

GRAND CIRCUS AND COWBOY NUMBER

Boys' Magazine

2¢
EVERY SATURDAY



THE
CIRCUS
IN THE
WILD
WEST

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A Scintillating Page of Fun and Frivolity.

THE JESTER'S REDEMPTION



SAW TOO MUCH.

HOTEL CLERK: Your bag has burst open sir. May I ask what that queer thing is?

GUEST: A new fire escape. I always carry it when travelling so that I can let myself down from the hotel window, see?

HOTEL CLERK (thoughtfully): I see. Our terms for guests with fire escapes are always cash in advance!—A.M. (Cardiff).

NEARLY A TRAGEDY.

His poor absentmindedness had got him into such an unfortunate mix-up that he resolved to end it all. He carefully stuffed the keyhole, the window cracks, and then threw himself upon the bed.

Next morning, when he did not appear at breakfast, they went upstairs and smashed the door. They found him snoring.

He had forgotten to turn on the gas!—L.C. (Stratford).

FIRST AID.

FIRST YOKEL: Wot's all the 'urry, Garge!

SECOND DITTO: Squire be fell down a well.

FIRST YOKEL: Be ye after a rope?

SECOND DITTO: No, 'is ear-trumpet. Oi've shouted down, but he can't 'ear.—(Altrincham).

SEEING THINGS.

MAGISTRATE: Why did you conclude that the defendant was drunk?

CONSTABLE: He was engaged in a heated argument with a 'bus driver.

MAGISTRATE: But that does not prove anything.

CONSTABLE: Well, sir, there was no 'bus driver there.—R.D. (Beccles).

A MOUTHFUL!

AMERICAN: Yes, your Lakes of Killarney are very nice. I would like to have them in New York.

IRISHMAN: Well, you lay a drain pipe from here to Killarney, and if you can suck as well as you can blow you will soon have them there.—A. L. (Moston).

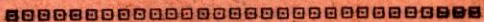
WANTED SHORT WEIGHT.

WILLIE: Threepenn'orth of castor oil, and give me short measure, please.

SHOPMAN: What for?

WILLIE: 'Cos it's for me!—G.C. (Durham).

'Where did you get that swollen nose?'
 "You saw those new concrete steps?"
 "Yes."
 "Well, I didn't!"



A POSER.

A farmer, visiting his son's college and wandering into a chemistry class, saw some students busy with retorts and test tubes.

"What be you trying to do?" he asked.

"We're endeavouring," replied one of the students. "to discover or invent a universal solvent."

"What's that?" asked the farmer.

"A liquid that will dissolve anything."

"That's a great idea," agreed the farmer. "When you find it, what you goin' ter keep it in?"—(Rugby).

TRADE TERMS.

The judge gazed sternly at the prisoner.

"How many times have you been convicted before?" he asked.

"Five, my lord," came the reply.

"Then I shall give you the maximum sentence."

"Maximum! Don't regular customers get a bit of discount?"—E.C. (York).

GASSY!

MAGISTRATE: What is your name?

PRISONER: S-s-s-s—

"Your name," thundered the magistrate.

PRISONER: S-s-s-s—

MAGISTRATE: Constable, what is this man charged with?

CONSTABLE: Soda water, I should think, sir.—G.C.S. (Prestwich).

NEXT PLEASE!

LITTLE BOY (in church for the first time as the surpliced choir enters): Are they all going to have their hair cut, Daddy?—R.S. (Leeds).



Customer: Are you the man who cut my hair last time?

Barber (tersely): No, sir. I've only been here a year.

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

SPECIAL CIRCUS AND WILD WEST NUMBER.

And if You Want to Join a Circus, Read this Tale of How Lion Tamers are Made.



Now that Tod's in uniform and on the job there's some zip in this Zoo.

Black Maguire's Treachery.

"NOW you've got it, Bert. Put him over it again, then back out slowly. Fine."

As Bert Tod backed out of the lion's den and snapped the door behind him, old Hans Kieffer, the animal trainer, patted him on the shoulder. "You'll make an animal man yet, son, because you've got the 'sense.'"

A suppressed snigger sounded from the leopard cage near-by, and the swarthy face of Señor Benito—otherwise known as Black Maguire—glared at them through the bars. "Kiss the dear boy and be done with it, Dutchy," he snarled in a most un-Spanish voice. "This mush makes me sick."

"If you don't quit licking those cats of yours you'll get sicker than ever," snapped the old animal trainer meaningly.

The war—if it could be called that—between Hans Kieffer and Señor Benito had dated from the moment that the zoological authorities had consented to take in charge an intractable lion called Dynamite, and turn him into a fully qualified circus performer. A bit unusual, perhaps, but the zoo had any amount of room, and the circus owner was a big taxpayer. Hans had come with the lion, of course, dedicated to the task of moulding to his will the huge king of the jungle. This didn't suit Black Maguire at all. Obsessed with the idea that he, and he alone, should have the handling of the big cat, he had promptly declared war on the hard-working old trainer.

Training a lion didn't come under Bert Tod's regular duties as a cage boy; his job was to hose out the cages, ventilate the dens, and feed the mammals in the east wing. But it happened that Bert wasn't one of those boys who worked with one eye on the clock and the other on the pay envelope. He loved

the tang of foreign smells in the great Mammal House, the grunt of feeding animals, and the patter of hard paws on the cement floors. When the old trainer dropped a hint, therefore, that he could use a helper now and then, Bert had hastened to offer his services.

On the surface it seemed as if the boy had made a bad move. In the first place, by aligning himself with the old trainer, he immediately turned Black Maguire into a bitter enemy. And in the second place, the job meant that he had to do without his lunch many and many a time, and toil away long after the other cage boys had slipped home.

"You have the 'sense,' son," repeated old Hans again, as they parted outside the door of the Mammal House, "and if you can stick it out we'll turn that bagfull of dynamite into something worth while before long."

Back in the leopard cages, Black Maguire brooded morbidly. Till finally, his unenviable reflections getting the best of him, he grabbed an iron rod and drove it furiously through the bars into the huge lion in the other cage.

The gigantic lion leaped into the air with a roar of pain and anger. Then, catching sight of his attacker's scowling face, he hurled himself against the side bars with an impact that threatened to tear the whole cage from its cement foundations. Inflamed with jealousy, his insane anger fed by the thundering roars of the mighty beast, Black Maguire prodded Dynamite till he was a ripping, devastating tornado, hurling himself blindly against the stout bars, tearing at the cement floor, and driving all the other inhabitants of the Mammal House into a frenzied pacing of their dens.

Dynamite's sudden relapse puzzled old Kieffer considerably. And though he suspected that some of

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



Get acquainted with these two, chums! They are: Tod, the Daring Boy Trainer, and Dynamite, a fierce African Lion, who figures in this grand tale.

the helpers about the place—the cage cleaners, possibly—had teased the great beast into irritation, he didn't think for a moment that the leopard man's insane jealousy would lead him to interfere with the savage lion.

"I can't understand it," he exclaimed, again and again, as he stood outside the cage with Bert the next morning and studied the hostile look in the creature's bloodshot eyes. "He was coming along fine yesterday, but to-day he wants to eat everybody in sight."

But had the old Dutchman seen the look of triumph on Black Maguire's swarthy face—he trundled by with a hose-drum, he might have put two and two together and made a pretty good guess as to who was the culprit.

It was a black moment for Hans Keiffer and his youthful assistant. It had taken them two long months to gain the confidence of that lion, and reach the point where Bert could enter the cage and patiently teach the mighty creature the art of getting on and off an elephant stool. And now, overnight, all that had been swept away. Indeed, one need only look into those burning eyes to realize that, as far as confidence and trust in humans was concerned, Dynamite was back to his jungle days, ready, and willing, to fight the world.

"Quiet, Dynamite, quiet," pleaded Bert Todd, pressing against the bars and putting everything he had into the words. But the infuriated giant glared at him with red-rimmed eyes, bared his fangs in a snarl, and flattened his great body for a spring.

"Try a bit of meat," suggested old Keiffer quietly. "But move slowly, son. Let him see what you expect to do before you do it."

Squeezing his way between the cages, Bert was making for the meat house in the rear when he came face to face with Señor Benito.

"Hello, Smarty," sneered Black Maguire, blocking his way, "hear somebody's gone and fussed up your pet."

Anxious to get away from the detestable fellow as quickly as possible, the boy merely smiled.

"What's the matter with your tongue?" snarled Black Maguire. "Can't you speak to a man?" But having no heart for either a fight or an argument, the lad dodged under the bully's arm and took to his heels.

It's astonishing how quickly bad news can travel. And it wasn't long before the whole great zoo knew the details of Keiffer's failure with the big lion. And since the old man thought more of his reputation than much fine gold, it cut him to the heart.

"But it isn't your fault, Hans," expostulated Bert. "And we know perfectly well that somebody

deliberately poked Dynamite in order to ruin his temper, so we might as well say so and be done with it."

But the old trainer shook his head. "They'd only laugh at us, Bert. No, we'll simply have to take our medicine and start in at the bottom again."

It wasn't long before the bad news, mounting in volume like a rolling snowball, trickled into the Curator's office, and Hans Keiffer was called upon to explain the matter. Hans never told Bert what had been said to him on that occasion, and the lad never asked him. But when the old man trudged back into the Mammal House again his kindly old face wore an unusually serious look.

"We'll have to speed up a bit, son," he growled, "or they'll hand Dynamite over to Benito."

'Ware the Lion.

TO the uninitiated, taming and training a lion doesn't appear to be such an extraordinary job.

But any animal man will tell you that there is nothing more exhausting and nerve-wracking than the everlasting clash between wills. And as can be well imagined, Hans Keiffer and Bert Todd spared no effort to regain once again the confidence of the surly Dynamite.

Bert was standing outside Dynamite's cage one noon, tempting him into accepting a morsel of meat from his hands, when Black Maguire, his blood-shot eyes blazing with the fiery liquor that was tangling up his feet, paused beside him.

"Well," he sneered, "when is Mamma's darling thinking of paying a personal visit to Dynamite?"

The boy flushed and took a quick step towards his enemy.

"Look here, Maguire," he growled through set teeth. "You may think you're putting something over on old Hans, but I've got my own idea of who meddled with Dynamite. And . . ."

A terrific roar cut short Bert's remarks, and the lion hurled himself against the bars in a frantic effort to get at the hated leopard man. Maguire's face paled as the tawny monster shot through the air again and again, and he instinctively shrank away from the spot. Then, furious at the thought of Bert witnessing his fear, he suddenly whirled on an unsteady heel and whipped his right fist to the point of the boy's jaw, sending him crashing against the lion's cage.

It is quite probable that the furious Benito would have followed up his cowardly attack if the door of the Mammal House hadn't opened at that moment to admit Hans Keiffer. At sight of his young friend swaying dizzily against the lion cage, the old man hurried forward with a low cry. But with that the fog lifted from Bert's brain, and shaking his head at the buzzing in his ears, he sidled towards his sneering enemy.

Maguire met him with a stiff-armed jolt that almost lifted him off his feet. But a long haymaker caught the leopard man across the throat and he fell back with a purpling face. Then in his eagerness to follow up that slight advantage, Bert laid himself open for a drive to the solar plexus that, had it landed fairly, would undoubtedly have ended the fight right there and then. As it was the boy had to fight agonisingly for his breath. More by good luck than good judgment, Bert whanged a right hook to the man's jaw that fairly lifted him off his feet.

For a second Señor Benito swayed on his heels—out on his feet—then crumpled to the floor like a bag of feed.

The drubbing that Señor Benito had received at the fists of his youthful opponent seemed to have a salutary effect on the burly leopard man, because

he took care after that to be busy at the far end of the leopard cages whenever old Keiffer and Bert worked with Dynamite. But long years on circus lots and in menageries had made the old man an astute judge of character, and he sensed treachery in the renegade's behaviour.

"Look out for him, Bert," he warned his friend. "Don't let him catch you in a side street, or you'll finish in a hospital."

THOUGH the mere sight of Señor Benito still sent the lion into a fit of furious anger, the big fellow's handlers appeared to make considerable progress after that. And there came a day when Hans and Bert once again moved cautiously about the cage. Slowly, carefully, rarely speaking above a level tone of voice, they coaxed and wheedled the tawny giant into taking up his training where he had left off. And as the days wore on and Dynamite mastered those tricks considered elementary in the repertoire of a high-priced actor, the old Dutchman

As the boy snapped off the lights and stepped through the door he didn't see a dark figure creep out from behind the leopard dens and attack the hinges of the little door in Dynamite's cage with a hammer and cold chisel.

The crowd came early the next day, pushing through the clinking turnstiles in an ever-thickening mass—women and children in the great majority. And in less time than it takes to write it the aisles were packed with people, staring in awe-struck admiration at the sleek specimens of spotted and striped beasts from the far ends of the earth.

Most of the tigers and leopards there had become used to the incessant cackle and the never-ending glitter of staring eyes, and they seemed fairly bored to death. Not so with the big lion in the far cage, though. The clatter of tongues got on his nerves, and the shuffle of feet nearly drove him crazy. Pacing restlessly up and down the front of his cage, he would pause every now and then, bare his fangs in a warning snarl, and bring up a deep rumble from his toes.



FACING THE LION'S WRATH!—Dynamite crouched over his shrieking victim, his eyes glaring with triumph. Bert's blood seemed to have gone to water, but holding the stool unhesitatingly he tried to tempt the lion from his prey. "Up, Dynamite, Up!" he commanded.

regained some of his early enthusiasm for his colossal pupil.

"He's the best I've handled, Bert," he confided once. "And if nothing happens he'll go over big."

But something did happen before they were many days older, a terrible, hair-raising incident that revealed Black Maguire in his true colours.

Following the usual custom, it had been planned to open the zoo to visitors on the following Saturday, whereupon every animal man in the organisation groomed his charges for that occasion. By that time Dynamite was going through his paces to the manner born; vaulting obstacles, hurdling barrels, and leaping through great hoops covered with coloured paper. Bert had finished late on the eve of the Saturday, and after he had slanted the props out of the cage he patted the lion on the head—a little dubiously, it must be admitted—and bade him good-bye.

"So long, Dynamite; you're free till Monday, so be good"

This only seemed to increase the interest of the excited crowd, of course, and by the time Hans and Bert had reached the Mammal House a great throng was jammed tight against the guard railing in front of the lion cage.

A single glance showed Bert that Dynamite was in a state of nervous excitement. Catching sight of the worried look on old Keiffer's face, he was hurrying forward with the vague idea of reassuring the big fellow by his voice and presence, when a child, suddenly squeezing under the guard railing, thrust a tiny cane between the bars and rattled it furiously before being snatched up by a frantic mother.

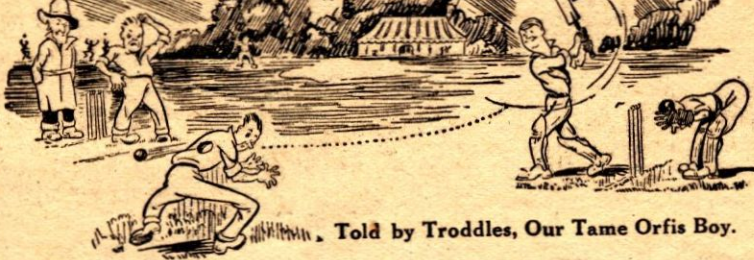
A scream from a woman, a gasp of horror from the crowd, and a tawny shape, leaping through the air like a rocket, hit the front of the cage with a terrific impact.

The tremendous weight and momentum proved more than the weakened hinges could stand, the gate flew open with a clatter of shattered iron, and five

(Continued on page 7.)

An Awful Jawful of Howling Mirth in the Queerest Cricket Match Ever Played.

BY WUN RUN!



Told by Troddles, Our Tame Orfis Boy.

THE schoole was in a ferment ! The egerly-lookt-forward-to dae had come at larst and they were to meet St. Slip's and do battle roil on the green turf !

Larst yeer St. Slip's had warked over St. Flippet's to such an eggstent that one or two plaeers were trodden completely into the grownd, and mae be found there to this dae !

But now, when the schoole had every hope of a gigantick win a calamity had occurred.

L. Ate Cut, the finest bat and captain the world had never scene, had disapered ! He had vanisht !

I. Hunt Clues, the schoole's tame 'tec, had serched hi and low. He had lookt up the chimneys, in the dog kennels, and other likely places, but in vane.

Then, when the teshun was at a height of five thousand feet, L. Egg Brake, the vice-captain, rusht into the common-room.

"News !" he cried. "There was a letter from old 'Cutty' on the notice-board."

Egerly the fellows crowdend round to heer the contents of the letter.

Deer Old Egg—it ran—I am off on an urgent mishun—but I will be back in time for the second harf of the match.

Yours never CUTTY.

"Hurrah !" The cheers of the delited fellows lifted the roof, and the vibrashun as it crasht back into place sent the form-master unconscious for fore daes, and the Hed had to send out for an eer-trumpet, which he has used ever since !

THE great dae had done exactly the same as any other dae—it had dorned ! The match with St. Slip's was due to commence at eleven o'clock, and by that time the ground was packt !

Soon after that a loud clatter was in the lain, and the St. Slip's fellows flasht up on their scooters !

Having lost the toss, the St. Flippet's fellows took the feeble one man short—the others their usual size. Wallop, the opposing captain, had agreed that Cutty might plae as soon as he returned.

All eyes were bent on the ground. Having stratened them and returned them to their owners, the umpire signalled for plae to commens.

G. Ood Length opened the bowling. His first bawl was a site to see. It bounst half-way down the pich, broke to leg, turned a somersault, and bounded to the off.

But no batsman stept out to drive it to the boundery. The trickiness of the deliverer had paralised him, and putting his hand to his heeted

brow, he burnt it so badly that he jumpt hi in the air and knockt his wicket down !

"How zat ?" "Out !" wheezed the umpire.

"That's the stuff," chuckled Dr. Likeboys, knocking I. Birehem's wig off. "Four to wun on St. Flippet's."

The second batsman wended his way to the wicket determined to do or die.

He doed ! And from then on the feelders were kept busy. Our after our parst and still the two men were there. Perspirashun poured from the brows

of the feelders, and then, just when the Hed was thinking of sending for the ambulance for his team—the rival captane declared.

Having no chaire the score now stood at 600.

I have drom a veil over the paineful seen that followed—the schoole's men went in bravely enuf, but the bowling beet them. And by tee they were all out for 46 !

After tee Wallop and his partner opened well. Anxiously the schoole's supporters lookt round, Would Cutty never come ?

Half an hour parst and the score was still on the increeze when suddenly a loud droning was herd. Looking up the specked taters perceevend an aeroplane.

Was it ? No ! Yes ! No ! Perhaps ! Never ! What ! No—yes—it was L. Ate Cut at larst.



G. Ood Length's furst bawl was a site to see.

Cheer after cheer rent the air, and secotine had to be applied to mend it, as Cutty, taking a parachoot leep from the 'plane landed in safety. Hardly had he recurvered his breth before L. Egg Brake arsked him to bowl.

Then the fun began. L. Ate Cut started off by doing the hat trick, and the score-board red 84-3-26. The feelders began to britten and wonderful was their wurk. They flung themselves at the bawl as though they wish to strangle it. Smudge, at point, raced a skier to the boundery and-ert it as it descended.

Then the rot set in and the rival team gradully crumbled away. L. Ate Cut's larst bawl was the wunder of the match !



The gardner pickt up a file and grownd his teeth with rage. They laried at him.

