the knife struck the empty air. Quick as a flash, he had the man about the middle.

The fellow found himself whipped off his feet and raised aloft in hands that felt like steel vices. Next instant he had gone hurtling through space, to strike against one of the two men remaining on their feet. With a yell, both crashed into the road.

Harry Holdfast sprang for the last man of the six, but the latter was not taking any.

He turned and fled towards the river, with Holdfast at his heels. The "Bulldog" treated him to a hefty kick as a parting gift, and then turned to see if the other ruffians wanted any further excitement.

They didn't. Having recovered somewhat from the "Bulldog's" ferocious attack, the gang made sullenly off, and Holdfast looked after them and grinned. He had not come to Limehouse for nothing after all.

"Now, I wonder what the game was?" the "Bulldog" muttered, wheeling about and looking in the direction the gang's victim had taken when he had fled in panic. "They were all Italians by the look of them, and that grey-haired bird was certainly not an associate with whom they had quarrelled, for he looked like an Englishman. Then, again, unless he was a giddy miser, or something of the sort, it could not have been robbery that was their motive. His linen was frayed, the suit he had on was threadbare, and he did not look as though he had two halfpennies to his name."

He picked up his hat, which had fallen into the roadway, and adjusted it. Then, producing a fresh cigarette from his case, he lit it and walked thoughtfully towards the river.

"Yes, I'll try to find that fellow and get to the truth of this," he muttered. "Somehow I feel there's a mystery at the bottom of the affair that I'd like to know more about."

Harry Holdfast paused as he reached the river-wall at which the alley ended.

He stood for a moment looking out over the moonlit water, then, chancing to glance to the right, he noticed a light suddenly appear in a shed-like structure standing near the water's edge.

Holdfast made his way towards it, to find that the windows were covered with yellow paper blinds. Even as he approached a shadow was thrown on one of them—the shadow of a man, who appeared to be reeling weakly, and whom Holdfast thought he recognised as the victim of the foreigners.

"Ah!" The "Bulldog" drew a sharp little breath between his teeth. The shadow had suddenly disappeared as though for some reason its owner had collapsed.

"By James, perhaps the poor chap was stabbed by one of those skunks!" Holdfast muttered to himself as he made for the door of the workshop, as it proved to be.

He found the door secured on the inner side. But his shoulder quickly solved that difficulty, sending the door thudding back upon its hinges.

Into the workshop went the "Bulldog"—to receive a surprise.

At its further side a marble slab stretched the whole length of the place. It was littered with all the equipment of a chemical laboratory, with separate gas-jets, bunsen burners, test tubes, beakers, balances, and distillation apparatus.



**THE TRAP!** There was a cry of disappointment as the figure in the black robe and cowl of the Camorra discovered that the envelope contained only pieces of newspaper cut to the size of banknotes. At that moment "Bulldog" Holdfast appeared from behind the hedge!

On a central table the stump of a candle burned in the neck of a bottle, and a glance showed Holdfast that the supply of gas had been cut off—another sign that the grey-haired man was not rich.

In the candle's flickering light the man was revealed lying stretched upon the floor. His eyes were closed, and he was unconscious.

Holdfast hurried to him and dropped to one knee beside him.

A hurried examination convinced the "Bulldog" that the man was not in any way wounded or injured. Then, as Harry noted the greyness of his face, his sunken eyes, and the pinched condition of his cheeks, he understood.

The man was on the verge of starvation. It was through lack of nourishment and weakness from hunger that he had collapsed.

"This is a queer business, Holdfast, old top!" the "Bulldog" mused. "Why on earth did those organ-grinding merchants attack this poor beggar? Well, I suppose it's no use speculating about that yet. The first thing is to remedy his present condition. He'll perhaps talk afterwards."

Holdfast rose and left the place, drawing the door shut after him. The hour was past midnight, so that

there were no shops open. He had noticed a coffee-stall quite near the mouth of the alley, however, and thought he might obtain something there for the relief of the starving man.

When he reached the stall he discovered that Bovril could be bought there. He purchased a large mug of the nourishing beverage, and, leaving some money as deposit upon the mug, he carried it back to the laboratory.

When he had forced a little of the warm liquid between the unconscious man's teeth, a little tinge of colour stole into the wasted cheeks.

The man groaned. His lids flickered, and he opened his eyes.

For just a moment they were vacant; then they filled with apprehension, and he tried to struggle out of Holdfast's arms as Harry supported him.

"Who are you?" he asked hoarsely.

"If you are one of those fiends—"

"I'm not, old top," Harry assured him. "Though I have been called some nasty things in my time. It was I, as a matter of fact, who came along and set about the Italian gentlemen who were swarming round you. But what's it all mean? Why are you starving here?"

The man's eyes lit up with a queer enthusiasm, which was, however, tinged with bitterness.

"I am starving," he answered, "because no one will see that I have the means to make millions with an invention I have perfected."

"Bats in his belfry, poor chap,"

even more eagerly. "I have produced a powder which can be placed in the tank of an engine, and it will do all that petrol will do, when a certain quantity of water in proportion is added. But I am allowing my enthusiasm to cause me to forget what I owe you. Believe me, I am more than grateful to you for saving my life."

"Oh, I enjoyed doing that, old top!" Holdfast told him. "Why did those brutes attack you? Was it to try and steal the recipe of your invention, perhaps?"

The other shook his head. "No; that is carried here," he answered, tapping his forehead. "It is not protected, for by the time I had finished my experiments I had spent practically every penny I possessed, and had not even the necessary two guineas to patent it provisionally for nine months. No, my friend, the motive of those men was vengeance—vengeance for something that happened years ago in Italy, when I was little more than a boy."

"Hallo! The jolly candle is snuffing it!" Holdfast said, with a laugh. "Have you another?"

"No," returned the inventor, shaking his head. "I am without any money at all—down and out—and I would have died of starvation but for you."

The candle gave a dying splutter. The flame lengthened for one brief moment, then went out, plunging the place in darkness save for the little moonlight that found its way through the blinds.

Suddenly a choking cry broke from the lips of the inventor.

"Look—look! A hooded man! They are after me again!" he cried in terror-stricken tones.

And there followed a thud suggesting that he had pitched from his chair in a swoon.

Harry Holdfast had leapt to his feet, and his eyes were fixed upon the near-by window.

A black shadow was thrown upon the blind by the moonlight—the shadow of a tall man who wore a ghostly cowl!

## The 2nd Chapter.

The Offer of £55,000—Kidnapped.

Harry Holdfast stared in fascination at the sinister shadow. Then, as it abruptly disappeared, he made a bound towards the door of the laboratory.

Unfortunately, however, he caught his toe against one of the legs of the table, and, unable to save himself, pitched at full length.

He was up quickly enough. But by the time he had reached the door, dragged it open, and rushed out on to the water-front, it was to see the cowed figure swinging itself from the river wall to a waiting boat.

The "Bulldog" sprinted forward, intending to leap into the small craft. But this shot away from the wall whilst he was still some yards distant, and the sudden "chug-chugging" that sounded from it showed it to be a motor-boat.

The boat was well on its way towards the centre of the river before Holdfast reached the waterside. He knew it was of no use trying to overtake the craft by swimming; so, after watching it until it was swallowed up by the night, he returned to the shed-like quarters of the inventor.

Harry raised the blinds, so that the moonlight streamed into the place. Then he went to the fallen man, and, picking him up, placed him back in the chair.

The inventor had been on the point of coming to his senses, and now he opened his eyes.

"The Camorra—they mean to have me, and my life is not worth a moment's purchase!" he gasped, clinging to Holdfast's arm in his agitation. "You'll think me a coward, but I haven't the strength left to fight down my terror of those fiends!"

"The Camorra?" Holdfast stared at him. "You mean the Italian secret society of that name?" he said. "I thought that it was as good as extinct in these days."

"So did I, and hoped so, until two weeks ago," answered the other, shuddering. "Listen! I want to tell you my story. You are a brave man, and I badly need someone who will stand by me."

He moistened his lips, then continued:

"At one time my family was fairly well off, and my people sent me to Rome to study art. My name, by the way, is James Meade. I was scarcely out of my teens in those days, for it is of twenty years ago that I speak."

"I fell in with some Italians, who were artists like myself, and who



seemed good fellows. But at length I discovered that they were members of a secret society. I pressed them to tell me about it, and, after some hesitation, they admitted it was called the Camorra, but they fooled me by making me believe that its objects were purely political and noble—not greedy and sordid as they really were.

"Being little more than a boy, my imagination was fired, and, to cut a long story short, I eventually became a member of the organisation. Then came what was to me a bombshell.

"One night at a meeting, I found the hooded members—it was a rule that the faces of all members should be hidden at such times—coolly discussing the proposed assassination of a well-known Italian statesman, whom I knew was kindly disposed towards the people and in every way a good man and a desirable leader. Lots were cast, and, to my horror, it was I to whom the task of murdering this man fell. I pretended I would carry out the decision of the society, and the next day I fled to England.

"For many months afterwards I lived in a constant state of apprehension. For I had learned that the penalty for disobeying any order of the organisation was death, and I believed that the society's agents would seek to be revenged for having failed it. But time went on and on, and the years passed without my hearing anything of the murderous body.

"That terrible night in Italy became like a bad dream, which I eventually almost forgot. I learned some years ago that the Camorra was disbanded, and thought I should never be menaced by it. But I was wrong. Scarcely had I perfected my invention and began to attempt to get it financed and placed upon the market than I received through the post a sheet of paper upon which was a large black letter 'C,' and beneath the words, 'Vengeance is sure.' I grew cold with horror, for I knew that the 'C' stood for Camorra, and that I had been traced after twenty long years.

"A knife was thrown at me, narrowly missing my breast as I left here three nights ago. There was this attempt on my life to-night, which must have succeeded had you not heard my cries for help and come to my rescue."

He hid his face in his hands. "I might just as well take no precautions," he said. "I know the Camorra—I know its methods, and I am a doomed man!"

Holdfast clapped him upon the shoulder.

"Cheer up, old bean!" he urged, genuinely sorry for him. "You come along home with me, and we'll see what can be done. I happen to be Harry Holdfast, and it rather pleases me to find myself up against scum like the beggars who attacked you this evening."

"Holdfast! I have heard of you!" Meade cried, looking up with new hope dawning in his eyes. "They say you delight in dangerous adventures, and—"

"I do, and I'll declare myself your protector from now on," the "Bulldog" assured him. "Anyway, you can't stay here and starve"—as Meade hesitated. "I believe in you and you must be my guest until something can be done about your invention. Take my arm, and we'll get to somewhere where we can pick up a taxi."

