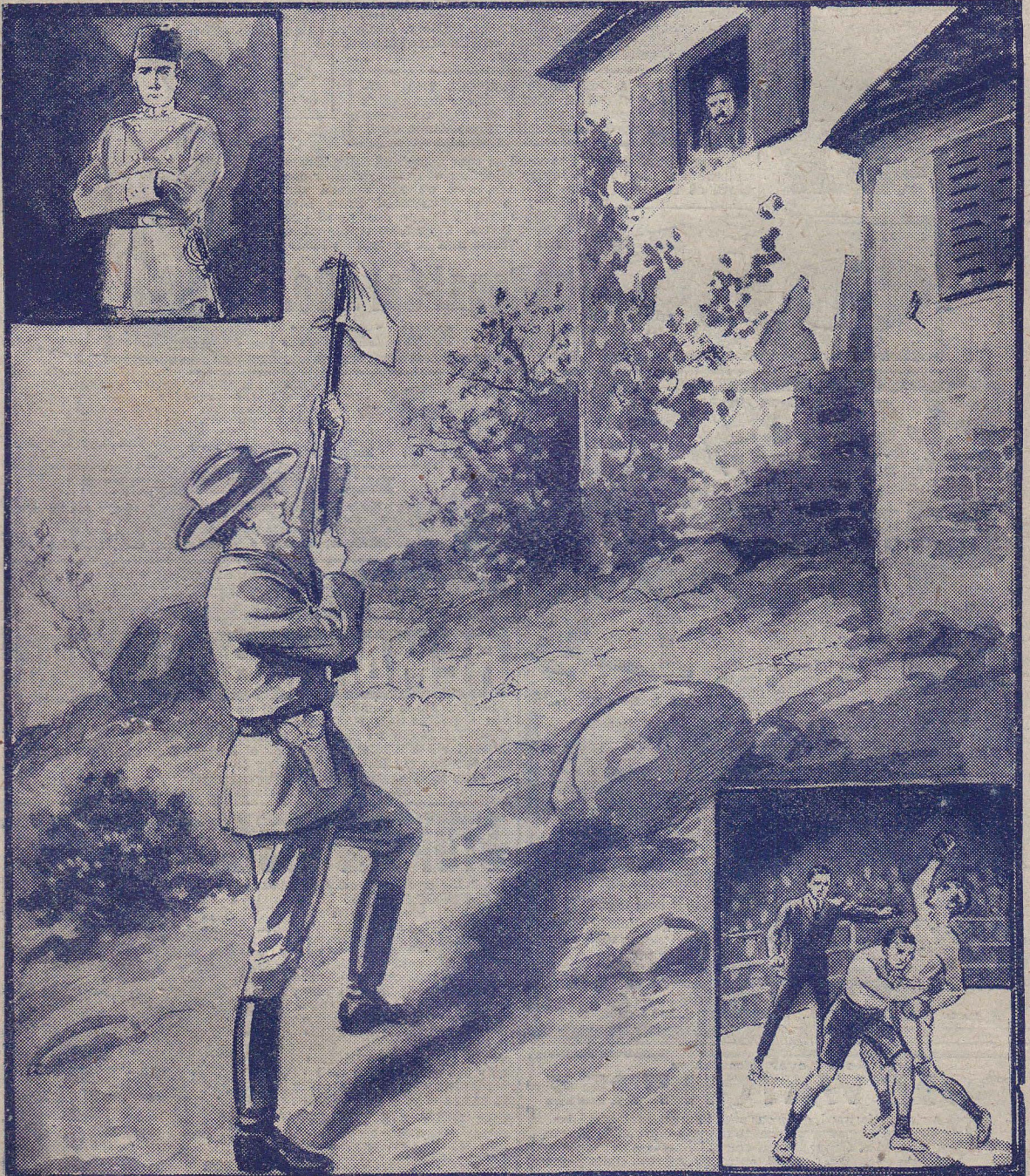


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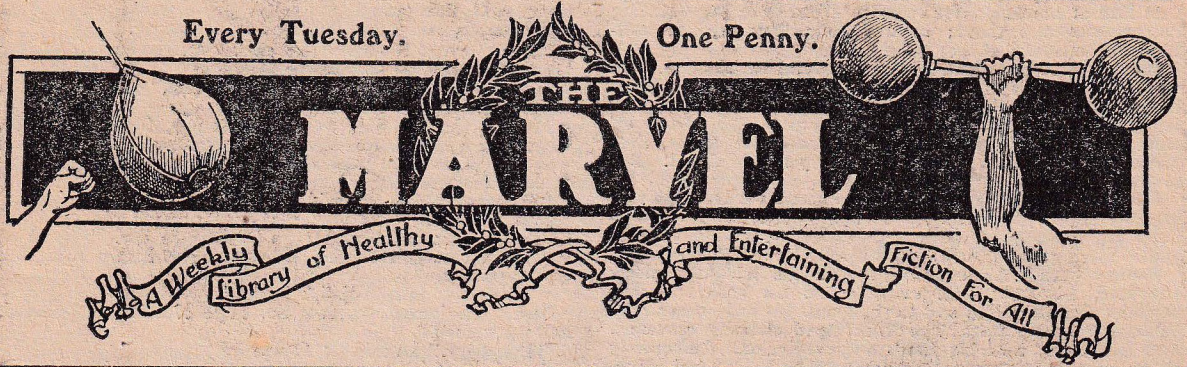
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-- BY --

ARTHUR S. HARDY.

## CHAPTER I.

### A Great Night at the Grammar School.

**T**HE excitement in the great hall of the Cheltham Grammar School was intense, for the final for the boxing championship of the school, all weights, was being decided, and the final for the first time in the history of that famous educational establishment possessed an international flavour, it being well and worthily fought for by an Englishman and a Turk.

George Crawford was the name of the Englishman—boy, one ought rather have said, perhaps—whilst the Turk bore the high-sounding designation of Safvet Adjali.

Prior to the coming of Safvet Adjali to the Cheltham Grammar School, two years before, not one of the many boys who went there to be prepared for either the 'Varsity or the world would ever have believed that a Turk could use his fists.

There do not exist many lovers of the mitt game, even among the more enlightened, who would put their money on a Turk if he were to decide to take up glove-fighting as a profession and were set to face a real good-class British boxer in the ring, and yet a well-known authority on boxing once wrote, that if the Turks were to seriously give their minds to the use of the boxing-gloves they would go a long way.

In venturing this opinion the expert may have been right, or he may have been wrong; but this much is certain, that since Safvet Adjali had started to learn boxing of the gymnastic instructor at the Grammar School he had progressed by leaps and bounds, until long before the boxing championships of the school were fought for the boys had realised that there was only one amongst them who stood any chance of beating him, and he was George Crawford.

George Crawford, sturdy, good-looking, smiling, and quiet in all that he said and did, was a middle-weight, and a finely-built athlete at that. Safvet Adjali weighed over twelve stone, and therefore fought in the heavy-weight class.

In the school championships of the various weights, so far as they had been fought, George Crawford had won the middle easily; whilst Adjali, who drew a bye in the first round of the heavy-weight competition—there were only three entries—easily disposed of Collins, the winner of the preliminary in the final.

Then came the great event, the clash between Crawford and Adjali for the championship of the school.

It was the last bout of a great day. The two principals rested during the latter part of the afternoon, and they met each other at half-past eight in the evening in the presence of the entire school.

The ring had been erected on a raised platform set in the middle of the fine lecture-hall.

The masters and their friends occupied seats near the ring. The boys were ranged on chairs and forms, which were on tiers one above the other, so that all might see. The galleries were crowded.

It was a sight never to be forgotten by those who were privileged to be there.

And what made the occasion more memorable even than the meeting between Turk and Britisher, was the fact that Tom Sayers, the middle-weight champion of the world, had come down on the invitation of the Principal of the School—Mr. Paul Bredbent, M.A., a friend of the Rev. Arthur Garthorne's—to referee the bouts, and to give away the magnificent challenge cups and medals.

Tom had brought Bombardier Welsh, the heavy-weight champion of England, and his staunch friend, with him; and

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the Rev. Arthur Garthorne, vicar of St. Michael's, in the East End of London, more commonly known as the Fighting Parson, was also there; as was John Thurloe, the well-known detective.

Tom Sayers' awards had given general satisfaction. He was a keen-eyed and unbiassed referee, and the boys loved him. Bombardier Welsh made himself useful by keeping the time, and somehow or other the contests were reeled off more quickly, and the decisions gave more satisfaction, than had ever been known during the history of the school. But to the big fight.

Anything more striking than the contrast between the tall, broad-shouldered, clean-limbed and fair-skinned George Crawford, and Safvet Adjali, the swarthy, heavy, smooth-bodied but powerful Turk, could hardly be imagined.

George Crawford stood erect, with his left arm nicely advanced, his right held easily across his body, the left shoulder slightly raised and to the front, his body beautifully balanced on both feet. The Turk stood clumsily crouched, bent his knees, held his hands awkwardly, and deliberately threw away the advantage he possessed in height and reach.

There could be no mistaking which way the boys' fancies led them—they were with Crawford almost to a man, though they had the good sportsmanship to conceal their partisanship, save when George steadied the Turk's rushes with that fine left hand of his, and proved, as has so often been proved before, that a good straight left will beat all the swinging rights that ever were.

George Crawford had won the final of the middle-weights on points, after six fiercely-contested rounds with a dour and plucky fighter named Williams.

Adjali had put Collins down in the final of the heavy-weights in eleven seconds with a right-hand swing to the jaw.

The Turk therefore possessed a punch, and it was against this punch that Crawford armed himself.

A circumstance which made the fight between the Turk and the Englishman particularly interesting, apart from the difference which existed in regard to weight, was the fact that their fathers knew each other well, and that Safvet had often and openly boasted of his great regard for George.

But he didn't show any particular kindness of feeling when the battle for the championship started.

He tried to put Crawford down with his first rush, and, in spite of a red-hot left and right, bored Crawford to the ropes, when the warning voice of Tom Sayers called upon him to be careful.

"Close your gloves, Adjali," cried Tom in a ringing voice, "and don't use your head!"

The Turk turned indignantly towards the middle-weight champion of the world.

"You harass me!" he cried.

"I don't mind whether I do or not," answered Tom. "I cannot allow even you to transgress the rules. Fight on, Adjali, or quit the ring."

Crawford had lowered his hands, and was waiting until the colloquy ended.

Adjali showed his white teeth in a smile, shrugged his shoulders with Oriental contempt, and then made for his friend.

Crawford was ready for him, and was not caught napping. He dashed that left home, and obliged Adjali by going into a clinch. The Turk tried what he could in the way of body-fighting, but George was a match for him even at that. He prevented Adjali from getting any of those swings of his home, and put in one or two nice rib-benders.

The bell brought the first session to a close.

Each round was of two minutes' duration, and the battle for the championship of the school was always one of ten rounds. They had each a long way to go.

For the next four rounds the contest went along exactly the same lines. Adjali stuck to his rushing and his terrible swings, playing all the time for a knock-out, as if he knew that he was fighting a much cleverer man; whilst Crawford, with that splendid left, varied occasionally by a stinging right, began to paint his opponent's face like an artist.

In the fifth round, in particular, he stopped Adjali's rushes with such magnificent stinging hits, that the boys could withhold their admiration no longer, and one great stirring round of applause burst from all parts of the hall, which even the masters and the monitors made no attempt to check.

It was only when it was dying away that they called out "Silence!"

The tremendous punishment set Adjali's face bleeding, and, had one of the masters been handling the bout, he would have stopped it at this point. Indeed, one of them did appeal to Tom Sayers, but the middle-weight champion merely shook his head.

"No, no!" he said. "Adjali is as strong as at the start. He could win by a knock-out. I have no right to rob him of the fight at this stage."

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The master who appealed looked doubtful, and turned to the Head. Fortunately, the latter was a sportsman through and through, and understood and loved boxing.

"Tom Sayers is right," he said. "Crawford is boxing beautifully. There is nothing brutal in the exhibition, and Adjali has a lot of fighting left in him still." As indeed the Turk had.

Finding that his wild word did not pay, Safvet bored in, went into a clinch, and drove a body blow downwards. It was a suspicious hit, but owing to a side movement of Crawford's it glanced aside.

"Be careful, Adjali," said Tom.

The Turk then brought his head upward sharply, and broke the skin beneath George Crawford's eye. The blood ran down George's cheeks. The young Britisher uttered a cry of protest.

"That's not fair, Adjali," he said.

The Turk looked up, saw the tinge of crimson, grinned, and apologised.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It was an accident."

And forthwith he set to fighting again with both hands, aiming at Crawford's face, whilst he pushed with his head and shoulder against his antagonist.

They were artful tactics, dangerous tactics, but Crawford received the upward punches upon his gloves, and stopped the Turk's body blows with his elbows. Finding that he had not succeeded in damaging Crawford as he had intended, Adjali sent a stinging blow a little below the waist-line, and the English boy staggered.

He uttered a low cry of agony, and his face turned white.

"Adjali," said Tom sternly, "I give you a second warning. If you foul again I'll disqualify you."

"It was an accident," said the Turk once more.

And then, seeing that a lot of sting had gone out of Crawford's fighting, he made a mad rush at him, hoping to put him down and out before the gong went.

Tom Sayers looked anxious. The schoolboys were silent. Would Crawford be able to with stand that fierce rush?

The young Britisher showed that he was still the better of the two by milling cleverly on the retreat, occasionally using his left to some purpose, and finally, after being driven into a corner, dodging his opponent, and leaving him floundering in the ropes.

The Turk uttered an oath in his native tongue, turned, and looked at the fine upstanding white lad.

And then the bell rang.

At once a storm of hisses burst from the lips of the on-lookers, as Crawford joined his seconds in his corner and sat down with a gesture of disgust.

"He has fouled me twice," he said. "Sayers is very lenient with him."

"Well, never mind," said one of Crawford's seconds.

"You'll beat him, George. Keep calm, and leave the rest to Tom."

The Turk, on the other hand, was mightily indignant.

"I have to fight two men," he said to his seconds.—"Crawford and the referee. The referee—Tom Sayers—he is not on my side."

The Turk's seconds were two schoolmates, and friends of Crawford's, as it happened. They were disgusted to think that they had to look after the foul-fighting foreigner.

"No, I should think not," said one of them. "Nor are we, Adjali. And you can't expect it when you fight like a coward."

The Turk bit his lip.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean," answered the schoolboy, "that if I had the handling of this fight, I'd have disqualified you long ago. Sayers, like the brick he is, is giving you an extra chance, just because you're not a Britisher, and mightn't know the rules."

At that Adjali relapsed into silence, but he made up his mind that he was going to win that fight, all the same, either by fair means or foul.

All the time the minute's interval was fleeting away he lay back in his chair, and, his brain working freely, he was able to fully weigh up his chances of scoring a victory.

They amount to nil, unless he could knock Crawford out.

And so the moment the word was given he rose from his chair and dashed forward, his rush carrying him to Crawford before the latter had got properly clear of his corner.

Adjali landed a tremendous body punch with his right, and then got the left to the face, and George staggered.

"Ah, I have you now!" said the Turk, his eyes flashing fiercely.

He laughed. He thought the contest was his, and he drew his right back slowly, looking for the spot where to plant the winning hit.

But he left his guard open, and—smack! George got him with the left on the point, and Adjali's legs sagged beneath



him. It had not been a very hard punch, but it had got home on the vulnerable spot.

Adjali was dazed, and crouched low, covering up. Crawford was on him like a flash. He did not hit wildly, but looked for an opening through which to drive the finishing punch to body or jaw.

Several times he struck his man, but all the while he had complete control over himself.

Adjali threw his head up in ugly fashion, missing Crawford's face by an inch. Tom Sayers did not issue another warning. Where was the use? But he would have disqualified the coward had he but touched the British boy.

The excitement was intense. Crawford drove the Turk before him to the ropes. He was complete master of the situation now.

To do Safvet Adjali credit, he made an heroic effort to pull himself together, and once or twice fought back, but always to be heavily countered, and a right upper-cut landed him on the floor of the ring.

He lay there whilst Tom Sayers counted the vanishing seconds.

Once he essayed to rise, but wiser thoughts prevailed, and he kept down until the last available moment. Tom was indeed in the act of saying "Out!" when he leapt up, and sprang at Crawford like a tiger.

But he had met his match. George Crawford took no chances, and even with his opponent down, and apparently beaten, he did not lose his head. He stopped the Turk with a fine left, and left and right sent him down again.

Adjali was weary, beaten! He was up again at the seventh second, however, and made another desperate rush. Crawford stopped him as before, and Adjali seized the British lad in a fierce wrestling grip, and tried to throw him.

"Break!" ordered Tom. "Don't hold, Adjali!" And at that, as if he had suddenly gone mad, the beaten Turk butted Crawford savagely, and struck him low.

Hisses rang from all parts of the hall. The Head rose in indignant protest. Tom Sayers hurled the Fighting Turk back.

"You are disqualified, Adjali!" he cried. As for Adjali, as he saw Crawford reel, and fall against the ropes, all his courage and strength seemed to return, showing that he had not been so badly beaten after all. And with a rush he tried to get at his victorious opponent once again.

Tom Sayers barred his way. "Did you hear me?" demanded Tom, in a stern voice. "You are disqualified, Adjali!"

Then the latent fury which was in the man burst out. "You would dare to disqualify me, Adjali the Turk?" roared the dusky son of the Near East. "Well, then, I will put you out, Mr. Sayers."

And he struck Tom savagely in the face. He had tackled the wrong man, however, and Tom, closing with him, gripped him by the arms, pinioned him, and held him until his seconds arrived and tore him away. "Take care of that man," said Tom, "for he's dangerous."

The bad sportsmanship displayed by Adjali had its effect upon the school. There was a certain amount of reserve amongst the boys when Tom gave the winners their medals and prizes from the ring.

But by the time George Crawford appeared, to take his championship cup, his prize for winning the middle-weights, and his two medals, they had regained their good spirits, and cheered him again and again.

As for Safvet Adjali, he was so disgusted at having been beaten, that he did not turn up to receive his prize at all; and perhaps it was as well, for the boys of the Cheltham School would have given him the time of his life. They had prepared a storm of special hisses for the purpose, which, however, were never used.

And the following morning Sefvet started for Turkey, his native home, and it was generally understood that he had finished his English schooling, and would come back to Cheltham no more.

## CHAPTER 2.

### An Englishman's Home in Turkey.

**W**HEN Tom Sayers, at the invitation of the Head of the Cheltham Grammar School, went to referee the boxing contests there—through the Rev. Arthur Garthorne—he had not the slightest idea that it would ever lead to any romantic happening; but it did, and that very soon.

Tom and Bombardier Welsh stayed at the master's house at Cheltham overnight, and the following day made further acquaintance with George Crawford.

He was a splendid fellow, and he told Tom much to the middle-weight champion's surprise, that he was himself almost as much a Turk as an Englishman.

Upon Tom asking him how he made that out, he explained that his father was a well-to-do merchant who had offices and factories in Rumelia, and headquarters at Adrianople; that he himself had spent the greater part of his life there, and that he was going back within a few days.

"I shall be sorry to leave the Old Country, Sayers," he said, "but I shall have to go. My father didn't want me to come back for another year, but I think I had better, for there is trouble brewing between Turkey, Rumelia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria. Most of the Balkan States are involved. There will very likely be a dreadful war unless some diplomatist can be unearthed in time who will handle the situation with the requisite delicacy.

"Surely they would hardly go as far as that?" said Tom. Crawford nodded gravely.

"I think they would," he said. "You see, many of the smaller countries and dependencies believe that they are strong enough to throw off the Turkish yoke once for all. They are all itching to gain the upper hand, and to dictate to the rest of the Powers around. They are aching for a fight, in fact; and in the event of any trouble, the Britishers resident in the neighbourhood of the frontiers would be the first to suffer."

"Do they dislike us so much, then?" asked Tom. "They are jealous of us, and the power we wield," said Crawford.

"How I should like to go over there!" said Tom. "I should like nothing better than to spend six weeks or a couple of months in a strange land amongst strange people, who live a life so different to our own."

Crawford laughed. "Well, if you feel like that, Sayers," he said, "come back with me. My father has a fine house near the frontier, and bachelor's quarters in Adrianople itself. He will extend to you the hospitality of a prince. Why not come, and bring the bombardier with you?"

Tom shook his head, and laughed, and then said suddenly: "Well, upon my soul, I don't know why we shouldn't do it, Billy. We were going to the South of France for six weeks. The other will be fresher, and less conventional."

"And you'll be among friends," said Crawford. "Will you come, Billy?" asked Tom.

The bombardier's reply came quickly. "Yes," he said. "Do you know, Tom, there are times when I yearn to get away from England. The time I spent in India remains grave, deep on the tablets of my memory, and I feel as if I want to visit fresh scenes, to see strange faces, and to listen to a language which is not my own. I should love it."

"Then, come!" said George Crawford, smiling. "Come!" "In the face of all the trouble brewing?" asked Tom, with a laugh.

"Yes," said George. "For I'm sure nothing will ever come of it. It is like so much lashing of the air."

And from just such a haphazard invitation as this Tom Sayers and Bombardier Welsh went to Turkey with George Crawford. They hurried back to London from Cheltham, packed their trunks and their bags with all the things they required, not forgetting their boxing rig, boots, and gloves, and ere a week was out had arrived in Adrianople.

Here George Crawford senior met them at the railway terminus, and greeted them and his son with a cordiality which proved how truly glad he was to see his boy again, and to meet with some of his boy's friends from England.

Tom regarded the merchant with interest. He saw before him a fine, upstanding, broad-shouldered man, whose hair and moustache were liberally besprinkled with grey, but whose stalwart frame spoke of a physical strength altogether out of the common.

"And so you are Tom Sayers, the middle-weight champion of England? And you are Bombardier Welsh?" said Crawford senior, gripping each by the hand in turn. "Well, I am truly glad to meet you. I have read of your achievements with interest, and I am proud to know you."

"Perhaps," said Tom Sayers, smiling, "you do a bit of boxing yourself, sir?"

"Indeed I do," answered the merchant. "It is the way I manage to keep fit. And I may say in passing that I have taught my boy here pretty well everything he knows."

They stayed in Adrianople for several days, and Tom was immediately struck by the warlike preparations which seemed to be going on there. Soldiers thronged the streets until one jostled with them at every other step.

They were a fine, muscular body of men, and Tom could readily understand why some very good judges of military



men had declared that, properly led, the Turks were among the finest soldiers in the world.

Tom heard weird and wonderful stories about the preparations which were being made to fully fit and equip the frontier forts and blockhouses against attack.

The Bulgarians had their armies prepared, and Tom was told by the English correspondent to a big London daily newspaper that at any moment the seething unrest might break into open conflict, war would be declared, and the Bulgarians would sweep down upon the Turkish frontier by way of Rumelia like a swarm of locusts.

"I hope, for your sake, Sayers," said the journalist, when he had reviewed the situation somewhat pessimistically, "that it won't happen while you are staying here—"

"Why?" asked Tom. "Personally, I should not mind the experience so very much, for it must be a thrilling thing to go through an actual war."

The journalist made a grimace.

"You'd not be able to get back to England for any of those boxing engagements of yours, Tom, that's all," he said. "And neither the Turks nor the Bulgarians would show much consideration for a Britisher in a time like this."

George Crawford senior's views, however, were not so gloomy as the journalist's. While regarding a war as likely, he did not think it probable.

"Besides, Sayers," he said, "even supposing it did break out, there would be no danger either to me or those who would be staying with me, for I am known to everybody for hundreds of miles round. My country house is right on the frontier, amongst the hills, but I do not think they would sack or burn it. We would be quite safe. By-the-by, I want you to come with me and stay there. George will tell you how beautiful it is."

"George has," said Bombardier Welsh. "We have had word pictures of the place drawn for us until we are dying to see it."

"Well, so you shall," said the merchant. "We'll all go there at the end of the week."

They accordingly made the journey by rail and by road upon the Saturday following, arriving at their destination at fall of evening.

The house was situated amongst some of the most beautiful scenery Tom Sayers or the bombardier had ever beheld. There was a range of mountains in the background, the wildest and most rugged they had ever seen. Pine-trees and firs abounded everywhere.

The valleys lay deep, purple and blue, on every hand; and here and there they saw some white-walled and red-tiled houses standing out from amidst the green.

"Home," George Crawford called the place.

There were several women-servants attached to the fine, low house, and one or two men. Turks these were, as Tom afterwards discovered. Mrs. Crawford was dead. She had died years ago when her daughter was born.

Dulcie Crawford was the other inhabitant of the house, and George's sister, seventeen years of age, was one of the most strikingly pretty girls that Tom or Billy Welsh had seen.

She spoke English, Turkish, and French fluently, and was accomplished in many other ways.

Her manner was essentially English, and to look at her, and listen to her, to note her style of dress, and observe her manner, was to marvel that she had been to England so little.

