

THE STRANGE CASE OF FERNANZ THE FENCER

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EVERY SATURDAY



SMASHING 'TEC TALE OF THE MONOCLED MANHUNTER.

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BOOTLES THE BRAUNY—

(Continued from page 14.)

took to the open road he caused all his men to bind their horse's hoofs so that the highwaymen should not suspect pursuit. Of course he lost a good deal of ground because of that, but it mattered nothing. The Bow Street Captain was certain now that his quarry were making for Dover, and he could follow and trap them at his leisure.

A matter that had been working at the back of Captain Sixsmith's cunning mind for a long time was a question of personal enrichment from the capture of the highwaymen. He was avaricious, greedy to an extreme. He planned to take apart one of Dick Turpin's band, and, under promise of clemency, obtain from him the secret of where the gang concealed their treasure.

Indeed, that idea dominated every other in Captain Sixsmith's mind. Riches—treasure—loot. He gloated in prospect over his haul. He had the mind of a miser.

Meanwhile, not suspecting that they were discovered, Dick Turpin and his band had arrived on the Dover cliffs, where they drew rein in consternation, staring out at the wrecks of what had once been two noble ships.

The sea was calmer now, and there was an unnatural stillness in the half light. The storm had died almost as suddenly as it had sprung up.

All at once Dick Turpin leant forward in his saddle, staring tensely through the slits in his mask out to sea.

"That's funny, boys," he said in a voice that did not seem quite steady. "Do you see what I see?"

Their blood turned cold as they sat their horses there on the lonely cliff. For on the deck of one of the ships there floated an eerie light that gradually took shape before their eyes. The shape of—a ghost.

As Dick Turpin sat there, tense and white, with a strangely fluttering heart, there suddenly broke on the night the sounds of shouts and cries, and the reports of pistols. Looking round, the highwaymen were startled to see a score or more of Bow Street runners riding down the cliff side towards them.

"We're trapped," Dick Turpin said sharply. "Fight—each one fight for yourselves, and get clear. As for me, why—why?"—he looked round—"Prince Charlie might yet be there," he muttered, almost to himself.

He turned Black Bess and urged the horse hastily down a precipitous cliff path. On the cliff a fierce fight was taking place. The highwaymen were escaping. But Jeremiah Sixsmith, Captain of the Runners, halted the remainder of his men with a sharp command.

"Tis Turpin himself entering the water there," he cried. "He is the man we want. After him. A reward for each of you if he is caught."

They plunged down the cliff after Turpin.

And meanwhile, strange to relate, the figure of a monstrous black man was clambering up the side of the pirate vessel.

Bootles had had an extraordinary adventure. As has already been told, he came to himself in the sea to find that he was clutching at something that gave him support, something of wood.

He quickly ascertained what it was. A chest of treasure. Bootles was no fool. Discovering a row-boat that had drifted from the wreckage, he rowed back quietly for more treasure, if such was to be found.

He had hardly reached the deck when he saw what Dick Turpin had seen. A ghostly white shape that seemed to be carrying a lantern floating over the deck towards him.

The black man recoiled in horror as he saw the

strange apparition advancing upon him. "Wow, ghosts!" he screeched and toppled backwards over the rails into the water.

As he came up he heard firing breaking out behind him, and then a hand clutched at his shoulder. With a wild scream, Bootles slewed his head, only to find himself staring into a handsome, boyish face, at a man seated on a horse, who was swimming gallantly in the sea.

"They've got me with a pistol-ball in the arm," Dick Turpin—for it was he—said quietly, but wincing with pain. "I've come—for—Prince Charles. Is—has anything happened? Do you know?"

"Massa, look," cried Bootles in great fright, ignoring the question and pointing to the deck. "Ghosts!"

"That's not a ghost," said Dick Turpin, biting his lips for pain. "Go after it. Get it!"

Suddenly reassured, Bootles roared like a tiger, and ignoring the pistol-shots of the Runners swimming behind, he clambered back on deck and launched himself like a tiger at that weird shape. Evidently quite unprepared for such an onslaught, the Thing gave a wild screech and crashed back on the deck.

Bootles tore away the sheet, for such he saw it was now. And he gave a shout as he saw the face of the man he had thus unmasked.

It was Barbarraso, the pirate chief who had so brutally treated him.

"Dis am good," Bootles chuckled suddenly. "Dis chile got a use for you." And, looking round, he suddenly saw two large chests on the deck. Perceiving that the lid of one had been prised open, and its contents—gold and silver and goblets and other trinkets—piled on the deck, he lifted the pirate chief, Barbarraso, bodily, giving him another hefty punch to quieten him, and bundled him into the chest.

One by one he lifted the huge chests, exerting all his tremendous strength, and dropped them into the rowboat, so that it threatened to submerge.

But, nothing caring, Bootles dropped in alongside and took up the oars. His face changed. He saw that the Bow Street Runners were swimming after Dick Turpin, and that they had almost caught him. He saw the highwayman chief scramble painfully out of the water and stagger up the shore, and Bootles rowed with all his might.

He reached the cliffs and scrambled up them by a circuitous route just as Dick Turpin staggered into a cave in the cliff side with the Runners hot on his heels.

Bootles was carrying one of the chests, but he put it down as the Runners came charging down the narrow defile. Aloft on the cliffs, Bootles could look down on that defile and he saw all that was happening. As the Runners were almost upon Dick, who had fallen now with his sword drawn in a last determination to defend his life, Bootles lifted a huge rock and hurled it down, effectively blocking the passages. In fact, the Runners recoiled only just in time from the danger.

Then Bootles picked up the great chest he had been carrying and hurled that down, too. As it burst against the rocks, a man came tumbling out. And Jeremiah Sixsmith, chief of the Runners, gave a great shout.

"It's Barbarraso, the pirate chief! Seize him!"

And so the Runners got a prisoner after all, what time Bootles was slipping down the rocks on the other side of the barrier he had formed.

"Dis way, Massa," he whispered, picking up the highwayman as if he had been a child. "Got some treasure in dis cave yonder. I allows I'll share with you, and join your band."

"Zounds, it's a sound scheme," said Dick, smiling through his pain.

Breath-taking Tale of Detective Work. Falcon Swift, the Monocled Manhunter, with his Assistant, Chick, Exposes a Sinister Foreign Plot.



THE STRANGE CASE OF
FERNANZ
THE FENCER

The Famous Detective Fights for His Life in an Amazing Lair of Crooks in London.

The Man Who Knew.

JEREMIAH ZANSWORTH sat in his private office, trembling.

He was an amazing old man.

His white hair curled at the back of his neck, and he wore a still well-fitting suit of light clothes that he had bought almost twenty years before. His face was keen, handsome, and well preserved, save that he wore false teeth. He was very careful to make things last.

He had obtained his house some fifty years before at very cheap rent. He had gained control of other houses, good and bad, some of them delapidated tenements in the heart of London's slumland. And for all of them he charged very high rents.

He was a miser.

The furniture of his office consisted of a solitary mahogany desk, which he knew he could transform into a hundred pounds hard cash if he so desired. It contained secret drawers and pigeon holes in which were documents, jewels and currency of incalculable value. It had belonged to a Spaniard of high caste and position at the time of the Spanish Inquisition. It held secrets of which only Jeremiah Zansworth knew, and it held one secret at which he could only guess.

Jeremiah Zansworth was a hard landlord, and, as cannot be too greatly emphasised, a miser.

All the characters in the stories printed in this magazine do not refer to any living person or persons.

The people of Slumland hated and yet admired him. For he was intrepid. He held his head high in the face of all manner of menaces. He was known to be worth at least a million pounds. And he was as shrewd and sharp as a razor blade. They admired and feared old Jeremiah Zansworth.

His big, rambling house was situated in a district surrounded by slums. All manner of toughs and villains who had a personal antagonism against Jeremiah had threatened him, and had endeavoured to burgle his house. But they got small change out of the shrewd old fellow. They broke into his house, only to find it empty—or so it seemed. They could never find Jeremiah.

He was hidden in a back room of the house which could only be reached by a secret corridor. There he lived and worked, and amassed money. He said he would not bank money. It came out

He said he would not bank money. It came out

of circulation into his private coffers and he hoarded it. He boasted that he had never helped a hospital or a poor person in his life. Nor had he ever spent an unnecessary penny upon himself.

Such was the eccentric, Jeremiah Zansworth, who sat in his private office and quailed.

The thing which he had hoped for now for years was coming. And now he was afraid, for he was an old man. And he had waited too long for this. The fight was gone out of him.

Proof that he was changing, as old men do change, was surely supplied by the fact that on his desk, like a black image in the dim gaslight, was squatted a telephone.

That telephone had not been there three days before. It was a new innovation. Jeremiah Zansworth, who pulled the strings and even manipulated the markets of high finance, had always said the telephone was an expensive luxury for him.

Yet he had had a telephone installed in that room which was only approached by secret corridors. For he was afraid, now that the fight was on.

Suddenly the telephone bell rang, with startling insistence.

The fine-featured old miser stared at it as though he half expected an apparition to issue from its mouthpiece. Then after a few moments of agonising suspense he took off the receiver, and applying it to his ear awkwardly, listened.

"Hallo, is zat you, Mr. Zansworth?" came a voice with a foreign intonation. The miser answered with a sharp, quivering monosyllable—"yes," and the voice, strangely unreal over the wire, went on:

"You haf not thought over vat we say? We protect you for one hundred pounds a week? Eet ces goot, si? I myself, ze chief of ze firm, will come to see you. We haf reason to know your life ces in danger—that you have been threatened. You haf received threatening letters, ces zat not so? If you weel take our protection you veel live for many years yet, Mr. Zansworth."

The old miser smiled—a thin-lipped, twisted smile. "That's the Cammora Private Agency, isn't it?"

he asked, and as the reply came in the affirmative, in that foreign voice, his mirthless grin broadened.

"Then you can go to Jericho," he snarled. And he hung up the receiver.

THREE minutes later he was putting through a telephone call of his own, his aged voice becoming more tremulous.

In the private study that was part of the suite of the Half Moon Street flat occupied by Falcon Swift, the eminent private criminologist, the telephone bell rang insistently in answer to the old miser's demand:

Chick, the sporting detective's assistant, was sitting curled up in his favourite armchair. Chick Conway had the habits of a somnolent cat when he was not required for work. He loved to read detective thrillers and to laze his time away. But Falcon Swift, his master, knew that there was not a more keen-witted or pluckier youngster in the whole of the United Kingdom when the occasion demanded, and therefore he indulged his boy assistant. He himself answered the 'phone, whilst Chick only looked up lazily.

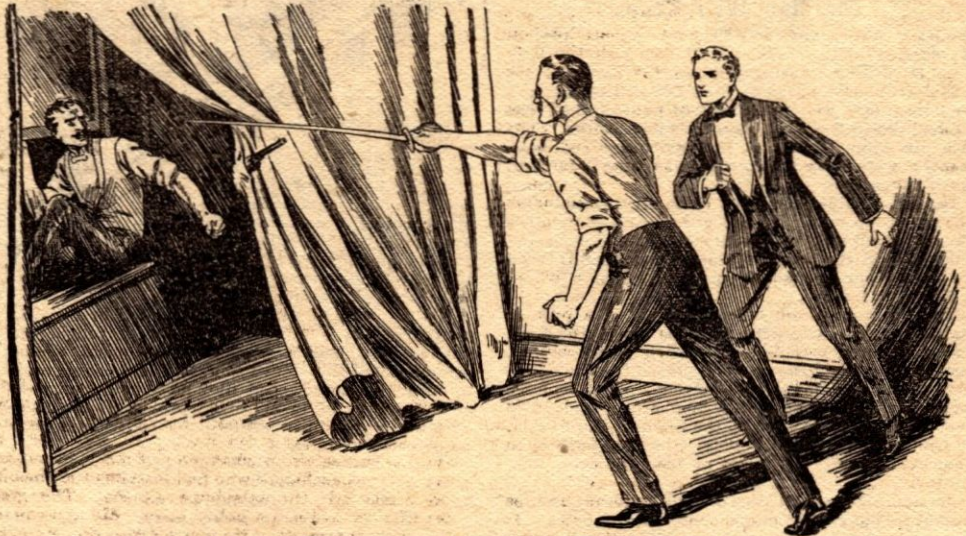
"Hallo, yes. Oh, yes. Is that you, Mr. Zansworth? Why, yes; of course I've heard of you"—this was in answer to the miser's surprised ejaculation.

Falcon Swift looked up, and his monocle dropped from his eye. His finely-pencilled brows raised slightly as he looked across at Chick, and the young sleuth, in answer to the unspoken command, swiftly rose, crossed the room, and sat down at the table, taking up notebook and pencil preparatory to making shorthand notes.

"Hallo, yes. Yes, that's so, Mr. Zansworth. I know the Cammora Private Detective Agency. All right. I'll be frank with you. I suspect them of being a crook concern. They pretend to protect high-placed people. If those people do not pay . . ."

The sporting detective paused significantly, then he added:

"Yes, I have inside knowledge. I know you to be pulling the wires of several important financial



THE GETAWAY.—Despite that menacing revolver, Falcon Swift slashed back the curtain with his rapier. An exclamation escaped his lips. As he had half expected, Fernanz was escaping via the window.



SLITHERING STEEL.—A strange thing happened. The Spaniard bent the rapier as if it were a bow, and it came hurtling, quivering from his hands. Chick, working along the wires, a little in advance of his Boss, stretched out his arm with a sharp cry.

concerns, Mr. Zansworth. That's why you rang me up, wasn't it—because you knew that I know? Yes, you can speak with absolute security."

"Very well. If I can speak, I will," came the thin, unreal voice of the miser over the wire. "The crisis has come, Mr. Swift. I thought I could fight him, but I can't. He's a big criminal—the Spaniard, Fernanz, the fencer."

"Fernanz, the fencer," Falcon Swift murmured. "He mentions his name. I imagine he's the Big Boss at the head of this Cammora gang."

The boy sleuth rose silently and took up an extra receiver attached to the telephone, specially built to enable him to "listen in." He took the notes rapidly as the miser at the other end of the wire resumed speaking.

"I've been laying for Fernanz for years. Understand. He was chief of a gang in Naples that played the same game. They'd threaten millionaires under the guise of a crook gang, and at the same time they'd approach these rich men as a detective agency, offering to protect them. Of course these millionaires paid up. If they didn't they were assassinated brutally in cold blood.

"He killed my brother ten years ago. He was a fool, my younger brother. They wanted to blackmail my brother and get money from him through fear of death. But my brother wouldn't agree. So Fernanz forced a quarrel. He's a champion fencer. He challenged the boy, and ran him through the heart."

The miser's voice broke off on a note of sudden tremulous grief.

"And so you are out for revenge, eh?" Falcon Swift queried, polishing his monocle with a silk handkerchief as he listened at the 'phone.

"I've snared him on—Fernanz," went on the quivering, oldish voice. "You see, after my brother's murder, there was agitation in certain circles. And the gang's safety was menaced. My brother happened to be a young but influential member of the

Diplomatic Service. He had friends who vigorously took up the prosecution of this gang. The gang had to quit their secret headquarters, and at the subsequent sale I—I bought the private desk of Fernanz. There's a rumour that it contains a secret that will hang him. Anyhow, it's lured him on to track me down, and now—well, I want help."

"He threatens your life?" Falcon Swift's question came sharply.

The answer was a startling one. It took the form of a sudden crack that sounded with astonishing clarity over the 'phone, followed by a shout in a thick voice of fear—the old man's voice. Then came a buzzing noise—and silence.

The sporting detective rattled the receiver handle three or four times, but in vain. He did not waste time, for he knew the affair was urgent. Hanging up the receiver, he replaced his monocle in his eye—he was in full evening dress, an Olympian, for he had anticipated dining quietly that night with his boy assistant. But now his voice was sharp as he addressed Chick.

"The Hispano, Laddie—and quickly."

"Right, Boss." The boy sleuth thrust his notebook in his pocket, and darted out of the room. In a few moments he was down in the garage attached to the flat, starting up the wonderful, sleek, speed saloon in which the detective travelled on his cases. Meanwhile Falcon Swift, on second thoughts, had sat down at the telephone again.

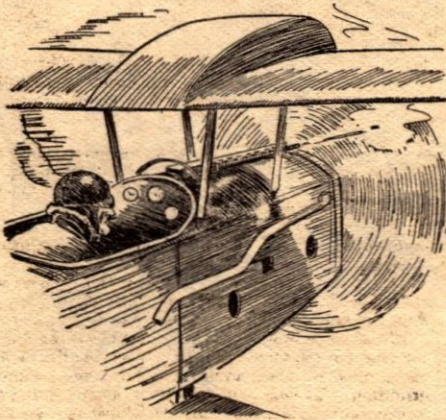
He tried from the exchange to get the address from which that dramatic call had come. He was successful in that, and he learned that the telephone had only been installed a few days previously. But he could not ascertain in what room of the big rambling house. The mechanics who had installed the machine had since left the telephone service. The great detective smiled as he jerked erect. He appreciated Jeremiah Zansworth. He guessed that the old miser had pensioned off the two mechanics who had installed

the 'phone. The man wanted no one to know his secret lair in the house.