Running up to the wicket he wirlid his arm round co such an eggstent he seemed to be turning in the air! But where did the bawl go? The batsman and specked taters lookt everywhere for it, then, plonk! It descended from the clouds rite on top of the middel stump. St. Slip's were out and the score red 100-11-0.

To tye the schoole watted 654-655 to beet. The match depended on Cutty.

He opened with a drive that took the cover off the bawl. The next, a new one, he put thrus slips, leeving a big hole in him. Then, having killed the umpire with the next, he settled down.

Procurig a tin opener Cutty opened his shoulders to the next bawl. *Whoosh! Tinkle!* It had found the boundary and the greenhouse, and with a long sie a cucumber dyed!

D. Ig. Well, the gardener, pickt up a file and grownd his teeth in his rage, but everyone larft at him.

The St. Slip's feelders were almost dun—many lae

prone on the grass. Six hundred and fifty was on the score-board.

Snick! The batsman at the other end had scored a single and Cutty had the bowling agane.

The schoole groned as the umpire held up his hand—it was to be the larst over.

The specked taters held their breth as the final bawl hurtled down the pich. Four runs wanted to win!

Would Cutty do it? Then, click. He had hit it!

"Oh!" The specked taters let go their breth and the rush of air welled across the pitch, knocking the wicket-keeper over and carrying the bawl to the boundary.

Hurrah! Six hundred and fifty-five! St. Slip's had been beaten by wun run!

"OH, help, help!" The table groned under the good things. L. Ate Cut and his form-fellows were celebrating in his studee.

"Now, I will tell you why I vanisht," said Cutty, firing the cawk from his ginger-pop into L. Egg Brake's eye. "Everything was all right up to midday when I received a letter from home.

"It ran:

Dear Laurie,

I hope you are wearing yore flannel nexst to yore skin and that you wash yore neck every morning. I feer for yore favourite canary's life. He hasn't any berd seed left, and there is none in the house and it is erly closing dae. Unless he has sum he will di!"

MOTHER.

"I quickly grabbed sum I had in my locker, and rushing to the village procurd an aeroplane. I arrived just in time to save Squeak-pip's life.

"And got back in time to save us," chippt in L. Egg-Brake.

"Hurrah, hurrah," yelled the fellows, and the studee bulged. Never had they cum across such a noble fellow.

And after that they eat and eat and eat until in the end the Hed had to send for a carpenter to widen the door to get them out!

Another Tophole Tale of Stan the Steeplejack and Pedger, his fat pal, appears on Saturday Next.

TOD, THE LION TAMER.

(Continued from page 5.)

hundred pairs of eyes stared in horror-stricken amazement at the snarling face of the lion framed in the opening.

Bert Tod doesn't remember much of what happened after that. From the corner of his eye, he saw Black Maguire whip a revolver from his pocket. But before he could fire it, and long before he himself had shouldered his way through the panic-stricken crowd, Dynamite had leaped to the floor, cleared the guard railing with a single bound, and felled the leopard man with a single blow of his mighty paw.

Crouching over his shrieking victim, Dynamite glared about in savage triumph, his thickened tail brushing the floor with an ominous *swish*. Stubbling clear of the mob—the rear ranks had jammed the door tight—Bert grabbed a stool from before the leopard cages and strode unhesitatingly towards the snarling lion.

"Up, Dynamite, up!" he snapped, putting all the decision he could muster into the command, and holding the stool out at arm's length. For a terrible moment the tawny body sank lower and lower to the floor, and he seemed about to hurl himself upon the intrepid lad. But clenching the stool with the strength of despair, Bert held the lion with his eyes.

"Up, Dynamite, up!" boomed old Keiffer's voice at that pregnant moment, and with a snarl of baffled anger, Dynamite leaped through the air in a beautiful curve, leaving the wavering stool by inches.

Hitting the floor with a *pth*, *pth* of claws, he turned—as he had been so patiently taught to do—to balance himself on the stool that Bert dropped quickly to the floor. Two minutes more of nerve-racking doubt, quiet spoken commands by the old trainer, and Dynamite finally crouched in his cage again, while iron bars were wedged across the shattered doorway, and hysterical men and women crowded about the white-faced boy.

Though Black Maguire, thanks to the valour of his youthful enemy, suffered no permanent injury from his frightful experience, he never returned to the employ of the zoo, and the entire leopard family was placed in the keeping of Hans Keiffer and his assistant. Much to their regret, Dynamite was taken away by his owners some weeks later. But when news of the great lion's spectacular success as a trick performer began trickling in, Hans Keiffer and Bert Tod felt amply repaid for all the time and trouble they had taken with Dynamite, the lion.

More Fine Thrill Tales Next Week, Boys. There is Dandy Lyon and Riff Raff in a Tremendous Tale You Won't Want to Miss. Terry the Tank's Right There.

Your Editor's News.

The Return of Tich, the Boy Millionaire, Next Week, Chums—Stan, the Star Steeplejack, The Boxing Dragoon, etc. Look out for Star Programme.

MY DEAR CHUMS,

I have lately been reading a new and deeply intriguing book on India, and it has struck me, as often before, what mighty matters hang on threads. I refer in this case to the loyalty of our great cousins of the Indian Empire. It's no use blinking facts, chums. There *is* in certain parts of India a revolutionary movement against the mother country.

"Let Indians rule India" is the cry, and those who voice it seem blind to the fact that India is, in the main, governed by her own native sons. Indian judges—barristers—civil servants. Why, our English public schools are fairly sprinkled with high caste Indians, who, in one way or another are equipping themselves for the future government of their own country.

Now this seems all very boring, chaps. But it isn't really. It's remarkably striking, particularly in this way. The Indians are in the main very intelligent; some are clever—some are extremely brilliant. The high caste Indians are sensitive, refined, and proud, and fiery as curry.

There you have it then, chums. What a delicate thing is the fabric of our society. As I said, mighty matters hang on threads. It might be that in offending one great and powerful Indian Rajah, the greatest catastrophe in history is caused.

I have spouted all this, fellows, because this anxious subject is the theme of our mighty sporting, Army

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.,
200, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C.1.

and Secret Service tale which appears in the Mag. next week. You'll revel in this long complete—

The Boxing Dragoon.

"Shiny" Hallem, a boy of barely nineteen, climbing up the ladder to pull down the heavy-weight boxing championship of the Indian Army—he's the chap who stars in this eerie yarn of jewels, white palaces, black princes—and sport.

It's a tale with an Arabian Nights atmosphere, fellows. Fancy "Shiny," a pukka soldier at eighteen—juggling with all manner of mystery. First he's trying to win the boxing championship (and that in itself is a hefty slice for a kid of eighteen to cut off), and then it is later revealed that despite the fact he is only an ordinary trooper, he is engaged on Secret Service work of the utmost importance!

And in a queer way the boxing championship is mixed up with the Secret Service work and with a jewelled cup worth a cool million, and—

JOKE COUPON.

Stick on postcard and send with your favourite joke to address on Joke Page, Boys' Magazine. 6/8/27.



But you'd better shake hands with "Shiny" Hallem yourself next Saturday, eh? He's fit and well to spar through a few thrill rounds with you in this story.

Comic stories? Good. Make way, please. Here comes the one and only Tich McGill, the boy millionaire who's got to get rid of a huge fortune. He comes back to the Mag. next week, chaps, in an exuberantly funny new series of stories, the first of which will be entitled:

King of the Cannibal Isle.

Laugh! You will laugh—there's no doubt about that. Tich is about the most comical lad on earth. I honestly think his antics would make a giraffe try to stand on its head. It's a topping long tale of him next week, chums, and I'd take it as a favour if you'd tell all your pals to look out for the *Boys' Mag.* with its arresting coloured cover—for it's packed with tales and surprises next week.

One of the thrill yarns is another exploit of Stan, the Star Steeplejack and his fat pal, Podger. It is entitled:

The Haunted Church.

Stan and Podger have to repair the tower of an old church, and directly they get into the church Podger, who is a little nervous, loses his friend, the star steeplejack, under most peculiar circumstances. Podger sets out on a search, and meets one hair-raising adventure after another.

I leave you to read for yourselves a very enjoyable yarn.

Our new serial, "The Planet Schoolboys" is full of topping adventures next week. You will learn whether Puggy Dibble and Co. are really dead, and there are some exciting flare-ups I can tell you.

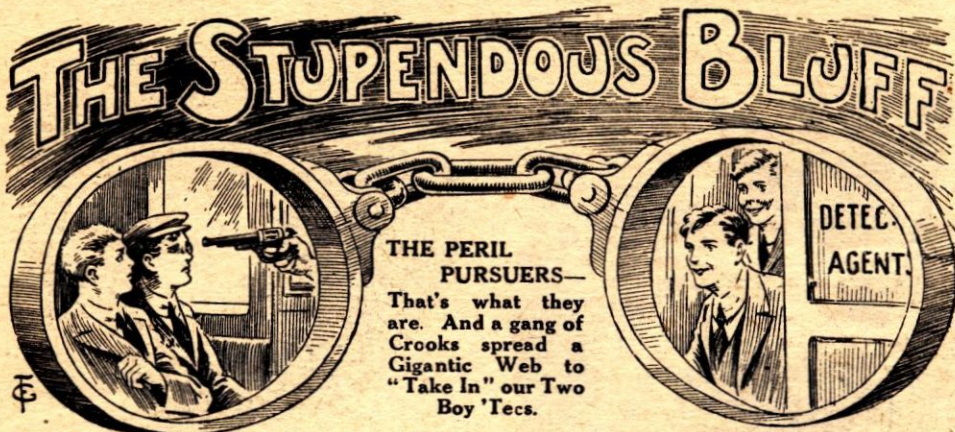
In our new wonder serial of Africa, you will reach a crucial turn in the affairs of "The Big Game Cricketers." You will see how Jimmy Brent and Co. prosper as slaves of the Big Boss in darkest Africa, and you'll see Sambo—well, you'll see old Sambo teaching the natives to play cricket. He's a lad—that fellow.

And then, chaps, I have a surprise story for you. Six tales next Saturday in the Mag. and all clinkers. And look out for special news from

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

Handcuffs, Pistols, Subtlety and Secrets. The Stock-in-Trade of Our New Firm of Boy Excitement-Seekers.



The Stolen Plans.

'SACKED!'

Slim Jim Refton walked slowly down the wide steps of the Jarraco Motor Company's huge block of offices. In his steel-grey eyes was concern and anxiety.

A painful interview with the managing clerk, five minutes previously, had resulted in Jim's dismissal. Now, with one week's salary in lieu of notice in his pocket, he stepped down to the city pavement.

"Three quid in the world and jobs none too easy to find in Radchester. I reckon—"

He got no further. In the act of turning from the last step, someone bumped into him with a force that sent Jim full length on the marble steps.

"Canna ye watch whaur ye're goin'?"

A distinctly Scottish voice sent Jim's glance up to the person who had knocked him down. He saw a youth of about eighteen, a short sturdy youth almost as broad as he was long, with a square, aggressive-looking face.

"Sorry," Jim picked himself up with an apologetic grin. "I guess I was thinking."

"Can ye no do that with ye're eyes open, mon? D'ye ken a clerk named Refton in this block?"

The sturdy youth looked up at Jim questioningly.

"Sure," replied Jim, "I'm Refton. Why—"

"I'm wantin' ye to come with me. I'm from Erneliffe and Erneliffe, Solicitors. There's a wee bit guld news for ye at the office."

Jim listened dazedly. Ten minutes later he was at the office of the solicitors, and Mr. Erneliffe was asking him pertinent questions regarding an incident of two years ago.

"Very good," the solicitor seemed satisfied.

You're Refton all right. You've got a small legacy of three hundred pounds from a man named Robalt. I understand you saved his son from drowning two years ago. Good luck to you."

Once again Jim Refton found himself staggered. But this time the rueful expression was replaced with a cheerful grin. With a thick wad of notes in his inside pocket he made for the street. At the office door the solicitor's sturdy junior clerk was regarding him enviously. Jim halted.

Say," he said. "I've an idea you and me could

got on together. I've got the brains and the kudos—you've got the beef. I got sacked this morning for leaving the plans of a new carburettor in an open desk. Somebody pinched 'em and I reckon to do a bit of 'tec work. I could open a small office in the city. What about it?"

The square face lit up with a grin. "Toc work, eh? Just bide a wee minnit, while I get my cap."

And so, readers of the leading newspapers saw a strange advertisement in their columns next morning.

BRAINS AND BEANS—Detectives.

Have you a mystery you require solving? We Solve anything Solvable. Anytime, anywhere. Call, write, or 'phone.

For three day the advert appeared without result. Then, on the morning of the third day a knock at the door of the small furnished office Slim Jim Refton had rented roused the occupants to quick attention.

"Door, Squat Quick!"

Squat Sanders—Jim had already christened his Scotch chum—dived for the door, to admit a tall, hawk-eyed man wearing big spectacles. He gave a surprised glance at the youthful detectives, and then plunged into his reasons for calling.

"I am M. Vantleson, of Vantleson & Raig, Jewellers. I have a rather important piece of work which wants doing. Briefly, I want you to take jewels to the value of one hundred thousand pounds to London for my firm. Can you undertake this?"

Jim, repressing a gasp of astonishment at the amount of money mentioned, nodded.

Yes. This agency undertakes that kind of work. When do you want us to start?"

Now A train leaves Radchester Central in fifteen minutes' time. It will be a dangerous undertaking. The crook fraternity know that this jewellery is being transferred from our Radchester Depot to London, and— Mr. Vantleson leaned forward. "You will have to be very careful. I hit on the idea of sending two perfect strangers with the stuff at the last moment. Here it is."

Jim and Squat found themselves staring at a small attaché case.

Now," Mr. Vantleson went on, "you will be met at London by my men. Hand it over at once to them. Understand?"



A VALUABLE CATCH.—Leaning over, Slim dropped the hooked line through the hatch. Before the astonished crooks could recover, the precious attache case was snatched up before their eyes.

Ten minutes later the amateur detectives were seated alone in a carriage of the London-bound train. The train had begun to move slowly from the platform, and the boys settled themselves; and then a man, who had been standing on the platform, darted suddenly for the moving train.

In an instant he was inside Refton's compartment, levelling a small automatic at the astonished chums even as he recovered his balance.

"Don't stir, kids. I guess that was the neatest bit of work ever. Not a porter saw that trick, and now we're all alone, eh?"

His glance strayed to the attache case beside Slim Refton.

"That's the stuff, O.K. I'll trouble you for it, kid. Hand over."

Refton handed the attache case across the compartment. The crook, a well-built, athletic type of man, grinned triumphantly. He placed the gun inside his coat pocket and slid slowly along the seat to the corner opposite the chums.

"Now, listen. I've got you covered from my pocket," he gritted. "First move and you're cold meat. I don't want a signalman to notice anything, savvy; and, don't forget, when I shoot, I shoot to kill."

Refton never spoke. But ever since the crook had dived into the carriage he had been busy. Attached to the little finger of Refton's right hand was a thick strand of black horsehair. The other end of the hair was tied round the communication cord.

Unseen against the carriage cushion the horsehair, one strand of which is capable of bearing a heavy weight, was the medium by which Jim could stop the train at any moment.

But the time was not yet. Jim was waiting for the crook to settle himself. Ten minutes passed. The train was rattling and roaring along at sixty

miles an hour by this time, and Jim, watching the crook carefully, judged that his time had come.

The fellow, obviously thinking that the chums were scared to death, was lighting a cigarette with his left hand. Slowly Jim pulled on the cord. Almost instantly the train began to slow down.

"By hokey, kids! You've played it on me, eh?"

The crook, gun in hand, was on his feet on the instant. But Refton greeted him with a sickly smile.

"How could we have stopped the train? We've never moved from our seats!"

The crook scowled viciously. It was clear that neither Refton nor Squat had moved.

"You're right," he muttered. "But don't move now."

Half-turning, he shoved his head out of the carriage window, the revolver still poised; and then Squat acted. He had been sat back in his corner, apparently frightened to move. But now, like an unleashed hound, he dived low for the crook's ankles. The revolver barked. A bullet ripped through Squat's coat, and then the crook was down.

Before he could rise, Slim Jim was upon the crook. One kick on the wrist and the revolver was sent spinning. With a screeching and whirring of brakes, the train came to a standstill.

"WELL, I guess we settled his hash, Squat. We can take things easy until we get to London. That is, unless there's a crook on the carriage roof."

Slim Refton chuckled. The crook, handcuffed securely, was safe in the guard's van, and the train, after a brief pause, had resumed its journey.

"D'ye ken ye nearly lost ye're partner, Slim?" Squat indicated his ripped coat ruefully. "Think o' the cost o' repairing that!"

Slim grinned. Then he took out a neat revolver from his pocket.

"Never mind the cost of that. Vantleson's fee is a hundred guineas for safe delivery of these jewels; and I reckon another half an hour will see the cash earned. It's only a forty-five minutes' run from Radchester to London. Once there the job's a cinch. We've nothing to stop in London for, so we'll come right back."

With his fingers about the trigger of the revolver safely hidden in his coat pocket, Slim settled himself. And then on a sudden he started.

"Squat," he said, "we're not through yet. What if someone impersonates Vantleson's messengers at London? He's given us a description all right, but a crook could easy make up as his messenger. We've got to go slow, very slow."

Double-Crossed.

"WELL, here we are, Squat."

The train was coming slowly to a standstill. As he spoke, Slim Refton pushed his head out of the carriage window. Almost immediately two men began to pace level along the platform with the slow-moving train.

Both raised their right hands, on the little fingers of which gleamed peculiarly marked gold rings. These were the marks by which Vantleson had told Slim he would recognise the men to whom he was to hand over the jewels.

"Got the stuff all right?" one questioned Slim as he thrust open the door. "You can consider your work done. Have any trouble?"

Briefly Slim recounted the episode in the carriage; and as he spoke he studied the faces of the two men before him. Both were keen, clever-looking men, immaculately dressed. And yet, Slim thought there was something hard in their faces, something he instinctively distrusted.

"Well, hand it over," one said. "We'll manage O.K. now. We've a car outside the station."

Slim handed the attaché case over. Then with Squat at his side he walked slowly along the platform.

"May as well get back to Radchester, Squat," he said. "There's a train in an hour. We'll have a snack in the refreshment room."

Squat, whose appetite was somewhat voracious, had just finished his snack when Slim Refton swung about suddenly. A news lad had entered the refreshment room, with the noon papers, and the glaring headlines of the poster he carried sent Refton's pulse racing:

Great Radchester Jewel Robbery.

Buying a paper, Slim read:

The great Radchester firm of jewellers, Vantleson and Raig, was this morning robbed of jewellery to the amount of one hundred thousand pounds. It was found that someone impersonated Mr. Vantleson, gained access to the jewels, and walked out with them.

"Suffering Frogs," Slim Refton stared at the paper. "Squat, we've assisted a gang of crooks to make a haul. That fellow wasn't Vantleson at all. Those chaps who met us were his confederates. If that wasn't the neatest piece of bluff I've ever heard—come on."

Scarce waiting for Squat to follow, Slim darted from the station. Hurried questioning of the half-dozen taxi-drivers outside the station resulted in

He glanced through the window as he spoke. The taxi had long ago left the city behind and was now bowling swiftly along the coast road leading to Brightsea. Grimly, Slim Refton settled himself to wait; and then a sudden exclamation from the taxi-driver sent the chums tense on their seats.

