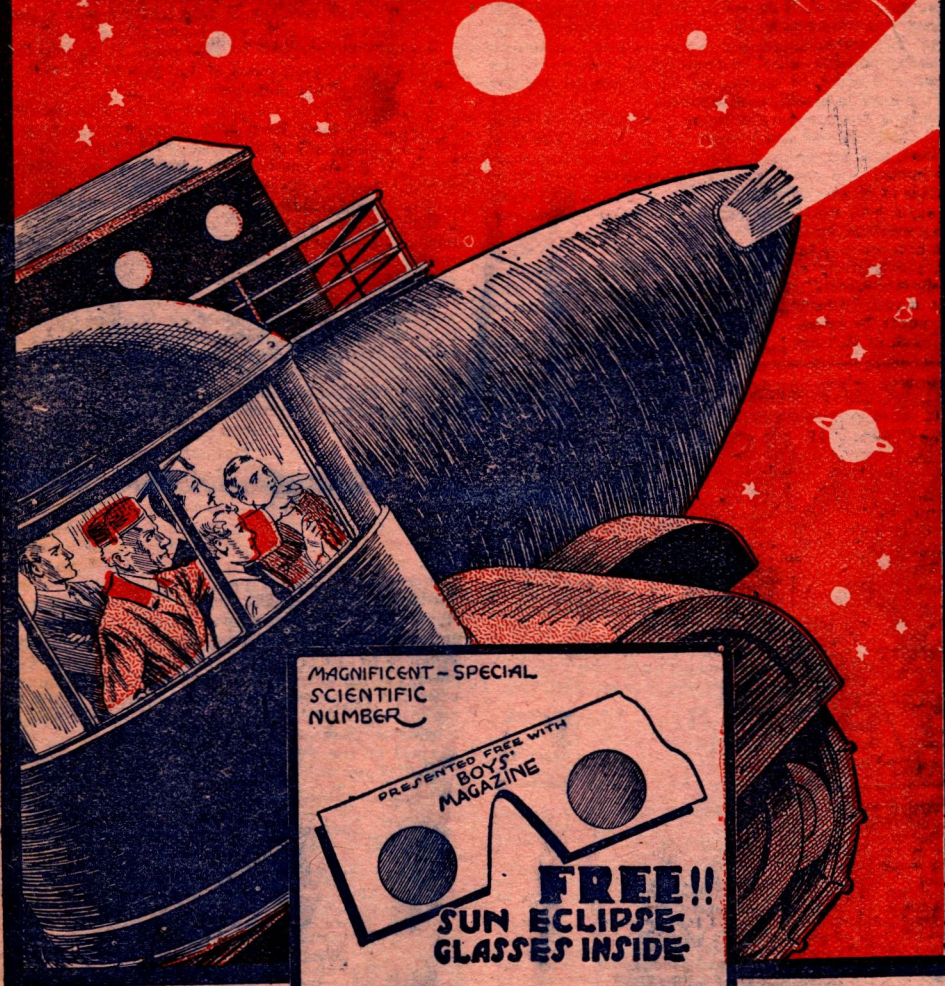


FREE SUN ECLIPSE GLASSES GIVEN INSIDE.

Boys' Magazine

2¢
EVERY SATURDAY



MAGNIFICENT - SPECIAL
SCIENTIFIC
NUMBER

PRESENTED FREE WITH
BOYS'
MAGAZINE

FREE!!
SUN ECLIPSE
GLASSES INSIDE


THE PLANET SCHOOLBOYS. GRAND NEW SERIAL TO-DAY.

Vol. X.—No. 278—July 2, 1927.

REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION
BY CANADIAN MAGAZINE POST.



The Eclipse



All About the Scientific Marvel that is to be seen on June 29, and How to Use the Special "Boys' Magazine" Sun Eclipse Glasses.

ON June 29, an event that many of the greatest men in the world have been looking forward to for the period of their lives takes place. You've read about it in the newspapers, you've heard about it at school, and, last week, when the Editor was telling you about this Extra Special Number of the *Boys' Magazine*, he gave you one or two interesting facts about the chief astronomical event of the decade. I refer, of course, to the eclipse of the sun by the earth's satellite—the moon.

Only a fragment—the moon, compared with the main body of our universe which is called the sun. Indeed, this minor body is many times smaller than the earth, and much nearer to us than any other matter in space. Yet on the 29th, at about 6-24 a.m., it is going to shut from our sight for a brief moment the nebulous sphere without whose light we could not live for any length of time.

Unfortunately only those readers who live within a certain "belt" will witness a total eclipse. The rest of you, however, will still see enough to remember for years to come.

Think of it, boys! All over the country hundreds

of thousands of tense people will be peering skywards. Some through special astronomical telescopes, refractoscopes, and the like; others through pieces of smoked glass. The former is probably beyond the scope of most readers of this paper; the latter is unsatisfactory.

You, however, will be fortunate in possessing a pair of the special glasses which you will find in this copy of the *Boys' Magazine*.

I have tested them and find that they are admirably suited for the purpose, and when I am taking my own scientific observations, photographs, etc., I'll think of you lads all over the country getting a first-class view of the event.

You'll find it quite simple to use the glasses. But a word of warning is necessary. Don't look at the sun without their aid as the uncanny and powerful radiance caused by the corona is harmful to your eyesight.

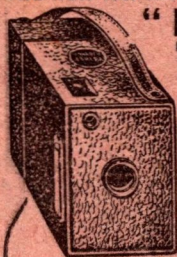
On the night of the twenty-eighth, if you go to bed a couple of hours earlier you'll wake up fresher, in time for the momentous experience. There's no need to stay up all night, you know—you can leave that to the astronomers, who will be studying the rest of the planets all night through, in the hope of learning something fresh about the wonders of the universe in which the earth spins!

Those of you who have cameras can also have a shot at getting a photograph of the phenomenon, though it will be a matter of good luck rather than good judgment if you succeed in getting a good picture with the ordinary hand variety. Still, it is worth trying, and I should think that, using ordinary film, a twenty-fifth of a second exposure—that is the usual speed of the ordinary snapshot camera's shutters—will be sufficient. But don't be disappointed, boys, if you don't make a success of it.

Remember, all the great astronomers from Copernicus to Einstein, suffered disappointment after disappointment before they finally triumphed over the immense mysteries with which they were confronted. And, anyway, you'll be able to get a first-class view of the wonderful happening—with the aid of the *Boys' Magazine* unique present of a pair of Free Eclipse Glasses.

GREAT RECORD BARGAIN !!

THE NEW 1927 IMPROVED MODEL OF THE FAMOUS



"MONARCH" Regd. DE LUXE LARGE CAMERA

Think of it!! Photography and all its joys at such trifling cost. Our enormous sales make this wonderful offer possible. These Cameras are British made and fitted with Genuine GUARANTEED MENISCUS LENS, Reflex Viewfinder, Nickel-plated Spring Lever Shutter, Black Japanned Leather Guard, and Flexible Leatherette Handle.

Every Camera is absolutely GUARANTEED TO TAKE PERFECT LARGE PHOTOS.

Size $3\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Supplied complete with all Accessories: Best Quality Plate, Developing and Printing OUTFIT, with easy instructions for use. Send P.O. 2/- To-day for Complete Camera and OUTFIT!

SELLING IN THOUSANDS! TESTIMONIALS GALORE!
W. J. Thomas, Esq., writes: "Developed and printed photo, and think it as good a photo as if it were taken with a camera which cost £3."
Miss E. Le Chement writes: "Thank you for the Camera. I had never handled any before; I was astonished to see the result of my first effort. The picture is as good as that done by a proper photographer."
D. Smallwood, Esq., writes: "I have been able to obtain most splendid photographs with your 'Monarch' Camera."
Miss P. Syms writes: "I received 'Monarch' Camera. I was surprised at the result. To look at the snaps one would think they were taken by an expert instead of an amateur."

DON'T DELAY!! GET YOUR "MONARCH" NOW!!
Write for Richly Illus. Catalogue, Hundreds of Big Bargains, Drapery, Jewellery, Cutlery, Novelties, etc., Post Free The Leeds Bargain Co. (B.M.), 31, Kendal Lane, Leeds.



WE TRUST YOU

A trifling deposit is all you remit in advance for a world-famed Mead "Marvel" 400A Cycle. After riding the cycle a month you pay balance in small monthly payments. Sent Packed FREE and Carriage Paid. "MARVEL" 400 £4 19s 6d CASH. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Factory-soiled cycles astoundingly CHEAP. Tyres and Accessories at popular prices. Write TO-DAY for sumptuously illustrated Catalogue, and reduced wholesale prices of 28 New Season's models.

Mead CYCLE CO. INC. (Dept. B.514)
SPARKBROOK, BIRMINGHAM

COMMENCING TO-DAY, BOYS!
Our Magnificent New Serial Tale of School Life and Fun and
Mysterious Scientific Happenings.

THE PLANET SCHOOLBOYS



TELLING OF A WONDROUS STARSHIP SAILING
AMIDST THE AWESOME PLANETS OF THE SOLAR
SYSTEM.

By the Popular School Story Writer—
EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

A Bit Too Steep!

"Oh, draw it mild, Barry!" protested Don Masters amusedly. "You don't expect us to swallow that yarn, surely?"

"He may expect, dear old fellow, but that's about as far as it will get," smiled the Hon. Freddie Trevor. "I mean to say, an airship without engines, what? Absolutely not, Barry, old sportsman!"

Barry Drewe shrugged his shoulders and remained perfectly calm.

"I didn't expect you to believe it, anyhow," he said. "But it just happens to be a fact—that's all. Uncle Roxley is one of the cleverest scientists living, and he has been working on this invention of his for years."

The chums of Study One in the Fourth Form at Castleton School were standing in the old quadrangle, in the shade of the clock tower. It was a half-holiday,

and the summer's afternoon was hot and cloudless. Most of the fellows were out on the playing fields, or boating on the river, or lazily reading in some shady nook.

"You don't seem quite yourself to-day, Barry," went on Donald Masters, looking curiously at his chum. "You seem sort of—well, excited."

"Absolutely!" said the Hon. Freddie. "I've noticed the same thing."

"That's because I *am* excited," smiled Barry Drewe. "And before the afternoon has gone you'll understand why."

Barry was the captain of the Fourth—a sturdy, upright youngster of about fifteen, with well-cut features and curly, brown hair. He was about the most popular fellow in the Lower School, and it had occasioned some surprise that afternoon because he

All the characters in the stories printed in this paper are fictitious: the names do not refer to any living person or persons.

had refused to play cricket. He hadn't given any explanation, either, and both his chums were puzzled.

The Hon. Freddie Trevor was a slim, aristocratic youngster, immaculately attired. In direct contrast, Don Masters was totally indifferent as to his personal appearance.

"Here comes the Firm," remarked Masters, as he glanced round, and observed three figures approaching. "By Jove! I wonder what Freeman will say when we tell him about this marvellous airship of your uncle's, Barry!"

"He'll probably think you're crazy," replied Barry Drewe, with a laugh. "Not that I care."

The Firm came to a halt in the shade of the clock tower. They were the chums of Study Four of the Fourth, and they were known throughout Castleton as "the Firm" because their names happened to be Freeman, Hardy, and Willis. George Freeman was the leader, and he was an aggressive-looking junior, with red hair and a rugged, forceful face.

For several terms there had only been Freeman and Willis in Study Four, and then a new fellow named Leonard Hardy had arrived. Some wit had suggested that he should be placed in Study Four, in order to make the Firm complete. Thereafter, Freeman and his chums had been dubbed "Messrs. Freeman, Hardy & Willis, Ltd."

"What's the idea of this, Drewe?" demanded George Freeman bluntly. "Why aren't you playing cricket? What about the match against Redwood?"

"Sorry, old man, but I can't play this afternoon," replied Barry.

"Why not?" asked Freeman sternly. "You're Junior skipper, aren't you? You're at the top of your form, and—"

"Yes, I know that, old son, but I'm excited about my uncle's airship," interrupted Barry Drewe. "Yes, I admit it. I'm jolly excited—a lot more excited than I look."

Freeman, who always imagined that he was the most important fellow in the Fourth, gave an expressive snort.

"What is there to get excited about?" he asked tartly. "We've heard a few run-ons about your Uncle Roxley, but you don't expect us to believe 'em, do you?"

"There may be something in them, after all, Freeman," put in Jack Willis. "Old Jerry has been talking during these last two or three days, and he says that Sir Clarence Bagshot has put tens of thousands of pounds into Professor Drewe's airship."

"Well, he can afford to," said Freeman. "By all that I can hear, Sir Clarence Bagshot is a millionaire."

"He's a fine sportsman," said Barry Drewe admiringly. "A wonderful explorer, and a great big game hunter. He's an old Castleton boy, too. Old Jerry used to be his fag in those days."

"Good old Jerry!" said Hardy. "One of the best, you know. Any friend of his is a friend of ours!"

"Old Jerry" happened to be Mr. Jerome Mannering, the master of the Fourth Form. He was quite a young man, and he was fairly worshipped by his boys. Mr. Mannering believed in being on the friendliest possible terms with his young charges, and he even allowed them to call him "Jerry" to his face. And never did they take advantage of this.

"But what is there special about this giddy airship?" demanded Freeman impatiently.

"Everything is special about it," replied Barry Drewe dreamily. "In the first place, there aren't any engines in it—and the whole ship is as big as a private yacht. It's made of metal, too, and it weighs tons and tons."

And yet there aren't any planes!" grinned Masters.

"And not even a propeller, or a gasbag, or an engine," went on Barry calmly. "Sounds impossible, doesn't it?"

"It sounds dotty!" snorted Freeman. "You hopeless chump! You don't expect us to believe this drivel, do you?"

"By Jove!" said Barry breathlessly. "There go the chimes! Three o'clock!"

"What about it?" asked Hardy. "It's high time we were on Little Side."

But Barry Drewe had moved out into the sunshine, and he was gazing into the blue sky, over in the direction of Colchester. Castleton School was situated about fifteen miles from Colchester, in the picturesque country of North Essex. The scenery in this district was particularly charming.

"What are you looking for?" demanded Freeman curiously.

My uncle's airship!" replied Barry. "I didn't mean to say anything until it actually appeared—but you fellows are so disbelieving that I can't keep quiet any longer. Uncle Roxley told me that he was planning to fly over Castleton this afternoon at exactly three o'clock, and—"

"Look!" yelled Masters, pointing. "What's that?"

A chorus of shouts went up. For, sure enough, something which gleamed and glistened could be seen in the sky—a great thing of metal, and it was coming noiselessly towards the school, gliding through the air, at a height of about a thousand feet, with apparently no effort!

The Monster of the Sky!

BARRY DREWE'S eyes were blazing.

"Now what about it?" he shouted exultantly.

"Do you believe now, or do you still think that I'm off my rocker?"

"But this is too absolutely absolute!" ejaculated the Hon. Freddie. "I mean, what? Great goodness, and all that sort of thing!"

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Freeman amazedly.

They stared over the school buildings—into the blue sky. Yes, there it was, beyond all question. One or two of those juniors rubbed their eyes, wondering if they were asleep or awake. For this thing was altogether too staggering to be believed.

There was something incredible about it—something stunning to the very senses.

Barry Drewe had told them what to expect, but they had only laughed at him. There is an old saying to the effect that seeing is believing. Yet these schoolboys were seeing, and they found it very difficult to believe.

An airship of the conventional type they could understand. A gasbag—planes—whirling propellers. Those things they could accept, and understand. But this vessel which hovered in the sky was unlike anything they had ever heard of or conceived of. It seemed opposed to every law of Nature.

"Oh, it's all rot!" said Freeman breathlessly. "But it's *there!*" said Barry. "It's coming right over us, Freeman!"

"I know it!" growled Freeman. "But it's all rot, all the same!"

And George Freeman's state of mind was understandable. He saw this marvel, but he found it impossible to credit it.

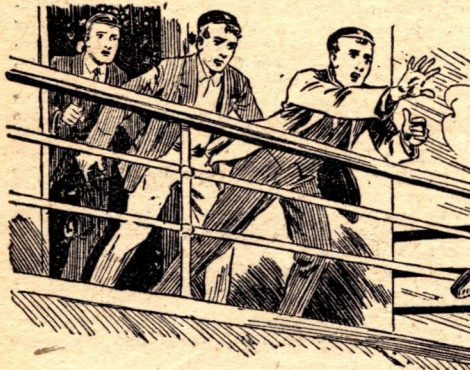
And small wonder! For the aircraft which now came soaring silently overhead was not an aircraft at all. It had no right to be in the air. The law of gravity forbade it—and yet there it was!

The air monster was a thing of metal—white, gleaming metal that reflected the sun from a thousand

and one points. She was rakish-looking, too—and impressive. Something like a cruiser, with sharply-pointed bows.

Fore and aft there were big tractor wheels, and the upper section of this extraordinary craft was provided with a very conventional-looking promenade deck, guarded by a rail. There were deck cabins, too—saloons and lounges. Right in the centre was a kind of dome, although this could not be clearly seen, as it was at the top. And by this time the airship was practically overhead.

There she soared, perhaps a thousand feet up now, and her speed had become considerably less. She was gliding along effortlessly, and one or two figures could be seen leaning nonchalantly over the deck rail. One of them waved, and it was a signal for



THE TRAITOR OVERBOARD.—There came a concerted gasp from the schoolboys as the traitorous Count, vaulting the rails, dropped sheer down from the wonder ship. It meant suicide, for it was more than twenty thousand feet to the ground.

those boys in the quadrangle to break into a combined yell of enthusiasm and wonder.

"There's Uncle Roxley!" shouted Barry, grabbing his cap off and hurling it into the air. "Hurrah! Look, you chaps! That's Uncle Roxley, waving his hand!"

"But—but how does it keep there?" asked Freeman incredulously. "It's made of solid metal—and there aren't any propellers, or planes, or anything! Oh, rats! We must be dreaming!"

"Absolutely!" said the Hon. Freddie. "I mean dash it, this is too thick!"

Shouts could be heard from the playing fields now, and crowds of Castleton fellows were appearing in the quadrangle. Seniors were just as excited as the Fourth Formers and the fags. Everybody was staring upwards. These schoolboys hardly realised that they were a mere handful amongst hundreds of thousands. For Professor Roxley Drewe's marvellous aircraft had caused wonder and, indeed, consternation, throughout several counties that day. This was the first time that the monster had appeared in daylight—in public.

Moving with that same uncanny silence, and now increasing speed, the ship soared higher, and grew smaller and smaller in the sky. And at last it was no longer discernible.

"What does it mean, you chaps?" asked Billy Ward, the leader of Study Nine, as he came up with his two chums, Harry Jefferson and Frank Mason. "I never saw anything so marvellous in all my life!"

"It was my Uncle Roxley's airship," said Barry

cheerily. "And I might as well let you fellows into the secret now. Uncle Roxley wrote to me and told me that he was coming to Castleton to pick up old Jerry."

"What!"

"It's a fact!" went on Barry. "The airship is coming down in Farmer Thomas' meadow, between here and Hillstead. I expect it's landed by this time."

"Then—then we can get a look at her at close quarters?" asked Freeman excitedly.

"Exactly!" said Barry. "My idea is for a crowd of us to go over and have a good look at her. It's quite likely that my uncle will let us go on board, too."

"Oh, good man!"

"Hurrah!"

The juniors crowded round, more excited than ever. And, while they were all talking at once, a tall, athletic young man came striding up. He was Mr. Jerome Mannering, the master of the Fourth, and he was carrying a suitcase. There was a twinkle of amusement in his eyes as he forced his way amongst the boys.



"Now then, young 'uns—now then!" he said genially. "Not so much excitement here!"

"Is it true that you're going for a trip in that ship, sir?" shouted two or three of the juniors.

"Perfectly true," said Jerry. "My pal, Bags, is on board, and—"

"Bags?" repeated Billy Ward.

"In other words, Sir Clarence Bagshot," said Jerry. "But he hates to be called Clarence. He was known as 'Bags' at school, and he's been 'Bags' ever since. I've been invited to go on a long trip, and I'm just off to the big meadow now."

"But school isn't finished yet, sir," said Len Hardy. "There are two or three days yet before the summer holidays start."

"That's all right," said Mr. Mannering. "The Head's let me off. I hardly know how to tear myself away from you all, but I daresay I shall manage it, somehow."

And Mr. Mannering walked off, grinning amiably.

The Solar Rover.

SIR CLARENCE BAGSHOT, Bart., grinned cheerily as he wrung Jerry Mannering's hand.

"Well, well, Jerry!" he said. "Thundering

glad to see you again, old man! I'm hanged if you haven't grown fatter!"

"What rot, Bags!" said Jerry indignantly. "And fancy talking about my personal appearance at a moment like this! Do you know, Bags, I can't believe it! When I spotted this—this monstrosity five minutes ago, I thought I was crazy!"

Sir Bags chuckled.