And yet Fernanz the Fencer had found it. That sharp crack—it had been a pistol shot. Of that Falcon Swift was sure. Was Jeremiah Zansworth already dead?

Chick entered the room at that moment and Falcon Swift nodded. The car was ready.

Soon they were threading their way through the quiet streets of London. It was midnight.



Below the roar of the propeller could be heard that vicious, monotonous rattle—the rattle of a machine gun.

They came to Soho, that strange, fascinating quarter of the city. The Hispano, driven by Chick, hummed up the drive of a big, deserted, dilapidated house. The house of Jeremiah Zansworth, the miser.

The famous detective opened the front door with his skeleton key. The passage was dark as the grave, and as silent. It held a musty odour.

"Come on, Chick!"

Together they entered the house, closing the front door behind them. The white glare from Falcon Swift's flashlamp was directed down on the floor of the passage. The dust lay thick there, and he examined the footprints, criss-crossing. His lips compressed in a thin line, and the monocle dropped from his eye.

"Footprints here of a man with rubber heels, treading cautiously," he announced. "I shouldn't think they belonged to Mr. Jeremiah Zansworth, eh, laddie? More likely our friend, Fernanz the Fencer. Reconnoitring. Let's see whether he found the old fellow's secret lair."

Cautiously the detective and his boy sleuth followed the footprints on the dusty floor of the long-disused house. The corridors wound this way and that, passing innumerable rooms. But though all were furnished, none showed any signs of recent occupation. After almost an hour of research amongst the confused footprints, Falcon Swift found some that led to a blank wall—an oaken panelling in one of the corridors on the bottom floor. There they stopped. There was no footprint that retraced.

"Ah, a secret door, I'll wager," muttered the famous detective, his long, delicate fingers travelling over the panelling.

There was the sound of a click, and the detective screwed in his monocle as the panelling slid back, revealing a cavity through which the light of his flashlamp showed another winding corridor.

"We might have searched for years before we

found this, but for the footprints, laddie," he murmured. "Come on!"

Together they passed through, and traversed the winding corridor until they came to another impasse—a long line of blackened oaken panelling. Falcon Swift's fingers searched it for long minutes, in vain. He was sure that there was a secret catch somewhere, but it was so artfully concealed that he could not find it. At least, realising that every moment was precious, he took his revolver from his hip pocket, and emptied the six bullets into the woodwork, pointing the weapon upwards.

Scarce had the echoes of the racketing shot died than the detective was at the holes thus made, peering through.

An exclamation escaped him.

"He's in there, Chick—dead, I believe. Quick; we must get to him!"

He stood back as he spoke, and then hurled himself bodily at the old oaken woodwork. It splintered under the impact, and Falcon Swift punched his way through the shattered wood into the room beyond.

One glance at the remarkable, white-haired old man hunched up with head drooping, in the swivel chair sufficed for the famous criminologist.

"Dead!" he pronounced, with a curious clicking sound of regret. "A bullet, I suppose. But from where? Not from over there, surely."

And he glanced over at the shattered panels.

Old Jeremiah Zansworth, the miser, sat with the blood trickling from a wound in his temple. But he sat with his back to the panels.

"Ah! The window!" exclaimed Falcon Swift, and he crossed in three strides to the square pane of glass five feet by four which was the sole means of admitting light and air to this strange apartment.

There was a bullet hole in the window-pane. The famous detective stood back, thoughtfully removing his monocle from his right eye.

"The appliance of one of Euclid's simple principles might serve us here, Chick," he mused. "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points, eh?" In quick strides he crossed back to the huddled man in the chair, taking from his pocket a little ball of string as he did so, which he unrolled.

Then he motioned Chick to stand, holding one end of the string at the wound in the old miser's temple whilst he took the line back to the spot where the bullet hole was made in the window. He turned, and there was triumph in his keen intellectual face.

"Continue to draw that line outside, Chick, and it must inevitably reach the spot where the killer stood when he fired this shot. Come here and look, Chick," he continued as he peered through the window pane. "See, it would stretch to that window down there in the tenements opposite."

The boy sleuth by his master's side whistled softly.

The gaunt frowning tenement building opposite contained many windows, but the one at which the Monocled Manhunter pointed was still brightly lit.

"That's the one," said the Monocled Manhunter. "You stay here, Chick. But if you hear this come quickly." And he drew out a police whistle whose note was piercing, as Chick knew.

The boy sleuth nodded.

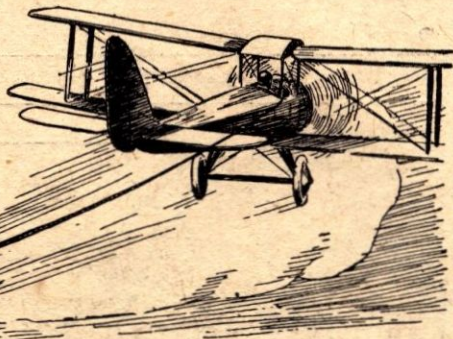
"All right, Boss."

Falcon Swift went quickly round the walls of the room, feeling with his hands like a blind man. There was a tense fascination in watching. But suddenly Chick heard a click, a panel slid back, and Falcon Swift was gone. Another click and the panel was back in place.

Chick was alone with the old man seated huddled up before his desk.

With somewhat of an eerie feeling, the boy bent over the old miser. He felt his heart. After a few

THE FLYING TARGET.—Chick felt his senses swimming as he sped through the air at the end of the rope. The other plane was firing at him.



for the lock was an ancient and exceedingly cunning one, and it would probably defy the efforts of the best of modern locksmiths to break it open.

The rage and consternation of the men was staggering. Swiftly they gabbled to one another in Spanish, a language which Chick understood in part. The key was swallowed. Fernanz the Fencer would slit their throats when he heard this. The young pup had swallowed the key. What was to be done?

All at once one of the men interposed amongst his excited companions. He held up a fat finger to his ugly, hooked nose, and cocked his head sideways, grinning. It was not a pretty sight, but it was presumably indicative that the fellow had an idea.

"He has swallowed the key," he said. "All right. We know how to make him bring it up. A joy ride in the 'plane!'"

They clapped their hands against their breeches at the idea. Chick was swiftly bound and gagged, and dragged along dark corridors out of the house. Jeremiah Zansworth, the old miser, they left alone. Presumably they, too, thought that he was dead.

The gang must have been a powerful and rich one, for in the grounds of the house were waiting two small but powerful single-seater aeroplanes. Chick quickly realised their ghastly plan. For a length of rope was produced, and he was bound like the tail of a kite to the fuselage of one of the aeroplanes.

Convulsed with fiendish enjoyment, one of the pilots got in. Chick, lying on the ground, heard the sudden roar of the engine, and the madly whirring propeller seemed to blow his head off. Then he was being dragged at hurricane rate over the rough ground.

At the end of the rope he was rising—rising into the air. A great nausea overcame him as all the blood seemed to rush to his head. His chest seemed at bursting-point, and his heart was somewhere in his mouth.

The pilot was doing stunts; looping the loop. Chick was whirled this way and that like a leaf in the wind. He was not conscious of anything, except that his heart beats were falling.

He did not know that the other 'plane was in the air until all at once the aeroplane to which he was attached took a straight course. Then, dimly, he was conscious of the roar of the other engine somewhere near.

Beneath the roar of that other engine there sounded an even more sinister note—the monotonous rattle of machine-gun fire. The pilot was firing at Chick through his propeller. Chick, his senses swimming, suddenly became aware of the bullets whining around him, and a nerve quivered madly in his temple. They meant to kill him then!

(Continued on page 35.)

minutes' examination he jerked erect with eyes dilated.

He had made a discovery.

The old miser was not dead; merely stunned by a glancing bullet. Falcon Swift, in his haste, had made a mistake; seldom that he made so annoying an error. But his eagerness in the chase of Fernanz had probably induced it.

Chick stood by the mahogany roll-top desk, thinking.

He started almost out of his skin as he felt a sudden weak touch on his arm. Turning, he saw Jeremiah Zansworth staring at him with glazed eyes while he held something out—a small key—and his white lips moved voicelessly.

The truth struck Chick. The old miser had received such a shock as to render him speechless, and he was frantically endeavouring to convey some message.

Chick bent down and read from the movements of his lips what he was trying to say.

"The key. Shut the desk. Quickly."

Chick took the key—it was very small—and turned to the desk. He had scarce brought down the roll top when he stared, transfixed with horror.

Four men were framed in the aperture caused by the smashed panel—four as sinister-looking men as Chick had ever seen in his life. Two of them wore the leathern jackets and helmets of airmen, whilst the other two had their caps reversed. They were swarthy, beady-eyed foreigners with thick, grinning lips. Just primitive brutes, and they were all armed.

Chick's instant thought was for the secret that roll-top desk contained.

He inserted the key in the lock, and with a single movement turned it. It was done then. And though the four foreigners shouted and rushed in with revolvers held in loose menace, Chick merely smiled, his hand at his mouth.

They grabbed him on all sides.

"The key," mouthed one of them savagely.

"Hand it over, or we croak you."

"Sorry, can't, old sport," grinned Chick. "You see, I've swallowed it."

He knew that the secret of the desk was safe now,

AMAZING OUTBREAK OF PRACTICAL JOKING AT BLANWAY COLLEGE

HEADMASTER HOAXED! | BURGLAR IN SCHOOL SENSATIONAL ARREST



If the Atlantic Ocean was a Bath of Hot Water—Scorcher Smith Would be in It. It's his Natural Environment.

Braith Gets Busy.

DON BRAITH, captain of the Fourth at Blanway College, stared despondently through the window of Study 20.

"Things are beastly slow," he remarked morosely.

Tom Warren, wrestling with a crossword puzzle, merely grunted.

"Suppose we go to see Scorcher Smith," suggested Angel Parsons. "Perhaps he'll have a scheme to liven things up."

Braith sported contemptuously. "Smith?" he growled. "D'you think Smith is the only fellow in the school who can work a jape?"

"Well, he's done some great stunts," said Parsons gently.

"That's just the point," agreed Warren. "Our reputation's gone to pot since Scorcher came. It's time we regained some of our lost laurels."

Braith was silent for a moment, then a sudden gleam came into his eyes. "Gad!" he ejaculated, and proceeded to outline the scheme that had just come to him. When he had finished, his chums burst into a shriek of laughter.

The door was opened amid the hilarity and the inimitable Scorcher Smith thrust his head into the study.

"What's the joke?" he asked.

Parsons wiped his streaming eyes. "Braith, he—oh! oh! oh! It's dashed funny—ha! ha! ha!—the jape of the season. Ho! ho! ho!"

Scorcher gazed at the hilarious junior with growing alarm.

"Off your rocker?" he asked politely, and turned his eyes appealingly to Don. "Braith, enlighten a

fellow, will you? Parsons isn't very lucid."

"Only a jape on the New House bounders," explained Don. "I'm going to tog up as a burglar and break into old 'Waterworks' room. I'll tie up and gag the old boy, and pinch his money just for the sake of appearances. After that I'm going to pay a visit to Bates and Co. I haven't worked out all the details yet, but I won't half give 'em a scare."

Smith nodded approvingly. "Sound scheme, laddie, but you've overlooked one point."

"What's that?" asked the captain of the Fourth. "Your inability to act the part of a modern Raffles," said Scorcher rudely.

Don clenched his fists. "Look here—" he growled.

"All right, old fellow. Have it your own way, but don't say I didn't warn you if you're bowled out." And with a cheery nod he lounged out of the study.

"If cheek was money, that fellow would be a millionaire," said Don, scathingly.

BOOM! Boom!

The last strokes of twelve had hardly died away before Don Braith slipped out of bed. He crossed over to the slumbering Angel and shook him by the shoulder.

"Wassup?" asked Parsons drowsily.

"Get up, you lazy bounder," hissed Don. "You've got to help me to dress up."

"Oh, run away and pick daisies," Parsons invited, turning over.

Don gave an exclamation of annoyance and, grabbing his chum by the arm, dragged him out of bed. Angel yelped as he smote the hard floor, but the shock had the desired effect of awakening him.

"I wish you fellows would perform your physical jerks in respectable hours," came the drawing tones of Scorchers Smith.

"Oh, shurrup, Smith," growled Don, tugging at the reluctant Warren's sheets. "Kim out, Rip Van Winkle!"

Warren came out with a bump, muttering under his breath.

Parsons stifled a yawn and lighted a couple of candles, while Tom produced the theatrical "props." From these Braith selected a loud check suit, a pair of yellow boots, a muffler and a cap of startling and original design.

He dressed quickly, and when he had darkened his chin to give it an unshaven appearance, his aspect would have struck terror into the heart of the bravest.

"How's that?" he asked, slipping on a black mask.

"Got your gun?" grinned Scorchers.

Don snatched up a "property" revolver and thrust it into his pocket.

"Cheerio, you fellows. I shan't be long." He climbed through the window and descended the stout ivy creepers. Fortunately, the night was dark, and, keeping well within the shadows, he

The amateur Raffles chuckled under his breath. "Brass! Dough! Spondulicks! Coin! Money!" he explained.

"Oh, money, you mean? To one who is so unfamiliar with the argot of the underworld, your expressions are a little difficult to comprehend!"

"Nah then, no lip. Let's be touching."

The housemaster thrust his scraggy legs out of bed and slipped on a dressing-gown.

"No tricks, mind yer," warned Don. Mr. Waterhouse, muttering under his breath, unlocked a drawer in his wardrobe, and took out a small cashbox. Reluctantly he handed it over to Don.

"Robbery by force is a serious offence, my man—"

"Oh, stow it," grunted the captain of the Fourth. "Now sit down."

He pushed the protesting Housemaster into a chair and pulled a length of cord from his pocket.

Mr. Waterhouse blinked uneasily at him. "I refuse to submit—"



THE CRACKSMAN CRACKS A JOKE!
Ordering Bates to lie face downwards over the bed, the disguised Don produced a ball of cord which he threw to Barson. "Tie him up, Spindleshanks!" he commanded fiercely.

crossed the quad and stopped under the window of old "Waterworks" room.

Mr. Waterhouse, senior master of the New House, was equally unpopular among his own boys as with their rivals, and he suffered much at the hands of Scorchers and Co.

The wall was covered with ivy, and the ascent presented no difficulties. Noiselessly Don opened the window and crept into the room.

S-z-z-z!

He grinned in the darkness as he heard the Housemaster's snore, and tiptoed to the bedside.

"Hands up!" he growled, pressing the end of the revolver against Mr. Waterhouse's cheek.

With a smothered yell the master sat up in bed. "B—burglars!" he stammered between chattering teeth.

"Where's yer 'oof?" Don asked gruffly.

"Hoof? Don't be ridiculous, my dear man. Do you mistake me for a horse?"

Don made no answer, but proceeded to bind the Housemaster to his seat with many workmanlike knots. The victim eyed him apprehensively as he slipped off his muffler. "Look here, my man. M—m—m—!"

His remarks were drowned in the folds of Don's scarf.

The japer picked up the cashbox and, chuckling inwardly, crossed the room. He passed through the door into the corridor.

"Now for Bates and Co." he muttered. Everything was dark and still and, as he proceeded towards the Fourth-form dormitory he reflected happily on the success of his jape. Softly he opened the door and walked in.

A watery moon thrust itself through the clouds, and by its pale light, Don made out the row of slumbering forms.

Silence reigned, except for the deep and regular breathing of a score of sleepers, punctuated at intervals by William George Bates's unmusical snore. Braith knocked over a chair, and the noise awakened the bully.

He sat up in bed, and a startled gasp escaped his lips as he beheld the apparition in the check suit.

"Burglars!" he yelled. "Gerrup, you fellows!" "Stow it," grunted Don, "or I'll pump yer full of lead!"

This dreadful threat convinced Bates that silence, in certain circumstances, is golden, but his cry had awakened the others, and they sat up in bed with startled expressions.

"Get out, all of yer," snapped Don, brandishing his weapon, "and line up against that wall. Look slippery now!"

The revolver looked very businesslike, and the New House Fellows lost no time in obeying the command. Don jerked a ball of stout cord from his pocket.

"Ere, monkey-face," he said, indicating Bates. "Lie down on that bed, face downwards."

"I'm dashed if I will," retorted Bates rebelliously. Don assumed a threatening attitude. "You won't, eh?"

He lifted the revolver and pointed the barrel direct at the other's head.

"All right, I'll go," assented the bully hastily. He threw himself face downwards across the bed, and Don beckoned to Barson, to whom he handed the ball of cord.

"Tie him up, spindle shanks, spread-eagle like, and no jiggery-pokery work. Then do the same to the rest of these scarecrows.

Barson obeyed sullenly and within half-an-hour nineteen out of the twenty New House fellows were gagged and spread-eagled face downwards across their own beds.

There remained but Barson to attend to, and he was too scared to offer any resistance. At the point of the revolver he was compelled to secure his own feet to the bedposts, and Don quickly completed the job.

He stepped back and surveyed the score of writhing juniors with a deep chuckle.

"Put up your hands!"

Don wheeled round sharply and saw to his horror Mr. Waterhouse framed in the doorway. He held an old-fashioned musket in his hands, and the barrel was pointed directly at Don's head.

The revolver dropped from Don's fingers and he raised his hands above his head.

