

THE GHOST CRICKETER

AMAZING YARN
INSIDE

Boys' Magazine

2^D
EVERY SATURDAY



THE EXPLOITS OF THE GENTLEMAN CROOK

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CRICKET BAT AND FOUNTAIN
PENS AWARDED TO SENDERS OF
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THE ONLY TIME.
"Do you always stutter like that?" asked the doctor examining the new recruit.
"N-n-no, s-s-sir," was the reply. "Only w-w-when I-I-I t-t-talk."
—L.L.W. (Deganwy).

OBLIGING—BUT STILL SCOTCH!
"What for did ye put a postage stamp in the collection, Angus? Did ye no have a copper?"
"Aye, but Ah did it to oblige the meenister, ye ken. As it was a special collection the morn, he asked as many as possibly could to gie paper."—O.T. (Camden Town).

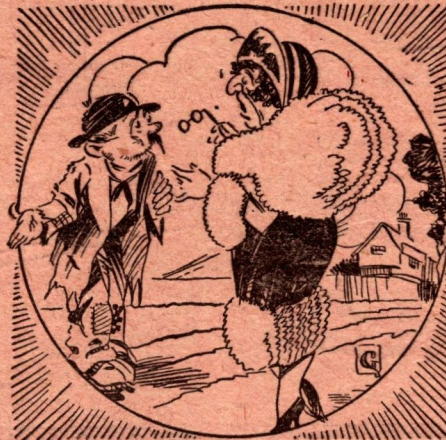
AN INCORRIGIBLE INFANT.
KIND UNCLE: My boy, you mustn't say "I ain't going." You must say "I am not going"; "They are not going"; "We are not going"; "He is not going."
HIS NEPHEW: Ain't nobody going!—E.A.D. (Watford).

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH!
AMERICAN: I once caught ninety-nine fish in one hour.
ENGLISHMAN: Why didn't you say one-hundred fish?
AMERICAN: Say, bo, I wouldn't tell a lie over one blooming fish.—M.S. (Londonderry).

HIS SCHEDULE.
PEPPERY GENT (to boy engrossed in "Boys' Magazine"): How often does this lift go up?
LIFT BOY (pointing to his mag.): At the end of every chapter, sir.—A.L.M. (Woolwich).

CANNY.
ENGLISHMAN (at street accident in Scotch village): Give the poor fellow some air.
SUSPICIOUS NATIVE: Gie him some yersel', mon.—C.H. (E. Dulwich).

THE RETORT.
VISITOR: I' say, my good man, will you drive me all around the town?
CABBY: Yep, if you can get any harness to fit you.—A.R. (E. Calder).



Lady: Are you the man who begs at the park?
Tramp: Yes, mum, but I'm openin' a new branch here.

Jones: Ever had any trouble with dyspepsia?
Smith: Only when I tried to spell it.

THE CURE.
I once knew a man who smoked ten ounces of tobacco every day for twenty-seven years, and then he gave it up at a minute's notice and never touched it again. He was sitting on top of a barrel of blasting powder at the time, and the head of his match dropped through the bunghole.—L.G.C. (Fochriw).

COULDN'T LEG TOMMY.
TEACHER: Now, Tommy, what do we mean by "the wisdom of the serpent?"
TOMMY: Please, Miss, 'cos yer can't pull a snake's leg!—G.B. (Nantyglo).

A DOUBTFUL VICTORY.
Two motorists met in a lane too narrow to permit them to pass each other. One rose in his car and shouted to the other:
"I never back for any fool."
The other replied: "I always do."
And with that he quietly put his car in reverse.—C.B. (Sacriston).

NO MEN-U!
CANNIBAL PRINCE (rushing in): Am I too late for dinner?
CANNIBAL KING: Yep; everybody's eaten.—E. B. (Skewen).

SMIFF, SNIFF!
TEACHER (to small boy): Spell that which you wipe your nose on.
SMALL BOY: S-l-e-e-v-e.—C.K. (Anfield).

THE DODGER.
WIFE (chopping wood): I wonder what you'd 'ave done if you 'ad lived when men had to earn their living by the sweat of their brows.

HUSBAND (who was reading paper): I should have started a little business and sold 'em 'andkerchiefs.—B.E. (Anglesey).

Jimmy Brent, the Amazing Man-about-Town, Stumbles on a Weird and Eerie Mystery During the Cricket Week at Hadleigh Towers.



THE GENTLEMAN CROOK, TURNS DETECTIVE FOR ONCE. A GRAND STORY OF KING CRICKET AND AMAZINGLY CLEVER CROOKS.

Enemies Meet.

JIMMY BRENT, with a slight, abstracted pucker on his tanned, good-looking face, took down his cricket bat from the rack in the pavilion and turned it over in his slim, capable hands.

It was a fine willow blade, glistening with oil, and the personable young man in white flannels and bright blazer bearing the crest of a famous 'varsity, handled it almost reverently. Withal he was abstracted.

He played forward to an imaginary ball, still thinking hard.

He was one of the guests at Lord Zintarri's house-party for the cricket week. Jimmy's engaging personality, as much the fact that he was an old Blue, had earned him that honoured invitation. And he had "skipped" from the West End and travelled down to Loamshire with alacrity.

To tell the truth, things had been getting a little too hot in London for Jimmy Brent, man-about-town and—gentleman crook.

When he tumbled to the fact that a plain-clothes detective was watching his flat day and night, he began to see the red light.

The cricket week offered Jimmy a chance to escape for a time. He was essentially a sportsman.

Since boyhood, sport and the countryside had been his life.

He loved it all—this peaceful, beautiful country house and the life it offered. And yet the queer kink in him was fanning to flame the old craving for excitement and danger.

He sighed as he gazed out at the cool greenery of the trees, and the heat haze, dancing and sparkling on the level sweep of the cricket field.

He was thinking that he had promised a cheque for a thousand pounds to a certain children's holiday fund. His private resources were very modest and he could not find the money out of his own pocket. And yet he was determined to keep his promise.

"It means another job, I suppose," he laughed. He had a very engaging laugh, Jimmy. It showed his teeth like a white bar in his sun-tanned face and the little crinkly lines about his brilliant dark eyes.

And then suddenly the laugh checked, and from his lips came a startled "hallo!"

Who should be coming across the green sward of the cricket field but his oldest friend and most relentless pursuer, John Craddock, the private detective.

There was no mistaking those broad shoulders and the somewhat stocky figure, the keen face with its pugnacious jaw. It was John Craddock, the famous private detective.

Jimmy's brows knit together.

In the old days of boyhood and college these two had been as David and Jonathan, and there was still a wealth of affection between them. But John

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

Craddock was the last man Jimmy wanted to see here.

He was coming towards the pavilion and, though he wore a lounge suit and bowler hat, he carried a green cricket bag. That meant that he was to be a guest at the house-party.

"Deuced inconvenient," muttered Jimmy, drawing back a little. For all his cool nerve, he had a sudden wave of panic, the instinct of the hunted. But it passed quickly.

There was the creak of an opening door and John Craddock was inside the pavilion. Then the door of the dressing-room in which Jimmy was ensconced opened, and the two old friends faced each other across the empty space.

John Craddock's rather homely face became as if thunderstruck as he stared at the handsome, lithe cricketer.

"You——?" he spoke harshly.

"Why not?" smiled Jimmy.

In that flash of dialogue was revealed a great deal,



THE NIGHT WATCHERS.—The constable behind the bull's eye lamp peered in the darkened room, but could see nothing unusual.

John Craddock, private detective, was the one man in the world who was positively certain that Jimmy Brent was a crook.

When after a lapse of years they had met again, and Jimmy had discovered that the other was a detective, he had revealed the astounding truth about himself in a moment of mad impulse.

He had practically challenged his old friend to a duel of wits. Chums they might be, for it was hardly possible that they could sink their lifelong friendship, but the position amounted to this: John Craddock, detective, was out to hound Jimmy down and give him over to the Law. That was his plain duty. Whilst audacious Jimmy was determined to juggle with his liberty and the excitement of illicit adventure as long as possible.

Jimmy knew now that his detective friend had not expected to find him here at Hadleigh Towers, and he drew a breath of relief.

John Craddock, for his part, was red and angry, looking ridiculously like a gaping fish.

It is only justice to record that the private detective had never revealed to Scotland Yard what he knew about Jimmy. That would have been a betrayal of confidence. His job, as he conceived it, was to catch the gentleman crook red-handed.

And then had come the sudden interest of the police in Jimmy. They didn't exactly suspect him of being a crook, but—well, there was his friendship with "Slick" Hanson, for instance. The cracksmen who had just emerged from prison! His comings

and goings to Jimmy's flat in the Albany had attracted attention.

The Yard didn't know that "Slick" had reformed. They have a theory at police headquarters that "old lags" never do reform.

Quixotic Jimmy Brent! He had persuaded "Slick" to give up the game and run straight. He had fitted "Slick" up with funds to start an honourable business. Incidentally the funds had come from Jimmy's own nefarious enterprises; and, in return, "Slick" had taught Jimmy all about the business of cracking safes. But that is beside the point.

The point was that John Craddock knew the police had their eye on Jimmy. And he was happy to give up the distasteful job of watching Jimmy himself. Let Scotland Yard catch Jimmy. And on his own head be it. Good-hearted Johnny Craddock knew one thing—that it would hurt him more than anything when they did rope in the audacious, lovable, gentleman crook.

But, now, he was infuriated at crossing his friend's path once again. He had been telling himself that he had washed his hands of the fellow, and here he was at Hadleigh Towers, no doubt up to some deep game.

Jimmy was standing against the wall, eyeing his detective friend amusedly, and behind him on a rack hung the vari-coloured blazers of Lord Zintarri's Eleven and of the Loamshire players.

With a sudden, quick, jerky step the burly detective crossed to one of the blazers and fished in the pocket. His hand came out holding a gold cigarette case, and he stared from it to Jimmy's clean-cut, smiling face with black suspicion.

But the gentleman crook shook his head.

"Do try not to be such a fat old ass, Johnny," he drawled in genteel reproof.

John Craddock flushed.

"Sorry," he said gruffly. "Should have known you wouldn't be so unsportsmanlike as to rob your fellow-guests. But, anyhow, what's the game?" he burst out once more. His anger was like a candle in the wind, guttering and then flaring again. "What the dickens are you at Hadleigh Towers for?"

"My dear old Johnny," his friend chuckled, "it's ever so decent to see you again. I understand that one of the men of Zintarri's Eleven has failed to turn up, and so no doubt you're taking his place. We shall be playing on the same side once again, Johnny. Think of it. I hope we have a good game, and that's all we're both after."

John Craddock looked relieved. He knew that this was his friend's cryptic way of assuring him that he was not at Hadleigh Towers for any unlawful purpose.

"Still, I do wish you'd go straight, Jimmy," he sighed. "You're such a good old fathead, really. You need never be short of money if you joined in with me."

"Ah," smiled Jimmy mockingly. "And that brings me to the point. What is our successful and fashionable private sleuthhound doing at Hadleigh Towers? Not on vacation, surely. If I know Johnny, he's here sniffing after clues, ferreting out some wretched wrongdoer. The brain that never ceases, the vigilance that never relaxes, and all that sort of thing."

"Well, I'm not after you, Jimmy, if you behave like a sensible fellow," said John Craddock in a burst of candour. "To tell you the truth, I'm down here after Count Carados."

Count Carados!

Jimmy swung round with a sharpening of the eyes. He had heard of Count Carados. The biggest swell mobsmen in Europe or America. He was a

mechanical genius, a much bigger safe-breaker than "Slick" Hanson would ever be.

There was one curious factor about the work of Count Carados. He was by way of being a poseur, always playing to the grand-stands. That is to say his robberies—some of them on a big scale—were remarkable chiefly for their spectacular and bizarre character.

He would not rob as an ordinary thief might, for he was a man of mechanical and inventive genius. Some of his criminal coups were almost theatrical in their elaborate effects. He used the tricks of the illusionist and the conjurer, but with a deadly purpose. And each new "job" that he brought off was different from the rest.

Jimmy Brent had heard of "The Count" in the Underworld of the East End, which he sometimes

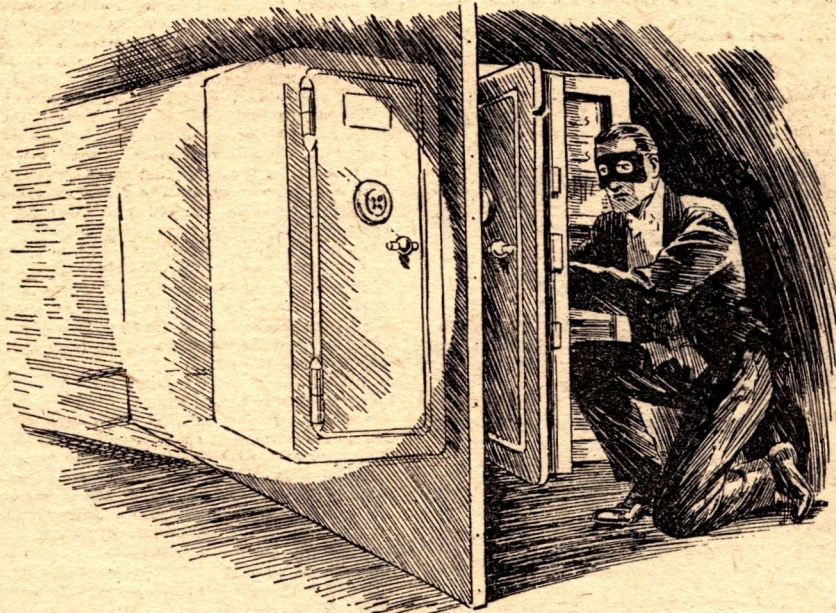
Jimmy nodded. His brilliant, dark eyes were alive with interest.

He had already met Lord Zintarri's son, the Honourable Jack Darrell, at the house-party. An extremely pleasant, rather quiet young man, he was a naval officer on extended leave. Certainly there had seemed nothing abnormal about him.

"He's a gunnery expert, as you've probably heard," went on John Craddock with persistent grimness. "As I say, through overwork and so on, he's had a brainstorm. Some months ago the blue-prints of a naval gun that he himself had invented and perfected disappeared. The Admiralty want to know who has stolen them from him."

"Eh? Then this Count Carados has stolen them?" said Jimmy with a startled whistle.

"We don't say that," said the private detective



DOUBLE MASK.—The gentleman crook's lips twisted into a smile. In front of the safe he was rifling was a canvas bearing a painting of an exactly similar safe.

penetrated in disguise. The Count was a big boss of crime, merciless and unscrupulous. His name was whispered with awe in all the thieves' kitchens of Limehouse. Jimmy Brent had often wanted to meet him.

But, after that first momentary shock of surprise, he did not even by so much as the flicker of an eyelid betray his interest.

"And who, pray, is Count Carados?" he drawled indifferently.

"The most sinister figure in the world of crime," said John Craddock grimly. "And he proposes to bring off down here one of his biggest coups. Listen."

John Craddock paused to bring up a chair. He sat astride it with his hands on the back and stared at Jimmy Brent most evidently in deadly earnest.

"I'm telling you this because I trust you, Jimmy. You may not know it, but Lord Zintarri's son has had a brainstorm. I don't think anybody guesses it, because he appears as normal as you or I. He's playing cricket this week; in fact, he's captain of Loamshire."

quietly. "Lord Zintarri's son broke down absolutely after the disappearance of the plans, and was given indefinite leave. He has been watched carefully ever since, and he has been heard in his sleep and at other times to ramble incoherently about the lost plans, in connection with which he often uses the name of Count Carados, the master crook."

John Craddock paused impressively. Certainly he had an appreciative audience. Jimmy's face now showed his tense interest in the narrative.

"Now here's where the missing link turns up," went on the detective, tapping the rail of his chair with a long, extended forefinger. "Yesterday a frantic wire reached the Admiralty from Captain the Hon. Jack Darrell. It read like this: 'Send someone at once to help me. The Count is here, and he will get the plans.'"

John Craddock fished from his pocket an official telegram form and handed it to Jimmy. On glancing at it, the young man-about-town found that it contained the words he had said.

"Now what d'you make of all that?" asked the detective, his eyes snapping.

Jimmy tried to conceal his excitement with an air of indifference.

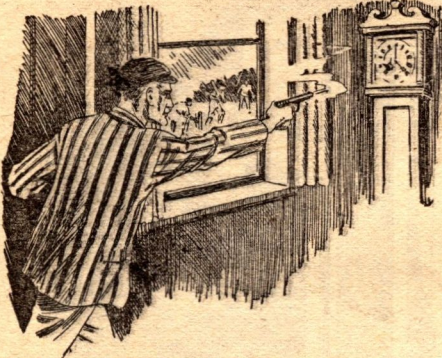
"Pooh! There's nothing much in it, is there?" he asked. "A naval officer, the inventor of a gun, finds that his plans are missing and has a nervous breakdown. He raves about a notorious international crook. Ergo, arrest the crook and get the plans back."

But he knew even as he spoke that it was not so simple as that.

"Jimmy, don't be a crass idiot." The words came like a pistol shot, and John Craddock flung out a hand in deadly earnest. "Now will you help me in this by promising to lay off any of your own little stunts, and so relieve my mind about you while I'm down here?"

Jimmy Brent, smiling amusedly, was about to reply when suddenly he checked the words on his lips.

He had seen something over John Craddock's



IN THE NICK OF TIME.—The old cricketer levelled his revolver and fired six shattering shots at the clock of doom.

head. Just the flash of white in the aperture of the slightly open door, that was all; but he recognised it as the flannel shirt of some cricketer at Hadleigh Towers who had been "listening in."

Jimmy thrilled unpleasantly. They had been overheard.

Who had been eavesdropping? Either the notorious Count Carados, or else—the Hon. Jack Darrell himself. Jimmy knew little as yet of this strange drama upon which he had stumbled. He was trying to get a grasp of it. And he reasoned that, so far as he knew, they were the two interested; so either one of them was most likely to be listening at that door.

His own sudden checking of speech struck Jimmy all at once. There had been a short silence in the pavilion, and now the man at the door had moved stealthily away. He evidently mistrusted that silence.

Jimmy spoke.

"Have you spotted this Count Carados yet?" he asked softly. "Ah, no! Probably lurking somewhere in the background, eh? By Jove, things look like being interesting down here! Two international crooks both at work in the same country house, eh?"

"Look here; you must promise you won't do any of your stunts," repeated John Craddock doggedly.

"Don't know that I can promise that, old scout," Jimmy replied with a laugh. "But I'll tell you what. If I see a chance, I promise you I'll help you with your own little stunt."

The private detective looked at him dubiously a moment, and then on a sudden impulse stretched out his hand with the old friendly grin that so seldom appeared on his face since the old college days. Smiling, the gentleman crook and the detective shook hands.

The Midnight Cracksmen.

ALMOST hidden in a deep armchair in the smoking-room was Captain the Hon. Jack Darrell.

He was an intellectual, sunburned young man whose boyish features were remarkable for their extreme gravity of expression. Captain Darrell had not laughed or joked since the mysterious loss of the naval gunnery plans.

A newspaper screened him from public view, but as Jimmy Brent and Jack Craddock came into the smoking-room the paper suddenly disappeared. Jimmy was no respecter of persons or of dignity. He snatched the newspaper, flung it to the ground and, laughing, introduced to the astonished young man's notice Jack Craddock, an old school-chum.

The three had been to school together, and the Hon. Jack Darrell was obviously glad to see Craddock. Inwardly, Jimmy was more pleased than he cared to confess, for they had just come from the pavilion, and it was good to see the Hon. Jack Darrell in a blue lounge-suit. It had not been he who had been spying, at any rate. He would not have had time to change from flannels if it had been.

The point was to find the actual spy.

The smoke-room was full of men—cricketers all of them, some of them of Lord Zintarri's Eleven and some of the Loamshire County Team. All were glad to meet John Craddock and to know that he was to be of the party.

Whilst they were talking and joking together, Jimmy Brent looked them over. They were a decent lot of sportsmen—men of his own class who would have thought eavesdropping shabby conduct. No, assuredly none of them was the spy.

From that Jimmy fell to counting them. There were about twenty-five men in the long smoke-room. With its french windows, its antique grandfather clock and the safe at one side of the room, it looked very much like the smoke-room of some prosperous West End club. Jimmy was to remember that room as the scene of dramatic and stirring happenings.

He turned away.

None of those twenty-five men could he reasonably suspect. He knew most of them personally, and liked them—they were most of them old Public School boys—and the rest by their cricket reputations. And he knew that they were all gentlemen whose integrity and honesty were above suspicion.

Who then was the spy in flannels?

Jimmy suddenly saw a white-flannelled man as he walked along the corridor. There was a semi-darkness in that corridor, as there is in most corridors; but, even so, Jimmy was struck by the intent gaze of the man as he approached him.