"Well, you always were a bit touched, Jerry, weren't you?" he said coolly. "Not that I'm blaming you in this particular instance. The *Solar Rover* is enough to make anybody believe that he's off his orion."

"The *Solar Rover*?" repeated Jerry.

"Yes."

"And why 'Solar'?"

"Because she's designed to rove among the solar planets," replied Bags. "Didn't you know that, Jerry? The Professor won't be content by merely skimming over the surface of the old earth. Good lord, no! He may not look very adventurous, but you can take my word for it that he's a demon for taking chances! Says he won't be satisfied until he's had a sojourn on Mars, and has paid a trip to Jupiter, and—"

"But it is ridiculous!" interrupted Jerry, incredulously. "You're kidding, Bags, aren't you?"

"I was never more serious in my life!" said the sporting baronet. "Takes your breath away, eh? But I'm not surprised—because it is a bit staggering. But I'm used to the idea of it, old man. It seems quite ordinary to me now."

Sir Bags was a fine-looking man of about forty—a clean type of Englishman, with a bronzed face and twinkling brown eyes. He was clean-shaven, square-shouldered and as athletic as Jerry himself. The fact that he was a millionaire several times over did not worry him. He happened to be a V.C., and his record in the Great War was rather startling. But then, Bags had always been a demon for risking his life. He was a big-game hunter of renown, and there were not many corners of the earth that he had not explored.

The two men were standing on the starboard deck of the *Solar Rover*, and it was small wonder that Jerry had been nearly startled out of his wits. For at close quarters the craft looked more impressive than ever. As she stood there, in that meadow, a thing of glittering metal, she seemed much bigger, too. And she was solid—composed of heavy metal in every inch of her. The very idea of this bulk getting off the ground seemed not merely impossible, but outrageously silly. Yet Jerry Mantering had seen her in the air—floating as lightly as a feather!

"Well, come along inside," said Bags. "I notice that several interested members of the local population are trickling up to have a look at us. Well, they can look. There's no charge. And what about your boys, Jerry? I thought they'd be flocking round?"

"Oh, you can be quite certain that they'll be here within any minute," replied the master of the Fourth Form. "When they come, there'll be a problem to face. They'll want to swarm on board—"

"Well, I expect the Professor will allow them to do much as they please," said Bags. "Young Barry belongs to your Form, doesn't he? He's the Professor's nephew, and—"

"Ah, and who is this?" interrupted a voice. "Who have we here?"

Professor Roxley Drew came up, and he peered at Mr. Mantering with inquisitive interest. The Professor was a rather thin man, with hair that was slightly grey, and with eyes that twinkled with an inquiring light. He wore glasses, and he stooped slightly. His face, although leared in the extreme,

was nevertheless attractive. There was something singularly magnetic about the Professor's personality. When he smiled, his eyes crinkled up, and he had a habit of thrusting his head forward and turning it slightly on one side.

"I think you know me, Professor," smiled Jerry. "My name's Mantering—"

"Ah, yes, to be sure!" said the Professor, as he shook hands. "The young gentleman we have come here to pick up, eh? Your friend, Clarence?"

"For heaven's sake don't keep calling me Clarence!" protested the sporting baronet, with a wince. "My name's Bags. If you knew how much I loathed the name of 'Clarence,' you would have mercy on me!"

"I really must apologise, my dear fellow!" said the Professor. "It's my regrettable absentmindedness. Not, of course, that I can see anything objectionable in the name of Clarence. By no means. A splendid name—a name to be proud of. However, if you have some absurd objection to it—"

"That's all right, Professor," interrupted Bags hastily. "Jerry wants you to take him to the control-room and explain a few of the gadgets. Not that he'll understand them."

"I'd simply love to learn the ins and outs of this ship, Professor Drewe," said Jerry Mantering. "I don't mind confessing that I'm in a complete maze. It seems so—so absurd. This ship must weigh many thousands of tons."

"It does!" said Professor Roxley Drewe. "But I will warrant that you are unacquainted with the metal, eh?"

"It looks something like aluminium," said Jerry.

"It is much heavier than aluminium," said the Professor. "Many times heavier."

"And yet the ship flies at a touch of a control?" asked the schoolmaster.

"The heaviness of the metal is a matter of absolutely no consequence," explained the Professor, as he led the way into a splendidly-furnished lounge, and turned up some wide stairs.

"By my secret process, I can completely nullify the effect of the earth's attractor. Thus, at a touch, this whole vessel becomes weightless, if you understand what I mean. Gravity is the force which gives everything on earth its weight. Remove the force of gravity and any article at once becomes as light as a feather—and lighter."

"Yes, I can understand that, sir," said Mr. Mantering.

In a nutshell, my process is simply this," continued the Professor. "By certain methods—which I am sure you will forgive me for not divulging—I can reduce the earth's attraction to nil. I can go even further, and utilise solar power in such a way that my ship will rise completely off the earth, and will travel in any direction that I care to select. It is entirely controllable."

"It sounds very easy, but it is the most astounding thing I have ever heard of," said Mr. Mantering.

They went into the control-room—a great apartment of mystery, where the entire roof was one vast dome of glass.

And from outside came the excited shouts of schoolboys' voices. Barry Drewe and his chums had evidently arrived, and they were expressing their amazement at the spectacle of the *Solar Rover* as she stood there in all her majestic glory.

The Marvel of the Age.

SOMEHOW, Barry Drewe felt a sensation of ownership as he stood there, looking at the glittering aircraft. This wondrous thing had been conceived and built by his uncle! So Barry felt that he was personally concerned.

"By Jove!" said Don Masters breathlessly. "Doesn't she look ripping?"

"Yes, but why couldn't she have come down in the School grounds?" asked George Freeman. "What's the idea of making us bike a couple of miles like this?"

Barry grinned.

"You're never satisfied unless you have a grumble, eh, Freeman?" he chuckled. "I expect Uncle Roxley had a good reason for coming down here, instead of in the School grounds. But what does it matter? You fellows wait a minute, and I'll go on board."

"We want to come, too!" said Hardy.

"Yes, I know that—but I'd better get official permission from my uncle first," replied Barry. "I shan't be more than a couple of minutes. You wait here."

As he left the other Castleton fellows, he noticed that a luxurious limousine had pulled up and a dark-looking man was now walking towards the *Solar Rover*. There was something foreign about his appearance, and Barry regarded him rather curiously as he found himself walking practically by the man's side.

"Wonderful craft, isn't she, sir?" ventured the Fourth captain.

"Yes, indeed," said the stranger, with a slightly foreign accent. "You are going on board?"

"Why, yes, sir," replied Barry. "Professor Roxley Drewe is my uncle, you know."

The foreigner started slightly, and halted.

"Splendid!" he said. "You will be good enough to pay my respects to your uncle, and tell him that Count Alexis Popandos is desirous of an interview. It is of the utmost importance."

When Barry arrived on deck he was feeling just a little awed. A big ladder had been let down, and an officer in uniform guarded it. Perhaps this was why Count Popandos had spoken to Barry—knowing that he could not get on board without a specific invitation from the Professor.

The officer was a broad-shouldered man with a grinning face, and he saluted as Barry stepped on deck.

"Young Master Drewe, ain't you, sir?" he asked. "The Professor tipped me you was coming."

"That's right," said Barry. "Where can I find him?"

"Up in the control-room, I think, young gent,"

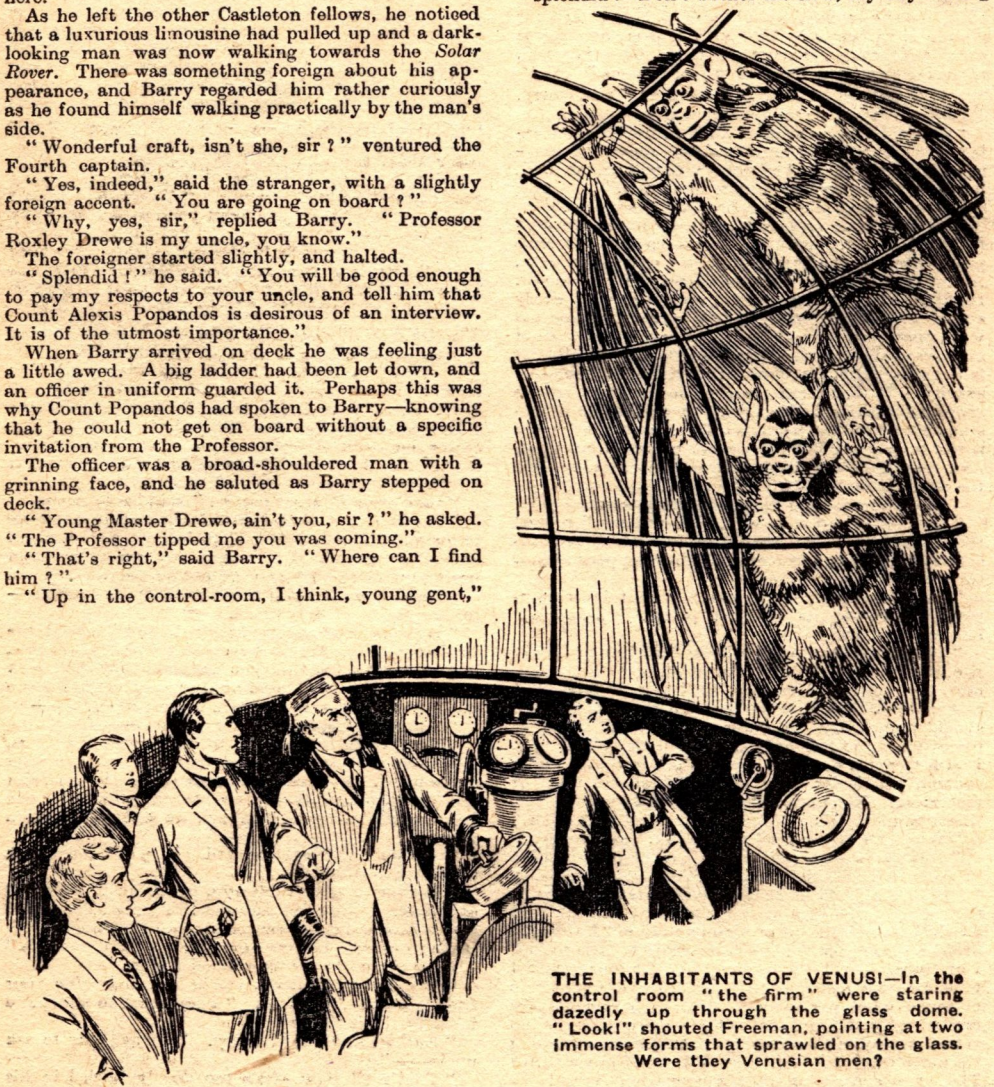
said the officer. "Straight through the lounge, and then up the stairs. You can't make any mistake."

Barry thanked him, and walked on. The officer was evidently a man of scanty education, judging by his speech—but Barry mentally decided that he must be a responsible sort of fellow, otherwise he would never be wearing officer's uniform.

The eager youngster ran lightly through the lounge, and mounted the wide stairs to the control-room. When he entered, he found his uncle talking rapidly and learnedly. Sir Bags and Jerry were listening with rapt attention. Barry stood there, more awed than ever. That wonderful apartment was, indeed, enough to make any newcomer stand and stare.

"Hallo, Uncle!" said Barry, at length.

"Eh?" said the Professor, glancing over the tops of his glasses. "Is that you, Barry? Splendid—splendid! Don't bother me now, my boy! As I



THE INHABITANTS OF VENUS!—In the control room "the firm" were staring dazedly up through the glass dome. "Look!" shouted Freeman, pointing at two immense forms that sprawled on the glass. Were they Venusian men?

was saying, Mr. Mannering, the principle is very simple after you have grasped the fact that the ether is charged with energy, and that I am capable of controlling this energy."

Jerry Mannering nodded.

"But what is the ether, Professor?" he asked.

"Ah, there we enter upon an interesting subject," said Professor Drewe. "Even I cannot tell you exactly what the ether is. I could talk for hours—"

"I'm sure you could!" interrupted Sir Bags hastily. "But let's keep to the subject, Professor! Jerry wants to know why the old *Rover* can make herself weightless."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Professor Roxley Drewe. "We must not wander from the subject. But the term 'weightless' is wrong, although I have used it myself. The weight of this vessel is several thousands of tons, and I may say that she had been built utterly regardless of weight. Her armour plating is as heavy as that of a cruiser, and she is capable of forcing her way through the densest forests, smashing down the trees as she progresses."

"And yet she can float in the air!" said Jerry. "That's what gets me, you know!"

"The thing is perfectly simple," smiled the Professor. "Far down in this ship I have motors—not ordinary electrical motors, you will understand, but energy motors of my own invention."

He turned and placed his hand on a big lever.

"At the touch of this lever, my motors are controlled," he went on. "You see, as this lever is pulled over, so the energy from the ether is utilised. And this energy is of a most peculiar character. Its first and most surprising effect is to charge every square inch of the vessel with a current. I use the word 'current' for want of a better term. It is not an electrical current, for it cannot be felt. But it is a Force which nullifies the earth's attraction—or gravity. Thus, as the lever is pulled over, so the gravity has less and less effect. You will quite understand that when the metal is fully charged the gravity is not merely nil, but has passed beyond that point. And then the forces of the ether take effect, and lift the vessel completely off the ground."

She becomes weightless?" asked Jerry.

"You can put it that way, if you please," replied the Professor. "The weight of this vessel remains exactly the same, however. All that happens is that the earth loses its power."

"And what happens if you pull that lever completely over—to its furthest point?" asked the interested schoolmaster.

"In that event, the *Solar Rover* would immediately rise from the ground, and soar at an incredible speed into the heavens," replied Professor Drewe. "I rather doubt if we should survive the ordeal. We should plunge into the outer ether, at the mercy of forces which no human being can understand. But I wish to point out that my ship is constantly under control, and is far safer than any railway train or motor car. Her motors require no fuel whatsoever, since the energy they utilise is drawn from the ether."

"Well, it's all very wonderful, sir," said Jerry.

"Nowadays you will be reading of hare-brained projects to reach the moon," continued the Professor. "I believe a party of Russian scientists are planning such a journey—in a vast rocket that will be fired off the earth by means of high-explosive. A German professor is engaged on a similar project. His rocket, I understand, will weigh something like four hundred tons, and it is reckoned that it will travel at the rate of seven miles per second. But such schemes are undoubtedly doomed to failure—since there is no actual control of these rockets. And, even supposing the moon was reached, how could there be any return? The very concussion of the explosion would be

sufficient to kill the reckless adventurers. With my vessel it is quite different, since speed is attained gradually, and in such a way that no discomfort is felt."

"But why seven miles a second in the case of these rockets?" asked Bags.

"Such a speed would be necessary in order to overcome the earth's gravitation," replied the Professor. "A slower machine would travel in a curve, and then drop back to earth. A rocket of that description must necessarily travel at a staggering speed in order to force its way through the ether. But with the *Solar Rover* it is quite different, since there is no gravitation to be overcome. My ether-motors—as I call them—solve the problems of gravity before we even leave the earth."

Bags turned to Jerry Mannering, and chuckled.

"It's no good, old man—we can't understand it," he said calmly. "So why try? Let us accept the Professor's ship, and leave the thinking to learned men. I'm quite content to take the thing as it stands."

"And—and can this ship really go out into the upper space, sir?" asked Barry Drewe. "Do you mean that it can travel to the moon, or to the planets?"

Sir Bags turned.

"Ah, here we have the first of the schoolboy contingent," he said genially. "Young Barry, eh? Professor, why don't you greet your nephew? Why don't you—"

But Sir Bags suddenly stopped. He was looking past Barry, and his gaze fell upon Count Alexis Popandos.

All Aboard!

PROFESSOR ROXLEY DREWE frowned heavily as he, too, caught sight of the intruder.

"Upon my soul!" he said angrily. "You again!"

"I crave your indulgence, Professor," said the Count earnestly, as he stepped forward. "The officer on deck allowed me to come through—believing that I was with your nephew. I confess that I took advantage—"

"Like your infernal nerve!" said Bags hotly.

"I will admit that I acted with unwarrantable impudence," said Count Popandos. "But I plead extreme urgency. Gentlemen, let me once again press you to reconsider your earlier decision. I am empowered to offer you millions—literally millions—for the secret of this vessel."

"By some foreign government, eh?" asked the Professor hotly. "You are a Greek, Count Popandos, but I do not think that you are acting for the Greek Government. As I told you before, I will have nothing whatever to do with your proposals—"

"I am empowered to offer millions—"

"That is of no interest to us!" snapped Bags.

"We told you once before, Popandos, that you were not wanted. We don't like your methods—we don't like the government you are working for. We can guess which one it is, although we will not mention names!"

The Count stepped forward, his eyes blazing, his whole manner tense.

"Let me have five minutes, gentlemen," he asked earnestly. "Just five minutes! I have been racing across England in my car, picking up your tracks from place to place. Let me now have but five minutes."

Bags turned to the astonished Barry.

"You'd better cut off, young 'un, and bring your friends aboard," he said. "They want to see round the ship, don't they?"

"Rather, sir!" said Barry. "I was going to ask uncle—"

"That's all right—he's too deeply buried in his

scientific thoughts," interrupted the baronet. "Go and fetch the boys on board, and perhaps we'll give you a little trip."

Barry sped off, highly elated. And a minute later he was in the meadow again, surrounded by a crowd of excited, clamouring Castleton juniors.

"It's all right—don't all shout at once!" grinned Barry. "You can come on board!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Barry!"

"Don't thank me!" said Barry. "You'd better reserve your cheers for my uncle. There's just a chance that he'll take us all for a trip, too!"

"That's not half so bad, what?" said the Hon. Freddie. "In fact, to be precise, it's dashed good!"

"Come on, then," said Barry Drewe. "Let's all line up, and go aboard in order. And don't forget—"

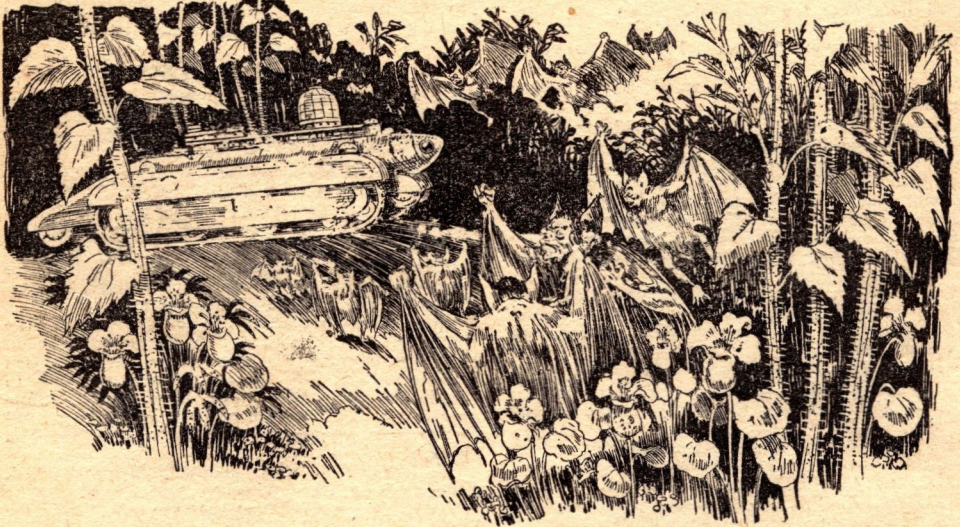
"Hold on!" interrupted Freeman abruptly. "Just a word with you, Hardy, my son!"

for all of us. I asked my major if we could come, and he said 'No,' so I knew it was all right."

There was no time to argue, for the other fellows were already going on board. There were twelve of them altogether—nine members of the Fourth, and the three fags. Plenty of other Castleton boys were hurrying to the scene, but they were out of luck. Only Barry Drewe's special friends were allowed on that wonder ship.

They went aboard lightheartedly, anticipating a short cruise round the countryside—perhaps as far as Colchester and back—and then the little spell of excitement would be over. Never for a second did they imagine that they were on the verge of the most thrilling experience of their lives!

For at that very moment—even as the twelve Castleton boys reached the deck of the Solar Rover—an unexpected little drama was taking place in the



THE FOREST OF HORROR.—The Wonder Ship lay in a forest of giant nettles and above her circling, floating, hovering, were scores of immense bat-like forms.

Len Hardy turned.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Is that cheeky minor of yours coming on board, too?" demanded Freeman aggressively.

Hardy grinned.

"If young Robin makes up his mind to come aboard, he'll come," he replied. "I can't do anything with him. You know what a forceful young bounder he is!"

"If he was my minor, I'd keep him in his proper place!" said Freeman tartly. "I don't hold with these fags pushing their way forward."

