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THE SPY OF THE SCHOOL

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IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO START OUR NEW SERIAL.

THE SPY OF THE SCHOOL.

By TYRER BROCKLEHURST.

CHAPTER I.

CONSPIRATORS IN CONFERENCE—CAPTURE OF THE SPIES—THE TORMENTORS—PEERS BIDSTON TO THE RESCUE—A DESPICABLE SCHEME UNFOLDED.

Mr. Mordaunt Bane tapped his walking-stick upon the rock before him with an irritable air, and, turning to his companion, superciliously said:

"Well, Mark Glastowe, you do look an object. Nobody could believe you are otherwise than a youngster fresh from an affectionate mamma."

"Just so!" chuckled Mark Glastowe, lighting a cigarette, and vaulting upon the rock already spoken of with the ease and exactitude of a trained jockey mounting a racehorse; "and I am here entirely in accordance with your wishes."

He was a tiny personage, with a soft and silky face, and cherubic features; yet, if the truth were known, he would not see his nineteenth birthday again. His suit of boating-flannels set off his little form to perfection, and completed the deception as to his age.

Suddenly he threw down the "weed," and whispered.

"There is a spy up yonder watching us."

"Just run and see if you are right," said Mordaunt Bane.

Glastowe fled nimbly to the zigzag pathway up the beetling cliff, at the foot of which the companions had been talking, and soon reappeared, dragging after him a couple of youngsters, each about ten years old, who pulled horrible faces, but made no noise whatever.

"I caught you!" he kept saying. "Come down to the ogre; he will eat you up."

"Stow that blubber, Glass Alley," muttered one of the boys; "you might think us as big babies as you are. When Peers Bidston hears how you have treated us, I'll stake my next allowance he will thrash you."

"Bah!" said Mark Glastowe, who was nicknamed "Alley," because of a fanciful derivation of his name from "Glass," and "Taw;" "I don't care; but if you say a word about this I will remember you, my chickens." Then he called to Bane: "Here are the spies; shall we dip them into the sea?"

"It is deep here," said the boy who had already spoken, "and we have not yet learnt to swim."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Bane; "then throw the little beggars in!"

"No, no!" cried the boys in distress; "the bottom shelves here dreadfully, and we could not get back. You must pull us out if we begin to drown."

The appeal fell upon callous hearts, and the boys—who were no cowards, as their endurance hitherto had attested, but who knew the extreme danger of their position—were seized, and dragged towards the heaving waters. They screamed, and just then there came a loud shout from the top of the cliffs, and a hurried pattering of feet down the path. Half a dozen lads arrived suddenly, each some years older than the captives, who were at once liberated, when spectators so unwelcome to the captors appeared.

"What, Peers Bidston!" said Bane, drawing himself up, and smiling with patronising magnanimity at the leader of the party. "Don't you know me?"

"The son of my guardian!" cried the youth addressed, a golden-haired, cheerful-looking, openhearted fellow of sixteen years. "What are you doing here? I thought you were in London, reading law."

"Should have been, boy; but came down for a change. I am staying at the Royal, in Poolmouth, and happened to meet Mark Glastowe here. He is a friend of yours, is he not?"

"I am the friend of all honest folk who will allow me to be so," was the enigmatical reply of the schoolboy, who, turning to Glastowe, asked: "What were you doing with these lads? Out with it, Tommy Verge!"

"Going to drown us," gasped Tommy, out of breath with the struggle; "and I told them, Peers Bidston, that you would thrash them."

"And so I shall, if they offer to touch you again. I give them both the challenge. I dislike the way in which you treated these youngsters, Mordaunt Bane, because, if you were only larking, the joke was a very vicious and unworthy one. Good-afternoon."

The youth bowed, and turned away.

"Now, chappies, we will go back by the coast, and I will race you who gets to yonder crevice first."

The boys whooped, and bolted full speed along the shingly, boulder-strewn beach, and were soon lost to sight within the gulley indicated by their captain.

"Glastowe," said Bane, "our being seen here together has given the show away. Why did you make this appointment?"

"I wanted to get some security you would keep your bargain, Mordaunt, knowing how hard you are to manage. Tell me again what I am to get if I succeed."

"You are to have an annuity of a hundred pounds settled upon you."

"Well! I want some document, signed by you to prove that."

"Not if I know it!"

"Then I leave Firdale Grammar School this term, and take

He swung out and began to descend slowly.

 NEXT WEEK, "WHITE IDOLS." By W. Shaw Rae.

to some more congenial occupation. You are not fit to trust, even by a pal. Good-bye."

The sham schoolboy slipped off towards the cliff pathway, grinning like a wicked sprite. He was called back by his employer angrily, and asked where he would hide the paper if he got it.

"In the bottom of my box. I always keep it locked."

"Then you shall have an undertaking, on condition that no one sees it, and that it is returned to me after the annuity has been made over to you."

"Very good! I will run down to Poolmouth next half-holiday; you must be on the front ready to give me the undertaking, and, if it is satisfactory I will go to work at once. Tell me again what I have to do."

The conspirators then put their heads together, and Bane once again described what fell work his hireling had to accomplish before the reward held out to him could be earned.

He explained that Peers Bidston was an orphan, Mr. Bane senior, a lawyer, being his guardian. The father of Peers was an old man when he married, and his wife predeceased him. Hence, knowing that neither parent would survive to bring up his only son to manhood, he made a curious will, leaving all his wealth to Peers, but giving the income of the estates to Mr. Bane senior during the former's minority. Should the son die before becoming of age, all the money was to go to specified charities; but should the son attain his majority, then the estates would come into his possession, with the exception of an annual charge to provide £200 a year for the guardian during his lifetime. On the other hand, should the son become a lunatic, or a criminal, then the property was still to continue in the possession of the guardian, unless it could be proved that the heir was hopelessly lost to reason or contrition; in which case the property would still go to the charity, with the reservation of enough to secure the comfort of the victim. Should it be supposed, however, that the heir might be cured or reclaimed, the guardian would still have the property under his control; but he was bound to spend a certain proportion of the income annually for the bringing back of his ward to sanity of morality.

"Barring accidents," the little conspirator exclaimed, "the moment Peers reached his majority the Banes would be cut out, with the exception of £200 a year."

"Exactly so, and that will not suit me, although it would not displease my soft-hearted pater," replied the schemer; "but if we can keep him in a lunatic asylum, or a goal, we can still go on enjoying the income from the estates, so long as we can put our hands upon him when needed. Therefore, I have engaged you to come here, aping the schoolboy, in the hope that you will have opportunities of driving the cub into madness, or into criminality, and if you want any assistance, do not fail to call for me. If I were you I should endeavour to get him hit upon the head, and to break his spirit as much as possible, and you should bring up the masters to think him an awful scamp."

"I will do my level best," replied Glastowe; "and mind you carry out your share of the bargain. I will meet you for the paper next half-holiday, as arranged."

The precious pair then separated. The scheming Mr. Bane slowly picked his way to the top of the cliff, and thence to the railway-station half a mile off, which enabled him to return to his hotel at Poolmouth.

CHAPTER II.

A CRICKET ACHIEVEMENT—THE INFORMER AT WORK—AN INTERESTING INTRIGUE, AND A COWARDLY INTERRUPTION—TRAINING A NEW "CREEPING-PLANT."

Firdale Grammar School stood upon a low eminence in the dale from which it took its name. A delightful trout stream ran along the western limit of the eminence, and the other limit connected the plateau with the buttresses of the adjacent hills. About a mile from the level of the school, the hills terminated in the limestone cliffs, at the foot of which the scene described in our opening chapter occurred.

The troop of boys led by Peers Bidston drew up near the school, and little Tommy Verge, when he got his wind, said:

"I do not believe those fellows had met for the first time. We watched them for a while, and they appeared to be talking most confidentially. We got to the brink of the cliff, intending to run down and skim stones across the sea; but we spotted Glass Alley, and wondered what he could be doing down there with a stranger, sitting on a rock smoking a cigarette. So, as he had done us many an ill turn, we engaged in a bit of the scout business, to see what he was up to."

"Why did you not run away when he saw you?" asked Peers with a smile.

"Would we run away from him?" cried the boys with indignation.

"Well, you are a couple of brave little kids, and I will look after you."

"Thank you, Peers, and if we can do anything for you in the way of fagging, we will be only too delighted."

"Right, Tommy Verge and Dicky Sabian, I won't disdain your offer. We have half an hour before supper; let us go into the field, and you can bat to my bowling."

Such an honour, to bat for Peers Bidston, the crack bowler of the school! The boys fled for the bats; and, taking quarter-hour turns, they withstood the furious bombardment with heroic courage, and did not wince once, even though they limped when the wild ordeal was over.

It was the hour of six o'clock, when supper was served. The principal, the Rev. Edmund Brane Tempest, M.A. Oxon, classic master to his college for some years, entered the schoolroom, followed by Mr. Arthur Skipley, B.A., the science master, and Mr. Edward Bone Shaker, the gentleman whose duty it was to cram knowledge into the junior forms, and also to teach the art of inducing perspiration in the national manner by means of cricket, football, and other field sports.

"Boys!" said the master, in his mellow Etonian tones, "are all present?"

The cry of "yes, sir," was raised; but in the midst of it little Glass Alley, with cherubic features, rose to his feet, and held up his hand. "Please, sir," he said, "Horace Ward is absent."

"You little beast!" growled Peers Bidston angrily.

"Please, sir," continued Glass Alley, "Peers Bidston is using abusive language."

"Bidston, I will not allow these attempts at intimidation. A hundred lines after lessons!"

There was a suppressed sigh. All the school adored Peers, and hated the "tell-tale."

"Where is Horace Ward?" asked the principal, heatedly. He ought to have been in his place."

"Perhaps he has not heard the bell, sir," said Bidston ambiguously.

"You know very well," retorted the "tell-tale," with a simple face, "that he went to Poolmouth for a packet of chocolate."

"How do you know that?" asked Peers, very wroth; "you must spend half your time eavesdropping."

"There you are, sir!" said the tiny but virtuous student; "I am not safe while this ruffian is in the place."

"Mr. Skipley!" roared Mr. Brane Tempest, now thoroughly aroused. "See that Ward, if he does not appear in five minutes, writes a thousand lines of Horace."

"Very good, sir!" said Mr. Skipley.

The sixty boys had scarcely commenced their evening meal in the refectory when Ward came in, and took his place at the head of the sixth form. He was about the same age as Bidston, but dark, while the latter was fair. Ward was willing to admit his chum to be his superior in all matters requiring physical endurance and skill; but Ward was the cleverer of the two in matters affecting the mind.

The masters at the head of the table did not appear to notice the arrival of the missing student, and all went well during the meal.

Afterwards the lads trooped into the playground for the usual half-hour before lessons. Horace Ward and Peers Bidston crept cautiously round the back of the building past the scullery, and through a small wicket in the high wooden fence surrounding the principal's private grounds. Near the wicket stood a summer-house, into which the boys quietly slipped, and there they waited in great trepidation.

By and by the sound of laughing voices was heard, and two angels in tennis-blouses and white skirts came round the end of the head-master's residence, and sat upon the iron seat under the eave of the summer-house.

They chatted pleasantly about the game they had just concluded, but were startled with a whisper.

"Winifred! Ada!" said the whispering voice.

The sound came from the unglazed window of the rustic structure behind them.

"What is it?" said the girls, shivering.

"It is we, Winifriede. Do not look round yet. We are in the summer-house."

The passionate speaker was Peers Bidston, whose ideal of beauty was the dusky Winifred, while his chum's adored one was the golden-haired Ada. These boys had been allowed the week before to play tennis with the girls in a match against a team from Poolmouth, and they had distinguished themselves greatly, and saved the Firdale contingent from defeat. This chance event was the origin of the boys' infatuation.

The girls, daughters of Mr. Tempest, had been brought up in the closest seclusion, and the idea of flirting with schoolboys had never occurred to them until these importunate lads insisted upon dragging them into an intrigue, which culminated in the present daring invasion of the summer-house.

"You silly boys!" said Ada severely, "if papa catches you there, you will be flogged!"

"We are not afraid," said the reckless Peers. "By the way, Miss Ada, we have some chocolates here. Horace has been for them to-night, and nearly got into trouble. Just put your hand through the window, and we will give them up to you."

The girls blushed and began to giggle. The situation was too gratifying to resist. They slowly raised their hands, and, without turning round, passed them through the window opening. Of course the hands were rapturously seized by the lovers inside, who began to shower kisses upon the plump white knuckles.

"This is disgraceful!" said the girls, simultaneously snatching back their property, and allowing frown after frown to cloud their fresh young faces.

"Forgive us," whispered the youths; "but we could not resist the temptation. Forgive us, do! If you will only trust us again, and pass back your hands, you shall have your chocolates."

"Don't be silly, then," said Winifred.

Chocolates were a most tempting luxury to Mr. Brane Tempest's daughters, and the bribe of these astute young rascals could not have been more effective. The hands were slowly raised again, and the damsels stammered the hurried request:

"Be quick now! We look so absurd like this."

The hands were suddenly grasped by a pair of small but muscular palms, and there was a strange commotion in the hut.

"Got you—caught you!" chuckled a boyish but knowing person. "If you stir, young ladies, I will tell your father; and if you little kiddies don't sit absolutely still, I will scream 'murder!' Oh, this is fine—fine!"

"Help!" exclaimed Ada distressfully. "Let my hand go, Master Ward! Mother will be coming, or possibly Mr. Skipley, or Mr. Shaker. Oh, do let me go!"

Our hero and his chum looked at each other. Instantly they made up their minds. They took the intruder suddenly by the neck, clasped their hands over his mouth, and, although Alley fought furiously, they managed to get him through the wicket-gate without discovery, and so they dragged him across the yard into the playground.

As soon as Alley got his breath, he began to cry out for the masters, and threaten to peach as to what he had seen.

