

PETE THE PEARL DIVER IS INSIDE, BOYS!

Boys' 2-D Magazine

EVERY SATURDAY



DON'T MISS THE ISLAND OF TERROR WITHIN

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THE YESTER'S REALM

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



Jimmy : Would you please move along a little, sir?

Stout Gent. : What for, my little man?

Jimmy : To give the wind a chance to get at my kite.

(Football to GEORGE GREGORY, 16, Brooklands Avenue, Helmshore, Lancs.)

ALWAYS LATE.

FOREMAN : Say, Jones, you are always coming late. Don't you know when work starts here?

JONES : Naw! They're always at it when I come.
(Fountain pen to JOHN GRACE, 36, Peasefield Road, Knotley Ash, Liverpool 14.)

HIS CHAN(T)CE.

FATHER : That cat was making an awful noise in the back garden last night.

SON : Yes, father, since he ate the canary, he thinks he can sing.
(Fountain pen to C. EDWARDS, 127, Catherine Street, Mill Road, Cambridge.)

STONEY.

PA : There's nothing worse than being old and bent.

SON : Yes there is, Dad.

PA : Then I'd like to know what it is.

SON : Being young and broke.

(Fountain pen to JACK RICHARDSON, 821, Corydon Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.)

WEIGHTY.

JUDGE : Why did you hit this man with a chair?

PRISONER : 'Cos I couldn't lift the table.

(Fountain pen to TOMMY TOMKINS, 2, Greenfield House, Abercreegon, Glamorgan.)

THE DIFFERENCE.

CAPTAIN OF VILLAGE CRICKET TEAM (whose equipment is limited): Ye've got your pad on the wrong leg, Garge; you bain't left handed, be ye?

GEORGE : Nay, but I be going to bat t'other end, bain't I?

(Fountain pen to JOHN TAYLOR, 28, Duke's Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.)



Sandy : I want a cheap coat-hanger.

Assistant : Yes, sir; our cheapest is twopence.

Sandy : Twopence! Is there nothing cheaper?

Assistant : Yes, sir; a nail!

(Football to FRANK DENHAM, 19, Seymour Road, Lower Edmonton, N.9.)

SAFETY FIRST.

DENTIST (to Sandy, who is counting his money) : It is all right, there is no need to pay until the operation is over.

SANDY : I am not going to pay. I am just finding out how much money I have before you give me the gas.
(Fountain pen to R. EDWIN JONES, Bryn Siriol Valley, Anglesey.)

JOKE COUPON.

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

29/4/35.

LATE.

BOOTS (after rousing hotel guest) : Are you the gentleman who wanted to be wakened to catch an early train, please?

GUEST : Yes.

BOOTS : Then you can go to sleep again, sir—you've lost it.

(Fountain pen to MAURICE TEASDALE, 13, Oakfield Terrace, Prudhoe-on-Tyne.)

NEXT STOP.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN (nervously) : And will the express stop at Euston?

PORTER OF COUNTRY STATION (heavily) : There'll be a 'otible crash if it doesn't!

(Fountain pen to JOHN BROADBENT, 31, Beaconsfield Road, Leicester.)

GENEROUS.

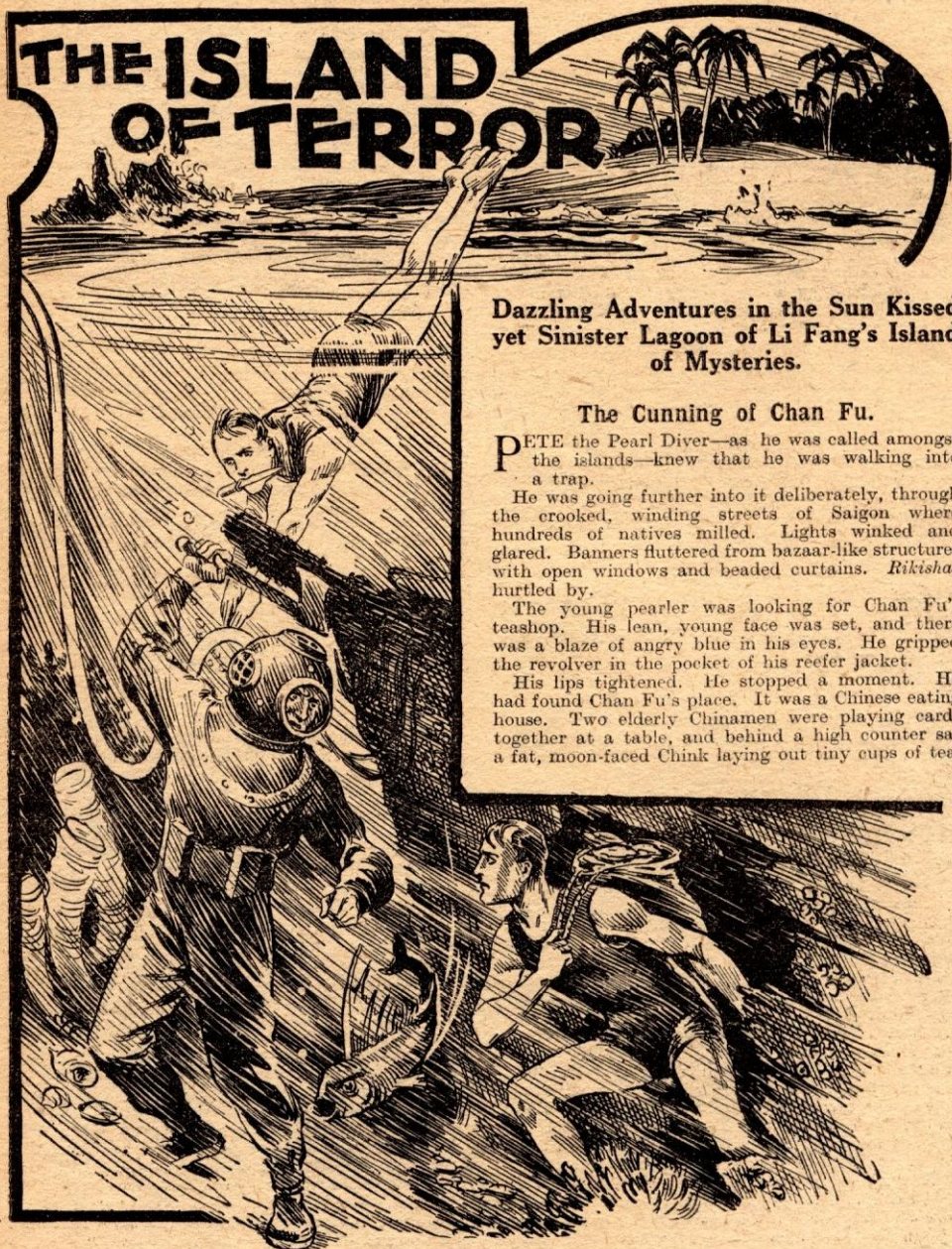
LITTLE ABEY : Fader, last night I dreamed that you gave me a shilling.

IKKY : Vell, you've been a good boy, Abey, give me sixpence back and keep the change.

(Fountain pen to W. CHALLIS, 9, Council Houses, Church Road, Bulpham, Essex.)

PETE THE PEARL DIVER ON A GLITTERING SOUTH SEA ISLAND FIGHTS
THE YELLOW PERIL OF THE PACIFIC.

New Long Yarn.



Dazzling Adventures in the Sun Kissed
yet Sinister Lagoon of Li Fang's Island
of Mysteries.

The Cunning of Chan Fu.

PETE the Pearl Diver—as he was called amongst the islands—knew that he was walking into a trap.

He was going further into it deliberately, through the crooked, winding streets of Saigon where hundreds of natives milled. Lights winked and glared. Banners fluttered from bazaar-like structures with open windows and beaded curtains. *Rikishas* hurtled by.

The young pearler was looking for Chan Fu's teashop. His lean, young face was set, and there was a blaze of angry blue in his eyes. He gripped the revolver in the pocket of his reefer jacket.

His lips tightened. He stopped a moment. He had found Chan Fu's place. It was a Chinese eating house. Two elderly Chinamen were playing cards together at a table, and behind a high counter sat a fat, moon-faced Chink laying out tiny cups of tea.

So here was where the trail began. The trail of three missing white men, his chum—Tim Anthony—being amongst them. The fat, moon-faced Chinaman looked up with an air of benign welcome as the young pearler entered.

"The hon'ble Blitisher honours my unworthy abode," he lisped. "Will the hon'ble sir deign to—"

"You Chan Fu?" demanded Pete abruptly. "If so, I'd like a word with you—somewhere quiet."

Just for a moment the Chink's eyes became like tiny, black, glittering stones; then the fat face was wreathed in smiles.

"Me Chan Fu, yaas. If hon'ble sir will do me great favour to follow—"

Pete's jaw tightened. He knew Chan Fu to be something more than the keeper of a Chinese eating house. He was an agent of Li Fang, the mysterious, who owned Terror Island.

Pete followed the Chink through a curtained doorway, along an ill-lit passage to another door. Chan Fu beckoned Pete the Pearl Diver into a room cluttered with curios, and with elaborate politeness placed a chair for his visitor, and himself took a seat behind his desk.

"Now if the hon'ble sir has business—"

Pete showed that he meant business by producing his revolver. He levelled it at the imperturbable Chinaman's head.

"This is just a little precaution," he said grimly. "You don't mind, Chan Fu—eh? I've got something to guard, you see. Just take a look at these."

With his free hand, he unbuckled the soft leather money-belt from about his body, and took from it a small worn chamois sack. Chan Fu's black brows arched, and into his eyes shot a gleam of avarice, as the contents were displayed.

Under the light, gleaming softly, lay dozens of smoothly rounded pearls, flawless and perfect. Hardly two matched for size; only in colour and texture were they equal.

"Hon'ble sir," lisped Chan Fu in real awe. "It will make a necklace for an emperor's daughter."

"It's been the devil of a job to match them up," said the young pearl diver, with a twisted smile. "But I need one pearl—just one elusive pearl to complete the string."

Chan Fu's wooden, mask-like face had undergone a change. Sheer greed, a positive leer in the eyes and the smile, made it a gloating horror.

"In long and ill-spent life have I never seen such matching," he murmured. "You need one pearl?"

"Yes," Pete the Pearler's voice crackled. "And you know where such a pearl is to be found, Chan Fu."

The Chinaman folded his hands, closed his eyes, and when he opened them again they were like little Chinese lacquer boxes that fit one inside another, until the last one is reached, and that is empty.

"Just one month ago from thirty-five fathoms," he spoke droningly, "six velly large silver-lip shells were brought up. Such a pearl as you describe was taken from one shell."

Pete the Pearler's eyes suddenly blazed blue fire. He squared on the Chink with bitter, hard face.

"The diver who brought up that pearl was my partner, Tim Anthony," Pete snapped. "What happened to him, I say—to him and the pearl?"

Chan Fu made a gesture of depreciation.

"It velly deep water," he lisped. "Foolish to dive so deep. Him get the bends"—the "bends" are mortal convulsions, the fate of many unfortunate deep sea divers—"him with worthy ancestors before night. A hurricane come and drive the lugger over coral reefs, ripping out bottom. One Sikiana boy, him escape wreck and come back with tragic story—"

Pete the Pearl Diver leaned forward in the chair, his eyes slitted behind the gun, his face a mask of frozen ferocity.

"You lie, you sleek, old, whiskered tom-cat," he said in a voice as dry as a whisper. "Listen! My pal dived in deep water. True, he got the bends, but he didn't die. True, the lugger did run into a blow and go off her course while he was out of action. But listen! It didn't run on any coral reef. It veered too close to Terror Island, the secret lair of Li Fang. And that yellow skunk ran out his armed cutter and sank my pal's lugger."

"Hon'ble sir, I . . ."

"Don't I know that you're an agent of Li Fang?" stormed Pete. "And that the Sikiana boy was brought here before he could blab? Tim, my pal, had a wireless transmitting set aboard the lugger and he sent out a message, which I picked up aboard my 'plane, telling me of the devilish thing that was being done. If you want to save your yellow miserable life, you'll tell me where this secret island of Li Fang's is, or—"

But he never completed the sentence. Chan Fu's legs were hidden by the desk; his toe stubbed a release spring beneath the carpet; and—

The floor beneath Pete's chair suddenly gave way. A yawning gulf developed beneath as the trap door fell inwards. And the lad was pitching down into dark depths—with Chan Fu's cackle in his ears like the croaking of Stygian frogs.

Li Fang the Terrible.

LUCKILY for him, Pete the Pearl Diver had closed the chamois bag containing the pearls, and stuffed it back in his money-belt.

Came a crash, a horrid jar that shook every bone in his body. He was not hurt, however, and he scrambled, gasping, to his feet.

Luckily, he had his flashlamp. He fished it from his pocket and switched on its dancing white beam, turning it around on the black walls of the cellar.

Suddenly his blue eyes lighted with a gleam of hope. The light from his flashlamp had suddenly flooded a barrel that stood in the centre of the cellar. Near it lay his revolver.

The young pearler picked up the weapon, but stuffed it in his pocket almost without thought, approaching the barrel with a curious thrill. Something was inside that barrel, he was certain. What?

"Gosh, I'm going to find out," he breathed.

He took up his jack-knife and commenced prising up the nails in the lid. He felt his nerves taut. His senses told him there was someone inside—a human being. Alive or dead?

The lid lifted, and he saw that within was Alome, the golden-brown skinned Sikiana diving boy, the lad who had escaped to come back with the tale of the sinking of the pearling lugger by Li Fang.

He was trussed up like a fowl, but Peter Graham speedily altered that with a slash or two of his keen-bladed knife. The lithe, young native pearl diver clambered stiffly out of the barrel.

"You all right, Alome?" Pete asked anxiously.

"Yes, Master," whispered the faithful young native. "Me very full of fight," he added with flashing eyes, as he eased his muscles.

Just then sounded the deep, resonant clang of a gong, and the scurrying footsteps of many men from somewhere without the cellar.

"That moon-faced Chink's probably waiting for his master, Li Fang," the young pearl diver hazarded as a cause of the delay.

"Master, he must not find you here," suddenly whispered the young native in alarm. "He would take you to the island of terror. For white men it is worse than death. The temple there—"

Pete the Pearl Diver nodded. His face was iron-hard, and his eyes smouldered. None could say where Terror Island was. Yet it was rumoured that in its depths was a temple given up to savage and barbaric rites. Li Fang hated all white men. He belonged to the great conspiracy that was trying to break the white man's supremacy in the East.

"Do not let him capture you," whispered Alome. "Already he has got your partner, Master Tim. And two other white men as well, owners of pearl fisheries."

The young pearler whirled and looked around. His brain was racing. "I've got to get to the island," he gritted. "Get my pearl, and set Tim free. How can we—"

The handsome, brown-skinned diver pointed simply to the barrel.

"Change places with me," he said in a low tone. "They were going to drop me in the sea. I know too much. But you, free and unbound—"

The young pearler stared at the faithful native. "They will kill you," he whispered.

"They would anyway," said Alome. Swiftly he outlined his plan. And at last Pete the Pearl Diver nodded quick assent.

Hastily the young pearler commenced to strip off his clothes. And as swiftly Alome, the Sikiana boy donned them. In the darkness and shadow he might easily be taken for Pete the Pearl Diver.

The young pearler clambered into the



BATTLE IN THE BARREL.—The pilot turned and saw Pete poking his head out of the barrel. At the same time the pearl diver's hands reached for the pilot's throat.

barrel. He crouched down inside as Alome hammered down the lid. Suddenly both started, and Pete inside the barrel grew tense as again sounded the ominous deep clang of the gong, then again the rush of scurrying feet, this time coming down steps to the cellar.

Quivering in every nerve, Pete the Pearl Diver applied one eye to a knot hole in the barrel. An opening appeared in the stone wall. Then Pete saw a sight to make the bravest quail.

Six giant Chinamen armed with keen-bladed *kris* stood there behind their feared and powerful lord. And there was Chan Fu, the moon-faced fat Chinaman there as well. But it was Li Fang who chiefly arrested the hidden boy's gaze.

More huge even in stature than his giant servants, he was fat and gross with a hanging jaw. Something unspeakably evil there was about him as he stood there in the robes and cap of a Mandarin. His eyebrows were sinister black bars. And his eyes behind the horn-rimmed spectacles—they were yellow and tigerish!

He rapped an order in Cantonese to his servants to take the Britisher. Ere the rush of men could eventuate, Alome's hand flew out. His long, Javanese knife travelled in a flash of silver fire.

Upon Chan Fu's face a look of horror broke out—as well it might, for the knife buried itself, to a quivering ivory haft, in his throat.

As he began to sink in death the disguised native boy dived for the Chinaman's legs, hoisted him and spilled him amongst the clamouring Chinamen. Then he was through the passage, leaping up the flight of stone steps.

With horrid cries Li Fang's bodyguard turned and gave chase to the supposed Britisher. The young pearl diver, crouched in the barrel, heard the clamour of pursuit merging into the streets, and hoped devoutly that his faithful diver had escaped.

The Duel in the Air.

AFTER what seemed aeons of time the lad hidden in the barrel heard the sounds of returning footsteps. There was a swish of robes, and Li Fang entered the brilliantly illuminated cellar, followed by his servants. The hidden pearler judged by his staggering rage that they had failed to recapture Alome.

With the yellow devil was a fellow, a European with a cigarette drooping from between his thin lips. A rat-faced man, with sleek, black hair, thinned, sneering, cold eyes, and the look of the speedman.

Pete the Pearl Diver recognised him immediately. It was Skip Kessel, a renegade aviator, who flew for Li Fang.

"I want this out of the way; dump it in the sea on the way over to the island," said the sinister Chinaman harshly in English.

The hidden lad within felt the barrel lifted in many strong hands. Then he knew that he was in a closed two-seater *rickisha*, that was racing with clattering wheels and pounding feet through the native quarter; and that Skip Kessel, the flyer, was with him.

The next he knew he was in an air field. He knew it by the thunderous roar of an engine being warmed up. Skip Kessel was taking him for his last air ride.

Skip Kessel clambered into the pilot's seat and settled, pulling his goggles over his eyes. The engine opened out to a roar, he threw off the brakes, and with a surge and a topple, the silver 'plane tore over the flying field.

Even as the 'plane surged up into the blue, the

young pearler inside had commenced his task of freeing himself from the barrel. The thunderous song of the engine drowned the hammering of his revolver butt against the nailed lid. Soon he was prising it up, and his head and shoulders rose above the barrel.

The young pearler saw that they were flying high above a sea of turquoise blue, but far ahead and beneath was an island like a green jewel in a gold setting.

Was it Terror Island? Even as he asked himself the question, Skip Kessel turned. A startled yell tore loose from the goggled pilot's lips as he saw the young pearl diver. Pete threw up the revolver, the black bore levelled at Kessel's snarling face, while he shouted to him to throw up his hands.