They left the riverside laboratory together, and in the West India Dock Road encountered a taxi that had just dropped the skipper of one of the boats berthed in the docks.

The driver was only too glad to have a fare back to the West End, and he conveyed them to St. James'. Not long afterwards James Meade was safely in the "dog-out" with Harry, and Dene, the "Bulldog's" valet, was preparing the starving man some soup and a light meal to follow.

On the following morning, after a long night's rest, James Meade looked considerably better.

Holdfast had instructed Dene not to wake his guest, and it was nearly eleven before the inventor appeared for breakfast in the "dog-out."

Harry, who had had his breakfast some three hours previously, watched him eat with satisfaction.

Meade turned to him as he finished the meal, with gratitude in his eyes.

"I'll never be able to repay you for your kindness to me," he said. "I really ought to go out to-day. I wonder if you will excuse me for a couple of hours? When I first realised that my aim was achieved, and that I had perfected my petrol substitute, I went to a firm of solicitors who always used to conduct

my family's legal business. It is the son who is head of the firm now—a man named Paul Smartley, of Cornhill, City, and he made an appointment for me to see him again to-day."

"Is he going to find the money to float a company, or something, and place your invention on the market?" Holdfast inquired.

"No—at least, I do not think he will agree to that," answered Meade. "That was my suggestion to him, but he did not seem in favour of the idea. He offered me a lump sum down of forty thousand pounds, for my recipe and all rights in the invention."

"Which you refused, I should think," Holdfast said. "Man, if your invention is capable of doing all you claim it can do, there is not thousands, but millions in it."

"I know," James Meade returned. "And I did reject his offer. However, we left the matter open, but I think that if he is prepared to substantially increase his offer, I shall accept a lump sum and clear out of the country, to escape the Camorra's agents."

As he had been speaking, he had risen to his feet. But, as he made to cross the room, he staggered, and

Just after midday Dene entered to announce Paul Smartley, and, as Holdfast nodded, the ex-gunner stood aside for the visitor to enter.

He was a tall, lean man of between thirty-five and forty, with a pale, clean-shaven face and a pair of grey eyes that somehow seemed a little furtive and worried.

He bowed and placed his silk hat upon a chair. Then he came forward and was introduced by Meade to Harry.

"I am a business man and accustomed to come to the point, Mr. Meade," he said, when he had taken the chair to which Holdfast waved his hand. "I have gone thoroughly into the matter of your invention, and I have decided to increase the offer I made you by fifteen thousand. That is to say, I will give you fifty-five thousand pounds cash down for all rights in the petrol substitute."

For a moment James Meade was plainly tempted. Then he caught the "Bulldog's" eye, saw Harry give a little decisive shake of his head, and shook his own.

"It is not nearly enough, Mr. Smartley," he said. "I cannot accept."

The solicitor's eyes gleamed. He

did not stir far from his guest. From past experience he knew how relentless organisations like the Italian Camorra could be, and he felt that it might not be long before another attempt was made upon Meade's life.

That night the "Bulldog" was half-inclined to sleep upon a couch in the bedroom he had allotted to Meade, to watch over him. But he did not wish to arouse fresh fears in the inventor, so he abandoned this idea, and went to his own room as usual.

It seemed to Holdfast that he had scarcely closed his eyes when he was awakened with a start by some unusual sound.

He sat up in bed and took his luminous wrist-watch from a table at his side, and he was surprised to find that in reality it was nearly three in the morning, and that he had been slumbering for nearly four hours.

Next instant he had leapt out of bed. Faintly from the direction of James Meade's bed-room had sounded a muffled cry, and Holdfast realised that it had probably been a similar sound that had aroused him.

He dashed into the corridor, to collide with the pyjama-clad figure of Dene.

The 3rd Chapter. A Faint Hope—The House in Soho. Harry Holdfast looked suddenly at the palm of his right hand.

Though London had been free from rain for over a week, and he remembered that the courtyard had been thick with dust that afternoon, his hand was wet.

He looked down, and saw that a little pool of water lay where the car had stood. He uttered a low exclamation of new hope as he realised that the water must have come from the car's radiator, and that, judging by the quantity that had accumulated, it must be leaking badly.

At this early hour in the morning the London streets would be more or less deserted. Would it be possible to track the car to its destination by the drips of water it would leave behind as it passed over the roads?

He walked as far as the alley-way, and saw that a few drops of water had been left at every few yards. It was the one faint hope of finding James Meade and rescuing him.

Holdfast reared the ladder up to the window-sill and regained the room above. He was dressed and out in the courtyard again in ten minutes, and he began to follow the faint track left by the drips of water.

It was not an easy task. Sometimes he lost trace of the scent altogether, then found it again more by luck than anything else. But he persisted doggedly, and eventually he found himself in the neighbourhood of Soho.

He came upon another little pool of water outside a tall, dark, and rambling house in a narrow side-street, and knew that the car had stopped there for a while at least.

The tracks continued on again, but went only as far as a public garage, now closed.

"It was into that house that Meade was taken," Holdfast muttered to himself. "The little pool of water accumulated whilst he was being carried in. Then the car was taken to the garage and housed there for the rest of the night. Well, I mean to get into that giddy residence before I am many minutes older!"

He retraced his steps to the house and looked up at its unlighted windows. A narrow passage led round to the rear of the house. Down this Harry crept, and found himself in a mews running along behind the wall of the squalid backyard.

A spring, and he had caught the top of the wall and was drawing himself up. He sat astride it and looked towards the rear of the abode.

In one window of the second storey showed a faint glimmer of light that stole through a rent in a blind of some dark material.

It was just then that a cluster of clouds drifted before the face of the moon, and Holdfast saw that above the roof of the house showed a shaft of light, which he knew must come from a skylight opening into the one illuminated room.

"That's where Meade is, for a certainty," he thought, "and, if I am quick, I may save him yet!"

He felt to make sure he had his revolver. Then he dropped into the yard and stole towards the house.

There was a low roof, covering what looked to be a scullery. Holdfast placed a dustbin beneath, climbed on to it, and gained the slates, which sloped upwards to the main wall of the building.

After crawling up to this the "Bulldog" found that a drainpipe ran up the face of the wall. He gripped at it and hauled himself up. He got a hold with knees and toes, and, with an agility not often seen in one of his stalwart build, he mounted higher and higher, until he was on a level with the roof, where the skylight was situated almost forty feet above the ground.

He raised a hand to the guttering, then obtained a grip with the other. He exerted his strength, and, drawing up his body, scrambled on to the tiles.

He removed his long ulster, which he had slipped on, remembering Meade had been clad only in pyjamas when he had been kidnapped, and thinking it might come in useful. Then up the sloping roof Harry crawled, dragging the overcoat after him, until he could grip at the framework of the skylight. He framed himself a little higher, so that he lay beside it. Then, cautiously—very cautiously—he looked through one of the dusty panes of glass.

The sight that met his gaze caused him to draw a sharp breath.

The room under him was spacious and hung with heavy curtains, and a dozen sinister figures were gathered round a long central table.

(Continued overleaf.)



THE ESCAPE! As "Bulldog" Holdfast held out a hand to assist James Meade, a man's head and shoulders appeared above the skylight and a shot whizzed dangerously near!

Holdfast leapt up and supported him, assisting him back to his chair.

"Look here, old top, it will take you some days to regain your strength," he said. "If this solicitor johnny wants to see you, let him come here. I will telephone him, if you like, and tell him you are not well enough to come to his office."

The inventor nodded, and Holdfast went to the telephone. He inquired the solicitor's number, and gave it to the exchange.

Mr. Paul Smartley proved to be in, and expressed formal regret to hear of James Meade's low state of health. He wanted to see him, he said, and, if it would be convenient, he would be at St. James' within the next hour.

Holdfast consented to this, and, replacing the telephone receiver, came back to his guest.

"Smartley is coming here," he said. "It strikes me he is rather more keen on your invention than he may have let you suppose. If you take my tip, you will stand out awhile—I mean, don't clinch any bargain with him for the sake of another ten thousand or so."

"But the Camorra?" Meade said, with a shiver. "Instinctively he glanced furtively towards the windows, as though he thought he might have been traced here, and that he would glimpse one or more of the society's dread agents outside."

"To Jericho with the Camorra! I'll see to those gentry!" Holdfast answered grimly. "Don't be rushed into letting go of the fortune that is in your hands because of them."

"I'll be guided by you, Mr. Holdfast," the inventor promised, bowing his head.

seemed disappointed. Shrugging his shoulders, he rose and took up his hat.

"Then there is nothing more to be said," he declared. "That is the most I can see my way clear to risk in the venture. I wish you good-day, gentlemen."

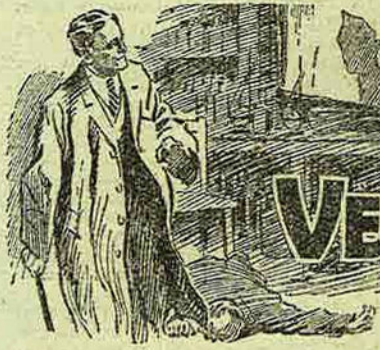
When he had gone Harry Holdfast asked the inventor several questions about the substitute.

As the reader knows, Harry was comparatively rich, and he was wondering if he might not take an interest in the invention and help Meade to float it.

For the rest of the day Holdfast

Advertisement for a racing competition. It features a drawing of a horse and jockey. The text reads: '£2 a week for Life! OR £1000 IN CASH MUST BE WON CUP FINAL COMPETITION See this week's ANSWERS Now on Sale Everywhere - 2d.'





# The MEN OF VENGEANCE!

(Continued from previous page.)

All the men wore black cowls, and their eyes gleamed menacingly through the holes in the ghostly-looking hoods, as one and all gazed towards the pyjama-clad figure of James Meade.

Almost under the skylight stood the inventor, between two of the hooded men, who gripped at his arms, whilst a third of the masked scoundrels held a knife to the unfortunate man's breast.

Holdfast found that he could hear quite distinctly what was being said below, and realised that the fastening of the skylight was broken, that the woodwork was warped, and that it was ill-fitting, leaving a gap between it and its raised base.

