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# Boys' 2D Magazine

EVERY SATURDAY

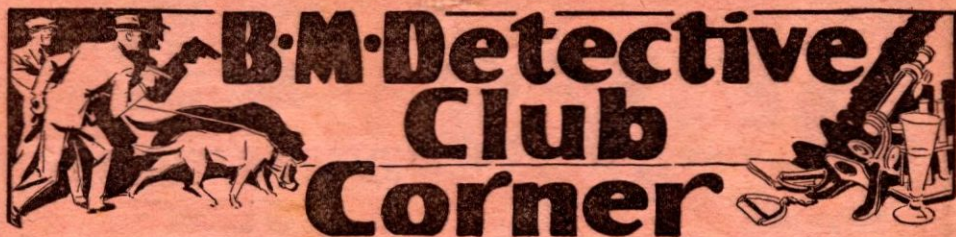


READ "THE CASE OF THE £1,000,000 CRICKET BAT," BOYS!

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# B.M. Detective Club Corner

Your Editor's Address:  
200, GRAY'S INN ROAD,  
LONDON, W.C. 1.

Get Ready for Next Week's Grand  
Addition to Your

**B.M. AMATEUR DETECTIVE  
OUTFITS, BOYS!**

SECRET MESSAGE DUPLICATOR.

Below the Editor chats about this Gift and  
the Splendid Stories booked for next week.

**M**Y DEAR CHUMS,

How do you like the Invisible Ink given with this number? Works the trick, doesn't it? Don't forget to see the pen you use to write your invisible messages is perfectly clean; you can keep the solution in an ordinary ink bottle which of course has been thoroughly cleaned first. When this B.M. ink is exhausted you can manufacture your own. The simplest media for invisible writing are ordinary milk, saliva or lemon juice. When heated, the paper on which the invisible message has been written is actually burned by the lemon juice, which is an acid. The simplest chemical solution is sulphuric acid diluted with twenty parts water. You can write messages which will baffle anybody who knows how to make ordinary invisible inks visible in the following manner. Use a simple solution of gum arabic! To make a message written in this manner visible it is not only necessary to damp the paper but it must be dusted lightly with cigarette ash or dust.

Needless to say all the above methods are not quite as satisfactory as the special chemical we have presented to you for your Amateur Detective Outfits this week.

On Saturday another necessary piece of apparatus for the amateur sleuth will be found tucked inside every copy of the *Mag.* This is

#### The Secret Message Duplicator.

With its aid you can make copies of all the invisible messages you send—a necessary precaution for the amateur sleuth. This inset will be followed by another Detective Club chart and a supply of Detective's Clue Powder.

Next week's stories hit the high spots for thrills and excitement, chums. You'll be kept baffled and intrigued by

#### The Hidden Hand at St. Giddy's!

Nothing quite like this amazing double-length school and mystery yarn has ever appeared before in a boy's paper. It tells of the astounding events that follow the coming of Julian Pomeroy to the ancient school. Though he looks as fit as a fiddle Pomeroy has an unaccountable yellow streak. He even lets Fatty Slocum give him a trouncing! Yet he is a likeable, athletic sort of chap and quickly proves his worth as a member of the Remove Cricket Eleven.

There is a mystery surrounding Pomeroy. Dark, evil forces dog his actions. And the Hidden Hand is at the bottom of it all. The Hidden Hand is the pseudonym of one of the most terrible crooks known to Scotland Yard. He has a club foot and sends all his warnings on a card—the Ace of Clubs. Le Duc, a French private detective, is supposed to have seen the Hidden Hand go to his death at the foot of the cliffs of Pebblecombe six months before; yet menacing messages written on an Ace of Clubs are sent to Pomeroy. Inspector Bulloch, of the Yard, and Le Duc turn up at St. Giddy's to solve the mystery and run down the Hidden Hand. Sefton Hallet, Pomeroy's uncle, and his clerk Wilmot, also come to the school. Which of these is the Ace of Clubs? Don't miss this absorbing long tale of mystery and thrills at school next week, chums.

Tails-Up Drake, the Flying Ace, also figures next week in his final adventure against Garson, the rascally film plotter, and his minions of the skies. Look for the title,

#### The Zero Plan!

When I say it is simply crammed with aerial thrills I don't exaggerate, chaps.

Fun with Washington Haysseed in

#### That Crazy Maze

and further gripping chapters of the Flying Circus are also among next week's good things. And whatever you do don't miss

#### Red Mask's Rival!

This is easily the most thrilling yarn in this grand Wild West series we have had so far. It tells how Red Mask rides on a lone mission to Mexico and meets Señor Jose Onate, the king of Mexican rustlers, in a duel of wits and six-guns.

Another gripping chat by our science expert on Speed Thrills of the Future is also booked for the near future. And on this page I will announce the biggest surprise I have ever had in pickle for my chums.

All the best,

YOUR EDITOR,



(With which is incorporated "Pals.")

GREAT NEW YARN OF  
THE SPORTING SLEUTH

Here are Thrills, Drama, and Excitement on the  
Cricket Field That Will Keep You Spellbound!



One of Those Bats Contained Their Booty—so To Make Sure of Getting it the Masked Marauders Stole the Whole of the Bats in the Visitors' Dressing-room! A GRIPPING INCIDENT FROM FALCON SWIFT'S LATEST CASE—TOLD BELOW.

"HOWZZAT?"  
"Out!"

Falcon Swift, the famous Sporting Sleuth, stood cool and immaculate in his white flannels as he received the ball from the wicket-keeper. His grey eye twinkled with satisfaction behind his monocle. It was the third wicket he had taken in the innings, and his masterly bowling had, indeed, been of fine service to Lord Moorfield's XI.

The sunshine of an early summer's afternoon beat down upon the carpet-like turf, and the white-clad figures on the green made a delightful picture. It was one of the finest private cricket grounds in the country; on one side there were the beautifully-kept gardens of Moorfield Manor, with the old ivy-covered mansion standing farther back, amid its stately trees.

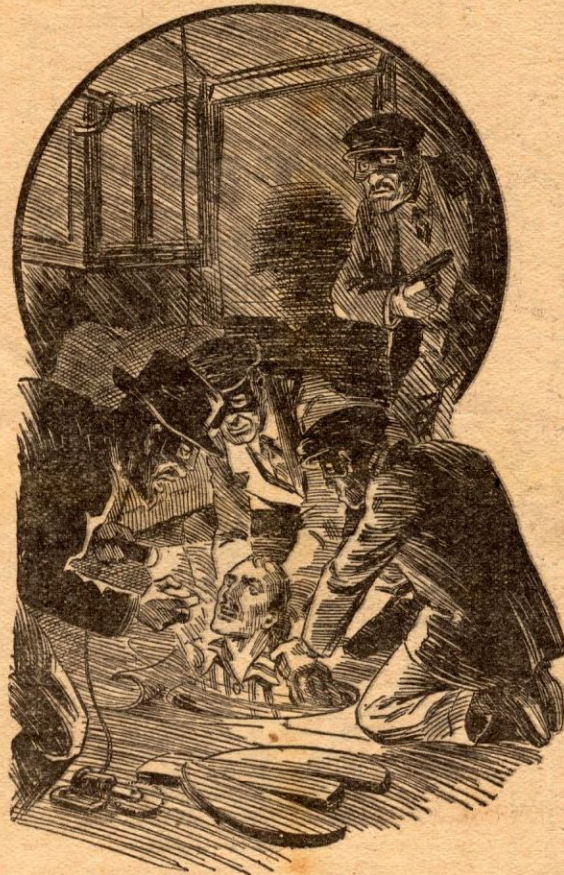
All the characters in the stories printed in this paper are fictitious. The names do not refer to any living person or persons.



Beyond the opposite boundary, a thick plantation arose, affording welcome shade for the spectators.

It was the second day of the match—Tuesday. The Hon. H. W. P. Milne's XI was making a big effort to win; but it seemed that Falcon Swift's masterly bowling would decide the issue.

Cricket Week at Moorfield Park was a great occasion for this quiet, rural corner of Essex. For it was celebrated with a brilliant house-party at the



THE CARRIAGE TORTURE-CHAMBER.—Parkes was lowered through the hole in the railway carriage floor, his feet almost touching the permanent way. "Where are the diamonds hidden?" demanded the crook leader.

Manor, and special entertainments were arranged for Lord Moorfield's many employees. Both Falcon Swift and Chick Conway had been invited to play, and they were thoroughly enjoying themselves. It was seldom, indeed, that the celebrated Monocled Manhunter took a week's holiday; but cricket had proved too great a lure. He had thrown his grim work aside, and was giving himself up entirely to the enjoyment of his unaccustomed leisure.

Chick, fielding at long-on, was glowing with pleasure because of Falcon Swift's bowling feats.

The great detective had made the highest batting score, and was, in fact, the "lion" of Lord Moorfield's house-party.