"Why, it's Rufus Sharples, the professional of Loamshire," he told himself.

Sharples was one of those men who manage to look huge and untidy even in cricketing flannels. Yet, for all his ponderous, elephantine appearance, he was swift as light on the field, and a tremendously powerful batsman with a repertoire of graceful, run-getting strokes.

He was incidentally the only professional on the Loamshire side. Jimmy knew him well and, indeed, had been practising with him at the nets only that morning. He liked the veteran professional immensely, and never until now had he encountered that queer, set stare from the man.

They approached one another in the corridor, and the professional raised a hand in half-respectful salute and murmured "sir," then passed on.

But the encounter had set the gentleman crook's brain seething.

"By Jove, he looks different somehow!" he murmured to himself. "Almost as if—well, as if he weren't the same man."

He hurried to his own room. He wanted to think.

For some reason or other he felt an uncontrollable excitement, as if he were on the verge of some stupendous discovery. Ordinarily cool, Jimmy could not understand himself.

In his rooms he sank into an easy chair. A luxuriantly furnished sitting-room overlooking the cricket field adjoined his bedroom, and he stared out of the window at the gathering dusk, thinking hard and searching for his cigarette case.

It proved to be empty of cigarettes, but the gentleman crook had bought a packet that morning. Jimmy had a nice taste in cigarettes, and he generally purchased a stock from an exclusive little tobacconist's in Pall Mall. But now he fished out a packet containing a well-known brand supplied at twenty for a shilling—the ordinary cigarettes of commerce." He opened the packet and extracted one, and idly he toyed with the "cigarette picture" enclosed with the packet. Then suddenly his attention was attracted. He stared at the card.

By the queerest of coincidences the cigarette card bore a coloured portrait of Rufus Sharples, the

lair of thieves as one of them. And this strange portrait gallery he reckoned as a valuable adjunct to his queer profession.

Suddenly he stopped and bent, scrutinising a portrait of a dark, striking-looking man. It was a photograph of him they knew in the underworld as Count Carados. The manner in which Jimmy had gained possession of that photo would form a narrative in itself. Sufficient that he had it and that it purported to be a true portrait of the master crook.



HOW'S THAT!—Jimmy sprawled headlong and flung out his bat just in time. For the next second "the sticks" were spreadeagled.



Loamshire cricketer—the man whom he had met in the corridor only a moment before.

But was it the same man? A strange thought suddenly entered Jimmy's head and he bent over the portrait, scrutinising it closely.

Then he rose with a thrill of anticipation and went into his bedroom. Swiftly he unpacked one of his bags. And then suddenly he stopped and jerked back on his knees and stared.

He was staring at a gold cup, small but exquisitely wrought, which lay snugly amongst his clean shirts and collars. With incredulous eyes he gazed at it a long moment, and then almost hesitantly he took it up.

It was the Hardingly Cup, won in 1925 by Phoenix, one of the best thoroughbred horses Lord Zintarri had ever had in training. Jimmy's host was a successful racehorse-owner and had a sideboard swamped by glittering trophies of the turf.

Slowly Jimmy smiled—a twisted little smile that made his good-looking face seem uncommonly hard.

"The plot thickens," he murmured. "He put down the cup after a moment, and delved amongst the linen in his bag until he came upon an album. Then, with excitement still rising, he repaired to the sitting-room and turned over its leaves.

It was what is known as a "rogues' gallery," and it was valuable in that it contained portraits and fingerprints of many criminals not even known to Scotland Yard. Jimmy had used ways of his own in obtaining this collection. He had penetrated the

He studied the picture long and earnestly, and then compared it with the cigarette picture. Suddenly he leapt up, his face hard and set.

"Yes, it's possible—more than possible," he told himself aloud. "They are remarkably alike in stature and features. It would be quite possible, with the aid of a little disguise, for this man, Count Carados, to impersonate Rufus Sharples."

Then he fell to musing.

But why? Why should he do it?

He stared out of the window, trying to fit the pieces of the puzzle together. Only that morning he had been batting to the bowling of the man he knew for certain was the kindly old Loamshire professional. And now another, a cunning and cruel criminal had taken his place. Then—what had happened to the real Rufus Sharples?

Jimmy suddenly felt a hot tickling sensation around his scalp.

Dead? Could it be possible that poor old Sharples was dead, murdered by this cunning and cruel wolf of society? Jimmy could never have explained why that terrible thought entered his head, nor why it rapidly grew to a feeling of certainty. He knew only that he had met one of the cruellest and most ruthless of men it had ever been his lot to come across when he met the impostor in the corridor.

His stare at Jimmy had been malignant, full of a dreadful intent. The young man-about-town realised that now.

And then in a flash it came to Jimmy.

Of course. He was the person who had overheard the conversation with Jack Craddock in the pavilion. Count Carados knew then that he, Jimmy, was a crook.

Jimmy continued to stare out through the window, his pulses thumping. The mystery was gathering like a black cloud over him. There was the strange instance of the gold cup he had found in his bag, for example. What did it mean?

He forgot about the cup all at once, and crossed to the window with quick strides, staring out.

Someone was down there below—a man, slim and lithe, in cricketing flannels.

The fact that he was there in the grounds was not so much unusual or arresting as the attitude and demeanour of the man.

As he turned round for a moment to gaze furtively at "The Towers," Jimmy recognised him. It was the Honourable Jack Darrell.

The young naval officer appeared to be in a state of considerable agitation. Even from the window, Jimmy could see that he was trembling, and there was more than a suspicion of moisture on his agonised brow. He kept gazing behind him as if mortally afraid that he was being shadowed; and, each time he discovered that he was not, he broke into a run, only to pause again and peer furtively around him.

"That fellow's got the jim-jams—badly," the gentleman crook muttered to himself. "He looks as though he's in a state of screaming fear."

Jimmy scrunched out the glow of his cigarette butt on an ash tray, and was surprised to find that his own hand was trembling slightly.

"Tut, tut," he muttered, frowning. He asked himself, amazed, what madness was in the air at night.

"Anyhow, I'm going to follow that chap," Jimmy told himself with a sudden, cool abandon, "in case he's in the throes of one of his mental aberrations."

He felt that he was on the brink of a discovery. But not a pleasant one. A dreadful discovery.

And he was right.

He hurried out and down the stairs. Dinner would be in less than an hour, and he had to change into evening-dress. But Jimmy guessed that Lord Zintarri's son would wish to be back in time for the meal, for the two elevens were to sit facing one another at the festive board, and toasts were to be proposed prior to the match between Loamshire County and Lord Zintarri's Eleven, which commenced on the morrow.

Jimmy hurried along the gravel paths, over the lawns, and plunged through the green, shadowy elms after his quarry.

He kept in the background as much as possible until the Hon. Jack Darrell had left the wide, open parkland in which the cricket field was situate and plunged into the gloom of the woodland.

Lord Zintarri had many hundreds of acres of estate, with good shooting of all kinds. The gentleman crook wondered where his quarry might lead him amidst all this wilderness before he reached his objective.

But suddenly the chase came to an end in startling fashion.

The man in front in cricketing flannels plunged into a copse, where Jimmy saw him stop dead. A despairing, choked cry came from the naval officer's lips—a cry that rang eerily through the silent woods. Somehow that cry made Jimmy's blood run cold. He stood up, peering through the thicket, and he saw that the Hon. Jack Darrell held his face between his hands and was moaning softly to himself.

Then he saw it, too, and he sank down. He felt

a sensation of cold horror such as he had never known before. For lying amongst the bracken in the copse was the figure of a man stretched out stiffly in a poise that suggested death.

His face was upturned to the sky, and Jimmy saw it clearly in that instant of time in which he stared horrified. The man lying there was Rufus Sharples, the Loamshire professional!

The Hon. Jack Darrell was moaning softly to himself, and, horrified, the gentleman crook listened.

"What have I done!" he cried wildly. "What have I done! This is my work. Heaven help me! I let that monster come here when I should have spoken out and told the truth. Oh, my heaven, what have I done!"

His revulsion giving place to puzzled wonder, Jimmy listened, and tried to piece together the fragmentary phrases that the demented man let slip. But he could make nothing of it all. He waited, and presently saw the Hon. Jack Darrell stumble away.

Was it a case of a conscience-stricken man revisiting the scene of his crime? The gentleman crook could not believe it. The Hon. Jack Darrell had always appeared to him a clean, manly type of fellow. Certainly he did not seem the type that makes a murderer. Jimmy made a clutch at his reeling brain, and moved forward to where the cricketer lay.

The Hon. Jack Darrell had gone. His stumbling footsteps could be heard amongst the brush.

Jimmy knelt down beside the body of Rufus Sharples. It was strangely calm and peaceful in death, he thought. With a sensation of awe he felt for the man's heart, and his worst expectations were confirmed. There was not the slightest trace of a heart beat.

Yet it seemed unreal to Jimmy—that this strong, virile man should lay there in death. There was no sign of a wound or hurt. The gentleman crook could not understand it.

Some inward prompting whispered to him. He knew that it was his duty to inform the members of the house-party, the police. But a strong desire to play this perilous game through came to him. It was the most mysterious thing he had ever hit yet.

In what manner had the old professional cricketer died? There was no sign to tell whether his death had been violent or otherwise. Jimmy Brent, with a sudden intuitive urging which he did not question but just blindly obeyed, grappled with the figure of the huge man and slung it over his shoulder.

He staggered away out of the copse with his heavy weight.

During his short stay there the young-man-about-town had investigated a great deal of Hadleigh Towers and its adjoining estates. Jimmy held that a clever crook must be like a general; he must know his ground, prepare his lines of retreat. And thus it was that Jimmy knew of a hunting-box or lodge in the woods near by. He stumbled towards it with his burden a dead weight in his arms.

In time he reached the lodge, and he opened the door with his skeleton key and gently deposited the professional cricketer on the couch. There was a telephone in the lodge, and Jimmy went to it and quietly rung up a friend of his, a young and clever doctor who was still "walking" a big London hospital.

Jimmy explained his gruesome business, or as much of it as he dared. He wanted to know how the old Loamshire professional cricketer had died. Would his friend hurry down by car to Hadleigh Towers and make a post-mortem examination?

Jimmy's tanned, good-looking face was dark and set as he talked over the 'phone.

He knew that he was juggling with dangerous matters. At a coroner's inquest he might be severely censured for not making known his discovery at once. Suspicion for the murder might even attach to him. Yet he blindly followed his instinctive guiding. A vast hatred of the super-criminal, Count Carados, filled Jimmy's healthy young being, and

changed into evening kit. He seemed to see only the face of Sharples, a fine old fellow and a splendid sportsman, staring at him mutely, helplessly; imploring him. It seemed to be saying: "Help me, Jimmy, for heaven's sake!"

Poor old fellow, he was beyond help. But, by heavens, his death would be avenged!

And thus, in a whirl of thought, Jimmy Brent made a fatal mistake, for he forgot all about the strange discovery of the gold cup in his bag.

At Dead Of Night.

At length, ready for dinner, he hurried downstairs, fingering his white bow tie as he made for the dining-room—a little habit of his when he was intent upon steadying his nerve.

On the threshold of the long dining-room he stood still—stood there, framed in the doorway, while slowly his eyes became cold and ferocious and the tiny smile of the reckless and scornful adventurer played like fire about his mouth.

He knew in a moment that he was hunted.

The men of the house-party stood in the dining-room facing him silently, with accusing eyes. They had evidently been awaiting his coming, and prominent amongst them was Lord Zintarri, distinguished-looking, white-faced and stern.

Jimmy's every instinct of warning reared up, but he disregarded caution and stepped coolly into the room.

Those bronzed, well-set-up young men in evening dress—many of them Army officers, barristers, and occupying other high walks of life—stared at the adventurer as if he were an outcast pariah. But Jimmy's eyes were lit and dancing; they conveyed an audacious challenge as they singled out one after another of the men in the room.

"Well, gentlemen?" he asked lightly—mockingly.

His voice broke the tension. From some place of concealment near the door, John Craddock, the private detective, suddenly appeared. He rushed to the door, slammed it, and turned the key in the lock. Still smiling, Jimmy turned his head slightly and saw him with a burly policeman by his side.

"Gee whiz! That's a good make-up," said the gentleman crook, turning his dazzling smile on the constable. "But what's it all about? Are we rehearsing for private theatricals?"

His insouciance was superb. John Craddock's face went red, and he throw out his arm with a gesture that held anger as well as accusation.

"It means this, that you are arrested for theft, James Brent," he said in a voice hardly under control. "You broke your word to me. To-night the majority of Lord Zintarri's collection of plate was missing, and suspicion turned on you. Your rooms were searched, and—well, you are a clumsy thief, after all. The gold cup was easily discovered."

In a flash it dawned on Jimmy, and he turned slowly round.

Lord Zintarri now held in his hand the identical



JIMMY TURNS CROOK CATCHER.—As he ran the man about town cast his dress jacket. He saw that the crooked Count was going to dive.

the gentleman crook was determined that he would bring him to book.

His friend, the young hospital doctor, agreed to rush down and examine the dead man; and Jimmy, after giving him careful directions to go secretly to the lodge in the woods, hung up the receiver and left the place.

He was going to keep his discovery secret.

He hurried back to Hadleigh Towers with a load on his spirits of which he could not rid himself. Cool and audacious, Jimmy was for once put off his mental balance. He had gaily pitted his wits against the forces of Law and Order, but now he felt that he was endeavouring to control forces almost beyond him.

Hurriedly he changed into evening dress. Curiously enough he did not notice a certain state of disorder about his rooms, though usually he had a hawk-like eye for such signs. The disorder was not marked. Certain of his belongings had been moved from their original positions, and his bed had been ruffled, and there were other little signs. But Jimmy's mind was performing gymnastics of thought as he hurriedly

gold cup which Jimmy himself had discovered in his bag, and on the sideboard, piled carelessly, were other cups, gold plate and so forth.

Jimmy's dancing eyes travelled round. A plant! He was appreciating the delicious irony of it. He, the gentleman crook, perpetrator of a score of clever thefts, was supposed to have committed this clumsy robbery.

His gaze encountered the impostor's. The man disguised as Sharples, the professional cricketer, grinned at him like a great wolf. And suddenly Jimmy exploded into an uproarious outburst of genuine laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's a fair cop. Ho, ho, he—oh, my poor sides! Ha, ha, ha!"

They stared at him as if he were a madman. Jimmy was riding helplessly on the crest of his laughter. But then suddenly that laughter ceased. Bent almost double as he was, Jimmy shot straight and his voice cracked through the room like a pistol shot.

"Look out, you bloomin' arabs!"

Crash! It was a heavy hassock that Jimmy had snatched up from the floor and heaved upwards with the delightful precision of a born cricketer. It took the electrolier amidstships, as it were, and smashed every light in a second.

Jimmy had a vision of those men in evening dress backing hastily from the tinkling, breaking glass; and then, as the glass fell, so did complete darkness—like a blanket.

Jimmy buttoned his dinner jacket, squared his shoulders, and grinned as he hustled forward for the french windows.

Angry mutters, and a hustling mob of hefty black-coated men through which Jimmy dived and pushed. The cricketers were not at a loss for some strategy, despite the surprise of the moment. They seemed to understand that Jimmy wanted to be near the french windows and the open air, and they formed a sort of a Rugby scrum in front of it.

Crash! Jimmy pulled the tablecloth, laden with knives, forks, plates, etc., right on top of the scrum, just as the men were groping for and lighting matches. He dodged round the discomfited and confused young men with joyous alacrity and pushed open the french windows.

Just as he was stepping out on to the balcony the figure of a man came upon him out of the darkness, as if from nowhere. Jimmy doubled his right fist, deeming the occasion to call for what he would vulgarly have termed "a sosh." But then he checked, for it was the Hon. Jack Darrell's white face he saw; and, more than that, the distraught young man was pushing something at him—a folded slip of white paper.

Jimmy, past surprise at anything that might happen now, took it and humorously touched his forelock.

"Thankee kindly, guv'nor."

Then he was gone, swinging over the rails of the balcony and dropping lightly some twenty feet to the ground. He ran swiftly through the trees and over the cricket field.

"You'll do fine, chum," he chuckled to himself. "Ah, dear me, this movie madness! Now let's see what Darrell's got to say."

He paused, and read the note; and then he looked up, staring through the night like one who scents the approach of an enemy. He was mystified and troubled once more. For the hastily scribbled words on the piece of paper ran as follows:

For a moment I remember. I put them in the safe so that he should not get them—and . . . it's going now. . . .

The plans! Those precious Admiralty plans of

the secret naval gun. Jimmy began to see light on the mystery now.

The Hon. Jack Darrell had hidden the plans of the naval gun in some safe. And the amazing part was that he must have forgotten where he had put them. In a flash, just now, he had remembered—but then his memory came and went in flashes evidently.

Jimmy mused on the bizarre situation. Then Count Carados had not got the plans. That, no doubt, was what he was at the house for—to get them.

The Hon. Jack Darrell may have collapsed through overwork. Or because the Count had threatened him. Or for both reasons. Probably the Count had some hold over him. He had lost the plans, anyway, and Jimmy now had a hope of getting them himself.

He laughed suddenly. The situation was Gilbertian. It was amazing. This truly was Kismet.

His relish fell from him suddenly as he remembered poor old Sharples, the professional. That vile, cunning hound had killed him just with the object of getting into the house.

Jimmy hastened his steps. He wanted to be in time to see his doctor friend at the lodge.

But he was astounded when he arrived there in the room beside the silent, still body to find that the doctor had been and gone again. He did not know that until he had read the contents of the note pinned on Sharples's chest and addressed to himself.

He is not dead (the note read), but in a peculiar trance induced mainly by an electric shock on top of a certain toxin. His heart-beats will gradually recover during the next two days. I will call again.

HOWARD JEFFRIES.

Jimmy looked up with a face of amaze when he had read this note.

"Well, I'm blest!" he ejaculated.

He decided, since he was a hunted outcast, that he would put up at the lodge for the night. Sharples didn't seem such a bad sort of bedfellow now.

THE gentleman crook discovered within the next twelve hours that there was a cordon of police round the house. And he also found that the cricket match between Lord Zintarri's Eleven and Loamshire had commenced in spite of the sensations of yesterday.

Jimmy lay amongst the bracken, watching the match, whilst he mated his plans.

The safe! There was a safe in the smoking-room. That was the one he'd go for first.

Thinking in this wise, he watched the first two batsmen come out to the wicket. Loams'ire were batting first, and since the Hon. Jack Darrell was captain of Loamshire he elected to take "first knock" against his father's eleven.

Despite his somewhat haggard appearance, the young naval officer played a fine innings. In the first hour he knocked up thirty-five runs against very stiff bowling. Out of this score he topped six fours and a six. It was merry cricket, with the runs coming fast.

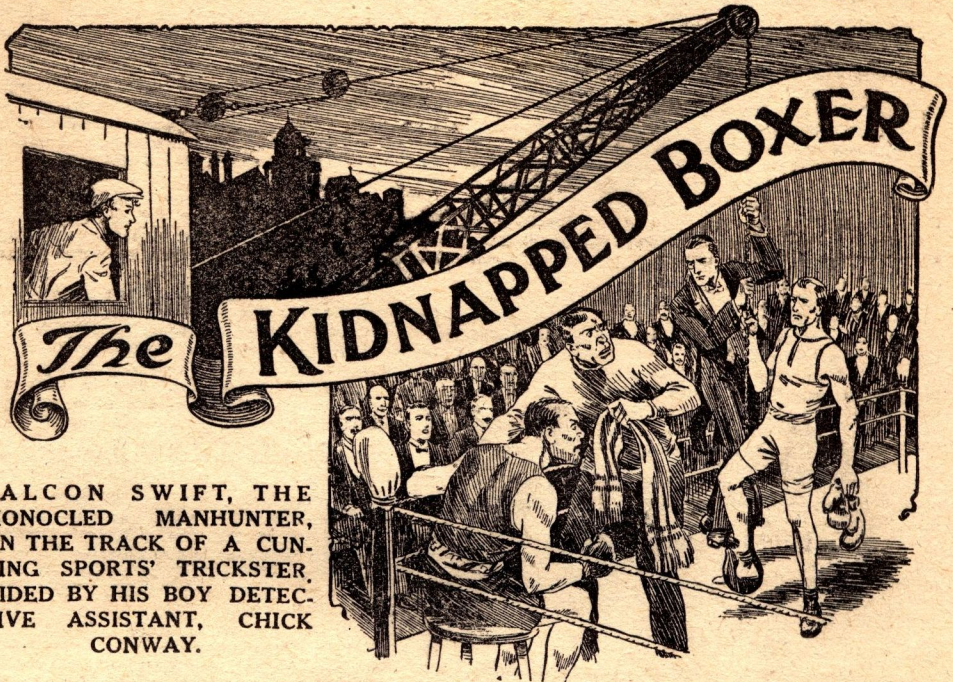
And then, at precisely twelve o'clock, came disaster sudden and awful.

