



"The watch and chain were not there."

THE MEDAL.

(Concluded from page 71.)

CALLAWAY had scarcely recovered his normal condition when the home station was reached, but he bucked up a bit on entering the town, for the annual fair was in full progress. Surging throngs of people began to press around him. A fascinating uproar fell on his ears. Stalls radiant with gas-flares, though darkness had scarcely fallen; glittering merry-go-rounds pursuing their circular journey to the accompaniment of strident music, greeted his sight in all directions. Small wonder, then, that the boy home for the week-end pressed his way into the densest throngs, peeped at the gaudy show-pictures, and lost himself for a time among the shooting-galleries, the swing-boats, and other attractions. The events of the afternoon faded from his memory. Rutherford College and all it contained sank into the background of life, and not until he was actually retiring to rest for the night did recent circumstances obtrude themselves upon him. Then, when in the act of removing his coat and waistcoat, he made the shocking discovery that the watch and chain he had taken from Scorby's locker were gone—completely gone!

With wide-open eyes and dropped jaw he sat upon the bedside. Oh, what a fool he had been! What a gaby! What an ass, to moon about at the fair without realising that pick-pockets were on the look-out for what they could take. What should he say to Scorby? How on earth . . . Why in the world . . .

But we must leave Callaway to chaotic thought and a restless night; for events at Rutherford College demand our attention.

Since good times and bad times and all times get over, there is no cause for astonishment that the morient at last arrived when Scorby was at liberty to leave detention-room. But rejoicings over freedom are not always immediate, and it was with a gloomy aspect that he wandered into the corridor. Scarcely had he shown his solemn face there, when he was surrounded by the most unwelcome company.

Warden, Green, and Fisher had evidently been lying in wait, and now lost no time in carrying into execution a deeply-laid plot. Seizing their victim firmly among them, they hustled him away in spite of protestations, till the common-room was reached.

'Now, you sneaking cad!' cried Green, echoing Scorby's words of earlier in the day, 'hand it over! Don't let us have any nonsense! I know all about it!'

'You leave me alone!' growled Scorby, feeling, however, the weakness of his position.

'Oh, yes, my beauty!' put in Warden. 'We will leave you alone when you have given me back my watch and chain.'

'Nonsense!' was the scornful reply. 'I've never had them.'

'We don't believe you,' asserted Fisher. 'We heard you crawl into his cubicle this morning and steal it from his waistcoat, hanging on the bed-post.'

'Get away!' retorted Scorby, throwing out his arms and kicking at the same time. 'You're telling lies!'

But he was dragged irresistibly toward his locker and commanded to open it, for nothing but a thorough search would satisfy his captors. So the lid was lifted, and Green, eager-eyed, stood ready to pounce upon the treasure that would prove Scorby's guilt.

But his face fell—the triumphant accusation died upon his lips; for, at the first glance, he saw that the watch and chain were not there. So unmistakable was his embarrassment that Scorby's indignation put on a defiant aspect.

Red with anger Green turned upon him. 'You've taken it away!' he cried. 'You *must* have done, for I put it there my very own self this afternoon. That's enough alone to—'

But he was interrupted by a confusion of tongues—denunciation from Scorby, reproach from Warden, and a roar of laughter from Fisher.

'You've given the show completely away, old dunder-head!' gurgled the last-named. 'What an ass you must be.'

'How? Why? What's the matter?' blinled Green. 'What I said was perfectly true.'

But to save the situation, his friends bore him away, and for the next quarter of an hour he enjoyed a dressing down that left him in little doubt as to his own imbecility.

'What I want to know is how you are going to get my watch and chain back?' cried Warden, when the storm of vituperation had spent itself a little. 'I don't mean to take such foolery lying down, so you need not think I do.'

'You can take it standing on your head, for all I care,' retorted Green. 'How can I know where the trumpety rubbish is gone? You agreed to putting it in the locker.'

'And the silly suggestion was your own,' shouted Warden. 'Let's have no wriggling to shift the blame.'

Green, with hands thrust in trousers' pockets, tossed his chin, coughing out a smiling expression of indifference. 'Blame!' he echoed. 'I don't mind blame when it comes from a chap like you, Teddy Warden. It would take a lot more than that to bend my spine.'