"Don't mind him, boys!" cried Bidstone. "He has been trying to injure not only us, but other people, and we will make an example of him! Come along; we will plant him!"

A procession was formed with great alacrity, and the prisoner was conducted to the back of the wooden pavilion in the cricket-field.

"Get a hammer and nails, boys!" shouted Bidston; "also some strips of leather."

Two delighted youngsters fled to execute this command. They were Tommy Verge and Dicky Sabian. In a minute they appeared with the articles mentioned; also a pair of old leather leggings.

"Here you are!" they cried. "Cut the leggings into strips, some of you."

This was quickly done; and there were plenty of willing hands to hold the victim still while Peers and Horace firmly nailed him to the wooden pavilion.

The strips were passed over his elbows, ankles, knees, wrists, and so on, until he was as firmly secured to the wall as if he were a creeping-plant climbing up it.

Great was the glee of the spectators when the last nail was driven.

"Now, boys," spoke Bidston in oratorical tones, "he is planted! Do not make such a row, but just leave him to his fate."

"Oh, you wretches!" shouted Mark Glastowe, foaming at the mouth. "You shall all suffer for this!"

"Let the cad threaten his worst!" said Ward. "It is lesson-time, boys. One, two, three!"

At the word of command the school vanished, and the new "creeping-plant" began to howl.

CHAPTER III.

THE GUARDIAN OF PEERS BIDSTON — THE PLANTED ONE TURNS HIS IGNOMINY TO ACCOUNT—A WELCOME SOLATIUM.

Ten minutes later a party of half a dozen persons slowly entered the playing-field from the garden of Mr. Brane Tempest. First came the stern Mr. Brane Tempest himself, who walked with an elderly gentleman with kindly blue eyes and a benevolent demeanour, and following these were Mrs. Brane Tempest, her two daughters, and Mr. Mordaunt Bane, whom we already know.

The elderly gentleman was the guardian of Peers Bidston, who had come to Poolmouth on business, and had taken the opportunity to run over to the school to see how his ward was faring. He had in the town unexpectedly come across his son, who had accompanied his parent to the school, in order to prevent, if possible, any interference by the weak but certainly well-intentioned lawyer with the plot which the unworthy young man and his ally were hatching.

As the party came into the field the principal remarked:

"Your ward seems to be in excellent health, but we have a little difficulty at times in managing him——"

"What on earth is that?" interrupted Mr. Bane senior, as he heard a terrible howl, coming apparently from the further side of the cricket-pavilion.

"I cannot say, I am sure," declared the master, gripping his walking-stick with professional fervour; "but we will go to see."

They and the others hurried in consternation to the place whence the sounds came, and were amazed at the spectacle which they saw there. The principal and Mr. Bane went forward immediately, and tried to set the prisoner free. The work of "training" him had been very well done, and his freedom could only be effected by sawing through the thongs with pocket-knives. This done, Alley dropped in a tearing passion on the ground.

"My dear boy," said Mr. Bane gravely, "tell me what this means?"

"Yes, speak out quickly!" commanded the head-master.

"I have been shamefully abused," gurgled the victim. "Fancy a fellow of my position being treated in this disgraceful way! I wish to explain what happened to my teacher. I caught Peers Bidston making love to your daughter, and because I intended to give you a proper warning Peers set the boys on to drag me here, and treat me in the manner you have observed."

Naturally, this greatly upset the young ladies, whose mother took them away at once.

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Bane," said the schoolmaster, "this is not the first time your ward has misconducted himself, and, for the discipline of the school, he must be flogged!"

"Well, 'spare the rod and spoil the child.' I do not wish to interfere with your management of the school, but I hope you will treat Peers as leniently as justice demands. I should like to see him before I go away."

"By all means, sir. Glastowe, run into the school, and tell Bidston to join us in the library."

Alley, glad to escape from such embarrassing company, made a show of hurrying off; but he managed in the lee of the pavilion to get in a word with his paymaster, who highly commended him for what he had just done.

"Keep it up!" the despicable creature said. "Mind the fellow does not have a day's peace. He will soon run away, or do some other silly thing, and so give us a hold upon him before long."

As the visitors and the head-master walked back to the school-house the latter said he would make a full examination into the affair, and a few minutes later Mr. Bane senior and his ward were alone together in the principal's study, Mordaunt having made an ineffectual attempt to join in the interview.

"Well, my poor Peers," exclaimed the guardian, in real distress, "I came over to see you to-day, and am truly sorry to hear of the trouble in which you are placed."

"Don't bother, guardian," answered Peers, with a rather sickly smile; "I shall be all right. I have the school at my back, and my only enemy seems to be that rascal Glass Alley, who persists in making mischief for me upon every possible occasion."

"Try to get on the right side of your master. He means to flog you now, but I do not see that he is unreasonable. Here are five sovereigns. I desire not to stint you in the least, and this will be a little solace for you after the flogging you are going to get."

"Thank you, guardian. I do not mind the punishment, though it is harder to bear when it is unjust."

Mr. Bane and his son then left for the Poolmouth train.

CHAPTER IV.

PEERS IN DISGRACE—CONFINED IN THE TOWER—THE WONDERS OF CAERMELYN—A BOLD EFFORT FOR FREEDOM.

A little later Peers was called to "the bar of the house," and in the presence of the school was told by Mr. Tempest that for offences enumerated he was to be flogged in the morning, after prayers, and in the meantime he would take his "Virgil" to the sanatorium, and would be kept there without food.

Peers marched upstairs gloomily. The school building was a fine, well-preserved structure in the Elizabethan style of architecture. Over the entrance-hall was a low tower, approached by a solitary narrow staircase, and the topmost room of this tower was used as a hospital and sanatorium.

The lock was turned, and the footsteps of the descending housekeeper grew fainter, and Peers was all alone in his prison. He spent a little time in enjoying the view from each in turn of the four low, broad windows. From the north he could see the white expanse of the ocean, dotted with ships and fishing-boats; from the east window he could see the range of mountains, terminating in the cliffs upon the seashore, and including the circular-topped, interesting height known as Caermelyn. This jutted out from the chain, with which it was connected by a sort of neck that, if the place were partially submerged, would be called an isthmus.

Caermelyn reached a height of about a thousand feet, and stood like a sentinel in front of the range. Its foot was about a mile from the school, and the ascent was very steep upon all sides except the neck already spoken of, which formed an easy means of reachin~ the Caermelyn summit from the adjoining uplands. The latter averaged almost from the sea an altitude of some two thousand feet.

Peers could make out, owing to the height of his present place of observation, certain rings which encircled the summit of Caermelyn. There were two such rings visible to him—one a short distance from the top, and the other some yards lower down. The rings were quite regular in shape and distance from the crown, and they formed the trenches constructed some two thousand years ago by the former owners of this island—the ancient British—in order to fortify the mountain, and enable them to resist—which they did successfully—the encroachments of the Roman invaders.

Mr. Brane Tempest, as the classic master of this school, did not care particularly to dwell upon this subject. He had no fondness for the archaic Celtic tongue, and preferred his Greek and Latin. But it happened that Mr. Bone Shaker enjoyed, in addition to his ability as "half-back," and "long-stop," a considerable acquaintance with the Celtic speech, and also a very enthusiastic appreciation of the virtues of the ancient Britons. Now Mr. Shaker was a popular fellow with the boys, who appreciated his society. He tried, not without success, to give them some of his respect for the "old inhabitants," and part of his curriculum was to take the school, on half-holidays, to the summit of Caermelyn, and show them the wonderful remains existing there of the genius of his revered ancestors.

Bidston had taken part with Mr. Shaker in a picnic upon this mountain, and it had interested him extremely. He now recollected that one of the proofs that the place was a true "camp," was the fact that, on the eastern side, where the isthmus was, there were three trenches, one below the other, while in all other parts there were only two. This proved, clearly enough, that those who constructed the fortification took care to make the strongest defences in the most vulnerable situation. Except just here, the only approach to the camp was up a steep slope, rendering an assault very difficult. Right in the centre of the isthmus were the remains of an entrance, cut out of the rock, and flanked by two circular bastions.

The brow of our hero puckered as he once more recalled to his mind these facts. At last he moved to the south window, overlooking the playground and the cricket-field, and then he passed to the west window, whence he perceived the narrow valley along which the train wended to Poolmouth, the chimneys and shipping of the latter port being just discernible over the tops of a belt of timber.

At last he came to a determined conclusion.

"I am not going to stop here all night!" he exclaimed, striking the window-sill with his clenched fist.

CHAPTER V.

THE ESCAPE—A TENDER RECOLLECTION—A TOOTHSOME LEGACY—A DREAM UPON CAERMELYN.

Peers proceeded to manufacture a rope with the sheets from the four beds; and, when it was as dark as might be expected, he cautiously, because he was suspicious of his white streak of a rope against the pink limestone of the building, allowed his hawser to descend through the north window, and he fastened the top of it to the mullion. With a chuckle, for he greatly enjoyed danger of any kind, he swung out, and began to descend slowly.

He reached the level of a tiny window communicating with the spiral staircase; but it happened that this window was a good yard to the right, and he could do no good by going lower.

He induced himself to swing, pendulum-like, at the end of the rope, although this caused much discomfort by the friction of his body against the stonework. At last he got his toe into the window embrasure, and, with much exertion, effected a landing upon the stairs. He found an easy exit from the house through the box-room window, and in a few minutes he was safely in the principal's garden.

He looked into the summer-house for his sweetheart's sake, and saw upon the seat two white objects. He took these up—they were the boxes of chocolate.

"I am hungry enough," he thought; "and these will at least keep me from starvation for awhile." So he put the boxes into his pocket, and was soon across the fence, and in the adjoining fields.

His face turned towards the north, where the glow of the sun was still visible, and would be during the remainder of the night, at this season of the year. Upon his right was the mountain range, and he thought:

"I must hide in the mountains. I can easily find a nook where it will be difficult to trace me."

An hour later he stood in the lower trench upon Caermelyn, and from this elevation surveyed the quiet vale beneath, and the still towering height of the mountains behind him.

Here he would stay. Rarely, indeed, was the solitude of this eminence violated. He could hide in the trenches perhaps for weeks, while for food he might slip down to the villages occasionally.

He gathered a heap of dried ferns, what remained of last year's growth, from beneath the green fronds which had been developed in the present season. Covering himself with these, he soon became warm, and fell into a deep sleep, during which he dreamt that the ancient British garrison was once more in possession of the fort, engaged in defending it against the classic enemy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCENE AT THE SCHOOL NEXT MORNING—HOW PEERS WAS TRACED—THE BOYS MAKE A PROMISE—BIDSTON FLOGGED—THE GREAT RISING.

Morning dawned, Nature awoke, and the inhabitants of Firdale Grammar School set about their manifold duties.

The boys, at the earliest moment, knowing that their favourite and leader was shut up in the tower, flew into the playground, that they might offer incense to his shrine by gazing at the windows of his fortress.

The two fags were amongst the first to come out, and they perceived a white line dangling from the window.

"Stars!" cried Tommy Verge, "he has cleared!"

"So he has!" exclaimed Dicky Sabian, clapping his hands. "Here's a lark! I should not have thought he could dare come down like that. I wonder where he is?"

"Suppose he has gone into the river, and is drowned?" muttered Tommy in an awed manner.

"Not he. Too much stir about him for that. He will be away now, perhaps at sea as a cabin-boy, or something of that sort. They have treated him disgracefully, and Glass Ailey is responsible."

As the youngster spoke, in the usual sequence of events, Glastowe appeared. He saw that the lads were eyeing the tower; his own optic was elevated, beneath his red brow, and in an instant he shouted:

"Bidston has hooked it! Oh, my! I must tell about that!"

"You cad!" jeered the boys, taking to their heels, for they knew how vicious the tell-tale could be if he liked.

But Mark was too much engrossed in the absorbing subject of Peers Bidston's daring escape to think of their remark. He hurried off to the principal, who soon appeared, evidently only half through his toilet.

"Search the house, boys, try to find him," he said anxiously; "the poor fellow may have got hurt somewhere."

The whole of the boys were secretly delighted at this turn. Quickly they scattered about the country, and the squad of which Horace Ward took command comprised half a dozen sturdy fellows, including Dicky and Tommy. Mark showed a tendency to enter the ranks of this squad; but Horace quietly hinted to him that he had better scutter in the opposite direction. Glastowe deemed this diplomatic intimation worthy of notice, and vanished round the playground wall.

The searchers, following their chum's footmarks in the damp soil, were led in the direction of Caermelyn, and they reached the foot of it just as Peers awoke from a refreshing sleep, and crept to the edge of the top trench to look over. He observed the group of his companions approaching, and, in spite of the distance, recognised them. Many wild thoughts had agitated him on the previous night; but now he felt lonely, and inclined to return to school, provided he could do so without loss of his self-respect.

So he rose to his feet and waved his handkerchief, attracting the attention of his friends in a moment.

There was a cheer, and up the steep slope the lads mounted with the facility of sheep; like one of the storming-parties of old, they rushed towards the trenches, and Peers Bidston came down to meet them, leaping six feet at a time.

"We have been sent out to look for you, Peers, old boy, and we are right glad to find you so easily!" shouted Ward; and when the friends met they shook each other heartily by the hand, a privilege which was also taken advantage of by the other boys.

"What are you going to do?" asked Peers.

"Take you back with us."

"I escaped because I felt I was being treated unjustly."

"Yes, we all knew that. The whole school feels for you. I have reason to be grateful to you personally, for you bore without complaint the whole stigma of that business, and I was responsible for at least half of it."

"You know that I should not think of peaching."

"Exactly. So does the school. We are of opinion that Glass Alley deliberately lays himself out to catch you in compromising situations, in order that he may tell about you, and get you into trouble. He does it for some hidden reason of his own."

"Do you think so. I fancied it was merely on account of his natural meanness."

