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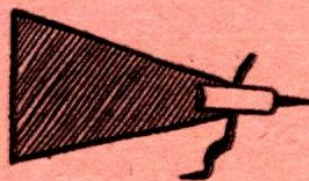
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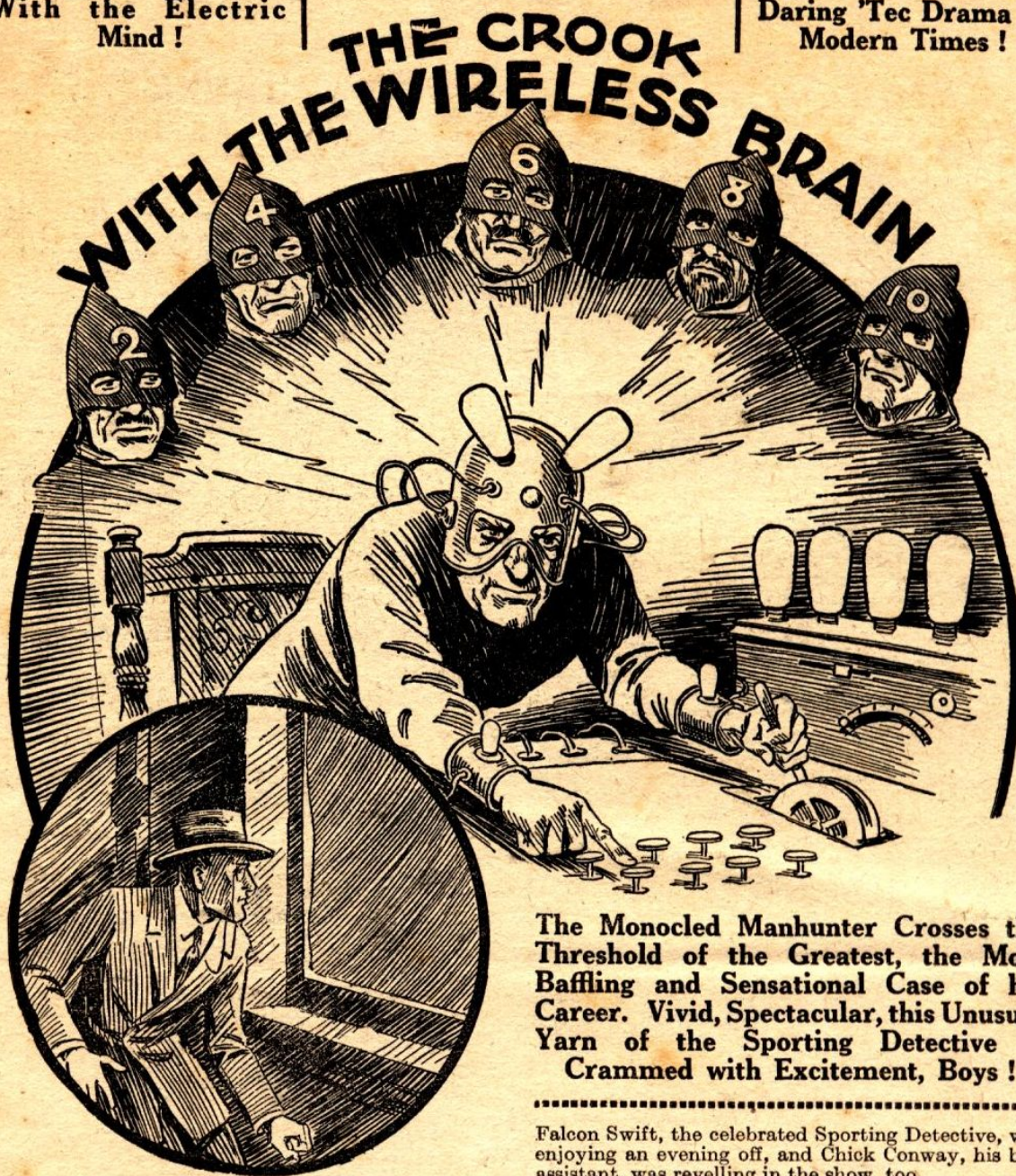
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Falcon Swift Fights the  
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With the Electric  
Mind!

OUR STAR-HIGH SLEUTH  
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Crook Control by  
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Daring 'Tec Drama of  
Modern Times!



The Monocled Manhunter Crosses the  
Threshold of the Greatest, the Most  
Baffling and Sensational Case of his  
Career. Vivid, Spectacular, this Unusual  
Yarn of the Sporting Detective is  
Crammed with Excitement, Boys!

**Messages From Nowhere.**

THE curtain went down in a riot of laughter at the conclusion of the second act in the Emperor Theatre; and the tall, slim man with the lean, scholarly face who sat in the third row of the stalls turned to the keen-eyed youngster who sat beside him.

"Enjoying it, laddie?" he asked.  
"You bet I am, Boss!" grinned the youngster.

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



A string quartet, half-concealed by festoons of imitation flowers, commenced operations after the short interval. The Monocled Manhunter was a great lover of music, and he lounged back in his comfortable chair, enjoying the dreamy waltz tune which the quartet played.

And then, suddenly, the spell was broken. Without reason, without any warning, Swift forgot the music and the dream-picture it had conjured up in his tired mind. The quartet was playing the same, the idle whispering chatter continued on all sides. But Swift was oblivious of all.

An odd, irresistible, fantastic impulse had seized him. An urge was upon him—an overwhelming urge to leave the theatre and to take the Continental boat-train at Charing Cross. There would be a man on that train—a small, dapper, elderly man with a slightly-grizzled moustache and neat *pince-nez*. Although Swift had no knowledge of any such person, he could see this man as clearly as though he had been given a detailed description.

The stranger would be carrying a locked attaché-case. Falcon Swift felt he must go to that train, and strike up an acquaintance with the dapper stranger. At the first opportunity, during the journey, he could easily sandbag him, seize the attaché-case, pass along the corridor, and hand the case to No. 5, who would be waiting in readiness.

That would be Swift's part of the job. Having received the case, No. 5 would continue his journey to Paris, go straight to the Astoria Hotel, where Room No. 203 would already be booked in his name, and await further orders.

"What's the matter, Boss?" Chick's voice, full of concern, broke in upon Falcon Swift's odd thoughts. The great detective shook himself, and he tried to cast those queer thoughts aside. But for once, in spite of his iron-control, the Sporting Detective betrayed his feelings.

"Oh, is that you, Chick?" he said abstractedly. "Don't bother me now, laddie. I'm thinking."

His voice was impatient. Chick was a nuisance. Again that impulse was upon him; it dinned and throbbed insistently through his brain. But for the fact that he heard nothing, somebody might have been talking to him, giving him orders by word of mouth. He saw the whole picture again, this time more clearly. The dapper man with the *pince-nez*, the attaché-case, the sandbag . . . No. 5 . . .

It was most disturbing. Then, as the music died down, the whole picture disappeared from Swift's brain.

"What was the matter with you in the theatre, Boss?" asked Chick, later, when they had reached Swift's chambers in Half Moon Street, and were sitting down to a cold supper. "You didn't seem to care twopence about the last act—and it was the funniest of all. I don't think you laughed once."

"Something happened to me, Chick," replied Swift slowly. "I don't think I'm criminally inclined, but what will you say if I tell you that I had a perfectly fiendish desire to murder somebody and rob him?"

"I should say 'Rats!' of course, Boss," said Chick earnestly, as he eyed the detective with some concern. "Don't you think you'd better take a month's holiday?"

Falcon Swift laughed. "Don't worry," he said, with a twinkle. "I'm not cracking up. If only I could think of some explanation, I shouldn't bother. But I'm puzzled—and I hate being puzzled. H'm! Infernally queer!"

He dismissed the subject, and Chick was relieved. He secretly concluded that his beloved Boss was merely suffering from a little brain fog.

But the next morning, after Chick had secured the

newspapers from Mrs. Malone, he went dashing into Falcon Swift's bedroom, wildly excited. Swift was just putting the finishing touches to his immaculate toilet. Clad in a morning suit of impeccable fit, he looked quite himself.

"Look at this, Boss!" gasped Chick breathlessly. "Don't you remember what you were telling me last night? A man was sandbagged on the Continental boat-train—brutally murdered—and he was robbed of thirty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds!"

Swift took the newspaper, and his lean, impassive face became more and more grim. Behind his monocle an almost incredulous light glowed. This thing was not merely startling—it was horrible.

Precisely as in Falcon Swift's fantastic "mind picture," the murder had actually happened! The same train! The victim was a small, dapper, middle-aged man, with *pince-nez*. The diamonds had been contained in a locked attaché-case. The murderer had completely vanished, and he had not left a single clue.

"What do you make of it, Boss?" asked Chick, almost frightened.

"I don't know," replied Falcon Swift. "But there's more in this than meets the eye, Chick. There is some logical explanation of this apparently impossible situation."

Swift decided to act. At all events, he would be able to test that astounding "mind picture." He rang up Scotland Yard, and got in touch with Detective Superintendent White.

"About this boat-train murder," said Falcon Swift. "Have you made an arrest yet?"

"No; and not likely to," came the superintendent's voice. "It looks like a crime without a clue, Swift."

"You'll find the murderer's accomplice, with the stolen jewels, at the Astoria Hotel, in Paris," said Swift crisply. "He was on that train, and he received the loot from the assassin. You will find him in Room No. 203 of the Astoria."

"But how do you know this?" asked the astounded Yard man.

"Never mind," replied Falcon Swift. "I am giving you the information, and it is entirely up to you whether you act upon it or not."

An hour later the superintendent, excited and triumphant, rang up.

"Thanks to you, Swift, we got the fellow," he said. "Found him in Room No. 203, as you said, with the swag. But he won't tell who his confederate is. For the love of Mike, Swift, how did you know?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you," replied Falcon Swift dryly.

"We're after the murderer now," continued the Yard man. "This chap won't give us any information, so perhaps you'll lend a hand? You're such a magician—"

"No, I'm afraid I cannot give you any further help," interrupted Swift. "But I believe that the whole job is the work of a big gang."

Chick Conway looked at his Boss in a scared manner when he was told.

"But it's uncanny!" he said. "You knew all about it last night, Boss—hours before it happened! You even knew that the accomplice would go to Room No. 203 in that Paris hotel!"

"And he was found there," said Falcon Swift grimly. "An astounding affair, laddie. By what mysterious power did that knowledge enter my brain?"

However, that master brain was not to be baffled. There was an explanation somewhere.

And, convinced though the Sporting Tec was that the Emperor Theatre itself had nothing to do with the mystery, he went again that night. It was there, sitting in the stalls, that the "urge" had



gripped him. Like an inspiration, he had remembered glancing at his watch at the commencement of the second interval. The time had been four minutes to ten.

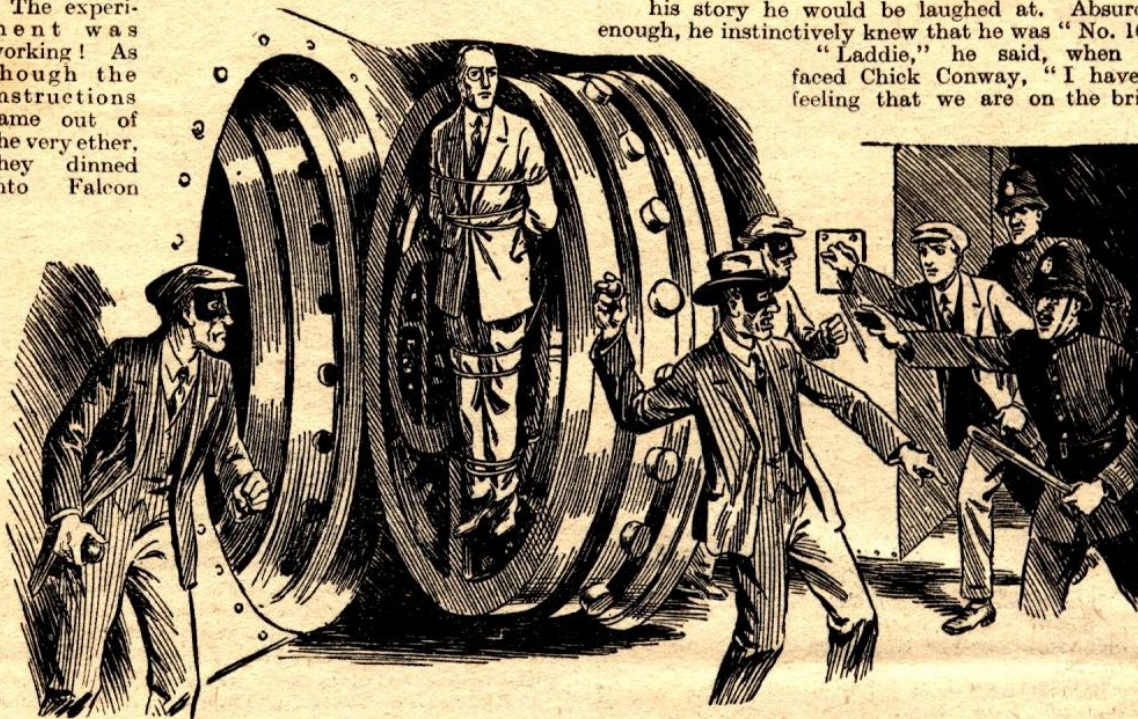
So it was practically a cast-iron certainty that those grim thoughts had entered his brain at about ten o'clock. Lacking any other line of investigation, he sat through that play again.

When the second interval came, and he saw that the time was three minutes to ten, he was aware of a slight thrill. And it took a good deal to disturb Falcon Swift's equanimity.

The quartet played the same dreamy waltz, and Swift's mind was a blank. He deliberately made it so. He glanced at his watch again. Four seconds to the hour. Would it prove to be of any significance?

Then he almost jumped in his seat, even his iron self-control jolted. For suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, he found himself thinking of the United Kingdom Bank, in Queen Victoria Street. He would go there at precisely one a.m.: he would meet Numbers 4, 6 and 12.

The experiment was working! As though the instructions came out of the very ether, they dinned into Falcon



**TORTURED TO TELL.**—Swift felt the safe door slowly swinging to. In a moment his head would be torn from his body. Then a welcome sound struck on his ears. There was the smash of shots, and Chick's voice.

Swift's brain. It was uncanny—devastating. He left his seat, fighting vainly against those thoughts which throbbled through his head. He could not dismiss them. Yet he was determined to amplify his experiment.

He found it difficult to concentrate upon his movements, for he was thinking of that other matter—the United Kingdom Bank. Having met Numbers 4, 6 and 12, he would enter by means of a grating which would be conveniently unfastened. He would enter before the others, he would creep forward and, at an angle of a dim passage, he would wait.

At one-fifteen the night watchman would come round, and Swift would have no difficulty in thrusting a silenced automatic into the man's back and ruthlessly shooting him.

These thoughts burned themselves into Swift's brain; but they were becoming less insistent. He

changed his direction, walking past the theatre again, and he was startled to find that the thoughts seared more deeply.

It was all so vivid that he could almost see it. The murder of the night watchman—and he, Swift, the-murderer!

Then the great vault. He even became aware of the combination of the massive strong-room. Within the strong-room he would find a great amount of bullion. Numbers 2, 7 and 16 would have a lorry waiting.

Then it seemed to Falcon Swift that the burning power of his thoughts was suddenly cut off. Yet he remembered everything. It was as though some mysterious Force had given him his instructions from the very ether itself.

The ether! An idea, staggering in its immensity, began to take shape in the Monocled Manhunter's master-brain.

### The Fight in the Vault.

**R**ETURNING to Half Moon Street, Falcon Swift pondered. If he went to Scotland Yard with his story he would be laughed at. Absurdly enough, he instinctively knew that he was "No. 10."

"Laddie," he said, when he faced Chick Conway, "I have a feeling that we are on the brink

of the greatest case of our careers. There is something stupendous in this—something which far exceeds our wildest imaginings."

"What do you mean, Boss?" asked Chick, startled.

"I don't quite know myself," replied Swift. "But I feel that there is a Master Mind at work—an evil, sinister criminal who is greater than any of his predecessors. A veritable brain machine."

He told Chick of his queer experiment, and of its result. "The Emperor Theatre is somehow involved," said the Monocled Manhunter. "At least, the secret lies in the neighbourhood of that theatre. But we cannot go into that now. There is work for us to-night, laddie—perhaps the grimmest work we have ever undertaken."

"I'm groping, Boss," said Chick, helplessly. "I can only think that there are two master minds—



and the second one is yours! It's a—a sort of mind-reading. Oh, I don't know how to express it."

"That is because you are groping in the dark, laddie," said Swift, nodding. "I am groping, too—but I intend to devote all my energies to this staggering problem."

At midnight he and Chick left their chambers. By twelve-thirty they were in a small street that ran behind the United Kingdom Bank.

"Amazing!" muttered Falcon Swift, inwardly startled. He had never been in this street before; yet he knew exactly where he would find that grating! There it was, although he had not even known of its existence. Some mysterious Force had told him.

"We will wait here, laddie," he muttered, and he and Chick retreated into a black, deserted alley-way.

At one o'clock, to the minute, a well-dressed man walked briskly down the street; he reached the grating, glanced quickly up and down, and then vanished.

"Number 10!" breathed Falcon Swift. He knew that, without knowing why he knew. Yet, at the same time, he felt that he, himself, was No. 10!

Two other men came into that road, and Swift saw that a police constable was pacing heavily along in full sight. In front of his very eyes, the two newcomers vanished at that grating. And then the policeman himself followed their example.

"Numbers 4, 6 and 12," breathed Swift. "That policeman was a fake. Hurry to the nearest telephone box and get in touch with Superintendent White. Have the Flying Squad rush here immediately."

As soon as Chick had gone, Falcon Swift acted. He remembered that "impulse" he had had at ten o'clock. The murder of the night watchman! Swift knew—now—that No. 10 was the man who was to commit that crime. It was for Swift to prevent it.

He reached the grating and lowered himself into the dark brick passage beyond. Silent as a shadow, his fingers gripping his automatic, he moved forward. It was rather an uncanny feeling, this—knowing precisely where he was going, and which way to turn. He even knew the exact corner where the night watchman would appear at one-fifteen.

And it was one-fourteen already! Falcon Swift moved faster. He was in a labyrinth of stone and steel corridors. Electric lights were glowing here and there, for it was the watchman's duty to patrol these passages between the vaults at certain fixed hours throughout the night.

Swift peered cautiously round a stone angle, and he found himself wondering again. Why was it that none of the burglar alarms had sounded? It was clear to him—although it might not have been clear to the police later—that the crooks were being assisted from within.

In the distance, he heard slow, regular footsteps. The night-watchman was approaching! And, dimly visible in one of the black, shadowed corners, a figure lurked.

Number 10! There he waited, and it would be supremely easy for him to step out at the crucial moment and shoot that unfortunate man in the back—dropping him dead in his tracks before he could utter a sound.

Swift gave the scoundrel no chance. Like a panther, he leapt forward, the man uttered a startled gasp, and the next second they were grappling. Not only was Falcon Swift one of the finest athletes in the country, but his knowledge of ju-jitsu was extensive. With a gasp of agony, the man went clean over Swift's shoulders, to thud violently upon the hard floor. Swift straddled him, holding him face downwards. The man, badly frightened, felt that he was gripped by bonds of steel.

"It's all right, my friend," said the detective coolly, as he glanced up at the amazed night-watchman. "This man was about to shoot you in the back, and I thought it advisable to butt in."

