

turn. It was a dull, close evening, with thunder in the lowering sky, and our bicyclist found it rather sweltering work to make his way up the hills that had to be faced every now and then. It occurred to him how such exercise might have the effect of making his hands a bit shaky, so it would not be the best preparation for a fight. Also the sky was growing blacker and blacker above, and there came a distant rumble of thunder. If it were going to rain, he had better turn back at once, before his half-hour was up.

He had not made up his mind on this point, when down came the rain in a sudden plump. Lionel got off the road, hastening to stand up beneath a tree not far off. There he stood, while the shower poured round him with a downright vehemence that might well drive any traveller to shelter. Soon it began to drip through the branches of his leafy umbrella, as he stood fidgeting, looking at his watch, and calculating how long he could afford to wait here if the rain did not stop.

It lasted at its worst only ten minutes or so, being the skirt of a black thunderstorm he could see drifting off over the wooded hills beyond. But before it was over, Lionel had taken the road again, making for home with all speed. It would never do for a bold warrior to be afraid of getting wet.

The shower soon passed, but it had given such a liberal watering to the roads that they made heavy going, and Lionel found it harder work now than on his way out.

"It was mostly up hill, so now I shall have the going down," was his reflection, as he treadled away through the fresh mud.

What had become of that village and that roadside inn he had passed on the way out?

As he slackened speed to look about for Lyndhurst Church spire, which ought to present itself somewhere as a landmark, the clouds cleared, to let out a great rim of golden light, edging the horizon in front of him. Could that be the sunset? If so, he was surely on the wrong tack. He knew enough of the geography of the New Forest to understand that he ought to be making southwards towards the sea, and not westwards, as his course now took him. Aldhurst, where he lived, lay in the very heart of the forest, and he had set out in a northward direction.

"I am certain this isn't the way I came. I must have taken a wrong turn somewhere or other," said he to himself. And the next bend of the road brought him on what he recognised as the most famous point of the New Forest.

Through the trees, in a hollow, he saw the drenched canvas screen of a cocoa-nut pitch, where, only the day before yesterday, he and Fred Bromfield had bowled at cocoa-nuts with such success that the proprietor lost his temper and would not let them try any more. And there, sure enough, on the other side of the road, was the Rufus Stone, an ugly dwarf obelisk, marking the traditional scene of the death of that Norman king killed by Sir Walter Tyrrell's arrow—a very doubtful story, in which the only certain fact is that William Rufus died, having lived in such a way that it was not much to be wondered at if somebody took the chance to kill him; though, perhaps, poor Tyrrell, who has borne the blame in so many

his friend Bromfield for chalking him as a descendant of a murderer.

This hollow, in fine weather, is seldom without visitors, tourists, excursionists, and their hangers-on. But the rain had driven them all away, and Lionel found himself here alone, hardly knowing which way to turn. This he knew, that the Rufus Stone was near the northern edge of the forest, miles from Aldhurst. When he looked at his watch, to see that it was past six o'clock, he might well be concerned about being late for the appointment he had made. And what, then, would that rudo Hampshire lout say to him, after his so scornfully declaring that the backwardness was like to be the other way on?

Lionel made haste to fly from that spot as hotly as Walter Tyrrell must have done if he really killed the Red King. But Tyrrell had one advantage over this descendant of his, in a steed that did not mind mud.

"The feathered race on pinions skim the air.
Not so the lobster, and still less the bear."

So says a certain poet; and he might have found a term of more forcible comparison, had bicycles been invented in his day, and had he ever had to force one up a soft hill after a heavy shower. Well for one in such a case that he have not a ruthless foe hard at his heels! Lionel's foe, so far as he knew, was rather in the opposite direction; what he feared was not to come up with him in time, and with dismay he remembered his own stinging taunt—

"Sure to find some excuse for saving his bacon!"

(To be continued.)

A ROMANCE OF THE DOCKS.

NOWADAYS when parties of our boys make periodical visits to the "Zoo," the Natural History Museum, and other similar places, with a view to amusement and instruction combined, it has often seemed to me a pity that the great docks at the East End of London could not also be thus visited.

Some may raise the cry at once that the docks are so "dirty." Be that as it may, on this particular day of which I am speaking, the bright May sun was shining on the water, and glistening through the masts and cordage, transforming the usually dull wharves into brilliant Turneresque pictures. There was, moreover, an indefinable smell—if it could be so called—pervading the air, a combined essence of much and varied merchandise, seasoned with that rotten, marsh-gaseous odour, peculiar to riverside premises, which, strange as it may seem, is far from disagreeable.

Down one side of the quay there were moored several large ocean-going steamers, discharging cargo, accompanied by an unceasing rattle of chains and much shouting.

Here was a vessel just arrived from the East Indies, with a cargo which seemed to be composed of a miscellaneous assortment of odds and ends. Piles of mangy-looking hides, fantastically distorted timber, and huge bundles of rattans were scattered about in choice profusion. By the way, these piles of timber are often responsible for many curious stowaways—not of the two-legged kind, but of the six, eight, ten, and "nobody knows how many" legged

kind, who make their way on board, and stow themselves snugly away in some dark corner.