"The wonder is that the governor will believe him, seeing that it is you, and you alone that he is constantly libelling. We have been talking the matter over, as we came this way, and we have decided that, if you will come back with us, we will all make a united representation to the governor for your acquittal for running away, and upon all other charges, and for Glass Alley to be dethroned from his position of grand inquisitor to the school."

"Very good!"

Bidston's prompt and matter-of-fact answer greatly cheered all the youngsters, who shouted jubilantly, and at a good speed the party returned to the school.

They entered the schoolroom, which was deserted, all the boys being out looking for the runaway. Mr. Brane Tempest was also out of doors, and the two daughters of this well-intentioned but hasty-tempered instructor came and peeped in, their faces being very white with excitement.

"You have come back, Master Bidston!" they exclaimed, when they perceived our hero seated despondently at his desk, with the other lads crowding round.

"Yes, Miss Tempest," he answered, looking up, with the fire of delight in his eye; "are you glad to see me?"

"We are, indeed," returned Winifred. "Look out, papa is coming!"

The maidens vanished, evidently well pleased that the lost had been found; and, in a moment, Mr. Brane Tempest, followed by a troupe of boys, came in, bringing with him quite a chilly air, in spite of the fineness of the summer.

There was trouble for somebody.

Mr. Brane Tempest proceeded to his dais, sat in his chair, laid his walking-stick across the desk, and placed his college cap beside it. There was a peg for the cap behind him, and he invariably hung the article upon the peg if he were in a good humour. When otherwise, he placed the cap upon the desk. So the school, keen in watching such barometrical indications, began to shudder.

"Peers Bidston," he said, in a deep, stern voice, "come forward!"

Peers rose boldly but quietly, and stepped to the desk.

"You escaped last night from the sanatorium; you broke our rules; you disobeyed my orders. What have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing, sir, except that I felt I was being treated unjustly, and my natural feelings induced me to get away."

"You were promised punishment last night, and I must give it you now. I am about to birch you, sir. Discipline must be maintained, and my orders must not be defied. You will take off your jacket, sir."

Peers looked round the room expectantly, but no one stirred. It was an awful moment. He cared nothing for a thrashing; but his spirit—for he was fast growing into a young man, and above such degradation—rebelled against the disgrace of being publicly whipped. However, he said:

"As you will, sir."

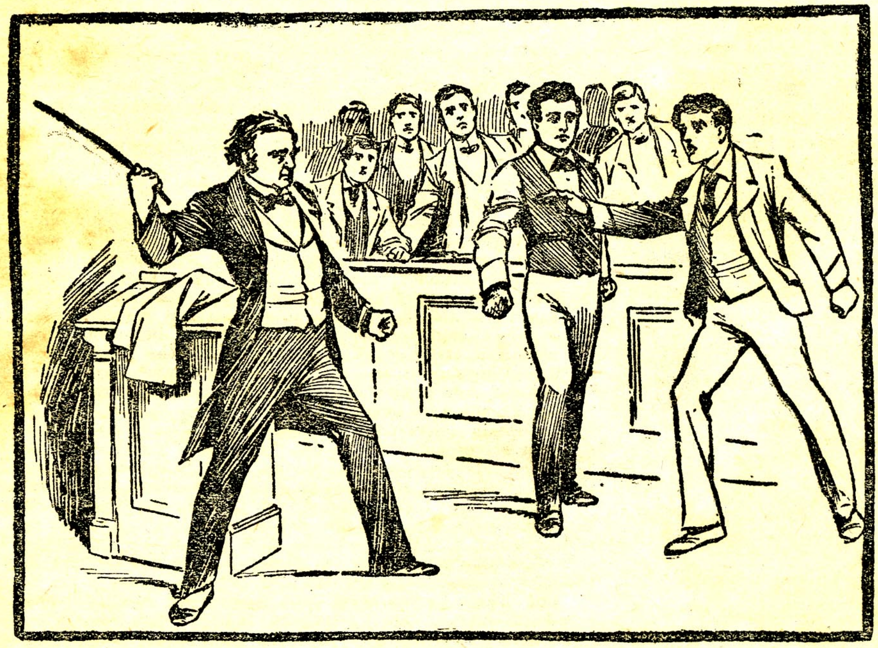
And he proceeded to remove his jacket.

The master came forward with a heavy cane, and, addressing the school, said:

"This is the treatment which, much against my wish, I am obliged to adopt in the case of troublesome boys."

The term still further hurt the dignity of our hero. The cane descended with a fearful whack upon the boy's shoulder, but not a wince did the victim permit his nerves to make.

Up went the strong arm of Mr. Brane Tempest, who was evidently in a terrible rage, and just as it was descending again Ward rose in his place, and cried:



Just as it was descending, Ward rose in his place and cried: "Stop, sir!"

"Stop, sir!"

"I will have no interruptions of this character!" exclaimed the principal, glaring at Horace.

"I beg of you to listen to what I have to say."

"I shall not!"

The cane once more smote our hero's almost bare back.

"You must listen, sir. I have something to say which is most important. We brought Peers Bidston back on the distinct understanding that the whole school would support a petition to you in favour of all scores being wiped off against him. Boys, how many of you support that petition?"

The school rose, and a forest of hands was held up. Only one boy sat in his place, and that was Glastowe.

"Get up, Glass Alley! Get up, traitor, sneak, coward!"

Such were the epithets from all sides. In a moment the school would have fallen upon him and torn him to pieces, but Ward cried:

"Leave the cad alone. We have more important work at present."

Turning to the master, he said:

"Do you consent to the appeal of your scholars, sir?"

Mr. Brane Tempest was too wildly passionate to consent to anything in his present condition. He glared at Ward, and was in an ungovernable temper. For answer he raised his cane and began to belabour Peers as fiercely as he could.

Ward sprang upon a form, and shouted:

"Comrades, our ultimatum is scorned! Our pledge to Peers Bidstone will be broken unless we act at once. Close round and rescue him!"

Like a Roman phalanx, and amid the bravest and most determined cries, the school bore down upon their hero.

Mr. Brane Tempest called for assistance from his other masters, but the latter were powerless. The principal found himself hustled into a corner, and at lightning speed the lads swept out of the building and into the playground, cheering and shouting lustily.

CHAPTER VII.

OPEN REBELLION—NO SURRENDER—A CAPTAIN APPOINTED—FLIGHT TO THE MOUNTAIN—COMMENCING THE DEFENCE.

"What is to be done now?" asked Peers. "We have broken out into open rebellion."

"Nothing, but carry it on till we get satisfactory terms."

"Are you game?"

"Certainly. And I can answer for the school. Boys," Ward said, turning to the excited company of pupils, "it is a serious thing to rebel against our masters; but it is done, and we have now two courses before us—tame submission on the one hand, with its consequences; and a stubborn resistance on the other, until we get Mr. Brane Tempest to promise us better times. Which shall it be? Hands up for giving way."

Not an arm was lifted.

"Hands up for a fight."

Every boy responded to this appeal in the readiest way.

"Thank you, comrades! We will make this day memorable in the history of the school. I beg to propose that the commander-in-chief be Peers Bidston."

"I second it!" exclaimed Dicky.

"Those in favour. Carried unanimously. Now, Captain Peers, we are under your orders."

Peers stepped forward amid enthusiasm.

"Boys, I thank you for this confidence. I trust I shall not disgrace you. My idea is to take to the mountains. Look round, and collar everything of ours that seems to be useful, and then off with you to Caermelyn!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Oh, I'll tell—I'll tell!" exclaimed a hated voice. Glastowe had crept up till within hearing. "I am going to Mr. Tempest to say that Peers Bidston is the ringleader, and he will get punished. Ah!"

"Let us take Glass Alley with us, and tie him to the hawk-trap!" shouted a number of the boys.

But the captain replied:

"Leave him alone. He will be a nuisance. It will take us all our time to defend the position, without taking care of prisoners. We can deal with him another day."

So the lads who had sped after the traitor returned, having driven him back into the school-house.

"Come here, a dozen of you!" shouted the commander.

And he gave the willing volunteers a hurried instruction. He sent other parties to different places, and in a few minutes they were all ready for the march.

Mr. Tempest, supported by the masters, and followed skulkingly by Glastowe, now appeared, and the principal said:

"Boys, I hear you have commenced an organised rebellion. This can only result in disgrace for yourselves and myself. Come back into the school."

"Let the captain reply!" shouted the rebels exultantly.

"I have to answer on behalf of those who have put me in command," said Peers proudly, "and the only terms we can accept are an amnesty for all of us and the expulsion of Mark Glastowe from the school."

"We cannot grant anything of the kind." Mr. Tempest again began to grow hopelessly angry. "I shall take no dictation from my boys. I am the chief here, and will be so!"

The group of teachers stood near the door of the schoolroom, and the rebels were massed at the opposite side of the playground. The scene was most picturesque, for the determination shown by the boys was almost sublime.

"Very well, sir," answered the captain, "you must take the consequences. We shall leave you without scholars until you accept our terms!"

"Then I shall call upon your parents to come and take you all home."

"If you do, the school will lose all its reputation."

"Peers Bidston, I have had enough trouble with you, and I hereby declare you to be expelled from the school!"

"Shame!" cried all the juvenile rebels.

"Mr. Skipley, Mr. Shaker," snapped the principal, "assist me to bring these rebellious rascals to their senses. Capture as many of them as you can."

"Through the playground door, boys!" ordered the captain.

In a few seconds everybody was at the other side of the door, which was promptly shut, and held by some of the bigger boys, while the others flew, laden as they were, across the fields towards the fortified mountain.

The masters did not catch a single boy, and in less than an hour all were safely ensconced upon the mountain-top.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RESOURCEFULNESS OF PEERS BIDSTON—TWO SUCCESSFUL FORAGING PARTIES—HEAVY ARTILLERY AND SMALL ARMS—DICKY AND TOMMY WIN PROMOTION—THE ENEMY ARE SIGHTED.

"Fall in, men!" commanded the captain.

The school had been drilled by a sergeant-instructor of Volunteers. The work had been distasteful enough to the lads, for the old sergeant was a crusty fellow, and determined to make soldiers of every youngster under his care. Now, however, the scholars were delighted that Instructor Watts had been such a martinet. They formed up in files with the greatest expedition.

"The company will divide into four sections. Number off from the right.

The roll reached the respectable total of fifty-nine.

"Numbers 1 to 15 will form the first section, numbers 16 to 30 will form the second section, 31 to 45 will form the third section, and the remaining fourteen will be the fourth section. Sections will separate by two paces. Company, by the left, quick march!"

The manœuvre was quickly performed.

"Now, men," continued the officer, "I propose to appoint a lieutenant, Horace Ward."

There was a loud cheer.

"I will also appoint a sergeant for each section. Bill Bates shall be sergeant of No. 1, Charles Seddon of No. 2, Richard Biggs of No. 3, and Reggie Adams of No. 4. Tom Verge and Dicky Sabian shall be my orderlies, to carry messages. Our force, therefore, comprises three sections of fourteen men and a sergeant, and one section of ten men and a sergeant, with a captain, a lieutenant, and two orderlies. No. 4 section will take sentinel duty, and Lieutenant Ward will post these men round the trenches in such a way that we shall get the earliest notice of the approaching enemy."

"Three cheers for Captain Bidston!" cried Ward.

And there was the heartiest response.

No. 4 section marched off, and Ward soon had them carefully placed. As it was a case of genuine warfare to them, they had no idea of playing, and every boy did his best to carry out instructions.

"Now, sections No. 1, 2, and 3, we will arrange our camp. Fortunately, the weather is fine, and tents are not needed at present; but for the night we will contrive something to shelter us later on. Where did you fellows leave the fire-engine?"

A dozen boys strode out of the ranks, and the leader, who happened to be the fat Sergeant Biggs, said:

"At the bottom of the hill, captain, according to orders. We could not get it up before the fall-in."

"Very good. Take your section, and haul it up in the quickest manner."

Biggs saluted solemnly, and marched his company off. The fire-engine he referred to was a neat little affair on four wheels, capable of throwing a strong jet of water for a considerable distance, and, of course, it was kept at the school for use in case of an outbreak of fire. In front of it was a handle, to drag it with, and in the boxes at the side were three fifty-feet lengths of hose and a couple of branches. It was a herculean task to get this engine into the fort; but those fifteen boys did it, and enjoyed the work immensely. Have not tasks of even greater magnitude been done by British warriors upon many a battlefield?

Captain Peers next directed section No. 2 to construct a dam across a natural reservoir in the path of a little stream, which came from a spring right at the top of the hill.

"Work hard, men," said the commandant, "and let us have a large store of water, and if anybody comes to attack us we will easily drive them off with the fire-hose!"

"Turning to No. 1 section, he said:

"Your duty will be to forage. I have had nothing to eat, except chocolate, since tea-time yesterday, and I am simply famished. As you came away without breakfast, you will, no doubt, be in the same condition. I have some money here, and I want all the fellows to make me their banker on this occasion. That we can settle later on. Sergeant Bates and his men will run to the village shop just at the other side of the mountain, and will buy as much bread, cheese, bacon, tea, coffee, cocoa, biscuits, and so on, as he thinks he and his men can carry. Keep a sharp outlook for the enemy, and don't get captured. Come back here as soon as you can, and, in the meantime, we will have a fire made. By the way, you had better bring a tin cup for each of us, and a big kettle. They sell these things there, I believe."

Delighted with their daring sortie, No. 1 sped away, and were soon seen climbing the main face of the adjoining mountain, which they had to cross in order to reach the village shop to which the captain had alluded.

Ward returned a few minutes after they had gone, and to him the chieftain said:

"I sent No. 1, in charge of Bates, over the mountain to the store on the other side. I gave them a sovereign—one of those my guardian presented me with yesterday. He little knew how soon that money would come in useful! He would be shocked if he were to hear how I am applying it. I told No. 1 to go over to this place, because nobody there will have heard of our rebellion, and I should not wonder if they get back all right."