She was delighted at meeting her big, fine-looking brother again, and she evidently had heard all about Tom and Billy, for she greeted them cordially.

The evening which followed was one of the most pleasant that either of the travellers had ever spent.

Dulcie was the first to retire to rest, and when she had gone, the father told the two professional pugilists how most of the sons of the Wealthy Turks and Rumelians resident in the district had offered their hands in marriage to Dulcie.

"But my girl has no head for marrying just yet awhile," said the father. "And when she does marry, I mean her to marry a Britisher. I don't want her to wed a Turk. Some of them are among the nicest men I have ever met, but somehow or other I shouldn't care to entrust my daughter into their keeping."

He drew his brows together as he spoke.

"And mention of all this," he said, "reminds me, George, that Safvet Adjali has called here a good deal since he came back from England. I don't like the look of it. He's after my girl."

"What?" cried George Crawford, frowning. "He'd better be careful. That Turkish pig after Dulcie? I gave him a hiding at Cheltham Grammar School, and he'll have another, if he's not careful!"

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The father motioned to the son to control himself.

"After all," he said, "at a time when my trade failed me, and I wanted capital to keep my business together, his father advanced me a couple of thousand pounds. One mustn't forget that, George."

"He charged fifteen per cent. for it, and you paid him back half the loan within the year," said George warmly. "I don't see that he has had anything to complain about!"

"Still, it was a kindness," said the father. "And I owe him over five hundred pounds still."

"For which he holds ample security, dad!"

"Granted, my boy. But I owe the money, and so we must tolerate the visits of his son, I suppose, so long as Safvet is amiable, and behaves himself."

"Let him dare to do otherwise!" growled George Crawford, whose face was as black as thunder. "And see what he'll get for it, even if his father did help you out of a hole, dad!"

Thereupon the subject dropped, but later on, when Tom Sayers and Bombardier Welsh were shown up to bed, the Cheltham schoolboy broached it again.

"Of course, Sayers," he said thoughtfully, "my dad's in the right of it to a point, but I know more than he does. Safvet Adjali was at Cheltham with me, and many a time he talked about my sister in a way I didn't like. He was feeling his way, I think. Dulcie is the sweetest and prettiest girl in all Turkey, I'll swear, and it makes my blood boil to think that that Turkish pig should raise his eyes to her."

"Do you hold the same dislike for all Turks?" asked Billy Welsh.

"No!" was the prompt reply. "Take old man Adjali, for instance. He's strict, upright, just to friend and foe alike, a true man. Now, if his son were like him, I'd ask no better husband for Dulcie."

Tom Sayers found himself wondering as he got into bed that night whether he should see anything more of the Turk whom he had disqualified in that boxing final at Cheltham, and he need not have wondered so much for the fellow called the very next day.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### A Disappointed Lover.

**T**OM SAYERS, Bombardier Welsh, George Crawford, and his father were out in the extensive and beautiful gardens at the rear of the house when the young Turk came.

Adjali rode up on a fine-looking horse, and he brought a bouquet of choice roses with him.

Upon being told that the Crawfords were in the garden, with some English visitors, the Turk grinned.

"Where is the lady?" he asked.

"She is in the drawing-room," answered the Turkish servant.

Safvet passed the man a piece of silver.

"Good!" he cried. "I'll go to her. Do not tell your master that I am here just yet!"

He walked with ringing spurs into the beautifully-furnished drawing-room, and found Dulcie there reading.

The girl looked up with a smile on her pretty face.

"Oh, George," she cried. "I'm glad you've come in, for I wanted to ask you a question about—"

Then she broke off abruptly, and changed her tone.

"It's you, Mr. Adjali!" she said. "I did not know you were here!"

"I have brought you these roses," he said, handing them to her as he spoke. "And other gifts if you would like them. Call me Safvet. I hate the formal Adjali!"

The girl's face crimsoned. She was conscious of his ardent look, and her heart leapt.

She could never tell why, but she always felt afraid of this man. To hide her confusion she buried her face in the roses.

"They are beautiful—very beautiful!" she sighed.

His eyes widened.

"So are you!" he cried in a voice which trembled with passion. "So are you. Dulcie, I love your English name; you, too, are very beautiful!"

And he stepped nearer to her.

"You must not speak to me like that," she said. "Please don't, Mr. Adjali, or I must leave the room!"

"I can't speak otherwise," he said, and he crept closer still to her. "Dulcie, I love you—I love you—I love you!" And he caught her suddenly in his arms, holding her so tightly that she could not free herself.

She uttered a low cry, and her cheeks flushed a deep crimson.

"How dare you?" she cried. "Let me go! Let me go! Let me go!"

"No!" he said, laughing triumphantly. "No. I have



wanted to speak to you for a long time, and I mean to speak now, Dulcie. I saw many beautiful English girls when I was over in your country, but none so beautiful as you. I have thought of nobody else for months. I adore you. I want to marry you. My father is rich, I shall be rich, I shall own miles and miles of the country about here. You shall reign over an army of servants when my father is dead. You shall share equally with me. What do you say? Will you be my wife?"

Dulcie could hardly make reply.

"You offer me marriage, and yet you speak about your father's death in the same breath," she cried. "No, I will never marry you, Safvet. I do not like you! I could never marry you!"

His face paled.

"Ah!" he muttered.

"Let me go!" she cried, struggling again, and this time with such success that she got her right hand free. He tried to seize the dainty wrist, which he had marked with his iron fingers, again, but she drew it back and struck him upon the cheek. With a hoarse cry he let her go.



"Yussuf," said Adjali in a low whisper, "remember you are bound to me. I want your help. Can I rely on you?" "Yes; to the death," answered the servant.

For a moment he stood staring at her, with the same expression that had marred his evil face when he was contemplating the foul on George Crawford in the fight at Cheltenham School.

He set his teeth until they grated together.

"So," he said, "you've struck me, have you? Well, my English beauty, you shall pay for that. You shall marry me; I swear you shall, for I'll kill you sooner than see you married to someone else!"

Then he leapt upon her, seized her, and held her fast.

She called for help.

"Bah!" he said. "Call away. Your shouts will not bring you any assistance. The servants in this house are Turks, and as such they are devoted to me. Your precious father, and his English friends are in the gardens. You and I are alone!"

And he tightened his hold upon her.

"Let me go! Please let me go! You are brutal, Mr Adjali!"

He laughed derisively.

"That's right!" he exclaimed. "Beg and plead. You struck me just now, and I mean to make you pay for it in full. I want a kiss from those pretty lips, Dulcie."

And he drew her down closer to him and bent his face towards her's.

"Help, help, help!" she cried again, this time in louder tones, and her voice echoed through the house.

Safvet gloried in her helplessness.

"That's right," he cried, "call away! No help will come!"

His lips almost touched hers, but with a supreme effort she drove him back, and then her cries echoed through the house again.

And this time they brought her help. Tom Sayers had been walking towards the house, bent on getting his pipe and tobacco-pouch, which he had left in his room, when he heard Dulcie calling. In a moment he had mounted the steps, the next he had pushed the door open and entered the house, and a second or so later he burst into the drawing-room, and saw Miss Crawford struggling bravely in the hands of the Turkish beast.

With a bound Tom reached them, and seizing Safvet, he wrenched him away from the girl, and hurled him aside.

"You villain!" he cried. "Miss Crawford, what is the matter?"

"He attacked me, Mr. Sayers," said the girl, trembling with indignation.

"She struck me; look here!" said Adjali, pointing to his cheeks, which certainly bore the imprint of Dulcie's hand.

"And serve you right, you cur!" said Tom, boiling over. "You ought to know better!"

"You call me harsh names," said Adjali. "Well, Mr. Sayers, we shall see."

And, maddened to think that he had been thwarted, he sprang at the middle-weight champion of the world.

Tom timed the man's rush, and crashed a stinging blow home. Safvet Adalji dropped to the carpet as if he had been shot.

For a moment he lay half-stunned. The next he was up. The next his hand moved like lightning to his pocket, and something flashed in the half-light.

His arm dropped, but Tom, realising his peril, gave it an upward blow, striking the forearm.

There was a flash, a report, and a crash.

It was a revolver which Adalji held, and the bullet from it smashed a magnificent mirror into smithereens.

Dulcie clasped her hands together in fear.

"Be careful, Mr. Sayers!" she cried. "Be careful!"

But Tom had closed with the brute, and, imprisoning his arm, and gripping his wrist, he turned it, causing the Turk to drop the weapon with a howl of agony.

Then he threw the brute with a clever backfall, and Safvet struck the ground for the second time, whilst Tom coolly picked up the revolver.

In the meantime the report of the revolver-shot had brought Mr. Crawford, George, and the bombardier, rushing back from the garden.

"Good gracious, what's all this fuss about?" asked Crawford, as he came hurrying into the room.

He stared in amazement at the scene before him.

"Ah! Safvet is here again!" he cried, and his face darkened.

"Yes, father," said Dulcie, going to him, "and he has insulted me."

The father uttered a cry of anger.

"Insulted you, has he, my girl?" he cried.

"It's a lie!" said Adjali, who had risen to his feet. "I came here with the most honourable intentions. I asked her to be my wife. Is that not sufficient guarantee of my good faith?"

"Did he ask that, my girl?" asked Mr. Crawford.

"Yes, father. But I refused him, and he insulted me!"

"And what part did you play in this scene, Sayers?" asked the merchant.

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BOXING RING, INTRODUCING TOM SAYERS AND THE FIGHTING PARSON IN THE "MARVEL" NEXT WEEK



Tom told him, Adjali several times attempting to interrupt.

"Safvet," said the merchant, when Tom had finished, "I have heard enough. You are a villain!"

"You didn't say that when you wanted to borrow money from my father," said the Turk, with a sneer. "Will you say as much to him if he should come to you to-morrow and demand the repayment of the rest of the money you owe?"

"Your father shall have every penny I received from him, plus the interest, to-morrow," said the merchant sternly. "I wish to be free of my obligation to him. As for you, Safvet, listen to what I've got to say.

"My girl is not for such as you. I'd sooner see her dead than married to you. You are a bad man. Because she refused you, you insulted her. You ought to be thankful that you haven't got murder on your hands."

Adjali apologised humbly.

"It was an accident!" he cried. "I did it in the heat of the moment. I would not have harmed Mr. Sayers or your daughter for the world, sir!"

"Your apology comes too late. Now leave my house, Safvet, or I shall have to turn you out."

The Turk indulged in a sneer.

"So," he said, "you, like your precious daughter, do not think me good enough?"

"No, by George I don't!" said Crawford.

"Very well," said Adjali between his teeth. "I will go, but you have not seen the last of me. When I love, my love amounts to a passion. I have not done with your daughter yet. And as for you and your son, Mr. Crawford, I will have my revenge!"

The merchant pointed towards the door.

"Out of my house!" he said.

Adjali turned away, with a mocking laugh.

George Crawford stepped towards him.

"You cur!" he cried. "I could kill you!"

They looked into each other's eyes, but the Turk was the first to quail. He left the room then, and hurried to the front door.

Outside, one of the Turkish men-servants was holding his horse. The fellow wore a dark moustache, and his swarthy face, coal-black hair, and the native dress he wore, made him look like a brigand.

"Yussuf," said Adjali in a low whisper, "remember you are bound to me. I want your help. Can I rely on you?"

"Yes; to the death."

"Good. Then I shall want you to let me into the house any time I ask you to—to-morrow, perhaps—understand?"

Yussuf looked round quickly, and saw the two Crawfords, Tom Sayers, and Billy Welsh standing at the head of the steps.

"What are you going to do?" he asked hurriedly.

"I am going to steal the girl," answered Adjali. "She struck me. I love her. I mean to carry her away."

Yussuf uttered a grunt, which was as good as a verbal agreement to help him.

"Yussuf," said the elder Crawford, "go into the house!" The Turkish servant obeyed, and Adjali swung himself into the saddle.

"Adieu, Mr. Crawford!" he said. "And don't forget that the country is in a state of unrest. There are brigands from Rumelia, from Macedonia, even from Bulgaria, waiting to swoop down upon your nest at the first opportunity. My father has command of the bulk of the troops in these parts. Guard your pretty daughter well."

Crawford made no reply, and with a sarcastic wave of the hand Adjali rode away.

"There goes a rascal, if ever there was one!" said the merchant.

"And the other," said Tom, "looks as bad. 'I'd never trust that fellow.'"

"Do you mean Yussuf?" asked the father.

"Yes."

"Oh, he is devoted to my service! I'd trust him with my life!" said George Crawford.

Tom Sayers shook his head. Mr. Crawford might have a high opinion of the black-haired, swarthy rascal, but he had not, and he wondered what sort of mischief Adjali and Yussuf had been talking over in whispers before the merchant ordered his servant into the house. Tom could see a whole peck of trouble brewing.

#### CHAPTER 4.

#### A Turkish Revenge.

THE Adjali's house was over eight miles away, but in the morning the merchant was up early, and accompanied by one servant, Yussuf, in whom he placed implicit trust, he started off on horseback, armed to the teeth, and with the money in his pockets that he owed the Turk.

THE MARVEL.—No. 459.

"THE BULLY OF THE RANK:" OR, "THE RIVAL CABBIES." ANOTHER FINE TALE OF THE

George Crawford was anxious to settle the debt he owed to Safvet's father.

His son had wished to accompany him, but the father had objected.

"No, George, my boy," he said. "I'll go alone. I do not need a witness, and I can protect myself. Old Adjali the Turk is an honourable man."

Upon his arrival at Adjali's house he was instantly conducted to the room in which the old man was working.

Safvet's father received him with a scowl of menace.

"So," he said, "friend, you return good for evil, by threatening my son. You consider him as dirt beneath your feet because he wishes to marry your pretty daughter. In what way is an Adjali inferior to a Crawford, might I ask?"

"Friend," said George Crawford, "what tale has your son told you?"

"Enough to make you out a villain!" said Safvet's father, bringing his hand down heavily upon the top of his desk.

"Wait," said the merchant, "until you have heard what I have got to say."

He thereupon told the whole tale anew from his point of view.

"Friend," he said, "if your son Safvet were only like you, I should account it an honour for my daughter to marry him; but he is not, and he has told you a string of lies."

Adjali the elder's face had softened whilst Crawford was speaking. When the English merchant had finished, he rose and gripped him by the hand, with almost British heartiness.

"Friend," he cried, "I know it is not in you to tell a lie. I believe you. I almost thought he must be in the wrong. Say no more about it. I'll teach him a lesson."

"And now," said Crawford, "I want to repay you the money I owe you, so that there may be a clean sheet between us."

The Turk objected, declaring that he didn't want the money then, and was willing to wait until Crawford found it convenient to pay him; but the merchant would not hear of it. The money was finally handed over, plus the interest, and a full receipt given. And after nothing would please Safvet's father but that Crawford must stay and eat with him before starting upon his journey back.

George Crawford gave way to humour him, and stayed.

And when the meal was served, in came the son, with a swagger and a smile. The smile faded as Safvet saw Dulcie's father seated at the table.

"Do you eat bread with our enemies, father?" he asked.

"Out of my sight!" said the father, springing to his feet. "I have been told the truth by my friend Crawford. Safvet, you are a villain!"

"But, father, I—"

"Enough! Out of my sight!" said the father. "And be careful. If you offend again, I shall punish you. My son must be truthful and honest. If he be ought else, I will disown him."

The old Turk's face was terrible to see. Safvet quailed before him, and left the room.

"My friend," said the elder Adjali, when his son had gone, "I have often envied you your pretty daughter, with her affectionate ways and her devotion to you. Would that my son were as good a son to me as she is a daughter to you. I ask your pardon for ever doubting that she and you were in the right. I ought to have known that I cannot trust Safvet. He does not speak the truth."

It was a humiliating admission for the father to have to make, but beyond everything he was just.

Early in the afternoon George Crawford started upon his ride back to town, and Safvet's father rode a little way with him.

They passed many questionable-looking men upon the road, who eyed them closely.

"You see these men, friend," said Safvet's father. "They are Turks, eagerly awaiting the issue of all the negotiations which are going on between the Balkan nations and Turkey. At the very first news of war they will leap to arms, and there will be heavy bloodshed. We are living in perilous times."

"But my house would be safe, I hope, in case of hostilities?" said Crawford anxiously. "Otherwise, it were better for me to take my daughter and my household to Adrianople, or even further south."

"No, my friend, stay here," said the Turk. "You shall not be harmed. You are beloved in Rumelia, and the bulk of the Turks in this part of the land respect you and honour you, although you are a Christian."

And so they parted, Yussuf riding silently alongside his master, and turning over much in his mind that Safvet Adjali had told him, whilst his master was at lunch, about his intentions with regard to the Britisher's daughter.

Yussuf's mind was ill at ease, for George Crawford had always treated him with the greatest consideration and kind-



ness, and he was in most things a loyal man. But Safvet Adjali had once done him a great service, and he felt bound to him because of it. Truly he hardly knew what to do.

That night at the Home, George Crawford gave a splendid dinner, and broached some of his choicest wine in honour of the occasion. He had paid off the last of his debts, and he was a happy man.

And after dinner, when they adjourned to the drawing-room, where the men were allowed to smoke, Dulcie sang some English songs, with charming expression, whilst her stalwart brother played the piano.

It was all so peaceful, so pleasing, so simple, that Tom Sayers and the Bombardier were charmed.

Excepting when the quaintly-dressed servants appeared, they never dreamed that they were in Turkey, and close to the frontier, of all places in the world.

Coffee had been served, that delicious coffee which is so fragrant and refreshing that one is always sorry that the cups are so small.

They took it in little jewelled cups of gold, and a solemn man-servant, with a face like a sphinx, handed it round.

So things were, when all of a sudden a sharp, clear report, which was unmistakably the crack of a rifle, echoed from somewhere without the house, and close at hand.

The merchant rose to his feet, with a start. "Hallo," he said, his face clouding, "what on earth is that?"

He rushed to the windows, threw them up, and pushed the heavy wooden shutters outwards.

From the darkness came the clamour of voices, and the others, who quickly joined him, realised that there were a body of men before the house.

"What did they want? What was the matter?" The hum of voices swelled into a shout, a second shot was fired, and then they could hear men hammering away at the stout gates with the butt-ends of their rifles.

"Frontier trouble, Tom," said the bombardier. "I'm afraid so," answered Tom.

"It's brigands!" said young George Crawford. The father shook his head.

"Nonsense, my boy!" he cried. "There are no brigands in these parts. It's a hoax, I should say."

Then he saw Dulcie standing by his side, her face pale, her eyes big with wonder.

"Go to your room, my child," he said, "and shut yourself in. You will be safe there. George, go with her, and see that she is safe."

George Crawford caught his sister by the arm. "Come along, Dulcie!" he said.

"I don't want to leave my father!" cried the girl. "I shall be all right, my child," said the merchant. "Go with your brother, dear."

She obeyed them without another word.

And no sooner had she left the room than one of the servants came running towards the house at breakneck speed.

"Master! Master! Master!" he cried, his voice shaking with fright.

"What is the matter, Ahmed?" asked the merchant. "There are a crowd of armed men outside the gates. They have shot one of your servants. They say they are going to ransack the place. Fly! Fly! Fly for your lives!"

George Crawford set his lips.

"Is this our boasted security?" he cried. "Gentlemen, I'm afraid I have been to blame. I was too sanguine!"

He stepped to the wall, and lifted a latest pattern repeating-rifle down from a rack.

"Arm yourselves!" he cried. "I dare say you know how to use a gun. We'll shoot down some of the marauders, before they sack the place, and as I dare say they are the veriest canaille. I presume we can beat them off. The Turkish servants will stand by me!"

Tom Sayers and Bombardier Welsh each took the weapon nearest to their hands.

"They are loaded," said the merchant.

The bombardier fondled his with absolute affection, for the military instinct was alive within him.

At that moment the gates either gave way, or were opened to the mob, and a fierce yell of triumph signified the fact.

Yussuf had done his work only too well; he had opened the gates to let Safvet Adjali, and a crowd of hired ruffians into the courtyard.

Having sold his master, Yussuf rushed towards the house, into which he was speedily admitted.

He made his way up the stairs, and saw George Crawford, his master's son, and Dulcie, about to mount the stairs.

Yussuf looked to right and left, saw that he was not watched, crept behind George, and felled him with a blow from behind with a heavy instrument.

The unfortunate boy fell heavily, and, as Dulcie turned with a startled cry, Yussuf seized her, raised her in his arms, and ran.

She uttered one long, piercing shriek.

"Yussuf!" she said, and then she fainted.

Out of the house hurried the man with his burden. Traitor that he was, his heart smote him sorely, but he remembered his promise to Safvet, and did not hesitate.

In the shadow of the trees in the garden he found the villain waiting.

"I have kept my word," he muttered. "The English girl is here!"

Safvet burst into a savage laugh.

"Good!" he cried, taking the insensible Dulcie from the man's arms. "You have done well, Yussuf! Where is my horse?"

"Here, close at hand, master!"

Safvet Adjali uttered a grunt of satisfaction, and strode on.

"One moment," said Yussuf, following him eagerly.

"You have forgotten something!"

"What, dog?"

"The money you promised me. My reward for helping you. I am in need of it!"

"Then take it!" hissed Safvet.

So saying, he turned like a flash, and drove a knife he held deep into the man's side.

Yussuf, who had sold his master for such payment as this, hurled aloft his hands, uttered a low, despairing wail, and fell upon his face, his fingers closing upon the grass in his agony.

Safvet hurried on, then, with his burden, alone.

"I have the girl," he muttered. "My men will ransack the house, and set fire to it. My revenge will be complete. George Crawford, you did wrong when you slighted me!"

## CHAPTER 5.

### Betrayed!

WHILE these events were happening, George Crawford senior, Tom Sayers, and Bombardier Welsh, stood by the window, prepared to shoot down the first of the brigands who might show himself.

They sheltered themselves in so far as was possible behind the protecting woodwork of the window-frames. At odd times they fancied they could see shadows moving in the darkness. From the region of the stables and outbuildings, came the incessant yapping and barking of the watchdogs.

They waited breathlessly for some time, and then George Crawford smiled.

"It is only some joke that is being played upon us by the villagers," he said. "I don't think there is any cause for alarm. Dulcie is safe with George. Let's go and see what's the matter."

It was at this moment that Safvet made off with the merchant's daughter, and by a preconcerted arrangement of signals, the villains who were helping Safvet in his desperate game fired a volley at the house.

The report of the gunshots went reverberating amongst the trees in the valley, and rolled away in a crackle to the hills. The thud, thud of the bullets as they plugged into the solid masonry of the house warned Crawford and his friends that there was, indeed, imminent danger, and crouching low, they fired in reply.

Then, when the noise of the firing ceased, and the smoke had rolled away, George Crawford sprang across the drawing-room to the door.

"I must rally the servants!" he cried. "There is evidently going to be desperate work. We shall need all our strength in order to hold our own against these villains. Close the shutters, and fast bolt them. Make your way to some of the upper rooms. You will be safer there!"

So saying, he threw the door wide, and almost ran into the arms of his son, who, white-faced, dazed, and wild-eyed, stared vacantly at him.

"George," exclaimed the father, startled at the appearance of his son, and then added harshly: "Where is Dulcie?"

"Gone!" said the brother, in a broken voice, staring vacantly.

"Gone," cried the father, and he seemed not to realise the meaning of the words, "what do you mean?"

"I was taking her upstairs," faltered the unfortunate boy, "when someone came up behind me, struck me down, and took Dulcie away!"

"Did you see them take her?" asked the father.

"No! But I was half-conscious of it, though," said the boy. "As soon as I was able to move, and think, I rushed to her room, but she was not there. I then searched the house, the kitchen quarters, everywhere, and could not find her!"

"Great Heaven!" said the merchant, raising his hands to his face, and seeming to lose all capability of action.



Could his daughter have been the cause of attack, he wondered? Had one of the chieftains in the district, whom she had refused in marriage, taken this mean revenge?

"Where are the servants?" he cried brokenly, as soon as he had regained his composure. "Marshal them, my boy! Arm yourself, and we will at least fight to the death."

"I don't know where the servants are!" cried George.

"Ahmed, Yussuf, all have gone!"

"Ah!" said the merchant, in a terrible voice. "I understand. They have betrayed us!"

The bombardier had gone to the open door in the meanwhile, and had looked out, and he now saw a number of figures moving in the darkness towards the house. They came creeping stealthily, noiselessly. He fired at one of them, and then swung the door to.

"Quick!" he cried, as he shot the bolt home. "They are coming! Let's go to the next landing and hold the stairway. We can shoot them down as they come in sight!"

The others realised that it was the only thing to be done, and they hurried up the stairs.

"Sayers," said George Crawford, on the way, "you've got me to thank for this! I promised you that you would not run your head into danger, and now it seems we are all doomed to be massacred."

"On what grounds?" asked Tom.

George Crawford shrugged his shoulders.

"You know what it is," he cried. "The Christians are hated by the Turks. In spite of the veneration with which my father is regarded, they have marked him down, it seems, and unless we can hold our own until rescue comes, we are lost!"