"How—how did you get away?" he stammered.

Mr. Waterhouse snapped on the light and advanced into the room. He favoured Don with a vinegary smile. "Worked my hands loose; a difficult job, my man, but I, Horatius Waterhouse, accomplished it."

He glanced about him, and for the first time noticed the peculiar attitudes of his pupils. "Gug—good heavens!" he gasped.

Don, seeing the master's attention, was momentarily engaged, dashed for the door. Fortune was against him, however, for he tripped and sprawled headlong.

Bang! Mr. Waterhouse fired out of sheer excitement. Luckily the barrel was pointing upwards, and nothing more serious resulted than a shower of plaster descending upon his own head.

Don was temporarily stunned, and before he could regain his wind the dormitory door was flung open, and in streamed the Rev. J. G. Brown, followed by a crowd of masters and boys, including Scorchers Smith, Warren and Parsons.

"Bless my soul! exclaimed the Head. "What does this mean, Mr. Waterhouse?"

The Housemaster swelled with importance. "A burglar, sir," he explained, indicating Don, "whom I have captured."

"Has he stolen anything?"

"My cashbox, but, if I mistake not, I see it lying there on the floor—unopened. I flatter myself that I have frustrated his evil designs," he announced pompously.

The Headmaster was obviously agitated. "Dear me, this is most distressing. Jesson, please be good enough to telephone for P.-C. Horrocks to come and take this man away. I could not sleep soundly with him under the same roof. Some of you release those unfortunate boys at once."

The news that a burglar had been captured spread round the school like wildfire, and the dormitory passage was crowded with curious fellows. With a prefect on either side of him, Don was escorted to the punishment room and locked in.

Warren and Parsons groaned in chorus, and the former sought out Carstairs. "Where's Scorchers, Car? Something must be done. Old Don will get the sack for this."

Carstairs looked round for his chum, but Scorchers was not in evidence.

At that minute he was very busy!

A Staggering Surprise.

SOME twenty minutes after the door had been locked on Don, the portly form of P.-C. Horrocks, the village constable, was seen striding across the quadrangle.

The Headmaster, standing on the steps of the New House, breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thank heaven, here comes Horrocks. Now we shall be able to go to bed without fear."

With the heavy, measured tread of the true policeman, the man in blue approached the Head and touched his helmet respectfully.

"You're sooner than I expected, Horrocks," remarked "J. G."

"Yesser, I lost no time. Now w're's the varmint?"

"Follow me," invited the Head, leading the way indoors.

"Er—have you brought handcuffs?" he asked as they ascended the stairs. "I fear this man is a desperate character."

The constable tapped his pocket, and the responsive jingle answered the Head's question.

The Rev. J. G. Brown stopped before "Nobody's Study" and turned the key in the lock. P.-C. Horrocks whipped out his truncheon and grasped it firmly as the door was opened.

Don blinked at the bull's-eye and for one moment thought of revealing his identity and throwing himself on the Head's mercy. His brain worked swiftly. Perhaps on the way to the police-station he would be able to elude the limb of the law and race back to the school before his absence was discovered. Anyway, things could not be made worse by prolonging the deception a little.

P.-C. Horrocks grasped him firmly by the shoulder. "I arrests you on a charge of burglary, and I warns you wotever you sez will be taken down and used against you."

Don rose to his feet and in the grip of the man of the law, walked along the passage. Round corners, over banister rails and out of doorways, boys thrust their heads, eager to catch a glimpse of the procession.

At the door the Head bade the gallant constable "Good night."

"I expect I shall be required to give evidence at court?" he asked.

(Continued on page 24.)

A Wreck In The Storm—Wrapped In Mystery—Dick Turpin Solves It,
And Finds A New Member For His Merry Band Of Highwaymen.



The Storm.

IT came like the clap of Doom, that last peal of thunder.

A moment previously the dark, tempestuous sky had been torn by zig-zagging forks of lightning, proof positive that the storm was right overhead. For when thunder and lightning are instantaneous the elements are at their most furious.

Now the thunder was continuous, like the barrage of monstrous, unheard of artillery. The heavens crashed and reverberated, and ever and anon forking streaks of blinding white light slashed and stabbed with crackling menace across the dark vaults.

As each flash of lightning came from out of the void, two ships, galleons, were lit as if in white fire. They were riding helplessly on the ridge of the waves, to descend into the troughs.

One of them was of infinitely greater tonnage than the other, and its deck was deserted. But high in the main-mast was a man. And the lightning lit him, showing his dark complexion, his tremendous physique.

The man was a negro. Moreover, he was one who soon was to become known to fame as Bootles, the famous black hightobyman of Dick Turpin's band, operating at nights chiefly on the Great North Road. But at that time Bootles was not known to fame. This was his first sight of England, high in the mast of the galleon, with the rain driving at him and the wind trying to tear him from his precarious perch.

The lightning showed the decks deserted, the poops uncovered, with the grinning muzzles of the cannon directed still, by a strange freak of chance, at the vessel not a thousand yards away that mounted and plunged erratically on the madly-heaving bosom of the sea.

It was proof of how suddenly that mid-summer storm had descended upon the white cliffs of Dover.

The cliffs were some distance away. They presented a sullen, defiant face to the driving rain, and to the black man aloft they appeared like white ridges in the distance round which the lightning played. Yet they seemed to frown upon the four-masted vessel with its trained cannon that had dared to show its warlike tendencies in sight of England.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

Heigho for the Highways, with Dick Turpin Riding at the Head of his Highwaymen on Black Bess, his Gallant Mare. This Thrilling Tale of One of the Most Romantic Periods of English History, tells how Bootles, the Black Highwayman, came to join Forces with the man in the Mask and Ruffles.

The white cliffs of Dover seemed to beckon on the smaller ship that plunged bravely down each trough, only to rise on the crest again.

The lightning lit something floating high over the warlike galleon. A black flag, unfurled in the tornado of wind, bearing the skull and crossbones grotesquely clear.

The white light of the heaven's wrath played on the deserted decks, and it showed the uncovered hatchway down which crouched men who were armed to the teeth.

They were frightened for their lives. For near this spot were rocks upon which they might be drifting. The storm had come so suddenly. It was a typical piece of midsummer's madness, that storm. The night had been oppressive, still and dark, but it had whispered nothing of the terrible elemental forces that were to be launched upon the sea and the land.

They had prepared for war, the men who manned the larger galleon. For days they had trailed their prey. And with the coming of night they had crept upon the galleon.

With guns trained, they had crept on, closer.

And then the pirate ship was caught in an awful trap set by Nature. As they swept on, those aboard heard the distant rumbling of thunder coming nearer, ever nearer. Lightning streaked the sky. They were plunging madly, with guns trained. They had been caught unawares by a midsummer's storm.

In a few moments it descended upon them in all its wrath.

The pirates, led by Barbarraso, their fiendish captain, crept down the hatchways, there to shelter from the storm. They were arrant cowards in the

face of Nature's sudden fury. They could do nothing except direct their pistols upon the man whom they had urged up the rigging to haul down the main-sails—the giant negro.

He was Barbarraso's slave. Barbarraso had bought him from the plantations in Jamaica, for he had been attracted by the negro's immense physique. And the negro's master had not been reluctant to sell him.

Bootles had been a persistent rebel upon the plantations. He was like a dangerous volcano, liable to erupt at any moment. And he seemed to wield an uncanny influence over the other natives.

His master had caused him to be flogged unmercifully, but Bootles' scars healed quickly, and his good humour was unfailing.

Yet he had a tigerish cunning. Once he attacked and broke up a brutal overseer who had gone too far. Bootles' master would gladly have had him done to death, but, somehow, the opportunity never presented itself. The other oppressed slaves watched Bootles as a dying man watches for the dawn. He was their only hope. They would see him beaten, scourged, but assuredly they would have risen in revolt had he been done to death.

Therefore Bootles' master was glad to sell him to Barbarraso, the pirate chief. Barbarraso had sailed away from Jamaica, and when twenty-four hours at sea he had uncovered the guns on the poops and had the sides of the vessel painted black by the ship's painter. Moreover, her name was changed from *Isabella* to *The Raker*. She was a freebooter, sailing the Jolly Roger!

And Barbarraso had made Bootles' life a worse hell than ever it had been upon the plantations. Bootles had been flogged from morn till night, and he had been unable to resist, for he proved to be a very bad sailor. Indeed, at that very moment he was groaning to himself with comical despair as he clung desperately to the rigging.

"Guess dis ain't so much ob a good ting. No suh. Bootles, he's gwan be mighty glad when he sees de dear ole land again. If ever. Yes, suh. Lawks, dis ole boat, she shore do rock."

At that very moment *The Raker* was tearing down a mighty trough in the sea, tearing down with the sea looming above like an immense black mountain ridge.

Far away in the trough was the smaller galleon, a red light still floating at her prow. The great roller swept forward, and the galleon rose upon the crest, rocking recklessly, her decks streaming water. She was flung forward, high on the wave, and then suddenly there came a tearing, rending crash, and the vessel was shocked to a standstill, the sea pouring through her as if she had been a sieve.

And of a verity a sieve she was, that once proud and boastful galleon. She had been flung straight on a jagged needle of rock, and held there, splintered like matchwood with the seas raking her. All her occupants down in the hold were drowned, and the black man had disappeared from aloft in the rigging.

Bootles! What had happened to him? He had been flung down far into the trough of the sea when that mighty shock had come, and he had gone so far under water that he thought he would never come up again.

When at length his black, shining face did appear above the surface the lightning played in white fire around a vessel that still bravely rode the waves.

Bootles saw it not more than a few yards away from him, and he struck out for it desperately, scarcely believing his luck to be true.

He was a poor swimmer. If only he could reach it in time! Bootles used all his mighty strength then to reach the vessel's side. He was conscious

one moment of rising high, and in almost the next of being far down in the depths with the angry heavens scarce visible for the vast mountain of water that rose above him. And the vessel. Where was it?

Then he rose again, and to his glad relief he saw it. He struck out, and a great shout left his lips as he saw a figure on deck throw out a rope—to him!

"Golly, dat's the decestest ting dat is," he muttered through clenched teeth. "Just let me get dat bit ob rope, an' . . . oh, boy!"

Desperately he clutched, and his capable black hands caught the rope. Next minute he was swarming up the side of the ship as it plunged down madly again into the depths.

Sky and depths seemed to be turning topsy-turvy, with the lightning and the thunder as terrible orchestral accompaniment to the upheaval. Bootles had gone in terror and sickness since they had put out from Jamaica, but never had he known such sheer primitive fear as at that moment.

He hauled up hand over hand like a monkey climbing a jungle tree. The rope was tied to the rail, and dimly Bootles could just discern the figure of an elegant man high on the poop.

He wore a silver-gray coat, a flowered waistcoat and high, gleaming top boots. His hair was tied back with a bow from a pale but extremely handsome and aristocratic face. It had blue eyes that could dance with fun, and fair, finely pencilled brows. A sensitive nose, and the lips and chin almost of a woman. Yet it was a man who stood there so bravely, almost disdainfully to clutch at the deck rails for support as Bootles clambered up the side of the vessel. For had he not untied that rope himself—that rope that lashed him to the mainmast? He had untied it so that he was no longer secure and had thrown it over the side to Bootles' aid.

Bootles dimly appreciated this as he climbed up on to the poop. He saw the young man there, swaying and staggering as he clung to the poop rails while the vessel madly plunged away in a slithering death slide. And Bootles' eyes bogged.

"Golly, if dat aint—" he began, and then stopped, staring, fascinated.

The man made him a little bow, with a tiny, twisted smile on his well-shaped lips. "You know me then?" he murmured. "Egad, you will not know me much longer, my ebony friend. For methinks this the end that comes now."

And he glanced upwards at the mountainous wall of water that was curling over in white foam as if to fall sheer down on top of them. Somehow they appeared to be rising, yet Bootles knew that this time they must almost certainly meet their fate, for some of that water must fall on them; they were directly underneath it. He made a rush forward and grabbed at the other man.

Bootles knew that the force of the down-pouring flood must tear the man's grasp from the rails. He would go just as the other members of the ship's crew undoubtedly had gone, swept away. Only he who had been lashed remained, and now he too must go to Neptune's depths, unless Bootles could save him.

Bootles had no doubt of his own strength or ability to remain on the stranded and practically doomed vessel. Headlong he flung himself, gripping the poop rails, one on either side of this mysterious, handsome stranger, and pressing his body against the rails so that he held them both there in a grip like a vice.

Came the sudden avalanche of water.

Bootles bent his head to the fury of that wave, just as the younger man did. But Bootles was taller and broader, and on his head the full force descended.

Grimly he held on, determined he would not let go if it were his death clutch. He believed that he was in the sea again now. Water virtually surrounded him on all sides up to his neck, with not a chance to escape. He was engulfed. And his newly found companion who had rescued him with the rope? What of him?

Bootles suddenly found himself lifted from the waters and the vessel was lurching, running, like the crippled, broken thing it was, straight through the storm-ridden night for the rocks that had already lured the galleon to her doom.

Some current was carrying it on.

Crash!

Bootles, sinking, with swiftly eddying and flowing water on all sides of him, desperately clawed at space. He was going down for the last time. He had failed. And what was more, he had failed in the mightiest, most important task he had ever

assayed. He cared not now how soon death came to him, for he believed that another more worthy than he had gone to his death.

Nevertheless, as his clutching fingers touched something, he held madly and strove to open his eyes to see what this thing was to which he was clinging. Certainly it was substantial, and it was of wood. So his subconscious instinct told him. Indeed, he did succeed in opening his eyes, but he did not know to what he was clinging—until afterwards.

Enter Dick Turpin And Co.

There sounded the soft, subdued pad-pad of horses' hoofs, and ever and anon showed the flash of a lantern which came and disappeared again. Horsemen were meeting on the Canterbury-Dover Road, and they were evidently in haste.

It was an ill chosen night for travel, for, after many days of heat, had come a storm, that was almost tropical in its immensity. The rain came down in a solid sheet, and ever so often the dreary wall of darkness was lifted in startling fashion by the vicious, crackling lightning.

Yet the horsemen bestirred themselves as if in haste and upon an important mission.

One horseman rode up under the furiously creaking sign board of the "Black Bull" Inn, and came to a standstill, scarcely touching the reins of the magnificent black mare he rode.

As he sat in the saddle he peered round him anxiously, and the lightning revealed a startling act. Over the upper part of his face he wore a black crepe mask!

The black three-cornered hat, trimmed with silver, and the big silver-grey riding coat somehow gave this man an exceedingly striking appearance. Or perhaps it was his poise—a poise of tense waiting and listening. For certainly he was no dandy in the accepted term of the word. At his wrists frilled Mechlin lace, and his pistols were prettily jewelled and chased. He could no doubt toy with a snuff box, or make a pretty speech as well as most of the young exquisites. But his tastes did not lie in that direction.

His black mask clearly denoted his "trade." He was a highwayman. Moreover he was Dick Turpin, the most ardently sought rumpad chief in England at that time.

A price was upon the highwayman's head, and upon all of his band. Yet that deterred them nothing. In spite of tipstaves, thieftakers and Bow Street Runners they had broken through from the North side of London to Canterbury, and now were free to go on the run as they liked.

Not that this was a fit night for holding up a

ROAD UP YOU RUNNERS.—As the Bow Street Police came charging down the narrow defile, Bootles, aloft on the cliffs, lifted the huge rock and hurled it down, effectively blocking the passage.



coach. The storm was awesome. But Dick Turpin had called out his band, and obey his signals they must, even if the end of the world were coming, which, indeed, did not seem so much out of the question to-night.

They rode out from four different hostelries round about Canterbury. There was Tom King, broad-shouldered, quiet, kindly and gentlemanly always, and there was Fifteen String Jack, a highwayman dandy; there was Kelly O'Flaherty, the Irish rumpad, and Jock McKie, the jovial Scottish Laird who had been turned out of his inheritance because of his loyalty to Bonny Prince Charlie.

Indeed, they were all Stuart men. None would give allegiance to the German upstart, George of Hanover, who had planted himself on the English throne, and all hoped to see Prince Charlie land and triumph in England.

As they came riding up, Dick Turpin motioned them with a gesture of his hand to make as little noise as possible.