There were to be three matches during the week—two days for each—and the weather, so far, had been ideal. The "star" match was to commence on the morrow, and everybody was already talking about it. The Springboks XI was due to arrive at Plymouth that very night; the team would sleep on the train, and would arrive at Moorfield Park soon after breakfast. And Falcon Swift's fine performance in the opening match made people hopeful that the redoubtable and "unbeatable" Springboks would meet their masters.

The new batsman took guard and prepared to face Falcon Swift's bowling. He was a tall, slim youngster, named Stewart, who had made forty-three in the first innings, and the spectators were looking forward to some interesting cricket.

Young Stewart hit a single off Falcon Swift's first ball—the second delivery of the over. This brought the great H. W. P. Milne himself to face the bowling. The Hon. Bill—as he was affectionately known—was a great hitter. Twice already he had sent the ball into the dense plantation for six. On the first occasion the ball had been lost altogether, and on the second it had only been found after a long search. That huge drive to long-on was the Hon. Bill's favourite stroke.

Down came the leather, and Milne's bat flicked deftly. *Clack!* The ball went speeding across the turf towards the boundary.

The batsmen were running—and so was Chick Conway. By making an extra spurt, he was just able to retrieve the ball in time. He sent it soaring back to the bowler amid applause. Only two runs had been scored off that hit.

Again Falcon Swift ran; and this time the Hon. Bill opened his shoulders in his own inimitable style.

*Clack!* The leather went soaring loftily skywards, to fall right beyond the boundary, in the densest part of the copse.

"Oh, well hit, sir!"

"A six, by gad!"

Falcon Swift compressed his lips. The Hon. H. W. P. Milne was making his bowling look commonplace. But the sleuth revelled in this battle, and he was determined to get the Hon. Bill's wicket at all costs.

One or two of the fieldsmen were making for the thicket. Chick Conway being foremost. But he paused as a stranger appeared from amongst the trees with the ball in his hand.

"All right!" he sang out. "I happened to spot where it fell."

"Thanks!" called Chick.

He expected the stranger to toss the ball to him; the man, however, swung his arm back and threw the leather high—unerringly towards Falcon Swift who happened to be standing well apart from any of the other cricketers. It was really a perfect throw, and the Sporting Sleuth made ready to take the ball.

Then it was that Chick Conway saw something which set his pulses racing. The stranger had followed the flight of the ball—and an expression of malevolent triumph creased his dark face. Seldom,



indeed, had the boy sleuth seen a look of such concentrated evil.

It was instinct, perhaps—or amazing presence of mind—which caused Chick Conway to spin round on his toes.

"Boss!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "Look out! Don't catch it! Let it drop, Boss!"

Such fearful alarm and warning charged his voice that Falcon Swift, who was about to field the ball, acted like lightning. He threw himself backwards, flat on the turf.

*Booooooooom!* The ball struck the grass, and there was an ear-splitting explosion, accompanied by a blinding flash of flame. Fragments of metal flew in all directions; two of the cricketers were struck and slightly injured. Falcon Swift, sprawling full length, missed the explosion's force.

A little cloud of yellowish smoke spread slowly from a jagged, ugly hole in the turf. From the pavilion and the boundaries came shouts of alarm. Men were running across the ground. In that moment, indeed, there was absolute confusion.

Chick Conway, however, kept his head. A great and fierce fury raging within him, he leapt towards the stranger who had flung the supposed ball.

An automatic was in his hand, and the muzzle

amazement. "Somebody tried to kill you, Mr. Swift!"

"Not for the first time," was Falcon Swift's cool reply.

As Chick approached the group of cricketers, Lord Moorfield himself appeared from another direction. The peer was a fine, big man, but deep concern showed on his healthy, sunburned face.

"The hounds—the cunning hounds!" he exclaimed, half to himself. "This must be their work!"

Falcon Swift heard the strange words, and looked his host squarely in the eye.

"To whom are you referring, Lord Moorfield?" he asked.

"Never mind—never mind," said his lordship. "Thank Heaven you are safe, Swift! Are you hurt at all?"



CHOKED OFF—Suddenly a rope snaked from the tree behind Falcon Swift. The loop dropped over his head, and the rope jerked taut, dragging the sleuth backwards.

suddenly belched flame and lead. Only because of the man's haste did Chick escape death.

The bullet seared like a hot iron through the lad's left shirt-sleeve, scoring a shallow furrow in his flesh. He staggered, for the sudden shock of the pain was exquisite. The man had leapt backwards at the same moment, and he went plunging through the undergrowth of the little wood.

Chick Conway followed. He had taken only a few strides, however, when he tripped over a hidden root and went sprawling. By the time he picked himself up, with blood flowing down his arm, the crook had gone, leaving no trace.

The boy sleuth stumbled out into the sunshine again, and he muttered a fervent prayer of thankfulness as he saw Falcon Swift standing in the midst of a group of excited, white-garbed figures.

"A bomb! That's what it was—a bomb!" came the Hon. Bill's big, powerful voice, charged with

"Not a scratch—although young Stewart, here, has an ugly cut near the knee, and—Hallo! So you are winged, too, Chick?"

"It's nothing, Boss," said Chick Conway breathlessly. "The man fired at me . . . just grazed my arm."

"You saved my life, laddie," said the Monocled Manhunter quietly, placing his hand on Chick's shoulder. "If I had caught that 'ball' I should have been blown to pieces! Your presence of mind was perfect. I can only assume that one of my numerous enemies chose this novel method of attempting to exterminate me."

"But—but how could he be so sure?" asked Lord Moorfield, in wonder. "He must have been lurking there with that substitute 'ball' in readiness."

"You forget yesterday's play," said Falcon Swift, thoughtfully polishing his monocle. "During his innings, Mr. Milne twice drove the ball into that



thicket. It is his favourite stroke—and it was any odds that he would hit the ball there again to-day. This ingenious crook took the chance!"

"It is very upsetting—and I hardly know what to say," exclaimed Lord Moorfield, his face lined with worry.

"I suggest that we carry on with the game," said Falcon Swift coolly, screwing his monocle more firmly into his eye. "Come along, gentlemen—there is no fear that there will be a repetition of the incident."

The Monocled Manhunter's coolness, his calm indifference to danger, had its effect upon the players and spectators. The game went on.

### The Hole in the Floor

"THE fool—the cursed fool!" Oscar Stark gritted the words savagely as he crumpled the telegram in his hand. He was standing in the window of a big, luxurious apartment in one of Plymouth's finest hotels. The other three occupants of the room, smart, well-groomed, alert-looking men, gazed quizzically at their boss. For Matthew Slade, Grant Sayers, and Nicolas Osloff—better known to the police as Nick the Pole—formed one of the most dangerous international gangs known to Scotland Yard. Oscar Stark was the chief—and he was a man who always went for the "big stuff."

It was evening, quite late—the same evening as the dramatic cricket match at Moorfield Park. The telegram which Stark had just received was a long one, for it was written in secret code.

"What's wrong, Chief?" asked Nick the Pole—a pale, loose-limbed man with a livid scar running down his right cheek.

"Morton has failed," replied Stark curtly. "I gave him full instructions—I sent him the special 'pineapple'—yet he failed. Swift still lives."

"That's unlike Morton," said Slade. "Does Swift suspect anything?"

It was this agent—Morton—who the day before had accidentally discovered that Falcon Swift was included in Lord Moorfield's XI. It was a grave discovery for the crooks—who were planning some big operation against the cricketing peer. Morton had wired his information immediately, and he had received drastic instructions from Oscar Stark.

"We shall go on just the same," said Stark, after a moment's thought. "There's no evidence that Swift is 'on.' Besides, it's any odds that we shall do the job at this end. I only planted Morton at Moorfield as a safeguard—so that he would get the lie of the land in case we need to use it. We've got to carry on."

THE famous liner, *Conway Castle*, on the South African service, had long since docked at Plymouth, and the boat-train was ready to start off on its long night journey to London.

Mr. George Parkes had retired, some minutes earlier, to his private sleeping compartment, and he was preparing to go to bed. Parkes was a keen-faced, athletic man of about thirty-five. He was the agent of Lord Moorfield—a trustworthy and intelligent man. He had been in the peer's service for years, and his particular business carried him constantly to and fro between England and South Africa.

By the time the train was getting into its stride, Mr. Parkes was snugly ensconced in his sleeping bunk, and the private compartment was all quiet. The train thundered into the night, the wheels beating their rhythmic song of speed.

Without warning, the door suddenly opened. Mr. Parkes had locked it from the inside—but that made no difference to Nick the Pole, who was an expert with locks.

It was Oscar Stark who, with gun levelled, strode in first, and behind him came his gang. Quietly the door was closed, and Grant Sayers put his back to it.

"Better not do any squawking, Mr. Parkes!" said Oscar Stark grimly.

Mr. George Parkes sat up, his eyes full of alarm—and recognition. "You!" he exclaimed, one hand stealing towards his pillow.

"Put your hands up!" snapped Stark. "Nick, rope him!"