"The car's just ahead. Looks like a smash or something. Shall I drive past?"

"Sure." Instantly Slim gave the command. "Don't stop level on any account."

The driver put on speed again. The chums, crouching unseen in the cab interior saw that the closed-in car had come to grief. It lay half in the roadside ditch, and a smashed hay-laden cart told of how the disaster had occurred.

There was no sign of the crooks, and halting the taxi, Slim climbed out. A few minutes' talk with a scared-looking countryman, driver of the wrecked cart, and Slim learned that the crooks had gone walking off ten minutes' previously.

"Gave me twenty quid for the damage," the yokel said. But Slim was already trotting along the country road.

"Luck's in, Squat," he muttered. "We'll catch them up before they reach their boat. Your gun all right?"

Squat nodded. Then he pointed to the long road ahead. Three figures walking swiftly along proved to be the crooks. Instantly Slim slowed down.



AT KING NEPTUNE'S MERCY!—Slim came to consciousness to find himself bound back to back with his chum. The crooks had left them helpless in a cave, and already the water was swirling round their armpits!

Slim learning that a closed-in car and the two men had departed half an hour previously.

"I heard one of the blokes tell the driver to drive to Brightsea," Slim's informant told him. "It's a little fishing village on the coast about thirty miles from here. I'll take you if you—"

"Sure thing." Instantly Slim had dived into the cab. "And make your 'bus fly."

"This is how the thing's being worked," Slim told his chum as the taxi tore along. "The crook who impersonated Vantleson knew that he could be traced. So he hit on the idea of letting us deliver the goods. He'll probably join his pals at Brightsea, and they'll make a getaway by boat. That fellow who tackled us in the train must have been in the know and had a shot for the stuff himself."

"But what we goin' to do?" Squat asked.

"Do." Slim took out the revolver he carried. "I only hope those birds are still at Brightsea. There'll be a bit of shooting if I don't get that stuff back."

"Go easy, Squat," he ordered. "We don't want 'em to get us first."

A sudden idea struck him.

"We'll cross this field—see how this road winds round it—and meet 'em at the far corner."

Breaking through the hedge, the chums ran swiftly across the huge field. Reaching the far side they were two or three hundred yards ahead of the oncoming crooks.

"Down behind this hedge, Squat," Slim muttered. "Now—"

He darted out as he spoke. Full in the path of the crooks he leaped, revolver raised.

"Up with 'em," he ordered. "And no fooling."

For a moment the three crooks stood there petrified. Then, slowly, they raised their hands. One of them, with the attaché case now raised high above his head, spoke:

"What's the game, now? What do you think—?"

The sentence was never completed. Even as he spoke

he hurled the attaché case. It caught Slim full in the face, knocking him back against Squat and thus sending both chums off their balance.

In an instant the crooks had followed up their advantage. The butt end of a revolver crashed on Slim's temple, and darkness came down upon his brain.

The Chums Win Out.

SSLIM REFTON awoke to consciousness with Squat's anxious voice sounding in his ears.

"Come on, Slim, yo'll have to stir yourself if yo're no going to be drowned."

Slim's eyes opened wide. He was seated in a large cave, and a twist of his head showed that he was bound back to back with his chum. The low murmuring of waves came to his ears and he started as water rippled across his outstretched feet, which were bound at the ankles.

"You're right, Squat," Slim's brain took in the situation in a glance. "It won't take long for the tide to fill this place. The crooks have gone, I guess."

"Ten minutes ago," answered Squat. "They've got a yacht some little distance off-shore. They carried us down here. Seems they're waiting for the crook who said he was Vantleson—but we've no time for talking."

A second wave, splashing across the cave, showed the need for haste.

Slim's eyes took in a small, sharp-edged rock rising out of one of the shallow pools on the cave floor. It was within a few inches of his outstretched bound ankles.

"Keep your balance, Squat," he ordered. "Once reach that, we'll be able to walk."

Carefully Slim manoeuvred until his ankles were resting on the sharp rock edge. Then he commenced to saw away at his bonds, working slowly and painfully. Quite suddenly the ropes parted, and then Squat swung round until his ankles were across the rock edge.

A few more minutes of painful sawing and both chums were able to get to their feet. By now the waves were rapidly splashing across the cave floor, but once on their feet the chums were safe for the present.

"Best get our hands free before we leave here," Slim muttered. "Those crooks might be watching. Come on, there's plenty of sharp rock edges in the cave walls."

Walking slowly to the cave walls the chums were soon struggling to saw through the bonds which bound them together. Then, free, they crept to the cave mouth through which the waves were now splashing a foot deep.

"There's the yacht," Slim pointed to where the boat lay at anchor. "Supposing we swim right out to it and take a chance? They'll never suspect we've got free."

It was the work of a moment to put the idea into execution. Abreast, the chums took the water, which was perfectly calm.

Swimming silently they reached the anchor chain. Apparently there was no one above deck, and without hesitation Slim gripped the chain.

"I'll signal you to follow if it's O.K.," he whispered to Squat.

It was early afternoon by this time, and the sun threw black shadows about the ship. Keeping well in the shadows, Slim crept forward. The sound of voices from an open hatchway halted him.

"I guess we'd best leave Croker. Seems he's been nabbed in Radchester or he'd have been here by now. Let's split the stuff now and make a get-away."

"Leave Croker." Slim recognised the voice of one of the pseudo messengers. "You wouldn't get a mile without him tracing you."

Slim peered down the open hatchway. There were six men there seated about a small table. The attaché case stood between them. Quite suddenly then the idea came to Slim.

"Gosh," Slim muttered, "once slip something over that attaché case handle and I could fish the case up."

Turning, he was soon fumbling with the canvas cover of the yacht's lifeboat. The canvas was drawn over the boat by ropes, small iron hooks keeping it taut. In a few seconds Slim had loosened one of the ropes with a small hook at the end.

Then, silently, he trod back to the hatch. Leaning over he dropped the line through the hatch.

The suddenness of the thing gave it success. Before the astonished crooks could recover, Slim's hook had gone beneath the attaché case handle. The case was snatched up before their eyes.

It was an instant's work then to bang the hatch-cover down and secure it. In ten seconds the crooks, shouting curses, were helpless, caught like rats in a trap.

"Good work," Slim chuckled as he raced for the yacht side. "Guess we ought to be ashore before they smash that hatch open."

That same afternoon Slim walked into the London shop of Vantleson & Raig, Jewellers, and placed the attaché case before the astonished manager.

"Guess this is what's worrying your firm," he said. "You'll find the stuff a bit damp but otherwise in perfect order."

Then with Scotland Yard hot on the trail of the yacht crooks, Slim and Squat made for their Radchester train.

"Not a bad day's work, Squat," Slim grinned as he settled himself in the carriage. "Those crooks will be sorry they ever let Brains and Beans take a hand in the Great Jewel Robbery."

Barty the Balloon Jumper is Coming on Saturday in a Whacking Fine Tale of the New Sport

Another Glimking Yarn of Stan, the Star Steeple-jack, and his Fat Pal, Podger, Next Saturday.

THE HAUNTED CHURCH.

Don't Miss this Eerie Tale, Chaps. A Special Feature will be the Return of **TICH, THE BOY MILLIONAIRE**, in an Exerciatingly Funny, Long Complete Yarn—

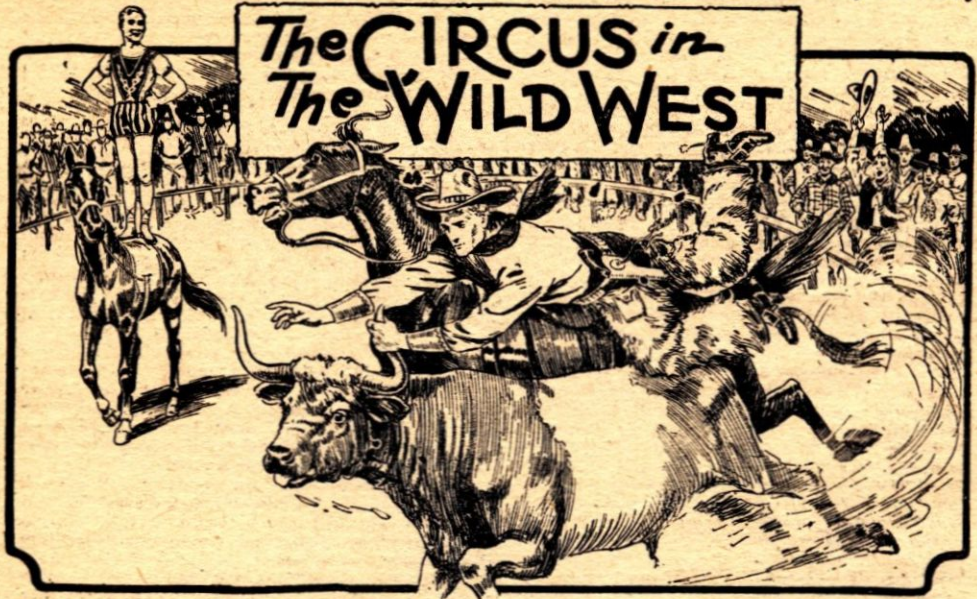
KING OF THE CANNIBALS.

You must be at the Coronation of the Funny Little Chap, on a Desert Isle.

The Mag. is crowded with Spanking Features Next Week See Editor's Chat.



Grand and Entrancing Long Complete Yarn Telling how **Don Duvall**, the Circus Daredevil, came to meet **Rex Remington**, the Famous Dandy Cowboy.



VIVID PEN PORTRAITS OF COWBOY LIFE. TELLING HOW **TEX McNAUGHTEN** JOINED THE BAR EIGHT RANCH.

The Bandits' Stronghold.

AS will be seen presently, it was the strangest and most secure strongholds of bandits and outlaws ever known. It was as impregnable as the Rock of Gibraltar. It is doubtful whether, even if it had been attacked by two companies of U.S. soldiery, it could successfully have been stormed against the six desperate Western bandits who held it.

One of them was nicknamed Cavalry, so called because once he had been in the U.S. Army, but he had deserted. Very carefully Cavalry walked towards the cairn of rocks on the top of which the other five outlaws lay.

Cavalry carried a water-bottle, half-full of tepid water. As has already been remarked, he walked very carefully—so carefully, indeed, that one might have imagined him toeing a white line. On all sides stretched an almost endless vista of brown-grey prairie, covered sparsely with mesquite and short, thick, curling manna grass, with just this cairn of rock—a rugged, naked monument in the solitude of the Texas cattle lands.

Rather, it appeared that the prairie, trembling and quivering under the relentless sun, stretched everywhere, but Cavalry knew better. He hated this spot with a fierce hatred, although he knew that it offered him security against the law and against his enemies. For he had been in the U.S. Cavalry, and he had experienced the horrors of the desert. This spot was worse than any spot in the Wyoming desert, where the lizard crawls, and the foolish grey wolf stalks from the shade of one hot rock to another, watching that strange creature, Man . . . waiting until that staggering, upright figure shall drop and crawl over the hot sand, imploring for water—waiting for the end and for nightfall.

Cavalry had experienced all this when he had deserted and taken to the desert, like a fool. He had known the horror of the vulture wheeling over him in the trembling blue. And since he had been lucky enough to come out of it alive, he had hated desert and sand. He hated this spot, for it was worse than the desert of Wyoming, where the mirage of beautiful lakes and trees beckons the parched traveller on to his doom.

Here there was sudden, quick death. It was a man-trap. One false step, even now, and he was doomed.

But Cavalry did not make that false step. He, who knew all about deserts, had discovered this stronghold, and he was not going to fall into his own trap.

He was a tall, thin, cadaverous man, dressed as a cowboy with a long, red weal slashing down the right side of his face, and deep-sunken, burning eyes. His two guns were strapped low down on his hips, and he also carried a knife with which he was as expert as any Mexican. He had to be, for he consorted with Mexicans. He looked the typical Bad Man of that semi-arid area of the South-West, as indeed, he was. Cavalry knew no law save that of Judge Colt, and his instincts were those of the preying wolf.

But if he was evil, four at least of his companions whom he discovered as he clambered up the cairn of rocks with the water-bottle in his hands appeared even more terrible. Not that they were physically any more revolting than Cavalry himself—they were simply Mexicans, that was all. Children of subtlety, of sloth and of deep cunning. They looked up as the gaunt bandit came through an opening in the rock, and their eyes were soft and dark, and they

removed their brown cigarettes with the debonaire air of watching one of their own bizarre operas.

Cavalry's lips twisted grimly in muttered curse of these Greasers who lounged indolently in that rocky retreat, gayly bedecked with sashes and silver ornaments. He hated the sight of their dark, swarthy faces, matted, greasy hair and flashing eyes. He hated himself for consorting with Greasers. He hated everything—the hot, glaring sun, the endless prairie and the enemies who beset him. He had reached that state of stark misery that is the fruit of a life of violence and killing and gambling. Only hate filled his storming and reviling soul.

Another man who squatted on the rocks watched him with grim humour. He was a long, lean Texan with fair, sun-bleached moustache and fierce black brows. His mouth redeemed a long and hard face, with skin like brown parchment, for the mouth held humour as the eyes also held something in their gaze that was generous and straight and fair.

Tex McNaughten, outlaw, might justly be said to have been a victim of circumstances. Way back in Texas a quarrelsome man had drawn a gun on him. But Tex, the indolent, slow and drawing of speech as he was of movement, had "beaten him to the draw" in a lightning movement, and that quarrelsome fellow had toppled in the dust, never to pull trigger again. The trouble was that the rights of the matter were never properly brought to light, and so Tex, like many another good man in those days, drifted into the ways of outlawry.

He followed the example of Mr. Maverick, after that gentleman had ceased to become popular in the cowlands. That is to say, he "moseyed" around, and whenever he saw a calf that had not a ranch brand upon it, he acquired it. But now barbed-wire fences were coming to the cowlands, and the iron trail of the railroad was blazing its way across Continent, and the cowboys "shot up" any gentleman who went hunting on their range for mavericks. The old order was changing, and it was a hard life being an outlaw.

Tex realised all this, but he had been pulled into the vortex of it, and there he was. The end would come one day, he reckoned, but he would die with his boots on. Meanwhile he was "tarnation thirsty."

He stretched out a hand for the water-bottle which Cavalry had brought.

"Reckon I'd shuah better drink afore these Greasers," he drawled. "I don't aim to be poisoned yet-awhiles. No, suh."

The four Mexicans, Jose Montero, Juan Capitan, Antone, or "Tony Benito and Sanchez Maringo, scowled at him darkly. They understood English, and the insult did not pass them by.

Slim, dark and sinister, they shifted on the rocks, and watched the Texan drink in silence, eagerly awaiting their own turn, whilst thoughts that were poison seethed in their minds.

"Come on, durn it!" growled Cavalry as the Mexicans were drinking. "Let's get settled down, and talk over the job. This 'ere circus and rodeo is coming to Shaneville, and we aims to make the biggest killing of our lives. There's Rex Remington, of the Bar Eight Ranch, and there's the Circle O and the Slash Lazy D—all taking a bunch of steers to the rodeo. There's other pickings, too. Reckon it shure ought to be a good haul, boys."

The Mexicans nodded vehemently, and commenced to gabble amongst themselves.

"Zere ees ze beeg stone," said Juan Capitan, who appeared to be the leader of the four. "Ze emerald eye of the serpent which zis Don Duvall haf. We must haf zat first."

↳ Cavalry nodded sullenly.

"All right, you durned Greasers," he growled. "You'll get your stone, don't worry. But the rest comes to us."

Cavalry had always been a cowman. He knew nothing of precious stones, whereas he knew a lot about cattle. But these four Mexicans, accomplished thieves both in cities and on the prairies, had joined the outlaw in his latest enterprise with only one object in view.

They wanted to get hold of the Eye of the Serpent, the most famous jewel in America.

They had read in the eastern newspapers that Don Duvall, the young circus proprietor from England, had brought the jewel from Mark Duveen, the Chicago multi-millionaire, and that Don was travelling with it for advertising and show purposes.

The jewel in question, a huge emerald, was said to have been found in an ancient tomb of the Aztecs in Old Mexico. Indeed, it was said to be the single Eye of the Serpent, the serpent being the symbol of the ancient Aztecs race and religions.

Therefore, as can be imagined, the jewel was exceedingly valuable intrinsically. And it was valuable for show purposes to Don Duvall, the boy circus owner, who was touring America. In every big city thousands had flocked to see the great emerald set up in a prominent position in the arena and flashing back reflections from the circus lights.

So far no attempt had been made to steal the jewel. But now that Don was travelling the smaller towns near Mexico, the attention of the quartette of Mexican crooks was directed towards the wonderful treasure of the ancient Aztecs.

"We must have ze stone first," put in Jose Montero excitedly. "Zat is important. We no work wiv you, if not. Ze stone we must haf."

Cavalry's eyes gleamed dangerously.

"He knew the stone was valuable, and if he could have negotiated it, he would have been after it himself. But cattle was easier for him to deal with, and he had many old scores to wipe off against the ranchers around these parts. There was Rex Remington, the Dandy Cowboy, for instance. Cavalry reckoned him as a deadly enemy. Before he left these parts he meant to even up old scores—and in a devastating fashion."

But he could do nothing without the Mexicans' help. He decided to temporise.

"Awright, Greasers," he growled. "We go after the stone first. But mind; if you double-cross me afterwards, I'll wring your necks one by one."

They promised fervently that they would not do that. And Cavalry believed that they meant it, for he held the winning card. If the worst came to the worst and all their schemes failed they might yet be secure in their stronghold here against the invasion of thousands.

Cavalry squatted down, scowling heavily, and talking of what he meant to do to the ranchers of the surrounding district, and to the Dandy Cowboy in particular. The hot sun streamed down on him as he idly threw pebbles against a further rock, and the Mexicans lay smoking, muttering softly amongst themselves. None particularly noticed that Tex McNaughten had stolen away.

The Warning.

"CAREFULLY does it, boys," murmured the Dandy Cowboy.

A herd of cattle some three thousand strong was taking the trail across the mesquite plain, shepherded by the Bar Eight cowboys.

The season had been a good one for the Dandy Cowboy, and these three-year olds, all bearing the Bar Eight brand, represented his beef stock for the

The Jewels of Rhaajolp: Grand Boxing Yarn of Indian Mystery, Next Week. 15

year. The cowboys were punching the herd to Shaneville, the nearest railroad town, from whence they would be sent by freight trains to the cattle yards at Kansas City.

The Bar Eight boys were promising themselves a holiday when they reached Shaneville. They knew that the cow-town would be in gala mood, for herds were being driven in from the two neighbouring ranches in the Pecos Valley, and everybody would be in town. It had been arranged that a rodeo should be held, with skill competitions between the cowpunchers of the various ranches. And what was more—the greatest event, indeed, for several years—the town was to be visited by a real, live circus. None other than Don Duvall's Gigantic Royal Circus and Menagerie and Hippodrome of Stupendous Wonders.

The Bar Eight boys were looking forward mightily to the visit to town. For eight months they had ridden range on the lonely, limitless prairie. They had worked and slept through days of unvarying monotony, with only themselves as company, and a greasy pack of cards for diversion. No newspapers, no visitors to make a break or change. Yet somehow they had managed to survive, and Rex's cowboys were still what he always termed them, "the happy famil."

They were promising themselves a high spree during this visit to town, however.

