

THE BIG GAME CRICKETERS.

MAGNIFICENT NEW  
TALE INSIDE.

# Boys' Magazine

2¢  
EVERY SATURDAY



THE GENTLEMAN CROOK ON TOUR—SEE PAGE 3.

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## THE MARVEL PLANE—

(Continued from page 23.)

chums scrambled up to where light was showing through the darkness.

"Goah, we're here all right. There's where the professor is held prisoner."

Scarce able to contain himself, Hal pointed to one of the low, wooden buildings. It was barely twenty yards from where they lay, and Hal recognised it instantly.

"I marked it when I was over the place with the *Sparrowhawk*. We'll make a dash for it. If Dad's inside, we'll have a chance to get away before the island wakens up."

With Sandy beside him, Hal dashed for the low building, reached the door, and swung the knob. Then with a cry of dismay, he fell back. Gluckstein and Professor Daring were alone in the small hut.

"So you are not drowned then?"

Past his first surprise, Gluckstein stared at the chums. Professor Daring, white and shaken, raised his hand in warning.

"Don't do anything, Hal. This fiend is holding a switch that will blow the island to pieces."

"It *ees* true, perfectly true," Hal glimpsed the madness in the German's eyes as he spoke. "I was just showing your distinguished father this little switch. He has three times refused to give me the secret of the *Sparrowhawk*, so I was about to move this small lever, which is connected with a mine beneath the rock. You are in time to die with us."

The German bowed sardonically. Undoubtedly the man had gone mad. There was an awful, glaring madness in his face. His fingers moved about the switch. Another instant and he would have pulled it downwards.

"Don't, for the love of Heaven!" The professor started forward.

"I will give you the secret of my invention. Don't kill these boys!"

"It *ees* too late, my friend. You have played too much with me. We shall die together."

Hal made as though to start forward and then, in amazement, he stopped. Behind the German was Squat Maguire, a warning frown on his face. He had crept in through a small door at the far end of the hut and now with one sudden plunge, he sent Gluckstein spinning away from the switch.

"Run for the 'plane!" he roared. "She's just behind the island wall."

Quickly the three obeyed. Outside the hut door Squat joined them and led the way to the *Sparrowhawk*. No one stopped them, and the explanation had spread through the rock. The soldiers and workmen were stampeding madly for the tunnel.

The silent-engined *Sparrowhawk* lay beside the island wall where Squat had parked it. In less than a minute the four had tumbled aboard the wonder 'plane and Squat had sent her upwards in a vertical rush.

Scarcely had she cleared the island wall when a low, booming detonation sounded. Gluckstein had carried out his threat. His madness had destroyed the island and all upon it.

For a while the four gazed down in silence. The explosion had been terrific. The island was completely wiped out.

"Boys," Professor Daring's face was very grave, "the man has destroyed himself and his handiwork. The secret of the *Sparrowhawk* is still mine."

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**JIMMY BRENT, THE AMAZING MAN-  
ABOUT-TOWN AND MYSTERY CROOK  
ON TOUR. A QUEST OF WILD  
ADVENTURE AND MAD PERIL IN THE  
AFRICAN JUNGLE.**

### The Start of the Quest.

A MAN slouched along the narrow, ill-lit alley, his hands in his pockets, a red-tipped cigarette lighting his face to a glow under the broad-visored cap he wore.

There was a suggestion of power about that loose figure with the hunched shoulders. Nothing could belie it—not even the dragging steps, the sunken head.

It was one of the sorrows of Jimmy Brent's life that he could never quite disguise his figure. His face—yes. He had the uncanny knack of altering his facial expression so that in a trice he appeared a different man, but swimming, boxing, rowing, cricket—in fact, a life filled with sport—had ingrained in him a lithe, easy grace that he found it difficult to dispel.

So that there was something attractive even in the appearance of this typical thug of London's Underworld who was slouching now out of one of the most dangerous back streets in Limehouse.

Jimmy was known in this scarcely reputable quarter as "Terry the Dope." He was reckoned to be quite harmless. Somehow money magically flowed from his pockets to treat the crowd of "boys." He very seldom worked. He was generally to be seen sitting hunched up at a table in Kerhan's den, ready to stand treat, always apparently making a great effort to rouse himself from the apathy that was upon him, always apparently trying to throw off the effects of the drugs he was supposed to take.

"Terry the Dope" made a good and sympathetic listener. The denizens of the Underworld grew to know him, and, as far as they were capable of it,

to trust him. Terry the Dope was always first to dub up when some unfortunate was nabbed by the police and "put away," specially when there were a wife and kids to be considered. He had plenty of money. One understood from what little conversation "Terry the Dope" allowed to slip from between his thin lips that he was an adept at the art of cracking safes. He was respected therefore, for in that particular maze of alleyways safe-breaking was considered to be a higher branch of crime.

Jimmy Brent, man about town, walked warily out of Hanging Sword Alley to-night, however.

There had come a crisis in this business of his masquerade as a crook here in the Underworld. For the Big Boss had heard of him, and the Big Boss was interested and wanted to see him.

That message had come from one, Tim Blaney, only that night. Tim, who was a huge fellow, with a rough, good-natured Irish face, full of freckles, had sat over his mug staring in great awe at Jimmy's hunched up figure for a long time. Then at last he had pushed back the mug, risen, and gone over.

"Shure, ye'll not believe me when I'll be telling you it," he had said in a low voice, "but it's the Big Boss himself would like to see you this night. I'm to take you to another party, who no doubt will lead you on."

Jimmy had looked up, his narrowed eyes astonishingly keen for a drug fiend. For a long moment he stared as if trying to digest this information, then with a hand he stifled a yawn and with a contemptuous shake of his head he relapsed into seeming apathy.

In reality he was galvanised, with nerves a-tingle. And so was everybody in the bar of Kerhan's den.

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



The news spread like wild-fire. The Big Boss wanted to see Terry, and Terry had received the order as a big dog will receive the attentions of a pup. It was madness, sheer madness. When the Big Boss sent out a command, there was nothing to do but obey.

Tim Blaney, big, good-natured Irishman, returned to his mug and stared almost stupidly at the man who defied authority.

Whispers passed in the Underground den. No one made a move towards Terry now, for he had become a marked man. The denizens knew that, as if by magic, the news had gone out, and was spreading, and very soon, in some mysterious way, it would reach the Big Boss.

Then Terry the Dope would die. No one defied the Big Boss, and lived. Men before now had blundered in his service, had made mistakes, and they had been crippled and broken in punishment. But death was the instant reward of defiance. Nothing less. For the Big Boss ruled in the Underworld only by terror and fear.

At last Jimmy had risen, and walked out of Kerhan's den without a word to any. Eyes followed him fearfully. They were fascinated and curious as to how soon and in what manner he would be stricken down.

So now Jimmy Brent, man about town, slouched down Hanging Sword Alley, and he confessed to an uncanny sensation at his scalp and to heart beats that were like hammer blows. It was like walking blindfolded amidst precipices; Jimmy never knew when the death that was hovering over him might swoop and strike.

He walked between frowning, crazy walls that leaned over a little towards one another. At intervals the sickly yellow glare of a street lamp battled against a fog of misty smoke. And all was silent. From none of those crazy dwellings did a head show, though watching eyes everywhere were upon Jimmy. They were all waiting for the lightning of the Big Boss's wrath to strike.

Jimmy smiled to himself as he came under a street lamp. A subject for some frenzied futurist painter this was, surely. It was piquant, but as Jimmy took step after step the fire began to die from the thrill of it. Policemen traversed this alley in pairs, and often their persons were the recipients of spare bricks. The alley, now quiet, might in a moment be transformed into an inferno of battle, such was its volcanic nature. But that was not to say that the Big Boss would use methods similar to those that obtained here. He was more subtle, with more extensive ramifications than this thieves' den. Perhaps he might let Jimmy go.

Five more slouching steps, and Jimmy had turned the corner. He hurried. Another corner turned, and he saw under a street lamp fifty yards ahead the blue uniform of a street constable. He was comparatively safe. He had reached as it were the belt of civilisation again after a venture into the wilds.

Jimmy Brent smiled, and removed his cap, revealing smooth fair hair, brushed back. He wiped his finely pencilled black eyebrows with a handkerchief, and the dark, vicious frown that knit them together was magically gone. The thin line of his mouth was gone too, marvellously giving place to well cut lips that were smiling.

Jimmy removed his "choker," revealing white collar and tie; he removed in a trice the padding from under the shoulders of his jacket, and he was completely transmuted from a vicious thug to a good-looking young man.

He commenced to run. Turning a corner, he dived down the steps of an area, and came up again from this place of concealment dragging a light two-stroke

motor-cycle. Soon it was chugging its song, and Jimmy, astride the saddle, was bumping away.

Reaching the purlieus of Holborn, he dismounted and took the machine into a tobacconist's shop, where he appeared to be well known. He emerged again without the machine, but wearing a soft velour hat and more presentable shoes, besides carrying cane and gloves. Swiftly walking away from the shop he hailed a taxi, and in five minutes he was entering by a back way his luxurious little flat in the Albany.

THE transformation is not complete, however, until Jimmy Brent, man about town, is seen in the garb most familiar to his friends.

He had finished dinner, served by his manservant and valet, and now, toying with a cigarette, he glanced through the french windows near by which he sat.

Opposite, like a long golden frieze, was the dining room of a famous and exclusive West End club, of which Jimmy was a member. But he was dining alone to-night because he wanted to think. His brain was racing riotously as he stared at the waiters moving round the tables opposite.

To-night he had to go out once more on business bent. His strange business!

He was in evening dress, apparently one of the most immaculate, good-looking and carefree of clubmen. But as he stared down at his patent leather shoes he reflected with a smile on the springs that were in their heels—springs specially designed to facilitate the young athlete in scaling walls, and so on.

To-night he must go very, very carefully. It was the most ticklish job he had ever taken on.

The Big Boss. Who was he? What was his identity, and in what lay his tremendous influence over the crook Underworld of London.

Jimmy was fascinated by the problem. For months he had been lured to investigate, and he had gone deeper and deeper into a complicated web. The Big Boss was all that his name implied, and perhaps more. He was the King of the Underworld—a terrible, sinister and mysterious figure. He pulled the strings, and the lesser crooks danced like puppets to his will.

It all thrilled Jimmy, who had taken up a life of crime simply because life hitherto had bored him. He heard more and more of the Big Boss and his methods. Apparently every crook in the Underworld was in his clutches—except Jimmy. The Big Boss's coups were sensational. No one knew who he was.

Then Jimmy heard something that caused his blood to flame to anger. The Big Boss had entered the realms of sport—like a plague. There was money to be made there. One of the first things the Big Boss did was to take a young boxer, run him up the ladder of success, until he reached his most important fight, and then compel him to lose in order to rake off big bets on the other man. That was his method. He was rigging the market, and ruining decent sport.

He ran a string of "fighting boys" now. His hand was heavy on professional football and cricket, and all to the end of getting rich quick.

Jimmy began to probe the man, but he could learn little for a long time, except that it was the same story over and over again—the story of a good man dragged down to criminal habits, used and then thrown aside by the Big Boss. Jimmy became more and more angry.

Dimly he realised that he for his part had been attracting attention, but it had not been brought home forcibly to him until to-night.



The Big Boss wanted to see him. Jimmy smiled grimly. For he had reached the point where he had determined to pit his wits against this mysterious master mind. Jimmy always did a thing well if he did it at all. At school and college he had been prominent in sport, and as a man about town he had made a prize idler. Now that he had taken up crime he was determined to be at the top of his profession. No Big Boss should give him orders. Jimmy would see the Big Boss at his own time, and in his own way.

"And, by Jove, to-night's the night," muttered Jimmy, suddenly filled with an uncontrollable excitement.

He started up and reached for his cape, the secret pockets of which had on several occasions held contents that would have startled the police.

Now as he started towards the door an image danced in front of his mind's eye.



SLASH THE GAME UP.—"Excuse me, old chap," broke in a drawing voice. And at the same time Jimmy Brent's cane slashed through the air and knocked the pistol from the other's hand. "We can't allow that you know. It's so dashed dangerous."

It was the image of Sambo Mauley, a gigantic gentleman from Africa. Sambo followed the noble art of fisticuffs for a living. His wonderful ebony body and jovial black face, slashed by a great grin, had been seen in many obscure boxing booths, where he had generally managed to win his bouts.

But suddenly he had become a great star in the fighting firmament. On the morrow he was to fight Nick Caley, the giant American heavy-weight champion, in a twenty-round contest at Boxing Hall. The fight had been boomed big in the newspapers, but it was thought that the almost unknown negro had almost no chance whatever against the redoubtable American champion, and indicating this feeling was the betting market which was quoting as much as eight to one against Sambo.

Sambo didn't care. He went on grinning, and fighting, down at his training quarters at Hoxton.

He really seemed a most agreeable and likeable coloured gentleman. But reporters who had seen him at work in training stated emphatically that he was not a patch on the skilful and ferocious Nick

Caley, who was certain to "knock him cold" in the first three rounds.

Sambo had enormous strength, and plenty of pluck. But the American champion had these, and skill as well. Nick Caley was as swift and devastating as a hurricane. He had wrought havoc with several giants as big as Sambo. He had science, whereas the negro had only a fair knowledge of boxing which had been literally hammered into his somewhat thick skull.

Knowing all this the general public believed that Sambo could not win the big fight at the Boxing Hall on the next night.

But Jimmy had heard otherwise. Whispers had floated through the Underworld, and to a man the crook fraternity were backing Sambo. For the Big Boss was behind the deal. He it was who had put up the colossal purse which had tempted the American champion to risk his reputation against the tyro. Cloaking his activities under the ambiguous title of a boxing syndicate the Big Boss was framing some gigantic crooked deal.

Jimmy Brent was sure of that. That was why he was going now to seek out Sambo. Sambo knew something. Jimmy

had seen him once at his training quarters and had noted the look of furtive fear that lurked ever in the big negro's eyes. Jimmy had the feeling that something colossal was on the board.

There was a small garage attached to his flat in which the gentleman crook housed a small but extremely costly six-cylinder coupe. He very soon had this out, and driving it himself, sent it running smoothly and silently through London's West End of electric sky signs, winking and spinning.

It was nearing midnight, and the theatres were emptying. The West End was taking supper.

Suddenly Jimmy leaned forward in the seat of the smart, cream-coloured coupe. An ejaculation of wonder left his lips.

"By all the saints, it's Henri Velasquez! Coming out of a theatre, too!"

The man issuing with portly dignity from the brilliantly lighted vestibule of the Regent Theatre, the man at whom Jimmy Brent was staring was Henri Velasquez, the moneylender. He had half of London Society in his clutches.



A great smooth face, with puckering fat lips, a dimpled chin, and sleepy, full-hooded eyes had Henry Velasquez. He had also a comfortable bald head—completely bald—and a habit of placing his hands upon his protruding waistcoat when given to speech. But this benevolent aspect was entirely spoiled by a cruel, hooked nose. It betrayed Henri Velasquez, and warned some people against him. It had warned Jimmy Brent.

The gentleman crook was sometimes financially embarrassed, and at these times, as if with uncanny prescience, he had been approached with the soft blandishments of Velasquez, the moneylender. But he had steered clear. There were sinister rumours about the fat, pompous man who was at present strolling, in evening dress, out of the theatre vestibule.

Jimmy deftly turned his wheel so that the coupe glided to the kerb near a newsboy. Abstractedly the man about town held out a silver coin for a paper whilst he stared hard at moneylender Velasquez. By Jove, didn't the fellow look a sinister cove to-night . . . Hatching mischief.

The gentleman crook scarcely knew what instinct had attracted his attention towards the man. He had always meant to probe Velasquez, the moneylender, but of late the mysterious Big Boss of the Underworld had occupied all his time.

Suddenly, however, Jimmy started violently and promptly pulled down the curtain along the side window of the coupe, peering out with narrowed eyes under the pretence of studying the racing results in the paper.

Another car, a big Vauxhall saloon, had drawn up outside the theatre, and a man had stepped out—a man whom Jimmy knew. It was his old friend Howard Carr who had been at Cambridge with him. But Howard Carr was strangely changed from the old days. Now he was bleak of face, with the stamp of fear indelible there. His evening clothes appeared a trifle seedy to Jimmy's critical eyes. And, worst of all, he cast a furtive look round him as he emerged from the big, lighted Vauxhall.

"The poor old chuckle-headed chump," murmured James Brent, who remembered Carr as a wonderful cricketer, a skilful and aggressive batsman, and the finest man in the slips Jimmy's undergraduate days had ever seen. Jimmy had heard that Howard Carr was in the moneylender's clutches.

The old Cambridge cricketer hurried towards the hawk-nosed man, and they exchanged words in the vestibule. For a moment the moneylender's heavy lids lifted, and a staggering rage was poured, if only in expression, on the man talking to him. It was a revelation. Jimmy could not hear what was being said, but the moneylender was staring towards the Vauxhall and talking swiftly.

Together the two made for the car, as if in haste. Jimmy pulled down his other blind and sat waiting. He slipped in his gear after the big Vauxhall, and glided down to Trafalgar Square after it. This was becoming interesting.

Jimmy came aside the Vauxhall, and peered in. He had a momentary shock.

Flowers, and many silver fittings, the suave electric globe above shining on them—rugs on the floor, and cream-coloured cushions, against which in the rear leaned a big, ebony-coloured man as if somnolent. His bowler hat was tilted to one side of his massive black skull, his gorgeously striped linen was ruffled and deranged, and the wonderful wide grin that the fight fans knew had given place to a drugged appearance. But Jimmy had not a moment's hesitation in recognising him. It was Sambo, the negro champion. Not the vital, tip-toed, smashing Sambo, but nevertheless Sambo.

Jimmy allowed the coupe to slip unobtrusively behind, but he clung like a leach to the Vauxhall, his thoughts very busy. A suspicion entered his mind, and persisted in asserting itself. Was the benevolent Velasquez in reality the mysterious Big Boss?

Half an hour, and the Vauxhall pulled up outside dark chambers in Kensington. Adroit Jimmy had shed his coupe in a convenient *cul-de-sac*, and now crept up in the shadows of the street lamps.

He saw Velasquez and Howard Carr between them helping the big negro out of the car. Matters had evidently developed, for Howard Carr, apparently in a state of great agitation, was talking excitedly across to the moneylender, who spat back at him sibilantly like an enraged cat. Howard Carr was in a condition to excite sympathetic comment. White as a sheet, with the blood drawn even from his lips, he trembled in his task of assisting the boxer, and the perspiration glistened on his face. Yet he talked. A flood of words—expostulation—argument—it might have been anything, came from his lips.

Jimmy, who could not make out a word from his distance, was glad to see them disappear inside the entrance to the flats. He darted after swiftly, and came up the steps to the entrance hall just as the lift was going up.

There was no attendant on the lift, but it was operated by each person who wished to ascend. Jimmy watched it going up, counting the seconds in order to ascertain which floor it would stop at. At length he heard a grating sound, as if of the lift stopping and, waiting impatiently a few moments, he himself pressed the switch that would cause the lift to descend again.

He went up with a heart that, queerly, was beating faster. Jimmy reckoned he had stumbled on big game, and though excitement was as the spice of life to him, he glimpsed a surfeit of it in the immediate future.

He stealthily stepped from the lift on the third floor. The name of Henri Velasquez was painted on a glass door, and other doors along the dim-lit corridor were numbered. The whole of that floor apparently was given up to Velasquez's offices.

The gentleman crook moved from one door to another, trying each with a careful hand. Each was locked. But from behind the one on which the moneylender's name was painted came the low hum of voices. Jimmy took out his crepe mask, and adjusted it carefully over his features. Then, smiling to himself, he brought out his skeleton keys and tried them in the lock.

The fourth key he tried yielded results. The door was at his mercy. Carefully he pushed it a little way ajar, and peered in.

A heavy black velvet curtain obscured his vision, but he heard the hum of voices on the other side more plainly now. He could distinguish the conversation.

Sambo, the huge African boxer, was speaking, and though his words were defiant, there was a terrified whine in his voice.