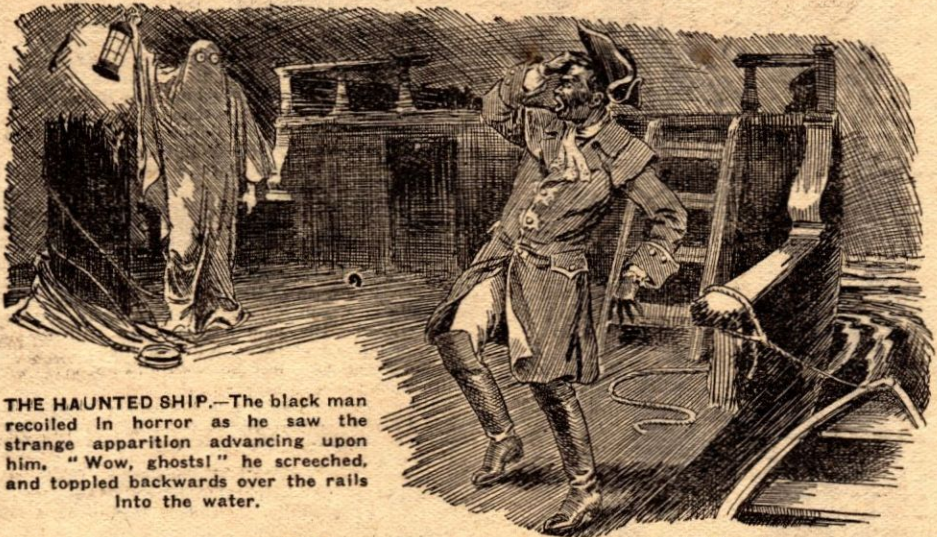
Though, indeed, the volume of the thunder was

There were still trees on the Dover Road, whose shadow they might have sought on their mad, wild ride. But Dick Turpin's band disdained anything but the open road—they would fight if they were stopped—and so they rode on with a swift clumpety-clump of horse's hoofs, which sounded preternaturally loud now that the storm was dying, the lightning coming only fitfully and the thunder far away.

They little guessed that they had been seen, and by Jeremy Sixsmith, the vicious, bold and resourceful chief of the Bow Street Runners.

Captain Jeremy Sixsmith hated Dick Turpin with a hatred that went hungry for revenge. Many times the famous highwaymen had cheated him and made him a laughing stock, and the Bow Street Chief was determined that he himself would corner Dick Turpin and all his gang. At present he was the favourite of George. To keep that favour he must see that this turbulent rogue of the highways was hanged at Tyburn.

It mattered nothing to Captain Sixsmith that several times Dick, in personal encounters, had spared



THE HAUNTED SHIP.—The black man recoiled in horror as he saw the strange apparition advancing upon him. "Wow, ghosts!" he screeched, and toppled backwards over the rails into the water.

so deafening still as to drown all other sound, and the lightning was still streaking the sky.

"Faith, what is toward, Dick, that ye call us from our beds this night?" asked Tom King. "A pestilence on it! 'Tis not fit to turn out a dog."

"Believe me," Dick Turpin answered with a little flash of white teeth under his mask, "I did not call you out for nothing. There is a signal from Allerdycy at the coast."

"What?" echoed his four highwaymen companions. "Then Prince Charles hath landed?"

Dick Turpin shook his head. "'Tis ill news," he said in a dull voice. "Prince Charles' ship hath foundered in this accursed storm within sight of Dover, and it is believed that he is lost."

Expressions of consternation escaped the four highwaymen's lips, and immediately they set spurs to their horses, galloping on the road to Dover.

They recked little of consequences just then in their anxiety to be of aid if possible to the leader of their cause. Perhaps indeed they were a little wild and reckless, in spite of Dick Turpin's repeated caution.

They all wore their masks, and it is likely they would have pistol-balled any who tried to stop them, so desperate was their hurry.

the Bow Street Chief's life. It is certain that Sixsmith himself would have pistolled Dick Turpin at sight. And so the deadly feud between them was rather unevenly conducted, for Dick Turpin, always humane in his methods, would not, if possible, take life, nor would he allow any of his band to do so. Otherwise the famous Captain Sixsmith of Bow Street might long ago have been under the soil.

Perhaps he knew that, and perhaps the knowledge nourished his hate. He had been waiting in Canterbury for sight of Dick Turpin and his band, for, in a curious, inexplicable way, knowledge had come to him that they were making a move into Kent.

He had seen the meeting of the five highwaymen, had noted their tense attitude, and the weight they seemed to give to what Dick Turpin had to say. And then when he saw them ride off in haste, Jeremy Sixsmith proceeded to collect all his men hidden in Canterbury, and in a state of considerable excitement he gave chase.

With his men he rode ruthlessly through the orchards at the side of the road, trampling underfoot the red and gold apples that had fallen in the storm. His whole object was to remain unseen. When he

(Continued on page 2.)

Our Steeplejack's Aerial Acrobatics include a Boxing Match on a Skyscraper Chimney This Week.



Stan Accepts a Challenge.

GOSH, Podger, the nerve of the fellow! And he's only been in Overtown two weeks. Look at that."

Stan Rogers, steeplejack, held out a copy of *The Overtown Gazette* towards his chum and assistant, Podger McIntosh, pointing at an advert. on the front page.

CHALLENGE.

I, Rupert Franson, hereby challenge any steeplejack to a side stake wager of £20, the issue involved being an ascent of any chimney or steeple in Overtown. I claim to be able to climb and repair, adjust scaffolding, and in every way deal with steeplejack repairs more quickly and expertly than any other steeplejack in the town.

"Weel," Podger looked up from the startling advertisement, "yon's a verra modest young man. But what's he after?"

"Contracts," answered Stan shortly. "If he wins his challenge he'll get the best work in the town. But he's not going to win it if I can help. Come on."

Rising to his feet Stan pushed back his chair from the small restaurant table, at which the chums had been having their dinner. Podger gave a rueful glance at a piece of pie and then surreptitiously slipped it into his pocket. Podger hated leaving anything but clean plates, which was the reason why he resembled a huge barrel more than anything else.

Ten minutes later Stan was standing in a small office facing a huge, broad shouldered man. Franson was an unprepossessing sort of fellow; his square face seemed to be set in a perpetual scowl.

"Yus, young fellow," he said; "I'm Franson, an' I'm goin' to get the climbin' jobs in this town. Wot's more, I don't want no lip from young kids. See that?"

Quite suddenly his right hand gripped Stan's left arm above the muscle in a vice-like grip.

"That's a taste of my strength," he leered. "That's the kind of feller you're up against, see?" Stan never moved. The grip on his arm tightened,

STAN IS DELIBERATELY CHALLENGED TO SUICIDAL FEATS. BUT WITH PODGER, HIS FAT PAL, HE WINS THROUGH ALL PERILS.

and it was clear that Stan's strength was gorilla-like. But Stan did not even wince.

"Best let go my arm, Franson," he said calmly. "I don't like you mauling me."

"Wot?" Franson belloved his rage out. "You young dog, I'll—"

His left arm came round for Stan's jaw. But, somehow, the punch missed. Then something struck Franson a blow behind the ear that shot him half across the small office.

"Now, Franson," Stan stared calmly at the bruised knuckles of his right hand. "I'm ready to accept your climbing challenge. To-morrow morning will suit me. Get your judge and choose the stack. I'll climb anything, anywhere."

THE idea is to scare me out of accepting his challenge, Podger. Anyhow, the thing's fixed up for to-morrow morning. We're climbing those two old chimneys in the Darrant Mill. You'll sweat to-morrow if we have to include scaffolding, my plump pippin."

Podger made no answer. He was scanning the short note that had been left at Stan's home half an hour previously. To the shrewd Scottish lad there was something behind the note from Franson intimating that he had fixed up for the climbing to be done at the Darrant Mill. The note ended: *Best give up your idea of accepting.*

"Anyhoo" Podger reflected, "if anything happens to Stan, Franson will hae me to reckon wi."

Bidding good night to his chum, Podger made his way home. It was dark by this time and Podger decided to take a short cut across a huge square of deserted ground where some new houses were being built.

He had passed the first half-dozen houses when a slight sound sent his gaze upwards. Hurting down from one of the partly built roofs was a great scaffolding plank. Podger saw it looming through the darkness, and in an instant he had leaped aside. The plank crashed within a few inches of where he had been standing! Podger stared up at the house, from which not a sound came. Then, with a shrug of his fat shoulders, he entered the building.

"Canna have planks fallin' doon like this," he



THE VICTIM FOILS THE VILLAIN.—The teeming sand threatened to fill Podger's prison and suffocate the game youngster. An idea flashed into his mind. Prodding his bundled jacket into the hole he effectively blocked it.

muttered. "That yin might hae killed me. I'll jist see—"

Podger broke off. Two shadowy figures swept down the stairs. He felt his right smash into a man's face, and then a gorilla-like grip enfolded him, effectually blocking his arms.

"Don't struggle or I'll break your bones," growled a voice that Podger recognised immediately. It was Franson's.

Mouthing curses, Franson's accomplice got to his feet and struck a match.

"Fetch him down to the cellar," he growled. "I'll show you how to fix him."

Roughly Podger was hustled down the stairs and into the cellar of the house. Here Franson's accomplice procured a candle and lit it. His face was contorted in a fiendish grin.

"There's a few tons of sand in the room above this cellar. We'll make a hole in the roof and let it trickle through."

Podger blanched, and made a futile effort to break Franson's grip. They were going to smother him alive!

Quickly Franson's accomplice smashed at the cellar roof with an iron bar, breaking through the plaster in a few minutes. Through the hole a steady stream of sand commenced to dribble to the cellar.

"You can loose him, now, Franson." The giant's accomplice dropped to his feet. "He'll never get out of here when we've locked the cellar door. Reckon a few hours will see him out of the way. Come on, we've got to fix that bomb in the chimney. When that young pig accepts the challenge to-morrow mornin' he'll make his last climb."

Leaving the candle spluttering on the cellar floor,

the thugs made for the door. Podger heard it bang to and the bolts shoot home.

For a moment the fat youngster stood without moving. He could hear the steady silting noise of the sand as it trickled through into the cellar.

Picking up the candle he located the cellar door. It was a great, iron-studded door, and it was bolted from the outside. It would be futile to try and break through that thick wood.

"No guid at a'." Podger's gaze swung to the hole in the roof. It had widened perceptibly. Already the sand had formed a mound that was knee high.

Like a flash the idea shot into Podger's brain. In an instant he had torn off his coat and rolled it into a bundle. Reaching up with the iron bar the thug had left he prodded the coat into the hole in the roof, effectually blocking the dribbling sand.

"That's settled ye, anyhoo. So long's that coat haulds, I'm safe, and the builders will be here in the morn to let me out."

With the candle beside him, Podger settled himself on the cellar floor to wait.

The Bomb in the Chimney.

"THAT'S funny! Podger should have been here on time. Surely he's not forgotten?"

Stan stared with a puzzled frown at the tall, Darrant Mill chimneys. The old Mill had been closed down for some years, and as the two high chimneys were within two hundred yards of each other they formed an ideal spot for Franson's challenge.

Franson and a thin-faced, steep-shouldered man stood at the foot of one chimney, while Stan stood at the other, his climbing gear on the ground beside him. In the mill yard a small group of men watched interestedly. The local newspaper had a photographer there, bent on taking a snap of the "climb," and the judge was a well-known sportsman.

It had been agreed that the winner of the challenge would give his prize to the local charities and, altogether it looked as if Franson's challenge was a thoroughly sporting offer. But Stan was puzzled and suspicious. Early morning though it was Podger should have been on hand. Stan had never known him to miss a "climb."

"Yer pardner ain't turned up, eh?" Franson had strode across the mill yard to confront Stan. "Well, I reckon we can't wait all day. I'll agree to cut out scaffolding and let the judge decide between me and you on climbin'. Are ye ready. First man to reach the chimney top wins."

Stan nodded, and with a scowl on his ugly face Franson strode back to the foot of his chimney. The judge gave the signal, and next instant Stan was fixing his first climbing ladder at the chimney side. With amazing rapidity the steeplejacks hammered home the staples of the climbing ladders and began to ascend.

Not until they had climbed half-way up the huge chimneys did either pause for breath. Then, Stan, looking towards his opponent, felt a strange suspicion shoot into his brain. Franson, almost level with Stan on his own chimney, was staring across with a diabolical grin at the young steeplejack.

"Gosh," Stan muttered, "there's something queer about that—"

He broke off suddenly. A yell from below sent his gaze to the mill yard. Podger, in his shirt sleeves, had smashed through the small crowd in the mill yard and was now swarming up Stan's chimney with incredible speed.

Stan's hammer was already raised to drive home the staples of his next climbing ladder into the chimney when Podger reached him.

the inscrutable face of their host he was assailed by a vague distrust, which ripened into certainty that there was crookedness afoot when, once, the Emir's long-nailed hand wandered to the jewelled dagger at his waist.

The advent of El Obani to advise them that the goatskins were filled put an end to the interview and they filed to the low door of the Guest House. It seemed that Jack's forebodings had been false, that they were to be allowed to proceed on their journey unmolested. But no!

Bill Scrubbs, in the van, suddenly stopped dead in his tracks as a tall, evil-faced Arab confronted him.

"Blimee!" ejaculated William. "That's torn it!"

For the man now standing before the boys with a cruel smile of triumph on his saturnine features was the chief of the robber band from whom they had escaped in the desert, and strung out behind him were the rest of the nomads.

A muttered command hissed from the robber chief's lips and with yells of execration the rest leapt at the youngster.

"Quick, back to the Guest House!" shouted Jack Sinders, and with El Obani and his two chums behind him covered the few yards that separated them from the place they had just left in a trice.

The crazy door was slammed and the wooden beam that secured it dropped into place—just as

the door and the youngsters could only stare helplessly at each other while capture rapidly became imminent.

It was at this crisis that the Hon. Ignatius broke his long silence with an idea that had been slowly taking shape in his brain.

"Listen, chaps"—his usual academic diction had disappeared under the urgency of the moment.—"I think there's still a sporting chance of getting out of this mess."

"What is it?" demanded the other two breathlessly while El Obani, who had been muttering snatches of the Koran with the fatality of his breed, resigned to Kismet, stopped and listened tensely.

"Just this," continued Ignatius: "You remember when we met El Obani here, he told us he was bound for the headquarters of the British Camel Corps at Wadi Wadi? Well, if he could once get out of this hole he could mingle with the crowd outside and as they are all much of a much-ness, he would go undetected. Then, seizing his chance, he could grab a camel and make a beeline for Wadi Wadi and get the Camel Corps out after us."



TERROR OF THE DESERT.—The air was half solid, murmuring with the friction of the flying particles. Jack Sinders hissed a warning, and keeping the camels' bodies between them and the Arabs, the three chums began to move stealthily away.

a rain of blows crashed on to the wood from the enraged Arabs without.

"Phew, Melopan seems 'otter than the Sahara, just now!" grunted William, wiping the perspiration from his sun-tanned forehead with a huge pocket handkerchief of startling hue. "And it won't be long before things are considerably hotter!" interjected Jack Sinders, as the door literally bulged inwards from the efforts of their enemies.

Nothing further could be done. Owing to the Emir's happy-go-lucky way of feeding off the floor there were no chairs or tables with which to barricade

There was silence of a moment or two while the others weighed up the slim chances of success contained in their scientist chum's scheme. El Obani himself broke in on it.

"The Pasha of Great Learning speaks wisely," he said slowly. "And with the help of the Prophet El Obani will endeavour to carry out his wishes."

With that he darted to a narrow, unglazed window at the rear of the Guest House. Peering through he caught the glint of white robes just beyond in the outer sunlight. They belonged to a single Arab who had been posted by the robber chief to give the alarm if the captives attempted to escape that way.

As El Obani watched him, himself unseen, the man allowed his scrutiny of the window to relax and turned round attracted possibly by some trifling incident beyond El Obani's vision.

What that incident was the honest camel seller did not pause to consider. Here was his chance and he took it with both hands, both figuratively and literally.

Eeling half through the narrow loophole, El Obani

gripped the unconscious sentry by the throat—and his iron hold allowed not a single yell to escape the other's lips.

For a few moments the robber struggled violently, then he grew limp, and with a hiss of triumph El Obani scrambled silently out of the Guest House.

The Hon. Ignatius, Jack Sindere and William Scrubbs, crowding to the window, were in time to see their ally gliding swiftly in the direction of half-a-dozen of the Arabs' horses. They held their breaths, fearful that he would be spotted before his scheme was accomplished; but no shout of alarm sounded, the whole of the robber band being engaged in battering the door of the Guest House, and El Obani seizing the Chief's own horse, a magnificent desert-bred animal, sprang into the saddle.

He turned, to wave gaily back to the anxious watchers, then, clapping his bare heels to his mount's belly, raced away in a cloud of dust. The desert swallowed him.

Torture and Death.

JACK SINDERS turned away from the window of the Guest House with something like a sigh.

"A white man—through and through!" he muttered; and a wordless prayer left him that El Obani's heroism would not be in vain. The eyes of all three boys were suspiciously moist as the alarming fact that the door was succumbing to the fierce attack upon it brought their thoughts back to the immediate danger in which they stood.

Weapons they had none, and the remedy suggested by William seemed more ingenious than effective. This was to use their boots as missiles.

"Anyway, if them niggers gives us the chance, we stand to brain six of 'em!" he said.

Grinning in spite of their predicament, the other two followed his example, taking off their thick tramping boots and waiting tensely for the door to go down. They had not long to tarry. For the Arabs had improvised a battering-ram and with a final rending crash the thick wood was wrenched off its hinges.

The chums had a kaliedoscopic glimpse of cruel, bearded faces as the robbers leapt triumphantly forward, then they let fly with their boots they had poised in their hands.

There echoed a yell of fury and pain as two of the Arabs received Jack's and William's missiles full on their lean jaws, and for a moment confusion reigned among the attackers. This was increased as the other three boots hurtled among them.

Then, murderous with rage, the rest of the robber band were at grips with the three game young Britishers.