"James Meade," the man who seemed to be the spokesman of the desperadoes was saying, "twenty years ago you joined the society to which we belong, taking the usual oaths of secrecy and allegiance. Whether you have broken the oath of secrecy we do not know, but it is certain that you set at nought that of allegiance, for you fled from Italy on the very first occasion that work of importance fell to your lot."

"I refused to commit murder," the inventor said quietly, seeming to have gained a certain courage now that the worst had happened, and he found himself in his enemies' hands. "The man I was instructed to kill was all that a political leader should be, and—"

"That it is not our business to go into after the lapse of all these years," interrupted the cowed man. "The fact remains that you broke your vows to the Camorra, and the penalty for disobedience to the organisation's commands is death!"

"Strike, if you will, and get it over!" Meade said hoarsely. "I am in your power, and it can avail you nothing to torture me."

"Wait!" the spokesman of the gathering said, holding up a silencing hand. "There is an alternative to death. In other words, you can pay to keep your life. In certain instances the Camorra can be merciful, and it has been decreed that if you agree to pay the society two thousand pounds for each year that has elapsed since you failed to carry out its orders, you shall not be troubled or menaced again."

"That would be forty thousand pounds," James Meade said, and his mind had gone to the offer made him by the solicitor, Smartley, for his invention. "If I paid, you swear that—"

"We pay nothing, old top—unless it is with this sort of payment!" The skylight had been sent crashing back upon its rusted hinges, and Harry Holdfast had dropped through on to the table.

His advent was like a bolt from the blue to both Meade and his captors, and as he snapped out his defiant words the "Bulldog" lashed out at the leader of the band.

He caught him a blow between the eyes that must have felt like the kick of a horse, and sent him to the floor.

The cowed men about the table could only stare, as Harry struck out at first one of Meade's guards, then the other, hurling both aside. It had all happened so quickly that they had had no time to recover from their astonishment.

"Quick—up on to the table!" Holdfast yelled, shooting down his hands to Meade, who was, fortunately, not bound.

The inventor clutched at them, and Holdfast swung him up beside him. Before a man of the gang could raise a finger to stop him, he had seized Meade about the middle, raised him, and hoisted him through the skylight to the roof.

A shot rang out as Holdfast sprang to follow, catching at the edge of the aperture. The bullet ripped its way through the sleeve of his jacket, but did no further damage, and Harry had drawn himself up, and was back on the roof beside the inventor, ere the owner of the revolver could fire again.

Snatching up the ulster, which he

had left by the skylight, Harry scrambled on up the roof, and gained its central pinnacle.

Turning, he held out a hand to Meade. He hauled him up beside him, just as a man's head and shoulders appeared above the skylight and another shot whizzed dangerously near.

Holdfast had noticed that a coping ran along the front of the house, and, pointing to it, he rapped out:

throat it practically hid his condition of undress.

A taxi—which they were lucky to come upon in Shaftesbury Avenue—took them back to St. James', and Holdfast watched over his guest for the remainder of the night.

He had waved aside the inventor's thanks for saving him, and seemed thoughtful.

As a matter of fact, it struck Harry as strange that the Camorra should demand such a sum as forty thousand pounds from a man like Meade, who, on the face of matters, was obviously without as many shillings. Then, again, he wondered how the society could have known that Meade was with him at St. James'.

"Who knows about your joining the Camorra years ago?" he asked, just before the inventor fell into a troubled sleep.

"No one, only the people of the Camorra itself," Meade answered at first. Then: "Oh, I seem to remember that soon after I returned from Italy I told my family's solicitor, old Mr. Smartley—the present Smartley's father."

Holdfast nodded, and a certain

"You will do nothing of the kind, old top!" Holdfast objected firmly. "You leave this to me. Both you and the Camorra—or, at least, someone else—are going to receive a surprise three nights hence. And you are going to keep both your life and the money your petrol substitute will bring you."

### The 4th Chapter.

#### What Happened at Sevenoaks.

The moon was full three nights later, and its pale light flooded the deserted hedge-bordered road near the open field somewhat grimly christened "Dead Man's Meadow," at Sevenoaks, down in Kent.

On the old and chipped milestone near the meadow's gates lay a large foolscap envelope.

A scarecrow, arrayed in an old frock-coat, with a battered top-hat tilted forward over what looked to be a head formed of rags, could be seen standing a little way back beyond the hedge, which was low at this point.

The outstretched arms, with the glove-covered, dead-looking hands,

concealed the human face beneath—the face of Harry Holdfast!

The "Bulldog" took a quick run and a flying leap that carried him over the hedge into the road. The hooded man uttered a gasp of alarm, and turned to spring back into his car. But too late.

Driving his left to the chin of the man who had been at the wheel, and who had leapt into the road and rushed at him, Holdfast grabbed at the cowed figure. As he and the man of mystery thudded into the road, a second car could be heard in the distance.

It came tearing up at a racing pace, and pulled up with a skidding of tyres. From it jumped Detective-Sergeant Dempster, of Scotland Yard, and James Meade.

The C.I.D. man pounced upon the driver of the first automobile, handcuffed him, and hauled him to his feet. Dempster bundled him into the hands of a second plain-clothes man, who had followed the inventor out of the police car.

It was at this moment that Harry rose, and, dragging his adversary up with him, snatched off his cowl.

The white and baffled face of Paul Smartley, solicitor, was revealed, and James Meade uttered a cry of incredulous amazement.

"Smartley! You!" he gasped. "Good heavens, Mr. Holdfast, what does this mean?"

"I am a little in the dark myself," Detective-Sergeant Dempster put in. "Though I know this man," pointing to the driver of the lawyer's car. "He's a member of a dangerous Italian racing gang we have had our eyes on for a long time."

"Precisely," Holdfast grinned. "It was not the real Camorra that went after you, Meade; only a gang of Italian racecourse ruffians, whom Smartley probably knew through defending one of their number when he was arrested some months ago. There must have been some record in Smartley's office about your telling his father about joining the Camorra years ago, and when you went to him to try to get him to finance your invention, he hit on a cute scheme to get it into his hands for comparatively a song."

"He sent the warning of vengeance that caused you to think the Camorra had traced you, then bribed this racing gang to pose as members of the society, make attacks upon you, and play upon your fears. He offered you fifty-five thousand pounds for your valuable recipe as Paul Smartley. As the Camorra he demanded forty thousand pounds to spare your life, so that he hoped to acquire an invention worth millions for a really trifling amount of fifteen thousand pounds. He must have believed, as I hoped he would, that you had disposed of your secret elsewhere when we inserted the 'Yes' advertisement in the 'Evening News.' And he thought, I suppose, that he might as well grab the forty thousand pounds to repay him for the trouble and expense of his little stunt. But he has hit trouble, and now is going to serve a nice little stretch in prison."

"Confound you, you clever fiend!" Paul Smartley raved, struggling in the grip of Dempster, as Holdfast flung him into the detective's hands. "When I have served my sentence and am free again, I'll be revenged. I'll not rest until I have killed you, and—"

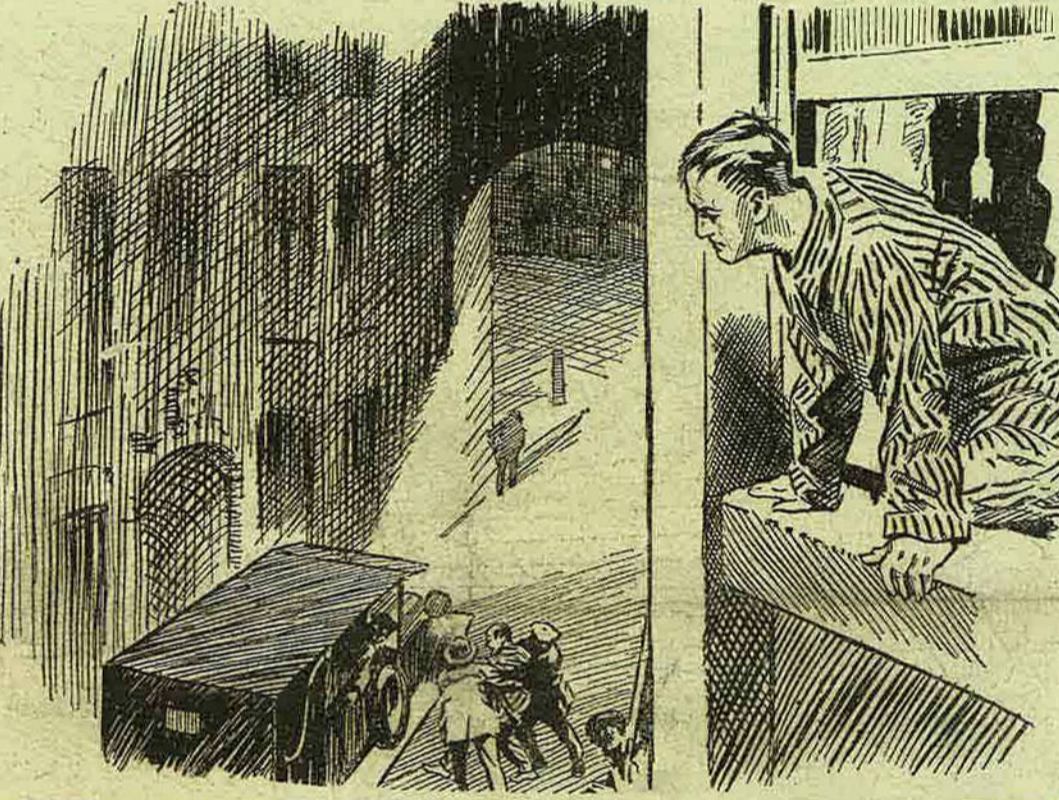
"Oh, do shut up, old top!" Holdfast pleaded, shaking his head at him reprovingly. "You have made me lose my beauty sleep two nights this week, and I want to get home and make it up."

Three weeks later Paul Smartley, whom it was proved had converted trust funds to his own use, and had been in desperate straits financially, was sentenced to seven years penal servitude, and, with Holdfast's influence, a company was being formed to put James Meade's invention on the market.

Tests had convinced experts that his recipe was capable of all he claimed for it, and he looks like making a colossal fortune out of the invention of which he would have been as good as robbed but for the pluck and wit of Harry Holdfast.

THE END

(Alpha Always reappears next Monday in "A Rogue of the Turf"—a rattling fine 12,000-word racing yarn. Order your Boys' Friend in advance and make sure you read it!)



**KIDNAPPED!** Rushing to the window, "Bulldog" Holdfast was just in time to see two dark figures half-forcing, half-carrying James Meade towards a closed motor-car that stood below!

