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# Boys' 2D Magazine

EVERY SATURDAY



**THE WEREWOLF OF BLACKSTON HALL—Appears Within**

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BY CANADIAN MAGAZINE POST.



# THE JESTER'S REALM



**Policeman:** Hey! Didn't you see that notice "Road Closed?"  
**Cyclist:** Yes, blow it! And I found it wide open!

(Football to JAMES ETCHELLS, Booth Farm, Kinder, Hayfield, Derbyshire.)

## HIS PICK A SHOVEL.

Two workmen were looking into a jeweller's window, where large quantities of gold sovereigns were being displayed.

"How'd you like to have your pick there?" asked Bill.

"I'd rather have my shovel," replied Alf promptly.  
 (Fountain pen to C. TREBILCOCK, St. Dennis, St. Anstell.)

## TO HIS TASTE.

**SHOEMAKER:** Here are the shoes for your new polar expedition. Were you satisfied with the boots I made for the last trip?

**EXPLORER:** Quite! They were the best boots I ever ate on a polar expedition!

(Fountain pen to ANTHONY SMITH, 93, Baird's Rows, Blantyre, Lanarkshire.)

## JOKE COUPON.

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

15/4/33.

## BORROWED.

**BOSS:** Where is your hat?

**OFFICE BOY:** On my head!

**BOSS:** But where ought it to be?

**OFFICE BOY:** On father's.

(Fountain pen to ALFRED WAY, 53, Cropley Street, Hoxton, London, N.1.)

## FIVE AND FIVE.

**TEACHER:** Johnny, what do six and four equal?

**JOHNNY:** Eleven!

**TEACHER:** No! Try again!

**JOHNNY:** Twelve!

**TEACHER:** No! Why don't you try ten?

**JOHNNY:** Oh, that isn't right. Five and five are ten!

(Fountain pen to DOUGLAS SMALLCOMBE, 33, Frant Road, Tunbridge Wells, Sussex.)

## A GOOD TURN-OUT.

"Why have you come home in the middle of the term, my lad?" stormed the angry father. "And how dare you tell me you don't like your school! Why, that school has turned out some of the most brilliant men in the country!"

"Very likely, Father," replied the young hopeful. "They've turned me out, too."

(Fountain pen to LESLIE BURKE, 99, St. Leonards Road, Windsor, Bucks.)

## HIS MEMORY.

**TEACHER:** What was George Washington noted for?

**JAMES:** His memory!

**TEACHER:** What makes you think his memory was so great?

**JAMES:** Well, they erected a monument to it!

(Fountain pen to E. SNOOK, Wrington Cottages, Tockington, near Bristol.)



**Mike:** Why aren't you on the diet the doctor ordered, Pat?

**Pat:** Faith, oi don't mean to starve meself to death just for the sake of living a little longer!

(Football to STANLEY BARTHOLOMEW, 8, McCleary Street, Pendleton, Salford, Lancs.)



(With which is incorporated "Pals.")

ZZZZZZZZRRRRMP! ZOOOOM! TAILS-UP DRAKE AND BONEHEAD MURPHY IN ANOTHER DAREDEVIL AERIAL EXPLOIT. WHITE-HOT FLYING THRILLS.

# The ARGOSY of the CLOUDS



### Mystery Messages.

"WHAT do you make of it, Sparks?"

In the low-roofed room of ebony switch-boards and gleaming valves, Squadron-Leader Geoffrey Drake stood watching impatiently as the wireless officer's practised hands moved over the tuners.

The glinting needles behind the glass dials of the wireless direction finder, flickered erratically—the remarkable radio apparatus that could locate an aeroplane and determine its exact position, though it were several thousand feet in the air and a hundred or more miles away.

But to-night the sensitive apparatus could forge no invisible link between the aerodrome wireless station and the mystery aircraft that was sending out code signals. For the last hour the two officers had been striving to trace the source of those signals.

**Crash Tactics Against a Dreadnought of the Air. The Film Plotter's Latest Attempt to Smash England from the Skies!**

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



"It's no good, sir," the junior officer rapped out impatiently. "The signals are strong enough to be comparatively near, yet it is impossible to locate them. We're up against something queer. For the first time in my experience, the direction finder is behaving as if those signals are coming from some blind spot it cannot probe."

Drake's lips compressed. The wireless officer's failure only strengthened his suspicion, that those indecipherable code messages were being flashed through the ether by the criminal organisation that was threatening Britain's Air Power.

Tails-Up Drake, acting under secret orders, was fighting a mystery menace, that had spread its sinister wings over Britain.

Phillip Garson—alias Red Garson, a dangerous emissary of a hostile organisation in Bolshevik Asia—was plotting to destroy Britain's Air Power, masking his treachery behind the apparently peaceful project of producing a great film of the activities of the Royal Air Force.

Drake's orders were to trace the peril to its source, that the real menace behind it, and the ringleaders, might be discovered.

Drake turned impatiently to the door.

"If there's anything to report, Sparks, I'll be out on the Control Tower."

A few minutes later Tails-Up Drake was swinging lithely up the metal ladder to the curved balcony of the great aerodrome lighthouse.

The young Squadron-Leader leant against the high rail, an alert, watchful figure, as his gaze followed the silver path of the floodlights.

Garson was filming some night flying scenes to-night and Drake was keyed up for danger. Out on the aerodrome he could see the circle of cameras, the squat lorries with the trailing cables of the sound picture apparatus. It all seemed peaceful . . . and yet . . .

Drake's senses reared in sudden warning. Faintly, yet vibrating a grim chord of memory in his brain, the throb of an engine drifted through the darkness.

The young airman jerked back his head, his narrowed eyes raking the shroud of darkness veiling the distant headland.

That distinctive engine note had been impressed on his memory in those moments of peril when he had discovered Garson's secret brood of aircraft, massing in the catacombs in the cliffs.

Now, as his quick eyes discerned a shadow swiftly against the gloom of the cliff wall, he knew he was not mistaken. Turning swiftly he yanked over a switch sending the great searchlight beam probing through the darkness.

For a fleeting moment the giant finger of light revealed a swiftly climbing, black monoplane, streaking ribbons of flame from its exhausts. With sheer flashing speed, the mono wriggled clear of the searchlight beam and was lost. . . .

Drake drew an excited breath as he flung himself towards the steel ladder. One of Garson's hooded night marauders. He must lose no time in getting on its tracks.

Down on the tarmac, he raced to where the Hawker Hart's silver wings gleamed in the floodlights.

"Start her up, Murphy!" He jerked to the stocky, red-headed mechanic, who, with an aggrieved expression, ambled forward to swing the metal propeller.

"Faith, an' it is noight shift we're on again?" muttered Murphy with the melancholy that in reality hid a remarkably resourceful brain.

## The Mammoth of the Air.

DRAKE'S practised ears, rather than his eyes, detected his quarry as Tails-Up zoomed the roaring Hart up into the night at dizzy speed.

The faint throb of the hooded aircraft grew louder as the Squadron-Leader swung the biplane's quivering, silver nose in the direction of the sound. Like a fleeting shadow, he saw the black mono climbing at terrific speed, some hundred feet above him. Drake yanked open the throttle to its furthest notch, hanging grimly on to his quarry.

Up . . . up . . . the needle of the altimeter clicking past the thirty thousand feet mark.

Yelling to Murphy in the rear cockpit to do the same, Drake reached for the mouthpiece of the oxygen apparatus, and took a deep, revivifying breath. At that great height the air was becoming chokingly rarified and bitterly cold.

Still the hurtling machine climbed. Forty . . . forty-five thousand feet. Drake grew anxious. The Hart was faltering, its efficiency decreasing every moment.

Tails-Up groaned as he saw the black mono, evidently built for efficiency at great heights, disappear into a swirl of cloud. In a last desperate endeavour to keep up with his quarry, the Britisher grabbed the high-power super-charger control and yanked it out.

That fierce rush of power flogged the faltering engine into a last effort. The Hart shot up through the mist into an eerie, silent world above the clouds, where glittering frost gleamed on the planes, and only frequent gulps of oxygen kept the Britisher's senses from reeling.

"Begorra!" muttered Murphy. "An' it's frozen mutton that o'ill be intoirely. . . ."

His voice snapped off, silenced by an amazing sight, at which Tails-Up Drake was also staring.

As though suspended from the dark arch of the sky, a giant denizen of the air hung motionless in that dead world above the clouds. A monstrous amphibian of the skies, that was a staggering blend of airship and sky liner, embodying advanced aeronautical discoveries.

A nest of power engines were clustered beneath the long, belying, airship envelope. Fore and aft were great lifting planes, and between them and above the ballonettes were slender shafts, holding supporting helicopters. It was those whirling discs of silver that held the giant ship poised in that rarified atmosphere.

"Phwat do yer make av it, sorr?" gasped Murphy.

"Garson's flying G.H.Q.!" Drake snapped.

Suddenly the startling truth had flashed into his mind. That sky giant, skulking in the upper reaches, was directing Red Garson's criminal activities. No doubt, Drake decided swiftly, those code signals had been sent out from this flying monster. He knew now why the wireless direction finder had failed. At that height wireless waves were controlled by cosmic forces that the great Marconi himself was only just beginning to probe.

"Shure, an' it's the Flying Dutchman, sorr," moaned Murphy.

The silent monster had an eerie suggestion of ghostliness. But the sudden ribbon of flame spurting from the domed defence tower on the control platform above the great envelope and the clatter of a machine gun were real enough.

Drake groaned as he kicked over the rudder and yanked at the ailerons in a vain endeavour to escape that fusillade in a swift flick roll. The air was too thin for the plane surfaces to bite. Operating at such an altitude, that fortified flying monster was almost invulnerable from attack by modern aircraft.

But with sheer flying skill, Drake swung the



quivering, silver nose up towards the sky mammoth, and his twin Vickers sent a prolonged burst into the grey hull.

Scarcely had the echoes of the chattering guns died away, when a great grey shroud suddenly swept across Drake's straining vision—a smoke screen flung from the twin tubes beneath the amphibian.

At that moment, when the biplane's engine was lashed suddenly into new power by a burst from the superchargers, the Hart hurtled perilously forward through that blinding shroud.

Drake's senses suddenly reared in warning. He yanked back the stick as a huge dark shape loomed across the biplane's silver bows. The plane shot upwards, hung poised for a dizzy moment on its slots, and then sank slowly down in a stalled dive.

Surprisingly Drake heard the under-carriage buffers creaking. He pulled back the throttle, and, as the engine cut out, there was a sudden, eerie silence. The Hart lurched, rolled for a few moments with a sagging motion, then surprisingly stopped dead.

Through a rift in the swirling vapour, Drake glimpsed the great, curved walls of the amphibian's gasbag beneath the biplane's wings.

He chuckled grimly. He had landed on the super-crook's flying headquarters!

### The Master Mind.

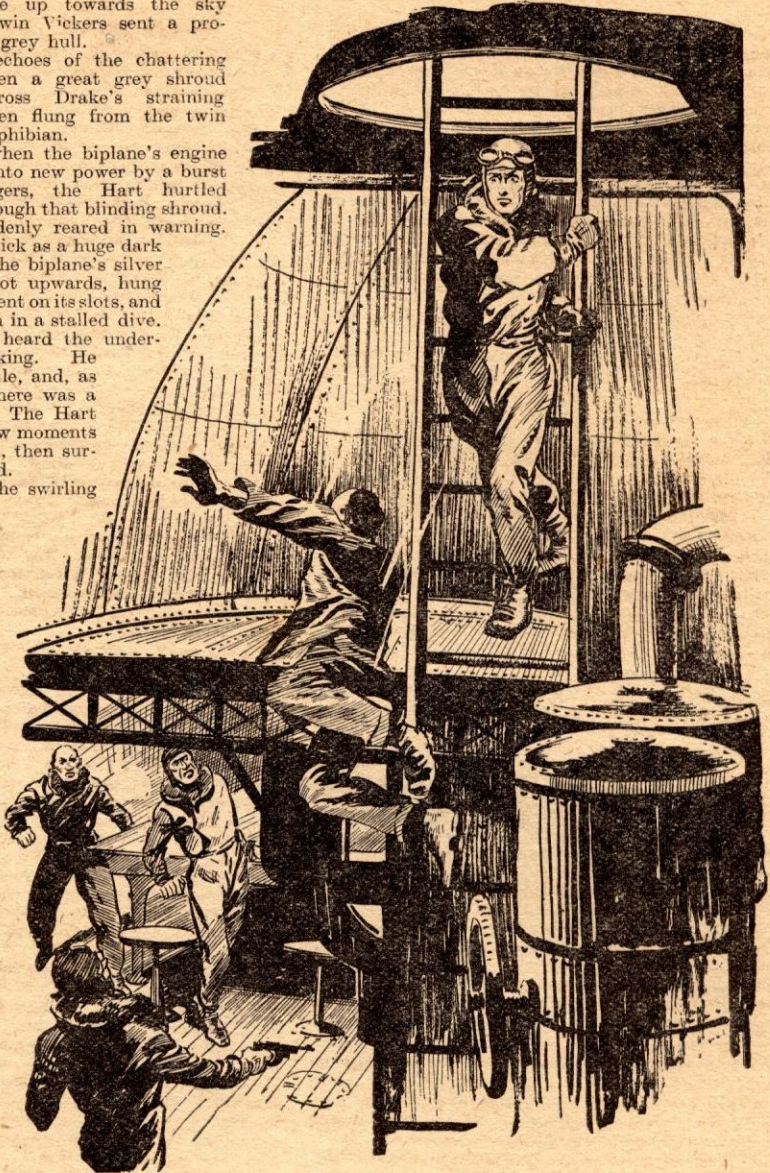
"SHURE Oi'll niver see owld Oire-land again, sorr," Murphy's doleful voice sounded eerily in that dark world.

"You certainly won't if that engine freezes up," Drake snapped. "Get out the inspection lamp and have a look round it. I'm going to investigate."

He had dropped on to the landing platform, his narrowed eyes raking the gloom. The smoke screen was clearing and sight of the domed defence tower, looming between the slender helicopter shafts, gave him his bearings.

That should provide a means of getting into the air giant, Drake decided. He loosened his revolver in its holster, and crept forward, his ears straining for sounds of alarm. His enemies evidently thought the smoke screen and the machine-gun bullets had driven him off, for nobody was about.

Yet he was up against unknown peril in that dead world miles above the earth, where only the crisp



SHOWDOWN IN THE SHAFT.—Drake's bunched knuckles crashed into the crook's jaw. He crumpled up and went thudding down among the enemy below.

crackle of icicles beneath his flying boots broke the eerie stillness.

The great, curved wall of the conning tower loomed through the darkness. Drake's hands moved guardedly over the ice-cold metal as he traversed the outer wall, seeking an entrance.

He found, at last, a short, metal ladder. He swung



himself on to the rungs and began to climb. That comparatively simple task demanded a surprising effort of will. His limbs were heavy, and that dull throbbing at his temples had commenced again. Both men and machines were at a disadvantage in that world of rarified air, the super-crooks had chosen so cunningly for their aerial lair.

Drake reached a narrow steel studded door. To his relief it swung back against the pressure of his shoulder. Noiselessly he slithered through the opening and lowered himself to the metal floor of the armoured conning tower. He slumped up against the wall, fighting against the faintness that again was stealing over him. But now each breath he took cleared his senses for the air inside the sky giant was impregnated with oxygen for normal breathing.

In a few moments Drake straightened, his brain working with its old efficiency. His quick ears had detected the faint murmur of voices. The sounds drifted from where a queer, purple light gleamed eerily through the gloom. As he cautiously approached it he saw that the glow came from a deep shaft leading down to the bowels of the air monster. He crouched over the metal grid, his ears straining to catch the muffled words drifting up from below. They were unintelligible, and, with a strug of his shoulders, Drake swung himself down on to the metal ladder against the curved wall, and he commenced to descend.

He did not doubt that he was dropping into a hornet's nest. Death, swift and horrible, might be waiting for him at the bottom of that shaft. But the thrill of his quest, tuned his nerves as only extreme peril could.

Drake saw that the metal ladder continued down to a steel floor but the curved wall of the shaft ended considerably higher.

The voices were louder now, and Drake, clinging precariously to the metal rungs, twisted his body until he could peer beneath the curved end of the shaft into the cabin below.

For all his iron nerve, a strange nameless fear made Drake's pulses race as he stared into that sombre place of black walls.

Sinister figures were grouped around a table clamped to the floor, the dull light of the swinging ceiling lamp casting dark, flickering shadows on their villainous, inscrutable faces. It was the face of the man who sat at the head of the table, however, that held Drake's gaze with hypnotic fascination. His massive head was sunk between his herculean shoulders like some crouching beast of prey. Never had Tails-Up seen such evil personified in a human face as he saw in the man's gaunt features. He had the high flat cheekbones of a Mongol, the cruel, bleak, almond eyes of an Asiatic—this mysterious assassin of the skies who had linked the science of the west with the treachery of the Orient, to strike against England.

Drake eased his aching limbs and bent nearer. The giant, who Drake did not doubt was the Power behind the audacious challenge to Britain's Air Power, was speaking in harsh, guttural tones. His horribly smiling eyes were fixed on a man in flying leathers, whose rigid hands gripped spasmodically at the ridge of the metal table—Red Garson.

"You have failed again, Garson," that relentless voice was saying. "But for your blundering the Air Ministry would be lying in ruins. One more mistake, and you pay the price our cause demands for failure—death, death that is not even mercilessly swift. . ."

*Clang! Clang!* Like a knell Drake heard the metallic sound of descending footsteps which grew louder each moment. Someone was climbing down the metal ladder of the shaft!

Drake's only chance was to silence the man, whose

descending figure loomed through the blackness. His tensed figure pressed against the curved wall, Drake waited. The man's shadow fell across his face, a burly foot dropped level with his shoulders. It brushed his arm and the crook looked down, his sallow face changing suddenly from casual interest to incredulous astonishment.

Drake's bunched knuckles flashed upwards, crashing on the Asiatic's jaw like a five point nine. The crook crumpled, his yell of alarm rattling into silence in his yellow throat. His nerveless hands relaxed on the ladder rungs, his body slithered. Drake made a frantic grab at the fellow's shoulders, with the faint hope of wedging his limp body in the shaft, but in the darkness he missed, and the body went sliding past.

Even as it went crashing on to the steel floor of the black-walled council chamber below, Drake was springing up the ladder.

Too late! He groaned as there came the whirr of hidden machinery, and a steel panel swung over the top of the shaft, cutting off his escape.

The ominous clang of feet on the rungs below echoed in his ears. With a grim laugh he loosened his hold on the ladder and let himself fall.

*Crash!* His heavy flying boots smashed against his foremost attacker, as he plunged down. There was a chorus of yells, a chaos of struggling humanity. Drake landed heavily on the metal floor, but even as he straightened, his fists whirling, a skulking figure leapt from the shadows behind him.