Skip Kessel did not. The crook flyer took a chance and shoved forward on the stick. The 'plane dropped her nose and went whirling down in a sheer dive with her throttle full open.

The young pearl diver hung on like grim death, while all his vitals seemed to ooze out of his body. Would they never come out of that roaring dive?

Skip Kessel knew his stuff, knew the 'plane. Bracing his legs, he pulled the stick full back, and the nose jolted up. The 'plane stood up in a roaring zoom, and went over in a sickening loop.

As it came out level, Skip Kessel turned with a guttural cry and lashed out. The young pearler had been groping for the dual control stick, had found it and fitted it into the slot. But now he was taken at a disadvantage, and Skip Kessel, leaving the ship to fly "hands off" for a moment or two, went at the boy. Pete the Pearl Diver felt the quick clutch of vice-like fingers upon his throat.

Dreadful moments followed like an eternity. Peter tried to break the hold on his throat by drawing down his chin, by lowering his body, but those fingers had found his windpipe and were squeezing relentlessly. He was seeing brilliant stars and flares.

Then all of a sudden something cold came to his hand—his gun. The 'plane was commencing to go down in a reeling topple. Gosh—one effort.

Pete made it. He brought up the gun-butt under Kessel's chin with a sickening thud.

It was all Pete could do to push the limp body back into the forward cockpit. Gasping, his brain reeling, he dropped back to the controls. Looking over the side, with the cold air beating refreshingly against his face, he saw the island.

The Monster of the Deep.

IT was Li Fang's secret island lying below in a reckless crash of beauty. Around the bay lay a generous stretch of glittering white coral sand—sufficient for a 'plane to land on.

Suddenly a choked cry came from Pete's lips. Far below through the clear waters he spotted the wreck of the lugger. It lay amidst a coral forest. Somewhere within that vessel was his pearl—the much sought pearl that would complete his string. He knew where Tim Anthony would have hidden it.

But the startled cry was not due to these imaginings, nor the sight of the dimly seen vessel.

Down there in the bay was a boat, a native *proa*, its brown sail unfurled to the breeze. Two Chinamen, stripped to the waist, were assisting its progress by rowing strenuously. And—

Standing balanced near the tilted prow was another huge Chink, clad only in cotton trousers. A rifle was levelled at his shoulder.

"It's Tim he's firing at—Tim, my pal!" yelled the young Pearl Diver as he jammed the throttle closed and volplaned down. He saw the gleam of white arms in the bay, saw a lad throw up his arms like a drowning swimmer.

He had not been hit, however. Pete the Pearl Diver breathed again, as he saw his pal shape his arms, and go down in another dive—down, down towards the wreck lying on the coral bed. In a flash the lad recognised the situation, knew what was taking place.

They were trying to make Tim Anthony dive for the pearl in the wrecked lugger.

"They've been torturing him," he gritted; "to make him do it. But I bet he won't bring the pearl up for them."

Almost unconsciously he saw that Skip Kessel in the front cockpit was coming round. But all the mad fight had gone out of him; he looked coldly sane—frightened.

"Hallo—what're those Chinks up to?"

Peter saw a man in diving suit and helmet come forward from out of the mass of brown sail. He had a hatchet in his hands, and it was evident he was going over the side.

Pete the Pearl Diver decided to take a hand in the game. Dipping the 'plane's nose he went down in a roaring, reckless slant. The diver looked up, and raised an arm in some sort of salute. Evidently he thought it was Skip Kessel at the controls. Then he went over the side before the slanting, roaring 'plane could demonstrate the purpose of the lad at the controls.

But the frightened Chinks at the oars, and the one at the air-pump, cried out in wild inarticulate alarm as the 'plane came down upon them like a mighty, roaring beast of prey.

The crossbar of its landing wheels would have sliced their heads off had they not ducked low. Pete lifted, turned around like a crazed hawk and came roaring for them again. It was too much for them this time. They shouted in wild alarm and dived overboard.

Pete the Pearl Diver lifted the ship up in a sheer zoom. He had decided on a reckless move. "Throttling down," he shouted to the reviving pilot: "You've got to take control, see? Land the 'plane somehow. It's up to you."

The goggled pilot made gestures of assent; he was thoroughly cowed. Pete shoved the stick forward, and sent the 'plane down in a slant once more over the wreck. He broke speed, levelling out with closed throttle like a gull alighting over the water. He stood up, and as Skip Kessel felt the stick limp, he took charge.

But by then Pete the Pearl Diver had clambered up on the cockpit edge, and gone over in a sheer dive down.

Down, down he went. Between his teeth was a Javanese fish-knife which he had taken from his belt. He felt that he would need it. He could see the wreck now—but where was Tim Anthony?

Suddenly the lad saw the monster, with awful, saucer-like eyes. It was like a great hillock as it mingled with the kelp weed and coral. And fear leapt to a white hot fire, running through his nerves, as he saw his pal, Tim Anthony, clutching a large bag, helpless in the grip of the gigantic octopus.

The great mottled hill was squirming and writhing as its tentacles relentlessly squeezed the life out of Pete's pal. Pete could see that Tim was almost all in as he beat and strained weakly at the powerful tentacles.

Pete the Pearl Diver, biting on a cry under water, dived madly. He knew that he had to hurry. He had marked the vital spot, and now, like an arrow from a bow he flashed in.

His knife was ripping, pulling, stabbing at the sac, the stomach of the brute. He was in the embrace of the Thing, its tentacles were round his body, squeezing, squeezing. The lad slashed again and

again at the soft flesh. No blood came from that pulpy body. He and Tim were doomed. His effort had failed.

Then something happened. The great tentacles spread out and out. Pete slipped away from that loathsome elastic body, clutching at his pal as he tried to move away. The repulsive creature turned against itself in its death agonies.

But Pete did not stay to watch. He caught his pal round the waist, and together they shot upwards—up, up towards the light and the air.

window of his helmet, Pete caught a glimpse of his terrible, hate-filled eyes. It seemed nothing could save him, but he glimpsed another diving figure. It was Tim Anthony—come to the rescue.

Knife in hand, Pete shot upwards, above Li Fang, clutching at the diver's hose and slashed it with his keen blade.

Instantly water must have flooded the diver's suit and helmet. He tugged frantically at the lifeline. To Pete's dismay he commenced to rise to the surface, clutching Tim Anthony in iron grip. He had got to hurry now. His pal was in fearful danger.

With all haste he made his way to the wrecked



BLOOMS OF DOOM.—Tim Anthony, helplessly bound in the canoe, was being sucked up by one of the Death Orchids. Madly Pete slashed with his sword at the devil flowers.

They came into the sunlight near the *proa*, and Pete the Pearl Diver caught at the gunwale, helping his chum aboard. As Tim flopped into the boat he writhed, purple in the face. He could barely speak.

"Li Fang down there—in the diver's costume," he choked. "Look out . . . for him . . . he's a fiend, the devil himself."

Pete, his young face hard in remorseless anger, saw that the Chinamen he had sent overboard were swimming back to the *proa*.

"The pearl?" Peter Graham asked in a low, urgent tone; "what became of it, Tim?"

"It's down there—in the cabin—behind the secret panel," his pal gasped as he writhed in the boat.

"I'm going down there, to get my pearl!" decided Pete the Pearl Diver suddenly. "You hang on."

He went down in a clean dive, then as he cleaved down through the water, he saw Li Fang in his diving suit and helmet, standing in a forest of kelp weed, near the hold of the ship.

The yellow devil seemed to sense Pete's presence, for he whirled round, and there was no doubt of the menace in his manner. Failure to find Tim Anthony had enraged him beyond measure. He lumbered clumsily through the water towards Pete, his axe upraised, ready to strike. And through the glass

lubber, and shot through the gaping hole in the hull. He knew where the cabin was—quite close—and that secret panel in the wall where the pearls were kept. As he darted out again like a fish, he had a chamois sack in his hand. He had gained what he sought.

The elusive pearl!

Terror Island.

GONE! They've got Tim—and Li Fang will make him pay, the yellow fiend!"

Pete the Pearl Diver breathed the words in despair as he swam for the island. While he had been under water Li Fang had made away with his pal. Pete remembered that the Feast of the Yellow Moon was to take place that night on the island, and shuddered. He had got to save his pal—or die in the attempt.

His knees touched the coral-spattered beach at last, and he pulled himself up out of the surf. There was a long wharf jutting from the beach, and near the wharf, tugging at its mooring line was the native *proa*. It was empty and deserted.

The airplane was gone, too. But on the sands, sprawled out on his back, lay the dead body of Skip Kessel. There was a bullet hole clean through his forehead. It was eloquent testimony of how Li Fang dealt with those who failed him.

Pete overcame his repugnance, and bending down stripped the flying overalls and boots from the body and donned them himself. They would serve to protect him in some measure from the terrors of the jungle.

The young pearl diver cut himself a bamboo cane.

He was too old a hand to move an inch on that island without a cane. Hurrying forward, he searched around for tracks of the Chinese. He found them easily enough—but he was not deceived for one moment by that obvious trail.

He knew it was a trap and his mind was very wary as he strode forward.

All through the long, hot afternoon he pushed on. He saw the sun sink behind the jungle wall in a blaze of scarlet—and wondered where the tracks of these Chinese were leading him.

On a sudden thought, he took the Jayanese knife from his belt and tied it with fibre rope in a peculiar way between his shoulder blades so that the edge jutted outwards; an edge sharp as a razor. The trick had served him before. It was simple, yet effective.

As the moon rose, he came at last to a break in the jungle. On the summit of a slope was a large temple, unlike any building he had ever seen before. It was composed of a square pagoda, backed by a tall, dome-shaped tower like that of a mosque, and a high, white-washed wall encircled it. How was he to get over that wall, the lad asked himself?

The young pearler at last moved—and quickly. An idea was born in his mind. He raced across to a fallen sapling. He lugged it through the moonlight to the wall of the temple, and forced it upright until it careened over against the wall.

Up this he climbed hand over hand until he could see over the wall. Globes of stars burnt low and lit the cool green paradise of a garden. Ferns from delicate dwarf lace to giant tree ferns, flowering vines covering pergolas and archways, flame trees dripping scarlet petals and white hibiscus made beauty. A stream wandered in and out, and over it were flung red-lacquered bridges like jewelled bows. But Peter Graham knew that there was sinister mystery and terror in that fairy garden.

He dropped to the ground—a long drop—and picking himself up, crept cautiously forward. Suddenly he started, looked up, and wild fear ran through him. For from the shadow of the palms stepped Li Fang, and behind him half-a-dozen giant Chinks in white cotton and broad, mushroom-like hats.

The Chinaman simply made a gesture, and the yellow men with eyes like cruel gashes fell upon Peter. He fought might and main, but to no avail. The vortex of the yellow men, who mounded inarticulately, he was borne before the master.

Li Fang appeared in merry mood. His face was creased up horribly in silent mirth.

"I knew you come," he cackled in pidgin English. "You likee see your friend? He is in my garden. In amongst the big flowehs. Come."

They bore him away to where the fairy stream ran under the bridges. And suddenly the young pearl diver saw his pal, Tim Anthony. He was in a canoe bound hand and foot. The canoe was moored to the bank, but the stream was trying to carry it on to where big flowers waved on either side of the bank.

And as he saw those flowers every drop of colour drained from Pete the Pearl Diver's face.

They were orchids. Death Orchids. Vivid in colouring, they waved gently to and fro. As the lad watched Li Fang pointed. One of the Chinks came forward with a pig which he threw towards the waving line of vampire flowers.

The pig had scarcely picked itself up when the black throat of one of the orchids opened, and the pig was sucked into it, whilst all the other flowers seemed to strain greedily towards it.

The flower shook with the beast's struggles. Horrified, the pearl diver saw the orchid open again.

The pig fell, drained of life and blood, shrunken to a dirty white mass.

Peter struggled against a trance-like horror. "That is to be the fate of your friend in half-an-hour when the moon comes up," said the Chinaman, dropping his pidgin English. "As for you—you shall be the prey of the black butterflies in the temple. Take him away."

Bound hand and foot now, the young pearler was dragged into the temple. It was hung with heavy draperies, patterned with dragons and images. The lad noted that the temple was crowded with Chinese, presumably there to witness the sacrifice. The lad was carried through an aisle of pillars to an altar, above which hung a brilliant canopy of Chinese lanterns. He was set down and the Chinks retreated. There was a flutter all round him, and with dilated eyes he saw what it meant.

A cry of pure horror almost left his lips. For around him in a swarm were the black butterflies. They, too, were bloodsuckers, like the tropical orchids; And he was bound hand and foot!

Then Peter remembered the knife between his shoulders, its edge against the rope, and he writhed desperately. Would the sharp, razor-edge of the knife cut through his thin flying overalls—and the rope? Yes! Suddenly there was a snap, and the tight rope burst asunder.

And then in his savage fury, Pete the Pearl Diver was suddenly inspired. He seized up a long kris and slashed at the Chinese lanterns. They fell, in flames. Like one possessed, he dragged on a great tapestry and piled it on the flames. There was a sudden roar. As if by magic the temple was a holocaust of flames.

A crash, a shattering tingle of glass. Pete the Pearl diver had dived through one of the stained-glass windows. Sword in hand he was running through those fairy gardens.

All at once he rounded a bend and saw the stream, saw the canoe with Tim in it, being sucked up by one of the vicious giant orchids.

His body springs suddenly released again, the pearler dashed forward with a shout of horror. He laid about him madly with the sword, reducing the yellow and scarlet balloon flowers to a mass of wreckage in a few seconds. Tim was free.

"Just in time, old chap," Tim almost sobbed as the pearler cut his bonds. "Thanks—Pete. There's—there's the airplane. I know where it is."

"You do? Good! Quick—run!" shouted the young pearl diver, fired anew with hope.

Side by side they raced through those sinister gardens—ran as never before. And then on a broad lawn, Pete saw the airplane.

Their brains in a whirl the lads scrambled in. Pete set the engine to roaring life, with a touch of the self-starter—luckily it was already warm. He threw off the brake and opened out the throttle.

With a harsh, elemental roar the plane surged at the Chinamen, who scattered with fearful cries. A hundred yards run and Pete snapped back on the stick, and the skimming machine slanted up, roaring into the night.

Pete circled once for altitude, and looking down saw the temple ablaze like a great beacon. As he set the plane's nose for the sea, he turned and grinned at his pal. He had got the pearl—and settled Li Fang's hash.

"Not too bad," Tim shouted at him with a grin. "Not bad at all."

The Miracle Boys return next week in a dazzling Mystery of the Cup Final. Falcon Swift also features in this high-speed Footer Yarn.

HUNDRED PER CENT PERCY, THE STUTTERING SALESMAN!
Here Again In An Uproarious Complete Fun Tale.



**The Rival Fire Extinguisher Salesman
Dragged Out His Instrument to Quell
the Lord Mayor's Blaze—and Nearly
Collapsed. It was a Saxophone.**

The Gathering of Salesmen.

"THIS," said J. Bertillon Bogg, the president of Fixit Corporation Inc., "is a sample of Burnum's Patent Fire-extinguisher. You hold the whole caboodle against your shoulder like a gun an' shoot it at the flames. A kind of a bomb thing whizzes out and bursts in the fire an' in less time than it takes to say Nebuchadnezzar, she's out!"

"Yeth, Mithter Bogg," said the chief salesman of Fixit Corporation. "I thee, thir!"

They were in the head office of the Fixit Corporation organised by J. Bertillon Bogg, a company that guaranteed to do anything in the way of commerce. The motto of the company was "Fixit Fixes You Up," and Big Business was written all over its president. The chief salesman, however, had not such an imposing aspect. He was a youth named Percy Bodkin, afflicted with a lisp, which he could suppress only by a strong effort of will. But Percy—"Hundred Per Cent. Percy"—had long ago proved to J. Bertillon Bogg that he was not such a simpleton as he looked.

"Well, Percy," continued J. Bertillon, "I've taken on the job of boosting the sales of these here extinguishers—an' it's up to you to do your stuff. Listen, I've located a one-horse burg down in the country, where they've only got a volunteer fire brigade an' one of them old-fashioned pumping

engines you work by hand. You gotta go down there with this sample and land an order—see. The place is called Hetherington-cum-Blather. Go to it, lad!"

"Yeth, Mithter Bogg."

J. Bertillon placed the fire-extinguishing apparatus in a long black case, specially built for it, and Percy Bodkin left en route for Hetherington-cum-Blather.

As only to be expected, Hetherington-cum-Blather was accessible only on a branch line of the railway. And Percy began to have grave doubts whether the train he boarded had the energy to totter out of the station to its destination, so long did it seem in starting.

He had been waiting patiently for half-an-hour when another passenger got into his carriage. He carried a large case which he dumped on the rack beside Percy's Patent Fire-extinguisher.

"This right for Hetherington-cum-Blather?"

Percy nodded.

"Thanks," said the newcomer, and then continued, chattily, "'Tisn't often I have to visit such one-horse dumps. I'm a first-rate salesman, sir, and I've heard Hetherington-cum-Blather is one of those places with only a volunteer fire brigade, and I'm going down there to put over a deal for some fire-extinguishers."

Percy's eyebrows rose in surprise. He had not time to say anything, however, before the carriage door opened again and another man with a case entered.

"Hetherington-cum-Blather?" he inquired.

"That's right! That little place'll never recover from the shock of having so many visitors at once!"

The second man chuckled as he stowed his case on the rack.

"Thank heavens, I shan't be there for long, anyhow. I'm a traveller and I'm just popping down to

get the Mayor interested in a new line of fire-extinguishers."

"Well, I'm blown!" said the other. "See here—"

"Hetherington-cum-Blather?" inquired a third man, sticking his head in the window.

"Yeth," lisped Percy. "Thtep right in and plathe your fire-extinguisher on the rack."

"Funny," said the third man, getting in. "How did you know I was selling fire-extinguishers?"

When Percy saw that man also was carrying a large bag, his eyes nearly popped out of his head. His remark had been intended as a piece of witty sarcasm for the benefit of the other two—but it was true!

The third traveller in fire-extinguishers had hardly seated himself when the door of the carriage was again torn violently open and two men carrying cases scrambled in together.

"Well, Charlie," said one of them, when they were seated, "fancy meeting you on your way to this Hetherington place. What're you travelling in these days? Vacuum cleaners, same as usual?"

"No," was the answer. "I've got a better line now—fire-extinguishers."

"What!" roared the whole carriageful in chorus.

The two late arrivals look round in surprise at their travelling companions. Then the man who had asked the question went on: "That's a pity, Charlie, because I'm going there to sell fire-extinguishers myself!"

As he finished speaking, a tall man, with a waxed moustache, climbed hurriedly into the carriage with the inevitable bag.

