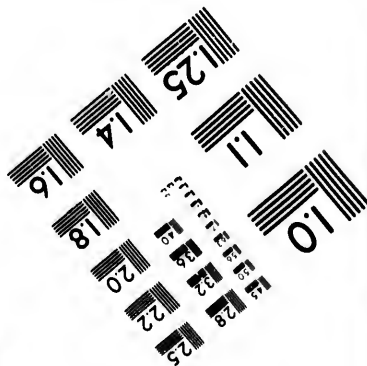
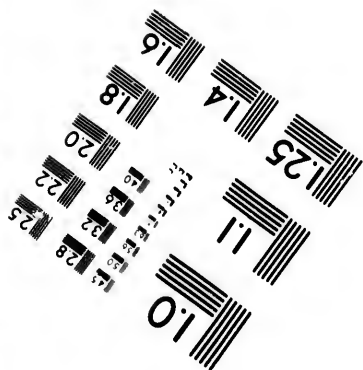
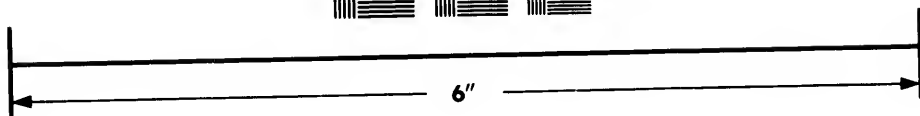
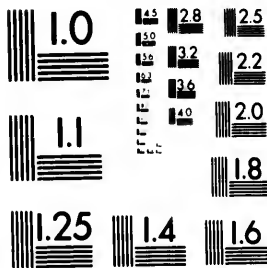


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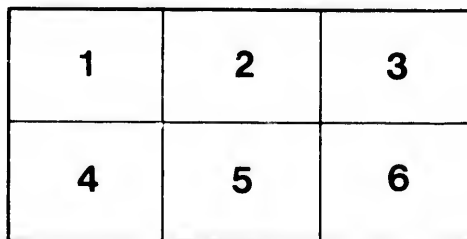
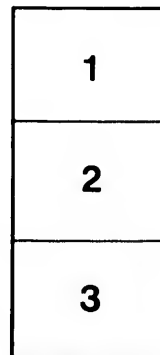
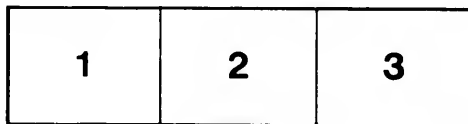
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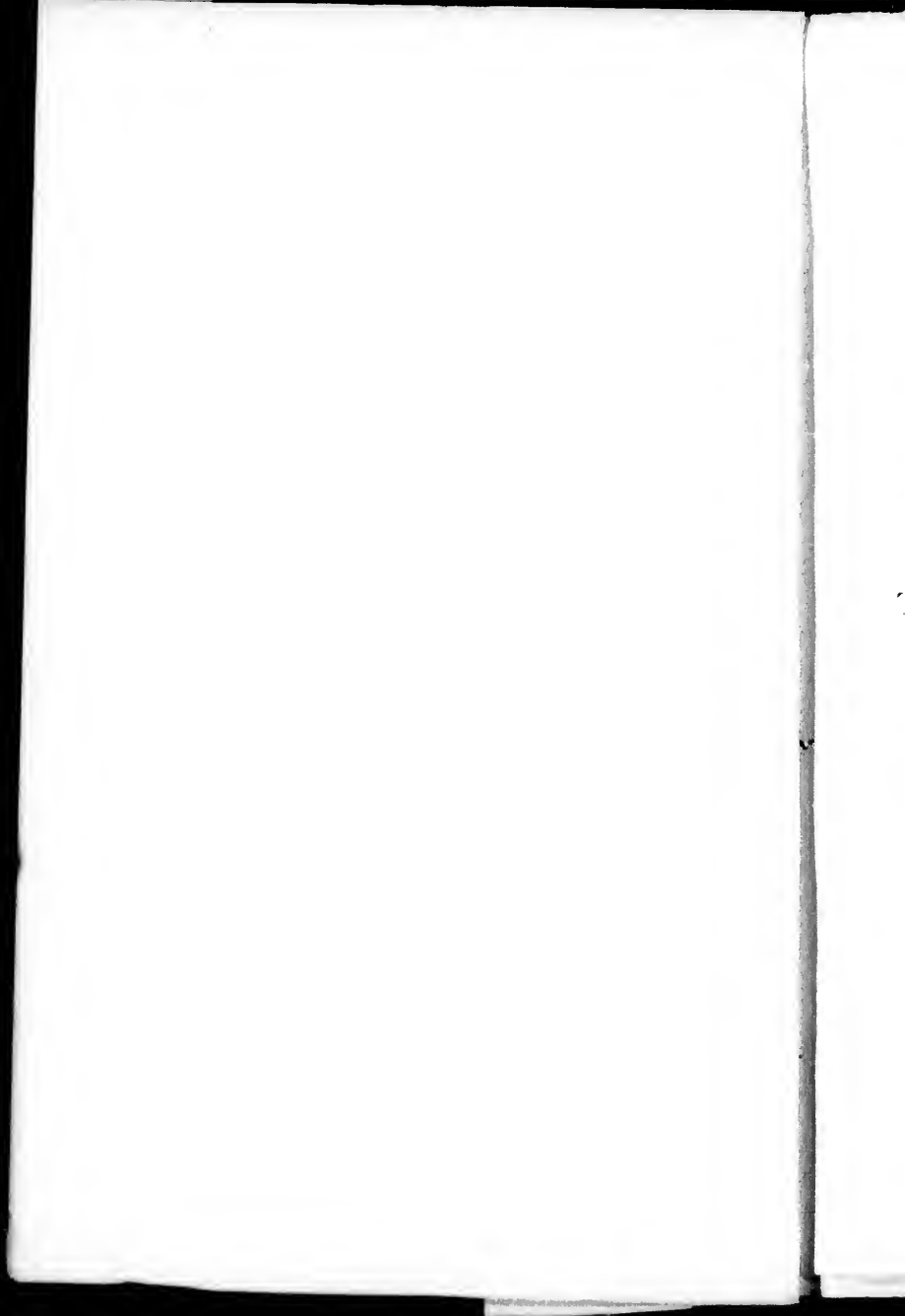
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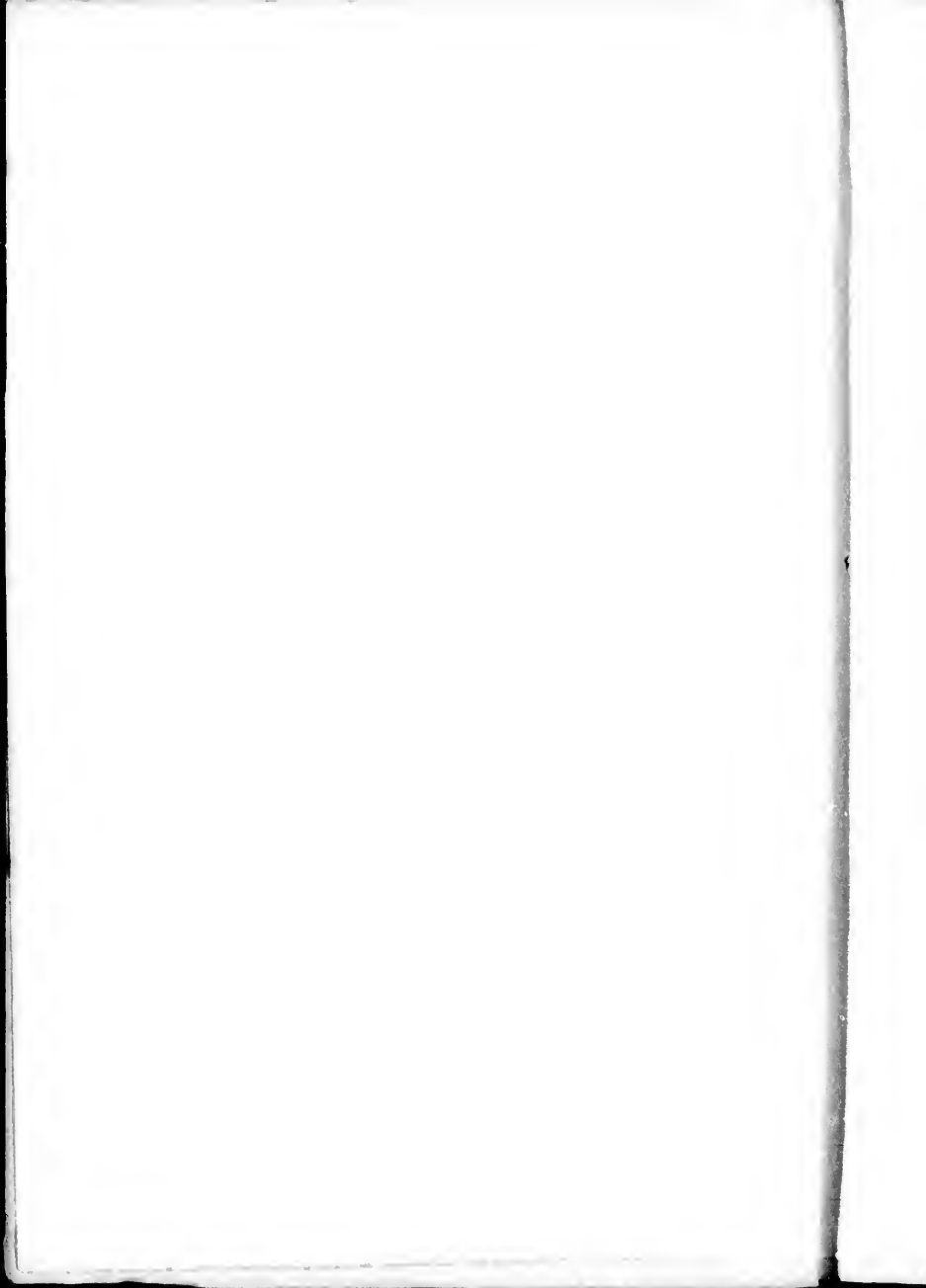
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THE QUEENSBERRY CUP



THE
QUEENSBERRY CUP

BY

CLIVE PHILLIPPS-WOLLEY

AUTHOR OF "SNAP;" "GOLD! GOLD IN CARIBOO;" ETC.

METHUEN & CO.
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CHAPTER I.

RAISING THE DEVIL.

“**F**IGHT!”

Dick has told me since that this monosyllable was the first word he ever read, and I have no doubt that it was so, for to my knowledge my chum never lied, whilst his memory was phenomenal. I used to think at one time that those five letters F-I-G-H-T, composed for Dick, not only his family motto (he was a St. Clair of Caithness, and as proud of it as the cock which his branch of the clan carries for a crest), but the whole duty of man. I certainly have heard him argue very plausibly that they did so.

“To begin with,” he would say, “of course now we have to fight the boys at Uncle Braith-

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waite's 'slip,' because they are bigger than we are, and beastly cheeky. Then, when we grow up to be men, we shall have to fight for Queen and Country, as all our people have done" (I am a Maxwell, and naturally we, both of us, meant to be soldiers); "and even the parson, when he comes to see the dear little mother, tells us that it is the duty of all good Christians to fight against the Devil and all his works."

This was Dick St. Clair's creed, and it brings me conveniently to the beginning of my story; for Dick took the last of his three duties first, and on the occasion of my first introduction to him, had challenged no less a person than His Satanic Majesty to deadly combat. As you will see further on, Dick was a very simple person, and took the Scriptures and many other things very literally. He called a spade a spade all through life, and expected other people to do the same.

Like my own people, the St. Clairs had not too much money to spend, so that both families lived in a retired country district in the North of England, close to the Scottish border, and lived very quietly at that; but they, at least,

RAISING THE DEVIL

had some shadow of ancestral glory in their old farmhouse by the sea, upon which they had spent more money than would have sufficed to build a modern villa, and enough taste, I used to think, to shame many of their wealthier neighbours.

But in our eyes the old house was well worth all the money spent upon it, for it had really long ago belonged to the family from which Dick's people sprang, and (greatest glory of our boyhood) set in the diamond-paned windows of it, was a great and goodly shield, in which were depicted the arms of the St. Clairs.

I dare say, if you could see it now, you would recognize that shield as but an indifferent piece of stained glass, of comparatively modern origin; but in those days the shield was a sacred thing which spoke to us, and told us brave stories of the dead past, when our people played a great *rôle* in life. We learned history from that shield—all the history we cared to know. When we walked in the network of rich colours which it and the sunlight wove upon the oak floor of the hall, we bowed our heads

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and went quietly. It was sacred ground that we were treading upon. In our troubles and perplexities we used to come to the shield to confess and ask counsel, going away from it with heads held high, certain beyond all possibility of doubt as to what it behoved a St. Clair to do, or to leave undone.

For of course I too was a St. Clair on my mother's side, and shared all Dick's enthusiasm on the subject, though I had my own ancestry and my own arms to be proud of. When I first met Dick I was, I suppose, nearly ten, and if so he must have been nearly nine, for there was only a year between us; but a year makes a wonderful difference at that time of life, and I know that I looked down upon him as quite a little fellow then.

My father had come to Scarsley on business or for the shooting, I don't know which, and I remember that it was a Sunday afternoon when he took me over for the first time to the old house. The wind was blowing so savagely off the land that we had much ado to keep our legs along the cliff's edge, and the first sight I had of the shield, with its great ship ploughing

RAISING THE DEVIL

through the fourth quarter of its field, struck me as being strangely in harmony with the wild scene outside the windows of my friend's house. When the old people got together I suppose I was in the way. At any rate I was sent off into the garden to look for Dick, and though I made myself so hoarse with shouting for him that my very soul yearned after the great yellow gooseberries all round me, I neither found my cousin nor, I am proud to say, yielded to temptation. I've no doubt that in old days the Maxwells often lifted cattle belonging to the St. Clairs (if there were any St. Clairs in their vicinity), but I felt even then that it would not be in accordance with the usages of war to lift fruit when on a friendly visit. And so after a while I found myself back again in the hall, examining the store of arms upon the wall, ancient claymores and modern assegais, kreeses from Malay, and knob sticks from Australia, and trying for the first time to understand the story of the shield. In the first quarter of it there rode a ship at anchor on an azure sea, its oars erect, its sails furled, a ship at rest; in the second and third quarters a lion ramped on a

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blood-red field, and this seemed a natural bearing for anyone descended from the old Norse carls of Orkney, as did the ship under full sail in the fourth quarter, only that it seemed to me that the first and fourth quarters should have been transposed. I must have been thus engaged for over an hour, for it had grown quite dusk, and the wind was driving the boughs hard against the panes, and whistling cerily round the gables, when I heard the voice of the master of the house calling to me,

"Inn, are you there, laddy?"

"Yes, sir, here I am in the hall," I answered from the darkness.

"And where is Dick? Can't you find him?"

"No, sir."

"Have you looked all over the garden and shouted?"

"Yes, shouted until I was hoarse," I could not help letting a tone of reproach get into my voice, for I felt that they might have heard me. I had a big voice for a boy, and had used it lustily.

"I wonder where on earth the boy is?" muttered his father. "Mother," he added,

RAISING THE DEVIL

turning to the gentle lady whom the whole house loved, "I have not seen Dick since breakfast, now I think of it. Have you?"

Neither the mother nor any of the servants had seen anything of master Dick since nine o'clock. He had not been to church with the family, nor when we went out to the little lake (or big pond if it please you, but little things were big to us in those days) could we find any sign of him. The old boat was tied up securely to the willow tree where the moor-hen had her nest, there were no clothes left on the bank, and the terrier who invariably accompanied Dick on his rambles was chained up to his kennel. Dick's absence began to be a trouble, for he was only nine then, and though of a roving disposition, never by any chance went to see any of the neighbours.

"Have you been in all the rooms?" asked his father. "Go and look in his bedroom. He may have gone to sleep."

But he had not, nor was he in dining-room, drawing-room, in any of the bed-rooms, nor of course in his father's den. At last someone tried the door of the morning-room, alongside

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which we had been talking all the time, and though the handle turned the door would not open.

"What is this?" cried his father. "Has someone locked him in here? Hullo, Dick! Dick!" but there was no answer, only a sound when we listened very closely as of someone muttering low inside.

"Dick, open! Do you hear me, sir?"

The muttering grew rather louder; but Dick, if it was Dick, made no intelligible reply, and the old gentleman being a strong man and of a fiery temperament, as were all of his race, put his shoulder against the door and smashed it.

"In the name of God take that!"

The words came to us in a clear childish treble, but in a tone as full of defiance as the king's when he swore that the rock should fly from its firm base as soon as he.

The room into which we had forced our way was in pitchy-darkness. Not a ray of light crept in through the tightly-closed shutters, and in the dim light from the shield in the window our own figures on the threshold must have looked vague and indistinct.

RAISING THE DEVIL

Before any of us could speak there was a loud snap; it sounded, I remember, hideously loud in the darkness; and then a hissing noise as if something was trying to light and could not, followed by a crashing report which made the windows rattle, and a bright flame in which for a moment we saw the set white face of a child, while a regular hail of missiles pattered and crashed on the wall, and one of them, as good luck would have it, hit my unfortunate father on the sleeve. I say "good luck" and "sleeve" advisedly, because Heron Maxwell, late Colonel in the 150th, had never had an arm in that sleeve since the battle of Balaclava was fought.

Staggered as he must have been by this reception in his own breakfast-room on Sunday evening, old Mr. St. Clair cleared the room at a bound, and caught his son by the arm before he could do any more harm.

"What the ——?" he cried; but luckily he stopped there, for the little figure he had clutched reeled for a moment, and then fell limp and quiet into his father's arms.

Master Dick had fainted, a fact which I

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should even now fear to chronicle if I thought him likely to read these lines.

"Bring me some water and open those shutters," commanded the father, and then, remembering his guests, he added, "No one is hurt, I hope."

"No, no, we 're all right," replied my father; "see to the boy." And he went over and threw open the shutters, and let what little light there still was into the room.

And a very queer interior that light disclosed.

Dick in a child's suit of Highland clothes, kilt and St. Clair tartan and all, was lying white and limp on the sofa, and even so what a strong, grim little face it was for a child, with its fair hair, broad forehead, and strong square jaw. I've seen that face set hard in many a tough fight since, but only once (ah me, that once!) so white as it was then.

On the floor lay an old-fashioned pistol, big enough to furnish metal for a rifle barrel of modern times; and another like it, still loaded, lay on the table beside the family Bible, in which was written the pedigree of the St. Clairs.

RAISING THE DEVIL

There was a wavy two-edged sword naked beside it, and a venomous-looking little dagger, also bare. It was evident that Master Dick had meant mischief. The small pieces of stone and old iron still sticking in the panelling proved that: but why he had made this awful attempt on our lives we could none of us guess, nor did we obtain any further information until he recovered from his swoon and volunteered it himself.

The Manor House, as they called it, was full of books, the master being not only a great reader, but a collector of quaint volumes, and Dick had been allowed to read almost anything which he could reach down from the shelves, and in one of these books—a quaint old work upon Witchcraft and the Black Art—he had read a recipe for raising the devil. The form of incantation was simple enough, but the burnt-offering required contained such a variety of ingredients, as in some measure accounted for the villainous smell which pervaded the morning room. After burning the hair of a black tom cat, half-a-dozen herbs, and some of a dead man's bones (all of which Dick had

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

procured after enormous trouble), the applicant for an interview, had merely to kneel down in utter darkness, and repeat his prayers backwards until the evil one appeared. Dick, it seems, had long been meditating the experiment, but some words which his mother let drop that Sunday morning had decided him. When the other members of the family went to church he had not been ready to go with them, and had in consequence received a very gentle "talking-to" upon the subject, his mother telling him amongst other things of the misery and unhappiness caused in this world by evil, and of the obligation laid upon all of us to war against the devil and all his works.

This was talk which Dick could understand. If the devil annoyed his good mother, and did so much harm, no doubt all true men, he argued, should fight against him, and especially any St. Clair; and as he happened to know how to procure an interview, he at once made preparations for meeting the arch enemy of mankind by taking down and loading the bell-mouthed pistols to the muzzles with tin-tacks, gravel, and anything else of a penetrating nature, and then,

RAISING THE DEVIL

having the house to himself for the forenoon, he shut himself up in the darkened morning room with a supply of firearms and sidearms, burnt his offering, and began to mutter his prayers backwards.

He had been on his knees doing this steadily from half-past ten until half-past six, so that it was no wonder that when his father knocked at the door, and eventually kicked it open, Dick had become faint and half foolish, and had in the half darkness mistaken his father for a more august but less respectable person.

But he had lived up to his motto. Frightened as he was, believing childishly in the efficacy of his patent, he had stuck to his colours in the dark all day, and when the enemy arrived he had shown fight to the best of his ability. He always did through life.

I remember after we had put the little fellow to bed, that the two elders stood together shaking hands in the shadow of the shield (though I suppose there was no shadow then, for it was late on in the evening), and I heard my father say to his old crony as he wrung his hand:

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"No, no, Malcolm, I'm not hurt in the least, I tell you. It was the empty sleeve he hit, but, man! what a soldier he'll make."

"Yes," answered the other, whilst I could see his proud old face grow prouder. "It's in the blood. I'm the only one for five generations who has not worn uniform, and you know why that was."

"I know," my father answered kindly, "and the Queen lost a better soldier in you than she ever would in Heron Maxwell."

And that was good of my father, but I am his son, and won't believe it; though if any one could have been a better soldier than he was, it might have been Dick's father, for Dick could never have got his fire and courage, though he might have got his staying power, from that gentle lady who was a mother to both of us.

CHAPTER II.

FERNEY AND THE FURIES.

I AM very much afraid that my story is not going to be all that it ought to be. I have heard men say, and men too whom I respected, that fighting, and especially fighting with the fists, is very disreputable ; and if they were right, no self-respecting lad should read any more of this story. But I myself cannot think so badly of fighting. The greatest countries the world has ever known achieved most of their greatness by fighting. Our dear old England drew in her strength from Vikings and Saxons, and half-a-dozen other strong northern races, with the salt brine on their lips and the love of battle in their hearts, and the men whom they begot have not only made an Empire, tamed and reclaimed half the wildest corners of the world, but by the strong

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arm of the soldier they have secured justice for millions, and kept the peace as only strong men can keep it.

Fighting is a good thing if men fight only in a good cause, and even the boxer's pastime necessitates such careful training, such self-denial, such coolness and endurance, such good temper even, as to more than atone for any brutality there may be in it.

But this applies only to fighting, not to watching fights. I have not a word to say for the folk who go to see and bet upon prize fights. I would as soon pay somebody else to play my innings for me at cricket, or ride my horse to hounds. And, moreover, to fight successfully, at any rate, in large bodies, men must submit to discipline, and that is the very foundation of public safety and society itself. It is just the want of discipline which is ruining America, and in a less degree the old country. Men are a great deal too free nowadays, and they use their freedom of thought to pull down old faiths and beautiful ones, which they can never hope to replace; they use their freedom as citizens to destroy the trade of their country

FERNEY AND THE FURIES

and their own prosperity, by strikes and such things, and the freedom of the press to spread evil doctrines, filth, and disloyalty. Give me discipline which binds men together as one man, rather than false freedom which leads to destruction and anarchy.

But I am wandering away from Dick St. Clair, who, though he certainly thought and talked of these things later in life, had no ideas on such subjects as a boy.

For some years after his futile attempt to abolish the devil with bell-mouthed pistols and Malay creeses I saw nothing of Dick, and when I met him again his own surroundings had altered greatly. Old Mr. St. Clair had gone to join his fathers, and the family, though they still lived in the shadow of the shield, were under the protecting wing of a Mr. Braithwaite, a cousin of Dick's father, and at that time guardian to the boys.

Mr. Braithwaite was a Scotchman of quite another type from my old friend; a lowlander with a lowlander's scorn for clan traditions and a business man's respect for the almighty dollar, as was natural in one who owned the largest

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and most profitable business in the neighbourhood. He was an upright man and well meaning, but with no more romance in his composition than lay between the covers of his great ledger, and with no more sympathy for the follies of youth than he had for crime. In a moment of genuine friendliness he had made up his mind that if Dick framed right he would give him first a stool in his counting house, and then perhaps by-and-by a share in the business. Ferney (Dick's elder brother) was eventually to become Mr. Braithwaite's partner. That was settled and suited Ferney "down to the ground," but as Dick's cousin had no children of his own there would be room for more than one of his wards in the firm. The mind of a good soul like Braithwaite was incapable of devising a brighter future than this for any boy. The business was made, the work not unpleasant, and the profits—well, Mr. Braithwaite used to smile when he thought to himself about the profits. But he could not shut his eyes to the fact that Dick would have to alter considerably before he would be fit for such good fortune as was in store for him.

FERNEY AND THE FURIES

Unfortunately Dick cared for none of these things. His father had always regretted that he himself had not been in the army; he had always promised Dick that it would be his own fault if he were not a soldier, and a soldier he meant to be by hook or by crook. He hated the very name of business; looked upon money as dirt which it hardly became a gentleman to deal with, and trade as degrading. The only books he read were histories of old wars; the only games he cared for were such as taught men to use their hands to guard their heads or break other peoples. Stripped to our shirts we used every evening to play singlestick in the old English fashion, with our elbows held high to guard our heads, or we used to put on the gloves and hammer one another mercilessly, until one or both were unable to strike another blow.

After a time we tired of this comparatively peaceful exercise, or yearned to practise what we had learned, and to see the effect of bare knuckles when launched against a foe with due skill. Instinctively we wandered down to Braithwaite's slip, where the boys were big and

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

rough, and in six months from our first visit, our reputations were established, nor was there a boy of anything like our age or weight with whom we had not tried conclusions.

This sounds ill I know, and such a course is not recommended to youth generally, but ours was a wild neighbourhood, and the lads round Mr. Braithwaite's slip in those days were bred from the fisher folk of our coast, and had no doubt a strain of Viking blood in their veins. They at any rate liked the sport as well as we did, and when their work was done for the day, and some great ship stood high and dry in her chocks, looked for our coming, and would have been disappointed if we had not come.

It is not to be wondered at that Mr. Braithwaite had no patience with our pranks, and warned us off his slip, but of course his words were wasted. There was a fascination about that slip (or marine railway as some folk call it) quite distinct from its charm as the stage on which our Homeric combats were fought. To boys who traced their ancestry from old Norse sea kings, there was matter of interest in every ship which our "uncle" docked; in the strange

FERNEY AND THE FURIES

sea-grasses which grew along their keels, in the clusters of strange shells which fouled their bottoms, even in the sea crust upon their plates. They had made many voyages, these ships, and seen many lands, and in their dumb fashion they told us much of the world beyond our sea rim—the world we yearned to see. Alas! before long, all our pleasant days, all our diving and swimming in the blue water beyond the slip-head, our merry boxing bouts and idle dreamings, came to an end. Like all great events the change when it came came suddenly.

Every Sunday the little mother and her flock used to walk to morning service at St. Andrews, being met at five minutes to eleven at the top of the Crofts by Uncle Braithwaite, in a magnificent black frock coat and top hat. We always called him "Uncle Braithwaite," although Dick objected to the term, and in sooth he was not more than his father's cousin, if that. I know that the men who seemed most magnificent to me, physically or mentally, twenty years ago, have somehow returned to the level of humanity; to the level, that is, of men not more than five feet nine or ten in height, and

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able, I daresay, to earn four or five hundred a year by passably honest means; but the halo which youth cast round Uncle Braithwaite is round him still. The owner of Braithwaite's slip at Scarsley was certainly the most eminently respectable man I ever saw. In height he was well over six feet, his hair was white as snow, parted with mathematical accuracy in the middle, and as trim and smooth as a well-kept tennis lawn. What with his frock coat, his upright carriage, his stern aquiline face, and his well-waxed white moustache, you could have sworn that the dignified gentleman who passed you the plate at St. Andrews was an ex-military man. But his appearance and his punctuality were the only military features in his composition. I have no doubt that upon the particular Sunday which I am referring to, Uncle Braithwaite was just passing as "the mother" reached the head of the Crofts, but we were not there to see, for, tempted by the brightness of the day, Dick and Ferney and I had obtained leave to tramp over to the village church at Treby, instead of as usual helping to fill our own great family pew.

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It was a lovely winter morning, crisp and dry, with several inches of snow upon the ground, and even Gyp, our Skye terrier, was more full of life than usual as we walked home.

Unluckily the service at Treby was over half an hour before that at Scarsley, so that when we reached the public-house which faces St. Andrews, the sermon there was still in full swing.

In the yard or open square in front of the inn when we passed it there were a couple of loafing yokels, accompanied by two much-ribboned lasses, who had no doubt driven with them into Scarsley in the waggons still standing in the road.

I suppose that the yokels having come from Treby were statutory travellers, and as such had been allowed to quench their thirst with somewhat injudicious freedom at the tap-room of the *Goat*, which would satisfactorily account for what followed.

"Bill," said the smaller of the yokels, as we passed, to his fellow, "see me knock that bloomin' dawg over."

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"You canna hit un, mon; he binna long enough for thee," giggled one of the lasses.

"I canna? Wait till I show thee, then," retorted her beau, filling his great paws with snow, and adding a piece of road stone to the mass to give it weight.

Meanwhile poor old Gyp had no suspicion of foul play. He was a dog of much dignity of demeanour, and accustomed, like his masters, from his youth up to be treated with some consideration in Scarsley village, so that he paced by the yokels with his tail held very high indeed, and his long Dundreary whiskers almost sweeping the snow.

Now the lass was wrong. A Skye terrier is an exceptionally long dog, long enough for anyone to hit, who can throw a stone at all, and perhaps that carter was a good shot; but be that as it may, on this occasion, at any rate, he shot well, planting his snowball fairly on Gyp's ribs, and turning him head over heels, to the huge delight of his companions. The next moment, before he could close his great laughing mouth, he was himself flat upon his back, with an uncomfortable suspicion that the earth had

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risen up and kicked him between the eyes. A minute later the action had become general, and a small tinkling bell, which none of us had time to notice, began to ring over the way. The man whom I had floored rose slowly from his feet, brushed the snow out of his eyes, and seeing that Dick was smaller than I, put down his head, and with a roar went at him like an angry rhinoceros.

"Left-hand upper cut," I heard old Dick say coolly, as he waited for the charge; but I have no idea whether he brought that little manoeuvre off successfully or not, for at that moment I was wracking my brain to remember any recipe contained in our favourite *Art of Boxing*, for the treatment of a gentleman twice your weight and strength, who insists upon coming to close quarters, and treats your counters as if they were mere shocks from floating thistle down.

Alas! I could think of nothing but flight, and that is *not* recommended in the work in question. Luckily for me, my carter was as good-natured as he was big and strong; and having realized that he could do as he pleased

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with me, contented himself with hitting me in the chest, and knocking my hat over my eyes—treatment very exasperating to a gentleman of my lineage, but comparatively painless, and under the circumstances unavoidable.

“Master Dick! Master Dick! Cut it! The judge be a comin'.” It was the first warning we had; but we both knew at once who the friendly potboy meant by the judge. Mr. Braithwaite was a churchwarden on Sundays; on week-days he was a most energetic J.P.

In despair I looked at my opponent. If I did not run, Mr. Braithwaite would freeze me with his cold-grey eye; and if I ran, the carter would think that I was running away from him, and, worse than all, I should never be quite sure that he was wrong, for I did feel a distinct inclination to bolt even before the potboy's warning. It was a horrible dilemma, but the carter let me out of it by turning and bolting for the fence himself. Possibly he worked for some one in the congregation, and had no wish to be seen—I don't know. What I do know is, that though he started first (to that I will swear), I was over the fence before

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he reached it, and yet I had time in passing to see Dick, who had driven his man back against the horse-trough, suddenly stoop and run in, catching the fellow by the ankles, and landing him neatly on his head in the trough. By the time he had emerged therefrom, with his red tie all draggled and his greasy curls all limp, Dick too was over the fence by my side, and we should both of us have been safe, but for that idiot Ferney.

Ah, well! it is a long time ago, and I am getting old, so I suppose that I ought not to speak so hotly of Ferney, who, after all, did just what he ought to have done under the circumstances, reminding us of the day of the week, the proximity of the church, and such other obvious matters as occurred to him. But why on earth need he have stood there arguing with the girls who had knocked his top hat off with their sunshades, instead of getting back to covert as we had done? As I said, it is a long time ago, and both Dick and I must have been terribly frightened, and yet we writhed with laughter as we peered through the fence and saw the whole congregation, in column of fours,

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led by Mr. Braithwaite in person, swoop down upon the miserable Ferney and the furies who still persisted in punctuating their remarks with blows from their sunshades. Poor Ferney! he is member for his division of the county now, and a great authority upon compulsory education, but neither Fred Ferris (the potboy, grown old and white haired now) nor I have forgotten that scene yet.

It was the very last in our home life at Scarsley, for between it and the day when we were packed off to Fernhall, on the opposite coast of England, there was only a dreary time of disgrace and constant surveillance.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST NIGHT AT FERNHALL.

DICK was thirteen, and I, Ion Maxwell, about fourteen, when we made our first appearance at Fernhall, and boys though we were, the surroundings of the great school struck a chill into our hearts. I have wandered a good deal since those days, but I will defy you to find anywhere more bleak scenes than those we drove through on our way to the school. From the nearest town, which I will call Slowton, it was three or four miles by road to Fernhall, and all those miles our four-wheeler ran through a dead flat country, over which the frequent storms of the west coast carried fragments of seaweed and other waifs and strays from the shore. You would see streamers of kelp hung in the hedges, and gulls flying low over the plough instead of rooks, and when

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the storms were actually raging you might see great white balls of sea foam driven far inland. The school itself was hedged in by a sea wall, and even that, strong as it was, yielded at times to the fury of the waves, which having made a breach, swept over the lands for miles and miles. But the flat land had its advantages. It was not picturesque, but it afforded us an excellent rifle range; the deep dykes with which the fields were intersected tried the muscles and nerve of the paper chasers, and no school in England could boast of a better or larger cricket field than ours.

But we saw none of these advantages when we arrived. The rain was coming down in solid sheets, and it was so late that after a hurried interview with the head master we were escorted to our dormitory in the inner quadrangle and left to familiarize ourselves with our new surroundings. I remember that quadrangle of small studies, with the boot-house on one side of it where the "gans" blacked our boots, and the great partitioned rooms in which our beds were, as well as if I had only visited them yesterday. For a moment when the

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master introduced us there was a hush. The ten or twelve boys in the room looked as if butter would not melt in their mouths, and the captain of the dormitory showed us to our cubicles with great courtesy. These cubicles were little pens fenced in with high wooden partitions, reaching to within a few feet of the ceiling, and containing each of them an iron bedstead and nothing more. A red curtain ran across the entrance to each, and a gas jet at the end of the room partially illumined the whole.

The moment the master had withdrawn there was a rustling of curtains, and a dozen boys in their night-shirts were in the passage.

"Hulloa, you new fellows, come out and let us look at you," cried a voice, and being wiser than Dick I complied at once. Dick remained in his den.

"Where is the other fellow?" asked the ringleader.

"In his room, I suppose," I answered.

"In his room, you suppose," drawled my interrogator; "then go and tell him to come out."

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"St. Clair," I called, "these fellows want you to come out."

"When I'm ready I'll come," answered Dick coolly.

"Confound his check," muttered Crowther, a big, red-faced fellow who was captain of the dormitory because, I suppose, he was the most unruly fellow in it. "What did you say his name was?"

"St. Clair."

"St. who? Oh, I see, Satan! Well, you fellows, let's bolt Satan," and without more ado he took up his pitcher and flung it, contents and all, over the partition into Dick's cubicle.

