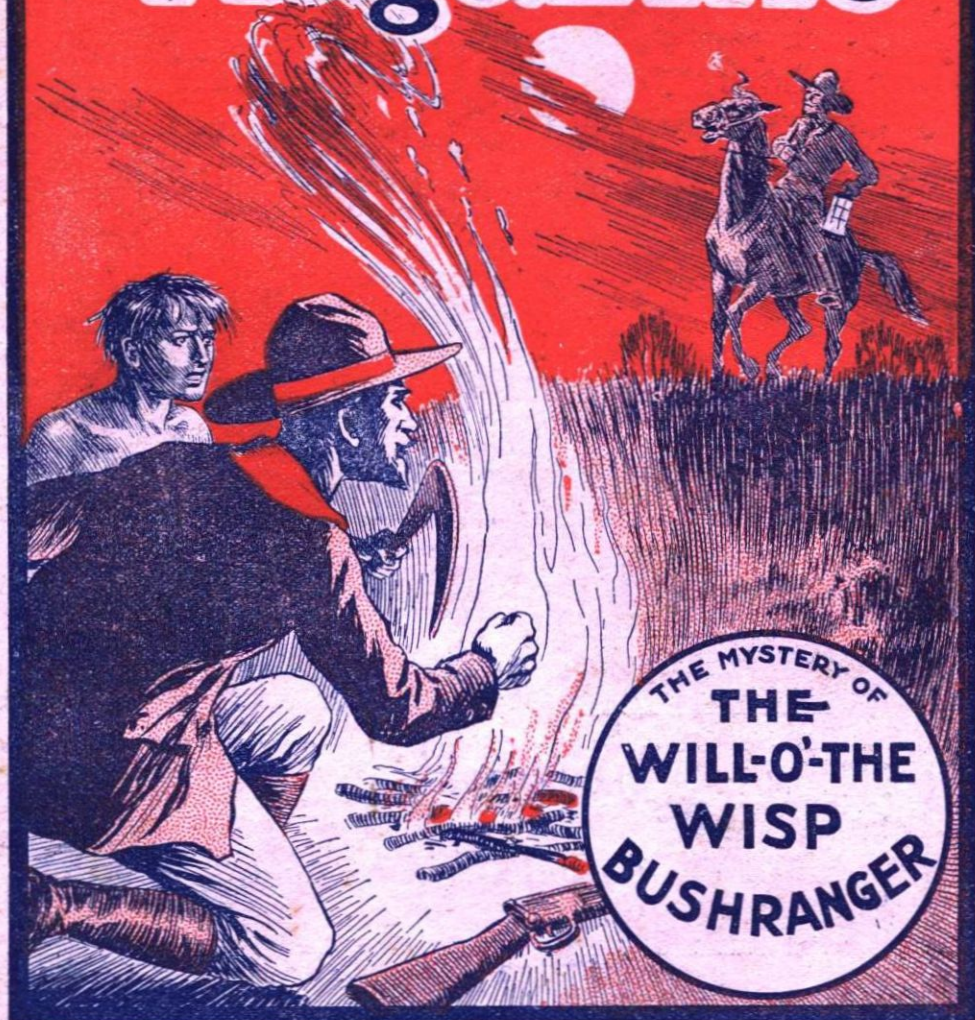


THE WHIP WONDER OF THE BUSH. GRAND YARN OF CAPTAIN CRASH.

# Boys' Magazine

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VIVID, EXCITING YARN OF BUSHRANGING.

Vol. X—No. 265—August 20, 1927.

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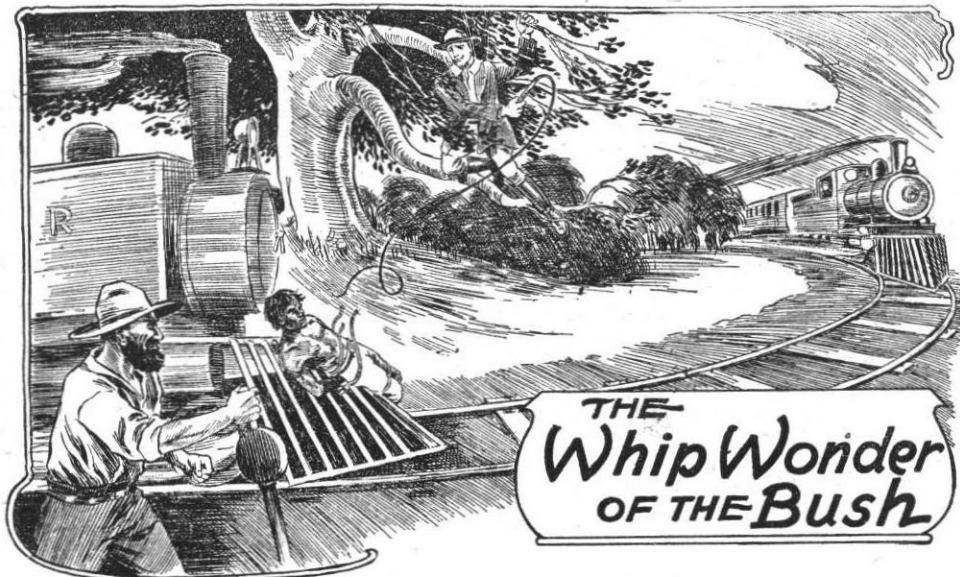
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Cooee! Here we are, Chaps, an Eerie, Mysterious Yarn of the Lonely Australian Bush, Featuring the Debonair Bushranger, and his Boy Tracker Pal.



TELLING OF THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN CRASH, THE DEBONAIR BUSHRANGER, IN QUEST OF A MYSTERIOUS WILL-O'-THE-WISP TRAVELLER OF THE NEVER-NEVER LAND.

### The Spirit Of The Bush.

THE stars were milky white, and somewhere among them floated the faint, yellow crescent of the moon—the moon, dead, yet dominant still—giving by its personality an eerie majesty to the lonely bush.

Over a camp fire, whose red flames tinged with grey smoke stabbed at the sky, sat a man and a boy.

Or rather, Captain Crash, Bushranger, reclined. He rested on one elbow, his elegant figure stretched out. The black butts of his guns and his black, spurred riding boots gleamed sardonically in the fire glow, as if belying the impression that otherwise might have been given: that this man was a dreamer, a dilettante in his monstrous profession of outlawry in the bush.

Certainly he looked the dreamer. His finely-chiselled face, with its fair Vandyke beard, its blue eyes, heavily lidded, was surely that of an artist. He was clothed in perfectly tailored riding breeches, a silk shirt with flowing black tie, and a jacket waisted and belted, yet made of serviceable cord, its pockets bulging with the utensils a bushman of the Queensland back-blocks would need.

As he reclined on the ground he held in one hand a staff, thrust into the red embers of the fire. He was cooking dampers for their supper while he pored over a book of Kipling's verse that lay at his elbow. Beside him squatted a boy—a black boy, or so he seemed to be, brewing the tea.

It is the bushman's never-varying meal at night—the brew of tea and the dampers, made from a bake of flour and water.

The black boy appeared about fourteen, and he had an impish yet serious face. Curiously enough he had not the broad, distended nostrils of the Australian aborigine. Indeed, he was strikingly good looking for a young savage.

After a long period of silence Captain Crash, Bushranger, raised his twinkling blue eyes and regarded his son (for this black boy was really Jack, his son, stolen from him many years before by Black Kelly and his gang, but now happily recovered).

Young Jack had got among a bush tribe of aborigines; and had learned all the mystery of the bush, its secrets. But since his father had found him again he had become an invaluable pal and assistant to the aristocratic bushranger.

"Jack," the bushranger drawled, with his enigmatical smile, "isn't this lonely wilderness more alluring than Naples, than the waters of Venice?"

Tell all your friends of this Strange Yarn of The Will-o'-the-Wisp Bushranger.



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



Hark! Listen to the dreary cry of that animal. Look at the dense shrub and bush crowding all around us—yes, crowding and crouching as if waiting in dread of the night. Methinks there's something in the air to-night, sonny."

Young Jack Crash made a grimace.

"Spouting poetry again, Dad?" he inquired, rudely. "Oh, yes, everything is beautiful, bewteeful—bewteeful!"

Captain Crash smiled blandly at his son. "Well, certainly you appear a better object without those little sticks in your nose to make you look like a savage," he remarked. "Don't know what you want to disguise yourself for to-night, sonny. You look better as a white man."

The boy tracker made another disgusted grimace at his bushranger father.

When he suspected that there was anything doing, when work might be on hand, he always blackened his face and body and also his fair hair, so as to resemble a bush aborigine. He found he could work better; he was more in his old element.

His father had told him that there was something in the air, something more than the spirit of the night which did, indeed, whisper of wild, mad happenings. The very gaunt trees that leaned grotesquely towards one another were like spectral sentries, waiting—for something.

"Dad," he protested, "why have we come to this part of the bush, to Woolamaloo? Why did you warn me to be on watch if there's nothing doing? Especially as I know every inch of the country."

"Your own native heath, so to speak," bantered Captain Crash, watching the boy. "Why should you be more alert, for trouble, let us say, than usual, eh?"

Captain Crash and his son Jack knew that part of the bush was swarming with a savage tribe of aborigines. Didn't the boy tracker have very good cause to know it? For the savages round here were those amongst whom he had been raised since a child when Captain Kelly and his gang had kidnapped him from his father.

That night Black Kelly and his gang had devastated and laid low a struggling gold mining camp. They killed off all the prospectors save Claude Crash, an English remittance man, and his son, whom, after a fierce fight, Black Kelly took away with him. The bushranger had ridden off with the boy at his saddle in revenge for the mad struggle the Englishman had put up.

Claude Crash went after them on horseback with a gun, his heart almost bursting with rage and despair.

But he did not come up again with the bushrangers, for, blundering post haste through the scrub after their evil deed, they had ridden right into the Woolamaloo country of wild savages.

That aroused the aborigines like a nest of hornets around their ears. The masked bushrangers had to fight for their lives against the savages' spears and boomerangs, and only by a miracle were they able to beat a retreat. Even so they suffered severe loss in numbers.

Wounded and hard beset, Black Kelly had committed then his blackest act of villainy. He threw the boy he carried at his saddle almost on the savages' spears, thinking that by such an inhuman sacrifice he might save his life. So surprised were the natives, that his ruse availed Black Kelly, inasmuch as that he was able to get clear.

But if Black Kelly thought that they would make a sacrifice of the boy, he was mistaken.

The natives took to the little white fellow. They

brought him up as one of themselves, and taught him all he now knew of bushcraft and tracking.

For their humane and kindly treatment Jack could never be too grateful. Even now he sometimes dressed as one of the tribe and blackened his face as they had taught him, so that he should seem more like one of themselves.

Nor would Captain Crash ever forget.

He had turned bushranger with the object of tracking down his enemy. And bushranger he had remained. On several occasions he had come into conflict with Black Kelly and beaten him at his own game. A deadly hatred raged between the two now. Captain Crash had sworn that the bush was not big enough to hold them both, and that one must die.

Jack was thinking of all this as he stared into the camp fire glow. And Captain Crash seemed to read the boy's thoughts.

He shook his head, smiling.

"No, sonny, the job to-night has nothing to do with Black Kelly," he drawled. "But it has something to do with these black folk of yours."

Jack sat up all of a sudden as the bushranger broke off. He stared out into the darkness, his nerves taut. He thought for a moment he had heard one of those black bush folk of whom Captain Crash had spoken. His hypersensitive ears were trained to hear the slightest sound. He thought he saw the black, flat-nosed face and glaring white eyes of a savage amidst the brush.

He took up a burning twig from the fire and threw it in the direction where his fancy had placed the apparition.

There was nothing there.

Yet out in the night his instincts, trained to the wilds, told him there lurked the savages with whom he had once hunted and lived.

Not more than two miles distant lay huddled the rude mud huts of the tribe, near the creek in which Jack had learned to swim like a fish.

The aborigines were wild and fierce now, more fierce than they had ever been.

They had been molested by Black Kelly persistently through the years, that was why. Black Kelly never forgot, nor did he ever forgive. His revenge on the black tribe had taken the form of sudden, swift, merciless raids. And so the aborigines had come to hate all white men.

The boy bush-tracker had warned Captain Crash that they might even attack themselves if their presence became known, and he had taken his bushranger father up to this position as near as he dared to the tribe, with the silent stealthy method of the black tracker.

All along he had wondered why Captain Crash was so keen on visiting the Woolamaloo savages, and when his father had insisted on lighting a camp fire Jack had pronounced it the height of folly. Yet nothing had happened . . . until now.

Smiling, Captain Crash watched his son. Then, all of a sudden, his face, too, changed.

"Look, sonny!"

He leant forward over the camp fire, his bearded face suddenly grave, his eyes like steel points from which a steel has struck blue sparks. The sensitive face of this dreamer of the wilds was on a sudden startling in its change.

The boy bush-tracker's gaze followed the direction of his father's out-flung arm, and he quivered inwardly at what he saw.

Why should he feel this seething excitement, he asked himself.

It was only a light dancing out there in the lonely bush. A red light, dancing, moving, just as if the moon had taken flight to earth, and without enlarging its shape, was gambolling over the Never-never



land. Only a red light! But what did it mean?

"That's Jack-o'-Lantern," said Captain Crash, and his tone had become matter-of-fact.

But the boy bush-tracker stared at him, baffled and bewildered. Red lights do not dance over the bush. Indeed, nothing ever happens in the bush, save the long draughts and the sudden floods and the interminable sun-glare and the murdering raids of men like Black Kelly.

"What is it, Dad?" the boy breathed.

"That's Jack-o'-Lantern," repeated Captain Crash, with the drawing matter-of-factness that might have irritated a saint. Nevertheless, he belied his seeming reticence over the matter by rising and pushing down his gun holsters over his hips. It was evident he was preparing for action.

The piqued youngster saw him next thrust a twig into the fire and apply it to his V-shaped pipe until

reappeared, dancing tantalisingly, mysteriously. Captain Crash, with one eye on the light, knocked out the glowing ashes from his pipe, and reined his horse around to stamp them out as they scattered over the ground. For the country had suffered from severe draught for months, and the bush was dry, highly inflammable. A mere spark might cause a devastating bush fire which would rush like a wave to the selections and farms not more than fifty miles distant.

"Yes, we need rain badly," drawled Captain Crash to himself. At which commonplace his bush-boy son writhed, his interest held focused all the time on that amazing red light.

Now the horse was urged forward through the starlit night. Jack, at the back of his father, asked the question that was burning on his tongue.

"Dad, who or what is Jack-o'-Lantern?"

The English bushranger laughed shortly, stroking his fair beard.

"There's not much mystery about him, sonny. He is, or was, a very hard man—a cattle drover in the old days. He had a selection of a hundred beasts, and Fortune favoured him. Rains came; his cattle increased to tens of hundreds—thousands. That's emphasis, not redundancy, sonny. He became a big fat cattle million-



GETTING OUT OF A TIGHT CORNER.—Jerking erect Captain Crash brought the bag that was supposed to have contained the gold down fair and square over the head of his bitter enemy.

the bowl glowed. After which he crossed to a blanket which had been dipped in the creek until it was soaking through, and, unfolding the heavy wet cloth, he flung it over the camp fire.

Jack backed away from the hissing, smoking fire as darkness came down, and he heard his father say, as Captain Crash sauntered over to his horse, which was tethered near-by:

"I hope Jack-o'-Lantern didn't see the flames. The old idiot thinks he's as sharp as a razor, and he tries to take every precaution. We're going after him, sonny, to bail him up!"

Jack could not understand his father's tone. It was half-affectionate, half-scornful.

Nevertheless, he obediently followed, and swung on the back of the big black horse behind his father. He understood now. They were on business once again—bushrangers on the unlawful pursuit of holding up a traveller through this Never-never land.

The red light disappeared as the horse moved carefully forward through the bush. Then it

aired. Ugh, how I detest the type!"

The short laugh with which he punctuated the last exclamation held genuine, kindly amusement, however.

"The railroad stretched out its arm from Brisbane, sonny, and made him rich. Cattle rose to fifty dollars a head—and didn't he ship 'em? They say it mellowed him, Jack—all that money. But I remember Jack-o'-Lantern only when I was one of his buckaroos, punching his darned beasts from here to Hades—bearing the whip of his tongue and his vile temper. Lord, but he had pluck, though, grit! He fought the merciless, sun-baked bush, Jack. It takes a man to do that. And in those days before you were born I wasn't even half a man. I deserved all I got."

"What was his real name?" asked Jack, curiously. "We'll call him Jack-o'-Lantern, if you don't mind," Captain Crash insisted, with a grim laugh. "He earned that nickname because he kept bulls, sonny, real vicious bulls that would kill a man before

breakfast, let alone at night. He used to send us buckaroos out with red lanterns and whips to punch 'em into the stockyards. Used to love to do it at night. Of course those bulls hated the sight of the red lanterns, and . . . well, I'm still alive, anyhow," ended the bushranger, stroking his beard and chucking a little. "But that's why they called him Jack-o'-Lantern, sonny!"

Jack, at the back of the horse, stared at that red, dancing light to which they seemed to be approaching a little closer now, and curiously enough he was not revolted by the story. There was something full-blooded about it that compelled his boyish admiration.

"All his buckaroos worshipped him," went on Captain Crash, in a reflective voice. "All except me. Mind you, he had grit. He wouldn't ask another to do that which he wouldn't dare himself. And when he made money he paid like a prince. But I wasn't there. I'd gone, just when the good times came. I thought the reckless idiot would kill himself and all of us, too, with his jack-o'-lanterns."

Captain Crash laughed amusedly. "He's still trying to do it—kill himself, look!" he cried as he pointed once again to the dancing light. "His latest stunt is to enlighten the poor, uneducated savages of this pitiless land, and, incidentally, to



**VENGEANCE IS MINE.**—As the whip came down again the debonair bushranger, aflame with rage, hurled the boomerang.

make himself richer. He travels alone with trinkets, making gifts to the natives, living amongst them. And at the last place he stopped he received in return a good deal of quartz and gold dust. He's been warned that there's danger in the Woolamaloo country, though, and now he's going to find it. We're going to hold him up."

"But, Dad—" protested Jack, to whom the scheme did not appeal.

Captain Crash only laughed again, however, and Jack, reflecting that bushrangers, like beggars, cannot pick and choose whom they shall rob, sat tight as the horse broke into a gallop.

The red light loomed nearer through the night.

Captain Crash slipped over the upper part of his face a black crepe mask, and drew out his pistols.

No longer was the bushranger riding his horse carefully, the thud-thud of hoofs beat upon the night. And suddenly the sound found its echo.

Jack-o'-Lantern, finding himself pursued, evidently was beating up his horses.

Now, however, escape was beyond his reach. The bushranger's black horse came on with an electric spurt down a slope, careered like a steep-chaser over a high mound of bushes and crashed through a cluster of trees on to the bush trail, where a stage-coach, with four horses attached, was lumbering along in a vain effort to escape, the earth and stones flying around her wheels.

"Bail up!" The bushranger's clear voice rang through the night. "Bail up for your life!"