"No, massa. Me no gonna do it, suh. Dis chile gonna fight fair. Sambo bery sorry."

"What?"

It was a single word, low ejaculated yet thunderous—barbed with venom. Jimmy on the other side of the curtain thrilled unpleasantly. In a flash he understood the position. In some way the fight on the morrow between the negro and the American champion was to be faked. Jimmy Brent did not understand how, for it was his considered opinion that Sambo was no match for his adversary, spite of his size, and he should have no difficulty in losing. For him to win a miracle would have to take place.

But the Big Boss had arranged that the fight



should be faked, and here was his tool, his meanest underling defying him. Jimmy sensed all that, sensed the menace in the air, and parting the curtains a trifle with a careful hand he peered through into the room.

At a table under a blaze of electric light sat the mysterious Big Boss of the Underworld.

Jimmy was sure that it was the Big Boss, yet he could not say for certain that it was Velasquez. For the man wore a mask, and he sat crouched over the table like a gross hunchback, his right arm extended at the cowering negro before him.

His rage was demoniac, the lower part of his face so contorted that the most prominent features were the jutting creased chin, and the bared teeth. The index finger he pointed at the negro was quivering with the fury that possessed the man.

"You defy me?" he hissed. "You dare to defy me, you black dog?"

Sambo covered back further still, his burning eyes fixed as if fascinated upon this dominant figure at the table. About the negro now seemed to cling the mystic atmosphere of the African jungle. A babble of words came from him, and he seemed to diminish in size in his terror of the man.

Behind Sambo against the wall three masked men in evening dress stood rigid, as men would stand

in front of their master. They grasped the African giant as he nearly fell upon them in his fright and held him upright.

"Listen, you black scum," hissed the man at the table. "You either fight and win to-morrow night, or you die now, you understand!" His hand moved to a drawer at the table, and came into sight again, the slim barrel of a nickel-plated revolver gleaming between the fingers now. He pointed it at the black man's heart.

"Quick. What shall it be?" he snarled. "You hold the secret of the Hidden City, and I should have no compunction in shooting you now. Your only chance is to fight to-morrow night—and win, so that we shall have the money to rig out this expedition to Africa. Then you shall come with me, and reap part of the reward. But if you defy me—Great Heaven!" he broke off in a devastating rage, "why do you refuse? You have tried the dope. You know that it is all right."

As if in answer the negro cast a sudden swift glance of fear at one of the men who held him. And at that betraying glance the man at whom it was directed stiffened. In spite of his mask Jimmy recognised him. It was Howard Carr.

And the man at the table read the glances that passed between the two aught. His clenched fist crashed down on the mahogany table, and a frightful oath escaped him.

"Betrayed, by—" he snarled. He pointed a quivering finger. "Get into that other room, you. Yes, all of you. I'll deal with you later when I've brought this black pig to reason."

Instantly in obedience the three masked men retired through a door into a further room, leaving the man at the table and his victim alone together.

"Come here—sit down, dog!" snarled the masked man.

Cringing, the giant obeyed. All at once there was something peculiar in the masked man's manner.



JIMMY JUMPS IN.—Like a tornado the gentleman crook descended on that bunch of crooks. In a few moments he had damaged three men for life





THE STRONG MAN.—With a bellowing roar of defiance Sambo rushed at the huge rhino.

He leaned forward, and behind the black crepe his eyes glittered with a fierce excitement.

"You'll do what I tell you," he hissed. "Come, the dope is all right. I've just taken some myself—only a small quantity, but try me."

And he held out his hand.

Hesitatingly Sambo thrust out his brown, ebony paw, and it was immediately grasped forcibly by the masked man. Squinting and goggling with pain, Sambo faced him. A groan escaped the negro, and the gentleman crook to his astonishment saw that he actually was in agony. The pressure on Sambo's hand was tremendous, and Jimmy Brent could hear the bones almost crackling under the strain. The strength of this masked man must have been enormous, and for some reason he wished the negro to have a sample of it.

Abruptly the Big Boss dropped Sambo's hand at last and growled.

"There!"

Groaning Sambo held up his hand. Little drops of blood were oozing from the finger nails, so intense had been the pressure.

"That's Hurculane, as I have called it," the Big Boss said in a tense voice. "Ah, the world may laugh, but they will soon learn its properties. Back there, in the Hidden City in Africa—beyond the mountains, the apes live on it and grow strong. The gorillas have arms not half as thick as yours. Yet they could take a tree and snap it like a twig. That's Hurculane. They can hang on a tree with one leg and fight a leopard—aye, and kill him. That's Hurculane. It can bring a man back to life when he's more than half dead. I have employed a specialist to analyse the stuff, but he has not discovered half its properties. They say it can double the power of the human brain—why, you fool, isn't it worth going for? It's more precious than gold."

Sambo only gaped. Stark terror of this man was upon him, for he knew what the Big Boss had meant to do with him after he had served his purpose.

The man leaned forward again. He had finished his breathless periods; he was trying to keep control over himself.

"You discovered this Hurculane—with other white men who have since died," he growled harshly.

"You brought me the plan of the Hidden City where it is grown. You know where it grows and can take me there. What reason then can I have for harming you, fool?"

"Massa, me no know." Sambo goggled his eyes. "Man, tell me you gib me dope which make poor ole Sambo fight like fury. Dis chile so strong he kill de champ. Den you kill poor ole Sambo."

"Fool, fool!" The masked man hissed. "You know where the Hurculane grows like a weed. Bushes as thick as gooseberry bushes. Think I want to kill you when you're going to take me there?"

The black giant shook his head stupidly.

"Sambo no know," he said bewilderedly. "Massa, he got plan of Hidden City now. Why he want pore ole nigger?"

"Why do I want you?" shrieked the enraged man, in a startling tone. "Because of the apes, fool. Gorillas twice as big as a man. And the Hidden City is guarded by savages. We must penetrate a country containing the fiercest devils in Africa. We have just a little Hurculane left, and you shall take it. You are a strong man naturally. You will be a giant with this, and you shall be our guard. Now do you see that I would not kill you, stupid black fool?"

Sambo looked doubtful and shook his head. But then he reflected that, after all, he was immune until after the fight. The Big Boss had backed him, and with Hurculane he might do it. He had already had experience of the colossal strength with which it endowed him—strength which would enable him to wrestle with a bull. Surely with such strength at his command he should be able to look after himself for a day or two! And then would come the jungle, the winding, twisting trail through impenetrable forest. Anything might happen there, even something to his own advantage against the Big Boss.

"Dis chile thinkum he all go do what massa say," he muttered. "Me bery sorry."

The man in the mask nodded, satisfied but grim. "And now you can clear out, you black heathen," he said quietly, rearranging the books on his desk. He half-rose. "I've got business to attend to."



### On the Jungle Trail.

**JIMMY BRENT** drew back into the cover of a full-length painting as the negro came out of the room. Immediately after Sambo had gone the gentleman crook heard a startled exclamation from the man in the mask, who crossed to the door and examined the lock.

Jimmy heard him muttering to himself in bewilderment something about having turned the key, but apparently thinking he had blundered in some way in trying to lock the door, he gave up the problem as hopeless and turned back once more.

Now the chief of this gang, for such he evidently was, took up the pistol once more from the drawer of his desk, and tip-toed across the room.

Jimmy becoming reckless all of a sudden followed only ten paces behind. He was actually crossing the carpet of the one room as the masked man laid his hand on the door knob of the inner room. The gentleman crook had a strange stirring of uneasiness over what portended.

He was going to interfere if necessary.

The Big Boss flung open the door of the inner room, and through the aperture Jimmy saw him part curtains precisely similar to those that guarded the outer room. After a second's pause his harsh voice rang out.

"Ah, so you're not all in the plot then. I see you've taken him and bound him up according to my secret signals. The traitor! We can't trust him, gentlemen. A man who would betray his own chief doesn't deserve to live."

From the interior of the room came a weak voice, choked with emotion and pleading.

"Boss, I didn't betray you. Can't you believe me? My interests are too wrapped up in yours. I—"

"You told that negro that he was to die," interrupted the man at the door coldly. "You told him to beware of me, that I was only waiting for him to win the fight before I killed him. Isn't that so? I want him out of the way, for he it was who brought me news of the Hidden City, and he knows too much—he might blab."

"It is you who are betraying him," came Howard Carr's voice on a sudden note of scorn and indignation. "You use him—to-morrow night he fights to make money for this expedition. And when it is made you would exterminate him as you would tread on a worm. Yes, I did warn him," went on the rebel of the gang, his voice rising. "I told him that death waited for him after the fight. I told him that you had ministered poison with the Herculane you are to give him. I warned him not to fight—"

"Enough," broke in the Chief harshly, stepping

into the room. "You die, my friend, now and at once, and you may thank Heaven your death will be an easy one. Put him in the clock, boys, and then we will dice for the privilege of dispatching the betrayer from this world."

There was a sound of moving and scraping feet. With rising excitement Jimmy Brent moved stealthily forward over the carpet. The man who had been standing at the curtains had disappeared now, and the heavy black velvet swayed slightly still from the movement he had given it. Beyond the curtain something was taking place.

Jimmy grasped the edge of one of the two curtains where they met in the centre, and pulled it back ever so slightly.

At the sight that met his eyes his teeth clenched.

His old college chum, Howard Carr, was there in the room, bound hand and foot, and placed in the lower receptacle of a towering grandfather's clock. The door of the clock was open; evidently it had witnessed other gruesome killings such as this was destined to be, for that door was marked with the dark stains of blood.

"In accordance with our usual custom," went on the Chief, "we shall decide who shall rid the earth of this man, and we shall make our decision by the hazard of the dice."

And now there fell an unanny silence in the room as the leader drew out a drawer in the table and brought out a dice box and dice.

With a flirt of his hand belonging to the practised dice player, he threw and the squares tumbled on the table with a clatter.

There was an indrawing of breath as it was seen that the dice had turned up seven.

The box was passed on to the next man.

Six!

The next man threw with trembling fingers and turned up three. And the next six again.

The Big Boss himself had won. To him had fallen the part of assassin.

He took up the pistol with a hoarse laugh and turned.

"Howard Carr," he hissed, his finger curling round the trigger, "prepare to meet your end."

And then came a startling interruption.

"Excuse me, old chap," broke in a drawing voice. "We can't allow that, you know. It's too dashed dangerous."

All turned and stared at the masked figure in the parting of the curtains.

And at the same instant Jimmy Brent's cane slashed through the air, and knocked the pistol from the other's hand.

(Continued on page 24.)



**WHAT** was the Secret of the Blazing Eyes in the Egyptian Tomb? Chums, a Hair-raising Thriller of a Long Complete Detective Yarn of the Mystic East is Appearing in The Mag Next Week—Featuring the Famous Falcon Swift, Sporting Detective with his Boy Shadower and Assistant, Chick Conway.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE DREAM CURSE

Don't Miss It. The Secrets of Ancient Civilization in Egypt Exposed. Falcon Swift Investigating an Astounding Case in the All-pervading Eerie Atmosphere of a Tomb in the Desert. A Long Tale Replete with Mad Thrills and Criminal Investigation Work, Featuring the Great Monocled Manhunter.

Order Boys' Magazine Next Week!





Boy (who has been sent to buy some ammonia and cannot remember the word):  
Please sir; smell the bottle.

### THE WRONG ANIMAL.

A man travelling by train in Ireland put his head out of the window at every station, saying to the guard: "Is my trunk safe?"

At last the guard retorted: "I wish ye'd been born an elephant instead of an ass, and then your trunk would be in front of your face."—E.M.H. (Caernarvon).

### FORCIBLE SAVING.

"Talking of economy," remarked the young man in the corner seat of the excursion train, "I know a man who hasn't spent sixpence on himself for the last two years."

"Nonsense!" commented the man in the opposite corner.

"It's a fact," said the first man. "But he'll be out next week."—M.C. (Cheetham).

### ABSENTMINDED!

WAITER: Mr. Gray has left his umbrella again. I do believe he would leave his head if it were loose.

JUDKINS: I daresay you're right; I heard him say he was going to Switzerland for his lungs.—C. M. (Lavendon).

### MAKING SURE.

An inscription on a tombstone: *John Dixon struck a match to see if there was petrol in his tank. There was. Aged fifty-six.*—J.C. (Cricklewood).

### SENTENCED HIMSELF.

WORKMAN (to his mate): It ain't right for me to be down 'ere, wheelin' bricks abart; my place is on the scaffold.—L.G. (London).

### GOT HIM.

YANKEE TRAVELLER: (having some fun at Pat's expense): What's the meaning of "nothing," Pat?

PAT: Shure, I don't know; but you will find it where your brain ought to be.—L.E. (Godalming).

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

### NO CIGARS.

An officer of the Basler Regiment was questioning a new recruit.

OFFICER: Ever had any illness, such as chicken-pox or measles?

RECRUIT: No, never.

OFFICER: Have you got any scars?

RECRUIT: No, but I've got some "fags!"—H.H. (Bath).

### THE OLD SCROUNGER!

PA (indicating statue): That is Sir Thomas Tiptop, my boy. He gave big sums to the schools.

YOUNG HOPEFUL: So that's him, is it? Why didn't he do the bally things himself?—A.H. (Aylesbury).

### NOT DRUNK!

SERGEANT: But if he was on his hands and knees in the road, what makes you think he was loitering with intent to commit a felony?

VERY NEW CONSTABLE: Bedad, sor, he was groping at the white line, saying he was going to roll it up and take it home to make a frieze for his bathroom.—(Bradford).

### A QUEER INSECT.

ANNOUNCER (at concert): Miss Jones will now sing, "Oh that I were a dove, I'd flee."

JOHNNY (to father): Say, Dad, what's a dove-eyed fief?—P.J. (Manchester).

### SPECIAL MENTION.

VISITOR: Can you tell me the population of the village, little man?

LITTLE BOY: Yes, sir, Me, and 2,224 other people.—A.H. (Jersey).

### UNPALATABLE.

HARASSED CUSTOMER. What is the best method to prevent the disease caused by biting insects?

BUSY CHEMIST: Don't bite the insects.—T.D. (Wavertree).



Short-sighted Old Gent: Now, I wonder what this notice says.



New Story Series, Chums, Introducing the Millionaire Globe-Trotter.



### A Jungle S.O.S.

**S**IR JOHN CHAMPION gently fanned himself with an enormous panama hat, then summoning sufficient energy to raise a glass to his lips, drained the contents to the last drop.

"Gee! It's hot," he murmured drowsily.

He was slumped full length upon a long cane chair, sheltered from the fierce rays of the African sun by a striped awning.

The ever-attentive Akbar, his Afghan servant, filled the empty glass then padded noiselessly away.

The s.y. *Wanderer*, the pride and joy of its millionaire owner, was steaming lazily up the Ibesi, a tributary of the Congo, in search of big game. The tall adventurer spent the greater part of his time roaming about the most remote corners of the earth quenching his insatiable thirst for excitement.

He was aroused from his siesta by a string of expletives, and had no difficulty in recognising the voice as that of Captain Peter Crane, his partner in many a hazardous adventure.

Champion stretched his seventy-four inches of brawn and muscle and leisurely made his way to the bridge.

"What's up, skipper?" he asked.

"Darned fool nigger," snapped the irate captain. "Steering down the middle of the river. Look!"

Champion, following the direction of his friend's outstretched arm, saw a native canoe bearing down upon them. It was propelled by a black, and as the distance between the two boats decreased, they saw he was bleeding profusely from a dozen wounds. The native waved his arm feebly, then sprawled back in an inert heap.

"Glory!" ejaculated Champion. "I wonder what's happened to the poor blighter?"

"That's what we're going to find out," returned the skipper grimly. He rapped out an order, and the canoe was hooked in. Tenderly they lifted the wounded man aboard, and it was easy to see that he had not long to live.

He broke into a torrent of native dialect, which to Crane was unintelligible.

"What does he say?" he asked curiously.

**SIR JOHN CHAMPION, MASTER OF MEN, AND KING OF THE SUPERSTITIOUS NATIVES, IN A THRILLING JUNGLE EXPLOIT.**

There was a hard glint in the steel-blue eyes of John Champion as he turned to the skipper.

"Native rising," he said peremptorily. "A missionary, James Oates, has been captured by N'wambi. This chap is Oates' servant."

A sudden rush of blood choked the words in the native's mouth, and he fell back with a long, shuddering sigh.

The adventurer bent his head and muttered something into the dying man's ear. A faint smile of happiness flitted across his features before his eyes became glazed in the unseeing stare of death.

"I've sworn to avenge him, and rescue his master," explained Champion. "Gad, what a stoic!"

"Where is Oates imprisoned?"

"In N'wambi's village, which is, as far as I can make out, about twenty miles up the river. Full steam ahead, Crane!"

The captain gave the order, and with the smoke belching from her twin stacks, the *Wanderer* leapt forward.

Champion's crew consisted of ex-Service men who could shoot with almost incredible rapidity and accuracy, and to each he served a Leo-Enfield rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition; two Lewis guns were mounted on the deck and placed in charge of picked men.

The sun was dipping over the rim of the world, and the shadows in the forest were lengthening as the *Wanderer* approached her destination.

Crane and Champion were holding a council of war on the bidge when the tall figure of a native broke through the trees and stood on the bank of the river, jabbering and gesticulating wildly. Champion addressed him in his own language, and instantly the black dropped into the water and began to swim with swift, effortless strokes towards the ship. He climbed on board and shook himself like a wet dog. The adventurer beckoned him forward and there began a long and earnest conversation between the two. After a while Champion turned to the captain.

"This man says he is N'wambi's Prime Minister, and he will guide us to the village, providing we hang his boss on the spot. Ambitious sort of cove. What do you say?"

Crane pulled at his short, golden beard. "Dunno. Can we trust him?"



"We shall have to, but I'll give him to understand that at the slightest sign of treachery, I shall pump him full of lead."

He addressed the native again, and, whilst pointing out that it was not in his power to hang N'wambi, promised to hand the rebel over to the authorities. To this the "Prime Minister" agreed, and it was decided that he should guide the rescue party to N'wambi's stronghold.

Half an hour later, Champion and six picked men slipped away from the *Wanderer* and disappeared

FALCON SWIFT, Sporting Detective, in a  
Thrilling Long Complete Yarn  
Next Saturday.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE DREAM CURSE.

Don't Miss Your Mag.

into the jungle. Mile after mile, without pause or hesitation, the black led them through the labyrinth of trees and creepers.

It was a nerve-racking experience, moving through the impenetrable darkness with death lurking in every shadow, and even Champion's iron nerves were affected.

He fancied he saw a dim shape moving ahead, and a hoarse cry broke from his lips as he saw another and another. From somewhere near by came the harsh scream of a night bird. It was a signal!

With a savage cry, the guide raised his spear and lunged fiercely at Champion, who leaped back in the nick of time.

"You treacherous hound!" he snarled.

His gun spat flame, and with a shriek of agony, the betrayer pitched forward dead.

Instantly pandemonium reigned, and the silence of the African night was broken by the wild yells of the attackers mingled with the incessant crackling of rifle-fire.

Champion shot with calm and deadly precision until his gun became too hot to hold; he flung it away and picked up the rifle of a fallen comrade.

The little party was now in a bad way; two men had gone down never to rise again, and all were wounded more or less seriously.

Champion himself was bleeding freely from a spear cut on the forehead, and he had to be continually wiping his eyes to prevent the flow from blinding his vision.

Suddenly the ever-closing circle of blacks made a concerted rush, and the survivors of the plucky rescue party were stunned or overpowered. Champion fought valiantly, but the odds were too great, and a blow behind the ear with a spear shaft robbed him of his senses.

### Drake's Fire Boats.

THE adventurer awoke with a throbbing headache. He opened his eyes and gazed dazedly at his surroundings.

He found himself to be lying in a native hut, and dimly he made out the figures of four other men. Each was bound, like himself, hand and foot.

Outside, a drum beat monotonously, and with it mingled the shrill cries of women and children, the shouts of men and the thunder of stamping feet.

"Who's there?" whispered Champion.

"Harvey, Smith and mesel', Cassidy," was the reply.