This device had the desired effect, and in a moment Dick was in their midst in his shirt, white to the lips and wet to the skin, with a great red lump on his forehead where the ewer had struck him.

"Who threw that water jug?" he asked, glaring round him on the circle of jeering young faces. "Who threw it, Maxwell," he reiterated, turning to me, as no one else spoke.

"That fellow," I replied, pointing to Crowther. Now Crowther was as burly a young Briton as

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you would wish to see; a Newmarket boy, red-faced and very confident in his own strength, who had been lord of that dormitory for two terms, but before the words were well out of my mouth the flat of Dick's hand made his red cheeks burn a deeper crimson.

There was a deadly hush for a moment after that blow had been struck, and I saw Dick's knees knocking together and his white lips quivering. To look at him you would have thought he was in a paroxysm of terror.

"Very well, you will fight me behind the chapel to-morrow," said Crowther coldly. He knew the rules of the school well, and feeling sure of his prey, had no mind to risk interruption and a heavy punishment by fighting in the dormitory.

"No, I won't," replied Dick, whiter than ever, and his voice trembled so that even I began to wonder if it were possible that he had a white feather in him somewhere after all.

"You won't fight to-morrow, after that. Then you'll take a licking," sneered Crowther.

"No, I'll fight you now," he stammered, and as he spoke he clenched his fists, shut his teeth,

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and dashed madly in at his foe, only to be laid low by as neat a counter as anyone need wish to see delivered. Crowther was not to be caught napping twice in one evening. But the blow, though severe, had the best possible effect on Dick, and when he regained his legs he fought his man as coolly as if he had had the gloves on. In spite of this change for the better, he had, however, no chance against Crowther, who had not only weight but science on his side, and it was lucky for my friend that the master turned up before many blows had been exchanged, and sent us all flying to our cubicles.

"Crowther, this is disgraceful, and on the first night, too. What is the meaning of it?"

"He struck me first, sir, and I had to defend myself," replied Crowther.

"Struck you first! Why the boy is not half your size!"

"It's true, sir, St. Clair struck Crowther first," put in a sycophant of Crowther's.

"Is that true, St. Clair?" asked the master.

"Yes, sir."

"What did you strike him for? Answer me!"

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But Dick's mouth shut like a steel trap. It was against our moral code to tell tales or to make excuses, and though I was burning to tell the whole story and set my friend right in the master's eyes, a look from Dick sealed my lips.

For a moment the master looked perplexed. Dick's white and blood-stained face, with its square jaw and angry grey eyes, impressed him, no doubt, unfavourably, and his stubbornness augured ill for his future career.

"Very well. Crowther, you will do a couple of hundred lines; and you, St. Clair, report yourself to the sergeant for a week's punishment drill. That ought to take some of the devil out of you," I heard him mutter to himself, as he went up the passage back to his room.

So St. Clair was introduced to Fernhall as Satan, and the name stuck to him.

But the troubles of that first night were not over yet, although they seemed to be. The dormitory had been stirred to its depths by the events of the evening, and the hush which followed the master's departure was not the hush of peace.

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I thought it was, and the dashing of the rain on the roof, and the unaccustomed roar of the waves on the sea-wall soon lulled me to sleep, and sent me back again in dreams to Scarsley. Dreams play strange pranks with one's individuality, and on this particular occasion mine converted me into a ship—a ship coming on to Mr. Braithwaite's slip in the cove. I felt the chocks catch me, and then I began to rise, slowly at first and then with greater rapidity. They were running me up the rails, and would soon have me hoisted high and dry, so that men could walk under me and scrape off the weed and mussel-shells. Suddenly there was a great shock, a hideous jolt, and I awoke. My first impression was a continuation of my dream. Something had gone wrong with the chocks, and I (the ship) had heeled over and was lying shattered on the platform. That was always the danger of Braithwaite's slip, a danger which he had always avoided hitherto. What a terrible state of mind my uncle would be in at the catastrophe! That was my first thought. My second was to realize who I was and to wonder what had happened.

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A sound of suppressed laughter all around me, helped me to guess at the cause of my mishap, and fumbling about on the floor I soon found out what that mishap was. My bed was literally in fragments, its own legs straddled out upon the floor, the clothes and myself scattered pell-mell across the cubicle. To each leg of the bed a rope had been attached, and I could feel that these ropes ran over the partition on either side of my cubicle. I had been hoisted, and so, I found out next day, had Dick.

The process is a simple one, and used to be a great favourite at Fernhall. A rope was made fast to each of the four legs of a bed, and two ropes were carried over the top of the partition to the left, two over that to the right, of the cubicle. When all had been arranged, the victim still being innocently asleep, the perpetrators of the joke hauled upon their respective ropes, and the bed rose slowly until it reached the top of the cubicle. Then the men hauling on the ropes let go, and the bed obeying the law of gravity came down with a crash, shooting the unfortunate occupant out

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of his sheets and his dreams at the same moment.

This was what had happened to me, but as I was not prepared to fight the whole dormitory I took my troubles philosophically, and seeing that it was impossible to mend the bed I rolled myself up in the scattered clothes, pulled my pillow under my head, and waited further developments. Whether Dick's desperate attack upon Crowther had had the effect of cooling the other fellows' courage, or whether they were tired and sleepy like ourselves, I don't know, but no further attempt was made to disturb us that night, so that I slept peacefully until morning, when I was ordered to turn out and fetch the boots of No. 36 from the boot-hall. It was of course a rainy morning, and the gravel in the quadrangle was bitterly cold for my bare feet, but seeing other youngsters obeying similar commands I did as I was bid, and tramped across to the boot-hall in my night-shirt, and after a prolonged hunt discovered a pair of boots with Crowther's number (36) chalked on their soles. My night-shirt of course was wet through, but that

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mattered little, as my shirt was dry. I knew nothing of rheumatism in those days, and night was a good twelve hours distant, so I tossed the wet garment on the bed, and dressed cheerfully enough, looking forward with a good deal of curiosity and some excitement to my formal introduction to public school life. I remember that morning, though *I* had to fetch Crowther's boots, no one fagged Dick. Either he had frightened our persecutors already, or they were reserving him for a worse fate.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DORMITORY BULLY.

I T would exhaust my readers' patience and mine were I to take him step by step through Dick's school-life, so I shall not attempt to do more than outline it. The results of our interviews next day with the masters were wholly satisfactory to both of us, though I suppose that they ought not to have been so to me, for Dick and I were drafted into the same form, in spite of the difference in our ages. But what did I care. I knew that Dick was cleverer than I was, and all that I wanted was to be near the dear old fellow as much and as long as I could. I knew that in the race he must win, and I was only too pleased that he should. I always was a second-rate fellow, although somehow I am supposed to be doing exceptionally well now; but that, I believe, is the way with second-rate men.

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To the disgust, I think, of our persecutors in the dormitory over the boot-hall, we were both placed so high (in the lowest form of the middle school) that we were moved as of right to other dormitories of a much more luxurious character than that in which we passed our first night, the only drawback to this being that Crowther also got his remove at the same time, and entered upon his middle school career when we did. I think at first that I was an infinitely more popular boy than Dick, although this was small credit to me. I had no convictions; Dick had. I did not "crib" myself, nor did I make small boys write out my impositions for me; but I did not show what I felt if I felt anything when my class-mates either cribbed or bullied. Dick was of different metal. A reserved almost sullen boy, he made very few friends, but his fearless tongue, his openly-expressed contempt for those who did not live up to his code of honour, made him hosts of enemies. I used to expostulate with him often, but I might as well have talked to the school-pump.

"Howells is a good enough fellow, Dick," I would say; "and I believe the masters know

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that he cribs. Why need you insist on snubbing him?"

"Howells acts a lie, and tells one every day of his life, and though, of course, it's not my business to expose his lying, I don't choose to know him. Do you think it is fair for him to take his place every day above poor little Lytham, just because he has the impudence to read off his construe from a crib, whilst Lytham makes his head ache trying to find out what old Tacitus means? The fellow is dishonest; I don't know anything about degrees of honesty."

And so it would end; and Howells, who was simply a lazy fellow doing as others did, and a fellow too who would not have told an ordinary lie, thought St. Clair a bumptious prig, and had not a good word for him.

But the fagging was the worst feature at Fernhall. I fancy that when we arrived, fagging was at its worst; not legalized moderate fagging of lower-form boys by boys above them, but unreasonable fagging enforced by the grossest forms of bullying.

Against this my young Quixote set his face like a flint. I remember well the first battle in

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this war. The new dormitory in which we had been placed, was on the third story of a huge building, the back windows of which looked down upon a yard of cobble stones. Round this yard were situated the school kitchens. Now one of the principal products of those kitchens were delicacies known to us as puffs—solid slabs of hard-baked crust containing a thin layer of prunes. Possibly the prunes balanced the evil effects of the pastry. I don't know; but however this was, prune puffs were served to us every other day, and were great favourites with the boys, so much so that a supper of stolen puffs in our dormitory was considered almost the *summum bonum* of earthly felicity.

These puffs led to the first battle. The dormitory gas had been turned down, and the Rev. Mr. Proser had passed round upon his tour of inspection. All seemed well, and it really would have been surprising to a more commonplace man than Proser, that a deep and even snore came from almost every cubicle as soon as the light went out. But Proser's mind was probably grappling with

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Greek roots; he neither knew nor cared anything for boys except as sadly porous vessels, into which he had to put a modicum of classical learning every day.

As soon as Proser's steps died away, the snoring stopped, and a voice demanded, "Whose turn is it to fetch puffs to-night?" Somebody answered, "Crowther's."

"John can't go, you had better find someone else," said a third voice, which we all recognized as that of big Crowther, the cock of the dormitory, and elder brother to our first enemy.

"Why can't he go, it's his turn?" echoed Acland, a thorough little radical, whose mouth could never be shut by those in authority.

"Because he has a cough, and I say so!" replied the great man, and we heard his sick brother trying hard to confirm his statement by something between a sneeze and a bellow.

"Fudge," retorted Acland, "he hadn't a cough ten minutes ago!"

"If you don't shut up, I'll send you!" cried Crowther angrily.

"You might try," replied the undaunted small boy, "and I would go if it was my turn, but it

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isn't and so I won't, and if you lay your hand on me, you'll get a jolly good licking from George!"

At this there was a smothered laugh, and we all heard Crowther jump out of bed as if he were about to administer a licking to the rebellious Acland, but he apparently thought better of it. The George referred to was the school hero, captain of everything, and young Acland's elder brother.

"Well, somebody must go," the first voice remarked, after a pause. "Here, Lytham, come out. You will do as well as another."

And so Lytham went, a boy whose early years had been blighted by sickness, so that though he was nearly sixteen he could hardly hold his own in our form, whilst his long, thin body was as weak as it was ungainly.

A rope was made out of the sheets of the smaller boys' beds, and the end of it was made fast to the window-sill, whilst the other was lashed round Lytham's waist.

Then, white and trembling, he was lowered from the dormitory window in his night-shirt in the dark, wet night.

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"Lord! what a funk the beggar is in!" said Crowther junior, who in spite of his cough was now watching the proceedings at the open window. "Swing him a bit to wake him up."

The suggestion seemed a happy one, and was promptly acted upon, so that you could see the white figure in its fluttering night-shirt swinging in the darkness like the pendulum of a clock.

"He has more pluck than you would have," said Acland to Crowther. "You would yell if they did that to you. Lower him down, and don't be a brute."

By this time Dick and I had joined the group, and between us we stopped Master Crowther's larks, and lowered Lytham to the ground.

"Untie the sheet, and look sharp with the puffs," cried Crowther; but the figure at the end of the rope took no notice of him. It did not even stand up.

"What are you at there; you'll have the nix round if you aren't quick. Look sharp, or you'll get tossed when you come up." But the figure never moved.

"Jerk at him, John," said the elder Crowther, and the other obeying jerked until the rope

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parted, and then the limp, white figure rolled over on the wet cobble-stones.

Lytham, that fool Lytham, had fainted, and how on earth was he to be got up again before they were all found out? Suddenly Dick appeared with another sheet in his hands.

"I'll fetch him," he said, and catching the rope in his hand he hauled it in, and spliced the new sheet to the old. Then he crept out of the window, and let himself down steadily until he reached Lytham's side.

"Can you tie him on?" called Crowther, after a minute. "For goodness' sake look sharp, or we shall all be 'bottled.'"

To be "bottled" was the school slang for to be caught.

"I'm not going to try," came Dick's cool answer; "but I think I can carry him to the sanatorium."

"To the what? To the sanatorium? Why, Pills would peach, and then we should all get the sack."

"I don't see that that matters," came the answer from below, and we saw Dick pick up his burden and begin to stagger with it over the

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slippery cobble-stones towards the surgery. If he took Lytham there the expulsion of everyone concerned in the business would follow as a matter of course, and the awful consequences of such a step made Crowther's red face turn a sickly yellow in the gaslight.

"If you don't come back I'll kill you, you sneaking hound!" he cried.

"Very likely you have nearly killed Lytham!" And Dick turned to go.

"St. Clair, St. Clair, don't be an ass. You wouldn't peach on the whole dormitory," cried Acland, and I foolishly, perhaps, added my voice to Acland's, so that Dick hesitated.

For a moment he stood thinking, and then, putting his burden down again, he said in the low tones in which we had all been talking, "If I tie him on, and let you haul him up, will you all swear that he shall neither be licked nor fagged again."

"We'll swear it," came the answer in a dozen eager voices.

"Make Crowther swear it," Dick insisted.

"I swear I will not lick him," repeated Crowther.

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"Nor fag him, nor let anyone else fag him," St. Clair dictated.

"Nor fag him, nor let anyone else fag him," Crowther repeated.

"All right, if you do, I promise you that I will report this to the 'Head.'"

"Likely enough, you little sneak," muttered the bully, though he was too wise to say so out loud, but helped the others with all his strength to haul up the still lifeless form of poor Lytham.

After he had been bundled into bed, Dick was hauled up, a wet and white-faced lad, his hand shaking, and those grey-blue eyes simply flaring out from under the overhanging brows.

"Bravo, St. Clair, you're a good plucked one," said somebody, and I laid my hand on his shoulder, but he took no notice of word or touch, but just pushed past and faced Crowther.

"You beastly coward."

"What?" cried the big fellow. "You call me a coward? Oh, I see," with a sneer, "but you forget I only promised not to lick Lytham."

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Beg my pardon, or I'll break every bone in your body."

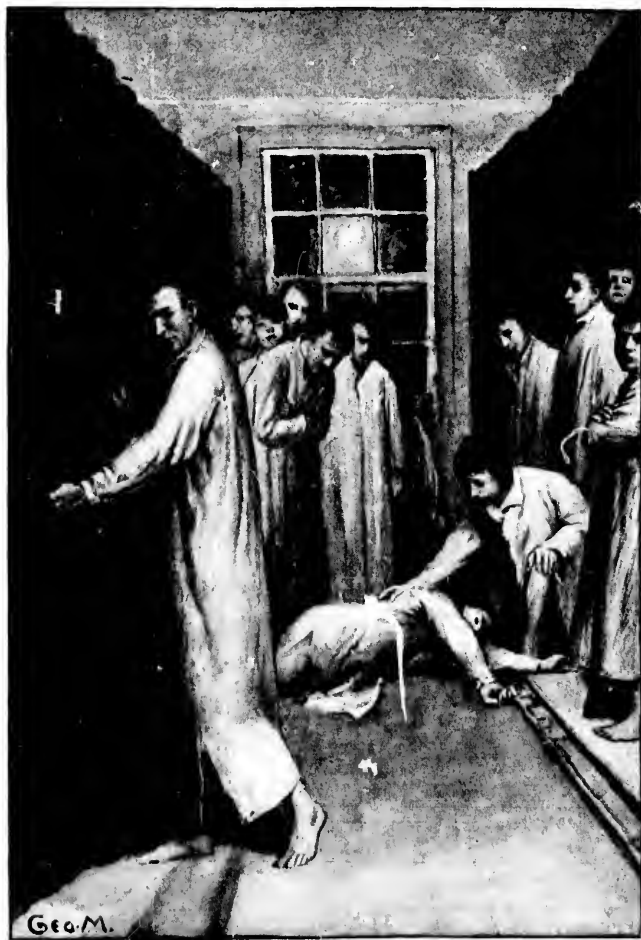
Dick stepped a pace nearer until his white face was almost against Crowther's chest, and then pointing into his face he hissed out again :

"You beastly, brutal coward."

There was a sickening thud, and the next moment Dick St. Clair was as limp and lifeless as the boy he had just tied on to the rope, and I, who had made a feeble dash to my friend's rescue, could only hear indistinctly humming, as it were, in my ears a voice that sounded like Acland's shrill treble :

"By George, they're right, Crowther. You are a brute and a coward."

No doubt Acland was right in part, and Crowther was a brute, a great unthinking, unfeeling brute ; but to do him justice he was too hard a litter to give a lad of my weight any chance against him, and I doubt if he ever felt much fear except when he saw Dick lying on the floor as white as his own night-shirt, the blood flowing from his broad square forehead, whilst I staggered to my feet too dizzy to hold my head up.



IT WAS A BAD NIGHT'S WORK FOR THE BELLYING PARTY.

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It was a bad night's work for the bullying party, and I think, as Crowther saw the other fellows gather round Dick and myself, he realized that some of his power had slipped away from him.

CHAPTER V.

UNDER SENTENCE.

THAT night when all was hushed, I, Ion Maxwell, had a very bad time of it. It was not because my head was ringing with Crowther's blow, although that was bad enough, but physical pain is a thing which any fellow ought to be able to bear. My pain was worse. I felt that I had been untrue to my creed, that I had "funked" and disgraced myself irretrievably in my own esteem and in Dick's. I had not had the courage to protest against Crowther's bullying of Lytham as Dick had done. I had let Dick show me the way there as he always did, and even when Crowther had felled my friend what had I done? I had of course rushed in and struck a blow for my party. Any English lad would do that, but I had waited long and done my part badly. All

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my coolness of which I was so proud had gone in a moment, and I had been knocked down like a ninepin, and so hurt or frightened (oh, Heavens! could it be that it was fright and not the force of the blow?) that I had made no further fight of it. Of course Crowther was a couple of years older than myself and immensely more powerful, but what were the odds against me in my battle as compared with the odds against which Dick's favourite heroes and my own ancestors used to fight? Lancelot and Galahad were mere men, but they fought giants and defeated them; Clive's army fought at seventeen to one, and gained the day; and even my dear old father led his handful against an unbroken regiment with a shattered arm! And I, Ion Maxwell, who had sworn to outdo my forbears, had been ignominiously defeated at one blow by a boy not six inches taller than myself. It was a deep, lasting disgrace, and I wished that Crowther's blow had killed me. Then at least I could have done no more than I had done.

When I had got as far as this I crept round to Dick's cubicle, half afraid to see him. He

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was awake of course, a towel soaked with blood tied round his head, his eyes shut, and his face very pale in the dim half light of the gas jet which, though almost turned out, still threw some light into his room. As I sat down on his bedside he opened his eyes and took my hand in his.

"Well, Ion, old boy, I'm afraid you got a terrible knock-down blow from that brute. You should not have interfered."

"Not interfered! Do you suppose I could stand still after he had stunned you? Was he to have it all his own way?"

"No, I didn't say that, and I don't think it. Whose side won, do you think? His or mine?"

"His, I'm afraid. If I had been worth my salt he would not have had so much the best of it," I answered bitterly.

"You are more than worth your salt, Ion. You could not have done more, and we did enough. That was our battle, though we did pay the butcher's bill. Why, man, he had to make a treaty, which saves that poor little duffer Lytham for the future, and we did more than that——"

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"More, Dick?"

"Yes, more. Those fellows see now what bullying really looks like. When Crowther closed my eyes he opened theirs. Now good-night, Ion. I'm nearly fourteen, I think, and you nearly fifteen. In another year, old boy, we will see how much bullying there will be in Fernhall," and so saying he lay back and closed his eyes. If it had pleased Providence to spare Dick, he would have righted greater wrongs than the bullying at Fernhall. But though I went to my bed cheered by knowing that I was not disgraced in Dick's eyes, I was far from content, and it was long before I slept, and even then my dreams were of that great shield at home, grown so great in my sleep that I could see nothing beyond it, while below it the one word of the motto blazed like white fire, "Fight."

That, I suppose, was why I was still thinking of fighting when the chapel bell rang, and sent me, dressing as I went, running across the quadrangle. My boot-laces were all undone, and I tripped over them as I went up the aisle, and of course my form master saw it and disapproved.

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But the sneer with which he glanced at my untidiness deepened into a frown as his eyes rested on my face. I could feel his eye on me all through the morning service, and I knew by instinct that he had not overlooked Dick's black facings any more than he had mine. Proser was, unluckily for us, our form master as well as our master-in-charge in the dormitory, and when we went to lecture at eleven, I was not in the least surprised to hear, "Maxwell and St. Clair, you will remain behind when the class is dismissed."

I had no time to do more than exchange a glance with Dick, and thank my stars that we were to go on in Tacitus, whose meaning I had always some sort of gift for guessing, even if I had not prepared my lesson carefully, but Dick managed to whisper to me in passing, "Don't tell him anything," which I understood to mean that he considered that Crowther had purchased a right to our silence in return for his promise to Lytham.

But the younger Crowther, who was in our form, had misgivings, and I noticed that when the other fellows left the class room he made a

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bolt at top speed to his brother's study. No doubt that worthy, not knowing the stuff Dick was made of, had a very bad quarter of an hour in consequence. He might have made his mind easy had he known his man. You might as well have tried to open a bear trap with your fingers as Dick's mouth when honour closed it.

"So, Maxwell, you and St. Clair have been fighting again; with one another it seems this time!"

Neither of us answered.

"Have you nothing to say, sir?" he added sternly to me.

"Nothing, sir," I answered.

"And you, have you no excuse for your conduct?" he asked of St. Clair.

"I never make excuses," answered Dick proudly.

"Do you think that your conduct needs none?"

"I am not ashamed of my conduct, sir, but I am sorry that the results offend you. They *are* painful," added Dick with a quaint smile, passing his hand tenderly over his swollen forehead.

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"You seem to think this pugilism matter for pride," said Mr. Proser sternly; "*gentlemen* consider it a blackguard's pastime."

No one answered him, though neither of us agreed with him. To Mr. Proser, Pollux, in a pair of weighted knuckle-dusters with Greek names to them, was a deity worthy of respect, but poor nineteenth century mortals playing the same game with their naked knuckles were very low class cads.

"This time I see you have been fighting with each other," the master continued. We exchanged glances which meant, "Better let him think so," but he was determined to get an answer. "*Have* you been fighting with each other? St. Clair, answer me, sir. Have you been fighting with Maxwell?"

"No, sir."

Even to shield his schoolfellows Dick would not lie.

"With whom have you been fighting then?"

"I can't tell you, sir," Dick replied steadily.

"Can't! Won't, you mean!" retorted Proser.

"And you won't either, I suppose, Maxwell."

"No, sir."

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"Then, sir, I'll make you. I'll make you both answer," cried Proser, fairly losing his temper at last, "and I'll teach you not to disturb the dormitory and disgrace the school by your blackguardism. Report yourself to the sergeant in half an hour's time. When I find you there, you will either make a complete statement of what occurred last night, or you will both be caned. You can go now," and Proser flung the door wide open and stalked away in high dudgeon.

As soon as Proser had disappeared into his own quarters, the little knots of loungers in the square came crowding round us. A rumour that trouble was brewing had spread, and I could see groups even of the lordly monitors standing outside their library windows, eyeing us with considerable interest.

"So you have peached, you little sneaks, have you?"

"That is what you might have done," I answered hotly. "Dick St. Clair keeps his word."

"Oh, then, *you* peached, did you?" retorted my questioner, not understanding me.

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"Leave them, Ion," said Dick; "they can't understand," and with his hand on my shoulder we turned and walked away towards the sergeant's den, a little building in the corner of the square, consisting of an outer room, approached by a flight of three or four steps, and an inner one, in which the sergeant lived, in which the mail was received, and all canings administered. The sergeant was an important functionary at Fernhall, an old soldier generally, whose duties were to receive and deliver the letters, to assist at school executions, lay information against those who broke school regulations, administer a most wearisome form of punishment known as "punny drill," and generally to lurk about, sneak round corners, and lie in wait for offenders. It was a bad system, a system of espionage, which encouraged deceit, and made boys look upon their masters as their natural enemies, belonging to the same class and having about the same gentlemanly instincts, as the sergeant or a private detective. Boys of to-day tell me that their masters treat them as friends, put them on their honour, and even try to get a personal knowledge of the

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character and inmost thoughts of each of them.

I remember a master who called up a boy whom he had watched from his study window fighting at long odds, and I remember that he gave the boy a glass of port wine to pull him together after his licking. It was distinctly against the school rules, but it was kindly meant, and did that boy more good, physically and mentally, than most of his interviews with the rod wielders; but it was almost the only friendly intercourse that boy ever had with a master at Fernhall.

But Dick and I had no friend at court in those early days, and we were in bitterly low spirits as we went across to our execution. Something was worrying Dick, and I was glad when he spoke.

"Ion, did your father ever cane you?"

"Once, for lying. He never caned for anything else."

"Like my dear old dad. Well, Ion, I'm not going to be caned."

"Not going to be caned! How can you help it?"

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"I'm not sure, but I shall tell Proser that I have done nothing to deserve it, broken no rules, and therefore won't be caned."

By George, as I remember it all now, I can almost hear the dogged resolution in Dick's "won't."

"Well if you won't, I won't," I replied, always only too ready to follow where Dick led, and so we went up the steps, reported ourselves to the sergeant to be caned at 12.30, and awaited our executioners, fully resolved not to be executed.

Meanwhile the other boys came in from the football field, and the racquet court, and stood about the square in groups, or loafed singly past the sergeant's office, some of the bolder ones even stopping to peep in and ask how we liked the prospect of our whopping.

"Ever had a caning before?" asked old Swann, the grizzly sergeant, who after all was not a bad fellow for such a billet as his. "No," I answered cheerily, for Dick rather resented his familiarity, "does it hurt much?"

"All depends," he answered meditatively, and then, moved perhaps by pity for our youth

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and inexperience, he added, "Bend your back in a bit as it comes, and let it hit you on the slack of your trousers, and holler the first time he hits you. As like as not, if you don't holler the first time, Mr. Proser will go on thrashing at you till you do. He don't understand the use of a stick, don't Proser," he muttered. The sergeant was himself an admirable single-stick player, and had an idea that he himself ought to have been appointed to wield the rod, but I could not help laughing at his idea of the way to receive corporal punishment. Fancy Dick St. Clair "hollering" at the first cut of the cane!

But my meditations were suddenly cut short. There was a hush in the square, and looking out I saw Proser and Johnson, a whiskered teacher of caligraphy, coming slowly across the square in our direction. Then I knew that we should not have much longer to wait, and in spite of myself felt a slight tingling down my spine, as I saw old Swann open the cupboard behind him, and taking from it a bundle of new rods, proceed to slowly unfasten the pink tape with which they were tied together.

CHAPTER VI.

WE MAKE A BOLT OF IT.

NOW I have no doubt but that our parents were wrong in instilling any prejudices into our young minds, but they were men of a particular stamp, bred from soldiers and reared amongst soldiers, and I suppose that they could not help themselves. There was one class of human beings which set their teeth on edge, in spite of themselves, comparatively harmless beasts too, like the skunk in many things. For instance, these creatures are of an effusively familiar nature, pushing themselves into all sorts of places in which they are not wanted, and so highly scented as a rule as to sicken the ordinary man. These creatures old Mr. St. Clair and my father used to call "bounders," And the Fernhall writing master was unquestionably a bounder. I daresay the man meant well

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enough, but he could not help his nature, any more than he could help wearing brilliantly coloured shirts and gorgeous ties. His hair was always parted in the middle and plaistered down with pomatum, and Dick averred that he kept his long moustache in soak like our cricket bats. Let me do Fernhall justice, Mr. Johnson was the only one of his kind at the school, and by no means popular with his fellow masters.

This, however, was the kind of man who accompanied Mr. Proser to the sergeant's den, and no more unfortunate companion could he have chosen for the occasion.

"Well, Maxwell, are you prepared to answer my questions?" asked my form master.

"No, sir," I answered as firmly as I could.

"And you also refuse?" he added coldly, turning to Dick.

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Then I must teach you a little wholesome discipline. Take off your coats."

We both obeyed in silence, but as Proser stood nervously fingering his cane, and Johnson, twirling his greasy moustaches, blocked the doorway at the top of the steps with his broad

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shoulders, Dick turned to Mr. Proser with his coat hanging on his arm,

"I don't want you to cane us, sir."

"Don't want me to cane you! Will you obey me then?"

"I can't, sir, but——"

"But me no buts. Obey or take your caning."

"I have done nothing to deserve one, sir, nor has Maxwell."

"I am the best judge of that Turn round."

"One moment, Mr. Proser, and I will. I give you my word of honour that though I cannot tell you how we got these black eyes, we have done nothing that you would cane us for if you knew," said Dick earnestly.

Mr. Proser wavered. He was a weak man, and a bookworm who knew nothing of boys or men, but he was a gentleman, and Dick's appeal touched him.

"Word of honour of a soldier and a gentleman! 'Pon my life, if he'd only put in the 'soldier' it would have been quite theatrical. What rubbish."

It was Johnson who spoke, and if a look

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could have gone through his triple layers of fat, Dick's would have killed him. But I suppose his white waistcoat turned the shaft. Certainly his words turned Proser from any kindly intention he may have entertained for a moment.

"No more of this," he said coldly, "Turn your back to me, St. Clair."

"I warn you, sir, I will not be caned," were Dick's last words, but as he spoke he turned his broad young shoulders to the rod, and as he did so it sang through the air and came down with a hiss across his linen shirt. As the cane touched him Dick sprang like a buck at the shot, his shoulder lowered for half a dozen inches or so, and propelled by his whole strength caught the boulder in the middle of his white waistcoat, and sent him flying head over heels out of the doorway and down the steps into the quad, where he lay like a lost sheep upon his back bleating piteously, while Dick and I dashed through the open doorway, jumped over his body as he lay, took the iron railings which bound the old chapel grounds in one stride, and were well on our way down

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the Slowton road before anyone else realized what had happened.

Through the big archway we both dashed, and as we went we heard someone cry "Follow them," but we had a good start and never turned to look or stayed to listen.

All Fernhall boys know the Wild Copse Road, a good straight mile on which many a runner has been trained. Down this we raced for half a mile, and then Dick turned sharp at the hedge and went through it with a crash.

"We had better go across country here," he shouted, and I followed his lead unquestioningly, though I had no idea where we were going or why.

Over the hedge lay a big bean field, and beyond sticky plough, through which we toiled heavily, but we were both in excellent condition, though Dick was never much of a runner. He always used to say that he would rather stop and fight than run a hundred yards. But the school was out after us. We could see them streaming down the Copse Road, and it did not need Dick's words, "The monitors are after us," to tell me what was the matter.

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"This will stop some of them," I cried, and shooting past Dick I led him at the big ditch of the country side, Jack Bacchus' dyke, a yawning chasm, eight feet deep from the top of the embankment to the water, and nearly thirty feet from top to top. As the banks sloped inwards to the water, an eighteen foot jump would just land a man clear of the water at the bottom of the opposite embankment, but even allowing for the elevation from which we took off it was a big jump, and I splashed as I landed. Dick did worse, he went slap in, and floundered out like a drowned rat.

"I don't believe they want to catch us," gasped Dick, looking back. "Nixon could have cleared that like a buck, and Upcott could almost jump from top to top."

"They were running hard enough when they started," I answered, putting my arms in front of my face as I dashed through a struggling bullfinch.

"Yes, as long as the nixes could see them, but look at them now, they are all craning at the brook."

And so they were, and, whether Dick was

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right or not, the bevy of monitors and others fell gradually further and further behind, until when we passed to the right of Slowton there was not one of them in sight.

We had come by this time to the brink of a wide river, which in a mile or two from where we stood flowed into the sea, and Dick was casting up and down it in search of a boat, but he could find none.

"How wide do you suppose it is?" he asked.

"A mile, I should think," I answered, and I expect that I was under the mark, for this river spreads tremendously in the low country near the seashore.

"A mile the worse for us," muttered Dick, "for we have got to cross it somehow. Do you think you can manage it, Ion?"

"I'll try. I'm a better swimmer than you, Dick, at any rate, but about our clothes?"

"We must stick to them, we shall want them on the other side, but I think we can wade a good way," and so saying he slid down the clay bank, and was soon up to his waist in the Swyre.

I followed him with a gasp. The water

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struck a chill into my vitals, for the memory of the winter was still in it, but for several hundred yards we waded safely enough, the water barely reaching to our middles. Then the stream grew deeper and stronger. Gradually it crept up to our waistcoat pockets, then to our armpits, and at that point we could barely keep our feet, and went down stream whether we would or no. At last I saw Dick's head begin to bob, and then I heard him call to me—"Look out, I can't touch bottom now, we must swim for it." And swim we did, for what seemed to me, in my heavy water-logged clothes, a good half hour, though I suppose ten minutes would be nearer the mark, and all the time the current hurried us rapidly down towards the sea. But we touched bottom again, and again began to wade, half swimming, half wading at first, and later walking firmly on the bottom, until just as the early winter evening was beginning to throw a shadow over the long dreary ploughlands, we crept dripping like otters up the north bank of the river. Then we sat down on the clay exhausted, to think and squeeze what water we could out of the legs of our trousers.

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“Have you any money with you, Ion?” asked Dick after awhile.

“Half-a-crown and some coppers,” I answered, feeling in the pond which had been my pocket.

“And I have eighteen pence in silver, and the half sovereign old Braithwaite gave me. What would old Braithwaite say to this, Ion?”

It was an awful thought, and I avoided it.

“What shall we do next, Dick?” I asked rather piteously.

The excitement was beginning to wear off, and I was cold.

“I suppose we must look for a place to sleep in,” Dick answered. “What is that light moving up the river?”

I looked in the direction indicated, and could see in the darkness, which had come on with great rapidity, a flaring light, low down by the water, now showing up plainly, and now disappearing altogether.

Though I watched it for a long time I could make nothing of it. It was certainly not the light of a cottage window, for it travelled from

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point to point, and always, so it seemed to us, up the middle of the bed of the river.

"We had better go and see," said Dick at last. "Where there is fire there is probably a human being, and if so we may get a hint as to where to spend the night. Come on!"

The darkness had now fallen, and we blundered sadly as we made our way over the moorlands by the Swyre towards the light, which was after all not on the Swyre itself, but a good mile up one of its tributary streams. It certainly was as eerie a night as any one need want to be out in, dark and cold, with a wind beginning to rise, and the only sound besides the squelching of the water in our boots, and the dreary monotone of the river, was the cry of some bird which kept uneasily moving about over the moorland.

"It's a man in the water," said Dick at last. "What on earth is he doing?"

"Fishing, I should think," I answered. "Let's watch him," and Dick agreeing, we crouched behind a thin bush and waited.

The man was coming down stream towards us, and though we saw him plainly enough, he

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did not catch sight of us, probably because he held between us and him a great torch, which flared and flickered redly and made the black waters which swirled round his legs of a ruddy colour. In his right hand he carried what looked like a gaff, and as he went he peered eagerly into the water on which his torch-light fell. It was a strange fishing, and a more evil-looking face than that of the fisherman no one need wish to see on a lonely moor at night. The man was clad in rough ploughman's clothes, and might have passed for an honest yokel, but for the fur cap drawn over his eyes, the great handkerchief knotted round his throat, and the indescribable ferocity lent to an originally hard face by its broken nose and broken jaw-bone.

