

SPECIAL GRAND PIRATE AND CANNIBAL NUMBER

Boys' Magazine

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EVERY SATURDAY



THE KID PIRATES. Rollicking Thrill and Fun Yarns
For Man and Boy Inside.

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THE KID PIRATES—

(Continued from page 7.)

seriously. Llewellyn and Ffoulkes received nasty injuries about the head from stones, and the others did not come off unscathed.

"Good heavens! they are in a killing mood," gasped Llewellyn. "How are we going to get out of it?"

"Look!" shouted Jumbo Clarke suddenly, and there was a note in his voice that startled the others and made them afraid. "We're out of it—but we're caught in the current! Good heavens; we can't fight it! We're being carried on..."

It was true. In their preoccupation they had allowed the raft to turn a dangerous bend in the river, and now they were out of their depth, caught in a fast and dangerous current and being carried whither they would not.

TO make the position more tragic, night drifted down with the suddenness of late September. A hot, still night, ominous, hoking a brooding threat.

And then suddenly it burst—the storm. Its first thunderous peal was like the crack of Doom. Lightning zig-zagged the sky. The boys crouched together on the drifting raft, fearful, held in tense, hypnotic dread. Never had they seen the forces of Nature so terrible in their wrath. Every flash of lightning was blinding, every prolonged, crashing roll of thunder seemed to deafen them.

Still the river, swollen, almost overflowing its banks, rushed them on.

"Boys—look—look—look!" screamed Llewellyn all at once. "Duck, duck for your lives. It's coming!"

It was a great tree, struck by lightning, falling across the river. And the craft was crashing down on the swollen river beneath the fallen tree. Each

boy crouched in dread fear, staring upwards with dilated eyes. And then, as though in some nightmare horror of vision, they saw amidst the high branches of the tree that was crashing across the river—a man. A man's face, horribly distorted with fear. There was a man in the tree!

"Duck, duck!" shouted Llewellyn. "We may—just—get under!"

His voice was drowned, utterly swamped by the reverberating crash, crack, crack of the lightning-struck tree. It was falling upon them—falling, falling...

No, it wasn't; they had just got clear; just got under it in the nick of time. With a sound like the roar of artillery, the tree crashed across the river, its furthestmost branches resting on the further bank. And as the raft crashed with the shock of that concussion into the bank—and stuck there—the hypnotised glance of the boys went to the dead man, lying entangled in the branches of the tree, and on his chest a sack from which a stream of gold was pouring on to his face—a face distorted in its death agonies.

"Gosh!" breathed Llewellyn amidst a sudden deathly stillness. "It's the man who robbed the bank."

And so, indeed, it was proved at the subsequent investigations. The next morning a search party found the kid pirates with the man—dead, alas! on the bank, and the bag of gold. It was proved that he had trained the dog so that when he robbed the bank it gave no warning. At any rate from it all the kid pirates gained considerable kudos, and they are now a popular and flourishing gang.

Young Mr. James Brown has bought them all special pirate kit. He thought it was due to Llewellyn. For wasn't Llewellyn Dorothy's brother? And hadn't Llewellyn saved him his job at the bank?

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OUR FUNNY AND THRILLING COMPLETE TALE, INTRODUCING
THE SCHOOLBOY CAPTAIN KIDD.



The Dog Fight.

LLEWELLYN BARKER strode down the drive of the "Laurels" with the air of a preoccupied and intensely busy private detective.

He slammed the gate hard—so hard that both his mother and father, who were still having breakfast, got up to look out of the window. They saw Llewellyn Barker still standing at the gate, his hands in his knickerbockers pockets, his satchel slung over his shoulder, thinking hard and with a terrible scowl on his face.

"Good gracious; what's the matter with Lew?" exclaimed his mother in alarm.

"Usual thing. Monday morning feeling, and doesn't like school," growled his father as he resumed his seat with the newspaper. He flung his head up from the news columns for a moment. "I'll have to teach that boy not to slam the hinges off the gates," he said grimly.

But Llewellyn Barker would have been most indignant if he had been told that it was owing to ill temper that he had slammed the gate.

No; far from it. He was above such petty trifles. Even now as he stood at the gate of "The Laurels" he had his hand at his face, the index finger of his right hand running along his left cheek whilst he frowned over his problems. It was an attitude of great thought.

Indeed Lew was a great man. He had not yet quite decided whether he would follow in the footsteps of a certain famous detective or Captain Kidd, the infamous pirate. Llewellyn favoured the pirate profession. But amongst his favourite reading was also a certain series of detective stories, and Lew privately had a profound admiration for the sleuth-hound in question, though he would not for worlds have admitted the fact openly.

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

The truth was that Llewellyn Barker was head of a gang that he had formed at St. Martin's School, which excellent scholastic establishment he attended as a Third Form scholar. Five other Third Formers with himself at their head had formed themselves into the Captain Kidd gang, and they had some great and gorgeous times on a near-by island on the river.

But a rival gang had sprung up in opposition to the pirate gang.

The irksome thing about it to Lew was that it was led by his deadly enemy, Hedley Gnomes. Still more irksome was it that Hedley had commenced in business as a detective, and he had a gang of five pretty slick assistants. Hedley Gnomes, the Private Detective, and his Five Personal Assistants! That was the kind of title you could roll round your tongue with some satisfaction. And Hedley Gnomes did it, too. He was a regular smarty, that fellow.

But perhaps what annoyed Llewellyn Barker most of all—what secretly touched him on the raw and made his spirit flame with rage—was that Hedley Gnomes had boasted that he and his gang of detective assistants were going to round up the pirate gang.

It was the virtuous superiority with which Hedley Gnomes decked his challenge that got Lew on the raw. Hedley Gnomes was a clever boy. He had put the innuendo round that the pirate gang was up to no good, and that he was performing a service to humanity by ridding the earth of them. Thus it will be perceived that he placed himself in the position of the righteous chastising the wrong.

It had gone all round St. Martin's that Hedley Gnomes and his detectives meant to "get" the pirate gang; all round the village the news had spread, in fact. Parents and others heard vague rumours of it.

Lew had long ago earned the name of being "the worst boy in the town," and Hedley Gnomes was "the teachers' pet," the boy who won all the prizes. So it will be seen that the rivalry between the two gangs had assumed a certain curious complexion that made it all the more deadly and serious.

The incongruity of detectives "rounding up" pirates was glossed over. Sufficient to say that the town watched the rivalry with breathless interest, and while Llewellyn Barker had many partisans, it was generally assumed that his clever and virtuous rival would in the end score off him heavily, and, indeed, those parents who heard of it rather hoped that "that nice boy, Hedley Gnomes," would succeed in his object in smashing up the iniquitous pirate gang. For it was assumed as a matter of course that the pirate gang was up to no good.

Thus we find Lew this Monday morning standing at his garden gate and thinking heavily. Whereas, in point of fact, he had ten minutes in which to walk the three miles between his house and the school if he did not wish to suffer penalties for being late.

His father looked irritably out of the window. "Isn't that boy ever going to get a move on?" he demanded of no one in particular. "If he gets black marks again this week for being late I'll take a cane to him myself. He's the bane of my life, he—"

He stopped just then, however, as a rather smart little two-seater car swept up to the kerb outside "The Laurels," and braked smoothly.

At the wheel was young Mr. James Brown, the assistant cashier of the local bank. A popular young man in social circles, and a very eligible bachelor. Llewellyn's mother got up from her chair and went to the window with interest.

"Why, there's young Mr. Brown called to take Dorothy into town for her shopping, I do believe," Mrs. Barker exclaimed with some fluttering. Dorothy was Llewellyn's sister, a pretty girl of nineteen, and it was an open secret in the town that Mr. James Brown had rather more than a passing interest in "The Laurels."

At the wheel Mr. James Brown, immaculate in a light suit, stared hard at Lew.

"Why; where's Dorothy?" he asked anxiously. "Isn't she well, or something?"

Llewellyn woke from his ponderous reverie, and stared with surprise at "Jimmy," as he somewhat presumptuously designated the young suitor.

"Why did you want her?" he asked. "I gave her the slip, you know, told her you might not be coming. I thought we men didn't want a silly girl hanging about us."

Mr. James Brown looked pained and a little indignant, and it was only after a rather marked hesitation that he nodded curtly and opened the door of the car for Lew. He certainly had not called round specially with the object of motoring Master Llewellyn Barker to his school in order that he should not be late. But since Lew seemed to think so, it was rather difficult to deceive him.

"Get in youngster," he snapped, scanning the windows of "The Laurels." But no sign of Dorothy rewarded him, and making the best of a bad job, he slipped in the clutch and moved off.

Llewellyn relapsed into his pose of ponderous thought for some time. He was really deeply troubled. He did not enjoy that drive very much. Life was a pretty raw proposition, he guessed. And he reckoned he had had a bad deal.

"Say?" he queried, looking up at length into the young cashier's face. "You've kinda seen that dog of Hedley Gnomes, haven't you, Jimmy? Is he very fierce?"

Mr. James Brown started abstractedly, and

wrenched himself from tender thoughts. Mr. Gnomes, Hedley's father, was a manager of the bank, and lately he had bought a rather fierce and nondescript mongrel that had been recommended to him as a good house dog. He assumed that it was this dog to which the boy referred.

"Fierce!" he declared with somewhat of a reminiscent frown. "I should say he is. Won't let anyone come near him without snarling and showing his fangs. I believe he'd tear a man to bits. He's a good dog to have at the bank though, especially when there are rumours of cracksmen in the neighbourhood."

Lew nodded and relapsed into pensive silence. Thereafter the conversation languished until the car drew up outside St. Martin's School. As the young pirate chief jumped out, and mingled with the crowd of schoolboys in the front playground, Mr. James Brown, with a curt nod, drove away. He was disappointed with life, and with young brothers in particular.

Mr. Gnomes, the bank manager, was away on holiday from this morning, which meant that Mr. James Brown would have to reside over the bank for two weeks, with little chance of visiting "The Laurels."

A group of boys immediately rushed up to Llewellyn as he landed. There were five of them, Eric Ladds, Rob Harper, Harry Foulkes, "Jumbo" Clarke, so called because he was big and fat for his age, and "Copper" Brown, who earned his nickname for the sole reason that he had large feet. Why policemen are supposed to have big feet is difficult to understand. All the boys were the members of Captain Kidd's Pirate Gang, and they saluted their leader by gruesome, if picturesque signs, indicative of the skull and crossbones. One sign that every boy gave was to draw his hand across his throat in a most significant manner.

Hardly had these greetings been exchanged when another boy pushed through the mob who were looking on, some enviously, at the "pirates." The newcomer had black curly hair, a very clean collar and hands, and a rather good-looking face which was at present somewhat distorted in a taunting grin. This was Hedley Gnomes, the model boy of the town, who, curiously enough, had pitted himself against Llewellyn in deadly rivalry.

Perhaps he had been urged to this by the fact that Llewellyn was popular amongst his fellows, even though he was "bad."

"Yah, pirate," he jeered. "I'm gonna chase you down. My detectives will hand you over to the law, and my bloodhound will eat your mangy little dog."

Llewellyn looked as though he might become heated. But by an effort he retained his poise.

"Pooh!" he sniffed. "Fancy calling that mongrel of yours a bloodhound! And you detectives! Why, you haven't even found our cave yet, let alone raided it."

"My bloodhound'll find it," asserted Detective Hedley Gnomes. "And when he does he'll eat up that mangy little dog of yours for a start. You know your Dad said you weren't to keep the brute, and I'm gonna wipe it out, and you, too."

Lew's face became a little more red. Some time previously he had befriended a stray pup, and taken it into the house. The dog had soon commenced to tear up the home, and Llewellyn's father had turned it out neck and crop and flatly forbidden the youngster to keep it.

Spite of that, the pup, "Whoof," was still in Lew's possession. He kept it on his pirate lair on the island, and every day took it food. He rather suspected that there might be trouble if his father knew.

Hedley Gnomes's way of waging war was to assume

that he was committing some dreadful crime by keeping the dog in the face of his father's orders.

"If your bloodhound finds Whoof, it'll be your dog that's torn up," Lew said defiantly. He didn't believe it. He knew his own dog to be a rather cowardly little creature when it came to a fight. But he had to stand up for the honour of his own dog.

"All right; I dare you!" exclaimed Hedley Gnomes immediately and triumphantly. "I dare you to let your dog meet mine. Why, my dog's so fierce he'd chew up a bull, let alone a mangy pup!"

Lew hesitated, and looked at his pirates.

"Look here," he said finally, and with more than a little grimness, "when school's over this morning I'll bring my dog to meet yours. Only you'd better dig a burial place for your old mongrel because Whoof won't eat that kind of a dog."

And so it was arranged, amidst considerable

pirate chief said, frowning. He paced to and fro, his hand at an imaginary sword hilt; then stopped to stare out through the glinting green of the trees to the opposite side of the playground.

"They're watching us," he hissed.

It was true that Hedley Gnomes and his five minions, hardly in proper concealment behind the wall of the Fives Court, were closely regarding the pirates.

"They mean to shadow us to our lair," put in Harry Ffoulkes in his most melodramatic manner. "They know that we must go there to get the dog, and they intend to lay us to the sword."

Lew was almost too worried to play his part. He knew that there was a cruel strain in Hedley Gnomes's nature that would rejoice at the sight of his large dog attacking and tearing up a smaller one. And Llewellyn Barker loved the mongrel he had befriended.



UNPOPULAR PIRATES.—They were pursued by a hail of arrows, and some of the town roughs coming up the river bank on the other side commenced to throw stones.

excitement. Nevertheless, during the whole of morning lessons Llewellyn Barker was a very abstracted and worried boy. He visualised the grim house-dog who was specially kept to guard the town's bank from invaders, leaping, snarling, with bared fangs, at poor old Whoof. He seemed to hear the agonised squeals of his faithful mongrel, and he didn't like it.

MONDAY was a half-holiday at St. Martin's, and after morning lessons Llewellyn signalled to his pirates, who gathered round him in a quiet corner under the elms.

"The battle takes place an hour from now, my men. And it would seem that ere the sun sets the Jolly Rover will be hauled down in tatters from its proud position, and we shall be hanging at the yardarm."

"Why not raid 'em, and put the old dog to the cannon?" suggested Jumbo Clarke.

"No; I have 'een agreed to a meeting," the

"Say, let 'em follow us," he declared, abruptly turning away. "Let's fight it out on the island ourselves. I'm not going to let old Whoof fight to-day. He's not well, poor old fellow."

They knew perfectly well that he was afraid for his own champion, but they said nothing. They followed, looking about them cautiously, as if they did not know that Hedley Gnomes and his detectives were in pursuit. Soon they were making their way down to the River Seale, which flowed quietly, glinting silver in the sunshine, between pleasant green banks.

There was a temptation to undress and plunge into the water for a swim as they had done many times before. But they restrained it. They were on business bent. And they walked in single file along the bank like mauraders.

And presently they came to a cleft in the river bank. It was a grassy slope, dipping down then upwards, and as they plunged down it they had the knowledge that they were hidden from their pursuers.

Llewellyn signalled to his pirates to lie down, while he cautiously scouted over the top of the ridge.

"They've stopped," he announced, after a cautious survey. "And, by gum," he added, "they're entrenching themselves in the sand—and old Hedley Gnomes has got that beastly dog with him!"

There was blank dismay, even a trace of panic, in Llewellyn's voice. The others, hearing it, came creeping up to peer over the top of the ridge.

What they saw caused their blood to run cold.

Hedley Gnomes was struggling with a huge and shaggy-coated dog, which was on a leash. Even from that distance they could see the brute was all bristling viciousness. Its snarling teeth and wrinkled nose were protected, however, by a muzzle. The young chief of the detective gang himself had little control over the brute, for it kept turning its head this way and that in an endeavour to maul him.

"He's out after us with that mad brute," voiced Llewellyn in dismay, forgetting his part as the bold Captain Kid for a moment.

The other members of the detective gang were busily entrenching themselves in a sandy pit along the river bank. They were piling high with their hands a wall of sand, behind which it was evident they proposed to protect themselves from any bombardment launched by the pirates.

"Gee; they're perhaps going to let that dog loose on us when they've got settled down," said Jumbo Clarke in horror.

"I wouldn't put it past that rotter," gritted the chief of the pirate gang. "But how the dickens did Hedley Gnomes know that this was one of our lars?"

"He's been scouting around, the rotten sleuth hound," Ffoulkes put in wildly. "Chaps, we've got to do something; I'm not going to be chewed up by a mad dog!"

Then Llewellyn took command of the situation, and became again the bold and resourceful Captain Kidd. "Hsst! Open the cave, my men," he commanded in a deep, guttural voice.

They proceeded to obey his command, and in doing so they gave quite a remarkable manifestation of their young leader's ingenuity and resource. A number of large slabs of green turf were removed from the ground, gradually unfolding to the view a large board behind. Once this board was removed a cavity was revealed, sufficiently large enough, indeed, to merit the title of cave.

Three of the boys were able to enter this cave together, and they did so at their leader's orders, bringing forth strange implements; wheels from what had once been a child's perambulator; paper hats, sashes, scarves and wooden swords; catapults, and wads of tightly pounded paper to serve as missiles.

In next to no time the gang were equipped in full regalia; and then from the board and the wheels and the sail a strange craft was rigged up by their willing and quick hands. A land yacht large enough to hold at least four of the boys.

"Now to the attack," grunted Llewellyn. "And let 'em have a real broadside, my men."

The land yacht was cautiously pushed up the slope, until its lowered sail peeped over the ridge like the grinning muzzle of a gun. Then all the pirates except Ffoulkes ranged alongside their craft, and at a word from Llewellyn they trundled it over the top of the ridge, getting impetus by running for a few yards as one does with a sledge, and then at another shouted command from Llewellyn they all jumped on board.

The land yacht flew across the turf with remarkable speed and smoothness, though it bumped to

each inequality of the ground, the kid pirates held on like grim death. Llewellyn in front lay on a log of a tree that was to serve as a battering ram while he manipulated the steering.

Straight and true as a die the craft sped for their rivals' ambush. Yells of alarm came now from Hedley Gnomes' detectives. They did not relish a fight at close quarters with this formidable and rakish-looking craft.

Biff, bang! Zaff zaff! With a dull crash the land yacht's battering ram hit the soft sand wall that their rivals had erected, and knocked it to smithereens. The next moment the yacht had come to an abrupt standstill pitching out its occupants, who energetically belaboured their enemies with the broadsides of their wooden swords.

Hedley Gnomes' formidable dog was at first buried in a shower of sand. He wriggled and fought free of this, squealing and barking like blue murder; then, throwing dignity incontinently to the winds, this fearsome hound fled over the river bank, squealing like a stuck pig.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! They're gone! Why, they've bunked for it! Look!" Llewellyn shouted in sudden delight and triumph as he sat up in the sand pit. A moment before he had been grovelling in the sand pun-ning someone's face like fun (he didn't know who it was, but he suspected it was his dear enemy Hedley Gnomes from the sounds that issued from the punched face). Then a sudden wild yell and he was punching at nothing, and five boys and a dog were fleeing as if for their lives over the river bank.

The joy-bursting truth was manifest. In one devastating onslaught the kid pirates had won, and their enemies were in complete rout.

Llewellyn got to his feet. "After 'em, chaps," he shouted and led the pursuit. But he had scarce gone a few yards when all of a sudden he stopped, attracted by a sight that sobered him.

Behind a hummock he saw the most sinister-looking man it had ever been his lot to set eyes upon. He was burly, heavily jawed and unshaven, and he wore a cap pulled down to conceal his low brow and furtive eyes. In his hand he held a whip and by its collar he was holding the ferocious dog of whose prowess Hedley Gnomes had boasted so much.

He was whipping the dog brutally. The sight was sickening. Nor did he seem to trouble to conceal his brutality. Every whip lash sounded like a revolver shot, so fierce and intense was it. And the dog with gritted teeth, and with stark fear in its eyes made never a moan. He dared not. For this was his master.