"Not forgetting Jim Oates," came a grim chuckle from the fourth.

"Glory! Is that you, Oates? I'm John Champion." Briefly he explained what had occurred, and concluded bitterly:

"That black devil's treachery cost me the lives of three of the pluckiest men I've ever known, but he didn't live long enough to enjoy the fruits of his betrayal!"

For an hour they discussed in low tones plans and possibilities of escape, whilst the noise without gradually diminished in volume until finally everything was still. Occasionally they heard the awe-inspiring roar of a lion or the shrill laugh of a hyena.

"What was that?" hissed Champion suddenly. They listened with strained ears. Came the intermittent *rat-tat-tat* of machine-gun fire, and the sterner note of a heavy service rifle.

"They're attacking the ship," muttered Smith hoarsely. "If they take that, our last 'ope's gone!"

Champion strained at his bonds with the strength born of despair, but in vain.

"No bally use," he panted at length.

The black guard thrust his head into the interior of the hut and muttered something threateningly.

Then there came to Champion's brain a desperate idea, and hopeless though it seemed, he determined to put it into execution.

"Oh, man!" he said in the native dialect. "Your heart is covered with the little fire-stick which says, '*Rat-tat-tat*,' and you will surely die unless you obey me."

"Lord," said the native simply, "I have no wish to die."

"Then liberate my comrades," commanded Champion. His voice was calm, even, yet his heart raced madly.

The black went down and severed Harvey's bonds, then as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he saw that the adventurer held no weapon. A cry of rage burst from his lips, but before he could make a move, Champion thrust out his long legs and crashed his boots full into the pit of the native's stomach. An agonised grunt escaped him as he crumpled up unconscious.

Harvey lost no time in liberating his comrades, and they stretched their stiff and cramped limbs with relief.

"What about this merchant?" asked Smith, indicating the still unconscious guard.

"Truss him up and gag him," commanded Champion. The order was promptly executed, then one by one they crept out of the hut and wriggled their way noiselessly along the ground.

Fortunately the night was exceptionally dark, and not once were they challenged. A pariah dog giving tongue caused them to stop, and with palpitating hearts they waited, but no other sound came.

Safely they gained the outskirts of the village and guided by the sound of firing, they crashed through the undergrowth in the direction of the *Wanderer*.

They had covered about half the distance when Champion stopped in his stride.

"Listen!" he hissed.

From out of the night came the regular throbbing of a lokai—the telegraph of the jungle.

"They've discovered our escape. Run, men, for your lives!"

CAPTAIN PETER CRANE paced the bridge of the *Wanderer*, puffing hard at his pipe.

He had heard the reports of rifles about half-an-hour after the departure of the expedition, then silence, and his mind was torn with conflicting emotions of fear and hope.

He stooped to knock the ashes from his pipe, and



that simple action saved his life. A spear whizzed over his head and fell with a clatter on to the deck below.

He drew his revolver and, as a shadow on the bank moved, fired.

A scream of agony satisfied him that his aim had been true.

Instantly that side of the river became alive with figures. Abandoning all caution, the savages flung themselves into the water and, with knives clenched between their teeth, swam towards the boat.

*Rat-tat-tat!* The Lewis guns sprayed the horde with a merciless rain of death, momentarily checking their advance.

They wavered, then, turning, swam back to the shore, where a council of war was held.

down by the machine-gun and temporarily stemmed the rush.

Again the savages were repulsed, but at what a cost!

There were not more than three of the defenders capable of holding a rifle, and all had sustained minor wounds. Crane knew, as they all did, that the next rush would be the end, yet he fitted a new drum into the magazine of the machine gun with a hand which was free from tremor.

Suddenly he heard his name called and, whipping round, saw the tall, lean form of Champion clambering over the rails.

He was followed by Smith, Cassidy, and Harvey and a man whom he did not know. The captain gave a shout of unrestrained joy.

"Thank heaven you're alive," he cried, rushing up to his friend.

They shook hands, these two, then Champion narrated their adventures and how they had escaped.

"We had to make a detour to avoid running into the mob, an' crossed the river about a quarter of a mile higher up. We then ran along the bank an' the boat screened us as we swam across. Give McStaggers instructions to get up speed right away. There'll be Hamlet to play when this crowd is reinforced."

The most severely wounded were carried below and tenderly nursed by Akbar and Jim Oates.

The remainder took up their posts on the deck, their guns trained on the enemy.

The telegraph bell tinkled, and with smoke belching from her stacks, the *Wanderer* moved slowly away.

Howls of baffled rage followed them, which swelled into a tumultuous roar as the savages were joined by a larger force.

A dozen canoes were manned and they swept along the river in hot pursuit. The situation was still fraught with dire peril. The natives were gaining with every stroke of their paddles, for unfamiliarity with the river necessitated cautious progress on the part of Crane.

"I've got it," burst out Champion, striking his right fist into the palm of the other. "Drake's fire-ships!"

The others looked at him as if he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"What? Mean to say you've never heard of how Sir Francis Drake defeated the Spaniards by settin' fire to a few boats, an' lettin' them drift among the Armada?"

"A bit before my toime, it was," murmured Cassidy.

When the idea was explained to them, the men jumped to do his bidding. Without a second's waste two of the lifeboats were filled with combustible rubbish, set afire and launched.

A liberal sprinkling of petrol caused the flames to leap high into the air, and, caught by the current, the blazing boats drifted towards the flotilla of canoes.

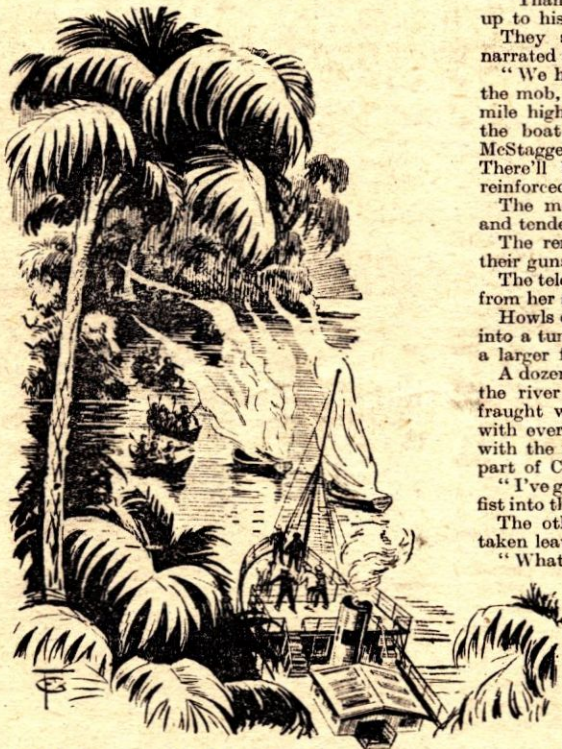
Stark terror threw the savages into a state of panic and chaos. In their anxiety to escape the flames, they collided one against the other, and a couple of canoes sank, hurling the warriors into the river. They attempted to board the other craft, and in their utter confusion, succeeded only in capsizing three more.

By this time Champion's fire-ships had drifted into their midst, and the savages' demoralisation was complete.

Champion grinned as he saw that the pursuit had been abandoned.

"Drake, old man," he said. "You were a genius."

Look out Next Week for a Special School Story Number. The Boys of St. Matts Coming Back Again.



**WHITE MAN'S MAGIC!**—Caught by the current the two blazing lifeboats swept back from the Britishers' yacht, among the native canoes. Stark terror threw the savages into a state of panic and chaos.

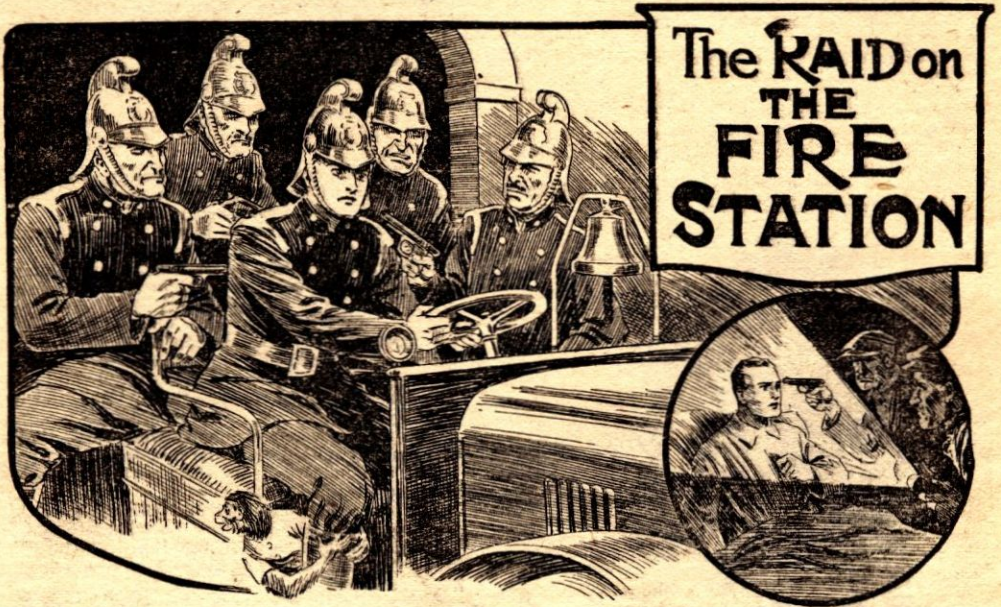
The respite allowed Crane to examine and strengthen his defences, and with fingers caressing the triggers of their rifles, the Britishers waited for the next rush.

It was not long in coming. Urged on by their leaders, the natives attacked with fierce, indomitable courage. A shower of short throwing spears hurled from the bank wrought terrible havoc amongst the defenders. One was killed instantly, and two severely wounded. To make matters worse, one of the machine-guns jammed, and the other was in charge of a man too weak from loss of blood to use it effectively.

Fully a score of the enemy were within half-a-dozen yards of the *Wanderer* when Crane flung himself



**CLANG, CLANG, CRASH!** The Boys of the Bloomsbury Street Fire Brigade, Axes Out, Fighting Flame and Smoke at Duty's Call.



**FIREFIGHTER FRED FORCED TO DRIVE HIS BELOVED FIRE ENGINE AT THE BIDDING OF DESPERATE CROOKS. JACKO, HIS PET MONKEY, PERFORMS AN AMAZING PART.**

### Bloomsbury Street Station is Held Up.

**F**RED LAWLESS—the famous fire-fighter of the Bloomsbury Street Fire Station—awoke with a start to find himself gazing into what, in his half-waking senses, he mistook for the powerful headlights of a motor car.

Gradually it dawned upon Firefighter Fred that the "motor headlamp" was an electric torch shone full into his eyes, whilst the cold, hard muzzle of a revolver pressed against his temple.

"Get up," hissed a grating voice in his ear, accompanied by a jab of the pistol's muzzle against his head. "Don't utter a syllable—but get up—and dress."

Slowly Fred pushed back the bedclothes and slid out of the bed—his bare feet touching the floor.

He chucked to himself as he realised that once he had his boots on, he had but to stamp upon the floor to bring some of his mates up from below to lay hold of the two men who had mysteriously gained entry to his bedroom and pulled on his uniform over his pyjamas, and drew his knee boots on.

He was upon the point of bringing one of them down with a thump upon the floorboards, when the door of his room opened and a couple of men in firemen's uniform entered the room, to be followed a moment later by another four.

Fred gave a laugh—his mates had come to his rescue. But the next instant his jaw dropped as he gazed in amazement at the uniformed men. For none of them made any attempt to attack the two interlopers.

They just stood there looking on!

Then one of the men in fireman's outfit spoke and Fred understood.

"S'all right, Boss," he said, speaking to the man who still kept the revolver directed full at Fred's heart, "we got the whole bunch downstairs—they're all nicely tied up. Jim's got a couple of spare uniforms, too, that ought to fit you and Ruddy."

In a flash Fred realised the hopelessness of his position. This desperate gang had broken into the Bloomsbury Street Fire Station and managed to overpower the men on duty—robbing them of their uniforms, which they now wore. But what was the plot? Why had they done this? He had no time for further conjecture, for with the nose of the gun jabbing into the small of his back, he was forced to descend to the station itself where stood the huge scarlet fire-engine and the motor fire-escape.

The Boss ordered him to show the man Ruddy the controls of the escape trolley and to start the engine up, and then handing the gun to one of his gang already dressed in one of the stolen uniforms, the criminal hurriedly drew the uniform supplied him, over his own clothes, finally placing a brass helmet upon his head.

Fred had no alternative but to carry out the orders which had been given him.

He got the motors of both the escape and the engine started, and as he moved round the station to do this, he perceived the forms of his comrades lying huddled up in heaps—all unconscious and their ankles and wrists securely bound.

Now a couple of men had climbed up into the driver's seat of the escape, and the Boss motioned for Lawless to take the wheel of the engine.



Reluctantly Fred obeyed, and the others in firemen's uniforms ranged themselves upon either side of the great, red juggernaut.

The Boss took up a position just behind Fred and the gallant firefighter felt the muzzle of the pistol pressed firmly in the small of his back.

"Get on with it! Drive straight to Hallowgate Gaol—and keep your hands on the wheel. All right, let her go!"

One of the gang seized the clapper of the bell and beat violently upon it, as the doors were slid back.

Fred let in the clutch and the fire engine hurtled out of the station. But as the monster sped on its journey, Fred felt something land near his feet. Glancing down, he saw it was Jacko, his pet monkey!

Fred Lawless was hardly in a position to argue with that pistol jammed in his back, and so—for the time being at any rate—he decided to act as if he were quite ready to do the man's bidding unquestioningly.

They had covered about half the distance to Hallowgate Prison, when the Boss signalled to a couple of men lounging about upon some waste building ground.

Fred saw a match struck in the darkness and the next instant a hissing shower of sparks shot up into the air to burst into a myriad of red balls of light. A rocket had been fired—and Fred realised that this was probably to act as a signal to someone inside the prison. Probably some warder who had been bribed to fire the place.

Another quarter of a mile, and then a full moon slid from behind a cloud to reveal the castle-like outline of Hallowgate Prison.

Already great rolling banks of smoke were pouring up from the building, and as Fred drew still nearer he could hear the ominous clanging of the alarm bell.

Now they were alongside the building and the Boss was rapping out his orders.

"You'll follow me," he hissed into Fred's ear as he handed the pistol to one of the others who still kept it uncomfortably close to Fred's ribs, and, still mystified, the gallant young fireman had perforce to obey.

Behind the Boss he strode along through the now open gates of the prison from which the anxious warders were marshalling groups of men in the broad-arrow branded uniforms of convicts. They were getting them out of the building and into the spacious exercise grounds of the prison—safe from the sudden outbreak of fire.

Unerringly, the leader of the gang led the way up a flight of stone steps to a gallery—ring round, halting before a certain barred door which had a small grill in the centre of it.

Here he paused and, whipping a key from his pocket, thrust it into the massive lock.

But the key would not turn in it.

Letting fall a muttered curse, the man turned to Fred.

"This key must be for the inside door," he snarled. "See what you can do with your hatchet."

Fred hesitated—gazed round for some sign of a warder or possibly a man in fireman's uniform whom he could recognise as a genuine member of the brigade, but only saw the tiny figure of Jacko seated high up upon an iron girder which supported the gallery above. Jacko sat there rubbing the smoke from his eyes, and looking on with a comical grin.

Yet his presence heartened Fred. And so—as the muzzle of the pistol jabbed once more imperatively into his ribs—he unshipped his hatchet and proceeded to attack the stout woodwork about the lock in the door.

At length, half-stified with the great clouds of smoke which seemed to be coming mysteriously from somewhere below—though, as yet, there was no sign of flames—Fred managed to hack the lock completely out of the woodwork.

Then the door gave inwards to admit to a narrow stone-walled passage at the end of which appeared another door—this time a steel one like a strong room. No axe could hack through that—but no axe was required, for this time the key in the hands of the Boss fitted the lock and shot back the bolt.

"In you go," ordered the man with the gun, and Fred was forced into the condemned cell.

Simultaneously a figure garbed in broad-arms sprang to his feet and leaped across to beside the Boss, wringing his hand. And part of the diabolical plot became plain to the young fireman. For the convict was none other than Cullem, who was to be hanged at dawn for a particularly brutal crime!

He was soon to know the rest of it.

"Quick, off with those duds," cried the Boss to the condemned man. "And you too," he added, jerking his head in the direction of Fred Lawless.

Cullem needed no second bidding, but immediately proceeded to wrench off his convict garb—and Fred under the intimidating effect of the revolver in his ribs—was obliged to shed his fireman's uniform.

Then a quick transformation took place. Cullem rapidly donned Fred's uniform, whilst Lawless was forced to garb himself in the shameful broad-arrow branded garb which the condemned man had shed.

Meanwhile four of the men disguised as firemen had been busy upon the bars of the small window of the condemned cell, outside which the head of a crimson ladder showed. Fred suddenly went berserk as he realised the dreadful plot of which he was to be a victim, and knocking the revolver from "the Boss's" grasp, he fought like a fiend.

But the crooks were too many for him. He felt ropes biting into his wrists and then a noose was flung about his ankles and drawn tight.

"All right!" cried the Boss. "Leave him here—

(Continued on next page.)

**C**HUMS—Falcon Swift, the Monocled Manhunter, with his Boy Assistant, Chick, in a Yarn of Mystic Peril and Gathering Storm in the Desert Next Week:

## THE

# MYSTERY OF THE DREAM CURSE.

A Haunted Tomb of the Pharaohs Deep in the Heart of the Desert. The Sporting Detective Elucidates a most Astounding Riddle of the East.

READ THE STORY IN NEXT WEEK'S BOYS' MAGAZINE





## THE RAID ON THE FIRE STATION—

(Continued from previous page.)

he'll get burned to a cinder and the ropes with him—they'll never be able to recognise him, when they do find his charred body, and they'll mistake him for you, Cullern," he finished, with a fiendish laugh.

But Cullern was not stopping to hear.

The truckle bedstead had been dragged beneath the window, and he was now climbing through the opening.

The next instant his feet were upon the rungs of the fire-escape, and he was hurrying down.

The crowd, which had gathered below, saw nothing more than a man garbed in a fireman's uniform and brass helmet coming down the escape, followed by others.



Spinning round a corner on two wheels  
Fred saw the other fire engine.

Fred was left alone, locked in the condemned cell and helplessly bound hand and foot. Around him the prison blazed.

And there was only one friend who knew of his peril and to whom he could look for help—a tiny brown monkey!

### In the Blazing Gaol!

THE whole building was seething with choking smoke and Jacko—from his position on the girder—could see darting tongues of fire beginning to leap up amongst the surging billows.

The sagacious little animal had realised that he would be helpless to save his beloved master whilst there were so many assailants about him, but as silence reigned in the cell, Jacko seemed to understand that the crooks had departed.

And so Jacko got busy!

He clambered down from the girder and made for the condemned cell at a run.

A cry of intense delight and relief escaped the almost helpless fireman's lips as he perceived the faithful Jacko clinging to the iron bars which criss-crossed the opening in the door of his cell.

"Hallo, Jacko—good monk!" cried Fred, for they had mercifully left him un gagged. "See if you can find the key," he added and nodded downwards.

Jacko disappeared for a moment, and Fred could hear the grating of the key in the lock as the tiny animal did its utmost to turn it—but it was too much for him.

A moment later he reappeared at the grill with the key in one of his tiny paws—a woebegone expression on his comical little face, as he gibbered frantically.

The monkey pushed the key through the opening, and Fred was able to grip it in his teeth.

Then dropping upon his knees he managed to

thrust it into the lock upon his side of the door, but the leverage required was too great for him to be able to turn the key with his teeth.

Still he now had the key upon the right side of the door—he must turn it somehow.

Hopping round so that he had his back to the door, his hands—tied behind him—closed over the key, and twisted it round.

He heard the bolt shoot back, and the next instant he had clawed the door open.

In a flash, Jacko was working with his sharp little teeth at the knots in the rope which held his wrists, and at length Fred fell them give. A moment later he had freed his ankles.

