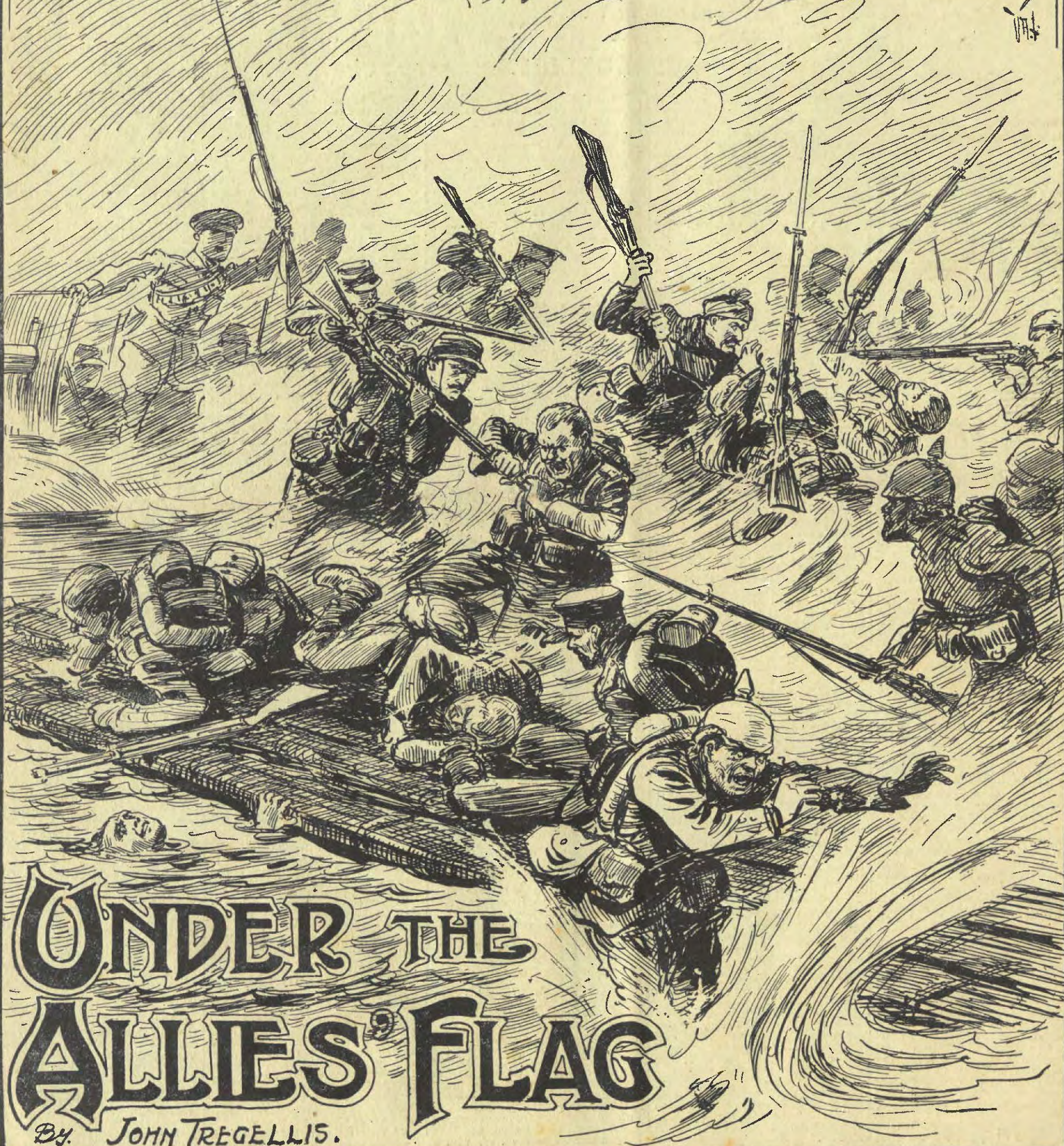


Special Naval Picture Supplement in This Issue!

THE BOYS' FRIEND



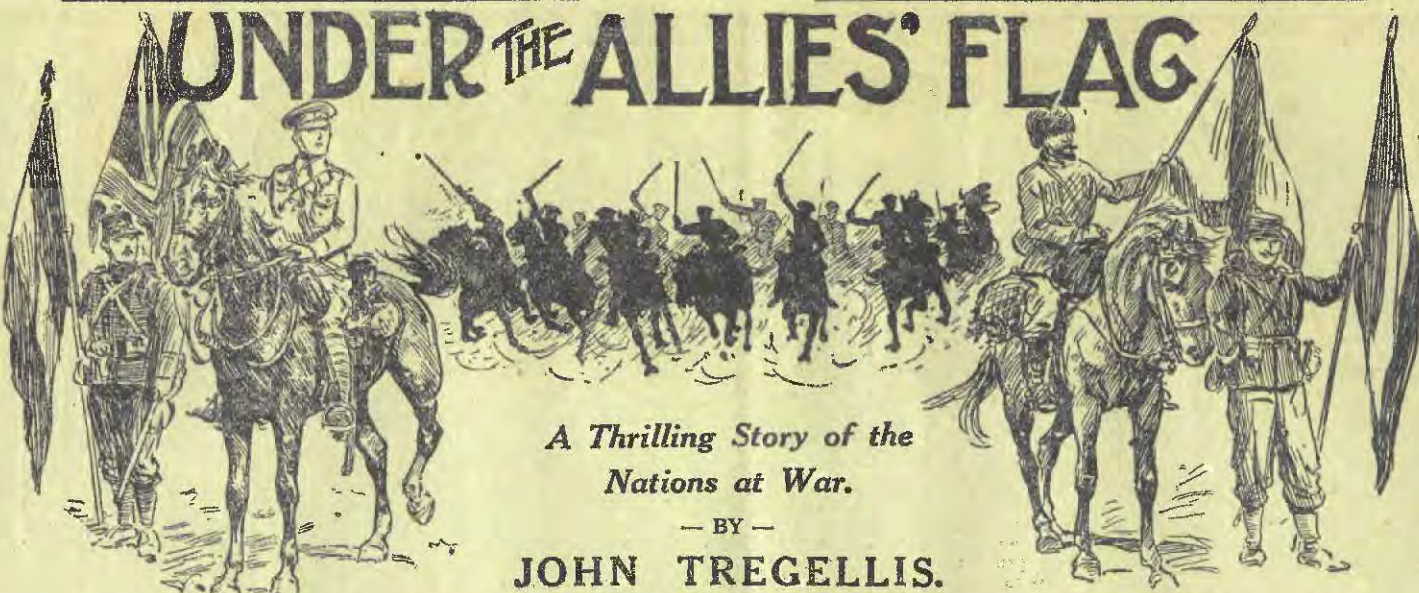
UNDER THE ALLIES' FLAG

By JOHN TREGELLIS.

JOHN TREGELLIS'S BEST WAR STORY.

YOU CAN COMMENCE READING TO-DAY!

UNDER THE ALLIES' FLAG



A Thrilling Story of the
Nations at War.

— BY —

JOHN TREGELLIS.

In Order to Commence Reading
this Story, New Readers Need
Only Know that:

ROY KILDARE, a young Irishman,
and
HARVEY DUNSTER, a clever air-
man, are engaged with the British force
on the Continent.

The two chums succeed in capturing a
motor launch, which is armed with a
machine-gun. They go across the floods
at Dixmude, and at length come in con-
tact with a great number of Germans on
rafts. A fierce fight takes place, and
when the machine-gun on the launch
fails to work, the chums are in danger of
being killed.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

The Battle of the Rafts.

The peril was more deadly now
for the launch than it had been for
the rafts. The Germans were mad
to wreak vengeance on the craft
that had spoiled their attack, and,
failing to swing their guns round,
they poured a vicious rifle-fire at the
half-crippled launch. But for the
steel shields fore and aft, on which
the bullets drummed wickedly, the
comrades would have been riddled.

"Thunder! It's like bein' in a
biscuit-tin while somebody's chuck-
ing bricks at you!" gasped Harvey,
as a bullet flicked the peak off his
cap. "Can't you— Good! That's
better!"

The machine-gun spoke again, Roy
toiling frantically at it to get it
going; and he managed to sweep the
raft once more, throwing the rifle-
men into confusion and downing
many of them. But for the second
time the gun jammed and was
silent.

"That's finished it! I can't do
any more with the thing!" cried
Roy. "Good man! Keep her steam-
ing like that! Run her in a line
behind 'em; they can't get their guns
to bear from this side."

"Gettin' too dark for 'em to do
much with rifles—and they're rotten
shoots, anyway," returned Dunster.

He was driving the launch on a
wide, wobbling course, getting away
from the rafts towards the eastern
shore as far as he could. The
bullets were flying wide now, and the
rafts' crews were busy enough at-
tending to the French fire from the
other shore.

"We've knocked the dust out of
'em already. What a pity we're
done! It wouldn't take much more
to mop 'em up."

"Can't do it with a couple of rifles,
old son. But we'll try if you like."

"What's wrong with your con-
founded engine?"

"One cylinder gone to glory;
bullet or something ricked through
the slit in the armour an' touched
the spot," replied Dunster. "What
in thunder is that pow-wow ahead
there? Sounds like a giddy battle of
bull-frogs."

Not far in front, right on the
launch's course, two large boats could
be seen hurtling together—one
manned with Belgian soldiers, and
the other with Prussians. There was
a tremendous struggle going on; the
Belgians were leaping into the Ger-
man boats, whose crew were fighting
furiously.

The natural result happened—both
boats turned over, and the whole lot

were flung into the water. It seemed
to cool the Germans off a good deal,
but it did not stop the Belgians.
Most of them were fermen recruited
from the marshy districts of the
Yser, and as much at home in the
water as on it.

There was scarcely a depth of four
feet, and the two parties were hard
at it in a cloud of spray, up to their
armpits in the flood, and the shriek-
ing and splashing and swearing were
prodigious.

Before the launch had reached the
spot the Belgians had the best of it;
there was no quarter given or asked,
and, though they lost five or six men,
there were a dozen of them left at
the end of it, and not a Prussian
soldier of the boat's crew remained
alive.

"Geel! They've crawled all over
'em!" said Dunster, steering for the
scene of the combat. "Them Bel-
gians do go the whole hog when
there's a chance to get a bit of their
own back! If we can't fight, we may
as well do a bit of rescue work."

"Heh! Heh! Hoi! Hoi! Anglais!"
yelled the little party of victors,
staggering about shoulder-deep and
waving their bayonets over their
heads. "Par ici! Hi! Zis vay, if
you please!"

"All right, cookies, we're com-
ing!" said Roy, as the launch was
run up into the zone of reddened
water, where many grim souvenirs
of the fight were floating face-down-
wards. "You're a plucky lot of
fighters, and we'll have you out of
that! Bear a hand, Harvey!"

A big sergeant-major, the leader
of the party, grasped the launch's
rail and heaved his huge, dripping
body aboard her, as Dunster shut off
his engines and came alongside; and
in no time the odd dozen of men
were out of the water and in the
launch—though some of them had to
be helped aboard—all but two, who
had not been reached yet. The
sergeant-major, with a whoop of joy
and thankfulness, folded the flustered
Roy in a soppy-wet embrace and
kissed the top of his khaki cap.

"Vive l'Angleterre! Vive la
Belgique! Hourrah for ze
Anglishes! A bas les Bosches!" he
exclaimed; and, releasing Roy, he
pointed to the distant German rafts,
with glaring eyes. "Aux radeaux!
Aux radeaux!"

"To the rafts?" said Roy.

"What," he added in French, "are
you fellows game to storm them?"

"Name of a pipe, yes!" chorused
all the Belgians eagerly and fiercely.

"Lead us against them, mon lieuten-
nant! With this so splendid vessel
we shall beat them—is it not?"

"See the gun—be blue! What a
lovely gun!" cried the sergeant-
major, in ecstasy, clapping Roy on
the shoulder and pointing to the
Maxim in the bows.

"The thing won't work—it's
jammed!" said Roy. "But, by
Jove, if you men have got any fight
left in you—"

"Come on, Roy, a boarding-party
—old style!" cried Harvey. "It's
ten to one; but they've had the dust
knocked out of 'em yonder, and we'll
see if we can't do the rest. Get
aboard, you in the water there!"

"Mais attendez!" gasped a young
Belgian soldier, who was floundering
about in the water close to the
launch. "Wait for me! I have
lost Rosalie! I cannot go without
Rosalie!"

He ducked under water and dis-
appeared, to the amazement of Har-
vey, his booted legs waving above
the surface.

"Rosalie? Is the chap diving after
his best girl, or has he gone mad?"
exclaimed Roy.

"But Rosalie—it is the baion-
nette, monsieur!" replied the ser-
geant-major. "Hurry up, there,
imbecile!" he exclaimed, as the
soldier splashed to the top again,
holding a rifle with fixed bayonet in
one fist. "Is it that you think the
Bosches will wait for you?"

"Voilà!" spluttered the young
soldier triumphantly, as he was
hauled, like a sodden sack, over the
gunwale, clutching his beloved rifle.

"I would not miss the fight for a
queen's ransom! I had to find
Rosalie. Aha! Montrez moi les
Bosches! Show me the dirty Prus-
sians! Let us be at them!"

"Silence aboard the flagship!"
ordered Roy. "Off with her, Har-
vey! Run us alongside!"

"Oh, Rosalie's the bayonet, is
she?" said Harvey, grinning, as he
set the engines going and steered out
for the centre of the floods. "She's
a sharper tongue than I care about.
Duck down, all you Belgian beauties;
keep under cover till we're close
alongside, and then let's see Rosie on
the rampage! I say, Roy, it's pretty
long odds. You've charge of the
boarding-party; make 'em put in a
volley or two as we run in, just to
clear the way, if the cartridges aren't
too wet."

It was nearly dark now, and the
rafts could be seen shoving along to-
wards the western shore, half doubt-
ful whether to go on or not. They
were still sweeping the defenders'
position ashore with their machine-
guns, and getting a thorough dusting
in reply.

They had lost sight of the launch,
or believed they had sunk her. She
came bustling along at half-speed,
with all the power Harvey could get
out of the engine; and, suddenly
sighting her, the nearest raft's crew
shouted and opened fire.

Keeping low behind the shield, the
Belgians were ready. Their brass
cartridges had not suffered from the
wet, and a crashing rattle of bullets
swept the raft, while the return fire
did small damage to the brisk little
armoured craft. Already the Prus-
sians had suffered heavily, but there
were fully thirty of them left.

"Encore! Give 'em another!
Pump it in, boys!" cried Roy; and
the repeating-rifles mowed the enemy
down again.

With guttural cries of rage they
tried to swing the clumsy raft and
bring the mitrailleuses to bear.

The launch was too quick for
them. Harvey reversed his engines
and ran her deftly along the raft's
rearmost side, the Belgians pouring
in a last volley to drive the Prussians
back.

"Now's your time!" shouted Roy,
springing out on to the planks.

"Into 'em! Vive les Allies!"

The Belgians leaped on to the raft,
yelling like demons, and, with Roy
at their head, went pell-mell for the
Prussian riflemen. In five seconds
there was such a hand-to-hand fight
raging on the raft as even the floods
of Dixmude had never seen before.

Harvey stopped only to catch a
turn of the launch's mooring-rope
round a post at the edge, and then
flung himself into the fray, with a

revolver in each hand spitting fire.
The big sergeant-major was swinging
his rifle by the barrel, and every
Prussian head that came in its way
needed nothing more.

Three of the Belgians went down,
wounded, but even as they fell they
dragged each one of the enemy on
to the planks, and none of these got
up again. Roy emptied his repeat-
ing-pistol, and used the butt of it for
a club. He ducked under the swing-
ing blow of a German bayonet, and
grabbed his assailant round the
middle, both of them rolling over to-
gether.

So fierce was the onslaught of the
boarding-party that the Prussians
gave way and broke after the first
resistance. The sudden attack out of
the darkness daunted them, for they
had already lost half their numbers.

Splash! Splash! Plunge! The
grey-clad riflemen, with no more
stomach for fighting, flung them-
selves off the raft in all directions,
taking to the water rather than face
the Belgian bayonets.

"Allez! A l'eau, laches!" yelled
the boarding-party, striking down
those who were not quick enough.
"Would that the whole German
Army was here to drown itself! En
avant, Rosalie!"

"Roy! Roy, where are you?"
cried Harvey eagerly.

"Here!" panted Roy, staggering
to his feet; and the man who had
been wrestling with him among the
stamping feet lay still. "Make a
clean sweep of 'em, Harvey! Look
out! They're shooting from the
other raft!"

"Turn the mitrailleuses on them!"
cried Harvey.

And Roy made a dash for the two
small abandoned machine-guns, be-
hind their shields.

The sole remaining raft, a hun-
dred yards away, had heard the tur-
moil, and knew their comrades were
being stormed. A hail of rifle-
bullets was hastily poured into the
Belgians, killing two men, and
wounding the sergeant-major
through the arm. But Roy had his
thumb on the spring of the machine-
gun to the left in no time, and the
wicked stammer of the cartridge-
belts running through the breach
broke out. The raft was swept with
a blizzard of lead.

"Give the Bosches their medi-
cine!" cried a young gunner-cor-
poral, setting the other mitrailleuse
going.

The effect was terrific, and the
remaining raft's crew, unable to get
their own guns to bear, found them-
selves taken in the rear by their late
consort, and gave it up in despair.

"Cessez! Nous-nous rentons!"
they screamed, in guttural French;
and a white flag flittered on the
blade of a bayonet raised aloft.

"We yield! We yield!"

The Theft of the White Streak.

Roy's gun stopped instantly; but
the young Belgian, his teeth
clenched, continued to fire furiously.

"Cease fire, there!" cried Roy,
darting towards him. "Don't you
see the flag? By gum, do you hear
me?" he shouted fiercely, striking the
man's arm away from the gun-spring
and sending him staggering.

"Name of a name, why?" cried
the corporal excitedly. "The Bel-
gians do not take prisoners!"

"I dare say not, but the British
do, and I command here!" said Roy.

"You behave yourself, my son, or
"

"Mille tonneaux! It is correct!"
exclaimed the sergeant-major, whose
arm hung useless at his side. "The
lieutenant commands! Obey orders,
Hyppolite, or do you want me to
coax you with the butt of my rifle?"
He thrust the corporal back, and
turned to Roy. "Though, parbleu, it
is a pity you British are so particu-
lar," he added. "I respect the white
flag in a truce, yes. But in the middle
of a fight—why, a thousand demons
fly away with it! We combat to a
finish here in the fens, mon lieutenant.
Those rats there would have shown
us no mercy!"

"Can't help it. Npbody fires on
the white flag under my command,"
returned Roy. "May be silly, ser-
geant, but it is so."

"Perhaps you are right—I thought
so once," said the Belgian grimly,
"but if you British had seen your
homes burned and your women-
folk and children lying in their blood
—and from end to end of your land—
you might come some day to refusing
quarter yourself once you got the
butchers face to face with you. Every
Bosche killed is so much gain to
the world!"

"Oh, I quite sympathise with your
point of view, sergeant," said Roy
quietly. "I'm not blaming you—in
fact, I wouldn't like to answer for
what the mildest of our British chaps
might do at home, if ever we get a
few thousand Prussians in England
behaving like they have here. Don't
fancy there'd be many get out alive,
white flags or not. Only I hold a
King's commission, and I can't bring
myself to it yet."

"In the meantime, when you two
guys have done discussin' military
laws an' customs," drawled Harvey,
"you might look after these castaways
over here—they're clamouring for
your attention."

"Achtung, da!" shouted Roy to the
crew of the other raft, in perfect
German. "Come in and give your-
selves up!"

"You are British?" wailed the
leader of the Prussians. He was only
a non-com, for the officers were all
down. "Gut! We yield ourselves
to you! You do not give us up to
the Belgians, or—"

"You'll surrender without any con-
ditions at all, and to me!" called out
Roy sharply. "Throw your weapons
overboard! Quick about it, unless
you want us to start on you again!"

There were forty men on the raft;
all that remained of two hundred.
They made no further demur, but
their rifles and revolvers splashed
overboard hurriedly. They could
hardly throw them away too fast.

"Now, pole that raft up to this
one. Bring her up handily, and
don't lose any time. That's it."

Six or seven of the Prussians seized
their poles and obeyed, punting the
cumbrous affair along.

"Make her fast with that length of
coil there, Roy," said Harvey. "I'll
hitch the launch on, an' I guess she'll
tow the tow."

The German prisoners looked very
apprehensively at their Belgian con-
querors, who made no sign, however,
and the two rafts were hitched to-
gether with coil rope, of which there
was plenty. Harvey took some more
of it for a towline, and, starting up
the engine of the launch, managed
very slowly to tug the rafts round, and
headed for the western shore, where
the tumult of the fight had died
down.

"They've settled up with the lot
that got over there, Roy," called
out Harvey. "The whole attack has
failed."

"Yes, I think the party's over—
all's ended well. Chuck me out those
first-aid cases that are in the launch's
locker on the port side. I saw 'em
there when we overhauled her."

Harvey, who was towing at the
end of a short rope, got several rolls
of lint and dressing, packed in water-
tight silk parcels, out of the lockers
and tossed them over to Roy on the
raft. Roy at once set about dressing
the wounds of the fallen men of his
own company as well as he could.

When he had made a job of them,
to the amazement of the Belgians and
of the Prussians no less, he jumped
over on to the other raft, and did
what he was able for the stricken
Germans, attending to the worst cases
first and working rapidly. The raft
was like a shambles.

The Prussians received him in dead
silence, but they soon did all they
could to aid, and more surprising still,
in a little while all the Belgians who
were unhurt came over, too, and
assisted Roy in succouring the hated
foe. Meanwhile, the two rafts tra-
velled slowly and heavily towards the

"THE RIVALS OF ROOKWOOD!" BY OWEN CONQUEST—

shore, hardly making two miles an hour, the launch fuming and fussing as she hauled the dead-weight along.

"Are you all right, there?" called out Roy, looking up from his grisly work.

"Guess I'm as right as a feller can be who's up to his knees in water," said Harvey calmly. "But it ain't reached the engines yet. I think she'll just do it. If not, you'll have to pole."

"What! Is anything wrong with the launch?"

"She's leakin' like a basket. Some o' those shots holed her along the water-line. Seems to me when you an' I ship on any craft we never leave her fit for much after, old son!"

"Can't be helped. I reckon this afternoon's job is well worth the price of a thirty-foot petrol launch, and she didn't cost the Government anything, either. Ahoy, the shore there!" he shouted, as they neared the bank. "Open the dock gates, and let in the Dreadnought! Have you made a clean sweep of the Bosches?"

They were already within twenty yards of the shore. Harvey had cast off the towrope, and slipped aside with the launch, letting the rafts drive slowly in by their own momentum, and he grounded his half-sunken vessel a little way to the right. Two companies of cheering, shouting Belgians and French Chasseurs were there to welcome them, scores of the soldiers wading out to their middles to help the rafts ashore. They gave the comrades and the boat's crew a mighty reception.

"But it vos superbe!" cried a French major, wringing Roy's hand. "Mais out—ve have finished the others, only if you had not mop up ziz lot, zey might have got ashore and turned ze scale. Ve vos in vot you call ver tight place! Ah, you British, you are great on ze rolling deep, how you say? Hola! Une garde pour les prisonniers ici!"

"Glad to have been any use, mon commandant," said Roy. "But, I say, you'll have these prisoners taken some sort of care of, won't you, and their wounded looked after? I took them, and I'm responsible—"

"Oh, sapristi, yes," said the major, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Zey vill be sent to comfortable quarters on ze French coast viz ze oder captives, and much too good for them, too! But what would you! We cannot be barbarians like ze Bosches. We are a nation civilised, unfortunately. Ze wounded vill get same care as our own men. Zis your comrade, ze capitaine de vaisseau?" he exclaimed, gripping Dunster's fist as that worthy, dripping wet to the waist, joined them. "You have given us vital aid in a glorious combat, monsieur; your fighting vos magnifique!"

"Oh, that's all right, major," said Harvey. "Guess you had an uncommon lively little scrap ashore here, too. By the way, we might as well make you a present of our baby battleship. Eh, Roy? She's no more good to us, but if you patch her up a bit she ought to come in useful on all this water you've got around here."

"Always generous, ze British! I accept viz great pleasure. Ah! You are great people! We have a compatriot of yours viz us to-day—tiens! Here he is!"

"Hallo! By Jove, I might have known it was you fellows stirring up all this devilment!" said a cheery British voice, and a tall lieutenant in khaki pressed through and greeted the comrades warmly. It was Moreton, a staff-officer with whom they had had dealings at Soissons over two months ago. "How did you blow in?"

"Just up from the coast. We're at a loose end for the moment," said Roy. "What brought you here?"

"I've been up to the French base with despatches, and on the way back found Commandant Dutoit here having a hot time of it, and he asked me to stop. Must get back to our lines as soon as I can, though. By Jove, you two are the very men we want! I shall take you both back with me!"

"The Streak's laid up, sir," said Harvey, and he explained briefly.

"Never mind, we've a plane you can use, and we're very short of airmen. We can't man her. Lost several pilots lately. You must fill the gap. I'll take you in my car."

"All right, sir. Where to?"

"We're only a short run from the British lines at Bixschote; we hold the whole position from there right round Ypres. We'll wire to Dunkirk telling them to hurry up with your machine, and in the meantime you must use ours."

The news was welcome enough, and

since there was nothing left to do at Dixmude, they bade farewell to the Belgians and the French major, who gave them a great send-off as they departed in Moreton's fast car, which had been left in the rear of the lines. His chauffeur-orderly drove like the wind, and in a short time they arrived behind the position of the British First Army Corps under Sir John Haig, beyond Bixschote.

It was good to find themselves back among British soldiers again, and the two comrades were put up at the staff headquarters of one of the divisions, where they were made heartily welcome, and joining the staff at mess, amused and regaled the officers with an account of their experiences at sea.

In return they got the news of the field armies since they had left. It was a record of steady, fierce, merciless fighting in muddy trenches and ruined villages, with very little progress for one side or the other.

"It will be a long job here, won't it, sir?" said Roy, for the account of it rather depressed him.