And he bestowed a hostile glare upon Robin Hardy and two other members of the Third Form. Not that Freeman really meant that glare. It was only just his way. At heart, the leader of the Firm was one of the most generous fellows breathing. People were always apt to misjudge him by his aggressive manner.

Robin Hardy was a cheery looking youngster of about thirteen, and his two chums—Freckles Smith and Nippy Frost—were ever ready to accompany him into any kind of mischief. It was only natural that they should be on the scene now.

"Don't you worry, Freeman, old sport!" said Robin Hardy, with a grin. "There's plenty of room

control-room. And the results were destined to prove staggering in their consequences.

A Startling Development.

COUNT ALEXIS POPANDOS flourished his hands excitedly.

"But let me point out, Professor Drewe, what this will mean to you!" he said, his voice rising shrilly. "Fame—fortune! I would remind you that—"

"I need no reminders, my friend!" broke in Professor Drewe curtly. "I care nothing for fame—and less for fortune."

In any case, the Professor will get them, without your precious Government's money!" put in Sir Bags. "I don't want to be rude, Count Popandos, but I would like to say that your persistence is becoming a nuisance. You are, I hope, a gentleman, and so we have tolerated your repeated attentions. But the time has come for plain speech. Neither Professor Drewe nor myself has any intention whatever of listening to your proposals, and offers. That is final and definite—and the sooner you get off this vessel, the better we shall both like it!"

"I agree!" murmured the Professor. "We desire no association with foreign Governments!"

Count Popandos compressed his lips, and his eyes were still burning with strange fire.

"And that is final, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Absolutely final!" replied Bags curtly.

And then, in a flash, the Greek suddenly lost all his self-possession. He pointed a quivering finger at Professor Roxley Drewe.

"Then, you fools, I shall act!" he shouted fiercely. "If my Government cannot possess this secret, no other Government in this world shall! This is your first public appearance—and every secret of this vessel is now on board, locked in its very construction, and in your own hearts and minds!"

"What on earth—" began Bags.

"I heard enough while I was listening on the stairs!" screamed Popandos, leaping towards the main control-lever. "I know that if this lever is pulled right over the vessel will shoot into outer space, and——"

"Drop that lever!" shouted Professor Drewe, in alarm.

"You infernal hound!" roared Bags, leaping forward. "If you don't——"

He broke off, for the *Solar Rover* suddenly gave a wild lurch, and Bags and the Professor were flung over. Count Popandos was clinging to the lever, and so he maintained his equilibrium. Little did he care how many souls there were on board. In this moment of madness, he was prepared for any devilry. He did not even know that twelve schoolboys were now on this ship—and even if he had known he would not have stayed his hand.

With a wild lunge, he had pulled that control-lever right over to its fullest extent. And now, with a strength that was almost superhuman, he wrenched at it, and snapped it off at its base.

"Go—go into outer space!" he shrieked, as he ran towards the stairs. "I was ready for this, you fools—and you have only to thank yourselves for the disaster!"

The *Solar Rover* was rocking alarmingly, and on deck the Castleton boys were thoroughly startled. They had not expected anything of this sort. Without the slightest warning, the vessel had shot away from the ground, flinging everybody headlong to the decks. The gangway had crashed over, and several other spectators on the ground had narrowly escaped injury. And now the glittering ship was rising higher and higher into the upper air, gathering speed with every second that passed. Already she was fifteen thousand feet up, and shooting skywards like a rocket.

In the midst of the confusion, Count Popandos rushed on deck, through the open doorway from the lounge.

Barry Drewe and his chums were just picking themselves up, and their expressions were full of surprise and horror. They instinctively felt that some mishap had occurred.

And then, to their further consternation, the Count reached the rail, glanced over, and then vaulted into space.

"Good gad!" gasped the Hon. Freddie. "Stop him!"

But it was too late! Count Alexis Popandos had gone—and he was dropping sheer through the air. The ground was twenty thousand feet below, and it seemed that the frenzied foreigner had gone to certain death.

But he was more cunning than any of those on board believed.

For he had hardly dropped for more than three thousand feet before a curious filmy mass could be seen billowing out from his figure. And then, during

the next instant, that filmy mass resolved itself into a great parachute!

So this Greek had come on board with the deliberate intention of sending the *Rover* skywards to destruction—but with the means to return safely to earth himself! That parachute, no doubt, had been carefully concealed round his person. It was of the finest silk, and had been cunningly hidden. At the pull of a control-cord, it had doubtless unfolded itself. And now the cur was dropping to safety whilst his victims were helplessly shooting skywards, into outer space!

It had all happened so quickly—so unexpectedly—that even Professor Roxley Drewe did not realise its full purport. Barry Drewe and his friends were stunned—dazed by the shock of the sudden rise, and light-headed on account of the coldness and rarefied nature of the atmosphere. They had had no chance to grow accustomed to the change.

They had come on board the *Rover* unprepared for any long trip—but, in all truth, it would be many a long day before they returned to mother earth!

Hurting Through Space!

PROFESSOR ROXLEY DREWE was as pale as death as he turned his startled eyes upon Sir Clarence Bagshot and Mr. Jerome Mannering.

"Well?" they asked, in one voice.

"We are at the mercy of the ether!" said the Professor unsteadily. "That—that hound has performed his diabolical work only too well! The control-lever is utterly smashed off, but the delicate mechanism is utterly ruined. Everything is jammed, and I can do nothing at short notice. It may take hours—many hours—to rectify this damage."

"And in the meantime?" asked Bags.

"Heaven knows what'll happen!" replied the Professor. "But be quick! There is not a second to be lost, gentlemen! We are increasing our speed with incredible rapidity, and it will be death to remain on deck. Bring everybody inside! Close every door. I will attend to the oxygen pumps, and to the heating apparatus. Our lives depend on speed."

"And those boys!" shouted Jerry, startled.

"They are on board, I believe."

"May heaven grant that they are safe!" said the Professor huskily. "Waste no time, gentlemen."

"Come on," roared Bags.

He and Jerry tore down the stairs, and when they rushed on deck they caught their breaths in gasping. It was icily cold, and breathing was extremely difficult. George Freeman and his two chums of Study Four were clutching at the rail, dazed and weak. Barry Drewe and the Hon. Freddie had sagged down near the doorway, nearly unconscious. Robin Hardy and his fellow fags were already stretched on the deck, and the others were similarly incapacitated.

"Good heavens!" muttered Jerry. "The Professor was right, Bags. There's not a moment to be lost."

"What became of that infernal Greek?" panted Bags.

"That—that man, sir?" gasped Barry. "He—he jumped overboard!"

"He's settled his account by now, then," muttered Bags. "Quickly, boys—inside with you! By glory! We shall all be dead in less than a minute unless we look alive!"

Somehow or other, the two men managed to drag the dazed schoolboys into the lounge. Barry and one or two others managed to get inside by their own efforts. Within a minute the great doors were closed. And then, without waiting, the two men ran across to another door, and after that they went round the ship, assisted by some of the members of

the crew, making sure that every single aperture was sealed.

All the doors and windows of the *Solar Rover* were so made that they could be hermetically sealed—like the bulkhead doors of a ship.

And now the oxygen apparatus was in order, and from fan-like mechanisms in every saloon and cabin and corridor the life-giving oxygen was being diffused into the atmosphere. And heat was now being manufactured in the curious-looking radiators. They were not radiators of the ordinary type, but were all controlled from the mysterious motors in the body of the vessel. All the energy was gathered from the ether—from the heart of the solar system—perhaps from the sun itself.

Even Professor Drewe did not know the precise nature of this energy. He only knew that it was a tremendous Force, and that he could control it. Even to this day, scientists cannot explain what electricity is, but it is used universally. So with this new energy that the Professor had recently discovered. He knew what it could do, he knew how he could use it—and he was aware that it came mysteriously from the ether. But there his knowledge ended.

And his present agitation was intense. For while he could control his ship, he was content—he was happy. But for the moment it was out of his control—and he knew that it was hurtling into the outer space with ever-increasing rapidity. Until that main lever could be repaired—until the delicate mechanism could be adjusted—the *Solar Rover* would continue to hurtle onwards.

In the control-room Professor Drewe and two of his trusted engineers were working feverishly—madly. They thought of nothing save the one task.

In the main lounge, the twelve Castleton boys were recovering, and they were asking all sorts of questions of Jerry Mannering and Sir Bags. But these mystified gentlemen could not give them any satisfaction.

It's no good asking us anything, boys," said Bags, helplessly shrugging his shoulders. "We're as much in the dark as you are. We only know that that beastly Greek smashed the lever off, and that we're now whizzing into the Unknown. According

to the Professor, we're gathering speed all the time. Take my advice and remain just where you are. Keep cool, and leave everything to the Professor."

"Well, we seem to be safe enough, anyhow," remarked Freeman. "It's not so cold now, and we can breathe properly. I don't believe we're in any danger."

"We don't seem to be moving at all," said Barry. "The ship is as steady as a rock, and—"

"Great Scott!" yelled Billy Ward, of Study Nine. He had gone to one of the windows and was staring out.

"What is it?" went up a chorus. "Come here!" shouted Billy. "See if you can see what I see!"

They went running to the windows, and they stared out excitedly. And then another chorus of shouts went up. They were shouts of surprise—consternation—amazement.

Not one of the boys could have told exactly what he expected to see. But they had a vague idea that the earth would be visible miles below—a great expanse of green countryside, with downs showing here and there.

But the actuality was a stunning shock. For they saw the earth as a sphere! And it was not immediately below, but practically facing them as they looked out of the window. It filled the whole heavens, and in various places there were masses of cloud obscuring the land and the sea. Yet, in spite of this, the outline of England could be distinctly seen—and the coast of France, and portions of Spain. And the full truth dawned upon these schoolboys.

They were not merely a few miles above the surface of the earth—but thousands and thousands of miles above it! They were in Outer Space, and the earth was receding from them with unimaginable speed and growing almost perceptibly smaller and smaller.

Another Staggering Discovery.

SPELLBOUND, the schoolboys stood at the windows, staring out. This thing was too big for them—and they were filled with so much awe that speech seemed pointless.

George Freeman, the leader of the Firm, was the



A GIGANTIC BLOODSUCKER.—They swarmed down to the Venusian ground and then—a terrible spectacle met their gaze. Freeman was caught in a vast spider's web and, coming to the attack, was the spider himself—as big as a lion.

first to recover his composure. Freeman was a very matter-of-fact sort of fellow, and the circumstance that the *Solar Rover* was utterly motionless told him that there was no immediate danger.

"Well, this is a go!" he remarked, grinning widely. "I never expected to see a map of the earth like this, you chaps."

"I can't believe it," said Barry bluntly. "It's too—too terrific!"

"Rats!" said Freeman. "We knew this ship was designed to go into outer space, didn't we? Well, here we are—off to the moon, or somewhere. I say, what a lark!"

"By glory! That's the spirit," said Bags approvingly. "I like to see it, Jerry. I was half afraid these boys would be scared. But not they!"

"They're made of the right stuff," said Jerry. "Mind you, I wouldn't blame them for being scared, because I'm feeling a bit scared on my own account. How the deuce are we going to get back?"

"We'll leave that to the Professor," said Sir Bags, coolly. "He's a marvel. In fact, I've grown so accustomed to trusting him that I'm perfectly comfortable. I'd better tell you youngsters that I've been in outer space before on this ship. Last week she went up to a height of about fifty thousand miles."

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it?" grinned Sir Bags. "But that's what the Professor told me—and I am perfectly willing to accept his word. It was safe enough then, so I don't see any reason why we should get the wind up now. I'll run along and see how the repairs are going."

"Can we come, sir?" went up a general shout.

"No, I think you'd better stay here," said Bags. "The Professor won't welcome an invasion, you know."

Bags went along to the control-room, and found the Professor and his assistants still working hard.

"The boys?" asked the old scientist anxiously. "The boys are all right?"

"Right as rain," said Bags. "Don't you worry yourself, Prof. As for that beastly Greek, he jumped overboard, I understand."

"We are getting on," said the Professor thankfully. "It may be an hour or two before we regain control but I do not think there is any need for alarm. At a rough estimate, I judge that we are now travelling through Outer Space at a speed of about fifty miles a second."

"Quite a crawl," observed Bags, grinning.

"It is, indeed, a crawl compared to the speed we shall attain during the next hour or so—unless these other energies are brought under control," replied Professor Drewe. "You see, Clarence, there is no resistance here. There is no atmosphere—and so it is impossible to appreciate our speed."

"We might be stationary for all that we can feel," agreed the baronet.

"Exactly," nodded the Professor. "Upon the whole, I am not altogether displeased. I have long wanted to make a trip into the vastness of the Solar System, but I did not dare to suggest it. It seemed too—too vast. But now we have been pitched into the thing, and there is no alternative but to go ahead, I have not the slightest doubt that we shall be able to return to earth safely."

When Sir Bags returned to the main lounge he found most of the boys sleeping. He was very astonished at first—until he became suddenly aware that he was very sleepy himself. Perhaps there was some difference in the oxygen-charged atmosphere. Perhaps the stress of that last hour had been too much. At all events, Bags was only too glad to sink into a soft chair and to close his eyes.

When he awoke he found Freeman, Hardy, and Willis, Ltd., crowding at one of the windows, and some of the other juniors were now awake, too. Their sleep had done them good. They were fresh again—and eager for any new excitement.

There was one ready made, as it happened.

For Mother Earth was now looking like a great planet, hundreds of thousands of miles away—perhaps millions of miles away. The mind could not possibly grasp the speed at which the *Solar Rover* was travelling.

And while they were talking, Professor Drewe came in—haggard, tired, but triumphant.

"At last!" he said wearily. "We have repaired the damage, and the ship is now under control."

"And are we returning to the earth?" asked Jerry.

"I rather fancy so," said the Professor. "At all events, I have greatly reduced the energy of the ether, and the earth's gravity should now have its due effect. You will not, of course, notice any difference. There will be no sensation of motion—no feeling of speed. You will simply see the earth growing nearer, and you can trust me to land you in perfect safety—on the exact spot we started from."

"Oh, crumbs!" growled Freeman. "I thought we were going to have some real excitement—and now it's all over!"

"You're never satisfied!" said Willis tartly. "I think we've had a marvellous experience."

But, as it happened, Freeman was wrong. For the earth did not get bigger. On the contrary, that sphere hovering in the sky became smaller and smaller as the time went on. Professor Roxley Drewe was startled at first, and very worried, too. According to all his calculations, the *Rover* should now be returning.

Instead, the vessel was getting further and further away.

Were his scientific principles all wrong? Had he miscalculated? It certainly seemed so, for he was ultimately forced to a startling conclusion—a staggering conclusion, indeed.

"What does it mean, Professor?" asked Sir Bags, as he came into the control-room and found the scientist examining his intricate dials and gauges.

"It can mean only one thing, Bags," replied the Professor quietly. "We have lost the earth's attraction, and I am powerless to regain it. At the present moment we are being attracted by the planet Venus, and we are hurtling towards Venus at the rate of many thousands of miles per second."

"Well, that's a piece of news," said Sir Bags calmly. "We wanted to go to the planets, didn't we?"

"We're going—and Heaven grant that we may be able to land in safety," said the Professor. "We can do nothing but consign ourselves to the mercy of Providence."

The Landing on the Planet Venus.

"FORESTS!" said Barry Drewe eagerly, as he pointed. "Look! Great forests, and mountains—yes, and water, too!"

"Just like the earth!" said Don Masters, breathlessly.

Were they dreaming? Were they in the midst of some exciting nightmare? Or were they actually looking upon the landscape of Venus?

Days had passed. For, although the *Solar Rover* was shooting through Outer Space with the velocity of a comet, many millions of miles had to be travelled. And nothing had changed Professor Roxley Drewe's first contention. The airship was being drawn towards the planet Venus, having been caught, by some mysterious trick of the ether, into that planet's attraction.

THE PLANET SCHOOLBOYS—

(Continued from previous page).

"Oh, dash it!" protested the Hon. Freddie. "I mean to say, old boy! But these frightful things are absolutely sixty feet high!"

"Yes, a sting from one of those merchants would probably be fatal," said Bags, nodding. "But they're nettles, all the same."

The *Solar Rover* was at rest—standing firmly and steadily on the surface of Venus! The impossible had been accomplished—and so easily, so jerklessly, that it was difficult to believe.

And while Sir Bags and most of the boys were at the windows, Jerry Mannering and the Firm were in the control-room, with Professor Drew.

If one could have observed the aircraft from a distance, the spectacle would have been a remarkable one. There she stood, in a kind of clearing, with a great forest in the background. A forest? So it seemed at first sight—but it was really composed of gigantic stinging nettles! And all round, too, were flowers. Flowers ten and twelve feet in height! The colours of these flowers were riotous—marvellous in their variety.

And then—what was that? What were those strange things flitting and floating and hovering? Figures! Bats? Surely they looked like bats! Flocks of them, high in the air, wheeling round menacingly. Some were nearer, circling the glittering monster at close quarters.

And in the control-room, Freeman, Hardy and Willis, Ltd., and the two men, were staring upwards—staring dazedly at the glass dome.

For something strange had happened—sounds had come from the glass.

"Look!" shouted Freeman, pointing upwards.

And they all looked. And there, clinging to the outer portion of the glass, were two extraordinary creatures. Those within could scarcely believe their eyes. They saw two enormous bat-like monsters—fully twenty feet in height, unless the curved glass was distorting their actual size.

Only for a moment did the boys gain a clear view. They could see that the bodies of these creatures were covered with long, soft fur. They had enormous feet, with webbing between. Wings, too—wings of webbing, and with heads, set curiously on the narrow shoulders. They were grotesque—utterly startling in appearance. For their faces, whilst being curiously human in aspect, were different—startlingly, wonderfully different. They had eyes—gleaming, red-looking eyes.

But this vision was only brief, for those two creatures fluttered away, and were lost to view.

"Venus is inhabited!" said Professor Drewe, his voice quivering. "We have proved that, at least!"

"You—you mean those—those animals, sir?" gasped Len Hardy.

"But were they animals?" asked Jerry. "I doubt it! Perhaps they are the 'human beings' of Venus! Who knows? In any case, I don't think I should care to have a scrap with the gentlemen!"

JOKE RESULT No. 265.

Cricket bat to John Pattison, 11, Allendale-av., Aintree, Liverpool.

Fountain pens to the following:—W. Gorburt, 3, Eva's-avenue, De-la-Pole-av., Allaby-rd., Hull; T. Ireland, 13, Allan-st., Motherwell, Scotland; E. Ashton, Cwm Elan, Lyme-gr., Marple; G. Pearson, 11, Mosbro Moor, Mosbro, Sheffield; H. J. Young, 20, Albert-rd., Parkstone, Dorset; D. Elms, 83, New-st., Torrington, nr. Devon; S. J. Thomas, 15, John-st., Abercrombie, nr. Aberdare, Glam.; B. Drew, 1, Oak Cottage, Spealwell-rd., Hay Mills, Birmingham; — 9, Higher Forest-rd., Redruth; C. Westcott, 5, Paul-st., Taunton, Som.; F. Wilderspin, 29, Shakespeare-st., Hove, Brighton.

"Oh, let's go outside, sir!" shouted Freeman excitedly. "Let's land!"

"All in good time, my boy—all in good time!" said the Professor soothingly. "We must not be in a hurry. There may be dangers here—in fact, it is quite certain that there *are* dangers!"

It seemed rather incongruous, but Jerry Mannering was wearing his schoolmaster's gown—even in a moment like this. He had probably put it on absent-mindedly—not that anybody took the slightest notice. The general excitement was altogether too great.

And then came the great incident of landing.

The boys would not be denied. They considered themselves permanent members of the solar party now, and they declared that they had as much right to land as any of the others. And so their "breathing suits" were doled out to them. They donned them eagerly, and were surprised to find them quite comfortable.

"Later, I shall test the atmosphere of this planet, and it is quite possible that it will be breathable," said the Professor. "But there will be no danger in these suits. We can venture on deck with perfect safety."

And so it proved.

Wearing those suits, every human being within the *Solar Rover* was immune from any possible peril. The great doors were unsealed, and thrown open.

"Look out!" shouted Barry Drewe, in alarm, as he saw Freeman climbing over the rail. "Come back, Freeman, you ass! Where are you going?"

But Freeman did not heed. Probably he did not hear—for the headgear of those curious diver-like suits muffled any ordinary sounds. But George Freeman was a fellow who generally acted on impulse.

He had determined to be the first to land on a planet!

He swarmed over the rail, and then clawed his way down, clinging to various projections, until he was able to leap. He landed with a thud, rolled over, and then stood up, waving his arms.

The others were lining the rail, leaning down, watching him.

Freeman ran off, excited and joyous. And to the consternation of all the others he vanished amid a tangle of undergrowth—grass, actually, and weeds.

"Better go after him!" shouted Barry, turning to the others.

But Hardy and Willis were already climbing the rail, fearful for their leader. They swarmed down, reached the Venusian ground, and rushed off to the spot where George Freeman had vanished.

