

Boys' ^{2^D} Magazine

EVERY SATURDAY

TWO TEAMS
ON EACH
PLATE

FREE

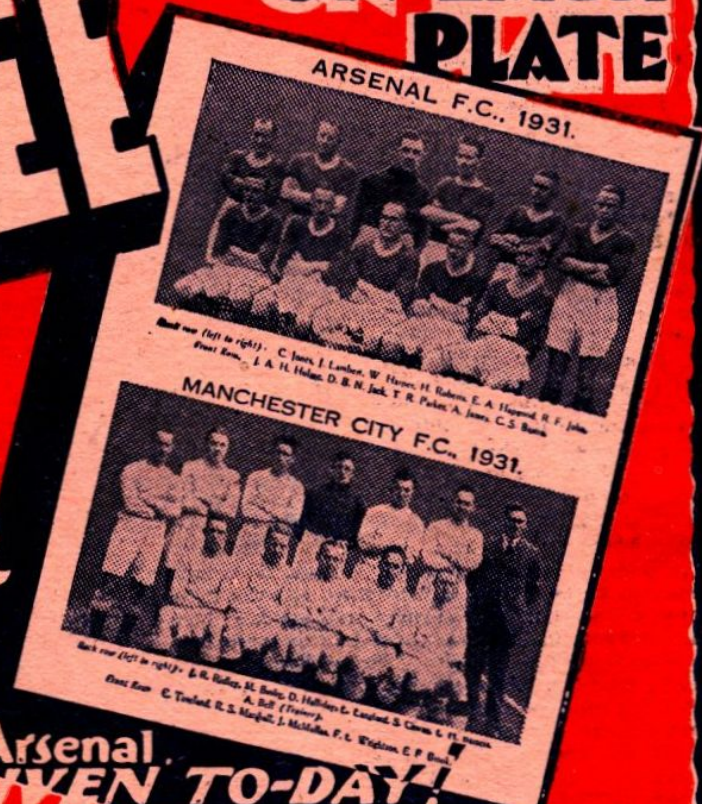
*Every
Week*

Manchester
City & The Arsenal

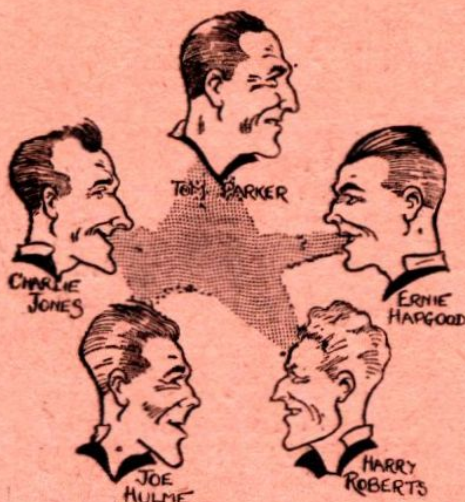
GIVEN TO-DAY!

SPLENDID SEPIA ART PLATES

of **FAMOUS FOOTBALL TEAMS**



OUR FLASHING FREE TWO-TEAM FOOTER PLATES!



The "Gunners."

HAIL to King Soccer! He's back from his summer holidays, and everybody's happy again!

First of all, let us hail the finest team of last season—the Gunners of Highbury—in other words, the Arsenal. Cup-winners in 1930, they followed this up by carrying off the League Championship last season with a record number of points. The Gunners were a wonderful side in every phase of the game and were only beaten on four occasions throughout the season, which is a wonderful record.

Much of the credit for this brilliant performance must be given to Herbert Chapman, the hard-working manager, who is now one of the greatest personalities in the game. Then there's Tom Whittaker, the trainer, once a player for the Reds of Highbury, one of the best wielders of the sponge and embrocation in the country.

But of course it's the players more than anyone who won the League Championship for the Arsenal, in addition to carrying off the London Combination Shield, the London Challenge Cup and the Professional Charity Shield.

Eight internationals and three others, who are good enough to be "capped" players, are the men who made the Gunners almost unbeatable last season. Harper, in goal, returned to the team last season after a spell in America. He prefers England to U.S.A., he says. And all the other former stars are ready for another season.

Of course, so far as the Arsenal Reserves are concerned, no one can stop them winning the London Combination. They've done it five years in succession—and they intend to make it the half-dozen!

With two such marvellous teams, it is only natural that the Arsenal should be considered the finest club in the country. And now the management are out to make the ground one of the finest in the world, too!

Manchester City.

AS the Arsenal are regarded as the stars of the South, the Manchester City club is coming to be known as the star club in the North—only they'll have to make a better showing than they did last season, when they finished eighth. But the City must be consoled, for they had a ton of bad luck one way and another.

Jimmy McMullan, the mighty midget Scots skipper,

In This Copy of the Mag. is Presented the First Dazzling Art Plate in our Grand New Free Gift Series. And Here's the Histories of the Two Teams: Manchester City and Arsenal.

was ill for some months last season and all sorts of other things happened. But the luck seemed to change when Dave Halliday was signed on from the Arsenal.

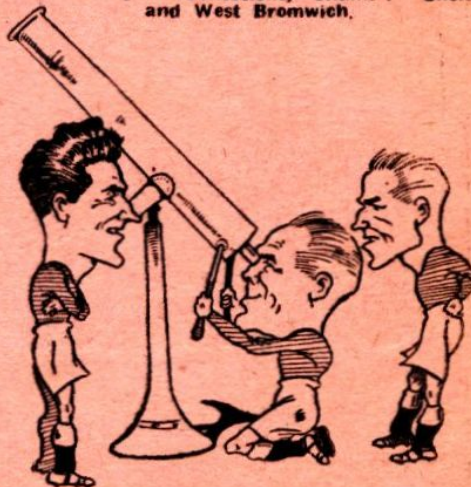
He was not the only transfer to the City during last season, either. Len Langford, the former Notts Forest goalie, was signed on by the "Light Blues." Len's a big chap who was a boxing champion when he was in the Army; he also won several high-jump contests.

Then in the forward line newcomers during the season were Race, a young inside-left from Liverpool; Ridging, a centre-forward from Tranmere Rovers (Dixie Dean's old club); Wrightson, a sturdy youngster from Darlington; Ben Boardman, from Stockport County; and Payne and Roberts, a complete left wing from Brentford.

And these chaps, together with Sam Cowan, the tall, good-looking centre-half, little Ridley and Bill Felton, at 'back; Eric Brook, the right-winger, who won a cap the previous season; Bobby Marshall, formerly of Sunderland; midget Jimmy McMullan, Matt Barrass and a few more will be upholding the City's traditions this season.

Eric Brook, the right-winger, who was a newspaper-boy a few years ago, was top goalscorer last season, with Dave Halliday a close second. Jim Ridley, the smallest full-back in the Football League game, held the record for appearances last season—he didn't miss one game!

Don't Miss Next Week's Stunning Free Two-Team Plate from your Collections, Chums! Chelsea and West Bromwich.



SOME SHOOTING STARS!—Halliday, McMullan (capt.), and Toseland, of Manchester City, take a dekho at a few of the 1931 League Champs. Can they emulate Arsenal's triumph this season?

(With which is incorporated "Pals.")

PHEEEP! THE FOOTBALL SEASON SHOOTS OFF—AND SO DOES THE MAG.'S MAGNIFICENT NEW EPIC TALE OF FALCON SWIFT!

Begin This Sensational Sporting 'Tec Yarn To-day, Boys!



The SHOOTING SLEUTH

AT LAST! FALCON SWIFT'S MOST AMAZING FOOTBALL CASE! TOLD IN A GIGANTIC BOOK-LENGTH YARN WHICH BEGINS BELOW!

A Whirlwind of Mystery and Excitement on the Green Arena. Every Word White-hot With Thrills.

.....
The Claws of Mystery.

THE silver nose of Falcon Swift's long, graceful Hispano Suiza felt its way gingerly into the ever-thickening crowd which thronged the road. But at last the Monocled Manhunter, with a chuckle, was obliged to bring the car to a complete standstill.

"Not much chance of our getting through this crowd, Chick," he said dryly. "My urgent business

THE MAN MONSTER—THE MONOCLED MANHUNTER'S MOST TERRIBLE FOE

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

in Halford must wait. Football, it seems, is of more importance."

It was Saturday afternoon, and the smoky, densely-populated city of Halford was giving itself up to the great winter game. It was the beginning of the season, and the great enclosure which housed the Halford Hotspurs was rapidly filling. The road in front of Falcon Swift's car was solid with eager humanity.

"I say, Boss," said Chick Conway, the famous Sporting Sleuth's boy assistant. "This must be the Hotspurs' ground!"

"It is," replied Swift, looking at Chick with an amused twinkle. "Kick-off in about five minutes. Would you like to see the match, laddie?"

"Would I!" exclaimed Chick breathlessly.

"Well, there's no reason why you shouldn't," continued the great detective, laughing outright. "I shan't need you this afternoon; my business in Halford isn't very exciting, and I think I can get through it by tea-time. Meet me at the Grand Northern Hotel at five o'clock. You'll find me in the smoking-room. We'll have tea, and then get on to London."

"You're a brick, Boss!" said Chick with alacrity. "Halford Hotspurs! The Wonder Team of last season! You remember how they won the Second Division championship, Boss? They were miles ahead of any other club, and this season they're playing in the First Division."

"Yes, I know," nodded Falcon Swift. "The Team which Couldn't Lose! I'd like to see the game myself. But you'd better hurry, or you won't get in."

"I'll get a two-and-four seat in the stand all right," said Chick, as he hopped out of the car. "Couldn't you come, too, Boss?"

"Quite impossible," smiled Falcon Swift. "Business before pleasure, Chick. All right; see you at the Grand Northern Hotel at five o'clock."

Chick went off joyously. The great queues had practically all gone in when Chick arrived at the rear of the great grandstand, where the turnstiles



THE UNSEEN WATCHER.—Falcon Swift saw a strange scene through that grating.

for the more expensive seats were situated. Chick paid his two-and-fourpence, and passed through the turnstile into a narrow passage, which was only just wide enough for one person at a time to pass through in comfort. It was the usual safeguard against rushing tactics.

The passage led straight for about ten feet, and then turned sharply. Chick took the bend blithely, and saw steps a little way ahead of him—steps which

led upwards into the body of the grandstand. A uniformed attendant was standing at the bottom of the steps, and a couple of the Hotspurs' supporters had just passed him, and were running up the steps into the stand.

Chick was subconsciously aware of the fact that a little altercation over a supposedly bad half-crown was going on at the turnstile, in his rear. But he scarcely took any notice. He was round the bend now, and momentarily alone—except for the uniformed attendant.

Then something happened. Something staggering. Without warning, two great metal claws leapt out of the wall of the passage, barring Chick Conway's progress. He jerked up against them before he could stop.

"What the dickens——" he began, amazed. Two other claws, like lightning, came out in his rear. He gasped as the four claws closed in upon him. But before he could utter any outcry he was seized in a steel grip and whipped through a black slot in the wall. There was a click, and the wall had closed, and Chick was in pitch darkness.

Outside, in the passage, two men were just coming through, laughing and talking. They had seen nothing; they suspected nothing. They passed the uniformed attendant and went up into the stand. The whole amazing incident had happened almost within the space of a split second. "Help!" shrieked Chick Conway, dazed with alarm. But that invisible door which had closed upon him was of solid steel and so sound-proof that not a whisper penetrated to the other side, where the public continued to pour, in a careless crowd, into the grandstand.

Chick's head was tingling, and his heart thudded swiftly as he realised the cause. A wisp of his hair had been literally torn from his head as it had got caught in the closing door.

A dazzlingly-bright light suddenly split the darkness, and Chick was blinded as it unwaveringly played upon his face.

"He'll do!" came a gloating, chuckling voice out of the blackness.

The light snapped out, and there was a metallic click as a circle of steel was whipped round Chick's body, pinioning his arms to his sides.

"What—what's all this?" he gasped. "Who are you? What are you doing with me?"

"Ask no questions," said the voice. "March!"

Something round was dug into his back, and he was forced forward. He blundered through the inky blackness, and soon he became aware of a little light glowing just ahead. He now saw that it was an electric bulb, fitted into the roof of a cage-like contrivance which formed the end of the passage.

"Inside!" commanded the voice. Chick had no chance of disobeying; he was pushed from the rear, and he blundered into the cage. There was a metallic clang as a steel grille shot across, imprisoning him.

He spun round, but at that second the floor of the cage dropped from beneath him, and he caught his breath in with a gulp. That cage was a lift, and at lightning speed it was descending—down, down into the very bowels of the earth!

And outside, on the glorious green turf of the Hotspurs' enclosure, the referee was blowing his whistle for the kick-off.

Falcon Swift's Decision.

"THEY'RE uncanny—that's what they are!" said a perfect stranger, addressing Falcon Swift in the Grand Northern Hotel smoking-room with boisterous enthusiasm. "A four-nil victory, against one of the hottest teams in the First Division."

Falcon Swift had finished his business in the town, and he was expecting Chick Conway at any moment. He knew that he would have a full report of the match from his enthusiastic young assistant. He chuckled at the thought. He was sorry that he had not been able to witness the game himself—for the Monocled Manhunter loved football as keenly as he loved every other sport.

By five-thirty Chick had not turned up, and Swift was slightly annoyed. By six o'clock he was quite angry, and he promised Chick a wiggling. But by seven Falcon Swift was anxious.

What had kept Chick ? Why had he not turned up for tea at five, as arranged ? Even if he had forgotten the name of the hotel, he would have had time by now to visit every hotel.

By eight o'clock Swift came to the conclusion that something must have happened to the youngster. He rang up every hospital, and he was relieved to learn that Chick had not been admitted to any one of them.

Swift went without his dinner : he was more restless than ever. The hours passed. And when, by eleven-thirty, there was still no sign of the lad, he went to the police.

Halford was quiet now ; the streets were practically empty. At the police station Swift was fortunate enough to catch Superintendent Medway—whom he had seen in the afternoon with regard to the forgery case which had brought him to Halford.

"I didn't know—I guessed," said Medway, deeply troubled. "Mr. Swift, this is infernally bad. I don't like the look of it at all. In fact, I'm afraid that you won't see Chick Conway again."

"No ?" said the Sporting Sleuth, his eyes like steel. "We will agree to differ about that."

"There's something horribly mysterious—something akin to Black Magic—about these disappearances," said Superintendent Medway, getting up from his desk and pacing restlessly up and down. "This is strictly confidential, Mr. Swift, but as you seem to know something of this town's unfortunate record, I'll tell you the rest. Between fifty and sixty men have disappeared from Halford during the last twelve months."

"That's amazing," said Swift. "And haven't you found one ?"

"Haven't had a trace," replied the police officer gruffly. "They are all strong, healthy, stalwart youngsters, most of them youths between the ages of sixteen and twenty. And here's the really bewildering part of it. As far as we can gather, these unfortunate youngsters have disappeared off the face of the earth whilst attending football matches at the Hotspurs' enclosure. There's never been a disappearance except on match days. Sometimes one vanishes, sometimes two, occasionally three. And it's been going on until we police are nearly off our heads."

"And Chick went to that match this afternoon,"



THE RANKS OF DESPAIR.—A number of strangely-clad youths filed past the dread ruler of this underworld. And amongst them the detective recognised Chick, his boy assistant !

"Isn't it a fact, Medway, that the people at Scotland Yard sometimes facetiously refer to this city as 'the town of missing men' ?" asked Falcon Swift bluntly.

"Have you any particular reason for asking ?"

"I have," flashed Swift. "Chick Conway, my assistant, has disappeared !"

"Good heavens !" ejaculated the Superintendent, startled. "Young Conway ! When ? How ? Wait a minute ! Did he go to the Hotspurs' match ?"

"Yes, but how did you know ?"

muttered Falcon Swift. "If that lad has come to any harm— But haven't you any theory ?" he asked abruptly.

"We've thought of everything," grunted Medway. "But we always find ourselves up against a brick wall. I wish to heaven you would stay here, Mr. Swift, and have a look into it !"

"What do the football club people think ?"

"They are as mystified as we," replied the Superintendent. "Mr. William Storey—you know him by repute, I expect—'Dad' Storey, as he is

known by the players, he has been worried half out of his life. He's done everything in his power to help us. He has allowed us to put plain-clothes men in every part of the ground. Week after week we had men in the enclosure, but it made no difference. Next day, or the day after, we heard of one or more youngsters having vanished."

"It is almost unbelievable," said Falcon Swift gravely.

"Dad ' Storey has naturally urged us to keep the whole business as quiet as possible," continued the Superintendent. "He didn't want it to get into the papers—or people might be afraid to go to the football matches. Rumours like that would keep the supporters away. The insuperable problem is: where do these youngsters go to? How is it that they are never seen after telling their friends that they are off to the football match? Frankly, Mr. Swift, your chances of finding Chick Conway are slim."

"I shall find him!" said Falcon Swift, and there was the chill of cold steel in his voice. "I am going to probe this mystery—for it seems to be the only way in which I shall find Chick Conway."

The Clue of the Torn Hair.

SLEEP for Falcon Swift was impossible. His anxiety for Chick Conway had now turned to very real alarm. There was a great bond of affection between the famous sleuth and his boy-assistant, and now that Chick was missing, possibly in dread danger, Swift was haggard with suspense.

And this extraordinary mystery of Halford's "missing men" intrigued him strangely. By the purest chance Chick Conway was amongst those missing!

Falcon Swift was a man of action. It was after midnight, but his steps did not take him back to the Grand Northern Hotel, but towards the Hotspurs' enclosure. When he arrived, the roads in the vicinity were empty. The high wall which surrounded the ground was not too difficult.

Somewhere within that dark and empty enclosure Chick Conway had vanished! And Chick was no raw youth who could be easily deluded by sharps or tricksters.

With one light-footed upward leap, Falcon Swift gripped the top of the wall. Like a cat he hauled himself over and dropped to the other side. The business offices, the grandstand, and the terraces were empty. The whole place was shut up for the week-end.

Like a shadow Falcon Swift prowled about, his senses keenly on the alert. He was beginning to think that his visit would be useless, when he remembered a chance remark of Chick's. Chick had said that he would go in the two-and-four enclosure.

Simply because he had failed in other directions, the Monocled Manhunter climbed into the silent stand and located the two-and-four section. With his flashlamp he examined the rows of seats—fruitlessly. He went down the stairs at the rear. These did not lead towards the exits, but to the turnstiles.

And as he went along the narrow passage, flashing his light in front of him, he suddenly halted.

He concentrated his light upon something which appeared to be sticking to the wall. A few wisps of human hair! The exact colour of Chick's!

"By Heaven!" he breathed suddenly. For he now saw that the hair was trapped in a crevice—a join. There was an invisible door here!

But, search as he would, he could find no way of opening the door. He could not even be certain that the door actually existed, so cunningly was it concealed.

He spun round. Impossible for the moneytaker at the turnstile to operate the secret door, for it was out of sight, round the bend. Swift ran to the foot of the stairs. Yes, this was the spot where the attendant stood. And he, of all men, was the only one who could take note of people as they came out of that narrow passage.

At this point, therefore, Falcon Swift concentrated his attentions. His trained mind and his experienced eye soon won him success.

Flashing his light up and down the wall, he made a discovery. The wall was of stone, with ornamental mouldings. And at one point of the moulding there were indications of finger-marks—as though that spot had been pressed or handled frequently. He pressed, but nothing happened. It was as solid as rock. He twisted, with the same result. But when he pulled on that projecting knob of ornamentation it came outwards like a lever.

A faint metallic sound came, and Swift swung his light round. But he saw nothing unusual. The hidden knob had gone back.

He pulled again, and this time he held it out—and in the passage there was a gap, and two pairs of horrible-looking steel claws were projecting!

"What devilry is this?" grated Falcon Swift, and even his iron nerve was shaken by this grim discovery.

He found that when he released his grip, the knob slid back into position—and the claws shot back into the wall of the passage. It acted like the shutter of a time-exposure camera.

He took a pocket-knife and jammed the projection so that it remained out. Then he went and examined those vile-looking claws, and the black gap in the passage-wall.

He could see that it was a remarkably ingenious mechanical device, operated, no doubt, by electricity. He determined to investigate, but to make sure that his escape would not be cut off, he removed his shoes and placed them in such a position that they would jam, should the steel door automatically close.

He padded along a narrow passage, the walls of which were of solid stone. It was a passage built in such a way that its presence could not be even suspected from outside. Soon he came to the end, and here he found a sort of cage.

A lift! Swift entered, closed the grille, and turned the control lever. The lift dropped so swiftly that he experienced a curious emptiness at the pit of the stomach. Down . . . down!

It seemed that he would never reach the bottom. Hundreds of feet he descended, and during those tense seconds his brilliant brain was active.

There were coal mines in this part of the country! And many of the coal mines had been abandoned for years! Could it be possible that he was being taken down into one of the old disused workings?

The lift suddenly jolted to a silent standstill. But Falcon Swift could not get out, for the way was barred by a heavy steel door. But there was a little circular hole in this door, at face level. He applied his eye to it. And what he saw caused him to doubt his senses.