"Not so long as you think, my young airman," replied the president of the mess. "We have pushed ahead well lately, and soon there'll be a big move. The Russians have done well in the East, too. Yes, there'll be news soon that will astonish the folks at home. We seem to have been

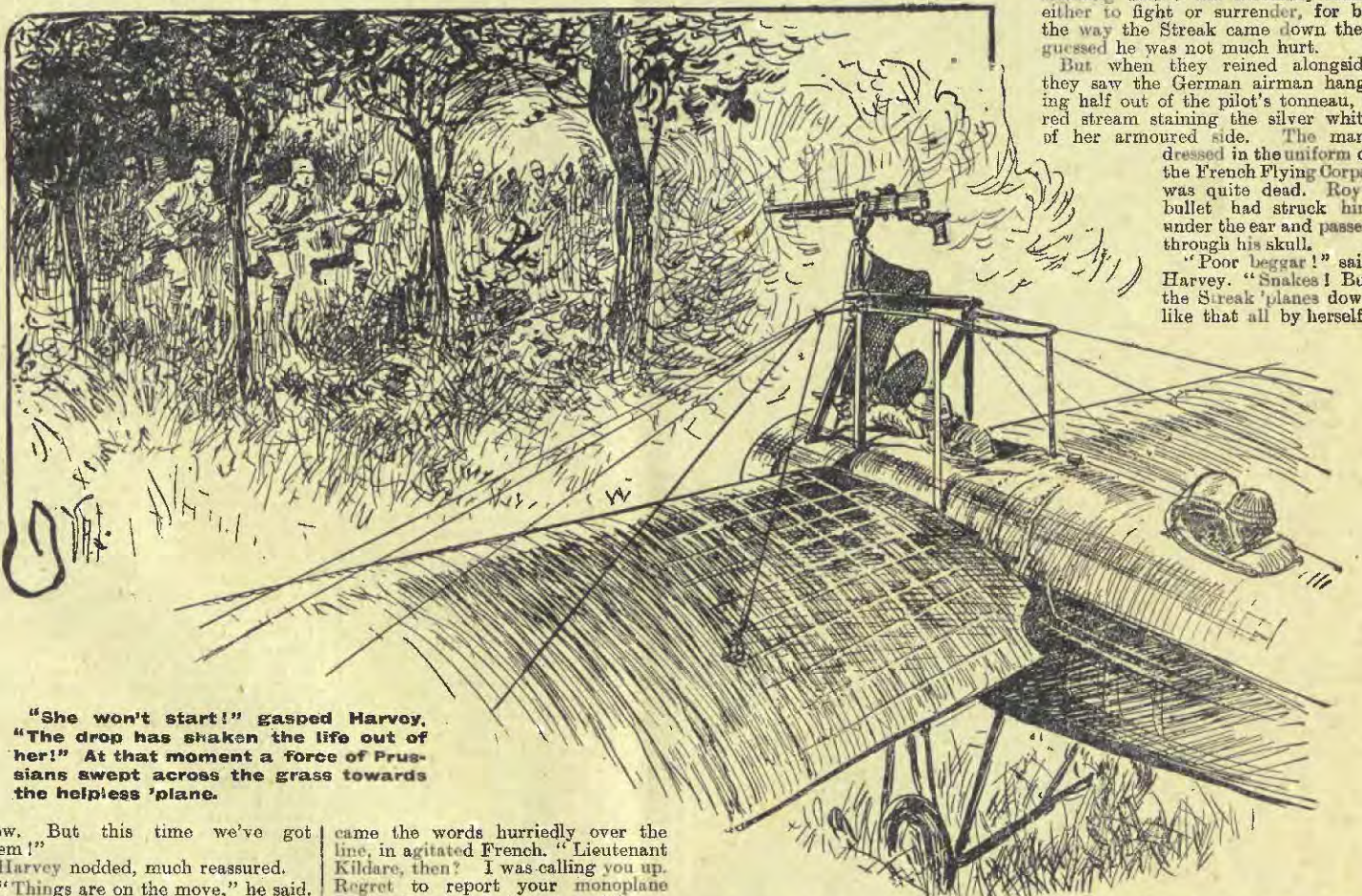
needless to describe all their doings. They made eight or nine journeys that day and the next, armed with nothing but carbines.

They brought in the reports needed, being given double work because the reserve airmen and 'planes, expected hourly, had not arrived. They were fired at constantly without receiving any worse hurt than a few shrapnel holes through the side-planes, but at the end of the second day the machine's left wing buckled and wrecked itself. They could only just get her home, and by the time they did so she was pretty thoroughly crippled.

"She's about done for," said the officer in charge of the corps next morning; "but it wasn't your fault—you've done uncommonly well. There'll be some new machines along by train to-day."

Harvey saluted, and walked off down to the cavalry lines. He did not feel enthusiastic about the new machines. Roy made for the field telephone near the staff quarters. He had been using it for the last two days, when there was a chance, and had got into communication with Dunkirk. But this time, as soon as the line was clear and he could call up the aerodrome headquarters there, he received some news that made him gasp.

"Is that Lieutenant Dunster?"



"She won't start!" gasped Harvey. "The drop has shaken the life out of her!" At that moment a force of Prussians swept across the grass towards the helpless plane.

slow. But this time we've got them!"

Harvey nodded, much reassured.

"Things are on the move," he said. "Remember what the admiral said, Roy. Little 'uns like us are not apt to see it till we're told, sir; we're flitting about too much. It's the men in the chief command who know."

"And the man in chief command's opinion just now is that you fellows ought to turn in," said the general, laughing. "for you're dead beat, and you've had a day that would knock out any of us old hands. We'll make you as comfortable as we can. It isn't saying much."

The comrades were glad enough to get to rest, for they could hardly keep awake.

They turned out in the morning to the familiar chorus of cannon and the distant whistle of bullets. The long line of trenches in front were getting their daily baptism of lead and nickel, and were replying still more hotly.

Cheery British battalions were marching from the base on their way to the communication trenches, most of them singing heartily as they went, and several officers recognised the two airmen, and gave them a greeting.

Their business, however, lay in the Flying Corps' lines, where they were given charge of a somewhat large, heavy Army biplane. It was handed over to them as if the corps were doing them a favour.

They were given instructions to scout out over the German positions at Lille and beyond, and soon the big biplane was roaring along on its way, skilfully piloted by Harvey. It is

came the words hurriedly over the line, in agitated French. "Lieutenant Kildare, then? I was calling you up. Regret to report your monoplane White Streak has disappeared!"

"Great Caesar!" muttered Roy, in blank dismay. "What on earth—"

"A Prussian airman secret agent, dressed in the uniform of our Corps Des Aviateurs, obtained access to the aerodrome unsuspected. Your plane was ready—he was making adjustments upon it—and he started the Streak, and flew off with her before we could prevent!"

"Heavens and earth!" Roy fairly shouted at the phone. "When was this?"

"Not an hour ago. I regret extremely. He left in north-easterly direction. I fear—"

Roy did not wait to hear what the Frenchman feared. He dropped the receiver and ran frantically towards the cavalry lines, where he found Dunster talking to a lancer subaltern and sweeping the sky with his glasses.

The German Airman.

"Harvey! Harvey!" yelled Roy, as soon as he was within earshot. "The Streak's stolen! The Germans have got her!"

"What!" hooted Dunster, gripping him by the arm as he arrived, breathless.

Roy gasped out his tale, as heard over the phone.

"Those asses of aviateurs have let themselves be spoofed!" he cried, but Harvey, who was white with anger and consternation, interrupted him and pointed to the north-western sky.

"I thought I was dreaming till you came up with this story," he exclaimed savagely. "Look there! I was right—it's the Streak herself!"

A distant monoplane, coming up rapidly from the direction of the coast, glittering like silver in the morning sun, could be seen. It was the White Streak, beyond all doubt—Roy turned his glasses upon her. She was flying hardly a thousand feet up, so as to leave the British lines on her right, and was wavering slightly as she flew.

"It's the Streak! What's to be done? There's no aircraft here could catch her or get near her!" groaned Roy.

"Here, lend me two of your horses!" cried Harvey to the subaltern. "We might gallop out and get under her by the time she crosses the front—anything's better than nothing. Come on, Roy!"

"Take the two best chargers, by all means!" exclaimed the subaltern, unpicketing a couple of them from the lines instantly. "I'll get word to the guns."

Roy and his chum were into the saddles and galloping away in the twinkling of an eye. The Streak was still well to their left, a mile away, and they rode so as to cut her off. It was a desperate race, straight across country, leaping empty trenches and

the airman jerk in his seat like a puppet pulled by a string, and then droop forward. The bullet had found its mark.

The Streak wavered and swerved, then came slowly planing to earth, round and round in slow spirals, half a mile away.

"After him!" cried Harvey, rushing to the horses. "He's had to bring her down—we'll get him now!"

There was a delay that maddened them. One of the horses, a well-trained charger, had stood where he was left—the other galloped off when the roar of the Streak's engine sounded overhead. Roy swung himself into the saddle of the first mount and raced furiously after the fugitive beast.

He caught up with it, and came thundering back after Harvey, who was running on foot in the direction of the grounded plane, which was lost to sight behind a low hill. Roy reined up, Dunster leaped astride the recovered horse, and away they went as fast as they could urge their mounts.

"Yonder she is!" cried Harvey, as they topped the hill and saw the Streak resting quite peacefully on a stretch of smooth grass in front of a small wood. "Look out for the fellow—he'll show fight, for he must guess what's waiting for him."

They had expected to find the pilot standing beside the machine, ready either to fight or surrender, for by the way the Streak came down they guessed he was not much hurt.

But when they reined alongside they saw the German airman hanging half out of the pilot's tonneau, a red stream staining the silver white of her armoured side. The man,

dressed in the uniform of the French Flying Corps, was quite dead. Roy's bullet had struck him under the ear and passed through his skull.

"Poor beggar!" said Harvey. "Snakes! But the Streak planes down like that all by herself!"

often with the whistle of bullets around them. They had eyes only for their beloved plane. She was still seen to be flying erratically.

"The beggar can't handle her!" cried Harvey. "There's one chance in a hundred of fluking a bullet into him—he's flying much too low. See, he's trying to lift her, the fool! Now, down with you and shoot, for goodness' sake!"

Roy reined his horse in with all his might, and, throwing himself from the saddle, ran to a fence and rested his rifle at it, taking swift and careful aim as the Streak came over at an oblique angle, her engines rattling like a Maxim.

Crack went the repeating rifle, and crack again. A third shot, but the Streak flew onward scornfully, and passed so straight overhead that the airman was hidden from view by the under shield.

"Missed!" said Roy between his teeth. "And if I hit him, Harvey, the whole show will come down smash, anyhow."

"Shoot, man, shoot! Better have her smashed a hundred times than let the Germans get hold of her. They'll have the best plane in the world if he gets home. Ah, hit, by the living powers! Well shot! But he's going yet!"

The rifle spoke thrice rapidly as the plane passed beyond and the pilot became visible once more. It was a tiny mark to fire at. But they saw

Don't that beat the deck? Gee! Mind your eye, they're shooting at us!"

A spatter of bullets drummed around them, and the grey uniforms of German sharpshooters were seen flitting in the wood. Roy sprang to the Streak, and lifting the dead man out, laid him on the grass and jumped into the observer's seat behind the gun.

"Up with her, Harvey! Let the horses go—we've got our clipper back again; make the most of her!"

Dunster, his hand quivering with eagerness at getting hold of his beloved plane once more, was at his place in a moment.

"Quick, old boy, quick!" cried Roy, for a full score of the Germans, suddenly ceasing their rifle-fire, rushed out of the wood towards them.

"She won't start!" gasped Harvey, juggling with the starting-lever and with the wires. "The drop has shaken the life out of her!"

"Then it's shaken ours out, too—those beggars are on us!" said Roy grimly. "All up, old chap—fire her tanks, and let's sell our lives as dear as we may!"

The force of Prussians, with a hoarse yell, swept across the grass towards the helpless plane, beside which their dead comrade was lying.

(The chums are in danger of being killed, and also of losing their beloved plane! Can they escape? Don't miss next Monday's thrilling instalment.)

—APPEARS IN "THE BOYS' FRIEND" NEXT MONDAY.



A Superb Complete Tale of School Life.

By ALLAN BLAIR.

The 1st Chapter.

What the Grampus Overheard.

"It's horrible!" groaned Dick Derriman.

"Beastly!" agreed Bob Seymour, with a sympathetic scowl.

"To be kept inside the walls of this rotten old school for a whole week for nothing."

"Yes," said Bob, the sympathy oozing out of him. "You can't count painting the Grampus's face with ink anything."

"Course not," Dick asserted, "even though there was some gum mixed up with it. If the Grampus hadn't broken rules by goin' to sleep durin' prep I couldn't have done it, could I?"

"Course you couldn't; and now, because he did break rules, you've got to suffer for it. Shows how the innocent have to suffer for the guilty in this rotten hole."

"Still, if the Grampus hadn't peached to Lattiford, it would have been all right. If he'd told the Head, I should have got a hundred lines or a swipin' at the worst. But, like the miserable sneak he is, he must go straight to that beast Lattiford!"

"Because he knows Lattiford's got his knife into you, Dick. Why is that?"

"Don't know," said Dick gloomily. "I only know it's there, that's all. I can sort of feel the steel point probin' through my flesh right to the very bone every time he fixes those beastly codfish eyes of his on me. There never was such a vindictive brute as Mark Lattiford, either at Ryecliff or any other school. He ain't fit to be a master. No idea of common justice. Why, if I'd painted his face with gum and ink, and then made him swallow bottles and brush and all, he couldn't have paid me out worse. A fortnight's confinement within school walls for that! Ugh! It ain't British."

"Why don't you write to the 'Times' about it?" said Bob Seymour solemnly. "Or, better still, get your guv to ask questions about it in the House of Commons. He's an M.P., isn't he?"

"Yes, and a K.C. as well, and up to his neck in work just now at the Old Bailey. I don't care about troubling the guv'nor. Whenever he hears a complaint about anything, he does ask such a jolly lot of awkward questions. I suppose I shall have to grin and bear it, that's all."

"Haven't seen you grin much the last week, old chap. And you've got another similar week to go through. Look here, Dick, if you mump and mope much longer you'll become a hypo—well, I forget what my uncle who's a doctor calls it. It isn't hippopotamus, but it's hypo-some-oid-thing, and it's a rotten thing to be, anyway. Prisoners get it after serving years in gaol, and you'll get it, too, if you don't kick."

"How can I kick?"

"Over the traces, my pippin. Defy that beast Lattiford. Break out of school, right out of bounds, for that matter. Do it now, as the soap advertisements shriek at you when you're wondering whether you'll have a wash or not. Strike while the iron's hot, or, anyway, as soon as the coast's clear."

"That's the point. I'd give anything for a good pelt of eight miles or so. But how's it to be done? When will the coast be clear?"

"After ten to-night. You'd be spotted for certain in the daylight; but after lights out, who's to know? We could sneak out then, and be

back by two or three in the morning. That old rope fire-escape of mine, you know—"

"Good egg!" cried Dick rapturously. "The very thing! We can slide down from the dormitory, and get back the same way. Bob, you're a brick! We'll go for a merry old trot together to-night."

"We will!" assented Bob, with the heartiness of a comic opera chorus. "We'll make for the cliffs, and shin along as far as Micklebourne Glen. Last night was glorious with the full moon out, and to-night will be the same. How'll that suit, old chap?"

"Spiffin'!" replied Dick.

And his eyes glowed at the prospect of a few hours' liberty, after his week's confinement within the walls of Ryecliff School, where he and his chum Bob were both Fourth-Formers.

As the two chums passed out of the preparation-room, where the foregoing conversation had taken place, a pasty-faced, short-necked, podgy chap of about fourteen sneaked out from behind a blackboard leaning against the wall.

It was Horace Climpson, nicknamed the Grampus on account of his more than stertorous breathing when asleep, a method of killing time to which he was very partial.

But the Grampus wasn't asleep now. He was exceptionally wide awake, although, as a result of having had to hold his breath while listening unseen to the talk between Dick and Bob, he was blowing pretty hard.

"Ho!" came like a croak from him. "So that's your game, is it? Goin' out for a pelt along the cliffs after lights out, are you? Sneak out by a rope ladder, will you? Good! We'll see if Horace Climpson can't put a stopper on your pretty little game!"

The 2nd Chapter.

Paid Back.

The Grampus was mean sneak enough for anything, but if his intention was to prevent Dick and Bob from going out for a moonlight walk he failed in it.

Anyway, shortly after eleven o'clock that night, when all lights were out, save one in the study of old Dr. Granby, the Head, the two chums might have been seen scudding along beneath the shelter of the wall bounding the football-ground, thence into the open fields, and so across to the south coast cliffs a mile away.

"Crums! Ain't this glorious!" exclaimed Dick, pumping up his chest as he took in lungfuls of ozone.

"Top hole of a night—eh?" said Bob. "More like May than the beginning of February, ain't it? Look at the sea, too—smooth as glass. Not a ripple, not a—"

He stopped abruptly, while his eyes turned quickly to the right, sweeping the rugged coast line on the very edge of which they stood, and finally resting on something moving inshore, towards the low-lying break in the cliffs giving on to Micklebourne Glen.

"Look—look at that! A boat!"

"A small sailing-boat! Who can it be—a fisherman?"

"Not it! Ain't big enough for a smack, and there's only one man in it. Rum for a chap to go out sailin' all on his own at this time o' night. See, he's lowerin' the sail, and paddlin' himself ashore. What a queer rig out he's wearin'. Looks like knickerbockers."

"Somebody's goin' to meet him," said Dick suddenly. "See that chap muffled up in a long coat, creepin' through the brambles?"

Both watched from the cliff-top, as they saw the two men shake hands. Their interest deepened a minute or two later, as they saw the occupant of the boat hurriedly strip off his clothes, tie them into a bundle, and place them in the boat.

It deepened still more as they presently beheld him wade into the water till it was nearly up to his neck, and then, accompanied by his companion, disappear among the brambles and bracken covering the sides of Micklebourne Glen.

"Well, I'm sugared and spiced!" exclaimed Bob Seymour. "If this ain't more than a trifle queer! What's it mean pitchin' his wardrobe overboard, and then sendin' his boat adrift?"

"Don't know, and it's no use guessin'," said Dick. "Let's go down to the glen, and try and get a closer glimpse of 'em."

They descended the steep path winding down to the bed of the glen cautiously, so as not to betray their presence.

"Hist!" whispered Dick suddenly. "They're coming this way. Hide behind these bushes."

They stooped, and from their hiding-place gazed along the moonlit path at the two men who were now approaching. The man who had arrived in the boat was fully clad again in clothes that had been provided by his companion.

He was an oddish man, between fifty and sixty, as could be judged from his sunken neck and rounded shoulders. As to his face, but little of that could be seen, so muffled was it by a slouch hat and the upturned collar of his long coat.

The face of his companion was similarly concealed, but something in his slouching gait and the peculiar carriage of his head, made Dick's heart give a bound.

Still crouching there, they watched the two men pass in the moonlight, and then disappear amid a grove of silver birches higher up the glen.

"Did you see who the younger man was?" asked Dick, clutching at Bob's arm, and with his face all excitement.

"No; couldn't get a clear glimpse of him from where I was."

"It was that beast Lattiford!"

"My Sunday tile! You don't mean that?"

"It was, honest Injun! Who could the other chap be, and what does it mean?"

"Goodness only knows; it's a rum go altogether. But, I say, Dick, this is awkward Lattiford's being out. If he should go back by the fives court gate, he'll spot that rope-ladder hanging from the dormitory window likely as not. That'll be deuced awkward for the pair of us."

"My word, yes. I shall get a whirly old time from Lattiford if I'm caught breaking bounds like this, and you'll cop it hot, too! Let's do a sprint back, and get there first!"

They climbed to the top of the glen, and setting off at a run across the fields approached the school in double-quick time. Entering by the gate near to the fives court, they skirted the wall of the football-ground, and dodged across the court giving on to the main quadrangle.

"Head's light's out," whispered Bob. "and Lattiford can't be back yet! So up the rigging we go, old boss!"

"It's gone!" exclaimed Dick, in an undertone. "The ladder's gone!"

"Great Von Cluck! So it is!" said

Bob, in a hoarse whisper. "What on earth are we to do now?"

"Somebody must have twigged us leaving, and then took the ladder away. Who can it be? Rotten mean thing to do, anyhow."

"Course it was, but it's no use arguing about that now. How's the dickens are we to get back?"

For a minute they stood gazing helplessly at one another. Then a step roused them.

"Lattiford and the other chap!" gasped Bob. "Quick—hide!"

But they were too late. Even as they started to run towards the angle of the wall, Mark Lattiford spotted them, and started in pursuit. Even then they might have escaped had not Dick caught his foot against the raised border of a flower-bed.

Over he pitched full length on the gravel. Bob turned to lend him a hand, but before he could do so the master was upon Dick.

Gripping him by the collar, he hoisted him to his feet, and swung him round. A furious oath sprang from his lips as he beheld who it was. "So it's you, Derriman! What in thunder do you mean by being out at this hour? Where have you been?"

"I've been on the cliffs!" replied Dick startled by the direct question into Washingtonian candour.

"On—the-cliffs!" The words came from the master's lips as though some demon had echoed them, while his big, glaring eyes flashed with fury, and his face went livid.

Then, before Dick could realise what was coming, Lattiford had swung him out to arm's-length, and raising the ash-stick he carried, was laying it across Dick's back and shoulders in a fit of ungovernable rage.

Swish, swish, swish! Never had a master at Ryecliff swiped a boy in such a way before; never had a master's face reflected such cruel and merciless savagery. A madman could not have exhibited a blinder rage!

For the time being, indeed, Mark Lattiford had gone mad. He continued to belabour Dick with such pitiless force and passion that the youngster might have fainted had the frightful punishment continued much longer.

But Bob Seymour, who had for the time concealed himself behind a wall, found his chum's groans and moans of agony too much for him.

Out from his hiding-place he came, charging at Lattiford with grinding teeth and clenched fist.

"You cur—you cowardly brute!" he cried. "Let him go, or I'll—"

What Bob might have done cannot be told, seeing that he was prevented from doing it. For at his approach Mark Lattiford slung Dick from him, and faced round.

"It's you, is it, Seymour?"

"Yes, it is," said Bob stolidly. "And I can tell you I've been out with Derriman, so you can swipe me too!"

But Lattiford was a trifle calmer now. An uneasy glance towards the fives court, behind which his companion was hiding, seemed to warn him that he must control himself.

He stepped towards a door, and unlocked it.

"Up you go to your dormitory the pair of you," he said. "And mind this doesn't occur again! If it does, I shall report the matter to Dr. Granby. Up you go!"

Dick was nothing loth. He had taken his punishment like a man, but the frightful swishing had left him sore and aching all over. He led the

way, and followed by Bob, made for the dormitory.

"What rotten hard lines you being caught," Bob said, as they reached the door. "And, my word, how savage Lattiford got when you told him you'd been on the cliffs. It seemed to drive him mad."

"You're right. It strikes me there's something fishy about that chap he met, and he was afraid we'd seen him. Gosh, how my back aches! How I hope I find out the chap who took the rope-ladder away!"

They entered the dormitory. All was silent there, for all were sound asleep. Sound asleep was particularly appropriate to Horace Climpson, who was making no end of it.

"Pretty creature!" muttered Bob Seymour, drawing near to his bed. "What sweet, sublime music he makes. Why—why—Dick, come here!"

"What's the matter?"

"Look!" Dick looked to where his chum pointed. Then hot anger leapt out of his eyes, and no wonder. For from beneath the mattress of Horace Climpson's bed protruded the end of the rope-ladder!

"So the Grampus took it!" hissed Dick savagely. "The measly bound, we might have guessed it! I'll pay him! Come, out of it, you rotten, vile, beastly, crawling, sneaky snake, out of it and take your gruel!"

One yank at the mattress, and the Grampus was sprawling on the floor. The next moment, and there was Dick dragging him by the scruff of the neck along the middle of the dormitory towards the bath-room at the end.

"What's the row?" demanded a dozen voices of the awakened sleepers.

"Come and see, me cherubs!" cried out Bob, who was lending a hand.

Forthwith they came and saw! Saw the Grampus, puffing and blowing as he had never puffed and blown before; saw him lifted into a bath, and held there while the water from the cold tap was turned full on, and he was doused and soused again and again, the while he spluttered and spluttered and gave forth dismal sounds for mercy and showed signs of being altogether wretched.

When at last he was released, and permitted to dry himself with a big towel, he was about the most miserable and discomfited person imaginable.

He hadn't even asked what it was for. He knew that already; the sight of the rope-ladder which he had meanly sneaked having told him that his infamy had been discovered.

But all the rest of that night as he lay awake he puffed and blew in a manner that easily beat all his previous records in the puffing and blowing line. Yet, all the time, instead of being repentant, his wretched little brain was at work trying to think out some scheme of vengeance against Dick Derriman.

The 3rd Chapter.

A Lad's Cunning.

The Grampus might well have left all reprisals to Mr. Mark Lattiford. For, although the days passed without any further reference from him to the escapade on the cliffs, the master let no opportunity pass of venting his wrath on Dick's hapless head.

During the next week or two, the slightest misdemeanour on Dick's part was the signal for punishment, impositions that kept him chained to his desk when the other fellows were out at footer; and sometimes in the shape of a frightful swishing that kept poor Dick in a condition of chronic aching and soreness.

Bob Seymour heard of his chum's repeated heavy punishment with hot indignation.

"It's a rotten shame!" he said to Dick. "He's making your life a fair misery. Why don't you complain to the Head?"

"What's the good? You know Dr. Granby is getting too old for his job, and hardly ever interferes with what Lattiford does?"

"Yes, I know that. But this sort of thing mustn't go on! Why has he got his knife into you so?"

"Because of that business on the cliff, I suppose! As we said before, there must have been something fishy about the fellow he met, and he's in a continual funk in case we should split about it!"

"That's all right enough, but if that's his reason, why don't he lamb into me as well? He never touches me; it's always you! You'll have to write to your guv'nor about it!"

"Yes. If it goes on much longer, I shall I hate worrying the guv,

LOOK OUT FOR SOME SPLENDID NEW SERIALS.

but I can't stand this sort of thing much longer!"

"By the way, Dick, that chap who sent the boat adrift. He's still knockin' about the neighbourhood!"

"Why, have you seen him again?"

"Just a glimpse the other night. Saw him dodge out of the wood on the Micklebourne Road. Dodged back quicker when he caught sight of me. Minute or two after I met Lattiford hurrying in the same direction. Going to meet him, no doubt. Wonder who he can be?"

Dick was too full of his own personal troubles for much speculation on that point. His life had indeed become a perfect misery, and he was growing very moody and melancholy under it. Hardly a day passed without his getting some punishment or other, and he began to wonder how it was going to end.

Once or twice it was in his mind to bolt, to leave the school and go home. But always the thought of his father restrained him.

Mr. Derriman was a famous K.C. with somewhat old-fashioned notions about the necessity for strict school discipline. An absolutely just man himself, he took it for granted that the authorities at Ryecliff School were equally just. Any punishment which his son got would, Dick felt, be regarded by his father as only a just reward. It was this thought that restrained Dick from making any complaint.