The captain then set to work with the engineers engaged upon the embankment. There were plenty of slate-like stones about, and these were laid one upon another until an excellent dam had been formed, it being backed with earth, torn up with pointed sticks, wickets, fishing-rods, etc., and carried in jackets. It soon became evident that the wall would keep back the water, for the water-level rose slowly, but steadily, as they proceeded.

Meanwhile, three were struggling in a sturdy manner with the fire-engine. They dragged it round to the back of the mountain, where the slope was not quite so steep, and where there was a sort of natural road by the side of the brook in the angle between Caermelyn and the main range. They perspired tremendously; but, at last, amidst cheers, the machine was thrust through the ancient gateway, and entered the entrenchment.

"I tell you what it is," suggested Ward; "this is a splendid weapon, but it gives us too little range. It is like a big gun in the fort; but we should have small arms to support it. What do you say to pea-shooters?"

"The very thing!" cried the captain; "pea-shooters and syringes! We can get some splendid garden syringes very cheaply. If we have them we must also have buckets. I am willing to pay for ten syringes, and the like number of buckets. How are we to obtain them?"

"Let us go, captain," said Tom Verge, alluding to Dicky and himself. "We can sneak down quietly and get to the station; then we will go to Poolmouth, buy the things, have them put into a parcel, including a bag of peas, and get the parcel conveyed in a port-wherry to the shore yonder. You can then send along the tops of the mountains till you come to the cliffs, and so the things can be got here."

"Right, Verge; cut and run!"

The boys, having received the money, vanished at once. They had a most exciting time. It was necessary to cross the river in order to reach the station, and there was no bridge except that close to the school-house.

While they were slinking along the footpath, at the back of the school, where a high wooden fence divided the pathway from the private garden of the principal, they heard the voice of the latter conversing with the assistants. They paused, put their ears to the chinks in the hoarding, and overheard some important information.

Mr. Brane Tempest was talking to both his coadjutors; and this is what he said:

"From what I gather, the young rascals have gone into the mountains. I assume they propose to stay there until I capitulate. I shall do nothing of the kind. They have no food, and no shelter, and I have sent round word to all the tradesmen not to supply them with anything. Moreover, as far as I know, they have no money, and when night comes down I feel sure they will get frightened, and come back asking for forgiveness!"

"They are a daring lot of monkeys," said Mr. Shaker, "and I am afraid they will find some means of holding out against us."

"I do not think so," answered Mr. Tempest. "What is your idea, Mr. Skipley?"

"They are sure to come round. The idea of their being able to stay up yonder without shelter or food is, of course, preposterous. We must keep quiet, and take advantage of the holiday. When they do return, my advice is, to severely punish the ringleaders, and put down any such disobedience of orders in future."

"Quite so," said Mr. Brane Tempest, this policy agreeing with his own purpose.

The boys had heard enough. Full of glee they fled stationwards, and only just missed being seen and nabbed by the forlorn Mark Glastowe, who, in a state of misery, was walking backwards and forwards in the school cricket-field, whence the footpath was visible.

There happened to be a train waiting, and in a few minutes they were disembarked at Poolmouth. They sought the most business-like ironmonger's shop, and, much to the amusement of the assistant, bought ten syringes, ten buckets, four dozen pea-shooters, two spades, a large coil of cord, and a kettle. The things were packed into a crate, and carried down to the quay by a barrow-porter. The lads further purchased a sack of large white peas, and a couple of meat pies for their own consumption.

The boatman was soon engaged, and in a wherry carrying two large lugs the novel munitions of war were quickly got round to the right spot. The pies were consumed en route.

The garrison of Caermelyn were busy upon the water scheme, when the other foraging-party came into view on the opposite mountain steep.

"Go and help them, boys!" ordered the captain.

The relief-party found Bates and his comrades loaded to staggering point with provisions. There were many loaves of bread, and one boy was hung over with tin cups, till he looked like a scaled animal. Another fellow was carrying a cauldron, wrong end up, over his head. In a short time the stores were safely packed in the fort, and in a little while further, all hands, except those on guard, sat down to a hearty meal of bread-and-cheese.

"Give us your adventures, Sergeant Bates," said the captain, when the rations had all been consumed.

"With pleasure, Captain Peers. We took the shop by storm. It happened that the shopkeeper had baked yesterday afternoon, and his place was well filled. He had also got in recently a new supply of tin cups, of which he had ordered a gross. We told him that we were camping out, and that if he would let us have things cheap we would come again. He seemed pleased, and gave us a decent discount. It was a long way, and the stuff was so heavy that we had to rest several times. We saw nobody but a gamekeeper, who eyed us suspiciously. As there is a right of road across the moorland, he could not interfere."

From the fort a considerable stretch of the sea was visible, and the watchful captain perceived the lugger creeping close in shore, as Bates concluded his narration. He assumed at once, from the tactics of the vessel, that it was engaged in his service, so he ordered sections No. 2 and 3 to fly shorewards.

The two commissioners had landed the goods, and were sitting upon them when the warriors arrived. Bulk was broken, and the weight, distributed among so many hands, seemed to vanish. The crate was carried, Sergeant Biggs pointing out that it might be useful. In this way the necessary ammunition and weapons were smuggled into the camp.

"Welcome, men!" cried the captain. "It has been a very risky thing to let you leave us in this manner; but now we can stand a severe assault. You have done bravely, my two orderlies, and in recognition of your skill and daring, I hereby promote you to the position of aides-de-camp."

All the lads gave a hearty cheer. Verge and Sabian were immensely pleased with their new dignity, and they strutted about in great glee.

"Before work is commenced again," said the captain, "we will have an account of the adventures of my aides."

The lads crowded together to listen, and Sabian told the story, and also the very interesting information obtained from the arch-enemy, Mr. Temple. Never were spies so successful in obtaining evidence of the enemy's intentions.

"So we are to be starved out, eh?" chuckled the captain, "and we are to be allowed to creep back and plead for forgiveness. I presume, men, that we will stick to our conditions—an amnesty for everybody, and for Glastowe expulsion?"

"Yes!" cried all hands excitedly.

"And we will defend this position against all comers?"

"Yes!"

"Hip!" roared Ward, and a loud British cheer followed.

"I will now hold a consultation with my officers," said the commander, who thereupon led Lieutenant Ward and his two aides-de-camp aside.

"The embankment is nearly finished," said the captain, "and it is rapidly filling with water. The fire-engine is standing within the breastwork, overlooking the road from the mountain, where we are most likely to be assaulted. All the syringes are in good working order, and I shall have them fixed in the guards' quarters, like a stand of arms. The buckets must be kept filled, and placed in equally convenient places. Therefore we are fairly ready for the enemy whenever they shall come. I think our best plan now is to raise a rampart across the entrance, otherwise we shall be vulnerable just there."

"No doubt," answered Ward.

"I will tell you what to do!" answered Tommy Verge excitedly: "make a trap there. Dig a ditch and cover it with soil, and then, when the fellows come, they will fall into it."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the captain; "the very thing! provided we can make the hole deep enough. I think the rock is very near the surface."

He turned to his warriors, and gave the following order:

"The same company will return to the dam and complete it; the others will set to work to make a trench, under Lieutenant Ward, across the entrance to the camp."

Guard was relieved, and dinner was served out to them, and the remaining "men" were soon deeply engaged.

It appeared that the entrance to the fortification had been considerably lower at some far distant period, and that the friable rock and the vegetable mould produced in the course of ages had gradually filled it up, leaving between the two bastions a curved depression instead of the original gateway. In the centre of this depression the spadesmen were soon knee-deep, constructing a neat trench, the others carrying the earth to the embankment in the buckets, which were temporarily emptied for the occasion.

Sergeant Bates, while lustily digging at the bottom of the cutting, struck his spade upon something hard, and grumbled about the stones. But when he came to expose the object his spade had discovered for him he was surprised to find that it was a metal article. He picked it up.

"Look here, boys!" he cried.

Everybody crowded round, and he rubbed the dirt of centuries from it.

"It is a helmet!" they all shouted in great astonishment.

"This must have been one of the helmets worn by the ancient Britons," Ward explained, taking the interesting find into his hand.

DO YOU WISH TO MAKE MONEY? If so, glance at Page 16.

When the thing had been cleaned sufficiently to show its composition, it was found to be of silver.

Peers was very much affected by the find, and he said:

"This has adorned the head of some British chieftain, and has fallen there with him in warfare. How interesting for us to come across it now! Do you know, I dreamt wonderful things up here last night. I could see the battalions marching, and hear their cries in battle!"

"Have it polished, and wear it yourself, Peers. It will give you a fierce aspect when we do meet the enemy!"

"It would be a lark, by Jove! Here, you two young esquires, come and attend upon your knight. It is the duty of an esquire to polish up his lord's armour. This helmet was manufactured hundreds of years before the days of chivalry, but that does not matter. Get it cleaned, gentlemen — get it cleaned!"

No task could have pleased Tommy Verge and Dicky Sabian more than this.

The two officers walked back to the trench, and saw it covered, first with light sticks, next with fern-leaves, and next with earth and moss, so as to hide it effectually. By the time this and the water scheme had been completed it was six o'clock, and the captain ordered all hands to tea.

After a meal of cocoa and bread-and-butter, it was time to think of sleeping quarters.

"What shall we do for shelter?" asked the chieftain, who was examining the polished headpiece.

"The only terms we can accept are an amnesty for all of us, and the expulsion of Mark Glastowe."

"Send down to Foxhall Farm and borrow a couple of rick-cloths for tents. They will make splendid ones. Mr. Robinson, of Foxhall, might lend them to me if I go. We are good friends."

"Thank you, Ward. That is a magnificent idea! You had better go at once, with half of No. 1 section, including the sergeant. There is a good hazel-hedge on the way, which has been allowed to run too high. Get sufficient sticks from it to hold up the canvas."

As the latest sortie-party were about to start, the captain said:

"Keep well ot of danger. Practise your Indian warfare tactics, and let nobody see you except Mr. Robinson."

"No wise man does anything reckless," was the lieutenant's answer.

And with this the expedition disappeared over the northern trenches.

They had been gone only a few minutes, when the sergeant of the guard hurried up with the disquieting intelligence that the enemy were approaching from the mountain pathway.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ENEMY ARE HAILED—THE CAPTAIN GIVES FAIR WARNING—THE ATTACK, AND HOW IT WAS MET—AN EXCITING STRUGGLE—BIGGS TAKES A PRISONER—THE ENEMY RETIRE—THE COURT-MARTIAL.

"Everybody keep quiet, and out of sight," ordered the chieftain, immediately putting the helmet upon his head. It was a heavy affair, but the romance of wearing it under such circumstances could not be resisted. "I will go and see who they are."

He crept to the southern bastion, and, peeping over the breast of it, saw three persons slowly making their way up the glen towards the neck of level ground separating Caermelyn from the mountain-chain.

They were Mr. Brane Tempest and the two masters. After a bit a fourth person came into view, creeping slowly in the rear. It was Mark Glastowe.

"Hang it! I wish Ward was back," muttered the captain. "He will be angry if he misses the fun. Here, Tommy, fly after Lieutenant Ward," he continued, speaking louder, "and tell him we are to be stormed, and that the enemy is close upon us. Tell him I will hold them back by parleying as long as I can, and he and his men are to return as quickly as possible."

"Yes, captain," was the answer.

And Tommy vanished.

"Be as quiet as the grave, and do not show a single head," ordered the commander. "No. 3 section will run the hose to the reservoir, and make everything ready for the attack in that direction. Biggs had better take the branch. No. 2 section will take the syringes, and the others will arm with pea-shooters. The sentinels must keep very careful look-out round the trenches, for there may be an attempt to outflank us."

The glee with which these belligerent orders were executed may be imagined. The grim visage of war can stir the human heart as no gentler features can.

Mark Glastowe was a coward, yet so keen was his interest in the events now going forward that he was compelled to follow his masters, upon learning that they were about to approach the rebels.

With the aid of his binocular, Mr. Tempest had been able to perceive occasionally parties of his pupils hurrying to and fro within the ancient fort, and they seemed so business-like that he became uneasy, fearful lest his prognostication as to their early capitulation should prove inaccurate. So he determined to go up himself and see what they were about. For safety he took his masters, feeling sure that the approach of the three would strike awe into the schoolboy breast.

Slowly the masters mounted the steep, and, having gained the "isthmus," they approached the gateway at their leisure.

They talked together in this strain:

"I do not see a single boy," said the principal anxiously. "What can have become of them?"

"I anticipate that they are eyeing us busily just now," returned Mr. Bone Shaker. "The young monkeys are too 'cute to expose themselves."

"Nay, they must have gone," asserted Mr. Skipley, B.A., who wore glasses, being short-sighted, and whose nose was perked forward in a laughable manner.

None of the trio was particularly appreciative of the enterprise. Schoolboys are notoriously mischievous.

"Well, we must get to the top of the mount, and then we can look round."

NEXT WEEK, "WHITE IDOLS,"

So they strode forward a little faster, and came within fifty yards of the gateway.

Glastowe, being emboldened by the quietness, followed rapidly, and Captain Peers noted his position with considerable care.

At last the masters reached a spot just about thirty yards from the concealed pit, and Peers thought it was time to stop them. So he mounted to the top of the bastion, wearing his helmet, and, striking an attitude such as he deemed would enhance his authority, he shouted:

"Who goes there?"

The enemy stopped, and Shaker began to laugh.

"Why, its Peers Bidston," he chuckled, "wearing something atrocious in the shape of headgear!"

"What do you mean, ridiculous fellow?" said the principal. "You know us very well. Where are your rascally companions? Just come out of that, and return with us to the school, or everyone of you shall be flogged! For two pins I would return you to your parents, the lot of you!"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I am selected by my comrades to tell you that we shall not return to school unless you agree to our terms. You know what they are, for we told you them before. If you cannot accept our ultimatum, we shall resist any attempt to get us back to the school. We are prepared for the worst. We intend to hold this position against all comers, and, until you can sign a treaty in the terms I have previously stated, I advise you to go away at once."

