

FREE! The GREAT CRICKET GAME 'ZAT

Boys' 2D

EVERY SATURDAY

Magazine

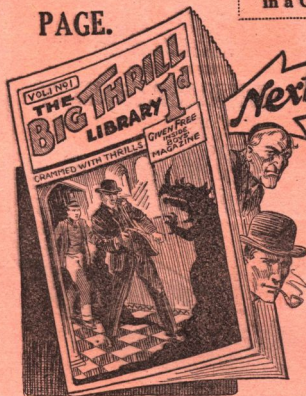


TAILS-UP DRAKE—SKY SCORPION—Appears Inside

VOL. XXII—No. 578—April 1, 1933

REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION
BY CANADIAN MAGAZINE POST

YOUR EDITOR'S PAGE.



Get Ready for the Exciting Exploits of **TIGER BOY**
in a Great New Yarn of the Mysterious Jungle.

Next Week's Grand Gift

And Don't Miss the First Number of the
Big Thrill Library FREE inside
next week's issue.

like a reserve set in case the others are damaged or become worn, should collect another set of eleven different 'Zat' cricketers and send them to our 'Zat Department. Don't forget to include your names and addresses with applications for the 'Zat games.

Next week's star story attraction in the good old *Mag.* features

Tiger Boy,

the White King of the Jungle Tree Tops. The scene of this long complete yarn is the mysterious jungle of Annam. Here, amid the mighty trees, Tiger Boy rules a powerful tribe of pygmies, his influence extending to the wild animals, with which he makes friends. Actually Tiger Boy is an English youngster who has "gone native" for certain secret reasons which will be revealed to you next week.

How do you like 'Tails-up Drake, the daredevil ace of the skyways, who makes his bow in this issue? Another of these gripping flying yarns appears next week. Look for the title

Red Raiders of Mystery.

In this thrilling episode, the curtain of mystery surrounding Phillip Garson is lifted and the full villainy of this international plotter is revealed. A speed-filled, multi-thrilled yarn of daring deeds in the air and Garson's secret retreat. You'll revel in it, chums! All the technical data relating to aeroplanes in this series is correct. It has been written by a man who is himself a flyer. Indeed, his chequered experience of the airways goes back to the Great War when he piloted one of England's battle 'planes. The drawings are by Serge Drigin, the Russian air expert.

Next Saturday is April the First—April Fool's Day! And as usual it is the occasion for more chortling escapades by the Joyous Juniors of St. Giddy's. Fatty Sloom sets the ball rolling this year by what is, for Fatty, a truly daring jape. He puts a notice on the notice board in Big Hall purporting to be from Dr. Holroyd and granting the whole school a day's holiday! First he gets his cousin in London to send a wire to the Head requesting his immediate presence for a school conference of the directors! What happens then you'll read in

Fatty's All-fools' Holiday,

one of the most amusing yarns in the ever-popular St. Giddy's series I have yet read.

Another exciting episode of the Master of Masks, and a laughable complete tale of the Chem-mystic Kid, entitled "Tommy's Terrible Twin," will thrill and amuse you. Actually Tommy Pink's twin is part of himself. Sounds tall—but wait until you get on to the amusing explanation next week.

More news next Saturday.

Your sincere friend, **THE EDITOR.**

MY DEAR CHUMS,
Another of the big things I have promised you is ready to be launched. You'll get it next week—the first grand number of

The Big Thrill Library.

This gripping midget *Mag.*, crammed from cover to cover with exciting illustrations and features, contains also a long complete thrill yarn introducing to you Bulldog Hamilton, the great adventurer. You'll take to Bulldog with his cruiser bow chin, his bowler hat, and big pipe. And the adventures he has will keep you tense as no story hero has done before. His first exploit is against Dr. Karno Klaws, the sinister owner of

The House of Mocking Shadows!

This mysterious place of hidden secrets is built on a rocky island in the centre of a lake in Dr. Karno Klaws' extensive estate. And here he hatches his dreadful plots against mankind. But when he kidnaps Professor Rodney Challoner, he makes the biggest mistake of his life—for it brings Bulldog Hamilton, adventurer, to his lair. Bulldog is a fine fellow to have as a friend, but a bad enemy. With Dick Challoner, the Professor's nephew, he penetrates to the heart of the house in the lake—and fights the devilry of Dr. Karno Klaws and his strange minions.

In addition to this grand complete thriller, you'll find scores of hints for amateur detectives, and other attractions in this natty new gift book. It's free inside next week's *Mag.*

You will also be asked to accept another

Three 'Zat Cards Free Next Week.

Thousands of readers have already received one of the *Mag.*'s grand free 'Zat games in exchange for eleven of these smaller cards, but for the benefit of new readers I am continuing this scheme for a few more weeks. Fellows who have already had a set of 44 Enlarged Glossy 'Zat Cards, but who would

SHOCKSTERS OF THE SHADOW BAR! Our Great New Flying Series, Starring a Daredevil Ace of the Skyways.

TAILS-UP DRAKE— SKY SCORPION



Thrills that will set you alight in this terrific new tale series, featuring Squadron-Leader Drake and Bonehead Murphy, his droll Irish observer.

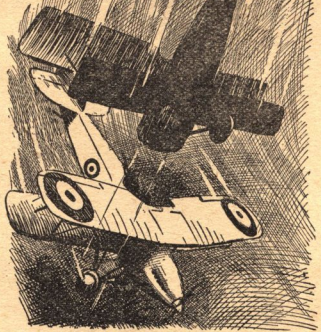
The Shadow of Death.

WITH flame-streaking exhausts the Hawker Hart came driving through a dark swirl of cloud, yawing like a temperamental racehorse as the strong, slim hands on the control-stick swung the fighter into a dizzy spiral.

Squadron-Leader Geoffrey Drake, D.F.C., studied the darkened aerodrome below, the propeller slip stream smashing against his leather-clad head as he leaned over that black abyss of space.

Drake was a typical product of the air age. Speed had graven lines about his steel-grey eyes. Continuous nervous tension had tautened the muscles of his lean, boyish face. Tails-Up Drake, they called him in the service, a nickname that was a tribute to his unflinching courage and resource in tight corners.

The young squadron-leader throttled back the snarling Rolls-Royce engine, and dived lower. Storm clouds obscured the moon, and the grey mists drifting in from Flamborough Head dimmed the orange boundary-lights of the landing-ground.



There was another reason for caution. That coastal defence aerodrome, guarding the vital aerial gateway to Britain's northern industrial centres, was dangerously crowded to-night.

Since dawn Royal Air Force machines had been concentrating there, stream-lined fighters of lashing,

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

incredible speed, giant, triple-engined bombers, and sleek, two-seater scouts with wireless ears and gun-bristling fuselages.

It was a mass concentration of Britain's air power, as spectacular as mobilisation for war. Yet it was for the more peaceful purpose of producing a great Air Force film, an ambitious project sanctioned by Britain's air lords that the might of England's air defences might be mirrored on the cinema screens of the world. And it would hold a warning to Britain's enemies, a warning *Tails-Up* Drake knew was more vitally necessary than the nation realised.

"Give them the landing signal," Drake snapped through the microphone of the telephone to the rear cockpit.

Wh-o-o-o-sh! The red rocket signal screamed into the darkness from the Verey light pistol thrust over the fuselage.

Air-mechanic Patrick Murphy thrust a languid head over the padded rim of the rear cockpit, watching for the green all-clear signal to flash from the control tower.

"Wake up, yer lazy spalpeens!" Murphy's long, glum face held its customary expression of melancholy. Bonehead Murphy had never been known to smile or hurry. If there was any trouble going, Murphy fell into it, up to the neck.

He was a character, this lanky, slow-moving, snub-nosed Irish mechanic, and a strange contrast to Daredevil Drake. But the young Squadron-Leader found in Bonehead Murphy an endless source of amusement, and he knew his worth. Murphy could tune an engine to the smoothness of velvet. He had an almost uncanny sixth sense in detecting the slightest flaw in racing tappets or purring valves.

The green all-clear signal flashed from below. A flick of the quivering rudder, and Drake swung the plane into a dizzy dive, to where the floodlights blazed a landing path, dead into the wind.

With practised skill the young airman stalled over a hedge and eased the hurtling thing of stream-lined silver and blue-grey wings down to the grass.

The speedometer needle still flickered round the sixty-miles-an-hour mark. Shimmering under the arc lamps, the plane streaked across the aerodrome with Drake striving to get the tail down.

Like a giant, black finger, a shadow swept across the field, shrouding the hurtling machine and moving along with it. This was the shadow bar, produced by a thin strip of metal hanging in front of the lens of the powerful main floodlight. It was operated by the traffic officer, and was an effective device for preventing landing pilots from being dazzled by the prevailing glare.

To-night it almost brought disaster. The black beam momentarily hid a great, loaded lorry that was making an elephantine effort to roll clear of the hurtling aircraft.

"Begorra . . . look out, sorr!" Murphy's voice rose in warning.

With lightning decision Drake stood on the rudder-bar and whipped open the throttle. The silver nose slashed round, the whipping spars of the under-carriage screaming in protest. The hurtling port-side wing missed the lorry by mere inches as that burst of speed yanked the plane to safety.

His face angry, *Tails-Up* Drake throttled back and sprang from the machine before it stopped rolling. He strode up to a group of white-faced civilians standing around the lorry.

"If you must clutter up the aerodrome," he snapped, "why the deuce don't you put out a red obstruction light?"

"A thousand pardons, sir. I fear it was my fault," said a suave voice, and a man stepped from the darkness.

It was Phillip Garson, in whose hands the Government had entrusted the making of the *Air Service* film. Drake eyed him with a queer sense of hostility. There was something definitely unpleasant about his dark, cadaverous face, with its restless eyes and loose-lipped mouth.

"I wanted to get some night flying pictures," Garson explained, and an oily smile flittered across his face. "I am sorry my camera lorry got in your way."

"You nearly crashed an eight thousand pound machine with your carelessness," Drake snapped. "You will please understand that though you will be given every facility for taking your pictures, the station orders must be obeyed. The safety of my pilots must come first. . . ."

He stopped abruptly, startled by the astonishing change that had come over Phillip Garson's face. The man was not listening. His gaze had gone beyond the young Squadron-Leader to where the senior Flight-Sergeant had come quickly forward to take Squadron-Leader Drake's instructions concerning his machine.

And as Phillip Garson's gaze rested on the newcomer's features in startled recognition, his face went grey, and a light of haunting fear leapt into his close-set eyes.

The expression Drake saw on his Flight-Sergeant's face was no less startling. He was staring at the film-producer with an incredulous light in his eyes. Then he jerked back his head, his accusing hand uplifted.

"Red Garson!" he cried grimly. "What are you doing here, you treacherous devil? I haven't forgotten where we last met."

"My dear man, what on earth are you talking about?"

Phillip Garson's voice broke in with quick protest. But like a quickening flame fear and anger kindled in his eyes. They flashed a swift message to the camera-man at his side, and the man moved quickly into the darkness.

"What's the trouble, Sergeant?" *Tails-Up* Drake's voice broke the silence.

He was staring uncertainly at the queerly angry sergeant. What had come over him? He had been a little queer, of course, since his privations in Afghanistan, when he had been captured and tortured by belligerent tribesmen on the North-West Frontier.

"That man ought to be under arrest, sir," said the Flight-Sergeant earnestly. "He's a spy and a traitor. I can tell you—"

His voice snapped off in a strangled cry. The tensed watchers did not see the swift and silent death that struck him down. A furtive figure poised on the metal ladder beneath the floodlight had swung forward the shadow bar at that vital moment. Like a shroud, that ebony shadow had swept around the Flight-Sergeant and the figures about him. Who could say how death had struck in that pall of darkness?

When in response to Drake's strident order the shadow bar was swung back from the giant lens, Flight Sergeant Hawke lay dead beneath the silver wings of the fighter, a jagged wound in his throat.

Drake bent over the body in grim bewilderment. It was then that a shadow fell across the huddled form and Phillip Garson's smooth tones echoed in the young airman's ear.

"Poor fellow, he was mad," the film director was saying. "It was as if he had a sudden attack of dementia. I saw him run into the blades of your propeller, Squadron Leader."

The Thumbless Hand.

WHEN the ambulance had carried the dead Flight Sergeant away, Drake paced restlessly to and fro beside his machine. His boyish face was troubled, as he tried to unravel the night's startling events.

What had lain behind Flight Sergeant Hawke's startling attack on the film director? Drake remembered the look of stark fear that had leapt into Garson's eyes. He would report the affair fully to Headquarters. But he had nothing definite against Garson.

"I don't like the fellow," Drake muttered uneasily.

"And Heaven knows what mischief he may be up to."

"Sorr."

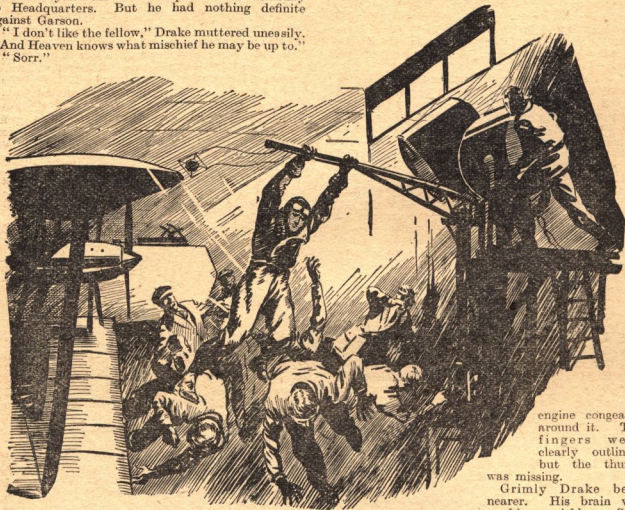
Drake's jaw tensed.

"So he was killed deliberately. But we haven't a ghost of a clue against Garson . . ."

Murphy's doleful voice broke in.

"If you'll look at your air screen, sorr, Oi think you'll foind the clue you're wanting."

Drake swung round and he gave a sudden gasp of surprise. Silhouetted on the wind screen was the outline of a blood-red hand, which each moment grew clearer as the oil spraying back from the running



TAKING THE "MIKE" OUT OF 'EM.—As the crooks rushed at Murphy, Drake leaped for the microphone arm. Under the impetus of his jump it swung round and he sent the

engine congealed around it. The fingers were clearly outlined, but the thumb

was missing.

Grimly Drake bent nearer. His brain was working quickly. Suppose Garson had struck that murderous blow at Sergeant Hawke as the only way of silencing him, had slashed at his throat in the darkness, with some weapon? It might easily be that the impetus of the blow had momentarily unbalanced him and he had gripped the aeroplane spar for support, leaving a betraying outline of his blood-stained hand.

And Garson's right hand was thumbless . . .

"Taxi in the machine, Murphy," Drake said with sudden decision. "I'm going to find Garson." His jaw set ominously, Drake strode towards the distant sheds. Murphy cocked his eye over the fuselage watching the Squadron-Leader's disappearing form. Then slowly he clambered down to the grass and ambled after his beloved chief.

THROUGH the glass skylights of "C" Flight hangars, Drake saw the violet glow of arc lamps.

The film-makers were at work. When he paused before the great steel doors of the hangar he found to his surprise that they were locked.

Drake started as Murphy's Irish brogue broke in on his thoughts.

"What is it, Murphy?"

He crossed to where the tousled-headed mechanic was tinkering with the Hart's engine.

"It beats me entirely, sorr, how that poor fella was killed," Murphy jerked.

"What's in that thick head of yours?" Drake smiled.

He had long ago given up taking Bonehead Murphy at his face value. He knew that quite a resourceful brain worked behind those droll, Irish features.

"If we keep our oies skinned, sorr, we'll be by way of foinding the murderous spalpeen," Murphy muttered. "That propeller didn't kill the Sergeant. Wasn't Oi in the cockpit switching off the engine when the throuble started? The propeller was dead foive minutes before the Sergeant fell."

His suspicions deepening he went quickly to the small door at the rear of the hangar. Opening it with a pass-key, he stepped quietly inside.

Drake stood in the shadow thrown by the wing of a giant bomber, watching the scene. The hangar had been converted into a temporary film studio. Banks of violet light slung down from the thousand-candle-power arc-lamps played from the roof. Cameras, in sound-proof boxes, had been wheeled on their rubber-tired tripods to the centre of the floor.

A number of Phillip Garson's assistants were grouped around them. The film director himself was addressing them and Drake bent forward in the darkness listening intently. Garson's dark head was flung back arrogantly, there was a fanatical light burning in his eyes.

"Let the fate that overtook that wretched man to-night be a warning lest any of you are tempted to break your oath of allegiance to The Brotherhood," Garson was saying and his face was sinister in the eerie glow of the violet lamps. "He knew me in Kabul when I was inciting the native tribes to rebellion against white rule. Britain's accursed bombers smashed our plans then. But soon we'll have their air power in our hands, and with it the kingship of the world. Wait patiently, comrades, for the moment to strike . . ."

Drake had stumbled on a sinister plot to gain control of Britain's air power, under the outwardly peaceful project of preparing a film. Its exact nature was not clear to him yet. But he had heard enough to realise that this daring coup had been hatched in the Bolshevik East and its spreading tentacles were tightening around the vital coastal defence station.

"So poor Sergeant Hawke was right," Drake muttered grimly. "I think it's time Garson and his gang were marched off to the guard room."

His hand went down to his revolver holster as he prepared for action.

As Garson had been talking Drake had noticed the gallows arm from which the sound microphone for talking pictures was suspended, swinging over the group of film makers. And his quick ears, practised in detecting the slightest change of note in a refractory engine, had heard the faint warring of a camera.

He glanced in the direction from which that sound came. Drake's eyes widened with surprise. Crouching behind a camera his hand pressing the electric control button, his sleepy eyes in his doleful face watching Garson and his men was—Bonehead Murphy!

Drake grinned. The stocky, little Irishman had sensed a fight and obviously he had not meant to miss the fun. Before the significance of Bonehead's movements behind that camera, dawned on Drake, the young airman was swept into sudden, whirlwind action.

Garson's voice had snapped off. A swaying arc-lamp, as ill-luck would have it, had thrown its purple beam on the little mechanic's crouching figure. The expression of fear that leapt into Garson's eyes when he spotted him, left no doubt in the mind of the tensely watching Drake, as to the crook's uneasy conscience.

He rasped out an order to his men. A circle of menacing figures closed in on Murphy.

With grim memories of the swift fate that had overtaken Sergeant Hawke, Drake spurred himself to action. He leapt forward, his hand tightening over his gun.

At the sight of that tense, fighting figure, Garson sprang to the switchboard and swung over the master switch. Instantly the great hangar was plunged into baffling darkness.

But Drake did not check his fierce rush. As

shadowy, menacing figures closed in on him, he took a flying leap at the swivelled gallow's arm. The impetus of his body swung it round, as he hung on. The suspended microphone whipped through the air like a flail. Yells of pain and rage split the air as the flying metal lashed against flesh and bone. The bunched crooks went down like a row of ninepins.

Drake laughed grimly as he dropped lightly to the floor. Momentarily he was beyond the danger zone. But what of Murphy? He paused near the door, his eyes making the gloom.