And then, suddenly, they checked—utterly horrified.

For the spectacle which met their gaze was not merely alarming, but terrifying.

There was Freeman—caught in a vast spider's web! He was struggling frantically to free himself. The web was woven between some of the gigantic weeds, and it resembled a tangle of great ropes. Freeman was caught—helplessly. And there, coming to the attack, was a spider!

But no ordinary spider! This repulsive creature—this Venusian monster—was as big as a lion, and it was about to sweep down upon its human prey!

Will that monstrous insect sap Freeman's life's blood before his friends can save him? This and many more questions you will be asking about this epoch-making wonder serial will be answered in the extra-long and tensely thrilling instalment which appears in next week's "Boys' Magazine."

Chaps will be clamouring for copies next week to carry on with this marvellous yarn, so the old injunction—order yours in advance and tell your chums the great news!



THRILL PHIL IN FLAME AND FLOOD, WITH HIS AMAZING WOLF DOG, KARELL. TENSE TALE OF MOVIELAND.

"STEADY Karell. Back for it. Now! Good dog!"

Thrill Phil's crisp, young voice awoke echoes in the forest stillness as he bent to caress the fine animal that looked up at him, to tug aloft.

Karell was the latest acquisition to the famous Moonlight Cinema Co.'s staff of artistes, and Phil had already made friends with him. Which was more wonderful than it seems—for Karell's forbears had roamed the big spaces for countless ages, free and untrammelled—enemies of Man, most ferocious of all the animals—wolves! But now one of them all had forsown the pack and taken unto himself a master—the boy who had saved his life.

It was this way. Phil had been out surveying the forests for a new location where another batch of his thrilling film pictures could be shot. He had found Karell—and Karell was fast in a powerful bear trap. Above the helpless wolf a great vulture wheeled; it was swooping to kill.

Phil shot the bird of prey dead with the rifle he carried and released Karell. The foot was broken and it flamed, but the boy film star set it and nursed the huge, savage wolf back to health. Thereafter Karell was his willing slave.

He was now engaged with his young master in the making of a lumberjack film—Roughneck Harry, Phil's friend and camera man to the Moonlight Film Inc. had seen the wolf's possibilities—and a real thriller it promised to be. Around the two, giant pines reared their pointed tops towards the blue vault of the sky, while the awesome silence of the forest was split by the crash of axes and the thunder of falling trees. In the distance, glinting in the sunlight, was the flume which bore the logs from the camp, across the valley on high trestles—its waters foaming and rushing as they carried the timber to civilisation.

"Gee, Karell, this is the life!" enthused Phil. "I guess—"

He stopped speaking as a wildly-gesticulating figure came running from a wooden hut in the distance. As the man drew nearer Phil made out the burly form of Roughneck Harry—evidently tremendously upset about something, because it was not usual for the big man to lose his poise, though he was often very excitable when making a film, as Phil knew to his cost.

The camera man panted level, and, for a moment, gasped for breath without addressing his protégé. Then he stuck his thumbs between his rough leather belt and the riding breeches it supported, and chewed viciously on his cigar.

"Say, boy," he spluttered, "I've just been in the hut and—it's been rifed! It's powerful hard to say it, but—someone's pinched the film original o' yew're last picture." His feelings got the better of him: "The dirty, low-down, sneakin' son of an all-fired, he-toed—"

Thrill Phil broke in on the camera man's tirade. His face had gone white at the news.

"Good heavens, Harry—you don't say! Ha—have you any idea who's done it?"

"Done it?" the big man exploded. "'Cept that I didn't see him, I guess it's as plain as daylight. Who else but that filthy greaser, Luigi?"

Thrill Phil nodded dumbly. He had jumped to the same conclusion as his rough-voiced but warm-hearted friend. The rascally half-breed, working for a rival company against the Moonlight Pictures Inc., dogged them wherever they went, like an evil shadow. For Thrill Phil was the Moonlight Co.'s last hope. By his daring he was reviving their productions' waning popularity among followers of the silver screen. And, this being against the interests of powerful rivals, they had commissioned this Luigi to remove Roughneck Harry and Thrill Phil from their path. So far, the issue had gone against the scheming greaser, but the theft of the film was a serious blow.

"Cheer up, Harry," said Phil, after a crestfallen

silence. "No use crying over spilt milk. Let's get busy."

The camera man roused himself with an effort.

"Righto, young 'un," he answered. "Suppose you're right!"

Amazingly his whole demeanour changed as he took up the megaphone which lay at his feet. Tense and alert, his face was almost frightful in its grimness. He crouched at the handle of his beloved camera.

"Go to it, you 'il runt!" he bellowed. "Register fear and step it lively up that young sapling in front o' you."

Phil, who was clad in a workmanlike lumberjack's outfit, obeyed with an almost comical expression of fear and admiration his mentor always bullied into him when picture-making. He was supposed to seek refuge up a tree from a hunger-maddened wolf, in the scenario—Karell was the wolf!

Lithely, hand over hand, the daring young film star climbed towards the sky up the forest giant Roughneck Harry had sarcastically referred to as a "sapling"! Up, up he went, while Harry turned as for life his at the handle of his film camera, switching the lens now on Phil and then on to the figure of the massive wolf, snarling and bristling realistically at the foot of the tree.

Soon he was in the higher branches, and the magnificent view made him pause a moment to admire. As he did so, a shout left his lips—for, perhaps a hundred yards away, he made out the crouching figure of Luigi, the rascally half-breed.

Thrill Phil scarcely stopped to consider. Sight of his enemy put one thought only in his head, driving all others away—to catch the rogue if he could. A plan flashed into his mind and immediately he acted on it. The pines grew almost a-top of each other in the rich old soil of the forest, and it was an easy matter to leap from one tree to another.

With a vibrant spring Phil reached the next tree and jumped for a third, while, all unconscious, the half-breed stood considering some devilish plan which had come to him for furthering his campaign of villainy against Thrill Phil and Roughneck Harry.

And then the boy film star reached a tree immediately in front of which Luigi was standing. Tensing himself, he dropped—clean asprawl the scoundrel's shoulders. Half-breed and clean-limbed white boy went down together in a struggling heap. But the mad strength of Phil's righteous wrath quickly overcame the other's efforts at escape.

"Got you, you hound!" gritted Phil, and proceeded to drag the greaser to his feet. "Where's the film you stole?"

"Eet ees where you'll nevaire find heem!" returned Luigi. "I haf—get heem, boys!"

Phil turned at the words—too late to save himself from the murderous blow a massive, evil-faced lumberjack aimed at his head. The buffet sent him sprawling. Before he could regain his feet four burly ruffians flung themselves upon him.

Luigi watched the struggle, jumping about excitedly the while.

But the odds were too great. Squat thumbs pressing cruelly against his windpipe caused a red glow to dance before Phil's eyes, the blood drummed in his temples—then he relapsed into unconsciousness.

A Forest of Flame.

WHEN Thrill Phil regained his senses something chafed his body in a hundred places and his head whirled alarmingly.

A saturnine face gripped within inches of his own. "So," hissed Luigi, the rascally half-breed, "ze brave adventure boy has awoke to learn his fate?"

The young film star ignored him and his dulled eyes took in his surroundings. He was bound hand

and foot and lying on a rough truckle bed in some lumberjack's shanty—probably belonging to one of the roughs Luigi had bribed to wreak his vengeance on the film star. A window showed him the gaunt shapes of the pines without and, from the distance, came the familiar sound of axes, as the lumberjacks, all unconscious of the strange scene being enacted near-by, plied their trade.

Luigi's gloating voice broke in on the youngster's thoughts.

"Eet ees good—I haf got the Moonlight's daring 'star' in my clutches at last. This time you die. Listen! I'm going to light a liddle fire outside ze hut and you will lie here—till the flames remove you—understan'?"

Horror showed for a moment in the boy's eyes. With a great effort he mastered his feelings—put out of his mind the vivid picture that formed there of the hut dyed crimson and licking tongues of flame searing him with pain.

"You go hang!" he said defiantly, glaring at the cruel greaser's gloating face. "Get out of it!"

The villainous Luigi struck him viciously. "Carambo—you talk to me cheekily, hein?" he spluttered. "Eet ees enough. I go now to light ze lettle fire."

He turned and went to the rough wooden door of the shack, bestowed another evil grin on his victim, and disappeared to carry out his threat.

Phil heard the bar that locked the door fall into place and then he was alone. He struggled madly with his bonds, knowing, even as he did so, that the effort was vain. The ropes held, and, at last, with the sweat pouring down his bruised face, the youngster gave up the hopeless task.

How long he lay there before the first signs of the conflagration came to him he did not know, but the sound of crackling undergrowth told him that the half-breed had kept his word.

A thin wisp of smoke curled under the door, and soon flames were licking at it greedily. As Phil watched with fascinated eyes, the fire spread, took the log walls and came on ever nearer to the truckle bed on which he lay.

Now the atmosphere was dense with smoke, which caused the boy film star to cough and choke and his eyes to run with the irritation. Crimson light lit the pungent billows.

Pandemonium broke out outside the hut. The sound of the lumberjack's voices came to him.

"Run, lads—the forest's afire!" somebody was shouting again and again.

If Phil could have seen outside the hut he would have known that Luigi had done his best work only too well. For a hundred yards to either side of the shanty flames roared skywards, as the dry undergrowth conveyed the fire from one forest giant to another. The lumberjacks, faced with the forest's greatest enemy, were rushing helter-skelter for safety, making for a spot lower down the hillside, where they would hack down a number of trees and clear an area of undergrowth to keep the flames back.

But Phil could not see all this, though he guessed something of what was taking place. He could only lie helplessly amid the choking smoke, his clothes already singeing with the unbearable heat as the flames crept closer and closer.

No use calling for help—the sound of his voice would not carry a dozen yards through the noise of the flames. He was beyond help, beyond—

Something seemed to snap in his brain as a short, sharp bark sounded outside the hut and next moment a lithe form came hurtling through the window.

"Karell!" almost screamed the boy film star. "Here, good dog. Worry 'em!" And he motioned with his head to the ropes that bound him.



HIS DOG TO THE RESCUE.—The sagacious animal's sharp teeth were working on the lad's bonds—rending, tearing, and pulling at the stubborn strands.

The sagacious animal obeyed, climbing on to the pallsie clumsily. Then his sharp teeth were working on the lad's bonds—rending, tearing and pulling at the stubborn strands.

In the excitement of the moment, with the promise of escape from the awful fate designed for him by Luigi, Phil forgot the heat, forgot everything save the fact that his almost human friend had tracked him down to his prison in time.

"Go to 'em, Karell!" he exclaimed. "Rip 'em off!"

Despite the tongues of flame that ever and anon licked at his magnificent coat, the wolf-dog was following the advice, and so frantically did he work that, within five minutes, Phil was free.

He jumped to his feet, letting the torn ropes slide to the ground, and then, calling to Karell, made for the window. The door was by this time an impassable mass of fire.

A dreadful sight met his gaze. As far as eye could see through the clouds of smoke, the giant cedars were wreathed in flames, while intermittently the crash and roar as one fell struck on the boy's ears like a death-knell.

He cast wildly around him for an avenue of escape, and his keen eyes descried a sandy path which the lumberjacks used, not yet impassable. The window

was the only means of exit from the hut now, and Phil squirmed through it, followed by Karell.

Then the wolf-dog, loping along beside him with his great stride, the boy film star ran swiftly along that way of escape from the flames.

Once a giant tree crashed down athwart the path behind them, and burning fragments showered upon the boy's unprotected head. Miraculously, however, both escaped hurt and sped on.

Soon an awful fact forced itself upon Phil's brain. The path was becoming increasingly narrow and before they could reach safety they must be shrivelled by the intense heat.

Thrill Phil stopped—just in time to avoid the huge pine that toppled athwart the path ahead. The way was hopelessly blocked by the blazing mass!

"We're done, Karell," muttered the youngster, looking down at the lean shape by his side.

Karell bristled and howled with fear. He, too, knew that death's wings were beating very close now.

Desperately, Phil peered round them, through the smoke, for some way of escape which he might not have tapped. As he did so a cry of hope left his lips. Something had caught his eye, something that glistened amid the flames like a silver road to freedom. The flume!

They were not ten yards from the spot where the river that flowed down the mountain side met the trestle bridge, which took it on high trestles across the gully. Many of the great wooden supports were already alight, but they had not yet fallen, and the waters flowed on placidly, a faint steam rising above their surface.

Karell smelt the water at the same time that Phil perceived it and the two commenced to run together. There was still a slender chance of winning through.

Across The Flume.

THE wolf-dog and his young master found the heat almost unendurable as they reeled on through the flaming pines to that tantalising strip that spelt—*Life!*

Something caused the boy film star to pause as his glance fell on something that reflected the red glow dully. Stooping, he groped among the pine needles that carpeted the floor and picked it up. A thrill of exultation swept through him as its import dawned on his tortured brain. It was a circular tin box, and on its metal surface was the legend: *Moonlight Film Studios.*

"Gosh!" exclaimed Thrill Phil. "What luck! The missing film!"

By what seemed a miracle the boy film star had happened upon the precious film which Luigi had stolen from Roughneck Harry's hut earlier in the day. How the fellow had come to lose it was only a matter for surmise. Most probably, in his haste of escaping from the scene of his victim's supposed death, he had dropped it from his kit and not noticed the loss. However, the main thing was that Phil had recovered the valuable negative, and, when he won through he would be able to hand it to Roughneck Harry in triumph.

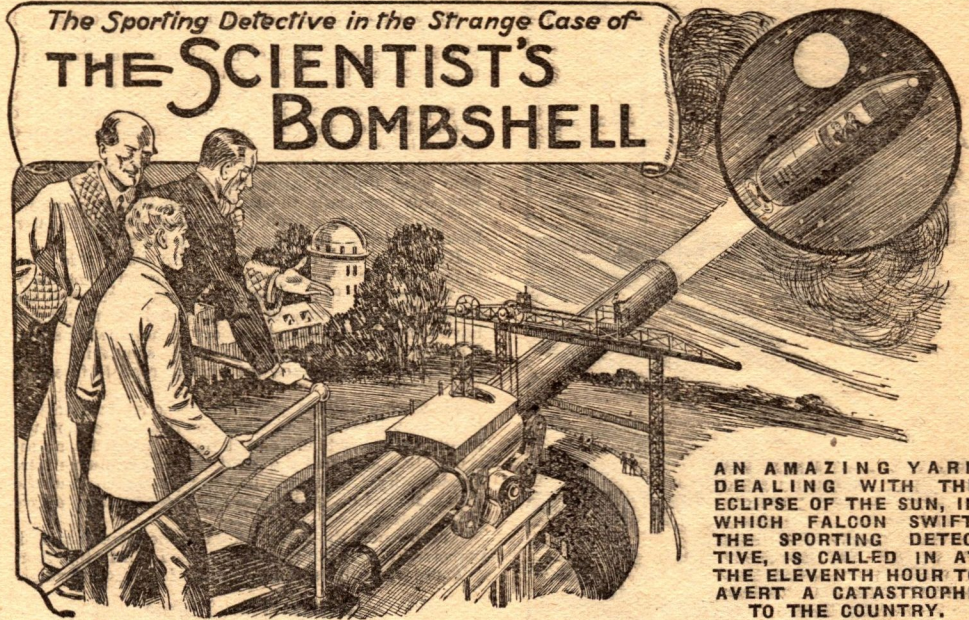
He had been running mechanically as he thought, thus, and it was with a feeling of something akin to surprise that he found himself almost upon the waters of the river.

He reached the bank, and, shaping his hands for the dive, plunged into the delicious coolness of the stream. The lithe form of Karell followed him, and then, side by side, they commenced the swim to Barkerville.

Soon they made the trestle bridge that bore the water across the valley and, praying that the trestles

(Continued on page 36.)

The Lure of Astronomical Discovery Cleverly Mingled with Detective Work in this Smashing Thrill Tale.



AN AMAZING YARN DEALING WITH THE ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, IN WHICH FALCON SWIFT, THE SPORTING DETECTIVE, IS CALLED IN AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR TO AVERT A CATASTROPHE TO THE COUNTRY.

The Revelation.

DOCTOR FLAVIUS SIXSMITH parted the heavy black curtains with a hand that was unsteady—a hand of long, white, tapering fingers decorated with a single ring in which blazed a crimson ruby.

He stood on the threshold of the strange, glass-domed apartment, staring slowly round.

It was as though he expected to see someone there. The irises of his eyes were sharply contracted, and in the soft light shed by the single table-lamp his face seemed as if carved in marble.

There was lively apprehension in that face—apprehension that was repressed. It was the face of a bold, keen and clever man who, for the first time in his life, has become the prey of panic and fear.

Striking in appearance he undoubtedly was, with his completely bald cranium, hawk-like face and incredibly penetrating grey eyes. Perhaps this was what had earned him the attention of the whole world. No; not personality and appearance alone, but his work. The whole of the civilised world was hanging breathlessly on the experiments of Doctor Flavius Sixsmith, waiting for what he had to tell them.

The eclipse of the sun!

The last total eclipse visible in England had been in 1724—more than two hundred years ago. And for this eclipse Doctor Flavius Sixsmith promised the world, and England in particular, startling happenings.

It wanted now only a week before the phenomenon took place, and still the scientist was silent. He made no pronouncement. The less reputable of the newspapers were challenging him, eminent authority though he was. And his enemies were preparing to jeer.

Why was he silent?

He was a prophet in danger of losing the honour he had gained in his own country.

He stood in the parting of the curtains, his gaunt figure, nearly six feet in height, enveloped in a frayed dressing-gown. Powerful in physique, he had, nevertheless, a scholarly stoop. His was the appearance of a comparatively young man grown prematurely old by study and knowledge.

In his right hand he gripped a large V-shaped pipe; the fingers of his left hand held the curtain in a grip almost like that of death as he peered slowly around.

He glanced once at the ring, the blazing ruby ring, on the second finger of his left hand. It had arrived in a small box bearing the name of a Hamburg jeweller only that morning. A gift! But a gift heavy with significance.

Stern-willed though he was, a kind of hypnotic influence caused the eminent astronomer and physicist to wear that blood-red ruby. He loathed it as much as if it had been a live snake around his neck. For him it was the mark of terror.

It is not within the province of this narrative to analyse the mind complex of such a man as Doctor Flavius Sixsmith. Sufficient it is to record the stark facts concerning that ring. And they are these:

Fourteen years previously, a poor and obscure student of physics in Berlin, Flavius Sixsmith had attracted attention by providing remarkable verification of Einstein's famous theory of relativity. His feet were on the ladder of fame. And at this point there entered his life Herr Frederick Von Graustark, customarily called the Count.

Count Graustark had four associates, all crooks of the first water. Flavius Sixsmith did not know this. He found them congenial and agreeable company. The Count in particular. Von Graustark was a dilettante, enormously rich and influential. Flavius Sixsmith became his protege. The Count provided

huge sums for his experiments, and gradually enmeshed him in his web.

Flavius Sixsmith understood the awful truth at last when he sat at a round table conference with the Count, and his four associates, Reuben Lipsheimer, Max Sternberg, Louie Vasiliev and Ralph Ballin. War between Great Britain and Germany had just been proclaimed. The World was in upheaval. And Doctor Flavius Sixsmith, English scientist, found that the strings of his Homeland were pulling him.

But he could not go. They asserted it vehemently, those five men, and with much gesticulation and threat. He was their tool. Had he not joined them in many of their crook enterprises? That liquid explosive he had perfected; the secret of it had been retailed to some of the cleverest safe-breakers in Europe, all of whom were under the Count's thumb. Didn't he know that? They sneered at his manifest horror. Yes, he was hand in glove with them. And the secrets of many of his other inventions, useful in war, had been placed in the archives of Germany's War Inventions Department. A gun he had perfected was even now being turned out from Krupp's Arsenal . . .

In a sudden blaze of light it came to Doctor Flavius Sixsmith. What a fool he had been! In what a fool's Paradise had he lived and worked! They had bought him body and soul. They had made him an unwitting enemy of his country.

They were crooks—yes. But like all Germans, they were fevered patriots, too. Some of his inventions they had used to their own advantage, but in the main they had picked his brains for their country's service.

And now they wanted him to go on. They told him he was committed to the Fatherland. He could not turn back. He would be shot as a traitor if he returned to England. They would make known what he had done in Germany's cause.

With impassioned force he pleaded, threatened and cajoled. He would sell them his life if they allowed him to go and remain silent. England was his country, and England he must serve with his brains

now. Afterwards—when this gigantic eruption had subsided, perhaps—he might show them his gratitude.

No; they were adamant. They had got him under their thumb. He must serve Germany now. If he tried to escape them—

To cut a long story short, Doctor Flavius Sixsmith did escape, and in sensational fashion. He fought himself out of that room against five men armed with revolvers. It seemed that he went berserk. He smashed the lamps, and in a darkened room, racked with the flame and smoke of gunshot, he found the door and got away. In disguise he fled to Germany . . .