"Over" had been called, and the bowler took up his stance to deliver to the Hon. Jack Darrell. He came down with a hurtling run, his arm flashed over his head, and he doubled up as the ball sped like a bullet from his hand.

It was one of the fastest balls this demon bowler had ever delivered. The Honourable Jack Darrell leapt out at it rather in the manner of Gilbert

(Continued on page 35.)

The Uncanny Fascination of the White Arc Lamps, the Swift Thud of Gloves, and the Shuffle of Feet, the Clamour of the "Fans"—this tale is instinct with the atmosphere of the Boxing Ring and of "Fighting Boys."



FALCON SWIFT, THE MONOCLED MANHUNTER, ON THE TRACK OF A CUNNING SPORTS TRICKSTER, AIDED BY HIS BOY DETECTIVE ASSISTANT, CHICK CONWAY.

Can you come at once? Tom Bull poisoned. Doctor suspects foul play.—SHEPHERD.

SUCH was the urgent message which Falcon Swift read as he ripped open the telegram his young assistant, Chick Conway, had just handed to him.

Chick regarded his master interrogatively.

"Anything doin', Boss?" he asked.

For answer the Sporting Detective handed him the wire.

"Phew!" exclaimed Chick, when he had swiftly mastered its contents. "Is this the Major Shepherd who's backing Tom Bull against Augie Slavinski for the Middle-weight Championship of Europe on the fifteenth?"

Falcon Swift nodded.

"You'll go, Boss?" demanded Chick, eagerly, his sleuth instincts on the *qui vive*.

"Immediately," returned Swift. "Get out the Bentley, Chick!"

In a moment the youngster was hurrying to the spacious garage which adjoined the flat in Half Moon Street, and, unlocking the sliding doors, he pushed them back upon their well-oiled hinges.

Passing the magnificent Hispano Suiza Falcon Swift also owned, the youngster leaped into the driving seat of the three-litre Bentley, jammed his foot down upon the electric self-starter, and the next instant the powerful engine roared into life.

Chick steered the massive sports car out of the garage and simultaneously his master, garbed in a leather motoring coat, jumped aboard.

"May I drive, Boss?" asked Chick, reluctant to relinquish his position at the steering wheel, and a nod from the Monocled Manhunter caused a smile of pleasure to break over his youthful features.

Falcon Swift was quite satisfied to allow Chick to remain at the wheel and weave his way through the maze of traffic in the London streets, for Chick was an expert driver.

Tom Bull—the aspirant for the middle-weight crown—was training at a spot known as "The Continental Gardens," which was situated at Hurst, about ten miles this side of Brighton.

"The Gardens" had extensive grounds, and a one-time dance room had been fitted up as a well-equipped gymnasium for Bull to do his training in.

It was just under fifty miles from London, and Chick—driving the whole way—managed to do the journey in little over the hour.

More than once a policeman's white-gloved hand was held up to arrest the speed at which they were travelling, but as the car drew nearer and he recognised the great Falcon Swift seated beside Chick in the car, the hand went up in a salute, whilst with the other the officer waved them on to show the road was clear.

Major Frank Shepherd, who had heard the familiar note of the Bentley, came hurrying out of the house to meet his famous friend.

The two shook hands in silence, but the lined and anxious expression about the Major's face told the detective of the strain he was suffering.

"It's good of you to have come so soon," he said.

"This is a bad business. The fight only a few days off, and— But come in and see Tommy."

Swift, with Chick bringing up the rear, followed the grey-haired old sportsman into the house and up the stairs to where the bedrooms were situated.

The Major led the way into one of them, where the figure of the promising young boxer lay stretched out full length in the bed. Swift looked down upon the man's white, drawn face.

"Hallo, Tom!" he exclaimed, extending his hand. "How do you feel?"

"Rotten!" answered the boxer, with a grimace. "They say I've eaten something which was poisoned. Terrible bad luck for the Major, too. Of course, I've had to break training, and we don't see how I can be fit enough to be in the ring and do myself justice by the fifteenth!"

"Yes—it's rough luck, Tom—but you must keep smiling," returned the Sporting Detective, more cheerfully than he felt.

The arrival of Dr. Hoskins put an end to further conversation. He nodded to Swift as he made across the room to his patient, to feel his pulse and take his temperature.

"H'm!" he murmured as he snapped the lid of his gold hunter. "He's better to-day—miles better. Ought to have him up again to-morrow. Got a constitution like an ox." He turned to Swift. "There's not the slightest doubt that there's been some meddling with Bull's food. He's got a touch of arsenic poisoning. Only slight, mark you—but enough to have put him on his back for a couple of days."

"How it's been administered beats me!" burst out the Major. "Bull's trainer, Jim Jepson, has personally ordered everything which Bull has taken!"

The detective thoughtfully polished his monocle. "I'd like to see Jepson," he said at length, speaking to Major Shepherd, who thereupon turned towards the door.

A few moments later he returned and ushered in a man of about forty years of age, in a high-necked, grey sweater. His flattened nose and "cauliflower" ears testified to his acquaintance with the prize-fighting game.

Major Shepherd introduced him to Swift, who gazed at him from his keen eyes.

"Who cooks the food here?" asked the Sporting Detective, and Jepson replied that his wife did all the cooking for the "Boys," as he called the boxers under his charge.

"So," he finished, a note of challenge in his voice, "you can bet it wasn't anything cooked that 'ad the dope in it."

"Of course not," returned Swift quickly. "And now, can you give me a list of everything Bull's had to eat or drink for the last two or three days? I know it's asking rather a lot, but . . ."

"Still it's easy," broke in Jepson. "Yer see, sir, we 'ave ter keep Tom's weight down, and so I've got a regger diet for 'im. 'Ave ter feed 'im like a bloomina' invalid, wot wif 'is 'ot-'ouse grapes and one fing and another! 'E wolfed 'arf that bunch only yesterday." And the battered old trainer pointed with a stubby finger to a half-demolished bunch of black hot-house grapes lying upon a plate beside the bed.

Swift slowly crossed the room, and screwing his monocle more securely into his eye, he inspected the grapes beneath the lens.

Major Shepherd joined him, struck by the detective's manner. "Anything wrong?" he queried. "Yes, these grapes have been poisoned!"

Everyone in the room—including the patient himself—gazed aghast at Falcon Swift.

"But it sounds impossible—" commenced Major Shepherd. "Why, I ordered them for him myself! Are you sure?"

"As sure as I can be without a chemical analysis," returned Swift. "Look here, Doctor. You see the bloom on the grapes themselves—looks like a kind of powder on the surface. But have you ever seen bloom upon the stem of a bunch of grapes?"

Dr. Hoskins shook his head.

"Well, take a look at those stalks and you'll see a kind of grey deposit of powder on them," went on Swift. "It's my belief that arsenic has been sprayed all over the bunch of grapes, and naturally some got on the stems. Where did you get them from, Shepherd?"

"Why, I ordered them from the biggest fruiterers in Hurst," answered Major Shepherd, as he fumbled in his waistcoat pocket and brought out a slip of paper. "Here's the receipt—they were delivered by one of their boys."

The Sporting Detective glanced at the bill, noted the address at the top of it, then turned to Chick.

"You can help here laddie," he said. "Get round to this fruiterers and make friends with the errand boys. Find out which one would deliver here, and then pump him. There's been some juggling somewhere between the shop and here. Get busy!"

The Treachery of Bud Peterson.

"I'VE got some real news, Boss!" cried Chick when, a couple of hours later, he burst into the private sitting room which had been placed at Swift's disposal at "The Continental Gardens."

"Bud Peterson's at the back of all this!" "Bud Peterson!" exclaimed Major Shepherd, who had been chatting to Swift. "Why, he's Angie Slavinski's backer!"

"Tell us what you discovered, Chick," urged Swift, leaning forward eagerly.

"Well," commenced Chick, "I did as you told me—got pally with the fruiterer's errand boys, and found out which one delivered here. Then I started to pump him for all I was worth. It wasn't easy, but at length I managed to get it out of him."

"The boy told me that as he was on the way with the grapes in a basket on the front of his bike, a fellow came up to him and asked what he'd got for here. The boy told him the grapes, and pointed to them in the basket."

"Oh, they're not nearly good enough for Tom Bull," the fellow said. "I'm a great admirer of his, and I'd like to send him some of my own home-grown hot-house grapes," and with that he produced a fine bunch of grapes out of a bag, he was carrying and changed them for those in the lad's basket."

"He also gave the lad ten shillings to say nothing about it," concluded Chick.

"The scoundrel!" cried Major Shepherd. "But how do you know that it was one of Peterson's mob who did the exchange?"

"It was Peterson himself who did it!" announced Chick, dramatically. "I asked the boy if he'd know the man again, and when he said he would, I showed him a photo of Bud Peterson, taken alongside Angie Slavinski, in to-day's *Mirror*, and he identified Peterson as being the man who gave him the grapes."

Major Shepherd sprang to his feet.

"I'll have the law on Peterson for this," he roared. "I'll . . ."

Falcon Swift laid a hand upon his arm.

"Plenty of time for that *after* the fight," he said. "Let's get his money first—it won't be so easy if he's behind prison bars. We can always send them there afterwards. The fight's the thing at the moment."

"That's true," agreed Major Shepherd, sinking back into his chair in a resigned manner. "But to think of the blackguard's treachery—it makes me sick."

"Nevertheless, it will be useful," returned Swift. "Useful? How?"

"Well, Peterson will hear that Bull's indisposed," went on Swift. "It's sure to leak out to the papers, and thinking your man's out of the running, he'll not bother you again with these loving attentions." And he motioned towards the doctored grapes.

"By Jove—you're right," exclaimed Major Shepherd as he gripped Swift's hand. "We'll do it! But," he added, a moment later, "what about Bull's road exercise? He must persevere with that to keep his weight down. They'll see him out at exercise, and know he's fit again."

But Falcon Swift shook his head knowingly.

"I think not," he said. "I've got a little plan to prevent that. Listen! I've recently bought a place in the New Forest. Sort of place I've always wanted to retire to one of these days. There's a big house, and it stands in several acres of ground, which is surrounded by a brick wall, fully seven feet high. The only entrance is through a pair of wrought-iron gates."

"I suggest that you pack up here as your training quarters and go and install yourselves there. The whole of the training can be done behind these high walls, and no one need know that Bull's on his feet again, and training hard for the fight. What do you say?"

"I say thanks a thousand times, Swift!" cried Major Shepherd as he gripped the young detective's hand in his. "You're the right kind of pal to have. When can we go there?"

"As soon as Bull's fit enough to travel," answered Swift. "I'll come along with you, and then afterwards we'll get busy after Bud Peterson. Keep those grapes locked up—we shall need them."

IN the days that followed, Falcon Swift amused himself by watching Tom Bull in his training.

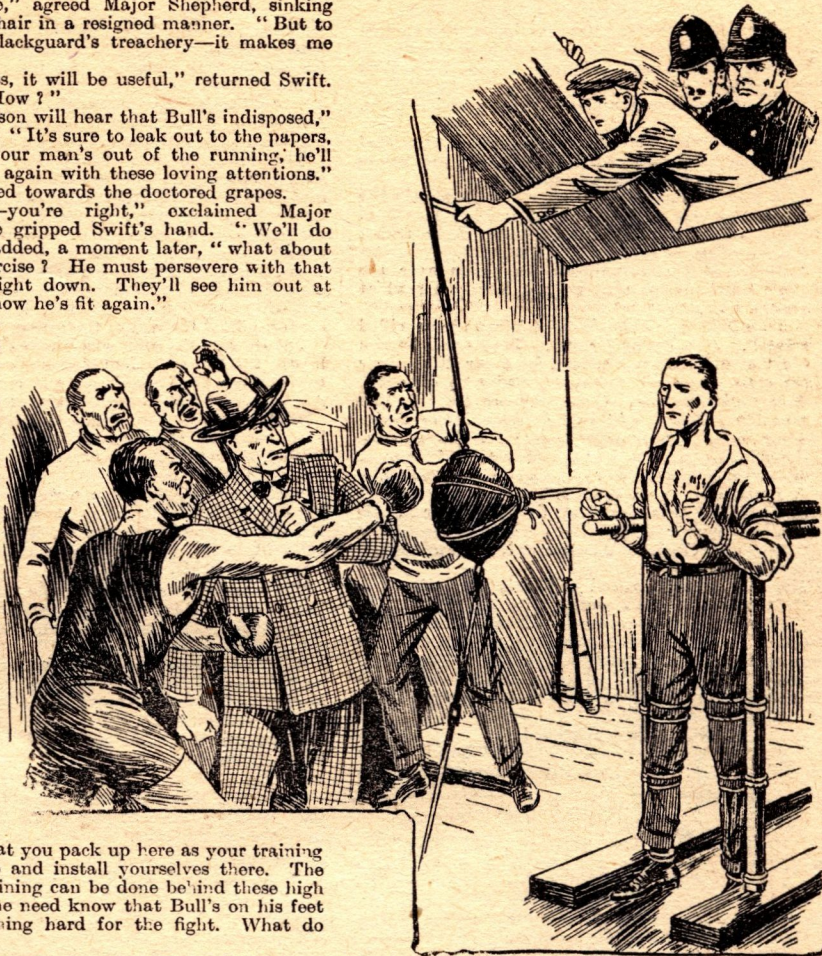
He even assisted in it by pacing Bull round the newly-laid cinder track for a time, and finished up with actually putting the gloves on with the aspirant to champion-ship honours.

It was early the following morning, however, that the big shock came.

Falcon Swift awoke with a start to hear someone hammering upon the door of his bedroom, and, opening the door, he found Jim Jenson standing upon the threshold—his face as white as a sheet.

"Hallo, Jenson—what's wrong?" asked Swift.

"He's gone, sir! Tom's disappeared!" stammered the bewildered trainer.



A DIABOLICAL DISPATCHER.—The Russian bully drew back his arm for the jab that would send the knife affixed to the punchball into Falcon Swift's heart when a youthful form appeared at the skylight. Chick Conway! Whipping out his clasp-knife the boy sleuth severed the rope.

"Gone? Gone where?" demanded Swift in amazement.

"Heaven only knows, sir," answered Jenson. "I went to 'is room to wako 'im up for an early-morning run round the track—and his bed was empty. And what's more, sir, it ain't even been slept in. I've hunted all over the place, and I've searched the grounds—but there's not a sign of him anywhere."

Falcon Swift hurriedly proceeded to pull some clothes on over his pyjamas.

Once dressed and out in the passage, he came face to face with Major Shepherd and Chick—both of whom had been aroused by other members of the boxer's camp whilst Jenson went to get Swift.

"This is awful," gasped Shepherd, nervously, and Swift nodded. He had no use for words at the moment.

Jepson hurriedly led them all to Bull's bedroom. A glance at the bed showed that Jepson had spoken only too truly—it obviously had not been slept in.

"What clothes are missing, Jepson?" asked Swift, crisply.

"Only his overcoat and cap," answered Jepson. "I . . ."

Suddenly Swift perceived a screw of crumpled paper which had been tossed into the grate where the remains of a fire still smouldered.

In a flash he had snatched it up and smoothed it out. There was some scribbled writing in pencil upon it, and as Swift finished reading it, he thrust the scrap of paper into Shepherd's grasp.

Jepson and Chick craned their heads over the Major's shoulders, so that they, too, might read at the same time.

Your kid Sam's sick—badly sick (ran the pencilled scrawl). He's crying for you. They won't let you break training to come to him, but a car will be near the gates at midnight to-night, and with a ladder. You could slip out. Come and see the kid, and probably save his life, and be back before dawn. Your wife, Nancy, asked me to get this message through to you. I'm just the other side of the wall. Whistle if you get it all right, and I'll understand.—
A FRIEND OF YOUR WIFE'S.

Jim Jepson was the first to recover from his astonishment and to speak.

"The darned fool—and he fell for it!" he muttered, with a curse.

Major Shepherd glanced helplessly at Swift.

"More of Peterson's work?" he asked dully.

"I'm afraid so, Shepherd, old chap," answered Swift. "This note must have been thrown over the wall on to the cinder-track whilst Bull was sprinting round. Forgive me," added Swift, "but good fighter though Bull may be, he isn't overburdened with intelligence, is he?"

Major Shepherd shook his head.

"They none of them are," he said, "begging your pardon, Jepson," he added, with a wan smile in the old trainer's direction.

Falcon Swift was thinking deeply.

Then slowly he started to speak.

"Hold on a minute, Shepherd, old chap," he said, "I'm not beaten yet—by a long way. I've got a scheme and I want you to leave it all to me—and to leave me alone now with my assistant, Chick. Don't worry—I may be missing for a day or so, but I shall be working in your interests."

And then Falcon Swift beckoned for Chick to follow him out into the grounds of "Forest House."

"What's the plot, Boss?" asked Chick so soon as they were alone.

"The plot," returned the Sporting Tec, "is that somehow or other I mean to get into the Peterson-Slavinski camp. They've got Bull a prisoner somewhere—and I mean to find out where."

* * * * *

ALL the world knew that Augie Slavinski was training out at Whetstone for the coming big fight, and it was to Whetstone that Swift made his way with no more definite plan in his mind beyond the fact that somehow he meant to get inside the training camp.

Arrived at the Recreation Grounds and Pavilion which formed the Slavinski headquarters, Swift found a queue of rough-looking characters wearing chokers and caps drawn down over their eyes, waiting outside the entrance.

From a policeman on duty he asked the reason of it all.

"They're there in answer to an advertisement for more sparring partners, Mr. Swift," answered the officer, saluting.

"S-sssh! Don't mention my name so loud," whispered Swift. "You can do something for me—take this telegram and hand it in at the post office for me." And whipping out his note-book, Swift wrote:

*Am inside their camp as sparring partner.—*SWIFT. Addressing it to Major Shepherd, he tore out the page and gave it to the policeman, with half-a-crown.

The detective then disappeared round a corner, and, dropping his monocle from his eye, slipped it into his pocket. Next he removed his collar and tie, which he threw away on to a rubbish heap. He already wore a cap, and he now pulled that down over his eyes as he rubbed some dirt upon his face. Then, assuming a threatening and pugilistic appearance, he tied his handkerchief, which he also first dirtied, about his throat and, lurching round the corner, joined the end of the queue.

Falcon Swift's ruse was successful, for when at length the queue had moved up and it became his turn to be interviewed, he was engaged as one of Augie Slavinski's sparring partners.

Bud Peterson was master of ceremonies, and he harangued the motley crew as he chewed his everlasting cheroot in one corner of his treacherous-looking twisted mouth.

"Each one of you'll go a round with Augie," he announced. "And yer needn't pull yer punches. Hit him all you know, but don't be surprised if you get sent to Dreamland yourselves," he added, with a vicious chuckle.

They were all grouped in the gymnasium which had been rigged up in the pavilion, and at that moment Augie Slavinski entered, wearing a hideously-coloured dressing-gown.

Then he stripped off his dressing gown and garbed as he was, in only his boxing shorts, socks, and boxing boots, Falcon Swift had a good opportunity of examining the man.

One glance was sufficient to tell him that the fellow was only half-trained! And the fight was to-morrow night!

Slavinski, however, soon accounted for his first man, sending him writhing to the floor with a blow over the solar plexus.

The others followed in quick rotation—but all went down before the Russian giant.

At length Falcon Swift's turn came, and he sprang nimbly over the ropes.

Slavinski shot him one withering glance of contempt and then, with an infuriating grin of derision, invited him to "Come on!"

Swift proceeded warily, sparring for an opening. He knew exactly the punch he wanted to land, and he was waiting his chance. It was a favourite trick of the sleuth's when up against a professional boxer. It was what he called his double, right-handed "ripple" punch.

It consisted of a powerful blow to an adversary's middle which caused a slight doubling up and contraction of the stomach muscles, bringing the point of the chin an inch or two forward. Then, before his man could fully recover from the body blow, Swift would run the same right fist in a rippling motion up over the fellow's stomach and chest, to engage with his chin.

It was just this punch which the Sporting Detective was jockeying to land now.

At length he saw his chance. Slavinski's mid-section was unguarded for a moment.

Crash! Falcon Swift landed a jolting short-arm jab just above the waistline, upon the man's too well-covered stomach, and then, like a streak of lightning, his right fist rippled up over the body and landed full upon the point.

Slavinski collapsed in a heap to the floor like an empty golf-bag!

And then a low, venomous voice broke the silence that followed.

"Put 'em up—Mr. Falcon Swift! Your game's played!"

It was Bud Peterson, grasping an automatic pistol, the muzzle of which was directed full at Swift's heart.