"Who are you?" gasped the watchman, running forward, and switching on a powerful flash-lamp. "Blimey! You're Mr. Swift, ain't you, sir? Mr. Falcon Swift?"

"Yes," replied the Monocled Manhunter. "Stand by while I make this fellow helpless. Got a strap? Or some rope? No, my beauty, you won't be able to get away."

The prisoner was attempting to struggle, and he yelped with agony as Falcon Swift jerked his arm.

"Number 1 will get you for this!" panted the fellow.

"I shall be most interested to make the gentleman's acquaintance—Number 10!" said Swift.

The night-watchman was bending down, helping to strap the prisoner. Luckily, he stooped lower at that second, and something thudded wickedly into the stonework, having missed the watchman by a fraction of an inch.

Swift leapt to his feet. But the next second there was a rush, and three or four men leapt to the attack.

### The Door of Death!

FALCON SWIFT fought grimly; but the odds were against him. Two men went flying, dazed and dizzy by the force of Swift's blows. But the others closed in, and one of them threw himself at the detective's legs, and Swift overbalanced. A moment later his enemies were swarming over him. The watchman was knocked out early in the fight.

"I'll settle the cur!" snarled No. 10, digging the muzzle of his automatic into Swift's chest.

"No, no!" interrupted one of the others. "Not yet, you fool! We want to question him—and shooting like that is too good for the skunk! He's Falcon Swift, ain't he?"

The detective was bound hand and foot, and then carried bodily up the passage until his captors arrived at a great steel vault. They carried him past a grille, and here, where the electric lights were glowing powerfully, they dumped their prisoner on the floor. In one of those steel walls there was the immense circular door of the bank's greatest strong-room.

"It was Swift who gave the information about No. 5," said one of the men harshly. "Now we find him here—ready to mess up this job before we can get started on it! Out with it, Swift! How did you know? Where did you get your information from?"

"I am sorry, gentlemen, but that's a little secret of my own," replied Swift coolly. "Quite an organisation, this of yours. You go by numbers, eh? Well, it's not a bad idea. You'll all go by numbers sooner or later, so you might as well get accustomed to the feeling in advance."

"Trying to be funny, eh?" grated No. 10. "I'll tell you what we'll do with him! Lend a hand here! We'll make him speak!"

Swift was lifted, and soon he was held upright whilst the great circular door of the strong-room was slowly opened, to the accompaniment of an electrical hum. The inner side of it was festooned with rods and bars and all sorts of gadgets, gleaming and shimmering in the electric light.

Swift was lifted and secured to the inside of the door—jammed and tied to the rods and bars. Only his head projected beyond the edge.

"Now you'll talk, Mr. Falcon Swift!" panted No. 10. "You know what we're going to do, don't you? This door closes slowly—by electricity! It'll take about a minute to close—and that'll give you a minute to make up your mind. If you won't speak



by the end of that time—I reckon you can guess the rest, eh? It'll make a nasty mess, won't it?"

Falcon Swift did not move a hair. But he knew that he was in a tight corner. If that great door did, indeed, close with him upon it, his head would be crushed to pulp—it would be torn from his very body. For there could be no stopping that massive steel door.

The Door of Death was closing! With Swift bound to its inner side, and accompanied by an electrical hum, those tons of steel were moving!

Lord Sinistone was a striking figure. Tall, straight, with a clean-shaven face of relentless purpose—the face of a man who had risen to the heights through sheer force of character and personality.

"My secretary has informed me of your splendid service to the Bank, Mr. Swift," said Lord Sinistone warmly, as he clasped the Sporting Detective's hand. "It was you who gave the alarm, I understand? I shall see that you are fittingly rewarded."

His manner was warm, but there was something in his tone—some half-hidden quality—which had



**BOGUS BLINDNESS.**—In the foggy murk Chick paused before the blind beggar, feeling in his pocket. Then Swift's fist thudded into the man's chest. As he crashed to the ground unconscious an automatic dropped from up his sleeve.

"Well?" rapped out No. 10. "Time's getting short!"

There was a sudden rush, and the crooks, with startled snarls, spun round. Automatics spat fire and lead. In a moment, there was confusion, and a hoarse shout escaped Chick Conway, who was the foremost of the newcomers.

"Boss!" he gasped, leaping for the switch. The strong-room door stopped in the nick of time. Swift had even closed his eyes, and he felt the icy cold steel gripping his neck. One split second longer, and . . .

Confusion had now become pandemonium. The vault was reeking with thick, noisome fumes. No. 10 and his companions, after that first burst of gunfire, had flung tiny but efficient smoke bombs.

"They all got away, worse luck!" said Detective Superintendent White, after Swift had been released and the worst of the fog had cleared. "Thanks to you, though, Mr. Swift, we spoilt their game. How did you happen to know that there was anything going on here to-night?"

"One day, White, I may be able to tell you," replied Falcon Swift. "But at the moment I can't."

"Something funny about this job," went on the Yard man. "How did the crooks get in so easily? Who gave them the combination of the strong-room? There was no dynamite used—no force at all. The blighters seemed to have all the information they needed at their finger-tips."

Soon afterwards the President of the Bank arrived, having been hastily summoned by the police. Falcon Swift recognised him at once, for he had last seen this great man in the stalls of the Emperor Theatre.

an almost sinister ring. No ordinary man would have detected it; but Falcon Swift instinctively felt that he was in the presence of an enemy. For some reason, Lord Sinistone was not actually grateful to the detective.

"But how did you know?" he went on, fixing Swift with his intense eyes.

Swift laughed. "As a matter of fact, it was pure chance," he replied smoothly. "I happened to be strolling down one of the back streets—prowling through the lesser byways of London by night is one of my hobbies—and I saw three or four men acting suspiciously."

### Swift Tests a Theory.

**FALCON SWIFT'S** occupation next morning was a curious one. He went flat hunting. It was a murky, misty day, with a promise of fog later.

Comparatively near the Emperor Theatre stood a large block of luxury flats, and Swift had no difficulty in renting one of these, ready furnished.

It was a fourth-floor flat, and, having locked himself in, he took a careful survey. Standing at one of the rear windows, he could dimly see the enclosed gardens of the flats stretching for some little way in the murk. On one side was another angle of the flats, and on the other the ugly rear view of the Emperor Theatre. Straight ahead, across a high wall, were the private gardens of a great West End mansion.

"Yes, this will do," muttered Swift. He sat down and waited. And it was a strange vigil. For Falcon



Swift was waiting for another of those extraordinary "mind pictures." The situation was ideal, for he was in the near vicinity of the Emperor Theatre, and yet he was in absolute privacy.

He sat in that furnished flat with the patience of a Red Indian. The thought of food never occurred to him. But he smoked incessantly.

As evening drew on, and fog began to creep over the metropolis, Swift became restless. His brain was as active as ever, and he had a premonition that success would crown his efforts that night.

As ten o'clock crept near he prepared for action. No longer was he content to wait. A definite suspicion was in his mind, and he was determined to carry his test a step further.

The fog was now dense. At nine-forty-five, Swift threw a half-finished cigarette into the fireplace, felt for his automatic, and then he slipped quietly out of one of the rear windows. He found himself on the iron fire-escape which extended from ground to roof.

Like a ghost of the fog, he crept down, making no noise, passing lighted window after lighted window. At last he reached the ground, and with the skill and silence of a black-tracker, he crossed the enclosure, reaching the dividing wall, and leapt up. A minute later he was in the private grounds of the big mansion.

And now Falcon Swift was filled with a burning intensity. The conviction that he was about to make a great discovery was stronger than ever.

During the day he had done something besides wait. Equipped with a powerful telescope and binoculars, he had concentrated his attention upon all the visible windows of the mansion. And on at least three occasions he had caught a glimpse of a tall, imposing figure flitting behind the great bay window of a room on the second floor. And Swift had not failed to notice the long wireless aerial overhead, with the leads running directly into this particular room. Neither had he neglected to observe that the telephone wires also led into this room.

A library, perhaps, or a study.

His movements, now, were deliberate. Glancing up through the fog, he saw that that second-floor window was softly illuminated. The blinds were drawn, and the windows themselves were closed.

Approaching the building, Swift found foothold and handgrip in the ornamental stonework, and in the ancient ivy which grew on the wall. Foot by foot he mounted.

At last he reached the wide ledge, and, clinging there, practically hidden by the swirling fog, he saw to his satisfaction that there was a tiny open chink at the bottom of the blind.

He peered into the lighted room—and his heart missed a beat.

### The Brain Machine!

FALCON SWIFT was looking into a beautifully appointed library, with softly shaded lights round the walls, which were lined with great bookcases. In the centre of the room stood a flat-topped mahogany desk, and seated at this, at such an angle that Swift could see it quite clearly, was a Thing. In that first glance, it was difficult to believe that the figure could be that of a human being.

But in that first fractional glance Falcon Swift knew that he had proved his theory!

The Thing at the desk was shaped like a man, in so far as he had legs and arms and hands. The head was grotesque; it was almost completely encased in a weird-looking, shiny metal helmet. Great glowing radio transmitter valves projected outwards from the front, giving a hideous suggestion of horns. Metal bands were clasped round the figure's

wrists, too, and in each metal band there was another glowing valve, but smaller. Thick wires ran from the headgear and the wristbands to the most elaborate radio apparatus Falcon Swift had ever seen.

This latter was a part and parcel of the great desk; a bewildering arrangement of dials and knobs and switches; and there were two rows of softly-glowing valves.

The Brain Machine! In that flash, Swift knew that his earlier fantastic idea was amazingly near the truth. The great detective throbbed with eagerness as he watched through that chink beneath the lowered blind.

A clock with a luminous dial showed that the hour was exactly ten. Falcon Swift could see gleaming, burning eyes behind the helmet, and the mystery figure's hands reached forward and delicately operated two great tuning-knobs.

Ten o'clock, then, was the definite pre-arranged hour for these manifestations of modern necromancy!

Into Falcon Swift's brain came a vague impression. For no apparent reason, he found himself thinking of Half Moon Street—of his own chambers, of Chick, and of himself. He seemed to suddenly possess an irresistible impulse to go at once. Yet it was all flimsy and uncertain; and it was strange that these thoughts should come into his head when he had so much else to think about.

The dials of the great radio set were slightly altered—and Falcon Swift nearly lost his grip on the stonework. For, with devastating unexpectedness, his brain commenced to throb as though he had been suddenly stricken by some dread malady. Next moment, the throbbing ceased, only to come again, then to go—for all the world like the oscillation of a wireless set when a station is being tuned in.

The truth came to Falcon Swift like a thunderbolt; for, a moment later, his brain was as clear as crystal.

"Number 10 . . . Number 10 . . . Number 10 . . . Number 10 . . ." With a maddening reiteration, he felt it. He heard nothing, but, right within his head, he felt that he was Number 10. And he found himself thinking of Half Moon Street again—this time with a tremendous intensity. He would go to Half Moon Street, where Numbers 2, 4 and 6, were already hastening. He would lie in wait in the fog, and when Falcon Swift returned he would approach in the murk, and shoot the Monocled Manhunter point-blank!

Swift was bewildered. What madness was this? He was telling himself that he would go to his own chambers, lie in wait for himself, and murder himself! And if Chick Conway were there, he would murder Chick, too!

Then he saw the dials being shifted again, and the fierce intensity of his thoughts relaxed. He was free to think clearly again—and he knew that he was once more the master of his own brain. During those few intense seconds, however, his brain had been claimed by another.

And the whole amazing mystery became clear. That figure within the room was the Brain Machine—a human being, sure enough; but a man who, by the application of wireless, could broadcast his thoughts to others!

And it so happened that Falcon Swift's brain was on the identical "wave-length" of Number 10! And Falcon Swift, crouching only just outside the window, picked up the signals with their full devastating force.

Never, in the whole of Falcon Swift's career, had he encountered such an amazing situation. For he was "listening-in" with his brain, as it were, to this King of Crooks sending forth his instructions for murder! And the victims were to be Falcon Swift and Chick Conway!



When the Brain Machine switched off and the valves lost their glow, he removed that awesome headgear. Falcon Swift did not turn a hair when he knew that the man beneath was Lord Sinistone, the millionaire banker and financier! For Swift had expected it—had practically known it.

Swift had remembered, too, that Lord Sinistone had been in the Emperor Theatre on that first night—but a few minutes before ten, when the interval had started, he had strolled out. He recalled the fact that Lord Sinistone had not returned until the last act had been going for some minutes.

Also, he alone would have been able to furnish all the help the bank raiders had needed. He would



**THE ELECTROCUTED EXECUTIONERS.**—The great executioner's axe swung high, and Swift steeled himself to meet his horrible fate. Suddenly blue flames flickered around the blade, and Number 6 fell back, with his companions, as though electrocuted.

know, too, the movements of diamond messengers, and should a diamond messenger be murdered and robbed, how could anyone suspect Lord Sinistone—who, at the very time of the robbery, would be quietly at home in his own library?

### The King of Crooks.

**FALCON SWIFT** lost no time. With that agility for which he was famous, he descended to the ground. Like a swirling part of the fog itself, he crossed the ground, climbed the wall and reached the flats.

A minute later, he was hurrying towards Half Moon Street. There were taxis available, but they

were merely crawling in the murk. It was quicker for Swift to go on foot.

He approached by way of South Audley Street and Curzon Street. It was more direct—and quieter than entering from the Piccadilly end.

He had pulled his hat well down over his eyes, he had hunched his shoulders, and turned up his coat collar. He slouched as he walked, and it would have been difficult, indeed, to recognise in this shambling figure the immaculate sleuth of the monocle.

Within a few yards of his own chambers, a slim, boyish figure appeared for a moment in the lighted doorway. Chick Conway!

"Phew!" Swift heard Chick mutter. "Thicker than ever!" The lad moved away down the pavement, and at the same moment a man materialised out of the fog. He came along slowly, near the edge of the pavement, tapping his stick on the kerbstone as he came. A blind beggar. Chick Conway paused, feeling in his trousers pocket.

And in the same instant Falcon Swift leapt. This was no time for taking chances.

*Crash!* Swift's fist thudded into the man's chest, and the next moment he had fallen unconscious in the mud of the road. An automatic pistol, fitted with a silencer, dropped out of the fellow's sleeve.

"I thought so!" muttered the detective curtly.

"Boss!" gurgled Chick.

"Come, laddie!" said Falcon Swift, leaping to his feet and seizing Chick's arm. They ran hard. Five minutes later, the great detective was at the wheel of his Hispano Suiza. The long, graceful car was thrusting its silver snout into the fog, its engine purring a song of power.

"Where are we going, Boss?" panted Chick, bewildered by the swiftness of this move.

"You and I are disappearing, Chick—and we are going away so that we may train ourselves," said Falcon Swift. And as they drove through the fog, Falcon Swift told the amazed Chick everything. He went on: "At present I can only pick up the wavelength of Number 10—and even then only at close quarters. But the Brain Machine's assistants are capable of picking up those signals, perhaps hundreds of miles distant. They are trained. So we shall go into training, too; and when the next round begins, laddie, we will be ready!"

### The Invisible Barrage!

**F**OR two weeks Falcon Swift and Chick Conway vanished from London. In a quiet retreat, where they were unknown, they conducted their daring experiments. Literally, they electrified themselves; day by day they became more and more immune.

Meanwhile, Lord Sinistone, Number 1, his sense of security shattered by his knowledge of Falcon Swift's activities, was preparing for his greatest and last *coup*. On a certain foggy evening—just such an evening as that on which Swift had made his startling discovery—the first blow fell.

The Brain Machine's men were ready—ten of them. Numbers 2 to 12, with Number 5 missing. In his wonder-study, Number 1 sat, the grotesque apparatus fastened about his head and person. He turned switches, he fingered the dials. Out into the ether went the Orders for the Night. First Number 2, then Number 3 . . .

At last, Number 10. And miles away Falcon Swift found unbelievable ideas coming into his head. He did not doubt their origin, for they throbbed through his brain like the beating of hammers.



"We've got them, Chick!" murmured Swift tensely.

Chick was conscious of vague, drifting ideas, but no more. He thought he mentally saw the Tower of London, but it was all blurred. His own training was not yet completed. But Falcon Swift, who had started with a great advantage, saw clearly into this new "mind-picture."

Midnight! The Tower of London—an electrical barrage, preventing all interference—he was to enter with the others, wearing the black robes—the Wakefield Tower—the Crown Jewels—Number 10 himself was to bring them to a motor-car which would be waiting beyond London's outskirts, at a fixed spot on the Folkestone road.

"What's the game, Boss?" asked Chick breathlessly, when he saw Falcon Swift's expression relax. "I didn't get it like you did! My brain's missing on all its six cylinders!"

"Our mutual friend, Lord Sinistone, is making a bid to steal the Crown Jewels at midnight," said Falcon Swift grimly. "I shall go alone, Chick. It would be useless to call in Scotland Yard. The Army itself could do nothing against this monster and his electrical devices."

"But you're electrified!" panted Chick. "You mean that you can get through?"

"I don't know, laddie—but I shall try," came Falcon Swift's cool reply, as he gently polished his monocle. "The police and the Army are not trained for this devil's work—and I am."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was as midnight was booming out that the thing happened. The fog-enshrouded Tower of London, quiet for the night, experienced a shock as though lightning had struck it. There was no sound—no flash. Nothing. But every living person within the Tower was struck unconscious! From the Lieutenant down to the smallest bugler, all were semi-electrocuted. And while that invisible discharge was maintained, so would they lie unconscious.

But the Brain Machine's men walked through it unharmed—for they were inured to its effects. The Tower of London and the Crown Jewels were at the mercy of the Brain Machine and his super-crooks!

### The Flash of Death!

FALCON SWIFT moved like a ghost through the swirling mist which came rolling from the river.

Even Chick Conway would not have recognised him. For he was wearing grotesque black robes—exactly similar to the robes worn by the members of the gang.

Suddenly he checked in his stride. He was near the Tower—near an entrance which was normally guarded by armed sentries. He had walked into the invisible barrage, and he felt every nerve and tissue of his being tingling. But that was all. He was as much master of himself as ever; his brain, indeed, was sharpened by that electrical tonic.

He set his teeth grimly and, single-handed, went into the battle.

He knew his way perfectly. Skirting the Tower Green, he passed the King's House and at length came to the Wakefield Tower. The home of the Crown Jewels!

He entered, and as he crept nearer to the fateful spot he beheld the black-robed figures working feverishly. By the light of powerful electric torches they were smashing down the protection which guarded the priceless jewels. The normal safeguards had been rendered immune by the Brain Machine's deadly beam-barrage. It only remained for the crooks to smash their way through the metal and glass by brute force. And with no fear of interruption this was a simple task, for the bars which guard the

Crown Jewels and Regalia are not of any great strength.

"Hands up!" The command rang out like the crack of a pistol. The crooks, spinning amazedly round, found Falcon Swift facing them, and in his grip was an automatic pistol! He had shed his black robes, and stood there immaculate. His monocle gleamed in his eye, and on his face there was a smile.

"Swift!" snarled Number 10. "But—but how—"

"Why ask questions?" interrupted Falcon Swift smoothly. "Keep your hands well above your heads, and march in front of me. The first man who attempts trickery will be shot down!"

One by one the defeated crooks took out their weapons and dropped them. It maddened them to realise that they were at the mercy of one man. Falcon Swift, alone, was contemptuous of the Brain Machine's mighty organisation of machines and men! But those crooks were fond of living, and they obeyed.