A revolver butt crashed against his temple, smashing his senses into oblivion. As the mists of unconsciousness surged into his brain, he caught a fleeting glimpse of Red Garson's leering face, heard his exultant voice.

"Drake!" he hissed. "What devil's luck! We'll finish him, Master. He knows too much."

### Murphy Does His Bit.

Drake drifted back to consciousness, his temples throbbing like the beat of trip-hammers. He tried to raise his hand to his aching head, but he could not move his arm. With that he saw he was lashed to a propeller and a spasmodic jerk of his head, gave him a glimpse of the silver nose and slender wings of the Hart behind him. The grim realisation of his peril chilled him.

The Hart was being relentlessly thrust towards the steel lip of the landing platform above the air mammoth. Those sombre, silent figures pressing against the wings and fuselage seemed to the young airman's overwrought nerves like denizens of the nether regions. There was something horrible in the silent dreadful efficiency with which his death was to be accomplished.

The Hart was being jettisoned into space, with the engine switched on. For he had heard the click of the switches behind him, followed by Red Garson's mocking laugh as he had dropped back from the fuselage.

The plunging machine would swiftly start its propeller in that fierce, downward rush. The engine would pick up, and the propeller, whirled into life, would smash the breath from his cored body.

Drake's breath caught in his throat. The Hart's nose was swerving down and suddenly the plane whipped into a yawing diving.

The great grey wall of the air mammoth flashed passed the rocketing plane. And Drake waited with grim suspense for the roar of the massed cylinders of the engine, that would be the last sound he would hear before death came.

It seemed an eternity whilst he waited, the whine of the wind through the wires of the plunging Hart like a death dirge in his ears.



Then amazingly, that surge of wind crashing against his corded body, lessened . . . the silver nose faltered and then slowly swung up.

Drake flashed a spasmodic glance over his rigid shoulder. His aching eyes stared incredulously at a crouching figure spreadeagled over the front cockpit, grabbing at the stick. Bonehead Murphy!

"Hold up, sorr! Oi'll get yer out of this. Those murderous hathens didn't know foive feet of foighting Oirishman was waiting to spoil their game. Oi hid myself in the fuselage. There room for a little feller in the long locker."

"Good lad," Drake breathed.

By this time Murphy had slithered into the front cockpit, steadying the plunging Hart with the stick well back and the rudder straightened.

"Slip off your belt, Murphy, and lash back the stick," Drake jerked. "Then slide me a knife. I think I can just hold it."

Still perilously poised above that black abyss of darkness, Murphy slithered over the engine cowl,

its clustered engines filling the night air with a reverberating roar.

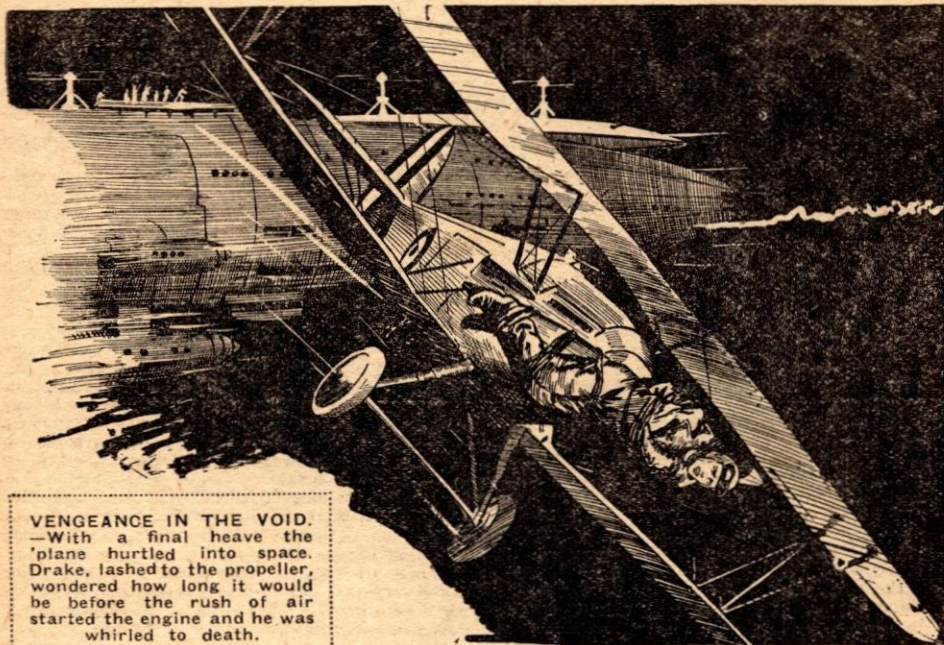
Suddenly Drake knew why the amphibian was plunging down into those lower altitudes, realised the dual purpose of the crook's flying lair.

Slung on launching parachutes beneath the belying gasbag, was a cluster of black, hooded monoplanes—reinforcements for Garson's brood in the catacombs beneath the cliffs.

He opened out the powerful Rolls and flashed in pursuit of the air monster. With its non-inflammable helium gas and scattered ballonettes he could not hope to destroy it. But there was another way of stinging that sky mammoth.

Drake pulled out of that flashing dive, and the twin Vickers, aligned on the cluster of black aircraft beneath the belying monster, stuttered their dreadful song.

A stream of whistling, tracer bullets smashed into the swaying fuselage of the suspended planes, as the Hart flashed beneath its quarry. That prolonged



**VENGEANCE IN THE VOID.**  
—With a final heave the plane hurtled into space. Drake, lashed to the propeller, wondered how long it would be before the rush of air started the engine and he was whirled to death.

while the Hart strained against the lashed controls. Cautiously the little mechanic yanked his arm round a hump in the cowl and stretched out his hand with the precious knife. Drake's numbed fingers clutched the haft at last, and with a jerk of his wrist he sent the keen blade slashing through the cord.

With painful slowness he freed himself, skilfully using the support of the cords until he could get a grip on the propeller and slither himself back on to the engine cowl.

With a breath of relief he wriggled on to the curved metal and kicked his legs clear of the last cords. He slumped into the cockpit and gripping the freed controls swung down the nose of the stalling Hart.

"Now for reprisals," he snapped, the light of battle flickering anew in his eyes.

Even as he spoke, a mammoth, grey shape came nosing through the clouds—the flying monster, with

salvo ripped through wings and spars, and there came a sudden burst of flame from the fired petrol tanks, a surge of fire spreading rapidly beneath the great grey brute.

The monster rolled as if in agony, and in a swift burst of flame, the burning planes dropped from the slender, launching trapezes, as the hard-pressed sky-carrier jettisoned its blazing cargo.

"Not a bad show, Murphy," Drake laughed, as he dived away.

But his face was anxious as he saw the sky mammoth plunge into a dark bank of cloud, the thunder of its clustered engines dying into the distance.

Tall-Up Drake and his metanchoy Irish mechanic feature in another whirlwind yarn of the Air next week. "S.O.S. to the Skies" is the title of this thrill-filled Flying tale.



THE PINNACLE OF THRILLS! The Last Grand Yarn of FALCON SWIFT and the IRON SPIDER. In the Great Abyss.



## THE MONOCLED MANHUNTER *versus* THE CROOK WHO WAS TRUE BLUE

### The Trail of the Spider.

THROUGH the giant forest strode a man in the weirdest garb imaginable. He wore a monstrous, bulging iron case, with a great helmet set back on hinges from the shoulders. In his arms he carried a shining, steel shell, in which his legs could be encased, to complete the outfit.

It was a more cumbersome device than any diver's, or even the huge asbestos suits of forest firefighters. The man was, in fact, the Iron Spider, the man who could not get free from the enormous metal suit he had made.

His keen, clever, rather youthful face looked strained and haggard as he strode through the amazing forests of the Abyssinian Mountains, one of the, as yet, unmapped regions of the dark African continent. He did not dream that he was being followed and watched.

"I'll get the key," he snapped fiercely. "I'll get it; and I'll make the hound set me free."

He had invented the amazing mechanical device for an exploration trip into the Great Abyss with a certain Professor Silver. The "Professor" had turned out to be a crook, however, who had used the Iron Spider to commit a daring jewel-robbery. After escaping over roofs and telegraph wires, he had reached his riverside retreat, still with the police on his track.

Then he had tricked the young inventor into getting into the Iron Spider, and it had automatically become locked.

Hunted by the police, the young inventor was in a fearful plight. He dared go abroad only at night. Then, becoming bolder, he had terrorised London by his appearance; for Connolley, the young man inside the Spider, was himself hunting down the man who had the key. That man had skipped out of England.

The Iron Spider had trailed him across the world. In Kenya Colony, British East Africa, a sensation was raging. Niggers and white men had been captured from the goldfields and spirited away. The public fixed these crimes on the Iron Spider, who had been seen haunting the goldfields.

But the lad knew the mystery of the missing miners. They had been spirited up here, into the mysterious depths of Abyssinia, by air-liner.

"I reckon there's a big gold-mine here, in the Great Abyss itself," muttered the man in the strange suit, as he strode on doggedly.

At length he came out of the forest—out in the bare, bleak spaces, where the weird half-light seemed intensified, for the sun's light was partially blotted out by the towering mountains.

The man in the iron case paused at a giant tree that stood like some lone sentinel on the very edge of a monstrous, mountain precipice. Seemingly bottomless, black depths yawned beneath, and down there dread mystery and terror lay hidden.

Ralph Connolley screwed on his helmet and stepped into the bullet-shaped casing, screwing it to the remainder of the metal body. Now he looked very different, a fearsome apparition, as he stood on the eight legs, which sprang out from the body at a



touch on some mechanism within. He had become transformed, indeed, into a huge, iron spider.

Inside, Connolley pressed the release of a powerful spring, and what looked like a snout, but was, in reality, a porcupine ball, sped upwards into the tree, unfurling a length of rope.

The spiked ball got its grip in the tree, and the Iron Spider commenced to drop downwards, on its rope, into the Great Abyss.

One of the two watchers gasped as he looked on. He was a fair-haired youngster, and with him was a hawk-faced man. The two were Falcon Swift, the famous detective, and his astute boy assistant, Chick Conway.

Falcon Swift had been closely shadowing the Iron Spider. In a powerful, cabined airplane the detective and his assistant had followed the strange crook into the almost inaccessible regions of the Mountains of the Moon. But even Falcon Swift could not say where the trail would end.

"Look, boss! He's dropping down into that pit," breathed Chick tensely. The whole affair seemed more unreal and fantastic to the lad because of the giant vegetation, and the strange half-light in these Abyssinian mountains.

"He's going down into the Great Abyss," said Falcon Swift in a low, keen tone. "Nobody's ever explored it, Chick! It must be like dropping through the earth, and there can be no air to breathe, deep down there."

"He's got an oxygen-generating device in that Iron Spider," Chick said sharply. "But we—we can't follow, boss."

"Yes, we can, laddie," said the detective softly. "You know I came across the plans of this spider invention in his rooms? Well, I had two more models made to the designs, and I brought them in the aeroplane."

Chick stared. "You mean we're going down there as Iron Spiders ourselves, boss?" he breathed, and gave a startled whistle.

The idea of exploring that mighty abyss in the Moon Mountains fired his blood. And—what awaited them down below? The conjecture excited his mind with the strangest fancies.

Together, Falcon Swift and the lad retraced their steps through the mighty, silent, solemn forest. They had managed to land their cabined 'plane in a great, open clearing, and they were lucky to do so, for the atmosphere in these high, mountain altitudes was rarified and cold and full of treacherous currents. Together, they dragged the two packing-cases back, realising the need for haste.

The Iron Spider, in the meantime, was swinging down from tree to tree into the depths of the pit. It was an experience sufficient to unnerve most men. The precipitous sides fell away like rocky canyon walls. The Abyss was seemingly bottomless.

Yet Connolley was not deterred. The snout—that was the porcupine ball of sharp, steel spikes—dug in, and the spider fell to the end of its rope. Then it gripped in with its claws, and the rope snapped back on

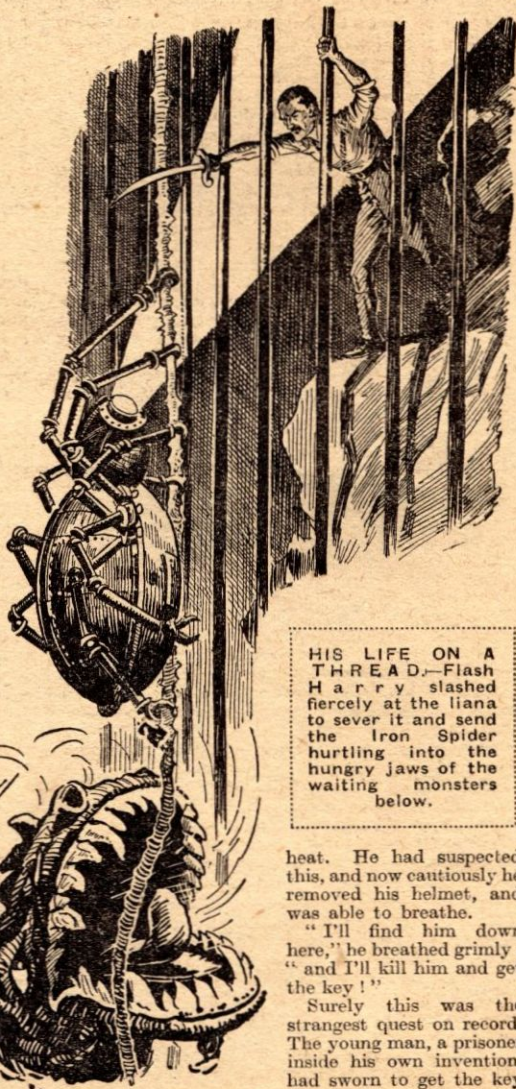
its reel like a great spring. The process of dropping was repeated. And so he progressed downward into the Great Abyss.

Any failure in the mechanism must have meant a hurtling fall to certain death. But the young inventor, out for vengeance on the man who had locked him within that iron casing, did not quail. Nor did Falcon Swift and Chick, who, above him, were also climbing down now.

### The Pit of Horrors.

AT last the Iron Spider came to a stop; he had alighted on a great rocky ledge, and some instinct informed him that he could not be very far from the bottom of this mighty pit.

His senses told him, too, that there was plenty of air down here, for he no longer felt an oppressive



HIS LIFE ON A THREAD.—Flash Harry slashed fiercely at the liana to sever it and send the Iron Spider hurtling into the hungry jaws of the waiting monsters below.

heat. He had suspected this, and now cautiously he removed his helmet, and was able to breathe.

"I'll find him down here," he breathed grimly; "and I'll kill him and get the key!"

Surely this was the strangest quest on record. The young man, a prisoner inside his own invention, had sworn to get the key



from the man who had betrayed him and fixed on the fiendishly complicated lock.

For a long time Connelley remained there, frozen and immobile. His senses apprised him of danger, down here in the depths, danger that made his heart race and thud, and filled him with a nameless fear. There was a taint in the air. Something that brought back to him terrible vagrant fancies.

Suddenly he started violently, and instinctively he replaced his helmet, which completely transformed him into the grotesque, metal spider.

He had heard sounds below; ominous sounds . . . the tramping of many feet. They seemed to be passing quite close beneath, and he could no longer restrain his desire to gain knowledge of this place of darkness and lurking evil. He switched on the powerful headlamps that served him for eyes.

The sight on which the twin searchlights flooded their radiance was a terribly grim one. The marching men were slaves, and they had evidently just issued from the entrance to the mines beneath.

Black, African negroes, and white men, missing miners, there were scores of them, each wearing around his neck the iron ring of serfdom, and chains around his arms and ankles linking him with his neighbour.

Four slave-drivers, two on either side, were marching, with cruel whips in their hands which they cracked and curled fiendishly around the bare backs of the slaves.

Suddenly behind his ghastly helmet, Connelley's eyes thinned to cruel slits. He had recognised the man who had betrayed him, the man he had come thus far to seek. He was, of course, one of the slave-drivers. A stocky figure in breeches, leggings and khaki shirt, with sleeves rolled up, he was driving the slaves mercilessly with the whip. But he stopped almost ludicrously and spun around, staring . . . staring up into the great, lighted eyes of the spider, as if he saw a ghost.

It was the crook known as Flash Harry. His black moustache had become ragged, his face swarthy under the African suns, but he was still wholly recognisable to the man he had wronged.

This was the man who had robbed Hatton Gardens of jewels worth a quarter of a million, and escaped over the roof-tops in the casing of the Iron Spider; who had then persuaded Connelley to don the outfit and had locked him in it.

With a crazed laugh, that was half snarl, he dug in the porcupine ball, and dropped from the ledge of rock on the long spider rope.

With a shout of wild fear Flash Harry suddenly broke the paralysing spell of terror that had seemed to hold him in its grip, and turned and ran. The Iron Spider had by now reached the ground, and came after him in great leaps, the beams from his "eyes" jumping apace with him and splashing the scene with lurid light.

This weird light showed the guilty man pounding frantically towards a spot where stood a tremendous, rude stone bowl. It was an *arreste*, a primitive ore mill. Connelley scarce forbore to let his eyes widen in amaze as he saw the strange creatures harnessed to the heavy sweep, and which they had to draw round and round in an endless circle in order to crunch the ore.

"Prehistoric monsters, by Jove!" he breathed, even in his fury to get after the man.

Yet they were strange monsters. They seemed to have analogy to our present-day ostrich, except that they were larger, and their feathers seemed of metal.

"The extinct Dodo," muttered the young inventor. Such thoughts flitted swiftly through the lad's mind, however. He was grimly bent on his main purpose, to get to grips with his enemy.

Suddenly Connelley cried out in horror. His enemy had stopped a moment over a brazier filled with glowing coals. Upon the fire was a great grid, on which slabs of meat were sizzling, evidently in preparation for the gold miners' meal.

The crook seized up one of the slabs of meat with a wooden skewer, and the lad distinctly saw him place a key upon the piece of meat; roll it hastily and fix it with the skewer.

Some prescience of what the man intended to do seized hold of the unfortunate inventor, and he endeavoured to quicken his pace as he leapt after him. He was still a good fifty yards distant.

But the man who had wronged him was evidently determined that he should never get free from the Iron Spider. He whirled suddenly and flung the piece of meat, with the key in it, at one of the strange Dodos. It was snapped in mid-air, and swallowed almost instantly. Then the desperate crook turned and ran for his life.

With a crazed snarl the Iron Spider went in leaps and bounds after his quarry. His sole urge now was to crush the life out of Flash Harry.

The crook, tearing at the top of his speed across that dark pit, knew that he could expect no mercy, and his face was a white, twisted mask of fear.

He was a resourceful ruffian, however, and a wild plan was working in his brain. He was shouting aloud as he ran.

"Raise the gates! Raise the gates!" the desperate crook screamed again and again.