The coachman laid himself back in his seat and tugged at the reins, an expression of terror on his face. Captain Crash's merry laugh rang out, followed by a shot from his pistol, and a bullet whistled up to the stars. The horses clashed and whinnied, checked in their headlong career. But the bush boy behind the saddle was not watching this familiar little comedy of the hold-up. He was watching closely the coach with its large red lantern over the window—that window at which no face as yet had appeared.

He was watching for the mysterious Jack-o'-Lantern.

The terrified coach-horses became still at length, and Captain Crash advanced on horseback at such an angle that he was able to keep the coachman covered with one pistol, whilst with the other he was able to rake the dark interior of the coach, should any menace show from there. It was not likely, for the mysterious Jack-o'-Lantern would have to lean out of the window before he could take a shot at Captain Crash.

"Now, Jack-o'-Lantern," said Captain Crash, with his musical drawl, "your valuables, please. I know you carry them with you. And I must request you to turn back your coach. It is not wise to venture into this part of the country."

The answer from the interior of the coach came in the form of a strangled sound, very much like a snarl.

"Ha! The reckless Jack-o'-Lantern does not like it," laughed the masked bushranger. "He finds that his usual ready resource does not meet this situation, eh?"

Captain Crash advanced nearer to the window.

"Your valuables, please!" His voice had become a bark.

The bush boy-tracker behind him on the horse could see the figure of a man huddled as if in terror against the seat. And Jack had a distinct feeling of disappointment. He had expected, from what he had heard of Jack-o'-Lantern, that the mysterious stranger would show a better front than this. Why, the man was as terrified as the coachman, whose demeanour on the box was comical.

As the gentleman bushranger's pistol pointed, through the window, the man stirred, half turned and held out a heavy-laden sack with a hand that shook.

"Here you are, curse you!" he snarled. "Take them."

Turning, the man inside the coach thrust the heavy sack at Captain Crash who took it by its neck, bottled by the cord that closed it. The sack was heavy, so heavy, indeed, that the gentleman bushranger had to exert all the strength of his right arm to haul it through the coach window on to his saddle. Not unnaturally, his attention was thus diverted. And so he did not see what Jack, his son, saw.

It all happened in a moment.

The coach driver, crouching back on the box, apparently petrified with fear, was all of a sudden most amazingly galvanised to life.

From his box he took a leap so that he landed on the back of the foremost coach horse, a splendid



black brute who had all along seemed to Jack as if he were of better breed than the average run of coach horses.

That particular horse was, as if by magic, loosed from its harness, and it started forward in an electric burst of speed. And as it broke away the pseudo coachman on horseback gave an exultant, gay laugh and threw off his greatcoat.

Under its vuluminous folds was concealed a red lamp which the rider held aloft as he raced away.

He was revealed now. A rather thick-set man with a beard, fine, heavy-lidded blue eyes and fair hair brushed back over a high forehead.

For one moment Jack stared at him in amaze, then he blinked and stared at his own father, Captain Crash, the aristocratic bushranger, had by now perceived the escape of the man and was sending a ball futilely after him.

The bushranger could have shot to kill if he had desired, but it was never his way to shoot at a man who appeared to be at his mercy. And in a few moments the rider was out of gunshot.

But in those revealing moments Jack received the shock of his life.

He stared after the furiously riding man, and then at his father. Was he dreaming, or was he crazed? Surely here was his father in front of him. And yet that dim, indistinct form had seemed very much like that of his own father, and the bearded face had seemed to him to resemble the face of Captain Crash.

After a moment the boy shook his head, giving vent to a little short laugh at his own foolishness.

"Thought you'd gone off for a moment, Dad," he muttered. "That Jack-o'-Lantern certainly is the biggest mystery I've ever struck."

The bush tracker boy stared after the dancing red light with knit brows.

Captain Crash looked at him rather queerly.

"You thought it was me?" he echoed. And then he was silent a moment. "Jack," he exclaimed

suddenly; "do you think you could track that fellow through the bush?"

The bush boy, known amongst his own tribe as N'Wani, which is best interpreted as "The-Eye-of-a-Needle," smiled.

"Bet I track him down before daybreak, Dad," he said confidently. "I'll come back and let you know where he is."

"Very well," said Captain Crash. Then he added earnestly: "And, Jack, keep him away from the Woolmaloo country. If he tries to head in that direction, turn him back by aiming spears at him. That ought to keep him away. Even Jack-o'-Lantern would scarcely ride in the face of spears thrown by unseen enemies."

"Right-ho Dad," answered the boy bush tracker.

He slipped from the horse, thrusting the boomerang he carried into the belt of his white cotton trousers. That was all his equipment. He carried not even a spear, for he knew the hiding places of the tribe to which he had once belonged, and he could always come upon a heap of spears laid ready by the natives for a forced march.

Jack went off at a run, half crouched. He could proceed at that rate for miles through the bush, following a spoor. He had the eye of an eagle, and his trained senses told him swiftly what each sign meant.

Captain Crash gazed after him for a few moments with an affectionate smile hovering about his mouth. Then at length the bushranger turned his attention back to the coach. He opened the door, and then he threw up his head and his laugh echoed through the hot, still night. For Jack-o'-Lantern had played a nice trick upon him. Here inside the coach was the real driver of the vehicle. Jack-o'-Lantern had merely changed places.

"Come! Out of there, my man," said the bushranger good-naturedly—albeit he held his gun



A COWARD'S DESERTS.—Growing more and more enraged as no sign came from the tracker boy—no cry for mercy!—Black Kelly flung back his whip, to use it with all the force of which he was capable. Then something hit him like the blow of an axe on the back of his neck.

levelled. "You've tricked me enough. Now get on your box again and be off."

The coachman, a burly, thick-set fellow, grinned slyly and obeyed. Once the coach was rumbling off again Captain Crash turned his attention to the sack.

He untied the noose around its neck and opened it. When he had gazed inside, he first started and then laughed heartily. He had been tricked once again. Jack-o'-lantern had got the better of him. Inside the sack, instead of the valuable gold-bearing quartz that he had expected to find was nothing but a heap of bricks—valueless pieces of rock and tone that he might pick up in any numbers on that oush trail.

"My poor wits! Will I ever get the better of that man?" laughed the bushranger, shaking his head.

Scarcely had he spoken the words when his face changed and became grim. He looked up and around him swiftly, and he saw that at four different points were men who had him covered with pistols. They were masked men, obviously bushrangers. And as Captain Crash slowly raised his hands above his head in obedience to a harshly-uttered command, his eyes sought one after another of the men, and as they rested on one man in particular he knew that once again he was up against Black Kelly's gang.

That black, straggling beard—those wild, blood-shot eyes through the black crepe mask—that old downowner's hat! Well, he knew them all. They belonged to his mortal enemy, Black Kelly, the man who had stolen his son and killed his friends many years ago, and now was desperately striving to kill him.

Captain Crash stood stock-still, and his fair Vandyke beard seemed positively to bristle.

He was defiant still, yet his heart beat a hammer tune that was born of his rage and fury.

### Escape.

THAT he, Captain Crash, the noted bushranger for whom the North Queensland police had offered two hundred pounds reward, should be caught napping in this paltry manner! Claude Crash clenched and unclenched his hands that he held above his head as he saw the gang smiling evilly at one another. Trapped, by heaven! Where were his wits?

"B'gar, we've got you, Captain Claude Crash," came the slow, sneering voice of his enemy, Black Kelly. Both the voice and the words bristled with menace. Slowly the heavily built ruffian lumbered towards his deadly rival, a gun levelled in each of his hands.

Captain Crash's narrowed eyes switched round to his horse. He knew that a single click of his teeth would have called the gallant animal over to him. But he also knew that such a summons would spell the death of his horse; immediately the bushrangers' weapons would crash their message of doom. And as it was he and his horse were very near to death.

He knew it as Black Kelly came to a halt facing him with legs astride. Like the bully he was, the masked ruffian thrust his face very near to his enemy's, glaring his hatred all the time. Captain Crash quivered with the impulse to snatch his fist into that hateful visage, but he checked himself sternly; his hands were above his head, and if he made any movement it would be his last.

With a sudden swift gesture, Black Kelly jammed one of his guns home into its holster, and then he snatched away the black crepe mask that covered the upper part of the gentleman bushranger's face.

"So, Captain Crash, you're after the same game as

me, eh? Yer low-down tyke! You'd pinch th' gold of the feller, Jack-o'-Lantern, would yer? And you so high-faluting an' pertending that bushranging's not yer real game, and that you only do it because yer after me!"

It was not so much the words as the terrific purring vehemence with which they were uttered that spelt menace. Yet Captain Crash laughed in the face of his enemy—a scornful, searing laugh.

"Low-down tyke!" he echoed. "By Jove, you put upon me a description that exactly fits yourself, Black Kelly. A most excellent description, too. Yes," he added with decision, "you're a low-down tyke!"

Black Kelly jabbed his gun fiercely into the chest of the bushranger, a jab that would have doubled up



CAMOUFLAGE.—With the current Jack crept up closer, ever closer in the disguised canoe.

most men. But Captain Crash stood his ground without even rocking on his heels.

"Understand, you hell hound," snarled Black Kelly, "that gold's mine, and it's me who's going to send Jack-o'-Lantern into the next world. I hate him—hate the devil!"

Captain Crash laughed scornfully again.

"Because he's offered a thousand pounds for your capture, eh?" he said mockingly. "He's put all the police of Queensland on your track, and everyone else, too. You're hunted from pillar to post, Black Kelly. That's why you hate him, eh? Well, understand; I'm going to win that thousand pounds. I'm going to deliver you over to justice."

They were brave words in the face of that heavy, six-chambered revolver whose blue bore squinted into Captain Crash's face. Brave, rash words.

They whipped his enemy to snarling, vicious fury, and Black Kelly's finger curled round the trigger. Captain Crash unflinchingly braced himself to meet the bullet. But then suddenly the black-bearded ruffian seemed to change his mind.

"No; I've got a worse death than that for you," he snarled. "Something slow, with torture. But first hand over that bag of gold, yer dog."

It was lying on the ground at the gentleman bushranger's feet, where he had left it when the command had come to hold his hands up. Captain Crash's eyes lowered, and a sudden, wild idea came into his brain.

He bent down slowly for the bag, whose mouth, it will be remembered, he had untied.



Black Kelly was watching him as a cat might watch a mouse, and his gun bore moved downwards on the crouching bushranger. His silent men at a distance also had Claude Crash covered, yet the gentleman bushranger's scheme was one that might succeed by the very suddenness of its execution.

And he did it swiftly—with the swiftness of a hawk striking.

He gripped the heavy sack with both hands, lifted and swung it, straightening his own body erect with a jerk as he did so. Down came the mouth of that sack over the head of the villainous bushranger, and though a terrified shot rang from his revolver, it was too late. The bullet spat up the soil a yard from the bushranger's feet, and as the stones in the sack descended in an avalanche on Black Kelly's head, he reeled, almost stunned.

With a reckless smile on his handsome, bearded



**BLACK KELLY'S GANG AT BAY.**—The debonair bushranger, in the forefront of the vessel, aimed repeatedly at the bushrangers on the roof of the flooded selection house.

face, the gentleman bushranger grabbed his hapless enemy.

He could have shot him out of hand there and then, but he forbore to draw his guns.

Instead, as shots cracked out from the other bushrangers, Captain Crash swivelled the reeling figure of the bushranger so that he formed a living shield between himself and the others.

"Shouldn't advise you to fire for a bit," he called out coolly. "If you do, you'll be blowing holes in Black Kelly, and that would be a pity, for he's such a nice man. So handsome. Tut, tut, Mr. Kelly," he admonished his enemy. "Better language, please. Remember I was brought up so carefully."

Black Kelly, indeed, was turning the air blue with his sulphurous remarks. He was nearly stunned, and a good deal hurt. He said so. And he called on his Maker to do terrible things to Captain Claude Crash, but it was the gentleman bushranger who was doing things with him.

Having picked up Black Kelly's gun, Captain Crash was jabbing his enemy with it towards the horse, who stood patiently by. Of a sudden the gentleman bushranger swung up into the saddle, and there his hand searched for and readily found the long stockwhip with which in the past he had subdued many a fierce herd of cattle.

The bushrangers commenced firing again now that their leader's body no longer formed a shield for their enemy. But Captain Crash made an exceedingly

difficult target, for directly he swung into the saddle his horse commenced to plunge and swerve wildly.

Nor did he long present himself as an object for marksmanship. His long stockwhip curled viciously in the air and cracked with the report of a pistol shot. It hissed again, and its tapering end curled round the shoulders of Black Kelly.

To the ruffian's utter astonishment he was jerked of his feet and dragged along the ground at a rapid rate.

The whip tied Black Kelly in a ring like steel owing to the skilful manner in which it had been manipulated. And now he was the prisoner of the gentleman bushranger.

Black Kelly's followers had become wildly excited. They were on foot and therefore scarcely a match for the well-mounted bushranger. But they had a plan to effect his capture.

They harassed Captain Crash as much as they were able, crowding upon him from one side and firing repeatedly. Luckily the shots missed, but the menace had the effect of turning Captain Crash off

the bush trail—which trail he had originally meant to follow—and across the open ground, peppered with pitfalls and dangers.

Hauled after him at the end of the whip, bumping over the bush and shrub, was the astonished, enraged and thoroughly discomfited Black Kelly.

But he had little time longer in which to suffer such ignominy. With startling suddenness, the tables were turned.

Galloping through the moonlit bush, Captain Crash suddenly felt his horse's legs give way under him. The animal gave a startled, terrified whinny, and then Captain Crash suddenly disappeared.

One moment he was there, the next he was gone from sight as though the ground had opened and swallowed him.

Captain Kelly lay on the ground, very much bruised, and still bound with the thong of the whip. For as he realised that the ground was giving way under his horse, Captain Crash had released the whip handle from his saddle pommel with a single jerk of his hand.

Had he guessed that the amazing thing that was happening to him was in reality owing to a trap set by Black Kelly's gang, he would have taken the villainous bushranger down with him.

For it was a deep pit dug in the ground into which he had fallen with his horse.

Such pits had been dug by the Black Kelly gang in profusion just around this part of the bush. They

were originally designed as traps for the aborigines of this wild Woolamaloo country, against whom the Black Kelly gang still waged their merciless war. But now they had found at least one of them useful in trapping their most feared enemy.

A shout of triumph from the watching bushrangers heralded the success of their ruse, and they came tearing up to gloat over their victim.

Black Kelly was released. He staggered up and crossed to the pit. The demon that guarded his black soul had come up to glare from his eyes as he looked down at Captain Crash deep in the pit, endeavouring as best he might to quieten his terrified horse.

"Got you, you dog!" spat out the bushranger chief. "And b'gar, you've going to die slowly and painfully, or I don't know nothing. You pig, you! You—"

Captain Crash cut short the compliments by drawing his gun in a flash and firing upwards. Black Kelly retreated with a shouted curse as a bullet whistled right past the lobe of his ear, actually nicking off a tiny piece of flesh. He raved and cursed, shouting to his men to put an end there and then to Captain Crash. But not a man would show his face over the edge of that pit. For Captain Crash was reputed to be the best revolver shot in the whole of that lonely Australian Bush.

Nevertheless Captain Crash was a prisoner, and he realised it as day came at length with a sudden flash of glaring sun. And as the pitiless bush day advanced he looked upwards, thinking to see if there were some way of escape.

He might climb of course; but at the top there were always the waiting bushrangers whose prey he would readily become.

They had been very quiet lately. Had they gone away and left him? Captain Crash looked up, shading his steel-blue eyes with his hand. It was a stiff climb, and he would never get his horse out of this pit. It was hopeless.

His mind ran on Black Kelly's threat. What fate had these enemies of his in store for him?

And then suddenly he started violently.

A queer feeling like a stabbing flame licked at his heart. Fear! For he saw coming slowly down the sides of the pit, writhing, coiling—gliding snakes. Not one, but two—three—four snakes. Terrible-looking reptiles with the horrid beauty of black and white diamond markings, and flat, upraised heads like those of cobras.

Captain Crash knew the type; they were the most deadly poisonous snakes in the whole of the never-never land.

And they were coming, more of them. Now there were a dozen swarming down the sides of the pit, and from above the debonair bushranger heard an evil, mocking laugh joined a second later by others.

Black Kelly had meted out the death that was to come to his enemy—a terrible agonising death, for Captain Crash would live in madness for hours after he was bitten.

With a grim, half whimsical smile on his face, the bushranger crossed to his horse, and placed one arm around the animal's neck, caressing it. But at the same time he was looking to his revolver.

It was fully loaded, but in his cartridge belt he had only half-a-dozen more rounds of ammunition.

"Old chap," he murmured, bending over his horse: "you know what Wendy said in Peter Pan? 'To die would be a very great adventure.' But, old chap, I wish it were some other death but this. It's—it's devilish!"

The horse looked at him with its great liquid eyes, and Captain Crash's jaw set. If only there

was some way of defeating these black-hearted ruffians yet!

### Jack on the Job.

JACK CRASH, or N'Wani, as he was called by the natives in this black country, crept forward inch by inch through the bush.

All around him was the tangled shrub, and above him, set like a red ball of fire in the cloudless blue, was the Australian sun.

Another boy, or man for that matter, would long ago have been "bushed"; that is to say he would have lost himself in that seemingly interminable expanse of bush and tree. He would have started to wander aimlessly in a circle. Worse than that, he would probably have been mad by now with thirst, for not a drop of water had touched the boy's lips for more than forty-eight hours.

But Jack was used to these long fasts. He knew that by making a detour of some miles he might reach a little hidden creek where water might be found. But he was on a tracking job, and his thirst was not a matter to be considered just then. If he had had water he would have drunk only very sparingly, for he was a good bush boy. He had seen ravens die after wallowing in the creek and filling their bellies. A little tea brewed at nightfall from a tiny fire of twigs would suffice to slake the boy's thirst; that is if he came across water.

Just now he was eager, for he believed that he was nearing the end of his quest.

Captain Crash had sent him to track down the mysterious Jack-o'-Lantern, and the spoor had led him into the wilds of the Woolamaloo country.

Somewhere near, Jack knew, were the savage aborigines. He had seen nothing of them, nor had he heard the slightest suspicious sound 'midst all this maze of hot, dried shrub. The only sounds were the occasional cries of the fantastically-coloured birds; all was loneliness and heat.

And what spoors of the natives Jack had seen were some days old. He almost had come to believe that the black warriors had deserted this part of the bush, but that his instinct told him strongly that they were lurking near-by, and that mischief brooded in the air.

What mischief it was he could not determine. But in any case he had no time to worry; his job was to keep on the track of Jack-o'-Lantern.

An elusive, mysterious Jack-o'-Lantern it was. Surely he must be a bushman born and bred—surely he must know that he was being followed, for Jack was having the task of his young life to follow the spoor.

The boy brush tracker was sure that at times the man wrapped his horse's hoofs in cloths. At times, too, he walked, sometimes with naked feet, sometimes in boots. If that was not an endeavour to put followers off the scent, Jack did not know what was. But he kept doggedly on his man's trail, his interest increasing.