A hand suddenly gripped his arm in the darkness. "Thank yer, sorr." It was Murphy's tired voice. "That'll teach the heathens to keep their dirty hands off the Air Force. We've got them beaten entoirely, sorr. When I followed you into the hangar, thinkin' you'd be by way of wantin' me help, I started the talking camera. It's recorded every word that murderous spalpeen, Garson, said. Oi hooked it off the tripod, and it's safe under me arm. Hadn't we better be getting away with the evidence, sorr?"

Tails-Up Drake laughed as he dragged the triumphant Murphy towards the door.

"Good lad!" he jerked. His voice snapped off as a burly figure swept down on them. Garson! Drake glimpsed his evil, distorted features. His fists clenched, but Murphy got in first.

A good Irish fist crashed into the crook's face, and he went down with a groan.

"Ye dirty scoundrel. It's a thick ear ye've been askin' for."

With a grin Drake yanked him, still holding the camera, through the doorway, and slammed the metal door behind him.

There was method in Tails-Up Drake's swift retreat. He realised that the invaluable evidence Murphy's resource had obtained must be carried immediately to Air Headquarters. That film record of Phillip Garson's treachery was more condemning than any witness.

"Start up the Hart!" Drake rapped out. "We'll start for London at once. I'll give orders for those bogus film-makers to be kept under close arrest in the hangar until I get instructions from G.H.Q."

The placid Murphy ambled off to the fighter standing on the tarmac. Drake, who had taken charge of the camera, hurried to the guardroom.

A few brief instructions to the Duty Officer in the orderly room, and Drake was ready for the swift dash to London.

Yet the young airman's eyes were a little uneasy as he glanced at the silent hangar on his way back to the waiting biplane. There was something queerly ominous in the silence of Garson and his gang, something that vaguely disturbed him. Yet they were safely secured, he assured himself, behind those locked doors, over which the guard already had been mounted.

Drake carefully placed the camera in the front cockpit of the Hart, and, slipping his foot into the metal stirrup, swung into the streamlined cockpit.

"Everything O.K., Murphy?"

"All correct, sorr!"

The blue-grey plane quivered as Drake yanked open the throttle. With a roar like massed artillery the six-hundred-horse-power engine thundered into life.

He took off in a dizzy, climbing turn, the powerful engine sending booming echoes through the night—the knell of Garson's hopes, Drake thought grimly.

Two thousand feet above the silent aerodrome, Tails-Up Drake swung the hurtling plane on to the first leg of its compass course to the south. His eyes were resting on the dancing needles of the instrument-board, when suddenly the faint throb of

another machine brought his leather-clad head jerking round. But the night sky was deserted except for the lone Hawker Hart hurtling on its urgent quest.

"That's queer!" Drake called. "Can you hear that engine, Murphy?"

Murphy cocked his head over the fuselage.

"Sure Oi can, sorr. And it's a powerful brute."

He stopped abruptly. And Drake was startled out of his customary calm as a snarling black biplane

Drake's mouth tightened. That complete masking of the pilot deepened his suspicions that this mystery aircraft, which had risen with such dramatic suddenness from some secret lair beyond the cliffs, had been sent by Garson to attack him.

He had no doubt of the sinister purpose of the hooded biplane a moment later. Spitting exhaust fumes from its thundering engine, it rolled into a dive and swept down on to the Hart with unmistakable hostile intent.

"Look out, sorr!" Murphy's voice came in warning.

Drake's last thought before the opening of that desperate death duel in the night sky was for his mechanic.

"Looks as if the brute means to ram us," he said coolly. "If there's trouble get out by parachute."

Murphy's voice came in doleful protest. "Let me die foighting, sorr. Oi'll never feel aisy parachuting until they cork the steeple."

His voice died in a gasp as Drake ruddered the Hart into a screaming power-dive. He had escaped disaster by a split second. The propeller lash of the black attacker smashed against his tense face as the biplane hurtled above him, missing his spinning wing by bare inches.

Drake's lips compressed in a thin line. He was up against a faster machine, and one that was being superbly handled. But for that lightning dive, the black brute's metal undercarriage would have ripped his wing tip to destruction.

The black and silver planes circled like fighters sparring for an opening. Again the mystery craft crashed in to attack. Its tail lifted like a scorpion, it came for Drake's "ship" full tilt.

With an unexpectedness that took Drake off his guard, the hooded attacker swung level with the Hart. It was a lightning manoeuvre which told of master hands on the controls. And its sinister purpose was suddenly clear. The port side wing flashed across the cockpit where Drake crouched, and instantly the landing flare, on the extremity of the quivering wing, burst into fierce flame.

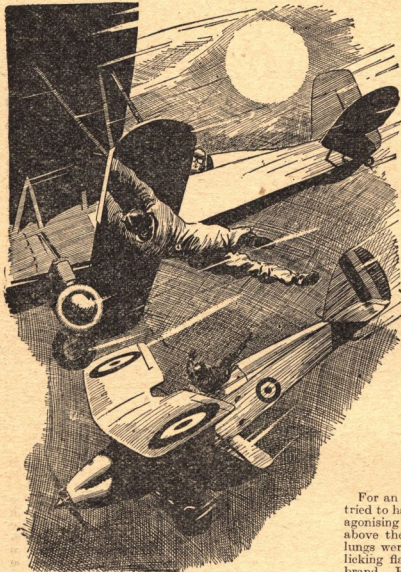
For an agonising moment Drake set his teeth and tried to hang on to the controls of the plunging Hart, agonising because that burst of flame, poised fiendishly above the cockpit, was searing his rigid face. His lungs were choking with acrid fumes. The hungry, licking flame was scorching his face like a red-hot brand. He could bear it no longer. With a groan he whipped his hands from the controls and, steeling himself to endure the pain, tore with burning gauntlets at the flare.

With the strength of desperation he loosed the flaming cylinder in its socket. His groping hands sought for a firmer grip, and it was then that, half blinded by the smoke, his writhing fingers overshot their mark.

Even as he felt rasping metal snap about his wrists like the teeth of a giant trap he knew the grim thing that had happened. Unwittingly he had thrust his hands through the wing tip "slots," and the pilot of the hooded plane had closed them.

He was caught in a horrible trap, powerless to save himself as the swerving wing of the black biplane swept him upwards from the cockpit.

He was hanging in space from the wing of the hurtling plane, the dreadful strain on his arms like red hot needles shooting through his flesh.



WINGS OF DOOM.—As he wrenched at the flare, Drake's hand caught in the wing slots. The enemy plane lifted and Tails-up was dragged from the cockpit.

leapt up from the abyss of darkness beyond the cliffs, as if it had been shot from a gun.

Drake watched the lone machine with narrowed eyes, a premonition of danger stirring in his heart. It was an ugly black brute of a machine, streamlined from cowling to rudders until it resembled a monstrous bullet. It bore no markings on the wings or rudder.

As it swung nearer, with the whine of the engine super-chargers now plainly audible, Drake saw that the cockpit, set far back in the bullet-like fuselage, was hooded.

Drake took a tight grip on his jangling nerves. With a supreme effort he yanked himself sideways, getting a foothold on the lower wing spar.

It eased that horrible strain, and wedging himself beneath the wing he fought to loosen his trapped hands, the propeller slip stream smashing against his twisted body.

He brought all his strength to bear on his imprisoned wrists. The pain was intolerable but at last the metal slot bent back. He was free. He wriggled his hands clear but for a moment he hung on, the light of vengeance in his bloodshot eyes as he whipped his revolver from its holster.

Crack! Crack! The whine of a bullet rose above the engine's roar, as he fired at the hooded cockpit. The fabric tore, and, caught by the wind, the hood slit in a jagged gash.

Drake had a fleeting glimpse of a cowering form beneath the shattered hood, and for a fraction of a second he looked into a pair of ruthless, evil eyes.

Garson! But even in that moment of dramatic recognition the black biplane spun into a slashing flick roll. Drake was flung from the wing tip like a shot from a gun.

The blood hammered at his temples in that sickening fall. But, taking a last grip on his reeling senses, he fumbled for the metal ring against his chest. He jerked it spasmodically and the rip cord freed the parachute from the pack between his shoulders. The billowing silk opening above him, checked his dizzy fall. He was over the sea, but skilfully spilling the air from the great mushroom of silk above him he drifted towards the shore.

His eyes were anxious as he saw a crimson glare light the waters below, and heard a muffled explosion. The Hart had fallen in flames, burnt to destruction by the wing tip flare he had not been able to throw clear in those moments of stress. Already it had sunk and Drake stared grimly at the patch of spreading oil on the waters—all that remained of the plane and the film that could have proved Garson's treachery.

But for all that disappointing end to the night's grim duel, Drake was more concerned for the safety of Murphy.

His anxiety was set at rest, however, when he landed safely on the shingle and saw a doleful Murphy folding his parachute where he had dropped on the rocks.

"All right Murphy?" he called.

The little Irishman gave a doleful grunt.

"I had to jump, sorr. I tried to get the camera but the flames beat me. But the foight's not properly started yet, sorr."

Drake laughed grimly.

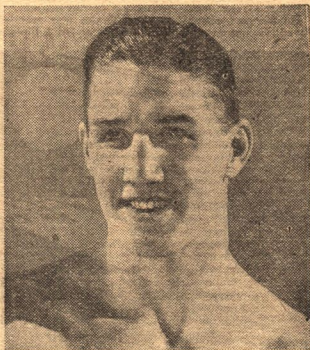
"Yes, the fight is only just beginning," he said. "We don't know what we're up against."

With narrowed eyes he was staring across the waters to the black shadows of the distant headland where the snarl of the hooded biplane's engine had died away as swiftly as it had come. Somewhere beyond that shroud of darkness lay the real secret of Garson's staggering challenge to Britain's Air Power, the sinister menace, which, Drake knew, he had only glimpsed to-night.

Another high-speed Flying yarn next week of Tails-Up Drake and his battle against the fearful menace to Britain's Air Strength. A white-hot Thrill yarn this, chaps.

EVERY BOY'S HEROES.

No. 1—JACK PETERSEN.



BIG things are expected of the big smiling young boxer whose picture appears above. He already holds the British heavyweight championship after only eighteen months of professional ring experience.

At school he punched so many fellows about that his father took him away and sent him to sea. But there smiling Jack Petersen showed so much wizardry with the gloves that it was clear he was destined for the gloved game. So, though it was originally intended to make him a doctor, his father took him into his own gymnasium.

Before he was twenty-one Jack was the Heavyweight Champion of Britain. Altogether he has only fought nineteen professional fights but he has won them all. Among them were bouts for the Welsh Heavyweight championship; the British Light-heavyweight championship and the British heavyweight championship. He took the latter from Reggie Moon.

Jack was born on September 2, 1911, at Cardiff, and was a public schoolboy. He weighs 13 stone, is 6ft. 1½ins. in height. His punch is so powerful that he has to wear 25oz. "pillows" when sparring!

Note the striking resemblance to Carpentier, the French ex-champ; in the picture above. Jack has a dual personality. Outside the ring he is a shy, retiring youngster, well-mannered, well-groomed. In the ring he becomes a dynamic fighting machine: packed with punch, pep, and the will to win! He has a wonderful fighting spirit, and has well earned the nickname of the Welsh Tiger!

He's still a boy—and a jolly good fellow. You should see him at Christmas putting away the "pud"!

Now, three cheers for the British White Hope—and may he soon win the Championship of the World!

Next Week's Hero: **JIM MOLLISON**—the Famous Flyer

THE GAY MUSKETEERS MAKE
THEIR BOW!

The Gripping Exploits of an Old-time
Thrill Trio.



**The Gay Musketeers' Secret
Mission to a Castle of Eerie
Mystery.**

THE sun was setting in a blaze of golden splendour one spring evening when three horsemen rode up to the *Auberge de France* at Avesnes in Picardy. They were all officers of the Royal Guard of Musketeers of King Charles of England, and old friends, yet three more dissimilar types it would have been hard to find. Tony Dale was tall and handsome; John, third Earl of Oldminster (known as Troddles to his friends), was fat and burly, and as strong as an ox; and Lancelot Saint John was almost girlishly slight, and had a milk-and-rose complexion.

Never had the three comrades been engaged in such a queer business as the one that now brought them to the sleepy, little Picardy hamlet. It was Lord Clarendon, the king's most powerful minister, who had sent them to Avesnes post-haste from London.

"Gentlemen," he had said earnestly to them in his private chamber at Whitehall, "the commission which I now entrust to you is a delicate one, and if aught goes amiss neither I nor His Majesty will dare help ye for fear of impairing our present friendly relations with France."

He had then gone on to explain that a certain *Vicomte de Berges* had aroused the grave displeasure of King Louis of France, and had been imprisoned by Royal command in the *château* of his half-brother the *Comte d'Avesnes*. De Berges had befriended

King Charles, when the latter was a fugitive in France during Cromwell's Protectorate, and out of gratitude for this, Charles was anxious to help him. But he dared not act openly in the matter; hence the Three Musketeers had been sent secretly to Avesnes to attempt to rescue the *Vicomte*.

As the three comrades alighted and gave their horses to an ostler, Lancelot Saint John eyed the inn with grave disfavour through a gold-mounted eyeglass.

"La!" he said, wrinkling his nose in disgust as he surveyed the inn. "This place hath a musty, tumbledown look."

This was true, for the inn was in such a dilapidated state it looked as though the next strong gale would blow it down completely.

"Let mine host but serve a well-cooked *ragout*, and I shall be content," replied Troddles, who was always ready to eat, and never failed to amaze the fastidious St. John by the enormous quantities of food which he consumed.

They strode into the inn, and were welcomed by the innkeeper who bowed humbly before them.

"We shall stay the night at your house," Tony told him in French. "See that three beds are made ready, and serve us the best meal your kitchen can provide."

"*Oui, messeigneurs,*" the innkeeper answered, bowing low again; he hurried to the rear of the house, where they soon heard him shouting to the servants and a clatter of pots and pans.

But long before a meal was ready a hunchback dwarf entered the inn and silently offered a sealed letter to Tony Dale. The musketeer whistled softly as he glanced at the contents. Then he read it aloud to his comrades.

Gentlemen (it ran), I have just learned of your arrival in Avesnes. It is unbefitting that men of gentle blood and breeding should endure the wretched food and accommodation of the "Auberge de France." Be pleased, therefore, to do me the honour to accept my hospitality. My servant, who is the bearer of this note, will bring you to my château.

Gentlemen, Your servant to Command,

JULES D'AVESNES.

Troddles scratched his head in amazement, whilst St. John peered at the missive through his gold-rimmed eyeglass as though he doubted whether Tony had read it aright.

"Zooks! What make you of this?" he asked.

"Methinks 'tis a trap which the Comte prepares for us," Tony said rather grimly. "He must suspect our mission, and is planning to entice us into his *château* to make an end of us."

He spoke in a low voice, so that the hunchback should not overhear, and his comrades answered in the same low tones.

"Well, what shall we do?" Troddles asked Tony, for he always relied on the latter's judgment.

"Accept the invitation," Tony Dale promptly replied. "Methinks we can give a good account of ourselves if the Comte meditates treachery."

"Aye," Troddles grunted.

He sniffed a little wistfully, however, as he caught a delicious scent of food from the kitchen.

"'Tis a pity to put the innkeeper to the trouble of preparing a meal for us and then not to eat it," he said anxiously. "Suppose we eat the *ragout* before we go to the *château*?"

Tony laughed.

"Nay," he answered. "We will go at once. You must control your appetite for awhile, Troddles."

Tony Dale explained things to the innkeeper, and bade him bring their horses into the inn-yard.

"You go to the *château, messeigneurs*?" the landlord said in a queer voice.

"Aye," Tony answered shortly. "What of it?"

The innkeeper glanced quickly in the dwarf's direction, and answered in a whisper.

"Do not go, *monseigneur*," he begged. "The Comte is an evil man. He hath sold his soul to the devil. His *château* is full of evil spirits."

Tony laughed shortly.

"Methinks I have a way of laying evil spirits," he said, and tapped the hilt of his sword. Then he turned to the dwarf.

"We accept your master's offer," he said. "But tell me, how did *monseigneur le Comte* learn so quickly of our arrival in the village?"

The hunchback opened his mouth and pointing to it, shook his head.

"I suppose he means that he is dumb," Tony said.

Finding that they could glean no information from the Comte's queer lackey, the three comrades mounted their horses, which had been brought out. The hunchback sprang nimbly into the saddle of his shaggy nag, and led the way towards the *château*. Some ten minutes later they rode across the draw-bridge, and passed under a raised portcullis into a spacious, paved courtyard.

Here they were met by three servants wearing the Comte's livery, and saw, not a little to their astonishment, that the men were all deformed in some way.

One lacked ears; another was a dwarf not three feet high; the third man was nearly seven feet in height and as lean as a lath.

"Faith! 'Tis like a country fair," St. John said in bewilderment, and had recourse to his eyeglass, again.

From the main doorway of the castle they saw the Comte d'Avesnes smiling a welcome to them. He was sparsely built, and clad completely in black. His black, beady eyes were so deep-sunken in his lean, bony face it might have been a death's head. Despite his forbidding appearance the Comte welcomed the Three Musketeers with courtly grace.

He led the way into a big, gloomy room, where a meal was laid out on a table. They were served by two more freaks, one a hunchback, the other so misshapen he looked more like an ape than a man.

Noting the Englishman's wonder, the Comte smiled wryly.

"But you think my taste in servants strange?" he asked. "It is a whim of mine, *messieurs*, to be served by lackeys like these. I collect freaks, as some men collect ancient coins or books."

Despite the oddness of the service, they were given a magnificent meal, after which their host suggested that they must be wearied by their journey and would doubtless like to retire at once. He showed them to their bed-chambers, three rooms next door to one another, and having inquired whether there was anything else he could do for their comfort, wished them good night and retired. As he vanished down a long corridor, carrying a candle in a tall, silver holder, Tony noticed that he walked as noiselessly as his own distorted shadow, which mocked his movements on the walls.

"What next?" Troddles asked.

"Into your rooms," Tony answered in a low voice. "And make a pretence of sleeping. To-night, when I think everyone is asleep, I will tap on your doors, and we will search for the *Vicomte de Berges*."

He stepped into his own room, and stretching himself, fully dressed on the big, four-poster bed, he waited with as much patience as he could command. It was past midnight before he rose from the bed and, opening the door a few inches, peered out. Through a long, oriel window at the end of the corridor, streamed big shafts of moonlight, giving the empty passage a strange, eerie illumination. Picking up a candlestick, but not lighting it, Tony left the room and tapped softly on his comrades' doors. St. John and Troddles, who were waiting impatiently for him, immediately came out.

"Come," said Tony, "and tread as softly as ye can."

Stealthily they tip-toed down to the great hall of the castle, which was empty and silent. The moonlight flooding in through the window shone on several suits of armour, which gleamed like ghosts in the white, ghostly light. Making their way through the hall, the three musketeers proceeded along a dark, oak-panelled passage, till they came to the head of a flight of steep, winding stairs.

"These should lead to the dungeons," Tony whispered. Pausing only to light his candle, he led the way down them. At the bottom they found themselves in a low-roofed passage, the walls of which were beaded with milky drops of moisture, and covered in places with fungi and patches of moss. The place had an earthy, grave-like smell, and St. John could not resist a slight shiver. He waved a delicately scented handkerchief in front of his nostrils.

Holding his candle aloft, Tony spied three iron-studded doors at the end of the passage. Thinking these must be the dungeons, he stepped toward them.

Before they had taken a dozen paces an ice-cold wind blew through the passage extinguishing the candle. A weird, terrible chuckle echoed eerily in the passage, and suddenly Troddles gave a gasp of horror: "Look!"