Ralph Connelley gritted his teeth harder as he gave chase. The crook was pounding desperately for an opening between two mighty, towering rocks, and the Iron Spider was still fifty paces behind, but gaining rapidly.

The desperate crook, his eyes wild with fear, dashed through the dark opening between the cliffs.

On either side of the gateway stood an immense, African negro. And a gateway in very truth it proved to be, for, as the Iron Spider sprang through after his quarry, there came a tremendous clang which echoed and resounded through that dark and gloomy pit. The Iron Spider turned, too late, too see that a great gate of massive, iron bars had crashed down, barring his escape.

But he was made blind to danger by the fury that possessed him. Near by was a tumble of similar rocks and boulders, through which his quarry had evidently darted. The Iron Spider sprang forward furiously, determined that the grim game of hide-and-seek should come to an end.

No sooner was he out of range of the great gate, however, than Flash Harry darted out from behind a boulder and raced to the bars desperately. The Iron Spider saw the manoeuvre and turned, springing after him. Then he saw how he had been tricked.

For Flash Harry was desperately squeezing between two of the bars of the gate. It was a tight squeeze, and his face was grey with the terror that gripped him. But he got through in the nick of time—just as the Iron Spider's final spring landed him with a crash against the iron bars.

Of course, it was impossible for him to squeeze through the bars in the cumbersome iron casing. But to one side of the gate and close to it was a thick, tremendously strong liana that had climbed up among the rocks, twisting round the jungle growths and forming a secure hold. The Iron Spider gripped this natural rope with his claws. He intended to climb over the gate.

But, instantly, Flash Harry dashed forward, and now his face was distorted with a mad, leering triumph.

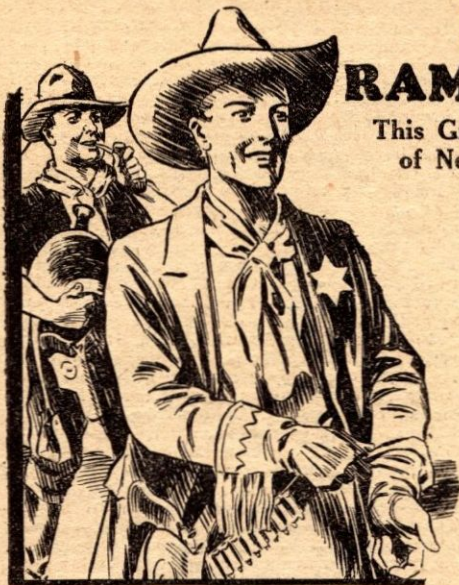
"Look out for yourself, Mr. Spider," he shouted. "Keep your claws sharp, and fight all you know



**THE DANDY COWBOY HERE NEXT WEEK!**

## MYSTERY AT RAMSHACKLE RANCH

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### The Raiders of the Red Planet.

This grand complete tale of the stars introduces Malcolm Brand, the fighting scientist. Brand has got in touch with the planet Soranus by wireless, and Zorn, the ruler of the Red Planet, says he is coming to earth to visit the Professor. But there is treachery behind it. For Zorn and his Soranians really plan an invasion of the world. They are aided by Max Marco, a human renegade, when their mighty ether ship lands on earth. But Jerry, an English youngster and Brand's assistant, turns the tables. This is something new in stories of space. I don't exaggerate when I say it is the best I have ever read. See if you agree with me next week!

### Washington's Diamond Jubilee

has an average of three laughs to the line! Well, that's only a rough guess, but as I was in tucks of mirth all the time I was reading it, I don't think I'm far out. Anyway, what happens is that the Darkie Sleuth gets the job of guarding a precious diamond owned by a wealthy financier. But the owner steals it himself! The explanation of this and the laughable events that follow will be enjoyed by you all.

### The Okay Trio

are newcomers to the *Mag.*; but you'll ask for more when you've read the first yarn of their exciting adventures in the jungle next week. Yes, chaps, Okay Brooks, the leader of the trio, is a magician with animals. He knows all the ways of the wilds, for he has lived there ten years before the yarn opens. With Umpalunga, a mighty zulu, who uses a polo-stick as club, and Senz, a Jap chap, he leads the pigmies on a vengeance trail. If you're not thrilled by the Okay Trio—well, you must be pretty case-hardened. Get on to them next week.

### SOS—to the Skies

is the next gripping story of Tails-Up Drake, who is already a big favourite with my chums. Gets more exciting every week, this grim, boyish adventurer of the air. The airman author of this flying series has more new thrills up his sleeve.

Finally, don't miss The Master of Masks next week. And I hope to have a special announcement of interest to you all. Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

### MY DEAR CHUMS,

My postbag is bulkier than ever of late. Letters from loyal readers all over the world reach my sanctum—most of them written in enthusiastic praise of the special new stories in the *Mag.* Each of those letters receives a personal answer from me, for I am never happier than when writing these little personal communications to my chums. And I find that one of the biggest favourites with you all is that famous adventurer of the Wild West—the Dandy Cowboy. So Bud Kelland has hurried along another yarn of the Boys of the Bar Eight Ranch for next week's whoozie number.

### Mystery at Ramshackle Ranch

strikes a new note in this splendid Wild West series. It features The Orphan, that wayward, likeable youngster who is the son of Hoppy Wannagan. The Orphan does not belong to the Bar Eight, but has lived in Happy Valley for some years before the yarn opens. And he has so lived down his past—he was once a wanted outlaw with a price on his head—that he is appointed sheriff of Happy Valley.

But this does not suit Black Hellier, leader of a rustler band which is the scourge of the Rio Grande. He plots to oust The Orphan Sheriff by playing on his past. But the youngster goes on with his task of rounding up the rustlers—though by so doing, ruin and disgrace will be his reward.

That's where the Dandy Cowboy and his merry punchers come into the picture—with six-guns crashing in the cause of justice. Drama and action;

how, because you're in the Pit of the Monsters. Two of them, there are. Scaly and large as dragons. And they have to be fed on human beings now; that's why we kidnapped so many niggers—to feed these brutes and keep 'em quiet. That clang of the gate generally tells 'em it's their dinner time. Listen!"

The youngster inside the iron mechanism suddenly felt the cold leap of fear in his heart. For all at

once a harsh stentorian roar rent the silence of that dark abyss and shook the air to echoes.

Next moment, from the swamp beyond the rocks came two immense monsters, with long, snake-like necks and scaly bodies that dripped noxious smelling mud. Their eyes seemed like balls of fire, and from their cavernous mouths their breath streamed in great jets, like smoke.

Even as the Iron Spider commenced to ascend the



giant liana, the monsters caught sight of him. They lumbered forward, their mighty roars echoing terrifyingly round that pit of horror, until they were below Connolley, who stared fearfully down at them.

They reared up, their jaws gaping, trying to reach him. The razor-edged teeth of one of them clashed together a couple of inches below his dangling legs. Higher and yet higher he mounted.

Then high above the din there sounded a shrill scream, hate-filled and dreadful. Connolley tensed, his senses rearing at a new danger.

Flash Harry had climbed the rock wall at the side of the gate, and now stood on a narrow ledge, a few feet above the Iron Spider. He was waving a curved kris, or scimitar, that he had picked up from somewhere. Suddenly he thrust the weapon through the bars of the gate, making a slash at the tough jungle "rope" on which the Iron Spider was hanging, to sever it.

The young inventor was in a fearful predicament. The hungry jaws of the monsters below were yawning wide for him, should he drop. Yet he could not hang on where he was, for the liana would be cut. And it was, in very truth, his lifeline.

In less than a split second, he made up his mind. He released his grip of the liana and at the same time sprang away. Down he dropped, towards those hideous, hungry brutes.

But so sudden was his move that, with a twist of his spider legs, he was able to land on the back of one of the monsters. Next moment, he had bounded to the ground, and he prepared to fight for his life.

### Freedom.

"LISTEN! What was that?"

Falcon Swift cautiously raised his helmet and Chick did the same. They were squatting on the very same ledge of rock that Ralph Connolley had occupied some minutes previously, and a strange sight they presented in the steel casings of the spiders.

Now, suddenly, a deafening roar reverberated through the Great Abyss. The sound had in it a frightening and terrible quality that caused even the hearts of those iron-nerved sluths to beat a little quicker.

"There's something down here," Falcon Swift said in a low voice. "Just listen to it. Come on, laddie, we're going to find out!"

They readjusted their helmets, and descended into the pit by dangling on their long, spider ropes. Turning, with their lights as yet extinguished, they commenced to travel across the pit. Still the mighty roar of the monsters rang in their ears, and they saw, as they progressed, the scores of slaves in the gold-mine standing in their chains, petrified with terror. Of Connolley himself there was no sign.

They were obliged to turn on their headlights now, and a wild yell of terror rang out at the sight of the two. But it was deadened by the continuous roar of the monsters. Guided by that sound, Falcon Swift and Chick travelled on, through the maze of rocks.

Suddenly they came in sight of the great gate, and it was, indeed, a staggering sight that met their eyes.

The Iron Spider was crouching before the two gigantic beasts of the past and was doing his utmost to defend himself. He sprang about like some laired animal in a trap, evading the darting heads, on their long, snaky necks, as if by a miracle.

Flash Harry, on the other side of the great gate, was about to retreat in a great hurry when Falcon Swift and Chick came on the scene.

He turned to run, and caught sight of the two Iron Spiders. He stopped dead, startled, terrified. A wild scream of fear rang from his lips.

Falcon Swift leapt upon him. The famous sluth had no compunction in pulling him down with his iron claws. He had all along suspected Flash Harry of being the real villain of this drama. And now, at least, he could prove a definite crime against the man, for he had pressed slave labour into service to work an illegal gold-mine. Falcon Swift had seen great cases of gold bars, ready to be spirited out of the mine; gold on which the Government in the ordinary way would exact an immense levy.

But as he crouched athwart the man, the drama behind the iron gate came swiftly to its crisis.

The Iron Spider had been forced to retreat against the massive bars; and in a rage at being cheated out of their prey, one of the monsters lunged his immense body forward in order to crush the spider against the gate.

The Iron Spider sprang away, but the monster crashed into the great gate. There was a noise like the tumbling of the heavens, and—the great gate gave and collapsed.

"Run! Run!" screamed Flash Harry in a paroxysm of terror. "The brutes will swallow us all."

He had managed to scramble to his feet, and now he turned, obeying his own dictum, running from the scene like one possessed.

Falcon Swift and Chick saw nothing for it but to follow. The great brutes were lumbering over the fallen gate, their heads swaying as they gave vent to their ear-splitting roars. Square-Crook Connolley, seeing his chance, was making away in great bounds.

The monsters came behind more leisurely. Swift movement was fortunately impossible to them, but their very breath was poisonous, and it reached far. It was fortunate for Falcon Swift, Chick and Ralph Connolley that they were breathing their own supplies of oxygen inside the iron shells they wore.

The three were springing side by side. Falcon Swift was making after Flash Harry, determined this time that he would not elude him. In sight of the great stone ore mills, worked by the strange ostrich-like creatures, he came within range of the running crook, and springing on him again, pulled him down as a panther would its prey.

A moment he released the catch of his helmet so that he could speak to the miserable scoundrel.

"You've made a fine mess of things!" he cried sternly. "Still, I'm going to do my best for the unfortunate prisoners you've brought down here. Where are the keys, you villain—the keys of their chains?"

Whimpering in abject terror, Flash Harry indicated a great bunch of keys on his belt. The sluth detached them.

"Come on, Chick," he cried vibrantly.

Then it was that Ralph Connolley did the strangest thing of all. He released the traces of the strange, ostrich-like creatures attached to the sweep of the *arreste*, and sprang like a mountain cat upon the back of one of them.

The fight that ensued was a grim affair. In the end the Iron Spider brought the strange creature down with a terrible blow at its neck.

Falcon Swift and Chick meanwhile had raced up to the chain gangs. With the keys they swiftly had them setting one another free, and the unfortunate slaves started to race for some steps that led out of the pit.

All was tumult, chaos; shouts and cries and grunts of fear struck terrifyingly on the ears. The monsters were coming behind, slowly but inexorably.

"We've got to do something to stop them, laddie," Falcon Swift whispered to Chick. "Their very breath will poison half those men toiling up those steps."

It did not take Falcon Swift and Chick long to



clamber up on their spider ropes, and the Sporting Sleuth, gripping Flash Harry in his claws, drew him up with him. They were surprised to see that despite the peril, Ralph Connolley was lifting the weird creature he had killed.

They scrambled up on a ledge out of reach of the monsters only just in time. The gigantic brutes were now closing in behind.

Flash Harry was gabbling. "The sides of the rock," he cried. "They're mined. But there are no fuses. If we could fire them off, blow the rock in on top of them—"

Falcon Swift swiftly seized on the idea.

"Have you got a canister of powder?" he cried; and when a canister of blasting powder was provided, he dug in its top with the spike of his jack-knife to make a sprinkler. All this was done in haste, for the roaring monsters were closing in swiftly. The detective discarded his iron shell, and, with a few swift words to Chick, took up the canister of blasting powder and commenced to run with it.

No sooner had he gained a few yards than Chick fired the trail of powder he had laid. Running fire like a red serpent raced after the detective.

He darted from hole to hole in the rock, spreading the trail of powder. In all he touched three dynamite dumps in this way, and racing on madly he leapt from the ledge upwards, to where Chick in the spider's suit dangled on the rope gripping the rock side far above.

Chick released the mechanism and travelled swiftly up on the rope. Near by Ralph Connolley was doing the same, and the crook inside Falcon Swift's Iron Spider shell was also saving his miserable life.

Then—the explosion came. The thunder of sound was tremendous, but no greater than the mighty crashing of the ledge as the great pieces fell and buried the monsters in the valley far below.

**H**OURS later, a weary party of men emerged over the top of the Great Abyss. They were the missing miners, saved by Falcon Swift's ingenuity and resource.

Ralph Connolley's conduct was strangest amongst all those men, delirious with joy. There on the edge of the Abyss he proceeded to cut open the strange creature he had killed. When he had completed the operation, he had in his hands the key.

True to his sworn word, he made the man who had tricked and betrayed him, set him free.

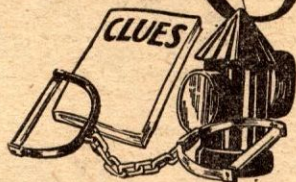
And so ended one of Falcon Swift's strangest cases.

Get ready to welcome a ripping new bunch of thrill-makers next week, chaps. They are the Okay Trio, and they make the sparks fly in a gripping Jungle yarn.

## Hints for the Boy Detective



# The AMATEUR SLEUTH'S CORNER



**T**HE keynotes of success in the amateur sleuth are keen, incisive powers of observation and the ability to analyse the minutest evidence that is at hand. The power to observe small details can easily be improved by getting into the habit of noting exactly any special feature or disfigurement of new acquaintances.

The sleuth's ability to analyse evidence can only be improved by practice. Work back step by step from certain incidents, drawing conclusions and forming theories as to what led up to those happenings, and in this way form the links in your chain of evidence.

When investigating material evidence an amateur sleuth should try to examine it closely without disturbing anything. Of course, this will in most cases be impossible, but when you do find it necessary to move something, remember to return it to its exact position until you have perfected your notes of the scene.

Fingerprints form a decisive clue in your evidence. Usually the prints are extremely vague, probably only a dim outline can be seen, but the keen eye of the trained sleuth will pick out this clue immediately. He will know where to look for he has learned that the most clearly defined fingerprints are to be found on highly polished surfaces, on weapons, or in dusty places.

But wherever the fingerprint is, and however vague, its distinctive markings can easily be clearly revealed. If a dim print is found on a dark surface a white powder, French chalk or talcum powder, should be dusted over it. The powder will then adhere to the lines of the print, making it stand out distinctly, so that it can be photographed for reference.

When the fingerprint is made on a light surface a dark powder, charcoal or powdered graphite, should be dusted over it. This acts in the same way as before, the lines of the print being made clear and definite.

If the sleuth has occasion to move articles on which fingerprint clues have been found, he should do so only when he is wearing gloves, otherwise his own fingerprints will be mixed with those that are being investigated. In this case the enthusiastic amateur sleuth will find himself being arrested as the culprit.

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THE CHEM-MYSTIC KID'S  
HOME-MADE DOUBLE!

A Laugh in Every Line of the Story of  
Professor Hypo's Latest Stunt!



### The Synthetic Twin.

"NOW, Mr. Green," said Dr. Theophilus Hypo soothingly, "I assure you there is no need for alarm. The apparatus is perfectly safe, and electric shock in any form is absolutely impossible. Isn't that so, Herr Doktor?"

The renowned German scientist, who was collaborating with Dr. Hypo in his latest investigations, nodded in agreement.

"Mein poy," said the German—Doctor Hacklimb was his name, "der vos no danger mit yourselves not at all. Der theory off der experiment vos fully explained in mein great treatise called 'Das Generalstaatsverordnetenversammlungen Von Dem Kinder Bewahrungsanstalten.' If you vos read bage neun mit carefulness you will see—"

"I ain't afraid of the shock," interrupted Tommy Pink, who was Dr. Hypo's laboratory assistant, of course, "but I have just been readin' an awful book called *Frankenstein*, y'see, and in it a scientific bloke like you, Dr. Hypo, makes an artificial man what's a perfect horror, y'see, an' when they let him loose he goes ravin' mad an' kills folks, he does, y'see!"

Dr. Hypo smiled in amusement at his German colleague. Then he said to Tommy, "But that is pure romance, Mr. Green. I assure you our experiments will be much more humdrum. Our purpose is merely to vitalize a lump of inert protoplasm, which, Dr. Hacklimb here, with masterly surgery, has provided with artificial organs similar to a human being's. It is Dr. Hacklimb's theory that it will be possible, by means of electric waves, to transmit vitality to it from a living human being, but we are convinced

The Boy the Professors had made had Absorbed All the Ill-nature of Tommy Pink and None of the Good. He Hit the real Tommy a Fearful Wallop and then Proceeded to Wreck the Laboratory. A Laughable Incident from this Novel New Fun Tale.

that this semblance of life will not last more than a few moments at the most. Besides, we have strong reasons for believing that the artificial human will resemble, in every respect, the actual living person who provides the copy, so to speak. If you agree to submit to the experiment the artificial human

will be exactly like you, Mr. Green."

"Dat vos zo," echoed Dr. Hacklimb. "Der poy ve vos make mit ourself vos exactly like you in every respectableness. Ve vos even provide him mit clothes like yours!"

"Gosh!" gurgled Tommy Pink. "Do you mean you're going to make me into twins?"

"Figuratively speaking," answered Dr. Hypo, "we are. However, you will feel nothing. In this large, opaque-glass cylinder, here, is the mass of body-stuff called protoplasm, roughly shaped like a human being. Another cylinder of similar shape and size is provided for you to lie in over there. Through that cylinder a high tension current shoots a stream of electrons which are transmitted—"

"All right, guv," said Tommy Pink hastily, fearing one of the Doctor's interminable lectures imminent, "you needn't explain all the details, and I reckon I can trust you to see nothin' goes wrong. What do I have to do?"