"Good boy, Jacko!" cried Fred. "And now to escape from this infernal place and get after those crooks!"

Fred raced for the balcony and gazed anxiously down into the well below.

It was one seething mass of flame—a veritable inferno!

"No good that way, Jacko, old chap," he muttered grimly. "We must try up above—the roof, maybe."

With Jacko perched upon his shoulder, the young fireman went up the iron staircase which led to a trap-door in the roof. He could hardly see a yard ahead of him—so intense were the swirling clouds of smoke, but somehow he managed to reach his objective.

It was the monkey's nimble finger which shot back the bolt and Fred flung it upwards.

The next instant he had scrambled up through the opening and stood upon the flat roof of the prison.

Lawless gazed about him for some means of getting down, but at first saw no escape. Then his eyes fell upon a tall flagstaff.

The flagstaff consisted of a tall spruce pole, held erect by two bolts between stout pieces of wood cemented into the roof.

Frantically Lawless seized one of the nuts and twirled it off its thread. A tug and the bolt came free in his hands. The pole could now be lowered, using the other bolt as a hinge. Foot by foot, the young fireman lowered it from the perpendicular until he had it lying horizontally, the end protruding a couple of yards over the edge of the roof.

Now he hurriedly unhitched the cord from the cleat at the base of the pole, and made a large knot in one end so that it would not drag through the pulley at the top of the flagstaff.

He then flung the loose end out and over the edge of the roof.

"Now for it, Jacko," he cried. "Let's hope it's strong enough and long enough—that's all." And Jacko, perched on his shoulder, seemed to nod understandingly.

Fred now swung his legs over the pole and proceeded to work his way out along to the end where the cord hung downwards.

The cord was thin and cut into his hands, but Fred was oblivious of this at that moment. Down, down he went, until, with a gasp of horror, he felt the end of the cord in his hands—he was still some distance from the ground.

But, in the meantime, a brigade call had gone out and now a dozen engines from different stations were upon the spot—together with a small army of genuine, uniformed firemen.

Gazing up through the swirling smoke they perceived the figure of a convict hanging on to the end of the flag cord—a tiny animal of some sort perched upon his shoulder.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Captain Hawtrey. "It's one of the convicts! Quick! Get the jumping sheet out and hold it beneath him. Hold on a



minute," he added, placing his hands to his mouth and yelling upwards to Fred.

An ominous creaking sound came from above, and Fred realised that the pole was beginning to snap. Either the flames must have reached it—or the weight at the extreme end had been too great.

Fred prayed that it might stand until he heard the word to drop from below—for he guessed that the landing sheet was being hurriedly got out.

A few tense seconds ticked by which seemed like an age to Fred—and then he heard Captain Hawtrey's voice again.

"All right—let go—drop!"

And not a moment too soon, for at that instant

On, on went Fred's engine, crashing along the deserted roads through the night.

Then from round a corner there sounded a hideous crash!

Fred spun round on two wheels, and was just in time to see another fire-engine just ahead of him.

It had mounted the pavement under the unskilled hands of the driver and had finished with its bonnet in the plate-glass window of a large jewellers' shop.

And it was the fact that the shop *did* happen to be a jewellers' which proved the gang's undoing.

The temptation was too great for them—they could not resist stopping and grabbing what they could out through the jagged hole in the window.



**THE FIRE-CROOK'S CRASH.**—The stolen fire-engine, under the unskilled hands of the crook who controlled it, mounted the pavement and finished with its nose in a jeweller's shop window.

there sounded a report like a pistol shot as the pole snapped in two and Fred felt himself falling through space.

Fred landed with a plomp, dead in the centre of the landing sheet, and then scrambled quickly out of it.

A couple of uniformed warders came threateningly towards him, but he unceremoniously brushed them aside, and made for Captain Hawtrey.

"By Jove—it's Lawless!" gasped the Captain, as he recognised Fred's smoke-besmirched features. "What the . . ."

But Fred—standing there in the convict's clothes—had no time to explain then.

"Has one of the engines gone off, sir?" he cried.

"Yes—a few minutes ago!"

"With Cullem and his gang aboard," cried Lawless, and then without a word he dashed for the nearest engine standing by with its motor running.

He leaped into the driver's seat, and flinging out the clutch, jammed home a gear.

"Which way did they go?" he shouted, and a couple of men springing up beside him pointed out the direction.

The huge crimson engine shot forward with a jerk, and before it had travelled a dozen yards Fred was in top gear with the accelerator pedal jammed down beneath his foot.

Quickly Fred jammed on the brakes, and shouted to the two men with him.

"Quick, run out the hose—there's a hydrant over there!"

In a flash—without waiting to ask questions—the two men obeyed, and in an incredibly short space of time the hose was streaked out and affixed.

"Right—let her go!" cried Fred Lawless, snatching up the burnished brass nozzle.

Then Fred proceeded to have a great game with the gang.

Each time one made to break into a run and get away, he was met by the full force of the stream of water from the hose, which sent him spinning back under its force.

Less than five minutes later a car pulled up at the scene of the accident, and a dozen warders and police tumbled out and flung themselves upon Fred's prisoners.

Captain Hawtrey turned to Fred Lawless.

"Well done, Lawless—well done! I always seem to be having to congratulate you."

"Congratulate Jacko," returned Fred, with a smile, as he patted the monkey—still perched upon his shoulder. "I'd be frizzling inside Hollowgate Prison, but for him."



HAL DARING, THE INVENTOR'S SON, AND HIS AMUSING AND INTREPID BOY PALS, "SQUAT" MAGUIRE, THE IRISH CHAP, AND SANDY McNAB, GO THROUGH TERRIFIC ORDEALS TO KEEP THE UNION JACK FLYING.

### The Message from the Skies.

ON the cliff top at Brightsea—a small fishing village on the east coast of England—a young man was gazing out across the restless, leaden-hued sea. Tall, with the clean-limbed muscular slimness of the racehorse, Hal Daring was a typical English boy.

Just now Hal—or Fearless Hal, as he was known to his intimates—was conscious of a feeling of anxiety tugging at his heart.

Every evening of the past seven days had found him on the cliff tops scanning the sea for some sign of his father, a world-famed inventor and scientist, who had gone for a stroll on the cliff tops seven days before—and had never returned. Mysteriously, inexplicably, without a word or a sign, he had disappeared.

Hal and his chums, "Squat" Maguire and Sandy McNab, had scoured the cliffs from end to end, but they had found nothing.

With a gesture of disappointment, Hal had half-turned from the cliff edge when a peculiar whirring noise caused him to glance up. A bird was flying over the sea towards the cliffs on which he stood. It passed over his head, and then the whirring noise ceased suddenly and the bird fell to the ground.

Hal ran forward and picked it up, and an exclamation of surprise escaped him. The bird was nothing more than a small cylinder, built of aluminium plates, and in place of a beak was a small propeller.

"Well, I'm hanged." Hal stared at the thing in amazement.

Then, with a cry of delight, he began to feverishly unscrew the propeller, and a tightly-rolled spill of writing paper was disclosed. Unrolling it, Hal read:

Dear Son,

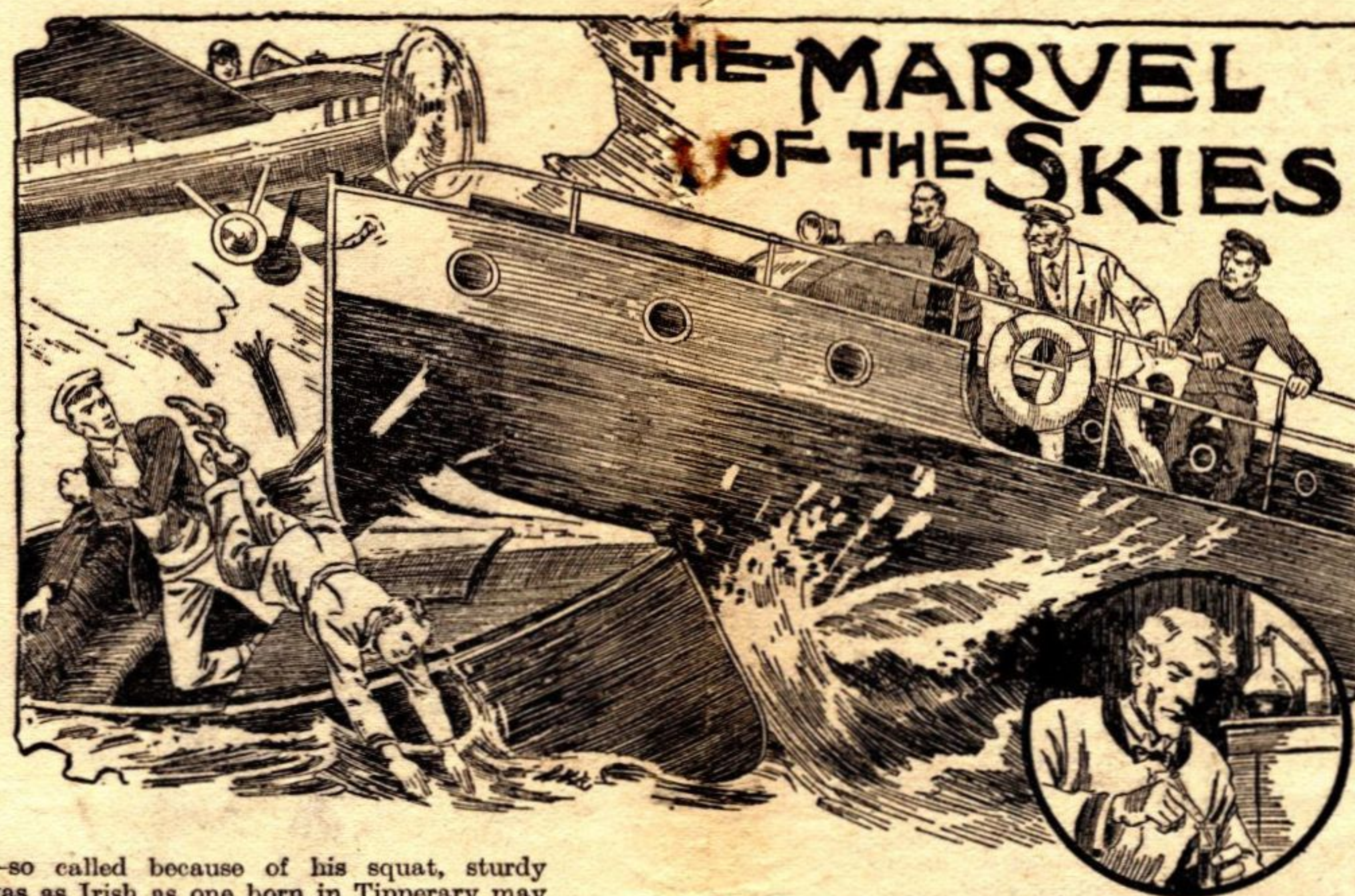
I am held prisoner on Death Rock in the North Sea—which is nothing more than a secret depot for manufacturing inventions of war. Unless I forfeit the plans of the "Sparrowhawk," I am to remain a prisoner. I suspect Gluckstein has something to do with the business. They are making me work in the secret laboratories and workshops, and I have managed to invent these aerial torpedoes. This is the sixth I have sent with a message. I will send others as soon as possible. Don't breathe a word to anyone but the boys, as my life won't be worth a moment's purchase if they suspect me. And watch a yacht called the "Vixen." YOUR FATHER.

Having read the strange, though welcome message, Hal ran back from the cliff edge towards a huge, smooth-faced rock, and after a quick glance about the cliffs, he pressed the rock and it swung open. Hurrying through the aperture thus disclosed, he descended a flight of shallow rock hewn steps and came to a brilliantly-lighted room filled with test tubes and the paraphernalia of the scientist.

Two figures at work over a low bench turned at his whirlwind entry and ran towards where Hal stood with the note in his hand.

They were Hal's chums and co-workers. "Squat"

A Silver Shape, Noiseless and Swift, Sailing the Skies Like a Bird! And an Intriguing Foreign Diplomat is After its Secret in Order that Another Terrible War Cloud Shall Break over the World. Read this Grand and Stirring Long Complete Tale.



Maguire—so called because of his squat, sturdy frame—was as Irish as one born in Tipperary may well be, whilst Sandy McNab bore the unmistakable mark of the Scot in his lean, shrewd face. The two were for ever quarrelling—until danger threatened either. Then, two better chums never existed.

The three boys read the message over and over again, and then fell to examining the wonderful torpedo in which it had been sent.

"Well, boys," said Hal. "It's good to know that Dad's alive. Guess we've got to make a move for Death Rock. We'll soon have Dad out—"

"Oh, will you?" A sneering guttural voice broke in on his words, and the three swung about in amazement. At the door of the laboratory a man in the white ducks of the yachtsman was standing and his bearded, thin-jawed, evil face held a sneering smile. Behind him three heavily-built, jerseyed men were looking into the laboratory. Unknown to Hal, his movements had been watched for the past hour in an endeavour to locate the secret laboratory and workshop of Professor Daring. When Hal had entered by the rock face the four men had followed silently.

At a swift command, the three men leaped forward but, like lightning, Hal sprang towards a bench and clicked on a switch.

Professor Daring had not overlooked the fact that his workshop was likely to be discovered. And the men were having a taste of an electric current.

Screaming and writhing, they tried to dart forward. But they were helpless. Meanwhile, Hal had taken out three automatics, and Squat and Sandy each held one poised in their right hands. Then Hal shut off the electricity.

"Now, Herr Gluckstein," he said coolly, "we want to know what you have done with my father.

I'll give you exactly two minutes to explain, and if you don't, I'm going to switch on that current again—with four times the voltage."

The German—for such he was—glared at the cool Hal in baffled fury.

"You English pup!" he mouthed; "for what do you think I have kidnapped your father? I want his secret of the Sparrowhawk—and mean to have it. You may be master now, but I am master at Death Rock, and your father is at my mercy. A word from me and—"

The sentence was never completed. An automatic barked and a bullet sent Hal's gun spinning into the air. One of the sailors had fired from his pocket. Quick as a flash, the four men had turned and swung through the laboratory door.

"After 'em, be jabbers." Squat was the first to recover from the surprise. He raced after the fleeing figures. But they made good their start. The roar of an aeroplane burst out and, while Hal and his chums were still at the rock door, the 'plane shot into the air, well out of reach of their bullets.

### A Rescue from the Air.

THE Sparrowhawk could do anything in the air. It could rise from the ground in its own length, it could hover like a bird, and it could climb three times as fast as any other 'plane. And it had taken seven years to build. Small wonder that Hal was perturbed at the discovery of his father's secret laboratories.

"Boys," he said after a futile chase, "we'll have to do something and quick. What do you suggest?" "Faith an' I—" began Squat.

"Haul yer speil," broke in Sandy; "ye ken naethin' about anythin'. Whaur brains are concerned ye're dead."

Hal shoved the pair apart.

"Look here," he said, "I've got an idea. First thing to-morrow we'll get the Sparrowhawk and the Seagull on the job. I'll take the 'plane up alone and you can manage the motor-boat. We'll get as near Death Rock as possible and spy out the position."

The three turned in. Long after Hal had undressed, Squat and Sandy were grumbling and grousing at each other.

The three were up with the dawn next morning and out on the cliff top. Hal ran an appraising eye over the Sparrowhawk.

Silver-grey, with wings specially constructed to bring wind resistance to its absolute minimum, the small 'plane had two great advantages. It was almost invisible in the air, and by a special invention of Professor Daring the engines were noiseless.

The pilot was protected by a bullet-proof cockpit and another ingenious contrivance enabled him to fire an aerial gun with his feet without taking his hands from the controls.

Below the cliff top Sandy and Squat were seated in the Seagull—a fast motor-boat—arguing and squabbling vociferously.

Hal's voice settled the argument and with a roaring of engines, the three sped swiftly over the sea towards Death Rock.

Once in the air, Hal swept the sea with his powerful binoculars and after half-an-hour's flying, he caught sight of Death Rock. Far out of the track of the regular passenger ships, it was not a place likely to be visited and Gluckstein had indeed chosen a safe spot for his nefarious schemes.

As he drew nearer to the rocky island, Hal gasped in amazement at the sight his binoculars disclosed. The small island was walled in behind its high, rocky headlands, and inside the wall were a number of low sheds and buildings.

He could see numerous dots hurrying about like flies between the buildings, and he knew that they were workmen.

Swooping nearer to the island Hal saw a lithe, slim shape leap from the island base towards the open sea. The waves curled back in spuming foam from its nose, and even from his height Hal knew that the speed of the motor-boat was tremendous.

He marked its progress through his glasses, and of a sudden a gasp of horror escaped him. Directly in the path of the flying monster was the Seagull; and at that speed a larger craft would cut through the other like a knife through cheese.

With nerves taut, Hal set the Sparrowhawk racing back towards the Seagull. And in that instant Sandy, at the wheel, saw the danger.

"Squat, ye Irish heathen," he yelled, "we're for it. Haul on."

He swung the Seagull about, half-burying it in a cascade of foaming waves, and began to race frantically away from the great leaping island boat.

But fast as the Seagull was, the island boat was faster.

In a screaming roar of engines, it tore into the Seagull. Straight amidships it struck, smashing the Seagull under the waves with crashing timbers.

Then when the debacle was complete, the pilot swung his boat round for the island.

Gluckstein, beside the pilot, leaned over the boat-side and shouted derisively at Sandy and Squat, struggling in the boiling, foam-crested waves.

"That'll teach you," he yelled. "You can drown like the dogs you are."

He took out an automatic and levelled it at the struggling Sandy.



But, before his finger had crooked about the trigger, a silver-grey shape hurtled like a bullet through the air. The wheels of the *Sparrowhawk* skimmed the motor-boat and struck Gluckstein full in the chest. He was sent staggering back full length in the boat bottom.

The pilot gave one terrified glance at the grim-faced Hal, and then threw on power and raced for the island.

Ignoring the boat, Hal swung his 'plane about and concentrated all his skill in reaching his chums. As the wings skimmed the surface of the water, Sandy and Squat grasped them and swung aboard. An instant later they were in the cockpit behind Hal, and the *Sparrowhawk* was speeding like a live thing into the sky.

### The Air Fight.

"WELL, have you decided yet?" Gluckstein, sardonic, sneering, stood before Professor Daring.

"I have decided as I told you before." Professor Daring's reply was emphatic.

"Then you will die before you give up the secret of the *Sparrowhawk*? You fool—do you think I fear to do as I say?"

The professor's level tones did not waver.

"I know that you are capable of anything, Gluckstein. But I do not fear you!"

Unable to control the furious anger that convulsed him, the German made as though to start forward and strike the calm-faced man before him. But suddenly, without a word, he turned upon his heel, leaving the professor alone in the small workshop.

For a moment the professor's keen, clever face looked anxious. Then he shrugged his shoulders and he turned to the low bench and picked up a tool.

Inch by inch the door was slowly pushed open, and a square Irish face peered cautiously in.

Seeing that the professor was alone in the workshop, the face was followed by shoulders of enormous breadth. The door was closed quickly to.

"Squat!" gasped the professor. "How on earth—?"

"Hal sent me, sor," Squat said quickly. "He says he'll have you out of here in quick time if ye'll watch out an'—begorra!"

The door banged open, and framed in it stood Gluckstein with a revolver in his hand and a number of menacing figures at his back. Gluckstein glared at the cool Irish lad standing by the professor.

"Himmel," he yelled, "we have—"

He broke off suddenly as a bony head took him square in the middle and shot him back into the men behind him. Straight through the passage made by the falling German, Squat tore like a rugger champion. Before they could recover, he was through and out in the open space before the workshop.

A silver shape swept low towards him. From it dangled a thick rope, a rope that swung right into Squat's outstretched hands. Squat grasped it, swung it about his body, and the silver shape sped into the air.

Before even the first bullet was whistling through the air, Squat was heaved into the 'plane cockpit with a jerk that shook every bone in his body.

"Well? Hal, goggles and helmeted, glanced back over his shoulder. "What did my father say, Squat?"

"He's all right," returned Squat. "Shure, we had no time for a lengthy discussion, but he looks well enough."