I remember once seeing come up from the hold of an old tub of a sailing ship, just returned from Bunnah, one of the largest spiders I have ever set eyes on. It fastened itself on the arm of one of the men unloading, who screamed like a woman at the touch of the repulsive thing, while his mates hung round, too frightened to offer any assistance. At last, however, it was knocked off, and fell into the water, from which it never returned, thus robbing the "Zoo" of a valuable and rare specimen. Centipedes, and other fearsome beasties turn up galore, while snakes are very often discovered.

Farther down are two American cattle-boats. They have discharged the cattle lower down the river, and are now unloading miscellaneous cargo. Half-sacks of flour, bearing somewhat euphonious titles on their sides, are coming rapidly down a shoot over the ship's side. It would be well if those rabid spirits who talk so glibly about war with the United States could take a walk down to the docks and see the thousands and thousands of sacks of flour that come into this country every week, the number of which is increasing by leaps and bounds. It would soon be seen by what ties the two countries are bound—ties, not only of kinship, but of mutual dependence.

Standing in one of the sheds are some round dark brown objects. These are cakes of greaves, or tallow scrap as it is called in

America, being the remnants from tallow-melting pressed into cakes and imported over here, to be used principally for dog- and poultry-feeding.

Those floating grain-elevators, for unloading and measuring grain in bulk, are marvellous in the rapidity with which they unload the ships. There is not space enough here to explain the method of working. Suffice it to say that the elevator is floated alongside, a pipe is let down into the loose grain, which is forced up by pneumatic pressure into hoppers, which, immediately the requisite quantity is obtained, open automatically, and the grain is shot into the lighter below.

Though harmless enough to look at, these bales of compressed jute form very treacherous cargo, as the ss. *Missouri* found to her cost some time ago, when a fire broke out in her hold, caused by the heating of some jute bales, and in spite of the strenuous efforts of all concerned it could not be got under (in a double sense) until the ship had been scuttled in Swansea harbour.

What a strange, worm-eaten ship this is unloading coconuts, by means of a hand-worked derrick! On her stern there is an undecipherable name, written in straggling yellow characters. A shaggy-looking dog prowls up and down the dirty deck, barking ferociously at all new-comers. The crew are still more shaggy and uncouth, and there seems little in common between them and the smart, well-dressed men of the

Atlantic liners lower down. Yet these men are fine sailors, and the rotten little vessel has braved many a terrible storm, that has sadly crippled her powerful sisters.

What a strange fascination these old wooden sailing ships have! Like old manor-houses, there always seems some mystery lurking within them. I remember once the captain of a vessel which at one time ran between Singapore and Borneo, and other ports in the Eastern Archipelago, telling me the story of a strange mystery which had occurred on his ship.

As is often the case, several of his men had deserted while in one of the ports, and he was hard pressed to find substitutes. Among the miscellaneous lot he was compelled to engage, was a rat-faced little Chinaman, with an unpronounceable name, whose whole earthly possessions appeared to be contained in a square box, made of some pungent-smelling wood, which he guarded with jealous care. Many of the men endeavoured to draw from him the secret of the box, but they were met with such threatening scowls that they soon left him alone, with one exception. This was a half-bred Dyak, who persistently pestered the evil-looking Celestial with his clumsy jokes.

Nothing, however, came of it, until one night the sleepy watch were awakened by a shrill yell, of such import that it almost paralysed its hearers. Rushing forward, quickly followed by the men from below, they found the Dyak lying face upward, with wide-open eyes gazing into space. By his side was the Chinaman's mysterious box, with one side ripped out; while in his hand was a short knife, which he had evidently used to force open the box. There was no wound on his body, but his face was swollen almost beyond recognition, and the eyes, shining ghastly in the moonlight, were almost starting from their sockets.

The box lay undisturbed, until at last one of the men, taking a lantern, peeped into it. Inside there was absolutely nothing save a tiny heap of dust, like pale-coloured snuff; but strange to say, while it was being examined, a peculiar breeze came through the rigging, and the next moment the dust was gone! And so was the Chinaman, for he was never seen again. Whether he was

killed and fell overboard in the scuffle, or whether, as the sailors believed, the box contained an evil spirit, which, after killing the Dyak, had spirited away the Chinaman, was never known. One peculiar circumstance was that on the deck, by the side of the box, there was burnt in the wood a peculiar round mark, as if it had been seared with a hot iron.

This tale, although it may cause some merriment by reason of the supernatural in it, was told me in perfect seriousness and good faith, and I firmly believe the main incidents are true.

We now pass over a swing-bridge, and there in front are the timber sheds. These huge bauiks covered with grime and dust are mahogany; and they have been lying here for many years, maturing. The large piano-forte and billiard-table makers have here a stock worth a fabulous amount.

Some of the logs are so huge, that it looks almost impossible to move them. But overhead is a powerful travelling crane, and this comparatively small machine will haul one of these massive logs from place to place with a dexterity almost human.