There was little opportunity of using their scimitars in the enclosed space, and for a time the boys held their own with lusty blows of their fists.

The Hon. Ignatius created as much havoc among the invaders as his harder chums. Indeed, he almost seemed to be enjoying himself. Hemmed in against the further wall by half-a-dozen snarling foes, his scholastic face hideous now from the cuts and bruises that decorated it, he worked his arms like high-precision pistons.

But the uneven battle could have only one ending. The boys were literally carried off their feet and, helpless at last, were quickly bound with coarse native fibre ropes.

Spat on, kicked, cursed in lucid Arabic, they were then hoisted to their feet and bundled out of the Guest House.

A crowd of natives hooted at them as they were forced along the narrow main street of Melopan to the fringe of the desert. Here they were joined by no less a personage than the Emir himself.

"Greetings, effendi," cackled the old rogue. "I must beg of you a thousand pardons for this rough treatment!"

"You miserable scoundrel!" retorted Jack Sindere. "You were in league with these villains all the time. But wait. I rather think Melopan will feel sorry for itself when the Egyptian Government hears of this. Britain has a nasty way of avenging insults."

The Emir laughed silently in his beard. "England will never know!" he answered calmly. "For the white pashas are going out into the desert. Men have left Melopan ere this—and they have never returned. To-night, when the sun sinks over the desert, you, dog of an infidel and your friends will be no more. The vultures will feast their fill on much carrion!"

Before Jack could think of a suitable retort, the Emir ordered the robber band to tie the boys on to three camels and rough hands carried out the command. The Emir turned back to his quarters without another glance at the boys he had condemned to a dreadful fate, and the cavalcade moved off into the mysterious, whispering desert.

Soon nothing but sand and sky surrounded them. They traversed perhaps a league thus, when the chief of the robber band called a halt.

The boys were quickly hoisted from their perches on the camels' backs before three strangely shaped rocks which reminded the youngsters of Cleopatra's Needle in distant London—only on a smaller scale.

From these rocks the boys' horrified eyes saw grisly shapes hanging—human skeletons! The bones, bleached white by the intense sunlight, were perfectly motionless in the windless air, but the grinning skulls seemed to gibber and chuckle as though they understood that fresh companions were about to join them.

To the fevered brains of the three young Britishers it all seemed some ghastly nightmare from which they would presently wake. Yet the feel of the cruel ropes as their captors bound them to one of the stone pillars convinced them that it was no dream, that probably the only waking they would know would be in another world.

Their last connection with the world of men, the last thread of hope they may have had seemed to snap when the Arabs again remounted their camels and rode away.

With burning eyes the Hon. Ignatius and his companions watched them until they became mere dots on the distant horizon and finally disappeared.

For a long moment after that the chums stared at each other dumbly. The events that had occurred in the last two hours had left them confused and bewildered, but gradually they recovered sufficiently to take stock of the position.

"Guess this is where we cash in, chaps!" Jack Sindere's voice sounded unreal. He laughed nervously. "Blimey, I'd like ter screw that Hemir feller's scraggy neck for 'im!" gritted Bill Scrubbs. "I would so!"

"He is certainly a most unprincipled ruffian!" murmured the learned Ignatius. "It seems very probable that we will starve to death here!"

"I'm afraid it'll be quicker than that—but hardly less painful," said Jack soberly. "You remember what the old scoundrel said about the sacred eagles."

Before the Hon. Ignatius could reply, half-a-dozen ominous dots appeared on the western horizon, and the chums knew that the end was drawing near. The Sacred Eagles of the desert were coming to claim their prey.

Fascinated, the captives watched as the moving specks grew larger, resolving themselves at length into the shapes of six magnificently proportioned

birds who were obviously each straining to be first on the spot for this easy feast.

It was the Hon. Ignatius who first tore his gaze from the sight. He spoke in an eager, hoarse voice, totally unlike his own.

"Chaps—I—I—There's still a small chance of getting rid of these ropes. If only I can reach my microscope. It's in my left tunic pocket—"

He broke off as Bill Scrubbs who was next to him strained his head and shoulders half round and with a violent effort brought his mouth on a level with

that fateful pocket. Then his sharp teeth were nuzzling with the button on the flap, and in less than a minute the pocket was undone.

It was a ticklish job getting the handle of the large magnifying glass between his teeth, and he had to tear half the Hon. Ignatius's pocket down to accomplish it. But at last it was done and after further exhausting effort he focused it—still held firmly in his mouth—on the main strands of the rope that imprisoned him and his chums.

The powerful rays of the desert sun converged in biting, burning brilliance. A pyramid-shaped flame danced from the rope and then wispy smoke curled lazily upwards.

Two minutes of this, the rope charred and blackened.

"All together, boys!" shouted Jack Sindere. Throwing all their weight on the ropes, struggling till their muscles bulged, the hardy youngsters gained their object. With a snap the weakened strands parted and the chums stumbled away from that gruesome pillar of stone.

They were still constrained by the ropes bound round their arms, but on hands and knees Bill Scrubbs played the sun's rays on Ignatius's bonds with the aid of the glass. The scientific youngster felt the heat through the stuff of his jacket, but he bore it without a murmur and soon had the satisfaction of bursting the ropes asunder.

"Good egg!" grinned the still trussed-up Jack. "Now we shan't be long!"

The words ended in a gasp of horror. For with the excitement of getting free the chums had forgotten the Sacred Eagles. But the giant birds of prey had not forgotten them and were now circling less than ten feet above the stone pillars.

Even as Jack gazed up at them one swooped down. The cruel beak, with the wicked eyes set close above it, flashed with the speed of an express train at Jack's upturned face. The boy averted it just in time and, dodging wildly, managed to elude the brute.

Only the Hon. Ignatius's presence of mind saved Jack from the next attack, however. Whipping off his white jacket the learned youngster beat off the enraged eagle with bewildering strokes of the garment.

Shadows on the sand loomed larger and larger as

the other five birds joined their companion in the attack on their legitimate prey, and Ignatius was engulfed in a swirling medley of beating wings and flying feathers as they tried to strike him down with shrewdly aimed blows of beak and claw.

It seemed that the gallant youngster must succumb, that any moment he would reel to the sand, blinded and beaten.

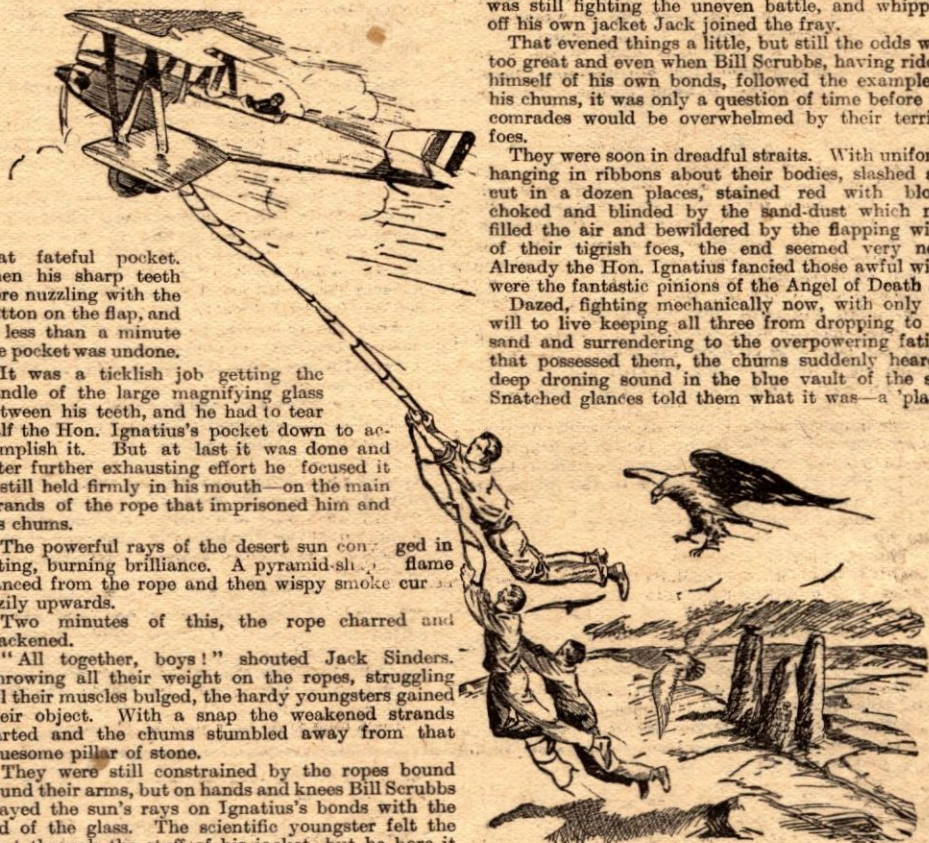
William Scrubbs was working frantically with the magnifying glass on Jack Sindere's bonds.

When they parted the Hon. Ignatius Tyrell Smith was still fighting the uneven battle, and whipping off his own jacket Jack joined the fray.

That evened things a little, but still the odds were too great and even when Bill Scrubbs, having ridded himself of his own bonds, followed the example of his chums, it was only a question of time before the comrades would be overwhelmed by their terrible foes.

They were soon in dreadful straits. With uniforms hanging in ribbons about their bodies, slashed and cut in a dozen places, stained red with blood, choked and blinded by the sand-dust which now filled the air and bewildered by the flapping wings of their tigrish foes, the end seemed very near. Already the Hon. Ignatius fancied those awful wings were the fantastic pinions of the Angel of Death...

Dazed, fighting mechanically now, with only the will to live keeping all three from dropping to the sand and surrendering to the overpowering fatigue that possessed them, the chums suddenly heard a deep droning sound in the blue vault of the sky. Snatched glances told them what it was—a plane!



ESCAPE TO THE SKY.—It was a tense moment. Could all three grab that link with safety? Ignoring the eagles, the chums clutched at the swaying ladder. With a thrilling sense of lightning movement through space, they were wrenched upwards.

And it was speeding towards them as fast as its propeller could bring it.

And at that the three staunch youngsters redoubled their efforts against the Sacred Eagles of the Desert! The eagles, too, had heard that ominous zooming sound away in the heights that were their home, but they still swooped and stabbed with their cruel beaks at the prey they seemed in such danger of losing.

For a painful minute it was touch and go whether the avenging plane arrived in time. Then a loud hail in a homely English voice came to the sorely pressed comrades. Simultaneously the aeroplane

A CLASH WITH THE SACRED EAGLES—*(Continued from previous page.)*

swept down, down to within twelve feet of the boys' heads and a rope ladder fluttered into the sand and moved towards them.

It was a tense moment. Could all three grab that link to safety in time?

"Now!" yelled Jack Sinders, and, ignoring the eagles, the other two followed his example and clutched at the swaying ladder. A sudden tug on their arms that threatened to jerk those members from their sockets, a thrilling sense of lightning movement through space and they knew they were saved—saved from the horrible, rending claws and the savage beaks of the birds of prey. The aerial avenger had arrived in time.

It was doubtful even then whether the chums would have won through had not another happening, which they had not noticed in the heat of the fight, taken place. The Arabs had come back—to gloat over their victims and see their final struggles against the Sacred Eagles. And now, robbed of their first prey, the eagles turned to them and more than one of the Arabs paid the penalty for his crimes. For the eagles, being sacred, were immune from attack by the Arabs and, with the true fatalism of the East, they allowed their bodies to be clawed and beaked as they rode in a wild break for Melopan.

Roaring with laughter, spite their wounds, the three chums had meanwhile gained the cockpit of the huge plane. The pilot nodded calmly and motioned them with his head into three of the seats.

Then they were speeding through the clear air for Wadi Wadi and the headquarters of the camel corps.

Three hours later the plane zoomed down outside the encampment of the famous British detachment, and the first to greet the Hon. Ignatius and his chums as they climbed from the cockpit of the plane to terra firma was—El Obani.

"Greetings, O noble young pashas," he said fervently. "Allah be praised that the Great Man Bird was in time!"

He never finished his speech, for the next moment all three were crowding round him, slapping him on the back, pumping at his hand, and with all the usual forcible methods of the English youngster congratulating him on the eleventh hour rescue of them from the eagles for which he was responsible.

Truly the men of the desert are strange—but El Obani had proved himself a white man!

Look Out for Tich Travers, Boy Millionaire.

MID-AIR MADNESS—*(Continued from page 17)*

Pondering the inspector's words, Stan made his way back to the engineering works, and leaving Podger on the ground ascended to the top. By that time the chums had fixed up their scaffolding and the planks ran round the chimney sides.

Stan reached the scaffolding and climbed on to it. And then he started back. Franson, an awful madness glaring in his eyes, was peering at him from the opposite side of the stack.

"I climbed up while yew was 'avin' yer dinner," the thug mouthed. "An' me an' yew is goin' to settled this thing up 'ere. See these?"

He produced a set of boxing gloves. The truth broke in on Stan. Franson had gone completely mad.

"Come on, get these gloves on. Best man wins."

Fumblingly Stan fixed the boxing gloves, Franson watching him with madness growing in his eyes. Then commenced the strangest boxing match ever known. Back and to across the scaffolding Franson and Stan swayed, fighting hundreds of feet above the earth.

The game young steeplejack's only hope was to

THE JAPE OF THE SEASON—*(Continued from page 10.)*

"You'll be notified if necessary," replied Horrocks, touching his helmet. "Good night, sir."

Captor and captive walked across the quadrangle, the cynosure of all eyes, and vanished into the darkness. In silence they passed through the school gates into the lane, then the man in blue tore off his helmet and wiped his brow. "My hat, Don," he breathed. "I wouldn't go through that again for a thousand quid."

"Wha-a-at!" Braith stared at the "constable" with bewilderment on every feature. "It's—it's not Scorchers?"

Percival Socrates Smith grinned in the darkness. "No other, old boy."

"But—but how did you work it?" asked Don, dazedly.

Scorchers laughed softly. "Luck mostly. When I heard the Head tell Jesson to 'phone for the police, I dashed off to 'J.G.'s' study. Jesson, of course, went to old 'Waterworks', which is an extension. As soon as he, Jesson, lifted the receiver, I cut out exchange, and in a girlish voice asked what number he wanted. When he had given it to me I waited a second, then demanded in a fair imitation of Horrocks's voice what was up. Jesson was deceived, and I told him truthfully that I would come at once. When he had rung off I slipped back to the dorm, unearthed the theatrical props and toggled myself up as P.-C. Horrocks. Unobserved, I crept down the ivy, across the quad, over the wall, and came tramping in through the gates."

"Well, I'm blessed!" was all Don could say.

"It's time we were getting back," said Scorchers. "It's a bit chilly standing here. Ready? Kim on them."

By making a detour and keeping well within the shadows they eventually arrived beneath the window of the school House dormitory. No one observed their ascent of the ivy with the exception of their form-fellows, who were anxiously awaiting their return.

* * * * *

The Rev. J. G. Brown never received the expected summons to give evidence against Blanway's burglar, and, as he did not trouble to determine the cause of the omission, the episode, after being a nine days' wonder at the college, was allowed to die a natural death.

The Dandy Cowboy Next Week. Chaps!

knock the madman unconscious. But Franson was clever. As Stan advanced he retreated along the scaffolding.

Suddenly Stan saw his chance. Franson's left swept over his shoulder, and instantly the youngster's right stabbed up in a fierce uppercut. It took Franson clear to the point, sending him crashing back to the chimney side. The madman's head struck the brick-work and with a groan he crumpled up—unconscious.

Like lightning, then, Stan dived forward to prevent Franson rolling off the scaffolding. In the nick of time he reached him, and it was an instant's work to rope him securely hand and foot. Then, with the aid of Podger, who had already raced up to the chimney top, the unconscious madman was lowered carefully to the ground.

Once there Stan wiped the perspiration from his face.

"Gosh," he muttered; "that's about the tightest corner I've ever been in. We'll hand him over, and then we've finished climbing for to-day."

Look Out. Surprises Coming Next Week.

Terrific Excitement. The Big Game Cricketers In The Grip Of The Sacred Apes!



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 and, in a meteoric flight to the top of the boxing tree, earn Velasquez a fortune.

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

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

Whilst playing cricket with the natives, a broken creature ran up to Sambo imploring his help. In pursuit came a man with a whip, Velasquez.

Sambo had by this time become chief of a tribe, and at their head he made war on Velasquez, but the Big Boss was more cunning than he, for by means of white man's magic, he captured the natives' imagination and forced them to take Sambo's friends prisoner.

Sambo, disguised as a witch doctor, entered the devil hut in which they were kept.

Escape—in the Nick of Time.

THE big game cricketers felt their hearts beating madly. It was all very well to face death bravely—and they knew how to do it—but the horror of the unknown was upon them then.

Outside, the native tom-toms were throbbing without pause upon the hot, still African night. It was an eerie, flesh-creeping sound. Its savage song gave promise of unspeakable torture to those prisoners inside the devil hut.

They watched the flames of the fire—bizarre, red—like a myriad wolfish tongues, licking up at the dark sky as if hungry for blood.

Sambo's almost nude body gleamed weirdly as he

stood at the door of the devil hut in a listening attitude. In an agony of suspense the big game cricketers watched him.