At the far end of the passage, three gigantic, human skeletons had appeared, apparently from nowhere. Faint, blue flames writhed slowly about their limbs, as they advanced slowly, in a line, towards the Three Musketeers who stood rooted to the ground with horror.

Troddles and St. John were both fearless as lions in the face of ordinary danger, but even their nerves were not proof against such terrifying apparitions. In a sudden panic they turned to fly. As they did so, however, there came a tremendous *clang*, and an iron grille crashed down from the roof of the vault, cutting them off from the stairs.

A Grim Battle.

WITH a slow, clanking stride, the three weird figures came towards them, their bony arms outstretched. Uttering a gasp of fear, St. John whipped out a small pocket pistol and fired pointblank at one of them. The shot had no apparent effect, for the thing continued to advance slowly towards the Three Musketeers, who retreated until their backs were against the iron grille.

"'Tis some trick of the Comte's," Tony cried, but even his iron nerve was shaken.

To add to the horror of their position, the faint light which writhed about the gigantic skeletons burned itself out, and the passage was plunged into Stygian darkness. But the metallic *clank, clank, clank* of the grisly apparitions drew steadily nearer.

Tony Dale pulled himself together, and whipping out his sword, lunged forward with all his might. He felt the weapon strike against something smooth and hard with a force that made the blade bend almost double, so that it would have snapped had it not been made of the finest tempered steel. Next moment there was a loud, metallic *snap*, and Tony was gripped so tightly about the body that it seemed his arms and ribs must snap under the awful strain. A second later he heard cries of pain from his companions, and guessed that they had suffered a similar fate. Suddenly a flood of yellow light streamed down upon them, and looking up, Tony saw the Comte d'Avesnes' evil, bony face glaring down at them through a trapdoor in the roof of the passage. In his hand he held a lantern, by the light of which Tony and his companions saw that they were each clutched in the arms of one of the gigantic skeletons, and were being pressed against the thing's bony breast.

The Comte chuckled horribly, then spoke in a mocking voice.

"This is another of my hobbies, *messieurs*," he said. "I have a liking for inventing little mechanical toys such as these. My Iron Men I call them."

"Villain!" Tony cried, striving in vain to break from the iron arms of the automaton. "Set me free and meet me in fair duel with any weapon you choose."

D'Avesnes merely chuckled gloatingly. In the light of the lantern his eyes glowed like points of yellow flame.

"Nay, *monsieur*," he mocked. "I prefer to leave you there to be slowly crushed to death by my Iron Men. There is a clockwork within each of them, and as time goes on they will press you tighter and tighter, till not a whole bone is left in your bodies. Ho! Ho! Ho!"



SKELETON SPECTRES.—Tony lunged forward with all his might. The sword struck against something hard and solid that almost bent the blade double.

He gave an almost maniacal chuckle, then continued: "Ye came hither meaning to rescue my half-brother, the Vicomte de Berges. Fools! Know ye not that whilst he is imprisoned here under the king's *lettre de cachet* I have charge of his estate and income. I was warned of your mission before ye left Paris, and decoyed ye here. After I had shown ye to your bedrooms, I came down here and prepared my Iron Men for ye. Their limbs were smeared with oil so that they would burn with a dull, ghostly flame, and the strong springs that move them were all ready

THE 'BULLY BOY' PEA PISTOL

Fire 15 shots with force and accuracy. Repeating action. Nickel finish. With ammunition, 1/6.
 6-Shot Model, black finish..... 1/3
 23-Shot Model, black finish..... 2/-
 50-Shot Model, black finish..... 2/6
 Postage 3d. each pistol. Colonial postage 9d. Extra supply of Ammunition, 6d. and 1/-.



Post 3d.
 A. HERBERTS (Dept. A76), 41, Watham Road, Streatham, London, S.W.16.

Boys! Get this Album!

Ask for the "XLCR" Stamp Album, a bonny illustrated robust album, holds over 2,000 stamps, 100 pages indexed. British-made, too, only 6d. Insist on "XLCR" Albums and Outfits. If any difficulty write to



THOMAS CLIFFE, Colwyn Bay.



wound against your coming. As soon as ye entered the passage I set my little toys in motion, and lowered the iron grille so that ye could not escape up the stairs. The moment ye touched my mechanical men ye released springs that made the arms seize ye like rats. And now, *messieurs*, I am weary and go to seek my bed. *Adieu, messieurs. Adieu!* Sleep well."

He chuckled again, and withdrawing his head, closed the trapdoor, and so plunged the Three Musketeers into abysmal darkness again.

"The fiend!" Tony gasped in a faint, breathless voice, for the Iron Man was now crushing him so tightly he could scarcely speak. "Can ye break loose, lads?"

"Nay," St. John groaned feebly. "Methinks my ribs are cracking."

Troddles said nothing, but struggled in grim silence to break free from the awful hug of the Iron Man. Troddles' fat concealed muscles as tough as steel springs, and now he exerted every scrap of his enormous strength. So violent was his effort to get free that he lifted the Iron Man off its feet, and they crashed clattering to the stone-flagged floor. Still the iron arms held him in their deadly embrace, pressing his arms against his side, and almost cracking his ribs.

Troddles rested for a few seconds. Then he filled his lungs with air, and strained anew. Suddenly his efforts were rewarded. He felt the iron arms opening and, with a last terrific effort, he tore them apart, and was free. As he rolled away from the automaton he heard the metal arms snap again in the darkness, like the jaws of a steel trap.

For as long as it might take a man to count ten slowly the gigantic musketeer was too exhausted to do anything but lie face downward on the flagged floor and pant for breath. Then he got slowly to his knees, and fumbled in the darkness for the candle which Tony Dale had dropped.

"I am free," he said, and Tony gave a thankful cry.

Finding the candle, Troddles lighted it with his tinder-box, and, setting it on the ground, seized the iron arms which were slowly crushing Tony to death. Whilst Tony Dale helped, he gave them a powerful wrench, and tore them wide open, so that Tony was able to slip out, and sink to the ground. Allowing the arms to snap into place again, Troddles gave his

attention to St. John. The latter was choking for breath, his face was blue, and his eyes almost starting out of their sockets. He was barely conscious, and quite unable to help himself. But between them, Troddles and Tony tore open the iron arms, and set him free.

Then all three dropped to the floor, too weary to move for some little while.

Troddles was the first to recover. Getting to his feet, he seized the iron grille in both hands, and shook it. But he might as well have tried to pluck up the very foundations of the *château*.

"Nay, Troddles," Tony said breathlessly, as he also struggled to his feet. "Waste no time on that. Stand against the wall yonder, and I will climb upon your shoulders. Mayhap then I can open the trapdoor."

Troddles did as he said, and, climbing on to his chum's broad shoulders, Tony thrust upon the trapdoor, which opened slowly. He hauled himself through the trap; after which St. John mounted upon Troddles' shoulders, and clambered up to him. Then they helped Troddles out of that place of horror.

They were in a small, round chamber, whence a narrow, spiral staircase went up and up out of sight. When he reached the top of the stairs Tony, who was leading, smiled with grim satisfaction, for he saw that he was in the Comte's bed-chamber. D'Avesnes was sleeping calmly in a big, four-poster bed, but as the musketeers stepped towards him he woke with a start. For a moment he stared, half-dazed, as though he could not quite believe his eyes. Then he sat up in bed with a cry of terror.

In a moment Tony's sword was pricking his scraggy throat.

"If you call for help 'twill be the last thing you do in this world," he said grimly, and the cry which the Comte had been about to utter died away into a low gurgle of terror.

"Villain," Tony Dale went on in a stern voice. "Rise and lead us to your half-brother's prison."

Trembling like a man who has the ague, the Comte d'Avesnes rose, and, with Tony urging him on with the point of his sword, he led the way out of his bedroom to a small chamber built in the roof of the *château*. He unlocked the door of this room, and Tony and his comrades followed him inside.

A tall, handsome man who was sleeping on a rough pallet of straw sat up as they entered the room, and addressed them in a rather startled voice.

"Who are you? What brings you here?" he asked.

"Have no fear, *monsieur*," Tony said. "We are friends come to set you free."

For a few seconds the Vicomte de Berges stared incredulously. Then he sprang to his feet.

"Heaven be thanked!" he said in a broken voice.

There is little more to tell. Forcing the Comte d'Avesnes to go with them as a hostage, the Three Musketeers and De Berges left the *château*, and made their way to the *Auberge de France*. There they hired a horse for the Vicomte, and set off immediately for the coast. Without mishap they reached England, where the Vicomte de Berges lived quietly for some years, eventually making his peace with Louis XIVth, and returning to his estates in France.

Look out next week for a ripping yarn of the strange secrets of the jungle. You'll be thrilled by the daring adventures of "Tiger Boy," also known as Ted of the Tree Tops!

THE COMICAL CREW OF THE | OUR MERRY SEADOGS SUNK BELOW
 "HAPPY HADDOCK." | THE SAD SEA WAVES.

SINK THE OLE LUGGER!

Pip's Brainwave.

"H'M," grunted Cap'n Keelson, running his fingers through his tarbrush whiskers doubtfully. "Now we gone an' made all the preparations, I ain't so sure this scheme o' yours is gonna work!"

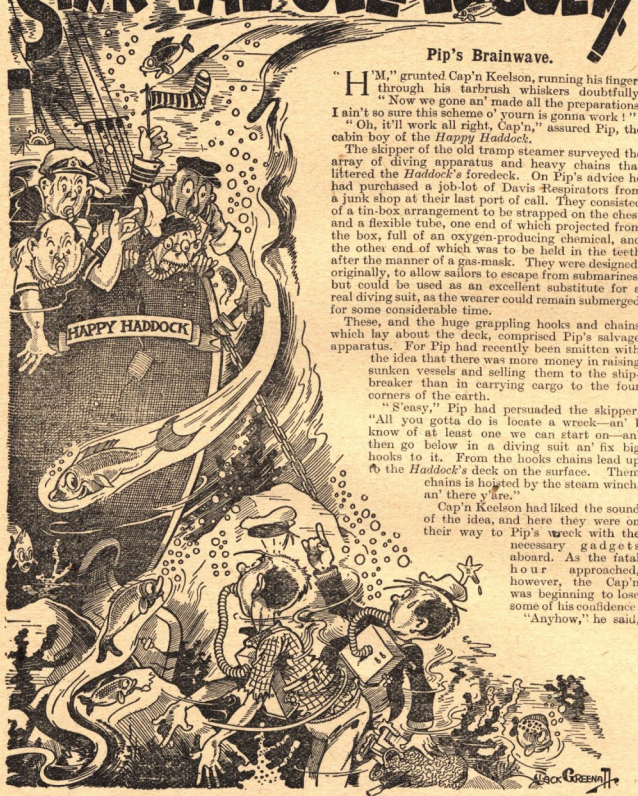
"Oh, it'll work all right, Cap'n," assured Pip, the cabin boy of the *Happy Haddock*.

The skipper of the old tramp steamer surveyed the array of diving apparatus and heavy chains that littered the *Haddock's* foredeck. On Pip's advice he had purchased a job-lot of Davis Respirators from a junk shop at their last port of call. They consisted of a tin-box arrangement to be strapped on the chest and a flexible tube, one end of which projected from the box, full of an oxygen-producing chemical, and the other end of which was to be held in the teeth after the manner of a gas-mask. They were designed, originally, to allow sailors to escape from submarines, but could be used as an excellent substitute for a real diving suit, as the wearer could remain submerged for some considerable time.

These, and the huge grappling hooks and chains which lay about the deck, comprised Pip's salvage apparatus. For Pip had recently been smitten with the idea that there was more money in raising sunken vessels and selling them to the ship-breaker than in carrying cargo to the four corners of the earth.

"S'easy," Pip had persuaded the skipper. "All you gotta do is locate a wreck—an' I know of at least one we can start on—an' then go below in a diving suit an' fix big hooks to it. From the hooks chains lead up to the *Haddock's* deck on the surface. Them chains is hoisted by the steam winch, an' there y'are."

Cap'n Keelson had liked the sound of the idea, and here they were on their way to Pip's wreck with the necessary gadgets aboard. As the fatal hour approached, however, the Cap'n was beginning to lose some of his confidence. "Anyhow," he said,



"who's agoin' down to fix them hooks. Stap me!"

"Why, me an' Fat Burns, and maybe Slim Small here'll do the divin' part. You an' Mister Hettup an' the rest of the crew can look after the hoistin' apparatus."

"Here——" started the slender, mournful looking Fat Burns. "If ye don't mind, Cap'n, I think me an' Slim——"

"The very men for the job," chuckled Cap'n Keelson. "I'll say it's right good of you boys to offer to take all the risk. We shall have to do without Hettup's help aboard here, though. He's gone below to get some sleep after standin' watch all last night. Still, I think me an' Dutchy and the cook can manage our part well," he went on. "We'd better be lookin' slippy, boys, must be pretty nigh in the right latitude, I reckon."

Fat and Slim glared at Pip as they busied them-

Submarine Shoeks.

"WELL," said Cap'n Keelson, looking over the side of his ship a little while later, "I reckon this is the spot where the old sailing barge, Nancy Lee, went under a year or two back. Are you ready, boys?"

"We're ready, sir," answered Pip, adjusting his diving apparatus. "Come on, Fat—an' you too, Slim!"

Fat and Slim moaned *sotto voce*, exchanged hopeless looks and followed suit. Pip took up a sack of tools and slung them over his shoulder.

"Don't forget the signal, Cap'n," he said, cheerfully confident of himself as usual. "Send the chains down after we've had time to locate the wreck, and wait for two sharp tugs on it. Then hoist."

Cap'n Keelson nodded. He overlooked the unusual procedure of having to take orders from his cabin-boy.

Pip climbed on to the Haddock's bulwarks, stood on the brink for a second, and then leapt. He sank immediately into the green depths of the sea, and in a second only a bubbling disturbance showed the spot where he had gone down.

"Oo-er!" trembled Fat Burns. "Cap'n, I've gone and caught the measles or something—been feelin' it comin' on for days——"

"That'll be all right," the skipper said with disconcerting cheerfulness. "The plunge'll do it good. Over you go!"

Cap'n Keelson gave Fat a helping shove, and over he went, plunging into the wake of Pip, head first. The Cap'n was just able to grab Slim by the seat of his roony pants



• A TASTY TIT-BIT.—One tentacle closed round Pip's gleaming marlinspike. Next moment the weapon disappeared in the octopus' mouth

selves with the chains about the deck, but the cabin boy merely smiled.

"We'll have a great time below there!" he said cheerily. "Bet you're glad I picked you to come with me, ain't you now?"

"Glad!" muttered Slim, dropping a great iron hook on deck with an ear-shattering thud. "Sink the ole lugger! If the Cap'n weren't within sight I'd——"

"Hey!" roared a voice from the companionway of the after cabin. "What the guldurned something is you guys doin'! Don't you know I'm atryin' to get some sleep!"

They turned to see the scowling face of the ship's mate, Mister Hettup, glaring at them. Cap'n Keelson also had heard him pass those few remarks, but he made a protest on behalf of the crew.

"Can't help it, Mister mate," he said, "we gotta get them chains ready for lifting the wreck. Better take a hammock down in the coal-bunker and fix it up there."

"Aye, aye, Cap'n," answered Mister Hettup a little crestfallen. "Mebbe so it is a good idear."

as he was silently stealing away.

"No shirkin', Seaman Small. Think o' me an' the ole Haddock, an' don't be selfish now!"

Slim Small gave the skipper a mute, appealing look, calculated to melt a heart of stone. Next second the skipper's boot sent him hurtling into the sea.

The skipper turned to Dutchy Jud, An How, the ship's Chinese cook, and the engineer, Mr. McWhirr, a taciturn Scot, who stood beside him awaiting orders.

"Well, that's the first part of the business over, anyhow. Now we better get them grapplin' hooks ready, an' you, McWhirr, get the winch ready."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The skipper glanced over the side of the ship again, and suddenly his careless glance changed into an astonished stare. Slim Small's round head and shoulders projected above the surface of the sea, bobbing up and down with the waves.

"Why stap me!" shouted Cap'n Keelson. "You back again!" Cap'n Keelson seized a long oar from a near-by lifeboat, and planting the end of it on Slim's head, forced the discomfited seaman below

the surface again. No sooner was the oar removed than up popped Slim's head again.

"Stap me! This is rank disobedience! Sink, you lubber! Sink, can't you!"

Slim removed the tube from between his lips and spluttered, "I can't-sink, Cap'n. Honest I c-can't!"

"I know vot it are," said Swedish Jud. "He vos too much fat, Cap'n—too full of vind! Dutchy vill fix him."

Suiting action to his boast, Dutchy gathered up a short length of heavy iron chain, slung a rope ladder overside and climbed down to water level. He hooked Slim with a boat hook and drew him near. Then he draped the chain round the portly diver's neck. Slim sank immediately.

Unfortunately for Slim, the weight being all at his head, he sank wrong way on. The onlookers saw him tip over in a somersault, had a fleeting vision of two wildly kicking legs as he plunged head downwards below the surface.

Fleeting shapes darted back and forth about Slim. A friendly disposed codfish swam along with him for some way. Down, down sank Slim, and as he swirled on in the direction of the bottom, the surrounding greenness grew darker.

"Sink the ole lugger!" moaned Slim, mentally. "Why'd I ever go for a sailor."

He sighted the bottom—a forest of tangled seaweed and strange submarine plants waving weirdly in the tide. Huge shells and great slimy rocks jutted out here and there, and unknown, horrible creatures crawled and slithered in the mud.

Slim Small landed head down on the sandy bottom of the ocean. From out the marine undergrowth some weird creature blundered forth and clutched him. It felt to Slim as though his heart was doing cart-wheels inside him. He turned to see what horror had him in its clutches.

It was a tall, slender animal in a Davis respirator, wearing sea-boots, trousers, and a checked shirt. He recognised it as Fat Burns. Fat made a beckoning gesture, in the slow-motion movement imposed by the under-water pressure, and another, more perky animal of the same species floated on the scene. This was Pip, the cabin boy.

With unutterable relief, Slim signalled to his two shipmates to release him from the chain around his neck. They did so with difficulty, but as soon as it fell away Slim began to float gracefully upwards.

Fat Burns made an upward dive at him and just managed to grab his foot before he shot out of reach. Pip lent a hand, and between the two of them they managed to haul Slim down until his feet were on the bottom.

Then Slim suddenly made wild and violent gestures with his arms. He squirmed as though he had become suddenly demented. Inadvertently, Pip and Fat released their hold on Slim, but he did not immediately shoot surface-wards as was to be expected. One of his feet remained rooted to the bottom, and he continued to make wild and incomprehensible gestures. Pip stooped down and looked at the anchored foot; then he beckoned to Fat.

Slim had carelessly pushed his foot into the open maw of an extra large size in oysters. As was its custom when things were put in its shell, the oyster clamped down over Slim's foot.

But the resourceful Pip was at hand. He still carried his tool-bag on his shoulder, so he selected from it a hefty marlinspike. With this, Pip prised open the oyster and released Slim, who immediately soared upwards. Again the ever-ready Fat dived upwards and grabbed him by the foot in the nick of time.

Then Fat and Pip began gesticulating to each other and pointing to the buoyant Slim, who was obviously

the subject of their pantomime. Pip, at last, produced a length of rope and tied it about Slim's corpulent middle. The other end he looped around a mottled-looking rock near by.