The work was quickly done.

"Yes, Mr. Parkes, we meet again," said Oscar Stark. "I'll trouble you for the big consignment of diamonds which you are carrying to Lord Moorfield."

"You rogues—you infernal scoundrels!" fumed the unfortunate man. "You've made a mistake this time—"

"Oh no," interrupted Stark. "My information came from a most reliable source. On two other occasions, Mr. Parkes, I have had the pleasure of robbing you. I have a fancy to complete the rubber. Come along—it'll save a lot of trouble if you spill the beans at once."

Mr. Parkes was cold with fury. It was, as Stark had said, not the first time that he had encountered this gang. It was perfectly true that Lord Moorfield was awaiting a consignment of diamonds, valued at a million pounds, for he was a dealer in those precious stones, and head of the world-famous Kanda-Diamond Trust.

Brave and resourceful as Mr. Parkes undoubtedly was, he could do nothing in the present circumstances. Useless to call for help, for the ceaseless thunder of the train would have drowned any cry. He was compelled to watch while the crooks went carefully through his baggage.

Very soon they found a formidable-looking steel dispatch box, and Oscar Stark gloated. One of Mr. Parkes' keys fitted. The box, however, contained nothing but the diamond messenger's passport and other papers.

"Come clean, you fool!" snarled Stark. "Where are the diamonds?"

But Mr. Parkes was staring at the dispatch case in horror and amazement.

"I—I can't understand it!" he panted. "The diamonds were there—"

"Your play-acting won't help you!" Stark grated.

"We're after that ice, and unless you tell us where it is we'll leave you as cold as a refrigerator!"

"I tell you, I don't know," said the diamond messenger desperately.

For a moment, Oscar Stark was deceived. He and his men went through the remainder of Parkes' luggage. His suit-cases, his bags, his attaché case—all were minutely examined. But no trace of a precious stone was found.

"Satisfied?" asked Mr. Parkes, at length.

And he could not conceal the gloating satisfaction in his voice. Stark detected it at once, and he swung round with murderous rage.

"It means that Moorfield has been using you as a blind, eh?" he snarled. "Well, Parkes—I'll give you one chance to live! You'll tell us where the diamonds are to be found!"

"I may be Lord Moorfield's agent, but he does not take me into all his secrets," replied Mr. Parkes bravely. "This time he has been too clever for you. The diamonds are being carried by someone else. I don't know whom."

"You don't know?" gritted Oscar Stark, his face purple with chagrin. "But you will know, my friend—or we'll leave you in scattered pieces along the permanent way!"



He held his automatic in the very centre of Mr. Parkes' forehead.

"Now!" he said tensely. "I'll count ten—" "You can count a hundred," said Parkes. "What good will this do you, you fool? If you kill me you're finished."

Oscar Stark resorted to other tactics. He gave orders to his men; Slade took a curious instrument from his pocket. It was a kind of saw, with a fine,

"This time, Parkes, I mean what I say!" snarled Oscar Stark, bending low over his victim. "Tell us where the diamonds are to be found, and you'll be safe. Remain silent, and I'll need a shovel to put you into your coffin!"

Parkes was a conscientious man—as loyal as steel to his employer. But he saw death in Stark's eyes and, great as his loyalty was, it could not stand such a strain as this.

## CHUMS! Don't Miss This Grand Apparatus for Your B.M. AMATEUR DETECTIVE OUTFITS!



A valuable aid to the Amateur Sleuth. It can be used for many purposes, especially to take copies of messages written in Invisible Ink. Given Inside every copy of **NEXT WEEK'S GRAND STORY NUMBER.**

narrow blade. It was electrically operated, too, for there was a wire attached to it, with an adapter at the end. The electric light was switched off, the lamp removed, and the adapter put in its place. When the switch was turned on, a tiny motor hummed in the mechanism of the saw. Electric torches gave the men all the light they needed.

Parkes watched wonderingly at first—and then with growing horror. For he now saw that a large circular hole was being cut in the floor!

At last, with a final kick, Slade cleared away the last remnant. The torchlights were concentrated upon the hole; a film of dust was rising, accompanied by a great draught. The rumble and roar of the thudding wheels sounded like thunder. Just below was the permanent way, over which the train was roaring at seventy miles an hour. It was just a blur in the darkness, beneath.

"Down with him!" said Stark harshly.

Even the iron nerves of the diamond messenger were affected by this grim order. He was seized by the shoulders and lowered through the hole until only his head and shoulders were above the level of the floor. His legs were so perilously close to the permanent way that he could feel the sting of the gravel as it was whipped up by the wind. An icy blast swept round his legs. He knew that one touch would mean the loss of a foot.

"Stop!" he panted. "You devils, stop! I—I'll tell you!"

"That's better!" said Stark. "Ease him up a bit men! Now, my friend! Out with it!"

"I—I only know that the diamonds were entrusted to a member of the Springboks Cricket XI. They travelled to England on the same boat, and they are going direct to Moorfield Park to play a match to-morrow," gasped Parkes. "The diamonds are hidden in a cricket bat—which one I don't know."

"That's not good enough," snapped Stark. "You'd better be more explicit."

"I tell you I don't know!" almost screamed the tortured man. "You fiends! Pull me up!"

"Which man is carrying the diamonds?" demanded Stark.

"I don't know—I don't know!" shouted Parkes, his voice hoarse and earnest. "There are fifteen cricketers in the team—the XI. and four reserves. One of those men is carrying the diamonds. I swear to you that I know no more."

His manner was so earnest, his words so desperate, that even Oscar Stark was compelled to believe him.

"Pull him up—and give him the 'six-day special,'" said Oscar Stark briefly.

Exhausted, the wretched man was pulled clear of the death hole; then he was held against the wall while Sayers deftly thrust a needle into his arm.



This was the "six-day special"—an effective drug which would keep Parkes unconscious for six days.

He fought for some moments against his slipping consciousness; then he became limp. He was placed in his bunk, and the gang quietly left the compartment, relocking the door after them.

They knew that they would have no difficulty in getting away from the train at Waterloo, for it would be some little time before the unconscious Parkes would be discovered.

And when Lord Moorfield heard of the outrage, he would naturally assume that his messenger had been drugged first, and his baggage searched afterwards.

### Falcon Swift Goes Into Action

"FRANKLY, Mr. Swift, I had a double motive in inviting you to join my house party," said Lord Moorfield gravely. "There was not only the cricket—but something else."

"I guessed as much," replied Falcon Swift. "I am also convinced that yesterday's attempt upon my life was connected, in some way, with the diamonds—"

"Diamonds!" gasped his lordship, staring. "I have not even mentioned the word."

"Perhaps not," replied Falcon Swift dryly. "But it is a well-known fact that you are one of the greatest diamond dealers in the world, and criminals do not attempt to take my life unless they are after big loot."

"You're right, Swift, and I have had a great deal of trouble with these infernal crooks," said Lord Moorfield. "They have robbed me again and again. This time I was determined to hoodwink them. Now, Mr. Swift, within half-an-hour the Springboks XI. will arrive—and one member of the team, Mr. Arthur Trevor, the famous batsman, is carrying the diamond consignment."

"I see. You also have a human red herring, I presume?"

"Exactly," said his lordship. "My usual agent, Parkes, travelled on the same boat. I have just heard, by telephone from Scotland Yard, that Mr. Parkes was drugged during the train journey, and his belongings searched. Needless to say, the criminals did not find the diamonds."

They were talking in Lord Moorfield's library, and the early morning sunshine was streaming through the great windows. The peer began to pace back and forth across the thick pile carpet, while Falcon Swift thoughtfully polished his monocle.

"When I invited you here, Mr. Swift, I did not think for one moment that there would be any trouble," continued the peer, in quiet subdued tones. "But it is comforting for me to know that you are on the spot, and I wish to engage you professionally. And so that you may be prepared, it is necessary that you should know the exact details of my arrangements. The African team, having breakfasted in London, is coming straight on here in a special luxury motor coach which I hired for their use."

"And the diamonds?"

"There is to be no mysterious business about the diamonds," said Lord Moorfield. "The team will drive straight to the pavilion, and as soon as the game has started I shall enter the dressing-room and quietly take possession of a secretly marked cricket bat in Arthur Trevor's bag. While the play is still on, I shall stroll indoors and look that cricket bat in my strong room. Until then I shall not be really comfortable."

"You are wise to think of taking precautions," said the Monocled Manhunter, his scholarly face assuming a grim expression. "The criminals are more active, perhaps, than you appreciate."

"Their activity ceased in the night, Mr. Swift," said the other. "When they attacked Mr. Parkes, and failed to get the diamonds. They can have no object in coming here—"

"In that case, how is it that Oscar Stark himself is on the spot?" asked the Monocled Manhunter quietly.

"Oscar Stark!" gasped Lord Moorfield. "Here! Impossible!"

"I saw him with my own eyes—from my window, when I was dressing," said the Sporting Sleuth calmly. "He thought he was hidden behind a hedge; but I possess a very useful pair of field glasses."