It was obvious as he turned that he was in a state of apprehension, not to say fear. He came tiptoeing back over the bamboo floor.

"Him gone, Massa Jimmy," he whispered as he bent down beside the gentleman crook. "Him 'fraid ole debbil doctor—dat's me. Him try make hoss sense of de jabber-jabber dese niggers speak. But ole Sambo understand 'em."

And he chuckled. All the time he was deftly manipulating Jimmy Brent's bonds.

"Dis shore am splendiferous, Massa Jimmy," he whispered. "Me bery pleased to see you again. Ole Sambo, him shore thought you all bin cut in pieces."

The black cricketer did not cut the hempen ropes that bound Jimmy, nor did he untie the knots, but just loosened them until they were loops through which Jimmy slipped his numbed hands and feet, rubbing and chafing them gratefully.

"Great Scott, Sambo; how did you get here!?" Jimmy broke out as their dusky friend knelt to perform the same service for the next prisoner, who happened to be Micky Dolan.

Sambo's face, streaked grotesquely with berry juice, expressed comical surprise as he slewed his head.

"Golly, you no know, Massa Jimmy?"—as if the whole world were resounding to the echoes of his exploits.

And then his white teeth flashed in a grin of pardonable pride. "Dis chile am become de chief of a raging, rampaging tribe of blackknobs. Shore t'ing. De Big Boss, he chuck poor ole Sambo in de ribber, but de alligators haf no fummadiddles wiv me. 'S marrerfack, de blackknobs, dey pull ole Sambo out, and dey make him big Ju-ju man, debbil-debbil witch doctor and King Pin." Sambo drew a deep breath.

"An' den de Big Boss come, de dirty crook!"—Sambo's face darkened to scowling malevolence. "Him got rockets and jumping crackers and uvver fireworks. Poor ole Sambo, him can't make magic like dat," and the black cricketer threw out his arms in a gesture of despair.

"He hasn't chucked you out, Sambo—succeeded you as chief of the tribe?" asked Jimmy with a tingling of apprehension.

In a flash he understood the position. Velasquez, by his wiles, had conquered the natives and persuaded them into believing him an even bigger man of magic

than Sambo. The fireworks were a stroke of genius. He must have brought them all the way from England for such a purpose as this.

"Chuck me out?" echoed Sambo bitterly. "Dat's what he's trying to do nooting else but. De big stiff. He don't know I'm Sambo, though. He not see me before I change from my white cricketing clothes, and he t'ink I'm de witch doctor."

"What's he up to now, then?" asked Jimmy. "Dat cheap skate try to make de natives t'ink him bigger'n what I am," Sambo said scornfully. "Him not t'ink I know about de leaf dough."

As he spoke he went swiftly outside the hut, and presently reappeared again with food in crude, earthenware dishes. It was some sort of mess of herbs and vegetables, and the big game cricketers, almost ravenous, ate of it with their fingers. Almost at once they felt a strange tingling, reviving strength coursing through their veins. Jimmy Brent looked up after the first crammed mouthful.

"What is it?" he whispered. "The Hurulane?" Sambo nodded. "A little in dere," he whispered, his white teeth flashing.

Then swiftly he took the three earthenware dishes he had brought—they were almost empty by now—and pushed them away along the bamboo floor of the hut into the shadows. He went from one to another, tightening their bonds with the swiftness of an expert. The big-game cricketers could make nothing of this procedure. All they could hear outside in the night was the thrumming of the native drums, but it was evident that Sambo heard something else, for his attitude was that of one tensely listening.

Suddenly he commenced to snarl in a blood-curdling fashion. As he did so the big-game cricketers heard other sounds coming up the ladder, and then about a dozen savages came into the hut.

The big-game cricketers were half pushed, half dragged out of their prison, through a maze of other huts and into a clearing where four huge camp fires illuminated the scene as though it were ghastly daylight.

Jimmy Brent was conscious of a new power, a strength of which he had not dreamed. He felt that by an exertion of that strength he could burst the bonds that just allowed him to hobble along and that cut into his arms like knives. But Sambo, who stalked majestically beside the little cavalcade, had shot him a warning glance, and that warning Jimmy had passed to his chums who evidently were feeling in a like mind with him.

The ropes that bound them were capable of holding them in bondage no longer. Spite of all they had been through, they were like giants refreshed. It was the effect of the wonderful Hurulane of which they had partaken. They might there and then had put up a fight with their captors and got free, but Sambo's apprehension was obvious. He was rolling his eyes in a manner that might have been comical had it not been so heavily loaded with drama. And the rest, who knew Sambo, took warning from his manner.

It was as well that they did, for they came between the two lines of huts into the open glares of the camp fires suddenly, almost before their impulse to fight had faded and died again. And then they saw how hopeless it was. More than a score of savages were gathered in the huge half-circle, their spears lifted from the ground. A shout from one of the natives guarding Jimmy Brent and Co. would have brought the others in pursuit immediately, and death from a score of spears would have been the reward for their rebellion.

Sambo had some other scheme in mind. He must have, reasoned Jimmy, looking at the bogus withdoctor. Sambo's manner almost betrayed him. It was so tense and anxious.

But Jimmy had great confidence in Sambo.

The ten big-game cricketers were brought to a standstill right in the glow of a fire that would have roasted a dozen oxen at once. The heat was terrific in that African night. Even the natives of the N'Gwambi tribe, innured to the climate, stood at a respectful distance. Round the fierce glow of the fire the mosquitoes swarmed in a cloud.

Their guards released them and fell back, and the semi-circle of half-nude savages raised their spears menacingly.

But Jimmy Brent told himself that he was practically free and unhampered. With one single mighty exertion he might break his bonds and make a dash—for liberty. He looked at the others, and at Sambo, who stood near-by, his eyes rolling. What was to come next?

He knew in a second. Henri Velasquez came swaggering towards them, followed by his half-dozen evil, fever-stricken ruffians, all armed with revolvers. The man who once had been boss of London's underworld was flourishing his revolver loosely, and as he came close to Jimmy his black beard seemed to wag with his shrill, cackling laughter.

"Well, d'y'e like the heat?" he demanded. "Soon you're going to be sacrificed to the gods of these niggers here. Roasted alive. How d'you like the idea?" He laughed uproariously.

The big-game cricketers were silent, ominously silent. They thought now they had a chance for their lives, with this strength welling within them.

"Who'd like a bullet?" Velasquez demanded. "I think I ought to give you one. It's quicker—and easier death. Seeing you're white men."

No one answered. They were staring at him steadfastly, and had he not been so flushed with triumph he might have seen the menace in their eyes.

But, indeed, the big-game cricketers quickly realised that even if they put up a fight it was well nigh hopeless. Velasquez turned and made a gesture, and the ring of armed savages closed in a little near towards the blazing fire. What could mere strength avail them against that formidable ring of spears? They might break loose, only to fall with their life-blood running from a dozen spear wounds.

"Listen!" Velasquez flourished his revolver, and stabbed its long bore at the disguised Sambo. "That fellow's the witch-doctor of this tribe, and though I don't think he's over fond of me, I can tell you he's fond of a little torture now and again. You see those bags?"—the bearded villain now pointed to three or four large sacks that lay on the ground near-by—"well, they contain bits of wood that join together and screw up and make a frame. Incidentally, a man is attached to that frame, and as the screws tighten, the muscles of his body are stretched—stretched." Velasquez was peering from face to face of the big game cricketers now, his brows bent wickedly as he sought to impress them with the horrid tortures in store for them. "It's screaming, agonising pain," he said, in a voice little above a whisper. "And then, when you think that surely no more agony can come to you in this world, you're released from the rack and you drop into the blazing fire, to be shrivelled up in a few seconds. That's not pain—that's release. But it's nice to think of, eh?"

Still they were silent, staring steadfastly at this diabolical ruffian. They dared not seem to lift their eyes up and beyond him for fear they should betray Sambo.

What was Sambo doing?

He was behind Velasquez. And he was moving in the horrid, slow motions of a native dance, that soon would quicken to frenzy. Almost Jimmy Brent and Co. doubted their friend's loyalty and

faith—doubted that he could be their friend at that moment. For, with his streaked face, his great swinging necklaces of bones, and the nodding parrot-plumes at his head, he appeared as monstrous a figure as they had ever seen.

But how could they doubt Sambo's faith? Had he not shown it strongly to them already? That slow war-dance, the closing in of the native ring—it all presaged something. It must all be part of Sambo's plan of escape, and yet it appeared so threatening.

Velasquez laughed shrilly, but anger was mounting behind the laughter. The persistent silence of the big game cricketers was whipping him to fury. Such it was meant to do, for there is nothing like cold contempt to sting the pride of a mean-souled man.

"Darn you!" he hissed from between his teeth, passing along the line of big game cricketers. He came to Jimmy, and in a sudden access of rage he smashed his clenched fist full into the former man-about-town's face. "Darn you!" he repeated. "You won't say anything, eh?"

lay on the ground near-by. Presumably they contained the arrangement of sticks, which, when fitted together, formed the native torture rack of which Sambo had evidently spoken to the pseudo witch-doctor.

Sambo looked up queerly, and in his striped, berry-painted face was an expression that was hard to interpret. It might have been fear; it might, on the other hand, have been savage exultation at the tortures in store.

The big game cricketers watched him tensely. Their faith in their former friend held fast in that moment of crisis. They could not believe that he meant to treat them scurvily.

Had he not given them the Hurculane so that even at this crucial moment they each had a reserve of strength which would enable them to burst their bonds and die fighting? Die they must if Sambo was false, for thirty spears were poised ready to be launched at their bodies should they make even a move.

And yet Sambo was approaching the three sacks



BAFFLED.—Between the trees a net swept up, and the apes, leaping at it, clawed viciously but unavailingly. Sambo's voice rang out on a note of triumph. "Golly, de ole ting still works!"

Jimmy recoiled under the savage blow, and out of necessity, to preserve his balance, and to save himself from sprawling into the huge camp fire that blazed hot behind him, he exerted all his newly-acquired strength so that the hempen bonds around his knees burst with the twanging sound of a snapped violin string.

Velasquez stared at the ropes as they fell in a writhing, snake-like movement to the ground. His face changed colour, demonstrating the arrant coward that he was actually. As the ring of savages round the prisoners closed in a little more, the Big Boss's voice rang out shrilly.

"B'gar, he's getting free! String him up, you." He turned to Sambo, who had crept a little closer behind the man he hated. "String him up, I say," he repeated shrilly in English. "String 'em all up, and let's have done with it. Let's see the wonderful torture machines in those sacks."

And he pointed to three large sacks, each big enough to hold three hundredweight of cement, that

that lay on the ground. His stealthy, sinuous movements held them in tense fascination. They knew not what to think for one staggering moment.

Sambo looked up, his face instinct with cunning even as he crouched over the sacks. He spoke in queer, broken English. It was almost incredible that Henri Velasquez did not recognise him then as Sambo, the black East End boxer whom he had tried to inveigle into his clutches in England. But he was full of fever. It might be that he was deceived, or that he knew, and that Sambo was working hand in glove with him. Even at that crucial moment the big game cricketers could not have told. It was a severe strain on their faith.

"You tink we got time for de leetle sticks that join together and stretch men's bones?" Sambo lisped. "You no tink the apes will come? Dem apes is 'orrible, ravenous! Devil-apes—remember, de could crush us all like egg-shells. . . ugh!"

Velasquez laughed, loudly and blatantly. He knew all about the apes that lodged in the hidden

City of Ruins near-by. Had he not gained a full knowledge of their habits and customs from the auxiliary papers preserved with the map he had taken from Sambo, the negro? Sambo, who long ago had become crocodile's food! Therefore, in his knowledge, he laughed at this native witch-doctor who thought that he knew everything.

"Fool!" he snarled. "Don't you know that the devil apes never come out when there is light? They've got the strength of giants, it's true"—he did not add that that strength came to the apes through eating the Huruulane plant—"but their little pig eyes won't stand any light. They like the darkness. That's why I've had these roaring fires made"—he jerked a thumb towards the three roaring camp fires whose flames leapt towards the stars. "Come; no nonsense now. Build up these torture racks you were telling us about, and let's hear the pigs squeal."

A murmur of acclamation came from the assembled warriors grouped in a large circle round the terrible fires, crackling in the hot African night.

Sambo bent over the three sacks. His eyes, white and large in his pleasant negro face, looked appealingly at Jimmy Brent, as if to restrain him during those tense moments. And then suddenly, in a flash, a long curved knife, thin as paper almost flashed from his sash to his hand, and he was ripping the bottoms of the three sacks.

He jerked erect, his remarkable physique thrown into base relief from the camp fires.

"Fools!" he boomed. "De apes is coming. Watch for dem—watch for dem. "Look—de darkness is coming!"

And he ran forward, swift as a falcon striking from the hand of the hunter. One of the sacks came down over his head and a shower of sand descended on the crackling, glowing camp fire.

It was extinguished in a few seconds. A spluttering, a vast volume of smoke, and then all was quiet. But before then Sambo had run to the next camp fire and similarly served it. The mighty red light that previously had gashed the night was dimmed. Only one fire remained, and to that Sambo in his weird-looking garb as a witch-doctor ran with the speed of light. The third sack was emptied. The natives, appalled, taken completely by surprise, made never a move. Darkness came down like a blanket on the hot African night.

There were screams, shouts—there was confusion. Jimmy Brent burst his remaining bonds in one effort, quietly enjoining upon his companions to do likewise. And then something else came to fill the night with horror.

Red eyes gleamed through the darkness. Horrid snarls were mingled with the screams of the natives. And vague shapes were seen, huge, monstrous.

The stars, like steel points, lit the plateau dimly, and the silhouetted, countless black forms of the apes. Jimmy Brent felt his arm seized in a vice-like grip, and turning he saw Sambo, his faithful friend.

"Dere's just one way, massa," Sambo breathed, "and dat is to go into de Hidden City itself. Der apes, day a bit slow and cautious when de go dere, cos dere many odder animals. Dis chile know a ting or two. He been here afore. Come wiv old Sambo."

And he led the way at a run, the other big game cricketers following.

And so they came to the wilderness of weird buildings, dead and crumbling with the dust of ages. Strange, slinking forms fled from their path as they ran, for their advent was so sudden that probably they startled the animal denizens of that Hidden City. Animal snarls quivered through the night as Sambo, panting, halted his band. They had come now outside the crumbling buildings into a grove of trees, thick of trunk and interwoven with liana and other tangled growth of the forest.

"Dis where we run last time I here," panted Sambo. "Dis de only place hold up dem apes. Look, here guns, and ammunition." He pulled aside a number of fallen tree logs as he spoke and exposed a long wooden rifle trunk, in which lay still several rifles, apparently in good condition.

"Quick!" gasped Sambo. "De're coming. Dis am de cat's whiskers for jobs."

Jimmy Brent and his companions looked round, their hearts beating fast. They raised their rifles.

They were still pursued. Through the crumbling buildings of the Hidden City came the drug apes—for all the world like a gang of stealthy marauders.

There was something uncanny in their slow, stealthy approach which was calculated to upset the strongest nerves.

Despite their training in the school of life, the big game cricketers all confessed at that moment to a feeling of panic.

"Fire for their eyes," whispered Jimmy Brent.

Four revolvers barked—the others were useless—and an instant later two of the gigantic apes dropped stone-dead. The others howled hideously, and came on with a sudden rush.

And then a strange thing happened. Suddenly, between the trees a net swept up, and the apes, leaping at it, clawed viciously but unavailingly. Sambo's voice rang out on a note of triumph.

"Golly, de ole ting still works. It still works. Fire for der eyes, genulumun. Dese old apes no good!"

Exciting, eh? But just wait until Next Week's Long Instalment.

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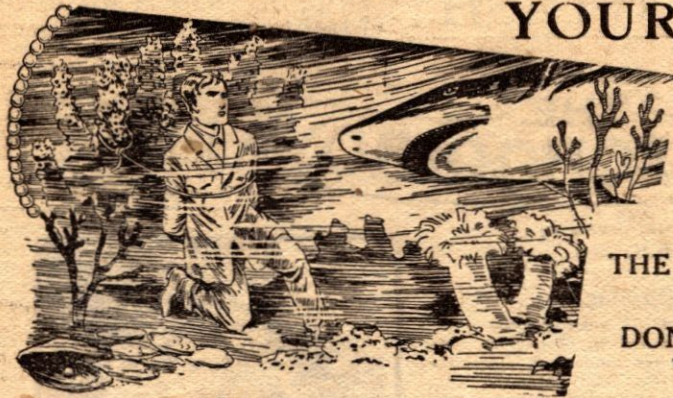
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YOUR EDITOR'S PAGE.

One of Our Big Summer Numbers with Special Swimming Tales, Chaps.

Look Out For
THE DAREDEVIL DIVER,
and Don't Miss
DON DUVALL'S UNDER-WATER CIRCUS.



MY DEAR CHUMS,
Exhilarating news!

We are to have a special Summer Swimming and Diving Number next week, with that capital boy hero of quick-action circus stories, Don Duvall, playing the star part in the principal yarn.