*Crack!* It was the unexpected which happened. One of those automatic pistols, striking the floor, accidentally discharged. The bullet ripped through Falcon Swift's sock, inflicting an ugly graze; and momentarily he staggered as the burning pain of the hot sear unbalanced him.

In a flash the crooks leapt. Until that second Swift had been master of the situation. Twenty seconds later he was held, a helpless prisoner, with death staring him in the face.

"By thunder! We'll execute him in a way that's fitting to these surroundings," snarled Number 10. "To the block with him!"

The other crooks were startled.

"Don't waste time!" went on Number 10. "Number 1 will pay us highly for this! You'll be the executioner, Number 6! Hurry! Mr. Falcon Swift," he added, turning to the detective, "you had better say your last prayers! Will you go to the block blindfolded and bound, or as you are?"

"If I am to die here, I will die as others have died," replied Falcon Swift quietly. "You have the advantage. Bind me if you wish."

He was dragged to the block—as fearless and calm in the face of death as any of his famous predecessors. His only regret was that he should have failed by the merest mischance. Yet it was a consolation. He had not blundered.

"Down!" commanded Number 6. Dressed as the dread executioner, he was an imposing figure. All round stood the others, in their black robes. Falcon Swift knelt, and the great axe swept upwards in the grip of the executioner.

\* \* \* \* \*

CHICK CONWAY quivered from head to foot. Forbidden by Falcon Swift to approach the

Tower of London, the boy detective had conceived a daring idea of his own. He had gone westwards—to Lord Sinistone's mansion. He had remembered his Boss's story, and some irresistible attraction lured him to the Brain Machine's den.


He was crouching on the window-sill, peering into that room of mystery. He gripped an iron bar he had found on his way across the foggy grounds. Little had he realised that that iron bar, by a miracle of modern science, was to save the life of his beloved Boss!

As he reached the window-sill, he saw the awful Figure within. And Lord Sinistone was ready—he was on his guard. With a snap the blind shot up, and a gun gleamed in the Brain Machine's hand. Chick Conway was looking at death. Without hesitation, he hurled his iron bar through the glass—straight at the Brain Machine!

The result was staggering.



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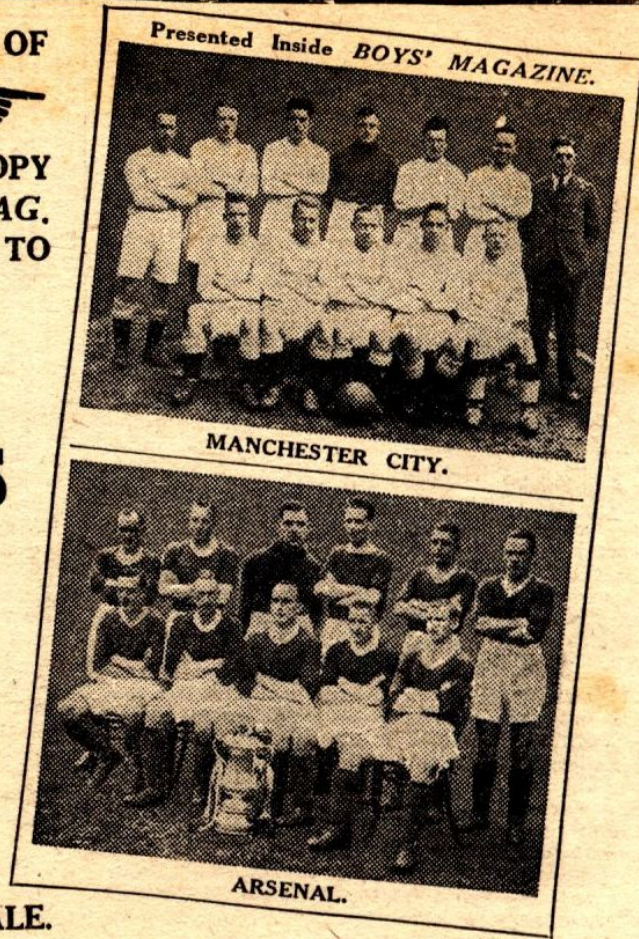
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### MONSTER NEW FOOTBALL TALE.



There was a rippling, blinding flash of blue electricity. A flood of it seemed to envelop Chick himself, for it poured outwards through the window and the walls in waves. Chick fell, stunned and paralysed, but by a miracle he remained on the broad window-sill.

He did not know what had happened—but his iron bar, crashing on to those instruments, had caused a contact between the brain-radio apparatus and that other electrical device which sent out the invisible barrage. There was an immediate short circuit—an appalling outburst of death-dealing electricity. Chick would have been killed on the spot if he had stood in its direct path.

And in the Tower of London the effect was just as deadly. For as the Brain Machine had been struck dead by that flash, so the death shock had been radiated in a millionth of a second to all those men whose brains were attuned to Lord Sinistone's.

As the axe was about to descend upon Falcon Swift's neck, the shock came. Blue flames flickered across that deadly blade, and the executioner fell back with his companions—struck as though by lightning.

\* \* \* \* \*

"THE most brilliant capture of your career, Mr. Swift!" said the Chief Commissioner of Scotland Yard, later. "You've saved the Crown Jewels, and you have rid the world of the most

dangerous criminal that ever lived! But how did you escape death yourself?"

"I took the precaution of donning a close-fitting rubber suit beneath my ordinary attire," replied Falcon Swift, as he leisurely polished his monocle. "And although my brain was attuned, just the same as the others, that protection of rubber was just sufficient to save my life. I was knocked out for half-an-hour—and I don't mind telling you that when I awoke I had a shock, for in that fateful second I believed that my head had been chopped off."

The Chief Commissioner chuckled. "Your head's too valuable to be chopped off, Mr. Swift," he replied dryly. "Well, Lord Sinistone is dead—thanks entirely to you—and his attempt to become the Crook Dictator of the World is dead with him."

"You are wrong in one particular," replied Falcon Swift, as he laid an affectionate hand on his young assistant's shoulder. "It was not entirely due to me. Chick, here, played the most important part of all, for it was his presence of mind which caused the fatal blow to be struck—and which saved me from going down in history as one of the beheaded martyrs of the Tower!"

A Falcon Swift Footer Serial starts next week, chaps, and it's the greatest thing that's ever been printed. Thrills and excitement o'ram every line, especially when Swift himself joins a famous league team and becomes "The Shooting Sleuth!"



# FREE GIFTS GALORE FOR YOU, CHAPS!



Your  
Editor's  
Grand News!

Dazzling Sepia TWO-TEAM FOOTBALL PLATES and a Topping PATENT TARGET to be GIVEN FREE! And Don't Miss Next Week's White-Hot Wonder Programme of Terrific New Yarns!

## FLASHING FALCON SWIFT SERIAL BEGINS NEXT WEEK!

**M**Y DEAR CHUMS,  
With the Metal Balancing Clip and Elastic presented in this number the *B.M. Aero Glider* is complete.

But the glider isn't the only free gift your old Editor has secured for his readers. On page 2 you will find the announcement of another stunning free gift offer. I refer to the *B.M.*

### Patent Target and Winged Dart.

This is too bulky to give away inside the Mag., so I have decided to print coupons every week. No need to wait four weeks to save the coupons. Persuade your chums who do not already buy the good old *B.M.* to become regular readers. You can then borrow their coupons and send for a Target right away, paying back the coupons from succeeding numbers of *Boys' Magazine*, so that your friends can get their own dartboards.

Phew! The air is thick with free gifts just now! Yet another stunning series of 'em commences on Saturday. Nothing less than

### Smashing Sepia Football Plates,

depicting two up-to-date football teams each week! You'll find No. 1 of these graphic Art Pictures in every copy of Next Week's Red Wonder Mag. And the first two teams are *MANCHESTER CITY* and *ARSENAL*. Make sure of securing these two to begin your collections by ordering the *Mag.* in advance! There's bound to be a rush for copies.

In addition to the above treats I have planned a series of special Story Numbers of the *B.M.* that have never been equalled in our history. And the first Big Story Coup kicks off next week. In response to the shoals of letters I have received asking for a *Serial* story of the *Mag.*'s famous detective, Falcon Swift, I asked the famous Secret Service man who pens these gripping tales to get busy. The result is a mighty, book-length yarn entitled

### The Shooting Sleuth!

Chums, you'll vote the sensational opening chapters of this giant tale—which appear next week—the most fascinating, the most compelling story-stuff you've ever read. From the flashing first chapter the author plunges into a whirlwind of mystery and excitement both on and off the green arena. You

### JOKE COUPON.

Stick on postcard and send with your favourite joke to the JOKE EDITOR.

29/8/31.

will see Falcon Swift sign on as centre-forward for the Halford Hotspurs; with him you will meet kindly "Dad" Storey, the genial manager of the team; Skeleton Tangle, the plump goalie; Phil Peters, the hot-spot pivot; and the rest of this likeable football crew—and you will meet the Man Monster! This terrible being is the criminal Goliath that the Sporting Detective is out to run to earth. He knows he is up to some devilish game, something as crookedly huge as it is dreadful. And, early in the yarn, Chick Conway falls into the Claws of Mystery! No, you won't be disappointed in this tense new yarn of football and detective work, chums.

Running it close for interest and popularity is another ripping long complete tale of those famous school story favourites, the Boys of St. Giddy's.

### Football Forbidden at St. Giddy's.

Yes, the Joyous Juniors open the new football season with a riot of larks and laughable exploits. Mr. Cattermole, the irate housemaster of St. Giddy's, is in charge of the school when they return from the Dandy Cowboy's ranch, where we left them last week. And for what he considers good and sufficient reason, but which Johnny Gee & Co. do not, Catty sends them home for a fortnight's suspension: a sort of short-term expulsion! But do they go home like good little boys? Not likely. They take over a football ground and turn professionals! Of the excitement and dramatic surprises that follow I will leave you to read for yourselves next Saturday.

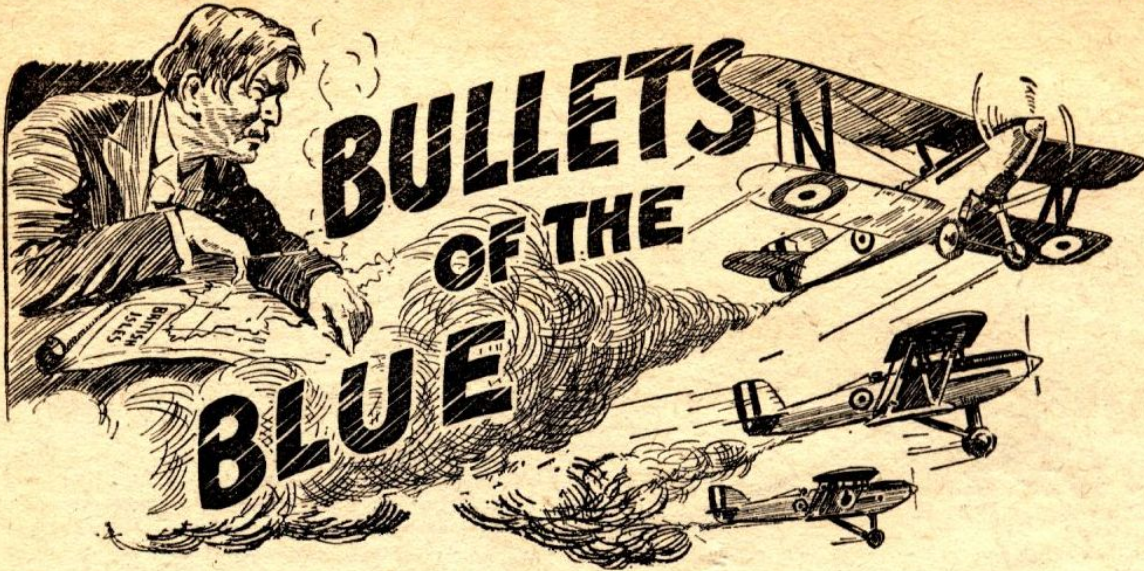
Gripping instalments of *BULLETS OF THE BLUE* and *BEWARE THE BLACK BATTLE-AXE* and *TWO* stunning complete stories have also been crammed in. Of the two completes it is difficult to decide which is the better. Both are absolute gilt-edged winners. One features Laughing Bill Teak on the North-west Frontier, and is entitled *FOUR AND TWENTY BLACKBIRDS—COOKED!* The other brings back those human and animal fun-makers: The Menagerie Mechanics. This week you will find them far afield—holidaying in Japan! Did I say holidaying? H'm, they don't find it exactly restful! Look for the title: *THE MAKE-SHIFT MIKADO*, and enjoy thirty minutes of solid laughter. Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

P.S.—Don't Forget the First Dazzling Art Sepia Plate depicting Manchester City and Arsenal is Given Inside Every Copy of Next Week's Mag. Tell all Your Chums this Splendid News, and Send for a "B.M." Patent Target. Free for Four Coupons. See Page 2.



THUNDERING THRILLS! THE MAG.'S MONSTER NEW EPIC AIR TALE OF DRAMA AND AMAZING INTRIGUE BEGINS ITS TRIUMPHANT RUN.



The Further Daredevil Exploits of Those Demon Aces—Johnny and Ian Chisholm—Heroes of "Sky Devils." By BERNARD BULEY.

THERE were a lifetime's thrills in the thunderous air combat of the Hendon Pageant.

Yet when Britain's latest and most marvellous airship left its shed amid the acclamation of the spectators, there was more excitement in that for her commanding officer, Ian Chisholm, than for any of those who cheered her.

For he took out the ship under threat—threat to the life of his brother, Squadron-Leader Johnny. Count Shaunberg stood behind him all the time, and he swore that unless Ian directed the ship according to his orders, Johnny's plane, which was taking part in the display, would be shot down in flames.

Ian knew well why Shaunberg wanted the ship. He had but recently led a revolution in the little Continental state of Waldenberg. The king had got away, taking with him as much of the bullion his country held as he could lay hands on. A submarine had carried king and gold from Waldenberg, and the sub now lay derelict 'mid the ice of the Baltic. And Shaunberg, self-seeking and fired with greed, knew that only an airship could save the bullion. He wanted now to get away in the darkness with the ship.

He might have succeeded, had not his minion who had been told off to shoot Johnny down done his job too soon. Johnny and his observer leapt from the doomed machine, landing by parachute on the airship's back. And Johnny found now that his "observer," a fear-stricken gibbering wreck, was the very double of his brother, but who said he was King Otto of Waldenberg.

Meanwhile, in the airship, a tall man in the uniform of a foreign general stepped silently through a door in the cabin, and disarmed Shaunberg. It was General Destrier of Waldenberg, a staunch Royalist, who was striving to replace Otto on his throne. He had already approached the British Government

with a view to securing the loan of this airship, when he could quell the revolution easily.

Ian stepped forward to thank Destrier, but suddenly he stopped. Shaunberg's pistol, in Destrier's hand, threatened him.

"Wait, Commander," snapped the General. "You are my prisoner now!"

### On Top of the World.

AIR COMMANDER IAN, at the wheel of the airship, racked his brains for a ruse to turn the tables against General Destrier.

"Come, no hard words, Commander." The General twirled his magnificent moustache, black eyes sparkling under their heavy-lidded droop of mastery. "Luck has put the game in my hands. I had no thought of stealing the airship. But now I must play the game as the Fates seem to dictate. Come, you can leave those controls for five minutes; leave the ship to steer itself. I wish to show you something that will amaze and stagger you."

"What about Johnny—my brother?"—the big dirigible navigator whirled with teeth gritted, jaw outthrust. "Are you going to leave him there, on the top of the world—to pitch out into space?"

"We are going on to the top of the world," General Destrier's deep voice boomed. "And there, Commander, I shall make you a proposal—perhaps the most bizarre and amazing ever known."

Ian stared at something in that deep tone. "As for this rat"—the General contemptuously indicated Count Shaunberg, still gasping and writhing from Ian's powerful grip on his throat—"we will tie him up."

Thus they left the arch-schemer, trussed like a fowl. And Ian, at the imperative urge of the blue cylinder of the revolver held by General Destrier, led the way along the dark catwalk of the airship, and up the ladders at the rear, through trapdoors to the gun platforms on the very roof of the immense dirigible driving through space.

Neither could have anticipated the sight that met their eyes when they emerged on the flat platform before the immense rudders of the airship, and stood a moment with the wind plucking and tearing at



them while great walls of cloud seemed to sweep majestically by.

Two men were hanging there on the ribs of the immense gasbag, locked together, one supporting the other.

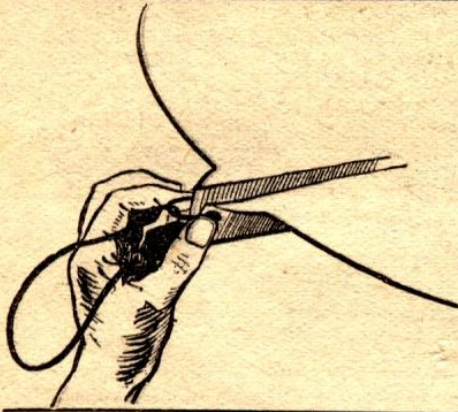
"By Jingo!" exclaimed Ian suddenly, his face whitening under its tan. "Johnny!"

"And the other? . . . d'you see him—know who he is?" demanded the General, turning his grizzled face with eyes now keen as lance-points on Air Commander Ian.

"Why do you tell me all this?" burst out Ian trying to break away. "My brother—"

"A moment more," the General said imperatively. "You know that King Otto awoke one morning to find his palace invaded, the mob battering down the doors, led by Count Shaunberg.

"Well, I, for love of his father, led him out by secret passages, got him away from the country. I discovered that he had laid his plans for flight, too, however. He had got the crown jewels and bullion worth two million out of the country.



## THE MAG'S FREE AERO-GLIDER

### INSTRUCTIONS.

**I**N this number is presented the envelope containing Metal Balancing Clip and Elastic for the Glider Hull Presented Last Week. Affix Elastic to Nose of Plane as Low Down as Possible by means of clip. Shown in Sketch.

**TO FLY MACHINE.**—Hold pencil vertically in left hand and Glider in right. Push pencil through elastic loop, draw back Glider, thus Stretching elastic, and then Release Glider. A Pin driven Into the Top of Pencil will make Launching Even More Effective.

Ian stared—and started violently. Was it his imagination? Was he dreaming? The other man was facing him directly just then, and Ian had a queer impression, as if he were gazing into a mirror. It was a moment or two before the truth burst on his bewildered brain. This other man was exactly like him. His double!

"Good Lord, they're in danger—they'll fall off!" he cried out the next moment.

He made to dash forward over the gasbag, to aid Johnny, but pulled up short as the revolver bore jabbed in his chest, and he found himself staring into the grim visage of General Destrier, of Waldenberg.

"You fool!" gasped Ian. "My brother will fall any moment!"

"Listen to my bargain then," General Destrier growled. "Yonder princeling is a coward. For five years I have suffered him, and advised him for his father's sake. It took his people five years of misrule and wild dissipation on his part, before they became incensed to madness . . ."

"Why—why all this?" Ian cried frantically.

"Because . . . my people want a king. A brave king. They would welcome Otto back, if he were just, ruled wisely, and above all, was a brave man. They need a king. You are exactly like his Majesty there. You shall be King."

Ian stared, his breath coming in a crackling hiss. In a flash he realised the situation. Unless he agreed to take the place of the King of Waldenberg . . . ! But it was mad, impossible.

He looked over, saw Johnny slithering, and his heart seemed to leap into his mouth.

"Your word . . . that you will do it!"—the General's voice struck on his numbed senses.

"Yes, yes . . . I give—my word!" Ian gasped, and then, no longer detained, rushed forward to Johnny's aid.