The detective's manner became more grave, and he thoughtfully tapped his monocle on his finger nail.

"Stark's presence here can mean only one thing, Lord Moorfield," he went on. "He has not given up hope of getting the diamonds. And if Stark is here, it means that his gang is here, too. They have been using guesswork, but I am not going to follow their bad example. So we will leave matters just as they stand until we can get hold of something more concrete."

THERE was a great ovation for the famous Springboks when they arrived. All the members of Lord Moorfield's houseparty turned out to greet the sun-tanned visitors. Introductions were made and the guests chatted with the cricketers for a short time before proceeding to the cricket ground. As Lord Moorfield had arranged the African players went straight to the pavilion, and they lost no time in changing into their white flannels.

There was a great crowd of spectators to-day—the ordinary public was admitted to this game. Lord Moorfield, who was the captain of his own XI., won the toss, and he elected to put his own side in first.

Normally, he would have opened the innings himself, with Falcon Swift as his partner, but the Sporting Sleuth wanted to see the match well under way before he batted, so he was fifth man on the list.

He and Chick Conway sat in the pavilion, watching the commencement of the game. The weather was still perfect, and the cricket was first-class. The Springboks were "hot stuff," and had had plenty of practice on their long sea voyage. It was at the end of the third over that Falcon Swift made a move. "Shan't be long, Chick," he said, as he rose to his feet.

"Better not go too far away, boss," grinned Chick. "You'll probably be wanted soon."

"Not for a long time, I hope," replied Falcon Swift.

"I hope we're in together—so that we can make a stand," said Chick. "By jingo! That would be ripping, wouldn't it, Boss? 'Famous detective and his assistant save Lord Moorfield's side from disaster!' How's that?"

"It sounds remarkably vainglorious to me," replied Falcon Swift sternly. "Who told you that you could bat, anyway?"

Chick chuckled as the Sporting Sleuth went into the pavilion.

Monocle in eye, the detective reappeared after a few minutes. He had paid a short visit to the dressing-rooms, and now he made his way towards the gardens, evidently intent upon going to the house. And in his hand he carelessly swung a bat.

The gardens were empty—for everybody was watching the game. Falcon Swift strolled leisurely, humming to himself. He was soon in the very centre of the delightful gardens, where great rhododendron bushes and a trim box hedge hid him completely.

Suddenly, two of the bushes parted, and a man



stepped out. An automatic was thrust hard into Falcon Swift's ribs.

"Reach for the sky, you!" gritted a voice.

With a startled exclamation, Falcon Swift dropped the cricket bat and raised his arms. On the instant, another man appeared, snatched the bat from the ground, and ran off like the wind.

"I think we have met before, Mr. Oscar Stark," said Falcon Swift coolly.

"Never mind that!" snapped Stark. "If you know what's healthy, you'll stand just where you are and say nothing!"

"So that your friend may have time to make a clean getaway with my very excellent bat?" asked the Sporting Sleuth quietly. "I am indebted to you Stark, for showing me so clearly that you know where the diamonds are concealed."

Oscar Stark started.

"What—what do you mean?" he asked harshly.

"I mean that the bat your friend just took is my own personal property—and quite innocent," replied Falcon Swift. "I wonder how you knew that Lord Moorfield's diamonds were concealed in a bat? But you don't know which bat, do you? You're up against it, Stark, and you'll get nowhere. You had far better understand—"

He suddenly concentrated his attention over his antagonist's shoulder, and his eyes gleamed like tempered steel. "Good fellow, Chick!" he said sharply. "Yes, grab—"

With a snarl, Oscar Stark half-turned, and in the same second the Sporting Sleuth brought up his right knee with terrific force, knocking the gun completely out of Stark's hand. It spun into the air, and Falcon Swift caught it deftly, turning the muzzle like lightning upon his enemy.

"Just a little trick, Stark," he drawled. "There's

The loop dropped over the detective's head, and with a twang the rope was drawn tight.

### Oscar Stark—Run Out!

IT was such an unexpected development that even Falcon Swift was taken completely off his guard.

He had turned the tables neatly on Stark—little dreaming that Nick the Pole was concealed in the hollow of the great tree which stood just behind the bushes.

With the rope taut, the detective could scarcely breathe; he was helpless. In a flash, Oscar Stark knocked the gun out of his hand.

"Good work, Nick!" he panted. "Hoist him up—quick! Somebody might come along at any moment. The bat that Sayers took is the wrong one. We've got to move fast."

The cord drew tight round Falcon Swift's throat; his senses began to reel. He was dragged backwards and upwards—almost hanged, in fact. It seemed an eternity before he was hauled on to the branch of the tree, and then Nick the Pole crashed the butt end of his gun upon his head.

"Leave him there!" cried Stark. "It's no good hanging about any longer."

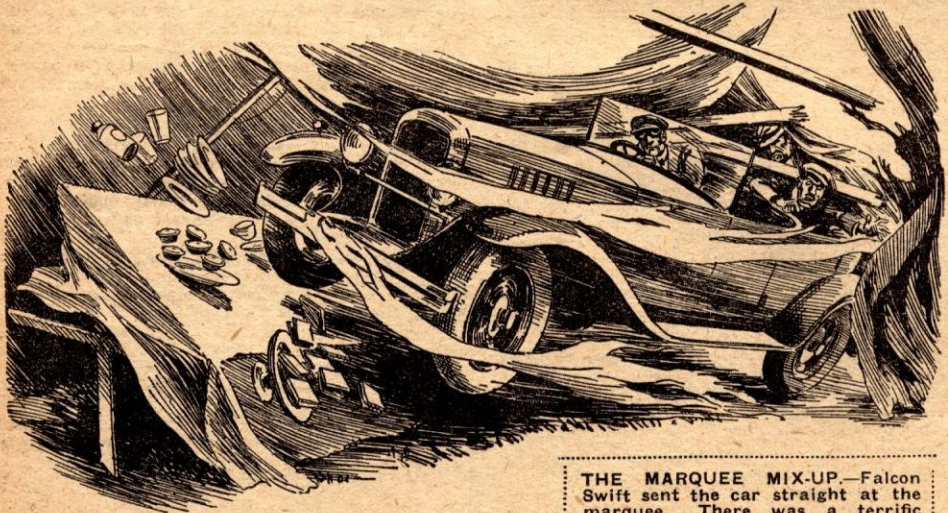
Falcon Swift was thrown down into the deep hollow of the tree—a serviceable enough hiding place, and Nick dropped to the ground.

"Is the car ready?" asked Stark, as they moved off together.

"Yes, with Slade at the wheel."

**C**LACK!  
"Oh, well hit!"

Lord Moorfield was batting strongly, and he and his partner was getting well "set." Cricket



THE MARQUEE MIX-UP.—Falcon Swift sent the car straight at the marquee. There was a terrific tearing, rending crash as the machine charged through the canvas.

nobody behind you; I merely wanted to get hold of your gun."

"You—you cursed—"

"Now, abuse won't help you," said Falcon Swift, with a grim little smile. "Be good enough to turn right about face and walk in front of me."

Oscar Stark, cursing, turned. And it was at that second that a thin rope, coiling like a snake, came out of the branches of the tree behind Falcon Swift.

of a very high order was being played. The Spring-boks were bowling and fielding well, but the batsmen were beginning to master the attack. There were crowds of people—members of the house-party—out on the deep veranda, watching the play. But



the big central saloon, and the dressing-rooms were nearly empty. One or two of the home side were standing about, chatting—two of them, at least, all ready wearing pads. Then came the amazing and dramatic interruption.

Three men, heavily masked, strode into the central lounge, from the rear doorway. Each of them held a levelled automatic.

"The first man who utters a sound will be drilled!" said Oscar Stark, in a low, tense voice. "Stick up your hands—and believe you're paralysed!"

"But—but—I say—!" began one of the startled cricketers.

"Don't argue—back away into the dressing-room," ordered Stark. "That's right—make it snappy!"

Utterly bewildered, the cricketers entered the visitors' dressing-room, for Stark already knew which this was.

"There's a cupboard here, Chief!" said Sayers, tersely.

"Good! Get into it, you rabbits!" snarled Oscar Stark. "Step lively, or I'll make you dance."

One of the cricketers suddenly lunged forward. It was a plucky effort—and a reckless one.

Thud! Stark's silenced gun spurted flame and lead. The unfortunate cricketer threw up his hands and crumpled to the floor. The bullet had grazed his skull, stunning him on the instant—but, fortunately, causing no serious injury.

"The fool!" snarled Stark. "Dump him in the cupboard, you others—get back!"

It was a dreadful object lesson for the other men, and they backed into the cupboard. The unconscious man was thrown in with them, the doors were closed and locked.

"By thunder! We've got away with it!" said Stark, his eyes glowing. "Grab those cricket bats!"

Every cricket bag was emptied; and, all told, there were plenty of bats. Each crook gathered armfuls—leaving not a single bat behind.