"Thought you'd learn the whereabouts of Bull, eh?" hissed the crook promoter. "Well, you shall. He's at Hayward's Wharf, near Limehouse. But you'll never use the knowledge!"

From behind Peterson there flocked some half-dozen shifty-eyed men—the regular staff of the

At length Slavinski had it adjusted to his liking. "Now we'll have a little punch-ball exercise," he hissed, between his clenched teeth, as he gave the ball a half-punch which sent it swaying forward on the two thick strands of rubber which held it to floor and ceiling.

The blade hissed through the air, and Falcon Swift felt a sudden stab of pain as the point punctured the skin of his chest just above the heart, and with a flash of horror the fiendish devilry of Slavinski's ghastly plan was made manifest to him.

The Russian bully was going to punch that ball until the knife had ploughed its way into his heart!

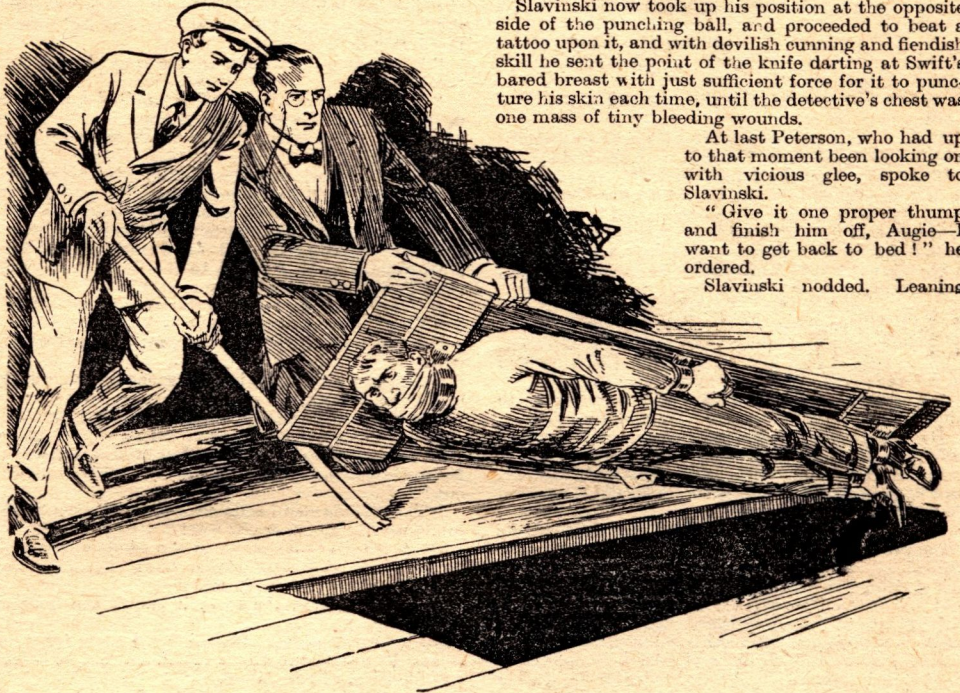
Already there was a trickle of blood from that preliminary thrust of the knife.

Slavinski now took up his position at the opposite side of the punching ball, and proceeded to beat a tattoo upon it, and with devilish cunning and fiendish skill he sent the point of the knife darting at Swift's bared breast with just sufficient force for it to puncture his skin each time, until the detective's chest was one mass of tiny bleeding wounds.

At last Peterson, who had up to that moment been looking on with vicious glee, spoke to Slavinski.

"Give it one proper thump and finish him off, Augie—I want to get back to bed!" he ordered.

Slavinski nodded. Leaning



THE MISSING MAN.—Between them the Sporting 'Tec and his assistant wrenched up the floorboards, to find Tom Bull clamped beneath and gagged cruelly.

Slavinski camp—and just then Augie Slavinski regained consciousness.

As the Russian struggled to his feet, mad rage showed in his eyes.

"What shall we do with him, Augie?" asked Peterson.

"I'll show you," hissed Slavinski. "Get hold of him and I'll show you!"

Half-a-dozen rough hands seized Swift, and at Slavinski's orders he was bound to a pair of parallel bars.

A punching ball suspended from a hook in the ceiling and held to the ground by a staple screwed into the floor was about a yard only from his face.

From a pocket of the dressing gown, which Slavinski now donned, the fellow drew a long, thin-bladed Russian knife, which terminated in a wicked, cruel point. The Russian proceeded to lash this ghastly weapon to the punching ball, so that its keen point was directed full at Swift's chest.

forward, he steadied the ball and directed the knife so that it pointed straight at Swift's heart.

Then he doubled his great ham-like fist and drew it back with a sudden hissing intake of breath.

His fist commenced to travel forward with stupendous speed, and his taut knuckles were about to strike the leathern ball, when . . .

Crash! There sounded the splintering of glass overhead.

It startled Slavinski as he gazed up to the glass fanlight in the ceiling and saw the face of a young boy, and behind him the helmeted heads of two uniformed policemen.

The sudden shock bereft his arm of some of its force, and although his fist struck the ball and sent it whizzing forward through the air, the blade intended for Swift's heart only penetrated his chest—though within an inch or so of the vital spot.

Then there sounded a snap as Chick—for it was he—leaned down through the opening of the skylight

and severed the thick strand of rubber of the punch-ball with his clasp knife.

"The police!" cried Peterson, in a panic-stricken tone. "Quick—beat it!"

"Chick—thank Heaven!" gasped Swift, and he slumped forward half unconscious, held up only by the ropes about his body.

Quick as thought, Chick and the two constables dropped down through the skylight, and the youngster sent a bullet from his hastily-drawn revolver scudding after the retreating forms of Slavinski and Peterson—but in the excitement of the moment it went wide.

For a moment, Chick was half-inclined to go after them, but his first thought was for Falcon Swift.

Racing to his side, he slashed through the cords which held him, and Swift sank to the floor—almost senseless.

"Quick—Chick!" he cried, in a tone hardly above a whisper. "Tom Bull—he's . . . he's at Hayward's Wharf, Limehouse!"

And then he sank into the merciful oblivion of unconsciousness.

Meanwhile, at a shout from Chick the two policemen had gone in pursuit of Peterson and Slavinski.

These two scoundrels had, however, reached the door and, leaping through, locked it after them.

By the time the police had succeeded in battering it down with a couple of Ladian clubs which they snatched up from the gymnasium floor, the birds had flown—the sound of a high-powered car disappearing into the night came to their ears.

* * * * *

HAVING once seen Swift safely into his own bed, whence he was brought in the police ambulance, and the doctor in charge of him, Chick decided to act as he knew his Chief would wish him.

"Hayward's Wharf, Limehouse," he repeated to himself, as he went in search of his motor-cycle.

He arrived in the Chinese quarter of the Docks before dawn and soon located "Hayward's Wharf."

It was a tumble-down building—obviously deserted and untenanted for some time. Still Chick realised he must get inside it somehow.

Clambering on to the roof of a lean-to shed, he managed to reach a window, the glass in which was broken.

Thrusting his arm through, he released the catch and scrambled through.

From top to bottom he searched the disused warehouse, but there was not a living being to be found.

In a garret he found signs of recent occupation—some stale bread and a broken jug of water—and some straw in one corner, which had apparently formed a bed—but of Tom Bull he could find no further trace.

"They must have come straight here and taken him away," murmured Chick, dejectedly, to himself, and then, turning, he left the building to return to Swift.

All through the hours of that day he sat at Swift's bedside, but the detective showed no signs of returning to consciousness—and the doctor gravely shook his head.

"He's lost a terrible lot of blood," was all he would trust himself to say in answer to Chick's anxious inquiries.

Telegrams and telephone messages came from Major Shepherd and Jim Jepson—but Chick was unable to give any encouraging replies to any.

At length they both arrived at Swift's bedside, and Chick told them everything that had happened.

When Major Shepherd heard it all, he sprang to his feet.

"I'm going to Scotland Yard," he cried. "I'll get a warrant for the arrest of both Slavinski and Peterson."

"No, don't do that—not yet!"

The words came in a weak voice from the bed. Falcon Swift had returned at last to consciousness, and had heard Shepherd's words.

The detective struggled up in bed.

"Don't do that, yet," he said, raising himself upon one elbow. "Chick, have you been to Hayward's Wharf?"

Chick nodded, and told him everything.

Then, to the amazement of everyone, Falcon Swift flung back the bedclothes and, scrambling from the bed, walked unsteadily to his wardrobe, from which he took his dress clothes.

"Help me dress!" he ordered Chick.

The youngster was upon the point of remonstrating with him, but a glance from Swift silenced him.

Falcon Swift glanced at the clock upon the mantel-shelf, which showed the time to be seven o'clock in the evening.

"What time's Bull due in the ring?" he asked the Major.

"Nine o'clock or I lose the five hundred appearance money—but that's as good as gone already!" he answered, mournfully. "But what are you going to do, Swift?"

"Find Bull and have him there by nine," answered Swift, briskly. "And what's more, I'm going to be alongside you in a ringside seat to see him wrest the championship from this murderous hound, Slavinski—and then afterwards, I'll have my go at him. Meanwhile, you go straight to the Colidrome. Bull shall be there by nine! Come on, Chick."

A taxi-cab took them to Limehouse, and Swift and Chick approached Hayward's Wharf together.

Outside there lolled a Chinaman, smoking a long pipe.

Swift drew alongside him and spoke to him quickly in his own language.

The Chinak answered in pidgin-English.

"No—me no see-ee anylun taken out of place. Two men clum and go in—three clock dis moralin' Me see lem from my house. But ley no bling anyone out!"

"Then Bull's still inside somewhere," cried Swift, jubilantly. "Come on, Chick!"

Chick led his Chief round to the window by which he had gained access earlier that morning and piloted Swift up to the garret.

As Swift entered the room it struck the hour of eight!

Swift lost no time in searching the room for some clue as to where Bull might be hidden but at length was forced to admit failure.

Then they descended to a wooden-floored basement searching every room upon their way down.

In the basement something reflected the light shed from Swift's electric torch.

It was the bright head of a couple of nails in one of the floor-planks.

Swift fell upon his knees and tapped at the plank with the electric torch.

A faint answering tap came in response from under the boards.

"The fiends have nailed him down under the floorboards—like a man in his coffin!" hissed Swift. "Quick Chick see what you can find about the place to prise these boards up with."

Chick dashed off, to return a few seconds later with a pick-axe and a crowbar.

Armed with these implements, they, between them, levered up the floorboards—to find Tom Bull, with a gag in his mouth, clamped to them by iron shackles about his wrists and ankles, and screwed into the under surface of the floorboards.

Upon hearing Swift's tapping he had managed to answer with his heels against the planks.

In a trice Swift and Chick had him free, and Tom

Bull swayed a little as he reached out for the flask Chick thrust into his hand.

"How do you feel, Bull?" cried Swift. "Are you fit enough to tackle Slavinski—there's still just time?"

Tom Bull wiped the back of his hand across his mouth.

"Tackle him!" he cried, his eyes blazing. "I'll half kill him. But what about my duds?"

"Here they are," cried Chick. "The Major brought them up with him and gave them to me." And as the lad spoke he dragged from his overcoat pocket Bull's white satin shorts, with the initials "T. B." embroidered upon one leg, together with his socks and boxing boots.

The taxi had been told to wait, and into it now the three crowded.

"The London Colidrome!" cried Swift, breathlessly. "And like the wind—double fare!"

They reached the hall as a neighbouring church clock struck the quarter before nine. But as they alighted on the fringe of the great surging crowd which surrounded it, they were faced with a fresh complication.

They could not get within twenty yards of any entrance!

A shaft of light from the roof of the building—like a huge flood light—shot up to the heavens.

The sliding roof of the London Colidrome had been slid back to liberate the smoke from a thousand cigars in the building, before the big contest was staged.

The sight gave Swift an inspiration.

"See that great electric derrick on the top of that building over there, Chick?" he cried, pointing to a huge crane on the roof of a half-completed new building upon the opposite side of the road.

Chick nodded.

"Well, s'm up the scaffolding and see if you can work it," cried Swift. "If so, lower the hook down to the roadway, and Bull and I will clutch on to it. Then raise us up and drop us down through the opening of the sliding roof. It's the only chance."

Chick nodded, and without a word sped off.

Bull and Swift watched him with almost unbearable impatience as he clambered up the scaffolding—and at length saw him swing himself into the little control cabin of the derrick.

Then, slowly but surely, the great hook started to descend, until it was within the reach of Bull and Swift, who by this time had clambered on top of the taxi to save a few precious seconds by being still nearer to it.

Chick saw them make fast their grip, and then reversed the mechanism. They were hoisted swiftly up above the swaying crowded streets below.

Then they were swung across the road, and immediately over the gaping hole in the roof of the Colidrome.

The M.C. was already in the ring, glancing interrogatively at the empty corner opposite that in which the grinning Slavinski was seated, when suddenly a great shout went up.

Gazing aloft, the huge audience witnessed the amazing spectacle of Tom Bull—already garbed in his fighting kit, ready to enter the ring, together with a slim, tall, monocled man, in faultless evening dress—being lowered from the yawning aperture in the roof, into the very centre of the ring.

As their feet touched the canvas, and they let go of the steel cable, a clock chimed the hour of nine!

Falcon Swift had kept his word and landed his man in the ring to time!

Tom Bull shot one withering glance in the direction of the quaking Slavinski, as he turned to his place in his corner.

The preliminaries over, the gong clanged for the first round, and Tom Bull leaped from his corner like some wild tiger suddenly liberated.

If ever there was a "needle" fight, then this was it.

Only one real blow was struck—and that by Bull. It was a regular pile-driver, and delivered with every ounce of strength and venom in the fighter's body and brain.

It caught Slavinski fair and square on the point, and he slumped sprawling to the canvas with a broken jaw.

Tom Bull looked down and laughed—laughed aloud and hilariously as he turned towards Major Shepherd, already at the ringside with outstretched hand.

And then a police whistle sounded above the hubbub.

It was blown by Falcon Swift, and as the inspector on duty came hurriedly to his side, followed by some half-dozen constables, Swift spoke quickly to him and pointed to Slavinski and the cringing Peterson.

Both were surrounded by blue-uniformed men, and when later Slavinski regained his scattered senses, it was to find his hands wearing something more than boxing gloves.

The police had slipped a pair of handcuffs over his wrists without even troubling to remove the gloves.

Rip O'Farrell of the Flying Squad Next Week. Don't Miss Him, Lads!

SAY, THE DANDY COWBOY AND HIS SLICK BUNCH OF COW-WRESTLING, ROUGH-RIDERS ARE ON HOLIDAY NEXT WEEK.

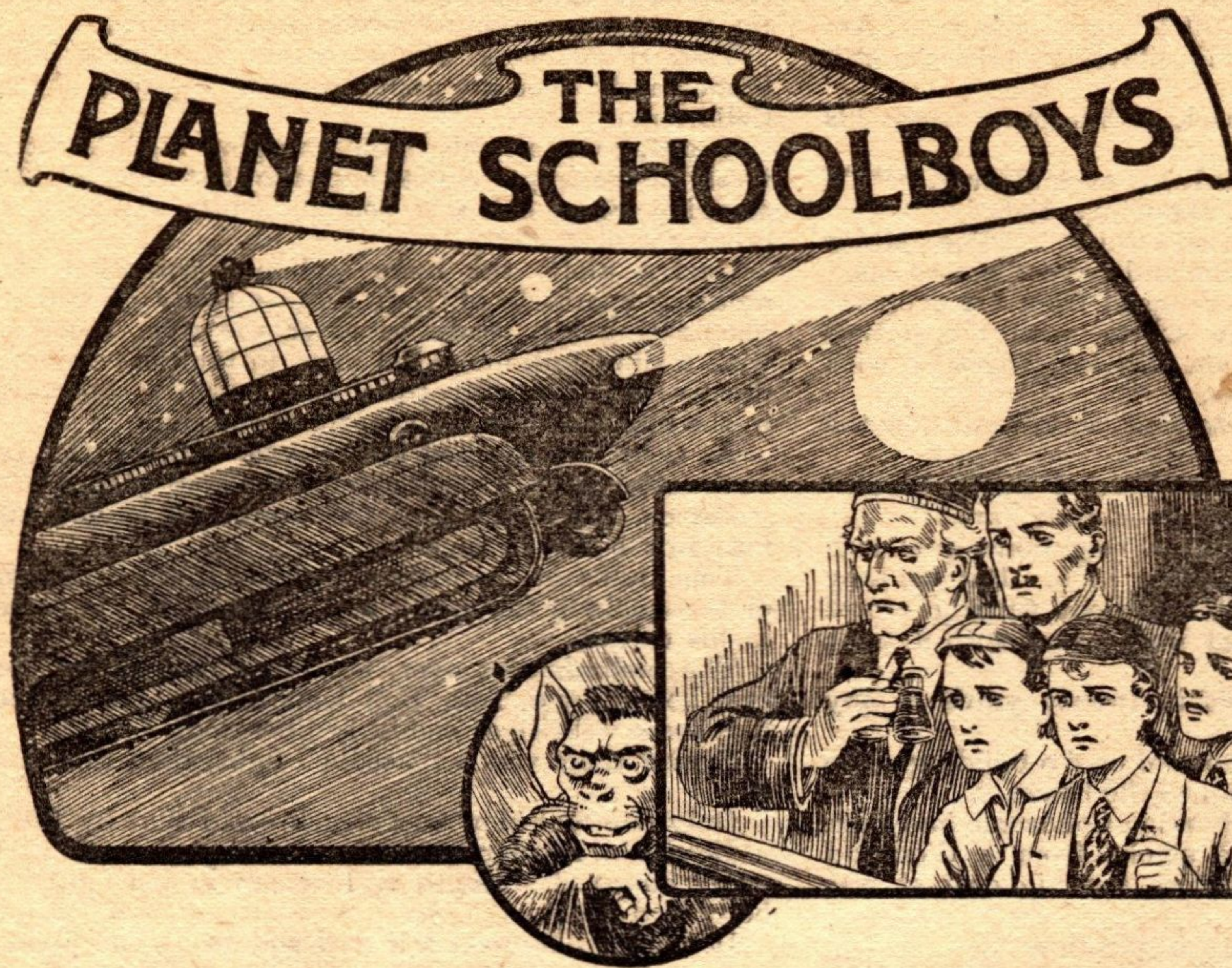
DON'T MISS

THE CAMPING COWBOYS.



This is a Yip-Whizz Tale of the Dandy Cowboy and His Punchers in the Romantic West that Sure Will Make a Hit With You. Bo' you'll wanna throw your hat in the air as you git travelling with these Roughnecks, Swimming in the Silvery Rockies—Hunting the Grizzly—Having a Wild and Hilarious Holiday in which is interwoven a Strange Elusive Mystery.

HOW'S THAT FOR TRICKS? A REAL KICK-A-MINUTE TALE



The Great Invention.

IT came down from the stars—a thing of gleaming metal, bristling with strange, scientific contrivances yet possessed of neither planes nor propellers. A crowd of schoolboys gasped at the magic of the wonder machine's flight and when it reached terra firma came in a bunch to investigate the phenomenon.

Professor Roxley Drewe and Sir Clarence Bagshot met them on board and chatted with Mr. Jerome Mannering, the popular Fourth Form master, while Barry Drewe, the Professor's nephew, proudly conducted his chums, Don Masters and the Hon. Freddie Trevor, on a tour of inspection.

"But—but how does the blessed thing work?" demanded George Freeman, leader of "The Firm" at Castleton School. The Firm consisted of Jack Willis, Leonard Hardy, and their truculent leader—Freeman, Hardy, and Willis!

The question was permissible, for the wonder flyer was opposed to all the accepted rules of flying, yet the Professor had already been a trial flight, five thousand miles from the earth's surface, and he planned to visit the planets.

He was now explaining to Sir Bags and Jerry, as the knight and the schoolmaster nicknamed each other, the secret of the monster's motive power.

"By harnessing wonderful forces from the ether, I can reduce the earth's attraction to nil and travel in any direction I care to direct," he was saying, when there came a dramatic interruption. A sinister-looking foreigner appeared and insinuated himself before the annoyed Professor.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion, Count Popandos?" demanded the last-named, angrily.

"Gentlemen," answered the Count suavely, "I have come to press you once more to sell me the secret of this vessel. I am empowered to offer you millions—"

"Once and for all I tell you it is not for sale!" retorted Professor Drewe.

In a flash the Greek lost all his self-possession.

"Then, you fools, I shall act!" he shouted, and before any of the three could stop him, he dragged at

Alive with the Stupendous Thrills of the Unknown, this Thrilling Yarn Tells of the Amazing Adventures of a Daring Band of Schoolboys among the Mystery Worlds in Space.

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a lever near the Professor's hand. It snapped off short as a startled cry left Professor Drewe's lips and with a triumphant laugh the foreigner raced up to the deck.