Even as Crawford spoke, they could hear men battering away at the doors in the front of the house. Soon similar sounds came from the rear.

A number of shots rang out, and they heard the glass window-panes shatter and fall.

But, curiously enough, although they could tell by the melody of sounds which came to them from below that their enemies were within the house, the invaders made no attempt to attack them.

"What's going on?" asked the bombardier, looking disappointed, for he had his rifle ready, and had promised himself to pick off the first of the brigands who dared to show himself below.

"I don't know," said the broken-hearted merchant. "They do not appear to be looting the place. Let me go down and parley with them!"

Tom Sayers stopped him.

"Not on your life, sir!" he said.

"Let me go," cried the merchant, struggling. "I must learn what they have done with my child!"

"They will kill you, dad!" said George.

"Then so much the better. What would life mean to me if I lost my child?" returned the grief-stricken father.

But they held him back all the same, and a moment or so later a suffocating odour came up from below, and billowy masses of penetrating smoke welled up the stairway.

This, together with an ominous and unmistakable crackle, told them what had happened.

"The villains have set fire to the house!" said the bombardier, leaping downwards. "We had better fight them man to man, and end it all at once, sooner than be caught like rats in a trap!"

The bombardier's face was set with resolve. He meant to kill, since it seemed he had to be killed, and he intended to sell his life dearly. Tom sprang after him. Then came George Crawford senior, and the boy brought up the rear.

The smoke was so dense that they choked as they groped their way into the hall.

It came from all sides. The front as well as the rear of the house seemed to be on fire. The wretches had evidently gone from room to room, and set light to them one after the other. The firing at the windows was explained. They intended to create a through draught. The doors, too, had been left open, but not a single one of their enemies was to be seen.

"This way!" cried the bombardier, making his way to the front door, and staggering blindly into the fresh, pure air.

He half expected to be shot down as he emerged into view of the men lurking outside, but all was silent, and he saw nobody.

He sprang down to the garden level, and sheltered himself behind some bushes. His eager eyes pierced the darkness, but he saw nothing suspicious, and heard no sound save the crackle of the fire in the house at his back.

One by one, Tom Sayers, the elder Crawford, and George, left the house, and, like the bombardier, sought shelter among the bushes.

All was quiet.

Billy Welsh, still doubting, crept stealthily from cover to cover, meaning to outflank the enemy. He used speed and caution, and soon was in sight of the entrance-gates. As before, he saw nobody. The enemy appeared to have taken flight.

Billy was so puzzled that he stood for a moment scratching his head in his perplexity. Then he walked boldly into the road beyond the house. He could see along a stretch of level and well-made highway which ran to the right and left, but it was deserted.

"Show yourselves, you villains!" he shouted. "Come out of your hiding-places, you dogs, and let us fight it out face to face!"

His own voice rang in echoes which mocked him. No other replied.

And at last the conviction was borne home to him that the brigands who had attacked and fired the house, had contented themselves with stealing only Dulcie Crawford, and had vanished the moment they had secured her.

He walked boldly back into the grounds, holding up his right hand and shouting:

"It's I—Billy Welsh!" he bawled. "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!"

"By George, you spoke only just in time, old man!" Tom Sayers' voice answered from a rhododendron bush hard by. "Another moment, and I should have put a bullet through you!"

Billy laughed.

"Good old Tom!" he cried. "You'd have put me out for good, then, Tom, old fellow!"

"Where are the enemy?" asked Tom.

"Gone!" answered the bombardier. "There is nobody within sight."

"Gone?" repeated George Crawford senior, hoarsely.

"Yes."

"And my child? They have taken her with them. She is lost."

From behind them now came the glow of the fire. The house was burning like tinder. It was plain that nothing could save it.

By its light they roamed about the grounds, seeking in vain for some clue as to the way in which Dulcie had been borne away. And in their search they suddenly came upon Yussuf lying upon the ground, with the blood dying his clothes.

George Crawford found him, and upon turning him over recognised him instantly.

"It's Yussuf!" he cried.

"Brave fellow," said the merchant, in a tone of deep emotion. "He met his death trying to prevent them from carrying away my child."

Then Yussuf groaned. In moving him they had brought the life-blood ebbing back to his heart.

Tom Sayers uttered a cry of joy.

"Take him into the light. He is not dead!" he cried. "We may be able to save his life. And then, he'll be able to tell you, Crawford, who the villains were who did this foul deed. With his help you may be able to save your daughter."

Yussuf was borne towards the house, and laid gently down upon the soft grass there.

And a moment or so later his eyes opened, and he looked upwards, with a glassy stare.

For a moment he lay groaning in agony.

"Who was it struck you down, my poor fellow?" asked the merchant. "Tell me, and I'll see that justice is done."

"Is that my master?" asked Yussuf, in a dull voice.

"Yes, Yussuf."

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THE MARVEL.—No. 459.

“THE BULLY OF THE RANK;” OR, “THE RIVAL CABBIES.” ANOTHER FINE TALE OF THE



The servant shuddered and groaned aloud. "May you forgive me," he faltered; "for I am a villain." Crawford started. "What do you mean?" he asked. "Speak, Yussuf!" "It was I who betrayed you," said Yussuf, raising himself up in George Crawford's arms. "It was I who opened the gate to those villains. Where is the young master?" "I am here, Yussuf," said George Crawford sternly. "Forgive me—forgive me, my lord!" said the wounded servant. "For it was I who struck you down, and took my mistress away, to give her into the hands of the villain who stabbed me."

"What!" All this while the merchant had tried to persuade himself that the servant was wandering in his mind; but convinced at last that he was a traitor, he drew a revolver from his pocket and presented it at Yussuf's head. "You traitor and villain!" he cried. "Your life shall answer for your crime!"

And he would have pressed the trigger, had not Tom Sayers seized him by the wrist.

"You don't want murder on your soul," said Tom calmly. "Besides, this man's evidence will be useful to you."

Crawford's face paled. "You are right, Sayers," he said. "But my feelings carried me away."

Then he bent over Yussuf.

"I have always treated you with every consideration and kindness," he cried. "And in return you have betrayed me, have robbed me of my daughter. If you want to spare your life, you must tell me the truth now."

"I will! I will!" said Yussuf brokenly, and his voice was scarcely audible. "It was Safvet Adjali who led me to betray my trust—"

"Safvet—Safvet!" cried George Crawford, in a terrible voice. "I ought to have known it."

"Master," said Yussuf, staring vacantly into Crawford's face, "before you judge me too harshly, listen. Some years ago this Safvet Adjali saved my father from death, and our home from ruin. He lent my mother money, and he was kind to me, and I swore that, whatever he asked me to do, even to the sacrifice of my own life, if he wished it that, I would do. After Safvet Adjali had been refused by my lady mistress, and you turned him out of the house, he asked me to help him to gain possession of her, and I declared I would. He hired the men who attacked this house, and I gave my mistress into his hands, though I could have killed myself for doing it. Then, he who had sworn to pay me well, and to look after me in the future, struck me down with a knife, and called me dog. Such is the truth."

George Crawford felt the Turk grow limp in his arms. "And where has Adjali taken my sister?" he asked, speaking in Yussuf's ear. "Tell my father—quick—quick—"

"To the Red House, near the frontier fort," murmured Yussuf. "He has gone there, because he thought that nobody would ever dream of his hiding in such a place."

"Is this the truth?" asked George Crawford. "Yes—Yes, I swear it—as I hope to be forgiven."

Yussuf choked, then raised himself, with a last expiring effort.

"Safvet," he cried—"I hate him! He has murdered me. Save the young mistress! Avenge—avenge—avenge—"

His voice weakened, then died away, and he fell back as if dead.

At that moment the roof of the Home fell in with a crash, and the sparks and flames leapt heavenward with a roar.

The house was gone.

And then a crowd of people came hurrying up, afoot and on horseback. They had been alarmed by the glare of the burning house, and had hurried to the assistance of the English merchant Crawford.

To them the merchant told his story.

"Will anyone volunteer to help me save my child?" he asked.

"Yes!" they cried; and fifty men proffered their services. A visit was made to the stables, the horses were found there unharmed, and within fifteen minutes the party, armed to the teeth, their clattering along the country road in the darkness, with an advance and rear-guard to protect the main body, hastening as swiftly as possible towards the Red House. They meant to rescue Dulcie Crawford, and to punish the man who had kidnapped her.

And as they went, the flickering light from the smouldering ruins of the merchant's house served to light them on their way.

## CHAPTER 6.

### The Chase and Rescue.

THE journey through the night was made at all possible speed, and yet, to the eager and heart-stricken father and brother, it was all too slow.

Upon the way they had to pass by the country house in which Adjali lived.

At Tom's suggestion, the merchant, leaving his son to go onward with the rescue-party, entered the gates, after being challenged, and rode up to the house, unseemly though the hour was.

Here he demanded an audience of the Turk.

The elder Adjali granted it, for he knew that nothing save a matter of the gravest urgency would have brought his English friend to his house at such an hour.

And so, whilst the grizzled old Turk listened, George Crawford told his story.

Adjali's face wore a terrible expression when his friend had finished.

"Adjali," said Crawford, "I demand justice."

"And you shall have it," said Adjali. "I do not doubt the truth of your words. Safvet was alone with your servant Yussuf during the whole of the time we were eating the bread of friendship, the other day. One must believe what your servant said. Safvet left the house this morning, and has not returned. Wait, I will dress myself, and come with you. My servants shall help you. You shall have your daughter returned to you, friend; and if Safvet has harmed so much as a hair of her head, I'll kill him with my own hand."

And Tom Sayers, who listened to what Adjali said, believed that he would keep his word.

They delayed their journey half an hour, and then set out twenty strong, with Adjali armed to the teeth, and followed the main body of the rescuers along the country road.

It was a weird and lonely ride, and scarcely a word was spoken. A mist shut down on them like a fog, and they had to trust to the instinct of the horses to guide them aright.

When the grey of dawn came and they were able to see, they knew that they were within gunshot of the Red House, a gloomy strong-walled structure, set upon a hill; and

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"Do you eat bread with our enemies, father?" asked Safvet, when he saw Crawford seated at the table.



presently they saw it, rearing itself up above the mist, which was being fast dispelled by a stiff breeze.

And presently they saw the rest of the rescue-party halted upon the road a quarter of a mile ahead, their horses steaming and blown. They had overtaken them at last.

No time was cut to waste. They joined forces, and then started down towards the valley, beyond which rose the hill on which the Red House stood.

A mile away to their left stood one of the frontier forts, and they could make out the gaily-clad Turkish soldier walking up and down the ramparts.

Their manoeuvre had, of course, been observed, and a messenger was hurrying from the fort at express speed, to discover what this display of force meant.

Safvet Adjali would, of course, be able to satisfy him. Safvet, the father, had great authority in this part of the country.

The armed force quickly deployed, opened out, and two wings were sent galloping along the valley, one to the left, the other to the right, their object being to completely surround the place, so that there would be no escape for the younger Adjali, and the miscreants who had ridden with him and his captive to this out-of-the-way place.

The two Crawfords, the bombardier, Safvet Adjali, and Tom Sayers were with the main attacking force, and they, after tethering their tired horses in the valley, began to scale the rocky slope towards the house above, seeking shelter as they went.

And that such shelter was needed they soon discovered, for shot after shot rang out from the strongly-built and fortified residence, the bullets whistling past their ears, or thudding against the rocks around them.

The bombardier fired the first shot in reply, and soon the rattle of rifle-fire awakened the echoes of the hills, and brought the soldiers crowding to the walls of the fortress, wondering whether the Rumelians and the Bulgarians had crossed the frontier, and were about to attack.

The firing soon became general, but not a member of the attacking force was harmed, though it became obvious that if they intended to make an assault and carry the place by storm, it would be at the risk of their lives.

Crawford was for risking everything. He wanted to save his daughter. Adjali was for more certain and less risky measures.

"Wait!" said he. "Hold your positions, and continue your firing. I'll go and see my friend the commandant of the fort. If I can get him to bring his guns to bear on the Red House, he'll soon blow its walls in, and drive the rabble that hold it out like rats."

And he would hear of no objection to his scheme. Tom reminded the old Turk that he would be training the guns on his own son.

Adjali shrugged his shoulders, and smiled. "Bah!" he cried. "I know Safvet well. He'll conceal himself in the cellars, anywhere where a shell won't harm him. He is too fond of his precious skin to risk its damage."

And he sprang from rock to rock, with the agility of a trained athlete, his years seeming to make little difference with him.

Shots were sent after him from the Red House, although Tom thought that his identity must have been made known. He mounted his horse in the valley, and, with the messenger from the fort by his side, rode the jaded beast off in the direction of the fort.

And whilst they waited the besiegers kept up their fire upon the Red House, whilst those within replied; though the only damage done was to the brick walls, and the rocks.

"Father," said George Crawford, "I don't like the idea of the house being shelled. Sussuping Dulcie were killed?"

"You are right, boy," said the father. "But what else can be done?"

"Send up a flag of truce, and demand the surrender of the girl," suggested the bombardier.

"They would show no respect to the white flag. And who would dare to take it?"

"I will," answered Tom.

He forthwith tied his handkerchief upon the muzzle of his gun, and, holding it aloft, started up the steep incline towards the house.

A shot or two was fired, and the bullets whistled by, uncomfortably close to him, Tom thought. Then the firing ceased.

Tom walked fearlessly right up to the house.

A man's head appeared at one of the small windows, and challenged Tom in Turkish.

"Can't you speak in English?" asked Tom.

There was a pause, and then a voice said:

"Well, Christian dog, what is it you want?"

"I have come up here on behalf of Mr. George Crawford, the merchant," answered Tom. "We know that Safvet Adjali, who has stolen Mr. Crawford's daughter, has

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been imprisoned in this place, and we demand her immediate surrender."

The man on the other side of the wall uttered a startled cry, and there was another pause, a long pause.

Then another voice spoke, and Tom believed it to be the voice of Safvet Adjali the younger.

"The English girl is not here," said the Turk. "You have come on a fool's errand. We have respected your flag of truce, but I give you fair warning that you will be fired upon if you are within sight within two minutes, flag or no flag!"

Tom looked down at the slope, and saw that the nearest protective boulder was some hundreds of yards away, and the slope difficult of negotiation.

"I could not get to safety in two minutes," he said.

Safvet's voice laughed mockingly.

"It is all you will get," he said. "And some of the time has already expired. Be quick, for we are deadly shots here."

"Is that your last word?" demanded Tom.

"Yes. Begone, you Christian dog!"

Tom turned, and began to retrace his steps, without hurry, for he did not think that Safvet would dare do what he said.

But suddenly a sharp report rang out behind him, and a bullet struck the ground almost at his feet.

He quickened his pace, and, with the men in the Red House firing at him as he went, he at last dropped behind a boulder, and stretched himself out breathlessly upon the hard ground.

Then, bit by bit, he climbed downwards, until he had rejoined the Crawfords, who had watched his perilous descent with their hearts in their mouths.

He gave them Safvet's message, and their anger knew no bounds.

"The villains!" cried the irate bombardier. "I tell you, Tom, when I saw those rascals potting at you, when you were returning, and carrying the white flag, too, I felt like murder. But Adjali has reached the fort, and if only the soldiers come to our help, we shall soon have possession of that hole up there."

George Crawford junior listened with gloomy face, and stood, with arms folded, staring up the hill.

He had no doubt that the soldiery would soon rout Safvet and his horde out of the Red House, but what then? How would his sister be?

He knew Safvet, or thought he did, and he felt sure that the villain, maddened at his failure, would kill Dulcie, and he groaned aloud.

Suddenly there was a report from the fort behind. The sound of the explosion was altogether different from that of a rifle. It was deeper, more menacing, and, turning his head in that direction, Tom saw a ball of white smoke mounting skywards. A shell had been fired, and they could see the smoke left by its progress touching the air here and there.

Crash!

The shell struck the Red House, and a mighty report followed which deafened them. They gazed up at the building in awe, and saw its brickwork fall in powder and dust.

Boom went the gun at the fort again.

Crash! A second shell struck the Red House, and, exploding, caused some of the roof to fall.

Boom! A third shell was fired, and, like the other two, it struck home. And then there was silence.

When the smoke above them cleared away, they could see the shattered walls, the misshapen roof, the broken windows. One well-planted shell had blown the doorway to smithereens. The way to the Red House was open to them.

George Crawford leapt from the shelter of the rock behind which he had been crouching, and footed it up the hill.

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" he shouted, waving his hat, and never pausing to think that his child might have been killed by those deadly shells.

The Turks responded with a gallant cheer, and, rushing pell-mell after him, went up to take the place.

No more shots were fired at them. The besieged had had enough. They knew that, on the slightest sign of fight, the guns in the fort would open fire again, and they had no wish to be blown to atoms.

Tom Sayers, Bombardier Welsh, young George Crawford, and the father were among the first to reach the door of the Red House, and, amidst the dust and dirt and debris, they saw two bodies lying, pale-faced and stained with blood.

The shells had done their work too well, it seemed.

However, these rascals deserved their fate, and they spared no pity for them. Stealers of women, and incendiaries as they were, they were better dead.

They passed beyond the door, and as they did so Tom saw a figure skulking away from them.

It was Safvet.

Tom rushed forward.



"Here's your man, George!" he cried.

The boy uttered a hoarse cry, sprang past Tom, and closed with Safvet, striking him a stunning blow, and felling him to the ground, where he pinioned him close.

As at Cheltham Grammar School, Safvet was the beaten man.

George clutched him by the throat.

"My sister!" he cried. "Where is she?"

Safvet choked. He could not reply for the pressure of George's iron fingers upon his windpipe.

"Let him loose, George," said the bombardier. "The brute can't answer you!"

George sprang erect, and Safvet, cowering like a whipped cur, held up his right arm, as if to ward off a blow.

"Dulcie is downstairs, in the cellars!" he cried.

George struck the man.

"You dog!" he cried. "You'd put her there, would you?"

"Yes, for safety," muttered Safvet.

"Is she harmed or unharmed?"

"Unharmed," answered Safvet. "She is as if she had never been stolen from her home."

Young George drew in a deep breath.

"It is just as well," he answered; "for if you had harmed her, I'd have killed you, Safvet. But we'll soon see whether you are speaking the truth."

By this time the rescue-party were swarming all over the Red House, and the rascals they found hiding in the holes and corners were dragged out without ceremony.

The Crawfords, Tom, and the bombardier went down the stone stairs leading to the cellars to find Dulcie.

And in the midst of the turmoil and fuss, Adjali and a number of soldiers from the fort, together with the Turkish commandant, arrived upon the scene. Safvet Adjali the elder looked at his son, who was guarded by two armed stalwarts, in utter contempt.

"So," he said, "what my English friend told me was true? And you, Safvet, my son, have descended to this? You are an incendiary, and a villain!"

"I meant well by the girl, father," said Safvet humbly. "I wanted her to become my wife."

"Bah!" said the Turk. "I know you too well, Safvet. I disown you! You shall never enter my doors again! I'll never give you one penny more! You must earn your own bread before you eat it! I cast you off!"

"Have mercy, my father!" pleaded Safvet, struggling.

Adjali waved him aside, and, with the gesture, swept him out of his heart for ever.

"No," he cried—"no! I have tried to make an honest man of you. I sent you to England, that you might learn chivalry and courtesy, qualities which were lacking in you. I have spent a fortune on your education, but all in vain. Turn to brigandage. It is your metier. I have done with you!"

And he walked on, with his hands set behind his back and his head bowed.

The son's lips curled, and he laughed defiantly. Of the two, he was the least concerned.

Meanwhile the search-party below had roamed about the cellars, calling Dulcie by name.

"Miss Crawford—Miss Crawford!" shouted Tom, as he lost himself in a labyrinth of passages. "Can you hear us? Are you there? We are friends. Your father is here!"

They all called, and they listened, but for quite a while they heard no sound save the squeaking of the rats and mice as they ran hither and thither in alarm. And then a faint voice replied.

The sound came before a shut door.

They made for it. They shot the bolts back, they turned a key they found in the rusty lock, and they pulled the door wide.

Then the bombardier struck a match, and by its faint light they saw the merchant's daughter cowering at the back of the cellar, frightened and wondering. Tom Sayers uttered a cry of fierce indignation, for he saw that her dainty wrists were tied together, and the cord that bound them had been affixed to a ring set in the wall.

They rushed forward, and they set her free.

She fell into her father's arms, sobbing.

"Father, father, father!" she moaned, and she fainted.

But joy does not kill, and soon after they had carried her up into the pure, clear air she revived. She was deathly pale, and shivered, for she had suffered much since Safvet had stolen her from her father's house.

"My child! My little girl! My little Dulcie!" the merchant murmured brokenly.

She smiled faintly.

"I am all right now, father," she said. "But it was terrible. I thought that I should never see you or George again."

"Has that villain harmed you?" asked the merchant. And his brows came fiercely together.

Dulcie shook her head.

"No," she said.

"It is as well for him," said the elder Crawford. "Those words have saved his life, my child!"

Then Adjali joined them. He beamed at Dulcie, and he asked her forgiveness for what his son had done. She gave it freely. Then the old man questioned her at length, drawing from her all that had happened during the journey through the night, and afterwards when the Red House was reached. It appeared that they had arrived at the place barely an hour before the dawn, and the party were so famished and tired that they set about cooking some food-stuffs before even attempting to sleep. And hardly had they partaken of this than the rescuers arrived, and she had been hurried to the cellar and tied up there, Safvet swearing that he would kill her sooner than that she should fall into her father's hands again.

There she had been left while the firing went on; and then she had heard the shells strike the building, and had feared that she would be buried alive.

Reassured by her story, the old Turk went outside, where he found his son, seated gloomily upon a piece of fallen masonry, with soldiers guarding him. The rest of the rascally gang had been bound, and were awaiting removal.

Adjali, the Turk, spoke to the commandant of the fort, and the latter ordered his men to release Safvet.

Then the father pointed down towards the valley below.

"Go!" he cried. "I set you free, but it is only because I wish to see the last of you. If I see you again, I shall order your arrest. Crawford has agreed to let you go. It is a mercy you do not deserve. Make the most of it."

Safvet did not even thank his father, but started at once down the hillside, and was quickly lost to view.

The rest of the rascals, who were recognised as notorious cut-throats and villains, were marched to the fort and locked up there, and the Crawfords, Dulcie, Tom Sayers, the Bombardier, Safvet Adjali senior, and the men who had come with them on the adventurous journey, set off homeward, using their tired horses as gently as possible.

"My son burnt your house down, friend," said Adjali, "let me offer you the hospitality of mine until you have settled what to do."

## CHAPTER 7. Home Again.

THE party arrived at Adjali's estate, tired out and hungry. They ate, and then went to bed. For two days they remained there, and nobody could have been more courteous than their host.

He never referred to his son, and he put them all at their ease.

At the end of the week they all set out for Adrianople.

There the holiday came to an end, and soon Tom Sayers and Billy Welsh were on their way back to England again, with the mutterings of war ringing in their ears, for the Balkan States were still in unrest, and threatened to make war with Turkey.

They were sorry to part with George Crawford and his father and pretty Dulcie.

"My boy," said the elder Crawford, as he shook Tom Sayers by the hand, "my recent experience has taught me that I am no longer safe in Turkey. Since my home is likely to be made a mark of by any lawless gang of ruffians to shoot at, I shall retire to a more civilised country, and end my days in peace there. I have my business matters to attend to; I must put them in order; and when that is done I shall sell out and come to England."

"Will that be soon?" asked Tom.

"Soon, I hope," said the fine old merchant. "Within the next six months, for certain."

"Then," said Tom, "we shall expect to see you at the end of that time."

The two friends travelled by rail to Constantinople, and took ship there for England, and after a pleasant but uneventful voyage they arrived in the dear old country, with a host of fresh experiences and adventures to talk about, and as fit as men could be.

To walk along the Strand and down Fleet Street, to visit the New Sporting Club, the Ring, the London Palace of Boxing, Fairyland, and other well-known centres and palaces devoted to the fostering of the great glove game, was a fresh delight to them, and it scarcely seemed possible that a short month ago they were taking part in that attack upon the Red House.

Then duty called, and they threw themselves into the hurly-burly of training and boxing once more, and all thought of Safvet Adjali, the Fighting Turk, faded from their memories.

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But one day Tom received a letter from young George Crawford, and in it the boy had sent the most amazing piece of news.

Safvet Adjali had turned up one night at his father's house with an armed force, had held the servants at bay, had seized and bound his own father, and had robbed him of all the money and jewellery the place contained. Then he had departed, mocking the old man, and had disappeared. "It fairly broke the old Turk's heart," wrote George. "But he refused to prosecute, although the Government were willing to place a price upon the son's head.

"Safvet has fled the country, and we shall see him no more. I believe he robbed his father of as much as three thousand pounds."

"What a villain, Billy!" cried Tom.

"I wonder what will become of him."

"Oh," retorted the bombardier, "he'll come to England, Tom! The Turks won't have him, but we'll receive him with open arms. England is the dumping-ground for all the undesirables on earth, I believe."