"Good!" Hal turned back to the joystick. And as he did so something rattled on the *Sparrowhawk's*

wings. It was the staccato rattle of bullets and he glanced up in sudden alarm.

Above him two 'planes were sweeping down in a devastating, concerted rush and firing as they came.

In the fraction of a second Hal made his decision. "Hold on, boys!" he yelled.

He touched the joystick, and the *Sparrowhawk* hurtled down, spinning and twisting in the air like a shot bird. It was a clever ruse, and one which had been popular with the war aces in their air fights.

Certain that they had shot the *Sparrowhawk* down, the two 'planes swung into the air again.

Then an amazing thing happened. Some few hundred feet above the sea the *Sparrowhawk* straightened out from the death spin. Instead of crashing into the waves, it swept up in an almost vertical rush.

In the space of a few seconds it had soared above the two 'planes and Hal was operating the footgun. A steady stream of bullets rained down on the 'planes, and one of them hurtled seawards in a rush of flames.

The other did not stop to argue. With its roaring engines going all out, it raced back for Death Rock.

### \*The "Rats."\*

"WELL, boys, it's up to me. I'll go down to the village to-night."

It was the morning following the air fight. Hal and his chums stood on the cliffs. In his hand Hal held another of the aerial torpedoes, and the message it contained was short and heavy with menace:

*Look out, Hal. Gluckstein has hired a Brightsea gang called "The Rats," to get you. Their headquarters are in The Roan Cow, on the waterfront. Watch them and find out—*

The message ceased abruptly, showing clearly that the professor had been disturbed while writing it; and Hal's face tensed. The Rats were a gang of waterfront crooks who would stick at nothing. But without hesitation Hal made up his mind.

And so, as dusk deepened into darkness that same night, a young fisherman walked into The Roan Cow. Standing at the dirty bar, Hal had no fear that his disguise would be penetrated. He looked round the smoke-filled room casually. And thus he saw The Rats.

There were four of them, and an involuntary shudder ran through Hal at sight of their repulsive features. Heavily built, ill-kempt, and clad in the jerseys of the waterfront dweller, all four wore the unmistakable stamp of the gaulbird. They had glanced suspiciously at the young fisherman as he entered, but now they resumed their low-voiced discussion.

Studying them covertly, all at once Hal stiffened. He was an expert lip reader, and quite clearly he saw one crook's lips frame the words:

"Join Gluckstein at midnight at the cliffs."

With every nerve taut, Hal watched. Clearly from the crook's lips he read the plot. The Rats were to make for the cliff top at midnight, where Gluckstein would join them. And then the gang would make a concerted attack to smash the laboratory.

Sure of the message, Hal pushed aside his barely touched drink and turned to the door.

"Say, you, hold on!"

Hal swung round. One of the Rats, a great, heavy-jawed fellow with enormous shoulders, was leaning over the table watching him.

"What's your boat?" he asked.

"The *Seaswan*," answered Hal.

"Liar!" Like a pistol-shot the word was ripped



out. As one man the four crooks rose slowly to their feet. An oath ripped out from the leader's lips.

"Shut that door, quick! Now, who are you? Out with it!"

Hal backed to the door. A quick side-glance showed that it was still open. There was just a chance for a sudden rush. Bunching himself, he dived forward—and then fell back in dismay. Framed in the doorway was one of Gluckstein's sailors. Instantly the German took in the situation.

"Der very poy we want. Hein?"

He came forward slowly into the room. And then, with the speed of light, Hal acted. His right shot out in a fierce, upswinging uppercut for the sailor's jaw. Like a pole-axed bull the man sagged down. Turning with a pantherish spring, Hal leaped the one table the room contained. In an instant he had overturned it and was behind it. One sudden wrench, and a heavy table leg was in his hand.



**PLOTTERS KEEP OFF**—Hal sprang forward and clicked on a switch. Screaming and writhing, the three men tried to dart forward off the plate, but they were helpless. They were having a taste of the electric shock.

"Now, you scugs," he roared, "come and have a taste of this."

For a moment the crooks hesitated. The wildly-waving table leg had put fear into their hearts. Then, one of them bent down and fingered in his boot. A long steel blade glistened under the light. It was a throwing-knife, razor-keen, deadly as a bullet in the hands of an expert.

With an evil grin the thug raised his hand for the throw.

"Cully," he mouthed, "I never yet missed with this knife. Straight between the eyes is where you're—"

The sentence was never completed. From outside came the sudden coughing roar of a motor-cycle's engine. Almost simultaneously the room door crashed in. Framed in it was "Squat" Maguire astride a huge motor-cycle, the front wheel of which had smashed the door.

"Bejabbers, ye filthy gossoons! Put your hands up, or ye're dead men!"

A wicked-looking automatic looked out at the crooks from Squat's right hand. With his left on the bars, Squat manoeuvred his machine until his front wheel was clear of the door. Then he shouted to Hal.

"Come on, me bhoy! I'll riddle the first man that winks at ye."

Still grasping the table leg, Hal dived for the machine. In an instant he was astride the carrier, and Squat was operating the controls. Before the crooks could move, the machine was jumping round and hurtling along the village street.

"Begorra, Hal, me bhoy, they nearly had ye then! I left the bike at the street top until I found out where ye were. And there's more trouble, I'll tell ye. Sandy's at the cliff with himself and there's a boat in the bay. Hold fast. We'll have to move if we're to save the lab."

Hal blanched at his Irish chum's words. Once destroyed, his father's laboratory could never be

replaced. The lifework of a genius would be brought to nothing.

"Open her out, Squat," he muttered grimly, "give her all she'll take. We'll have to risk a crash."

Without a word, Squat fed the huge engine with more "gas." The great machine began to hit up a speed that was almost terrifying. Squat took corners in a swerving rush that threatened to unseat the pair.

Fortunately the roads were clear of traffic or a smash would have been inevitable. In the clear moonlight Hal could see the speedometer needle quivering to the sixty mark. And still they raced on.

A sudden yell from Hal sent Squat's head up momentarily from the bars. They were on the cliff road and clearly definable in the moonlight was the lean figure of Sandy, struggling in the grip of three burly sailors. The bearded Gluckstein stood by, urging his men on. The chums had arrived in the nick of time.

Right on to the cliff top Squat sent his machine. His front wheel scattered the sailors like ninepins.



And scarce waiting for the bike to stop, Hal launched himself at Gluckstein.

The German had heard the roaring engine, and as Hal leaped forward a revolver glinted in the moonlight from Gluckstein's hand.

"Back, you dog!" he ordered.

Hal never hesitated. The table leg, which he still carried, swept down for Gluckstein's wrist, sending the revolver spinning even as the German pulled the trigger.

One of the sailors gave a short, coughing grunt and then lay still. Gluckstein had shot one of his own men. With a muttered curse, the German turned to the cliff edge. Before Hal could define his intention, he had leaped off the cliff into the sea.

### Hal Boards the "Vixen."

TWO days passed before the chums heard anything further of the sinister German. But on the third night, which was dark and moonless, the long, speedy yacht *Vixen* again crept into the bay.

It was Sandy who gave the alarm. The Scotch lad's keen ears had caught the low throbbing of the yacht's engines. Ever since Gluckstein's attack on the laboratory the chums had been on the *qui vive*. They had divided the days into spells of eight hours, and each took a turn at watching from the cliff edge.

"Hal, me boy, if yon yacht is'na in the bay, I'm a fool."

Hal swung round from the lab. bench at which he was working. Sandy's thin face was contorted with excitement. Not for a moment had Hal thought that Gluckstein would give up his attempts on the laboratory. And of a sudden an idea flashed into his brain.

"By heavens, boys, if that's Gluckstein's yacht, I'm going to board her. By hook or crook I'll find what that fiend's doing. And I'll make him cough out the secret entrance to his island if I have to choke it out of him. Come on."

Squat, who had been having a spell in his bunk, tumbled out quickly. His square Irish face grinned at Sandy's excited mien.

"I'll wager it's only some steamer he's heard. Sandy's ears are not much use to him."

"Ye pair fool, ye. I dinna whisper into 'em every time I open my mouth, an' that's what ye dae."

In an instant the two were glaring at each other and then a word from Hal settled the threatening quarrel.

"Will you two never stop your barking? What if the yacht should be at the cliff base?"

The suggestion was enough. Silently the three made their way down the cliffs towards the sandy shore.

Squat and Sandy were openly at variance with Hal's dangerous project, but they said nothing. They knew it was useless trying to influence Hal when once his mind was made up.

Entering the water silently, Hal struck out into the bay. Very soon Sandy's suspicions were confirmed. The outline of the yacht loomed up before him in the darkness.

Treading water, Hal's eyes took in a large, open porthole. Instantly his fingers had grasped the edge and he was hauling himself through.

"Gee whizz, I'm in luck!"

An exclamation escaped him at sight of a number of brass-buttoned uniforms in the small cabin. In a trice he had shed his wet clothes and climbed into one of the uniforms. Not a sound came from above, and once in the uniform, Hal cautiously opened the cabin door.

He reached the deck without mishap, and keeping close to the deck-rails trod softly along. Gluckstein,

no doubt thinking that Hal had invoked the aid of the police, was obviously waiting for an opportunity to get ashore. Not a light gleamed from the yacht, and Hal was forced to tread carefully in case he struck into something.

The sound of voices some little distance ahead of him brought Hal to a sudden stop. Unmistakable was the guttural voice of Gluckstein.

"We will return to the island. Bendenberg, you will take a boat and keep watch on the pig-boys until I return. The wireless tells me that there is trouble on the rocks. I must return at once."

Carefully Hal crept towards the speaker. He found himself outside the door of a small cabin, and with every nerve tense, he pushed lightly upon it. It opened to his touch, revealing Gluckstein and the yacht captain seated before a small table, upon which Hal glimpsed a map.

"This is the way to the rock. The secret entrance is here."

Peering through the part-opened door, Hal held his breath, waiting for Gluckstein to continue. But the yacht captain rose to his feet.

"Very good, sir. We return at once."

Hal darted back into the alleyway as the captain came out. Then, on a sudden, mad impulse, he entered the cabin. Gluckstein's back was towards him, and without hesitation Hal hit him. His fist took the German behind the ear, completely knocking him out.

Snatching up the map, Hal made for the door, then:

"Hands up!"

In the cabin doorway was a German sailor, a levelled revolver in his hand. And even as he started back, Hal heard the throbbing of the yacht engines. He was caught like a rat in a trap.

"Keep your hands up."

The sailor moved forward into the cabin. Still covering Hal, he shook Gluckstein by the shoulder, and soon the German opened his eyes. A vindictive glitter came into his eyes as he saw Hal.

"Goot! Now I haf the father and the son, hein? One or the other will tell me the secret of the wonder 'plane, or—"

The threat in his voice was unmistakable. Hal, his brain racing, looked about him. The yacht was already under way. In another few minutes it would be almost impossible for him to swim ashore even if he reached the deck.

On a sudden his eye fell on a soda syphon that stood on the small table. It was within an inch of where he stood. Gluckstein and his captain had been regaling themselves with whisky when Hal had overheard them.

"Now look here, Gluckstein," Hal spoke evenly. "I'm prepared to let you have the 'plane secret. Give me permission to—"

While he was yet speaking, his right hand came down on the plunger of the syphon bottle. In the same movement he swung the bottle upwards, and a stream of soda water shot full in the face of the German sailor. The revolver barked.

Hal felt a bullet whiz through his sleeve, and then, head down, he charged. The German sailor crumpled up like a pricked balloon. Before Gluckstein could reach him, Hal was through the door and racing for the deck. Roaching it he ran to the deck rails, gave one glance at the dark, tossing waters, and then dived.

\* \* \* \* \*

SANDY McNAB strained his eyes over the sea. His bony hands clutched the wheel of the powerful motor-boat and now and then he swung a small searchlight across the waves.

Nearly an hour had passed since Hal had swum



off to the yacht, and in that time Sandy had heard the yacht engines being started. It seemed certain that Hal's plans had failed.

Leaving Squat at the cliff, Sandy had decided to follow the yacht in a motor-boat which Professor Daring kept near his laboratory. But as he chugged over the sea his hopes had gradually failed.

"Ye ken this is a bad business," the Scotch lad muttered to himself.

The searchlight had picked something out on the surface of the water, something white that was not foam. Instantly Sandy was racing towards it, his heart leaping into his throat.

"Hal, Hal," he yelled, "where are ye?"

Back over the water came a faint call. Hal, at the point of exhaustion, was within twenty yards of the boat. Quickly Sandy guided the boat towards him. One sudden, quick heave, and Hal, more dead than alive, was in the boat.

### The Rock Destroyed.

"WE'VE got to risk it, Sandy. I've got the location of Death Rock. The map shows the secret entrance. We'll never get another chance like this. Gluckstein thinks I went under.

Hal, almost fully recovered from the long, desperate night swim, was at the wheel of the motor-boat. He had decided to race the boat across to Death Rock. His intention had astounded the dour Sandy. Neither of the lads had a weapon. It seemed the essence of madness to try and reach the rock unarmed.

But there was method in Hal's madness. He knew that Gluckstein thought he had perished in the sea. For the yacht had been stopped to search for him, and only Hal's under-water swimming had saved him from discovery. And this fact would give him a chance to reach Death Rock's secret entrance.

The first pale streaks of dawn were tinging the sky when the chums came in sight of Death Rock. Midway between the huge bleak island Hal caught sight of the cave which marked the entrance to the secret channel. It was a great wide cave hewed out of the solid rock by the action of the elements, and from the sea it gave no hint of the secret channel behind.

"Gosh," Hal muttered as they drew closer. "No wonder Gluckstein feels safe on the island. Not in a thousand years would anyone dream of this channel. Easy does it, Sandy."

Silencing the motor-boat's engines to a low, purring hum, Hal carefully guided his craft into the cave mouth. And then commenced a nerve-shattering drive through intense darkness. The secret channel ran right into the heart of the island. And it was tricky work guiding the motor-boat along the narrow tortuous inlet. More than once the motor-boat sides grated and scraped along the tunnel walls.

But grimly Hal kept the boat to its course. He had not dared to switch on his lights, and with every nerve tense, the chums strained ahead through the inky blackness.

Of the *Vicen* there had been no sign. Obviously the yacht had dropped Gluckstein at the island and either gone back to the bay or was lying back of Death Rock.

Sandy, close beside Hal, had picked out a huge spanner from the motor-boat's toolchest and, with this in his hand, the Scotch lad stood waiting. Quite suddenly Hal realised a change in the channel. It seemed to widen, where the boat had touched the tunnel sides an instant before there were now inches to spare.

"Go easy, Sandy," Hal muttered in the darkness.

"I guess—what's that?"

In an instant Hal had stopped the boat engines. A low, guttural voice came sounding along the tunnel. It seemed to be no more than a foot away, and on a sudden impulse Hal switched on his lights.

A gasp escaped the chums at the sight that met their gaze. Standing on a shallow platform at one side of the tunnel was a uniformed German with a bayoneted rifle on his shoulder. The light from the motor-boat had momentarily blinded him and instantly Hal saw his chance.

"Quick, Sandy, let him have that spanner. And for the love of Mike aim straight!"

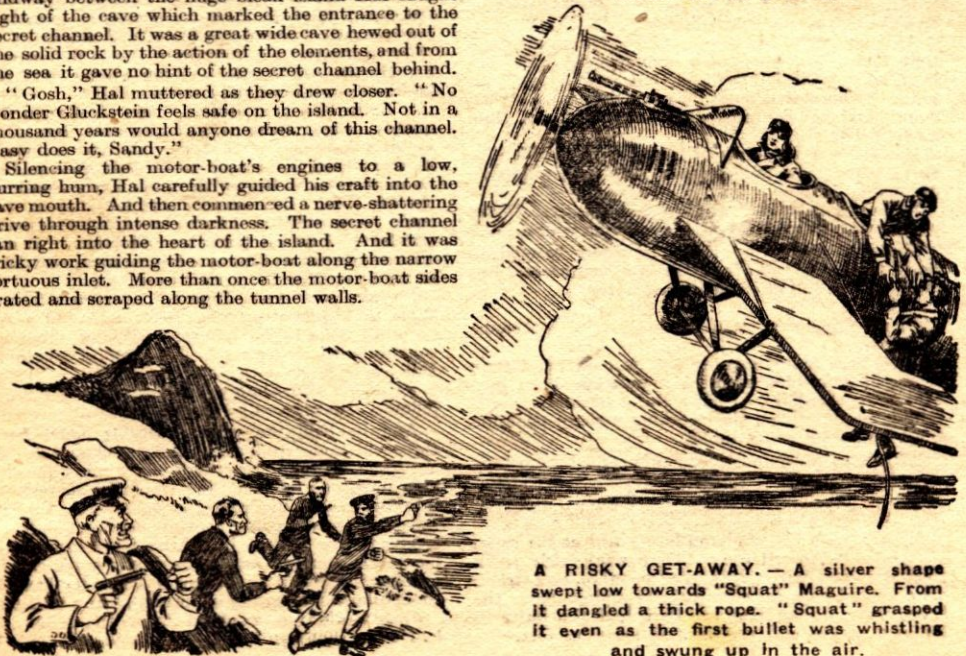
Sandy raised the heavy spanner. Quick and true as a speeding bullet it flew through the air. It took the surprised soldier full between the eyes and before he could recover, the chums had reached the platform.

It was the work of a moment to pin the man down, and, with no gentle hand, Hal rammed a gag into his throat.

"Now," he grinned, "we'll tie the blighter up. Then for Dad and a quick getaway. Come on."

Leaving the soldier helpless on the platform, the

(Continued on page 2.)



A RISKY GET-AWAY.—A silver shape swept low towards "Squat" Maguire. From it dangled a thick rope. "Squat" grasped it even as the first bullet was whistling and swung up in the air.





## THE BIG GAME CRICKETERS

(Continued from  
page 9).

Scarce had the clatter of its falling subsided than the debonair gentleman crook stepped swiftly into the room, bent and picked up the revolver. He was smiling gayly, and he made a mocking bow to the amazed crooks.

"M'sieu Velasquez—and gentlemen," he bluffed, with a gay undertone of mockery in his voice. "I am a detective from Scotland Yard."

A snarling voice came from him whom they called the Big Boss. His eyes, blue as chilled steel, stared hard at the masked gentleman crook. It was obvious the Big Boss was trying to rise to the situation, to determine who this intruder might be—and to act, if possible.

But Jimmy held the pistol, and it was pointed straight at the Big Boss's heart.

An hour previously Jimmy had made up his mind that Henri Velasquez, the moneylender, was the Big Boss of the Underworld, but now he was not so sure. This man had not the moneylender's paunchy figure, and he was not quite bald. He had thin, greying hair.

But there were points of likeness. In his identity as Velasquez, the moneylender, this man might be disguised.

"Henri Velasquez," Jimmy said briskly. "Will you please do me the favour of removing your mask."

The man stiffened. His very figure seemed to bristle with rage, and from his thin, compressed lips came a word full of concentrated hatred.

"Never!"

Jimmy's pistol pointed menacingly, and then he shrugged.

There was more pressing business on hand than a vain game of bluff with this man, whose chill, blue eyes glared his hate. Jimmy Brent backed towards the big grandfather's clock, taking a sharp penknife from his pocket as he did so.

"If you have no objection, gentlemen," his mocking voice rang out, "I will just release Mr. Carr. He is an old pal of mine, and too dashed good a cricketer to be snuffed out like this."

Swiftly, with his left hand he slashed at the ropes that bound Howard Carr. They were fairly thick ropes, but they were taut and of dry fibre, and strand after strand eagerly gave way, snapping under the keen blade. Soon Howard Carr had the knife in his own hands, and was cutting loose his feet.

"Thanks, unknown friend," he said with a little husky laugh as he stepped from the clock. Astonishingly, his nerve seemed to have returned. He had gained infection from Jimmy's own delightful carelessness in a situation that bristled with menace.

"Well, gentleman," Jimmy said, bowing again. "We are going. Sorry to leave you. I hope you haven't got any trap-doors, or anything melodramatic like that in this place. M'sieu Velasquez there is ingenious enough to install them, but I imagine for once he has failed in enterprise.