He beheld a wide tunnel, with electric lights gleaming at intervals. It stretched away interminably into the distance, and the openings of other tunnels, to left and right, were visible. It was a veritable catacomb.

And then, as he watched, a Thing came into view. A monstrous caricature of a man—a creature with a humped, misshapen body; with grotesque legs, and great lolling arms. It slouched along like some evil animal, and as it passed under one of the lights, Falcon Swift saw the face. It was hideous; it was

the embodiment of evil, of malignant relentlessness. Across one ear there was a deep, livid scar, and a section of the ear was missing altogether. This Monster Man paused after taking a few shuffling steps, as though listening. And he stood waiting, gazing down into one of those side tunnels.

A string of figures came out of the tunnel: they looked like young men, and yet there was something hideously machine-like about them. They were all dressed exactly the same in close-fitting union suits, with black skull caps. They walked in step like machines; their arms hung straight by their sides, their heads were drooped forward. Not a sound did they make, except for the shuffling of their feet. There were about twenty of them, and they crossed the main tunnel and went into one of the other side tunnels. And behind came a ruffianly-looking man carrying a whip.

"Am I awake—or dreaming?" muttered Falcon Swift, his face more haggard than ever. For amongst those unfortunate "machine men" he had recognised Chick Conway!

An impulse seized him to batter down that steel door, and dash to Chick's rescue. But it was not the Sporting Sleuth's habit to give way to sudden impulses. He gripped himself. It would be foolish to show his hand at this stage. Far better to wait. And at least he had discovered that Chick Conway was alive.

He operated the lever, and the lift ascended. Within a couple of minutes he was back in that prosaic-looking passage which led from the turnstile to the grandstand stairs.

Nothing had happened. He donned his shoes, removed the obstacle which jammed the operating knob, and the secret door, with the horrible claws, snapped back into place.

He decided to go straight to the hotel. He wanted to think. There was a bewildering mystery here—something bigger than Falcon Swift had ever before tackled.

He had nearly crossed the turf to the playing pitch when he fancied he heard voices—low, muttering voices. They came from the stand. Crouching down, he sped silently into the goal-mouth, and flattened himself to the grass at the back of the net. There was less chance of being spotted—

And then, suddenly, his thoughts were shattered. From every side of the uprights and cross-bar flickered thin tongues of blue flame. They licked across, and down, making an impassable barrier!

Signed On.

FALCON SWIFT had had a few surprises on this astounding night, but this was the greatest.

The phenomenon, he knew, was due to some queer kind of electrical discharge. It ceased as quickly as it had started. And then, before he could make a move, he heard those voices again.

Two men approached, and they stood looking at that very ordinary-seeming goal. The blackness concealed Falcon Swift.

"It's all right now," said one of the men. "I expect it was a poor contact which made the 'fluence a bit weak this afternoon."



IN THE CLAWS OF THE MONSTER.—Hidden from the turnstiles of the football ground by a bend in the passage, Chick found himself suddenly seized in a dreadful contrivance.

"Yes, it's all right," said another voice. "The Chief's too particular."

Falcon Swift heard the two men retreat. He knew—now—that his presence was unsuspected. He had merely happened along just when a test was in progress.

And a grim, almost ferocious frown was on the Monocled Manhunter's brow. He was a sportsman to his finger tips—and cleanliness in sports was sacred to him. He remembered the Hotspurs' amazing record.

Those blue flames would be quite invisible by daylight. There was some dirty trickery here. No wonder the Hotspurs had always won! There were more secrets in this ground, it seemed, than in a stage magician's whole outfit!

* * * * *

BY the exercise of his great will power, Falcon Swift got some sleep. But by nine-thirty—and it was now Sunday morning—he had breakfasted and was his own immaculate self.

Monocle in eye, cane in hand, he strolled round to the central police station.

He got in touch with Superintendent Medway. He told Medway nothing of what had happened overnight, but he induced Medway to take him along to "Dad" Storey, the Hotspurs' manager. Mr. William Storey lived in a delightful bungalow he had built for himself on the fashionable outskirts of the town.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Swift," said the manager, when he had been introduced. "I wonder what brings such a great man as yourself to smoky Halford?"

The Superintendent told him, and "Dad's" kindly face became grave. He was a bluff, hearty, well-built man.

"I'm dreadfully sorry to hear this, Mr. Swift," he said, earnestly. "I know Chick Conway by repute, of course. So he is the latest man to disappear! And again the Hotspurs' enclosure is suspected." He looked at the Superintendent with tragic appeal. "What can it mean?" he asked huskily.

Medway shrugged. "We police don't like admitting that we're baffled, but it's got to be done," he said. "We're up against a brick wall, Dad. The thing has flooded us."

"And you, Mr. Swift?" asked "Dad" Storey, turning eagerly to the great detective. "Won't you stay in Halford for a bit? I am willing to commission you, at any fee you choose to name—"

"If I stay, it will be for Chick's sake," interrupted Falcon Swift, shaking his head. "But I am afraid I can do very little from outside, Mr. Storey. I am wondering if it would be possible for me to—well, to join the club? As a playing member of the team, I would have the free run of the ground."

"Mr. Swift is a great footballer, I believe," put in the Superintendent, dryly.

"Why, of course!" almost shouted Storey. "I had forgotten that! You are a brilliant forward, aren't you, Mr. Swift? We're needing a new centre-forward, too!"

"If you could sign me on as a player, I could work quietly, almost secretly," said Falcon Swift. "These crooks, whoever they are, may know every plain-clothes police officer by sight. But I should have a bigger advantage."

"We can manage it," said Mr. Storey, breathlessly. "We'll sign you on at once, Mr. Swift. And we have a league fixture to-morrow, too! Could you turn out?"

"There is nothing I should like better," replied Falcon Swift, and there was a curiously intensive note in his voice.

And so it was arranged. But the instant Falcon Swift and Superintendent Medway had gone, Mr. William Storey shut himself up in the privacy of his sitting-room—and a horrible change came over him.

His benevolent expression vanished, and his eyes burned with satanic fire. "Dad" Storey had suddenly taken on a startling resemblance to the Man Monster of the underground tunnel!

"Fool—fool!" he snarled, shaking his two fists at the closed door. "Do you think you can find your infernal assistant again? Do you think you can unmask me?" He laughed hideously. "You will be the next to disappear! Better for me to keep you here, under my eye, than for you to work from the outside!"

But there was one fact which this man with two identities did not know. The Monocled Manhunter was well on his guard!

For he had seen a curious, jagged scar on "Dad" Storey's ear—and he had previously seen that same scar on the ear of the Man Monster! These two, unbelievable as it seemed, were one and the same!

Falcon Swift—Centre-Forward.

"GOAL!"

It was Monday afternoon, and the great enclosure was filled. The Hotspurs were playing their important fixture with Highbury United. And the crack London team was fighting a losing battle.

Falcon Swift, looking lean and lithe and virile in his footer togs, was in the centre-forward position of the Hotspurs. He had just scored.

And now, almost from the kick-off, and with half-time looming near, Swift again had an opportunity. The United's half-back line was more or less disorganised. Swift, playing brilliant football, had already proved himself to be a thorn in the side of the visitors. Their pivot had been unable to hold him; always he had been the winner in every tussle. Falcon Swift's cleverness, in fact, had made the United's centre-half look feeble. Actually, that player was one of the finest in first-class football.

Swift was running in; he steadied himself, and, amid a bellowing roar from the crowd, he kicked.

It was a beautiful shot, but the wind seemed to be carrying it just clear of the left-hand upright. And then, at the last second, something mysterious and miraculous happened to the leather sphere; it swerved, and turned in, to the utter confusion of the goalkeeper, and thudded to the back of the net. "Goal!"

It was getting a by-word in Halford. The Hotspurs could score anyhow, from any angle! And Falcon Swift, who knew perfectly well that the ball should have gone outside the upright, was more grim than ever.

He watched intently, some minutes later, when the Highbury centre-forward broke through and looked like scoring. Did that "fluence" work both ways?

Crash! It was a smashing shot, and it looked a winner all the way. The lean, scraggy Hotspurs goalie leapt valiantly, but he would never be in time . . . Then the ball, apparently about to enter just below the cross-bar, at the corner, swerved as though hit by a gust of wind, and passed safely over the top.

"Oooooooh!" went up a gasp from the crowd.

"May I be mistaken for a whale!" ejaculated the goalie. "That bing-dingled air current again! I was fair beaten by that one, too!"

Falcon Swift heard those muttered words, and his suspicions that the players were themselves innocent were confirmed. Grimly, he decided that he would have a look at that football at the first opportunity!

For, of course, the ball itself was somehow doctored. Swift had certain proof of this at half-time, when the Hotspurs left the field two up. A short, broad-shouldered man who looked like an ex-boxer pounced on the leather and took charge of it.

"Beefy is as crazy as ever this season," said one of the players, with a grin. "Grabs the ball as soon as the whistle goes—as though it was filled with gold. Never knew any other trainer do it!"

But Falcon Swift knew—at least, he guessed.

They ran through the players' entrance amid a roar from the spectators in the grandstand, and a moment later the home team and the visitors branched off into their respective dressing-rooms. And Falcon Swift saw an opportunity.

It was dim in that passage after the brilliant daylight, and just ahead of Swift was "Beefy" Arkwright, the trainer. He was a good trainer, but Swift had already smelt him as a crook. He was hugging the football affectionately.

Crash! As though eager to run to the dressing-rooms, Swift barged headlong into Arkwright. By

a clever ju-jitsu trip, he floored the trainer, and the back of the man's head crashed on the concrete.

"Sorry!" said Falcon Swift, in mock consternation. "Here, boys! Quick! 'Beefy' wants a touch of his own cold sponge!"

The players gathered round, and none of them noticed that their new centre-forward had whipped the ball out of Arkwright's grip. Like lightning, Swift ran to his locker, and hid the ball there. In its place he held a duplicate—same make, same markings, and just sufficiently soiled. When Arkwright staggered to his feet, dazed, he looked round wildly.

"Where's the ball?" were his first words.

"There he goes again!" exclaimed Skeleton, in wonder. "Sink me for a jellyfish!"

The trainer glared. "If you'd look after the ball during the game half as well, Tangle, you wouldn't do so bad," he retorted. "It's a good thing somebody in this club is conscientious!"

He went off holding the ball tightly. But he was holding something of no importance.

Death in His Pocket.

SEEKING his opportunity, Falcon Swift went to his locker, and it was only the work of a moment for him to slash open the football. And within the rubber bladder he found a tiny electro-magnet of unique design—a curious little gadget scarcely bigger than a walnut. He could see that when the ball was fully inflated the contrivance was suspended on tautly-stretched rubber strings, which were themselves attached to the inside of the bladder. Thus, its presence was unsuspected.

"Amazing!" muttered Swift, his sporting instincts outraged. "The secret contrivance hidden in the goalposts can either attract or repel the ball."

He pictured the genial-looking "Dad" Storey sitting in the directors' enclosure of the stand, controlling that mysterious "fluence" by hidden buttons. Well, the second half would be slightly different!

The players were ready to go out again, and passing down the passage Falcon Swift found the manager next to him. "Dad" Storey affectionately took the detective's arm.

"Well done, Mr. Swift," he said softly. "I dare say that in addition to goal scoring you have kept your eyes open in other directions? Have you discovered anything that might help?"

Swift slowly adjusted his monocle and found the other looking at him with a curiously intent expression. There was almost a challenge in Storey's eyes.

"You must not expect miracles of me, Mr. Storey," said Swift. "I have kept my eyes open—yes—but you must give me time."

"Of course!" agreed the manager readily. "Well,

good luck in the second half, Mr. Swift! I hope you will leave the field looking as cool and as immaculate as you look at this moment."

His smile was benevolent, but Swift detected a mocking note in his voice. He took his place on the field with a curious sensation of impending disaster. Storey did not know that Falcon Swift had discovered so much—but the detective was certain that Storey would take sinister steps to get rid of him as quickly as possible. What had that mocking note meant? What danger lurked on the springy turf?

The game underwent a dramatic change this half. Swift was grimly amused when the great J. H. Briggs scored a perfect goal in the first minute. No last-second swerve this time! And later, when Swift himself sent in a hot first-timer at the other goal, it whizzed just over the cross-bar. The "fluence" was in that cross-bar, ready to induce the ball under—but the ball failed to respond!

Then came another fine piece of work by the Highbury United forwards. Phil Peters, the Hotspurs pivot, had half twisted his ankle, and was, for the moment, more or less helpless. In dazzling style the United men smashed through the defence. Passing superbly from one to another, they raced up, the ball under perfect control. Swift himself was dashing into the game in a vain endeavour to help the



THE PLOT EXPLODED!—Instead of his watch, Falcon Swift found himself holding a flat metal container. Instinctively he flung it from him—in the nick of time.

defence. But at the last second Briggs tipped the ball forward to his inside-right man.

"Off-side!" yelled the crowd wildly.

But the referee took no notice; the player was well on-side and unmarked. No unseen handicap to conquer here! With a beautifully-judged kick, the visiting forward cannon-balled the leather into the net.

"That ball's coming!" gasped Skeleton—"that was!"

Falcon Swift chuckled inwardly. Consternation reigned amongst the Hotspurs' supporters. The visitors had equalised—and any man with an inkling of football knowledge could see that the Highbury team was playing hotter, faster, better football. That

supreme confidence of the Hotspurs was lacking; they were rattled.

Falcon Swift felt for his watch which he had placed in the hip pocket of his knickers, with his handkerchief. He was curious to see how many minutes it had taken the United to equalise. He looked at the watch—and his expression became frozen.

It wasn't his watch—it wasn't a watch at all! It was a metal case exactly like a watch, but there was no face! And in that flash the Sporting 'Tec remembered Dad Storey's affectionate grip in the dim passage of the stand.

A bomb! Tiny enough, but sufficient to blow Falcon Swift to fragments! No wonder Storey had mockingly "hoped" that Swift would leave the field looking cool and immaculate!

All this passed through the detective's mind in a flash. The referee was blowing his whistle impatiently—wondering why Swift had not taken his place for the re-start. And it was at that moment that Swift felt the instrument in his hand give a slight quiver, as though some hidden mechanism had started operating.

He flung the thing from him—and there was a blinding flash of light and an ear-piercing explosion.

Thrills white-hot, wave on wave, in a whirlpool of events! And this is only the staggering beginning, chums, of this smashing football yarn of the Sporting Detective. Don't miss next week's gripping instalment. Tell all your pals about the Mag's Latest Scoop!

FOUR AND TWENTY BLACKBIRDS— COOKED—(Continued from page 13.)

sure it's better waiting here than where you were before."

With a swagger that befitted an Afghan outlaw who had got the better of the hated Hound of Hind, Bill entered the hall where the Afghans were eating. He took up his place at the head of the two rows of men and squatted down Afghan fashion with his back to the door behind which he had left Martub.

He still wore the monk's garb and there was no danger of any of the gang suspecting his identity. Squatting there he waited his opportunity. When the Afghans were getting garrulous under the influence of the good fare, he decided that now was the time to act.

He gripped the edges of the strip of matting upon which the Afghans were squatting—and heaved, rising to his feet as he did so. The result was—chaos!

Twenty men sprawled in a heap, mixing merrily with the soup, meat and drink between them. Twenty pairs of legs and feet kicked frantically and twenty voices yelled lustily. A free fight instantly began, for no one had seen Bill's action, and each Afghan was accusing his neighbour of the trick.

Amid all the excitement he had caused, Big Bill slipped through the door at his back, and grabbed up the cage containing the outlaw chief. With it slung over his shoulder he passed quickly through the hall and out.

Just then a cry arose. One of the Afghans had managed to disentangle himself from his fellows in time to see Bill.

Bill heard the cry and slammed the door shut after him. He was half-way across the courtyard towards the narrow plank bridge and safety when that door was opened again and the Afghans ran out.

"Bill, my lad, you've got to skip," the jovial giant told himself grimly, and put his best foot forward.

Somehow the Afghans guessed they had been

hoaxed. Like a pack of howling wolves they streaked forward on Bill's heels.

Luckily Bill had a good start. Heavily burdened as he was he was almost to the narrow bridge across the chasm which protected the Tibetan temple, when the foremost of his pursuers caught him up. The fellow raised his dagger hand to strike.

As if by instinct, realising his danger, the laughing giant swung round. A merry chuckle broke from his lips at the pained look which rose to the Afghan's face as he received Bill's foot in the stomach and howled.

"You can howl till the cows come home," Bill chuckled. "It won't hurt me! An' you—take that!"

This latter he gritted as another Afghan raced up, and Bill swung round so that the cage upon his back caught the fellow a blow aslant the head which knocked him three yards away.

This little tussle had given the others the chance to arrive on the scene, and a dozen of them were on him. Three of them rushed at Bill at once. And, hindered by the cage, Bill was at a disadvantage. It looked as if his number was up.

Then a strange thing happened. One of the three let out a yell, flung up his arms, and dropped in his tracks with a red blotch in the centre of his forehead. Another did the same thing. Yet there had been no sound.

The third stopped, unable to understand it—and then he too, yelled and sagged to the ground unconscious.

"Good biz, Abdulla," Big Bill grinned, turning to the narrow bridge upon the other side of which, grinning like an imp and fitting another hard round stone to his sling, was his boy assistant. "Give 'em beans."

Abdulla proceeded to do so. As fast as he could fit stones to his sling he sent them darting across the chasm straight and true as bullets fired from a revolver. Every shot told. Each was followed by a yell and an Afghan was put out of action.

Bill hurried across the bridge. "Hold hard now, Abdulla," he ordered, and the young sheep-boy slacked his sling.

Immediately those of the Afghans who were as yet unhurt surged forward, boiling with rage and eager to get their hands upon the pair. Three of them had filed on to the bridge—nothing more than a tree trunk with the top side lopped off—when Big Bill got to work again.

He placed the cage upon the ground, and stooping suddenly, grabbed his end of the trunk. He heaved upwards. His bunched muscles cracked with the strain, but the end of the trunk rose. Then with a jerk he tossed it into the chasm, the three men upon it giving out squeals of terror as they plunged down with it.

"And that's that, Abdulla," Bill said, slipping off his monk's cowl and robes.

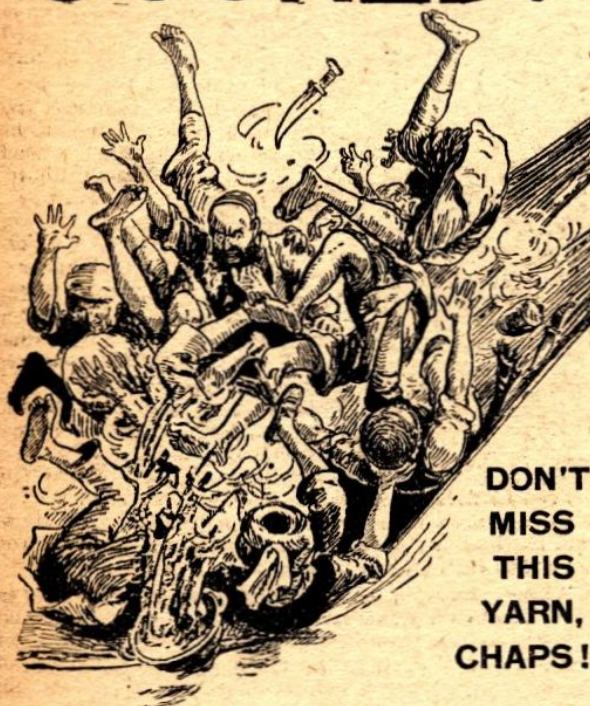
Abdulla grinned. "Teak, sahib, thou art indeed the whisker's cat!"

"You mean the cat's whiskers, laddo," Bill chuckled. "Well, maybe you're right, but I guess those Afghans across there will have to be more than cat's whiskers to follow us now. Come along, Martub! You don't mind if I carry you like Dick Whittington carried his dinner, do you? Not that it'll make any difference if you do object. You're my spoils of war an' I'm going to please myself how I take you home."

Don't miss Kahdoosh, the Husky Eskimo, in a grand new tale of the Frozen North. It appears Next Week—and another Sepia Football Plate (Chelsea and West Bromwich) is Presented with every copy.

BIG BILL TEAK, THE LAUGHING WHITE GIANT, IN THE TIBETAN TEMPLE OF MYSTERIES! GRAND COMPLETE TALE, WITH A KICK IN EVERY LINE!

FOUR AND TWENTY BLACKBIRDS— COOKED!



**DON'T
MISS
THIS
YARN,
CHAPS!**

The Temple Trap.

THE brown-faced, loose-limbed giant gazed upward at the Tibetan temple nestling like a fortress three hundred feet up the sheer cliff wall.

"That's the place, boyo," he said, cheerfully, addressing the brown-legged imp at his side. "That's where Martub Khan has hidden himself, and I'm thinking it's going to be a devil of a job to get him out, Abdulla."

Abdulla grinned. "Maybe thou wilt have need of the ju-jitsu, Teak sahib."

"Without a doubt," Bill Teak replied. "Those monks will certainly resent my appearance to disturb their peaceful lives, and if they object I might have to start scrappin'. The real trouble, first of all, is getting up there without being seen, an' I'm afraid the only way is to climb up this cliff face. It'll be a tough job."