"There!" said Dr. Hypo to the German scientist. "I felt sure he wouldn't spoil it all, Dr. Hacklimb! You have nothing to do, Mr. Green," he added to Tommy, "but to lie passively in the second cylinder, until we switch off the current."

Dr. Hacklimb began fussing about with the cylinder containing the protoplasmic preparation. Dr. Hypo





A WHALE OF A WALE.—The irate gent, mistaking Tommy Pink for his terrible twin, grabbed him by the collar and commenced to belabour him soundly.

glanced his eye over the switchboard and the electrical apparatus.

"Everything seems in order for us to carry out the experiment right away. Are you ready, Mr. Green?"

"Y-yes, guv," gulped Tommy.

Hesitantly, he climbed into the empty cylinder and lay down flat, surrounded by a fearsome array of electrical tubes and coils. Dr. Hacklimb sealed up the tube with specially constructed glass ends which clamped in place, and Tommy wished heartily to himself that he was out of it and in the wide free world outside. He shut his eyes and waited. When he opened them again the tube was glowing with a vivid purple light, but he could feel nothing. Suddenly the light was switched off. Dr. Hacklimb unsealed the end of the tube, and said to him, "It vos all offer mit itself, Herr Green. You pring yourself out!"

Tommy Pink scrambled out of the glass tube eagerly.

"Gosh!" he said. "I didn't feel a thing—an' it was all over in no time!"

"I told you so," smiled Dr. Hypo. Suddenly from the other glass cylinder, which had contained the protoplasm, came a violent shouting.

"Hey!" said a voice exactly like Tommy's own. "Let me out, can't you. Think I'm a blamed sardine or summat!"

The three of them moved eagerly towards the second cylinder. Dr. Hacklimb carefully unclamped the ends with which it was sealed and then stooped down to peep in.

Out shot a clenched fist, striking him a smacking blow square in his Teutonic moustache.

"Ach! Himmel!" yelled Dr. Hacklimb, sprawling his length on the laboratory floor.

A duplicate head of Tommy Pink poked itself out of the open end of the cylinder; but it wore a bad-tempered scowl, almost unknown to the cheerful visage of the real Tommy. Next moment Tommy Pink's synthetic double crawled out of the long glass tube and stood upright, glaring at them. The novelty of seeing two perfectly identical Tommy Pinks made Dr. Hacklimb forget the blow on his face.

"Der gomblete success, Herr Dr. Hypo!" he cried exultantly. "It are vunderful! Vunderful!"

"You shut up, you dodderin' old Hun!—else I'll sock you another!" said the new arrival. Then, turning to Dr. Hypo he went on, "And as for you, you gibbering old son of a cracked test-tube, I've been savin' it up for you for a long time!"

Suddenly he sprang past the real Tommy Pink and clutched the unprepared Dr. Hypo by his side-whiskers and hung on to them with all his might.

"Yow! Ow! Ouch! Takimorf! Leggo!"

The real Tommy and Dr. Hacklimb sprang to assist the doctor and dragged the artificial Tommy off him. The German received a vicious blow in the tummy for his pains, which seated him, with uncomfortable firmness, on the laboratory floor. Then the animated lump of protoplasm turned on Tommy like a wild beast.

"Gosh!" shouted the real Tommy, landing his double a counter biff in the chest and checking his furious rush. "He's a Frankenstein! I warned you!"

"Callin' me names! Take—Wah! Glag!"

Tommy landed another corker on the chin, but the blows only enraged his crazy adversary the more. With a shriek of berserk rage, the manufactured Tommy hurled himself forward and closed with him. They thudded to the floor, a writhing bundle of whirling fists and wildly kicking legs.

"Herr Green vos right!" shouted Hacklimb, dragging Dr. Hypo from under the bench. "Quick mit ourselves! Ve must hold him! He must not excape!"



Simultaneously the two scientists dived at the uppermost Tommy Pink and dragged him away.

"Leggo! I'm the real one! Leggo!"

Just in the nick of time the two scientists released their hold and dived at the other Tommy Pink as he was scrambling to his feet. Their combined weights bore him down again squirming and yelling madly.

"Quick!" gasped Dr. Hypo. "Get rope, Mr. Green! We've created a maniac I fear!"

The panting Tommy Pink who was assisting them to hold the other sprang away promptly and rushed from the laboratory to do the Doctor's bidding.

"I realise the cause of this now," said Dr. Hypo, breathing hard and seating himself the more firmly on the prisoner's head. "We're all veritable Jekyll and Hydes with the mischievous, wild and savage parts of our nature's inconsciously suppressed by force of will and education. But the suppressed parts are always trying to get free and control the brain. We've provided Mr. Green's unconscious suppressions with a separate brain and a body for that brain to control!"

"Herr Doctor, you vos right. Ve haiff—"

"Doctor Hypo!" interrupted a gasping voice from below. "You've made an awful mistake! I'm the real Tommy Pink! It was a cunning trick—so that he could escape from being put back in the cylinder!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Dr. Hypo, springing to his feet. They dragged Tommy Pink to his feet and looked at him.

"It vos true!" said Hacklimb. "He has escaped!"

As one, the two doctors hurled themselves through the door in pursuit of the departed Tommy Pink. The remaining Tommy Pink gave a not very pleasant grin and locked the laboratory door behind them.

"Diddled 'em!—the doddering old idiots! Now for a real lark! I'm the Pinkenstein I am! I'll show 'em!"

He picked up a heavy microscope from a near-by table and hurled it savagely at a shelf full of bottles, producing an ear-splitting crash and a shower of debris.

Then, picking up a heavy poker from the fireplace, he went round the laboratory, slashing savagely and swiping at everything that came his way. In three minutes Dr. Hypo's laboratory was littered with broken glass and mutilated apparatus.

At last, with a chuckle of glee, he pounced at the apparatus that had produced him, tore the connecting wires apart and raised aloft his poker for the grand finale of his smashing bee.

At that moment the door handle rattled, and frantic fists thudded on the panels.

"I told you so!" shouted the voice of the authentic Tommy. "He's tricked you!"

Three shoulders thudded simultaneously on the laboratory door. It shook violently, but, for the moment, held.

Within, the Pinkenstein, thinking only of his liberty, rushed for the window, battered out the glass with his poker and clambered through. With the agility of a monkey, he scuttled down a drain-pipe to earth.

The door of the laboratory burst in with a splintering crash almost at the same moment. For a second the scientific experimenters were struck motionless by the sight of the carnage within.

"He's gone!" yelled Tommy, sighting the smashed window and hurrying over. "Look! He's down there in the street!"

"Himmel!" gasped the German Doctor. "I vos loosened a berfett peast of a poy in der name of

science! Der Pinkenstein vos at largeness mit der world!"

### The Pinkenstein Mix-up.

"THERE'S not a moment to be lost!" shouted Dr. Hypo, rushing for the laboratory door. "Who knows what mischief he might do! We must catch him!"

Doctor Hacklimb and the real Tommy scrambled through the door in the wake of the alarmed scientist. Downstairs they rushed, out of the front door, and into the street. But the Pinkenstein had made good his escape, for there was no sign of him.

Suddenly, however, from around a near-by corner, came the crash of splintering plate-glass and a yell of wild laughter that was unmistakable.

Tommy tore round the corner into the next street, stumbled over something lying on the pavement and fell. The two scientists hurtling in his rear were unable to pull up. They finished in a heap on top of Tommy.

When they sorted themselves out they found that Tommy had fallen over an irate gent who was seated on the pavement, at the time, rubbing a swiftly blackening eye. He gripped Tommy by the collar, as he scrambled to his feet, and proceeded to present the youngster with a resounding box on the ears.

"That'll teach yer," said the gent, belabouring him soundly. "Nice—biff!—state a things—wallop!—when young fellars starts punchin' their elders in the heye for no reason howsomer!"

"Stop! Stop!" said Dr. Hypo, coming to the rescue. "You've made a mistake!"

"No more I hain't! I knows 'im. Walkin' round the corner peaceful I was when—"

*Crash! Jingle—tinkle thud!* The smashing of glass drew their attention along the street. The Pinkenstein was scurrying far off, hurling bricks through shop windows as he ran; laughing and shouting derisive remarks he was, and drawing forth into the open a crowd of amazed and angry shopkeepers.

The angry gentleman with the black eye was so amazed to see another Tommy Pink rushing there along the street, that his grip on the real Tommy relaxed. Tommy wasted no time explaining to him.

"Down here!" he shouted to the Doctor and his German colleague. "I know an alley were we can cut him off!"

Tommy Pink scuttled down a near-by passageway like a hound on the scent, the two scientists puffing and blowing with the unwonted exertion in the rear, like leaky bicycle pumps. Tommy ran like the wind, leaving the two doctors far behind, in his effort to intercept the synthetic Tommy.

But he was not in time. When he emerged at the top end of the alley, his quarry had passed. He found himself immediately in front of the enraged mob of shopkeepers, hot in pursuit of his destructive double.

They were on him before he realised his danger. A dozen hands grabbed him and bore him down.

"Hold him! The young rascal!"

"Get the police!"

"Leggo, you chumps!" shouted Tommy, realising that he had been mistaken again for the Pinkenstein. "I ain't him! I'm me!"

Tommy Pink struggled wildly, seeing that it was impossible to reason with the excited mob. By a miracle, it seemed, he tore himself free of the detaining fists, and darted off with all the speed he could muster. But fast on his heels came the raging mob.

Tommy dived down a side street, and thence through the open door of a butcher's shop, hoping to escape them.



Then he stopped dead in his tracks and gazed at the scene before him in amazement.

The butcher and his assistants were grovelling in terror behind their counters and in the centre of the sawdust-covered shop danced the Pinkenstein. In one hand he brandished a fearsome-looking butcher's chopper and in the other a huge carving knife.

"Big Chief Protoplasm scalp him paleface heap much! Yeo-o-o-ow! Wullawullawullawulla!" he yelled.

He stopped his antics suddenly and glared at his human counterpart.

"So here's my better half! I'll start off by scalping you!"

"You won't" said Tommy Pink, seizing a pork chop and hurling it at the pseudo redskin.

Pinkenstein let forth a fearsome yell of rage as the pork chop struck him on the nose. He dropped his hatchet and knife, and grabbing a nice juicy steak, slopped it back at his rival.

Seeing the turn of events, the butchers took

Drs. Hypo and Hacklimb pushed their way to the front of the crowd, but even they could not tell t'other from which.

"Constable," said Dr. Hacklimb, to the policeman who had been called on the scene, "it vos a dreadful mistake ve make mit ourselves! Der experiment go wrong und exgape! Blease at vonce assist us to get back dese two Tommy Binks to Herr Hypo's laboratory!"

"That's right, officer," panted Dr. Hypo. "You know me, of course—Dr. Hypo, the scientist."

"All right, sir," the policeman answered. "Come along you two!"

Meekly the two Tommy Pinks obeyed.

### The Riddle Solved.

BACK to Dr. Hypo's house they marched, followed by the procession of onlookers. Both Tommy Pinks remained peaceful until they were safely in the shattered laboratory.

Dr. Hypo stared from one to the other in a troubled



NOT MEET FOR THE MEAT.—Tommy halted on the doorstep in amazement. The Pinkenstein, brandishing an enormous knife and chopper, was dancing a kind of Indian war dance.

courage and joined in the fray. A second later the air was thick with flying pieces of mutton and beef, of sausages and all manner of butcher's produce. Taking advantage of the tradesmen's barrage, Tommy Pink rushed forward and closed with his artificial twin.

Down they went, wrestling wildly in the sawdust, until the pursuing mob outside located them, and swarmed into the shop. Tommy and Pinkenstein were hauled apart and dragged to their feet, both of them raging and struggling to get at each other again.

"Heavens!" yelled half-a-dozen voices. "There's two of 'em!"

fashion. "I can't possibly tell which from which, Hacklimb. It would be terrible if we were to make a mistake!"

The doctor looked at his scientific collaborator in dismay. The cunning Pinkenstein seized the opportunity to stoop down swiftly, unobserved, and pick up a pin lying amongst the broken glass on the floor.

"Der vos only vone vay to tell," said Dr. Hacklimb as calmly as he could. "Der Binkenstein vos only an artificial machine mit itself! A machine cannot control itself for long. Stand dem both still, Herr Hypo, und ve vill detect der machine by der endurance

(Continued on page 31.)



SEPTIMUS  
MAYHEW.

### The Legend.

TWO men sat at a low oaken table in Bulldog Hamilton's London flat. Around them an old-fashioned candelabra cast weird shadows, illuminating but dimly the slanting walls and vaulted ceiling of that room, set high above London's teeming streets. The names of both were by-words. One was Bulldog Hamilton, world-wide adventurer and crook-catcher; the other, Sir Olaf Hodge, the famous expert in psychic and occult phenomena.

On the table were scattered musty documents and old parchments over which they had been poring for some time—Bulldog pulling steadily at the big briar pipe which never seemed to be absent from between his strong teeth.

Sir Olaf Hodge broke the silence.

"This is one of the strangest psychical phenomena I have encountered, Hamilton," he said quietly. "But I am convinced there is human agency behind it somewhere, that means foul play—danger. And that's precisely why I am asking you to investigate the affair, Hamilton. Now, with your permission, I'll run over the whole story."

The other smiled grimly, and nodded in assent.

Sir Olaf adjusted his pince-nez and proceeded to read from a typewritten document before him.

"Outside the gates of Blackston Hall is a huge boulder of black granite, the black stone from which the hall gets its name. There is a legend in the family that Sir Hubert Blackston, one-time heir to the estate, was carried off by a werewolf. His father went in chase and overtook it just as it was about to enter the lake in the grounds where it lurked. Sir Hubert succeeded in slaying the mythological monster and saving his son. But," says the ancient writer of the legend, "when burying it, the old lord neglected to drive a stake through its heart to prevent it from rising again! The villagers, however, sealed the tomb by levering the huge boulder on top of it. From this arose the prophecy:—

*'Neath Blackston Rock ye Werewolf lies,*

# THE Were Wolf OF BLACKSTON HALL

THE BIG THRILL LIBRARY SECTION. No. 2. Another Exciting Exploit of Bulldog Hamilton, the Detective Adventurer. An Unusual and Uncanny Tale of an Eerie Mystery.

*He sleeps secure—but never dies,  
And if ye rock be rolled aside  
His vampire grave will open wide,  
Then once again ye curse will fall  
Upon ye heir to Blackston Hall.'*

The famous psychic expert laid down the yellowed parchment from which he had read the strange rhyme and, while Bulldog watched the blue smoke rings from his pipe curl towards the ceiling, proceeded with his story.

"A week ago the stone was rolled aside owing to a road-widening scheme of the local authority—and, Hamilton, the skeleton of a wolf was found underneath it! Since then, according to young Lord Blackston, who has placed the matter in my hands, since I was his father's greatest friend, strange things have happened at Blackston Hall; occurrences that have convinced the boy that the werewolf has actually come back to life as prophesied in the legend."

"I take it the present heir has not yet reached his majority," interrupted Bulldog.

"Precisely," assented Sir Olaf, stroking his beard. "He lives at the Hall with his guardian, Mr. Septimus Mayhew. I understand the Hall is mortgaged up to the hilt and practically worthless, but at the age of twenty-one, Lord Blackston inherits his mother's huge private fortune. Septimus Mayhew is her cousin and the next heir. But to return to the werewolf."

"The papers relating to the late Lady Blackston's wealth were hidden for safety in the hollow leg of an old refectory table in the library at the Hall. It was intended later to put them in the hands of the family lawyer. But one night, before this could be accomplished, the papers disappeared. The next morning it was found that the leg of the table had been bitten to pieces by some animal and the papers removed. Further, a servant who was disturbed by the noise, swore he saw an animal like a huge wolf disappear in the direction of the ornamental lake which still exists in the grounds of Blackston Hall."

"And that, Hamilton, is as much as I have been

able to learn from Lord Blackston and my own research among old documents from the library of the Hall. There's something sinister behind it all. And you, old friend, are the fellow to get to the bottom of the mystery. Will you do it?"

There was no doubt about Bulldog's willingness. His steely blue eyes were alight with an unusual excitement. He held out a muscular hand.

"Okay, Hodge. I'll tackle the job," he said quietly. And the next two minutes Sir Olaf spent in getting his hand in working order again after Bulldog's firm grip!

### The Werewolf.

ERIC, Lord Blackston, awoke with a sense of foreboding. It was past midnight and not a sound disturbed the slumbering inmates of the mansion. True the wind moaned a dirge in the tall elms, the fitful shafts of the moon were indeed eerie as the nimbus clouds scudded across its dead face—yet none of these had awakened the heir to Blackston Hall.

Things not of the daylight moved in the crawling dark. The boy peer's fevered pulse, his crinkling scalp told him, and he shivered with an awful, unnameable dread. He steeled himself to look from the massive four-poster on which he lay at the moonlit square of the mullioned window.

What he saw was too much for his already jaded nerves. He collapsed into the dark abyss of unconsciousness. Next moment, the thing he had seen smashed the wood, glass and lead of the window to fragments and came into the room. With ungainly, unnatural gait it approached the bed. The moonlight gleamed on a nightmare shape—a wolf, yet not a wolf, its huge shoulders were slightly hunched and possessed of a stiff mane. The head was big and square, the body covered with scales like those of a lizard.

This monstrous terrible Thing was advancing

BULLDOG  
HAMILTON.

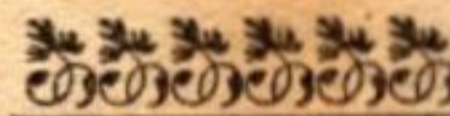
towards the unconscious boy, when the door was flung violently open and an athletic figure burst into the room. A man wearing a bowler hat and with a big-bowled pipe in his grim mouth. Bulldog Hamilton was on the job.

At this sudden interruption that menacing monster halted in the centre of the oaken floor, its upper lip lifted in a voiceless snarl. Strangely enough, however, it did not attempt to attack the man who faced it unflinchingly. Instead it turned and sprang for the broken window to escape whence it had come.

A squat automatic in Bulldog Hamilton's right hand spat lead in a stream of death; but the bullets seemed to ricochet off the gleaming scales of the monster, which made good its escape. From the window the adventurer watched it retreating across the parkland towards the lake. Ere it disappeared behind a belt of trees there came to the watcher's ears an awful sound—a sound like the laughter of something that died a long time ago.

"WHO—who are you?" Yellow candlelight flickered into the room with the startled-voiced question. Bulldog Hamilton turned slowly and faced his interrogator.