"Slide down with me to that! We can run along it and gain the next building."

Meade understood, and together they went slithering down the sloping slates, and came to rest at the raised stone parapet.

They dashed along it. There was but a small gap between the house and the next. Both took the jump and gained the coping of the latter in safety.

There were no signs now of pursuit, and, continuing along the parapet, they found themselves looking down on to the flat roof, some twelve feet below, of the garage to where Holdfast had traced the car.

Harry dropped down on to it. He turned and caught and steadied Meade as he followed. A tarpaulin-covered lorry stood beneath in the yard. They jumped to that, and thence to the ground, where Holdfast helped his companion into the ulster.

It reached almost to Meade's bare feet, and when it was buttoned to his

suspicion began to creep into his mind. It seemed wild and improbable at first, but more feasible after he had spent the remainder of the night thinking it over.

Somehow, he was not greatly surprised at the sequel to the night's adventure that came in the morning. It took the form of a roughly-printed message, which was slipped by an unknown hand into the letter-box. It was addressed to Meade, and ran:

"Place the forty thousand pounds demanded upon the milestone near Dead Man's Meadow, at Sevenoaks, at midnight, three nights from now. If you agree, insert word 'Yes' in Personal Column of 'Evening News,' addressed 'C.' Swift vengeance is certain if you fail in this.—C."

Meade groaned as he read it.

"They mean to have their pound of flesh," he said. "I shall sell my invention to Smartley, and put the money where they stipulate, to end this awful suspense."

seemed to sway a little in the gentle breeze, as a closed car throbbed its way slowly from the direction of Sevenoaks.

The car passed and re-passed several times. Then, as if whoever was in it had convinced himself that the spot was deserted, it pulled up abreast of the milestone and the door was opened.

From out of the automobile stepped a sinister figure arrayed in the long black robes and cowl of the Camorra. The man snatched the envelope from off the milestone with a triumphant chuckle. But his laughter changed to a cry of furious disappointment as, on breaking the envelope open, he found that within was only a wad of pieces of newspaper, cut to the size of banknotes.

Simultaneously the scarecrow sprang into life. The outstretched arms lost their lifeless appearance. One of the hands went up and snatched off the battered "topper" and the linen mask that had

## WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN ON SATURDAY.

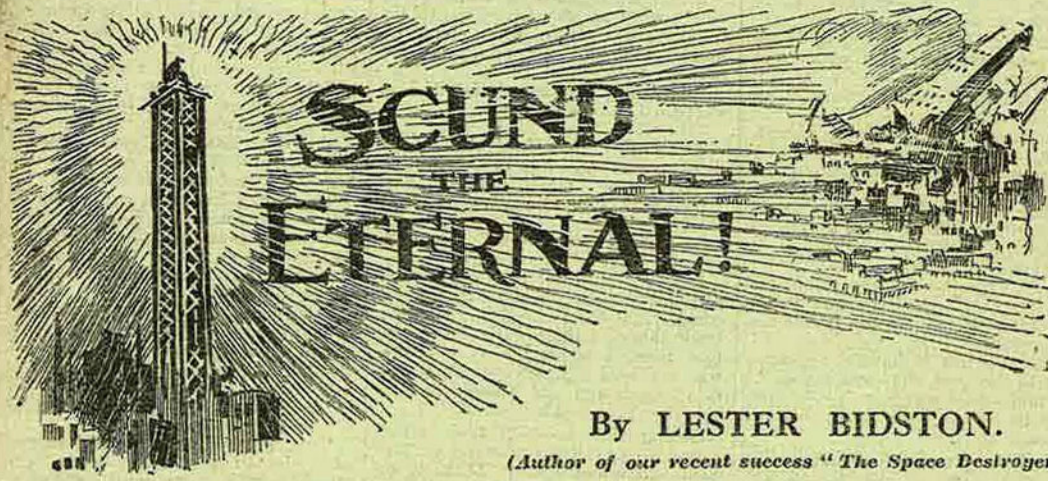
Below will be found our expert's opinion of the probable results of the big games to be played on Saturday, April 21st. The likely winning side is printed in capitals. Where a draw is anticipated, both clubs are printed in smaller letters.

First Division.	Second Division.	First Division (Scottish League).
PRESTON NORTH END v. Arsenal.	Bury v. Blackpool.	Airdrieonians v. Falkirk.
ASTON VILLA v. Everton.	CLAPTON ORIENT v. Southampton.	GLYDE v. Aberdeen.
TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR v. Birmingham.	Coventry City v. The Wednesday.	Alloa v. Albion Rovers.
MIDDLESBROUGH v. Blackburn Rovers.	LEEDS UNITED v. Notts County.	HEARTS v. Ayr United.
Chelsea v. Bolton Wanderers.	MANCHESTER UNITED v. Leicester C.	MORTON v. St. Mirren.
Burnley v. Sunderland.	Port Vale v. BARNESLEY.	Motherwell v. Celtic.
SHEFFIELD UNITED v. Cardiff City.	ROTHERHAM COUNTY v. Bradford C.	PARTICK THISTLE v. Hibernians.
LIVERPOOL v. Ruddersfield Town.	SOUTH SHIELDS v. Crystal Palace.	RANGERS v. Kilmarnock.
Nottingham Forest v. Manchester City.	Stockport County v. Derby County.	
NEWCASTLE UNITED v. Stoke.	WEST HAM UNITED v. Fulham.	
Oldham Athletic v. West Bromwich Alb.	Wolverhampton Wanderers v. Hull City.	

Read the rollicking fine school stories of Tom Merry & Co. in the "Gem" Library.



## A STARTLING STORY OF MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE!



By LESTER BIDSTON.

(Author of our recent success "The Space Destroyer!")

Sid, Ken, and Tim quickly find themselves in Scund the Eternal's presence when they force an entry into his palace in an endeavour to rescue Thensla!

## The 1st Chapter.

Britain is in a panic because a large part of Lincolnshire has disappeared in a night, leaving behind a blackened and charred coastline. Similar reports are received from China, South America, and South Africa. It is the opinion of Miles Belmain, an American scientist, that the calamities are caused by projectiles from another planet. To test the American's theory, Ken Thornton, Sid Kennedy, and Tim Baynes, three adventurous youths, set out for Venus in Pearl II, a space-ship, which they have constructed from a gravity-defying metal of their own invention. In a similar space-ship they have already visited Mars and Vulcan. They reach the planet Venus, but fall into the hands of some gigantic ants, or Spays, in whose stronghold they discover Thensla, a beautiful young Venusian girl, who is also being held prisoner by the terrible insects. After many narrow escapes from death, the three youths and Thensla succeed in escaping from the Spays, though they are compelled to abandon the Pearl. They reach Nayr, capital of Apadocia, over which rules Uensl, Thensla's father, a king without power. The real ruler of Apadocia, the only inhabitable part of Venus, is Scund the Eternal, who, from his citadel, Tarp, controls all that goes on in the country. Though their arrival is kept from the people, Sid explains to Uensl the reason why they have come to Venus, at the same time urging him to throw off Scund's yoke. This the king agrees to do. Disguised as a Venusian, Sid Kennedy enters the city of Tarp in search of the secret of Scund's mysterious weapon. Here he places himself at the head of some slaves, who escape from the Pit of Tarp during a rebellion in the mine. Meanwhile, Thensla is kidnapped by Scund's order. A battle between the cities of Tarp and Nayr follows when Uensl refuses to present himself at Scund's palace. Nayr is destroyed by a terrible death-ray, but Tarp suffers much damage during the conflict as a result of a terrific bombardment by Uensl's guns.

## The 2nd Chapter.

## What Happened in Tarp!

Another shell that must have narrowly missed Scund's palace finally came to rest in the centre of a wide square surrounding Tarp's greatest buildings. In an instant the noble space was converted into a smoking abyss, and the onlookers were horrified to see two huge six-storied barracks slowly arch forward and crash bodily into the valley of smoking soil.

A dreadful wail of despair and fear rose from the thousands who thronged the streets—a cry that quickly turned to a consuming rage that, curiously enough, was directed against Scund.

"Down with Scund!" The words mingled in an ominous roar. "Kill his soldiers! Wipe out all that is his!"

"Come, Osen," Sid exclaimed. "Whilst those fellows strike a blow for freedom we can help them."

Re-entering the guard-house and quickly explaining the position to the survivors from the pit, Sid and Osen burdened each man with a generous supply of the weapons found in the store-room. A minute later this resolute force hurried into the outer street.

They stepped into a scene of terrifying confusion. Fallen buildings made many places impassable, dense volumes of grey smoke from a score of fire caused eyes to smart and throats to burn. Bloodthirsty fighting had broken out in all directions.

"Keep together, men!" Sid ordered. "Those fellows are without weapons—a deficiency we'll try to make good!"

A rousing cheer answered and encouraged him.

How accurately he had judged the need for arms was proved by their running full-tilt into a one-sided fight within a hundred yards of their guard-house—a veritable massacre, where forty of Scund's soldiers were making dreadful use of spears and swords against twice as many unarmed, leaderless slaves.

Never did retribution overtake cruelty more quickly. Without pausing to take breath, without giving an order beyond a beckoning gesture, Sid headed his men into the melee and gave the exulting, cowardly soldiers something to think about.

There was a lot of shouting, a moment's clash that looked like developing into a stiff battle, then Sid's men swept over Scund's warriors.

Of the slaves whom his intervention had saved, Sid armed as many as possible from the surplus his men carried. Others he directed to the guard-house, with directions to distribute every weapon the place contained; and he was about to give the order that would have sent his augmented force seeking fresh adventure, when a well-remembered voice hailed him.

"Ahoy, Sid! Just tell these perspiring pals of yours to leave us alone, or we'll eat 'em!"

At the sound of that voice Sid shouldered his way through the crowd, to find Ken and Tim in noisy altercation with those he had lately armed.

"Drop your weapons, men!" he ordered. "These are friends who have come to help us!" He turned eagerly to his chums. "How in goodness did you get here? What news have you of Nayr?"

"Nayr has ceased to exist," Ken answered gravely. "And, of all its inhabitants, few can have come unscathed through the horror that has swept over it!"

"Nayr ceased to exist! As bad as that?" Sid answered sadly. "Then what of Uensl and—Thensla?"

"When we left Nayr, determined to seek news of you, Uensl's palace still stood. That is all we can say of him. Thensla was abducted from Nayr several days ago, and has fallen into Scund's hands, we fear."