Stark and his men departed as they had come. This time there was not a soul in the lounge—for a particularly exciting bit of play was taking place on the field, and all eyes were concentrated upon the wicket.

Once out of the pavilion, the rest was easy. They ran hard, streaking through the gardens.

The run was only a short one. Oscar Stark had laid his plan carefully. On the drive stood a powerful car, and Matthew Slade was at the wheel. Already, the engine was purring powerfully.

Stark was the first to arrive; he flung his armful of bats into the rear seat and then leapt in.

The other bats followed. Nick the Pole and Grant Sayers leapt aboard.

"On, Slade—get going, you fool!" gritted Stark, pulling out his gun.

"O.K., Chief," said Slade.

He dropped in the clutch, and the car with a terrific jerk, leapt forward. With ever increasing speed, the automobile roared down the drive.

And there was a smile on the face of the driver; behind his big goggles gleamed a monocle. For the man was not Matthew Slade, but Falcon Swift.

The Sporting Sleuth had not been knocked completely unconscious by Nick the Pole's blow; and he had quickly shaken off its effects.

The morning breeze helped to revive him; he dropped to the ground, and one of the first things he saw, upon coming within view of the pavilion, was Stark and his companions entering by means of the rear door. In a flash, Falcon Swift knew what their game was—they were making a raid, with the obvious intention of seizing all the cricket bats.

The Monocled Manhunter looked round; he saw the waiting car on the drive, and he recognised

Matthew Slade. Luckily, he spotted Chick, too, and he gave the lad some swift instructions. It had been easy enough for the Monocled Manhunter to make a quick detour, to leap into the car, and to take Slade by surprise. That crook was now behind a hedge, his wrists enclosed in steel bracelets, his mouth gagged by the detective's handkerchief.

Falcon Swift himself, donning Slade's long rain-coat, had sat at the wheel—and with Slade's soft hat and goggles, he had waited. The trick had worked!

Suddenly, the Sporting Sleuth swerved violently, sending the great car off the drive, and charging headlong towards a great refreshment marquee which stood on the greensward. Stark leapt to his feet, his eyes aflame with suspicion.

"Stop!" he screamed. "By Heaven! It's not Slade! It's—it's—"

"Falcon Swift!" croaked Nick the Pole.

Stark's gun swung round—but, mercifully, at that second, the car charged with terrific force into the marquee.

The air was filled with confused sounds. The canvas split and tore noisily; there followed the sharp cracking of woodwork, as the car mowed through chairs and tables.

Then the whole canvas structure collapsed, falling, fold upon fold, over the car. Swift, who had been prepared, had crouched down, and he was otherwise unharmed, except for a few bruises. In a moment he was out, and his own gun was in his hand.

It was the end of Stark and his gang. The master crook and his companions were buried under the mountain of canvas, and when, finally, they emerged, they were easily taken.

It was a dramatic capture. Falcon Swift had decided upon this move earlier, and during the brief meeting with Chick Conway, he had told the latter to dash to the marquee and warn everybody to clear out.

So Lord Moorfield's diamonds were saved, and Falcon Swift had captured a particularly dangerous gang.

But the famous criminologist was much more pleased with the fine performance he made against the Springboks. Chick Conway, too, had a goodly share of the honours of that momentous week. And they both wholeheartedly enjoyed the rest of their interrupted cricketing holiday.

A terrific Mystery Menace threatens St. Giddy's in next week's double-length school tale featuring Johnny Gee & Co. of the Remove Form.

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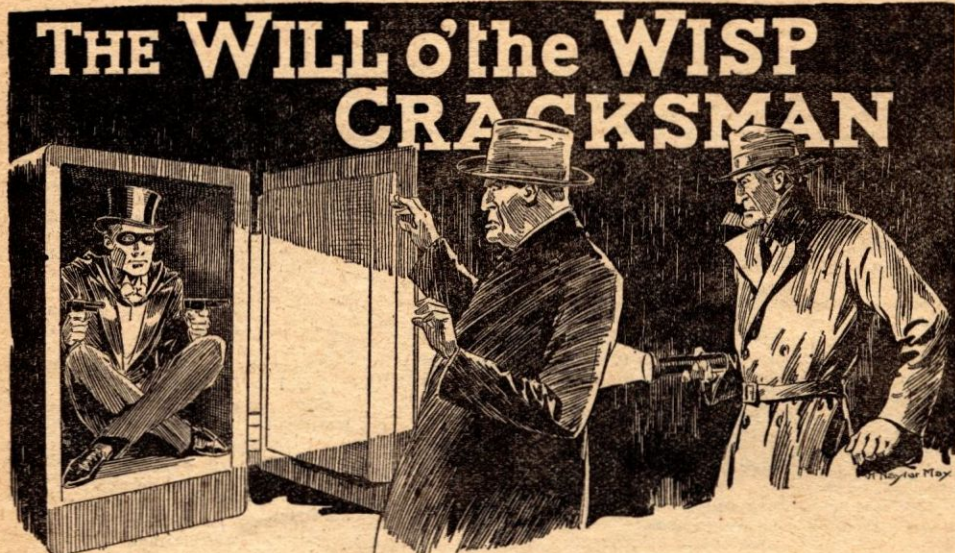
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**THE 1933 ROBIN HOOD!**

Enter the Amazing Man About Town in an  
Exciting Exploit Against a Modern Shylock.



**THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE GREY GHOST!** Marcus Vine, Master Plotter, got the shock of his life when he opened his safe—to see **Two Automatics Trained on his Heart.**

### Behind the Steel Door.

**T**HUD-THUD! Thud-thud-thud! Jimmy Brent's quick ears caught the faint, mysterious sound as he stole down the long passage of the deserted office building. The gentleman cracksman paused, eyes narrowing behind his black mask—listening intently.

*Thud-thud-thud!* The sound was repeated. It seemed to Jimmy Brent that it was coming from one of the dark, empty offices near at hand. It was nearly midnight, and the great Mycroft Trust building, in Kingsway, was as deserted as a churchyard. Jimmy Brent was on the job! In the daytime he was a gentleman of leisure—member of London's most exclusive clubs—just a rich idler. At night, however, he became the Grey Ghost—the mysterious cracksman whose identity baffled the police yet who gave all his ill-gotten gains to charity. Jimmy only robbed the undeserving rich to aid the poor.

"Strange!" he muttered, frowning, as he listened to that sound. It came from behind a glass-topped door in front of him, on which were the words—*Marcus Vine—Investments*. Jimmy was aware that Marcus Vine's reputation was of the worst; the man was a wealthy company promoter, a City "shark" of notorious character. It was this man's safe he had come to rob—to collect a subscription for a charity Vine had refused to support.

*Thud-thud-thud!* That extraordinary sound came again and without further hesitation, the gentleman cracksman drew a little instrument from his pocket; a fine steel wire, highly tempered, trembled in the keyhole of the office door. Under the skilful hand of the Grey Ghost the lock was quickly conquered. Jimmy opened the door cautiously and stepped into the room.

"Help—help!" came a faint, feeble cry from the gloom on the other side of the room.

The beam from the amateur cracksman's electric

torch splashed into the darkness; at first glance it seemed that there was no place where a man might be hidden. Then Jimmy strode forward rapidly as he saw the great steel safe in the corner. The thing was unbelievable, yet . . .

"Where are you?" asked Jimmy Brent sharply. "Here—inside!" came the answer, so faint that ordinary ears could not have heard. "Let me out . . . I'm suffocating . . . Let me out!"

It took a great deal to startle the hardened Grey Ghost; but he was horrified now.

"How did you get in there?" he asked, his voice as steady as a rock. "There is no key. It is a combination lock—"

"Vine!" came the voice. "It was Vine, the murdering scoundrel. . . . The combination . . . hagg-a-h-a-g-g-a. Hagg-a! I heard Vine . . ."

The voice trailed away. Only by placing his ear close to the cold steel had the Grey Ghost heard.

With steady, nimble fingers, Jimmy Brent operated the control knob. The combination was right. For when he pulled at the handle, the door swung heavily open.

A startled gasp broke from his lips, as his torchlight flashed upon the purple face of—Jackie Craddock.

He and Craddock had been at the same "varsity" together, but their professions were diametrically different. For whereas Jimmy had chosen to become a crook, Jock Craddock was making a name for himself as an amateur detective!

It was touch and go. Another five minutes and there would have been no hope. Jimmy Brent forced some brandy between his friend's lips. In a few moments his eyelids flickered, consciousness returned. . . .

"Wh—where am I?" What—Jimmy!" gasped the detective, gazing incredulously at the cracksman. "You saved my life, old man. A few more minutes. and—but what are you doing here?"



"I came to make a collection from Vine for a deserving institution," replied Jimmy Brent, a grim little smile playing round the corners of his mouth. "I heard of his crooked ways of making money and I decided to—er—relieve him of some. But tell me—how did you come to be locked in Vine's safe?"