But the Dandy Cowboy's warning was a timely one. They had not yet reached town, and the time had not come to give vent to their high spirits. One or two of the score of punchers were disposed to be "frisky" as they rode herd, and that was inviting calamity. A revolver shot, a voice raised too loudly in song might frighten the great herd of cattle and cause them to stampede.

The Dandy Cowboy was bringing the herd over a new and strange trail to Shaneville. It was supposed to be quicker, but that point had now become doubtful. The Bar Eight boys had punched the herd a hundred miles over the prairie in six days, and during that time the cattle had not touched water.

The southern sun streamed down on the prairie, setting the earth a-tremble so that it moved and heaved and writhed. Long ago they had seen the last of the few twisted trees, covered with great festoons of the devil's decoration, the Spanish moss. Here they were on the high prairie, where even the slight wind was hot and blasted with sand.

The cattle went laggardly, eyes abulge, nostrils distended and snorting. Suspicious and nervy was the great herd—famished for water. The cowboys herded the cattle in a huge triangle or V shape, its nose headed forward, so that the heavier mass of cattle behind pushed forward those who timidly nosed their way through the dancing heat haze.

The Dandy Cowboy was anxious, for he knew there was need of particular care on this last stage of the journey to Shaneville. It was rumoured that amidst this scarcely known tract there lay a terrible trap of Nature. And suddenly, to his horror, Rex saw it.

"Look—look there, boys!" he cried. "Careful with the herd."

All the cowboys turned to stare in the direction of their young Boss's outflung arm.

There was no need for their peering, half-closed eyes to gaze too long or too hard. They were horrified at once, for they seemed to be right on the verge of it. A great, golden-brown sea of sand—alive—heaving under the sun, writhing in torment. And amidst it all was a cairn of rock, like a desolate light-house.



AT THE PISTOL'S POINT.—"I want ze Eye of ze Serpent," ground out the masked bandit. "Queek—or I shoot." The boy circus owner coolly placed his hand in the pouch of his money belt.

"Gol-durn it," shouted Jack Jakers, the young ranch foreman in panic. "It's quicksands, boys!"

Quicksands, shifting restlessly there amidst the prairie. And as they peered the cowboys seemed to see a change come over the scene. Instead of that hot, writhing sand there was a wondrous blue lake with green trees, and overhead white fleecy clouds. A mirage!

Only those who have seen a mirage can understand the uncanny power of it, the seductive lure. It seems to go to the brain. Often it is said to be a figment of the imagination, but sometimes, as in this case, it is a freak of Nature. Just as sometimes fantastic shapes can be seen at dusk, or the face of a man in the full moon if one stares hard enough, so does the blinding sun distort the face of the desert wilderness to snare and trap men with its false beauty.

Nor does it lure men alone. The Dandy Cowboy quickly averted his face from the mirage, depths of apprehension stirring within him. For the huge herd of cattle appeared almost to be a-top of the quicksands, and if one of them should turn its bulging eyes and see that beckoning water, the beast would immediately set up a lowering to the rest, and then there would be a clashing of horns, a thunder of hoofs, and the thirst-maddened herd would go rushing headlong to destruction in the quicksands.

By a miracle the cattle were not yet apprehensive of the fair illusion that beckoned them to doom. The Dandy Cowboy made a sign, and the punchers immediately spurred up their tired ponies, and pulling up their neckerchiefs over their mouths, rode forward in a cloud of alkali dust to turn the head of the herd.

Their manoeuvres were akin to genius. They rode in at the head, thrusting their cow-ponies against the flanks of the cattle, sending in stabbing blows at those flanks with their quirts. All was done as silently as possible, and the greatest care was needed, for at the rear of the herd were two score of fierce old mosshead steers—rangy, longhorn cattle who would make tough meat, but who had been principally brought on the drive for the purpose of skill contests in throwing, roping and "cow-wrestling" at the forthcoming Shaneville rodeo.

After a few minutes' desperate work the herd was turned away from those treacherous quicksands. It was done with a skill that can only be compared to a mother's deftness in turning her child in the cot. Soon the cowboys were riding alongside the herd, softly singing to soothe the huddled beasts.

*Way down upon the Swanee river,
Far, far away.*

Rex, turning to cast a last glance at those quicksands that so nearly had lured them to destruction, was startled. He reined in Firefiend, his eyes like gleaming slits under his sombrero.

Over the heaving mass of sand now letters danced and frolicked in white light—letters writ large. They spelt a message of two words, and it was obvious to Rex's sane commonsense that they were heliographed from that raised cairn of rocks amidst the quicksands.

BEWARE RUSTLERS!

That was all the message said. After a few moments so jumbled did the letters become that it was impossible to read them. Then they disappeared, leaving only the writhing sand.

Rex turned away, deeply perturbed. He carried all his fortunes with him in that herd of three thousand cattle, and he would suffer severe loss if anything happened to them before they reached Shaneville. If it came to a fight with rustlers, of course, he knew he could place implicit trust in his twenty cowpunchers, each of whom packed two Colts and had plenty of grit. But he was frightened

of the cattle themselves. They were restless, and, as the range term goes, on the prod.

Rex determined to keep a strict watch out, and meanwhile the herd moved peacefully over the trail. That night it watered, and the position was saved. Two days later the exultant Bar Eight drovers arrived in Shaneville.

It was a town *en fete*.

But it was also a town of mysterious happenings. Rex had evidence of it the next day when, with the cattle all in the stockyards, he followed his cowboys into the Ace High Saloon to "celebrate."

The Fight.

"WAL say! If it ain't that four flush, Remington!"

The speaker was a fair-haired, half-drunken giant—none other, indeed, than Cavalry, the outlaw. He was in the garb of a cowboy, and he leaned against the bar as he spat out the words. His part of the affair that was impending was to keep the Dandy Cowpuncher and his Bar Eight boys in that bar as long as possible.



The bandits came riding on in the face of the Dandy Cowboy's deadly fire.

The Dandy Cowboy gave a slight start at the words, and stood stock-still at the head of his "boys" as he was entering.

His finely pencilled brows knit in real anger.

It was direct insult. The man had called him "a four flush"—a crook, in front of his cowboys. Rex seemed to know the fellow by sight. He did not remember, however, that in long-ago days he had exposed the man cheating at cards. Slowly the Dandy Cowboy strode up to the bar and his hand rubbed against the side of his chaps, not in search of his revolver, but as one who had an impulse to hit out.

"Ah, I remember you, Cavalry," he said at last between his teeth, staring hard.

He turned away and quietly ordered a drink.

"You called me a four-flush, Cavalry," he said, looking up quietly. "You've got to be very careful with those pet names of yours, otherwise they may cause a little—ah—feeling of constraint."

Cavalry threw back his mighty head, and laughed again. He was really a huge, gaunt fellow, and he towered above all the rest of the cowpunchers in the bar.

Everyone waited tensely for the end of his laughter, believing that very soon gunshot would be shattering the peace of the Ace High Saloon.

Cavalry climbed on to one of the high stools in the bar and sat a little huddled up.

"I say you are a four-flush," he repeated. "You double-crossed a lot of decent boys at a game of cards."

Rex fingered his glass, but did not reply for a moment. He was so amazed. Amazed that this fellow should have the effrontery to distort so the tale to make it appear that he, Rex, had been caught cheating.

The fair-haired giant turned round to the rest of the cowboys in the bar, who were listening tensely to the conversation.

"Say, do you hear him?" he sneered. "He ain't got a word to say for himself."

"I've only got this to say," the Dandy Cowboy drawled quietly. "You've got the tale a bit twisted, old chap. You were cheating foully—don't you remember?"

The drunken grin faded from the giant cowboy's face as a general laugh arose from those in the saloon.

"You darned liar!" he yelled.

The Dandy Cowboy flushed and his eyes became steely. "I guess I'll do more than return that compliment," he said with biting scorn. He had meant to order ginger-ale for himself, but now he

about the size of a man's palm appearing on his forehead.

There was a moment's silence—tense, expectant silence. And then the giant outlaw sprang at Rex again, his fair hair all over his tanned face, his eyes bloodshot like those of a mad beast.

His great ham-like fist shot out for Rex's face, and the Dandy Cowboy flashed aside just in time to avoid the full force of the blow. As it was, it caught his ear, grazing off some of the skin, and setting the nerves in his head jumping like a hundred needle points.

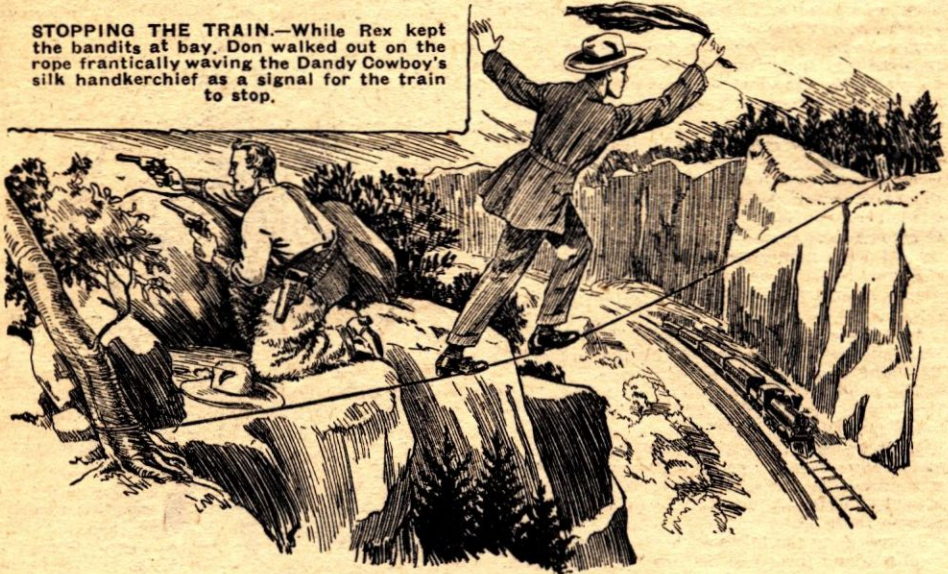
The Dandy Cowboy had been no mere tyro at boxing in the old days in England. And now he commenced moving round the giant outlaw, his fists moving dreamily, while he watched the murder in the eyes of the other man.

Suddenly Cavalry bent and seized a heavy bar stool.

"Take that—durn you!"

It came hurtling at Rex's head. Just in time he

STOPPING THE TRAIN.—While Rex kept the bandits at bay, Don walked out on the rope frantically waving the Dandy Cowboy's silk handkerchief as a signal for the train to stop.



turned to the bar tender. "Give me a drink of whisky," he ordered, and the glass was handed to him.

"I don't think you're a really decent chap," he drawled, while the other stared and listened. "I think there's a touch of the yellow streak in you. You ill-conditioned cur!"

And with that he threw the contents of the glass straight in the outlaw's face.

Cavalry staggered back with a screaming oath as the whisky stung his face and eyes. For a moment he paused like a panther crouching—an ugly creature, all his passions gathering. And then with a roar he sprang at the foreman.

The Dandy Cowboy punched like a sledgehammer, as the giant, with his hands going down to his gun holsters, jumped at him. No doubt he thought to lraw his gun and jam it in Rex's chest, perhaps to torment him with taunts before he killed him. But he was too late, and Rex's fist landed full in his face with a crack that rang through the saloon. Cavalry reeled back with a roar of surprise and pain, and stood straddled against the wall, a patch of red

ducked, and the stool passed harmlessly by and splintered the looking-glass behind to atoms.

"Bad luck, you big stiff," drawled Rex.

And then the outlaw saw Rex's right drawing back to punch. Instinctively he guarded as the Dandy Cowboy made that motion. But he blundered, for Rex's right leapt out, giving him a blow as if a great tiger had stabbed a paw at his face.

As the blood spurted, Rex crashed into the outlaw's stomach with his left, and between his eyes again with the right. Over toppled the outlaw, to the accompaniment of delighted cheers from the Bar Eight cowboys.

He had scarce shaken the boards before he was up again, and he sprang in, snarling softly. But he was blind in one eye, and Rex calmly smashed his fist to the other.

"Better cry quits," he said as he stood back. "I don't know why you picked this quarrel with me."

The words seemed to give the outlaw his cue. His hand went to his belt, and he flashed out a knife,

leaping at Rex. So swift was he this time that the Dandy Cowboy had no time to avoid him, and together they crashed down to the floor.

Cavalry had one straining hand at Rex's throat, and the other was upraised with the knife ready to strike. Rex struggled madly to hold that knife away, but the giant was as strong as himself. Then, knowing that he must die if he did not take desperate measures, the Dandy Cowboy's knee went up with a jerk into the giant's stomach.

Cavalry coughed and his whole body became lax. Rex snatched the knife out of his hand and flung it across the room, then he wriggled from under him and got to his feet.

There was a cheer from the Bar Eight cowboys, which died as it was seen that Cavalry was not finished yet. Somehow he staggered up, and with his battered face contorted evilly, threw out a pointing finger-like taunt at Rex.

"You dog!" he ground out. "Curse you, you've lost yore steers, anyhow. The herd's gone. I'll blow 'em up as I said I would, in the canyon. Trail's all set . . . you dog!"

The Dandy Cowboy stared a moment, realising that the man in his anger was saying more than he meant to do. And just then a cowpuncher excitedly burst open the door of the saloon and came inside.

"Say, you Bar Eight bunch," he shouted. "That's been an attempt made by th'rusters at the stockyards to corral yore herds. Masked Mexicans they were. Shot up five of the drovers who were getting the cows in ter the train. They'd have had the whole herd, too, only Jackson's boys from the Circle O happened to come on the scene. Lucky fer you. They'd have had those steers stampeding through the town, whilst yore here celebrating."

Rex calmed his cowpunchers' excitement with a raised hand.

"That's so—and thanks," he said calmly. Then his glinting eyes turned on the giant who had forced this fight upon him to keep him there.

The giant, in snarling fear at that look, leapt at Rex. And then the Dandy Cowboy went in to finish the business. He slammed with right and left. It was cruel, but the end came at last. Cavalry staggered crazily, his mouth wide open and his face a terrible, blood-bespattered sight. Rex smashed a final blow to his jaw, and he fell and turned his face to the wall.

Disregarding the fallen man, Rex snatched up his sombrero and turned to his Bar Eight punchers.

"Come on boys. I believe this fellow has mined the railway at the point where it runs through the canyon. And the freight train has started with the steers. Guess we'll have to ride hell-for-leather."

With wild exclamations the cowboys scrambled for the door and for their horses, tethered to the veranda rails. Less than a minute later twenty cowboys were riding in a cloud of dust out of the town, making for the railway at Canyon Point, some fifty miles away.

Would they be in time to prevent the blowing up of the train?

Don Duvall's Ruse.

"THIS is the life. And it's some country, too." It was Giglio, the strong man of Don Duvall's Gigantic Circus and Menagerie, who made the remark. He stood in the dining-car of one of Mr. Pullman's amazing new saloon carriages, and looked out of the window at the scenery that seemed to flash past. At that time Pullman carriages were not known in England, and they were a novelty even in America.

Don Duvall, the boy circus owner, had ordered



TO SAVE THE RODEO.—Jumping from the back of one maddened steer to another, the Circus Daredevil leapt for the trapeze bar, and swung for the Mexican on the board who was throwing the fire flares.

a special train to take him on his tour of America. The railroads were exciting the greatest comment just then in America, and the Circus Daredevil found that his special train, loaded with elephants, lions, tigers and other animals was a splendid advertisement. At every town at which they had stopped to perform they had had "full houses," and had been forced to turn money away. Therefore Don was quite pleased with his tour of the States.

Sitting at the window, he gazed idly out at the rolling prairie, baking and trembling under the sun. "Yes; it certainly is a wonderful country," he agreed. "And there'll be a great deal more progress out here in the West yet. I wonder what the town of Shaneville is like," he broke off thoughtfully. "They say we shall meet the famous Dandy Cowboy of the Pecos Valley there, and his Bar Eight men. They're the gunfighters who've cleared many of the trails of Indians down here. We haven't met any real Westerners yet—"

"You soon will," put in Signor Antone Bellasmo, the ringmaster prophetically.

The ringmaster literally spoke the truth, for at that very moment some ten miles down the rail track a gang of as villainous-looking men as one could reasonably expect to find anywhere in the West were at work.

The gang comprised the four Mexicans, Jose Montero, Juan Capitan, Tony Benito and Sanchez Maringo, together with the long lean puncher, Tex McNaughten from Texas. The Greasers had discarded their Mexican dress and sugarloaf hats in favour of the disguise of cowpuncher clothes.

They were the most notorious and cunning gang of train hold-up men in that part of the country. If the four Greasers were ever caught they knew no mercy would be shown them, and, like the cowards they were, they were beginning to be afraid of the fate that might be in wait for them.

They were playing for big stakes this time, however. The precious emerald of old Mexico, known as the Eye of the Serpent!

With their ill-gotten gains they would be able to clear out of the danger zone. Always providing there was no trouble with their confederate, the dangerous, ill-tempered Cavalry.

Even then, however, Cavalry was riding his horse like a madman for the railroad, broken in body and smarting in mind from the drubbing that Rex had given him.

He was riding in a murderous frame of mind, which thirty miles of hard galloping did nothing to soothe.

All he wanted was to smash the Dandy Cowboy—to ruin him financially. And he had his plans all laid. Long ago he had sworn that if he failed to steal

the herd of cattle from the stockyard, he'd make very sure that he had his revenge in some way.

He had mined the railroad at the point where it ran five miles through lonely, echoing canyon depths, and it needed only the touch of a detonator to smash railroad, canyon sides and anything else that might happen to be there in one awful, stentorian explosion.

And the freight train laden with Rex's cattle should be running through the canyon tunnel at the time of the explosion.

He was something of an engineer. He had laid wires and had concealed a detonation box some five miles from the spot. He had only to press a button, and watch the earthquake in the distance. Of course there'd be a hue and cry after him, but he'd get away.

Meanwhile the Mexican bandits were working against time. Fate had shown them a very effective way of holding up the train, for they had found a huge gnarled old oak tree alongside the line.

Generally the railroad and its immediate vicinity was cleared of trees, for fear of storms or robbers. But this gnarled old oak by some freak of Chance had survived, and it reared upwards some ten yards from the shining rails.

It would not remain there much longer. With a huge tree saw the Mexican bandits were cutting it down.

The saw moved to and fro to the accompaniment of its monotonous grind. Tex McNaughten, the only bandit there who was not a Mexican, looked on with grim eyes above the black silk neckerchief that concealed his features. He did not like this business. If that giant tree fell as the Mexicans planned that it should fall, it would completely wreck the train, taking a toll, no doubt, of many lives.

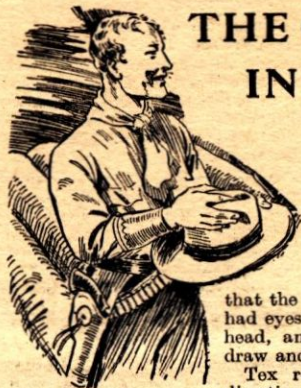
Suddenly Juan Montero who had been on look-out duty came riding up, the blue smoke from his cigarette borne in spurts on the heat-swimming air as he puffed furiously. He was very excited, his black eyes gleaming viciously.

"Queck. Ze train, eet come. In five minutes eet will be here."

The other three Mexicans hastily threw themselves over their horses, and turning in their saddles just before they spurred off, they loosed a stream of words at Tex McNaughten, who all this time had remained irresolute.