It certainly would be a tough job. Martub Khan, the assassin and general loot-wallah, whom Bill had been chasing for three days, had chosen his hide-out well. The only approach to the temple was a

.....
**It takes a Tough
Line of Crook to
Take a Rise Out of
Laughing Bill—
Martub Khan
Can't!**
.....

narrow bridge which crossed the chasm on the side of the temple opposite where Bill now stood.

"But I guess it can be climbed," murmured Bill. "Abdulla, you scoot round opposite that narrow bridge we've just come from and wait for me coming out."

Abdulla grinned and nodded. And twanging the sling that was a relic of his herder days, when it was the sole protection against marauding wolves, he moved off.

"Now for the Temple," Bill grunted. He had already chosen the easiest route, and reaching up for an overhanging lip of rock grabbed it and hauled his loose frame upwards.

Then he repeated the performance. In a surprisingly short time he was a hundred feet from the ground and breathing as steadily as when he started the ascent.

There was hardly foothold for a fly up the remaining two hundred feet of rock, but Big Bill almost emulated a fly the way he clung on, rising step by step nearer to the top. His strong fingers found a niche and hooked themselves in it to draw his six feet of supple bone and muscle upwards, and presently the top was only a matter of a dozen feet away. And when at last he hauled himself over the last few feet he was still grinning cheerfully.

"Now for Martub." He found that his climb had brought him into an outer courtyard of the temple. From where he crouched he had a good view of the great pine doorway and at that instant a man came sauntering out. He was garbed in the white turban and the flowing robes of the hill tribesman and he had the thick black beard no good Afghan is without. Bill recognised him on the instant.

"Martub Khan, by jove!" At the same moment the outlaw saw Bill and stopped. He turned, hurriedly, and retreated into the temple. The door closed behind him.

Bill strode across to the great door, and seizing the stone knocker thumped loudly. He could hear the rich, dull tones echoing through the hall on the other side and through the corridors beyond that. Then the door opened and a cowed monk stood on the threshold.

"What do you want?"

"I have come to warn you of the jackal you shelter in your midst," Bill replied. "I refer to Martub Khan. He is a brigand and robber, and I would take him with me."

"So thou art a man of war?" was the unpromising rejoinder. "Then thou must go. While Martub Khan remains within these walls thou cannot touch him."

"As I expected," thought Bill to himself. "They're sheltering him—the cunning wallah!"

The monk spoke again. "Only on promising peace to all within mayest thou enter the Temple in the Clouds."

"Well," thought Bill to himself. "I can't gain anything while I'm outside, so I might as well go in an' see what turns up."

"I promise," he said aloud. "I have travelled far and would sup with you."



A RISE AND FALL!—The foremost Afghan felt himself taken in a grip of steel. Next moment he was sailing through the air over Bill's shoulder.

The monk stood aside.

"Enter, my son!" Bill did so. Immediately he crossed the threshold he was in a large hall—and not alone!

A score of men stood around. Not a one was dressed in the dull, grey clothing of the monk at the door, but one and all simply bristled with daggers and knives while one or two sported new Martini rifles.

In a flash the grinning giant realised who they were. Martub Khan's men! He had been neatly trapped.

Then a dry laugh sounded behind him. It came from behind the monk's cowl and Bill knew who the monk was. Martub Khan himself!

The Trapper Trapped.

HO! Ho! So the hound walks asleep into the trap set by the wolves of Martub Khan, and we have such a nice death waiting for thee. Ho! Ho!"

A raucous laugh rolled round the room as Martub's men took up their leader's joke. Even Bill himself grinned.

Then he jumped forward. His bunched fist crashed home in the middle of the nearest black beard and the laughs turned to snarls as the owner of the beard was lifted off his feet and crashed backwards. Then the whole score closed on him.

One leapt in front of the rest with dagger-hand upraised. The next moment it would have swung down into Bill's heart but the Afghan felt his wrist taken in a grip of steel and he was jerked off his feet and sailing through the air over Bill's shoulder.

The wall stopped his flight when his head hit it. He crumpled to the floor with no further interest in the proceedings.

Two more came for Bill together, expecting to take him by surprise, before he had recovered from dealing with the first-comer, but to their own immense astonishment their wrists were also gripped and their knives twisted out of their hands.

"D'you want a bit, too? Righto! Here y'are!" And he gripped their heads in either hand and knocked them together so hard their owners' knees sagged and they dropped senseless.

Now Bill had his back to the wall and was lashing out right and left. So long as he kept out of the crush he was all right. The Afghans' very numbers impeded them, preventing them using their daggers as they wished.

"Take that! And that! Yes, an' here's one for you, O red-beard."

A gap appeared through the press. Bill glimpsed a door open at the other end of the hall and bounded for it. He was through it and racing along the corridor beyond with the pack yelling behind him. Martub Khan was in the lead.

Shooting a quick glance over his shoulder the grinning giant saw this and it gave him an idea. He dodged through the first doorway he came to.

The next moment Martub Khan had bounded in after him, and Big Bill instantly

heaved shut the heavy pine door, strengthened with bars of beaten iron, as Martub's men raced up. He shot the bolt as the Afghans rained heavy blows upon the other side. Then he turned to Martub Khan.

"Now, Martub, old stoekin', you an' me are going to have a picnic all to ourselves."

With a snarl Martub Khan raised his dagger. It formed a line of light as it whizzed towards the Englishman.

Just in time Bill dodged and the keen blade quivered in the door. "Missed!" he mocked.

But Martub had another dagger, larger than the first. He had his hand upon the haft when Bill stooped quickly, lifted a huge wooden cage from the floor, and hurled it with all his force at the other's head.

Martub saw the cage coming and raised his hands to protect himself. But the Afghan would have needed mail-armor to save himself altogether, for that cage was capable of holding a man, very heavy, and Bill had put all his six-feet-odd of muscle behind the throw.

The cage bowled Martub over against the other wall like a ninepin. He was too dazed to do anything after that, and it was Bill who had to lift the cage off him.

When he blinked dazedly from the floor, Bill was standing over him running his thumb suggestively across the blade of his own dagger.

"Had enough, Martub?" Bill grinned.

The Afghan's sullen silence was eloquent. Now Bill was faced with a problem. How to get out and take his prisoner with him?

Martub's men were hammering furiously upon the heavy door. They couldn't get in yet, but in time they would hammer through the pine beams and tear the thing down.

"And that pigeon hole of a window's no use," the big Englishman grunted, eyeing the oblong slit which served as the room's only window. This room was a cell in which monks were incarcerated as punishment for breaking the rules of the temple, and the heavy cage Bill had used to such good effect had belonged to the monks before Martub's gang had driven them out. It was used for punishing priestly offenders by hanging them out in the sun.

It was this cage which gave Big Bill an idea.

"The very ticket," he chuckled. "Now, Martub, old stockin', you an' me's goin' to do a little swop. You are going to be me, an' I'll be you. You should get a great kick out of being the Hound of Hind for a bit. Off with those priestly robes, and on with mine. Hurry up, or I might get angry, and that would be a pity."

For just one moment Martub Khan thought to protest. Then Bill made a step towards him, flourishing the dagger, and he slipped off the monk's hood. The rest of his monk's garb followed, while the heavy pounding upon the door went on. Less than three minutes later the swop was complete.

"Now, my beauty, just sing low while I make you a gob-stopper out of my hanky, an' then I'm going to put you in that cage there. I've a notion that was the sort of thing you were going to do with the Hound of Hind, so you can't have any objection now that you're the great man himself."

At that Martub Khan blanched under his dark skin. Big Bill paid no heed to his fear, however, but quickly tied a good gag over his mouth, then bundled him inside the heavy cage, fastening the crude door securely afterwards.

"Fraid you won't be very comfortable, old sock, but it's got to be did. Truly, Martub Khan, it is one fine joke."

Grinning all over his almanac, but hidden, however, inside the monk's cowl, Bill shot back the heavy bolt and swung open the door.

Martub Khan's men were obviously surprised to see him. They hadn't entertained much hope of their chief beating the grinning giant who could cause men to sail through the air by a simple twist of the wrist. Yet here he was standing before them! Truly Martub Khan was a great leader!

"Oho! My men!" Bill cried, imitating Martub's voice to perfection. "Am I not your leader, and am I not a great one? Behold, the Hound is caged. Take him and we will put him out to dry from the temple wall."

Two of the biggest Afghans put away their daggers and lifted the cage containing the fake Bill Teak, and then Bill himself hustled them outside along the echoing corridors, giving them no time to take a too-close peep at who it really was inside the cage.

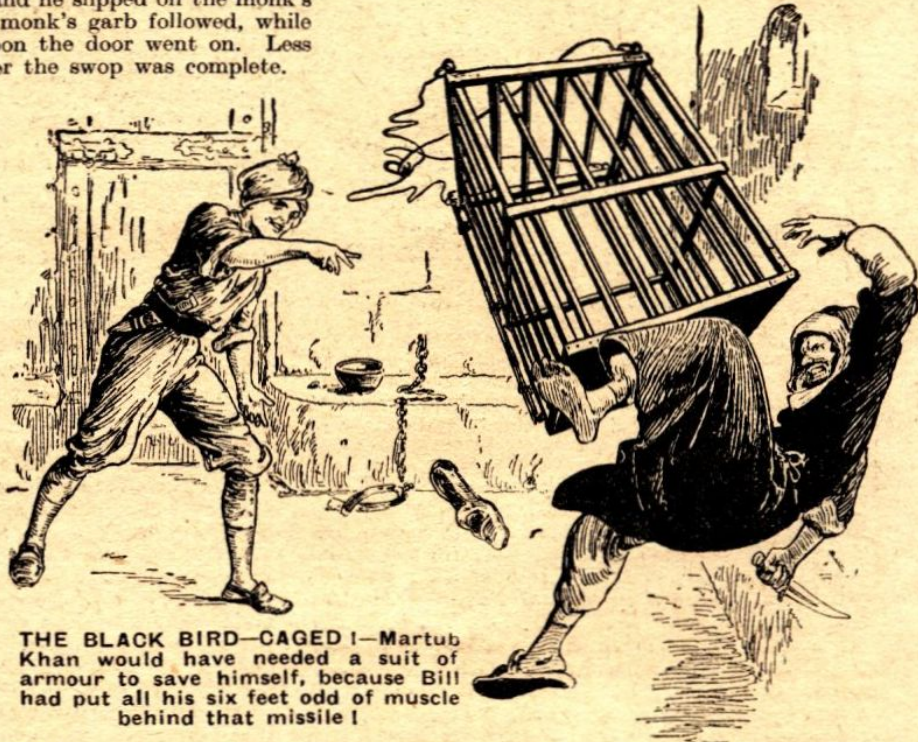
The Hound Unleashed.

THE cage was carried up on to the roof of the temple and slung down the temple wall from a big hook where the wall was built sheer to the cliff on the side Bill had scaled.

It was a drop of over three hundred feet to the ground below and Bill could understand why the man in the cage now ceased to struggle to get free. He was afraid that his exertions might dislodge the hook and let him down heavily!

Bill chuckled. "The Hound is properly leashed," he cried. "And now, my brave men, we will eat and be merry, for it is fitting to celebrate the capture of him who is feared by all men, excepting Martub Khan."

This suggestion appealed to the Afghans and they retired to the hall which had witnessed Big Bill's first tussle with them. Into this hall were brought hampers of food and wine from the stores left by the monks, and Martub's men arranged the victuals upon the floor before a long strip of matting upon which they squatted.



THE BLACK BIRD—CAGED!—Martub Khan would have needed a suit of armour to save himself, because Bill had put all his six feet odd of muscle behind that missile!

At this juncture Bill made an excuse for leaving them, supposedly to torment the man in the cage with a succulent piece of meat and a bowl of wine.

But immediately he had left the hall he dumped the wine and the meat in a gloomy corner, and hurried on to the roof. Then, first making sure that no one watched, he hauled the cage and Martub Khan to the roof.

"No, Martub Khan," he grinned. "I'm not going to let you out just yet. I'm going to give you a free ride upon my back."

Big Bill slung the cage over his shoulder, and carried it down into the temple again. At last he dumped his burden just behind the door leading from the banqueting hall.

"You'll wait there, Martub," he muttered, "until I see a chance to get through that pack in there. Don't worry, it won't be so long, and after all I'm

(Continued on page 14)

THE HISTORIC WONDER TALE THAT IS STILL MAKING HISTORY!

BEWARE- THE BLACK / BATTLE-AXE



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

The Dealer in Treacheries.

GUY, lying by the stone, heard these words in the old uncouth Saxon tongue, and, like a flash, he understood. Just as even in these days remnants of old beliefs are to be found here and there, remnants of old rites are practised, so, then, in the depths of the Ashdown Forest, undestroyed by the waves of Roman, Saxon, Viking and Norman invasions, this Druidical cult pursued its course.

These men were Druids. The mistletoe, and the sun striking through stone and the sacrificial knife, were theirs. The old horrors of the old and awful religion yet lived in these tree ringed glades.

The advent of Guy and his captor had caused some consternation. Guy, flashing a quick glance round him, was aware of a dark ring of figures, of brutish faces and eyes that gleamed in the torchlight. Here, the lowest of all the driven serf folk gathered in terror of the white-robed fiends who practised the awfulness of Druidism.

Guy suddenly leapt to his feet and made a dash for it. He heard wild shouts. He felt great hairy hands clawing at him, tearing at arms and shoulders, legs and body.

Frantically he strove to free himself. He was dragged to his knees, yet still he fought. Something lurched across him, a great skin-clad body that pressed him down. Something else hung now to his right arm so that he could not use it. Of a sudden the fight was over and the captive secure.

They dragged and carried him back, and they whipped hide thongs about his wrists and knees and ankles, and they laid him with great ceremony flat on the sacrificial stone, so that he looked up—up towards the serene far stars and the aloofness of the skies.

And . . . from afar . . . deep and menacing, came the bay of a dog. The shrill howl of a wolf met it, was flung from echo to echo. Beasts padded restlessly hard by. And the dog bayed again.

There was a silence in the glade. The singing had ceased. Men strained their ears for the baying. The wolf's voice slashed eerily across the silence, and was taken up here and there.

Guy strained at his bonds. To die in battle—that was nothing, a man's death, the sort of death men of his time wished for; for they knew no better, and looked upon war as glorious. But to lie on this blood-drenched stone, incredibly ancient as it was, old before the Roman sceptres came ashore at Deal . . . to die under the cold, cruel sacrificial knife amid pagan rites . . . that was terrible to contemplate.

But the hide thongs held. They had been tied by cunning hands. He could not free himself.

And, as the silence hung quivering, as the dog bayed no more, the singing started again.

Guy never forgot it. It rose and fell sweetly, and yet just because it was so sweet it was awful. The sweet singing of something indescribably sinister, that lured and called the blackness out of men's souls to stalk beneath the starlight and work all evil.

Now the high priest was chanting something. Now the beast folk dimly seen in the ring around were crouching low towards the earth of which they were so nearly a part.

Now the chanting ceased and silence dripped . . .

Guy set his teeth. This was the moment. He knew it. This was the terrible moment when all his hopes and ambitions would be destroyed.

He saw the great knife taken carefully, held carefully, and he saw, with cold heart, that same knife poised, straight up, point downwards, above his breast.

The priest was talking in measured tones. The beast folk were lying silent, awe-struck.

And . . . something whanged, deep, vibrant, like a great harp string touched by the tip of a giant's finger.

The priest choked, fell forward across Guy, the sacrificial knife clattering on the stone it no longer would cause to be stained. A quarrel was buried head deep in his chest.

Into the clearing came life and death . . . Life in the shape of steel clad men, death in the shape of the steel they carried.

A dog ran with them, its muzzle bound above the nostrils by hide. That was why it had bayed no more. It ran straight to the stone. It had followed Guy's trail. Had his giant captor carried him, he would never have been found.

Amid the killing that took place, the screams, and the crashing through bush and undergrowth for life that was dear though foul, Guy found his bonds sliced through. He got up, and was about to stammer thanks, when he saw the face of Matt Skelpane.

Skelpane's sword flickered at Guy's throat. "How now, little knight," he grinned. "Hast got thy life, eh? And through old Matt. Never shall you say that Matt was not your friend." He lifted his voice. "Kill and spare not. Root me out these vermin! Slay!"

The fierce men-at-arms whom he had hastily gathered from Winchelsea needed no bidding. Killing was deemed a man's trade in those days—the only trade worthy of following. They hunted through the near woodland. Their steel took toil. Only one good thing came of it all—they destroyed the Druidical sect once and for all.

They tipped up the sacrificial stone and they tossed the dead priest across it in the manner of those rough times. The poor serfs, of whom some escaped fortunately, afterwards crept back to see it, and fled wailing.

But by then Matt Skelpane was journeying on.

Guy rode, as before, between two men; but now his horse's bridle was tied to the horse on either side and his hands were behind his back, lashed close.

The big body of men—there were more than twenty of them—rode unmolested over the old packhorse trail. No lurking bandits or masterless men dare attack so formidable a force.

They rested later, and resumed their march at midday, having fed well. They rode easily, so that their horses did not become unduly fatigued.

Guy would have found the ride interesting, but for his captivity. He calculated that, unless a miracle happened, he was surely doomed to die; for he knew that Fulk de Brion would willingly pay from the Vardray estates to ensure that those estates remained to him.

They came up over the Ton Bridge, with the big new castle standing away to their left, and they pushed on till they ran into the Canterbury Way. It is of interest to record that their horses travelled at the usual jog trot of travellers over this famous old road. This speed was called the Canterbury trot, and from it we get our word canter.

So, urging ever forward, resting, sleeping, eating, they came to the outskirts of Southwark, and saw London Bridge before them.

Now Matt Skelpane was a great man in the City of London, yet even he dared not essay the taking of a captive through its wall. Therefore, he turned aside on the marshes of Southwark and, at nightfall, sought a boat. In this boat Guy was ferried across the broad river, that, above them, widened out to the marshes of Westminster, and lapped at the grass grown edges of the Stronde—now called the Strand—the road that connected Westminster with the City, and along which footpads lurked.

It was night. If his experience in the glade of the Druids had been eerie, so Guy found this new experience eerie. They came to a watergate under the great walls, hard by the Lud Gate which loosed traffic on to the lonely Stronde. The watergate was deep and dark, sunk in the masonry, with the water ebbing in and out of it, so that Skelpane's little wherry ran right under the gate to the very metal of the roads.

What bribe Skelpane had paid that he might be free of this gate, Guy never knew. But a man holding a great torch opened the gate for them, and, urged by a sword blade, Guy lurched up out of the boat to the slimy steps.

Skelpane hissed to Guy: "An you utter one cry, you die."

Guy needed no warning. His experience with his captors had taught him how formidable and merciless they were, and he knew that his life would be instantly forfeit if he attempted anything in the way of outcry or escape.

Beyond the walls were horses, and these they mounted, Guy being tied as before. Five men had travelled in the boat, and they were good escort in the City, despite its lurking robbers.

It was Guy's first visit to London, and he was amazed by it. The great wooden houses, the multitudes of them, the narrow streets which were so many . . . to him this was the most marvellous place in the world. Of course, it was only a tiny section of what we now call London.

They left the Fleet River to their left, and proceeded towards the Chepe, where the greatest of all the merchants lived. The Chepe, narrow, according to our ideas, but wide and magnificent then, was ultimately attained, after a climb from the waterside, and they went into Skelpane's house.

It was a big house, built entirely of wood, with a carved and decorated and highly-coloured façade. Matt Skelpane lived more luxuriously than many barons, and he was certainly richer. He had the riches of the then known world to draw upon.

Guy found himself in a room which took his breath away. Even in these days it would have been considered splendid; for, its walls and ceiling were all of polished wood panelling, and its great floor was polished and set about with the skins of strange wild beasts that Skelpane's shipmen had brought from overseas.

Guy was left alone with Skelpane, who held a dagger under his hand as he seated himself at the great table. Tapers lit the room, and in a massive fireplace a great log crackled.

Skelpane cocked his head to one side—a



THE AVENGER!—Skelpane whipped round—to face the man who had just appeared through the window. It was Wat—and lying flat in the sailor's hand was a broad, flat, wicked-looking knife!

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characteristic movement of his—and surveyed Guy.

"So, my young lord," he grinned. "We ha' come home after many misadventures. Eh?" He paused. "Didst notice anything in the river as we crossed?"

"Water," said Guy, dryly.

Skelpane laughed. "Hast not lost thy spirit," he said. "Not a ship?"

Guy said: "There were one or two ships, but I have no eyes for such, being no shipman."

Skelpane tapped his teeth with the dagger point. "Tis strange," he said. "Greatly strange. I could ha' sworn that lying above London Bridge was a ship that I did see in Bordeaux—a little French craft going by the name of *Lucette*. She lay below us, and we passed her when we left the Gironde."

He pondered. "Long have we been travelling from the coast—going easily, for there was no need to waste good horses by overpushing them. Time was lost out of Winchelsea in that little adventure of yours. The *Lucette* . . ." Plainly Skelpane was disturbed.