His atonement for the blunder he made in selling his brains to Germany can be found in the remarkable scientific services he performed for this country during the war. But the astonishing part was that none knew his secret. Count Graustark and his associates kept quiet. And so in England Doctor Flavius Sixsmith lived a life of great honour and renown.

It is doubtful if it had been otherwise even if the truth had been known. A man blunders, makes mistakes. Doctor Sixsmith was almost simple in worldly knowledge, and his absolute integrity was, in a way, his worst enemy.

For now he conceived himself under an obligation to Count Von Graustark and his four crooks for the silence they had kept.

He knew they were crooks. Yet they had bought and paid for him, and during that impassioned scene on the eve of war he had promised that if they kept silence he would show his gratitude.

The Count had traded on this. The war was a thing of the past, but "conscience doth make cowards of us all." Doctor Sixsmith was still terrified that his secret might leak out.

Von Graustark knew his man. Several times Doctor Sixsmith had received secret messages from the sinister Count. The time was coming when he must repay. In the old days, when he had been lionised by the scientific world of Germany, Count Von Graustark had presented him with a valuable ruby set in a ring. In fact the Count himself wore



THE INVENTOR AT BAY.—Like lightning Doctor Sixsmith whipped back the cover from his walking stick, to reveal the shining keen blade of a sword. For suddenly from all sides glaring white lights had impinged on him—searchlights behind which his enemies sheltered.

one, exactly similar, as did his four associates. Von Graustark had a nice taste in terrorism. He had made it plain that the ruby ring was the mark of a secret society to which Doctor Sixsmith belonged.

Flavius Sixsmith had discarded the ring, sent it back to the man he had once thought his benefactor. And now Graustark wrote that it would be a sign that he needed Doctor Sixsmith again when the ring was returned.

Well, the ring had come back that morning. And Doctor Sixsmith was wearing it now.

The Count, of course, in common with the rest of the world, knew of his research and experimental work in connection with the eclipse of the sun. And as repayment for his silence he now demanded the secret of Doctor Sixsmith's discoveries.

He wrapped this demand up in threat and vague hinting. He said he knew practically the discovery that Doctor Sixsmith had made, and he was coming to take the matter into his own hands.

Doctor Sixsmith was appalled. The bluff worked with him. He reasoned this way. How did the Count know that his discovery promised material gain unless he knew all? Graustark was a crook. He wanted money. He would not want the secret unless he knew that there was money in it. The man was omniscient.

This was the thought that dined in Doctor Sixsmith's brain:

Somehow the Count had got to know that the experiments he was conducting in connection with the eclipse of the sun were experiments in the making of gold!

ALL this passed through Doctor Sixsmith's mind as he stood there gripping the curtains on the threshold of his observatory.

It was as though the eminent astronomer and physicist was reluctant to enter the great dome-shaped apartment with its giant telescope rearing to the sky where he spent most of his waking hours.

He was reluctant. More than that, he was afraid. A new terror had come into his life.

So little did he care actually for money itself that he had practically acquiesced to the Count's demand that he should reap the benefit of his secret. He had made no objection to the Count's proposal to come to his observatory. The discovery itself was sufficient for Doctor Sixsmith—the discovery of how to make gold. If Count Graustark cared to scoop the reward he might do so.

Indeed, the whole world might share in the gold—if there was any to share!

Originally that had been Doctor Sixsmith's intention, to announce to the world that he had discovered the secret of making gold, to make it, and to tell the world where that gold might be found. But first he would tell Count Graustark, so that that avaricious crook and his associates might have first pickings of the haul.

A hill of gold! Surely that would satisfy the Count and keep his mouth shut.

There would not be enough to upset the currency of the World. The gold he would make would not yield as much as the Klondyke. It would be out of his power to make more than a certain quantity. But it was possible that there would be enough to make Graustark and several other people millionaires.

These had been the thoughts that had actuated Doctor Sixsmith in first making an announcement concerning his experiments in connection with the eclipse of the sun.

Then had come no further announcement, and the world was getting impatient. Was Doctor Sixsmith bluffing? What was his important discovery? Had he, indeed, made one at all? These were the

questions the newspapers asked, almost in unequivocal terms.

The scientist dared not make any reply, for an awful suspicion had entered his head. The making of gold was out of the question, for he had discovered a small but important error in his calculi. But he believed he had stumbled upon another discovery. One that shocked and terrified him.

He could not be certain yet. To-night he meant to verify his deductions.

He entered his observatory with slow steps, walked to the gigantic astronomical telescope, and laid down full length on the couch beneath it. It was midnight, and the stars were bright. For a long time he studied the pale, translucent moon, and then at length he moved to a small table on which was an intricate device—a chart under a glass-covered case. On the chart an inky claw was moving slowly but ruthlessly, tracing the movements of the planets of the solar system.

Doctor Sixsmith tapped keys and made calculations. Then he moved to a spectroscope, studying the moon again. His agitation increased. He was trembling.

"Great Heavens!" he muttered at last. "It's true. I have discovered a means of annihilating Great Britain with her millions of inhabitants."

He pushed the spectroscope on its swivel, and stood up in great agitation, one hand at his collar. "Great Heavens!" he muttered again. "If Count Graustark should come . . . now!"

His mind revolved with intense rapidity. To a trained scientist the instrument boards, together with the notes made in his open diary which lay on his desk near-by, would reveal a great deal. He had tried to make gold, but he had made another terrific and terrifying discovery.

None must know of it. None must know of the awful power he held.

Suppose Count Von Graustark should come to-night—the fanatic Count who hated England with the rabid hatred of a mad dog! He could justly boast of being a trained scientist. He would read the secret contained here in the observatory. And he would gloat. He would be more gleeful than if Doctor Sixsmith had discovered the secret of making gold. For his hatred of the country that had beaten Germany was a mania with Count Graustark. Gladly would he send England to eternal destruction.

"I mustn't let that fiend, Graustark know," muttered the Count feverishly.

Speaking thus aloud he moved hastily over to his log which lay open on the table. But suddenly he was held transfixed. It was as if the whole of his body, apart from his head, had been petrified, turned to stone. Neither hand nor foot could he move. His head and neck muscle obeyed the frantic urge of his will, but those only.

And as if in obedience to some unuttered command, Doctor Sixsmith turned his head.

A cry that was little more than a gasp escaped his lips.

There, in the parting of the black velvet curtains, he saw a face. The face of Count Von Graustark.

And such a face. It was hairless, smooth, and as yellow as a tea rose. Puckering, whimsical lips gave it an elfish appearance, belied by the stern malignancy of the slant eyes. It was the face of a young-old man, and it was crowned by a shining opera hat, set at a rakish angle. A long cigarette-holder between the lips held a white tube of tobacco and opium, from which came a curling, sickly-smelling wisp of smoke.

Count Von Graustark stepped into the observatory, a buoyant figure in evening dress and a long opera cloak. The brilliant red of a diplomat's sash con-

trasted vividly with his white shirt front. Count Graustark was at all times a punctillio for dress.

"Got you, my excellent Englishman," he purred softly as he advanced a step.

In his hands was an electric magnet. That and nothing more. With that he held the famous English astronomer at bay. It electrified Doctor Sixsmith, held him transfixed.

"I heard all. I came in time evidently," purred the sinister Count in German patois. "My good Sixsmith, you are still fulfilling your destiny of being an enemy to your own country and friends."

His soft laugh was charged with evil. His awful eyes strayed eagerly towards the open diary on the

patent leather shoes—through the thick plush curtains.

Doctor Sixsmith commenced to struggle. The sweat stood out on his great, intellectual head. But not until fully half-a-minute after the Count's spectacular exit—indeed, until the magnet's paralyzing force was nullified by distance—could he move. Then he was like some giant bursting his bonds. He glared around him.

The gun! That was the key to the whole situation. If he could spike the gun the Count would be impotent for harm. The gun was the key to the whole situation. It lay outside in the grounds of the observatory, ready for use on the occasion of the eclipse. A tremendous but intricate piece of machinery, it was easily capable of being spiked.

The Doctor's eyes, glaring around, alighted on what appeared to be a walking-stick, and he snatched it up.

But before he left the observatory he turned to the telephone.

"Falcon Swift," he muttered. "He at any rate will help me." And in a few seconds he was speaking over the 'phone to the famous private detective.

"Come round, for Heaven's sake, Swift," he urged. "There are terrible things happening here to-night. No, I can't explain. Come at once—before it is too late."

And he crashed the receiver down on its hook and raced out into the grounds, half demented, with the walking-stick in his hand.

Over the soft turf he raced until he came in dim sight of a massive erection—a great gun rearing up from a basin in the grounds. Doctor Sixsmith paused almost at the bridge of the structure and turned round at bay. Like lightning he whipped back the cover from his walking-stick, to reveal the shining,



THE BALLOON BOMB.
 "—Look, look!" cried Doctor Sixsmith wildly. "The madmen! The evil fiends! They've discharged the explosive gun! That balloon shape is a huge bomb, shooting for the moon!"

desk, but he could not refrain from taunting his victim.

"I have been wanting to come and see you, Sixsmith, old fellow. You are so energetic. You do things. And they are always worth examining. Now me, I am a genius, too," he added boastfully, "but I have an inherent laziness that cripples achievement. I dragged myself to see you though, my dear man. I heard you had something big. It seems I arrived at an opportune moment."

He crossed over, cat-like, to the big diary on the desk.

Doctor Sixsmith bit his lower lip till it bled. There were servants in the house, but he could not cry out, could not make anything more articulate than animal noises.

His face was bleak and fierce as he stared at the man who was reading his secret.

At last Count Von Graustark turned with a little smile, eyes wide in inquiry. An incredibly evil, puckish face it was. Such a face as the young and good-looking Dr. Jekyll might have worn during his transformation to that indescribable villain, Mr. Hyde. It seemed to question: is this true—this thing? Apparently accepting an answer from Doctor Sixsmith's awful, repressed fury, the Count took up the diary and glided—literally glided on his



keen blade of a sword stick. For suddenly from all sides glaring white lights had impinged upon him. Searchlights behind which his enemies s'eltered.

"Back, you dogs!" he growled. "I'll run the first man through who has the courage to show himself."

For a second those white lights wavered and held. Doctor Sixsmith turned and raced for the bridge over the gun. He scrambled up the ladder with white lights, confused and mingling, flooding him whilst from behind came a medley of angry curses and shouts.

Scrambling along the broad side of the gun, he raised his swordstick again and again, and plunged it into a delicate part of the mechanism. There came a howl of rage, and five figures hurtled at him, bearing him down to the sloping back of the gun's muzzle. He was severely manhandled. Staring up, he saw the gross, swarthy faces of Graustark's five crooks, one of whom had him by the throat.

He was shaken like a rat, guttural threats were spat at him, and then at the command of another voice—purring and sinister—the voice of Count Graustark himself—he was thrown outwards from the gun, to fall senseless to the turf twenty feet below.

"Quick," barked Count Graustark. "Let us see if he has been successful in spiking the gun. If not, we'll fire the explosive at the moon immediately."

Enter Falcon Swift.

"FASTER, Chick, laddie."

It was Falcon Swift's cool, incisive voice. Somehow some sixth instinct seemed to tell the famous sporting detective that they were arriving too late upon the scene. He was answering the midnight telephone call of Doctor Sixsmith, whom he knew well. Naturally he knew that the famous scientist had some secret to guard, and he was apprehensive.

Suddenly Falcon Swift started violently, the monocle dropping from his right eye.

A blinding white glare had cut through the dark sky, upwards towards the heavens. It made its meteor-like progress almost in half-a-dozen seconds, accompanied by a sound as of crackling lightning tearing the sky. A few seconds the white path tore upwards, then it was gone. The dark sky was peaceful again.

Chick, gripping the huge polished wheel of his master's thoroughbred car, turned a white face.

"What was it, Boss?" he breathed.

"Some explosive gun being fired from Greenwich, from the grounds of the Professor's observatory, I should say," replied the great detective at a venture. His swift, incisive reasoning of the matter, built up from facts he knew, was correct. Graustark and his crooks had even then fired the big explosive gun in Doctor Sixsmith's grounds, and were hastening away now into the darkness.

Chick "blinded" the big, silent car. He brought her up to an abrupt standstill from fifty miles an hour, flinging up the stones from the gravel drive of Doctor Sixsmith's house. Both the detective and his boy assistant leapt from the purring Hispano Suiza.

A shy moon had shown her face, and by the pale light the crime tracker and his assistant saw the prone figure of Doctor Sixsmith, his dressing-gown thrown grotesquely up over his face to reveal his long limbs.

He was insensible, and they worked over him fifty long minutes before at length he shivered and opened his eyes.

"Ugh!" He spat out a burning taste of brandy, and then galvanised, he leapt to his feet and pointed upwards.

"Look, look," he cried wildly. "The madmen! The evil fiends! They've discharged the explosive gun. See that balloon shape. It's a huge bomb, shooting for the moon!"

They saw it, like a huge gas balloon sailing through the sky. It seemed quite near, yet they knew that it was not.

Then Falcon Swift and Chick became aware that Doctor Sixsmith was distraught. He was holding his head in his hands, trembling visibly, and as pale as death, and he was muttering.

"The end. Ruin and devastation will come on June 29, and I have wrought it."

"Come, come; collect yourself, Doctor," Falcon Swift said soothingly. "Come, you shall tell us the whole story."

He insisted on taking them up to the bridge where they looked out over the expanse of the great gun, like a sinister sleeping giant in the moonlight. Gasping a little, Doctor Sixsmith told his story.

It seemed he had observed a gigantic flam or exrudescence on the sun, and he had analysed it as helium—a new gas, which Ramsay, the famous physicist first discovered in 1895.

His observations had led to the discovery that when the moon passed across the sun's face that gigantic gas cloud would temporarily be released from the sun.

And quite erroneously, as he now knew, his calculi had led him to the conclusion that an explosive fired at that gas would disintegrate electrons and form molten gold, which would fall on the earth. And so he had built the tremendous high-explosive gun. Now he knew that he was all wrong. In reality the effect of his explosive would be that a flood of molten, red-hot metal would fall on England, or at least that belt of it which was in total eclipse, laying the whole country bare and devastated.

Left alone, that menacing flam would return to the sun's orbit under natural circumstances. But it had not been left alone. Count Graustark, deadly enemy of England, had interfered, and already there was tearing into the solar system the deadly bomb balloon which would precipitate disaster upon the country.

Truly was Doctor Sixsmith fulfilling his unfortunate destiny. He was destroying that which he loved most of all—his native land.

Falcon Swift and Chick listened tensely to the tale told in broken, disjointed sentences. They were both very grave. This was no ordinary man-hunting case. It was disaster.

"And can nothing be done?" cried Falcon Swift at last, gripping the scientist's arm. "Think, man—think! You are a man of abnormal mentality. Surely something can be done to remedy this diabolical state of affairs."

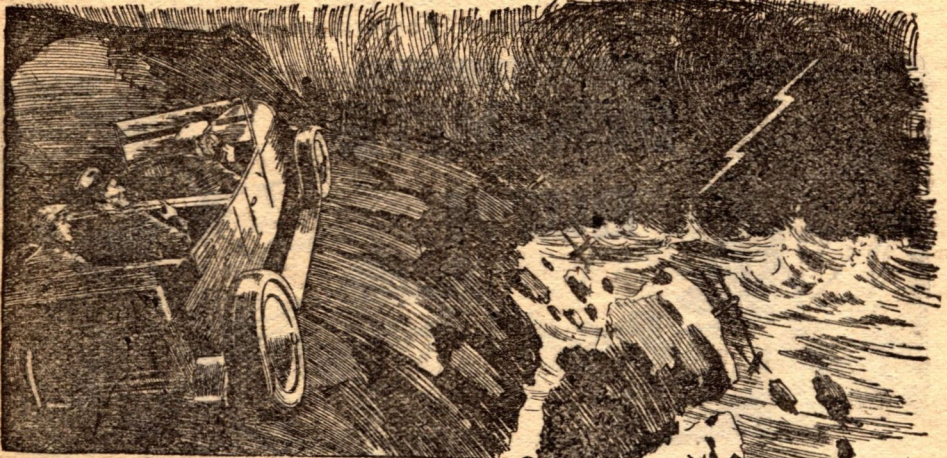
Doctor Sixsmith hesitated.

"There is one thing. The gun will shoot a projectile that I have built to carry human beings. It is all in the experimental stage, however. It is dangerous to try it."

"Go on, man—speak on," said Falcon Swift urgently. "Think of the thousands of lives at stake."

"I am thinking of them," Doctor Sixsmith said with compressed lips. "But this is practically suicide. The projectile will shoot some thirty thousand miles off the earth, then its force will be expended, and it will return by gravity's law. The only thing to stop it crashing with its occupants is a certain wing-gliding apparatus I have perfected upon it, and this only becomes operative in the earth's atmosphere. No, it is too much of a gamble." He shook his head.

"But tell me," the detective asked, clutching at



THE END OF THE ECLIPSE.—The elements roared—shrieked. And then with dramatic suddenness came the awful cataclysm. Not a hundred yards away the ground was seized as if by a seismic shock. There was a rending, tearing crash, and part of the cliff side slithered down to the sea.

his sleeve again, "what good could two human beings do by taking the journey in your projectile."

"If they went at once," grated the scientist, who seemed almost on the point of mental collapse, "they would follow the path of the bomb balloon. There is a gun in the projectile by which the balloon could be fired long before it reached the vast floating mass of meteors for which it is aimed. That is all. I would go myself—I would gladly take the risk—but none but me knows how to operate the gun so that it will eject this projectile. And to stand any chance at all, someone must go at once."

"Then I'll go," Falcon Swift said, determinedly. "No, no; no arguments. Prepare everything, Doctor!"

The Monocled Manhunter felt a tug at his sleeve and looked down to see the earnest, flushed face of his boy assistant.

"You're not going to leave me out, Boss?" the boy said eagerly. "Why, I—I wouldn't care about living if—if anything happened—"

Falcon Swift nodded. This was the most dreadful risk he had ever taken, but he knew that Chick must come. They had been together in too many perils to separate now.

"All right, laddie. Let's get busy helping the Professor."

There was really little they could do. From their high platform they observed a great torpedo-like shape slowly coming up on a hydraulic lift to the gun as Doctor Sixsmith operated a lever.

Then the breach of the giant gun slowly opened, and the projectile was tilted automatically into position. Falcon Swift's knowledge of modern machinery was "extensive and peculiar," but never had he seen anything like this. He descended with Chick and the Doctor.

Through gleaming plate glass they saw the interior of the projectile. Asbestos lined, it was barely large enough to hold two human beings. They crawled inside and found it lined with air tanks, as a submarine is. There was just one little cupboard ready to their hands, containing chicken sandwiches, thermos flasks and other foods of travellers. And before them was the breach of what looked like a machine-gun, poking its ugly muzzle through the bow of the vessel.

"Get in," commanded Falcon Swift after a very brief examination. "Come on; we're ready. Let's lose no time!"

Chick, with a fast-beating heart, crouched down in the little seat. There was a final handshake with the Doctor. And then the shutters descended over the glass sides, and they were in their prison, lit by a steady electric globe overhead.

Chick felt rather than knew that the breach of the gun was folding down on them. The heat already was stifling. He waited, his heart beating like a trip hammer. Once he glanced at Falcon Swift. A tiny smile curved the detective's lips, and in his right eye was still his beloved gleaming monocle. He was the superb adventurer.

Suddenly Chick felt a terrific crash, as if a mighty hammer had hit him from behind. A gargantuan roar filled his ears, and he swooned where he sat. But before he became insensible he knew that they had started on their mad career through space.

He knew nothing of that strange and terrible journey at lightning speed. He lay there insensible in a little prison of blazing heat in a projectile whizzing madly through the ether.

Falcon Swift was in little better case. He lay gasping, his face bleak, almost wolfish with the agonies he endured. Soon he, too, slept—blissful sleep, but he awakened again. Chick at last opened his eyes to wondrous, awesome surroundings. Blackness, lit by rolling planets all around him. The shutters were up over the glass sides, and Falcon Swift was lying full length at the gun, peering out through the spyholes, his face set in a grim mask.

Looking ahead with him, Chick saw the queer bomb balloon. Falcon Swift had the gun trained on it.

His lips moved soundlessly, and formed the word, "Watch!"

Then he pressed the trigger. There was no sound of an explosion, but to Chick's startlement an awful, consuming blaze appeared before his eyes. The bomb balloon, composed of some new modern explosive, had died in the ether.

Hitherto, since they had awakened, Chick had felt

(Continued on page 34.)

Wallamaloo! The Lure of the Lone Bush Calls in This Topping Yarn of Wonders and Excitement. Featuring a True and Tried Hero.