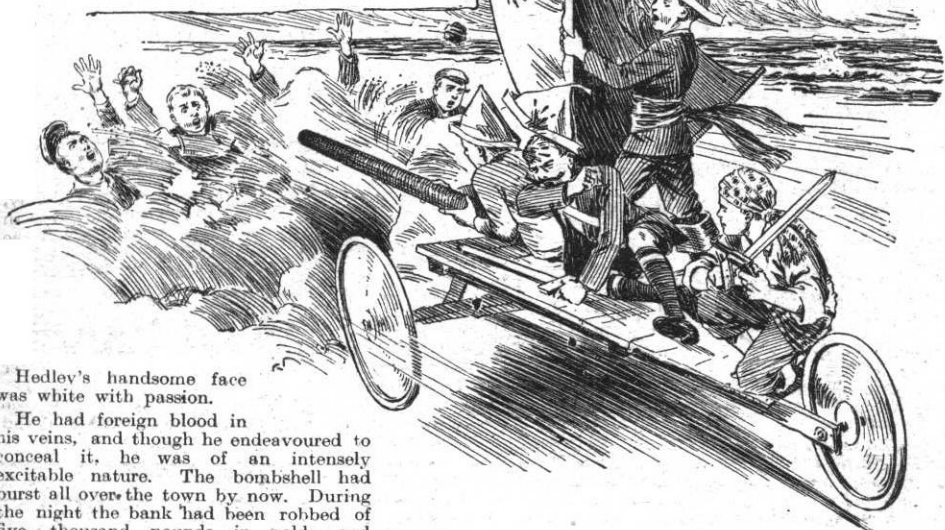
THAT night there occurred a drama of which only one man on earth was cognisant. And he was a cracksmen. In muffler and mask he worked on the window pane with a diamond. Inside in the long cashiering department of the bank a fierce dog moved restlessly. He dared not make a sound, though he would gladly have hurled himself at the throat of the man who was breaking into the bank. That man was his master. And the dog went in terrible fear of him.

The burglar entered the bank, and set about his stealthy work. An hour later he stole out, down to the river. Over his shoulder was a sack containing money in gold.

Captain Kidd's Luck.

THEY did it, I tell you. They did it. He dragged the dog, so that he could ruin my father." And as Hedley Gnomes shrieked the words he pointed a shaking hand at Llewellyn Barker.

THE KID PIRATES' TRIUMPH.—The land yacht's battering ram hit the soft sand wall and knocked it to smithereens. The next moment the yacht had come to an abrupt standstill, pitching out its occupants, who energetically belaboured their enemies with the broadsides of their wooden swords.



Hedley's handsome face was white with passion.

He had foreign blood in his veins, and though he endeavoured to conceal it, he was of an intensely excitable nature. The bombshell had burst all over the town by now. During the night the bank had been robbed of five thousand pounds in gold, and Hedley Gnomes' father was a ruined man unless it was quickly recovered.

Hedley had seen his father, had seen the terrible state of anxiety and worry he was in. Even Mr. James Brown, the assistant cashier, exhibited emotion. For in that small community it was a veritable crash. Many worthy townfolk would be ruined by the bank's failure. And Mr. James Brown saw his chance of marrying and settling down gone for ever. For he had been in charge of the bank, and his reputation was lost unless the gold was recovered.

Now the drama was taking a new turn. White-faced, Llewellyn Barker stared at his accuser. Afternoon lessons were over, and the boys of St. Martin's were crowded round the two deadly enemies. All day Hedley Gnomes had been stating with absolute positiveness that it was Llewellyn who had broken into the bank. It was incredible—ridiculous. No man in his sane senses would have given credence to such a farcical theory for an instant.

But the boys of St. Martin's had often heard Llewellyn boasting of what he would do, the robberies he would commit. And now he was paying for those foolish boasts. For they took him at his word. Many of them knew that their fathers had suffered financial loss, and Hedley Gnomes had somehow managed to inflame a wild mob spirit against Llewellyn.

"He did it, I tell you. He did it," Hedley Gnomes wildly shouted.

The boys of St. Martin's crowded round Llewellyn in an ominous way. "Mob him! Make him tell us where he's hidden the gold," one or two of them

shouted. And the cry was immediately taken up. A rush was made on Llewellyn Barker.

Backing against the wall, beset by overwhelming numbers, Llewellyn, in desperation, made the secret sign of his gang, Ffoulkes and "Copper" and Jumbo

Clarke and the other two rushed in, yelling wildly, with fists clenched, to the rescue of their leader. Didn't they know he had not robbed the bank? It was ridiculous, madly impossible.

With a great scurry of fists the pirate gang fought their way backwards to the school gates. They were pursued by a vindictive mob.

"After 'em! Mob 'em!" "Beat it for the river, boys!" gasped Llewellyn as the six pirates ran under a shower of catapult missiles, peas aimed from peashooters, soft balls and other ammunition. There was no mistaking the school's attitude; it was bitterly hostile.

Llewellyn made no attempt at concealment of his plans now, for there had come a sinister development; the town roughs had joined in the chase, and the pirate gang were in real danger of maltreatment.

Llewellyn, followed by his pirates, made for the place where his river raft was cunningly hidden in a backwater. Determined to put a bold face on it, Lew got from under the soap box the full regalia of Captain Kidd, and hoisted the black flag bearing the skull and crossbones even as Ffoulkes pushed out with his pole into midstream. They were pursued by a hail of arrows (for they had been forced to leave their bows and arrows behind) and some of the town roughs coming up the river bank on the other side commenced to throw stones.

Ffoulkes and Jumbo Clarke now were propelling the raft as hard as they could down the river with their punting poles. Missiles of all kinds were hurtling round the boy pirates, for the town roughs, always vindictive against the school, now saw their chance of harming at least six of its members

(Continued on page 2 of cover.)

Chaps, Here's Our Kid Movie-Actor in a Reel of Mirthful Melodrama.



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ONE OF THE FUNNIEST YARNS OF
THRILLS IN THE JUNGLE WILDS,
FEATURING PHIL, THE BOY FILM
ACTOR, AND HIS TRIED AND TRUE
CHUM, ROUGHNECK HARRY, STAR
CAMERA MAN.

"S'FUNNY thing, but nothing pleases the picture-goer in one and threepenny seats, than to see some other poor gink in a fix! And that Phil, you poor mut, is why you and yours truly are here in Somaliland."

"Roughneck" Harry, the star camera-man of Moonlight Moving Pictures, Inc., shifted his cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other. His mode of expressing himself to young Phil Thrill—the boy stunt actor of the outfit—was as rough as was his bull-dog-like neck which earned him his nickname of "Roughneck."

The fortunes of "Moonlight" had been badly "on the blink" (as Harry would have expressed it), and these two had courageously set out with nothing more than a movie camera and some lengths of celluloid in a desperate effort to snatch the financial affairs of Moonlight out of the fire. How well they had succeeded is now almost ancient history. They had first delivered their onslaught upon the Rockies and, using these huge and awe-inspiring heights as their background had secured some real "whizzes" (Harry's word again) of pictures.

They had in fact photographed the Rockies dry, and so Harry had cabled the President of the Moonlight Company that he was "beating it" for Somaliland.

The President nodded wisely as he read the cable, quite satisfied to rely upon his famous camera man's judgment.

And now they were there.

They had pitched their small camp—consisting of but one tent—upon the borders of a jungle reputed to be "alive" with lions. There were also rumours of "Cannibals!"

Roughneck Harry stretched out his long gaitered

legs as he sat upon a packing case, and plunged his hands down into his breeches pockets in search of a match with which to relight his interminable cigar. He blew a cloud of smoke into the air and punched at his open palm with his clenched fist.

"Pitchers with a punch in 'em is wot we're after, son," he cried, "and by the porpoise's paunch we're gunner get 'em here. Ready?"

Phil Thrill rose from the upturned bucket which had formed his seat and stretched his arms above his head.

"Ready—and waiting, Boss!" he answered.

Roughneck Harry ran an appreciative glance over the clean limbs and lithe body of the fearless young film actor. For all his rough mode of speech, Harry loved the boy as he would have done his own son—had he one.

Harry too now rose quickly to his feet and, flinging the strap of his movie camera over one shoulder, he hitched up the tripod under his arm.

"Better bring a gun, kiddo," he advised. "We're out 'shootin' lions' this morning!"

"With the camera or the gun, Harry?" chaffed Phil in bantering tone.

"Both!" flung back Harry. "With the camera for the film and with the gun for the skin. Reckon my best parlour down Callee-fornia way can do with a nifty new rug."

Phil nodded with a smile, as he took up his

Falcon Swift, the Monocled Manhunter, in a Stupendous Detective Exploit. 9

Mannlicher sporting rifle and snapped open the breach to make sure all was O.K.

"Righto—lead on MacDuff," he chuckled, for Phil was never so happy as when work was in the offing.

"Guess we'll make straight inter the jungle, Phil," announced Harry.

The two had hardly penetrated the outskirts of the great tropical jungle before a deep roar, terrifying enough to make the bravest quail—broke upon their ears.

It came as music to the ears of these two, however. It was what they were eager to hear.

In a flash Harry had slung the camera off his shoulder and on to the tripod he was already fixing with the other hand. He directed the lens full upon Phil, and was gazing at the inverted image of the youngster in the view finder, as the boy film actor stealthily went forward, his gun ready in both hands, one finger crooked about the hair-trigger.

Again came that deep roar echoing through the jungle, and then from the midst of a mass of thick bamboo before him there was a movement in the undergrowth as the King of the Jungle slunk nearer and the swaying canes parted to present the spectacle of a lion's great head and shaggy mane.

The beast's jaws were apart, slavering froth dripped from the huge white teeth flashing cruelly in the sunlight.

Harry clamped hard on his cigar and commenced cranking the camera.

"Try to lure him up towards me, Phil," he yelled. "Let me get a 'close up'—don't shoot yet!"

Phil nodded, but did not move his eyes from those blazing orbs in the massive yellow head before him.

In that instant he remembered he had read somewhere that lion tamers exert influence over their animals by keeping an hypnotic eye upon them. He would try it; if it failed, well, there was always the gun!

Foot by foot, Phil slowly retreated from the lion, groping carefully with his boot as he took each step backwards, still keeping his eyes fixed upon those of the savage man-killing beast before him.

Any second Phil expected the brute to make his wild leap through the air, but the lion seemed not cowed, but curiously held whilst Phil kept his eyes upon him.

Slowly—step by step, in time with Phil—the gargantuan beast emerged from the heart of the jungle into a little clearing between him and the spot where Harry, his eyes agleam with triumph, was recording the picture of his life.

"Great!" he almost whispered, watching the lion. "Keep it up, Phil."

Phil's intention was to work his way backwards right behind Harry and so lure this fine King of the Jungle right up to the front of the camera.

But at a fateful instant in stepping backwards, the young film actor's right foot caught in a protruding root of a tree; he slipped, flung out an arm to try to preserve his balance, but the next instant he was sprawling upon his back at Harry's feet.

The mesmeric effect of Phil's fixed gaze upon the lion snapped; the magic of his eye broken for one fleeting second. The lion, released from its influence, rent the jungle with a ghastly roar, and from its crouching position made a galvanic spring.

Its immense yellow body hurtled through the air straight for the spot where Harry stood, still cranking like a man possessed.

Phil lying prone upon his back, the rifle still gripped in his hands, saw the tawny body of the lion flying through the air above him and its yellow belly presented a fine target.

Without having time for proper aim, Phil jammed

the butt of the rifle upon his own stomach and, taking a snap shot, pulled the trigger.

A hideous report sounded to mingle an instant later with the death roar of the great jungle beast.

The bullet had penetrated its heart, and it was half dead in the air, before it finally fell to earth with a crash and lay still, but for the convulsive quivering of its nerves and muscles.

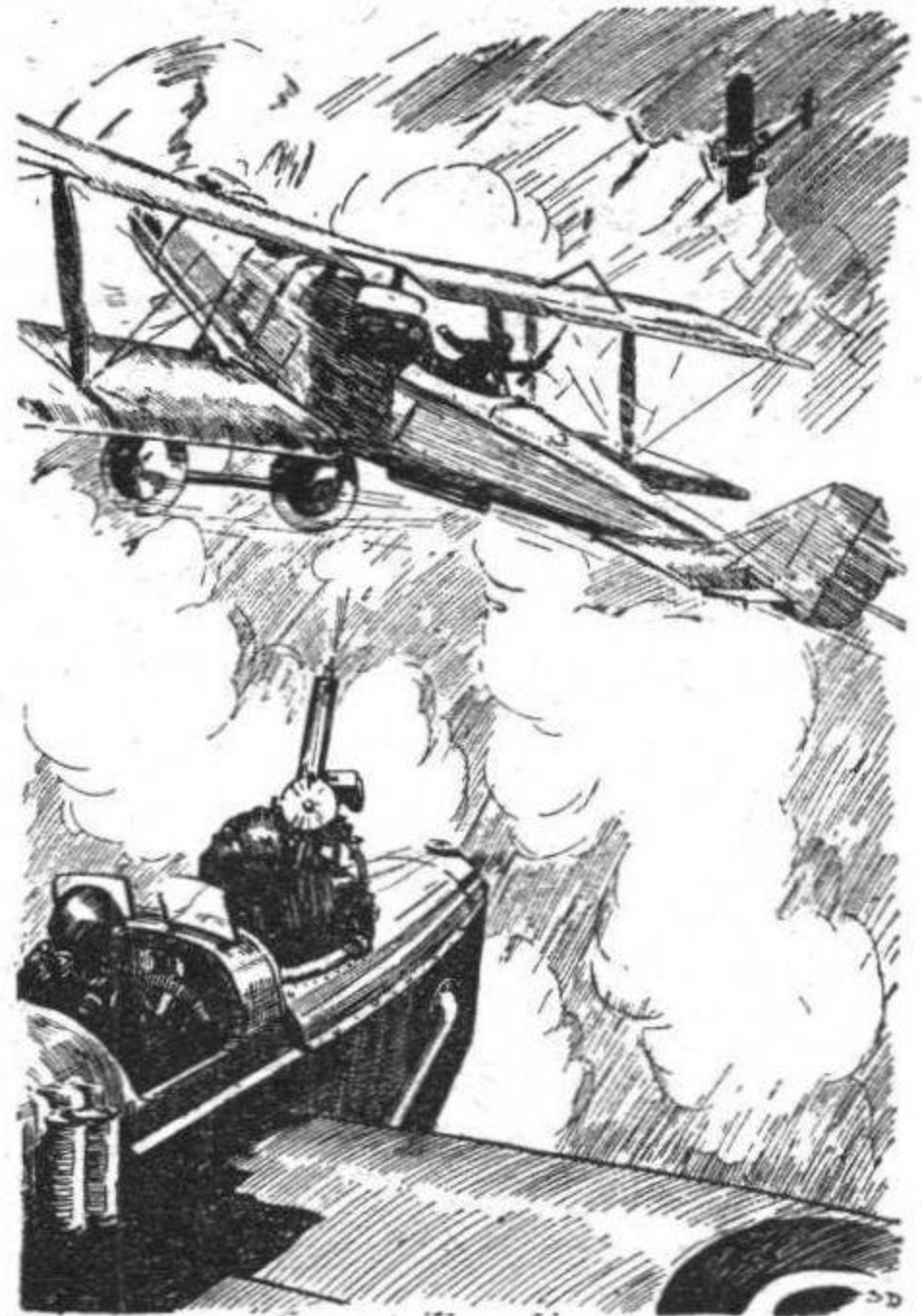
It fell upon the spot where, an instant before, Harry had been cranking, for, simultaneous with Phil's well-timed shot, Harry had wrenched his precious camera and tripod away, and swinging it over brought the steel-shod ends of the tripod's leg up, directing its three steel-pointed legs in the face of the lion, bayonet fashion.

In a flash Phil had scrambled to his feet, snapped a second shot into the breach and spun round ready to plug a second bullet into the lion's body had it been necessary.

"You got him, Phil!" ejaculated Harry, delighted, "and so did I!" He tapped the body of the movie camera. "By the monkey's molars, I'll tell the world we've got some little snapshot to-day! Guess

Boys of Britain!!! The Most Thrilling, Vivid Warning the World has Ever Received. A Warning of the War to Come. You Mustn't Miss This Staggering Tale, Tingling With Enjoyable Thrills, Yet Pulsating with Stark Realism. The World's Next Monstrous Upheaval,

THE WAR ON WINGS.



A Tale that is a Forecast of Air Fighting Tactics. Written by a Veteran Pilot. For sheer Sensationalism Nothing Can Excel This Tale That Flashes a Thousand Dazzling Searchlights on the Dark Uncertainty of War in the Future. Read the First Gasping Chapters in Next Week's

BOYS' MAGAZINE.

we'll dope it out with the developer soon as it gets dark to-night, eh Phil?"

Phil nodded enthusiastically.

Moonlight Pictures Inc. had sent out the necessary apparatus and chemicals with which to develop trial strips of film, together with a projecting lantern through which the producer could pass the film.

Harry replaced the camera and tripod upon the ground. "Give me a hand to try haul this carcass to the camp!"

But so fine a specimen was Phil's "bag" that it defied their united efforts to shift it, and they soon gave up the attempt.

"Leave it to me, Harry," said Phil, as he straightened his back and withdrew a long bladed skinning-knife. "I'll see you get that hearthrug for your best parlour all right." Dropping upon his knees beside the carcass, he proceeded deftly to deprive it of its hide.

WITH impatience Roughneck Harry, camera man, awaited the fall of darkness. Immediately it was dusk he lit the ruby lamp in the tent and had out his developing dishes and chemicals.

"Pull the flap to, Phil," he ordered. "Guess it's kind of dark enough now."

The flap of the tent closed, Roughneck unfastened

small tent quite unknown to the two white men within.

The film was fixed and dried, and nothing would satisfy Harry but to try the film out through the projecting lantern—despite the fact that they had only a negative, and the dark figure of the lion showed white upon the celluloid and the sky black.

"Come on, son," he chuckled, as he wound the film about a spool. "We'll cart the lantern out and use the side of the tent as a screen. I want to see how this projects!"

Phil nodded and lifted the projecting lantern from the case where he had placed it whilst he got the compressed gas from a couple of cylinders, playing upon the lime until it was white hot, and hissing forth a brilliant beam in the darkness.

Harry lifted the flap and Phil emerged—the lantern in his arms.

The beam of light shot out into the jungle clearing and then it was that the two perceived in the distended circle of fierce white light the head and shoulders of one of the cannibals!

Phil almost dropped the lantern in his surprise—but Harry, his professional instinct ever uppermost, sprang for his movie camera.

"Cannibals!" he muttered blow his breath. "Keep the light on 'em, Phil—open the lens up a bit—I'll get a shot."

The whirring sound behind told Phil that the star camera man of Moonlight Inc. was acting on his intention.

In the face of this hideous danger, hard-bitten old Roughneck, could think of film making!

Phil swung the beam of brilliant light from the projecting lantern, left and right in an arc, to discover that they were completely surrounded by those grinning black fives.

Thrusting down the muzzle of the rifle that the camera man had seized directly he got his picture Phil cried: "Don't fire! One shot and they'll be on us like a pack of starving wolves. There's hundreds of 'em. Let's think! Got any flash powder?"

"Stacks!" Harry answered, producing a tin canister from the stores behind and thrusting it into Phil's hands.

Phil took it and walked boldly out into the flood of brilliant light shed by the lantern on the ground, its beam of light directed upon the jungle where crouched the cannibals.

"Our only hope is to strike terror into these savages," he muttered through his clenched teeth.

Phil knew that any moment a poisoned arrow from one of the cannibals' blow-pipes could put a sudden and agonising end to their lives, but the boy film-actor was banking upon the fact that if—as he believed—the cannibals saw in them a toothsome morsel for their stew-pot, they would be reluctant to kill them with poison, thus rendering them unfit for human consumption!

Harry, watching spellbound, saw Phil advancing into the ring of light, and as he went he executed a strange and fierce native dance, his legs flying out with great rapidity at queer angles from his hips. The chief of the man-eating savages gave a gasp of bewilderment as he perceived a white man executing what appeared to him to be their own religious dance!