Now Guy's heart began to beat a trifle faster. He remembered that Wat, Dickon, Son of John and Maltort had wished to steal a boat, and that the three shipmen had gone out to seek such a one. Maltort had known that he, Guy, had left to take meat with Skelpane. Suppose . . .

But supposition never saved lives, and Guy, recalling the gigantic gale, told himself that the little *Lucette* could, anyhow, never have lived through it. Skelpane's big ship had had great difficulty. All of which showed how much Guy underrated the seamanship of that amazing ruffian.

The *Lucette* might truly have had time to reach the Thames, for Skelpane, as he said, had journeyed slowly over the pack trail, halting nights and travelling easily and shortly of days. Yet . . . no such miracle could be vouchsafed to Guy.

Skelpane hammered on the table-top with the hilt of the dagger and a serving man entered. Skelpane said to him: "Ask Master Gulot if the parchment is yet ready."

In a little while a small man in black entered. He was French, and he was a clerk, a man versed in the way of writing. He did Skelpane's accounts for him and wrote fairly many letters for him to distant merchants. He carried now a great parchment, all sanded to dry it, and it was covered with flourishing characters of great beauty.

Skelpane took this from him and, cocking his eye

first across the top edge of it at Guy, he said: "Hearken to this." And he proceeded to read:

"To the Most Puissant and Noble Fulk de Brion, Baron of Vardray, Greeting.

"It has been my fortune, by the grace of God, to take to my keeping the person of one Guy de Vardray, lately travelling far and wide in the lands of France and Castile, and to your ear and your ear alone, most puissant and noble Lord, I would say that this same Guy de Vardray does claim and declare that the estates now so beneficently ruled by yourself do belong to him and to him alone. He does wish to lay his cause before the King his court, at the Palace of Westminster, that a hearing may be granted him and this great wrong righted. For he does call it a wrong. Now I do not believe all the story of Guy de Vardray, and if your lordship does send word to me that this is an upstart and a dealer in lies, I shall mete out to him the death which such deserve. In this matter I have gone to great expense, and in sending such denial, perhaps you, my Lord, will see to it that I am properly recompensed in the way of moneys. A thousand golden crowns would repay me and make me ever thy servant. If you are unable to send the denial, I should deem it only right that this young man should appear before the King his court, and state his story.

"Given under my hand and seal, and most humbly."

Matt Skelpane scrawled his great signature across the bottom of this document.

"How now?" he said to Guy.

Guy shrugged his shoulders. "I die either way," he replied. "Fulk will pay. He knows that my claim is just." He paused. "Mayhap he will come himself. When treacheries are dealt in all are treacherous. How knows he that you will slay me?"

Skelpane chuckled. He seemed not a wit offended by Guy's remark.

"Art right. I get these thousand crowns, and then more . . . and more . . ." His face convulsed slightly. "From now on I own the Vardray estates. They are mine, in that I suck them dry, and hold ever over the head of this Norman baron the fact of thy life." He turned. "Gulot, send six men. They ride hard. They ride now. Give them moneys for horses. They rest not till this is handed to the Lord of Vardray himself. Seal it and roll it. Let Domtam carry it and be in command. Hasten."

Gulot bowed and withdrew, and the room was silent once more. Suddenly, and a little later, Guy heard the ring of horses' hoofs.

Skelpane said softly: "My riders set forth. Thy fate goes with them, little lord."

Guy wondered if he dared essay an assault on the man, but realised its futility. Skelpane was dagger-armed and yet strong and active, as a man must be who has spent many years at sea. His servants were within call. Death must be Guy's portion if he leapt at his captor.

Suddenly Skelpane whipped round. A voice had sounded from the open window:

"Come aboard, shipmaster."

And Guy uttered a low, quick cry of gladness.

For this was Wat.

Skelpane's jaw dropped. Wat's hand slid forward, tremendous, like a chunk of rough mahogany. Lying flat on it was a great, broad wicked knife.

Wat hissed: "Hearken, Skelpane. Dost remember when my ship lay alongside yours at Havre, and I did, with such a knife as this, cut through a wind-swayed rope at ten paces? Well . . . what I did to that rope I can do to your throat. Stand still! Stand silent!"

Another Grand Instalment of this Smashing
Historical Yarn next week, chums. Are you
collecting the coupons for a Patent Target and
Winged Dart?

YOUR OWN FOOTBALL THIS SEASON—FOR A JOKE!

THE JESTER'S REALM



Cashier (at footer ground): Hi, what's that?
 Jock: That's a wee cheese, mon, an' I want to go in on the strength of it!
 (Football to T. LEWIS, 173, Dalmarnock-road, Glasgow, S.E.)

HIKING!

"Are these sheets quite clean?" asked the tourist as he surveyed the bed.

"Clean!" cried the landlady, indignantly. "Of course they are. They've just come from the laundry. Feel them!—they're still damp."

(Fountain pen to WILLIAM VUDGE, Coppett Hill, Goodrich, Ross-on-Wye.)

GOT THE BIRD.

"Five miles as the fly crows," said the witness who was giving evidence.

"You mean as the cry flows," corrected the attorney.

"What he means," said the judge, "is the cry crows."

The court was dismissed.

(Fountain pen to L. ROBINSON, 117, Amptill Avenue, Benoni, Transvaal, South Africa.)

STILL LIFE.

CORPORAL (instructing sentry): Don't stir a foot from your post, but keep walking up and down, and see what you can hear.

(Fountain pen to WILLIAM WILKINS, Orchard Cottage, Catcott, near Bridgewater, Somerset.)

CATTISH.

DINER: Waiter! Waiter!

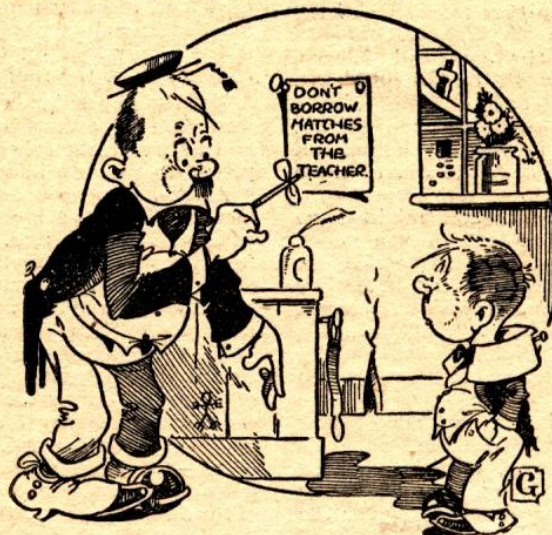
WAITER: Yes, sir.

DINER: Are you sure this is rabbit pie?

WAITER: Certainly, sir.

DINER: Then how is it I heard it purr when I poured out the milk?

(Fountain pen to _____, 4, Highfield Road, Wheatley, Doncaster.)



Master: What did Archimedes discover when he was in the bath?

Bright Youth: Dirt, sir!

(Football to J. Fox, 15, St. Bees-street, Moss Side, Manchester.)

THE ONLY WAY.

One night reading *Boys' Mag.* sat Peter,

His leisure hours never seemed fleeter.

He refused to be stirred

Till he'd read every word,

So they turned off the gas at the meter.

(Fountain pen to B. BRITTLE, 29, Thomas Street, Miskin, Mountain Ash, Glam., S.W.)

VISIBLE.

"Can you see me across the road, Policeman?" asked the stout old gent, who was very nervous of the traffic.

"Bless you, yes," replied the policeman. "I can see you half-a-mile off!"

(Fountain pen to G. HICKS, "Ingelside," 41, Stafford Street, Market Drayton, Shropshire.)

WHO'S ZOO?

FRIEND (to lion tamer): What happened to your hand?

LION TAMER: I opened the lion's mouth to see how many teeth it had, and it closed its mouth to see how many fingers I had!

(Fountain pen to JOHN DAVIS, 22, Yukon Street, Connswater, Belfast, Ireland.)

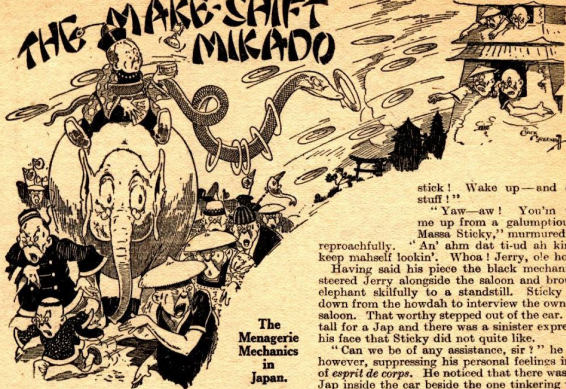
DONE FOR!

IRATE ACTOR (in *Wild West theatre*): I'll be hanged if I act here again.

MANAGER: You will—or else shot!

(Fountain pen to M. BARRETT, 103, Inglethorpe Street, Fulham, S.W.6.)

THE MAKE-SHIFT MIKADO



The Menagerie Mechanics in Japan.

A Roadside Rumpus.

BLOOMPH! Blah! Bloooooomp! Blah! The raucous sound shattered the stillness of the summer afternoon. It drowned the sweet twittering of feathered throats; it shadowed the sylvan beauty of the winding Japanese road. It was hideous. One could hardly believe such sound were human had one not the evidence of one's eyes to perceive the huge mouth, opened like a red cavern in the black face from which the sound emanated. That mouth; that face could belong to only one person; Slippy, the comical nigger mechanic of the Menagerie Garage.

Slippy sat like a mahout on the huge head of Jerry, the elephant. In the howdah on Jerry's back travelled Archie, the Anaconda; Monty, the Monocled Monk; Sally, the bear; and Sticky, the English youngster who, in working hours, ran a garage on a Kutish road with the aid of these trained animal mechanics.

But to-day, as Sir Henry Newbolt might have said, England was far and motor repairs a name. For the boy garage-owner had decided to give his queer assistants a holiday abroad. And here they were jogging along a dusty road in quaint Netsuna, a lesser known island near Japan. Past pagodas, past temples with their endless flights of steps; under hump-backed bridges; by plummy blossomed peach trees Jerry lumbered.

Slippy's idle cogitation of the problem of how Slippy managed to sleep, perched on the elephant's head, without losing his balance, were interrupted by the sight of a saloon car drawn up against the side of the road. A kimonoed figure bent over the engine. Obviously the car had broken down, and immediately all Slippy's professional instincts were aroused.

"Pull up, Slippy. Perhaps we can give these guys a hand!" he commanded. Then, as the nig still slept on, raised his voice: "Slippy! You old liquoric

stick! Wake up—and do your stuff!"

"Yaw—aw! You'n wokened me up from a galmptious sleep. Massa Sticky," murmured the nig reproachfully. "An' ahm dat ti-ud an kin hardly keep mahself lookin'. Whoa! Jerry, ole boss!"

Having said his piece the black mechanic deftly steered Jerry alongside the saloon and brought the elephant skilfully to a standstill. Sticky climbed down from the howdah to interview the owner of the saloon. That worthy stepped out of the car. He was tall for a Jap and there was a sinister expression on his face that Sticky did not quite like.

"Can we be of any assistance, sir?" he queried, however, suppressing his personal feelings in favour of *esprit de corps*. He noticed that there was another Jap inside the car beside the one tinkering with the engine. And these two impressed him one degree less than the fellow to whom he had already spoken. A tough bunch!

"Hon'ble cah broken down," the owner told him in a sing-song voice. "You can mend, us velly glad. We in big hully!"

"Okay—we'll fix it!" snapped Sticky, and with the nig he was quickly at work on the engine. Oil-drip plugs were the cause of the trouble, and it took the pair only a couple of minutes to fix new ones. Then the Jap remembered that the little window in the roof of the saloon had stuck so that it wouldn't open and intimated in his flowery language that he and his ancestors would be forever in Sticky's debt if the boy would fix that also. Sticky and Slippy climbed on to the roof of the saloon to do so.

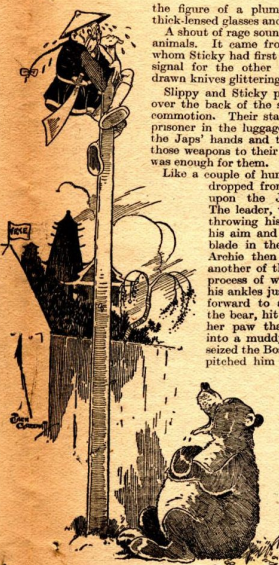
Usually the animals were able to help, but there was nothing for them to do in this job. So, as animals and boys when they are left alone, these worthies promptly got into mischief!

Archie, the Anaconda, was the cause of it all. Like most reptiles, the big snake from the Amazon was extremely fond of rats. Sticky had a standing order for him with a rat-catcher back in England. And those rodents were sent to the Menagerie Garage in a leather-covered box which once had acted as luggage carrier on the rear of a saloon car.

At the back of the Jap's car was a similar box, Archie eyed it wistfully for a few moments—visions of many rat dinners that had come to him in a similar contrivance making his fangs water. Suddenly, to his intense excitement, he heard a faint scratching sound—from inside that box!

Rats! As sure as eggs! He conveyed the news of his discovery, in whatever language animals understand, to Monty and Sally, and the bear and the monkey had prised open the lid of that box in two shakes of a lamb's tail. They were not prepared for the disappointment that came then. For the front of the box, which worked on a kind of hinge, fell down revealing not rats—but a human figure,

FUN—With the Lid Off! You'll Ha! Ha! Like a Hyena at the Ludicrously Laughable Exploits of the Fun Fellows Below. Another Riotous Complete Fun Tale of Those Quaint Animal Comicalities: Sticky, the Kid; Slippy, the Nig; Archie, the Anaconda; Sally, the Bear; Jerry, the Elephant; and Monty, the Monocled Monk!



THE BANDIT "BEARS" UP!—At the foot of the pole, with a sweet sad expression on her long and lugubrious face, was Sally the Bear!

He took a large clasp-knife which Slippy produced from a capacious pocket and slit the captive's bonds. The little Jap rubbed cramped limbs—and then solemnly shook hands with himself before each of the chums and the animals in turn.

"Hon'ble fiends, you save mah'le life of Hi Koko. How can unworthy Prince thank you!"

"Prince Hi Koko!" ejaculated Sticky. "Well, I'm blowed!"

Now Sticky had been in Netsuna long enough to know something of that strange Japanese island, Netsuna does not actually belong to Japan, but had his own government. The old king had just died and Prince Hi Koko was to be crowned the next day. Rumour had it, however, that the young prince had abdicated, taking as much of the island's wealth as he could lay hands on with him. It had thus been decided that if he did not appear in the coronation procession which was to take place to-morrow the island would become a Republic. The reason for Prince Hi Koko's "disappearance" was now plain to Sticky. The toughs who had just "legged it" were clearly kidnappers, probably hoping for ransom; "Well," the amateur mechanic said, scratching his head. "I hardly think you're in the peck, to do anything to thank us, old Cocky—er—Hi Koko. I mean, you're a king without a crown, and all that sort of bilge!"

"Yes, that is velly true, hon'ble fiends," murmured H.H.H. "I shall indeed be without my crown unless I can attend the coronation to-morrow. The people will form a republic, and I shall be king!"

"But you can surely go back now," suggested Sticky. "We will get you back safely to town, where your bodyguard will look after you."

Hi Koko shook his head mournfully. "This disreputable being would not be safe, even in his little hovel of a palace, from those bandits. No one has yet been able to outwit them, save your great and glorious selves. No, I must stay in hiding."

Sticky felt very sorry for poor Prince Hi Koko; Slippy, too, hung his head in solemn melancholy; Monty, the Monocled Monk, however, could not bear to see his masters in such sad spirits, so he immediately took steps to amuse them.

Grabbing the hat and the thick spectacles of the Mikado-to-be, which had fallen off during the rough-and-tumble with the bandits, he put both on and scrambled on to the broad back of Jerry. Sitting there pompously, chattering and yelling, he looked for all the world like an Animal Emperor holding forth to his recalcitrant subjects. And, as he looked up to see what all the row was about, Sticky got his idea.

Forgetting that Hi Koko's multi-flowered robe covered a royal back, he dealt it a right royal smite that made that Mikado reel. Letting out a whoop of wild abandon he seized the astonished Slippy and danced a jig round him.

"Got it!" he howled. "We'll do what Monty's doing. Hi Cocky can stay in hiding here, while we take his place in the procession till they are ready to crown him. I'll dress up as him, and be the Make-Shift Mikado!"

THE MIKADO MAKES 'EM SHIFT. WHEN Slippy and Hi Koko had restored him to ordinary sanity, and he had explained his plan in detail, they began to realise that there was some sense in it. Sticky was about the same build as Hi Koko, and, dressed in his robes and glasses, no one could tell the difference. And then, if the bandits turned their attention to the Menagerie Mechanics—well, those worthy beings hoped to prove a hot handful. They had outwitted them once, and they might as well try again.

So the arrangement was made. Sticky was to take the place of Prince Hi Koko in the procession, right up till the last moment of the coronation, when the real Mikado, who would be in hiding near, would

take his place. If the bandits got at all fresh, the Menagerie Mechanics were going to make the fur fly and the bandits bunk.

Word was forthwith sent, under the special secret seal of Hi Koko, to the Lord High Dib-Grab (which means Chancellor of the Exchequer), to say that H.R.H. would be ready at the appointed time, and would arrive on the back of an elephant. Meanwhile, no inquiries were to be made, so as not to arouse the suspicion of the bandits.

And the next afternoon at two-thirty prompt, when Jerry lumbered into the courtyard of the Mikado's palace, everything was ready for the start of the great procession. As Sticky well knew, the cortege was to go right through the town, then there was to be the coronation, after which the Mikado would retire to a feast, and the people to a Grand Fete and Fair in honour of the occasion.

Sticky, as he sat on Jerry's back, dressed in the clothes of Hi Koko, was not recognised as an impostor. The Lord High Dib-Grab rushed up to him, gave him his sceptre of Royalty, and then immediately gave orders for the procession to move off.

The band struck up. Sticky, keeping his fingers out of his ears with difficulty, muttered something about "Nelson's last command," and decided to put up with the wailing and moaning of the reeds and the strings. And then they were off.

Sticky was expecting trouble, of course. And he was glad when suddenly, out of the cheering and capering throng that lined the streets with their quaintly-built houses, there glided the long sinuous form of Archie, the Anaconda. He coiled round Jerry's leg, and thence round Sticky's waist.

The crowd howled again. Most of them had never seen so large a snake, and when they saw Sticky (alias the Make-Shift Mikado) stroke its head in quite a pally manner, they thought this was a sacred dragon come down from his perch on high to bless their Mikado on his Coronation day!

He was a blessing too, more than Sticky realised at first, though he was glad of his company. But five minutes later Archie found himself up to his neck

(which is a long way for a snake) in work saving Sticky's life.

Suddenly something hissed through the air, and the sceptre in Sticky's hand was sliced in twain. Something fell with a clang to the pavement, and Sticky saw a disc of iron, like a flat quoit, but sharp as a razor on the outside edge. The terrible Death Disc of the East!

Sticky's heart jumped. With yells of "Bandits! Dey Killum we-all!" The populace were running in all directions like frightened rabbits to their hutches.

And Sticky, looking up towards the window of a house opposite, saw four villainous figures, three of whom he recognised as those he had already seen in that car. And in their hands, ready to throw, they held more of the Death Discs.

The first came whirling and whizzing down. Sticky caught it on his finger, quoit fashion, as it was about to lop off his nose and yelled, "Archie, do your stuff!" as a cloud of them came hissing toward him.

Archie took the tip. His head came up, and went through the first of the rings, then the second, the third. Coiling, twisting, writhing, and flicking like a whip-lash, he caught nearly all of those deadly missiles; and those he missed with his head were trapped by his tail. And when the supply was run out, Sticky raised a piercing yell.

It was answered immediately. The roaring voice of Slippy, the nig, awake for once, sounded from a little alley near by, and out of it galloped the gigantic negro himself, together with Monty, the Monk, and Sally, the bear.

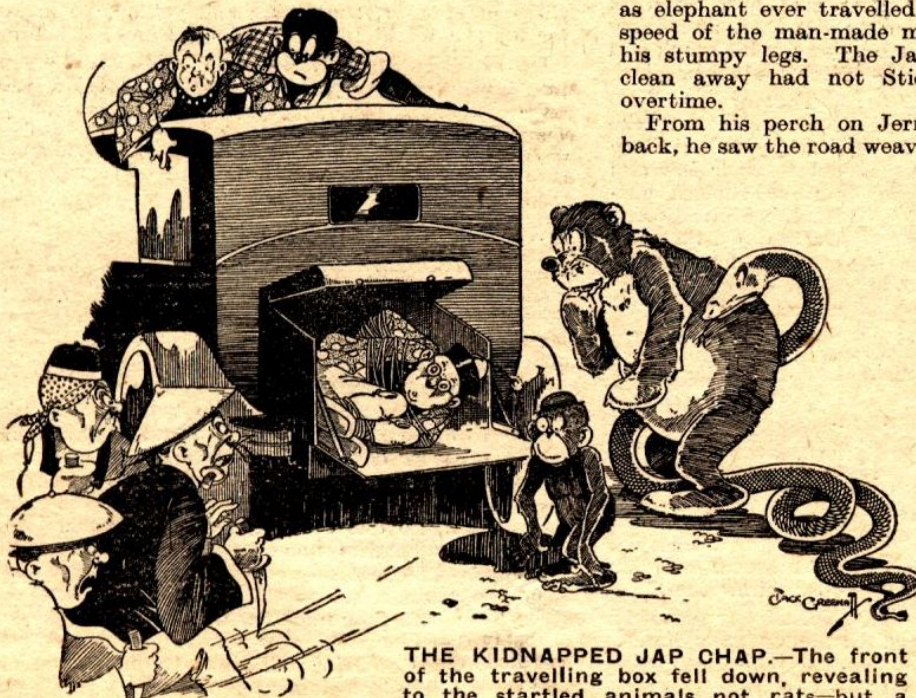
"Where am dey, Mars' Sticky? We'll git 'em pow'ful quick!" he shouted. He let out a bull-like roar as the four bandits came dashing out of the house, and darted into another dark street. Two of them he overtook and grabbed in his huge arms, twisting their knives out of their hands. The leader went dashing on, with Sally bounding on his trail; while the fourth came sweeping out in a tiny "Lostin Heaven" motor-car, and buzzed away down the road like an angry bumble-bee.

