

The Rebellion at St. Basil's School. (See the Picture Below.)

THE Boys' Herald 1d

A Healthy Paper for Manly Boys.

No. 151, Vol. III.

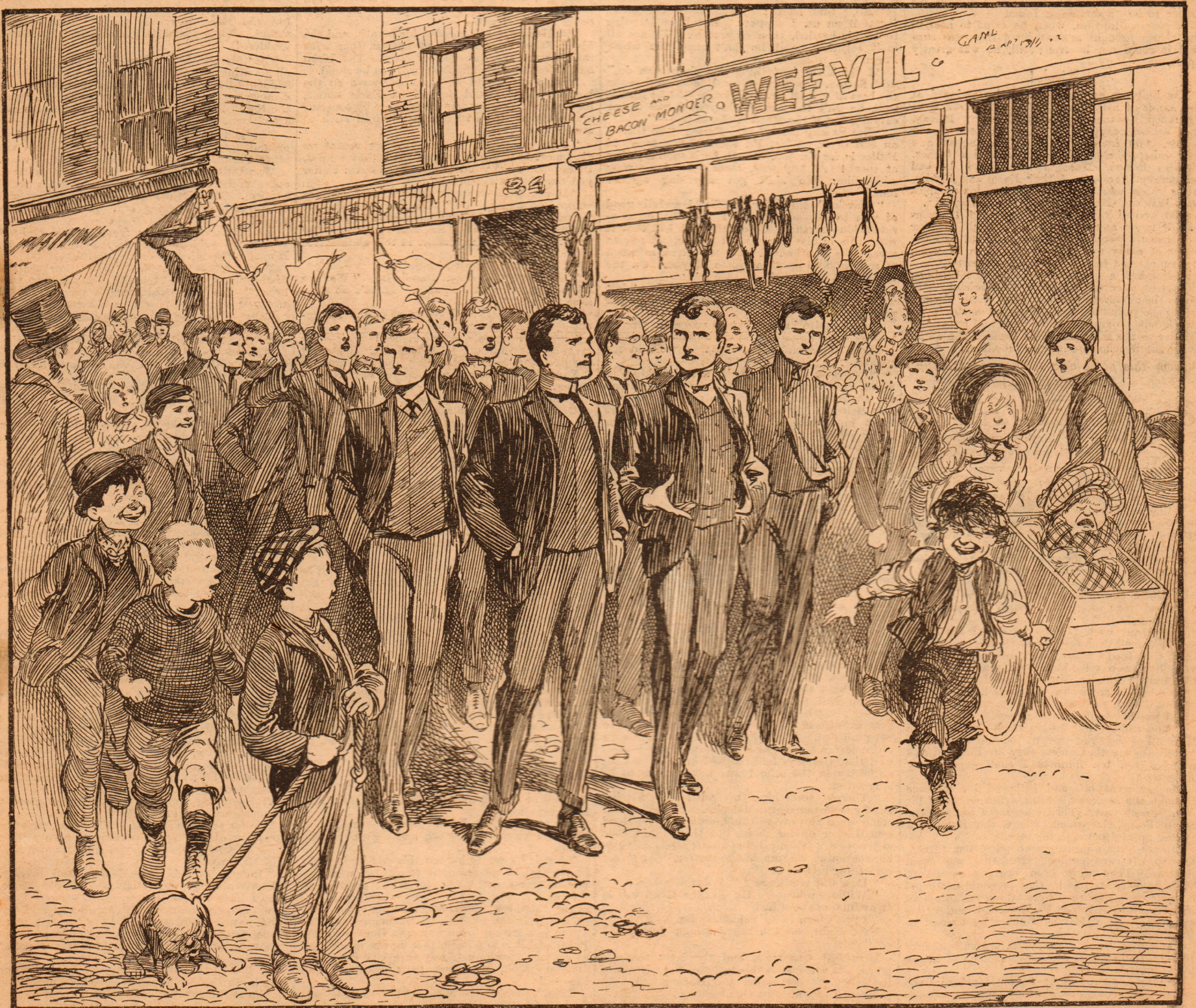
EVERY THURSDAY—ONE PENNY.

WEEK ENDING JUNE 9, 1906.

TRUE AS A DIE.

An Enthralling Tale of St. Basil's School.

By Popular HENRY ST. JOHN.



THE SIXTH FORM REBELS!

The whole party of rebellious Sixth Formers marched off to the village, some carrying their pocket handkerchiefs tied to sticks. A small crowd of children fell in with the procession, and marched with the boys down the village street, yelling with all their might.



True as a Die.

A Tale of St. Basil's School
BY HENRY ST. JOHN.

The First Chapters Specially Re-written for New Readers.

For His Father's Sake.

EVEN before Malcolm Warrington made his appearance at St. Basil's, Mr. Withers, the deservedly unpopular master of the Fourth Form, learnt something about the new boy's family history, which, with his usual mean and ungenerous spirit, he meant to use for the purpose of making Malcolm's lot an unhappy one.

Through reading a letter not intended for his eyes, he gathered that, years before, Warrington's father—who had held a high position in the Army—had been condemned on a charge of treason, and banished from his native land. Now, although many believed Colonel Ian Warrington guiltless of the charge brought against him, his innocence had never been proved. Malcolm was quite unaware of all this, believing his father to be on service in India.

Of course, Malcolm, when he came to hear of the charge brought against his father, was sure that it could not be true; still, he was greatly upset.

Rivals!

The bullying and sneers Malcolm endured at the hands of his thoughtless schoolfellows were lightened by the friendship of Harry Belton, the school captain, a kind-hearted young fellow, who knew all about Warrington and the unhappy cloud hanging over his father. Besides Belton, Malcolm also found he had temporary friends in Arthur Earle and Bimby, while those who made themselves his enemies were Wilshin, Geering, Peters, and Cartwright.

The arrival of a new boy named Huggins caused much amusement in the school. Owing to his many eccentricities the poor lad was the subject of many practical jokes, but in Malcolm the simple lad found a staunch supporter. Having had a disagreement with Mr. Withers, Belton resigned the captaincy of the school. As, under the circumstances, no other Sixth Former would accept it, the Head, taking the matter in his own hands, appointed the bullying and unpopular Hacker to the position. This aroused the anger of the Sixth, who rose in open rebellion.

(From this point new readers can take up the story to-day.)

Council of War—A Want of Discretion.

GO to all the Sixth Form rooms and tell them they are to come down at once," said the Head.

Hacker went out. He went upstairs and knocked on the first door. It was Earle's.

"You are to come down at once, or there will be trouble—the Head sent me!" he shouted through the keyhole. There was no sound from within, and Hacker passed on to the next door and delivered his message. Ten minutes later he was back in the Sixth Form class-room.

"Well?" said the Head.

"I gave the message, sir, but none of them answered me; they all heard, though—they couldn't help it."

The Head waited. The hands of the clock slowly travelled onwards, and then it was forced upon the Head's mind that there was something very like open rebellion. And the rebellion of the Sixth Form, at that—the head form of the school! His authority was defied. The Head trembled with rage, and when he was angry the Head was apt to do unwise things.

"You can go and inform them that I relieve them all of their prefectship," he said to Hacker; "and also say that unless they are down in this room within ten minutes I shall expel every absentee!"

Hacker went off, and bellowed his message through the keyholes, adding a few words of his own in each case. Then once more back to the Sixth Form class-room, where the Head was pacing up and down in his rage.

Minute after minute passed—five, ten, fifteen, twenty. It was evident that this was open defiance. They were even braving expulsion. They knew as well as he that he could not expel a whole class, and they were taking advantage of it. Then suddenly the Head turned, and strode out of the room, leaving Hacker by himself to think over the situation.

The entire Sixth Form, with the exception of Hacker, had collected to hold a council of war in Earle senior's room.

It was a pretty tight fit for fourteen well-grown youths to get in, but they jammed in somehow, and the meeting might well have been described as "packed."

It was a serious affair, and they all realised it. This, at any rate, was no laughing matter. The Sixth Formers had kicked over the traces, and had gone a little farther than the Sixth

Form had ever gone before in the whole history of St. Basil's.

The Head had sent an order, and it had been disregarded. The question now was, what should they do next?

"What you chaps have got to remember is this," said Earle senior. "It isn't the Head we are against in this, it's Hacker. We all know what Hacker is. There's not a chap in the school worse fitted for the captaincy than he is. For myself I would sooner see one of the Fifth Form chaps put up for the place than Hacker. He might be a kid, but still, we might respect him. And who the dickens is going to respect Hacker?"

There was a murmur of assent at this.

"Then you have got to remember the show Hacker made when he forced his way into the prefects' room. Pretty sort of chap he is to shove over us in authority—eh?"

"We can't go too far," said Dewsbury. "I suppose you chaps don't go so far as to propose a lock-out?"

"No," said Earle; "not unless the Head forces it on us, I suppose. But if he is going to be pig-headed, then so are we. We are all in it together, and he can't expel the whole Form."

"I think the best thing you chaps can do," said Belton, "is to swallow Hacker and make the best of it. Of course, I know that he isn't—well, he isn't the sort of chap we'd like to see captain, but if the Head sticks to it—"

"Not at any price," said Earle; "so there's an end of it. Why, I'd sooner have seen old Haller in for the job, though he is such a duffer at sport! At any rate, there's nothing wrong with him. We ain't got anything against him."

"Thanks," said Haller. "That is awfully good of you to say so, Earle. Personally, on consideration—mature consideration—I felt that it would be in the interests of the school not to accept the position. I have not given so much of my time to sport as some of you. On the contrary, I have—"

"Yes, that's all right," said Earle, "but we've got to get down to business. What's our programme?"

No one quite knew what to suggest. One or two were for going the whole hog and having a lock-out there and then, but they were in the minority.

"I suggest that we go down to breakfast as usual, and that after breakfast we ask the Head for an interview, and put the matter to him," said Belton. "If he won't listen to us, then we must hold another meeting and discuss our future plans."

Belton's suggestion was carried.

"You can bet your boots," said Morris, "that the Head won't listen to us! You know what he is when he gets his back up, and he's got his back up over this matter. I believe he hates Hacker as much as any of us. But he's selected Hacker, and we'll have to swallow him, unless we kick."

"Then we'll kick," said Earle. "Now—"

Clang, clang! The breakfast bell.

The Head was at his usual place at the head table. As the clang of the bell died away the Fifth Form filed in and took its usual place. The Fourth followed, then, after a brief wait, the Third.

"So the Sixth were not coming. They—"

The Head had formed his conclusion too hastily. Belton came in, Earle followed, and behind them the entire Sixth. And the Head felt a glow of satisfaction steal over him. He had brought them to their senses, then. There was an end to this nonsense. So much the better. But he should not pass the occurrence over in silence. No! Someone would have to be punished. The whole Form would be in disgrace for a time at least, but it was just as well that the boys had realised in time that his authority in the school was not a thing to be laughed at.

"There's something up with the Sixth," Bimby whispered to Malcolm. "They didn't come down to prayers this morning. The Head sent Hacker up for them, but they didn't take any notice. It's my belief that there's going to be ructions. So much the better. We'll see something if there is."

"How did you know?" Malcolm asked.

"William told me. He said the Head was in an awful tear about it."

"I don't believe it," said Malcolm.

"All right, do the other thing; but you'll see."

Breakfast was over, and the boys rose for grace. It was one of the duties of the captain of the school to say grace, and Hacker forthwith proceeded to offer up a thanksgiving.

"The Sixth Form will go to its class-room at once," the Head said sternly.

"Told you so!" muttered Bimby. "Earle junior, your brother's in for it with the rest of them!"

"He's in pretty good company," said Earle

junior. "I dare say he'll keep his end up all right."

The Head realised the fact that the Sixth Form was not composed of small boys who would be easily overawed. The Sixth Form at St. Basil's was a power, and a considerable one; and in this matter of Hacker the Sixth Form was against him, and would have to be fought. Somehow the Head felt rather nervous of the coming conflict. He went to his study to consider what position he should take up. Of one thing, however, he was certain—he would not budge an inch. Hacker had been selected by him because every other boy in the Sixth Form had refused to take the captaincy. It was monstrous that the Sixth Form should dare to think of dictating to him. It was unheard-of impertinence.

The Head worked himself up into a rage, which was the worst thing that he could have done. A little diplomacy and a little careful handling would have saved the situation, but the Sixth Form, feeling that it had a grievance, was not in the humour to stand bullying.

By the time that the Head found himself in the Sixth Form class-room he was in a royal, tearing rage. His hands shook, his face was purple, and for some moments he could scarcely speak.

"You—you," he gasped, slamming the door after him, "are—are you all here?"

"Yes, sir, all here," said Earle senior coolly.

The Head paused.

"How dare you—" he shouted. "How dare you defy me in the unheard-of manner that you did this morning? I say that never in the history of this school has such a piece of gross effrontery ever been offered to a headmaster!"

"No disrespect to you was intended, sir," said Earle senior.

"No—no disrespect! You—you disobey me, laugh at my order, disobey them, treat me with contempt, and—and you are— Dare to tell me that you mean no disrespect! You shall suffer for it, I will—"

The Head paused, gasping for breath, and the Sixth Form boys looked at one another with rather startled expression of faces. The Head had taken it badly, about as badly as he could.

Well, what would be the next move on the board? That would depend on Earle senior, for Earle senior was their mouthpiece by consent, and what he said and did they would stick to and carry out.

"I am sorry, sir. I said that we meant no disrespect to you, and as you think that we did, I can only say that on behalf of the Form I offer you our sincere apologies."

"It won't do—it won't do at all! I will not accept apologies, sir!" shouted the doctor. "Understand me? You have gone beyond all bounds, you have defied me, and you shall suffer for it. Who is the ringleader in this abominable affair?"

"I am," said Earle senior quietly.

"No, no!" shouted Dewsbury. "We are all in it together and equally. There's no ringleader at all!"

There was a babel of voices at once. Everyone echoed Dewsbury's speech.

"Silence! I will have silence! This—is this going beyond all things. I say silence!" shouted the Head, stamping on the ground. "Earle, by your own confession you are the ringleader. I say, by your own confession—"

"No!" shouted Dewsbury.

Once more the room rang with sound, and the Fifth and Fourth Form boys out in the playground stood listening with scared looks on their faces.

"Another word from you, Dewsbury, and you will bitterly regret it!" shouted the Head.

"Earle, by your own confession you enticed the rest of the Form to treat me and my authority here in this unheard-of manner. There is but one punishment that fits such a case. Insubordination at school, as in the Army and Navy, must be put down with the strongest hand. You will be—"

The Head could not get the word out, or if he did get it out it was lost in the terrible din that arose. Earle had gone very pale. He knew well enough what the Head meant—expulsion! It would be a horrible disgrace. He thought of his mother, of her tears, of the shame that would attach to him for years to come. Expulsion for this foolish freak! It was a little bit rough, a bit too hard.

But the Head was not allowed to pronounce the word. For minute after minute the din continued. Every boy there, with the exception of Earle and Belton, yelled his loudest. It was insubordination with a vengeance—rank rioting, mutiny, and nothing else. As for the Head, he was beside himself with passion.

"You—you willains!" he shouted. "You scoundrels, how dare—"

"Silence! Order, order, you fellows!" Earle shouted at the top of his voice, and held up his hand for silence.

For a moment he did not succeed in getting it, then the voices trailed off, and silence reigned again.

"Sir, if by punishing me this can be brought to an end, I am content to accept whatever punishment you think fit to order," Earle said. "I can only say, as I said just now, that I have never intended disrespect towards you. Our grievance is the election of Hacker as captain. There is a strong feeling against Hacker in this Form, and it is impossible that we can regard him as captain or submit to any authority from him. If you would withdraw your selection, and let—"

"No," shouted the Head emphatically—"no! And as for you, Earle senior, as I said before, your punishment shall be immediate ex—"

There was no stemming the torrent this time. Yells, howls, cat-calls, shrieking, and bellowing made the room ring. It was deafening, stupefying. The Head shrank back, appalled at the

awful din. Then someone struck up the "Marseillaise." The boys didn't know the words, but that didn't matter; they knew the tune, and they knew that it was the hymn of the revolutionaries.

"By gum, they are going it!" muttered Bimby. "The Head can't be in there! Give us a bunk up, Warrington, for goodness' sake!"

Bimby climbed on to Malcolm's back and looked in at the Sixth Form class-room window, and what Bimby saw kept him silent from sheer stupefaction.

In the centre of the room the Head, standing with clenched fists, his face purple, a look of absolute fury on his face; and around him, standing on the forms, on the desks, yelling, bellowing, howling at the top of their voices, the usually well-behaved Sixth Form.

Then suddenly the door of the class-room was flung open, and in rushed Mr. Rayle.

"How dare you!" he shouted. "Silence! For shame! Shame upon you all! Silence, I say!"

"Have you all gone mad?" cried Mr. Rayle, when the yelling ceased for a moment. "Have you all taken leave of your senses? Have you forgotten the respect and deference due from you to Dr. Headford? I am ashamed of you, ashamed of the whole class! If there is one among you with any sense of decency and honour, I call upon him to assist me to restore order!"

"Mr. Rayle," said the Head in a voice that shook with rage. "I can manage this for myself! I thank you, but I do not require any interference!"

It was a very ungraceful speech, considering that Mr. Rayle had restored the order that the Head had been incapable of obtaining. And the moment the Head had made it the uproar recommenced.

Mr. Rayle bowed and stood aside. He felt hurt, and he felt sorry to see that the Head was himself mainly responsible for the outbreak. True, nothing could excuse the boys their conduct, but the Head was only goading them to worse things. What would the end of it be? Mr. Rayle wondered.

The "Marseillaise" had recommenced, they were all shouting it at the top of their voices. Then suddenly Dewsbury and some of the others made a move to the door. Out they went, yelling at the top of their voices, and out trooped the rest after them.

Two and two they marched across the playground, greeted by a yell of cheering from the other Forms. Straight towards the gate they went.

Mr. Withers hesitated. It seemed a fine opportunity for him to perform a noble act of heroism. The Sixth Form was in rebellion, and looked as if it was going out. If he could stay there!

Mr. Withers dashed in front of them and put his back against the gate, and struck an Horatius-defending-the-bridge attitude.

"Back!" he shouted. "Back! For shame! Shame upon you all! Back! You shall not pass here!" He stretched out his puny arm. "I say you shall not pass here, miscreants!"

"Out of the way, if you please!" said Dewsbury dangerously.

"Never! Back! Shame upon you!"

"There's no time to act the fool, Mr. Withers! Get out of it, please! I sha'n't ask again!" said Dewsbury.

"Would you raise your hand against me, wretch?" shouted Mr. Withers. "Would you—"

Mr. Withers broke off with a shrill yell of fear. He was seized and unceremoniously bundled out of the way, and flung sprawling on to the ground; while the gate was flung open, and the Sixth Form marched out.

"But—but for your interference, Mr. Rayle," gasped the Head. "I should have quelled this tumult! It was a pity you came in. If I had wanted you, I should have sent for you!"

Mr. Rayle changed colour. It was unjust, but injustice from the Head was not unheard of.

"I am sorry," he said stiffly. "I heard the noise, and as you did not seem to be able to stop it I thought I would assist you in doing so. I am quite at a loss to understand the behaviour of these boys!"

"I am not!" said the Head angrily. "Your paragon Belton is at the bottom of this! He and his inseparable friend, Earle senior!"

This was another injustice, for, as a matter of fact, Belton had taken no part in the orgie at all; on the contrary, his had been the one voice raised in protest when the Head's orders had been disregarded before breakfast.

"They have gone out," said the Head, after a pause. "I see they do not even scruple to raise their hands against Mr. Withers! It is beyond bearing, past everything! I shall make an example of the really guilty ones—an example that St. Basil's will remember so long as one stone stands upon another!"

This sounded very fine, but under the present circumstances it did not amount to much.

"So far as I can see, the entire Form, with the exception of Hacker, is participating equally in this. If you punish one, you must punish all," said Mr. Rayle.

"Enough of this!" said the Head fiercely. "I have allowed you certain liberties, Mr. Rayle, that I have not allowed to other masters here. You're presuming on my indulgence and the good nature with which I have treated you! Understand I do not allow you or anyone else to dictate to me in the management of this school!"

Mr. Rayle bowed, and turned away.

So the Head estranged himself from the one man in St. Basil's who might have been of real use to him at this juncture, and tried to cheat himself into the belief that if Mr. Rayle had not interfered he would have managed to quell the disturbance and bring the rioters back to a sense of their duty and respect to him.

Meanwhile, the Sixth Form had marched out of the playground. The boys, now they had time,

to consider it, had rather surprised themselves. They had not thought of going to this length; in fact, they were quite unprepared for any decided act of hostility, and now that they had really done it they were rather at a loss to know what to do next.

They did not possess a hat between them, nor an overcoat, and it was a raw and chilly morning, and the roads being damp and muddy did not improve the appearance of their indoor shoes. But they felt that they were heroes.

The Fourth and Fifth Forms were crowding round the gate, cheering them from the distance.

"Well, we've done it this time!" said Earle. "Looks like it, and a jolly good job too!" said Dewsbury. "He shouldn't have tried shouting us down. Couldn't put up with that sort of thing, you know!"

"Don't look as if we could, does it?" said Vernon. "The question is—what the dickens are we going to do now? It would look rotten to have to go back like a lot of kicked curs!"

"That's not to be thought of," said Dewsbury. "We've got to fix things up somehow, and we've got to make the Head come round. We ain't going to do any coming round. We wouldn't mind apologising, but it amounts to this. If we cave in and go snivelling back, he'll expel Earle, and, perhaps, another one or two of us. That's what we've got to guard against. If we give him a funk over it, he'll come round and let us down lightly."

"That's all right so far as it goes," said Morris; "but we can't stand here in the road talking the thing out, and making terms and that sort of thing, it's beastly cold. It seems to me that the first thing we ought to consider is the question of funds."

Fortunately for them, the Sixth Form was, as a rule, pretty well provided for funds. There were one or two rich boys in the Form, notably Belton, who always had quite a substantial sum by him. Belton's pocket-money was more than liberal, and as Belton's tastes were simple in the extreme, he always had a good deal of money.

"I've got a bit," Belton said; "and it's at the service of the Form at large. I know I've got two five-pound notes in my pocket-book."

"Got your pocket-book on you?" asked Dewsbury anxiously.

Belton nodded, and laughed. "And a sovereign, I think, in my pocket besides. That's eleven pounds."

Dewsbury had a couple of pounds, Morris mustered thirty shillings. Most of the boys had something over a sovereign. Earle senior was the least well-off with about half a dozen shillings.

But the inspection proved that the mutineers were possessed of quite an ample sum of money among them, and their spirits rose.

"What I propose is this," said Dewsbury. "We'll march down to the Welcome Home and make it our headquarters. We'll get a private sitting-room—there's a jolly little room on the first floor overlooking the street—and with about a couple of bed-rooms, we might be able to manage."

"Seven in a bed-room!" said Morris. "A bit crowded won't it be?"

"All the better this cold weather," said Dewsbury cheerfully. "Anyhow, we shall manage all right, and when the Head sees that we mean business, he'll come round, don't you fret."

As it was very evident that they could not sit in the road, Dewsbury's proposal was carried, and the whole party of rebellious Sixth Formers marched off to the village, some carrying their pocket-handkerchiefs tied to sticks.

The villagers were surprised. Women came to the windows of their cottages, and leaned out to watch the procession pass.

A small crowd of untidy-looking children fell in with the procession, and marched with the Sixth Form down the village street, yelling with all their might.

"Well, and what'll be the rumpus now? What will the young varmint be up to?" Mr. Pensella, the baker, wondered.

"It's a great shame, a-letting 'em come out like that!" said his wife. "Look at 'em, poor young things, with no hats on and their thin shoes! I do think that old Headford ought to be right down well ashamed of himself, I do!"

Mrs. Pensella was virtuously indignant. The Head had removed his custom for bread to the baker at Richford, and the Pensellas did not admire him in consequence.

"I do say it's a shame!" said Mrs. Pensella, going out into the street and discussing the matter with the neighbours. "There's them poor young dears, looking cold and ill, I declare, without no hats on and no boots nor nothing! I'm sure, if their mars was to know of it they'd precious soon take 'em away from that there old Headford's, which he is a stingy old beast, if ever there was one!"

"He's no gentleman, as I always did say," said Mrs. Tucker, who kept the sweet shop.

The Head had once issued orders that Mrs. Tucker's shop was not to be patronised by the St. Basil's boys, as he did not believe that cheap sweets were conducive to health. So Mrs. Tucker had a grudge to nurse against him, too.

Headquarters — The Agreement — A Message to the Enemy.

MEANWHILE, the band of heroes had arrived at the Welcome Home, and Dewsbury and Earle stepped inside to interview the host, while the others waited outside, surrounded by the crowd of delighted children.

"Fourteen on you—and you want rooms and board?" said the puzzled innkeeper. "Well, I don't know as how the accommodation of the house is equal to it, young gents."

"Oh, that's all right," said Earle. "We don't mind sleeping six or seven in a bed, if it comes to a pinch."

The innkeeper scratched his head.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "I ain't one to turn away business, seeing as it's been a bad winter, but seven in a bed—fourteen on you, and—Missus—"

He went out to consult with his wife, and came back presently.

"Me and the missus has talked it over, and we desay we could manage," he said. "There's three rooms, and we can put up two beds in each—that'll be six beds. Not a powerful lot among fourteen."

"That would do all," said Earle. "It would only be two in a bed and two over."

"Well, gents, there it is," said the publican. "As I say, I ain't one to turn away no business, and I don't ask no questions. But—but"—he turned red—"there's the matter of money. You'll excuse me for mentioning of it, but, young gents—"

"That's what we want to talk to you about," said Earle. "We think that the best thing would be to arrange with you to take us in at so much a day a head, and we'll pay you daily in advance."

The man's face brightened. "That's business," he said. "Let's see, fourteen on you. Fourteen's a powerful number. A leg o' mutton won't go fur with fourteen young gents, and bread-and-butter and tea, and—I'll go and talk to the missus."

He went, and came back presently.

"Me and the missus has talked it over, and we think that three-and-six a day for each one of you won't be unfair," he said.

"Let's see, that will be two pounds nine a

"I don't want you chaps to get into a row—a worse row—because of me," said Earle. "You've got to think of yourselves, and—"

"We are all going to sink or swim together," said Dewsbury, "so there's an end of it. We won't give in to the Head except on our own terms, and our terms are these. Removal of Hacker from the captaincy, and no expulsion for anyone concerned. I think we ought to all agree to that before we go any further."

"Hear, hear!" There was a shout of applause. "Well, we will draw it out in form," said Dewsbury. "Bung over the pen and ink, Morris!"

Dewsbury set to work with pen, ink, and paper. "We, the undersigned members of the Sixth Form, each and severally agree to the following, and give our solemn words of honour to stand by the arrangement hereby made.

"1st. That having revolted against the tyranny of Dr. Headford, we agree to stand by one another and to hold together until our return to St. Basil's.

"2nd. That the only conditions upon which we will return to St. Basil's are the following: "The removal of Hacker from the school captainship.

"The solemn promise and undertaking of Dr. Headford that no member of the Sixth Form shall be expelled.