The Chief made an imperious motion with his hand to stay those of his henchmen who were upon the point of flinging themselves forward upon the two white men.

Phil, struggling with the lid of the canister containing the flashlight powder, breathed a prayer for the success of his mad project.

Now he tipped a heap of the powder out upon the ground, keeping a pinch of it between the finger and thumb of his left hand.



THE SCHOOLMASTER DETECTIVE.

An Extra-Long Thrilling
Yarn, featuring
Falcon Swift, the
Monocled Manhunter,
and his Boy Assistant,
Chick, at School,
Next Week.

the movie camera in the ruddy glow from the ruby dark-room lantern.

Holding the ends of his precious strip of film, Harry ran it through the developer.

At length the image appeared, and Harry gave an ejaculation of satisfaction as he perceived he had secured a perfect picture of the incident right up to the very instant when the lion made its final spring.

In the film the head of the beast, its immense jaws gaping apart, came towards the camera, getting larger every second, until it was so huge that it filled the whole of the negative.

"Great!" exclaimed Harry, as he washed it and then plunged it into the hypo. to "fix" it.

So intent had been the partners that they were quite insensible to what was happening outside their tent, now turned into an impromptu dark room.

Yet much was happening there!

Through the strange white mist which had risen from the swampy jungle like a blanket about them, there crept stealthy black figures.

Each had weird and fearful designs smeared over their half-naked bodies in brilliant colours. Quills and feathers were thrust through slits in the lobes of their ears and their ugly thick lips curled back from their savage-looking teeth!

Cannibals!

Roughneck had not been misinformed when he had been told that in Somaliland, he would find both lions and cannibals to photograph.

Some hundreds of these inhuman savages were gathering in an ever-tightening cordon about that

With his right, he groped in his pocket for his petrol cigarette lighter. He pressed round the steel wheel against the flint, and the bewildered savages perceived this mysterious white man produce fire from the air in his hands.

Quickly Phil bent down and plunged the flaming lighter into the heap of white powder upon the ground at his quickly moving feet.

There came in an instant a great sheet of blinding white flame about Phil and, still bathed in the brilliant light, he danced quicker and more madly than ever.

Holding his hands aloft, and with a great look of awe on his face, the chief of the cannibals slowly advanced towards Phil, to drop upon his knees and bury his face in the ground before the young cinema actor a moment later.

A great sigh escaped Phil's lips as he realised his ruse to save Harry and himself had succeeded.

He held the cannibals to his sway now, they would not dare to attack them for very fear of the white man's magic.

But Phil was still afraid that he had not made

Then he turned to Harry and whispered.

"Start turning when I get the gun," he said, and then made for the tent to emerge a moment later with the Mannlicher in his grasp.

Simultaneously Harry commenced to turn, and upon the white surface of the outside of the tent, there appeared what looked like a ghostly white lion peering out from between stems of black bamboo—with a pitch black sky above.

The cannibals gave one echoing cry of terror, as the ghostly lion appeared slowly to approach toward them.

At Harry's elbow the boy kinema-actor stood waiting the crucial moment, the gun ready cocked in his grasp.

He watched the moving picture on the tent, and then as he saw the great beast crouch for its spring, he flung the rifle up to his shoulder and sent a bullet hurtling through the canvas of the tent.

"Black out!" he yelled to Harry, and Roughneck switched off the gas from the two small cylinders.

Simultaneously the picture faded from sight, and Phil, seizing the lantern, pulled the film clear and then swung it round as he turned the gas on again, and



THE LION LEAPS—TOO LATE.—The boy film actor jammed the rifle on his stomach, and taking a snap shot, pulled the trigger while the Moonlight Picture Inc. camera man, cranking his camera like a man possessed, swung aside, directing the legs in the face of the lion bayonet fashion.

sure of their security. In some way he must scare the savages off so that the camera man and himself could escape in safety during the night.

His gaze fell upon the hissing, projecting lantern and the idea came to him.

"Quick Harry!" he cried. "Bring out that negative of the lion we took this morning!"

Quite satisfied to do the youngster's bidding, after the exhibition he had given of the control he could exercise over these man-eating terrors, Harry obeyed.

Phil leaned down and, raising the cannibal chief to his feet, made motion for him to watch his movements.

The cannibal chief fell back and waited obediently.

Phil taking the film snapped it into the projecting lantern and then picking it up, carried it a little way from the tent and, directing the beam of intensely white light upon the opaque canvas, he busily focussed it.

opened up the lens to send a white beam of light into the jungle.

He was just in time to see the black figures of the cannibals stampeding through the undergrowth, as if the devil himself were after them.

The chief of them all stood quaking with fear at Phil's elbow—eager to run after his men—but hesitating to show the fear which smote his heart.

He snatched Phil's hand and raising it quickly to his lips, he kissed it hurriedly. Then turning upon his heel, he raced after his men, never daring to look behind for fear that terrifying ghost-lion should re-appear.

Phil and Harry watched him go, and then turning they looked into each other's eyes—a relieved expression in them—and burst into roars of laughter.



OUR TWO AIR-WAY
WHALERS CAN'T ESCAPE
CANNIBALS.

BUT THEY DID PUT THE
"BREEZE UP" THE BAR-
BARIANS BY A "BOLT FROM
THE BLUE."

Their Captain Was K'dnapped, So, Sky-High, They Harpooned Him as he Was Whizzed
on the Back of a Sacred Whale Into the Maw of a Whirlpool.

"HIKE down—slick as yew can make it, Bo!" Michael West, known to his associates as Micky, grinned as the Bowery-like tones of his chum's voice buzzed in his ears through the headphones he wore.

The two chums were seated in the twin cockpits of the *Spermoid Special*, now breezing along five hundred feet above a leaden sea. The *Spermoid Special* was the name they had given to the strangely constructed plane which was Micky's pride and joy.

A gleaming thing of shining aluminium, its wings were shaped like an eagle's, and of stupendously long spread. It was driven by two huge Rolls-Napier engines, each capable of developing a thousand horsepower, and its gigantic, powerfully built body could stand a strain of many tons.

That was necessary, for the mighty 'plane had as queer and novel a mission as surely anything that ever flew. It was another triumph of science, an aerial whaler.

Micky's job was to accompany the whaleboat, *Kingfisher*, and instead of the crew of the boat harpooning the whales, Micky's Yankee chum, Hudson Hedler, performed this feat from the air.

In answer to the controls the massive 'plane zoomed down until she was within five yards of the surface of the water. Clearly to Micky's eyes, as he took a glance over the side of the cockpit, came sight of a huge, fish-shaped bulk, moving ponderously along near the surface. In a minute or so the great mammal would come up to breathe.

The American youngster bent down for something at his feet; a long, arrow-pointed harpoon gleamed in his hand.

A flash of light marked the passage of the weapon as it sped hurtling and true for its objective—just as

the whale's broad back broke the surface of the waves.

"Got him!" breathed Hudson, and clung desperately to the sides of the cockpit as the gigantic aeroplane lurched like a wounded bird. But Micky's sure hands on the joystick swung the *Spermoid Special* back to an even keel. The Yankee kid's eyes were glued on the big drum which supplied the rope attached to the harpoon. It was blurred with speed as it unrolled to the deep dive of the maddened whale.

A thin wisp of smoke curled up from the bottom of the cockpit, caused by the friction of the rope as it paid out through the hole there.

That question that has throbbled in every whaler's mind since whaling first began was in both boys' brains then: Would that fast-disappearing rope prove long enough in ratio to the depth of the sea monster's dive?

The question was answered the next moment. In need of air, the mighty mammal broke the surface of the sea again a dozen yards away and then shot off towards the distant horizon in an attempt to escape the strange thing that seared its flesh. The sea was red with the monster's blood.

As he felt the forward progress of his 'plane, Micky shut off the engines, and by skillful maneuvering, kept her skimming above the restless sea, using the energy of the whale for motive power.

Gradually the speed of the monster lessened until at last it came to a standstill—lolling on the surface of the sea—dead.

With a swift slash of his pocket-knife, Hiram Hedler cut the rope that connected the whale with the 'plane, and Micky allowed his engines to come to life. The aerial whaler sped on with a thrumming

roar, while the Yankee kid got busy with his wireless apparatus advising the captain of the whaling ship somewhere below the horizon the exact latitude and longitude in which he would pick up the latest "kill."

This done, he took up the telescope again and commenced searching the waters for that tell-tale water-spout with which the whale reveals its presence.

Half-an-hour passed and only the leaden, gently heaving sea rewarded Hudson's gaze. And then he became rigid, and an almost comical expression of dismay illuminated his features. He was listening to a message that was coming in out of the ether—a call for succour.

"Gee?" he said once, speaking inadvertently into the mouthpiece of the telephone that connected him with his chum.

"What are you saying 'gee' for like that? Been stung by a bee?" queried Michael humorously.

"Bee? You big stiff! Naw. But lissun to this," returned Hudson excitedly. "I just got a message through from them guys infesting the *Kingfisher*. Say they're in a mess up to their ears! They were just anchoring on to that whale when a canoe full of Eskimoos or some such animiles hove up, and before they knew what, the hull crew of the *Kingfisher* was captured. I guess they got the wireless guy when he'd done that much of his stuff, 'cos the message broke off there, an' I've not been able to get a line on him again."

Micky came to a sudden decision. A light flick of the rudder bar set the wonder-plane turning and, banking skilfully, the English youngster swung her nose pointing the way they had come.

Then he was zooming back for the spot at which they had last seen the dead whale.

On the Isle of Wugga.

WIND—monstrous—living, all-powerful, roared in the chums' ears, tore at their fur-lined overalls as Micky opened the control slides of the great carburettors to their fullest extent. The speed registered "250," so it didn't surprise either of the youngsters when, within three minutes of their receiving the *Kingfisher's* S.O.S., they found themselves flying directly above that vessel.

The whaler was not alone—she was being towed by three long, low-built craft, and, zooming lower, Micky made out every detail of the last-named.

They were constructed after the style of the old-time galley, and their high prows were modelled into strange and repulsive animal shapes.

Each boat was crowded with fur-clad natives whose faces, discovered Hiram, through his telescope, were of the mongolian type common in these latitudes. And then the Yankee kid's gaze became riveted by a tall, commanding figure in the bow of the foremost craft.

The natives had become hesitant in their rowing at sight of the huge, angry-buzzing bird above their heads, but a harsh word from the man in command caused them to concentrate wholly again on their task.

"Say, bo," spake Hiram through the aerial telephone. "Get that tall guy bossing it over them li'l teddy bears down there? Guess he's the feller who's caused this little rumpus. Wonder what the game is?"

They had not long to wait to discover. An island had appeared out of the sea mists low down on the horizon, and, redoubling their efforts, the rowers made for it.

Half-an-hour later they grounded their boats in a natural harbour on the little rocky coast, and some of their number, aboard the whaler, made the vessel fast with her anchor.

Circling round, the two chums saw first the captain and then the crew of the whale-boat taken ashore by their strange captors and escorted to a little village of seal-skin huts a few hundred yards from the shore.

"Looks as though our fellows are in a tight fix, Hiram," muttered Michael through the aerial telephone. "I'm going to find a landing for the 'plane and then we'll investigate."

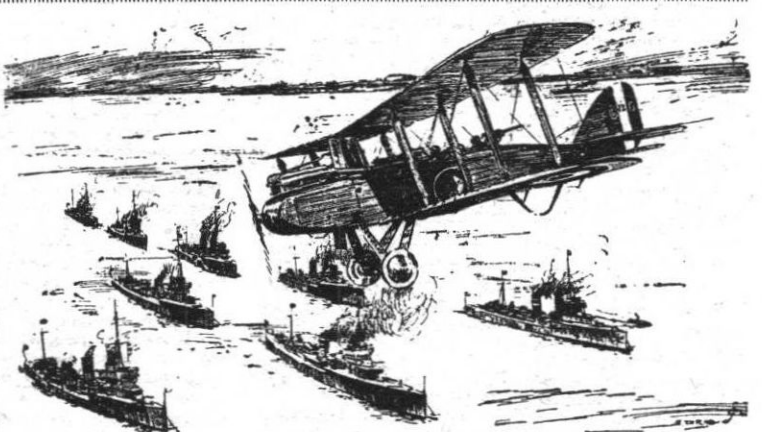
So saying, he dragged on the joystick, and speeding nearer and nearer to terra firma, the magnificent aeroplane hurtled out of view of the savages below.

They discovered that the island was close on two miles in width, and half-a-mile from the native village was a grassy plateau which would make an admirable landing-place. Towards this Micky sent the *Spermoil Special*. The gallant 'plane grounded with scarcely a bump and ran to a standstill.

In a trice the two aerial whalers were climbing out of the twin cockpits to terra firma.

"First thing—we've got to get in touch with those poor fellows from the *Kingfisher*," said Michael West

"Mobilise Swiftly!
Great Britain Has
Declared War! Every
Man and Boy Needed
for the Colossal Crash
of Armaments in the
Clouds!" That is the
Message Throbbing on
Every Wireless Wave
in The World. Air
Marshal "Tornado"
Crichton, Chief of
Britain's Flying Forces,
Surveys the Country's
Preparedness from His
Fighting Monoplane.
Don't Miss The Stag-
gering Opening
Chapters Next Week of



THE WAR ON WINGS!

briskly, while Hudson stamped on the frozen soil to restore his circulation. "Kim on!"

Together they moved through the hardy vegetable growth of the northerly island until, through the gnarled trees they espied the native encampment below them. From the primitive huts, constructed of branches from the stunted trees, over which were stretched whale and sealskin strips, smoke spirals ascended.

"The tribe's at home," Micky grinned. "Guess we'll make a call!"

He dropped on all fours and wormed his way towards a barrack-like hut, larger and more stoutly constructed than its fellows.

"That seems to be the local gaol," he indicated it with his thumb—"Anyway, we'll look over it first for the prisoners."

Outside the high doorway of the place the chums perceived the shadowy form of a sentry holding a rude whalebone spear loosely.

"Front door barred—we'll try the back," whispered Michael and, followed by Hudson, he made a large circle through the undergrowth, coming at last to the rear of the big hut.

There was no entrance here, but drawing a clasp-knife from the pocket of his flying-jacket, Micky deftly cut a flap in the skin covering.

Cautiously he peeped within. A strange sight that almost brought a gasp to his lips! The semi-darkness of the interior was illumined by half-a-dozen tallow lamps which shed a sickly radiance over the scene.

Seated in a semi-circle were a dozen members of the tribe, their skin-clad forms looking like so many crouching bears. They were staring with unblinking eyes, motionless, at the bound captain and crew of the *Kingfisher*—seven in all. And standing before them was the splendid figure of their leader, who was haranguing them in their native tongue, breaking ever and anon into a pidgin English for the benefit of his captives.

"To um Isle of Wugga, mens of the far spaces, have you come." He was addressing the prisoners now. "For the people of Wugga haf decided you die. Moosimo—the whale god of our peoples, the great and wise from the lands below the sea—hath died even to the white mens' spears. For that they must be also killed. See! The night god comes to watch our vengeance."

Raising a great arm, the huge savage pointed towards the door of the hut, which was darkening now as the long, semi-arctic night came down. A low wailing sound came from the rest of the natives, and they prostrated themselves for nearly five minutes. Then they resumed their sphynx-like watching of the prisoners.

Captain Frodsham of the *Kingfisher*—a big, bearded man who couldn't even spell the word "fear"—broke in on the huge native's harangue.

"Listen—you hulking son of a heathen hoodoo. I'll teach you to talk to an English sea captain about death. Just undo these ropes—hang you! You—!"

The worthy seaman then went on to tell the other in language unprintable here exactly what would happen to him if he obliged by releasing his captives.

Raising his right arm in a dignified gesture, the Chief of the Isle of Wugga gave his decree—unmoved by the tirade.

"We go now to bury ums whale-god—even in death he is greater than thy god that flies in the heavens." He was referring, of course, to the *Spermoi*!

Special. He went on:

"And it is fitting that thou who killed Moosimo should go with him to Valhalla. We shall tie ums to the great back of ums whale-god. Thus Moosimo's spirit will take vengeance."

A murmur of approval went up from the assembly, and leaving the rest of the crew of the *Kingfisher* in the hut, they filed out into the starlit darkness, taking with them the skipper of the whaleboat.

Rival Gods.

FOR a breathless minute, Hudson Hedler and Michael West stared silently at each other, while the full significance of the tragedy about to be enacted sunk into their brains. Then Micky tensed to action.

"Quick!" he commanded. "Get round and silence the sentry while I release our fellows inside." And without waiting to see the command obeyed, the daring young airman slipped through the opening he had made in the sealskin.

A suppressed gasp of surprise and sudden hope came from the captives as they made out the shadowy form of the newcomer. Then Micky was slashing at their bonds with his clasp-knife.

"Follow me, men," he whispered, when all had been released. "There's still a slim chance of turning the tables."

In Indian file, silently as ghosts, Micky and the men of the *Kingfisher* slipped through the opening in the sealskin wall of the hut. The Yankee harpooner awaited them.

"What now, bo?" he asked of his chum.

"We've got to get back to the 'plane," returned Micky, briskly. "You chaps"—turning to the crew—"make for the *Kingfisher*. We're going to try to rescue Captain Frodsham, and in the confusion you'll be able to get aboard the whaler without being spotted. If you succeed, make for the open sea as quick as you're able. Ready?"

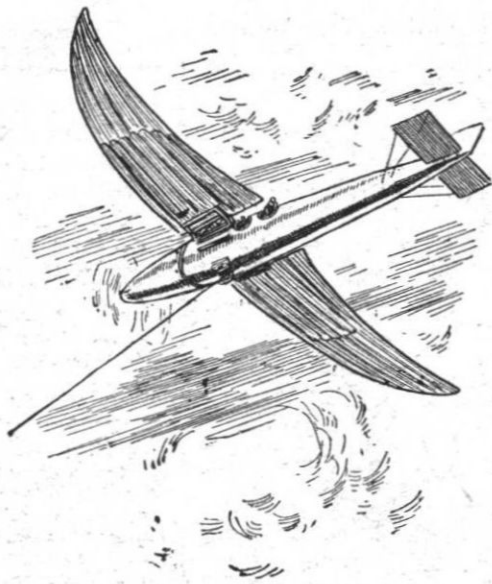
"Aye, aye, sir!" came the whispered chorus.

"Right! Get busy!"

The men stole shorewards through the undergrowth, the while Micky and his Yankee chum made



MISSED BY INCHES.—A gasp of relief, escaped the a r men as the spear sank deep into the carcase of the whale. They plainly saw the grim little grateful smile on the blue lips of the captain as it missed him by inches.



DRAGGED TO DEATH.—With the rope tugging, the 'plane staggered like a shot eagle and sideslipped in a spiral to destruction. Micky fought like mad for control.

back for the place where they had left the *Spermoil Special*.

They found the 'plane, looking like a huge phantom in the eerie radiance of the northern sky, standing untouched where they had left her.

"Get her going, Hudson," sang out Micky, climbing into his place at the controls. The Yankee swung the left-hand propeller and jumped clear as the two of them hissed into the song.

He clambered into his place behind Micky, then the *Spermoil Special* ran forward, climbed steeply and slipped into the sky. She was about to enter on the most ticklish task of her strange career.

"You know what to do, Hudson," came Micky's voice through the headphones clamped over the Yankee's ears.

"Yep," was the staccato answer. It had hardly left the American youngster's lips when the sea showed below the sides of the cockpit.

The *Spermoil Special* was scarcely more than two hundred feet up, and every detail of the grim rite that was happening down below was plain to the chums' eyes.

It made a strange scene. Near to the anchored *Kingfisher*, from whose funnel smoke still trailed, lolloped the huge bulk of the dead whale. The whole population of the Isle of Wugga was gathered on the shore, watching with evident enjoyment the sacrifice of a brave man's life. For the fearless skipper of the *Kingfisher* was already fastened securely to the gleaming back of the sacred sea mammal which, even then, was being slowly towed out to sea by one of the native boats packed with rowers.

They were making for the north end of the island and, as they moved slowly along, the savage watchers kept pace with them, in solemn procession along the shore.