Having thus disposed of Slim, Fat and Pip again went into a dumb conference about the subject of their visit underseas.

They failed to notice that the rock to which they had anchored Slim Small, had suddenly produced a large number of legs and a couple of hefty claws



A BITE IN ARREAR(S).—The lobster playfully gave Fat Burns a sharp nip. The seaman glared round at Pip who was innocently holding the sharp-pointed marlinspike.

from beneath itself and was crawling away, towing Slim behind it. Pip had tied the floating Slim to a giant king-crab!

Slim, however, soon drew their attention to the fact by his wild and violent kickings. Hastily, Fat Burns produced a knife, and slashed through the rope. The crab walked on, indifferent to the disturbance he had caused, and left Fat holding the rope with Slim Small waving in the tide.

It was decided, finally, that Fat should hang on

to the end of Slim's rope and walk about with him in search of the wreck.

This settled, they commenced to look for the wreck. Fat Burns stooped down and looked among the seaweed as if expecting to find it there. A lobster chanced along, and sighting Fat's inviting attitude, decided it was too inviting an occasion to let pass. It stretched forth one of its pincers and presented Fat with a sharp, stimulating nip in the rear.

Fat Burns was incapacitated from yelling, but he leapt fully two feet into the air—beg pardon, water. The lobster retired from the scene sniggering up his claw, in the quiet, droll way lobsters have. Fat

Suddenly the octopus seemed to be attacked by a violent pang of indigestion. It released its hold on Pip and began to writhe and squirm and lash the surrounding water with its tentacles. All at once it swam away, still writhing in apparent agony.

Pip breathed a sigh of relief and made his way back to where he had left Fat and Slim. With gestures he bade Fat come along to the wreck, towing Slim with him. When they had returned to it there was another short consultation, and then Slim was made to understand that he was to carry the news to the surface.

They released the rope that held him down. He shot upwards, and apart from banging his head on

Collect a Team of 'Zat Cards

AND EXCHANGE IT FOR

The Great New Game—'Zat!

44 TEST CRICKETERS' PORTRAITS AND RULE CARD SENT POST FREE FOR ELEVEN DIFFERENT MINIATURE CARDS. SWOP YOUR DUPLICATES WITH YOUR CHUMS AND SEND YOUR TEAM TO 'ZAT DEPARTMENT, "BOYS' MAGAZINE," 196, GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.

THREE More 'Zat Cards Free Next Week.



turned round and glared through the water at Pip, who was standing immediately behind him, still holding that sharp marlinspike in his hand.

"Think you're mighty funny, dontcher?" were the words that framed themselves in Fat's mind, but of course the innocent Pip couldn't hear them. He gathered, however, from the violent blow which Fat's fist suddenly struck him in the tummy, that Fat was a trifle peeved about something. The sudden, unexpected biff shot Pip off his feet and sent him floating gracefully through the water in a sitting-down position.

About a hundred yards further along, Pip suddenly brought up sharp against something. He saw that it was the mast of a sailing ship, as he slowly floated down to the deck. He started to look over the vessel and soon located what had evidently been the captain's cabin in the poop.

Pip looked in and then backed away with a startled gurgle of horror. Two, round, saucer-like eyes were glaring at him out of the darkness. They advanced towards him and then a mass of writhing tentacles squirmed out of the door. Paralysed with horror, Pip realised he was gazing upon an octopus.

And the peculiar part about this octopus was that some of his tentacles had boots on the end of them! It was not that the octopus was a dressy sort of fellow. He had discovered a box of boots in the cabin and was just sampling the leather with his suckers, when Pip had interrupted him.

Pip was still holding the marlinspike in his hand and luckily the octopus turned his attention to this gleaming piece of sharp steel first. One of the tentacles shot out and wrenched it from Pip's grasp. It disappeared somewhere beneath the octopus' head where the mouth is located and the tentacles began to wave around Pip. He thought his last hour had come when one of these twined about his middle!

one or two fishes on the way up, reached the surface without mishap.

Down in the Deep.

SLIM SMALL came to the surface some distance from the ship, but they were on the look-out for some sort of signal and sighted him easily. A boat was swiftly lowered. They rowed out to him and hauled him in, very wet and glad to be back. Slim took off his breathing apparatus, and said:

"They've located the wreck Cap'n, an' will you please lower them grapplin' hooks. Sink the ole lugger! I hopes I never have to do no divin' never no more, I never! It's orrid!"

Cap'n Keelson looked gleeful. They roved the boat back to the ship and in less than ten minutes after Slim's emergence, the *Happy Haddock* had steamed over the spot where he had come up and, with a clanking rattle the chains ran over the side down into the sea, one on either side of the ship. A massive grappling hook hung on the end of each.

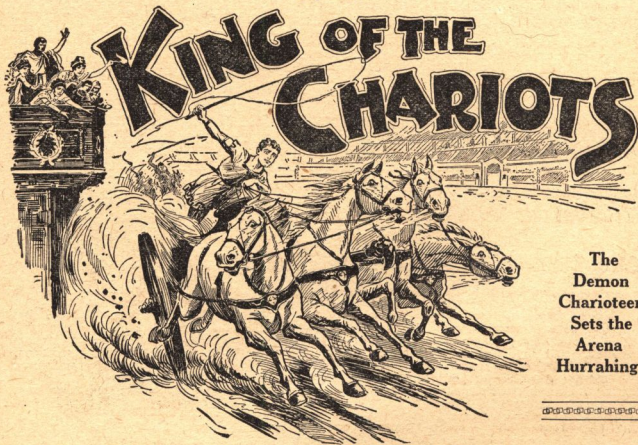
Unfortunately, they had forgotten to allow for Slim's drift with the tide. Actually, the spot where they lowered the chains was about two hundred yards away from where Fat and Pip waited.

The hooks reached the bottom, unbeknown to the amateur divers. The hooks, furthermore, not only reached the bottom, but with the perverseness of coincidence, caught securely under a sharp wedge of rock—a chunk which was part of a larger formation buried solidly in the bed of the ocean.

Midway up to the surface a young porpoise of a curious turn of mind was examining one of the downward hanging chains. There is only one method of investigation known to the porpoise family and that it to ram its body against anything that mystifies or frightens it. This the inquisitive porpoise began to

(Continued on page 26.)

ERICUS THE BRITON—The Glorious Gladiator of Ancient Rome and Idol of the Populace.



The
Demon
Charioteer
Sets the
Arena
Hurrahing !

The Chariot Race.

CLATTER, clatter, clatter ! The twenty-four horses lined up in the *carceres*, the dark stalls of the Circus Maximus, for the big chariot race, were plunging and rearing wildly ; and well they might, for the place had the smell of death to the fiery-tempered animals. The wild beasts, the lions and tigers, crept through this same dungeon from their cells before leaping into the arena and dragging their prey to death.

But the six drivers knew how to control their horses. They ought to have done, for they were the pick of Rome.

"Ho, Ericus the Briton !" shouted a stout, thick-set driver with a strident, boastful laugh. "I shall beat you to-day. You *habet* !"

With a great laugh he stuck down his thumb, a sign in the circus which meant that a beaten gladiator must die. Ericus the Briton laughed also, and saluted.

"It may well be that you will win, O Majesty !" he cried.

In his heart he knew fear. For he had become known as the demon charioteer of Rome, and he lived by the favour of the people since he had been captured as a prisoner of war in the far away isle of Britain.

And the other driver was Nero. The theatre had lost its glamour and lure of late, and the Emperor had become a charioteer. As an artist, a singer and a poet Nero's merits might be questionable, but there was no doubt he was a mad, skilful and reckless chariot driver.

He scared other drivers off by his mad driving. It seemed, at that time, that Nero wanted to break his neck in the circus. Or was it that he was intent only on winning ?

"By the Druid's Stone ! I'll keep with him to the last !" growled the demon charioteer under his breath.

A moment or two later he was confirmed in his decision not to let the Emperor win. For through the darkness of the reeking stalls, a slave, with a flaring torch, came up to the charioteer and whispered to him quickly.

"The General Suetonius hath arrived in Rome," he said low. "With the prisoners from Britain. And he hath Prince Werewolf, who is to be sold to-night in the market place as a slave."

Ericus the mighty Briton started violently. The news was of terrible significance to him. Suetonius was the Roman general who had finally routed the Britons at Colchester. And it will be remembered that Queen Boadicea, in despair, had led a gallant charge amongst the Roman hosts, her chariot and those of her legion being armed with sharp knives protruding from the axles. But the rout had been complete, the massacre terrible. And Queen Boadicea had taken poison.

Now Suetonius, the victorious general, had arrived in Rome with a host of the British charioteers as prisoners. He had also brought Prince Werewolf, of Iceni, Boadicea's stripling son.

Ericus growled, and clapped one heavy fist in the palm of his other hand. He had never forgotten that he was a Briton, never ! With wide, blind eyes he stared ahead, seeming to see again his fair native land.

"Prince Werewolf, a leader of ten thousand men, to be sold into bitter slavery !" he growled. "Never, if I can help it !"

He would win this race, by hook or crook, whether he raced against Emperor or no. For a bag of gold

THE BIG THRILL LIBRARY FREE TO

Here's a Splendid Treat in Store for EVERY READER Next Week, Chums. You'll find a Copy of this New Thrill Mag. inside every copy of next week's "Boys' Mag." It contains a gripping, new, complete thrill story, hints on clue finding, etc. SIXTEEN PACKED PAGES FREE.

was to be dropped at the feet of the winner. And Ericus meant to gain that bag of gold.

"I'll bid for the prince in the market place," he breathed fiercely. "Buy his freedom. And if I can, I'll help him escape from Rome."

Just then the gates went up, and the six charioteers dashed out of the stalls into the blinding hot sunlight of the Circus Maximus.

The great, oblong amphitheatre, nearly two thousand feet long and over six hundred in width, was a wonderful picture to behold. Tier upon tier of seats along both sides and the curved end were crowded with a seething, yelling mass of humanity.

It was estimated that four hundred thousand people, lost in admiration, crowded between the Palatine and the Aventine that day to see Nero race against Ericus, the Briton, and the four other picked charioteers of Rome.

The mob loved Nero at that time. It was before he reached the height of his atrocities, before he burnt Rome. Good times had come to the mob since he had donned the purple.

From the two hills the thousands who could not get into the circus saw and cheered, as the six charioteers charged madly into the arena.

It was what is known nowadays as a flying start. There was no Caesar in the stone gallery above the gate to turn and salute. Caesar was racing, and the crowd was cheering him madly, above all the other charioteers, pampered favourites of the mob though they were.

Nero wore the sparkling amethyst stomacher, which gave his gross face, with its red, garlanded curls, a god-like glow. He looked the real charioteer—and he was—as he strained over the flying chariot, the reins lashed about him, in his girdle a short sharp knife with which he could cut loose his bound body in case of danger. His whip rose and fell, cracking madly. He glowered darkly at the five charioteers who were his opponents as they flew by his side.

In the centre of the arena, which was covered with hard white sand, was the *spina*, a broad stone wall round which the racing chariots were driven. This was terminated with the *metae* or goals—conical pillars which marked the turnings of the course.

As the six charioteers dashed madly out into the race, they were blinded by the change from darkness to the brilliant sunlight. That was part of the mad hazard of the race. For a moment it seemed that two chariots would collide, but they swerved apart in the nick of time, their drivers striving vainly to see.

One of them was Ericus, the Briton, the other was a driver in red, named Doryphoros.

He swore luridly in Latin, and pointed with his whip at Caesar who, despite his one weak squinting eye, to which he generally wore an emerald spy glass, seemed to see in the lancing heat-glare—at any rate, had drawn ahead, hidden in clouds of sand.

"Ho, Emperor! I'm going to beat you!" cried Ericus. His chariot was flying along the straight course after Nero's so madly that the hoofs of his steeds hardly touched the ground.

It was the S-bends at either end of the course which Nero took so madly, and which chiefly endangered the lives of others. There was no room for two flying chariots abreast here. But though aware that he might pile up upon the Emperor in awful wreckage, Ericus kept after him grimly.

"Going to pass—win that bag of gold!" he breathed.

A hundred thousand throats bellowed for Nero as he madly tore along in the lead, fleshy arm raised high as he whipped, his dark brows set in furious determination. But those cries would as speedily have changed to Ericus if he won the lead. The fickle mob would shout for Nero only so long as he was winning, and he knew it.

He went tearing round into the long S-bend like a madman.

Thuddah—thuddah! Clatter—clatter. One of the horses stumbled, and almost fell, but he wrenched on the rein with a harsh latin cry. And his whip flashed:

Crack! Crack! With ears flattened back and racing close to the ground, his four white horses tore on, and his two-wheeled chariot swerved madly round a pillar marking the place where many a driver had broken his neck.

Now the course was clear before him, and Nero flew on with an immense roar of acclaim beating against his eardrums. But the others pressed close behind. The course had to be traversed seven times.

Ericus! He came hard on the mad Nero's heels. Gritting his teeth, he was determined to beat Caesar, but not at his own game. The famous charioteer had all four of his horses nicely balanced. He was not whipping the hides off them; they were not sweating, their eyes flashing with pain as were Nero's horses. He went into the S-bend with them running close together in a smooth, electric stride.

Though four abreast, the inner pair only were yoked to the pole; the outer horses, drawing only from a trace and the reins, were free to wheel, which they did as the demon charioteer sifted the "ribbons" and stamped with his iron-shod foot on the floor of his carriage.

"Gently Scipio. Round now Jugurtha!" Round they wheeled, running at speed after Nero, and a cry of *Euge!*—"well done!"—came from Ericus, only to change to an explosive gasp of dismay.

There had sounded an ominous crack. A crack that meant disaster. Looking down, the charioteer saw that the yoke pole had been sawn half-way through. Any moment it might snap under the strain and the chariot would crash in a mangled wreck.

Now Ericus understood why Nero had been so confident he would win to-day. He had done this, or caused it to be done. It would be easy enough in

the darkness of the stalls while waiting for the start of the race.

Though his life hung in fearful danger, it only made the Briton more determined to win.

He knew that he had to hold every horse, as it were, balanced in his hand. He tore down the course after Nero. It was at the turns that the strain would come to the pole. He went round the next like the wind, but in reality ever so tenderly, holding each horse balanced and poised like the juggler he was.

There came another sharp crack.

But the half-sawn pole held still. The demon charioteer felt the blood rush around his heart as he sensed for sure that it could not last out the race.

He tore after Nero. Twice—thrice—four times round the course at mad speed. The chariots were close up on the leader. Nero tightened his body, strained forward. He whipped his Parthian horses mercilessly. They were gallant runners; their hoofs seemed to disappear from under them, but they never stumbled.

The wind rushed past the charioteers. For them the blue of the sky was mingled with the sea of faces and

the shimmering marble in rainbow colours. The cheering like the roar of surf in their ears. Three in a line, two in a line, and Nero leading, they went round the turn and all tore along the straight, keeping the wall near on their left.

Ericus breathed hard. His horses were running well, like a swift, surging river. But at the last turn had come another deadly, ominous crack from the yoke pole.

Two more circuits, and the real race was going now. The drivers were turning on the steam. They forgot they were competing with the Emperor. They shrieked and cursed. Nero signalled to them furiously with his whip to keep back. But they would not. They relied on the mob.

And a great howl rose from the spectators that warned Caesar. It was dangerous to play with them, trick them. They looked to see him win—or crash.

He would do just that—win or crash.

Nero lashed the horses to madness. They went round the rampart like a tidal wave. After came the other charioteers. The axles rattled furiously, iron shod wheels threw off sparks. Nero's eyes were set blindly at the turn. His horses reared; but with a mad tug of the reins he got them into line and went round.

And after him went Ericus, the Briton, urging his horses on in a mad swerve.

Crack! It had happened. Luckily, it was on the straight. As the chariot tilted



RACING WITH DEATH.—Ericus drew level with the bull. Desperately he slashed at the ropes that bound the young Prince, to release him before the bull crashed with another chariot.

THE BIG THRILL LIBRARY **FREE** TO

Here's a Splendid Treat in Store for **EVERY READER**
Next Week, Chums. You'll find a Copy of this New Thrill
Mag. inside every copy of next week's "Boys' Mag." It
contains a gripping, new, complete thrill story, hints on
clue finding, etc. **SIXTEEN PACKED PAGES FREE.**

was to be dropped at the feet of the winner. And Ericus meant to gain that bag of gold.

"I'll bid for the prince in the market place," he breathed fiercely. "Buy his freedom. And if I can, I'll help him escape from Rome."

Just then the gates went up, and the six charioteers dashed out of the stalls into the blinding hot sunlight of the Circus Maximus.

The great, oblong amphitheatre, nearly two thousand feet long and over six hundred in width, was a wonderful picture to behold. Tier upon tier of seats along both sides and the curved end were crowded with a seething, yelling mass of humanity.

It was estimated that four hundred thousand people, lost in admiration, crowded between the Palatine and the Aventine that day to see Nero rick against Ericus, the Briton, and the four other picked charioteers of Rome.

The mob loved Nero at that time. It was before he reached the height of his atrocities, before he burnt Rome. Good times had come to the mob since he had donned the purple.

From the two hills the thousands who could not get into the circus saw and cheered, as the six charioteers charged madly into the arena.

It was what is known nowadays as a flying start. There was no Caesar in the stone gallery above the gate to turn and salute. Caesar was racing, and the crowd was cheering him madly, above all the other charioteers, pampered favourites of the mob though they were.

Nero wore the sparkling amethyst stomacher, which gave his gross face, with its red, garlanded curls, a god-like glow. He looked the real charioteer—and he was—as he strained over the flying chariot, the reins lashed about him, in his girdle a short sharp knife with which he could cut loose his bound body in case of danger. His whip rose and fell, cracking madly. He glowered darkly at the five charioteers who were his opponents as they flew by his side.

In the centre of the arena, which was covered with hard white sand, was the *spina*, a broad stone wall round which the racing chariots were driven. This was terminated with the *metae* or goals—conical pillars which marked the turnings of the course.

As the six charioteers dashed madly out into the race, they were blinded by the change from darkness to the brilliant sunlight. That was part of the mad hazard of the race. For a moment it seemed that two chariots would collide, but they swerved apart in the nick of time, their drivers striving vainly to see.

One of them was Ericus, the Briton, the other was a driver in red, named Doryphoros.

He swore luridly in Latin, and pointed with his whip at Caesar who, despite his one weak squinting eye, to which he generally wore an emerald spy glass, seemed to see in the lancing heat-glare—at any rate, had drawn ahead, hidden in clouds of sand.

"Ho, Emperor! I'm going to beat you!" cried Ericus. His chariot was flying along the straight course after Nero's so madly that the hoofs of his steeds hardly touched the ground.

It was the S-bends at either end of the course which Nero took so madly, and which chiefly endangered the lives of others. There was no room for two flying chariots abreast here. But though aware that he might pile up upon the Emperor in awful wreckage, Ericus kept after him grimly.

"Going to pass—win that bag of gold!" he breathed.

A hundred thousand throats bellowed for Nero as he madly tore along in the lead, fleshy arm raised high as he whipped, his dark brows set in furious determination. But those cries would as speedily have changed to Ericus if he won the lead. The fickle mob would shout for Nero only so long as he was winning, and he knew it.

He went tearing round into the long S-bend like a madman.