### The Rescue.

**S**URE-FOOTED as a cat, Air Commander Ian raced along the narrow duralumin rib of the great airship.

King Otto of Waldenberg, frenzied, crazed, sprawled on the sloping envelope, his clawing hands on Johnny's shoulders. In his wild, frantic fear, he had brought them to this, and any moment now both might plunge to eternity.

Air Commander Ian bent down, his clasp knife raised aloft. He was hacking at the fabric of the airship around the rib.

In something like a couple of seconds a hole gaped. Acting swiftly, feverishly, Ian unhitched his cartridge belt, buckled it round the duralumin rib gaping from the split fabric. He had no hesitation in what he did now. Twisting the looped belt round his wrist, he swung down towards his brother. A strong, capable hand stretched down and caught his double under the armpit, wrenching him loose from Johnny. Not a second too soon! Johnny's right hand had lost hold. A hand bleeding at finger-tips; nails torn.

At that crucial moment they found an ally. The two skyriders! A friend and helper in sore need.

General Destrier! A rope was in his hand, left over from the trussing of Count Shaunberg. The

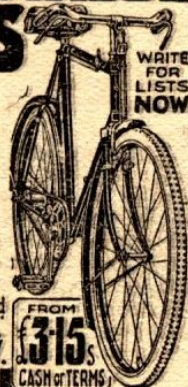
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Grand Duke Michael Destrier tossed it, and it fell, lurching and furling, to Johnny.

In the nick of time! Johnny, at his last gasp, clutched the rope's end. And then the tremendous strength of the Grand Duke Michael came in evidence; he hauled Johnny up as a man might a fair-sized fish.

"Good piece of work!" panted Johnny as he sprawled on the gasbag, heaving like a snoring giant under them. "Now Ian—my brother."

"Aye—and the King," cried Iron Michael. His grizzled, moustached face was animated by keen eyes. Action, peril, had roused the old soldier's blood.

The rope went down again, and Ian, seizing it, lashed it securely round the waist of his double. The ex-King of Waldenberg had lapsed into unconsciousness. And the Grand Duke Michael growled at sight of it. A saddened, weary man voicing his thoughts.

"Alas! I fear this will prove the collapse of His Majesty. A severe breakdown has been imminent. His doctors at Court have warned him. And this is the very moment when he might appear before his people, show a bold front, and retrieve the throne."

His soliloquy, however, was meaningless to Squadron Leader Johnny Chisholm. With bated breath he watched Ian as the rope was thrown down to him, and he hauled himself up on it hand over hand.

Ian came up safely. But Johnny felt a queer chill. The big Air Commander was strangely silent, his handsome face set. He merely clapped Johnny on the back in congratulation for their narrow escape.

Ian was worried. "My promise, sir," he said in a low voice to the Grand Duke Michael. "It was given on the spur of desperation; to save my brother. Surely you will not press me to this mad, fantastic role; playing the part of King!"

"The Fates, not I, direct you, sir," answered the General. "Methinks you will yet find the part you have to play compatible with honour."

Ian shrugged his despair, almost haggard of face. Conceive his position. A high executive officer of the Royal Air Force, responsible for the airship, just then adrift in space! He was bound to the Service, his King, Country. His duty to make immediate wireless reports and return the airship to her moorings, or take orders. Not to gallivant around Europe playing the fantastic role of King. In this even more than his honour was affected.

And yet that promise, given in a moment of dire extremity, when Johnny's life was in danger, was as much as a solemn vow. And Ian was deeply sensible of it.

In silence, then, he helped to lift the unconscious King of Waldenberg. He taking the shoulders and Johnny the legs, they cat-walked along the rib of the airship towards the gun platform, General Destrier going ahead.

Suddenly the high whine of an approaching airplane, growling, swelling, pounded in their ears like a descending hurricane. General Destrier looked up, and his eyes blazed, lips set grimly under the iron-grey moustache.

"Count Venskye, by the eternal!" he swore.

In either hand the next moment was a black, snub-nosed automatic. He bent down as a fighter plane, with the red-white-and-blue cockades of the R.A.F., appeared over the great airship, tearing across the sky with a roll like thunder.

"He's the fellow who attacked you," the General muttered. His head jerked at Johnny. Then he seemed to signal quickly with the arms that held the two snub-nosed automatics.

"And, by heavens, he's coming for us!" Ian panted. His most dreadful pang was for the airship—Britain's wonder airship.

For it was true. The aeroplane had dipped its nose. *Whrooooooooooom!* It was coming down through a cloud. A death-dive! The goggled pilot hunched



CIRCUS STUFF IN THE CLOUDS.—Ian clung to the rope, and relieved Johnny of the young king's weight. General Destrier flung a rope down to Johnny from the catwalk of the ship.

over his controls as the wind whipped back in a howling torrent.

"The mad sky fiend!" snarled Grand Duke Michael. "He'd send the whole lot of us down blazing!"

His words seemed in dreadful earnest. For fire-spots were blazing around the nose of the ship as it drove down, blasting the skies apart. But Count Venskye, if that were his name, fired at too great a range. Then stopped. As if he had run out of ammunition.

General Destrier got to his feet, raging.

"Ha! I signalled him that Shaunberg was a prisoner aboard!" he shouted furiously. "That stopped him. Venskye's only idol is the Count. They served together in the air during the war. We're safe, while we've got Shaunberg."



The next moment he was blazing away with both automatics. For the 'plane, howling thunderously, was right over their heads . . . coming out of its dive with a dreadful shudder, as if hit with a mighty sky hammer. They could see the goggled ghoul in the cockpit backsticking madly. And the General's bullets tore through wings and fuselage of that harshly bellowing monster . . .

If he had hit the petrol tank or killed the pilot, that mass of doped linen, spruce wood and metal would have fallen atop of Britain's biggest dirigible, with inevitable consequences of horrible catastrophe. The Grand Duke Michael was reckless of that in his fury. For, indeed, it was a mad moment.

As it was he hit the pilot—must have done. The goggled head jerked up suddenly, teeth showing in agony, as if he felt the burn of a bullet. But he held his stick back, tilted the shuddering tail down, whipped his horses into a climb. Count Venskye screwed skyward, roaring.

The way he slanted up into the blue was a commentary alike to the excellence of the R.A.F.'s latest pursuit 'planes, and the skill and nerve of this wounded stealer of the 'plane.

Nor did the fighter roar back to the attack upon the ship.

"Come on; enough of this," said Air Commander Ian shortly as he hustled his companions through the trap door. He was a little pale. He had had dreadful moments when he thought the airship was going down in a blazing, roaring ruin. A two-million-pound marvel of the twentieth century . . . worth more than his life, and Johnny's—and in his charge!

### A Courageous Coward.

THEY came into the control-cabin, to find it filled with a vibrant crackle. The marvellous radio was in action, ready to receive messages.

Flight Sergeant Tornado Wills stood stiffly in front of the radio set, and his hand snapped up in the salute. He had been put there to guard Count Shaunberg who lay, trussed still, at his feet. The big Flight Sergeant with the homely, kindly face was an old sky comrade of Ian and Johnny—had winged alongside these two, the lightning and the thunderbolt, in war days. It goes, therefore, that he knew his sky stuff.

"Yes, sir; H.Q. trying to get you," he said.

Commander Ian went to the radio apparatus, tense, with blue eyes slitted. The crackle of the wireless became more fierce—then through it, tocsin clear, ran the Air Marshal's voice:

"Hallo! Observation tower, Hendon; Air Marshal O'Neil speaking. Good lord, man"—as Ian's voice answered. "Radio reports Squadron Leader's 'plane brought down in flames by unknown miscreant. Ambulance men can't get near flaming machine. You and the Squadron Leader—are you safe?"

"Yes, sir." Rapidly Ian detailed all that had happened. The whole amazing story. Omitting only one matter—his promise to the Grand Duke Michael to masquerade as King Otto of Waldenberg.

Air Marshal O'Neil listened in obvious stupefaction. He audibly gasped. And in the control-room of the dirigible Flight Commander Ian waited at the end of his narrative, fair brows glistening over boring blue eyes, his young jaw set. He expected recriminations, wrathful words to blue the ether.

A monotone of voices came through the radio. Air Marshal O'Neil was conferring with colleagues, members of the High Council in the control tower with him. The rattle of voices died.

"Commander Chisholm, remove strangers." The crackling voice cut incisively again through the

control-room. "Count Shaunberg . . . only the ears of friends must hear this."

Ian half-whirled round, and gestured to Flight Sergeant Tornado Wills, who expeditiously removed the master-plotter through the exit with the sliding door.

"Ready? Now attend." The voice crackled again. "Fate has guided our hand in this matter. And Britain moves in Waldenberg—but unofficially, you understand. Commander, the five million that has been removed from that country is British gold. It should have been shipped to this country. British interests in Waldenberg are immense. Reports have just come through that the Revolutionists are destroying the oil wells—these belong to the British Government."

There was a pause. Ian's breath came hissing as he waited in the silence. A presentiment was on him of tremendous events shaping themselves.

When the Air Chief spoke again, his words came slowly, as if carefully weighed.

"It shall be given out to the world that the airship is on a secret experimental cruise. In reality—"

"What d'you want me to do?" broke in Air Commander Ian.

"You are charged, unofficially, to adjust affairs in Waldenberg," came the staggering reply. "Recover the Crown Jewels, the bullion, set the King again on his throne, and so preserve the peace of Europe.

"It is a tremendous task. You will realise that when I tell you that Count Shaunberg has a fleet of fast pursuit and fighting airplanes at his command. But listen, Chisholm: there are vital interests at stake—more than you guess now. And Great Britain does not want to enter into this officially.

"You have ten new-type pursuit 'planes, packed in crates aboard the airship, haven't you? And ten men to man them? These are your orders. Return the airship to her moorings here as soon as possible. Then doff your British uniforms, you and your companions, and enter Waldenberg with your flying squadron—like bullets from the blue.

"Understand. You have no country. You are mystery flyers, with a roving commission. You will meet danger, strong opposition perhaps. And if you are trapped, downed in flames, this country cannot avenge you. That is all. Whilst you have the airship under your command you can talk to us on this special wave length as if we were in a locked room. But I expect the airship returned to her moorings as quickly as possible. The airship must not enter Waldenberg. The 'planes must bear no British markings. This country, officially, has nothing to do with your enterprise."

There was more to it. But it was all to the same purport. Air Commander Ian turned round with a stunned face at last, still grappling to realise it all.

"You heard?" he asked hoarsely, his eyes moving from his airman brother to the Grand Duke Michael.

"We heard. And it is good," said Grand Duke Michael, with a note of triumph hardly suppressed in his voice. "It means that Fate has guided your hand. Sire, you shall be King!"

Ian started. Not more violently than Johnny, however. Moved by a common impulse, the eyes of all three travelled over to the locker bench on which reclined, or rather lay, the ex-King Otto of Waldenberg.

A fine figure of a man, his resemblance to Ian was still startling. But from his fair hair, parted exactly as Ian's was, tiny globules of sweat glistened and trickled; his whole face was grey and harsh, and his eyes when they opened, stared fixedly with pupils curiously dilated. His was a soul in mortal fear. He tossed and turned, muttering to himself feverishly in French:



"They're after me! . . . They'll kill me! . . ." Even as they watched, he started to his feet with a loud gasp of terror, and commenced groping, walking as a somnambulist might, with hands outstretched. His eyes were pools of stark fear. And the sight of this big, handsome fellow stumbling like a child learning to walk struck both Ian and Johnny with an eerie chill.

"He's a mental wreck," muttered the Grand



**THE COURAGEOUS COWARD.**—"I'll show them if I lack courage!" shouted King Otto. He tore open the sliding door and hurled himself into space. Ian and the others, rushing to the door, saw him turning over and over as he fell toward the pack ice below.

Duke Michael sadly. "Until he mends he can never be King. My people wouldn't accept him."

Then they observed that the ex-King of Waldenberg was wearing a fresh parachute across his shoulders. "Why, who put it on him?" commented Johnny, and queerly the trivial matter of it brought to his mind a fresh presentiment of evil.

"I did, sir." The sliding door to the other compartment had opened, and the towering form of Flight Sergeant Tornado Willis appeared in the aperture. "He was crying out that they were going

to throw him out of the airship, sir, so I put the 'chute on to comfort him, sir. It seemed to quieten him wonderfully. . . . Hallo there—look out!" he suddenly barked, on the instant springing forward.

But he was too late. All in the control-room were too late to intercept the ex-King of Waldenberg. His crazed fear had yielded him what he believed to be an inspiration, and with a hoarse cry he sprang to the sliding door and tugged it open.

A gust of icy air burst into the control cabin of the airship like the smashing of a vial of wrath.

King Otto of Waldenberg whirled with handsome face utterly distorted.

"You shan't get me!" he shouted defiantly. "Regardez! See if Otto of Waldenberg lacks courage."

If he were in his right senses, he certainly did not lack for pluck at that moment. Always from boyhood he had been timid, shrinking from the perils that must of necessity encompass a king. Now he did a madly reckless thing. Looking straight down to his doom, he jumped out into the wild gusts, and dropped like a stone.

### The Challenge.

**W**ITH a sharp cry Air Commander Ian sprang to the open door, the others hot upon his heels.

Looking out, they saw Otto of Waldenberg's body turning like a catharine wheel as it fell. All four held their breath. A blue-white glare beat up from below—from Arctic pack ice that spread in a continuous field to the horizon.

"Ice! We're over the Baltie!" ejaculated Air Commander Ian sharply. "He's done for!"

The four watchers were transfixed in suspense. Then breaths hissed in a relief that was like pain. He had pulled the rip cord. The great white silk mushroom that was the parachute had belled out. And the figure had jerked sharply upright . . . was floating now.

Yet it seemed that the ex-King's case was made little better. "He'll smash on the icebergs," Johnny voiced with sharp indrawn breath.

The surface of the frozen sea was incredibly rough. Jagged 'bergs stood up like fantastic buildings of monstrous size. The dirigible was flying low, and all the terrain beneath seemed composed of jagged white fangs.

"Ah, look!" exclaimed the Grand Duke Michael. "He's fallen in the 'lead'!"

His great chest heaved with relief as he slashed a finger under his iron-grey moustache. There was still affection in the old soldier's heart for the weak and wayward young man who had ruined his own kingdom, spurning his wisest counsellor.

"It is almost incredible . . . yet it must be true," he muttered, pointing down to a great silvery stretch of water between the icebergs. Over it bobbed the white flower of the parachute, travelling lower. A low ground wind was carrying it along. King Otto's fate hung in slender balance. If the 'chute lurched and dipped into the sea, he must inevitably be drowned in a few moments.

"Amazing!" pursued the Grand Duke Michael. "That must be the same 'lead' of water by which his Majesty escaped from the submarine in a canvas boat.

"You are aware that he attempted to get away with the Crown Jewels," he added. "The submarine was rammed in this ice. He escaped, leaving that vast fortune . . . and the submarine cannot be far distant."

Ian sprang to the controls, set bells jangling the

(Continued on page 36.)



**Live Wire Larry, the Lad who Likes Danger if it Shows Him Science's Secrets, Comes Back in Another Gripping Complete Yarn.**

### The Phantom.

"BOSS! Here you are at last! What do you think I found down the mine?"

Captain Kenrick, famous throughout England as the Fighting Scientist, climbed down from his car to face a human whirlwind in the person of his assistant, Live Wire Larry.

The Scientific Errand Boy held out a lump of shining yellow metal in a grubby fat.

"Gold!" he said. "Down the tin mine!"

Captain Kenrick took the metal, a look of surprise on his face. "But that can't be," he said. "This is smelted and purified. It couldn't have come straight out of the mine."

"But it did, Boss. I brought it up in a sample digging in one of the tunnels. And I've tested it, too."

They walked together into the little hut that was now a laboratory. The Fighting Scientist had bought this isolated piece of land near the cliffs in Cornwall, with its old disused tin mine, for the purpose of studying the ores and mineral products of the country more closely.

The Fighting Scientist puckered his brow. "It seems to be gold all right. But how did it get there? I wonder..."

"Wonder what?" asked Larry, slightly disappointed at Captain Kenrick's lack of enthusiasm.

Captain Kenrick got ready his miniature electric oven. "Well, it's like this, Larry," he said, while he worked. "I've been up to London to-day at the summons of a newly-formed National General Banks Committee, to help them investigate who is flooding the market with faked gold."

Larry gasped. "But it'd have to be a good imitation, boss, to pass into circulation."

"It is, laddie—as good as this! There's only one way to tell the difference, and that is by an atomic test—find out the number of atoms to the molecule. That test has proved it to be not gold, but tin, treated in some manner we cannot find out."

"And you think this is some more of it?"

"I'll tell you in a moment." The captain worked on in silence. At last he straightened.

His voice was tense. He said: "Laddie, by the strangest coincidence that ever happened, this is a piece of the counterfeit gold!"

"But how did it get down our mine?" queried Larry. "We'd better get down again and see what we can find."

They dragged on their grimy mining overalls and took miners' lamps. It was getting dusk, but that would not make the darkness of the mine any worse. They reached the pit shaft, and entered the ancient lift. The old rusty wheels had been oiled enough to allow them to turn after a rest of nearly fifty years, and the ropes of the lift removed.

"Well, here we are," said the Scientific Errand Boy at last, as they stepped on to the floor of the mine. "It was up that tunnel that I found the metal."

They went a short distance up the tunnel he indicated, each carrying a pick and a shovel, their miners' lamps making a weird flickering glow over the damp walls and rotting supports of the mine



tunnel, then Larry made a discovery. His exclamation brought Captain Kenrick hurrying to his side.

"Look there, sir! Neither of us did that!"

There, in the rays of the two lamps, showed a footprint in the clay floor.

A moment they stared at it, while the light of the lamps lit their startled faces blue. The Fighting Scientist straightened.

"That's recently made," he said. "During the last two days. We're not the only ones who visit this mine."

And while he yet spoke, there came to their ears a shriek, a shriek that had in it all the hate and fear that man can express, and which swept down the tunnel with a sobbing cadence that seemed to make the flames of their lamps quiver.

They kept round, faces white, eyes distended. The sound had come from round a bend to the seaward side, away from the shaft—and safety. Neither counted that.

Captain Kenrick yelled "Come on!" He seized his shovel, and with Larry at his side, he pounded round the corner, feet clattering on the rotted railway sleepers that paved the working. And round the corner, fast disappearing in the gloom, they saw a shape. Whatever it was, Captain Kenrick, scientist and ex-soldier (D.S.O., M.C.), forgot its strangeness, heeded not its possible ability to cause danger, and hurled himself in its wake as it turned another corner.

Larry, his heart beating with apprehension, followed his master closely.

They turned the corner together, and two things happened. They saw before them a blank wall—of

**Whirlwind Tale of a Mystic Underworld—a Place of Mystery and Modern Magic—and Telling of an Amazing Master Crook's Mad Quest for the Philosopher's Stone!**

the Shape no sign. And behind them sounded a deep, rumbling roar, swelling to a crashing crescendo of sound that threatened to break their ear-drums. The sides and roof of the tunnel behind them caved in, right to the very turn a few yards away; and with the clouds of dust and dirt that assailed their nostrils came the smell and the haze of burnt gunpowder.

### The Gold-makers

It was Captain Kenrick who first recovered. He said: "This is a trap. That thing we saw was a man."

His tone was crisp; his mind, trained in the field of battle and in the laboratory, quickly grasped all the salient points of the situation. "He knew we should follow, and dropped a time bomb as he ran..."