Mr. Brane Tempest was, to use a little slang for want of a better word, "flabbergasted." But Shaker, who was a favourite with the boys, said:

"Look here, Peers Bidston, you are acting in a very silly fashion. You are all right, you know, during the daytime; but you must remember that the night will come, when, even at this time of the year, it will be very cold up here. You will catch a chill, all of you, and we shall have more patients than we can accommodate for the infirmary which you escaped from in such a daring fashion. Just come back with us, and I am sure we shall get on well together, as of yore."

"Our terms are an amnesty for us all, and expulsion for Mark Glastowe."

"Well, we can consider all this when we get back to the school."

"Nonsense, Mr. Shaker! we cannot leave this place unless we have a clear understanding, and I decline to parley with you further. Why should I? If you do not retire at once, we shall open fire!"

The captain jumped down into the ditch, and signalled to the men at the handles of the fire-engine, and in a few seconds water was at full pressure in the pipes. All the buckets were filled, and carriers were ready to refill them. The syringe-men stood two to each bucket, to give reserves.

Mr. Tempest shouted:

"I shall come and chastise you all. Anybody that I can catch will severely suffer for this."

He set off at a run towards the entrance, and the masters could only do likewise.

"Now, men, keep steady!" cried the captain. "Take a good aim, and fire!"

The great gun — that is, the fire-engine—belched forth a thick and powerful stream of water, and the small-arms—that is, the syringes—sent forth ten thinner but quite as penetrating streams. The aim was good in each case.

The fire-engine jet caught Mr. Tempest full in the breast, and knocked him backwards, wetting him to the skin. Then it struck the masters, and doubled them up. And the disengaged soldiers peppered the enemy with peas. There was a determined effort to get through, and Mr. Tempest actually did reach the concealed pit, and fell into it with a cry of terror. The relentless fire-jet followed him, and spattered mud and water about in a most disconcerting fashion. So the good man scrambled out of the trap, and fled precipitately out of range. He was followed, of course, by his two assistants, who shook the water from them in the most rueful manner.

Suddenly the captain recollected Glastowe.

"Section No. 3," he said hurriedly, "make a flank movement from the right and down the slope. Catch Glass Alley, who is hiding in the bracken just yonder, and bring him back with you. He shall be tied to the hawk-pole!"

Without a sound the section dashed off, and they had come upon Glastowe and collared him before he or the flying enemy perceived the manœuvre.

Glastowe yelled from fright, and offered no resistance. He was dragged upwards by the hair of his head, and could not hang back.

The masters saw him, and ran angrily towards his captors. Fortunately, Biggs had the common-sense to lead his men towards the zone in which the fire-hose would be in range, and this soon drove the masters back, so that the captive sneak was brought triumphantly into the fort, amid the loudest cheers.

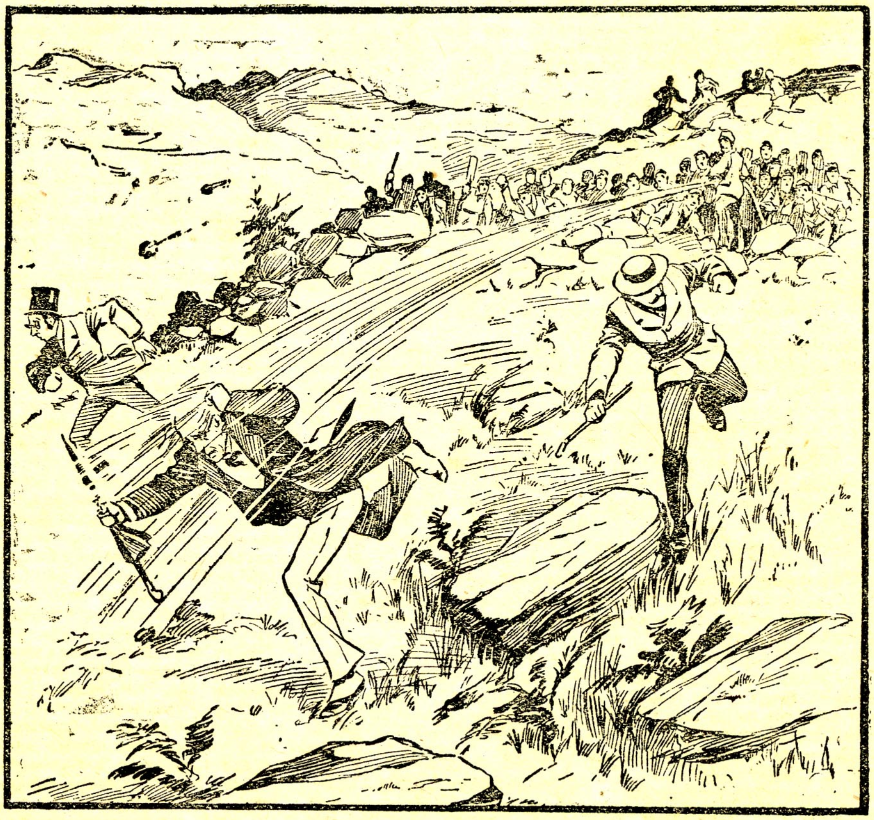
Mr. Tempest shouted—in a rage, as usual—for some time at his rebellious students from a safe distance, and then he went down the hillside with his companions at a rapid rate.

Just then Lieutenant Ward and the detachment of No. 1 section, who had accompanied him, appeared, laden with the rick-cloths, and with a bundle of long, sturdy hazels. Tommy Verge was with them, having come up with them as they were approaching the farm of Mr. Robinson.

"What a shame," said Lieutenant Ward, "that we should be done out of the fun!"

"I knew you would break your heart over it. That was why I sent after you," said the captain. "Never mind, it is a soldier's duty to obey. And you were serving the commonwealth just as well as if you had been here in action. Oh, it was glorious! You should have seen the condition of the governor, all covered with mud, and soaking with water. My eye! the pea-shooters did some mischief. I could see the poor enemy hiding their faces under their coat collars, so accurate was the aim. We have a prisoner, too, he went on, pointing to Mark, who was blubbering like an infant, and using the language of the stable alternately with the most abject appeals for mercy.

"Don't kill me," he moaned, "for I have done nothing to deserve this treatment. Don't kill me. I am getting tired of this sort of life, and want to go back to my father."



The enemy fled precipitately out of range.

BY W. SHAW RAE.

"Who is your father?" demanded his jailor, Biggs.

"He belongs to the stud."

"What stud?"

"Ah! You are pumping me, youngsters," said the captive, with a sly wink. "Not if I know it. You can just let me alone."

"We will hold a court-martial over this prisoner," said the captain, who directed his officers to take their seats upon a mound, and ordered the jailors to bring Glastowe before the tribunal.

"You are accused," said the chief, "of causing this rebellion by your lying and deceitful tales. You are a common sneak. In answer to this accusation, what have you to say?"

The prisoner closed his mouth, went white with either fear or anger, and refused to say anything.

"Very good. We take your silence to be an admission of your guilt. The sentence of this court is that you shall be tied to the hawk-trap, and left there until further orders."

Biggs obtained some of the cord brought from Poolmouth, and proceeded to bind Glastowe as directed.

The hawk-trap, a familiar object on the summits of British mountains which are preserved for game, was a tall, stout pole, set into the ground, and having at the top of it a small flat table, very much like the truck of a mast, upon which was fastened an iron spring-toothed trap. The apparatus being set, and the ground in the neighbourhood being baited, the hawks, of which sportsmen are so jealous, are attracted to the spot, and in order that they may investigate the bait, they alight upon the trap and are captured.

It was to this apparatus that the sneak was securely bound, and he was left to his fate, whereupon he commenced howling pretty much as he had done when planted against the cricket-pavilion of the school.

The noise was disagreeable; but the boys put up with it with considerable patience.

In the meantime all hands were engaged upon the erection of tents, and as night soon came, all except the guard lay down upon the fern-leaf beds, in a condition of tired, but most delightful, good humour.

Captain Peers sent a messenger to inform the captive that if he did not "cut his din," he would be gagged.

This threat, from one who was becoming remarkable for the accuracy and punctuality with which he carried out his promises, was promptly obeyed.

CHAPTER X.

A SERIOUS CONFERENCE AT THE GRAMMAR-SCHOOL—MR. TEMPEST MUST DO SOMETHING—ANOTHER ATTACK ON THE FORT ORGANISED—THE ENEMY REINFORCED—THE STORMERS ADVANCE IN TWO DIVISIONS—HOW THE PRINCIPAL WAS MADE PRISONER—A CAPITULATION.

At the hour of eleven o'clock that night a very serious conference was going on at the Firdale Grammar School. Mr. Brane Tempest and his two assistants were closeted with the chairman of the governors and the secretary of the foundation. The condition of things was very disquieting.

"I cannot understand," said the reverend gentleman, who acted as chairman of the governing body, "how you can allow your pupils to escape in this way. Surely there must be something radically wrong in the administration of the school to produce such unanimity among the boys?"

"The whole series of events has been most unfortunate," replied the master, "and the ringleader seems to be Peers Bidston, who is acting as commander at the fort yonder. He disobeyed me, and broke the rules of the school upon several occasions, in such a glaring manner that I had to punish him. He then induced all the boys to rebel, and we were accordingly quite powerless. The thing was done so suddenly and so effectually that it would have taken twenty men to restrain them."

"My experience of boys," said the chairman, "is this, that they will not act in such a manner unless their sense of justice is very much outraged. There must have been some mistake. Are you sure that you punished Peers Bidston justly? If, by any chance, he has been illtreated, under an error of judgment, that might account for the trouble, for I know he is adored by the lads."

"Well! I cannot admit," said Mr. Brane Tempest, "that I have acted with any greater precipitancy than I usually do, and, as you know, I am seldom guilty of punishing anyone unjustly. However, we must make a careful inquiry into the matter as soon as the boys come back. At the same time, for the sake of discipline, I cannot think of giving way. They must return here unconditionally."

"It is for you to take care of your authority," said the chairman, "and I will offer no suggestion as to what course you should adopt. But pray recollect that, if the story of this business get to the ears of the boys' parents, or if it become a matter of common knowledge, it will do the school an infinite amount of harm. Therefore I trust you will put an end to this absurd conduct at the earliest moment."

"Certainly! I have sent my gardener for the two men who act as keepers for the gentleman who has the shooting rights over this mountain district; no doubt they will consider the action of the boys detrimental to the game, and will assist us in driving the young rascals out of their retreat. If we can once get hold of some of them, we can break up the ring and restore our authority."

"No doubt."

"Well, I expect the keepers here shortly. I propose to accompany them, with Mr. Shipley, Mr. Shaker, and my gardener to the mountain. We will go at once, armed with canes, and will take the troublesome fellows by surprise, and get them back at once. They may take cold, and no end of mischief, sleeping in such an elevated position, without protection from the chilly air of the night."

"I trust your enterprise will succeed," said the chairman, rising to depart. The secretary indicated his intention to accompany the attacking force.

Two hours later the principal, his gardener, and one burly gamekeeper approached the camp from the "isthmus," while the other keeper, the assistant masters, and the secretary slowly climbed the mountain at the other side, for the purpose of entering the entrenchment from the rear of the former line of attack.

The brave defenders by this time were all fast asleep, excepting the sentinels, who sturdily did their duty. Even Mark Glastowe was dozing, stiff though his limbs were from the cramped position in which he had to stand.

Suddenly the sentinel nearest the hidden pitfall saw a dark, moving shadow, and whistled slightly to attract the sergeant, who was standing not far away.

"Sergeant," he said, when that officer observed the signal, "come here, I can just make out something moving against the shadow there. The hill is in a deep shadow, although the sky glows still towards the north."

"Of course," said Sergeant Bates, "at this time of the year we never get an absolutely dark sky, except in very cloudy weather. But, as you say, the ground is dark enough, and there may be somebody creeping up there for all we can see. Are you sure it is not a sheep?"

"I should not like to give a positive opinion; but, if you will stay here for a minute in my place, I will creep down and reconnoitre."

"Very good!" replied Bates.

The sentinel crawled rapidly down the slope and vanished.

Almost as soon as he had gone there came a sharp whistle from the opposite side of the camp. Instantly, Bates rushed to the two tents and shook one of the occupants in each, telling him to arouse the others. Thus all were on the alert, and under arms in a few seconds. The sentinel came back hurriedly, with the information that three persons were creeping slowly towards the camp, while from the further trench came the news that an attacking party were approaching there also.

Captain Peers got his men formed up with the utmost promptitude. His face was pale, but resolute, and every man felt that to hold the fort upon this occasion would require all their courage and all their resources.

"Men," said Peers, in a low tone, "there is evidently an organised attack being made upon us, for the enemy are in two divisions, and are trying to catch us asleep. On this side we will keep the fire-engine and one section, with only three syringes. Reduce the number of sentinels to one half, Lieutenant Ward, and bid them be extra careful. Then get all the available force and prepare to meet whoever appears on the western side. If it comes to close quarters, do not scruple to throw them back down the slope. If you get short of ammunition, let the grassy turf be dug up with the spade, and throw that. We have reached a crisis, and must act like British soldiers. Only pluck and endurance will make us the victors!"

A low cheer was raised after this speech, and off the western division went, full of determination to do or die.

The bustle had aroused Mark from his lethargy, and, to render things more disconcerting, he once more began to howl.

"Oh, I'm going to die," he whined, "somebody come and set me free. My back is breaking, and my blood is gathering into my head."

No one took the least notice of him in the camp; but the strange sounds he produced struck terror to the hearts of the invaders on both sides. Even the gamekeepers, used as they were to travelling about the mountains in the night, could not stand such unearthly wails, and thus the cowardly fellow actually assisted his enemies in the task they had before them.