Thuddah—thuddah! Clatter—clatter. One of the horses stumbled, and almost fell, but he wrenched on the rein with a harsh latin cry. And his whip flashed: *Crack! Crack!* With ears flattened back and racing close to the ground, his four white horses tore on, and his two-wheeled chariot swerved madly round a pillar marking the place where many a driver had broken his neck.

Now the course was clear before him, and Nero flew on with an immense roar of acclaim beating against his eardrums. But the others pressed close behind. The course had to be traversed seven times.

Ericus! He came hard on the mad Nero's heels. Gritting his teeth, he was determined to beat Caesar, but not at his own game. The famous charioteer had all four of his horses nicely balanced. He was not whipping the hides off them; they were not sweating, their eyes flashing with pain as were Nero's horses. He went into the S-bend with them running close together in a smooth, electric stride.

Though four abreast, the inner pair only were yoked to the pole; the outer horses, drawing only from a trace and the reins, were free to wheel, which they did as the demon charioteer sifted the "ribbons" and stamped with his iron-shod foot on the floor of his carriage.

"Gently Scipio. Round now Jugurtha!" Round they wheeled, running at speed after Nero, and a cry of *Euge!*—"well done!"—came from Ericus, only to change to an explosive gasp of dismay.

There had sounded an ominous crack. A crack that meant disaster. Looking down, the charioteer saw that the yoke pole had been sawn half-way through. Any moment it might snap under the strain and the chariot would crash in a mangled wreck.

Now Ericus understood why Nero had been so confident he would win to-day. He had done this, or caused it to be done. It would be easy enough in

the darkness of the stalls while waiting for the start of the race.

Though his life hung in fearful danger, it only made the Briton more determined to win.

He knew that he had to hold every horse, as it were, balanced in his hand. He tore down the course after Nero. It was at the turns that the strain would come to the pole. He went round the next like the wind, but in reality ever so tenderly, holding each horse balanced and poised like the juggler he was.

There came another sharp crack.

But the half-sawn pole held still. The demon charioteer felt the blood rush around his heart as he sensed for sure that it could not last out the race.

He tore after Nero. Twice—thrice—four times round the course at mad speed. The chariots were close up on the leader. Nero tightened his body, strained forward. He whipped his Parthian horses mercilessly. They were gallant runners; their hoofs seemed to disappear from under them, but they never stumbled.

The wind rushed past the charioteers. For them the blue of the sky was mingled with the sea of faces and

the shimmering marble in rainbow colours. The cheering like the roar of surf in their ears. Three in a line, two in a line, and Nero leading, they went round the turn and all tore along the straight, keeping the wall near on their left.

Ericus breathed hard. His horses were running well, like a swift, surging river. But at the last turn had come another deadly, ominous crack from the yoke pole.

Two more circuits, and the real race was going now. The drivers were turning on the steam. They forgot they were competing with the Emperor. They shrieked and cursed. Nero signalled to them furiously with his whip to keep back. But they would not. They relied on the mob.

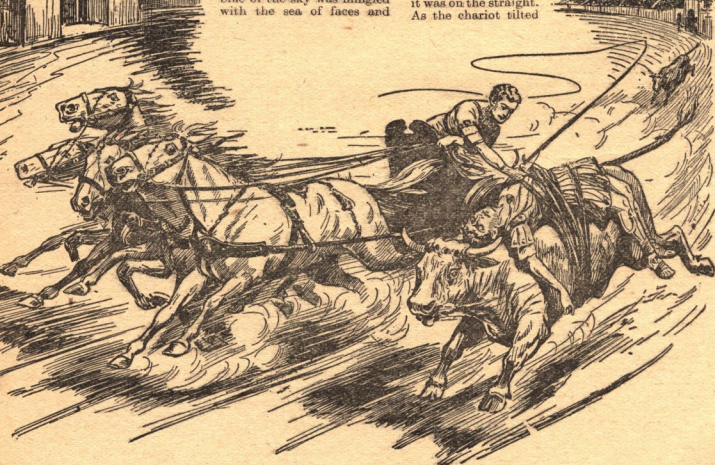
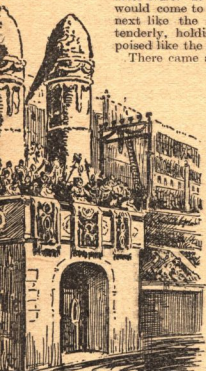
And a great howl rose from the spectators that warned Caesar. It was dangerous to play with them, trick them. They looked to see him win—or crash.

He would do just that—win or crash.

Nero lashed the horses to madness. They went round the rampart like a tidal wave. After came the other charioteers. The axles rattled furiously, iron shod wheels threw off sparks. Nero's eyes were set blind at the turn. His horses reared; but with a mad tug of the reins he got them into line and went round.

And after him went Ericus, the Briton, urging his horses on in a mad swerve.

Crack! It had happened. Luckily, it was on the straight. As the chariot tilted



RACING WITH DEATH.—Ericus drew level with the bull. Desperately he slashed at the ropes that bound the young Prince, to release him before the bull crashed with another chariot.

away under him to crash in ruins, Ericus the Briton leapt on to the rim, with a chariot streaming on either side of him, and from there on to the back of the two centre horses.

It was done in a flash. He was riding the galloping horses, with feet astride, one on each of the two centre steeds, and urging them on, on.

Nero shouted at him madly and struck out with his whip as he thundered level. Ericus the Briton paid no heed to the lacerating cut. He was going on, to win, without a chariot.

The last course! Level with the furious Nero; now came the most perilous turn. They crashed at it together; neither would give way. But at the last moment the white Parthian horses of Nero's chariot reared madly, and as four together the barbarian's horses shot past round the column and raced on, past the goal.

By a miracle Nero crashed round the column, and by a miracle his chariot righted itself. As he went past the white line, and men ran to pull up his trembling horses, the Emperor was shouting furiously. They released him from the reins. But he could hardly stand erect. He pointed at Ericus the Briton. "He doesn't win. I literally flew, like Icarus. I was divine!"

But from the mob had come a mighty shout that rolled and crashed like thunder. They had seen the way the chariotless horses with the driver on their back, had shot past at the turn, and they knew that they had seen a marvellous piece of horsemanship.

"Ericus wins! Ericus the Briton!"

There was no gainsaying that massed shout. It was too formidable. As Ericus rode bareback past the judge's gallery a great bag of coins fell with a clink at his feet. He jumped down lithely and gathered the spoils of victory.

"Though I expect for this the Emperor will have my head," he thought ruefully.

Judging by the roar of applause, Nero had need to go carefully before making an open move against the demon charioteer. Ericus, however, knew that Caesar had his spies and guards everywhere, and once the net was spread there would be no escape for him.

"By the beards of the Druids! It behoves me to get away before Nero takes me," he breathed as he lightly leapt up on the backs of his horses again.

He was concerned now with but one thing—to set free the young British prince who had been made captive by Suetonius and who was to be sold in the slave market. After that—well, Nero could do what he would with him, Ericus the Briton.

"A man can die but once," he breathed grimly.

And so he rode round the arena, saluting the cheering thousands and making a brave sight. As he came face to face with the fury-whitened Nero, the charioteer, erect on the backs of the horses, raised his hand in the salute, and from his lips came the dreadful-thrilling cry of the gladiators as they enter the arena and salute their ruler.

* *Ave Cæsar imperator.*

Morturi te salutant.

But then he wheeled his horses abruptly, and calling them to a gallop, still mounted on their backs, he raced out by one of the four exits from the arena to the accompaniment of a thunderclap of cheering.

Caesar glared after him, his face set, eyes bloodshot. With a gesture he called to him, one Pomponius who was Captain of the Prætorian Guard.

As such he was an important person, the captain of the Emperor's bodyguard. He wore a breastplate of solid gold, and his helmet was surmounted by a golden eagle of Rome. Pomponius was much feared

and hated. He was cruel and fierce, and he had become very rich by pandering to Caesar.

Like Nero himself, he sometimes participated in the Roman games. It was not to ingratiate himself with the mob, however, but to please his own love of cruelty. Pomponius wielded the net and trident when he entered the ring. And none could stand against him. Not even the trained gladiators. He was as swift as a flash—and deadly. Many had stood up against him. All had received the death thrust. He showed no mercy, not even if the crowd willed it. The mob feared him.

"Hark 'ee, I conquered," snarled Nero.

"Assuredly, O Divine One."

"Mine was the victor's wreath," cried the Emperor, shaking. "He filched it from me. Hark'ee now, have him watched. Watch him well. The slightest pretext, and—"

He lowered his voice, and Pomponius smiled cruelly. "It will need tact, O Caesar. At present he is the idol of the populace. But it shall be done."

Caesar nodded with a cruel light in his eyes. He was content that on the morrow Ericus the Briton would die, favourite of the populace or not.

The Furore in the Forum.

THE life centre of Rome in those days lay in the hollow between the Seven Hills. And various splendid thoroughfares, lined with temples and statues led towards the Forum. It is to be remarked that not often were slaves sold here; mostly they were sent to the markets of Delos and Paphos. But this was a special slave who stood on the stone block against the rostrum Augustini, where Nero himself had declaimed to thousands in the great square.

And yet he looked but a mere pigmy against the gigantic rostrum with tier upon tier of massive blocks of marble, and in the centre up aloft the bronze figure of the wolf—the foster mother of the great city—with metal jaws distended and polished teeth that gleamed like emeralds in the red glare of the setting sun.

A pigmy—and yet a handsome pigmy. A fair-haired boy of little more than sixteen or seventeen, dressed in wolf skins. Mighty Rome looked down on him as if in pity. The Capitol, temple-crowned, rearing its defied summit towards the dome of heaven. The heights of the Avantine, barren and scorched, beyond the temples and palaces, guarding the great shining S of the River Tiber flowing towards the sea. Aye, a mighty fastness, Rome, with the vast Campania beyond.

And a lad in the Forum for sale, a British captive. "Twenty thousand *sesterces*, I am bid for this fair-skinned prince," cried the auctioneer in strident tones. He indicated Vincinius, an elegant patrician of Rome—the very arbiter of fashion, who must, of course have a prince for slave.

But no; behind the young Roman, in the white *toga*, towered the form of Ericus the Briton, swarthy and fierce in his tunic and iron shod boots. The gladiator who fought for prizes; the demon charioteer.

But he had a true friend in Vincinius. The gladiator could not bid himself; he would be suspected, therefore his friend and patron was doing it for him.

Then stepped forward a frowning Roman general, in golden breastplate, with the eagle gleaming aloft on his helmet.

"Fifty thousand *sesterces*, I bid for that puny whelp," he growled contemptuously.

He had his orders from Nero. The Emperor had sensed what was afoot, and was out to frustrate Ericus, the charioteer.

The giant Briton's lips thinned to a grim line. He nudged his friend and patron.

* Hail Caesar, Emperor.

We who are about to die salute thee.

"A hundred thousand I bid," cried the young patrician at the gladiator's urging.

Murmurs went up from the crowd who thronged under the arcades of the temples and bustled round the fountain. The bidding went on. It rose to two hundred thousand *sesterces*—the bid of the young patrician—and at that Pomponius gave up. Scowling angrily, he strode up to Vincinius.

"By the belly of Bacchus!" he growled. "It is strange, Vincinius that you should bid so high for this slave—and you a pauper. In the hands of the usurers, so 'tis said."

Vincinius' fine eyes flashed. It was true the money-lenders were squeezing him. But lately he had learnt something startling about the fraternity, and swiftly now the angry retort came from his lips.

"Equally as strange that Pomponius, captain of the Guard, should be behind these usurers," he said. "He grows rich by money-lending," he cried contemptuously, turning to the crowd.

The shaft went home. Pomponius looked staggered and guilty; part of the crowd laughed and jeered. Money-lending was an art of the Jews, despised by Romans.

Gobbling with rage, Pomponius strode forward and struck the young Roman heavily.

Recovering, white as a sheet, Vincinius said: "We must fight."

"As you will," said the Roman soldier grimly. "To-morrow, in the circus. I will take the trident

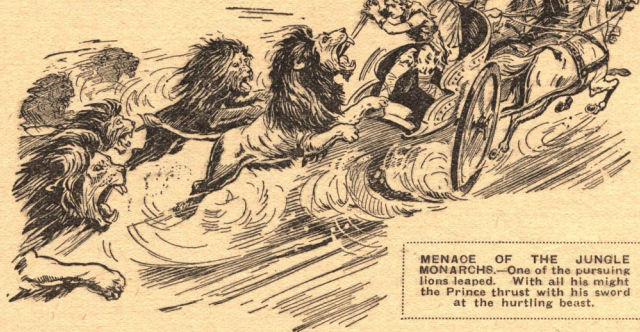
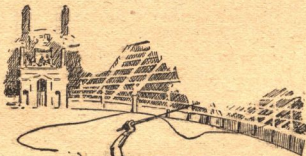
would be to please and gain favour with the Emperor. "You?" he said sinisterly. "Yes, I will meet you to-morrow in a fight to the death. And—watch out!"

He turned and strode away through the crowd. The people stared at Ericus with awe. They believed he was shortly to die. No man living could beat Pomponius with the trident and net.

But the big charioteer had already forgotten about the fight. As soon as the price had been paid to the auctioneer, he seized hold of Prince Werewolf, and hurried him away.

"Be careful; spies are all around us," he warned.

The big charioteer pretended to make for Tiber-side, but then, rapidly turning a corner, he retraced



MENACE OF THE JUNGLE MONARCHS.—One of the pursuing lions leaped. With all his might the Prince thrust with his sword at the hurtling beast.

and net; you shall have shield and as long a sword as you care."

There was a dead silence for a moment. A hush of awe. It was certain death for the young patrician. None could evade Pomponius in his deadly swiftness with the net.

Then Ericus the Briton gently pushed his patron aside and came boldly to the fore.

"I will take on that fight," he said in his great, deep voice. "A tiger should meet a tiger. Once I was slave to Vincinius, the Roman, and he gave me my freedom. I would fight this and a thousand battles in return."

Vincinius expostulated. But the crowd cheered. The idea of two such doughty warriors meeting in the Circus fired their imagination. Pomponius grinned slowly at the famous charioteer and slow cunning crept in his eyes. To kill this man in the Circus

his steps with the young prince. They crossed the street under the shadow of Nero's palace with its lit gardens on the brow of the Palatine, and so came to an iron gate. They entered the famous Esquiline gardens.

Before the fire of Rome destroyed them and made there a black wilderness there were no more wonderful walks in the city than these public gardens. Here in the flower-haunted gardens, the big charioteer hoped for a few minutes peace from the mob.

"You must get away," he urged. "Listen, there is a ship going out of the Tiber to-morrow for Londonium...."

He drew the Prince on, walking through the gardens. There was a big honey-coloured moon floating in the sky, flooding the white marble buildings of Rome with shimmering light. But it was no good to the big charioteer. His face was savage.



More
**GRAND FIRST
AID CABINETS
FREE!**

CONTAINING
LINT,
BANDAGES,
IODINE,
PLASTERS,
STERILISED
DRESSINGS,
OINTMENTS,
Etc.

TO WIN ONE OF THESE RIPPING GIFTS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Write on One Side of a Sheet of Paper the Names of Your Tribe and a Brief Description of its Activities. Incidents while Out Hunting, Camping, or During Pow Wow. Give the Names of All Members. And the title of the Best Yarn you have read in "Boys' Magazine."

LONE BRAVES . . . describe their own activities. Translate Password NIFODOMA from Special Adventure Code in Your Code Books and insert actual word at Top Left-hand Corner.

Post to—

FIRST-AID COMPETITION,

Headquarters, B.M. League,

196, Gray's Inn Road,

London, W.C.1.

BE A B.M. REDSKIN BRAVE

Send Membership Form, Three Coupons, and Stamped Addressed Envelope to THE CHIEF, B.M. LEAGUE, 196, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. A Ripping Badge and Code Book are sent Free to Every Member.

B.M. LEAGUE MEMBERSHIP FORM

.....(name) enclose
three coupons and stamped addressed envelope
for membership of above. I am of British
birth and promise to adhere to tenets and
objects. (1/4/33)

BOYS' MAGAZINE LEAGUE COUPON

Boys' Magazine, 1/4/33.

"Ah, look!" he suddenly hissed low.

There standing by a lily pond, in which goldfish swam and a fountain splashed, stood Nero Domitius Cæsar. The Emperor's brawny arms were folded across his chest, his garland-wreathed head was sunk a little while he stared into nothingness. Thinking . . . Truly a picture of a god-like king. Under the moonlight the gems about his person flashed fiery colours, and lent him an aura of light. The brooding Emperor!

Ericus was about to draw the young prince hastily away, when it happened.

Nero started and made a gesture as if warding off some attack. He cried out. A knife tinkled to the ground at his feet.

"He has been attacked!" cried Prince Werewolf, and impulsively dashed forward.

That was his undoing. From all around guards sprang out of concealment and seized the young British prince. He was dragged in front of Cæsar by the grim soldiery.

The Emperor put up his emerald and squinted. "You threw a knife. You tried to kill me."

In vain the boy protested.

"To-morrow you die in the Circus," said Nero, in a voice dry and husky as a whisper. "The wild beasts shall have you."

In concealment Ericus clenched his hands. He realised the cunning of the Emperor. This was all staged, of course. No one had thrown a knife at the Emperor. Nero, carried in a litter, had followed them, determined to frame a pretext for putting the young British prince to death.

With a groan, the Briton turned and hurried through the gardens. Nero could not have planned better to hit back at the charioteer who had beaten him. To-morrow Prince Werewolf was to be thrown to the wild beasts. And there was a no way to save him!

Treachery in the Arena.

BY the time the hot sunshine was once again flooding Rome, however, Ericus the Briton had thought of a way.

He hurried down the Palatine to the Circus. People were flocking to the gates in their thousands. The heat was great, but the clouds were not the usual fleecy clouds that dance gaily over Rome. They were heavy and sullen, and they were gathering.

Thunder and lightning in Rome. It might be to-day—or to-morrow. A vivid storm promised.

But the people flocked to the Circus. Tier upon tier became filled. Excitement raged in great roars that died and rose again. Ericus the Briton could hear, as he waited in the gladiators' room for his combat. His mind was made up. He had got to beat Pomponius, beat him to the ground and hold him at his mercy with the sword poised over him to strike.

Then he would look at Cæsar. And Nero would surely put his thumb up in sign of mercy and clemency. For he valued Pomponius highly.

"Then," gritted the charioteer, "I'll tell the Emperor that I'll kill Pomponius—run my sword through his heart—unless he delivers Prince Werewolf to me safe and sound in the Arena."

It meant then that he would have to escape from Rome with the mob at his heels. But Ericus was confident that in his chariot he stood a chance.

A licitor appeared to tell him it was his turn to enter the arena. He went boldly, with supreme confidence, to meet Pomponius, the most feared exponent in Rome of the art of the *retarius*—the net thrower.

With only shield and sword in his hands, Ericus took up his stand ten yards distant from his cool, cynically smiling adversary.

Pomponius had the net folded on his shoulder. Its edge was weighted with metal beads. When he threw that net scarce anything, however swift, could elude him. Whether man or beast it was squirming in the net, to be dispatched by the three-pronged trident that Pomponius held in his other hand.

But to-day Pomponius was facing a more terrible adversary than he had yet met. He realised it as the lithe Briton crouched with his glittering sword pointed at his enemy's breast.

Fixing him with intent eyes, the British gladiator

advanced inch by inch, like a tiger about to spring. An unearthly hush settled over the vast concourse in the hot sunshine. The tension gripped them, held them painfully.