They Can Slash, Bash and Lash—But They Can't Beat Captain Crash, the Aristocratic Bushranger of the North Queensland "Never, Never Land."

The Tree-Felling Competition.

CAPTAIN CLAUDE CRASH, the gentleman bushranger, strolled into Ritson's Sunrise Bar as dapper and debonair as ever. In his wake came his son, Jack, who was in his disguise of a bush-boy, his body, bare from the waist, and stained a shiny black.

A group of cowboys and bull whackers were excitedly scanning a notice which had been nailed up in the timber-walled bar, and over their heads Crash could see a large £500.

The gentleman bushranger thought swiftly. He knew full well that many of the dastardly deeds of his hated rival bushrangers, Black Kelly, had been placed at his door, and now, if the police had put out a reward for his capture, even Ritson's Bar was not safe for him.

Overcoming his first impulse quickly to quit the bar, he sauntered up behind the group and then he laughed aloud as his eyes fell upon the second line of the notice.

£500 In Prizes! Crash realised that this was a poster advertising a Jamboree and Rodeo which was shortly to take place at Wallamaroo.

A path was made for the bushranger to come nearer to the notice, and then he read some of the events for which the prize-money—amounting to five hundred pounds in all—was offered.

Amongst them was a Tree-Felling Contest and the conditions of the Competition.

Each competitor would have three trees allotted to him, which he would know by numbers scrawled upon them in whitewash. He would bring his own axes, and at the signal for the start, which would consist of a pistol-shot, the competitors would attack their three trees. The one who felled his three trees first to be declared the winner.

With a thoughtful air, Captain Crash took a stub of pencil from his pocket. There was space left at the bottom of the notice, headed with the various

contests, and Crash's pencil made for the column, Tree-felling.

"Going to enter?" laughed one of the bull-whackers good-naturedly. "Bit risky, ain't it? Sure to be some of the North Queensland gentry present."

Captain Crash glanced at the speaker with a wry little smile, and then wrote: *A. N. Other* at the end of the list of names already scrawled in for the Tree-Felling Contest.

IT was the day of the Rodeo, and seated in his secret hut in the bush, Captain Crash glanced at his watch.



With a lithe swing Jack sent the boomerang hurtling through the air.

"Noon!" he muttered. "And Jack not back yet. Guess I'd better get along to the show, and he can follow on."

He scribbled out a few words telling Jack that he had gone to the Jamboree and instructing the youngster to follow. Then he took up his razor-edged axes and passed out of the hut to where his horse was tethered.

Jack—garbed in his native disguise—had gone out on a little hunting expedition. There were some wild ostrich he had spotted a few days before, and he had decided to try and bag a couple. Jack carried no rifle, for he had perfected himself with the native weapon—the boomerang.

Sure and silent, he could kill with unerring skill—the weapon returning to his hand with unerring regularity.

He had first sighted his ostriches near the quarry where the railway engineers had been blasting a way through the solid rock with dynamite.

An explosion had startled the birds from their home in the bush, and it was thus that Jack had spotted them.

It would, he guessed, be deserted that day, because all the workmen would have been given the day off to attend the Rodeo.

Jack planned, therefore, that he would be able to bag at least a couple of wild ostrich and still put in an appearance at the Rodeo in time—he hoped—to see his father win the Tree-Felling Contest.

Soon he sighted a splendid pair pecking at some scrubby bush.

Swinging his right arm back, Jack sent the curved lathe of wood whirling through the air, and the next instant one of the ostriches lay quivering upon the sandy ground with its neck broken.

The other bird gave a frightened glance at its mate and then made off with a curious shriek not unlike that of a cock-pheasant.

The disguised youngster caught his weapon swiftly as it came sailing back, and thrusting it through the lasso about his waist, made his way towards his kill.

He knew full well that the other bird—startled for a time—would return to that spot, for its young were still there, and Jack had a notion to catch the second bird alive.

To this end he shinned up the trunk of a tree and crawled out along one of the stout branches, where he waited with his lasso curled ready in his hand.

But the second ostrich seemed in no hurry to return, and Jack was upon the point of giving up when he noticed half-a-dozen horsemen rapidly approaching the quarries. But they were not any of the railway workers!

A lone horseman joined the others and in a flash Jack recognised him as his father's ruthless enemy, Black Kelly.

The next instant he saw a couple of the gang force open a door of the store-house and disappear inside.

They reappeared carrying an iron-bound case between them. Jack knew those cases—they contained the sticks of dynamite that the railway engineers used for blasting their way through the solid rock to lay the track.

He saw the two men hoist the box on to a spare horse and then they all remounted—Black Kelly at their head with his right-hand man, Jake Freidman, at his side.

They were now making their way in the direction of the tree where Jack lay hidden, and he heard Black Kelly's ugly voice as it drifted on the breeze.

"And don't let there be any bungling. You can find out which are the numbers of the trees Crash has to fell from the list on the notice board—see that the stuff is put into the right trees, and then we'll

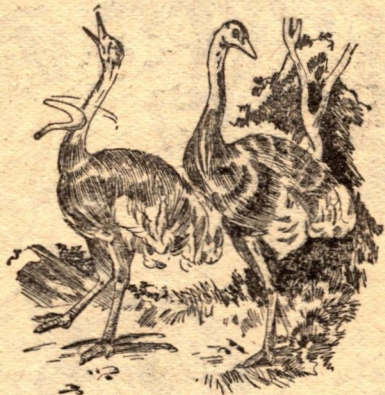
have the fun of seeing our lah-de-dah friend go sky-high."

A chill of horror ran down Jack's spine as the words drifted across to him. They were going to mine the trunks of the trees which his father would attack with his axe—one blow from the pointed edge of the steel head would explode the dynamite!

He must get back to the secret shack and warn his father, but how was he to do that in time?

At that moment a sudden and desperate idea came to him as he perceived the other ostrich.

Its young were now grouped under the very tree in which Jack was hiding, and the parent bird was coming straight back to them.



THE BOOMERANG'S BULL'S EYE.—The boomerang sped straight and true from the youngster's hand and one of the ostriches lay quivering.

Jack recoiled his lariat in his hands and lay—holding his breath—waiting.

At length the big ostrich was immediately under the tree.

Jack sent the noose of the lasso snaking down through the air. It dropped neatly over the head of the giant bird, and, with a quick turn of the wrist, the boy jerked it taut.

Thus taken by surprise, the bird stood stock-still for an instant. With a lithe spring, Jack landed plumb upon its back.

The ostrich danced round, trying its utmost to fling the boy from its back, but Jack managed to lean forward and jam a looped length of his lasso into the bird's mouth, and then draw it quickly taut.

It acted as a bit and reins.

Now the bird—its great neck stretched out before it—started to run across the bush, making straight for where Black Kelly and his men were riding. The rascally bushrangers let out a yell.

"Strewh! It's that darned N'Wani!" he cried, and raised his Remington to his shoulder.

Jack saw the act—jerked on the rope in the ostrich's mouth—and bent over its body.

He heard a bullet zip its way through the air just above him. But now he was level with them—about three hundred yards away.

Urging the bird on like an expert jockey, Jack lay low, crouching down upon the side furthest from Black Kelly's mob. Bullets ploughed their way into the bush on all sides of him. But a running ostrich is not an easy thing to hit—and a few seconds later Jack was ahead of the men on horseback.

Then suddenly, as he reached a spot some hundred yards from the river bank, he heard a smacking

**A METTLESOME
MOUNT!**
Urging the
ostrich on like
an expert
jockey, Jack lay
low, with Black
Kelly's mob rac-
ing behind him.



sound, and the great bird collapsed beneath him, sending him catapulting over its head to land in a heap in the soft sand.

Black Kelly had hit Jack's mount—killing it instantly.

"We've got him now!" he heard Black Kelly cry.

Quick as thought, Jack whipped out his Bowie knife and hacked through the lasso rope so that he still had many yards in his hand. Then, running zig-zag, he made for the river.

The bark reached, he sent his lasso hissing across the raging mountain torrent which it was impossible for him to swim, and he saw the noose fall over the bare branch of the tree at which he had aimed. Quickly he drew the line tight and made it fast to the bottom of a tree trunk. Then, hand over hand, he went across the raging flood.

It was a race against time and Kelly's flying bullets, but Jack won through.

He reached the other side and dropped safely to the ground—first taking the precaution to slash through the rope with his knife.

He was just below the spot where the secret shack was situated, and, scrambling up the precipitous slope hidden by the trees, he reached the door, wrenched it open and dashed in—to discover the place empty.

The note his father had left behind for him caught his eye, and in a flash he took it in. He must get to the Rodeo ground before his father started to fell his three trees, for already Black Kelly and his gang would be on the way to insert sticks of dynamite into them!

Shinning down the slope once more, Jack raced for the spot where lay hidden his birchwood canoe. Quickly he ran it out and leaped into it, paddling like mad downstream in the direction of the nearest point to Wallamaroo.

* * * * *

A PISTOL shot rang through the air. It was the signal for the tree-felling contest to commence.

Some dozen men, with coats off and their shirts rolled above the elbow, raised a dozen axes, and soon the bright blades were flashing in the sun as they came down upon the trunks of twelve giant trees.

And one—towering above the others—wore a black mask beneath which showed a fair Vandyke beard—Captain Crash!

Upon the outskirts of the crowd Black Kelly and his gang sat their horses.

"Which tree is the dope in, Jake?" whispered Kelly, leaning forward and speaking to his lieutenant.

"The middle one—the next one he'll tackle."

Black Kelly nodded with satisfaction and settled down to enjoy the "fun" of seeing his hated rival blown into a thousand pieces.

Captain Crash was the first to be through with tree number one, and snatching up a second axe he sprang along a few feet towards the next tree allotted him.

"Now for it!" hissed Kelly as he saw the gleaming axe raised above Captain Crash's fair head. But before the gentleman bushranger could bring it down upon the ruined tree, something hissed through the air and struck the haft of his axe, turning it aside.

Next moment the figure of a black boy, his bare shoulders glistening in the sunlight, raced for the side of the masked bushranger.

Captain Crash already had the axe raised again for a second blow when Jack hurled himself forward.

"That tree's mined, Dad!" he cried. "Kelly's bunch have put dynamite in it!"

An angry, dangerous light crept into Crash's eyes and showed through the slits in his mask as his gaze settled upon the fleeing figures of Black Kelly and his men. Then, running to his horse, he mounted and dashed in pursuit.

So intent was the gentleman bushranger upon squaring accounts with Kelly that he did not so much as glance over his shoulder. Had he done so, he might have seen the rest of Kelly's mob under the leadership of Jake Freidman from behind as they rode out in fan formation.

The scoundrels waited until Captain Crash had emptied his revolver after Kelly; then, without giving him time to reload, sent a rope hissing through

the air. Crash was jerked out of the saddle and a couple of the bushrangers threw themselves upon him. The Captain fought like a tiger, but others joined in the unfair fight and, before long he was trussed up like a chicken ready for the oven.

Then, when he saw that all was safe, Black Kelly came riding back—an ugly leer upon his evil face. "Tie him up to that tree," he ordered. "We'll have some fun with him."

His men did his bidding, and Black Kelly, dismounting, caught at the bridle of Crash's horse and unstrapped the two axes fixed thereat.

"Now we'll try a little axe-throwing on our own account," he cried hideously, raising one of the axes above his head.

The gleaming blade came straight at the gentleman bushranger, and he only managed to twist his head in time. The axe buried itself deep into the trunk.

"Hard luck!" hissed Kelly, and raised the second axe.

But this time his aim was not so true. The axe cleaved its way upon the other side of Crash's head, slitting his ear as it did so.

Black Kelly chuckled with diabolical glee, and then his eyes descended upon a wicker birdcage tied to the saddle of one of his men.

"What you got there, Ike?" he demanded.

"Only a woodpecker," answered the fellow. "Got it as a pet!"

"A woodpecker, eh?" said Kelly, and a fiendish light crept into his eyes. "Well, you're going to lose your pet—give it ter me!"

Unwillingly the fellow handed over the bird in its cage.

"Good! Now we'll send Crash where we meant him to go!" hissed Kelly, producing a stick of dynamite from his saddlebags, as he came towards Crash. "I'm going to put this stick of dynamite in the bird's cage and hang it on a branch nice and near you, my la-di-da friend. Sooner or later the bird'll peck the dynamite—and then up you go! Savvy?"

But Crash did not bat an eyelid—fiendish though the plot was. He watched the inhuman, black-bearded scoundrel hang the wicker birdcage upon a branch near him, then mount his horse and motion for the others to get at a respectable distance.

This done, Kelly galloped up to the cage and slid the stick of dynamite through the bars—to race off a moment later.

The woodpecker cocked its head upon one side and looked curiously at the object in its cage—and Crash, his pupils narrowed to pin-points, was forced to watch the bird. Any second it might peck at the deadly explosive which needed but such a touch to set it off!"

Then suddenly a cry went up!

Jerking his head round, Captain Crash saw his son, Jack, mounted on a horse he had borrowed, several other men with him. They were natives, and had bows and arrows slung across their shoulders, for there had been a bow and arrow contest at the Jamboree for friendly natives.

"Keep off!" yelled the gentleman bushranger frantically. "Stand clear, Jack—there's dynamite in this cage—and the bird may peck it any second. Keep away."

Jack reined in his horse with a jerk, and his hand sought his faithful boomerang, only to release it the next instant as he realised its uselessness.

Then as one of the natives joined him—an idea came to him.

Without a word, he snatched the long bow and arrow from the native's back.

Hastily fitting the arrow to the bow, he drew back the thong and took steady aim.

Zip! the arrow hissed through the air to finish in the breast of the woodpecker, and the bird collapsed in a heap at the bottom of its cage.

Black Kelly, seeing his foul plot frustrated for the second time that day by the boy he knew as N'Wani, gave an angry shout and spurred his horse forward. But at that instant Jake Friedman let up a cry.

"The police!" he yelled. "The North Queensland! Beat it, boss."

The officer in charge had seen that entry of "A. N. Other" in the tree-felling competition, and subtle inquiries had led him to suspect that it was none other than Captain Crash. He had accordingly sent a detachment to the Rodeo to capture him.

But now that they saw Black Kelly and his gang, they decided to try to make sure of him as well.

Jack made for his father as he saw a couple of the police moving in the same direction and quickly the youngster slashed his father free.

"Take my horse and beat it, Dad!" he cried.

"But you?" cried Crash, as he wriggled free. "They know you work with me!"

"Never mind about me, Dad—I'll be all right! I'll get back amongst the natives, and the police won't be able to tell me from one of them in this rig—and they can't arrest the lot of us. You get away—I'll join you at the shack later."

Realising the truth of his son's words, Crash leaped into the saddle to disappear in a cloud of dust a moment later.

Meanwhile Jack doubled back through the bush, and was soon amidst the natives which he resembled so closely.

The police made off after Crash—but Jack laughed a few minutes later as he saw them return without their man.

* * * * *

It was dusk when Jack crept back under cover of the gathering darkness to the secret shack in the bush.

There he found his father safe and sound.

"Thank Heaven you got away all right, Dad," he cried as he joined him.

Crash nodded.

"Wish I could have got away with the tree-felling championship, as well," he laughed.

Tell All Your Chums about the Smoked Eclipse Glasses given with The Mag. This Week. And about the Rattling New Serial, "The Planet Schoolboys."

1/6 The Bully Boy 1/6

20-Shot Rapid Repeater Action Pea Pistol. Fires a Pea 25 feet at the rate of 100 a minute. A Regular Pocket Lewis Gun! Bright nickel finish; each in box with ammunition. A better shooter than you have ever had before! Send 1/6 and don't miss our latest quick-firer! Colonial Orders (stamps not accepted) 9d. extra.—J. BISHOP & CO., 41, Finsbury Square, LONDON, E.C.



CAMERA for 1/9 only

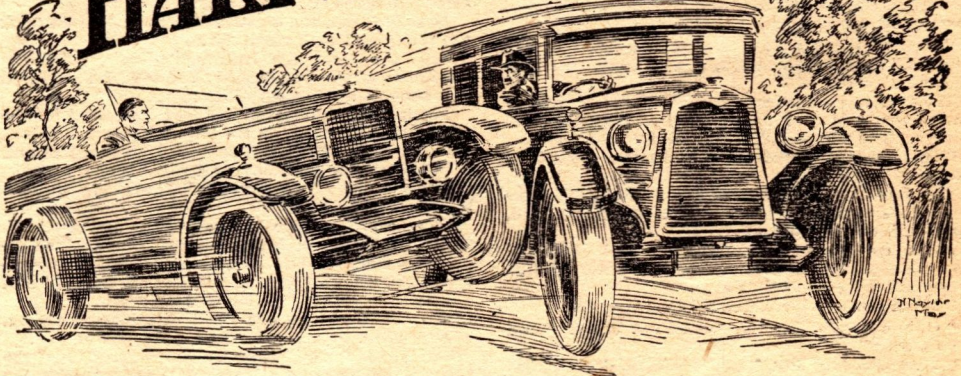
"The Viewograph" 3 1/2 x 2 1/2 Post 3d. Takes perfect photos, 3 1/2 x 2 1/2 inches. Fitted with Convex Lens, Viewfinder etc. Complete with Dry Plate, Developing and Printing Outfit, and full instructions. The "WONDER" Camera. Same as above, but without viewfinder. Complete 1/3. Post 3d. Send at once for one of these delightful Cameras, Trade supplied.



A. HERBERTS, 27, Adys Road, Peckham, London, S.E.15.

A Rousing, Rollicking Tale of Andrew William Buckle, the Big Noise and Live Wire of Chudleigh St. Giles School.

SOME HALF HOLIDAY



Wow! A Kidnapped Schoolboy, with Buckle on the Trail in a Captured Car.

Trailing a Kidnapper.

BUCKLE was unlucky—so he thought. The Dominic had caught him red-handed putting a live wire on the door of Number Five study. Buckle had intended to give the Fifth Form bullies, Maddock and Pierce, a little shock. But Andy didn't know that the Doctor himself happened to be in the study, giving Maddock and his friend a little talk.

It was the Dominic who received the shock. And if Maddock told the truth, the Doctor broke all the records at the "high jump," when he fingered the electrified door-knob, as he came out of the room.

Andrew William Buckle did the next "high jump" into the Doctor's study. No one had ever known the Head to be so fierce. He broke two canes upon Buckle, and sent for a third. And Andy had fifteen minutes of the liveliest fox-trot he had ever danced in his life.

"There!" snorted the Head, throwing away the broken pieces of the third cane. "I'll teach you to electrify door-knobs. Now go, sir! But remember you are gated for a week. And, to-morrow, you shall spend the half-holiday doing hard, manual work in the garden!"

That was why, on the following afternoon, Buckle missed the seven-mile cross-country run.

All the rest of the school seemed to have followed the packs. But Buckle suddenly heard the patter of footsteps just coming down the drive.

It was Young Timson of the Third, a timorous, gentle youth who had but recently come to Chudleigh St. Giles. He was fond of Buckle, who more than once had rescued him from the clutches of the bullies.

"Hullo, Timson!" called Buckle. "Aren't you following the packs?"

Timson: ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~was~~ ^{was} short.

"Er—no, Buckle. I intended to. But just as the packs were starting I got a message to say that

a friend of the pater's out in Burma had called to see me."

"Where is he?"

"Bottom of the drive. He can only stay five minutes. He's motoring to London. Excuse me, Buckle. I must go. Sorry you've been gated!"

Buckle watched the youngster out of sight, then yawned, stretched himself, chewed a piece of grass lazily, and was about to return to his trenching when he heard a muffled scream.

"Snakes alive!" he gasped. "That's Timson!"

The next instant, with a bound he cleared the wall, raced down the drive, then caught a glimpse of a swarthy, sinister-looking man carrying the struggling form of Young Timson into a covered motor.

"Hoi!" shouted Andy. "Stop! Stop!" But, before he could reach the gates, the door was slammed, the engine opened out, and the green motor started off.

Buckle sprinted to the gate and into the road. The motor was already fifty yards away. In another twenty seconds it would be out of sight.

Andy's brain was simply buzzing. He didn't delay five seconds.

"The Doctor's new Sunbeam!" he gurgled. "We might do it." Then he yelled the chauffeur's name at the top of his voice.

But there was no reply. The schoolhouse was too far away. And the gardener, at that moment, was looking for Buckle at the bottom of the shrubbery.

"I must risk it!" decided Andy. "I've lost two minutes already. An' the greer Buick was a fifteen-thirty. That villain'll make a getaway. Here goes!" Jarrold's goggles and cap, with his leather coat, were lying beside the wheel. Andy slipped into the chauffeur's gear, switched on the self-starter, and the engine opened up.

Fifteen seconds later, Buckle was in the road. Everything was clear. There was absolutely no traffic in sight, and Buckle, who was perfectly at

home at the driving-wheel, opened out full, leaving a trail of dust behind him.