Suddenly we saw the fellow stop near the edge of a deep, quiet pool, into which anyone who had had less intimate knowledge of the river would probably have blundered headlong ; we saw him plunge his long gaff into the water, and the next moment he tossed on to the bank a long, quivering bar of what looked in the torch-light like ruddy gold.

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“Bravo! that’s a beauty!” I cried, forgetting caution in my boyish keenness for sport (or poaching), but as I spoke the torch dropped with a hiss into the water, I heard a scramble on the bank, and the only sign of the man in the darkness was an occasional splash as he slipped into some puddle in his line of retreat.

CHAPTER VII.

BILL DIXON, POACHER AND PUGILIST.

“**H**ERE! hold hard there; we are not water bailiffs!” yelled Dick after the retreating figure of the poacher, “nor the squire’s keepers either!”

But only another splash in the distance was his answer, and the darkness of the March night seemed to grow solid around us.

“Confound you, Ion, you have played the cat and banjo with our chance of bed and supper, I’m afraid. That fellow is too scared to stop on this side the border. Give him another yell, though,” he added, and we both yelled in concert, assuring the man of our entire sympathy with gentlemen of his profession, and disavowing indignantly any connection with the established institutions of the country.

But it was no good; the poacher would have

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nothing to do with us, and Dick muttered sulkily that all proverbs were fossil folly. "They say that birds of a feather flock together," he grumbled, "and yet here we are, law-breakers ourselves, trying to make friends with a poacher, and he will have no more to do with us than if we were gamekeepers or policemen."

For about ten minutes we stood by the bank of the river, cold and wet and shivering, uncertain what to do, unable to go back, and disinclined to go forward; for the moor was so wrapped in gloom, and so full of dykes, deep and hidden by feg and brush, that it was dangerous to travel it without a lantern.

Suddenly there was a rustle in the grass behind us, and before I could turn, a heavy hand was laid on my shoulder.

"It's no good struggling, my man; I have thee fast," said a voice in my ear. "Bill and me has been watching for thee many a night."

This was certainly surprising intelligence, and showed a prophetic instinct in my captor which I should not have expected in a person of his stolid and unimaginative aspect, but the first part of his statement was undeniably true. If

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he held me much "faster" I thought his claws would go through my jacket. That he was a river watcher or a keeper was obvious, and that he and his fellow had a tight hold on Dick and myself undeniable.

"Well, now you've got us what do you mean to do with us?" asked Dick coolly.

"Take you to the cottage till morning if you come along quietly; if not, chuck you in there," the keeper answered, pointing to the salmon pool behind us.

"Thanks. If there's a fire in the cottage I prefer the cottage," replied Dick. "I've tried the river once to-night, and it's cold, decidedly cold," and he shivered at the thought of it.

The man looked at him, puzzled by his accent and his *nonchalance*.

"You needn't be cheeky, my lad," he remarked. "You'll have a good deal to answer for without that when the Beaks get hold of you. Where are your cleeks and the kelts you've killed?"

"I don't know what a cleek is," replied Dick, honestly enough, "and the only kelt I've seen

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this year has just gone across that moor as hard as two legs could carry it."

This tickled the watcher's sense of humour so that he laughed audibly, but the face of the man in authority grew very dark indeed. He lived too far north to relish chaff.

"Kelts don't walk. What do you mean?" he said.

"I mean that the only poacher I've seen lately (unless you are one) took to his heels ten minutes ago when he saw us, and I think took his fish with him. But you can look. You have a lantern there."

"Do you mean to pretend as you're not poaching? Do you think you'll make growed men believe that?"

"You can believe what you please," replied Dick angrily; but I was more politic, and turning to the keeper with what dignity I could assume, asked him:

"Do we look like poachers, keeper?"

The "keeper" perhaps mollified him a little, but Dick had certainly rubbed him the wrong way, and he scanned us with no friendly glances before he answered.

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"Like enough; you're none too decent. Just shop lads from Darkpool or Slowton most likely. It'll be lucky for you if we don't find that you emptied your master's till afore you came tryin' to empty our salmon pools," he growled. "No decent country lad, even if he were a poacher, would be fool enough to come leistering when the fish are off the spawnin' beds. Turn the bull's-eye on, Bill, an' see if you can find their cleeks or their fish."

But the bull's-eye revealed nothing, neither fish nor cleeks. Even the dropped torch had long since drifted seaward out of sight. Bill was just going to give up his search as useless, when the light passed over something on the bank of the stream which made him utter an exclamation. That "something" was the track of a pair of huge nailed boots in the holding clay, a pair of such boots as neither Dick nor I wore or could wear.

"Hulloh! There's bin someone else around here besides these lads," he whispered; "an' you's more like the track of the mon as took the kelts last weck, than any track as those shoes would make," and he pointed almost

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contemptuously at our comparatively urban foot-wear.

But the keeper was only half convinced, and we were heartily glad it was so, for just then captivity meant to us the possibility of drying our clothes before a fire, the certainty of having a roof to sleep under, and a strong probability even of something for supper; whilst freedom meant a night spent on the moor with wet clothes outside, and nothing at all within.

Unfortunately just then something occurred which made the watcher's arguments utterly unimportant to us.

"Hist! Do you see that?" he whispered suddenly, crouching and pulling me down with him.

The keeper made no answer, but looked hard and long at the red light, which now again danced and wavered over one of the streams on the moor about half a mile from where we stood. Then he turned to me.

"I'm going to leave you two here. If you holler or warn them fellows, look out! If I ever catch you it will be the worse for you; but if you keep your mouths shut and follow

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the river bank for maybe half a mile, and then turn up the path to the left, you'll come to my cottage. The woman, I dessay, will let you dry yourselves till I come. Now, Bill, come along, we ought to get him this time!" he added to his companion, and without another word the two men slipped off into the shadows, one keeping above the leisterer, the other creeping up to him from below.

For a quarter of an hour we sat and watched the leisterer's light as it moved here and there, and listened, anxiously expecting every moment to hear the sounds of an encounter between the poacher and the keepers.

But the light continued to move about from place to place, coming round again gradually in our direction, until it seemed close to us again.

Then it suddenly went out, and the moor was all blackness, without light and without sound. No one could have believed that any living thing was moving on it.

"He has fooled the keepers again; they might as well try to catch a will-o'-the-wisp."

Dick spoke out loud, and as he did so a gruff

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laugh sounded behind him which made us both jump almost out of our frozen skin.

"Jest about my sentiments, mate," said a voice, "and they're not likely to nab Jem any more than they'll nab me. You needn't be skeared," he added, coming up from the black depths of the river, "it's only me, Bill Dixon."

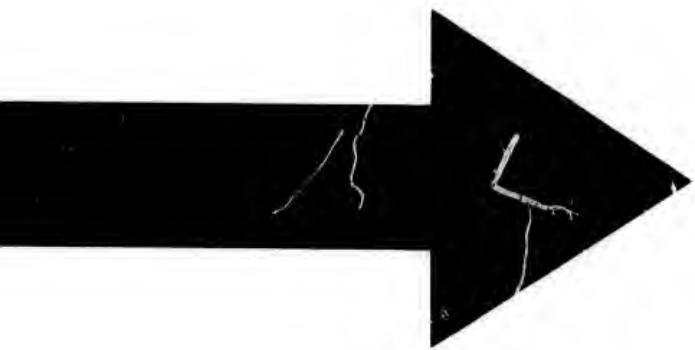
A single glance at the dripping figure by our side was enough to identify it as that of the broken-jawed poacher, whose operations we had, fortunately for him, disturbed a short half-hour before.

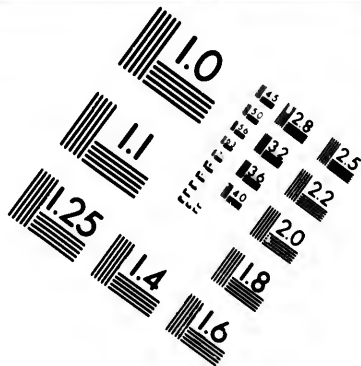
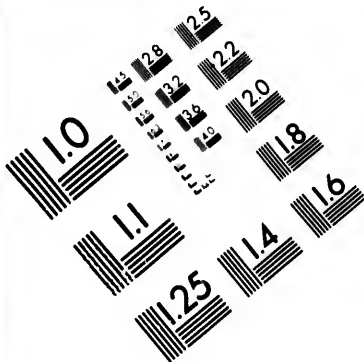
"Evenin', gentlemen!" our new friend went on. "I'm proud to hear your opinion of yours truly; but if I might make so bold, what the devil are you a-doin' here at this time of night? Not hamateurs in my line of business, eh?"

"No," replied Dick, "we are not. We have lost our way on this confounded moor in the dark, and don't know where to get a meal and a night's lodging."

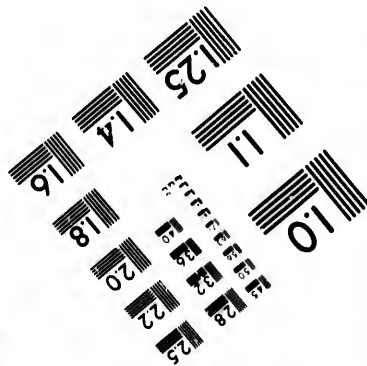
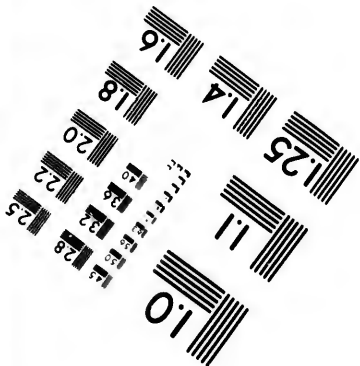
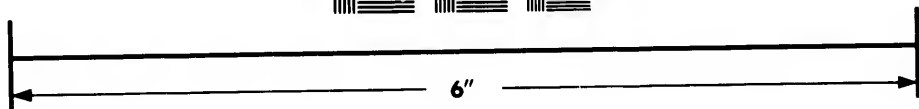
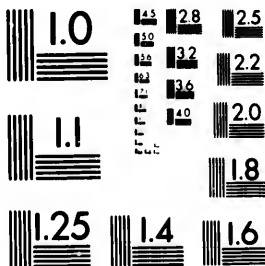
Bill Dixon struck a match, and for a moment, before putting it to his pipe, allowed the light of it to stream through his great hands on to our forms and faces.







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THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

One keen stare from under the peak of his great fur cap took us all in and seemed to satisfy him, after which he puffed away at his pipe until it was well alight, and then dropping the match into the river asked quietly: "Run away from Fernhall long?"

This was a poser, but Dick met it gallantly.

"We left this morning."

"Got a 'oliday for good behaviour, like as not?" suggested Dixon.

"No, we ran away because we wouldn't take a licking."

"You ain't above tellin' the truth, young 'un," said Dixon approvingly, "and I suppose it would hardly suit you both to go and stay the night with Squire Lomas' keeper. He'd send you back in the morning, and I guess that's about the best he could do for you."

"That is not our way of thinking, and we don't mean to go to the keeper's if we can help it."

"Well, will you come with me? You can if you ain't particular. We've got all we want to-night, in spite of those chaps."

There did not seem to be much choice. Our

BILL DIXON, PUGILIST AND POACHER

teeth were chattering with cold by this time, and we had not eaten since breakfast.

"Yes, we'll come if you can give us a dry place to sleep in ; we'll pay you for it."

"I guess you needn't trouble to pay. You did me a good turn to-night, though I don't suppose you meant to. If you hadn't blundered on to that salmon-pool when I was a-working, those fellows would have come pretty near nabbing me. Come along, then. You'd best get on to my shoulders; it's no good getting soaked again," and he bent down for Dick to climb up, and then turning to me added, "I'll be back in ten minutes for you."

I can't say that I liked waiting, but there was nothing else to be done, so I sat down and wondered if I should ever see Dick again, and wished sincerely that I had let old Proser cane me to his heart's content. After all, what did it matter whether we had deserved it or not. But my meditations were broken by the return of Dixon, this time in a little round tub of the lightest possible structure, into which he got me with a great deal of care.

"Now do you sit right tight," he whispered ;

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

"you're a big lad, and she'll hardly take two. If we upset cling on to the coracle, and I'll get you ashore. But don't holler. That keeper ain't a very great ways off yet."

Since those days I have done some very ticklish things in the way of navigation, have ridden a log in a strong stream, and crossed the Fraser in a fairish flood, lying flat at the bottom of an Indian's dug-out; yet I never went in more imminent danger of an upset than I did that night in Bill's coracle. But he was a master of his craft, and, in spite of our double weight, the little tub took us safely to the shore, where we were joined by Dick and a nigger, Jem Pardoe, Bill Dixon's companion. As soon as we were on shore Bill picked up his coracle, put it on his head, as Thor did the giant's cauldron, and led the way unhesitatingly through the dark, followed by Dick and myself, whilst Jem brought up the rear, carrying three or four great kelts, which a few hours earlier had been making their way down stream to "mend" in the Atlantic.

After half an hour's tramping over blind ways, which seemed perfectly familiar to our

BILL DIXON, PUGILIST AND POACHER

guide, we came out into a high road, and once in it stepped out quickly, only too glad of a chance of setting our blood in circulation again, until at a bend in the road, under the lee of a tall hedge, we saw a gipsy's caravan with a small fire burning in front of it. It makes me grateful even now, the memory of that bright little blaze of kindly fire in the bleak night.

"Here you are, gen'lemen. Walk right in, as they used to say to me in Amerikay. You can't 'ang up your 'at in the 'all, because there ain't no bloomin' 'all to 'ang it up in; but if you'll take off them duds, I'll lend you some of mine whilst yours are dryin'."

"Thank you, Dixon," I said; "but where are we?"

"Hoff the Isle of Wight, my boy, don't you see as we are? and this is Bill Dixon's boxing booth on the way to Darkpool Fair, and this, gen'lemen, is my little wonder, *the* American champion feather-weight, 'Yankee Mike,'" and he introduced us to a lantern-jawed little fellow of about Dick's height, who had just brought up an armful of "sweaters" and flannels of very doubtful cleanliness, in which to array

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ourselves whilst our own clothes were hanging on a bough before the fire.

"Now, Mike, hurry up, and cook one of them fish," commanded Bill, throwing a great red kelt towards him, which the little man caught and began to prepare for supper.

I don't suppose that a poached kelt sounds very appetising to most of my readers, but I know that that night, lying on the straw under Bill's rough roof, there was a pleasant flavour of wood smoke about it, which seemed to me to make it sweeter than the best salmon I had ever eaten at my father's table, and I doubt whether Dick or I ever slept more soundly on a bed than we did on the clean wheaten straw under the hedge, with the rain making strange music on the canvas above us. For the moment we were too tired to think of Fernhall or Proser, or the outraged sensibilities of our school authorities.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SKELETON GIVES A LESSON.

THE birds were singing gaily when we woke next morning, and the sun shining brightly, pleased it seemed with the new day.

Early as it was we were the last to wake, and a pleasant smell of boiling coffee told us that our hosts had not been idle whilst we slept. I have often felt a twinge of conscience since, for I am afraid that the eggs we ate that morning were no more honestly acquired than the broiled kelt which accompanied them, but just then these things did not trouble us. We were hungry, and infinitely interested in our surroundings.

Just as we were finishing our breakfast Bill Dixon came trotting down the road. It was a warm morning, and he had evidently been

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

running, and yet Bill was as heavily clothed as if he had been facing an Arctic winter.

"Training some of the fat off, lad," he explained, as he sat waiting whilst Mike got him his breakfast. "Nothing like a dose of salts and a morning run in sweaters to get a man into good fettle for fighting."

"Are you training for a fight?" asked Dick with interest.

"May be 'yes' and may be 'no,'" answered Bill enigmatically, "but anyway there are some big hulking chaps up at Darkpool as 'll want a lot of handling in the show booths. These Lancashire lads can all fight a bit."

"That they can," replied Dick warmly, "and so can the fisher lads on our side."

"Where may your side be?" asked Bill.

"On the Northumberland coast."

"What, are you a Tynesider? Tynesiders can fight, you bet."

"No, we come from north of Tyne."

"Pretty nigh Scotch then," laughed Bill. "Did you ever 'ave the muffs on yourself, lad? I can see as you've been at it without 'em," and he pointed at Dick's bruised fore-

THE SKELETON GIVES A LESSON

head. "'Ow did you get that? Fightin' with one another?"

"No," Dick answered. "We both got licked by the same fellow." And then he told the prize-fighter the whole story. It did not matter, you see, a brass farthing what we told him.

"An' so that's the way as they do things at them public schools, is it?" asked Bill, when the story was finished. "Well, dash me if it ain't a disgrace. A big chap like that a 'ammerin' a feather-weight, and the referee givin' the feather-weight the sack for getting a licking. Why it's clean agen' the rules, let alone common sense," and the man-of-war, who poached by night, and led none too reputable a life by day, looked utterly horrified at such a violation of the principle of fair play.

"Do you think now as I could 'appen across that there Crowther?" he insinuated after a pause. "'E'll likely come to Darkpool for the fair, won't 'e?"

"No, Bill," I said, laughing. "Oddly enough the Fernhall masters do not approve of your Darkpool fair."

"They don't, don't they? An' what's that

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

got to do wi' Crowther. A chap that size don't 'ave to ask master's leave to go to a fair, do 'e?"

"As long as he is at Fernhall, Bill. But, I say, couldn't you give us a lesson," asked Dick, "so that we could tackle Crowther ourselves?"

"*Couldn't* I? says you. Well, if that 's your sort I'm on. 'Ere, Mike, Mike."

Michael, the lean, was at that moment in the ditch bottom washing plates, and drying them on the grass. The knives he cleaned (and the forks) by driving them up to the hilts in the sandy soil, but the cups he did not clean at all. Somebody might have forgotten to stir up his sugar, and as sugar was scarce in camp he could not bear to waste the leavings. He was busy, but at the voice of Bill he hurried out of the ditch and came slouching up to the waggon.

"'Ere, Mike, 'ere's a gentleman as wants you to larn 'im the noble hart. Will you oblige 'im by puttin' on the muffs."

A grim smile spread over the skeleton's face, as he went to get the muffs referred to. Boxing was a matter of business with Mike, but he was a man who liked his business. So did his chief,

THE SKELETON GIVES A LESSON

Bill Dixon, and showed his love for it by the keenness with which he bustled about, clearing a ring for the lesson.

"Walk up, gents, walk up," he cried. "Welcome one hand hall! Walk up han' see the well-known little wonder, Yankee Mike, wots agoin' to knock the stuffin' out of the Fern'all Fancy."

At that moment the Yankee Wonder and the Fernhall Fancy walked into the ring, and struggled into the blood-stained, hardened gloves which Bill misnamed muffs. The suggestion of softness in the name was certainly the only softness about them.

The two boxers made a very fair match as far as weight went, though one was as near forty as the other was near fourteen, but the old Yankee feather-weight when stripped had a perfectly sepulchral appearance. He was all bone. There was nothing else about the man. You could count his ribs through his jersey, and see the bones of his arm working through his skin. At first I think Dick believed that he could do as he pleased with this old skeleton, and after feinting once or twice he led off as

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

boldly at Mike's head as he would have done at mine.

Dick's hand touched nothing; his elbow got a nasty jar, and a paw pushed his head gently but firmly back. The skeleton had not moved its feet; it had only moved its head three or four inches to one side, and its paw had moved so quickly that Dick had not seen, though he had felt it.

For a moment Dick looked puzzled, and then dashed in again, determined to make the little man move at any cost. But it was no good.

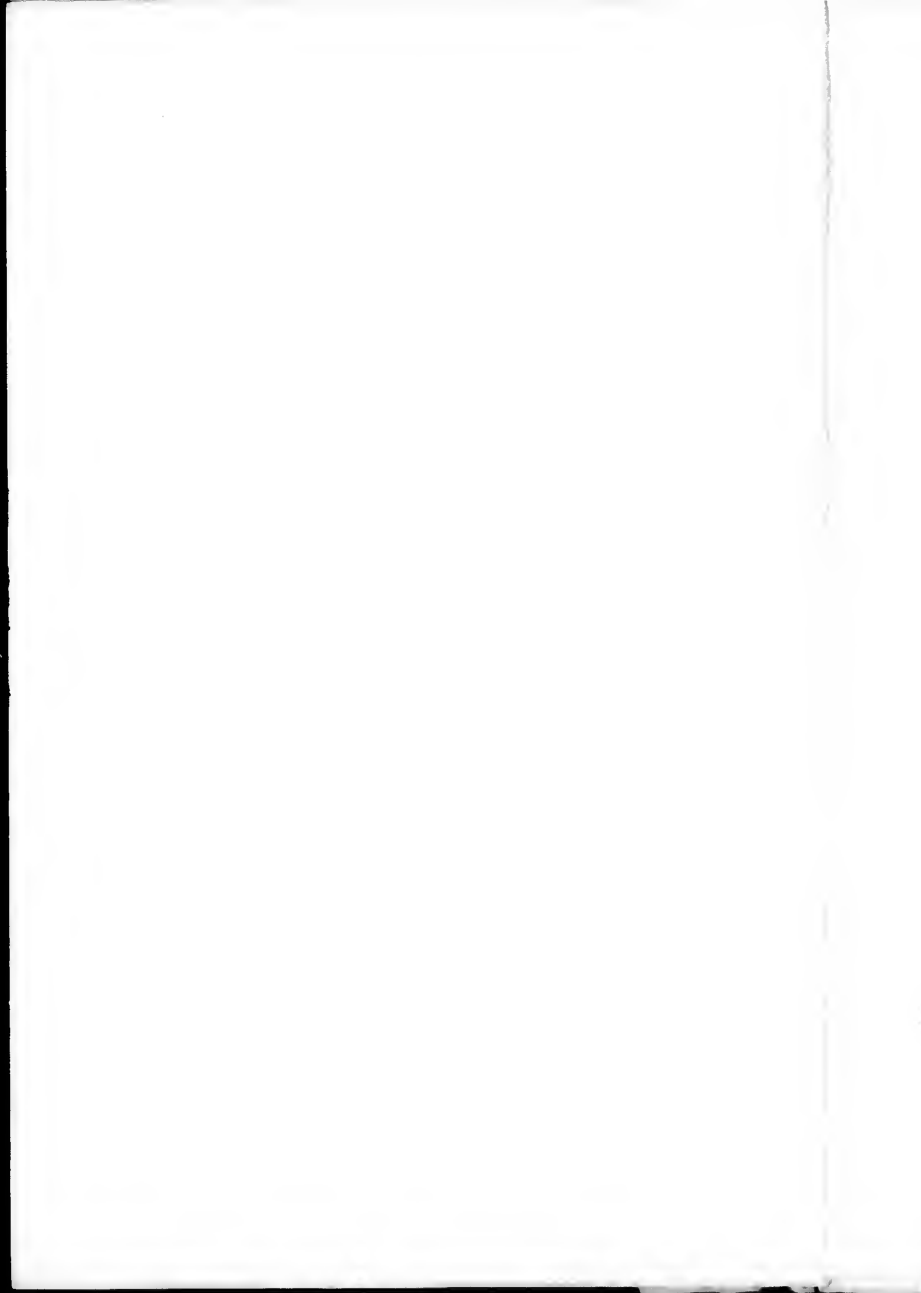
Whenever Dick stirred, that long, bony arm flew out and a great glove lit on Dick's nose, closed his eyes or shut his mouth. Mike scarcely seemed to move, but that left hand of his was everywhere at the same time; and the more angry Dick became the harder were the blows he received, until at last he had not a sound spot on his face or a breath left in his body, whilst Mike still smiled placidly in the middle of the ring untouched.

Dick was, I think, more disgusted and humiliated than I ever saw him before or since;



DICK'S HAND TOUCHED NOTHING.

Geo. Morrow



THE SKELETON GIVES A LESSON

but Bill kept applauding him, and evidently thought well of him.

"E'll do, e'll do," he kept saying, "give me a young un as comes back when 'e 's 'it. I don't want none of your cautious coves. 'E don't know nothin' about it, 'e don't. But 'e'll learn, 'e'll learn, and 'e'll make a fighter, that's what 'e'll do. 'Ere, Mike, give me them muffs," he added, and dragging them on he took Mike's place in the ring. "Now look 'ere," he said, "I want to learn you summat as you don't know. Let go at my 'ed."

Dick did as he was bid, and the big man, avoiding the blow, laid the assaulted head confidently on the young assailant's breast, and looking him in the eyes, tapped him playfully on the nose. To the next lead Bill came forward and stopped it with his great bullet head. The effect of it upon him was about as great as it would have been upon a stone wall.

"Now, lad, that comes of 'itting slow, and 'itting wild. Let 'er go when you 'it, and put your weight into it. Now there's another thing. 'It again."

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Again Dick lunged out, with all his force this time, and instead of merely missing his man, his arm came in contact with Bill's guard, and he was spun completely round so that he presented the broad of his back to Bill, who, seizing the opportunity, prodded him gently in the short ribs with his great right hand.

"Now that's all on account of your foot!" he cried. "See 'ere, 'ere's the fust rules, and don't you forget 'em. Keep your heyes hopen, keep your mouth shut, and keep your left toe pointin' straight to the front. If you don't, the other fellow just catches you as you comes, swings you around an' 'its you wherever 'e pleases. You'll foller your left toe wherever it's a-pointin', mind that. Get back!" and he smacked Dick smartly in the face with the back of his glove.

"Now wonst agen," he went on. "This time you watch my 'and," and as he spoke he led like a flash of lightning with his left, catching Dick squarely between the eyes.

"Now where was that? Did you see it?"

"No," replied Dick, "how could I?"

"'Ow could you? Why not?"

THE SKELETON GIVES A LESSON

"I couldn't see through your fist, could I?"

"Well that's your fault. Why didn't you duck? Try again."

Dick tried again, and this time ducked quickly enough to avoid the left, but only to find his teacher's right thumping against his nose.

"Now that's a hupper cut," Bill exclaimed in high glee. "A very dangerous stroke. You must keep your eyes skinned for that kind."

And so the lesson went on, until I became convinced that with a past master of the noble art, your head could never be safe, no matter what position you put it in. But Dick apparently thought otherwise, and although considerably bruised and out of breath, shook hands warmly with his first teacher, and pocketed a very dirty piece of pasteboard with great care, whilst I heard Bill Dixon say:

"I'll be back again at my old stand at Slowton next term, and if you come in any time I'll give you lessons free gratis *hand* for nothin'. So help me Bob, I will."

Two hours later the van passed a railway which, as I knew, ran across the bottom of

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

the Wild Copse Road. There was a small station near the point at which we reached the railroad, and after consulting his great silver watch, Dixon announced that the morning train would soon pass by.

"And look here, you two," he said, "I've about made up my mind as you'd better go back on it. You've had two days hoff and a waggon load of fun, and I guess if you hadn't earned your caning before you've earned it now; better go back and take it; maybe they won't expel you then."

On consideration there seemed a good deal of sound sense in Bill's reasoning, and perhaps his argument that if Dick was expelled he could not give him any more lessons in boxing, carried some weight with my chum; at any rate we decided to take his advice, and in consequence the old van was driven up to the station gate, and Bill got out to wait for the train.

It seemed that the guard of it was an old friend of Bill's, and very anxious to know something about the Hartlepool Pet, whoever that might be; but being satisfied upon that point, he took us into the baggage waggon and left

THE SKELETON GIVES A LESSON

us there to meditate upon our sins and their probable consequences, until such time as the train approached the foot of the Wild Copse Road.

Just before we came to this point the guard came in to us and told us to get ready.

"You knows all about it, I expect," he said, "most Fernhall boys do, but your faces are new to me. When the train slows up, jump off on to the ditch bank. You can't hurt yourselves much, and if you do roll into the water it can't be helped. But jump when she slows. If you don't you'll be carried on to Pulltown."

It did not sound cheerful, but we had to do as we were told. The train roared through a flat land, past a village or two, and then entered upon a long loop running round a reclaimed bog. On the side nearest to us was a ditch, and the line ran along an embankment some feet above the level of the water in that ditch, but the bank of it sloped easily from us to the water.

"There's your ditch," said our friend the guard, pushing back the doors of the baggage waggon. "Now get ready and don't funk.

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

When she slows, go to the door, and when I whistle, jump. Jump the way she is going, mind, not the other way."

It sounded easy enough, but it looked extremely difficult. If you remember for a moment how long it takes you to make up your mind as to where you shall take off and where you shall land, in an ordinary jump, you will realize some of the difficulties of this jump from a railway train, but even then you won't feel the horrible sensation of *adhering* by your feet to the train when you think that you are doing all you can to jump out into the middle of the muddy stream which keeps gliding by you.

However, we did jump when the guard whistled. I don't know what Dick did, but I confess that I shut my eyes and sprang wildly into space, and heard, as I picked myself up with my mouth full of mud and water, a ringing shout of laughter from the guard's van and the words—

"No bet, William. They started even, and they're both in head over heels."

However, a wetting was only a small thing,

THE SKELETON GIVES A LESSON

The important point was that the bottom of Wild Copse Road was close at hand, and that by putting our best legs first we should just be able to report ourselves to Mr. Proser before morning school.

I remember as we ran across the first field a fox stole past us into covert, and we noticed then for the first time the tree from which later on we got that great woodpecker's nest; but all the way up to the school we went at a jog trot, and never spoke a word. As we passed through the gates Dick said—

“Let us go to Swann and get him to report us, it will save bother”; and as no better plan occurred to me I consented. But old Swann was not there. He, it seems, was out after us, and the whole school was in a turmoil of excitement, which was not decreased when the news spread that Ion Maxwell and Dick St. Clair had come back of their own accord.

I don't care to dwell upon what followed—upon the terrible interview with the Headmaster, and the utter bewilderment of Proser, or the difficulty I had in persuading Dick to apologise to the “bounder” Johnson. Of course

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

we received our caning, and I fancy very few boys ever had a sounder one, and I am certain no boys ever made less moan over one. But the marvel to us was that no word was said about our expulsion, and that we were transferred from Crowther's dormitory to another. Acland was a queer little fellow, and very rarely said anything to his big brother about the private affairs of his schoolfellows, but my own opinion has always been that "brother George" was told the real reason for our black eyes and determined refusal to "peach" upon Crowther and his associates, and that old George saw the Head about it. If that is so, the mystery is explained, for our Head was a very different man to most of those who were under him. He had not forgotten the boy in the man, and I believe that he entered as thoroughly into the schoolboy's code of honour as any boy amongst us, God bless him! As for the caning, that was a small matter. I've often had a worse from a friend in a bout of singlestick and called it fun.

CHAPTER IX.

BEFORE THE MONITORS' COURT.

THE rest of our first term passed away in comparative calm, as did the year which followed it. After such a tempestuous start in life we had a right to look for a lull, and we got it. After the caning came a period of peace; peace with the masters and peace with the boys. The masters, for some reason or other, seemed to look on both of us with a certain amount of favour, whilst our companions regarded us as desperadoes best left alone. Under these happy conditions we both developed a good deal; Dick distinguishing himself as much in the classrooms as I did in the playing fields. There was soon no doubt in any of his masters' minds that that fellow St. Clair could do almost anything he chose, and most of them thought that he would choose to do a good deal. But his school-

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

fellows as a rule did not care much for him at this time. Dick was too hard-working and too straitlaced for most of them, and then too he cared very little for cricket, and less for the milder amusements of school-life. He was a man always who had but few friends, but those would have laid down their lives for him, while though he had scores of enemies, none now dared to lay a finger upon him, at least none in our part of the school, though there was one who we both felt was only waiting for a chance, and would not miss it when it occurred. That one was Crowther major. The feud between us and the Crowthers had become a sort of school vendetta. The younger Crowther, our first enemy, had altogether retired from the lists, but his elder brother had never forgotten the insult Dick had put upon him in the dormitory after Lytham's fainting fit, and we knew that he only waited for a chance of avenging it. But he had sufficient tact to leave Dick severely alone until the proper time arrived, for though Dick was not very popular with his classmates, he was a wonderful favourite amongst the small boys, or paupers as we used to call them.

BEFORE THE MONITORS' COURT

At first these little beggars used to look at him in awe and distrust, expecting that this strange being whom no one fagged, would soon become as overbearing a master as Crowther himself. But he never did. Even when he had a right, sanctioned by half a century of school traditions, to the services of a fag, he never employed one, and in time the little ones who used to regard him with awe began to regard him with love, so that when in a great football match between the houses, Dick had the ball, you might hear the paupers screaming for "St. Clair! St. Clair!" as they screamed and cheered for no one else. All this Crowther knew, and therefore held his hand for awhile, for it is not pleasant even for a monitor to be too utterly detested by the whole of the lower school. But his chance came at last, as chances do to those who can wait. It was more than a year after the row in the dormitory, and Dick, who had twice got a double remove, found himself at about fifteen in the lower fourth; that is, in the lowest form of the upper school. I had lost a lap in the race, and was at that time still in the upper third. Now just at this time a question

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arose which was warmly debated between the sixth and the rest of the upper school.

As I have said, a certain amount of fagging was legalized at Fernhall, but it had always been a disputed point as to whether a *monitor* had or had not a right to fag anyone in the lower forms of the upper school. The Fernhall tradition was that the upper school was privileged; but the monitors, whose ranks had recently been strengthened by the addition to them of Crowther major, had, since the departure of George Acland, the old school captain, asserted the reverse. Before long it began to be whispered about the quads that the monitors had determined to put this question to the test, and the name even of the subject upon whom the experiment was to be made was freely bandied about. He was, so a certain section of the upper school said, an infernal young radical, who thought that he could upset all school traditions.

It was necessary to make an exhibition of him, and they had made up their minds to do it. I think in those days every one knew what was coming, except Dick, and even

BEFORE THE MONITORS' COURT

he probably knew it too, but was far too proud to show it.

The storm broke near the end of the term. Dick was coming across the quad before dinner, and Crowther and a small knot of monitors were lounging together outside their study windows. I saw them exchange glances with one another, as with Crowther, and then Crowther called across the quad, "St. Clair, come here."

"What do you want," replied Dick, civilly enough. "I'm in rather a hurry."

"Never mind your hurry, come here when you are told to."

Dick bit his lip, hesitated for a moment, and then went. After all he believed in discipline, it was the soul of the Queen's service, and these monitors were in some sense his senior officers.

"I hear that you say that the monitors have no right to fag the fourth form," said Crowther, when Dick came up to him, in such a tone as to reach the ears of all the boys, now crowding about the doors of the hall in expectation of the dinner-bell.

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

"I do not know that I have said so," replied Dick, "but it is the school tradition that the fourth form is exempt from fagging," replied Dick firmly, "and can fag if it pleases."

"Who made you a judge of school tradition? The rule is that no one *except* the monitors shall fag the fourth form. They fag if they choose all below the fifth."

At this there arose an indignant murmur amongst the boys who had now gathered round the library rails, and some one cried out, "Don't fag for them, St. Clair. They've no right to fag you."

"Who said that?" cried Crowther furiously. "Was it you, Acland?"

Before Acland could answer Dick replied for him, "Consider that I said it. I will not fag for any one."

A hum of applause greeted his words. It was the gage of battle flung boldly down, and the school was with St. Clair to a man. For a moment Crowther's evil face turned purple, and he half raised his arm to strike the speaker, but Whatcom, another monitor, caught his arm, and whispered something into his ear, and then

BEFORE THE MONITORS' COURT

turning to St. Clair, asked him coldly, "Do you persist in refusing to fag?"

"Unless you can show me some warrant for altering an old custom which you have known longer than I have done, yes," replied Dick.

"These questions are for the monitors, not for the school," answered Whatcom pompously. "You refuse, then?"