Erius moved yet another inch nearer, crouched down and ready to dash in like lightning when the opportunity offered. Pomponius on the other hand stood absolutely still. His eye was unusually accurate, and he could trust his practised arm to whirl the net abroad at the exact moment when its sweep would be ineludible.

Slightly nearer, more menacing grew Erius with his two-edged sword. People screamed from the tiers for Pomponius to throw. Still he remained immobile, watching the tigerish Briton.

"A little nearer, British dog," he taunted with a scornful smile, "and I'll have you."

Erius slid an inch inside the fatal distance, sword gripped as he crouched.

All in the Circus held their breath. Still his enemy did not throw. Like a lightning flash Erius the Briton dashed in with his sword.

But the wily Pomponius was not to be caught so easily. He shifted his ground as quick as light, and they stood at bay. The Briton dashed in again. Foot, eye, and hand all moving together, and again his cunning adversary dodged. He was smiling mockingly—luring the Briton on.

With a cry Erius launched himself with heart-shrivelling speed at his foe.

The net flew out. Such an awful shout rose from within the walls of the Circus Maximus as seemed like the upblast of an explosion.

For the Briton had been too clever this time for his foe. In the exact split second he had stopped his rush and sprung back—how he did it, only he knew. The net fell short.

With kindling eye then, the Briton sprang in to make a deadly thrust. But Pomponius was not waiting for it. Turning round, he pounded across the arena for dear life, gathering his net for a fresh cast as he flew.

The people rose up in a dark mass, screaming themselves hoarse.

"COWARD!" The roar continued as they watched the chase. The Roman was fleet of foot, but he had hardly reckoned on the amazing speed of Erius the Briton. He was gaining, and there was a gleam in the big charioteer's eyes as he held the sword ready.

Faster and faster they flew, the Briton gaining every minute. The mob was yelling with delight. His arm was up to strike—when, suddenly, a deep groan charged the air.

Erius suddenly gasped, and the sword flew from his hand; in full flight he crashed down and rolled over and over in the sand.

It was the end for him, of course. In a trice Pomponius turned and cast the net, and the Briton was helplessly entangled in it, with his enemy standing over him with a sneering smile, the trident raised to kill. He looked up to Nero.

The cruel Emperor was just about to lean forward, with this thumb pointing down as a sign that the Briton should be killed, when one of his generals seized his arm, and pointed.

The mob was going mad. They were yelling and making a strong demonstration for mercy. Every man's hand was held outwards with the thumb pointing up which meant that the Briton's life should be spared.

Nor was the reason hard to seek. In the arena where the Briton had stumbled and fallen was a sword blade, sticking upwards from between a crack in the stone flags.

It was this that had caused the Briton's discomfiture. That sword blade had been concealed by a mound of sand when he had run upon it. It was a trap—a deadly trap laid by Pomponius.

He had meant all along, if he failed, to run upon this concealed sword, luring his victim to follow. Now Erius lay struggling in the net with a badly wounded foot while Pomponius waited, with murderous eyes, for the signal to kill.

But it did not come. Nero knew the fury of the mob, and knew that they would wreek the amphitheatre if Erius were slain. They had seen through the trick with the sword.

Nero leant forward and, with malignant, twisted face, made the sign for mercy.

Horror Let Loose.

WRITHING in the net on the sanded arena, Erius the Briton guessed that his respite from death would be, at best, but a short one. Pomponius of the Guard gave his weapons to one of the attendants who had now entered the



TREACHERY IN THAT TRIP.—Erius, following the fleeing Roman, raised his sword to strike, when he suddenly tripped over a sword point sticking up between the flagstones.

arena, took his cloak from another, and with a graceful bow to the spectators and a glowering look of hate at the gladiator he had trapped, turned scornfully away and left the arena.

As he gathered himself up and trudged wearily towards the gate, the big charioteer was thinking desperately that all was lost. Prince Werewolf would be cast to the wild beasts in the arena, and nothing he could now do would save the young Briton.

Nor could his own fate be long delayed. He knew that, though saved by the mandate of the mob, Caesar had the right to order him into the arena again to perform some impossible task, the outcome of which could only be his death.

And he was right. As he passed under the gate, lictors came forward and seized him.

"The Emperor hath commanded that you are to

take part in the chariot race with the captured Britons," announced one of the lictors.

So that was it! At first there seemed nothing menacing in it. He was conducted round to the dark stalls where ten chariots were lined up, the horses kicking and chafing impatiently. Each captured British charioteer, who had ridden in Queen Boadicea's famous charge, was now secured by chains round the waist to his chariot. But that was all; his hands were free. As Ericus took his place in his chariot, he shook his head.

"Nero has some deep design," he growled under his breath.

But now the trumpets were blaring, the signal was given, and the gates went up.

Out swept the madly charging chariots, while a roar of excitement went up from the massed thousands in that sultry amphitheatre, darkened by thunder-clouds.

At first it seemed that Nero had commanded the captured Britons to a harmless chariot race.

Ericus at once swept into the lead. He knew the dangerous circuit, and was glad it had been vouchsafed him to lead the way. *Clatter, clatter, clatter!* Swift as the wind his four horses raced on.

The demon charioteer swerved them like a master round the turns. And the captured British charioteers fell in behind, racing close to the wall, and getting the "feel" of the dangerous course for the mad tussle that would soon open out.

Once round the circuit—twice. And then suddenly it happened. The gates under the Imperial box were opened, and into the arena, like a black thunderbolt tore a monstrous Brahm bull with Prince Werewolf of Ieni tied to its back.

With head lowered and bellowing wickedly, the maddened bull tore across the lists at the troop of chariots as they came round the curve.

A deafening roar uprose. In a few seconds there would be a terrible smash.

Then in an electric second the amphitheatre became dumb. The crowd rose from their seats in a black mass, hearts in their mouths. A fearful thrill was coming. For at sight of Prince Werewolf on the horns of the wild bull, the demon charioteer swerved his four galloping horses, and bending forward, striking at them with the whip, as he had never done before, he rushed them, like a streaming meteor, across the arena at the maddened beast.

It looked like a head-on crash.

Cries of astonishment followed the heavy silence. At the last moment the maddened bull threw up its head with a shaking roar—and swerved aside.

In an instant the demon charioteer was racing alongside the maddened, bewildered bull. He leant over the side of his chariot, and now in his hand, besides the whip, was a sharp knife. Swiftly with a few desperate slashes he freed the young prince who slithered harmlessly to the sanded arena.

In a trice now the demon charioteer was pulling his rearing, terrified horses to a standstill. He jumped down from the chariot as the bull turned for another charge. Like an arrow from some mighty bow Ericus launched himself at the bull.

There was a blur of movement. Gasps rose—cries. It was seen that the famous gladiator had gripped the bull by the horns, and by some amazing trick—partly a feat of strength, partly knack—he threw the mighty beast over. As it crashed down, those nearest in the arena heard the sound of cracking bones. Then the beast sank in a heap, its neck broken, dead.

The amphitheatre was in a state of madness. The walls of the immense building shook under the clamour of thousands of throats. The mob was

demanding pardon for the British captives—and for Ericus the Briton, the demon charioteer. He had earned it by his wonderful feats.

Nero had become frightened. He feared a riot. But it was too late now; his commands had been given. Suddenly the gates under the Imperial box opened, and out into the arena rushed half-a-dozen fierce starved lions from the Libyan desert.

The scene was fearful, indescribable, with shaking ears the lions rushed at the chariot.

"In with you—quick!" cried Ericus to the young Prince Werewolf; he himself sprang to the reins. With a wild clatter of hoofs the chariot tore round the circuit. The only hope of escape was flight.

And what a forlorn hope that was! Travelling with heart-shrivelling speed, the tawny lions streaked in great leaps after the chariot.

The foremost came in a hurtling jump, and Prince Werewolf, who had seized up a sword, poised himself. He thrust with all his might down that terrible open throat. Its soul-shaking roar dying, the lion crashed down and rolled over and over in the death throes.

The chariot flew on. There was wildest uproar in the great amphitheatre. And then, all suddenly, like a visitation of wrath from the skies, the storm burst.

Down the dark sky, like an awful lighted spear of vengeance, ran lightning.

Cr-aash! The sky seemed to open directly above with one mighty concussion.

The City of the Seven Hills was lit luridly, then became dark. Peal upon peal of thunder came like detonations of doom. And in the Circus Maximus the scene was indescribable. Hundreds were crushed to death as the people of Rome sought to escape what they believed to be the vengeance of the gods. Nero's name was howled with execration. He had brought this upon the city.

But round the amphitheatre, conveniently placed, were some of Ericus' friends, the gladiators of his old *lanistria*, or training school. In their hands were mighty bows and great arrows. In the confusion and alternating darkness and light, they loosed the shafts at the lions in the arena.

It was not long before all had been killed. Then someone opened the gates.

"Follow me, my friends," cried Ericus the Briton as he swept his chariot out.

Of that chariot race through Rome in the big storm no record remains so little can be told. But it may be imagined that it was the demon charioteer's most amazing race. People spoke of seeing the chariots tearing down the Flaminian way, through those wonderful broad streets with their porticoed houses and temples, slashed by lightning, deluged by rain, and so out at last through the gates of Rome.

Out on Tiber-side a ship was waiting. The prisoners were smuggled aboard and in time reached Londonium again.

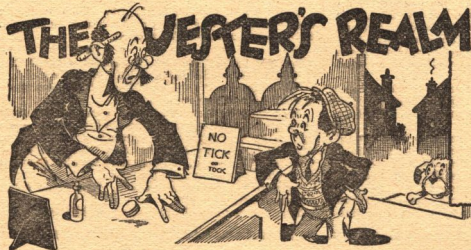
As for the Demon Charioteer, he returned to Rome. But no punishment awaited him. The storm had done tremendous damage in the city, and no man could say whether the British charioteers and Prince Werewolf had escaped or not. Save Ericus the Briton, and he wisely kept his own council.

A week after he was racing in the arena again. Cheered by thousands. The demon charioteer.

Grand double-length yarn of the All Fools Day frolics of Johnny Gee & Co. of the Remove Form at St. Giddy's next week. You must not miss this ripping yarn of the School of Larks and Learning.

HAVE A JOKE AT THE JOKE EDITOR'S EXPENSE.

THE WESTER'S REALM



Football and Fountain Pens awarded to senders of all jokes printed here. Send your favourite jokes on p.c. with coupon on this page to the Joke Editor, "Boys' Magazine," 196, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

Cockney Urchin: Two pennorrf of Rhubub Pills, guv'nor.
Chemist: Shall I wrap them up for you, my boy?
Urchin: Yus, of course. Fink I wants ter roll the blighters 'ome?
(Football to H. BROWN, 10, Beechholme Road, Clapton, E.5.)

DONKEY WORK.

While showing an Irish friend round town, George was surprised to see him stop and stare at a chip-watato cart, with a chimney at the back, drawn by a donkey.

"What's the matter, Pat?" George asked.

"Begorra," replied the Irishman, pointing to the cart, "I've seen some lazy donkeys, but I've never seen one with an engine to push it!"

(Fountain pen to HAROLD HALL, "Fernville," Leyland Road, Penwortham, Preston.)

NO GOOD.

BOBBY (to shopman): That egg I bought is no good!

SHOPMAN: Why, what is the matter with it?

BOBBY: I've dropped it on your step!

(Fountain pen to NEVILLE LAKE, Culladose, Bainbridge Avenue, Hartley, Plymouth, Devon.)

JOKE COUPON.

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

1/4/33.

A DRAW.

HORSE DEALER (trying to sell very scraggy horse): 'E's a very good horse for drawing!

PROSPECTIVE BUYER: Yes; but I'm a haulage contractor, not a humorous artist.

(Fountain pen to P. J. DRANE, 139, Salisbury Avenue, Barking, Essex.)

GAS.

Pat had bought a gas stove from a friend. A week later, when he saw his friend, he said:

"That stove you sold me is the best thing I have ever had. I lit it last week, and it has not gone out yet!"

(Fountain pen to F. A. MOORE, "Evenlode," Brentry, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol.)

HEATED.

SAMBO: Do you smoke?
RASTUS: No, I never get that hot!

(Fountain pen to JAMES S. RATHBONE, "Craythorne," Albert Road, Grappenhall, Cheshire.)

EXPENSIVE.

BILL: How much did your gold watch cost you?

TOM: Eighteen months!
(Fountain pen to COLIN BETTEL, 23, Cwmndonkin Terrace, Swansea.)

BACKED TOO FAR.

BOOKIE: Ever lose money backing horses?

LITTLE MAN: Yes! I backed one in the window the other day, and it cost me five shillings.

(Fountain pen to WALTER BIRCHALL, 114, Moor Road, Orrell, nr Wigan.)



Assistant (with an eye to business): How would your little lad like a game of Ludo, sir?

Customer: Oh, he'd be delighted if it's not taking up too much of your time.

(Football to T. GWYTHYR, 93, Princess Victoria Street, Clifton, Bristol.)

OH NO ?

DELIVERY MAN: Is this package yours? It has your address but the name is obliterated.

HOUSEKEEPER: In that case it is not for me. My name is O'Reilly!

(Fountain pen to PETER WHITEMAN, Ancoats Convalescent Home, Great Warford, near Alderley Edge.)

WHITE-WASHED.

ARTIST: May I paint your house?

FARMER: No fear! I've just had it white-washed!

(Fountain pen to W. HOLLAND, High St., Coningsby, Lincoln.)

SINK THE OLE LUGGER!*(Continued from page 16.)*

do. As the chain did not yield the first time, it tried a second. Still the porpoise was not satisfied. He lunged himself against it again without result, and then grew bored with the thing and swam away.

Up above Cap'n Keelson was waiting for two sharp jerks on one of the chains as the signal to start hoisting.

"Right away McWhirr!" he yelled to the engineer at the winch, after the second charge of the porpoise below them. "They've given the signal. Start up the winch."

"Aye, sir! I can start her, but this winch is an' owd 'un, ye ken—mebbe the lever'll jam when I try to stop. If ye can wait a wee minute now—"

"Oh, that'll be all right!" said Cap'n Keelson, eager to get on. "Hoist away there!"

McWhirr shrugged his shoulders and started up the winch. The chains grew taut and began to wind

Keelson bottled his rage as he saw his ship sinking lower and lower into the sea, and hastily followed suit.

Down went the *Haddock*, the winch chugging busily and drawing her further under the water, until even her funnel disappeared.

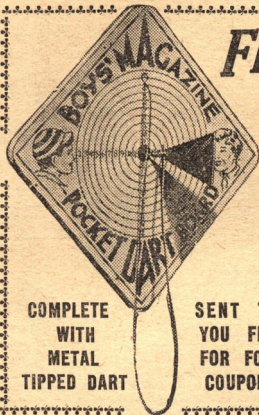
DOWN below, Fat and Pip waited patiently for the chains and hooks which did not come.

"Funny!" thought Pip. "Perhaps they haven't found the right spot."

With signs he beckoned to Fat Burns and carefully they made their way along the sea-bottom to search for the hooks. After walking about a hundred and fifty yards, Pip suddenly grabbed his shipmate by the arm and pointed. Fat followed his direction and a startled look came into his face.

"Golly!" Fat said to himself. "Another wreck! And a steamer, too!"

They hurried as quickly as they could through the



**COMPLETE
WITH
METAL
TIPPED DART**

**SENT TO
YOU FREE
FOR FOUR
COUPONS.**

FREE! To All Readers

One of these Special Coupons is printed each week in *B.M.* Send your four as soon as you get them to the Editor, "Boys' Magazine," 196, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1, or Withy Grove, Manchester 4. Mark envelope "Pocket Target." Enclose 1½d. stamp for postage.



water towards it, and had it not been for the pressure of the water they would have fallen over with amazement when they read the name *Happy Haddock* on the bow. Up on the decks of the submerged vessel they saw the rest of their shipmates in Davis respirators, signalling to them wildly.

Pip and Fat looked at each other in blank surprise. When action returned to them they walked round and examined the bottom of the ship. There was no damage there and they were mystified to find out how she had sunk. Then Pip found the grappling hooks tightly jammed under the mountain of rock.

He made his now familiar "Leave it to me!" gesture to the skipper, and he and Fat selected spanners from the toolbag they carried. It was just possible, Pip knew, that there would be enough air left in the holds to float her to the surface.

In a few moments they had got the shackles free and the *Happy Haddock* began to float slowly upwards. Pip and Fat grabbed the dangling chains and hauled themselves on to the deck.

It seemed an eternity before they emerged into the air, but at last it happened. Cap'n Keelson tore off his diving things and yelled: "All hands to the pumps! Pumps, you lubbers! Stap me!"

Like mad they rushed for the pumps and started furiously to work. Back breaking toil it was, but

round the winch-drum. Cap'n Keelson and the rest of the crew looked over the ship's side eagerly.

"Stap me! This is queer! The old *Haddock's* sinking fast!"

"It was the chains!" yelled Dutchy Jud suddenly. "Dey was pulling the ship down, instead of us pulling dem up!"

"Stap me! You're right! Hey! McWhirr! Stop the blamed thing! It's pulling us under!"

McWhirr pushed over the control lever of the winch to stop it. It jammed!

"There y'are, Cap'n," said the engineer, in his slow way. "I warned ye! I can't stop it now, ye ken! Ye should've waited—"

Cap'n Keelson danced with rage. The water was already pouring over the bulwarks and the ship rapidly sinking lower. The rest of the crew hastily dashed for the Davis respirators that remained.

"Do somethin'! Stap me! Do somethin'!"

McWhirr did. He waded hurriedly across the flooded deck to grab a respirator for himself. Cap'n

(Continued on page 32.)

THE GREATEST YARN OF MYSTERY AND INTRIGUE, OF SPIES,
KINGS AND THE SECRET SERVICE EVER PENNED.

The MASTER of MASKS



Everybody's Reading This
Gigantic New Story of the
Mysterious One Over
Seven. By JOHN HUNTER.

"THE Rat Trap! And the Rat! Caught like a rat in a trap! Just that! Like a rat in a trap!" The words babbled from the lips of the demented Jules Debar. "Wertzheim knows all about the Rat..."

From the shadows reached the Hand of Death, and Debar was no more. And Billy Trent was left with a mystery, the mystery of the Rat Trap and its strange prisoner. What was the Rat Trap? Who was the Rat? What terrible mystery lay behind his being held a prisoner?

On one never-to-be-forgotten night, when the Ambassador of Lithkrania was kidnapped from the theatre where Billy was employed, the boy had been plunged into the maelstrom of mystery and unknown things.

Trying to solve the riddle of the Rat Trap was Mr. Brame Sentence, who had taken Billy on as his assistant. Under the vacuous, futile exterior of a dandy, Mr. Sentence concealed the keen, decisive brain of the smartest agent of the British Secret Service.

"Behind it all are immense, incalculable forces—forces organised by the greatest crook confederation ever known," he told Billy in his lazy tones. "And we hunt one man only, The Master of Masks, known to his myrmidons as One Over Seven."

In search of the man Wertzheim, Billy journeyed to Hamburg. Here he made a friend of a German named Fritz, who found Wertzheim. Before Billy could question him, however, the persistent pursuers of the Society of Seven appeared and

Wertzheim bolted for Berlin.

Billy and Fritz followed him on the train, only to find him in a compartment—dead, killed by the ruthless One over Seven himself.