Tom Sayers laughed at his friend's humour, but Billy proved himself a true prophet, for Safvet Adjali, the Fighting Turk, actually did come to England, where he spent the money he had stolen from his father like water.

One day London lovers of boxing were startled by the announcement that Ali Mahmoud, the Fighting Turk, was prepared to fight all comers, no weight barred, for anything up to £100 a-side, and any British champion who fancied himself could readily be accommodated. The promoters of boxing who ran the London Palace had taken the Turk up, which rather argued that they believed in him.

Mahmoud's challenge was openly scoffed at, but, all the same, when he fought his first battle against a heavy-weight boxer from East Ham, named Skerridge, a packed house gathered to see the foreigner perform.

To their amazement, Mahmoud put the Britisher down and out in the first round, his punching being terrific.

Mahmoud next fought Hewson, the boxing brewer. He won handily in five rounds.

Three more victims fell to his all-conquering gloves, and the Turk came out with a pointed challenge to either Tom Sayers or Bombardier Welsh. The champions ignored the challenge. Mahmoud's form had appeared to be good, but he was a fighter, pure and simple, and had done nothing to prove that he was in the same class as Tom Sayers or Bombardier Welsh.

One day Tom Sayers, who had been on a visit to his friend Arthur Garthorne, the Fighting Parson, ran across one of the promoters who ran the London Palace of Boxing, and buttonholed him in the street.

"Oh," said Tom, "by the way, what sort of a man is this Fighting Turk you've got hold of?"

"Ah," said the promoter, "now you're talking! He's a goer, Tom, and no mistake! He'd make either you or Billy Welsh travel. Will you consent to meet him? I may say there's an idea current round St. Michael's that you're both afraid of him."

"I can't help your patrons giving full rein to their ideas," he said. "No. Neither of us will fight your man. But where did you pick him up?"

"Oh, that's a story, Tom. I met him in the West End at a second-rate private boxing club. He was there, and he'd been drinking hard. He'd spent a fortune in a month or two, I was told, and had come to the end of his tether. George Hyland was there, and offered to fight any big man who'd care to put 'em up for the best purse the members could muster up. Twenty-five pounds was soon subscribed, but nobody would take Hyland on. They were afraid of him. Then up jumped this Turk, who said his name was Ali Mahmoud, and said he would box Hyland the best of ten rounds for the money, the winner to take all. Hyland leapt at the chance, and the Turk beat him in three rounds. That proved to me that Mahmoud was a good boy.

"Well, Tom, to cut a long story short, I asked him to come and see me, and he did. He told me that he'd run through a fortune, had come right down upon his uppers, and meant to take to the ring as a means of livelihood. Well, I knew I'd got a winner. I made him sign a contract with me for a year, and there you are."

"And he's a real Turk, you say?"

"An out-and-outer, though you'd never suspect it to hear him speak, Tom. He talks English like a native, and a deuced sight better than some of us, too."

Tom Sayers could never have told why, but somehow or other he could not get the idea of Safvet Adjali out of his mind. Could it be possible that this fellow, Ali Mahmoud, and George Crawford's old enemy, Safvet Adjali, were one and the same? he wondered. And he determined that he would look in at the London Palace the next time the Turk was on show and see. After all, there were not so very many Fighting Turks in the world, he argued.

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At the end of the week Mahmoud was down to fight again, this time being pitted against a once well-known heavy-weight, named Bryson. Bryson was a sixteen-stone man, who had nothing left him of his old-time prowess save his punch, but even he was quite capable of beating any but a good man.

That night Tom Sayers and Billy Welsh paid one of their periodical visits to the London Palace, and their entry was the signal for a prolonged outburst of cheering. They sat down near the ring and waited the development of events.

It was half-past nine before the big men appeared in the ring, and then Bryson was the first to clamber through the ropes. He was fat and bulky, genial and smiling, and he acknowledged the hearty applause of the crowd with sundry nods of the head.

They had not long to wait. A shout of applause told them that the Turk had appeared. A few seconds later, wearing a bright red dressing-gown, and with closely-cropped head, he got into the ring.

They recognised him instantly.

It was Safvet Adjali, although he looked bigger and stronger and more formidable than ever.

And if they saw Safvet, he also saw them, and his eyes flashed.

He bent over the ropes.

"Ah, you are there, then!" he cried. "Tom Sayers, if you are a man, you will agree to fight me in the ring. You will give me my revenge?"

Tom leapt to his feet.

"Yes, by Jove, I will, and gladly, too, Adjali!" he cried. And then he turned to Billy Welsh.

"Billy," he said, "this villain evidently squandered the fortune he stole from his father in fast living after coming to London, and now hopes to make another out of his prowess in the ring. The scoundrel! The scoundrel, I swear he sha'n't do that. I'll fight him. He's not met a really good man yet. The crowd thinks he's invincible, he is a big draw, and the promoters give him good money. Once he is beaten, the attendances will suffer, and the promoters will get sick of him. I'm going to queer his pitch, Billy. He deserves no mercy, and I'll show him none!"

Safvet still sneered down over the ropes.

"Will you fight me, Tom Sayers?" he asked; and his voice rang through the hall.

"Yes, fight Tom!" said a man seated near the ring.

"He's afraid," said Adjali, pointing. "Neither he nor the bombardier, who calls himself heavy-weight champion of England, dare face me in the ring!"

His words angered the crowd; they shouted caustic and sarcastic comments and criticisms at Tom.

Tom Sayers turned and faced the house.

"This man, who calls himself Mahmoud," he cried, pointing at Adjali, "is a villain and a thief! I met him in Turkey. His real name is Safvet Adjali. Some of you think I am afraid of him. Very well, then, I'll fight him, and as soon as the match can be arranged."

The densely-packed audience hung on Tom's every word, and when he had finished the handclapping was deafening.

"Bravo, Tom!" they shouted. And Adjali's face lengthened. He turned to the M.C., who was the mouth-piece of the promoting management.

"Make the match for me!" he hissed. "Take Tom Sayers at his word. Arrange the fight. I want to kill him!"

The M.C. made a grimace.

"Oh, the battle would be a good thing for the 'Ali Mahmoud'!" he said. "There can be no doubt about that. But if you run away with the idea that you're going to have an easy journey against Tom, you'll be pulled up sharp. If ever you meet him face to face, it'll be good-bye to you as a possible champion proposition. He'll lick your head off!"

"Bah!" said the Fighting Turk. "I know what I'm worth, and what I can do. I am not afraid of him. I have improved tremendously since I entered the ring as a professional. I can fight better than ever I was able to. I shall win."

But it was time for the battle between himself and the big, good-natured heavy-weight to commence, and Mahmoud's seconds seized hold of him and conducted him to his corner, where they forced him down and tied his gloves on. Then the seconds were ordered out of the ring, and the two big fellows faced each other.

The contest that followed was of the briefest duration.

The sixteen-stone heavy-weight, who had been dragged out of his honourable retirement in order to make another victim for the Fighting Turk, was far too slow to block the swift blows which were rained at him, and so, making up his mind to submit to punishment, he went in, hoping to be able to land one of those sledge-hammer blows for which he was famous.

Before he could do so, however, a severe clip on the point



staggered him, and a few seconds later he was sent down under a shower of heavy blows.

The old fighting instinct was strong within him, and he got up at the sixth second, and tried to make a turn in his own favour.

With his head down, and covering up, he charged to close quarters, and shook the Turk with a vicious right-hand dig.

It was his expiring effort. The quicker, younger, and much more agile man beat him away, sent a lightning blow to the jaw, and one more heavy-weight had fallen before the all-conquering Turk.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Tom Sayers Whips the Fighting Turk.

**W**HEN it was first reported that Tom Sayers had agreed to fight Ali Mahmoud, the Fighting Turk, the sporting crowd were frankly incredulous.

The Turk was admittedly a dangerous man, but all the same, what could the great Tom Sayers want with fighting him? He had nothing to gain, and everything to lose by such an encounter.

No title was at stake, and Tom Sayers could hardly expect to share a big purse—at least, big according to his ideas—at the London Palace of Boxing.

Yet the match was made, and a date three weeks ahead was set for the encounter. £350 was the extent of the purse put up by the management, of which sum only fifty pounds were to be the portion of the loser.

The men wagered £100 a-side, and agreed to fight at catch-weights, six ounce gloves to be used. The duration of the contest was set at fifteen three-minute rounds, with one minute intervals, under New Sporting Club rules, the men to be in the ring at half-past nine o'clock sharp.

A forfeit of £100 was posted on behalf of each principal in the event of either not turning up.

Tom Sayers was as fit as the proverbial fiddle, and took only the lightest of training spins, devoting all his attention to work in the gymnasium. It was to be his first fight since his return from Turkey, and it seemed most appropriate that he should have to meet a man of Turkish nationality.

Never in all his life had Tom Sayers felt such a bitter enmity against any man as he did against Safvet Adjali.

When he remembered the rascal's foul fighting at Cheltham Grammar School, his villainous stealing of Dulcie Crawford, and his firing of the merchant's home upon the frontier, Tom's blood boiled; and as he carried his mind back over the events which had followed, the attack upon the Red House, the rescue of Dulcie, and the friendliness of Adjali the elder, his bitterness increased.

And, to say all, Safvet had robbed his father, and been forced to leave his own country and find a refuge in England.

Well, thought Tom Sayers, England should serve as no asylum for such a rogue. He would beat him to a frazzle, to use an Americanism, and close a ring career to the villain. He should not prosper, of that Tom was determined.

Adjali was not blind to the reason which had induced Tom Sayers to enter into the match with him, and he was fully alive to the seriousness of his position. If Tom beat him, good-bye to his prospects of making a living out of the ring.

And so he devoted himself closely to his training; and the promoters of the London Palace sent their best men to spar with him, to help him and advise him. They liked Tom, and they disliked Adjali, but the Fighting Turk would be worth a small fortune to them if only he could beat Tom Sayers, and so they left no stone unturned in order to get him thoroughly fit for the contest.

On the night when the battle was fought, not a seat was to be had at any price, and the big boxing hall was crammed full soon after the doors were opened, and this, in spite of the fact that double prices were charged for admission.

The minor bouts were tolerated with a fair amount of patience by the boxing crowd, and after what appeared to be an endless period of waiting, Tom Sayers, who was supported by Bombardier Welsh, Ben Kelly, the old prize-fighter, Sam Bethal, and Joe Grant, alias the Slasher, made his appearance and climbed into the ring, five minutes before time.

And what an ovation he received, to be sure.

Tom looked fit to fight for his life. He carried no superfluous flesh, and his eyes were bright, and his lips curved in a confident smile.

His muscular body showed at the opening of the dressing-gown he wore.

He acknowledged the cheering of the excited audience with a bow, and then went to his corner. It was observed that he wore no bandages.

A minute later the Fighting Turk appeared.

Adjali looked in wonderful trim, and appeared to be more muscular than of old.

He, too, was trained to the hour, and there was a dangerous gleam in the depths of his dark eyes.

His body had that sleek, smooth appearance which is characteristic of his countrymen; but there was a suggestion of enormous strength in the deep, thick frame.

His face was set, his cunning eyes glinted wickedly, and he scowled at Tom, as the middle-weight champion glanced steadily at him.

Tom Sayers was giving a lot away in weight, height, and reach to a boxer, who everybody believed had improved out of all knowledge of late, and there were many who believed that the handicap would be too much for him.

Of these, however, Tom Sayers was not one. Quick to size up the merits of an opponent, he knew that Adjali was far too slow, and he knew that he could out-box the Turk, who was cumbersome and heavy upon his feet.

What he had to guard against was the Turk's heavy blows, each one of which carried a knockout in it.

The preliminaries were rapidly gone through, for the management of the London Palace did not believe in keeping their patrons waiting.

The gloves were tied on, the M.C. finished his address to the packed house by introducing the men, and then the seconds were ordered out of the ring, and the signal was given for the fight to begin.

Up jumped the principals, and Tom Sayers, moving quickly towards the Turk, smashed his left to the fellow's dusky face, dodged the counter, and danced away.

A dark place showed upon Adjali's skin where Tom's glove had landed, and he looked angry. He rushed at Tom, swung a terrific right, but missed by a mile; and with a swift left-hand punch Tom dropped him.

Within ten seconds Adjali had been put down, and a roar of amazement went round the house. It was the first time that the Fighting Turk had been put down since he had entered upon the series of contests for which he had contracted with the management of the London Palace.

Tom stood back, without requiring the warning of the referee, and allowed Adjali to rise. The Turk seemed reluctant to get upon his feet, and when he did get up he seemed dazed. And well he might be, for Tom had put every ounce of strength he possessed behind that blow of his.

"The Turk's beat," came in a shout from all sides of the house. "Go it, Tom!"

Tom Sayers did not heed their bidding, and stepping within distance, he showered punch after punch at face and body, until the Turk's guard dropped uselessly, and he was dropped with a vicious upper-cut.

Dazed, bleeding, bewildered, with all the fighting knocked clean out of him he lay upon the canvas-covered floor of the ring, staring stupidly at his seconds, who were making frantic efforts for him to rise.

At last he got upon his feet, though only just in time.

Tom sent him staggering with a right-hand body blow, and then dropped him for the third time with his deadly left.

And all this while the Turk had not even landed a single blow.

"He's afraid!" shouted an indignant spectator. "Take him out of the ring; Tom's murdering him! Don't hit the baby, Tom!"

Tom's face was smiling. He had accomplished what he had intended. He had knocked the bottom clean out of the Turk's fighting reputation.

There would be no big matches open to Adjali after this.

The Turk remained down for the short count, and then staggered up, with murder in his heart. He would have fouled Tom in any way and every way that was open to him if he could; but, although his wits were quick enough to see an opportunity, he was too tired and dazed to obey the call, and whilst he lunged a downward blow at Tom's body, the middle-weight champion sent the right home in a corking hit to the jaw, and down went the Fighting Turk for the last time.

Tom gave him one look as he lay upon the floor of the ring, then turned away, and, knowing that the fellow would require no more, he walked to his corner.

Never had the crowd seen such clean-cut fighting as Tom had shown. From the very moment the men stood up the fight was his, and this despite the fact that Adjali was keen to win, and had meant business.

They looked at the prostrate, beaten Turk, who was too dazed even to writhe, and waited until the referee had called the fatal "Out!"; and then as Adjali's seconds climbed into the ring, picked their man up and bore him away, a tumult of applause shook the boxing-hall from floor to roof.

Tom Sayers donned his dressing-gown, stepped beneath the ropes, and left the ring.

He passed through a standing mass of cheering sportsmen, and disappeared beyond the door leading to his dressing-

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room, leaving behind him several thousand lovers of the mitt game, who had been simply staggered by his showing.

And if there were any there who had entered the Hall that night doubting Tom's worth, they left it later knowing that the middle-weight champion of the world was a champion indeed.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Where the Parson Came In.

**A**S Tom Sayers had anticipated, his run-away victory over Mahmoud, the Fighting Turk, sent the latter's pugilistic stoek down with a bang. Nobody had any use for Adjali after that in London boxing circles.

Later on he tried his luck in Liverpool; but there, being pitted against a rugged, hard-hitting boxer, who threw science to the winds, and, like Safvet himself, tried for an early knock-out, he was beaten in three rounds.

Then it became almost impossible for him to secure a boxing engagement of any kind.

The Fighting Turk was a draw so long as he continued to win; but the promoter preferred a second-rate Britisher to a third-rate Ottoman, and at last Adjali returned to London disheartened, despairing, and with a heart full of evil. He considered that he had been robbed of the right to live, and therefore he reckoned that he was fully entitled to steal. Besides, stealing came quite natural to a man who had robbed his own father, and who stuck at nothing.

Adjali, developing into a loafer, might often be seen hanging round the purlieus of the St. George's Road, St. Michael's; and there were times when he paid visits to the docks, and watched the steamers being loaded prior to their departure to foreign countries.

Sometimes he wished that he was going with them.

He had heard that America was the land of promise. It was there that men were well-paid for the work they did, and he considered that he might make a fresh start in the boxing ring there. Another change of name, and some skilful showmanship might give him a comfortable income for a year or two.

But he knew that if he wanted to carry his plan into effect, he would have to get the capital wherewith to defray the expenses of the voyage, and pay for his living until such time as he could gull the American boxing promoters into giving him a trial.

He tried to get the management of the London Palace to take him up once again. But they had had enough of the Fighting Turk, and wouldn't hear of it.

"You did for yourself for good and all, Adjali," said the manager, there, "when you allowed Tom Sayers, a middle-weight, to beat you inside a round."

"It was a fluke!" protested Adjali hotly.

"Well, you have tried others since, and been beaten," was the quick retort. "It's no good. You may be a Turk, but you're no fighter, at least, judged by our standard."

Adjali then tried to borrow money, but they wouldn't give it him.

He left, feeling more desperate and bitter than ever; and as he walked about the principal streets in the St. Michael's district, he began to pay very close and serious attention to the houses there. After all, thought he, burglary was not such a difficult thing to achieve.

One foggy night, the Rev. Arthur Garthorne, who had been paying a visit to a poor, sick workman, whose home he had saved from the hands of the brokers a day before, strode, with coat-collar upturned, and wide-awake hat pulled down over his face, through the cold, making towards home.

The hour of two had just chimed from the distant steeple of St. Michael's Church.

The parson chose the route leading through Park Road, the best road in the district, where most of the wealthier shopkeepers lived. It was much pleasanter to go that way, for the streets were broader.

He had got half-way along the road, when of a sudden his attention was attracted to a large house by the sudden lighting up of one of the lower windows.

Alderman Smythe, the grocer, lived in that particular house, and Garthorne knew Smythe well. The grocer was an extremely temperate man, who seldom visited theatres, who rarely entertained, and whose boast it was that he sent his household to bed at ten o'clock, and retired himself at eleven every night of his life.

What then, thought Garthorne, should keep the grocer up on this particular night? Was there illness in the house? He could hardly imagine so, for he had met the alderman that very morning, and Smythe had spoken of the wonderful immunity of his household from illness of any kind, owing, as he thought, to the early hours they kept.

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The Fighting Parson paused, shivering in the cold, and looked at the lighted window thoughtfully.

"Can it be burglars?" he muttered.

Now, the alderman was also known for his love of silver goods, and he had often been known to boast of his collection of plate, which was reputed to be of considerable value for such a man to possess.

The grocer's eccentricities were so well known, that almost every loafer and rascal in St. Michael's had heard of them. What more likely than some deft and daring criminal should have marked some of that silver down as his own?

The parson opened the gates of the house, walked up the gravel path, and took a closer view of the lighted room.

And whilst he was looking he became conscious of the rustling of the shrubs close at hand. The next moment the figure of a man rose and sprang at him.

"Hallo!" said a deep, harsh voice; and the parson found himself in the hands of a policeman.

"Steady!" said he.

"Why, it's the parson!" said the other.

"Yes, constable," answered Garthorne genially. "I was attracted by that light in the grocer's house, and wondered whether there were burglars inside."

The constable's answer was a startler.

"There are," he answered. "Mr. Smythe has electric wires connected with a burglar alarm all round the house. They've been cut. Besides, a special mark I put on the windows has gone. Someone's broken in, and they entered by that window there." And the policeman pointed to a window above the parson's head.

"So," said Garthorne. "Very well, then, help me up. I'll try and see whether I can get a look inside."

"I was waiting until my comrade joined me on this beat," said the constable, "and keeping an eye on the house at the same time. Constable Perkins isn't due for ten minutes yet. I hardly liked to tackle the job single-handed, for fear that there were more than one in it. And I want to make a capture. Do you understand?"

"Just so," said the parson. "Well, there are two of us, constable, so let's begin."

"Do you mean to say you're going to help me, sir?" asked the bobby, gasping in surprise.

"Yes," answered Garthorne. "I have made it my business to try and check crime in St. Michael's, and a man who breaks into another man's house and steals is deserving of no mercy. I'm a Christian man, I hope, but I loathe and despise a burglar. Help me up."

"You may be risking your life, sir. Let me go instead."

"Nonsense!" answered the Rev. Arthur Garthorne. "I am the lighter man. Don't argue."

The policeman demurred no longer, and the next moment Garthorne was up on the window-sill.

Crouching there, he looked into the lighted room, and there he saw the burly figure of a man stooping over some glittering objects which he had placed on the floor. These were silver articles, and had been taken from a case set against the wall.

The man was standing upon one of them, pressing it flat, so that it might be the more easily carried.

He was intent upon his work, and his very action betrayed the fact that he was a cool and dangerous villain.

Upon the table lay a revolver, evidence that the man intended to shoot if he were discovered.

The Fighting Parson remained perfectly stationary, watching the movements of the fellow, fascinated by his coolness and daring; and then, as the burglar turned his face into the light, he recognised the villain.

It was Safvet Adjali, the Fighting Turk, the man who had been beaten by George Crawford in the boxing final at Cheltham Grammar School, who had made the adventure of the Red House possible, and who had only recently been beaten by Tom Sayers in the ring at the London Palace of Boxing, when he fought there under the assumed name of Mahmoud.

And so the scoundrel had turned burglar on top of it all! What a miscreant, to be sure!

Adjali, unaware that he was being spied upon, placed the stolen silver objects, now as flat as plates, in the big bag he had brought with him for the purpose, and then turned his attention to several locked cabinets in the room. He could not open them, and at last evidently made up his mind to rest content with the spoil he had already garnered together, for he came towards the window, carrying his heavy bag with him.

He held hold of the lower part of the window-frame, and threw it up, and then for the first time he noticed the Fighting Parson crouching there, with his face within an inch of his own.

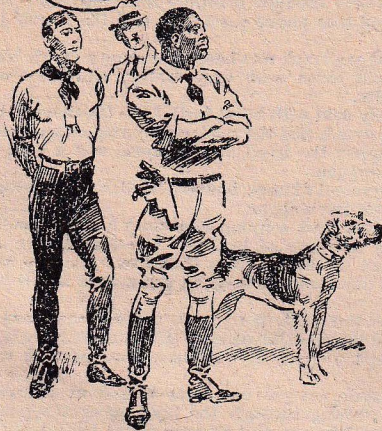
"Adjali," said the parson in a deep voice, "the game is up! Surrender!"

(Continued on page 26.)



THIS SERIES SPECIALLY WRITTEN FOR THE "MARVEL" EVERY WEEK.

## THE COWBOYS' VERDICT



A Grand Tale of Thrilling Adventure and JACK, SAM, and PETE—The Three Famous Comrades.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

## CHAPTER I.

## The Sheriff on the Trail.

**A**LL day rain had been beating down, and now that night had come, it was pouring harder than ever, while the wind blew in angry gusts round the little Far-West inn where the comrades had found shelter. The pine-log fire blazed merrily. Pete watched its flickerings drowsily as he lolled in an easy chair, and smoked his pipe.

Suddenly he started up as the door was flung open with a violence that was startling, and a harsh voice gave some hurried orders.

"Looks like Don Quixote," murmured Pete, "or a yard ob pump-water!"

"See, you here!" cried the stranger. "Serve up supper sharp and hot! The best you've got, 'cos I'm the eater! Whisky hot with lemon—serve that first. And, mind you this, it's for Under-Sheriff Rick Symonds, who's got the power of hanging men—and the habit! Right, boys! Don't disturb yourselves. You needn't move, you there."

"I ain't going to, my dear old hoss!" answered Pete, to whom the last remark was addressed.

"I'm on the ramp for two or three of your colour, my lad, so you'd best be careful! You bear a plumb resemblance to a cattle rustler I once met down south. I don't forget faces—in fact, I'm a bit too fly to forget anything! Have we met before?"

"Should say you ought to know dat best if you don't forget faces," answered Pete.

"There's faces and faces. Yours is one of the 'ands. Equality and fraternity is my motto, but I don't carry it as low down as you! I'm on the way to hang a man, and it would be jest all-fired easy to string up a brace!"

"Hurry up wid de whisky, landlord!" said Pete. "When he's slopped dat down his froat he may feel in a better temper!"

"Fetch me a riding whip, landlord!" cried Rick Symonds. "A thick one. I want to express my feelings, and to appeal to his!"

The landlord did not like the order, because Pete had been a good customer; but, not daring to disobey it, he brought the whip.

Symonds seized it, and caught Pete one crack. Then Pete, still remaining seated, caught the great man's wrist, and the pressure he brought to bear on it caused Symonds's face to twitch.

"Before you commence flogging me, my dear old hoss, I would feel obliged if you would kindly listen to my self-defence. T'ank you! If you will just allow me to clasp your oder hand

it will save you acting in a hurry wid your revolver. Dat's it. I'm much obliged to you for de consideration you are showing me. It's a nasty sort ob night, ain't it? Too much rain, and it is apt to spoil a man's temper. Now, can't you see your way to let me off dat flogging?"

"Let go!" yelled Symonds, writhing with the pressure on his right wrist and left hand.