"And that no member shall be selected for especial punishment; whatever punishment being awarded to be borne by all concerned equally.

"3rd. That a common purse be formed to meet the expenses of the rebellion, to which all

"as we have agreed to the terms on which we will surrender, if we let the Head know exactly what they are. We could write a letter and send one of the kids from the village up with it. Dewsbury's pretty good at writing, so he might work out something."

"I think that's a very good idea," said Earle. "It'll be much the best way to let the Head know exactly how we are going on, then there can't be any mistake. If anyone has anything to say against it perhaps he'll get on with it."

No one had anything to say against the proposal, so Dewsbury resumed the pen and wrote a letter to the Head.

"You've got to make it respectful," said Earle, "but at the same time let him see that though we don't want to cheek him yet we aren't going to give in unless we get our own way."

"How would you start it?" asked Dewsbury. "Honoured Sir, or just 'Sir,' or 'Dear Sir'?"

"How would 'Respected Sir' do?" asked Betts, who was not considered over brilliant.

"You can't very well call him 'Respected Sir' when we ain't respecting him!" said Morris. "I shouldn't start it 'Sir' at all. I'd start it this way! 'The boys of the Sixth Form present their respectful compliments to Dr. Headford—'"

"That's it!" said Dewsbury. "Now leave me alone a bit!"

At the end of a quarter of an hour Dewsbury had finished his letter, and he read it aloud for the consideration of the rest.

"You see, putting it that way saves signing it," he said, "and the Head is sure to look to see whose name is down first, so it saves bother. Now for it!"

"The boys of the Sixth Form present their respectful compliments to Dr. Headford, and while deeply regretting their recent act of insubordination, they yet feel that if Dr. Headford will give the matter his earnest consideration he will agree that they were not without just reason for complaint. The election of Hacker as school captain is distasteful to the Sixth Form, and not in accordance with the rules of the school, Hacker, at the time of his election, not being a prefect. If Dr. Headford will kindly consider the matter, and agree that the election of Hacker was not in form and valid, and if he will allow the Sixth Form to choose the captain itself, the Sixth Form will at once return to its allegiance and duty.

"The Sixth Form would, however, respectfully impress upon Dr. Headford that his action in this matter is unanimous, and that no one boy may be regarded as the head and front of the offending party. Dr. Headford's sense of justice will therefore compel him to agree that whatever punishment he may think fit to mete out to the Sixth Form shall be a general punishment, in which all shall participate equally. No one boy is to be made a scapegoat of and no expulsions shall take place unless the entire Form is expelled. On receipt of Dr. Headford's kind acceptance of this proposition the Sixth Form will at once return and put itself at Dr. Headford's disposal."

"Well, it beats me how Dewsbury can think of it all!" said Betts admiringly. "We ought to elect him secretary. I don't think it could be beaten. It covers everything, don't it?"

It did, and the letter was approved of generally. There was no difficulty in sending it off. The landlord said that his boy could take it. And Belton gave him a shilling for his trouble, and then the mutineers sat down to pass the time away till Dr. Headford's answer should arrive.

It was astounding, incredible, unheard of! The entire Sixth Form, with the exception of Hacker, had risen in rebellion! The Head was not quite sure that he was not dreaming.

For some time he stood at his study window and watched the gate in the almost certain expectancy of seeing the rebels returning sheepishly. Time went on, but they didn't come back.

"They will certainly have to come back soon," muttered the Head. "They cannot tramp the country this weather without any hats or coats or boots. It is utterly disgraceful! I shall make an example of Earle senior that will long be remembered in St. Basil's!"

Feeling that he wanted someone to discuss the affair with, and knowing that he had offended Mr. Rayle, the Head sent for Mr. Withers.

"I am appalled beyond measure!" said Mr. Withers. "That it should be the Sixth Form of all others simply leaves me breathless! And most unfortunately, sir, I fear, I greatly fear—"

"What?" said the Head. "Out with it, what do you fear?"

"I fear that the example is spreading! The Fourth Form has been utterly unmanageable; I can do nothing with it at all—absolutely nothing! They have all been shouting and singing and—going on!"

"I think that the whole school has gone raving mad!" said the Head. "I am at a loss—loss to—dear me, a messenger with a letter!"

The Head opened the window.

"Is that letter for me, boy?"

"It be—if you be him whose name is writ here," the boy said.

"It is for me—and from those villains!" said the Head, tearing the envelope open.

For some moments there was silence while the Head read; then his face went crimson.

"Unheard of effrontery! They—they dare—dare to dictate—dictate terms to me! Dare! Mr. Withers, put your hat on at once and come with me! These scoundrels have taken refuge in a public-house in the village! But I will soon rout them out of it! Come, sir—I will take my own answer, boy!" the Head said grimly. "You can go. There is something for yourself!"

"Sure I ain't robbing you, mister," said the boy, regarding the penny the Head had given him.

"Sure you won't have to go without nothink!"

"Go away—go off at once! Mr. Withers, come! I shall show them, the audacious, impertinent scoundrels! You will see! Come!"

(To be continued in next Thursday's issue of THE BOYS' HERALD.)



Mr. Withers gave expression to a shrill yell of fear. He was seized by Dewsbury and unceremoniously bundled out of the way. The gate was flung open and the Sixth Form marched out.

day," muttered Earle. "It seems an awful lot, but— He looked at Dewsbury.

"It's reasonable enough," said Dewsbury. "I'll go and tell the chaps to come in."

After a brief conference outside, in which the village children did their best to join, they concluded to accept the terms. Their capital would allow for nearly ten days at the Welcome Home on the terms arranged, and in ten days a good deal might be done.

"The Head is bound to come round in the course of a day, or perhaps two," said Dewsbury, "when he sees that we really mean business. And anyhow, we've got to go somewhere, ain't we?"

The sitting-room was not large, but it was comfortable, and the puzzled host did his best to make his guests feel at home.

Chairs were brought from all parts of the house, a set of chess, minus two bishops and about six pawns, were produced, also other games in a more or less incomplete condition. A roaring fire was made up, and then the rebellious Sixth was left to itself.

"Look here, you chaps!" said Dewsbury. "What we have to do is to look the situation fairly in the face. We've gone a bit farther than we reckoned to, but as we have done it we have got to stick to it. If we give in now, we simply give the Head the whip hand of us, and we'll have to put up with whatever he decides. Besides that, we should make ourselves the laughing-stock of the school, and we can't afford to let those kids of the Fourth giggle at us."

"That's what I say," said Morris. "We've done it, and there's an end of it. Besides that, we've got to think of Earle. If we give in now the Head will take it out of someone, and that someone will be Earle."

shall contribute according to their means and from day to day as may be required.

"4th. That the general management shall be vested in a committee, formed by those whose names are signed hereto, and that a chairman shall be elected who shall be regarded as the head and the one in authority. Also that a treasurer shall be elected who will attend to the money affairs generally and shall keep a proper account of all amounts paid out.

"Being in agreement with the above, we herewith sign our names in proof."

The document was passed from hand to hand, and after each boy had read it he signed his name at the foot, till fourteen names were inscribed on it.

"I couldn't have done it better myself," Morris said. "It looks quite businesslike. Now I suppose, the first thing to do will be to elect the chairman and treasurer. I propose Belton as chairman!"

"No, I can't take it," Belton said. "You see, really the whole thing is due to me. If I hadn't upset Withers and been reduced, there wouldn't have been any bother about the captaincy. Besides that I am not a prefect now. I propose that Earle is made chairman."

"Oh, I'm no good at that sort of thing!" said Earle modestly.

But in spite of his protests, Earle was elected. And then, as Belton would not be chairman, and as he was contributing the lion's share of the expenses, he was elected treasurer.

"I think the first thing we had better do," said Earle, "is to form a meeting and discuss our plans. I suppose there's nothing much we can arrange now, as Dewsbury's paper seems to cover all the ground; but someone may have a suggestion to offer, so we will consider this a meeting."

"I think it would be a good plan," said North,



(YOUR EDITOR (H. E.))

Controller of THE BOYS' HERALD—Thursday. THE BOYS' REALM—Saturday. THE BOYS' FRIEND—Tuesday.

YOUR EDITOR'S ADVICE

Your Editor is always glad to hear from you about yourself or your favourite paper. He will answer you by post if you send a stamped addressed postcard or envelope. Write to him if you are in trouble, if you want information, or if you have any ideas for our paper. All letters to be addressed to the Editor of THE BOYS' HERALD, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.

If your letter is not replied to here, it may be answered in "The Boys' Realm" next Saturday, or "The Boys' Friend" next Tuesday. It will pay you to get a copy of each and see.

In a Fortnight's Time. A couple of weeks from now THE BOYS' HERALD will contain the opening chapters of Mr. Martin Shaw's new serial story, entitled "THE FAR, FAR NORTH."

It is a very fascinating story, in which adventures in the Klondyke form a considerable part. But the chief interest in this tale will lie in the fact that it deals with a character already very popular among my friends. Most of the readers of THE BOYS' HERALD will remember Larry Tring, the hero of "Fighting His Way." Well, in the "Far, Far North" we once more become acquainted with Larry Tring, and we follow him through some of the most thrilling and stirring adventures that any lad can experience. It is a bright, breezy story, and I feel sure it will do much to add to the popularity of our paper. Remember, this story will commence in a fortnight's time.

Another attractive feature for THE HERALD is a new sea story. My friends will find this a very interesting and exciting short serial tale of sea life—one of the good old breezy type which have been popular with boys ever since tales for lads were written, and I feel sure that this yarn will be voted by my friends quite one of the best yet published in THE BOYS' HERALD.

A Would-be Yeoman.

From a Hampstead reader, who signs himself "Old Heraldite," I get a letter in which he tells me that he is desirous of joining the Yeomanry, but he would like to know beforehand the conditions, and how much it would cost him.

Here are the particulars for which my young friend asks:

The Yeomanry are the only cavalry possessed by the Volunteer Service, with the exception of a very small force of Mounted Rifles. Yeomanry are assembled for permanent duty every year for a period of six days, and are liable to certain fines for non-attendance. It is, of course, essential that each Yeoman should possess or be able to hire a horse.

The following are extracts from the "Yeomanry Regulations": "No person under 17 or over 49 years of age may be enrolled. Yeomanry regiments assemble for six consecutive days for training in each year, exclusive of days of joining and leaving.

Regiments will usually be inspected on the last day of the six days, unless that day should happen to be a Sunday.

Each Yeoman must go through the musketry course previous to December 31st.

"Each Yeoman must attend at least six squad drills, mounted or dismounted, and five mounted troop drills annually, except recruits, who do twelve mounted or dismounted drills.

"Any Yeoman not attending drill for two consecutive years, unless on leave, will be struck off the rolls.

"Non-commissioned officers and men of the Yeomanry receive pay for six days of permanent duty at the rate of 7s. per day."

The nearest Yeomanry corps to my reader is the Duke of Cambridge's Hussars, with headquarters at 7, Montpelier Terrace, Knightsbridge, S.W. The uniform is green, with black facings; green busby bag and green-and-scarlet plumes. Entrance fee, £1 ls.; subscription, nil. The uniform is provided free, except gloves, pantaloons, Wellington boots and spurs, Hessian boots and spurs, saddle and girth, with loop to receive surcingle.

Recruits must possess a horse, or produce a certificate from relation, friend, or employer providing a suitable one whenever required, and they must be good riders.

I may tell my correspondent that unless he has a horse or can get the loan of one he would find the Yeomanry a somewhat more expensive Service than the Volunteers, but not very much.

A good deal depends, of course, upon the company he wishes to join and the men he mixes up with. If he gets in with an expensive set he is likely to get through a good deal of money unless he exercises considerable self-restraint. There are, however, plenty of modest troops which he can join—troops in which the expenses are pretty well covered by the allowance made by the Government; and, whilst obtaining a good deal of healthy exercise, he would, at the same time, be fitting himself to be of service to his country if the need arises.

How to Improve Handwriting.

A reader of THE BOYS' HERALD, who signs himself "Energetico," tells me he would like some information on how to improve his writing.

There is one simple and easy plan which I have recommended on many occasions to my friends when they have put this question to me. It is this:

Go to a stationer's and get a book containing specimens of commercial handwriting. Select the example which you wish to imitate, then cut this out and attach it to a sheet of foolscap. Copy it until the sheet of foolscap is filled on both sides; then take off the specimen and attach it to a new sheet of paper. A couple of pins or paper-fasteners will enable one to do this. In this way, constantly imitating one specimen, the handwriting is bound to improve.

There is one thing, however, to bear in mind, and that is this: Having selected the type of handwriting which you wish to imitate, proceed at first very carefully to copy the example in front of you. Copy it as closely as you possibly

Daily Mail.

Have You Seen an "Answers" Bonus Ticket?

If you have you will find on it a number. Some of these numbers are published regularly every Tuesday in "Answers," and the lucky people who have these tickets have only to send them up to "Answers" offices to get the gifts which has been awarded them.

To one of these tickets a gift of five hundred pounds has been allotted; to others bicycles, gramophones, piano-players, and all kinds of useful and interesting articles. Many of the tickets are worth a sovereign each, and if you should possess a ticket the number on which is entitled to receive a sovereign, you have only to send your ticket up to get the cash for it. So, my boys and girls, look out for "Answers" Bonus Tickets. They will be distributed all through the country.

From a New Zealand Reader.

The following interesting letter from a New Zealand Heraldite will, I am sure, be perused with attention by every one of his fellow-readers at home. They will, too, I am sure, echo my expression of sympathy with my friend in the unpleasant accident with which he met, and express the hope that he will long ere this have recovered from the effects of it. It will also be seen from my young friend's letter that he is anxious to exchange postcards with boys at home. I feel sure that this request of his will not long remain unanswered when these lines appear in our paper:

"Christchurch, New Zealand. Dear Editor,—I received the Certificate and Badge of THE BOYS' HERALD League of Health and Strength safely when I was in the hospital. I am sorry to tell you that I was dragged along in the stirrup by a horse, and besides sustaining a compound fracture to my leg, my scalp was nearly pulled off. I also received several minor injuries.

"Whilst lying on a bed of pain I used to wait anxiously for my BOYS' HERALD, and I can assure you I was very glad when it did come. I like all the stories very much, and was very pleased to hear that Larry Tring was to appear in the paper once again.

"I should like to exchange postcards with some of THE HERALD readers at home.

"You will be interested to hear that I know of several young ladies who read THE BOYS' HERALD, and they like it much better than any girls' paper.—Yours sincerely,

"M. E. WILLIAMSON."

The Sort of Letter I Like to Get.

As many of my friends are doubtless aware, if a lad in search of advice writes to me and encloses a penny stamp for reply I send him a personal letter through the post—a letter in which I consider every question he has put to me, and give him to the best of my ability a straightforward and intelligent answer.

Sometimes my friends write and thank me for my efforts in this direction, and the following is a typical letter from one boy. I publish it because it is a letter which, should it be perused by many lads in similar cases, they will benefit by the remarks of my young friend B. A. T.:

"Dear Sir,—I received your kind letter this morning. I read all you had to say, and I was delighted with the sound, straightforward advice. I shall do my utmost to build myself up, and lead an honest, clean, and upright life. I never smoke nor drink any pernicious drinks. I sleep with my windows open, and get plenty of exercise with a developer-dumb-bells, chest-expander, etc., and also from walking, and deep breathing.

"Shortly I shall join the Health Culture League. I know a few pure-minded young men in Manchester who have joined, and who indulge in physical culture. I have made up my mind to try to succeed, and be as pure as I can. What is more, your splendid journal THE BOYS' HERALD is going to greatly assist me in the future. I have shown your advice on smoking to various boys, and I know some that have thrown the habit off. I shall always remember your kindness.—B. A. T."

YOUR EDITOR (H.E.).

THE LEAGUE OF HEALTH AND STRENGTH. FOR "BOYS' HERALD" READERS ONLY.

Briefly, the object of this important New League is the encouraging of boys to grow up into strong men physically and morally—true specimens of the great race and Empire to which they belong. To this end Your Editor has laid down the five following rules, with which every boy who wishes to become a member must comply:

NO SMOKING (TILL 21). NO DRINKING OF INTOXICANTS AS BEVERAGES.

NO SWEARING. NO GAMBLING. NO EVIL HABITS.

In connection with this League of Health and Strength there is a SECRET PASSWORD, which is known ONLY TO MEMBERS, a handsome CERTIFICATE, and a beautifully-designed BADGE, which every boy should get and be proud to wear.

Conditions of Membership.—All one has to do to become a Member of this League is to fill in the following Application Form, and send it, with ONE Penny Stamp to cover the cost of posting certificate to Member, to the Secretary, BOYS' HERALD'S League of Health and Strength (Room 27), 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. If, however, you desire the handsome League Badge, in addition to the Certificate, then you must enclose TWO of these Application Forms—cut from the current number of THE BOYS' HERALD, with your ONE penny stamp to cover cost of posting Certificate and Badge to you. Boys who are already League Members, but have not yet sent for their Badges, must enclose ONE Stamp and ONE Application Form only, with letter stating that they are already Members, and require the Badge alone.

THE UNDERSIGNED, being desirous of becoming a Member of THE LEAGUE OF HEALTH AND STRENGTH, do solemnly promise to keep every one of the rules stated above, namely: To Refrain ALTOGETHER from Smoking until 21 years of age; To Abstain from Drinking Intoxicating Liquors as Beverages; Not to Use Bad Language; Not to Indulge in Any Form of Gambling; and To Steadfastly Keep from all Bad Habits.

This Coupon is available until JUNE 6th. Name Address Date

THE BOYS' FRIEND Correspondence College. (AND BOYS' HERALD)

2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.

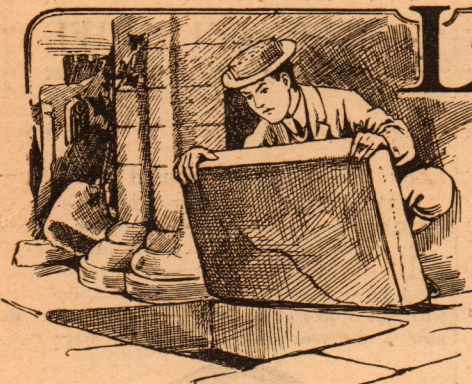
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Founded by the Editor of THE BOYS' HERALD, THE BOYS' FRIEND, and Companion Papers for the Benefit of His Readers. (1) Civil Service (comprising actual examination papers as set by the Civil Service Commissioners at past examinations for Boy Clerks, Male Sorters, Customs, Excise, Second Division, &c.). (2) Pitman's Shorthand (under special license of Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd.). (3) English Composition and Essay Writing. Address all communications to "The Principal, B.F.C.C., Room 25, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite St., London, E.C." The Lessons are the Copyright Property of the College, and must be returned with Papers for Revision. A New Class Begins Every Week. Twelve Lessons in each course. The first lesson is obtainable with twelve of the following Coupons, all cut from this week's paper:

COUPON No. 16. Twelve of these Coupons, or six of these and six from next Tuesday's issue of "The Boys' Friend," entitle a reader to the first lesson (if he is a new student), or any other lesson due if he is already a student of the B.F.C.C. The Coupons must be sent in within a week from date of issue. Name Address B.H. Vol. 3. No. 151.

LAST MAN IN.

ONE OF OUR FINE MASTER AND PUPIL STORIES.



The 1st Chapter.

King Cricket—A Terrible Temptation.

"WELL hit, Jack!" It was a shout of delight from three score of throats as Jack Oswald's bat met the leather and sent it upon a journey far across the boundary.

There was a crowd round the cricket ground at Merivale Abbey. It was only a practice match that was in progress, but it was watched with eager interest.

The Merivale lads were serenely convinced that what they didn't know about the grand old game wasn't worth knowing. They took it seriously, and played it for all they were worth. And among the events of the cricket season, the periodical match between the two houses at Merivale excited the keenest interest.

And on the morrow the School House was to meet Kidd's.

During the present season Fortune had favoured the School House. Of three matches with Kidd's House, they had won two and drawn one. And as their success was mainly due to Jack Oswald's splendid cricket, it is needless to say that Jack was the most popular fellow in his house.

The School House side were playing a scratch eleven now, and Jack had been at the wicket some time. He had knocked up forty, and still seemed as fresh as paint. And the School House fellows cheered every hit, thinking of the morrow, when he would be batting against Kidd's House and winning another victory for his side.

"Well hit, Jack!" And Jim Severn, the School House captain, grinned with delight as he watched from the pavilion. With Oswald in his present form, the result of the inter-house match was a foregone conclusion.

But there was one dark face in the crowd looking on.

Rake, the captain of Kidd's House, had strolled over to see how the School House fellows were shaping, and he watched Jack Oswald's innings with lowering brows.

Rake was as keen a cricketer as any at Merivale, and he threw himself with passionate earnestness into the contest between the two houses for cricket honours. The defeats of his house cut him deeply, and he strained every nerve to turn the tide of ill-fortune, but in vain. His side was a very good one, and, barring Jack Oswald, quite equal to the School House team. But Jack was the rock they split upon. There was no player in Kidd's House who could touch him.

Rake was a good sportsman at heart, but continual failure and disappointment had soured him, especially as a good many fellows of his house were inclined to throw the blame upon him. And so of late he had begun to feel a bitter dislike for Jack. His brow was black, and his eyes gleaming spitefully, as he watched the School House champion.

"It's no good," he muttered to himself. "He's in better form than ever, and none of our bowlers will be able to touch him. Confound him! If something would only happen to him, and the School House played without him to-morrow, I wouldn't be afraid of the result. But as it is, it means another licking, and then all the fellows grumbling at me as if it were my fault. That's the pleasure of being captain."

There was another ringing shout.

"Good old Jack!" Rake clicked his teeth, and, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, walked moodily away. He was afraid someone would see the savage spite in his face. He wanted to be alone, too, with his gloomy thoughts.

He strolled towards the old abbey, from which the school took its name. The abbey was in ruins, and the boys of Merivale were fond of exploring its mysterious recesses on half-holidays. Underneath the ruins was a stairway of stone leading down into a subterranean passage, which extended to an unknown length under the earth. There was a legend that it ran as far as the seashore, a mile away, and ended in the caverns there; but no one had ever followed it to its end. Amid the ruins lay the great slab of stone with the iron ring in it, which gave admittance to the underground recesses.

Rake threw himself down upon the grass among the great masses of masonry. His look was still heavy and depressed; he was in an ill-humour with himself and all the world. A dark thought was running in his mind, a thought of which he was ashamed, but which would not leave him. If only Jack Oswald did not play upon the morrow, Kidd's House would be victorious for once. If only he could contrive to prevent Jack from playing!

In his gloomy meditations he did not notice the passage of time. But he was suddenly roused out of a brown study by the sound of voices in the ruins. His eyes gleamed. He recognised the

voice of Jack Oswald, but a huge mass of masonry lay between him and the speakers, and he could not see either of them.

"Lend us a hand, Crane."

"Right you are, Jack. Goodness; isn't it heavy?"

"We can manage it between us." A sound of tugging, and of a heavy stone moving and scraping, followed. Rake knew what it meant. Jack Oswald and his chum had slipped into the old abbey to spend the half-hour before calling-over in exploring the ruins. They were raising the huge slab which covered the entrance to the subterranean passage. Rake made no movement to indicate his presence.

"Easy does it!" "I say, Jack, stick it up safely, you know. It would be no joke to get shut in here, and we haven't told anyone we were coming."

"That's all right. Got the lantern?"

"Yes."

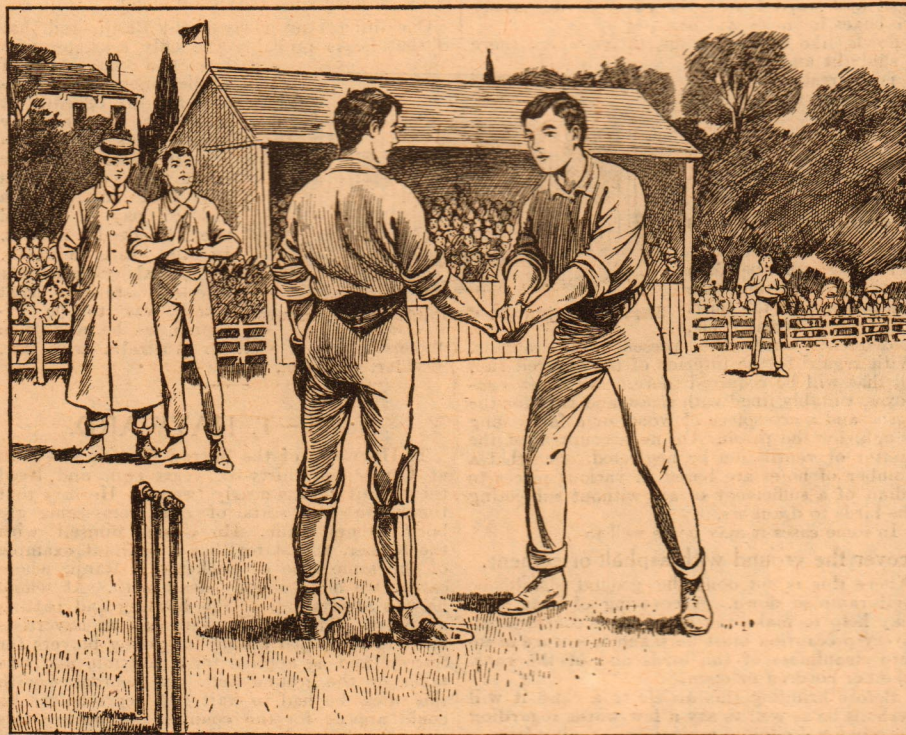
"Light up, then, and come on." The footsteps died away.

Rake lay still. A strange expression had come over his face, and a peculiar glitter into his eyes. He rose, and, passing round the great block which had hidden him from the sight of the explorers, he glanced at the slab. A dark cavity was disclosed below. He could see the dim outline of the old stair.

He stood looking at the slab. He was quite alone. There was no living thing in sight save a skylark winging its way across the blue.

"It would be quite safe!"

His lips were trembling, and he was very pale. But with a sudden decided movement he stepped to the slab and dragged at it. His face grew



Severn gripped Jack's hand. "You'll be in with me, Jack. I depend upon you to save the side."

red with the exertion, but at last it toppled over, and, with a dull jar, fell back into its place.

To move it from below was impossible. The stair was so narrow that only one could mount at a time, and either Oswald or Crane could not have shifted the stone an inch alone. Rake did not pause an instant after the deed was done. A sudden terror of detection had fallen upon him. He walked swiftly from the ruins on the side away from the school, and by a long detour made his way back to Merivale, getting in just in time for calling-over.

By this time he was perfectly cool and collected. After all, a night's imprisonment in the subterranean passages would not hurt anybody. And to-morrow the School House would have to play without their champion, and the long record of defeat for Kidd's House would be broken.

The 2nd Chapter.

In Darkness and Despair.

"HALLO! What's the matter?"

"By Jove, Jack!" gasped Crane.

"What is it?"

"The slab's closed!"

The chums had returned to the stair after their exploration. They had allowed themselves just time to get in before calling-over. Crane mounted first, and made the alarming discovery that the slab was down.