Simultaneously the aerial monster gave a tremendous lurch and shot heavenwards, throwing the juniors gathered on her decks to their faces. When they scrambled upright the vessel was fifteen thousand feet above the earth's surface and hurtling upwards at ever-increasing speed. And then, to their consternation, Count Popandos appeared from below and, without hesitating a second, cast himself into space.

The startled youngsters crowded to the rails—in time to see the billowing folds of a parachute arrest the miscreant's seeming fall to destruction and bear him gently down to firm ground.

White-faced and dishevelled, the Professor and his two companions came out on deck and herded the juniors into the inside of the vessel. Then, after barring the airtight doors, Professor Drewe told them the dread news—they were hurtling through outer space, and, until the damaged mechanism was repaired, there was no hope of a return to earth!

"At the present moment," he told them gravely, "we are heading straight for the planet Venus at many thousands of miles per second!"

Hours passed and to the voyagers' intense joy they were able to make a safe landing on the planet. Strange, bewildering country surrounded the vessel, which had come to rest in a forest glade—and the forest was composed of gigantic nettles!

Flying in the air around them they discerned a flock of bat-like animals with eerie, almost human faces. These animals disappeared, however, and, after equipping all with breathing suits, the Professor opened a door of the flying monster.

Freeman, anxious to be the first human to land on a planet, jumped to the Venusian ground first, and the others saw him disappear through some undergrowth. They followed him, anxious for his safety.

They found him—and speechless with horror, bounded forward.

For Freeman was held fast in a huge spider's web and creeping towards him across the powerful strands came the denizen for his prey—a monstrous spider!

The Land of Amazement.

SPELLBOUND, the juniors stood there, staring at the unfortunate Freeman, and at that awful Venusian spider. It was their first sight, at close quarters, of insect life on the white planet.

For, incredible though it seemed, this gigantic creature was really an insect! A species of spider, without a doubt. It was unlike earth spiders in general shape, but there could be no mistaking the character of the brute.

"Quick, you chaps!" gasped Freeman, hoarsely. "Can't you get me out of this? I'm stuck—absolutely stuck!"

"Look!" shouted Hardy, in horror. "It's moving! It's coming nearer!"

"Help!" screamed Willis, terrified for his leader's safety. "Oh, help—help!"

None of those Castleton boys was ashamed to admit that he was sick with terror. In the presence of an animal they might have acted differently. But this was a spider—a loathsome monster such as they had never imagined in their wildest dreams. The dreaded tarantula, of Brazil, was a mere microbe compared to this horrific thing.

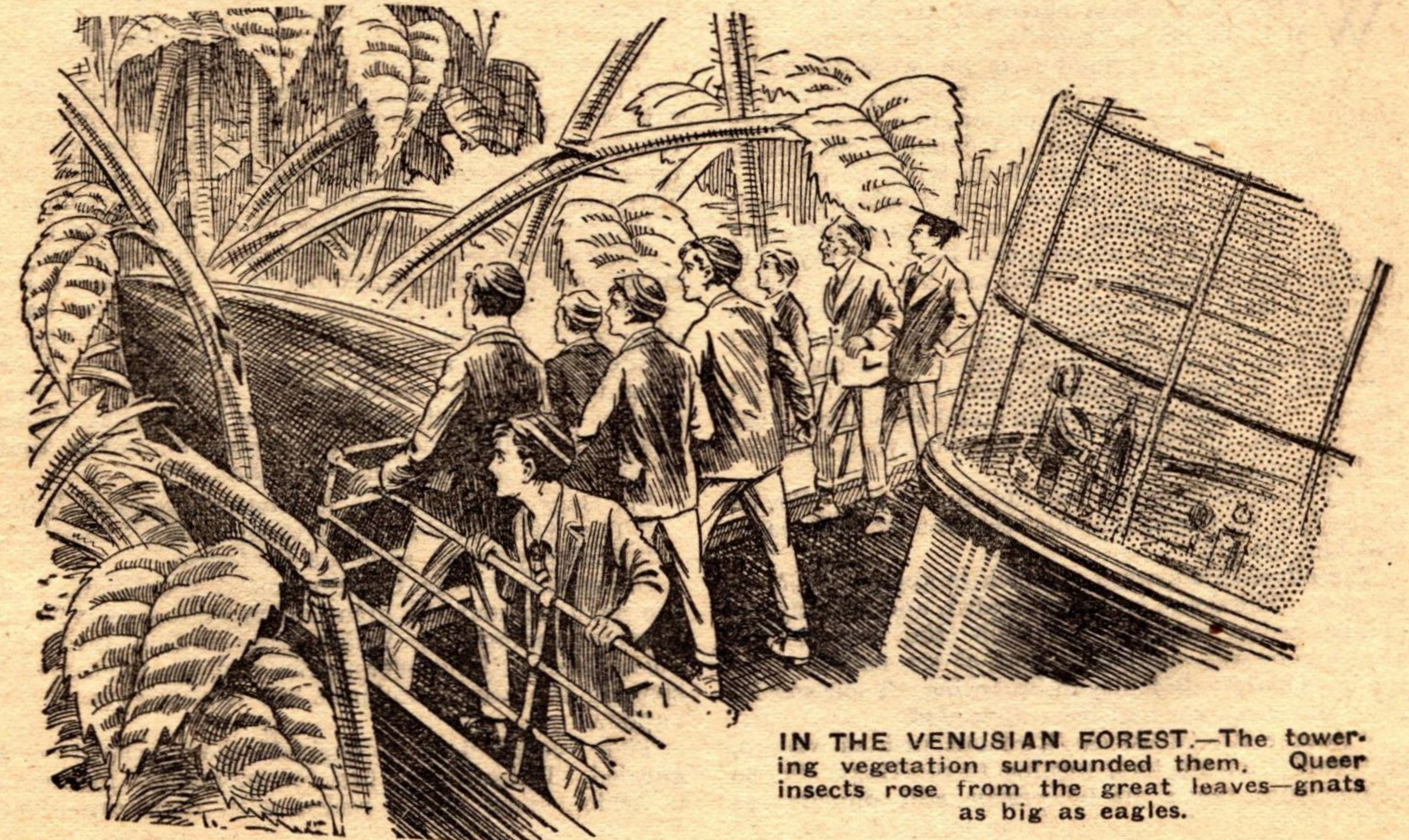
And Freeman, was caught in its web—entangled hopelessly!

His shouts for help sounded muffled—and none of the other boys heard all his words. Their breathing-suits made it impossible for them to converse in the ordinary way. Yet those shouts for help must have been heard by Sir Clarence Bagshot and Jerry Mannering. For, a moment later, the two men came charging through the thick, coarse undergrowth.

Even Sir Bags, steel-nerved as he was, recoiled with a gasp of consternation as he caught sight of the spider. Jerry was helpless—and he expected to see Freeman killed before his very eyes.

Indeed, the reckless junior was in dire peril. The spider was moving forward—advancing upon him, the whole web quivering and shaking under the creature's weight.

Freeman's life was saved, no doubt, by the fact that the spider was uncertain. This was something new—a capture that he had never before made. And



IN THE VENUSIAN FOREST.—The towering vegetation surrounded them. Queer insects rose from the great leaves—gnats as big as eagles.

so he was advancing cautiously, suspecting that his victim was, perhaps, a dangerous enemy.

And in that brief moment, while Freeman was still safe, Sir Bags acted.

The sporting baronet had been in many a tight corner in Central Africa—in the heart of Borneo—and in the Amazon forests. And never had Bags been known to fail in a moment of crisis.

Crack! crack! Two revolver shots rang out sharply, and both those bullets had sped true into the enormous head of the spider. And Bags stood back, his heart nearly standing still. What would be the effect of those shots? Would the brute be goaded into an immediate attack? Would he suffer any injury at all?

But there was no time to think. The spider had acted. With a violent shaking of his web, he twirled round, and shot sideways—shot back into a kind of lair, formed by a tangle of great leaves.

"He's gone!" panted Barry Drewe. "Quick, you chaps!"

Whether they heard his words was doubtful, but they needed no invitation. With one accord, they ran forward, and seized hold of Freeman.

"All together!" yelled Hardy. "Come on—pull!"

At any second that spider might come back. Barry and the Hon. Freddie and one or two others wanted to get at their pocket-knives—so that they could slash at these gigantic threads of gossamer. But their ordinary clothing was hidden beneath the breathing-suits. All they could do was to tug and pull and wrench at the unhappy Freeman.

And at last their efforts were rewarded by success.

With a tremendous jerk, Freeman was released. Half-a-dozen of the juniors tumbled over, as the web suddenly snapped in several places. And those strands were like ropes—like great elastic whips.

"Back!" roared Sir Bags, his voice plainly audible through the glass of his visor. "Back to the Rover!"

"All right, sir!"

The boys were only too ready to obey. They had had one brief taste of life on the planet Venus, and they felt that it was enough to satisfy them for the time being. If spiders, why not other creatures?

Perhaps there were beetles here—as big as tigers! Perhaps there were scorpions and centipedes, too! The very thought of such creatures made the school-boys anxious to get back to the safety of the *Solar Rover*.

And as they ran, helter-skelter, a great realisation came upon them. They could see that forest in the

PROFESSOR ROXLEY DREWE,

The Genius Inventor of
the Solar Rover—the
ship that can sail the
stars.



background—that forest of stinging nettles, soaring fifty and sixty feet high. Further beyond, they could see real trees. Trees similar to those on earth in shape and foliage. But they rose for hundreds and hundreds of feet into the air. Some, indeed, were thousands of feet in height!

Everything on the planet Venus was enormous.

Vegetation, flowers, grass—insect life! Everything was staggeringly huge. They felt very much as Gulliver must have felt in the fanciful land of Brobdingnag!

And their minds were stunned at the possibilities. Their imaginations could not possibly cope with the vista of amazement that was opened. What chance had they in a world like this? In a world where everything was unbelievably large? The insects of the undergrowth were as huge and as dangerous as forest monsters. At any moment, some terrible monstrosity might pounce down upon them, and destroy them all!

The Crucial Test.

"WELL, that was a narrow shave, boys," said Mr. Mannerling soberly. "For a moment, Freeman, I thought that you were doomed."

"If you thought so, sir, you can pretty well imagine my feelings," said Freeman, in a husky voice. "By jigger! When I found I couldn't get out of that web, I thought it was all up with me!"

"It must serve as a lesson to us," said Professor Roxley Drewe, nodding. "Let us remember, my friends, that we are in an unknown land. Everything here is new—unexplored. We are the first human beings to land upon a planet, and it is necessary for us to proceed with the utmost caution. It was rash of you boys to venture down upon the ground."

"Well, it was Freeman's own fault, sir," said Barry. "He was off before we could stop him. Just like the ass, of course. He was always a reckless sort of chump!"

And for once Freeman had nothing to say. For he realised, in all truth, that his recklessness had nearly cost him his life.

The adventurers were all back in the *Solar Rover* by now. The doors had been sealed, and the oxygen pumps were working. Within the vessel, the atmosphere was similar to that of the earth. And the boys had no difficulty in breathing. Their special suits and headgear had been discarded.

"Rather a pity we can't go out just as we are, sir," said Don Masters, turning to Sir Bags. "The temperature seems to be pretty stiff outside—as

hot as the tropics on earth. Couldn't we risk opening a door to see what the atmosphere is really like?"

"It's no good asking me," said Bags, shaking his head. "The Professor is the scientific genius here."

"All in good time, Clarence," said Professor Drewe. "We must not be too impatient."

"I'm the most patient man under the sun—until you start calling me Clarence," said Bags grimly.

"Really, my dear fellow, I must apologise," said the Professor. "I keep on forgetting how you dislike that name of yours. Personally, I can see nothing wrong with the name of Clarence. An excellent name—a name, indeed, to be proud of. However, about the atmosphere of Venus. I think it's highly probable that we shall be able to breathe this Venusian air. I must determine the matter at once. I will make tests—and then we shall know for certain. I believe that the atmosphere is heavy—much heavier than that of the earth. But we shall soon know for certain."

And the Professor bustled about, hurrying up to the control-room, to fetch various instruments for the purposes of the test.

And while he was engaged upon this task a gong sounded, announcing that a meal was ready in the main dining-saloon. But nobody took the slightest notice. Food was not to be thought of now. The adventurers were far too excited to eat. The school-boys, indeed, were crowding at the windows, staring down upon that astonishing scene. They could not forget Freeman's experience, and they were searching for other insects—or animals. Their minds were reeling at the prospect of seeing one of the larger animal species.

For if a spider could be as large as a lion, what would a full-sized mammal be like? They all wanted to explore—to plunge into these weed forests—and to penetrate the vast woodland belts in the distance.

But, as Professor Roxley Drewe had said, extreme caution was necessary. They had already had a taste of what Venus could provide, and they were acutely conscious of the fact that this planet was full of dangers.

An excited, triumphant shout came from the control-room, and the next moment Professor Drewe came running down into the main lounge, his face flushed with new excitement.

"Success—success!" he shouted exultantly.

"Is the atmosphere O.K.?" asked Bags.

"It is heavy—decidedly heavy—but breathable," said the Professor, nodding. "I have made exhaustive tests, and I am convinced that there will be no danger in throwing open every door and window. The atmosphere of Venus is safe for human beings."

"Hurrah! Let's open the doors, you chaps!"

"A discovery—a distinct and wonderful discovery," continued the Professor, excitedly. "For many years—for centuries—scientists and astronomers have disputed the question of the atmospheric conditions of the planet Venus. How puny their efforts! How insignificant their conclusions! For here we are, on the planet itself, and we now know that Venus is supplied with a dense atmosphere, similar to that of the earth, and perfectly breathable."

Sir Bags strode to the hermetically-sealed doors. "Then it'll be safe to fling them open?" he asked. "Perfectly safe," said the Professor.

Clang-clang! Sir Bags operated the levers, and the next moment the great doors were drawn back. The atmosphere of Venus was surging into the *Solar Rover*—filling every cranny of the lounge, and striking the planet explorers like a vast wave of hot vapour.

They coughed and choked—they gasped and gurgled. But after the first few moments—moments in which their brains reeled with dizziness—their

lungs became more accustomed to this Venusian air.

"You see?" shouted Professor Drewe, as he strode out on deck. "What did I tell you? My tests were sound. We are standing on Venus, and we can breathe! It is the most marvellous discovery of the age!"

The others, of course, did not share the scientist's enthusiasm. They were finding that breathing was somewhat difficult. And the heat was intense. It was a sultry, moist heat—very similar to that of a swampy, tropical climate on earth.

And then came a new idea—this time from Sir Bags.

"Why not set the old Rover going?" he asked briskly. "Your motors will drive her along the ground, won't they, Professor?"

"Assuredly."

"Then let's go for a bit of a tour," said Bags. "Set the tractors going, and we'll barge through this forest of nettles, and see what lies beyond."

A Staggering Shock.

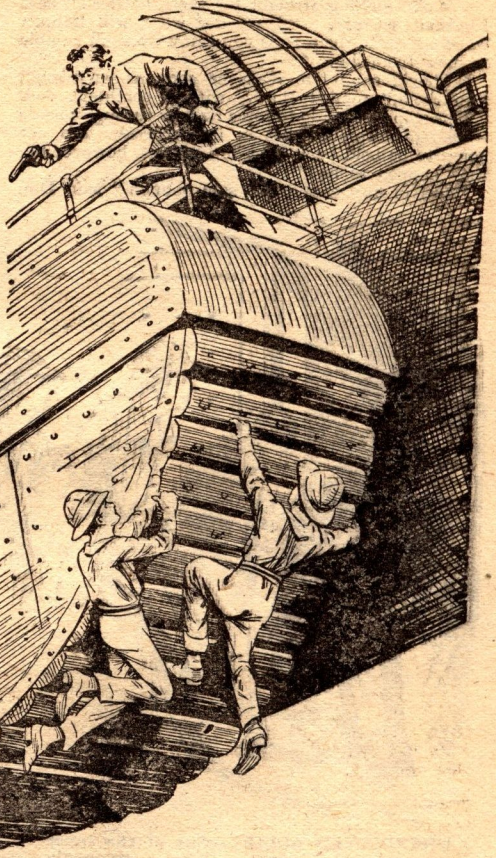
THE Solar Rover moved forward with a lurching motion, and her great bulk rolled majestically over the Venusian ground, her tractors strutting and humming.

"Well, she goes all right," said Bags genially. "I was half-afraid that your marvellous energy mightn't work on Venus, Professor."

"On the contrary, my dear fellow, the energy here is much more pronounced, even than on earth," said the Professor. "That was why we started

off with such a jerk. You see, this energy is derived from the sun. And the sun, doubtless, is also responsible for that other energy, which is so well-known to us—electricity, Venus, as you are aware, is nearer to the sun than the earth. Consequently, my motors are particularly efficient."

They were standing now in the pilot-house, well forward. The front of it was all glass, which could be pulled back at will. It was lofty, too, and a commanding view of the immediate ground ahead could



WHIPPED INTO THE VOID!—As the wildly excited boys rushed to the side of the Solar Rover the wonder machine gave a sudden jerk. Willy-nilly the juniors were flung to the ground as the Rover soared skywards. It took with it, clinging to one of the great tractors, Freeman and Barry Drewel

be obtained. One of the Rover's crew was at the wheel—which wheel, by the way, was very similar to that of an ocean-going yacht.

All the boys were now outside on the forward deck—a kind of upper deck, semi-circular, which ran round the front of the pilot-house. Sun helmets had been handed round, and these were very essential. For the glare of the sunshine was tremendous. Here, on Venus, the sun was of terrific intensity. And the atmosphere was hot, as well as being heavy. It was even worse than the tropics.



But for the fact that the adventurers were all thoroughly excited, they would have given way to the strain. For they were all feeling tired—sleepy. The heaviness of the atmosphere had that effect. But they fought against this sensation. They wanted to explore—to see more of this wonder planet.

And the schoolboys crowded there, leaning over the rail, watching with intense interest. Jackets had been cast off, and everybody now stood in shirtsleeves.

"We're making straight for those nettles!" said Freeman eagerly. "I wonder what will happen when we strike them? D'you think we shall be able to mow them down?"

"They'll snap like reeds as soon as we plough into them," replied Barry, with a confident nod. "This ship was made to force its way through forests—felling enormous trees in its progress. It's not going to be held back by a few nettles, however big they happen to be!"

"And in any case we're safe enough," said Don



UNEXPECTED ALLIES.—Out of the inner compartment came three strangely assorted figures. A startled exclamation left the lips of Freeman and Drewe. "Stowaways!"

Masters contentedly. "If we get stuck, or anything, the Professor has only to switch on the 'fluence, and we shall rise into the air."

"Absolutely," nodded the Hon. Freddie. "I can't quite understand why the dear old boy hasn't shoved us into the air as it is. I mean to say, what's the idea of ambling over the good old ground when we can fly so much more quickly overhead?"

"Well, it's better to travel over the ground," said Barry. "We're closer—and we want to see what will happen when we hit this Venusian vegetation."

Their doubts were soon set at rest. For the *Rover*, striking that vast tangle of pale green vegetation, forced its way through with the greatest ease. The sixty-foot-high nettles crashed over to right and to left as the monster land-yacht proceeded onwards.

And now they were right in the midst of the nettle forest. The towering vegetation surrounded them. And there was always something to see—something fresh to look at. Queer insects rose from the great leaves—gnats as big as eagles. Fortunately, none of these fearsome insects came near the *Rover* herself.

And then, at last, the nettle forest was conquered, and the *Rover* emerged beyond—to the accompaniment of startled shouts from the schoolboys.

For a new vista of wonder met their eyes now. A long, sloping hill was before them, covered with coarse grass that reached a height of twenty or thirty feet. And there, at the bottom of the declivity, ran a river—a great, broad river, with unbelievably high trees on the further bank. As far as the eye could reach, there was nothing but the forests and the valleys to be seen. No sign of a building of any kind—no sign of any creature that could be likened to human beings. The Venusian world seemed to be virgin forestland and plains.

"I rather think we ought to get out here, Professor," said Bags. "At least, as soon as we get to that water. I have a mind to examine it at close quarters. We might be able to do a bit of fishing, too, eh?"

"It is an excellent suggestion," said the Professor, nodding. "We will certainly land. But this time we must be more cautious. We must take plenty of firearms with us. I even think it would be advisable to serve out rifles to the schoolboys."

"You can do so with confidence," said Jerry Mannering. "They all belong to the Castleton Cadet Corps, and they know how to handle rifles quite well."

And so, twenty minutes later, Barry Drewe and his comrades were in possession of rifles, which they slung confidently across their backs. And then, after the *Solar Rover* had been brought to a standstill within twenty yards of the water's edge, the ladder was lowered, and the landing party prepared to descend. They were nearly all going this time—the Professor himself being just as eager as any of the boys. He was like a child now that Venus had been reached. He wanted to explore everything—to examine every new object that came into sight.