He saw a figure that might have stepped straight out of the pages of an early Victorian novel. A man of middle-age, swathed in a voluminous dressing-gown, stood in the doorway holding an old-fashioned candlestick, in which a tallow-dip flickered and smoked. Beside the dressing-gown, which was padded to twice its normal proportions, the newcomer wore fur-lined slippers, a red flannel night cap and even woollen mittens on his hands. His nose, below



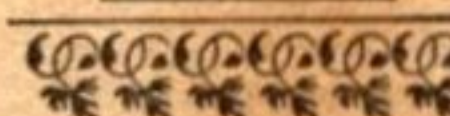
More Famous  
B.M. Story  
Favourites  
Booked for  
Next Week's  
Grand Number.

Look Out for  
THE OKAY TRIO  
Raiders of  
the Red Planet.

TAILS-UP  
DRAKE  
Washington's  
Diamond Jubilee.

THE DANDY  
COWBOY etc.

And Don't Miss  
the Wonderful  
Surprises in Store.





the nightcap, was large and hooked, his face was wizened but his eyes were clear and piercing. The tip of his nose had a definite red tint and he blew it in a large coloured handkerchief before repeating his question in nasal, wheezy tones.

The younger man moved his square shoulders precisely three degrees forward and back, and with a quizzical smile replied:

"My name is Bulmer Hamilton—at your service, sir. You, I presume, are Mr. Septimus Mayhew."

"Quite right, quite right, though how and why I am known to you puzzles me," said the other, somewhat snappily, and blew his nose again violently. "Perhaps you also know that I am Lord Blackston's guardian and demand an explanation of your apparently burglarious entry of his premises at dead of night."

Bulldog Hamilton had taken an instant and instinctive dislike to Mr. Mayhew. Obviously, he decided, an intriguer—a puller of strings for his own benefit.

Aloud he said: "An excusable and natural request, Mr. Mayhew; I have papers to prove my *bona fides*, and I rather think I arrived at an opportune moment. Business has brought me to Blackston. I have a room already booked at the inn. If you will take



BANG! BANG! — Bulldog Hamilton's revolver spoke as he leaped from his hiding place towards the marauder.

the trouble to 'phone there, they will confirm this. I missed the last train from London and had to motor down here. Hearing your ward's cries as I passed along the road, I came to investigate."

He then told Septimus Mayhew of the dramatic happenings before that worthy arrived on the scene. Septimus Mayhew listened in silence to Hamilton's strange narrative. At the end of it his rather dark face twisted into a cynical smile.

"Werewolves! I am afraid that as a naturalist in both senses of the word I must take them—*cum grano salis!*"

In spite of his dislike, Bulldog smiled at the aptness of the Latin tag. If the other thought to anger him with the remark, however, he was disappointed.

"Exactly, Mr. Mayhew—you take them with a grain of salt! And so do I! For the time being, I will bid you 'good-bye.'" And after the same salutation to the boy peer, who, he saw, had recovered from his terrible shock, Bulldog allowed a servant to lead him from the Hall to where his car waited on the highway.

Septimus Mayhew did not see the look of understanding that passed between Lord Blackston and the adventurer. He had turned away to hide his queer expression of doubt and chagrin that he could no longer keep from his face.

### The Scent of Death.

BRILLIANT sunshine streamed into the library of Blackston Hall when Bulldog Hamilton was shown into it next morning. It was difficult to believe that those old-world walls cloaked any horrors—especially of the kind with which Hamilton had come in contact the night before. The adventurer had not long to wait. For within two minutes of his arrival the door burst open and the youthful peer walked in.

"How-de-do, Mr. Hamilton. I'm glad you've turned up!" greeted the boy. Then he added, somewhat sheepishly: "I'm almost beginning to believe in that stuff about the werewolf. Anyway, it seems to have taken a big lurch against me!"

"Cheer up, laddie," said Bulldog, pulling at his inevitable pipe. "I'd like to see the table. The one this *bête noir* of yours took the documents from."

"Righto," answered the youngster, who seemed to be much reassured by the presence of the big, abrupt adventurer. "This way."

He led Bulldog to a refectory table at one end of the long, oak-panelled room.

The handsome piece of furniture had lost much of its grace. It dipped drunkenly towards the floor, and, stooping, Hamilton found that the beautifully carved leg at that end had been splintered and crushed for fully a foot of its length.

His eyes glinted with a strange light when he rose and dusted his well-kept hands.

"No wolf ever had jaws strong enough to crush solid oak of that thickness," he remarked, half to himself. Then, picking up one of the broken fragments, he sniffed it keenly. "H'm, amised," he murmured, looking thoughtfully at the young peer.

"That's uncle—a sort of trade-mark of his—suffers from asthma, you know, and everything he touches smells of cough mixture. He carries a bottle of the stuff around with him everywhere he goes, so that he can take his doses at the exact time!" the boy laughingly explained, concluding: "He stowed the papers away there himself."

"I see," said Hamilton quietly. "I'd like to have another chat with your uncle."

"Then your wish shall be granted, Mr. Hamilton," broke in a new voice from the doorway. Turning abruptly, the pair saw Mr. Septimus Mayhew himself. His strange night attire had, of course, been discarded, but the garments he wore in its place were even more outlandish. Though the mild spring sunshine flooded the place, he was muffled up to the eyebrows, so to speak. True, his Norfolk shooting-suit was only notable because of its vivid, mustard-coloured patterning, but round his thin neck was wound a thick, woollen scarf that must have measured close on two yards; his feet were incased in fur-lined, carpet slippers, and, strangest of all, his head was crowned by a red, velvet smoking-cap.

While Bulldog surveyed him doubtfully, he produced a small medicine-bottle from one pocket and a huge, silk handkerchief from another. Two drops of the mixture from the bottle he carefully dribbled on to the handkerchief, then he applied it to his scarlet-tipped nose.

"Ah—that's better," he croaked at last. "I am a martyr to asthma, Mr. Hamilton—a martyr, sir. Now, tell me why you have honoured us with another visit."



"Well," began Bulldog, and decided, in his straightforward fashion, to stop beating about the bush—for better or worse, "to tell you the truth, Mr. Mayhew, I have been sent by Sir Olaf Hodge to investigate the truth of this story of a werewolf at Blackston Hall."

He paused—expecting the storm to burst, hoping for nothing worse than a peremptory order to quit the place from Mayhew in his capacity of guardian to the young peer. But if the man were the rogue Hamilton suspected him to be, he was yet cunning. No trace of annoyance showed as he replied cordially:

"Well, well, Mr. Hamilton!! How truly exciting!! I did not know you believed in such things!! Certainly you shall try to solve the mystery. I fear I was somewhat brusque with you in the night—but you will agree it was not an auspicious time for making new acquaintances. Indeed, I, too, am beginning to believe in the legend of Blackston Hall. This strange disappearance of the documents relating to Lord Blackston's fortune—"

"Which you took from the family safe and placed

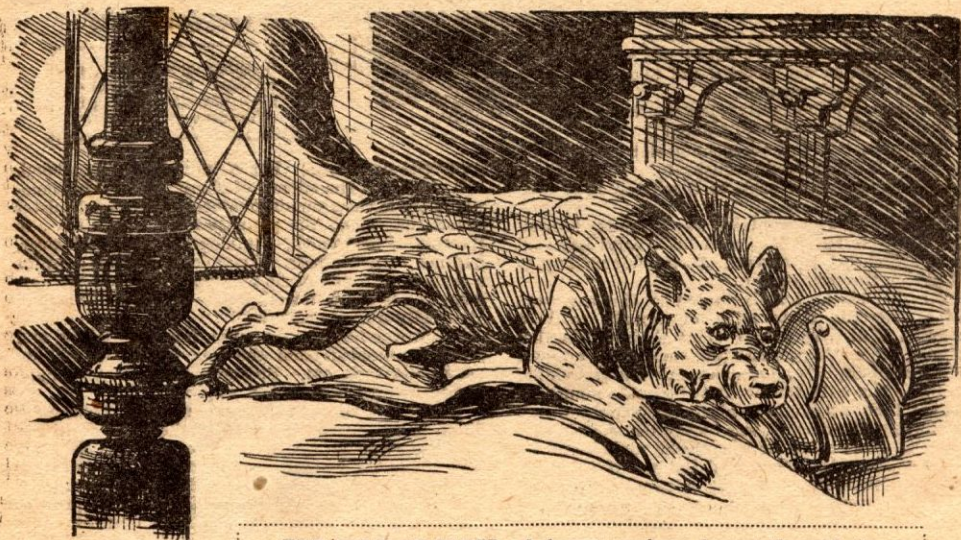
generous sample of the asthma cure, which old Septimus Mayhew had pressed upon him—but he had also managed to whisper to the boy a request to visit him at his hotel if anything untoward happened before nightfall.

Later he thanked his lucky stars for this.

### The Amulet.

**B**ULLDOG HAMILTON sat in his cosy, private room in the hotel at Blackston village. Pulling occasionally at his deep-bowled briar pipe, he stared thoughtfully into the fire. A number of test tubes and a retort lay with other chemical apparatus on the table. He had just finished analysing the asthma cure, and he had discovered that it consisted almost wholly of aniseed—a drug beloved of the dog tribe.

"So, Mr. Mayhew," he mused. "You soaked that table-leg in aniseed—to attract what? You swore you didn't believe in werewolves when I first met you; at our second meeting you were just as



THE STEEL SLEEPER.—A fearsome shape leaped through the window and hurtled straight at the figure in the bed. Its jaws closed on the steel throat of the suit of armour.

in the hollow leg of this table," murmured Bulldog.

"Yes—thinking they would be safer there," pursued the strange old man. "Though I regret now that I did so. It was another mistake to allow them to move the Black Stone. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. You know, there's never smoke without fire, and werewolves have been believed in in Europe for more centuries than—but you do not seem interested in my discourse, Mr. Hamilton?" he broke off.

"Nunno, not exactly," murmured the adventurer. "The fact is I'm more interested in that cough mixture of yours."

A startled light leapt for a moment into the queer eyes of Septimus Mayhew. But when Bulldog went on to explain that he would like some of the stuff for a friend of his, the other instantly recovered his sang-froid. His pet complaint was obviously a fetish of his, and for the rest of the interview he talked about it and its symptoms to the mildly-amused detective. When he left the Hall, Bulldog carried a

emphatic about their existence. That was a blind—to put me off the scent. The scent—ah! What animal was it you used to impersonate the werewolf and which you attracted to that table-leg with aniseed? I wonder."

For a time he thought in this channel, his brain running on a keen, deductive train—putting together the pieces of the strange mystery.

The hotel boy interrupted him with the announcement that Lord Blackston had called to see him, and five minutes later the boy peer was shown into the room.

"Hope I'm not interrupting you, Mr. Hamilton," greeted the youngster, shaking hands warmly, "but things are pretty dull at the Hall, and I thought I'd run down in the car for a chat."

"Anything fresh happened?" queried the other.

"Nothing startling," returned Lord Blackston. "Oh—you seem to have converted Uncle Septimus to a belief in werewolves, witches and black magic! He has given me this to wear round my neck to-night



when I go to bed. Says it's an amulet guaranteed to ward off evil spirits!"

Laughing, the boy drew a piece of brocaded fabric from his pocket. Bulldog examined it curiously. It was covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics. A faint, familiar scent assailed his nostrils, and raising it thereto he sniffed keenly.

As he did so his eyes narrowed to steel points beneath their black brows.

"Aniseed—or the Scent of Death!" he murmured—but so softly that the other did not hear.

"Suppose it will be all right to humour my avuncular relative?" said the boy carelessly.

"On the contrary," said Hamilton slowly, "it might be—er—fatal!"

"Good heavens! What on earth—" began Lord Blackston. Bulldog interrupted him.

"I want you to put yourself entirely in my hands, my boy." And the other, impressed by the seriousness of his tones, agreed at once, though he was puzzled and intrigued by the adventurer's manner.

"Of course, I'll do exactly what you want," he said. "But what's it all about?"

"I hope to tell you everything—later," was the only reply Bulldog would vouchsafe. "Meanwhile, I should like to come back to Blackston Hall with you now."

As he said the last words he was wrapping himself in a big overcoat. Then, with his bowler hat well over his forehead, he allowed the bewildered boy to lead him to the waiting car.

Soon the sleek, long-bonneted racing-car was lancing over the three miles of moonlit road to Blackston Hall. They arrived at their destination in record time. The sombre pile, once more arrayed in the mantle of night, looked as eerie and forbidding as before. Not a light showed at any of the numerous windows, though a glance at his luminous wrist-watch told Bulldog Hamilton it was barely ten o'clock.

"Uncle goes to bed at nine every night—and he likes the servants to have all lights out by ten," explained Lord Blackston in answer to Bulldog Hamilton's question. "He had already retired when I left."

"All the better for my purpose," replied Bulldog and relapsed into a thoughtful silence which he did not break until they were both in Lord Blackston's bedroom.

"Now—what's the next move?" asked the young peer, who was vastly intrigued by all this mystery.

"I want a suit of armour," was the astonishing rejoinder.

"A s-s-suit of armour? I say, Mr. Hamilton, you're not joking, are you?"

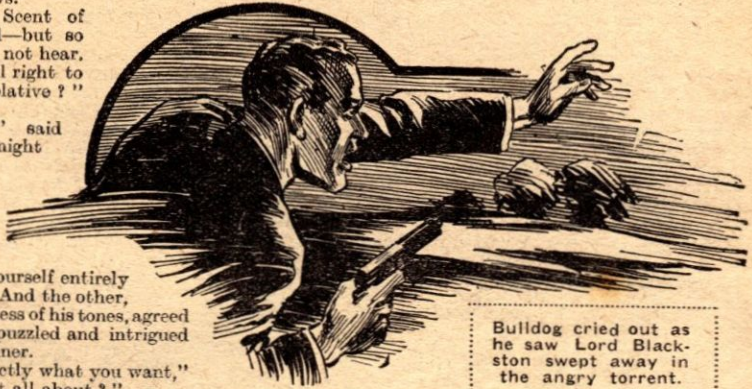
"No, my boy—I am very far from joking. There is a suit of rather fine sixteenth-century mail at the corner of the passage outside. Come—we must bring it along here."

Completely mystified, almost doubting the sanity of the abrupt man before him, Lord Blackston, however, followed Hamilton to the corner of the bedroom passage and assisted him to carry one of his ancestors' war-costumes to the bedroom.

Now, under Bulldog Hamilton's direction, they placed it in a recumbent position in the bed. Then the adventurer did an astonishing thing. He produced the amulet which Lord Blackston had left in his charge, and fastened it around the dummy figure's throat!

"Now, we've got to hide. This will do," hissed Bulldog, drawing the lad behind a Jacobean tallboy in one corner of the spacious room. "We'll have to possess ourselves in patience—and silence—for an indefinite period."

Thus commenced a vigil which had not been disturbed when midnight chimed from the old clock tower. Then Lord Blackston gave a shudder of



Bulldog cried out as he saw Lord Blackston swept away in the angry torrent.

superstitious horror. For a terrible, wailing laugh had shattered the silence of the night. From somewhere out in the grounds it came—an eldritch, sinister sound that made the youngster's tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth. Bulldog Hamilton, however, had not turned a hair. His voice was firm, save for a note of triumph, as he whispered: "You are now going to see the werewolf again—but don't be afraid. It's really quite harmless!"

There was no time for more, for a scratching and scraping sounded from the roof of an outbuilding below the bedroom. Suddenly, a fearsome shape leaped through the broken window.

While the two silent watchers drew back with bated breath, it sprang on to the bed, and they saw its jaws close on the steel throat of the dummy. Next moment a whining snarl came from the awesome visitant. It drew back hurriedly—its jaws almost broken by that frightful bite on the unyielding metal.

"Bang! Bang! Bang!" Bulldog Hamilton's revolver spoke as he leapt from his hiding-place towards the midnight marauder. But, as before, the bullets ricocheted harmlessly off the horrible, scaly body. One smashed a picture by Hamilton's head. Then, with a hideous peal of laughter, the Thing went through the window.

It is a human and animal instinct to chase anything on the run—and Lord Blackston obeyed that primal urge now. Forgetting his recent fear of the strange visitant, he jumped in front of Bulldog Hamilton and followed the werewolf through the window.

"Come back!" shouted the detective. But his words went unheeded. So he, in turn, went in chase of Lord Blackston. The youngster had broken his college records in his year. Now he sprinted away from the athletic but older man. Also he knew every inch of the grounds. He was gaining on the monster when it reached a point almost at the lake. Here a stream fed the ornamental pool—a stream which was crossed by a light wooden bridge. The werewolf had just reached the other end when Lord Blackston set foot on it. Swift as light the animal turned and, burying its powerful teeth in the post supporting the footbridge, snapped it like a rotten carrot.



Next moment the whole structure had collapsed, the part on which Lord Blackston stood being borne along by the swiftly rushing torrent into the lake itself.

As the boy was drawn under the dark waters, Bulldog Hamilton reached the edge. Without hesitation he dived into the icy, forbidding depths.

It was difficult work in the inadequate light of the moon, but Hamilton dived again and again at the

swam diagonally upwards, and to his intense relief, his head suddenly broke the surface. The moonlight revealed a section of the bank covered with bulrushes. He scrambled ashore amongst them. As he did so a figure rose up behind him and a life-preserver struck the boy unconscious.

He came to his senses to find himself lying, bound hand and foot, on the concrete floor of a strange, circular chamber, built of glass. Strong electric



THE IRON-JAWED GHOUL.—Swift as light the werewolf turned and buried its powerful teeth in the post supporting the bridge. It snapped, and Lord Blackston crashed into the torrent.

spot where the boy had disappeared. Each time he drew a blank. He groped about the bed of the lake—without avail. There was no trace of Lord Blackston.

At last, when the adventurer had decided to give it up, his fingers encountered a hard, glassy substance and he traced the outline of a large semi-circle. It was as if the dome of a mosque lay there on the bed of the lake! What could it mean? Was this a submerged lair of the werewolf, and, if so, how did it enter from the lake? Had Lord Blackston been forced by some unknown agency to enter it, too?

Bulldog swam to the edge of the lake and waded through the bulrushes to terra firma. His first impulse was to arouse the house, to tell Septimus Mayhew of his ward's disappearance and to inform the police. But he decided against this. Mayhew, he felt sure, was implicated, and if the boy were still alive, he was in the villain's hands.

The adventurer gazed at the waters of the lake thoughtfully, groping for a solution to it all. What sinister mystery did that black patch of water hide? And, as he sat thus, he saw a mysterious, yellow glow deep down in its depths!

### The Unmasking.

SEPTIMUS MAYHEW, again clad in his flamboyant night attire, faced his captive.

Lord Blackston, since he had started in pursuit of the werewolf, had lived in a nightmare of events. After being swept by hidden currents into the lake, he was drawn down, down into the hungry maw of the waters.