"Closed!" repeated Jack in amazement,

ing, however, what the reply would be.

Jack set his shoulders to the stone and gave a mighty heave. It did not budge.

Again and again he tried, but the result was the same. The stone did not move. Exhausted by his efforts, Jack descended the stair and rejoined his chum. Their faces were pale as they looked at each other in the light of the lantern.

"I say, this is a go!" muttered Crane. "How are we to get out? It's no good shouting. Nobody could hear us through that stone. How could it have got shut?"

"I can't imagine, unless somebody shut it on purpose, and that doesn't seem likely. But what on earth are we to do? The worst of it is that no one knows we came here, and so it may be days before anyone thinks of looking for us under the abbey. They may not even think of it at all!"

There was a long silence. If no one knew that they were there, there was a strong probability that they would perish of hunger in that gloomy retreat.

At last Jack spoke, in a low voice:

"It's no good sticking here. Look here, Crane, you've heard the yarn about this passage leading down to the caves on the seashore—that's our only chance!"

Crane shuddered. It seemed terrible to wander away into that gloomy passage, perhaps never to return! Yet it was evidently useless to remain by the stair, and the light of the lantern would not last many hours.

"All right!" he muttered. "Heaven help us!"

"We'll leave our caps on the stair in case

"Why, I lodged it up on the end as carefully as anything! Let me come up."

He took Crane's place on the stair. He felt the stone over with his hands. It was fast in its place, not a crack showing of the opening.

"Can you move it?" asked Crane, well knowing the reply would be.

Jack set his shoulders to the stone and gave a mighty heave. It did not budge.

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Jack was the first to awake. He started up, chilled by the contact of the cold stone. Darkness was all around him, without a gleam of light. The tears were wet upon his face. Was it still night, or had another day dawned? It was impossible to tell.

"Crane, wake up, old chap! We must have another try."

Crane groaned as he rose. Each of the boys had a box of matches, and they struck them one by one as they stumbled on. But the matches were exhausted at last; the boys were sinking with hunger and despair and the oppression of the terrible darkness.

A sudden thought flashed into Jack's mind.

"They'll be playing Kidd's House by this time, Crane, and I'm out of it!"

Crane did not reply. Cricket seemed a very far-off thing to him as he walked in the shadow of death. But the thought haunted Jack and added to his misery. Would they never find an outlet? Were they doomed to leave their bones in this horrible place?

It seemed so. How the hours passed they knew not; they had no sense of time—whether it was morning, afternoon, or night, they could not guess. They were famished with hunger. At last Crane threw himself down.

"It's no good, Jack, I give in! I shall die here!"

"For goodness' sake, old fellow, buck up!" said Jack earnestly. "Any minute we may light on an outlet. And haven't you felt that the air is fresher now? That shows that we are coming to the open air, I think."

He helped Crane to rise. The boy staggered on, leaning upon Jack. He was in despair; but Jack still hoped. Suddenly a gust of unmistakably fresh air fanned their faces. With renewed hope they stumbled on.

There was a gleam of light ahead!

"Hurrah!" cried Jack. "Look, old chap, it's daylight!"

Daylight it was. They ran on with restored strength, and in ten minutes were in a huge cave open to the sea. The sun was in the west.

Fatigue and hunger were almost forgotten, by Jack at least. His thoughts instantly flew to the House match in progress at Merivale. Was there still time for him?

The 3rd Chapter.

The Cricket Match—A Sudden Surprise Well Done, Jack!

THE whole school was amazed and excited by the mysterious disappearance of Jack Oswald and Crane. What had become of them was a puzzle. Rake kept his own counsel, and the searchers who went in quest of them returned unsuccessful. It was an anxious night at Merivale Abbey. That some accident had happened to the pair appeared certain, and faces were grave when morning came and they had not been seen. The subterranean passage being out of bounds, their intention of going thither had been kept a dead secret, and no one thought of it now.

Most worried of all was Jim Severn, captain of the School House. There was no question of putting off the House match. At a hint of such a suggestion Rake had instantly put his foot down. The match had to be played, and it was certain now that it would have to be played without Jack Oswald. And, without Jack Oswald, Severn knew that things were likely to go heavily against the School House. They had no substitute who was a patch upon him, so it was not only as a chum, but as a cricketer, that Severn missed Jack. Crane was not in the eleven.

"Hang it!" growled Severn. "What can have become of him? Where can he have got to? Accident be hanged! What could have happened? He's gone and lost himself somewhere, somehow! He may turn up in time for the match yet."

"Not much chance of that," said Turnbull, shaking his head.

"Well, I shall chance it. I shall play ten men, and put in Oswald if he comes. We can't ask favours of Rake; he's keen on beating us now that Oswald is out of it. If Jack's in time to be last man in I sha'n't grumble. But what on earth can have become of him?"

Dr. Meade had called in the police to search for the missing boys. Meanwhile, the sides prepared for the match.

Rake won the toss, and elected to bat. It was to be a single-innings game. The School House cheered as Severn led his men from the pavilion and they took up their posts.

Rake and Lovell opened the innings for Kidd's House. Rake was in a confident mood, and his men were naturally encouraged by the absence of the dreaded bowler. The innings began well, Rake knocking up fifty-five before Severn bowled him.

The wickets fell slowly, and the score mounted fast, the School House faces growing longer as the game proceeded. The "Kidds" cheered vociferously when the score topped the hundred, and there were yet four wickets to fall.

The innings closed with 120 for Kidd's House. The "Kidds" were jubilant! Severn felt glum.

Success had evidently put the "Kidds" upon their mettle. They were bowling well, and the School House wickets began to go down. Three down for a miserable 12! The "Kidds" cheered loudly, and the School House faces lengthened. Then Turnbull and Stacey made a stand at the wickets, and began to put on some runs.

Rake went on to bowl with a confident grin. He sent down a ball with a cunning twist on it, and Stacey's wicket was in ruins. Stacey carried out his bat, and there was a cheer from the "Kidds."

And that cheer was followed by another—from the School House fellows this time. Rake wondering what it meant, turned round, and the colour deserted his cheeks. The lads were shout-

LAST MAN IN.

(Continued from the previous page.)

ing themselves hoarse, and the cause was a panting figure that came breathlessly tearing up to the pavilion.

"Oswald!"
"Good old Jack!"
"Now we'll give 'em socks!"
Jack reeled into the pavilion. Severn caught him by the shoulder, staring into his drawn face.

"Where have you been?"
"Abbey—shut in—got out in the caves!"
gaped Jack. "Left Crane in a fisherman's place, and got a lift here in Farmer Jones's cart. Am I in time?"

"You're in time."
Jack made a lightning change and a lightning meal. He felt a new man after it, and if he needed anything to spur him on he had it in the knowledge of the leeway the School House must make up to win.

Another batsman came off, looking very rueful, just as Jack returned.

Severn gripped his hand.

"You'll be in with me, Jack. I depend upon you to save the side!"
Jim Severn went on, his heart lighter than it had been at any time during the match; and when his partner was stumped a minute or two later he did not turn a hair.

"Last man in!"
How the School House cheered when Jack Oswald was seen striding from the pavilion, his bat under his arm, his face still rather pale, but calm and resolute.

Rake went on to bowl against Oswald. He threw all his skill, all his cunning, into it. But Jack was there every time. That over added sixteen to the School House score.

Severn grinned.

"Jack's all right, and I can stick it out, I fancy! Good old School House!"

It was in vain that the "Kids" tried their trickiest bowling. Severn was careful, and did a good deal of stonewalling. Jack was invincible, and almost every flash of his bat meant one, two, or three. He was not, as a matter of fact, in his usual form, but British grit upheld him, and he was grimly determined not to give in till the School House had scored a victory.

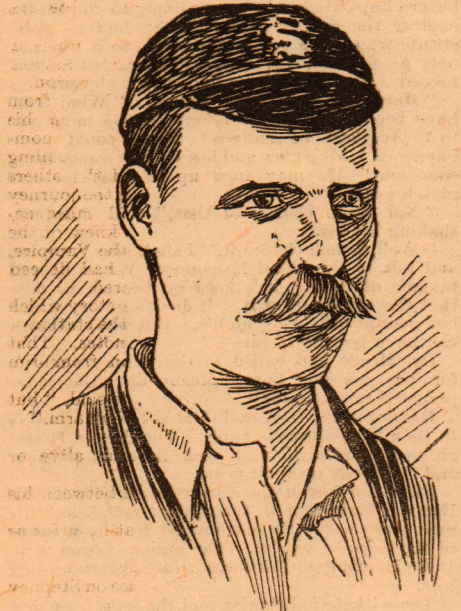
100!
The School House roared. The two batsmen were still at it, and now they seemed to have got thoroughly set, and there was no shifting them. Rake was pale with rage. He had acted like a scoundrel, and it was all for nothing! The hateful conviction was growing upon him that the School House was destined to win.

Clack!
Away went the ball, faster than the eye could follow. How the batsmen scudded! One—two—three—four—yes, five! The ball comes whizzing in from Rake's hand straight as a die; there is a long-drawn breath, a clatter of falling bails. But Jack's bat is on the crease, and the umpire shakes his head.

"Not out!"
The School House breathes again. It is a narrow escape; but a miss is as good as a mile.

105! 110! 114! 117!

And now Rake takes the ball again, with a



TOM HAYWARD.

desperate gleam in his eyes. Finesse is forgotten, and he tries sheer force.

Down comes the ball like a 4.7 shell. It breaks just as Jack likes it. The bat flashes, and the leather goes on its journey.

Where is it—where, that is the question? Somewhere beyond the boundary, at all events, and the School House has won the game!

There is a swarming of boys over the level green, and the air is rent with shouts. Even the defeated side join in the shouting for Jack Oswald, and universal cheering and waving of caps greet the triumph of the hero of the hour. And even Rake catches the infection of enthusiasm, and malice and disappointment are forgotten, and his voice rings out cheerily with the rest.

THE END.

(Another grand Master and Pupil story next week.)

POULTRY KEEPING.

A New Short Series of Articles on an Interesting and Remunerative Hobby.

The Roosting-Place.

You must now set to work on the principle of dividing the house up into two sections, one where the netting is to be placed for the run, the other for the nest and roosting-place. The latter will be the compartment made by setting up a partition from the second upright at the front to the second at the back. The dotted lines in the diagram on this page indicates this. Before placing this in position, however, it will be necessary to cut a piece out sufficiently large to allow of easy egress and ingress for the birds. A shutter to cover this up when required will be

an improvement.

Your next care should be the door and its attendant framework at the right-hand end. As this will present no difficulty, it is unnecessary to spend further time on explanation. Care, however, should be taken to fit the match-boarding well together, and to allow for the effect of damp and sun when hanging in the frame. A knob and button will be all that are necessary to make this part of the structure complete.

With regard to the front of the house, it will be found a good plan to cover it in with match-boarding as far as the third upright, except for a small square—in which the pane of glass will be let, and fixed in its frame by means of the putty—and an oblong opening, 2½ ft. high and 4 ft. long, extending

from the second to the third upright.

This, of course, is covered with the wirework netting. The space between the third upright and the left-hand corner-piece is for the large door leading into the run. This you will construct on the same principle as the other door, except that the top half of it, instead of being solid, can be stretched over with wire netting. The purpose of the little window is to admit light and warmth into the covered run, where the boxes for nests will be.

Fowls, like human beings, thrive where there is sunlight and warmth; it is a great mistake to keep them too much in the dark.

If your house has been carefully built, and the roofing felt properly laid on, it should be

free from all cracks and chinks.

If not, care must be taken to see that all these are stopped up, or the birds will suffer from colds, consequent upon the presence of draughts. With regard to the interior of the covered run, all that will be required therein are a few egg-boxes, suitably lined with straw and hay, for the nests, and a crosspiece of wood, or a fairly long bough, for the perch. On no account must the matter of ventilation be neglected. See that a number of holes are bored in various places to admit of a sufficiency of air without subjecting the birds to draughts.

In some cases it may be as well to

cover the ground with asphalt or cement.

Where this is not done the ground should be well rammed down. A covering of peat moss may help to make the birds more comfortable. Every precaution must be taken to ensure absolute cleanliness of the birds and of the runs, whether covered or open.

Before bringing this article to a close it will perhaps be as well to say a few words regarding the window I advised my poultry-keeping friends to let into the covered part of the run. If the house has been built as it should be, to face the south, on a slightly-elevated position, the window will admit both light and warmth, two very essential requisites to the well-being of fowls, for they, like human beings, are liable to suffer from lack of natural warmth and light. The window will serve an additional purpose in that it will greatly facilitate the task of cleaning out the covered part of the run. In the next article I shall deal with the proper food and other points of interest to young poultry-keepers.

The Run.

Now, with regard to the run. Of course, it will not matter how large the run is, for the more space you can give your fowls the better they will thrive. But this is hardly the question; the usual drawback of young poultry-keepers is lack of space. Given plenty of space, the birds will do well, and keep free from disease. They will, besides, lessen the cost of their keep, as they will pick up no inconsiderable quantity of food from the earth in the form of worms, insects, and so forth.

It is not, however, given to every lad to have at his disposal a very large-sized run. This is specially applicable to boys living in towns where gardens are generally very small. Under this circumstance, it will often be found best to extend the run somewhat, roofing the whole in with felt. By this means the ground beneath will be kept free from damp and remain sweet. If the fowls are well looked after under these conditions, given proper food, their run kept clean for them, and the other necessary attentions paid, they should thrive even though the amount of ground at their disposal is small.

FAMOUS CRICKETERS.

Brief Character Sketches of the Most Notable Players of our National Summer Pastime.

No. 5.—K. S. RANJITSINHJI.

PERHAPS no cricketer ever rose so suddenly into popular favour as did Ranji. One day he was unheard of; the next he was being discussed by every cricketer in England. One reason for this was that he was the first foreigner who ever rivalled John Bull at his own game, and when Ranji put up such a good show at the wicket, and displayed such a mastery of the art of batting, his fame quickly spread abroad throughout the land.

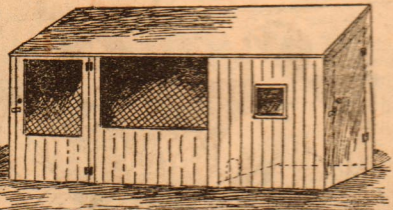
Ranji was born at Sarodar, in the province of Kathiawar, near Bombay, on September 10th, 1872. His father, whose name was Gewar Sinhji, was the nephew of the reigning ruler of the State of Mewanagar. It was at the Rajkumar College for young princes that Ranji learned to play the great game with which his name will ever be associated. At the age of sixteen he came to this country, and soon after

went up to Cambridge.

Here he had to combat with that dislike which many Britishers seem to have imbued in their natures—the dislike for what they are pleased to term "niggers." But Ranji proved himself such a good fellow that he lived down this opposition, and when he left was one of the most popular fellows at Cambridge. In his last season at the 'Varsity he finished up third in the batting averages, and in his first match for Sussex he created a great sensation by scoring no less than one hundred and fifty against the M.C.C.

Ranji is an all-round sportsman. He is a good tennis player, a cyclist, a footballer, and a splendid shot. Amongst his bags are many a bird, and also, be it said, a lion or two, from which it will be seen that excellence at cricket is by no means his only attainment.

One thing I must say about Ranji, and that is that he is probably the only cricketer who



Sketch showing the Completed Fowls'-House.

has had an Act of Parliament passed specially for his benefit. It may not be generally known that there is a law in force to the effect that every Indian who lands in Australia has to pay a fine of one hundred pounds. In the Bill, however, a special clause was inserted stating that Ranji was to be excepted, as he was then about to pay a visit to Australia with Mr. Stoddart's Eleven.

No. 6.—T. HAYWARD.

T. Hayward, of the Surrey Eleven, was born at Cambridge thirty-six years ago, and lived there until he was nearly twenty. He says that there are two sorts of cricketers—some are born, others made. He classes himself with the former, and states that a brilliant example of the same type of cricketer is Ranji, whose career we have already dealt with. At school he was always top of the bowling and batting averages. One day Hayward saw an advertisement in the paper asking for young players for Surrey, and he applied for a position, and was taken on the ground staff. In accordance with the rules, he had to wait two years before he could appear for the county, and during this time he played for the Club and Ground, and did very well. His first appearance in first-class cricket was in 1891, in the match between Surrey and Warwickshire, when he only got one innings, and was bowled for a duck. He made up for it in his second match, however, by scoring a century. In 1899 he scored 275 in the match between Surrey and Yorkshire at the Oval.

Mr. Hayward has taken part in nearly

thirty Test matches,

and first visited Australia in 1897. The following is a brief summary of his views with regard to cricket as a career:

"To my mind," he says, "a professional cricketer has a far better time than a professional footballer. With luck he can expect to go on playing for from fifteen to twenty years, whereas the footballer rarely lasts more than ten. There is less chance of serious injury, and the game is usually played under better conditions. Finally, after he is past service the cricketer can usually obtain a post as a coach."

"On the whole, I think cricket is a first-rate career for a young man who is fond of open-air life, and has the sense to keep steady. You get a chance of going all over the world, you have the privilege of meeting distinguished people, both on and off the field, and in the players' room there is much good fellowship."

From all of which it will be seen that Tom Hayward, the famous Surrey cricketer, has come to the conclusion that there is only one game really worth playing—viz., Cricket, with a capital "C."

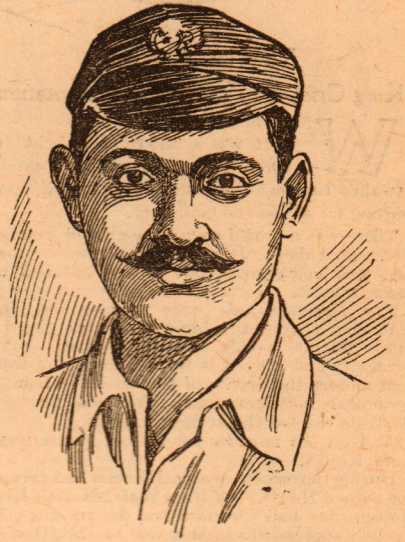
(Next week we shall publish short character sketches of Jackson and Warner. Look out for them!)

VOLUNTEER LIFE.

A Series of Articles of Interest to all.

Long Marches — Mounted Infantry—Cyclist and Artillery Sections.

THE last few years have been very difficult ones for Volunteers. The authorities at the War Office seemed to have placed every possible obstacle in their way, doubtless with the object of forcing "conscription." But now a different policy seems to have been



K. S. RANJITSINHJI.

adopted, and more sympathy and encouragement is being shown towards the men.

Instead of the compulsory camp, the authorities are granting permission for regiments to have a "march" in place of it if they so prefer.

This is great fun, and very interesting and instructive, as tents, cooking arrangements, and commissariat are taken along with it, and the conditions are enforced as near as possible to those which exist in active warfare.

I hear of one London regiment which is taking a march in Scotland this year, and no doubt other regiments will soon follow this lead by having marches in the Home Counties.

Then it has been decided by the Army Council to complete the organisation of the forty-four new Volunteer brigades by the addition of the personnel of a brigade supply column to each brigade.

It is proposed that the organisation of this new unit should be distinct from, and additional to, the establishments of the infantry battalions of the brigade.

This means that the need for more Volunteers will be greatly increased, and the object is to make each brigade thoroughly efficient and up-to-date.

Many regiments now have their mounted infantry, cyclist section, and

artillery section, and, of course, their signallers and ambulance, and when this supply column is added, they will be practically complete and up-to-date.

There is also reason to believe that there is a possibility of holding a Royal review of English Volunteers on Salisbury Plain in August next. It will be remembered that the King inspected the Scottish Volunteers at Edinburgh last year, and it is understood that his Majesty is disposed to consider favourably the idea of honouring the English corps in a similar manner.

If this should happen to be the case, there will be thirty or forty thousand Volunteers gathered together on the Plain for this review, and the sight of such a body of armed men is one never to be forgotten; and the recruit should not, under any circumstances, miss this, and he should endeavour to make himself sufficiently proficient to take

his place in the ranks

alongside his comrades. There is plenty of time if you join now, for a great deal can be accomplished in a few months, and it will be an event that will make every Volunteer feel proud that he has taken part in it.

But the contemplative recruit should not delay in joining, as the longer he leaves it the more he will have to learn to catch up with the others who may have had a few months' start.

Independent of the good one does one's country in becoming

an efficient Volunteer,

plenty of fun, healthy exercise, and enjoyment can be got out of volunteering; and the love of the uniform, together with the roll of the drum and the pleasant society of one's comrades, have such an effect upon one, that the leaving of a corps in which so many happy years have been spent is done with great reluctance.

So again I repeat. Do not delay, but join at once, and I guarantee that you will agree with me that some of the most pleasant recollections you will have, when looking back upon your lifetime, will be those experienced when a Volunteer.

THE END.

"Honesty Wins."

A Great New Story of Human Life. Sequel to "Always Honest."

By HAMILTON EDWARDS (YOUR EDITOR) AND ALLAN BLAIR.

The Previous Instalments Specially Re-written for New Readers.

Fighting for Right.

WITH the narrative of extraordinary, but nevertheless true, happenings following upon the discovery by Bob and the friends who are working on his behalf—ex-P.-c. Cave, the Rev. Arnold Verney, and Levi Bernheim—that he is in reality the rightful heir to the Dyson fortune, which so far has been enjoyed by a youth known as Walt Dyson and the crowd of rascals fattening upon him—Sir Silas Renfrew, Martin Crane (an ex-solicitor), Deeks, Bellersby (a lawyer), the Vampire, and a villain named Rudford, this story deals. It opens with the discovery by Bob of the hiding-place of his enemies, in a house by the side of the Thames. The ruffians, however, are soon lost sight of, and Bob seems as far as ever from getting his rights.

Strenuously, however, he and his friend ex-P.-c. Cave endeavour to get on the track of the villains who are robbing him of his fortune; but their efforts are completely baffled. They are helped with money largely by Bob's friend, old Mr. Bernheim; and, this fact coming to the knowledge of the Vampire and Crane, the two ruffians decide that the safest course to follow will be to put Mr. Bernheim out of the way. With this idea in view, they succeed in kidnapping the kindly old Hebrew.

Cave arranges with Bob Welford to go to the Derby, in the hope that they will see there some sign of the villainous gang whom they are engaged in tracking down. The visit of Walt Dyson, in the company of Foxy Pike, Colonel Gildermore, and a Mr. Butterworth to the Derby—all engaged in robbing the unfortunate youth of his money—is then described, Walt being fleeced of five thousand pounds. Just, however, as the meeting breaks up, Bob Welford catches sight of his old chum Walt. He tries to reach him, but in vain. Seeing his intended move, Pike and his companions hurry Walt Dyson rapidly away.

But the bitterness of his experience weighs heavily upon Walt, and, thinking things over, he at last determines to throw up all his criminal associates—in fact, to get right away from them. Accordingly, he takes leave secretly of the gang, and goes away never to return to his old haunts. (To-day's instalment follows on immediately from this point.)

The Arrest of Foxy Pike by his Old Enemies the Police.

IT will be remembered that M. Perinet had promised to meet Sergeant Prinder at eight o'clock on the night of their return from the Derby. This appointment the Parisian detective duly kept. Punctually at the hour arranged he proceeded to the police office in the East End to which Prinder was attached, only to find, however, that the latter had been called away half an hour previously on some urgent business.

Prinder had left a brief note stating as much, and adding that, as it was uncertain at what hour he would return, he would be glad if Perinet could call upon him the next day instead.

Leaving word with a constable on duty that he would come again on the following morning, M. Perinet left the police-station. The next morning he met Prinder at the appointed time. After the usual greetings, the talk turned on the events of the previous day.

"Do you know," remarked Perinet, "I had quite a stroke of good fortune on my way up from Epsom yesterday."

"Glad to hear that. What was it?"

"Why, I recovered my warrant!"

"What, the one your young friend Le Choucas took from your pocket?"

"The same. I will tell you about it."

And Perinet did, producing, as he concluded, the blue document—to which was now attached a sheet of white paper—and handing it to the sergeant.

Prinder took the warrant with a smile, and looked at it with some amusement. But the smile passed from his face as he noted some words pencilled on the sheet of white paper attached.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet. "What's this? Where did you get it?"

The French detective looked up in surprise at his confidant's eagerness.

"Is it that slip of paper you are referring to?" he asked.

"Yes, yes! Where did you get it?"

"Well, it was rather curious. When Le Choucas handed me the warrant in the way I have already told you, I naturally had a look at it to see that it was all right. A little to my surprise I noticed this piece of paper, with a name and address on it, inside the warrant. Both had evidently been placed in a pocket, and one had slipped between the folds of the other. I kept it, because, as you know, in our profession we keep most things of that kind. I had no idea

it was of any importance; but, judging from the look upon your face, it seems—"

"Of any importance!" broke in Prinder. "I should think it is! You have read what's on this slip, of course?"

"Yes. It is the name and address, evidently, of one of Le Choucas' friends—one Foxy Pike."

"Exactly," agreed Prinder, nodding his head. "And this same Foxy Pike is a chap I want, and his address is what I've been trying to find out for a long time past."

"Indeed?" laughed Perinet. "Well, I am glad to have been able to help you in the matter, though my getting hold of the address was quite an accident."

Sergeant Prinder's face remained grave.

"It's no laughing matter, Perinet," he said. "This Foxy Pike is no ordinary thief—he's one of a gang that's given us no end of trouble. We've been wanting the members of the gang for months."

"On what charge?" asked the Frenchman, growing interested.

"Conspiracy—conspiracy to defraud. It's a case of misappropriation of trust funds; there's a big fortune involved. The gang have dodged us I don't know how many times, but now, Perinet—thanks to your stroke of luck in getting hold of this address—it looks as if we may soon lay some of these scoundrels by the heels."

There was such a ring in Prinder's tone, and such an eager light in his eyes, as immediately deepened the Frenchman's interest. He pressed for further particulars, whereupon Prinder, as briefly as he could, told the story of the gang who, getting hold of Walt Dyson, had passed him off as the heir to the Dyson estate.

As he concluded his hurried account he rose from his chair and put on his hat. Then, unfolding the slip of paper, he read it once again. It contained these words: "Foxy Pike, The Haven, Limmerton Road, Highbury."

"That's all right," he said, replacing the paper in his pocket. "Now, Perinet, I must go and call upon a friend of mine who's particularly interested in this case. Jim Cave is his name—you met him yesterday at Epsom. Cave and I must proceed to Highbury without loss of time. It's no use asking you to accompany us, I suppose?"

"No," answered the Frenchman, shaking his head. "I would be delighted to do so if I could, but I must get back to Paris to-day, and I have several things to do before I leave London. Good-bye, and good luck!"

He shook hands with Sergeant Prinder, and took his departure.

Prinder lost no time. He started for Aldgate at once, and found Jim Cave at home. Great was the latter's excitement on hearing the news. His eagerness to hasten to Highbury matched that of Sergeant Prinder. Extra help having been quickly procured, they started for the northern suburb.

Arrived in the neighbourhood of Limmerton Road, Prinder deemed it wise to exercise caution. In his time he had dealt with all sorts and conditions of criminals, and he knew better than to make straight for the house, knock upon the door, and demand admittance. To do such a thing as that would possibly mean the escape of those whom he sought. Carefully, then, he reconnoitred the house in which Grandfather Butterworth lived, found that it had a garden with a high wall and a side door, and posted his men accordingly.