Craddock did not answer for a moment; then he gave a dry little chuckle:

"Queer, isn't it, Jimmy?" he said. "I should have been dead by now but for your activities." He

knocked him on the head, and then Vine had pushed him into the safe.

"Now," Jackie concluded, dejectedly, "the scoundrel has probably gone to Wright's farm to destroy some vitally important papers. The farm is empty at present, Wright having dismissed his servants and housekeeper while he is staying in London for a day or two."

"I see," said the gentleman cracksman quietly. His brain was working swiftly, coolly, on this unexpected development to his evening's quest.

"Jackie, old chap, I want you to do me a favour. Will you leave this matter entirely in my hands?"

"But..." gasped the detective.

"Oh, I know it's irregular," interrupted Jimmy Brent. "But you are in no condition to continue to-night. And by to-morrow those papers you mentioned—your only real evidence—will be destroyed."

For some moments Jackie Craddock was silent. His face, pale and haggard after his recent harrowing experience, was creased in a thoughtful frown. Suddenly he turned to the amateur cracksman with a smile, and grasped his hand.

"All right, Jimmy," he exclaimed. "Go right ahead. And I hope you get what you want!"

Jackie Craddock was still weak and unsteady. Jimmy Brent assisted him out of the office; down the stairs; he helped him into his waiting car, and drove him to his West End chambers.

Then without the loss of a moment, Jimmy Brent set out again and he entered upon the adventure with an inward thrill.

### The Death Knives.

ALOW, rakish racing car roared along the great arterial road into Kent. Jimmy Brent sat at the wheel, and more than once his speedometer needle touched the "80" mark, as he sped towards Hedem Village and Wright's Farm.

He had ascertained that Craddock had been in the safe for less than half-an-hour, and there was no certainty that Marcus Vine would drive straight down to Hedem Farm.

Through Sevenoaks at last. . . . Hedem Village was just a little collection of cottages, a mile off the main road. The farmhouse, which was

a comfortable, half-timbered building, stood in lonely isolation. Jimmy Brent parked his car near by, and completed the journey on foot.

All was quiet as he approached the house; not a light was showing. His task was easy, for he had obtained very careful directions from the detective.

The front door soon yielded to his expert manipulation of a pick-lock and he made his way across the hall, into the dining-room. His torchlight flashed; he found the locked cupboard where Wright had concealed the papers for which Vine was risking so much. This lock, too, presented no obstacle. The cupboard door opened—and there, sure enough, were



THE DOOM MACHINE.—The two crooks threw Jimmy Brent into the chaff-chopping machine. Above the Grey Ghost gleamed great knife blades.

gave a somewhat strained laugh and then proceeded to tell his story.

A few days previously a retired farmer named Edward Wright had come to Jackie's office for his help. It appeared he had invested a considerable sum of money—all his savings—in the company which Vine had promoted to market his—Wright's—Patent Miracle Threshing Machine. He had discovered that he had been swindled, and he had promptly enlisted Craddock's aid to get sufficient evidence to convict Vine. Jackie had called at Vine's office late that evening, but before he could gain any useful information, the rascally business man and his secretary had attacked him. They had



the documents. Brent prepared to tuck them into his pocket . . .

‘Put your hands up—and keep them up!’

The voice was guttural, and as the words were uttered two beams of light shot out from the darkness and concentrated unwaveringly upon the gentleman crook. Jimmy stood rigid.

He knew, in that second, that he was in a tight spot. Marcus Vine and his secretary, Hugo Stanger, had been lurking in the house!

‘All right, gov’nor—I give in,’ muttered Brent sullenly. ‘Blimey! I never knew you was here!’

The change in him was incredible. He covered, he shrank; his expression was that of a terrified coward. He knew that at least one automatic was pointing at him, and Marcus Vine was desperate.

‘Who are you—and what are you doing here?’ gritted Vine as he advanced.

Jimmy saw him now—a coarse, fleshy man with pig-like eyes. In direct contrast Hugo Stanger was thin and leathery—a reptile-like creature.

‘Crikey! I thought you was my old gov’nor!’ said Brent, in well-feigned surprise. ‘Here, what are you doin’ in this house, anyway? My name’s Reeves, and I used to be the butler here. I know all about Mr. Wright’s business deals, and I thought mebbe I could get my own back by pinching these securities—’

‘You fool—they’re not securities,’ snarled Marcus Vine.

Relief sounded in his voice. The Grey Ghost’s ruse was succeeding.

But disaster overtook him—and from an unexpected quarter. There was a sudden clatter from above, a whirring of pulleys, and a heavy, old-fashioned oil-lamp crashed down upon the charity crook’s head before he could dodge.

He went down like a pole-axed bull, paraffin spurting all over him. Vine leapt forward, his gun ready.

‘It’s all right—the fool’s knocked out!’ he grated. ‘He didn’t know that that lamp worked on a pulley, and that my hand was near the controlling chain!’

He grabbed up the documents, examined them quickly, and the fact that they were soaked in paraffin gave him an idea.

‘A match, Stanger—quick!’ he snapped.

He threw those precious papers into the grate, and a moment later they were flaring up. Jimmy Brent knew nothing. The only proof of Vine’s crookedness was destroyed!

‘Help me, Stanger,’ said Vine grimly. ‘I have an idea.’

That it was a hideous, malevolent idea was evidenced by the expression in the crook’s eyes. Together, they carried their victim out of the house; they took him to the rambling outbuildings, at the rear. In a great barn stood Edward Wright’s Miracle Threshing Machine—a full-sized experimental model.

‘What are you going to do?’ asked Stanger tremulously, as Vine removed a great dust-sheet from the machine.

‘You will see,’ replied Vine, his eyes burning. ‘By Heaven! This is ours now, Stanger—and it’s worth a fortune! I’ve tried to trick Wright, but he was too cute! Well, I’ve won in the end.’

Villain though Stanger was, he was horrified when he saw his employer’s object. Vine opened an iron door of the threshing machine; within, there was a long shoot, leading to a kind of central chamber. The torchlight revealed numbers of deadly knives, gleaming overhead. Stanger, who had seen the plans of the threshing machine, knew that these knives descended with a chopping motion when the machinery was set going.

‘No, no!’ he panted. ‘You can’t do it, Vine!’

Marcus Vine gave Jimmy Brent a shove, and the Man about Town slid into the central chamber. The iron door clanged shut.



**THE LAMP OF OBLIVION.**—Without warning the lamp crashed down on Jimmy Brent’s head. The crook financier had worked a secret mechanism.

‘We’ve got to do it!’ said Vine. ‘We dare not let this man live. The papers are destroyed. Wright is dead. Don’t clutch at me like that, you fool. I have everything worked out.’

Jimmy Brent, within the deadly trap, was recovering consciousness; he heard the significant words. The papers were destroyed!

He still had his torch with him, and with all that icy coolness for which he was famous, he now dealt with the situation. He reached up, grasping top of the knives which were immediately above him.



*Snapp-snap!* Exerting all his strength, Jimmy Brent succeeded in breaking off the knives. He concentrated upon the next two, reaching up in the same way, and using his back, as he lay flat, as leverage. Little beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

Again the knives snapped. He took hold of the next two, worming his way into position.

Then came an ominous humming sound. . . . Marcus Vine had turned the switch, and the electric motor was in operation! A grinding of machinery now sounded, and the great structure commenced to throb and vibrate with automatic life.

*Champ-champ-champ! Whirrrrrrrrrrr!* The whole top of the central chamber descended, and for one second Jimmy Brent believed that he was about to be crushed to death. Had the knives remained intact, he would have been pierced and killed on the instant. As it was, the metal-work descended to within a half-inch of him, and then rose again—to descend more quickly. Soon, the mechanism was working at full pressure, and the Grey Ghost's ears were deafened by the terrific roar. . . .

### The Safe's Contents.

MARCUS VINE had left his car in a side lane, some half-mile away. Neither he nor Stanger knew that their victim, the supposed Reeves, had come to Hedham Farm by car, too.

"Couldn't we have left him there tied up, or something?" muttered Stanger.

"No," replied the other. "The world believes that Edward Wright is bankrupt. Nothing is known of his business dealings with me, and now the documents are destroyed. When we get to the office we can easily put that infernal detective in the car, take him down into the country, and dump him in a river. It's easy! When the affair is completely blown over I shall be able to market the Miracle Threshing Machine and make a fortune. You'll have your share, too. I tell you, we're safe now."

Hugo Stanger breathed heavily.

"Yes, I believe you're right, Boss," he muttered.

They drove on—and their sense of security increased as they approached London.

\* \* \* \* \*

"WE can get him out by the back way," said Marcus Vine, pointing.

He and Stanger were in the great office building, on the ground floor. Vine knew that the watchman would not come this way for at least two hours.

The pair went up through the empty, deserted building. They reached Vine's office. The crook's hand was now steady as he turned the key.

"We won't switch on the light," he muttered, as he closed the door. "Here, Stanger, you hold this torch."