"I refuse!" answered Dick.

"You will report yourself, then, to the monitors' court at two this afternoon!" commanded Whatcom, and at that moment the school dinner-bell rang, and the mob rushed in to dine off tough beef and resurrection pie.

The one topic of conversation at that meal was Dick St. Clair's summons to the monitors' court, a dread tribunal supposed to be held only to deal with such rare cases of theft, or other low-class crime, as the monitors might in their wisdom consider it better to punish than to report.

In the old days a man punished by the monitors left the school as a matter of course. Not only was the physical punishment administered by that court terribly severe, but the man

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who was so punished was as a rule branded with disgrace for life. The monitors' was a criminal court, and therefore not (so the school thought) the proper tribunal to try such an offence as Dick's.

"Shall you go, Dick?" I asked of him as we sat at dinner together.

"Certainly not," replied Dick; "but they will fetch me."

"And what then?"

"It depends a good deal upon who they send to fetch me. If Crowther comes there will be some sport."

But they did not send Crowther. On the contrary, when they had given Dick a quarter of an hour's grace they sent a party of four to fetch him, and these four, monitors better known in the examinations than in the football field.

"You had better come," they urged. "It is better to come willingly than to be dragged thither, and if it takes the whole twenty to do it, St. Clair, they will make you come at last."

Partly because what they urged was reasonable, and partly because there was no one amongst the four in whom Dick could find a

BEFORE THE MONITORS' COURT

decent match, he consented at last, and followed the four to the upper row of studies.

Here a couple of monitors guarded the lower entrance, and kept the paupers at a respectable distance from the buildings. The rest of the twenty were waiting for their victim upstairs.

It was nearly three when some of us saw Dick St. Clair walk across the quad to the monitors' rooms—a strong, resolute lad, with firm lips and strong brown hands, which he had a habit of clenching until the knuckles of them turned white with the strain. At four the school met again, and our form assembled in its own class-room.

Like the rest, and more than the rest, I had been waiting and watching anxiously for Dick, and now all eyes were turned on his empty seat.

“Where is St. Clair?” asked Proser.

“He has not come in yet,” answered someone.

“I see that, Jones; perhaps you'll answer my question if you can. Where is he?”

At this the unfortunate Jones broke down.

“He had to go before the monitors' court at

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two," he blurted out, "and he has not been seen since."

I never saw a man's face change more than Proser's changed then. He had given Dick his first caning, and had at one time entertained a sufficiently poor opinion of him, but that had worn off by degrees, until at last he had begun to regard him as the flower of his flock, or at any rate as the most promising intellect which he had to deal with.

But at the mention of the monitors' court, poor Dick fell at once from the high pedestal to which he had climbed with such infinite pains, and took his place as the black sheep again. And then he came in.

I said that two hours before Dick St. Clair crossed the quad a lithe, upright lad, with firm lips and a fearless eye. The Dick St. Clair who entered the class-room and tottered to his seat was for the moment an old man. His face was bruised and swollen, white with pain where it was not purple and livid with bruises, his knees knocked together, his lips trembled, his hands shook, and, when, forgetting where I was, I cried to him :

BEFORE THE MONITORS' COURT

"Dick, old fellow, what is it? What have they done to you?" He did not seem to hear me.

I had altogether forgotten myself, and had risen from my seat to go to him, whilst the whole form had sprung up to look at him, when I heard Proser's voice with a note in it which made it strange to me.

"Maxwell, you may take him to his room, and if he wants anything let me know. I think you should get Dr. Erwell to see him."

I did not wait to hear any more, but led him away like a child, unresisting and apparently uninterested even in what I was doing for him. And yet this was my hero Dick, the boy of iron whose will always ruled mine, and would be ruled by none!

In our study—a bare little room which he and I had shared since we first came to Fernhall—I could get nothing out of him. Along the side of the room there was a long rough lounge which we had made, and at the foot of it Dick had hung on the wall a rudely-painted copy of the St. Clair shield. For a few minutes he sat on the edge of the lounge looking fixedly at

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the shield; but whether he saw it, or whether his mind was far away, and his eyes saw nothing of the ships and the lions of battle, I cannot tell. At last he turned away with a sigh, and lay down full length, face downwards upon the lounge. But whether he lay thus to hide his face from the shield or save his poor bruised back I cannot tell.

For a while I sat and watched him, trying by little acts of service to win a word from him. But it was no good. He would not speak, and at last he seemed to sleep; seeing which I crept out on tip-toe, to find out from others if not from himself what had happened to my cousin.

And oh, but my heart that day was black as hell with hate. With that broken figure before me I could understand why a trampled people turned, and why it was that tyrants died.

CHAPTER X.

ION MAXWELL ENTERS FOR "THE STICKS."

WHEN I left the study I forgot that the rest of the school was not "out" yet. Except Dick and I, all the fellows were of course still in the big school or in the class rooms, so that the quadrangle was apparently empty.

At first I thought that it actually was so, and sauntered across to the library to get a book to distract my thoughts from my troubles; but as I vaulted over the iron railings I heard voices in the porch of the building, and stopped instinctively. The voices might belong to some of the masters, and I had no wish to meet any of them just then.

"Well, sir, you may say what you like," said the first speaker, "and you may report me to the Head if you choose, but I shall speak my

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mind all the same. To use them broomsticks to beat a lad with is brutal. It's more. It's —it's criminal."

The voice was old Sergeant Swann's, and it fairly quivered with indignation. Until then I had had no idea that there was an atom of human kindness in the old man's composition, and the revelation was so astounding that I had much ado to resist my first impulse, which was to dart round the buttress and grip the good old boy by the hand.

But another voice answering him chained my attention, and diverted me from my purpose.

"You forget yourself, Swann," said this voice coldly; "but I suppose you mean well, and I agree with you that it would have been better not to use those confounded clubs. A cane would hurt more and do less damage. But the authority of the sixth form must be maintained at all costs."

"At the cost of that boy's life, for instance," said Swann bitterly.

"It will hardly come to that," replied the other. "You overrate the whole matter and the beggar's obstinacy, but if he still refuses to

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fag when he comes before the court to-morrow I expect it will go hard with him."

"Do you mean to say that he is to be thrashed again to-morrow?"

"If he won't fag, certainly. He will be thrashed every day until he gives in. But though he is as stubborn as a mule I don't think that he'll hold out another day. That fellow will grow into an anarchist, or something of that kind, if he is allowed to follow his natural bent."

"If you don't kill or cripple him he'll grow into an officer more like," cried Swann, "an officer as Thomas Atkins would follow to hell and beyond. Look here, Mr. Chalmers, you'll pardon an old soldier speaking plain, because, though you won't say so, I know as you're agen this bullyin', for bullyin' it is, monitors or no monitors. If you are agoin to beat that St. Clair until he gives in you're agoin to beat him till he dies. I've been in seventeen big fights, sir, in my time, and more little 'uns than I can remember, and you won't tell me as I don't know a soldier's face when I sees one"——

Those were the last words which I heard

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distinctly, for Swann and Chalmers moved on into the library as they spoke, their voices growing fainter as they went, but they had said enough. I understood now, as though I had seen the whole shameful scene, why that listless, broken figure was lying on the lounge in our study, its bruised face turned away from the shield.

The thought of my dauntless Dick at the mercy of those pitiless bigots well-nigh drove me mad, for I realized more fully even than the sergeant, that if they were going to beat him until he yielded, they would have to beat him until he died. He looked half dead I thought already. Swann of course saw only my chum's dogged pluck. That was written in every line of his face, in the strong square jaw, and the unflinching grey eyes, but I knew his heart, and the thought in it. If this had been a mere matter of personal pride, he might have yielded. I don't think that he would have done so, but he might.

But Dick was fighting for something better than this, something higher and holier. A principle was involved, and poor old Dick was

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death on principles. He had sworn to his own conscience, that if he ever had the chance, he would put down bullying at Fernhall, and some God had heard his oath, and put him to the test. Even if it were necessary to take upon his own young shoulders the troubles of every pauper in the school Dick would do it, and if the load broke his back he would never complain, if his loss was the world's gain. His simple creed said "Fight." It said nothing about the odds, at which a man should fight. They were nothing accounted of in Dick's creed.

And was I, Ion Maxwell, his cousin, to stand by and see this thing done, because the power of the monitors was forsooth a properly constituted power, and because our code of honour forbade me to report the facts to the Head? He, I knew would not tolerate this barbarity. But, on the other hand, I knew that the day I reported Crowther and his companions to the Head would be the last day on which Dick St. Clair would look me in the eyes as a friend.

It was a cruel dilemma to be put in, and the

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trouble worked strangely on me. As a rule I am a peaceful man enough, except that I love an honest fight for the fun there is in it, but on this day I was outside myself. As I crossed the quad, the door of the armoury caught my eye. It stood ajar. If I went in no one would say anything to me, even if they should happen to see me; for was I not in the corps, and on trial for the Wimbledon eleven? But then, was there any powder kept there? and if so, how much should I want, and how should I apply it in order to blow the monitors and their court, their studies and their instruments of torture to their master? For in my agony for my friend some unsuspected current of my blood stirred, my eyes had a crimson mist before them, my mouth had dried till my lips cracked. I was for the moment a Maxwell of the sixteenth, not of the nineteenth century—one who could love and hate, fight and wreak vengeance for a friend, but to whom the words mercy and forgiveness had no meaning.

At that moment a notice on the board outside the monitors' libraries caught my eye, and, thank God, turned my thoughts into

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another channel. It was within a fortnight of the end of term, and the different athletic competitions were being decided daily. This notice referred to one of them, and as I read it an idea formed in my brain. At least I would have some revenge.

The notice was on behalf of the gymnasium, and was an invitation to competitors for the various events to inscribe their names in a certain book kept in the school of arms. There were several events, but the one which took my attention was headed "Single-stick for all comers," the notice going on to say that the Head-master, seeing how popular this exercise had become, had decided to give a silver cup to the best player, the award to be decided by points and general form in a bout of ten minutes.

When I looked over the entries I found about a dozen names, of which four were scratched, the reason for this scratching being suggested by the last entry—"R. B. Crowther."

This reminded me that Crowther was certainly the best stick player I had seen in the "Gym.;" but he was the best of a poor lot, none of whom

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had, to my mind, any idea of the science of sticks. I think that I have said somewhere before in this narrative that I was something of a fencer. It was, of course, no credit to me. Nothing, I think, that we have or do, can fairly be set to our own credit. Everything is either a gift at birth or the result of lucky environments.

I owed my sword play to both. By nature I had a quick eye, and a wrist which has sent off balls through the pavilion windows more than once in the history of Fernhall cricket, and by good luck, I had always near me as a youngster, one of the best swordsmen in Her Majesty's army—my good father, Colonel Heron Maxwell.

Luckily for Dick and for me the arm that my father lost at Balaclava was not his sword arm ; that remained to him, and so it came about that, from our very earliest days, Dick and I were grounded in the beautiful mysteries of sword-play. Dick was a good swordsman. With the foils perhaps he was the best of the two ; but if my father's eyes were not blinded by prejudice, I was always the better stick player. And yet I had never played since I

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had come to Fernhall, though my chum's name was amongst the entries for the master's cup.

As a matter of fact I never was such a keen fighter all round or such a gymnast as Dick. I was a much keener cricketer. He tolerated cricket, but he would never (as he put it) waste time learning to "play ball." I was devoted to cricket, and having satisfied myself that, as far as I could see, there was no one worth playing sticks with in the gymnasium, I never went near the place again. Why then enter for the competition now? you ask. Why not leave your friend Dick to settle with Crowther? Surely that cup would be worth the winning to him. Yes, but his was one of the four names which had been scratched.

Be sure that I never for one moment doubted why he had done this; but yet when he woke late in the evening, and found me sitting beside him, one of the first questions I asked him was:

"Dick, why did you scratch for 'The Sticks'?"

He raised his right arm painfully, and I saw that his hand drooped from his wrist.

"They broke my sword arm to-day, I think.

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The broomstick caught me across the wrist, and it's either broken it or made it too stiff to use. Besides, I'm stiff all over, and may be stiffer this time to-morrow."

And he tried hard to smile at his own misery, but it was a ghost of a smile.

I couldn't stand this sort of thing any longer.

"Dick," I cried impetuously, "it's fair to warn you. If you go to that court to-morrow I am going to the Head."

"If you do, Ion, I will never as long as I live exchange one word with you. For shame, man."

I knew it, but I too could be stubborn. "That will be very sad, Dick, but it will not be all my loss," I answered, "and I will not consent to have you murdered, even for so dear a thing as your friendship."

"But, Ion, you can't do so mean a thing."

"I can, and will, unless you promise me——."

"To fag?"

"No, not to fag. I would not have you obey the monitors even as far as you do."

"What do you mean? I have flatly refused to obey them."

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"And yet you go to their mock court, when they bid you, to be beaten like a coster's ass for not serving them. Why go?"

"They would drag me there if I did not go of my own free will, and that would be more degrading than the lickings I take, away from the eyes of the school."

"They wouldn't drag you there if they could not find you."

"Naturally," said Dick, with a faint smile, "but how am I to avoid them?"

"If I tell you where to hide, Dick, will you do it? It is only twelve days now to the end of the term, and even they dare hardly take you from the class-rooms."

Dick thought for a moment.

"Do you think, Ion, that it would not be shirking?" he asked.

"No," I answered. "Why should it be? They say you shall fag, though you are a fourth form fellow. You say you won't. They say that they will lick you until you do. They have tried, and they will try again if they can catch you, but you are not bound to help them by going to be licked."

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For a long time Dick did not answer. I was afraid that my scheme had failed, but I knew I had still one argument left.

"Don't answer me for a moment, Dick," I said, though he did not seem at all likely to. "There is just one other thing that you ought to know. The Head might side with the monitors. I don't think he would, but he might. But my father wouldn't. I have written to my father."

"Ion, you can't have been such a fool!" he cried, springing to his feet as if he would have struck me. "He'll tell the little mother, and it will break her heart!"

I knew where his thoughts would go before I spoke; for hard as he was to others and to himself, to that one woman he was a child, and wrote as a child, to the very end of his gallant life. But I would not spare him, though I never felt more frightened in my life.

"Precisely," I said.

"And *you* have done this?" he asked sternly.

"No, I have not done it, Dick. I have written the letter, but if you will give me your promise I will not send it."

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I never saw a face change more rapidly than his did at those words. All the anger died out of it. He saw that it was for his own sake that I threatened, but he knew me well enough not to doubt my promise, so he yielded.

"You have me in a corner, Ion. Where am I to hide?" So I told him, and together we stole out from the quad, and the next morning, and the next, and every morning until the end of the term, or nearly the end of the term, the monitors sent their searchers for St. Clair in vain. A few minutes after the rest of the fellows were in their class rooms Dick would come in. Proser of course rebuked him and set him lines to do, but for some reason best known to Proser's own kindly heart, he forgot to ask for those lines, and they were never done.

The paupers perhaps knew where his hiding-place was. Paupers know everything. But Dick was their champion, and they would not tell—and so his secret was kept—and where his name had been written and scratched on the list of competitors for the swordsman's cup, was written in big letters the name of Ion Maxwell. It was

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taken little notice of. The school wit sneered at the change.

"If it is not David it is Jonathan, of course," he laughed, and the school put down the substitution of my name for Dick's as a piece of foolish clannishness on my part. They had never seen Ion Maxwell play sticks.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SWORD CUP.

“ONLY three more days of it, Dick,” I was saying, as he and I stood together behind one of the breakwaters on the shore, “and I scarcely think anyone will catch you now.”

“No, I don’t think they will, Ion; but I should like to hear the fellows sing the *Dulce Domum* to-night.”

“I’m afraid you can’t do it, old fellow Crowther is as hungry for blood as a baulked tiger, and he will be particularly savage to-night,” I added.

“Why to-night, Ion, except that I’ve kept him waiting so long?”

“Don’t you remember what comes off this afternoon?” I asked.

“Is there anything particular on this afternoon?”

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"Yes, the sword cup. By Jove, how I wish you could be there."

"It's no good wishing; but look here, Ion, if you want to win it, and I suppose you do, don't think of me."

"Oh, no! of course I shan't think of you, Dick," I replied, and I know that I ground my teeth in spite of myself.

"Well, if you do you'll play wild, and have no chance; but if you keep your head, good Lord, how some of their bones will ache to-night. But there are some fellows coming over the sea-wall; I'd better be off."

"It's only a couple of paupers, Dick; you are all right, and besides I'll go and turn them," and so saying I left him, whilst he sat down on the beautiful golden sands, and began to take his clothes off.

For to become invisible Dick St. Clair had to strip.

Two hours later the majority of our school-fellows trooped up to the gymnasium, a great room fitted with parallel bars, horizontal bars, trapezes, climbing ladders, and other appliances for teaching human beings the full use of their

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limbs. But on this day no one made any use of the appliances of the gymnast. All interest circled round a great chalked ring, in which reposed a dozen stout ashplants with their baskets, or hilts, some wire helmets with huge ear pads, not unlike the helmets of the old knightly days, and a few leathern jackets and aprons.

Guarding these as Master of the Ceremonies stood Sergeant Swann, and from the way the old man kept poising an ashplant, the least observant of men could have guessed that he would rather have played than judged.

Our Master of Ceremonies gave us just five minutes' grace, though I knew that he gave it with a grumble, for the old soldier valued punctuality on parade next to pluck, and then he read out the names of the competitors.

"Davis," he called, and a long red-headed Welshman answered, "Adsum." "Richards!" he went on, "Davenport, Aspland, Wilson, Corbett, Crowther major, and who is this, St. Clair? No, Maxwell."

"Adsum," I answered, coming forward.

"I didn't know as you played, Mr. Maxwell.

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It's no good going in if you don't know anything about it."

"I know a little," I answered quietly, whilst some of the juniors tittered as they saw the great Crowther weigh the thickest ashplant in the lot in his huge red hand and glance sneeringly at me. Crowther hated me almost as much as he hated Dick, but it was no time to make any show, so I kept my eyes lowered, and waited my turn. Out of the eight entries only six were present. My schoolfellows were as plucky as other people, and it was to their credit that so many put in an appearance, for Crowther was looked upon as absolutely certain to win, and he had an evil reputation for furious hitting. After all, what most of the boys had come for was not to see who would win the cup, but to see the bout played between old Sergeant Swann and the winner. The cognoscenti rather opined that Crowther would be more than a handful for old Swann, and a good many I am afraid hoped to see old scores paid off by Crowther's ashplant.

"If the other gentlemen are not here now, I think we need not wait for them, sir," said

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Swann, saluting Mr. Foulkes, the master in charge of the proceedings. The Head was away, as luck would have it. During prize week the school was full of visitors, and I suppose some of them had detained him.

"No, Swann, it is no good waiting any longer. Draw the ties," replied Foulkes; and the names of the competitors having been written on slips of paper, were folded up and put into a helmet, from which Mr. Foulkes took them in pairs.

"Davis and Crowther, Corbett and Aspland, Maxwell and Davenport," he read. "Davis and Crowther put on your jackets, and understand, gentlemen, please, that only 'clean' hits count, that is to say, hits without a return. Now, sergeant, take charge of them, and may the best man win."

Foulkes was a good sportsman, and did his duty in the gymnasium a great deal more cheerfully than he did in the class room. Nature had meant him, as she means most men, for a man of action, but necessity had made him a pedagogue. Poor Foulkes! though I believe he is a bishop now!

I am bound to say that there was no "sword-

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play splendid" in that first bout. Davis, poor fellow, had a small head and an enormous helmet, which rolled about so on his shoulders that he could barely have seen his adversary. But he felt him. There was no doubt of that.

A generous player, with such a man as Davis opposite to him, would have put his cuts on lightly, made a point or two, and shown off his own play to advantage without hurting his adversary. But that was not in Crowther's nature. The brute loved to give pain, and when he had enticed the innocent Welshman to lunge at his apparently unguarded leg, he withdrew it, and brought down his own ash-plant with a crash that filled the room with sound, and made Davis wince as if he had been branded with a hot iron.

There was a murmur through the room, some murmuring in disgust, more in admiration of the big fellow's slashing stroke. Englishmen love strength, and are not always very discriminating in their praise of it; but old Swann frowned and tugged at his heavy grey moustache, and Foulkes called out, "A clean hit,

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Crowther; but there are no extra points given for knock-down blows."

Crowther said nothing; but if you could judge by his looks when he took his helmet off, he would have given a good deal to try conclusions with Mr. Foulkes himself. The fellow was the biggest man in the room. Boy as he was, even the sergeant was a couple of inches short of Crowther's six feet one, and less powerfully built. For a lad of nineteen Crowther was a giant, but his great bullet head and short red hair made him look more like a professional pugilist than a gentleman.

The second bout between Corbett and Aspland was a mere scramble, both hitting savagely, but neither ever attempting to guard. How the sergeant ever awarded the points was a mystery to me, but he did it even to the competitors' satisfaction, and then my turn came.

I remember well even now that the first stick I took up, and I chose the lightest—for speed not strength is what you want in sword-play—I remember, I say that some muff had put the hilt on the wrong side first, and of course as soon as I touched it I saw the mistake and set

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it right. Swann's eyes were on me all the time, and I saw that he noticed this. Poor Davis, I think, had played with the hilt reversed, and rubbed his knuckles badly in consequence. But it was when I saluted and then sat down to work, my knees well bent, my right heel in a line with my left heel, the heels about two feet apart, my right toe pointing squarely to my front, and my left at right angles to it, that old Swann's face relaxed into a smile, and I heard him murmur, "Ho, ho, a player!" Yes, I knew that I was a player, and if Swann had remembered my father's name, he would not have wondered that *his* son had been well taught.

But it was not my game to play too well in that first bout, so, though it was really hard work to accomplish it, I managed to make Davenport hit me almost as often as I hit him. They gave me the bout, however, and no one I think except old Swann knew that I was playing 'possum.

At last it was my turn to tackle Crowther, and I felt my fingers grow to my hilt, and the good plant tremble all down its supple length as I stood waiting.

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And then a strange thing happened. Old schoolfellows have told me since that I must have had something to do with it. But who knows? Nobody at any rate knew then, and if I do know I am not going to confess now. The jacket which Crowther had been wearing had been slit from collar to skirt, and there was not another jacket in Fernhall which would have held the monster. For a moment all was confusion, and then Mr. Foulkes said—

“This is a most disgraceful thing. I’m afraid, Crowther, we shall have to postpone the final until we can get the jacket mended.” This would have meant that the final would not have come off until next term, and I heard Crowther, who was glaring furiously at me, mutter—

“It has saved that young brute’s hide, worse luck to it.”

But this was not what I wanted, so, turning to Mr. Foulkes, I said quietly, “If Crowther doesn’t mind playing *without* a jacket, I don’t, sir. He is a very light hitter, and we can’t come to any harm with the masks on.”

“Hang his impudence,” cried Crowther, too much annoyed to have the sense to conceal his

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vexation. "No, sir; of course I don't mind if he doesn't! But I think he will by-and-by," he muttered as he crammed his mask on his head.

"Won't you salute first, Crowther?" I asked in my blandest tones, not offering to touch my helmet which lay at my feet.

"Oh, hang your salutes!" he growled; but he had to take his helmet off again and go through the whole performance, salute to the right, salute to the left, and bow ceremoniously, though he certainly did not do it with the knightly grace which the occasion demanded. I had gained my first point. My enemy had lost his temper before our swords had crossed for real business.

And then we sat down and began, in nothing but our thin summer jerseys through which you could see the pink flesh, our arms even, bare to the elbow, and with nothing on but our flannels below the edge of our aprons.

I made a mistake as soon as I crossed swords. My eyes were on Crowther's red beef, and my thoughts with Dick St. Clair and his wrongs, so that instead of stepping out of distance directly our sticks crossed, as I should have done, I

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paused a second. It was enough. The moment the sticks touched Crowther snatched a hit. It was hardly good form, hardly fair, but then Crowther knew nothing of good form, and cared nothing for fair play, but the blow which caught me on the funny bone was a heavy one, and made me turn sick, as that blow always does. But of course I did not show it. On the contrary I brought my hilt to my lips, and acknowledged as jauntily as if some one had paid me a compliment. But I felt that I owed one.

By George Is there anything better than sword-play? I am getting old and stiff now, and the gallery laughs at me when I try to field a ball at cricket; but give me an ashplant, and my muscles drop into their places, the big swords swell on thigh and sword-arm, my back straightens, my eye brightens, the turf seems elastic to my feet, and my head goes up like a man's again. We have done I'm afraid with the soldier's trade, and not one gentleman in fifty would know how to use arms if he carried them, and if I dared to speak what I think to my friend Arthur, the man of business, he

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would laugh at me, and tell me to learn double entry, and forget all about quarte and tierce. But I can't do it, and I don't believe, in spite of the evolutionists, that we have gained anything to compensate us for the joy of battle which our fathers loved and which we have lost. There is less bloodshed now-a-days and less sudden death perhaps, but is it worse to be wounded than swindled? Is the life-long worry about investments better than sudden death? I don't think it; but then at heart I am a barbarian, and if you took them out of their top hats and frock coats so are a good many other Englishmen.

But all this time I ought to be on guard, and so as a matter of fact I was, with blows showering upon me as if it was raining ashplants. From the first Crowther did all the leading, and though I could see an opening every time he raised his hand, I never attempted to take advantage of it. I meant to humiliate him first, I would thrash him afterwards. At head and thigh and ribs he slashed and hacked, and each blow if it had come home would have brought the blood through my jersey; but the

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upright guard is a good one, and though my hand hardly moved, my stick was always where it should be.

"Bravo, Maxwell, bravo!" cried Foulkes, and that old war dog, Swann, had his eyes dim with delight; but I kept cool, muttering to myself. "Not yet, Ion, not yet."

And then Crowther, who was really not a bad player, changed his tactics. He saw that he could not reach me with a direct attack, so he tried to draw me, let his hand drop as if he was tired, and let his great coarse leg wander out beyond his guard.

To oblige him I took the bait and lunged out at my full stretch, cutting at his leg as if I wou'd cut it from under him, and of course it went back like a flash, and raising himself to his full height with his feet together, he dealt me a blow which might in old days have cleft me from crown to belt. But even as I lunged I raised my guard, and his stick, instead of cutting a deep weal down my spine, broke short on the forte of my blade, whilst I laid my own stick gently on his ribs, and smiled up confidingly in his face before I came on

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guard again. I had him at my mercy, and he knew it.

But when he had got himself a new stick I began in earnest. I felt that if I delayed much longer I should win the cup without striking a blow for Dick, and I would rather have lost the cup than that should have happened. And first I fainted at his head, and cut him *across the kneecap*. It did not look a hard blow, but he felt it, and without acknowledging my point as a gentleman should have done, he returned furiously at my head. I stopped his cut, and came home again *on his kneecap*. Then he grew cautious. That kneecap ached badly, I knew. So did Dick St. Clair's back; and as he would not come to me I gained ground, drawing my left foot up to my right until I could lunge nearly twice as far as he expected, and then again I led quick as lightning, using every muscle in my body, and again the good ash rang hollow *on his kneecap*. That time he dropped to his knee, and a word fell from him which made Mr. Foulkes knit his brows.

Crowther major, was not setting the example which a Fernhall monitor should have set to

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the juniors, and perhaps that was why the future bishop did not interfere to stop the bout. Be very sure that if the stopping of that bout had depended upon Sergeant Swann, it would have been going on until there was not a whole spot on Crowther's hide; and as for the paupers, they had forgotten their fear, and the room rang with cries of:

"Maxwell, Maxwell! go it, Maxwell! Let him have it!"

Never was a bully in worse plight before. His mask and stick were prison chains to him. He could not throw them down, and as long as he wore them they were a license for me to leather him.

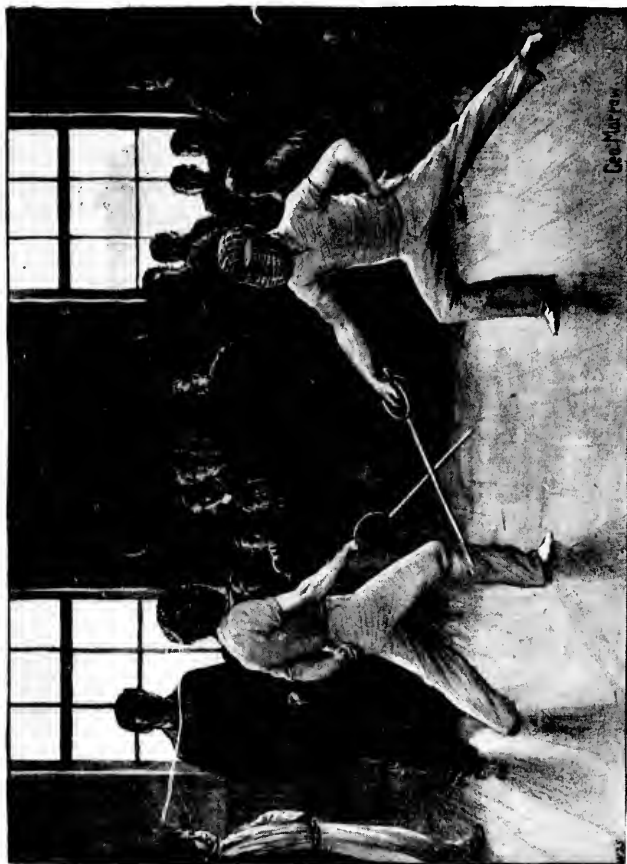
Having created a tender spot on his kneecap, I began to take advantage of it. My blood was up now, and that red mist was coming into my eyes again, and I couldn't keep my thoughts from that bruised and livid face which had hidden itself from the shield in my study. Every time now that my wrist moved Crowther's stick came down to guard his kneecap, and seeing this I fainted there, and twice came in across his ribs, the good stick twining round

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them like a snake, and leaving a bloody streak where it had been. I felt that they would not, could not, give me much more time. Foulkes would not have given me so much but that he knew his man. A whisper of the bully's doings had reached the master's common room, and Foulkes himself had seen the cruel way in which he had lashed into the poor, stupid Welsh boy's spine. So I prepared to give him his *coup de grace*.

Twice as he lunged wildly at me I met him full on the mask with my point, jarring his head till his teeth rattled, and almost dislodging his helmet. The second time I got what I wanted. The helmet had not quite settled back into its place again, and between it and his shoulder I could see his great bull's throat. With a quick, vigorous feint I drew his blade down to cover his knee once more, and then with a short, hoarse cry, "For Dick," I lunged and cut with all my might at his neck.

I saw the ashplant reach him; I heard his cry, "My God, he has killed me!" and I saw him fall, and I suppose that they picked him up



WITH A VIGOROUS PUNCH I DREW HIS HEAD DOWN TO COVER HIS KNEE. ONCE MORE.



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and said things to me that I would rather not have heard. I don't know. The red mist was so thick then that I could not see. The Head's cup was never awarded. I was disqualified for hard hitting, and the school spoke of me ever afterwards, as long as I stayed at Fernhall, as that Scotch devil Maxwell. But what did I care. My friend was avenged.

CHAPTER XII.

DICK ST. CLAIR'S REVENGE.

IT was prize day, the last and greatest day of our summer term, and the sun was glowing on the green acres of the cricket field, and gleaming on the blue miles of the Irish Sea, as the sun only glows and gleams upon a dead calm sea or a level lawn in June. As a rule there was a grey sternness about Fernhall which seemed natural to the North Country—a quiet and repose worthy of a scholar's home; but towards the end of June all this vanished, and Fernhall fell into temptation. The driving rain ceased for a season, the strong sea breezes dropped, the lads whose weather-beaten faces and great boots were normal on our west coast vanished, and in their place a lot of long-limbed luxurious fellows in flannels and straw hats appeared, fellows soft-footed and quick as

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panthers on the grass, always playing cricket, or stretched full length along the turf in warmth and idleness. Six weeks earlier the only men who would have dared to lie on that turf were those whom the necessities and accidents of the football field compelled to do so.

Early in May there had come flowers about the place; first the apple - blossoms in the orchard, and those were not so strange, being like the snow we were used to; but afterwards in sheltered corners there came roses and stocks and peonies, until in June our land of storms and rainfall had become a land of brilliant coloured blossoms.

Just about June too some madness got into the brain of the chapel choir. Instead of the old simple dirge - like chants which we were used to, the choir began to practise new-fangled music, and I've known Dick to stay in chapel, even after the service was over, in a "dead haze," as we used to call it, his eyes straining, his lips parted, until the deep notes of the organ had trembled away into silence.

Then, as often as not, he would start to his feet, and dash past me without knowing that

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I was there, his eyes bright and dim, his lips apart, his head up, and his hat off, as if he could not brook that anything in this mood should come between him and Heaven. And always at such times he would make for the sea, nor would he tolerate even my companionship there.

But the very last and worst sign of dissipation which was to come at Fernhall appeared about a week before prize day. As was fitting, this sign appeared in the Head. For two or three consecutive mornings he would be five minutes late for lecture. Once or twice during school hours we would detect him talking excitedly to his wife, and at last he would come to lecture in a new cassock. At least if it was not a new cassock (and I want to be accurate on so important a point), we did not recognise it as the old robe with which we had been so long familiar, for the yellow egg stain which had graced it like an order ever since the early days of February had disappeared altogether.

After this the end came quickly. Cabs with queer wicker trunks upon them drove up from Slowton. Barnes, the captain of the eleven, wore a pair of light-coloured trousers.

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Crowther major began to curl an imaginary moustache. Lectures were held in all irregular places, and at all sorts of irregular hours, because the class-rooms were wanted for examinations, or for even more unusual rites connected with the distribution of prizes. The quality of the twopenny pies at the tuck shop distinctly improved, at the same time that resurrection pie and prehistoric stew gave place in hall to prime joints of mutton and beef with vegetable trimmings. At this point I feel that words fail me. If I could do it on paper I should flap my wings and crow. That might express the jubilant light-headedness which took possession of everybody at this time. Words cannot do it. As I shut my eyes, even I who have been through it so often cannot systematically recall the joys of prize day. With a sound of music and laughter all sorts of things rush by me. Champagne and goose-berry tarts, pink dresses and blue sashes, crowds and crowds of people, speeches made by great men grown boyish again to give us pleasure, and then at night I hear (the night of the thirtieth), the voices of our four hundred

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singing with the full strength of their young lungs the last verse of the last psalm in the Prayer Book, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." We used to make the chapel almost rock with that last wave of sound. After that for ten weeks the mice about the organ loft were never disturbed by so much as a whisper.

From early morning until late in the afternoon of the particular prize day of which I am writing Fernhall had been in a constant whirl of excitement, and I especially had had no time to think even of Dick, for I had been playing as bowler of the second eleven in the annual broomstick match. But at four o'clock everything had quieted down a little, and hot and tired we all of us gazed wistfully towards the sea. It certainly was overpoweringly hot on land, and the green waves looked deliciously inviting, beyond the rim of yellow sand which separated them from the foot of the sea-wall.

"No chance of getting a boat out to-day," sighed Aeland, who was lying beside me on the top of the embankment looking seaward.

"No, I'm afraid not," I answered. "Old

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Swann would not have time to come if he wanted to, and I don't suppose he would want to much," I answered languidly.

"I don't know," persisted Acland; "Swann would do anything for you, now that he has seen you play sticks, Maxwell. I believe he would get the boat if you asked him to."

"Well, I shall not ask him; it wouldn't be fair; and besides, why should we not go and bathe without him? No one would say anything to us to-day."

"That's a good idea," cried my companion, springing up; "let us do it. There won't be any one about now, and even if there was they can't set us punishments to-morrow."

That is one of the peculiarities of the end of a term at a public school. Wrong-doing at that happy period brings no punishment. Like the boys, the masters want to get away, and cannot stop to punish peccadilloes.