The fire-engine team were at their posts. Peers called his "aides," and, giving them each a pile of fern-leaves from the tents, said to them:

"Run down the hill, and put these upon some convenient place, then set fire to them, and scuttle back at your quickest speed."

The instruction was obeyed smartly, and soon a fierce blaze arose, illuminating the scene with a lurid, wild effect. So fortunate were Tommy and Dicky that they actually started the fires on each side of the approaching enemy, who were thrown into bright relief just as they were prepared to make a dash at the entrenchments; the chagrin of Mr. Tempest at this may be imagined. He cried: "Come along quickly!" brandishing his cane, and threatening to punish any boy who resisted him.

He got a cold douche for his trouble, sent forward with such force as to stop his headlong career. But, unhappily, the gamekeeper was of too stern a stuff to be kept back with water.

"Pepper the stranger!" ordered the captain, to his "archers," whose peas began to patter upon the face of the sturdy gamekeeper.

The man did not stop to swear; he swore as he came along, and shouted:

"You young beggars, if I get hold of you I will teach you to play your tricks with me!"

The gardener, timid in consequence of association, where that, to him, everlasting object of trepidation, a schoolboy, was concerned, hung back in great alarm.

Bates rushed up to the captain, and whispered:

"He is going wide of the trap. Let us run out and entice him towards it?"

"Do, by all means."

The sergeant beckoned to a chum, and off they scuttered down the bank, brandishing sticks, and shouting defiantly. They jumped neatly over the pitfall, which had been carefully restored, and, then, as the principal and his burly warrior made a sudden dash to catch them, they came back again, once more quietly crossing over the trap, into which both adversaries floundered, just as the master was in the act of shouting:

"Look out, they have a pit somewhere here!"

"Now, lads, down upon them!" roared the captain.

And before the disconcerted enemy could recover their feet they were collared each by half a dozen desperate youths, who shouted:

"You are our prisoners. Promise not to escape, and we will not hurt you!"

This request had a dissimilar effect. It made the principal more angry than ever, and it made the gamekeeper so extremely limp from laughter that he was absolutely powerless to resist any longer.

"Oh, oh, oh!" he croaked, as he lay upon his back in the cutting, with a lot of boys on his chest and legs. "Oh, oh! my sides—how they ache! This is the richest business—this takes the biscuit! Look here, governor, can't you let these young beggars have their way? Hang me! but they deserve it."

"They get more impudent than ever!" asserted the principal. "It is all very well for you to laugh, Jenkins; but what about my authority? I have to live with the young beggars, as you call them, who will become absolutely ungovernable."

"I hope you will promise, sir," said Peers. "You shall not be subjected to any further indignity if you will. I may tell you, sir, that all the boys respect you, notwithstanding what has occurred, and that we have not acted as we have done from any real disire to be discourteous. When we did rebel, however, we made the most fun we could out of it. For that you could not blame us."

"Let me get up. I promise!" said Mr. Tempest, in a somewhat surly tone.

The gamekeeper was still laughing heartily. He had never enjoyed such a joke before.

"Don't think me a traitor, sir," he said between his convulsive gasps; "but I could not help it. They conquered me by making me laugh. When I laugh I get as helpless as a kitten."

As the principal was awkwardly returning to "the upright attitude of man," his gardener ran up, puffing as if he had been most violently engaged in the attack, instead of hanging in the rear, as had really been the case.

Mr. Tempest looked at him suspiciously, but said nothing.

"Will you come to our tent, sir?" said Captain Peers. "And there we can get a fire, and dry your clothes. We can also talk over the question of a treaty. You must admit, of course, that under the circumstances, as you are our prisoner, and have promised not to escape, the only way out of the difficulty is an arrangement agreeable to both parties."

At that moment there was a loud cheer from the opposite side of the camp, followed by a series of sounds indicating that a desperate struggle was going on there.

"Would you like to call your men off, sir?" said Peers. "For we have a strong force yonder, and I have given instructions to throw over any person who tries to enter the camp. It may be troublesome if we go on."

"Yes, I think we had better order an armistice," remarked Mr. Tempest, for the first time using a word of a character in keeping with the idea which had been carried out by the boys.

They therefore hurried across the top, and reached the trench in time to see, in the dim light, that the defenders were having a warm time of it.

The second gamekeeper and Mr. Bone Shaker, both men of noted physical ability, were just in the act of forcing their way up to the top of the parapet, in spite of the crowd of lads, who were pelting them with bits of turf. The lads were preparing to charge them, and push them back at all hazards, when the voice of the schoolmaster was heard shouting:

"Stop, boys! Stop, Mr. Shaker! I have acknowledged myself to be a captive, and I desire that we shall cease hostilities—for a while, at any rate."

For a moment the boys were thunderstruck to hear the well-known voice behind them. But when they realised the meaning of what Mr. Tempest said, they raised a wonderful cheer—a cry of victory, in fact.

In a few minutes the defenders and their adversaries were seated on the upper ground in the fort before a huge fire of dry and very inflammable bits of decayed gorse-stems, which were to be found in abundance around.

Peers and Ward talked seriously to Mr. Tempest.

Mark Glastowe had kept quiet during the latter part, but he now began to give tongue again.

"What have you done with Glastowe?" inquired the schoolmaster.

"He is tied to the hawk-pole. He is such a mean rascal that we meant to punish him. Why he should be so extremely bitter against me I cannot make out. You recollect the accusation that I was talking to your daughters? I freely admit that I did so; but, while I was so engaged, he came up and was most insolent. It was in consequence of his rude and caddish behaviour then that we fastened him to the wall of the pavilion."

"Appearances were certainly against you, Bidston."

"No doubt, sir; and I do not claim to have been over good. At the same time, it was too bad to be punished continually for things I was not responsible for, especially when it was done at the instance of a fellow who seemed to be bent on spiting me. Our terms, sir, are that you forgive us, and take us back on the old conditions, and that you banish Glastowe from the school."

"That is very awkward. You see, Mark is one of our best boarders, and was sent here at the instance of a very influential man. He pays for the best of everything."

"No doubt, sir. But one unpopular scholar will probably drive half a dozen good ones away."

"I will consider. But now let us go to Glastowe, and set him at liberty. He is howling as if he were being killed."

"That only shows what a coward he is," replied Peers.

CHAPTER XI.

GLASTOWE'S CONFESSION—HOW MR. TEMPEST WAS DECEIVED—MORDAUNT BANE GIVES THE PAPER—HIS FATHER'S DECISION—MORDAUNT'S THREATS—THE CARRYING OF PEERS BIDSTON.

"Now, Glastowe," said Mr. Tempest, "what have you to say for yourself?"

"I am nearly dead, sir. Do forgive me!"

"This is the consequence of disobeying orders, Glastowe. If you had stayed at the school, as you should have done—for you got no instructions to follow us—you would have been safe. As it is, you have had an experience which, I trust, will be a lesson to you. You know what it is to be in the hands of enemies who despise and detest you. I am sorry, boy, you have made yourself so unpopular in the school."

"Do set me free, sir."

"I am seriously thinking of leaving you here till the morning."

"No, no! don't do that, sir. I am nearly dead. My legs are dying, I am sure; I am so tightly bound."

Mr. Tempest made no reply, and in a second the wretched youth began whiningly:

"Do cut these ropes, sir. If you will, I will not persecute Peers Bidston any more. I was put up to do it. I never liked the job!"

The principal smelt a rat.

"What do you say?"

"Oh, I was put up to it, indeed, sir!"

"You mean you were directed by someone to tell lies about this young gentleman?"

"Certainly, sir. If you will set me free, I will tell you all about it."

"You may cut his bonds, Peers."

In a few seconds Mark was lying upon the grass, groaning and rubbing his legs.

THE PAGE AFTER THE NEXT IS THE ONE YOU WANT.

"Now let us hear this disreputable tale."

"You shall, sir. I shall go back to my father. I had an idea it would be a fine thing to be educated, but the work of getting the education is too hard for my liking. I thought it would be an easy job, but it is a lot more trying and unpleasant than the stablework I used to do."

"Stablework?" ejaculated Mr. Tempest, bending over the prostrate schoolboy, while Peers and Horace listened with the keenest interest.

Twenty or thirty yards to the right, a circle of boys and men was getting quite gay over the recital of the adventures in Poolmouth of Tom Verge and Dick Sabian.

"Yes," said Mark; "my father is the trainer to Lord Topthorn, and I was to have been a jockey, so they brought me up on gruel, to keep me small."

"What is your real age, then?" asked the principal.

"I am now nineteen."

"But you were entered with us as being only fourteen."

"I know, sir. And I was so little, and acted so simply, that you were deceived."

"I never suspected that I had been so grossly tricked."

"It is true, sir. I got acquainted with Mordaunt Bane, a young fellow who did a great deal of betting, and frequently knocked about our stable. He had been to a school like this, and talked about it, and it made me anxious to try what school life was like. Besides, I wanted to learn, and be a clever scholar. After a lot of talk, he told me that he would pay for my education if I would go to this school, and do my best here to disgrace Peers Bidston, and either drive him into gaol or into a lunatic asylum, but not to injure his health."

Peers comprehended the despicable plot as Glastowe concluded the confession.

"So I am to thank my friend Mordaunt for this," he said musingly. "What a rogue he must be!"

"I fail to understand you, Glastowe," said Mr. Tempest, "for you were introduced to me by Lord Topthorn."

"The boss was induced by my father," said the little creature, "to undertake to find me a place at your school, he being connected with one of the governors. He did so, and gave me a good recommendation. Father told the boss that if it were known that I came from a hunting-stable I should not be accepted as a scholar, and that, even if I got through that obstacle, I should be teased by the fellows, and made miserable, so his lordship, who agreed as to the soundness of the governor's argument, consented to pass me off as the greatly neglected son of a friend in India. Mordaunt paid the money for the term, and fitted me out. I met him on the shore here a day or two ago, and asked him for a paper to show that he would make me a present of an annuity of a hundred a year if I succeeded in driving Peers Bidston off his chump. He promised to give me such a paper in Poolmouth to-morrow afternoon. It will be a half-holiday, you know."

"You had better keep the appointment, and get the paper, telling the vile plotter nothing about you confession," said Mr. Tempest. "It will be as well, before you return to your father, that you should convict the right person of this crime. You may now return to the school with us. You may tell your comrades, Peers, that I capitulate on the terms arranged—that is, a free pardon for all of you, and this unhappy youth to be sent back to his home. It is not often that we have been deceived in this way, and it will make it all the more important for us to make the fullest inquiry in all cases. It is understood, I presume, that we have now entered into a treaty, myself to forgive all of you, and you to return to school, and conduct yourselves respectably in future?"

"Certainly, sir; we shall be only too glad."

Thus was the famous treaty of Caermelyn completed, and thus ended the remarkable rebellion of Firdale Grammar School.

The march home was like a Roman triumph, and, in the still watches of the night, the frequent cheers of the boys reverberated with extraordinary effect.

Mr. Tempest called Peers into his study early the next morning, and said:

"My boy, I am extremely sorry that you should have led such a sad life lately at the school, and that I have lent myself unconsciously to playing the game of the man who would have practically murdered you. I have had Mark Glastowe under observation all night, and mean to keep him in sight all day, too. I have told him that he must, as the price for being allowed to go to his father, and for being kept out of goal on the charge of criminal conspiracy, go through this business faithfully, and put his base employer into our power. I have sent for your guardian, and for Lord Topthorn. If all goes well, we shall expose young Bane to his parent, who, notwithstanding his insane love for the worthless rascal, may perhaps be induced to send him abroad."

The plot worked out as expected. An adept at deception, Glass Alley rolled up to meet his "hirer" on the front in Poolmouth, and Mr. Tempest kept within a discreet distance.

The conspirator and the informer entered an aristocratic billiard-room, and, after a game, Mark broached the subject of the paper, saying:

"I think I shall soon get through my task, Mordaunt, for that fool of a Peers becomes sillier every day. He has been fancying that he was the commander-in-chief of an army, and capering about as if he were giving orders. Poor beggar, his life has been miserable lately; but when he is mad he will not know anything about it."

"You have changed your tune tremendously," said Bane, with suspicion.

"Good reason! All I want is that paper. It can be of no use to me until the thing is done. It is not likely I would throw away what character I have by showing it to anybody, for it makes me as much a criminal as it does you."

"Do not be sarcastic," replied the schemer. "Here is your paper. I have brought it for you, already drawn up. Do not read it now, take it away first. Mind, now, if you ever show it to anybody, or attempt to make an unfair use of it, I will murder you as sure as you are sitting there! There, cut, will you! I see a fellow that I know coming into the hotel."

Glastowe could not have received a more welcome instruction. He vanished from the billiard-room, and rejoined his schoolmaster, to whom, without a word, he handed the paper received from Mr. Bane.

When they got back to Firdale, Mr. Bane senior had arrived.

Mr. Tempest took him to the library, and there, after considerable hesitation, managed to convey to the visitor the story of his son's villainy.

"This youth," said the master, alluding to Glastowe, "a forward, horsey fellow, brought up apparently in the fastest circle, and born into an atmosphere of deceit, was an ideal informer. He evidently told us the truth about the proposed meeting with your son, for they actually did meet at the time and place stated. This is the paper which Glastowe gave me upon returning from the bar to which they retired. I have not looked at it yet. Upon this paper depends the proof or otherwise of this most grave allegation."

"Let me see!" gasped Mr. Bane senior, whose distress was not to be wondered at. He was, as we have already said, anxious to be honest, but he was almost criminally lenient and indulgent with his son, whom he petted and spoiled most foolishly.

Mr. Tempest handed the paper to him, and, with trembling hands, he opened it, and read aloud in a choking voice as follows:

"I hereby promise to purchase, for Mark Glastowe, an annuity of a hundred pounds in the event of Peers Bidston entering a lunatic asylum or a goal.—Signed, MORDAUNT BANE."

"Oh, my son, my son! How could you treat your poor father so. I have loved you, and I have worked for you, and I have suffered for you, as no man ever did before, and this is the reward! Tempest, I feel crushed. What shall I do?"