"Thirty—thirty-five—forty!" muttered Buckle, and the cheery, round face of the speedometer seemed to chuckle, as if it were enjoying a first class joke. *Rep-r-r-r-r!* The Sunbeam purred beautifully, and the hedges, fields and ditches swept past the runaway.

At any moment now the green car might show up on the horizon. And with head bent over the wheel, but his eyes peering ahead, the daring schoolboy swept along the London road.

He had covered twenty-odd miles when he came to cross-roads. And the four-fingered signpost blinked at him with the words "London—Plymouth" and "Milverton—Ottery St. Mary."

Here was a dilemma. Had the kidnapper turned off to the right or left? Until now there had been no main crossings, only country lanes which led to villages. Buckle pulled up and stopped dead, as a motor, approaching from the direction of London, came into sight.

"Ahoy!" he called, raising his hand. "Have you met a green Buick in the last five minutes, sir?"

"Yes," came the reply. "A green car was taking petrol at the Cherwell Garage a mile down the road."

"Was it a Buick?"

"Er—I believe so," jerked the chauffeur. "Didn't notice particularly. There was a dark-featured man in charge of it. Had a sick boy inside. Said he was taking him to hospital. There must have been an accident, I think."

"Thanks," jerked out Buckle, not waiting for further news. "A sick boy, eh? That means the rascal has drugged Timson. Only a mile further on, too. Gee, but I'll catch him, an' run 'im down, if I have to smash the Head's new Sunbeam. Poor Timson!"

Buckle had opened out again, and the indicator jerked up to fifty-eight. Swinging round the next bend, the little hamlet of Bellecombe opened out before him. Just a few cottages, an old church, and—a garage.

It was at the garage he caught sight of the Buick.

"Now for it," he muttered. And his face was set like a mask. "He may be a desperado—but I'm goin' to hang on to him."

Yard by yard he overhauled his rival. Evidently the desperado in the green car had become suspicious. This road-hog in his rear was the first driver who had tried to pass him.

Buckle was still gaining ground. He was straining forward, too, trying to glimpse the inside of the Buick, when he caught sight of a pale, sickly face. It was undoubtedly Timson, lying moaning on the rugs.

"Timson! Timson!" yelled Andy, utterly unable to restrain himself now. And from the sinister-faced man at the wheel there came a terrible oath.

"What do you want?" he rasped, turning upon Buckle the most villainous pair of eyes the boy had ever beheld.

"Get to your left and let me pass!" shouted Andy.

"I won't!" came the retort. And "Black Peter," a notorious scoundrel who had been paid five hundred pounds to kidnap Young Timson, resolved upon more deadly action.

Slipping his right hand into his pocket, he whipped out something which glinted in the sun. It was a small Webley pistol.

"Get back!" he ordered hoarsely and, this time, stark murder leapt from his beady eyes. "I know your game. But you don't know who you're up against. I'll give you one more chance. Take that first road on the right or I'll—"

"I won't!" hoicked Andy, for his blood was boiling now. If it had been a machine-gun he was facing, his resolve would have been the same.

"Then take that, an' that!" Black Peter fired twice—not to kill, but to frighten off his daring opponent. One bullet splintered the side of the car.

"You hound!" hissed Buckle, and as the motors were now neck and neck, running both at top speed, Andy gave the steering-wheel a sudden wrench, turning in as if to ram his adversary's car.

It was a dummy threat, but it had the desired effect. Black Peter, with an oath, jabbed over his own wheel to avert a collision, swerved, skidded, jammed on his brakes, and ended by running the bonnet of his car into the hedge.

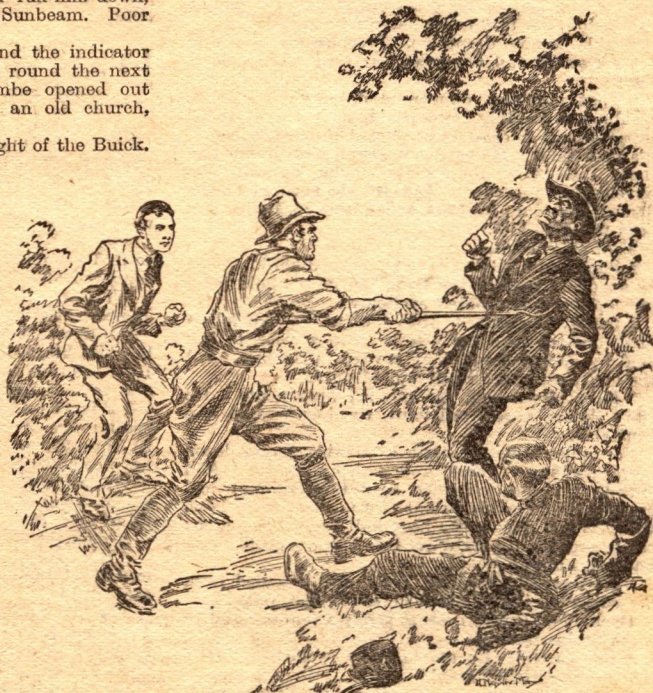
Just at that moment, a policeman, riding a bicycle furiously, came sailing along from the village through which Andy had chased his man.

"Anything wrong?" he asked of Black Peter as he came abreast and jammed on his brakes.

"Yes, Constable," replied the criminal smartly. "That fellow down the road there"—and Black Peter pointed to where Andy had just brought his car to a standstill.

The village constable cocked his ears.

"Gosh—it's a Sunbeam, too!" he exclaimed.



UNEXPECTED ASSISTANCE.—Just when it seemed that Andy's number was about to be raised a farm labourer appeared on the scene. Leaping the hedge he came at Black Peter with pitchfork raised.

"An' we've just had a 'phone message through to say a Sunbeam car was pinched barely half-an-hour ago. Dr. Spancker's car it was."

"That's your man then. Get him afore he clears," urged Black Peter, jumping at the chance.

Constable Turk didn't wait any longer; he mounted, and pedalled for dear life towards the second car.

It was Black Peter's opportunity. Not a second did he waste. His engine was running perfectly within five seconds. So he backed the nose of his car out of the hedge, reversed, and tailed off down the slope, by the way he had come.

Barely sixty yards had separated the cars; and, as Constable Turk dashed towards the Sunbeam, Buckle, who had dismounted, came shouting and gesticulating towards him.

"Hoi—stop!" ordered the man in blue; and, dismounting quickly, he threw his bike into the roadway and gripped Andy by the collar. "That your car? The Sunbeam, I mean," were his first words, ignoring Andy's expostulations.

Buckle still tried to explain feverishly. But Mr. Turk only shook him, feeling sure he had made a great capture.

"No—no!" panted Andy.

"H'm! Stolen it, I suppose? Belongs to Doctor Spancker at Chudleigh St. Giles, I see. Identification marks correct. Where's your licence?"

"Er—haven't got one. But it's the other man you want," stammered Buckle. "I was following him. He's kidnapped one of the Doctor's pupils—a small boy named Timson."

"Ha, ha!" chuckled the man in blue, taking an even tighter grip on his prisoner. "Heard tales like that before. A bird in the hand's worth—"

Buckle became desperate. Precious seconds were being wasted, and the green car was almost out of sight.

"That man's a dangerous criminal," he said, speaking as forcibly as he could, for the grip on his collar almost choked him. "An' if he gets away, it's your fault. He carries a pistol, and he tried to shoot me. See, there's the bullet hole in the panelling of the car." And Buckle pointed to the damaged motor, towards which the constable had been dragging him.

That clinched it.

"Shot you? Bullet hole?" echoed Turk. Then he suddenly realised the truth, let go his hold upon his captive, and shouted excitedly:

"Quick, youngster! Into the car! We'll follow him. Better take the wheel. You're used to it." And the next instant, they started in pursuit. But the green car was already out of sight.

"Most likely he'll get mes'ed hereabouts. He can't know these awkward turnings," said the constable.

For miles they proceeded, making half-a-dozen more corkscrew turns and hairpin bends. And Buckle was beginning to fear the criminal had escaped, when suddenly out of a narrow, rutty lane, where it had apparently been half-bogged, the green car emerged and nearly ran into them. Black Peter had lost his way.

"Here it is!" shouted Turk, and bounded from the car, shouting to Black Peter: "Hoi, stop!"

Buckle had barely time to shout a warning and to jamb on his brakes.

"Be careful, Constable," he yelled. "He's dangerous. He'll shoot!"

But it was too late. Finding himself cornered, like a rat with its back to the wall, Black Peter whipped out his pistol and fired, hitting the constable in the leg. Then, uttering a fierce oath, he opened out and tried to force his way past the obstruction.

"You villain!" shouted Andy, and seizing a huge spanner from Jarrold's repair kit hurled it.

The pistol flew from Black Peter's hand, and he slithered backwards, then rolled into the ditch under the hedge-bottom.

But he was quickly out again and, with a terrible rage gleaming in his eyes, he charged down upon Buckle. Though he defended himself courageously it looked as if Andy's number was about to be called. He was no match for Black Peter, and the constable now lay helpless upon the ground.

It was at this moment that help arrived in the most unexpected manner. The two ringing shots had brought John Hodge, late of the Devonshires in the Great War, a farm labourer who happened to be working in the adjoining field, upon the scene.

"Hoi—leave that kid alone!" he shouted through the hedge. "Leave that kid alone or O'll—"

The sentence was left unfinished. Hodge had seen the wounded constable lying on the ground. And with a bound he cleared the hedge; then, using his four-pronged fork much as he had used the bayonet against the Germans at Devil's Wood, he gave Black Peter such a dig in the ribs that he yelled with pain and turned upon his new assailant with savage fury.

"No you don't!" rasped Hodge. "Hold 'em up, or I'll spike you!"

A couple of short jabs with the pitchfork showed Black Peter the sort of man he was up against; and, content with fuming and threatening as an alternative to being spiked, he at length sullenly held up his hands.

The next moment, Andy, acting upon instructions, had snapped the constable's handcuffs about his wrists.

DR. SPANCKER, in a fever of excitement, was pacing his study, holding in his hand a momentous telegram.

Plot to kidnap my nephew, Timson, just discovered. Please wire if he is safe.

THOMAS ANDREW TIMSON, London.

The Head of Chudleigh St. Giles was in a whirl. The boys had returned from the cross-country run, a roll-call had been held in the quad, and two boys were missing—Buckle and Young Timson.

Two search-parties had been out, but had failed to find the missing boys. The police had also been communicated with, and descriptions issued.

"The car is sure to be found, sir," consoled Jameson, the Junior Master.

"I know—I know," snorted the Head. "That boy, Buckle, hasn't enough wit to evade the police. He'll soon be brought back. Then I'll thrash him and have him expelled. But t'is other boy, Timson—I think I told you that I promised we should take special care of him. His father's a high official out in Burmah, and apparently he has enemies who have come to this country to carry out t'is deed."

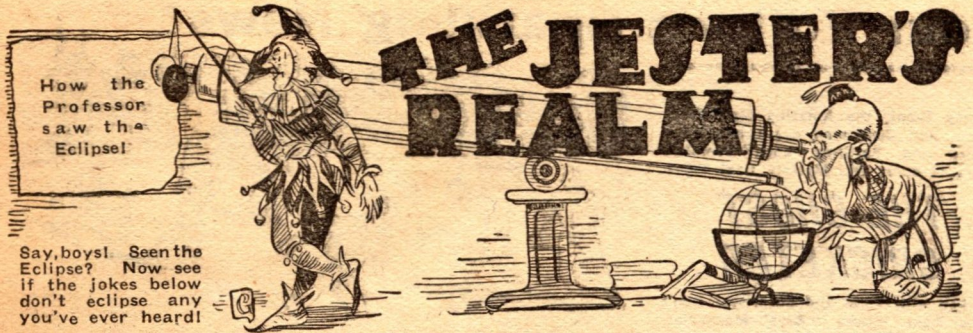
While the Head was speaking, the *honk-honk* of a motor, coming rapidly up the drive, brought them all to their feet.

A moment later they were outside.

"It's Buckle bringing back the Sunbeam," explained Jameson. "And—bless me—young Timson's inside."

The Dominic gasped. But when Detective-Inspector Keene stepped out of the car and, after helping young Timson to the ground, explained just what had happened, Dr. Spancker's views concerning Master Andrew Buckle underwent a mighty change.

Now Chums You'll Miss a Treat if you Don't Start Reading The New Wonder Tale Entitled "The Planet Schoolboys," commencing This Week.



How the Professor saw the Eclipse!

Say, boys! Seen the Eclipse? Now see if the jokes below don't eclipse any you've ever heard!

A SPELLING EXPERT.

P.C. 64 and his mate found a dead horse is Parliamentary Road. P.C. 64 whipped out his note book, then paused.

"How'd you spell Parliamentary?" he asked. "Dunno!" replied his mate. "Let's shift the bloomin' 'orse round to Peel Street!"—T. I. (Motherwell).

PROFITABLE PUNISHMENT.

DAD: Ah, your friends have come to ask me to let you off this thrashing, eh?

LITTLE JOHNNIE: No, Dad. They've paid a penny each to see it. So get on with it. Don't keep the audience waiting.—E.A. (Marple).

NO POSSIBLE DOUBT.

The charge was one of drunkenness. "And what further evidence have you to offer, Constable," questioned the magistrate, "except that you found the accused lying complacently in a horse trough in the public square?"

"This, your worship," he said, producing an empty whisky bottle. "This was floating beside 'im, and inside it was the message, 'Wrecked off Bull's Head: One survivor.'"—G.P. (Mosbro).

TOPSY-TURVY.

"Can you tell me the way to the church?" asked the stranger.

"Sartinly, sir," replied the oldest inhabitant obligingly. "Go up the downs, keep straight along the crooked lane, then round the square, and when you turn to your left you're right."—(Redruth).

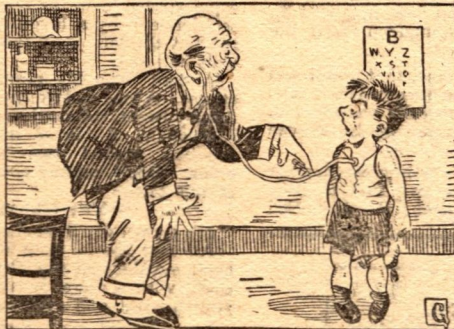
BOTH SCOTCH.

Two Scotsmen were out walking when they came across a half-crown in the middle of the road. One of the Scotsmen dived at it and picked it up, the other borrowed it to have his eyes tested.—D.E. (Torrington).

BIG POCKETS.

THE JUDGE (to defendant): You are charged with stealing a motor car.

DEFENDANT (timidly): Search me.—S. J. T. (Glam.).



Doctor: Now say ninety-nine three times.
Schoolboy: Two hundred and ninety-seven.

HARDLY HEALTHY.

CONSTABLE: The car skidded on the greasy road, crashed through a telegraph pole, and fell over the cliff to the rocks, five hundred feet below.

OLD GENT: Dear me; was the driver hurt?—H.J.Y. (Dorset).

THE RENTMAN.

MOTHER (telling fortunes): I can see an 'andsome dark man, wearing a bowler 'at an spats, wiv a bagful o' money in 'is 'and.

DAUGHTER: Yus, 'e's at the front door waiting for the rent.—W.G. (Hull).

MISUNDERSTOOD.

WILLIE: Did you go to see our school cricket match to-day, Auntie?

AUNTIE: Yes, but when I got inside the ground the umpire shouted: "Over!" so I came out.—C.W. (Taunton).

AGREED WITH HIM.

A traveller entered a railway carriage in which a dean was sitting, and began to engage in conversation. Presently the traveller said: "Can you tell me the difference between a dean and a donkey?"

After a few moments the dean confessed himself unable to solve the riddle, so the traveller said: "Well, one prays and the other brays."

"Ha, very good!" said the dean. "Now can you tell me the difference between a traveller and a donkey?"

After a little while, the traveller said he could not see the difference.

"Neither can I," said the dean.—F.W. (Hove).

JUST HOW!

LADY: Well, John, and how do you like your new baby brother?

JOHN: Asleep.—B. D. (Birmingham).

CRICKET BATS and FOUNTAIN PENS awarded to senders of all jokes printed on this page. Send in your favourite joke to: Joke Editor, "Boys' Magazine," 146, Fetterlane, London, E.C.4. Coupon on Editor's page must accompany every joke submitted.

Your Editor's Sparkling News!

Jimmy Brent, the Amazing Man about Town, and Gentleman Cracksman, in a Weird and Thrilling Long Complete Story of Sport and Mystery Next Week.

THE GHOST CRICKETER

Packed with Tales and Surprises. Don't Miss Next Week's "Boys' Magazine."



MY DEAR CHUMS,

At last! Our great new astronomical serial has made its appearance. And I predict a furore of excitement, great fun and mystery for you, my chums. Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks has written the tale of his life.

I was gripped with a fever of excitement as I read this ripping yarn. Sometimes I laughed long and loud, and then I went on eagerly reading. Such a great and enjoyable tale has seldom come my way. I am glad it is running in the good old Mag.

Shall I let you into a little secret? Next week you will meet one or two new, funny and mysterious boys in this tale. You remember the excitement and confusion in which the *Solar Rover* took off from the earth? Well, to tell you the truth, chums, there were one or two fellows from Castleton School who managed to get on board and stow themselves away. One fellow in particular will grip your attention, though you may not admire him. And, by Jove, the mystery comes thick and fast in this topping new and unique wonder story.

And the Eclipse glasses. I hope each of you got your pair, and that you will be making preparations for your scientific observations on June 29 when the sun is eclipsed by the moon. Myself I am motoring out to a lonely spot near Southport with one of the members of my staff, where we shall view the eclipse from a scientist's observatory. As you know there is a certain belt up in the Midlands and through Wales where the eclipse is total—where absolute darkness descends on the land when the moon passes the sun's face. I guess it will be thrilling, for my dear old scientist friend has promised to initiate me into any discovery he might make in the limitless ether.

Lads, I do wish, as chums of mine, that you would tell all your friends about our new wonder tale, "The Planet Schoolboys." Naturally we want to get a bigger band of readers than we have even now.

And just tell 'em that there's a bumper number coming next Saturday, with a long and exciting detective tale featuring once again the Monocled

Manhunter and his boy assistant, Chick Conway. The yarn is entitled

The Kidnapped Boxer.

Thrills of fighting in the ring. Chaps, there is none who knows better the noble art of fisticuffs than the Secret Service author of our detective tales. And he has wrought a wondrous yarn of sleuth work, deduction and action for you next week, with Falcon Swift and his smart boy assistant, Chick Conway, performing herculean feats under the glaring white lights of the roped arena.

Because I have been so anxious that you should get well into our new yarn, "The Planet Schoolboys, I have had to hold over a great many of the thrills in store for you in that marvel yarn of motor racing, "The Speed Demon." It is a very short instalment this week, isn't it, chums? But next Saturday's long instalment will wake you up.

An old hero comes back in a rousing and rollicking yarn of the broad highways, the yellow, dancing moon, and tales of derring-do next Saturday. None other than Dick Turpin, the Hero Highwayman, together with all his merry companions: Bootles, the jovial giant black rumpad; Joe Button, he of the red rose and comical ways; Sixteen-string Jack, the immaculate night rider, and others. The tale is called

Dick Turpin's Mission.

You mustn't miss this great yarn, fellows, if you like a funny and thrilling tale.

And, chaps, I have another tremendous new serial yarn in store for you, with many surprises in the way of free gifts, coming shortly. You can look out for some special news in next week's chat. The new serial tale is by a favourite Mag. author, and it's a red hot thriller. And the free gifts— Well, just wait and see.

Ah-ha! The big plum of next week's feast of stories. A long and exciting yarn of cricket, featuring Jimmy Brent, the gentleman cracksman and all-round sportsman. A tale of weird and eerie adventures, pivoting around this will-o'-the-wisp gentleman crook. Don't, on any account, miss the eerie thrills of this tale—

The Ghost Cricketer.

It's a yarn you'll remember for a long time, chums. Another special long chat for the thousands of loyal members of the *Boys' Magazine* League next week, with a secret message in code that will grip your interest and attention, I can tell you.

See you next week, then, chaps,

Your sincere friend,

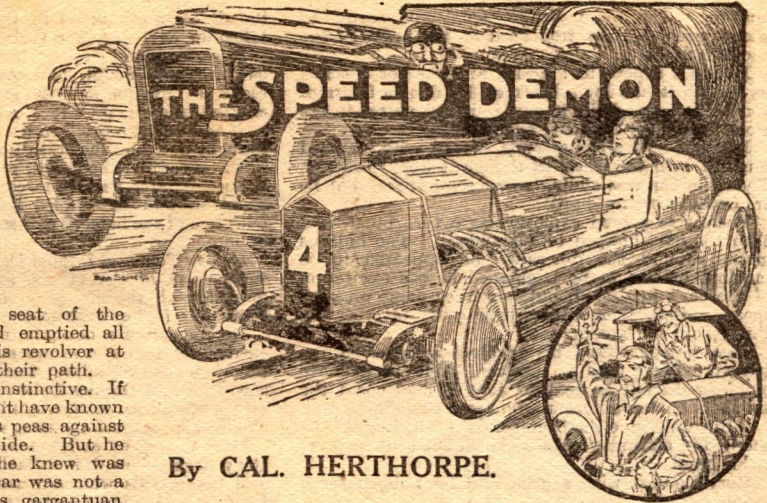
THE EDITOR.