Later the train was wrecked by Billy's enemies and the boy was captured. Into a car he was bundled, and they headed south for Venice, travelling all that night and next day.

In the mountains of Austria, however, they were overtaken by a blizzard. Still they kept on, moving slowly down a path that overhung a canyon.

The wind tore at them. The roar of the torrent below was louder. The machine slid the more and there was high terror in the car.

Swinging a bend the car suddenly lurched, her stern came round. For a breathless second she hesitated. Then over she went, down to the roaring, snow-filled darkness below.

Jaws Of Death.

THE car dropped like a stone, and had the accident occurred higher up the mountain road, it must have been dashed, with all its occupants, to pieces. As it was, the greatest danger to the people inside it now arose from the torrent. Would they be able to get out of the car before they were drowned like rats in a trap?

In that strange fashion in which the human brain works in moments of intense crisis, Billy found these words flashing through his brain as the car hurtled downwards.

Rats in a trap! . . . and all that talk by two dead men of the rat trap and the rat it held. . . .

There was a crash. The car bumped and lurched. It had hit a rock standing above the black and white boil of the torrent. Its chassis twisted, but nothing actually broke. The windows were split all ways, but, being made of unsplinterable glass, they did not fling dangerous fragments into the faces of the passengers.

The car bumped slightly, bumped again, and was suddenly quite still. Curiously enough its engine was still running, and as it was in gear its rear wheels kicked and spun for a second or two until the roaring water got to its petrol supply.

A light came up in its roof. The water had not yet flooded out its accumulator, and the roof light connection was unbroken. The light, for so long as it burnt, showed exactly where they were and how they were situated.

The car lay on its side, wedged between two fangs of rock in mid-stream. To either side of it the torrent thundered, some feet of deep and dreadful water slicing past at high speed between two great walls of tree clad rock.

The chauffeur lay against the underside of

He had dislocated it. The fellow on the underside of Billy was gasping like a stranded fish, winded but not really injured. The fourth man, the leader, was, like Billy, unhurt.

He was standing up and trying to force open the door above his head. It had jammed owing to the general twisting of the chassis and bodywork, and he had some difficulty with it.

Billy offered to help him. They jammed at the door with the heels of their hands, and suddenly it gave and lifted. The wind caught it and hurled it open, breaking the leather check, so that the door flattened back against the side of the car leaving a hole above their heads through which they could climb.

Billy set his teeth. Here, if luck favoured him, might be a chance for escape. The other two men were jabbering in Lithkranian and the leader was answering them.

Billy began to pull himself up to the doorway. None of them stopped him, and the leader followed him, the others coming after. The last two men began to drag the unconscious driver out, and there Billy saw his chance, for they had great difficulty in doing so owing to the dislocated shoulder of one of them.

In fact, this fellow turned on his leader and rasped angrily into his face, so that the leader rather grudgingly consented to give them a hand.

Billy was now standing on the side of the car above the torrent. Some feet away, and about half-way to the bottom of the great wall of rock, was a flat-topped boulder, standing up amid the boiling current with cream and black water racing across it, tossing high in spindrift.

Dare he risk the jump to the rock? If he landed, could he keep his feet? And, doing so, could he take off from it and come to the bottom of the big mountain? Those were the

questions which raced through his brain. He never really answered them—in theory.

He suddenly found himself jumping, escaping a clutching hand which launched itself for his shoulder as he took off. The torrent was beneath him for an interminable time. Then he was down on the flat-topped rock, shin-deep in water that threatened to tear him off at any second, crouching for a moment panting, trembling, staring across the thunderous void beyond.

He jumped again when, for a moment, the water subsided from the rock top and thus did not drag at his jump. And again he hung over the torrent for a time which seemed limitless.

The black wall rushed to meet him. His feet hit something, scraped, lost hold, dragged. He pitched sideways, his hands going out. One of them clutched wood and leaves, and held. His legs dragged in the torrent, but he got his other hand to the job, and he pulled himself on to the rock face . . . safe. . . .

Doing this he saw the leader jump from the car to the flat-topped rock and land on it; and knew his peril was not yet passed.

He began to scramble up the rock face, clutching at low bush and small tree trunks, scraping with his feet, climbing for his life.



THE NOOSE RUSE.—Two men seized Billy. A rope was thrown over the branch of a tree, a noose was made at one end and placed over Billy's head.

the car, his head cut and bleeding, his face white. He had struck one of the side posts when the machine dropped and was unconscious. Billy had been saved from all hurt by the fact that he was wedged between two men in the rear seat. The man beside the driver was moaning and holding his shoulder.

He was an active boy, but the man after him had been born in the mountainous districts of Lithkrania, and was a master of the art of the cragsman. His jump from the flat stone was more sure than Billy's. He landed squarely, and gained valuable seconds.

Nevertheless, in the darkness, he might have lost Billy but for one thing. The snow had ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and though the wind still howled, visibility was better.

Billy reached the road in a short space of time, for the distance was necessarily short, else the car had been smashed to pieces; and he began to run down it, slipping a little on its snowy surface.

The leader of his captors had gained the road and was coming at his heels, though making no effort to shoot at him. The command to take Billy alive held good all through.

Billy swung a bend in the road and stopped.

Three wolves were crossing the trail: lean, grey shapes floating against the darkness like evil wraiths, reddened eyes flicking sideways towards him, slavering jaws agape. In summer or spring time they would have fled for their lives at sight of man; but now they were hungry and desperate.

Billy stood quite still. He had the sense to know that if he turned his back on them they might have jumped at him. The first of them was down slightly, hunched, as though ready to spring, its ears flattened. The second stood by, while the third padded restlessly to and fro.

They were uncertain. Man was their foe. He hunted them relentlessly. Yet this was one human only . . . and alone . . . though he did not flinch from them.

The first wolf uttered that awful cry of the wolf, a cry which sent Billy's blood cold; and, on this, he launched himself through the air, an arrow-straight mass of sinew and grey fur, straight for Billy's throat.

In mid-air he convulsed and slid sideways, while to Billy's ears came the double crash of an automatic pistol.

As the wolf slid to the roadway, dead, the other two rushed into the woodland for their lives; and a hand fell on Billy's shoulder.

"Got you!" It was the voice of the leader. "And just in time. These mountain wolves are dangerous to a lonely traveller in mid-winter, my young friend."

Billy drew a shaking hand across his lips and stared at the dead wolf. Then he stammered: "You saved my life. Thank you."

The leader grinned. In his way he was not a bad sort of fellow, though driven hard by a discipline

which rendered him inhuman when orders were orders.

"Come on," he said, and he dragged Billy back along the road. By the time they reached the scene of the accident the other uninjured man was ashore, down below, and he had managed to get a tow rope across to the car.

Billy helped them with this rope. He was assisting to save the lives of the two injured men out on the rocks, and all thought of captive and captors had



FOREST FIENDS.—Uttering a wild howl, the foremost wolf leaped straight for Billy's throat. At that moment Billy heard the crack of a revolver.

now to be dismissed. The chauffeur had recovered his senses a little, and they got him across first, the fellow with the dislocated shoulder following him.

"This is going to delay us," growled the leader. "We've got to get another car, and we've got to cross the frontier unseen. Keep together and watch that boy."

They set off, walking as swiftly as injuries permitted, and gradually the air grew warmer, the country less formidable and gaunt.

They happened at last on a small wooden house by the wayside and the leader said: "We'll shelter here for the night. Obey me in everything."

He walked to the door of the little house and they all followed him.

A Strange Meeting.

THE little house was a poor place. A man lived there alone. He was an elderly man and, at first sight, Billy took an intense dislike to him: He had a sly, saturnine face, and though he listened with some politeness to their story of the car wreck, Billy could see he reserved his own opinions.

In the room on his ground floor he had an enormous wood fire blazing, and he made them all some coffee, which they drank gratefully. It seemed that they were many miles from any town where they might

hope to get a car, but in the morning he could promise them a cart ride which would bring them, late the next afternoon, to a place of some size. A big place, he said, with about two thousand inhabitants.

They were, Billy knew, on the borderline of the great Lithkranian Empire, running near to the Italian frontier, with Austria not far off.

They all slept in one room upstairs. Halfway through the night Billy awoke. The leader was sitting fully dressed in a chair, his gun on his knee. He was taking no chances. Billy was a little frightened by this; but he soon went to sleep again, though his sleep was disturbed by the mutterings of the chauffeur, who was in a rather bad way and needed medical attention. A bit of rough surgery had put the other injured man's shoulder into place, and it was now tightly bound up, with his arm strapped to him. It would heal in time.

When Billy woke up the sun was glorious above the mountains, glinting on the aloof white peaks, and shedding golden light across the rich lowlands.

Their host had got out his cart. With some difficulty they hoisted the chauffeur into it and started off.

It was a long, fretful journey. The horse ambled and stopped, walked, trotted occasionally, had to be watered and fed once. They drank bitter red wine and ate black bread and mountain cheese, while the day wore away.

Billy thought to himself that Fritz would soon receive his letter, and, unless he were mistaken in that solid person, would come roaring south on one of the great transcontinental trains, Venice bound. The delay was all in Billy's favour.

They were in sight of a town at last, nestling under the foothills of the further mountain range—a picturesque little place of red-roofs and quaint gables, with a tall wooden church steeple reared above the mass.

The leader stopped the cart. Their driver need come no further. He handed the man a sum of money which opened his eyes and brought profuse thanks to his lips, and then he dismissed him and told his companions to wait with Billy while he went on to the town.

They stayed comfortably in the shade of some trees, while the cart ambled back on its way, the old horse plodding along slowly; and time went past. Two hours had gone when the leader reappeared. He was seated on the high seat of a Ford of ancient vintage, one of those epicyclic gear Fords which are now no longer made. He explained that it had taken him all his time to get its owner to sell it, and he had paid as much for it as a decent class saloon would have cost in England. They tumbled into its ancient open body and off they went, rattling through the darkness, while the chauffeur dozed in the rear seat.

How that old Ford gallantly climbed the precipitous roads beyond the village, how it boiled over and had to be cooled and refilled with water from running streams, and how, like all its kind, it just kept going, there is no space to tell here; but at long last it brought them over the shoulder of the mountains and within sight of the lights of a big town.

They were tired out, cold once more from their mountain ride, and only too thankful when their tenacious steed creaked and rattled into the stone-paved roadways of a stone-housed town and pulled up before a building marked "hotel."

They went into the big, panelled room of the hotel and a man sitting by the fire stood up to make room for them.

The man was Mr. Brame Sentence.

The Smuggler's Secret.

HE took no notice whatsoever of Billy, while Billy, who was absolutely staggered to see him, tried hard not to stare. Before the boy recovered, Mr. Sentence walked out of the room.

The leader was just reaching for Billy's arm, to draw him to the fire, when Billy thought he saw a chance of escape. He made a dash for the door and the trail of Mr. Sentence. Instantly the leader and the uninjured man came after him. He found himself in the outer hall. Mr. Sentence had ascended the stairs from this hall to the gallery across the top, and Billy went pounding after him.

Even then he kept his head, for the only thing he cried out was: "Sir! Excuse me, sir!" As though Mr. Sentence were a stranger to him.

Mr. Sentence turned and screwed his monocle into his eye and surveyed him as though he were a strange animal.

"Stop that boy," the leader cried. "He's a runaway. I'm an officer of police!"

"Certainly, dear chappie!" Mr. Sentence made a wild grab at Billy. The boy dodged and he saw hanging from the mid-roof of the hall was a great, old chandelier no longer used.

Billy took a running jump off the gallery, grabbed the chandelier, swung on it like a pendulum, and landed on the far side of the floor near the door. It was all done so swiftly that he gained yards and yards on his pursuers.

He tore out through the doorway into the dark and silent street—for it was now very early in the morning, long after midnight—and he began to run. The others were after him.

He reached a cross street. An open car was coming along it, with two men sitting forward, and something stacked in the back. The car was running fairly fast.

Billy took a running jump, landed on its footboard, and elung to its side.

The men turned and stared. He thought the fellow beside the driver would knock him off; but he did no such thing. He grabbed him and dragged him helter-skelter on board, while the car accelerated and roared on its way.

It was when they had climbed into the southern hills, when they swung off on a track and pulled up in a great clearing amid dark trees, a clearing where an immense fire roared and a number of men were gathered, that Billy understood. He had fallen into the hands of a gang of frontier smugglers.

He was dragged before a big, swart man sitting by the great fire. The man wore the picturesque clothing of Lithkrania, with a little felt hat in which was a gay feather.

As Billy came full into the glare of the fire, the Lithkranian started. With mouth gaping, he stared at Billy—stared as though he were seeing a ghost.

"You!" he gasped in English. "The Rat Trap... like a rat in a trap... you are the..." he stopped suddenly.

Once again Billy was hearing those strange words. Like a rat in a trap... What did it all mean? Who was the man in the Rat Trap? What mystery lay behind the Rat Trap?

The swarthy Lithkranian leaned forward, his eyes gleaming.

"What's your game? What do you know of the Rat Trap?" he snarled fiercely.

Then Billy made his great mistake. "I have heard of the Rat Trap," he said truthfully. "But I don't know anything about it. I've been trying to find out what it all means. I—"

"You're lying," interrupted the smuggler. "A

(continued on page 32.)

BOOTS & BLACKING.

The Comical Kid Globe-Trotters.
No. 1 · In a Stew!



Boots and Blacking, our comical kid globe-trotters, were one day shipwrecked on a South Seas island. Unfortunately, before they could make any inquiries about the inhabitants, they fell into the hands of a native.



The black, grinning broadly the whole time, tied Boots and Blacking up and led them before the chief. "Ho, ho!" boomed that individual. "Take dem to de stew-pot." And he licked his lips in anticipation.



Into the pot Boots and Blacking were popped. They had certainly landed in a warm spot this time. "You make velly good stew," said the cook, appraising them with a professional air, and added a pinch of salt.



While he went off to get a little spice for flavouring, a great python, attracted by the appetising odour of our stewing globe-trotters, poked his head down from an overhanging tree, and sniffed appreciatively.



The python came lower to have a taste of the stew. "Come on!" cried Boots. "Follow me, Blacking!" and, using the snake as a rope, he climbed hastily into the tree above. His pal followed quite as hastily.



Hidden by the luxurious foliage, Boots and Blacking saw the cook return. "Goity!" he gasped, his eyes nearly popping from his head, and turned and fled, leaving our globe-trotters to make their escape.

new kind of spy, eh? I'll soon find out what your game is."

The swart face creased in a sinister grin. A big hand on which a gold ring gleamed, was lifted, and guttural words were uttered sharply.

Two men seized Billy, and one of them held a coil of rope. They dragged him beneath a great tree near where the cars were parked, and the rope was thrown over one of the tree's lower branches and made into a noose at one end.

The noose was put round Billy's neck and the rope was then hauled on until he was actually standing on the balls of his feet, his heels off the ground, in order to keep his weight from his neck. Then the rope was made fast.

The leader spoke curtly. "When your ankles are giving way call out. But only if you intend to tell the truth." He walked off and joined the others at the fire.

So there was Billy, the rope strained above him, the noose hooked round his throat, a running slip-knot which would tighten terribly once his strained feet gave way beneath him.

The men were arguing fiercely. Plainly they had all met together—the various little bands of them—to settle some dispute. Billy stood for as long as he could, the rope tightening slightly, his legs feeling ready to burst. Then he took a chance.

He slid his right hand upwards and got hold of the rope above the noose, at the same time grabbing the knot of the noose with his left hand and sliding it up the rope, so that the noose slackened and he was able to whip his head out of it.

He was free—but soon. There was a shout and the party at the fireside broke up. He turned and bolted, and almost cannoned into the car which had brought him to the spot. He tumbled into it and desperately fingered the switch he had seen the driver use.

A job at the starter and the warm engine was instantly roaring with life.

He slammed the gear lever home. The car jolted backwards. He had put her into reverse. He pushed the lever forward. She took it, though she was in third; and she roared away as guns boomed and the forest awoke with thunderous and terrible echoes.

The car simply leapt like a living thing at the men who tried to cut her off, scattering them all ways, so that Billy had a clear run to the track that wound amid the trees.

SINK THE OLE LUGGER!

(Continued from page 26.)

on that depended the safety of the ship. For half-an-hour it went on, and then at last, with a look of infinite relief the Cap'n pronounced the ship safe.

At that moment Mister Hettup, the mate, emerged on deck, gave a yawn and stretched himself.

"Hello!" he said, surveying the drenched deck. "Looks as though it's been raining pretty bad!" That was a good idea, Cap'n, sleepin' in the coal bunker. D'you know I never heard a sound! Slept like a top I did!"

Hettup's clothes were as dry as toast!

"You guys look pretty done up! There ain't nuth'n happened I s'pose!"

"He ain't noticed nothin'!" said Slim Small with a gasp. "Sink the ole lugger! He—"

The whole crew turned and glared at Slim.

"Don't you never use that expression never no more!" roared Fat Burns. "It ain't good taste, it ain't!"

Tommy Pink, the Chem-Mystic Kid, comes up against his Synthetic Twin next week. The result will send you into roars of laughter. Look for the title, "Tommy's Terrible Twin."

His driving was not good, but somehow he managed to get that great, powerful car through the swinging track towards the road.

His windshield splintered under a bullet's impact. His rear mirror told him two cars were starting in pursuit. He reached the road and turned right—heading south, giving her all the throttle he dared.

The pursuit was hot and strong, and he knew he now had no chance of outdistancing it. He dared not drive as fast as the men behind him, and his one chance was to get rid of the car and hide amid the hills.

He chose a spot where the road swung across a low bridge above a placid stream which began life as a mountain torrent thousands of feet up.

He braked heavily. The car almost stopped, while he flung the throttle open and jumped.

His jump landed him in some bushes, while the car, its footbrake released and its throttle pulled wide, crashed into the stone parapet of the bridge and sliced over into the stream.

Billy scuttled through the bush and trees into the hills, and, looking back, saw that the pursuing cars had stopped. He began to run, ducking and twisting, keeping out of sight and hoping they had lost all trace of him.

This proved to be a fact. An hour later, almost dead-beat, weary to death for want of sleep, he was assured that no pursuit was possible. The sun was now warm, and he crawled into a crevice between two rocks and slept. He woke some hours later, refreshed and mightily hungry. A wash in a clear hill-stream, from which he also drank, put him into some kind of fettle, and he began to tramp in what he concluded to be a southerly direction, judging from the sun's position.

He decided he would try to get to Venice. He still had his passport and money. Unless he were mistaken in the man, Fritz would go there, and he guessed that the Palazzo Marani on the Grand Canal was one of the knots in the strange web of circumstance in which he was enmeshed.

He now had no delusions regarding his own position in the game. He was of some importance, Mr. Brame Sentence had not selected him—as he had said—because he was sharp and resourceful. Mr. Sentence was not that kind of man. He had picked Billy because Billy was one of the keys to the mystery—though what kind of key Billy could not now guess.

He trudged on and came to a town. From there he took a branch line, which bored through the big mountains, stopped at a frontier station, and emerged at last on the Lombardy plain.

They pulled up at Milan, and Billy slept there that night and viewed the city the following day. In the afternoon the nine o'clock express from the Gare Lazare in Paris checked in its tireless stride to Trieste and the Near East.

Billy boarded the Venice portion. He was fed, bathed and had bought some new clothing. He felt fit and ready for anything.