"You mean, state my case. Bery well. I hab travelled in several countries, and hab got to tink I hab de same rights as oder people. Now, what I want to ask is dat you will let me off dat flogging."

"I'm not going to touch you."

"Dat's kind and considerate; but I don't want you to decide in a hurry. If you really feel dat it would do you good to flog me, why do it by all means, 'cos I ain't got de slightest doubt dat it would afford Algy a good lot ob fun. Algy is dat lad who is laughing at you. Jack and Sam are doing de same. Dey hab an idea dat my pleading for mercy will prove effective. Crushing your hand? Well, never mind dat. It will soon get all right when I disrelease it. Why, dis is de first time I eber saw a sheriff dance, and he's singing to his step! So you wouldn't like to flog me? Oh, don't yowl at me like dat. You ought to remember dat as a sheriff you hab a certain amount ob dignity to support, and it ain't at all dignified to dance and yowl. Well, accept my best thanks for your leniency. Nuff said."

Pete released the great man, who went round the room in a doubled-up manner, with his hands clasped to his breast, and groaning all the time.

Presently he straightened himself up, and drained the glass of hot spirit the astonished landlord had brought in.

"Hurry up with that grub!" he exclaimed, pitching the whip in the corner of the room. "What's your name, my lad?"

"Pete."

"Right you are, Pete! I like a man who makes his meaning plain. Always do it myself. See here, I've faced every peril under the sun, and there isn't a man who can frighten me, nor yet twenty men! When you are dealing with rustlers you have to take the upper hand, else they will. So long as you chaps are straight, I'm satisfied. Now, what do you say to that?"

"Dat I tink I hab done you good, Rick! De man who takes de upper hand wid us free has got to be strong. We neber take de upper hand wid oder men, and it's a liberty we don't allow to be taken wid ourselves."

"You wouldn't like to lend me a hand, I suppose?"



"Yes. Dere you are, old hoss. Catch hold ob it, and I will gib you my top-not squeeze!"

"What I've got will satisfy me. But why the thunder didn't you tell me you were so strong, then I would have acted in accordance? Still, there's a low-down skunk of a chap as has had the impudence to make love to my daughter Lucy. A beautiful girl, mind you—"

"Must take after her moder in looks, and if she takes after her fader in temper, I pity de poor skunk!"

"He's a rustler. Some of his cows have got calves with different brands. I know that for a fact, because a rich ranchero named Cecil Gear has seen them. Now, this skunk—his name is Con Lorn, and his nature's horrid—knows that I'm on his trail, 'cos I caught him talking to my daughter, and he'd be pretty sure I wouldn't allow a thing like that. Well, when I get on a criminal's track he gets run to earth, and there's no man more competent to do it than me. He's a dangerous character, I tell you, and though I fear no man, he might bring forty of his kind upon me, so that you three would come in useful."

"You would leave us to fight de forty while you fought de one?"

"I'm going to prove that man guilty. He deserves hanging if it is only for his all-fired impertinence for making love to my daughter. The brute knows that I have made my pile, and he thinks to dissipate it, but I think that he won't."

"And what does Lucy tink?"

"She's a sensible girl, the same as I'm a sensible man, and she wouldn't have nothing to say to him. Told him that the man she marries has got to be the man I like."

"Golly! Did she tell you dat little lot?"

"It's her way of thinking. She knows that not one red cent would she handle of my dollars if she disobeyed me. Here comes my food. If it isn't good, I'll stuff it down your throat, landlord. I'm not the style of man to be trifled with."

"Ain't de man a full-sized idiot!" observed Pete, in a voice that was distinctly audible to all. "I dunno dat I sha'n't place him across my knee, and flog some ob de nonsense out ob him."

Rick Symonds glanced sideways at the daring Pete, but commenced his meal without uttering a word.

As soon as it was finished, he took one of Jack's cigars, and then he commenced to brag once more, but he was remarkably careful as to what he said to Pete.

"I've ordered a—a coach to be here at ten o'clock to-night, boys," he explained, when he had told a little more of Con Lorn's misdeeds. Now, say! Will you come with me?"

"I don't like de rain," growled Pete.

"You will be under cover. It's only the driver who will be wet. I've got some lamps of my own invention on that coach—made 'em myself—and the glare they give makes you think the moon has been turned into a mighty arc lamp, and dropped on the wag—on the coach. Four horses and a good driver. We shall clip the distance in no time. You will find it a sight more comfortable driving under cover at night than walking in the rain by day, for this spot won't dry up for days to come. I believe the blessed barometer has gone right round past stormy, and shot back to wet on its second journey. The rainy season in the tropics is nothing to what we are going to get these next few days."

Needless to say, the comrades did not believe a word that Symonds told them, but as they wanted to get on, they agreed to accompany him that night.

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Patent Lamps Give More Light Than is Needed.

**A**S the clock was striking ten, a rumbling sound was heard outside, then a bright light flashed through the window, and going out, the comrades saw a large waggon with a tilt, in front of which were two enormous lamps.

"Nice soft straw to lie on," observed Symonds, rather fearful that the comrades might fight shy at the lumbering waggon.

"We can't get wet."

"De driver can."

"Bust the driver. He can get dry again, I suppose? Those lamps are about the cleverest things I've ever invented, and I've invented a sight of clever ones in my time. You see, the air rushes up, and the faster you go, the more light you get. It's worked with petroleum, and it not only gives light, but heat. With one of those lamps in the house, you don't need a fire."

"Should say you would need an insurance policy," observed Pete, gazing dubiously at the flaming lamps. "Still, we will hope for de best. I expect de prairie wolves will tink de forest 's on fire, and dat it's coming deir way. Still, jump in, boys! I dunno woder de driver wants a drink ob something hot?"

"Not him! He's three parts drunk already. If he upsets us, I'll string him up to the nearest tree."

"Must be Bombastes. I tought he was Don Quixote," observed Pete, lifting his dog Rory into the waggon. Then the comrades followed, and away the driver went.

Rick Symonds closed the back of the tilt, and having lighted

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another of Jack's cigars—which were excellent ones—he began to recount a few more of his daring deeds, and Pete went to sleep on the straw.

The horses went at a gallop, the driver having no difficulty in seeing his way, for whatever faults Symonds's patent lamps might have, they certainly had plenty of brilliancy.

Harder and harder the rain beat down on the waggon tilt. The comrades thought it surely must be hail; then the howl of the wind rose above the rattle, and the fearful jolting awoke Pete.

The waggon track was becoming more rugged, but the waggon springs and axles were very strong, and they withstood the fearful jolts.

Suddenly wild yells burst forth from the driver, then there was a roaring sound, and the jolting increased enormously.

Pete ripped the front awning open, and a rush of fire swept into the waggon.

Rick Symonds's lamps had exploded, and a cascade of fire was falling over the waggon.

The driver took a flying leap from his seat, and, fortunately, landed in a clump of bushes. The four horses seemed to be determined to escape from that fire. A steep hill lay before them. They took the waggon down it at about forty miles an hour.

From side to side it swayed, while it appeared to be trying to leap all inequalities, some of which must have been extremely high jumps, judging by the awful bumps with which it came down.

Pete made several attempts to get at the reins, but the fire was rushing through the opening in the front of the tilt like a blast furnace, and no man could have faced it. Besides, even if he had, and gained the driver's vacated seat, he would certainly have been roasted alive, while he could not possibly have caught the reins.

The bottom of the hill was reached at lightning speed, and then there was a stupendous crash, as the front wheels took the rocks.

Fortunately the pole snapped, and the four horses galloped onwards, while the waggon turned turtle, and flames leapt up from it.

The patent lamps seemed to be determined to show just what they were capable of doing. They roared out flames, while more flames leaped from the wrecked waggon, and the rain hissed on them; but a few fire engines would not have had much chance against that conflagration; the rain did no good at all.

Pete's head emerged from the wreckage, and one swift glance around convinced him that his comrades and Rory had scrambled from the wreckage; then Symonds' head bobbed up quite close to his, and they gazed into each other's faces with such a comical expression that Algy shouted with laughter.

"Good evening, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "Rader warm for de time ob year, don't you t'ink. Should let Lucy invent de next lamp you patent."

"Pull me out, you silly villain!" howled Symonds. "I shall get burnt."

"Den you will match me, Rick, 'cos I'm burnt already!" exclaimed Pete, extricating himself from the wreckage; then, seizing Symonds by one of his legs, he wrenched him from the burning waggon.

"It's all right, boys," exclaimed Pete. "We hab got a camp fire to order. Pity we sin't got some meat to cook ober it."

"How dare that driver let the horses go like that?" shouted Symonds. "I'll certainly hang the villain when I catch him!"

"I fancy he found de seat rader too warm for comfort," observed Pete.

"Here, help me out, you silly rascal!" yelled Symonds, making an effort to free himself, and finding he was jammed. "My legs are fixed. I shall be burnt to death!"

"I don't tink so, my dear old hoss," answered Pete with exasperating calmness. "It will take de fire some little time to reach you to cause death. I don't tink much ob your lamps. Dey might do in time ob warfare, but—"

"Perdition! There will be an explosion directly, and we shall all be blown to atoms. One of you help me out, while the others extinguish the lamps."

"Den I'm going to be de helper out," declared Pete, wrenching away the wreckage. "I ain't dealing wid de lamps. Dere's a lot too much heat 'bout dem for my liking."

"Fury! Don't pull like that. You are wrenching my legs off. Why aren't you more careful?"

"It's for you to be careful, old hoss," answered Pete. "I ain't hurting myself in any way."

"But you are hurting me!"

"Dat ain't de point. De argument is dat I ain't hurting myself, and dat's de ting I am guarding against principally. Ob course I would be sorry if I hurt you in any way, 'cos I don't want to do dat any more dan a dentist wants to hurt a man when he's wrenching out his toof. Only you'm like dat toof. You'm bound to come out now dat I hab got hold ob you. Dere you are; you'm all safe and sound!"

"You have barked my shins."



"De bark will grow again, and once more your legs will spread out, and you will blossom into a beautiful Sheriff."

"See here, my lad, don't you dare to make fun of me, because I won't stand it. Now, let's get on. We are not so far from our destination."

"What would be about de distance you consider not so far?" inquired Pete, collecting some of the broken waggon—there were plenty of splinters—and flinging it on the blazing lamps; then he shoved one of the wheels on the top of that.

"About five miles. Why, you stupid rascal—"

"Den you can consider dat is exactly five miles furdur dan I am going to walk to-night. I ain't leabing dis camp fire."

"Now, listen to me—"

"Wait a bit till I hab formed a sort ob shelter from de rain, and I'll listen as much as you please. Help me hack off some branches, Algy. You can go on talking while I work, Symonds. I shan't be able to hear all your remarks, but dat won't make de slightest difference; 'cos dose I don't hear will hab exactly de same effect as dose I do hear, and dat effect won't be felt."

Pete had his own way. He formed the best shelter he could, availing himself of a cedar-tree to help keep off the rain, and lighting a second fire beneath its dense branches, the comrades passed a fairly comfortable night.

"There's the loss of the waggon," observed Symonds, the following morning. "But I don't mind that, because it wasn't mine. I merely lent the lamps. As for the horses, I expect they will be captured; but I don't mind them, because they didn't belong to me either. Now, what I want you chaps to do is to help me capture this rustler. I haven't sufficient evidence against him at present, but shall get it. I know he's guilty, and when I know a thing like that against a man I can soon get the evidence. What you have got to do is to follow me up, and watch the interview—being ready to come to my assistance in case of need. Will you do it?"

Pete said they would; and he gave his consent because he wanted Con Lorn to have fair play. It seemed to Pete that Symonds was an interested party, and had an axe to grind in arresting him.

The five miles were nearer twenty, but Symonds was a remarkably good walker, and he did not trouble himself at all concerning the others. At about mid-day the weather cleared; and when night came on, and they crossed a range of hills, the moon rose in an almost cloudless sky.

From the ridge of the hills the comrades could see a small shanty in the hollow. A few cattle were grazing on the level ground; while they could see a man standing at the door of the hut, smoking a pipe, and with arms folded across his breast.

He was at no great distance from them, so that they could see him distinctly, and presently he walked up the height after one of the beasts that had strayed that way.

"It's Con Lorn, right enough!" exclaimed Symonds. "I am going to charge him with the theft of beasts, and shall soon tell by his manner if he's guilty. Mind, he's a dangerous character; but I don't know what fear is, and so long as there's only one man to contend with, don't care. You keep amongst these bushes and watch. If he attempts violence you can come down, although, as I tell you, I don't fear him. I don't know whether you will be able to hear the conversation; but that won't matter."

He strode away, and Pete sighed. He did not quite like the task he had undertaken. Con Lorn, as far as he could see, was a fine-looking young fellow, and Pete did not want to be a party to trapping him, whatever his past might have been.

As Symonds approached, the comrades saw Con's right hand dart into his side coat-pocket, and remain there.

"I don't quite like that action," murmured Sam. "Some of those fellows have a knack of firing from their pockets. You see, it doesn't give their opponent a chance of retaliation. They just twist their revolver up, and send in the fatal bullet before the other man has the slightest notion that they are going to fire. I was served that way myself once."

"Was de shot fatal, Sammy?" inquired Pete.

"Rats! How could it have been fatal?"

"If it went frough your heart, or de place where your brain ought to be."

"I reckon I wouldn't be talking to you to-night if it had been fatal, stupid. It missed me altogether. But candidly, I don't like that young man's movements—"

"Golly!"

### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Prisoner's Sentence

PETE'S exclamation was caused by a terrible cry that rang out, and which came instantaneously with the report of a weapon.

Riek Symonds flung his arms into the air; then fell face forwards to the ground.

Down the height the comrades rushed, and while Sam bent over the wounded man, Pete seized Con Lorn, who had made no attempt to escape.

"Well, it makes no odds," he said calmly. "He meant to hang me, and he will succeed! Is he dead?"

"No; but he is dying," answered Sam. "You have shot him through the throat. Lend me your scarf, Jack. We must do our best, but there's no hope. There is one thing. He cannot feel. Take that miscreant's weapon away, Pete. He discharged the shot through his pocket, didn't he?"

"M'yes! Here's de hole—and one ob de chambers has been fired. Here come some men. I tink dey heard de shot. I'll shout to dem."

Three cowboys ran up, and they glared fiercely at Con Lorn. He had the reputation of being a rustler, and it made all men hate him. If a beast should be lost or stolen, Con Lorn received the blame, and more than one man had sworn to have his life.

"Why, it's Symonds, the Sheriff!" exclaimed one of them. "As decent a fellow as ever breathed, and one who was dead nuts on rustlers. See here, boys, we'll string Con Lorn up. It's about time we stopped his deeds. If I'd had my way he would have been strung up before, and that would have saved Symonds' life."

"Well, stop it for de present!" exclaimed Pete. "You hab got to gib de man a fair trial. What hab you got to say for yourself, Con Lorn?"

"Nothing! What's the good? You heard what those men said. Do you suppose that they are going to give me a fair trial? I don't expect it from you; let alone from them!"

"Should say your fair trial meant your conviction."

"It is certain to mean it if you give evidence."

"And den you know what will happen?"

"Yes."

"You don't want to say anything?"

"No. It is no good. No one here—or anywhere else—would believe a word I said."

"You quarrelled wid him?"

"Yes. The same as I would quarrel with any other man who dared to call me a cattle rustler—a thing I have never been guilty of in my life. I have been a bit wild, the same as many another, but I've never been a thief!"

"Dat ain't de accusation against you now," said Pete.

"I tell you to your face that you are a cattle rustler!" cried one of the cowboys.

"Yes, you tell me that now that I am being bound, and am powerless to knock you down; but you wouldn't dare do it if I were free!"

"Just you release him, mate!" cried the cowboy; "and I'll soon show him whether I dare tell him he's a thief!"

"Bery well, old hoss," answered Pete, commencing to unfasten the lasso with which he was binding the wretched man's arms behind his back.

"Here, what are you thinking of?" gasped the cowboy.

"He will escape if you free him!"

"Nunno. I shall see to dat. You told me to release him."

"Well, p'raps it would be safest not," growled the man, climbing down. "I don't want to run the risk of him escaping."

"Bery well," exclaimed Pete. "I don't fancy dat is de only risk you are frightened about; but you hab got to consider dis. When a man is in great trouble—and Con Lorn is—dat ain't de time to kick him. De same as it ain't de time to threaten a man when he's bound. What's to be done, Sammy?"

"We must carry the wounded man to that hut. I don't know whether it would be possible to get a doctor here?"

"It would take time," observed one of the party. "There's a waggon starting for the town to-morrow morning, we could start to-night if need be, and I would take him in it to his home. I know where he lives. He's got a daughter, and she would be able to look after him; though, if you was to ask my opinion, I'd say his hours are numbered."

Sam feared the same; but they carried the unconscious man to the hut, and then the cowboys demanded that Con Lorn should be given up to them; but Pete decided on accompanying his prisoner.

They all proceeded to the adjoining run, Sam alone remaining with the injured man, for whom he could do nothing more. He merely told the man to send the waggon round as quickly as possible, feeling convinced that unless Symonds had proper medical attention he would never regain consciousness. All Sam had been able to do was to stop the bleeding, and he had an idea that there was internal hemorrhage.

The waggon was soon got ready, and being driven round to the hut, the wounded man was lifted carefully in; then they drove off at a walking pace; in fact, Sam advised them to keep at a walk all the way, as he knew that much jolting would only hasten the end.

All now proceeded to the whisky store, where every cowboy on the run, and Nixon, its owner, were assembled.

Pete stood by his prisoner. He felt that there was no chance for him; but, however much he might deserve death, Pete was determined to be no party to an execution by lynch law. That the wound would prove fatal he was fully convinced, and he was equally certain that Con Lorn would receive rough justice before the news of Symonds' death arrived.



"Now then, my lad," exclaimed Nixon, seating himself at the end of the large apartment, while his cowboys took seats on the benches round, "what's your name?"

"Pete."

"We know the prisoner's name and his nature!" exclaimed Nixon. "They tell me that you are friendly disposed towards the prisoner. Is that so?"

"I neber met him before to-night."

"Ever done any rustling yourself?"

"Nunno!"

"Well, before you begin to talk I want to let you understand this. If you lie, or if you try to shield that demon from justice, we shall string you up alongside of him."

"Quite right, old hoss," answered Pete steadily. "What's your name?"

"Mr. Nixon."

"You are an enemy towards de prisoner?"

"Correct."

"Bery well, before you begin to judge I want you to understand dis—if you try to convict dat man against de evidence, I'll take you outside and I'll flog you till you yowl for mercy."

"Steady there!" cried Sam, as Nixon's hand flew to his revolver butt. "I don't allow any shooting here."

"Who the thunder are you?"

"Dat will do, Nixon," interposed Pete. "If you want to quarrel you can do it wid me, and you will find dat I am quite enough to go on wid. You won't need Sammy to help me, nor Jack or Algy eider. I shall be able to manage you, and two or free oders like you. What you hab got to do is to try de prisoner. You ain't trying me, and it don't matter twopence to you if I'm as dishonest as you are, nor as big an idiot. Dis is a serious matter, and we don't want any ob your bounce. Just you behave yourself in a proper manner, else I shall pull your nose for you."

"By thunder, I won't stand this! I'll make you sorry for those words, my lad, just you see if I don't! But, first of all tell me what you know."

"Dat Con Lorn and Riek Symonds met, and apparently had a row. Dey appeared to be talking in an excited manner. We could not hear deir words—"

"Keep to yourself. You don't know what others could hear."

"See here, Nixon, if you tink you'm going to bully me you hab mistaken your man. I know dat Jack and Sammy couldn't hear what I couldn't hear. It wouldn't hab been possible for any man to hear at dat distance."

"What distance was it?"

"Ain't de man a mighty idiot," growled Pete. "How should I know de distance? It was too far to hear, dat's all I know about it. We were not far from de top ob de hill, and de two men were not far from de bottom. If you will just stop your stupid remarks, I'll tell you what happened. You can breezebeat your own men as much as you like, but you won't succeed in doing it wid me, and you are likely to hurt yourself in de trying. Well, Con Lorn's hand was in his right pocket. I neber saw him draw a weapon. A shot was fired, and Riek Symonds uttered a cry and fell. Dat's all I know 'bout de matter."

"What did you do then?"

"We all ran up, and found de poor fellow in a dying condition—or what I fear was one. Con Lorn made no attempt to escape. I seized him, and presently bound his arms behind his back."

"Did he make any statement to you?"

"No. He said it would be useless."

"He meant that you knew he was guilty?"

"Golly! How do you suppose I know what de man meant? Still, my impression was dat he tought no one would believe any statement he made. In fact, he said words to dat effect."

"Repeat the words!"

"Go and drown yourself, Nixon. You are lots too silly to lib. I don't remember his words. I hab told you deir effect, and dat ought to be good enough for a man like you."

"You must have been a born fool not to have taken careful note of his words," sneered Nixon, desirous of getting a little of his own back. "Still, we can't expect to get much common sense from a man like you. Do you wish to ask the witness any questions, Con Lorn?"

"No. He has spoken the truth."

"Then you plead guilty to the crime."

"I am perfectly innocent."

"Do you mean to say you fired by accident?"

"I did not fire at all."

"All right. If that's your defence, well and good. I daresay we shall be able to upset it."

"A thing that you are anxious to do. You have hated me because my bit of a run is close to yours. You have tried to turn me out before this, but you haven't succeeded."

"Maybe I'll succeed this time. Listen to me, Pete, did you examine the prisoner's revolver?"

"Yes."

"Had a shot been fired?"

"Yes."

"Had it been fired through the pocket of his coat?"

"Yes. You can see de hole."

"That is quite correct," exclaimed Con Lorn. "But that shot was fired by accident an hour before I met the Sheriff. I had my revolver in my pocket, and was riding after a stray beast—"

"Your own, or one of mine?" sneered Nixon.

"In flinging my lasso," continued the prisoner, ignoring the question, "I struck my hand against my pocket, and must have touched the trigger. At any rate, the weapon went off. It was the only shot fired out of my revolver to-day."

"The boys can believe that yarn if they choose. Do you want to ask any questions?"

"Yes. Was I standing close to Symonds, Pete?"

"Quite close."

"Could I have touched him without moving?"

"Yes, easy I should say."

"Was Symonds standing upright?"

"Yes."

"Now, you hear all that," exclaimed Con Lorn. "My height is five feet nine. Symonds is at least six feet in height. Now, assuming that we were two yards apart—we were much closer, but even at that distance it stands to reason that if I fired a shot from my pocket—the bullet would cut through the ill-fated man's throat in an upward direction. Can the man who bound up the wound—I think you called him Sam—say if the wound was a slanting one?"

"Yes," answered Sam; "I noticed that carefully. It was lower in the throat than at the back of the neck. It completely pierced the throat."

"You think it was such a wound as a revolver ball would have made?"

"I should imagine so."

"Then I have nothing more to say!" exclaimed Con Lorn.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Pete Gets Into Hot Water.

NIXON beckoned his men towards him, and commenced to speak to them in lowered voices. Pete left the prisoner standing in the centre of the apartment, and went to speak to his comrades.

"What do you make ob it, boys?" he inquired.

"I reckon there can be no doubt," said Sam. "What is your opinion, Jack?"

"It looks very black against him."

"I'm most afraid you are right, boys. What do you tink, Algy?"

"Why, I felt convinced that he was guilty until he spoke about the angle the ball had taken. He seemed to be so certain that you would answer that the wound was straight through the unfortunate man's throat. And, of course, if such had been the case, it stands to reason that the shot could not have been fired from the prisoner's pocket. Then, again, his explanation as to having fired his revolver by accident seemed to me to be truthful. He is either the cleverest actor I have ever met, or perfectly innocent of the crime. It is a terrible thing to hang a man on circumstantial evidence, and yet in a murder case it is about the only evidence possible to obtain."

"You tink he's innocent, Algy?"

"Well, I can't see how he can be; at the same time, I admit his manner was convincing. However, it doesn't matter a bit what we think. It is what Nixon and his men think, and my impression is that they will act accordingly. They appear to have settled the matter now."

Once more the men separated, taking their seats as before; and now Nixon rose, and addressed them.

"My men," he exclaimed, "as you know in this wild part it is our custom to deal with desperate characters ourselves, and we are going to do so in the present case. Con Lorn has had a fair trial. We have listened attentively to every word he has said, and to every word others have said in his favour. The verdict rests with you. Do you say he is innocent or guilty?"

"Guilty!" came a hoarse and angry roar, for the wretched prisoner was very unpopular.

"If there is any man who thinks there is a doubt, let him hold up his hand."

All the comrades raised their hands, but none of the other men.

"Well, I am willing to listen to what you wish to say," exclaimed Nixon; "but I must warn you before you commence that it will make no difference to the fate of the prisoner. We have got a verdict of all but his friends, and although you may be desirous of getting him let off, we have got to do justice to the dying man. Listen to me, Con Lorn; you will be kept a close prisoner for the next few days, then if the worst happens to your victim you will be hanged. The men will bring back the news. On his life yours depends. Lock him in one of the cellars of my ranch. I shall see that he does not escape. He



will be treated with every consideration. Do you wish to say anything more?"