"There is only one course," said Mr. Tempest. "You must make your son work for his living, and you must send him abroad to do so. Tell him that if he comes back in five years a sober, honest, and respectable man, you will not disinherit him; but, otherwise, he need not return at all, so far as you are concerned."

"I will do this. It will kill me; but I must act righteously. It makes me sick to think how near I was to doing an injustice to Peers, a thing which my very nature abhors."

The servant announced the arrival of Lord Topthorn, a young sporting nobleman, whose misdeeds were chiefly due to thoughtlessness. His lordship was neatly reprimanded for the trick he had lent his name to, and he hurried back with Mark Glastowe, who got a "wiggin" from his father, and was the next day put in training for a country race shortly to occur.

Mr. Brane senior did not see his son again, but wrote to him a letter, telling him the decision to which he had come.

Mordaunt guessed at once that he had been betrayed, and he came to the school to inquire for Mark.

Mr. Tempest saw him, and quietly asked him into the "torture-chamber," as the boys called the study.

"What do you want here?" he queried.

"I have come to see Mark Glastowe, who was a friend of mine."

"That youth has gone home to his father, and if you dare to molest him you will be arrested. Lord Topthorn is aware of your villainous conduct. No doubt the letter you have received from your father indicates that he also appreciates you at your true value. Therefore, the best thing you can do is to accept the terms offered you. I am afraid you are past taking advice; but, if you are not, I trust you will allow me, as a tutor of many years' standing, to say that a course of vice will, in the long run, bring you to misery."

"I have listened to your preaching, Mr. Tempest," said Bane, with a sneer, "and I take as much notice of it as if I were a faint already. Good-day to you for a meddlesome old humbug!"

With these words the young man, in a condition of uncontrollable wrath, left the house. As he walked across the lawn, between the school-building and the cricket-field, he happened to pass Peers Bidston and a crowd of his jubilant admirers.

"You are there, are you, you milksop?" he hissed, in his rage. "You have escaped me this time; but your hour will come. Then I will not spare you!"

With a parting oath, he rushed away, and soon vanished down the avenue.

The spiteful expressions thus uttered to the hero of the school had a soul-stirring effect. The students crowded upon the lawn, and soon were practically all present.

Horace Ward climbed upon the boundary-wall, and said:

"Comrades, we have just heard something which shows that even Peers Bidston has mortal enemies. Let me assure you, lads, that Peers has gone through a very dangerous and trying time; for he has been the subject of a vile conspiracy. The danger is now over, and I desire to move this resolution: 'That the boys of Firdale Grammar School wish to put on record their respect, gratitude, and affection for Peers Bidston, who is a loving and trustworthy friend, a clever scholar, a first-rate athlete, a defender of those in distress, and a military officer equal in ability to a hundred Wellingtons!"

The resolution was received with tremendous cheers. It was seconded by Tommy Verge in a speech which, owing to the fervour of his feelings, was absolutely inarticulate, and it was carried by a unanimous show of hands, followed by such an outburst of clapping that all the other inhabitants of the school and school-house, including the Misses Brane Tempest, came running to the doors to see what was the matter.

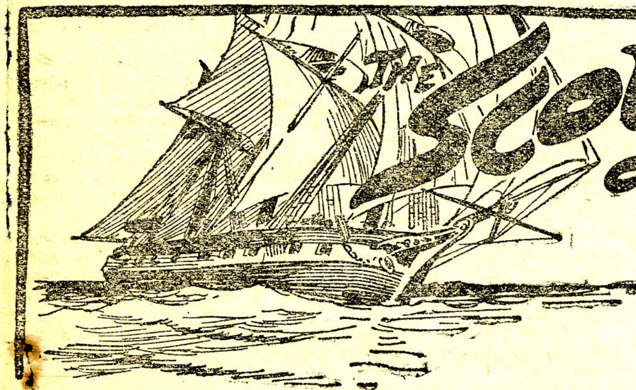
A shrill voice cried:

"Make way, make way, friends, for the knight's esquire!"

It was Dicky Sabian, who was carrying, high over head, the wonderful silver helmet which had been found in the ancient British camp; he rushed to the captain, and placed the trophy, with an inimitable flourish, upon that hero's head.

"Shoulder him, shoulder him!" cried Ward, and Bidston shot upwards, and was carried, upon a dozen excited crowns, round and round the field.

THE END.



THE SCOURGE OF THE SEAS.

By HENRY ST. JOHN,

Author of "The Days of Dashing Drake," "A Middy of Nelson's Day," "Clive Hardacre," &c., &c.

INTRODUCTION.

The story opens with our hero—a lad of about fifteen—wandering the streets of Brightling, homeless and hungry. He finds himself on the sea-front. In the harbour many ships are moored. One in particular—a rakish-looking schooner—attracts his attention. As he watches it, he sees two shadowy figures struggling. One throws the other, who is bound, overboard. No sooner does our hero see this than he dives to the rescue, and unloosens the drowning man's wrists, only to become unconscious. On recovering his wits, he finds himself in a cosy bed in the house of the man he has saved, who turns out to be Captain Curzon, captain of his Majesty's frigate "Fearless." The captain makes Frank Farleigh a middy on his boat.

Captain Curzon, the next morning, asks Frank to promise never to mention, even to him, what occurred on the night before. Frank wonderingly does so. He then tells his own history. He had always supposed himself to be the son of old Ben Farleigh, a fisherman; but on his deathbed, a few days before, Ben had declared that this was not the case, and that his father had left him with him when he was quite a baby.

Frank asks his father's name, but Ben dies before he can tell it. On the old man's death, his nephew, Simeon Clyne, claimed all he owned, and sent Frank about his business.

Our hero then makes the acquaintance of the bo'sun of the "Fearless," one Bill Woshem. While the captain is paying his respects to the admiral, these two go off in search of adventure.

They hire a boat and row about the harbour, followed, unknown to them, by another boat, containing a muffled-up man, who has tracked them from the captain's house.

Suddenly they come across a magnificent schooner, the "Vulture." To their intense astonishment Captain Curzon hails them, and they go on deck. Immediately the captain blows a whistle, and from the companion a dozen ruffians spring out and bind the pair securely, while Captain Curzon looks on with a triumphant smile on his face.

CHAPTER IV.

ON BOARD THE "VULTURE"—PRISONERS—AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

Taken completely by surprise, and almost stupefied by the suddenness of the attack upon them, Frank Farleigh and Bill Woshem were speedily overpowered by the ruffians who had so unexpectedly ascended to the deck.

A quick glance at his captors told Frank that they were not Englishmen. Their nationality would have been hard to determine, for their dress combined the characteristics of nearly every nation under the sun. They were swarthy, muscular fellows, some of darker complexion than others, one or two being actual negroes from the region of the Sahara, while some were flat-faced, insipid, fair-haired Dutchmen.

Their costume on the whole affected the Oriental. Nearly all wore richly embroidered shell-jackets and loose, Turkish trousers, gathered in at the knee and strapped around the calf and lower part of the leg.

Their headgear was of the most varied and incongruous character. Several wore ordinary English seamen's caps, one wore the Turkish fez, and others contented themselves with kerchiefs loosely tied about their brows.

They were all armed, too, with pistols and cutlasses of English origin, yataghans from Turkey, and even a couple of those horrible weapons the Malay creese were in evidence.

Take them altogether, they were a band of villainous-looking cutthroats, and what connection could possibly exist between them and Captain Wilfred Curzon, of the "Fearless" was a question that neither Frank nor Ben could reply to.

In a moment or two the arms of the prisoners had been forced behind their backs, and had been secured in that position by strong ropes.

Captain Curzon looked on with an inexplicable smile on his face; then, turning to the men, he said something in a quick, authoritative voice, the meaning of which neither Frank nor Ben could gather, for, although they knew it not at the time, the language which Curzon used was the Lingua Franca, the common tongue of rogues and vagabonds all the world over.

They were then hustled nearly off their feet, and forced to descend into the interior of the vessel.

Here a further surprise awaited them. The moment they had descended the companion they found themselves surrounded with every evidence of wealth and luxury. Heavy Persian carpets covered the floor; jewelled lamps hung from the carved and gilded ceiling; silken curtains surrounded the doors of the cabins, which opened out from the passage in which they stood, and when one of these curtains was flung back, and the door opened, the eyes of Bill Woshem fairly goggled with surprise at the almost dazzling beauty of the room beyond. It was a saloon, fitted up in Oriental fashion, a style then almost unknown in England. It was resplendent with the rich and varied colouring, which the people in the East know so well how to produce. Cabinets containing splendid articles of jewellery stood about; from the walls hung curtains of heavy silk, upon which hung a variety of weapons, principally swords, of every conceivable kind, the scabbards and hilts of which simply blazed with diamonds and other gems.

As a matter of fact, the room was simply one dazzling treasure-house, and Frank and Bill, standing on the threshold, could only look in mute astonishment on the evidence of immense wealth which they beheld.

"I can't understand it, I can't!" said Bill, in a hopeless tone of voice. "I must ha' caught the daleerium trimins! It ain't nat'ral, it ain't! Wot's the cap'n doin' here on this outlandish craft, with a crew of cutthroats obeyin' his orders, him as is cap'n of the smartest frigate in the service? And look at them there things, them jools! Why, they must be wuth piles o' money, and the cap'n was never too flush, as I can reckomember."

The door had closed behind them, and they were alone in the gorgeous apartment.

"I feel as if I were in a dream, too," said Frank. "Yet we cannot both be dreaming at the same time, and of exactly the same thing. How long have you known Captain Curzon, Mr. Woshem?"

"I've sailed under him for nigh on seven year. Cap'n o' the foretop, I was, and he was second luff, when fust we met. Then we both riz in our perfeshun, and I became bo'sun, and him they made a cap'n of."

"And have you never seen this vessel before—never been on board of her before?"

"Never seed the length o' her coffin hull before. If I had, I should ha' knowed her again out of five hundred. One don't forget the rake o' a mast and the cut o' a jib when one's been a sailorman for nigh on thirty year."

"It is a mystery!" said Frank.

"What is a mystery?" asked a voice behind him.

Frank swung round, to find the door had softly opened to admit the object of their conversation. He stood just inside the room, and almost hidden behind him was the figure of another man.

Frank made no reply. Again, for the space of an instant, his eyes and those of the captain met.

"You were speaking of mysteries," said Curzon, with a half-amused, half-sneering tone in his voice. "You think it mysterious, I suppose, that I, a poor naval officer, should be in the possession of so fine a craft as this?"

Frank made no reply. Again the sensation of doubt crept over him as he listened to this man—a doubt that he could hardly define. The harsh ring in the voice was unfamiliar, yet the voice was the same, the man was the same, his gestures the same; even a peculiar twitch of the eyebrows, which Frank had noticed was one of Captain Curzon's peculiarities at breakfast that morning, was not wanting now.

"Beggin' yer honour's pardin," said Bill, "it comes kinder hard on me to feel as one who I've sailed under for so long should set a parcel o' murderin' Turks on me, and tie me up like as if I was a chicken a-goin' to be roasted."

"You shall be free all in good time," replied Curzon.

Then suddenly he half turned and stepped aside, so that the figure of the second man was rendered visible.

Frank uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Simeon—Simeon Clyne!" he ejaculated.

Simeon Clyne, the man who, two days previously, had turned Frank out of house and home, was a wiry, dark-browed person, with an evil, ferrety face and nervous hands that never were for an instant still. He stepped back as Frank recognised him, and shot a baleful, vindictive glance from his narrow, grey-green eyes at the boy, but made no reply to the recognition.

"You two old friends," said Curzon, "seem to feel no great joy at meeting."

"I cannot understand it, sir," said Frank. "This morning you professed to know nothing of me; but now it appears that you must know more than you admitted."

"You mistake. I sent for Clyne so that he should recognise you, and tell me if you are indeed the person whom you represent yourself to be."

"You could not take my word for that?" said Frank. "Surely my story was not so very hard to credit?"

"I always prefer to make sure, even of the most trivial things. You are now my guest on board my private yacht, which I rather flatter myself you will find quite as comfortable as that rotten old hulk the 'Fearless'!"

"What!" cried old Bill reproachfully; "ye to speak that way, sir, o' the brave old craft!"

"You are an honest fellow," replied Curzon, "but you are a great fool!"

And, with a loud burst of laughter, he turned and strode out of the cabin, leaving his prisoners to their own reflections.

Ten minutes later the door was again opened, and a tall, muscular, thick-lipped fellow entered, carrying a silver tray, on which was spread a repast so rich and so plentiful that neither Frank nor Bill imagined for a moment that it was meant for them.

The man, who was evidently a Spaniard, put down his burden and approached Frank, favouring him with a sinister, suspicious glance as he came.

"De capitaine him say you mens mus' eat."

He accompanied this remark by deftly untying the cord that bound Frank's hands; then, leaving Frank to perform the same office for his companion, he quickly left the room, and locked the door after him with a loud click.

"This is rum treatment, ain't it?" said Bill, as he seated himself in front of the tray and proceeded to stow in cargo. "Fust we gets jumped on by a lot o' dirty Turks, and then we get tied up and shuffled down below, and now we has grub sent down to us good enough for a hemperor to live on!"

The hours went slowly by after that, and they were left completely alone. At first they amused themselves by taking stock of the treasures the room contained; but after a little while even that palled on them, and they were beginning to feel tired and dispirited, when the door was again opened, and the dark sailor entered, bearing another well-filled tray, which he put down, and, removing the empty one, took his leave without uttering a word.

"Anyhow, they don't mean to starve us," said Frank.

"And I don't mean to starve meself, neither," said Bill.

And he fell to with great earnestness.

After that no one came near them. The light, which came in through two portholes high up in the wall, began to fade, the shadows grew long and heavy, and presently darkness, unbroken by a ray of light, filled the cabin.