He was almost sure now that he had caught up with the mysterious Jack-o'-Lantern, that indeed, the man was hidden in the bush only a few hundred yards ahead. That was why Jack was creeping up so carefully; he wanted to get a sight of the man.

Cautiously at length he raised himself on hands and knees, and peered between the partition of a long line of bushes. At sight of the man there, despite his life-long training of reserve, an explanation of sheer startlement left his lips.

"Why, it's Dad!"

The man lounging there in the shady little clearing of bushes roused and looked round with an astounded expression on his face at the sound of that voice in the lonely bush.



He had been smoking a large V-shaped pipe whilst he read from the pages of a book that seemed to contain poems. His face was clean-cut, deeply tanned, and distinguished by astonishing blue eyes, a fair, Vandylke beard and hair brushed back. He was almost foppishly dressed for a bushman, and no one who had seen Captain Crash, the debonaire English bushman, could have taken this man for anyone else but him.

Yet to Jack's surprise he seemed to stare as the boy bush tracker came wonderingly into the clearing.

And Jack had enough at which to wonder. How came his father to be here, he asked himself. He had left his father behind in the bush, and he had imagined he had been trailing another man. Never had his reasoning been so at fault. Never was a boy more bewildered than was Jack at that moment. His blackened face was comical in its expression of astounded chagrin.

"Hallo, Dad!" he exclaimed as he came forward. "How on earth did you get here? I imagined I was trailing Jack-o'-Lantern."

After a moment the man removed his pipe from his mouth, and rose to his full height. Jack stared at him with narrowed eyes, the bewilderment growing in his eyes. For somehow his father seemed altered, and when he spoke the boy bush tracker gave a start, for Captain Crash's voice was different.

In a way it was the same deep, musical voice, yet there was a different inflexion in it that Jack could not miss.

"I thought I'd put you off the scent, sonny," he smiled. "Jove, you're some bush tracker, and no mistake. I used every artifice, and here you are; you've found me."

"But what was the idea?" persisted Jack with a feeling of growing uneasiness. "Why did you give me this chase if there's no point to it?"

The other raised a hand suddenly, and his face became grave and set.

"Listen!"

Jack pricked up his ears, and his heart commenced beating a hammer tune. No need for him to ask the meaning of those ominous sounds that came from all around in the bush. The queer cries, the crashing of undergrowth. He knew. The natives of this wild Woolamaloo country had surrounded them on all sides in the bush, and were obviously on the warpath.

Jack ran to peer through the near-by bushes and he saw them.

There were hundreds of them; real Australian aborigines, their faces hideous in their anger and their hate. As Jack and his companion who had come to his side stared out at these men, hundreds of spears were raised threateningly. In another moment such a shower of spears would have transfixed them as would have been sufficient to kill them many times over.

But in that moment of grace Jack raised his hand. "Stay!" he cried in the native dialect. "Would you kill me, then? N'Wani, a child of your own tribe? We come as friends. Why should there be this killing?"

There came exclamations of startled surprise as the aborigines recognised the boy. Spears were lowered, and the black men came forward with expressions of delight at meeting one who until a short time ago had been a popular member of their tribe.

The chief, Nasambo, embraced Jack in the native fashion, while Captain Crash smoked his pipe and looked on, apparently both amused and astonished, judging by the expression on his bearded face. But he had cause to be grateful, too, for had it not been for Jack's intervention he would assuredly have met his death a moment or two before.

He could not understand what was being said in the native dialect. And perhaps it was as well that he could not, for the conversation concerned himself intimately.

"I tell you, this white man is not a member of the Black Kelly gang," Jack was reiterating again and again. "He is my own father, whom you know, and I will not have him harmed."

The chief of the tribe grunted dubiously.

"He is after the hill of gold," he answered in the dialect. "That we know, for we have spied upon him, and we have seen him consulting the map. Therefore it is only right that he should die."

Jack was thunderstruck. The hill of gold was a dead secret of the tribe, and anyone who betrayed its existence deserved to meet with a fate worse than death in the opinion of the tribe.

Jack himself had heard of the hill of gold, and, indeed, had seen it. Only was it visible at dusk, when the greyness of night was stealing over the purple skies, for somehow the sunset seemed to bring the surrounding country into a queer focus. During the day the precious nature of this hillock could not be discerned, but at dusk, if one stood at the proper

(Continued on next page.)

Gee, Lads! These Two Boy Fliers are Forcing the Pace! They're out for the Record in Their "Silver Hawk"—Out to become the Aviation "Aces" of the Century. See Them Winging in the Blue, Speeding Past Perils and Pursued by Plotters. Their Motto is:—



## THE ATLANTIC—OR BUST!

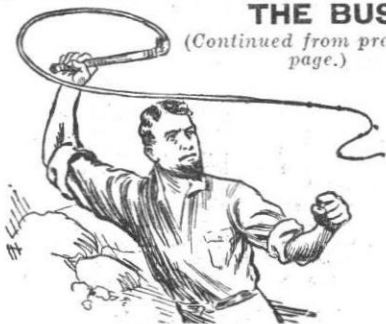
It's a Big Flight Story, Bursting with Thrills. Two Lone Lads, Stout Fellows and Fine Fliers, Facing Fearful Perils in the Flight from London to New York on a Secret Mission. Just See Them, Short of Petrol, Busting Up Against Icebergs, Yet Keeping the Union Jack Flying on the Skyways.

THIS TOPPING TALE  
APPEARS IN

NEXT WEEK'S BOYS' MAGAZINE

## THE WHIP WONDER OF THE BUSH—

(Continued from previous page.)



place and viewed it, it appeared as it was indeed, a little hill of pure, shining gold.

Jack had been entrusted with this secret of the tribe, and he had never told anyone of it—not even his father. Rumours of the matter were of course widespread throughout the backblocks, but the story was becoming so legendary that it was hardly believed.

But if Jack had not told his father, how came it then that Captain Crash not only knew and believed the story, but that he actually had a map and was seeking the treasure?

Jack looked round from his father to the natives, and he read slowly gathering suspicion and distrust of himself in their faces.

"Dad," he implored; "tell me how you got hold of the map, please."

"I got it from Black Kelly," said the other sternly. "I am not here to make mischief. Black Kelly and I are old enemies, and it is a fight to the death. I heard that he had managed to get round one of the natives to make a plan of the Hill of Gold, and one night I entered his camp and stole it from under his pillow. He is a monster, that man, and I sometimes think it would be better for this country had I killed him off there and then. He has gathered new ruffians round him, and now has a gang of other thirty armed and desperate men to do his bidding.

"And as far as the Hill of Gold is concerned," he broke off with a smile, "I was merely curious to see it, and I have been trying to find it with the aid of this map. Do you mind that?"

The question was translated by Jack to the chief of the natives, who shook his head vigorously after conferring with his followers. Then he spoke again to Jack.

"If you will take us to Black Kelly, you shall have sight of the gold—yes, some of it. He is our enemy, and we cannot rest until we have wiped him out with his men."

Jack exchanged a rapid glance with the man by his side.

To tell the truth, the boy bush tracker was uneasy, though he could not have told why. Vague depths of apprehension were stirring in his heart. He felt apprehensive about Black Kelly, and, strangely enough, he felt apprehensive about his father—his father who stood here before him.

Just now the boy bush tracker believed that his father stood in no great peril, for did he not see him before him, safe and sound? But some sixth sense he possessed warned him. And it was a warning he could not afford to ignore.

Captain Crash nodded as he met the boy's inquiring eyes.

"If you know the secret lair of this gang of bush-

rangers, lead on," he remarked dryly. "They are best wiped out of existence altogether, and I don't see why these black fellows shouldn't do it. So lead on, Macduff. For some reason I feel a wild impatience, as if something vital was on the boards. I believe there is need for haste, so let us hasten, Jack."

Which was a very queer speech for Captain Crash, usually so cool and collected, to make.

### Captain Crash Fights Free.

"HIST! There they are."

Jack Crash felt his arm gripped tightly, and his pulses quickened as he heard the deep, musical voice of the man he called father. Yet in a subtle way his father seemed changed to him. He was not thinking of that just then, however, for with absorbed eyes he was watching the scene before him.

A strange scene to be enacted in the bush! What did it all mean?

Behind the bush tracker boy and the man who was with him were crouched more than two hundred expectant and bloodthirsty blacks. They could scarce contain the fever of their impatience, for their prey was before them.

The boy tracker had led the aborigines up to this spot with the bushcraft that had become as second nature to him, and thus the whole army of blacks had penetrated to the lair of Black Kelly's gang without being suspected.

They were impatient now to launch the attack that would wipe out Black Kelly and his gang for ever.

They had implicit confidence in Jack, however, and they waited his word to attack. For all their ferocity and their hatred of the bushrangers, they went in some fear of Black Kelly and his gang. For these natives possessed no firearms of their own, and they knew the havoc that these score of bush ruffians might work amongst their own numbers if they were not properly led.

Jack, however, held his hand, as also did the man beside him. They were watching the bushrangers in some mystification.

Nearly the whole score of them were squatted on the ground, and they were taking out with gauntleted hands a number of snakes from baskets. Jack recognised these snakes as of the most deadly kind known in Australia. The bushrangers were putting the deadly reptiles down into a huge pit in the ground, the while the hot, still air was filled with their coarse, ribald laughter and evil jests.

"There's somebody in that pit," muttered Jack. "Somebody they've trapped, the devils! And now they're putting the snakes down there. The cunning, cruel swine!"

Even as this muttered soliloquy left his lips, he was startled to hear a roaring, defiant voice issue from the depths of that pit.

"All right, you blackguards. Let 'em all come. I'll fight 'em as they come. They won't get me yet!"

Jack started as if fire had touched him as he heard that voice. How well he knew it! Impossible that he could be mistaken. It was the voice of his father, Captain Crash, bushranger.

And yet . . . Suddenly the boy's thoughts stopped dead, and then went racing in chaos again. His father! Why, his father was behind him now, had been with him all this time. He made a clutch at his reeling brain. Was this a nightmare—or what?

He turned to look at his father who, until a moment ago, had been at his elbow tensely watching the scene. But to his astonishment he found that the man had gone, and that, save for the waiting, expectant natives, he was alone.

(Continued on page 28.)

Moonlight Pictures  
Incorporated.

In a Scaryfying  
Scoop,

With Thrill Phil the Intrepid Boy Film Actor,  
and Roughneck Harry, Director.



**GEE! YOU'LL JUMP WHEN YOU  
READ HOW THE FILM MAKERS ARE  
DOUBLE-CROSSED BY A RED  
INDIAN ON ONE OF THEIR MOST  
IMPORTANT PRODUCTIONS.**

"JUMPING rattlesnakes! What have you got there, Harry?"

The words were spoken by Thrill Phil of Moonlight Motion Pictures, Inc.—the star-stunt actor of the outfit tossed by "Roughneck" Harry—rough in manners, but with a heart of gold.

A Taqui Indian had come down from amongst the great Rocky Mountains in the background and placed a curiously shaped basket on the ground in front of the film producer.

"How man, in there?" demanded Roughneck Harry as he drew a roll of notes from the hip pocket of his riding-breeches.

Usak, the Indian, held up four fingers in response.

"And like I ordered—harmless?" returned Harry.

"All fangs him gone," and the fellow made dumb show of what looked to Phil as he silently regarded his movements, like the opening of a bottle with a corkscrew.

Roughneck Harry nodded and, peeling off several notes, tossed them to the Indian, who turned on his heel and silently disappeared.

"You said a mouthful, Phil," remarked Harry. "When you asked what I've got in there," and he tapped the basket with the toe of one of his riding-boots.

"But what is inside?" asked Phil again.

"Just what you said, sonny—*jumping rattlesnakes!*" answered Harry, chuckling. "Yep, sir, I tipped off that Indian guy to go fetch me three or four 'rattlers,' but to yank the fangs out before he brought 'em to me—and there's the result. Let's take a glimpse at 'em!"

Roughneck bent down and carefully removed the lid of the narrow-necked basket.

Across the top was stretched a fine netting made by the native Indian weavers, but the mesh was wide enough to look through.

Writhing and squirming within were four vicious-

looking reptiles—rattlers, as betokened by their curiously shaped tails!

Phil's eyes glinted with pleasurable anticipation, for he knew at once that sooner or later he was to make a closer acquaintance with these repulsive-looking reptiles before the lens of Harry's movie camera.

"Well—what's the great idea, Harry?" he demanded straight away. "Spill the beans—I'm listening."

Harry withdrew his unlighted cigar from his mouth and gazed for a moment into the dying embers of the fire.

"You certainly are the coupon clipper's scissors for work," he remarked. "I'd kinder fixed the stunt fer ter-morrer, but I can hand you out the dope on it, right now."

"Then—shoot!"

"Wal, I got a whoozer of an idea for our next pitcher," resumed Roughneck. "You'se supposed to be a Cheechako kid out to jump a gold claim. You has a partner what double-crosses you and he's aimin' to fix you and rob you of the gold. I takes a shoot o' you up in the Rockies. You'se steppin' it out along the trail when you comes right up against a bunch of rattlesnakes. Your pard wot's turned ugly don't know nuthin' about them, 'cos he's aimin' to wipe you off their map by sending some darned big boulder come crashing down the side of the mountain wot'll flatten you right out."

"He sure sends this pebble shootin' right down on you from above, but you'se seen the rattlers, and you jumps clear to dodge gettin' bitten by them. This saves your life, 'cos by jumping outer the way of the snakes you dodges the boulder—and the boulder just squashes them rattlers into pulp—fade out—Close-up of you registering horror—some pitcher, I'll say!"



THE following morning saw Harry and Phil mounted on a couple of prairie ponies heading for the Rockies, with Phil's wolfhound, Karell, trotting along behind them.

The boy star was dressed as a typical gold hunter, in breeches and shirt open at the neck, and with his usual broad-brimmed Stetson perched on his head at a jaunty angle. From his saddle hung a spade and the basket containing the rattlesnakes. Harry had the tripod and apparatus of his movie-camera, together with a lasso coiled on the pommel of his saddle.

At length, after an arduous climb up the narrow mountain path, Harry called a halt.

With the stub of the cigar he had been meditatively chewing he now jerked upwards.

"There's the pebble I told yer about, Phil," he announced, and Phil, gazing up in the direction indicated, saw a huge boulder which must have weighed several tons, perched precariously on the mountain side. The only thing which prevented it crashing down upon them was a stout prop of wood placed at an angle to support it.

Below this and where they now stood was a narrow path and then a drop of some hundreds of feet into a great yawning ravine.

Harry was already down from his pony and lifting off the tripod, soon had his camera erected and focused on the spot where that great boulder should hit the trail when released.

From where he had carried them, strapped alongside his saddle, Phil took the pointed miner's spade and washing-pan.

Now all was in readiness. Harry had a rope running from his hand as he stood alongside his camera, up to the prop holding the boulder. It only remained for Phil to shake those rattlesnakes out of the basket and for Harry to start cranking.

"Ready!" announced Harry, and Phil, taking the basket, removed both lid and netting and shook out the four loathsome-looking reptiles.

Simultaneously Harry gripped the rope in two hands and gave it a savage jerk.

The prop was yanked away and the boulder started to crash down the mountain side.

Quick as thought, Harry had his right hand upon the crank of his beloved movie camera and was turning for dear life.

Phil advanced to the spot where the snakes were already poisoning their great, ugly heads ready to strike.

Phil laughed carelessly and advanced steadily, keeping his weather eye open for the great boulder which was now crashing down upon the spot, bringing with it a shower of dust, sand and smaller stones.

For a moment it looked as though the youngster would not be able to leap clear.

The foremost rattler drew its head back a few inches premature to striking, and then something furry and light brown in colour flashed through the air.

It was Karell—the wolf-dog!

In mid-air the faithful hound fastened its teeth into the neck of the huge snake, and the rattler collapsed in a heap—sending forth a hideous rattling sound from its curiously shaped tail as it wrapped its folds about the sleek body of the dog.

According to plan, Phil should have jumped back at that instant, but the spectacle of his dog being crushed to death by the coils of that huge snake, tightening in its death agony, sent him leaping forward, with the spade swiftly raised. Down it came with a shuddering thud upon the tail of the rattler.

"Look out!" yelled Harry, still cranking

automatically, though he was nearly paralysed with fear and anxiety for the star stunt actor's safety. "Jump!"

But it was too late—the boulder was upon both Phil and the dog!

It looked, for an instant, that nothing could save either man or beast, and then the great weight of solid rock struck a projecting piece of stone alongside the narrow trail and ricocheted up and over Phil.

So near was it to the intrepid young actor that it whisked his Stetson from his head. It fell on the extreme edge of the ravine.

Simultaneously there sounded a dull, squelching sound as it ground the heads of the other three rattlers to pulp, and then with another great bound it went rolling over the brink and down into the gaping canyon below.

But Phil was oblivious of all this! It is doubtful if he even realised that the danger threatened from the boulder was passed! The blow from the spade had severed the rattling tail of the huge reptile, and now Phil, flinging himself into the whirling melee of flying fur and snake scales, tore at the coils of the reptile in a desperate effort to tear them from the wolf-hound.

Meanwhile, Harry, rooted to the spot, had his professional instinct uppermost and went on cranking, though he watched the battle with those narrowed, lynx-like eyes of his—ready to spring to Phil's assistance should it be required.

Now he saw that Phil had slid his arm under the snake's body and had clasped his hands together. With his foot braced against a projecting point of rock, he started to tear away, dragging the slimy coils of the rattler free from the struggling dog.

At length the boy felt the strength of the dying snake ebbing, and at last the cruel contraction of those coils released their hold and with a joyous bark, Karell wriggled free.

Then, and only then, did Phil relax his hold and drop the squirming pulpy mass to the sandy ground.

With a laugh he turned and, picking up his spade and the pan he had dropped, proceeded to walk on towards Harry as if nothing untoward had happened.

And Roughneck, chuckling delightedly, kept on turning until Phil was so close up to him as to be no longer in focus.

"Got it all?" laughed Phil as he flung down spade and pan.

"Every inch!" cried Harry. "By the hedgehog's eyebrows, that'll make a whizz of a pitcher. Wonder what made Karell go 'cuckoo' like that and jump in, though? *Might have spoiled the stunt, 'stead of making it hundred per cent.*"

Phil shook his head, and then, turning, he retraced his steps to where the rattlesnake—now quite dead—was lying motionless upon the ground.

Then, as he gazed down upon the ugly head and the cold, staring, beady eyes, he gave a gasp of dismay.

The jaws of the snake were open, and from them protruded the forked poison fangs!

There was treachery in the air! None of the snakes had been rendered harmless by the drawing of their poison fangs!

Somehow, the instinct of the great dog, Karell, had divined this in the nick of time and he had leaped to the rescue of his master—nearly to pay forfeit with his own gallant life!

With a little nervous laugh, Phil dropped on one knee beside the now panting dog, flung his arm about his great neck and hugged him to him.

Meanwhile, Roughneck Harry was putting in a little overtime at thinking, and the expression upon his face boded ill for someone.

"Get the plugs, Phil," he cried suddenly. "We're going after that burned Redskin, Usak. I'm gunner know the reason why he dished up those snakes like he did."

The film producer headed off towards the purple heights of the Rockies, picking the same track as he had seen the Indian take.