"Phew!" he said. "Nearly missed it! Pretty crowded, what? Never thought Hetherington-cum-Blather was such a busy spot. I'm a salesman, myself, and—"

"And you're on your way to sell fire-extinguishers!" said six voices in unison.

The last man scowled round the crowded carriage as the train began at last to chug slowly out of the station.

"That's the way it goes, eh!" he growled. "We're all on the same racket? Well, I don't mind telling you fellows you're wasting your time. There—Hey! Who're you shoving?"

The remarks of the salesman with the waxed moustache were rudely interrupted by a large case jabbing him in the back. Again the carriage door had been flung open, and yet another man leapt in.

"Sorry," the final passenger apologised to the man with the waxed whiskers. As the racks were now full up, he placed his bag on top of Percy's. They looked almost identical—a fact which did not escape the salesman with the moustache.

"Never expected this line to be so busy," went on the last comer. "Thought Hetherington-cum-Blather was a quiet place."

"Pleathe!" groaned Percy Bodkin. "We know all about it. You're going there to get an order for fire-extinguishers, aren't you?"

"Fire-extinguishers?" said the newcomer. "Not me! I'm a saxophone player and I'm on my way to play at Hetherington-cum-Blather Fire Brigade sports!"

"Hip-hip-hooray!" shouted Percy suddenly. "Thread the glad newth! He'th a thaxophone player!"

But the rest of the salesmen were not half so enthusiastic about it. They all glared back and forth at each other fiercely; if looks could burn, those numerous fire-extinguishers would have come in handy.

"Anyhow," said the man with the waxed moustache, "I ain't afraid of you lot snaffing the order.

My extinguisher is the most up-to-date invention of the lot—Burnum's Patent Fire-extinguisher!"

"Burnum'th!" lisped Percy in astonishment.

"Why mine'th a Burnum'th!"

"So!" glared waxed-whiskers, "I've got a rival with the same goods, eh? Well, see here, you lispin' boob—you won't put anything over on Jim Boyle—that's me."

Percy looked worried. It was startling news to find this man was selling Burnum's Extinguishers as well as himself. He had felt confident that he could land an order, if he were given a chance to demonstrate his fire-extinguisher, but this was a serious setback.

Much the same train of thought was passing through the mind of Boyle, of the waxed moustache, and already he had a plan to get the better of his lispin' rival.

The case he carried and Percy's were identical. Moreover, the saxophone case which lay atop of Percy's extinguisher was so similar that it could easily be confused with either. What would be easier than to mix the cases up so that Percy would walk off with the saxophone, and the saxophonist take Percy's extinguisher?

No sooner had Boyle formed the plan than he was putting it into practice. He hurried forward—for he was obliged to stand in the overcrowded carriage—grumbling something about being sick of holding his bag. He hoisted his fire-extinguisher case on to the luggage rack and pushed it on top of the saxophone case, so that the three almost identical bags were lying on top of each other, with the saxophone case sandwiched in the centre.

Bad Business.

WHEN the train finally staggered into Hetherington Station there was a concerted dive for the door, and the bodies of six salesmen jammed in the doorway, straining and struggling to be the first out of the train.

"Gerrout!"

"Steady on! Who're you shoving!"

In the confusion it was an easy matter for the rascally Boyle to complete his scheme.

He gripped the handle of Percy's extinguisher case and dragged it from underneath the others. Thus the saxophone case became the lower of the two remaining.

As the crowd of struggling salesmen thinned out, Boyle pushed his way through and hurried down the platform, chucking to himself. Percy Bodkin and the saxophone player were the last to leave the carriage.

"Let me thee," Percy said, when they turned jointly to the luggage rack. "Which ith your bag and which ith mine?"

"That's mine on top," the saxophonist said. "I got in last, you know."

He gripped the topmost case and pulled it down: Percy took the lower one, and they stepped out of the carriage together.

Percy Bodkin strode along with the saxophonist for some distance until their ways parted. Then he hurried on anxiously.

When he came in sight of Hetherington-cum-Blather town hall, his spirits rose. Five of the extinguisher salesmen stood outside, looking very disgruntled. The only one missing was Boyle, and it was plain from the uncomplimentary remarks that this gent had raced them all to the town hall and claimed the first interview.

Percy ignored them and hurried on past them, entering the town hall boldly.

"Hey!" shouted the salesman after him. "Take your turn!"

"Not me!" Percy called back. "Thith ith a cathe of thurvival of the fitteth!"

The rest of the salesmen entered the town hall in a body, at the rear of Percy. Within was a clerk seated at a desk. Percy hurried over to him and said: "Pleathe may I thee the Mayor or the Town Clerk or—"

He broke off as an inner door of the place was torn violently open and the cunning Mr. Boyle sailed gracefully through it. He landed with a jarring thud at Percy's feet. His fire-extinguisher case came hurtling after him, and then, in the open door at the rear, an irate gentleman of large proportions appeared.

"Witherbotham!" he roared to the man at the desk. "How often have I told you not to waste my time with these pestering salesmen. That's the ninety-eighth fire-extinguisher salesman I've thrown out this week! If I see another, I'll kill him!"

beat yet—not by long chalks! I'll show that big boob where he steps off, before I leave this town!"

Boyle glared round for his fire-extinguisher bag. It stood at Percy Bodkin's feet. He grabbed it, gave a final glare all round, and stalked in fury out of the town hall. The clerk turned to Percy with a smile. "What were you saying before we were interrupted?"

"Thankth," gulped Percy. "I—I d-don't think I'll bother you to-day. G-g-good afternoon."

Percy Bodkin took up his fire-extinguisher case and hastily removed himself from the town hall.

A Fortunate Fire.

PERCY betook himself to a near-by tuckshop and tried to cheer his drooping spirits with a fizzling ginger-pop. At last, it seemed, he had failed, for it was impossible to get an order from a Mayor who went berserk at the very mention of the word "fire-extinguisher."



A DROP IN SALES.—The door of the Mayor's room was suddenly torn violently open, and Percy's cunning rival came sailing through, followed by his black case.

He stamped back into the room, slamming the door behind him. The five salesmen standing behind Percy grinned weakly at each other.

"So that's the way of it! I'm off!" said one.

"Me, too! I value my life above my sales!"

The other three agreed with them and the five discreetly left the town hall. Mr. Winterbotham went over to the dazed Boyle and assisted him to his feet.

"I didn't know you were trying to get an order for fire-extinguishers," he said, "or I could have warned you. They're Mr. Merry's pet aversion. We get streams of 'em here, every day!"

"Is that so?" said Boyle, glaring through an eyelid that was rapidly darkening. "Well, I'm not

Meanwhile, the disgruntled and somewhat damaged Mr. Boyle was hatching yet another dastardly scheme. He had not forgotten that Hetherington-cum-Blather Fire-Brigade were holding their annual sports that day. It was that very fact that suggested his unscrupulous plan.

He made a surreptitious tour of the town hall, inspecting every window from the outside. At last he found what he wanted at the back of the building. A large window was wide open, and from the outside it was an easy matter to reach the heavy curtains which hung on either side of the window.

With a sly chuckle, Boyle produced a box of matches, struck one, and, leaning forward, applied it to the corner of one of the curtains. He waited until

the blaze had spread to his satisfaction, and then crept quietly away, still chucking to himself in gleeful anticipation of the triumph to come.

Boyle didn't know that his actions had been carefully watched by a small boy, who was at that moment hurrying to inform Hetherington-cum-Blather's only constable.

Boyle watched with satisfaction the gathering clouds of smoke above the town hall. Suddenly the triumphant climax came. Winterbotham and the Mayor dashed out of the town hall in a wild panic.

"Fire! Fire!" they shrieked. "Somebody run to the sports and get the brigade. Fire!"

"Fire, eh?" said Boyle, calmly walking up to the excited Mayor. "Well, see here! I'm the only feller in this place who can save that rotten town hall of yours. Burnum's fire-extinguisher"—he patted the case he was carrying—"is guaranteed to put out any size blaze! Reckon you'll change your tune about my offer now, eh?"

"Oh, please!" bleated the Mayor. "Save our beautiful town hall! It will be burnt to ruins!"

"Don't I know!" grinned Boyle. "Promise to give me a thousand pound order for fire-extinguishers, if I put it out. Is that on?"

The Mayor gulped, and hesitated awhile.

"All right," he said at last. "I'll do anything to save the town hall! Quick! The flames are bursting through the roof!"

Boyle gripped his bag, and the three of them plunged through the door of the town hall.

A second after they had disappeared into the smoking interior, Percy Bodkin poked his head out of the near-by shop and gazed in alarm towards the town hall.

"Good heaventh!" he shouted. "The town hall'th on fire! Hey! Help! Call the fire-brigade—"

Percy Bodkin broke off and suddenly looked down at the bag he was holding as though he had just remembered it.

"There'th a thilly ath! Thith ith a wonderful chanthe to demonthtrate what thith fire-extinguither can do!"

No sooner had Percy realised this, than he was leaping through the choking smoke into the entrance of the town hall. He soon traced the root of the blaze to the council chamber at the back of the town hall, and there saw three men against a background of solid flame, for the whole of the rear wall of the chamber was ablaze.

"That's on, is it?" Percy heard Boyle say. "A thousand-pound order for Burnum's Fire Extinguishers if I put out the fire!"

"Yes! Yes! Hurry! It's spreading fast!"

"Wait a minute," said Percy, rushing forward. "I'll help. I've got a—"

"Gittout!" roared Boyle, suddenly turning and seeing Percy. He gave him a shove in the face that sent the lad staggering backwards and seated him firmly on the floor.

Boyle fumbled with his case. "Blessed lock's got stuck! Have to break it open!"

He raised his boot, and with a forceful kick, smashed the lock. He opened the case, thrust in his hand and drew forth the contents. His eyes nearly popped out of his head. It was a saxophone!

"I've been tricked!" he roared, turning to Percy. "It's you, you young pup!"

But the burly Mayor intervened. He seized Boyle by the collar. "This your idea of a joke!" he roared. "I'll knock your—"

"Look!" shrieked Winterbotham. "That boy's got a fire extinguisher!"

Percy had meantime wrenched open his own case and brought forth the authentic Burnum's Patent

Fire Extinguisher, which looked like an ancient blunderbuss. Lifting it to his shoulder, Percy took careful aim at the burning wall, and pulled the trigger.

There was a sharp crack, a thing like a cannon ball hurtled out of the muzzle and soared high above the flames. It exploded with a terrific roar and a black, liquid spattered broadcast over the blaze.

A second after the discharge of the extinguisher there was nothing left of the fire but smouldering debris, and a few moments later even the smouldering ceased.

"Marvellous!" said the Mayor and Winterbotham in chorus; and the Mayor continued, solo: "What kind is that? With such fire-extinguishers we'd have no need of a fire brigade at all!"

"Burnum'th Fire Extinguisher, thir," said Percy. "I'll be pleased to take an order for any quantity!"

"Here! Wait a minute!" spluttered the struggling Boyle. "I—"

"You shut up!" roared the Mayor. "You black-mailed me into promising you a thousand-pound order for Burnum's Fire Extinguishers, didn't you?—and then made a fool of me with that ukelele or whatever it is. Well, I'm going to give that thousand-pound order to this young fellow who actually put the fire out. And as for you—"

"Beg pardon, sir," said a new voice behind them. "I fancy this is the fellow I'm looking for. Is this the man, sonny?"

They turned to see a large policeman and a small boy.

"That's 'im!" said the small boy, pointing to Boyle. "I sore 'im set alight to them curtains in this room a' purpose!"

"Good gracious!" said the Mayor. "So you caused the fire as well! I knew you were a criminal from the start! Here, constable, take your man!"

"Hey! Wait!" choked Boyle. "I—"

Again he was not to be heard. This time the interruption took the form of a sudden invasion of strange gentlemen in running shorts and firemen's helmets. In the midst of the men was the saxophone player who had travelled down in the carriage full of fire-extinguisher salesmen.

"Where's the fire!" demanded the gentlemen of the strange garb. "Stand back an' let the hose play!"

"It's out," said the Mayor. "Go back and finish your sports. I shan't need you any more. I'm buying a thousand pounds' worth of real fire-extinguishers!"

"Hello!" said the saxophonist suddenly. "There's my instrument. So you're the fellow that stole it!"

He walked up to Boyle and wrenched away the saxophone he was still holding in his hands.

"Another charge, eh?" said the policeman.

"Things look like being pretty hot for you! Come along!" Relentlessly Boyle was hauled off by the worthy copper to answer for his sins.

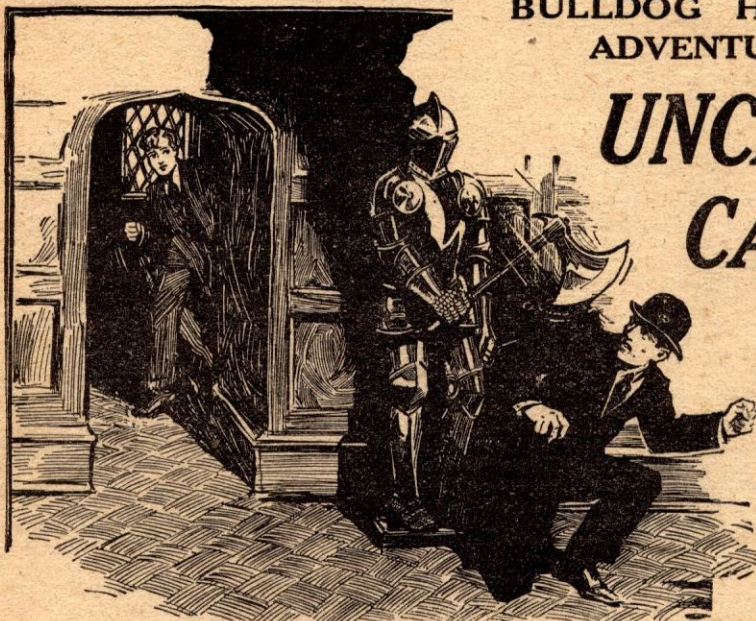
HOW Fixit had managed to Fix It Up was always a puzzle to Percy. Of course, he didn't know

that he had carried the saxophone about himself for some time—neither did he know that when Boyle had been flung out of the Mayor's office at his first interview, he had grabbed the case Percy was carrying, and stalked out with it, thinking it was his own. Thus Percy came again into possession of a Burnum's Fire Extinguisher without even knowing he had ever been without one. The workings of Fate are peculiar!

These merry mirth-makers, the crew of the "Happy Haddock," are here next week. You simply must not miss this screaming fun-tale.

BIG THRILL SECTION

ANOTHER EXCITING EXPLOIT.
BULLDOG HAMILTON—
ADVENTURER in
UNCANNY
CASTLE



What was the
 Secret of the
 Strange, Eerie
 Events at
 Tregellis
 Castle?

Below, Bull-
 dog Solves the
 Mystery in
 S m a s h i n g
 Style.

The Haunted Castle.

THERE it stands—Tregellis Castle, the home of my ancestors."

Lord Tregellis, a youngish, refined-looking man, pointed almost sadly. Bulldog Hamilton, adventurer, had brought his powerful car to a stop on a spur of this lonely Cornish coast road. Tregellis Castle, gaunt and grey in the fading evening light, looked sinister, indeed. Its towers and battlements stood out starkly against the background of scudding clouds.

"I like it," said Bulldog Hamilton, in his blunt, staccato way. "It looks dangerous."

He squared his powerful shoulders unconsciously as he engaged the gears; his out-thrust, determined jaw took on an even greater aggressiveness as his powerful teeth clamped down on his big-bowled briar pipe. Anything dangerous, anything adventurous, appealed to Bulldog Hamilton's fighting spirit.

The car purred on in the evening gloom. Ken Tregellis, who was the third occupant of the powerful Alvis, was a fair-haired, fresh-faced youngster not long left school. He was Lord Tregellis' son, who had begged to be allowed to come on this adventure.

The peer had appealed to the famous adventurer to solve the dread mystery of this lonely Cornish castle. For many years, Lord Tregellis had been accustomed to spending a month or two at his desolate West of England seat; but a year back terror had gripped the castle. Whispering voices, borne on an icy wind, were heard in the hall and in the corridors. Panic ensued, and the servants cleared out in a body. Fresh servants were obtained, and they bolted in just the same way.

In the end Lord Tregellis had been obliged to shut the castle up completely. All through the long winter months the castle had stood empty; and

now, in the spring, Lord Tregellis had thought of the redoubtable Bulldog Hamilton.

"If there's a natural explanation of this ugly state of affairs, I know you will find it, Mr. Hamilton," said Lord Tregellis, as the car approached the grey old walls.

Darkness was creeping down as the car halted on the weed-grown drive. The narrow windows, dust-begrimed and forbidding, stared unwinkingly at the visitors. While Lord Tregellis went forward to unlock the great door, Bulldog and Ken hauled out four, heavily laden suitcases which contained food, lamps, blankets, and other necessities.

The door creaked open, and Ken turning, caught sight of an evil, hideous face at one of the deeply recessed windows.

"Dad! Look!" gasped Ken, pointing.

Bulldog swung round, but the face was no longer visible. Ken blurted out what he had seen, and Bulldog nodded. Without a word, he dashed into the castle, past the surprised Lord Tregellis. It was Bulldog Hamilton's way; he wasted no time in words. He acted.

Reaching the window where Ken had seen the hideous face, he found nothing but festoons of dusty cobweb.

"Mustn't let your nerves get the better of you, boy," said Bulldog gruffly. "The light is bad—and you must have been mistaken. Well, Lord Tregellis, where do we go? One room will be sufficient."

Lord Tregellis did not reply; he was looking at the tiled floor and the panelled walls. They were almost dripping with dampness; there were great patches of mildew and mould. In one or two places, moss was sprouting up between the tiles. And in that half-light, the appearance of decay was melancholy and eerie.

"A pity—a terrible pity!" muttered Lord

Tregellis, with a helpless shrug. "Such a find old pile—going to rack and ruin!"

He led the way to a comfortable room some distance down the great hall. It was the study—and, when in residence at the castle, Lord Tregellis occupied that room a great deal. It was damp and dreary, and the furniture was filmed with mildew.

"Ugh! There seems to be a ghastly blight on the place," muttered his lordship. "I'm not sure that we should have come—"

"Nerves, Lord Tregellis—just nerves," jerked Bulldog, looking round. "Place been unoccupied all through the winter. What else could you expect? Boy, we'd better light the fire."

Ken busied himself at the great fireplace, while Bulldog unpacked the suitcases. They had brought a bundle or two of wood for this very emergency, and a cheerful blaze was soon going. Bulldog himself lighted two powerful vapour lamps, which dispelled the shadows.

"Perhaps I can help?" suggested the host.

"You can," retorted Bulldog. "Better be wiping the furniture—get some of this mildew off. Ken, we shall need more coal."

The fire was roaring famously now, the wood crackling and the coal taking a firm hold. Ken took the scuttle and went out into the hall—for he remembered having seen a giant scuttle, full of coal, next to the quaint old fireplace.