Briefly Ken related the events that had led up to this final catastrophe, then:

"Seeing we could do no good in Nayr we made straight for here, and, possibly because volumes of smoke hid our approach, we got through unscathed. This crowd attracted our attention very quickly, and, spotting you in the van, we alighted not far away."

"And nearly got skewered by your army," Tim added wryly. "What's the next move, Sid?"

Sid's face had paled at the news of Thensla's disappearance, and, though he made no direct comment about it, his agitation was plain and unashamed. Three things struggled for possession of his mind—the unchanging necessity of unravelling the secret hidden by the closed gates, the

rescue of Thensla, if she still lived, and the paying of Scund for all his horrible, callous brutality.

He summoned Osen to his side with a gesture.

"Osen, these are my friends from Valda. They bring grave news, telling me that Nayr is levelled to the



THE MYSTERIOUS BUBBLE! In silence Sid, Ken, and Tim watched the blue bubble swell in circumference.

ground and that we can expect no help from her. Well, already our force has doubled, and we can only go on fighting and wrestling arms from the soldiers where and when we can." He turned to his chums. "Scund has not been visible since the trouble began. There's no doubt he's directing matters from that grim stronghold of his, so into there I'm going, if it's humanly possible."

"And, sure, ye'll not be goin' alone," said Tim. "We don't know the old gentleman, except by bad repute, but we've a little debt to settle with him—for what he's done to Nayr. And where you go, there go we, says I."

"Of course," Ken agreed. "How d'you propose doing it?"

"With all the ruin that is spread about us, anything can happen," Sid answered. "Anyway, it's the enemy's headquarters, so we'll just fight our way towards it."

Sid's scheme of attack was simple. It must be remembered that the wretched slaves of Tarp were without training worthy of the name, and that they only owned a nondescript collection of weapons. But, against that, the terrible effects of the atomic shells had smashed a large portion of the city, had started a score of fierce fires, and had thrown its soldiers into complete confusion.

On this Sid based his plans. He hunted the companies of defenders without a halt, never once stopping

to play the defensive. He turned a flank here, crashed into a centre there, or resolutely hacked a way through a solid mass. And so, keeping constantly on the move, always attracting new numbers of slaves, who ran to his growing force for protection and were turned into fighting units as fast as arms could be procured, Sid slowly and dourly worked his way towards Scund's stronghold.

It would be tedious to relate the history of that street fighting in detail.

But Scund was a doughty antagonist. He struck when least expected, and, striking, showed a cold-blooded vindictiveness that was loathsome.

So in this case, Sid's army, untrained, unwieldy, flooded impetuously into the square that lay behind Scund's palace, and dashed towards the grim grey walls as if they thought to tear the place down with their crude weapons.

Then was the lesson of the Closed Gates, the shattering of Nayr, and the destruction of Uensl's proud fleet played over again.

Until the open place became a congested mass of shouting men the smooth walls were lifeless, cold, and silent. Only then did a score of black muzzles protrude from as many tiny loopholes, muzzles that became suddenly noticeable by reason of white beams of light that flickered from them, to the accompaniment of a loud droning noise.

Forthwith, flashes of actual flame, a bright glare leaping from one to another, touched and spread in the

pretend to make another attack on the palace, Osen. Keep beyond the range of the ray, but get the fellows to yell and dash about as if they meant it. That'll keep those rymerchants busy and give us the few minutes we need. Come on, chaps!" Hope flooded Sid's face, but his chums were quite bewildered as they hurried their leader towards the abandoned flier. Luckily, it had dropped in a deserted by-street.

A minute later it was in the air, Sid in the pilot's seat, Ken and Tim squashed in the observer's post behind him. Flying low, intentionally hugging the clouds of smoke that hung over the burning town, Sid made a complete circuit of the palace.

By some method not yet perfected on earth, Venusian flying was unaccompanied by the racking noise we know, so that in a few tense words Sid was able to explain his desperate resolve.

"Memory hasn't played me false, I'm glad to say. I thought I remembered a huge window staring out towards Nayr," he said; adding abruptly: "There it is—and that's our way in!"

"But we can't land there," Ken answered. "Why, there's only a six-inch ledge—"

"Never mind the ledge," Sid interrupted grimly. "Hold tight!"

Turning away from the palace and swooping round a great spiral, he steadied the machine, set its nose in a line with the window, and literally hurled the flier towards his objective.

Those behind him were suddenly conscious of a whistling wind that sprang up about them. They felt the plane rock uneasily from side to side, saw the grey walls spring towards them, and heard a bewildering splintering crash as the window broke apart like a cardboard model that is crushed beneath the heel of a petulant child.

## Tricked!

If Fate had shown an unkind face to the voyagers since they first landed on Venus, surely a kind and merciful Providence watched over them as the flier crashed into Scund's stronghold.

The two who crouched in the observer's seat already counted themselves as dead; but Sid, piloting the machine with superb nerve, had reasoned cunningly before embarking on this last desperate throw, and though they crashed through the window at a terrific speed and were flung from their seats like stones from a catapult, they were within the palace, bruised, cut, and dazed, but otherwise unharmed.

The flier was hopelessly wrecked, a grotesque mass of splintered wood and twisted metal. Even as they rose shakily to their feet, it slowly tilted backwards and fell to the ground a hundred feet below.

"Please, we've come!" Tim muttered, tenderly rubbing a lump on his forehead. "I don't know why and I don't know how; but, sure, we're here!"

"Pull yourself together, man!" Sid exclaimed sharply. "The crash we made must have roused half the people in the place! The sooner we get busy the better!"

With scarcely a glance at the room they had so unceremoniously broken into, they passed through the only door it contained, and stepped into a wide stone corridor that was without a sign of life.

Down this they crept, bared swords in hands, their eyes alert for the first threat of danger.

But not a sound broke the stillness. As, unmolested, they traversed passage after passage, descended flights of steps, and peered into empty rooms, they almost came to believe that Scund had departed and deserted the place to the first chance-comers.

"It's some go!" Ken muttered. "I expected a mob to fall on us as soon as we entered!"

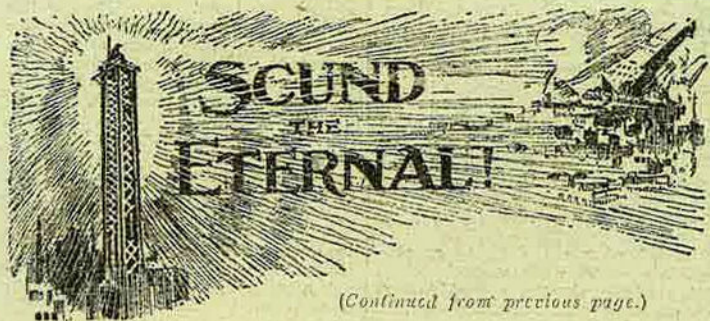
"Perhaps it's a bit more of Scund's magic!" grimaced Tim. "Perhaps he got tired of scrapping, and just whisked his retainers and all his bag of tricks away like Thingamy and his magic carpet!"

"Or perhaps Osen is keeping them busy," Sid reasoned. "Anyway, we've got to go on searching until we find Thensla, or some clue that will put us on her track!"

Why the apparent ease with which they seemingly wandered about the massive pile did not arouse their suspicions it is impossible to say, unless it was that their minds were still dazed by the nightmare aero flight and subsequent crash, or that thoughts of Thensla left room for naught else. Whatever the reason,

(Continued overleaf.)





(Continued from previous page.)

the fact remains that they resumed their search, suspiciously yet hopefully, but without realising that they were marching straight into a carefully prepared trap.

Afterwards they learned that their every move had been watched by Scund's spies from the moment their plane had lifted from the streets of Tarp. And since entering the palace their every step had been dogged.

But for the moment their way was Scund's way. They desired to search every hole and corner of that great building, and, to a point, he was willing—even anxious—to smooth their path.

So innocently enough they systematically traversed every passage, entered every room—all elaborately furnished, but deserted—and at last came to a door that was painted a vivid crimson, a truthful sign of danger, had they but realised it.

Opening the door, they stared in amazement. They found themselves looking into a room that was without light, except that the far wall, thirty feet away, was apparently made of luminous glass, and that a picture showed thereon, vividly outlined and in constant movement, of ruined and smoking Tarp.

Remarkably clear, without the faintest flickering of the screen—if such it was—or hint or sign of projector, the vision revealed was absolutely uncanny. They saw the crowds of freed slaves dashing about, as if intent on storming the palace, yet never once nearing it, and in that moment the chums knew how Scund must be enjoying the spectacle of so much wasted energy. But grimmer sights were showing on this strange screen. They looked on a minute picture of a bloodthirsty fight that was in progress between slaves and soldiers at the very base of a smoking building—a fight that was obliterated by the walls tottering and breaking apart.

The scene snapped. It was instantly replaced by a view of Nayr, or what remained of the marble city. Now, if that picture spoke truth, it was nothing but an extensive ruin of white rubble, saddening to look upon when one recalled the wondrous beauty that had been.

Again the scene changed, to show a boxlike dungeon on whose walls a slime of rank growth glistened with moisture. And in this dreadful prison, manacled to the ground by a weighty chain, crouched Thensla, white-faced and weeping.

All else forgotten, Sid sprang into the room, red rage in his heart, his sword uplifted as though to strike and break the hateful picture. Because they shared Sid's anger, and, like their leader, took the vision for reality, his chums followed—to hear the ghost of a sneering laugh and the click of the door that closed behind them.

Too late, Sid sprang back. But now a panelled wall, its symmetry unbroken, met his bewildered gaze. "My hat!" he gasped. "We've been caged like three tame bears! There's not even a hint of the door by which we entered!"

"And this blessed screen's the bait that drew us into the trap!" Ken grumbled.

By mutual consent they bent in closer examination of the panelled wall. They tapped each separate board, but again drew blank, for their strained ears could detect no difference of sound that would hint of the vanished door.

At last they wearily desisted, and stared at each other in consternation.

Tim began to sing softly, lugubriously: "Within these sae-a-red bowers—"

"Dry up, Tim!" Sid broke in sharply.

But Tim was unimpressed by the seriousness of the situation.

"I say, Sid," he asked, "who's the old party opposite?"

Following Tim's gesture, the others again turned their eyes to the screen, to find that the drooping figure of Thensla had gone, and that it had

been replaced by a "close-up"—a huge bust-view of an old man.