The vicinity of the *Kingfisher* was soon absolutely deserted, and the two boys in the 'plane grinned as

they saw. It would now be an easy matter for the crew of the whaler to get on board unperceived, and, with steam up, they could escape and be far out to sea before the savages knew of their flight.

So far so good—but the task of rescuing Captain Frodsham was still to be accomplished. Micky's gaze went back to the whale, and a gasp of horror escaped his tight lips.

For the towing party had reached the northern extremity of the island and had just cut the whale free of the rope with which they had borne it thither. And it was moving away from the island at ever-increasing speed yet propelled by no visible means! But the reason for this was not far to seek.

On the horizon what seemed to be a huge cloud reached down to the sea. It was as though a great poplar tree had been planted there by some whimsical giant. Yet it was no ordinary tree of bark and sap and tender leaves. From the sea it came and the sea composed it. In short, the thing to which the gallant captain of the *Kingfisher* was being drawn was that scourge of mariners—a whirlpool!

That tree-shaped cloud above the spot was caused by the aerial currents that met there, sucking the water high into the air. Sea currents also met at the whirlpool—and it was in the grip of one of these that the sacred whale was being rushed to doom.

All this flashed through Micky's brain at lightning speed, then he was tensely, madly maneuvering the controls of the *Spermoil Special*. The magnificent 'plane answered nobly to the call—went hurtling towards the speeding body of the whale, while the speedometer needle flickered round its dial. At last she came level with the swiftly-moving sea monster, and Micky's knuckles gripped white on the joystick as he sent the 'plane arcking down . . . down . . .

Less than two hundred yards separated the dead whale and its living burden from the horrible burying-place of the Men of Wugga. Could the boys act in time?

Hudson Hedler was on his feet now, waiting tense, grim-faced, a gleaming harpoon gripped in his right hand. The whale was directly below him. He poised for an instant—a splendid young figure—then his supple body swung lithely, his hand went up and down.

The harpoon flashed through the air—straight for the body of the dead whale, and a gasp of relief escaped both boys as it sank deep into the carcass. They plainly saw the grim little grateful smile on the blue lips of the skipper of the *Kingfisher* as the harpoon missed him by inches.

The task was still only half accomplished, however. The spray from the whirlpool was bathing Captain Frodsham's face now, and he was half hidden from the boys in the 'plane by the steamlike vapour.

Micky banked the *Spermoil Special* steeply, recklessly, and sent her zooming back from the wound in the sea that threatened to swallow its prey. Hudson watched the drum round which the rope fastened to the harpoon was coiled with fascinated eyes. He saw it come to an end at last, tauten and jerk dreadfully so that the 'plane seemed to stagger like a shot eagle. His stomach seemed to leave his body as the tremendous machine sideslipped in a spiral to destruction; then he heaved a sigh of relief as Micky once more gained control and the powerful twin propellers pulled the 'plane to an even keel.

Triumphantly the *Spermoil Special* throbbed on, and behind her dragged the huge carcass of the whale with Captain Frodsham cheering like a boy upon it.

"Gee, boy! I guess we've done our stuff with all sorts and sizes of them there animiles since we hit the trail with the *Spermoil Special*," Hudson's voice

(Continued on page 30.)

A Masterly Exp'ort of Sir John Champion, The Millionaire Globetrotter.

The Island of Despair



**WHITE MEN—
SLAVES ON A
SECRET ISLE—
SAVED BY OUR
SIR JOHN
CHAMPION,
THE ACTION
ADVENTURER,
IN HIS
SWOOPING
SEAPLANE.**

*A Yarn of a
Mysterious South
Sea Isle Where
All Manner of
Things Happened
In The Moist
and Shadowed
Heat.*

The Escape.

THE little island of Sutra lay steaming and sweltering under the fierce rays of the tropical sun.

On every side, around the island, the glittering sea stretched until it merged into the deep blue of the heavens.

From the highest point on the island a thin wisp of smoke curled lazily upwards. It came from the chimney of a small, wooden hut, roofed with corrugated iron. A man leant against the door, pulling hard at a pipe. Tall he was and unkempt in appearance; his ducks were soiled and torn in a dozen places, and the growth on his chin was several days old.

He roused himself from his lethargy, and stared down into the valley.

A couple of hundred feet below, men, stripped to their waists, were toiling like ants, digging, pushing trucks, and staggering under the weight of their loads. He laughed harshly as he saw one stagger and fall, then scream with anguish and despair as the lash of a taskmaster's whip cut his burning skin. Despair, yes; this was the Island of Despair, where men, chained together like slaves, wrested gold from the earth.

Through the blazing heat of the day they toiled and sweated, until the sun dipped over the rim of the world.

The man above watched them being marshalled together and marched to a long wooden shed, a silent, broken company.

Hours passed . . . and the guard on the cliff was fast asleep. Silence reigned save for the monotonous beat of the surf breaking against the beach three hundred feet below.

Crack! came the staccato report of a rifle; the confused shouts of men, and the deep bay of a blood-hound giving tongue. The man, awakened from his sleep, jumped up and ran out of the hut. In the valley a dozen torches waved and flickered.

One of the chain-gang had escaped! The man's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. The fugitive would undoubtedly make for this spot, as it was the only path down to the beach. A faint rustle caused him to whip round, and, with a palpitating heart he listened, straining his eyes into the gloom. A half-strangled scream broke from his lips as a dark, vague shape loomed up out of the night.

Two hands fastened around his throat in a vice-like grip. He felt his senses swimming; lights flashed before his eyes, then everything became a blank. The other flung him down, then turning, ran swiftly to the brink of the cliff.

A crude path had been hacked down to the beach, and he cautiously began his descent.

From out of the darkness behind him came the baying of hounds, and the angry murmur of men's voices.

Champion Chips In.

SIR JOHN CHAMPION, explorer and big-game hunter, lit his pipe, and blew out a great cloud of smoke. He thoughtfully watched it until it merged into the haze which hung over the cabin like a pall.

"Crane," he said, leaning forward in his chair, "adventure is dead—a thing of the past."

The person addressed, a short, lean man with blue eyes and a golden beard, laughed.

"Oh, I dunno. Remember that adventure up the Ibesi?" He broke off. "Hello! What was that?"

"That" was a sound of a scuffle of feet on the deck above, and men's voices raised in altercation.

Sir John Champion uncoiled himself from his chair.

The *Wanderer* was lying in Southampton Water, being overhauled and re-fitted in preparation for another of her mysterious trips into the unknown.

The night was dark, and Sir John had difficulty in distinguishing the half-dozen shadowy figures swaying and struggling on the deck.

"What does this mean?" he shouted.

The fighting ceased, and Cassidy's voice came out of the darkness.

"Sure, sir, an' ut's a thievin' spalpeen that we've caught, crawlin' about on the deck—"

"I'm no thief, you fool," interrupted an unfamiliar voice. "I want to see Sir John Champion."

The baronet peered into the stranger's face, and read the deadly earnestness in the tortured eyes.

"I am he. Righto, Cassidy, let him go. Kindly step this way, sir, will you?"

He conducted the man down into the brightly-lit cabin, and introduced him to his skipper. The stranger's name, he learnt, was Joe Bevan.

"Thank heavens I've found you in England, Sir John, for you are the one man in the world who can help Jim Carter."

"Jim Carter!" cried the baronet. "Why, I was at school with a chap of that name—my best friend."

"Yes, I know, Sir John. That's why I have come to you. Jim Carter is a prisoner—worse, a slave—on the Island of Despair."

"A slave on the Island of Despair?" put in Crane, beginning to doubt the sanity of the stranger.

Joe Bevan laughed harshly. He passed a weary hand across his forehead.

"My story starts five years ago when, down and out, I found myself in 'Frisco. I was friendless, penniless and homeless. One night I was slouching about the docks when something hit me on the back of the head, robbing me of my senses. I awakened with a throbbing headache, and found myself to be manacled hand and foot. It was very dark, but I knew from the motion that I was in some sort of a ship. I had been shanghaied! As my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, I could make out the forms of a score of men, bound like myself. They represented nearly every nation and colour under the sun.

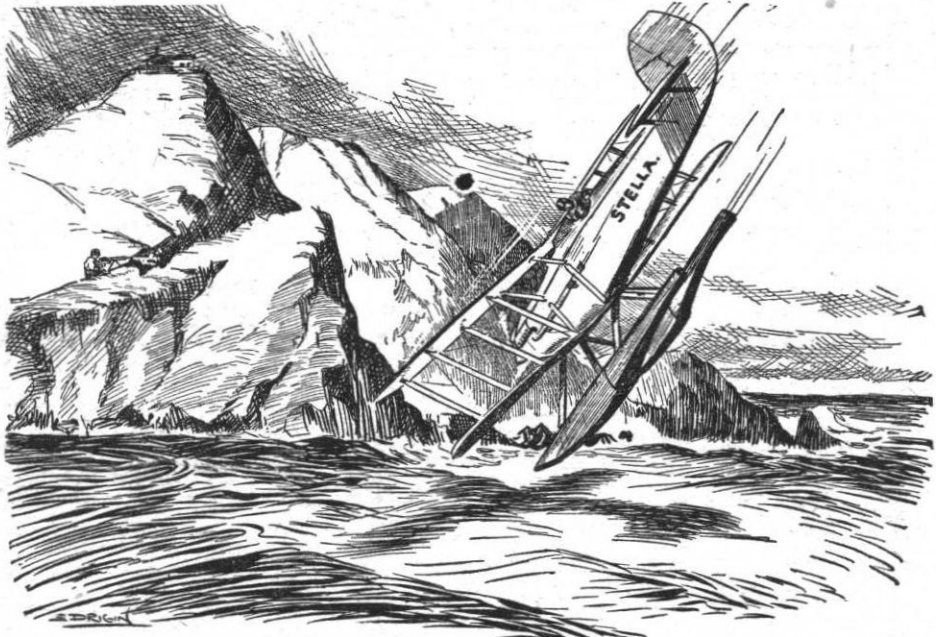
Swedes, niggers, Chinks, Germans, French, Americans, Swiss, everything. Ah! I could learn was that we were bound for the Island of Despair—slaves.

"In due course, we landed on the dreaded island. Only eighteen of us survived—three having died en route. They were tossed to the sharks, poor devils! We were marched over the hills, into a valley.

"When the dawn broke we were chained together, and marched to the gold-mines, and there we worked—nay, slaved—wresting the precious metal from the earth, under the supervision of brutal taskmasters. Until the set of sun we sweated and struggled, whipped like curs when our efforts flagged, cursed at and kicked until we fell, physically exhausted. Day in, day out, every one the same.

"Time went on, some of the slaves died or were shot when they could stick it no longer, and they were replaced by others, one among whom was Jim Carter. He told me that if ever I succeeded in escaping, I was to seek you out and tell you. I promised; and one dark night I got away out of the valley. The guard on the hill I strangled with my bare hands. I think I went mad for a moment. Then down to the beach I scrambled with the bloodhounds yapping almost at my heels. There was a boat drawn up on the beach, and I jumped in, paddling like a man possessed. They fired at random, shot after shot, and I laughed as the bullets splayed the water on every side.

"When the day broke and the sun increased in power, my sufferings were acute. I lay in a stupor, whilst the sun blazed down on me with relentless fury. Then, when I had abandoned all hope, I descried a steamer bearing down on me, and I raised myself, and screamed and waved my arms. They saw me, and I was picked up, bordering on the edge of insanity.



THE MACHINE GUN'S SONG.—Rat-tat-tat. An unseen Lewis gun crackled from the island; bullets struck the fuselage. Champion realised that one of the main struts was severed, and like a wounded bird the machine fell, spinning and lurching.

"For a week I lay at the point of death, then my constitution pulled me through, and, on being landed in England, I lost no time in seeking you out."

For a moment after the conclusion of the man's story there was silence in the cabin, then Sir John leaned forward.

"Who is the leader of this cut-throat gang?"

"Jabez Wolfe, a man as devoid of humanity or morality as a shark. His underlings are the scum of the earth, second only to himself in ferocity and cruelty."

"A jolly crowd," murmured Champion. "Do you know exactly whereabouts this Island of Despair lies?"

Joe Bevan shook his head.

"No, I do not know its exact longitude and latitude, only that it lies somewhere north of the New Hebrides."

"We might spend months combing the islands without finding it," said Crane.

Sir John smote the palm of his left hand with his right fist.

"Got it," he cried triumphantly. "The new seaplane I've bought. Using the *Wanderer* as a base; I can search the seas from the air. Once the island is discovered the rest will be more or less easy." He turned to his captain. "When can we leave England, Peter?"

"Let's see. To-day's Monday—er—Saturday at the latest."

Champion laughed his boyish, enthusiastic laugh. "Good! To-day week we shall be on the high seas, bound for the Island of Despair."

Champion Captured.

FROM an altitude of two thousand feet Champion gazed down at the unfathomable, trackless wastes of the Pacific Ocean, solitary save for a wisp of smoke on the horizon. It came from the *Wanderer*, steaming lazily through the blue, unruffled water.

The baronet in his high-powered 'plane was above his yacht, combing the seas for the Island of Despair.

He soared higher, ever higher, constantly sweeping the horizon with a pair of powerful glasses.

"Ah!" An exclamation broke from his lips, as a tiny dot, unmistakably land, merged into view.

He swung the 'plane round, and, like some monstrous bird winging its way through space, set a course for the island.

He dropped a few hundred feet, and gazed over the side of the fuselage into the valley. He caught a glimpse of men, crawling about like ants, and the crude, long huts of which Bevan had spoken.

He experienced a feeling of exultation as he circled round, prior to the return flight to the *Wanderer*. So far, so good.

Rat-tat-tat!

An unseen Lewis gun crackled from the island; bullets struck the fuselage. Champion seized the joystick, but before the machine could rise another deadly hail hit her. One of the main struts was severed, and, like a wounded bird, she fell, spinning and lurching.

The blue sea seemed to be leaping up to meet them. Champion wrenched himself free from the straps and plunged down in a mad dive from the fuselage, and, with long, powerful strokes, swam towards the island.

A minute or two later he stood on the beach, gazing around him. The face of the rock rose sheer, and, save for a flight of rudely-cut steps, would have been inaccessible even for a cat.

"Hands up!"

Champion glanced up at the command, and saw a rifle barrel pointing down at him from the top of the

cliff. An evil, bearded face exposed itself to view, and the baronet raised his hands.

"Kim up them steps," barked the man with the gun. "D'you hear?"

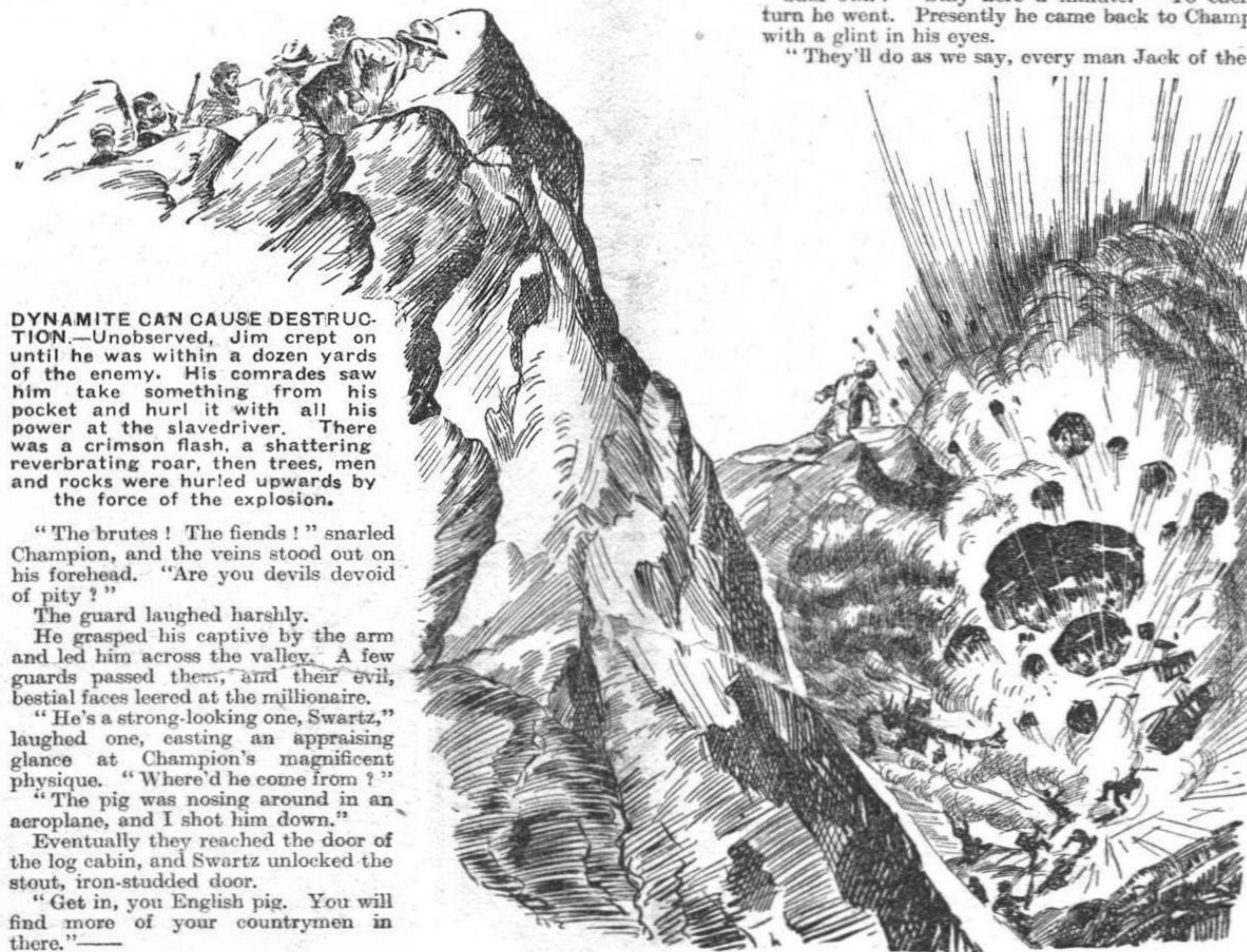
Sir John nodded, and cautiously mounted the flight of scars in the face of the cliff. It was a hazardous ascent, and more than once his wet foot slipped. He reached the top in safety, however, and the slaver covered him with his rifle.

"Walk," he said peremptorily. "And no tricks, or I'll shoot!"

Hands elevated, Sir John strode on over the rough ground with the guard at his heels, occasionally prodding him in the back with his rifle when his foot faltered. Along a rough footpath they descended into the valley.

At one end were the workings of the mine, and from these between thirty and forty men, manacled together, were being marched, under the surveillance of six armed guards.

An angry exclamation broke from Champion's lips as he saw one stagger in his stride. Instantly a whip cracked, and the cruel lash curled itself around the miserable man's leg. He screamed and writhed with agony as the whip rose and fell. A bucket of water was flung over him, and he was rudely jerked to his feet. Then the procession staggered on, a straggling line of broken men, to whom death would be a merciful release.



DYNAMITE CAN CAUSE DESTRUCTION.—Unobserved, Jim crept on until he was within a dozen yards of the enemy. His comrades saw him take something from his pocket and hurl it with all his power at the slavedriver. There was a crimson flash, a shattering reverberating roar, then trees, men and rocks were hurled upwards by the force of the explosion.

"The brutes! The fiends!" snarled Champion, and the veins stood out on his forehead. "Are you devils devoid of pity?"

The guard laughed harshly.

He grasped his captive by the arm and led him across the valley. A few guards passed them, and their evil, bestial faces leered at the millionaire.

"He's a strong-looking one, Swartz," laughed one, casting an appraising glance at Champion's magnificent physique. "Where'd he come from?"

"The pig was nosing around in an aeroplane, and I shot him down."

Eventually they reached the door of the log cabin, and Swartz unlocked the stout, iron-studded door.

"Get in, you English pig. You will find more of your countrymen in there."—

He gave Champion a push, which sent him stumbling into the dark interior. The foul, dank air made his stomach heave.