It was gloomy out there, and the shadows were deep. Ken had scarcely taken three strides before he suddenly halted, and a chill crept up his spine. An icy draught had suddenly manifested itself—and with it came whispering voices, distinct yet seeming to come from a distance.

"'Tis folly to dwell in Tregellis Castle!" came a soft, sibilant voice. "Fools—fools! Death will overtake those who remain within these accursed walls!"

Ken spun round, startled. He was alone! There was not a living thing within yards of him. He fancied he heard a low, ghostly, cackling laugh. . . .

"Bulldog!" he shouted, his voice almost a croak. Bulldog Hamilton, a gun in hand, came charging out of the study.

"Well, boy?" he jerked. "What's wrong?"

Ken told him—but now there was no chill draught—no voices. Bulldog looked at the lad closely.

"All right—better get the coal and go back," said Bulldog. "The fire needs replenishing."

Ken was glad enough to get into action. He filled his scuttle, and returned to the study. Bulldog Hamilton remained in the hall—having told Ken, in fact, to leave him alone there for a while, warning him, too, to say nothing to Lord Tregellis.

"Madness and death await those who stay the night in Tregellis Castle!" came a sudden whispering voice, borne on an icy draught. Bulldog's jaw jutted out aggressively as he stared round. He suspected trickery. That the sound was not supernatural, Bulldog was certain, but for the moment he was baffled.

Drip—drip—drip! Bulldog swung round as he heard that ominous sound. Somewhere, not far distant, moisture was splashing down upon the floor in a steady, slow drip.

Suddenly, Bulldog located the sound. He crossed the hall with swift, cat-like steps. And there, almost at the feet of a rusty suit of armour, which stood on a pedestal, was a little, irregular pool on the floor. Something dripped into it even as Bulldog bent down. . . .

The pool shone muddily in the torchlight. Dirty water was percolating from the ceiling. Bulldog flashed his light up to the rafters, expecting to see a stain. But there was nothing—nothing but the oak

beams and the whitewashed plaster, between them. Where, then, was the water dripping from? There had been no rain for days.

Bulldog bent down again, examining the pool with greater intencess. It was impossible for him to see that the arm of the armoured figure was slowly and mysteriously raising itself! And grasped in its hand was an enormous battle-axe!

Up it went, silently, horribly. At the last second there came the faintest of metallic scrapes, and Bulldog Hamilton's extraordinarily acute hearing caught the sound. He swung round sharply.

Swish! With deadly, appalling speed, the battle-axe dropped; it shaved past Bulldog's head, missing him by the merest fraction of an inch. Had he not moved, the axe would have cleaved his head in two.

Clang! The battle-axe struck a part of the armour, and a moment later Lord Tregellis and his son came running out. They found Bulldog Hamilton staring thoughtfully at the armour.

"What's happened?" gasped Ken. "That noise. . . ."

"Nearly a goner, that time," rapped the adventurer. "I was examining that pool of water when the axe rose, probably attracted by a powerful electro-magnet, and fell. Fortunately, I heard it and moved out of the way just in time. A very ingenious trick. The water, of course, was to attract my attention. How it got there I don't know for the moment. But I mean to find out. Come!"

They stared at the ceiling, and were bewildered to see that there was no wet patch. Bulldog dashed up the stairs three at a time, the others following. They hurried into the room above—which was a bedroom. The floor was of polished oak. Bulldog swung his light round, but no living thing was to be seen.

"Ah!" Bulldog took a deep breath as he saw that two of the boards, immediately over the spot where the water had dripped, were comparatively loose. He wrenched them up. Below, he found a tiny crack in the plaster—but there was no indication of moisture, not even the slightest drop.

"Hm! Just too late!" murmured Bulldog, his jaw out-thrust, his teeth tightly gripping his eternal pipe. "There was somebody dripped the water through that crack in the plaster by means of a slim-nozzled squirter. It's just trickery. Where the rascal. . . ."

Crash! Without warning, the door slammed hard, and all three distinctly heard the click of a key turning in the lock. From the other side came a peal of hideous mocking laughter.

The Ghost Footprints.

BULLDOG HAMILTON dashed to the door, and wrenched at the handle.

"Stand back, boy!" he commanded, as Ken sought to help him.

The adventurer ran back to the centre of the room, and then like a human battering-ram he charged.

Crash! His powerful shoulder struck one of the great panels; there was a splintering of woodwork, and the big man went clean through. He was out in the corridor less than half-a-minute after the ghostly laughter had sounded. Ken and Lord Tregellis followed—Ken rushing to the side of Bulldog, who had sprawled headlong.

Again came the mocking laughter—pealing out distinctly from the direction of the staircase. Pluckily, Lord Tregellis raced away; almost at once a loud scream sounded—a great, despairing cry from Lord Tregellis himself. Then—silence. . . .

"Dad—Dad!" gasped Ken, in anguish.

"He should not have gone!" rapped out Bulldog, who was now on his feet. "Keep back, boy. Let me go first."

He reached the wide landing. Everything was deathly quiet now. The light of Bulldog's torch played down the staircase. He descended; and as he did so, he unhooked a massive medieval sword from its fastenings. With this thrust out before him he continued his descent.

He reached the bottom of the stairs, and advanced across the hall. That uncanny silence still prevailed.

Whizzzzzzzzzz! Without the slightest warning, and as though flung by unseen hands, three daggers detached themselves from the panelled wall. They came hurtling past Bulldog Hamilton, missing his face

holders which acted when an invisible ray from a selenite cell—was broken. Fortunately my sword broke the ray first, so that contact was made a split-second too soon."

Unexpectedly, Bulldog Hamilton switched his torchlight off, and now the pair were left in total darkness, for night had drawn on, and, outside, a moaning wind was rising.

"Oh! Look—look there!" gasped Ken. Some little way down the hall, in the direction of a wide arched corridor, footprints were visible, glowing eerily, with a ghostly, luminous greenish fire.

To Ken's surprise, Bulldog Hamilton permitted himself one of his rare chuckles. The adventurer was standing over the first footprints.

"Easy, boy—easy!" he said, in his rapid way. "I'm responsible for these." "What!"

"A little trick of mine—to catch the trickster," went on Bulldog. "Ever known a ghost to leave footprints, boy? A human being has trodden here—and he wasn't your father. Look at the size of these feet."

Ken was bewildered, and filled with a sudden great admiration for the famous adventurer.

"I put down some powder—special powder of my own," explained Bulldog. "When trodden on, it becomes luminous—the crushing of the tiny particles releases the light-giving properties. And that dust is adhering to the shoes of the man who seized Lord Tregellis and carried him off. See! The trail is easy enough to follow!"

In complete darkness now, Bulldog was advancing down the arched corridor. With Ken, no longer fearful of the supernatural, close behind him, the adventurer was following those glowing, phantom-like footsteps. He had now forsaken the sword and was gripping his gun, ready for instant action.

At the end of the corridor, the footprints turned off, leading down a narrower passage; and here, suddenly, the trail ended. They had reached a spot midway down the passage, and there were no footprints further on. Bulldog switched on his torchlight, and he and Ken found themselves staring at a solid stone wall.

"But—but how can this be, Bulldog?" asked Ken, in a low voice. "The man could not have escaped from here—"

"It's quite simple," jerked Bulldog. "The footprints end here—so there must be a door here."

With deft, sensitive fingers, the adventurer felt along the stonework of the wall. In spite of appearances, he knew that there *must* be a door there, somewhere.

"Ah!" exclaimed Bulldog abruptly.

He had found an irregular line running up the wall. The rest was comparatively easy. Bulldog was



PHANTOM DEATH.—Suddenly, as if propelled by unseen hands, three daggers detached themselves from the wall. They whizzed past Bulldog, almost grazing his face.

by mere inches, and with a twanging of tempered steel, they stuck quivering in the panelling opposite.

"Bulldog!" panted Ken. "Oh, my hat! You—you might have been killed!"

"But I'm not!" jerked Bulldog, and in his voice there was a note of exultant triumph.

He ran across to the hooks on the wall.

"I'm not scared, Bulldog," faltered Ken in a whisper. "But—"

"It's all right, boy," Bulldog rapped, and in his voice there was a note of triumph. "More infernal trickery! Those daggers were hurled from catapult

looking for something definite, and presently he found it. The stonework was rough generally; but there was one little spot, a kind of projection, which was worn smooth with much fingering.

He pressed on that spot; but nothing happened. He applied a downward thrust, then an upward. Finally, when he pressed hard to the left he felt a movement; a click followed, dull and metallic. A big section of the stone wall swung backwards, revealing a black gap.

"Jumping corkscrews!" ejaculated Ken, his heart thudding.

Bulldog Hamilton led the way through. A flight of steep stone stairs yawned at his feet. They were circular, and seemed to go down endlessly. But at one glance Bulldog saw that the stairs were well worn and that they were not very dusty. Proof enough that they had been recently used—and much used.

A draught was coming up, and it was accompanied by a curious drumming and humming which beat against the ears of the explorers.

They reached the bottom of the staircase at last. Now they found themselves in a typical dungeon—such as can be found beneath any ancient castle. It was quite bare, and the walls and floor reeked with moisture.

But there was something different about this particular dungeon. In the very centre of it there was a great circular opening, like that of a well. Standing near-by was a slab of stone—and this, obviously, fitted into the opening. Bulldog approached, and now he had flashed his torchlight off. He had already seen that there were strong iron rungs leading down the shaft. Yet he doubted if this was really a well. For he knew that far below was the famous Tregellis Pool. This was an enormous cave which was always filled with deep water. It was one of the most inaccessible caves along the whole Cornish coast, and it had an evil reputation.

Upwards from the shaft a strong draught was blowing. It came in a steady current, blowing against the ears of Bulldog and Ken. And they heard voices—voices which were eerily clear. Then it was that Bulldog knew how the voices had reached the hall. Some natural formation of the shaft, or of the cavern below, caused the voices to echo and re-echo as they came upwards through shafts, similar to this, built in the walls.

"... made a big mistake, Lord Tregellis, when you brought your son and this man, Hamilton, to your castle," one voice was saying, in a hard, grating tone. "We've got you, and we'll soon have your son, and—"

"You villains!" came Lord Tregellis' voice. "Mr. Hamilton will find me—"

"When he finds you it will be too late—for you are going to die now," came the sinister retort. Bulldog gripped the slim arm of his young companion.

"Boy, don't worry!" he whispered tensely. "I'll save your father—and this is where we go into action!"

The Secret of the Cave.

DOWN in the black, gloomy cave three men were standing in the flaring, flickering light which came from a number of smoky oil flares. The yellow glare was reflected in the restless depths of the famous Tregellis Pool.

One man was the captured peer, standing with his back to the Pool, so that retreat was impossible. Facing him were his two enemies, and they were both heavily masked.

"Your son will share the same fate as yourself," said the bigger of the two men, with grim relentlessness. "Hamilton will suffer death, too. You

will all vanish—and nobody will ever know what became of you—Ah!"

Lord Tregellis made a quick lunge forward. With one sweep of the hand, he succeeded in tearing the mask away from his tormentor.

"Professor Patterson!" he shouted, aghast.

The face which was revealed was distorted with fury; but it was a learned, intellectual face, marred only by the hard lines and the cruel, malignant eyes.

"Nothing can now save you from extinction!" gritted Professor Caleb Patterson. "For you know too much, my friend!"

"And yet I know nothing!" retorted Lord Tregellis. "It is not eighteen months since you were my honoured guest in this very castle above. The world believes that you are abroad, cruising in your little yacht, engaged upon that antiquarian hunt for age-old relics, which has taken you into every corner of the world. What, then, are you doing here? Why—"

"Enough!" broke in Professor Patterson impatiently. "Since you have discovered so much, I will tell you the rest. Yes, I was an honoured guest under your roof; but one day, during that delightful holiday, I bathed in this very pool. The fancy took me to test its depths, for I am an excellent diver. Shall I tell you what I found at the bottom of the Tregellis Pool?"

A fanatical, insane light burned in his eyes.

"Gold!" he continued gloatingly. "Yes, the wreckage of a great Spanish galleon. So I decided to secure this great treasure for myself. I pretended to go abroad in my tiny yacht, with my crew of two. But the yacht is concealed in this very cave—and here, in this darkness we have lived, I and my men. It was necessary to get rid of you and your servants; but I was prepared for any emergency—as you have discovered to your cost. Month in, month out, we have worked, taking it in turns to dive to the hulk, and our task is nearly completed. Soon, we shall be able to steal forth in the night. Then my little yacht will appear in English waters—and I shall become a nine-days' wonder. I shall tell a plausible story of having found a wrecked galleon in remote waters of the Caribbean. The treasure will be mine—all mine, since the Government cannot lay claim to any particle of it."

"You are very sure of yourself, Professor Patterson!" said Lord Tregellis calmly. "Far too sure!"

Something in his lordship's tone made the professor start, but he could not guess the truth. The shaft from above penetrated the cave at that spot, and Lord Tregellis could see a crouched form stealthily descending the metal rungs. It was Bulldog Hamilton!

Craaaaaaash! The Adventurer had leaped bodily outwards and he landed right upon the professor's shoulders, locked together they went rolling over the slippery rocks, near to the edge of the Tregellis Pool. Snarling and clawing, Patterson fought like a tiger.

As Ken Tregellis dropped out of the shaft he was just in time to see the second crook drive a fist with tremendous force against his father's head. The unfortunate peer crashed over, and he lay still on the edge of the pool.

"I'm here, Bulldog!" sang out Ken breathlessly.

He sailed in, doing all he could to help. And, in fact, it was he who turned the tide. Clawing at one of the crooks Ken managed to drag him back. Bulldog, having delivered a terrific left uppercut against the jaw of the Professor, now swung round.

Crash! His left found a billet between the eyes of his assailant; the man reeled, cursing.

"Look!" screamed Ken, his voice charged with new horror.

From the black waters of the Pool a thing of unnameable horror had suddenly appeared. It was gripping at the side of the rock, while loathsome tentacles reached out, grasping Lord Tregellis, and dragging his inanimate body nearer and nearer to the water.

It was an enormous octopus, with vile tentacles. Its baleful eyes were full of evil intent.

Ken flung himself forward, but he was just too late. With a plunge, the unfortunate peer, firm in the clutches of those horrible, remorseless-tentacles, was dragged in.

"Bulldog—Bulldog!" shouted Ken despairingly. Bulldog Hamilton half turned, in time to see what was happening—for all this had occurred within the space of seconds. While the Adventurer's attention was diverted a heavy fist crashed against his head. Stunned, Bulldog went reeling over, to fall head-long into the Pool, and to sink like a stone.

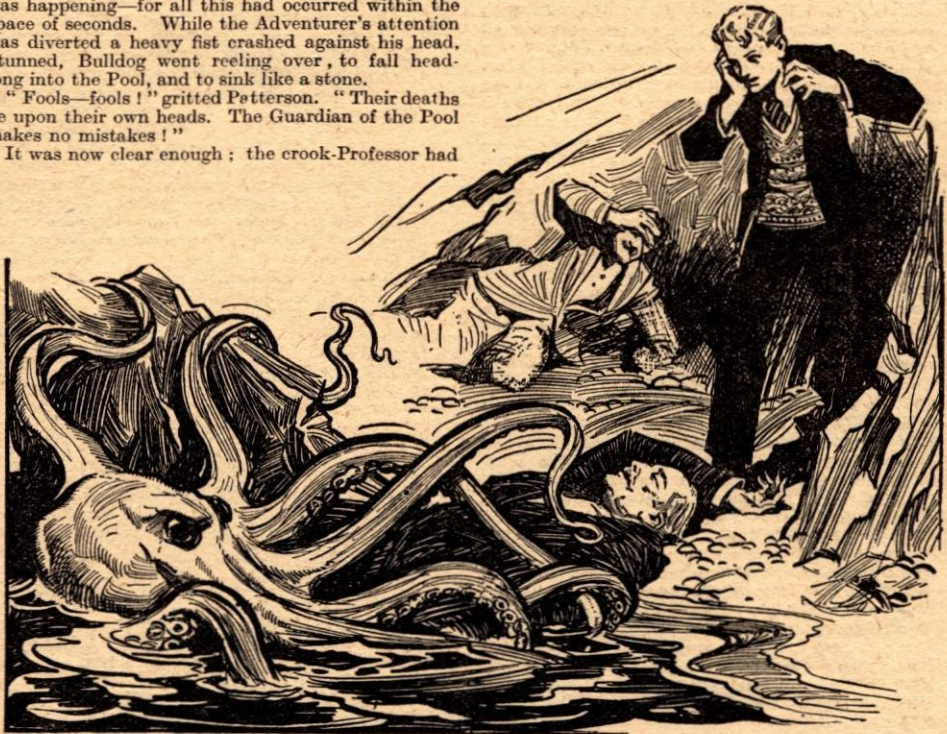
"Fools—fools!" gritted Petterson. "Their deaths be upon their own heads. The Guardian of the Pool makes no mistakes!"

It was now clear enough; the crook-Professor had

Adventurer avoided the danger. He swam nearer, and plunged his knife again and again into the vile body of the noisome creature. The water became as black as ink itself—

He felt the active body of Lord Tregellis near-by, and he gripped hard. With powerful strokes, he struck upwards. All about him, in the Pool, the water was being lashed to a terrible commotion by the death struggles of the giant octopus.

Bulldog bumped against something; he felt, rather than saw, a weapon sweeping at his throat. Professor Patterson, mad with fury, struck with deadly intent. *Crash!* Even under water, the mighty Bulldog



THE GUARDIAN OF THE POOL.—Ken stared fascinated, horrified, as the giant octopus seized his father and dragged him slowly towards the pool.

always intended Lord Tregellis to die in the clutches of the octopus. It had been brought to the Cornish coast by the Professor himself, and it was secured to the rocks by means of a strong chain—which kept it a prisoner near the Pool, but allowed it a certain amount of liberty.

With a sudden impulse Patterson plucked a knife from his waist and dived. He meant to make sure.

BUT Bulldog Hamilton had plenty of life left in him. For the cold water quickly restored his swimming senses, and he found himself sinking down, down, drawn, apparently, by some strong undercurrent. He saw something blurry, shapeless, just beneath.

The octopus! A tentacle came stretching out at him, but with a single slash of his knife, the

succeeded in getting a tremendous force behind his punch. He avoided the knife by a fraction, and his fist crashed into the crook-Professor's face. Patterson sank limply; writhing tentacles reached him, dragged him down . . .

He was never seen again.

The other two men, terrified by their employers' doom, surrendered without a struggle; and Lord Tregellis hushed the whole matter up, so that the name of Professor Caleb Patterson, once honoured, should not be besmirched because of his greed for gold.

"The Torpedo Trap" is the title of next week's yarn of *Tails-Up Drake* in his battle of wits against *Garson* and his *Menace to Britain's Air Power*.

MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE HOLIDAY YARN FEATURING THE BOYS OF ST. GIDDY'S. It Tells of Johnny Gee & Co.'s Amazing Adventures in Spain—land of the Bullfight, Bandits and Strange Customs.



On Holiday.

STUDY No. 4 at St. Giddy's was crammed with a laughing, excited throng. Though only a week of the Easter holidays had passed, Johnny Gee and his chums had returned to the old school. But not for any lessons in the musty form-room. On the contrary the most exciting part of the holiday was soon to commence. For they had arranged with Lord Reggie, the schoolboy earl, to fly in a special 'plane he had chartered to Salamanta in sunny Spain, there to spend the last fortnight of the "vac" with the Earl of Beauchamp, Lord Reggie's cousin. The Joyous Juniors were partaking of foaming ginger-pop to refresh them after the return journey from their homes.

"Well, chaps, the gang's all here," said Johnny Gee. "It was jolly sporting of Lord Reggie's cousin to arrange everything with the Head. We'll drink his health—and Lord Reggie's, too!"

The healths were drunk enthusiastically in foaming ginger pop. Lord Reggie Cholmondeley Pelham-Smith, in shining topper and brand new fancy waist-coat, polished his monocle and beamed upon the Co.

"Well, old chappies, I think we should be tricklin' off to the flyin' ground—what?" he said.

Mr. Ernest James Cattermole, M.A., the sour-grained Housemaster, was waiting for them below. This was the only "snag" so far as the Joyous Juniors were concerned—Dr. Holroyd had insisted that a master should accompany them, and Mr. Cattermole had been selected.

Catty greeted them with rather an ascetic look. He was not looking forward to the trip by aeroplane. Grinning serenely, however, Johnny Gee & Co. trooped merrily out of doors after him, and walked to the flying ground at Merivale.

The juniors' eyes danced eagerly when they saw a huge, cabined aeroplane waiting there, its aluminium body glistening in the afternoon sunlight.

"My word!" breathed Tony Graham. "Isn't she a ripping bus!"

Mr. Cattermole clambered gingerly aboard, and the Joyous Juniors followed him into the cosy, beautifully upholstered saloon. Their luggage had already been taken aboard and the juniors bade good-bye to the St. Giddy's fellows who had come to see them off.

Whooooooom! With a terrific roar the giant engines of the 'plane burst into life. Cheers arose as the huge machine glided swiftly forward, and soared away into the air.

"Begad! We're off, old chappies!" said Lord Reggie enthusiastically. "The jolly old 'plane seems to be a bit lop-sided, y'know!"

There certainly seemed to be something wrong with the 'plane, for it seemed to have a distinct list to rearward. A piercing howl from the steward's room in the stern caused them to start violently.

"Yarooogh! Yah! Leggo! Ow-wow-wow!"

The heroes of the Remove blinked at one another. That voice was only too familiar. Next moment, the steward appeared, whirling along in his grip a plump, rotund schoolboy figure.

"Slocum!" gasped Johnny Gee & Co. simultaneously.

They had not seen anything of Sammy Slocum all the morning. His requests to join the Juniors on their trip had been refused, whereupon Fatty had expressed the intention of joining a swagger yacht party at Pebblecombe.

"Do you know this boy, young gentlemen?" asked the steward. "I've just discovered him—"

"Know him!" gasped Johnny Gee. "I should jolly well think we do—to our sorrow! Fatty, you rotten little stowaway! So you didn't go to Pebblecombe, after all!"

"Groooooogh! No, fear!" gasped Fatty Slocum. "A jolly mean trick, I call it, refusing to take an old pal with you! After all I've done for you, Gee!"

"An old pal—oh, my hat!" gurgled Johnny Gee. "Fatty, you horrid little wangler! No wonder the machine was lop-sided when we took off! Well, chaps, what shall we do with the fat blighter—drop him into the Channel?"

"Perhaps we'd better clap him in irons, and hand him over to the police at Salamanta!" said Tony Graham. "Stowaways are indictable in law, you know."

At the dismal prospect of spending his holiday in a Spanish prison, Fatty Slocum let out a wail. By this time, however, Mr. Cattermole had entered the saloon and he bore down angrily upon the plump stowaway of the air liner.

"Slocum! Reprehensible youth!" he rapped. "You have had the audacity to insinuate yourself upon this party without an invitation! Kindly sit down and remain silent for the rest of the journey! I shall deal with you when we return to St. Gideon's!"

Sammy Slocum wedged himself into one of the armchairs, and blinked rather dolorously through the saloon windows.

CATTY IN THE BULL-RING!
Dauntlessly Johnny Gee advanced into the path of the Bull as it charged at the half-conscious Housemaster.

Big Surprises on the Way, Boys. Watch the Editor's Chat for Special News.

In the Hands of the Bandits.

THE big 'plane made grand progress, and after a light supper in the evening, the heroes of St. Giddy's thrilled as they saw that fields, woods, and pastures had given place to the barren wilderness of mountains. Over the Spanish border they flew, and speeded onward across the wild vastness of the Pyrenees!

"My word! Isn't the scenery wonderful!" exclaimed Johnny Gee. "Creepy, rather, at night-time, and—Great pip! What was that?"

Out of the darkness below came a sudden stab of flame. They gazed downward in tense, excited wonderment, which turned to sudden horror as shots sounded above the roar of the engines, and an ominous rending of the upper saloon fabric brought to them the startling realisation that the 'plane itself was the object of the mysterious firing.

The machine gave a shuddering swoop; then came a deadly rattle of shots blazing furiously through the night. The Removites, thoroughly scared, crouched low. They felt the 'plane turn sharply, then swoop terrifyingly down towards the great, jagged rocks of the mountains. But they sensed that the pilot was wrestling desperately with his controls.

"We're coming down with a bump!" Johnny Gee muttered tensely. "Wait for it—"

Crash! It came at last! The whole machine seemed to shudder as it landed heavily, the occupants of the saloon were pitched headlong on top of one another in a wild, sprawling heap. For several minutes, all was confusion, as the juniors sorted themselves out. Then the cool voice of the pilot broke in reassuringly.

"A close shave that, my lads! Afraid we've damaged the understructure a bit, but it couldn't be helped."

The juniors scrambled out of the saloon and stood gasping on firm ground once again. Mr. Cattermole

was visibly trembling. He looked round him fearfully.

"We're stuck for the night, I'm afraid!" the pilot announced. "Unfortunately there are armed bandits abroad, and—"

"Then we were fired at deliberately by bandits?" asked Johnny Gee breathlessly.

The pilot nodded grimly. "Banditti or revolutionaries!" he replied. "If you take my advice, sir"—this to Mr. Cattermole—"you'd push on to the nearest village."

Mr. Cattermole was only too willing to agree to this. He suffered badly from nerves, and his whole constitution had received a severe shaking. Johnny Gee & Co. had their own inward misgivings, but they kept stiff upper lips, and trooped onward through the moonlit mountain valley.

On and on they walked, and at last they saw a light gleaming ahead. When they came nearer, however, their hopes died. It was only a crude, wooden hut at the side of the winding road, with a lamp burning fitfully at the window.

Johnny Gee knocked at the door, but some minutes elapsed before it was opened, cautiously, and a dark, swarthy face appeared. The sole occupant of the hut was a mountain shepherd, obviously scared but relieved to find that his callers were merely a stranded party of English schoolboys. He spoke in broken English, and Johnny Gee & Co. learned from him that Collenza, the nearest village, lay five miles ahead of them.

"But the young señora must beware—Pablo Mendez and his outlaws command this pass, and to fall into their hands means death. Pablo Mendez is the most dreaded bandit of the Pyrenees—he and his band of out-throats. The young señora might safely reach the village of Collenza—quien sabe?"

The shepherd shrugged his lean shoulders, and withdrew into the hut, bolting the door behind him.

"Oh, crumbs! Nice sort of outlook for us—I don't think!" said Johnny Gee as they turned away. "It's no use, sir, we must push on and make the best of it."

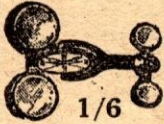
The juniors started at every sound as they tramped onward. The road led deeper into the mountains, on either side the country grew more wild, rugged and mysterious.

Next Week's All-Star Thrillers.—FALCON SWIFT and CHICK (In a Gigantic Tale of Wembley).
THE TALKIE THRILL HUNTERS (In Sunset City).
TAILS-UP DRAKE (In the Torpedo Trap).
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A boot scraping on the rocks above, caused the juniors to halt. A dark figure loomed into view, silhouetted against the moonlit sky. Next moment the rocks seemed to come alive with swiftly moving, sinister forms dressed in the picturesque garb of mountain brigands. These dark-eyed, swarthy fellows surrounded the juniors but were evidently surprised to find they were a party of English school-boys.

To resist was impossible, for they were hopelessly outnumbered and their captors were armed with knives and guns. Despite feeble protests from Mr. Cattermole, the party was marched into the mountain fastnesses to a large cave, guarded on the outside by members of the outlaw band. The captives were taken inside and, after being stripped of all their belongings, were bound hand and foot and thrown into a heap in a corner.

Johnny Gee & Co. looked about them with feelings of horror and dismay, as they awaited the coming of the dreaded brigand leader. It all seemed like a hideous nightmare.

At length, a sharp exclamation from the guards outside caused the men in the cave to spring alertly to their feet. Johnny Gee & Co. felt their hearts beat faster as a dark shadow fell across the cave entrance. Then a figure stepped into view!

"This, surely was not Pablo Mendez, the cut-throat villain of the Pyrenees. The outlaw chief was but a boy—a sturdy young Spaniard of about the Removites' own age, very dark and strikingly handsome. He was dressed in the romantic, carefree style of the brigands—yet his dignified and authoritative bearing stamped him as a boy of noble birth. A flaming red *banda* encircled his lofty forehead.

His dark eyes flashed an inquiring glance at the captives; then he spoke in swift, imperious tones in Spanish to his lieutenant. Instantly, the outlaws ran towards the captives and removed their bonds.

"A thousand pardons, my friends!" said the youthful brigand in a rich, musical voice, and he bowed gracefully. "You have suffered the great outrage at the hands of Escamillo and my outlaw band—*si*? But the things they take from you shall be returned, and you shall be set free. It is fortunate that you were not captured by that arch-villain, Pablo Mendez."

"Then you are not Pablo Mendez?" exclaimed Johnny Gee.

The boy outlaw's eyes flashed.

"I—Pablo Mendez? *Pst!*" He spat contemptuously. "*Non!* I am the bitter enemy of that yellow adder. My name is Don Pedro Innocentio Ramon

Diego Alvarez. I am a descendant of the noblest family in all Castile."

"But I don't understand," said Johnny Gee. "Surely you are not—"

"A brigand? *Si!*" Don Pedro smiled flashingly at the Removites' surprise. "Listen, my friends, and I will explain it to you. When the Monarchists were overthrown, the King himself fled and the nobility of Spain were either driven from the country or were seized by the Revolutionists. My own *castilio* of Santa Ruy was attacked, and the family treasures stolen—but not by the revolutionary soldiers. It was Pablo Mendez and his band of robbers. Then I, Don Pedro Innocentio Ramon Diego Alvarez, vowing to be avenged and to recover my family treasures, took to the mountains with my faithful servants. Soon, my friends, we shall have a reckoning with Pablo Mendez!"

The eyes of the boy outlaw flashed and Johnny Gee & Co. thrilled at the resource and daring of the young Don Pedro.

The Removites then explained how they came to be lost in the Pyrenees that night, and the Spanish boy nodded.

"'Twas one of the anti-aircraft guns of Pablo Mendez that brought down your machine," he said. "You must go, my friends, for it is dangerous for you to stay here! The mountain road to Collenza is held by Pablo Mendez and his band of robbers, but my men will conduct you by another route and see you safely on your way. It will be my happiness to meet you again, my friends—perhaps soon. *Adios!*"

Mr. Cattermole gasped with relief, but Johnny Gee & Co. were rather reluctant to leave the boy outlaw's stronghold. With the dark-eyed Escamillo and half-a-dozen bandits leading the way, the St. Giddy's party followed narrow tortuous paths through the mountains.

All at once, Escamillo gave a sharp exclamation and turned to Mr. Cattermole, in a state of great excitement.

"Run, señor—Pablo Mendez and his *banditti*—they are upon us. We will remain, and keep them at bay. *Despacio!* Here they come!"

Shots rang out suddenly from the dark, rocky crags above them, and crimson stabs of flame spat viciously. Darting into cover, Don Pedro's men returned the fire.

Johnny Gee & Co. and Mr. Cattermole took flight along the winding trail, and the sounds of the gunfire receded in the distance. Deeper and deeper into the unknown mountain tracks they plunged until they were hopelessly lost. Desperately they kept on.

The Deserted Castle.

SUDDENLY, looming out of the shadows, they saw a stone wall in which was set a crooked, iron gateway. Through the thick foliage of the trees within the wall, they caught a glimpse of an ancient *castilio*, silhouetted starkly in the moonlight.

"Perhaps we can shelter here for the night, sir!" exclaimed Johnny Gee. "Anyway, we can try!"

An air of mystery pervaded the courtyard, and they were conscious of an unaccountable thrill, as they trod the shadowy flagstones. Great, black bats fluttered about the towers of the palace, and owls broke the mystic silence of the night with their hideous screeches. The whole place was in darkness, its shutters closed against the world.

Dick Bannister found a bell at the side of the great door, and pulled it. The jangling notes rang hollowly through the empty halls. They waited tensely for some moments, and then Johnny Gee gave the huge door a push. It creaked open and, almost fearfully, they stepped inside.

They found themselves in the large hall of the

castilio. Its frescoed ceilings were hidden in a haze of shadow. Pale moonlight streamed in at the windows, revealing the mysterious grandeur within.

Johnny Gee struck a match and lit the three candles in a massive brass holder that stood on a table. The flickering yellow light gleamed on the massive mahogany furniture, and showed the great, black beams that supported the ceiling above. Almost frightened to breathe, the Removites went onward to explore the castle.

They did not meet a soul in the whole place. Upstairs were many magnificent bedrooms, while below Fatty Slocum soon unearthed a large, well-stocked pantry.

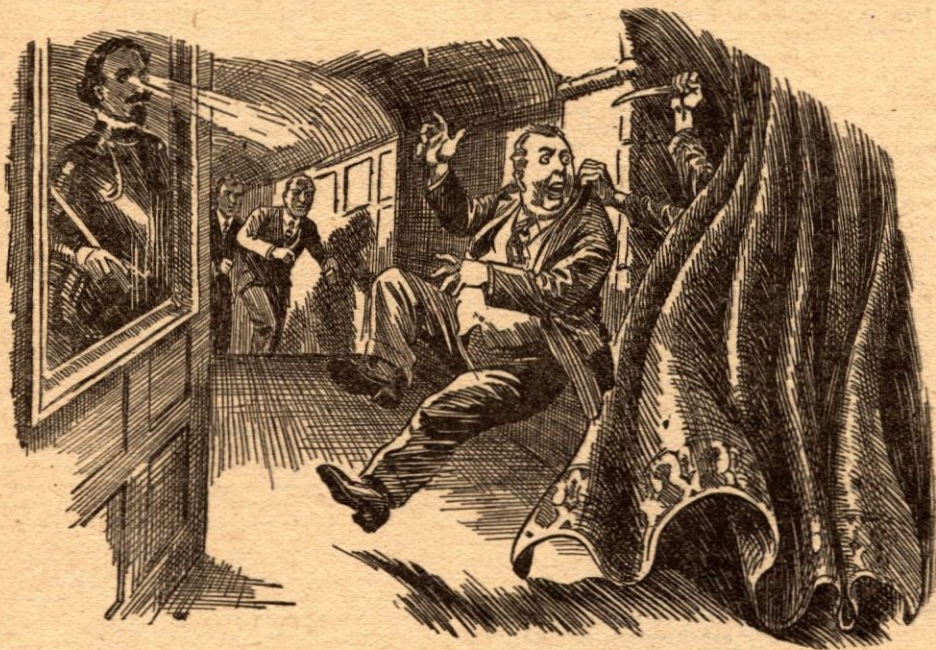
"Well, this is a rummy go!" observed Johnny Gee. "I suppose we'd better take quarters here for the night, and push on in the morning. Goodness knows who the place belongs to, but apparently the owner hasn't been home for months."

The eyes in the picture of an old-time Spaniard which hung on the wall were aglow. Twin shafts of light shone from them, impinging on a thick curtain on the opposite side. As Fatty stared at the curtain something moved behind it, and a low voice hissed: "Caramba—a spy!"

Fatty Slocum gave a bellow of fear, but his quaking legs refused to carry him from the spot.

Fatty's first terrified cry awoke Johnny Gee & Co., and they came piling out of their beds. Outside, they met Mr. Cattermole, and together they dashed downstairs. Turning the corner of the wide picture gallery below, they halted in sudden amazement.

They saw the fat form of Sammy Slocum standing as if petrified. All at once, they heard him cry out, and start to run. But a mysterious hand protruded from behind a curtain, seized the fat Removite and dragged him out of sight behind the curtain.



THE MYSTERIOUS MARAUDER.—Ere Fatty had taken a few steps, he was seized from behind, and a dark, sinewy hand brandished a dagger above his head.

It was now nearly midnight, and after a snack the Removites decided to turn in. Mr. Cattermole installed himself in one of the state bedrooms, while Johnny Gee & Co. occupied rooms on the same floor. They were tired out with the excitement, and soon dozed off, though they had perforce to sleep in their clothes.

There was one youth who did not sleep, however. As soon as the others were asleep, Sammy Slocum crept forth stealthily into the moonlit corridor. The pangs of hunger were assailing Fatty, and he meant to have a feed. With infinite caution, Fatty made his way down the wide central staircase. He was traversing a long corridor when, with a wild yelp of terror, he drew to a sudden halt.

"Come on!" muttered Johnny Gee, white to the lips.

They arrived at the heavy plush curtain, and pulled it aside. Only the blank panelled wall met their gaze. Slocum and his unknown assailant had vanished!

Fearfully, the Removites gazed about them. Massive oil paintings hung on the walls of the corridor.

A flood of moonlight bathed in striking brilliance a full-length portrait of a Spanish grandee of olden time. Johnny Gee drew a deep, startled breath as he noticed that the eyes of the portrait were aglow with an uncanny light, and from those burning orbs, two shafts of reflected light were concentrating on a spot behind the drawn curtain on the panelled wall!

"Great Scott!" muttered the Remove captain. "I wonder if those eyes are meant to reveal anything?"

Johnny Gee, with swift intuition, pressed upon the mahogany panel where the shafts of light converged. There was a click, and a wide section of the panelling slid silently inwards.

Without hesitation, Johnny Gee stepped through the aperture. The juniors followed and found themselves on a flight of narrow, crumbling stone steps that wound spiral fashion into the impenetrable blackness below. Johnny Gee, who had had the presence of mind to bring his pocket torch, flashed on the light.