While Stanger directed the light on the safe door, Marcus Vine operated the control knob. He turned the handle, and swung the door wide open. . . .

"If you're fond of life, Marcus Vine—reach for the ceiling!" said a quiet, drawing voice.

Within the safe squatted the masked Jimmy Brent—and in each hand he held an unwavering, levelled automatic!

"The devil!" gasped Vine, his face the colour of putty.

"No; the Grey Ghost!" drawled Brent, stepping out of the safe.

At that dread name, Stanger gave a terrified gasp

while Vine turned a shade paler and passed his tongue over lips that were suddenly dry.

"I fooled you at Hedham Farm, my friend," smiled Jimmy. "I broke off the steel knives, and it was an easy matter to slide down the shoot, and escape from the machine. My car is a racing one, and it was simple enough for me to get here first." Then he added in a sharper tone, "Now, sit down in your chair. You, Stanger, stand behind your master. That's right. I'm going to do the talking now, Vine."

"What—what do you want with me?" asked Vine, so terrified that he could scarcely speak. "How—how did you know—"

"You need not ask me where your victim is, Mr. Vine," said Jimmy Brent, a look of contempt on his handsome face. "I took him away—and I have hidden him. Now, you and I can do a business deal—if you are inclined."

"I—I don't understand," muttered Vine, a hope springing within him.

"A business deal," repeated the Grey Ghost, in his cultured accents. "I will promise to keep quiet about Mr. Edward Wright and the man in the safe if you will make it worth my while. I want forty thousand pounds in oash—now."

Marcus Vine gasped. This was exactly double the amount of Edward Wright's investment. He did not guess that the second twenty thousand pounds was for charity.

"No, no! It is impossible!" snarled Vine. "I haven't the money in cash."

"That is a lie!" retorted Jimmy Brent calmly. "There is more than that amount in the safe. I could have taken it—but I prefer to do business in a straight-forward way."

Marcus Vine crumpled. He went to the safe, and took out the money. It was all in bank notes of big denomination. There was a cunning light in his eyes as he handed the notes to the Grey Ghost.

"Oh, no!" said the Man about Town. "You're not going to stop these notes, Mr. Vine. Take up your pen, and write to my dictation. You're going to make a statement to the effect that you killed a detective, and that you are paying me forty thousand pounds as the price of my silence."

"Never!" croaked Vine. "If I do that I shall put myself in your hands—"

"If you don't do it, I'll take up this telephone and ring up Scotland Yard!" said Jimmy Brent in cold, decisive tones.

The battle was won. Marcus Vine wrote the incriminating letter, and signed it. Jimmy Brent placed it in his pocket with the money, and then he backed to the door.

"Gentlemen, I will bid you good night!" he said, bowing. A mocking contemptuous smile curved about his lips as he closed the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

EDWARD WRIGHT could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes, when next day Jackie Craddock handed him twenty thousand pounds. And the detective did not think fit to tell him how the money had been obtained.

A welcome donation of twenty thousand pounds from an anonymous person was also gratefully received by one of the big London hospitals.

Look out next week for a bonzer yarn of Tails-Up  
 Drake in his battle against Red Garsen. Thrills and  
 Drama in the Air cram this grand yarn, chums.



**HUNDRED PER CENT. PERCY, the Sell-Anything Kid, ||| Our Comical Sales  
Here Again in Another COMPLETE MIRTHQUAKE! ||| Star's Latest Hit!**



**Percy's Pyjama Procession Came to a Full Stop when Dynamite Dan flung his Sleep Bomb. Loud Snores Arose on all Sides.**

### A Pyjama Proposition.

**P**ERCY BODKIN shielded his eyes from the glare and said, "Good heaventh, Mithter Bogg! We'll never thell thothething! They'll keep people awake at night if they wear 'em!"

"That's jest the grit in the beeswax!" answered J. Bertillon Bogg, hastily covering up the pair of lurid pyjamas he had been showing to Percy. "The manufacturers of these things have got ten thousand pairs on their hands and they can't get rid of them nohow."

The Fixit Corporation Inc., of which organisation J. Bertillon Bogg was the head, guaranteed to sell, buy, or do anything in a business way which ordinary merchants and tradesmen found impossible. But those pyjamas were a tough proposition, even for Fixit! Their colouring was so vivid that it almost made one's eyes water.

"Well," murmured Percy thoughtfully, "we might be able to thell one or two pairth to people thuffering from colour-blindneth—but ten thouthand!"

"Yeh!" barked J. Bertillon Bogg, puffing smoke from his cigar like a steam engine, and striding back and forth across the office carpet restlessly. "You've sure lisped a bibful, Perce! I guess the only thing to do is to advertise them, then, and—"

J. Bertillon Bogg's remarks were arrested by the sudden blare of a band from outside the office. He strode over to the office window and looked out almost mechanically. His eyebrows went up in surprise.

"Why, jumpin' cranberries! Them guys has got

our pyjamas on—or ding my sides they're the dead image!"

Percy Bodkin hurried over to the window and followed his boss's astonished gaze. In the street outside, a procession of dark-skinned, luridly dressed men, marched behind a thumping brass band. In their centre, rode a young man on a horse, dressed even more brilliantly than the rest.

"Oh that!" grinned Percy. "That'th—I mean, that's the Prince of Izatzo, and his bodyguard from Izatzo—one of those little Latin American States where they have a revolution every Friday before breakfast. He is the heir to the throne of Izatzo and he's over here on a visit. He always travels about with a young army like that, so the papers say, to impress people."

"But look at their uniforms!" said J. Bertillon Bogg. "They're almost exactly like our pyjamas!"

The head of Fixit Corporation and his youthful assistant watched the pompous procession pass out of sight, then J. Bertillon Bogg slapped his thigh with a decisive gesture.

"That's given me a notion! We'll have a procession like that, with men dressed in our pyjamas to advertise 'em! You see the idea, Perce? Once we've had our parade people'll think of our pyjamas every time they see the Prince of Izatzo wanderin' around town with his boy-friends—he'll be a free advert! An' we'll have a band leadin' the procession and you in pyjamas on horseback just like the real prince!"

"Me, Mithter Bogg?"



"Why not? You're my chief salesman, ain't you? You deserve to have the place of honour, Perce."

Percy gulped. Somehow he had not quite conceived of himself taking an active part in this proposed procession. Percy Bodkin was a modest youth, and the idea of exposing himself to public view in those dazzling pyjamas startled him.

"But, Mithter Bogg—"

"Shucks! Say no more, Perce. I understand. You're overwhelmed by my choice of you to take a leading part in this advertising campaign! But I ain't conceited! I know you can carry this through much better than I could myself—an' that's why I'm standin' aside and leavin' it to you. I'll 'phone up and engage those men for the procession right now—guess we'll have a white horse for you to ride on—and say! but it'd be a great idea to have pyjamas on the horse too, wouldn't it now?"

Before Percy could open his mouth to protest, J. Bertillon Bogg had dashed over to the telephone and was rattling off orders into the mouth piece like a machine-gun. Percy made a gesture of despair. There are difficult moments in the life of a salesman.

### Bombed to Sleep Procession.

WHILE the arrangements for J. Bertillon Bogg's Pyjama Procession were proceeding rapidly to completion, a certain gentleman, known as Dynamite Dan, sat in conference with his gang.

Dan and his boys were in the cellar, down by the riverside, which they used as their headquarters, and where Dan spent his spare time manufacturing bombs—for Dan was one of the best bomb makers in the business.

"We ain't gotter bump dis guy orf den?" queried Soapy Ed, Dan's right-hand man.

"Nope," answered Dan, admiring a small, circular bomb he held in his fist. "Instructions is to kidnap him without bloodshed an' make dis guy sign a paper sayin' he renounces de throne of Izatzo. No violence—just persuasion."

"But how're you gonna pull it orf?" asked another member of the gang. "I've heard tell this here prince wanders about town with a brass band and a bodyguard two or three hundred strong."

"Pipe de bomb," exclaimed Dynamite Dan, holding up the circular object in his hand. "It's this what's gonna do de trick. Full of chloroform and ether—enough to send him an' his bodyguard fast asleep in two jiffs when it explodes among 'em. All we gotta do is collect his slumberin' majesty from their midst and fetch him here in the car."

Dynamite Dan's gang grinned.

"Trust you to work it all out, Dan," said Soapy. "Sure the bomb'll work?"

"I made two—case the first doesn't explode," replied Dan, taking another bomb from his pocket and showing it to them. "But I guess the first'll be okay. All we gotta do is wait round some corner until the Izatzo boys smear the landscape an' then heave the bomb into 'em!"

"But you ain't never seen this here prince and his bodyguard," protested the fourth man present; "how're you—"

"Aw-boloney, you big cheese! Ain't you read the papers?" replied Dan uncivilly. "These guys wear uniforms what makes horses shy and motor-buses backfire! You can see 'em comin' a mile off! We'll recognise 'em right enough!"