But events were moving forward to a crisis when the boy would be able to keep silent no longer.

It happened in this way. It was a half-day—Saturday. There was a footer match on. The game was between Lattiford's and Winthorpe's Houses—always a struggle followed with keenness by the whole of the school.

In the ordinary way Dick Derriman would have played for Lattiford's. He was, in fact, the best junior inside-right in the whole school.

But the Fates, in the shape of Mark Lattiford, intervened. For some offence, trifling really, but magnified out of all proportion by the vindictive master, Dick, although allowed out to view the game, was forbidden to take part in it.

Dick watched the match for some time, but without a great deal of enjoyment. His disappointment was keen at not being permitted to play, and his disappointment grew as the game progressed. His House was losing, and he felt that had he been in the team they might have won.

During the second half his misery and chagrin increased so much that he felt the tears coming into his eyes. To hide these signs of weakness from his schoolfellows he presently moved away from the touchline and made for the pavilion.

There was nobody there, and he felt relieved. The inclination to cry was much stronger upon him than ever, but he restrained himself by an effort of will.

Along with his feelings of utter misery came a curious feeling of drowsiness.

That was easily accounted for by the fact that recently he had slept but little at night. Slumber had been but of a fitful kind, his recent persecutions having brought about a habit of starting up in a half-drowsy state in the belief that Mark Lattiford had called him out of bed for punishment. It was a case of his nerves having become unstrung by systematic injustice.

The sight of a snug place between the two rows of topcoats belonging to the players, and hanging on pegs, put it in his mind to lie down and try to get half an hour's doze. He did so, with the result that, in his tired-out state, he was fast asleep in two or three minutes.

In that condition he was presently found by Horace Climpson. That youth had indeed watched him depart from the field and enter the pavilion, and his native curiosity had set him wondering why.

So he had followed unobserved. Gaining the rear of the pavilion, he had raised the flap of wood that covered the window-space, and cautiously looked in.

Surprised to find Dick asleep, he had watched him out of his cunning little eyes for a few seconds. Presently his gaze became fixed upon the lines of overcoats hanging there, and in a moment his eyes flashed with evil purpose.

The next minute, and he had climbed over the sill of the window-space, and stood between the line of coats where Dick slept. Three minutes later, and he issued forth, very red in the face from the necessity of

having had to restrain his hard breathing, and made his way back to the field.

The 4th Chapter.

Expelled!

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" came from eleven lusty young voices. "Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" from another lot of equally lusty throats.

The match was over. The cheers were the customary rounds given for each other by the rival teams.

At sound of them Dick Derriman started awake and leapt to his feet. Across the ground came the players, scudding back for their coats.

"Mustn't let the fellows see me," Dick muttered to himself. "They'd see from my eyes that I've been nearly snivelling, and they'd chip me no end if they twigged that. I'll out."

He was off through the back window in a jiffy just as the players came trooping in at the front. Amid a puffing and blowing and a huddling on of topcoats and mufflers came suddenly a cry from Beddowes major.

His topcoat was on, his hands deep in the searching of his pockets, and a look of blank dismay on his ruddy face.

"What's up, Beddy?" inquired Ranson.

"My money's gone!" replied Beddowes. "I had three bob in my right-hand pocket, and it's gone—every stiver!"

"That's rum!" exclaimed Pilchester, who played centre-half for Lattiford's House. "So's mine! I had sixpence in silver and twopence-halfpenny in coppers, and it's all vanished!"

"Great Charley Peace!" cried Ranson in his turn. "And I've lost a lion shillin' that I wouldn't have parted with for fifteenpence!"

By this time the hands of all the players were busy searching their pockets, with the result that no less than nine of them had to report the loss of small sums of money, while Wilkins minor was uttering bitter lamentations over the mysterious disappearance of his combination knife, and relating in groans how it contained, among other things of everyday utility, a pair of tweezers and a thing for getting stones out of horses' hoofs.

"What's all the row?" inquired McIver, entering the pavilion at that moment.

McIver was in the Sixth, would be captain of the school next term, when Travis left, and so commanded an answer.

"There's been a beastly thief about!" answered Ranson.

"A thief!"

"Yes. Some of the fellows have lost no end of money, while I've lost a lion shilling and—"

"And I've lost my knife," wailed Wilkins minor, "with tweezers in it and a thing for gettin' stones out of—"

"Jingo!" broke in McIver, with knitted brows. "This is serious. Sure you fellows had the money and things before the match began?"

Everybody was sure; ready to swear to it.

"This'll have to be inquired into," McIver said gravely. "Ah, here's Mr. Lattiford! He'd better be told."

The master was told, and his face grew graver even than McIver's.

"Was anybody seen entering the pavilion while the game was in progress?" he asked.

"I—I think I saw Derriman going in," said the Grampus, who had by this time joined the group.

"Derriman—Derriman! Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"And I'm sure I saw him come out!" burst out Wilkins minor, with sudden recollection. "It was just as we came back for our coats. Didn't any of you other fellows see him as well?"

"None could say, or, at any rate, would say. That there had been a thief about was certain, but few credited for a moment the possibility of Dick Derriman being the thief."

But the evidence seemed to be sufficient for Mr. Lattiford.

"Where is Derriman?" he asked, with a very black look indeed. "He must be questioned at once."

Dick was found in the common-room all alone, and as gloomy as ever. He looked up in amazement as Mark Lattiford entered, followed by thirty or forty boys.

"Derriman," said the master severely, "I have some questions to ask you. Several of your schoolfellows have had money stolen from their coats in the pavilion. Do you know anything of this matter?"

"I!" cried Dick, opening his eyes very wide, and with a deep flush of indignation on his face. "Of course I don't, sir!"

"Oh, you don't! Perhaps you'll deny having been in the pavilion while the game was on?"

"No, sir, I don't deny that," replied Dick, flushing again, and then going white. "I did go into the pavilion."

"You admit that? Why did you go in?"

"I—I don't quite know," answered Dick lamely. "I—I felt beastly down in the mouth, and—and I believe I went to sleep."

Mr. Lattiford smiled derisively.

"Went to sleep! That's a strange thing to do while a football match was on!"

"Don't you believe me, sir?" cried Dick quaveringly.

"Well, no," said Lattiford, tugging at his moustache in a way that pulled

the corner of his mouth down in a bitter sneer. "Since you ask me, I don't! Your story is feeble in the extreme. Turn out your pockets!"

Dick's face went as red as fire.

"Do you mean you think I'm a thief?" he demanded hotly.

"Turn out your pockets or I send for Dr. Granby!"

Dick hesitated one moment. Then he savagely turned out his pockets one after the other.

"Does that satisfy you?" he said, with sullen anger, when nothing was found.

"So far, yes," replied Lattiford, with whom the Grampus had been whispering. "But I understand you were wearing a topcoat this afternoon. Where is that?"

"It's hanging over there," answered Dick, controlling his indignation only with difficulty. "If you want to search that as well, I'll fetch it."

"No, I'll fetch it," said the master, striding over to the long row of pegs against the wall. "Is this your coat?"

"Yes."

Slowly Mark Lattiford dived his hand into the right-hand pocket. It came out empty. He tried the left with a like result.

"Any more pockets?" he asked.

"Ah, I see, there's one inside!"

His hand went into the breast-pocket, and now his face changed. When he withdrew his hand, it contained two things—a combination knife and a lion shilling.

A low murmur of surprise swept through all who saw.

"Is that your knife, Wilkins?" asked the master.

"Yes, sir."

"And does this coin belong to you, Ranson?"

"Yes, sir; that's mine right enough."

"You hear that Derriman. How do you account for these things being in your coat-pocket?"

"How should I know?" stormed Dick fiercely, and with his face the colour of ashes. "Nobody is more surprised than I am. You don't think I stole them, sir, do you?"

Lattiford shrugged his shoulders and made no answer. All he did was to cast a queer look round at the other boys, who all stood silent, appalled at the evidence against one they had always regarded as the soul of honour. Only the Grampus breathed harder than ever, and sniggered as if he were mightily pleased at the outcome of events.

"For Heaven's sake," cried Dick desperately, "tell me, sir, that you don't think I'm a thief!"

"That is for Dr. Granby to decide," answered Lattiford coldly. "Come with me to his study at once!"

Half an hour had passed. Dr.

Granby sat at his desk with his head leaning heavily on his hand.

Before him, white as a sheet, stood Dick Derriman, and near by stood Mark Lattiford. Slowly the doctor lifted his grey head.

"I have listened to what has been said with deepest pain," he said, in a low tone, "and I am compelled to inform you, Derriman, that the evidence is strong against you; very strong—incontrovertible. You are charged with having stolen money and other things from your schoolfellows, and circumstances compel me to believe that you did."

"I did not," protested Dick pitifully. "I swear I did not!"

"Hush! Don't aggravate matters by perjuring yourself. What I have heard compels me to believe that you have departed from the path of honour and uprightness. It grieves me to tell you what your punishment must be. To-day I shall write to your father, telling him that he may expect you home on Monday. Derriman, you are expelled from Ryecliff!"

The 5th Chapter.

Justice is Done.

Mr. Derriman, K.C., M.P., received next morning at his house in Surrey, from which he went daily to his chambers in King's Bench Walk, two letters.

Both bore the postmark "Ryecliff." One was in Dr. Granby's hand, while the other writing he did not recognise. He tore the doctor's letter open a little wonderingly. Wonder gave way to a feeling of shock as he read it, for it told of systematic ill-behaviour on the part of his son for some time past, and repeated punishments at the hands of Mr. Lattiford, and conveyed the most startling news of all—that Dick Derriman had been proved a thief, and had accordingly been expelled.

Momentary grief at the amazing news was followed almost at once by an outburst of indignation.

"My boy a thief!" the K.C. cried, banging the breakfast-table with his fist. "It's a lie—an infamous lie! He may have had repeated punishments lately, and perhaps deserved them, but my boy Dick a thief? No. He couldn't be. He couldn't go other than dead straight to save his life. I must go right into this business. I'll motor down to Ryecliff to-day."

He had decided on that before even thinking to open the second letter. When he did, he was more determined on his course of action than ever.

For the second letter was from Bob Seymour, who had once come to his house with Dick on a holiday. That letter first asserted Bob's entire belief in Dick's innocence, and then went on to tell a good deal more.

It explained that Dick had, for some time past, been a victim of persecution at Mark Lattiford's hands, and referred to that meeting on the cliffs between Lattiford and the other man. Finally, it ventured the opinion that the charge against Dick of theft had been deliberately caused by Horace Climpson having put the stolen articles in his pocket, and had deliberately arranged with Mr. Mark Lattiford to bring about Dick's ruin by so doing.

That was enough for Mr. Derriman. Great criminal barrister that he was, there was no man better qualified to get at the truth of such a matter as this.

Arrived at Ryecliff School, and having remained closeted with Dr. Granby for some time, he sent for Horace Climpson. In a manner that had won him fame as an astute cross-examiner in the Law Courts, he asked the Grampus various questions, and so tied him up in a knot of contradictions, that Master Horace was compelled to blurt out the truth.

The truth not only confirmed Bob Seymour's suspicions that he had put the knife and lion shilling in Dick's pocket—keeping the other money himself—but that, all unknown to the people at the school, Mark Lattiford was his uncle, and had particularly urged him to seek some fitting opportunity to involve Dick in disgrace, and so spoil his school career.

It being eminently desirable to put this startling statement to the test, Mr. Mark Lattiford was sent for. He wasn't to be found anywhere on the school premises.

While Mr. Derriman and the doctor were speculating on this curious absence, a visitor arrived in the shape of a police-inspector from Wattlebridge, a neighbouring town.

The news he brought was startling enough. Mr. Mark Lattiford was in custody. He had been arrested a couple of hours ago.

(Concluded on page 608, col. 5.)



The water from the cold tap was turned full on, and the Grampus was doused and soused again and again. He splattered and spluttered and gave forth dismal sounds for mercy, and showed signs of being altogether wretched.

SECOND INSTALMENT TO-DAY!

YOU MUST NOT MISS THIS STORY!



THE FIRST INSTALMENT IN BRIEF.

JACK CARELESS is sitting in a luxurious armchair smoking a cigarette when his father enters the room, and orders him to throw it away.

"Now that you are fourteen years of age, Jack," says Mr. Careless, "I've got to start thinking of you. I've got to realise that one of these days you are going to take my place in business."

"Before you can do this, however, I've got to make a man of you. A few more years of late hours, theatre-going, cigarettes, and motor-car driving will turn you out a pigeon-chested, measly-faced little swab, not fit for a collier's galley. You are going out of this, and going at once."

"Where am I going, dad?" asks Jack.

"To the North Sea fishing fleet, my son," answers his father.

And in due course Jack finds himself on board the Laughing Girl, in charge of a man named Di Dane.

The process of making a man of him has begun.

(Now read this week's enthralling instalment.)

Jack Gets His First Experience of Fishing.

"Show a leg there! Show a leg, sleepers!"

Jack turned in his bunk and groaned. He was not accustomed to early rising, and it was only five. At home he was accustomed to get up at ten. In the West End of London, where he lived when he was at home, nobody got up at five in the morning except milkmen and people who cleaned the steps.

He turned over, and dug his head into his pillow again. The bunks in the fore-castle head of the Laughing Girl were very comfortable. They had wire springs and horsehair mattresses with plenty of warm blankets; much better than the usual "donkey's breakfast," or canvas sack of straw on which the North Sea fisherman generally seeks his rest.

Jack very quickly went to sleep again. But he was not asleep long, for he was suddenly grabbed, bed-clothes and all, and rolled out on the deck of the fore-castle.

Billy Bunker stood grinning over him.

"Come on, sleepyhead!" he exclaimed. "The deck-pump is rigged. It's ten-past five, and you can get your wash!"

Jack sat up amongst his blankets, and glared up at the smiling Billy resentfully.

What right had this lout to come and pull him out of bed in this fashion? he thought to himself.

"Come on, bor," said Billy persuasively. "Come yo' out on deck. It's ten-past five, and we're gwoin' to drop the trawl. 'Sides, the skipper don't like anyone to be late. Five's our time to turn out, and if you don't keep time aboard ship it's all sixes an' sevens, like Hunkey Doodle-um's home on a Saturday night!"

"You go and hang yourself!" replied Jack, sitting frowns and drowsy amongst his blankets. "I'm going back to bed again." And he gathered up his blankets, and tumbled on to his bed once more.

Billy Bunker stood aghast.

"But, bor Jack," he almost pleaded, "it's the skipper's orders!"

"You tell the old skipper to go to Jericho! I'm going to sleep. And don't you give me so much of your 'Boy Jack,' either. I'm 'sir' to you. My dad owns half this boat, and he owns half the ships on the sea. I'm not going to be dictated to by a dirty cad who stinks of fish! And you can tell the skipper so."

And Jack, rolling over in his bunk, his face from the light, pretended to be asleep.

Billy Bunker stood for a moment watching him, a puzzled expression on his honest, square face. Di had

clearly told him that he was first younker, and that Jack was second younker, and that he would hold him responsible for Jack's manners and safety. Jack was to obey him in all things.

"Look yo' here, bor," said he gently; "you've got to turn out, or you'll get a lick o' the rope's-end."

He put his arms gently round the unwilling Jack to draw him from his bed, and was promptly rewarded by a punch on the nose that caused him to see stars, whilst the blood slowly trickled on to the struggling bundle of Jack and the blankets.

"You can take that for a coward's blow!" shrieked Jack. "I'll teach you to lay your dirty paws on me, you low-down cad!"

The fo'e's'le hatch was thrown back by the men who were hosing the decks and scrubbing down. Jack's shouts had drawn the whole crew to the fo'e's'le head.

Billy said nothing. But he carried Jack, blankets and all, up on deck, and placed him gently on the wet planks. Then he wiped his bleeding nose slowly.

"Look yo' here, bor!" said he. "We don't take a coward's blow in the North Sea fleets, an' if yo' weren't such a little chap I've a mind to give yo' a right proper old belting!"

Jack was now beside himself with rage. The men on deck were laughing at him and his well striped silk pyjamas. Even Ching, who had put his head round the deck-house from the galley to see what all the ki-bobbery was about, was grinning all over his yellow, solemn face. The second engineer, who was trimming coal in the bunkers, had also thrust up his head, black as a nigger, through the bunker plate. In the wheelhouse Di Dane was grimly gazing out to sea, apparently taking no notice of what was going on under his nose.

"You're a whole lot of dirty, low-down cads!" screamed Jack, clenching his fist. "And as for a coward's blow, take that—and that—and that!"

He flew at the astonished Billy Bunker like a wild cat, fetching him another smack on the nose and a resounding thump on the jaw.

"A fight! A fight!" cried the men. "Howd off him, younker! Yo'll have to have it out proper an' sportsmanlike!"

It was plain to them at once that Jack, young though he was, knew how to use his fists, and was not deficient in pluck.

They were not far out in this. James, the footman at home, who had been a bit of a sporting character, had taken some pains to have his young master educated in the art of boxing. Unknown to his mother, Jack had taken many lessons from the famous Buck O'Keefe round at the Cow and Windmill, the public-house at the end of the mews behind Jack's London home.

Billy Bunker was about Jack's age, but was framed on a much larger scale. A couple of years of sea life, hauling on ropes, lifting fish-trunks, and helping with the trawl, had put weight and muscle on him that Jack did not possess.

On the other side, Jack had forgotten more about boxing than Billy had ever learned.

Billy was an unwilling fighter. It was plain that he did not want to hurt Jack. At the same time, it was plain that Jack wanted to hurt Billy. He kicked and struggled in the arms of the two men who held him.

"Let me get at the cad!" he squeaked. "I'll show him!"

"Gently—gently, bor!" said Joe

Graves, the first hand of the Laughing Girl, who had taken command of the ring. "Billy were only doin' of his dooty in rousin' ye out. He were tryin' to keep ye out o' trouble. If he hain't roused yo' out, the skipper would ha' come along wi' a rope's-end and roused you wi' a North Sea kiss."

"But yo've given Billy bor the coward's blow. Are yo' gwoin' to take it back? There's no 'arm in takin' it back, and there's no 'arm in sayin' yo're wrong. We don't want any fightin' aboard this packet. But if yo' don't take it back, Billy's got to fight yo' an' he'll eat yo' up like a longshore herrin'!"

"Let him try!" squeaked Jack, tears of mortification and rage in his eyes. "I'll fight him, and I'll fight the whole lot of you! I hate you and your beastly boat, you gang of low-down cads! I'll have you all sacked when we get back to port. I'll—"

Ching had strolled up from the galley, his arms in his sleeves as usual.

"Oh, what a naughtee closs lil' bwoy!" he said soothingly, in his queer Nankin-Norfolk lingo. "Im welly, welly closs indeed. I bet two sticks of tobacco dat Billy whack 'im in two round. Im too closs to fightee long times. Softlee, softlee catchee monkee! Jacky, 'im all too closs, likee dog-fies."

"Here, Ching, not so much talk!" commanded Joe Graves. "You take the watch. Two-minute rounds, and none of your Chinese hank with the time. And none o' yer Chinese gambling. Come on! Where's your watch, you old scoundrel?"

Ching slipped his long, yellow hand into his socks, of which he wore three pairs, and from his thick-soled Chinese shoes produced the fine gold stop-watch which was the pride of his life.

Joe Graves slipped off Jack's silk pyjama jacket, showing a narrow, white chest and a thin pair of shoulders.

"Jackee, is allee same as Ostend labbit," said Ching, shaking his head sorrowfully. "Is you leady, boys?"

Jack flew at Billy like a whirlwind, but was stayed off by the lad's huge hand. It was plain from the first that Billy was acting on the defensive. But Jack was not to be denied. He made a second dash at his opponent, and landed a heavy blow on Billy's face.

Billy still smiled good humouredly, but looked dazed. The men were astonished by the strength that lay in this little angry body who hopped about so gamely in the brilliantly patterned silk pyjamas.

They made no favourite of Billy, but cheered Jack equally.

"Go it, owd lightnin' trousers! In at 'im, little 'un!" was their cry. "Don't yo' hurt the lil bor, Billy," they added.

Excited by their cries, Jack made another desperate dash at Billy. He would show these North Sea louts a bit of science. He would show them that he had not had a front seat in the great Wells-Carpenter fight for nothing. He would serve Billy as Carpenter served the Bombardier. They came to a clinch, Jack striving desperately to reach the vulnerable point in Billy's heavy-muscled body. But Billy's guard was there, and he simply stood his ground till Ching called time.

Jack barely waited for the second round. No sooner had the words "You ready?" passed Ching's lips than he was all over Billy, like an angry fox-terrier at a slow-moving bulldog. He landed half a dozen

heavy blows on Billy with a cut in the mouth that set the fisher lad's lip bleeding.

But Billy kept his temper, and still smiled. Gradually he wore out Jack's rush. All the cigarettes that Jack had smoked in the last year began now to talk back at him. His breath came fast and thick. He had an idea that Billy was "letting him down easy." This maddened him, and he rushed in with a desperate blow.

Then, of a sudden, something hard caught him on the chin, and for a minute or two he remembered no more.

When he came to himself he was laying on the deck, and Billy was swabbing his face with a towel wetted at the hose.

"What was that hit me?" he asked drowsily.

"That was me," grinned Billy, still friendly. "Yo're a game little pup, Jack, and when we've larned yo' to keep yo' temper, yo'll be as good wi' yo' fists as any bor in the fleet. But keep yo' fists for the other craft an' ther Dutchmen, an' don't 'ee use 'em on yer own shipmates. When we've got time I'll get yo' to larn me some o' them Lummion tricks. They put me all up at Harwich for a lil while. Now shake hands, an' no ill-will!"

Billy held out a great hand with his friendly smile. The anger and the fight had gone out of Jack, and the men nodded approvingly as he put his fist into Billy's huge paw.

"That's the ticket, lads!" said Joe Graves in short, businesslike tones. "Get yo' clothes off, Jack, an' we'll give yo' a 'Winterton Wash' that'll soon fresh yo' up. Now, Ching, old sport, off to the galley and get the brackfiss under way! We be agwoin to shoot trawl!"

Ching sloped off to the galley, whilst Jack kicked off his pyjama trousers, and, still somewhat dazed from Billy's knock-out pat, stood ready for the hose.

He found that a Winterton Wash was a rough sort of bath, for the force of the stream knocked him head over heels in the scuppers just as Billy's fist had done.

"Stand up to it, bor! Stand up to it!" called Joe Graves, and Jack, pulling himself together, braced himself against the silver stream of cold sea water. Joe played it over his chest, and up and down his spine for a minute or two, trying his hardest to bowl him over again. But Jack stood steady, and laughed as Joe, with a wink, threw the copper nozzle into the scuppers.

"Feel better now, laddie?" he asked.

Better! Jack felt like bars of iron! A warm glow spread up from his toes all over his body. He felt like two boys rolled into one, and all his ill-humour, and the headache which Billy's tap had given him had disappeared. With his pyjamas under his arm, he tumbled down into the fo'e's'le to dress, and when he came up on deck, he felt such a healthy hunger as he had never felt before in his life.

From the galley aft wafted a delicious smell of frying fish and bacon and hot coffee, and hot rolls. But breakfast was not ready yet, for the trawl was not yet down.

Jack looked on curiously as the men made it ready for shooting. He saw that it was like a gigantic butterfly-net, which stretched the whole length of the vessel, each end reaching as far as the huge steel hoops, or "gallows," that were built into the bulwark of the ship for and aft. To these were hung the pulleys over

which the warps, or drag-ropes, of the net passed.

"Now, Jack," said Joe Graves, who was standing by him, "you're gwoin' to see a trawl shot for the first time. Yo' see, it's just like a great butterfly-net, a hundred and thirty feet across the mouth, an' twenty-five feet deep. Remember, bor, that the corners of the net that they are making fast to those big squares o' wood, are called wings. The front o' the net is called the "square," the middle is the "belly," and the tail-end, where it dwindles away into the small, strong mesh, is called the "cod-end."

"Now, you see the big squares o' wood—big as the top o' the kitchen table—that the boys are makin' fast to the corners o' the mouth o' the net, they're the otterboards."

"The net is fastened to them, and the warps are fastened to them as well, so that when the ship pulls on the warps, or ropes, the otterboards get across the water and keep the mouth o' the net open to scoop up the fish."

"It's just like pullin' a big butterfly-net through the water along the bottom of the sea! It's the pull on the otterboards that keeps the mouth open, just as you might say, if you opened your own mouth, the otterboards would be at the corners of yo' lips! D'ye understand?"

Jack understood perfectly. He opened his mouth wide, pulling at the corners of his lips with his fingers.

"That's it!" said Joe. "Yo' fingers are the warps, an' the net under water opens up just like a great mouth as the boat drags it along the bottom. Yo' upper lip represents the headline, and your lower lip represents the ground rope. Yo'n's the ground-rope lying just along the edge o' the net there."

"Do you mean the one with all the big bobbins on it, like whopping great cotton-reels?" asked Jack.

"That's it!" answered Joe. "Those are elm bobbins, an' they are threaded on the ground-rope. They sort o' roll along the bottom o' the sea like wheels, an' they save the ground-rope o' the trawl being cut up or hooked up by the rough patches o' rock on the bottom. Now, see! They are goin' to drop the trawl overboard!"

Di Dane, in the wheelhouse, gave a turn or two to the spokes of the wheel, and the Laughing Girl swerved from her course, so as to bring the side from which the net was to be dropped to the windward.

The cod-end and the net were first thrown overboard. Then the otterboard at the forward end of the ship was lowered into the water, dragging away from the side of the trawler as the ship forged ahead, uncoiling the trawl warp from the drum of the powerful steam-winch which stood on the deck in front of the wheelhouse.

Jack began to understand the use of this winch as the forward warp went whining out over the pulley in the forward gallows under the tremendous pull of the great net.

Joe, standing by the winch, gave the word.

"Let go the after door!" he cried. And the door, or otterboard, at the aft end of the mouth of the great butterfly-net, was dropped into the water astern, its warp whistling through the after gallows and uncoiling rapidly from the other drum of the steam winch from which it was led along the deck.

Jack saw the great net open in the water as the doors, or otterboards, were tugged apart by the pull of these two powerful ropes, the net swerving away from the stern of the ship, and sinking slowly in the clear green water.

The warps were racing off the drums now as the huge net dragged and sank, and Jack marvelled no longer at the tremendous size and weight of the powerful winch.

"Stand yo' back from that after warp, bor!" commanded Joe Graves, motioning to Jack to keep away from the steel rope which was racing off the winch and slithering through the leads on deck, and over side through the stern gallows. "If yo' got caught up in that," he added, "it'd take the legs off ye like pipe-stems."