It was apparent to the most obtuse that the tirade administered to Green had been an overdose. A trifle more leniency would have secured his complete humiliation, but you can over-goad the driven horse, and the more Warden railed the more ungovernable became the prancing spirit of Green. At last the watch-owner changed his tactics, and closed the argument by sighing in despairing tones, 'All right, old man, I see that you have done me; for clearly enough it was a trick to get hold of the property for yourself.'

'Draw it mild!' put in Fisher, speaking for the first time. 'You are making a lot of fuss, aren't you, over a tin-pot ticker?'

'It wasn't yours, so of course it had no value,' retorted Warden. 'What I say is full of reason. We know that Scorby didn't take it out of the locker, for he was in detention all the afternoon, and *you* know that I didn't. At the same time Green was the only other person who knew that it was there. I'll thank him when he has the honesty to return it.'

With that he walked away, in too bad a temper to hear any rebuke in the peal of laughter that followed him out of the room.

Thus stormily did that eventful Saturday close, and at Rutherford College two boys at least went to bed in a state of mental disturbance almost as great as that of Callaway. Throughout the following Sunday, whenever Green and Warden met, their intercourse was of the sulkiest kind, and the clouds had by no means cleared away when Monday morning came. But before

the hour of noon had struck, a remarkable circumstance took place which changed the whole aspect of affairs.

Our two friends were sitting in class when the door opened and the Head came in. After a few words with the Form-master, he turned to the assembled company, and, sweeping it with a critical glance, called for attention. 'I have had a watch and chain brought to me this morning,' he said, 'and shall be glad if the owner will acknowledge the property.'

With these words he held out for general inspection the very identical articles that the scheming Green had placed in Scorby's locker. Warden gazed in speechless amazement, too confused to take in clearly what followed.

'They were found on Saturday afternoon,' continued the Head, 'hanging on the trunk of a tree in Silwood Park. The keeper, very good-naturedly, brought the things to me an hour ago.'

Warden rose with much hesitation. 'They belong to me, sir,' he stammered.

'Then, at the end of morning school, be so good as to come to my room for them. I should like a little explanation, which doubtless you can give.'

As Warden sat down, he was conscious of a mocking smile from Green, and as soon as the moment of liberty arrived, he made overtures to that youth for assistance in solving the mystery. But Green's sole reply was, 'It's a conjuring trick. Shows what magic power I have for spiriting back a stolen watch.'

With no better backing than this, Warden presented himself in the Head-master's room, and was greeted with the ominous words:

'This should be a lesson to you, my boy. It should make clear that the laws of the school cannot be secretly broken with impunity. Silwood Park is well known to be prohibited ground, yet you—'

'Please, sir,' broke in Warden, 'I have not been in Silwood Park. I have not indeed.'

'But this is your watch, and was found there as I have described.'

'Yes, sir, but I was not wearing it on Saturday.'

'Then who was?'

'I don't know, sir.'

'That's very odd,' came the reply, in tones that filled Warden with alarm. 'Perhaps I can aid your memory. During his call this morning, the keeper informed me that the boy who left the watch behind was a boy who had to climb the tree to recover his cap which a skylarking gang of schoolfellows had tossed into the branches.'

'Oh!' The exclamation escaped Warden's lips before he could check it, and his face reddened as he realised the revelations that were about to be drawn from him.

'Do you know who that boy was?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Were you responsible for the trouble he was put to?'

'Partly; but I did not know he had got my watch.'

'Then you had not even that excuse for teasing him?'

Warden was silent, twisting his fingers behind his back and feeling that he was getting more than his proportion of embarrassment.

Perhaps the Head began to share this feeling, suspecting that others were sheltering in the background, for he suddenly handed over the watch and chain with the

remark: 'Now, we will say no more about it on this occasion, but you may send to me at once the boy who appropriated your property.'

'He was really not to blame, sir,' stammered Warden. 'I see now that it was all a mistake, so if you don't mind—'

A smile dawned on the listener's face. 'If that is your wish,' said he, 'matters shall remain as they are. It seems to be a case of general wrong-doing with no one to blame. The keeper himself urged that the trespasser should receive no punishment this time, and now you exonerate him as well. Dismiss.'