And so they all went down the ladder, and they all hurried to the water's edge, and gazed about them with eager interest. Little did they realise that they were on the verge of a staggering shock. For hardly had the last schoolboy descended the ladder when a yell came from George Freeman. He had turned back, for some reason, and was looking up at the *Rover's* deck. And then he pointed, and he raised his voice in amazement and anger.

"Look!" he shouted. "That Greek fellow!"

Sir Bags and the Professor swung round, and stared at the gleaming vessel. And, to their staggering surprise, they saw Count Alexis Popandos leaning over the rail!

An Enemy In Their Midst!

COUNT ALEXIS POPANDOS! It was small wonder that Professor Roxley Drewe and Sir Clarence Bagshot stared up at the Greek in consternation and dismay. For, until that second, they had believed that the scoundrel was on earth. After wrecking the control-lever of the *Solar Rover*, Count Popandos had leapt overboard, and had descended to earth by means of a parachute. And days had elapsed since then! Yet here he was—on deck—whilst most members of the party stood on the Venusian ground!

ZZZZZZZZPPP!! WHIZZ! HE'S TEARING INTO THE PAGES OF THE MAG. AGAIN NEXT WEEK.

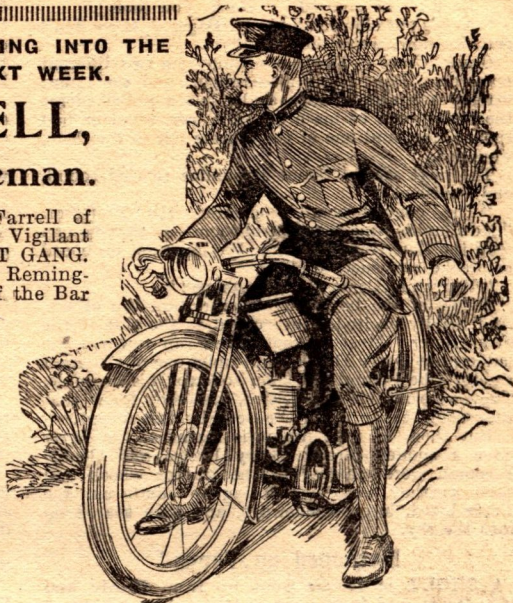
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Boys' Magazine.



It was a startling situation—a situation fraught with grim possibilities.

There could be no doubt that Count Popandos was in a dangerous mood, for he was flourishing a revolver. And his dark, cunning face was flushed with triumph. He leaned over the rail, and pointed mockingly at Sir Bags and Professor Drewe.

"Repeatedly you have refused to listen to me, my friends!" he shouted, his voice thick and victorious. "But now you must listen! I am master of the situation—I hold the trump card!"

"You scoundrel!" roared Professor Drewe, running forward. "You infernal rogue! How did you get here? By what dastardly trickery did you—"

"Steady, Professor—steady!" muttered Bags. "He'll kill you if you move another step. We shall have to deal with the beggar cautiously—or our number will be up!"

"Good heavens!" breathed Professor Drewe. "But he's in control! And we—we are helpless here! We are armed, are we not? Can we not shoot him down?"

"Impossible!" muttered Jerry Mannering, hoarsely. "He's got a bead on all of us!"

This was true enough. Count Alexis Popandos was holding his revolver ready, and at the first sign of attack he would assuredly fire. Nothing could be done at the moment.

"You thought I'd jumped overboard in a parachute, didn't you?" he shouted jeeringly. "But you were wrong! I knew what this vessel was capable of, and I fully intended to come to the planets with you. It was a paid underling of mine who jumped overboard in the parachute! He was ready—and at the critical moment he leapt over the rail, and descended to earth. Thus you were all deceived. You thought it was I who had jumped over, but you were wrong. I have been on board ever since—hiding. Oh, yes—I had my hiding-place prepared well in advance."

"But what was the object of your confounded trickery?" demanded the Professor, in a furious voice.

"Is not the object obvious?" asked the Count, mockingly. "Since you thought that I had jumped overboard, you instituted no search in the vessel. So I have come to Venus with you, unsuspected. Am I not clever?"

"But why?" demanded Jerry Mannering. "In heaven's name, why? What have you done this thing for? What do you expect to gain by acting in this insane manner?"

The Count leaned further over the rail.

"It is not what I expect to gain—it is what I have already gained!" he retorted. "You are marooned, my friends! Do you understand that? Marooned on the planet Venus! This ship is now mine—and I am in sole control! I shall return to earth, and you will be left here!"

"What!" yelled Barry. "You're going to leave us—here?"

"Oh, crums!" went up a chorus from the other schoolboys.

"I don't think you will last long!" chuckled Count Popandos. "Not more than an hour or so. Yes, there are wild creatures in these Venusian wastes. Creatures that we do not even know of. You will not trouble me any further, my friends!"

His words were like a death knell. They had landed lightheartedly, meaning to have a look at this Venusian water. For they had believed that every member of the party was friendly. There were no enemies on the *Solar Rover*, they had thought. But how wrong had been that belief!

For a moment they had a glimpse of hope. For two of the *Rover's* officers suddenly appeared in the Count's rear, and they were approaching cautiously. They had seen what was wrong—they had become aware of the danger. And they were about to act.

But the cunning Greek acted first.

Twirling round like a cat, he levelled his revolver.

"Back!" he snarled. "Back, you fools!"
 "Now's our chance!" roared Bags. "If we don't get him now, we're doomed!"

Crack Crack! Two shots came from two different revolvers. Bags had pulled trigger, and the Count uttered a shriek of rage as he felt a bullet pierce the fleshy part of his arm. His own revolver had spoken, too, and one of the officers fell to the deck, wounded.

The next second Count Popandos twirled round, and vanished.

"The control-room!" shouted the Professor. "He's making for the control-room—so that he can send the *Rover* into the air! We must get on board before he can succeed!"

"Hurrah! Come on, you chaps!"

A few of the boys were nearer than the others. And, wildly excited, they rushed to the side of the *Solar Rover*. Most of the fellows ran towards the ladder, but Barry Drewe leapt upon one of the great tractor wheels, and Freeman followed his example. They were nimble and active, and they knew that they could easily reach the deck by this means.

But then, at that dramatic moment, the *Rover* gave a sudden lurch. Barry Drewe and George Freeman were clinging to the tractor wheel, and even as they were attempting to climb up, the *Rover* lifted, lurched sideways, and then soared up into the sky.

Marooned on Venus!

A SHOUT of horror went up from Hardy and Willis, and from most of those other juniors.

They had been on the point of rushing on board. One or two, indeed, had been actually on the



COUNT ALEXIS POPANDOS,

The Sinister Agent of a Foreign Power who is out to steal the *Solar Rover*.

ladder, and this ladder had been torn from its hold, and had crashed over, carrying them with it. But Barry Drewe and George Freeman were on that tractor wheel, clinging to it for dear life. They were crouching back against the glittering plates of the *Rover*, expecting to be torn from their hold at any moment. A sudden lurch would mean death.

In any case, was there any hope for them?

If the *Rover* continued upwards—soaring higher and higher into the upper air—they would inevitably perish. For they would be exposed to the rarified conditions above. And what if the *Rover* continued into Outer Space?

As it happened, there was no need for these fears. For the great vessel had scarcely risen more than a thousand feet when she came to a halt. And there she hovered, held as though by some invisible hand. There was, indeed, something uncanny in the way this vast ship could come to rest in mid-air, without propellers, or planes, or suspensory screws.

"She's stopped!" shouted Don Masters, breathlessly. "Look! Something must have gone wrong!"
 "There's nothing wrong!" panted the Professor.

"That infernal hound knows how to use the controls—that is all! He has brought her to a standstill deliberately. He knows that we can do nothing here. We are helpless—we are marooned! The ship is beyond our reach!"

Professor Drewe was utterly distracted. His consternation was pitiful to witness. There was the child of his brain, in the hands of a rogue! He could not be blamed for nearly going off his head with worry and anxiety.

As for Sir Bags, he stood there, grim and fierce. But he was perfectly cool. Bags was always cool, under any circumstances. He knew the folly of getting excited—for most mistakes are made under such conditions.

On the *Rover*, Count Alexis Popandos emerged from the control-room, to find himself facing several members of the vessel's crew. They were looking ugly and warlike. But they had already had evidence that the Count was prepared to fire his revolver without compunction.

"Back!" snarled the Count. "Do you want me to shoot you down? Your only certainty of returning to earth is to obey my orders. Get back to your posts, you scum!"

"Not until you have lowered the ship and allowed the Professor and those boys to get on board!" said one of the men. "We're not going to see murder done!"

"Stand back, you fools!" shouted the Count. "Get below, or I'll fire!"

And once again he proved the grimness of his mood. For his revolver snapped viciously, three times in succession, and livid spurts of flame came from the barrel.

Two of the men shrieked aloud, as bullets ripped into their flesh.

"Do you see?" snarled the Count. "I mean what I say! Pah! You are not hurt—you are only grazed! My aim is true—and I did not fire to kill! But unless you obey orders I shall fire to kill!"

Plucky as those men were, they could not stand against such a desperate rascal as this. They backed away, and went below. And at the very same moment two other figures came into sight.

The figures of Jerry Drewe and George Freeman! They had taken advantage of the momentary lull to climb upwards, and to gain the deck. They were on board! And, below, Bags and the Professor and the other boys were watching with breathless interest. They were watching, too, with intense anxiety. Were their companions to be killed in front of their very eyes?

"Now!" roared Freeman aggressively. "On him!"

With one concerted leap, the two boys sprang upon Count Popandos from the rear. They bore him to the deck by the very force of their charge, and the next moment they were rolling violently backwards and forwards. The Count was undermost, shrieking and cursing in his own language. This attack had come upon him as a complete surprise. His revolver had been knocked out of his hand, and for the moment he was weaponless.

Crash! Biff! Freeman was a renowned fighter, and his left dived at Castleton. It now drove forcibly into Count Popandos' face.

"That's the style!" gasped Barry. "We've got him now! He's down—he's beaten!"

It really did seem that the frenzied rascal was defeated. The Greek was wriggling madly, but he was no match for these healthy British schoolboys.

However, the capture was not to be. For just then—just in the moment of victory—two of the *Rover's* stewards came running up. They were men who had been serving in the dining saloon ever since the

voyage had commenced—men who were trusted. Barry Drewe gave a chirrup of relief as he saw them.

"It's all right—there's help coming now!" he said. Quick, you fellows—grab this brute, and bind him up!"

His words ended in a cry of startled surprise.

For the two stewards, instead of grasping Count Popandos, seized the two boys. Roughly, Barry Drewe and George Freeman were pulled back, and their struggles were useless against these powerful men. The Count jerked himself to his feet, his face livid with fury.

"Hold them!" he snarled. "Hold them tightly, the young cubs!"

"Leave them to us, sir!" said one of the men.

And then the truth became obvious. These stewards were the Count's paid underlings—his spies! There seemed to be no end to the cunning of Count Alexis Popandos.

Prisoners on the Marvel Monster.

IN vain the two boys struggled. They were finding that their exertions had tired them enormously. On Venus it was not so easy to exert a great amount of physical strength. There was something in this strange atmosphere, perhaps—something in the sultry heat.

"You traitors!" panted Barry Drewe, as he glared at the two stewards. "What's the meaning of this? This man is my uncle's enemy! Why don't you seize him, instead of seizing us?"

"You young fools!" snarled the Count, his voice unsteady with rage. "These men belong to me! Realise now, you young whelps, that I am a man who makes my plans carefully. Never did Professor Drewe suspect that certain members of his crew were in my pay! It was not my intention that they should reveal their true colours until the right moment arrived."

On the ground, Bags and Jerry Mannering and the Professor were gazing at one another in consternation. The whole thing was becoming increasingly clear to them. Now they could understand how the Count had existed during these past days. He had been looked after by these underlings of his—these seemingly loyal stewards! They had hidden him—they had carried him food. What easier, indeed? It was all so clear now—that now it was too late!

On the *Rover's* deck, Count Popandos pointed to the rail. His eyes were glowing with hatred and with a kind of fiendish pleasure.

"Throw them overboard!" he said harshly.

"You're not going to do that?" shouted Barry, in horror. "It's over a thousand feet to the ground—and we shall be dashed to pieces!"

"Precisely!" said the Greek, nodding.

But even his underlings hesitated to carry out that callous order.

"Wouldn't it be better to lower the ship, sir, and let them jump for it?" asked one of the stewards. "Let them be all together—they won't last long, in any case. It doesn't seem right, sir, to throw them over."

The Count came to a decision.

"Take them below—lock them up!" he said curtly. "We will deal with them later. No, I shall not descend here—it is too risky."

He was obviously thinking of the revolvers and rifles that were held by the party below. He was out of range of those firearms now, for he kept well back from the rail. But if he lowered the ship he would undoubtedly come within range. And the Count had no intention of taking such chances.

"Take them below!" he repeated harshly. "We are in command of this ship, and we can do as we please. We will set them aground in some different

spot—perhaps a hundred miles away. There is other work to be accomplished at the moment. We must subdue the crew—or kill them. I am master, and I will be obeyed!"

So the two boys were relieved—much to their relief. Instead of being thrown overboard, and ruthlessly killed, they were to be imprisoned below. But what difference did it make, really? That was the thought that was in most of their minds.

They were to be locked up—and then marooned on some different part of this unknown planet. In a way, it was an even worse fate than being killed outright. And probably the Count realised this, too. He took a kind of devilish pleasure in conceiving a plan that was even more cruel than his original scheme.

Barry Drewe and George Freeman were forced through the lounge, and then down a long corridor, and into an iron stairway. Down they went—right into the centre of the vessel. And then, at last, they were brought to a halt in front of a heavy door. It led into a dark storeroom, where a good deal of the ship's supplies were kept.

With a clang, the door was unbolted and flung open. And then, without a word, the two juniors were thrust into the inky blackness of the storeroom.

The door closed again, and there came the sound of the bolts shooting into place. Receding footsteps, and then silence.

The Stowaways!

BARRY DREWE and George Freeman heard the clanging of the steel door, after they had been thrust into the storeroom, with feelings of helpless anger. They were prisoners, and they were separate from all their chums, and from those who were the leaders of this expedition.

"Well, this is a go!" said Freeman gruffly.

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**THE STOLEN STARTING BOX,
Next Week.**

"Everything seems to be upside down, Drowe! First the Count bobs up, and then we find that some of the crew are in his pay!"

"It's awful!" said Barry hoarsely. "Poor uncle! It must be terrible for him. And old Bags, too—yes, and those other fellows. What are they going to do? They've been left behind—left on the ground—"

"It's no good talking," interrupted Freeman. "We've got to act, Drowe! We can't stand here, idle—waiting for the next bit of devilment! We're the only chaps left on board, so it's up to us to save the situation."

"Yes, but what can we do?" asked Barry. "Hang it, I'm pretty game as a rule, Freeman, but this thing has completely bowled me over. We're prisoners here. We can't get out—it's a steel door, and it's bolted!"

"Aron't there any other doors?"

"Not that I know of."

"Well, we can look, can't we?" said Freeman, in his forceful way. "Anyhow, we're not going to sit here, twiddling our giddy thumbs! Just think of it, old son! What a glorious triumph if we can only recapture the Rover, and take her back—"

"Don't!" muttered Barry. "It's too good to be true!"

"I know it is," growled Freeman. "But we're alive, and if there's any chance. We'll do some kicking, too! It wouldn't be so bad if we only had a light! Isn't there a switch somewhere?"

"There ought to be," said Barry. "Most of these storerooms are provided with my uncle's special 'ether lamps.' It's rummy stuff—that new energy that my uncle has discovered. It can be used for light and power, just like electricity—and it has wonderful other properties, too—"

"Listen!" interrupted Freeman. "What was that?"

"What was what?"

"I thought I heard some tapping—over on the other side of this dark hole of Calcutta!" said Freeman. "There you are! There it comes again! Can't you hear it?"

They both remained absolutely silent.

And, sure enough, the sound of tapping came from the further end of the storeroom. What could it mean? Who could be there?

The next second a flood of soft light diffused the entire chamber. For Barry Drowe had found the switch, and he had pressed it down.

The two juniors found themselves in a confined space. The storeroom was almost full of great cases and sacks and chests. But there was a sort of passage way in the middle, and at the further end of the room there was another door. It was a narrow door, made of metal, and it was closed.

Instinctively, the two boys moved towards it, and Barry was the first to place his hand on the door knob.

"There must be an inner compartment," he said softly. "It can't lead anywhere, because this door must be near the side of the ship."

He turned the knob.

"Yes, it's a spring latch," he went on. "And it's as black as ink beyond, and—"

"Oh, thank goodness!" came a voice from that darkness.

"Who's there!" shouted Freeman, amazed. "Either I'm crazy, or that was Puggy Dibble's voice."

"Oh, my hat!" came the voice again. "Is that you, Freeman?"

"What on earth—" began Barry, in amazement. "Well, I'm hanged! Look, Freeman! Three of them!"

"Stowaways, by jiggery!" roared Freeman.

And there was no doubt that his shot was a true one. For there, in that inner compartment, were three miserable-looking specimens of humanity—three bedraggled Castleton juniors!

They came staggering out into the light of the outer compartment, and they were blinking painfully. It was an amazing discovery. Indeed, there seemed to be no end to the surprises of this sensational day.

"Thank heaven somebody has come!" said one of the dishevelled trio. "We—we thought we were never going to be rescued! We've hammered until we were nearly mad!"

For a moment, the two prisoners stared at these three scarecrows. They were Puggy Dibble and his two companions of Study 7, in the Fourth Form at Castleton. Dibble, Royce, and Hoskins.

Puggy Dibble was an ugly-looking junior at the best of times, but just at present he was positively revolting. His face was grimy, his eyes were staring, and he was collarless and coatless.

Dibble was a big sort of fellow—not exactly fat, but ungainly. He had a pug nose—hence his nickname—and an altogether unpleasant type of countenance. As a matter of fact, Dibble was an unpleasant junior. At Castleton he was known as a sneak and a liar. And he had an extraordinary facility for interfering with other people's business. He was the busybody of the school. And his cronies, Royce and Hoskins, were little better. They were about the last three fellows that the other juniors could have desired with them on this trip.

Stowaways! The Firm look like having a bad time, eh? Don't miss the exciting events in Next Week's Long Instalment of this Stunning Serial of School and Science.



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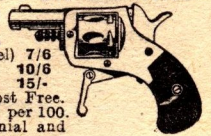
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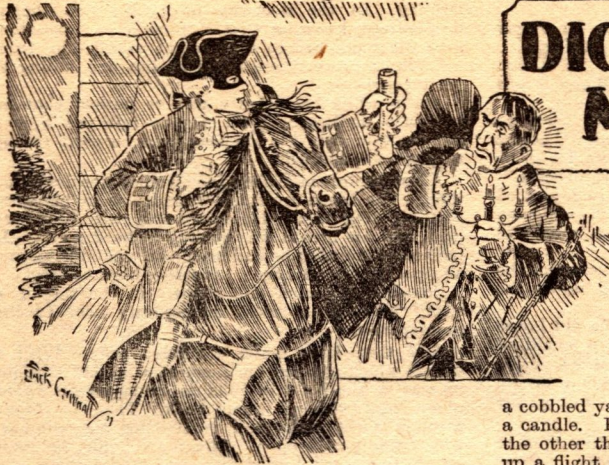
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DICK TURPIN'S MISSION

THE MAN IN THE MASK AND RUFFLES RIDES FOR BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE

A Leap For Life

ON a spring night, when a full moon was shining clear in a deep purple sky, a horseman mounted on a magnificent black mare, came galloping along a rough road, which wound through a deep valley in Devon. Presently, turning a bend in the hills, he came in sight of Blackleigh Towers, a square, compact building of stone, surrounded by a wide moat of stagnant water.

Riding up to the edge of the moat, the horseman surveyed the old house. A solitary light showed, and the drawbridge was raised, and hung like a black curtain over a cavernous archway in the outer wall.

Raising himself in his stirrups, the horseman called out in a deep, rich voice: "Hallo, there! Hallo!"

"There!" The cavernous archway flung back a faint echo, and all was silent again. Seven or eight times he repeated his summons before a man appeared from beneath the archway, and leered suspiciously at him.

"Who are you? What want you at such a late hour?" the man demanded, in a surly voice.

"Speech with Sir Roger Dawlish," was the reply.

"I doubt if my master will see you at such a time," the other growled, scratching a stubby chin with his thumb nail, and lowering at the horseman.

"Thy master *must* see me, and at once!" the latter called back in peremptory tones. "Go, tell him that I am bearer of important news from one across the sea."