Sticky gave chase. Jerry lumbered along as fast as elephant ever travelled before, but the superior speed of the man-made midget was too much for his stumpy legs. The Jap crook would have got clean away had not Sticky's brain box worked overtime.

From his perch on Jerry's rolling and tumbling back, he saw the road weaving in a semi-circle around a rice field. He directed Jerry to cross it, and, arriving at the other side before the bandit got there, waited behind the hedge.

Now Jerry never had liked these little "Lostin Heaven's." Perhaps he thought they gave his master more repair work to do than they were worth. Whatever it was, he knew how to deal with them.

As it came humming round the bend to the spot where they waited, Jerry whipped out his trunk and wound it round the car's tiny bonnet. There was a shriek of rage and surprise from the bandit,



THE KIDNAPPED JAP CHAP.—The front of the travelling box fell down, revealing to the startled animals not rats—but a bound, human figure.

and a roar of protest from the revving engine. Then the former cracked his head against the steering wheel and fainted with a groan, while the latter cracked a con-rod and expired with a loud crash.

"Good work, Jerry," grinned Sticky. "We'll take him back to town. I reckon our old pal Hi Cocky will be pleased. Hullo, what's that?"

In lifting the car Jerry had tilted it so that the dickey seat fell open, and Sticky saw a large bulging sack inside. The mouth was not fastened, and in the sack Sticky saw the sparkling of priceless jewels, gold plate, and coin.

"Golly, that must be the loot they pinched," he gasped. "This certainly is some catch! Come on, Jerry, let's get back to town."

Five minutes later they ambled into the town. Jerry put down his load, and the police, in their comic semi-European uniforms, took charge of the bandit.

The Lord High Dib-Grab came bowing and scraping forward. "The Most Exalted and Gracious Prince Hi Koko will pardon this utterly ludicrous person for daring to suggest anything, but may the colonation ploedee?"

It seemed to Sticky that the time for the great *denouement* had come. With the bandit gang broken up, the real Mikado might as well take his place at once. So he jumped down from Jerry's back, and took off the royal robes.

"Yes, it may, old egg," he chortled. Then he raised his voice. "Hi, Slippy!" he yelled. "Where are you? Trot forth, me old pal Hi Cocky!"

Slippy had just returned from placing his pair of bandits in the local hoosegow.

"Okay, Mars' Sticky!" he called. "Ah getum." He cantered off, to return a few moments later with Hi Koko himself, dressed in ceremonial robes and riding in a rickshaw.

The situation was quickly explained to the astonished populace. They cheered loud and long, and some went so far as to suggest that Hi Koko should abdicate, and the brave youth Sti Ki be crowned in his place. Hi Koko, ever the hospitable and generous Jap, himself graciously seconded the suggestion.

Sticky, however, modestly declined with many thanks, and the ceremony went on. Half-an-hour later, Hi Koko descended the steps of the pagoda of the Rising Sun, amid the acclamations of his people, now a full-blown Mikado.

But he was fuller-blown still at eight p.m. that evening, as were Sticky, Slippy, and their animal pals, when the newly-made Mikado laboriously raised his well-stocked self from a sadly-depleted festive board.

"Hon'lable fiends," he said. "It is my humble wish to confer some mark of esteem upon the hon'lable Houses of Sti and Sli, of which we have two such distinguished members among us—Sti Ki and Sli Pi.

"Sti Ki shall have the honour of changing the name of the humble and idiotic Mikado—henceforth my name shall be, as he calls me, Hi Cocky. And he shall be known among us by the name Pi Jama, meaning 'Dressed in the Robes of a King.'"

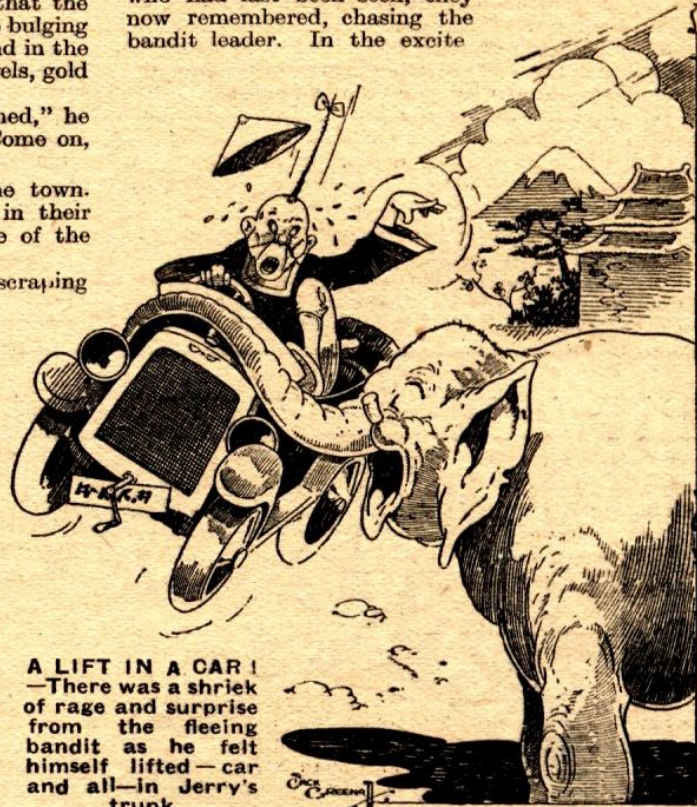
"The black one, Sli Pi, shall also receive an illustrious title. Henceforth his name shall be 'Mud,' meaning Dark Horse."

Sticky and Slippy stood up, and, amid polite cheers, gravely thanked the Mikado Hi Cocky for the honours placed upon them, which they knew placed them above everyone else in the land in rank.

As they sat down again, the Mikado turned his attention to the animals.

"They shall all be honoured, fiends, by being made sacred in this land," he said. "The Elephant, the Anaconda, the Monkey, and the——"

He looked round the hall, and Sticky and Slippy looked too. There was no sign of Sally, the bear, who had last been seen, they now remembered, chasing the bandit leader. In the excite



A LIFT IN A CAR !
—There was a shriek of rage and surprise from the fleeing bandit as he felt himself lifted—car and all—in Jerry's trunk.

ment of the ceremonies, etc., they had completely forgotten her!

Immediately all was confusion. Search parties were organised, and the police, the army, and the navy were called out. The army scoured the whole countryside on his horse, and the navy dragged in all the rivers round about from his rowing boat, from eight-thirty till eleven; and when all hope was being given up, Sticky and Slippy, with the other three animals, found her.

They were passing despondently by the ground where the fête had been held. A tall greasy pole had been raised, in the manner of English fêtes, with a prize for the one who reached the top. And in the deepening gloom, Sticky suddenly noticed a man clinging to the top of the pole, desperately trying to prevent himself from sliding down its greasy length. It was the bandit chief, whom Sally had been chasing.

Sticky and Slippy rushed through the gate, and two broad grins spread over their faces.

For at the foot of the pole, patiently waiting for her victim to lose his weakening hold, was Sally, the bear. Her great paws were folded across her capacious tummy, and she was looking up with a sweet sad expression of anticipation on her long and lugubrious face.

She could have climbed up quite easily, but she probably realised the value of anticipation to the tortured mind of her victim. However, Sticky decided the bandit couldn't stay up there all night, so at his word, Monty, the Monocled Monk, shinned

up the pole with the greatest of ease, and then tickled the Jap under the armpits!

He gave a howl, and flung out his arms, wriggling and shrieking with a mixture of rage, fear, and laughter. Then he lost his precarious hold completely, and slid down the pole with a bump.

As he landed at the bottom, Sally pounced on him, and laid him at Sticky's feet as a sort of offering. Every time he let out one of his periodic howls, she cuffed his head.

Soon he too was with his friends in misfortune, or rather in the jail. And life in the little island took its usually peaceful and undisturbed course.

It was too peaceful for the adventure-loving Menagerie Mechanics, and before many days passed they took a fond farewell of their friend the Mikado. But for many a year the names of the lord Sti Ki Pi Jama, and the lord Sli Pi Mud, were spoken of with awe and reverence by the people of Netsuma.

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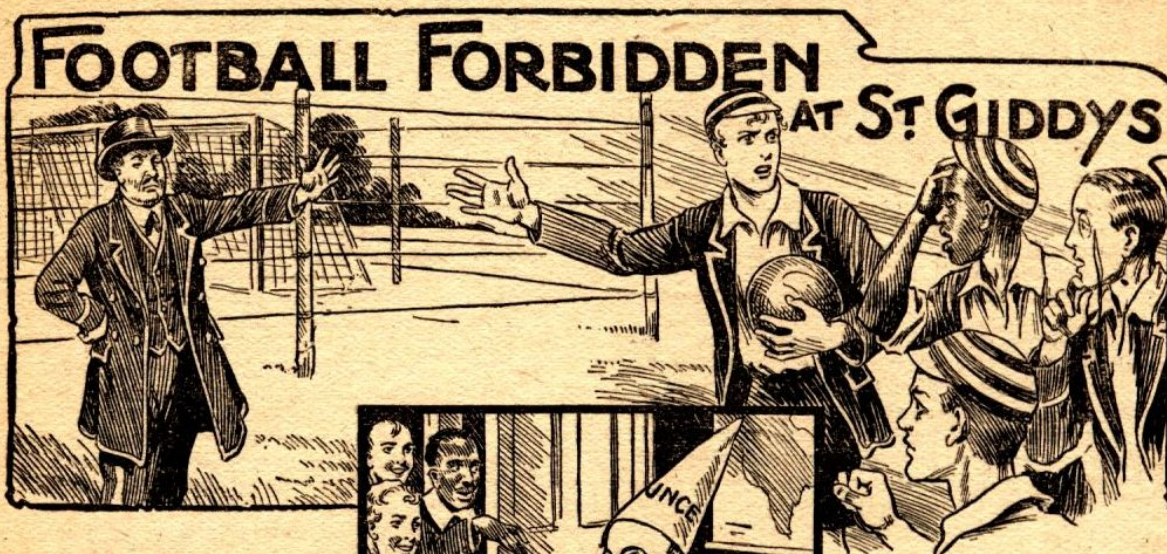


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The Edict of Catty.

"ST. GIDDY'S again! Back at last!" breathed Johnny Gee, his boyish face aglow and his eyes sparkling with pleasure.

Johnny Gee & Co., the joyous chums of the Remove, and Hank P. Peck, Timothy Catchpole and Fatty Slocum had returned to school after a glorious summer holiday spent in America and in the great open spaces!

"Let's rout old Rumble out, and give him a cheer!" said Johnny Gee.

Dick Bannister yanked heartily at the handle of the gate bell, and rang a *fortissimo* tootle.

Clang! Clang! Clang! There was a heavy tread on the flagstones, and Sergeant Rumble, the old and ancient school porter of St. Giddy's, opened the gates. Johnny Gee & Co. made a rush at him. Rumble's topper was knocked awry, his horny hand was wrung as though it were a pump handle, and he was clapped heartily on the back.

"Here we are again, then, Rumble old tulip!" cried Dick Bannister, boisterously. "How's tricks?"

"Groogh! Yah! My heye! Ooogh!" gurgled the porter, staggering back. "You—*gurrogh!*—young rips! Ow! Which Hi 'as horders to take you up to Mr. Cattermole has soon has you come in!"

The cheery expressions on the Removites' faces vanished. The mention of Mr. Ernest Cattermole, M.A., the cantankerous Housemaster, cast an immediate damper on their spirits.

"My hat! So Catty's laying for us already!"

exclaimed Johnny Gee, and his boyish brow knitted. "I'm sure the Head—"

"Which Dr. 'Olroyd isn't back yet, Master Gee!?" said Sergeant Rumble, grimly. "'E won't be returning for another few weeks, and Mr. Cattermole is in charge 'ere."

"Oh, golly, golly!" All the sunshine vanished from Johnny Gee & Co. at this disquieting news. They gazed at one another in deep concern and dismay.

Mr. Cattermole was not a friend of the joyous juniors—on the contrary. Johnny Gee and his chums were a special "mark" for the sour-tempered Housemaster.

Vividly they remembered the first day of the summer vac., when they had started off from St. Giddy's for their visit to America. Mr. Cattermole had been put in charge of the party, to chaperon them as it were, but Catty had been left behind at Southampton!

Apparently Mr. Cattermole had been nursing his grievance, and now that he was in sole charge at St. Giddy's during the Head's absence, they could expect short shrift from him!

Johnny Gee & Co., and Peck, Catchpole and Slocum went indoors and along to the Remove passage, first, to leave their belongings. Then, not without many inward qualms, they made their way to Mr. Cattermole's study.

Johnny tapped at the door, and the harsh voice of the irascible Housemaster bade them enter. Mr. Cattermole rose from his desk, and bent a steely gaze upon them.

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"Ah! So you have come back!" he rasped. "What have you to say for yourselves? You had the temerity to proceed to America without me, having—ah!—left me behind by means of an audacious trick!"

Johnny Gee & Co. looked uncertainly at one another.

"Everything went off very well, you know, sir," said Johnny Gee. "We—we had a splendid time!"

Mr. Cattermole's brow lowered still more. Apparently the fact that the Removites had had a splendid time without him did not tend to mollify him at all—quite the opposite, in fact!

"I have never heard of anything more outrageous in all my life!" he hooted. "Such gross disrespect towards a master—such unbridled defiance of discipline! But, now that you have returned you will forfeit all the privileges and liberties enjoyed by the rest of the school! You will learn full details later. But let me warn you, the slightest breach of my disciplinary rules will be treated with the severest punishment. Go!"

Johnny Gee & Co. went, simply overwhelmed with dismay.

"Life won't be worth living!" groaned Dick Bannister, hollowly. "What a merry home-coming!"

Johnny Gee & Co. trooped off to Study No. 4, their old headquarters in the Remove passage. The room was just as they had left it, and even with the shadow of Catty's edict upon them, they felt a degree of comfort in being back in the old study once again.

They found a parcel on the table, addressed to Johnny Gee. It had come by post, and had been sent from Merivale. Wonderingly, Johnny tore it open, and drew forth a small book. There was a note inside the flap.

The book was entitled, "*Football and How To Play It.*" And the note that was enclosed read as follows:

Dear Johnny,

I send you herewith a little book which possibly you and your chuckle-headed gang would care to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. You need it!

Your old pal,

TOMMY RHODES.

Johnny Gee & Co. glared at this epistle, and at the booklet, and their feelings were too deep for words.

"The fearful cheek of it!" roared Dick Bannister, rending the booklet page from page and hurling the remains into the wastepaper basket. "So those Earlswood rotters have started their larks early!"

"They're going to mop up the field with us at footer—I don't think!" said Johnny Gee between his teeth. "We'll show Tommy Rhodes and his gang what's what! Come on—we'll start right now at footer practice, and get the team in tip-top form for Saturday. We'll prove to those Earlswood duffers whether we can play footer or not!"

Johnny Gee called the team together, they changed

into footer garb and trooped merrily down to the field.

They forgot their troubles in the joy of playing footer again, the grand old game whose season started with the autumn term, and soon their shouts were resounding merrily across the playing field, to the thud of the rolling leather.

They did not see the tall, spare form of Mr. Cattermole striding across from the School House, his scholastic gown billowing in the wind.

"Stop!" he roared, dashing precipitately on to the field and waving his arms wildly. "Cease this ruffianly game! Boys, I command you—*Yarooogh!*"

Johnny Gee & Co. were making a concerted charge towards the goal, and in the excitement of the game they did not notice Mr. Cattermole until it was too late. The onrushing forwards simply swarmed over him, and the luckless Housemaster went down like a piece of chaff before the wind, with the players sprawled on top of his prostrate person.

"*Ooogh! Yah! Gug-g-good heavens! Wah!*"

The ground was muddy from the rain overnight, and Catty, unfortunately, had landed in a specially bad patch. He went down flat, with his face buried in the quaggy turf, and the weird, gurgling noises that rose from him were remarkable, to say the least! There was a wild melée on top of Mr. Cattermole for some moments and then, as the Remove footballers realised the truth, they jumped off with alacrity and yanked Mr. Cattermole to his feet.

"Boys! Hooligans! Violent reprobates!" he shrieked. "This—this is an outrage! *Gerrroooh!* I have forbidden you to play football! You are all gated! Follow me! Every one of you!"

The Remove footballers exchanged rueful glances. They followed the muddy, bedraggled, wrathful Housemaster indoors and formed a long procession up to his study. Catty was worked up to concert pitch, and he swished the cane with deadly relish!

And next morning, when Johnny Gee & Co. wandered disconsolately down to the football ground, they found that Sergeant Rumble and the gardeners, acting on Catty's instructions, had erected a tall wire fence around the junior ground.

Football for the Remove was prohibited—by Catty's order!

"I vote we tear the blessed fence down!" growled Dick Bannister, and there was a murmur of approval.

Johnny Gee's eyes gleamed. "If we did, we'd only get ordered off, and there'd be more ructions!" he said. "No, I think I've a better idea. What about the football ground at Merivale?"

"Why, that belongs to the town team—and it hasn't been used for ages!" exclaimed Pratley.

Johnny nodded.

"The Merivale F.C. has been dead since two years ago, through lack of support. But their ground is still there, even though the fences and the grandstand and pavilion are badly in need of repair. I'm going to speak to Towler about it and ask him whether we can't take it over!"

Ten minutes later, Johnny Gee crept into the cloisters by way of the old ruined west wing, and he clambered over the school wall in a quiet, out-of-the-way spot. He dropped softly on to the grass on the other side, and scampered off into the bushes opposite and across the fields.

He called at a small house just outside the village. Johnny Gee found Frank Towler, captain of the defunct Merivale Soccer Club, in the little sitting-room.

"Well, Frank?" said Johnny Gee cheerily. "You don't look very chirpy, old son. Worried about the team, I suppose?"

Towler nodded. "Yes, I'm afraid we're in a bad way," he said, and his eyes glistened angrily. "It's

not the team's fault, Gee, in spite of what local opinion may be. The club is heavily in debt, and we haven't sufficient funds to start playing this season at all. Our ground is going to wrack and ruin, and it looks as though we shall soon be finished for good. The club has been the victim of a deliberate plot, and the man behind all the dirty work is John Gunter!"

"Gunter—the landowner?" exclaimed Johnny.

"Yes—the rascal! He wants to take possession of our ground, so that he can sell the land for building plots. When we first leased the football ground we got it very cheaply, from Captain Chalmers. But when he went abroad, he sold that part of his estate to John Gunter—and Gunter wants our football ground, to make a big profit on. The lease expires in a couple of weeks' time, and unless we have sufficient funds to renew it, he can exercise the option of taking full possession. That, of course, will mean the finish of the Merivale F.C. and our football ground. And Gunter has had a gang at work—Roker and his set of hooligans—spoiling our matches and thus bringing us to ruin. As a professional team, we have had to rely entirely on gate money for our funds, and thanks to John Gunter the club is badly on the rocks, and cannot afford to pay for the renewal of the lease. It's only a fortnight now—and Gunter will grab our ground!"

Johnny Gee's boyish brow was puckered.

"Jolly hard lines!" he said. "As a matter of fact, Frank, I've come to ask permission for the use of your ground for our team. We'll pay as much

The luckless victims of Catty's spleen bore the heavy yoke of oppression with philosophic cheerfulness. And when night came upon St. Giddy's, Johnny Gee and the members of the team arose and girded on their footer togs, and crept away from the slumbering school with great stealth. Beneath the light of the moon, they practised long and hard on the ground of the Merivale Football Club.

Watchers were always posted round the broken fence to keep cave, in the event of interruptions.