Bill threw himself down on to a pile of silken cushions, where he laid his length, and soon filled the chamber with the thunder of his snores.

But Frank lay awake far into the night, thinking and wondering. The last two days had brought about strange changes in his fortunes, and these changes, so quick and so unexpected, filled him with wonder and amazement. As for Captain Curzon, the mystery that surrounded him was too impenetrable.

How came it that a naval officer, one who is scarcely ever able to leave his ship, yet found time to take voyages aboard this schooner? Whence came all the vast treasure which surrounded him on every side? Where did Captain Curzon pick up the curious collection of foreigners who formed the crew of the "Vulture"? And, lastly, why had Captain Curzon changed so much in his bearing to him, Frank? Why had the very ring of his voice changed from the low, almost sad tone to the loud, coarsely hilarious and sneering voice which he had used that day?

These and many other questions did Frank ask himself again and again, again and again, until at last he, too, drifted off into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER V.

SUSPICIOUS SIGNS—THE CHASE OF THE INDIAMAN—BAULKED!—THE "VULTURE" IN HER TRUE COLOURS.

Soon after daybreak the Spanish sailor glided noiselessly into the cabin, and again exchanged the emptied for a well-filled tray. So quiet were his movements that they disturbed the slumbers of neither Frank nor Bill, who did not awaken until some hours later, when the sun was streaming gaily in through the portholes.

Bill, whose appetite was never at a loss, expressed his satisfaction at the way they were being catered for, and the breakfast he made was a marvel.

But when the contents of the tray had disappeared, the time hung heavily and monotonously on their hands. No one came near them for many hours.

Frank grew more and more silent, and Bill became irritable and morose in consequence.

At last, towards the afternoon, there came the sounds of many feet tramping the deck, of voices, of the creaking of the windlass, and the many other noises that generally accompany any extra activity on board ship.

"I shouldn't be s'prised," said Bill, "if she wasn't making ready for sea."

And he proved to be right, for after about an hour of this extra activity and bustle a perceptible movement, which grew more and more pronounced, told them that the "Vulture" had left her anchorage, and was bowling swiftly out to sea before a steady breeze.

Nearly an hour passed, while both Frank and Bill knew that each moment was bearing them farther and farther from the land.

Bill shook his head.

"It's wrong—there's somethin' wrong! 'Cause why? Here

THIS SERIAL GETS MORE

we be a-makin' out to sea, with me, Bill Woshem, bo'sun of his blessed Majesty's ship the 'Fearless,' aboard, while at the same bloomin' minnit the 'Fearless' herself may be makin' ready for sea, as far as I know."

"And you are not the only one here who ought to be on board the 'Fearless,'" said Frank.

"Lor', no! There be you. I was forgettin' you were goin' to jine the midshipmen's mess."

"I was not thinking of myself. There is Captain Curzon."

"Oh, he's gone, you can depend on it! A cap'n can't play pranks like as if he was a mid——"

But to give the lie direct to Bill's words, the door at that moment was flung open, and Curzon himself stood before them.

"I have many apologies to make for my conduct," he said, addressing himself especially to Frank, "and I can only hope that you did not find your captivity irksome. It is over now, and I believe I shall be able to make up for it by showing you some exciting scenes in the space of a few hours."

He then motioned to them to follow him, and he led them up on to the deck.

"Phew!" whistled Bill as his quick eyes took everything in.

Frank looked up, and his eyes and the old sailor's met for an instant. There was a world of suspicion in Bill's eyes. And good cause there was for it, for this is what he saw.

The coast lay like a faint shadowy line upon the water, as the "Vulture," with her canvas-crowded masts, raced over the foam-crested waves, heading direct for the open sea, the Atlantic Ocean.

The deck of the "Vulture" was crowded with men. There were half a hundred at least lying about, laughing and jabbering in their different tongues, while they kept themselves busy cleaning up weapons, which they carefully loaded, as though expecting to find use for them before long.

They were a repulsively hideous set of men, and Frank shrank instinctively closer to Bill's side.

"See 'em—the guns?" whispered Bill quickly.

Now that his attention was attracted, Frank saw what he had not noticed before. Ranged around the deck of the "Vulture" were a number of brass cannon, which most certainly had not been there when they had first found themselves on the "Vulture's" deck.

Curzon was standing forward, with a glass raised to his eyes, which he kept directed on a distant sail over their bows.

The sail, judging as well as the distance would permit, was a large merchantman.

"Indyman," muttered Bill to himself, as he followed the direction of the captain's gaze.

The men, too, seemed much interested in the distant sail, and ever and anon they would look up over the bulwarks, as though to make sure that they were still on her track.

The "Vulture" was rapidly overhauling the stranger, and Bill, who felt no great love for the vessel that he stood on, could not but admire her beautiful sailing qualities.

The masts and part of the hull of the merchantman were well in the line of vision now. She was an immense craft, and evidently carried a great number of passengers, judging from the swarms of people on her decks.

"Soon the "Vulture" had crept so closely that the name, in great gilded letters, on the poop of the Indiaman was clearly visible—the "Calcutta Castle."

A quick order from Curzon, and half a dozen men swung themselves into the shrouds and swarmed aloft to take in sail. As the speed of the vessel decreased, the idle crew suddenly sprang into life and activity. The guns were manned, the decks were cleared for action, and, amid a scene of subdued excitement, a ball of bunting was run up to the masthead, where it stiffened out in the breeze—a dead-black flag, bearing no design or device.

The display of this flag evidently caused great excitement on board the Indiaman, who immediately responded by exhibiting the flag which for a thousand years had braved the battle and the breeze.

Bill clutched Frank by the arm.

"By thunder!" he cried, while his eyes almost protruded from his head with the violence of his feelings, "we are aboard a pirate!"

Captain Curzon overheard the remark, and swung round with a malicious expression on his face. He was about to speak, when, boom! boom! The muffled reports of distant guns caused him to start violently. At the same instant one of the sailors—the Spaniard who had waited on Frank and Bill in their captivity—rushed up, and made some communication to the captain.

The firing had emanated from a strange vessel, which appeared on the weather beam, bearing down upon them with every inch of canvas that it was possible to set.

In the chase of the Indiaman, the approach of the stranger had passed unnoticed; but now that Curzon's attention was called to it an expression of rage darted across his face.

"Curse it!" Frank heard him mutter, as he levelled his glass at the new-comer; "we shall have to run for it, after all! Curse their meddling! If I make no mistake, it is the 'Fearless.'"

"I thought so," muttered Bill, who had also overheard Curzon's remark. "And it's not the fust time the old 'Fearless' has spiled the doings of such as these!"

"All hands make sail!" roared Curzon, giving the order in English, as a ball from the "Fearless" sent a fountain of water flying into the air scarcely a quarter of a mile astern.

The crew swarmed into the rigging, and sheet after sheet of canvas was flung out to the breeze.

But now the tables were turned with a vengeance. The crew of the "Calcutta Castle," understanding how matters were going, began to assail the pirate with a few well-directed shots from a brass swivel that she carried in the stern. A damaging fire of musketry was also kept up, which brought more than one of the pirate crew lifeless to the deck.

Nearer and nearer crept the "Fearless," and still the "Vulture" could not shake herself free.

Crash! A 32-lb. shot struck the "Vulture" astern, and sent the splinters flying merrily.

Curzon stamped up and down the deck, raving like a madman. He even drew his pistol and threatened the men aloft, who, exposed as they were to the musketry of the "Calcutta Castle," were working under difficulties.

But in the nick of time a breeze caught the unfurled canvas, and the "Vulture" heeled over on her side for a moment; then, righting herself with a shake, like a thing of life flew on at a pace so terrific that the green water was churned up into snow-white foam, which flashed along her polished counter and swirled out into a wide, white track astern.

"We're losin' our chance!" cried Bill, gripping Frank by the shoulder. "Overboard with ye! We'll swim for it; and, never fear, the old 'Fearless" 'll have us aboard. Follow me!"

As he spoke he ran towards the bulwarks, and in a moment would have leaped over them into the sea; but crack! There came a wreath of smoke from Curzon's pistol, and Bill stumbled forward in a heap into the lee-scupper.

"Take warning!" shouted Curzon fiercely. "If you attempt to escape, Frank Farleigh, I'll shoot you like a dog, although you are worth more to me than you dream of!"

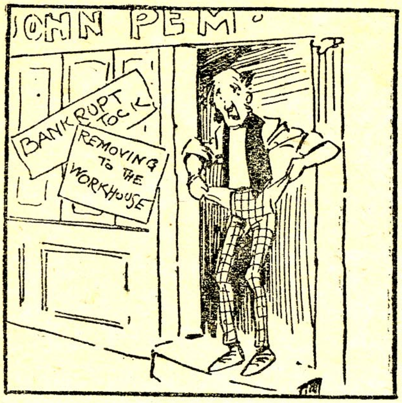
Frank ran over to Bill's side, and found that worthy not quite so bad as he had anticipated. The ball from Curzon's pistol had passed through the fleshy part of the sailor's neck, producing an uncomfortable but by no means fatal wound.

The shot that had battered its way through the "Vulture's" stern was the first and last from the "Fearless" that told. Each succeeding shot fell farther and farther astern; and although the "Fearless" kept up the chase for some little while, she was presently forced to abandon it, and the "Vulture," thanks to her superiority in light winds, had escaped.

(To be continued in next week's number.)

Over £50 in Prizes

Each of the Pictures given below illustrates some British Sea-coast Town. Thirty-two pictures have already appeared in Nos. 169, 170, 171, and 172 of the "UNION JACK" and Nos. 231 to 236 of the "FUNNY WONDER." Back Numbers can still be obtained, if ordered and paid for at your newsagent's.



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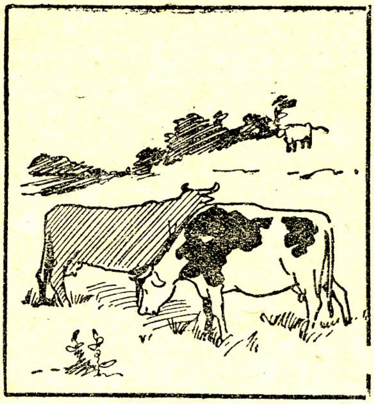

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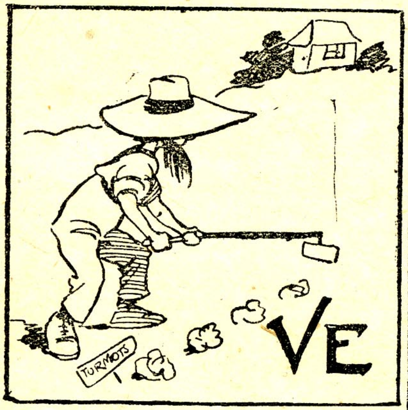

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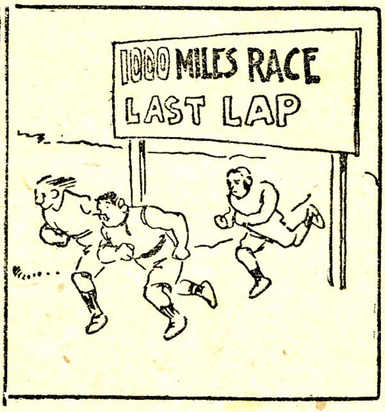

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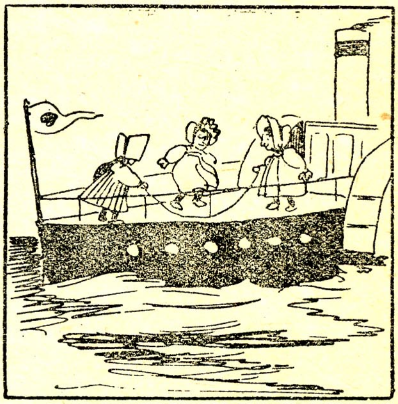

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The Last Set of Pictures will appear in the "FUNNY WONDER," published to-morrow (August 14), and in next Friday's "UNION JACK," together with full instructions how to send in solutions.

THE EDITOR'S DECISION IS FINAL.

From the Quarter-Deck.

What do you think of the "Scourge of the Seas"? Do you like it, or don't you? I am very anxious to please as many of my readers as possible—no one can please all—and I cannot possibly know whether I am doing this unless you write to me. Your letters are always welcome.

"Plunger" (Stourbridge) is troubled with deafness after a dive or a swim, and wishes to know how to prevent it. The remedy is simple. He must hold his head down and let the water which has got into his ears run out.

Hurry up and join the UNION JACK League. You can easily become a member. Fill in the coupon given herewith, get your letter witnessed by three friends, pop it in an envelope, together with another envelope, stamped and addressed to yourself, and send it to me. In return I will enrol you, and send you a badge. Every fiftieth applicant is awarded a handsome prize.

UNION JACK LEAGUE.

I, ...

of..

hereby declare my wish to be enrolled as a member of the "Union Jack" League, and promise to do all in my power, by means of the "Union Jack" and otherwise, to exterminate the "penny dreadful."

Another list of names next week.

Your sincere friend,
The Skipper

Printed and Published by the Proprietors at 24, Tudor Street, London, E.C.

"I AM A CYCLING NOVICE.

I don't know how to keep my bike in order. I don't know how to mend my punctured tyre. I don't know when to oil the bearings. I don't know what gear to have. I don't know what weight my cycle should be. I don't know the best cycling roads. In fact, I don't know anything about cycling that's worth speaking of."

This is just the sort of cycling person Messrs. Harmsworth's cycling paper is intended to reach. This paper, which has an enormous circulation among cyclists in all parts of the world, tells you everything you want to know about your bicycle, and about cycling in all its varied phases. It is the very thing for the inexperienced rider of either sex. But it is just as interesting to the cyclist who knows all about cycling, and, in fact, to everybody. It is published on Friday, and costs but a penny. It is wonderful value. It is beautifully printed, has fine illustrations and photographs. Every cyclist in the land ought to purchase this week's number.

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12/3/97