"I'll bring my rug if you will sneak up into the dormitories and get a couple of towels. Get some of the other fellows to come too," said Acland.

"All right," I answered, and went, and in ten

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minutes' time four of us were undressing behind one of the great wooden breakwaters on the sands.

The rule at Fernhall was, that only monitors were allowed to bathe without superintendence, although almost every pauper in the school swam like a fish. The rest of the boys went down to bathe at intervals, and were kept within a certain stated distance of the shore. Outside this limit what we were pleased to call the life-boat cruised to keep in stragglers, and pick up anyone who might be in trouble; for, in spite of the fair seeming of those glassy green waters, they were not altogether innocent. Here and there were shoals, and a man wading out on to these with an incoming tide might well find that when the water where he stood had only crept waist high, the water between him and the shore was deep enough to drown in. We had all of us wandered enough along the tide line to know that the great smooth sea could be as cruel as it was fair. Long pennons of kelp wrenched up by the roots were not the only things we used to find along the shore when the wind blew in from the sea, and besides the

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ordinary dangers of the deep there was one peculiar to Fernhall. Right in front of the bay, about a quarter of a mile from the beach, there was a tiny island or chain of rocks called the Chaplet, and this was never quite covered by the highest tides. Between this and the shore there ran what we called a tide-rip. This tide-rip was generally innocent enough, too strong perhaps to swim against, but easy enough for a strong swimmer to cross, and at the best times for bathing practically non-existent. But at other times, and in certain conditions of the tide, it ran like a mill race, and so that the swimmer who got into it would be carried far down the coast before he could get out of it again.

The worst of it was, that unless you knew the tides as old Swann knew them, you were never sure of this current. Here and there, of course, you might see a streamer of kelp strained out along the smooth surface, but it took very little current to do this, so that the kelp was no guide to go by. And there was really no other, for even when the "rip" was running at its maddest, the only visible sign of it was a kind of oily

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smear on the surface of the water. Luckily there was no necessity for getting into the "rip" if you were not an ambitious swimmer. For a hundred yards from shore the sea was as safe as a sitz bath.

"It seems to me that the 'rip' is running pretty fast to-day, Maxwell," cried Acland, as he waded out from the shore. "Look how fast that log is going down the smear."

"Is it? Well, the log may have the smear to itself for me," I answered, as I ducked and paddled off lazily, lying on my back and looking up at the blue sky, whilst the sun shone down on me, and the sweet salt water lapped over me.

I was content, and had no mind to try my strength against the current. All down the coast that afternoon there were bathing parties, some of them composed of visitors to the school, some of monitors who were privileged, and some no doubt of law-breakers like ourselves; but the nearest party to us was a party of the sixth form, whose gorgeous rugs lay behind the next breakwater but one on our right. The "rip" by the way was running from right to left.

"I say, there is someone out beyond the

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Chaplet," cried Acland. "Do you see his head? He is coming round the top corner of it now. One of the monitors next door, I suppose."

"He does not seem to mind the 'rip' any way," I answered, watching him lazily, for it was no uncommon thing for one of our strong swimmers to strike away far beyond the Chaplet rocks until their heads became mere dots in the distance.

"Can you see who it is?" asked one of the others.

"His hair looks red enough for Crowther, but I fancy the salt would be too much for his hide just now," I laughed.

"By Jove! it is Crowther," cried Acland; "and look, Maxwell, look. Great heaven! the 'rip' has caught him."

And so it had. As that red head came slowly past the corner, steering apparently straight for the sixth form party on our right, it suddenly swerved, and was hurried away past the edges of the Chaplet, full in the middle of the dreaded smear, to our left.

Already it was half-way past the low, long line of island rocks, when we heard a voice we

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knew crying for help, and saw a pair of arms tossed wildly into the air.

As the cry reached us the head went down. But it came up again a few yards lower down. Crowther was a strong swimmer, and even the "rip," which we now guessed must be running at its worst, could not drown him easily. As soon as his head re-appeared, poor swimmers though we were, Acland and I struck out through the sea towards him with all the strength we had. And not only we. Every man and boy along the shore seemed to have heard that cry and seen the swimmer, and from every breakwater men were ploughing their way towards the island, some swimming steadily with strong breast strokes, others racing on their sides, their white arms flashing out of the water as they swam; but all swimming as they never swam before, for the prize they knew was a comrade's life. But we were too late. Before the best of us had swum two score yards, Crowther's head disappeared for the second time, and the great shiny band of water swept on without a mark upon it. A human life was a small thing to it in its race to the Atlantic. When Crowther

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sank the second time some paused to look, others wiser bore to their left and swam on, hoping that they might yet be in time to help.

But there was other help nearer than ours.

As I shook the water from my eyes I saw a figure rise from behind the Chaplet rocks, and, tossing off its coat as it ran, spring from point to point at top speed until it reached the last ledge of the Chaplet. Then it plunged like a gannet, head first into the oily swirl.

Without a word we trod water and waited. One moment, two, three, ten went by, and still the smooth, sunlit stream went by unbroken. Surely those were minutes and not moments that we waited. It seemed to me as if some spell rested upon nature, all was so still. The "rip" glided by without a break in its green waters; a gull swung down without a sound; and a score of silent, eager men watched and waited.

At last the spell was broken by a ringing cheer. "There he is, he has him, bravo!" and all eyes turned to where the diver had reappeared, nearly fifty yards from where he sank, supporting the drowning man with one hand,

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whilst with the other he tried hard to fight his way across the "rip." In the middle of it something happened. There was a little splashing, a cry, and then the oily current went on again unbroken. Both had sunk. But the swimmer reappeared again almost immediately. The drowning man, scared by the rapidity with which the "rip" was dragging them along, had lost his head, and clutched his would-be preserver in that frantic grip which has cost so many lives. Most men would have given him up after that, but this man did not. Even at that distance we could see what he was doing. We could see him swimming slowly with the current, and peering about him as he went. Suddenly he saw what he wanted, a pale shadow sinking from the sunlight, and he dived as a duck dives, coming up again directly with his man in front of him. By George! how we cheered! though in doing so we swallowed quarts of salt water and did no good whatever.

But he had no time to notice us or our cheering. He had his battle to fight with that heavy water which, in spite of himself, drew

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him away from the shore, and tugged at him for the prey of which he would rob it.

Alone and with both his hands free, the swimmer from the Chaplet rocks would have won his way through the "rip," though even then he would have been carried far down the shore before he got clear of the current.

Handicapped as he was he had no chance. Already the two black dots were far away towards the point, when someone at my side said, "If he doesn't leave that fellow to drown, he'll drown himself."

"Then he will drown," I said, and though I hardly knew what I did, I scrambled out upon the beach and began to run across the point.

In a case like this any example is followed at once; and though I could hardly have told them myself why I was running, I soon had a crowd at my heels.

The bay in which Chaplet Island lies is protected on one side by a sort of spit round which the tide-rip curis, until it strikes against a point on the other side of the base of the spit, from which it turns and runs straight away to the North Channel. It was across the base of

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this spit and towards this point that we were running. The tide-rip had the start of us, but we had the shorter course to run, and at that point, if anywhere, we should at least get one last look at the drowning men before they were carried out to sea.

I was a fast runner in those days, and I was running as I never ran before, for I alone knew who the swimmer was who would rather drown than leave his man ; but in spite of my efforts I heard a deep breath at my shoulder, and a tall figure went by me as if I had been standing still. It was Foulkes, the present bishop of — I remembered then that he had held the half-mile record for England, and it dawned upon me for the first time what a record runner meant.

But if he was first at the point I was second, and I was not sorry that he was first, for he had his wits about him, and I had not. On the shore he snatched up a piece of driftwood, and using it as a staff plunged in at once up to his waist.

"Join hands," he cried, "here they come. He's got him still"; and one by one, as they

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came panting up, visitors and masters and boys joined hands and plunged in, until we formed a living chain, the last link of which was almost afloat on the very edge of the current.

Although when watching him from one side he seemed to be hurrying so rapidly out to sea, when we were waiting for him he came to us slowly enough.

"Dick," I yelled, "Dick, try to reach us your hand," but he took no notice ; his head was half under water, and his body bobbed and swayed hideously with the motion of the current.

He had lost consciousness, but he had not lost his hold. Perhaps some of the other links in that chain kept their heads to the very end, and could tell you how we got hold of him at last, just as he was sweeping by us for ever.

I don't know myself, but I do know that if a certain good bishop asked me to black his boots for him, or to perform any other menial office for him, I should do it with gladness. He was the best runner of his day, and he is a great dignitary of the church now ; on a certain day in June I thought him the best *man* bar one, at old Fernhall.

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Between us we dragged Dick St. Clair and Crowther up the beach; Crowther apparently dead, and Dick so nearly dead that there seemed no hope, and yet, thanks to the use of proper means, we saved them both

As Fouikes turned Dick upon his face to let the water pour from his mouth, he caught sight of his shoulders, still purple and green from the blows of the broomstick; and as his eyes wandered from those shoulders to the man lying by Dick's side, I heard him mutter beneath his breath:

"Greater love hath no man known than this, that a man should lay down his life for a friend. This lad would have laid it down for *him!*"

And that was Dick St. Clair's revenge!

CHAPTER XIII.

A WALK ACROSS ENGLAND.

AFTER four o'clock on prize day there is a pause—next morning there is a breaking up. The whole body of taught and teachers goes to pieces. The atoms of the little world fly off from one another at a tangent, and by eleven o'clock in the morning, the only living thing left about the place is old Elizabeth, the needlewoman, and tradition has it that she is a Fernhall fixture.

Breakfast even on breaking-up day is a very perfunctory performance; it is the only breakfast during the term when you can get as many pats of butter as you please. An active and hungry fellow might collect a dozen on his way up the hall, there are so many plates with no one in front of them. For many of the fellows, especially such as have had relatives at the

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school during prize week, manage to get away on the evening of prize day. Dick and I, however, were not among these lucky ones, but we had our boxes packed and corded early, and were ready to start by the first 'bus running between Fernhall and Slowton.

What a glorious drive that always used to be in the fresh summer morning, in a coach full of high spirits, with nearly five months' work behind, and full ten weeks' pleasure in front!

The whole way to the station we sang: every yokel we met was chaffed, and probably pelted with fruit or pastry: the sour-looking keeper who blamed us for every pheasant's nest which went wrong, was derisively cheered, and reckless invitations to "come and stay with me, old fellow," were extended to companions we had hardly tolerated during the term.

At the station there were always a good many people to see us off. The Fernhall boys were popular with the regiment stationed at Slowton, who shot sometimes on our range, and were beaten by us twice a year with great regularity at cricket, and who taught us in

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return a good many things worth knowing in the way of manly bearing and self-restraint. The swaggering boy who talked too much of his own exploits on the cricket field, or at Rugby Union, got his first hint from these men, that the great world thinks most of those who do great deeds and say nothing of them. Boys are very quick to take a hint, and most of us had noticed that the man who had won the Cross in the Crimea, seemed to know more of roses than he knew of battlefields, while young Molyneux, who won the Grand Military, neither chewed a straw nor carried a riding cane. But these very men, though they were so reticent about themselves, were ready enough to recognise merit in others, and I had hardly put my foot on the platform before I heard eager whispers all round me. Which is he? Which is St. Clair? What that bit of a boy with the captain of the second eleven? and then one of them, a sad dog, whom everybody in the regiment loved, came up to me and held out his hand—

“Well, Maxwell, going home? Remember me to the Colonel, my boy, and tell him to

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horsewhip you for howling a captain in Her Majesty's ——th, twice running for a duck."

Of course I laughed, and said that I wouldn't do it again, and he added laughing too, "No; I don't think you will, for I shan't be here; but isn't your friend Mr. St. Clair? I wish you would introduce me."

Of course I introduced him, and then the colonel came up, a tall, grey man, stiff and (we thought) cold as a rule, and shook hands with both of us, but when he spoke to Dick there was a tone in his voice which must have made it rare music for the boy he spoke to, the tone of respect which one brave man feels for another. As he bade us good-bye, he laid his hand on Dick's shoulder. "You must be one of us, lad, the Queen cannot spare such men as you"; and then whilst Dick's eyes grew dim and his cheek flushed with honest pride, he added to me, "You come to us of course, Maxwell; you are soldier bred."

"Dick's people were soldiers too, sir," I cried, anxious to spare my chum a pang, for I knew that he hated the idea that his father had never served.

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"So I should have thought," replied Colonel Farquharson, and as he strode away I heard him mutter, "Yes, yes, we know the name, and you can't mistake the breed."

Other professions are no doubt as honourable (perhaps more so) as the soldier's, but Colonel Farquharson at least did not think so.

Just then the train steamed into the station, and as it did so there was a sound of wheels outside, and another bus dashed up, and a fresh crowd of noisy, excited lads rushed on to the platform.

"Hold hard there," cried one, "don't leave us behind, conductor"; "No; I haven't got a ticket; pay you on the train," cried another; "Who has got my bonnet-box?" yelled a third, and so shouting and pushing, utterly regardless of everything and everybody, each carrying his own odds and ends, they tumbled into the third class carriages, all except a few who had too much money or too little brains. These travelled first, in great and lonely splendour. Amongst these of course was Crowther, purchasing the homage of a porter, who carried his walking sticks, with one of his father's hardly-

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earned half-crowns. On his way to his carriage Crowther caught sight of us, and after hesitating for a moment he turned back, and held out his hand to Dick.

"I am not coming back any more, St. Clair, but if there is anything my people can do for you —"

He stopped there lamely enough. I did not wonder at it. Dick's haughty stare would have stopped most people.

"Well, at any rate, let us shake hands," he said, but Dick took no notice of the out-stretched hand.

"What! Won't you do that?" Crowther persisted. "You saved my life yesterday, and I owe you some thanks for that."

"You owe me nothing," Dick said at last. "I saved your life because I was obliged to. Any one would have done that, but I have a right to choose my friends." And with that he turned on his heel and left him.

I confess that I thought Dick was wrong, and I told him so, and no doubt many people thought the worse of him for this action of his, but Dick rarely showed himself to

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advantage in the ordinary things of life to outsiders, and moreover I am not drawing an ideal character, but one I knew. I am not painting him as he ought to have been, but as he was, and in spite of all my arguments he held to his opinion (he always did hold to his opinions—right or wrong), and only made me the same answer to all that I could urge, "I'm not bound to like a cad, and if I don't like him, it's not honest to shake hands with him."

But this point we argued long afterwards. Just then we were deep in the matter of the moment. Dick wanted to miss the first train and go by a later, to escape the fellows who worried him with well-meant congratulations. "I want to get away by myself," he said. "And besides," he added, "I've not money enough to buy a ticket."

"Not money enough to buy a ticket," I asked. "Why what have you done with your travelling money?"

For a time he would not tell me, but at last the whole story came out. It was so like Dick, but so utterly foolish. I had seen that a man had stopped him as he entered the station, and

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I noticed the military salute which the fellow gave him, but I had thought no more of it. Though an older man would have suspected a fraud in it, the story the fellow told Dick was plausible enough. He had an empty sleeve, and he leant heavily on crutches, and Dick did not know that the arm had been lost in a reaping machine years ago when the beggar was drunk, or that the crutches were absolutely unnecessary except as weapons of offence. What Dick was told was that the arm had been lost in action, that the army had no place in it for maimed men, and that outside the ranks the wounded man had no home and no means of "earning a crust for her and the little uns, sir," he added, pointing to a miserable, slatternly woman who dragged two children at her heels.

"You'll likely be in the army yourself by-and-by, sir," the fellow went on. "You wouldn't like to think as any of the men as you leads would have to starve and their little ones with them, because they'd given their right 'ands for Queen and Country!"

The argument was one which a boy like Dick could not resist, and once he had yielded

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to the fellow's solicitations he did so thoroughly. His hand went into his pocket, and without counting the coins he poured them into the ready palm stretched out for them, and hurried away to escape his thanks.

When we held a court of inquiry, we two, upon the funds still left, we found that Dick had just enough left to pay the freight charges upon his luggage to Scarsley, and a sixpence over. That sixpence we spent in sending a telegram to the mother, and then we went to find our friend Bill Dixon, the prize fighter.

For already we had formed a great scheme, which was full of attractions for two such boys as we were.

"It can't be such a tremendous distance across country," Dick said, "from here to Scarsley."

"Not a great distance, Dick! Why it must be a hundred miles."

"Well, and what is that? Four days' march for us. Cameron walked across Africa. Are we such duffers that we can't walk across the narrow end of England?"

This seemed a poser, but I had another objection ready.

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"What about grub, Dick? Cameron used to shoot things. If we shoot anything we shall get imprisoned for poaching, and besides we have no guns."

But Dick was not to be beaten. "A man," he said, "could live on vegetable matter for so short a time, and no doubt we could catch some trout in the burns which ran down from the Cheviots, and at the worst there would be my thirty shillings."

Bill Dixon did not strengthen my case at all. He, to my surprise, entirely concurred with Dick, and scoffed at the idea of "any gentleman as knew his way about" wanting for food on his way through his native land.

"Why where you're agoin game is fairly 'sniving,'" he said. "I'll give you a snare or two, and show you 'ow to pick up robbuts; and if you're sick of robbuts, I'll show you 'ow to get summat better," and with that he produced a net of silk so fine that, big as it was, it would roll up into a mere handful. "I dunno' as you'll get many birds without the dawg," he said, pointing to his old colley; "but I canna lend you the dawg. I'll be wantin' 'im myself

A WALK ACROSS ENGLAND

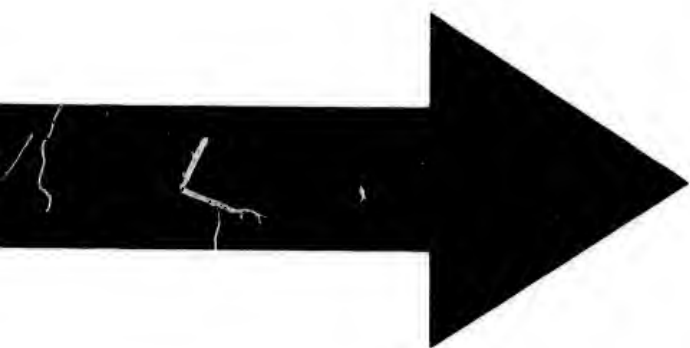
the first week in August. But you'd get some young 'uns, and they're rare good split up and broiled. Say the word, and I'll come along myself," he added.

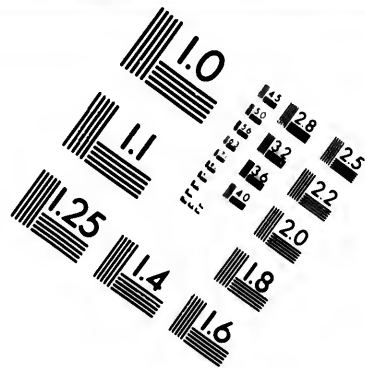
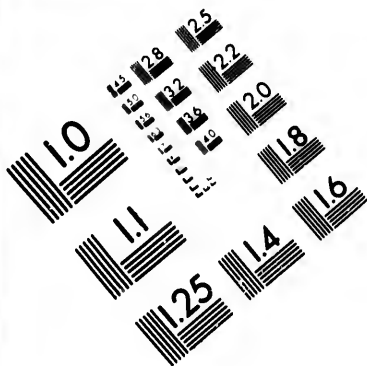
But Dick did not say the word. On the contrary he considerably weakened the dishonest Bill's regard for him by some very scathing remarks upon poaching generally, and the netting of roosting-birds in particular.

But Bill forgave us in so far that he set our heads in the right direction, told us how much, or rather how little, we ought to pay at the different roadside inns for bed and board, and after walking half a dozen miles with us, left us with a final recommendation to keep our eyes skinned for "'od-ma-dod snails." "They makes a capital broth," he said, "and are first-rate for trainin'. I allus eats a lot of 'em myself when I've got a 'ard job on in the ring."

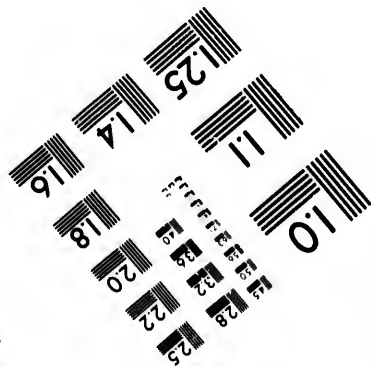
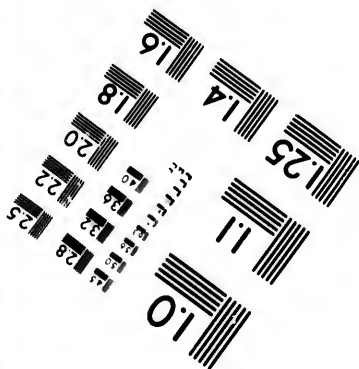
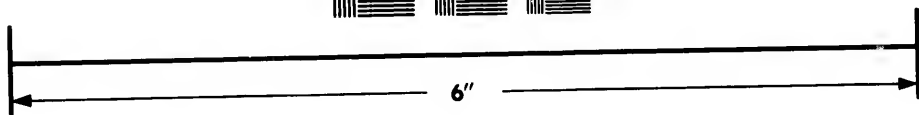
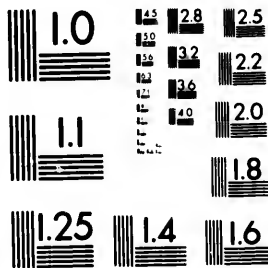
But we never came down to "hod-ma-dod" snails, though we bought a tin-kettle, and invariably cooked our midday meal by the roadside—sometimes a pot of birds' eggs (but these were mostly hard set in July), sometimes a mess of nettles, which would have formed an excellent







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THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

substitute for spinach, but that July nettles are tough and stringy, and sometimes a grill of tiny troutlets, which we caught in brooks too insignificant to be preserved. But at night I used to assert my authority, and obtain a substantial if unpretentious meal, and leave to sleep in a hayloft, from the owner of the nearest wayside public. As a rule the publicans, seeing that we were bent on some boyish freak, treated us kindly, and charged us so little that Dick used to resent what he considered their charity.

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK HAS A SECRET FROM ME.

THOSE were glorious days for us, especially when we had reached the moors, where alone in England a man can come face to face with Nature as it was before modern civilization spoiled it.

Up in the Cheviots the world is as wild and free as it is on the prairies of North America, and infinitely more beautiful. I have seen nothing since to beat those long rolling swells of purple heather, those cool deep gorges through which the brown burn foams and glides, angry and rough one moment, dreaming and still the next, or those wide sweeps of yellow moorland grass where the horned, black-faced sheep feed, and from which in the far distance you can see the blue edges of the sea. All day we used to swing along the upland trails, never

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meeting a human being unless it was a shepherd, and yet never without something to interest us. The moor birds were new to us. The ring ouzel, that white-breasted mountain blackbird, repaid an hour's study, the gulls which still hung about the moors where they had bred, and the curlews, made us wish that we had been on the moors a month or two earlier, in the nesting time, while the blackcock we flushed in the furze or by the burn side, and the red grouse which used to come whirling down on the feeding heather at dawn, made us regret that we were not a year or two older and happy owners of moorland shootings and a gun license. Then too Cheviot side was red not only with the heather and the sunburnt ferns, but with the history of battle, and many a long hour Dick and I lay and talked of Flodden Field, of the doings of Fosters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, and of the merry days of the moss-troopers. I'm afraid that if it had been in our power we would have put back the hands of the clock to a date at which a strong arm need never have been idle, or a stout heart hopeless for want of employment; a date at which the swordsman's hand

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had more power than the agitator's tongue or the journalist's pen.

But the days went by too quickly, and before the beginning of a new week, we roused ourselves one morning from our lair amongst the heather (we had for once slept out), and across the valley we could see Chillingham, and a white blot in the open space amongst the trees which we knew to be the celebrated herd of wild white cattle for which Chillingham is famous. Between us and the seat of the Tankervilles ran the railway, and a couple of days further on lay Uncle Braithwaite's slip; Dick's house, to which we were both returning for the holidays, as my father was away; and a welcome about the quality of which we both felt a little apprehensive.

I am bound to say that our uncertainty was very soon dispelled when we reached home. Dick's mother pretended not to be pleased to see us; Ferney, grown quite a man of business, treated us in a compassionate elder brotherly way, which I found intensely irritating; and Mr. Braithwaite would not see us at all for nearly a week. After that he sent for us,

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and we went to him in a yard at the back of his iron-works, where fragments of old machinery, rails, ploughs, and a hundred other rusty relics were piled up waiting to be converted into new anchors, steel plates, or some other parts of a great ship's accoutrements.

He received our greetings in silence, and for a minute continued to walk up and down the yard without speaking, his hands behind his back, his thin lips compressed, and his eyes half shut.

"Ion Maxwell," he said at last, "how old are you?"

"Sixteen, sir," I answered.

"And you, Richard St. Clair—fifteen?"

"That is right," Dick admitted, quietly.

I don't know what it was about Dick which always annoyed his uncle, but there certainly was some quality in him which put up that honest gentleman's back—thus even at these simple words, his eyes opened suddenly, and he came to a standstill in front of the speaker, staring angrily into his face as if looking for some covert insult in it.

But Dick's face was as innocent of im-

DICK HAS A SECRET FROM ME

pertinence as his words were, and after a moment's scrutiny Mr. Braithwaite renewed his march with an offended snort.

After taking two or three turns across the yard he stopped, and handed a long white document to each of us.

"Read them," he said.

The white documents were of course our "characters," libellous productions issued twice a year, and sent from Fernhall post paid to the boys' parents.

Of course no character is all good, but mine, as far as I could see at a glance, was a very fair one, and looking over Dick's shoulder I could read Proser's verdict — "Has brilliant ability, and applies himself diligently to certain subjects."

"Well, sir," I said boldly, "I don't see very much the matter with these."

"No? Do you see what your masters say about the ability which God has given you?"

"Yes; that is not bad, is it?"

"To whom much is given, from him shall much be expected. How have you used those talents, Ion?"

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"All right, sir, I think," I answered.

"All right, you think," he answered bitterly. "This letter from your form master tells a different story. I had hoped that the extraordinary leniency shown to you for your disgraceful conduct during your first term would have been remembered by you. It seems that like the dogs you have returned to your vomit."

Like most lowlanders, Mr. Braithwaite was very fond of quoting scripture, especially when he was in an unscriptural frame of mind, and I augured ill from the quotation.

I was right unfortunately. Mr. Proser, it seems, had heard of our missing the train at Slowton, and as he could not possibly know why we had missed it, he began to suspect. Being no athlete himself he could not of course imagine the pleasures of a week's walk across England, so he refused to believe that we had walked merely for the fun of walking. Why then had we walked when we might have gone by train? A few questions asked in Slowton furnished him with what he considered a satisfactory answer to the conundrum. We had been seen in company with the poacher Dixon.

DICK HAS A SECRET FROM ME

That was enough for Proser, and fortified by a few facts, he had given rein to his imagination, and written Mr. Braithwaite a truly awful letter. This was the cause of the trouble.

"You don't deny I suppose that you met this fellow Dixon at Slowton," Mr. Braithwaite asked.

"No, sir," I answered. "We met him of course, but —."

"And you left the town with him for the moors?"

"Yes, sir, but —."

"Thank you. I congratulate you on at least being truthful so far. I won't trouble you to invent any reasons for your behaviour. I can imagine them, and have no wish to hear any more."

"But you must hear our explanation," urged Dick.

"Silence, sir!" thundered Braithwaite. "Be sure if I will not hear Ion, I will not hear you."

That was enough for Dick, whose mouth shut at once as if it would never open again.

"As for you, Ion," Mr. Braithwaite went on, "your unfortunate father, when he returns, must

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decide about you. Richard St. Clair, you have shown yourself utterly unfit by your tastes and conduct for the service you aspire to. You had better give up all ideas of the army, and make up your mind to accept the place in Rithet and Turner's, which I have secured for you. By steady application there you may yet do well."

With these words he left us, and stalked back into his counting-house, while we stood and stared gloomily at the heaps of old iron all round us.

"So," Dick said at last, shaking himself a little and taking my arm, "So Uncle Braithwaite is going to make a clerk of me, is he, a clerk to Rithet and Turner, in East India Avenue? He may make anchors out of old ploughshares, but he'll not make a clerk out of a St. Clair."

"He means to try to, Dick, and what can you do?"

"Hold my tongue and work. A man can be what he pleases. It depends upon himself."

And this was the last he said upon the subject, though from stray fragments of our uncle's conversation we gathered that arrangements had been made for Dick's admission into

DICK HAS A SECRET FROM ME

the East India Avenue firm in August. I don't think the mother liked the idea of an office stool for her boy any more than he did, but she believed it necessary.

"Things are not as they used to be, Dick, in your grandfather's time," she would say, "and I don't think that you would care for the dull routine of a soldier's life in times of peace. There is no likelihood of fighting nowadays."

"No, mother; it's a good thing too, isn't it, dear?"

"Yes, I think so, Dick; but if there is to be no more fighting, what becomes of your service? *You* don't want to be a soldier for the sake of wearing a red coat?"

"Not quite."

"Nor of loafing your life away in country quarters?"

"Nor that either, mother, though perhaps country quarters are no worse than East India Avenue."

"But, Dick, it won't always be East India Avenue. With your brains you must succeed, and then you can take a moor or travel, or if

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you are still ambitious you can enter the House; that is where titles are won nowadays — ”

“With Samson’s weapon,” Dick laughed. “Who told you that I wanted to win a title, little mother?”

“Isn’t that the end of all ambition?” she asked.

“I think not, dear. Title without honour is but a barren grant. I would fain win honour, but I know of no title that I would prefer to that my father gave me. Am I not a St. Clair, mother?”

“Yes, dear, and that you will always be, whether you are a soldier or a merchant.”

“Of course; and whatever I am I shall try to make the little mother proud of her boy.”

And here the conversation would drop, and Dick would steal away upstairs and be lost to us all for the day. From morning until night he used to sit in his little room near the top of the house, never coming down to the slip for a plunge in the green waters, or a turn with the boys about the yard.

It was a deadly slow holiday for me, without

DICK HAS A SECRET FROM ME

any companion except Ferney, who was always too well dressed to jump a hedge or cross a grass field, and the worst of it was that Dick did not take me into his confidence.

I knew that he had been writing an article for a magazine, because he brought it to me one morning with a brief printed circular from the publisher, regretting that he could not make use of it.

"Beaten there, Ion, I must get money in some other way."

"But what do you want money for, Dick?"

"Time will show, boy," he answered. "What do you suppose this is worth?" and he drew from his waistcoat pocket a gold repeater which had belonged to his father.

"I don't know. Twenty or thirty pounds at least, I suppose; but you would never sell that! It was your father's, Dick."

"Yes, I know. It was my dear old father's, and I have not much else to remember him by, but I would sell it to pay for some things—things that he would approve of."

And so saying he put the watch back into his pocket and ran upstairs, coming down again

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dressed with a care and smartness somewhat unusual for him in the country.

"Why, where are you going, Dick?" I asked. It's nearly dinner time."

"Yes, I know it is; but you must make excuses for me, Ion. My head aches with work, and I am going for a long walk. It will do me more good than food, I think."

And this was the first word he had said to me about his work, and the summer holidays were almost over.

CHAPTER XV.

DICK DISAPPEARS.

“**I**ON, who is that dreadful man hanging about the back-door?”

It was Mrs. St. Clair who spoke. She had just come in from gathering a basket of roses in the dusk, and looked white and frightened as she appealed to me.

“How should I know, mother? I don't know all the scamps in the district. Ask Uncle Braithwaite; he is here more than I am,” I said, laughing at her.

“Don't be foolish, Ion. I have asked Mr. Braithwaite, and he doesn't know the man. Do you, John?” she asked, turning to him as he came up and joined us.

“No, I have never seen the fellow before, nor does he belong to this neighbourhood. There are a great many more of such strangers about

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here now than I like," he added, half to himself.

"Well, I will go and look at him anyhow, mother," I said, and turned to go; but before I could carry out my intention Mary, the housemaid, bounced into the room with her cap on one side, and a "do or die" expression on her face.

"Well, Mary, what is it?" asked Mrs. St. Clair, as the girl stood gasping on the threshold like a newly-landed fish.

"A pusson, ma'am, at the back-door. A pusson askin' for Mr. Ion or Mr. Richard."

"Well?"

"I slammed the door in 'is face, ma'am, and put up the chain, I did!"

"What! for asking for Mr. Ion?"

"No, ma'am—the spoons."

"But did he ask for the spoons too?" I put in, laughing.

"No, Mr. Ion; but he looked 'em."

Even the mother laughed at this, but Mary went on quite innocently.

"Yes, ma'am; if hanyone hever looked like a burglar 'e does. E's got 'is 'air cut that short,

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and a red muffler round 'is throat, and 'is jaw broken, and 'anging down that awful as I expect 'e's in after the spoons now. Chains ain't no good against 'is sort, ma'am. And please, ma'am, 'e said 'is name was Bill Dixon!"

"Bill Dixon! What! that rascally poacher! This is monstrous!" cried my uncle, and at this unexpected confirmation of her suspicions Mary the maid turned to the colour of Mr. Burne-Jones' maidens, and flopped incontinently upon the floor.

"My dear!" cried Braithwaite, when we had put Mary into a chair, "you will surely not consent to his seeing the boys. He is the fellow with whom they left Slowton."

But the mother had no need to reply; for Bill, disgusted by the maid's suspicions, and tired of waiting behind a closed door, had retired from our inhospitable house, and as I looked out of the window I saw him slouching away down the road, his close-cropped hair, broken nose, and broken jaw making him look what our western cousins call a "tough citizen."

That night I had to stand a very severe cross-examination; but as I knew nothing of

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Bill's reasons for calling on us, nothing could be extracted from me. The result was that my uncle considered me a deeper and more dangerous young scapegrace than ever, whilst the mother heard for the first time, I believe, the true story of our connection and adventures with Bill. Perhaps this accounted for the calm fashion in which she heard of Dick's disappearance. At least I tried at the time to account for her unnatural indifference in this way, but even then I knew that I was wrong. But if the mother said very little when Dick failed to take his accustomed place at evening prayers, Mr. Braithwaite said enough for both.

According to him the unhappy boy had finally gone to the devil (or Bill Dixon, synonymous terms with our uncle), and would be next heard of through the police.

I hardly took Mr. Braithwaite's view of the matter, of course; but even I had my doubts. That Dick had gone off with Bill I did not believe. I knew, for instance, that Dick had left before Bill arrived; but Bill might have had some message from him for me, and having got that idea into my head, you may be sure that

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I was up and out in the village "bright and early" next morning.

Dick of course had not come back, nor could I hear anything of Bill in Scarsley, so, having snatched a hurried breakfast, I ran over in my flannels to the little town of Clifden, towards which Dick had been walking when I last saw him. The morning was sweet and fresh, and the run did me a lot of good. It was the first decent piece of exercise I had had since those miserable summer holidays began, during which, thanks to Dick's retirement, I had been forced to loaf as I never loafed before. But now there was something to do, and I began to feel alive again. My first business was to find Bill; but though I hung round every tap-room and stable-yard, and visited every game dealer's in Clifden, I could see nothing of my man. However, as I wandered from place to place, my search was in part rewarded, for in a pawnbroker's window I caught sight of a gold repeater which I knew. It had once been old Mr. St. Clair's, and I had last seen it in Dick's hands on the night before. From this I concluded that Dick had needed money to leave the district, that he had

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raised the money and had gone. But whither and why? Often and often we had talked about seeking service abroad as soldiers of fortune if we should be so unlucky as to fail in our attempts to enter the Queen's service, but then Dick had not failed yet, and moreover we had always agreed that we would go together if we had to go at all. Could Mr. Braithwaite's threat about East India Avenue and the office stool have driven Dick to desperate measures, in which his affection for me would not let me share?