He kept talking, mainly because he realized that, brave though he was, any show of hesitancy would probably have unnerved Larry.

The treatment worked. Larry's mind worked inquiringly now rather than fearfully. "Then if it was a man," he said, "there must be some way out here."

"That's right, sonny. You'll make a soldier yet," grinned the Fighting Scientist. "There's a way out all right. But don't forget it will be hard, very hard, to find it. It must be, or our ghost wouldn't have risked leaving us in here."

They set about digging with the shovels they had brought as weapons. They dug at the walls carefully, gingerly, for every now and then a huge piece of the wall, loosened by the explosion, would fall down with a roar and a rumble. The timber props that held up the roof also were cracking under the strain of the disturbed earth.

Larry was getting desperate. The smoke of the gunpowder was burning his throat. The air in the confined space was quickly getting used up, and sweat poured off the two as they worked.

Suddenly a startling thing happened. They were digging together at a portion of the wall, pushing hard on the boarding at their feet to get a good grip, when, with an unexpected lurch, the whole floor seemed to fall through, and they with it.

In company with a ton or more of earth and gravel, and half-a-dozen of the heavy sleepers, they crashed down for some twenty feet, landing with a thud that, but for the earth that fell with them, would have knocked them insensible. As it was, they rose, dazed and bruised, to their feet, to find themselves covered by a couple of automatic pistols.

They were both too knocked about to take in at once the astonishing details of the cavern in which they found themselves. It was vast; it seemed to be furnished for comfort, for there was a thick, coloured carpet spreading all over the floor; it was well lighted, and there were visions of strange machinery in the far corners; there was the pile of filth and rubble in which they stood and blinked—and there were the men with the revolvers.

One of them was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a jaw of iron, wide-set eyes, and a brow that bespoke immense knowledge. He was clad in evening dress, and he sat at a table that was covered with viands, choice as are to be found in a first-class hotel. He held the automatic negligently, and there was a look of polite inquiry on his face.

He looked at Larry and the captain as he spoke, but his first words were addressed to another. He spoke as though he chided a careless servant for spilling his tea into the saucer.

"You dropped the bomb too late, Gelman. It loosened all the earth round here."

"Sorry, Boss," came a mutter from another man. Larry saw him across the room, taking off an ordinary sheet that had been draped over a seaman's uniform. Here, then, was the ghost they had seen in the light of their miners' lamps.

The Boss, whose name they discovered later was Crosby, was speaking again. "Well, Captain Kenrick," he said, and his voice was still pleasant. "Our first attempt at killing you having failed, we shall have to dispose of you some other way."

Reverberated and dazed as he was, Larry could not find it in him to be any more astonished at this calm speech. Somehow, its deadly coolness seemed to carry its own conviction.

Opposite Captain Kenrick and Larry was the great bench covered with chemicals and machinery. They saw two tunnels running into the cavern, and a light railway with trucks running in through one and out of the other. They saw a pile of ore, containing no doubt rich deposits of tin, standing by one of the tunnel mouths. And by the other, that which went seaward, two seamen were loading trucks with golden bars.

They appeared to be solid gold, but Larry guessed it was the fake metal.

Crosby was talking. Larry listened. "Captain Kenrick," he said. "You must realize that you put us in a difficult position by coming here to this mine. I know well that you have been asked by the General National Banks Committee to investigate the flood of gold that threatens to upset

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**THE COLOUR-MAN COLLARED.**—Larry kicked the door shut, and as the painter turned the boy jumped at him, the sack gaping wide over his head.

the Gold Standard, and that you have discovered it to be not true gold but a form of tin. You are a danger to me, and I had to have you removed. You understand my position?"

He spoke apologetically, as though excusing himself. While he listened to his captor, Captain Kenrick's mind was also wrestling with the subject of the faked gold. Obviously, the metal was transmuted here, in this cavern; but by what process he could not guess.

Heat was used, for he could see, between the two tunnel mouths, an enormous electric oven, fully ten feet high, with a great opening panel in the side through which the stuff to be melted was placed. Crosby, reading his thoughts as his eyes flashed round the room, spoke again.

"That furnace smelts the tin ore," he said, "and provides part of the treatment for making it appear gold. It is drawn off molten through a vent-hole in the bottom, and poured, at very finely calculated temperature, into a certain liquid. It is then left for a while, and when withdrawn it is gold!"

As he finished speaking, the two seamen finished their job of loading. One of them shuffled over to Crosby.

"All set, sir," he said. "Ship layin' to, and the tide ready."

Crosby said: "Okay. Get the stuff on to the launch. What about these two?" He indicated Kenrick and Larry with a wave of his hand. The gun had returned to his pocket.

"Dunno, sir. Could take 'em wiv us. Or what abaht the oven?"

Crosby grinned at the suggestion. He did not know the meaning of the word cruelty, just as Hercules probably didn't think himself very strong; only that all the other people were weak.

"We'll use the oven on the boy," he said. "That'll be quite tidy. And we'll take the scientist with us. I may be able to use him."

Now the full horror of the suggestion sank into the brains of the science chums. They leapt to their feet and forward, but the crooks were obviously quite used to dealing with such exigencies. All five—two seamen, two navvies, and Crosby—closed with them, and ropes were whipped round their wrists and ankles.

Captain Kenrick, impotent to save his boy assistant, was dragged out of sight, while Larry was pulled, helpless, toward the electric oven.

He bit his lip, determined not to show any of his terrible mental torture as he was bundled through the great door by the two navvies. One of them spoke to the other. "You're staying this trip, ain'tya, Grigg? All right, you can switch on."

He went out, leaving Grigg to see to Larry's execution. Larry was now standing on the edge of a pile of tin ore that had just been put in.

Grigg appeared nonchalant, as though such jobs were within the ordinary day's work. He looked in at Larry, lighting his pipe, and said: "Well, young 'un, I s'pose you've said your prayers. Pity you had to butt in, but still, you'll be seein' yer guv'nor agin before I will."

He guffawed at the implied jest, and reached for the switch.

There was a click, and from a metal point in the top of the steel and fire-clay sphere leapt a crackling flash of searing, blinding, artificial lightning. Larry pressed back to the wall of the oven, and the continuous stream of sparks swept past him to the highest point of the ore on which he stood. And Larry saw the metal melting with a steaming hiss as the heat tore it apart.

The door of the oven had not been closed by Grigg, who now stepped over to the table to help himself to the wine Crosby had left. And, though he had a temporary respite, Larry saw that at the last the heat must melt away the ore till that on which he stood was the highest, or till the molten metal swirled about his feet.

The sheer desperation of his position gave him an idea. If he could get his hands free, he would have a chance with Grigg, and here was fire to burn the ropes. Cautiously, he stretched out his arms, till he had them close to the stream of molten tin that trickled sluggishly down from the point where the flash touched. He lowered them a trifle, and a cry of pain leapt to his lips as the skin was burnt off his wrist by the metal.

He heard steps crossing the room. Grigg had heard his cry, and was coming to watch his charge. Larry bent down again, to finish off the job before the man arrived, and as he leaned the flash of lightning switched its course a little, and in a wisp of smoke and terrible heat the cords were torn from his wrists.

Grigg came round the sphere, saw what had happened, and leapt. As Larry drew instinctively back against the wall of the sphere, the man's leap carried him forward, across the pile of semi-molten ore, and full into the path of the electric discharge. And Larry turned his eyes away from the sight of a man dying suddenly and silently. Grigg was a black villain, and had died the death he had intended for Larry; yet the boy was sickened at the sight of his sudden end.

He wasted no time about it, however. He managed to hobble out of the door of the sphere, keeping clear of the molten metal, that had now become a pool, and hopped across the room to the table. He plastered butter thickly over his skinless wrist, where it was burnt, and then freed his ankles.



Now, for the first time, he heard sounds of activity down the exit tunnel.

His one idea now, was to try to rescue Captain Kenrick, so he hastened, yet with due caution, toward the sea, and his enemies.

Light shining round a bend warned him that he was close to the muttering voices. He peered round the bend, and saw that the cave-mouth widened out, funnel-fashion, with its floor just above sea level. There was a lantern, shaded on the seaward side, that cast its light over the men who worked, and the counterfeit gold they were loading on to the motor-boat that rode by the edge. And by chance the shade was so fixed that it also cast a line of deep shadow along to the point where Larry stood.

Larry was quick to take advantage of the chance. All the men were busy, loading down a huge crate of the yellow metal into the launch. Of Captain Kenrick he could see nothing; obviously he had already been placed in the boat. And Larry slid like a shadow along the dark cave wall till he stood by the bow of the boat.

Silently he slipped over the bulwark, ducking down beneath a pile of tarpaulin.

A moment more of hurried work and all was done. Larry heard Crosby give an order and then, to the accompaniment of a burbling exhaust, the boat was swishing out to sea.

As she went, another of the mysteries of the night

was cleared up. Crosby spoke, evidently to Captain Kenrick, and his voice came to the lad as he lay still under the tarpaulins. He said: "You are to see an interesting piece of work, Kenrick. This morning the good ship *Valentia* came steaming up from Spain, laden only with ballast. Night fell on her as she rounded the point of Brittany. We shall board her in a few moments. And in the morning the *s.s. Rameses*, laden with gold from Africa, will steam up the Channel into London. Her name and papers will be different, but her shape, tonnage and colour will be the same."

Now Larry heard other confused murmurings of voices, felt the presence of a large ship near them. The launch's engines were stopped, and she bumped lightly against the side of the bigger ship. There was the orderly bustle of seamen at work, noises with the tramping of feet, then the clank of chains with the creak of winches, and the boat began to rise out of the water.

Larry's luck was definitely in. For instead of swinging the boat inboard on its davits, they were content to clew it to the ship's side, leaving it hanging, and did not trouble to stretch the tarpaulins over it after all the gold and the prisoner had been taken off.

He heard the voice of Crosby saying: "You can take him below. I'll attend to him after we have reached London." He evidently referred to the bound body of the Fighting Scientist. And as the



**THROUGH FIRE TO FREEDOM.**—The cracking sparks tore through Larry's bonds as Grigg came round to the furnace door. He leapt at Larry, and as the lad drew back, he crashed past him on the pile of molten metal and into the path of the man-made lightning.



voice seemed to come from below him, Larry judged that he was well above the level of the deck. In this he was right; for when he risked a look out from under his tarpaulins, he saw that the only place from which he could be seen was in the rigging.

The vessel was by now under way, and Larry turned his thoughts to rescue and escape. He remembered the statement of Crosby about "attending to" the Captain after reaching London. For this he was glad. It gave him time for one thing, and for another it made his wish more possible. For while a rescue might have been effected, if necessary, while still out at sea, escape was manifestly impossible.

Larry looked round with caution at the men who worked on deck. Most of the crew were below; only four were visible. Of these two appeared to be on the watch, one at the wheel, and one, slung out over the bows of the boat on a rope cradle, was painting out the name of the ship by the light of a lantern, and substituting her new name.

It was this paint that gave Larry the inspiration. All he had to do was to get some of that paint and lie low. Others would then do all the rescuing for him. In his elation, Larry almost sang, but decided not to because of the noise.

Larry crept over the side of the launch, and made his way silently across the deck to the companion stairs. More by good luck than anything else he found the paint cupboard within a few moments, and disappeared inside to get the paint and the brush. And then for the moment luck deserted him.

The painter had finished his work by now and was returning to pack up his paint in preparation for a good night's sleep. Larry heard his footsteps as he approached.

Larry drew in behind the door, so that as it opened he would be hidden. But he knew that as soon as the man turned to leave again he would be discovered, and his mind sought fiercely for a plan of action.

His foot found it. He trod on a sack, and even as he saw it and snatched it up, the door creaked open and a man stepped in with his arms full of pots of paint and brushes.

Larry kicked the door shut again, and as the man turned sharply to investigate the phenomenon of an unsprung door shutting and latching itself, Larry jumped.

The sack lifted, mouth gaping open as the sailor's opened to yell. But the sack's mouth did its work first, and the yell was choked off into a muffled gurgle. The tins of paint dropped with a clatter, but already the sack was over his arms, pinning them down.

It was now the work of a moment to secure the man's arms and legs and gag him. And then Larry, bearing the paint and a brush with him, slid out once more into the darkness to the privacy of his launch. He hoped the man would not be missed till morning, as, indeed, he was not, for it was his "watch below," and he was, in fact, about to retire when he had met with Larry.

It would now be, Larry guessed, about midnight. And so there were about four hours of darkness before him, in which to carry out his inspiration. He set about the job methodically, doing it carefully and without haste, while the time slid by and other ships' lights glimmered here and there and disappeared. And when grey dawn began to show, the Isle of Wight was in sight.

### The Plan Works.

**H**IS job well done, Larry now curled up under the tarpaulins again, safe in the knowledge that even if he were caught, there would be rescue as soon as she put into dock. Nevertheless, his last wish as he dozed off was that he would not snore.

He slept well and long, and without any interference, so that he awoke, refreshed, to find the hands of his watch pointing to four-thirty. And there was land close in to port and starboard. They were in the Thames Estuary.

Now Larry began to take notice. A ship passed them, and he saw the deckhands staring curiously toward the *Rameses*. But they did not stop or make any communication, though it was clear their curiosity had been noticed by the crew of *Rameses*, late *Valentia*. There were murmurings among the men, and Larry began to fear that this curiosity might spell failure to his plan. But nothing happened.

It was, of course, Larry's work during the darkness that caused the unwanted interest; but it was not till they were well past Deptford that the crew found out the full potency of it. Two motor-boats, laden with river police, came chugging alongside.

They hailed the captain, and he, hoping it was merely a matter of some routine, let down a ladder. Twelve stalwart arms of the maritime law came on board.

Now the captain of the *Rameses*, and Crosby, her owner, standing alongside him, could see that there was a grimness about these men that meant something more was coming than an inquiry about the weather. The chief of them said: "Where's Captain Kenrick, the scientist?"

The captain of the ship paled, and Crosby took a quick pace forward. "I'm the owner of this vessel, officer," he said. "And we carry no passengers. We have no man of that name among the crew."

The officer drew a gun from his pocket. "You two stay here," he said, "and call up the crew while my men search the ship."

The bluff might yet have worked, for Kenrick was well concealed. But at that moment a voice from behind and above the officer called: "He's in the port boiler. There's no water in it, and the fire's been drawn."

The policeman whipped round, to find Larry grinning down at him over the edge of the motor boat. He had heard the information from two of the chatting seamen.

The crew were soon rounded up, and Captain Kenrick drawn out, stiff and cramped, through the manhole in the boiler. The river police dropped anchors fore and aft to prevent the ship drifting.

The Fighting Scientist gripped Larry's hand as they sat in the stern of a rowing boat, going shoreward. "Well, laddie," he said, "you've earned yourself some glory this time. Thanks to you, I can report to National Banks Committee that the source of the fake gold flood has been found, and the supply stopped. But how did you manage to let the police know? You couldn't have sent them a message from Cornwall, for they'd have been looking for a ship called *Valentia*."

Larry grinned. "It was what you might call a work of art," he said. "If you look round you'll see."

Wondering, Captain Kenrick turned about in the boat. And then he understood what had been puzzling the crooks themselves, and what they also had just understood.

For, neatly and with many flourishes, as though the artist had much time at his disposal, a message was painted on the outside of the motor-boat that swung at the davits, where it could be seen from the river but not from the ship. It read:

**HELP! CAPTAIN KENRICK PRISONER ON BOARD!**

Screaming fun yarn of the Menagerie Mechanics next week, boys, telling of their visit to Japan. They find that it isn't all cherry blossom and lotus flowers, but they teach the same thing to several bold bad bandits before they leave!



THERE'S NOTHING FISHY ABOUT THE RIPPING JOKE PRIZES.

# The Jester's Realm ...



CRICKET BATS AND  
FOUNTAIN PENS  
AWARDED TO  
SENDERS OF JOKES  
ON THIS PAGE. SEND  
YOUR FAVOURITE  
JOKE ON P.C. WITH  
COUPON ON PAGE  
12 TO JOKE EDITOR.  
"BOYS' MAGAZINE."  
196, GRAY'S INN-RD.,  
LONDON, W.C.1.

Doctor Fish: H'm, so you have a pain, eh? Is it a large one?  
Patient: No, doctor, only on a small scale!  
(Cricket Bat to M. COBNER, Brockhurst, Church Stretton, Salop.)

## ALL OUT!

UNWANTED CALLER: Can I see the manager, please?  
OFFICE BOY: He's out.  
UNWANTED CALLER: Can I see the under-manager,  
then?  
OFFICE BOY: He's out.  
UNWANTED CALLER: Very well, I'll just sit by  
the fire.  
OFFICE BOY: That's out, too.  
(Fountain pen to N. SLAUGHTER, 8, Ella St., Newland  
Avenue, Hull.)

## EXECUTION.

DICK BANNISTER (holding his nose): Take this egg  
away, waiter.  
WAITER: What shall I do with it, sir?  
JOHNNY GEE (helpfully): Wring its neck!  
(Fountain pen to E. LANDAMORE, 60, Howard Road,  
Upminster, Essex.)

## TAKING NO CHANCES.

FIRST NAVY: Why  
doesn't old Joe come down  
from the steam-roller and  
have his grub with us?  
SECOND NAVY: He  
says that with all these  
ear-thieves about he's not  
taking any chances!  
(Fountain pen to PETER  
McDONALD, 44, Kerse  
Road, Grangemouth, Scot-  
land.)

## PLUM CAKE.

Tommy was sent for  
sixpennyworth of plums,  
and his mother warned  
him to pinch one or two  
to see if they were ripe.  
Tommy returned and  
said: "Here's yer tanner  
and the plums, Ma. The  
man wasn't looking, so I  
pinched the lot!"  
(Fountain pen to LIONEL  
THORNE, "May View,"  
York-rd., Rayleigh, Essex.)



Master (to inattentive student): Board,  
Brown; Board!  
Brown: Yes, sir, very!  
(Cricket Bat to R. O. WHITING, 141, Otley-  
road, West Park, Leeds.)

## JUST WAIT!

BILL: We've missed that train all through you,  
Fatty.  
FATTY: Never mind, we won't have to run for  
the next.  
(Fountain Pen to L. MITCHELL, 48, Mirfield Rd., Off  
Cecil Rd., Victoria Av., Blackley Est., Manchester.)

## OWE!

TEACHER: Now, Johnny, suppose I lent your  
father five pounds, how much would he owe me at  
the end of six months if he agreed to pay me back  
ten shillings a month?  
JOHNNY: Five pounds, Miss!  
TEACHER: Dear me, you don't know much about  
arithmetic.  
JOHNNY: More'n you know about my father!  
(Fountain pen to RAYMOND DAVEY, Wesleyan Manse,  
Randfontein, Transvaal, South Africa.)

## CHEAPER.

"Hoo much do ye  
charge for pullin' oot a  
tooth," asked the Scotch-  
man painfully.  
"Three shillings,"  
replied the dentist.  
"Mon, that's a lot o'  
money. Will ye loosen it  
a bit for saxpence an' I'll  
pull it oot ma'self?"  
(Fountain pen to A.  
GOTLIEB, 330, The Terr.,  
Wellington, N.Z.)

## BEEF!

ALBERT: My brother is  
so strong he can knock a  
wall down.  
TOM: Well, my brother  
is so strong he can get a  
bull, squeeze it, and he  
will have an oxo cube!  
(Fountain pen to THOMAS  
QUINN, 35, Sheldon St.,  
Clayton, Manchester.)