"That, Tim, is the estimable Scund himself," Sid answered, grimly adding: "One with whom you'll soon be better acquainted."

For an appreciable time the giant face towered over them, its big, fish-like eyes staring coldly down, its cruel face a network of fine wrinkles.

Then the picture began to dim, the outline blurred, the screen fading to



**INTO SCUND'S PALACE!** The aeroplane crashed through the window at a terrific speed and Sid, Ken and Tim were flung from their seats into Scund's palace.

darkness. For long, tense seconds the light lingered round those cold, dead eyes, but at length they also thinned and vanished. With them the last flicker of light snapped out, and the three youthful adventurers stood motionless in a darkness that could almost be felt.

Then—it seemed to come from the exact spot where Scund's cruel orbs had been—a bright star of blue light broke out. From this minute illumination the chums saw a thin steel tube protruding several inches from the wall.

Without understanding this fresh mystery, they sensed danger to themselves. But when the little star began to swell and assume an iridescent rotundity, Tim gave way to hysterical laughter.

"I'm for ever blowing bubbles," he began.

But the sudden grip of Sid's fingers on his arm broke his song in its beginning.

In a strained silence they watched the blue bubble swell to three-foot circumference, sway by reason of its own weight, then detach itself from the tube, and float gently to the floor.

So softly did it touch solidity that it bounced from the ground many times. With each jump it neared the amazed chums, as if actually conscious of their presence. In that Stygian blackness the globe, luminously transparent, had a truly ghostly aspect. Their sighs of relief were heartfelt and genuine when the thing burst with a tiny pop.

"Here's another of 'em coming!" exclaimed Tim. "Is old Scund in his dotage, d'you think, to be playing games like this?"

"By no means," Sid answered in a hushed voice. "You can be sure this game means ill to us."

Ken sniffed.

"I say, chaps, d'you smell anything? It's— Now, what is it, I wonder?"

Now that their attention had been called to it, Ken's companions became aware of a faint, bitter-sweet odour

that permeated the atmosphere. But for the life of them they failed to place the smell.

"I know!" Tim suddenly exclaimed. "It's pineapple—the smell of new-cut pineapple!"

Sid's breath drew inwards with an audible hiss.

"Pineapple!" he exclaimed, aghast.

"Why, a species of our most deadly poison-gas has the exact scent of pineapple!"

"Then this is Scund's revenge!" Ken gasped. "This room's nothing but a lethal-chamber!"

Sid laughed harshly.

"Well, boys, we've only got to die once, but I'd like to have done something for poor old Thensla before the beast got us."

"And I'd like to have done something to the poor old beast himself!" Tim murmured savagely. "Oh, just to get my hands firmly planted in his whiskers, and—"

But Tim never finished that justifiable wish. Instead, he joined his chums in a lung-bursting paroxysm of coughing. Their throats grew dry and fiery, their eyes moist with tears

that permeated the atmosphere. But for the life of them they failed to place the smell.

"So we're not to starve!" Tim grinned, seating himself at the table and waving an airy invitation to his companions. "Eat, drink, and be merry me lads, for to-morrow we may go dry!"

"Suppose it's poisoned, Tim?" Ken suggested, with a sly smile.

"Oo-er!"

Tim's lips pursed doubtfully, a dainty morsel half-way to his mouth.

"Nonsense, Tim!" smiled Sid. "Whatever fate awaits us, it isn't poisoning!"

"Good on you, boss!" Tim answered. "Well, here goes!"

It went. But they had barely completed a generous meal, when a slight cough from the far end of the room made them lift their heads sharply, to find themselves staring at a crowd who gathered near the open door, and of whom Scund and Thensla formed the most prominent units.

Seeing that he held their attention, Scund slowly advanced, perforce accompanied by Thensla, on whose shoulder his hand lightly rested.

For a time he looked at them in silence.

"So, youths of Valda, I meet you at last—to thank you for the harm you have done in Apadocia."

The words were spoken quietly, so sadly that Sid had an uneasy sensation of wrongdoing. But that was a thought that vanished in a moment, and, proudly erect, his eyes level with the brooding orbs so near him, he gave back look for look unflinchingly.

"We've done no harm," he answered coldly. "That which has been done—the foul wrecking of Nayr, the murder of its helpless citizens—is a deed your soul will answer for when the gods choose to judge you."

"I thank you," Scund answered quietly. "But my deeds and my soul are not for such as you to probe into. Nor have I shown you mercy so that you could discuss them with me."

But Sid ignored him and turned abruptly to Thensla.

"Lady, this man's talk of mercy leaves us cold, when we remember the vision we saw of you in that horrible dungeon!"

"Dungeon?" Thensla considered the strange word, then shook her head. "I know it not, nor understand your meaning."

"We saw you chained to a wall—" Sid persisted.

Again Thensla shook her head. "That cannot be. Prisoner I am, but I have been treated with a respect and kindness I had not looked for."

"Stranger, the mirage-wall shows truth or lies at my will!" Scund smiled sourly. "That which you saw of this lady was but a thought I threw from this chamber to bring you—where I wanted you! Enough of that! You have thrown my schemes awry, and I would know why."

Then Sid dramatically threw concealment aside. He felt that the last round of the long fight had commenced, and that it would be fought to a definite decision.

"Then know, O Scund, that you are correct! We come from Valda! We seek not to hide that which you guess at!"

The sickly, swimming sensations easing, he looked at the surroundings with interest, surprised at the elegant furnishing of the place, the soft couches on which they reclined, and the entire absence of windows. He turned to his chums, to find they were occupied on the same quest—a knowledge of their whereabouts.

"Well, Scund's got us caged all right," he said wilyly.

Sid rose and stretched languidly, seeking to clear his brain of the cloud that depressed him.

Tim, who had been prowling uneasily about the big chamber, now hailed the others from a remote corner.

"Yo, ho, ho! And a bottle of rum!" he cried, accompanying the words by holding aloft a crystal flagon filled with a liquor that glinted ruby-red in the strong light.

With some pride he displayed a table delightfully laden with the strange but palatable foods they had grown accustomed to eating on Venus—fruits, unnamed, but delicious, the tender meat of an animal not unlike the kid, a plentiful supply of the dark-tinted bread.

Looking down on that table, they suddenly realised how hungry they were, and how long it was since they last ate a substantial meal.

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"Then know, O Scund, that you are correct! We come from Valda! We seek not to hide that which you guess at!"

"I never guess—I know! But not always do I speak all I know!" Scund smiled sourly. "As instance, I know that once a bright star flashed from your globe from a little land placed in a surround of water. That was the moment you commenced your long leap through space. I know also, Yosa, that Valda has lately suffered a series of bursts that have caused much argument and some little fear!"

The chums looked at each other in silent amazement. Either Scund was more than mortal—as, indeed, he claimed to be—or thought-transference was an established science on Venus.

"Then, as you know so much," Sid answered, "you also know why we made this journey and why we worked against you. What need to ask us the question?"

"Still, I do ask—perhaps so that others may hear."

"Oh, I'll tell them!" Sid turned abruptly to the eager men who stood at a respectful distance.

"Know, you who assist Scund in his wickedness, that from the heavens terrible explosions have rent our world, and myriads of innocent people have died—killed, we think, by some dastardly work of your master! There, Scund, does that satisfy you?"

But Sid's denunciation had a result vastly different from what he had intended. Instead of the councillors recoiling from Scund in horror they turned a look of admiration on him, and a whispered buzz of congratulation was directed towards him.

But Scund's bright eyes stared steadily at Sid.

"And you came to kill those terrible explosions at their source?" he asked. "For that reason you entered Tarp, I suppose, and led the attack on the Closed Gates?"

"For that reason I entered Tarp," Sid admitted. He looked at Scund shrewdly. "And had that attack succeeded, I think the secret we sought would be a secret no longer."

"Now I see! Well, had I known your desire, you could have passed the gates long since!" Scund replied courteously. "But the approach to the gates is not the only entrance to the place you would pry into. Follow me, and see all that Tarp had kept from its own people. From you nothing need be hidden. Rather would I explain what you cannot understand."

"Beware a trap!" Tim whispered, as they left the room and followed Scund along a carpeted corridor. "He's too smooth to be true!"

"I know it!" Sid admitted.

He turned to Thensla, even then wondering why Scund allowed the girl free speech with them.

"Thensla, what has happened to make Scund so polite?" he whispered.

"I know not," the girl replied. "I only know he has warned me that on your shoulders rests the decision of my life—or death!"

"On our shoulders? How can that be?"

"He refused to say. I warn you—beware of him. But tell me of my father and Nayr, Yosa. I know that something dreadful has happened, though not what it is."

"Nayr no longer exists," Ken told the girl. "Of your father we know little. The last we saw of him was

## ANOTHER GREAT MASTERPIECE:—

### "THE OUTLAW KING!"

By Morton Pike.



The Wonderful Adventures of  
**ROBIN HOOD,**  
the famous outlaw, and  
his **MERRY MEN** of  
**SHERWOOD,** starting  
in next week's issue of  
our Grand Companion  
Paper  
**THE "POPULAR!"**

Tell all your pals—The Thrill of the Century!



on the roof of your palace, where he was directing operations against Tarp."

Scund now halted opposite a triple-locked door. This he began to unfasten with keys he took from his belt.

Thensla pressed the hands of Ken and Tim. She turned to Sid last of all.

"Not again may we have speech together, Yosa of Valda," she said softly. "The gods warn me inwardly that the end draws nigh."

"Say not that!" Sid whispered fiercely. "Lady, since I have known you my thoughts have been of you always! Courage, Thensla, for Scund has not won yet!"

Thensla shook her head.

"Winning or losing, I know that I lose! Ere that time comes, Yosa, I would thank you for all you have braved for my sake, both here and in Spayland!" She leaned closer to him, her eyes shining, her face smiling and delicately flushed. "Glad I am, Yosa, to have lived thus far—to have been privileged to meet and to know one such as you!"

She stopped abruptly. Before Sid could frame a reply Scund was impatiently beckoning them into the place he had entered.

The Master Magician.

How can the wonder of the place in which the awed voyagers now stood be portrayed in words?

Can you imagine an enormous tube, two miles in length, half a mile in height and width, the long length of its tunnelled way almost dead level, the whole sheath of its circular wall smooth, highly-burnished metal?

Can you imagine even that amazing constructional feat being merely a means towards an end? Why, the place, wonderful as it was, was nothing but a repository for two instruments so vast that the three voyagers rubbed their eyes, to be sure they did not dream.