"No; I have nothing more to say."

"You do not wish to make a confession?"

"I am certainly not going to confess to a crime that I never committed, just so that you may clear your conscience, if you ever had one. You have always had your knife into me, Nixon, and you have lied about me from start to finish. Every little fault I had in my wild days you magnified into a great crime. You blackened my character in the eyes of the very man of whose death you now falsely accuse me."

"I suppose you will tell me next that we haven't any evidence against you?"

"Unfortunately, the circumstantial evidence you have against me is very black. At the same time, it is as false as you are, and if you take my life you will be committing the very crime of which you falsely accuse me."

"You had a motive in his death," declared Nixon. "I know for a fact that you had asked his daughter to be your wife."

"How could that be a motive?"

"You knew that she would have his money, and you wanted to get at it by marrying her. I know that for a fact."

"Don't talk such absurd nonsense! How could you know such a thing for a fact? It is merely a little more of your fiction. You never have spoken the truth about me. I knocked you down once for lying about me, and you have never forgiven it. But it is useless to speak to such a man as you. There is no honour in your nature."

"Take the fellow away!" cried Nixon fiercely. "Lock him in that cellar with the iron door, Silas, and see that he does not escape! You will look after him, and let him have such food as he requires, but no drink except water! Take him away!"

"Now, what's de best ting to be done, boys?" inquired Pete, when the company left the place. "We can't let de man be hanged in dat illegal manner, specially if he happens to be innocent."

"Suppose we spend the night at his hut and talk matters over?" suggested Jack. "We can use his provisions, and refund the money. He will have no objection to that, especially as we want to clear the matter up. I am confident those men are quite capable of taking his life."

"Well, dat's just where our difficulty comes in, Jack. You see, if we set de man at liberty, and he happens to be a dangerous criminal, why, dere's no telling what furdur villainy he might not commit, and we would be sort ob answerable for it. On de oder hand, if he happens to be perfectly innocent—and he says he is, and, ob course, ought to know better dan we do—and we let him be hanged, den again we are sort ob responsible, and it's a responsibility dat I don't like at all. But come 'long! We will get some food for de start—"

"Here, mates," exclaimed one of the men, coming up. "the boss says that if you like to stop at his place and pay for your board for a day or two you are welcome, so long as Pete behaves himself. He will feed you almost as well as he charges you. He's a rare one on the make, and I believe he'd black your boots at a dollar a time. He's all for money."

"Well, let's come, boys," exclaimed Pete. "It will save us all de trouble ob getting our own meals, and if it costs us a bit more, we sha'n't mind dat."

They proceeded to Nixon's ranch, which was of small dimensions. Most of the furniture appeared to have been made by himself and his men, and not to have taken very long in the making, nor was there much of it. He did not go in for such luxuries as carpets, and the place gave the impression that he studied economy more than comfort.

He arranged terms with Jack, and they were not much higher than those of a first-class hotel would be; but, as Pete put it, the accommodation was much lower, and so that balanced it.

The food was substantial, and well cooked. There was more than sufficient of it even to satisfy Pete. Nixon treated him very coldly and haughtily, but he was most agreeable to the others, and he appeared to take a great fancy to Algy.

"We have got a lot of rough characters about this part," observed Nixon, when the meal was finished, and Jack brought out his cigar-case. "I have to keep my eyes open, else I'd be robbed right and left. I am robbed as it is. You see, with a large run like mine, you can't keep watch all over it, and while you are watching one end those demon rustlers are robbing you at the other. It's a hard life, and a precarious one. You never know how you stand, and the boys are always giving trouble."

"Drinking, old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"Well, I don't mind them doing that—not out of working hours. I supply the whisky, and there's a bit of a profit on it, so I don't mind. They can drink all night for all I care, but they have got to be ready for their work in the morning, else I'll know the reason why. Now, what I have sent for you particularly is so that you may see the extent of my run. I've got a thousand head of beasts to be headed into the corral to-morrow, and thought p'raps you chaps would like to give me a hand. Ever done any of that work?"

"A'yes! A bit. How much do you pay a day?"

"Pay! Pshaw! You don't require pay."

"I ain't so certain 'bout dat."

"Well, I am, so that's all right. Look here, we four will do the work. To tell you the truth, my hands are not much good at it. I suppose you can tackle it?"

"Yes. But dat ain't what's bodering me. I'm tinkin' ob de money."

"You don't want money, I tell you."

"De man seems to know my wants better dan I do. But eben supposing he's right in respect ob not wanting money, I'm mighty certain dat I don't want work, specially if I ain't going to be paid for it. I tink Jack and Sammy would be more likely to work for nuffin to suit your requirements, 'cos dey are as soft as hot ice-puddings; but dis child has got an intellect bodering on—bodering on— What's de word I want, Algy?"

"Insanity!"

"Golly! Dat ain't de word at all, Algy. You know dat perfectly well, and it's no good my training you if you go and suggest words like dat in juxtaposition to my intellect. However, provided you find us horses, cattle whips, and de day happens to be bright and fine to-morrow, den we will head in your beasts, and if you like to mix up wid dem, I'll head you in as well. 'Nuff said."

Nixon did not like Pete's remarks at all, but he liked getting free labour, especially as his men were very busy just then repairing the banks of a river which flowed through his run, and which had given way during the late rains.

"I'll lend you the horses," he said.

"Dat's mighty kind ob you, my dear old hoss," observed Pete. "I could see you were a kind-hearted old hoss directly you started bullying me, den cringed down when I took de upper hand. I should say you are de kindest-hearted man on de face ob dis earth—to yourself. You make me tired, Nixon, so now I will turn in, and we will start to-morrow morning."

"We must start early."

"I'll call you as early as I consider good for our constitutions. Show me my room, and if you are addicted to snoring, it will hab to be one not too close to yours."

## CHAPTER 5.

### Where the Stamped Cattie Ran.

IT was morning, although no one would have known it had he not looked at the time, which was close upon three. There was frost in the air, and it appeared to be trying to freeze the fog that clung to everything like glue.

Nixon was sleeping beneath piled-up blankets, and only the top of his head was visible.

Now a groping hand roamed over his head, and he uttered a yell.

"It's all right, old hoss," exclaimed a voice that was not difficult to recognise. "You told me to call in de morning. It's a smartish sort ob morning too, and—"

"You silly villain," snarled the sleepy man, "it is not morning yet."

"Yes, it is. It's nearly free o'clock, and you hab got to recollect dat it is de early worm dat gathers de cattle, so get up, and don't be such a lazy worm."

"Go and hang yourself! I won't get up till eight, and then I am going to have my breakfast before I fetch the cattle in."

"You will get up now. I ain't habing my time wasted in dis manner."

"The cattle are mine."

"I know dat, but I'm employing you to fetch dem in."

"Nothing of the sort. I am employing you."

"You can't employ a man widout paying him. Now, I'm going to pay you for de work. If you do it entirely to my satisfaction I shall pay you a dollar a day, so dat you are to consider you are my servant for de time being. 'Nuff said. Get up!"

"I sha'n't! Go—"

"Now, look here, Nixon, when I employ a man and gib him fair wages, I 'spect him to obey me, and dat's what you are going to do. Dere's only one alternative to getting up, and dat is going to sleep again. If you are determined to go to sleep, I am determined you shall get up. You can please yourself 'bout enforcing your determination, 'cos I'm going to enforce mine."

"If you don't clear out of my room I'll shoot you!"

"Dat ain't de way to argue, my poor old hoss. When I tell you to get up, if you say you won't, den someting is going to happen."

Pete struck a match, and then lighted a candle. After that he got the water-jug, and slopped its contents over the sleepy man.

The icy water rendered him wide awake in a second.

Leaping out of bed, and using some very Wild West language,

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The bottom of the hill was reached at lightning speed, and then there was a stupendous crash, as the front wheels took the rocks. Fortunately, the pole snapped, and the four horses galloped onward.

he clenched his fists, and went for Pete with a rush. But he never hit him once in the face, and suddenly the infuriated man uttered yells of pain.

In the struggle, which on his side was a fierce one, Pete had inadvertently placed a remarkably heavy boot on Nixon's bare toes. It was quite an accident, but it had the effect of ending the combat forthwith.

Nixon sat on the drenched bed, clasped his left foot in his hands, and howled.

"Sorry, old hoss. Yah, yah, yah! You dunno how sorry I am. Oh, is dat you, Algy? Well, I'm just inducing dis man to come and call his cattle home. I fancy he has decided to come."

"Whatever is he making that howling row for?"

"Why, he has—yah, yah, yah!—sort ob placed his toes under my foot, and I fancy it has hurt him."

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised if it has, especially as he has no boots on. I know a clump from your dainty trotters hurts when the recipient has boots on. But never mind, Nixon; it will get all right by the time you are dressed, and the pain in your foot will take your mind off this beastly cold. I wish Pete would be more energetic in the daytime, and less so at this time of night. You had better get dressed, or you will get some more cold pig. Come on, Pete, you will have to rout out Jack and Sam, but there is some water in their rooms, so that I don't expect you will experience any difficulty in that direction."

Jack and Sam did not need water. Knowing Pete's playful ways, they sprang out of bed before the water came, and when the little party made their way to the stables Pete was the only one amongst them who looked at all happy.

It was not till day was dawning that the raiders reached the part where the cattle were, and they had strayed for miles.

"Now, see here, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, as the sun rose and the morning mist was dispelled, "I'm going to bring dose beasts up wid a mighty swoop, so you just keep out ob deir way. You will be safe if you stop here, 'cos I shall drive dem furdur south. Jack, Sam, and Algy will help me, so dat we sha'n't need your aid. Come 'long, boys!"

Away they galloped, and the long whips cracked. The comrades understood their work well, and they brought the great herd up in grand style.

There was a sound like distant thunder as the frightened beasts galloped onwards, and Pete was too excited with

work to bother about Nixon. He knew the cattle were not going in the direction where he had left them, and that was all he cared about.

Cracking their whips and shouting, the comrades rode on the fringe of the mass, driving the stray beasts in until they swept onwards in a dense mass, and then, to their surprise, they saw two riderless horses galloping ahead of them.

"I dunno where dose horses came from, boys," panted Pete, reining in. "But de beasts are going in de right direction, and dey are bound to slacken speed soon. Golly! Why dere's a man being hanged!"

The comrades galloped towards the tree, which was quite close. In one of the lower boughs was a young man, who had thrown a lasso over Nixon, and had hauled him about eight feet from the ground. Probably he had done this so that the stampeding cattle should pass beneath him without harm, but unfortunately the noose of the lasso had slipped round Nixon's neck, and he was being half strangled.

Pete galloped past, and slashed the rope with his knife, causing the unfortunate Nixon to fall in a heap, while his would-be rescuer, relieved of his weight, fell backwards over the branch, and came to the ground with a thud.

"Here, what's your game, old hoss?" demanded Pete, gazing at the fallen stranger.

"Oh—uh! Gerald Gear. I'm Nixon's friend, and—"

"Well, eben if you are, you ain't got de right to hang him," observed Pete, dismounting and releasing the lasso.

"I was saving him from the stampeding cattle."

"Oh, dat's all right, if he doesn't mind being saved by dat cistern, only it's rader like blowing a man's brains out to save him from dying of consumption. Personally I would rader take de risk ob charging cattif dan be hanged; but ebery man to his taste

and if Nixon prefers de hanging, he's quite welcome to—"

"You silly scoundrel!" gasped Nixon, getting his breath with a gasp. "You ought to have been more careful, Gear. You wrenched me up by my neck."

"I 'speat it was a case ob neck or nuffin," observed Pete. "But how was it you came here, Nixon? It ain't de place I told you to wait."

"I saw my friend, Mr. Gear, and rode across. When he saw the cattle coming he climbed the tree. I only just had time to when I was wrenched from my saddle by the neck, and—"

"Yah, yah, yah! Well, neber mind, old hoss. I feel sure dat Gerald Gear acted for de best, and I don't tink he's stretched your neck much. He may make you an inch or so taller, and gib you a swan-like appearance. Oh, don't laugh at de poor man, Algy! You can see dat he's annoyed 'bout his neck. Still, I wouldn't boder 'bout it, Nixon. You know de giraffe is quite a graceful beast, and he's got a longer neck dan yours, even dough it has been stretched. You two had better follow on foot, 'cos we must now pay attention to dose oder beasts. Come on, boys!"

"Here, we can't walk home all that distance!" cried Nixon.

"Lend me that horse."

"Golly! I ain't going to do anything ob de sort."

"It is my horse."

"I know dat; but you lent him to me, and I ain't done wid him yet. You shall hab him after I hab ridden him home."

Then Pete galloped away, refusing to discuss the matter further.

They soon overtook the cattle, which had now slackened their pace, and Pete drove them into the corral; but it was not until evening that Nixon and Gear came in, and then they were tired and cross.

## CHAPTER 6.

### The Ranchowner's Promise.

NIXON cheered up a little after dinner. Perhaps it was the whisky he consumed during the meal. At any rate, he gave Gear an account of what had happened to Symonds.

"It is a brutal action," declared Gear. "Look here, Nixon, it is time that fellow Con Lorn was settled. He has been stealing cattle for years, but now he has come to taking life it is our duty to put an end to him. What's the sense in waiting.



You say Symonds's can't recover. Even if he did it doesn't alter Lorn's intention. The man deserves to be hanged. Symonds was a downright good fellow, and he was my future father-in-law. I consider it my duty to avenge his death. Are you sure the shot will prove fatal?"

"There isn't a doubt about that," answered Nixon. "I saw him, and knew at once that he was a dying man. We have given him a fair trial, and he has been found guilty and sentenced to death. All the same, I am inclined to defer the sentence until my men return with the report as to how he is."

"De proper ting for you to do is to hand him ober to justice," said Pete.

"You don't know what you are talking about!" declared Nixon. "It might be a couple of months before I got the police here, and if you think I'm going to keep the brute all that time, then you are mistaken! We know he's a cattle thief, and——"

"You don't know anything ob de sort!" growled Pete.

"What has it got to do with you?" demanded Gear fiercely.

"I'll admit it has got a lot more to do wid you, seeing dat de man is your rival."

"That's a lie! He certainly had the impudence to speak of love to Miss Symonds, but she treated him with the contempt that he deserved."

"Did she tell you dat?"

"She never told me anything about the matter. Her father told me. Are you going to keep those fellows here, Nixon?"

"Certainly not. In fact, I haven't got room for them now that you have arrived. You will have to go."

"Can easily do dat," answered Pete. "Just pay de old banks for what we hab had, Jack, and den we will put up at Con Lorn's hut, and decide de best way to act in de matter."

"My opinion is that the best thing for us to do will be to proceed to the town," said Jack, "and there learn exactly what has happened."

"Very well," exclaimed Gear. "I see no objection to that."

"It would be all de same if you did, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "We ain't asking your advice!"

"Do you pledge your word of honour to take no action concerning your prisoner until we return, Nixon?"

"Well, that depends on how long you are going to be absent. You will have to state a time," said Nixon. "I'm not going to keep a desperate character like Con Lorn for an indefinite period."

"One week from to-day," said Jack. "That will give us ample time to get to the town and back."

"You can't go on foot. If you choose to purchase horses from me I will agree to your terms."

And so it was arranged, Nixon offering to take forty pounds each for four horses, provided he selected them.

"Well, dat's all right, old hoss," exclaimed Pete. "But don't you see, we wouldn't like you to gib too good value for de money. What will you take for each horse, provided we select dem?"

"Four hundred pounds for the four, and I would buy them back after you had done with them."

"At de same price?"

"Not likely. You will have the use of them, and possibly damage them. I would make you an offer for them."

"Well, we won't boder 'bout de repurchase, 'cos I'm mighty certain it would neber come off. I will pay you four hundred pounds for de four horses."

"You will pay? Have you got the money?"

"Yes. I suppose you don't mind Bank ob England notes? You see, I hab got plenty ob dem. I'll gib you a hundred pounds now, and de oder free hundred when I hab made de choice, which will be to-morrow morning."

Then Pete counted out the notes, and the comrades made their way to the little hut where Con Lorn had lived his lonely life.

"I can't make it out at all, boys," exclaimed Pete, when he had lighted a fire. "Con's manner was not dat ob a guilty man. Do you tink dere was any troof in his story?"

"It seems very improbable," answered Jack. "I fear that he is guilty. You see, he bears an indifferent character."

"Should say he bore a mighty bad one if you can believe what Nixon says. But den you can't. Now it appears to me dat de young fellow's fate depends on

weder Symonds lives or dies, 'cos he would be able to say weder Con Lorn fired de fatal shot."

"Not if that shot was fatal," observed Algy.

"Why not, Algy?" inquired Pete.

"Well, if the shot proves fatal, it stands to reason that Symonds will die; and a dead man is scarcely going to give evidence."

"Don't matter a bit. What we hab got to do is to choose de horses and start off to-morrow, den if we find dat de worst has happened to Symonds, we might be able to find some police or someone to come and stop what Nixon means to do to his prisoner, because it ain't right to let a man die a shameful death wid such evidence as dey hab got against him; and even if he's guilty, dey ain't got de right to execute him."

"I reckon lynch law is supreme in this wild part," said Sam. "We can only do our best. It is certain that we could do no good here. Every man would be against us, and we can't hold up the whole of those cowboys."

Pete was the first up the following morning, and he made his way to the stable, where he found one of the hands attending to the horses. The man gave him some advice as to the selection, but Pete preferred to be guided by his own knowledge. He selected the best four horses, and tried them all before deciding. Then, when Nixon made his appearance, the deal was completed, although Pete had to pay extra for the saddles and bridles.

For the start, the weather was all that could be desired, but they had not proceeded far on their journey when storm clouds spread over the heavens, and thunder rolled across them; while before long a terrific storm burst forth.

The rain came down in blinding torrents, and the howling wind drove it into their faces with such force that it was almost impossible for them to keep to the track.

The worst of it was, the rain continued all through the day, and when night came on the whole country was flooded.

In some places they were compelled to swim their horses, while they were in actual danger of their lives.

They might have turned back, but no such thought ever occurred to them. They knew that a man's life depended on their efforts, and they were determined to do their very utmost to reach the town.

It was nearly midnight before they came in sight of the blurred lights of the inn, which had so far escaped the floods, because it lay on higher ground than the surrounding country.

The landlord appeared to be delighted at their appearance.



Pete's head emerged from the blazing wreckage, and one swift glance around convinced him that his comrades and Rory had scrambled clear; then Symonds' head bobbed up quite close to his, and they gazed into each other's faces.



He was sitting up in the hope that some belated traveller might come that way, and he knew the comrades would be good customers.

Their advent made him trust that the tempest would continue for a month or so, and he assured them that it would be death to go on further, and suicidal to return.

At any rate, to go on further that night was out of the question, for the horses were fagged out, so they made arrangements to remain at the little inn, much to the landlord's delight.

The following day the storm was worse than ever. They made an attempt to continue their journey, but soon discovered that it was hopeless. The country was simply impassable, and the state of affairs made them very anxious concerning the fate of the wretched prisoner.

That night the rain ceased, and the following morning another start was made; but although they got through the worst of the flood, their progress was very slow, and they began to fear that their chances of getting back before the week had transpired were remote.

## CHAPTER 7.

### The Fatal Decision.

"LOOK here, Nixon," exclaimed Gerald Gear, "it's all nonsense waiting for the return of those fellows. Your men came in last night, and they reported Symonds's death. There's the end of the matter, and it rests with us to avenge the crime."

"Well, that's so," exclaimed Nixon. "All the time I pledged my word not to hang him until the week was up."

"As a matter of fact, they can't possibly get back in a week. The waters are out, and the chances are they will be kept prisoners at the inn for more than a week."

"I don't like breaking a faithful promise like I made them." "Why not let me break it. Give me a free hand, and I'll punish the villain for his crimes. He deserves death for his horse stealing, much more so for having taken Symonds's life."

"Well, I'm not going as far as that, although I'll admit Symonds wasn't a bad sort—not if you let him brag. He was a harmless man, and that's what we want in sheriffs. Still, if you like to take the matter into your own hands, I shan't interfere. I know you have got an axe to grind in getting rid of him."

"Ridiculous! You surely don't think that Miss Symonds would prefer a villain like him to me?"

"There's no accounting for the taste of any girl. Still, that's not the question. If you choose to avenge Symonds's death, I won't interfere. You can do exactly what you like with the prisoner."

"Then he shall hang this very day."

"Mind, it has nothing to do with me. I'm not going to interfere in the matter, and if there is any trouble about it, you will have to take all the blame."

"Pshaw! Are you frightened. He won't be the first man in this part who has died by lynch law, and it's certain he won't be the last. I shall let your men do the work, and I can promise you that they are only too eager to do it."

"You are sure the poor chap is dead?"

"Certain. The cowboys got it from one of his servants, who said poor Lucy was brokenhearted. They left word that they were coming straight here to hang the murderer; and mind you this, even if you told them not to do it, I don't believe they would obey you. They mean to have his life; and when you come to think of it, it is only justice."

"Well, I'll leave it all to you, Gear; but you must see to it that I don't get into trouble over the matter. That fellow Pete is dangerous, and he would make it hot for a man who did not keep a promise made to him."

"I'll serve him the same road as the other one if I have any of his nonsense," declared Gear, leaving the room in order to give orders that the prisoner should be brought up.

A few minutes later Con Lorn was brought into the room. His arms were securely bound, and he knew that he had nothing to hope for from his fierce judges, especially when he saw that his rival was amongst them.

"Con Lorn," cried Gerald Gear. "You have been found guilty of an atrocious crime. You know the penalty of that crime."

"I know that you will be the first to take my life, and I also know your reason, Gerald Gear."

"You have tried to blacken my character in the eyes of the young lady whom I have asked to be my wife."

"I knew that you had asked Miss Symonds to be your wife."

"And yet you dared to ask her to be yours."

"I told her that I loved her."

"Do you call that honest?"

"Certainly! I knew that she had refused your offer."

"It is a lie!"

"I was so informed by one who would never speak falsely."

"And who was that, pray?"

"By Miss Symonds. I asked her the question before I spoke to her of love."

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"I suppose you will tell me next that she accepted your offer?"

"I did not make an offer of marriage. I told her that I loved her, and her answer was that she had promised her dying mother long years ago that she would never wed against her father's wishes. She never will."

"A thing that would be fatal to your suit!"

"Exactly! Her father hates me, and believes me to be a cattle-thief."

"Which you are."

"It is not necessary for me to tell you that you are a liar, because you know it. I have never committed a theft in my life. It is true I have squandered money in my time, and have lost much at gambling with you. You say that I have blackened your character in Miss Symonds' eyes. That is absolutely false. I had no reason to do such a thing; and if there had been a reason I should not have done it. As a matter of fact I do not know anything against you that would render you unfit to become the husband of any woman. I only mentioned your name to ask if she was your promised wife, and she answered in the negative, telling me that she had refused your offer, and that her father was striving to induce her to accept it."

"I don't believe one word that you are saying."

"That matters nothing to me. It could make no difference now, for I firmly believe that you intend to take my life, and I am powerless to prevent it."

"You will have to answer for your awful crime," said Gerald Gear, sternly.

"These men have declared me to be guilty, and I do not doubt that they believe it, for they could have no interest in my death. With you it is different, for you know that I never committed that crime."

"How could I know such a thing as that?"

"You have known me for years, and must be convinced in your own mind that I would take the life of no man. Listen to me, you men. Once Gerald Gear, whom I accused of card-sharpping, challenged me to mortal combat. I was forced to meet him, for I had accused him in public. I said then that he had robbed me. I say it now. He did rob me. Well, we fought with revolvers. The arrangements were that we fired five shots each, starting from twenty-five paces, and walking in. He made those arrangements, and I agreed for I left it to him. He fired his five shots as I walked in. Twice he slightly wounded me, but with the other shots he missed."

"I fired two shots over his head as I walked in, and then I stood not one yard from him, with three shots remaining. I could have taken his life according to the rules that he himself had made. I fired the three shots over his head, and he slunk away. When next we met it was by chance. He now asserts that I have taken the life of a man who never wronged me. That I shot him down without the slightest warning. It is vilely false—as false as when you and he accuse me of cattle-rustling. Do your worst. My life has not been such as to cause me to turn a coward when death is near."

"You need not try to deceive us with plausibility," sneered Gerald Gear. "We know that you are guilty; and the words you have uttered are not true."

"In what respect are they false?"

"We are not dealing with the past now, and it will not help you to refer to it. You must prepare to meet your fate. Lead him out, my men. There is nothing more to be said. You know the mode of his death. It is merely the punishment he would receive in his own country for a similar crime."

Con Lorn did not offer the slightest resistance, neither did he plead for his life. He knew that he was surrounded by foes—men who had learnt to loathe him for the reports that had been spread—and now they would show no mercy to him.