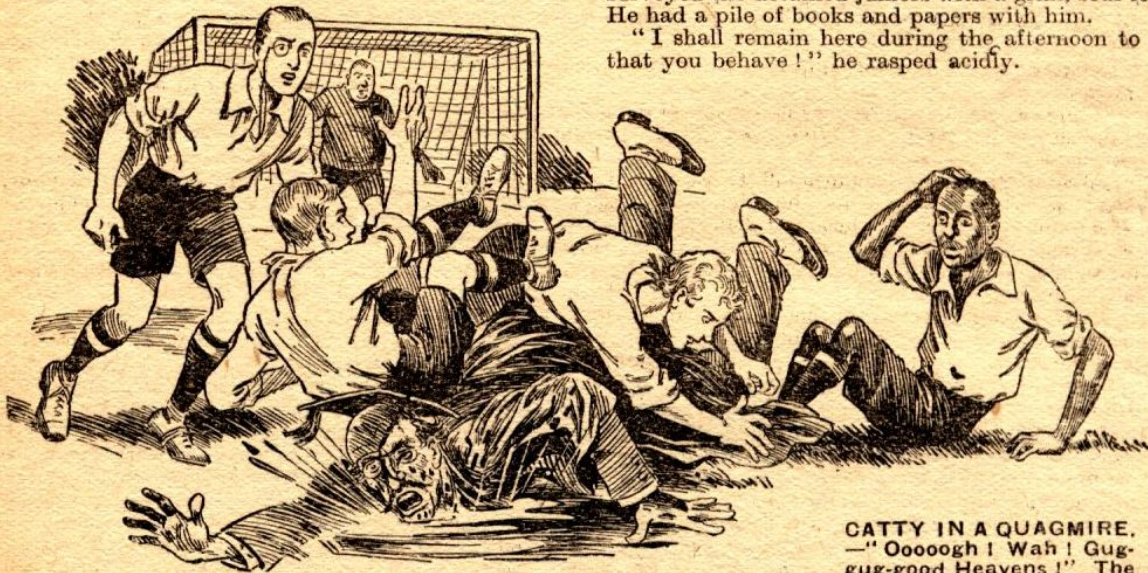
The secrecy of these manoeuvres seemed to add a zest to their game, for they quickly developed wonderful form, and Johnny Gee was more than delighted with the prowess of his team.

The first match of the season took place on Saturday afternoon, between the St. Giddy's and the Earlswood School Junior Elevens. Johnny wrote to Tommy Rhodes at Earlswood, hurling defiance in his teeth and at the same time explaining that the game on Saturday would have to be in secret, owing to their "rumpus" with Mr. Cattermole. Johnny requested that the Earlswood team would attend at the Merivale F.C. ground at three o'clock, when the St. Giddy's Junior Eleven would derive great pleasure in wiping them completely off the earth!

Saturday dawned at length, and excitement in the Lower School was at concert pitch. Directly lessons were over, Johnny Gee & Co. and a whole batch of Removites were marched off to the form-room by Mr. Cattermole.

The Housemaster sat at the desk in front and surveyed the detained juniors with a grim, sour look. He had a pile of books and papers with him.

"I shall remain here during the afternoon to see that you behave!" he rasped acidly.



CATTY IN A QUAGMIRE.

—"Oooooogh! Wah! Gug-gug-good Heavens!" The

luckless Housemaster went down in the mud with the onrushing forwards on top of him.

as we can afford, of course, and it may help you scrape up the funds you need."

The young Remove captain proceeded to explain, and Frank Towler listened sympathetically.

"You can use our ground with pleasure," he said.

"You can practise on it, and use it for matches whenever you like—until we're chucked out by Gunter!"

"Thanks!" said Johnny. "And if we can do anything to put a spoke in Gunter's wheel and save the ground, you bet your Sunday boots we will!"

The Night Birds.

MR. CATTERMOLÉ'S ban on the heroes of the Remove was maintained vigorously, and Remington & Co. of the Sixth were his ever-willing assistants in keeping the Joyous Juniors in a state of disciplinary subjection.

Johnny Gee & Co. exchanged significant glances. In meek obedience to their tyrant's command, they set to work at their lines. Johnny Gee glanced somewhat anxiously at his watch from time to time, and then drew a sigh of relief as a tap came at the door and Buttons, the page, inserted his shock head into the classroom.

"You're wanted on the telephone, please, sir!" he announced.

Mr. Cattermole arose and swished away, bestowing a threatening look on the detained juniors. Johnny Gee & Co. chuckled and waited.

Mr. Cattermole came out of the masters' room, a look of great excitement on his face. He hurried to his study, and sent for Remington, of the Sixth.

"Ah, Remington," he said, "I should like you to go to the Remove form-room and keep an eye on

those juniors whom I have detained for the afternoon. I have just received a telephone message asking me to meet a man and inspect some documents that may be useful to me in the History of St. Gideon's that I am writing. I must hurry out immediately. I shall hold you responsible for those young rascals, you understand?"

"Leave them to me, sir!" said the prefect viciously.

Mr. Cattermole put on his topper, and Johnny Gee & Co., watching from the form-room window, saw him hasten across to the gates and disappear. Johnny Gee & Co. chuckled once more, and again waited.

A few minutes later they heard the heavy tread of Herbert Remington on the corridor outside. They waited behind the door, and when it opened, they made a concerted rush at the burly form that entered.

Dick Bannister clapped a chalky duster in his mouth. Remington gurgled and choked, and his eyes rolled in a wild, alarming manner over the duster. He struggled furiously to get free, but in the hands of those redoubtable juniors he was helpless! The unpopular prefect was dragged to the chair just vacated by Mr. Cattermole, and he was dumped upon it, his legs tied to the under-part of the chair, and his arms roped to the sides. A big dunce's cap was thrust on his head, and Dick Bannister, in a reckless mood, drew glaring circles round the prefect's eyes in black ink, and daubed that luckless fellow's nose with red ink.

"Might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, you know!" grinned Dick. "There's going to be a frightful rumpus about this later, but why repine? We've footer to attend to."

The renegade Removites left the form-room, and they made their way out of St. Giddy's by the back door. They trooped down the lane and into the wood, and there, close to the old woodman's hut, they met a party of Remove boys comprising Smith minor, Pratley, Greene, Dixon, Oswald and Prinsep.

"Good egg! You got away, then?" grinned Dixon. "Smith minor did the spoof 'phone message. We've got Catty nicely tied up in the hut. We dressed up as you told us, and he quite thought we were footpads!"

"Now for the match!" said Johnny Gee briskly. "We're playing on a real professional ground this afternoon."

The heroes of the Remove dashed off to Merivale F.C. ground to play their prohibited match.

Tommy Rhodes, the leader of the Earlswood juniors, and his team, together with a goodly number of their followers, turned up at the ground a few moments later. They gasped when they heard what had transpired at St. Giddy's.

"My hat! Won't there be a shindy when you scallywags get back!" said Tommy Rhodes. "But let's get on with the washing—we're dying to slaughter you!"

"Ditto repeato, you Earlswood duffers!" The two teams lined up, and Frank Towler, who had consented to referee the match, blew the whistle. Tommy Rhodes had won the toss, and Johnny Gee kicked off. It was a glorious day for footer, fine but not too warm, and a keen wind exhilarated the schoolboy players. The ball went out to Lord Reggie, who made pace along the touchline and got round Cakebread, of Earlswood, in brilliant style. But with O'Neill, the heavy Irish back, charging at him, Reggie transferred neatly to Tony Graham, who, in turn, passed to Johnny Gee.

Johnny took a long shot, but the Earlswood goalie was not caught napping. He jumped high and fisted out the leather. It was scooped up by Tommy Rhodes and slammed across to Bob Nutter.

The Earlswood boys had the enemy in their territory, and now they realised what a tussle that match was going to be! Johnny Gee & Co. were on their mettle! The game swooped up into mid-field and the Earlswood players attacked determinedly, but suddenly the ball shot out from a melée and went rolling down the field at the fast-moving feet of the Hon. Bob Vernon. The halves charged at him and he passed smartly to Snowball, who quick as lightning kept the spinning sphere on its way towards the enemy citadel. Bob Nutter of Earlswood made in, but Snowball waited only long enough to draw him, and then he tapped the leather across to his skipper. Johnny Gee had his second chance of a shot at goal, this time at no more than ten yards. He put in a beauty. The goalie met the ball with the tips of his fingers, but absolutely failed to hold it. A split second later it was thudding in the net, and a howl of delight arose from the St. Giddy's partisans.

"Goal! Hurrah! Played, Snowball and Johnny!"

Johnny Gee's face was flushed with pleasure. The St. Giddy's Junior XI, despite the setbacks and handicaps they had had to endure, even to the extent of doing secret practice by moonlight, were showing the brilliance of their teamwork and giving a taste of their quality already.

It was first blood to St. Giddy's, and they went back to their places, eager for more!

The Earlswood players made a long, combined effort, and the game entered upon a phase of thrills and suspense that kept the onlookers in the throes of excitement right up to half-time. Both teams were in splendid form, and the battle went back and forth, all the players giving of their best. The St. Giddy's goal was in danger many times from the dashing attacks of the boys in blue and white, and Otto Schmidt, the plump German goalie, seemed to be everywhere with fists, feet, head and his substantial figure.

The second half was hard and fast, and the pace was gruelling.

There were narrow escapes on both sides, but minute followed minute, and there was no alteration in the score.

In the last stages of the game Johnny roused his men to Trojan efforts, and they made an irresistible swoop on their rivals' goal. The Earlswood defenders closed in on them desperately, and those last minutes of ding-dong struggle were the most thrilling of the whole match. A whoop went up as the leather was seen to sky-rocket towards the goal, having been hooked from the feet of Tommy Rhodes in grand style by Johnny Gee.

It looked as though the ball would pass over the cross-bar, but it dropped just inside, too high for the goalie's fingers. There was a yell of delight from the crowd.

"Goal! Hurrah! St. Giddy's wins!"

"Two—none, by Jove!" chuckled Johnny Gee, breathlessly. "That's put it across Earlswood—what?"

Tommy Rhodes grinned ruefully. "Jolly good game!" he said. "My giddy aunt! That holiday in America seems to have put pep into you St. Giddy's bounders. You're hotter than we bargained for!"

Frank Towler of the home team clapped Johnny admiringly on the shoulder. "The crowd are raving about you, Gee!" he exclaimed. "Just look at 'em—there are people from all the neighbouring places in Merivale this afternoon, and they've all crowded down here to see the match. I wish we'd charged admission money now," he added ruefully.

"We should have roped in a good bit—and the crowd would have had their money's worth, too!"

Johnny Gee's eyes sparkled. "That would have been a good idea!" he said. "Anyway, Towler, we're awfully obliged to you for the use of the ground. It enabled us to play our match, and—and now we're going back! We've called the tune, and now we've got to pay the piper, I suppose!"

News had come to them at the football ground that Catty had been released from the woodman's hut, and he was now at St. Giddy's, preparing for their reception.

Johnny Gee & Co. and their followers came up the Merivale Lane to the gates of St. Giddy's.

"My hat! The gates are locked!" ejaculated Tony Graham. "What the dickens— Oh, jeminy!"

The form of Mr. Ernest James Cattermole was standing behind the bars of the locked gates. He was glaring at them through those bars, very much like a wild, rapacious animal.

"Oh, golly, golly!" The side-gate opened, and Sergeant Rumble appeared. There was a stack of boxes and bags behind him, all belonging to the Removites.

Mr. Cattermole pointed a trembling forefinger towards the luggage.

"There are your cases!" he hooted.

"Take them and go! Do not dare to show your faces at this school again! Until Dr. Holroyd returns to decide your ultimate punishment, you are no longer recognised as pupils of St. Gideon's! I have notified your parents, and your railway tickets will be handed to you at the station."

Johnny gritted his teeth.

The others regarded their leader in dismay. "But—but we can't go home, Johnny!" said Tony Graham desperately. "It means us all parting, and—"

"No, it doesn't—not by a jugful!" rapped back Johnny. "We're not parting at all. We stick together like the giddy ivy! United we stand, divided we come a cropper! We're not moving a yard out of Merivale. Come with me!"

The suspended juniors picked up their bags and turned from the closed gates of St. Giddy's. They followed Johnny Gee down the Merivale Lane.

"What's the idea, Johnny?" demanded Dixon. "Where on earth are we going?"

"To see Frank Towler first, and get his permission for the stunt I have in mind," replied Johnny Gee between his teeth. "Then, old sons, we're going back to the Merivale football ground and take up our abode in the pavilion. It's my idea for the Remove XI to turn professional while we're orphans from school!"

Toughening the Toughs.

BANG! Biff! Bang! Bang!

The exiled boys of the Remove were busy! The following morning saw them up with the lark, and full of the joy of living. They had slept quite comfortably in hired camp-beds and "shake-downs" in the football field pavilion. And they had set the oil stoves going and cooked a grand breakfast of eggs, bacon and coffee. The somewhat noxious fumes of the paraffin stoves and the aroma of eggs

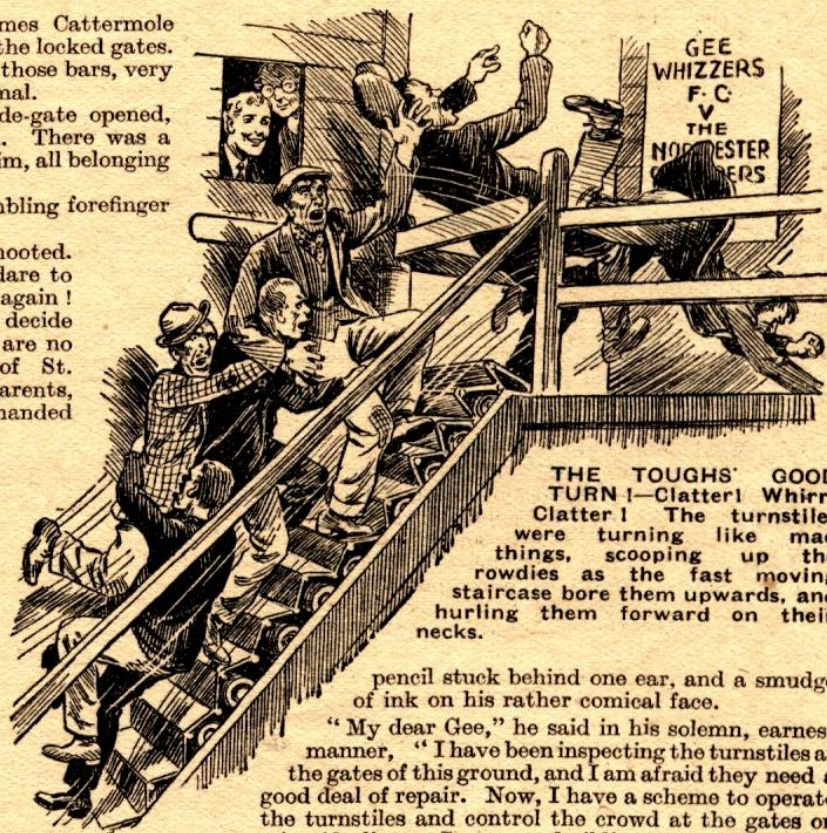
and bacon still clung in the air, but the general atmosphere was one of gaiety and animation.

Johnny Gee & Co. had already set to work to repair the grandstand! Planks of wood, and nails, and pots of paint were everywhere to be seen.

Dick Bannister and his squad were performing doughty deeds, repairing the fence that ran round the ground. True, the planks were not exactly even in places, and the merry juniors may have used more nails than was absolutely necessary, but the results, viewed as a whole, were most satisfactory.

Timothy Catchpole came up to Johnny Gee, who was fixing up a small room in the pavilion as an office. Johnny was Chairman, Business Manager and Director as well as captain of the schoolboy football pro's.

Catchpole had a roll of plans under his arm, a



THE TOUGHS' GOOD TURN!—Clatter! Whirr! Clatter! The turnstiles were turning like mad things, scooping up the rowdies as the fast moving staircase bore them upwards, and hurling them forward on their necks.

pencil stuck behind one ear, and a smudge of ink on his rather comical face.

"My dear Gee," he said in his solemn, earnest manner, "I have been inspecting the turnstiles at the gates of this ground, and I am afraid they need a good deal of repair. Now, I have a scheme to operate the turnstiles and control the crowd at the gates on scientific lines. I propose building a sort of moving staircase or Customer Conveyer from the gates to the turnstiles, which will be operated by special machinery working in conjunction with the moving conveyer. The action of the moving staircase will be to keep the turnstiles continually fed with people, and the turnstiles themselves will be entirely automatic, keeping a check on all the people passing through. Thus, we shall know just exactly how many people have been admitted to the ground, and so be able to check up on the gate receipts."

Johnny Gee chuckled. "It sounds a good idea, Catchpole," he said. "You can go ahead if you like, old son."

Catchpole lost no time in getting to work on his latest brainwave. The mass of apparatus and weird contrivances that he set up at the gates of the ground caused the other Removites to open wide their eyes and wonder!

They had training to do as well as repair work, and Johnny kept his team well in trim. They had running and jumping exercises as well as football

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practice on the ground, and so kept themselves fit and ineffably cheerful.

"My word! This is chunks better than lessons!" grinned Dixon. "When is our first public match, Johnny? Have you fixed it?"

"Rather!" responded their leader. "I've been on the 'phone to Wightman, the skipper of the Norchester Crusaders. I've asked for a match, and explained that we're running this stunt in aid of the Merivale F.C. And they're coming over on Wednesday to give us a match. The Crusaders are sports, too. They're willing to forgo their share of the gate money, so as to make more for the good cause."

ALL Merivale was soon talking about the Gee Whizzers Football Team, as the St. Giddy's professionals called themselves, that had taken possession of the derelict Merivale ground for a short season! Johnny Gee and his lively lads became the centre of attraction in the town.

And when, on Wednesday afternoon, the gates were opened and Johnny Gee & Co. saw the crowds thronging towards the ground, they rubbed their hands with satisfaction and chuckled mightily.

Frank Towler and his friends, all members of the unfortunate Merivale F.C., were in attendance to help in the management of the ground. Timothy Catchpole was in the little box at the barrier, operating the mechanical devices, whilst Smith minor and Hank P. Peck were at the gates selling the tickets.

The Norchester Crusaders arrived well on time, and they smiled when they saw the preparations that Johnny Gee & Co. had made for the match.

"So the St. Giddy's Junior XI. calls itself the Gee Whizzers—eh?" grinned Wightman. "Quite a natty professional name, too! My word, you're getting a gate!"

The public were simply rolling up to see the match, and money was falling merrily into the coffers!

There was a goodly sprinkling of St. Giddy's and Earlswood caps in the crowd, too! The exiled juniors were having the full support of their old friends and schoolmates.

Suddenly Hooper came dashing up to the pavilion. "I say, Roker and his gang are coming!" he cried. "They've got Remington and some of Catty's crowd with 'em, too! They mean to make trouble at the match, that's evident."

Johnny went into the little box where Timothy Catchpole was operating his wonderful mechanism. Certain whispered words passed between Johnny and the schoolboy inventor, and Catchpole, blinking at a fast rate through his spectacles, stooped down to make adjustments to those creaking, rumbling devices that operated the moving stairway and the turnstiles.

The St. Giddy's boys, Towler & Co., and the Norchester fellows all gathered behind the barrier, ready to lend a hand when the time came.

Roker and his party of roughs passed through the gates and stepped on to the moving stairway. They sneered and laughed loudly at the device, that jolted them slowly upward towards the turnstiles.

But suddenly their laughter broke off, and loud yells of dismay and terror broke from the hooligans' lips. The moving staircase had, without warning, increased its speed! The rumbling became a roar, and the jolting turned to a wild heaving as the staircase whirled its passengers upward at a terrific rate.

"Creak! Clatter! Whirrrr-rrrrr!" "Yah! Hi! Stoppit! What the— Whoooooop!" yelled Roker.

He was pitched headlong off the moving staircase, and the arms of the turnstile, whirling out from the barrier, caught him up and projected him forward with a violence and suddenness that quite took his breath away.

"Clatter! Clatter! Whirrrr-rrrrr!" The turnstiles were turning like mad things, scooping up the rowdies as the fast-moving staircase bore them upward and hurled them forward on their necks! Wild howls of anguish broke out from Roker & Co. as they found themselves in the whirling arms of the turnstiles. One after another they were hurled through the barrier, to land in a dazed and dizzy heap on the floor beyond!

"Ha, ha, ha! Go for 'em!" sang out Johnny Gee, as he led a rush upon the fallen rowdies. "Chuck 'em out!"

Roker & Co. were too hurt and bewildered from their experiences on the moving staircase and the turnstiles to offer much resistance. Johnny Gee & Co. and their backers fell upon the sprawling enemy, and pitched them headlong over the fence, where they fell in a rubbish dump below.

There they lay, in a squirming heap, whilst the merry footballers gazed over the fence and roared with laughter at them.

"That's settled Roker's hash for this afternoon!" said Johnny Gee as they returned to the pavilion amidst the laughter and applause of the assembled crowds. "Now for the match—the crowd are yelling for us!"

The match started, and the crowd settled down to get their money's worth.

They were not to be disappointed. On the field the gallant schoolboy eleven seemed to be dwarfed by their big opponents from Norchester, but from their first concerted attack they showed that what they lacked in weight they made up for in precision and speed.

The first goal was scored by the Crusaders, but by half-time the Gee Whizzers had equalised, and seemed as fit and fresh as when they started.