With hearts pounding wildly, the juniors crept down the secret steps to the very bowels of the earth it seemed. At length, they came to a massive oak door swinging on great iron hinges. The juniors stepped into a great arched, cobwebbed vault beyond. A number of chairs, benches and oaken chests, all of great age, lay strewn about the floor, rotting with decay and festooned with cobwebs.

All at once, a noise in the distant blackness made the Removites start. They darted into hiding behind a tumbled pile of broken masonry and watched fearfully as a door at the farther end of the vault opened. A number of dark forms appeared, some carrying a heavy oak chest between them, others bearing lights.

They were swarthy, evil-faced Spaniards in bandits' dress. Their leader was a tall, dark-complexioned rascal whose eyes glittered with the cunning of a hawk. Across his left cheek was a livid scar, the legacy of some vicious battle of knives.

The leader crossed to the door by which Johnny Gee and Co. had entered and, while the other cut-throats disappeared into the passage, he remained behind. He turned his face, distorted with evil, towards the spot where the Removites were hidden.

"So the young señors come to spy upon Pablo Mendez! But they will have long time down here for spying! Young señors, Pablo Mendez bids you a long farewell. *Adios!*"

With a mocking laugh, the brigand leader withdrew, closing the door with a slam. The bolts grated into position, and then the footsteps of Pablo Mendez receded along the passage and the stairs beyond.

The chums of the Remove were left alone to their miserable fate!

To Salamanta

WILD terror gripped at the hearts of Johnny Gee & Co. They tried battering at the door with the heavy oak furniture, only to find their efforts useless. Hours passed—hours of chill, sleepless terror and despair.

"A fine mess we've landed ourselves in!" muttered Johnny Gee. "In—"

"Begad! What's that, old chappies?" exclaimed Lord Reggie suddenly.

A distant bang sounded, and voices were heard, shouting in Spanish. With new-found joy in their hearts, Johnny Gee & Co. leaped to the door and banged desperately upon it.

The voices came nearer, and sounds of hurrying footsteps on the stonework were heard. Then came the joyous sound of the bolts grating back, and the door opened, to reveal Don Pedro and his lieutenant, Escamillo.

"*Bueno!* So we have found you, my friends!" exclaimed the boy bandit. "To-night we drove Pablo Mendez and his men from their stronghold. They took their plunder with them, but Pablo Mendez left behind one document, an ancient parchment which gave the secret of this vault in my *castillo*,

where the most valuable treasures were hidden. By moonlight, the eyes of my ancestor, Don Carlos de Alvarez, shine upon the hidden lock—"

"Yes, rather! We spotted that!" exclaimed Johnny Gee eagerly. "We saw Pablo Mendez and his men removing the treasure chest, but they caught us napping. They cleared off with the loot—"

"My men will be after them!" exclaimed Don Pedro, his youthful eyes flashing. "But come, my friends, you must rest while my men keep guard on the palace."

The juniors and Mr. Cattermole were glad enough to leave the grisly death chamber and return to their beds. Of Fatty Slocum there was no sign, but one of Don Pedro's men had seen him in the hands of the rival bandits.

About midday sounds of firing outside roused them from their slumbers, and they learnt with a thrill that Pablo Mendez had returned with his outlaw band. Fierce attempts were being made to break into the gates, but the Spanish boy's followers were gallantly keeping the attackers at bay!

The juniors, who were soon joined by Mr. Cattermole, partook of a late breakfast, prepared by Don Pedro's men. The housemaster was in a very nervous state, however, and he started up in terror as blood-curdling yells came from the gates of the castle, followed by an intense outbreak of firing. Johnny Gee, looking through the window of the *piazza*, gave a startled cry.

"Oh, crumbs! Pablo Mendez and his rotters have broken in!"

Don Pedro's men barricaded themselves in the castle, and Johnny Gee & Co., eager to be of assistance, rushed to the armoury to provide themselves with weapons.

Mr. Cattermole having borrowed a long Toledo sword decided he would keep well out of the fighting line! With this view in mind, the Housemaster made his way hurriedly along one of the rear corridors of the castle. Turning a corner, he halted with a gasp of horror.

Lying prone on the marble floor was the senseless figure of young Don Pedro! Catty stiffened as he saw a form creeping towards the unconscious Spanish lad. The prowler was Pablo Mendez himself! Dagger in hand, his face distorted with murderous hatred, the brigand leader bent over the dauntless boy!

Mr. Cattermole gave a stifled cry, and Pablo Mendez turned, snarling, towards him. Catty had his sword in hand, and as Pablo Mendez sprang towards him, he took a random swipe.

The next thing Mr. Cattermole saw, when he came out of his terrified confusion, was the form of Pablo Mendez diving through the window in cowardly retreat!

Johnny Gee & Co., returning from the armoury, had watched this episode in amazement, and they now came dashing along the corridor.

"Bravo, sir!" cried the Remove leader. "You gave that villain a nasty cut! How's Don Pedro?"

The boy bandit slowly came to, and the Removites assisted him to his feet. He told them how, remembering a secret entrance from the rear, he had gone there to make sure that none of the attackers got in that way, only to find Pablo Mendez already prowling in the corridor. The villainous outlaw had knocked the boy senseless, and only Mr. Cattermole's timely arrival had saved Don Pedro's life.

"*Muchas gracias, señor*, for your bravery!" said the boy bandit. "I will appoint you my deputy- lieutenant."

"Er—thank you very much, Don Pedro, but I—er—prefer not to take an active part in these terrible

hostilities!" gasped Mr. Cattermole hastily, and he hurried away with his sword dangling between his legs.

In the meantime, the tide of the battle had turned, and Escamillo and his men, in a desperate hand-to-hand encounter, routed the enemy from the courtyard.

Johnny Gee & Co. sent up a shout of victory as Pablo Mendez and his desperadoes dashed off into their mountain fastnesses.

"Whew! How was that for excitement, chaps?" gasped the Remove leader. "What about Slocum,

Johnny Gee & Co. hurried back to the cleft where the dust had accumulated, and set about dislodging the rocks that blocked up the end of the cleft.

Gradually they loosened the rocks, until it required but a single hearty shove, to send everything crashing down into the pass—dust as well!

Soon, in the distance, they heard the ominous sound of gunfire and men's shouts. Johnny Gee & Co. waited breathlessly on their coign of vantage. Came then the swift *clap-clap* of horses' hoofs and the rattle of wheels on the road. Gazing downward, the Removites saw Pablo Mendez and his men who were now mounted on horseback except those who were driving the two large wagons.

"Now, then—heave-ho at this rock!" muttered Johnny Gee tensely.

The juniors exerted all their strength and shoved together. The rock moved, and suddenly toppled over the ledge and, with a roar, hurtled downward, accompanied by a miniature landslide. *Swoosh!* Down went the mighty avalanche



DUSTING 'EM DOWN.—The retreating bandits raced into the defile. With a last heave Johnny Gee and Co. moved the rock, releasing an avalanche of dust on the villains.

though? We can't leave him to the tender mercies of those rotten brigands."

"I know where Pablo Mendez's new stronghold is," said Don Pedro eagerly. "They have to go through a pass to reach it, and we will waylay them there!"

Johnny Gee & Co. were enthusiastic, and the whole party set out at once. In the wild fastnesses of the Pyrenees, Escamillo took out a party to reconnoitre. Johnny Gee & Co. bethought themselves to do some scouting, too, and it was not long before the Remove leader's sharp eyes took note of a deep cleft in the rocks overlooking the pass.

"My hat!" exclaimed Johnny Gee, turning eagerly to the others. "This cleft is full of dust, which the wind blows down from the mountain tops. This spot directly overlooks the road, too, along which Pablo Mendez and his gang are due to arrive any minute now. If only we could dump this lot on top of them, and catch 'em on the hop!"

The Removites eagerly sought out Don Pedro. The boy brigand's face lighted up with a dazzling smile when Johnny Gee had explained his plan.

"Bueno!" he exclaimed. "You, my friends, will prepare the big surprise, while my men attack Pablo Mendez from the rear."

of dust, in a swift, devastating deluge. It swept full upon Pablo Mendez and his men, completely smothering them. Next moment Don Pedro and his gallant men appeared and charged down to the attack!

"Hurrah!" yelled Johnny Gee. "Kimmon—let's see whether Slocum's anywhere about!"

The Removites ran down the steep slope into the road below. The dust-pall was clearing, and they saw that Pablo Mendez and his men had taken to flight, with Don Pedro's band giving chase.

A terrified howling from the interior of the first wagon brought Johnny Gee & Co. wading to the spot, knee-deep in dust! Inside that wagon they found Fatty Slocum, bound securely.

A search of the wagons brought to light a vast accumulation of booty, including the big oak chest from the castle of Santa Ruy.

Don Pedro returned with his outlaw band some time later, bringing along half-a-dozen prisoners. The Spanish boy's dark eyes flashed jubilantly when he saw the treasure trove stowed inside the captured wagons.

"Bueno!" he exclaimed. "We will now go on to Collenza, by the other road."

The wagons were turned, the horses quietened, and the cavalcade wended its way onward through the mountains to Collenza. There, Lord Reggie

booked a telephone call to Salamanta, to reassure his cousin that they were all safe.

To the Removites' great relief, the aeroplane in which they had set out from St. Giddy's, arrived later at the town. The pilot and mechanic had only just completed the repairs, after spending a night in the mountains.

The youthful Don Pedro had been chatting with Johnny Gee & Co., meanwhile. Now that he had recovered his family treasures he wished to leave Spain and take refuge in England, where he would be safe from Pablo Mendez and from the Revolutionist soldiers.

"Tell you what, old chappies," exclaimed Lord Reggie. "Let's take the jolly old treasure with us in the 'plane. Don Pedro, Escamillo an' one or two other bandit chappies can go along too, an' I'll arrange with Claude to look after them when we arrive."

Lord Reggie's idea was greeted with acclamation, and so it was arranged. The treasure and rest of the bandits' loot was stowed on board the big aeroplane. Don Pedro himself, together with his lieutenant Escamillo and two other trusted henchmen accompanied the precious cargo. Johnny Gee & Co. and Mr. Cattermole clambered aboard and they started on the last lap of their journey.

They arrived at Salamanta without mishap and were met by a tall, handsome young English officer. It was Lord Reggie's cousin, the Earl of Beauchamp. Lord Reggie explained the presence of Don Pedro and his men, and his cousin agreed to help and advise him. Then the whole party, the outlaws carrying the treasure, made their way to the hotel, where rooms had been booked for them.

Over supper, that evening, they discussed plans for Don Pedro's future. The Earl of Beauchamp considered it a good idea for Don Pedro to give up his life of outlawry, and suggested that he should go to St. Giddy's as a pupil. This plan was greeted with acclamation by the juniors for a firm bond of friendship had sprung up between them and the romantic Spanish boy.

It was finally agreed that a cargo steamer should be chartered at the harbour, and the treasure shipped on board disguised as merchandise. The boat would go to England, where arrangements could be made for the safe disposal of its precious cargo.

The Bull-Fight.

NEXT day, the Removites had plenty to do and see. They rambled through the crooked streets, mingling with the kindly, good-humoured, contented natives. They rode on donkeys along the white, sun-baked roads, and took jaunts on the rattling, dusty trams to the outskirts of the town, where they explored the never-ending groves of oranges and prickly pears.

"My word! Ripping, isn't it!" said Dick Bannister, as, finally, they sunned themselves by the waterfront, sipping delicious iced drinks. "Reggie's turned up trumps again, and booked seats for us at the Arena this evening. While in Spain, one must see a bull-fight—it's an old Spanish custom."

Meanwhile, Mr. Ernest James Cattermole was making a tour of the town on his own. He wandered down towards the ruined castle by the harbour, and walked along the crumbling ramparts of sun-baked stone. It was a lonely spot, especially so at this hour of siesta.

Mr. Cattermole was very surprised, therefore, to hear a rush of feet behind him and a shout in Spanish. Next moment, a dirty, sickly-smelling *banda* was drawn tightly over his mouth. Within a very few seconds, Mr. Cattermole ceased his feeble struggles, and collapsed unconscious.

When he came back to his senses he wondered what all the shouting and excited hubbub in the distance could mean. He was in a small room with wooden walls and a bare floor. Then Mr. Cattermole noticed his dress, and he gave a violent start.

His scholastic limbs were draped in silken knee-breeches and stockings; he wore a brightly coloured blouse with a wide sash round his waist, and over this a short velvet jacket adorned with gold braid. His headgear was a heavy velvet affair with a tassel.

"Good heavens!" cried Mr. Cattermole. "Where am I?"

"Ah! So the *señor Ingles* is awake!" A soft, suave voice sounded close by his elbow. The House-master was horrified to find himself staring into the dark, villainous face of Pablo Mendez! "So you are surprised at your dress?" the scoundrel went on. "You no recognise heem as the dress of the *torador*? You are in a room of the Arena at Salamanta—the bull-ring—you hear the shouts of the audience? This evening, the fiercest bull in Spain will be turn loose in the ring, and a new *torador*—by name, *Pedrillo*—has been engage to fight heem. But *Pedrillo* is not here, and we have arrange, *señor*, that you shall take his place."

"What!" shouted Mr. Cattermole. "How dare you suggest such a thing! I am not a *torador*—I cannot fight a bull!"

"Ah! But the *señor* must prove his excellence as a *torador*!" sneered Pablo Mendez. "Already you have prove to me the swordsmanship. *Caramba!* I swear to take my revenge. When the bull gores you, the *matadors* and bull-ring officials will not interfere, for they are in my pay! Ah! Listen, *señor!* The crowd—they cry for *Pedrillo*. You go forth now, to face the bull!"

Mr. Cattermole, almost paralysed with terror, was dragged from his seat by the brigand chief's confederates and taken into the wide corridor outside.

A uniformed attendant came up, leading a horse, and Mr. Cattermole was lifted bodily into the saddle.

His frantic shouts for help were drowned by the tumultuous roar from the crowd in the vast Arena. The mad bull—the biggest and fiercest in Spain—had been let loose!

In the front seats just beyond the safety barrier were Johnny Gee & Co. The heroes of the Remove had watched the great fierce bull goaded to mad, blind fury with feelings of mingled nausea and excitement. Now they awaited the appearance of the mystery *torador*, *Pedrillo*, with as much excitement, almost, as the natives.

Suddenly, a great shout arose. The *matadors* rode away, and the main gates to the ring came open, to admit the *torador*.

A horse came galloping into the ring, with a rider clinging to its back in a strange, huddled attitude, not proudly erect and waving his hat, as most *toradors* do.

A sharp cry of horror burst from Johnny Gee's lips as he saw the white, terror-drawn face of the rider. It did not seem possible! Mr. Cattermole!

But for the instinct and training of the horse he was riding, Mr. Cattermole would certainly by now have met a horrible death. Any moment, now, he would fall from the saddle. Panting with horror, Johnny Gee sprang from his seat.

"Come on, chaps—grab him and get him over, while I—I try and stave off the bull!" he shouted, and next minute the plucky Remove leader vaulted over the barrier.

He snatched the red cloth from the hands of a *matador* and, with jaws set grimly, eyes gleaming, he advanced into the path of the bull as it charged at

(Continued on page 36.)

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THE EDITOR.

OUR GIGANTIC TALE OF THE SECRET SERVICE

THE MASTER OF MASKS

By JOHN HUNTER

A Story of Spies, Kings, Intrigue—and Mystery. Featuring Billy Trent, Mr. Sentence of the Secret Service, and The Dreaded One Over Seven.



A Rat Trap! And a strange prisoner held like a Rat in the Trap. That was the mystery Billy Trent was out to solve. With his allies, Mr. Brame Sentence, an agent of the British Secret Service, and Fritz, a German, Billy came up against immense, evil forces—The Society of Seven. At their head was One Over Seven, known as the Master of Masks. The trail led the Secret Service Trio to the Schloss of Stahnfeld in Lithkrania, a small Central European state, where the mystery had its foundation. A clue was provided by a letter which Billy found in a car he and Fritz had stolen from One Over Seven. The message ran as follows: "I am a prisoner in the Rat Trap at the Stahnfeld Schloss. Come to my aid.—Karl R."

The Mystery of King Karl.

"A KING!" echoed Fritz, still staring at Billy. "What do you mean?"

"That 'R' after his name," explained Billy. "Karl, R. It means Karl, Rex. King Karl. Is there a King Karl in Lithkrania?"

Fritz shook his head. His knowledge of the world was mainly limited to vague memories of Belgium and the borderlands of France, and to Hamburg and its environs.

"Now," said Billy, weighing the paper in his hand, and eyeing the Gothic characters which covered it. "How did this get into the hands of One Over Seven, anyway?"

Fritz was silent. He was all right when it came to action and the minor cunning, but a process of deep thought was beyond him.

After an interval of thoughtful silence, Billy said: "Suppose the man who was entrusted with this either handed it over to somebody else, or was caught trying to get away with it?"

"Perhaps One Over Seven was the messenger," suggested Fritz.

Billy nodded. "Perhaps. Though I doubt it. What bribe would such a man accept? No, the wording of the letter suggests that some servant took money to carry this message out of Stahnfeld Castle. He either took the money and then betrayed the man who had given it to him, or he was caught.

There's another thing. Everybody believes King Karl to be dead. That's plain. He takes the trouble to deny it."

Fritz drew a deep breath. "Let's hop it," he suggested.

This was practical. He started the car forward, and it skimmed across the high snow-covered road at about thirty-five miles an hour, its caterpillar tractors running smoothly and obviating all risk of sideslip or danger.

Whither the road led they had no idea. They guessed that One Over Seven had probably travelled along it to Brakenwold, and if that were so they were making for the place whence he had come. It was a logical theory that that place would be the centre-point of the whole affair. It might be Stahnfeld Schloss. They did not know.

They both were very tired now. They had not slept properly for a long time, though Billy had had his long day's rest in the pine wood; and it was decided that they should seek some kind of shelter.

Accordingly, carefully marking the way, Fritz turned off the mountain road, up a narrow track, which led them to an inn very much like the Daffodil. They did not take the car to the inn. It might be well-known, for One Over Seven was possibly an important person in that district.

They came into the cheeriness of the inn, to its great log fire, its hanging lamps, its bustle, and Fritz told a story of tramping the mountains which was not questioned.

They ordered a light meal from the landlord, who was alone, and Fritz began to talk to him. They managed to get on quite well, for Lithkranian was so closely allied to German that an understanding was easily reached.

Later, in the room they shared—for they did not separate on account of danger—Fritz imparted the gist of his conversation to Billy.