The terrible eyes of the masked crook told him that his shot had gone home. There was nothing to stop Jimmy or Howard Carr from leaving the place.

"Very well, gentlemen, I bid you good night." Jimmy tucked the cane under his arm, and flourished the pistol as he stood for a moment near the velvet curtains. He paused. "Unless any of you gentlemen would like to come with me. The business to be conducted is a fight against the Big Boss of the Underworld."

Suddenly two men rose from the table and stepped forward. They removed their masks, and Jimmy momentarily lowered his pistol and stared at them in amazement. For they were Dick Challenger and Sir Martin Anton, Bart.—both young men whom he had known intimately at Cambridge.

"We're with you, Jimmy," said Sir Martin Anton quietly, albeit there was a repressed look of fear in his handsome, weak face. It was obvious that he had keyed himself up to do this, that in reality he went in awful fear of this man who called himself the Big Boss. But the fear was not so great that it could overrule his horror of murder—especially murder of Howard Carr, his old chum. Just this encouragement of Jimmy's appearance, and he was in revolt against the tyrant over him.

"We're with you, Jimmy," he repeated with a catch in his breath. "It means ruin and disgrace for me. This fellow knows something about me—something shady that he'll bawl from the house-tops. But—well, we're with you, old boy."

"Good," said Jimmy briskly. "Scat then, you fellows. I'll see you in the next room."

And he held the velvet curtains apart for the three old undergraduate friends to pass through.

It was an amazing situation. Jimmy faced two men now, one an underling whom he scarcely took into his reckoning, and the other—the Big Boss. This man was snarling continuously and softly, like a savage dog with a bone who fears interruption; his hands clenched and unclenched by his side, and despite the pistol in Jimmy's hand he looked as though he would spring upon him at any moment.

Jimmy did not want to shoot the fellow. He had other game on hand. Big game, too.



"Good night, M'sieu Velasquez," he mocked.

The next second he was gone through the curtains, just as the Big Boss sprang tigerishly. Laughing softly as the fellow became mixed up with the curtains, Jimmy opened the door, passed through, closed it behind him, and swiftly turned the key.

But he knew that even the first round in the game was not entirely won yet. He swiftly crossed the room, making for the table at which the Big Boss had sat during his momentous interview with the negro.

The plans of the Hidden City! Jimmy was sure that they were somewhere in this drawer, for he had seen the Big Boss place them there. He rummaged through swiftly with practised hands.

"Good biz! Here they are."

He held up a few papers and a piece of bark, held together by a rubber band. On these papers and the bark were drawn crude plans of the approach through the jungle to the so-called Hidden City in the heart of Africa. Jimmy smiled at the three rather dazed young men who were staring at him.

"Valuable these, boys."

Just then there came a crashing revolver shot from the room beyond. The men in that room were evidently trying to blow down the door. Jimmy decided that he had had enough adventure for that night. It was time to go.

"Come on, boys," he said. "We'll sport a taxi to my flat. Guess it's been a good evening's business—what?"

And, laughing, he led the way out of the room.

IN his dressing-room, Sambo Mauley, native gentleman of Africa, caressed his rather thick lips with a trembling hand. Five minutes before the first gong had sounded in the packed Boxing Hall beyond. Sambo was not frightened of Nick Caley, the gigantic Yankee, who was to be his opponent in the hurricane clash due to commence within ten minutes. The fear of the Big Boss was on the big black man. He had the simplicity of his kind, and he was completely dominated by the personality of the fearful being who ruled the Underworld in which he lived.

He had just received a note—

*Mind you smoke the cigarette.*

That was all it said. But the cigarette contained the Herculane that was to give him the strength of the fabled giants—such strength and hardihood as would enable him to win through by sheer force against the American champion.

Howard Carr, who had been attending at his training quarters, had told him that the cigarette also contained a poison that would kill him an hour after the fight. What was Sambo to believe? The Big Boss had assured him that it was a lie, that he was invaluable to the project in Africa. . . .

Tremblingly the big black man fished in the pocket of his dressing-gown and took out a silver cigarette case. He snapped it open, and took from it the single cigarette that it contained, placing it between his thick lips. His eyes were dilated. He was like some poor animal that sniffs the slaughterhouse and knows instinctively the fate that awaits it, yet can do nothing to avert it.

In an agony of indecision he lit a match, and was about to apply it to the cigarette when—

A hand stretched out from behind him and snatched the white tube of the cigarette away from his lips. Sambo turned with the queer, deep gasp of the African negro and saw—Jimmy Brent.

The gentleman crook wore a white sweater and flannel trousers. By some means known only to himself he had obtained a position at Boxing Hall. Smiling gently and deprecatingly, he shook his head.

"Mustn't smoke before the fight, old fellow," he drawled.

Sambo gasped. He could do nothing more. He was like a fish just pulled out of the water.

"Listen, Sambo," said Jimmy. "You don't know me yet, but I'm a pal. I want you to fight fair, even if you lose. You'll lose at any rate honourably. But if you smoke this cigarette—you'll die."

Sambo relapsed into a chair, breathing heavily. Words were beyond him. He could only stare with goggling eyes.

"But Massa—" he began at length.

And then there sounded suddenly the deep clang of the gong.

## THE Fight!

Ten thousand people sat tense in their seats as the two men jumped up with the clang of the gong echoing through the vast, smoke-laden Boxing Hall. In one of the ring seats sat Henri Velasquez, hunched and stolid, his rings flashing coloured light as he continually applied the long cigar to his lips.

Jimmy Brent in a seat near by watched him closely.

The two men were springing like tigers to meet one another. Came the thud-thud of gloves. The white lightning flash that was Nick Caley slid around the huge bewildered negro. Nick with his short, scrubby black beard and his arms working like piston rods was a fearsome sight. The primitive fighter, but with science in every punch.

Sambo showed amazing pluck and a fair knowledge of the game. It was rather stirring to see him coming in again, with his black arms moving dreamily, his white teeth showing in a friendly grin just after the huge, gaunt Yankee had slammed him to the ropes in horrible fashion.

But it was in in-fighting that the nigger suffered. His ebony body was a mass of weals after the first round, and he came up for the second with a dazed, sick look in his eyes. If he had taken Herculane he might have been able to withstand such punishment.

But as it was, the Yankee champ. hit him, and almost tore bits off him with his awful fists.

Sambo went down. It is to be remembered that he was fighting the World's heavy-weight champion, and big black fellow with a stout heart though he was, he was literally beaten down. He came up again and staggered under a hail of blows, and at the gong the frenzied crowd cheered him frantically.

Sambo staggered up for the third round, trying to smile. And Jimmy's heart swelled as he watched the plucky black boxer. But it was the end. The fierce Yankee champ. was out for victory. He sprang in tigerishly, sending his left to the jaw and his right to the stomach, then with incredible swiftness driving the right for the head—and down went Sambo.

As, amid the hub-bub the black boxer was counted out, Jimmy Brent glanced across at Henri Velasquez. Upon that usually stolid face he saw emotion for once—amazement and a staggering, fiendish fury.

WHEN you're down, you're down. And you probably don't want sympathy or friendship or company or anything else. An hour later Sambo emerged from a side door of Boxing Hall and he was really down and out. He was feeling considerably hurt, both in body and spirits.

So that he suddenly snarled as he saw about a dozen thugs rushing upon him in the black alley. He recognised them—denizens of the Underworld, tools of the Big Boss. He was about to be "beaten up good and proper."

They seized him, and fell on top of him like wolves. He was kicked several times, but in the melee he



managed to scramble up. In grim silence they seized Sambo to pull him down once more.

And just then a figure came running towards the scene with fists clenched—the smart, well-built figure of a young man wearing a cap. It was Jimmy Brent, man about town.

Like a tornado, Jimmy descended upon that bunch of crooks. He was pretty mad. In a few seconds he had damaged three men for life, and had made himself the vortex of a fearful, softly cursing mob.

"Begorrah, it's a fight," shouted an Irish voice suddenly, and turning, Jimmy Brent found an ally. It was Tim Blaney—Tim of the Underworld. A crook, but a good-natured Irishman and one who loved a fight. He lashed out with his great fists, and, encouraged, Jimmy did likewise. They found Sambo by their side in a few seconds later fighting like a man possessed.

"Hallo—they've gone!" exclaimed Jimmy suddenly. "The yellow streaks. Hi! come back and have some more."

The half-a-dozen flying figures did not accept the invitation. But it was not strictly true that they had all gone; the remainder lay on the ground, groaning and twisting with pain.

Jimmy suddenly clapped his two new found friends delightedly on the back.

"Jolly good piece of work. Come on, fellows, we'll get a taxi to my flat in the Albany, where I've got something to tell you."

And in Jimmy's luxuriously furnished flat they met Howard Carr, Dick Challenger and Anton. As they sat over a drink, Jimmy Brent, man about town, outlined his scheme.

"Listen, boys; we're all going out there together—to the Hidden City, I mean. Some of us are wanted by the police, others of us are pretty sure that we're going to be betrayed by the Big Boss. All right, then. We'll get out of the country until things blow over. We'll do some big game hunting in Africa, eh? We're not scared of the Big Boss, and we'll beat him at his own game. I've got the map. We'll find the Hidden City, and the Herculane."

And upon this momentous decision they all shook hands very heartily, and had another drink.

A TRIM, white steam-yacht crept down the uncharted N'Gawna River—a river of haze and slime, and of dark, lazy, fever-invested waters; a river whose banks were lined on either side with the thick jungle forest of liana and other tangled growth. A river in which lurked the sly alligator and the evil hippopotamus.

"My golly," said a thick, queer voice, "dis am a ribber, an' no mistake. Dis chile been down dis ribber once before. An' Sambo, he know sumping."

The big negro gave a half shudder as he spoke.

On the deck crowded Jimmy Brent and his newly-formed friends—or rather friends whom he had found again. And all of them watched fascinated the ever-changing scene.

They had commenced on their quest. Two days before they had slipped down the river from the coast town of N'wani—into a country scarcely penetrated by white man.

Jimmy Brent himself was a little restless. A feverish excitement gripped him, for which he could not account. It seemed to him that a brooding threat hung in the air, and he wanted action—freedom of movement.

"I say," he exclaimed suddenly. "Look, there's a clearing ahead there. Why not land for a time and have a knock at the nets?"

The idea was acclaimed at once, and the steam-yacht was carefully brought in to the bank.

Everyone landed, including the captain whom

Jimmy had hired to navigate the yacht, and the crew of three—decent fellows all. In all they comprised eleven men, and as Jimmy had once laughingly pointed out, they all played cricket, and if the opportunity presented itself, they might form a team and play a match against another eleven. Not that that was likely to happen in the heart of darkest Africa.

They landed and speedily fixed up a net and stumps. Jimmy took his bat to the rough crease and prepared to receive the bowling of Sambo, who, it appeared, had played for a minor team in England. He was no minor bowler though, for the first ball that came down was a hot one, with terrific speed in its travel. Jimmy scarcely saw it. It kicked up a little cloud of dust, and the next thing he knew, his stumps were shattered.

"Gee whiz!" he gasped. "What was that—a tornado?"

"Golly, me good!" ejaculated Sambo with the greatest delight. "Dis chile got greata strength in the arm."

But, as Fate would have it, that was the last ball played that day.

Suddenly black shapes appeared in the clearing, and cries of alarm went up from the cricketers, for they were the black shapes of savages running.

It was quickly evident, however, that they were not bent on war. Their screams were of fear and terror, and the reason became apparent as three huge black African rhinoceroses charged into the clearing after them.

The rhinoceros—which never wanders very far from a river or pool—hates the sight of man. But instantly the men in white flannels detracted their attention from the blacks, and with bellowing roars they rushed for the net round which the cricketers were grouped.

It was then that Sambo performed an act which distinguished him in that country for ever afterwards.

A huge bull rhinoceros came charging for the net, and Jimmy raised his bat, his only weapon. But Sambo leapt into the picture. With a bellowing roar of defiance Sambo rushed at the huge rhino and grabbed it by the horn.

It was literally a struggle between the huge mammal and the man.

Exciting, eh? What will be the result of this mad struggle? See the picture on the cover this week, chums. See how the natives are admiring the Big Black fellow. Why? Has he won the battle? Exciting developments in this grand serial yarn next week.





**YOUR EDITOR'S ADDRESS.**

When you're blue with nothing to do, Remember there's always a pal who wants to hear from you. Drop a line to:

**THE EDITOR, Boys' Magazine,  
Allied Newspapers Ltd.,  
20, Gray's Inn Road,  
London, W.C.1.**

**M**Y DEAR CHUMS,

Didn't I tell you I had a big surprise for you? What do you think of our terrific new serial of big game hunting and cricket in the wilds of the African jungle? There are going to be big developments in this grand Summer serial next week, and I advise you to order your copy of the Mag. early.

Chums, Jimmy Brent is a card, isn't he? You can never guess what happens next week. Fancy a man about town in the jungle, trying to get up cricket matches and going out for big game! But there's bigger game than shooting wild animals in the jungle, as you can guess. Next week you will hear more of the mysterious Big Boss. Look out for long, exciting chapters.

Also, I have a big long complete yarn for you featuring the Monocled Manhunter. One of the best in this great detective series that has ever appeared. It is entitled

### **The Mystery of the Dream Curse.**

If you like a thrilling adventure and detective yarn you simply mustn't miss this. It is one of our Secret Service author's masterpieces. It tells how Falcon Swift, with his trusty boy assistant, Chick Conway, is called in to investigate the case of a famous Egyptologist, a friend of his, who is found in an exhausted and strange condition wandering in the desert.

He babbles of an old tomb, and of a secret chamber containing many mysteries. And he talks of the full moon that drives men mad.

What does it all mean? You will read of the unusual combination of circumstances under which the Monocled Manhunter takes up the case, how he goes to the tomb at the full moon, and of the awful discoveries he makes.

Well, chaps, I mustn't give all the yarn away, must I? Do you remember me telling you of my little jaunt up the shaft of a high chimney in the Black country, with the object of obtaining for you a series of realistic stories? Well, next week the good old Mag. will introduce to you a hair-raising sort of a gun in

### **Stan, the Star Steeplejack,**

not to mention his fat pal, Podger. You'll like this first tale, I'll guarantee. Stan is a marvel, and next week he is up against a terrific proposition in unravelling the mystery that surrounds a certain high chimney.

Chaps, it's by way of being a special School story number next week. I wonder whether you

## **YOUR EDITOR'S CHAT.**

Big and Sensational Detective Story of Falcon Swift, the Monocled Manhunter.

### **THE MYSTERY OF THE DREAM CURSE**

Next Week.



remember Cyrus P. Kane, the Yankee schoolboy, and the fellows of St. Matt's College? Cyrus was really a queer card. He came to St. Matt's dressed like a cowboy, and he played baseball instead of cricket. But he very soon learned the great English game, as you remember. Well, next week, we find him in a grand long complete story of rowing, school life and fun, entitled—

### **The Regatta at St. Matt's.**

It's a school tale that you'll enjoy, I can tell you. And there are immensely dramatic developments in our new serial, "The Planet Schoolboys." This week, chums, I have so crowded the Mag. with good things that I have been forced to hold over some special news in connection with the *Boys' Magazine* League. But an interesting announcement will be made in the Mag. next Saturday.

I have got a secret up my sleeve. It's a secret that, to tell you plainly, I'm wildly excited over. 'Cause, you see, it concerns another of our great series of wonderful free gifts.

These gifts are positively coming along shortly. And, by Jove, they're stannars!

They beat the band, chums. You're mostly all old pals of the famous Red Mag., and you remember our wonderful free transfers, the football players, we gave away. Well, this new series of free gifts whacks 'em all.

### **The Explosive Hare.**

That's the title of a new story of Duncan and his white racing greyhound that appears in our next number. Look out for it.

Well, chums, you can see my address at the top of this page, so write to me. Write to me as often as you like and let me know what you think of the *Boys' Magazine*. All readers who write and enclose a stamped addressed envelope may be sure of receiving a prompt reply. Remember the slogan, "your editor wants to hear from you."

Your sincere friend,

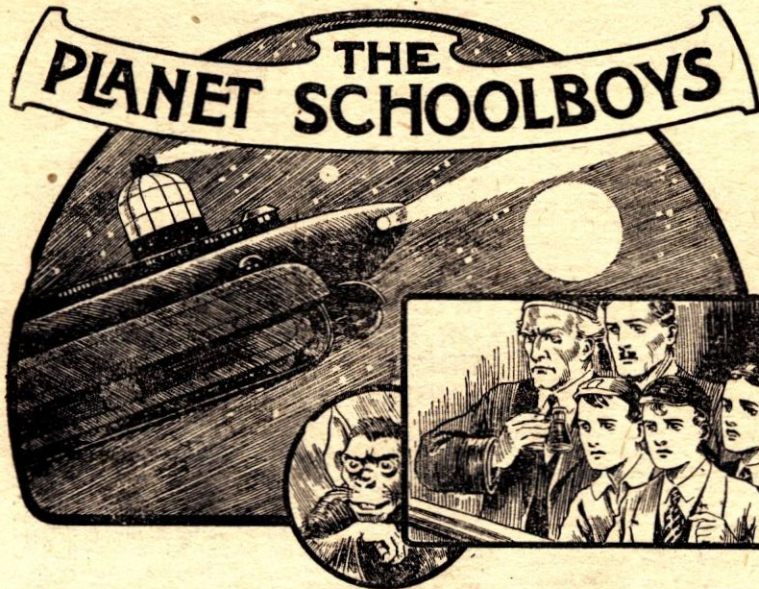
**THE EDITOR.**

### **JOKE COUPON.**

Stick on postcard and send with your favourite joke to address on Joke Page.  
**Boys' Magazine.** 23/7/27.



Magnificent New School, Fun and Scientific Serial Just Commencing. Alive with Stupendous Thrills of the Unknown, it Tells of the Amazing Adventures of a Daring Band of Schoolboys Among the Mystery Worlds in Space.



A Voyage of Discovery Among the Stars! Who can tell the Marvels that Wait the Bold Adventurer in the Limitless Ether? There are Adventures, Dangers, and Triumphs, too. Incredible to Mortal Man! Your Chance to Experience Them, Chums, is in the Vivid, Forceful Chapters Below!

By EDWY  
SEARLES  
BROOKS.

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.

The question was permissible, for the wonder flyer was opposed to all the accepted rules of flying. The Professor was now explaining to Sir Bags and Jerry, as the knight and the schoolmaster nicknamed each other, this very secret.

"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. Count Popandos, a sinister-looking foreigner, appeared, and, before any of the three could stop him, he dragged at a lever near the Professor's hand. It snapped off short. Simultaneously the aerial monster gave a tremendous lurch and shot heavenwards, throwing the juniors gathered on her decks to their faces. Count Popandos appeared from below and, without hesitating, 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 herded the juniors into the inside of the vessel.

"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.

Flying in the air around them they discerned a flock of bat-like animals with eerie, almost human faces. These animals, disarmed, 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, to find himself held fast in a huge spider's web.

In the nick of time the erstwhile leader of The Firm was rescued, and everybody journeyed back to the *Solar Rover*. Shouts of anger and amazement left their lips when they found Count Popandos, who had stowed away on the vessel (one of his accomplices had performed that spectacular parachute descent at the beginning of the voyage through space) in command of the wonder flyer.

With a mocking wave of the hand Popandos sent the *Solar Rover* hurtling upwards—but not before Barry Drewe and Freeman had managed to clutch at one of the great tractors and so gained the deck.

They leapt upon the Count, but bribed members of the crew overpowered the daring youngsters, and they were incarcerated below. And then, when they had become used to the darkness, they found they were not alone. Three queer forms confronted them. They were Puggy Dibble, Royce and Hoskins—stowaways from Castleton School!

And then, exploring their prison the youngsters came upon a trap-door—a road to freedom!

The adventurers left on Venus were at that moment facing terrible danger. Captured by giant bat men, they were taken to the strange beings' stronghold—caves in the face of a great cliff. It seemed they were doomed . . .