Warden obeyed with a lighter heart and better temper than he had possessed for some time. While crossing the playground a moment later, he ran against Scorby and Callaway. A long explanation had just ended between them, whereby Callaway had learned of his unintentional theft and the manner in which the property had been recovered. 'The best thing I can do,' he sighed, 'is to go and make a clean breast of it to the Head.'

The beaming Warden caught this remark as he joined them, and graciously responded, 'You need do nothing of the sort,' backing up the assertion with a full account of what had taken place.'

'Well, under those circumstances,' acknowledged Callaway, 'it would only be stirring up the mud to no purpose. I'll let the matter drop.'

Warden withdrew, glancing back with a genial smile as he remarked, 'And it's a good end to much ado about nothing.'

JOHN LEA.

THE HEDGEHOG.

HE had been asleep for a few weeks, but one night, about the middle of November, when the wind was causing the dead leaves to scurry all around in the wood, he emerged from his sleeping quarters in a hollow at the base of an old oak-tree, where the leaves were particularly deep, and formed for him a cosy bed. Perhaps the screech-owl had roused him, for he had been uttering his nasal, eldritch cry incessantly for the last half-hour, disturbing the slumbers of the inmates of the houses near at hand.

At any rate, the little animal was now thoroughly awake, and set out fearlessly, at a run, in search of food, for he was very hungry. He was about a foot long and some six inches high, round-backed, pig-headed, black-eyed, with spines about an inch long, sharply pointed, firm and elastic, covering his back. He was known as the common hedgehog.

Certainly he resembled the hog, being piggyish in shape, if not in greediness, and it was in the direction of the nearest hedge that he directed his course. He rustled as he went, for his body was so close to the ground that, even in the moonlight, his feet were not visible as they guided his stumpy body over to the hedge, a few yards from his winter quarters.

With the aid of his sniffing, searching snout, he soon discovered a slug, and with a few scrunches, he swallowed it with relish. Further on, a fat worm, which had unwarily wriggled too far up out of the soft earth, was tugged up by this night prowler, and in a second was no more. Then, without hesitating a moment, he sped along under the hedge till he reached the back gate of a house on the outskirts of the wood. Here he visited



"Then with one paw she smartly patted the round impassive object."

the dustbin, finding a piece of stale bread, which he swiftly carried back to his home at the foot of the oak. As he returned to the dustbin, a cat caught sight of him, and sprinted after him, mistaking him for one of her own kind, or perhaps out of curiosity.

The hedgehog, about to be beaten in the race, stopped suddenly, and contracting the muscles of his back so that his bristles stood out stiffly in all directions, he rolled himself into a ball, and waited for the attack. Puss paused a moment in doubt at this unusual sight, and then with one paw she smartly patted the round impassive object before her. But once was enough—she retired on three legs!

Having deposited the crust of bread in his home, the hedgehog returned to the dustbin, and found a large rat there, making some investigations among the contents. But the rat's appearance inspired no terror in the hedgehog, for he calmly approached and started to chew up a crust which the rat was already busy upon. The rat without more ado walked off, and left the hedgehog, grunting contentedly, at his meal.

All the other cats he met, all the midnight prowlers, left him severely alone, for his armour was his safeguard. After another half-hour he returned to bed, and to sleep, possibly till the genial warmth of spring would again tempt him out of his hiding-place. Then, perhaps, as in last April and June, he would hear again the shrill cries of three or four blind little baby hedgehogs, as they held up their tiny snouts to their parent, who would be unremitting in his care of them till they reached the time when their own armour would be sufficient to defend them from the cruel creatures that haunted the wood.

It was August, and the hedgehog still lived at the foot of the oak-tree, but now he was not alone, for his little wife was busy feeding four hungry little hedgehogs, who were giving forth strange noises, half whistle, half squeal, as they ate up the worms and other dainty morsels which were brought to them by their diligent parents. Soon all the food was gone, and Father Hedgehog had to sally forth early in the morning, two o'clock a.m., in search of more. A tent was pitched about a hundred yards away, and he made a bee-line for this, for many a scrap had been picked up there, just as the clock in the distance was chiming two.