"Another! Oh, my heavens! How long will this go on?" came a weary voice from out of the darkness. Champion spun round. The voice was vaguely familiar.

"That's—that's not Jim Carter?" he ventured.

"It is, and who the deuce are you?"

"John Champion."

A dim form staggered out of the gloom, and, seizing John's hand, worked it like a pump handle.

"John—John! Dear old John!" And the tears streamed down his lined, haggard face.

As his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, John picked out the forms of nearly forty men. They were lying on beds of straw, resting their weary bodies for a few precious hours, and though they had been relieved of their heavy chains for a space, to Champion it was the most pitiable sight he had ever witnessed.

He briefly explained to Jim the chain of events which had led to his capture.

"We must strike to-night, old man, and, if we can get free, gain the top of the cliff. There a beacon will attract the attention of Crane, who, alarmed at my absence, will be steamin' about in search of me. Can you arouse in these poor beggars sufficient enthusiasm to make a bid for liberty?"

Said Jim: "Stay here a minute." To each in turn he went. Presently he came back to Champion with a glint in his eyes.

"They'll do as we say, every man Jack of them,"

he whispered. "In about half an hour the guards will be round to put the chains on us again, and send us out for night slavery."

Champion stroked his chin thoughtfully. "Listen," he breathed, "as soon as you hear them comin', start a scuffle, an' whilst their attention is engaged in forcin' order, you an' I will take one each. Understand?"

Jim nodded, and went to tell the others.

"They're comin'," breathed Champion, suddenly. "Start fightin'!"

Instantly a free fight broke out in the log cabin. The door was flung open, and in came the two guards, rifles levelled.

"Here, stop fighting, or I'll shoot," shouted one.

Not the slightest attention was paid to him. He did not notice Champion creeping behind him, and the first intimation he received of that worthy's presence was a pair of hands, which gripped his throat like a vice. Simultaneously, Jim leapt on to the back of the other guard.

The slaves instantly ceased their mock battle, and the guards were overpowered and bound and gagged with strips of clothing. Jim and Champion each took a rifle from their fallen captors, then in single file they crept out. As silent as shadows they crossed the valley until they reached the path which led up to the cliff.

"You lead, Jim," breathed the tall adventurer, "an' I'll bring up the rear."

Jim nodded, and went ahead. Suddenly from out of the darkness below came the menacing bark of a bloodhound, and men's voices. A flash stabbed the darkness as a gun was fired.

A couple of bullets zipped past Champion's ear like angry bees. Up, ever up, they climbed, and when they were within twenty yards of their goal, there came a flash and a crack from above. A man in front of Champion fell with a choking sob.

The guard above incautiously exposed his head for the fraction of a second, but it was enough. The millionaire globe-trotter fired at the head silhouetted against the dark sky. A shriek burst from the man's lips, then silence.

They scrambled up the last few yards, and on to level ground. Champion picked up the dead guard's rifle and handed it to one of the escaped slaves, an Englishman named Dallas. He called Jim and a council of war was held.

"With three guns we can command this path," said Carter. "Then when morning comes we can signal to your yacht by some means."

Champion agreed, and he, Jim and Dallas sprawled on their stomachs, with their rifles trained on the path.

"What was that?" breathed Champion.

There was a rustle in the darkness below, and a second later a great, dark thing, with gleaming fangs and red eyes, came bounding up the hill.

Dallas fired and missed, and on came the bloodhound, saliva dripping from its heavy jowl. Sir John's index finger tightened on the trigger of his rifle.

A horrible choking sound came from the brute's throat, and it staggered a couple of yards, then rolled over and over, dead.

After that the long hours dragged by as if on leaden wings. All but Champion snatched a short rest, and when Jim resumed his position, he found the baronet, finger on the trigger of his gun, staring with strained, bloodshot eyes into the gloomy valley.

Rat-tat-tat!

The staccato, incessant chatter of a Lewis gun broke the stillness of the night, and a shower of bullets sprayed the ground in front of them.

"Good heavens!" cried Jim. "They've dragged

up the machine-gun. When our ammunition is exhausted, we shall be completely wiped out."

"That's the jolly little fellow who smashed up my aeroplane," Champion said grimly. "I owe that chap a grudge."

John turned again to speak to Carter, but, to his astonishment, found that worthy to be absent.

Champion was almost beside himself with anxiety. Very soon they would be presented with two alternatives—surrender or massacre, for with their meagre stock of ammunition they could not hope to hold out very long.

The sky became a little lighter, and a shaft of yellow broke through the grey. Straining his eyes in an endeavour to pierce the gloom, John discerned his chum creeping towards the belt of trees which sheltered the slavedrivers.

Had Jim gone mad? This was the question that throbbled through Champion's fevered brain.

Eat-tat-tat-tat!

A stream of lead poured out from the muzzle of the Lewis, but the bullets only flattened themselves against the rocks.

Still Jim crept on unobserved by the enemy until he was within a dozen yards of them. His comrades saw him take something from his pocket and hurl it with all his power at the slavedrivers.

There was a crimson flash, a shattering, reverberating roar, then trees, men and rocks were hurled upwards by the force of the explosion. Sir John jumped to his feet, and, scaling the ramparts, dashed across the ground to where Jim was lying. He raised his friend, and saw that he was bleeding from a cut on the forehead. Carter opened his eyes, and wiped the blood from his face.

"Nothing much, old chap," grinning. "Hurled with accuracy and violence, I cannot conceive of anything more effective than dynamite. I suddenly remembered that there was a store kept down in the valley for blasting purposes, so I hiked off and got it."

Champion recognised the hole which once had been the enemies' camp. The sight made even him shudder, and he returned with a white face.

"All wiped out," he said shortly.

Together they walked back to their comrades, and the men cheered and cheered again. Some laughed and sobbed hysterically now that the tension was over. One, standing at the edge of the cliff, trying to pierce the veil of mist which hung over the sea, gave a sudden shout, and Sir John dashed to his side.

"Look! Look!" screamed the man hysterically. "We're doomed! The island is sinking!"

Champion peered down, and his heart seemed to tighten. The water, instead of being three hundred feet below, was less than eighty, and with the passing of every minute it rose higher and higher. This fresh and totally unexpected peril was quickly communicated to the rest, and they watched the ever-advancing water with despair in their hearts. In the midst of victory, they were defeated.

Sir John groaned and strained his eyes into the mist. Somewhere out there the *Wanderer* was searching the trackless wastes for her master. What was that? Faintly came the harsh, discordant note of a foghorn. Again, this time louder. He breathed painfully, with hope and doubt in his mind. A shout of joy escaped his lips as the bows of his beloved boat loomed up out of the mist. Nearer she came, like a phantom riding the waters, until he could see Akbar, the Afghan, on the bridge, dwarfing into insignificance the lithe, lean figure of Captain Peter Crane.

"Saved! Saved!" shrieked one of the freed slaves deliriously.

The water had crept up to the thirty-foot mark, and was still advancing, silently, relentlessly.

"Dive in, men, and swim for your lives," shouted Champion, and one after the other they leapt into the sea.

THE mist had lifted, and the *Wanderer* was steaming away as quickly as her engines would permit, to avoid being dragged down into the inevitable whirlpool.

Rescued and rescuers alike fixed their eyes on the Island of Despair, which half a mile away was settling down into the ocean.

Now only the highest points were visible above the surface, and still she descended into the unfathomable depths. Slowly, majestically, she vanished from view, and the Island of Despair, which had broken so many men and had been the cause of so much strife and bloodshed, was no more.

"If only I could exterminate Wolfe and his scoundrelly crew I should consider my task complete," said Champion, as the waters closed and swirled over the great rock.

Jim nodded.

"Somehow, I think we shall meet him again," he replied; and he was right.

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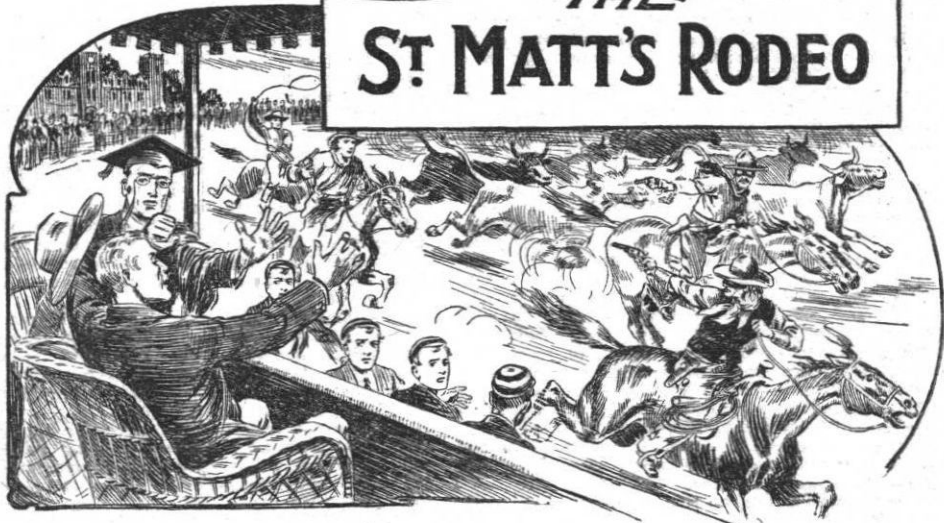
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THE COWBOY KID ON THE RAMPAGE WITH HIS WILD WEST RODEO AT AN ENGLISH PUBLIC SCHOOL.

THE ST. MATT'S RODEO



You've Got to Hand it to Cyrus P. Kane, the Canadian Schoolboy. Say, When he Starts to Pull His Stuff the New York Skyscrapers Stagger—And That's Saying Some!

Cyrus to the Rescue.

"A RODEO!" exclaimed the chums of No. 10 Study of the Fourth Form corridor at St. Matt's in one amazed voice. The Three Mutineers, as they were popularly known, regarded Cyrus P. Kane as though he were some unique and rare object of curiosity.

The Canadian junior nodded at them coolly. His face betrayed no signs of excitement, but his blue eyes twinkled merrily.

"Sure, bo's," he said, in his drawing tones. "It's the Dad's idea, you know. Pop's off to Canada the day after to-morrow; before he goes he wants to show you sleepy guys just what life is like on a hundred-per-cent Canadian cattle outfit."

The speaker paused and dropped lazily into a large arm-chair from which Fred Strong, the Captain of the Fourth, had stood up for a moment. The leader of the Mutineers regarded the action with stern disapproval.

"My chair, I think," he said gently but firmly.

Cyrus P. affected not to hear him.

"Yep," he went on cheerfully. "Reckon the Dad's goin' to give you hoboes a big surprise and then some. Of course you know what a Rodeo is—?"

"My chair, if you have no objection," put in the Skipper of the Fourth again. The other took no notice.

"—They had one at Wembley Exhibition, if you remember. Buckin' broncos; roundin' up and lassoing wild steers; breaking in unbroken horses; demonstrations of how cattle rustlers are dealt with on the ranges—"

"Get out of my chair," bellowed Fred Strong.

"—Waal, bo's, we're goin' to have a show like

that down here," Cyrus continued. "Dad's rounded up a travelling bunch of cowboys, complete with steers and broncos, who are doing your little ole island at the moment. He's got the Head's permission—Ow! Yo! Yarroo!"

The Canadian wound up his discourse with sundry yells of dismay as the Mutineers, in answer to a sign from their leader, fell upon him, hip and thigh.

They dealt with him in no tender fashion. Three pairs of hands lifted him bodily from the chair, dropped him heavily upon the floor; repeated this movement four or five times, then stood back, grinning broadly.

"Darnation lot of yahoos!" yelled the angry victim. "What d'ye mean by handing me this rough line of goods?"

Fred Strong shook an admonishing forefinger at him.

"To teach you manners," said he severely. "You can't come into a respectable study in a decent scholastic establishment, pinch the best chair, and then reel off a string of fibs to innocent schoolboys. You're not in the wild, woolly west now, old son."

Cyrus P. picked himself up. Despite some anguish of feelings, in his handsome face his eyes still twinkled.

"Rotten bunch of coyotes!" he growled. "For two pins I'd go along to the Dad and make him cry off the stunt."

"Do you mean to say all this business is true?" asked Strong, incredulously, for there was something convincing about the Canadian kid now.

"Sure, bo," nodded Kane. "But if you doubt me, why, pop down and have a look at the hall notice board."

They accepted the invitation with alacrity. The hall was crowded with juniors and seniors, all talking

excitedly. After dint of much pushing the Mutineers at last got near enough to the board to read the large notice pinned thereon.

Permission has been given to the boys under my charge to attend a certain display known as a Rodeo which is to be held in Grantan Meadow during the next two days.

This entertainment has very kindly been provided by Mr. Hiram Kane, who desired the boys of St. Matts to learn something of everyday life on a Canadian Cattle Ranch.

Strict compliance with all instructions given by Mr. Carlow, who will be in charge of the scholars, is enjoined.

The Rodeo will arrive in Wryming this afternoon. The procession may be witnessed by any members of the school who so wish.

J. JAMESON,
Headmaster.

"I like that last bit!" grinned Tom Knowles. "If there's one absentee I'll eat my hat; and not ask for salt with it either."

Such was the general opinion. Therefore it came as no small surprise that, when St. Matts wended their way in the direction of the village after lunch, Cyrus Kane was not amongst them.

"Blessed-if I can understand it," confessed Fred Strong to his comrades when the Mutineers had unsuccessfully sought their chum. "Why, even his father is here with Mr. Carlow."

But they arrived in Wryming and lined the main street with the local inhabitants without sight or sign of the missing junior.

The train bearing the Rodeo party had evidently arrived. From the direction of the station came the lowing of cattle; the stamping of horses, and the raucous voices of men. All eyes were fixed on a bend in the road round which the unique procession would presently appear.

Suddenly a roar of delight rent the air as a mounted man, arrayed in complete cowboy garb, swung into view, his steed bucking and rearing in the most fearsome manner.

Those in the rider's vicinity fell away from the flashing hoofs with yells of fear. Whereupon the cowboy doffed his sombrero and waved it reassuringly at them.

He was followed by ten or twelve others, similarly dressed. As the party entered the narrow street they checked the activities of their steeds.

Suddenly the roar of the onlookers burst out afresh. Seven powerful steers with long, curved horns appeared in view, led by halters attached to rope muzzles.

The activities of the horses was nothing in comparison with that of the steers. Intractable at the best of times, the acclamation of the crowd appeared to drive them to a frenzy of terror or rage.

They twisted and stamped in their efforts to get free of their charges, and the concentrated bellowing was terrific. It seemed almost impossible that the mounted cowboys could hold them in. But as they neared where the Mutineers stood, Fred Strong gave a yell of astonishment.

"My only maiden aunt! Look at Kane!"

Riding with the freedom of the perfect horseman and clad in cowboy array, was Cyrus P. Kane, a broad grin of sheer joy on his face.

He raised his sombrero in a wide flourish as the Mutineers spotted him.

"Hello, you bo's!" he roared at them. How's this for some outfit?"

The words had not left his lips when there came a wild stamping of horses accompanied by cries of fear from the rear.

One of the steers was turned in the direction of the sound.

By some means one of the steers had managed to break loose from the fellow who held it, and was now standing, with lowered head, above the sprawled figure of a man.

Close by stood Mr. Carlow, the Fourth Form master, wringing his hands helplessly.

"Heaven, it's Mr. Kane!" yelled Fred Strong. "Cyrus, it's your dad, and he'll be killed!"

Already the young Canadian had lifted the lariat from the pommel of his saddle. Moreover, white-faced, but steady as a rock, he was preparing to fling the noose.

Whizz! Through the air it shot, settling below the curved horns of the maddened steer. The latter made as if to gore its unfortunate victim. And at the same instant Cyrus wheeled his horse completely round, urging it forward with voice and spur.

It was almost possible to hear the straining of both beasts. Just for an instant the two appeared immovable; then the impetus of the horse's onrush told. The steer was literally dragged backward, flung on its side and hauled along the street for several yards.

The fight was all knocked out of the quivering brute. The work of securing it again was easily and quickly accomplished.

Hiram Kane was assisted to rise. Save for a bruise on the arm where the steer's hard forehead had struck him, he was unharmed.

Many would have had the procession abandoned. But the Canadian millionaire rancher refused to allow such a thing. Nothing further untoward occurred, and eventually the Rodeo arrived safely at Grantan meadow.

ABOUT ten o'clock that same night three men were seated, drinking and talking in low tones, in the parlour of the Green Harp Inn.

They were an unprepossessing trio, especially one individual. Had there been present anybody who had attended that afternoon's procession they might have recognised in this sinister-faced fellow the man who had been in charge of the steer that had so nearly killed Hiram Kane.

One of the party was addressing his companions earnestly.

"It is a pity you failed, Jake," he said to the cowboy. "But for the young cub everything would have been O.K."

However there is still time to get Kane before he sails on Friday. For get him we must, otherwise the fat'll be completely in the fire."

"Cut that out, Carew!" growled the 'puncher. "We know it all. The point is, how do you intend to do the job?"

Coolly Carew leaned forward in his chair. "If you will have the patience to listen to me for a few minutes I'll show you how Hiram Kane dies at the Rodeo to-morrow, to be precise!" he began, softly.

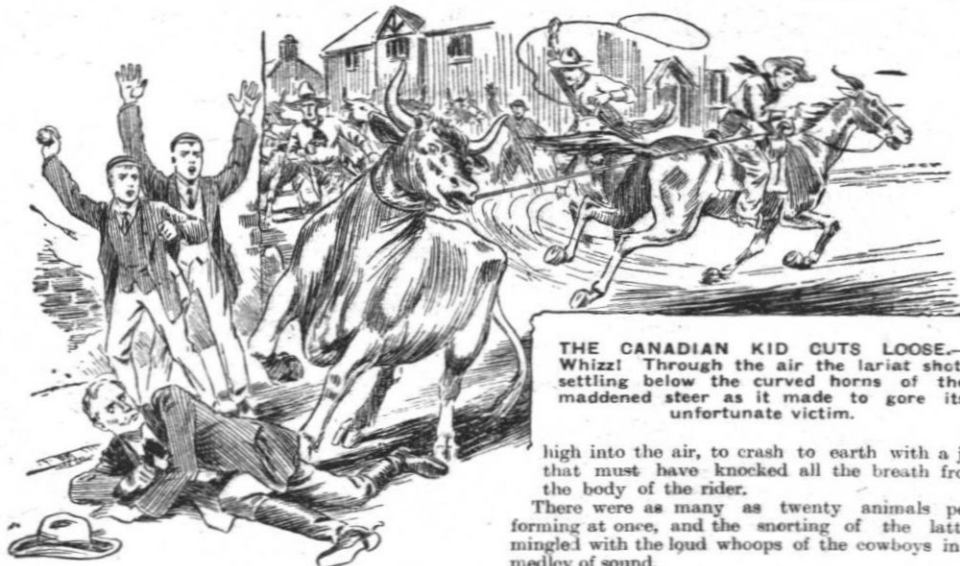
The Rodeo.

ALTHOUGH the Canadian Millionaire strove to dispell the rumour of foul play, his schoolboy son could not quiet his fears, and, indeed, something of his belief managed to leak out, and exaggerated stories ran round the school and the village. The millionaire had a deadly enemy. That was the gist of the rumours.

The local police, communicated with, were early on the scene, and Cyrus P. Kane suffered a lengthy cross-examination at the hands of the Inspector.

The great question was, would the Head take too serious a view of the business and prohibit the fellows attending that afternoon's Rodeo?

Had it not been for the millionaire there is little doubt that he would have done so; but Kane senior



THE CANADIAN KID CUTS LOOSE.—Whizz! Through the air the lariat shot, settling below the curved horns of the maddened steer as it made to gore its unfortunate victim.

pleaded successfully with the kindly old doctor, and the dreaded veto was not pronounced.

In fact the boys received an additional surprise in the shape of a notice that appeared on the board shortly after lunch.

A Football Match has been arranged to take place to-morrow, Saturday, between an Eleven chosen from the Rodeo party, and another representing St. Matts.

The School Team will be selected by the Sport's Committee this evening, and the names duly put down on this board.