"The road down there," he said, referring to the mountain road they had been travelling, "goes to Stahnfeld. So we were right about that. Stahnfeld is a big-sized town. A hundred thousand people. It is on the banks of the great River Wahmol, and it sends logs down to the sea and iron, too. Several versts..." He paused. "Ten mile, eh? Yes. Ten mile from it is the great Schloss. It is higher up the river, like one of our Rhine castles—on a great rock that goes right down into the water. There are high mountains all round it and many pine trees—big forests. It is very lonely and dangerous and mysterious."

"What about King Karl?" asked Billy. "Did you find anything out about him?"

"Ja. There was a King Karl who ruled Lithkrania. He was a very good king. Oh—lots of years ago. Maybe ten, more years than that. He was very clever, and was a professor. Herr Doktor. . . . Ja. He did science. And he had a cousin. Adolf. And

then King Karl died and Adolf was king. Adolf is king now, and he is a great soldier."

Billy reflected on this. The plot had thickened. There was now no doubt that the good King Karl was not dead, unless the message they had found was a cruel fake. But the heart of the secret lay at Stahfeld Schloss, and to the Schloss they must go.

"Well, good night, Fritz," Billy said sleepily, turning in his bed.

"Chin, chin," said Fritz, and dropped into the sleep of utter exhaustion.

Hours of darkness drifted past, with the wind moaning through the great pine forests and howling through the split canyons in the mighty mountains.

And through the pines a man fled for his life, hunted and twisting, with the deep baying of great dogs in his ears. And further behind him, dancing through the trees that covered him, the pinpoint of light of the hunters.

He scrambled up the mountain path, and he tore through the thickets. His hands were bleeding, and the nails were ripped from his finger-tips. There was a great weal across his cheek, and his back was cut to ribbons, so that his fragments of shirt were embedded in the hideous wounds that the rawhide lash had made.

He saw the inn ahead of him. He was finished. His race was run. He came staggering forward, croaking, trying to shout; and he feebly beat on the inn door with his hands.

It was Billy who heard that beating. His long sleep during the day had rendered his night sleep very light and uneasy. He heard the beating like a light tapping that came sliding down the dark corridors of sleep, and woke him.

He slipped out of bed. Fritz was snoring, lying on his back, his mouth wide open. Billy opened the door and ran down the wooden stairs and began to draw the bolts of the great outer door.

He heard a shot as the last bolt slid back. From beyond the door came a quick, sharp cry of agony. The door opened and a man lurched in. The door slammed close, heavy and massive, and its big wooden bar dropped into its sockets across it, holding it fast.

In the dim red glow of the dying fire embers Billy saw a grey face upturned to his. The man spoke, and the language he used was English, the English of a man who has acquired a little culture from knocking about the world.

"The letter," he gasped. "He gave me the letter. They caught me and thrashed me for it; but I escaped. They have got the letter. But He . . . is . . . not . . . dead . . ."

There was a crashing on the door, a great voice yelling words which Billy did not understand. He ran, leaving that which now lay prone and lifeless on the floor, and he slipped upstairs and shook Fritz.

"Fritz," he hissed. "We've got to bolt. A man's come here. Shot. He says Karl is alive. Now we



A HERCULEAN HEAVE.—The cavalryman overtook Billy and Fritz, and the latter side-stepped. As the horse brushed past him he gripped the rider's ankle and heaved.

know what we're after. Come on. There's a gang downstairs."

Fritz slipped out of bed. Neither he nor Billy had undressed completely, and it took Fritz about two seconds to whip on his jacket and overcoat.

There was a terrific noise downstairs, and they could hear the landlord's voice. They slipped along the passage, into a dark room and dropped out of a window at the rear of the inn, and began to run to the spot where they had left their car.

They reached it and started it off. The noise evidently was heard at the inn, for a great shouting came to their ears. But the machine ran recklessly down the steep path, bumping and lurching over inequalities and bushes, and reached the road.

There Fritz gave it full throttle, and it roared forward evenly towards Stahfeld. It had travelled about ten miles, and, from high up, they could see a few lights below them, and a broad stream of silver indicating a river, when Fritz pulled the machine sideways.

A big log was lying across the road—a massive tree trunk cut down and left there. Men were standing near it. A rattle of rifle fire greeted them. One over Seven had been busy.

The car dived into the pine forest, hit a massive

tree trunk and wrecked itself. Billy and Fritz scrambled out and ran through the trees. Men sprang up all round them, and instantly a furious fight developed.

Billy kept close to Fritz, who began to lay about him with the butt of the rifle. He had taken the precaution of carrying the weapon away from the Daffodil with him. With it Fritz beat a way through their assailants, leaving three men stunned, and another with his shoulder broken.

He and Billy gained the shelter of the dark trees, and sped on their way, with the noise of pursuit growing fainter behind them. So they ran till they reached the lip of a steep hill and the end of the pines. The town of Stahnfeld lay below them. They had reached their goal.

In Stahnfeld.

Fritz hid the rifle and they slid down the hill to Stahnfeld.

As they went, Billy said: "Fritz, we've got to lose ourselves. We mustn't go to any house and ask for shelter. We've got to seek shelter somewhere secure. What about the waterside?"

This seemed sound, and, reaching the environs of the town, they plunged through its narrow, cobbled streets of quaint, gabled houses, many of them of timber, through old-world closes and dark alleys. They reached the waterside and found what they wanted—an old hulk moored to rotting piles, unused save by rats; and they crept aboard it.

Its stern cabin was quite habitable, they found, watertight above, and dry. As they inspected it, they heard the drum of a motor-boat engine, and, peeping out through a broken port they saw a big craft go steadily past. It held five men, and the upturned muzzles of rifles showed among them. The boat was patrolling the river.

"Police," grunted Fritz; but Billy did not believe they were police at all.

They rested that night in the cabin, and all the next day they lay hidden in it. Strangely enough, they found no commerce passing on the great river that day. Instead, several big motor-boats filled with armed men patrolled up and down. By nightfall they were desperately hungry and resolved to slip out and risk their luck trying to buy food.

They trekked through unfamiliar ways, noting the name of each street on a piece of paper so that they could find their way back, and they came to a cheap sailors' eating house, into which they turned. Fritz ordered Frankfurter sausages, mashed potatoes and sauerkraut.

There was talk all around them. Billy could not follow it but he saw Fritz growing uneasy. The German whispered to him: "Eat quick and get out."

Billy had the curious feeling right down inside him, that comes to a man as zero hour is approached before a great attack. Something was happening.

They finished their food and were mightily refreshed. Fritz settled the bill, and they were getting up to go out, when four men in uniform clanked into the eating house. They were the *kepis* of German police, only the arms of Lithkrania were on the fronts of them, they carried swords in sheaths and rifles.

One of them, who wore three stars on his left sleeve, yelled a harsh order, and the people in the eating house stood up sullenly. The non-commissioned officer shouted another order. A big seaman with a stupid, heavy face, standing behind Billy, suddenly reached out his hand, picked up Billy's empty, heavy cocoa mug, and threw it straight at the face of the officer. The man staggered back.

There was a thunder of feet. A rifle cracked. Then the four policemen went down beneath a flood of humanity which kicked and crashed at them.

Fritz and Billy, clambering over tables, scrambled for the street, where people were running pell mell. Many of them carried bludgeons and staves. Some had bare knives in their hands.

Above the tumult crashed an ominous sound, the steady, metallic *clip clop* of horses' hoofs.

"Cavalry," Fritz gasped. "Duck . . ."

They came round the corner as he spoke—tossing plumes on gilded helmets, steel cuirasses gleaming in the street lamps, drawn swords at the slope.

The fight in the eating house suddenly lurched in a compact mass to the street, and the subaltern at the head of the cavalry squadron saw the police struggling in its midst. His sword dropped from the slope and pointed straight forward above his horse's ears.

Instantly the cavalry surged forward in a wave of flesh and steel. Billy saw the sabres rise and fall pitilessly. Men scrambled for safety. He and Fritz managed to dive into a narrow alley and run. A cavalryman came after them, riding hard, the blood lust on him, his sword dripping red.

He overtook them at the end of the alley, and Fritz, stepping sideways, flattened himself to the wall. The horse's flank brushed him, and as it did so he got two mighty hands on the cavalryman's ankle and heaved.

Off went the horseman. His helmet struck the flags, split, and split the head with it. Fritz grabbed Billy's arm and hurried on.

"Fritz, I've lost the paper," Billy gasped. "I don't know how to get back."

"Run," grunted Fritz. "Or die . . ."

Billy, running hard, panted: "What is it, Fritz? What were they saying in that eating house?"

"Revolution!" snapped Fritz; and told all the story in that one word.

The Horrors of War.

Fritz panted more information. It seemed that the people were fretted against King Adolf, whose kingship was nothing more nor less than a tyranny. Whether the revolution would be successful or not nobody could say.

They came round a corner into a great main road and the midst of battle. A barricade had been flung across the road. It consisted of two motor-buses, piles of furniture and other stuff looted from shops and near-by houses. Behind this barricade was a rabble of people.

Beyond the barricade were two companies of infantry in the famous green uniform of the Lithkranian Carabineers.

"The army is not with them," Fritz grunted. "So . . . that is lost."

A machine-gun stammered nastily. Bullets crashed into the barricade and shrieked down the street. Fritz and Billy ran to the shelter of the barricade and stayed there. There was nothing else to do.

An officer of the Carabineers stepped out and spoke to the crowd. A man near Billy lifted his rifle, sighted it carefully and pulled the trigger. The officer's arms went out wide and he dropped on his face.

A yell went up from the crowd, and beneath that yell Billy heard a low whistle. The infantry moved. They came forward at a run, even, steady, unflinching.

Rifle fire crackled spasmodically from behind the barricade, and men in green spun and dropped; but the main body came on.

There was a sudden last rush, a breaking of the

steady green line into a wave that scrambled and lifted upwards; a shout. Green things jumping down, stabbing. The barricade broke and was taken, its defenders fleeing all ways, Fritz and Billy with them.

To have lost that paper was a disaster. For now they could only wander through the stricken streets, finding themselves covering the same ground over and over again.

At any moment they might be embroiled in some melee which would end it all for them. They might go down before a rush of cavalry which would sweep them away.

Luck took them through an alleyway which, winding sharply, debouched into a boulevard of fine shops. The boulevard was deserted save for a posse of infantry with a machine gun at its middle, the gun on a tripod straddled across tramlines.

Fritz and Billy did a daring thing. They slipped across this boulevard. They heard the soldiers shout at them, but they took no heed, gained another side street and scooted on.

In a main road beyond a tank went clattering past, bristling with guns. There was a rush of people, and a daring assault was made on it. At the same time, from the boulevard they had left, came that ominous *clip clop* of horses' hoofs which they now dreaded.

They ran. The gang round the tank had got its door open and were dragging its crew out, despite its guns and the desperate resistance.

The cavalry were just seconds late. The crew were slain. A man with a knowledge of tanks—a man who must have served in the European war—was at the machine's controls and he started it forward.

Billy and Fritz were caught between the tank and the cavalry and they did the only thing possible. They ran forward and jumped.

They got a hold of the tank's sides and they scrambled up them, coming flat to the top of the steel monster. They had hardly done this when its quick firers and machine guns began to talk. The cavalry wavered and crashed all ways under the hideous and sustained fire, horses and men coming down in kicking, struggling heaps.

The tank was a fast one, and its driver let it go. It slewed a corner. One of its machine guns was chattering right alongside Billy, nearly splitting his eardrums.

The men inside made no effort to get Fritz and Billy off, nor to stop and let them come inside. Two lives were nothing on that night when many lives were lost.

They skidded round a corner at dangerous speed and ran slap into a half company of infantry. Rifles blazed and crashed. The tank's guns cracked. The tank itself simply ploughed through the compact mass of men, rolling and bumping, and lurched on.

Billy was terrified. His one idea was to lie flat and cling tightly to the top of the tank.

They came to the great barricade which the Carabineers had carried and which they still held. Their mad driver put the tank at it.

The Carabineers started shooting, and the tank fired back. It hit the barricade amidships. It tore the rear step from an upturned 'bus, and it smashed furniture all ways, infantrymen with it. It went lurching on like some horrid animal from the depths of the world's making.

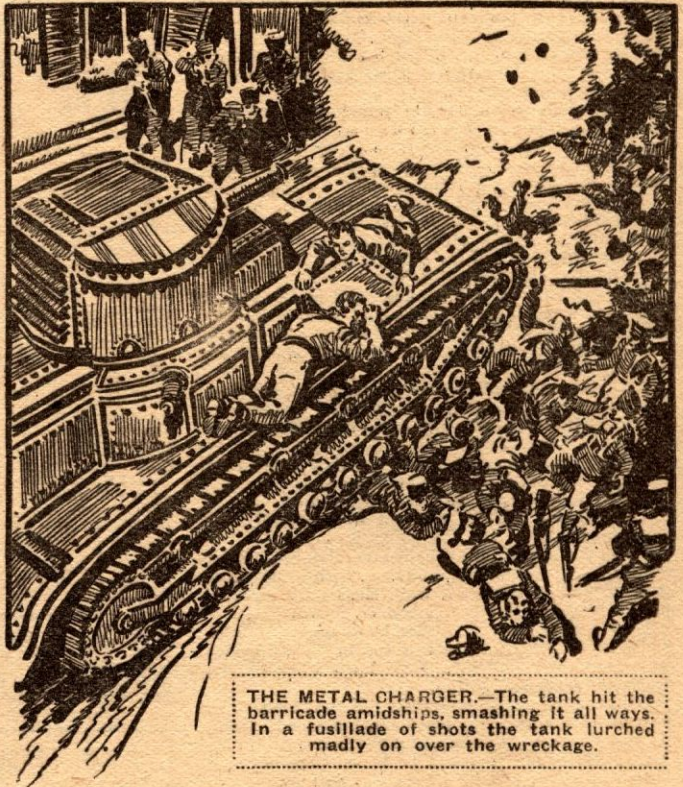
Another boulevard, wide, tree-lined, one of the few such modern streets in that old town. And . . . another tank. . . .

They saw it coming ambling at slow speed round a corner, and it is possible that had their crew not been so utterly lunatic in their exultation, the tank would have taken no notice of them, merely regarding them as a patrol.

But they opened fire on it. The other tank stopped and then slewed round.

"Fritz, we're for it," Billy sobbed.

Fritz grunted and held on and watched. The tank



THE METAL CHARGER.—The tank hit the barricade amidships, smashing it all ways. In a mad race of shots the tank lurched madly on over the wreckage.

went barging forward, shooting. They saw flame stab and lift and crash from the side of the military tank. A light shell had got home.

The commander of the military tank gave his craft full speed. It came straight at the revolutionist's machine. In vain their driver swung sideways and tried to accelerate. The nose of the other tank took him fair and square amidships on the starboard side, and locked.

It drove on, a merciless, blind monster. It pushed the revolutionary tank sideways, across torn tram-

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lines, over a smashed kerbway, across cracking, splitting paving stones, right into a smashed shop front. The tank jammed the further wall. The floor above caved and began to drop.

Billy and Fritz slid off and fled for their lives through the rear quarters of the building, dazed and staggering, hardly holding their feet. They found themselves in a small yard. The building behind them was filled with noise and shrieks. The soldiers were avenging their comrades.

The yard was surrounded by a high wall, and they managed to scramble over it into a mews at the rear. They ran through this mews for all they were worth.

"We've got to find shelter," gasped Billy. "Any house. Anywhere. Just for a rest."

"In here," said Fritz. They had reached a little street, and they found a shop half-way down it. The shop had been looted, and wrecked by riotous hands. They crept into it and lay panting behind the debris of its broken counter and fittings.

They lay thus for half-an-hour, and at the end of that time, with all the district about them ominously quiet, they decided to risk the street once more; for they had to discover sure and safe shelter ere dawn broke.

With dawn, either the revolutionists or the soldiers—whoever were winning—would clear the streets, and woe betide anybody who could not give a proper account of themselves.

As they walked along the street they could hear the distant crackle of gunfire and knew the fighting was still in progress, but the experienced ears of Fritz told him the fire was not so sustained, was more spasmodic.

Turning a corner they came on disaster. They walked round unthanking, and saw, within ten yards of them, lolling against a wall, their rifles at their sides, a platoon of infantrymen on patrol duty.

They turned to run. Rifles leapt up, and Fritz, grabbing Billy's arm, checked the boy's instinctive movement towards flight. Fritz knew when sudden death was confronting him.

He lifted his hands, and Billy did the same. The sergeant in charge of the platoon came over to them. He was a veteran, with a string of ribbons across his chest. He began to speak to Fritz, then his eyes lighted on Billy, and he stared . . . and stared . . . and said nothing.

What does the sergeant know? Is Billy on the verge of solving the great mystery? Look out for startling developments in next week's thrill-filled incidents.

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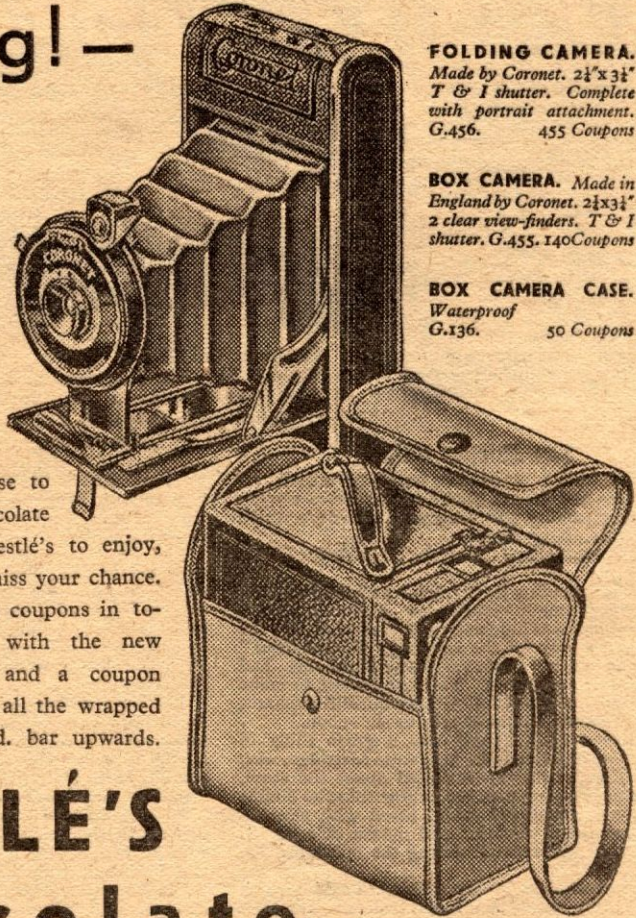
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Ether! That was the grim
Fate that threatened the Space
Explorers when they were Trapped
on a Trip to the Moon.

The Rocket Ship.

BOB and Ronnie Mordaunt, sturdy youngsters of fourteen and fifteen, stared in fascinated wonder at the gleaming, glittering steel structure which towered high above them.

"It's too marvellous for words!" exclaimed Bob, at last.