Rustling under the flap of the tent, he approached a basket which had been overturned, disclosing a bag with two buns inside. Quick as lightning the snout of the hedgehog was poked into the paper bag, and the crinkling of paper that ensued aroused the campers, who thought a passing tramp was giving them an early call. All they saw, however, was the hedgehog disappearing with a large bun in his mouth. He carried the welcome meal to his hungry young ones, and returned five minutes later for the other bun. Still his hungry family shrieked on for more, and he set out for the nearest house. In the hen-run lay a basin, with some hen's food still adhering to its sides. With his snout the hedgehog pulled the basin down, climbed in, and collected all that was left of the food, the while the basin swayed this way and that, as the weight of the eager forager rested now on this side, now on that.

But the day was now breaking; so he hurriedly made his return journey to the oak, where his family, drowsy after their diet of worms, insects, slugs, and other delicacies, awaited him, the little ones silent at last. Man,

who in the country at least works by day, would soon be abroad, passing through the wood with heavy tread; and so the hedgehog retired to his cosy heap of hay and leaves and moss, to sleep till the darkness fell again, when once more he emerged and went on his nocturnal quest for food.

J. MACILRAVEY.

A YEAR IN A GARDEN.

III.—MARCH.

THE rock garden really began in February, when preparations were first started for draining the field-path. But on the first day of March Billy heard a visitor say, 'What a capital place for a water garden!' His father had replied, 'But this is to be the chief path running through the children's new garden, and I am



Alpine Flax.

going to have it properly drained, so that it will always be dry for them.

Billy thought it all over, and then went to talk about it to his faithful little helper. 'Babe,' he said, 'why shouldn't we make a water garden and a rockery, too?'

To make a real rockery had been his great desire since he had had a garden of his own. And now here was the opportunity! All this bank of earth that had been lying piled up for weeks was already in many places covered with huge blocks of stone that had been dug up. Babe entered into all his plans with enthusiasm. They ran up and down the bank so often that very soon a little narrow path had been beaten down over the



Gypsophila.



Alpine Aster.

ridge. They made plans for a water garden that could be undertaken in the summer holidays, when the rockery was finished. Finally, their father's consent was obtained, and work was begun in earnest.

First of all, the little path over the top was widened and levelled, bricks were laid down, and thyme was planted in amongst them. When all this was quite neat and firm, operations were begun at the foot of the bank, where the largest 'rocks' were collected and fixed. Some of these were big boulders from the stream at the other side of the meadow. Above the boulders, wide, flat spaces of soil were made for patches of various kinds of sedum and Alpine pinks, all of which like plenty of room in which they can grow and spread. Over the rocks a little higher up were planted drooping gypsophila and Alpine flax and mossy saxifrages; here also were blue campanulas, yellow alyssum, and purple aubretia. All these things were put in rather close together; it was Billy's aim to have a good show when the summer came, but probably by next year they would have grown so much that some would have to be taken out. Stone-crops, with their lovely red-and-white tufts of flowers, were given a somewhat dry position, and some clumps of orpines, which belong to the same family, were put in a corner that was still more dry, and where probably little else would have thrived. Perennial candytuft, blue Alpine aster, dog's-tooth violets, several kinds of hepaticas and veronicas, all found homes in the rockery. The common red houseleek had a place of honour, and near it were the cobweb houseleeks, all great favourites with Billy, who loved to watch the tiny offsets grow in the summer.

Showers of rain often stopped their work, and then the sunk path was quickly under water. One day they were watching the brown water rising and overflowing, and Billy looked on with prophetic eyes that saw the future water garden in all its beauty. 'That must be our work in the summer holidays, Babe,' he said.

TO SCHOOL!

OH, if I was a fairy-boy,
And didn't want one bit
To go away to school each day,
I could get out of it,
Because I'd beg a Will-o'-Wisp
To lead me on and on,
And nobody could scold me then,
Because I should be gone!

And if I was a beetle-boy,
Who didn't want at all
To learn, you know, I would just go
And find a fox-glove tall,
And there I'd lie quite high and dry
All through the school-time hours,
And if they tried to blame me—why,
The fault would be the flower's!