RALSTONE,
Vice-President.

"Topping idea!" was the unanimous verdict of the fellows.

The afternoon's entertainment was due to commence at two-thirty, and, long before that time, Grantan Meadow was packed to its full capacity.

A sixpenny entrance fee was charged to the villagers and St. Matt's alike, the proceeds being earmarked for the small local hospital fund.

The cowboys mingled freely with the spectators, much to the delight and curiosity of the latter, who fingered the heavy butts of colt .45's; caressed the long, woolly chaps of their wearers, and tried, with varying success, to manipulate the lassos.

At two-thirty, Mr. Carlow, the Head himself, and Hiram Kane appeared on the scene, and the business started.

The first event on the programme was an exhibition of horsemanship, which included the saddling and mounting of practically unbroken animals, and their ultimate subjection.

It was a thrilling display in every sense of the word. No sooner would a cowboy leap into the saddle than his mount must become a positive lump of fiendishness.

One moment the beast would rear up on its hind legs, then drop forward, and lash out behind with terrific force. Another moment would see it spring

high into the air, to crash to earth with a jar that must have knocked all the breath from the body of the rider.

There were as many as twenty animals performing at once, and the snorting of the latter mingled with the loud whoops of the cowboys in a medley of sound.

A deafening roar of cheers greeted the chief of the cowpunchers, a giant of six-foot-six, as he addressed the crowd through a megaphone.

"We are now going to show you how the cattle are rounded up and branded!" he announced.

A few breathless minutes slipped by, then seven steers were released from a small corral, and came flying across the meadow.

They parted and spread in all directions as the cowboys, swinging their lassos, gave yelling pursuit. Despite the rails which separated them from the frenzied animals, the onlookers were far from easy.

Whizz! The lassos shot unerringly from the hands of the throwers, the nooses settling over the horns of the steers. In an instant they were flung to earth and the red-hot branding irons applied to their hides.

The smell of burning fur pervaded the atmosphere.

In one case the lasso failed to reach its objective. Nothing daunted, the cowboy in question urged his horse level with the steer and, springing from his saddle, gripped the curved horns with both hands.

A terrific struggle ensued. The maddened steer strove might and main to shake off its human antagonist, snorting and bellowing the while.

But the man was not to be denied. Slowly but surely the steer's neck was twisted round until, at last, it subsided, only to be treated in the same manner as its fellows.

THE big cowboy was speaking though the megaphone again.

"Try to imagine that it is night time, and that the ranch is wrapt in slumber.

"One of our outposts has just arrived to say that cattle thieves—or rustlers, as we call them on the range—are at work. We will open the show from when the pun-ners and rustlers first sight one another."

For the second time the steers were released. Five cowboys set about rounding them up. They were driving off the cattle when a dozen other men rode out of the corral and began to pursue the rustlers all over the meadow.

Revolvers came into play. The staccato reports



SCHOOLBOYS VERSUS COWBOYS.—The powerful Sixth Former made no mistake. With the speed of a cannon ball the leather flashed by the cowboy goalkeeper and struck the back of the net.

rang out deafeningly. Shouts from the cowboys mingled with cries of alarm from the more timid members of the crowds.

"All right!" roared a stentorian voice reassuringly. "They're only blanks!"

The affair became more thrilling as the pursuers drew closer to the pursued. Lassoos were flung by adept hands, bringing the rustlers to earth, one after the other.

At last only one remained free, and he had three men on his trail, firing rapidly as they rode furiously in his wake.

A cry of fear suddenly became audible even above the general hubbub. Every eye was turned towards where Hiram Kane sat with the Head and Mr. Carlow. The Canadian was observed to reel in his seat then drop sideways, to the ground.

In a moment the Rodeo was forgotten as the spectators rushed to the spot.

Cyrus and Fred Strong the Skipper of the Fourth, were first on the scene. The former knelt by the recumbent figure of his father, while Dr. Jameson, aided by Mr. Carlow, urged the crowd to fall back.

Kane senior's face was very pale. Across his right temple stretched a long, narrow scar from which the blood slowly oozed.

A hasty search procured a medical man who happened to be present. The millionaire regained consciousness while the former was making an examination.

"W-what happened?" he demanded, a trifle unsteadily, raising himself on his elbow.

The medico's expression was extremely grave. "You've had a mighty close escape, sir," he said shortly. "One of those weapons must have contained a live cartridge. Another half-inch and the bullet would have passed through your brain."

An immediate inquiry was made into the matter, without any satisfactory issue, however. It was impossible to say which weapon had contained the live round, or how it had got there.

"But I can guess who the culprit was," Cyrus confided to the Mutineers later. "Did you chaps

notice that one of the three 'pun' hers who chased that 1st rustler was the same fellow who had a charge of the steer which almost did for the Dad yesterday?"

A GENERAL rush was made for the notice board on the fellows' return. Amongst the eleven chosen for the morrow's games were the names of Cyrus Kane and Fred Strong.

Despite a certain amount of disappointment on the part of those enthusiasts left out, it was generally agreed that the team was as strong as St. Matt's could produce.

Saturday dawned a perfect day for the great match, and at two-thirty Big Field was crowded to witness Hiram Kane kick off.

A Race With Death.

IN comparison with their schoolboy rivals, the cowboys presented a most formidable opposition as they took the field. The gigantic figure of Rex Tackhard, their Captain, dwarfed every other player, and all were in cowboy garb.

St. Matt's greeted their appearance with a sportsmanlike roar of cheers that was hardly excelled when the school eleven emerged from the dressing-room.

Mr. Carlow, acting in the capacity of referee, called the two captains, Ralstone and Tackhard, forward to spin the coin. The former called correctly and both sides lined up, Hiram Kane preparing to kick off at the sound of the whistle.

Peep!

The millionaire delivered a sharp tap which sent the ball to Fred Strong at inside-left. In a moment the St. Matt's front line went off down the field, the sphere passing to-and-fro among them with perfect precision.

The cowboys rushed to the attack, displaying remarkable speed and agility in spite of their bulk. One dashed at Strong in reckless fashion. The leader of the Mutineers flashed aside, but not quickly enough to escape the concussion altogether. He went flying, managing however to pass to Ralstone at centre ere he fell.

(Continued on page 36.)

Exciting Episodes in Darkest Africa. Jimmy Brent, the Amazing Man About Town and Mystery Crook on Tour With His Friends on a Daring Quest.



Sambo, the Black Cricketer, Saves His Pals from the Cannibals' Ovens in this Thrilling Instalment, Chums.

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 became 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.

Jimmy, however, escaped from the man, and luck aided him, for he found an abandoned balloon belonging to an explorer who had at one time visited this peril plateau. In the balloon Jimmy sought out his friends—and found them, making a last stand against tremendous apes who infested the plateau.

Jimmy drove off the apes, to be attacked again in turn by Velasquez and his savages, over whom by now he had gained complete control. The Big Boss had so completely subordinated himself to his greed that, as Jimmy—a prisoner with the rest in canoes bearing him he knew not whither—gazed up at a hideous black fellow, the witch doctor of the tribe, he recognised him as his arch enemy—Velasquez!

The Prey of the Cannibals.

JIMMY stared up into that hideous face, and for a moment could scarce believe it. He remembered

Velasquez as gross of countenance, with fleshy, swarthy cheeks, heavy-lidded eyes, and an ugly, square-cut beard that had blown a little white through the years of his sin. He would never have recognised this low-browed, savage creature, black as a piece of coal, with the red-rimmed orbs glaring savagely at him had it not been for his voice.

But now Jimmy picked out various points of resemblance. And a contemptuous smile curved his lips. Sambo had masqueraded as one of the tribe, as their witch-doctor, in fact. But, compared to this,

he had made a handsome witch-doctor. He had not descended to such degrading depths as the Big Boss. This man had transformed himself into nothing less than a bestial cannibal.

"Well . . . you cur, Velasquez!" Jimmy drawled, and his slow words were loaded with a terrific loathing and disgust.

A fist smashed into his face.

"Just for that yours shall be the most horrible, slow death of any wretch who ever went to the cannibals' ovens," snarled the Big Boss. His awful hands went to Jimmy's throat, lightly caressing the veins that stood out as the cricketer gritted his teeth. Velasquez cackled with soft laughter, and the foam came to his lips.

"This is where I shall myself cut your head from your body," he whispered, his voice shaking with hate. "But not before we have done with you. My men have sharpened their axes and their long knives, and each shall cut off such juicy morsel as he cares to put in the ovens. Oh, you will die slowly, I assure you, and you will make good eating."

A mist of horror clammed on Jimmy's forehead. He was a sick man, almost swooning from nausea as he stared helplessly into that awful face thrust so near his own. But the fighting urge swamped all his loathing. He struggled like a man possessed with his bonds. If only he could get one arm free, for a second, he told himself, this beast would be living no longer . . . but another devil would rule in Hell.

As he writhed, Velasquez laughed, a girny laugh, and punched him again full in the face; a ghastly bit of punching that was, for the man's fist twisted like a drill in rock. And thereafter Jimmy was still, striving not even to ease the bonds that cut red-hot into his flesh from his struggles.

But as he lay there his brain persisted. It jangled with thoughts. Noises thrummed and throbbed in his head, and with a queer mordant wit he compared it to a piano played by a maniac there in the steaming jungle. Strange how it should strike fine notes—notes of lucid thought, even though he was a sick man.

He must think, he told himself desperately. Think—think—think!

He was sorry for the others, with a sorrow that brought him near to weeping. He had a vivid mental picture of the terrible ordeal that every one of the paddles was taking them to. If only he could think!

He closed his eyes, listening to the beat of the paddles, helpless and seething with inarticulate rage. He heard Sambo roaring his passion of threats at



PREY OF THE CANNIBALS.—The Big Game Cricketers were trussed up, each to a tree, stacing helplessly at their chief laid out on a stone platform.—

the natives over whom he had once ruled. The others seemed paralysed with dread. Then even Sambo was silent, his threats smashed to nothingness on his lips by a native's stone club. The canoes moved down the steamy river under staggering copper sky, rocking with the devilish mirth of their captors.

JIMMY opened his eyes. He was aware of a tremendous bump which seemed to him in his bemused state as if the earth had collided with some planet of outer space. It was blackness here, under trees and tangled jungle growth that folded in the river like a great arch. The river! It just writhed with disease. Jimmy found a thousand muscles aching, and an awful stench assailed his nostrils. They were picking him up out of the canoe, landing him on the tangled bank of the river; four hideously painted, evil-smelling cannibals.

He had thought it dark at first, with a Stygian darkness that you could grab in your hand. But now a new vista opened before his eyes, and seemed to burn those eyes in their sockets. Before him, red and lurid glare cast the trees into fantastic silhouette shapes.

Jimmy's brain registered the fact that it was the glare of a camp fire between the trees . . . in a clearing. Weird black shapes moved, and howls and screams smashed the tropical stillness. The savages were carrying their burdens up a slope on the river bank to the camp fire, some of them dancing like dervishes, all of them screaming horribly.

Jimmy was in a terrible state of languor. He felt he wanted to die. He prayed to die. He lay inert as a sack of meal in his captives' grasp.

He was not aware that they lowered him to the ground at Velasquez's order. But they did. The hideous witch-doctor (for he filled the part so perfectly that he deserved the title) was snarling horribly as he bent over Jimmy with a rude clay vessel, shaped like a bottle in his hands. He held the neck of it to Jimmy's lips, and his whisper was like the hiss of a snake as a colourless liquid gurgled over Jimmy's face, some of it being forced down his throat.

"Not so apathetic, my fine beauty!" he rasped

in that awful whisper of his. "I want you to know everything—to see everything. I want you to be alive when you die. See!"

Jimmy was alive the next second—keenly alive. The vile native "hooch," a raw spirit of tremendous strength, burned his throat like a torchlight procession. It vitalised him—galvanised him. He struggled like a suddenly aroused tiger, and the witch-doctor with a mad grin, brought his wooden club down on his head.

The natives lifted him again, and Jimmy, still spluttering and spitting out the firewater, realised that in the procession of prisoners next to him Sambo, the black cricketer, was being likewise carried by four natives.

Sambo was quiescent, docile as a child. His eyes were closed, and he might have been unconscious, but there was a lurking grin round his thick red lips. Sambo was a burly fellow, and the four natives found their strength fully taxed to carry his inert form. Perhaps Sambo's covert smile came from the realisation of this, for it was true that he possessed a violent and amazing sense of humour.

He opened his eyes, that were like big black buttons set in pearl, and winked all of a sudden at Jimmy, whose straining gaze was bent on him. Jimmy at once felt the blood coursing hotly through his veins. Hope strained on a leash of fear. It amazed him that under these nerve-shattering conditions anyone could wink.

"Can anything be done?" he said voicelessly. His lips framed the words, but no sound issued from them. Sound would have destroyed any chance that remained. Just as voicelessly he sent up a petition to Heaven that Sambo would understand those lip movements.

The black man was equal to the occasion. "Sure ting," he messaged back by the same medium. "Dese niggers still a littul bit afraid ob ole Sambo. Us still makum magic. Look at um balloon."

Which was Sambo's way of saying that the native's had been somewhat awed by Jimmy's appearance in the balloon when he had rescued the rest of the big game cricketers from the apes.

Indeed, with his rolling eyes, Sambo indicated the balloon basket, which was being carried just a little way ahead of them by three natives.

Its gasbag, alas, was now a limp, collapsed piece of skin, pierced by three score or more native spears when Velasquez had led the attack on Jimmy after he had chased away the apes.

But the savages still regarded the balloon with awe and respect. Indeed, so fearful had they been of it when they had seen it with Jimmy inside in the air that Velasquez had taxed his authority to the utmost in persuading them to launch their spears at it. This Sambo knew, for he had heard Velasquez exhorting the savages with screams and shouts in the native dialect to launch the shower of spears at Jimmy's balloon.

It will be remembered that Velasquez had been handicapped at first by not knowing the natives' patois. But somehow he had picked it up. They differ very little, the river dialects of native Africa.

But Sambo had understood every word. He had heard and understood also when Velasquez had later—as the canoes paddled down the river—promised the savages that he would make the balloon whole again and launch it in the air as further proof of his magic.

Sambo questioned this strongly. It was a very moot point whether Velasquez's much-vaunted sorcery could be strained to such limits as this. The gasbag had been pretty badly punctured.

But from it all an idea had come to Sambo. He

was fondling that idea now. He wanted Jimmy to capture it too. But how to convey the idea to him? Jimmy's eyes in his white, strained face were directed at that basket which was being trundled up the incline towards the camp fire; then he looked again at Sambo.

"Reckon dere's one of us might make a getaway in dat ole basket. An' dat suttin' pusson's me." Sambo said all this by the language of lips. At all times he was by way of being verbose, long-winded, and he could not clip his sentences even in such an emergency as this.

Jimmy's eyes asked startled questions.

"Reckon dis chile could get away—mebbe help you later. All right? Um?" Sambo persisted.

Jimmy nodded ever so slightly. "Yes," he urged silently.

And then Sambo did an amazing thing suddenly. He came to life. From being an inert mass, bound with hempen ropes as securely as a mummy is bound with linen, he became as a million voltahe live battery. Every muscle of him bulged. In what superhuman manner he achieved it is impossible to say, but the fact remains that he burst many of his

bonds with sounds like pistol reports. A leg was free, a heavily-booted leg, kicking upwards at the jaw of one of the natives. That native reeled away, to fall screaming over the protruding roots of a jungle tree.

Sambo was on his feet, and balancing grotesquely, he kicked again at the nearest savage, splintering the fellow's knee cap.

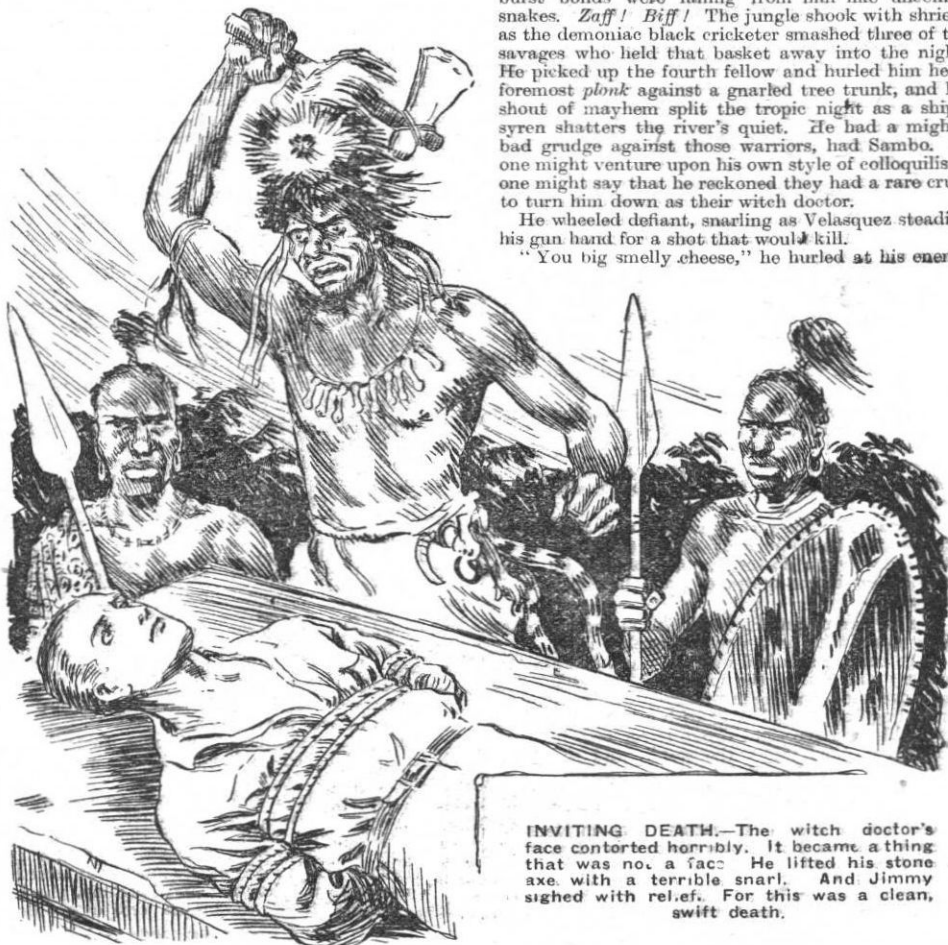
Jimmy in sympathy commenced to struggle too, but his efforts were as those of a babe compared to the dynamic fury of the black cricketer. He was held securely, whereas Sambo was hobbling now towards the balloon basket, shouting something in the native lingo, whilst Velasquez came after him yelling and tugging like a tenderfoot at the holster that held one of his ponderous Webley six-shooters.

He got the gun free, and loosed a racketing bullet. But he was a poor revolver shot in an emergency. The husky automatic had a "kick" in it, and it wrenched Velasquez's arm up so that the bullet ploughed amongst the trees, to send a score of monkeys gibbering like mad for concealment elsewhere.

Sambo had by this time reached the balloon basket, and his long, glistening black arms were free. His burst bonds were falling from him like uncoiling snakes. *Zaff! Biff!* The jungle shook with shrieks as the demoniac black cricketer smashed three of the savages who held that basket away into the night. He picked up the fourth fellow and hurled him head foremost *plonk* against a gnarled tree trunk, and his shout of mayhem split the tropic night as a ship's syren shatters the river's quiet. He had a mighty bad grudge against those warriors, had Sambo. If one might venture upon his own style of colloquialism, one might say that he reckoned they had a rare crust to turn him down as their witch doctor.

He wheeled defiant, snarling as Velasquez steadied his gun hand for a shot that would kill.

"You big smelly cheese," he hurled at his enemy



INVITING DEATH.—The witch doctor's face contorted horribly. It became a thing that was not a face. He lifted his stone axe with a terrible snarl. And Jimmy sighed with relief. For this was a clean, swift death.

with a mad grin. "You mœbbe fink you kin turn this ole basket into a flyer. But you caint. I got her."