When I had followed this line of thought thus far, I blundered up against one of the men I was looking for.

"Why, Bill," I cried, "how are you?"

"Nicely, Mr. Maxwell, nicely, thank you; but where 's your butty this marnin'?"

"I don't know, Bill. I wish I did. Are you sure that *you* don't know?"

"S'elp me Bob I don't. I aint seen Mr. Dick since 'e left Slowton. 'Taint so bloomin' likely as I'd go 'angin round folks' doors, an' 'ave them slammed in my face if I knowed where 'e was."

"I'm sorry, Bill," I answered apologetically, "that that idiotic woman shut the door in your

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face : she has got burglars on the brain. But as to Dick, I am out looking for him myself."

"When did you see 'im last?"

"The night you came up to the house, about three or four hours before you came. My people all think that he is off poaching with you somewhere."

At this Bill fired up.

"Poachin'! 'im poachin'! That's uncommon good of 'em, that is, an' shows 'ow much they knows of Dick! Do you mind 'ow 'e bully-ragged me about them nets the last time I seed you?"

"Yes, I remember; but they don't know anything about that."

"And who is 'they,' Mister Maxwell, if I may make so bold?"

"His uncle, Mr. Braithwaite, and ——"

"Mr. Braithwaite!" interrupted Bill. "'Im as owns the slip and the iron-works?"

"Yes, he is Dick's uncle."

"Oh 'e is, is 'e? That's 'im as owns the slip, 'im as thinks Dick St. Clair is hoff poachin' with that blackguard Bill Dixon: 'im as slammed 'is bloomin' door in my face!"

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"He did not do that, Bill. He could not help what the maid did."

"'E could 'elp drivin' Dick away, couldn't 'e?"

"I don't know that he has done that either, Bill."

"You don't know, don't you, Mister Maxwell! Then I do, and if I'd knowed sooner, Bill Dixon would not 'ave been such a bloomin' fool as to run over all the way from Rattray, to give your uncle a 'int of what's goin' to 'appen to 'is bloomin' works."

"What do you mean, Bill? Did you come to see Mr. Braithwaite?"

"No, I come to see Mr. St. Clair. 'E could 'ave given 'is uncle a 'int if he'd a mind to."

"And can I, Bill, if anything is really wrong?"

"Not much! What, give 'im a 'int *now*? I'll see 'im 'otter first. But look 'ere, you're a good lad, and Dick's pal. Don't you go nigh the slip after dark. Let your uncle go if 'e likes. The job will suit 'im."

And with this mysterious hint Bill Dixon turned and slouched away down a side street, and was soon out of sight. I knew the fellow too well to attempt to follow him in his then

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uncommunicative mood, and besides I was thoroughly convinced that he was quite as much in the dark about Dick's movements as I was. Between his evidence and the evidence of the gold repeater in the pawnbroker's window there was a certain agreement, and I was fully persuaded that Dick had left the district, and my heart sank into my boots as I came to the conclusion, that if he had gone he had probably gone for good.

The future without Dick looked a most uninteresting prospect, and I don't think that it was only fatigue which made my feet so heavy as I jogged back over the fields from Clifden to Scarsley. There was still one point that puzzled me in the whole business. I could guess why Dick had gone, and roughly whither he had gone. But how came it that his mother, whose whole heart was wrapped up in Dick, took his absence so quietly? Did she know more than I did? I fancied she did, and there was some consolation in the thought, for if she knew and was not anxious, Dick was sure to be all right. But he might have told me too. Confound him!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SCARSLEY STRIKE.

WHEN I reached Scarsley it was about lunch time, or rather about dinner time for the hands at the slip. The whistle indeed had gone nearly ten minutes when I came trotting down the main street, which leads past the head of the lane going down to the works. Two years ago, before Dick and I had been sent to Fernhall, we knew, by sight at any rate every male dweller in Scarsley, and knew every workman about Mr. Braithwaite's slip to speak to. Not a few of the younger men had stood up to us in a rough and tumble, had shown us how to bait our lines for the deep-sea fishing, played cricket with us, or in some sort or other been our companions and friends. So it happened that always hitherto we had had greetings at every street corner, as we passed

THE SCARSLEY STRIKE

through the little village of which our uncle was the lord and paymaster, and had grown accustomed to see only faces which we had known for years. But on this day as I ran down the familiar streets I was struck by a great change, though it was one which I should perhaps not have noticed but for Bill Dixon's warning words. Near the top of the Close I ran through a little knot of loafers, who, though they gave way to let me pass, did so, I thought rather to avoid a collision than out of courtesy. To my "Good morning" not one of them replied. Struck by this I looked back. No, I was not mistaken. They had not answered me, and what is more they had no intention of doing so. There was an expression on their faces which was strange to me, and the faces themselves, all five of them, were faces I had never seen before. Of course even a village population changes somewhat in six months, but I had hardly been away as long as that, and yet it seemed as if the whole population of Scarsley had been changed since I last saw the place. I passed two more groups of young men before I reached the head of the lane, and

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though I am not sure that all the faces were absolutely new to me, there was not one of our old friends amongst them.

Round the slip, too, things were not as they used to be. At this time of day a year ago the married men would have been at home with their wives, eating such substantial dinners as no peasants or men of their class can afford, except perhaps in America. The younger and unmarried men, or those who came from a distance, should, according to immemorial custom, have been sitting about by the roadside under the great elms, looking out lazily to sea, and chewing great hunks of bread and meat, with a newspaper over their knees, and a tin drinking-bottle by their sides. Instead of this as I passed I saw them all standing about, married and single alike, in knots by the roadside, eating as they talked, or even forgetting to eat in the heat of their noisy arguments. As I came up to them they eyed me askance, and dropped their voices. Whatever it was that they were discussing, they evidently did not want me to hear what they were saying about it, and only very few of them made any response

THE SCARSLEY STRIKE

to my cheery greetings. Here again I noticed how the old order had changed, how few of the old faces I saw in these noisy groups, and how shamefaced the few old friends seemed whom I caught amongst the talkers. As for the ring-leaders, the men who were holding forth in each little knot, they were all new men to me. Not the big-shouldered, red-fisted fellows with whom I had been used to swim and fish and fight, but little cadaverous wretches who looked as if they had been bred in a mushroom-house, and brought up on wind. They might be "*workmen*," but they did not look it, and the more I saw of them, and of the noisy, feverish luncheon-hour in which they were the principal features, the more certain I became that there was some reason for Bill Dixon's warning to "keep away from the slip because trouble was brewing."

Be sure then that I was not surprised when, next morning about eleven, Ferney St. Clair and my uncle came back to the house in a state of great excitement. It was not their habit to return before twelve or one o'clock, but their first words explained this breach of custom.

"Mark my words, Ferney, your unhappy

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brother has something to do with this. That fellow Dixon is using him as his tool, and will take care that he is his scapegoat at the finish. My men never dreamed of striking before."

As I was near enough to join in the conversation, I came forward at once to shield Dick.

"I am sorry the men have struck, sir," I said, "but you are quite wrong about Dick. He is not with Dixon, and Dixon does not know where he is."

"How do *you* know that?"

"I saw Dixon yesterday. He was looking for Dick."

"If there is nothing between them, tell me, why did he want to find Dick?"

"He said that he wanted to give you a hint about some trouble which was brewing, for Dick's sake," I replied.

"Give me a hint!" cried Braithwaite, furiously. "Give me a hint! A likely tale. Give your friend a hint, sir, from me, that John Braithwaite is a justice of the peace, and will know how to deal with Mr. Bill Dixon if he lays his hands upon him. Give me a hint indeed!" and he puffed out his

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checks as he had a habit of doing when angry, as if he were about to explode.

"All right, sir," I replied, "do as you like with Bill if you can catch him. All I want you to know is that Dick is not with him."

"Where is he then?"

"I don't know. I wish I did."

To this he made no immediate reply, but after frowning at me for a moment or two, took Ferney's arm, and led him away into the garden, muttering something about "those two boys supporting one another in every rascality."

Next morning an article appeared in the *Clifden Chronicle*, which gave me all the information I wanted. It was as I thought.

"The shipwrights in Mr. Braithwaite's employment," so the paper said, "had been infected by the spirit which had unfortunately driven so much business last year from the Tyne, and had all gone out upon strike, the cause of dispute between the men and their employers being a demand on the part of the former for an increase of wages."

The old rate of wages for years had been four shillings a day, but the men had now seen

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fit to demand four shillings and sixpence, and to this demand the *Chronicle* understood that Mr. Braithwaite had no intention of yielding. The wages, he maintained, as now paid were such as his men had always received; they were as high as those paid to workmen of the same class in any other part of England, and were if anything higher than he was justified in paying, as the general depression, common to the whole world, had already made itself seriously felt in his own business. He had no intention, however, of decreasing either his staff of workmen or their rate of pay. He would hold on as long as he could, and wait and hope for better times, but he could not and would not increase his expenses when his profits were on the decrease. If the workmen now in his employ did not choose to work for the old wages he would find others who were ready to do so, and if, as threatened, any attempt was made to intimidate the new men, he would call in the help of the local militia. If Scarsley was to be the scene of another unjust battle between labour and capital, the labourers might count upon a determined resistance to their

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extortionate demands on his part. And in this determination Mr. Braithwaite had the warm sympathy of the *Chronicle* and his neighbours. Everyone of course was very glad to see a man fighting their battles for them, for the battle Mr. Braithwaite was committed to was the battle of every man who had earned any money and saved it, against those who having no mind to work or save wanted to steal.

Poor old gentleman! I never had any very great love for Dick's uncle. He never had been the kind of man whom boys love, but I could not help admiring him and liking him better during that week of trouble than I ever liked him before. Business man as he was to the tips of his fingers, he had a good deal of the old Scotch fighting mixture left in his blood still, so that neither persuasions nor threats, which were now bandied about pretty freely, moved him a hair's-breadth.

True to his promise, he had, as soon as his own men left their work, imported a body of what the Scarsley people were pleased to call "blacklegs," and these men pushed on the work at the foundry and on the slip in spite of the

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mutterings and threats of the strikers. Unfortunately words soon led to blows, and before the end of the week a savage and determined fight had taken place in the lane leading to the slip, in which the "honest British workmen" who did not want to work, had broken the heads of several "scabs" and "blacklegs" who did, with brickbats, bludgeons, and other weighty arguments.

During all this time Ferney and Braithwaite and I went down to the slip and to the foundry to encourage the new men, and to keep an eye on the strikers, and from time to time whilst thus employed I caught a glimpse of Bill Dixon's burly form; but what he was doing, whether he was with the strikers or against them I could not guess, and I dared not speak to him as Mr. Braithwaite suspected him, and even I could not understand his position.

And all this time we heard no word of Dick—Dick, who would have been so useful to us in this state of siege, when the number of troublesome strangers grew daily in the Scarsley streets, when my uncle could not walk in safety alone to his own works, when a picket of the

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strikers was impudently set all day at the public-house at the head of the lane, to stop our men if they could when they went down to the slip, and turn them away from their work.

We did our best in our town of course, and in spite of the men the hammers still rung all day on the ribs of the big whaler (the *Wrestler*), which my uncle had upon the slip, and the work went on fairly well in the foundry ; but we had to keep an eye on the slip all day and set a watch to guard it all night, for the *Wrestler*, in spite of her battered appearance, was worth a great deal of money, and I could see that my uncle's anxiety to get the repairs upon her finished, and send her off again to sea, grew with every day.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW DICK SAVED THE "WRESTLER."

"WE shall have the *Wrestler* off the slip to-morrow, uncle," Ferney said at dinner on Friday night, "and I think that that will teach Cassidy and his roughs that we can do without them, and are not afraid of them."

"I hope you are right, Ferney," replied my uncle. "Perhaps you are, though I don't feel at all comfortable. At any rate, most of the foreigners seem to have gone. There was no one about the slip to-night."

"No, they have got sick of the game, and given it up. Take my word for it, we have broken the back of the trouble."

So said Ferney, but I did not agree with him. It was true that the village was quiet, and that the noisiest of the strikers had disappeared; but the calm and the stillness was too like the

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calm before a thunderstorm to please me, and if I was any judge of human faces the men I had seen on my way home looked as little like yielding as it was possible for men to look.

Hot and restless I strolled down into the garden, and stood at the very edge of it in the dusk looking out to sea. Down by the water's edge, a mile off perhaps as the crow flies, I could see the slip and the great whaler of over 2000 tons burden standing up gaunt and still against the evening sky, her poop a good sixty feet above the level of the green water. Standing up there silhouetted against the sky she reminded me of the ship at rest in the first quarter of my cousin's shield. Ah, that cousin of mine! Where was he now that we wanted him so badly? Just then I saw a figure leap the fence opposite to me, and something in the clean stag-like leap made me start and cry "Dick," and I was right. In another minute he had seen me and crossed the road to my side, hot and dusty, and with those falcon eyes of his reddening with the light I knew so well.

"Is the mother about, Ion?"

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"No."

"Nor any one else."

"No; no one."

"That's right. Jump the fence and come along. We've no time to waste."

Of course I obeyed him. Dick always led, and I was too good a soldier even then to stop to ask questions. For five minutes we jogged along the road together, going at a long swinging trot, and keeping carefully in the shadow of the hedge. Then Dick stopped, and sat down on a stone heap.

"They have had prayers, haven't they?"

"Yes, half an hour ago."

"Then you won't be missed. That is all right. We are going to sleep on the *Wrestler* to-night. Do you mind?"

"No, old chap, of course I don't; but why?"

"To save old Braithwaite more money than he could make in three years. He doesn't deserve it, but he's the mother's brother, God bless her. Come on."

And without deigning any further explanation he set off again at a run, until he gained the head of the lane which leads to the slip.

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Here he spoke to the watchman, a very old friend of ours, and gained his permission to pass. It was not the first time that Dick and I had spent a night on board one of Uncle Braithwaite's cripples. The rat hunting in them used to be excellent, and a night passed on board them between heaven and earth was full of weird suggestions to a boy's imagination.

Once in the alley, Dick stopped again, and putting his hand on my shoulder said, "Forgive me, Ion, I believe I've gone too far. *She* isn't your mother after all."

"What do you mean, Dick?" I asked, astonished.

"I mean that I've no right to ask you to risk what we are going to risk to-night for *my* mother's sake. It will be life or death, Ion," and his eyes shone at me in the darkness. It *was* the light of battle in them then! I thought so.

"We can talk about this by-and-by," I said; "let's climb on board," and I turned to go down to the platform on which the ship stood.

"Good old Ion," he said, and gripped me by the muscle of the arm for a moment, and then

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we crept down to the *Wrestler* together, took a turn round the platform to see if anyone was about, and then climbed up one of the big supports of the scaffolding, dropped on board, and made our way to the deck house on the poop.

Here we found Bill Dixon, comfortably smoking a clay pipe and waiting for us.

Bill's presence was a surprise to me, but the whole affair was a mystery; so I said nothing and waited.

"Have you got the blue lights, Bill?" Dick asked.

"Yes, here they are, lots of 'em," and he pointed to a bundle of things like rockets on the floor. "You know how to light 'em?"

"Yes, I know; and the other stuff, is that here?"

"There it is—fifty pounds or more," Bill answered, pointing to a square wooden box full of sawdust, in which lay a number of round sticks about ten inches long by two inches thick.

"It's lucky they wanted that to blast the *Wrestler* off the rocks," muttered Dick. "Where did you find it?"

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"They'd stowed it away on board; one of the chaps told me where it was."

"Very well," said Dick; "now you be off to Clifden, and run as if the keepers were after you, Bill. You may manage to get the soldiers here before anything happens. If not we'll keep the ship."

But Bill Dixon didn't move.

"I'd like to stay, Mister St. Clair," he said. "I can't do any good running, and you may want me. They'll be here before I've gone a couple of miles——"

"Do as you are ordered," said Dick sternly. "This is not your business. We have something at stake; you haven't," and Dick compelled the old prizefighter, in spite of himself, to climb over the ship's side and swarm down into the darkness. We heard him stepping cautiously over the planks of the platform, and then all was still again. We were alone in the deck-house, and for nearly an hour we sat there and waited, watching the stars come out and listening to the lapping of the waves against the piers. Once the watchman came round, and we saw his light as he passed round the

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ship. As far as he could see all was well. About half an hour after this Dick rose and looked out to sea.

"Now, Ion," he said, "here they come. Don't show yourself, and don't say anything whatever happens, but when I tell you, light one of those blue lights and stand by me. If the worst happens, old chap, we shall have died doing our duty."

By this time I had some idea of what was wanted of me, but I said nothing, only I strained my eyes to watch the six dark shapes, which came gliding towards us from the cape where the main part of Scarsley village lay.

"Six of them," Dick muttered. "They can hardly do it with six crews, though they have got the bilge blocks all split ready. I'm glad they never thought of using fire."

"There are two more boats—three, Dick," I said, "coming from the west"; and I pointed to where three more dark shapes were creeping up to the slip.

Presently we could hear the dip of their oars, and then the figures of the rowers became plain to us. The boats were big row boats, and each

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was as full of men as it would hold. When they reached the slip and swarmed out upon it, there must have been between fifty and a hundred men, dark, silent figures, moving about in the gloom under the bilge of the ship, fastening ropes to the "shores" which (wedged between the platform and the ship's bilge) held the great mass erect.

I suppose some of you who read my story have never seen a great ship on one of these marine railways, so that in order to understand what follows you must let me explain a little. The rails run from the power house where the engines work, and the great iron cables begin, along the bottom of the sea to a point one or two hundred yards from shore. Along these a weighted platform held by the cables, slips out under water until it catches the keel of the ship, which is to be repaired, in the chocks (blocks of wood built to fit the keel), and then, the engine being set in motion, the great cables tighten and draw the platform and its burden out of the sea, higher and higher until it is high and dry, with the keel itself two feet from the platform, and the deck perhaps sixty feet above

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sea level. To keep the ship from falling over, and thereby shattering itself and everything round it, V-shaped cradles or bilge blocks are built up of square pieces of timber, clamped together with iron dogs, and in these the ship's keel is held as in a vice. But even these are not enough to secure such a weight as a ship of 2000 tons burden, and therefore forty or fifty great beams are wedged in, one end resting against the rounded under side or bilge of the ship, the other against the platform. In this way the ship is held firmly, and men can walk in safety under the counter, can scrape the mussels and sea-weed off the ship's sides, or even put a new bottom into her if necessary, though should these supports fail the whole mass would come crushing down upon the men, reducing the ship, her masts, and her machinery to almost as useless atoms as the human beings beneath her.

The overturning of such a ship as I am describing would have meant to my uncle not only a loss of many thousand pounds, but a loss of reputation for workmanlike skill which would have ruined him. And the object of the nine

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boats' crews of strikers was nothing less than the overthrow of the *Wrestler*. If they could not gain the victory over capital by ordinary means, these men meant to try what extraordinary means would do.

The strikers' boats had all been moored to the starboard side of the platform. The men themselves were on the port-side, and all the ropes (long cables each with three or four men to pull upon it) were being fastened to the "shores" on the port-side. One man in a light-coloured wide-awake seemed to take command, and all worked in absolute silence, quick and quiet as rats, of which they reminded me irresistibly as they crept and glided amongst the timbers under the ship.

In ten minutes' time all the ropes had been fixed, and the loose ends of them carried to a bank on the port-side, slightly higher than and some distance from the platform.

Several men were stationed at each rope, and then a dozen or so with hammers or axes in their hands came down on to the platform again, and began to beat savagely at the bilge blocks, which had been already split by them.

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In the stillness of the night their blows made a terrible clang, which seemed to ring through every timber of the ship, and make it quake like a living thing in agony.

"Now is our time. If they get those blocks out she will go over without much pulling. Light your candle!" and as I struck a match and lit my blue-light Dick picked up the wooden box full of sawdust and those strange short rods, and sprang out upon the poop.

"Hold hard, men, if you value your lives!" he cried, and at the sound of his clear command the ring of axes and hammers ceased, and my weird blue-light streamed out into the darkness, flickering over a score of white faces, which glared up silently at the boy's figure above them, and then in the silence, the light passed on, made a wide track across the still sea, and lit up half the heavens, whilst the masts and rigging, the ropes and ratlines of the doomed whaler stood out against the sky with ghastly distinctness.

For a moment the strikers were staggered. They were like men who, robbing a corpse, hear the dead speak. They had thought that the old

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ship was a helpless, lifeless victim, and lo! she had found a voice in the night, and that voice ordered them *at peril of their lives* to forbear.

It was a strange thing; and it and the stranger blue-light, showing each the blanched face of his neighbour, cowed them for a moment, but it was only for a moment. The rascals were some of them English after all, and the race, as a race, fears neither man nor devil.

"Who the deuce are you? And who do you think you're givin' orders to?" cried the first who found his tongue, in a voice which he tried to make steady.

"Richard St. Clair of Scarsley," answered Dick, "and I bid you leave this slip at once. If you stay, you stay at your own peril."

"Well crowed, Master Richard," answered the man. "Boys, it's the old skinflint's nephew. It ain't enough that we should be bullied by men; it seems we're to be brow-beaten by brats. Say the word, and we'll kill the cub in the nest!"

But the men still hesitated.

"Great Scott! You ain't afraid of a boy and a blue-light, mates, are you? Here! lend me

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an axe," cried the man in the wideawake; and snatching one from another man's hands, the fellow struck blow on blow upon the blocks.

We heard one block fall from its place upon the platform, and felt the whole ship quiver. If we could not stop him, the whole fabric, with ourselves, would turn over with a crash in a few more minutes.

"Very well, men," cried Dick, "then we'll go together. Do you know what this is?" And he drew one of the shiny sticks from the sawdust in the box and held it aloft in the blue-light.

"Yes," he went on, speaking as coolly and as clearly as an officer on parade. "You know it, and you know me. Did any of you boys ever know Dick St. Clair funk? It's dynamite, and this box," he said, lifting the case above his head, "is full of it. If you strike another blow I'll drop it on the platform. If you are not gone before we count fifty I'll drop it any way. Count, Ion!" he commanded; and standing behind him I counted slowly, trembling lest some fool should strike another blow, and

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send us all to perdition; for I knew well enough that Dick would keep his word to the letter, and that if that box fell from such a height there would not be a live man within a hundred yards of the slip.

Luckily the strikers knew this too, and the moment the first man moved they all ran, some making wildly for the boats, others dashing away too scared to know which way they were going.

Before I had counted thirty there was not a man upon the slip, and the hurried dip of their oars alone told us that the whole scene had ever been a reality.

And then, just as the blue-light was dying down, I heard a clear word of command at the head of the alley.

"Company, fours, double!" And then the rhythmical trot of the heavy militia boots as F Company came charging down to the slip; and in another minute old Bill Dixon was swarming up to us, his great ugly face dripping with honest sweat, and a thirst on him, so he said, like a lime-kiln.

They caught half-a-dozen of the strikers, and

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took two boats which had been left behind, and made much of Dick, whilst I sat on the box of dynamite to keep anyone from stumbling up against it, my knees knocking together, and my very heart cold inside me. I had never been so near death before.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“FIRST! MOTHER!”

I SHOULD think that we had quite ten minutes to recover our breath and regain our equanimity, whilst the militia were hunting for strikers in the shadows of the foundry buildings. Neither Dick nor Bill nor I joined in the chase. We had done enough for one night. We had saved the ship, and had no particular desire to hand any of our old play-mates (or enemies, it's the same thing) over to the police. Even the militia did not seem very keen at their game of hide-and-seek, and we were all glad when Captain Croome ordered them to desist from it, and setting a guard to watch the slip until morning, formed up the rest of his company and handed them over to the junior sub to be marched back to quarters, whilst he and the senior subaltern accompanied

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Dick and myself to Mrs. St. Clair's house. As we marched up the alley a mob of men came rushing to meet us, with Mr. Braithwaite at the head of them.

Someone in the village had seen the blue-light, and had heard the strikers trying to hammer out the chocks, but by the time he had roused my uncle, and collected enough men to be of any service, the strikers had been dispersed, and the white light of early morning was gleaming on the bayonets of Captain Croome's guard.

The sight of this guard on the slip somewhat soothed my uncle, but his heart was where his treasure was, and it was only with much trouble that we succeeded in persuading him to come back home with us.

As he turned to take one last look at the slip, his eyes fell on Dick and Bill Dixon for the first time.

"Ah," he gasped fiercely, "birds of ill omen! So I owe to-night's work to my own kith and kin, do I?"

Croome, who was near him, only half caught the meaning of his words, and did not see the

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deepening of that great furrow which cut my uncle's forehead in two, and seemed to send out darkness over his whole face.

"Faith," he said, "you do. It was touch and go one time with slip, ship, and factory. Another three minutes, and Mr. Dick there would have blown the whole of the Company's plant into match-stalks."

"A kindly act for a kinsman's hand," retorted Braithwaite. "Did you take that gaol-bird with him?" he added, contemptuously jerking his head towards Bill, who, overhearing him, returned his civility with a most cut-throat scowl.

For a moment Croome looked mystified, and then said in a loud tone for Bill to hear:

"I'm afraid this trouble has made you mistake friends for foes, Mr. Braithwaite, and no wonder if it has. If it had not been for that good fellow the militia would not be here to-night. He ran from Scarsley to Clifden to call us out, and he must have the feet of a hare to have done it in the time."

At the word "hare" old Bill pricked his ears suspiciously, and looking hard at Croome fumbled in the tail-pockets of his corduroy coat, whilst some of the men laughed audibly.

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No! there were no ears sticking out, and on consideration he hardly thought that they would search him; but when my uncle came up with outstretched hand Bill kept his own "maulers" on his pockets.

"Then I owe my ship's safety to you. How can I thank you?" said Braithwaite.

"You don't owe me nothin', and I don't want your thanks," he said surlily. "You owes 'em to Dick there, an' if I'd bin 'im I'd 'ave blown the ole bloomin' ship to blazes, and you with it!" and so saying he turned and shambled off, leaving Mr. Braithwaite sadly discomfited.

I think we were all too tired for explanations that night, and when morning came everything had been explained before Dick and I came down to breakfast. We were early risers as a rule, but that morning we both overslept ourselves, and it was past nine when Dick marched into the breakfast-room, and going straight up to his mother kissed her between the eyes, holding her head in his hands before them all, as if there had been no one in the room but those two. He had done so every morning since he was a child, and felt no shyness as he

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stood facing us with one hand still on his mother's shoulder.

Certainly he looked a handsome fellow as he stood there behind his mother's chair, nodding a bright good morning to us all, so like her, and yet so unlike, a proud, protecting look on the young manly face, and such a look of love and pride and trust on hers as I pray that every boy may one day see on his mother's.

"You must forgive us, Captain Croome," she said. "Dick and I keep to old customs, even when strangers are present."

"Some old customs need no excuse, madam," replied Croome, bowing very gravely. "I wish I had a mother who had a right to be as proud of me as you are of your boy; but if I am not mistaken you have more cause to be proud of him this morning than even you know," and as he spoke he lifted the morning paper which he had been reading before she had come in, and passed it to her.

But Dick took it from him.

"What, is it there?" he cried, and I saw a hot flush come into his cheek as he read something on the second page of it.

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"Thank God!" he muttered, with a deep sigh of relief. "There, little mother, read it for yourself. I told you a man might be whatever he would," and he handed the *Standard* to her, marking the place for her with his finger and thumb.

For quite a minute he held it there whilst she fumbled for her spectacles, and then, with her thin white hands resting on that strong brown fist of his, she tried hard to spell out the paragraph. But she could not do it. Either her spectacles were dim that morning, or her hands shook so much that Dick could not hold the paper steady; in any case he saw her trouble, and bending down until his yellow hair touched that dear white head, I heard him whisper in her ear—"First, mother."

For a moment she looked down the table, seeing no one, unless perhaps it were one dear familiar face which only her eyes could see, and then, with a little catch in her voice which even her pride could not conceal, she laid her hand on Dick's arm, and rising said, "You will excuse us, Captain Croome, I should like to show this to Dick's uncle myself."

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As I opened the door for her I turned my head away, but for all that I know that if Dick had not been there to steer her, she could not have found her way from the breakfast-room to her brother's study.

When they had gone of course we pressed Croome for the news, but he would not tell us.

"Wait until *he* comes back, and ask him," he said, and as they had taken the *Standard* with them we had to do as he bade us.

At last Dick came back to us, old Braithwaite leaning on his shoulder, and for the first time I felt certain that beneath the business man's crust of formalism a good warm heart was beating.

"Well, Dick, hurry up!" I cried impatiently. "What is it that you have done now? Why have you been keeping it from us?"

"There is nothing to keep, old boy," he answered, laughing. "I have only passed into Woolwich. I knew I should."

"Passed into Woolwich? When? How?"

"Last week; at the head of the list." Croome answered for him. "Didn't you know that he was up for it? Didn't he tell you?"

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"Not a word. Dick, you villain, how did you do it?"

And then he told us all about it, how he had made up his mind to pass, on the day his uncle had consigned him to East India Avenue; how, knowing that the Engineers is almost the only branch of the service in which a man can live without private means, he had worked hard all the holidays, denying himself the out-door pleasures which he loved, and grinding away in his garret until, as he said, he could not see the walls for maps, and felt as if cube-roots were growing all over him.

When at last the examination day approached he would tell no one. He might fail, and he dared not risk his uncle's jeers and his mother's disappointment, so that he had to pawn his dead father's watch to obtain funds for his journey. At the last moment he had half confided in his mother. He would not tell her why or where he was going, but he could not bear to let her worry about him, so he just whispered in her ear, "I shan't see you for a day or two, mother. Don't ask why, don't ask where I am going, but it's all right. You

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can trust Dick, can't you, mother?" And she, looking into his eyes, knew that she could trust him; and whilst Mr. Braithwaite was fuming and suspecting all manner of evil, and even I (more shame to me) was beginning to doubt, she had much ado to appear decently troubled about her boy's disappearance.

There was only one more week left of our holidays after this, and that went all too fast. The day after the events just described we all went down to the slip and saw the ropes still fastened to the ship's supports, saw how the bilge blocks had been split, and in some instances forced out, and realized perhaps for the first time how near a catastrophe we had been. Another block driven out, or a single haul upon those ropes, would have brought the great whaler crashing over on her side; but it was not to be, and one day in the middle of the week we all lunched on board her, and then saw the platform glide away beneath the green water, saw the salt sea rise and kiss her sides, and a little later saw her spread her white wings and sail away towards that mysterious north, from which so much of England's

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strength came, and towards which the national instinct still turns, in spite of its storms and fields of ice.

After this I went back to Fernhall, and Dick began his career as a soldier at Woolwich. Of course I heard from him constantly, but I missed him sadly. The old school was not the same place without him, though there was his work to finish. But even that failed me. Dick had dealt a death blow to bullying before he left Fernhall, and I had no trouble in completing that which he had begun. His name was enrolled amongst our school heroes, and for awhile to be like Dick St. Clair was every boy's ambition. No bully could hope to be that, and so bullying ceased to be. As for me, I did my small part, working in the schools, and making scores for the school eleven, but I hardly cared even for cricket as I used to. There was no Dick, you see, to cheer me when I bowled a wicket, or chaff me when I was hit to leg for six.

But perhaps I worked all the harder. I had Dick's example before me, and I began to realize that my future success or failure in life

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depended upon what I did or left undone at school; and so towards the end of a term I went up to Oxford, and just managed to resist the dreamy influences of that dear old place, just managed, and only just, to refuse enough invitations to college breakfasts at Oriel and Brazenose, to go into my "exam." with a clear head, and come out with a decent scholarship.

Not that I wanted a scholarship. If I had understood that the winning of it would have tied me even to beautiful Oxford for three years, I would have passed more time boating on the upper river, and enjoying myself generally; but I had a vague idea that the winning of a scholarship would propitiate my people, and in some way make my road into the army an easier one, in spite of my awful ignorance of mathematics, which even my most strenuous efforts could not diminish.

It was just after the winning of this scholarship that a note came to me from Dick, congratulating me on my success, and proposing a scheme with which I gladly fell in.

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"Can't you get up to town," he wrote, "for a couple of days to see the Queensberry Cup competed for? We have talked of it all our lives, and one or two men from 'the shop' are going to compete. I fancy that if you asked the Colonel to let you come up and find the funds for you, he would not say 'No,' now. And besides I want to have a talk to you about the future. Do you see that things are beginning to look very black in Mashonaland? If the mathematics are still a stumbling-block, there might be a chance for you there. Clive, don't you know, *primus in Indis*, did not begin life as a regular soldier."

You may be sure that ten minutes after this I was writing to my father, as eloquent a letter as I knew how to pen, and in three days' time the dear old man sent me his permission, a letter to the Head asking for four days' leave of absence (which would not have been granted had I not won the scholarship), and a ten pound note to defray my expenses. There was an incidental allusion in the letter too, to the possibility of business bringing him to town at about the same time.

"FIRST! MOTHER!

I have always had a suspicion that my father was as much of a boy at sixty as he was at sixteen, and I have met a good many like him since. They were not the biggest duffers in life's great game either.

CHAPTER XIX.

LONDON.

LONDON was a new world to me, and for the first few minutes the din of it deafened me, the lights of it dazzled me, and all the sordid life of the streets repelled me. But even before we had reached Dick's rooms my first feeling of aversion had worn off. The electricity of the great city thrilled through me: my brain worked quicker: my pulse beat higher: I had already caught the fever of England's mighty centre, where men work harder, play harder, and live faster than anywhere else on earth.

I of course am country-bred, and would drive men back if I could upon the land, to rear a great limbed race of country folk such as those from whom England's "thin red line" used to be drawn, but for all that I cannot help being proud of London.

LONDON

If you want to know what she really is, go away from her to the earth's furthest corners and watch and listen. In the uttermost parts of the sea, in the bowels of the earth, in the babel of the world's markets, it is always "London! London!" When the miner on the diamond fields finds his stone of great price, the first question he asks is, "What is this worth, mate, in London?" The hunter of Arctic foxes, as he smooths down the rich fur, repeats the question, "What is it worth in London?" The kings and mighty men, when they weigh the chances of war, ask first, "What will they think of this in London?" The man who wants something almost beyond human skill thinks, "They *must* be able to make it for me in London!" The surgeon, considering some last desperate measure for saving life, mutters, "I've heard of its being done in London!" And every great one, scientist or singer, actor, artist, or athlete, the man who has killed his tens of thousands, and the man who has made his tens of millions, comes alike at last to London.

They know in their hearts, each one of them, that the sum of their success in this world is

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

recorded in the answer to one question, "What do they think of him in London?"

I know that earth has other great cities—Paris the beautiful, stately Vienna, jerry-built New York, that city of sergent-majors Berlin, mysterious Petersburg, brooding in the clear darkness of her summer nights by the Neva, I know, I say, for I, Ion Maxwell, have seen them, but I know too that the man who has seen London has seen them all.

There is no beauty, no pomp, no mystery, no pleasure, no sin, and no sorrow which cannot be found in London. Within half-an-hour's walk of Temple Bar a man may see and know all that men can know or see, or if he would measure his strength with the best in any class, he need go no further. He may have been a miracle in his own district, or in his own country; he will be a giant indeed if he attains to a place in the front rank in London.