He thought his last hour had come, for, struggle as he would, he could not break that invisible, remorseless attraction. At last in a forlorn bid, he

lights illumined the semi-sphere, and by their light he saw his uncle regarding him.

A venomous, malevolent expression distorted Septimus Mayhew's face, as he fixed his burning, hate-filled eyes on his captive, who recoiled in horror.

"So, my boy, I have you in my power at last," hissed the man, who was now revealing himself in his true colours. "You were saved from death the other night through the interference of that fellow Hamilton, but this time you shall not escape. See!"

Lord Blackston looked in the direction his guardian indicated and saw a now-familiar form chained to the wall.

"The Werewolf!" he exclaimed.

Septimus Mayhew laughed harshly. "Hardly," he sneered. "Call it a metamorphosis." And with these cryptic words he drew a large, hypodermic syringe from his pocket, and placing the nozzle against the leg of the animal, pressed the plunger. The result was startling, horrifying. The werewolf gave a peal of unearthly laughter and commenced biting through its bonds as if they were thin twine.

"I'm afraid I must leave you, Eric," Septimus Mayhew said, smiling horribly. "My—er—pet seems annoyed." And, backing, to a narrow exit from the chamber, he left the lad to a dreadful fate.

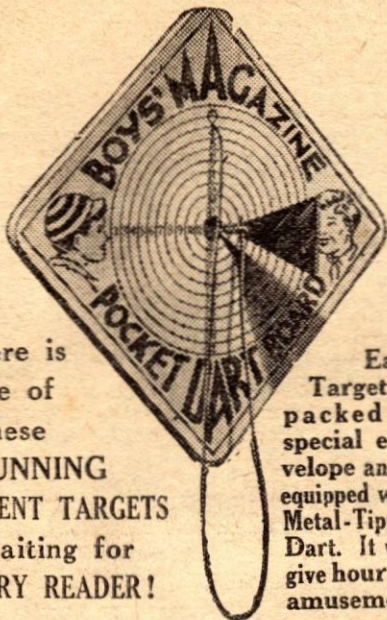
Lord Blackston stared at the struggling werewolf with eyes almost starting from his head. But with a great effort he composed himself to meet his doom. He saw the creature break free from the wall, and foaming at the mouth leap towards him. Then a thunderous knocking on the glass dome of the chamber drew his attention. And a gasp of relief escaped the captive's lips as he dimly made out the figure of Bulldog Hamilton.

The adventurer was hammering on the tough glass, and flashing his waterproof electric torch in an



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effort to distract the creature from its prey. The werewolf regarded this new enemy with bloodshot eyes. Then, with another burst of hideous laughter, it leapt at the detective.

There was a terrific thud as its ugly snout crashed against the iron-hard surface of the glass, and it dropped to the floor, temporarily stunned.

"Hold on!" Bulldog Hamilton's lips framed the words; then his face disappeared. His lungs almost bursting for want of air, he had shot to the surface of the lake. But he did not pause there. Haste was imperative if he was to reach Lord Blackston before the ravening werewolf recovered consciousness. With a swift, over-arm stroke he swam for the buirushes and commenced searching frantically among them.

For some time his efforts were unrewarded and he was beginning to lose hope when, suddenly, he

stumbled on what he sought. It was the cleverly concealed entrance to a subterranean tunnel.

Without hesitation he commenced to crawl down the steeply sloping pipe, until he had covered a dozen yards. At this point his head came in contact with a hard surface which effectively blocked further progress. His electric torch revealed it to be a circular, steel door, and he sighed with relief when he descried a simple latch on its left side which was unprotected by a padlock. Cautiously Bulldog raised this latch and opened the metal door.

Beyond, as he had expected, he saw the brightly lit interior of the glass cell. The werewolf lay on the floor where it had fallen, but it had recovered consciousness, for at the entry of the adventurer it raised itself into a crouching position and, almost without pause, sprang full at the intruder.

*Bang! Bang! Bang!* Three deafening explosions sounded in the confined space and the creature seemed to halt in mid-air. Then it crashed to the concrete floor and lay still. Bulldog Hamilton had fired in the nick of time through his hip-pocket—aiming at the red, gaping jaws of the monster.

When he examined the werewolf he found it was dead.

"Thank heaven you were in time," said the young peer, rubbing his limbs briskly to restore the circulation, after Bulldog had released him from his bonds. "But I confess, Mr. Hamilton, I am still puzzled over the whole affair."

"Everything can be easily explained," began Bulldog, but before he could say more, muffled footsteps sounded from the far side of the dome.

"My guardian! He's coming back!" whispered Lord Blackston.

The other gripped his arm and drew him into the passage by which he had just entered. He carefully pushed to the circular door until it was ajar. They could thus see into the submerged chamber without being seen themselves.

As Hamilton did this a similar door at the other side of the chamber opened, and Septimus Mayhew stepped in. His face was a mask of cold fury. Obviously he had heard the shots and had come to investigate. At sight of the dead body of his creature his rage knew no bounds.

"Tricked!" he grated. "The birds have flown. Lucky for me they did not wait. Now I can at least make my own escape."

His next actions puzzled the adventurer at first. He bent over the carcase of the werewolf and fiddled with its scaly hide. Then, to the watchers' amazement, a section of this covering opened, and from the cavity the plotter withdrew a sheaf of papers.

"My mother's will!" whispered Lord Blackston in Hamilton's ear. "The documents that were stolen from the leg of the library table!"

But Bulldog did not appear to have heard. Instead he flung open the door of the passage and leapt at Septimus Mayhew.

"Caught red-handed!" he roared.

Mayhew stood at bay, his face livid.

"Yes, I think you almost win—but not quite!" rasped the schemer, and leapt to sudden, amazing action. Before Hamilton could reach him he snatched up a huge sledge hammer that stood against the wall, and, wielding it with a maniac's strength, he crashed it once, twice, thrice, against the glass side of the dome.

The result was cataclysmic. Even the toughened glass was not proof against those desperate strokes. It shattered, and water began to pour into the underwater cell. Worse—the rest of the dome collapsed under the sudden strain, and the whole lake seemed to pour in upon the three men.

Only the fact that Hamilton and Lord Blackston



were close to the exit, and the detective's swift action saved them from certain death. For, even as those hammerblows fell, Bulldog Hamilton had snatched the boy peer back into the passage.

"Crawl—for your life!" he thundered. And like two startled moles the pair wriggled up the sloping passage to the bulrushes. Despite their haste, the water came swirling round them, when they were still a yard from the surface of the ground. But, with all the force of his muscles, Lord Blackston levered himself out of the top of the opening and gave Bulldog a hand.

The pair stood among the bulrushes inhaling deep breaths of the clean, night air. Then both stared at the mouth of the pit through which they had come. The black waters of the lake were now level with the surface of the soil around it.

"I'm afraid your guardian was not so lucky," murmured Bulldog Hamilton soberly.

It was Septimus Mayhew's requiem.

\* \* \* \* \*

"BUT what sort of animal did my guardian use for the werewolf?"

Young Lord Blackston asked the question in puzzled tones. He was seated with Bulldog and Sir Olaf Hodge in Hamilton's London chambers.

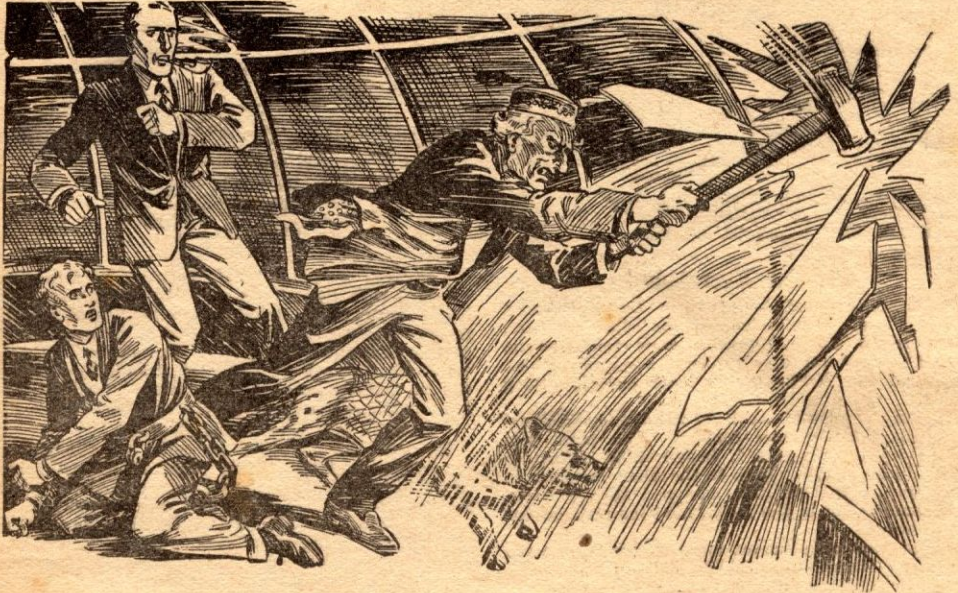
Bulldog removed his pipe from between his teeth to reply.

"The Werewolf," he said slowly, "was—a

the hiding place of the treasure. It was in a glass structure which the eccentric lady had had built on the bed of the ornamental lake in the grounds. By accident Lord Blackston came upon his guardian as he was poring over these papers in the library and saw enough to realise that they referred to his mother's fortune. Septimus Mayhew, as you already know, had them hidden in the leg of the library table, ostensibly until they could be placed in the family lawyer's hands. But he never intended to allow this.

"Instead, he concocted a remarkable scheme. The skeleton of a wolf, found under Blackston Rock when it was removed, gave him the idea. A keen naturalist, he disguised a hyena as a wolf, covering it with armour plate to make it invulnerable to revolver bullets. The hideous laughter of the thing puzzled me at first, lending colour to the werewolf idea—but I have spent some years in South Africa and am familiar with the almost human laughter of these animals. They are also incredibly powerful in the jaws and can bite through wood, as if it were paper. Mayhew controlled the animal by means of mesmerism and the scent of anised. His motive for all this was of course to make the hyena, in the guise of the werewolf, kill Lord Blackston. To overcome its cowardice he inoculated it with hydrophobia—in effect sending the animal mad. Fortunately I was able to intervene and save Lord Blackston from his fate.

"The rest you already know. The documents



DOOM IN THE DOME.—Mayhew snatched up a huge sledge-hammer. He smashed it against the glass side of the dome, shattering it, and water began to pour in.

hyena!" Bulldog waited for the murmur of excitement which followed this revelation to die down, then in terse, telling phrases the usually short-spoken adventurer told his two listeners the explanation of all that had happened.

"When the Lady Blackston died, the only will in her lawyers' possession made her son her sole legatee. But her fortune, reputed to be two hundred thousand pounds, could not be traced. Recently, however, Septimus Mayhew found the documents describing

describing the hiding place of Lady Blackston's fortune were recovered from the lake with Septimus Mayhew's body, and the gold has also been salvaged by divers.

A grim smile illumined his strong face as he concluded. "And that, I think, is the end of the legend of Blackston Hall."

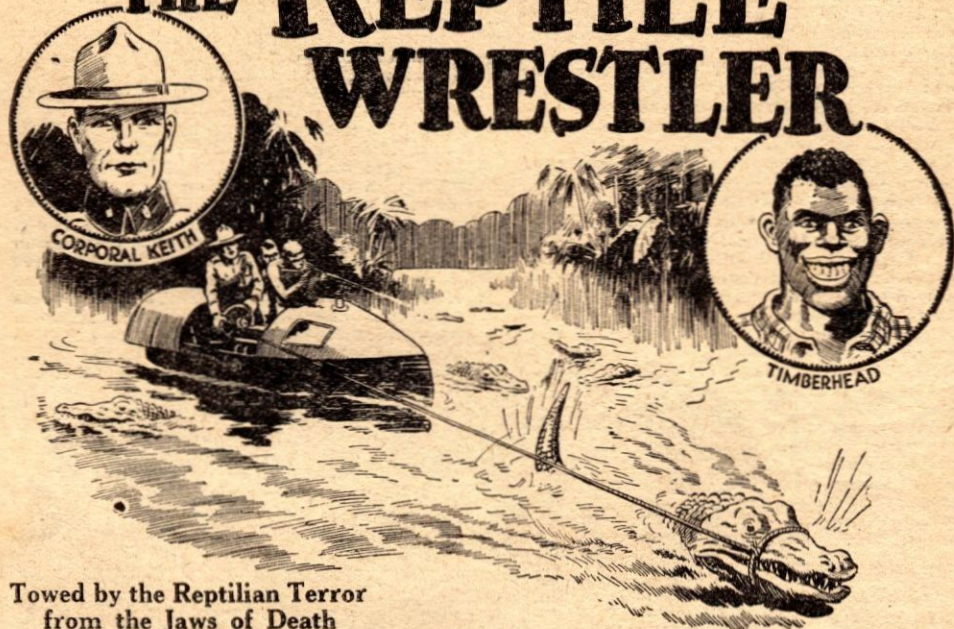
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# THE REPTILE WRESTLER



**Towed by the Reptilian Terror  
from the Jaws of Death**

**In The Everglades.**

THE silence that broods over the Everglades of Florida was broken by the splash of oars. Corporal Keith Kennedy grew tense as he peered keenly through the tall saw-grass which concealed the *Kittiwake*, his little electric diving canoe.

Round the edge of a thickly wooded islet bobbed a small, flat-bottomed dinghy. The man who pulled it—a stout, florid, heavily built fellow in white ducks—had his back to the silent watchers in the canoe. Another man, stripped to the waist, was standing up in the stern, his eyes bent on the slimy water.

"That sure looks like our man, Timber," muttered the young Mountie to his dusky pal.

"Which one, baas?" inquired his coloured partner.

"The big man," replied Keith. "I'd know that back anywhere. If only he'd turn his face—"

Suddenly his attention was diverted from the big man to his younger, more slightly built companion. The boy—he was little more, though lithe and muscular—was pointing excitedly at the water, where a sudden swirl suggested the presence of an alligator.

Then, to Keith's astonishment, the young man suddenly sprang from the dinghy and took a header into that alligator-infested stream! Hardly had he disappeared when the water surged and bubbled violently.

"By gosh! It's the Reptile Wrestler!" exclaimed Keith. "He's tackling a 'gator!"

The fame of "All-in" Ed Hickory, the man who wrestled with live alligators, had reached even the headquarters of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, far away up north. Keith looked on in amazement at this exhibition of his skill. Out of the seething waters flashed a long, scaly tail, frenziedly beating the air, and a moment later the head of "All-in" Ed bobbed triumphantly above the surface.

"He's got it!" gasped the Mountie.

Through the confusion he could see the young man's fingers clasped firmly round the closed snout of the alligator. The monster writhed and struggled furiously to free itself from that experienced grip.

Three times Ed Hickory vanished, drawn down through the boiling water by the powerful amphibian. Each time he shot to the surface again. His famous wrestler's hold was unrelaxed. Gradually, inexorably, the saurian weakened. Slowly, fighting every inch of the way, Ed hauled it towards a spit of sand jutting out from the shore, opposite where the *Kittiwake* lay hidden.

"By heck! He's winning!" cried Keith.

At last Ed gained the shore, and waded out of the water, dragging the captive reptile, a monster more than ten feet long, with him. But the struggle was not yet over. The 'gator struck out viciously with its powerful tail, and Ed flung himself on it in an effort to turn it over on its back, when it would be helpless. The man in the dinghy began cautiously to approach the shore.

Then something happened which threatened to turn Ed's victory to disaster. He thrust one bare



foot against what he thought was an old log, to gain a purchase—and the log suddenly sprang to lashing life! It was a sleeping alligator, a full-grown monster some fourteen feet in length!

Ed saw his danger, and, as he lay panting on his captive, yelled to his companion to help him. But, to Keith's amazement, the man in the dinghy pulled hurriedly away from the field of battle.

"The coward!" ejaculated Keith, and in a flash he had jammed in the gear and sent the *Kittiwake* skimming across the stream.

"Harman! Help! Shoot, you fool!" screamed Ed, squirming away from the attacking saurian. But the man in the dinghy cast one startled glance at the approaching canoe, then pulled frantically at the oars. He disappeared into the heart of the saw-grass.

Hastily surrendering the wheel to Timber, Keith seized his repeating rifle and stood up in the bows of the canoe. The giant alligator had its massive jaws open, and was waddling forward to snap at Ed's leg when Keith fired. Into the soft flesh of the monster's throat the bullet passed. The 'gator shocked, and closed its jaws with a sound like the cracking of a whip, missing Ed's foot by a couple of inches. It kicked wildly, but another bullet stretched it inert and lifeless on the sand.

By the time the *Kittiwake* ran aground Ed Hickory had his captive spread out on its back, and was hypnotising it by softly massaging its stomach. Gradually it grew limp and passive; a film passed over its eyes.

### Two-Gun Jake's Goodwill.

"SAY, buddies," said the Reptile Wrestler, staring at Keith and Timberhead as they stepped ashore, "I don't know who you are, but if there's anything I can do to repay you—waal, I guess you saved my life!"

"I'm Corporal Kennedy, of the Canadian Mounted Police," replied Keith, shaking the proffered hand. "And you can square our little account by telling me who your friend is."

"That cowardly skunk?" exclaimed "All-in" Ed angrily. "Why, he's Jake Harman. He runs an alligator farm, and if it hadn't been for you he'd have had mine, too."

"How so?" asked Keith.

"Waal, we're partners," said Ed. "He put some capital into my farm, on the understanding that he gets it if anything happens to me. An' it looks like he wanted it to happen!"

"You're lucky," remarked Keith grimly. "You've been dealing with a dangerous man, Ed. Jake Harman—Two-Gun Jake, we call him up north—is a gunman! He killed a mounted policeman over the border, and I guess he thought he was safe hidden away in the Everglades. But I got permission from the U.S. police authorities to round him up."

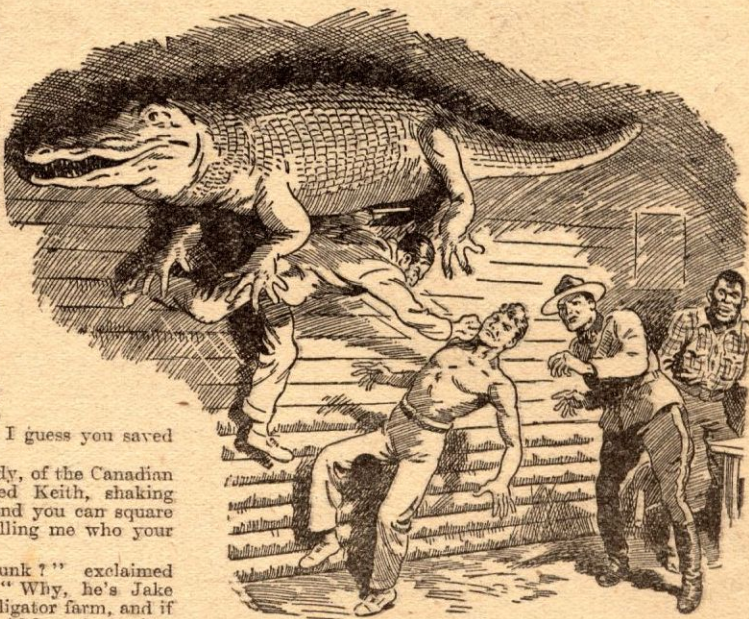
Ed whistled. "So Jake's a crook, is he? Say, let's talk this out."