More than that, he contrived to get a peep over the garden wall and through the back window.

Seated in the room beyond the window were two figures—an old man and a youth. They were no others than Grandfather Butterworth and Foxy Pike. That was sufficient for Sergeant Prinder. He dropped from the wall to the ground in a moment, and consulted with Jim Cave.

"They're inside," he said—"two of 'em. They tally with Perinet's description of the old man and one of the young 'uns who he saw on the coach yesterday. Now we'll get to work at once."

Grandfather Butterworth and Foxy Pike were at that moment seated at breakfast—a late breakfast, and a peculiar one. For it was past eleven o'clock, and the beverage, instead of the customary tea or coffee, was Scotch whisky and soda-water. They had retired to bed very late, and had passed a worrying, sleepless night. Now they were trying to banish the feeling of depression by indulging in ardent spirit.

"What do you think has become of him, Foxy?" old Butterworth was saying.

"Dunno at all," was the reply. "Walt's a prize mug, and anybody as handles him right can lead him. He ain't never done anything like this afore. As long as I've known him he's never sloped off and stayed out all night unless some of us was with him. It's a puzzle, and I can't make it out at all."

"He slipped away very quick, Foxy. It was just when we came out of the restaurant after supper—when we were bidding good-bye to your friend the Jackdaw. He slipped off as if—Whatever's that?"

He suddenly broke off in his speech to ask the question. Even while he was speaking a "rat-tat-tat," loud and peremptory, had come at the front door.

Butterworth and Foxy looked at one another. The glass of spirits in the old man's hand shook as he set it down upon the table. Foxy found his throat going dry as he asked hoarsely:

"Who is it? Who's a-calling' on you at this time o' the mornin'?"

Grandfather Butterworth rose from his chair and moved with silent tread towards the door into the passage. Foxy clutched his arm.

"Who is it?" he asked again.

"Hush!" said the old man, trembling in every limb. "I don't know who it is, but it may be— He gave a gulp, and stopped.

"May be who?" inquired Foxy, in frightened excitement.

"I don't know—I don't know. But I'm getting old, and every knock gives me a start. Come into the room here, grandson! Now go over to the window. Keep well behind the curtain, so that you can see without being seen. Go on, Foxy! You are younger than me, and your sight is better. Go on—go on!"

Foxy, trembling with excitement himself now, moved carefully over to the bay window. Edging close against the wall, he pulled the curtain aside an inch or two, and got a view of the step outside the door.

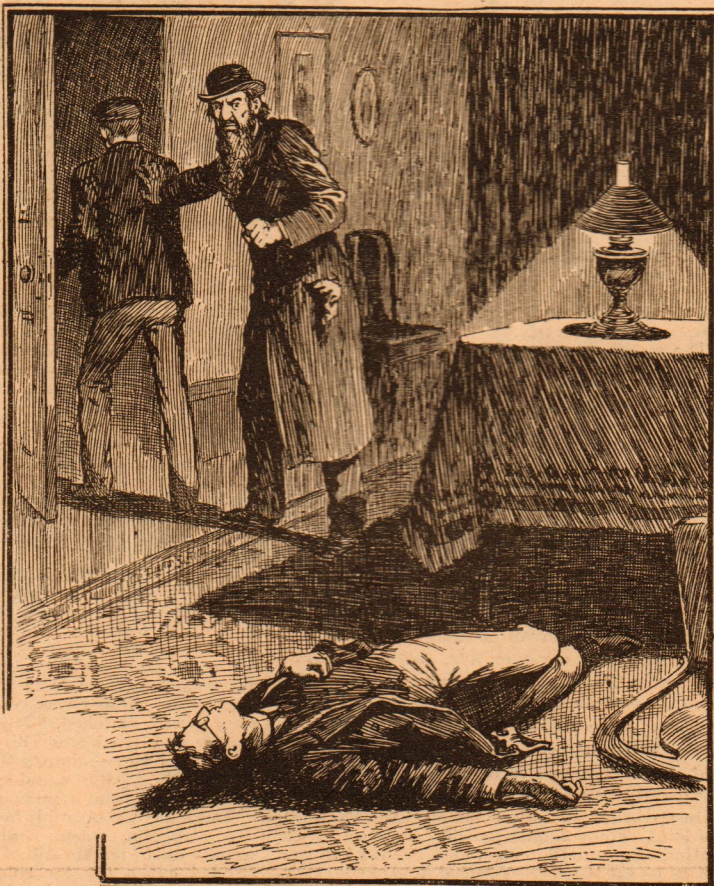
One glance was enough. Forcing back with difficulty the cry of mingled surprise and fright that rose to his lips, he darted back to his grandfather.

"Come on, come on!" he whispered hoarsely. "We must hook it! There ain't a second to lose! They're after us!"

"Who—who is it?"

"The splits! There's a couple of 'em outside. I knows the face of one of 'em; it's Cave—the bloke as I've told you about—him as was set on to find out where the Vampire was!"

Grandfather Butterworth's face went whiter and his limbs shook more violently than ever. In his excitement he moved as if towards the front door. A grip upon his arm restrained him.



One backward glance, half of fear, half of gratified revenge the Vampire gave; then without a word he shuffled stealthily out of the room, accompanied by Rudford.

"Are yer barmy?" whispered Pike. "Not that way, yer old fool! D'yer want to get us nabbed? Come to the back!"

"Yes, the back, of course, of course!" agreed Butterworth, recovering his wits a little. "We'll get into the garden and slip out by the side gate, and they won't see anything of us."

Noiselessly Foxy Pike led the way along the passage, through the kitchen, and into the slip of garden. A dozen yards from them, upon their right hand, was the gate. It was locked, but Foxy reached down the key, which was hanging on a nail outside the back door. Quickly he moved to the gate, fitted the key into the lock, and turned it.

Exactly what happened afterwards Foxy could not have said, for even as he was about to pull the gate open he found it pushed violently towards him and himself sprawling upon the ground. A moment after he heard an ominous click, as Sergeant Prinder snapped a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists. Out of the corner of his eye he saw his grandfather in the grip of two plain-clothes men, while a pair of bright steel bracelets gleamed similarly upon his wrists.

"Here, I say, guv'nor," Foxy blurted out, his wits all alert in an instant, and giving vent to a fine show of indignation, "what's the meanin' o' this here—eh? What—you, sergeant!"—he recognised Prinder at a second glance. "You, above everybody else! Well, I should have thought you would have known better than to commit a outrage like this on a puffishly innercent old gen and his grandson who was just a-toddlin' out for a mornin' stroll! What's it mean, sergeant, that's what I wants to know? And remember anythin' you says I shall take the liberty of usin' as hevidence at sich time as me and me grandfather brings a haction for onlawful arrest and bein' took into custerdy under false pretences! It's scandius, sergeant, that's what it is—scandius!"

"All right, Foxy—all right!" smiled Prinder. "You remember me, I see, and you've plenty to say for yourself, as usual! But take my tip, my lad, and don't say too much."

"What for shouldn't I say jist what I likes?" roared out the young thief, still maintaining his exhibition of virtuous wrath. "Is this Rooshia, or is it a free country?"

"Oh, it's free enough, Foxy, till you interfere with other people! Come along!"

The sergeant took Pike by the arm. The youth tried to shake him off.

"What is all this about?" he demanded.

"What's the charge?"

"There will be charges enough when you get to the station; but one will do to be going on with—conspiracy," said the detective formally. "Conspiracy against the person and property of Robert Welford."

"Lummy, never heard of it! It's Vampy's doin'—Vampy's and Crane's! Them's the blokes you wants, sergeant, not me! I'm innercent I am! Vampy and Martin Crane, they done it!"

"Very well," said Sergeant Prinder, jötting down a hasty note, "you shall tell us all about that later. It may help you," he added significantly.

"All right, guv'nor, I'll come quiet! But what's the charge against the old 'un?" He jerked his thumb towards Grandfather Butterworth, who was standing quite quiet.

"Don't worry your head about your grandfather," answered Prinder. "He knows there are plenty of charges against him. Come on, we'll be getting to the station."

A couple of four-wheeled cabs were chartered, and in a few minutes the two prisoners and their captors were on their way to the police-station.

Although receiving the usual caution from Sergeant Prinder, Foxy would not keep his tongue still. He talked continuously, complaining bitterly of his own hard lot and railing incessantly against the Vampire and the others who were still at liberty. Indeed, on the journey to the lock-up he made Sergeant Prinder acquainted with almost everything he knew of the dealings between Martin Crane and the Vampire, and the many ways in which they had fleeced Walt Dyson, who had now disappeared.

Of the story which he thus told—a story which was continued when they arrived at the station—Sergeant Prinder made copious notes. That finished, the officer, at a suggestion from Jim Cave, asked Foxy a question.

"You're not obliged to answer," he said, "but if you like to tell me it won't do you any harm."

"What's the question, guv'nor?"

"It is this—is Mr. Levi Bernheim alive or dead?"

Foxy Pike, with his head propped between his hands, looked up quickly.

"He's alive," he answered; "that is, as far as I knows he's alive."

"Where is he, then?"

"He's in a cellar—near the old house on Stepney Green, where Vampy used to live."

"Good! Can you take us to that house and show us the cellar where Mr. Bernheim is?"

"Guv'nor, I can!"

"And you'll do it?"

"Guv'nor, I'll do it!"

Something About Kind Mr. Bernheim, and How He was Found by His Friends.

THEY were in the Vampire's old house on Stepney Green—Detective-sergeant Prinder, Jim Cave, a constable in uniform, Foxy Pike, and, last but not least, Bob Welford.

Access to the house had been simple; for weeks ago the police had possessed themselves of keys and had paid several previous visits to the house. Now they stood in the broad passage, while Foxy Pike led them to the dark part under

HONESTY WINS!

 (Continued from the previous page.)

the stairs and disclosed to them among the panels the door which, despite their previous searches, had—from its secret character—quite escaped their notice. Now, as it opened with a spring, Sergeant Prinder and Jim Cave exchanged a look and a jerk of the head, as if they were reproaching themselves for never having discovered the door.

Down the steps into the tunnel they passed, the constable lighting up the gloomy way with his bullseye lantern. Anxiety filled them all more or less as to the condition of Mr. Bernheim. All the information they had regarding him was what Foxy Pike had given them, and he had not heard of the old Hebrew for several days. No time was lost, therefore, in pushing on towards the other end of the tunnel, the length and construction of which secret passage plainly caused the police officers a good deal of surprise.

"It's the Jago all over again," whispered Prinder to Cave, in allusion to a similar tunnel which had been discovered some time before in the neighbourhood of Spitalfields.

Jim Cave nodded, but made no answer. There was no time for words now, and he was as eager to get on as was Bob Welford, who walked close behind him.

Foxy Pike led the way, pausing presently as they reached the other end.

"This is the cellar, gov'nor!" he whispered to Prinder as the party halted outside a door on their right. "This is where Mr. Bernheim is—anyways, it's where he was put."

"Open it—open it!" gasped Bob. But Sergeant Prinder put up a warning finger.

"Not for a minute, my boy," he said in a low tone. "A few seconds won't make much difference, and there's something else to do first. Where's the way up to this man Fincher's house?" he asked, turning to Pike.

The latter pointed to a spot a few yards further on. "There's the stairs, gov'nor!" he answered. "They leads up into Fincher's passage."

Prinder turned to Jim Cave. "You wait here a moment," he said; "you and Bob wait together. I'll go up with the constable and collar Fincher."

He made for the stairs, followed by the uniformed officer, mounted them, and pushed open the door which he found at the top.

Ten seconds later those waiting down below heard the sound of a scuffle. It was soon over, Fincher being captured with very little trouble, and with handcuffs upon his wrists placed in one of the rooms; while another policeman, fetched from outside, kept guard over him.

Sergeant Prinder and the constable he had brought with him again descended to the tunnel.

"Now, then, Jim; we're ready! Shoot back the bolt—it's on this side. Everything's nice and easy for us."

Cave needed no second bidding. He drew the bolt back and threw open the door. All was dark inside the cellar, and for a second or two nobody could see anything; but their eyes got used to the gloom, and when the constable, advancing, directed his bullseye upon the interior, all caught sight simultaneously of him whom they had come to seek.

No words were spoken; only cries of joy leapt from two throats as the party rushed forward towards that figure on the ground upon which the shaft of light was playing. It was Levi Bernheim.

White and still he lay, with closed eyes. Jim Cave and Bob Welford sank down on their knees beside him; Sergeant Prinder, taking the constable's bullseye, bent over him. The constable, stepping back two or three paces, remained with Foxy Pike near the door.

"He's unconscious," whispered Jim Cave, placing his hand over Mr. Bernheim's heart, "but he's still alive, thank Heaven!"

"Better get him out of this as soon as possible," said Prinder; "it's damp here, and the air is just about as foul as it can be. He's been badly treated. Lend a hand, Jim! We'll get him into the open air and find the nearest doctor."

It did not take very long. Gently and tenderly Sergeant Prinder and Jim Cave lifted the old Hebrew up and carried him from the tunnel up the stairs and into the room above, near an open window.

Fincher sat there watching them with a sullen air, but even he, seeing now that the game was up, was willing to render what little help he could. He told them where the nearest doctor lived; and Bob, all eagerness to be of service, tore out in search of the medical man.

He was back in a few minutes, accompanied by the kind and grave-faced doctor.

"He is very ill and weak," pronounced the doctor, after a brief examination; "but with fresh air and proper nourishment he will recover."

A sigh of relief escaped Bob as he heard these words. Up to now a great anxiety had filled him, and he had begun to fear grave danger. A

little brandy-and-milk was poured between Mr. Bernheim's lips, and later, a four-wheeled cab having been fetched, he was lifted into it—still in an unconscious state—and driven home to his house in Spital Square.

There he was at once placed in bed, and his own medical attendant sent for.

His report corresponded with that of the other doctor. Mr. Bernheim was very ill, he said—suffering most likely from a lengthy incarceration in a foul atmosphere and lack of proper food. Perfect rest and good nursing were the chief requisites, he added, and these things—now that he was back under the care of his own daughter—the patient was assured of.

Constant and unremitting were the attentions bestowed upon Mr. Bernheim by Miss Rachel Bernheim, Liz Mason, and the hospital nurse who had been called in. Thanks to their care, added to the skilful treatment of the doctor, Mr. Bernheim rapidly improved in health. Late in the evening of his being brought home he recovered consciousness, and from that moment he never looked back. Each morning found him stronger, and at the end of the week he was able not only to see and recognise Bob Welford and Jim Cave, but to discuss with them the developments that had taken place in the eventful story we have unfolded.

With those developments we are already acquainted. Foxy Pike, Grandfather Butterworth, and Fincher were in custody; but, after all—culpable though they had been—the part they had played in connection with Walt Dyson had been but a subsidiary one in comparison with the leaders of the gang; and those leaders—the Vampire, Martin Crane, and the others—were still at large. Similarly, too, no trace had been

in no amiable manner, either! An interval of silence had followed, to be broken now as the Vampire said, with a swift glance at his companion.

"I've waited long enough, Mr. Crane! I want to know what you're going to do—and you've got to tell me!"

"Got to tell you what? What is there to tell?"

"There's lots to tell, Mr. Crane, and lots to keep quiet about. But one thing I want to know now—when am I going to get any more money?"

Martin Crane made an impatient gesture.

"It's always that—always money!" he droned out monotonously. "Why do you come to me?"

"Because, Mr. Crane, you hold the purse-strings—because you're always able to get money when you want it. You took the business of Walter Dyson into your own hands; you've managed it all through, and a pretty little pile you've made out of it, I make no doubt."

"You had your share," Crane answered coldly.

"My share!" echoed the Vampire angrily. "What do you mean by that? I've had a few hundreds, where you've had thousands! Why ain't I had as much as you? Answer me that, Mr. Crane. Ain't I done the work?—ain't I took the responsibility—ain't I done desperate things to make the way clear for you?"

"For me! You refer to the fellow Crooks, I suppose!" sneered Crane. "Did I ask you to do that? Did I know anything of your intention? Did I ask you to put your neck in a—"

The Vampire sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing.

"Stop that!" he cried out, gulping hard. "You talked like that before, Mr. Crane, and

Crane's head; then down it came. The ex-solicitor reeled, gave one moaning cry, then, his legs giving way beneath him, he fell in a muddled heap to the floor.

Rudford bent down over him. The Vampire collapsed into a chair, panting for breath. Thus they remained for almost five minutes. At the end of that time the Vampire, moving forward, bent over Crane. He placed his hand over Crane's heart.

"You needn't trouble," Rudford said hoarsely, "he's finished with—he'll never breathe again!"

The Vampire smiled a sickly smile. From the dead man's coat he took out a packet of papers, which he transferred to his own breast pocket.

"Rudford," said the Jew, speaking thickly, "we must go! D'you hear me? We must go from this. It won't be safe to stay. We'll leave this lumber here, my dear!" He gave the dead body of Martin Crane a savage kick as he spoke. "We'll leave him here, and we'll be miles away before he's found!"

He put on his hat and drew it low down over his eyes; he beckoned to Rudford and moved towards the door. One glance back over his shoulder, half of fear and half of gratified revenge, and then, without a word, he shuffled stealthily out of the room, accompanied by Rudford.

How the Links in the Long Chain Were Welded Together.

SEVEN weeks had passed, an eventful time, during which many things had happened.

First and foremost, the Vampire and Rudford were under arrest. The discovery of the dead body of Martin Crane in the house at Greenwich had caused a tremendous sensation. That the ex-solicitor had met his death by murder was a fact plain as plain could be. Equally palpable to the police from the very first was it that Martin Crane's blood was upon the heads of the Vampire and Rudford. Evidence in plenty was forthcoming that the Vampire and Crane had lodged in the house together for a week or two prior to the latter's death, and that their frequent and almost only visitor during that time was Rudford.

The voices of Crane and the Vampire raised in dispute had several times been heard by the people of the house, who had even heard fragments of the heated discussion which so shortly preceded the commission of the terrible crime.

The identity, then, of the murderers was proved beyond doubt; but as to their whereabouts, total ignorance prevailed for nearly a month. But the police were thoroughly roused now, and their efforts to track down the two infamous criminals were continued night and day. Acting on the information of Foxy Pike—who was still in custody, awaiting his adjourned trial—every place to which the Vampire and Rudford had been known to resort in the past was carefully watched, on the bare chance that one or other of the "wanted" men would again put in an appearance.

And these efforts were in due time rewarded. It was among the Surrey hills that eventually the two villains were captured. At a little inn kept by an accomplice they were found by Detective-sergeant Prinder, and in charge of that officer and others, speedily brought back to London.

In the cells of a prison they were awaiting trial for the murder of Martin Crane, while many other charges hung over their heads, to be prosecuted in the very unlikely event of that one failing.

During those seven weeks the friends of Bob Welford had been busy on the boy's behalf.

Detailed communication by cable with a trustworthy solicitor in New Zealand had procured very tangible

results. It had been clearly proved that Mr. Henry Dyson—the testator of the property to which Walt had been fraudulently put forward as heir—had died nearly five years previously, bequeathing his entire property and estate to his only son, Wilfred Dyson.

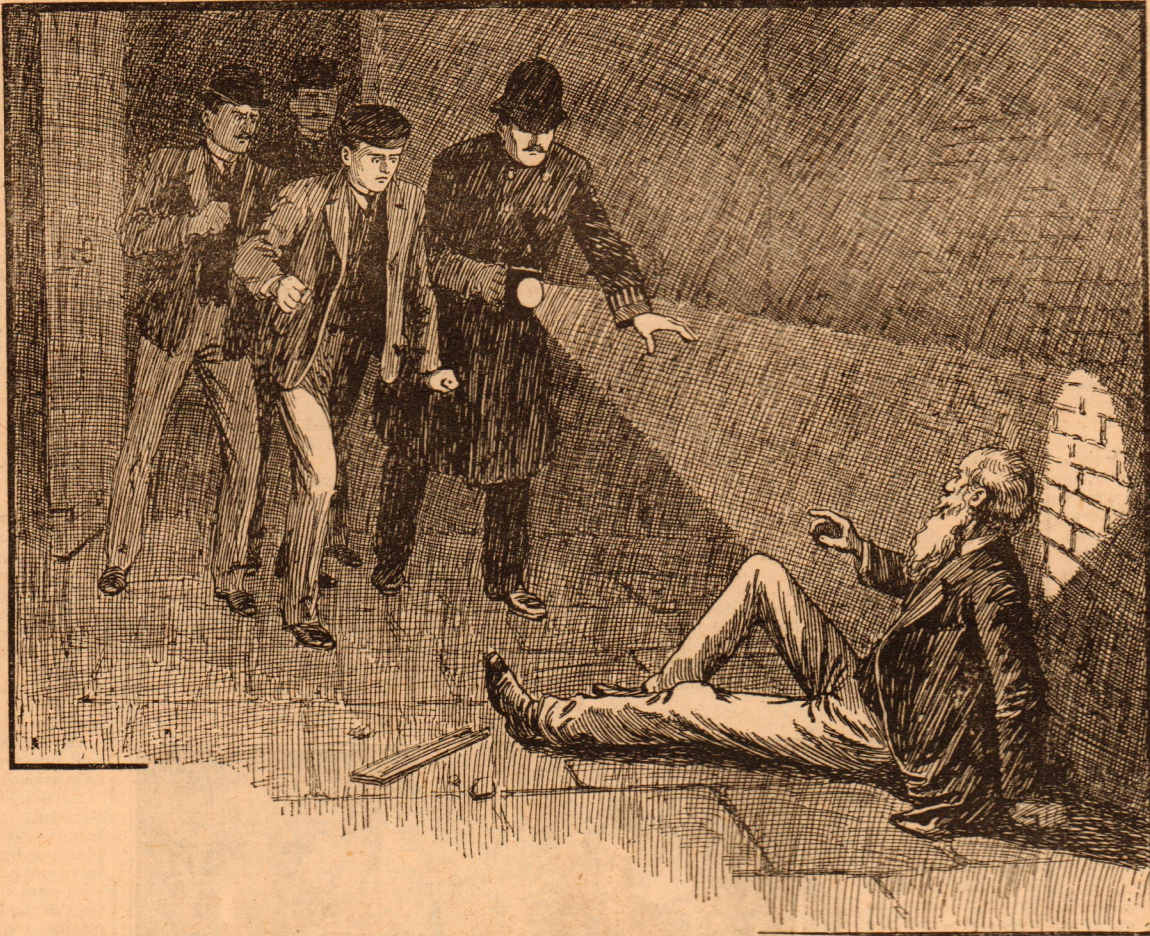
Of the whereabouts of that son very little information had been obtainable from the papers which Henry Dyson had left behind him. It was only known for certain that, previous to the testator's emigration from England, the boy—quite an infant—had been placed in the care of some woman to nurse.

One important fact which the will revealed was that Martin Crane had been appointed sole executor, and that he, or someone acting for him, had duly proved the will at the Probate Registry in the city of Wellington, N.Z.

There was a further clause requesting Martin Crane—whom Henry Dyson seemed to have known during his residence in England—to seek out the missing son Wilfred, act as guardian to him, and to hold in trust on the boy's behalf the property bequeathed.

Beyond that the New Zealand solicitor had succeeded in tracing the two witnesses to the will, who had been intimately acquainted with the testator, and who were even now, at the request of Mr. Bernheim, on their way to England to assist in proving Bob Welford to be no other than Wilfred Dyson, and to establish his claim to the whole estate.

(To be continued in next Thursday's BOYS' HERALD, 16 large pages, price 1d.)



Cries of joy came from Bob Welford and Cave as the party rushed forward towards that figure on the ground upon which the shaft of light was playing. It was Levi Bernheim.

discovered of Walt Dyson. He seemed to have disappeared completely.

The search for the principals of this real-life drama was now prosecuted by the police with the greatest energy. Once or twice, thanks to Foxy Pike—who had turned King's evidence, and had told all he knew—the authorities lighted upon a clue which promised well; but for the time being luck proved to be against them, and the days went on only to find the Vampire and the others still at liberty.

The Manner of Martin Crane's Exit from Our Story.

THREE weeks had passed since the discovery of Mr. Bernheim. In the sitting-room of a house in Greenwich, where they had come to live, sat the Vampire and Martin Crane. That they were in no friendly mood towards one another was plainly discernible. Crane sat there cool and calm as usual, but the furrow between his knitted brows clearly told that, however composed might be his manner, he was greatly perturbed within.

On the other side of the table sat the Vampire. His long, skinny hands passing over each other continually, and the constant movement of one foot as he sat there cross-legged, told of the ceaseless play of nerves. His face, pinched and drawn, and the set expression of his eyes, told of sleepless nights and gnawing worry.

They had been talking, these two—talking

you'll go too far one of these days. Nothing was done to Crooks that you didn't know of, and if my neck was put in danger by that, so was your's just the same! Be careful, Mr. Crane! You're dealin' with a desperate man now!" The Vampire was bending down and hissing the words into Crane's ear. "Don't you forget," he added, "that what happened to Mo Crooks happened to Samuel Bellersby similar! Don't you—"

He broke off in his speech chokingly, as Martin Crane, at length roused to fury by the Jew's last words, jumped up and caught him by the throat.

The Vampire struggled hard, trying to wrench himself free, and alternately striving to reach the curtained window of the door at the other end. His own long, skinny arms were thrown about the neck of Martin Crane. Backwards and forwards they rocked about the room, their shadows dancing weirdly upon the walls in the lamplight. Nether was very powerful, but they were evenly matched. The Vampire's superior height and reach were discounted by his age. For two or three minutes the struggle continued desperately. All of a sudden the door was burst open, and into the room came Rudford.

Amazement was on his face as he looked at the two struggling men. Only for a couple of seconds did he remain still. Then, as the Vampire gurgled out a cry for help, he strode quickly forward. His hand dived into the long, deep pocket inside his coat and he whipped out a life-preserver.

For a moment the weapon hovered over Martin



THE ROMANCE OF THE ROAD

A Tale of the Days of
By Morton Fike
CLAUDE DUVAL

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Seeking His Fortune.

JACK OLDACRE, a sturdy lad of fifteen, was one winter's day of the year 1667 trudging through snow-covered lanes to London Town—where he hoped to make his fortune—when he was set upon by two hired ruffians, who attempted to kill him to gain a reward of fifty guineas offered by a lawyer named Snatchall. But the plot became known to the celebrated highwayman, Claude Duval, who frustrated it.

Then, in company with Duval, Jack reached London, where the highwayman interviewed Snatchall, the lawyer, who was anxious to secure Jack's death in order that, by forging a will, a huge fortune left to the boy should go to Jack's cousin, who was in Snatchall's power. Duval meant to wring from Snatchall a confession of his rascality. He was, however, betrayed, and forced, with Jack Oldacre, to take to flight, hotly pursued by a company of Foot Guards.

Meanwhile Jack Oldacre rode on alone to Oldacre Hall, where he was trapped by his father's treacherous servant, who had discovered the Oldacre treasure and meant to appropriate it to his own use. This piece of rascality was, however, found out by the steward's honest son, Kit Careless, who revealed the plot to Jack. But a greater surprise awaited the boy, for Duval found a packet of papers proclaiming Jack to be heir to the Oldacre fortune and estate.