With which defiance he kicked himself head foremost into the upturned balloon basket, just as Velasquez, who was certainly disconcerted by such vagaries, loosed his second shot. It tore into the canework of the basket, which didn't stop it, for it ploughed out the other side. And then the basket became animated.

It turned over on its side for a start. Its interior was pretty well filled by Sambo, who was all arms and legs. The four remaining bullets zipped out from the blue bore of Velasquez's automatic, smashing holes in the basket work.

But the basket was moving.

It was four-sided, as any ordinary balloon basket. It moved over on its facets like some clumsy new beast in the jungle. Velasquez couldn't stop it, though he drew his second revolver, and pumped six more reverberating shots at it. Sambo had taken a long chance. But he was winning.

He was propelling that basket from inside down the hill towards the river that crawled through the black jungle. The river of stinking mud and steaming dark water. The balloon basket gained momentum, for the hill was steep.

The natives scattered, screaming in superstitious awe. Here was evidence of Sambo's sorcery if they needed any. For in disappearing inside that balloon basket and making it move, Sambo had made a very big magic, indeed; such a magic as should make all men hide their faces from the wrath that would fall upon them if they opposed him.

Velasquez, with two empty revolvers, his witch doctor's face foolish in its malignant chagrin stared after the basket rolling down towards the river. But suddenly the curses falling from his lips changed to a shout of triumph.

From the mud of the river there had crept out a long, black snout, above which twinkled nastily two little red eyes. Arrested, the natives stared at that snout as it snapped open to reveal a long battery of teeth. It was the loathsome, lurking crocodile, and who shall say that it had not seen its prey inside the basket?

Howbeit, Velasquez, the self-styled witch doctor, at once turned the incident to his advantage.

"Ha, look!" he cried triumphantly. "See what happens to those who risk the anger of the Magic Man who Makes Fire. Me! See the crocodile has got him!"

Gasps came from the savages, and the hideous, long-haired heads nodded. In lightning fashion had their new witch doctor avenged himself by calling up this loathsome destroyer from the depths of the river!

As for Jimmy and Sir Mark Anton and the others, they stared with nerves near to exploding.

The balloon splashed into the mud, and scattered water; and amidst the splash the crocodile seemed to move like a darting fish for its prey. Sambo came tumbling out of the basket with a yell. He saw the crocodile and the sight drove terror into his heart. He disappeared under the water, and so did the crocodile. And impelled by an awful curiosity the natives crowded down to the river whilst the bound men craned heads and eyes. They saw a turmoil of froth amidst the black waters. The incident was closed. Sambo that thrown the dice in a last gamble with Fate—and lost.

Jimmy lay staring at the river, shuddering as if fever was closing its grip on him.

AND presently they came back, the warriors with their spears raised suggestively, the witch doctor at their head looking more fiendish than ever in his chuckling joy. Events had vindicated him. He was more firmly established than ever as chief of this blood-lusting black mob. And himself he was no more than a savage, for he had descended very readily to the terrible environment of the primitive jungle.

He grunted something to his spearmen, who gathered up their victims once more and recommenced their journey towards the lurid red glow of the fire.

Savages came to meet them, exultantly yelling and shrieking. Velasquez glared around him with basilisk eyes of approval as they helped in the carrying of the prisoners towards the camp fire.

Panic gripped Jimmy as he saw the scene. He feared for the reason of himself, and the others.

The scene almost defies description. In the clearing burned the fire, sufficient to roast an ox. And its lurid flames lit a stone platform on four carved pillars. Under and round this the fire burned. This was the oven.

Before the fire was another platform, rather similar; the *dubu* (or ceremonial platform), on which the prey of these bestial cannibals was carved up. And behind the *dubu* towered the hideous devil house, built in the fashion of a crocodile's head, with a gaping jaw for entrance.

Stained with the juices of various jungle berries and ornamented with banana leaves, this devil house was like a nightmare vision. The trees encircled the clearing—a space streaked with flame, habited by dancing shadows. But it was the fire and the witch doctor's platform that held most significance. Little wonder that Jimmy Brent's brain reeled.

He endeavoured to cling desperately to his stoicism as he saw his friends each lashed tightly to one of the circle of near-by trees, guarded by savages with long broad spears. He himself was prodded up to the *dubu*, or ceremonial platform. And as he was lifted on to the platform and laid out full length, trussed like a fowl as he was, Velasquez came up and peered over him, cackling horribly, his evil face twitching with the blood lust.

"You will make nice eating," he whispered, stretching out a hand and feeling his victim.

Jimmy once again was given up to violent shudders, which he struggled to control.

The witch doctor laughed—senselessly, madly. "Ah, so you quail, do you? They're all like that when death creeps near," he rasped. "But wait until they start cutting you up—alive—bit by bit. Ah; that's fine!"

Jimmy stifled the groan that rose to his lips. Well he knew the devilish artistry of these dark cannibals. They would keep him alive as long as they could, to see him squirm in dreadful anguish. They would see that there was still life in him when they cast him to the lingering, agonising hell of the flames. Dear Heaven, could nothing save him from the dreadful, slow torture?

He prayed then for death—a swift, clean death—as he had never prayed before.

Velasquez, seeing fear in his eyes, threw back his head and laughed—a laugh like the rattle of the snake before it strikes.

He turned then, and beckoned to the warriors, half-a-dozen of them, who were lined up, brandishing their knives with evil glee upon their faces. Those six were privileged to help the witch doctor carve up the first victim; the others must wait their turn.

They came up shouting and laughing, the blood lust turning them to insane creatures. Behind

(Continued on page 30.)

Chaps, Look at This! The Thrills of the War in the Air that Might Come, Vividly Told in Our New Tale!



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WATCH OUT. POSITIVELY COMMENCING IN NEXT WEEK'S BOYS' MAGAZINE. PACKED FROM COVER TO COVER WITH EXCITING TALES.

BIG GAME CRICKETERS—*(Continued from page 28.)*

crowded the rest of the savages, some beating on small drums of snake skin. Others leapt and swayed on the fringe of the ceremonial platform, their hoarse voices shouting a savage chant in praise of their tribal heroes. Jimmy, his face ghastly white in the swirling smoke, stared up at his hated enemy, and prayed harder still for a chance of a swift death.

Velasquez bent over him with a keen-bladed knife in his hand—and Jimmy almost fainted. The lurid flames illuminated a countenance too hideous for conception—Velasquez was chewing a betel nut, like any cannibal, and his mouth frothed red. His eyes were like horrid red wounds in his black face, and he was cackling softly.

He drew his knife across Jimmy's chest, just gently. But it cut through the stained cricket shirt; it was like a hot wire streaking across Jimmy's chest. And the knife came up dripping blood.

"Aha, there is much sweet meat here!" cackled this fiendish white man.

Then Jimmy was inspired.

He did a thing he had never done before in his life. He craned up his head and spat full and deliberately, and with much force, into Velasquez's face.

The witch doctor stiffened, and his face contorted horribly. It became a thing that was not a face. The knobby forehead became boiling with purple veins, the eyes bulged with the frenzy of his sudden staggering rage. Snarling brutally, he raised the stone axe that hung from his belt—raised it high in the flame-lit night—to bring the heavy weapon down with barbarous force full in Jimmy's face.

And Jimmy sighed with relief as he closed his eyes. Death was to come swiftly after all.

The heavy club smashed down—on the stone table, missing Jimmy by a foot. Jimmy opened his eyes at the dull crash of it, and groaned aloud. He saw the mad grin on Velasquez's face. He understood. In that swift duel of wits he had been beaten; he had not bluffed his torturer into killing him quickly. Velasquez's cunning was allied to madness. He wanted blood—agony; he wanted to see his victim squirm in dreadful pain.

"Come!" he beckoned.

And the savages mounted the platform with their knives gleaming, ready to do things unspeakable, things that cannot be explained, to Jimmy. Then suddenly they started, wheeled, and stared. Because their witch doctor had stiffened as if in the death-throes, and had thrown out a rigid arm, with the index finger pointed. In the shoulder of that arm was a little dart. It wasn't poisoned, because Sambo had found it in the jungle—used, probably, by some native long before. And he had had no time to find poison with which to barb it. He had cut a bamboo and scooped out its pulpy middle to make a blow-pipe, the while he hastened towards the lurid glow of

the cannibals' fire, guessing that there he would find his friends.

He hoped that the dart was still poisoned. But it wasn't. Sambo stood there in the circle of red light cast by the camp fire. Sambo, with his fine physique exhibited, because his drenched clothes clung to him! He had not been an hour out of the river. And it was night; there was no sun to dry him.

He stood there, like a challenger who has just blown the trumpet call, with that blowpipe at his mouth, and watched events. Velasquez did not collapse. With a savage snarling oath he plucked the dart from his shoulder, and shrieked to his savages.

Drunk with murder, they ran on Sambo. The whole herd of them. "Kill, kill, kill!" they roared. "Let us kill him!" A shower of spears hurtled at Sambo, who was already fleeing.

He cared not now that the dart from his blowpipe had not laid Velasquez low. He had got nearly the whole mob at his heels, thirsting for his blood. They hated being interrupted at their feasts and tortures. Their gods were outraged. More than anything they hated Sambo for that.

Nearly the whole village came in pursuit of him. Velasquez himself ran with his paunch wobbling. His rage was staggering.

Only a few spearmen were left in charge of the native village. But they were mere youths in whom the instinct for carnage had not yet been fully developed. Luckily for Jimmy Brent, the real tribal leaders, aged and enfeebled men most of them, but vindictive as wasps, had been forced to stay away from this expedition to the plateau. Else they would surely have cut up Jimmy and his friends trussed to the trees. Nothing would have stayed their blood lust, not even the mad chase of Sambo. They would not have been lured away by Sambo's ruse. The sacrifice and the feast was all to them.

And a mad chase it was in quest of Sambo. He ran, dodging like a fox before the hounds. Surely he bore a charmed life during that chase! Most assuredly he had an uncanny instinct for choosing those few avenues that were open through the dense tangle of undergrowth. Had not the hefty spearmen been close behind, they would have lost him, so uncanny was his choice of a path.

And presently he came to the lonely, wide plateau, the plateau where once had grown the Hurulane, the mystery plant that gave strength to those who ate of its leaves.

The plants were now denuded, and they stuck up like cabbage stalks. Sambo now ran like a flat-footed negro who has stolen a melon from a plantation. He was tired, but he was also hesitant. For he was heading straight for that group of crumbling buildings that has been named in this chronicle "The Hidden City."

**What New Danger is Sambo Running Into?
Don't Miss Next Week's Crescendo or Thrills.**

THE AERIAL WHALE HUNTERS—*(Continued from page 15.)*

reached Micky through the headphones, "But that's the first time I've landed a dead 'un!"

"You've said it," began Micky, then he broke off with a cheer. Over the distant horizon a cloud of smoke showed. The youngster let the magnificent engines of the plane "all out," and the shape of the Kingfisher seemed to bob up from behind that smoke, growing larger every moment.

At last Micky was directly above the vessel and, amid cheer after cheer from the crew, he maneuvered the whale and its human burden alongside.

There willing hands released Captain Frodsham.

Five minutes later the *Spermoil Special* was thrumming on with the whaling ship steaming behind her . . . both fulfilling their appointed tasks of capturing the valuable mammal of the sea, as though they had never heard of the Isle of Wugga or Moosmo, the whale god of the north. But Micky and Hudson had one reminder of it all. It was in the form of a wireless message from the ship below them: "Captain Frodsham requests the pleasure of the company of the crew of the *Spermoil Special* to dinner at first port of call. He wants to shake hands with two white men."

**The Monocled Manhunter in a Startling Thrill Detective
Tale Next Week, Chums. Watch Out!**

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

THE PLANET SCHOOLBOYS

Specially Written for our Chums by
EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

A Chance in a Thousand.

"THEY'RE in!" muttered Barry Drewe, with a gulp. "Oh, you chaps—those horrible things have broken in!"

Freeman, ever aggressive, whirled up one of the heavy saloon chairs.

"Well, we're not going to take it lying down, are we?" he roared. "Come on! We'll fight! We're not dead yet!"

Sir Bags started to say something, but he checked himself. It seemed so useless. It was characteristic of George Freeman to act in this way. He never knew when he was beaten. But of what possible use was that chair? Of what use were rifles and revolvers? If that gigantic crustacean had really broken in, no human power could drive it out again. For its shell was like armour plating, and its strength incredible.

And just then, before anybody could make a move, a palefaced steward came staggering into the saloon—his eyes wild, his whole manner expressive of terror.

"Steady on!" said Bags, striding up to the man. "What have you seen—out there?"

"Nothing, sir!" panted the steward. "But—but I thought something had broken through. There was a terrible crash, and I stumbled and fell—"

"You what?" roared Bags. "And that splintering we heard just now?"

"That—that was me, sir!" gasped the scared man. "I was coming here with a tray of glassware, and—"

"Oh, my goodness!" interrupted Barry. "Then—then that shivering of glass we heard was only you? It wasn't one of these lobster things breaking in?"

The relief was so enormous that nearly everybody in the saloon felt physically sick. They had believed the worst—and their excited imaginations had played a scurvy trick on them. That smashing of glass had only been caused by this frightened steward, as he had dropped his tray.

"Well, we're relieved for the moment, anyhow," said Bags briskly. "But I'm hanged if I know what we can do. It's only a brief respite, at the best. As long as we stay here, we're in terrific danger—and those brutes might smash through at any second."

"But we're safe so far!" panted Willis.

Thud-thud-thud!

Those enormous sounds came booming throughout the *Rover*—and the great vessel shook and shivered by the very shock of them. They proved the terrific strength of these gigantic crustaceans—these creatures of the Venusian night.

Crash-crash!

Louder and louder became those blows. And every one meant that the *Rover* was being strained and jarred. Indeed, the onslaught was so persistent—so fierce—that it could not last for long. Sooner or later, something would go—and the lives of those adventurers would be sacrificed.

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



And they all felt so helpless, too. What weapons they possessed were useless against such enemies. The big guns, perhaps, would have killed these crustaceans. But it was impossible to use the big guns at such close range.

And there was the weed itself, too. The weed was tugging and straining at the faithful *Rover*—trying to pull her down—to enmesh her in the entangling masses of the weed growths.

Thud-thud-thud!

"We cannot stand this!" shouted Professor Roxley Drewe, his eyes gleaming, his face haggard and pale. "Bags—boys! Something must be done at once—and something drastic."

"Exactly!" said Sir Bags, nodding. "But what?"

"There is only one possible hope for us—a chance in a thousand!" said the Professor. "Indeed, it would be quite truthful to say that it is one chance in a million. If we remain here, on the surface of this weed, we shall be inevitably doomed."

"But we can't get off it, sir," protested Freeman.

"No—but we might be able to get under it," replied the Professor tensely. "That is our only chance—to get under it!"

"Under the weed?" said Bags, staring. "Man alive! You're not suggesting—"

"I am suggesting that we should reverse our ether motors," interrupted the Professor. "They are absolutely useless in their present state. This weed has tugged us and gripped us so securely that we are unable to move. But I firmly believe that this weed is only a great floating mass—hundreds of feet thick, possibly, but floating nevertheless."

"Ye gods!" said Mr. Mantering, in blank amazement. "But—but we shall go to certain death if we try to dive under it!"

"Certain death will be ours if we remain here," replied the Professor quietly. "The sudden reversal of our energy will have a terrific effect. The jolt will be so stupendous that everybody will be killed unless they hang on like grim death. My hope is that we shall give so swiftly—so precipitately—that we shall tear clean through the weed. And if we can only reach the clear water underneath, there is a bare possibility that we shall be able to alight safely on the sea bed. And then— Well, then—anything might happen. But let us make an attempt to get free from this weed!"

"And so say all of us!" nodded Bags soberly. "Go ahead, Prof! We're ready."

The Great Moment.

PROFESSOR ROXLEY DREWE'S proposed expedient would be desperate indeed. But, under all the circumstances, it was the only possible thing to be done. For it held out a faint chance of success.

Yet the dangers would be appalling enough!

Even supposing the *Rover* broke through that mass of weed, what would be in store for her, and her precious freight of humanity? What would they meet with down there, in the depths of this Venusian ocean? Already they had had a taste of the horrors that Venus could provide.

However, even this desperate venture would be welcome to all. For it meant action. It meant that something was to be done.

And anything was better than remaining still—waiting for the end that would inevitably come. Slowly but surely the weed was gaining a death grip on the vessel. And those monstrous crustaceans were hammering and battering continuously—weakening the *Rover's* stout plates. Those plates could withstand a certain amount of battering, but in the end they would give way. Even if they did not crack and crumple, there was a chance that they would cease to be airtight.

And if such a disaster as that happened, even though the *Rover* was still able to soar in the atmosphere of Venus, she would never again be able to venture into Outer Space. And that would mean that the voyagers would be marooned for ever on this planet. Never again would they see dear old Mother Earth!

"Well, we're going to have some excitement now!" remarked Freeman, his eyes glittering. "By jigger! I wonder what'll happen when we've dived down into the weed?"

"Don't talk about it, old man," muttered Hardy huskily. "I—I expect we shall all die!"

"Rot!" said Freeman. "What about the new term at Castleton? We've got to get back to England in time for school, my lad."

"Don't!" muttered Willis.

"Don't what?" said Freeman. "What's the good of getting the wind up? We're all alive and kicking, and I don't see any reason to croak. Leave everything to the Professor—he'll see us through!"

"Oh, I wish they'd start something," said Billy Ward anxiously. "This suspense is getting awful."

"It's madness," wailed Puggy Dibble. "Why, are they going to try to dive through the weed? It's crazy! We shall all go to our deaths!"

"Shut up!" frowned Freeman. "It's the only thing to be done, you silly ass! This weed is gripping us—and these crab-like beggars are battering us to bits. If we just stay here, on the top of the weed, we shall all fall into the claws of these sea monsters. There's a chance of life—a chance of freedom—and we're going to take it!"

Thud-thud-crash-thud!

"There they go—at it harder than ever," muttered Barry. "By Jove! We'd better get a move on, if we want to escape."

And then Sir Bags came bustling round.

"Now, then, you youngsters—grab hold of anything!" he said briskly. "It doesn't matter what it is—but grab! And be ready for a terrific shock."

"What's going to happen, sir?" asked Jefferson excitedly.

"No good asking me—I'm just as much in the dark as you are," replied Bags. "But in about two ticks the Professor is going to reverse his ether

motors. He's going to do it suddenly, too—and that'll mean something like a jolt."

"But why, sir?" asked one of the schoolboys. "Why can't he reverse the engines gradually? The jolt might smash the whole airship to pieces."

"If it does, we shall have a mercifully quick ending—that's all," replied Bags quietly. "But it would be no good, you young 'un. No good reversing the engines slowly, I mean. Our only chance is to make a swift dive—a tremendous plunge through this tenacious weed. It is enormously thick, you must remember—and unless we go it with tremendous force, we shall never get through at all. So be ready for that pretty little jar."

It was a time of tense expectancy. Now and again the boys could hardly hear what they were saying—for the thuds and crashes on the metal sides of the *Rover* were deafening in their intensity. On all sides, the crustaceans were hammering away, trying to smash a way through to their victims. And at any moment one of the monsters might climb higher, and crash through the glass dome of the control-room. That, indeed, would be a dire tragedy. Anything to get free before such a thing took place.

"Ready, there?" came a sudden shout. "Give the word, men! Give the word!"

It was Professor Roxley Drewe's voice, and it was throbbing with intensity. And the shouts went up and down the *Rover*, from end to end.

"Be ready! Hold tight!"

And everybody seized upon something solid—some immovable fixture of the vessel. The boys, the members of the crew—Sir Bags himself—everybody. They all held tightly. They all waited in a fever of anxiety and dread.

Up in the control-room Professor Drewe took a deep breath, and laid his hands upon the levers.

"Everything will depend upon the next ten seconds!" he muttered. "Well, may Heaven preserve us—and guide us to safety!"

With a single swing of his arm he drove the levers back.

Success!

THE *Solar Rover*, with a wild, giddy lurch, seemed to be tearing her very vitals out.

The boys, who were clinging desperately, found themselves hurled with terrific force against the floor—or the walls—or the furniture. The *Rover* swayed like a living thing in mortal agony. She dipped, plunged, and swooped with devastating force.