But I'm the other sort of boy,
And I must start at once,
For there's the bell! And, besides—well,
I can't grow up a *Dunce*;
For boys like me are all, you see,
Going to be grown men:
And if we grow and do not *know*,
Well, what would happen then?

GOOD-NIGHT.

GOOD-NIGHT, Nurse; you don't know where I'm
going.

Good-night, Mother; you can't come with me.
I don't sleep; I go to chase the squirrels
On the top of the very tallest tree.

Great White Owl, he waits outside the window.
'Tu-whit, tu-whit,' don't you hear him call?
On his back I cuddle in the feathers;
He takes care, and never lets me fall.

In the sky the little stars are dancing,
Glow-worms light us as we fly along;
In the woods 'tis very, very quiet,
Only flowers ring their bells, ding-dong.

Now I know the holes the squirrels live in,
For they drop their nuts upon my head;
They jump out, and as we race together,
All the birds wake and look out of bed.

Oh! such fun to jump upon the branches,
While the rooks scold, 'Ah, you naughty boy!'
See-saw, see-saw, swinging back and forwards,
There we play till the squirrels squeal with joy.

White Owl watches from the tallest fir-tree,
Till he sees the grey dawn in the sky;
Then he calls me, 'Come home, come, come, come
home,'
Spreads his wings, and back again we fly.

Nurse, she always leaves the shutters open;
White Owl drops me through the window-pane.
Scurry, hurry, scurry to the pillows . . .
When I wake, 'tis morning come again.

E. M. ATKINSON.

CHINNA.

By MRS. HOBART-HAMPDEN,
Author of 'The Secret Valley,' etc., etc.
(Continued from page 66.)

THE raft grounded at this moment on the shores of the island, and Chinna scrambled on to the rocks, and began to climb towards the summit. Brian watched him until he disappeared on the further side, and then he could hear Chinna's voice raised questioningly, and another voice answering. Almost every word was audible, so still was the day.

'Oh, Wonder-worker, come to our village,' said the voice that wasn't Chinna's. 'Come, O mighty hunter, and save us from the destroyer.'

'And whose anger have ye now aroused, O people of little worth?' Chinna demanded in a superior and condescending fashion.

'The anger of the great one of the forests. He whose name we may not speak. Lo, yesterday did he come to our village when all worked in the fields save the very old and the very young. Very softly he came, creeping up the village street, and entered the empty house of the chief among us, and the wind shut to the door behind him. And all day he slept, and none knew of his presence. And in the evening we returned; and as the headman, all unaware, would have entered his dwelling, forth sprang the great one and caught him by the arm.'

'Did he kill?' Chinna asked.

'The headman he spared; he has not yet tasted of human flesh. But he slew of our herd. A fine cow. A fat cow. One of the two that are mine.' And, at this, the strange voice rose in a wail. 'And then he drank from the tank which is beside the peepul-tree,' it went on. 'And, afterwards, he returned to the house. Come and slay him while yet he is heavy with meat. 'Twill be an easy task.' And now the voice wheedled. 'Most simple indeed.'

'Um,' said Chinna. 'Then surely there is no need for a mighty hunter, one who is worthy of a rich reward. Deal ye with the great one of the forests yourselves since ye deem it but child's play to do so.'

And at that there came the sound of footsteps returning towards the raft, and the strange voice shrieked, 'Ask what reward thou deemest fit, thou master of the great ones. Only come and save us. Oh, leave us not to perish.'

CHAPTER VI.

CHINNA, it seemed, was moved by this appeal, for he came to a halt, and began to bargain. And, when he had arranged that he was to receive a new axe, three hens, a kid, and enough silver to make two bangles for Mrs. Chinna, he finally agreed to face the great one.

'When the sun is setting for the second time I come,' he announced then.

'Delay not. Return with me even now,' the strange voice implored.

But Chinna answered, 'There are matters which must first receive due attention. I must speak with the spirits of the forest that they may be graciously disposed and lend me their aid. The great one will doubtless kill again on the second day. When meat is plentiful, he will eat of it, fresh and fresh. Drive the herd past his dwelling between noon and sunset to-morrow that he may feed ere I come.'