They were urging him to bestir himself, but Tex McNaughten's troubled eyes suddenly cleared, and he turned his horse's head away from them, galloping in the opposite direction.

The Mexicans snarled horrible imprecations, not knowing what Tex McNaughten meant to do. But they dared not attempt to fire at him, for it was said



THE CIRCUS IN THE WILD WEST.

□□□□□□□□

that the bandit from Texas had eyes in the back of his head, and he would surely draw and fire first.

Tex rode madly in the direction from which he

knew the train would come.

ALL unconscious of what threatened, the members of Don Duvall's Circus troupe sat in the Pullman carriage, watching the passing panorama.

"I really came out here to Shaneville to get hold of some crack rodeo cowboys for the circus," Don was saying when suddenly he looked up, and all the others, startled by his expression got up to look through the window of the Pullman.

"Hallo, what is it?" exclaimed the Circus Daredevil, watching with interest. And then his eyes sparkled. "By Jove, that fellow can ride."

It was Tex McNaughten, bandit. Sitting upright in the saddle, he held the reins in his left hand, emptying his six-shooter in the air as his mettlesome broncho swept like the wind over the prairie, towards the train.

He was approaching the giant locomotive in a curving sweep, but his firing and the wild prairie cry that came from his lips had no effect.

The loco was thundering at something like fifty miles an hour, and the driver had no intention of slackening. For he believed Tex to be a lone hold-up man.

Tex came in on the hurtling train like a bird wheeling, his chaps flying in the breeze, his pony bunched up with the speed she was gathering. Don Duvall and his circus troupe in the Pullman carriage watched in fascination.

Right alongside the running board of the train came Tex, and then, pushing his pony away from the monster of steel and destruction, the bandit leapt. Next moment he was clinging like a fly to the running board, whilst his horse careered away over the plain riderless.

"Hurrah," cried Don in admiration. "Gee whizz, if we could stage that stunt in the circus, what a hit it 'ud make."

Tex was pushing back the door of the Pullman, and he came inside coolly, pushing his empty Colt into its holster.

"Gents," he said briefly. "Guess I've come to warn you that there's a gang of train bandits waiting only a mile down the line fer yuh. 'Nother two minutes an' you'll be hitting a tree dropping across the line—and then you'll hit th' breeze for Kingdom Come, unless you tell th' engine driver to lay off. What's his hurry anyhow? This is a slow-going country!"

To say that they were startled is to put it mildly. But in a few terse sentences the lean Texan convinced them of the truth of his statements. Further, he removed his two guns and placed them on the table,

so that there could be no suspicion that he was in league with the hold-up men and had boarded the train in order to make the driver slow down.

They all took time, those explanations, and Tex became very urgent.

Looking out they could see ahead the giant oak tree, and to their startled fancy it seemed already to be leaning over towards the shining rails.

"I'll go," said Don suddenly, and he was out along the running board, moving with the swift deftness of an accomplished acrobat, though the wind endeavoured its utmost to tear him off his insecure perch, to send him hurtling to his death on the ground below.

The engine driver turned with a startled face and a heavy gun raised as the boy Circus Wonder came up to the footplate, and touched him gently on the shoulder. He had evidently seen the bandit landing on the train, and expected an attack. But in a few short, concise sentences Don told him of what portended, and the fear-stricken engine driver immediately commenced to brake up his huge locomotive.

The great oak tree seemed to be sweeping right upon them, though in reality it was the train that moved.

And to the horrified gaze of Don and the engine driver it was now manifest that the tree, cunningly sawn almost through, was falling under its own weight across the line. They were almost on top of it with the brakes screaming, the wind tearing at them—everything a blur. It was a moment of sheer terror.

And then it was as though suddenly the train jumped off the lines. Both the engine driver and Don gripped what came nearest their hands and clung for dear life. Something had passed like a thunderbolt immediately before their vision. The trunk of the tree!

The smash of it hitting the line seemed like the concussion of a cargo of bombs on a gunpowder factory.

When it was all over and a few moments had passed, Don breathed a prayer of thankfulness, for the train had been braked to a standstill within a foot of that fallen tree; and now the terrified cries of the menagerie animals who filled the rear portion of the train filled the loneliness of the Texas waste.

Don, spying out from the footplate, saw horsemen coming in the distance, and immediately with a low word to the driver he slipped out and retraced his steps to the Pullman car.

As he entered he saw that the strange cowboy who had boarded the train was concealed under one of the seats. The ringmaster pointed this out to him quietly, whilst the others stood tense and alert, staring at the horsemen now rapidly approaching in a cloud of dust. Everyone understood now that this was a train hold-up.

Don picked up one of the two Colt's .45 lying on the table, and quietly slipping one in his pocket, the other under the seat, he sat down.

He was scarcely a moment too soon, for the four masked horsemen came spurring up to the Pullman, and sliding back the door came in by the simple expedient of stepping out of their saddles into the carriage.

All four carried guns, and the man in the lead glared around him. In answer to the awful unspoken message in his sioe-black eyes, all instinctively raised their hands above their heads—all except Don, who sat cool and smiling at the table. The bandit chief picked him out, and immediately pounced upon him, speaking for the first time in snarling, foreign tones.

"So you are ze English pig boy, Don Duvall," he ground out. "I haf come for zomezing. I want ze Eye of ze Serpent. Queek—or I shoot!"

So that was it! Don knew that the fame of the jewel he had purchased had spread all over America, and he had received offers from detective agencies to guard him since it was known that he carried it about his person. But he had refused all these. He deemed himself quite capable to look after the jewel—himself and the faithful troupe of circus performers who always travelled with him.

Now under the threat of that long gun barrel with its gaping blue bore from which at any moment might issue flame and death the boy circus owner coolly unbuttoned his Norfolk jacket and placed his hand in the pouch of his money belt.

The circus troupe watched tensely. They knew that Don Duvall kept the jewel in that body belt, and when they saw him bring out a small black box they breathed hard with disappointment.

It was the case containing the Eye of the Serpent. Chung Lun, the Chinese conjurer of the circus, at the back of the Pullman with his hands raised, was the only one who still suspected that Don would not give in so easily. Chung Lun watched, squinting hard.

Don held the jewel box in his hand and looked up at the masked bandit.

The Mexican, his eyes glowing avariciously, made a grab at the case, but Don coolly drew it away.

Instantly he opened the lid of the box—and threw its contents. A brown powder spread itself over the bandit's face. He doubled up with a sneeze that seemed as if it must burst his head open.

"Atishoooo!"

It was an extremely strong snuff that Don had thrown in the Greaser's face. Warned that there might be some attempt to steal the jewel, he had prepared a dummy box with this powerful snuff.

The other three turned, eyes glittering with fear and hate. It was then the Chinese conjurer moved. It was a lightning movement, and the next moment one of the bandits staggered with a cry. His back was transfixed with a knife.

The other two spun round at this disaster, and Don, seizing the opportunity, made a grab for the gun of the sneezing bandit who seemed, indeed, as if he would go into a fit.

The tables were turned with a vengeance. And at that crucial moment, looking out of the window of the still Pullman car, the circus troop saw a cavalcade of horsemen riding madly towards the train.

Tex McNaughten came out of his hiding place under the seat and stared with guns drawn and brows knit.

"Guess it's the Dandy Cowboy and his bunch," he drawled at length. "Say, this is no place for th' baby. I'm going while the going's good."

In that flash of time the Greasers jumped for the door of the Pullman where their horses stood waiting. One had blood flowing from a knife wound in his shoulder, another a smashed hand, and a third was almost in a convulsion of sneezing. Yet they stayed not upon the order of their going.

They jumped into their saddles and spurred their ponies. Don did not fire after them, nor Tex. The long, lean puncher from the South stood irresolutely with a peculiar expression on his face.

"Guess I'd better stay an' meet the Dandy Cowboy," he muttered. "I kinda calculate I've got something to tell him."

Rex came spurring up, with ten of his punchers in the rear. His clean-cut, tanned face was hard and set as he flung out a gauntleted hand towards the fleeing Mexicans. Everything he possessed was at stake.

"Go and get those polecats," he snapped. "And bring them back to me. Sabe?"

"We've got you, Boss," cried Jack Jakers grimly,

spurring on ahead, and the living wave of horsemen commenced to move forward swiftly again.

The famous cowboy-rancher of the South-west watched them a moment, and then turned to Don. And a smile crept to Rex's face and diffused to his eyes. Impulsively he held out his gauntleted hand.

"I know you," he said. "You're the Circus Daredevil, aren't you? I've heard about you, and I've been wanting lots to meet you."

"Well, I've heard about you all right," Don said ardently as he gripped the hand of friendship. And these two, looking one another frankly in the eyes, knew that this was the kind of friendship that is made at once, and endures for ever.

It was then that a voice interrupted them.

"Say Dandy, I don't aim nor calculate to intrude, but I reckon you ought to know that these fellers is craving to blow up yore cattle. Kinda mean, ain't it?"

Rex turned at once to the lean drawing Texan, who had been the speaker. As if by magic the grim anxiety had returned to the Dandy Cowboy's face. He scrutinised Tex McNaughten swiftly and keenly, however, and liked the look of him.

"Yes I do know that," he said frankly, and with a troubled note in his voice. "That's why I'm here. But the trouble is I don't know at what point on the railroad they've plotted to blow up the train. That's why I sent my boys after those cowardly Greasers."

Tex McNaughten suddenly leant forward, a strange expression in his grim face.

"I know," he said bluntly. "Useter be one of the gang meself. I could take you there."

Rex stared in surprise a moment, then nodded shortly. "Righto," he said, without comment.

"Look here—I'm coming with you chaps," Don said impulsively.

Rex nodded. Firefiend, his black stallion was eight hands high, and could easily carry the two of them.

Without further delay Don swung behind the Dandy Cowboy, and they set off at a whirlwind pace.

Tex McNaughten, spurring a little in front, suddenly pointed to a puff of smoke about a mile away on the railroad.

"That's the freight train, steaming east," he said through gritted teeth. "We're too late."

And he spurred forward at greater pace, his face grim and creased. The Dandy Cowboy saw that there was real cause for urgency now, and riding at a mad pace, he went in front.

They were racing along the narrow canyon trail now, with the shining rails of the iron trail far beneath them. Still in the distance, the freight train was bearing down on the spot.

Rex suddenly pulled his horse to a halt.

"We don't know where the explosion's going to occur," he said through set teeth. "We'd better warn them from here—if they can see us."

"I've got an idea," put in Don excitedly. "See that tree stump on the other side. Can you lasso it? If you can, I can tightwalk across."

The Dandy Cowboy looked at Don only for a moment, and then he understood.

Tex McNaughten cut in.

"Better take my rope," he said gruffly offering his lariat. "Have to tie it to yours to reach across."

There was no time for argument. The train was approaching at a rapid rate. Rex followed the suggestion, and, swinging the lariat until it formed a huge whirling circle over his head, he threw.

A shout of delight went up from Don as it was seen that the noose settled fairly and squarely over the tree stump on the opposite side of the canyon.

Rex, pulling taut the rawhide rope, made fast the

other end to a tree. As he did so Tex McNaughten gave an exclamation.

"Those durned Greasers with Cavalry have seen us. They're coming back," he muttered, pulling out his guns and advancing with grim, creased face. He bent down behind a boulder.

Don realised that there was not a moment to lose.

"Here, give me your neckerchief," he said. And the Dandy Cowboy swiftly untied the red neckerchief from around his neck and handed it to the Circus Daredevil. Then he too bent down behind a boulder, and commenced firing.

The bandits came riding on in the face of the Dandy Cowboy's deadly fire. Cavalry saw his last scheme failing him, and was almost mad with rage. A second crashing gunfire joined Rex's. It was from Tex McNaughten.

One of the men jerked up and toppled from his saddle.

And meanwhile Don was walking out on the rope stretched across the canyon with the assurance of long experience. The tough rawhide rope held taut, and having tried it once, he ran out lithely, frantically waving the red silk neckerchief as a signal for the train to stop.

His delight was unbounded as he saw it slowing down. The driver had evidently seen Don's signal.

And it was as well for him that he had. For scarcely had the train braked to a complete standstill almost below the intrepid boy acrobat than the great rugged canyon seemed suddenly to split in twain in one terrible, stentorian explosion.

Don was running back to safety as it happened, else he would surely have met his doom, for the terrific concussion of the explosion shocked the air.

Somewhere down in the depths of the canyon boulders flew and crashed. A vast volume of smoke arose behind. It was some time before the echoes died, and when the smoke cleared it was seen that at one spot down below the railway was blocked by great torn boulders, the rails themselves were grotesquely tangled and smashed.

And at the coming of the explosion Cavalry, the instigator of it all, had turned and fled. Three of the Mexicans were past fleeing, for they lay on the ground, badly wounded.

WELL, it was all over, the bandit gang had been instrumental in holding up two trains, but in neither case had they attained their object. Rex, Don and Tex McNaughten returned to their own train, amidst a hubbub of excitement.

As it was impossible to proceed on the remainder of the journey to Shaneville by train, Don determined to take his circus on foot, and the boy Circus Wonder, who had the knack of seeing business opportunities in everything, determined to form a procession through the little cow town.

It was an enormous success. And every single inhabitant of the little cow town, including the dogs, crowded to the sidewalk to see it. First the ringmaster in his gleaming white shirt front, with the broad, purple sash across his breast; then the clowns, "Spick and Span," in costumes containing all the colours of the rag bag. Following them were the elephants, the animal cages containing the lions, tigers and other denizens of the wild. They were followed by the cowboys in their white chaps and broad-brimmed hats, and finally came the negro band resplendent in its red uniform.

The procession wound up outside the principal hotel by holding a tug-o-war between the circus performers in their costumes and the Bar Eight boys, which, after a strenuous struggle was won by the cowboys. Excitement flared to fever heat when

it was proclaimed by the ringmaster through his megaphone that the Bar Eight boys would give an exhibition of the work they intended to do at the rodeo competitions on the morrow.

And that night the great marquee tent pitched just outside the town was crowded to the uttermost limits. Exciting and amusing as many of the "turns" were it seemed that nothing could equal the rodeo in which Don Duvall had agreed to collaborate with Rex.

Three score of ferocious old mosshead steers were driven snorting into the arena, and under the arc lamps the cowboys rode round them, their lariats whirling as they roped one after another of the untamed creatures.

Rex gave a demonstration of hand throwing, leaping from the back of Firefiend, and grabbing at the horns of a maddened bull. For a few moments bull and cowboy appeared in a whirl, and then it was seen that the bull was rolling in the sawdust with its legs twisted round its horns in such a manner that it could not rise.

Tremendous applause, then the blare of music as the steers came thundering into the ring again.

And then, suddenly, swiftly upon that circus arena drama descended.

Something red and smoking hissed down from the tent top. Another followed—yet another. They were burning brands. Looking up, the vast audience saw to their horror that on a board suspended just below the canvas were two men.

Cavalry, the bandit chief, and the remaining Mexican! And it was they who were throwing down the burning faggots.

The already enraged steers became out of control. To the accompaniment of a great clashing of horns and thundering hoofs, they endeavoured to stampe. The Bar Eight boys, at great risk of their life, were endeavouring to keep the cattle in the arena, away from the panic-stricken audience who were fighting for the exits.

They might have succeeded, but for the fact that the burning brands were still falling.

Don, gripping his hands, watched in horror for a few moments during which it seemed his heart stood still. Then suddenly his body springs were released, and he sprang to action. Running into the ring the Circus Daredevil jumped upon the back of a maddened steer, and springing from one to another he leapt for the trapeze bar that hung above and swung for the Mexican and the bandit chief on the board.

He collided full tilt with both of them, and there ensued a mad struggle of short but terrible duration. Then, despite their fear of the maddened steers the whole vast audience gave a concerted gasp of horror as it was seen that all three were falling, falling.

But Don just managed to disentangle himself in time to grasp the trapeze bar, and hanging there helplessly a minute, with his heart beating wildly, he saw the two bandits tossed on the horns of the infuriated animals.

And so Nemesis overtook the gang of bandits one by one. All except Tex McNaughten who, as all readers of these tales well know, turned to the straight but narrow path and became a member of the famous Bar Eight ranch. This, then, is the story of how he joined the Dandy Cowboys and how Rex and Don met. After a pleasant stay at the Bar Eight Ranch, the circus returned to their native England, bearing many memories of their friends across the sea.



Just Commencing,
Chaps. Grand New
Series of JIMMY
BRENT, the
Amazing Man About
Town and Mystery
Crook, on Tour
With His Friends
on a Daring Quest.

HURCULANE! That was the magic substance that took James Brent, Esq., Man about Town, to the Dark Continent.

Velasquez, the Big Boss of the Underworld, plotted to use Hurculane for his own crooked ends—for by its aid a man's strength was increased a hundredfold. He schemed to compel a black boxer, Sambo Manley, to take the wonder-drug and in a meteoric flight to the top of the boxing tree earn Velasquez a fortune.

But Jimmy Brent knew, and together with Dick Challenger and Sir Martin Anton, Bart., went out to Africa where the mysterious plant, Hurculane, grew in abundance. Sambo went with them, and was suddenly attacked by a huge rhinoceros.

What the others did not know was that Sambo had taken a dose of Hurculane—which he himself had originally discovered in the black depths of Africa—and by its aid he was able to overcome the rhinoceros, much to the awe of the natives of the N'Gwama tribe who were looking on.

Scarcely had Sambo passed the first flush of his victory when he and Jimmy Brent and Co. were attacked by Velasquez and his villains. Velasquez, fearing Sambo's knowledge declared that he must walk the plank.

A ROAR of acclamation from the ill-conditioned ruffians who stood around greeted Henri Velasquez's words.

They were mainly half-breeds—swarthy traders who bartered or stole ivory along the N'gwama river. Henri Velasquez had gathered them together in the coast town of Siowana, and he knew his men, villains and thieves all of them; as bloodthirsty a gang of cut-throats as ever sailed in a pirate ship of old.

It was, virtually, a pirate quest upon which these scum of the African coast were engaged now, though it is not to be presumed that Henri Velasquez had acquainted his followers with the real object in view. He was too cunning to commit such an indiscretion. Probably he had told them that the expedition was planned to search for ivory. Ivory—treasure of Africa—so often stained red with human blood!

Like any pirate chief, Henry Velasquez had seized a peaceful vessel "on the high seas," as it were, and now was proposing to make its lawful owners walk the plank.

Jimmy Brent froze in horror as he heard those words—"we'll make him walk, to the crocodiles." And at the raucous laugh that greeted it the one-time man-about-town endeavoured furiously to move, to

struggle. But his struggles were short-lived. It was as though his body was covered with sore wounds, and that every time he moved, salt was rubbed into them.

To be savagely clubbed into unconsciousness, to be kicked and whipped by primitive, berserk natives, and then to be laid out under the glaring African sun for five solid hours—that is no fit preparation for fighting.

And hearing Sambo's doom pronounced, Jimmy Brent's companions, like himself, wanted desperately to fight.

The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. They could only lie on deck glaring their rage, their spirit indomitable. No words would come from their swollen mouths. If they had had a drink it is probable that things might have happened differently, for Tim Blaney, the Irish giant of the Underworld, young Sir Martin Anton, Dick Challenger—men like these—were not the sort to take things lying down.

Jimmy's heart swelled within him and seemed like to burst with rage and despair as he lay there like a log, watching the Big Boss's swarthy, gibbering scum of men working at a job they appreciated only too well; they were lashing a plank up to the deck at the gangway, and their high-pitched talk, much of it in Portuguese, seemed to jar and quiver on the hot air like the quarrelling of jungle monkeys.