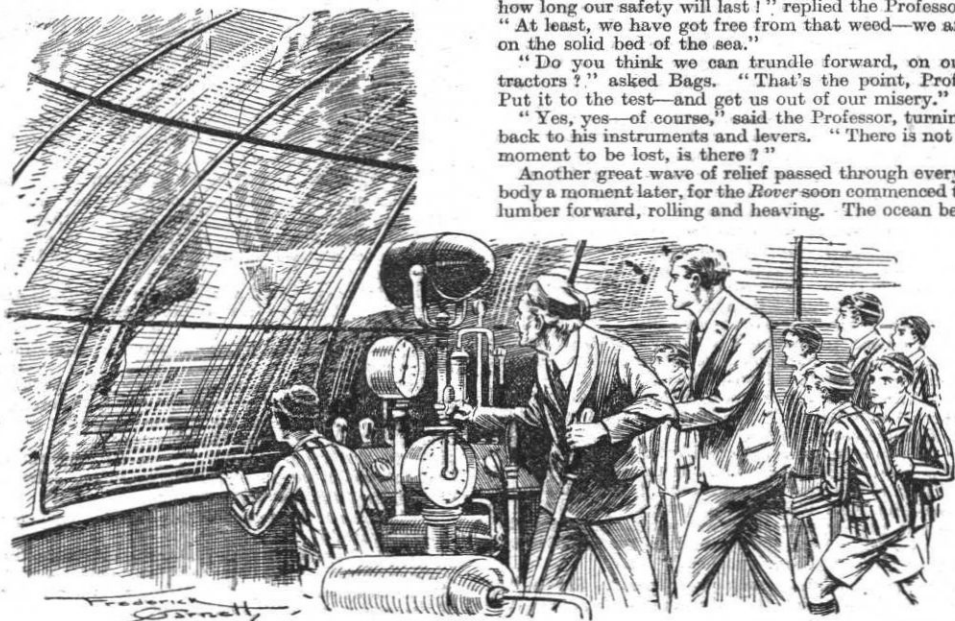
And then—down!

Everybody on board felt the sickening sensation. A sudden plunge—a shrieking and roaring of conglomerated sounds. And the *Rover* was going downwards—down by the bows. She was plunging like a stone. Just for a moment, above all those other sounds, the boys could hear the noise of rending and tearing. And, dully, they knew what it meant. The *Rover* was plunging through that weed—tearing her way through by sheer force. The full power of her motors were now driving her downwards—whereas formerly, those motors had been trying to drag her upwards, into the air.

The effect of this sudden reversal was staggering.

Down she went—and those few seconds were fraught with terror. In the control-room, Professor Drewe was staring upwards—staring at the glass dome. He expected to see it crumple up before his eyes—he expected to see the masses of weed come surging into the control-room, to smother him and drive the life out of his body.

He saw the weed slithering past—a confused, tangled, greenish-black mass. There were many heavy thuds on the glass dome, and yet it still withstood the enormous strain. And then—yes! It



ROCKS AHEAD.—The searchlights were all concentrated ahead, and now a great mass of rocks could be seen rising in jagged fearsome tiers. The ship was brought to a standstill as she was about to crash head on.

seemed too good to be true—but now there was water. Black, inky-looking water—but no weed.

And the *Rover* was still plunging downwards, apparently out of all control.

"We're through—we're through!" screamed Professor Drewe, excited as he had never been in his life before.

With trembling hands he pulled on the levers, hoping to check the vessel's deadly plunge. For there was no telling how deep this ocean was. Perhaps the bottom was comparatively close—and that would mean disaster, for the *Rover* would shatter herself to pieces on the sea bed.

So far this terrible thing had not happened. Now, as the Professor watched his instruments, his heart commenced to beat with feverish rapidity. The *Rover* was assuming an even keel. She was speeding forwards—plunging through the water, with a tremendous roaring commotion. Now her downward plunge had been so greatly reduced that the Professor was beginning to hope.

Down, down—but with less violence. And then—Crash! The stout vessel shook from stem to stern, and became still. Utterly still, tilting well over to starboard, it was.

"We're on the ocean bed!" shouted the Professor, running to the door, his face flushed, his eyes aflame.

"Bags—Clarence! We're through the weed—we're on the ocean bed!"

"Hurrah!"

It was a wild, hysterical cheer—uttered not only by the schoolboys, but by every member of the *Rover's* crew. Not until then did they realise the tension through which they had just passed.

Sir Bags came running up, with Barry Drewe and Freeman and many of the other boys just behind.

"Are we still safe, sir?" shouted Hardy.

"Yes, we are still safe—but Heaven alone knows

how long our safety will last!" replied the Professor. "At least, we have got free from that weed—we are on the solid bed of the sea."

"Do you think we can trundle forward, on our tractors?" asked Bags. "That's the point, Prof! Put it to the test—and get us out of our misery."

"Yes, yes—of course," said the Professor, turning back to his instruments and levers. "There is not a moment to be lost, is there?"

Another great wave of relief passed through everybody a moment later, for the *Rover* soon commenced to lumber forward, rolling and heaving. The ocean bed

was evidently very uneven, and the great ship was rocking from side to side. But she was progressing—she was getting further and further away from that great weed continent which spread overhead, on the surface of the sea.

To rise again was impossible—but there was a chance that she would be able to progress along the sea bottom until she had passed beyond the limits of that deadly weed.

Would this nightmare never be over? Professor Drewe said nothing now—he remained in control, and his expression was set and grim. He had come to a certain decision. If ever they got out of this sea of horror—if they once more found themselves in the outer air—he would cause the *Rover* to fly into space—away from this planet of everlasting perils.

Into Outer Space.

"ROCKS ahead!" sang out Barry excitedly. "What's that?" shouted Sir Bags, as he ran up. "Rocks?"

"Yes, sir—rocks!" went up a yell from several other juniors. "We're running straight on to them."

Sir Clarence Bagshott took one look, and then he leapt round.

"Easy, Professor—easy!" he roared. "We'll pile her up unless we're careful."

Most of the juniors were in the control-room now—staring through that great glass dome. Over two hours had passed, and the *Rover* had been trundling onwards all this time. Occasionally, great sea creatures would surge past, and there had been hundreds of smaller things seen. But nothing had attempted to attack the vessel yet. And hopes were beginning to rise.

The searchlights were all concentrated ahead, and

the murk of the sea was changed to a dull, greenish gloom. And now a great mass of rocks could be seen immediately ahead—rising up in jagged, fearsome tiers. They appeared suddenly, with practically no warning. The *Rover* was only brought to a standstill in the nick of time—just as she was about to crash head-on.

"Well, what are we going to do now?" asked Bags. "Do you know, Prof, I'm feeling terribly helpless these days. I'd much prefer a good old elephant hunt, in the wilds of Africa. Or, if it comes to that, I'd rather be dodging cannibals in P'apia, or some other outlandish place. Venus is all very well, but I'm out of my element here."

"If it is within my power, Clarence, we shall be back on earth before many days have elapsed," Professor Drewe said quietly. "It had been my hope that we should be able to explore many other sections of the Venusian globe. But, with all these boys aboard, we must not take any further deliberate risks. Our one aim now must be to get free—to get into Outer Space. Then—home!"

"Yes, if we can manage to locate the good old earth," said Bags. "But for all we know we might find ourselves on Mars."

"Do not let us meet trouble half-way," said the Professor. "I am confident that we shall be able to land on the earth quite safely, if only we can get free from this planet. My programme now is to retreat two or three hundred yards, and then rise. We will do so cautiously, in case the weed is still over us, on the ocean's surface."

A further period of anxiety followed. Slowly, the *Rover* raised herself from the ocean bed, and went

soaring upwards through the water. It was uncanny, the way this great vessel of metal could conquer water and air and Outer Space alike. But Professor Drewe's wonderful ether motors were responsible for it all. He had harnessed an energy that was practically unknown, even to himself. And he was thankful, indeed, that his marvellous motors were still in perfect condition. The *Rover* had been through all sorts of trials and troubles, but her internal mechanism was unimpaired.

"We're in the air!" yelled Freeman suddenly.

"Yes, yes!" shouted one of the other juniors. "Look! There's the sea down there—with bits of weed all over the place. We've left that mass of stuff behind, and we've got out of the sea, and we're in the air."

"But look—what's that?" muttered Robin Hardy, pointing. "There're lots of them—on deck! Can't you see?"

"Ugh! They look like great slugs!" said Willis, with a shudder.

His description was not far wrong. A species of enormous sea slug had gripped the *Rover*. There were hundreds of them—and they were swarming slimly over the decks—clinging tenaciously to the vessel, after she had left the water. For it was true enough that she was in the air now. She had risen—she had conquered these Venusian terrors.

"Well done, Professor—well done!" said Bags enthusiastically.

"Wait!" said Professor Drewe, his voice filled with anxiety. "We are not free yet, Clarence! These deadly slug things are holding us down. Instead of rising at our usual speed, we are merely struggling upwards. But, thank Heaven, we have got out of that sea!"

Strangely enough, the boys hardly gave a cheer; and conversation languished. They had been surfeited with thrills during these past hours, and they were hoarse from very anxiety and uncertainty. Even now, they were not absolutely free. And though they wanted to cheer, though they wanted to make a tremendous noise, they felt physically unable to do so. They could only remain at the windows, staring out, hardly hoping that they would ever see Mother Earth again.

Gradually those sea slugs fell off. As the air became more rarified, they lost their grip; they became senseless with the cold. And they fell off—one after another at first, and then in dozens. And as they did so the *Rover* became lighter, and increased her speed, and at last the final repulsive sea monster had gone, and the *Solar Rover* was soaring upwards

into Outer Space—away from Hudson Zeff and his strange Venusians—away from this planet of night horrors and hidden mysteries.

"Well, boys—you'd better all turn in," said Bags calmly.

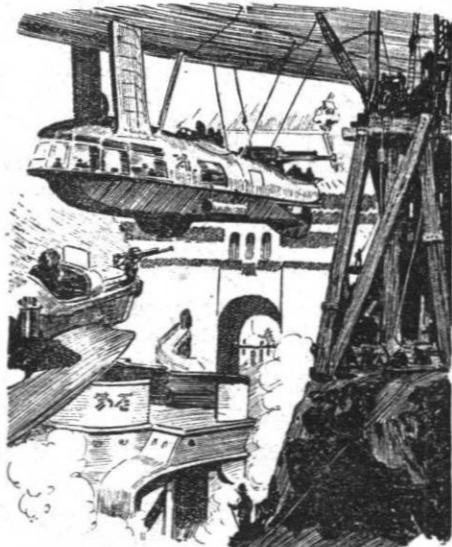
"We're free now—we're making for Outer Space! It's all over bar shouting, and now we shall have a nice little rest for several days, while we're locating the good old earth."

The Madman.

AND what of Count Alexis Popandos?

In the stress and trial of that grim night, nobody had given a thought to the Greek rascal who was

THE MYSTERY LAUNCHING OF MARVEL SHIPS OF DESTRUCTION ON GREAT BRITAIN.



There was Never Such a Yarn as This. Chaps. Depicting Graphically and Faithfully What the Great Air War of the Near Future Will Be Like. Packed With Thrills and Excitement Don't Miss the Breath-taking First Chapters Next Week.

A Striking Incident from the Mammoth Air Thrill Story

THE WAR ON WINGS.

imprisoned below, in one of the storerooms. But Popandos was there, nevertheless—a sullen, dangerous man.

No attempt had been made to bind him, or to chain him up. There had been no time—for everybody had thought that the last hour of existence had come. What did it matter about Popandos, anyhow? They had all been fighting for their lives—fighting against the horrors of the Venustian ocean.

Popandos had been thrust into one of the strongest store-rooms, far below the decks. There was no possibility of him escaping from there, for the store-room had a great metal floor, with bolts on the outer side, and with a great lock, too.

Popandos himself had known nothing of the great fight that had gone on. For hours he had remained caged in that prison—and although he had felt the lurchings and the heavings he had no means of



A MADMAN'S ACT OF DESTRUCTION.—In a veritable fury Count Popandos seized a length of chain. He whirled it round his head, and then with a maniacal shriek of defiance he hurled it downwards—into that whirling motor.

ablaze. There was a small trapdoor in the flooring—a metal square, with hinges.

Perhaps Popandos thought of escape for the moment; although he must have known that there could be no escape for him. He would never be given another chance; he would never be allowed to get free from this vessel now.

He struck another match, and after a good deal of effort he managed to pull that metal door upwards; and, immediately, he was aware of a curious droning hum, arising from below. Still another match flared up, and Popandos held it so that he could look straight downwards.

Machinery—whirling, humming, droning machinery! It seemed to the Count that he was looking upon some great electric motor. It wasn't an electric motor; it was more intricate—more complicated. In a flash he realised the truth. He was looking down upon the working parts of one of Professor Drewe's ether motors. This trapdoor was merely an inspection hole.

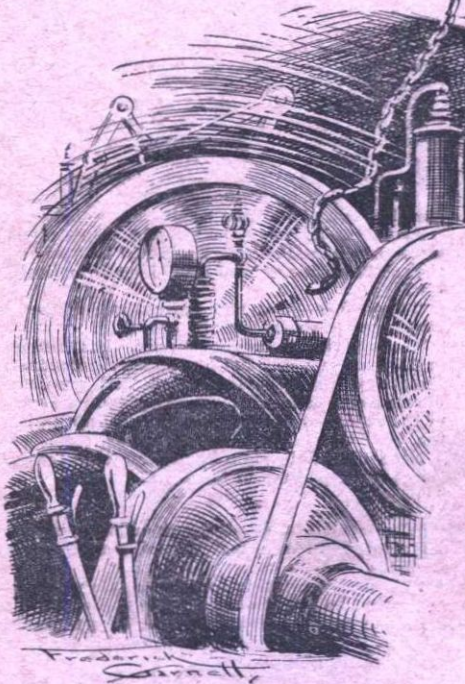
"Fools—fools!" screamed Popandos, with a sudden frenzy of crazy rage. "They put me in here—and they shall suffer!"

In that same maddened fury, he seized a length of chain that was lying loose in a corner of the store-room. He whirled it round his head, and then, with a maniacal shriek of defiance, he hurled it downwards—into that whirling motor.

There was a grinding, jarring noise, and the *Solar Rover* shook in every one of her plates.

Count Alexis Popandos, screaming with triumph, stood over that little trapdoor, his face transformed—his shoulders hunched. For he had become a maniac—and in his frenzy he had attempted to destroy the very mechanism that was carrying him to earth and safety.

The Count's Final Act of Madness! Read Next Week What Happens, Chums.



knowing what they meant. Now, after this passage of time, he found that the *Rover* was practically stationary. If he thought anything at all, he believed that the vessel had come to rest somewhere. That she had reached land, and was remaining still.

Actually, the *Rover* was now in Outer Space—hundreds and hundreds of miles above the surface of Venus.

Popandos at last shook off his lethargy and paced up and down his confined prison. Up and down—up and down! And every time he walked he subconsciously felt a slight movement in one portion of the metal flooring. Something jarred every time he walked over it. Not until a full half-hour had passed did he realise that something was loose there. In a dull abstracted kind of way he felt a curiosity. What was it in the floor, there?

He felt in his pockets and produced a box of matches. He struck one—and then his eyes became

THE ST. MATT'S RODEO—

(Continued from page 24.)

The captain of St. Matt's sped away, followed by his forwards. Rex Tackhard plunged to stop him. Ralstone swept by his gigantic opponent with an ease that elicited a yell of laughter from the onlookers. With a rueful grin on his face, Rex wheeled about in pursuit.

It looked as though Ralstone might get through on his own. But a powerful half-back succeeded in putting him out of his stride. Then Fred Strong found himself in possession again. With a quick glance to observe the position of his wings, Strong bore down upon the two hefty backs. He succeeded in dodging one. The other crashed into him in a terrific shoulder charge just as he swung the leather out to Mifford at right wing who was on-side.

Mifford steadied himself. Thud! The powerful Sixth Former made no mistake. With the speed of a cannon ball, the leather flashed by the rival custodian and struck the back of the net.

It was an early score and the schoolboys voiced their approbation in no uncertain manner.

From the line-up the visitors got down to real business. They swept through the St. Matt's defence by sheer force of weight, and commenced a bombardment of the home goal.

Philip Craig, in goal, saved time after time from every conceivable angle. At last Cyrus Kane relieved the pressure with a kick that sent the leather quarter-way up the field.

The battle waged on in ding-dong fashion. What St. Matt's lacked in weight they made up for in speed and agility. Play travelled from end to end without either side being able to obtain the advantage.

Phoop! went the whistle for half-time. St. Matt's were one goal up.

"Hello!" remarked Ralstone, when the teams lined up for the second half. "We're one man short. Anybody seen young Kane?"

The Canadian junior was nowhere to be found, despite the most diligent search. There remained nothing for it but that St. Matt's should continue the game with ten men.

They got down to it with no great hopes for success.

EVEN as Ralstone called Kane's name, the Canadian junior was thundering along the road toward Wrymang as fast as Rex Tackhard's powerful horse could carry him.

In the breast pocket of his jacket a tiny piece of paper seemed to burn. The message it contained danced before the lad's eyes. He repeated the few words to himself:

Your father decoyed away by the three-ten train.

As the horse's hoofs rattled on the uneven surface of the village high-street the shrill blast of an engine smote upon the rider's ears.

Kane's brain worked like lightning. He knew he could not arrive in time to stop the train. And to have a telephone message sent on to the next station might be of no avail. His father's captors, fearing such a move, would be sure to carry out their fell designs before the next halt.

The plucky boy gritted his teeth. "I must try and cut them off at the level crossing," he murmured.

The people scattered to right and left as he galloped through the village and out into the country beyond.

The road ran parallel with the railway line. A hundred yards ahead swayed and rattled the rear coach of the train.

The crossing lay barely a mile further on. What he really intended, Cyrus hardly knew; but he must reach the spot in advance of the train.

With agonised eyes he realised that he was gaining on his quarry at a very slow rate. He strove to urge his mount to greater efforts. The gallant beast responded nobly.

Presently the gates of the crossing hove into view. Just then the door of one of the compartments swung open and a figure emerged on to the footboard.

"Hold tight, Dad! I'm coming!" Cyrus roared at the top of his voice. It was almost as though the millionaire heard the warning. He looked straight at the rider, then commenced to move along the footboard.

The train rattled over the level crossing. Cyrus swung his horse in a wide detour and rode full at the gates. Like a bird the animal took the jump in its stride, swung round and galloped furiously alongside the swaying carriages.

Astonished faces appeared at the windows. But Cyrus saw them not. His gaze was riveted on a second figure that had emerged from the compartment his father had just left.

Crack! Crack! The fellow was deliberately firing at the clinging form of the rancher. Hiram Kane crouched low, the bullets singing above his head.

Again the miscreant loosed off. Cyrus urged his steed to one final effort. He leaned half-way out of the saddle with extended arm as he drew level with his father.

"Now, Dad—jump!" he roared, and gripped with iron knees as the millionaire obeyed.

There was a sickening wrench that seemed to pull Cyrus asunder. For a moment the dead weight threatened to upset horse, boy and man. Then Hiram Kane managed to obtain a grip on the pommel of the saddle, whence he drew himself up behind his son.

Next minute the train had disappeared from sight round a sharp curve in the track.

"It was all a dastardly plot on the part of my manager in Alberta," the millionaire explained later.

"He has been trying to ruin me in my absence in order that he might obtain possession of my ranch. To make assurances doubly sure, he arranged with two members of the Rodeo outfit to kill me on their arrival in England.

"Well, the scheme has failed," Kane concluded. "But I am still in debt for my life not only to Cyrus, but to his friends as well. Some day I will, with your headmaster's permission, ask you to pay me a long visit to Alberta."

Of course Cyrus's exploits made him the hero of the hour. One thing only perturbed him.

"Guess I'm no great shakes at footer, bo's," he acknowledged to the Mutineers. "Reckon you guys did well to lick the 'punchers without yours truly."

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