In a moment or two, Joe lifted his hand to signify that enough steel rope had been paid off the drums, and that the trawl was on the bottom. The roaring and thundering of the winch-drums stopped, the warps whined as the Laughing Girl, steaming at three miles an hour, dragged the trawl along the bottom of the sea.

"There yo' be, Jack," said Joe

HOW DO YOU LIKE OUR SPECIAL PICTURE SUPPLEMENT?—

Graves. "Trawl is down, and now we can go to brackfiss! There's bacon an' eggs, an' fresh fish which was got out o' the sea last time we hauled the trawl—when you were sleepin' in yor lil bed!"

Jack blushed. He was beginning to feel a little bit ashamed of his temper, when he had got out of bed the wrong side that morning.

"How do you know how much rope to let out from those drums on the winch?" he asked, by way of changing the conversation.

"By the depth o' water, my bor!" replied Joe, with a twinkle in his eye. "We are trawlin' the Winterton Twenties now, about fifty mile out to sea from Yarmouth. That means there's twenty fathom o' water for ten miles round us. When we are trawlin' or draggin' that great butterfly-net, we always pay out three or four times the length o' warp that the water is deep. I've given her sixty fathom to-day, as the sea is as smooth as glass, and the bottom of the sea is just all sand an' small shells. If it was rough, I'd ha' given her eighty fathom."

Jack gazed in astonishment at the first hand. At first he thought that Joe was chaffing him. All round was sea, just a blank horizon, and Joe spoke as though he knew exactly where the Laughing Girl was, the depth of water under her keel, and the sort of sand or rock that was to be found at the bottom of the sea fifty miles from the land.

"But how do you know where we are?" he asked, wonderstruck. "We are at sea, and miles and miles away from the land."

Joe laughed.

"A North Sea fisherman allus knows where he is, bor!" he answered. "Three hundred mile this way, three hundred mile that way, it's all the same to him, night or day, thick weather or clear weather. If we only knew where the fish are as well as we know where we are ourselves, we'd all be rich men in no time!"

"Uncle Di yonder can tell yo' where he be by the smell o' the water. You could blindfold him and drop him down in any part o' the North Sea between Harwich an' the Norwegian coast. Give him a lead-line, and he'd tell you where he was in two minutes, an' not be a mile out o' his reckoning either. Di, he knows the bottom o' the North Sea as well as he knows the floor of his lil parlour at home."

"But come you to brackfiss, bor! There's plenty o' time to stare at yon trawl; we sha'n't be haulin' it for another three hour. That's ten mile we steam, pullin' it behind us. Come yo' along, bor!"

Jack needed no second bidding. He was as hungry as two hunters, and Ching was passing along the deck, followed by Billy Bunker, laden with covered tins which distributed the most grateful odours to hungry men and boys.

Ching was a great cook. He had served as a cook in the Navy on the China Station, and what he did not know about fried fish was not worth knowing. Jack never afterwards forgot that splendid pile of golden brown fish that was piled generously on his plate at his first breakfast on the Laughing Girl.

Ching's breakfast rolls, light as feathers, were top-notch, and the rich brown coffee that poured in a great stream from the family coffee-pot seemed to Jack the most aromatic and delightful coffee he had ever tasted.

Jack tucked in at Ching's fried fish with a heartiness that made all his shipmates laugh.

"Yo're in luck, bor, that yo' start wi' fine weather!" laughed Joe Graves. "Maybe if it were blowin' ha'f a gale o' wind you wouldn't be so ready for a second helpin'. No, bor, don't put yo' sugar in yo' coffee, put it in yo' mouth, an' then drink your coffee—so! That's North Sea fashion, and a trick we've picked up from the Danish pilots an' the Dutchmen."

Jack had noticed that the sugar in the great blue bowl was not ordinary white sugar as he was accustomed to see at home, but great chunks of sugar candy. Joe poured him out a huge slop-basin of coffee, and laced it with a quantity of condensed milk.

"Got that under your waistcoat, lil' bor, an' you won't take no harm. You'll find we live like fightin'-cocks in the North Sea Fleet!" said he.

Jack, warmed with coffee and the friendliness of the table, felt inclined to conversation. It was the sugar candy that set him off.

"I haven't seen this sort of sugar

since I was a kid," said he, assuming an air which conveyed to his hearers that this was a very long time ago. "We used to stay down on a farm, which belonged to my people, and there was a pig there that used to be awfully fond of it."

Jack did not notice that at the word "pig" the face of every man at the table lengthened.

"This pig used to follow me round all day for sugar," he continued, "and old Barkin', the farm labourer, who had a wooden leg, and who used to look after my rabbits for me—"

At these words Tubby, the coal-trimmer, gave a howl, his face in his hand, and, taking a pinch of salt from the cellar, threw it over his shoulder.

"That's about done it!" he groaned. "That's put the lid on! Pigs first, and wooden legs and rabbits afterwards! Go on, sonny! You may as well go on!" he continued, turning to the astonished Jack. "You've done in the luck for this trip, and you may as well finish what you are saying!"

"I was only going to tell you about the old white horse we had at the farm—" began Jack in an aggrieved tone. He felt somehow that they were getting at him.

Pincher Martin, the deck-hand, choked over his coffee. He was a Ramsgate man. A groan went up from the whole crew.

"Why, what have I said?" demanded Jack, gazing round the table with astonished eyes.

"Never mind, bor!" said Joe soothingly. "Yo've said the most unlucky things you could say aboard of a fishin' craft. First of all, on a Yarmouth craft yo' must never mention a 'pig.' It allus brings bad luck. Last time I heard a chap mention a pig on a Yarmouth craft we were driftin' with best part o' half a mile of nets out, and the suddenest gale yo' ever saw came up so that we had to cut an' run."

"Tubby here is a Lowestoft man. And there's two things you must never mention on a Lowestoft craft, sail or steam, an' those two things are wooden legs an' rabbits. The word 'rabbit' alone is enough to scare all the fish out o' the North Sea where a Lowestoft craft is concerned, and as for a white horse—well—"

"Pincher Martin here has his home port in Ramsgate, and to talk of a white horse to a Ramsgate man is to put the kibosh on his fisherman's luck for the trip. Sure enough, we are going to carry away some gear, or blow the head out the low-pressure cylinder—you see!"

And with these ominous words Joe left the table, and went topside to

watch his warps, leaving Jack somewhat crestfallen over his first attempt to provide breakfast-table talk on a North Sea trawler.

What Jack Picked Out of the Trawl.

It was ten o'clock when Di Dane decided to haul the trawl.

Joe Graves stood watching the warps as they strained through the snatchblock on the starboard quarter. Now and then he would place his finger on the warps as though feeling by their vibrations for what there might be in the huge bag-net below.

"Pigs has done it!" he said gloomily to Jack. "There's nothin' much but muck in the trawl. See how heavy she drags behind the ship. Now, look here, Jack, if the cod end of that trawl were full of fish it would lift and be alive, but I can feel by these ropes that it's hanging as heavy on the bottom as a bag o' soot. There's no life in it. It's full o' muck, Cromer diamonds, jellyfish, Jewfish, starfish, and stingers!"

Jack felt very sorry that he had talked about pigs at breakfast-table, and so spoiled the luck of the trawl.

Joe grinned, and glanced towards the galley, where Ching was lighting two long red sticks that burned like fuses, and filled the air with scented smoke.

"You've scared old Ching proper!" said he. "Ching's burnin' a joss-stick to ward off the bad spirits. Ching knows that to talk about pigs on a Yarmouth boat puts a bad joss on the fishin'. Ching's a superstitious fellow Ching is!" added Joe, with some contempt. "But then, of course, he's only a Chinese, and don't know any better!"

"What about you, Joe?" asked Jack candidly. "Don't you call yourself superstitious, being so afraid just of a simple word like 'pig' again, but he checked himself—" like the domestic animal I mentioned!" he added.

"That ain't superstitious!" protested Joe Graves. "Any Yarmouth man will tell you that ain't superstitious. Anyhow, you wait and see the trawl come up!"

He signed to Di to slacken the speed of the Laughing Girl, and walked forward to the winch. Slowly and heavily, with a tremendous hissing and pumping and straining of the warps, the trawl came home. Bit by bit the drums wound up the wire ropes, and dragged in the huge net till it was close alongside the trawler.

The otterboards, or doors, were hoisted to the galleys fore and aft, and the huge net, like the rigging of a deflated balloon, hung heavy in the water alongside.

There was no life below water, no churning of great and small fish, such as the fishermen love to see.

"Nothing but muck and misery!" said Joe, spitting over the side.

A wire rope from the masthead was fastened to the heavy ground rope with its string of massive wooden bobbins, and a few turns of the winch hoisted this over the narrow bulwark, till the mouth of the net lay along the whole length of the deck.

The headline, or upper lip, was hoisted in, but the bag of the net still hung heavy and limp overside, and all the strength of the crew was not enough to gather it up and lift it inboard.

Pincher Martin, leaning over the side, passed a rope round the hanging bag, which, he informed Jack, was called a "snortler." The wire rope to the masthead was attached to this, and passed round the drum of the winch.

Jack was afterwards to learn that this wire rope was called the "jilsen," and was used for lifting any heavy trawl. A few turns of the drum brought the pouch or cod end of the trawl tumbling inboard amidst the derisive groans of the crew.

As Joe had predicted, there was a lot of muck and few fish. As the pocket of the net was cleaned out, Jack learned that a "Cromer diamond" was one of the huge flints which are found all along the northern coast of Norfolk.

There were a lot of these, weighing a hundredweight or so apiece. There was also a pile of wrack and weed, a big dogfish, which thrashed and snapped, and bit right and left, a lot of jellyos, a few miserable haddock, an old sea boot without a sole, two tin cans, and a number of small fish, like perch, which Jack was warned not to touch.

"Get one of they spines into yo' hand, and maybe you'll get pizened all up yo' arm!" snapped Joe.

The net was cleaned out, the few small haddock were thrown into fish-trunks or boxes, and the Cromer diamonds and other rubbish were thrown overboard. The crew prepared to down trawl again.

Jack was very despondent as he helped to pitch the great stones overboard. He wished that he had not talked about that pig, and the wooden leg, and the white horse. He had Jonah'd the catch! Four hours' work had gone for nothing!

He felt depressed and miserable. Billy had pointed out, too, that a big fogbank was rolling down from the northward, like a cold, wet blanket over the sea, blotting out all the blue sky.

Joe Graves noticed the boy's despondency, and smiled at him kindly.

"Cheer up, Jack!" said he. "'Tis fisherman's luck. In one day an' out the other! Maybe it wasn't the pig that did it after all. Ching was talkin' to his joss afore we came away, and Ching's joss he said that this trip wasn't goin' to be 'over an' above in the fishin' way, though it might turn out mighty well in other ways."

Jack felt better at once under Joe's cheery smile. He had a great lump of flint in his hand, or, at least, he thought it was flint, when it suddenly struck him that it was a deal lighter than the other flints that he had thrown overside.

He paused a moment to examine it. It was a great stone of yellowish-brown colour, seaworn and rounded at the edges. It certainly did not weigh so much as the big Cromer diamonds.

Joe stepped forward and looked at the stone too. He took it from Jack, and gave a shout that brought the whole crew running to him.

"Jack's no Jonah after all, old pardners!" he cried. "See what the lucky young imp he have picked out o' the trawl!"

"What is it, Joe?" asked Pincher Martin curiously. "What's this great brick you're makin' such a Saturday night of?"

"Amber, my son—amber!" replied Joe triumphantly. "We sometimes trawls it up, but more over on the Danish coast. But I've never seed such a chunk o' amber in all my 'perience o' the sea. It's worth a few quid that bit, and Jack shall keep it for his luck till he's old enough to smoke a pipe. There's enough amber there to cut up for a hundred pipe-stems. It's a specimen piece, that's what it is—a specimen piece!"

"What is amber? A sort of sea-foam, ain't it?" asked Pincher curiously.

"Sea your grandmother!" replied Joe scornfully. "It's a sort of fossil gum which they get out of the sunk forests along the shores of the Baltic. The land sunk thereabouts, they say, an' took down the great forests o' pine-trees along with it under the sea. Now they dig down under the sea to get at it by mines."

"They all belong to the German Government—blow them! They're good at mines of all sorts—those amber-mines, an' they turn a pretty penny out of it. But now and then a bit rubs its way through the bottom o' the sea, and gets driftin' about on the floor, to be trawled up or thrown up on the English coast by a gale. But it's 'most rubbed away by the time we get it."

The specimen was handed up to Di to be admired, and the trawl was shot again for another tow of three or four hours.

The fog came slowly rolling down from the North, and soon blanketed the Laughing Girl in its cold, clammy depths.

Jack was soon taught that, as younker, he had something to do besides watching the trawl and picking up specimen pieces of amber. He was set to cleaning paintwork and polishing up the brasses of the engine-room telegraph and binnacle in the wheelhouse, and here, under Di's silent and approving eye, he polished with all his might and main till the brass shone like beaten gold.

Now and then he would get a squint at the great chart of the North Sea which lay pinned out on the desk behind the steering-wheel. It was a wonderful map, all covered with tiny figures which showed the depth of the water and the different sorts of land which lay hidden beneath the shallow green waters.

But Di Dane never seemed to look at the chart. As Joe Graves had said, he knew the vast plains of the North Sea, where the millions of fish swarmed and fed, as well as he knew the floor of his parlour at home.

It was nearly two o'clock. The fog was thicker than ever. The trawl had again been heaved without much better luck than before, and Di had signified his intention of digging out for a new fishing-ground.

All of a sudden he started, and rang the engine-room telegraph to "Stop." The report of a warning gun rent the misty noontide, and out of the haze, lying right across the bows of the Laughing Girl, showed the grim outline of a warship.

"A German cruiser! A mine-layer!" gasped Di. "See! The dirty dogs are at their game now!"

He pointed to a crane which was lowering a caslike object over the stern of the warship.

The Laughing Girl had detected the



All the cigarettes that Jack had smoked began to tell on him. His breath came fast and thick, and he rushed in with a desperate blow. Then, of a sudden, something hard caught him on the chin, and for a minute or two he remembered no more.

German busied in the fell work by which the Kaiser hoped to drive the British Fleet from the North Sea whilst his own battle-fleet lay skulking safe in port.

"Stop, you British trawler, or we'll sink you!" called a voice in good English from the high bridge of the cruiser.

Di made no answer. With the way still on her, the Laughing Girl was bearing down on the warship.

"The old girl was built for the Iceland trade, and she was built for ice!" he muttered. "If she'll stand the iceberg she hit off Husavik last spring, she'll stand a punch into a German third-class cruiser!"

"Stop, or we'll sink you!" called the voice again.

Di had rung his engines to full speed ahead. He made no answer, but directed the solid steel bows of the Laughing Girl at the grey-painted side of the mine-laying cruiser.

A cry of consternation rang down the German's decks as the daring attack was delivered.

A quickflier rang out almost overhead, the shell passing over the squat masts of the trawler, so near was she to her prey.

The German captain tried to set his engines ahead to dodge this undreamed-of antagonist. But it was too late. Di Dane had selected his mark, and a second later the bows of the Laughing Girl bit with a grinding crash into the German pirate's steel plates, which buckled and bent and twisted and rent under the charge of the stout British trawler.

Prisoners of War.

Jack was standing by the wheelhouse when the Laughing Girl made her dash into the grim, grey-painted side of the German mine-laying cruiser.

He had often read of collisions at sea, but he had never experienced one. He saw Billy Bunker and Pincher Martin throw themselves on the deck the moment before the stout steel bow of the Laughing Girl bit into the plates of the cruiser, and in that moment he found himself stupidly wondering what was going to happen. He did not feel frightened. He felt curious.

His curiosity was quickly satisfied. He was suddenly thrown down on the wet deck, along which he shot on his face like a stone thrown on ice, till he fetched up against Billy Bunker with a bang that nearly knocked the breath out of him.

He saw a great hole open out in the side of the cruiser as the Laughing Girl rebounded and cut again into the grey wall of the German's side, ripping her open just as a sardine-opener twists open a tin can.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang! Bang, bang!

Overhead the quickfliers of the German were pouring forth a panic-stricken volley of shells. But the cruiser had taken a list, and could not depress her guns sufficiently to hit the low decks of the trawler as, with her engines full steam ahead, she wrenched at the widening fissure in the side of the warship like a fox-terrier worrying a boarhound.

The air was filled with this din, the scrooping of metal against metal and the roaring of steam from the escape-valves. Close behind the trawler the shells were whipping the sea into fountains, but the quickfliers could not touch their tiny antagonist.

In the wheelhouse Di put the trawler's helm hard aport so that she twisted almost alongside the cruiser, still keeping her bows in the rent she had made, and opening up the steel plates below the water-line.

"You was a proper old bang!" shouted Billy. "Come you out of this, Jack. They'll start shooting down on the decks in a minute!"

He dragged Jack to his feet, and they ran behind the shelter of the deckhouse.

Ching was crouching there, busy bolting down the tripod of the heavy whaling-gun which the Laughing Girl carried as part of her Iceland equipment.

"What are you up to, Ching?" shouted Billy. "You can't sink her with that old popgun!"

Ching grinned, and pointed to the mine that still dangled half submerged in the water from the crane at the cruiser's stern.

The mine-laying crew, disturbed at their fell work by the ramming of their ship, had run forward, leaving the mine still moored by its lowering tackle close under the cruiser's stern.

Jack did not know what this object was. It looked very much like one of the floating buoys which he had seen on his visits to the seaside.

He watched curiously as Ching opened the breech of the whaling-gun and slipped in a small conical shell. He peered curiously round the corner of the deckhouse whilst Ching carefully levelled the whaling-gun at this harmless-looking object.

"Stand back, Mars'r Jack! Plenty bump in half a mo'!" cried Ching, and pushed Jack behind the sheltering deckhouse.

Then, taking careful aim, he pulled the trigger of the whaling-gun.

From the stern of the cruiser there was a flash and a roar and a stunning explosion. A pillar of water and flame shot up a hundred feet in the air. Jack was thrown to the deck as another tremendous explosion followed which seemed to split sky and sea.

Then, with a thundering crash, a solid mass of water fell from the skies upon him, pinning him down under the weight of many tons. He was washed round in a whirlpool of water, his feet uppermost, and his grasping fingers touching the deck.

He thought he was overboard, and that the Laughing Girl had sunk!

Then, as though by magic, the water seemed to fall away from him, and he found himself landed with a bump on the deck, hugging Ching round the neck with all the strength that was in him. Billy, in his turn, was clinging to Jack's leg, spitting up the salt water he had swallowed, and laughing hysterically.

"Plenty bump! Oh, my word, Ching! You are a nut!" gasped Billy.

was ripped into matchwood. But her stout hull had taken no harm, and, save for a big dent in the steel back of Ching's galley, no harm had resulted from the flying fragments of the mine.

"Stand by to save life!" shouted Di from the wheelhouse. "Get the nets and gear over side!"

The sea was covered with bobbing heads as man after man jumped over from the cruiser. Di steamed slowly up to them, whilst his crew worked madly festooning the trawl-nets over the low sides of the Laughing Girl so that the Germans might get foothold and handhold in their meshes. Ropes were thrown right and left into a sea that was black with swimming men.

Slipping on their lifebelts, the Germans swarmed out of the sinking cruiser like rats, the stokers racing up from below as she settled. Into the water they plunged, swimming away from their sinking ship as hard as they could go.

Jack was frightened now. His mouth was dry, and his tongue seemed to stick to the roof of it. The Germans were swarming up the sides, grabbing the nets that dangled in the water and the ropes which were thrown to them. They came tumbling in over the bulwarks by the score, scowling and cursing.

The last man was out of the cruiser now, and she was sinking fast. Two of her three funnels were already sticking up from the smooth, oily sea. Then suddenly she lifted her dripping bows high out of the water.

and tell those men to get below into the hold. There's not room for 'em all on deck. Shoot the first man who disobeys. Speak to 'em in German!"

Jack braced himself up and took the revolver that Di handed out to him. It was cocked and ready.

The Germans were already scowling at Di in the wheelhouse, and a threatening murmur ran amongst them. There were over a hundred and fifty of them on the trawler's deck, which was packed as thick as an excursion-boat. A hundred and twenty more were clamouring in the water alongside.

Di laid another revolver ready to his hand to shoot the first man who attempted to rush the wheelhouse. Even Di's ruddy face paled a little. He had eight men and two boys on board all told, and the odds were already fifteen to one should the Germans turn ugly.

The Germans were for the most part Schleswig-Holsteiners, tall, blonde giants, few of whom stood under six feet in height.

Di watched Jack anxiously as he made his way through the crowd and stopped in front of a huge petty-officer.

Jack's governess had told him always to be polite, and this bit of advice stood him in good stead now. He had slipped the revolver in his pocket, but it was plainly to be seen.

The petty-officer looked down on Jack as the giant might have looked at Jack the Giant Killer.

"If the Herr Petty-Officer will order his men to take off the hatches

The German was purple with rage. He was Count Hugo von Furstenburg, and one of the leaders of the German Navy League, a firebrand, and a great favourite of the Kaiser.

He had sailed out of Cuxhaven only twenty-four hours before, with a complimentary telegram in his pocket from his Imperial Master, and orders to sink all the British Navy he could find within reach. Now, before he had struck a blow at the hated British, he had allowed his ship to be sunk by a dirty little North Sea trawler.

"What ship is this?" he demanded brusquely in perfect English.

"Laughing Girl, o' Yarmouth Port," answered Di calmly.

"A filthy trawler!" exclaimed Captain Count von Furstenburg, almost beside himself with rage.

"Steady, sir, steady!" replied Di, with a shift of the wheel. "She may be what yo' call a filthy trawler, but she's gettin' an honest living by what she gets out of the sea, and not by droppin' in floatin' mines. Yo'n's a murderer's trick! The Laughing Girl may only be a filthy trawler, but she's been one too many for the Steinmetz. Yo' be thankful, my lad, that yo' didn't lose any lives!" he added.

The captain of the Steinmetz swelled with wrath. His fat neck turned purple, and his fat ears stood out like fans at the side of his head, blue with suppressed wrath.

Di took little notice of his wrath. He was rather nettled at hearing the Laughing Girl called a "filthy trawler" by the German.

"Yo' keep a civil tongue in your head, bor!" said he calmly, and with some dignity. "If yo' can't, go forward. Yo've been licked in a square an' open fight, an' if you can't take a lickin' like a gentleman, yo' can just keep quiet, like Joe Hall's dead cow. Get forward, bor, and thank Heaven that yo're not in Davy Jones's locker along o' yo'r ship!"

Captain Count Hugo von Furstenburg understood English perfectly. To be compared to Joe Hall's dead cow put the lid on his simmering wrath. He was a true German, and he gave not a moment's consideration to the fact that Di could have steamed away and left him and his two hundred and seventy men to drown.

"Arrest that man and keep him prisoner!" he cried, as though he were on his own quarterdeck.

Three or four German sailors moved slowly towards the verandah or gallery round the wheelhouse. It was apparent from the slowness of their movements that they did not like their captain, and that they did not like the look of Di's determined face.

The captain had spoken in German, but Di was quick to gather the meaning of his order; he picked up the revolver that lay ready to his hand.

"The first man that enters this wheelhouse without my orders I'll shoot as dead as Dan Darby's donkey!" said Di grimly. "I'm captain on this ship, and it's you that's my prisoners! Don't yo' push me, captain, or some o' your crew will get it where Dame Spicer's chicken got the axe—an' that's in the neck!"

The Germans had never heard of Dan Darby's donkey, or of Dame Spicer's chicken. But Di's face, and the businesslike fashion in which he handled his revolver, showed them pretty plainly what he meant.

Count Hugo von Furstenburg was not beloved by his crew, and the Steinmetz had not been what is known in the British Navy as a "happy ship." Already there had been too much shot-drill, and too many defaulters walking in circles on the forecastle-head for the liking of her crew. They knew that if their captain seized the trawler and took her into the Elbe they would be quickly packed off again to fight against the British Fleet—and for that they had no great desire. As they stood now they had done their duty, and were content enough to be taken into port as prisoners of war.

The German captain turned and swore at the thickly-packed crowd, calling them pigs and dogs, and threatening to shoot any man who did not at once obey his orders.

Four of his ship's police, who still wore their revolvers slung about their necks by lanyards, came slowly forward to attack Di in the wheelhouse.

"I'll teach this British dog to insult an officer of the Kaiser's Navy!" almost screamed Von Furstenburg, and, as a lead to his men, he whipped a revolver from his pocket and levelled it at Di's head.

(Will Von Furstenburg fire at Di? and, if so, will the German crew obey their commander's orders, and take charge of the trawler? Another long instalment of this grand story next week.)



When taken a prisoner of war a soldier, in his eagerness to help his comrades, is often prompted to attempt to escape. A British major succeeded in getting away from the barracks in which he was kept captive, and although he was fired at when climbing a wall surrounding the building, none of the bullets hit him, and he succeeded in gaining the British lines.

"Are we sinking?" stammered Jack.

"Don't you worry, Mars'r Jack. We allee light. But dat bad German feller, 'im sinkee all light."

Ching, streaming with water, had struggled to his feet, and pointed forward over the bows of the Laughing Girl, which had drifted away and astern from her formidable foe.

Jack saw what had happened now. Ching's shot had exploded the mine at the cruiser's stern, which, in its turn, had fired another mine placed on deck ready to lower. The stern had been blown clean out of her by an explosion which had sent a wave sweeping the Laughing Girl from end to end.

Realising what had happened, Di Dane had set his engines hard astern, and the Laughing Girl had drawn her stout bows out of the rent in her enemy's side, allowing a torrent of water to pour in at her crushed coal-bunkers.

In the mist they saw the doomed cruiser listing heavily and settling by the stern, which was already under water. They could see her decks humming with panic-stricken men, who were rushing wildly to the boats, casting off their lashings, and endeavouring to swing them out from the davits.

Half the funnel of the Laughing Girl was gone, carried away by a fragment of the exploded mine, whilst her stumpy little mizzen-mast astern

There was a great sigh of escaping air, a dull explosion, and a rumbling crash as engines and guns tore from their beds. Fountains of water shot up which subsided into a wide, creamy expanse of foam streaked with cinders and oil.

Their enemy had sunk!

Jack's knees were shaking beneath him with the horror of it all. He wanted to cry, but he stuck to his job like a little man. He had made a rope fast to a ring-bolt in the deck, and threw it to German after German as they came struggling towards the trawler, hoisting in one after another.

Ching, Joe Graves, and Billy had jumped overboard to help three men who were without lifebelts.

One of these was a German lieutenant, who was crying for help. None of his mates would help him; but Joe Graves plunged in, swam to him, gave him a heavy thump on the nose, and, turning him over on his back, towed him to safety.