"I know where the double-crosser has his camp," he muttered, "but it's the other side of the Mustang Creek. He'll have had a canoe to get across in—but it beats me yet how we're going to make it."

The two rode on in silence then, until at length they had reached the summit of the mountain trail.

Below in the deep valley upon the other side they saw the Mustang Creek.

It was one which was of great value to the lumbermen working on the forests above, for after they had hacked down the great trees and trimmed them, they rolled them into the racing current of the creek which swirled them downstream to the sawmills where they were dried and sawn up into fine planks.

Even now, as they gazed down upon the swiftly flowing river, they could see the surface almost completely covered by the great trunks of trees jostling each other in their swift career downstream.

Then suddenly Roughneck, who had been scanning the prairie upon the further side through a pair of field glasses, gave a cry.

"Here, Phil—see what you make of that lone horseman," he snapped, handing the field glasses to Phil.

"Looks like that skunk Luigi!" announced Phil as he focused the glasses upon the galloping figure on the other bank.

Luigi was the dago representative of a rival firm of motion picture makers. He was doing his utmost to ruin "Moonlights."

"Ker-rect," grated Harry. "And he's making for the Indian camp. Bet he had something to do with that Indian double-crossing us over the snakes. Come on—we've an account to settle with both Luigi and Usak."

Phil nodded and, spurring his pony into a canter, he followed his mentor down the narrow mountain trail.

At length they were forced to come to a standstill at the banks of the swiftly running river covered with floating tree trunks.

Without a word, Phil alighted from his horse and took two things from the saddle bags. One was a revolver and the other a powerful catapult. A canoe lay moored to the bank the other side. The canoe in which Usak had crossed the stream.

Then, turning to Harry, he motioned for him to get his camera set up.

"There's only one way for me to cross that stream that I can see," he said grimly; "it'll make a good picture, too, which may be useful, so you might as well shoot it. I'm going to try to get across by jumping from log to log. Say when you're ready."

Harry nodded, and in a few seconds he had his camera in order.

"Right!" he cried, focusing and commencing to crank.

Phil approached the bank and, with a light leap, landed upon the log nearest the edge. Hardly had his feet touched it, however, before it started to roll under him. In a flash Phil leaped from it to the next, and so on, keeping within range of Harry's whirring camera.

It was a perilous journey indeed, but at length Phil reached the last log and leapt for the other bank.

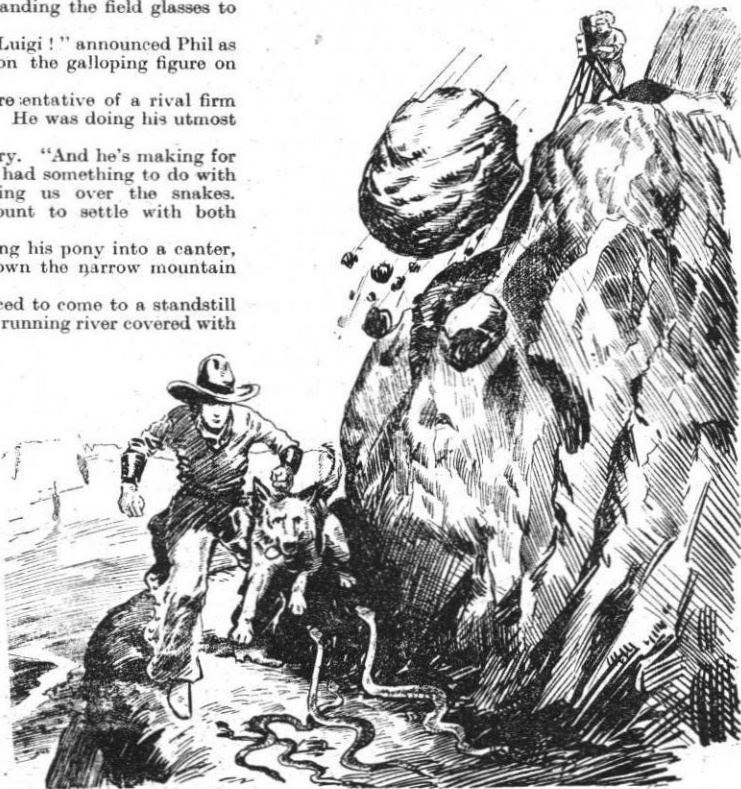
Landing safely, Phil turned a laughing face back to Harry.

"Get it?" he shouted through cupped hands and chuckled as he saw Harry nod enthusiastically.

"Well, fix your telescopic attachment to the lens and keep it on me," yelled Phil. "There may be something else worth filming before I'm through," and then he rose to his feet and started off towards the wigwams into which he had seen Luigi disappear after dismounting from his horse.

Harry quickly screwed on the long focus attachment to his lens which would enable him to record Phil's movements even from that distance across the river.

Meanwhile, the youngster crept cautiously towards the wigwam. Dropping on all fours as he came within a few feet of it, he squirmed along like one of



DEATH HURTTLES DOWN.—"Look out!" yelled Harry, still cranking automatically. "Jump!" But it was too late. The boulder was upon both Phil and the dog.

the snakes which had so nearly brought him to an untimely end.

Now he was up against the rough hides with which the native tent was built and could hear angry voices raised in argument coming from within.

He recognised the dull monotone of the Indian—speaking indignantly, and the oily voice of the dago, Luigi.

"I tell you you've double-crossed me, you skulking red swine," hissed Luigi. "You did what that darned Yank told you—and supplied harmless snakes. That kid still lives. You drew the fangs!"

"No!" The Indian was speaking now, quietly at first, but his voice rose in an angry crescendo. "Usak, do what you say. Him give bad snakes—him plenty poison."

"You liar! You took my money and theirs, too—but you double-crossed me and I'll get you, Usak—when you're away from your tribe—for this. See if I don't!"

Then there came to Phi's ears the sound of a man rising to his feet and making for the opening of the tent.

The stunt actor lay low in the sun-burned grass and waited—watching.

Luigi flung open the flap of the wigwam and came quickly out—his face purple with rage. He turned back towards the Indian who, realising that there was a fight impending, drew his tomahawk.

The two men closed with a crash!

Luigi made a wild sweep through the air with the flashing blade of his knife, but the Indian parried it neatly and turned it aside with the shaft of his tomahawk.

Then, hanging on to the Redskin's arm, Luigi cunningly entwined both his legs about one of the Indian's and with a savage jerk, tore the man's foothold from the ground. Phil saw the blade of Luigi's knife flash in the sunlight as the two men fell, to bury itself into the Indian's body the next instant.

A grunting gasp came from Usak—he made a valiant effort to strike at Luigi with the tomahawk as the dago sprang clear; then he fell back with a groan upon the prairie and lay still.

But Phil had not been the only spectator of the fight.

Other Indians from the encampment were now running to the spot, and as Luigi also noted this, he turned and raced for his horse. Springing into the saddle from the ground, he drove his spurs cruelly into the animal's flanks, and was soon lost in a cloud of dust.

The Indians, quick to realise that he had secured too great a start, turned their attention to their wounded comrade.

Meanwhile, Luigi had reached the corral where were penned the Indians' herd of wild steers, and then, as his gaze fell upon the fierce animals, a savage thought crept into his evil brain.

He swung his horse across to the gate in the corral and, leaning out of the saddle, flung up the catch and wrenched the door open.

Then he rode swiftly round outside, firing from his revolver.

Maddened by the noise of the shots, the untamed beasts stampeded for the gate which Luigi had opened. Next instant the huge herd were careering over the prairie in all directions.

Roughneck Harry had seen it all, and once more springing back to his camera, slammed in a fresh spool of film and commenced to crank again. He could do nothing—he might as well get a picture!

A shout went up to warn those stooping over Usak, and as they swung round they saw a wild steer charging madly for them. They scattered in all directions, leaving the wounded Usak lying at the mercy of those cruel horns.

In a flash Phil had sprung to his feet from his hiding-place and, snatching the bridle of one of the Indian's horses which was within a few feet of him, he vaulted into the saddle.

With his knees he urged the willing brute on towards the great galloping steer.

Now Phil was almost level with the maddened beast—another spurt and he made his great effort. Rising in the saddle, he flung himself up and out towards the steer's horns.

The next instant Phil was gripping one horn in each hand like a vice.

Crash! His feet dug into the soil with a cloud of dust flying up about him.

It was a perfect "bull-dog," and the bull came to a standstill. Now Phil had the steer's head twisted sideways—one horn pointing to the heavens. Shifting his weight in the flash of a second to keep the lower horn downwards, Phil released his grip of the upper horn and shot his arm round the massive brute's neck to force his fingers into the gaping mouth.

He closed his grip upon the teeth and gums of the steer and then came his last effort.

Exerting all his weight upon the horn below him, he tugged viciously at the brute's mouth.

The steer strained against him to free his head, but Phil was master now.

A great bellowing snort and then the bull collapsed in a heap upon its side—just short of where Usak lay—Phil flinging himself full length on to the brute's head to keep him down.

He shot a glance back across the river at Roughneck Harry and saw that strange individual executing a wild kind of war dance and flinging his hat into the air in his excitement.

Phil understood its meaning—Harry had got his picture!

Look out for a laughter-making yarn of Tich Travers, The Boy Millionaire, Next Week, Chaps.



**H**ERE he is—The Fellow Who Flew the Atlantic to the resonant music of a mystery melodrama.

He encountered an iceberg, and the iceberg opened and revealed a floating cave of plotters. His petrol ran out, and fire rockets set his wondrous 'plane, "The Silver Hawk," in flames. Still, "It's dogged as does it," and the hero of our great long tale appearing in the Mag. Next Week was determined to fly

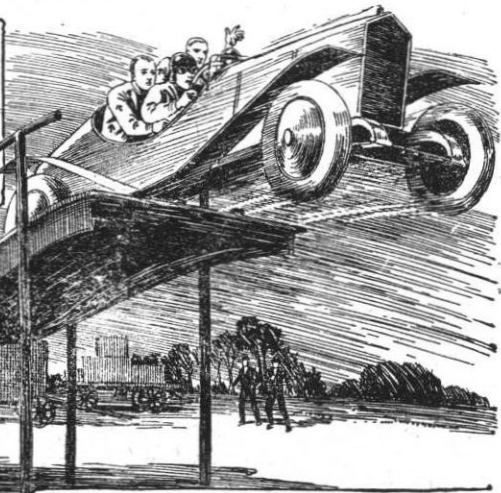
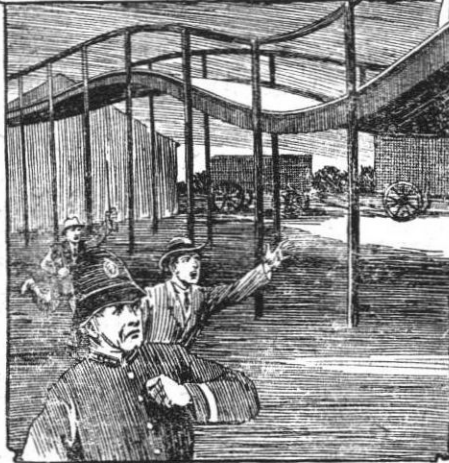
## THE ATLANTIC—OR BUST.

Get a Thrill-a-Minute by Reading this Great Air-Conquering Tale.



HERE HE IS, THE SPEED DEMON ON THE SWITCHBACK IN HIS FAMOUS THUNDERBOLT CAR.

**Rory Milligan.**  
THE MOTOR DEMON, RACING  
**LIKE LIGHTNING**  
**FOR A LIFE**



**100 m.p.h., and Then Some, to Save a Pal. That's the Stunt of Rory Milligan, the Record-or-Crash Driver This Week. Sensation Succeeds Sensation.**

### Sentenced to Death.

"THUNDERBOLT" had stalled!

Rory Milligan and Tom Carson of "The Broad Arrow" Company had been streaking across the dreary waste of ground known as Penton Moor when the engine had died out with a convulsive splutter that could not take off Rory's cheery grin, however. He was out of the cockpit in a trice and unstrapping the great bonnet, bent to dis over the trouble.

At that moment a streak of white light pierced the gathering gloom and bathed the chums in brilliant radiance.

Simultaneously the sound of a gun being fired came to their ears.

"Must be from Penton Moor Jail," remarked Tom. "We ought to be somewhere near the place."

"Penton Moor Jail!" The words echoed in Rory's brain.

Two of his best pals were inside those grey walls! One sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, whilst the other had been found guilty of killing a police constable and condemned to die upon the scaffold!

Briefly the details were these: The police had made a raid upon a house in South London where they had reason to suspect that counterfeit notes were being printed.

They managed to force an entrance, but not until one of their number had been shot down and killed instantly.

The two Nation brothers were found in the house, the younger one, Ted, with a smoking revolver in his hand.

He had been arrested and tried for the murder of the constable, and so damning had been the circumstantial evidence and the testimony of the Crown witness, Andrew Gow, who had turned King's evidence, that poor Ted Nation had been sentenced to death, whilst the elder brother, Ben Nation, had been given a long term of imprisonment as an "accessory."

Now Rory Milligan knew that the only reason the two boys had been present in the house at all was because they lodged there. Ted's story was that the pistol had only been thrust into his hand a moment or two before the police came crashing in through the front door. But in the face of all the evidence against him, he could not prove his innocence and the death penalty had been passed upon him.

With a weary shrug of the shoulders Rory turned once more to the engine of the Thunderbolt, now bathed in the flood of light which came from what proved to be a searchlight in a high observation tower inside the prison.

"Try her now, Tom," he called, emerging a moment later from the bonnet.

Tom Carson seized the starting handle and swung against the high compression.

Almost immediately there was a dull roar and the engine burst into life once more, revving up well as Tom touched the throttle.

Rory slammed down the bonnet cover and re-buckled the straps.

"Well, we'd better get along," he murmured, and at that moment the great beam of light switched away from them and went hovering out over the

lonely moor in its attempt to pick up some sign of the escaping convict.

Rory had his foot upon the running-board when, suddenly, in the light shed upon the road ahead by Thunderbolt's headlamps, he perceived two crouching figures.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, grabbing Tom's arm. "Convicts—two of 'em!"

"Look out!" warned Tom. "They're going to try to rush us!"

"Let 'em try it," muttered Rory, his hand moving towards a heavy spanner. And then the light from the headlamps had shone straight upon the faces of the two convicts, and Rory had recognised them.

They were Ben and Ted Nation!

"Ben! Ted!" he called, and heard a gasp come from each of the poor wretches before the car. "It's all right—it's Rory here—Rory Milligan!"

A cry of relief came from the throats of the two in convict garb and, straightening up, they now both ran quickly towards the car.

"Rory!" cried Ben. "What are you doing here? This is luck!"

"Tumble in—the pair of you," returned Rory, jerking his thumb to what little room there was behind him.

"You mean it, Rory?" exclaimed Ted Nation aghast. "You know what it means—helping a convict to escape—and one booked for the gallows at that!"

"Yes, I know," returned Rory between his clenched teeth. "But you're both innocent, I know that."

Without hesitating more, the two convicts tumbled into the back of the car and crouched down.

Simultaneously Rory jammed back the gear lever, jerked in the clutch and Thunderbolt shot forward with a bound. Not a moment too soon! For hardly had they rounded a bend in the road than Tom Carson yelled in his ear.

"There's another car behind us—going like smoke. Looks as if it's got armed warders in it, too."

"Let them try, and catch us then!" Rory said grimly, and jammed his foot still harder down upon the accelerator pedal.

*Whizz-z-z! Zipp!* A bullet hissed past within an inch of Rory's ear, and he heard the dull report of a carbine behind him. The warders had either sighted the two escaping convicts in the back of the car or suspected that the car had been there as part of the plan of escape.

"Keep low," hissed Rory as he rapidly changed gear into top. Thunderbolt seemed to be flying through the air, and the pursuing car was being left hopelessly behind.

It wasn't Tom's "picnic," so to speak, but he was "in it" now, and if these two were friends of Rory that went with him. Dragging off his leather jerkin, he flung it over the two figures crouching low behind him to cover them as far as possible.

The Thunderbolt was now making straight for the village of Penton.

Rory knew every inch of the road and remembered how, on the way out from London, he had noticed a kind of circus and fair ground being erected upon the common there.

He wrenched round the great steering wheel to take a sudden bend on two wheels and then he gave a groan. For the road was hopelessly blocked—caravans and trucks right across it. The prison must have phoned through to the village warning them about the car and they had used the big circus wagons with which to stop it.

But Rory still kept Thunderbolt going at full speed. In the back of his mind he had formed a vague hope of getting through.

At the side of the road he had spotted a half-erected "Scenic Railway," which was to be one of the attractions of the fair when properly opened.

The end nearest to him sloped downwards to the grass at the side of the road.

It presented a chance—and a chance was all that Rory asked!

Now he was almost upon the heavy barricade of wagons, and the crowd of villagers and circus hands scurried out of the way, thinking that the great racing car was going to try and charge the obstacles.

Rory laughed grimly, then, with a savage wrench of the wheel, he swung the car completely off the road and sent it bumping straight for the sloping track of the Scenic Railway.

*Crash!*

The Thunderbolt's front wheels bumped up on to the wooden structure and went zooming up the first incline. Breasting it, it shot forth into the air for a moment—all four wheels clear of the track.

A quiver ran through the entire chassis as the wheels came down again, and the Thunderbolt fairly shot down the incline to go swooping up the next gradient.

At the summit of the second rise the track swung round abruptly to the left in a great sweeping curve. Skillfully Rory worked the steering wheel round, "feeling" for the track under the wheels—and then he gave a cry of anguish!

The track stopped dead in the air!

No chance of slackening speed—no hope of avoiding a smash by slamming on the brakes—there was only one thing for it; he would have to take that leap through mid-air.

The front wheels were already shooting off the abruptly ending track into the air to be followed, a split second later, by the rear wheels. The great car was poised in the air—twenty-five feet above the turf—going forward yet dropping swiftly every second.

"Hold on!" yelled Rory as he himself settled down tightly into his driving seat and braced his legs and bunched his muscles to withstand the shock when the wheels met the ground again.

Then it came! A shuddering shock ran through the whole car as the wheels came into contact with the ground, which seemed to have risen to meet them.

The steering wheel was almost jerked out of Rory's grasp as the front wheels twisted round under the impact. Next the rear of the car started to slither in one gigantic skid—for the grass was wet from recent rain.

In a moment Rory was gripping the wheel and, wrenching it round, he dexterously steered out of the skid as only Rory Milligan could do.

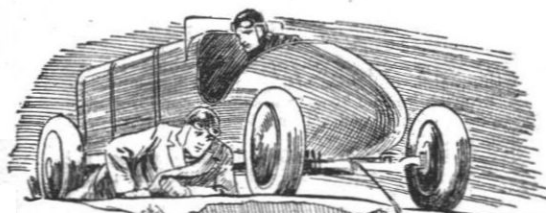
Bumping over the low bank of grass at the side he gained the smooth surface and laughed aloud as he cast a glance over his shoulder at the gaping crowd far behind.

The chief constable—at whose orders the barricade had been erected—was fuming with rage, and, turning, he raced for the police station to telephone through to the next village to block the road again.