I am writing this chat at the week-end as usual, and I've just come out of the sparkling sea after a long swim. My old doggy pal, Seat, has been lingering behind, afraid to come out too far. Doesn't swimming make you feel fit, chaps? I've been swimming with a young New Zealand Maori who has just complimented me on my swallow dive from a high rocky promontory. He himself is like a fish, and when he goes under water I don't know when he'll come up. So no wonder I feel bucked at the compliment. You thought your old editor was past high diving stunts, did you? Ah, you don't know.

Well, as usual, to know that everything's right, I came with this young Maori swimmer down to the bay here to investigate the possibilities of some remarkable stunts in our magnificent exciting yarn next week.

Don Duvall's Underwater Circus.

And I'm satisfied. So you're to get a clinking yarn of excitement and swimming, my masters. Circus stunts, swimming, mystery—Gee!

Not only that, but you're to meet new pals in another underwater story, this time a yarn of the ships that go down to the sea, and of the brave fellows who man them. You must meet

The Daredevil Diver

next week. And his pals are there too. He is a cable

layer, chums, and his game is a most hazardous one. But when he was captured by a cunning Chinaman to go diving for sunken treasure—well the hazards came a bit too thick and fast.

They're all real honest-to-goodness thrill yarns next week, and you who like school tales must just wait! I've got something up my sleeve. What about a tale of a mixed school? A Chinese boy, an American boy, an Indian boy—all creating fun? Sounds exciting, eh? Well, wait for more news coming shortly.

Oh, I was going to tell you that the Dandy Cowboy appears in a stunning exploit on the trail of

The Mystery Rider.

And the Mystery Rider is a bandit whose stock-in-trade is cunning, caution and quickness. The thrilling duel between the two makes a gripping Western yarn.

Last but not least in our list of heroes comes Rip O'Farrell, the motor cycling policeman attached to Scotland Yard's Flying Squad. Rip goes after an extraordinarily resourceful road rascal—a master of crime. He comes out the winner in a drama of thrills, but there's such

A Shock for the Speed Cop.

Such a surprise. And it'll surprise you too. You'll never guess what's going to happen till the end. So don't miss it.

I'll meet you then in our capital number next week, eh?

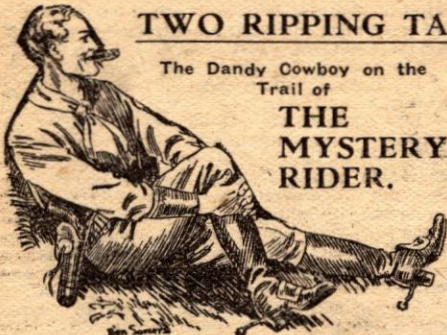
Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

TWO RIPPING TALES.

The Dandy Cowboy on the Trail of

THE MYSTERY RIDER.



NEXT WEEK!

A SHOCK FOR THE SPEED COP.

Rip O'Farrell, the Motor Bike Policeman, on one of his Most Startling Cases.



THRILLS AFLASH! Gripping New Yarn of the Mightiest Mystery—Space!

THE PLANET SCHOOLBOYS

Specially Written for our Chums by
EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

The Thunderous Opening.

FLASHING through space on the *Solar Rover*—a marvellous machine invented by Professor Drewe—a band of schoolboys landed on the planet Venus.

They found it peopled by a nation of strange winged beings, ruled by Hudson Zeff, a Yankee who had landed on the White Planet ten years before in a projectile.

Count Popandos, a crooked schemer, turned Hudson Zeff against the adventurers, and he shut them out of his city—Venusville—just as the terrible Venusian night descended.

In so doing he invited tragedy! Attracted by the lights of the *Solar Rover*, dreadful, nameless monsters came out of the darkness, giant buildings toppled under the onslaught. It seemed the city was doomed . . . and then the *Rover's* guns got into action.

A New Danger.

BOOM! Boom! The *Rover's* guns were spitting again, and this time the range was longer. The airship had risen somewhat, and she was firing at those vague monsters which were still approaching the outskirts of the city. The flashing of the shells exploding came out of the night like dazzling bursts



Dazzling bursts of flame illuminated vague monsters as the shells exploded.

Like a hurtling meteor of the night sky, the *Solar Rover* flashes to Venus



of flame, illuminating everything in a lurid glare for a second or two.

"By glory!" roared Sir Bags suddenly. "I've got an idea. Let's soar over the sea."

"But what good will that do?" asked Robin.

"A lot of good, I should think, my lad," replied Bags. "These monsters have been attracted by our lights, haven't they? Well, let's get over the sea, and attract them back into their natural element!"

It was certainly an excellent scheme, and one which might have definite results. And so, after a word with the Professor, Bags hurried on deck again, and found the *Rover* soaring higher, and making off towards the black, mysterious Venusian ocean.

It may have seemed to the inhabitants of the city that the airship was deserting them, that the adventurers had taken flight, and were fleeing. But this misapprehension would not persist for long.

For, sure enough, those monstrous creatures ceased their advance on the city. They could be seen down there—over a dozen of them—like moving mountains. And now they had halted, and were seemingly uncertain. The *Rover* was out over the sea, all her searchlights full on and glaring down upon the beach. The idea was to attract the creatures back—to lure them into the ocean once more.

And the ruse succeeded, too.

"That was a splendid idea of yours, Clarence," said Professor Roxley Drew, as he came on deck. "Hudson Zeff did not speak idly when he told us that these night atrocities are attracted by the light. I am more and more convinced that Venus is intensely more interesting as a planet than the earth."

"It's intensely more excitin'," agreed Sir Bags, nodding.

"But think of the possibilities!" went on the Professor, waxing enthusiastic. "So far we have hardly probed the outskirts as I might say, of this remarkable globe. Here we have a planet where there are two separate and distinct forms of life. During the daylight hours, all is peaceful and safe on the surface of Venus. But as soon as the night comes, the planet is converted into a place of unknown horrors. Indeed, even now, we may be in some terrible danger."

"There's nothing like being cheerful," agreed Bags, nodding.

"And as soon as this affair is over—as soon as these monstrosities are lured back into the sea—we shall rise for many thousands of feet," went on the Professor. "It would be foolish to take any unnecessary risks. The man in charge of the controls has received instructions to remain in this spot—until he gets further orders. See! Already these creatures are back in the water. We have lured them—"

"Hold on!" said Bags abruptly. "What's the matter with young Robin?"

Robin Hardy, of the Third, heard the remark, and he turned swiftly.

"There's nothing the matter with me, sir," he said. "But I can see something rummy up in the sky."

"By jingo! So can I," said Barry Drew, staring. "There's something moving there—several things moving—"

"Hundreds of them, I should say," went on Robin, pointing. "Look, sir! We shouldn't see them at all, only for the reflection of our searchlights. It's as black as ink up there, but—"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Professor. "What on earth does it mean, Bags? There is certainly something in the air."

They all stared, and for a moment or two there was silence. At least, there was silence on board the *Rover*. From far below came the great splashing and wallowing of the dragon-like things as they returned to the water.

And in the upper air, in their hundreds, were other creatures. They could only be dimly seen, owing to the fact that the searchlights were pointed downwards. But in the reflected glow, the figures of these flying things could be made out. They were enormous too—great flying bulks, like a flock of grotesquely shaped aeroplanes, only they were silent—mysterious.

"By George!" ejaculated Mr. Mannering. "You don't think they're those Venusians, do you? Those fellows we met when we first landed?"

"No—they're too big," said Bags. "These things are twenty times the size of those savage Venusians. I think we'd better throw a light on them—before it's too late."

And within a minute, half the searchlights were directed upwards and outwards—into the stygian blackness of the night.

And then a series of shouts went up from the schoolboys—from Professor Drew himself, and from the others.

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped Freeman. "What—what are they?"

Straight towards the *Rover* a flock of strange creatures were coming—and they looked greenish in the white light from the searchlight. Their eyes glittered, too, and their great wings were flapping noiselessly.

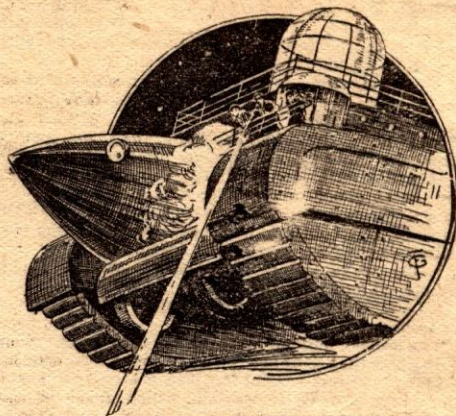
"Lizards!" ejaculated Sir Bags. "That's it, by gad! Flying lizards! And each one is as big as a cross-Channel passenger 'plane!"

The Flying Lizards.

THERE seemed to be no end to the dangers and excitements of this eventful night!

These flying things had been called lizards for want of a better name. True, they resembled lizards in a vague sort of way—and yet, at the same time, they were vastly different. They were evidently reptiles, and their size was stupendous. As yet they were half a mile distant from the airship, and yet they seemed even bigger than the *Rover* herself. They were gigantic.

"I do not quite agree with you, Clarence," said the Professor, staring through a pair of binoculars. "These strange flying monsters are more after the



Boom! Boom! The Rover's guns were spitting again.

style of birds—they are more like the pterodactyl, of prehistoric times. Everything that we have seen on this planet convinces me that Venus is in a far more undeveloped state than the earth."

"Never mind about the undeveloped state of Venus!" said Bags briskly. "These lizards—or pterodactyls, if you like—are getting uncomfortably close. The beggars are just like moths, as old Zeff told us. They are being attracted by our lights, and they're coming in flocks. No wonder the Venusians bolt themselves into their buildings every night, and leave everything in utter darkness. The very act of lighting the city would bring destruction upon it."

There was no question that Sir Bags had spoken the truth. These giant lizards were being attracted by the searchlights. This was obvious enough, by the unswerving course which the creatures were taking. They were flying straight towards the *Rover*, menacingly, and with deadly purpose.

And now that they were getting nearer the adventurers realised their new peril. There was something awe-inspiring in the way these flying lizards were coming straight on—right into the eyes of the searchlights. The strange creatures seemed to be fascinated—mesmerised.

In just the same way, birds on earth will dash themselves to death against lighthouses. Moths will fly straight into the open flame of a candle. There seemed to be some horrible hypnotic influence, compelling these gigantic lizards to fly straight for the *Rover*—blindly and without any care for their own safety.

But there was more in it than this. For if these lizard-things struck the *Rover*, nothing in creation could save her from destruction. For there were hundreds of them, as could now be seen. They were much nearer, and at short range it could be seen that their size was even greater than the explorers had first supposed. They were stupendous monstrosities, not unlike greenish frogs, with great spreading wings of webbing.

"Look out!" roared Bags. "We'd better get aloft! The infernal things are almost on us!"

But Professor Drewe had already hurried to the control-room, and he was once more in charge of the levers. The *Solar Rover* commenced rising, and, as she did so, the lizards swerved, so that they flew into the beams of the searchlights.

"Switch off all the lights!" called Bags. "If we don't—"

But before he could get any further a staggering thing happened. The bulk of the lizards were still some distance away, but coming onwards with incredible speed. There was one of the flying horrors, at close quarters. It had been coming along at an angle, isolated from the rest and unseen by those on board the *Rover*.

And now, dramatically, and with unexpected force, the thing hit the bows of the *Rover*.

It was a dull, jarring thud. From stem to stern the *Rover* shook and shivered. A great shudder passed through her metal frame, proving that the force of the collision had been terrific. She was falling—nose first—at terrific speed.

"Oh, we're going to crash!" wailed Puggy Dibble, clinging to the rail.

"Look out!" roared Freeman. "It's all over, you chaps!"

The others had no time to say anything. They only knew that their hearts jumped into their mouths. The *Solar Rover* was falling like a stone—following the great lizard—which had killed itself by the force of the collision.

And then, just when all hope seemed lost, the *Rover* partly righted herself, and assumed an even keel. The headlong drop ceased, and there was a curious cushioning sensation. It was caused by the ether-power having its effect.

If the *Rover* had had a hundred feet more of air space, all would have been well. But the Professor had got her under control again just a second too late. For before she could commence rising there came a loud, shattering crash as she hit the beach. And there, not twenty feet away, was one of those enormous brontosaurus-like sea monsters.

Something else had happened, too.

At the moment of the crash, Barry Drewe was jolted over the rail! It had all happened in a flash—before any of the others could quite realise the tragic nature of the occurrence. The sudden jar had been too much, and Barry went flying—over the side, down on to the hard ground—But no! Something far worse had happened to him.

He flew out in an arc, and in the reflected gleam from the searchlight the other juniors saw that Barry had struck the massive body of the sea-monster, and now he was in the grip of the terrible thing!

A Chance in a Thousand.

"BARRY!" shouted Don Masters, in frantic horror.

"Dear old thing, we can do nothin'!" muttered the Hon. Freddie. "Good gad! That blighting blighter has absolutely got him!"

All was confusion during that first sensational minute. Below the *Solar Rover* hundreds of fixtures had been wrenched away, and the havoc was tremendous. Her tractor wheels were crumpled and crushed—her plates were bent and twisted. The proud airship was crippled—but, mercifully, not hopelessly disabled.

Nobody took any notice of Professor Roxley Drewe's anguish. Every thought was for his nephew. For Barry was in danger of instant death.

Indeed, his experience was dreadful, and not unlike that adventure which had befallen young Robin Hardy. For the sea monster seized him in its great mouth, and whirled him high over the ground. So big was the creature that Barry found himself hundreds of feet up in the air—expecting every moment, to be dashed to death.

And yet, even in that awful moment, he found himself surprised. He wondered why he was alive, for he felt that he should really be dead. But the mouth of this thing was not provided with teeth,

as he had imagined. He was firmly held by the lips of the thing—great, fleshy lips which almost enveloped him, and which sickened him by the breath that came from that throat.

On the *Rover's* deck, Sir Bags acted with extraordinary speed. Never for a moment did he believe that Barry could be saved. But Bags took the only possible course.

He rushed to one of the big guns, and gave orders that it should be swung round, and pointed straight at that vast, heaving body.

"But we can't, sir!" exclaimed one of the crew. "The explosion will kill the poor boy!"

"He'll be killed anyhow—unless we take instant action!" snapped Bags. "There's not one chance in a thousand of saving him. And you're wrong about the explosion too. The range is so short that the shell will penetrate into that monster's body—and explode there. The force will be deadened—confined."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"Confound you—fire!" thundered Bags, frantic with anxiety.

And the big gun was fired. It was a terrible chance. With a shattering report, the shell was sent on its way. There was no pause—no second of tense waiting. Intermixed with the explosion of the charge came a dull, muffled report. And the brontosaurus heeled over, shaking horribly. In its vast hide gaped a great, jagged hole.

The great Venusian animal was killed on the spot—and Barry felt himself falling from a height of many hundreds of feet. But fortune was with him, for at the very second of dropping he was held over the monster's body.

He landed upon the great heaving mass, and slithered down. Fortunately, he had struck that portion of the body which had not been mutilated by the explosion of the shell. Down he went, sliding and rolling. His fall was broken, and at last he struck the ground itself, still rolling, and in a stupefied kind of way he realised that he was not only alive, but merely bruised.

And with this realisation came the desire for life. He picked himself up dazedly, and ran. He ran blindly, not caring where he went, so long as he got away from this horror. Barry did not know, at that time, that the thing was dead.

Suddenly he collided with something solid—something hard and jagged which bruised him afresh. He found, in the gloom, that he had struck some big rocks which rose up from the ground unexpectedly. He groped about and then, to his joy, he discovered a kind of crevice.

Creeping in, he breathed a great sigh of relief. Here, at least, he would be safe for the time being. He walked on, getting deeper and deeper into the crevice. With a shock of surprise, he felt himself sinking into a pool of water. For the moment he believed that a new peril had come upon him. But he was wrong. For the water was only two or three feet deep, and it seemed to be fresh and clean.

Barry was glad of it, for he felt he needed nothing at that moment better than a wash. He wanted to get the smell of that dreadful sea monster away from himself.

At last he pulled himself out, and now, indeed, a surprise awaited him. For a figure was standing right before him. Barry became rigid—and his heart beat a rapid tattoo against his ribs. He believed at first that he was face to face with another mysterious Venusian night monster.

But no—a voice came to his ears.

"Who is that?" it said, in a whisper. "What does all this mean? I cannot think, I cannot grasp—"

"My only hat!" muttered Barry, staring into the gloom.
For he had recognised the voice of Count Alexis Popandos!

The Coming of the Dawn.

FOR a moment Barry was too surprised to say anything.

In all this recent excitement, he had forgotten all about the villainous Count. But now, dimly, he

think we're safe here—and the dawn can't be far off. We shall be O.K. then."