Those two instruments were a marvel of super-scientific skill, or the result of a master-mind rioting to madness. The one, actually the gun for which the chums had persistently searched, was a weapon almost beyond their imagination. In comparison, the twenty-inch terrors of our Dreadnoughts became ridiculous toys; it was like comparing a pop-gun to the weapons which so efficiently guard our shores. Its breech, eight hundred feet overhead, was a vast black cavity, into which even now the voyagers were privileged to see a shell being loaded.

Even the shell itself was a thing to shudder at. It emerged from a pit of unknown depth, a score of six-inch cables gripping its sides, a huge derrick of enormous power slowly lifting it; a conical shape, two hundred feet in length and, at its base, fully a third as wide! Awe-stricken and tongue-tied, the chums watched the terrible missile rise, cant over, and slowly disappear into the wonder-weapon.

But it was the gun's companion that gripped their attention.

Almost at their feet a circular staircase began that wound up to half the height of the vast tube, and terminated in an enclosed platform. From this emerged the slim beginning of the most amazing telescope that ever the mind of man had conceived—an instrument made entirely of glittering quartz, and one that, like the long gun-barrel, ended a full two miles away!

It was a telescope unlike any known on Earth. Rather was it a whole series of instruments that, beginning with the single tube high over their heads, turned into a cluster of six some distance away.

Scores of workmen were assiduously polishing the tubes of glittering quartz, and the brightness of this mineral crystal created a sparkle that dazzled the eyes. So much was this so that the voyagers now noticed how carefully each workman's eyes were protected by tinted goggles.

Though it has taken long to describe the outer appearance of Scund's "babies"—for so Tim facetiously named them—Sid and his chums had but a momentary glance at the instruments before Scund shepherded the whole party into a lift that quickly carried them to the dizzy heights of the platform.

They emerged to a place that was fascinating to the trained eyes of Sid and Ken.

But Scund, motioning them to follow him, crossed to a wall and pointed to a map.

"Do you recognise that place?" he demanded. "Tell me, do you know this particular portion of it?"

It was a map of our world at which the astonished chums gazed.

"Well, I'll be staggered!" muttered Tim. "And I thought we were the original and only fliers through space! Why, somebody's been here before us, and shown these beggars a plain outline of our dear old Earth!"

"That is not all," Scund said. "Step with me to the observation chamber, and see the last and greatest of my secrets. Then will I talk with thee."

They now entered a round tower that stood, like a huge pill-box, in the centre of the platform—a place whose upper reaches were covered by a thick, green cloth, but whose lower portion was filled by a circular table, its top a dead, dull yellow. Between this curious table and the wall there was bare width of standing room.

"Now, voyagers," Scund began, "I am about to switch off these lights. Then will I open the curtain above. Once that cloth parts, I warn you, cast not your glance upwards if you would preserve your sight. Rather, look down on this white surface, and see that on which few have looked. You understand? Keep your eyes from that which shines above!"

With the last word the place was plunged into darkness. For a moment silence held them. Then, with a tiny click, the curtain overhead parted, and the table-top was thrown into such strong relief that its yellow had turned to burning white.

cried, "this is impossible! Why, it's like looking at England from a height of about fifty miles, instead of the twenty-six million we know we are from it!"

"Wait!" Scund warned. "That is not all. Look now!"

For the last time he fingered the board, and, to the startled eyes of the voyagers, they stared down on London—not a London in which they could distinguish any particular building or street, yet a London that was unmistakable, by reason of its broad, flowing river and the bridges that spanned it.

"My only aunt!" Ken gasped, his voice cracked and hoarse. "Old London!"

"Old London, you call it. I have often gazed on this great city and wondered how its myriads lived. Old London!" For a time Scund mused in silence, then sighed. "Beyond that I cannot go, though I would that I could bring your world yet nearer, to study the ways of your peoples and compare their intelligence with mine own!"

Abruptly he wiped the view from the table, and switched into its place the curtain that covered the blinding light.

Sid broke the silence that followed this amazing astronomical display.

"Then you have fired that gun, knowing the awful misery you were creating in our world, even sighting

it to suit whatever dastardly purpose you had in mind?"

"I fired it—yes," Scund admitted coolly. "But the gods directed the shell. To my sorrow, I admit that, though I can hit Valda, my shell-thrower is not sufficiently accurate to hit any particular part of it."

"No matter!" Sid snapped. "You admit the crime, yet of the reason that lies behind your wholesale murder you say nothing!"

"Of that we will speak later," answered Scund. "Your words bear witness to what I have done. I have shown you everything, that your eyes must see what more I can, and will, do should the need arise!"

"What d'you want of us?" Sid demanded.

"I want—I demand the secret of your invention," Scund answered slowly.

Sid laughed grimly.

"So that you can bring bondage to our people as you have already done to your own? We refuse—eh, boys?"

"Absolutely!"

"You will perhaps change your minds when I tell you that your refusal means death to the Lady Thensla! Also, a continuance of your obstinacy means a shelling of Valda far beyond anything I have yet attempted!"

Sid was visibly disconcerted, and the faces of all three paled.

"By no means," Scund answered coldly. "I am simply demonstrating that neither you nor any other interloper will be allowed to interfere with my work."

"Perhaps your own people of Tarp will answer that?" Sid replied.

"I alone answer that!" Scund replied loftily. "And, stranger, know that not all the rebellious passions you have aroused will alter my plans a iota!" He looked at Sid with glittering eyes. "Know, also, that when it suits my purpose I can crush the rebellion—he snapped finger and thumb—"like that! Why, folly haunted youth, in this building alone I have five hundred heat-ray bearers waiting to sweep Tarp clean at my command!"

"Have you? Well, you're such a pretty gilt-edged scoundrel," Sid replied, dangerously subdued, "that it will be a kindness to put Apadocia in mourning for you!"

With the word, Sid vaulted lightly on to the table and flung himself, unarmed as he was, straight at Scund's scraggy throat before anyone in that cramped place realised his intention.

But he had hardly taken two steps when Scund slipped through the doorway, and though Sid took a flying leap after him, it was only to plunge into a crowd of subordinates who had blocked the exit with their bodies the instant they understood his intention. He fought bitterly for a time, and Ken and Tim pluckily threw themselves into the melee. But it ended all too quickly in defeat in that restricted place, where weight and numbers alone counted, and very soon the three were dragged to the outer platform, panting and impotent, each in the clutch of two burly Apadocians.

Scund laughed harshly at the sight of the furious, helpless prisoners.

"Yosa, think not that I feared to face you!" He snatched the same black wand from his tunic that Sid had once before seen him use with grim effect. "Ah, you remember it, Yosa? You know that one touch of the violet ray this stick contains would stretch you dead at my feet!"

"Then strike, eternal coward!" Sid challenged angrily.

Scund shrugged his shoulders and coolly replaced the wand.

"Foolish youth, the gift of life you so lightly disdain is a gift the gods give once only—a gift to be respected and paid for!"

"But not at your price!" Sid answered hotly.

"At any price, as you will learn if your ways let you live so long!" He indicated a long, narrow table that occupied one side of the open platform. "But we waste time. At least listen to what I have to say. Then, if you still disown desire of life, I'll see it troubles you no more!"

Hot words trembled on Sid's lips, but a warning glance from Thensla caught his eye and made him follow Scund in silence.

Sid found himself marvelling at the changed demeanour of the Eternal, wondering why the ruthless, mysterious being had repeatedly spared his life, despite the extreme provocation he had received.

But Scund allowed scant time for thought. Himself occupying a raised seat on one side of the table, he placed Thensla on his immediate right, the voyagers directly facing him across the three-foot board, and his puppet councillors wherever they could find seating room.

"Strangers," Scund began, "as you have asked, so have I shown you the great secrets of Tarp. In return, I crave from you the secret of the wonder-machine that has safely carried you from distant Valda."

"We have already refused it!" Sid snapped. "Nothing you can do to us will ever change that answer!"

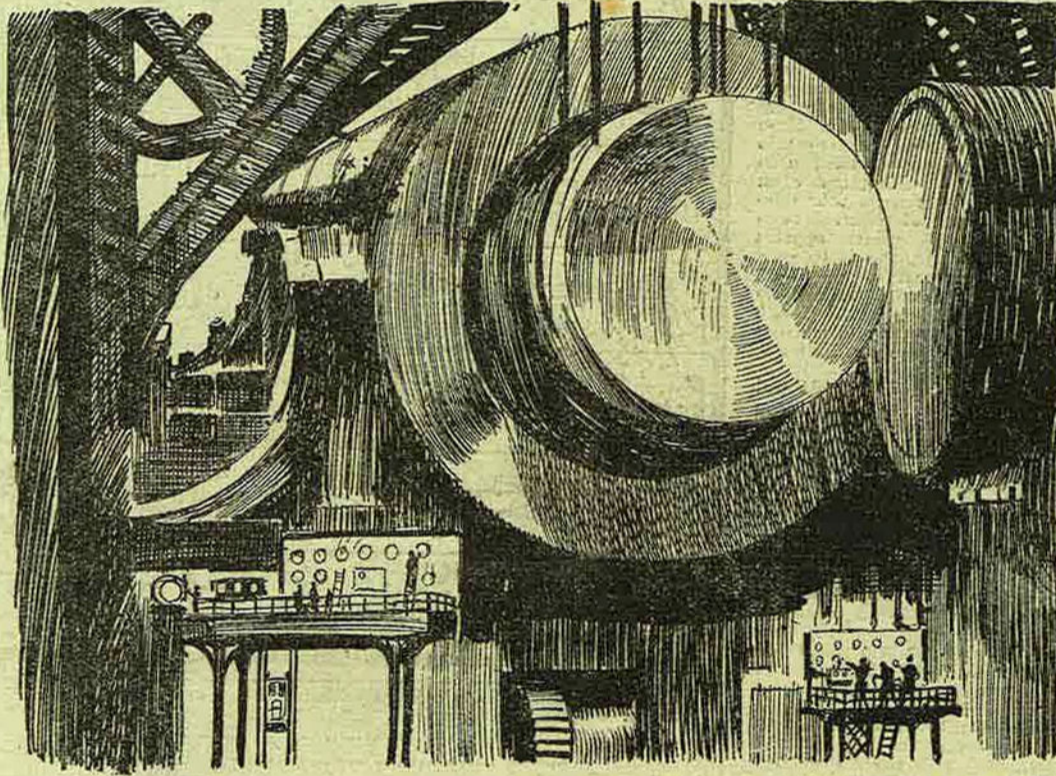
Scund glanced sideways at Thensla—a look full of cruel portent.