Jack's courage was nearly done. He felt that he must run away and hide.

But a sharp order from Di brought him to the wheelhouse. He pushed his way through the thick press of Germans who were packing on the decks.

Di put his head through the open window of the wheelhouse.

"Stop finking, Jack," he cried, "or I'll give yo' a hiding you won't forget as long as yo' live! Take this,

and get below into the hold there will be more room on deck for his friends who are now in the water," said Jack in his best German.

For a moment the big man stared. Then he gave a bitter laugh.

"Come on, boys!" he exclaimed. "These Britishers are sending out children to fight us; but as our captain allows himself to be sunk by a stinking fish-boat, we may as well obey the children. Off with the hatches!"

His men sullenly obeyed the order. They knocked off the stretchers of the tarpaulin and threw off the hatches and commenced sulkily to troop below. Their shipmates still swarmed up the sides, and, though the big petty-officer, who seemed to have taken a fancy to Jack, urged company after company below, the decks were still packed and crowded as the last few men, including the German captain, were taken from the water.

Thanks to the fact that the German crew had rushed forward at the collision, not a single life had been lost by the exploding of the mines astern.

To give him his due, the German captain was the last to leave his sinking ship, and the last to come on board the trawler. The crowd of Germans stood back and saluted as he came, spluttering and swearing, over the bulwarks, hoisting his heavy body laboriously inboard.

On the crowded deck they forced a little open ring before the wheelhouse, where Di stood calmly looking down on his prisoners of war.



The 1st Chapter. How the Spell Came.

"What a glorious pearl. Pure white, and as large as a marble—eh? Look at the label—'The Spell of Fear.' Oh, let's have the story, Bob."

Bob Briscoe was every bit as eager and curious to learn how the lovely gem came by such an eerie title.

And the story is well worth telling. Broome is no place for a sick man. Tucked away in the south-west corner of Dampier Land in West Australia, and ringed with mosquito infested swamps, it supports the toughest crowd you may find anywhere. Pearl divers or dealers every one of them, and of almost every nation. The end of the fishing season in December spells in those latitudes midsummer cyclones.

William Briscoe had been down with fever. His kanakas had deserted, and, to make matters worse, the pearling lugger had sprung a leak.

He got away at last with a scratch crew of two Malays, a black fellow called Boomerang, and a dago named Antony Souza, a first-rate diver.

It was neck or nothing that trip. Pearling is a huge gamble. You fish for mother-of-pearl-shell, which fetches over two hundred pounds a ton at Broome, and you take what fortune sends you in pearls, whose value may run to four figures and sometimes more.

The Southern Cross glowed like points of liquid fire when the smart little lugger tacked out of Roebuck Bay. There was a heavy swell, and the wind was freshening.

"That copper haze yonder means bad weather," remarked the dago uneasily.

Briscoe shifted her beam a point. "We'll risk it, anyway," he growled.

The dago muttered a fierce imprecation. He had half a mind to mutiny.

"We will strike the uncharted seaboard higher up," went on Briscoe grimly. "Those inland seas brought Hargraves a cool three thousand pounds last trip."

"And he lost the number of his mess to those black fiends," commented Souza. He spoke lower. "The crew don't like the notion, mister—they're scared of the black fellows; the most bloodthirsty in Australia."

It was quite true, but Briscoe bore down the objection. Just then they had other risks to face. Through the night, and for the best part of the following days, the lugger thrashed bravely along upon a north-easterly tack.

Then, for three weeks they wound through stranded coral islets, steering into narrow straits and hidden harbours. They were gathering a good harvest of shell, and not a few good pearls into the bargain. Then Boomerang, who was diving in native fashion without any tackle of any sort, brought up a shell which yielded the finest pearl of the lot.

The little crew were busy at their stations, when a cry from Souza brought them scurrying round.

Briscoe eyed him shrewdly. "Ah!" he cried, holding forth the gem for inspection. "This fellow beats your best, Souza, by a long figure."

The dago gave a gasping sort of cry, and his dark eyes flashed. He was moved to envy. Anyone might have noticed that his long, lean fingers twitched with excitement.

He bent forward till his tawny face was on a level with his employer's.

"Ah, yes," he murmured, with the soft lisp of a Malay, "he's the very finest free pearl we've got. Flawless. Yes, I should think he's worth a good double."

"More than that," Briscoe laughed. "Try the weight."

He passed the gem over, and hailed Boomerang. "But the black had gone below."

"A very fine pearl; yes, a very fine one, mister," agreed the dago.

His dark eyes seemed to narrow to pricks. They flashed a swift signal to the Malays. One of the pair reached into the folds of his clothing. The movement arrested Briscoe. He doubled his fist and let drive at the little brown man as the latter lunged spitefully with his long wavy-bladed dagger.

A shrill whistling cry broke from the diver.

Briscoe turned savagely upon him. But too late. The shadow of the second Malay darkened the floor.

All that the Englishman could distinctly recall was a scutter of feet, then Souza's purring laugh lost itself in the plop of a stunning blow, which sent Briscoe sprawling across a hundredweight of shell.

He lay in a crumpled heap against the open hatch.

A deep-throated roar brought back his senses.

Boomerang, naked to the waist, was dancing like a madman round the poop, thrashing the bulwark with his waddy—a native war-club of hard wood—and tearing at his ample beard. The moment he saw Briscoe move, he gave a demoniac leap, which brought him within an ace of his helpless master.

"Prown feller knock white feller a'heap," he spluttered. "Come in. Black feller catch debbil man."

The black's meaning was plain enough. Souza and the two Malays had dropped overboard into the dingy, and had skimmed the narrow spread of water to the mangrove-fringed bank.

The lugger had been made fast in five fathoms of water close inshore.

Briscoe dragged himself up, and, staggering to the black fellow's side, he caught a glimpse of the treacherous rascals as they scrambled ashore.

A torrid sun blazed down on the gently heaving water.

Boomerang pointed to the swiftly retreating figures.

"Come along, white feller!" he yelled.

Next moment he was overboard, and Briscoe, catching something of his vengeful fervour, plunged after him in mad pursuit.

The plunge steadied him. He remembered the pearl and knew that Souza had decamped with it. The

dago could have but one object in bolting. He meant to strike Port Warrender, a small haven about fifty miles due north.

Probably the black fellow guessed as much. Certainly he gave his master little time for reflection. Finding that he lagged, he reached out the waddy and helped him to make the nearest mangrove clump.

His coal-black features worked savagely as he dragged clear of the water. Briscoe judged that it would go hard with Souza and the two Malays if the black fellow should overtake them.

"Brown debbil, him steal pearl b'long to white feller. Black feller come up bottom lugger and see him do so!" he cried, thrusting his black fist in pantomime inside his belt.

"Black feller track debbil—debbil men." So saying, he flung off at a gait which Briscoe found some difficulty to match.

The 2nd Chapter. Outmatched.

Antony Souza and his Malays had got some minutes' start, and that counts in heavy timber. Behind the mangroves tropical ferns fringed the spits of sand and water shallows.

Soft wooded trees in a network of vine and gorgeous flowers fell away into the hazy, hilly distance.

Pursuit in such a riot of vegetation looked hopeless. But on pressing ahead, the maze shaped into countless timbered islets upon a wide lagoon, whose extent was masked by a dense myall swamp.

Boomerang never faltered. His quick eye seized on the fugitives' track, and this drew him in zig-zag fashion across the first shallow. He bounded into a tangle of ti-trees, and there Briscoe lost him until he showed half-way up a fern-massed slope.

"Brown debbils go separate," he called down; then in a lower key: "Black feller fasten on white feller's diver. You come quick, him lost in swamp."

He scuttled on, leaving a light track through the dense undergrowth, which needed sharp eyes and a clear brain to distinguish.

Briscoe was in no condition to command either. The swift, murderous assault on the lugger and this impetuous chase confused him. His head swam, and everything seemed aquiver as he panted and laboured after his fleet-footed guide.

He climbed the slope, and crashed through the rank growth. Suddenly the ground seemed to fall away. He lost his foothold, and next moment went bumping down upon moss and fern-growth for some thirty-feet.

He was not hurt, though fairly

startled to plunge thus completely into heavy, stifling gloom.

The sunlight was completely shut out by spreading fern-trees and blue acacias. The sickly sweet odour of myall wood, and the reek of tropical flowers stifled him. But the worst was not yet. He moved cautiously through the scrub, gasping and cooing at every pore. The sweeter was intolerable. Gradually the dread truth which he had fought against crept into a certainty. He was hopelessly lost.

A single glimpse of sunlight would have sufficed to give him a rough bearing. But nowhere could he distinguish such welcome aid.

The maddening cackle of a laughing-jackass mocked him out of the gloom. This bird, belonging to the Kingfisher family, is a famous snake-killer. Its loud call, oddly like the bray of an ass, seems to paralyse the reptile, and is usually sounded when the latter is near.

Briscoe paid little heed to the warning. He was anxious to attract Boomerang, and hailed him loudly. But he got no answer to his repeated "Cooees."

Again the bird broke into its harsh jabber.

The desperate man paused, startled as the meaning broke upon him.

The ground lay soft, moss-covered and creeper-hid, with here and there a little dry, sandy break between. An ideal lurking place for a deaf adder, or, worse, the deadly and pugnacious tiger snake.

He began to tread gingerly. A flock of white cockatoos shrilled their harsh notes from the upper branches of a big blue gum.

Briscoe took heart. The scrub ahead showed signs of thinning. He quickened his pace, and was nearing the break, when unaccountably the gloom deepened. A curiously muffled clap boomed heavily across the lagoon.

The sound spread into the distance with none of the deep, sonorous roll of thunder; it awoke no echo upon the hills, and was followed by neither wind nor rain. Then it faded dimly, sobbing lower to tremble upon the water, and there expired in one long, eerie rumble.

An unbroken silence followed. The cockatoos still perched high upon the blue gum, but they were as quiet as the Kingfisher, whose cackle would have sounded musical just then.

The gloom faded. Like the creatures around, Briscoe seemed spellbound by a strange fear, till suddenly his eye lighted upon the bright, carmine undercoil of a black snake. Partly concealed by a trail of honeysuckle, the reptile was within easy striking distance. Its narrowed eyes were fixed in unblinking vigilance upon him; its will to destroy being horribly

expressed by the threadlike movement of its pronged tongue.

His hand slipped to the pigskin pouch at his belt. He carried a five-chambered revolver, which was fully charged, and luckily he had some reloads if the worst came to the worst.

The reptile moved swiftly, too; but Briscoe was quick—quicker than the swing of the lozenge-shaped head. The revolver spoke with a sharp, whiplike crack, and as the smoke lifted a black, headless coil slid through the creeper and thrashed the ground at his feet.

Overhead the cockatoos challenged harshly, and again the undergrowth awoke to life.

Pushing and struggling, Briscoe reached a tangle of myall wood, unscreened by higher growth, and got a glimpse beyond. A dark rain-cloud, copper-tinted, hovered inland, suggesting thunder.

He laughed in sheer relief. The problem which confronted him was how to make the lugger before sundown? And this was no light task, for the harder he strove to break cover the more completely entangled he got.

The scrub was impenetrable in places, elsewhere it opened out into a never-ending maze of little glades and channels, some high and dry, but for the most part boggy and unsafe.

If Souza was lost in the swamp as Boomerang had supposed, there was a remote chance of knocking against him, unless, indeed, he had been warned by the shot. Briscoe kept a sharp look out.

Suddenly he heard a stealthy move behind, and, wheeling swiftly, he came face to face with the worst scared black he had ever seen.

The latter crouched low, as though preparing for a spring.

In an instant he was covered with the revolver.

"Baal ('No'), white feller; him no shoot," he faltered.

The words broke in hoarse, quavering monosyllables.

"By all that's wonderful, Boomerang—you!" Briscoe called, uncomfortably impressed by the other's terror.

The black dropped down on his knees.

"White feller get out of swamp. You heard him?" he cried.

"Him! Who? What?"

"The bunyip," chattered the black, in abject terror. "Him make big sound. White feller hear him," he persisted.

Briscoe shook his head. The black, he knew, referred to the bugbear of every native—the semi-fabulous, wholly-elusive, yet very horrible creature which they call the bunyip.

That some monster of appalling bulk and unspeakable ferocity does inhabit these lagoons in the far north of Australia, many travellers agree. A squatter has described it as being bigger than an elephant, shaped like a bullock, with staring eyes and ripping tusks.

In a flash Briscoe recalled the story told him by a doctor who declared that he had seen the creature. This much was certain; the man had started off a sceptic, to return with hair whitened in one dreadful night, a shattered, nerveless wreck. A bushman, his companion, never got back.

These and other ghastly tales told by the blacks flashed upon him with unwholesome vividness, while Boomerang crouched lower, cowed with fright.

"White feller heard him, debbil debbil of the black lagoon," he whimpered. "Black feller corroborroo here'bouts. They very fierce blacks bunyip totem. They catch black feller and white feller—no let-'em go. Gib 'em to debbil debbil of the lagoon."

"Get up, and don't talk rubbish!" retorted Briscoe sharply.

The notion that they might indeed have blundered into some savage tribe's domain was too likely to be comfortable. He felt angry with himself. If the black was right, then Souza and the Malays were as good as lost. The sooner they themselves got back to the lugger the better.

But they were soon to learn the hideous meaning of downright fear, and the extent to which it can paralyse the bravest.

It needed some hard kicks to get Boomerang on the move. Then he lurched like a hopeless drunkard. He was useless. His ability for tracking was gone. He had settled it that sooner or later they were doomed to meet the monster whose booming cry, he persisted, had terrified every creature in the swamp.

Nothing that Briscoe could advance to the contrary would satisfy him.

REMEMBER!

'THE RIVALS OF ROOKWOOD!'

BY OWEN CONQUEST—

The First Story in

OUR MAGNIFICENT NEW SERIES OF COMPLETE SCHOOL TALES

Appears in Next Monday's Issue.

OUR FOOTBALL COMPETITION WILL APPEAR NEXT WEEK—

"White feller hear him and shiver with fright," he protested shrewdly. There was no undercurrent of malice to give sting to the remark. Yet Briscoe felt that it was true. How did the black know?

The latter's dark, rolling eyes watched him with a strange, unfathomed look.

"The white feller half believe," he faltered. "Black feller know. Bunyip totem never leave debbil debbil lake. Why?"

He answered the question himself.

"They can't," he said, in a hoarse shake of fear. "Him debbil debbil uv de water call 'um louder—louder. They com'a back quick. Him never let 'um go. They come back. Bunyip totem very much afraid. They fight kangaroo and emu totem. They catch 'um, drag plenty kangaroos to debbil debbil. Um blackfellers know bunyip magic too strong."

Which meant that sheer downright fear held the luckless savages helpless, and kept them always within hail of the mysterious monster of the lake. Extravagant as the notion sounded, it was not improbable.

Briscoe strove to laugh the black out of his fears; but he was sensible of an eerie, creepy feeling, which made him start at the least sound.

Fortunately, the need for action helped him. For some time they blundered from one break to another; then suddenly a single step brought them clear of the dense scrub.

The black's huge bulk shook with terror, and he screwed both hands over his eyes. It was clear that he expected his ghostly fears to take bodily shape.

They stood on the edge of a sand-flat which spread towards an open slope, brown with coarse porcupine-grass and belted in the distance by tall gum-trees.

A small wallaby bobbed up from a clump of spinnifex, then rustled across the slope towards the gums.

Boomerang uttered a low cry.

Briscoe seized him by the wrist.

"Come along!" he urged. "If we reach the lugger before dark you may laugh at your bunyip, for all the harm it will do. Look lively!"

But the other was not to be reassured. In sheer desperation Briscoe drove the cold muzzle of the revolver into the black's ear.

"Move, or, by Heaven, I'll shoot!" he cried.

The black turned a wild, appealing glance upon him. His teeth chattered; he tried to voice his fears, but failing, he lurched heavily along by Briscoe's side.

They had covered some thirty yards when a loud, jagged yell ripped asunder the brooding silence.

It came from behind. Quick as thought Briscoe leapt round. His heart sank.

A mob of black fellows had broken from the swamp, and were storming across the open, with brandished spears.

"The bunyip totem!" gasped Boomerang.

Their totem mattered little, for their hostile purpose was all too clear. Spears whipped across like hail.

A shot brought down the foremost. "Quick! Make for the timber!" shouted Briscoe.

To his horror, the black stood immobile. He seemed dazed by fright. To linger was madness, and yet he could not leave the helpless wretch to the mercy of that savage crowd.

Quickly he took aim at the leading savage.

The fellow dropped, and for the moment his fall checked the fierce rush of those immediately behind.

Briscoe wheeled round and dragged at his companion. Nothing but immediate flight could save them.

"Make for the timber!" he cried hoarsely. "By heaven, the whole yelling bunch is upon us! Ah!"

He broke off in a sharp cry of pain and reeled. A spear-head quivered in his side. He wrenched it free and at the same time took swift aim at a burly blue-black savage.

Death claimed the yelling black fellow a moment too late. He had time to launch the most deadly of all native weapons—a boomerang—which neither white man nor black can safely defy in the open.

Edged like a knife, the hard scimitar-curved missile droned across on its deadly mission. There was a crash, a piteous cry, and Boomerang went down with his head split.

A demoniacal yell burst from the attacking band. As Briscoe turned to run the mob bounded on him like wolves on an out-run horse. He fought blindly, bent on selling his life as dearly as possible.

The first got a bullet through his head; the next dropped, shot through

the heart. Then the revolver clicked ominously; there was no time to reload.

Struggling to the last, Briscoe clubbed his weapon and brought down two more. Then he was seized from behind and dragged under. Bruised, stunned, and pain-racked, he struggled feebly till his senses mercifully faded into oblivion.

The 3rd Chapter. In Dread of the Unknown.

Night had fallen when next his eyes fastened on the savage crew. In the red glare of half a dozen circling fires the blacks were feasting ravenously.

For a long time he watched them. Then of a sudden he made a horrible discovery. The older men were decked out in the clothes of the two Malays. To the number of fifty or more the rest were hideously daubed in white, yellow, and red clay.

The latter, at a signal from their leader, seized their weapons and sprang, yelling, into the hollow clearing where their captive lay helpless on the ground.

A dismal chant burst from others beyond reach of the fires. Instantly the painted crowd clashed their boomerangs and shields, and, yelling

common with the savage blacks as when, from the shimmer of water beyond, rose a deep, thunderous boom. It seemed to tremble into the bush for miles. Then came a heavy, rolling splash, a shrill, high-pitched, despairing wail, sobbing low into a nerve-racking moan.

The blacks vanished like magic. He saw them scatter up the slope and disappear beyond the fires.

He was alone—alone with that unnamable thing in the black lagoon.

There rose a chill, creeping mist, which to his straining eyes seemed to hover and take shape amid the fringing reeds.

How long he watched it he was unable to say. He was not conscious of cold or of any physical discomfort then.

Again and louder broke that harsh boom. Again the water heaved; and again the weird din sank into a strange, terrifying silence.

He was breathing hard, as a man does who has striven to the uttermost—short, quick gasps matching his rapid heart-beats. A cold, icy horror seemed to hold him there, helpless amid the creeping water.

Then something dimly white pushed towards him.

He gave a bound, only to spin round and come down with a heavy

It's brought nothing but horror and witchery. I was a fool to be tempted!" he cried, in a thick, husky voice.

He held forth the pearl. The light gleamed softly on its lustrous surface.

His offer, and perhaps his broken manner, blunted Briscoe's anger. He seized the pearl, and slipped it into the pocket of his belt.

"Say that you forgive me, Briscoe! I have suffered," pleaded the dago.

"So have I and the rest on account of you," returned Briscoe sharply.

He did not spare the other, and Souza seemed to take his outburst meekly.

"May the Powers defend us!" he cried suddenly. "Have you seen it—the thing in the water?"

His speech broke away into little rippling gasps. In an access of terror he seized Briscoe, and clung to him, while from the water again burst the loud, booming peal.

This time the mysterious sound died down swiftly. To both it seemed to finish in a broken, gurgling note, which was the more horrible because it suggested a closer approach to the patch of swamp.

The wash surged above their ankles.

"Can't you move?" whispered Souza.

A dull, leaden splash followed the movement.

There could be no mistake, for each felt the backwash. They were knee-deep in water.

"It's the thing that the blacks call the bunyip!" screamed the dago.

His grip unfastened. Briscoe thought that he had taken to his heels, till of a sudden he felt a stroke and a swift loosening of his ankle thongs. Souza had separated them with two blows from his knife.

"Come away!" he urged brokenly. "The water is wash down the channel behind. Eh—look out! A flood!"

A cold rush of wind whistled through the sagging gums, and above the wind rose the crash of scuttling timbers. The dull, angry roar of seething waters bore swiftly towards them. Both knew what it meant.

"A cloudburst back in the mountains!" exclaimed Briscoe.

His companion nodded. Then the half-submerged bulk of a huge white gum drove by.

"Hold on for your life, man!" Briscoe yelled.

It was a slender hope, but death stared them in the face. Behind, swirling past the fire-glow, leaped a cataract of foam and dark patches of uprooted timber.

Souza measured the danger accurately. He sprang at the white gum, and got a hold half-way along its length as Briscoe snatched at one of the rent limbs. He was flung astride the heaving mass as it rolled broadside into the lagoon.

There he clung for dear life in the heavy blackness, listening to the angry rush of the flooded river behind, suddenly appalled by a yet louder and more awesome sound ahead.

A feeble shout told him that his companion was sensible of this fresh horror.

The surface of the lagoon heaved and bubbled like a maelstrom. Huge volumes of water leaped upwards, yet the log floated, till in one never-to-be-forgotten moment its fore part snapped. Something of huge bulk wallowed furiously upon them and bore them under. Down and down into the unplumbed depths of the lagoon.

The bole of the white gum seemed to quiver beneath the strokes of a giant's hammer. Twisted, whirled, and tossed, it took a sudden upward turn, and came hissing through the troubled surface.

It was dark, yet not so unutterably black as those horror-laden depths. In the faint starshine Briscoe made out his companion. Souza was still clinging to the trunk.

The swirl of the flood and the splintering crash of wood sounded like the sweetest music after that terrifying din.

He shouted, but his companion paid no heed. Something urged him to make for the dago. But his strength was almost spent, and the log rolled heavily. Slowly he managed to edge closer.

Then the bole drove head-on into a clump of mangroves, and he was flung off by the shock.

He heard the other's wailing cry.

But it was impossible to distinguish him. The water broke heavily through the line of timber, and might be depended on to carry them past unless by an unlucky chance one or both of them should get fast in the mass of fibre and roots.

Groping warily, Briscoe came upon the dago as the current bore them outward into a wide clearing.

"I'm done for, Briscoe!" he groaned. Then his tone underwent a swift and amazing change. "The lugger! Look! We've made the lugger!" he cried. "For the love of Heaven, help me! I'm broken!"

By one of those surprising twists of fortune Briscoe found that they had indeed struck the lugger. There she strained taut to her cable, clear out against the dim phosphorescence of the sea.

Somehow they crawled aboard, and knowing what lay behind that slender barrier of mangroves, they were not slow to give her ample sea-room.

It took them five days to reach Port Warrender, and a sorry plight they cut. Antony Souza's left arm and shoulder were broken, and besides, he bore a curiously punctured wound on his cheek.

"The mark of the 'bunyip'!" he declared, with a shudder.

As to whether that were so Briscoe would not pretend to say. Enough for him that to the end of the chapter he carried with him the spear-wound of the Bunyip Totem.

THE END.



The two men held on to the tree for dear life, whilst behind them, swirling past the fire-glow, leaped a cataract of foam and dark patches of uprooted timber.

their loudest, made a rush towards their victim.

Briscoe gave himself up for lost. But he was resolved to die game, and the horror of it all lent him strength. He twisted to his knees and scrambled up to face them in the murky light.

For one brief moment the black fiends wavered, but for a moment only. With an ear-splitting yell they rushed in upon him, and ere he could deliver a single blow he was seized, caught up, and tumbled helplessly across the barrier of flames.

His captors lost no time over preliminaries. With triumphant shouts, and to the harsh beating of their weapons, the crowd rushed him down a slope to a low-lying spot where a few solitary blue gums reared their dismal shapes against a dark patch of water.

Some bore blazing embers snatched from the fires. All were wildly excited; but what struck the desperate captive as curious was the little heed which the mob paid him.

Swarming into the water, they beat their shields upon the surface; then, to Briscoe's amazement, each torch-bearer flung his blazing brand into the lake.

As the last lurid streak vanished the din rose louder than before, to be silenced in a manner as unexpected as anything that had occurred yet.

Even after the lapse of years Briscoe could never forget the wild, unreasoning terror which seized him in

plash within the swamp. He was, indeed, a captive. The blacks had pinned his ankles to a snagging bit of timber.

He strove frantically to break loose, but the thongs composed of dry fishgut were plaited and fastened in native fashion. He had no knife; no means of separating them amid the ooze and the increasing flow of the water.

Picking himself up, his eye caught the object which had excited his fears. Seen in the glimmer of the distant camp-fires it resembled the long, shapeless reach of some devil-fish.

An eddy brought it closer. He snatched it up in a shiver, horrified to distinguish the torn dungaree jacket of one of the Malays.

Evidently the poor wretch had suffered for his attachment to Souza. Probably all three had been overpowered by the black fellows, and if so, it was not difficult to picture their fate. And yet Briscoe was wrong. Enlightenment came swiftly and strangely.

A soft, squelching sound broke the eerie stillness. The unknown horror held him in bondage, and he almost cried aloud when a touch reached his shoulder.

He twisted round, gasping. There, trembling and craven against the distant fire-glow, stood Souza himself.

"Take it back, the accursed thing!"

"Those black devils have made me fast."

"Ah," he faltered, "they fastened the Malays so! I saw them—watched them from the distance. They stripped them first."

"And killed them afterwards?" Briscoe suggested grimly.

"No. Something came up from the water. It was dark. I can't swear to what happened. I heard the men scream, or I fancied so, for that ghastly row smothered all sound. But I saw the men go down. They were crushed or sucked under. Explain it away as you will, but I'll swear that some monster finished them. Briscoe, can't you understand? It's the fear of it, the horror of it that made a coward of me. I would give all I have to get away, and can't."

Only in time of desperate strait does a man show his own weakness. Souza spoke the truth. Briscoe recalled Boomerang's terror, and his reason for it. The same horrible fascination to linger within hail of that eerie boom lay like a spell upon him, too.

"The water is rising quickly. Oh, by heavens, what's that?" the diver quavered.

For a moment Briscoe's heart seemed to stop. Then it bounded like a mill-race. Where but a moment before the fire-gleam had streaked the lagoon there loomed now a dead black mass too large for any known creature.