The weather had now cleared, and the sun was shining upon the wretched prisoner. The song of the birds was in the air, while the earth looked very beautiful. In the distance Con could see his little home; then he gazed at the grim faces of the men, as they made fast the fatal rope to a bough of the tree beneath which they had led him.

"Anything to say?" demanded the man who placed the fatal noose over the wretched man's neck.

"Merely that I am perfectly innocent," answered Con Lorn. "I bear you no malice. Perhaps one day my innocence may be made known, and then you will feel remorse for the work you have done; at any rate, you will be able to say that I have faced death without fear. I hope to meet death with the same fortitude. Finish off your work. I am ready."

## CHAPTER 8.

### A Race for Life.

**S**YMONDS' daughter, Lucy, was as unlike her father both in appearance and disposition, as could well be imagined, although his bark was considerably worse than his bite. His great fault lay in imagining that he was really a wonderful fellow.

At any rate, he was devoted to his daughter, and she was very fond of him. When he had been brought home hovering



between life and death, the shock had been terrible to the beautiful girl, and her face grew whiter each day as the doctor gave her no hope.

Then the old servant broke the news to Lucy that Con Lorn had fired the shot, and her grief was complete.

She did not believe it, but she knew those men would hang the man who had won her heart, and the horror of the whole thing seemed to be more than the young girl could bear.

Then the doctor brought her news that her father had regained consciousness, and wished to speak to her immediately, and alone.

So Lucy went up to his room, and her first impression as she gazed at her father's white face, was that he was very near to death, and that he would be taken from her.

"Don't be frightened, Lucy," he murmured in a voice that was very weak, although his brain seemed to be quite clear. "I believe I'm going, but shall make a fight of it. See, little Lucy, I'm leaving you a lot of money. It was honestly earned. But money is not everything to a young girl. Before I die I want to see you married, and to know I did my best for you. Gerald is a good young fellow, and his position—"

"I do not love him, father. But do not speak of me."  
"I must speak of you, Lucy, and think of you. Don't you see, you are a sacred trust. I swore to your dying mother to do my best for you. I wasn't rich then, but I made my pile, and it's all going to you—every penny of it. Don't you think in time you'd love Gerald Gear?"

"I never could, father."  
"Well, I'll leave it at that. I won't try to force you. Who do they accuse of this?"

"Con Lorn. Oh, father, he never did it! I know he never did it. It breaks my heart to think he will meet a shameful death for a crime he never committed."

"But he is nothing to you, Lucy?"  
She lowered her eyes and sobbed, but she made no reply. Rick Symonds' white face became more troubled.

"He is innocent," he murmured. "I do not know who fired the shot, but it was not him. The bullet struck me at the back of the neck. I remember that quite well before I lost consciousness. They will— Lucy, he must be saved! I do not know how it can be managed, little girl, but he must be saved. I am not sure I have not wronged him. Not a moment is to be lost. I trust it may not be too late; but can you think of some means to save him?"

"Yes, father! You will live! You feel better? I cannot part with you. You who have been so good to me."

"Come, Lucy, it does the old man good to hear that. I've not been all I should have been, but I think I've kept the vow, I swore with you. I feel I have not done badly there; and I won't do badly in the end. Lucy, there are evil tales going the round concerning Con Lorn. They may be lies. I do not know. You are a clever girl—you take after your dear mother. She was a clever woman—a very clever woman. Well, little girl, save that young man, and if—if we never meet again, and if you are convinced that Con Lorn is a man of honour, and that he will make you happy, you have my free consent. There lassie, the old man's last gift!"

"Oh, father, do not say so! Do not think it. You will live for me, and I will do exactly what you tell me to do."

"Very well. My order won't be hard to obey. Make your life as happy as you can, and accept Con Lorn's offer of marriage if you are convinced of his integrity. And Lucy, there are three young men—Jack, Sam and Pete by name. They will be there, and they will act as your friends. You can trust either one of them I know, and I'm a judge of character—there isn't a better one. I always was smart in that respect."

Even though so near to death Rick Symonds could not help boasting a little, but Lucy did not mind. She knew that at heart he was good, and she loved him dearly, for his one aim in life had been to try to make her happy.

Brushing away her tears, she kissed him, and tried to smile.  
"I shall soon see you again, dear father. Good-bye for the present. There is only one way to save Con Lorn."

And stealing from the room, she sent the nurse to take her place.

Lucy knew that each moment might make all the difference between life and death to the man whom she loved. In a very few minutes she was dressed in her riding habit, having already given orders that her horse should be saddled. The storm had passed, but she knew that the low-lying land would be flooded. There was peril in going; perhaps more peril when she reached the wild spot, yet Lucy would have gone to death to save the life of the man she loved.

She was soon galloping southwards at her horse's greatest pace. She knew the direction well; in fact, the wagon track led to the cattle run; but where this track wound round she rode straight across the country.

The ground was fearfully heavy, and in many parts the water still lay a foot or more in depth; but it had drained off very rapidly.

The day passed; but when night came on the moon was shining, and Lucy still rode on.

Her horse was jaded, but she could not spare him now. It was a matter of life or death to the man she loved and trusted. If she could never bring him happiness she trusted to bring him life; at any rate, no effort on her part should be spared.

Once her horse fell, but she was uninjured, and getting the tired horse up, she rode wildly on once more.

She had struck the wagon track once more, and she now kept on at a steady gallop, fearful that if she urged her horse too much, the poor brute would fail her altogether.

Day dawned at last, and it was light when Lucy galloped past the little inn. She could have got food there, but would not stop one moment. The landlord ran out to watch her in surprise. He knew her by sight, and guessed why she was riding at that pace. He shouted something to her, but Lucy did not hear the words.

As she neared her destination her great dread increased. She had a presentiment that she would be too late. Want of food and rest were telling their tale, and it was as much as she could do to retain her seat. A horrible faintness was taking possession of her, and hope had almost fled. Yet she would not give in until she had done her utmost.

A clump of trees concealed the cattle-run from her view, but she knew exactly where it lay, and strained her eyes in that direction. Her horse swept round the trees, and then she saw that which caused her to utter a cry of terror.

The fatal cord was round her lover's neck. Two men stood at his side, ready to execute their terrible deed.

"Stop! Stop!" she cried, galloping up, and almost falling into Gerald's arms, as he assisted her to dismount. "This is murder! Oh, men, Con Lorn is innocent! My father still lives. I have come straight from him with the message that Con Lorn never fired the shot. Gerald Gear, are you a party to this awful deed?"

"You do not regard the matter in its true light, Lucy," exclaimed Gear, lowering his eyes before her indignant gaze. "This man shot your father. Do you plead for the life of such a man?"

"It is false! He never committed such an action."  
"How can you say that?"

"I know it. He is incapable of such an action. My father told me that the shot was fired from behind him."

"Listen to me, Lucy," exclaimed Gear. "Con Lorn has received a fair trial, and he has been found guilty. Let us explain the whole matter to you in private."

"Mr. Nixon," cried Lucy, approaching him; she had met him on several occasions at her father's house, and knew that they were connected in business matters. "You will not allow this deed?"

"Well, you see, I have no voice in the matter. Con Lorn has been sentenced to death, and these men are determined that he shall die."

"Let me speak to you concerning the matter, Lucy," said Gear. "You need food and rest. You are not yourself."

"I need neither until you have set Con Lorn at liberty."  
"Well, step aside, and let me tell you all I know. That may alter your opinion. Do nothing for the present, men. I wish to explain the matter fully to this young lady, and she will then decide on the prisoner's fate."

In the hope that Gerald Gear would really leave her to settle the matter, Lucy followed him to some little distance from the rest.

## CHAPTER 9.

### A Villainous Stipulation.

"LUCY," he exclaimed, "you know that I love you deeply, and that it is your father's wish we should become man and wife."

"Mr. Gear, you gave me to understand you were going to speak concerning the man who is now at your mercy."

"That is exactly what I am going to do. I am perfectly convinced that he is guilty of the crime, and of many others. Now, I am aware that he has asked you to be his wife, and the very fact of your having come here leads me to suppose you reciprocate his affections. As I have already informed you, I am convinced of his guilt, and you will understand that it would be impossible for me to set the criminal at liberty did I think there was the slightest chance of his ever marrying you. Well, if you solemnly swear to become my wife, I will set Con Lorn free, and no harm shall come to him. If you refuse, then I shall leave the cowboys to complete their work." Con Lorn's life depends on your decision."

"I have listened to your words," cried Lucy indignantly, "and I think you are one of the meanest men that ever lived. I would rather meet the fate you would deal to that innocent man than become your wife. I loathe the sight of you. No man would descend to such villainous to gain any woman for his wife. All you care for is my father's money. You know by marrying me it would become yours."

"Your words are signing Con Lorn's death warrant."  
"He shall know the offer that you make me, and these men shall know it!" cried Lucy, hurrying away from the fellow, and



then, in a voice tremulous with indignation, she repeated what Gerald Gear had said.

"Would you have me accept such an offer, Mr. Lorn?" she demanded.

"Can you ask me such a question," he answered. "I would rather meet the most terrible death. If I escape the death which I certainly do not deserve, Gerald Gear, I will knock you down for the vile compact you have striven to make. Let them do their worst, Miss Symonds. Leave me to my fate, and remember that my last prayer will be for your happiness."

"You men will not commit this crime!" cried Lucy, feeling that it would be useless to appeal further to Gear.

"You see, miss, we have sworn to have his life, and being honest men, we couldn't possibly go from that oath. It may seem a bit rough to you, not being accustomed to such ways, but if we didn't make an example of cattle thieves, there would be an end to our living. Now, if you just go into the house, you won't see nothing of it."

"Oh, you will not commit this fearful wrong!"

"Now, see here, miss, you don't view the matter in the right light. No doubt you mean well, but you are just about as wrong as a tender-hearted young lady could be. He's got to die, and unless you want to see it, the best thing you can do is to go away."

"But he shall not die!" cried Lucy. "See! Help is coming!"

"Why, it is Jack, Sam and Pete, and that lad returning!" exclaimed Nixon. "You will have to explain to them, Nixon, that you took the matter out of my hands, because I promised to wait a week, and the week isn't yet up."

"Leave it to me," exclaimed Gerald Gear. "Those men have no right to interfere, and if they interfere, they will be shot."

"Now, den, you Nixon!" cried Pete, riding up. "Do you call dis keeping your word? We heard dat dis young lady was riding here at top speed, and as de landlord at de inn told us she was Symond's daughter, we tought we had better return. Release dat man!"

"Now, you stand back!" cried one of the cowboys, who was holding the rope. "We are going to hang the brute! Stand back, or I'll blow your brains out!"

Pete, who had dismounted, took two steps forward, and then there was a sharp slap as his left hand slapped the speaker's cheek, while such was the strength of the blow that the man rolled sideways over. A second man fired at him, but he missed his mark, and Pete struck him between the eyes with his fist.

"Steady, there!" shouted Sam, holding a revolver in each hand. "I never miss my aim. There had better be no more firing. I have you covered, Gerald Gear."

"Don't fire!" exclaimed Gear, while Nixon gave a similar order, for Jack had got a revolver levelled at his head. "You have no right to interfere in the matter, but we do not intend to allow bloodshed—"

"Not where your own blood is concerned," exclaimed Algy. "I have noticed that you are remarkably careful of your own skin."

"Con Lorn is innocent!" cried Lucy. "My father has told me so."

"Den dat settles de matter, my dear!" exclaimed Pete. "Con Lorn is my prisoner. I took dat man prisoner, and bound his arms behind his back. Now I am going to release him, and let me see the man who dares to stop me—let me see de six men who dare. Golly! Or de twelve men. Listen to me, you cowboys! You'm a set ob idiots, but you are strong men. Now you hab used your strength against a man who is helpless to retaliate. I'll fight you wid my fists—as many ob you as like to come on. I'll fight all dose who dare to try to stop me from freeing my prisoner. Why don't you come on. Here you are! Dere's one man against a score."

"We are under Mr. Nixon's orders!" growled one of the men, not caring to face one of Pete's blows, for the man whom he had knocked down still lay on the ground. "He's our employer, and if he says there's to be no fighting, it ain't likely that we are going to fight."

"Con Lorn, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, severing his bonds, "you'm a free man, and I ask your pardon for eber habing suspected you."

"Oh, I don't blame you for that!" exclaimed Con. "I should have suspected you under similar circumstances. I owe my life to that brave young lady, and to you. I consider that it was a magnificent act of bravery on Lucy's part to ride here alone. It is an action that I shall never forget. I may tell you, my friends, that I asked Lucy to be my wife, but my suit was hopeless. She told me so, and the reason was that her father hated me. Well, I don't blame him, for my character has been blackened by every possible means, and Gerald Gear was the man who did so."

"He has made those men, and this young lady's father, believe that I am a cattle rustler. He thinks that I retaliated, and told him some of his past life, for which reason he invented a past for me, and a very vile past he made it. But there was not one

word of truth in what he said. I admit that I squandered all the money that I had, but when it was all gone I set to work, and became my own master in a small way. As my bad luck would have it, I bought a piece of ground adjoining Nixon's, a thing that angered him, and he was only too ready to believe the tales that Gerald Gear told. This was bad enough, but the cowardly miscreant offered to spare my life if Lucy would become his wife. I said that if I were ever free I would knock him down for those words. I shall do so."

"Here, just you stop a bit, Con!" cried Pete, springing at Gerald Gear, and disarming him. "If you hab got to be knocked down, de man who does it is going to meet you on equal terms, and it wouldn't be anything like equal if you are armed and he is not. Dere you are! I don't fancy you are in possession ob any more weapons."

"You had better be careful, Con Lorn!" cried Gear, looking startled, for there could be no doubt that Con was very much in earnest. "You are making a dangerous foe in me."

"You are not so dangerous as a foe as you proved yourself to be when I treated you as a friend. You are a common thief, a cardsharper, and you robbed me on more than one occasion. Defend yourself. You know what I have threatened. It is a threat that I shall surely execute."

"Keep back, fellow! I do not fight like a rough!"

"You act like one. I slap your cheek. Perhaps that will rouse your puddle blood!"

Con gave him a slap across the face that caused a red mark to appear, but even then he did not appear anxious to use his fists.

"I will not fight in the presence of a lady," he muttered. "I challenge you to mortal combat."

"No; I refuse to meet you with weapons. We are going to meet with fists!" said Con. "I met you once with weapons, and conquered you, and then I spared your life. I'll horsewhip you now, if you will not meet me with fists. You did not mind attempting to hang me in a lady's presence, and therefore you cannot mind fighting me."

"Demon, I'll teach you to insult me!" yelled Gear, springing at him, and striking out with all his strength.

Con guarded two heavy blows, then his left fist shot out landing between his opponent's eyes, and Gerald Gear went down.

"I have executed my threat," exclaimed Con, turning from him.

"Well, dat's right enough," said Pete. "I don't tink he's going to boder you any more for de present. Now de question is what are we going to do wid Lucy? What do you tink we had better do, my dear?"

"Could you see me back to my father? He is very very bad."

"Oh, he's going to get all right, Lucy. Seeing that he has regained consciousness, and he must hab done so, seeing he told you dat Con neber fired de shot. Well, dere's no difficulty 'bout de matter as far as I can see. Look here, Nixon, you are a friend ob Rick Symonds. He ain't got a mighty good taste in de choice ob friends; but seeing dat you helped to convict an innocent man you ought to lend your aid as far as it is required. You hab an old housekeeper at your ranch. Bery well, she can accompany us to de town. You will lend us a wagon and we will use dese four horses. One ob your cowboys can act as driver. He shall drive us to de town, and drive de old woman back again, and you may keep de horses, which means you will make four hundred pounds. Do you agree?"

"Yes! I'm always ready to help a friend."

"I know you are when dat friend's name is Nixon; but dat settles de matter so far. Come 'long to de fellow's house, Lucy, den we will decide what to do wid Gear. I'm going to keep him prisoner for de present."

"Fellow!" cried Gear, rising, and making no attempt to retaliate. "You dare to talk about taking me prisoner."

"Well, you see, it was de sort ob ting I couldn't keep secret. Now, listen to me, Gerald Gear, as far as I can gather from de conversation, you hab been spreading a lot ob false reports about your rival. Dose reports really caused him to be made a prisoner, 'cos if people had not believed he had been a cattle-stealer, and worse, dey would hab been more inclined to listen to his defence. Well, no one will doubt Lucy's word when she asserts dat her fader declares Con Lorn neber fired de shot. We start from dat point. Now, den, Algy, you are generally good at detective work, just you gib your impressions."

"It's a funny way to solve a mystery, too," exclaimed Algy. "However, I don't care. If I were a detective, and were to make a deduction, I should work it like this. Con is innocent. That is proved—I mean, of course, innocent of the crime. Had anyone a motive for the crime? Would anyone benefit by Symond's death? Gerald Gear would not. He was in the neighbourhood, it is true, but he had everything to lose by Symonds' death, and nothing to gain. Con had everything to gain, it is true, but we know he had nothing to do with it."

"Stop a moment, my lad," interposed Con. "I am glad to hear that you are convinced of my innocence; but I would like to point out to you that I had nothing to gain. I had asked



this young lady to be my wife, and she refused, because she had given a promise never to marry without her father's consent. He had forbidden such a marriage, therefore his death would not have freed her from that pledge, and she would have kept it—she will keep it. I know that perfectly well, and I admire her all the more for it."

"Well, it does not matter as far as my deductions are concerned," said Algy. "Now, we know of no one who could have benefited by Symonds' death. Was the thing an accident? It looks as though it was; but if it should have been an accident—Gerald Gear, will you, please, listen to every word that I am saying?"

"I am not in the humour to listen to a conceited boy's nonsense," said Gear.

"You must listen to this. It is most important. I want everyone to watch Gerald Gear's face closely—very closely, please. I want you all to see if there is the slightest change in it. He fears to meet my gaze! Ah, that's better! You are looking into my eyes now, Gerald Gear, but it is against your will, and you only do so because you are anxious not to cause the listeners to suspect that you know anything about the matter. I say it looks as though it was an accident—an accident so far as Rick Symonds was concerned. But if I am right, can you tell me, Gerald Gear, why the man who fired the shot climbed a tree to do so?"

"I do not understand you," said Gear, speaking slowly; but there was a startled expression in his eyes. "Did you see someone climb a tree?"

"No! If the thing was accidental, it looks suspicious that the man should have climbed a tree. It looks as though he did so in order to keep watch, and he would probably be watching Con Lorn. He would not know that Symonds was coming here, and therefore could not have been watching for him. Now, had anyone a motive in taking Con Lorn's life?"

## CHAPTER 10.

### Algy Plays His Last Card.

**A**LGY ceased speaking, and commenced stroking Rory's head. Gerald Gear strove hard to appear at his ease, but his efforts were in vain. He seemed to be waiting for Algy to proceed, but feared to ask him to do so.

"Look here, Algy," exclaimed Pete, "I wish you would pay a little less attention to dat dog, and a little more attention to de deductions. You began dem all right, but you finished wid a brevity dat may be de soul ob wit, dough it ain't de soul ob sound sense."

"What's the good of my asking a question if I don't receive an answer. Had anyone a motive in taking Con Lorn's life?"

"I dunno. Ask Sammy. I should say de only party present would be Gerald Gear, if he tought dat Con and Lucy were going to be married."

"Absurd!" exclaimed Gear. "As a matter of fact, I knew they were not going to be married. What makes you think someone climbed a tree, boy?"

"I went to examine the place," answered Algy. "I knew that the wound was either in an upward direction or a downward direction. Did your father tell you how he was shot, Lucy?"

"From the back."

"Very well. That was what I imagined, and, that being so, it stands to reason that the bullet took a downward direction. For it to have done that the man who fired the shot must have been considerably above his victim. I carefully examined the spot, and came to the conclusion that a man had been concealed in a particular tree from which he would have had a view of the spot, also of Con Lorn's shanty. There were no footprints beneath the tree, because there had been rain. However, that did not matter. Someone climbed the tree, and fired the shot by accident."

"Golly! How do you know dat?" demanded Pete.

"I don't know it. I am only making deductions. I believe someone fired the shot by accident—that is to say that he hit Symonds by accident. I believe that the shot was intended for Con Lorn. The two men were standing close together, and the wrong man got hit."

"I wish you wouldn't keep stopping when you come to de important part, Algy. You'm worse dan a serial story. Who fired de shot?"

"Gerald Gear," answered Algy calmly.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete, gripping him by the arm. "Are you sure ob dat, Algy?"

"Of course I am not. Don't I keep telling you that I am only making deductions?"

"It is simply scandalous that the boy should make such a shameful accusation against me!" declared Gear.

"But you made de same accusation against Con Lorn, old boss," retorted Pete.

"He was found guilty after a fair trial. You yourself thought him guilty."

"Dat's so. I must say de evidence was against him, and I'm mighty sorry dat I suspected him ob such a crime. What makes you tink dat Gear fired de shot, Algy?"

"First of all, he turned up soon afterwards, and that shows that he must have been in the vicinity. Then, again, I think he smokes cigarettes in a holder. What is the matter, Gear? Don't you feel well? Your face has grown quite white. I picked up this amber cigarette-holder beneath the tree referred to. You will notice, Pete, that it is silver-mounted, and that there is a monogram on the silver. The initials are G. G."

"Golly! De boy is a born detective," exclaimed Pete. "He's most as clever at detective work as another man I know. I'm not going to mention his name, 'cos I wouldn't like you to tink dat man was conceited. What hab you got to say to dat little bit ob evidence, Gerald Gear?"

"It—is it certainly my cigarette-holder, but—that boy never found it there. It is false! He stole it from my pocket! I had no rifle."

"But you had your revolver," said Algy.

"A revolver would not carry so far. I mean——"

"And I mean that you have convicted yourself, Gerald Gear," interposed Algy, "and that was exactly what I intended you should do. If you were not up that tree, and if you did not drop that holder, how came you to know the distance of the tree from the spot where the two men stood. You are silent. Well, it does not matter."

"What am I to do wid him, Algy?" inquired Pete. "I don't care to let him travel wid us to de town."

"He is a friend of Nixon's," answered Algy. "Let Nixon keep him a prisoner here. If all goes well with Rick Symonds—and we all trust and believe it will—I should let the scamp go, merely warning him off the place."

"Bery well," exclaimed Pete. "You will be answerable for de man, Nixon. Now, we will start straight away, 'cos we can stop at de inn. Get de wagon ready, and let me hab a few words wid de housekeeper. I daresay she won't mind coming to take charge ob Lucy—not after I hab had a chat wid her."

It was a good thing for the housekeeper, for Pete treated her in his customary liberal manner. After Lucy had been provided with some food, the start was made, and when, eventually, they reached Symonds' home, they learnt from the doctor that he had taken a decided turn for the better.

In a few days' time he had sufficiently recovered to listen to the whole story of the crime, while Con Lorn gave him a full and absolutely true account of his past life, with the result that Rick Symonds came to the conclusion that Lucy had made a wiser choice than he himself had made.

"That fellow Gear deceived me entirely," admitted Symonds. "Mind you, I'm smart, and it's not often that any man can deceive me. I'm good at summing up a man's character. In fact it's one of my strongest points."

"Golly! De man is forgetting his patent lamps," exclaimed Pete. "Should say from de burning power ob dose lamps dat dey were your strongest point, Symonds. But neber mind. You'm a lot too fond ob bragging, but you hab got your points, and you am't quite such an idiot as I took you for when we first met. Now, all you hab got to do is to make Con Lorn happy."

"Lucy will have to do that," answered Symonds; "but I'll make him rich."

"I thank you from my heart for giving your consent to our marriage, Mr. Symonds," exclaimed Con. "You have given me your greatest treasure. She is a sacred trust, and in the years to come I hope to be able to convince you that you have made no mistake; but not one penny of your money will I touch. I have made a little, and shall certainly make more. I can support Lucy in comfort, and should look upon myself as contemptible were I to take anything from you. If you choose to settle money on Lucy, it will be for her to dispose of as she thinks fit; but not on our home. It is for me to find the money for that, and I am thankful to know that I can do it."

"Well, Con," exclaimed Symonds. "I like a man to feel like that. I believe you are right. Now, all we have got to do is to make arrangements for the wedding. I shall be all right in a few days now, and I hope our friends will stop for the wedding."

And this the comrades consented to do, while within a month Rick Symonds had almost recovered from his wound; at any rate, he was well enough to enjoy himself at the wedding breakfast.

It was Con Lorn who sent word to Nixon to release the man who had attempted his life, and warn him off the place.

Then the comrades took their leave.

THE END.

A splendid tale of the early adventures of Jack, Sam, and Pete appears in the new companion paper, "THE PENNY POPULAR." Now on Sale.



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## BOYS' FRIEND

One Penny.

"Let me go—let me go! I'll kill you! Help! You're throttling me! I've done no harm! I live here!"

And he wrestled fiercely, hoping to overpower the constable.

He had met with his match, however, for this particular policeman was wrestling champion of the Metropolitan Police.

He turned the Turk upon his back and pinioned him down.