One night Jack Oldacre, Kit Careless, and several others were listening to Duval's life story when a company of Life Guards, under Sir Harry Claydon, surrounded the highwaymen's retreat. A stiff fight followed, in which all except Jack got away. He alone remained a prisoner in the hands of the enemy. Very little time elapsed before he was inside Newgate, but you may be sure Duval did not mean to leave his young friend to his fate without making an effort on his behalf. Accordingly he contrived a plot to secure Jack's release—a plot which was successful.

But no sooner was Jack outside the prison, and mounted on a horse, when the alarm-bell announcing his escape was rung.
(This enables my new friends to start reading this story to-day.)

The 31st Chapter.

How Kit Careless Became an Alderman in a Very Strange Way.

THE snap of the rope flung Kit backwards, and as he picked himself up and looked down into space, his heart sank for a moment.

He had accomplished his object, and the prisoner was rescued; even then the highwaymen were dashing out of sight round the corner of Giltspur Street; but Kit Careless was left alone, and Snatchall's voice was raising the alarm.

There were shouts from the prison, and the warning bell clanged loudly. "There he is!" cried someone from below as Kit peeped over the parapet; and, knowing that he had been seen, he abandoned all hope of descending to the ground by the scaffolding of the City gate.

There was no time to be lost, for now, out upon the roof, were several warders, armed with muskets, and Kit Careless was caught in a trap from which it seemed impossible to escape.

They did not summon him to surrender, but all three fired point-blank, and all three missed, which is not unusual when one fires in that way.

Kit Careless dodged, ran along on all-fours under the shelter of a strip of tiled roofing, and at once decided that matters were very serious.

In those days old Newgate Prison formed a sort of island, and was separated from the other houses in Newgate Street by a narrow lane.

The parapet of the gaol itself was studded with clumsy spikes. There was nothing for it but to jump the space between the prison wall and the adjoining building, but the spikes were a difficulty; moreover, there was a question of landing on the other side.

The sound of the firing and the clang of the bell brought folk to their windows, and even out into the streets.

Already an ever-increasing crowd followed his movements from below, and the mountebank knew that the

warders were even then busy reloading their pieces.

At last he reached a piece of coping which would afford him a good jump off; the sound of running feet close to him spurred him on, and, measuring the distance with his eye, he launched himself into space.

The crowd yelled. A warder who had been within arm's length of him, and had sprung forward only a second too late, clung desperately to the parapet as he well-nigh pitched over.

Kit landed with a tremendous crash that sent the broken tiles in a shower on the gaping crowd underneath, and stayed his backward fall by seizing the ridge of a dormer window.

For an instant the shock made his head swim, but he quickly recovered himself; and as the jailer was joined by half-a-dozen others, the daring acrobat scrambled over the ridge of the roof and vanished from sight.

He knew he had only gained breathing time and that he would be quickly pursued; and anxious to put as much space between himself and the warders as possible, he crawled along on hands and knees, once starting back with a shiver as a bullet fired at random fell within three inches of his hand.

"Corn in Egypt!" he exclaimed, as he came to a low, square chimney, with a soot-blackened grating over it.

One wrench of his strong arms and the grating came away, and setting it on one side he swung his legs over the opening, and proceeded to lower himself cautiously down.

Hands, knees, and elbows were bruised and bleeding before he had gone many yards, and he was almost choked by the pungent soot; but Kit Careless knew what he was doing, the only point of uncertainty being what he would find at the bottom of the chimney.

He had to pause every few feet, for the cloud of soot threatened to stifle him; but at length, upon looking down, he saw a little patch of light between his knees, and in a few moments he crouched panting on the hearthstone of a huge old-fashioned fireplace.

As he waited to get his breath a piece of brick dislodged in his descent came rolling down, and fell upon the hearth with a sharp sound.

Kit had just made out in the dim light filtered through the window curtain that he was in a bed-chamber, and the curtains of a large four-post bed parted, a man's face appearing in the opening.

A hoarse whisper with a tremble in it said: "Who's there?" And as Kit remained still as a mouse, after a little while the head was withdrawn, and silence reigned in the room once more.

Kit was mentally wondering how on earth he was to get across the floor and through the

door on the opposite side when an unmistakable sound came from behind the curtains—the sound of two people snoring; one in a deep bass, the other in the minor key.

"I wish I was well out of this!" thought Kit Careless.

As his eyes grew accustomed to the half light, and he ventured to bend forward into the room to reconnoitre, he noted two things—one was that his own garments were so frayed and fouled by his passage down the chimney that he would be almost certain to be seized by the first citizen he met; the other was that the clothes of the gentleman who was placidly performing that nasal duet with his good dame lay spread out on a chair within reach of Kit's arm.

In spite of the seriousness of the position, he could not help smiling at the thought that flashed into his mind.

It was a very respectable, not to say handsome, suit of snuff-coloured cloth with brass buttons; a Spanish beaver lay on the top of a carved oak dower chest by the window with the worthy merchant's peruke upon a stand beside it; and with nimble fingers Kit Careless began to slip off his jacket.

The broad recess of the fireplace made a very good robing-room, and in a few minutes Kit had appropriated the suit; and, carrying the square-toed shoes in his hand, stole like a shadow across the polished floor in his stockings feet.

With a glance at the bed he put on the curled wig, wiped the soot from his face with a towel, and then found himself confronted with a difficulty.

Beside the wig-block lay a patch of velvet, to which were attached two strings of ribbon—the gentleman had evidently only one eye, but which was the missing one?

There was no time for hesitation, so he tied it over his left at a venture, lifted down the sword and girdle that hung behind the door, donned a walking cloak, and slipped his feet into the shoes, which fitted him exactly.

"I wish I knew your name, my friend," he thought, "and whether your serving-maids have unbarred the front door so early."

The critical moment had arrived as Kit laid his hand upon the key, and his heart beat the lighter as it turned without noise in the well-oiled lock.

There was still a heavy bolt to draw, but that, like the key, made no sound, and stepping softly into the passage the daring mountebank drew the bed-room door softly to behind him.

The house, as he saw it in the early morning light, evidently belonged to a well-to-do merchant, and was furnished with some taste; but he did not linger, and, drawing the cloak about his chin, and pulling the hat brim well over his eyes, he walked boldly downstairs, imitating what he imagined would be the ponderous and rather pompous walk of the owner of the clothes in which he stood.

"Lud, master," cried a voice, followed by the clatter of a broom, as he reached the hall, "you are going forth early betimes. Prithee, let me fetch you a draught of ale against the morning air."

It was a comely servant whose voice had startled the masquerader, and fearing lest he should betray himself if he spoke, Kit nodded and jerked a warning thumb in the direction of the upper floor.

He was evidently a good master, for the maid tripped off willingly, and when she returned with the ale Kit pointed to the front door and turned his back upon her while he drank it.

"Oh, well-a-day, master! And what is going forward?" she cried, as she flung the door open and admitted a babel of voices and the sound of hurrying feet. "Surely it is some of those poor prisoners in Newgate escaping again, and I pray they be not taken, for it is a fearsome place."

"Bless your kind heart!" thought Kit to himself. And stepping quickly forth he was confronted with another and more serious peril.

A crowd of perhaps fifty folk came surging down Warwick Lane, headed by Jem Grindstone and three or four warders, armed with halberds and muskets, and they were all looking up at the roofs of the houses.

"Good-morrow, Master Doubleday," said Grindstone, touching his hat respectfully to the supposed owner of the house. "A prisoner has escaped and is on the roof above there. Would your honour have the kindness to allow us passage through your attic?"

"Master Doubleday" made a sweeping motion with his arm towards the door through which the serving-maid was peering with wide-open eyes, but "Master Doubleday" having apparently business of his own, passed through the crowd to the other side of the lane.

"Egad, captain, did not I tell you he would be here to time?" exclaimed a voice at his elbow. "You say Tom Doubleday has no courage, and I cry out upon you!"

Kit felt himself seized by each arm by two cloaked gentlemen, who paid not the slightest heed to the crowd, but hurried him out into Newgate Street.

"The coach is waiting at the corner of Little Britain," said the one who had spoken, "and 'tis but a short ride to Finsbury Fields. For the credit of the City we are very anxious to be the first arrivals, for we like not your opponent's seconds, more especially the swashbuckler who calls himself Captain Hawk."

"Oh," groaned poor Kit Careless to himself, "here am I going to fight a duel with a man I don't know because I have borrowed a suit of clothes from a man I never saw in my life! And Hawk, too! What has he got to do with it?"

"Do you find your arm steady this morning, sir?" said the other gentleman whom his friend had addressed as captain.

"Passing steady, I thank you," said Kit, successfully imitating the voice of the real Mr. Doubleday.

"I am glad to hear it, sir—most infernally glad to hear it; an insult from a rascally fellow like that to the whole City of London cannot be better wiped out than by the sword of a worshipful alderman like yourself," said the gentleman. "I am only sorry that I could not have had you at the Artillery Garden to show you a trick or two of fence—but there, it is not six hours since the challenge, and these little matters are better adjusted without delay. Here is the coach."

A hackney carriage stood at the end of Little Britain, and into it they got, the captain and his friend, somewhat unsteadily. They mentioned afterwards that they had been sitting up all night, lest they should oversleep themselves; and having cracked numerous flagons of Rhenish, they were both decidedly warmed with wine, a fact not a little in "Master Doubleday's" favour.

The City was awaking, but as yet there were few people abroad as the coach rumbled through Cheapside and turned in the direction of Moorgate.

"We have planned the meeting," said Alderman Doubleday's civilian friend, "a little this side of the windmills, where we shall be safer from interruption."

"The deuce you will!" thought Kit, huddling himself deeper into his cloak. "What I want to know is, am I going to kill the other man, or is he going to kill me?"

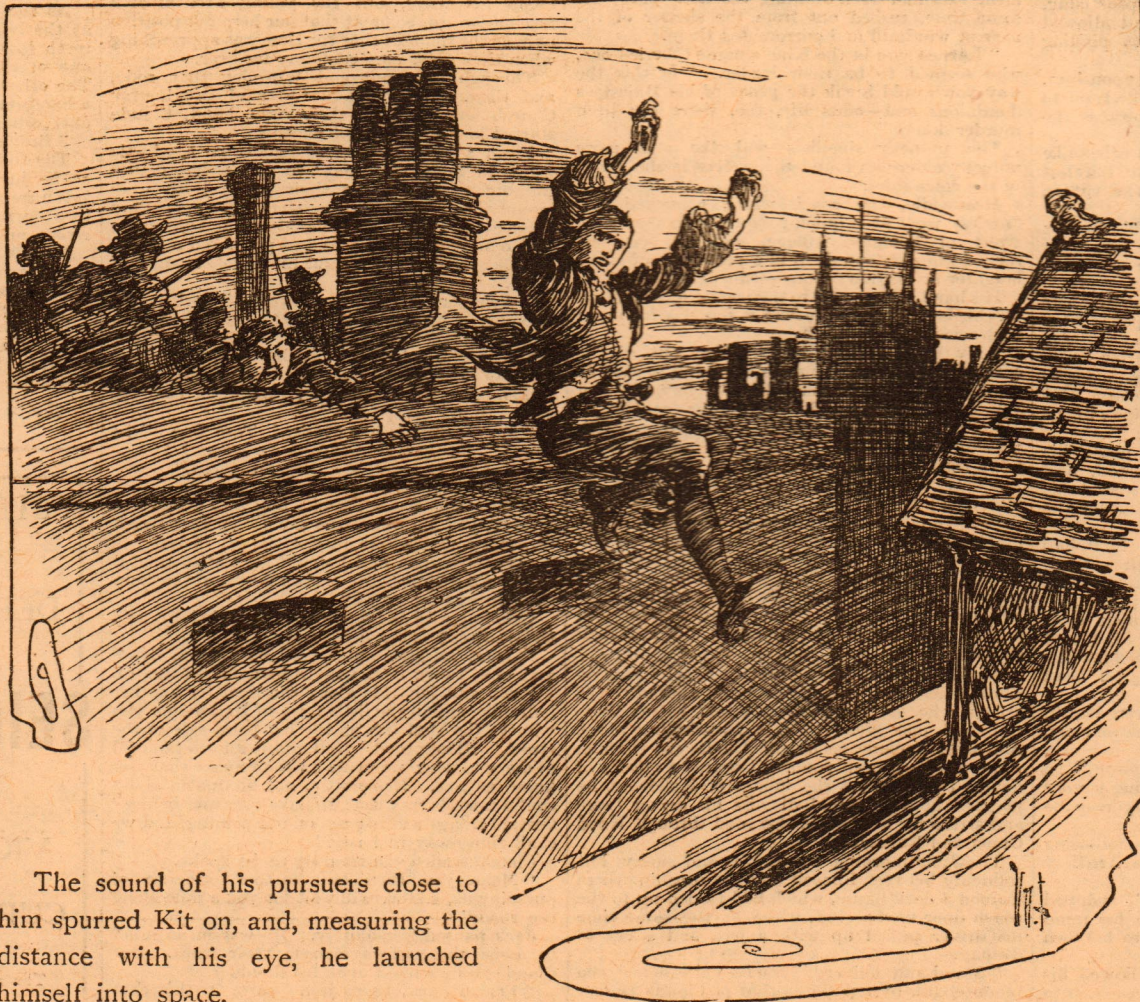
The coach jolted up the long road which led towards Islington village, and it had scarce drawn up with a jerk on the City side of the line of windmills which in old days stood there, than another coach came rumbling from the direction of Clerkenwell.

Kit and his friends got out. The other coach stopped, and from it descended four cloaked figures, who raised their hats stiffly in response to the other party's equally curt salutation.

One of them carried a wooden case, which Kit knew contained surgical instruments; two others approached the captain and his friend—one of them being none other than our old acquaintance Hawk—while the fourth man, with whom the masquerader was about to cross swords, remained standing a little aloof, rubbing his unshaven chin in his huge hand, and seemingly thinking of something other than the business that had brought him there.

Every now and then he would look across his shoulder towards the City, and then he fell to pacing backwards and forwards, while Kit gazed at him with a feeling of stupefaction.

There could be no mistake about it. It was the lawyer, Daniel Snatchall!



The sound of his pursuers close to him spurred Kit on, and, measuring the distance with his eye, he launched himself into space.

The 32nd Chapter.

The Duel in Finsbury Fields, and its Sequel.

KIT CARELESS stood rooted to the spot, which was perhaps the very wisest thing he could have done. But when he had caught his breath and pulled himself together, his quick eye took in all the possibilities of the position.

He knew that Snatchall was by no means an indifferent swordsman. But that fact did not trouble him in the slightest, for Kit was conscious of his own powers.

There was an ugly story afloat that Snatchall had gone out with a man into Lincoln's Inn Fields and deliberately butchered him by a foul thrust. But Kit cared not for that, for to be forewarned was to be forearmed.

Three things alone troubled him. First, would the real Alderman Doubleday appear upon the scene before the business was concluded? Second, would it be murder to kill the blustering bully under the circumstances? And lastly, how would he, Kit Careless, get away if such a thing came about?

He could tell, from the boiling fury that betrayed itself in the lawyer's every movement, that Jack and the highwaymen had escaped. And while he was cudgelling his brains to imagine what the end of it all would be, Snatchall himself took the matter into his own hands, and became clearly responsible for everything that followed.

"Have you not done with your chattering, you fools, there?" he cried, in his tremendous voice. "You are worse than a parcel of old women! I for one have work to do elsewhere. If your gormandising gentleman had any stomach for the fight, we might have finished it ourselves by this time. Perhaps," he added, "you do but wait for the arrival of the constables?" And he laughed coarsely.

"I am at your service!" cried Kit, shifting the patch slightly away from his left eye and advancing towards his opponent.

"Egad, sir!" cried Snatchall. "You have more courage than I gave you credit for, though it is Dutch courage, I'll be bound, after all is said and done."

The seconds, more especially the captain of the Artillery Garden, sprang forward, aghast.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," he cried, "this is against all the rules and principles of the approved Courts of Honour! Your blades are not measured, nor is the ground stepped."

"If you don't step out of my way, sir," cried Snatchall, "the ground will be measured by your own length! Now, Master Alderman, have at thee!"

The others fell back, seeing that the two principals were determined to engage. And Kit Careless, wrapping Alderman Doubleday's cloak round his left arm—an example which Snatchall followed—the two swords crossed.

"Poor Tom is a dead man," whispered Master Doubleday's friend. "I'll swear Snatchall's rapier is a foot longer."

But the artillery captain, who seemed to know what he was talking about, jerked him by the arm to silence.

Kit was playing not only for his life, but his liberty. He knew the instant blade kissed blade that he had Snatchall completely at his mercy, but to have shown it to the onlookers would have been to betray the deception he was practising, and several times he gave ground and allowed the lawyer to come perilously near to pinking him.

He knew that Hawk's keen eye was upon him, and as he parried thrust after thrust, he tried to manoeuvre that his back should be towards the ruffian.

For five minutes the pair faced each other like tigers, and the more cautiously Kit Careless played him the more furious grew the ruffian Snatchall.

"Odds life!" he hissed, through his broken teeth. "If 'twere not for the clothes you wear and your blind eye, I would say there was some trickery here."

And even as he spoke he saw that the eye was not blind, after all, and his own opened wide with astonishment and suspicion.

At that instant he had sprung upon his opponent and made a foul thrust at his leg, in hopes of disabling him and killing him at his ease. But Kit saw it in time, and received the weapon in the folds of the cloak on his left arm.

He saw, too—and the knowledge made his heart leap—that the fraud was detected, and with the rapidity of lightning Kit passed his rapier through the lawyer's body, aiming for the heart.

With a howl like a wild animal in pain, Snatchall threw up his arms and fell back with a thud, and a red mist passed in front of Kit's vision. He passed his hand across his eyes.

It is not a pleasant thing to kill a man, even though he be a monster of Snatchall's kind, and when he looked again the doctor was kneeling beside the prostrate body and shaking his head ominously.

The seconds had hurried up, and even Hawk, who was rather an expert in such matters, confirmed the doctor's opinion.

"You had better get your friend away," he said shortly. "I see some figures moving yonder in the bushes, and it is not unlike they may be the constables."

"You admit it was a fair stroke, sir, following upon a foul," said the captain of the Artillery Garden sternly.

"It was a fair stroke enough," snapped Hawk, who was already wondering in his mind how he could turn his patron's death to his own advantage.

As for Kit, he said nothing, but allowed his seconds to lead him to the hackney coach, into which he climbed with bent head, like a man suffering from remorse.

"Keep a good heart, Tom," said the civilian second. "We will tell the coachman to drive you to the Red Lion at Islington yonder—a guinea will stop his mouth—and you must wait there until we come to you."

Kit threw himself back in the vehicle with a wave of his hand that might mean anything, and the artillery captain, thrusting his head into the window, whispered to him to wipe his sword and sheathe it, lest it should tell tales.

The coach was scarce out of sight up the long hill, when a breathless gentleman, on a sweating horse, reined up beside the group that surrounded the lawyer's body; and Alderman Thomas Doubleday gasped like a codfish.

"Why, what in Heaven's name is this?" he stammered.

"And who in Heaven's name are you, sir?" ejaculated the captain, staring as though he had seen a ghost.

"You must be mad to ask me such a question, Sam! Don't you know Tom Doubleday?"

The captain took off his hat and wiped the perspiration from his brow with the cuff of his coat. And, indeed, the real alderman was in such a plight that his most intimate friends might have been excused when all things were taken into consideration.

Picture a respectable, civic dignitary, who had lain awake half the night dreading the duel he was pledged to fight in the morning, suddenly roused by an incursion of prison warders and gaping citizens, and then to find that some rascal had stolen his clothes into the bargain!

Poor Master Doubleday had blundered into his Sunday suit and buttoned it all the wrong way, put on his second-best wig, which was woefully out of curl, and, unshaven and half distraught, he had left his wife in hysterics and galloped off to the rendezvous, alternately boiling with rage and trembling with fear.

"I have been robbed!" he cried. "Terrible things have happened in my house! A murderer has escaped from Newgate, and the whole ward is upside down. But," he added, with a glance at the body on the grass, "I have not forgotten that I pledged myself to kill Daniel Snatchall this morning, and I demand to know what is the meaning of this?"

"The meaning is that you killed him ten minutes ago!" said the captain. "That we put you in a coach, and that you are even now yonder in Islington and here at the same time. Law-ak-mercy, are we all bewitched?"

"I must know more of this matter," interrupted Hawk, stepping forward with his most bullying air. "My friend has been slain by treachery, and you shall all answer for it. Zounds! is an honourable gentleman like Master Daniel Snatchall to be done to death by a parcel of City hogs? Draw, sir—draw!" And whipping out his rapier, the swashbuckler advanced upon the captain of the Artillery Garden.

Fortunately, the doctor gave a startled cry, and, turning round, they were astonished to see the apparently dead man raising himself on to his elbow, his face ghastly white, and the front of his shirt all bedabbled.

"Put up your sword, Hawk," he said in a curious voice broken by the hard cough. "Dan Snatchall takes more killing than this, and we will have the law on them. Follow that man who fought me; it was Careless, the mountebank."

He sank back into the doctor's arms and fainted away. But before anyone could move, a dozen men, who had been stalking the little party for some time, rushed out from the shelter of the nearest windmill and surrounded them.

"I arrest you in the King's name!" cried one, who seemed to be their leader. "Is this the way you would break the peace of his Majesty's dominions and—odds life, too, there has been murder done!"

The unlucky duellists and the still more unlucky alderman found themselves in the hands of the constables.

Meanwhile, the coach which conveyed Kit Careless went at a quick pace through the broad street of Islington village, and its occupant rocked himself to and fro in a paroxysm of silent laughter at his marvellous escape.

His hand had strayed to the pocket of Alderman Doubleday's breeches, where it found a fat purse with several guineas in it.

"My friend," said Kit, leaning out of the coach window. "I am not in the mind to stop at the Red Lion, after all. Get you forward, and you shall have two guineas for your trouble."

"Sir," said the coachman, looking round with a twinkle in his eye, "I wish your honour would kill a man every morning and engage me to carry you away. It is a real pleasure to drive a gentleman!"

Kit had only one plan, and that was to place as great a distance as possible between himself and any chance of pursuit, and then to strike out along the Cambridge road, which Duval and his men were going to work. He knew he would have no difficulty in finding their whereabouts, for the highwaymen had taken him completely into their confidence.

He knew the rascally innkeepers, who sent on word when rich travellers were abroad; the ostlers, who for half-a-crown would betray those who had just given them a five-shilling piece. And as the hackney coach rolled on its way through what was then open country towards a cluster of houses that marked the village of Holloway, he planned how he would dismiss his driver there and strike for the Cambridge road through Wood Green and Enfield.

The June morning was bright and sunny, but suddenly between himself and the sunshine there loomed a dark figure, which had ridden up to the coach door unobserved, while at the same time his driver pulled up with a jerk and a cry of dismay.

"Stand and deliver!" cried a voice, which the mountebank recognised as that of Claude Duval. "As for you, sir"—and the highwayman approached the window—"I trust you have more

money than you know what to do with, for we know what to do with every farthing you have!"

Kit slipped off his wig and popped his head out of the window with the unexpectedness of a Jack-in-the-box.

A roar of laughter greeted his appearance, and the ringing cheer which the highwaymen gave might have been heard half a mile away.

They had just ridden out of Hagbush Lane, after having lingered in the neighbourhood of Clerkenwell in the vain hope that Kit might yet join them, and, seeing a solitary coach, the temptation had proved too strong for Claude to resist.

"Well, friend Kit," cried Claude, "I would rather see your honest face than a sackful of guineas fresh from the Mint!" And, returning his pistol to its holster, he gripped the mountebank's hand. "Out with you, Kit!" he said. "Master Jack is yonder with a spare horse for you, for he takes no part in these little affairs. And now, by your leave, we will push on at our best pace, as I have the thought that we shall be followed."

"Here, good fellow," said Kit, reaching his hand up to the box on which the terrified driver sat with a face the picture of misery, "take these two guineas I promised you for your services, and another one to keep your mouth shut!"

"May the rope that hangs your honour be long a-weaving!" cried the delighted driver. "And trust me, none shall know where I set you down."

Kit vaulted into the empty saddle without touching the stirrups, and rode away beside Jack.

The 33rd Chapter.

Jack Oldacre to the Rescue.

DIVIDING into two parties to avoid attracting too much attention, the daring adventurers cantered through Hornsey and Wood Green until they dropped into the high road near Edmonton Wash.

"'Tis not to be thought of," said Claude, as, with our hero on one side of him and Kit Careless on the other, the bold highwayman gave his horse the spur until they had left Waltham Cross behind them—"tis not to be thought of that you should spend your days as a strolling player—with all due respect to excellent Kit here—and the sooner you are rid of our company the better for your reputation."

Jack was about to speak, but Claude checked him.

"This capture and your escape from Newgate are most unfortunate, although since Snatchall is dead your greatest enemy has been removed. Still, you have wasted eight months for naught, as your name will now be in everybody's mouth. I would to Heaven there were some way of getting you the King's pardon!"

"If Master Jack found his money, that least would have been easy enough," said Kit. "'Tis said every man has his price, and King Charles is no exception to the rule."

"No man must speak slightly of the King in my hearing!" said Claude sternly.

"Out upon it, Kit. I fear me thou art a Round-head!" said Claude. "Still, we will not quarrel. Every man has a right to his opinion; but in my country we are brought up to the belief that the King can do no wrong."

Jack Oldacre was silent and thoughtful. He had long given up any hope that Duval would mend his ways, but the young Frenchman's fascination was so great that our hero felt positive pain at the thought that the time was approaching when they must part company for ever.

Through Cheshunt and Wormley they rode, and then, as the square tower of Broxbourne Church showed upon their right hand, Claude started in his saddle and reined in.

From a leafy lane there had come a whistle which he knew well, and two men rode out into the highway, touching their hats. Both were mounted on serviceable roadsters and were plainly dressed, but there was something in both faces that reminded one of a bird of prey, and a lonely traveller would have felt for his pistols at sight of them.

"Welcome, captain, welcome!" cried the foremost, with a glance at Jack and Kit, whom they had not seen before. "A word in your ear." And bending forward he whispered something to Duval, who stared at him in amazement and smacked his thigh with a force that made his mare jump.

"Ma foi, this is news indeed, Tom Bun!" he cried. "Are you sure there is no escort?"

"Not a man, captain; they ride incog."

"Who else is at the inn?" said Claude.

"None but the landlord's folk and a brace of sour-visaged Puritans, who are eating bread-and-cheese by themselves in the stable. I tell you Jim Bartholomew and I would have attempted it ourselves, only it being in the middle of the town the risk was too great."

Claude curled his moustache thoughtfully, and then, turning to our hero, said:

"Jack, we have got a bold venture on hand, and one 'twere best you had no knowledge of. Do you and Kit ride along the road for another half mile, and in the little town of Hoddesdon you will see the Bull Inn on the left-hand side of the street. Ride into the yard and call for a tankard of ale, and when we come make pretence that you know us not. Remember, not so much as an eyelid must betray that we have ever met before! Certain things will happen on our coming, and we shall ride away in haste."