"Yosa, before you make that answer final, I would tell you something of the harsh fate that broods over Atara. I would fain tell why I have unbared my secret works to you instead of to mine own people."

"That you fear to take them into your confidence argues ill of those same works!" Sid replied cuttingly.

"You wrong me, Yosa. That I have not spoken openly is because all Apadocia would have driven from fear to madness, had I told them what I am about to tell you."

(What is the fate that broods over Atara? On no account miss next Monday's long instalment of this amazing story. Order your BOYS' FRIEND in advance.)



SCUND'S WONDER WEAPON! From the platform Sid, Ken, and Tim, awe-stricken and tongue-tied, watched the loading of the gigantic gun!

"Again I warn you! Lift not your eyes!" said Scund. "Above you is a mass of liquid fire that throws its magnified glare on this white screen."

They could see an apparatus of many plugs and wires at Scund's elbow—an instrument that was twin to a telephone switchboard. Manipulating this with deft fingers, Scund suddenly pointed to the table-centre, and there, portions of its surface obscured by cloud-belts, was a reproduction of Earth.

"There, voyagers, you see your world, as no doubt you have seen ours through instruments of your own. But watch!"

Time and again Scund rapidly fingered his switchboard. With each movement of his hand the reproduction of Earth grew larger, until it covered nearly all that twenty-foot table, and every outline of land and water stood clear and sharp as though cut into the table's surface.

"Fortunately, the sun shines on the place you come from," Scund said unemotionally. "How call you that little land?"

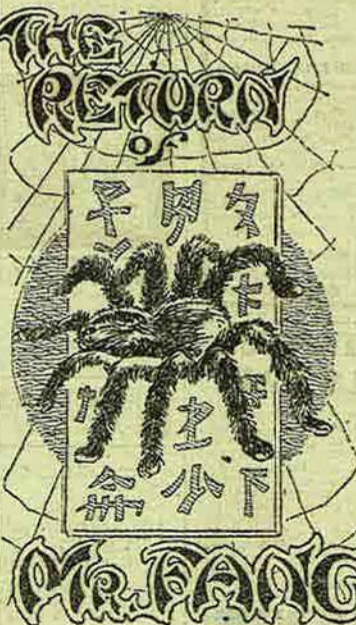
"Great Britain," Sid answered absently, his whole mind concentrated on the marvel on which he gazed.

Scund smiled. "A little place to be named 'Great Britain' he said. 'But at this Britain we will look closer.'"

And, true to his word, Scund suddenly wiped the screen clear, and immediately replaced it by a picture of Great Britain, of a size sufficient to show up every mountain, lake, and town of any size.

"But, great heavens, sir," Sid

THE MOST AMAZING WIZARD FROM OUT OF THE ORIENT!



In Next Week's "MAGNET" LIBRARY!

"You cannot be so murderously brutal!" Sid said wildly. "Why cannot you be content with being Lord of Apadocia, as you are? Why seek to conquer another world?"

"In the comfort of the outer platform I will tell you of the strange tragedy that hovers over this world," Scund's hand moved swiftly towards a raised button that was blackly prominent on the yellow table. "But first, as a warning that I threaten no more than I will perform—listen!"

The last word synchronized with an ear-bursting explosion, followed by a thousand echoes that floated back from the mouth of the two-mile bore. Then, as these sounds rumbled into silence, the shocked voyagers heard a prolonged scream that was like the whistle of an express train. For several minutes they stood motionless, petrified with the horror of the dread warning that gradually thinned and receded.

It was almost impossible to credit the wanton cruelty of Scund's action. But only too well they knew that they listened to yet another giant shell beginning its twenty-six million miles' journey to Earth!

Sid Defies Scund.

For just so long as the whistling of the giant shell was audible the voyagers stood in petrified silence.

"You inhuman monster!" Sid cried at last. "Surely you have not fired another shell at Valda—perchance signed the death-warrant of several thousand people—just to impress us with your cleverness?"



# In Your Editor's Den



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers upon any subject. Address your letters to: Editor, "Boys' Friend," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

### A BIG CLAIM TO MAKE!

Perhaps you will think I am exaggerating when I say the new number of the BOYS' FRIEND is the finest ever sent out into the world. But I am convinced that this is so. We have had any number of winners, but anyone who could run down the list of triumphs with which the history of the old "Green Un" is studded would be put to it to discover a better budget of grand fiction than is contained in the issue which you have in your hands this week. The Jimmy Silver yarn itself is far away the best to date.

### "THE ROOKWOOD TENDER- FEET!"

Further astounding adventures of the Rookwooders in the Wild West will be found in next week's number. Owen Conquest is very much at home indeed in the land of ranches and buck-jumpers. He knows it all, and he has got a ripping yarn for next Monday, showing the difficulties of the newcomers, also the quaint ideas which have been flying round that Jimmy Silver is a Johnny Raw. It is not quite so. Silver can ride, though his very practical horsemanship is put to the severest test any chap could face.

### "THE FINAL!"

Walter Edwards' yarn next week tells of the event of the season. Chelsea Villa meet Huddersford Town for the trophy. What happens? There is a whirl of incident, and a perfect dust-storm of intrigue, and some of the dust gets into the eyes of the public. There has been tremendous excitement over this match, and the Duke is on the keen edge of anticipation, for he means to out everybody. His kidnapping stunt down Wapping way brings into play the evils of an underground prison, and a phenomenal surprise for Hercules Samson--and others. "W. E." has good reason to feel a throbb of pride over this story, with its wealth of humour and consummate dash.

### "A ROGUE OF THE TURF!"

Alpha Always is welcome in any story. He is as cool as a cucumber, and gifted with a peculiar kind of cleverness. In the coming sensational story of the Turf he shows once more how deeply he has studied human nature.

### PROGRAMMES AND OPINIONS.

That we should like to hear further of Daresbury School is evident. Peter Foy has jumped into popularity with his brilliant stories of that establishment. Moreover, he presents a group of characters who are mostly likeable, and all fellows to be remembered. I am glad to say that shortly there will be another chapter of events at Daresbury. School tales have ever been a predominant feature of our paper; so it will continue. There are plenty of matters on which I have been wishing to have a chat with my chums, but most of them will have to wait. I have only space now just to remind you that the two serials, "Sound the Eternal!" and "The Phantom Pirate!" are still drawing full houses, while there will be a grand wind-up on the subject of footer by "Goalie" next week. And after that you might look out for an array of brilliant novelties coming!

### THE RESULT OF "HUDDERSFIELD TOWN" COMPETITION.

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to the following competitor, whose solution came nearest to correct, with one error:

THOMAS COMBE,  
70, Hawthornvale,  
Leith.

The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided among the following eight competitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

Charles H. Morton, 7, Eyre Street, Pallion, Sunderland; Frances Morton, 7, Eyre Street, Pallion, Sunderland; Jane Hamilton, 29, Duke Street, Motherwell; Joan Frisken, 21, Church Street, Lochgelly; Mrs. Pattinson, 17, Clementina, Carlisle; Harold Lee, 23, Ainscow Street, Bolton, Lancs; Miss V. Shaw, 61, Pontypridd Road, Porth, Glam; Bernard Wallis, 14, Egerton Road, Bishopston, Bristol.

Forty-eight competitors, with three errors each, divide the ten prizes of 5s. each. The names and addresses of these prize-winners can be seen on application at this office.

### SOLUTION.

Huddersfield Town might be called the kiddies of the First Division. A few years ago they were in great financial difficulties, but they played such brilliant football that the gates increased amazingly. Huddersfield won the English Cup last year, and will fight hard to keep it.

### Your Editor.

### The "Magnet" Library Limerick Competition.

NO ENTRANCE FEE REQUIRED.

FIRST £1 1s. PRIZE.

AND

Consolation Prizes of 2/6 for all efforts published.

In order to win one of the above Prizes all you have to do is to supply the last line of the verse given below, taking care to see that your effort bears some apt relation to the theme.

### RULES GOVERNING THE "MAGNET" LIMERICK COMPETITION.

1. The First Prize will be awarded to the sender of what, in the opinion of the Editor and a competent staff of adjudicators, is the best Last Line received.
2. Consolation Prizes of 2/6 will be awarded from week to week to those competitors whose efforts show merit.
3. The coupon below entitling you to enter for this competition must be either pasted on to a postcard, in which case your Last Line must be written IN INK directly beneath it, or enclosed separately in an envelope with your Last Line effort attached.
4. Competitor's name and full postal address must accompany every effort sent in.
5. Entries must reach us not later than April 26th, 1923, and MUST NOT be enclosed with entrance forms for any other competition. They must be addressed "Magnet Limerick No. 2," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.
6. Your Editor undertakes that every effort sent in will receive careful consideration, but he will not hold himself responsible for coupons lost or mislaid, or delayed in the post. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery.
7. This competition is open to all readers of the Companion Papers, but the result each week will appear only in the "Magnet."
8. It is a distinct condition of entry that your Editor's decision must be accepted as binding in all matters. Acceptance of these rules is an express condition of entry.

### "MAGNET" LIMERICK COMPETITION No. 2.

Said Bunter, "There's nothing for tea,  
And I'm hungry as hungry can be."  
But when he asked Brown  
To advance half-a-crown

### THIS EXAMPLE WILL HELP YOU:

Browney turned a deaf ear to his plea!  
E. F.

CUT HERE.

Beneath his calm, even innocent exterior he conceals a smartness which discounts the cunning of any rogue. It is a fine yarn, revealing some mighty queer dealings, and it all tends to make one want to hear more of the soft-spoken, straight-dealing character whose methods are matchless.

### DON'T MISS THIS GREAT OPPORTUNITY!

## £10 AGAIN OFFERED THIS WEEK IN PRIZES!

### THE HISTORY OF THE WEST HAM CLUB.

FIRST PRIZE £5.  
SECOND PRIZE £2 10s.  
and 10 PRIZES of 5s.

### INSTRUCTIONS.

Here is a splendid footer competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of the West Ham Football Club in picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve the picture, and when you have done so write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears under the puzzle, pin it to your solution, and post it to "West Ham" Competition, Boys' Friend Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, April 26th.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all or any of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with the "Gem," the "Magnet," and the "Popular," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.



I enter "WEST HAM" Competition and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name.....  
Address.....  
B.F.

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