Henri Velasquez watched the proceedings with a hateful grin on his face, still holding the big elephant gun, its butt resting on the deck. Out here in Africa, the inscrutability that had characterised this Big Boss of crime was gone. He was just plain brute. He was full of fever, and he had run short of quinine.

"See," he said, pointing with a grin; "there's our little friend, the croc. No doubt he's hungry enough to make a good meal even of you, you black trash!"

Even lying as he was on deck, Jimmy Brent was able to see something that appeared at first sight to be a log floating on the steaming river. It came nearer the white yacht, and then horrid red eyes opened and blinked in the sunlight, a great jaw opened, too, revealing for a moment a red cavity and long rows of white, jagged teeth. The crocodile snapped at some fish passing, and then became immersed in the water again, only to reappear in a moment, its tiny red eyes glaring at the deck as if the brute were expectant.

Jimmy, with a crawling horror of fear in his brain, turned his eyes from that ominous sight to Sambo.

The black cricketer was glaring his defiance.

"Get him," ordered Velasquez curtly, and three or four of his ruffians advanced on Sambo.

Sambo appeared at first potent for harm. He struggled as they dragged him to his feet, throwing

off him forcibly three of the men who tried to grasp him. He was growling deep in his throat, and Velasquez, with an enraged bellow, swung the elephant gun through the air so that the butt landed with a crack on the black cricketer's skull.

Poor Sambo wilted under that foul blow, and sagged at the knees. They had to drag him up from the deck again, dazed and with all the fight knocked out of him. Jimmy Brent clenched and unclenched his hands in quivering anger, striving to master the dizziness that made everything throb before his eyes, struggling to muster all the strength that was ebbing from him.

A mad plan had entered his brain. "Go on—out with him!" shouted Velasquez. "Fools, can't you see the croc. is waiting for his dinner? This black trash knows how to reach the Hidden City, and we don't want him interfering with our plans."

At that they pushed forward the tottering black cricketer on to the plank.

The Hidden City, as they conceived, was some vast swamp in which elephants went to die, where ivory in plenty might be found. This was the tale Velasquez had told them. For Velasquez had no intention of sharing the spoil with this scum. They would help him gather the leaves of the wonderful Hurulane—the shrub that bore strength and health—and they would never know of its properties. The quest for the ivory would fail, and they would return disappointed. But not Velasquez.

That was his plan. Meanwhile, he kept them keyed up with greed and hope. The throwing of Sambo to the crocodiles was, to them, a pleasurable interlude. Had not their master gained control of this white ship? And would they not all soon be rich? Oh, he was a great man, the Boss!

With great zest they pushed Sambo forward on the plank to his fate.

Jimmy Brent gathered himself together on the deck, his eyes blazing. For the moment none of his captors were taking any notice of him.

Sambo had been forced to take three paces out on the plank, but now he turned sick and dazed, but defiant still. His eyes goggled and the red mouth rolled words at Velasquez.

"You'm yellow trash!" he boomed. "You'm wait. Dis nigger take and break you belly soon. You'm ain't nothing but a poodle dog of a man, and when Sambo get hold of you, you is gwine ter be ain't!"

Sambo made a gesture with his big-boned hands. In a way there was something splendid about this defiance from a man who stood on the threshold of eternity. It enraged Velasquez, enraged him to the point of insanity. He pointed a quivering finger at the gaping crocodile in the river.

"Get out there to feed that brute, you," he mouthed. And then as the black cricketer swayed perilously on the plank, Velasquez raised his double-barrelled elephant gun to prod him.

At that moment Jimmy's body springs were released. He leapt galvanically to his feet, straight at his enemy.

Even as Sambo was tottering on the plank, Jimmy's hands seized the elephant gun, and wrenched it from the grasp of the startled Velasquez. The gentleman crook barely observed whether the two triggers were cocked or not; he threw the heavy weapon to his shoulders, directed it at the river, and pulled both triggers.

The tropical stillness was shattered by the explosions. And as the echoes died away on the hot air, something in the river disappeared and the dark water was stained with red.

The crocodile's great jaws had been smashed by the shot.

But almost at the same time there was a splash. Sambo, unable any longer to retain his balance on the plank, had toppled and fallen.

Aghast with horror, Jimmy started forward on the plank, the smoking gun in his hand. But Velasquez leapt at him and dragged him back, snarling horribly. Three of his men went to his assistance, and Jimmy, suddenly overcome with weakness, gave up the struggle and stood staring blankly at the steaming water with its dense wall of vegetation on the further side.

He saw nothing beyond a whirling haze in which it seemed silver sparks danced and flashed. He scarcely heard the maledictions which Velasquez was pouring into his ears. And he certainly did not see the trail of canoes that came *swish-swashing* upstream, some of the natives quietly dipping their paddles whilst others held poised spears.

There were five canoes in all, each manned by six natives. They were of the N'Gwami tribe, brave and fearless fighters, but extremely superstitious. This was their country, and on the banks of the sluggish river they could trace many spoors of animals. But never before had they seen the rhinoceros, and it was these natives who had fled in fear when the three giant mammals had appeared in the forest.

How the three rhinoceroses had wandered so far into the territory of the N'Gwama River, was a mystery never explained. The rhino prefers the semi-arid regions of the South, and the dark mystery land of Central Africa, ravaged by storms and atremble with fever, they had abandoned *cala-cala*, as the natives say, long ago.

And the N'Gwami people had regarded with awe Sambo's herculean struggle with the bull rhinoceros. In particular was their young chief, M'furi, impressed. He was a young man with a massive chest and tapering limbs, a champion wrestler and hunter, and now his broad nostrils quivered and rage sparkled in the eyes set deep in the black, glistening face as he sat in the bulwark of the foremost canoe.

He had witnessed the scene on the white deck of the steam yacht, *Zena*. He had seen Sambo forcibly propelled along the plank, and had seen him topple in the water. And he did not like it.

He muttered to his men, and they sent the foremost canoe in which he sat driving with clean force towards the spot where the crater made by Sambo's entry into the sluggish river was rapidly filling.

There were several things M'furi, the chief of the N'Gwami people, did not like about this business. He did not like the intrusion of the Osari people on his side of the river. The Osari were neighbours with whom they lived for the most part in a state of armed truce, but on the slightest provocation war flared between the two tribes. There was provocation now.

The Osari had no right to be on their side of the river. Yet the Osari had actually the effrontery to attack these white people on the territory of the N'Gwami people, and to make them prisoners. M'furi, the young and warlike chief of the N'Gwami was very angry about it all.

He sat with spear poised as the canoe shot up, and his followers copied his example.

Henri Velasquez gaped at the N'Gwami people whose canoes halted and grouped round the spot where Sambo had entered the river. And the Big Boss's eyes became shining slits, his mouth ugly.

He mistook them for the people he had bribed with beads and shining goo-gaws, and whom he had awed with his elephant gun, and made foolish with vile whisky. He thought they were the Osari folk, who were quite under his thumb.

"Hi!" he shouted rudely. "What the devil are

you up to?" And then he added something in the native dialect which meant the same thing, only expressed even more forcibly.

The warriors' polished spear-heads glittered in the sun as they raised them menacingly. M'furi stood up in the canoe.

"O, Yellowface of Evil," he addressed Velasquez fearlessly, "this is a bad palaver. Because of the evil thing that you have done my warriors are very angry."

"Done?" croaked Velasquez, gripping the rails and glaring. "Done, you black pig! What d'ye mean, hey? I'll show you what I'll do, I'll—"

He seized his gun and levelled it. And then, discovering that both the barrels were empty, his rage became as the rage of a demon in chains.

"O, Yellowface," went on the chief with grim wrath. "What have you done? You have caused war between the Osari and my people. And you have sent the Most Powerful Witch Doctor, He who Fights With the Thunder Beasts, to the river so that Ewa (death) shall come to him. But that shall

had welcomed Sambo as their new witch doctor, an they were offering defiance, and more, threatening this cunning devil who looked to have beaten Jimmy Brent and Co. in the quest for the Hidden City.

Jimmy's hopes suddenly flared high, sending new life tingling through his veins.

Velasquez wheeled like some wild beast on his men. "D'ye hear that?" he foamed. "You fools! Why do you stand there like wooden images? Let 'em have it. Shoot their canoes to bits, you white-livered curs!"

They came to the rails, revolvers in their hands, but stark fear in their yellow faces. How did they know how many spearmen might be lurking in the dark, impenetrable forest yonder?

Their appearance at the rails was the signal for those in the canoes to take aim. Jimmy Brent ducked down hastily as a hail of spears came whizzing for the deck of the yacht. The shower of spears took deadly toll. Most of them, it is true, clattered on the deck of the yacht, but four of them transfixed the legs and arms of four of Velasquez's scoundrels.

They were spears sharp-pointed almost as knives, and the four villains plucked them from their wounded members howling with fear and pain.

Henri Velasquez himself set the example; he commenced to run for the hatchway, like the craven he was, and his villainous crew followed suit. A second shower of spears assailed the deck, one whizzing close past Jimmy Brent's ear, and then the canoes commenced to move in what seemed a scramble but was, in reality, an organised manoeuvre towards the yacht.

Luckily, none of the arrows had found a mark on any of Jimmy Brent's party. They had been immune owing mainly to the fact that they had been lying on the deck, but Jimmy himself who had crouched down low was lucky to escape.

He peered between the hot brass rails at the approaching natives. They were obviously attacking the yacht in full force.

And Jimmy Brent, usually so cool and resourceful, for once made the mistake of his life.

He had heard something of what had passed between the chief of the tribe and Henri Velasquez, and he understood that those warriors were disposed to be friendly towards the amazing Sambo; but he mistook their attitude now as one of hostility towards himself and his party.



WALKING THE PLANK.— "Get out there to feed the crocodiles you—" shouted the Big Boss of crooks. And he raised his elephant gun to prod the black cricketer.

not happen, for he has such magic. It is written in our book that such a ju-ju man shall come to us, and shall vanquish the terrible M'shim-ba-m'shamba" (the god of storms).

Henri Velasquez licked his lips. His rage was staggering.

As for Jimmy Brent he heard something of all this and was beginning to understand. These natives actually

If he had only waited to see what eventuated, how differently matters might have turned out!

The menace of Velasquez's rivalry in the quest of the Hidden City and of the marvellous Huroulane might have been disposed of there and then, and a trail of horror and terror through that dark and tangled continent averted.

But Jimmy, like many another, made a mistake in thinking that he was effecting a great coup.

He turned vibrant, his voice surging like an electric wave over those others who lay on the deck.

"Chaps; they're coming. The savages. And the coast's clear. Come on; if you can move, we go while the going's good."

He crawled towards Dick Challenger and Captain McTavish, who had commanded the yacht *Zena*. As he did so, feeling in his pocket for a brandy flask which, by some great good luck, he carried there. They were already aroused by his words, and a few drops of the precious spirit served to instil in them fresh life. It was the same with Sir Martin Anton, and with Tim Blaney and Howard Carr; it was as though the elixir of life had been poured into them. They stirred and got up, as did the two stewards, Rupert Lane and Rex Carter. A lean and wiry American crook, Zeff Walton, who, bitterly hating the Big Boss, had turned to Jimmy Brent's party, roused himself like a wounded tiger, and the last remaining member of the party, Allan White, a cockney sailor, staggered up under the spur of the spirit and of necessity, and, with the rest of the party, made for the rails that fringed the shore.

As they scrambled over the side into the clearing in the forest a shout arose from one of the canoes. They did not hear it, or if they did, paid no heed, but tumbled one after another, most of them staggering rather than running, through the thicket,

with the white yacht between them and the natives who manned the canoes.

And then when freedom beckoned—such freedom as that dark and mysterious forest offered—suddenly upon them burst disaster.

Out of a near-by belt of trees appeared savage, half-naked forms, glistening with oil in the sunlight.

Savages!

It was the return of the Osari tribe. Jimmy Brent groaned inwardly as he saw them advancing in a yelling mob. He thought that he and his party were caught between two fires, whereas, if he had only known it, the natives manning the canoes in the river were disposed to be friendly towards them, for in one of the canoes was Sambo himself, shouting to his friends to come back.

They had fished Sambo out of the river into the chief's canoe, whilst natives sat ready with spears poised, ready to drive them into any denizen of those dark, flowing waters who might fancy their new ju-ju man as a succulent meal.

Sambo, mighty thankful that he had survived, was frantic in his endeavours to enlist the attention of his friends. But the din and confusion created by the savages on shore drowned his voice, loud though it was.

And Jimmy, cast upon his own resources, had a sudden idea by which this new emergency might be met.

He remembered that when Velasquez's rascally crew had fled the deck from the shower of spears, some of them had dropped their rifles, and now, shouting to intimate to the others his purpose, he scrambled back on deck and made for the spot.

There were five rifles there, which he gathered up hastily. The others had paused under the shadow of the yacht, completely defenceless and at the



A BRAVE STAND.—Seizing the empty rifles by their barrels, the Big Game Cricketers whirled them madly at the heads of the Osari, who now surrounded them in a screaming mob.

mercy of the oncoming natives, who now, seeing how helpless they appeared, were advancing upon them with sinister slowness.

Jimmy raced over the deck with his burden, and flung the rifles over the rails to his friends. All the cramped aches and pains seemed miraculously to have left him now, and he levelled his rifle as the Osari warriors, with a renewed yell of execration, came rushing on.

Singling out the foremost savage, Jimmy pulled the trigger, and found to his bitter disappointment that, save for a faint click, there was no response. The rifle was empty.

It was the same with the others. Not a shot was fired. Every rifle, without exception, was empty. The things were a mockery in their hands, and the Osari warriors, at first crouching in cowed fear of a fusillade, now voiced their joy at this failure of the white man's magic and came on in a tumultuous rush.

Jimmy dropped over the side of the deck to the ground.

"Let 'em have it, chaps," he yelled. "Back to back. We'll give the black devils gyp even yet."

They were in no proper case to fight, yet they responded manfully, and seizing the rifles by their barrels, they whirled them madly at the heads of the Osari, who now surrounded them in a screaming mob.

Three luckless warriors of the Osari, who came at Jimmy bunched together, received a slashing blow across the face from his heavy rifle butt, and backed away screaming with pain. One black man spitting out half-a-dozen broken teeth. Jimmy leapt at them like a giant refreshed, and put them to rout with three terrific swings of his improvised club, which almost cracked the skull of one and sent the other two toppling in the brown undergrowth.

The others, inspired by his example, plied their weapons right and left until the incensed natives raised their spears to use them by the point.

Velasquez, in ordering the first attack, had made the proviso that these white men should be taken alive, and had promised the natives many rewards if this were done. But now the chief, greedy though he was of these cheap and bright trinkets, forgot altogether the caution, and he growled something in the dialect. Instantly the spears were raised to strike the Big Game Cricketers low.

And then, the instant before the shower was launched, came a startling interruption. From the white yacht came the sinister crackling fire of a machine-gun, and Jimmy instantly guessed what had happened.

Velasquez and his rascally crew had discovered one of the two Hotchkiss guns carried on board but not yet rigged up on deck, and they were firing through portholes at the laden canoes in the river.

This was exactly what was happening. A sudden hail of annihilating bullets hummed viciously across

the river, and caused instant devastation. Three of the canoes, riddled with holes, capsized and precipitated their occupants into the water, and in a few moments the unfortunate war party of the N'Gwami was utterly smashed.

Two of the canoes were able to sheer off out of the range of fire, but they alone escaped. The river became alive with the bobbing heads of natives swimming, many of whom, alas, would never reach the shore, for the hail of bullets continued mercilessly.

Sambo himself had been precipitated into the water, but the black cricketer decided to risk the horrors of the river of mystery and diving almost to its slimy depths, he swam under water, making with a strong breast stroke for the distant bank. Luck was with him, for he reached it in safety, and crawling out amongst the dense undergrowth, he lay there, breathing heavily, a prey once more of the ants and scorpions.

And on the opposite bank a transformation had come over the scene. At the sound of the Hotchkiss's grim rat-tat, the warriors paused as if transfixed, their faces expressive of fear.

What was Sambo's misfortune was, in part, good fortune to Jimmy Brent and Co., for the hail of spears was stayed, and what undoubtedly would have been certain death was, for the moment, averted.

The natives stood listening to that sinister rat-tat, their eyes large in their black faces.

For some moments it went on, and then on the white deck of the yacht appeared the bulky and sinister figure of Henri Velasquez.

A moment he gaped at the Big Game Cricketers, and then he smiled beneath black, scowling brows and flung out a fat hand.

Something he snarled in the native dialect—something that brought the Osari warriors on with a rush again. This time the weary and pain-racked cricketers crumpled completely before the attack. One or two of them put up a short but furious fight, but eventually went down under weight of numbers.

They found themselves dragged to their feet, held on all sides by the glistening, evil-smelling natives, while Henri Velasquez clambered majestically over the rails of the yacht and, dropping to the ground, approached them with the slow menace of some jungle beast tracking its prey.

"So. You'd try to escape me, eh?" he growled, fixing Jimmy with his piercing eyes. "Well, we'll see about that. You shall be punished—severely. Remember this"—he struck his clenched fist into the palm of his left hand—"You are my slaves to do with as I like. You're my white slaves here in Africa. And, believe me, I'm going to make life unbearably hot for you."

Slaves of The Big Boss of London's Underworld, forced to do his will here in the wilds of Darkest Africa! What will come of it all? You must not miss next week's thrilling instalment.

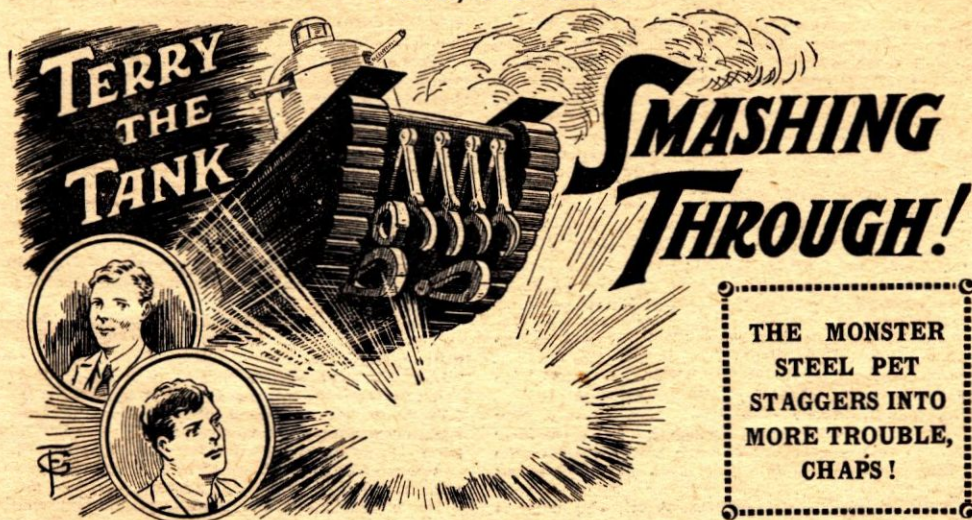
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THE BOXING DRAGOON.

DON'T MISS THIS GRAND LONG STORY OF THE ROPED ARENA, NEXT WEEK, CHUMS.



Fine Yarn of the Dandy and the Cockney Kid in their Machinery Marvel, The Tank.



Trouble On The Road.