He squatted down on the sand, the Mountie and his dusky pal sitting with him, and together they held a council of war. Keith guessed that Harman would attempt to make a getaway, either out of the country or to one of his hide-outs in the vast swamps. But Ed suggested that he should lead the Mountie to the gunman's 'gator farm, where they might learn something of his movements.

Casting a regretful glance at his captive 'gator, which he had to abandon, Ed followed his new friends to the canoe. In a few minutes the *Kittiwake* was gliding through the shallow water towards an apparently impenetrable wall of jungle. But Ed was familiar with the paths of this rank wilderness, and under his guidance Keith steered the canoe through a maze of channels overgrown by dense vegetation.

"It's sure lucky I met you, Ed," remarked the young Mountie, as they suddenly emerged on to a level tract of water, ringed by saw-grass six feet high. In the midst of it rose a stockaded islet, black with cypresses and pines, and festooned with wild vines.

"Yep! It's not easy to find your way around



A CROOK IN CROC'S CLOTHING.—The Reptile Wrestler reached up to the stuffed crocodile to demonstrate a grip, when suddenly a fist shot out of the skin and sent him reeling.

here," replied the Reptile Wrestler. The canoe ran aground on a sandy beach, and they sprang out. Their rifles held ready, Keith and Timber followed Ed through a gate in the stockade. They moved cautiously between compounds, in which captive alligators basked in the sun, towards a low-built shanty among the trees.

As they drew near, a man suddenly appeared on



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the veranda, stared at them for a moment, then came running towards them, a look of fear on his face.

"Why, Mas'r Hickory," he panted, "wot done bring yo' heah?"

"I want Mas'r Harman," replied Ed. "Where is he?"

"Oh, Mas'r Hickory, he done leave mighty quick fo' de swamp!" exclaimed the nigger, trembling like a leaf. "But he hab left yo' a letter in de cabin, baas."

Ed exchanged a glance with Keith. "Looks like he's slipped it for one of his hide-outs. But we better search the house."

Still suspicious and on the alert for treachery they mounted the veranda steps, and tried the door. It yielded, to let them into a large, untidy room, unremarkable save for an enormous, stuffed alligator skin hanging from one log wall.

"That's the biggest 'gator I ever collared in these waters," remarked Ed, jerking his thumb at it. "Sixteen feet if it's an inch! I made Harman a present of it, and he had it stuffed."

Keith, one finger on the trigger, was looking round the room. His eye fell on a black ebony box on the table; an envelope lay beside it. "See here," he said, "this is addressed to you, Ed."

The Reptile Wrestler ripped it open, took out a single sheet of notepaper and then gave a sharp whistle. "Say, jest listen to this!" he exclaimed.

*Dear Ed,—I guess my number's up. That durned mountie is after me for some little trouble up Canada way, so I'm clearing. I've left you the farm, and you'll find the deeds and my goodwill in the ebony box.—All the best, J. HARMAN.*

Keith looked suspiciously at the black box. "Seems fishy to me!" he commented, raising his rifle. "Stand back while I put a bullet through that box!"

A loud report reverberated round the room, and the box jerked sideways across the table under the impact of the bullet.

"Waal, it ain't exploded!" Ed said with a laugh as he picked it up. He tore open the lid, and then recoiled with a startled gasp.

Hissing angrily, forked tongue darting venomously, an evil, ruddy-brown head reared itself out of the box. Next moment a great snake leapt into the air like a released spring and coiled itself round his bare arm. He shook it violently, but the head struck with the vicious speed of a whip-lash, and the poisonous fangs were buried deep in his flesh!

Crack! Keith's rifle spoke again, and the snake, its head shattered by the shot, relaxed its grip and

dropped heavily to the floor. Ed stared aghast at the small punctures in his arm.

"Don't worry, baas!" shouted Timber, leaping forward. "Ah'll fix dat!" He bent over the lad, his great, white teeth bit into the wound and he sucked at the wound, drawing the venom into his mouth. Then he spat it out.

"I'm O.K.," grinned the Reptile Wrestler, mopping the sweat from his brow. "I reckon Timber saved my life." He spurned the dead snakes with his foot. "Cotton-mouths! So that's Harman's goodwill!"

Ed armed himself with one of Harman's guns, and, their fingers on the triggers, they subjected the house and grounds to a rigorous search. But there was no sign of Two-Gun Jake.

"Looks like he's hiding on one of his islands in the swamp," said Ed. "Shall we try to rout him out?"

"Sure!" said Keith promptly. "But one of us must stay here, in case he returns when we're away." He turned to his darkey pal. "Timber, you'd better stop and keep watch. And if you see Harman—shoot!"

"Dat's O.K. by me, baas," replied Timber. Settling himself in a chair with his rifle between his knees, he mounted guard, while Keith and Ed returned to the *Kittiwake*, and moved across the water out of Timber's sight.

"Ah guess dis chile hab got de easiest job," thought the darkey, rocking himself lazily.

A slight noise behind him made him turn in his chair, but a crushing blow on the back of his skull, pitched him on his face on the floor!

Timber's head had often been compared to solid oak, but the force of that blow almost robbed him of consciousness. Dazedly he saw Two-Gun Jake's coarse, florid face grinning down at him, and wondered, in a vague, wandering way, where on earth the man had been hiding.

Then Harman clapped his hands, and a crowd of shivering niggers appeared at the door. "Take this sleeping beauty and chuck him in one of the alligator compounds!" he ordered brusquely. "I've got some more work to do!"

**Towed By An Alligator!**

THE *Kittiwake* had reached the centre of the water and Keith was heading her for an almost invisible channel in the swamp, when her speed abruptly slackened. Keith pressed the starter, but, though the batteries hummed, the little canoe seemed to have lost all motive power. She turned slowly, drifted sideways a few yards and then stuck, wedged in the saw-grass.

"What's happened?" exclaimed Ed anxiously. "Can't say," returned Keith, examining the controls. "The batteries are still running. Here, wait a moment." He leaned out over the side, and ran his hand along the stern under the water. Then his expression changed. "By heck! the screw's dropped off!"

"What! The propeller?" gasped Ed. At that moment a hoarse shout drew their attention to the islet they had just left. A white-clothed figure standing on the shore was signalling them with a gleaming revolver.

"Two-Gun Jake!" ejaculated Keith, recognising the gross, ungainly form.

Ed Hickory stared in amazement. "How the heck did he get there?" he gasped. "I thought we'd combed out the island!"

Harman made a trumpet of his hands and shouted in a jeering voice: "Won't you fellers drop in for a bite of lunch? I've got your darkey pal waiting for you—in the 'gator compound!"



"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Keith, and he sprang up in the derelict canoe, his hands tightening round his rifle.

"Sorry I can't help you," went on Harman, his faint voice shrill with hate. "I guess you'd better swim for it. But mind the gators!"

Keith's reply to this taunt was to level his rifle and fire, but Harman saw the movement, and sprang back, disappearing among the trees.

Ed Hickory was gazing round the expanse of water with a moody eye. "I ain't going to be beat by that skunk," he muttered. "See here, Kennedy, I'm gonna swim for it. You can keep the alligators off with your gun."

Keith shook his head. "Too risky," he replied. "We must think up a better scheme."

Suddenly his shrewd eyes lightened. "I've got it!" He fumbled with the lariar which always hung coiled at his belt. "These alligators are gonna work for their living!"

The Reptile Wrestler gazed at him in silent curiosity as he swung the lariar round his head. A giant alligator, diabolically interested in the occupants of the motionless boat, was swimming towards them, its half-opened jaws lifted out of the water. Keith's eye was on it. He made his cast with his usual uncanny skill, and the long noose fell neatly round those cavernous jaws.

They snapped to with a grisly clash of teeth, and the startled gator, swirling round in an eddy of foam, plunged away with a jerk. But Keith was ready for it. He lashed the end of the lariar round a forward cleat, the rope tautened, and the *Kittiwake* surged comberously in the wake of the alligator!

"By gosh! What an idea!" gasped Ed in astonished admiration. He levelled his rifle, his quick brain grasping the gist of the plan. A shot rang out, and the bullet, plopping into the water beside the alligator, made it shoot forward with renewed violence—towards Harman's island!

"That's the scheme!" shouted Keith. "Keep him moving!" He snatched up his rifle and dropped a bullet on the other side of the alligator.

Unfortunately, this had the effect of making him dive. His long, scaly tail whirled up in the air, and the indignant monster sank from sight. At the violent pull on the rope the *Kittiwake's* silver nose dipped, and the water foamed over it.

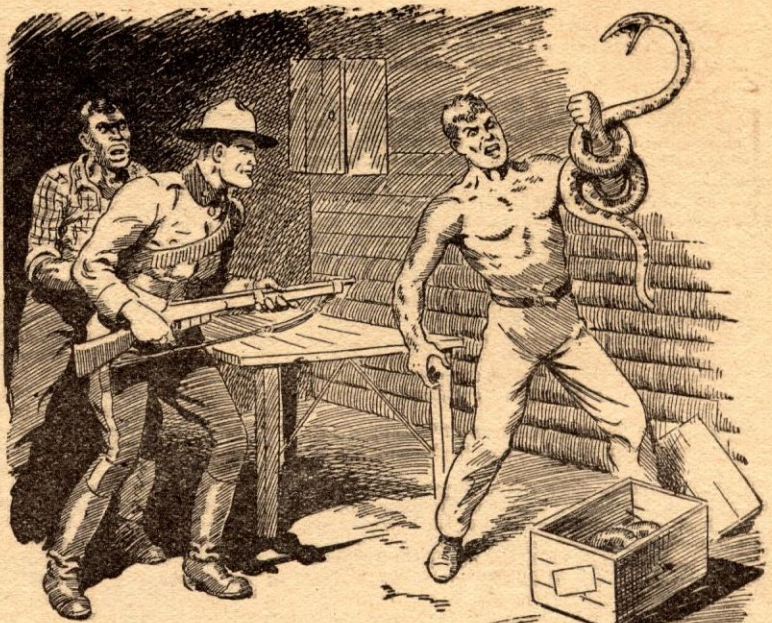
"He'll sink us!" yelled Ed in alarm. But Keith was prepared for that. He pulled back a lever, and the folding hood on the after deck slid forward, enclosing them in the well. Then the *Kittiwake* sank in pursuit of the alligator.

"Help! Help!" It was Timberhead's voice,

"Say," Ed gasped, "is this a canoe or a submarine?"

"A bit of both!" grinned Keith.

Irritated by the pressure of the noose on its throat, the alligator soon rose to the surface, dragging the *Kittiwake* after it. The metal hood flashed back,



CRATE SNAKES—Ed tore open the lid of the box, then recoiled with a startled gasp. A great snake, hissing angrily, had writhed out and coiled itself round his arm.

and Keith was quick to rise and drop a bullet in the neighbourhood of the saurian's tail.

Maddened with fear, the great reptile thrashed its tempestuous way through the water, plainly making for the alcove, where it hoped to throw off its mysterious burden. The grip of the noose round its throat and the hissing fall of the bullets spurred it on. At last the terrified creature launched itself up the sloping shore, and the next moment the *Kittiwake's* keel was embedded in sand. The exhausted monster sank down, making feeble little tugs at the rope.

"I guess I'll finish the poor crittur!" muttered Ed, and, taking careful aim, he lodged a bullet in its head. The great tail lashed out—twitched—and was still.

It was the work of a moment for the friends to leap out into the shallow water and drag the *Kittiwake* up the beach.

"We gotta go carefully," said Keith. "That skunk Harman may be hiding among the trees."

Step by step they advanced towards the gate in the stockade. Peering through it, they satisfied themselves that there was nobody in sight, and then walked on tiptoe along the avenue between the compounds. Suddenly a shrill scream rent the air—brought them to a shuddering halt!

"Help! Help!" It was Timberhead's voice,



vibrant with horror. "Keith! Baas! De 'gators hab got me!"

In a flash Keith had hurled himself at the low stockade of one of the compounds, and scrambling to the top, he saw Timberhead, his head bleeding, sick with terror, crouching in the opposite corner. Six enormous alligators, awakened from their noon-tide sleep, were waddling with deliberate menace in his direction. The covering nigger was so befuddled with fear and the effects of the blow, that the idea of clambering over the low stockade had not even occurred to him.

In an instant a volley of shots rang out as Keith and Ed emptied their magazines at the reptiles. Two rolled over dead, one went lashing and writhing into a pool, and the others scurried away in lumbering panic.

"Climb over the stockade!" yelled Keith.

Timber looked round with lack-lustre eyes, and then, as if suddenly aroused to action, swarmed over the stakes. In another moment he had run round the outside of the compound and joined them.

"What happened? Where's Harman?" demanded Keith.

"Sho' Ah dunno!" stammered Timber. "Ah was jest sitting there, thinkin', when—*wham!* a thunder-bolt hit me on de bean! De next t'ing Ah remembers was wakin' up wid dem 'gators wallowing 'round me!"

"Quick! Let's search the house!" snapped Ed. "That murderous skunk must be lurking somewhere!"

Hastily reloading their rifles, they raced up the steps and burst into the cabin. It was empty. Through all the rooms they rampaged, poking their rifles into cupboards, peering under beds, challenging Harman to come out and show himself for the dirty scamp he was. Then, while Ed kept watch in the house, Keith and Timber made a rapid detour of the island. They found the niggers cowering in abject fear in their huts, but the poor wretches could offer no explanation as to Harman's whereabouts.

At last they rejoined Ed Hickory outside the shanty. "No sign of him!" announced Keith. "Looks like he's got away in a boat. The scamp's as slippery as an eel!"

"Let's go inside and get a drink," said Ed, philosophically.

When they had settled down to their refreshment, Keith's curious eyes, roving round the room, settled once more on the enormous stuffed alligator which hung from the wall.

"Say, you must have had a tussle with that crittur!" he remarked. "What beats me is how you keep their jaws shut."

"Aw, it's child's play." Ed got up and strode across to the dead monster. "The main thing's to get a grip on his snout before he can show his teeth. See here!" He reached up one sinewy, brown arm, and his powerful fingers closed over the reptile's snout. "You dig your nails into his nostrils, take a firm hold of one leg— Great, jumping catfish!"

The Reptile Wrestler reeled back from a violent and unexpected blow in the face. A revolver-shot cracked, and, as Keith instinctively ducked, he saw the middle of the stuffed saurian ripped open as if sliced with a knife—and a man leapt out!

It was Harman!

In a moment Two-Gun Jake had whipped across the room to the open door, and was racing desperately towards the shore.

"After him!" yelled Keith. Pausing only to snatch up his rifle, he darted out of the shanty in pursuit. Ed and Timber followed close on his heels. The air re-echoed with the reports of their rifles.

Harman made straight for the *Kittiwake*, as if intending in the extremity of his blind fear to jump into her. Then he suddenly realised that she was useless. He turned as if to confront his pursuers. Then, losing his head in blind panic, plunged head first into the lake.

The three men paused on the shore as they saw Harman strike out with a powerful over-arm stroke. There was a surge and a rush in the water, and a dark snout rose for a moment to view.

Little swirls and ripples marked the passage of other alligators. Suddenly there was a mighty threshing, the clash of razor-toothed jaws, and an agonised, terrified scream, which died away in a bubbling groan. The oily water reddened as if in the sunset glow—but it was still high noon.

"The 'gators have got him!" said the Reptile Wrestler.

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# HORNBY SPEED BOATS

## TOMMY'S TERRIBLE TWIN

(Continued from page 17.)

test. In time it will show der natural anger und mischief belonging to it!"

"You're right," said Dr. Hypo with something like relief. "Stand still, both of you!"

The real Tommy Pink felt relieved.

He stood motionless beside the Pinkenstein, confident that he was safe. Then the Pinkenstein, with a subtle gesture, jabbed the pin into Tommy's rear.

Tommy leapt into the air with a howl, and turned to his tormentor furiously.

"You rotter! I'll knock your silly head off for that! I'll—"

"There you are, Doc," yelled the Pinkenstein backing away from the furious Tommy. "He couldn't endure a minute!"

The two scientists pounced on the real Tommy Pink before he could get at his artificial twin. Pinkenstein rushed to assist them.

In a few moments poor Tommy Pink lay bound and helpless with his cunning worst part standing over him and smiling in triumph. The two Doctors grabbed him immediately and shoved him into the big cylinder whence the Pinkenstein had emerged not an hour and a half ago.

"Now, Mr. Green, get into your cylinder. Let's get this frightful business over at once."

Pinkenstein smiled and climbed into the cylinder where Tommy Pink had lain. Dr. Hacklimb sealed up the ends of both pieces of apparatus.

Dr. Hypo examined the apparatus, noticed that some of the wires had been torn away by the raging Pinkenstein, and reconnected them. His hands shook nervously.

"All ready, Hacklimb?" he said at last.

"So, Herr Doktor."

Dr. Hypo pulled over a big knife-switch. There was a crackle of high voltage electricity and the two big cylinders glowed with purple fire. After a few moments Dr. Hypo switched off. Hacklimb went over to the cylinder containing Pinkenstein—whom they believed to be Tommy—and took off the end of the cylinder. He looked in.

Hacklimb staggered back in horror. "*Ach! Mein Gott! Mein Gott!*" Then he added, "Der vos, somet'ng wrong somevewer!"

The German scientist pounced towards the other cylinder and tore off the end-cover. He hauled forth Tommy Pink, still safe and sound.

"Good Lord!" shouted Dr. Hypo, perspiration standing out on his dome-like forehead, "we've saved this—this—thing and—"

"Ve haff not," said Hacklimb. "Dis vos Herr Green. Der animated protoplasm trieked us mit ourselves. If he vos Herr Green in dat udder cylinder he vould be merely electroouted—not changed into der lump of protoplasm *vat I made mit myself*."

Hacklimb pointed to the apparatus; "In der excitement you vos get der wires reversed. Der electricity vent into der machine *wrong way round!*"

It was true. Dr. Hypo had accidentally connected the positive to the negative terminal and *vice-versa* with the result that the current had flowed in the reverse direction, thus reversing its effect!

"Thank heavens!" gasped Dr. Hypo rushing to Tommy and tearing off his bonds. "Mr. Green—Tommy—you're safe!"

Washington Hayseed, our comical coon defective, and Buskit, his assistant, are next week's mirth provokers. If you enjoy a screaming fun tale don't miss Washington's Diamond Jubilee.