The servant disappeared, muttering to himself; and after a short absence, returned and said: "Sir Roger will see thee."

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"Hah!" Again Sir Roger drew a sharp breath.

"Everything seems to be upside down, Drewe! First the Count bobs up, and then we find that some of the crew are in his pay!"

"It's awful!" said Barry hoarsely. "Poor uncle! It must be terrible for him. And old Bags, too—yes, and those other fellows. What are they going to do? They've been left behind—left on the ground—"

"It's no good talking," interrupted Freeman. "We've got to act, Drewe! We can't stand here, idle—waiting for the next bit of devilment! We're the only chaps left on board, so it's up to us to save the situation."

"Yes, but what can we do?" asked Barry. "Hang it, I'm pretty game as a rule, Freeman, but this thing has completely bowled me over. We're prisoners here. We can't get out—it's a steel door, and it's bolted!"

"Aren't there any other doors?"

"Not that I know of."

"Well, we can look, can't we?" said Freeman, in his forceful way. "Anyhow, we're not going to sit here, twiddling our giddy thumbs! Just think of it, old son! What a glorious triumph if we can only recapture the Rover, and take her back—"

"Don't!" muttered Barry. "It's too good to be true!"

"I know it is," growled Freeman. "But we're alive, and if there's any chance. We'll do some kicking, too! It wouldn't be so bad if we only had a light! Isn't there a switch somewhere?"

"There ought to be," said Barry. "Most of these storerooms are provided with my uncle's special 'ether lamps.' It's rummy stuff—that new energy that my uncle has discovered. It can be used for light and power, just like electricity—and it has wonderful other properties, too—"

"Listen!" interrupted Freeman. "What was that?"

"What was what?"

"I thought I heard some tapping—over on the other side of this dark hole of Calcutta!" said Freeman. "There you are! There it comes again! Can't you hear it?"

They both remained absolutely silent.

And, sure enough, the sound of tapping came from the further end of the storeroom. What could it mean? Who could be there?

The next second a flood of soft light diffused the entire chamber. For Barry Drewe had found the switch, and he had pressed it down.

The two juniors found themselves in a confined space. The storeroom was almost full of great cases and sacks and chests. But there was a sort of passage way in the middle, and at the further end of the room there was another door. It was a narrow door, made of metal, and it was closed.

Instinctively, the two boys moved towards it, and Barry was the first to place his hand on the door knob.

"There must be an inner compartment," he said softly. "It can't lead anywhere, because this door must be near the side of the ship."

He turned the knob.

"Yes, it's a spring latch," he went on. "And it's as black as ink beyond, and—"

"Oh, thank goodness!" came a voice from that darkness.

"Who's there!" shouted Freeman, amazed.

"Either I'm crazy, or that was Puggy Dibble's voice."

"Oh, my hat!" came the voice again. "Is that you, Freeman?"

"What on earth—" began Barry, in amazement. "Well, I'm hanged! Look, Freeman! Three of them!"

"Stowaways, by jiggery!" roared Freeman.

And there was no doubt that his shot was a true one. For there, in that inner compartment, were three miserable-looking specimens of humanity—three bedraggled Castleton juniors!

They came staggering out into the light of the outer compartment, and they were blinking painfully. It was an amazing discovery. Indeed, there seemed to be no end to the surprises of this sensational day.

"Thank heaven somebody has come!" said one of the dishevelled trio. "We—we thought we were never going to be rescued! We've hammered until we were nearly mad!"

For a moment, the two prisoners stared at these three scarecrows. They were Puggy Dibble and his two companions of Study 7, in the Fourth Form at Castleton. Dibble, Royce, and Hoskins.

Puggy Dibble was an ugly-looking junior at the best of times, but just at present he was positively revolting. His face was grimy, his eyes were staring, and he was collarless and coatless.

Dibble was a big sort of fellow—not exactly fat, but ungainly. He had a pug nose—hence his nickname—and an altogether unpleasant type of countenance. As a matter of fact, Dibble was an unpleasant junior. At Castleton he was known as a sneak and a liar. And he had an extraordinary facility for interfering with other people's business. He was the busybody of the school. And his cronies, Royce and Hoskins, were little better. They were about the last three fellows that the other juniors could have desired with them on this trip.

Stowaways! The Firm look like having a bad time, eh? Don't miss the exciting events in Next Week's Long Installation of this Stunning Serial of School and Science.



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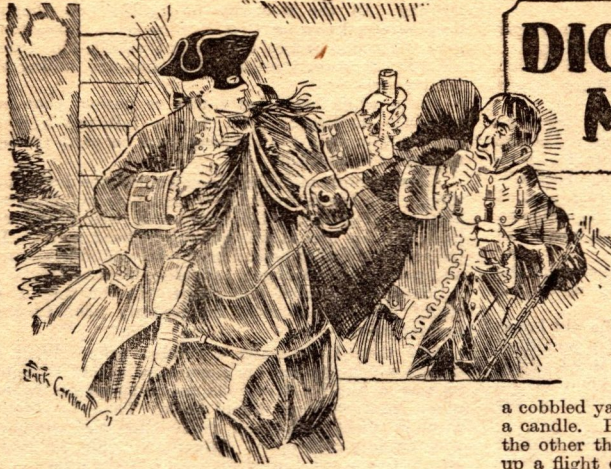
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Exciting Tale of The Hero Highwayman—Effervescing with the Fun of His Companions on The King's Highway.



DICK TURPIN'S MISSION

THE MAN IN THE MASK AND RUFFLES RIDES FOR BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE

A Leap For Life

ON a spring night, when a full moon was shining clear in a deep purple sky, a horseman mounted on a magnificent black mare, came galloping along a rough road, which wound through a deep valley in Devon. Presently, turning a bend in the hills, he came in sight of Blackleigh Towers, a square, compact building of stone, surrounded by a wide moat of stagnant water.

Riding up to the edge of the moat, the horseman surveyed the old house. A solitary light showed, and the drawbridge was raised, and hung like a black curtain over a cavernous archway in the outer wall.

Raising himself in his stirrups, the horseman called out in a deep, rich voice: "Hallo, there! Hallo!"

"There!" The cavernous archway flung back a faint echo, and all was silent again. Seven or eight times he repeated his summons before a man appeared from beneath the archway, and leered suspiciously at him.

"Who are you? What want you at such a late hour?" the man demanded, in a surly voice.

"Speech with Sir Roger Dawlish," was the reply.

"I doubt if my master will see you at such a time," the other growled, scratching a stubby chin with his thumb nail, and lowering at the horseman.

"Thy master *must* see me, and at once!" the latter called back in peremptory tones. "Go, tell him that I am bearer of important news from one across the sea."

The servant disappeared, muttering to himself; and after a short absence, returned and said: "Sir Roger will see thee."

With that he worked some rusty machinery, and the drawbridge descended slowly, with a harsh creaking of timber and cogs. Immediately the newcomer had crossed, he reversed the machinery, and the drawbridge rose again. At the same time another man appeared out of the darkness, and said: "Will you follow me, master?"

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"Hah!" Again Sir Roger drew a sharp breath.

pleasure. I thought ye were two hundred miles from here. 'Pon me soul! Life is full of surprises. How is business, Jem? Or are you Tim? Plague on it, I can never tell one from t'other. Ye are more alike than two peas in a pod."

Whilst the dandy highwayman was talking this light banter, his mind was working keenly seeking some way of escape. A single suspicious movement, or a warning shouted to his comrades, would be the signal for his death, he knew.

"You put the bracelets on him, Jem, whilst I keep him covered," said Tim Hooley. To the highwayman he remarked ferociously, "I'll blow your head off if you stir a limb or make a sound. We know that Button and that black villain Bootles are in the house, and we'll have them after we've taken you."

Jack's smile never wavered.

"Mind the lace round my wrists," he said calmly. "'Tis Mechlin, and cost a pretty figure."

Jem fished a pair of handcuffs out of his pocket and warily approached Sixteen String Jack, still covering him with his pistol. Just as he was about to snap the handcuffs on his wrists, Jack laughed.

"You will never take me," he declared. "Look behind ye."

He completely hoodwinked the Runners, who glanced round nervously, fully expecting to find Bootles and Button stealing upon them.

Though their attention was only diverted for a moment, it was sufficient for Jack. He leapt up and dashed his fist into Jem's face. The Runner went head over heels across the table, and his pistol exploded harmlessly, the bullet burying itself in the ceiling. Landing on his head, he lay in a heap, half-stunned.

A second later Tim fired, but in his excitement he missed the dandy highwayman—though only by a hair's breadth—and the next moment Jack had seized him round the waist and hurled him bodily across the room, for, spite his slight figure, Sixteen String Jack was possessed of enormous strength.

Tim landed with his hind quarters in the big wood fire that crackled in the wide-mouthed fireplace. A

moment he sat there dazed; then, just as Bootles and Button rushed into the room, the heat penetrated his clothing, and with a fiendish yell he leapt up and danced wildly round the room, howling for someone to put him out.

Sixteen String Jack was laughing too heartily to help. But Bootles dashed the Runner face downwards across the table, and proceeded to extinguish the flames by spanking him with the broad blade of the carving-knife.

Then he set him on his feet, and eyed him severely.

"What am dis li'l robin redbreast doing here, Massa Jack?" he demanded; whilst Button drew a brace of pistols and held them ready for use. But the Runners had had all the fight knocked out of them. Jem remained sprawling on the floor, whilst Tim stood claspng his injured quarters and groaning deeply.

"Just a friendly call, Bootles," Sixteen String Jack answered carelessly.

"Shall I blow their ugly heads off, cap'n?" Button asked, with a pretence of ferocity that made Jem's face pale and Tim cease his groaning.

Jack appeared to consider, whilst the unhappy prisoners felt shivers running up and down their spines. Then Bootles broke in.

"Since dese gen'lmen hab so kindly called on us," he said, with a wink to his comrades, "it am only right to gib dem some refreshments. Me hab jus' cooked a lubby cake, which dey shall eat."

Button bubbled with laughter.

"Strike me pink!" he exclaimed. "That's a good idea."

Sixteen String Jack was of the same opinion, and, still covered by Joe's pistols, the two Runners were bundled into the kitchen, where Bootles broke the horrible cake into two with several violent blows of the pcker. Then, with a wide-lipped smile, he commanded the Runners to eat it.

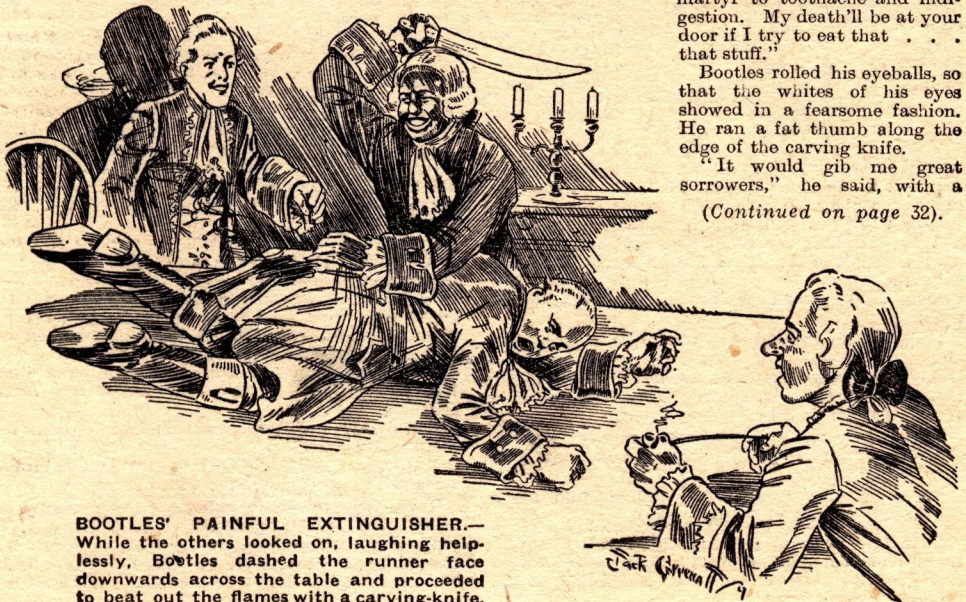
"I won't!" Jem said hysterically, shuddering at the mere thought.

"Ye'll hang for this, you . . . you hard-hearted savage!" Tim vowed, in a pathetic voice. "I'm a martyr to toothache and indigestion. My death'll be at your door if I try to eat that . . . that stuff."

Bootles rolled his eyeballs, so that the whites of his eyes showed in a fearsome fashion. He ran a fat thumb along the edge of the carving knife.

"It would gib me great sorrows," he said, with a

(Continued on page 32).



BOOTLES' PAINFUL EXTINGUISHER.—While the others looked on, laughing helplessly, Bootles dashed the runner face downwards across the table and proceeded to beat out the flames with a carving-knife.



YOUR EDITOR'S PAGE

Chums, The Dandy Cowboy and His Cheery, Rough-Riding Bunch of Cattlemen are Back Again. A Magnificent Long Complete Yarn of Their Amazing Adventures—Humorous and Mysterious, whilst on Holiday. Don't Fail to Read

THE CAMPING COWBOYS.

MY DEAR CHUMS,

The holiday spirit is in the air. And I want you to know how the cowboys of the golden West made holiday in the grand old days when the boundless prairie was open and free, and the cowboy drove his cattle—wild descendants of Andalusian stock—from Texas to the North.

The long trails have been blocked now, fellows, the ranges are traversed by barbed wire, and the superb freedom of the Wild West is exchanged for the bounds and limits of exact ownership.

But our famous author, Mr. Bud Kelland, is an old-time cowboy, and he loves to write of the time—not so very long ago—when upon the glorious coloured canvas of the West were seen stalking the grizzly bear, the buffalo, the lean grey wolf and the tense figure of the flying antelope. There was also the Indian and, not least of them all, the cowboy riding with the jingle of spur, or the creak of leather gear, or the whipping of his scarf-end in the wind.

The cowboy! Think of him—think of the punchers of the Bar Eight Ranch, chaps (characters all drawn from real life as they are). From early morn till night they ride in the choking alkali dust, rounding up the cattle, fighting drought and disease, Indians, and rustlers. Don't these hard-working fellows deserve a holiday?

Anyhow, you'll find the Dandy Cowboy and his cheery, gun-fighting punchers on holiday in the Mag. next week. A magnificent and thrilling long yarn of excitement and mystery in the Wild West it is, and it is entitled

The Camping Cowboys.

Now you know how I hate to give away the plot of a yarn beforehand, especially such a stunner as this long tale. But you can bet your life if it's a Dandy Cowboy yarn it's a winner from the first word to the last, eh? Wild Western thrills such as you have never heard of before coming next week, chaps.

I daresay you are all roused to a high pitch of interest in the new sport of greyhound racing by now, chaps. You're all "going to the dogs," eh? Well, I hope not—in that sense, anyhow. But if you haven't seen the greyhounds racing after the electric hare, you've missed something. And you ought to rectify that by going when you possibly can. It's a great and exciting sport for boys.

The Mag. is always up to date, chaps. I think we shall be the first paper to introduce stories of greyhound racing. Just meet Duncan, the boy trainer,

and his splendid white greyhound in a tale of startling events next week. It's entitled

The Stolen Starting Box.

And I'll wager you'll be wanting more yarns of this popular sport to follow in the Mag.

Terrific excitement next week with our new and manly hero, Rip O'Farrell of the Flying Squad. The smart speed policeman stumbles upon mystery after mystery. He can't make it out. A man approaches Rip to say that his car has been stolen—a man whom our Flying Squad policeman does not particularly like at sight. In a breakneck chase Rip captures the car chief, and as a reward he is suddenly and unexpectedly knocked senseless by the man he has helped. Don't you think that would rouse any fellow's fighting instincts? Anyhow, Rip O'Farrell is fighting furious, and he goes doggedly on the trail of the mystery, only to discover at length that he has tracked down an amazing secret gang. You'll enjoy this story of Rip on the track of

The Secret Gang.

And there's a fine complete tale of Thrill Phil, the boy film-maker, and his queer mentor and friend, Roughneck Harry, the camera man. In the making of a film they organise

Aerial Cricket.

Sounds strange, doesn't it? Cricket in the air. Wait till next week. This yarn will surprise you.

And our new serial, "The Planet Schoolboys." Don't you agree with me, chums, that it's a stunner? There's a terrific long instalment with startling developments next week, and I advise you not to miss it.

Well, chums, my old dog, Seat, is tugging at my trousers leg as I write this. I am sitting in the cbs with my portable typewriter, and we are near an old disused mill in the country. Seat knows all about this mill. It is overrun with rats, and Seat is a goer for rats. So I suppose I shall have to oblige the old fellow, and go with him for his bit of sport.

Till next week, then, chaps,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

JOKE RESULT, No. 266.

Cricket bats to L. Tate, 9, New Radnor-st., New Wortley, Leeds; and G. O. Eddy, 23, Trelawney-rd., Camborne, Cornwall.

Fountain pens to the following:—I. L. Williams, Plas Gwynant, Deganwy, N. Wales; M. Simms, 10, Lincenhall-st., Londonderry, Ireland; E. A. Deayton, 10, Sutton-rd., Watford, Herts; C. Taylor, 3, Arlington-rd., Camden Town, N.W.1; C. Beck, 8, Craiglands, Sacriston, Durham; G. Bowen, 21, Waen Ebbw, Nantyglo, Mon.; E. Bamford, 34, Siding-terr., Skewen, nr. Neath, Glam.; B. Edwards, Snowdon View, Llantalpwwll, Anglesey; C. Keating, 45, Sunlight-st., Anfield, Liv.; A. L. Mould, 6, Winifred-st., N. Woodwich, E.15; C. Horton, 48, Melbourne-gwy, E. Dulwich, S.E. 22; A. Ramsay, Menzies-bldgs., East Calder, Midlothian; L. G. Candrick, 43, Aelybryn, Fochriw, nr. Cardiff.

JOKE COUPON.

Stick on postcard and send with Your favourite joke to address on Joke Page. Boys' Magazine. 9/7/27.

DICK TURPIN'S MISSION—*(Continued from page 30.)*

detached air, "to cut off de heads ob two gen'lemen in dis kitchen," he nodded towards the innkeeper, who was a startled spectator of the farce, "but if dey don't eat dat booful cake quicker'n I can say 'Blow me up a gum tree,' me shall cut off dere noses as a start."

He made a wild flourish with the carving-knife that caused it to hum viciously through the air not many inches from Jem's nose.

Believing the negro to be in earnest, the twins started to eat the awful cake, which was nearly as hard as wood. They pulled terrible faces, and swore they were being killed. But Bootles was merciless. Every time they stopped working their jaws the knife hummed round their heads, and not until every scrap of his concoction had vanished did he cease to threaten them. Then, picking one up in each arm, he carried them, without an effort, to a big cupboard, and threw them in and locked the door upon them.

"Now, lads," Sixteen String Jack said, recovering his gravity, "we had better begone, lest more of the Runners come looking for the Hooleys. We will ride to meet Dick and give him warning."

A little later, having bribed the innkeeper liberally to keep the Runners prisoners for an hour, they rode away from the Golden Hind, and took the road to Blackloigh Towers.

Bonny Black Bess

EVEN as Dick Turpin sank beneath the waters of the moat the idea flashed into his mind that he must let his enemies think he had met with a fatal accident. Flight meant deserting Black Bess.

Accordingly, he swam his hardest under water, until his lungs were nigh bursting for air and he was forced to come up to breathe. He found himself opposite the raised drawbridge, in the deep shadow cast by the wall of the old house, and a couple of strokes brought him to the edge of the moat, where he was completely hidden from his enemies by a small platform projecting over the edge.

No one thought of looking for him beneath the drawbridge, and having waited till his enemies had passed out of sight round the moat, Dick hauled himself out of the water. Peering cautiously through the archway, he saw Black Bess standing near the hall door, the reins knotted round a post.

Two men stood by the mare, as though on guard, chatting about the recent events.

A moment Dick hesitated, bracing his limbs. Then he dashed forward at top speed, and was nearly upon the ruffians before they were aware of his presence. They sprang to meet him, shouting a noisy alarm, and one thrust at him with a pike which he was still carrying.

Turpin avoided the blow and grappled with the man, so that they fell to the ground together. Dick was uppermost, and he had the rascal by the throat, squeezing the breath out of it.

Then the second man whipped out a knife, and stooped to plunge it between the highwayman's shoulders. But as the blade flashed silver-blue in the moonlight, Black Bess reared with a shrill whinny of rage, and the cutthroat went down, stunned and bleeding, beneath her hoofs. A moment later Dick, having well-nigh throttled his man, sprang up and worked feverishly to unknott the reins.

Just as he finished and vaulted into the saddle there came the hollow thud of feet crossing the drawbridge, as the searchers raced across it, recalled by their comrades' shouts.