RIFF RAFF mopped his comical, Cockney face with a handkerchief already drenched in perspiration, then smoothed his inimitable forehead down over his brow.

"Crikey," he breathed, "I reckon they was right w'en they called this 'ere country o' Braganza the 'otbed o' Eurip. I'm worn to a shadder."

Dandy Lyon made no reply. He was staring through the conning-tower aperture of Terry the Tank at a big open touring-car on the road ahead, three men standing beside it in a baffled attitude.

It was clearly a breakdown, and Dandy pulled up alongside. The three men stared in awe as the mighty machine drew to a standstill.

One of them—a big man of sallow complexion, with a moustache that Riff, in a whispered aside, likened to a bow-tie stuck on his upper lip—spoke with an odd gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.

"We should be grateful for a lift to the nearest town, Monsieur," he said. He paused, then: "My name is Strube, of the Braganza police. We are in pursuit of a dangerous criminal, but one of his bullets put our car out of action"

Riff admitted the trio into the tank, and a moment later Dandy had switched over the starting-lever. The monstrous tank surged over the road at unsuspected speed, and the needle of a speedometer on the control table flickered from twenty to thirty—and to forty

The eyes of the man Strube widened in gratified astonishment. "At this rate we shall overtake our man," he said. "Doubtless he will not be travelling fast, being assured that he has no longer any fear of pursuit."

He was right. They had covered a distance of no more than four miles when they came within sight of a small sports car travelling at an easy speed.

Before Dandy could check him, Strube reached forward for the trigger of the machine-gun which nosed through the conning-tower aperture in front of them. Came the rattle of enfilading bullets, and the rear tyres of the fugitive sports car-burst with a

stinging report. Instantly the auto swerved wildly, plunged into a ditch by the roadside and turned over on her side.

A few yards from where she lay, the figure of the driver rose presently just as Terry the Tank drew alongside, and in a moment Strube and his two companions had dropped from the machine and were laying hands upon him.

Dandy and Riff were approaching the group when Strube half turned to them.

"There is no need for you to remain, m'sieurs," he said. "We thank you for your help—now you may go."

In his tone was a domineering note that piqued Dandy a little, but before he could answer he was suddenly aware that the prisoner's eyes were upon him, strangely alight.

"You are British," he said, and he spoke the English of an Englishman born and bred. "British, and helping foreigners against one of your own race!"

"I am helping foreign police against a criminal," said Dandy sternly, when the other cut in on him.

"Police—criminal" he cried. "They've fooled you. These are no police—"

One of his captors silenced him with a cowardly blow on the mouth, and Strube's revolver moved sinistinely in Dandy's direction. But before he could use it, Dandy dealt him a right-hand slam to the jaw, which sent him pitching. His minions relaxed grip on their captive and stormed across at Dandy.

The first Dandy met with a screw-punch to the solar; the second never reached him, for Riff stopped him definitely by a swing to the nose that drew blood and hurled him back howling.

Dandy caught the elderly Englishman by the arm and hustled him into the tank, scrambling after him with Riff bringing up the rear on his heels. Then, with a whirring and a clattering, Terry the Tank thundered forward again, raising the dust in clouds from the lonely road.

THE rescued Englishman, a tall, aristocratic man of middle age, broke a spell of silence that had lasted between them for something like fifteen minutes.

Another Grand Tale of Roughneck Harry the Film Camera Man Next Week. 29

"First," he said, "I must introduce myself. I am Sir John Gresham, of the British Diplomatic Service, and I am homeward bound now with certain treaty-papers affecting a number of Central European states neighbouring this country of Braganza. Somehow the authorities in Braganza have got word of me and the papers I carry, and Braganza lies in such a position that her rulers, if they knew the contents of the treaty-papers, could easily frustrate Britain's interests.

"Of course, Braganza can do nothing openly—But they have engaged the services of Julius Strube, international rogue, political adventurer, renegade and criminal."

Dandy's eyes hardened as he began to see how near he had been to aiding his country's enemies. Riff whistled and smoothed his inimitable forelock.

"Then," put in Dandy, "your aim is to get across the frontier as quickly as possible."

"As quickly as possible," said Gresham, "but I doubt if I shall reach the frontier. Strube has agents all over the country. He will stop me—somehow."

Dandy glanced down at the diplomat, and there was a grin on his face that men of Strube's character had learned to beware.

"Stop you?" he echoed. "Stop you? Now how in the world is anyone going to stop you with Terry the Tank wrapped outside you?" And with that Sir John Gresham stared at him relievedly, hopefully.

"You're going to help me," he began, but Dandy cut in on him.

I reckon it's what Britain would expect of us. We're going to see you through, Sir John."

Hours later Riff was at the controls of Terry the Tank, relieving Dandy after the youngster had put in a four hours' stretch of steady driving; when he saw something that brought a cry to his lips.

"Strike me pink! 'Ere's Strube's work!"

In a twinkling Dandy and Gresham were up on the platform beside him.

The road was hemmed in on the one side by a turn of the muddy river; on the other by impassable swamps. And full across it was a wall of great tree-trunks piled one upon the other.

Dandy did not echo Riff's cry. Without a word, he took command of the controls and sent Terry the Tank hurtling toward—straight for the solid barrier of logs!

A smashing shock, a splintering and snapping of wood, as the blunt nose of the metal monster shattered the foremost logs; but the barrier was too deep to smash through in that fashion and with racing engines, Terry came to a standstill.

Stopped, after all! At least, so Sir John Gresham thought till he saw the youngster switch over a control.

Up from the front of the tank rose those six claw-like grabs—monstrous, clutching—for all the world like the talons of some giant of steel. And with a gesture almost of human contempt, they flung the logs one by one backward over the conning-tower.

Swiftly the path was cleared, with Terry shifting steadily forward—till at last she surged triumphantly on the awe-stricken bunch of ruffians who had thought to check and capture her.

The ruffians broke before her to right and left, some plunging blindly into the river, to sink instantly to their knees in liquid mud; others forced into the swamps, where they became immersed to the waist.

Beneath the roar of Terry's engines as she thundered onwards irresistibly sounded Riff Raff's voice, raised in an untuneful parody of a popular song:

"They're knee-deep in daisies an' 'ead over 'eels in mud . . ."

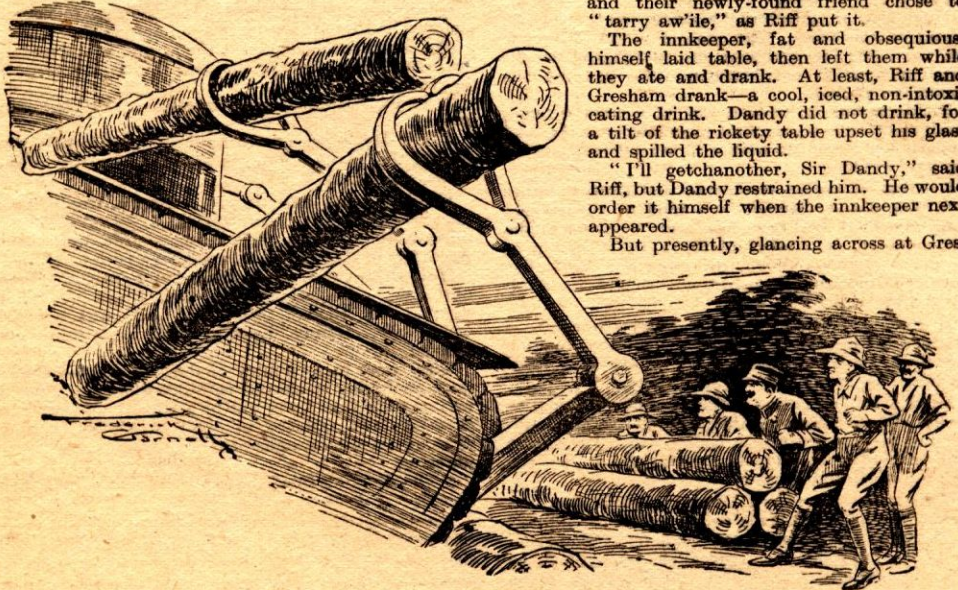
The Innkeeper of Barne.

LESS than forty miles from the frontier there is a little hamlet called Barne, which boasts a tumble-down inn, and it was here that the adventurers and their newly-found friend chose to "tarry aw'ile," as Riff put it.

The innkeeper, fat and obsequious, himself laid table, then left them while they ate and drank. At least, Riff and Gresham drank—a cool, iced, non-intoxicating drink. Dandy did not drink, for a tilt of the rickety table upset his glass and spilled the liquid.

"I'll getchanoother, Sir Dandy," said Riff, but Dandy restrained him. He would order it himself when the innkeeper next appeared.

But presently, glancing across at Gres-



TERRY TACKLES THE LUMBER.—Inside the tank Dandy Lyon switched over a control, and those claw-like grabs, monstrous, clutching, closed on one after another of the logs forming the barrier. The huge tree trunks were flung with gestures of almost human contempt behind.

ham, Dandy Lyon saw that the diplomat was lolling in his chair, like a man drowsing. And as for Riff—the Cookney was quite obviously fast asleep, his head half-buried in his arms.

Dandy rose to his feet and took them by the shoulder. There was not a sign of response. A dark suspicion came to Dandy's mind. He picked up his companion's glasses. There was a white, powdery residue in the bottoms of them! Drugged!

From behind the door came the sound of footfalls, approaching cautiously. The youngster slipped back to his chair on a sudden resolution, folded his arms on the table and bowed his head, feigning unconsciousness.

The door opened and between his fingers Dandy saw the rotund innkeeper with two men in aprons, who looked to be waiters, and behind them none other than Strube and two of his myrmidons.

Six to one against Dandy! "It was as you surmised—hoped," the innkeeper was saying to Strube.

"They halted here to eat and drink only one hour after you had 'phoned through to me. You are soon here, M. Strube."

Without a word, Strube handed him a bundle of notes.

The crook crossed to the table, stooped, and reached a hand towards Sir John Gresham's inside breast-pocket.

Dandy acted swiftly.

There was a clatter of breaking crockery as he jerked up the table. The edge of it struck Strube heavily in the jaw and sent him sprawling from his kneeling position ere his hand had reached the diplomat's pocket.

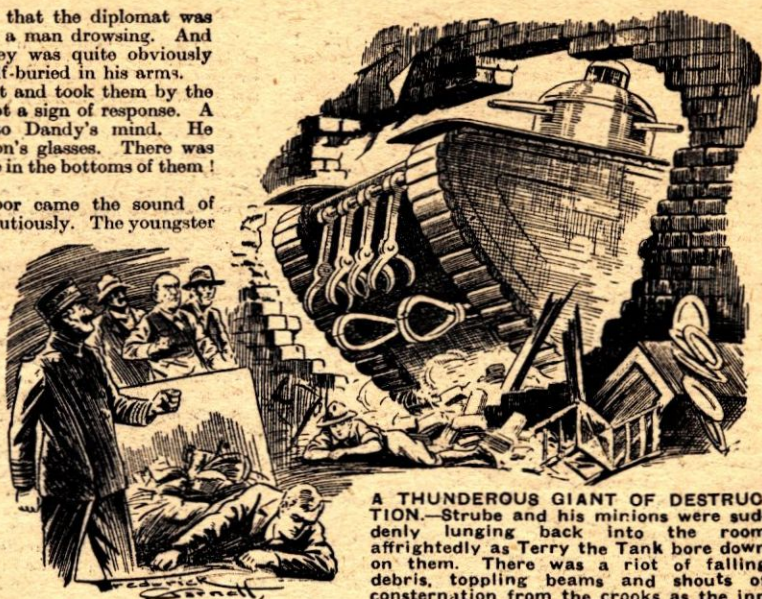
Dandy sprang to his feet, dashed across the room, handing off one of Strube's men Rugby style, and plunged feet foremost with a flying leap through a big bay window.

Heedless of jagged fragments that ripped clothes and flesh, Dandy landed in a kind of yard where Terry the Tank had been left, and in an instant he had mounted the control platform and thrust over the starting-lever. Then, revolving one caterpillar more rapidly than the other, he brought the tank round to face the inn.

Strube and his minions were at the window, rage on their features, but suddenly they were lunging back into the room, affrightedly, as the monstrous machine bore straight down upon them.

Amid a riot of falling debris, toppling beams, as the inn collapsed, Terry the Tank nosed to a standstill, looming over two prostrate bodies which lay on the floor—her protruding snout covering them from the crashing wood and masonry.

With stillness restored, Dandy forced open the tank's door and clambered round to where Riff and Gresham lay in safety. One by one he carried them inside the machine, then, reversing, he backed the tank out of the wreckage and sent Terry on to the long ribbon of road that led to the frontier. But as the tank sped thunderously from the scene he had a vague impression of a figure lunging up painfully



A THUNDEROUS GIANT OF DESTRUCTION.—Strube and his minions were suddenly lunging back into the room affrightedly as Terry the Tank bore down on them. There was a riot of falling debris, toppling beams and shouts of consternation from the crooks as the inn collapsed.

from the midst of the wreckage—the figure of Julius Strube.

Across The Frontier.

DANDY leaned forward across the control-table and peered up through the conning-tower aperture at that portion of the sky within range of his vision; and as he did so he knew that the throbbing he had heard under the roar of Terry's engines had been no trick of the imagination.

An aeroplane had passed then, and was speeding far ahead now through the blue limitlessness of the heavens.

"Strube," said Dandy tersely. "I'll bet any money."

"E's developed 'igh flown ideas," put in Riff, one eye on the 'plane. "Hi c'n see 'eavy weather a'ead of us, Sir Dandy."

Gresham was optimistic. "Strube won't have time to do much," he declared. "It's only ten miles to the frontier, and once beyond it, we're safe. An escort of Rego-Slovanian soldiery is to meet me."

Yet there was more ground for anxiety than optimism, considering what they knew of Julius Strube, and though mile after mile was covered eventlessly, Dandy Lyon's misgivings were not allayed.

They were in a country of densely-wooded slopes now, in-lining westward to Rego-Slovania, and it was as they thundered out of a thick copse of trees that Gresham pointed to a silver ribbon of river running at right-angles to the course they were pursuing.

"The dividing line," he informed them, and then he stopped dead.

A turn in the road took them out of sight of river and bridge, and away near the foot of a steep hill they saw a huge motor-lorry drawn up diagonally across the road.

Dandy laughed. For indeed the situation was ludicrous. Strube was not so astute as they imagined if he thought that lorry was to stop Terry the Tank.

In spite of the vehicle's bulk, Terry would toss it clean off the road in fragments.

Roaring, the mighty tank hurtled pell-mell down the steep slope and, rapidly nearing the lorry, Dandy glimpsed the lorry's contents under the flapping hood—barrels stacked one upon the other.

A dread suspicion flashed upon him. Supposing those barrels were filled with explosive! The metal monster could scarcely be invulnerable against something like a ton of bursting devastation!

Dandy jerked the engines into reverse!

No use. The slope was very steep—Terry would crash headlong into the lorry! Nothing could stop her! And Dandy's suspicion was certainly now!

There was a ghastly moment during which Riff and Gresham gave themselves up for lost, and then, all at once, Dandy was reaching to press the trigger of that machine-gun which nosed through the aperture in front of him.

Came the racket of bullets, followed by a thunderous, crashing detonation that seemed like to split the heavens; and from the lorry, blotting it entirely from view, burst a monstrous mass of jagged flame. A moment later the metal monster was roaring into a fog of smoke that marked the spot where the lorry had stood.

A slug of twisted iron—a fragment of the lorry—drove through the conning-tower aperture, missed Dandy's head by inches and clanged against the back of the tank. An instant later they launched from the dense haze of smoke and swung round a bend into view of the river and the frontier-bridge.

There in the roadway lounged a group of Braganza's soldiery, and in conversation with an officer stood

Julius Strube. Dandy saw his startled face, his narrow eyes bent upon the tank as she swept into view and bore down upon him.

The officer ran—Strube tried to run, too—but even as he wheeled one of those mighty grabs rose, clutching—with Julius Strube held aloft and struggling impotently. Next instant Terry the Tank was surging over the frontier-bridge into Rego-Slovanian territory.

From the huts came an officer with a strong force of carbiniers at his heels. They pulled up beside the now stationary tank, and as they did so, Dandy, Riff and Gresham clambered out.

"I am Captain Bernardt, of the Regiment of Dragons," the officer announced when Gresham had introduced himself, "and I am in command of a party detailed to escort you through Rego-Slovania." He paused, turning his eyes upon the struggling form of Strube, still held aloft by the grab, then: "Julius Strube!" he ejaculated. "The man whose villainy has cost my country dear."

"I shall be delighted," he went on grimly, "to command the firing-party which will be held in your honour. For that is the treatment Rego-Slovania metes out to traitors."

And before Dandy Lyon, Riff and Gresham had reached England's shores, Julius Strube, international rogue, political adventurer, renegade and criminal had paid the price for his misdeeds.

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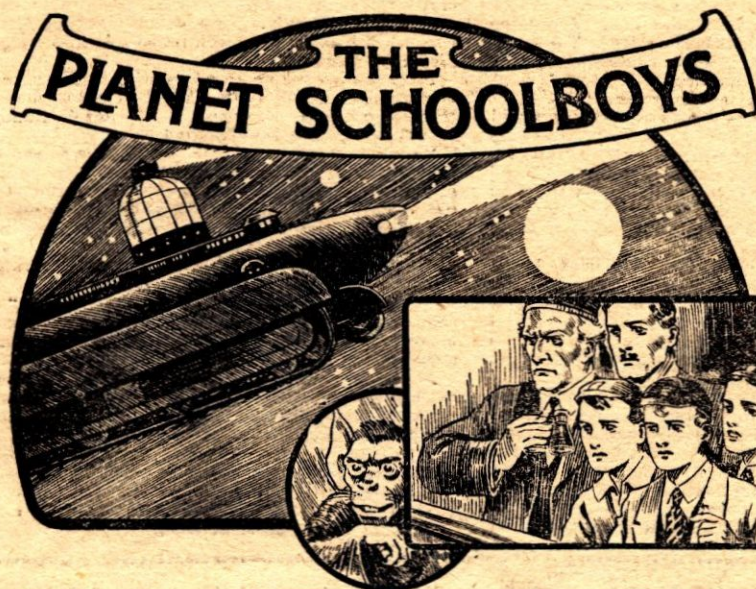
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By EDWY
SEARLES
BROOKS.

The Great Invention.

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

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

"But—but how does the blessed thing work?" demanded George Freeman, leader of "The Firm" at Castleton School.

The 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.

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!"

To the voyagers' intense joy, they were able to make a safe landing on the planet.

Shouts of anger and amazement left their lips when, after journeying back to the *Solar Rover*, 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. 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—stoways 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 . . .

In a bid for escape the adventurers came out on a rocky ledge—to see the *Solar Rover* swooping towards them. Freeman and Barry had regained command, and they took their comrades back to safety.

The *Solar Rover* flew on—to find, on the other side of the mysterious planet, a wonderful city with grotesque buildings towering for thousands of feet in the air.

Shocks and surprises crowded one on another. The Venusians were ruled by an earthly monarch—Hudson Jeff, who had left Kansas ten years ago in

a projectile. He had taught the Venusians American! The only member of the schoolboy party who would not be impressed by the Venusians was Puggy Dibble. Puggy, fat and gross, with a five pound note in his pocket, itched to spend it.

Dramatic Developments.