There is a voice abroad to-day which says that "there is no merit in nationality *qua* nationality," that a Chinaman is as good as an Englishman, and a Hindoo probably better than either. It is the voice of the broad-minded

LONDON

cosmopolitan, and if you listen to him he will tell you further that all religions are equally useful and equally foolish, and that the wise man who has freed himself from the bondage of old superstitions has no race and no religion ; that the greatest thinkers have no race prejudices, no religious beliefs, and that in time, when the world has been properly educated, it will be one big blend of mongrel unbelievers. It may be that the cosmopolitan is right, but I don't like "blends," and though this wise person whom I have described will jeer at me, and throw cold water upon my enthusiasm for England and her great metropolis, and will call Ion Maxwell an insular bigot, I shall not care or change, and I advise you boys to let those who will love the whole world with cool and temperate affection, but do you grow up "insular" and "bigotted" if you like, but at any rate strong in the faith of your fathers, loving your England with a strong man's love, which is blind to all beauty save the beauty of one, and blind to her imperfections.

Remember that the strongest race the world ever knew, a race which has survived and kept

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

its strength through the centuries of persecution, made race prejudice the root of its religion, while the most go-a-head nation of to-day owes its loudly-proclaimed prosperity, NOT to its world-wide sympathies, but to its belief in its creed that "Ameriky kin lick creation."

* * * * *

"Ion, are you going to sleep over that cigarette?"

Dick's words broke my dream, and brought me back to my surroundings. After depositing my gear in the rooms which he had taken for us in Duke Street, Dick had carried me off to the *White Horse Tavern*, for a simple dinner such as English boys appreciate, for though he had eaten very sparingly himself, avoided the vegetables and drunk nothing, I had both eaten and drunk enough to make me comfortably dreamy after my long journey and my dinner. So I admitted my sins.

"I suppose I was dreaming, Dick. Don't you ever dream now?"

"I haven't much time to dream, Ion," he answered, "there is too much to do."

LONDON

"Is it work that makes you look so 'drawn,' old fellow," I asked, scanning his face anxiously.

"No. I may be a bit over-trained, perhaps, but it will soon be over now."

"Then you have entered for the cup. You did not tell me so, but I guessed it. Have you any chance?"

"Come and see," he replied. "If you have had all you want, we may as well stroll round to Ned's. I have to spar three rounds with some fellow this evening, and it will be my last bout before the competition."

"Come on," I cried, throwing my cigarette away and jumping eagerly to my feet. "Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"Time enough, old chap," he answered. "I don't eat much, but I must have some time to digest even what I eat. How would you like to begin the month with an ounce or two of salts, and then be expected to walk ten miles in sweaters before breakfast every morning? It would make you look 'drawn,' wouldn't it?"

I thought so, but even this severe course of discipline did not seem to have taken the spring

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

and elasticity out of my friend. On the contrary; he strode down the narrow pavements and slipped in and out amongst the cabs at the crossings, at a pace which soon brought us to a quiet square at the back of Regent Street.

Here we stopped in front of a certain doorway, over which was a lamp bearing the mystic words "School of Arms," opened the door without knocking, and then passing from the narrow passage through a side door to the right, entered a long, bare chamber, with a gallery running round it where the men dressed and kept their flannels.

I followed him, and we stood together in the best boxing rooms in London. At one end of the floor where we entered, a powerful grey-bearded man was playing single-sticks with a tall, slight fellow—as well known in London drawing-rooms as he was in every arena where English sportsmen competed for the first place—whilst at the other end of the floor, in a kind of pen, a short black-haired man, with a broken nose and great stomach, was skipping about like a kitten and requesting his pupil, whose

LONDON

arms seemed stiff and unwieldy, to "lead out, lead at my 'ed, and 'it 'arder."

This corpulent person with the round, smooth arms was Ned Romilly; and though his figure looked better suited to an armchair than a prize ring, and his arms more like a woman's than a pugilist's, he was the quickest man on his feet, and probably one of the hardest hitters of his day in England. If you notice, you will see that fat people are generally light on their feet, and the best boxers rarely have a largely developed biceps. Their hitting muscle is behind the shoulder.

"Ough!" grunted the fat man, sending out his fist as he sent the air out of his lungs, and knocking his stupid pupil half through the panelling, "that's the way to 'it, Sir George. 'It from the shoulder, don't chop. Good evening, Mr. St. Clair, are you feeling fit?" and leaving the battered baronet to recover himself, he came to the side of the ring, and leaning over the ropes, shook hands cordially with Dick. Even at this distance of time I can remember quite plainly the size of the hand which the "Professor" afterwards offered to me. His glove (boxing-

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

glove of course I mean) would have made a commodious mattress for a moderate-sized man. At the first sound of Dick's name there was a distinct stir in the school of arms. The old swordsman and his pupil stopped playing and took off their masks, half-a-dozen heads were craned over the gallery balustrade, and a small boy of nine or ten half opened the door, looked in at Ned for a moment, and then with a mysterious wink closed it again and vanished. Evidently St. Clair was a name to conjure with in the boxing-room in Lucre Square.

"Well, Ned, has my man turned up?" Dick asked, looking round as if expecting to see someone waiting for him.

"No, 'e 'asn't," replied the pugilist. "The silly fool got fightin' in Smithfield last night, and broke 'is nose. That's the worst of Jew prize fighters, they're all too nosey. You can't look at 'em without 'urtin' their smellers."

"But what am I to do? Will you give me a turn?" asked Dick, with some irritation.

"No, I won't," replied Ned. "I ain't goin' to spar loose with anybody to-night, least of all with you. I'm goin' to a dance by and by, and

LONDON

I don't want no black eyes, and besides, I've eaten a beefsteak puddin' as my missus made, and don't feel like fightin', but 'ere's a man 'ere as does. Mr. Campbell, this is Mr. St. Clair, the gentlemen that 's goin' to win me the heavy-weight cup. Mr. St. Clair, Mr. Campbell," and Ned waved his hands and bowed with a florid grace of manner peculiar to him, a manner acquired in many city and suburban dancing-rooms, where, in his spare moments, Ned delighted to officiate as M.C.

Many and many a time has Ned invited me to see him "dance the polka," and many a time have I gazed in awe at the skill with which he used to revolve round his own waistcoat in the fashionable "trawtom," and listened to his oft-repeated dictum, "A good boxer ought to be a good dancer, because it's all in a man's feet. Quick 'ands ain't no good if your feet are slow." Ned's feet were as light as his huge paws were heavy. But away with reminiscences of Ned's hands. Even at this distance of time the mere mention of them makes my head ache.

CHAPTER XX.

A DARK HORSE.

"IT is all very well for you to say that you won't box with me, Romilly," said Dick angrily, "but I must have a spar."

"So you shall, didn't I say so? This gentleman will oblige you."

"Yes, I shall be very glad to have three rounds with you, sir," said the man introduced as Campbell, a man at first sight below the medium height, and of no great chest development, dressed quietly and well, and with that inimitable smartness, which together with the "drilled" look of his figure, suggested at once that he had been or still was "in the service."

Dick looked at him and I think liked him, for though he was very distant as a rule with strangers, he unbent at once with him, and said very civilly, "It's very good of you, but you

A DARK HORSE

don't know Ned. He has no conscience, and wants to let you in for a rough and tumble which you might not care about."

"Oh, as to that," replied Campbell, "the rougher the better! I don't mind how rough a spar is."

Dick looked at the carefully-waxed moustache of the speaker, at his neat button-hole, his pointed, patent leather boots, his irreproachable hat and gloves, and seeing Ned's great face beyond, wrinkled with a mischievous grin which he fancied he understood, he gave the stranger one more chance.

"I was to have had a fellow here from Smithfield to-night, a second-rate professional, to give me a really hot set-to to try my condition. This is to be my last bout before I compete for the Queensberry heavy-weights."

"The heavy-weights! Are you over eleven stone four?" asked Campbell. "I should not have thought it."

"I am though, just over, and so, I suppose, are you," he added, after a pause, looking more critically at Campbell's square-built frame.

"I am, rather! Well, as your man has not

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

come, shall we have a turn? It'll do you good. I'll make it as hot for you as I can," and the fellow twirled his moustache and grinned confidently.

I think Dick was a little nettled, either by his coolness or by a doubt which had crept into his mind that Ned was not playing straight with him. As for me, I thought the soldier-man a most conceited person, and expected to see him come utterly to grief in the long run, even if he had the strength to stand up to Dick for a whole round, which I doubted. But Dick was a better judge than I was, for on our way upstairs to the gallery to undress he whispered—

"I wonder who the beggar is? He looks a tough customer, and he is hall-marked!"

"Hall-marked, Dick," said I. "What do you mean?"

"He has had the bridge of his nose broken. Don't you know the hall-mark of the 'fancy'?" replied Dick.

"He may have had that done in a dozen ways, Dick. He is no boxer!" I answered scornfully. "He looks soft!"

"He knew the weights though, didn't he?"

A DARK HORSE

laughed Dick, who was bending down to lace up his tennis shoes and tuck the bottoms of his flannels into his socks. "Well," he said, straightening himself and taking my arm, and "come see," and together we went down into the boxing room, where Campbell was waiting for us.

We had not been in the gallery five minutes, and yet though the long room was almost empty when we went upstairs, it was quite crowded when we came down again; crowded too with men whose dress and bearing marked them at once as no mere casuals who had dropped in by chance.

"There is Sir Frederick, poet and lawyer, and better even with the point of a rapier than a point of law," whispered Dick, "and there's H., the chess player, alongside of our only tragedian. This is what that brute Romilly calls giving me a *private* trial. I would rather break his head, I think, than win the cup—and I say, look at that!"

"That" was Campbell, who like Dick had got into a pair of flannels and a thin, white vest, and was at the moment of our arrival

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

carefully depositing a row of three false front teeth upon the mantelshelf over the fireplace.

"I can't afford to swallow my pearls," he said laughing, as he saw our eyes upon him, "and you warned me that we should have a hot set-to, you know. Are you quite ready?"

"Quite!" replied Dick, and as I pulled his gloves on him he muttered, "Looks like business, Ion, doesn't he?"

I was obliged to admit that Campbell certainly did look very much like business. I don't know that his change of costume had made him look any taller than before, but the tight-fitting jersey showed off the enormous chest of the man to great advantage, whilst his long, bare arms, as hairy as a chimpanzee's, hung down until the fingers almost reached to his kneecaps.

Just then Ned, who had been out with a client for a moment to keep up his spirits by pouring spirits down, roared across the room, "Now then, Mr. St. Clair, you ain't afraid of such a little 'un, are you?"

Under all those eyes Dick flushed hotly and bit his lip angrily. Ned's familiarity annoyed

A DARK HORSE

him, and any suggestion of drinking filled him with angry scorn. He used always to say that the chief charm of all athletic exercises was the necessity they laid upon a man of keeping himself clean from all kinds of intemperance, amongst which he numbered drinking and smoking, in however moderate a degree. But though annoyed he went into the little ring quietly enough. He always was quiet and undemonstrative in a contest, whether it was a tennis match or a death struggle. You could never tell from Dick's face whether he was winning or losing, or whether he cared a brass farthing whether he won or lost.

"Too small a ring for the boy," I heard one of the clubmen whisper, as the two faced each other. "Ned ought to have given him a twenty-four foot ring. Fighting in that ring is like fighting in a railway carriage."

"Yes," another answered, "his only chance with Campbell would be to stick to out-fighting. The fellow is a pocket Hercules; he beat the——"

But the rest was drowned in bravos, as Dick instead of giving way before Campbell's rush,

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

countered him twice heavily, and then led again with a beautiful long-shot which was too quick for the older man.

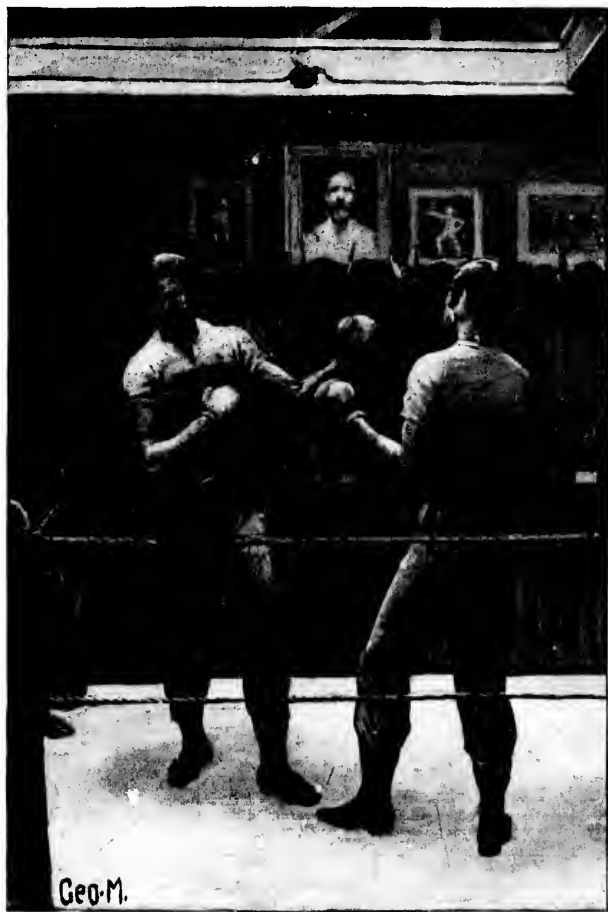
“By Jove! he has got a good left hand——! Confound the fellow——!”

The first half of the sentence was a tribute to my friend's quickness; the second an anathema, in which many joined (and I amongst them), hurled at Campbell.

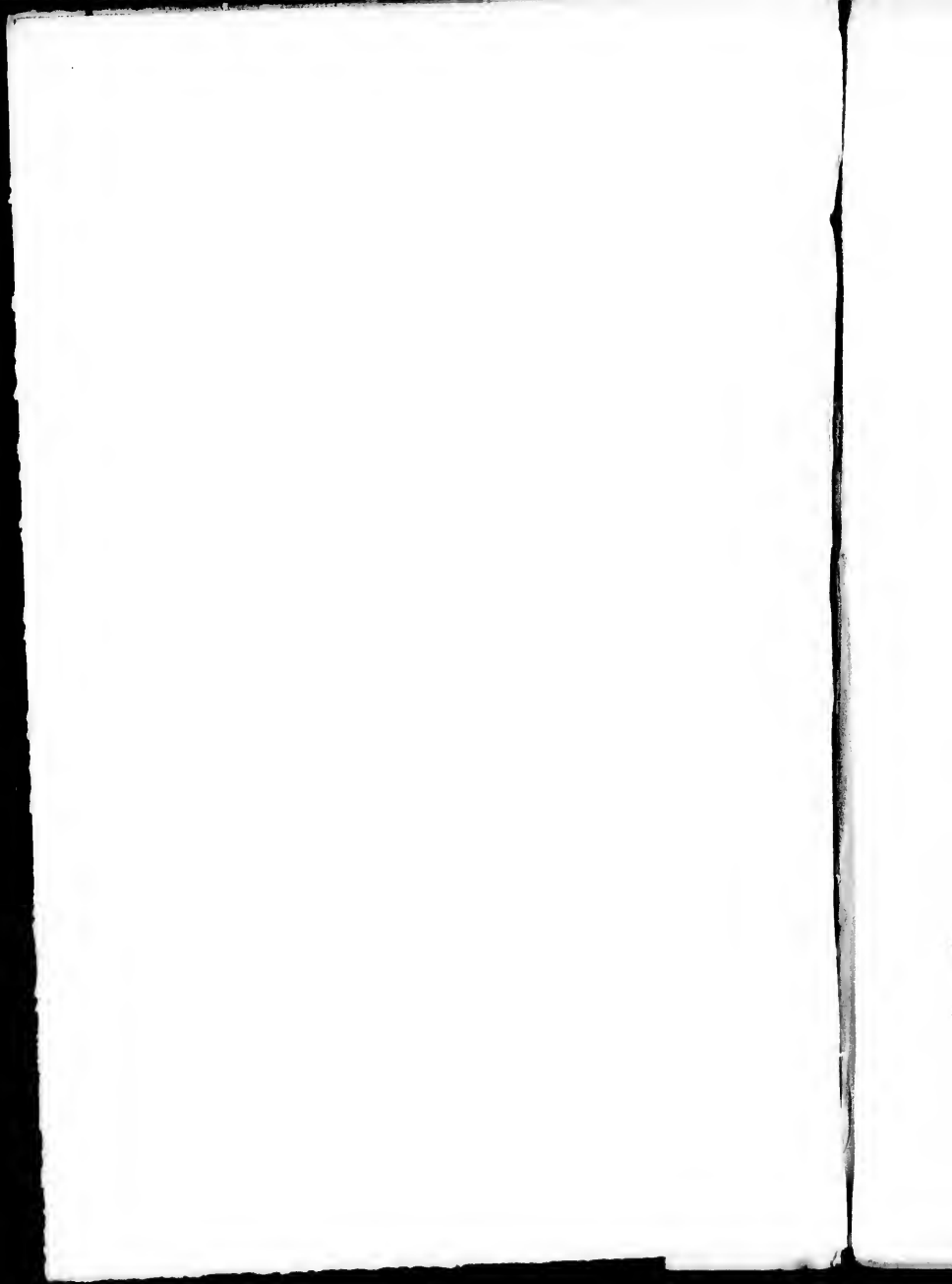
Dick who was evidently not yet quite certain whether he ought to spare his man, or do his best to protect himself against one who was at least his equal, had been sparring cautiously for an opening, when, without a second's warning, a strange thing (in those days) happened.

Campbell, of course, was standing as a boxer should, with his left hand and left foot to the front, his right hand guarding his body; but as Dick came within range he spun round on his right heel, turning his back to his enemy, and swung his long right arm round like a flail, catching Dick a terrific back-hander on the bottom of his jaw, which knocked him down like a pole-axed steer. It was the dreaded pivot blow, recently introduced in America,

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CAMPBELL WAS STANDING AS A BOXER SHOULD.



A DARK HORSE

which, though it is contrary to all our pre-conceived ideas of good form in boxing, is terribly effective against a novice.

For a good many seconds Dick lay where he had fallen, in a heap upon his face, and I think no one expected to see him come up again to the scratch; but he rose at last and staggered towards his man. Just then Ned Romilly called "time," and the two men went to their corners for a minute to rest. For the next two rounds Campbell had the spar to himself. It was all Dick could do to keep his head up, and twice before it was all over he came again heavily to the ground, though it was hardly Campbell's fault that he did so. The spectators and Ned both did their best to get him to leave the ring, but he would not, though he could do little more than keep his face to the foe, and smile good-naturedly at every fresh blow he received. He was too stunned and dizzy to fight, but too stubborn to give in.

When it was over and I was leading poor old Dick away, I heard one man say to another:

"He is not much good after all. Campbell did as he liked with him."

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

"You think not," answered his friend. "Well, I don't agree with you. He knows how to take a licking, and that is something. The boy never saw a pivot blow before, and I am certain never saw Campbell clearly after he was knocked down the first time. *But he stuck to him for the three rounds.*"

Two hours later Dick and I had turned in to bed for the night, and the folding-doors between the rooms being open, Dick called to me:

"That fellow *was* a soldier once. He told me so. An officer too at that, but he has had hard luck, and is a professional now. That licking cost me half-a-sovereign."

"A pretty good licking too for the money, Dick."

"Yes; I grant it, but who would have taken that man in frock coat and patent leathers for the best bruiser in the Colonies? After that confounded pivot blow I remember nothing, except that something like a steam engine kept pursuing me round and round the ring. It worried me, because I could not keep my head out of the way of its piston rods. I should

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like to laugh," he added, "but my jaw is so stiff that I can't."

Five minutes later, as I was dozing off, he called to me again—

"By the way, did you know that our old enemy, Crowther, was in the room whilst I was sparring?"

"No. Was he really?"

"Yes; he was there, and Ned says that he came to see me spar. He is a pupil of old 'Bat,' and being satisfied that I am no good, means to enter for the cup."

"But he can't now. It would be a post-entry."

"That doesn't matter. No one will know except ourselves, and I shall not object. I don't want the cup unless I am the best man. Good-night."

After this we slept, and for the next two days Dick and I strolled about London, seeing the sights quietly, and doing as much walking exercise as we could. On the second day my father came up to town, and a queer little incident occurred, which showed what a keen interest all London takes in the great amateur

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

boxing competition of the year. The Colonel and we two boys were travelling third class by the underground railway, and my father was deeply interested in something which he was reading in the *Globe*. Opposite to us were a couple of noisy young ruffians, sturdy and hard-looking fellows but light-weights, who insisted on bear-fighting, to the annoyance of the other passengers, and especially of my father.

"Steady, Bill," said one of them at last, seeing me frowning, "you're kicking the old gentleman opposite."

"All right," replied number one; "so much the worse for 'im. If that chap," meaning Dick, "as anything to say, I'll just 'it 'im one in the mouth, to get 'is 'ead up, and then go in and finish 'im with a rib bender. 'E ain't likely to be Crowther or St. Clair."

Dick smiled, and drawing out his card case, solemnly handed the young rough his card, with the remark that he would be at Ned Romilly's next morning at eleven, if he liked to try that "rib bender."

For a moment the fellow looked puzzled, and

A DARK HORSE

then glancing at the card read Dick's name, and as we had just reached Charing Cross Station, jumped up and left the carriage. Like every lad in town, he had read the entries for the Queensberry Cup, and knew the sort of man Mr. Richard St. Clair was.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIRST BOUT OF THE HEAVY-WEIGHTS.

IT was Saturday morning, a Saturday in the middle of March, and I, Ion Maxwell, had crept quietly from my room and found my way out on to the Embankment. The morning was only just breaking, and but for the cries of a few carters coming in to Covent Garden the whole city was still. Down by the water the stillness was complete, save for the grinding of a boat against its moorings, or the lap of the water against the foot of the bridge. There was a heavy mist too on the river, so that all things were vague and large, and I could almost fancy that I saw strange craft creeping up from the sea, bringing knights from Norway to tilt at our tournament; for the tournament of London Town was to be held on this day at Lillie Bridge without the city, although, alas!

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there were no heralds in the streets, no swaggering men-at-arms bearing the badge of Maxwell or St. Clair, no crowds streaming towards the lists, where, with a King to judge and a Queen of Beauty to reward merit, Sir Richard St. Clair and Sir Ion Maxwell tilted for the championship of Christendom against the Lancelots, Gareths, and Galahads of a world in which the strength and courage of the man, the purity, loyalty, and devotion of the knight, were more esteemed than the smartness of the speculator or the tact of priest and politician.

As the mists rose the details of modern London became clear to me. There were no glimpses between the houses of green fields beyond. The grimy buildings stood close packed, shoulder to shoulder, and covered the whole earth, leaving no room for spring flowers or the green grass. There was no glitter of sun upon steel, no ring of chargers' hoofs upon the road, only the blinking of a million dirty, shame-faced windows at the rising sun, and the rattle of hansom's taking late drunkards home to bed. It was a March morning in the nineteenth, not in the sixteenth century, and it was high time

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that I stopped dreaming of the "steel shod rush and the steel-clad ring, the crash of the spear staves splintering, and the sparkle of sword-play splendid," if I would get home in time for breakfast and look after *my* knight and his nineteenth century tournament.

So I drove the dreams away and hurried back to Dick, but some of the flavour of them clung to me all day, and I found myself recognizing old types in the Queensberry ring, and the old English spirit in everything connected with it; in the manliness that throws it open to all, gentle and simple; in the shrewdness of the blows dealt; in the light-hearted friendliness with which they are received; in the absolute integrity of the judges and the quiet unquestioning confidence of the competitors in the awards. Blaspheme against it if you will, my cultured modern youth, there's more of the spirit of England in a twenty-four foot Queensberry ring than in most places that I know of to-day.

And here we were at last beside it, Dick, and my father, and I; Dick (for I must draw him as he was), very quiet, thin, pale, and as nervous

THE FIRST BOUT

as a well-bred horse, his hand shaking and his knees unsteady, his lips tightly pressed together, and a fire in his eyes that seemed to be burning him up. This waiting was his trial. When the blows began to rain upon him the nervousness would go, and Dick would be himself again. As luck would have it the day was a fine one, and the ring was pitched on the grass in front of the big pavilion instead of in the gymnasium, and the crowd was greater than usual, composed not of Londoners only, but of ruddy, weather-beaten countrymen from the shires, bronzed soldiers from the East, and broad-shouldered, loose-limbed sailors who had known every sea whereon the Union Jack has floated. Men of every class were competing for the Queensberry Cup, and each class had sent its champion.

The first business of the day was to weigh the competitors and draw them in pairs. Very little some of them wore when they came to the scales, and the difference between a light pair of tennis shoes and a heavy pair would, in some instances, have changed the class in which they had to compete. Surely, it seemed to me, that some of the middle-weight men were the veriest

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giants who ever got into the scales below eleven stone four ; but it is marvellous how much muscle and bone it takes to weigh eleven stone four, if only there is no useless lumber weighed in with it. Even Dick, tall and broad as he was, might have competed in the middle-weights had he chosen. He was an ounce below the middle-weight when he weighed, in his jersey of gossamer silk, but he had entered for the big event ; he had come to meet the giants, and had no intention of flying at lesser game. He was drawn in the first round with the rustic champion of Devon, a young Goliath who stood a clear head above his fellows, with arms like the arms of that old Philistine of Gath.

The first bouts were fought between the light-weights, and after them the middle-weights contended for the mastery ; and all this while my father and Dick and I stood at the barrier and waited ; whilst a little knot of the men of Devon, farmer-folk and such like, gathered round their champion, and looked pityingly on the pale slight lad, who waited shivering in the cold March air to be his victim. The last bout, before

THE FIRST BOUT

Dick's, was in its second round, when one of Goliath's backers brought him a glass, and producing a tiny champagne bottle from one pocket, and a well-worn flask from the other, mixed him a drink.

"It will do thee good, lad; take a pull at it," the man said; "it be rare stuff to fight on."

The big fellow seemed nothing loth, and drained the cup, and after that I saw that he swaggered more, and his comrades were louder in their boastful talk, and all the people round looked admiringly on his huge arms, which he left bare for them to see. But Dick's thin lip curled, and his nostril quivered, and I almost thought he would have laughed outright when the fellow emptied the cup.

"Richard St. Clair and Harry Bourne" the ringman called, and as he did so Dick let my father's fur coat slip from his shoulders, and walked quietly across the green to the roped enclosure, beside which sat one man who had won his cross in the trenches of Sebastopol, and two of the best all-round athletes in Great Britain. Beside Dick stalked Bourne, and Dick paused to let him enter the ring first. It was

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better so. I knew who would come out first, or thought I did, for the winner is the first to leave the ring and receive the plaudits of the people. When the men shook hands in the middle of the ring it seemed a hundred to nothing on Bourne. When Bourne had delivered his first great *swinging* blow the judges knew that it was a thousand to nothing on Dick. Those blows might have caught a Devonshire yokel, and if they had caught him even his sturdy ribs must have cracked beneath their weight; but they never touched Dick. It was as if a man should hit at floating thistledown. The blows, which would have broken the limb of an oak, only drove the thistledown aside and spent themselves on air. For a couple of minutes Bourne hunted Dick about the ring, hammering at him with both hands, and exhausting himself without harming his active adversary. Then for a moment he stood shaking his head as if puzzled. Quick as light Dick shot his clenched left hand between the big man's eyes, and sprang back as if in retreat, and then as Bourne, stung by the blow, dashed madly in we saw that Dick had only withdrawn to get more power for his

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spring; for, as the fellow came to him, all the smaller man's wiry frame shot out straight from the ball of the right foot to the knuckles of the left hand, and the champion of Devon rolled over limp and unconscious, and lay there whilst the referee counted out sixty seconds of time. After that three stout fellows carried Harry Bourne away, and the judges declared that Richard St. Clair, of the Woolwich Gymnasium, had won the first bout for the heavy-weight championship of England.

"It was a very old 'draw,' sir," said Dick to my father, who was congratulating him on his success, "that light lead with the left; but the fellow came to it grandly, and when I led again, I got my whole weight on to the point of his jaw. It was like hitting a rock. You know something about that trick."

And so I did. Master Dick had often played thus on my fiery Scotch temper, and brought me back with his confounded left lead like a racquet ball from the wall, only to be driven back faster than I came.

It was some time after this, when two more bouts had been fought, and Crowther declared

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

the winner of one of them, that Ned Romilly, who was Dick's second, came to us, wanting to speak to Dick.

"I'd like to speak to you alone, Mr. St. Clair," said the Professor, looking suspiciously at my father and myself. "I've something very important to say to you."

"You can say it here, Romilly," replied Dick. "I've no secrets from these gentlemen."

"Well, if I must, I must, but I like to talk business in private. Won't you come into the Pavilion for a moment, sir?"

"No; I won't. What is it? Out with it!"

"Well, it's just this. If Crowther don't beat you, you 'ave won the cup. No one else 'as a chance."

"Perhaps so. I think so myself. What then?"

"But Crowther's too 'eavy for you. 'E's nearly as 'eavy as Bourne, and not such a fool. I taught him myself."

"So much the worse for me. But I can't help it. If he is the best man he'll win."

"But 'e's a post-entry."

"A what?"

"A post-entry. If the judges knew it, they

THE FIRST BOUT

would not let 'im compete, at least not if any one of the competitors objected. 'E only entered three days ago."

"Well, but they don't know it, and if no one objects they won't rule Crowther out of the competition."

"Then 'e'll win as sure as my name's Romilly. 'E thinks 'e can beat you and that's 'alf the battle. I'll go and lodge your objection now, if you like, Mr. St. Clair."

"What? You want *me* to object, because you think the man too good for me? You are insolent, Romilly."

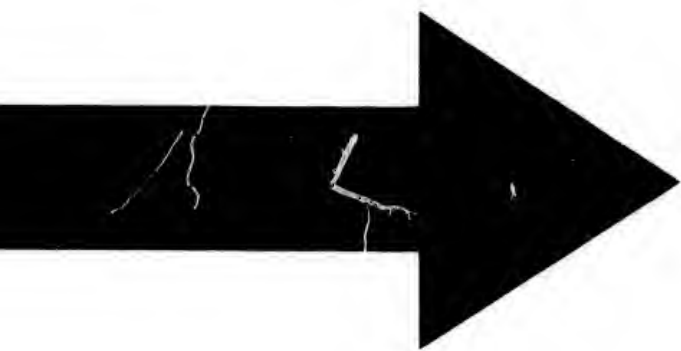
"Insolent or not, I ain't a d——d fool," replied the fellow savagely; "and if you don't mind losing the cup, I don't want to lose my five-and-twenty quid!"

"You mean that you have bet twenty-five pounds on my winning the cup? Thank you. There will be some consolation for me, then, if I lose it. It will teach you not to treat your pupils as if they were mere race-horses."

"Then you won't object?"

"I'll see you hanged first!" replied Dick, and turning on his heel he left him to meditate





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THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

on the crass stupidity of "those bloomin' gentlemen hamatours."

"E's got the cup safe as a 'ouse—a cup worth sixty guineas—and the championship of England for a year, and 'e won't take it, just because 'e ain't certain as Crowther ain't a better man nor 'im," he said to a "sporting" friend; "and I know as 'e can't win. Crowther is as good scienced, and weighs two stone more nor St. Clair ever weighed."

But Dick stood quietly waiting and watching. That the cup he would probably lose was worth sixty guineas made absolutely no difference to him. He did not want the cup, but he did want to feel that for that one year he had proved himself, as a boxer, the best man in England. If he could not win on his merits he did not care to win at all.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE CUP WAS WON.

AFTER the first rounds in the heavy-weight competition a good many people kept strolling past our corner, and their steady stares considerably discomposed Dick. Though he did not mind fighting for his own amusement, he resented what he called the indignities of the paddock. He felt, he told me, all the time as one of those satin-skinned beasts must feel when they lead them up and down at Ascot, and wanted, like them, to let out with his heels, and scatter the inquisitive crowd. At last two men stopped in front of us, and one of them held out his hand to my father.

"How do you do, Maxwell? I didn't know you were in town."

"How do you, General?" replied my father, taking the proffered hand. "I thought you

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

were hunting with the Pytchley. Surely if *you* can tear yourself away before you have killed a May fox I may be forgiven for coming to town in March."

"Oh, well, it's a beastly early season, you know, and fox-hunting is almost all over already! Besides, I always make a point of coming to see the Queensberry Cup sparred for. I used to box a bit myself once, you know."

"Yes, I remember. You hadn't forgotten much about it either when I first joined the regiment."

"Forgotten? Then? Why do you know that seeing those boys at work makes me want to go into the ring and have a turn with them even now. Do they ever box in Africa, Courtney?"

"Yes, they box a bit at Cape Town," replied his friend, a wiry, weather-worn man of forty, with a frank, kindly look in his honest blue eyes. "I wonder where they don't box where they speak English. There was a fellow named Campbeli there, who was quite a star in the profession."

HOW THE CUP WAS WON

"I've met Campbell!" broke in Dick. "I mistook him for a novice."

"And what happened?" asked Courtney.

"Locomotive engines," laughed Dick. "That is to say, that all I remember of the three rounds was a puffing and snorting which followed me all round the ring, and a hideous 'beat,' 'beat,' which makes my head ache yct."

The two men laughed, and the General said:

"You did not beat him as easily as you beat Bourne, then?"

"No, sir. Campbell did all the beating."

"Who do you meet in the next bout?"

"There is only one more, the final. I meet Crowther."

"Can you beat him?"

"I don't know; I shall try."

"Well, he is a very big fellow for you to tackle. I think, if I may advise, that I should let him do most of the leading at first. He may tire. Big men generally do."

"I am afraid Crowther won't. He is always in good condition, though he never deserves to be. Nothing ever puts him out of condition."

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

"You know him then?" asked Courtney.
"He is a friend of yours?"

"I was at school with him, but we are not friends," replied Dick shortly, and the conversation drifted into another channel, and remained there until the finals of the Queensberry heavy-weights were called, and Dick once more stripped and went into the ring.

"Remember the family motto, Dick," said my father as he left us, and though Dick made no answer, his face showed that he had heard him.

"What is the family motto?" asked the General.

"Fight," replied my father.

"By George! It couldn't be shorter or better; and the boy looks as if he could wear it."

"He can if anyone can. Watch him now!" and both men ceased speaking and turned their whole attention to the ring.

When Dick and Crowther entered the ring there was a roar of applause and clapping of hands. Now as they stood facing each other a dead silence, the silence of expectation, fell upon the great crowd of spectators.

HOW THE CUP WAS WON

Two more perfect specimens of young manhood probably never stood face to face. Crowther tall, broad, and muscular, his great frame still lissom from extreme youth, but his bull neck and huge limbs already giving promise of the monster he would soon become, and Dick nearly as tall but lighter built, broad in the shoulders, long in the arm, light in the quarters, sinewy and quick and graceful as an Apollo, carrying his head high like the thorough-bred he was.

"Never saw a fellow stand better in my life. Didn't know a man could stand so well," muttered the General; "but why don't they shake hands."

Dick had offered his, but Crowther for a moment seemed unwilling to take it. He had not forgotten the scene on the Slowton railway platform. However, a peremptory "Shake hands, gentlemen," from one of the judges brought him to his senses, and he went through the ceremony with as little cordiality as possible.

And then they went to work, every eye in that great crowd fixed upon them, *their* eyes

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seeing nothing but each other, their mouths shut tight, and their hands in gentle, ceaseless motion, like the tails of tigers before they make their spring, every movement light and free and catlike, their feet *kissing* the turf, not trampling it.