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN.



I would like all my readers to look upon me as their real friend, someone to whom they can come for help and advice when they are in doubt or difficulty. It is never "too much trouble" to me to be of use to my boy and girl friends if they feel they would like to write to me.

Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself; let me know what you think of **THE BOYS' FRIEND**. All readers who write to me, and who enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply by post.

The subscription rates for this paper to any part of the world are: 7s. per annum, 3s. 6d. for six months, or 1s. 9d. per quarter, including all double and special numbers.

All Letters should be addressed: The Editor, **THE BOYS' FRIEND**, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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NEXT MONDAY'S MAGNIFICENT SCHOOL STORY.

THE first of a remarkably fine series of school stories—a series which will more than ever enhance the name and fame of the old **BOYS' FRIEND**—makes its appearance in next Monday's issue.

I will not be too long-winded in my praise of these new yarns and their author. Throughout his life Mr. OWEN CONQUEST has kept in close touch with boys, and no man is more fitted to write stories of school life than he. There can be little doubt that his latest creation, **Rookwood School**, will soon be as much a household word with **BOYS' FRIEND** readers as the schools which Henry St. John and David Goodwin have made famous in years past.

Every boy likes a good hero, and **JIMMY SILVER**, who plays the leading part in next week's story,

"THE RIVALS OF ROOKWOOD,"

is a very enterprising and admirable young gentleman, whose acquaintance will be hailed with keen delight by all my chums.

I anticipate a bulging postbag next week, for my correspondents can hardly fail to give expression to the keen feeling of enjoyment they will experience on reading the absorbing adventures of Jimmy Silver at **Rookwood**.

SUNDAY GAMES.

I recently had occasion to reassure one of my chums on the subject of playing games and visiting places of amusement in war-time. A reader who lives at **Devizes** has now written to ask if my remarks in favour of boys' recreations applied to Sundays.

Although I stated most emphatically that I considered it a sin and a shame for lads to be debarr'd from pursuing their usual enjoyments because the nation happens to be at war, I quite as emphatically put my foot down when it comes to Sunday sports.

Of recent years there has been a great agitation in many circles for football on Sunday, and at the risk of being considered an old fogey, I will proceed to give my views on this important question.

There are numbers of people nowadays who treat Sunday just like any ordinary weekday. They cycle, play football, play bridge, and so forth.

Looking at the matter from a common-sense point of view, surely it is a good thing to give games as well as work a rest one day in the week? If one plays no football or visits no places of amusement on Sunday, one returns to such diversions with all the keener appetite on Monday. From that point of view alone I say it is advisable to make a difference on Sunday. As for making a difference on Sunday for other reasons, well, I will leave that to my chums to think about.

The argument most frequently brought forward in favour of Sunday recreation is that there are a great number of people who have no time during the week to play games, and who, therefore, may rightly consider it quite proper to employ Sunday for recreation. This argument does not, in my opinion, legitimise the playing

of games on Sunday by anybody. It points to the fact that our system of work must be wrong to employ people to such an extent that they have no time during the week for playing games and the enjoyment of healthful exercise. By general consent, business hours should be made shorter; employers should be compelled by Act of Parliament to close their shops, warehouses, offices, and mills at mid-day at least one day in the week. If this became the rule all over the country, what a wonderful change would be effected everywhere! Your Editor would no longer be bombarded by so many letters from overworked youngsters asking how they can keep fit.

Until some such law as I have just mentioned comes into force, the appeal for Sunday games will become even more powerful than it is at present.

I am afraid that a goodly number of readers who peruse this page will regard my remarks as "tommy-rot." I seldom attempt to sermonise, and I know that when I do take up a serious subject there will be at least a few of my more thoughtful chums who will give me a hearing. I hope my friend at **Devizes** will be one of them. The Parable of the Sower is applicable to all such discourses as these, whether they be delivered in a pulpit or in the columns of a periodical. The majority of the seed "falls on stony ground," but a little of it is bound to bear fruit, and so the writer who is sincere in his utterances may comfort himself with the reflection that he has done somebody a little good, and that he has not existed for twenty-four hours altogether in vain. And so I hope that my views on Sunday games will not be derided, but loyally backed up by many staunch readers of **THE BOYS' FRIEND**.

A BOY WITH A BIG GRIEVANCE.

As I have remarked many times on this page, and shall doubtless remark again and again, I am always only too pleased to advise those of my chums who are beset with any doubts or difficulties. It is my wish, in fact, to do all in my power to strengthen the firm bonds of friendship which knit me to the countless myriads of boys and girls who read **THE BOYS' FRIEND**.

A great many of my large family of readers are glad to realise this fact, and to avail themselves of my counsel; but I must confess that "Indignant," a **Catford** reader, has brought me face to face this week with what I consider to be a "poser." Nevertheless, I am not daunted by my chum's letter, which contains a very remarkable grievance.

The trouble is this: "Indignant" is now fifteen years of age, and, having left school barely a year, is already beginning to make his mark in an architect's office. He possesses two sisters—both enthusiastic readers of this paper—and one brother, who, "Indignant" informs me, "is nineteen, splits his hair in the middle, and calls himself a man of the world." I can't help thinking that this is a somewhat unkind designation of one's kinsman; but "Indignant" writes under great provocation, and is therefore entitled to a certain amount of excuse.

It appears that this big brother sometimes takes it into his head to pry into my chum's correspondence, and of late he has opened several of his younger brother's letters without scruple or hesitation. "Indignant," not unnaturally, feels as his pen-name suggests.

I know exactly how my **Catford** chum feels, for I have been in a

similar position myself. I well remember as a youngster at school that a certain master was in the habit of intercepting some of my letters, and my feelings towards this intruding pedagogue were of a decidedly warlike nature. I alluded to the learned gentleman as "Nosey Parker," and somehow the name stuck.

But when I come to look back on those days, I can't say I feel altogether proud of having been responsible for this odious nickname. I realise now that my correspondence was opened, not from inquisitive motives, as I suspected at the time, but in order that I might not be the recipient of any communication calculated to do me harm. In certain cases I think a master is quite justified in doing as my old teacher did.

With big brothers, however, the situation takes another turn. I have two brothers some years older than myself, and if either of these worthy fellows essayed to peer into my private correspondence, my next actions towards them would not be suggestive of brotherly love. But then, I have long since completed my fifteenth year, while my **Catford** chum, although I do not wish to injure his feelings by saying so, is not yet of an age when he can think and act in all matters entirely off his own bat.

I cannot imagine that "Indignant's" elder brother has any ulterior motives in acting as he does. Probably he regards it as a brotherly duty, though I must say it seems a strange way of looking at it.

Anyway, "Indignant" should not let his brother's actions lead to a grievous family quarrel. Domestic happiness is the finest ideal on earth, bar none, and when a rift in the lute comes about—well, there is no saying where things will end.

Probably, when my chum gets a little older, his elder brother will not seek to forage into his letters; and if "Indignant's" correspondence is as it should be, of an honest and straightforward nature, why, what has he to fear or resent?

While I am quick to sympathise with my **Catford** reader, I really think he should bear with his brother's whim for a time, at any rate, so that nothing may occur to shatter the harmony of the household.

BOYS WHO WOULD BE TALL.

"Tom Thumb," of **Ilford**, wrote to me a few weeks back asking if I would be good enough to give him particulars on how to increase height. This I did, and my **Ilford** reader wrote a week later saying that he had put my instructions into effect, and had not grown another inch. Several readers have echoed the same extraordinary grumble.

Surely my chums do not imagine I am a magician, who has power to make short boys tall, and vice versa? If they do, then I must tell them that they are quite off-side.

"Tom Thumb" is so enraged by the fact that my advice when acted upon did not take immediate effect that he threatens to give up reading this paper—a very silly attitude indeed for a boy to take up.

Apparently, Master Tom expects me to dole out remedies to undersized boys in the same way as a physician would impart a cure for chilblains. My dear Tom, no one, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature, and I think the remedy for being short is best left to Nature.

I still hold to the advice I gave you, however—advice which will certainly do you no harm, and which I

do not hesitate to repeat for the benefit of your fellow-readers who err on the short side.

These were my remarks:

"If Nature has her limitations, nevertheless, it is within the power of most boys to put on, say, at least one inch to their other inches. The leading of a regular, healthy life, the eating of good and nourishing food, and the taking of outdoor exercise as often as possible will do a lot in this direction.

"Here is an exercise that those interested will find of value: On rising in the morning, fling up the windows—which, by the way, should be open night and day—so that they will allow the air to enter to its fullest possible extent; and then, standing with the hands on the hips, slowly draw the air into the lungs, raising the body gradually until you are on tiptoe, and cannot reach any higher. Then slowly empty the lungs of air, and sink to the heels. Done a dozen times every morning and evening, this will increase the size of the chest, as well as assist Nature in adding further to your inches."

If "Tom Thumb" is the true sportsman I imagine him to be, he will doubtless withdraw his somewhat hasty remarks. After all, Tom, what matters if you are a midget? Many little fellows of my acquaintance fully make up for their deficiency in stature by possessing hearts of gold.

IN PRAISE OF FRANK RICHARDS.

Most readers of **THE BOYS' FRIEND** also make a point of reading "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. **LIBRARY** stories when they appear, and a Bayswater chum has just written praising that fine story, "The Boy Without a Name," by Frank Richards, which appeared early last year, and a few reprinted copies of which are still obtainable.

Here is my chum's letter:

"Dear Editor,—I have just finished reading Mr. Richards' story in 'THE BOYS' FRIEND' **LIBRARY**.

"Public school stories are, and always have been, my favourite reading, and I think I have read nearly all the best-known school stories by all the well-known authors, dead and living; but I can safely say I have never read anything so altogether interesting as 'The Boy Without a Name.' The thorough delineation of the characters of the principals make Mr. Richards' tales intensely absorbing. I congratulate this author in particular on the creation of so delightful a character as De Courcy, the 'Caterpillar.'—Believe me to be,

"A SINCERE ADMIRER

(Bayswater).

"P.S.—More, please!"

Many thanks, indeed, my Bayswater chum! I have passed your letter on to Mr. Richards, and am afraid that gentleman will be in a fair way to developing swelled head when he reads your appreciative remarks. Your request for more stories of a similar character will certainly not be neglected, though Mr. Richards' services are in such great demand that I cannot promise with any degree of certainty when you will get another threepenny book story from his pen.

HAVE YOU A REAL CHUM?

"A man is judged by the company he keeps," runs an old saying, and there is a great amount of truth in it. If a fellow, who, from all outward appearances, seems a decent chap, is often seen in the company of a thief,

one is forced to think that the apparently decent fellow must also be a thief, else why should he seek the latter's acquaintance?

The worst mistake a really decent boy can make is to chum up with a fellow whose ways and habits are not all they might be. At the time the friendship commences the decent chap may not consider that his companion could possibly influence him in any way. But he can. It is far easier for the fellow with the doubtful character to influence the proper chap than it is for the latter to lift up the wild one.

Some boys have a knack of making friends with anybody who will be friendly with them. This is a great mistake, for one "real" friend is worth any number of casual acquaintances.

Don't pal up with the boy next door because he is your neighbour and because he is always handy when you want him. If he is of the right sort, however, seek his society, treat him as your friend, and I assure you your friendship will grow stronger and stronger, and will in after years be invaluable to you.

When at school boys have many opportunities of making friends, but when schooldays are done with these friends disappear. It can't be helped, for every boy does not tread in the same walk of life. Some join the Navy, some the Army, others take up a trade, while business offices attract many.

Once you have left school it is not such an easy matter to make friendships. It is best, therefore, to get one good friend and stick to him, for no fellow is to be pitied more than the one without a real friend.

"Oh," you may say, "why should I take the trouble to find a friend who will always remain my friend? I can always find half a dozen chaps with whom I can spend an enjoyable evening."

Perhaps so. But will these half a dozen fellows rally round you when you are in trouble? No. It is the true friend who is wanted then. It does not matter what sort of difficulty you may be in, a fellow has no right to call himself your friend if he does not stick to you and endeavour to help you out of your trouble.

I remember when I was a boy going to a seaside resort for a holiday. Another fellow and I rode to the place on our bicycles and a very nice ride it was, even though the distance was some eighty miles. We had a very pleasant stay at the seaside, and when the day came for us to return home we were feeling quite fit for the journey.

We at length started away. I set the pace at the outset, and after a while I was about a quarter of a mile ahead of my companion. He caught me up at length, and asked me why I was riding ahead of him, and I told him rather sarcastically that I didn't want to crawl along. He warned me that I had a long way to go, and that if I continued at such a pace I should crack up.

Being young and headstrong at that time, I took no notice of my friend's advice, and went on in front of him again. After a while I unfortunately got a puncture, which was immediately mended. Owing to the hot weather, however, the patch would not stick, and before we arrived home in the early hours of the morning my tyre had been taken off at least a dozen times.

Now, to show you the value of a true friend, I will tell you that it was not I who mended the punctures each time. I never could fiddle about with tyres, and my friend knowing what a dud I was, attended to them himself. He forgot all about the way I had treated him at the beginning of the ride. He realised that I was in a difficulty, and he did his utmost to help me out of it.

This is only a minor instance of a friend's loyalty, but I've no doubt this friend of mine would stick by me in bigger troubles. And that is the kind of friend you want, boys—a friend who will be just as pleased and willing to share your troubles as your joys, and one who will stand by you through thick and thin.

You have only to have the sympathy and help of a friend in a trouble to realise that a true chum is worth all the gold in the world.

Your Editor

THERE ARE SOME GRAND NEW STORIES AND SPECIAL FEATURES COMING.

Full of Fun and Excitement.

Start Reading To-day.



THE HEADMASTER'S DAUGHTER

A STORY OF STOKERICH COLLEGE - BY SIDNEY DREW.

NEW READERS SHOULD MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF :

LAINLEY, ORRESS, and BURTWICK	Members of the Fourth Form.
PINWELL, CORFE, and RACE	Who belong to the "Snoggs."
Mr. AINSFORTH	The Fourth Form-master.
Mr. GUDDINGLEY	The Fifth Form-master.
SENNETT	The Captain of the School.
ENID ARCOTT	The Headmaster's Daughter.

On Enid's twentieth birthday she is presented with a valuable necklace by her father. Later, this is stolen, and suspicions fall on Sergeant Whittle, a school servant, who is missing.

Mr. Guddingley finds a pawnticket for a diamond necklace in Mr. Ainsforth's pocket, and denounces the Fourth Form master to the Head. The latter demands an explanation, but Mr. Ainsforth, who really had another necklace which he gave to the headmaster's wastrel son to pawn to save him from disgrace, refuses to give it, and eventually hands in his resignation.

Lainley learns that the Snoggs have gone to a tunnel for some shooting practice, and follows them. He comes across a fellow named Luke Webster endeavouring to catch rabbits with the aid of a ferret.

Suddenly he hears squeals, and thinking that the rabbits are being unnecessarily tortured, he makes a vicious dig at the earth with a spade. Lainley receives a big surprise when the bottom seems to fall out of the earth.

(Now read this week's superb instalment).

The Tunnel and Its Secret.

It has been frequently stated that when a person is in a position of grave and dreadful peril the incidents of his past life crowd into his mind with great vividness and at amazing speed.

Nothing of the kind happened to Lainley. Possibly there had been nothing in his past career worthy of being recalled. He was convinced himself that his position was one of intense gravity and danger. Only the spade that had been kind enough to fall crossways over the hole through which he had plunged prevented him, in his agitated mind, from plunging into a darksome pit a thousand feet deep, with icy water at the bottom, and newts and toads and other cheerful creatures to bear him company.

"Ye-ow! Help! Help!" yelled Lainley, in frantic despair.

If Corbrook had sauntered along just then, with his blue spectacles and tallowy black hair, he could have told Lainley all about it.

Corbrook was a snob and a prig. He knew the history of Stokerich and its geography from A to Z. He could have informed Lainley, who was clinging like grim death to Webster's spade, that he was more in than out of the old conduit that had once supplied the school with water from the reservoir.

Nowadays Stokerich drew its water supply from the company's main, and the conduit had long since been blocked up and forgotten except by such learned and painstaking fatheads as Corbrook himself. But Corbrook did not saunter along.

"Yow! I'm going! I can't hold on much longer! Help, Webster—anybody! Help!" wailed Lainley.

The ferret, very lively after its long sleep, came out to see who was making all the noise, peered down at Lainley with its cruel little red eyes, and scampered back into a rabbit-hole.

Lainley was fairly nimble on the horizontal-bar in the gymnasium. He could have pulled himself up, and perhaps made his escape. But the slightest movement brought down a shower of sand and soil, and he was in dread of a general collapse that would bury him completely.

"Ow!" It was all over. Lainley's fingers slipped from the handle of the spade. From his parched and ashen lips broke a scream of agony. All was over except the bump.

Out bobbed the ferret again to see the last of him and to gloat over his hideous doom. Down went Lainley, hurtling into the black throat of that fearsome abyss, down into the black chaos of the blood-freezing gulf—down, down, down!

Exactly three feet two inches into that pit of doom and gloom went Lainley of Ainsforth's. Then he stopped hurtling. He had fallen on his feet. He wiped the sand from his parched and pallid lips, and shook it out of his ears.

Rescue was near at hand, but, alas! it had come too late.

Lainley was in the fearsome abyss right enough, and he thought he might as well explore it a little before calling out the lifeboat or the local fire-escape to rescue him. And Lainley was pretty sure that as the market price of a ferret was about four shillings and sixpence, a thrifty person like Luke Webster would not permit an animal of such vast value to roam at large without making a stern effort to recover it.

Lainley's last shout had fallen upon the ears of Mr. Pootley. Mr. Pootley was on the towing-path taking a brisk constitutional. He stopped, with his nose in the air and his learned head on one side.

"Hah!" exclaimed Mr. Pootley, looking at the river and at the sky and at his boots. "What was that? It bore a strong resemblance to a human voice. Dear me!"

If there had been anybody in the river, it is difficult to say what wild deed of heroism Mr. Pootley's recklessness would have forced him to attempt. Luckily nobody appeared to be in danger of drowning, so Mr. Pootley had no need to get his feet damp.

Suddenly he caught sight of the spade, the signs of recent excavation, and a dead rabbit that Luke had netted soon after he had begun to dig.

Mr. Pootley went down and picked up the rabbit. The animal was still warm. Mr. Pootley lapsed into learned thought and tremendous meditation.

"The mus domesticus, or common mouse, and the common wild rabbit," mused Mr. Pootley, "are both rodents, both night prowlers, and, in a fashion, of similar habits. The microbes I discovered on the mouse brought to me by Follett were only discovered on the ears of the animal. As yet I have been unable to identify them, but if they are new to science they will cause a remarkable sensation. Why, good gracious, the thought in itself is staggering in its immensity!" exclaimed Mr. Pootley, smiting his brow. "If on the ears of a mouse, why not on the ears of a rabbit? I must have these ears and make immediate investigation. It is staggering in its sublimity. Where is the owner of this animal?"

Mr. Webster was too busy having a fight with a couple of men who had come to cut off the water to worry about anything else. And Mr. Pootley was a man of honour. Calculating that if one rabbit is worth one shilling, the ears of one rabbit ought to be dear at threepence, Mr. Pootley placed three copper coins on the spade, and took out his pocket-knife. To open the knife he had to drop the rabbit he was about to operate upon.

"Can I believe my eyes?" gasped Mr. Pootley. "Can I—Astonish-

ing! What is the meaning of this phenomenon?"

The phenomenon at which Mr. Pootley was gazing through his eyeglasses was sufficiently remarkable to a man with his studious and inquiring mind.

The defunct rabbit was going down a hole. It was not going down on its legs, but insinuating itself by a succession of quick, spasmodic jerks. No self-respecting dead rabbit would have descended to such base conduct. But there could be no doubt about the descending part of the problem. The rabbit was jerking itself on head-first.

"That is certainly the most curious and perplexing thing I have ever witnessed," said Mr. Pootley, mystified. "Dear me! How it resists! It is apparently quite lively."

Mr. Pootley grasped the vanishing ears of the curious rodent and pulled. Mr. Pootley, having the weight on his side, won the contest. He drew the rabbit out with a jerk, and gave a squeal of dismay, for attached to the nose of the rabbit was a snakey, dirty-white, spitting horror with blazing red eyes and bristling whiskers.

Mr. Pootley never thought at the moment to let the rabbit go. He stepped back in his fright and trod on the spade. The spade lay balanced like a see-saw across a clod of earth, and immediately he stepped upon it the handle flew up and smote him on the back of the head.

Mr. Pootley threw up his arms to balance himself as his feet skidded, and in some foolish way managed to make a kind of fur necklace of the ferret and the rabbit. True, he was a naturalist, but he was one of those naturalists who prefer their specimens dead. The only specimens Mr. Pootley cared to deal with in their ferocious wild state and unmuzzled were microbes.

Horried, he clutched the ferret that was dangling over his waistcoat to fling it from him. Resenting this liberty, the ferret promptly released the rabbit, and took hold of Mr. Pootley's thumb.

Mr. Pootley left shortly afterwards, anguish on his brow, his thumb in his mouth, and a slight but painful bump on the back of his head, to disinfect his wound.

He soon met his friend Mr. Gunder, who had come in quest of him. Mr. Gunder looked mildly surprised, for Mr. Pootley rarely pranced along wearing his hat over his right eye-brow and sucking his thumb.

"You seem agitated, my dear fellow," said Mr. Gunder, in dismay. "Why this haste? You alarm me. Surely you have not encountered that German brigand in broad daylight?"

"Noth, Gunder," replied Mr. Pootley, with some difficulty, for he still kept his thumb in his mouth. "Ith—ith noth tho, I have been bittoth by a ferocioth animal—a pole-cath, or a weaselth, or a ferreth,

which thurn poaching rascalth lefth ath large. Ith hurth me, Gunder." "Dear me! How unfortunate, old fellow!" said the sympathetic science-master. "Come at once and let me cauterise the wound. Such creatures carry infection on their teeth. I have known cases of tetanus—"

Mr. Gunder may have meant well, but his last word made his friend pale a little, for tetanus is only another term for that most unenviable complaint, lockjaw.

"I implore you not to suggest anything so shocking, Gunder!" said Mr. Pootley, removing his thumb.

"Certainly not! But it is only wise to take ordinary precautions, old fellow. And as we are approaching the quadrangle, perhaps I may, without offence, call your attention to the manner which, in your natural agitation, you are—er—wearing your hat—or—in rather a curious manner. Allow me, Pootley."

As Mr. Gunder straightened his friend's headgear Mr. Pootley wilted visibly, and said:

"A-ouch! Do you see anything there, Gunder?" he asked, wincing.

"Yes, indeed, there is a distinct swelling, my poor fellow," said Mr. Gunder, examining the back of Mr. Pootley's brainy head. "A pronounced swelling. Were you bitten there also?"

"I can hardly say, but I should think it is improbable. I can only surmise that this disreputable poacher was lurking somewhere in concealment, and was in his fuddled mind under the impression that I was about to steal his ill-gotten rabbit. Doubtless he struck me a cowardly blow from behind, and fled for his life. But do not delay, Gunder. Let us apply antiseptics and arnica."

Mr. Gunder and his wounded comrade faded away into the quadrangle.

As a great poet has truthfully remarked, it is a considerable distance from somewhere or other to the abode of the most charming young lady of his acquaintance in far-off Tipperary. This truth also might have been applied to the position of the dead rabbit where Mr. Pootley had left it as compared with the position of the nearest hole.

Quite scornful of the fact that by its disreputable conduct it had hindered one of the most important scientific discoveries of modern times, the ferret scratched its whiskers and pondered. The ferret wanted to get back to the trenches, so to speak. It knew that Webster, the enemy, would return and attempt to drive it out and undermine the position. Even a ferret cannot expect to hold a trench without rations, and here was food in plenty for quite a long siege.

The road to the trenches was uphill, and the bunny was heavy and plump. But a ferret is a plucky and determined little animal. It was determined to get the provisions safely into the lair before the arrival of Luke Webster if it had to work overtime without any extra wages. So the ferret began to work its way up hill, dragging the rabbit after it.

Why the Rifle Club Broke Up in a Hurry.

Though it may seem somewhat of a shame to have left Lainley in a hole for such a long time, it was necessary for the proper understanding of the story to describe the little adventure that befell Mr. Pootley, the ferret, and the defunct rabbit, and more particularly the ferret and the rabbit.

Lainley, after his frightful plunge of three feet two inches into unfathomable space, was agreeably surprised to find no icy water, no newts, and not even the suspicion of a toad. The floor, in fact, was quite dry and sandy, and the air was fairly fresh. The roof and walls were neatly bricked. Lainley had found a weak spot in the brickwork to come in by.

"I say, what a spanking robbers' cave this would make," thought Lainley. "I wonder if there's any way out or in except through that puncture I made in the roof."

The place would be an ideal secret den for Orress, Burtwick, and himself if there was any access to it. He turned away from the hole. To the left a solid mass of brickwork barred the way. Lainley lighted one of his pieces of candle, and went along the tunnel. The air was so fresh that he was sure there was some other outlet. The floor sloped gently for quite thirty yards.

"Like a silly German sausage, closed at both ends!" muttered Lainley. "Oh, hold me tight! What's this?"

The candle swayed and guttered,

and a cold draught of air, as he held it up, whistled softly. Lainley was no Robinson Crusoe in this case. Somebody had been there before him. Lainley had not discovered another naked footprint in the sands. The people who had been there before him were not idiotic enough to tramp about there without their boots and socks.

Lainley saw a rather expensive electric hand-lamp in a mahogany case suspended from the roof by a cord. The lamp was so fixed that when the light was switched on the full light would fall upon a square card affixed to the wall. There was a black circle in the centre of the card, and various other numbered circles radiated from it.

"A target," thought the explorer. "Then that little ass Follett did speak the truth for once by accident. Yah! What rotten shots!"

There were no bullet-marks on this particular card, but all round the bricks were chipped and broken. Lainley was wondering how the Snoggs gained entrance to their underground shooting-gallery. The secret was soon his own. An old sack screened a narrow aperture on the extreme right of the wall. Lainley squeezed through. The ground was no longer dry and sandy, but covered with puddles. Old bricks had been placed at intervals to act as stepping-stones. On his left hand the light of day was streaming in, and Lainley saw the river gliding past. Beyond that the tunnel continued its way in deepening gloom.

Lainley thought he knew all about it by this time, but not as much as Corbrook might have told him. The Snoggs reached their shooting-gallery by way of Webster's arch. How they had lighted upon the inner tunnel he could not guess. And the very next instant the hollow sound of voices came out of the gloom, and a distant light blinked. The marksmen were approaching.