PUGGY DIBBLE grunted with impatience. "What's the matter with you chaps?" he demanded. "Why hang about here, looking at these beastly Venusians? We want to find a tuck-shop! I'm starving!"

"Dry up, Puggy!" said Freeman. "Or, better still, clear off! If you want some grub, go and find it. We don't want you with us."

"Absolutely not!" said the Hon. Freddie severely. But Puggy Dibble and his chums did not feel inclined to part company from the rest of the fellows. They felt more secure with the crowd.

"That queer old American chap said that there were shops here," argued Puggy. "And if there are shops it's pretty certain that they sell grub. We've got plenty of money to spend, so why can't we—"

"Oh, dry up!" interrupted Willis. "What's the good of money here, you lunatic? These Venusians don't know what English money is!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Puggy, looking startled. "I'd forgotten that! Still, I don't see—"

"I say!" broke in Don Masters. "What's happening on the old Rover? Look over there! There seems to be something—"

"By George!" ejaculated Freeman, staring.

They all looked round. They all became tense. Certainly there was something very strange happening on board the *Solar Rover*. Struggling figures could be seen, and near by many of the Venusians were flying round in circles, like frightened pigeons.

And then—Crack! crack! Two revolver shots

rang out on the still air. And at the same moment Barry Drewe let out a great yell.

"It's Count Popandos!" he roared. "Can't you see him? Count Popandos and those other rotters! They've got free! They're trying to steal the Rover again!"

"Oh, corks!" gasped Puggy Dibble, turning pale. "What do you know about this?" asked Robin Hardy, sharply.

"Nun-nothing!" gasped Puggy. "I didn't untie the Count's hands! I don't know anything about it!"

"Come on!" bellowed Freeman. "Castleton to the rescue!"

And the next moment the crowd of boys swept across that marble square—forgetting all about their plans. The *Solar Rover* was in danger again, and Count Popandos and his men were on the point of victory.

It was touch and go. As the juniors swarmed up towards the Rover, the Count and his men floored the last of the guards. They were in command now! Within a few seconds the Count could dash into the control-room and have the Rover off the ground. But Popandos saw the juniors coming, and he gritted his teeth with rage.

"Stay here!" he panted, swinging round on his men. "Keep these boys back!"

And off he flew—straight for the main lounge. From there he would be able to get into the control-room in half-a-dozen strides. But, even as Count Popandos rushed into the lounge from the starboard deck, Barry Drewe and Freeman and the Hon. Freddie dashed in through the port door.

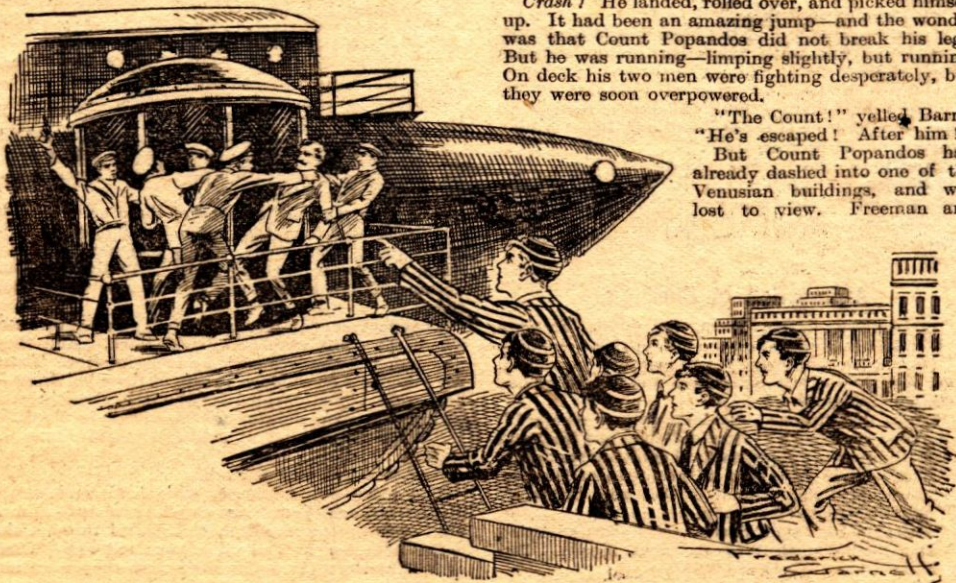
"Here he is!" roared Freeman. "On him!" But the Count could see that it would be a hopeless fight. He turned on his heel, pale with fury and consternation. He dashed out, the juniors hard at his heels.

He took a flying leap over the rail, and went sailing down towards the ground.

Crash! He landed, rolled over, and picked himself up. It had been an amazing jump—and the wonder was that Count Popandos did not break his legs. But he was running—limping slightly, but running. On deck his two men were fighting desperately, but they were soon overpowered.

"The Count!" yelled Barry. "He's escaped! After him!"

But Count Popandos had already dashed into one of the Venusian buildings, and was lost to view. Freeman and



THE SCHOOL YELL TURNS POPANDOS YELLOW! "Castleton to the rescue!" shouted Freeman, and the next moment a crowd of schoolboys swept across to where Count Popandos and his rascals were overpowering the "Rover's" crew.

Hardy and Willis were in full chase, and they, too, vanished into that building.

"You rotter!" panted Barry Drewe, clutching at Puggy Dibble. "The Count's escaped—and he nearly succeeded in getting hold of the Rover again! And you let him out, you treacherous rotter!"

"I—I didn't!" panted Puggy, desperately. "Where did you get that money from?" asked Don Masters.

"I—I— had it all the time!" babbled Puggy. "I—I— That is—"

"You're a fat liar!" said Barry, contemptuously. "But you're more of a fool than a rogue, Puggy! I don't suppose you realised what you were doing. But how did you come to release Count Popandos?"

"I didn't release him at all!" blustered Puggy. "I don't know anything about it, I tell you. What do you think I am—a liar? Royce and Hoskins and I only went below to look for some grub, and—"

He paused, and the circle of Castleton juniors closed round him.

"Yes—and what?" asked Billy Ward, grimly. "And—and we happened to go into the Count's prison!" said Puggy, frantically. "I—I mean, we didn't go into it! We never even saw the Count! He didn't ask us to untie his ropes—did he, Hoskins?"

"Nun-no!" panted Hoskins, fatuously. "That's enough!" said Barry, with contempt. "You can't even tell lies thoroughly! You give yourselves away with every sentence. You miserable cads! Thank goodness we've captured Popandos' men. But he's escaped—and he may cause all sorts of mischief before he's recaptured."

A shout went up from one of the other juniors. They had been attending to the hurts of the crew. One or two of these men had been badly knocked about, but they were not seriously injured. That revolver had been fired by one of these guards, and Count Popandos and his men had attacked.

"Here come Freeman & Co.!" shouted Nippy Frost, of the Third. "But they haven't got old Poppy!"

"Let's go to meet them." There was a rush, and the Firm was looking very flushed and hot when the other juniors crowded round them.

"It was no good!" growled Freeman. "We went into that building, but it's all dark in there—and there were swarms of those Venusians, too. We got properly mixed up with them."

"And the Count?" asked Barry, quickly. "Never saw a sign of him at all!" replied Freeman, with a grunt. "He's gone—escaped!"

Count Alexis Popandos was free—at liberty in this Venusian city! What mischief would he get up to now?

A Question of Clothing.

GEORGE FREEMAN was very upset. In spite of all his efforts—and the efforts of his chums—Count Alexis Popandos had completely escaped. And now he was lost somewhere amid these quaint Venusian buildings.

"How the dickens did those rotters escape?" demanded Freeman. "How did they get free, and attack the guards? That's what I can't understand!"

"There's no puzzle about it," grunted Don Masters. "Those cads, Puggy Dibble & Co., were bribed!"

"What!" roared Freeman. "It's a fact!" said Masters. "Puggy admitted it—and then denied it in the next breath. But we know what to believe!"

"By jiggery, you're right!" shouted Freeman,

glaring round. "Puggy was flashing a lot of pound notes in the air, wasn't he? He was bribed by Count Popandos! Where is he? Where's Puggy? I want to punch him on the nose!"

Barry Drewe took Freeman by the arm. "It's no good, old man," he said quietly. "It won't retrieve the position if you punch Puggy Dibble on the nose. And it wouldn't do him any good either. He's just a plain chump, without sufficient brains to realise the difference between right and wrong."

Many of the other fellows had collected round, and they were all looking alarmed and anxious. The Count's two companions had been recaptured, and were once again locked up. But, after all, they were only tools. The Count himself was at liberty—and the situation was grave.

"The best thing we can do," said Billy Ward, "is to find Sir Bags and the Professor. We'll tell them what's happened, and get a stronger guard on duty."

Barry nodded. "That's right!" he agreed. "This affair ought to be reported to them at once."

"Absolutely!" said the Hon. Freddie. "I mean to say, this priceless blighter of a Popandos might pop out at any minute, and proceed with the dirty work. He appears to be a murky sort of a merchant!"

So the Castleton fellows went in search of Professor Roxley Drewe and Sir Clarence Bagshot. The trouble was, nobody knew where the inventor and his companions had gone. They were somewhere in this strange Venusian city, looking round, fascinated by all they saw.

The boys divided themselves into several parties and they separated. Puggy Dibble & Co., of course, had long since vanished. The young rascals knew only too well what damage they had done—and they did not feel inclined to face their angry schoolfellows.

"Come on!" said George Freeman, in his forceful manner. "We've got to find old Bags, and we've got to be quick about it, too! We shan't get any peace while Popandos is at liberty!"

"But what can Bags do?" asked Hardy, as they set off across the big square.

"Why, he can tell Mr. Zeff, can't he?" said Freeman. "And Zeff can give instructions to these Venusians to search the whole place, and to rout the Count out of his hole."

"Yes, that's a good idea," said Willis, nodding. "If Mr. Zeff gets his Venusians on the job, there'll be something done. And the sooner Popandos is recaptured, the better."

The Firm plunged into one of those great marble buildings, and then they came to a halt, looking about them wonderingly. They had hardly known what to expect, but they had certainly imagined nothing like the spectacle which now confronted them.

They had come in through a great square entrance, where the walls were many feet thick. And they now found themselves within a lofty interior. There were no doors or windows in any of these buildings—but great blank openings. And the daylight was pouring through, showing up everything in detail.

"Why, it's a kind of a shop!" said Freeman, staring.

And this was true enough. The place was immense, and there were many of the strange Venusians standing about—and a kind of fluttering sensation had passed through the entire chamber as the schoolboys entered. Their arrival had created a big stir. And they were not unconscious of this sensation, either. George

Freeman swelled visibly as he realised that he and his chums were regarded as persons of importance—capable of striking awe into these planet beings.

They saw all sorts of stands, filled with the picturesque tunics which the Venusians wore. They were peculiar garments, so fashioned that they fitted loosely. And they were woven out of some curious fabric which the juniors could not name. As the trio walked forward two Venusians tentatively approached them.

"I'll tell you what!" said Freeman, with a grin. "We'll rig ourselves out in these Venusian togs! A sort of compliment to our hosts, eh? Why not, you chaps? I think it's due to old Zeff and his subjects!"

Hardy and Willis looked at their leader in dismay.



The Cunning of the Count.

MR. HUDSON ZEFF, President of Venusville, came to a halt?

"Well, stranger, what's the big idea?" he asked curiously. "I don't remember having been introduced to you."

Count Alexis Popandos caught his breath in sharply. Quite unexpectedly, Hudson Zeff had spotted him. The queer, misshapen hunchback had walked into one of the marble buildings unexpectedly, and he had come face to face with the Count as the latter was about to dodge out—in the hope of finding a more secure haven of refuge. And now the Count decided, quick as a flash, to take advantage of this chance meeting.

"A thousand pardons, sir!" he said, suavely. "You, I take it, are the remarkable individual who has organised this civilisation upon Venus?"

For a moment Hudson Zeff did not reply. He was looking at Count Popandos closely—keenly. Vaguely he wondered why Professor Drewe had not told him of this other man in the party. For, obviously, Count Popandos was not a member of the crew. He was distinguished-looking—impressive in his bearing.

As for the Count, his mind was in a considerable state of bewilderment. Nevertheless, he was a

THE SCATTERBRAIN'S LATEST!—Freeman, Hardy, and Willis saw all sorts of stands laden with the picturesque clothing the Venusians wore. A sudden idea struck the erstwhile leader of the "Firm." "I'll tell you what," he grinned. "We'll deck ourselves out in some of these Venusians' togs. Sort of compliment to our hosts!"

They knew what a stubborn fellow he was, once he got an idea into his head. And this idea was quite characteristic of him! The more outrageous, the better he liked it.

"Just a minute, old chap," said Willis, hastily. "You haven't forgotten that we're searching for the Professor and Sir Bags, have you? We've got to tell them about old Popandos—"

"That's all right!" interrupted Freeman, with a wave of his hand. "It won't take us two ticks to buy some of these togs, and to get into them. Let's be the first to wear the costume of the country."

"Yes, but—"

"I don't want any arguments!" said Freeman, frowning. "I've made up my mind!"

"But look here—"

"And that settles it!" roared Freeman. "Any objections from you chaps, and I'll biff you! Understand?"

Hardy and Willis understood. They sighed, and resigned themselves to the inevitable.

quick-thinking rascal. He had kept his ears open, too, and from many of the remarks that he had overheard—remarks made by the Rover's men, and by the schoolboys—had told him that this city was in control of a human being. And here was the man himself. A strange-looking specimen, it was true, but that was of no matter.

"I am glad of this meeting, good friend," went on the Count, lowering his voice, and coming closer to Mr. Zeff. "I take it that we are private here? We shall not be overheard? There are no—spies?"

The President of Venusville waved a crooked arm. "If you wish to speak—go right ahead!" he invited. "I am waiting, Mr.—"

"My name is Popandos—Count Alexis Popandos," interrupted the Count. "I am the inventor of the Solar Rover. The vessel is mine—my own brain-child."

"Really?" said Hudson Zeff. "I had been given to understand that Professor Roxley Drewe—"

"No, no!" said the Count quickly. "Take no notice of those lies! Have no faith in these tricksters and rogues. They are all enemies—enemies!"

"You surprise me!" said Hudson Zeff, unemotionally.

"It is true—it is true!" insisted the Count, his voice rising in a shout of passionate indignation. "These men are scoundrels! They have stolen my ship—they have stolen my invention! And they are not merely my enemies, but yours! I want to warn you against them. Their plan is to overpower you, to humble you into the dust, and to seize control. Do I not know them? Have I not had bitter experience!"

The hunchback nodded slowly.

"It is well that I should know the full truth," he said. "So you are the inventor of the Rover, oh? Doggone my hide! I rather suspected something of this kind. So they double-crossed you, Count?"

"Yes!" said Count Popandos, lowering his voice again. "Ever since we left the earth, they have kept me a prisoner. Yes, locked up in one of the store-rooms. But I have escaped now—I am at liberty! And I urge you, my good friend, to heed my words! Beware of these Englishmen! They are traitors and tricksters! Watch them closely, or it will be a bad day for you."

"And what do you want me to do?" asked Hudson Zeff. "You've sure made me curious, Count. If I can help you, I will. But I am not saying that I trust you—any more than I trust them. I'm a cautious man, I guess, and I need to have proofs before I move. They say that they own the Solar Rover. You say that you own the Solar Rover. Am I to believe them or am I to believe you?"

"Believe me—if you wish to live!" said the Count fiercely. "Man alive, I am warning you! Help me—be my friend—and all will be well! It is my intention to return to earth at once, and if you will help me we will take the Rover, and make this journey. And once we get back to earth I will allow you to take all the credit for the discovery of Venus. Is it a bargain?"

Hudson Zeff gazed at the Count through narrowing eyes.

"You will let me take the credit?" he repeated. "When we return to earth, you will proclaim that I am the discoverer of Venus?"

"Yes, yes!" said Count Popandos eagerly. "I care nothing for fame. My whole life is filled with science—with research. I desire no fame—indeed, I fear it. For I do not wish to be disturbed. I have no time for such trifles. Leave me in peace, my friend—and you can take the credit. You can be the great man, the discoverer of the planets! Help me in this mission, and you will become the greatest man on earth."

A strange gleam came into Hudson Zeff's eyes.

"I'll help you!" he said, briefly.

"Then—then you believe—"

"I guess it doesn't matter what I believe, and what I don't believe," interrupted Hudson Zeff. "I have decided to help you, Count Popandos. Let that be sufficient. But we mustn't allow these others to guess that we are in collusion. You understand? Come with me. I will put you into a place of safety—and then I will deal with these companions of yours as they deserve!"

Without another word, the President of Venusville took Count Popandos by the arm and led him out of the building. They passed out into the brilliant sunlight, and soon vanished into another dark doorway.

The Reward of Greed.

PUGGY DIBBLE'S eyes gleamed with gloating satisfaction.

"My only hat!" he muttered. "Look at all this stuff, you chaps! Food—and tons of it!"

"Yes, but it doesn't look particularly appetising!" said Hoskins, dubiously. "For all we know, Puggy, this Venusian food may be awful. I don't think we ought to chance it!"

They had been searching about among the Venusian buildings, and at last they had entered a quaint little "shop" where great marble slabs were covered with all manner of eatables. There were objects which looked like cakes, only they had a greenish appearance. There were pastries, too, and other remarkable foodstuffs.

"Well, what are we going to do?" asked Royce doubtfully. "We can't take the stuff without paying for it, can we?"

Puggy Dibble looked round, and beckoned to a nervous-looking Venusian who was hovering near-by. "Hey!" sang out Puggy. "What is this stuff—food?"

The Venusian came forward with that strange hopping gait so characteristic of the race.

"Food!" he said. "Good food. You buy?"

"Yes, I'll buy!" said Puggy, as he pulled out one of his pound notes. "But what about money? How much?"

The Venusian indicated one of the piles of food. "Three dollars!" he said briefly.

"Old Zeff has introduced the American currency," grinned Hoskins.

Puggy stepped forward and grabbed a pile of the food. The Venusian looked on and made no objection. Indeed, he backed away, rather alarmed.

"It's easy!" grinned Puggy. "Come on, you chaps!"

Puggy took a big bite into one of the "pastries," and a joyous expression came over his face.

"Gorgeous!" he mumbled, with his mouth full. "My only topper! What a flavour! Never tasted anything like it!"

He took another bite, and Royce and Hoskins were so impressed by the ecstatic expression on Puggy's face that they commenced eating, too. And, without question, this Venusian food, in spite of its strange appearance, was extraordinarily appetising. It was unlike anything the boys had tasted before—and it was luscious.

Puggy, Dibble & Co. were not particular when it came to foodstuffs. They crowded out of the building, carrying their spoils. And a shout went up from a number of other Castleton boys who were only a hundred yards away.

"Hi, you fellows!" shouted Puggy. "Grub! The finest stuff you ever tasted! Come on—there's plenty for everybody!"

But at that moment a startling thing happened. Puggy Dibble suddenly dropped his armful of food, and he clapped his hands to his podgy stomach.

"Oh!" groaned Puggy. "Help—help! Oh! I'm in pain—I'm—I'm—"

"We're poisoned!" screamed Hoskins.

And as the other juniors came running up, Puggy Dibble & Co. fell writhing to the ground, their faces contorted, their groans hideous to hear. Only for a few seconds did they writhe—and then they stretched out, still, and apparently lifeless!

Are the Three Gads of Castleton Poisoned? You'll Find Out in Next Week's Long and Exciting Chapters of This Topping Serial.