FASCINATED, the boys stared at that metal trap-door in the floor.

Here was a discovery! The moment was fraught with wild hope. Would that trap-door lead them to freedom? Or would it merely lead them down into another compartment, from which there was no escape? Everything would depend upon the next few minutes.

"Come on!" muttered Barry, tensely. "Lend a hand, Freeman!"

"Rather!" said the leader of The Firm. "By jiggery! I believe this is going to mean our escape!"

"Don't jump to any conclusions, old man," interrupted Barry. "It's a fatal policy to do that. Let's get the trap-door up and see where it leads to. There's no time for guessing."

Puggy Dibble & Co. looked on with eager eyes while the other two juniors tugged at the trap-door, and slowly pulled it up. A black cavity was revealed—a yawning chasm, which gaped at their feet.

"I'll go down!" said Freeman, breathlessly.

"No you won't!" put in Barry. "It's my job—"

But Freeman had already lowered himself into the hole, and with a reckless abandon he released his grip. He didn't know how far he was going to drop. He was taking a big chance. Perhaps he would go to his death. Perhaps there were some of Professor Drewe's energy motors beneath this floor—or storage batteries which would mean death to anybody who touched them. But Freeman had always been a reckless youngster.

*Thud!* He landed on something solid, much sooner than he had expected. The drop, indeed, had been very short, and he did not even fall over. Recovering his balance, he looked up, and the square of the trap-door hole was only three or four feet above his head.

"It's all right!" he panted. "I'm safe! There seems to be another storeroom, or—"

He broke off, drawing his breath in excitedly.

"Daylight!" he went on. "There's a chink of daylight here, you chaps! Come down—quick! I believe there's a way of escape here!"

"I'm coming!" sang out Barry briskly.

"Hi! What about us?" roared Puggy, in alarm.

"You can follow, if you like," snapped Barry. "We won't stop you."

He lowered himself through the aperture, and dropped. He found himself in total darkness—or so it seemed at first. Freeman was there, and the leader of the Firm clutched at Barry's arm.

"Look!" he muttered.

And there was every reason for his excitement. A chink of daylight was coming through into that dark chamber. For a moment, the juniors could not understand what it meant. And then Barry gave a little ejaculation of joy.

"I've got it!" he stuttered. "We're right near the side of the ship, Freeman. There must be a door in the outer plates—right down in the hull of the Rover."

"But why?" asked Freeman, breathlessly.

"I don't know why!" replied Barry. "My uncle designed this ship, and we shall have to ask him. But you can be quite certain that he wouldn't provide a door here unless it was necessary. Perhaps it's connected with one of the tractor wheels or something. Anyhow, let's have a closer look."

They ventured forward cautiously, and at last they came to close quarters with that chink of daylight. In the meantime, Puggy Dibble and his companions had dropped down, and were cowering behind, thoroughly scared.

"Here we are!" breathed Barry, as he felt a sort of catch. "Yes, there's a lever here. I can just manage to pull it, and—"

He broke off as a small metal door swung open in his hand. A flood of sunlight came sweeping through, dazzling them—blinding them. They were thoroughly excited, too. And after a few moments Barry ventured to peer out, shading his eyes with his hand.

He looked directly downwards—sheer for over a thousand feet to the ground. This door opened out on the starboard side of the Rover, and the deck was several feet above. A little way to the left, and below, one of the great tractor wheels jutted out. And just above it there was an open porthole. Barry took these facts in in less than ten seconds. They meant a great deal.

"By corks!" said Freeman suddenly. "Now I can understand the meaning of this little door! Look here, Drewe!"

Barry turned, and then he, too, understood. Quite near by there was a big machine-gun—placed on an intricate-looking tripod. Evidently this was a specially-provided doorway for the use of that machine gun. It could be pushed out, and operated with ease, from that position. Professor Drewe had designed his ship for every purpose. It was, indeed, like a battleship in many respects—with machine-guns and artillery.

"Look here!" said Barry, beckoning Freeman to his side. "No, you ass—don't shove your head out! You might be spotted from the deck. Be careful, for goodness' sake!"

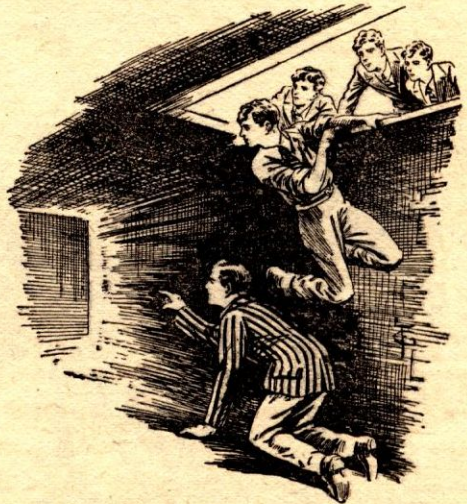
"Yes, but—"

"We can get down to that tractor wheel with ease," went on Barry. "And then it'll be child's play to climb through that open porthole. Don't you see? We shall be in a cabin then—and the whole ship will be open to us!"

"Come on!" muttered Freeman, excitedly. "We don't want to wait for Puggy and these other cads! We'll capture the Rover ourselves!"

The boys did not consider the risks. They were over a thousand feet up, and the slightest lurch of the vessel would mean death for them. For they would be torn from their hold, and sent hurtling down to destruction. But they did not hesitate.

They had forgotten all about Puggy Dibble & Co.



THE LIGHT OF FREEDOM.—A chink of daylight was coming into that dark chamber. One by one the boys followed Barry to investigate.



They dropped down to that broad tractor wheel, and then they wormed their way through the porthole. They found themselves in a small cabin, and they stared at one another breathlessly.

"Well, we've done it!" muttered Freeman. "What now?"

"Now we'll find Count Popandos, and grab him!" said Barry, fiercely. "That's what we'll do, old man. We're going to seize the *Rover*!"

And then, at that very moment, Count Popandos himself came striding into the cabin. In the doorway, he checked, stared at the two juniors, and he opened his mouth to shout. But they were too quick for him.

With one leap they hurled themselves upon the Greek, and the next moment he was writhing on the floor, fighting madly. It had all happened within a second.

"Got him!" shouted Freeman, victoriously. "By jiggery! We've got him!"

And such was the ferocity of their attack that Count Popandos had no chance. The fight was swift and deadly. And at the conclusion of it the two schoolboys were the victors—with Count Alexis Popandos as helpless as a trussed chicken.

Barry Drewe and George Freeman left Count Popandos locked up in that cabin—bound hand and foot with handkerchiefs, pieces of string, a table cloth, and anything that could be used as a binding rope.

Creeping along the deck, Barry and his companion found themselves facing the two stewards—those men who had turned traitors. And then the fight started. As it chanced, the men were unarmed at the moment. They had believed themselves to be safe from any attack.

But the schoolboys were like demons—fighting with the desperation of despair. Everything depended upon their success. And so they hurled themselves into the battle with an abandon which staggered their adversaries. The boys rather expected help, but none came. All the other members of the crew were conspicuous by their absence.

"You young cubs!" snarled one of the men. "Count—Count! These demons have escaped!"

Crash! The man sagged over as George Freeman's

fist caught him in the mouth. They were powerful men, these two—brutes of fellows. But they were completely taken by surprise. Never had they dreamed that two schoolboys could fight so desperately as Barry Drewe and George Freeman. And, incredibly enough, the schoolboys won!

The very intensity of the fight had made it short. It was impossible for such a battle to continue for long. And after Freeman's adversary had been flogged, the other man was quickly dealt with. He was dragged down, flung on his face, and his wrists were tied together behind his back.

Barry Drewe looked up, his face pouring with perspiration, his eyes gleaming.

"We've won!" he panted huskily. "The *Rover's* ours!"

"You bet it is!" said Freeman, with a roar of joy. "It's ours—and now we can go to the rescue of the others."

### In Full Command.

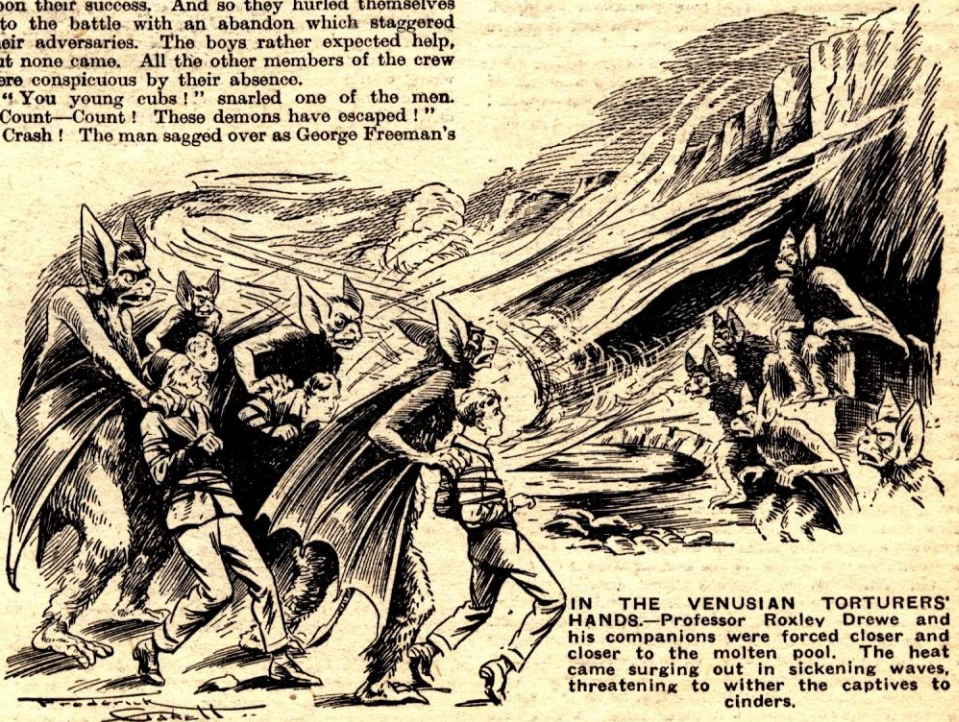
"HERE they are!" shouted Freeman, with breathless excitement.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Barry Drewe.

For over ten minutes they had been searching the *Solar Rover*—searching desperately, with growing apprehension. For, after bundling their two prisoners into that same cabin with Count Alexis Popandos, the plucky juniors had searched the ship, in an effort to find all the other members of the crew.

But these men could not be discovered! And the juniors had feared, with growing horror, that Popandos had thrown them all overboard. But this assumption was wrong, as it now proved.

For the two boys had just flung open the door of the main dining-saloon. And there, helplessly bound, were all the men—nine or ten of them. They were



IN THE VENUSIAN TORTURERS' HANDS.—Professor Roxley Drewe and his companions were forced closer and closer to the molten pool. The heat came surging out in sickening waves, threatening to wither the captives to cinders.



tied with ropes, and were lying full length on the floor, helpless. It was an enormous relief to find them safe.

"It's all right," panted Barry, as he pulled out his knife. "We'll soon have you free! We've collared the ship, and we've got Popandos a prisoner!"

"You're a living wonder, Master Drewe!" said one of the engineers.

"Never mind about living wonders," said Barry, briskly. "We haven't done anything particularly spectacular. We've only had a scrap or two. We've got to get the *Rover* round, and then we must go back to that place where my uncle and all the others were left! They may be in the hands of those spiders and other insects. They may be dead! There isn't a second to lose!"

"You're right, young sir!" said one of the men. "Thank heaven we've got hold of the *Rover* again. Where's that Greek? And those accursed stewards? We've got to deal with them——"

"You carry on with this knife, Freeman," said Barry, handing it to the leader of The Firm. "Cut all these other men free. I'll rush back to that cabin and the prisoners will be dealt with. We're not going to let them try any more tricks!"

Barry hurried off with four members of the crew. And three minutes later Count Alexis Popandos and his allies were dragged out of the cabin. The three villains were pale with rage and hatred. All their plans had gone by the board! And solely owing to these two schoolboys. Small wonder that Count Popandos was nearly crazy with fury.

But it made no difference. His snarls were ignored. He and his men were taken far below—right down into one of the innermost chambers. They were thrust in, bound just as they were. And the door was locked and bolted. One of the engineers, a bluff, hearty Cockney, dusted his hands as he turned away from the door.

"Well, that's settled their hash for the time being, young gents!" he said. "Crikey! We're 'avin' some 'igh old times aboard this craft, ain't we? The Professor warned us that we should go into all sorts of dangers, but I'm blowed if we expected anything like this."

"We've got hold of the *Rover*!" chortled Barry, joyously. "That's the only thing that I can think about now. Is there anybody here who can control her properly?"

"Two or three of us, Master Barry!" said the engineer. "There won't be no trouble about managin' the old craft."

And he was right.

Before long, the *Solar Rover* was speeding back over the Venusian landscape, with the five Castleton boys standing on the forward deck, watching eagerly for the first sign of their lost companions. Puggy Dibble & Co. had been brought up from their prison, for these three juniors had not had the nerve to escape by means of the tractor wheel and the porthole. They had waited until somebody had come down to the storeroom to release them.

"That's the place!" shouted Barry, suddenly, as he pointed. "Look! Can't you recognise the spot?"

"By jiggery!" breathed Freeman. "I believe you're right! Look! There are the marks where the old *Rover* smashed down those nettles! Yes, this is the place!"

"But where's uncle?" asked Barry breathlessly. "Where are all the other chaps?"

The *Rover* was soaring along, only two or three hundred feet from the ground. It was amazing how easily and smoothly she could be controlled. Not that the two juniors gave a thought to this point just now. They were solely concerned about the



'MID THE ANGER OF THE ELEMENTS.— Stumbling, choking, the little party of adventurers made for the entrance to the tunnel, while the blinding rain and billowing steam swept around them.

safety of their companions. And they had arrived at the place where Count Popandos had seized the *Rover*. But that place was now deserted. There was no trace of the main party.

What had happened.

Had they moved off of their own accord? Had they sought shelter in one of those Venusian forests? Or had they been seized by some monstrous creatures? It was impossible to say. And there was only one thing to be done. Search—search—and then keep on searching.

And so the *Rover* was sent higher—higher—and higher still. In this way a wider vista could be brought under observation. This atmosphere, although so heavy and emervating, was nevertheless crystal clear. One could see for miles and miles.

But in all that great landscape there was not a movement. Not a sign of life.

What had become of the main party?

Little did Barry Drewe and George Freeman guess the truth! They would have been horrified—staggered—could they have seen down into that great rock basin at that moment. For Professor Roxley Drewe and his companions were in such peril that everything that had gone before seemed insignificant by comparison.

One glimpse will be sufficient.

The captives were in the grip of their Venusian hosts—hovering high, high above that molten pool.



The heat came surging up in suffocating waves, and the flames licked, and the fire boiled and bubbled.

Swooping round, the Venusians were flying over the pool, and not one of those prisoners failed to realise the significance of this activity.

They were to be dropped into that molten mass—one by one, they were to be sent down to instant, horrible death!

### The Deluge.

IT was impossible for the solar adventurers to realise the dreadful nature of their impending doom. They were numbed by the very horror of the whole situation. In a dull kind of way, they knew—or they guessed—that these Venusians were about to drop them into that boiling, white-hot pool.

And what then?

Mercifully, they would know little about it. One plunge—and then death. Swift, instantaneous death. This thought—if, indeed, it occurred to any of them—was the only consolation. There would be no slow torture, no ghastly agony. It would be over in a flash.

Sir Clarence Bagshot was essentially a man of action, and never had he felt so utterly desperate as now. He could do nothing—absolutely nothing. And Sir Bags had the reputation of being fearless. But he felt rather ashamed of his helpless rage, and his fury, when he saw these Castleton schoolboys accepting the dreadful situation with true British pluck. Not an outcry from one of them. Not a sound of fear—not a single scream. They were brave to the last, too. It was good to see—and yet, so pitiful.

Round and round swooped the Venusians, and the heat from that vast pool came surging up in suffocating waves. It seemed that the Venusians were circling lower, and Sir Bags wondered, with a dull shock, if torture was to be their lot, after all.

"Never say die, you chaps!" came a choked kind of shout from Billy Ward. "We're not dead yet! Castleton for ever!"

"By the Lord Harry!" muttered Sir Bags, between his teeth. "What grit! Is there no way—"

And then, in that flash, the rain came.

A second earlier, nobody had suspected rain—nobody had known, even, that rain was commonplace on Venus. Perhaps it wasn't commonplace. At all events, the rain that *did* descend was like nothing on earth. Sir Clarence Bagshot had been in almost every tropical clime, and he knew what equatorial rain could be. Yet, in all his experience, he had seen nothing like the deluge that came down into that mountain basin on Venus.

Indeed, it could hardly be described as rain. It was one sheet of water—one vast, tearing, hissing, blinding downpour. And it started just as though a reservoir had burst its banks, and was cascading over the tops of the rocky ravine.

Down it came—and, instantaneously, there was confusion amongst the Venusians. They fluttered here and there, beating their great wings helplessly against the flood of water. They were caught unawares—taken by surprise.

There was another immediate result, too. Vast clouds of steam arose from the lava-pool—rising up in billowing volumes. The water, pouring into that cauldron of fire, was instantaneously converted into high-pressure steam, and it came roaring up like the escape from an immense boiler. In less than three seconds the rocky mountain sides were hidden in the wreathing vapour. And the very air was full of the shouting of the elements. It was one terrific uproar—deadening to the senses.

Obviously, the Venusians were frightened. They fluttered round, dropping lower and lower as they beat their wings helplessly against the rain. Down they went, fighting madly, and one by one they dropped their burdens—their instinct being self-preservation alone. They wanted to get to their tunnels—to their retreats. And they thought nothing of their prisoners now. And it was quite obvious that these Venusians were capable of thinking. For as the prisoners were released the bat-men rose, struggling against the rain, making for those ledges—for those gaps in the rock. They wanted to find shelter against this unbelievable downpour.

"Boys—boys!" shouted Professor Drewe urgently.



"Good heavens! If any of them have dropped into—Bags! Are you there, Bags?"

"Right on the spot, Prof!" sang out Sir Bags, as he came stumbling up, bruised and battered, but otherwise whole.

"By glory! I thought I was the only one alive! Where are the youngsters?"

"I'm here, sir!" sang out Robin Hardy. "And here's Don Masters and old Freckles!"

"Good lads!" panted Sir Bags. "We must collect together, if we can. It's our only chance! Hi!" he roared. "This way, Mannering! Is that Freddie with you? Good! Come on—let's keep together!"

It was almost too good to be true. It seemed that the adventurers were all safe and sound. Their captors had not dropped them until they were quite near to the ground—until the rain had beaten the Venusians down and down. Thus, the fall had only been slight. In some cases the bat-men had been even beaten right to the rock before they released their victims.

And there they stood, battered almost double by the force of the drenching downpour—choked by the sulphurous steam. They were blinded by the heat, too, and their senses were reeling. But one fact emerged from all this confused tumult. Not one of them had dropped into the pool of fire. All were safe!

And now what? Would they be able to escape

THE ROVER'S SPECTACULAR RETURN.—"It's all right, you chaps," sang out Barry. "Come on—scramble aboard!" Cheering wildly, the adventurers who had been marooned so long, leapt for the deck of the Solar Rover.



from these Venusian creatures? There did not seem to be one chance in a million!

### Into the Black Tunnel.

THE effect upon Sir Bags was positively extraordinary.

"Keep together, you fellows!" he sang out exultantly. "We're all safe so far—and there's no reason why we shouldn't snap our fingers at these Venusian merchants! The elements have come to our assistance—but it's up to us to take full advantage of the fact!"

"What do you propose?" gasped Jerry Mannering.

"Good heavens, Bags, there's no earthly chance—"

"Isn't there?" roared the sporting baronet.

"This way! Into the tunnel! We're going to make a bid for liberty!"

Poor Professor Drewe was completely helpless. He was like a child in this desperate situation. For the Professor was a man of science, and in such a crisis as this he did not know which way to turn. He was lost—he was pitifully dependent upon others.