The wind was in their favour, too, in the second half, and the spectators were kept on tenterhooks of suspense and excitement. Again the red shirts slammed in the leather, but Johnny Gee & Co. bucked up and fought hard for the equalising goal. They attacked strongly, and swarmed like bees round their opponents' goal. Johnny Gee shot hard at point-blank range, and the goalie fisted out the ball promptly. Then the Hon. Bob Vernon shot, and struck the upright, and then Johnny Gee darted in as the ball rebounded, and headed it into the corner of the net, just beating the goalie by a hairbreadth.

"Goal! Hurrah!" Time was passing, and the Crusaders were pressing, but the schoolboy team's defence was determined and strong. Grimly did their opponents attempt to break through, and gallantly did the halves and Dick Bannister and Geordie Danvers on the back line repulse their attacks. Play was transferred to midfield again, and it seemed that the match would end there with a draw. But

suddenly Lord Reggie got away on the wing with a dazzling turn of speed.

"Pass, Reggie!" Reggie passed smartly to Snowball, who was unmarked on the other wing. The little nigger accepted the ball and, with a lightning-like movement whipped it into the net, the Crusader goalie having no possible chance to save.

Whoops of delight arose from the spectators.

"Goal!" "Atta, boys!"

Johnny Gee & Co. resumed the fray with flushed, eager faces and shining eyes. Only ten minutes more to play, and if they could keep the red shirts at bay the victory was theirs.

The Gee Whizzers played on the defensive during those ten gruelling, hard-fought minutes. Once the Crusaders ripped their way through, and the boys' goal was bombarded hotly. But Otto was there where he was wanted, every time, and the attacking inside right relieved the situation by sending the ball just over the crossbar.

The ball was then whipped away into midfield, and there it remained until the final whistle blew!

The Gee Whizzers, the schoolboy exiles from St. Giddy's, had won their first public match—and won gallantly! The Crusaders' captain was the first to congratulate them. The ground resounded with the cheering, and it rang mockingly in the ears of Mr. Gunter and Mr. Cattermole, and their savage-hearted myrmidons outside.

The crowds came thronging out of the football-ground, animated and excited with the great match they had witnessed. They had had their full money's worth, and the popularity of the youthful Gee Whizzers was established at Merivale.

And when, later on, Hank P. Peck announced the gross takings to be over seventy pounds, Johnny Gee & Co. felt that truly they deserved well of their country.

Catty Fired.

"WE must put a stop to this! The situation is insupportable!"

Mr. Ernest James Cattermole was the speaker. He was pacing up and down in his study at St. Giddy's like a vulture that cannot lay claws on its prey. With him were Remington, Burgess, Slade and Bond, of the Sixth. The rascally prefects were looking black and angry, but their mood was not to be compared with Mr. Cattermole's. He was fairly consumed with rage and bitter malice.

"For a whole week those young renegades have been living in the football-ground at Merivale!" hissed Mr. Cattermole. "I think we are justified in taking the strongest measures to deal with them."

The "strongest measures" were arranged between the cantankerous Housemaster and his satellites.

Meanwhile the exiled Removites, in blissful ignorance of the treachery that was afoot, got themselves into trim for the next match, which was booked to take place on the morrow, Saturday.

Their opponents this time were the Rovers from Lexham, a team far-famed throughout the county for their prowess. That fixture was widely advertised throughout the neighbourhood, and a greater crowd than before was expected.

Tickets were selling like wildfire, and the schoolboys were jubilant.



IN THE HEART OF INFERNO.—Crimson, scorching flames darted their hissing tongues at Johnny and his unconscious burden.

"Our receipts will be more to-morrow than they were on Wednesday!" chuckled Johnny. "We shall then have raked in more than the hundred guineas required for the renewal of the lease. Gunter will be properly done in the eye."

"Rather!"

That night, the juniors repaired unto their beds in the pavilion, feeling eager and confident for the fray on the morrow!

They did not see the stealthy forms that crept up to the grounds in the darkness. Roker and three of his hooligan gang were there—and Gunter.

Roker's coarse, wicked face creased in a sardonic grin. "The petrol's where we left it, sir!" he said. "It won't take us a jiffy to soak the grandstand and the pavilion, and set 'em alight. The wood will blaze up in no time, and away will go the lot. There won't be no match on this ground to-morrow—no fear o' that!"

"Good—good!" hissed Gunter. "Set about it now—and be careful you are not discovered. I will pay you well for this night's work, if you succeed in causing this fire!"

"Leave it to us, sir!"

Like wraiths in the night, the incendiaries made their way into the empty aisles of the grandstand, creeping noiselessly as they set about their nefarious work.

And, skulking in the upper galleries, were Mr. Cattermole and his posse of prefects. They were waiting for an opportune moment to creep out and fall on the slumbering Removites in the pavilion, according to the plans they had made.

Suddenly, Remington gave a suspicious sniff. "Can you smell anything?" he muttered tensely.

"Yes—it's petrol!" whispered Bond. "The place simply reeks of it, and— Oh! Good heavens! Look! The place is alight!"

A great tongue of crimson flame licked upward in the darkness below them, and a fierce crackle of burning timber broke hideously through the silence. The grandstand was alight! The flames spread rapidly, until the bay below them was one lurid cauldron of fire!

Remington & Co. sprang to their feet, shouting with terror. Down below, they heard a stampede of running feet, clattering on the boards above the awful crackle of the flames! Dark figures darted away into the darkness of the ground. Roker & Co. had taken fright and were making off, after starting the blaze in the grandstand.

The flames were gaining a hold, and great, livid tongues of fire and smoke licked upward from the blazing woodwork. Remington & Co., their craven hearts gripped with terror, dashed over the partition nearest them and ran—each one for himself! They leaped over the seats and hurled themselves down to the ground, the lurid glare and the intense crackle of the flames spurring them in their headlong flight.

They paid no heed to the terrified screeching of Mr. Cattermole behind them.

The Housemaster, unable to leap so high as Remington & Co., had fallen in his frantic endeavour to climb the partition. An agonised cry burst from his lips as he struck his head on a pillar and went reeling down the gangway towards the blazing inferno below.

"Help! Help!" shrieked Mr. Cattermole. "Save me! Oh!"

His voice trailed off as he crashed in a huddled heap between two rows of seats. The Housemaster's senses left him and he lay there helpless, whilst the hideous flames devoured their way nearer to him. . .

There was a shout from the pavilion as Johnny Gee & Co., aroused by the noise of the fire, came dashing on to the ground.

Their boyish faces blanched with horror when they saw the blaze in the grandstand.

"Oh, good heavens! Somebody's been here and set the stand alight! The hounds!" burst out Johnny. "Get the hose going, quick! Fetch your saws and choppers, and hack away the woodwork where the flames are going! They haven't got a firm hold yet, and we may be able to save the grandstand!"

The Removites tore away to do their leader's bidding. Johnny ran to the blazing stand, and he drew up short, frozen with horror, when he heard a faint, agonised cry coming from somewhere within that mass of hectic flame!

"Help—help! Oh—"

"Someone's up there—trapped in the fire!" blurted from the Remove captain's lips as he dashed onward, his heart thumping with horror. "This way, you chaps—for the love of Heaven, hurry!"

Johnny leaped over the barrier and dashed headlong into the maze of flame and smoke that was sweeping over the lower part of the grandstand.

All at once he stumbled across a prone figure lying on the scorching boards. He bent down, and

a low, amazed cry escaped him when he saw who it was. Mr. Cattermole!

Johnny did not stop to reason why the Housemaster should be there, alone in the blazing grandstand at dead of night. Uppermost in his mind was the realisation of the deadly peril that confronted him—that most horrible of deaths—from burning!

Exerting all his strength, Johnny raised the senseless Housemaster and hoisted him across his shoulders. Then, with head down, he turned and plunged once more into the seething inferno of flame and smoke below.

Crimson, scorching flames darted their hissing tongues at him as he stumbled onward with his unconscious burden. Clouds of acrid smoke, belching from the crackling woodwork, tore into his lungs and choked him and blistered his eyes so that he could not see. But he kept bravely on, and suddenly he felt strong arms gripping him, supporting him and taking his burden off his back. He reeled drunkenly forward, taking in the fresh night air in eager gulps.

"All serene, Johnny!" It was Dick Bannister's voice close to his ears. "You're a trump, the way you fetched Catty out of that blaze! You might both have been burnt to death—"

"I—I'm all right now!" gasped Johnny, rising to his feet. "What are the others doing? Have they got the flames under?"

"Yes, rather!" came the cheery response.

The Removites fought grimly with the flames, keeping the fire at bay, and at last a cheer arose as the light sputtered out, and only the columns of black smoke were left! They played the water on the charred, glowing woodwork, and the danger was over!

"This was a put-up job, Johnny!" said the Hon. Bob Vernon in serious tones. "Someone has been here with petrol, and the idea was to set the whole place alight, but apparently the rotters, whoever they were, were disturbed and they skedaddled. So the damage is very little, really, and we'll be able to make it good in the morning. I wonder whether Cattermole knows anything about it?"

Johnny Gee started.

"Surely he wouldn't be such a rotter as to be a party to setting the grandstand alight!" he exclaimed. "Come on—we'll ask him!"

Mr. Cattermole lay on some rugs in the pavilion. All the fury was gone from the cantankerous Housemaster now. He lay there groaning hollowly, although it was obvious that he was not seriously hurt. Johnny Gee, at the risk of his own life, had fetched him out in time!

And from Catty's gasping lips, they heard how he and Remington & Co. had set out from St. Giddy's with birches, to take them by surprise and drive them out of their stronghold, and how they had surprised the incendiaries at their fell work.

Catty had recognised one of the fleeing forms on the ground as Roker!

Johnny Gee gritted his teeth. "We'll get the police on this job!" he said. "Here's P.C. Dooley and the town fire brigade."

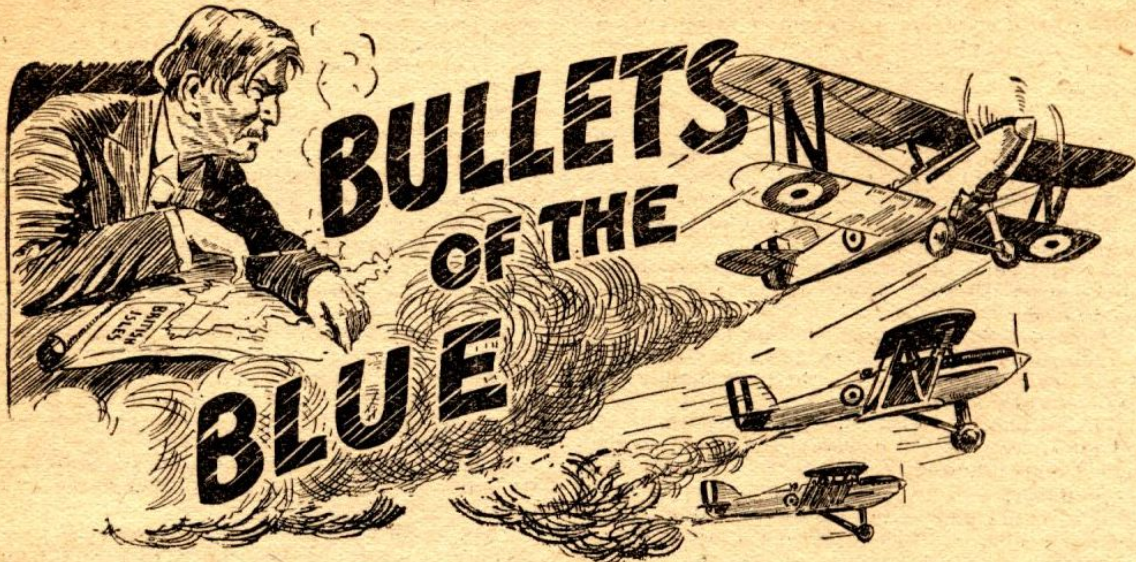
It was late before the juniors returned to bed in the pavilion. But they felt safe now from any further attack.

Saturday morning found them bright and smiling. Johnny Gee was little the worse for his ordeal. The grandstand was repaired, and the juniors put in some useful practice on the ground ere the time came for them to prepare for the match.

All roads seemed to lead to Merivale that sunny, crisp afternoon! The football ground of the school-boy shooting stars was besieged by an eager crowd.

(Continued on page 36.)

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 salve 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.

And before General Destrier would allow Ian to bring in his brother from his perilous position atop the airship's gas-bag, he exacted a promise that Ian would pose as King of Waldenberg instead of the craven Otto. First they flew to the ice-locked submarine to recover the Crown Jewels. A startling development occurred, however, when King Otto jumped from the airship, to be captured by Count Venskye, Demon Ace of Waldenberg. Count Venskye challenged Johnny to a duel for the King's life.

The Secret of the Submarine.

AS the four in the control room stood a moment in tense silence, Count Venskye's voice came mockingly through the radio receiver again.

"There is no time to waste, gentlemen. In ten minutes I will meet your ace for supremacy in the sky. I will give you no more time."

Air Commander Ian moved quickly to the controls. "He is right. King Otto of Waldenberg freezes while we argue," he said. "We shall see who breaks the wings of this flying fury."

He turned the wheel. Bells jangled, and he issued crisp orders to his men at their stations.

The giant dirigible turned lazily, heading towards the smooth ice with a thunder of engines.

"D-r-r-o-o-o-one!" The great cigar shape looked huge, invincible, a monster of destruction as it circled, dipped, poised and became almost motionless. Cables were lowered fore and aft, with special ice-anchors.

The crew were now invading the dim regions of the vast dirigible where the packing-cases containing the new 'planes were stored. With commendable celerity they lowered three cases containing the parts of one pursuit 'plane to the ice. No time to assemble more than one 'plane.

But Air Commander Ian, striding about the vast space between the gasbags, directing operations, was grim of face.

Ian's concern was for Johnny. The kid . . . going to duel with that sky-tearer!

Stalwart Johnny merely grinned as he met Ian's brooding blue eyes, however.

"What's on your mind, fellow?" he asked. "We met the eagles of Germany, didn't we? Sent 'em fluttering down, too. Well, then?"

Air Commander Ian stirred restlessly. "This is different," he growled. His hand flung out and pointed. "Lower that extra case," he ordered the R.A.F. mechanics.

The huge case was taken from the store department and lowered to the ice. It contained a new-type glider. The big air commander had a plan of his own.

There was no time to assemble a second engined 'plane, so he intended to go up in the glider.

Striding back to the control room, Ian saw General Destrier standing motionless at the bow window; a monstrous, ominous figure in his military greatcoat, tugging at his moustache.

He paid no heed to Tornado Wills and another mechanic who were lowering Count Shaunberg, trussed as he was, to the ice. The Grand Duke Michael was tensely watching through the window.

With his hands in his pockets, the fur collar of his flying teddy bears turned up, the big skyman walked to the General's side.

"What is it?"—with growling uneasiness.

Grand Duke Michael pointed. Ian stared through the plate glass, and saw it down there, in that jumbled, flashing mass of the ice pack. A long cigar shape of dully glowing metal, piled high and dry amidst the floes—pushed there by the sweeping broom of the Arctic.

His teeth clicked. In the hold of that submarine were Crown jewels of untold value, and British bullion.

Years it might be before the ice freed the submarine.

Ian knew that King Otto had escaped from that trap during the night in a canvas Eskimo boat. Fearing that he would be followed—shot down in the boat—he left the Crown jewels and the bullion behind as hostage to his fortune.

"Then logically one assumes they're gone," Ian said with a short, impatient laugh. "Shaunberg and Venskye would have raided the submarine, taken them."

"Ah, no, my friend." The Grand Duke Michael's eyes flashed under dark brows. "In that submarine is placed an explosive. Anyone tampering with the hatchway—anyone trying to get in—will send it off. Blow himself and the submarine sky high."

Ian's breath escaped in a whistle through his teeth. "Ah, now we have it," he murmured grimly: "the secret of the submarine. It has its silent watchdog, eh? . . . Ah, look—"

He pointed to where a black shape hovered and looped in the blue. "Count Venskye waits for us like a crow in the sky."

"No—he does something more than that," growled the Grand Duke, leaning forward tensely. His voice changed to an enraged snarl. "See, he breaks his word. He is diving down over the water lead. Over King Otto! Not to fire on him, but to get the key—the scoundrel! He has discovered since that King Otto has a simple key which has only to be inserted and turned in a slot in the submarine to nullify the bomb, render it ineffective. So that anyone may enter."

The big skyman pounded a clenched fist in the palm of his other hand. A few seconds saw them scrambling down the rope ladder to the bleak ice.

The Duel.

SQUADRON LEADER JOHNNY, heavily swathed in woollies and flying-leathers, was banging the tail-skid on the ice to test it when Ian strode up to him.

"What now, fellow?" he asked, springing quiet

and alert to his feet as he saw the big skyman's enraged face.

Rapidly Air Commander Ian told him. Johnny's eyes sharpened to diamond shapes. "Better shove off," he said, starting to fork the cockpit. "She's ready."

She was. The new R.A.F. pursuit ship was a sweet job. All sheet duralumin; no fabric to shred. There were six hundred horses in her nose, and they were crackling and spluttering for more feed. A gaunt, glittering, low-winged mono, with retractable floats as well as wheels, all latest improvements—little wonder that Air Marshal O'Neil had said that in these the adventurers would appear like bullets of the blue!

Johnny was squeezing into the tiny cockpit. He adjusted helmet, goggles. From a fair boy he had changed to the grim, dark skybird as he bent, trying the controls.

There was a sudden bark of power, like a cannon-shot. Johnny was not waiting. Before the gaunt ship had coughed more than half a dozen voluminous bursts of smoke, a couple of streaks of scarlet flame, the young skyrider raised his leather-clad arm. Off!

The 'plane careered forward with a shattering roar and rumble. Driving tornado of stinging water from the ice shot in her wake. Streaking—bullet-swift.

They watched her in awe. With a roar like massed artillery, she swished over the ice. Bounded once, twice, then steadied under the master-hand of the young Squadron Leader. In a beautiful but sharp take-off, she rose like a sky-rocket into the gloom—that weird gloom that had usurped the painful glitter of the sun, and was lit by the play of the Aurora Borealis.

It circled for altitude, the shaking thunder becoming a drone. Then those on the ground saw it, like a streaking shadow, diving from one cloud stratum to another, straight for the enemy.

Dizzy tearing through the clouds! As he hunched, with the crackling thunder of his engine in his ears, heavy slip-stream pressure on goggles—his hand notching the throttle wide—Johnny saw Count Venskye. And he felt a dryness in his mouth. Pulses hammering furiously.

Something told him he was due for the fight of his life.

Count Venskye had landed down there in the waters of the lead that glittered like fluid steel. His ship, also, was equipped with retractable floats. He had found King Otto of Waldenberg lying on one of the rubber rafts, unconscious. Nothing to be gained from him. A hurried search failed to reveal the key. Venskye stood on the stirrup of his ship, goggles over his forehead, staring upwards at the ship diving down on him.

Flame from his exhaust-stacks flashed across that dark speed face, teeth bared—flashed and went, leaving eyes hidden deep in hateful wells.

Must get off. This menace from the skies had to be met. He was baffled—the key—he had failed! With a savage snarl he forked his cockpit, gunned the motor, and travelling thunderously in a flying sheet of spray, he slanted upwards.

While Johnny dived. But not to meet him yet. There was a popping and splutter as he closed throttle and levelled, then he opened out with a bark to let the air from under her, and landed—smack—cruising, slowing down in diminishing spray.

Right up to the raft, as neat as you please!

He got King Otto of Waldenberg to the ice, and pulling out a small flask of brandy, allowed a few drops to trickle between the blue lips.

Presently lids lifted from over dull, glazed eyes—eyes that stared with terrible fear.

Johnny bent. "Listen. I am your friend." He talked quickly, softly: something of magic there must have been in his soothing manner. For the light of understanding dawned in the sick king's eyes. And when Johnny talked of the key, he nodded.

"In my boot," he muttered. "I trust you. . ."

His head fell back. Unconscious again. And Johnny hastily procured the key.

He went to his ship, and fired a blue flare from his Verey pistol to summon aid. Then he forked the cockpit, and jerking open the throttle, hit the fighting-plane with power.

She sliced the water with blinding speed, jumped aloft hungrily. Up and up in an almost vertical spiral until Johnny had gathered himself two thousand feet of altitude. Then he levelled out. And a shadow fell athwart his wing.

His eyes clung overhead to the Sisorsky fighter. It was sliding off height. Venskye was coming in to snarl defiance before he attacked. Johnny jerked his release lever, stripping the cowlings to expose his cold Brownings, the while he stared at the other's wing guns inside I-struts. Something new that Venskye himself had fitted to the stolen plane. The Sisorsky was armed to the teeth.

He came in until his left wing almost touched Johnny's right. Johnny waved. Venskye's answer was to bare his teeth and draw his finger ominously across his throat.

"Right-ho, then; let's go!" shouted Johnny, his face suddenly fury-whitened. All the mad fight roused in him.

He dipped his threshing propeller. Venskye did the same. They were going down in a blur, side by side. Wingtip to wingtip. Tail to tail. Engines crazing a thunder that reverberated for miles. Flames curling from exhausts.