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!" 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.

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.

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," he told Billy in his lazy tones. "Led by the Master of Masks, known to his myrmidons as One Over Seven."

To Venice Billy went in his efforts to solve the mystery of the Rat Trap. In a palace on the Piazza San Marco Billy witnessed a meeting of the Seven. Unfortunately in his excitement he gave himself away. Almost at once, however, his German friend, Fritz, appeared on the scene, and together they made a daring getaway in a gondola.

The Seven followed in a motor-boat and were quickly on their trail. Suddenly Fritz brought the gondola broadside on to the motor-boat. The frail

craft was smashed to smithereens and the motor-boat was holed.

Fritz and Billy had jumped before the moment of impact and, coming to the surface, Billy struck out across the current. All at once he realised that the lights of the Piazza drifted away to his left . . . drifted further and further.

He was being swept out to sea.

## Peril in the Piazza.

DESPERATELY did Billy swim towards the shore, though he knew that his efforts, unaided, would be hopeless. He had lost Fritz, who only knew that he might be found at the Palazzo Marani, and had no idea of his staying in any hotel, and he was likely to lose his life.

In the eleventh hour when, reunited with his big German friend, he might have gone on to a solution of the mystery, he had been swept aside and was being borne out on to the wide darkness of the Adriatic down the path the golden ships of Blind Dandolo once had sailed to the sacking of Stamboul.

He kept shouting aloud as he beat at the water, and suddenly his hail was answered. He saw a dark, bobbing mass near by, a powerful arm lifting and falling, and Fritz himself swam alongside him.

This was by no means miraculous. They had fallen into the water at the same time and in the same spot, so that the tide run carried them the same way at the same speed. True, they would not have found one another but for Billy's shouts, but those shouts



had been heard by Fritz twenty yards away, and he had recognised the voice and had swum towards it.

Fritz had something wedged under his arms and across his chest which lifted him high out of the water, something which changed the whole situation in a flash, and filled Billy once more with hope.

It was the long and heavy gondola oar Fritz had been wielding when he swung the gondola across the bows of the rushing motor-boat.

Now they need not sink unless exhaustion caused them to drop from the oar. It was sufficiently buoyant to keep them both afloat. Billy imitated Fritz and lay partly on it, with the woodwork under his armpits as far as it would go, and he kicked out in unison with Fritz.

"Fritz, you're my mascot," Billy said. "You turn up like a bad penny every time. I'm never going to be sufficiently grateful to you."

Fritz said, reflectively: "I could do with a pint." He had often heard British soldiers say that when completely fatigued, and he thought it indicated a need for quiet rest.

"You shall have a barrel of the best Mûnicher if we ever get ashore," promised Billy.

They were actually now making something like headway against the tide, for Fritz was very powerful and Billy was able to put all his strength into kicking, instead of having to keep himself afloat.

A good time afterwards, with Billy nearly exhausted, but with Fritz apparently in full fettle, they ran through the jumble of gondolas below the steps of the Piazza San Marco and staggered up those steps which, centuries ago, welcomed Venetian conquerors.

So they found themselves in the Piazza San Marco. High above them, like a gigantic needle piercing the sky, towered the world famous Campanile, with, near by, the Church of St. Mark and its gorgeous architectural combination of eastern and western ideas, its blue and golden mosaics on its façade.

The Piazza San Marco is a great square surrounded by shops and cafés, most of the latter world famous, and all standing beneath an arcade, open on the front, surrounding the square on three sides, supported by pillars.

Now as Billy and Fritz stepped into the Piazza it was quiet and empty save, at their entry, its world-famous pigeons stirred and swooped in a gigantic fluttering, rushing from eave and crevice and roof, right across the square, lifting and chittering, wheeling about St. Mark and the Campanile, before coming to rest.

Billy had to dive through the little alley beyond the telegraph office at the far end to seek his hotel, and he and Fritz slid along under the arcade on the Canal side of the square.

They had got halfway along when shadows materialised out of the deeper gloom of closed shop fronts.

Even as the men leapt at them Billy had time to realise what had happened. The all-powerful One Over Seven had known they had fled across the Grand

Canal. He had set agents to watch the landing place on the Piazza, agents to watch *rio* and *riova*, *fondamenta* and *ria terra*, hoping against hope the fugitives might fall into his hands.

There were four of them, hefty fellows dragged from the lowest quarters of Venice. One carried a great stick which he whirled aggressively, but the other three held things more deadly—knives which gleamed wickedly in the darkness, silent and sure.

The man with the stick crashed it in sideways fashion at Billy's head, and Billy, ducking swiftly heard the weapon whistle across his neck and strike one of the stone pillars with a thud.

Have you ever hit a cricket ball with a bat when not holding the bat properly and felt the hands go numb and tingling under the impact, so that you have dropped it? That's exactly what happened to the fellow with the stick as his bludgeon caught the ungingiving stonework of the decorated pillar.

He yelled out. His momentarily nerveless fingers loosed their grip. The thing fell to the ground and in its falling the tide of battle changed.

The knifers had made for Fritz, who had momentarily stalled them off by knocking the foremost of them into the two behind, so that all three staggered back.

The stick fell at Fritz's feet, and from that moment the forces of the opposition were foredoomed to failure.

Fritz picked up the stick and yelled something in



AMBUSHED BY BANDITTI.—Billy and Fritz were making their way across the piazza when four men leapt from the shadows. Knives gleamed, and one of them whirled a great cudgel.



German. The stick rose and fell. A man went to his knees, his pale face streaked red, his eyes glazed. Billy, meanwhile, rushed by the man who had held the stick, fell on all fours in front of him and brought him headlong to the hard stones, which hurt him tremendously.

A knife stabbed viciously. The stick whisked with a twist of Fritz's iron wrist, and broken fingers loosed that stabbing knife. The stick lifted, dropped like a flail, and the broken-fingered gentleman went down too. The fourth man turned to flee. Fritz went lumbering after him and caught him at the entrance to the Piazza, where he floored him with a blow which would have laid an ox at his feet.

Billy joined Fritz, who was flourishing the stick and glaring about him, plainly anxious that somebody else should turn up and ask for it.

"They think we've just joined up," he said contemptuously to Billy. "Where now?"

"Hotel I think," said Billy. "Fritz, you're beautiful. You don't look much, but you can fight."

Fritz grinned slowly. "You call me handsome?" he demanded, slowly.

"Frightfully," smiled Billy.

"Frightful . . . handsome . . ." Fritz stroked his chin with a massive paw. "They don't go. Like pig and life and bacon. I'll have to tell Johann when I get back to Hamburg."

They plunged through the alley and came at last to Billy's hotel, where Fritz was given a bedroom which caused his mild blue eyes to open wide with astonishment. Their clothing was taken to be dried, and they settled down for the night.

In the morning they met. There was a letter for Billy. At least, there was an envelope. It had been posted in Venice the previous night. It contained one hundred and fifty pounds, English money. That was all.

Mr. Brame Sentence appeared to be in the offing.

They changed some of this money at a bank, and they bought fresh clothes, for the immersion had ruined their own. Fritz had a fine taste in garments, and he rigged himself out like an Italian on holiday.

Then they went to a big travel agency and there Billy made inquiries. A detailed map of Southern Europe was produced. A pencil traced lightly across it, wriggling here and there, until at last its point came to a stop at a place in Lithkrania on the map coloured dark brown to indicate gigantic mountains. Above the pencil point was a name—Stahnfeld.

"That," said Billy, "is where we want to go."

In the afternoon they set off together for the great Schloss of Stahnfeld and wilder adventures than ever.

### The River of Death.

**B**ILLY was under no delusions regarding that journey to Stahnfeld. If the heart of the mystery lay in the dark schloss in the high mountains the approaches would be closely guarded. He and Fritz could no longer travel openly. They had to go carefully, and they had to remember, all the time, that they trod enemy's country.

They arranged that as German was so closely allied to Lithkranian, Fritz should pose as a Lithkranian from the northern provinces who had lived in Germany. Billy was to be his young cousin, and dumb. That let Billy out on the talking side. He did not know one word of the language.

They took a train as far as the border station, and there they got out. They were high up in the hills, with the greater mountains, which were Lithkrania's southern frontier, stretching ahead of them.

They found that lumbering was going on in the hills, and that the great logs, in vast rafts, were

being shot through the rapids and canyons, the gorges of the mountains, to the broad river on the northern plain, where they floated to a seaport.

Here was a chance to get through to the heart of the hills, for the rafts stopped at various recognised halting places. In Venice Billy had obtained about a hundred pounds' worth of Lithkranian money, and this bribed a passage for them.

The raft on which they travelled was an immense thing, a mighty platform of wood, held loosely together by cables. On it were three huts in which its crew lived. For a financial consideration, Fritz and Billy were allotted one of these huts to themselves, for Billy had to have opportunities for talking. The six lumbermen, who constituted the crew of the raft, and who were gigantic fellows, slow and cumbersome, but highly skilled in managing their unwieldy charge, shared the other two huts.

They set off, floating serenely at first, and then speeding up as the current increased in force, until with a roar like thunder they shot the first of the rapids, and went swirling and boiling through a mighty canyon, whose walls seemed to reach the clear frosty sky far above them.

The raft lurched and swung until it seemed it must split into a thousand pieces; but those who had lashed it together had vast experience of their work and it held through its very looseness. It came eventually to where the river broadened slightly and ran more easily, though the mountains about it were higher still.

It was on this broader stretch of the river, and at a place where the hills drew back a little, leaving flat land on each side, that a motor-boat put off shore and ran alongside the gigantic platform of lumber.

Four men stepped on to the raft, the motor-boat, hatched fast, bumping alongside as the raft drifted lazily. Three of the men carried rifles and looked dangerous. Their leader, who displayed no weapons, spoke sharply to him who might be called the captain of the raft. Fritz, straining his ears, whispered to Billy: "They want us. You watch." He lumbered forward heavily.

The captain of the raft was looking puzzled. His hefty crew of five were gathered near him. Fritz plucked the sleeve of the captain and whispered to him in German.

"This is a plot. A hundred kronki among you if you drive those fellows away." A hundred kronki was equivalent to twenty pounds, English money.

The captain's eyes lighted up. He suddenly roared at the top of his voice, brandishing his massive hands shorewards. The leader of the invaders snarled an order. The captain roared once more. One of his men smote with a gigantic pole and stretched the invading leader senseless . . . in fact, he died.

A rifle spoke. One of the crew choked and came to his knees, tearing at his chest, with an ominous, thin, red streak running and bubbling from his lips. That started it properly. Fritz waded in. The big poles flailed and stabbed. The rifles were beaten from the hands that held them. Two senseless and one conscious men were heaved into the river. Their motor-boat was kept hitched up. The raft drifted on and Fritz distributed his hundred kronki among the five survivors; for the shot man was dead by the time the fight was over.

They reported the whole circumstance to the burgomaster of the tiny town at which they hitched up for the night, attributing the attack to bandits. The captain and crew were furious about the death of their comrade, and Billy and Fritz knew they would be their allies for the rest of the voyage. The captain went ashore at dusk and came back with four long deer-stalkers' rifles and a canvas bag of cartridges.



He had, he explained, borrowed them from friends. They all went to sleep, as was usual, for it was unnecessary to keep watch on the raft when it was hitched up.

It was pitch dark, and not long after midnight, when Billy awoke with the consciousness that the raft was moving uneasily. He got to the door of their hut and looked out. Instead of the comforting presence of the little mountain town's lights he saw nothing but a vast, forbidding blackness towering above him, the blackness of high mountains at night time.

He dashed back to Fritz, who woke the captain and crew. They were, so these men informed them, six miles below the town, and of course could not get back to it.

This meant an attack for sure. The captain guessed where it would come. The river narrowed at a certain point, while the big hills dropped back, leaving once more flattened land to either side. This land was thick with pine trees almost to the water's edge, explained the captain—a dark desolate, remote spot, fit for all manner of crimes.

The raft drifted out between the high walls of rock to the flat land—a sinister stretch of valley, with the big hills some distance away to either side, with a great, massed sprawl of black pines crowding down to the water's edge on either bank. Now the stream was indolent, and the raft's motion was sluggish.

It bumped, swung and came to a standstill. The river had been boomed.

The boom was seen by the light of a great fire, which the captain had had lit in a mighty brazier on the raft. It was a steel cable lashed round several pine trunks on either side, and dipping into the water. The forepart of the raft was hitched up in it, and the tide pressure kept it so hitched. Only by cutting through the hawser could they get free, and that meant exposure.

The captain was yelling orders. Loose logs from the raft were being piled up facing each other. From the midst of the dark trees came the wicked crack of rifles, and foot long stabs of red flame flushed in the darkness. One of the crew cried out with that quick, agonised cry of a shot man. He dropped on his face, tried to crawl and then was still.

The captain snarled mad words. He and his three companions dropped below their barricades, Fritz and Billy with them. Fritz had one of the rifles. He had been a crack shot in the war, and though the German service Mauser was different from this long gun, he could make good use of the latter.

The brazier was near by, flinging high flames into the air from its pile of resined fuel, shooting an uncanny dancing light across the scene.

There were, they reckoned, a dozen men on either side of the river, who kept up a rapid fire. The bullets screeched and whined across the barricades, smacking great, white wounds in the solid logs. Billy got used to them at last and did not instinctively duck

his head every time he heard one coming, a movement which caused war-hardened Fritz to grin.

Suddenly there was a rush from one side of the river, a rush towards where two motor-boats were moored. Fritz began to shoot with the deadly coolness of an old soldier—no hurry, no mad jerking of bolt and pulling of trigger, no panic, no wild sighting, but aiming for his man's knees every time.

It was Fritz who checked that rush for the boats. The others missed with all their shots in the darkness.



**FIRE FOR THE GUNMEN.**—The captain of the raft lifted the brazier by its legs and hurled it across the water into the forest amongst the enemy sharpshooters.

Three of the rushing men on the shore came down in screaming agony. Billy was learning what war meant—no glory, no banners, no medals . . . only death and agony and foulness . . .

He stared at Fritz in the red light of the fire. The man's face was set and hard and a bit white. He muttered something in German. He rammed home another clip of cartridges, and his hand was like rock; but there was perspiration on his temples.

The captain hissed: "There has been no rain and no snow for weeks—only a high dry wind . . ." His eyes were gleaming. Nobody knew what he meant for the moment.



The attackers had drawn back, licking their wounds. They loosed a furious volley. One of the bullets, ricocheting madly, chipped wood, smacked sideways, and ripped a jagged, awful hole through the chest of one of the crew. The man gave a high scream, writhed and slumped madly at his wound, then slumped suddenly, grotesquely to the logs of the raft.

He lay stiff and limp. The little garrison was reduced in numbers. The captain crawled out from behind the barricade, though Fritz tried to stop him.

"He'll go west," Fritz said to Billy. But he did not go west. He had all the luck in the world. Bullets chipped round him but did not hit him. He reached the great brazier with its mighty mass of flaming wood.

He picked it up by its legs, a feat of strength which made Fritz grunt, and he began to run with it, a flaming beacon of a man offering a magnificent mark. A rifle cracked. The captain's body shocked. He stumbled, recovered. He reached the edge of the raft—ten feet only on this side, from the shore . . . and, with an effort which was superhuman, which only a dying man could have accomplished, he threw the brazier and its load of burning destruction across those ten feet of dark water, into the midst of the dry undergrowth beneath the shoreward pines.

Then, shaking a mighty fist once at the hidden ambushers, he toppled into the river he knew so well, and it took him into its peaceful arms and bore him away.

Flames were roaring up instantly, flames which crackled and leapt and twined, flinging sparks in myriads, as the undergrowth blazed at a dozen points at once under the scattered brands from the brazier.

On that side of the river the attackers were running for their lives, scrambling into their boats and tearing upstream away from the inferno.

On the other side of the river, the attackers, aghast at the catastrophe, were silent. The heat of the flames was now intense. It scorched the eyeballs of those on the raft. But the dead captain's heroism had been well directed, for he had thrown his brazier at the very point where one end of the cable was lashed to the pine trees.

The mooring pines were alight. The weight of the great raft under the tide strained at them. Suddenly they parted, shooting sparks up in vast numbers. The raft lurched sideways, swung partly round, and began sedately to drift on its way.

They were clear and free, running with the tide, the fire behind them, the attack definitely beaten.

Billy, a little scared, kept close to Fritz as the raft drifted on. The two survivors of its original crew held consultation with Fritz, and it was decided to hitch up at the first town they came to and telegraph throughout the country the story of the outrage.

To Billy Fritz whispered: "We hop it then. We're playing our own hands. On this raft we're sure to get colared. Betcherlife."

Billy nodded. It was the only thing to do. It was in the cool clear grey of the mountain morning that they came on another township, its quaintly shaped, wooden houses crowding down to the water's edge.

They all poled at the raft. It was heavy work, but they got it sufficiently across the tide for it to bump the rough landing stage, where great ropes were instantly flung over stanchions and, straining, held the raft steady.

The report was made. The burgomaster of the little place was aghast. His lonely telegraph wire

got to work, flashing the news to Trondwald, the capital of Lithkrania. Murder on the mountain river. Rifle-armed bandits and death. A pine forest ablaze. News indeed.

Trondwald sent back a curt command. "Hold them all."

The burgomaster announced this to the two survivors of the crew and to Fritz and Billy. The boys' lips tightened as he heard it.

"We've got to bolt, Fritz," he said. "We're for it if we don't."

It was Fritz who knocked the policeman down—as gently as possible, let it be said—and Fritz who bored out of the little, log, mayoral building to the narrow street.

A sleigh was standing there—a splendid thing, with four magnificent horses champing at their decorative bits, the burgomaster's own winter equipage.

Into the sleigh leapt Fritz and Billy. Fritz had the reins gathered into one powerful hand. The long whip cracked like a gun. The horses came round with a slanting scramble, the sleigh bells tinkled musically. There were yells and cries, the outburst of a vast commotion.

And the sleigh was haring up the street, the horses stomach-down to the snow, heads thrust forward, climbing the steep path, hitting straight for the white fastnesses of the high mountains, going in a scurry of kicked and churned snow-dust . . . vanishing round the farther bend . . .

They eased the team halfway up the climb. The mettlesome horses trotted easily, the sleigh gliding as though on oil. They mounted high into the pass, heading they knew not where.

They rounded a shoulder of a mighty hill, clinging to a snowed-hard road below which, on the other side, dropped a great precipice. The air was now clear and sunny and like heady wine, the fine air of high mountains.

From somewhere a rifle cracked. The offside horse of the foremost pair lurched and came to his knees. Smoke drifted lazily on the hillside. The sleigh swung round and came to a standstill.

"Now we're for it," said Fritz, in his cockney English. And he was right.

In the fastnesses of the enemy headquarters! What will be the end of this wild venture? You simply must not miss next week's splendid episode.

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