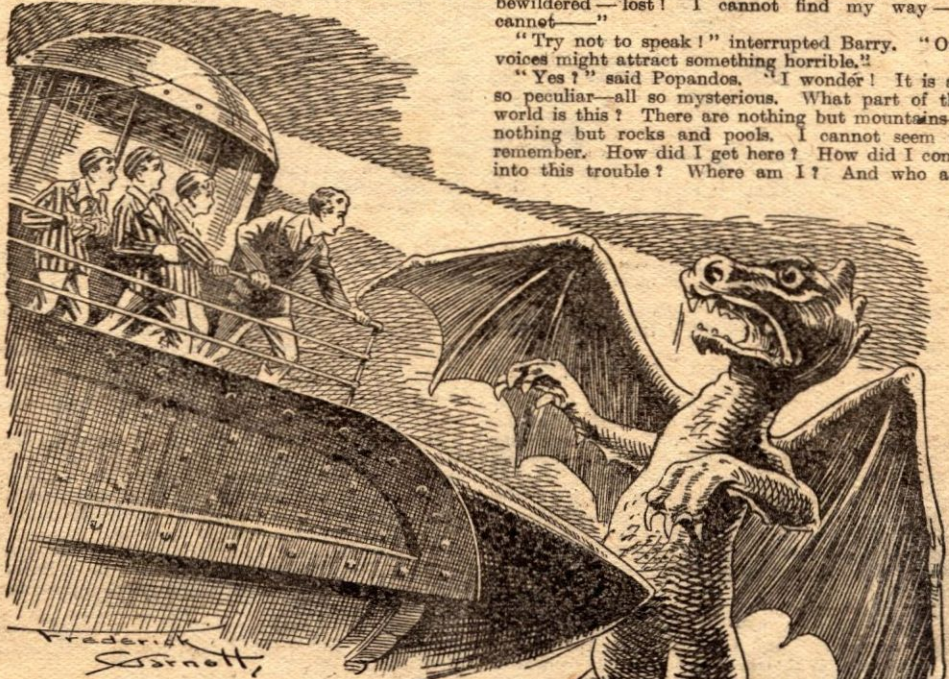
"The dawn?" faltered Count Popandos.

A hand came clutching out of the darkness—a shaking, quavering grip. And Barry found himself very close to the Greek rascal. Popandos was clinging to him—clinging in a strange, childish kind of way.

"I don't understand!" muttered Popandos. "Is this all a nightmare? Am I dreaming? I am bewildered—lost! I cannot find my way—I cannot—"

"Try not to speak!" interrupted Barry. "Our voices might attract something horrible."

"Yes?" said Popandos. "I wonder! It is all so peculiar—all so mysterious. What part of the world is this? There are nothing but mountains—nothing but rocks and pools. I cannot seem to remember. How did I get here? How did I come into this trouble? Where am I? And who are



A COLLISION IN THE CLOUDS.—Dramatically and with unexpected force, the Rover and the aerial monster collided. There was a dull, jarring sound; from stem to stern the starship shivered. . . Then she fell groundwards at terrific speed.

remembered everything. He recalled that banquet in the "White House"—he recalled Mr. Hudson Zeff's pronouncement. Yes, Zeff had proposed a deadly plan. His design had been to keep all the adventurers on the planet, and to send Count Popandos into Outer Space on the Rover. But Zeff had been foiled in this mad scheme, and all his victims had escaped. Count Popandos, it seemed, had been wandering about this strange city in the uncanny darkness. He had been locked out—he had been at the mercy of all those night creatures.

And by chance, perhaps, he had found this crevice, and had sought refuge in it. In spite of the man's villainous nature, Barry felt rather softened towards him. After all, he was a human being—and his experience of that night must have been too horrible for words. The very thought of it was enough to give Barry a shiver down his spine.

Alone in the darkness of that strange city! Shut out from all the marble buildings—left to the mercy of the Venusian terrors!

"It's all right, Count!" said Barry huskily. "I

you?" he added, clutching more tightly at Barry's arm. "Who are you?"

"My hat!" muttered Barry, with a strange feeling of pity.

He realised the truth. Count Alex Popandos had gone off his mind! And who could wonder at it? A night alone with those Venusian horrors! Was it not enough to send any man crazy?

"Steady—steady!" murmured Barry. "We're safe if we keep here, Count."

"Why do you call me 'Count'?" asked Popandos vaguely. "Count? Count what?"

"You are Count Popandos."

"Am I?" said the Greek, wonderingly. "I didn't know!"



IN THE BIG BEAST'S JAWS!—Barry was firmly held in the great fleshy lips of the awesome creature, sickened by the breath which came from its throat. "Fire!" thundered Sir Bags, frantic with anxiety. With a roar the big gun exploded.

Meanwhile, everybody on the *Rover* was in a fever of anxiety. Since the monster's death nothing had been seen of Barry.

And then came the dawn—to the great and wonderful relief of all.

Just as the night had descended with such swiftness, so the dawn came. There was a sudden end of the blackness—and over in one section of the sky lurid beams of light shot up—red, yellow, heliotrope, orange. Great, scintillating rays of colour.

From that dead sea, and from many parts of the land, came mysterious movements. Shufflings and slidings and slitherings. Only for a few moments—and then there was silence. The last of the night creatures had slipped away, for the dawn was their enemy.

Just for a brief spell sea and land were enshrouded in a great black shadow. Then it lifted—mysteriously, magically. And light fell upon the surface of the planet. A golden, orange light. It seemed to flicker, and then change colour. And the full beauty of the Venusian dawn was there.

In any other circumstances, the adventurers would have been enthralled—entranced—by that wondrous sight. But just now they thought only of their great relief—and of Barry's disappearance.

"Come along!" said Bags grimly. "We've got to make a search—at once! Poor kid! I expect we shall find him dead somewhere. It's too much to hope—"

"Look!" yelled Don Masters excitedly.

He pointed, and all the others set up a great shout. Near by was the monstrous body of the brontosaurus-like sea creature. Further away were other mountain-like masses. But none of the explorers looked at these dead things.

They were watching two figures—which had just come out from a crevice of the rocks. And one of them was Barry Drowe. He was safe—he was alive!

"Hurrah!" A heartfelt cheer went up, and the fact that the other figure was that of Count Alexis Popandos did not seem to matter.

The Coming of the Count.

"MY boy!" exclaimed Professor Roxley Drowe, as he seized Barry by his shoulders and held him for a moment. "Thank heaven you are alive and well! I had feared—"

"It's all right, uncle," said Barry. "I don't like to remember what happened—I only know that I escaped, and I found a sort of crevice in the rocks, where I hid until the dawn came."

"Everybody else is safe, too," said the Professor. "But my ship! My poor, poor ship!" he added sadly. "I am desolated!"

He turned with a kind of gulp in his throat. They were all crowding round the rail at the top of the ladder, and from this spot Professor Drowe could see the crumpled tractors and the bent and battered bows. For now that daylight had come the damage to the *Rover* was distressingly apparent.

The boys, however, took little notice of this aspect of the matter. They were too excited about Barry's sudden appearance—to say nothing of the appearance of Count Popandos.

"Well, we've had a pretty exciting night," said Freeman. "But we're all safe, and that's the thing that matters most."

"What about some breakfast?" asked Puggy Dibble grumblingly. "We haven't eaten a thing for hours and hours! It's rotten the way we're treated!"

"Take this ass away and smother him!" said Freeman glaring. "All he can think about is grub—even at a time like this!"

"Yes, dry up, Puggy!" said Billy Ward angrily. The others were looking at Count Popandos. Now that Barry was alive and comparatively unhurt, the excitement had gone down a bit. The boys had time to look at Count Popandos and to wonder at his appearance.

For the Count was dishevelled and wild looking. His eyes were vacant, and his whole appearance like that of a child.

"Go easy with him!" murmured Barry, with a meaning glance. "He's harmless now."

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Masters.

They all understood. Count Popandos had gone mad—his brain had been turned by the terrors of the night. He was like a little child—harmless, pitiful.

"I found him in that crevice, sir," said Barry, as he drew Sir Bags aside. "It seems that he'd been out all night."

"Poor devil!" muttered Bags with genuine compassion. "No wonder he's in this condition."

"He doesn't even know who he is, sir—or anything

about our recent adventures," said Barry. "His mind is a complete blank."

"I'll have a word with him," said Bags abruptly. He went to Count Popandos and the juniors gave way. The Count was staring along the deck, curious and wondering.

"Yes, I am dreaming!" he said as he looked at Bags. "This is a ship—and yet it is on the land! No such thing can be! I am dreaming. Everything is so strange—so mysterious."

"There is nothing to fear now, Count," said Bags. "The darkness has gone—"

"Ah, the darkness!" muttered Popandos, cringing away, a light of terror leaping into his eyes. "The darkness! Take me away from it. Do you hear? Take me away! I cannot bear the darkness—I cannot stand—"

"Steady!" interrupted Bags, gripping him. "There's nothing to fear now, Popandos."

He could feel the man trembling under his grip. At the same moment the Count fell whimpering to the deck.

Sir Bags beckoned to some members of the crew, and they came up at a run.

"Go easy with him!" murmured Bags. "The poor man is demented. Take him below, and put him in one of the staterooms. Give him food if he wants it—and a little brandy, too. See that he is made comfortable."

Count Popandos was led below. He went meekly, sobbing as he was helped along. In spite of all his former villainy, none of the adventurers could feel bitter against this poor wretch.

And below, Count Popandos was cared for and looked after. Gentle hands helped him to get out of his clothing—and those same gentle hands helped him to one of the beds. And at last he slept, and he was alone.

And then—Count Popandos sat up!

He looked about the little cabin, and there was now a light of keen intelligence in his eyes. It was a light of cunning triumph.

"Yes, I have fooled them!" he muttered tensely. "They think I am crazy—they think I am harmless. But I shall surprise them all soon. Very soon!" he added, with fiendish relish.

The wily Count had tricked them all. For he was no demented creature—but a cunning fiend in human shape!

The brilliant villainy of Count Popandos has aided him to lull the suspicions of the gallant adventurers. How will he turn it to account?

Riotous long instalment Next Week, boys.

FERNANZ THE FENCER—

(Continued from page 7.)

Suddenly there was a mighty snap, and Chick felt an agonising jerk. He was falling, falling. Dear heaven, he was falling to his doom! Fate had played a grim jest, for one of the bullets had snapped the rope by which he was attached to the plane.

Chick, falling, saw what seemed like a great silver sheet of metal rising up to hit him. He closed his eyes.

Falcon Swift's Fate.

FALCON SWIFT calmly adjusted his monocle as his head appeared over the top of a wall. He had reached the spot that had been his objective. Facing him was the brightly lit window from which he was confident had come the bullet that had spelt Jeremiah Zansworth's fate.

Without any qualms he crept across the littered back yard, and coming to the window, he crouched on one side and reached out sensitive trained hands. Somewhat to his astonishment he found that the window opened gently upwards. He had not expected to find matters made so easy for him.

The window went up then quickly, and the famous detective climbed inside the room.

Instantly he knew that he had stepped into a trap. For the light went out suddenly in the room, and darkness came down like a blanket. Cursing his folly, the detective rushed again to the window, only to find himself hammering against what appeared to be a steel sheet. And then suddenly a great light impinged upon him, blinded him, and a mocking voice, with a foreign intonation broke in on his panting breath.

"Caught Mister Falcon Sweet! Did you think that I, Fernanz the Fencer, was so easy a prey? I know that it was you the old miser summoned on the telephone. I was listening in. And now, well they say that you are something of a hand with a rapier, Mister Sweet. You shall have one chance of life. Come!"

With that brisk, imperative word a shining rapier was thrust hilt forward through the barrage of light at the detective. He snatched at it quickly, peeling off his jacket and letting it fall, for already another blade with its point levelled at his body, was playing like lightning for his chest.

The two blades met with a clash.

"Ach! Got you!" cried the man exultantly.

"No—not quite!" panted Swift, retreating with his back against the wall.

And then came a startled interruption. A trap-door slid back in the roof overhead, and framed in the shaft of light that poured into the room was the scared, white face of Chick Conway. A pistol was in his hand, a wet and useless pistol, for he too was dripping with water. The Gods had grinned on the boy sleuth. He had fallen into a lake after that mad drop from the aeroplane. And now, Fernanz the Fencer behind the glaring flashlamp stayed his last death thrust to look up startled into the grim, peering face of the boy detective.

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"Hands up, or I'll blow you to bits!" Chick cried sharply.

But the Spaniard was not so easily tricked. "Bah!" he exclaimed after one searching glance. "You have been in the water. Your pistol is wet." And he prepared to draw back the rapier to deliver the death thrust at Falcon Swift.

Chick, seeing his bluff had failed, called out in an agony of apprehension:

"Stay, the key—the key of the desk that you want." And he threw it down, determined to lose that rather than that his Boss's life should pay forfeit. He had not swallowed the key, but had been merely bluffing them. A bluff that had threatened to cut short his career.

The Spaniard stared at the key a moment, then recognising it as the genuine article, he pounced on it.

And in that moment a rope snaked down—the identical rope with which Chick had been bound to the airplane. Falcon Swift jumped for it like a tiger springing, knocking aside Fernanz's rapier as he did so. And as it clattered to the ground, he swarmed up the rope.

Luckily Chick had had the foresight to attach the other end to a pillar in the room above. A howl of rage and execration came from Fernanz as he saw how he had been tricked of his prey. But by then the detective was in the room above.

"Thanks, Chick," he panted. "Sorry you had to give up the key though. Which way?"

"I don't know, Boss. . . . Look, here's a door!" Chick cried.

They came out into a passage at the foot of a flight of stairs. And suddenly they found a raging mob of men swarming round the corner of the corridor upon their heels. Falcon Swift and Chick were forced to beat a retreat up the staircase, the detective plying his rapier with deadly effect, pricking all and sundry who came too close, while Chick wielded the broken leg of a chair which he had obtained from somewhere.

As if by magic, Fernanz the Fencer appeared in the forefront of the attack, pressing savagely and shrieking encouragement to his thugs.

They were coming to the top of a landing now, and there was a door close behind. Fernanz was, pressing on Falcon Swift, but now the combat was equal, and the detective held his own. Suddenly knocking up the other's blade, he seized him and carried him bodily in his arms, crashing him against the door, so that it flew open, half ajar as it was, and Fernanz was precipitated with a crash on the carpet.

"Oh jolly good, Boss," cried Chick in high glee as they darted inside the room, and slammed the door just in the nick of time in the face of the mob.

"They'll break in in a moment," said Falcon Swift grimly as he turned the key in the lock. "But if they do they'll find this fellow run through the heart." "Get up you scoundrel," he growled, making to prick him with his rapier.

Fernanz leapt to his feet with galvanic speed, and was on guard in a second. But Swift's anger had transformed him into a phenomenal fencer. He moved around the Spaniard like forked lightning, his rapier seeming to rain blows upon the other. Inch by inch Fernanz retreated, a wild terror growing in his eyes. He had met his master.

The detective made a sudden thrust, which Fernanz narrowly parried. With a sudden breath the man gave up the fight, and backed away. Swiftly he

pushed aside a heavy velvet carpet that hung across the room, and disappeared behind it. A revolver thrust out from behind the curtain, and there came the Spaniard's snarling warning.

"Move an inch, and I fire to cool!"

An instant's pause, then: "Bah!" ejaculated Swift with contempt. "It's the pistol you dropped in the room—the pistol soaked in water." And he slashed at the curtain with his rapier, pushing it aside.

As he had half expected, the useless pistol had been attached by a gold scarf pin through the trigger handle to the velvet curtain. A fake! And Fernanz was escaping through the window.

"After him!" thundered the sporting detective. "Don't let the villain escape. Remember—the key!"

Clambering through the window after the Spaniard they saw him coolly negotiating his passage across a thick tangle of telephone wires. He had put on his jacket again now, and carried his rapier still in his hands. But both Falcon Swift and Chick were weaponless.

"He'll get away from us yet," ground out Falcon Swift.

The man had almost reached the other side. Now he was there, and suddenly turning, he bent his rapier like a bow in his hands. With a peculiar gesture he threw it, and the long, glittering blade slithered through the moonlight.

Chick, who was a little in advance of his Boss on the wires, gave a cry and stretched out his hand as a fieldsman might for a cricket ball. Either he was lucky or he showed superb judgment, for as the point of the blade was turning to bury itself in Falcon Swift's heart, Chick's hand caught the hilt and deflected it from its course, sending it clattering to the ground far below.

"We'll have to follow the scug carefully," Falcon Swift muttered. "Look he's making for Jeremiah Zansworth's secret room, and the desk. No doubt he thinks he'll find a revolver in the room to keep us at bay."

Impotent to do any good they watched Fernanz calmly treading along the roof. They saw him smash in the window from top to bottom, and through the gap they saw this spectacular scoundrel approach the desk.

Chick watched tensely as Fernanz the Fencer bent over the lock of the desk.

And then he cried out in delight.

From the swivel chair behind the crumpled, broken figure of Jeremiah Zansworth, the miser suddenly straightened and came to life. His heavy chair swept over his head and came down on his enemy's. Fernanz crumbled up like a burst balloon.

"Hurrah," cried Chick. "Let's put the manacles on him, Boss. Oh, I didn't tell you, I knew the old fellow was not dead."

And thus ended the amazing case of Fernanz the Fencer, who received his just deserts at the hands of a High Court judge. A hidden pigeon-hole in the desk revealed evidence that he had written against himself in the form of plans and confessions of terrible crimes. That desk revealed one other thing, too. It revealed that Jeremiah Zansworth, unknown to any, had been giving large and generous donations to the hospitals and to the poor for the last twenty years.

The Dandy Cowboy coming Next Week in a Duel with The Mystery Rider. Don't Miss It!