Then taking out his whistle he blew a shrill blast upon it, which went echoing through the night.

The Rev. Arthur Garthorne came to the window, got out upon the sill, and dropped to the ground.

"Have you got him, policeman?" he asked.

"Ay, that I have, sir. But he's a strong 'un. It's as much as I can do to hold him."

"Let me help you," said the Fighting Parson.

Between the pair of them the work was easy enough. They held Safvet Adjali down, so that he could not move a finger.

And then lights appeared in the upper windows of the house.

The door of the house adjoining was thrown wide, and a man came rushing out to ask what was the matter.

Then came the echo of running feet, and the next moment a second policeman appeared.

For Adjali the game was up.

They hauled him to his feet.

"Why, he's no Briton, but a bloomin' foreigner," said the constable, who had made the capture.

"Yes," said the Fighting Parson. "He's a Turk."

"A Turk, is he?" said the bobby grimly. "Well, we'll give him some Turkish delight. A year or so in quod will do him a bit of good, I'm thinking."

Safvet glowered at the faces around him, set his teeth, and never uttered a word.

"Adjali," said the clergyman, "you escaped punishment for your misdeeds in your own country, but you'll not escape here. You'll get a long sentence, I hope."

The Turk shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," he muttered, "I can't help that. I suppose it's Kismet."

Adjali's trial was of the briefest. The witnesses were few in number, and their evidence was to the point. A counsel battled bravely on behalf of the prisoner, without making the slightest impression upon anyone in court. Eighteen months' imprisonment was the sentence meted out, and Adjali, dogged, sullen, and vicious, was led away to the cells.

Adjali's behaviour in prison was exemplary. He had the good sense to realise that the better he behaved himself, the sooner would he be a free man; and whilst he performed the daily and monotonous tasks which were assigned to him, and dreamt of freedom, he shaped his plans for the future. He had failed at burglary on the first time of asking, but he had had luck then, he reckoned, and his very boldness had brought about his capture. He wouldn't take so many risks next time.

He meant to revenge himself upon the clergyman who had helped to arrest him, and upon Tom Sayers, who had beaten him in the boxing-ring.

All these things he meant to accomplish, and the future, he assured himself, should well repay him for the past.

But he reckoned without the authorities, and when at last his day of freedom arrived he was told, peremptorily and gruffly, that he would be escorted by detectives to a ship bound for Turkey, that his passage was already booked, and that he was to be deported.

His face changed at that. What! Go back to Turkey? That was out of the question. The moment he set foot on his native soil, he knew that he would be arrested for the crimes he had committed there. His father had only stayed his hand on condition that Safvet left Turkey for ever.

The rascal, whining and begging for mercy, went down upon his knees and begged to be allowed to remain.

They would not listen to him, and so he, together with a number of other aliens, was taken to the ship, and put aboard.

An hour later the ship sailed. Adjali, however, was determined to escape, and when the vessel put in at Marseilles he got ashore by a daring manœuvre, and was lost amongst the labyrinth of slums which border the harbour there.

News of his escape was soon noised abroad, and the French police began a systematic search for him. The Turkish steamer, however, went off without him.

He was not found, and after picking up a living in all sorts of doubtful ways, Adjali made his way into Spain, journeyed

## THE FIGHTING TURK.

(Continued from page 14.)

### CHAPTER 10. The Last of Adjali.

THE villain dropped his well-laden bag with a clatter, and uttered a scream of dismay. The next instant the parson had leapt into the room, had rushed to the table and seized the revolver, and had levelled it at Adjali's head.

"The game is up!" he said. The Fighting Turk, gnashing his teeth with rage, stood crouching, as if to spring, with his fists clenched.

"Drop that revolver—drop it," he said, "or I'll kill you!" "No," said Arthur Garthorne. "If you move a step towards me I shall fire, Adjali! I'll stand no nonsense from you. I mean to keep you until the police arrive to take you!"

Adjali cast about him for a means of escape. He knew that the parson would keep his word. But what about that open window? There was probably no one else outside. A leap, a spring through it, and he would be safe in the front garden of the house, whence he would be able to easily make the road.

No sooner thought of than done. He uttered a defiant laugh, snapped his fingers in the air, and with a turn and a spring reached the window.

He placed his hands upon the sill and vaulted through.

Then it was that Arthur Garthorne fired the revolver. The report would serve as a signal to the constable waiting outside, it would rouse the dwellers in the house, it would alarm the neighbours.

Adjali should not escape.

The Turk dropped into space, lost his balance for a moment as he struck the ground, but the next instant was standing erect, and prepared to make a dash for liberty.

He was too late, and ran into the arms of the policeman.

"All right," said the bobby, "I've got you, my beauty! Let's have a look at you."

THE MARVEL.—No. 459.



thence into Portugal, and finally got on board a vessel at Lisbon, which was bound for New York.

He believed that he had achieved his object at last, and that the great American continent, where there was money to be made, was open to him.

The English police however, had reckoned upon Adjali's getting to America, sooner or later, and so they sent a full and complete description of the rascal across the Atlantic, and enclosed Adjali's photo with it.

The proofs of Safvet Adjali's identity were there, waiting to confront him the moment he arrived. The New York police kept a wary eye on all Turks, especially poor Turks, and he was not likely to pass their eagle scrutiny successfully.

One day Tom Sayers was rung up on the telephone, and upon answering the call, discovered that it was his old friend John Thurloe, the detective, on the other end of the wire.

"Well, Thurloe," said Tom, "what is it, a matter of great importance?"

"I don't know that I should call it that," answered Thurloe. "But it certainly is one of interest. Your old enemy, Safvet Adjali, has been heard of at last."

"Oh!" cried Tom. "How, and where?"

"He arrived at New York aboard a small liner from Lisbon, was recognised, and refused a landing. They rejected him as an alien criminal and undesirable."

"And what then?" asked Tom.

"Oh, the steamer simply had to take him back again, and as he hadn't got the money to defray the expenses of the return voyage, he looked like getting in for a lively time."

"And serve him right," said Tom. "I wonder what will become of him?"

"Goodness knows!" answered Thurloe. "He'll not be allowed to set foot in England again. Portugal will probably refuse him. America is closed to him. France won't have him. I don't know what he'll do, or where he'll go to. It seems to me that the only place that will gladly open its doors to him is the prison."

At that moment one of the maidservants at the Grange opened the door of Tom's study, and, standing there, said:

"I beg your pardon, sir, but here are Mr. Crawford, Mr.

Crawford, junior, Miss Dulcie Crawford, and a foreign-looking gentleman of the name of Adjali, come to see you."

"Show them in—show them in!" cried Tom, in a tone of delight, and then he called into the mouth of the receiver. "Come over and see us all, Thurloe, and bring the Fighting Parson with you, for it'll be great to see so many old friends again."

THE END.

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## BRITAIN AT BAY!

A Powerful and Stirring War Serial.

By JOHN TREGELLIS.

### BRIEF INTRODUCTION FOR NEW READERS.

The Germans had invaded British territory. Landing in the night on the East Coast, they had taken the nation by surprise, and within a fortnight London was reached, and the whole of the metropolis north of the Thames was in their hands. A truce was called that Germany might propound her terms to the British officials. A bulletin of the Kaiser's extraordinary demands was posted up near by where Sam and Steve Villiers, the two cadets of Greyfriars School, who had performed such magnificent services for their country in the invasion, were standing, but was received with jeers and dissentient cries of all Britishers crowding around; and then another bulletin was posted up announcing a great British victory, and that a Naval battle was in progress in the Channel. All knew what this meant. Britain's invincible fleet was on its way to avenge the defeats, and regain command of the ocean highways.

But then there came the news that a second force of Germans were coming across the ocean, intending to land north of the Thames.

Lord Ripley dispatches Sam and Stephen on "Special Service," and the two cadets decide to go to the Thames estuary at once. Sam hits on a splendid idea, and it is due to the two cadets that the whole German Sixth Army Corps flotilla is blown up and wrecked.

The cadets are picked up by a British torpedo boat under the command of Lieutenant Cavendish. Sam suggests to Cavendish that if a torpedo-boat could get through the Swale, a mighty sweep could be made of the German warships.

Receiving orders from Frobisher, they carry out their daring scheme, getting safely through.

Cavendish opens fire upon the German warships, sinking two, and causing wholesale havoc among the others. The Germans sight the torpedo; and with the vessel seriously damaged, Cavendish is compelled to make hasty retreat. They are making their way back through the shallow water, when Lieutenant Cavendish hears from the men below that in another minute the water will reach the boilers.

Cavendish swung the wheel round, and the torpedo boat turned to the right.

"Is she sinkin', then?" cried Stephen apprehensively, for he had heard the engineer's message. "By gun, I can feel her goin' down under me!"

### Help for the Troops.

"Rummy sensation, isn't it?" said Cavendish calmly. And a moment later there was a surge and a heave as the crippled torpedo-boat's bows lifted in the air, and she stopped dead. "We sha'n't go any farther down, however, for I've run her on a mud-bank, an' there she'll stay. What's the bottom like here, Villiers?"

"Soft ooze. There's miles of it, an' she'll be high and dry when the tide's out," said Sam.

"Right! Now I've got twenty minutes' work in front of me. You'd better look at the view."

Cavendish went below, and while the boys remained above on the rent and battered decks, the chill grey light of morning grew over the desolate waste of flats and water, and a thin white haze crept in from the sea. In the interior of the vessel were ceaseless sounds of hammering, and soon Cavendish and Hicks came up from below, grimed and weary.

"We've finally scuttled her; not that she'd have been much good," said the sub-lieutenant. "Now we'll heave the spare Whiteheads over; if the mud's as soft as you say, they ought to sink in it."

The torpedoes were brought up, and each one, after being deprived of its head and detonator, dropped over the side. The lock-action of the three-pounder was detached and flung away, and Cavendish looked round his craft with a sigh. It was the first time the boys had seen him look anything but cheerful, but in a few moments he brightened up again.

"The beggars are welcome to what's left of her," he said. "I haven't left 'em any pickings, nor as much as a cartridge to make use of when they follow her up. My Aunt Jemima, but I'd like to be at Sheerness now the day's dawned an' hear the giddy German Admiral's opinions on the night's work!"

"You must feel horrid sick at losin' your vessel," said Stephen sympathetically, for he had heard of the grief of sea captains when their ships were lost. "You—you aren't going to stay an' go down with her, are you?"

"No jolly fear," said Cavendish blandly. "It ain't often a fellow survives the loss of a torpedo-boat in action, an' I'm quite willin' to be the freak. I'm not goin' down with her, for she isn't goin' down at all, and if I ever reach the squadron with a whole skin I want Frankie to give me another. However, it ain't much good speculating on that, for the chances of gettin' out are pretty thin."

"If they find which way we've gone—which they're pretty sure to—"

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sure to do, of course," said Sam—"they'll be after us before long."

"I should like to bet they're on the way now."

"The water's ebbin' fast; we'll be high and dry soon, and the ooze is too soft to walk on," added Sam. "We'd be bogged to the arm-pits."

"True, Mr. Pilot. An' shipping's in the hands of the Germans, even if we could get ashore that tide. So we'll launch the Berthon boat an' get out while there's water to float it, though where we're going to is more than—"

"Hallo!" said Stephen, who had been peering steadily down the Channel. "Sail-ho! Comin' this way."

All turned to look at a red topsail that came curtseying through the mist, away over the deeper water, and a shadowy hull was seen beneath it.

"Not a German, anyway," said Cavendish. "Fishing-boat. If we can get him to take us off—"

"By gum," exclaimed Sam, as the vessel resolved itself into a smart fishing-smack, with a gun-punt lashed along her deck, and a solitary figure in shining oilskins at the tiller, "it's Ned! It's the Maid of Essex! Ned, ahoy!"

The figure in oilskin started up as Sam's voice reached him, and looked intently at the stranded torpedo-boat.

"It is him, by the Great Hook block!" cried Stephen. "Hooray!"

"Who?" said Cavendish, mystified.

"Ned of Northey, the marshman, our pal. That's the smack we lost when you run us down."

"Holy pokers, is that you, Master Aubrey?" came Ned's voice across the water. "Is your brother there, too? Half a jiff, and I'll launch the punt—"

"Get that dinghy in the water," said Cavendish to his men. "We ran down his, so we'll fix him up with ours. I don't know where his pal is, Villiers, but he's a friend in need if ever there was one. Get in!"

The Berthon boat was rapidly opened out and launched. She would only hold four at a pinch, so the boys, Cavendish, and Hicks pulled off to the smack, which was hove-to, and could get no nearer on account of the shallow water.

"Glory, is it you, gents?" cried Ned, gripping the boy's hand convulsively in his horny paw as they came alongside. "I'd given you up for dead!"

"You ought to jolly well know that we never give ourselves up for dead," said Sam; "but it's great to see your brown phiz again, Ned, an' you couldn't have turned up at a better time either. Our ship yonder is busted, an' we're expectin' the Germans to breakfast."

"Come aboard quick, then, sir, an' fetch the other chaps off," said Ned. "I'll find 'em a way out."

Cavendish shook Ned cheerfully by the hand after saluting in Navy style as he boarded the vessel, and quickly went back again in the dinghy, after a few words of consultation. He was gone so long that there was barely water enough to float the boat back, but he brought back with him a couple of parcels, which he handled very carefully. The only luggage Stephen had saved from the wreck was his beloved carbine.

"No time to bring any personal effects," said Cavendish. "I've got one or two things here which might be of service to us. We had to leave poor Gray the stoker behind, for we've no chaplain, an' there's no sayin' when or how we shall get anywhere. I've hoisted the Jack upside down on a staff, an' the enemy'll give him a Christian burial, which is more than we can do. We've had the service read over many of their men."

He uncovered as he locked back at the wreck of No. 667.

"He died at his post. May we do the same when our time comes," said the sub-lieutenant soberly. "Well, good-bye, little ship. I've only had you five days, but you've whipped a hundred times your weight in the Kaiser's fleet, so peace be to your bones. Now, sir, where are we bound?" he added, turning to Ned. "You're skipper here; I'm only a passenger."

"Out with the tide first of all," said Ned, putting his helm up and easing the sheets, while the smack began to rustle through the waters as the morning breeze heeled her down. "Where in Shoebury ha' you gents been, an' what's that hooker on the mud?"

Stephen told them briefly how they had fared since the night before, and Ned's eyes opened wide as saucers.

"Great guns, sir! What a cruise!" he exclaimed. "Why, it's just what you were speakin' of as he sailed down outside Sheppey. An' you got the torpedo-boat to do it?"

"The skipper here did it. I was only pilot," said Sam. "But where have you been, Ned?"

"I cruised about till daybreak yesterday, sir, waitin' for you off Herne Bay, an' a rare state I were in. I thought you'd gone back to Lunnon or been drowned, for I never saw the dinghy."

The lads hardly knew how tired they were till the tension was removed, and now that the danger was past for the time being they could hold out no longer, but fell asleep where they sat. Ned, the only one who had had a night's rest, roused Cavendish and Stephen enough to get them into the cabin bunks, and he took the helm himself. Sam refused to budge, and went comfortably to sleep lying along the cabin-top, where he snored in blissful oblivion of Germans, warships, raids, admirals, and all other troubles of the kind.

When they awoke the flagship was in sight. The three lads at once jumped into the dinghy, and Ned rowed them to the great cruiser.

Sam and Cavendish were taken aft to the admiral's cabin by a subaltern of Marines. Sir Francis, looking as keen and hawk-faced as ever, received them without a moment's delay. The two youngsters saluted.

"Where is your ship, Mr. Cavendish?" said the admiral sharply.

"I left her aground in the Swale, sir, sunk by German shell-fire," said Cavendish, with the same cheerful air he always wore; "but I did what you sent me to do."

"Give me your report in full."

And Cavendish gave it him. The midnight passage through the Swale, the torpedoing of the two German ships, and the loss of No. 667 he put into a few words.

The admiral listened without a word. His keen features showed his amazement from time to time, but he kept his eyes all the time on the sub-lieutenant's face.

"Gentlemen," he said, bring down his fist upon the table, "I have been fifty years in the Navy, and I would give the whole of it for such a time as you have just spent. It's the youngsters who see the fun," he added, with a sigh.

"Mr. Cavendish, you will at once get your step as full lieutenant. Mr. Villiers, when I gave you leave to pilot No. 667 through the Swale, I certainly never expected such a haul as this. You have both done most admirably."

"We had great luck, sir," said Cavendish. "Things fell out very handily for us. I'm sorry I couldn't bring my ship back."

The admiral laughed.

"Don't let the loss of No. 667 worry you, Mr. Cavendish," he said. "You may rest assured that your services will be rewarded as they should be, and it seems to me it is as well for the German Fleet that you have come back early. I can't afford to waste you. There is a first-class destroyer coaling at Dover, and I wish you to take command of her shortly."

Cavendish's eyes glistened with delight as he saluted.

"And you," said Sir Francis, turning to Sam—"but for your pluck and knowledge of the channels the thing could not have been done at all. I don't wonder at the reputation you have ashore. As you belong to the Army, there is nothing I can offer you in this Service, but I will see your exploits are recognised as they ought to be at headquarters; nor will your young brother and that smart young smacksman be forgotten."

"I'm not looking for rewards, sir," said Sam, whose face had flushed with pleasure, for he felt Admiral Frobisher's praise was better worth having than that of most men.

"No, my lad; it's early to talk of rewards while the enemy still holds the upper hand, and our work is still before us."

"Is there any work that I can bear a hand at, sir, however small?" said Sam eagerly. "I know I'm not in your Service, but if you'd give me something to do—"

"I'll see if there's any need of you. You have certainly proved yourself fit for anything," said Sir Francis; "but I have urgent affairs to see to now, and you must leave me."

The comrades saluted, and left.

Late that night Cavendish informed Sam that the British troops were in a bad way at Shorlands, and that the admiral had received a message asking for help.

"What we want is guns," added Cavendish; "an' I don't see how we can get 'em there."

He then told Sam the position of the troops.

Sam thought for a moment. He knew the coast like a book.

"You get the guns—I'll get 'em there," he said. "Once we could get over the beach and through the gully to the shore we should be under cover of Colonel Blake's guns—that is, if you have given me their position right."

"Course I have," replied Cavendish. "However, let's see if we can get the guns. I'm afraid Frankie won't hear of it."

Sam and Cavendish made their way to the admiral, who had just received another wireless message indicating the dire straits of the force under Col. Blake's command.

"Couldn't we let 'em have a couple of our four-point-

(Continued on page iv. of cover.)



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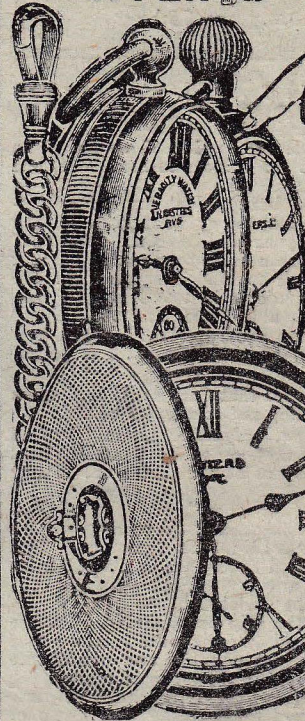
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# BRITAIN AT BAY!

(Continued from page 28.)

sevens at Shorlands, sir?" said Cavendish, who never beat about the bush.

The admiral looked at him irritably. "I never took you for a fool before, Mr. Cavendish," he retorted. "Do you propose to carry them to Shorlands, one under each arm?"

"No, sir; they're rather too heavy. But my old engine-room artificer, Graeme, who was in the gunboat *Throstle* with me on the West Coast, is in your engine-room. He and I once made a gun-carriage to take a quick-firer ashore an' talk to the King of Akka, who was makin' things hot for the British Resident there. We made it in two hours by ourselves, and I'd back him, with a full staff and the help of the engine-room, to turn out two carriages that'd hold a pair of 4.7 guns in less than eight. Quickest man at a forge an' rivets in the Service, sir."

Cavendish then told the admiral that Sam could lead them by a good and safe route, knowing the country as he did.

"Two 4.7's!" exclaimed Sam, forgetting himself. "And ashore by six o'clock. Why, if they got to Shorlands, Colonel Blake could knock blue blazes out of the Germans! I beg your pardon, sir!"

"Send that artificer to me at once," said the admiral sharply, "and also Engineer-Commander Jerrold!"

In less than a minute they were both there, and Sam retired, while a quick consultation took place in the admiral's cabin. Presently Cavendish came out in high glee.

"They're goin' to try it!" he exclaimed. The activity that reigned in the ship was amazing. Graeme and the engineer-commander rapidly designed a carriage that could be turned out as speedily as possible, and would take the 4.7 gun. Forthwith the engine-room forges roared, the hammers clanged, the steam-lathes buzzed and shrieked, while on deck a couple of crews were busily dismantling two of the 4.7's, of which the cruiser had eight. And outside the milky fog covered everything like a blanket.

All night the work went on, with such speed and handiness as only the Navy can show. Towards the end of it the admiral summoned Sam and Cavendish.

"The carriages and guns will be ready at the appointed time," he said. "I am taking a great responsibility in de-

priving my ship of them at such a time as this. But I have to support Colonel Blake, and if they can be got to him, he shall have them. You have reported to me that once the beach is left behind, and the gully from the shore passed through, you will be under cover of Colonel Blake's machine-guns, and will probably be able to reach Shorlands?"

"Yes, sir, with luck," said Sam. "Very good. I can spare you twenty bluejackets—ten to each gun, two of them being gunners. It is little enough for such heavy work, but you must do your best. Lieutenant Cavendish will go with you. They are already twisting the gear on deck, I hear."

It was already dawn, and the fog was thinning before the land wind. The two big "cutters"—the largest rowboats the flagship carried—had been lowered, and stagings were fitted into them, on to which the long 4.7 guns on their improvised carriages were lowered, the ammunition being stored with the carriages. Steel-girded boards were taken to get the guns ashore.

The sea was calm, luckily, for in heavy weather the operation would have been impossible. Twenty minutes later the two boats glided away into the mist, Cavendish and Stephen in charge of one, and Sam commanding the other. Besides the boats' crews, there were ten sturdy bluejackets in each, all beside themselves with delight at having been picked for the job.

Sam took the lead, as he alone knew the exact course for the gully, since the shore was not visible yet. They pulled swiftly in, praying that the fog would hold. But while they were still fifty yards from the beach, the freshening wind shredded the mist, and drove it away like a veil, showing the calm sea glittering in the morning sun, the flagship lying on in the channel, and the shore of Sheppey just ahead.

"Confound it!" said Sam. "Pull now, men! Give way there—every moment counts!"

A German sentry on the cliffs squibbed off his rifle, and another a long way down the sands did the same. The blue-jackets oars made the water fly, the boat grounded in the shallows, and, like lightning, the crews were overside and rigging the girded gangways. In a few minutes the big guns were run down them without mishap, and the crews jumped to their places at the ropes to haul them up the beach.

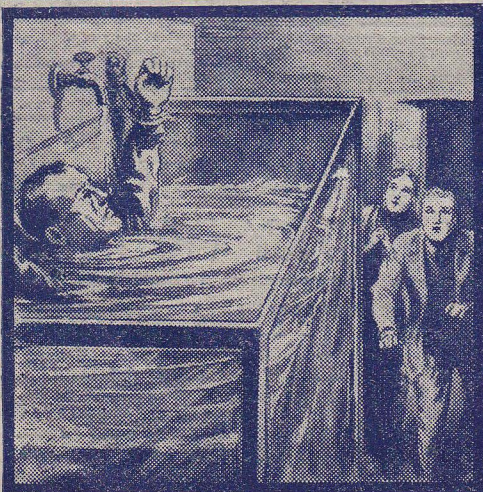
As they did so a drumming of many hoofs was heard, and round the point swept a full troop of Prussian hussars, sabres in hand, their horses lathered in foam and rowelled red along their flanks.

Straight down upon the guns they came, as hard as they could gallop.

(Another long instalment of this Powerful War Serial next Tuesday in the MARVEL.)

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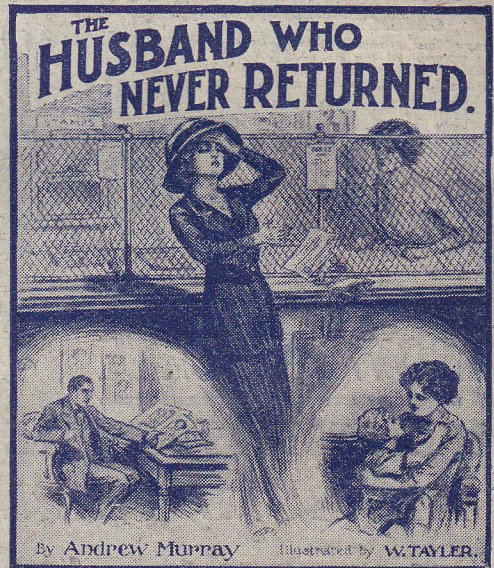


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