To those boys with a taste for mechanics, this is indeed a paradise. Cranes of all sorts and sizes, hydraulic and steam; swing-bridges which, by the movement of a small lever, swing round as easily as a well-oiled garden gate; and many other wonderful devices, such as floating derricks, capable of lifting many tons, steam dredgers, etc., which alas! I have no space to describe here.

The younger children, I am afraid, will be disappointed at not seeing anything of a more animated nature. I know one little chap who seemed to think that the "Docks" must be a kind of free-and-easy Zoological Gardens, where wonderful birds, beasts, and reptiles wandered free. He was shown the big ships; but they failed to impress him. The big cranes were as nought, and at last he collapsed with a sorrowful wail of "There ain't no parrots!"

No, "there ain't no parrots" to be seen. In fact, this trade in living animals is principally centred at Liverpool, although even now the naturalists' shops in St. George's Street will supply one with anything, from lions to lepidoptera.

Although this trade is nothing nearly so profitable as it used to be, yet there are many men who still make considerable additions to their wages by bringing over various wild creatures. There is, however, a terrible waste of life in so doing, as fully ninety per cent. of these poor birds and animals die on the voyage over.

Here is something that will please Master and Miss "Sweet Tooth." These sticky-looking brown blobs are "skins" of Muscavado sugar from Barbados. Most of the skins are broken, and the quays are covered with a vile treacle-like substance. There is not much resemblance between this stuff and the white, sparkling cubes used at tea-time; such a vast difference in appearance does the refining process make.

"Raw" sugar comes from a variety of places, and each different sugar carries its own price in the market—"Demerara," "Peruvians," "Mauritius," "Surinams," "Egyptians," "Barbados," etc. The finest sort of Demerara sugar is, I believe, styled "Choice Bloomy."

Only the other day this particular spot was inundated with currants (kindly remember to spell it with an "a," Mr. Printer, or I may be accused of dishing up an antiquated pun). They had been shipped in barrels, which latter appear to have been somewhat damaged in transit; and consequently the place was covered with this toothsome grocery.

It is a marvel to me how the sticklebacks exist in the filthy water in the basins; yet they do, and appear to thrive; and these "sparrows of the water" may be seen swimming about, as cheeky and perky as if they were in the waters of some beautiful clear stream, instead of this thick, muddy liquid.

But we must now depart, as it is nearly closing time; but ere we pass through the big gates, let us not forget the small iron box which silently appeals to us for our help in maintaining the lifeboats round our coasts. Need I say there is nothing more deserving of our sympathy than this grand and noble cause? and if, my lads, you should at any time visit the docks, and have some coppers burning big holes in your pockets, don't forget to exercise a little self-denial in aid of the lifeboats and their crews.

SOME MOVING FIGURES, AND HOW TO MAKE THEM.

By H. F. HOBDEN,

Author of "A Toy Steamer, and How to Make It," "The 'Boy's Own' Locomotive," etc., etc.

PART II.

THE arms are to be cut out in pairs locked together, as in fig. 5, and may be either carved or flat, and are wired on in the same way. Drill a fine hole through each pair of arms at *a*, and make them about $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches long from shoulder to shoulder.

The head *b* ought to be carved out from the solid, and make the heads rather full sized, say 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, as a little top weight is of advantage, and they should be made to look as comical as possible; cut the base of the neck slightly curved and run a slit across at *c* with a saw, and another at *d* in the neck (fig. 3), and join the head to the body by glueing in a strip of leather or couple of folds of calico and allow to dry; have the two portions of neck close together, so that there is only a very slight amount of play.

Now paint them with oil colour to look bright; say with blue knee-breeches and red stockings, black boots and striped jerseys.

When quite dry put a length of black

thread through the holes *a*, fasten a bent pin to one end and hook it into a curtain or round the leg of a table or chair about six

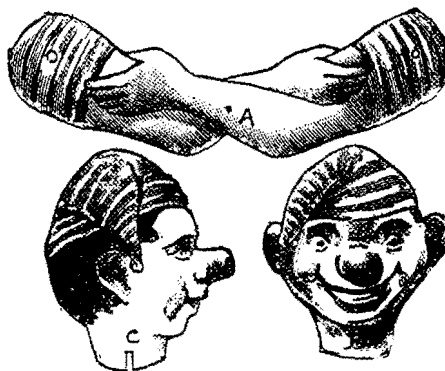


FIG. 5.

inches up from the ground, and by holding the thread at the other end in your hand, with the figures about midway between the chair and yourself, you can easily cause them to perform most amusing antics; and if the light is not too strong, the thread being black is invisible, and to an onlooker they seem to be acting alone.

Those mysterious things advertised as the "Manx Mannikins" you have perhaps heard of; they were described as being actually alive, and were sold in closed boxes with the lids pasted down, which fact alone ought surely to have raised something more than a suspicion on the part of the intending purchaser; but doubtless many a gulleless youth and grass-green country maiden were taken in by the carefully worded advertisement, and paid down their money for the thing that was described as being actually alive, and that would bleed if pricked, was also capable of feeling pain, and was more-