Claude smiled significantly as he spoke. "Make you then still further pretence of pursuing us, and we will wait for you a mile along the road."

Jack paused irresolutely. He was in no mind to assist the highwaymen in their work. But Claude laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"Friend Jack, there is no harm in this that I ask you to do. Nay, rather will it be for your own good."

Still with some misgivings in his heart, Jack pressed his horse forward, and, accompanied by Kit Careless, rode on towards Hoddesdon.

They found the Bull Inn without difficulty, and, clattering under the archway into the stable-yard, found three horses tied to a ring in the wall.

They evidently belonged to persons of quality. From the richness of their velvet saddles and from the laughter that came through an open window, it was evident their masters were carousing within.

"Ho, landlord!" cried Jack. "Bring us two tankards of your best lambswool to wash the dust from our throats."

"If your honours will step into the little room," said the landlord, who was carrying a tray on which were two flagons of wine, "your wants shall be attended to in a moment. I have some gentleman of great quality above who will not be denied." And the landlord, who was very red in the face and all of a flutter, mounted the stairs as fast as his fat legs would carry him.

Kit, who was feeling very ill at ease in his fine clothes, had been gazing through the window of the inn which looked into the yard, and he now called Jack's attention.

"If you be the two Puritans of whom we heard, methinks they cut their cheese with a long knife. Those fellows mean no good."

Peeping through the curtain, Jack saw two ill-looking men whispering together in the gloom of the stable. One of them was examining the point of a long sword such as the pikemen used during the Civil War, while the other was trying the edge of a formidable knife with his thumb.

"Egad," whispered Jack, "from the way they look upwards they mean no good to the gentlemen overhead! Yet they seem not like common robbers, but rather of the fanatic sort."

While he spoke, one of the men peered cautiously up and down, and glided across the yard towards them and so into the inn, his companion following with the sword in his hand.

By a common impulse Jack and Kit sprang to the door of the little room; too late, however, to intercept the man with the knife, who was climbing the stair with the noiseless tread of a marauding cat.

"Look to it, Kit!" cried Jack. And leaving the mountebank to confront the second man, our hero whipped out his rapier and sprang up the staircase in pursuit.

Across the dim landing above fell a ray of sunshine from a half-open door, and Jack saw a figure crouching there. It was the room where the three gentlemen were making merry over their wine, and as a roar of laughter made the rafters ring, the crouching man pushed the door wide open and ran in.

The rest happened in a flash of time.

Jack gained the landing and saw the glitter of the steel in the man's hand as he paused at the edge of a screen which partly concealed the table. He tried to shout a warning, but something seemed to clutch his throat and he could not utter a sound.

A dastardly murder was about to be committed before his very eyes, and the would-be assassin dashed the screen aside with a hoarse cry and raised his weapon above the head of one of the revellers, whose back was towards him!

Although his two companions saw the danger and gave a cry of alarm, nothing could have saved him had not our hero leapt into the room and passed his rapier through the body of the wretch!

As the man rolled over on the floor, clawing at the boards with his fingers and snapping his teeth like a dog, Jack saw to his dismay that one of the gentlemen was Sir Harry Claydon. The other, who had whipped out his sword, was a handsome man of somewhat dissipated appearance, whom he knew not, and they both cried:

"Bravo, sir! It was most bravely done!"

The third figure, who had overturned his chair as he jumped up, now turned an olive-tinted, saturnine visage upon our hero. He was dressed in a dark grey silk coat, with costly lace at his wrists, and a black peruke fell upon his shoulders.

"Odds fish, young sir," he exclaimed in a harsh voice, holding out his hand, "we do indeed, owe you a debt of gratitude almost beyond repaying!"

Our hero flung off his hat, and dropping on one knee, kissed the fingers which were extended towards him, for the man whose life he had saved was indeed King Charles the Second himself!

(To be continued in next Thursday's BOYS' HERALD.)

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PEDRO THE GUIDE.

A Thrilling Tale of Adventure
Among Brigands.

By MAX HAMILTON.

The 1st Chapter.

The First Shot—The Beleaguered City—
The Santa Marta Silver Mine—
Hedley Brunton's Plan.

"HALLO!"
"Hallo!"
A couple of pens were dropped on to a couple of desks, and as many chairs were overturned on to the floor, as the two lads who had been occupying them leaped up with a simultaneous bound and darted to the open window.

"There—over there!" Ralph Wilmot cried, pointing an excited finger towards a hill some three or four miles away, above which a white cloud was rising and slowly dissolving.

"By Jove, they're getting near!" Stephen Travers returned. "Jolly near! I wonder if Garcia will be able to keep 'em in check?"

The last words were barely out of his mouth when from the distant side of the hill puff after puff of white smoke burst forth, and the rapid crackle of rifle fire came sharply through the still summer air.

It was hard to believe, so peaceful was the scene upon which the two lads gazed, that only a mile or two away men were matched in warfare, and that each of those tiny puffs floating above the smooth hillside meant a shot fired in deadly earnest. From their post at the office window of the Santa Marta Silver Company the young clerks could see the white stretch of town nestling down to the smooth waters of the Pacific, and on the landward side the giant Andes soaring up into a cloudless sky many miles away in reality, but seeming in that clear, dry atmosphere as if they were close at hand.

The time was afternoon—a hot tropical noon-tide—which, as usual, had emptied the streets of Santa Marta. In spite of their uneasy fears most of the inhabitants had been enjoying their customary siesta, when the first warning of the neighbourhood of their enemies was given by the outbreak of firing.

Five minutes later and the squares and streets were swarming with an excited crowd. Men were shouting to each other and shaking their fists in the direction of the field of battle, women were wringing their hands and shrieking out terrified questions, and nearly all were crowding towards those parts of the city whence they could obtain a distant view of the scene of action.

Nor was the panic-terror that was sweeping like a wave over the population of Santa Marta unjustified by circumstances. During the last month the South American Republic of Orona had been in the throes of an attempted revolution. It promised to be an unsuccessful one, since the forces of the rightful President Mendez had already worsted those of his rival, General Silva, in two or three hard-fought encounters; but Silva still had a considerable army in the field, and a few days before the inhabitants of Santa Marta had heard with considerable alarm that the insurgent troops were nearing their city.

The rumour had soon been confirmed by the discovery that General Silva had torn up the railway line which connected the town with Hermosa, the capital of Orona, thus completely isolating Santa Marta; and as it was impossible that the President's troops could come to their assistance at once the Santa Martans were thrown entirely upon their own resources for the means of defence and defiance.

And these resources were not great, for at the outbreak of the rebellion most of the loyal troops in the neighbourhood had been hurried off to join the President's main army, leaving Santa Marta with only a small garrison under the command of Major Garcia. The latter had done everything possible to get his little force into fighting trim, and the citizens, who were loyalists almost to a man and had everything to lose and nothing to gain from the success of the rebels, had rallied enthu-

siastically under his banner, and formed a volunteer corps to assist the regulars in the defence of the city; but, all the same, it was doubtful if the enthusiasm and bravery of the defending forces would avail to save Santa Marta from the superior numbers that Silva could launch against it.

Like many South American ports, Santa Marta possessed a large European colony, actively engaged in the trade and industry of the country, and its members, who were among the wealthiest and most energetic of the community, were naturally extremely anxious at the turn events had taken. Though there was little doubt that Mendez's stable Government would gain the day in the end, even a temporary occupation of the town by General Silva's troops might well mean something like ruin to many of the merchants and traders of Santa Marta; for the rebel commander was commonly reported to be utterly unscrupulous in his methods of extorting money, and it was believed that his dash on the port was prompted by the desire to make himself master of its wealth.

One of the most important commercial undertakings in the town—and, indeed, in the whole of Orona—was the British-owned Santa Marta Silver Company, which held a concession for working a rich vein of silver in the spurs of the neighbouring Andes; and as a large consignment of ore was waiting for shipment at the company's wharf it was no wonder that the news of the rebel approach had thrown the manager, Hedley Brunton, into a state of intense uneasiness. His excitement had not failed to communicate itself to his subordinates, and for hours before the first shot was fired at the approaching rebels every soul in the company's employ had been straining his ears to catch its echo.

And not the least excited of the numerous employees of the Santa Marta Silver Company were the two young English clerks, Stephen Travers and Ralph Wilmot, to whom the reader has already been introduced. Had Brunton permitted them to absent themselves from their duties they would gladly have been shouldering their rifles among the ranks of the town's volunteer defenders; but this the manager had promptly and rigidly forbidden.

"Not likely!" he had said decidedly. "President Mendez has my best wishes, and deserves them; but my first duty is to my employers, and so is yours. If Silva gets into the town—as I am afraid he is sure to do—and finds out that the mine's officials have been fighting against him, he'll have a fine excuse for ceasing to look on us as neutrals and confiscating as much of our property as he can lay hands upon. So no soldiering for you, my lads, understand that!"

And, disappointed as they were at the manager's

decision, both Travers and Wilmot were forced to admit that, under the circumstances, it was a perfectly reasonable one.

It is scarcely necessary to add that the work which they had tossed aside when the firing broke out was not resumed; and for the rest of the afternoon Ralph Wilmot and Stephen Travers hung out of the office window with their eyes fixed upon the hills to the northward, where the combat continued to rage fiercely.

At first the fortunes of the day seemed fairly even, neither side advancing or retreating; but as the sun drew near the western horizon Ralph and his friend realised that the defenders were slowly but surely being driven back towards the town by the increasing numbers that were being brought against them. All the same, the Santa Martans were making a brave stand in the face of adverse fortune, and contesting every inch of the way; and when night fell and the firing slackened, their adversaries' outposts had not been pushed forward more than a mile since the beginning of the encounter.

"I'm afraid it's a bad look-out for our chaps," Stephen Travers sighed regretfully. "Unless something unexpected turns up, Silva will be in Santa Marta to-morrow morning!"

Ralph nodded, and then the pair turned sharply as the door opened.

The new-comer was Hedley Brunton, hot, dusty and dishevelled. He had been absent from the office since the battle began, and the lads could see by the look on his face that his view of the situation was a serious one.

"Any news, sir?" Stephen asked eagerly. "I want to speak to you two fellows," the manager replied, without answering his question. "Come into my room, will you?"

Anxious and not a little curious, the two lads followed the manager into his office. As Ralph closed the door, Brunton flung himself heavily into a chair and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"There's a siphon in the cupboard, Travers," he said, "get it out, will you? I'm dead beat, and my throat's like a dustbin! I've been rushing about all the afternoon in this blistering heat."

"Now then," he went on, when he had gulped down a glass of soda-water. "I want to have a talk with you. I'm going to ask you to undertake a risky job. But please understand, both of you, that you are quite at liberty to refuse to take it on. Remember, I'm not speaking to you now as your superior—your manager. I'm not giving you orders, but asking a favour of you—see?"

Ralph Wilmot nodded. "We understand, sir," he replied. "What is it you want us to do?"

"Well," Brunton returned, "in the first place, you must know that things look about as black as they can for the loyalists here, and, therefore, for us. I have just come from Garcia. I managed to hunt him up out yonder—and he jerked his head towards the battlefield—and had a talk with him as soon as the firing began to slacken. He's a plucky fellow, and he's made a plucky fight—done wonders against superior forces—but he told me frankly he had no hope of being able to hold out much longer. The enemy outnumbered him by three to one already, and by to-morrow their reinforcements will have come up. Under the circumstances, therefore, he feels that it would be useless and criminal to throw away any more lives in a hopeless defence, and he intends—as, I think, rightly—to send a flag of truce to Silva in the morning offering to surrender. Knowing what Silva is, he says that is the only way to avert a massacre not only of his troops, but of the helpless townsfolk.

"I do not myself see what other determination he could come to, since help from outside could not possibly reach him under a week. But, all the same, his decision is a very serious one for me—that is to say, for the Santa Marta Silver Company. Garcia did not disguise from me his belief that one of Silva's first measures on entering the town would be to lay hands on as much of our property as he could. He is said to be in want of money to pay his troops who are clamouring for their arrears. That being the case, the silver ingots which are waiting to be shipped next week would, of course, be an irresistible temptation to him. Our only chance, therefore, of saving them from his clutches—and the company from a huge loss—is to get that silver out of the way at once—to-night."

"And," Stephen Travers asked eagerly, as the manager paused, "you want us to help you to do that, sir?"

Hedley Brunton nodded. "That is exactly what I do want," he replied. "I have a plan for placing it in safety, which, I believe, can be carried out with your assistance. But, as I told you just now, the job will be a risky one."

"I don't think you'll find either Wilmot or myself will mind taking on a bit of a risk, sir," Stephen returned quietly.

The manager smiled. "No," he said. "If I had thought you would mind, I shouldn't have taken the trouble to speak to you on the matter. But it was my duty to point out to you that you may be about to run into very considerable danger."

"All right," Ralph broke in, "you've told us that, now let us know what we have got to do."

"I'm coming to that," Hedley Brunton returned, amused at the young clerk's impatience. "What you have to do is this—take charge of the silver, and escort it out of Santa Marta to-night."

"How?" both the lads asked breathlessly.

"With a team of mules. It is useless to think of getting it away by sea. Garcia tells me that one of the rebel gunboats was sighted off the mouth of the bay this morning. She is evidently lying off Santa Marta in order to pounce on any vessel that may venture to leave the harbour. Therefore we can only get the silver away on the landward side; and even that will be difficult enough. I do not disguise from myself that it may be impossible. However, as far as we know, the enemy have not yet surrounded the town; they are swarming on the north and east. But Garcia's men have hitherto prevented them from scaling the heights on the south, and it is in that direction that you must make your escape to-night."

"And where are we to go—where are we to take the silver?" Stephen Travers asked.

The manager shrugged his shoulders.

"That is just the difficulty. It is a hundred and fifty miles to Vellima, so it is useless to imagine that you could reach it before you were overtaken. Silva will have you pursued directly he enters the town and learns the truth, and it will hardly be possible to keep it from him. And as your laden mules will only travel slowly, his men would certainly come up with you in a few hours if you kept along the coast road. No, to my thinking, your only chance will be to branch off at once for the mountains. You ought to reach them by day-break, if not before, and when once you are among them, you can easily find some hiding-place for the silver."

"Easily enough," Ralph repeated. "And when we have hidden it we are to come back, I suppose?"

Hedley Brunton shook his head.

"My dear boy, no—not as long as General Silva is in possession of Santa Marta. When he finds out what you have done, he will be thirsting for your blood, if I am not very much mistaken. You must resign yourself to a picnic in the Andes until Mendez comes to our rescue—that is to say, for a week or two at least. When—as I don't doubt will soon be the case—General Silva and his horde of ragamuffin soldiers are sent packing, you can come down from your mountain fastnesses, and we will have the ingots brought back to Santa Marta."

"But how are we to know?" Travers was beginning, when Brunton cut him short.

"I've thought of that. You are not going alone. For one thing, you'll want a muleteer—



As the brilliant moonlight revealed to Pedro the face of the lad who was rushing towards him, his jaw dropped, a hoarse cry came from his lips, and he stood motionless as one paralysed.

PEDRO THE GUIDE.

(Continued from the previous page.)

you'll never manage the beasts yourselves—and Garcia has recommended me a trusty man, a fellow called Pedro Maquez, who knows all the mountain routes within a couple of hundred miles of Santa Marta. He will manage the mules for you, and act as your guide; and when he has installed you safely in the mountains, he will be able to scout for you. It will be quite easy for him to bring you information, but it certainly would not be safe for you to come down in search of it yourselves. As foreigners you would be remarked at once."

"I see," Ralph Wilmot said thoughtfully. "You are sure this man Maquez is to be trusted, sir?"

"Garcia answers for him. He says the man is under a deep obligation to him, as he—Garcia—once saved him from drowning. Of course, I should have preferred not to have taken anyone else into the secret, but I don't see how it is to be avoided. Without a guide you would be certain to go wrong in the dark, and, as likely as not, you might end by blundering into the enemy's lines. Well, what do you say? Are you willing to undertake the job for me?"

"Of course we are," both the lads answered in a breath. Brunton nodded approvingly.

"I was sure that would be your answer," he said. "Well, lads, I'll tell you this. If you carry through the business successfully, it won't do your prospects with the company any harm, for you can rely on me to report your conduct to the directors in the most favourable light that I can put upon it. But remember," he went on grimly, "don't run any needless risks. You are to keep out of the way of the rebels at all costs, and to lie low when once you are up in the mountains. If you are careful, I hope it won't be many days before you and the silver are both back in Santa Marta none the worse for a bit of mountaineering."

"I expect we shall have rather a jolly time," Stephen Travers laughed.

"I hope you will, but remember to be cautious. General Silva will be scouring the country for you by to-morrow afternoon. I expect I shall have a lively half-hour with him when he finds the safes are empty. However, that's all in the day's work, and he will hardly dare to do more than be abusive to a British subject."

"What time are we to start, sir?" Ralph inquired.

"At ten o'clock. Be here ready for the journey a few minutes before ten."

The 2nd Chapter.

The Journey to the Mountains—The Cave—The Underground Labyrinth.

ACTUALLY at a quarter to ten Ralph Wilmot and Stephen Travers turned up at the manager's office, ready to start out on their adventurous journey. The night was a dark and moonless one. Only a red glow to the north and east marked the camp fires of the rebel host. The sounds of firing had long since died away, and the streets were already in silence. Usually, at that comparatively early hour, they were alive with passers-by, but anxiety and terror had robbed the citizens of all desire to spend their evenings abroad, and the cafés were deserted, and all the places of entertainment closed.

"That's right. You're more than punctual," was Hedley Brunton's greeting, as the two lads appeared in his room. "The mules are already loaded, so there is nothing to prevent you from starting at once. Come along, and I'll introduce you to the guide Maquez."

And five minutes later the eventful journey had begun—the long string of heavily-laden mules, with Maquez at their head, was winding through the silent streets towards the southern gate of Santa Marta.

At the gate itself, which was held by a strong detachment of volunteers, there was a short delay; but Hedley Brunton had not forgotten to obtain from Garcia a formal permit to leave the town, and the production of this soon set matters right with the officer in charge of the detachment. The gate was opened, and they set out along the road that was to lead them to the Andes.

As the lights of the city grew faint behind them, the two lads felt their hearts beat more quickly. They were now actually launched upon their adventure, and responsible for the immense sum represented by the loads of silver carried by the plodding mules. At first they found themselves—in spite of their guide's assurances that there was nothing to fear from the rebel forces—glancing anxiously into the darkness on either side of the road, and starting at every sound; but as time went on their uneasiness wore off. For Pedro Maquez was right—a considerable force of loyalist troops lay between them and the outposts of General Silva.

For more than an hour they plodded steadily on, keeping to the road, which wound along the coast towards the distant city of Vellima; but at the end of that time Maquez fell back from his post in front of the team, and informed them that they were about to leave the highway for a track leading upwards into the fastnesses of the Andes. Accordingly, five minutes later they branched off from their previous direction along a rough and stony pathway which, as the hour went by, grew ever steeper and more toilsome; and when morning dawned it found them actually in the shadow of the giant peaks which form the backbone of the South American continent. Though they would have died rather than confess it to Pedro Maquez, the two lads,

unused as they were to mountaineering, were by this time pretty well done up, and they secretly envied the ease and absence of exertion with which their guide swung himself along the rocky and at times perilously narrow track. Great was their relief, therefore, when, soon after sunrise, Pedro, having scrambled to the summit of a pinnacle of rock and carefully surveyed the route by which they had come, pronounced that it would be safe to make a halt for breakfast.

A favourable spot for a rest having been discovered, the mules were brought to a standstill, and Stephen and Ralph thankfully flung themselves down on a bank of short turf, while their guide, whose wiry muscles seemed incapable of fatigue, set about preparing a meal. He smilingly put aside the young Englishmen's offer of assistance in his culinary labours, assuring them that he was not in the least tired, and insisting that they should snatch a few minutes' rest while the kettle was boiling. Needless to say they were nothing loth to obey him, and, unslung their rifles, they stretched themselves out on the mossy turf, and in less than half a minute were as sound asleep as if they had been in their beds.

"Your breakfast is ready, señors," were the words that aroused them from their slumbers, and starting up, yawning and rubbing their eyes, they found the kettle boiling merrily, and a plate of dried meat waiting for them to fall upon, which they did with a hearty appetite.

Up till now they had not exchanged many words with their guide, who had marched throughout the night almost in silence at the head of his train of mules; but over their meal their tongues were loosened, and they discussed their next movements with him over their steaming mugs of tea. Pedro's advice was that they should continue along the valley for two or three hours longer, until they reached a secluded spot where a fissure in the crags formed a good-sized cave, where he himself had often sheltered while hunting. The recesses of this cave would form at the same time a hiding-place for the treasure and a shelter for the young Englishmen who were to guard it; while Pedro himself, after guiding the mules to a village on the slopes of the mountains where a friend of his would take care of them for the present, would proceed on a scouting expedition to find out how things were going in Santa Marta, returning in due time to the cave with news.

As he listened to the guide's explanation of his plans, Ralph Wilmot realised with a slight sense of uneasiness how completely he and his friend were in the man's power. Supposing that Pedro should prove false—supposing that the idea of selling the secret of the hidden treasure to the rebels should enter his mind! General Silva would doubtless reward him amply for such an act of treachery, the lad reflected; then, remembering Major Garcia's assurances that he could rely upon the man, Ralph reproached himself for the flash of suspicion. Garcia was not only the soul of uprightness himself, but he was also a shrewd man of the world besides; he would not be likely to recommend for such a post a man whose honesty he had not thoroughly tested.

Nethertheless, Ralph's mind was not altogether easy, as their meal finished, the little party once more set out on the march, and more than once he found himself keenly watching Pedro Maquez as the latter strode along the mountain path at the head of his team of mules. But it was impossible to detect the faintest sign of treachery in the guide's bronzed face; while his cheery talk as they wended their way up the valley further tended to allay the young clerk's uneasy fears. He was more than half ashamed of them by the time they had been an hour upon the road, and glad that he had not mentioned them to his chum.

The sun was already high in the heavens when, as they rounded a sharp angle in the mountain path, Pedro Maquez stopped and pointed ahead.

"There, señors," he said—"there is the cave I told you of. We shall reach it in another ten minutes or so."

Following his outstretched finger, the lads saw a cleft in the sheer cliff that towered above the track along which they were proceeding. The scenery around them was now of the grandest and gloomiest description; the vegetation of the plains and lower slopes had long been left behind, and firs and larches had taken the place of tropical plants and trees. Up above them rose a straight wall of rock, and on the other hand a rugged and broken slope fell away to the bottom of the valley, along which tossed and thundered a mountain stream fed by the eternal snows of the peaks which rose far overhead into the cloudless blue of the sky.

As Pedro Maquez had said, another ten minutes brought them to the mouth of the cave—a gloomy opening of considerable size. Bringing the mules to a standstill, the guide lit a torch and led the way into the cavern.

"This runs a good way into the rock, doesn't it?" Stephen asked as he peered into the gloomy depths.

Pedro nodded.

"Oh yes, señor; it is the opening to a mine which was worked out years ago—it runs a very long way. There is a regular tunnel, with branches right and left. I have explored a good deal of the mine myself, but one has to be careful not to get lost. I will take you along the passage when we have brought in the silver, for in case you were discovered and attacked it would be as well for you to know where to take refuge."

"H'm! I think I'd rather fight in the open than along there," Ralph returned.

"No doubt," was the reply, "but you could make your escape along one of those passages, señor—there is another exit further up the valley."

"In that case we had better explore it before you leave us. But, first, where are we to put the silver?"

Pedro indicated a good-sized cleft in the walls. "Here would be as good a place as any, señor. We could roll these big stones in front of the

opening, so that if anyone did enter—which is most unlikely—he would not come across the treasure."

The spot agreed on, the little party promptly set to work to convey the silver ingots from the backs of the mules to the cavern; and, having accomplished that task, they sat down to their mid-day meal, after which it had been arranged their guide was to leave them for the present, returning only when he had news of the outside world to communicate to them.

Having finished his meal, and rolled himself a cigarette, Pedro Maquez rose to his feet preparatory to taking his departure.

"Ah, I forgot, though!" he exclaimed, as if a thought had suddenly struck him. "I was to show you the other way out of the cave—through the tunnels. You never know whether you may not want to make use of it, so I'd better point it out to you before I go."

"Right you are!" Ralph said, rising to his feet. "Come along, Steve!"

Kindling a torch, the guide plunged into the darkness of the cavern, the lads following closely on his heels. A few yards from the opening the cave narrowed sharply, and they found themselves in a tunnel four or five feet wide, and only high enough to enable them to walk upright. And, as Pedro had told them, other and similar tunnels branched off on either side; in fact, they soon saw that they were in a regular network of subterranean passages.

"I say, Pedro," Travers called to the guide when they had wound in and out among the various tunnels for nearly ten minutes, "I shall never be able to find my way through this maze again!"

"It will be all right, señor!" Pedro returned cheerfully. "I have brought a piece of chalk with me, and as we go back I shall mark the various turnings you are to take; then, in case of need, you will be able to find your way easily enough. Take care," he added a moment later, "we are coming to a dangerous place!"

He spoke the truth. The subterranean passage had suddenly widened out into a fair-sized cavern, but in place of a floor a black gulf yawned before them—a gulf whose depths their eyes sought in vain to fathom. Involuntarily the two lads drew back with a shudder.

"Surely we can't get across this!" Ralph exclaimed, pointing to the gulf.

"We can get round it, señor," Pedro returned, leading the way to one side of the cavern. "See, there is a little ledge of rock! If you pick your way carefully it is quite easy—so!"

He stepped lightly across the perilous passage as he spoke, and stood on the further side of it holding his torch so as to light the way for his companions.

Probably only a sense of shame at the idea of confessing their fears to him induced the lads to follow him; but follow him they did, though much more slowly, and each breathing a sigh of relief when he found himself safely on the other side.

"That's right!" Pedro said approvingly. "And now come on, señors, we are nearly there!"

He darted quickly forward as he spoke—so quickly that a moment later the red light of his torch disappeared round a sharp angle in the tunnel walls some distance ahead of Ralph and Stephen.

"Hi!" the latter shouted. "Not so fast, Pedro; you've left us in the dark! Come back!"

There was no answer—only the echo of his own voice against the walls of the cavern.

A horrible fear gripped Ralph Wilmot's heart. With outstretched hands he groped his way towards the spot at which the guide had disappeared, and, feeling his way along the wall of rock, came to an opening in it—the entrance to another of the network of tunnels that wound their intricate way through the heart of the rock. But nothing met his eyes but blackness—the blackness of the tomb. There was no sign of the red flicker of Pedro's torch; the guide had disappeared.

The 3rd Chapter.

The Guide's Treachery—Deserted, and in Darkness—Despair—A Strange Guide—Light at Last.

A CRY of horror rose to Ralph Wilmot's lips as the awful truth burst upon him.

Pedro Maquez had treacherously abandoned them! They were alone, without a light, without a guide, in the very bowels of the earth!

Alarmed by his friend's cry, Travers came groping his way towards him.