Fortunately, Sir Clarence Bagshot was second to none when it came to a question of leadership. His personality was magnetic—his judgment superb. And in some uncanny sort of way he knew exactly where to go. While the others were blinded and confused, Sir Bags had a very shrewd idea where that tunnel entrance was.

And he led the way towards it—the others stumbling on behind him, gasping and choking, but still full of life. And life was very sweet to them just then, after their dreadfully narrow escape. Not, indeed, that there was any prospect of ultimate safety. For what lay beyond the tunnel? Nothing—but space! A vast cliff, thousands of feet above the plain, with a narrow ledge upon it. What could they gain by plunging through that black tunnel?

Sir Bags did not ask himself these questions. His one idea was to put as great a distance as possible

between themselves and the Venusians. Perhaps this downpour would last for hours. Perhaps they would be able to find some sort of rock haven, where they could barricade themselves in. There were all sorts of possibilities. But the one thing to do now was—to get out!

"Here we are!" yelled Sir Bags triumphantly, as the black tunnel yawned ahead of them. "Good egg! We've found it!"

"Not so much of the 'we,' sir!" panted Robin Hardy. "You're the chap who's doing everything! We're just following."

"I'm not so sure about that, young 'un," said Sir Bags. "You seemed to have a pretty shrewd idea where this tunnel was, anyhow!"

And this, indeed, was the truth. Robin was one of the keenest youngsters in Castleton, and the fact that he was a Third Form fag had nothing to do with his intelligence. He was plodding along, half-dragging his two chums with him. Indeed, Freckles Smith and Nippy Frost were too dazed and bewildered to walk of their own accord. They accompanied Robin blindly.

It was very much the same with the others. The Hon. Freddie Trevor and Don Masters were clutching at Mr. Mannering, and Hardy and Willis were sticking close to Billy Ward and Jefferson and Mason. Two members of that party were missing—Barry Drewe and George Freeman. They had gone off with the *Solar Rover*, when Count Popandros had seized her. And even in this dread moment of crisis Hardy and Willis were anxious and miserable about their leader.

"Phew! Thank goodness!" panted Sir Bags, as they plunged into the comparative coolness of the tunnel. "I'm glad to be out of that!"

"Let us rest for a moment!" gasped the Professor. "Upon my soul! I never expected—"

"Sorry, Prof, but there'll be no rest yet!" interrupted the sporting baronet grimly. "We've got to keep on—and then keep on keeping on! Those winged devils may be after us. We can't afford to take the slightest chance. We've got our liberty again, and, by glory, we want to keep it! So let's press on—even if we're nearly dead with exhaustion!"

"Hear, hear!" panted several of the boys.

"You are right, Clarence—quite right!" sobbed Professor Roxley Drewe. "Forgive me for being so thoughtless."

He struggled on gamely, although he was nearly done. But the horror of that great mountain basin gave them added strength. They wanted to get far away from it—and on they went, stumbling along that black tunnel.

Sir Bags led the way, and, fortunately, he possessed a powerful electric torch. It was of wonderful service now. For there were many pitfalls in that rock, many cruel projections against which they might have stunned themselves.

The enervating nature of the atmosphere was reduced here, for the rock walls cooled the air. And



THE Party of Schoolboys from Earth watched eagerly—fascinatedly. From the deck of the "Solar Rover" they saw a great towering city of grotesque buildings, rising for thousands of feet in the air. Amazing buildings, glittering and gleaming in the sunshine.

## THE MYSTIC CITY ON THE PLANET VENUS

CHAPS YOU WANT TO READ ABOUT THIS CITY IN "THE PLANET SCHOOL-BOYS" NEXT WEEK.



they were now completely out of the zone of fire. No longer did the waves of heat from that molten pool strike them in suffocating deadliness.

They pressed on—ever on.

And then, at last, Sir Bags gave a glad shout. Far in the distance, there appeared a tiny, minute speck of light. It was the exit—the end of the tunnel. Beyond lay the great cliff, with the plains thousands of feet below. But, at least, they would be in the daylight again, on that ledge, and they might be able to find a haven. For they remembered that there were caves there, and if only they could fix up a kind of retreat they might defy these Venusian enemies.

And so, struggling, stumbling, and fighting against their exhaustion, they pressed on. And at last they emerged—into the blessed daylight. The rain had ceased, and the sun was glaring down with terrific violence. The rays struck their tired bodies like shafts of fire from a furnace. The rock ledge steamed with the heat.

And as their eyes grew accustomed to the brilliant daylight, Len Hardy suddenly gave a scream of excitement, and he pointed outwards—out into the atmospheric void.

"The *Rover*!" he shrieked, half-hysterically. "Look, you chaps—look! It's the *Rover*."

### In The Nick Of Time!

"THE *Rover*!" went up a breathless chorus.

"Keep your hair on, my sons," growled Sir Bags, frowning. "Don't forget that infernal Greek is in command of the *Rover*—and he left us to our fate once. There's no guarantee that he'll take us off this ledge."

"That is true," said the Professor, nodding. "Yet, Clarence, it does me good to see my ship again. What joy if only we can get on board—"

"Let's signal!" yelled Billy Ward. "Come on, you chaps! Wave your hands—wave anything!"

They not only signalled, but they shouted at the tops of their voices. In their excitement, they did not realise that it was impossible for any sounds to carry over so great a distance. For the *Solar Rover* was at least seven or eight miles away, speeding along, two or three thousand feet above the level of this ledge.

And at any moment those Venusian bat-men might come surging out of the tunnel to recapture them! The rain was over now, and the peril was acute.

And in the meantime there were tense, anxious figures on the deck of the great airship.

She was cruising high now, so that the watchers could obtain a wider view of the ground below. And yet there was no sign of the missing party. Deeper and deeper was the conviction growing that Professor Roxley Drewe and all his companions had been annihilated by some of the dreadful Venusian monsters.

Barry Drewe and George Freeman stood on the forward deck, with binoculars to their eyes. They were searching every mile of ground—watching, watching. But there was no sign of any kind of life—nothing but those great forests and those weird tangled masses of weeds.

"It's no good, old man," said Barry, at last. "They must have gone—they must have been dragged into some burrow by those spiders, or something equally horrible."

"It seems impossible!" said Freeman huskily. "I mean, all those chaps. Hardy and Willis and young Robin and—"

"Don't!" muttered Barry, in agony.

Had they regained control of the *Rover* for nothing? Had they fought their battles, and had they conquered, for this? Even if they were able to return to dear old Mother Earth, what a tragedy—what a ghastly story to take with them!

"Rummiest place I ever saw!" came a remark from Puggy Dibble, further along the deck. "So this is Venus, eh? Well, I wouldn't believe it at first—and it seems too impossible to be true, even now."

"I believe there's some fake about it," said Royce. "We're in Brazil, or somewhere, and these idiots have been trying to fool us that we're on another planet. I don't believe it."

Freeman turned, and glared at the three Castleton cads.

"Aren't things bad enough, without you making them worse?" he demanded aggressively. "Dry up, you idiots! What does it matter if we're on Venus, or Mars, or Jupiter? Professor Drewe and old Bags and all our chums are gone—vanished! Can't you get that into your thick heads? There's not a sign of them—"

"Freeman—Freeman!" came a sudden gasp from Barry. "Look here!"

"Eh?" gasped George Freeman, turning round. "What the—"

"Over here—over towards that great cliff!" panted Barry, pointing. "Can you see anything?"

Freeman levelled his own binoculars, and stared—and then let out a wild whoop.

"There's something there!" he roared. "They're signalling. Can't you see? They're waving. It's them—they're there."

"But—but it's impossible!" panted Barry excitedly. "How could they have got up to that ledge—thousands of feet high?"

"Never mind how they got there!" bellowed Freeman. "Hi! Steersman! Can't you see? Turn the ship round, and—"

"We've seen, young gent!" sang out one of the engineers. "By thunder! I believe it's the guv'nor and all the others!"

The *Rover* gave a hunching motion as she swung round, and increased her speed incredibly. Then she went soaring on—hissing through the air at such speed that the boys were compelled to grab at the rail, and so cling there for dear life. Nearer and nearer to that vast cliff they came—and with every second that passed their hopes grew. For those tiny figures on the cliff ledge became clearer and clearer. Yes, they were the figures of human beings. The lost adventurers.

Barry was feeling strangely cool now. His wild excitement had gone and his hand was steady as he gazed through his glasses.

"Yes, it's uncle!" he muttered happily. "It's Uncle Roxley, and old Sir Bags, and Don and Freddie, and . . . Yes, all of 'em. They're all there, Freeman. Oh, my goodness! I never hoped for anything so glorious as this."

"Didn't you?" said Freeman. "Well, I did. You fatheaded chump! You surely didn't think they were dead, did you? I knew they were alive all the time."

As for the party on the ledge, they were now nearly crazy with excitement. The *Solar Rover* was coming nearer and nearer. Then Count Alexis Popandos had been bluffing all the time. He had never intended to leave them to the Venusian creatures. He was going to take them off. He was coming now to . . .

"Why, look!" yelled Don Masters suddenly. "That's Barry there—on the bridge. Can't you



see him? Barry and Freeman—on deck! The Count isn't there!"

"Cheer for me, somebody," said Sir Bags huskily. "My voice has gone. Old Popandos has been whacked, by the look of things. Those boys have got control of the *Rover* and—"

But he was not allowed to say another word. The air was filled with wild cheering. Everybody seemed to go mad at the same moment. For this really was too good to be true.

And the *Rover* came on—nearer and nearer, until she was hovering like a feather close against the ledge. Barry Drewe and George Freeman were leaning over the bridge-rail now, their faces flushed with joy.

"It's all right, you chaps!" sang out Barry. "Come on—scramble on board. We've got the old ship again, and Popandos is locked away, below."

"Hurrah!"

"Nearer—nearer!" yelled Sir Bags, with a sudden note of alarm. "Quickly—bring her nearer, so that we can jump on board. Those accursed bat-men are after us again."

### Puggy Takes The Credit!

WITH a gentle, almost imperceptible bump, the *Solar Rover* hit the rocky cliff-face. So perfectly did she answer her controls that she hovered there, as gently and as easily as a steamship against the side of a dock.

And with one scrambling rush the adventurers climbed on board. Sir Bags was the last one to leave that ledge. He saw everybody else safely on the *Rover* first.

"Quickly, Clarence!" panted the Professor urgently. "For heaven's sake, man, come aboard!"

"Don't call me Clarence!" roared Sir Bags.

"But, man alive, you don't realise—"

"Yes I do, Prof," said Sir Bags, as he glanced over his shoulder. "Here they come—swarms of 'em. Well, that to them!" he added, snapping his fingers contemptuously into the air. "We can defy the whole bally crowd now. I don't know how this miracle came about, but I was never much of a chap for asking questions."

He vaulted lightly on board, and at that very moment a motley mob of the great bat-men came surging out of the tunnel exit. They took to the air at once, and fluttered round, uttering shrill, clicking cries. And the *Solar Rover*, with all her precious crew on board, soared away, increasing speed with incredible ease.

Only for a few minutes did the Venusians attempt to give chase, but then they gave it up. For the *Rover* was now racing upwards and onwards at more than five hundred miles an hour. Her uncanny "sun-energy" was such that she could obtain almost any speed.

Professor Roxley Drewe stood on the deck, looking about him like a man who has just come out of a dream.

"My ship—my ship!" he muttered fervently. "Thank heaven we are on board again! I did not hope for this—I could not hope for such wonderful joy. My ship—my ship!"

"Yes, it makes you feel good, doesn't it?" asked Sir Bags, as he clapped Barry on the back. "Well, boys, how did it happen? Tell us all about it. Not that we really feel like listening. We all need a sleep—and the chances are that the majority of us will drop down, exhausted, just as we stand. It's only the excitement that's keeping us up now."

And this was true enough. Most of those school-boys were utterly done. They were practically at the end of their tether, and only the joy of being rescued kept them awake.

A crowd of fellows had gathered round Puggy Dibble & Co., and there were many expressions of astonishment.

"But you weren't on board at all!" ejaculated Bill Ward, staring. "Where the dickens did you spring from?"

"We were stowaways!" said Puggy proudly. "Jolly lucky for you, too."

"What do you mean—lucky for us?" asked Don Masters.

"What I say," replied Puggy. "Royce and Biggs and I stowed ourselves away, you know, and when the crisis came we went for that Popandos chap and floored him."

"Oh, draw it mild!" protested Don, staring. "You couldn't floor a fly, Puggy."

"I tell you, we went for Popandos, and we captured the ship," said Puggy, with incredible effrontery. "Didn't we, Biggs?"

"Eh?" gasped Biggs. "I—I— That is—"

"Not that you fellows helped much!" went on Puggy Dibble contemptuously. "I did practically all the fighting. My hat! You should have just seen me sloshing old Popandos. You've got to thank me for being alive now, you chaps. I think you ought to get up a vote of gratitude, and—"

"By jiggery!" ejaculated George Freeman, in amazement.

He had come up unobserved, and he now pulled Puggy Dibble round and thrust a big fist under Puggy's nose.

"See that?" he roared aggressively.

"Hi, steady!" gasped Puggy. "Keep your fists to yourself, Freeman."

"You worn!" yelled Freeman. "You know jolly well that you skulked down below while the fighting was going on. You and your pals couldn't scrap against a couple of infants out of a kindergarten."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All the other fellows roared with laughter, and there was a hysterical note in that laughter, too. The relief at being saved was tremendous. And it was just like Puggy Dibble to claim all the credit—it was quite characteristic of him.

"The less you say, Puggy, the better," exclaimed Billy Ward. "We know you of old, you fibber!"

"Well, I—I mean— I'll admit that Freeman helped a bit!" stuttered Puggy. "It might have been harder for us if Freeman hadn't helped—"

"You awful fibber!" yelled Freeman. "Barry Drewe and I did everything!"

"Well, don't argue about it, boys—don't argue about it!" said Mr. Mannerling. "Let us all be thankful that we are alive and safe. We are once more aboard the *Rover*, and I have received instructions to take you all below and to pack you straight into bed! We need sleep—and plenty of it! Twenty-four hours straight off!"

"Lead me to my little cot!" murmured Billy Ward dreamily. "Oh, corks! Sleep—blissful rest. But first of all let's have a drink, for goodness sake!"

"And I vote we get off Venus as quickly as we can!" said Freeman. "We've had enough of this giddy planet! Why not try Mars for a change?"

Professor Drewe, who had overheard this remark, shook his head.

"No, certainly not," he exclaimed, recovering some of his old enthusiasm. "We have scarcely explored a square mile of this planet yet! We cannot leave Venus—we must see more of this amazing world. Popandos is safely under lock and key, below—and there he can stay!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Wouldn't it be poetic justice to hand those villains over to the bat-men?" asked Freeman thoughtfully.



"Yes, old man—but we couldn't do it," said Barry. "They acted inhumanly towards us, but two wrongs don't make a right. We shall have to keep the prisoners on board until we get back to earth."

There was very little further discussion. A reaction had set in, and over half the fellows were drooping with exhaustion. And less than ten minutes later, after a merciful drink, the rescued ones were below—sleeping like tops.

And the *Solar Rover* went onwards—speeding across the surface of Venus at a height of twenty thousand feet.

### The Amazing City.

"WELL, I'm jiggered!" said George Freeman blankly.

He was standing on deck, and many of the other juniors were with him. They were staring down—down at a vast expanse of ocean. As far as the eye could see, in every direction, there was nothing but water. Sparkling, gleaming water. A vast Venusian ocean!

The boys had just come on deck. Very different did they look now—with their fresh faces and eager eyes. They had slept long. In fact, they had all been sleeping for nearly thirty hours and, in the words of the Hon. Freddie Trevor, their tissues were somewhat restored. Their good old blood corpuscles were once more absolutely sprightly.

Night had come—the Venusian night—and now it was daylight once more. On Venus, it seemed, the day was very similar to that of earth, being, in fact about twenty-three hours.

And during all that long sleep of the boys the *Solar Rover* had been speeding onwards at something like three hundred miles an hour. She had covered many thousands of miles and was now over a totally different part of the planet. But here, instead of the rugged landscape, there was nothing but water.

"How long has this been going on?" asked Freeman, indicating the ocean.

"Oh, for hours and hours, according to one of the engineers," said Barry Drewe. "We lost sight of the last scrap of land during the night."

"Well, here we are, boys!" sang out Sir Bags cheerily, as he came on deck. "What about some breakfast? I suppose you know it's all prepared in the dining-saloon, don't you? Aren't you hungry? I'm not!"

"Not hungry, sir?" asked Barry in surprise. "It's too stupendous to be called hunger," replied Sir Bags. "I'm ravenous—I'm positively dangerous in fact. I could eat one of these deck-rails!"

And soon they were all at the great table in the dining saloon. Everybody was in the happiest spirits. Professor Roxley Drewe himself was effervescent with excitement and anticipation.

"Soon we shall sight land again," he said. "I can hardly remain down below here. I want to be on deck all the time—watching!"

"Why, what do you expect to see, sir?" asked Freeman, staring.

"Wonders—constant wonders!" replied the scientist. "It is impossible to guess at what we shall see when land comes within sight again."

"But it won't be any different from the other land, will it, sir?" asked Ward.

"Not different?" echoed the Professor. "My dear boy! Think! The chances are that it will be vastly different—totally different!"

"How do you make that out, sir?"

"Good gracious!" said Professor Roxley Drewe

in astonishment. "Upon my soul! Do you expect to see the same kind of scenery in England as you see in the Rocky Mountains? Why should it be any different on Venus!" One section of this globe is probably totally different from another."

"Land-ho!" came a hail from somewhere out on deck.

"That's done it!" grinned Sir Bags complacently. "Well, I'm not disturbing my meal just to catch sight of a bit of land. It'll still be there after I've finished these eggs and bacon!"

But the others were rushing out, too excited to heed. The Professor's words had put new thoughts into their heads. And when they got on deck they could see a low smudge on the far horizon. It grew more and more distinct as they progressed, and after another half-hour had elapsed they could see signs of vegetation. They could see hills beyond, and it seemed that the great forests were not so vast as those which they had viewed earlier.

Moreover, the atmosphere was much cooler here—that terribly oppressive feeling was conspicuous by its absence.

"As I suspected—as I suspected!" shouted the Professor excitedly. "I believe that we originally landed in the Venusian tropics—where everything grows to an enormous size—as, for example, in the Amazon region on earth. But now we are in a more temperate zone."

"Just a minute, Professor!" said Mr. Mantering, pointing. "Look through your telescope, sir! Am I wrong, or are they buildings over there?"

"Buildings!" went up a concerted yell.

"Amazing—amazing!" gasped Professor Roxley Drewe. "Yes, Mantering—yes! They are buildings! Immense, lofty buildings, more and more magnificent than any skyscrapers of New York! This is a staggering discovery, indeed!"

A wave of new excitement went over the young explorers. Buildings! Here, on Venus—great, towering, lofty buildings! Then the Venusians of this zone were not cliff-dwellers!

"It's—it's too stunning for words!" ejaculated Barry blankly. "I can't believe it, Uncle!"

The Professor turned upon him, his face flushed. "Why not?" he snapped. "Why should you be so astonished?"

"But—but isn't it startling, Uncle?"

"No, it is not!" retorted Professor Roxley Drewe. "It is the only logical thing that we could expect. We are now over a totally different part of Venus, and the chances are that we shall discover a civilisation here!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You're absolutely right, Prof," declared Sir Bags, nodding. "For all we know, we might have landed in the Papua of Venus. Those cliff-men—and the giant spiders, and all that. That part of this globe may have been the most wild and savage of all."

And they watched eagerly—fascinatedly. Nearer and nearer to the land they grew and, without doubt, there was a vast city along the shore, in the distance. A great, towering city of grotesque buildings, rising for thousands of feet into the air. Amazing buildings—glittering and gleaming in the sunshine.

On the threshold of a staggering, incredible discovery! Wondrous things, beyond the imagination of Earthmen, are to be disclosed to the Professor and his chums. What they are you'll read for yourselves, boys, in Next Week's Stunning Instalment of this Marvellous Serial Tale.