But as Rory drove like some fiend incarnate—something seemed to warn him that they would never reach Croydon. Half turning his head, he yelled this to the two fugitives behind him.

"It's hopeless!" he cried. "But I've got another plan. Remember the Purton Caves where we used to play as kids, Ben? They'll make a good hiding-place for you until we can get you away!"

"No hope," shouted Ben Nation. "The quarries are too steep—more than vertical. We could never make the caves!"



**THE CONVICTS  
IN THE CAVE.**

—Foot by foot the speed demon backed the car steadily until its rear wheels were on the brink of the drop. It was just enough. His two friends were lowered sufficiently for them to be opposite one of the caves.



"Oh, won't he?—you wait!" cried back Rory, then to Tom at his side: "Got a tow-rope aboard?"

"Yes—but . . ."

"But nothing—wait and see!"

With his lips set tightly into one straight line, Rory changed direction and drove till the quarries were reached. Here he pulled up for the first time since he had started off upon this mad journey from Penton Moor.

Before he finally clambered out of the driving-seat, however, he swung Thunderbolt round and backed her so that her rear wheels faced the edge of the quarries.

Then he sprang to the ground.

There was not a soul in sight and, snatching the tow-rope which Tom handed him, he looped the back axle and made it fast.

Next he wrenched off the hand-worked Klaxon horn from its insecure fastening on the car and thrust it into Ben's hands.

"You'll need this," he cried, and in the other end of the tow-rope made a large loop in it.

"Now, you two, sling one leg each through this rope and hang on," cried Rory. "There's just enough rope for you to drop over the extreme edge of the quarry. I'm going to drive the Thunderbolt slowly back in reverse and thus lower you both down the face of the quarry until you're level with one of the caves. When you're opposite a cave, sound the horn, Ben, and I'll put the brakes on. Swing inside, and once you're safe, sound the horn again. I'll cut the rope adrift and let it fall down to you. To-morrow night I hope to come back for you."

Ben and Ted Nation nodded and then, pausing but a second to grip Rory's hand and murmur their thanks, they flung their legs through the loop at the end of the rope hanging over the edge of the quarry.

Rory sprang once more to the wheel and then foot by foot he backed the car steadily until its rear wheels were on the brink of the drop.

Then, just as he was forced to stop, a grating note from the Klaxon told him that he had lowered his two friends sufficiently far for them to be opposite one of the caves in the cliff-like face of the quarry. Then the rope started to sway as the two fugitives kicked against the side.

Tom, craning his neck over the edge, was watching eagerly.

"Good! They've made it!" he shouted, and his words were followed by two strident notes upon the Klaxon.

The rope was now slack and Tom hastily hacked through the strands with his jack-knife and leaped aboard the car.

Rory thrust in a gear, and Thunderbolt sped off like the wind.

ALL that night Rory Milligan and Tom Carson gave no thought to sleep.

They were planning to get the two men out of the country within the next twenty-four hours.

"We can get them down to Seahampton under cover of the darkness to-morrow night," said Rory. "We'll take them some grub—for they'll be famished, poor chaps—and a change of clothes, and then we'll make Seahampton."

"Why Seahampton?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Have you forgotten that old fishing-smack I bought cheap?" laughed Rory in response. "It's riding at its moorings down there and we'll use it to cross the Channel. The old boat came from St. Malo—so I know it's capable of making the trip. Are you game to come with me?"

For answer, Tom Carson placed his hand into that of his chum and gripped it hard.



### The Two-Day Race.

EARLY the next day, however, when Rory and Tom arrived at the Broad Arrow Motor Works and heard what old Mr. Carson had to say to them when he sent for them, they were forced to change their whole plans.

"Looks as if we'll have to postpone that trip across the Channel, Tom," remarked Rory. "I was hoping we'd be able to get to-morrow off, but now here's the Boss suddenly decided to enter the Thunderbolt for the big two-day race at Weylands Track at the very last minute—and you and I have got to be there."

Tom nodded gloomily.

"Meanwhile those poor fellows will be left in that cave without anything to eat or drink for two whole days and nights before we can get to them!" he murmured.

"Who says so?" returned Rory quickly. "True we've got to race to-day—but I can slip away to-night, and get down to Purton caves with some grub and clothes, and tell 'em they'll have to hang on a bit longer before we can try and get 'em out of the country."

Tom brightened up. "I'm coming, too, then," he said firmly, but there again they had to alter their plans at the last minute.

The Thunderbolt had already been taken on down to Weylands Track by a mechanic, and so Rory and Tom made their way to the racing venue in a small two-seater car, but not before Rory had slipped round to his home and secured a suit case which he had already packed with plenty of tinned food and condensed milk, etcetera, together with a complete change of clothes for each of the Nation brothers.

This he dropped into the back of the dickey-seat and, closing it down, locked it.

Then the two chums set off for Weylands to take place in the first day's run of the Great Two-Day Race, as the posters advertising the event put it.

Meanwhile the Chief Constable of the town of Penton had not been idle.

Despite Rory's meteoric dash with the Thunderbolt over the half-erected Scenic Railway, the policeman had managed to decipher the number at the back of the car and had telephoned this information through to Scotland Yard.

Hardly had Rory and Tom left the Broad Arrow Works for Weylands in the two-seater than a 'phone call came through from "The Yard," only to learn that the Thunderbolt was already on its way down to Weylands Track, and that Rory Milligan would be driving it in the two-day race starting there that morning.

All in ignorance of this, Rory, when he arrived at the famous track, was amazed to find a couple of inspectors waiting for him.

They plied him with questions and cross-examined him with regard to his movements the previous night, but Rory skilfully avoided giving any clue which might put the police on the track of the escaped convicts.

He could, however, see that neither of them believed his story of what had happened the previous evening, and he guessed that from that moment onwards he would be watched like a cat watches a mouse.

And there he was with the dicky of the two-seater containing a suit-case full of food for the two famished fugitives in the caves! How was he to get to Purton Caves without these policemen following him?

It was indeed a problem, but gradually a plan commenced to form in his brain.

Drawing Tom to one side, he whispered certain instructions in his ear which sent the youngster

hurrying away in the two-seater to Meredith's garage on the Portsmouth road.

He returned—minus the two-seater—in time to take his place alongside Rory in Thunderbolt.

Rory slowly drove the great machine to the starting-point, oblivious of the approving glances of the crowd—for he was too busy confiding the remainder of his bold scheme to slip the lynx-eyed policemen.

It was to be a scratch race—all the cars starting together. The starter's flag fell and the field shot forward with a jerk—the Thunderbolt as usual stealing the lead and poaching the inside berth.

Tearing incredible speed, smoke and flame and shattering roar from exhausts, Rory exulted in it all and he was leading the field by nearly two whole laps, when he was "flagged" that this was his last lap for that day.

Along came the Thunderbolt, bobbing up and down on the unevenness of the track as she roared up the straight again past the stands—then, instead of pulling up, the great car seemed to gather extra speed as it made direct for the steep gradient of the test hill.

Onlookers who had chosen this vantage point to view the race scuttled out of the way as they saw the Thunderbolt coming—apparently out of control.

The great machine flashed by them with but inches to spare, and then Rory wrenched round the steering wheel to the head of the member's exit.

Through the gates he gained the main Portsmouth road, and made for Meredith's garage.

A glance back over his shoulder down into the track and he saw two men from Scotland Yard dragging out their motor-cycles and stamping frantically upon the kick-starters with the intention of following.

It was too late now, but Rory beat them to it.

Jack Meredith had carried out Rory's instructions conveyed by Tom, to the letter.

The two-seater was waiting there, pointing southward with its engine running and a dummy upon the seat.

Rory pulled the Thunderbolt up alongside it and, leaping out, dragged the dummy out of the two-seater.

At a hurried command, Tom slid along into the driving-seat of the Thunderbolt and as soon as Rory had propped up the dummy and wrapped his own leather driving-coat about it, and jammed a stuffed crash helmet on top, he signalled for Tom to get away.

Then Rory slipped into the driving-seat of the two-seater, jumped in a gear, and followed in the wake of the Thunderbolt.

It was not long before he heard the deep roar of a couple of powerful motor-bike engines behind him, and in the driving-mirror he picked out the two policemen going all out.

He averted his face as they flashed by him and laughed softly to himself as he saw them swing off on to the same side road which Tom had taken with the Thunderbolt.

But Rory kept to the main road for Purton . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

DUSK was gathering as Rory drove his two-seater up on to the cliff-like side of the quarries and came to a standstill.

He had a stout rope—one which he could climb up and down—and he now made this fast to the car itself.

Next he whipped out the suit-case full of food, and tying it to the other end of the rope, he lowered it quickly over the edge.

It was not long before he heard the note of the

Klaxon horn and felt the rope being drawn inwards.

Then he swung himself out and over the edge, gripping the rope and lowered himself to the cave.

A few moments and he had joined his friends, the Nations, in the cave. They were already wrenching open the bag and falling upon the food therein, murmuring their gratitude with their mouths crammed full.

Rory waited until they had got the worst of their edged appetite appeased, and then he told them how his having to take part in the big two-day race at Weylands had forced him to change his plans.

"If only I could get evidence to prove your story," he ended, "it might not be necessary to make the trip across the Channel. Tell me, Ted—who really shot the policeman?"

"Andrew Gow," answered Ted unhesitatingly. "I saw him do it with my own eyes, and then before I could recover from the horror of it all, he had thrust the shooter into my hand and the cops found me with it."

"And is there no way of getting a confession out of this scoundrel, Gow?" cried Rory.

"Not while he's awake!" put in Ben.

"Meaning what?" asked Rory quickly.

"Well, there's just one chance," returned Ben. "We lived in this man's house for some time, and we know that whenever he was particularly worried by having anything on his mind he used to talk terribly in his sleep. I bet he's pretty worried now—and will be whilst Ted's alive—and so the chances are he's doing a mighty lot of sleep-talking."

A sudden light of inspiration crept into Rory's eyes.

"By Jove!" he cried. "I've got an idea! Is

there any chance of my being able to find this man Gow?"

"Yes, you'll most likely find him drinking pretty heavily at a public house called The Wheatsheaf, near where he lives. He's there every night!"

At Rory's request, Ben went on to describe the man minutely.

"Good enough," said Rory at last, glancing at his wrist watch. "I'm going after the fellow right now."

And, seizing the rope in his hands, he shinned up it again to the waiting car.

\* \* \* \* \*

Back in London, Rory made a few changes in his appearance by buying a cheap cap and a "choker," and smearing his face with dirt.

When he reached the Wheatsheaf it was nearly closing time, and the publican was reluctantly urging his equally unwilling "guests" out of the place.

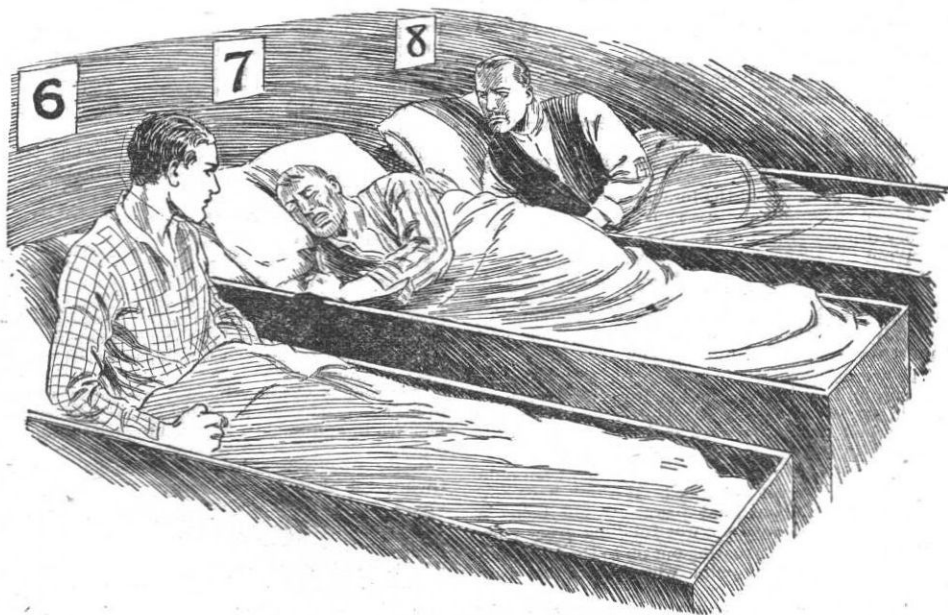
Rory, waiting in the shadows, attached himself to Andrew Gow and followed him.

The fellow made his way along the road to at length enter a door over which hung a lighted lamp indicating *Beds For Men Only—8d. a Night (payable in advance)*.

"A dosshouse," murmured Rory to himself. "Good enough then—here goes," and he followed Gow into the place.

Paying his sixpence "in advance," Rory contrived to select a bunk next to the one into which Gow hurled himself.

The only light in the place was turned down by the thrifty proprietor to but a tiny glimmer, and then Rory heard murmurings coming from the sleeping man on the rough bed alongside him.



A CONFESSION IN HIS SLEEP.—Rory and the detective listened to the man's ramblings—the ramblings of a criminal who was confessing to his crime in his sleep.



He eased his way towards him to hear more clearly.

"They'll hang him by the neck until he's dead! Hang him for plugging that wark! I shall be safe once he's swung! What a bit o' luck I gave him the gun! But I must lay low until it's all over."

Rory felt like flinging himself upon the sleeping

man there and then dragging him to the nearest police station and charging him with the killing of the policeman—but he realised that his unsupported word would be useless.

Why hadn't he brought someone else with him? he asked himself, but it was not too late! He'd see to it that there was someone there with him to-morrow night.

And then with a feeling of triumph he dropped to sleep. His plan had so far succeeded!

\* \* \* \* \*

WHEN Rory Milligan arrived at Weylands Track again the next morning he sought out Tom to hear how things had gone off.

"Great!" Tom told him. "I led 'em all round the country and then back here. Hid the dummy all right just before they dashed up and asked for you. I told 'em what you said—that you'd be here again this morning—but I'm afraid they're going to turn 'ugly' when they do spot you, Rory. They were mighty sore at being tricked last night! And I don't think you'll be able to give them the slip again!"

Rory laughed.

"Give them the slip!" he cried. "I don't want to—I need them both badly now," and then he went on to tell Tom of his success in tracking down Andrew Gow the preceding night and what he had overheard.

"And," he concluded, "I'm going to take one or both of those 'tees with me to-night to hear it, too!"

Rory, however, got no further.

At that moment he saw the same two detectives coming hurriedly towards him.

Turning to the Thunderbolt, he slipped into the driving-seat.

"Hi! Stop!" yelled the foremost of the Scotland Yard men as he broke into a run.

Rory drove smilingly towards him.

"Want me?" he asked tantalisingly.

"Yes," snapped the man, "you're under arrest," he added, whipping out a warrant, "on suspicion of having been concerned in the escape of Benjamin and Edward Nation from Penton Moor Prison, and I must warn you that anything you say . . ."

The words broke off in a gasp for the detective had sprung into the car beside Rory, and even as he did so, Rory let in the clutch and sent the Thunderbolt roaring forward with the sleuth as his passenger in the mechanic's seat.

The conditions of the big two-day race were only that a passenger must be carried. It didn't have any barring clauses about that passenger not being a police officer, and so Rory was fulfilling every rule.

He now sent the car roaring out on to the track and made for the starting-point where the other cars were already drawn up.

He timed it well, for he arrived at the spot only just in time to come to the standstill from which every car must start.

No sooner had his road wheels ceased revolving than the detective started to let up a yell and try to drag Rory from his seat at the steering wheel. But Rory hung on tight and grinned.

The starter's flag fell—something seemed to hit that detective in the small of the back as the Thunderbolt shot forward and the race was on.

The man from Scotland Yard had never been in any car capable of half the speed of the Thunderbolt and, as it fairly tore down the straight and up the first banking, he was forced to release his hold upon Rory and to let his hands to hang on to what little he could find of grip.

On, on roared the Thunderbolt round and round the track.

Rory was increasing the lead he had gained the previous day and the race was safe in his keeping.

At length he saw the black and white checkered flag fall as he whizzed past the stands for the last lap, and flashed over the finishing line. Then he executed a repetition of his performance of the previous day.

He zoomed up the test hill with his foot right down on the throttle pedal and thence out through the members' gate once more and on to the Portsmouth road.

On he went—past Jack Meredith's garage—until he reached a lonely spot on a common.

Then only did he slacken speed—though even now he kept the car going too quickly for the policeman to dare risk a jump from it.

"Now listen," said Rory authoritatively. "I did help the two Nation boys to get away, and I know where they are now, though I'll never tell unless you promise to do what I ask you. Listen!" And Rory went on to tell the policeman everything that had happened in detail, except the actual hiding-place of the two fugitives from Penton Moor Gaol—how he had tracked down the man Gow and overheard his confession in his sleep.

"If you're game to do-it, I'll take you with me to-night to that dosshouse and you can hear it all for yourself. Now what's your answer?"

The Yard man remained silent for a few moments, thinking deeply: then he extended his hand.

"All right," he said. "I'll risk it. Somehow I believe you and trust you! Shake!"

Rory "shook," and from that moment—though the youngster was still the other's prisoner—they became allies.

\* \* \* \* \*

THAT night, Rory and the detective—both disguised as penniless loafers—picked up Gow as he entered the same dosshouse.

They slept on either side of the murderer, and both heard the man's ramblings in his sleep—ramblings that justified the Scotland Yard man in placing Andrew Gow under arrest as soon as he woke the next morning.

The scoundrel knew his own weakness of talking in his sleep and when he realised what had happened, he gave in and made a full, waking confession of the crime.

Later Rory triumphantly led his Scotland Yard friend—for thus he now regarded him—to Purton Caves, and res used the two waiting brothers.

The famous Thunderbolt has played many dramatic parts, but it is doubtful if it has ever before participated in the escape of two convicts—nor has it ever been used to "kidnap" a Scotland Yard man.





# Your Editor's Page

Grand  
Air  
Stunt  
Number Next  
Week, Chaps.



## THE ATLANTIC—OR BUST. A SKYSCRAPER-SHAKING LONG COMPLETE.

**M**Y DEAR CHUMS,  
I wouldn't mind wagering that five out of every ten of you who read these words will one day be piloting your own aeroplane through the boundless blue of the skies.

Now this sounds as though your old editor is setting up as a prophet, doesn't it? Well, chums, I am. Not that I prophesy another Great War in which all you sparks of Britain will be in your military khaki with eyes narrowed for danger as you zoom through the air. Heaven forbid! I've seen war, chaps, and I've seen too much to wish for another (though I'm a Britisher, and I know that every boy born in this great country of ours would rise with joyous alacrity to the occasion if such a terrible aerial war did threaten).

If I may once again pose as a prophet, I will say this: The war in the air between mighty nations will come, but not in my time, or yours, I hope. No, your part in the future, chaps, will be to make commercial flying safe. It is not safe yet. It is still in the pioneer stage. It will be your part to map out the skyways, and to make flying a safe commercial proposition.