THE HISTORIC WONDER TALE THAT IS MAKING HISTORY!

# BEWARE- THE BLACK / BATTLE-AXE



The Mighty  
Moving  
Chronicle of  
the Avenging  
Knight,  
By  
JOHN  
HUNTER.

## Out At Sea.

NEVER had Maltort been so pleased to see the three rogues as he was when he got the first glimpse of Wat's great shoulders rolling through the doorway. He hastened to meet them, and saw that their faces were wreathed in smiles.

Wat greeted him and said: "News, jester. But first a bite to eat and some drink." He roared for the drawer, and great pots of the good, red wine, some cold meat and rough bread, were placed before them.

"We ha' found a ship," said Wat. "'Tis but a little ship, but staunch and true, and she'll sail the seas with any craft an I get my hands on her steering oar. We plan to take her ere the sun rises. We need kill nobody, which will please the knightling." He added this sentence casually, as though he purveyed, in passing, a piece of rather uninteresting information.

Maltort nodded gloomily. "My lord is not here," he said.

"Why? Where is he?" Now they perceived how downcast Maltort was, and their faces lit with some apprehension. During their long period of adventuring with him, Guy had endeared himself to them, scoundrels though they undoubtedly were.

Maltort told of Skelpane's invitation, of how Guy had accepted it and how he, Maltort, had strange forebodings regarding it.

"'Tis likely enough that I am being the fool that I look," he said. "And yet I cannot shift it from my mind that naught good will come of it. I like not that Skelpane. Too smooth. Too smiling. And his eyes are thinking all the time, if that tells you what I mean."

Wat swore, which indicated that Wat was very disturbed.

"Like him not?" he echoed. "You were a fool in truth an you did like him. Now I ha' done this and that in my time, and I don't deny it, though I believe good St. Christopher will see me through at

the last, him being a great traveller and knowing the temptations of a shipman. But beside this Skelpane I am a saint myself. Never a black deed was done at sea or ashore but that he has done its match. Rogue I be, more's the pity—but black-hearted villain is he, Master Fool, and for that you can take the word of Wat. How say you, Dickon, and Son of John?"

They nodded agreement, and Son of John, in his quiet fashion, observed: "An the lordling has gone with Skelpane, no good will come of it. What would Skelpane want with him save to serve himself? Naught he cares for a man who wins a fight. 'Tis something deep and dark that's afoot."

Maltort got up hurriedly, filled with apprehension. "Let's away to his ship and see what's toward," he urged. "And without delay."

They finished their meat and wine hurriedly and they came with him to the blackness and the bluster of the night; for a strong south-west wind had now risen and was threatening to lift to gale force.

"I know where she lies," said Wat, as they buffeted their way along. "An you wish, Jester, we'll steal a little boat and pull out to her. The *Sainted Ladye*, he calls her, in sooth. 'Tis a pretty name, with a left-handed smile in it for those who know Skelpane as I do know him."

They came to that section of the quays off which the *Sainted Ladye* had lain, and they saw nothing.

Maltort said shakily, quietly, slowly: "The ship hath gone . . ." The three shipmen stood and looked at each other. "Dark work," muttered Dickon uneasily. And Son of John added: "I had my fears about it directly Maltort did tell us."

And then Wat roared: "By all the saints, I'll have the tongue of that Skelpane an he's harmed the little lordling. An I follow him to his great house in the Chepe, I'll tear the heart out of him, though they hang me after for it at the Lud Gate."

He took Maltort's arm in a great grip. "Hearken," he said. "Lower down is a French ship. She is called *Lucette*. She is the little ship we marked; and her crew lie drunk ashore, with never even a dog aboard her. Ever since noon we have watched them putting wines and foods aboard her against a voyage in the morning when the tide does swing. Now a gale is upping from the south-west, and I know the south-wester as a man knows his own brother. Many a time and oft have I fought him along our own good Wessex coast, and glad I've been to run into any port with my mast bare and my ship all but sinking. Yet there is haste in this. An you're willing to risk yourself with me, I'll get you through. Wilt sail to-night?"

"But where?" gasped Maltort; who, as has already been seen, was never any good when it came to ship matters.

"London," said Wat grimly. "'Tis the only place where we know at the last we shall find Skelpane. And when we find him, if we find not the knightling, too, well and right, then Skelpane hath taken his last voyage." He lifted his face to the moaning wind. "Hearken, St. Christopher. An' you have not any pressing business with a great lord or, maybe, a prince, who sails the seas this night, run alongside your old friend Wat and see him through. There shall be many candles at any altar you like to mention, an the thing is done properly."

Maltort swallowed hard, thought of Guy, and said: "Any matter that you say, Wat, I will do."

Wat was instantly the ship's captain. He thrust into the hand of Son of John some gold coins and said: "Run you to the Coq d'Argent, settle our



score, and tell mine host that the matter of the moneys I owe him shall be settled when next I come to Bordeaux. Then haste you after us to the *Lucette*."

Son of John tore off. Wat added, by way of explanation for his extraordinary display of honesty: "I would not settle the score, but I may have to come here again. The debts can wait."

They fought their way in the teeth of the increasing wind down the quays. Dickon said: "'Tis higher, Wat. Will that little ship outsail it?"

"She has to," said Wat grimly. Maltort said nothing. He was afraid, for he was one of those unfortunates who have a horror of the sea, though his recent voyagings had cured him of sea-sickness. There are some folk, however, who can never travel on the great waters and find pleasure in it, and Maltort was one.

However, he did not protest. He knew that Wat, Dickon and Son of John were taking a gigantic risk with their eyes open—knowing the risk full well—and all for the sake of Guy. To have protested about his own fears would have been ingratitude. After all, he had known Guy since he was a baby, and must love him. But these three men were seoundrels, pirates, land robbers, who hitherto had sought only their own pleasures. They knew full well that they might be drowned ere morning; that on an ordinary commercial voyage they would have lain snug in port all night; yet they were willing to sally forth on Skelpane's trail, without hope of any gain, with gigantic risk of death, just to save Guy. Maltort felt eternally grateful to them.

Son of John breathing quickly, overhauled them just when they got to the section of the Gironde's shore-off which lay the *Lucette*. Hard by was an estaminet. Its windows were warmly lighted, barred against the blustering wind, and from within it came the sound of high singing.

"They're in there," said Wat. "And there they may stay to find their boat gone. What said mine host, Son of John?"

Son of John grinned. "There was a little matter of argument over the loan. And I told him that he need take nothing or keep his mouth shut; which he did, and took payment for what we had had and said he hoped our ship was sunk."

"Ungrateful," muttered Wat. "That comes of being a good customer. Where's a boat?"

They found one, and they made a somewhat perilous voyage in it across the long swells that ran up the wide estuary from the sea. Maltort, sitting astern, with the black water running high within an inch or two of him, decided that, there and then, his fate was decreed. Yet they bumped at last against the *Lucette* and Wat hoisted Maltort aboard.

She was a little ship, about as big as a modern fishing smack, and built on much the same lines, though, of course, differently rigged. In fact, with changed rig and some slight differences in hull, her kind may still be seen, running out of the little French ports into English ports, like Poole and others, bringing slates, shingle, etc. They are always gaily coloured, for the French and the Germans and Dutch have a nicer taste in those matters than have we.

The *Lucette* was immensely strong as to timbers, built rather more skilfully than most ships of her time—she had, in fact, been built at Genoa, where some of the world's greatest sailors then made their headquarters—and if any ship of her tonnage could outride the gale, she was the one.

Wat muttered: "An I can get her out, and she will hold across the wind till we round the head of Brittany, we ha' won through." He roared orders, and Son of John and Dickon



THE BOW-STRING'S LAST TWANG.—The fellow with the bow slicked an arrow to its string and drew it back. The other flung his knife and cut the cord and the fingers that drew it.

hastened to obey them. Maltort aided in hauling up the anchor; the great mainsail, with its blackened red device of a hovering falcon, was shaken out a little, and closely reefed below, and the *Lucette* shuddered and took it.

Maltort never appreciated properly the seamanship



of Wat as he carried that little ship out through the Gironde and into the teeth of the great south-wester. A modern shipman would have stood back in amazement and admiration of the great ruffian, of his cunning use of sail and steering oar, of how Son of John and Dickon obeyed every yelled order with precision and speed; of how Wat used the very wind that threatened them so that it aided them, taking advantage of every little shift in it, every lull.

He was like a clever chess player slowly penetrating the almost impregnable defences of a clever defensive player. Every move tended towards a gradual gaining of ground. And at last they ran the bar.

Maltort sobbed aloud. She took greenness and whiteness sheer across her, so that she was engulfed. She seemed to stagger like a stricken man in battle. Wat was thigh deep in water, with Dickon beside him, pushing the oar over, and Son of John at the ropes, handling the great sail.

She lifted. Her head, faltering, swung north-west. She heeled as the gale hit her tiny rag of a sail, and, with a long shuddering slide, she pulled clear and threshed across the gale's screaming face.

They shaved the Ile d'Oleron by a hundred feet. So close were they that they could see the white heads of the great breakers.

But the *Lucette* held. She made marvellously little leeway for a ship of her time. The Genoese boatbuilders knew their job.

Wat could now only steer by the wind. He had no compass, and there were no stars to guide him. Yet he knew the wind was south-west, and so he knew that as long as he kept it on his port side—he they called it larboard then—he must be heading north-west.

The seas simply ran across the *Lucette* all the time. She carried a pocket-handkerchief of sail, and Wat thanked St. Christopher again and again that that sail was brand new, that all her gear was new and strong, and that her stout mast, while it groaned and creaked and threatened to tear itself and the deck clean away, held.

All night they threshed on. It is almost true to say that only one other man in all England could have brought the *Lucette* through it, and that man was Matt Skelpane himself.

Wat never left the oar. Dickon and Son of John worked unceasingly under his orders, helping him now and again when the great oar threatened to master him and kick him outboard under the thresh of the waves at its massive blade.

And so, slowly at last, but welcome, grey light lifted eastward, to show a grey and green and tortured sea, white-headed and wind-threshed—and, away to starboard, distant, the coast of Poitou.\*

Maltort clawed his way against wind and water to Wat's side. "Let me fetch meat and drink," he begged. "Naught have I done through the night, and you must all be hungry."

Wat nodded. Dickon stood by Maltort to open and close the hatch. They chose a moment when the sea's run eased, and Maltort slipped below and the hatch was shut on him. He collected two bottles of wine, some bread and some fresh southern French cheese, and hammered on the hatch. Dickon opened it for him at a right moment and he staggered to the deck with his provisions.

They ate and drank, and Wat altered her course slightly. Now they could see exactly where they were. Wat reckoned that it would take them forty hours to round Ushant, and once clear of it they had a clean north-easterly run right up Channel. Even if the gale still held, it would be then behind them, and they would race for London.

The *Lucette* was still behaving well, and so it was decided that all should get some snatches of sleep

in turn. Maltort and Son of John took the first stretch, for Son of John was a more dependable steersman than Dickon when a gale was blowing, though Dickon was more cunning at the job in warfare. He, however, would take risks that the quieter Son of John would avoid.

Later, Wat and Dickon went below, and, at mid-afternoon, all four of them were once more on deck, refreshed, with more food and drink taken, and with the great inward bend of Brittany plain to be seen by them. But the gale held on.

They were holding far out from the numerous islands, and now Wat was confident that unless ill-luck befell them their little ship was going to win through. Even Maltort now believed it. He had grown accustomed to her shuddering and groanings, even to the great swirling rushes of water across her decks, and the fact that she was still afloat had done much to reassure him.

All of them were caked in salt rime, but now their hopes were high. She was probably travelling at about seven miles an hour, land measure, which was remarkably good.

The luck that they deserved was theirs with the sunset. The gale began to abate, as it often does on the sinking of the sun. The clouds were broken, and through the flying wrack of them they saw the stars.

Wat said: "'Tis ended. We ha' won through. Now, St. Christopher, hast served me well, and I shall never forget you."

Maltort could perceive the lessening fury of the waves. They still ran in great rollers, but they did not tear and crash at the boat so much. She rode more easily, and was faster.

Wat told Maltort to go below and sleep, and he split watches for the night. Maltort dropped into dreamless slumber, and it is worthy of note on behalf of the three ruffians, that they did not wake the deformed man up, but worked the ship themselves all through the night—two on deck and one below—until dawn.

Dawn brought sunshine, a fine fresh wind, and a long swinging sea—and Ushant in the distance. By midday they had rounded it, the great sail was spread fully, and, leaving the pirate-infested Channel Isles to the south, they headed briskly up-channel, the little *Lucette* dipping and curtsying bravely, as though she knew that she had performed a valorous task over the past forty hours.

Wat took Maltort's arm. "Look, Master Fool," he said, "to your left as we go, and soon shall you see the white cliffs of our England. We are home!"

### The Land Robbers.

THE *Sainted Ladye* weathered the storm, as was only to be expected of a ship owned and sailed by Matt Skelpane, who assisted Felton, his shipmaster, through the night until he was sure that all need for worry had passed.

By the next morning Guy was recovered from his stunning and fully awake to the fact that he had been treacherously used and was in the hands of a foe. However, he saw nothing of Skelpane all that day, nor the following night, during which he found that the ship rode more steadily, and that the waves ceased to buffet at the outer wooden wall of the dark little cabin in which he was confined.

By mid-morning of the following day, the *Sainted Ladye* was making good progress, and Guy was brought above decks. The ship was, for those days, a fast one, and she had gained a considerable distance on the *Lucette*, apart from her several hours' start. So Guy, when he reached the deck, saw, away to larboard, a great island.

He spoke to one of the two armed men who escorted



him, and one of them said curtly: "'Tis the Isle of Wight." He was taken to where Skelpane sat in his luxurious cabin in the high, castled stern of the ship. Skelpane briefly explained the whole situation to him. The villain made no bones about it. He intended to approach Fulk de Brion and offer to sell him Guy's life. If Fulk did not consent to make the purchase, he, Skelpane, would assist Guy to lay the matter before the Court at Westminster, and his moneys would help to push the claim. Meanwhile, Guy could eat with him if he wished.

Now Guy was so hungry and thirsty that he consented, and, having had a good meal, was again allowed on deck.

The ship was bowling along bravely enough, hugging the coast, and Guy saw the white cliffs of Sussex lift ahead. To his surprise, he found that the voyage, so far as he was concerned, ended on the Sussex coast at the growing and important port of Winchelsea. He would go overland from there, along the packhorse tracks to London, as a prisoner.

They ran under the walls of Winchelsea late that night. The vast expanse of marshland that now exists, was then covered by the sea, and what we now know as one of the most beautiful and dreamy old walled towns—Winchelsea—was one of the most important Continental trading ports in the country, heavily garrisoned, and always with many ships riding outside its walls.

Matt Skelpane was so well known at the port, and was of such influence, that, late though it was, the sea gates were opened and he was allowed to land.

Guy was taken ashore in a great chest. He was bound hand and foot and gagged, and nobody asked what the chest contained for the simple reason that Skelpane said that that was his private business.

Skelpane had an agent in the town, and this man, within half an hour, secured pack-horses, and, with six men as escort, Skelpane rode northwards across the winding pack-horse tracks towards London. Of roads there were none in that district at that time.

Outside Winchelsea, Guy was taken out of the chest, released of his bonds and seated upon a horse. He was dazed and nearly suffocated, and for some time he rode without speaking; but at last he recovered. His first feeling, despite his captivity, was one of relief at finding himself in England once more. He knew he was in the land of the south Saxons, and that it was called Sussex therefore, but beyond that he knew very little.

A man rode to either side of him, sword drawn. His mount was a poor hack, the mounts of the rest of the party being fine horses. He had, therefore, little chance of escape. Yet a chance came.

They were crossing a high, wooded ridge, when something sighed through the air, and the man on Guy's right screamed, hand to throat, and went writhing sideways from his saddle, an arrow buried in his neck to its feathers.

Guy swung his horse sideways, snatched the bridle of the now riderless animal, and slammed with his heels. His mount lifted under him. He saw the sword of his other escort lift and whirr, and, as it came round and down he jumped from one saddle to the other, so that he left the hack and bestrode the finer animal



TOLL OF THE DEVIL-PRIESTS.—They came to a clearing where white-robed men chanted before a white stone. And Guy's captor hurled himself at their feet, crying: "I have brought a sacrifice for the old gods!"

of the dead man, while the sword struck the leather of his former saddle.

Skelpane roared orders. Guy put his horse at a gate, and as it took off another arrow sighed through the darkness and struck into the horse's neck so that it collapsed in mid-air and flung Guy to the ground.

There was confusion in the darkness. Skelpane knew only too well that his little band, formidably armed though it was, had been attacked by some wayside robbers and masterless men. He was frantic not to lose Guy, yet the only chance of escape



from the hidden marksmen that presented itself was hurried flight.

Another of the escort died under an arrow. Guy scrambled beneath the rough wooden gate into the field beyond, and was about to get up and run when something came on to his back with terrific force. He half-turned and found himself bestrode by a powerful, hairy man, roughly clad in a leathern jerkin. This man held a great knife just above his eyes and hissed.

"Silence—an you wish to live."

With the knife-blade so close, there was nothing for it but to lie still and quiet, while Skelpane's men tried to rally. They failed. Skelpane shrieked an order, and, instead of heading for London, drove back for Winchelsea. In that he displayed an intelligence Guy's captors failed to perceive. They did not know their Skelpane.

With the vanishment of the little troop, Guy's captor straightened himself, put to Guy's collar a hand only equalled in size by the hands of Wat or Simon the Serf, and hauled him to his feet as though he hauled a child. The man spoke broad Saxon interlarded here and there with crude and often mispronounced Norman French. He dragged Guy with him and loosed a low and musical whistle. In a short time three other men, very similar to him, drifted out of the darkness.

Guy realised that he had fallen into the hands of savage and desperate men, out of the law, liable for the rack and the rope if caught. He was dragged into the wood and to their camp.

### The Last of the Druids.

THEY lived in a wattle hut they had made in a very thick part of the forest. Guy rapidly learnt that their attack on Skelpane's cortege was the cause of quarrel among them. The fellow who had captured him had, apparently, been opposed to the ambush. The others had upheld it and executed it. They carried long, very rough bows made of English yew, which, already, archers were discovering, made the finest longbows in the world.

They argued and quarrelled among themselves. The third man said that the assault was madness—on so powerful a retinue. The other two very rightly pointed out that had a third bow been at their disposal—instead of skulking in the field—they would have emptied all the saddles of Skelpane's lot, secured the horses, and rich booty. They were, of course, absolutely right.

And the prisoner. . . . The two spoke with contempt of the prisoner. Why did the third man take him? Why not slit his throat right away and be done with it? What was that? Ransom! They laughed.

Whereon the third man got up and drew his knife. Guy, whom they had bound about the ankles with cowhide, lay and watched. He knew that his life hung by a thread. These men were as near to being wild beasts as might be. One of the other two had words of wrath flung into his teeth. He yelled something and jumped up, snatching for his bow, and Guy saw a strange and curious fight.

The man who had the bow slicked an arrow to its string like lightning and drew the cord back. The fellow with the knife, standing but a few feet from him, seeing arrow-headed death about to leap at him, flung his knife and the knife cut the bowstring and the fingers that drew at it, so that the bow fell to the ground.

Whereon the fellow with the knife jumped in at his partly-mutilated and erstwhile comrade and, snatching the knife in a quick, stooping movement, stabbed him to death.

