

290 THE HUMAN BOY AND WAR

time and thought into the transaction, and as it was my first introduction into the world of business, so to speak, and I stood to net a clear thirty shillings, naturally I left no stone unturned, as they say, to make it a brilliant and successful affair.

And yet it all went to utter and hopeless smash, though it was no fault of mine.

And you certainly couldn't blame Protheroe min. or Mayne either. In fact, Protheroe must have carried it off very well when he got home, and the calisthenics went down all right ; and Mayne, when his people asked how it was that he hadn't got more than one prize, was ingenious enough to say that he'd suffered from hay fever all the term and been too off colour to make his usual haul.

So everything would have been perfection but for the idiotic and footling behaviour of Protheroe min.'s mother.

This excitable and weak-minded woman was not content with just quietly taking the prize and putting it in a glass case with the prizes won in the past by Protheroe's brothers. She must go fluttering about telling his wretched relations what he'd done ; and, as if that was not enough, she got altogether above herself and wrote to Dr. Dunston about