"Ralph, what's the matter—where are you?" he called anxiously. "Where's Pedro?"

Ralph burst into a wild laugh, that echoed strangely along the vaulted cavern.

"Where's Pedro?" he repeated. "You may well ask that, Steve!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Pedro is a traitor—that he has left us!"

"Left us?"

"Yes, left us here—to die! He has betrayed us for the sake of the silver, the traitor, the coward!" Ralph cried, grinding his teeth in helpless rage.

Stunned by the horror of the thought, Steve Travers staggered back against the rocky wall behind him, but the next instant he had pulled himself together again.

"Don't give up hope, Ralph," he said. "He may only have hurried on, not noticing that we were so far behind, and—"

"That's nonsense!" Ralph interrupted. "If that were the case, he would have missed us before now and turned back. Besides, he must have heard us shouting to him."

It was true, and Steve's heart sank.

"No," Ralph went on bitterly, "the brute has laid his plans well, and we have walked into the

trap he laid for us like two fools! We're done for!"

Steve reached out his hand, felt for his friend's, and gripped it.

"Ralph, you mustn't despair. Supposing he has left us—well, we must just make out way out, that's all!"

"But how? We should never find our way through all those turnings without a light, much less climb over that awful gulf!"

It was true. To attempt to repeat, without the aid of a torch, the feat they had lately accomplished of climbing round the edge of the pit would be nothing less than madness.

"No, it's impossible to go back that way in the dark!" Steve said with a shudder. "Never mind, we must find the other way out. There must be another, because Pedro has taken it. Have you got any matches on you, old man?"

"No. My matches are in my knapsack, and I left that at the opening of the cave when we set out to explore these horrible galleries."

"The same with me. I can't feel anything in my pockets but a handkerchief and a piece of string. Well, we must do without the matches, then. Here, give me your hand! It won't do to lose each other. Now, come on!"

Hand in hand they stepped out through the darkness, treading with the utmost caution, since they never knew whether some fathomless gulf might not be yawning in their pathway, and straining their eyes through the gloom ahead of them for the faintest sign of daylight.

But all in vain. Minute after minute went by, and the darkness remained unbroken and impenetrable. And their hearts sank yet lower as they realised how intricate was the network of subterranean passages in which they were involved; for at every few yards, so far as they could judge, they came upon some fresh opening. At first, as far as possible, they kept straight on, but before very long they were brought to a standstill by the discovery that the gallery along which they were proceeding was blocked by a heap of large stones, which had fallen from the roof above. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to turn back and try another direction.

It was impossible any longer to keep account of the windings of their path; they lost all reckoning of them, and stumbled blindly forward in the thick darkness, groping their way along by the rocky wall. It seemed to them that hours must have gone by since the gleam of their treacherous guide's torch had faded from their eyes, and still they were as far as ever from freedom.

The awful prospect of ending their lives in this subterranean labyrinth spurred them on in their frantic search for an outlet; but as time went by, and nothing but utter darkness met their straining eyes, something like absolute despair settled upon both their hearts. They ceased to speak, gripping each other by the hand lest they should become separated in the awful gloom, and felt their way along the corridors in silence.

Once Ralph, who was leading the way, had a narrow escape of being swallowed up in a yawning gulf that opened before them in the floor of the gallery. His foot actually went over the brink before he was aware of his danger, and had he been alone he would certainly have plunged headlong forward into the nothingness below. As it was, however, Steve Travers felt him falling, and, by an instinctive jerk upon his friend's wrist, hauled him backwards, and enabled him to regain his footing. And how great their danger had been the pair ascertained by crawling cautiously to the edge of the pit and dropping into it a fragment of broken rock. It was a long time before any sound reached their ears, and when it did it was the faint echo of a distant splash. The lads shuddered as they turned their backs on the pit and pursued their way with added caution.

The close, damp atmosphere of the mine was terribly trying, and before long, that and sheer fatigue began to tell upon the wanderers, and at last, utterly worn out, they were obliged to give up, for a time at least, their all but hopeless search, and sink down on the floor of the cavern for a much-needed rest. Gloomy, indeed, were their thoughts as they lay staring into the darkness, and even Travers, who was naturally the more hopeful of the pair, did not venture on a word of encouragement.

How long they lay there without moving—hopeless and helpless—they had no means of knowing; but Stephen was half dozing, when he started into wakefulness again as his chum's hand was laid upon his own.

"I say," Ralph whispered, "what's that? Didn't you hear it?"

"What? I don't hear anything."

"Listen. There it is again."

And, sure enough, Steve heard a faint, rustling sound, as if some creature were brushing against the walls of the cavern. Involuntarily the two lads shivered and drew closer together. Both of them were plucky enough by nature, but their long captivity in the darkness was beginning to have its effect upon their nerves.

"What can it be—a snake?" Steve whispered.

"I don't know. Listen. Ah!"

And Ralph's voice rose almost to a shriek as he struck out wildly with his hands.

"Something touched my cheek!" he gasped, leaping to his feet.

As he did so the invisible thing struck him again, this time full in the face. Involuntarily he clutched at it, and the silence of the cavern was instantly broken by loud screechings, mingled with violent flappings.

"It's a bird!" he exclaimed. "I've got it by the legs."

"Don't let it go!" Steve cried eagerly.

"Why not?"

"Because it may lead us out of this—show us the way it came in. If a bird comes in here, we can't be very far from the open air."

"Of course we can't. But how is it going to show us the way out?"

"I told you I'd got some string in my pocket—nearly a whole ball. We'll tie it round its leg,

and then let it fly. Most likely it'll make straight for the nearest way out of the mine."

"Bravo, Steve!" Ralph cried excitedly. "You're the chap for ideas. But, I say, be quick with your string; the creature's biting chunks out of my fingers. Put a handkerchief over its head, if you can manage it."

Not without difficulty Travers managed to muffle the head of the bird—which was evidently some small species of owl—in his pocket-handkerchief, and by the time the operation was performed Ralph's fingers were torn and bleeding from the assaults of the captive's strong beak. Having thus rendered the bird defenceless, they proceeded to knot one end of the string round its leg, and then, after having unwound the whole ball, they let the prisoner go, Stephen holding the other end of the string between his fingers. For a few seconds the bewildered owl flapped wildly above their heads, and then they heard the beat of its wings grow fainter down the passage.

"Now!" Steve said, a moment later, as he felt the string grow taut, and they began to feel their way along it down the corridor. In a yard or two the cord turned sharply to the right. Still nothing but darkness met their eyes, and after they had proceeded some distance further they could hear their guide flapping loudly about from side to side of the cavern.

"He's got to the end of his tether," Ralph said. "We must draw in the string we've left behind us."

They did so; and once again the sound of wings died away, and they followed the line of cord. A few feet more and again their path took a sharp turn, and as they rounded the angle of the rock a cry burst simultaneously from both their throats.

For ahead of them, and shining faintly through the darkness, they could see a circle of daylight. They were saved.

Forgetting all fear of hidden pitfalls, they rushed and stumbled on, shouting wildly in their excitement, and three or four minutes later they emerged into the open air and gazed thankfully upon the sky, which a little while before they had thought never to see again.

The 4th Chapter.

The Silver Safe—The Night Journey—Steve's Accident—A Perilous Meeting—Suspense—The End of a Traitor.

THEIR first act, after emerging from the horrors of darkness into the light of day, was to release the captive bird which had served them to such good purpose, and, with a loud screech, the owl fluttered back into the recesses of the cavern.

A look round showed them that they had left the mine at a spot fully a mile higher up the valley than that at which they had entered it. Further, from the position of the sun, they saw that their imprisonment in its gloomy depths must have lasted at least four or five hours.

After a short consultation they decided to make their way back to the mouth of the cave, where they had left not only the silver, but their rifles, their knapsacks, and all their provisions. Caution was needful, for although the mules had disappeared, it was just possible that the treacherous Pedro might still be somewhere in the neighbourhood. Accordingly, they neared the cave with the utmost wariness, and only entered it after listening for some time outside it. Their fears were needless, however. Pedro had departed with the train of mules, and the cavern was empty.

Though the faithless guide—probably with an eye to their market value—had carried off the lads' rifles, he had not troubled to take their knapsacks as well; and for this omission Ralph and Steve were thankful, since the knapsacks contained their store of dried meat and bread.

Before, however, falling to upon a much-needed meal, they lit a pinewood torch, and made their way to the recess in which they had hidden the silver. They had more than half expected to find the ingots missing, and great was their relief at discovering the treasure undisturbed beneath the stones that they had heaped upon it.

The silver being safe, the question now arose as to what was to be done with it. They could not guess whether their scoundrelly guide intended to appropriate it to his own uses—in which case he might leave it where it was for the present—or whether he intended to hand it over to the rebels. If the latter was his object, he would probably return as soon as he had communicated with General Silva, accompanied by a detachment of the rebel troops.

"Where the dickens can we put the stuff?" Travers said, frowning thoughtfully. "We can't carry it far, that's certain. If we had a spade we might bury it, but—"

"I have it," Ralph interrupted him. "We'll pitch it into the river."

"Right you are, so we will," Steve returned. "It isn't deep here, and, anyway, the silver can easily be fished out again."

A steepish slope led down from the level of the cave to the mountain torrent that rushed through the bottom of the valley, and, acting on Ralph's suggestion, the two lads clambered down the slope and selected a suitable spot in which to conceal the treasure—a pool some four or five feet deep, where the breaking foam would effectually prevent the silver from being seen from the bank.

Having fixed on the hiding-place, the next thing was to convey the ingots one by one to the river-bank and throw them in—a task that took them a considerable time. When it was accomplished the sun was already sinking, and in view of the approach of night Ralph and Steve held a hurried consultation as to their next move.

Unarmed as they were, they felt that it would be folly to pass the night in the neighbourhood of

the cave; for all they knew their treacherous guide might return at any moment, and perhaps not alone. They decided, therefore, to set out along the path that they had traversed in the early morning, and branch off from it into one of the numerous valleys which they had passed on their journey from the plains.

Shouldering their knapsacks, they set off, keeping a bright look-out along the path ahead of them. For nearly an hour they strode rapidly on, without seeing so much as a sign of life in the silent valley; and they had nearly reached the point at which they intended to branch off from their previous route when an accident occurred that added a new peril to their situation.

They had reached a stretch of the path where the surrounding cliff grew suddenly steeper, and the track itself narrowed to a mere thread, winding round the face of the crags, now lit by brilliant moonlight, now plunged in the deep shadow of overhanging rocks. It was necessary to proceed with extreme caution, especially in those parts of the path to which the moonlight did not penetrate, and the lads slackened their pace accordingly.

But, in spite of the care with which he was feeling his way, Steve, who was leading, made a false step upon a loose fragment of rock, which turned under his foot. He made a desperate effort to recover his balance, but in vain, and, pitching heavily forward, he all but went over the edge of the cliff—in fact, his head and shoulders were actually hanging over it when Ralph seized him by the collar and dragged him back into safety.

"I say, old chap, you did give me a turn!" Ralph said, drawing a deep breath of relief. "I thought you were gone that time, and no mistake! Thank goodness, there's no harm done!"

"I'm rather afraid there is, though," Travers replied, biting back a groan. "It's my ankle.

Steve's foot felt considerably less painful when he had removed his boot and swathed the injured ankle in a handkerchief soaked in the water of a little spring that gushed out of the cliff, and he was in good hopes that by morning he should be able, with Ralph's assistance, to make his way to safer quarters.

To lie down on the path would have been dangerous. It was so narrow that a movement made in sleep might easily have precipitated them over the edge into the depths below. They had, therefore, to sit up and get such rest as they could by leaning back against the rocky wall behind them. And, comfortless as was his position, sheer fatigue soon overcame Ralph, and Steve, who was himself kept awake by his aching foot, could hear him breathing regularly and evenly.

An hour or two went by, and Travers, as his ankle began to feel easier, also grew sleepy, and his eyes were just on the point of closing when they were caught by some dark object moving across a patch of brilliant moonlight a little way down the valley. He leaned forward and stared at it intently; but even as he did so the black object was swallowed up in the blacker shadow cast by a projecting cliff.

Laying his hand on his chum's shoulder, Steve shook him slightly. And Ralph opened his eyes with a start.

"What's the matter—anyone coming?"

"I rather think there is. I saw something moving along the path down there a minute ago, but before I could make out whether it was a man or an animal it had disappeared into the shadow."

Ralph strained his eyes into the blackness, but it was impossible to discern anything moving in that thick gloom. For nearly a quarter of a mile the path was plunged in deepest shadow, then, only a little distance away from them, it emerged once more into the moonlight. They would have

since Steve was practically helpless, and Ralph could only oppose his knife to the double-barrelled rifle of the guide.

Breathlessly they watched the man as he drew nearer along the narrow path, in complete unconsciousness of their presence. And so deep was the shadow around them that they believed that the faithless guide would not discover them until he was actually within striking distance.

But in this hope they were mistaken. They had not taken into account the keenness of the mountaineer's eyes, sharpened by many a night watch. While he was still a few paces away from them, Pedro came to a sudden halt, and, standing motionless as a statue, peered before him straight at the spot on which the two lads were crouching. It was clear that he had distinguished something in the gloom, and was trying to make out what it was before coming to closer quarters.

On their side, Steve Travers and Ralph Wilmot were equally motionless; and so, for a few seconds, the three remained without stirring so much as a muscle.

It was the guide who was the first to make a move—a move which showed plainly that though he might be uncertain as to its nature, he scented danger of some kind. For, with the swiftness born of long usage, he unslung his rifle which he had been carrying at his back and brought it to his shoulder. Ralph and Steve could see the barrel shining in the moonlight as it pointed directly towards them.

It was useless to attempt concealment any longer. Ralph hesitated no more, but with one bound leaped to his feet, and, knife in hand, dashed at the treacherous guide. And as he leaped forward out of the shadow he heard the click of the trigger as Pedro cocked it. Steve heard the sound, too, and a cry of horror broke from his lips, for he believed that Ralph was doomed, since the muzzle of Pedro's gun aimed full at his chest.

And had Ralph been but the fraction of a second later in his spring death would have been his fate without the shadow of a doubt, for Pedro's finger was resting on the trigger as the lad emerged into the moonlight and in the very act of giving the fatal jerk.

But that jerk was not given. Instead, as the brilliant moonlight revealed to him the face of the lad who was rushing towards him, his jaw dropped, a hoarse cry came from his lips, and he stood motionless as one paralysed. Horror and an almost insane fear were depicted upon his features; and no wonder, for, so certain had he made that his victims had met with a speedy death in one of the numerous pitfalls of the disused mine, that he believed for the moment that the figure that was darting at him was no human one—that Ralph Wilmot's ghost had arisen to bar the path to his ill-gotten booty.

And that access of superstitious terror was Ralph's salvation. Before Pedro had realised the truth he had knocked up the rifle and wrested it from the guide's nerveless hands.

It was only when he found himself disarmed that the traitor realised his mistake. Sheer terror had sent him staggering back against the face of the cliff; now, with a yell of fury, he leaped forward at his adversary.

Ralph had no time to level the rifle before the man came on, and he, on his side, stepped sideways and away from the edge of the cliff, barely avoiding an onslaught that might well have carried him as well as the man who made it over the precipice.

As it was, the guide's mad rush was fatal to himself alone. Unable to check himself as Ralph stepped aside, Pedro darted onwards, and then, with a terrified shriek, pitched headlong over the cliff and went hurtling down into the valley below, whence an instant later the echo of a distant splash reached the horror-struck ears of the listeners on the pathway.

They had seen the last of their faithless guide! His body, shattered by the fall, had plunged into the mountain torrent which had seized and swept it onwards with irresistible force.

Though his foot was decidedly better, it was not without difficulty that Stephen with Ralph's aid managed to make his way down the mountain path on the following morning.

Concerning the fate of the silver ingots which they had sunk in the river, they had no anxiety. It was clear from Pedro's returning alone to the cave that he had planned to appropriate the whole of the booty to his own uses—that it was personal greed that had prompted him to the theft, and not a desire to serve the rebel leaders. And, that being the case, they had little to fear from any search that General Silva might undertake for the missing treasure.

When a full week had elapsed Ralph judged that it was time to discover what was going on in the outside world. And, accordingly, leaving his chum in their mountain retreat, he made his way towards the plains in the hope of falling in with some countryman who would give him news of Santa Marta. Nor were his hopes disappointed. At a wayside village he learned that, as the loyalists had expected, President Mendez had marched to the assistance of Santa Marta, and that General Silva, whose unpaid army was rapidly melting away, had judged it best to beat a hasty retreat.

Twenty-four hours later, both Ralph Wilmot and Stephen Travers were back in Santa Marta, where, it is needless to say, they were heartily welcomed by Hedley Brunton.

Nor did the manager of the Santa Marta Silver Company fail to redeem his promise to place the conduct of his two juniors in a favourable light before the directors. With the result that the young clerks not only received the thanks of the board, but the more substantial gratification of a very considerable rise of salary.

THE END.

(Next Thursday's issue of our paper will contain an enthralling Camp Fire and Wigwam Story—a true, up-to-date yarn of Indian life.



Having unwound the whole ball, they let the bird go, Stephen holding the other end of the string between his fingers. For a few seconds the bewildered owl flapped wildly above their heads, and then they heard the beat of its wings grow fainter down the passage.

That beastly stone twisted under me and then rolled on the top of my foot. I don't feel much as if I could walk."

An exclamation of dismay broke from Ralph's lips.

"Don't you think you can walk at all?" he asked anxiously. "Here, let me help you up! Perhaps you'll feel better in a minute."

With some difficulty he hauled his chum to his feet, and Steve made a brave attempt to walk. But after taking a step he was obliged to desist.

"It's no good, old man," he said between his teeth. "I must have twisted it badly. I dare say I might manage to hobble along with a stick if we were on flat ground and I could see to pick my way, but I feel as if my ankle might double up under me at any moment, and it's too risky trying that sort of thing on the edge of a precipice in the dark."

"Get on my back, and I'll carry you," Ralph suggested. But Steve shook his head decidedly.

"No, Ralph, I'm not going to let you try that game. As likely as not we should both pitch over then! When daylight comes you shall give me a hoist if you like—that is to say, if I'm not better, which I hope I shall be. But I'm not going to let you try it in the dark."

Ralph was forced to admit that his chum was right, and that an attempt to descend the mountain path in the fashion he had proposed would be more than risky. So, having made up their minds to remain where they were—at any rate until dawn—the pair endeavoured to make themselves as comfortable as the rocky nature of the ground would permit.

to wait until the man or animal had passed the dark stretch before they caught another glimpse of him. If an animal, it was as likely as not to be a mountain bear—not a pleasant prospect, since neither of the lads was armed with any more formidable weapon than a clasp-knife, and flight, in Steve's crippled condition, was out of the question.

Silently, and in uneasy expectation, the pair waited with their eyes fixed upon the bend in the path at which the figure must emerge into the light. As the moments went by, the faint rattle of a pebble dislodged by a footstep reached their ears now and again, and at last they could hear the footsteps themselves through the still, night air. And a few seconds later the tall figure of a man suddenly emerged from the shadow and stood clearly outlined against the rock behind him, and less than fifty yards away from the two lads.

Both Ralph and Steve started as they saw it; though they could not yet see the new-comer's face, his build and gait were familiar enough to them. There was no mistaking the man for any other than their treacherous guide Pedro Maquez, who was doubtless on his way back to the spot at which he believed the spoil he had acquired by such dastardly measures was still hidden.

As yet he had not seen them, for the overhanging rock above them cast a deep shadow upon the place where the lads were sitting, but a few paces more would certainly reveal their presence to him. And although they were two to his one the advantage would almost certainly lie on Pedro's side in the case of an encounter.

NATURE AND HER CHILDREN.

A Series of Clever Story-Articles by the Author of "The Man with the Gun," etc. **THE BIRD MESMERISTS.**

"PUZZLED?" said the farmer. "Puzzled ain't the word for it! I'm beat—beat as clean as—a whistle!" And he flung out a brown hand to emphasise the fact. "It is annoying, I admit," said his pupil. "But surely something can be done?" "Done!" replied the farmer. "Done! Against what? Against spooks?" It was certainly very strange, for the farmer had been losing chickens in a most mysterious way for a week past. Having only a small farm, his poultry was to him an important factor. By night the birds were carefully shut up, and by day if anything had attacked them they would almost certainly have made enough noise to warn those ever on the alert. There was no warning beforehand; no tell-tale footprints were left behind. Traps were set and remained empty. Watchers sat up at night, but watched in vain. One day a chicken would vanish as if ghosts had seized it; the next day another. They were in the morning, and by the night

they were not. Little wonder that the luckless owner talked wildly of spooks. One evening the pupil fed the fowls himself, for he had taken it upon his own shoulders to solve this problem. He counted them, and there were one hundred and twenty-six fowls and chickens. He then left them, and, going round the old barn, drew them some fresh water. Returning slowly, he stopped suddenly, with a gasp, as he turned the corner. There before him lay the poultry—dead, or apparently dead. The birds which he had but a few minutes before left so full of life were now scattered about in twos and threes, lying in every position, motionless. Was he mad—dreaming—ill? Dead? No; impossible! He ran forward, with a shout. "Sho-o-o!" he cried. And then, for the second time, he gasped. For, as if a spell had been cast off, every fowl and chicken got up and quietly went on feeding, just for all the world as if nothing had happened. When he had recovered from this second shock he counted them. There were one hundred and twenty-five. A chicken was missing! "Good gracious!" he cried fiercely. "I won't be done like this, spooks or no spooks!" As he spoke, almost before the words had left his lips, a strange noise, a sort of gentle hiss, attracted his attention towards an old portion of the barn, a part so old, in fact, that the farmer had for

some time quite given up using it. He peered through the growing dusk, and he fancied that, from a hole under the roof, a strange, malignant face, shrouded in white, looked out at him and was swiftly withdrawn. The next instant he was inside the barn, feeling his way cautiously up the rotten steps leading to the loft. A hiss, loud and prolonged, greeted him as his head came on a level with the floor of this loft. Something clumsy and squat was shuffling its way towards the hole under the roof, through which filtered a sickly light, and was quickly swallowed up in the gloom. The thing reached the hole, and passing through it, vanished so quietly that one might almost have supposed it to have fallen out. Then another shape, the exact counterpart of the first, only smaller, followed its leader; and each, as it saw the white face of the young man peering at it from the ladder, uttered a venomous hiss. Another and yet another ghastly phantom slid hissing across the dusty floor and disappeared into the gathering gloom of night. The pupil groped his way carefully down again and passed out, nor did he return until the following evening, and then he carried his gun. He was not a naturalist, and, not knowing what the creatures were that he had seen, he discreetly held his tongue. On the following evening, accordingly, he fed the fowls, and then, instead of going away, he

hid himself close at hand, behind a tree. He had not been waiting long when a big, brown shadow came flying along by the barn. There was something infinitely ghostly about this creature, for, although it was a bird, and a large bird at that, it made no noise. Now, birds, as a rule, make a very appreciable noise with their wings when flying; but the owl flies silently. What followed, however, was still more ghostly, for the great bird, when exactly above the feeding poultry, checked in its flight and dropped—as a stone drops—upon a chicken. Instantly, as though a spell had been suddenly cast over them, every fowl and chicken within sight fell to the ground, and remained as if petrified. There was no cackling, no commotion; the bird of prey seemed to have completely mesmerised his victims. There was only a slight scuffle, and then the owl rose and flew with the dead chicken towards a very old oak-tree, whose gnarled branches spread round the old barn. At the same time four silent shapes dropped from the hole under the roof of the barn, and flew clumsily, as young birds fly, into the same oak-tree, hissing loudly. The rest of the story is told by a glass case, in which are two stuffed old owls and four young ones; and the farmer will, if you ask him, tell you how these birds first mesmerised and then stole his chickens.

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ACCOMPANIED by his bosom friends, Rupert Thurston and Ching-Lung—the inimitable Chinese prince, conjurer and ventriloquist—Ferrers Lord, the multi-millionaire, sets out on a quest into the heart of Brazil, by way of the mighty Amazon, to search for a wonderful and priceless flower known as the Blue Orchid.

Engaged also in this quest is a rascally German named Hans Hausmann, Ferrers Lord's rival and enemy. The hunt for the Blue Orchid is to be an exciting, adventurous race between these two men and their followers.

Engaged in the service of Ferrers Lord are Prout, Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and a much pampered Eskimo, Gan-Waga by name.

Finding the Blue Orchid.

The tiny launch of Ferrers Lord—christened the Blue Orchid—is steadily ploughing her way by night through the yellow waters of the broad Amazon, when Hausmann's yacht, the Medea, opens fire on her. The Blue Orchid continues her way. Hausmann gives immediate chase.

Meanwhile, Ferrers Lord's party having landed, they strike inland and come upon a strange race of people governed by a beautiful woman known as Althara the Merciless.

For some time the orchid hunters stay amongst the strange people, and witness many peculiar rites and ceremonies. Among these is one known as the Feast of Treason, which Ferrers Lord attends in company with Althara the Merciless.

(This brings us to the latest incidents in this fine story.)

How Prout Went in Search of Loot and Became Loot Himself.

PROUT, Joe, Filson and the little stoker shook hands with Vasco. They pushed the plank across the mysterious chasm. No sounds of music ascended now from the black pit. Vasco hurried away through the tunnel, and then the hungry men tramped back into the twilight. Prout sat down under the column to smoke a thoughtful pipe.

"Ain't you starvin', by honey?" he asked suddenly.

"Ain't you?" said Filson.
"Rabid," answered the steersman. "I could eat bricks spread wi' margarine. Things is gettin' serious."

They were all ravenous, and the prospects of a meal seemed far from rosy.

"If we could get to sleep we shouldn't feel it," said Joe; "but it isn't so easy when you're hollow inside. If Vasco isn't back in half an hour we can pretty well reckon that he's managed to get out. He's took on a risky job, but he knows what he's doing. It won't take him long to get down to the village. I jolly well wish him luck. We shall be in queer street pretty sharp if he don't strike lucky."

Prout growled out something unintelligible, and stretched himself out to slumber.

"There's no need to keep a watch, is there, d'ye think, Joe?" said Filson.

"Shouldn't think so," said the carpenter. "I don't see how anybody can cross that ole unless they bring a plank wi' 'em. We sha'n't get into any trouble from that direction, mate. We'll give Vasco about four hours. He ought to turn up by then."

"And supposing he doesn't?"

"Oh, if he don't, we'll go arter him," said Joe. "We might as well be shot as die of starvation."

Conversation languished. They tried to sleep, but they were too hungry. The stars overhead looked very cold and distant, and the breeze made a queer humming noise among the caves. Joe got up and began to walk to and fro.

"Which of you isn't asleep?"

"None of us is asleep, by honey," growled Prout; "and we ain't likely to be neither."

"Then let's slide out of this, chaps; I can't stick no more of it," said Joe. "It's fair maddening to lie 'ere thinking our heads off. Maybe we'll miss Vasco, but I've got a pocket-book and pencil, and Vasco can read. How about leaving a message? What do you say?"

"Anything's better than this," agreed Filson. "This is torture."