It was all so sudden and so terrible that Guy felt his senses swinging. Yet it was not all. The other

bowman, seeing his comrade in grumbling so rapidly and awfully killed, tried to avenge him—forgetful of the third man's skill at throwing a blade. He had not made one stride with the axe he snatched up before he, too, went choking downwards to the grass, the knife-hilt standing in his chest like the black finger of death . . . pointing. . . .

The knifer deliberately withdrew his blade and looked round just as deliberately. He had killed his comrades, as was inevitable during one of their fierce, wild and uncontrolled quarrels, and he was alone with the lad he had captured.

He seated himself over Guy, a terrible and grotesque squatting figure, the knife-blade wiped. He kept feeling its point with his finger-tip. And he talked.

"Why," asked he, "did you ride as captive with yonder riding?"

"Hearken," said Guy. "I was being cruelly used by yonder man whose name is Skelpane. I have, in my own country, a fair heritage, and any man who takes me thither shall receive a rich reward, freedom for all his life, and a fief to hold for ever."

The man pondered this. "Where would that be?" he asked.

"In the country of the West Saxons," said Guy. "Wessex."

The man pondered once more. He had vaguely heard of the country of the West Saxons. It was a long way away—right across Sussex and the great dark hills where the dark old Shapes of the dead and forgotten gods roamed, those hills where the troglodyte yet stole forth and stayed on the edges of the gleaming high pools when the wan moonlight invited steel for sacrifice. He knew all about the Druidical and Neolithic ghosts of the South Downs. He always imagined he had seen them.

The man put the knife point down to Guy's chest. Guy lay perfectly still, though his hands were free. He knew that any movement would result in instant death.

Then the knife blade was lifted and again examined. Its holder said: "I would like a field and a cow and a bull, and a little house."

"You shall have them," said Guy.

The man grunted and cut Guy's leg bonds. "Come," he said. He plunged off into wild country. Sussex has ever been, of all the counties near London, the most undeveloped, mainly because it has had so few big roads cut through it. In those days there were vast tracts, like the Ashdown Forest, where anything might happen, where many strange and terrible men lived, out of the way of the travellers on the pack-horse trails, where high and low justice did not reach, and where the King's mandate could not run for the simple reason that the King's men could never enforce it.

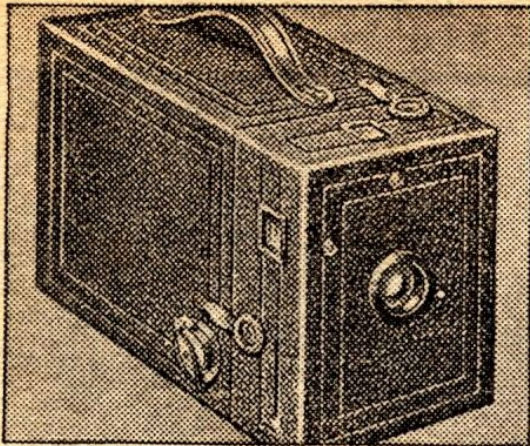
Now as his captor dragged Guy through the trees, across the wild country, Guy heard the sound of low, sweet singing. It was terrible singing. It held a note that was old, as though down through the blackest of the ages came an echo of something sinister.

They came to a clearing. Some white-robed men officiated at some ceremony, and in the midst of the clearing a great flat stone stood—a sacrificial stone.

And Guy's captor, suddenly hurling him forward so that Guy fell prone by the stone, knelt, head down, arms flung sideways, and panted: "Highest ones. I have slain two men in quarrel and fear the old gods. I have brought a sacrifice for them."

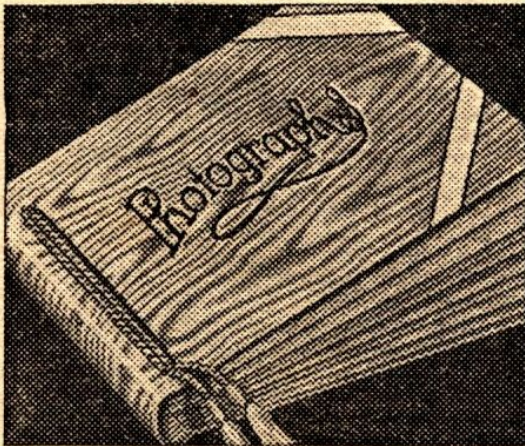
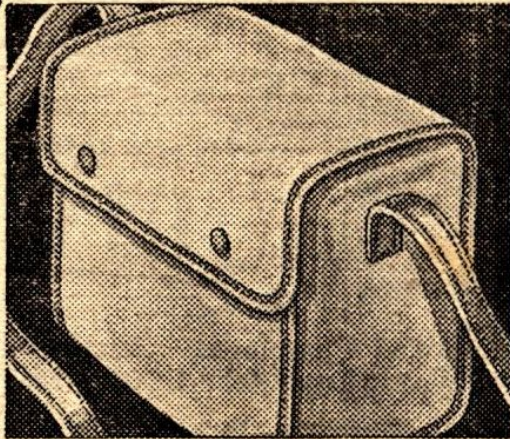
With his friends far away, Guy has no chance to save himself from the sacrificial stone of the fanatic priests. But there's a dramatic surprise in the next smashing instalment of this grand serial.





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**THE BOY MAGICIANS—CHAMPION BUTTON BUSTERS—PUT THE KIBOSH ON THE YELLOW PERIL IN THE EXCRUCIATING CHRONICLE BELOW!**



**Pig-tails and Pantaloons—Anathema to the Kid Conjurers—Show a Yellow Streak When Those Globe-trotting Magic Makers Bite the Tongue of the Dragon!**

**Visibility—Bad!**

**S**NOTRY MILLER, Bill Westlake and their fat pal Podger, the daredevil trio of globe-trotting stunt artists, were exploring the native quarter of Shanghai.

"So this is China!" observed the boy millionaire leader of the adventuresome trio. "C'mon, boys—let 'em know we're here!"

Snorty, Bill and Podger opened their lungs and gave forth their war cry.

"Whoopeeeeeee!"

Snorty and his pals and Doc Pettigrew, the solemn old explorer and writer who was Snorty's guardian and who accompanied them on all their travels, had only that day arrived in Shanghai, after a tour of Tibet and Siberia in Snorty's wonderful airship.

Never before had the Whoopee Boys met such thrilling and interesting adventures, or made so many discoveries. They had even reached the walls of Lhasa, sacred city of Tibet where reposed the secrets of the ancient dynasties of Tibet and China. The Grand Lama had refused them admittance, and they had been lucky to escape with their lives. They had learned that a band of Chinese robbers had broken into the temple, and made off with the sacred jewels, and Snorty & Co. had made a compact with the Grand Lama, whereby they were to be admitted into the mystic city of Lhasa, and have all its marvels and historic records revealed to them, should they succeed in recovering the jewels and bring them back to the city.

Their quest had brought them into China, and Doc Pettigrew was busy collating all sorts of information. He had been very busy in his scientific researches, too.

Out of the quicksilver mines of Siberia, they had

watched the convict miners working, their flesh rendered transparent by constant handling of the stuff. This had set Doc Pettigrew on the track of his greatest discovery—a colourless liquid product of quicksilver from the Siberian mines, a substance that not only made solid matter transparent, but rendered it invisible altogether!

"Reckon we've found High Street, China, all right!" grinned Bill Westlake. "Gee, there must be millions of Chinks in this town alone, by the look of things, and—Hallo!" He broke off, and his keen blue eyes narrowed. "See that yellow-faced old villain doing conjuring tricks in front of the crowd over there?"

Snorty looked, and a grim expression crossed his tanned, boyish face.

"Whee! If it isn't the same old sneak-thief who swiped the Doc's wallet when we were coming off the steamer at the Bund!" he exclaimed. "We'll teach that yellow heathen a lesson, and get the Doc's wallet back. There was a chunk of money in it, and some valuable papers." A gleam of fun entered Snorty's eyes. "Bill, I want you to do some magic for me. Take a dose of the Doc's mixture—quick!"

The crowd of Celestials in the narrow street were too absorbed to notice Snorty & Co. Snorty sprayed Bill Westlake with the Doc's disappearing mixture. The result was almost incredible. Bill gradually melted away into nothingness before his comrades' vision!

"Now, c'mon!" said Snorty to his invisible pal. "We'll show 'em a few magic tricks!"

Snorty strode forward dramatically, and waved his hands in front of the Chinese conjurer as though about to mesmerise him.

"Behold!" cried Snorty in a deep voice. "I



have you bewitched, you pigtailed chunk of yellow peril! I make you fall before me—like so!"

Snorty made a "magic" pass, and immediately the Chinese conjurer's legs swept from under him, and he fell to the ground with a wallop and a fiendish yell! The unseen Bill, of course, had inserted his invisible legs between those of the Chink and brought him down.

All manner of articles started to jump out of his pockets! There was an evil-looking knife, which of its own accord flew in the air and disappeared over the pagoda-like roof of the near-by bazaar! A bag of stolen money appeared from the folds of the old trickster's baggy trousers.

Doc Pettigrew's stolen wallet came out, too, and by "magic" means it passed through the air and into Snorty's pocket! The Chinese conjurer lay on the ground, yelling his terror, for he felt sure that he was under some magic spell!

Suddenly, sounds of shouting and weird noises broke upon the sultry air, and the crowd began to scatter before a dazzling cortege that wound its way down the narrow street. In the midst of the cortege was a magnificent sedan chair, carried by a pair of huge Mongolian giants, both over seven feet in height! Seated in the sedan, on rich, luxurious cushions, was a big, heavy-jowled mandarin.

"Hai!" cried one of the yellow couriers in front. "Make way there, for the great mandarin Fu Chang!"

The natives bowed in awe and grovelled before the evil, cruel-looking Fu Chang. Snorty & Co. stood at the side of the road, and gazed with great interest at this scene of ostentation. Bill had, of course, taken the antidote that made him visible once more.

"My word!" breathed Snorty. "Here's Chu Chin Chow of China himself, all done up doggy for his afternoon's airing!"

All at once the Whoopee Boys' grins faded. A cry of amazement burst from Snorty's lips.

A man—an Englishman, wild-eyed, haggard, unkempt and ragged—had dashed from the crowd and flung himself frenziedly in the path of the procession. And he pointed a trembling forefinger at the scowling figure on the sedan chair.

"See him! Fu Chang, the most powerful mandarin in Shanghai—rich, through gorging on the blood of his victims!" The words rattled harshly in his throat. His tones rose to a scream as he tottered closer, his finger shaking with rage and ague. "Look on him in all his power and finery—the leader of the Kai Tong—murderer, plotter, thief, ruler of pirates and the yellow hordes with whom he schemes to conquer China and rule the world—"

He broke off, shouting incoherently, as Fu Chang's bodyguard, at a hissing command from their master, started towards him.

Crazed as he was, the man sensed his peril and ran like a hunted animal into a narrow, dark alley with the band of Fu Chang's yellow myrmidons in pursuit.

Snorty, Bill and Podger exchanged tense, agitated looks. "That yellow devil will kill him!" muttered Snorty under his breath. "See the awful look on his face! If the Englishman is caught, it will be all up with him, and—Oh, great snakes! The yellow rats are after us, now! This is where we hop it!"

The mass of natives were creeping ominously towards the three lads. They had heard the Englishman's wild denunciation of Fu Chang—and the mandarin now wanted them killed, to silence their tongues lest they should repeat what they had heard.

They ran swiftly through the bazaar, sending goods and merchandise flying.

They came to a door at the other end. Bill crashed it open with one mighty kick, and they dashed headlong through. They found themselves in a narrow street on the other side, and Snorty gave a quick gasp as he saw a huddled form crouching in a doorway.

It was the Englishman! He turned his wild, crazed eyes upon them, and tottered forward.

"Save me from those yellow devils! If I fall into the hands of the Kai Tong, they will show no mercy! Fu Chang is the man known as the Dragon—the terror of China!"

Snorty and Bill seized the man and dragged him into the doorway of a near-by shop. It was a Chinese eating house, dingy and mysterious looking.

"No—not in there!" moaned the Englishman.



THE DEATH-BEETLE DOWNED.—Buzzing angrily, the deadly beetle swooped straight at Doc Pettigrew. There came a shot as Podger fired, and the awful thing fell to the floor.



"It is the restaurant of Ling Wu, one of the leaders of the Kai Tong. He works for Fu Chang——"

"Never mind! We gotta get out of this, and to blazes with Ling Wu!" rapped Snorty. "Dope those chairs and tables—quick!"

They yanked open the door and grabbed at a pile of chairs and tables ranged against the wall. A big, fat Chinaman behind the counter started to shout at them, but broke off with a gurgling cry and a prayer to Confucius when he saw Snorty spray his chairs and tables with the Doc's magic quicksilver dope—and saw those solid chattels vanish as if into thin air.

Snorty, Bill and Podger hurled the invisible chairs and tables into the street, and thus formed an unseen barrier between the narrow walls!

The bloodthirsty Chinese dashed towards their victims, only to cannon into the invisible obstacles across the roadway. Howls of pain and fiendish curses arose from the yellow men as they crashed over on top of one another, soon to form a sprawling, milling, fighting human heap.

Chortling with victory, Snorty, Bill and Podger ran off round the corner with the man they had rescued.

DOC PETTIGREW sat up late that night, poring over the rescued Englishman's papers and the amazing story they unfolded. Snorty, lying awake after his pals had gone to sleep, heard the old Doc go off to his own room.

Snorty's mind was revolving round the staggering incidents of the day, and he imagined the Dragon——

Hark! What was that? Snorty Miller started up in bed with a sudden gulp of alarm. Footsteps, creeping stealthily along the corridor outside, came to his ears. Swiftly he slipped out of bed, roused Bill and Podger, and the daredevil trio peered tensely out into the darkness of the corridor.

A short, squat form in the native dress of a Chinaman darted away from the bedroom occupied by Doc Pettigrew. Just for an instant they caught a flashing glimpse of an evil face, then the midnight marauder was gone!

The boys dashed along to the bedroom door. They flung it open, and then drew back, their breath sucking in with horror.

Doc Pettigrew lay in bed, peacefully sleeping, but creeping over the bedclothes towards him was a hideous shape—the shape of a giant beetle, its wings shimmering with a golden sheen, its body covered with thick metallic scales that protected it like armour.

"The Golden Beetle! Once it gets its teeth into the Doc, it will be all up with him!" Snorty's hoarse words awoke the Doc, who sprang up in bed with a low cry of horror.

With a shout Snorty sprang into the room, and Bill and Podger followed at his heels. He grasped the coverlet, and jerked the loathsome thing away from the helpless Doc. There was a shrill, sibilant hiss from the beetle as it hurtled backward from its victim, and a baleful green light stabbed from its eyes. Its golden wings spread out and, with a rapid, regular beating noise it darted about the room like a gigantic moth, snapping deadly venom at the three lads who had roused its fury!

Bill flung on his knees as the hideous thing swooped down towards him. It darted then at Podger, who struck at it madly with a pillow. Snorty had a chair and was making desperate efforts to get in one decisive, battering blow!

But Bill Westlake's hand had gone to the holster at the back of Doc Pettigrew's trousers, hanging on the back of the chair. Bill drew the Doc's automatic and took tense, steady aim at the hideous flying beetle just as it was dashing itself down on Doc

Pettigrew. *Crack!* The weapon spat a crimson jet of fire, and a bullet sped to its mark! It tore through the short scales at the back of the beetle's head. Next moment the loathsome creature lay writhing on the floor.

"Good old Bill!" gasped Snorty in a hoarse voice. "You saved us all that time!" Shudderingly, the boys removed the carcass of the Golden Beetle.

Next morning, Snorty & Co. accompanied Doc Pettigrew to the Chinese Government Building, where the amazing facts were placed before a highly-placed official. He was a suave, fat, imperturbable gentleman in European dress, whose almond eyes glimmered behind his gold-rimmed spectacles. With characteristic Oriental calm, he listened to their story.

"This mandarin Fu Chang, he is an eminently respectable and powerful man," he observed. "But we make investigation, and report to you our findings."

Snorty & Co. waited at the hotel whilst the Doc set off to pay another call—this time to a British Government official. But, as the day wore on, and Doc Pettigrew did not return, their impatience gave way to grave anxiety. Snorty's fears were confirmed when he rang up to make inquiries, and found that nothing had been seen or heard of Doc Pettigrew since leaving the hotel.

"He's fallen into the hands of Fu Chang, Snorty!" said Podger tragically. "Those yellow devils were after him, you know, and the Kai Tong spies must have been keeping watch on the hotel."

Snorty Miller nodded. His boyish jaw was set grimly.

"If the blessed Chink authorities can't do anything about this Fu Chang rascal, we'll have to work solo, that's all!" he said. "We gotta find out where they've taken Doc Pettigrew, and what they've done with him. I reckon it would pay us to have a sniff around Ling Wu's chop-chop dive. We may get some information there."

Snorty & Co. set out from the hotel and made their way into the native quarter. Snorty quickly located Ling Wu's eating-house, and they slipped in through a window at the back, which led into a store room.

The Whoopee Boys crept to the door opposite and peered through. It gave out on to the saloon at the rear of the restaurant, where slant-eyed Chinese were crouching over the fan-tan tables, gambling and drinking. The next room they looked into was an opium den. Curtains hung over walls and doors, and Snorty & Co. were thankful for these. They were able to hide behind these curtains and gradually make their way farther into Ling Wu's house of crime and mystery.

Snorty gave a sudden, warning hiss, and crouched low behind a curtain that screened off a small room from the rest of the cubicle. The sound of voices, speaking in low tones, came to their ears, and with breath held tensely, they listened.

Squatting on a mass of cushions in the room beyond was a short, thin Chinaman whose shrivelled, shrunken face was the personification of evil and cunning. His companion was a Russian seaman, a coarse, brutal, cunning scoundrel, cringing before the Celestial who was his master.

They spoke in English, the common language of the seaports.

"Everything is arranged then, Ling Wu," the man was saying, hoarsely. "The *Kalasin* arrives at the Bund to-night, with those boxes of bones from America. They're supposed to be the bones of the dead members of the tong—eh?" He gave a coarse laugh. "I wonder how you manage to get away with it, Ling Wu."



The yellow, withered face of Ling Wu was inscrutable.

"You know well," he said. "It is custom of tongs for bones of dead members to return to China. Me no get trouble with Customs over that. Me explain and pay good money, ask no questions, disturb no bones—you savvy?"

"Yes, I savvy!" chuckled the other. "But it's a small percentage of stiffs that you import into Shanghai, Ling Wu. If the authorities knew that the boxes were full of swag for the Dragon—the proceeds of robberies and murders that take place in London, New York, all the big cities of the world, and loot of the Chinese pirates on the Yellow Sea and the Yangtze Kiang—"

"No talkee like that, Gratinsky, or your bones rot, maybe, in Hangchow Bay!" murmured the Chinaman, softly, yet with a lashing menace in his tone. "You talk, no good business. I pay you good money. Dagon pay good money. Ev'lybody pay good, so long as no talkee. That good business—eh?"

"All right, Ling Wu," growled Gratinsky. "The lay is this, then—I get the boxes from the *Kalasin* when it arrives to-night, and have 'em carted to the Dragon's—"

"To the House of the Blue Lantern!" came softly, but incisively from the Chinaman.

The other gave a knowing grin.

"Sorry, Ling Wu! To the House of the Blue Lantern, of course!"

Snorty & Co. were trembling with excitement behind the curtain. They scarcely dared to breathe, even, as Gratinsky left the cubicle-like room, and brushed past them.

Ling Wu soon rose to his feet and shuffled away.