Dick charged straight at them, scattering them to right and left, and sending one over the edge of the drawbridge into the moat.

As Dick rode clear of the bridge, Sir Roger rushed forward, his face demoniacal in its fury, and levelled a pistol at Black Bess. Dick cried out in horror, and dragged at Bess with a violence that caused the tender-mouthed mare to rear wildly. At the same instant there was a flash, a thunderous report, and a bullet hummed past them. There followed a scream as Black Bess beat the would-be assassin down with her fore hoofs. Then away she galloped like the wind, leaving Sir Roger a crumpled heap on the ground, whilst his men looked on helplessly.

A mile up the valley Dick met his comrades and related his adventures to them.

"'Twas Black Bess saved me," Dick said, and patted a glossy black shoulder.

"Aye," said Sixteen String Jack, and sang in his splendid voice:

"No highwayman ever before did posses,
For ease, for security, danger, distress,
Such a mare as Dick Turpin's Black Bess, Black Bess!

Which nobody can deny!"

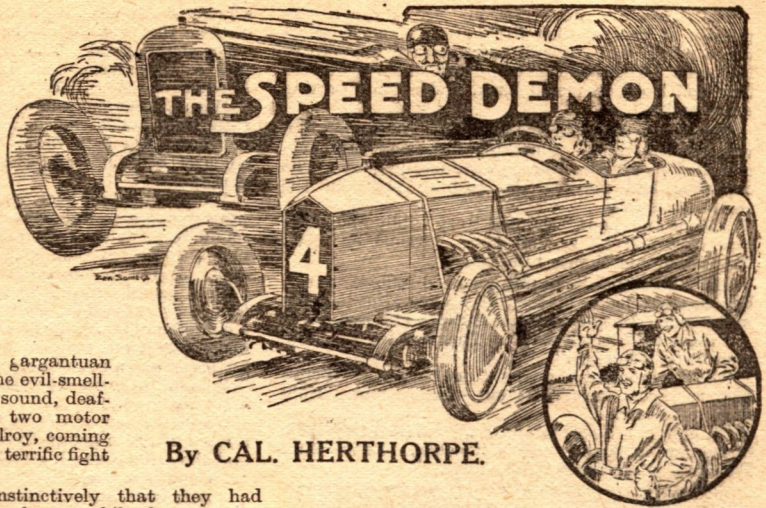
Look out for Thrill Phil Next Week, Chums!

LOOK! SOMETHING NEW AND NIFTY, EH?



Grand New Series of Greyhound Racing Tales Starting Next Week.

Chums! This is the Triumphant Conclusion of this Grand Motor-Racing Serial of Cyclonic Speed, Maddening Mystery, and Wild Excitement.



Escape.

THE roars of the gargantuan dinosaurs filled the evil-smelling cavern with sound, deafened and confused the two motor racers and Dapper Delroy, coming as it did on top of their terrific fight with these cave men.

Yet they sensed instinctively that they had nothing to fear from the brutes while the cave-men were in attendance, or at any rate until the cave men themselves ordered it.

Amazing though it was, the two gigantic dinosaurs were slaves to the cave men. On their raised platform at the further end of the cavern, they crouched, with huge, ghastly-grey lolling tongues and eyes, as it seemed, of fire.

The cave-men dominated them, sometimes prodding them with their long stone-tipped spears. Yet still there was some queer respect paid to these monsters of a bygone and forgotten age, for the cave-men all made them obeisances from time to time, continually stretching out their arms and lowering their heads in salute.

And the Speed Demon? He lay as if dead on the stone slab in front of the dinosaurs. An almost pitiable torn and battered figure he was now, for his ill-omened black raiment more resembled rags than cloths.

As they were carried towards the spot where he lay, all three, Rory, Tom, and Dapper Delroy, commenced to struggle furiously again.

They had somehow a sense of impending doom. A panicky horror surged through each of them.

It may possibly have been due to the awful stench in these caverns—an incredibly awful smell that made all three physically sick as they were brought nearer to the dinosaurs.

The terrible brutes' red eyes stabbed down at them through the half-light. They seemed to be staring at scaly walls for so near were they to the monsters that their eyes now could no longer focus the whole of their immense shapes. From the two grey-red caverns of their mouths came a horrid thunder of sound, and panting breath that was like the withering blast of the hot desert wind.

Tom Carson's head was forced down by scaly claws, and his arm was jerked up almost out of its socket; thus was he made to salute the scaly monsters. He saw that Rory next to him had gone through a similar experience, but Dapper Delroy, unfortunately for himself, misunderstood the actions of the frightening cave-men, and screamed and struggled violently against their attentions. With the result that one of them, baring vicious curved fangs in fury, struck the little jockey down with his spear. Dapper Delroy fell as if he had been poleaxed,

and only rolled once, then lay still beside the Black Speedman.

Now the two motor racers found themselves being dragged back step by step slowly, the cave-men all the time screeching strange incantations, and making obeisances to the prehistoric monsters. Soon Rory and Tom were halted again, and flung down on the slab violently.

Dazed and sick, as they rolled over both saw the Black Speedman near to them. His eyes were open, and he was staring at them with a world of meaning, whilst his mouth worked in the lip language.

"Dynamite," he kept saying. "I've got some dynamite!"

Rory stared at Tom. Neither yet had been buffeted sufficiently to be past battling and thinking, dreadful though the situation was. Both guessed immediately what the Black Speedman meant and their hearts leapt high with hope.

Rory rolled over twice towards the Black Speedman as if in a convulsive moment. For he saw that the Black Speedman's arms were curiously bent probably both of them broken. If the dynamite was in his pocket, then Rory meant to get it.

All around the captives the din was increasing. The cave-men were gesticulating, moving; they were performing some awful grotesque dance round their victims.

Rory made a bold move. His arm stretched out for the jacket pocket of the Black Speedman, and felt in it—the only pocket that had not been torn to shreds. At first he clawed with a feeling of growing despair. The pocket was a capacious one, and inside were all manner of things. But Rory found it, a large stick of dynamite.

He drew it out, and his heart leapt exultantly as he did so, for from somewhere near in the caverns came a lurid red glare—the glare of a fire. Rory searched round swiftly, and saw that many of the cave-men were dancing round this fire, and he surmised—no doubt correctly—that they four were to be offered as sacrifices to the dinosaurs on that fire.

All literally must be gambled on one last throw.

Wildly he stared, trying to gauge the distance away from them of the fire—a difficult task from where he lay on the stone slab. Then suddenly, galvanically, he jumped up and threw as he had never thrown before.

The dynamite described an arc through the weirdly lit cavern, then fell. For a moment there was a pause, while Rory's heart seemed to jump to his mouth. Then came an awful flash and a stentorian roar and Rory staggered back, under the vibrating shock and fell.

But he was up again in a moment. All around him was pandemonium. Shrieking hideously the cave-men fled in all directions, the dinosaurs, too. The explosion had marked the turning point in the earth-men's fate.

"Come on, chaps," shouted Rory wildly above the roar of sound all around him. "Come on Tom. Now's the only chance to escape."

The Black Speedman did not need telling. Somehow he struggled to his feet, his broken arms hanging by his side. But his face was the face of a maniac.

"Come on," he shouted. "This way for the car—your own meteor car."

"Stay a moment, though," Rory barked. "There's Dapper here. He's right out—unconscious. He'll have to be carried."

"You fool! Never mind him," shrieked the Black Speedman in fury. "He's hopeless. Leave him. We can't do anything for the idiot!"

Rory shot him a glance full of scorn and contempt, and then bent with Tom over the unfortunate Dapper, who was quite unconscious. Spite all he had been through, the Black Speedman's nature, evidently, had not changed. He was still a vicious and dangerous man.

Together they picked up Dapper, and then commenced to follow the Black Speedman who was already frantically running through the cavern. Many a time, however, he cast furious, hate-laden glances back at the two racing men. Maimed as he was, he could not himself drive a car.

Following the Black Speedman they hurried out into the blackness of a further cavern. Luckily for Rory and Tom their diminutive friend was but a lightweight, for both of them were nigh exhausted. And after covering what seemed miles in the darkened caverns, they came upon it suddenly. The Meteor car!

Rory's heart leapt, spite of the dreadful situation in which they found themselves. For the wonder car was intact, exactly as he had last seen it. A long gaunt grey shape with wide apart wheels, between which the body was sunk.

Tenderly they placed Dapper Delroy in the bottom of the cockpit, and just managed to squeeze in themselves—the three of them. It was the strangest part of the whole of that wild adventure to Rory and Tom that the Black Speedman, their implacable enemy should be crouched behind them in their own car, making a journey with them, all their aims and desires being in common. And their greatest desire was to get out of this place free and alive.

Tom turned the starter against the terrific compression and a mighty roar filled the caverns as the engine roared to life. Rory got into gear, and the great machine shot away like a comet.

Roar—roar—roar! The meteor car was going at last. The Black Speedman was shouting, his face convulsed. Terror gripped him—the terror of the sheer speed, the dread of what might happen if the car deviated one iota from her course. And Tom? The palms of his hands were wet as he clung to his seat. His lips went dry, and his tongue clung to the roof of his mouth. This was speed—this mighty blast of wind over the car's scuttle.

How long they roared at terrifying speed through those black caverns they never knew. But at last

a great shout went up from Tom's lips. For ahead of them they saw light—the blessed daylight.

On they roared. The light hurt their eyes at first as they dashed out, gradually failing in speed. For long ago Rory had "cut out."

With a great shout of satisfaction the young motor racer leapt out of the cockpit, Tom following. They had come out in a rocky basin, somewhere in the wilds of Scotland, and the scenery all around was glorious.

With delighted exclamations the two tired and worn racing men walked away from their car, staring round them at the trees and birds. They had completely forgotten their old enemy, the Black Speedman. And in that they made a mistake.

They heard running footsteps, and turned. And then they realised it, for the Black Speedman, with a completely maniacal face was running upon them, his useless hands swaying by his side. And between his teeth was a round object—a concussion bomb. "Run," shouted Rory suddenly. "Run for your life. He's mad!"

They commenced to run, but they had scarce gone a score of paces before there was a flash and a roar, and the ground shook under their feet.

"Good heavens—" cried Rory aghast.

"He's gone, Rory," Tom answered. "Gone! He dropped the bomb."

And so indeed it proved. In his shaking mad fury the handless man had dropped the bomb with which he had hoped to turn the tables at the last moment, and he had gone out—like a snuffed candle. It was the last that was ever seen of the Black Speedman.

"Nemesis," muttered Rory. He suddenly turned to his friend and held out his hand. They shook on the successful termination of a perilous adventure.

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THE GHOST CRICKETER—

(Continued from page 10.)

Jessop, and made as if to lift the ball over the pavilion. None saw clearly what happened. There was a sound as though the ball had touched the bat, and the red sphere went skying. But the Honourable Jack Darrell had not completed his stroke or "carried it through"—it was a mere blind hit such as a schoolboy might perform with his eyes shut; and as the ball rose in the air, an easy catch for slip, the Honourable Jack Darrell staggered backwards with a cry and then dropped in a senseless heap into the arms of the wicket-keeper.

Instantly, the players and the two umpires ran forward in consternation; but Jimmy, watching from his point of vantage, saw that the Hon. Jack Darrell was limp as they picked him up. Nor were they, apparently, able to revive him or bring him to consciousness. Lord Zintari himself came hurrying on the field, and in the end the unfortunate player was carried off the field on an improvised stretcher.

A dreadful thought entered Jimmy's head as he watched these proceedings.

Was the Hon. Jack Darrell, too, "dead"?

Jimmy was impotent to make a move. He himself was a "wanted" man with the police on his track. If he went forward now he would instantly be arrested.

And yet he was itching with impatience. He suspected Count Carados of further foul play, and he was anxious to know for certain what had happened.

He waited there hidden, and the cricket match was not resumed. As minute succeeded minute, Jimmy's anxiety and apprehension grew.

And then at last he knew, and it was like a knell striking at his own heart as he heard the deep, solemn notes of a bell sounding throughout the gardens and estates of Hadleigh Towers. He knew what those solemn bell tones signified.

It meant that one of the race of Darrell lay dead.

It was the custom in the Darrell family that whenever one of their number died he should immediately lie in state in the great, grey, stone mausoleum that lay at the edge of the lake, and that the bell should toll the death knell every hour. Such a custom prevails with many great families, and Jimmy had heard of it in connection with the Darrells.

Jimmy could not believe Jack Darrell was dead. Horrified, he lay in his place of concealment. And then he noticed that the blinds were being pulled down in the windows of Hadleigh Towers. Tragedy had descended with terrible suddenness and swiftness on the great house.

The gentleman crook rose at last and made his way back to the lodge. His mind was made up to a definite course of action now. This thing was becoming too deep and terrible for him to endure it any longer. He knew he had got to act, and act quickly.

* * * * *

THE mausoleum bell tolled its deep note of mourning for the dead. And then all was quiet and still in Hadleigh Towers. It was midnight.

A figure in evening dress crossed the lawns with the stealthy swiftness of a panther hunting in its native forest. The figure was that of a man, the upper part of whose face was covered by a black crepe mask.

The figure was that of Jimmy Brent, man-about-town and gentleman crook.

Jimmy paused outside the windows of the long smoking-room and, weighing in his right hand a thick coil of rope, he laid back his whole body and his arm, and then threw upwards.

The rope snaked up through the moonlight, but Jimmy's aim had been true, for the noose at its end settled over an upjutting iron post and quickly tightened as the gentleman crook pulled.

In a moment he was swarming up the rope like a monkey.

It was the work of a moment when he had reached the balcony to break open the french windows; and, with his flashlamp shedding a thin pencil of light before him, Jimmy quietly entered the dark room.

He stiffened suddenly as he heard a sound.

A sound ever so slight, yet definite. It was a soft footfall in some room adjoining or in the passage.

"Ah, our friend the Count prowling about, eh?" Jimmy thought.

He swiftly made for the door, opened it, and stepped out into the passage. Instantly, he glimpsed a figure gliding away, and with a quicker pulse he followed it.

The man opened a door and stepped inside, closing it after him.

Jimmy, roused to the point of recklessness, darted forward, seized the handle and jerked at the door—just in time to prevent the man on the other side locking it. It flew open, and the masked gentleman crook came face to face with Count Carados.

The fellow was a coward evidently. With every manifestation of terror he darted to the wall—they found themselves in the dim, moonlit rapier of Hadleigh Towers—and seizing down a rapier the master crook presented the naked point at Jimmy's breast.

With a low laugh of amusement Jimmy evaded the lunge. This was exactly what he wanted. He was a master fencer. Snatching a rapier from the wall, he presented himself "on guard."

"Come on, then," he said gaily. "I shall be delighted to run you through."

The count had no help for it. He was cornered, and in the moonlight the blades flashed and clattered. Suddenly the Count screamed with fear and pain as Jimmy's rapier "pinked" his shoulder and, dropping his own blade, he fled like the coward he was.

Jimmy was after him in a trice.

That scream, he thought, must have aroused the house—on tenterhooks as it was. He was discovered. But if he got his man—proved that another was prowling, too—he might be able to prove a great deal more, later.

They were out in the grounds, running wildly. Fear seemed to lend the Count wings.

Jimmy marvelled that that scream had apparently not disturbed the house. Still, he was determined to capture the fellow and bring him to justice.

They came in sight of the lake, on the farther side of which was the family mausoleum, gaunt and grey in the faint light of the moon. And to Jimmy's astonishment the Count made straight for it and dived in.

On the impulse, Jimmy followed, throwing off his dress jacket as he did so. But as he came to the water's edge he paused, thinking better of it. He did not want to get wet. He had other work to do to-night. He waited, certain that the fellow would come up to the surface. But two minutes passed and, completely mystified, the gentleman crook gazed over the now calm waters of the lake.

He had lost his man.

At length he turned away. The all-important point of recovering the plans of the naval gun must, he knew, occupy his mind to the exclusiveness of all

also. The Count had been prowling about the house in the hope of finding them; but Jimmy guessed that sooner or later he would find a way of wringing the secret from the Hon. Jack Darrell, whom the gentleman crook firmly believed to be still alive.

So Jimmy went back and climbed the rope again to the balcony of the smoke-room. Once inside, he set methodically to work to break open the safe against the wall.

And Jimmy certainly had queer methods of his own.

First of all he suspended from a rafter in the ceiling a length of what appeared to be canvas in front of the safe, then he set to work with his slim hands only, working on the safe.

After nearly half-an-hour the door opened, and a little clicking sound of satisfaction came from Jimmy's lips. He stopped, however, suddenly in an alert position. He had heard footsteps.

Voices, and one of them was Count Carados's! He had brought the police to search the house, secure in the fact that Jimmy would be arrested if he were caught.

They were on the balcony now. The constable behind the bull's-eye lamp peered in the darkened room, but could see nothing unusual.

"Ain't nothin' there, sir," he growled.

The gentleman crook's lips twisted into a smile. For he had tricked them. The canvas in front of the safe he was rifling bore a painting of an exactly similar safe, so that at night the room looked to be unoccupied and the safe undisturbed.

The constable and the treacherous master crook passed on.

Jimmy bent to the safe again, and smiled as his hands encountered a mass of blue-prints which he knew to be those of the missing naval gun.

And then suddenly, cool and steel-nerved though Jimmy was, he got the fright of his life. He looked up, and scarce did he repress a cry. For he saw a ghost. He could have sworn that it was a ghost.

The ghost of the Hon. Jack Darrell!

It came gliding in the smoke-room, haggard and pinched of visage, clad in flowing, white, ethereal robes. Or so it seemed to Jimmy for one awful, panic-stricken moment. It was Jack Darrell's face right enough. Unmistakable. But he looked ghastly—ghostly.

The gentleman crook crouched back.

But the ghostly form glided nearer to him, and then a hand stretched out for the blue-prints Jimmy still held. And in a flash Jimmy understood.

This was no ghost—but Darrell himself, escaped from the mausoleum in his "death" robes and wandering in a trance. Unconsciously almost, Jimmy stretched out his hand with the blue-prints and gave them to the man who had racked and worn himself almost literally to the grave in worry about them.

Then suddenly once more Jimmy started.

He heard footsteps—voices. The voice of Lord Zintarri. They were coming to discover what was happening. Evidently the "ghost cricketer" had attracted attention in his wanderings.

"This way," said Jimmy suddenly, and grabbed the ghost's arm.

He knew of a way out through another door, and he hurried with his charge up a flight of stairs and along a passage to the rooms he had once occupied.

He was afraid of shock for Jack Darrell if he should awaken too suddenly out of his trance. And also a plan had come to him.

Now, old followers of the gentleman crook's adventures will remember one of the strange faculties he possessed—that of altering his facial expression at will. He bent over his trunk, adjusted a wig, and then went to the mirror. In a few moments he turned round. And he looked almost the double of the Hon. Jack Darrell.

Jimmy went quietly to the door and opened it. There were footsteps outside. He confronted Lord Zintarri and other members of the house-party.

"Hallo, gov'nor!" he said, as much at his ease as if this were the most matter-of-fact meeting in the world.

* * * * *

IT ranked as a nine days' wonder—that supposed awakening of Jack Darrell from his trance. For Jimmy told part of the truth, posing, of course, as Darrell. He had been in a trance, and had awakened remembering where he had put the blue-prints of the gun.

And so sorrow and mourning was turned to joy at Hadleigh Towers. But Jimmy kept a watchful eye on Count Carados, who was still posing as Sharples, the professional.

Particularly when it was arranged that, partly in celebration of the wonderful thing that had happened, the cricket match should be resumed.

He was put in to resume the innings he was supposed to have begun. But he noticed that as time went on the Count grew more and more alert and malignant in expression.

And then at about twelve o'clock by his wrist-watch Jimmy smacked a ball away and took a chance run.

He knew that it was a risk even as he ran. At the last moment he sprawled headlong and flung out his bat just in time. For the next second the "sticks" were spread-eagled.

And then everyone on the field was startled by a stentorian explosion which seemed to upheave the field beneath them.

An explosion!

A moment before it had taken place a man garbed in cricketing flannels had rushed into the smoke-room with a revolver in his hand. It was the real Sharples, recovered now from his trance and conscious of the danger to others. He knew that when the clock struck twelve the field was electrically mined. Had not the villain himself told him so? He levelled his revolver and fired six shattering shots at the clock of doom.

Then, in a state of great agitation, he came running out on to the field, pointing the revolver at the bogus Sharples.

"Hold him, hold him!" he cried. "That man is the villain who has done all this. He has electrically mined the cricket field, and in another moment you would have been sent into the same trance as I have experienced."

Jimmy smiled and, waving a hand of congratulation to the real Sharples, he was the first to run forward to secure the biggest plotter of the time ever known.

Look Out for Duncan and His Racing Greyhounds
Next Week, Chaps.