Prout said nothing, but he acted promptly. He struck a match, and by its feeble light Joe pencilled a message to the guide telling him they would return if all went well. The paper was pegged to the grass beneath the column. By the light of another match they safely crossed the plank. The night was not particularly dark, and it was practically impossible to miss the path.

"Hallo," said Prout at last, "Vasco's got through. He's managed to shift the stone!"

"Then get through afore the rummy thing shuts down," said Joe. "You can never trust these outlandish arrangements. Where's Filson? Are you all right, Filson?"

"Close behind," replied the engineer.

They went boldly across the open plain towards the village.

"Whoa! Easy all!" said Prout. "I guess there's only about 'alf a mile to go. One man will run a sight less risks than four, by honey, so I propose as I go fust and you wait 'ere. There's sense in that proposition."

"Why should you go?"
"Because I'm in command, Joseph, and the commanding officer pleases himself," said the steersman. "You just squat down and wait. Them's the orders, and if you don't obey 'em I'll 'ave you tried for mutiny. 'Ere's a nice dry hollow, and that tree'll mark the spot, so I can't miss you."

Both Joe and Filson protested against the arrangement, but Prout was firm. With anxious eyes they watched his figure dwindle into the darkness.

"Mighty quiet and still, isn't it?" said Joe.

There was not a sound except the faint rustle of the forest.

"It is quiet," answered the engineer. "Has Hausmann wiped them all out, do you think?"

"Shouldn't wonder. He must have brought a regular army of thieves and wasters up with him from Obidos to do it. The niggers looked a smart lot, but you couldn't expect 'em to put up much of a show against bullets. What's that yelling?"

It was only a wild cat in the forest, but the noise was startling. It made Thomas Prout start and look back.

"Just like a kid howling," he muttered. "Is it fancy, or can I see the huts? Yes, that's them, by honey."

He was only a couple of hundred yards from the outer ring of huts. Prout bent almost double, and crept along, listening intently. In a few moments, still listening, he had pressed himself flat against the mud wall of one of the huts. The silence was alarming; the little town seemed dead.

"By honey! What if they've massacred the lot and cleared out," thought the steersman, with a shudder of dread. Prout edged along and came to a narrow lane. He could see nothing, hear nothing, until suddenly a restless cock began to crow. It was quite a relief to the steersman.

"By honey, there's something alive, if it's only a rooster!" he mumbled. "It wouldn't like Hausmann to leave the place wi'out burning it, so I expect they're still— Ugh!"

His foot struck something, and, putting down his hand, Prout touched the icy face of a corpse. He secured the dead warrior's spear which was lying beside him. Then he pushed open the rush door of a hut, and, entering, closed the flimsy door carefully behind him. He struck a match.

"Those who weren't killed must have bolted," he thought. "Hausmann's lot are sure to be in the palace, and they're just as sure to have plenty of sentries about. If they've nailed the chief and the rest of the boys they'll be at the palace, too, unless— Prout ended by gritting his teeth together. The thought was too dreadful put into words.

He looked round in vain for food. There was a little raw maize in a jar, but nothing else. Prout left the hut and walked along the narrow lane which joined a wider street. This, too, was utterly deserted. Even the hungry curs seemed to have fled before the conquerors.

"By honey, I mustn't lose my way," said the steersman to himself. "Things are bad enough as it is, but if I go and get lost, the whole bag of tricks will be— Look alive! Who's that?"

A musical whistle struck his ears. Someone was whistling in perfect time and tune. The strains grew louder and clearer, and then a lantern flashed into view. A man with a rifle on his shoulder swung briskly along to his own music, and Prout nimbly skipped into an adjacent hut.

"By honey, the cheek of 'em!" said Prout. "That chap ain't afraid of much."

He peeped out after the retreating figure. The lantern fell with a clatter into the dust. There was a hushed cry and a faint thud, and the whistling ceased abruptly. Then came a soft patter of naked feet, and Prout saw another figure running up the road. The runner must have possessed the eyes of an owl.

"Hands up, or I shoot!" he cried.

"By honey, it's Vasco," said Prout. "Fancy meetin' you, by all that's lucky! Did you kill him?"

"No, I only stunned him," said the guide quietly. "I needed his rifle and revolver. Come back with me to gag him, for he will begin to howl the moment he comes round. If we could speak his language, we should soon drag the truth out of him. Do you speak German?"

"Not enough to fill a thimble, Vasco. I never could get on wi' that lingo. By honey, I'm mighty glad I tumbled against you, messmate. We 'ad to come—couldn't stick it any longer. Have you found out anything?"

"Nothing." The guide knelt down and swiftly gagged the senseless man. "They have a strong guard round the palace, and I could not get near. I heard them talking, but, of course, I could not

understand. They were singing and laughing, so I suppose they were drinking. That will do. They will not find him till daylight."

He dragged the man into the dense shadow and put the broken lamp beside him.

"Where was most of the fighting?" asked Prout.

"Near the palace; the bodies lie thick there. But I do not understand. These warriors must be great cowards, for only a few scores seem to have been slain."

"And the rest have clapped on all sail, eh?" said Prout. "Hausmann's chaps don't seem to think much of 'em. This chap came along as if he owned the place. By honey, I can't make it out neither! They looked full of fight to me, not at all the sort to bolt when the bullets began to fly. What's the move now? I'd better take the orders from you over this job, I'm thinking. You're more accustomed to such jobs."

The guide handed him the rifle and cartridge bandolier, keeping the revolver for himself.

"You had better search for food," he said, "and await me here. I will try again to creep past the sentries and learn what has happened. There will be food in some of those huts."

"How long shall I wait?"

"Not more than half an hour. I may not be able to return, but do not let that make you anxious, for I do not think they will take me. Be cautious, for they may send out a patrol."

"All serene. I'll keep my eyes and ears open, by honey," said Prout. "Jolly good luck, Vasco!"

The Indian went off at a swift, silent trot. Prout picked up the lamp. The glass was broken, but that did not matter to the steersman. He went into another hut and lighted the lamp. There was nothing there to suggest a hasty flight, and no sign of disorder. The hut obviously belonged to a fisherman, for it contained a heap of nets and a quantity of dried fish. Prout took the fish thankfully.

The next hut was even more profitable, for it yielded several fowls and a small bag of rice. Prout packed up the loot in a piece of fishing net and slung it over his shoulder. Then he sat down to wait for Vasco.

"Time must be about up," he mused. "He said 'alf an hour. By honey, I'd feel more comfortable waitin' out yonder wi' the boys than 'ere. Vasco's as game as they make 'em. He won't throw up the sponge till he gets what he's after. Jee-hosh-ophat!"

There was the sound of a shot, and it brought Prout to his feet at a bound. Perhaps it was Vasco's death-knell. Utter silence followed. Another ten minutes went by. Peering out, the steersman was astounded to see a half-naked figure standing in the middle of the road not twenty paces from him. The man was leaning on a spear in a listening attitude. He straightened himself and dashed away like the wind.

"One of Althara's boys," said the steersman. "Praps they haven't caved in yet. By honey, here's another. A second warrior had appeared like a ghost. He too rushed away."

"It's beginning to look ugly," mused Prout. "They won't be particular arter this. They'll lump all white men together as a bad lot now. By honey, I don't like it."

Prout felt that it would be quite as dangerous to meet any of Althara's warriors as to meet Hausmann himself. What had occurred had put them in an ugly temper, and they would not be likely to discriminate.

Every white man would be a deadly foe. The position was becoming acutely dangerous. It was useless to wait any longer for Vasco. Making sure that the coast was clear, and fervently hoping that he would escape with a sound skin, the steersman cocked his rifle and turned into the narrow lane.

"By honey!" he gasped.

Three gleaming spears were levelled at his breast. It flashed through his mind that if he pressed the trigger the report of the rifle would rouse the Germans and probably cost Vasco his life. He ducked, and a spear went hissing above his head. Then he rushed in and struck out wildly. It was no use. He went down and the naked warriors fell on him and pinned him fast.

Althara Wins Over the Warriors—Back to the Bungalow—A Merry Meeting—The Stronghold of the Caves.

CHING-LUNG with his head in the bag laughed long and loud. In spite of their perils and anxiety, His Highness could not control his mirth. The whole situation was so absurd; so like a scene from a comic opera, as Ferrers Lord had said. The idol reared, and gnashed, and glared, the worshippers bowed reverently, and there, in his absurd kilts, with the stately and handsome Queen beside him, stood the millionaire on the sacred altar.

"Funniest thing I ever knew," chuckled the Prince. "He ought to give 'em a Highland fling and bring down the house." He jerked his head out and bawled to Barry O'Rooney: "Go and tell Ben to cheese it, Barry."

Barry could not hear a word, but, guessing what was wanted, he scrambled down into the lower cave. Ching-Lung's head went into the bag again. The warriors were on their feet, and the Queen had stretched out her arm. All eyes were fixed on the altar. By degrees the ear-splitting noise died away.

"Give 'em a white light, Ru," cried Ching-Lung. "That's a lot better."

The white beams showed up the two figures vividly. There was a crash of voices.

"Althara, Althara! Amekeenish, Amekeenish!"

"My lucky stars! They think poor McNish has come to life," said Ching-Lung. "This is too funny for words, Ru. Can you hear 'em yelling?"

"I should be stone deaf if I couldn't."

"I only asked because I fancied the row Maddock made might have deafened you," said Ching-Lung.

"I say, those kilts of Lord's take the biscuit. Come and have a look."

Thurston was in no mood to appreciate the humour of the situation. The diabolical noise seemed to have terrified and cowed the jaguars, for they had abandoned their attempts to gain a footing on the altar. The shouts of the warriors were silenced as Althara waved her hand.

"My children," she cried, in clear ringing tones, "I have come to the Feast of Treason, for the Queen is above all laws. I am tired of bloodshed and of witchcraft. To-night none of my people shall die."

She paused. People drew in long, hoarse breaths and stared at her in stupefaction. They did not seem to grasp the news. She spoke again.

"All those who have been smelled out and slain have been those whom the devil-men have hated. I will have no more devil-men and wizards. Charkoni the Cheat is dead."

A wild roar of cheering followed. Not a man knew when he marched into that ghastly arena whether he would live to see another sunrise. The sense of relief was immense.

"Althara! Althara!" They beat their shields with their spears. "Althara, Althara!"

"They are in a good humour," muttered Ferrers Lord. "That is something."

"While I rule you," said the Queen, "no man shall be put to death unless he breaks the laws of our land. I come here, my children, with glad tidings, but with a heavy heart. But for this vile Feast of Treason which called you away from me, all would have been well. I bid you be silent so that all may hear."

She turned round and her eyes swept the circle of eager faces. The jaguars began to howl. "Slay the beasts!" cried Althara. "We have fed them enough."

The warriors swarmed over the barricade. In three minutes the battle was ended.

"My children," said the Queen, "my heart is heavy. When Charkoni summoned you away leaving me with but half my body guard the town was attacked by white men and taken. My warriors lie dead in the streets. They were brave, but they could not stand before the firesticks."

Her voice was drowned in a howl of rage. Ferrers Lord shrugged his shoulders.

"Speak faster, Althara. Slow speech is dangerous now."

And so the Queen spoke. Ferrers Lord watched the faces nearest to him.

"The Queen can manage them," he thought.

The warriors listened sullenly to the story of the attack on the village and then angry shouts arose.

"Stranger," said the Queen, "they are hungry to attack the white dogs, but they will obey me. To-night they will herd up the cattle and take them to a secure refuge. Now that Charkoni is dead, Okarni shall command my warriors. He is old and wise and cunning. I will speak with him."

A grey-haired warrior stepped to the foot of the altar. He was probably not more than fifty years old, but men age swiftly on the Amazon. He bowed low.

"Okarni," said Althara, "you have served me faithfully, and I never needed faithful servants more than I need them this day. The white stranger is very wise. He too is a warrior and a brave one. Spears and shields cannot battle against firesticks. You and the stranger shall lead my people. Send out scouts, Okarni, and see what is doing in our city. The white stranger has lost some of his comrades. Seek them high and low, but do them no hurt. Bring them to the little house when ye find them."

Okarni bowed again. Presently nearly a hundred warriors left the arena at a trot. Okarni uttered a few hoarse shouts of command, and with a thunderous salute the others marched out.

"Queen," said Ferrers Lord, as they walked back to down the tunnel, "where are the women and the little ones?"

"They are in the forest, white man. They are forbidden to come near the altars until the Feast is past."

"It is a lucky thing," answered the millionaire. "And what is this secure refuge you spoke of?"

"It is a secret stronghold made long ago by the hands of the dead. Once, the legend says, a great race lived here, and they raised these pillars and temples. But the fierce tribes around coveted their riches and they were ever at war. And so at last they became weaker and weaker, and made strongholds and hiding places until a pestilence smote them and they all died. Amekeenish found out many things which he has written down, but none can read it. He was a good man, stranger, and my people loved him."

The next moment they were back in the cave.

"How has the show gone?" asked Ching-Lung.

"Have you made it all right, do you think?"

"I trust so, Ching. We have delayed the massacre in any case, and put an end to the smelling-out. We must hear news very soon, for they have sent out about a hundred spies."

"Where do we go now?"

"Back to the bungalow," answered the millionaire.

"Good biz. Poor old Gan will have missed me I expect."

A tramp through the darkness brought them to the bungalow. To Ching-Lung's great joy, Gan-Waga was sleeping soundly, and there was not a symptom of fever about him. The troubles of Tariace were not yet over, for in about half an hour Okarni arrived, and the unhappy interpreter was put to work to translate. In the midst of it all there was noise of tramping feet and grounding spears. And then an amazed voice cried:

"By honey, it's the blubberbiter!"

"And, by honey," shrieked Ching-Lung frantically, "it's Tommy Prout!"

"Tommy! Souze me, it's Tommy!" howled Maddock.

Ching-Lung, Maddock, O'Rooney, and Thurston, made a wild dash for the door, upsetting a warrior in their haste, and nearly upsetting themselves. Outside in the glare of torches they saw a sight that made their eyes dance—Joe, Filson, Vasco, Prout, and the stoker. They were guarded by a squad of natives, but the rush broke the line, and for the next few minutes the excitement was intense.

"By honey, get us something to eat," said the delighted steersman, "and then we'll swap yarns! We're starving!"

Never was there such a swapping of yarns. They are already known to the reader, except what happened to Prout and company. Expecting little mercy, Prout had made a fight for it; but numbers prevailed. He had been marched across the plain, to find Joe, Filson, and the stoker also in custody. Some time later Vasco was brought in. Cunning as the Indian was, he had walked right into a picket.

"We thought it was a case," said Joe, "and we'd only our fists and feet and teeth to fight wi'; and our teeth warn't much good, for they'd got blunt and rusty for want o' use. They warn't rough wi' us, but they showed us pretty plain that they wouldn't have no nonsense. Vasco tried to patter their lingo, but they wouldn't speak. And just when we'd made up our minds that they were going to grill us for supper, we spots old Gan."

"And a swate soight ut was to yez, Oi'll wazer," said Barry.

"Sweeter nor toffee. And when the rest of you came bundlin' out, I thought I was dreaming."

There was plenty to eat, but they were almost too excited to eat it. Every face beamed. They kept shaking hands over and over again, and slapping each other on the back.

"Phwat Oi want now," said Barry, spitting on his palm, "is a smack at them German sausages, and loike the kid wid the soap, Oi won't be happy till Oi gets ut."

Vasco had been the only silent one, and the only one who had been doing justice to his food.

"Hausmann is not dead, Excellency," he said.

"Then he's made of cast iron," said Ching-Lung. "How do you know, Vasco?"

"I got into the palace, Excellency. I saw the fat man. He lay on a couch in the outer court. Another man was with him—a doctor, I think. They spoke together. Oh, no, he is not dead!"

"What luck!" said Ching-Lung. "I don't mean to say I'm sorry I didn't kill him, for I'm glad. What luck for him, I mean! It must have been a weak cartridge. By the way he dropped I thought he'd take no further interest in orchids, or anything else except a funeral. Was he badly winged, Vasco?"

"I cannot tell, Excellency," answered the guide. "There was not much light. When he spoke to the other man his voice sounded weak. But I am sure it was Hausmann, for his face was big and fat."

"Ut would be big and fat av Oi got near ut," growled Barry. "To get near ut is the wan dhrame of me loife."

Then there was more chatter and swapping of yarns. Ferrers Lord had abandoned the garments of the defunct Mr. McNish and put on his own clothes. He stepped out, and bent over Gan-Waga to feel the Eskimo's pulse.

"Well?" asked Ching-Lung, who had followed.

"There is nothing to be anxious about," said the millionaire. "He will be as lively as a kitten again in a few days if we can keep him quiet. I want to see this stronghold the queen and Okarni speak about, for I dare not leave the Eskimo here. The famous Scotch warrior built this bungalow, and when Hausmann's fellows start exploring, they are almost certain to stumble across it."

"The stronghold sounds like the one Prout and Joe stumbled across," said Ching-Lung. "It has a musical well in it, from all accounts. For further information I'll refer you to the steersman."

Prout was called, and he gave a picturesque description of the stronghold of the caves. Then the millionaire asked to see the queen. Althara was very gracious.

"It is enough, stranger," she said. "Fear nothing. Your wounded comrade shall have my litter to carry him to the place of refuge. We go thither in an hour."

So Gan-Waga was borne to the stronghold of the caves in Althara's litter, and the gallant Eskimo slept all the way.

The Attack that Failed—The Treachery of Tarface the Interpreter—Trouble Brewing.

FERRERS LORD had no sleep that night, for scouts and spies were continually going out and coming in. The most serious news was brought about dawn. A hunter who had been digging tapir traps in the forest had come across the tracks of about thirty men

with a number of mules. They were white men, and they were making for the village.

"Reinforcements for Hausmann," said Ferrers Lord. "It must have been a sort of flying column that attacked the village." He looked at Tarface. The poor little native was nodding, for he had been shockingly overworked. "You had better be off to bed, interpreter," added the millionaire. "We can do nothing more."

Hausmann's force, if the statements could be relied upon, numbered about seventy men, all well armed. Althara had some sixteen hundred warriors. A sudden night attack might have ended in a complete massacre of every white man in the village. The millionaire's one idea was to avoid bloodshed of any kind. Had he hurled Althara's eager warriors at the village in the dead of night, nothing except machine-guns could have kept the Germans from annihilation. Ferrers Lord threw himself down on a heap of dry fern.

"Are you asleep, Ching?"

"No, just woke up," said Ching-Lung, with a yawn. "What's the latest trouble?"

"Thirty men have joined Hausmann."

"Some people have queer tastes. He's the last person on earth I'd care to join."

"I am speaking seriously."

"So was I," said Ching-Lung. "Look here, old chap, I quite appreciate the seriousness of it all. You've been hoodwinking Althara, and, as a white man, you were bound to do it. It's quite right that if Hausmann was nicely entrenched or had picked out a position, he could kill these chaps down like flies, though the odds are about twenty to one. But I know jolly well we could rub all those Germans clean off the slate. They fancy they've got a pottering little tribe to deal with, and they're playing the fool generally. Oh, I know all about it! I only hope the niggers won't find out."

It was a curious position. Hausmann had

into it, the caves were naturally bomb-proof. There was an ample supply of excellent water. How long could he keep the natives quiet?

Okarni came out of the tunnel to meet him, and the unhappy Tarface was roused to interpret. "My spies have counted the white men, stranger," said the chief. "That is their number."

He opened and closed his fingers seven times. Ferrers Lord's guess had been very near the mark.

"It is a large force," said Ferrers Lord. Okarni spat contemptuously over his shoulder, and began to jabber rapidly.

"Say he eat 'em up, say you tell queen lies," said Tarface. "Say not afraid of firesticks. Warriors tell all same story. All want fight. Say go fight now. Say take four hundred men."

Ferrers Lord whistled. He understood now. It was impossible to bring in the women and children on the previous night, and four hundred of the warriors had been drafted off in command of Okarni's son to guard them.

"So he has taken the law into his own hands, and told them to attack the village—eh?"

Tarface nodded.

"Say attack over now and all white men dead," he explained.

"Tell him he's a fool," said Ferrers Lord. Tarface was too diplomatic to do any such thing, for Okarni had rather a short temper.

"Say warriors come back bimeby wid white men's heads on spears," said the interpreter.

There was a grin of triumph on the old warrior's face. At that moment Ching-Lung came out of the cave.

"This maniac has sent the men who were supposed to be looking after the women and children to attack Hausmann, Ching," said Ferrers Lord. "The fight is supposed to be over by this time."

Ferrers Lord. "It was the 'firesticks on wheels' that the poor wretches could not face. I'm dreadfully sorry about all this, for, in a way, we're responsible for it. If we only had guns, we'd take to the forests, but without them it would be like going to certain death. Wake up the men, and let us do all the good we can. See if you can get any bandages and splints."

The queen still slept. Aided by Joe, the millionaire was setting a broken wrist when Tarface, who was green with fright, came panting up to him with a letter.

"My brudder bring him. Brudder speak bit English like me. He go in fight, and white men catch him. Put gun to him head and ax questions. Then send him back wid dis. Oh, shocking bad luck!"

The envelope was addressed to Ferrers Lord in pencil. The note itself was written in German, and the writing was extremely shaky.

"From Hausmann," muttered the millionaire. "Oh, he wants to make terms. If I will sign a bond pledging myself to say nothing about that little affair in the river, he will give up the hunt and let me have the blue orchids. He is getting amazingly generous. Unfortunately, I do not believe in these bursts of generosity." He thrust the letter into his pocket and went on with his work. "I would rather trust a hungry jaguar. Take this note to the prince—the pigtail man," he added, a moment later. "Where is your brother?"

The brother was a good deal better-looking than Tarface, but cowardice evidently ran in the family, for he was in a condition of such abject terror that the millionaire could not get two coherent words out of him. The disorder seemed to have stunned all the warriors. They stared at the wounded in a dull, vacant sort of way, and squatted about in little silent groups.

"What is your opinion of the fellow's letter, Ching?"

"I have the same opinion about his letter as I have about himself, old chap," answered Ching-Lung. "I dare say he's as sick of hunting us as we are of being hunted. How did he know we were here?"

"Through sheer bad luck. They happened to take our precious interpreter's brother prisoner, and he has a smattering of English. Hence the letter." He shook his head.

"I don't know how this is going to end, Ching. I'd give fifty thousand pounds for half a dozen rifles and a few hundred cartridges. This is most unfortunate. You may depend Hausmann told that youngster that if they'd give us up the Germans would leave the village. Our one hope is that he was too frightened to understand what was said. If he spreads the story about, it will be awkward."

"M'yes, most awkward," said Ching-Lung. "We ought to keep an eye on him."

Thurston was a clever surgeon, and he worked with a will. When the millionaire's back was turned, Tarface slipped into a cave after his trembling brother. He seized his brother by the shoulder and shook him.

"What did the white men tell you?" he asked, in the native tongue.

"I cannot remember much," stammered the bold young warrior, his teeth still chattering. "They said they did not want to kill us, but these white men who are with us."

"Yes, yes," said Tarface eagerly. "What else?"

"They will give me firesticks and knives if I will make the queen send the white men to them."

"Yes, yes? What else?"

Tarface was not naturally ill-natured. He did not profess to be a hero, he was fond of the wine-cup; but his greatest vice was idleness. He had been overworked, and he hated work. So long as the white men were there he felt that he would have no peace. His one desire was to get rid of them, and at last he saw his chance to drink his fill and sleep in the sunshine again without being dragged here and there and compelled to interpret. There was an ugly gleam in his squinting eyes as he glided out of the cave. He came face to face with Ching-Lung.

"Hallo, you ugly little rat! What mischief are you plotting now?" said Ching-Lung.

"Not plot noting," said Tarface.

"You'd better not, my sweet one," said Ching-Lung, "or I'll twist your neck round and round till you can see fifty ways at once. Don't be in such a hurry. Who's in here?"

"Only my brudder."

Scenting treachery, Ching-Lung looked him squarely in the face.

"If you play any games with us," he said grimly, "I'll pay you for it, my friend."

Joe whistled to him. The carpenter had just cooked their breakfast.

"There's trouble coming, Lord," said Ching-Lung. "I can smell it in the air. That little beast Tarface is up to the neck in it. It's coming as sure as Christmas."

It came even sooner than Ching-Lung expected it to come.

(This magnificent story will be continued in an equally long and fascinating instalment in next Thursday's issue of THE BOYS' HERALD, 16 pages, price 1d. Mr. Martin Shaw's great new story, "The Far, Far North," commences in this paper in two weeks' time.)



"By honey!" Prout gasped. Three gleaming spears were levelled at his breast.

proved himself to be a merciless foe, and here was the man whom he hated most and feared most, trying to save him and his men from massacre. The Germans, by their carelessness were simply inviting destruction to fall upon them—that is, if they were acting carelessly. Who could tell?

"Yes, it is difficult," said Ferrers Lord, "very difficult."

"It just depends how long you can keep up the bluff, old chap. Some of these fellows are spoiling for a fight. I don't want to see the German gang carved up, and I don't believe in helping niggers against white men. I hate the thought of it. When I come to think of it, we made a blunder in promising anything at all."

"That was an unavoidable blunder, Ching. We cannot work miracles. We had lost our weapons and some of our comrades. I do not think I am a cruel man by nature, but I tell you, Ching, if harm had come to any of my men through Hans Hausmann, I should have turned all these savage warriors loose on him."

"And regretted it all your life, old chap. It would have been red murder."

He turned over and went to sleep again. The fire in the centre of the cave smouldered red, and threw fitful shadows across the walls. Still, the millionaire did not close his eyes, but lay puzzling his brains to find out how he could keep the men who were seeking to murder him from being murdered.

He rose at dawn, and went out into the cool air. A herd of undersized cattle grazed in the hollow. They had plenty of provisions, and men had been sent to conceal the tracks as much as possible. The place was absolutely impregnable. Even if Hausmann could have dropped shells

"M'yes," said Ching-Lung. "What was the strength of the force?"

"Four hundred."

"Then I expect it is over," said the prince. "If they weren't all asleep, it ought to be over. Hallo! What's all this?"

Okarni let his spear fall as a tramp of feet sounded hollowly through the tunnel. Ching-Lung was right, the fight was over. In single file the remnant of the warriors trooped through. Many of them were wounded, but they lined up. Four hundred had gone out, barely half that number returned. They had gone out to eat up the white men, but the white men had eaten them up instead.

"My son? Where is my son?" wailed Okarni. "Ye dogs! Where is my son?"

One of the warriors pointed to his bullet-riddled shield and to a bleeding wound in his arm. It was answer enough. Okarni squatted down and began to throw dust on his head.

"Poor old chap! I feel quite sorry for him," said Ching-Lung. "Perhaps this will teach them a lesson, and keep them quiet. We'd better start doctoring them and fix up some kind of a hospital."

Ferrers Lord soon gleaned the details of the disaster. Choosing the hour when men are supposed to sleep soundest and when most men die, they had attempted to rush the city from four points. Had the whole of Althara's army been there, the attack might have succeeded. To their astonishment they found that barricades had been erected across the roads leading to the palace. They were met by a terrific fire from all points and beaten back. Three times they charged, but none reached the barricades. "They've got a couple of Maxims, Ching," said