Just think of it! Modern cities with skyscrapers and what-not in Central Africa, or in the heart of the Amazon country may arise through your activities in the future. You will complete the business of exploring and mapping out this world of ours, so that there will be no unknown or hidden lands in the future. There will be no overcrowded towns or countries, for you in your powerful space destroying machines will take people to new places where new communities will be built up.

That is what I anticipate in the near future, chums. This wonderful world of ours will grow young again, and you will help. That is why people like Captain Lindberg are heroes. They are blazing the trail. That is why I particularly want you to read our magnificent long complete yarn next week—

### The Atlantic—or Bust.

It is written by an old flying man (and flying men are so temperamental that they make good editors, poets and authors). There is no man who can write a more thrilling yarn of the skyways than our author, so don't miss this tale.

Our two heroes, flying the Atlantic together in their wonder machine, "The Silver Hawk," crash up to the bright stars, and when weather forbids them to fly high, they come down over the dreary wastes of the iceberg lands. The villains in this story know this. They know that our Skyway Pals cannot keep skychigh for ever, and they await them in a cunningly camouflaged lair that appears to be an iceberg

All right, chaps. Watch for thrills in this meteoric yarn of the skyway pals' flight from London to New York. It appears next week, packed with excitement.

Chaps, last week I told you that you were going to read a wonderful yarn of Dick Turpin and all his merry band of highwaymen, not forgetting Bootles, the jovial black highwayman. Well, chums, this yarn, "Bootles, the Brawny," is coming next week. And it's such a tale as will delight your hearts. Bootles goes on board a wrecked ship to investigate the mystery of buccaners' gold, and he meets with a ghost, and—

Well, lads, I won't say any more. I leave you to read this rattling long story of fun, mystery and drama. It's that special kind of Mag yarn that leaves you dreaming about what *might* have happened if only you'd been there to take a part.

And talking of buccaners, there's just the most tremendous pirate tale you've ever heard of coming next week. It's entitled

### The Pirates of Demon Isle.

Well, Handsome is the pirate chief.

He operates amongst coloured seas with brilliant blue skies above. Around him are the fantastic isles of golden trees and emerald-blue grass. And amidst all this colour he struts with his pistols, his sash and his black skull and crossbones—searching for treasure which maybe he will never spend.

That's how I look at outlaws and pirates, chaps. I remember "Butch" Cassidy, a cruel and brutal outlaw of Arizona when I was a boy. They captured him, and he had thousands and thousands of pounds secreted away. What good did it do him? One of my ancestors, who was a sheriff of the Bad Lands at that time asked the dread outlaw this question, and he answered that he had accumulated all this treasure, not because he wanted it, but because of the fun and daring of the thing.

And that is the kind of chap you will find Handsome, the pirate chief, in our great tale next week.

### The Electric Plot.

Hold your breaths, pals. Dunk Grey and Pretty Polly are here again next week in a live-wire yarn of the quick-moving new sport. There's a match arranged between the young dog-breeder's whippet and an American dog, Bootlegger. But a lot happens before the race comes off.

You see Dunk and Squire Branscombe journeying across the Atlantic. That's uneventful—but then the trouble starts. How it develops and the gripping happenings that ensue you'll find out for yourselves in the Mag. next week.

So don't miss our Special Mystery-Pirate Number.

Your sincere friend, THE EDITOR.



### A DEAD LETTER!

Two friends set sail in different ships. Their names were Pat and Jock.

When Pat arrived at Perth, Australia, he found a letter awaiting for him, which read:

*Dear Pat,—Are you alive or are you dead? If alive, send me that ten bob what you owe me.*

Pat replied: *I am dead!*  
(Fountain pen to W. GOUGH, 22, Cecil Road, Gloucester.)

### THE INSULT.

AMERICAN NEWSPAPER REPORTER: And in what State were you born, Professor?

PROFESSOR: Unless my memory fails me, in the state of ignorance.

REPORTER (writing swiftly): Right, and how long have you lived there?

(Fountain pen to C. R. MARSHALL, "Sledmere," Lichfield Road, Four Oaks, Birmingham.)

### AN EFFERVESCENT EPITAPH.

Here lies the body of Mary Ann Lauder.  
She burst while drinking a seidlitz powder.  
Called from this world to her heavenly rest,  
She should have waited till it effervesced!

(Fountain pen to T. DUERDEN, 117, Every Street, Nelson, Lancs.)

### WELL PROTECTED.

JACK: Did you hear about poor Claude?

FRED: No. What's the matter?

JACK: He slipped, and a nail penetrated his skull. The doctor says it only missed his brain by about six inches!

(Fountain pen to E. CORLESS, 104, Ladies Lane, Hindley near Wigan.)

### EXCRUCIATING!

NURSE: The surgeon is so very comical, isn't he?

ANOTHER NURSE: Oh, yes! He has all the patients in stitches!

(Fountain pen to T. C. DAVIES, 31, Glenwyllin Rd., Waterloo, Liverpool)

### CAUSE AND EFFECT.

"When the tourist arrived home he fell on his face and kissed the pavement of his native city."

"Emotion?"

"No, banana skin."

(Fountain pen to R. GILSON 3, Waller Street, Aber-tillery, Mon.)

### A QUICK RESTER.

THE BOSS: Are you one of them blokes wot drops their tools and scoots as soon as the knock-off whistle blows?

APPLICANT FOR JOB: Not me! Why, I often have to wait five minutes after I put me tools away before the whistle blows.

(Fountain pen to H. CLARK, 21, Pike Street, Stockton Heath, near Warrington.)

### A STIFF RETORT.

AMERICAN VISITOR (being introduced to famous cricketer): Wal Bo, and how are you feeling?

FAMOUS CRICKETER: A little stiff from bowling.  
AMERICAN VISITOR (misunderstanding): I didn't ask you what you were, or where you come from.

(Fountain pen to H. BUTCHER, "Revel" Alexandra Road, Fordingbridge, Hants.)

### HIS PLAYMATE.

The director of the zoological gardens was on his vacation.

He received a note from his chief assistant, which ran thus:

*The chimpanzee seems to be pining for a companion. What shall we do until you return?*

(Fountain pen to W. D. HALL, 102, Vardre Road, Clydach, near Swansea.)

### A NASTY ONE.

A blacksmith and a carpenter spent a day at the local zoo, and the carpenter talked so much about the habits of the various animals that the blacksmith became very bored.

In due course they arrived at the monkey-house, and the carpenter asked the blacksmith if he knew what the animals were.

"Well," replied the blacksmith, "judging by the sawdust on the floor, they must be carpenters."

(Fountain pen to W. CULLEN, 27, St. Alban's Road, Treherbert, Rhondda.)



Father: Don't you know it's wicked to sail boats on Sunday?

Bobby: This isn't a pleasure trip, dad, it's a missionary boat going to Africa.

—Cricket bat to: A. Knott, 18, Ringlow Park-road, Swinton, Manchester.

**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 Page 23 must accompany every joke submitted.**



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 Mauley, to take the wonder-drug.

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.

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. 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.

Sambo walked the plank, plunging into the infested river just as the yacht was attacked by savage warriors. In the confusion Jimmy Brent and his big game cricketers escaped, only to be recaptured by Velasquez, who pronounced sentence.

They were to be his slaves!

But Sambo had not only escaped from the terror-infested river; he had captured the imagination of a native tribe as well, and with them as their chief, he journeyed to the Hidden City to Jimmy Brent's rescue.

Climbing a high rocky cliff to the plateau where the Hurculane grew, the black cricketer was confronted on its very brink by—a puma!

### Secrets of the Hidden City.

**T**HE sudden, awful shock of seeing that puma caused Sambo Mauley to relax his hold on the top of the ledge to which he had so laboriously climbed.

One hand went, and then the left hand slipped, and it was not until he was virtually clinging to the ledge by three fingers that his instinct of self-preservation came to his aid.

He clung on by a pressure of those three fingers on the ledge, a pressure which most men would not have been able to withstand for an instant. As it was, Sambo's hand went white under its brown colour with the tremendous strain, for every drop of blood was squeezed from his hand.

And so he hung there, and swung a little, like a signboard in the wind. It was agony to Sambo, that slight swaying of his body. It threatened to dislodge his hold on the ledge altogether, and he was trying, inch by inch, to work up another finger on to the ledge, and then another, and so reach up again with his other hand.

As for the puma, Sambo began to realise how needless was the fright it had caused him.

It crouched on the edge of the ledge, a great, evil-smelling cat, its open mouth worked into thin, angry creases as it snarled and spat.

Undoubtedly, it was a man-killer, and Sambo had had a narrow escape. But his wits, sharpened a great deal by all that he had gone through, told the black man that he was as safe—from the puma at any rate—hanging from this perilous perch as he would have been a hundred miles away on *terra firma*.

For the puma dared not launch its eighty pounds of quivering fury at Sambo. The puma must have been endowed by Nature with a modicum of intelligence, for the brute plainly realised that this ledge was the end of existence, that to go over it would spell disaster.

And so it crouched, snarling horribly, while Sambo, with stark fear at his heart, hung to the ledge with three fingers, and tried to manœuvre a better hold.

He dared not reach up again with his right hand, for so strenuous action would disturb his precarious balance and send him toppling headlong. He had to fight for a better grip with his left hand first. Only the Hurculane saved him—the precious Hurculane which gave him the strength with three fingers to support the weight of his entire body.

Gradually he was able to work up his fourth finger and thumb on to the ledge. And now the puma almost caused catastrophe. For its paw flicked out as it voiced an air-shaking roar, and as it stabbed at Sambo's hand that unfortunate member of the black cricketer's body welled with blood.

Sambo screamed aloud in agony, but life was precious still, and he did not relax his hold. Indeed, goaded by sheer desperation, he swung up with the other hand, and so obtained a less precarious hold.

The puma crouched back, making to spring at that black face now over the ledge. For Sambo had swung up with the desperate strength of despair; the big game cricketer now was actually kneeling on the edge of the ledge, staring with goggling eyes and trembling, wide-apart lips at his wild enemy.

The puma was incensed to madness. Its long tail swished, and its hideous snarl died in a shudder as it gathered itself. The puma seemed to know that it had but to give one lick with its tremendously





Coming down at a hurricane pace Sambo let the ball loose.

powerful paw, and Sambo would drop away into oblivion.

Its roar rising again to crescendo, the puma sprang. Sambo let out a nerve-quivering yell. It may be that the negro's alert mind had nevertheless prepared every move in the game that was to be played. At any rate, with that foolish yell he pushed himself back by his hands and knees and dropped, assuming his old position of hanging from the cliff-side.

And the puma over-reached itself. Seeing Sambo disappear, the attacking brute tried to curb its flight through the air, to descend shorter than it had already intended. But it was just a second too late for the brute to recover poise, and it landed floundering, with its fore-paws actually over the side of the cliff.

Quick as lightning Sambo acted, quicker even than the brute itself, who was floundering madly. Sambo swung himself up to the ledge again, and swinging his foot round, delivered a mighty kick at the beast.

A snarling howl, then the puma had disappeared. Scrambling up on to the ledge and to safety, Sambo looked over the edge to see the great beast crashing lifeless to the ground many feet below.

Sambo chuckled.

"Guess I've broken de first barrier to dis yere Hidden City," he murmured.

Then he turned from his squatting position almost on the cliff-edge, and stared out over the plateau to which he had come. A faint, rather pleasant smell assailed his nostrils, and he knew it for the Hureulane.

But his mind was not occupied with the precious drug which they had come to seek. He was staring out over the plateau, dim and misty in the moonlight, staring at an outer ring of buildings as strangely designed surely as any ever seen by the eyes of man.

Many of them appeared to be huts, made from mud plastered over a wooden skeleton-work, and there was nothing particularly striking about these, except that they formed a background for the more fantastic buildings.

In the moonlight some of these latter appeared more like gigantic mushrooms than anything else. They seemed also to be made of mud. There were temples that stood on their own stilts, as if they were water dwellings, and there were strange high

buildings with cupola towers that had the appearance of mosques. All were a dirty grey in colour, yet against the crimson and black of the African evening sky they appeared eerily beautiful and alluring.

Yet Sambo shuddered as he stared through the moonlight. This was the Hidden City of the Hureulane—a city doubtless inhabited by some sort of man many years before, but now it was a dead city. Dead that is as far as human habitation was concerned and yet alive . . . alive with the creatures of the wilds!

Sambo once had ventured into that Hidden City when he had first come here to discover Hureulane. He never wanted to go again. He had crept into a temple in which snakes abounded—terrific snakes, bigger than man had ever seen before. He went into another building, with its roof open to the moonlight and great gaping holes in the walls, and there he saw the apes.

The mere sight of them was frightening—horrific. For of their species they were giants. With one blow any one of them might have demolished the heap of ruins, in which perhaps a score of them stalked to and fro, gibbering and talking together in their own fashion.

Sambo had reasoned it all out. He thought he knew the explanation for their terrific size and strength. They had been eating leaves from the Hureulane shrub.

Other animals there were here in profusion—gazelles, impallas, game of all sorts. In fact, Sambo honestly believed it to be the biggest game-hunting preserve in Central Africa. There was one thing, however, about which he could not say, and that was whether the animals, having taken Hureulane, were as easy to hunt and kill as those who had not taken it.

Personally, Sambo preferred not to meet a wandering elephant who had taken Hureulane.

Indeed, Sambo, although no coward, would have preferred to have kept away altogether from this sinister, secret plateau where even now a brooding threat seemed to hang in the moonlight. He had told Velasquez that he would not go for a fortune. And yet Jimmy Brent had persuaded him to come out here once again to this fever-stricken land of mystery.

There was this much to be said for Sambo, that he had courage of a high order. His friends had been taken prisoners, and some instinct told him that Velasquez would bring them here. Therefore Sambo had followed. He had never been known to leave his friends in the lurch.

Staring out over the plateau, he could see nothing. All was quiet, and hot—and mysterious. The black cricketer at length recovered sufficiently to proceed with the business which he had on hand.

He untied from his belt a length of thin hempen string. The length of this string reached down, interminably it seemed, to the rocky ground far below, where the natives of his tribe waited, and attached to the string at the bottom was a strong rope ladder which the natives of the N'Gwambi tribe had made during their days and nights in the forest. Swiftly Sambo commenced to haul up the string, and at length the rope ladder itself appeared, dangling in the moonlight.

Sambo hauled it up until he had it in his hands, and, satisfied that its further extremities reached almost to the ground below, he set about the task of pegging the rope ladder down to the cliff-edge.

He did not descend himself, but bent over the cliff-edge, beckoning to the N'Gwambi warriors who waited. One by one they came up the rope ladder to the secret plateau, until at last there were two score of armed warriors and fifteen heavy packages



standing there with Sambo, almost on the portals as it were, of the Hidden City.

Sambo whispered instructions to their chief, and they dispersed silently over the open plateau.

**D**AWN came sweeping over that plateau in the heart of Central Africa. First the blackness was streaked with grey, then the sun, a fiery, molten ball, appeared above the rim of the horizon.

It looked down upon ten men bending to work, their cricket flannels half-torn from their backs, their beards grown upon their haggard, pallid cheeks. They had slept that night upon the open ground, and with the coming of the sun they rose wearily once more.

They were slaves—veritable slaves, eating out their hearts and their lives upon this great plain where grew the marvellous Hurculane!

And they had need to work. For their captors slept in the wooden hut set on the plain, and they slept badly. They came out with the rising of the fierce sun, and Henri Velasquez was at their head, the cheeks of his yellow face like parchment.

He carried the whip as did his villainous followers. Their sole recreation now was to flog unmercifully the ten men who worked for them, gathering the leaves of the Hurculane from the bushes.

The hours passed, the dawn slowly lengthened until there came the heat of noon . . . And not a mile away the would-be rescuers of Jimmy Brent and Co. were playing cricket.

**S**AMBO did not dream that his friends had already arrived upon the plateau where grew the Hurculane. With the coming of morning he proceeded to initiate the men of the tribe who had so strangely elected him their chief into the mysteries of the great summer game of cricket.

And the result was that it increased his prestige with the tribe. It would seem that Sambo had the uncanny knack of doing exactly the right thing. He was surprised to find that the N'Gwambi warriors seemed to take to cricket as a duck does to water.

In the first place, he put the late chief of the tribe in to bat. This black warrior had rather questioned Sambo's authority as chief, as was perhaps only natural since he himself had been deposed to give place to Sambo.

Sambo with the ball in his hand (for he had managed to preserve the cricketing utensils of the expedition) came down the rough pitch and delivered an easy underhand. He was rather surprised to find it smacked away for a good hundred yards by the native chief. Evidently the fellow's boast was justified and he knew something of cricket.

**WELL BOWLED SIR!**—The natives made gestures of great glee as their chief's wicket was scattered.

He delivered a few more very easy balls, each of which was treated with derision.

Sambo decided that it was time to show his mettle. Coming down at a hurricane pace he let the ball loose. Crash!

The natives made gestures of great glee as their chief's wicket was scattered.

And then upon the scene came an extraordinary interruption. A man came running, half-demented, babbling. He was almost naked from the waist, and his face seemed unrecognisable with dirt. Yet Sambo stared at him as the poor fellow fell at his feet, and the black cricketer's face was awful in its wrath.

"Save me, save me!" cried the man wildly. It was Sir Mark Anton.

"Why, Massa—" faltered the black cricketer.

And then he jerked erect and stared out through the dancing heat haze at a man who came running in pursuit, a whip in his hand.

Exciting, eh? But What Will Happen Now?  
Don't Miss The Mag. Next Week to Continue  
The Tale.

## THE WHIP WONDER OF THE BUSH—

(Continued from page 12.)

Then the bush boy did a foolish thing. His brain in a riot, he got to his feet and ran forward. His father! His father was down in that pit, and he must do something to help him.

The blacks started up after him with cries of consternation. Without a leader they immediately became a rabble, particularly when the roused bushrangers sent in an annihilating hail of lead amongst them. Crying in fear, they ran all ways—an army routed almost before a shot had been fired.

But Jack ran on, right into the teeth of the bushrangers' guns, and he seemed to bear a charmed life, for he came through unscathed. Right up to the very edge of the pit he rushed, and was leaning over before Black Kelly and another of his villainous gang grasped him. Jack struggled like a madman, the sobs coming from his throat, for he had seen his father.

Captain Crash was down in that pit, and with guns exhausted, he was wielding his long stockwhip like a man possessed. By now the pit was swarming with the deadly snakes, but many of them would never move again save in the frantic death wriggles in which they were now indulging.

For Captain Crash had bethought himself of his whip to guard his own life and that of his horse, and as fast as a snake moved forward with its deadly fangs showing, so did the bushranger's whip crash. He was keeping them at bay, his whip cutting the slimy bodies in halves. But as one expired in the death throes, so there came another with eyes coldly glittering to investigate these strangers, man and horse.

Nor did they move slowly, but with the rapidity of a python that falls from branch to branch. Twice to his sickening horror Captain Crash found the reptiles coiling around him, and on each occasion they were dragged off by the teeth of his horse. The animal, whinnying madly, seemed quite sensible of the terror that threatened them in the pit.

Jack, before his wild struggle with the bushrangers who had seized him had managed to drop something in the pit—a length of rope which he generally carried tied to his belt. But now he was dragged away, his horrified gaze taken from the scene in the pit, and with Black Kelly gripping him cruelly from behind he was turned round to be marched away.