Round and round they went, always circling to the right, now one trying a feint, now the other, but for a while neither of them seeing an opening. Then Crowther led, as Ned Romilly taught men to lead, with a quick, savage lunge, his left arm straightening itself as his whole body shot forward from his right foot, his head bent a little to the right, but his eyes still on his opponent's. At the same instant Dick lunged, but both men had been too well taught by the same master. Each left hand but brushed the right cheek of the head it was aimed at, and again both men were on guard. The next moment they were countering heavily, and their blows came too quickly almost for the spectators' eyes to follow them, only the heavy sound of them seemed incessant. Then they sprang apart again panting, but apparently unhurt, until Dick, feinting with his left, and coming in on

HOW THE CUP WAS WON

the ribs with his right, was met by a terrific left-hander full in the face, which sent him reeling across the ring, and before he could gather himself together Crowther was upon him, hitting with such force that the lighter man could not stand before him, but eventually staggered helplessly back on to the ropes, where for a second he seemed to hang inert.

Now was the big man's chance, and seizing it relentlessly he dashed in to follow up his advantage; but Dick, though distressed, was not spent yet. With a quick side step he seemed to slide from under the great bulk of his enemy, and putting in a stinging left-hander on the red head as he passed, he stood once more facing his man in the middle of the ring, a quiet, easy smile on his dear old face. That smile irritated Crowther, who, emboldened by his first success, abandoned caution, and did his utmost to force his man again to the ropes.

I thought that the particular left-hander which followed would almost have knocked Dick's head off. I never saw a blow sent in with more force and "vice"; but Dick saw it

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

coming, and this time, instead of countering, came in to meet it, bending his head ever so little to one side as he came in. Certainly he judged that blow to a hair's breadth. Crowther's knuckles brushed his cheek and bruised his ear, but the force of it was spent on air; while Dick, using every muscle to the utmost, from the ball of his foot to his shoulder, cut upwards with his left, and catching Crowther fairly between the eyes, as his head came forward in the lunge, lifted him clean off his feet, and brought him down with a great crash, half-stunned, upon his back.

I don't believe that my father ever missed his right hand as much as he did at that moment, and I did not notice until afterwards that in his enthusiasm he had been battering in the toe of my boot with his cane in his frantic endeavours to applaud. All this had taken but a minute and a half, and there was another minute and a half left in which to fight, but when Crowther staggered to his feet, it was obvious that he at any rate could not make much use of the time. His head was swinging, his legs were unsteady, he could hardly raise

HOW THE CUP WAS WON

his hands, in the words of the ring he was almost "knocked out." One more blow, and that an easy one to give, would stretch him senseless. whilst men counted sixty, and Dick St. Clair would be hailed as winner of the heavy-weight championship, having finished his man in one round.

The crowd knew this, and yelled to their favourite (the little man is always the favourite with an English crowd) to "go in and finish him"—"give him his quietus"—"knock him out, little 'un, before he comes to," and Romilly so lost his head that he stood up and left his corner, and shouted to Dick to knock him out—"It's your only chance, man, and it's not agen the rules! 'It 'im again, 'it agen for my sake, before 'e comes to!"

But Dick took no notice either of the cries of the crowd or the prayers of his second, who was ordered sternly by the judges to get back to his corner or leave the ring.

Quietly our man stood on guard and waited, his eyes vigilant, but his strong young hands quiet. It might be that it was lawful to win from a man half dazed, but it was not chivalrous,

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and so though he knew that every second's delay put the coveted cup further and further out of his reach, he waited until Crowther's head was again clear, and he was once more master of himself and his great strength. Then he scored one or two quick *light* points, boxing in beautiful form, and the time-keeper called time, and the first round was over. As far as the boxing went, there was as yet nothing to choose between the two, but Ned Romilly muttered that "the bloomin' young fool 'ad throwed the cup away, clean throwed it away."

As Dick went back to his chair, behind which his sulky second stood facing him with a towel, the old General muttered, "By George, that boy is a gentleman," and Courtney answered, "Yes, he is good for something better than the ring."

"It is conduct such as his that makes the ring worth boxing in," replied my father, and the man with the watch called, "Time, gentlemen!"

The second round was, as second rounds often are, a comparatively slow affair. Both men boxed better than they had boxed before, but Crowther was now moderately cautious.

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Perhaps he had not quite recovered from the effects of that terrible upper cut, but be that as it may, he made poor Dick work for every second of the three minutes, and must have made him feel the weight of his extra two stone all through the round. It was plain now to us that in spite of his skill, Dick was over-matched, and the General said over-trained.

"These fools," he said angrily, "never seem to realize that a boy like that does not want half the training of an older man. He would have been better if he had never been trained at all. I'm afraid, Maxwell, he will never stand up through the last four minutes."

"He'll stand as long as his legs will carry him," I answered for my father, "and he'll win yet."

"I hope so," said the old man kindly, "but your chum has done better than win the cup already."

If the fighting was fierce in the first round it was fiercer still in the last. There seemed no pause between the blows. Crowther was determined to crush Dick by sheer weight and strength, and as Dick could not keep him at

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arm's length he let him have his way, and with his chin on his chest fought him at half-arm, giving him blow for blow, always cool, always smiling, and always there at the scratch. But it could not last. There is a limit to human endurance, if there is none to some men's pluck, and we could see now that Dick's counters were slower, and that he was almost too feeble to lead. He was dying game, but he was dying, and at last a savage cross-counter caught him on the point of the jaw and dropped him at Crowther's feet. Before thirty seconds had elapsed he was up again, blood dabbling his white jersey, blood pouring from his nostrils and making his set face look ghastly in its whiteness.

And Crowther saw nothing but the up; he remembered nothing but his old enmity, and the snub he had received on Slowton platform; he had no time to think how *he* had been spared when *his* eyes were dim and *his* head was swinging in the first round. Savagely he rushed in at his beaten foe, his close-cropped red head boring in through Dick's guard, his furious blows raining round the staggering boy,

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IT WAS DICK'S SUPREME EFFORT.

HOW THE CUP WAS WON

though, by what seemed to be a miracle, none of them went fairly home. At last he had Dick against the ropes, and I almost shut my eyes to avoid seeing the *coup-de-grace* given by that brute.

As far as we could judge, Dick could hardly stand to receive it, much less fight or defend himself, and no doubt Crowther thought as we did, but he had forgotten that some men are never beaten until they are dead. Whether Dick led him wilfully into the trap, or whether (as I think) it was merely the last desperate effort of a beaten man, I don't know, but as Crowther dashed in hungry for blood, that limp figure on the ropes seemed to gather itself together, and recoiling from them like an arrow from the string, put every ounce of strength and weight that was left in it into one last blow. It was Dick's supreme effort, but it was not made wildly. Though he must have felt that the next moment he would be down stunned and beaten, his eyes were as steady, his judgment as good as ever, so that the good blow crashed like a cannon-shot right on to the point of Crowther's jaw.

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

It altered the whole fight.

Like a man struck by lightning, Crowther dropped at Dick's feet, every muscle limp, all the rage forgotten, the cup lost, and as the judges declared St. Clair the winner, he too reeled and fell face downwards over his foe. He had fainted from sheer exhaustion.

"Overtrained," said the General. "You had better see him home, Maxwell."

"Yes, but he won the cup," I said.

"Not the only thing he'll win if he lives," answered the old soldier.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FOR GOD!

THE rest of the story of Dick St. Clair is not an easy one for me to tell. I want you to see him clearly to the end; not perhaps a perfect type, but at any rate a gallant English lad, who, having been taught to "live pure, speak true, honour the Christ the King," did his best to live up to his simple creed, without caring greatly for the opinion of the day, or the consequences which might follow upon his acts. As for me, I can only see the last two scenes of Dick's story through a mist. When you boys are old enough to look back at the last scenes in the life of your dearest friend, you will understand what that mist is; and forgive me if I tell my tale but poorly now I hurry to a conclusion.

Two months had passed since Dick had won

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the cup, and his name was still remembered by some few as a successful athlete. It would have been better for him had it been otherwise. Men are too apt to think that those who can fight are always wanting to fight, which is a mistake. The exact converse of this proposition is the truth.

Dick was back again in London, as he often was on Sunday, and there was a dreamy hush about the streets of the great town, peculiar to it on Sunday. Even the most timid of old country-women might have crossed some of the East End streets without fear and trembling. But the parks were as full as the streets were empty. The sun of early June was gleaming upon the still unsoiled leaves of London trees, to convince everyone who saw it, that in spite of all prejudices to the contrary, Hyde Park in its season is as beautiful as any spot on earth. There was no sound in the air now, except the coo of the wood-pigeon, and the indistinct hum of many distant voices; but a few hours earlier the bells of a hundred churches had reminded London's five millions that *their* Queen was the Defender of the Faith; that

FOR GOD

they lived even as she reigned, "Dei Gratia," by the grace of God, and that England itself was the England they were proud of, only because their forefathers kept her always "most Christian England."

But it was afternoon, the bells had ceased pealing, the services of the morning were all over, and Dick and his uncle were strolling into the Park, as a thousand other men were.

I don't know whether London's great pleasure ground was ever given up to cricket and quarter staff and such like English sports. I fancy not. But at any rate it is given up to worse things to-day.

Fighting is giving place to talking. The tongue rules instead of the brave heart and strong arm. It is talk, talk, everywhere in London parks on Sunday and all holidays; the politically blind leading their blind fellows to their own and their country's ruin; African niggers missionizing amongst white men; labourers teaching the striker's gospel of suicide; everywhere the men with loud voices, glib tongues, and unblushing effrontery attracting the admiration and wielding the influence

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

of the masses. Of such men on this particular Sunday afternoon Hyde Park was full.

Under some lime trees against the railings, as the two came in from the west, a big buck nigger was singing "Sankey and Moody's hymns" to his white brothers, with as much swing and unction as if he had been singing "the Ringtailed Coon."

Old Braithwaite was a great believer in the brotherhood of man, but he hardly liked the look of the nigger missionary.

"I thought it was our special mission to convert the heathen," he said.

"But he is not a heathen. We have opened the black man's eyes, and he seems to think that we want converting more than he does," answered Dick. "Perhaps he is right."

What Mr. Braithwaite's answer was, I don't know; but I fancy he would not care to have it made public. He was a great believer in the equality of men *in theory*.

"Well, if you don't like the nigger's hymns, uncle, let us go and see what they are doing over there. The crowd is the biggest in the Park."

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"As you please, Dick, but I doubt if it is worth while, and we shall not be able to get near enough to hear."

"Oh, I'll manage that; you stick close to me," replied Dick, and partly by persuasion, and partly by quiet force, he soon made a way for himself and his uncle into the inner ring of the mob, composed mostly of well-dressed, apparently well-to-do men, with a fair sprinkling of women and children amongst them.

But as soon as he had gained a place in the front rank, I feel sure that the honest churchwarden of Scarsley wished himself at home again.

"For shame, men!" he cried; and the crowd, looking up at his grave north-country face and sober clothes, jeered at him.

What he had seen and heard made John Braithwaite—pure-minded, simple old Scotchman that he was—look grave; it made Dick's face grow strangely white, with a look on it of rage and incredulous horror.

"Could this," he wondered, "be modern England?"

In the middle of a ring of laughing girls and

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

women — fair-haired, modest-looking *English* girls and women mind you, some of the latter with their husbands by their sides, and little children clinging to their skirts, was an under-sized London gutter-snipe, the mean face of the man pinched by poverty and blurred by drink.

The miserable fellow had twisted his dirty clothes into some sort of mimicry of a parson's dress. On his head was the orthodox top-hat, round his throat a soiled handkerchief did duty for the white cravat "of the cloth," while in his hand was the Book on which the Church of England rests, and from it he was coining foully blasphemous obscenities for the amusement of an English audience on Sunday afternoon, his partner meanwhile taking round a hat for coppers.

Surely Judas hardly earned his cursed money worse.

"Come away, Richard! For God's sake come away!" cried Braithwaite. "Take no notice of the scoundrel!"

"Take no notice, uncle?" gasped Dick. "Am I English and a Christian that you *dare* tell me to take no notice of that?"

FOR GOD

"It can do no good, boy; and think what the world will say if you make a scandal."

"Curse the world!" hissed Dick. "Let me go!" and he shook himself free.

"Think of the papers, Dick, and your mother."

But at that moment a little girl of six, with yellow curly hair and such blue eyes as God makes to remind us of heaven, toddled into the ring.

"Suffer little children to come unto Me," quoted the gutter-snipe, as the child's mother, feeling shame too late, tried in vain to drag her back.

"Now, my little hinnercence," he went on, laying a foul paw on the yellow head, and blinking down into the pure child's eyes, "can't you tell me what Hadom did then? But p'raps you ain't old enough for the gay gentlemen to 'ave told you yet."

And then he answered his riddle for himself, amidst shouts of laughter and applause, at the expense of our first mother, sweet Eve; and though I have heard many a coarse joke since in Western mining camps and American saloons,

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

I have never yet heard coarser, fouler jokes than those which set a crowd of English men and women laughing at the Bible in Hyde Park that Sunday afternoon.

But the laughter was short-lived. The spirit of pure dear old Mother England was there even in that mean crowd. With a cry like the cry of a hurt lion Dick sprang into their midst, and before the gutter-snipe had more than licked his foul chops after delivering his last obscenity, a pair of clean young English hands—such hands, boys, as built your England—twisted themselves into the blackguard's neckcloth, and hurled him, as if he had been a man of straw, head over heels into the frightened crowd.

But the crowd rallied, and the partner with the hat came to the front. He knew he had his audience with him, against a man who looked like a gentleman.

"Oo are you a-'ittin', you bloomin' lord?" he cried, having emptied the coppers first into his trousers pocket. "Let's see you 'it one of your own size!" and he threw himself into what he appeared to consider a perfect fighting attitude, and beat the ground behind him (as

FOR GOD

the costers do) with his right foot like an angry rabbit.

The man was a big man, but bloated with drink and incapable, and Dick looked at him coldly without moving. He had no mind to fight such a thing unless he was obliged to, but there was something he wanted to say to that jeering crowd and if the fellow stood between him and his will, he would have to take the consequences.

But he stood still until the fellow thought him afraid, and, cheered by cries of "Chuck 'im out!" "Knock 'is face in!" rushed in to do his patrons' will.

Quick as light Dick caught his clumsy blow as it came, clung to his wrist, and then using a well-known "catch," drew the big man to him, and bending suddenly sent him rocketing over his shoulder into the crowd.

It was quickly done, so quickly that there seemed to be hardly any struggle, and yet when Dick turned passionately on the crowd one of his eyes had received an injury from which it never recovered.

But this he did not know until afterwards.

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

His whole heart then was too full of indignation to leave any room for thought of self.

"You blackguards!" he cried, as he faced the crowd. "Is this a place to bring your women to? Is it from such scoundrels as that"—and he pointed to the grovelling figure of his foe—"that you expect them to learn their duty as mothers of Englishmen?"

A sullen growl came from the crowd, and some one bolder than the rest cried, "Go for a bobby! Pitch the beggar out! We don't want any of his prayer-meeting sort!"

"Pitch *me* out!" cried Dick. "No, no! that would be men's work. You are not men. The men who fight are the men who pray, not the things who encourage filth, and bring their women and children to listen to it. Good heavens, you women! don't you know that Christ died for you? that your only hope of your men's respect and your children's love is to live as He taught you to? Don't you fellows know that the men who made it a proud boast to say, 'I am English,' lived by the Bible, died for the Bible, and based every hope for this life and the next upon the Bible's teaching. And

FOR GOD

this Book"—and he raised the battered volume reverently from the ground—"the corner-stone of England, is made the jest of a gutter-snipe by your permission. For shame! You are no Englishmen!"

"I can't have any one a makin' a disturbance in the Park, sir, and these men have laid a charge of assault against you," said a voice at Dick's shoulder. "You'd better come along quietly, and see the Superintendent," and as he spoke the policeman let a faint jingle of steel remind Dick that he carried "the bracquets" somewhere handy for any one who would not peaceably submit to his orders.

Dick glanced round him, and decided in a moment that the policeman was right. It was no good staying to say more. The crowd, ashamed of itself, and afraid of the policeman, was slinking away, and though there were knots of loungers all over the grass, it was already hard to say which of them had really been parts of the original gutter-snipe's audience.

There was no one left even upon whom Dick felt that he could call for evidence in his behalf. Even Mr. Braithwaite had fled before the fear

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of a public newspaper scandal — that terror before which English courage is most apt to evaporate.

“All right, Sergeant,” Dick said. “I will come quietly of course. There is my card, but I should be much obliged if you would let me walk on a little ahead of you.”

“Certainly, sir,” said the Sergeant, and the four set out towards the Police Station at High Street, where after a very short investigation, Dick was told that he had better have a talk with the “two gentlemen,” and arrange the matter without letting it go into court.

Dick’s moral crusade in Hyde Park cost him exactly two sovereigns, a new top hat (25s. at Heath’s), *and* his commission; for the day after the trouble in Hyde Park, his right eye became inflamed, in two days he was nearly blind, and at the end of several months the best optician in London had done so much for him that he could see to read and write, and even to shoot a little, but not well enough to pass the physical tests necessary for an officer passing through Woolwich.

The gutter-snipe’s nails had done more harm

FOR GOD

than the might of Crowther could have accomplished.

In serving God it seemed as if Dick had forfeited his right to serve the Queen.

But God, though we can't see Him sometimes through the fogs of London, sees us, and rewards His soldiers even in this world. Let me tell you of Dick's reward.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY.

I HAVE but one more chapter to write, and then I shall have done with Dick upon earth, though I pray that I may so live as to meet him again where God has fresh battles for brave men to fight, new work for strong men to do. Not only do I still sit beneath the old shield at Scarsley, but I know now what I used not to be able to understand, I know why the ship in the last quarter of it is still sailing on. Dick's work is not done yet, his ship is still sailing on, there is no rest for such as he. If there were, heaven itself would be a hell to them.

Do you remember that I mentioned Courtney, a man we both met with the General at the Queensberry competition? On that occasion he prophesied that trouble was brewing in

FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

Mashonaland, and I noticed that the General and my father listened to him as to one whose prophecies could be relied on. They knew their man, as England knows him now, for one who understands Africa as few men have understood it, and who has done more to make our race respected in that dark continent than any man of his time. All through the summer, whilst the doctors were tinkering with Dick's eyesight, the trouble in Africa grew, until at last the Chartered Company found that it must either fight or fly. Being English, and a worthy peer of these two great companies (John Company and the Hudson Bay), which have won empire east and west for England, the Chartered Company made up its mind to fight, and Dick reading the rumours of war, and looking round despairingly with his dim eyes for some place in the world in which he might fulfil his destiny, saw his chance in Africa, remembered Courtney, and wrote to him at once. He told him his whole story since the Queensberry competition in plain, straightforward fashion, and asked for such help and advice as he could give. Courtney's answer

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

was characteristic, written in the big, bold hand of a man more used to holding a rifle than a pen. "I was to have started next week," he wrote, "for a shoot in America, but I cannot leave the boys now they are in trouble. The little thirty-three which should have killed wapiti will come in handy for Kaffirs. I am going down home to-morrow. Meet me on the platform. You'll know me by my hat if you have forgotten my face. Rhodes I expect wants all the good men he can get, though he has no room for duffers."

It is needless to say that the next day, Dick marked down that wide brimmed African sombrero on the platform, and went with its owner to his beautiful old home by the Thames, and there in a room piled high with trophies of the chase, lions' masks and skins, the white tusks of bull elephants, and the curled horns of a hundred antelopes, talked matters over and decided to go out with his friend.

Early in November he was at Boluwayo; London and its teeming streets, and his own peaceful home at Scarsley almost forgotten, or

FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

at most appearing to him only as memories of another state of existence. The whole world for him had changed in a few weeks, but the spirit within him remained unchanged, and the fearless picked men amongst whom he found himself suited him exactly, as he suited them. At Boluwayo in '93 there was no room for incapables, and there were no incapables found there.

About the middle of the month of November, the great king hunt which closed the Matabele war commenced. Lobengula was in retreat, and Major Forbes was collecting a little army only 300 strong, to follow the tracks of the king's waggon, and if possible capture the king himself.

Partly owing to his own merits, his grand physique and fearless bravery, and partly perhaps to Courtney's influence, Dick found his way into the little army, and left Inyati with it on the 14th of November. That was no picnic upon which the 300 started. Their whole impedimenta consisted of a hundred cartridges and a police cape per man, though the country through which they had to pass was densely

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wooded in parts, cut up by rivers, and the tropical rains were already coming on. All about the tracks of the flying king were death and the signs of death. In the long grass lay the bodies of men and slaughtered cattle. Smallpox had been busy with the Matabele, busier even than the rifles of the white men, and the forest air was putrid with the exhalations of corruption. Now and again the three hundred caught a glimpse of natives by the road, but they vanished as the white men approached. There were some skirmishes, but not many. As a rule the pursuers only felt that a cloud of stealthy, swift-footed foes hovered incessantly near them, a vast but invisible mass which fled silently through the forest as they approached, growing more numerous and bolder day by day. At any moment a bullet from an unseen foe might quench the bravest life ; the incessant marching through thick places wearied the men ; the want of food weakened them, and at night they had to stand in the pelting rain at their tired horses' heads, or lie in pools of water trying to sleep. For the African rains had

FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

P

commenced, and were soaking through them until their very bones began to soften, and the strength of the hardiest was washed out of them. Even when they built themselves a fire to dry their clothes by, they had to build cairns of stone round the fire that they might keep their feet out of the water whilst they dried their bodies. And yet they never lost heart.

To Dick, and probably to most of the men his comrades, there was some compensation in the savage beauty of the surroundings; in the occasional dash after cattle; in those rare skirmishes when the Matabele ventured for a few minutes to give battle; in the thousand and one new forms of life which surrounded their path; and in the majestic chorus of the lions at night, which made the very forest leaves tremble with its full-throated, awful music.

More than once they came upon kraals still warm with the life which had just streamed from them into the bush, or upon mission stations wrecked and ruined by the very men for whose benefit they had been built. But

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though the chase was a long one there were signs that it was nearing the end. At first the king was reported as being now sixty, now forty miles ahead; later on the distances grew less; the king's camp was only twenty, sometimes only twelve miles in advance of his pursuers, and towards the end of the month his camp fires were seen more than once; but though when this occurred the lean, worn men who were upon his track pushed forward through the bush as quickly as British skirmishers could, they were always too late. When they reached the camp fires, those who had made them had vanished, and not a breaking twig or the rustle of trodden grass betrayed the way they had gone.

On the third of December the main body of white men camped by the Tchangani river, a rapid stream 150 yards wide, and so confident were they that now at last the king was almost within their reach, that though the dark was coming down, a small patrol party, the very flower of that little army, was sent across the river to see which way the enemy had gone. Thanks to his youth, his temperate life, and his

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years of training, Dick had stood the work of the last fortnight better than most of his fellows, so that he had the luck to be included in this chosen band. The river was full of crocodiles, but no man recked of these. Death and danger had become familiar to these men, and they waded or swam the Tchangani as if it contained no living thing more dangerous than a croaking frog. On the other side the river, darkness fell, and yet in spite of the silence and the darkness the whole forest seemed to be alive. Indefinite shapes moved through it, soft-footed things stole across the trail; they felt, though they could not see, that their footsteps were dogged, their every movement watched. So dark did the night become that the men had to grope on their knees and *feel* for the waggon-tracks. They guided themselves by touch, they could no longer guide themselves by sight. And at last in the blackness before them the swift-footed prisoner, who led them, pointed to the king's kraal.

At first they could see nothing. The darkness seemed absolutely solid, but the thirteen who represented England could hear the rustle of

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

many feet in the enclosure in front of them, and knew that their guide spoke the truth.

The African King was there in front of them.

They had followed the lion to his lair in the very heart of an African night. What his strength was, how many his followers were, they never stopped to think. With the superb insolence which comes of centuries of victory, *one man* went forward and called to a people to give up their king.

It was but a small thing to hear, that voice in the vast silent forest, but even the Matabele knew its power. It was the voice of the Queen of nations, the voice of England.

For answer, the thirteen who listened, heard the rustle inside the kraal grow louder, as if a hive of wasps was rousing itself for action; they heard the clicking of a hundred locks as the Matabele cocked their rifles, and, worse than all, they heard the rush of swift-footed, unseen foes who poured past them in the darkness into the kraal. The men whom they had passed on their way were gathering in hundreds round their king. The children of the night and the forest were making them ready for battle.

FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

And then the thirteen withdrew. They would not give up their quest ; they were ready to fight at any odds. The greater the odds the greater the glory of victory ; but their chief had men's lives in his hands to guard, and at least he would let them have daylight to fight by.

So for the rest of that night they stood in utter silence waiting for the dawn, no man seeing his fellow's face in the darkness, no man hearing anything more cheering than the forest whispers and the ceaseless swish of the rain.

Two men were sent back for reinforcements to the main body beyond the Tchangani river, and just before dawn these reinforcements came.

When the first red flash burst from the darkness of that African jungle there were thirty-three heroes waiting to die for England. But amongst them there were three who were not her's. Brave men those as any there, and bred from the same gallant stock ; but they were America's and not England's, and Wilson sent them back to take word of his plight to Forbes, where he lay hemmed in by foes beyond the river.

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Probably few but frontier men such as they were could have made their way back, even then, through those "humming" hordes of Matabele, but they won their way to the river at last, and the message they gave their chief was worth taking. When he asked them why Wilson and his men, such as had horses still alive, had not also fled and saved their lives, do you remember their answer?—

"They could not *all* have escaped, and Wilson's men were not the sort to leave their chums."

No, lads, and be sure of it, when the great war comes, if it ever comes, when the children of England are arrayed against the rest of the world, be sure that men of the same race as those scouts will be found, at bottom English too, "not the sort of men to leave their chums." There will be little chance for the rest of the world when the great West, remembering old ties and pride of race, stands shoulder to shoulder with the old folk at home.

It would be worth the greatest war the world ever saw to bring back all her children again to their grey old mother.

FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

After the scouts had gone, the end came quickly. The daylight as it grew, showed the Matabele the mere handful against which they had to fight, though it showed our men too where to put their bullets.

Behind Wilson's party was a long, open valley, girt in with dense bush, and in the middle of it a huge ant heap. To this ant heap the patrol party retired, losing some more horses as they went, whilst waves of Matabele swept after them and round them through the bush.

As long as a cartridge was left our men kept that valley clear of foes. To put foot in it was to die, but one by one they too sank behind their horses until in front of them was a rampart of their own dead.

At the last moment the forest in their rear belched out another regiment of blacks, men who had come up from the river, and old Dick who, though he was slowly bleeding to death from a score of wounds, was still able to kneel and load for a comrade, saw the black waves closing in, and heard the hoarse yells of the leaders.

THE QUEENSBERRY CUP

"At them with the assegai!"

"Stab at close quarters!"

In spite of the odds against him, Alan Wilson stopped the Matabele rush just once more. Calmly, as if on parade, every man put his last cartridge into the breech, came to the shoulder, and at Wilson's word "Fire!" the whole of that little square broke and blossomed into flame.

The men listening by the Tchangani heard one volley and then silence. They were too far off to hear what followed, but a Matabele has told us.

When the last shot had been fired there was nothing left but to die as Englishmen know how to die.

Wilson knew how to fight, how better; he knew too how to die. I have never yet heard of any man who knew quite so well.

When the black waves of death closed in, he and his men, wan, weak, bleeding to death, staggered to their feet, their revolvers gripped in their honest right hands, their caps held reverently in their left, and with calm, brave eyes fixed steadily on the rush of a thousand foes,

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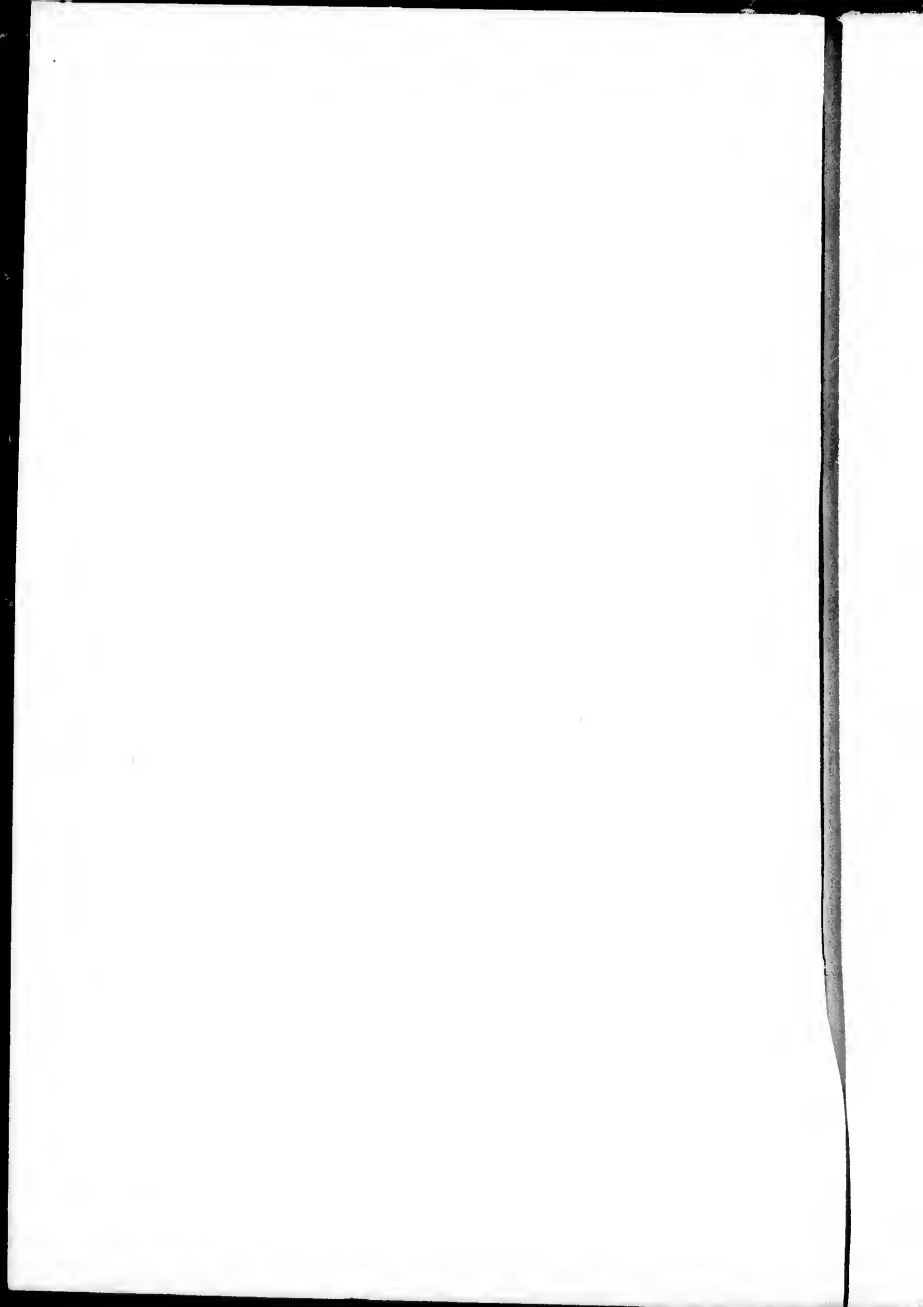
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"GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!"



FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

hands still ready to fight, noble English hearts
turned to their homes, they met death singing,

"GOD SAVE THE QUEEN."

* * * *

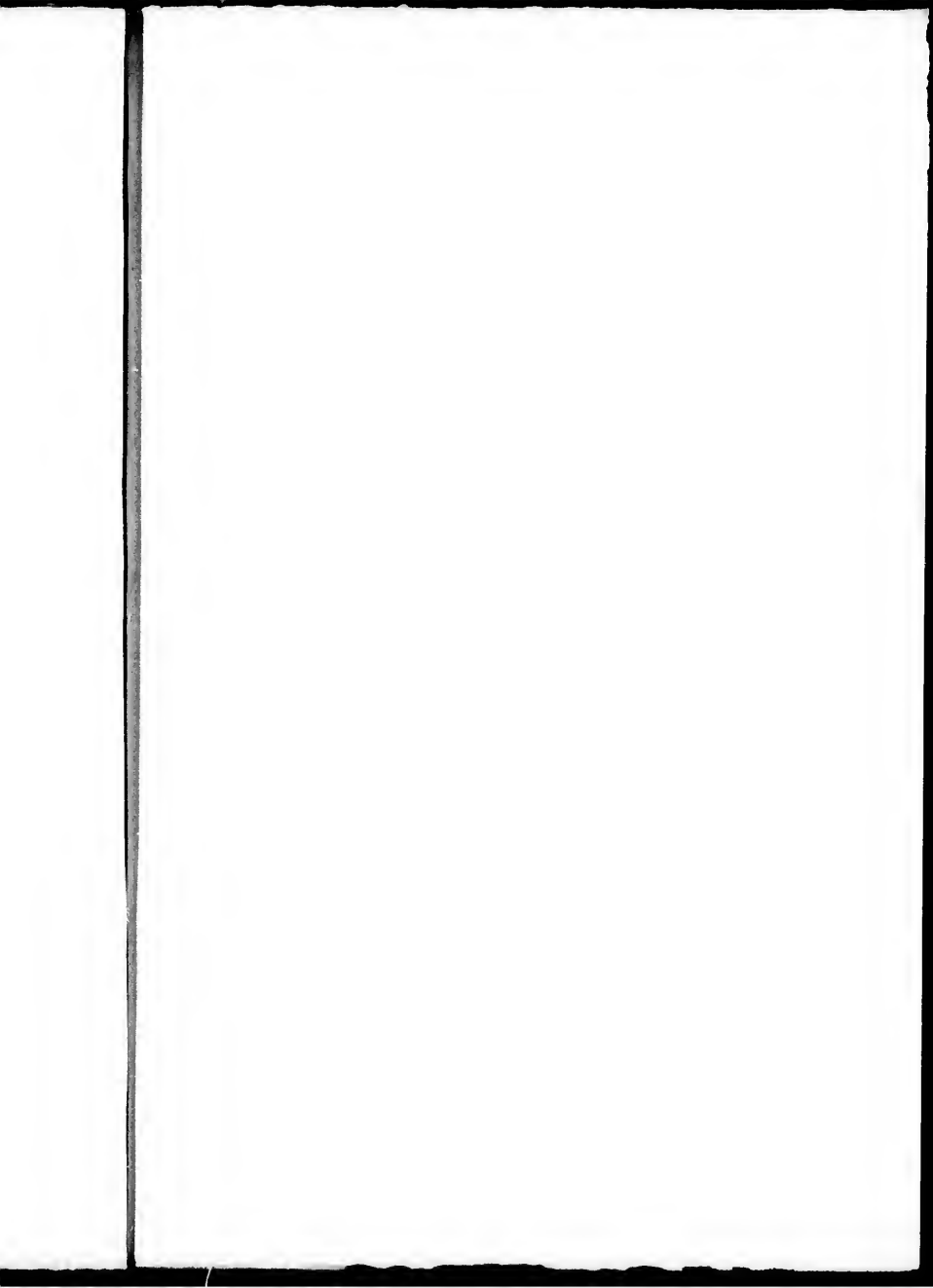
Good-bye, Dick. We who loved you would
fain have had you with us until our lives end,
but being such as you were, we know that
death could never have come to you in more
welcome fashion than he came then, when your
hot, young blood was full of the fire of battle,
and your loyal English heart of that pride of
race which rings through every line of our
glorious National Anthem.

The old Norse religion of your Viking fore-
fathers, which Carlyle calls "the consecration of
valour," has been replaced by a nobler religion
to-day, but the glory of the old faith lives on
still in the new; and you, and gallant Alan
Wilson and his comrades, have taught us that
the English of to-day are true English still.

It is a lesson worth dying to teach.

NOTE.—The author apologizes for having introduced a ficti-
tious character into Alan Wilson's gallant ring: his excuse is
that he knew of no nobler field on which his boy-hero could
have died: no better prize for him than such a death.

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