"Rotten luck!" growled Lainley. "No chance of playing a jape on 'em now to scare 'em out of the place and bag it for ourselves. Never mind. I'll make the bounders let us come here and shoot, or give the show away."

If he had turned under the arch leading to the river, he must have been seen. He had no hope of escaping detection, but he shaded the candle, and hastily retreated behind the sack.

"Cave! Shurrup!" said Pinwell's voice. "River, you know. There may be some bounder on the towing-path."

"He'll only think we're giddy mermaids singing," said Corfe. "Don't drop that rug, Race, or I'll skin you!"

The voices died down into a murmur. Then came a splash and a wrathful remark from Corfe, who had slipped off one of the bricks into some inches of muddy water.

"What a muffed I am!" muttered Lainley. "Why, the pitch is queered already! I forgot that leak I dug on the roof. When they see the merry daylight, they'll sheer off. If they don't, old Luke Web will soon be poking his red nose to see what it's all about. Well, I'm blessed! Ow! That's warm!"

Lainley felt the candle burning his fingers, and dropped what was left of it without any arguing. He was considerably surprised to find himself in profound darkness.

"Well, that puts the lid on the whole box of tricks and screws it down!" he exclaimed, mystified.

Mr. Pootley had put a lid on the hole, but not intentionally. Before starting to dig for the ferret, Luke Webster had discarded a thick, stiff tarpaulin jacket he had been wearing during the rain, and Mr. Pootley had back-heeled this garment over the hole. Had he not already found the way out, Lainley might have felt uneasy. He swiftly struck a match. There was a little hollow in the wall at the side. Lainley squeezed himself into it.

At the far end of the tunnel gleamed the lights of flash-lamps. The Snoggs were heavily laden. Corfe paused to switch on the lamp over the target. Then they came forward quite close to where Lainley was hiding. Pinwell carried an old cane-bottomed chair, and Race a roll of cocoanut matting.

"Spread the rug down there, kid," said Pinwell. "That's just the distance. The target shows up well—don't it? I'll bet I'll be able to plug the centre every time after a bit more practice. I shall be in the cadets next term, and those cadet cads think they know a bit. I'll surprise

WATCH MY CHAT FOR FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS.—ED.

"em when we start shooting. Bit of an eye-opener for 'em if I whacked Sennett for the silver cup—eh?"

"You want to do something to get your money back, Pin," said Race. "I can't get over the price of this giddy rifle. Nearly four pounds—eh? I thought you could get a rifle to fire these little cartridges for about seven-and-six."

"Oh, I expect you can get a rotten toy, but this is the genuine article!" said Pinwell loftily.

The Snoggs had evidently visited Mrs. Harris at the tuckshop, for Corfe put Pinwell's vacuum flask and a large paper bag on the chair. Then Corfe took a seat on the mat on one side with a box of .22 cartridges, and Race took a seat on the other side and polished up the lenses of a pocket telescope with his handkerchief.

"I wish I hadn't forgotten that giddy guide-book," said Pinwell; "but it doesn't signify, 'cos I can remember most of the twaddle. Firing in a recumbent position, that's it. Hold the rifle easily but firmly, and get your eye on the barlycorn sight. That's the giddy twiddle-bit at the end of the barrel."

"Snick her open. Here's a cartridge, old man," said Corfe.

Except for the illuminated target, there was no other light to distract the marksman's attention, as Pinwell wriggled about on the mat trying to get an easy position.

Lainley reached out, and abstracted the vacuum flask. As Lainley had anticipated, the flask was filled with hot coffee. Lainley helped himself.

"Ain't you ever going to shoot before we grow whiskers and want shaving, Pin?" asked Race.

"It ain't so jolly easy," said Pinwell. "The book says, get the sight dead on the bottom of the bull, but the rotten thing wobbles about. Now, I'll plunk it. How's that for a middle?"

"Nowhere near it," said Race, the telescope to his eye. "You were yards to the left. I saw the mortar fly."

Lainley reached out a second time, and took a cheesecake out of the bag. He was rather glad he had come.

"What a swindle!" growled Pinwell. "The silly thing can't shoot true. I was on it as dead as nuts that time. I wish they'd put some springs or feathers in this mat, it's so jolly hard. Gimme another roll, Corfe. I'll let daylight through this go."

Lainley helped himself to more coffee. It was very nice, so were the cheesecakes.

"How's that?" cried Pinwell.

"A daisy," answered Race; "a regular beaut! Another shade, and you'd have been bang in the middle of the old bull's optic. You won't beat that in a hurry, old son. Close to the centre, Corfe."

"Oh, I'm getting my hand in!" said Pinwell, very pleased with himself. "You can't expect it all at once. I'll be able to write my name on it soon with bullets. More ammunition, kid. I'll riddle it."

"Easy a minute," said Race. "Don't shoot!"

While Lainley was sipping his third cup of coffee, Race approached the target.

"Why, you haven't touched it, you jackass!" said Race. "It ain't a bullet-hole at all, only a bit of white mortar off the ceiling or somewhere. Turn it up, and let me show you."

"Don't bluff!"

"I ain't bluffing," said Race. "You ain't been within forty miles of it."

"Then what did you tell me I'd made a bull for?" shouted Pinwell.

"I must have been up the pole to think you ever could," said Race witheringly.

Pinwell made a fourth attempt.

"Missed again," said Race.

"You're making that poor wall look as if it had smallpox. This is your last go. We agreed on five shots apiece, didn't we, Corfe? Shut your eyes this time, Pin. Whoop! You're on it at last."

"On the bull?"

"No, on the giddy mat," said Race, grinning. "You're as cruel to that wall as the Germans were to Louvain. Shift over, and take the telescope. It's my turn now."

Lainley did not care for any more coffee, so he replaced the depleted flask on the chair. Discovery was certain. He could not remain there until the Snoggs had fired off a hundred rounds and taken their departure. It was not exciting enough. And he was not sure as to the reception he would receive. It was dangerous to groan, or shriek, or play ghost. He might scare the

Snoggs into flight by that method, but the rifle might go off in the excitement, and bit something besides the unlucky wall. Lainley did not want to be that something. The rifle cracked.

"O-oh! Murder! Wharrisit? O-oh! Whar-whar-wharrisit?" shrieked Pinwell.

A sudden light streamed down from above. Something heavy fell with a thud on Pinwell's head, followed by a little avalanche of sand and moist earth. As Pinwell shrieked, Race swung round on the mat and saw a horrible, bristling, fiery-eyed object within an inch of his nose.

"Ow! Hellup!" yelled Race, startled out of his very wits.

Thud! came something else on Pinwell. He struggled from beneath it, his hair on end. Corfe and Race were already leaving the district. They bolted along the tunnel without looking back, and Pinwell followed with his long legs.

Once past the sack, they did not trouble about the stepping-stones, but splashed their way along through mud

Mr. Pootley Gives an Admirable Lecture on Ferrets.

Miss Enid had been attracted to the spot by hearing extraordinary cries. She gazed down at Lainley in wonder. Lainley had not the genius or presence of mind of his chum Orress, but he had got all his wits together by this time, and was equal to the emergency.

"Don't come too near, Miss Enid," he said, "for I don't think the roof is very strong."

"But what was all that shouting, Lainley?"

"Only Pinwell," grinned Lainley truthfully. "He can't stand ferrets. Some people can't. I'm a bit nervous of handling this chap myself, so I'll keep an eye on him till Webster comes. A stray ferret is a jolly lot worse than a fox. If he got in amongst your chickens at night there'd be a regular slaughter."

"Then please don't let the horrid thing get away, Lainley!" said the Head's daughter, quite satisfied.

When Enid had gone Lainley took

bribe to old Moxon, who had met him out of bounds the day before. Then he switched off the light above the target. It was a thousand to one that the Snoggs would be hanging about the mouth of the arch, but there was no help for it. He was about to light a candle and make his way over the stepping-stones, when the creaking of oars made him hurry towards the river.

"Gorgeous luck! It's old Higsby!" said Lainley, and whistled through his fingers.

Higsby looked after the school boat-house. He was a good-natured, weather-beaten old fellow, who never asked a junior questions. He pulled alongside, and ferried Lainley over. Lainley presented him with the rabbit.

In a few minutes Lainley was in the study, breathlessly relating the afternoon's adventures to Burtwick and Orress.

"Most amusing thing I've heard in my life, as the man said when they told him his mother-in-law had just died," grinned Orress. "And those Snoggs are back. I heard 'em talking as I passed their room."

"They'll be after their stuff when they pull round a bit on ginger-wine, that's a moral," said Burtwick. "They can't, though. Tea will be ready in a minute, and it's early prep. to-night. I saw it stuck up on the notice-board, so Ainsforth must be going off somewhere to-night. Kid, you made one frabjous mistake. You ought to have plugged that hole up. Webster will find it, and raid the show."

"My hat! I never gave that a thought," said Lainley. "But my idea might work yet, so it don't matter much what Luke Webster does. The Snoggs can't very well get back till after prep, and they won't know anything at all about Web. Couldn't we watch 'em off, and drop a hint to Poot and Gunder and Moxon that the German johnnie is hiding in the arches? They couldn't be rough on the Snoggs for it, you know."

Orress quashed the idea at once.

"No masters, kids," he said. "We might raise a smile out of Poot and Gunder, but we'll leave masters clean out even when we're dealing with hoggly Snoggs. Watch 'em, and I'll do a bit of thinking. When in doubt come to your grandpa Orress. He's got all the brains of the family. Just trust grandpa."

The three Snoggs did not appear at teatime, but they were in the house; and Burtwick, who could see the gate from his place at table, kept watch to make sure that they did not sneak out.

Though the Fourth-Formers and the Snoggs were perfectly distinct and separate, early preparation meant the absence of Mr. Ainsforth or Mr. Pootley. On such occasions only Snoggs and Fourth-Formers were bunched together for the time being under the eye of the master who happened to be at home.

Mr. Pootley was in charge, and Mr. Pootley had his thumb bandaged. Unfortunately for the boys, no symptoms of lockjaw had yet appeared. On the contrary, Mr. Pootley's jaw was in excellent working order. The presence of the Snoggs caused quite a crush in the class-room.

"Silence—silence!" said Mr. Pootley.

"As Mr. Ainsforth informs me that he has not set any—Follett, sit up!—set any definite lessons to his Form, I— Pinwell, cease giggling! My dear boy, if you knew how completely idiotic you look when you giggle, you would refrain! You look idiotic at any time, but when you giggle you are utterly imbecile! As I was about to state, no specified lessons have been set, so it is my intention—fifty lines, Follett, for putting your tongue out at Orress!—to give a short natural history lecture instead. Lainley, instead of twiddling your thumbs and squinting, suggest an animal or bird."

"Ferret, sir," said Lainley.

If he had thought of all the animals in the London Zoo, Lainley could not have picked out a worse one for Mr. Pootley to lecture on. Mr. Pootley abhorred ferrets.

"Very well," he said, with a snort. "Let us discuss the ferret. Like the otter, the stoat, and the skunk, the ferret belongs to the weasel tribe. What was I saying, Follett? What was the last word I used?"

"Tripe, sir!" answered Follett, amid a chorus of sniggers.

Follett received another fifty lines, and was told to stand on the form. The Snoggs could not imagine what could have happened to their master. Once he had been meek, drowsy, and easy-going, but for the last week or so it was about as easy to catch him

asleep as one of the weasels he was speaking about. Having thus dealt with Follett, Mr. Pootley glanced quickly at his bandaged thumb. A ferret had done that, and revenge is sweet. The fire of battle came into Mr. Pootley's eyes, and smouldered there behind his spectacles.

"The ferret, as I was saying," went on Mr. Pootley, "is a semi-domesticated member of the weasel family, and the weasel family contains in its ranks the most fiendish, the most bloodthirsty, repellent, pugnacious, evil-smelling, hideous, ferocious, untamable, ungrateful, besotted, rapacious, gluttonous, insatiable, obnoxious, hateful, depraved, and accursed class of creatures that Nature has yet produced."

Mr. Pootley paused to take breath and to smile a satisfied smile. He was getting some of his own back.

"We know," continued Mr. Pootley, "that in a savage there may be nobility. When erect and dauntless and unconquered in his native wilds he rushes to battle or to the chase there is nobility in him. But—hum!—when he becomes semi-civilised by the white man, when he washes off his war-paint and dons an old tall hat and a pair of ragged trousers and smells of gin that primitive nobility vanishes."

"I do not admit," proceeded Mr. Pootley, "that there ever was an atom of nobility in any ferret. I mean only to point out that man, in adapting this vile and insidious vermin to his own barbaric use, has deprived it even more. It lurks in hedges and secret places, it crawls by night, it outsnares the snake in its cunning. Red murder and treacherous slaughter are its delight. It bites the hand that feeds it; it tears and rends and mauls. Its—er—horrid lips are perpetually crimson with innocent blood. Hateful, insidious, treacherous, crawling, rapacious, gluttonous, insatiable, pugnacious, hideous, depraved, and utterly repellent to every decent man, bird, or beast, a horror of horrors, and unutterably vile—such is the ferret!"

"Sounds just like a Snogg, only more so, sir," said Orress, as Mr. Pootley paused.

At once all was uproar. The Fourth-Formers greeted this rather sweeping statement with yells of laughter and delight, and the angry Snoggs booed and groaned.

Mr. Pootley secured peace by threatening to detain them all. Having thus unmasked and utterly flattened out the whole race of ferrets, Mr. Pootley was in a good humour, and merely censured Orress. And at last he dismissed them.

"Keep jolly close to the hoggly Snoggs, kids," said Lainley. "Don't let those three beauties slip."

Corfe and Race lingered outside the class-room door for Pinwell who was looking for something in his desk.

When Pinwell came out and joined them Burtwick followed. The Snoggs went upstairs together, with Burtwick lurking at their heels and little Follett immediately in front.

"Hallo! Have they found the diamonds or the tuckshop burglar?" cried Race. "Here's the police force with news of some sort, I'll bet!"

Burtwick saw the uniformed figure of Constable Wossler approaching, accompanied by Mr. Moxon. The bell-ringer pointed his forefinger at Pinwell.

"Now, Mr. Pinwell," said the constable, opening a fat pocket-book, "where's that there gun-l licence for carrying that there gun?"

Pinwell started guiltily and paled, and there was a gleeful grin on Follett's face.

"Wha-wha-wha-what gug-gug-gun?" stammered Pinwell.

(Pinwell little thought when he bought the gun that he would need a licence. It is, however, against the law to fire a gun without possessing a licence. What will happen to Pinwell now that he has fallen foul of the law? Will Constable Wossler assert his authority, and march him off to the police-station? If so, what will Pinwell do to get out of the difficulty? You should not miss next Monday's enthralling instalment. By the way, next week appears the first of our grand new series of school tales, entitled "The Rivals of Rookwood." This story will be top-notch, and any reader of THE BOYS' FRIEND who fails to read this superb yarn is missing a real treat. The "Rookwood" stories are going to be the best that have ever appeared in the good old Green 'Un.)



"O-oh! Murder! Wharrisit? Whar-whar-wharrisit?" shrieked Pinwell, and as a sudden light streamed down from above something heavy fell with a thud on his head, followed by a little avalanche of sand and moist earth.

and puddles, and never stopped until they were out in the wholesome daylight and fresh air.

"Well, if that don't take all the dog-biscuits!" said Lainley, not a little scared himself.

The light revealed three new visitors to Lainley—a ferret, a dead rabbit, and an old tarpaulin jacket. The ferret was sitting on the rabbit, and it was very angry about things. It is hard lines to fag a heavy rabbit up a steep hill by inches at a time to reach a respectable rabbit-hole, and then to find that the hole is not a rabbit-hole at all, but a sort of glorified drain with a lot of human idiots at the bottom of it.

This sort of thing is enough to disgust any ferret. The animal was not even grateful to Pinwell for having broken its fall.

"Hi! Say, Webster, here's your old ferret!" cried Lainley.

But, owing to the fact that he had lost the fight with two gentlemen who had called either to collect the overdue water rate or cut off the supply, Webster had not returned. A face looked down, but it was not Webster's. It was the pretty, surprised face of Enid Arcott.

a seat on the cane-bottomed chair, and giggled a little.

The ferret, tired and disgusted with life, had curled itself up sleepily on Webster's tarpaulin. Lainley knew that the scared Snoggs would return. They were not likely to abandon such valuable property as the rifle, vacuum flask, and lamp. But Lainley did not expect them to come back at a moment's notice. They would not recover from their fright so easily, and they would do some scouting before they again ventured to explore those gloomy depths.

After putting out his hand and withdrawing it several times, Lainley at last ventured to take hold of the sleeping ferret, which made no attempt to bite. Then he climbed on the chair, and neatly and lightly threw the animal through the hole. It was the best he could do. He knew the ferret would go to ground, and that Webster would eventually find it.

He folded the rifle up in the tarpaulin, and placed it in the hollow where he had been hiding.

"If I can only put Gunder and Pootley on it," he thought gleefully. "Oh, what joy!"

He took the rabbit with him as a

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START READING TO-DAY!



The Fighting Drum Major.

By

Captain Malcolm Arnold

(Author of "For Cup and Belt," "Off to Australia," etc., etc.)

NEW READERS SHOULD KNOW THAT

TOM BAYNE is the drum-major in the Loyal Doverport Regiment. Though keen to go to the war, he has to stop at home to nurse a broken arm, the result of a foul plot against him. When he recovers he is ordered to take a number of recruits to Bonlogne.

He has not been on the Continent long before he falls in with the Loyal Doverports. He takes his place in the trenches, and when the order comes he fires into a mass of Germans who are charging forward.

(Now read on.)

The Doverports Distinguish Themselves.

Crack, crack, crack!
The modern rifle has a thin report and shows but little flame. In the darkness, however, the tiny blue sparks, spitting out fiercely from the rifles of the advancing Germans, made little spots of blue light all along the slope.

The bullets, whining shrilly as they passed, began to rain like hail along the trench. It was fairly evident that there was quite a big body of men attacking, and had it not been for the timely warning of the drum-major, the trench occupied by the Loyal Doverports might have been caught napping.

As it was, the storm of bullets that blazed out suddenly from the men in the trenches gave full token to the advancing Germans that they would have to fight for every inch of the ground.

Some of the newspapers at home have been inclined rather to sneer at the German as a soldier, but the more level-headed of us realise, that whatever his faults may be, Hans knows how to die.

The close-formed ranks of the enemy, harried and racked by the never-ceasing rifle-fire from the trenches, came on steadily, paying their tribute of dead for every inch of ground covered.

Tom, snuggling down in his trench, fired until his rifle was red-hot, and the sweat poured down his cheeks, despite the fact that the night was cold. He could just make out the shadowy form of the enemy in front of him, and clip after clip of cartridges were shipped in the chamber of the magazine-rifle.

It was Tom's first experience of the ghastly carnage that modern warfare entails, and it must be confessed that, for the moment, it left our young hero sick and dazed. He knew that it was utterly impossible for his bullets to miss their targets, for he was firing into the thick of a vast horde advancing grimly up the slope.

They were not more than two hundred yards away, and now and again during a temporary lull in the firing Tom could hear the hoarse voices of the officers urging their men on.

Crack, crack, crack!
It was carnage, carnage terrible. The smoke from the discharged cartridges began to filter slowly along the trenches, making the eyes smart and filling the lungs with acrid vapour. And, always the return fire from the enemy hissed and spluttered overhead.

There was a footfall behind Tom, and someone came close to him.
"All right, drum-major," the voice of Colonel Keppel said; "don't look round! How do you like it, eh?"

Tom let drive a couple of shots before he replied.

"Can't say I like it a bit, sir," he said truthfully enough. "It seems to me nothing more nor less than slaughter!"

The grizzled-haired colonel nodded his head.

"Yes; you're right," he said, in a sad voice; "it is slaughter. The most terrible war that ever man has taken part in!"

From the slope there came a shout, a long-drawn, deep yell. Evidently

the Germans were gathering themselves up for the final charge.

"Got your bayonet fixed?"
It was Colonel Keppel's voice and Tom nodded his head.

"Yes, sir," he returned.
"You'll want it in a minute," the colonel went on. "I'm afraid those fellows are going to come on despite our fire. By Jove, they are plucky enough, poor chaps!"

Another hoarse shout, then up over the slope came streams of running men. They were mown down in heaps, but still they came on, and presently above the sheltered trench Tom saw a huge figure appear.

Against the background of the night sky he saw the spiked helmet, and the man, halting for a moment, raised his butt above his head, so that the bayonet was pointing down straight at Tom.

There was no time to think. Tom whipped up his own rifle and fired blindly. He saw the head of the German tilt back, a hoarse shriek sounded, then a moment later the huge figure toppled forward, almost crushing our hero down beneath him. The drum-major had to wriggle himself free of the dead man, then with a rush and a roar, a wave of Germans came over the brow and down into the trench.

Tom Bayne found himself striking out blindly, fiercely in the dusk. Always his bayonet went home, home in something soft and yielding, something that he knew was the body of a man. He received a gash along his shoulder, but hardly felt the pain of the wound at that moment.

He was now in the middle of the sheltered trench, and the battle raged like a volcano all around. It was hand-to-hand work, each man choosing his own antagonist, and every yard of the trench saw its own desperate struggle.

How matters might have gone is a problem. The attack had been carried out by a regiment of Prussian Guards, huge, powerful fellows, well-trained in the art of war, and inspired with a fierce courage that was worthy of admiration.

The Doverports who had been several weeks in the trenches were weakened by their long watching, and, although they fought like the gallant little tigers they were, it might have gone ill with them.

But, just at the critical moment when the fight in the trenches was at its fiercest, there came through the night a clear bugle-call, a sharp, ringing sound, then up the slope there came rushing a double line of khaki-clad men.

One lumbering German had fired point-blank at Tom, and the bullet had just whizzed past the drum-major's head. He had slung his useless rifle down, and had brought the butt round on the fellow's head, laying him senseless; then, as he leapt aside to avoid the thrust from a bayonet, the first of the advancing supports reached the trench.

Tom looked up and saw a turbaned head above him, heard a deep-throated, shrill yell; then, into the trench there stepped a wave of Pathans, gaunt, fierce men from the hills, taking part in their first battle on European ground.

Another rocket shot up into the air, and again the white light blazed forth, illuminating the earth as though it were day. The turbaned men from India went into their work with a will, silently, ferociously, as is their custom.

It is very doubtful whether a single German who leapt into that trench left it alive. The struggling mass swayed to and fro, the whole trench echoed and re-echoed with the sound of crashing of arms, and the quick, sobbing pants of the men.

Gradually the din died away, a furtive shot sounded now and again; then, after a long moment, there came a pause. Someone, a ragged, breathless figure, leapt up on to the top of the trench. Tom, who was close to the figure, recognised it.

It was Colonel Keppel, and the drum-major struggled to where the officer stood.

"Sound the 'Cease fire!' Find a bugle!"

Tom had already caught sight of one of his drummers. The youngster had been badly wounded, and was lying in a transverse with his bugle by his side. The drum-major staggered along the trench and unslinging the instrument from the lad's shoulder. With a rush he gained the colonel's side again and stood ready.

"Did you say cease fire, sir?" he asked.

By this time the commanding-officer had taken in the situation. He saw now there was still another line of Germans toiling up the crest.

"No; I'll alter that," he said; "give them a minute, then let's have the 'Charge!'"

It seemed to Tom as though that minute would never pass, but at last Keppel raised his hand, and Tom placed the bugle to his lips.

It was the Doverport call that he gave first, and the clear, quick, staccato notes danced through the night air; then following it came the 'Charge,' and all along the trench a thin cheer answered it.

"Come on, boys! Follow me!"

Keppel's sword leapt from the scabbard, and the colonel waved it above his head. Out from the trench there came creeping the khaki-clad figures, some of them rifleless, many of them hatless and wounded. But every man capable of answering that call did so, and with them came the Pathans.

"Charge!"
Keppel's voice barked out the order; then, down the slope, over the heaps of slain, went the remnant of what had been the Doverport battalion.

Sheer into the second line of the attacking Germans, the thin, khaki-clad men broke. The enemy, taken completely unawares, was carried down the slope by the wild, fierce rush; down the slope, along the level, over into the deep pit of the railway they went.

Tom had dropped his rifle, but he found a bayonet in his hand. How it had come there he was never able to say, but he used it as one might use a sword, hacking and slashing with the vicious blood-lust that comes now and again to a man thoroughly roused.

Huge figures seemed to rise in front of him, and he smote at them blindly, the red rage running through his veins like fire.

He had no idea what he did, or how he did it, during that fierce hour of battle. It was not until he found himself gasping for breath on the edge of the railway, with the sound

of running feet dying away in the distance, that he realised that his first battle was over, and that it had been, so far as the Doverports were concerned, a victory.

"Any drummers there?"

From a culvert on the railway there came a shout, and Tom, feeling sick and dazed, arose to his feet and staggered towards the culvert.

"I am Drum-Major Bayne, sir," he said.

It was Colonel Keppel, hatless, with only a half of his sword left in his hand. His khaki jacket had been torn down the front, and there was a broad gash over his face.

Another rocket had been fired, and beneath the light of it the colonel's eyes blazed like stars.

"Sound the rally," he said. And Tom, feeling as though his lips were little pieces of dried hide, tongued his bugle for a moment, until at last the notes rang out.

It was a pitiful remnant that came gathering round that culvert; Pathans and Britishers dragging their wearied limbs along the slope to halt in a ragged line in front of their commander—here and there in the ranks some man being held up by the kindly arm of a comrade.

A pitiful roll-call.
Keppel's eyes were bright as he looked at his scattered command.

"All right, boys," he said. "Get back to the trench. We have given them more than they bargained for, and we'll see no more of them to-night. Right about turn! Quick march!"

It was hardly a "quick march"—it was more of a tired dragging of weary limbs up the slope, but Tom, marching behind his colonel, felt that he had taken part in something that would remain as a vivid memory with him for the rest of his life.

He watched the struggling band make their way over the ground strewn with dead, on to the trench, and as he finally dropped beneath the shelter of the vast barrier, a mute wonder at the great Providence that had brought him out alive and practically scatheless through that terrible night came down to him.

Here and there in the trenches men were being mustered and roll was called. There were several companies who had no officer, and in these cases the roll was called by the sergeant.

Tom found himself at last in the shell-proof dug-out occupied by the commanding officer. Keppel had dropped on one of the chairs, and he looked up at Tom with a quiet smile on his lips.

"We've got to thank you for what happened to-night, Bayne," he said.

"If it hadn't been for your timely warning, I am afraid that there wouldn't be a man alive in the Doverports now. You saved us."

Tom drew a deep breath.

"I don't know that there are very many alive as it is, sir," he said in a hushed voice. "It was terrible."