Boys' Magazine. 2/7/27.

JOKE COUPON.

Stick on postcard and send with your favourite joke to address on Joke Page.

Chums! This Grand Motor-Racing Serial of Cyclonic Speed, Maddening Mystery, and Wild Excitement is Reaching its Triumphant Climax.



By CAL. HERTHORPE.

TOM rose in the seat of the racketting car and emptied all six chambers of his revolver at the awful monster in their path.

The act was sheerly instinctive. If he had reasoned he might have known that his bullets were as peas against the terrifically tough hide. But he did not reason. All he knew was that the Thunderbolt car was not a dozen yards from this gargantuan monster, and that it was impossible for Rory to pull up.

Above the roar of the car the bullet shots sounded with staccato, whip-like crashes that echoed strangely throughout the caverns.

Luck must have guided Tom's aim, for though the bullets effected no wound, they struck the awful monster in a tender part around his eyes. The effect of it, and of the car's strange headlamps, must have frightened the brute, for with a roar that seemed to lift Rory's and Tom's heads off, the monster shot out of the path.

It left a trail of slime in the stone—slime in which the racing car performed a slashing skid even as it hurtled within three feet of the scaly monster. Rory used all the strength and skill he had to pull the shooting car straight. And he succeeded.

They went hurtling on.

"Phew! It was a dinosaur!" yelled Rory above the din of the engines.

He had recognised the gigantic monster, supposed now to be extinct, and he no longer wondered why the Black Speedman had been apprehensive about venturing along this unknown trail.

"A dinosaur—yes," Tom shouted in a louder and more startling tone; "and it's coming after us!"

One glance Rory cast behind him. A split second of time was all he could spare at the wheel. He saw the great scaly brute slithering after them in the lurid red glare of their rear light. It was some way behind now, slow in comparison to the racing car, yet its mammoth ugly jaws were open in a snarling roar, and for some reason he could not define, the young racing driver became apprehensive of danger.

"The brute can't catch us," he muttered to himself.

He trod hard on the accelerator, never losing his nerve, holding the car as if he were roaring up the railway straight at Brooklands. His judgment was superb. Yet it was a frightening enough experience to make the bravest quail.

And then suddenly he knew that his apprehensions had been well founded.

Ahead of him, in the glaring light of the search-lights, slithered another great brute. The dinosaur had evidently been calling to its mate ahead. Nor was that all. For around the reptile in front came running dozens of the most frightening creatures Tom or Rory had ever seen.

Their hideous cries mingled with the deafening roars of the brute behind and in front. The caverns were filled with such a din as surely no man had ever heard before. Indeed, little Dapper Delroy could no longer forbear to rise from his seat at the bottom of the car to see what was taking place, rocking and swaying though the racer was. At sight of the nightmare that confronted him he sank down again, nearly swooning with horror.

And, indeed, it was a sight that would have made the most intrepid man wonder whether he was dreaming.

The dinosaur, not more than two hundred yards ahead, was crouching in the path, its great ugly feet set firmly on the rock, its back arched like a frightened cat. It was roaring horribly, and appeared hideously ugly in its fright. Manifestly it would have scurried from the path of the oncoming juggernaut of destruction had it not been for the creatures around it.

They held it with the menace of their attitudes, and with the hideous shrieks that came from their red, slaving throats.

Creatures! Surely the term was too commonplace and flattering to be applied to them.

They were giants—great hairy giants, carrying stone-tipped spears in their claw-like hands. The hair covered their figures in patches, revealing ghastly white portions that were evidently their skins. Their feet were those of the animal, as also were their hands; their faces were more hideous than any animal's, having flattened noses, great yawning red gaps for mouths, and protruding, reptilian eyes.

Yet they stood on their hind legs like men, and men they evidently were—the inhabitants of this cavern land. There were scores of them.

For the space of a moment Rory was in danger of losing his nerve. He trod on the accelerator instead of the brake—the error of the merest tyro at motoring. Yet he was to be pardoned. He had been through a great deal, and this was surely the breaking point.

In a second however he regained his nerve.

He knew that he had to pull up. There was no help for it.

If he crashed into that mammoth brute in front it would mean that the brains of the three of them would be dashed to pieces on the stone.

And somehow instinctively he avoided that.

His hand went out and switched off the motor

ignition. The giant engine spluttered away to silence even as Rory trod hard on the brake of the shooting monster.

It was a superb foot brake, and the car checked as though it had hit a brick wall. But so far from coming to a standstill, it spun round like a top in the worst skid Rory had ever experienced.

It lasted only a few seconds. Rory, with bunched muscles, held the wheel as though it were life itself. Then the car was sliding away somewhere, and he trod on the brake—hard.

There was a loud explosion as a tyre burst, and then the car slumped to a standstill. The hideous giants around the dinosaur had appeared for a moment or two to be frightened at the exhibition of the car's mad skid, but now they came on with spears raised, their ear-splitting yells reverberating throughout the cavern.

Tom Carson raised his revolver and pulled the trigger. There was no answer. With a grimace of bitter despair he realised that he had spent the six shots on the dinosaur who came limping behind.

"But we'll give the brutes a fight, eh, Rory?" he shouted in a stirring voice as he clubbed his revolver in his hand.

Rory nodded with a grin, and bent down for a spanner.

Dapper Delroy bobbed up from the bottom of the cockpit with his silver-plated toy pistol in his hand. He wore no crash helmet, as the two motor racers did, and his fair hair looked as though it were standing on end. But he looked game and tremendously full of fight.

The pistol streaked flame and smoke, and one of the hairy giants clasped one hand to his great bulging chest with an awful roar. He seemed for a moment as if he might drop, but then with the rest he came on.

In a moment the horde were on the car, whilst

THE SCIENTIST'S BOMBSHELL—

(Continued from page 23).

no motion. But now there was a sudden violent jerk, and Falcon Swift promptly pulled down the shutters over the plate glass windows.

He spoke in the lip language. "We're travelling again. The projectile's reached the end of her tether, and now the earth is pulling her back. But we've accomplished what we set out to do, laddie."

Chick smiled slightly, then closed his eyes. The heat was becoming intolerable again.

How long he slept he did not know, but he awoke once more to find himself in a subdued gloom of daylight. The plate glass windows were open again, and as he looked out his heart leapt for joy, for he saw land beneath and the rolling sea. They were over England once more.

What was more, the gliding wings protruded from the sides of the projectile. Falcon Swift had operated them, and they were gliding down to Mother Earth.

"It's June 29, the day of the eclipse," said Falcon Swift in his natural voice. "Notice how dark it is, laddie. And—by Jove," he broke off, "look down there!"

Chick looked and gasped in amazement, for rolling swiftly along a road beneath them was their own Hispano Suiza car. They recognised it even at that height, for they were swooping down almost directly overhead. And at the wheel was Doctor Sixsmith!

"He's observed us—come to meet us!" cried Falcon Swift.

He operated a lever, and the projectile, which was now more in the nature of a glider than anything else, swooped down. It came gently to rest, and

the dinosaur remained in the position it had first taken up, as if a slave to their wills.

Rory, Tom and Dapper Delroy struck out right and left at those awful, hair-covered faces—the puny blows of dwarfs against giants. Rory's spanner crashed into a giant's face, with no more result than as if he had hit a brick wall. A spear was raised and brought down on his crash helmet, and he staggered in the car under the shock, protected though he was. A second later the spear came down again on his shoulder, and he toppled headlong from the racer with two of the hideous evil-smelling creatures on top of him.

He saw Tom and Dapper Delroy reeling back before the onrush of the others, saw them crash to the ground with the giants on top of them, and then for a time he lost consciousness.

He opened his eyes again to find that he was being carried by two of the monster cave men, whilst a procession came behind. Turning his aching head he saw Tom and Dapper Delroy, the captives of others of the cave men and, like himself, they were being carried through the tortuous paths.

How long that awful, joggling journey continued Rory never knew, but at last they turned a corner, and his nostrils were afflicted by an awful stench. Looking round him he saw that they were in a great cave, lit as if by myriads of glittering red and white jewels.

A cave! And at the further end on a slimy stone platform of immense dimensions were the two hideous reptiles.

And then a cry of astonishment came from Rory's lips at what he saw.

Lying unconscious on the stone platform in front of the reptiles was the Black Speedman.

Exciting, eh? A Great, Long Instalment of this Serial Coming Next Week, Chums.

Falcon Swift, with a last quiet smile of satisfaction at the instruction board that had all the time been before his eyes, opened the shutters and stepped out.

In a few moments they were shaking hands with the almost delirious scientist at the wheel.

"You've brought it off; I know you have," cried Doctor Sixsmith delightedly. "I can tell by this storm that's coming—a natural aftermath. Here," he added suddenly, his expression changing. "Jump in the car. The storm's going to break."

Hardly had he said the words when the storm broke with a clap of thunder that was like the trump of doom. Total darkness seemed suddenly to come upon the world—darkness stabbed by forking streaks of lightning. The rain came down in a sheet.

The elements roared—shrieked. The three sat still and mute in the car. Never had they experienced such a storm. And then, with dramatic suddenness, came the awful cataclysm. Not a hundred yards away from where their car stood the earth was seized as if by a seismic shock. There was a rending, tearing crash, and part of the cliffside slithered down.

It was Nature's protest against Man's interference. Afterwards with a great deal of scientific rigmarole, Doctor Sixsmith explained that this was the result of the explosion of the bomb balloon.

The storm continued for a full two hours, but at last came the sunshine through the gloom. The eclipse of 1927 was all over. And so was the case of The Scientist's Bombshell.

But as the car glided back to town, Falcon Swift made a mental vow that one day he would bring Count Von Graustark and his dreadful associates to book.

THE TOUGHEST TEAM IN THE WORLD.

Triumphant Conclusion of John Hunter's
Grand Serial.

THEY did not read Gurt's secret thoughts. They did not know that he was weighing his chances of shooting them down as they walked in single file before him along the gallery leading to the foot of the shaft below the summer house. For that was what Gurt intended—to obliterate all traces of his first foolish crime by perpetrating four more. It would be easy. He was a dead shot. His pistol was an automatic, a thing which delivered a stream of lead so long as the trigger was pressed. He would choose the long, straight stretch before the summer house was reached. He had an arrangement in the summer house whereby he could cave in the walls of the shaft below it. Once the cash was aloft, he could cover every evidence against him.

"Right," he said. "One journey will do it, with four of you to help. Wait a minute." He approached the safe, and addressed them when he stood before it. "By the way, you'll remember I'm the only man with a gun here. I just remind you of that in case of accidents."

"You bet, Boss," grinned Gosley. "We're not losing that thousand pounds."

Gurt smiled. It was easy. He spun the knob of the combination and spelt out the word "Security." He pulled the door open and as he did so a cold, quiet voice struck his ears.

"Hands up, Gurt!"

He turned, and found himself looking into the muzzle of Kane's gun, with Kane's hard and glittering eyes behind it. He read the resolution in those eyes on the instant; he saw what he had omitted to see five minutes earlier, that Kane

was a deadly, dangerous man, and his hands went up. His gun dropped to the floor.

Kane grimaced. The others were silent, awe-struck. Kane said: "Gurt, I guess I can tell you your game for the benefit of these fellows. You never intended any of us to get out alive, eh? You intended to shoot us in the gallery. D'you think I'm a fool? D'you think I imagine you're a fool—letting us loose knowing you killed Dugan? Shut up, you fellows! Can't you see that he *dared* not let us live after tipping Dugan off?"

They murmured frightenedly. It was obvious now that Kane put it into so many words.

"But," said Kane, "I guess you're the one that's going out, Gurt, and we're the boys who are going to blue the cash. Look at that safe! Full of money! What do you go on it, mates?"

They stared, fascinated, their faces alight with greed. And while they stared Gurt pointed past Kane and uttered a choked cry.

"That won't come off, Gurt," snarled Kane. "I'm too old to be caught by that trick. It's got whiskers on it."

"You look!" gasped Gurt to Gosley.

Gosley turned and yelled: "Kane! The kids!"

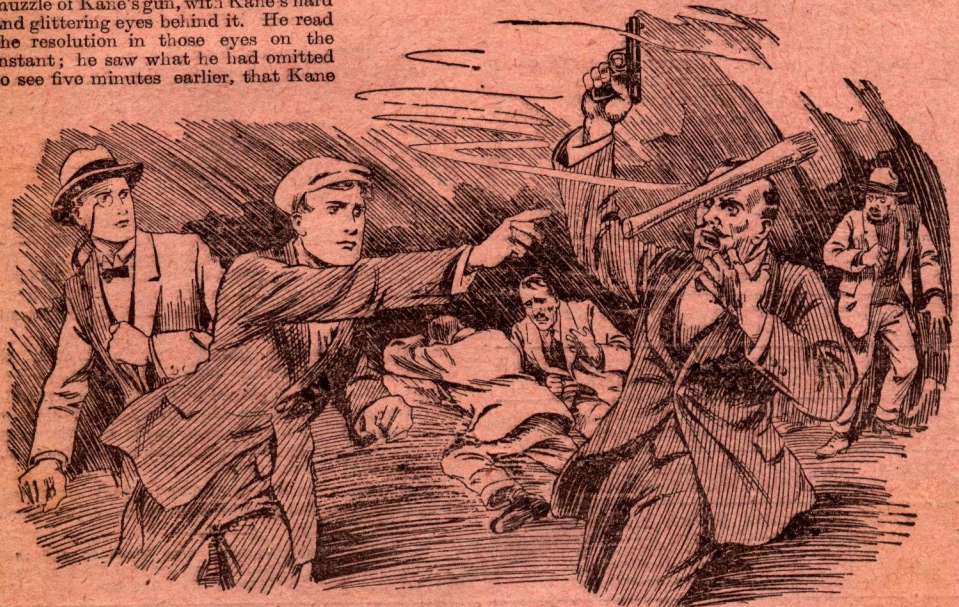
Patsy and Jimmy rushed forward on hearing this, knowing that their only hope lay in swift retreat to the gallery. Kane, hearing Gosley shout, involuntarily looked over his shoulder.

Gurt moved like lightning. He stooped, seized his gun, and while yet his hand rested on the ground, he shot Kane through the chest.

Kane dropped in a choking heap. Gurt fired again. Black Jack dropped in his tracks.

Patsy did an amazing thing. Instead of dashing into the gallery, he leapt towards the scene of conflict.

Trim, Harper and Gosley were running from Gurt. Gurt, wild with rage, gone *berserk*, fired once more. Harner stumbled to his knees and fell on his face.



THE KILLER'S LAST CRIME.—Gurt fired once more—then Patsy did an amazing thing. Picking up a pick handle he hurled it full at the armed Crime King. Gurt stumbled forward with a mad and awful yell.

Patsy picked up a pick haft and threw it. It hit Gurt in the face. With a mad and awful yell, the murderer stumbled forward, hideously hurt. He still held his gun and he tried to use it, but he could not do so effectively. Jimmy met Trina fair and square and, wiping his right across his chin, dropped him to unconsciousness.

Gosley tried to dodge, but Jimmy was round on him like lightning, fainted, and knocked him out.

He looked about in time to see Patsy and Gurt go down in a wild and kicking heap, with Gurt's gun sliding across the floor towards the open door of the great safe, where the money seemed to mutely mock them all.

Gurt was soon subdued, and when they dragged him to his feet Kane, looking up with glazing eyes, began to laugh. He laughed till the laughter died . . .

THE FOREST FLAME—

(Continued from page 17.)

would hold, Phil went on with a workmanlike trudgeon stroke.

Ten minutes later a hoarse shout made him raise his glance and he espied Roughneck Harry in the distance—where the flume reached terra firma.

“C'mon, Phil, lad,” bawled the camera man. “The flume'll be down any moment now. Thank heaven—I thought that swine Luigi had done for you!”

His tone changed abruptly: “Splash it lively, you goldurned, half-baked clown. Register fear, hang you! you great, big, soft baby!”

Phil grinned in spite of the danger which still threatened him, for the burly camera man had unstrapped his camera and now was turning merrily at the handle.

Next moment the grin was wiped from his face as in front of him the waters were dyed crimson and unbearable heat scorched his feet. A hasty glance behind him told the dread truth—a mighty tree, its thick foliage one mass of hissing flame, was bearing down on him and the faithful wolf-dog.

Before the conflagration it must have been growing on the very edge of the flume, and when it toppled in flames, it had gone into the water and been borne down the swiftly-flowing stream behind Phil—its superior bulk giving it added speed.

Biting back a cry of fear, the boy film star redoubled his efforts. His seared hands and arms flashed in

THAT was the end of it. Gurt received his just deserts. The others went to penal servitude.

The police made a ‘clean’ sweep of all Gurt's places and those of his hirelings who had not fled, for Gosley and Trim and Harner—who were not killed—turned King's evidence and supplied a vast amount of valuable information.

Pitchester was cleaned through, and seemed like a human body cured of some disease by deft and skilful operation.

And, about the time Gurt went to his doom, Sammy Hicks, rather pale, but smiling, walking with a stick which would one day be dispensed with altogether, strolled down the front of a big seaside resort. With him walked all the members of the Town team. For the specialist had effected a wonderful cure, and Sammy was learning, after many years, what it is like to walk in the sunshine.

and out of the tepid water like the strokes of high-precision pistons, his churning feet leaving a white wake behind.

And, inch by inch, he began to gain on the great firebrand, noting out of the corner of his eye as he did so that Karell was keeping pace with him. The end of the flume came nearer and nearer until, with a gasp of relief, Phil dragged himself to the solid ground on which Roughneck Harry was standing.

The blazing tree hurtled on—but it never reached the two. There was a reverberating crash as the blazing trestle collapsed and the flume, twisting like a falling snake, went toppling down, down . . . to the bottom of the gully.

Thrill, Phil felt his hand crushed in a bear-like grasp, and Roughneck Harry, tears shining in his eyes, was congratulating him on his wonderful escape.

“Thanks, Harry,” murmured the boy film star, suddenly weak from the crowding experiences of the last few hours. “But here's the chap we've got to thank.”

He stooped down and fondled the scorched fur of the great wolf-dog. Then he told the roughneck camera man of how Karell had tracked him with the instinct of the wild to the blazing hut and the thrilling events that had followed.

“By the Great Hookblock!” said Roughneck Harry, when the story was finished. “If only I could have ‘shot’ the whole of it!”

Thrill Phil grinned.

“If you're going to ask me to go through all that again,” he told him, “count me out—but here's something for a sort of consolation prize.”

Roughneck Harry stared in amazement for a moment or two at the metal box containing the missing film which Phil thrust into his big hands, then:

“I'll say you're the elephant's braces, the kangaroo's goloshes and—here shake again, I—”

But, with a rueful glance at his right hand, which still showed signs of the big camera-man's emotion, Phil was making for the first house in Barkerville, where he hoped to obtain a much-needed bath and a shakedown for the night.

With him went the wolf-dog he had saved from death and who had paid his debt in like coin—Karell.

Dick Turpin coming back Next Week in a Fine Yarn, Chums. You'll Laugh and be Thrilled by the Magnificent Highwayman.

BLUSHING.—Guaranteed Cure, 6s. 6d.—CHEMIST, 17, Bloomsbury Mansions, London.

500 FOREIGN STAMPS, 6d. 2,000, 1s. 6d.—CRANWELL, 202, Herman Hill, London, E.18.

STAMMERING CURED or no charge. Particulars free.—B. HUGHES, 7, Southampton-row, London.

100 DIFFERENT STAMPS FREE.—Send for 1/4d. approvals.—COX, 135, Cambridge-road, Seven Kings.

EXPLOSIVE CIGARETTES, Bombs, Itchykoo, Sneezing. 70 Samples, 2s.—HUGHES, 368, Dudley-road, Birmingham.

SENSATIONAL STAMP OFFER FREE! Fine set 20 British Colonials, including scarce 100 different stamps (40 fine unused), and set 100 gummed and printed album headings. Absolutely free. Just request approvals.—LISBURN & TOWNSEND, London-road, Liverpool.

Printed and Published by ALLIED NEWSPAPERS LTD., at their Registered Office, Withy Grove, Manchester. Sole Agents for Australasia: MESSRS. GORDON & GOTCH (AUSTRALASIA), LTD. Sole Agents for South Africa: CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY, LTD. MESSRS. THE AMERICAN NEWS CO., LTD., for Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, St. John, Halifax, Hamilton.