"It's the pup boy that belongs to that fool!" shouted Black Kelly with a sudden oath. "And b'gar he knows how to find the hill of gold. I always said he did. He's hand in glove with these durned niggers. C'mon, boys; we'll make him tell."

And then suddenly all the bushrangers stared and Black Kelly pointed with a trembling hand.

"Look thar, look thar!" he screamed. "It's Captain Crash, or his ghost. Look, byes; I ain't seeing things?"

If so, he was seeing only that which the others saw, and which Jack himself saw. Out there in the bush was a figure on horseback. And in some strange way it appeared ethereal, unearthly, with a halo of light round it. But unquestionably it was the figure of Captain Crash, or his ghost.

"B'gar, it's Captain Crash!" yelled Black Kelly, snarling horribly.

"Naw," screamed another in awful accents of fear. "Taint him. Th' snakes have got him, an' it's—it's his ghost!"

Superstition breeds like the fever in the lonely Australian bush, and at those awful words the bushrangers became trembling, stricken wrecks of themselves. Black Kelly alone had sufficient gumption to go back to the pit and peer down, and when he returned, his face was a sickly yellow.

"He's gone," he whispered shakily. "B'gar, but we've got the boy, and he's no ghost. We'll make him tell where the hill of gold is. And if—if Captain Crash is still alive he'll not like to see his son whipped to death. Tie him to a tree, byes," went on the villain, his voice rising. "I don't believe in ghosts!"

His brutal, self-confidence was infectious. His men began to recover a little, and they tied Jack securely to a near-by tree, each vanishing into the bush with gun handy there to wait events. For it was Black Kelly's idea that his deadly enemy would make some move once he saw the agony through which his son was to go.

He took up his long-tongued stockwhip and swaggered up to the boy bound to the tree.

"Naw," he said through gritted teeth. "You're goin' to tell me where the hill of gold is."

The bush boy's white teeth merely flashed in a contemptuous smile.

Crack! A red welt showed on Jack's back as the whip lash curled viciously round it. The bush boy gritted his teeth. Not a sound escaped him.

Crack, crack crack!

Jack whitened to the lips. Yet still there came from him no sound. Growing more and more enraged as no sign came from the tracker boy—no cry for mercy!—Black Kelly flung back his whip to use it with all the force of which he was capable.

He little knew that a man had flung himself off his horse, had flung down his whip and drawn his guns. The chagrin of that moment! His guns were empty. And this man knew that he dared not advance any nearer, for round the whipping-tree was a veritable cordon of Black Kelly's men, waiting to trap him.

Captain Crash (for it was he); he had escaped from that pit by lassoing the rope Jack had flung down to him to the stump of a tree. And the mysterious Jack-o'-Lantern, the will-o-the-wisp of the bush, had aided him by his timely appearance on horseback.

This Jack-o'-Lantern who so resembled Captain Crash the bushranger, was a friend after all. But indeed, Captain Crash had never doubted it. He scarcely thought about that service that had been performed for him. He was watching the whipping of his son with eyes that flashed like points of steel.

As the whip came down again, the debonair bushranger, aflame with rage, hurled the boomerang that he held in his hand.

Something hit Black Kelly like the blow of an axe on the back of the neck just as he was about to flash the whip again, and with a choked groan he collapsed, face downwards.

Captain Crash ran forward. In his insane rage he cared not now for the danger. But he quickly realised his folly, for he had run into a nest of hornets. A score of bushrangers ran out from cover and secured him on all sides. And the man whose neck he thought he had broken with that boomerang shot, Black Kelly himself staggered up to his feet somehow and confronted him in a staggering rage.

"The pig swine!" he snarled, glaring from his bloodshot eyes. "Finish 'em off. No slow torture for 'em. They keep on escaping me, and I'm afraid. Hey, I've got it," he ended with a shout of triumph. "We've planned to hold up the Brisbane Express by shunting that old, disused train into it. Let's tie 'em on the cowcatcher. That'll finish 'em off, and there'll be—no ghosts!"

The idea caught on with his followers, and swiftly they tied Captain Crash and his boy son up to two horses and mounted them, riding swiftly through the sultry bush.

In their hatred-ridden joy they did not notice how sultry the day was become; almost unbearable, with dark clouds drifting above. Rain had been expected



for many days, but now there was coming . . . a deluge.

Such a cloudburst as spells in the bush only one thing—a terrible, devastating flood!

Still the bushrangers rode on. They came at last to the railway, to an old siding where still an engine was housed in a shed. This engine had been planned to open up a new branch of the railroad ever stretching its arm through the bush country, but the developments had not materialised. The lone engine, a perfectly good piece of machinery, was patiently waiting its turn to play a part in the progress of civilisation.

Little its creators—wonderful engineers of their time—dreamed of the use to which it would be put. The bushrangers had forced the powerful locks of the shed and had got the engine out, coaled up, and ready for its journey of destruction.

"Come on with 'em," shouted Black Kelly, fierce in his exultation. "To Hades with 'em, byes. Tie 'em up to the cowcatcher. I want to see 'em die."

Captain Crash and his son, Jack, were tied up to the cowcatcher—the long, metal flange in front of the engine designed to turn stray cattle off the railway tracks when they happened to roam, as often they did, in the paths of the engines. One of the bushrangers got in—and he knew how to drive a railway engine as no one else did. The engine got up speed and soon was rushing along the metal rails at forty miles an hour, due to meet the Brisbane Express coming from the other direction, head on.

With the engine almost at top speed, the driver dropped off amongst the soft shrub.

Thundering through the hot, still bush country its wheels screaming with the speed it was taking on, the locomotive rounded a great curve, and there ahead of it, coming to meet it, was the Brisbane Express!

Captain Crash saw it, and cried out to his son.

"It's all over. Good-bye, Jack!"

Black Kelly had ridden on ahead to the points, and now he pulled back a switch so that the two engines should meet on the same line. And even as he did so there came such a crash as he had not expected—a crash that seemed to shake the whole world. It was a crash from the mighty heavens—an earnest of the most terrible storm the bush country was to know in all its creation.

"Byes, it's a cloudburst!" yelled Black Kelly in sudden terror. "Run—run for your lives!"

They did not wait to see the crash of the two locomotives. Swinging into the saddles of their horses, they rode off post-haste, bent on reaching the nearest selection ten miles away for shelter from the coming storm.

And so they did not see the man up in the tree that cast its shadow over the railway lines—the man who was almost a replica in appearance of Captain Crash.

That man sent out his whip curling and drew it back again as the locomotive hurtled round the curve. Now he was ready for action, and the whip was flung out, drawn back again in earnest.

*Crack, crack, crack, crack!*

It hissed with lightning speed through the air, and so delicately, so marvellously was it wielded, that it cut the bonds of Captain Crash in two hissing flights. Captain Crash was flung by the speeding train right off the track, on to the footplate of the train, where he clung desperately.

And a moment later Jack Crash was released in the same marvellous manner—flung off the lines just as his father pulled up the train with the brakes.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE storm had risen, and the floods were high over the bush. Black Kelly and his gang ensconced on the roof of the near-by selection house were at bay at last—beaten by the forces of Nature and by the ingenuity of Captain Crash, and—his elder brother, Jack-o'-Lantern. For Jack-o'-Lantern was none other than his brother, marvellously like him in appearance.

Together they were in a boat, manned by North Queensland Police, who, despite the floods, were bent on wiping out the bushrangers who had terrorised the country for so long.

But they were having a hard fight. The debonaire bushranger in the forefront of the vessel, aimed repeatedly at the bushrangers on the roof of the flooded selection house.

"You'll never get 'em. They're keeping us at bay, Claude," shouted his brother behind.

"But Jack'll get 'em," said Captain Claude Crash quietly.

And he glanced towards the mass of twigs floating towards the roof of the selection house. Not twigs really, for with the current Jack, in a canoe disguised with twigs and bush and shrub, crept closer, ever closer.

A shot rang out.

A man toppled from the roof into the water. And a great shout rang from the besiegers in the boat. For Black Kelly had gone to his account at last. And it was Jack the bush boy who had settled that account.

After that catastrophe the remainder of the gang surrendered. What was the use of fighting any more? Black Kelly, their leader, was dead—drowned—from a bullet-shot which Jack, the bushranger's son, had plugged near his heart.

HERE'S A YARN TO STIR THE BLOOD TO THE CALL OF WILD ADVENTURE.

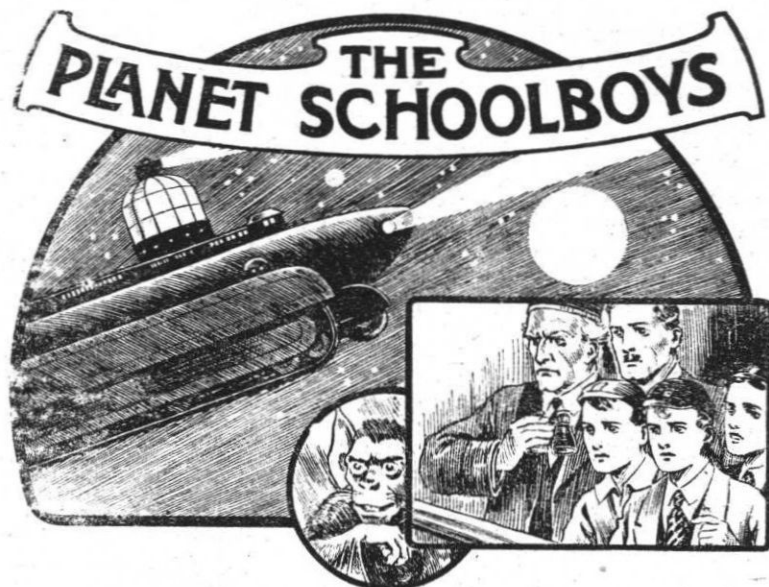
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By EDWY  
SEARLES  
BROOKS.

### 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.

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

Shouts of anger and amazement left their lips when, after journeying back to the *Solar Rover*, they found Count Popandos in command of the wonder flyer.

With a knocking 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—stowaways from Castleton School!

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

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

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 taught the Venusians American!

Afraid that if the adventurers were allowed to return to earth there would be a rush to colonize Venus and rob him of his sway, the Yankee captured them. In a break for freedom, led by Sir Bags, the space voyagers came upon the *Solar Rover* being taken away, harnessed to a number of strange animals.

And then, just as they were about to attempt to board it, an eerie darkness swept down, and the Venusian pursuers fled back to their city in terror.

### The Coming of the Darkness.

**E**VEN the "animals" harnessed to the *Rover* shared in this general panic. Possibly they were released by the Venusians; at all events, they got free, and went tearing off towards the city, thundering over the ground like a herd of elephants. There was no indication of an attack. The humans were left severely alone.

And again that flickering came in the sky—like a deadly, ominous warning.

A voice came out of the sky—from Hudson Zeff. He was soaring overhead, carried by his Venusian bodyguards. And there was something mysteriously significant in his words.

"Back!" he shouted. "Back to the city! The night—the night is upon us!"

"Rats!" roared Freeman. "We've got the *Rover* now—and we'll stick to her."

"Back!" came Hudson Zeff's warning again. "The night monsters will have you!"

And then Hudson Zeff had gone, his Venusian bodyguard whirling him away in sheer terror. In less than ten seconds not a Venusian was to be seen. All had gone fleeing back to the city. Nothing living was within sight now—except these breathless adventurers from earth.

"What does it mean?" muttered Mr. Mannering, frowning.

"Heaven only knows," said Bags. "But I don't like the look of it. That old wretch said something about the night while we were having the banquet, didn't he?"

"Yes, but he wouldn't explain," said the Professor, frowning. "He left us in the dark—and now—"

Even while the Professor was speaking, the darkness came. It was dramatic—startling. Just as though a candle had been snuffed out, the last ray of sunlight left the sky, and everything became black. And it was not the blackness of a night on earth, but the blackness of something horrible. The very swiftness of its descent only made it the worse.

Bags stared upwards.

"No stars!" he muttered. "And no moon."

"Of course there is no moon," said the Professor, clutching at Bags' arm. "Venus has no satellite, like the earth. And the stars are completely hidden by the immensely high cloud banks. Have you not noticed the curious formations of clouds? They have been coming over from the sunset, masses and masses of them."

"Never mind now, Prof," said Bags quickly. "There's evidently some sort of danger on Venus at night. Come on—let's get aboard the *Rover*. We shall feel safe there."

"But where is she, sir?" shouted Barry. "We can't see anything. This darkness is awful!"

"We're all together," said Sir Bags. "The best thing we can do is to hold hands, or arms, or something. Each fellow keep a grip on his companion. Come on; this way."

They pressed on, Sir Bags leading. He knew, more or less, where the *Rover* stood. But he had to walk blindly, since this sudden darkness was so intense that it was like a solid wall in front of them. Every vestige of twilight had gone out of the sky, and the blackness had swept down completely. Nobody needed telling that the Venusian night was a period to be feared.

And what of Hudson Zeff's strange behaviour? What of his words? "The night monsters!" That was what he had said. And Zeff had given that warning, even though he had desired to capture his guests. This danger, evidently, was so horrific that he had forgotten all his schemings. And humanity itself had prompted him to issue that warning.

Sir Bags had seen something else, too, something that the others had missed.

As he had stared back towards the city, just before the darkness had swooped down, he had seen something that had caused him to start. Every one of those great openings in the marble buildings had been closed. Vast slabs of solid stone had been placed over the openings, making them as solid as the very walls themselves. Why? Why were those openings so powerfully covered? And why had the Venusians gone screaming back? At any ordinary time, without doubt, they would have sought their houses in good time, before the twilight had gone. But this evening they had been chasing the adventurers, by Hudson Zeff's orders. They had been caught unawares in the excitement. But even Hudson Zeff himself had not dared to remain abroad in the darkness.

Fumbling, panting heavily, the three men and the schoolboys and the *Rover's* crew progressed onwards. They gave no thought to Count Popandos now. It mattered not to them what had become of that rogue. They thought only of their own safety.

And there was something in this darkness which



**THE NIGHT HORROR'S PREY!**—A scream of horror arose, and there was a rush to the rails to save Robin Hardy. But it was too late. Robin was seized in that immense feeler, and swung out into space.



sent a chill to their hearts. There was a feeling of dread in the air, a sense of impending horror.

A shriek came from one of the juniors towards the rear.

"Something touched me," he screamed.

"Steady!" shouted Sir Bags. "It's all right, boys—the Rover's here! Good! Here's the ladder. I felt it. Come on!"

"Oh, thank goodness!"

Sir Bags pulled a box of matches out of his pocket, and he struck about fifteen of them at once. A flare went up, dazzling in that darkness, but glorious to see. For it revealed the glittering sides of the Rover, and the ladder still in position.

Scrambling, stumbling, they went up and found themselves on the decks. Even the men were feeling panic-stricken, with the deadly fear of the Unknown.

And then came another scream—a shouting cry of horror—from Freeman. He was the last to come up the ladder, and he now clung there, half-way between the ground and the deck.

"Something's got me!" he shouted huskily. "Help! Help! Something has got me!"

### The Monstrous Unknown.

THERE was a world of fear and horror in George Freeman's tone.

Fear—from the ram-headed leader of the Firm! It was so unusual, so unaccountable. As a rule Freeman was absolutely fearless, caring nothing for any odds. For the first time in their lives Hardy and Willis heard their leader sob with terror.

Something had got him! *Something!* And there was Freeman, clinging to the ladder, struggling for dear life—trying to claw his way upwards to the deck, so that he could join the others.

"Stand aside there!" roared Bags.

Without compunction he sent two or three of the juniors hurtling over as he pushed his way back to the top of the ladder. He struck another handful of matches, and they flared up, burning his fingers horribly. But in that tense moment Bags did not even feel the pain. His revolver was ready. He held the matches aloft, like a torch.

Below, he could see Freeman's face, staring upwards at him, pale, ghostlike—and full of anguish.

"All right, young 'un," sang out Bags. "I'm coming—"

"Don't!" panted Freeman. "Don't come, sir! It'll only have you, too!"

And then Sir Bags started, and felt sickened. Just for a second he had caught a glimpse of a thing squirming round Freeman's shoulder. A sort of black feeler—writhing, contorting, twisting.

*Crack!* Sir Clarence's revolver spurted fire, and he was one of the finest revolver shots in the world. He saw that feller shoot back, quivering like a piece of sprung wire. And another gasp came from Freeman, and he clawed his way up two or three more steps of the ladder. In the same instant the matches went out, leaving the darkness more intense than ever.

Leaning over, Bags just managed to grasp Freeman's shoulder. Jerry Mannering, on the other side, tugged at Freeman's other arm. They went reeling across the deck towards the door of the lounge. All the rest had gone inside—pale, shaken and faint. They did not know what it was outside.

"Quick—the doors!" panted Bags, hoarsely.

His own mind was in a whirl. Something was pulling at Freeman all the time, and the unfortunate leader of the Firm was practically in a state of collapse. He was unable to help himself. He was

just being dragged along by Bags and Jerry—while that monstrous unknown thing tugged at the rear.

Mercifully the lights of the lounge suddenly blazed out, and everybody found themselves blinking dazedly.

"They're in—they're in!" shouted Hardy, shrilly. "Shut the doors!"

These doors were of solid metal—great, enormous things which slid silently on roller bearings—and which hermetically sealed the doorways.

*Thud!* The door closed—just as Freeman had been pulled inside. And with that there came a sickening kind of squelch—horrible to listen to. Freeman sank to the floor, panting heavily. And Sir Bags, his face beaded with perspiration, stared down at the edge of the door.

"What is it, Clarence?" asked Professor Drewe, coming forward.

"Heaven alone knows!" said Bags.

They saw something lying there, something which had been severed by the edge of the door as it had gone home into its slot. There was about a yard of it—a black, writhing thing, as thick as the trunk of an elephant. Something that looked like Indian ink was oozing out, and spreading over the carpet of the lounge. It wasn't blood—it was just something that was utterly black.

"Ye gods!" muttered Jerry Mannering at last.

He touched the thing with his foot, and he did not need telling that it had been severed from the mysterious monster outside. On the end of it were a number of clawlike projections. They weren't suckers, but blunt claws—and they were still moving slowly up and down, as though reluctant to perish.

"Freeman, old man!" said Hardy, as he flung himself down beside his leader.

"I'm all right," panted Freeman, with a wan smile. "Oh, thank goodness we're back in the old Rover again! It almost feels like being on earth. We're out of that horror!"

"Yes, rather!" said Bags, ripping off Freeman's jacket. "Hallo, hallo! Look at this."

"That's where the—the thing caught hold of me, sir," said Freeman, staring.

His arm was bare, and there, vividly apparent, were several awful bruises.

"I can't understand it, sir," went on Freeman. "It wasn't so much the pain of that grip, but the horrible sensation that went right through me. It was like an electric shock, only—only different! I seemed to be paralysed. Just that touch on my arm made all my limbs helpless. I don't mind admitting I was scared stiff. What was it that got me, sir?"