'My other cow. Without doubt it is my other cow he will choose,' the stranger moaned.

'What is that to me?' said Chinna, loftily. 'Will ye not all sit safe within your houses while I face the great one in his strength? It is for me, therefore, to choose the manner of that facing and the moment.'

The strange voice died away in doleful sighs, and Chinna added, 'Go now, and look not behind you. It is not meet that any should see the way that I take.' And in a little while Brian could hear the splash-splash of a paddle from the further side of the island. And presently Chinna came scrambling down towards the raft again, his face all twisted into thoughtful lines.

But at sight of Brian he began to smile, and waved his hand as a king might wave it. 'Ye heard?' he asked. 'Ye heard them ask for my aid? Now it is plain how great I am. I, Chinna, the hunter; I, Chinna, lord even of the lords of the forest.'

And he tossed his little axe up into the air, and caught it again, and gave a short, sharp yell. And the splashes of the paddle, which were getting more distant each moment, grew extremely hurried.

'I heard,' said Brian. 'But I didn't understand what you were talking about. Who is the great one?'

'The great one?' said Chinna, and his voice was tinged with awe. 'It is the striped one. I may not speak his name. He who walks by night. He who feeds on the flesh of beasts; and, sometimes, on the flesh of man.'

Brian understood now. It was a tiger of which Chinna was speaking. Most natives of India think it is unlucky to mention tigers or snakes, or any dangerous creature by name. They hold it is wiser instead to use a descriptive title.

'And is there a striped one in the village?' Brian asked, not liking to say 'tiger,' lest he should vex Chinna. 'But how can you kill it?' he went on, 'with only a bow and arrow?'

'I shall kill the great one with a poisoned arrow,' Chinna explained. 'Such an arrow as I brought from the hut last night, the head of which had poison smeared on it. When he has fed full, and goes to the water to drink, then I will hide within reach. And if the spirits are kind—as kind they have been in the past—I will slay him. Thus did my father with a bear, using the very bow that now I use. Often has he told me the tale besides the camp-fires of my youth.'

He took up the paddle, and began to urge the raft away from the island; and, simultaneously, Brian questioned eagerly, 'Will you take me with you? Oh, Chinna, do take me with you! Oh, do, do let me come.'

'Nay,' said Chinna firmly. 'Such hunting is for grown men only. Moreover, to find a place in which to hide may be difficult. Perchance I must remain exposed to view. Me, the great one may take for one of the village people who are beneath his notice. But a white face and strange clothes might stir him to suspicion.'

And no amount of pleading would turn Chinna's 'No' into 'Yes,' and it was a dejected and gloomy Brian who followed the little man to the clearing. Frederick was playing on the outskirts, so busy with some wonderful game that he scarcely noticed his brother. But Nancy came running to meet Brian, very full of the happy morning she had spent. Mrs. Chinna had taught her how to cook rice so that each grain was plump and white and soft, and separate from its fellows. And had let her grind grain in a little handmill. And, together, they had gathered certain fruits, which, it seemed, Chinna had need of, and had collected more firewood. And had chased away the monkeys which had persecuted the goat until she had taken refuge in the hut. 'And this evening,' said Nancy happily, 'I am going to learn how to milk.'

And then she noticed Brian's mournful expression, and at once she began to question him anxiously. Nancy always had a great stock of sympathy ready for anybody who might require it. 'Is anything wrong, Brian? Didn't you enjoy yourself this morning?' she asked.

'Oh, yes, I enjoyed myself,' said Brian, with added gloom. And then out came his grievance with a rush. 'Chinna's going on a tiger hunt. There's a tiger in a village near here, and it's eating the village cows, one by one. And Chinna's going to kill it with a poisoned arrow, and he won't take me with him.'

'Oh, I'm so sorry,' said Nancy, trying very hard to be as disappointed as Brian evidently expected her to be, but not succeeding very well because she could not help feeling relieved also.

And Brian, well aware of this, accepted consolation with a somewhat aggrieved air. And, to himself, he said, 'I'm not going to stop behind. I'm not. I must go with Chinna. I simply must. Somehow or other, I'll find a way.'

(Continued on page 82.)



"Chinna scrambled on the rocks and began to climb towards the summit."