They were standing in the quiet parkland of their Uncle John's home in rural Essex—Bellmore Manor. The house itself was hidden by a belt of trees, but the boys had eyes only for the amazing "Rocket Ship" which their uncle, Professor John Mordaunt, had invented and constructed. To-night he was to make the great venture—to set off with his faithful assistant, William Jope, on a pioneer trip to the moon.

The Rocket Ship herself was a great thing of gleaming metal, shaped like a gigantic cartridge, with festoons of super-rockets clustered about the stern. There were steadying fins, too, and within the double hull was a commodious cabin, fitted with sleeping bunks, shockproof windows, and masses of scientific apparatus to take records during the epoch-making trip.

The boys had already been within the cabin, which was reached by mounting a metal staircase, and they had been amazed at its size. There were food stores, water supplies, special electrically heated suits for use on the moon.

"It's—it's glorious!" exclaimed Ronnie, his voice throbbing, his eyes aflame. "Oh, uncle, Bob and I would give anything to go with you on this trip!"

"Yes, uncle," urged Bob. "Do let us go!"

Professor Mordaunt, a small, wiry, kindly looking man, shook his grizzled head.

"It is perfect, is it not?" he chuckled. "But you cannot come, lads! Oh, no! Far too risky."

"But you said—"

"I will take the chance—and my good Jope is willing to venture with me," said the Professor. "I am confident that by the use of my special steel parachute vanes, I can land the rocket on the moon—and there will be sufficient power left for the return

journey. But in a venture of this sort there is always a great risk. No, boys, you cannot come."

The boys were not disappointed, for they had expected nothing else. They knew that they were especially honoured, in any case. Very few people were in the secret; not only was Professor Mordaunt anxious to avoid publicity, but he had every reason to suspect that an unscrupulous rival of his, a Dr. Ernst Nordheim, would go to great lengths to wreck the venture.

The boys accompanied their uncle to the Manor for dinner; the Professor partook of his meal with as much serenity as though he were about to start on a trip to a near-by town. The boys could scarce contain their excitement, and as soon as the meal was over they hurried out.

"Uncle John is a marvel!" said Ronnie, as he and his brother walked across the moonlit parkland. "In an hour's time he's setting off for the moon—and he hasn't turned a giddy hair!"

The boys were drawn irresistibly towards the great Rocket. They broke through the belt of trees, coming within full sight of the Moon Rocket. A figure was moving near to the supporting structure; a man dressed in curious-looking, white overalls, and a headgear which completely masked him. This man, the boys knew, was Jope, their uncle's assistant. He was a brilliant engineer, and was in charge of the mechanical side of the venture.

"Look!" exclaimed Bob suddenly.

He pointed. A figure, lurking like some crouching animal, had appeared from the deep shadows of the Rocket cradle. Before the boys could shout a warning, the figure leapt upon the unsuspecting Jope from behind.

Thud! The boys distinctly heard the sickening blow, as something descended heavily upon the engineer's head. He fell without a groan, to lie sprawling in the grass.

Lost in Space.

WITH a burst of dazzling flame, the Moon Rocket hurtled into the ether, leaving a trail of fire behind, so that it looked like a great comet. Up it went—up—up! With incredible, fantastic speed, it hissed away from Mother Earth.

The two men in the cabin, stunned at first by the shock of the skywards leap, began to recover the use of their wits. As soon as he was able to think clearly, Professor Mordaunt stared fascinatedly out of the shock-proof windows. He saw the moon, looking impossibly large and brilliant, straight ahead, the earth was a vast mass of darkness below. . . . Then the sunlight blazed through the glass, filling the cabin with its dazzling rays.

"Jope—Jope!" panted the Professor, turning. "We are in space, hurtling towards the moon. . . . Success! Do you realise—"

He broke off, nearly choking; for the supposed Jope had whipped off his headgear, and there stood Dr. Ernest Nordheim, his evil face full of mocking triumph.

"So!" he gloated. "You refused to take me on this journey, *mein guter Professor*. But I haf come! *Ja*—to share the honour mit you!"

"Nordheim!" gasped Professor Mordaunt. He was completely dwarfed by the mighty German scientist.

"I have all the honour!" went on the crook-scientist. "*Ja, Ja!* You, *mein Freund*, I leave on the moon!" He laughed uproariously. *Ja*, I return to earth alone, and all the honour, it come to me!"

The professor stared at him with rising anger. "And Jope?" he asked. "You hound! What did you do to my assistant?"

"He, *mein Freund*, he sleeps," replied Nordheim. "By now, perhaps, he has recovered his dull wits. But it is too late!"

"Not yet!" sang out a clear, boyish voice. A fresh gasp of amazement escaped the professor. Before Dr. Nordheim could spin round, the cushioned seat of the locker behind him swept up. With all his strength, Bob Mordaunt sent his clenched fist crashing into the rascally doctor's face.

The other locker opened, and Ronnie appeared. Together, the plucky boys sailed into Nordheim. They were still a bit dizzy, but the main effects of the strange gas had worn off.

Their uncle joined in; he flung himself upon Nordheim's feet whilst the boys made the prisoner's arms secure. Nordheim cursed and struggled and raved; but all to no purpose. In the end he was tightly bound—strong cords being passed round his wrists, and his arms fixed behind him. His ankles were corded, too, and drawn back so that he was utterly helpless.

"My lads—you have done wonders!" said Professor Mordaunt when the boys had finished. "But, Heavens above, what does this mean? You are in Space—hurtling towards the moon with me!"

Bob quickly explained what had happened, what had been their original plan—and how it had gone wrong.

"Well, it is too late now to make any change," said the Professor. "There can be no turning back. We must go on—"

He broke off with a gasp of dismay. He was gazing out of the window, and he saw, with deep concern, that the moon was far away. The Rocket, in fact, was hurtling straight into Outer Space, and not by any conceivable chance could it now hope to land on the moon.

"Uncle! What does it mean?" asked Ronnie, aghast.

"The fight took longer than we thought—and

those minutes were of vital importance," explained the Professor, his face haggard. "The second series of rockets are now in operation, and any attempt to steer the vessel would be hopeless. We have missed our objective—we are being whirled into the unknown."

"You—you mean that we're doomed, uncle?" asked Bob.

"Not necessarily," said the Professor. "When we reach the end of our power, we must inevitably fall—to the planet whose gravitational force attracts us. It may be the Earth. We can only hope for the best."

On they hurtled—and the speed was now quite incalculable. For they were in Outer Space, far beyond the influence of the earth's atmosphere. There was no resistance here—nothing. Even the sun had begun to lose its power—or so it seemed.

"Look!" shouted Bob abruptly. "Oh, uncle, what's this? There's—there's something only a few miles away, and coming towards us, and—"

He broke off, and Professor Mordaunt gasped. "A meteorite!" he exclaimed exultantly. "A great mass of matter from the ether—a fragment as big as England itself!"

It mattered not to him—now—that the Moon Rocket was lost, and that the fate of its occupants was uncertain. He was a scientist, and he was the first living man to set eyes on a great meteorite before it crashed into the dense atmosphere of Mother Earth.

"Look, Uncle—look!" said Bob tensely. "We're getting nearer and nearer."

"Boys, this is one of the most amazing things that ever happened!" said the Professor, his eyes aglow. "Good gracious me! The meteorite is attracting us—and I think we shall collide."

Nearer—nearer! With thudding hearts, they watched. That mass of matter, apparently motionless, but really shooting through space at incredible speed, was extraordinary enough. It was a tiny world of its own; rocky hills could be seen, and valleys, too. But it was barren, ugly, fearsome.

As the two bodies were rushing along at exactly the same speed, there was no danger of a violent collision. The Moon Rocket grew nearer and yet nearer—attracted by some irresistible force.

"Stand by!" exclaimed Professor Mordaunt, his voice throbbing. "We've got to land, boys—and I think we can manage it safely."

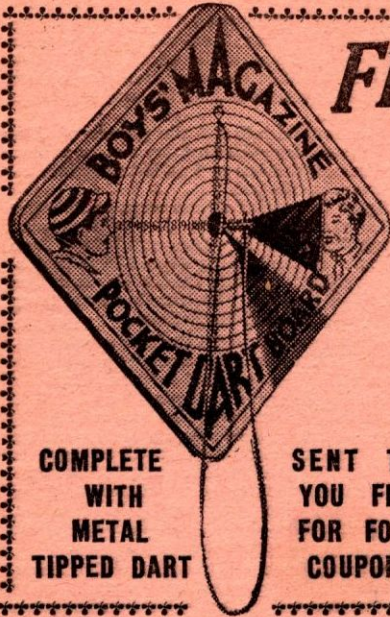
He leapt to the controls, and by skilful manipulation of the guiding vanes, a disaster was averted. The Space Ship struck the meteorite in a rocky valley; it bumped, and the occupants were sent hurtling in all directions. When they picked themselves up they found that their precious vessel had come to no real harm.

"Look—my boys—my boys!" panted the Professor, staring out upon the strange landscape. "Gleaming metals—glistening quartz! We must take a closer look while we have the chance."

He bade the boys don some electrically heated asbestos costumes, whilst he got into one himself. They were heat-proof and cold-proof—and each one was provided with a globular helmet, and oxygen was automatically supplied to the wearer. Dr. Nordheim, in a corner, watched with burning eyes. Neither the Professor nor the boys knew that when the great shock had come, one of the rascally scientist's bonds had been severed. . . .

The door was unsealed, and the Professor was the first to leap down upon the meteorite. The boys followed, and they were aware of a strange chilling—even through the cold-proof suits.

"Gold—look at the gold!" shouted Ronnie. "And diamonds and emeralds and rubies!"



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It was true! The meteorite valley was a glistening mass of pure gold and valuable, gem-bearing quartz.

"We can take some of these, Uncle!" shouted Bob. "These diamonds and—Great Scott! The rocket! Nordheim has got free!" For, standing in the doorway of the cabin was Dr. Ernst Nordheim, and his face wore an expression of demigod triumph.

"So!" he snarled. "This, then, is the end! You shall travel to Eternity—and I shall return to earth, the conqueror!"

The Crumbling Doom.

THEY tried to run back to the Space Ship; but with a slam, Dr. Nordheim closed the hermetically sealed door.

"Boys, we are doomed!" panted the Professor, in anguish.

Even as he spoke, he and his young companions were aware of a strange, moaning sound which came across the meteorite. It increased with every second; a blast of wind struck the trio, and the Moon Rocket itself shook restlessly.

The Professor was paralysed with dread. For he knew what it meant. The meteorite was entering the outer strata of the earth's atmosphere. Soon—within a few minutes, perhaps—these millions and millions of tons of rock and quartz would disintegrate, and flare up in white-hot fire.

The Space Ship rocked again; the wind was getting stronger, and the great controlling vanes were taking charge. Suddenly, the glittering vessel rocketed into the air, twisting and turning, and then it shot far, far above, dwindling into a tiny thing. . . . There came a puff, it seemed, and Professor John Mordaunt groaned. For his wonderful Moon Rocket had burst into a million fragments, as though a bomb had exploded on its centre. He knew the reason—the sudden violence of the take-off had been too much, and the Space Ship had literally crumbled to powder.

"Quick, boys—there's not a second to lose!" shouted the Professor, his voice sounding but faintly through the toughened glass. "We must rope ourselves together."

The boys understood. Each of these suits was provided with a wonderful parachute, which could be opened out, stage by stage. There were tiny pilot chutes to begin with, and they grew larger, thus checking the descent of the wearer gradually. There might yet be a chance. . . .

Suddenly, a shock like an earthquake seemed to torture the meteorite.

Abruptly, dramatically, the ground parted not ten yards from them—cracking with a noise like a million cannons. A vast, black abyss appeared, widening until it stretched for hundreds and hundreds of yards. Smoke came roaring up, dense, choking. And from somewhere beyond the horizon a great glare was showing itself. Already, the meteorite was bursting into flames as the air resistance grew and grew.

"Boys!" shouted the Professor, his head close to Bob and Ronnie. "When I give the word, pull the red cords. Are you ready? Now!"

They obeyed. The first little parachutes were freed, and in a moment they felt themselves being whisked off the surface of the doomed meteorite.

They found themselves in a world of unreality.

Whether minutes passed, or hours, they could never tell. Time and distance meant nothing to them. They only knew that they suddenly saw the meteorite burst. The whole world was filled with glare and heat, and it seemed that this was death itself.

* * * * *

BOB was the first to recover consciousness. He awoke to find himself floating gently and easily.

Not far away, Ronnie and the Professor were floating, too—and all three parachutes were joined up by means of ropes.

"Uncle!" shouted Bob. "We're saved!"

They fell into the Atlantic, but were picked up by a liner's lifeboat. And the story they had to tell startled the whole world.

They were amazed to discover that the meteorite had caused little or no comment; for, to the people on earth, it had been just another "shooting star."

But they had lived on that shooting star—and, because of it, they had been saved from a terrible end—the end which had overtaken Dr. Nordheim.

Startling, white-hot tale next week featuring the *Dirt-Track 'Tec*. Don't miss this thrilling yarn of adventure on the Speedway.

THE JOYOUS JUNIORS IN SPAIN

(Continued from page 24.)

Mr. Cattermole. The Housemaster had now fallen from the horse's back, and lay half-stunned on the ground.

Dauntlessly, the Remove captain faced the monster.

The bull, turning from Mr. Cattermole, rushed headlong for Johnny Gee with a bellow of rage. The other Removites, quick to seize the opportunity, piled into the ring and dragged Mr. Cattermole to safety.

Johnny Gee dodged nimbly aside as the brute flung itself at him in its berserk rage. As the animal hurtled past Johnny hurled the red cloth full in its eyes, at the same instant taking a wild leap for the barrier.

While the bull dashed its horns into the ground, madly tearing the cloth to shreds, willing hands assisted Johnny Gee over the barrier. There was a moment of tense silence, and then a tumultuous shout of cheering burst forth.

The Removites hurried from the Arena with Mr. Cattermole, and hired two cars to take them back to the Hotel de Reviera. The Housemaster, though badly shaken, was able to give a fairly coherent account of what had happened. Don Pedro listened in horror.

"Then Mendez is here in Salamanta!" he exclaimed. "We must look out for further villainy."

Lord Reggie's cousin was not at the hotel, and the juniors sat in the lounge waiting anxiously for his return. All at once, Don Pedro started to his feet with a cry of alarm. A tall, pompous Spaniard in gaudy uniform, with jet black hair and flowing mustachios, came stalking into the lounge, followed by a dozen native police. They strode up to Johnny Gee & Co. and Don Pedro, and seized them unceremoniously.

"What does this outrage mean?" demanded Mr. Cattermole angrily.

"You, *señor*, and these boys, are under arrest for assisting Don Pedro Innocentio Ramon Diego Alvarez, a Monarchist, in his attempt to escape from this country!" was the stern reply. "I, Rodriguez da Costa, Governor of Salamanta, order your immediate removal to prison!"

It was in vain to argue with da Costa. He rapped out swift orders in Spanish, and the St. Giddy's party with Don Pedro were bundled away to the prison, and without further preamble they were hurled into a dark, stone dungeon and locked in.

Evening drew on and shadows lengthened. The Juniors slept fitfully through the night, and were all awake in the cold, grey dawn.

Suddenly, they started. A tap sounded at the grating above them, and the deep, rich voice of Escamillo came to their ears. He and Don Pedro conversed together softly in Spanish and then a small parcel was thrust between the bars.

"Escamillo brings Don Pedro bad news," he exclaimed. "This morning—but an hour ago, Pablo Mendez and his men have attacked the boat on which the plunder was loaded, made the crew obey them, and the *Garcia* is now sailing into the bay, with Pablo Mendez in charge!"

"Oh, scissiors!" gasped Johnny Gee. "If only we could get out of this hole—"

"We shall soon be out, my friends!" smiled Don Pedro. "Here is a spray, containing ether, for the guards. Quiet! Here they come!"

It was half-past six in the morning, the official rising time for prisoners. Two dark-visaged warders

arrived and opened the dungeon door. Immediately, Don Pedro raised the spray, there was a sizzling noise, accompanied by a strange, sickly odour. The guards caught the full benefit of the ether douche, and with gasping moans they sank in huddled senseless heaps to the stone floor.

Hastily the Juniors relieved the guards of their keys, and tip-toed along the shadowy stone corridor, safely they unlocked doors and at last found themselves safely outside the jail.

A dark figure in seaman's dress crept up to them from the shadows of a doorway. It was Escamillo! He beckoned them to follow him, and he led them to the harbour. At the landing stage, a large motor-launch was waiting. Johnny Gee & Co. and Don Pedro scrambled into it. The launch moved away across the sunlit waters of the harbour.

The Removites experienced a thrill of amazement, when the launch drew alongside a small Spanish gunboat, and swarthy faces appeared over the side of the vessel. Don Pedro gave a ringing laugh, and a shout to welcome the members of his own loyal band!

"During the night, my friends, Escamillo and the others seize the gunboat. We now go in chase of Pablo Mendez!" he said to Johnny Gee & Co.

The gunboat went full speed ahead in pursuit of the raided *Garcia*, which was making for Tangiers. They were within sight of the Algerian coast ere the low, tub shape of the cargo steamer was seen.

As soon as they came within range of the *Garcia*, a shell was sent whizzing across her bows. Howls of dismay and fury arose from the dark-skinned brigands on board, and a dark, swarthy form went overboard from the fo'c'sle end, to swim, with swift, powerful strokes, towards the shore, which was only a quarter-of-a-mile away.

It was Pablo Mendez! Shots were fired across the water after him, but after disappearing for a while, they saw his drenched form clambering out on to some rocks.

The brigands offered no resistance, and were dragged on board the gunboat by Escamillo and his *compadres*. The steam was let loose from the escape cocks, the fires gutted, and the captive brigands forced to empty the contents of the coal bunkers overboard.

"My hat! That's got the merry gunboat stalled for a few hours, at any rate!" chuckled Johnny Gee. "They'll just drift until they meet another vessel. Is the booty intact?"

"Si!" replied Don Pedro. "My men have released those members of the crew who were in irons, and we can get under way."

Don Pedro and his men and Johnny Gee & Co. set sail on the *Garcia*, after turning the gunboat adrift with its cut-throat crew. They returned to Salamanta, but did not take the boat into the harbour. Don Pedro remained on the *Garcia*, in case any zealous police should spot him, while Johnny Gee and Co. went to the hotel and explained matters to Lord Reggie's cousin.

"Well, if you take my tip, you lads will get back to England with Don Pedro as soon as you can," he said.

The Joyous Juniors set sail on the *Garcia* from Salamanta, with Mr. Cattermole and Fatty Slocum. They wondered where Pablo Mendez was now, and what steps, if any, he would take to enact his vengeance on the Spanish lad.

Look out for the Talkie Thrill Hunters next week in a gripping yarn of the West, entitled "Zarabas, the Gorilla."