"We don't know, my boy," said the Professor. "But let us thank Heaven that we are safely on board the Rover, and that every door has been hermetically sealed, and every window, too. I have operated the master lever, and we are completely isolated from everything Venusian."

"That's good hearing, anyway," said Bags, as he busied himself with Freeman's hurt.

"It is quite obvious that the Venusian night is deadly," went on the Professor, talking in a dreamy, abstracted way. "It is very interesting—very intriguing. I have always believed that the night on some of the planets must be very different to the earth night, particularly on those planets where there are no satellites to provide a false light."

"This is all very interesting, Prof, but don't you think it would be a good idea for us to get into the air?" said Bags, glancing up with a grin. "Now that that bit of excitement is over we might just as



well soar up to a couple of hundred miles or so. We shall all feel a lot safer."

"Yes, rather!" chorused all the others.

### What Searchlights Revealed.

PROFESSOR ROXLEY DREWE'S scientific theories were not popular just at the moment.

Everybody felt that his words were true—that the Venesian night was somehow a time of deadlines. But these things could be discussed much more agreeably at a height of two or three hundred miles. The *Rover* could accomplish that distance in a very few minutes once her controls were operated.

And so during those next few moments orders were given by the Professor and by Bags. Men were sent to their posts, and the boys were kept in the lounge.

There was one thing which Sir Bags and Professor Drewe had discovered, and which they kept to themselves. All those guards who had been left in command of the *Rover* were missing. Without doubt they had been seized by the Venusians, and had been taken into one of those marble buildings. They were prisoners in the hands of Hudson Zeff. But this was not the time to think of rescuing them. Nothing could be done until the coming of daylight.

In the control-room Professor Drewe stood at his levers. And he sent the signals into every compartment of the ship—the signals indicating that he was about to raise the vessel.

Over went the lever, and the *Rover* quivered in every plate—in every bolt. The sensation was extraordinary. The great craft shook and vibrated

after the style of an antiquated motor-car. The Professor stared at his dials, and then he uttered a hoarse shout.

"We're not moving!" he panted, staring round at Bags.

"That's rummy, isn't it?" said the famous sporting Baronet.

"It is extraordinary—it is beyond belief!" shouted the Professor. "Why are we not moving? My ether-motors are working—the indicators prove that. The solar energy is as active here as ever before. And yet we are not moving."

"You're sure there's nothing wrong with the works?" asked Bags.

"Good gracious, of course I'm sure!" said the Professor. "We are being held down, Clarence!"

"I wish you wouldn't call me Clarence," said Bags sadly.

"Man alive, is this a time to quibble about a name?" roared the Professor. "I tell you we are being held down. Do you understand? Held! What stupendous power can be holding us to the ground like this? Think of it, Clarence! This ship weighs thousands of tons—"



**THE MONSTER IN THE MATCHGLOW.**—For an instant Sir Bags felt sickened. He had caught sight of a dreadful thing clutching Freeman. Crack, crack! The millionaire's revolver spurted fire.

"What about the searchlights?" broke in Mr. Manning.

"By the Lord Harry!" roared Bags. "Why didn't we think of that before? The searchlights, Prof! Shove off the energy and shove the searchlights on. Perhaps we shall be able to see something."

"An excellent suggestion," said the Professor. He was bewildered—dazed. For the first time in his experience the solar energy had failed. But he

knew well enough that it was through no defect in the mechanism. Something was holding the *Rover* to the ground—some vast, mysterious power. And the searchlights, perhaps, would reveal this mystery.

Down in the lounge the boys had practically recovered their composure by this time. Freeman, except for a stiffness in his arm, was almost himself again. But he was very subdued—very quiet. The others were staring blankly out of the great windows—into that great darkness. And they knew that something was wrong. Although they could see nothing, they knew that the *Rover* had not left the ground. She had quivered in agony—her plates had groaned, and her bolts had protested. But she had not moved.

"There's something wrong, you chaps!" muttered Barry. "Keep still, for goodness' sake. Don't go rushing up to the Professor or to Bags. They've got quite enough worry without us butting in. Let's stay here and take it quietly. They're doing the best they can."

"Look!" yelled Don Masters, suddenly pointing.

"There's a light out there!"

"A searchlight!" said Billy Ward, rushing to the window.

They all made a run. Sure enough, the dazzling beam of a searchlight was playing down from above, illuminating the ground below with a dazzling brilliance. And it was illuminating something else, too. Many cries went up from those watchers, both in the lounge and in the control-room.

For the spectacle that unfolded itself was a staggering one.

All round the *Rover* were great creatures—visible only for a moment, since they swept precipitately out of the range of that searchlight. Only one or two glimpses did the watchers get of those monstrosities.

But it seemed to everybody that these things were bigger than mammoths, with vast, inky-black bodies that heaved disgustingly. And those bodies were fashioned something after the style of a beetle's. But each of these monsters, towering twenty or thirty feet high, possessed scores and hundreds of cable-like feelers. And these writhing feelers were passed over the *Rover's* decks—over her hull, to starboard, to port, aft and forward. They were holding the *Rover* to the ground, as Gulliver was held to the ground by the Lilliputians!

### The Fight for Liberty.

BARRY DREWE rubbed his eyes. "Did I imagine it?" he muttered. "Look, Freddie! Is there anything there?"

"Absolutely not!" said the Hon. Freddie, in a shaky voice. "Absolutely nothing, old top! But I rather fancy I saw a frightfully beastly sort of frightful thing a couple of jiffies ago. A vast, bulbous sort of blighter that oozed away into the offing as soon as the light trickled round it."

"That's what I saw," said Barry, nodding. "Freddie, old man, what does it mean?"

"Eh?" said the Hon. Freddie. "I mean, what? Good gad! Don't ask me, old lad! I don't mind admitting that the old brain has short-circuited."

And if consternation ranged in the lounge, those in the control-room were even more dismayed.

"Did you see them, Clarence?" asked the Professor, as he turned a pale, startled face towards Bags. "Did you see those—those incredible things?"

"Yes," said Bags, nodding. "They looked a bit like beetles to me—only they were as big as houses!"

"They are the monsters that Hudson Zeff warned us against" said the Professor. "Now we can

understand why the Venusians fled back to their city—"

"Yes, by gad, that's right," said Sir Clarence, nodding. "And did you notice, too, that all those big openings in the buildings were closed just before sunset? Every wall was made solid—"

"Ah, another indication," shouted the Professor. "We can now realise why these Venusians do not provide their houses with ordinary windows. They would be useless against these ghastly monsters. Don't you see? They have built their houses of immense blocks of stone—granite, or marble, or whatever it is. And at night they close those openings—they seal them solidly. And why? Obviously, to keep out these horrors of the blackness!"

"Yes, but there's something else," said Mr. Mannerling, quickly. "These monsters evidently don't like light. They can't bear the light. Look at the way they scuttled off as soon as the searchlight was put on them. And the very fact that these Venusians go about in the daytime fearlessly proves that these creatures are powerless in the daylight. They are only abroad after darkness has fallen."

"That's clear enough," nodded the Professor. "They are night creatures, as distinct from the day beings. On Venus, without any doubt, there are two separate and distinct species. On earth, as you know, the night creatures also prowl about by day; and *vice versa*. But here, on Venus, the species are separate and distinct. And the only safety for these Venesian bat-men is to build their cities absolutely clear of ornamentation, as I might say. And their houses are constructed like fortresses."

"Yes, that's right," said Bags. "Now we can understand why the Venesian city is so extraordinarily bare. I mean, there are no trees there, or parks, or gardens, or anything. Just the marble streets and the marble houses. During the night these simple creatures hide themselves away, and they are safe behind those great walls. And when daylight comes they are free to venture into the air. But, while this is all very interesting, Prof, what are we going to do? I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that the old *Rover* is quivering again. These horrible things are trying to crush us!"

"Wait!" said the Professor. "I have an idea. There are searchlights on every side, and my plan is to set them all going. We will man every searchlight now. We will play the beams round the vessel, so that not a single inch is left unprotected. And in that way, perhaps, we shall release ourselves from the grip of these horrors."

And orders were given, and every heart beat rapidly with hope and doubt. Would this expedient prove successful? Would the switching on of all the searchlights enable them to get free from these night monsters, and to soar aloft into the safety of the upper air?

Every man at his station heard the Professor's signal. And, at the same moment, the "ether engine" was turned on to its fullest extent, and the *Solar Rover* strained and groaned afresh as she tried to pull herself away from the grip of those monstrous Venesian creatures.

The Professor was in mortal fear lest the glass dome of the control-room should be splintered to fragments. Everything would depend upon the next few seconds.

In the main lounge the boys were at the windows, watching fascinatedly. They could see everything now—with the searchlights fully on. They could see those crawling things dropping away, as the searchlights blinded them and confused them.



"Keep it up!" shouted Sir Bags. "We're doing it, Prof!"

"Heaven grant that we win!" said the Professor. "But if this goes on, Clarence, we shall only crash! We are held at the stern—and—"

He broke off, for at that moment the *Rover* gave a violent lurch, and shot many feet into the air. Her stern had come away suddenly, just as though a number of steel cables had snapped. And up she went, rising higher and higher.

"Hurrah!" shouted Barry excitedly. "We're free!"

And when Sir Bags hurried out on deck most of the Castleton boys followed him. They leaned over the rail, staring at the ground—now four or five hundred feet beneath them. The searchlights were playing straight downwards, illuminating a patch of ground with dazzling intensity.

But only for a moment or two were those beetle-creatures in view. For the *Rover* was moving swiftly along, the Professor having evidently decided to get

Recklessly, Len started to climb the rail—having a mad idea, probably, of getting down to that tractor, where the beetle-creature was clinging. But any move of that kind would only be suicide, and Len Hardy was dragged back, and held.

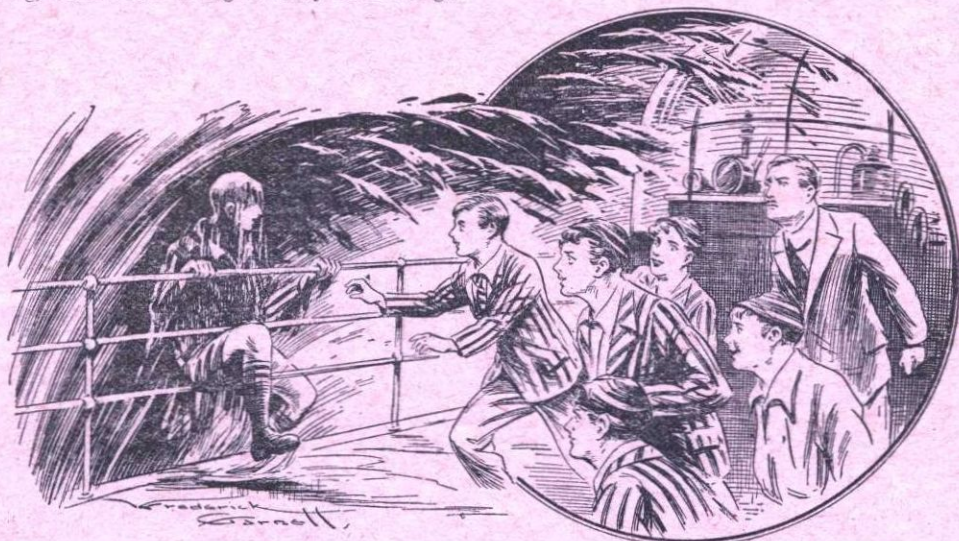
Robin was being slowly waved up and down, as though his captor was taking a delight in playing with him. And the other boys recklessly clung to the rail, ignoring the fact that other feelers might come up, and claim them, too. Robin himself saw this danger, and he gave a shout of warning.

"Stand back, you chaps!" he called. "There's no need for more than one of us to be wiped out. This beggar will have you unless you're careful!"

"But can't we save him?" panted Nippy Frost, as pale as chalk. "Oh, can't we do something?"

"Robin, old man!" choked Freckles Smith.

And in the meantime Sir Bags had rushed into the control-room, and he was grabbing at the Professor's arm.



UP FROM THE DEPTHS.—There came another terrific outburst from the mighty geyser, and the mud shot upwards in a vast shower. There clinging to the rail was a figure "Mud baths are good for the complexion," was Robin's greeting.

away from this neighbourhood altogether. He was thinking only of the safety of his precious craft.

"Well, there's nothing much to see," said Freeman, in a tone of disappointment. "I was rather expecting—Hi!" he added, with a note of wild alarm in his voice. "Look out, you chaps! Oh, great Scott! Look out, there!"

A great black, cable-like feeler had come over the rail. And in the next second the boys knew the truth. One of those monsters was still clinging to the ship—wedged, it seemed, upon one of the great tractors.

A scream of horror arose—and there was a rush to save young Robin Hardy, of the Third.

But it was too late! Robin was seized by that monstrous feeler, and then carried outwards, dangling. "Robin—Robin!" shouted Len Hardy, in dire anguish.

The situation was full of horror for everybody—but for Len it was trebly agonising. His young brother was out there, with death staring him in the face. And nothing could be done.

"Lower her!" he said tensely. "Quickly, Prof! Lower her!"

"Are you mad, Clarence?" said the Professor. "We have escaped from this peril, and now you are suggesting—"

"Man alive!" roared Bags. "One of our boys is captured by a monster that is still clinging to the ship! He's held out over space—and he may be dropped at any second! There's not one chance in a million that we can save him, but—"

"Good heavens!" said the Professor hoarsely.

He understood. He wanted no further explanations from Bags. And the next moment the *Solar Rover* was shooting downwards towards the black ground. Bags stood there, watching the indicators—and occasionally staring out through the windows. But not a word was spoken.

If the *Rover* could only land, there was just a chance that Robin would be saved. For machine guns and rifles could be brought into use—and perhaps that deadly creature would be annihilated.

On deck, Barry Drewe and the other juniors stood



watching tensely. Lower and lower! And still Robin was held out over the void, expecting every moment to be tossed to his death—or crushed against the metal side of the *Rover*.

Indeed, he would have met this fate long since, but for one fact. The beetle-creature was numbed—dazed by the light. It had become wedged between the tractor wheel and the body of the vessel, and so had not fallen with its companions. The searchlight deprived it of its powers, and so it clung there, apparently helpless.

A wild hope began to fill the breasts of the watchers. The *Rover* was now only a couple of hundred feet above the ground. And there were no trees here—nothing but a strange, earthy-looking marsh, without a trace of vegetation. Bare ground—ideal for landing upon.

Lower and lower!

Only a hundred feet now, and—

But then, at that second, a united shout of horror arose. For with Robin's safety almost within sight the Venusian beetle-monster had suddenly lost its last remaining grip. It toppled backwards, hovered for a second, and then fell—carrying the unhappy fag with it.

"Look!" screamed one of the juniors suddenly. "Oh, my hat! They've gone—they've gone!"

It was amazing beyond words. For at that second both the monster and Robin had struck the ground. But instead of being crushed to death, as everybody had expected, they went right in—into the ground!

There was a sudden heave—a rolling, billowing movement, horrifying to see. And then nothing—nothing but the smooth surface!

### The Mighty Geyser.

THE *Solar Rover* hovered there, fifty feet high—stationary. And all those on her decks were staring downwards.

"It's mud!" said Barry, with a queer note in his voice. "Don't you see, you chaps? It's nothing but mud. Thick, oozing mud. And poor old Robin—"

It was too horrible. Robin Hardy had fallen into that mud, and had been sucked straight down!

And yet it didn't look like mud at all. It was smooth and brown and innocent-looking. And now, for the first time, the schoolboys felt a certain heat coming upwards. Waves of warmth were surrounding the *Rover*.

Sir Clarence Bagshott came running out.

"Poor kid!" he said huskily. "We can't do anything for him. He just vanished, and—"

Zurrrrh—zurrrrh!

Without the slightest warning there was a terrific commotion in that great pool of mud. It bubbled and boiled, and then an incredible mass of mud came shooting upwards, spraying into the air and dropping back upon the *Rover's* decks with dull plonks.

"It's a geyser!" yelled Sir Bags. "Great gad! It's the mightiest geyser that human eyes have ever looked upon!"

"And poor old Robin was sucked into it!" babbled Nippy Frost. "Oh, my goodness! Poor old Robin! Poor old—"

"Look!" screamed Freckles Smith.

There came another terrific outburst from the mighty geyser, and mud shot upwards in a vast shower. But nobody took any notice. For there, clinging to the rail, was a figure. It was almost unrecognisable as that of a human being. It was just a misshapen mass of mud, but it clung there.

"It's Robin!" choked Len Hardy, dashing forward.

The others were almost stunned by the realisation. Robin Hardy had been sucked down into that geyser—and then, the next moment, he had been hurled upwards by the force of the subterranean energy. And by some miracle he had fallen upon the *Rover's* deck—back amongst his companions.

In the next instant, he was dragged away from the rail, and none of the others took the slightest notice of the rain of mud which fell all around them.

"Robin!" panted Len Hardy.

"He's dead!" said Nippy Frost, with a gulp. "He must be dead!"

"Rats!" came a gasp from the mud. "Who's dead?"

"He's alive!" shouted Len joyously. "Oh, Robin, old son!"

"No need to make all this fuss," said Robin, attempting to sit up. "Mud baths are good for the complexion."

"But how have you escaped?" asked Barry, incredulously. "Don't ask me!" said Robin.

"I thought it was all up with me, and then I found myself choking in a lot of sticky mud—and it was very warm too. The next second I found myself being shot upwards, and then I heard you fellows. That's about all I know. I'm rapidly coming to the conclusion that Venus is a queer sort of place!"

"Drag him in, you chaps!" said Barry. "We'll take him straight down to one of the bathrooms, and give him a ducking. He may be injured—and we want to be sure. We can't do anything until all this mud is cleaned away."

"Better carry him!" said Len tensely. "Oh, thank heaven, he's alive!"

They could hardly believe it. A few seconds earlier it had seemed absolutely certain that Robin was dead. And now he was on deck again—having been hurled upwards by the mighty forces of this mysterious planet.

A crowd of the boys escorted Robin into the lounge, but one or two of the others remained on deck. Such fellows as Puggy Dibble and Claude Royce and Biggs Hoskins had remained in the lounge all the time—crouching in abject fear. The mysteries of this Venusian night had robbed them of their nerve. Not that Puggy Dibble & Co., had ever had any nerve.

And outside, on deck, a new peril had arisen.

Zurrrrh! Swoooooh! Zurrrrh!

The geyser was terribly active now—and thousands of tons of mud were being hurled upwards into the air, until it was almost impossible to see a yard in any direction. The mud struck the *Rover's* keel, and her underplates, and caused the whole vessel to sag and sway and reel over. And at the same time immense masses of mud fell with sickening thuds upon her decks.

Sir Bags rushed into the control-room.

The Professor turned a startled, anguished face towards Sir Bags.

"I only pray that we can get free, Clarence!" he panted. "But this mud is beating us! It is as deadly an enemy as the beetle-monsters! The weight of the mud is too much for us—and we can't rise! We are being forced down into the heart of the geyser!"

An awful fate threatens the brave voyagers aboard the *Solar Rover*—suffocation in a sea of mud! What miracle can save them now? Another hectic round of thrills Next Week, Chums.