Keppel shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, yes," he said, "but we haven't come through so badly as all that. Besides, if we have lost a few men, they all gave a good account of themselves. There must have been at least five thousand attacking us, and we have driven them back. It's a feather in our cap, Bayne, and I won't forget it. Is there anything I can do for you now?"

Tom drew a quick breath.

"Yes, sir, you can do something for me. You can allow me to stay out here," Tom began. "I want to stay out here. I don't want to go back to the depot, and—"

The grizzled-haired colonel smiled.
"That's the one request that I can't grant you, Bayne," he said. "Don't you see why, my boy? If I allowed you to remain here you might be killed, and you are much more use to the Loyal Doverports in the depot at home than you would be in the trenches. We shall want men, more men, and still more men, and while you and the rest of the staff at the depot can turn 'em out to take the places of the killed here, never forget that you are doing just as much for us as if you were in the trenches. In fact, you are doing more."

"I can't think it's like that, sir," said Tom.

His commanding officer nodded.
"Yet, I assure you it is the case," he said. "I should think that to-night the Doverports have lost at least half of its strength. Where are we to get other men from unless you and your comrades at the depot drill new recruits and send them out to us? No, Bayne, you will have to go back. We can't spare you to take your place in the trenches here, or we would do it."

He pointed to a desk close to the chair. There was a blue official paper on it.

"But I might tell you," the colonel went on, "that your action to-night is not going to be forgotten. I consider that your timely warning saved us from being cut to pieces. I am recommending you for the Distinguished Conduct Medal, and, although you may go back to Bramley to-morrow or the next day, you will at least have the consolation of knowing that you will be entitled to a war medal, and I hope something more. I have done the same for Sergeant Wynter, and in the name of the battalion, I thank you both."

He held out his hand, and Tom gripped it, the young drum-major's face flushing with pride.

Nat Stroud Again.

Portsmouth was one of the towns that did not, so far as business was concerned, suffer during the early months of the war. It is true that several of the naval disasters smote the old seaport town very hard in the matter of the lives of her gallant sons, but the business side of Portsmouth has been increased by the vast number of troops that were garrisoned there.

The result was that the music-halls and cinemas drove a brisk trade, and for Portsmouth is always a sporting community, one of the largest halls had been taken over for boxing contests.

It had been just a curious turn of chance that had sent Nat Stroud and Curly Madden down to the busy town one bleak Saturday.

Madden had travelled down there to try and fix up a match between himself and a naval man from the dockyard, and Stroud, having nothing better to do, had taken on the task of acting as Madden's manager.

They had had an interview in the morning with a stoker, and so far the match seemed likely to come off. In the afternoon Stroud and Madden, who had taken rooms in a quiet unpretentious hotel, strolled down the busy main street.

At the corner where the tram lines cross, beside the great station, they were brought to a halt by a big crowd that had mustered there, and Stroud, pushing his way through the mass of people, saw that they were interested in the passing of a rather mournful procession.

It was part of a hospital train that had just arrived at Portsmouth station, and the slow-moving ambulances were watched closely by the throng.

Not all of the soldiers were seriously wounded, and bringing up the rear of the procession came a little group of fourteen or fifteen men.

Madden, who had been glancing idly at the procession, reached out and touched Stroud on the arm.

"Look!" he said. "That fellow, the second on the right. Don't you know him?"

Stroud followed the indicating finger, and his heavy face went dark. For, striding along, chatting cheerfully to the man on his left, was Drum-Major Tom Bayne. He did not seem to be injured, there was no sign of bandages on his arms or head.

As a matter of fact, Tom Bayne had been rather incensed to discover that he was marked as "slightly wounded." He had been sent back from the line of trenches, and had been attended to at one of the field-hospitals. He had tried to dodge the ordeal, for the wound, although painful, was by no means serious. But our Army surgeons are more than

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ANY BOY WHO FAILS TO READ "THE RIVALS OF ROOKWOOD" IS MISSING A TREAT.

careful of their men, and Tom found that the authority was too strong for him, and he had to take his place in one of the hospital trains and go on down to Boulogne.

He was not detained in the hospital there, however, and after waiting for a day, he was one of a group of men who were put on a hospital ship and taken to Portsmouth.

The lesser wounded were marched up to one of the barracks, and after being inspected by the medical officer there, Tom's plea to be allowed to rejoin his depot at Framley was acceded to.

"I'll let you go just as soon as I can, drum-major," said the medical officer. "Your papers have not arrived yet, so of course you can't leave until they do come. But, after all, two or three days at Portsmouth won't do you any harm."

In the evening Tom and five or six others were marched to one of the barracks, and were attached to the battalion there for quarters and rations.

Tom promptly sought out the drum-major of the battalion, and, as is usually the case, the two men of similar rank soon became quite friendly together.

The drum-major of the 9th East Fifes was a much older man than Tom; indeed, he had been a pensioner when the war had broken out, but he had offered his services to train the new units of Kitchener's Army, and, although he was a man bordering on the fifties, there was no doubt about the keenness with which he entered into his work.

To Tom Bayne's surprise, he discovered that Drum-Major Wells knew him by repute.

"You are of the Loyal Doverports, eh? Then your name is Bayne, isn't it?"

"That's right," said our hero.

Drum-Major Wells grinned as he eyed Tom closely.

"Well," he said, "I can't say you look much like a fighting drum-major but that's the name you've got, ain't it?"

Tom laughed.

"They did give me that name, I believe," he returned, "but how did you know about it?"

"I read the papers," said his companion, "and that recruiting dodge of yours was great. Oh, I tell yer, ye're well known about these parts."

Tom had slipped off his khaki jacket, and it was only then that one could notice the bandages around his shoulder.

"It's a pity you got fished there," Drum-Major Wells went on, "for the boys here are awfully keen on boxing. We have contests going on 'ere pretty well every week, and there's a big 'un coming off on Tuesday next at one of the local halls. Perhaps you'll be 'ere to see it?"

"I hope not," said Tom; "but I've got to wait for my papers."

Wells arose to his feet, and slipped on his jacket and cap.

"Well, you might as well come for a stroll," he went on. "I am going down to the naval barracks now. They've asked me to lend a hand next Tuesday at the fight, and I'm just going down to see what's happening. You might as well stroll down with me, if you will?"

It was a fair step to the naval barracks, and Tom noted that the sentry was very careful to scrutinise them both before allowing them to pass inside. Wells had asked for a certain petty officer, and presently Tom shook hands with a broad-shouldered, bronze-faced man.

"Pleased to meet you, Bayne," the petty officer said; "if you are a pal o' Wells here, you'll be interested in boxing, so you'd better come along up to the gym now."

"What's on?" Wells asked.

"Oh, Jerry Bowker is havin' a bit o' practice!" Petty-Officer Warren explained. "I have just fixed him up for a fight on Tuesday."

Wells leaned towards Tom.

"Jerry is a good man," he said; "a light-weight. He was well up in the Aldershot championships last year."

Tom nodded.

"I think I remember the name," he said; "a red-haired fellow, isn't he?"

"Yes; that's right!"

They had crossed the square now, and they found themselves in a big gym, in which a fair muster of blue-jackets had gathered. The gym was warm and well-lighted, and in the centre of it a ring had been erected. Tom and Wells slipped into a quiet corner to watch.

Stoker Jerry Bowker was evidently taking on three men, one after the other, for after a brisk bout with a

hefty-looking, hard-hitting sailor, another man slipped into the ring at once, and the ginger-haired stoker went on with his work.

He was obviously in the pink of condition, and could stand a lot of punishment.

Tom watched the men practising keenly. He was heart and soul in love with the game of boxing, and was always interested in it. At the end of a gruelling time, Jerry was forcibly brought to a halt by a couple of his seconds, who insisted on dragging the sweating man out of the ring and making him sit down to rest for a few moments.

The sweat was pouring down the freckled face of the stoker, but his grin was as wide as ever, and he was evidently far and away from being spent.

The petty-officer who had been introduced to Tom, slipped to the side of the ropes, and threw a set of old gloves into the ring.

"Now then, you youngsters," he cried, "any of you want to settle any little differences, now's your time. Keep the ball rolling while Jerry has a breather."

A laugh went round the circle of blue-jackets, then presently two men, slipping out of their jumpers, and removing their boots, did accept the officer's invitation.

They entered the ring, pulled on the gloves, and went at each other with much more strength than science. Their exhibition was appreciated, and for a moment shouts

around him, made the young drum-major fairly blush. Jerry thrust his arm beneath that of Tom, and turned to the circle.

"Wot are yer all starin' at?" he said. "He's quite 'uman. Come along, old man, I want to 'ave a word with you!"

And so, much against his will, Tom was led out close to the ring where the two sweating sailors had just come to an end of their battle, brought to that pitch by sheer exhaustion. Jerry marched Tom up to the petty-officer, who was in charge of the gymnasium.

"Don't yer know who this is?" Jerry asked.

The petty-officer looked at Tom and shook his head.

"I've been introduced to him," he returned, "but I don't know much about him."

"Well, he is the fellow that whacked Miner Geddes, and I should think he is just about the best light-weight boxer in the Army—or in England for that matter."

The petty-officer stared for a moment, then, an instant later, he was inside the ring, and had held up his hand as a gesture for silence.

"Boys," he yelled, "we've got a surprise for you! There's a visitor here that most of you have heard about. Come along, Jerry, let's have him in here!"

Even if he had attempted to struggle, Tom would not have been able to resist the kindly thrust which Jerry Bowker gave to him, and the

Jerry's grin almost reached from ear to ear.

"The only thing I don't want the drum-major to do is to fight me," he replied. "I saw him at work on Miner Geddes, and I give him best right now. But referee, bless yer, I couldn't pick a better man for the job!"

"Then that settles it, and I have no doubt that Mr. Curly Madden will have no objections either."

At the mention of the name Tom's eyes sparkled.

"Did you say Curly Madden?"

"Yes. We have just fixed up a match with him. I had a word with his manager, Mr. Nat Stroud, this morning."

"Stroud as well?" Tom thought. "By Jove, here's a curious business!"

He was well aware of the feeling that both Stroud and Madden bore towards him, and as there was always a certain element of dry humour in Tom's composition it was that fact which really made him make up his mind.

"All right," he said, turning to the petty-officer, "it's a bargain. On Tuesday I'll act as referee for you."

"Hear, hear! That's the ticket!" Jerry put in.

Tom turned towards him.

"But there's only one thing," he said quietly. "I am not too sure that Curly Madden will agree to this."

"But he'll have to agree. Blow

sure that Madden would beat Jerry; and money was very tight with both men at that moment.

"Oh, no, no, I don't care who referees!" Stroud returned. "I trust your boys to see that it's fair."

He adopted the air of hearty good-nature fairly well, but as soon as he left the petty-officer Nat Stroud turned and hurried back through the streets to the hotel.

He found his man and a couple of evil-looking fellows, who were acting as Madden's seconds, exercising in a wide shed close to the hotel.

Stroud burst into the shed, his face black with rage.

"Look here, Madden," he cried, "I've got a facer for you! That hound Drum-Major Bayne is going to referee on Tuesday!"

"What?"

Madden dropped his gloved hands and stared at his manager. Stroud cursed volubly.

"It's a fact," he went on. "I have just heard it from Petty-Officer Warren."

Now, both Madden and Nat Stroud made a mistake. They thought that Drum-Major Tom Bayne was of the same kidney as themselves. They both knew that if they had been chosen to referee a match in which he, Drum-Major Bayne, was to take a part there would be but little chance of his securing a victory.

And so, narrow and evil-minded men as they were, they promptly decided that the drum-major would do likewise.

Stroud leaned forward. "We've got to get rid of that young hound," he said, in a savage tone. "We've got the best part of three days yet. I'll soon find out where he is stayin', and it'll not be my fault if we can't manage to queer his pitch for him."

He looked at the East-End pugilist, and then at the two evil-looking, hulking fellows, who were acting as seconds to Madden.

"If we four can't put paid to that young cub's account between now and Tuesday next," he hissed, "my name ain't Nat Stroud!"

(Another enthralling instalment next Monday.)

THE QUEER AFFAIR AT RYECLIFF.
 By ALLAN BLAIR.
 (Continued from page 597.)

"Arrested!" gasped the doctor. "Good gracious me! On what charge?"

"On the charge of harbouring an escaped convict—an elderly man who escaped from Rockland Prison some few weeks ago. The convict was a notorious company promoter in the City of London, who was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. He was sentenced under the name of Mortimer Winship, but—"

"Mortimer Winship," interrupted the K.C. "Why, I was counsel for the prosecution in that case. Mortimer Winship was one of the biggest scoundrels unhung!"

"I believe that, sir. But it now appears his real name is Lattiford; the father, in fact, of Mark Lattiford."

Mark Lattiford's father a convict!" gasped Dr. Granby. "And you, Mr. Derriman, prosecuted him, and got him seven years. Good gracious me! That would explain why—"

"Why he had his knife in my boy Dick. Yes, doctor, I think you're right."

He was right, as events proved. Bitterly wrathful against the eminent lawyer, who had but done his duty in prosecuting the so-called Mortimer Winship, Mark Lattiford, had sought revenge on Dick on learning of his identity. That revenge had taken the form of petty persecutions at first. But when, later on, he was joined by his father, who had managed to escape from Rockland Penal Prison in a sailing-boat, the two conspired together to make Dick's life a torture. Their schemes had culminated in the attempt to brand the boy as a thief, and to get him expelled from school in disgrace.

But the attempt failed. It was not Dick Derriman who left Ryecliff branded with shame, but Horace Climpson. As to Mark Lattiford, he was sentenced to a smart term of imprisonment for harbouring a fugitive from justice, while his scoundrel of a father was sent back to Rockland to complete his sentence, and something added thereto.

THE END.



"Charge!" Keppel's voice barked out the order, and then down the slope went the remnant of what had been the Doverport battalion.

of laughter went up as they swung to and fro, pummelling each other for all they were worth.

Tom, busily engaged in watching the rousing set-to in the ring, did not notice that the stoker had moved from his side. It was only when he heard a voice next to him that the young drum-major looked round.

Jerry Bowker, in a thick dressing-gown, was standing in front of him, peering into his face.

"If I don't know you, I'll eat my 'at!" said Jerry.

The stoker was evidently the lion of the gymnasium, and at his words the men nearest to him turned their heads. Tom looked at the freckled face, and half shook his head.

"I think you are mistaken, old man," he said. "I don't remember ever meeting you."

The red-haired stoker chuckled.

"That may be," he returned. "I was only one of the crowd. There was a big batch of us came up from Portsmouth to see a fellow called Miner Geddes, and if you ain't the Fightin' Drum-Major, then my eyesight's gone wrong."

Drum-Major Wells, who had been taking in all this, threw back his grizzled head, and laughed.

"You've got him, Jerry," he said. "Yes; this is the Fighting Drum-Major!"

It was the first time that Tom had ever realised that his fame had reached beyond the little circle of his own friends. But what Wells had said was absolutely true, and the way in which the jolly tars gathered

young drum-major, in his khaki suit, found himself standing in the centre of the ring beside the petty-officer.

That worthy extended his hand and pointed to Tom as though he was some marvellous picture.

"Here he is, boys," the petty-officer cried; "Drum-Major Bayne, of the Loyal Doverports—the Fighting Drum-Major!"

They gave him a cheer, a loud, throaty, deep-voiced shout. Wells, leaning over the ropes, whispered something to the petty-officer, and again the sailor raised his hand.

"Drum-Major Bayne has been wounded, or we would have him putting on the gloves now. But wounded or not, we want to see something of him while he is down at Portsmouth, and as we have been wanting to find a referee for Jerry's fight on Tuesday—well, here he is!"

"Bravo!"

"That's the talk!"

This was being pitched into a task with a vengeance. Tom turned and stared blankly at the petty-officer.

"But—here, I—I say—"

"No excuses, my lad!" the petty-officer roared, in a loud voice. "We would rather see you with the gloves on, but if you can't put 'em on—well, hang it all, we will have you in the ring somehow or other! You've got to referee on Tuesday, and we settle it right now!"

He turned to Jerry.

"Have you any objection to Drum-Major Bayne refereeing for you on Tuesday, Bowker?" he asked.

him! He never mentioned anything about refereeing; and if it comes to the pinch—why, we'll let him turn up on Tuesday without knowing who's going to referee."

"Oh, he's hot stuff, is Madden; and Stroud as well!" the petty-officer put in. "They have made us guarantee twenty pounds expenses, and we are putting up a purse here of fifty pounds, the whole lot to go to the winner."

"Can't say I like that arrangement either," said Jerry ruefully; "cos it means that if I lose I don't get anything."

"Well, you ain't got to lose," was the petty-officer's calm retort.

Tom did not give any further warning to the P.O.; and so on the following morning (Sunday), when Stroud chanced to run up against the sailor in the wide streets of Portsmouth, the P.O. quite inadvertently mentioned the scene that had taken place in the gymnasium the previous evening. When Nat Stroud heard who it was who was going to referee the fight between Curly Madden and Stoker Bowker his face was a picture of dismay.

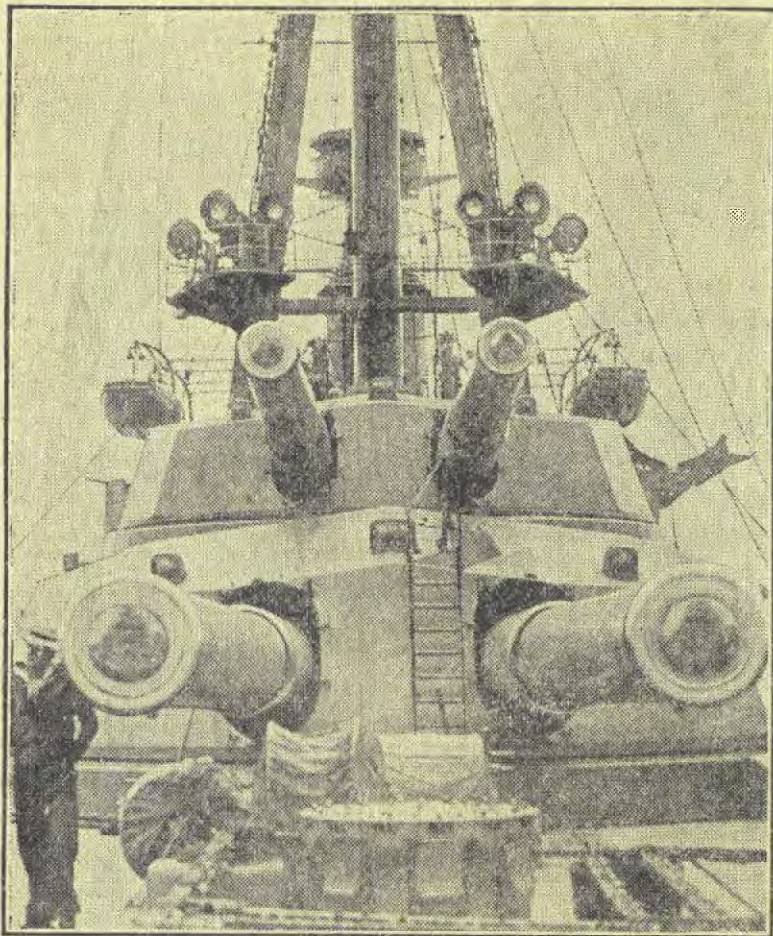
Petty-Officer Warren glanced at the manager.

"What's the matter, Mr. Stroud?" he said. "Have you any objection to the drum-major?"

Now, Stroud had a hundred objections to raise, but none of them were of much use. After all, the sailors had treated him and Madden very well in promising them their expenses. Stroud was also pretty

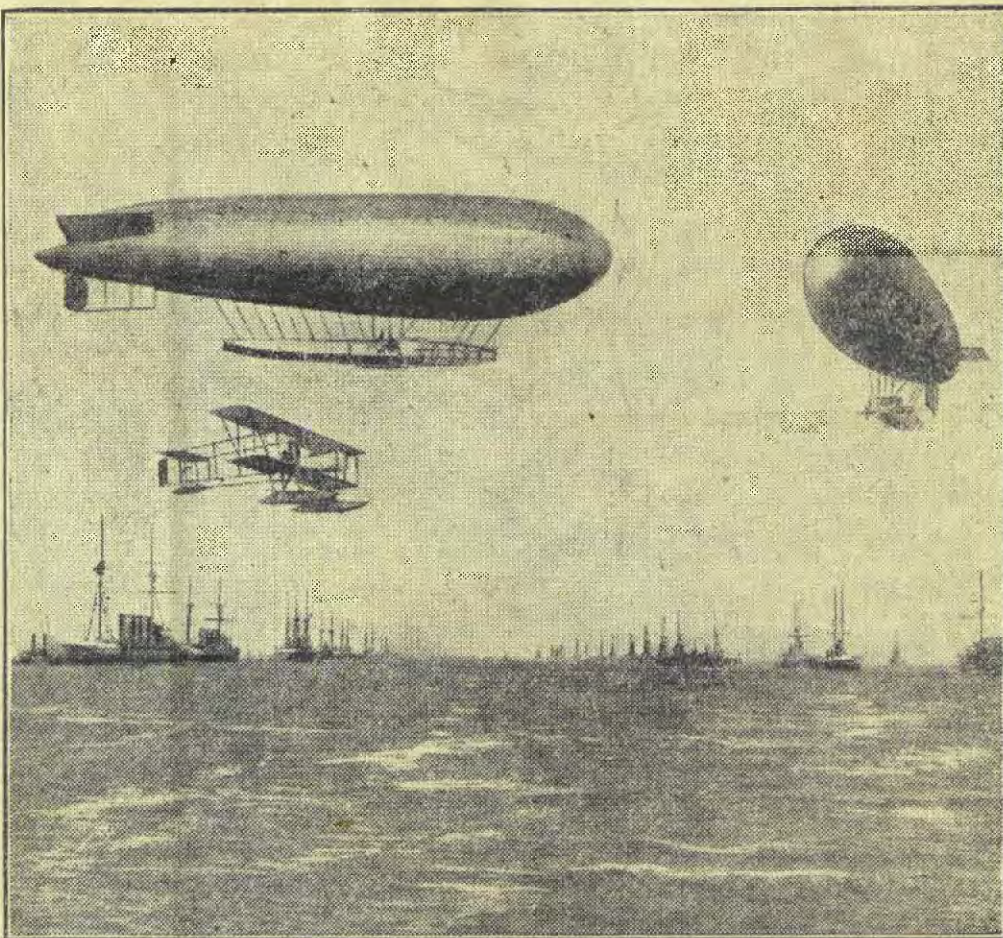
MAGNIFICENT NAVAL PICTORIAL SUPPLEMENT!

BRITAIN'S MIGHT!



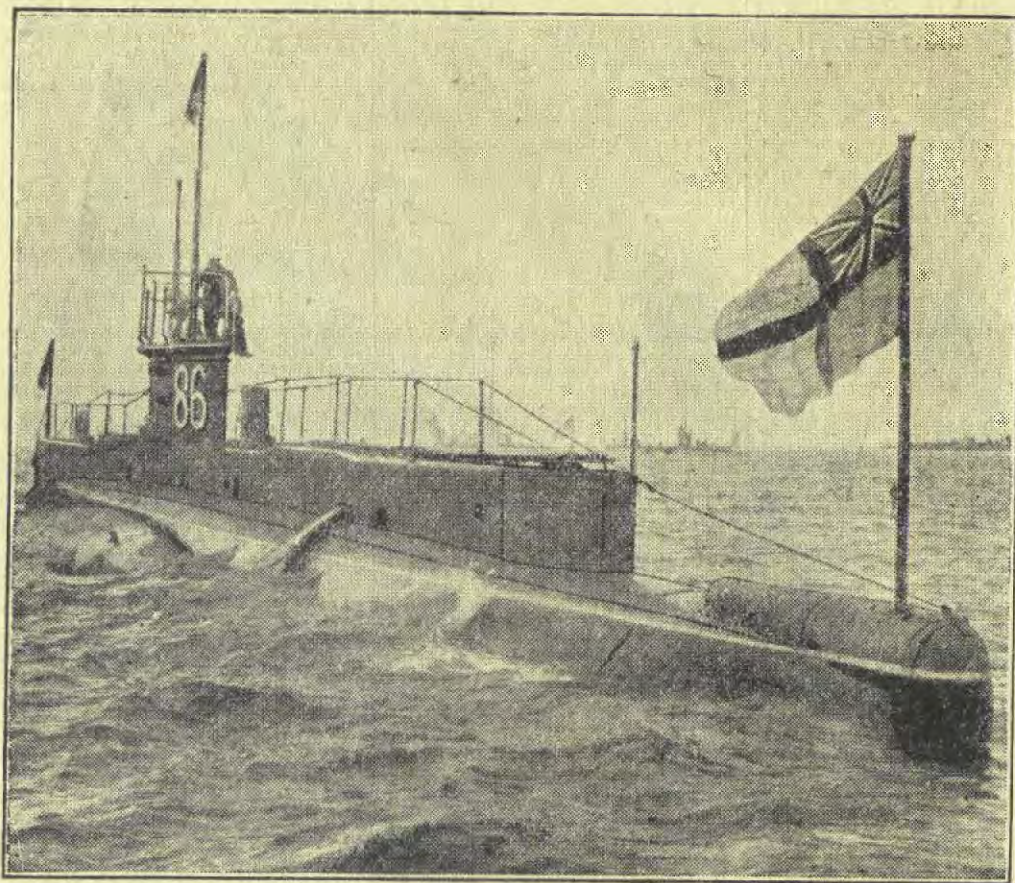
This is the only photograph ever taken of the powerful 12-inch guns on the flagship Neptune. These guns have already been fired at sea in the presence of his Majesty King George, and are recognised by the Admiralty as being invaluable in time of warfare.

WAITING FOR THE GERMANS!



Britain's superb fleet is here shown ready for action; and it is small wonder that the German vessels are none too eager to show themselves, for what with the battleships below and the aircraft above they would be despatched to almost certain doom.

JACK TAR CALLS THIS A TIN FISH!



We all owe a tremendous debt to the submarine, which is one of the greatest powers in modern warfare. Think of Holbrook! What British boy failed to be thrilled by the simple story of his daring exploit in the Dardanelles? The submarine shown above is of a more recent type to that of which Holbrook was in command, and it has now left the placid waters of the Solent in order to perform valiant things off Heligoland. It is a fact worthy of note that Britain possesses over seventy submarines, while the enemy can only boast about twenty-three.

IS IT THE ENEMY?



To judge by the keen expression on the faces of the above signalmen, it would seem that an enemy vessel had been sighted. The gallant men on board the Dreadnought are alike skilful and fearless, and promise to give any opposition a warm time!