At last he saw long lines of lights. The train was travelling over a mighty bridge. It ran to a standstill in a noisy station, and Billy passed the barrier.

He stood on the top of the usual steps one finds at great railway termini; but below him was no roaring main street, but a wide waterway on which gondolas floated—the Grand Canal.

He was in Venice, on the edge of the mystery surrounding the Palazzo Marani.

What danger does Venice hold in store for Billy? What mystery will it unfold? You simply must not miss next week's astounding episodes.

THE MIRACLE FOOTBALLERS | IN THE CLUTCHES OF PROFESSOR ZORRO! | THRILLS OF SCIENCE AND ON THE GREEN ARENA.



Trapped in the Tower.

PROFESSOR MORTIMER ZORRO, archaeologist and crook, was at work. Seldom had a man employed himself so strangely.

The Professor, his vulture-like form encased in a suit of hardened, unsplinterable glass, was crouching low in a rock tunnel. He had no lamp, for from the rock itself, came a dazzling display of light, flashing in all colours. This narrow tunnel was far beneath the Crater—the famous stadium of Welham Wanderers. Long, long years earlier, a great meteorite had fallen from outer space and had buried itself on this part of Lord Welham's estate in Derbyshire.

Far below the surface, unknown to all but one or two men, some marvellous metallic deposits existed—unlike anything on earth. Lord Welham, who was a scientist, knew that this extraordinary metal was akin to radium, and he had called it meteoradium. Its properties were stupendous, and even Lord Welham was only in the early stages of his experiments.

Zorro, evil and sinister, had determined to put the meteoradium to crooked purposes—and his main purpose, just now, was to rid himself of Lord Welham and his twelve adopted sons—those sons, who, by their brilliant prowess at football, had become famous throughout the country as "The Miracle Boys." It was a well-deserved title, for had they not swept clean through the English Cup Competition to the very final?

They had won their way to Wembley in spite of the evil plotting of Professor Zorro; and here was Zorro now, bent upon further mischief. His glass suit was jointed, so that he could move with comparative ease; his head was encased in a globe, and even his hands were protected in the same way.

He was obtaining a supply of meteoradium, picking the dazzling fragments from the meteoric ore. The glass acted as a perfect insulator, and the Professor

was safe. Without the glass he would not have lived ten seconds. For meteoradium was deadly beyond imagination.

Zorro chuckled as he worked; his store grew, and he was placing it in a square glass container, the front of which was provided with a sliding door. At last, after hours of patient work, he had accomplished his task, and he crept away, gloating.

* * * * *

"**C**OME on, the Tin-Can Trojans!"

Crowds of football enthusiasts from Welham Town were pouring into the Crater. It was the next afternoon, and the "Miracle Boys" were playing Danchester City. It was an important match for the Midlands, for Danchester was a big town not twenty miles away, and a large multitude of the City's supporters had come over to encourage their favourites.

Ajax, the Mighty—the sturdy, muscular captain of Welham Wanderers—came out of the dressing-room with his team, and at the sight of the famous boys, the crowds sent up a great cheer of welcome.

"We mustn't take things too easily, chaps," said Ajax, as a word of warning. "Danchester City are near the top of the table—and the team are as hot as mustard."

"Don't you worry, Ajax, old son," said Eos, the goalie. "We'll pull through all right."

And Boreas, Eurus, Perseus, and the other members of the team echoed his words.

Lord Welham, the guardian of these wonder boys, smiled encouragingly as the boys went out. He had come down from Welham Priors, near by, to see the beginning of the match.

"Play your usual game, my boys, and you will come out on top," he said. "You have pleased me very much—"

He broke off, frowning. Ajax, turning sharply, frowned too. For Professor Mortimer Zorro, with a disarming smile on his gaunt face, was approaching.

"Have you come to watch the match, Professor?" asked Ajax bluntly.

"Tut-tut! Don't glare at me, boy," said the Professor with a shrug. "No! I have come to give your guardian a word of warning."

"Any such word from you, Professor Zorro, will be a waste of breath," said Lord Welham curtly.

Zorro looked him straight in the eye.

"It is a pity—a great pity," he said, with a sigh.

"You are a scientist, Lord Welham, and you know the immense—the stupendous—secret which lies beneath the ground on which we stand. I have been making some wonderful experiments. And I am warning you now, just as I am warning these boys, that this had better be their last game on this ground. I am determined—"

"Your impudence is only excelled by your arrogance," interrupted Lord Welham. "So you have come out into the open, Professor? I will give you one minute to get off this property. Ajax, will you and the others escort the Professor to the nearest exit?"

"Will we?" grinned Ajax. "Watch us, Chief!"

And Professor Zorro, snarling under his breath, took his departure before the Miracle Boys could lay their eager hands upon him.

* * * * *

"GOAL! Well done, Argus!"

The game was five minutes old, and Argus, with that brilliance which was so dazzling to watch, had beaten opponent after opponent, making rings round them, almost, and finally streaking for goal, and sending in a cannon-ball shot which had given the custodian no chance.

Ajax and his men were playing with superb skill to-day; for not only had they Wembley in their minds' eye, but they felt safe from any evil attempt by Zorro to wreck their game. For many precautions had been taken. Openings in the rock had been blocked up, and, in various parts of the natural stadium, special guards were on duty.

Danchester City, shaken, nevertheless proved game. They were brilliant professionals and of sterling grit. They rallied magnificently, and sweeping through the home team's defence, they stormed the goal.

Slam! A shot went in which Eos saved with all his customary skill. The leather came back to the left wing; it was returned smartly by one of the City halves, and like a shot a forward snapped upon it, and got the ball past Eos while he was hopelessly out of position.

"Goal!"

"Well done, City!"

So the game went on, the Trojans finding that they had no easy task. But with Ajax at the helm, cool, resourceful, quick to seize upon any opportunity, the "Giant Killers" swept on to victory. At half-time they were leading by the odd goal in three.

In the opening stages of the second half, Danchester City made a superb effort to equalise. The game developed into a titanic struggle, and football of the highest order was witnessed by the tens of thousands of spectators. The City centre-forward, by dint of his brainy play, broke clean through, and his shot would have defeated any goalkeeper in England—except Eos. He leapt when it seemed hopeless. By supreme skill he reached the leather, and he tipped it over the bar.

Then followed a corner kick, and once again the Trojans' goal seemed in danger. But Eos cleared, Ajax swept the leather down to midfield, and the pressure was relieved. Within two minutes, the ball was trapped by Nike, the outside left, and down the touchline he sped like a streak of lightning. He centred, a mighty roar went up, and Argus, as lithe as a panther, dashed in.

"Goal!"

It was the end of the City's hopes. After that they battled grimly but despairingly. The game ended in another victory for Lord Welham's "Orphans." The crowds poured off well satisfied with their money's worth.

The Crater was situated a mile or two outside the town, and it was, indeed, lonely in this hilly, wooded spot. Within twenty minutes the last of the spectators had gone, and the contrast was astonishing.

The Crater was utterly deserted. Not even an attendant remained. The Danchester City players had gone off home in their own motor-bus, and Ajax and his men were in sole possession of the arena.

Hesperus, happening to stroll out before any of the others, stared hard across the trees; his face flushed and in a moment he had turned, and was dashing back.

"Ajax! Argus! Eos!" he yelled. "Quick! There's something wrong at home!"

The other young footballers came crowding out.

"Look!" gasped Hesperus.

Beyond the trees a column of ominous smoke was arising—and the boys knew that the only building in that direction was Welham Priors. They did not know that one of Zorro's men was watching from behind the rocks on the other side of the arena.

"Come on! We'd better see what's wrong!" shouted Ajax.

"But it may be only a bonfire," protested Zephyrus.

"Can't help that—we've got to make sure," retorted Ajax.

They went dashing out of the Crater and across the parkland. And no sooner had they skirted the belt of trees which hid the old mansion from view, than cries of consternation escaped them.

For the great central tower of Welham Priors was belching with flames! The flames, lurid and ominous, were pouring out of every narrow window. Ajax caught his breath in fiery.

"Zorro!" he exclaimed fiercely. "The brute! The destructive scoundrel!"

"Look!" yelled Eos, in sudden horror.

At the very top of the tower there was a flagstaff; a wave of smoke swept aside, and the boys could see. Bound securely to the flagstaff was Lord Welham himself! There were no servants at the Priors, and if the boys had not come . . .

"Come on! We might be able to save him!" shouted Ajax.

Wild with excitement and fury, the Miracle Boys dashed for the door of the tower—which stood wide open. In their excitement they saw nothing suspicious in that circumstance. It was natural, too, that nobody else should have seen the fire, for the old house was surrounded by trees, and was quite invisible from any road.

The boys poured through the great doorway, and as the last one entered two men leapt from near-by bushes. They slammed the door and placed a great timber against it.

It was a trap!

Ajax and his "brothers" found this out within a minute. The fire was a fake—for each window was supplied with a simple apparatus which shot lurid flames outwards, whilst doing no actual damage. Even Lord Welham was in no danger. He had been made a prisoner—and placed up there, at the tower's top, so that he would act as a lure for his boys.

"Excellent!" gloated Professor Zorro, leaning at the Miracle Boys, who were all held securely. "Yes, I have come right out into the open—and to-night I am going to take positive action. I am tired of delay."

He laughed as though at some hidden joke, and there was a ring of untold menace in that laugh.

The Glass Case of Death.

DARKNESS fell, and the night was unusually black, for there was no moon, and the stars were obscured by heavy clouds.

A strange procession moved across the Welham Priors estate. It was composed of thirteen prisoners, all handcuffed, all gagged, and roped together like a chain-gang. Lord Welham himself was at the head, and his twelve adopted sons followed. Professor Zorro walked at the head of the procession, and his Grey Men—so called because of their skin-tight grey costumes—formed the escort.

Right across the estate they went, avoiding foot-paths and highways. And at length they reached a dark, gloomy house, well hidden among trees. It was Gaunt Grange, the home of Professor Zorro.

Through a great doorway the prisoners were led:

Within it glowed a dazzling fire, which sent out sparks and flames of every conceivable colour. At the sight of it, Lord Welham exclaimed in amazement, for his gag had been removed.

"Meteoradium!" he gasped.

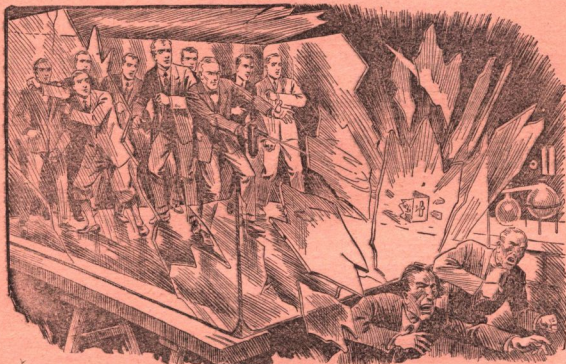
"Exactly!" purred Professor Zorro. "In that glass container there is enough meteoradium to kill every inhabitant of the British Isles! But we are safe—for glass is the perfect insulator of meteoradium."

By this time the boys had had their gags removed, and they were placed in a long line, side by side—and closely guarded. Their manacles were not taken off.

"I'm going to show you an interesting experiment," continued Professor Zorro. "I think it will interest you—for it is one of the marvels of the age."

He motioned to his men, and one side of the great glass case was swung open like a door. That door, when closed, was hermetically sealed.

To the amazement of the prisoners, Zorro's men



CRASH GAS.—There came a terrific explosion as the hissing spurt of gas from Lord Welham's machine met the vanishing rays. The glass sides of the chamber of death went hurtling in ruin.

and then down dark, stone-flagged passages—right down into the vast basement.

The eyes of the boys opened in wonder. For this cold, damp cellar had been transformed into the Professor's secret laboratory—the place where he conducted his experiments.

Electric lights glowed from the ceiling; there were benches containing wonderful scientific instruments; shelves packed with chemical bottles, test-tubes and retorts.

But the boys scarcely saw anything of this; their whole attention was attracted by the astonishing object in the very centre of the laboratory. It was a great glass case, standing on a number of wooden trestles, clear of the floor. The glass case was about twelve feet square and six feet in height, and walls, floor and ceiling were composed of great sheets of plate glass—special hardened unsplinterable glass. Attached to the rear "wall" was a protuberance of glass—a kind of stuck-on glass case in miniature.

now proceeded to carry a table into that glass "room"; chairs followed, and then a big retriever dog was tied to a table leg. Finally, a well-nourished goat was carried, struggling, into the "room," and Zorro gave the word for the door to be closed.

"No doubt you have observed the transparent container in which the meteoradium stands," said Professor Zorro, softly. "The meteoradium cannot now affect the contents of the glass case; but when I pull this string, a glass panel is pulled aside, allowing the meteoradium rays to enter in full strength. Watch! The results should provide you with entertainment."

As he spoke he pulled on a cord, and Lord Welham and the boys saw a small glass panel slide back, thus making the great glass "room" and the miniature glass case, as it were, into one. Nothing happened. The meteoradium continued to send forth its bewildering coloured rays, and the dog and the goat continued to eye one another in the same manner.

"What devilry is this?" asked Lord Welham.

"Wait, my lord—wait!" purred Zorro.

Impressed by his tone, they stared at the great glass case. Was it imagination, or were the contents of the glass case fading? They no longer seemed solid; they were assuming an extraordinary transparency. Dog, goat, table, chairs—everything was slowly but surely becoming invisible!

"It's impossible!" panted Eos. "What—what is happening to them?"

Within those last few seconds the process had quickened; the objects within the glass faded more rapidly.

"Poof! They are gone!" said Zorro, gleatingly. It was a fact. The glass case was empty! Everything which it had contained had disappeared as though into thin air.

"You have seen the effect of meteoradium upon earthly matter!" said the professor. "The things you saw within the glass case have not merely become invisible; they had gone for ever. Look!"

He had closed the panel by now, and at a word from him, his men opened the great door. Zorro himself stepped into the glass case, and walked about, proving that the space was free of any obstruction.

"Do you understand?" he goated. "The things you saw have gone—they have been converted into millions and billions and trillions of invisible atoms. Meteoradium has the power of disintegrating—"

"But—but what does all this mean?" demanded Lord Welham, hoarsely. "You have not shown us this experiment without an object, Zorro."

"No!" thundered Zorro. "My object is clear! You and your boys are going into this case now! Do you understand?"

The Miracle Boys were aghast with unutterable horror.

"Ah! You have gathered what is to become of you?" laughed the professor. "What happened to the furniture and the dog and the goat will now happen to you! Thus I shall be rid of you all, and the world will never know how you vanished! For there will be no trace, Nothing! With this power in my possession, I can become the conqueror of the entire world! You and your boys, Welham, shall be the first to taste my power! In with them!" he added, turning to his men.

One by one, the prisoners were thrust into the glass case—and before being put in, their manacles were removed. Zorro had a fancy to see them fighting madly to escape—to see them beating upon the toughened glass.

At last they were all in—and the door was hermetically sealed. There they stood within the case, gazing out upon the gloating Zorro.

"Courage, boys!" said Lord Welham, quietly. Ajax and the other boys squared their shoulders. They would never let Zorro see a trace of cowardice.

But only Lord Welham had any hope. He was amazed that he had not been searched, for in one of his pockets he carried a little scientific instrument of his own invention. He had made a gas which, he believed, was capable of combating, if not nullifying, the effects of the meteoradium rays which reduced solid matter to invisible atoms.

"Get ready!" came a muffled shout from Professor Mortimer Zorro.

Click! The glass panel slid aside, and the boys stared fascinatedly at the dazzling meteoradium. They were exposed to it now, yet they felt no change.

"It is our only chance!" cried Lord Welham. He whisked the little instrument from his pocket. He did not know what the effect would be, but this was no moment for conjecture. He pressed a catch, and a hissing spurt of gas leapt across the glass chamber at the meteoradium.

Booooooom—craaaaanash! The gas, meeting the meteoradium rays, caused a terrific explosion.

They found themselves sprawling on the floor, amongst the trestles.

All round them lay Professor Zorro and his men—none of them seriously hurt, but all stunned by the force of the explosion.

"We're alive!" gasped Ajax.

"Come! We must get out of here," panted Lord Welham.

They did not remember how they escaped, but escape they did. Out in the windy night they recovered completely, and they returned to Welham Priors.

Once again they had defeated Professor Zorro; but they had by no means destroyed all the evil contrivances he had at his command.

Make sure you secure a copy of the Big Thrill Library free with next week's Mag. It contains an eerie, double-length mystery yarn and useful information for amateur sleuths.

500 UNSORTED STAMPS, 6d.—WAY, Wilmslow, Cheshire.

10 POLAND STAMPS FREE.—Send for farthing approvals.—WEBB, 67, Amherst-road, Hastings.

HEIGHT INCREASE GUARANTEED, 14 days or money back. Booklet free.—STEBBING, 28, Dean-road, London, N.W.2.

100 DIFFERENT STAMPS FREE.—Send for 1/2d. approvals. Letters only.—COX, 3, Mornington Mansions, Westcliff-on-Sea.

BLUSHING, NERVOUSNESS, SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS cured, or money returned. Booklet free, privately.—STEBBING TREATMENT, 28, Dean-road, London, N.W.2.

FOOTBALL FREE.—A size 5 Football given away absolutely free to boys. For full particulars please enclose addressed envelope.—E. EVANS & CO., 5, Sea-view, Holywell, Flintshire.

WONDER 100 DIFFERENT STAMPS FREE, including Newfoundland, Angola, Air Stamps, Siam, China. To applicants for famous 1/2d. stamps. Without approvals, 6d.—FLEMING, Christleton-road, Chester.

STAMP COLLECTORS' OUTFIT FREE.—Watermark Detector, Duplicate Album, Perforation Gauge, 100 Stamp Mounts; also the Liberia Packet of 51 different Stamps, which includes the beautiful engraved view of the Liberian Coast (the famous Negro Republic). Send 2d. stamps for packing (overseas 4d.).—R. B. WILKINSON, 25, Lawson, Colwyn Bay.

FUNNY RIPPING JOKES.—Sneezing Roses, 9d.; Performing Pigs, 6d.; Electric Snuff 1/1; Puzzle Cigarette Case 1/2; Tricky Squinting Kiteaerograph, 1/2; Ventriloquist Voice Instrument, 1/1; Squinting Flower Buttonhole, 1/2; Explosive Cigarettes, 1/2, etc. Assorted boxes, 2/6. Catalogue free.—RUSSELL'S AGENCY, London, Wellington, Salop.

BALLOON PACKET FREE.—Actually contains fine copy of the beautiful stamp issued to commemorate Picardi's world's record ascent of 10 miles into the air, and shows the balloon ascending. Over 55 different, including Uruguay, Nigeria, Charkari, etc. Send immediately as this Balloon Stamp is now obsolete, and will become rare. 2d. postage requesting approvals.—LISBURN & TOWNSEND (Dept. B.M.), Liverpool.

DISARMAMENT PACKET & STAMP OUTFIT FREE!—Over 60 different stamps. Greece (liner), F.M.S., Epirus, Wallis Isles, U.S.A. (Columbus), Roumania (Boy King), Venezuela; also Perforation Gauge, Mounts, Transparent Envelopes, Watermark Detector, Duplicate Album and scarce Geneva Conference Commemorative. Finally, packet 50 different stamps. ALL FREE. Request approvals. Postage 2d.—SHOWELL BROS. (B.M. 15), 42, Vanbrugh Hill, London, S.E.3.