"Can you match this game?" gritted Johnny as he held on. Straight down. Wind whipping back across the screen in a howling torrent—gagging him. Wings bent under the terrific pressure, tail trembling like a beast in torture.

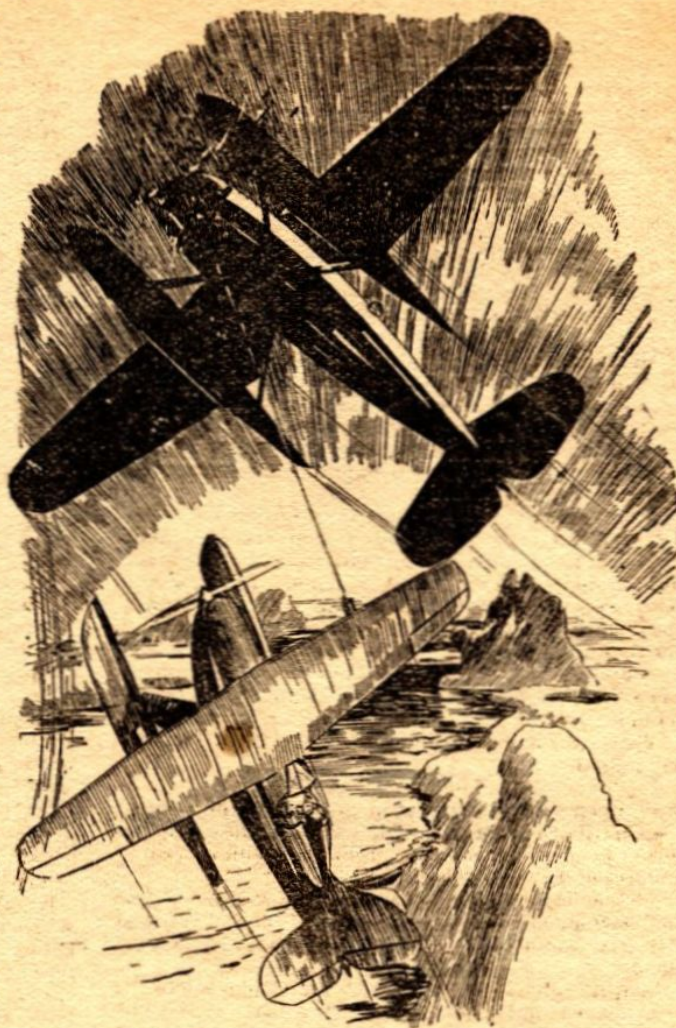
But Venskye was with him all the time. And the two poured down, roaring, from the skies. Height-indicator needles stopped. Venskye's eyes flickered—with fear. But he held on to the death. Johnny fought back his body in the tiny cockpit.

"And here's another, y'big ape!" He palmed the stick back, and wires grew taut. Nose of the shuddering plane came up; she went up, up in a raging zoom. But Venskye was with him, engine bellowing like a mighty beast. And as Johnny hung on his climb, the Sisorsky, with startling suddenness, split-are'd over.

Through the roar of engines now suddenly broke gun-clatter. Like giant typewriters raving. Head slewed over his shoulder, Johnny saw the Sisorsky coming at him with a rush and a roar. Fire-bubbles spouting from her guns. It was as if his tail and fuselage rattled to hailstones. He lurched away wrapped in it—white ghost-fingers streaking past his head, his shoulders—a thousand-foot dive, and Johnny half-rolled, falling into an inverted spin.

Venskye couldn't duplicate that mad tumble. He pulled up, as if dizzy. And like a flash, Johnny's plane slid out of its spin, and came up and up, a raging zoom.

"My turn now, fellow!" Johnny gritted, his thumbs down on the trips.



FROZEN DEATH.—Venskye's plane wallowed and rocked in the breath of a thousand bullets as Johnny came under him in a raging zoom. And that death-stream found a fatal spot.

Nor could Venskye escape that bullet from the blue that came up under him. That sky-rocket, spewing fire. He looked over the side, face crazed. Johnny had scooped under him, and on, and up. Venskye's plane wallowed and rocked in the breath of a thousand bullets.

Never had he seen such a ship that could slice up, hanging on its propeller, streaming steel as if through twin hoses. In agony he crouched. Would it never fall away?

Yes; Johnny's plane stalled, snap-hammered on to her nose and twisted down. But not before his death-stream had found the vital spot.

"Got you, fellow!" Johnny gritted in satisfaction. As he twisted down in a headlong fall, he saw, with back-flung head, steam clouding from the punctured radiator of Venskye's Sisorsky. Motor was coughing horribly, flying wires snapping about in the gale of wind. Then, before the demon ace could switch off, his propeller froze, dissolved in a thousand flying wood fragments.

Venskye, fighting the ship, put her in a glide towards the ice bay far below.

"Yap; I got you!" Johnny choked as he kicked inverted rudder and side-sticked out of a spin. "Hallo,

it looks like he's gliding to a landing near the submarine. Why—why—he's crashing for sure."

No doubt of it. The Sisorsky was coming down from the heights like a plummet. Johnny gritted his teeth, an involuntary shudder at his spine, as he waited for the hollow sound of the death-crash to come up to him.

It came—an evil sound of horror. Winging over in that direction, Johnny saw the tangled wreckage of the 'plane on the ice near the submarine.

In the Submarine.

"**D**ONE for!" Johnny sobbed.

He swept his pangs aside, however, quickly. Venskye had been a cunning wolf of the skies. He would have done for Johnny if he could—if it had not been the youngster's fate to live. Johnny determined to go down and inspect the wreck. And then a thought occurred to him. He'd got the key. He'd go into the submarine and get the Crown jewels. Save time—the airship, with Ian, was moored five miles distant.

Johnny need have no pangs over Count Venskye, however. Though, to be sure, that flying demon would have compelled his admiration if he had seen Venskye face his end. Any man's admiration.

Count Venskye, when he saw that it was inevitable that he must crash, bared his teeth in foaming curses. And then made up his mind to the most daring move of his career.

The chances were that he could limp to some sort of pancake landing; save his life. But suddenly his cunning—his amazing daring—revolved wildly

YOUR EDITOR'S CORNER

MY DEAR CHUMS,

Rotten luck! I've only this stingy space left to chat with you chaps this week. And such a lot to tell you about. How do you like the new art plates? Humdingers, eh? But wait until you get next week's. It depicts:

West Bromwich and Chelsea.

And it's a beauty, chums. These plates will look fine on the walls of your dens or in your sport albums. The yarns next week also hit the high spots. First a gun-crashing long complete Wild West whoozer, entitled

The Bar Eight Ranch Ablaze!

The Dandy Cowboy and his 'punchers in peril through the plotting of Black Bart, the bandit scourge of the Rio Grande! It's packed with excitement and swift action—like all these gripping stories of the *Mag.*'s famous cowboys.

Kahdoosh, the Husky Eskimo,

is a new pal you'll meet next week. Favourite dish: Candles! But there's a big thrill as well as laughs in this first yarn of his strange adventures 'mid the frozen wastes of the Land of the Northern Lights.

Cinder Sammy—Speed Merchant

also appears in this crammed number. Our Stuttering Star is up to his usual side-splitting antics on the dirt track. And plus thrilling instalments of **THE SHOOTING SLEUTH, BULLETS OF THE BLUE,** and **BEWARE THE BLACK BATTLE-AXE,** next Saturday's number is one you won't want to miss. Sorry I've been almost crowded out by the yarns this week. I'll send you each a personal letter if you'll write me telling me which tales you like best.

The Editor

in his brain . . . and came to focus on a staggering plan.

He'd crash . . . yes; near the submarine.

He drove his 'plane downwards, heart pounding madly. Venskye had done this for a motion-picture firm making a film of war-battles in the air. Had crashed 'planes, specially weakened, in front of the camera batteries. He knew all the tricks of crashing.

But this was a real crash, with an all-metal 'plane. No time to think of that now. He was going down, dropping like a plummet. Wires screaming a banshee wail. Crazy crash! Gaining the speed of a bullet.

He whipped his leather coat off, wrapped it round head and shoulders, clawed for cotton waste, stuffed it inside the front of his helmet.

From the parting in the leather coat the one uncovered eye of the air demon gauged it. *Whooooee!* Fifteen feet from the ground—and still falling.

Then Venskye gripped the stick, and tugged it back into his stomach. He ducked his head under the cockpit. Another second—

"*C-r-ra-ash!*" A grinding shock. Wheels he had lowered from the wing stubs hurled themselves upon the ice, and the whole gaunt machine bounced high with a rending shock.

Up went the tail—the machine turned a complete somersault—came down . . .

Rending, tearing, ripping of sheet metal. The hideous crash of a combination of many wrecked things—that unforgettable sound of a wrecked 'plane. The tail heaved upwards, poised perpendicularly and then drooped over on its back, burying the flyer.

Perhaps sixty seconds later a figure crawled out of the wreckage, staggered drunkenly, with head upturned. Venskye, staring at the sky!

He shouted crazily as he saw a black hawk-shape winging over. Then sprang to his machine, turned the petrol cock, and as the spirit flowed out, flung the flame of a dozen matches to it.

There was a *pouff!* and a sheet of flame leapt up from the cockpit. Venskye tore off his helmet with scratched hands, running, staggering towards the submarine. Blood streamed from his nose, his head, making of his face a ghastly mask. He reached the shelter of the submarine's hull.

The stern of the undersea boat was pinned in a great mass of ice and boulders. Plenty of places for a man to hide. Yet curiously enough, fifty yards beyond lay a stretch of smooth ice where an airplane, if handled skilfully, might land.

Venskye crouched behind the ice boulders and waited, trying to suppress his harsh breathing. Johnny was *skirling* down to a landing. The villain ran his thumb along the sharp edge of a knife he gripped, and his eyes blazed hate.

As the floats swished to a standstill fifty yards from the submarine, the young Squadron Leader clambered out, stiff and oil grimed.

There was a curious dullness at his heart as he surveyed the flaming wreckage of the Sisorsky, casting the melted water into lurid pools of light; throwing leaping shadows around the submarine.

Venskye's funeral pyre!

The key he held in his hand was a large edition of the sort to clocks or clockwork models. The key that would render the bomb in the submarine harmless. Johnny had been told that the lock—if one might call it that—was in the steel side of the conning tower. A thousand voices seemed to throng around him as he mounted the crazy ladder to the conning tower.

But death stalked Johnny from another direction. A shadow darted out from between the ice hummocks, moving stealthily, swiftly towards the submarine. A figure in black, oil-spattered flying leathers. Face

frozen to a mask that showed clenched teeth and viciously blazing eyes. It was Venskye!

He mounted the ladder like a cat. On the hull Johnny gave a little exclamation of satisfaction. He had found a hole in the side of the conning tower, a metal slot over which the key fitted. He turned the key, and distinctly heard a sharp click.

"Now for it," he ejaculated with satisfaction.

He jerked at the hatch, all unaware of the dark figure on the conning tower companion, crouching in the shadow of the hull plates. The hinges of the hatch were oiled but frozen tight by the bitter cold. At length it loosened, came up on its hinges with a clang.

"Phew!" ejaculated Johnny, as he lowered his body through. He felt along the steel walls, found an electric light switch, and pressed it down.

A glass bulb flared brilliantly in the steel ceiling. Johnny placed his hands on leather-clad hips, and laughed shortly.

"No explosion. Yet there's something darned creepy about this jigger!"

He went into the control room with its nest of serpentine speaking tubes, valves and levers. He was peering about. Ian had said that the Crown jewels had been hidden in a locker.

Ah! Was that the place? He laid down the key he had held until then, on the table. And crossing with mounting excitement to the locker, bent down. There was a key in the lock. He turned it and lifted the cover.

Johnny gasped at what he saw.

So did his excitement flare that he was all unconscious of a lean, sinister face peering into the control room. Venskye was seized with uncontrollable excitement, too. Here was his chance. With a dart he was in the room, and had seized up the key, careless of the sound he made.

Johnny, staring at glittering baubles, suddenly listened—and lost all interest in those jewels of untold value, heaped in a big wolfskin bag. He had heard unmistakable sounds. He suddenly slewed his head. A voice snarled: "Death, Englishman, flies low!"

It was the greatest shock of Johnny's life. He saw Venskye there on the threshold, knife ready to let fly. Venskye, cold, shaking with his terrible rage, black eyes flowing sheer menace. Count Venskye, the air demon whom he had thought dead!

Yet Johnny contrived a grin. Though he knew with full certainty that but a second must elapse before the knife was hurled with deadly aim and force at his throat.

"Wait a minute," Johnny said cheerfully. "Don't you want these trifles?"

He held up the great bag, flashing with fine jewels, then dipped it into the locker again, and laughed. The hilarious laugh was to cover the sounds he made. He was taking a leaf out of Ian's book—quick-witted Ian! In the lockers were spanners, tools of all kinds. Johnny had scooped out the Waldenberg Crown jewels, and was filling the bag feverishly with junk under cover.

"Hand that over!" Count Venskye bit off, his lips thinned. He would have come for it, but he distrusted this fair, laughing English flyer. It was foolish to get close to these fighting Englishmen . . . when one had a knife, and could strike.

"Hurry," he spat out.

"All right, then." Johnny slung the bag over, closed at its string. It landed with a heavy dull thud, and as the knife flew like silver fire across the

control room, Johnny moved pantherishly aside.

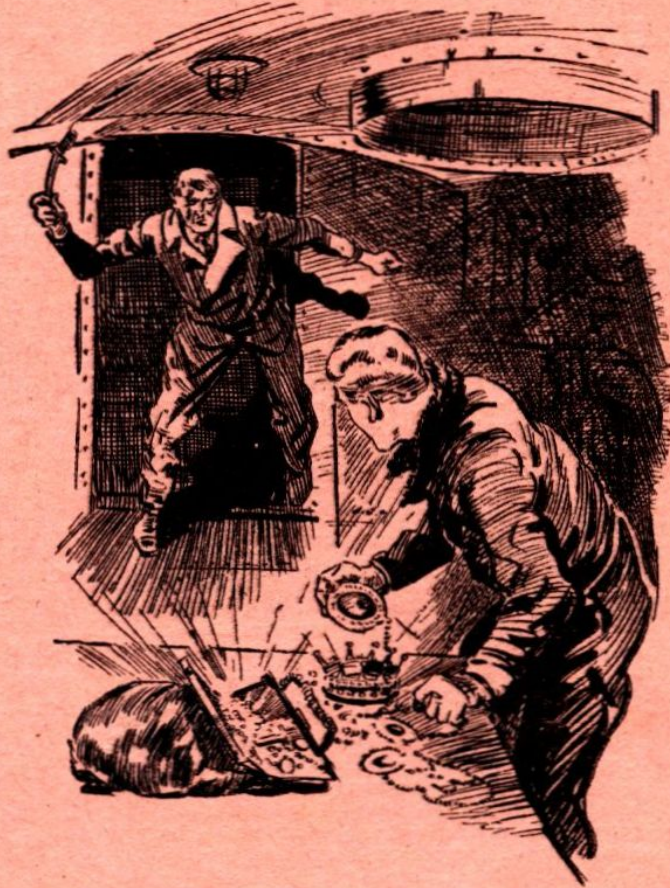
"Ah! Got you!"

"You devil!" panted Johnny, his face streaming blood.

He moved for his assailant. The razor edge of the knife had nicked his cheek and ear—he had been lucky; but he was smarting, infuriated.

Count Venskye, with a snarl, switched off the electric light, clambered up the hatchway, and through it. The hatch slammed down with a metallic clang.

And as Johnny struggled to push it open a gong sounded in the hollow depths of the submarine.



SHOCKS IN THE SUB.—Johnny, staring at the glittering baubles, suddenly heard a voice: "Death flies low, Englishman!" On the threshold was Venskye!

The young Squadron-Leader started violently, sought the electric light and switched it on. He stared round him wildly, and saw a clock with a single inky claw ticking off seconds. A dawning realisation of his position made the perspiration glisten on his brow.

The key—the key that put the bomb out of action—where was it?

He moved hastily to the table. Gone! And in a flash he realised. Venskye had taken it, and put the bomb into operation again.

In a few seconds it was due to explode, sending him and the submarine sky high.

Trapped and doomed! How can Johnny escape from this dreadful quandary? Another instalment of this splendid New Tale of the "Sky Devils" in Next Saturday's Grand Free Gift Number.

FOOTBALL FORBIDDEN AT ST. GIDDY'S (Continued from page 30.)

Catchpole's moving staircase and automatic turnstiles evoked roars of laughter, for under the terrific weight of the human traffic that wonderful mechanism began to develop trouble! In a luckless moment, Catchpole happened to reverse it, and people were being whirled out of the ground, instead of into it! But Johnny Gee & Co. came to the rescue, the moving staircase was stopped, the turnstiles were unjammed, and the crowd, very good humoured in spite of their experiences on the reversing staircase, came flocking in again and paid their money eagerly to see the match.

Every inch of space was taken up at the Merivale ground that afternoon, and rounds of cheering arose when Johnny Gee and his merry men came trotting out on to the field!

The Lexham Rovers looked very formidable. They started their play with a rush that bade fair to fairly overwhelm the schoolboys. But they reckoned without the famous St. Giddy's defence! That devastating onrush was brought up sharp, and back the ball went—and into the Rovers' half! Then commenced a "scrap" that lived long in the spectators' memories. It was football of a high order—a valiant battle between the Tritons and the minnows!

Johnny Gee & Co. suffered a set-back when the Rovers scored two goals in quick succession, but by half-time they were one up themselves—and hoping for more. They came back into the field on the resumption, and were determined to do or die. The cheers of the spectators urged on that plucky team of schoolboy shooting stars. And, by a wonderful combination of passing and heading up the field, they concentrated their attack round the Rovers' goal.

Lord Reggie rushed in with the ball, monocle flying on the end of its string. He had snatched up the leather from a smart back-heeled pass from Philip Brooke. A burly back came charging at him, but Reggie did not flinch. He swerved at the crucial moment and banged the ball with a crashing shot. The goalie clutched at it, and measured his length on the ground, while the spinning sphere went in—and the teams were level!

"Good old Reggie!"

"Play up, the Gee Whizzers!"

Flushed and eager, the schoolboy exiles played up. They played the game of their lives! Right up to a minute of the finish the score stood two—all, but in the closing seconds Johnny Gee beat the Rovers' captain with a terrific daisy-cutter, and there was a roar that could have been heard a mile away.

"Goal!" "Oh, hooray!"

Pandemonium reigned on the ground.

The schoolboy shooting stars had performed the hat trick! Three wins in succession—and wonderful wins at that!

No wonder the crowd howled, and whirred their rattles, and tossed their hats in the air! Johnny Gee & Co., breathless from their terrific battle, acknowledged the plaudits and bore their blushing honours thick upon them.

Then a hush fell on the crowd, and the schoolboy players stood stock still.

A tall, dignified gentleman came striding across the field. It was Dr. Holroyd, the venerable Head of St. Giddy's.

Johnny Gee glanced quickly at the Head, but there was a friendly smile on his kind old face. He strode forward, holding out his hand.

"Allow me to congratulate you, Gee, on a wonder-

ful victory!" said Dr. Holroyd. "I have been here since half-time, but I have been so thrilled with watching you play, that I did not interfere before. You lads have certainly acquitted yourselves well, and I have heard from Master Towler just why you have—er—taken such a bold step as to play professional football. The receipts total a huge amount, and Towler tells me that to-night he will be able to pay Mr. Gunter the renewal money for the lease of this ground. I can only say that I am proud of you, my boys!"

Johnny Gee's eyes danced. The rest of the exiled Removites chuckled joyously.

"Oh, that's ripping, sir!" exclaimed the Remove captain. "And Mr. Cattermole—"

"I was called back to St. Gideon's by an urgent message from Mr. Tattersall," said the Head quietly. "I have seen Mr. Cattermole, and made a complete investigation into the affair. I am satisfied that your conduct, though extremely drastic, was provoked by—er—extenuating circumstances. I have also heard how you saved Mr. Cattermole's life last night, when the prefects behaved like cowards and ran, leaving him to his fate. The police have arrested Roker, and they are now making inquiries as to the part played by Mr. Gunter in that disgraceful affair. I am sure that no blame redounds upon you lads, and you will return with me to school now."

Johnny Gee & Co. looked eagerly at one another. "And we—we shan't get expelled, or flogged, or—anything, sir?"

"On the contrary, Gee," smiled the Head. "I am very proud to own you as pupils of St. Gideon's."

"Hurrah!" The exiled juniors returned to St. Giddy's in high feather. A crowd formed in gay procession with them, and they were made the heroes of the hour.

Study No. 4 that evening was the scene of great festivity. The Joyous Juniors were celebrating on a grand scale! They had every reason to celebrate, too. Their cause had been won, and the Merivale F.C. were again in possession of their ground, and their finances were on a sound basis once more—thanks to the Gee Whizzers of St. Giddy's, the Schoolboy Shooting Stars!

Another Chortling long complete yarn of the Boys of St. Giddy's on the way. And don't miss next week's Sepia Art Plate of Chelsea and West Bromwich.

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