Ten minutes later the Whoopee Boys dropped from an upper window into the street, and vanished down a narrow alley!

It was getting dark when Snorty, Bill and Podger arrived at the waterfront along the Bund. The docks were full of shipping, and out on the Hwang Ho River the craft were numerous on the turgid water. Native sampans moved mysteriously about the river, like wraiths in the gathering gloom.

Snorty had made inquiries, and was able to recognise the low, squat hull of the steamer *Kalasin* lying at anchor some distance off the quayside.

Getting into conversation with an English seaman, Snorty was recommended to go to one Tom Fat, a Chinaman who kept a marine store just off the Bund. Tom Fat was a friend of all the English in Shanghai. His knowledge of the underworld of that city was, like Sam Weller's knowledge of London, "extensive and peculiar."

"The House of the Blue Lantern?" he said, and shook his head vehemently. "Bad house—no good. You boys try get in, you get caught. Yellow dogs stickee you with knife, or slit throat."

"So there's absolutely no way in without a certainty of getting nabbed?" queried Snorty.

"Sure thing!" said Tom Fat, smiling.

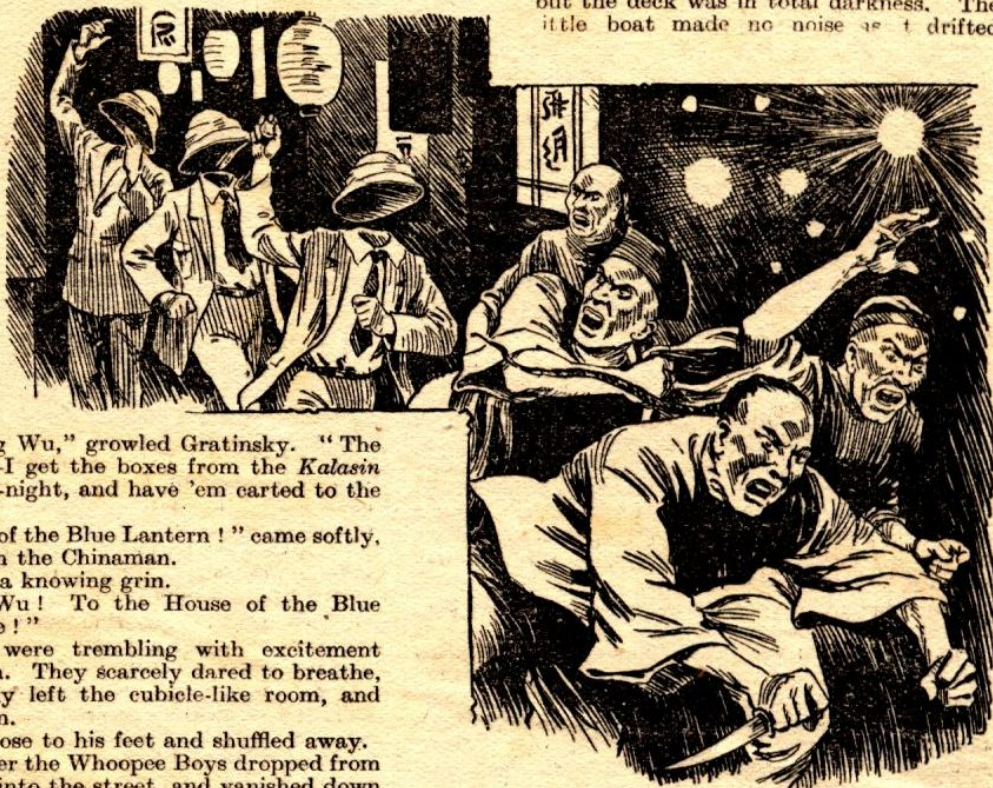
"That settles it, then!" Snorty said. "We'll try

the other plan. We know it velly risky, and we savvy that we may not come back. But you be a velly good sport, Tom Fat, and do as your Uncle Snorty tells you!"

Snorty had his way and half an hour later a small native boat put out from the Bund and slipped noiselessly through the darkness. A pigtailed boy was operating the paddle, and seated in the low hull were three huddled figures in cotton jackets and skirts and straw-mesh hats.

The trio were Snorty, Bill and Podger, on breathless adventure bent!

The boat went silently across the waters of the harbour towards the *Kalasin*. There were lights gleaming in the stern portholes of the tramp steamer, but the deck was in total darkness. The little boat made no noise as it drifted



**CHIVVYING THE CHINKS.**—With their heads rendered invisible by Doc. Pettigrew's mixture, the Whoopee Boys danced about like Dervishes before the scared Chinks, and threw their patent fireballs amongst them. Those Orientals fled from their sight like so many rabbits.

through the darkness under the *Kalasin's* bows. With the silence of ship's rats, Snorty & Co. wriggled their way up the anchor chain and slithered over the rail on to the deck.

Moving noiselessly, and with every sense alert for danger, the intrepid boys crept along the gloomy deck. A dark Chinese form arose from behind one of the forward hatches. Bill Westlake took the Chink's wrist in a grip that twisted the knife he had raised out of his clutch, and it fell with a dull thud on the tarpaulin below. At the same instant Snorty's hand went over the man's mouth, and Podger took him in a bearlike hug.

The Whoopee Boys quickly had him rolled up in the tarpaulin, effectually bound and gagged.

Several boxes were already on deck, having been brought up from the hold on the ship's winches.



Snorty inspected them in the darkness with gleaming eyes.

The boxes were specially constructed for the transportation of dead men's bones. They were not ordinary crates, but solid wooden, lead-lined cases with hinged lids, each lid fitted with a lock. And such locks presented no difficulty to the Boy Magicians, who had made a special study of the tricks by which Houdini had baffled the world.

The locks were silently opened, and they raised the lids. Gasps of wonderment escaped their lips. The contents were, not bones, but wads of cotton wool in which ingots and precious plate were wrapped. Each case contained booty worth many thousands of pounds.

Snorty & Co. dug out the swag with eager hands, until they had a pile of it on the deck.

"We can't carry this with us," said Snorty, "but it wouldn't be a bad notion to stick it in the fo'c'sle and make it disappear!"

It did not take long for them to carry the swag into the fo'c'sle, all the crew being ashore, and Snorty sprayed it with some of the Doc's disappearing dope. That pile of valuables vanished from sight in the darkness, and Snorty & Co. chuckled.

"Now to put our own living bones in the crates! They'll have three human treasures to cart ashore!"

Snorty, Bill and Podger got into the boxes, and closed the lids. The locks snapped fast again, but they knew that they could get out of those boxes just as soon as they wished!

It seemed that hours passed ere the scraping of boots sounded on the companion steps and heavy footsteps trod the deck. Then came the noise of boxes being shifted, and slung over the side.

At last, the cases were ashore, and Snorty, peering through a chink that he had managed to scrape in the lid with his knife, saw that they were in a narrow street. He saw Gratinsky rap at a narrow door, over which swung a lamp that cast an eerie, ghastly blue light through the gloom.

Snorty's heart pounded. The House of the Blue Lantern—the secret lair of the Dragon!

Snorty had his eye glued to his peep-hole inside the box. The door was opened, and the boxes were carried into a narrow, filthy-smelling passage. The soft-footed native porters carried the boxes down some steps, leading to a cellar. At the bottom they passed through a wooden door and then, at the end of the dank-smelling cellar beyond, a blue light flashed and the sharp, staccato voice of a Chinaman flashed a challenge.

Gratinsky, who was in charge of the midnight convoy, growled something that apparently was a password, for a section of sliding door glided open noiselessly, and the procession moved onward into the mysterious darkness ahead.

The sliding door closed behind them. Hunch-backed forms, with hands folded across their breasts, stood watching silently, impassively, whilst Gratinsky led on his convoy. The air was now tinged with a sweet, sickly perfume. The floor was covered in thick carpet—a contrast, indeed, to the squalid hovel through which they had just passed.

The boxes were taken into a large store-room leading from the main corridor, and the soft-footed porters seemed to melt away in the darkness. They heard the footsteps of Gratinsky padding away on the carpeted floor.

They waited until silence had settled on the lair beneath the House of the Blue Lantern. Then Snorty & Co. set deft fingers to work on the locks. Softly, the lids came open, and the Whoopee Boys crept forth.

"Whee!" murmured Snorty. "How's this for a den of mystery, fellers? They haven't taken out return tickets for those crates, and it strikes me we may have to stay down here for some bit, unless—" He snapped off with a gasp, and he and Bill and Podger ducked nimbly behind the boxes as a soft-footed Chinaman in a silk robe slunk past.

"He looks like one of the Big Mogul's confidential clerks!" grinned Snorty in the gloom. "What say we man-trail him?"

The three boys slipped away noiselessly, hugging the black shadows of the walls. They followed the Chinaman until they saw him slip through a narrow door, covered with ornate lacquer work. A light showed between the aperture, and they crept up to take a look-see.

They were gazing into a large chamber, like an Eastern salon, its walls decorated with fine mosaic work and hung with priceless tapestries, the floor covered with luxurious rugs and carpets. Seated on a heavily carved dais, with his giant Mongolian guards mounted on the marble steps on either side, was the fat, repellent figure of Fu Chang. He was draped in gorgeous silk robes, and he wore an amazing regalia, the huge diamonds of which scintillated on the reflected light from above.

Doc Pettigrew, his solemn old face pale and haggard-looking, was standing before the arch crook of the Orient. He was bound hand and foot by silk cords.

Fu Chang's voice spoke, soft yet edged with a deadly inflection.

"So, Doctor Pettigrew, I will say farewell to you before you die! You have found out far too much—you and those three boy whelps of yours! You have reported that I—Fu Chang the mandarin—am the Dragon. You have betrayed my secret to the authorities. Know you, Doctor Pettigrew, that the tentacles of the Kai Tong are too deeply rooted to be destroyed. From this country's four hundred millions of yellow population I can command an army that upon my word will plunge China and the whole civilised world into a maelstrom of murder and outlawry. To-night, at my word, the yellow hordes will come out of their rat-holes, athirst for killing and sabotage, and by the morning not a single white will be left alive in Shanghai; within a week the whole white population of China will be wiped out, and the wave of Yellow Peril will sweep towards Europe to destroy civilisation and set up the Dragon as King of the World."

Doc Pettigrew was regarding him steadily. "You are not a man, Fu Chang—you are a fiend!" he said through his gritted teeth. "Without warning, you will plunge the city into anarchy and death—"

"Yes—because of the interference of you and your boys!" sneered the Dragon. "Think of it, Doctor Pettigrew—not a white man left alive by the morning, and I shall reign in Shanghai, with the jewels of the Grand Lama of Tibet as my regalia!"

He stroked the dazzling array of gems that bedecked him, and something of their light was reflected from his narrowed eyes.

"This is the regalia you came to seek—eh, Doctor Pettigrew?" he mocked. "Gaze upon them once more, and bask in their beauty, before you die! I am going to make you amuse me ere you perish, Doctor Pettigrew. You shall see!"

He clapped his hands, whereupon two hunch-backed yellow servants glided forward, and removed the huge screen that faced the dais, from the other end of the chamber.

A hoarse cry of terror burst from Doc Pettigrew's lips and Snorty, Bill and Podger, watching from



behind the lacquered door, felt their hearts run to water at the sight revealed before them.

A huge red spider, as big as an octopus, was crouching on a web that it had spun across a tall wooden frame. A harsh, cackling laugh rang out from Fu Chang.

Fu Chang rapped a word of command to his two Mongolian giants. They stepped forward and removed the Doc's bonds. He fought frenziedly to get free, but they picked him up as though he were a babe and carried him towards the spider's web.

The Doc gave a despairing cry as the two giants tossed him upon the web—and there he lay, fighting desperately but unable to tear himself away.

Snorty & Co. had stood transfixed, but as they saw the fearful spider rouse itself and prepare to leap down the web upon its victim, they became galvanised into action.

Whipping out the knife that had been dropped by the Chinaman on board the *Kalasin*, Snorty, regardless of his own peril, sprang towards the frame. He slashed at the web with the long, curved blade, hacking madly at the sticky meshes that held the Doc in their grip.

Even as the tentacles of the spider groped down at him, Snorty freed the Doc, and they both sprang away from the now mutilated web.

Snorty & Co. and the Doc stood with their backs to the wall, facing their murderous enemies. Podger drew a deep breath and took a desperate chance with his ventriloquism. He shouted with his second voice, which seemed to come from the curtains behind Fu Chang's dais.

The shout had no meaning—it was just a yell, but its effect was instantaneous. With startled cries, Fu Chang and his servants wheeled in the direction from which that blood-curdling yell had come. And, when they looked round again—Snorty & Co. and Podger were gone!

The refugees dashed through a labyrinth of dimly-lighted corridors.

"This way!" yelled Snorty, and he sprang into an alcove, where they crouched in breathless suspense. Again Podger's ventriloquism came in useful. He directed his voice along a corridor to the left, and Snorty & Co. gave low chuckles when they saw the mob of Chinamen dash towards the sound.

When the rabble had gone, the Whoopee Boys and Doc Pettigrew slid off in the opposite direction!

They were in a dark, dingy thoroughfare close to the water. Running desperately, they reached the Bund and gazed across the turgid waters. From behind them came the low, rumbling murmur of the mob breaking loose.

The Kai Tong had been aroused!

Snorty pulled out a handful of fireballs—the coloured lights that stage magicians and illusionists use to add thrill and mystery to their tricks. He dashed them into the opening of the narrow street, and immediately the night darkness was riven by puffs of crimson, yellow and blue fire.

Then the Whoopee Boys sprang the biggest "stunt" known in the annals of mysticism! They sprayed their heads with the Doc's vanishing mixture, and danced before the startled Chinks—a group of headless, living corpses, yelling like wild Hottentots. The yellow mob turned, howling dismally, and scooted for dear life!

Snorty & Co. marched through the native quarter, yelling loudly and scaring the Chinks into the uttermost throes of terror.

Doc Pettigrew had scampered off for help, and Snorty & Co. kept the whole neighbourhood in a state of fear, until the soldiers arrived. The authorities had been stirred into activity at last, realising the

terrible danger of the Kai Tong that was now erupting in their midst.

Snorty & Co., whose heads had now miraculously returned to their bodies, made a rush into the House of the Blue Lantern, taking the secret passage-way by which they had made their exit. They reached the lair of the Dragon just as Fu Chang was about to make his getaway with the Grand Lama's regalia. The three boys dropped on him together, and there was a whirling fight in the Hall of the Spider. The arch-crook of China fought with demoniacal savagery, but Snorty & Co. held him down till the police and soldiers arrived. Doc Pettigrew took possession of the regalia!

Snorty & Co., seated in their hotel, chuckled as they watched the Doc making frantic notes of all that was happening. The Doc was working overtime, and no mistake!

"Well, we've made a bit of a mark in Shanghai, fellers!" grinned Snorty. "I think we'll hop back to where we've left the airship, and hit the trail—I mean, take the air—for Tibet. The old Lama at Lhasa will be tickled pink, Doc, when you hand him that grand regalia!"

Doc Pettigrew looked up, beaming through his eyeglasses.

"Yes, and I shall be the first man to have the secrets of Tibet and Ancient China revealed to me!" he said eagerly. "My boys, what a book I shall be able to write now!"

"You've said it, Doc!" grinned Snorty. "So much for China and the Yellow Peril."

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**BULLETS OF THE BLUE***(Continued from page 17.)*

engines were stopped. Ian manipulated the rudder controls, and the great dirigible dipped.

Johnny and Flight Sergeant Wills became infected with his feverish anxiety to save a life. From the adjoining compartment they pulled out three of the rafts—huge rubber contrivances, blown up. These they threw out as the great dirigible swept down low, trembling and shivering over the wide waterway between the ice.

They had the great satisfaction of seeing two of the ungainly rubber rafts splash down beside the figure on the parachute just as the air gave under the parachute and the whole contraption fell into the sea. They saw the ex-King Otto slash at the webbing of the parachute, saw him strike out frantically for the raft in heavy, sodden clothing, and watched until they knew that he was saved.

The whole manoeuvre had been exceedingly delicate. And the four in the control-room, not to mention the nine trusty R.A.F. mechanics at their different stations in the airship, heaved a sigh of relief as the great envelope jolted, and rose like an express lift, with a million purring, crackling voices. She had dipped far too low, and had been in danger of being dashed on the icebergs. A monster airship is not as manoeuvrable as a jazzy pursuit plane.

And now the four looked at one another a little blankly. It seemed they could do no more for the ex-King Otto of Waldenberg. Not even drop him a rope. They were a mile up already, and sweeping over the lead of water with a great drone of engines.

"We can't leave him there to freeze," said Johnny, voicing the thoughts of all.

"That we can't," said Ian determinedly. "We must devise a way of getting him back into the airship."

Suddenly all four looked up. There had come a startling interruption to their thoughts. The snarling thunder of an airplane engine. A daring plane must have dived down, and dipped right under the control cabin of the airship.

With one accord the four adventurers darted to the periscope mirror as the sound died as quickly as it had come. In the mirror they saw the plane, looping off to their right, like a silver bird in the chill blue sky.

They knew who it was before the Grand Duke Michael's savage growl broke the tense silence in the control-room.

"Count Venskysky! . . . The fiend flies like the death hawk he is. What's he after now?"

They were soon to learn. Through the ether there came a loud crackle on the radio. Air Commander Ian quickly moved to it, and manipulated it. It was such a radio as needed no ear-plugs. At the turn of a switch a voice spoke to the whole room.

"Count Venskysky of Waldenberg Republic speaking," said a sardonic voice in the blue. "Hallo. Hallo. Am I on?"

The famous commander of the airship assured him curtly that he was:

"Listen: Get this. Unless you surrender your prisoner, Count Shaunberg, I shall dive down on his ex-Majesty of Waldenberg and fill him so full of lead it'll take a crane to lift him."

They looked at one another aghast, the four tense-faced listening skyriders. It was an ultimatum. And none doubted but that Count Venskysky was in deadly earnest.

"What shall we do?" muttered Iron Michael

hoarsely. "By Heaven, I'll not see the King killed like a rat."

Ian had turned with jaw outthrust, eyes gleaming. He was speaking into the radio.

"If you do that, we'll drop our prisoner headlong," he promised grimly.

A silence. They were evenly matched then. Both had the same weapons with which to fight. Both sides had a prisoner. And Count Venskysky was evidently considering that aspect of the matter.

Air Commander Ian was thinking furiously. He was committed to a daring mission. He meant to see it through.

"Hallo, Airship"—it was Count Venskysky's voice again. "Will you exchange prisoners? I'll land in the water and pick up his ex-Majesty . . . in return for my leader."

Before Ian could answer, the Grand Duke Michael spoke with hoarse impulsiveness.

"No—no! Don't agree. There is a reason, a vital reason, connected with the Crown Jewels in the submarine."

Air Commander Ian nodded shortly. This Venskysky was dangerous. Neither his word, nor his actions could be trusted. He was best out of the way.

"Listen," the Air Commander's voice crackled. "There is level ice ten miles south. I will drop an ice anchor, and land an airplane. Then I will fight you—a duel in the air, to see who takes both. The winner takes all."

There was only the slightest pause. Then a sardonic laugh sounded.

"I am ready, Air Commander. To the death then. Let it zoom."

"Wait a jiffy." As Ian turned with blue eyes a-glitter Johnny stepped forward, his face flushed, earnest.

"I'll fight this duel, Ian," he said with quick breath. "You're—you can't be spared."

Ian stared grimly. Hearts were beating hard at that moment—when the Grand Duke Michael broke in:

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