After this brief lapse into the underworld, let us return to the offices of The Fixit Corporation Inc. J. Bertillon was a swift worker and already a hundred or so men had been hired, together with a brass band, and they were lining-up, even now, outside the offices of the celebrated sales-agency. Each man

was clothed in a vivid suit of pyjamas and on his back was a notice: *Buy a pair of Morpheus Pyjamas! All the rage!*

Percy Bodkin also wore a suit of these dazzling pyjamas, but he had persuaded J. Bertillon that a notice was not necessary on his back, as all the others had them. J. Bertillon, however, insisted that Percy should ride on an ancient nag, hired from a nearby livery stable, and had had this same charger decorated about the legs with two pairs of pyjama trousers.

"I guess that's fine," J. Bertillon said gleefully, viewing the contingent of Pyjameers. "If that don't fetch the public, my instincts as an advertiser are at fault. We'll make those sleep-suits popular yet! Go to it, Perce!"

J. Bertillon Bogg gave a flourishing signal to the band. They commenced to play a march as aggressive as the pyjamas they wore, and the procession marched off.

In ten minutes they had disorganised the traffic at two junctions, caused a sensitive horse to bolt and attracted hordes of small boys who yelled derisive remarks. Crowds collected on the curb to cheer and boo them as they passed, and Percy Bodkin's ears felt as though they were on fire.

But the procession was to terminate suddenly and in a strange manner. Fate lurked in a nearby car in the shape of four villainous-looking gentry who peeped out at the approaching spectacle.

"That must be 'em!" grunted Dynamite Dan, the sleep-bomb poised in his hand.

"I guess that'll be the prince," said Soapy Ed. "That young feller on the horse, with a face like a half-eaten turnip!"

Dynamite Dan waited for the critical moment, while the whole gang drew handkerchiefs over their mouths and noses, and then, as the leading part of the band passed, tossed the bomb lightly into their midst.

It fell at the feet of a large gentleman walloping the big drum with great gusto, and he was kicking up such a din that the dull thud of its explosion passed unnoticed. A pungent smell seeped up from below. The man with the big drum arrested his drum-sticks in mid-air and indulged in a huge yawn. A second later the rest of the band yawned in sympathy and their pace began to flag.

"Juzgonavforrywinks," mumbled the man with the big drum; then, using his instrument as a pillow, he laid down on the ground and dropped off immediately into a sound sleep.

The rest of the band seemed to think this a good idea. As one man, they dropped their instruments, and laid down beside him. A chorus of snores, sounding like the distant rumbling of thunder, rose from the ground.

Percy fought hard against the drowsiness that was overtaking him. By a sheer effort of will he looked about him, to find people on every side settling themselves down for a snooze. Then Percy's vision became blurred and he lapsed into a semi-conscious state.

Subconsciously, he was aware of being lifted from the ground and carried, it seemed, to a car, for presently came a buzzing sound like an automobile engine—but that, of course, might have been only the concerted snores of the sleepers around.

### Dynamite Dan Dozes.

WHEN Percy Bodkin came round he thought he was viewing four gargoyles in a nightmare, but soon it became evident that these faces were the property of human beings, and that he was not dreaming.



"Hello!" said Percy. "Where am I?"

"Youse in de clutches of Dynamite Dan an' his gang!" answered a gruff voice. "We ain't gonna hurtcher—so long's you do what we say, see? If you don't—"

Dynamite Dan picturesquely left the threat to the imagination, but gave a gentle hint by sticking a long black automatic under Percy Bodkin's nose.

Percy saw that he was in some sort of a cellar. Just over there was a bench strewn untidily with bottles of chemicals, and there was a round bomb there recently taken from Dynamite Dan's pocket for safety—for his first sleep-producing bomb had been quite successful.

"I don't understand," lisped Percy. "What do you want me to do? How did I get here? I remember—"

"How you got here don't matter at all!" answered Dan. "You do as I say or I'll show you what!"

He thrust a large official-looking document under Percy's nose and jabbed a pen into his fist.

"Sign on the dotted line!"

"Oh!" said Percy with sudden inspiration. "I

An expression of surprise came into Percy's face. Before answering he glanced at the paper he had signed and read: *I, the Prince of Izatzo, hereby renounce, abdicate and otherwise chuck the throne of Izatzo. Signed . . .* The light of understanding came into Percy's eyes.

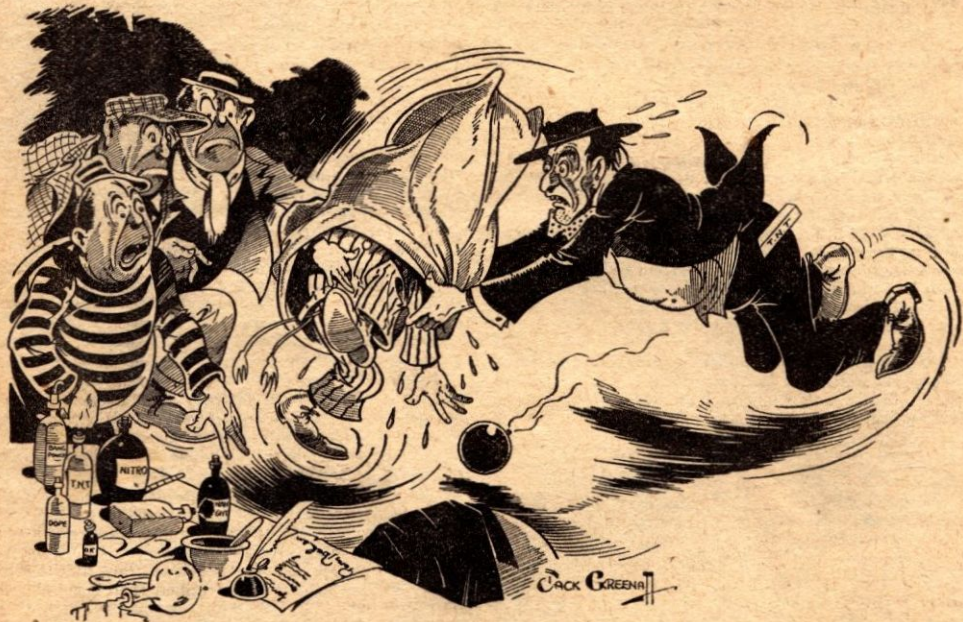
"Oh!" he said cheerfully. "You've made a miltake! You thought we were the Printh and hith bodyguard. We were jutht advertithing a new line of pyjamath!"

"What!"—Dynamite Dan looked as though he were on the verge of an apoplectic fit.

The cheerfulness faded from Percy Bodkin's face. Instead of laughingly admitting the joke was on him, Dynamite Dan extended two claw-like hands towards Percy's throat and moved forward ominously.

"I've made a mistake, have I!" he gritted through clenched teeth. "Well, if I have, it ain't gonna do you no good it ain't! I'm gonna pound you to a pulp! We'll bash you till—"

Percy had already heard enough. The lisping young salesman let out a startled yell and dived clear of those nasty, grasping hands in the nick of time,



**GETTING THE SACK.**—Stealthily Dynamite Dan crept up behind Percy and whipped the sack over the salesman's head. In his surprise Percy let go of the gas bomb.

thee! You're one of thothe autograph hunterth! But you needn't have taken all thith trouble."

Percy applied pen to paper and signed, "Percival Bodkin" with an elaborate flourish at the bottom of the document, then he added the letters "A.S.S." behind his name.

"Bodkin!" grunted Dan suspiciously. "That don't sound like the name of a wop prince. What's them letters mean? Prince?"

"Printh? Of courthe not! That meanth Athothiate Thalethman'th Thothtiety!"

"Salesman!!! Say, wait a minute!" roared Dynamite. "Ain't you the Prince of Izatzo?"

at the same time butting Dan violently in the tummy.

But the other three members of the gang sprang instantly to their chief's assistance. Percy dodged them wildly back and forth across the narrow cellar, searching frantically for some weapon with which to protect himself. Almost automatically his fingers closed round the small, circular bomb on the bench.

"Thtand back!" he screamed, waving the bomb threateningly before him.

The gesture arrested his attackers suddenly. But Percy had not reckoned with Dynamite Dan, who had by now scrambled to his feet and was behind

(Continued on page 26.)



**SP-E-E-ED! WITH SOMETHING LIKE A WHZZZZZZ! A Fascinating Vision of Future Travel that May Become a Possibility a Few Years Hence. Take a Trial Trip Below, Chums, and See How You Like It! GRIPPING SCIENTIFIC CHAT.**



**A Thousand Miles An Hour!**

WELL, and why not? What's more, we don't mean just a speed, but a distance of a thousand miles covered in the hour. Mad? We don't think so; a hundred years ago, a speed of sixty miles an hour was incredible, but it soon arrived. A long way between that and a thousand, you'll say! Very likely; but once we have got the machine to travel at the speed, the distance soon follows. We shall see.

First of all, what does such a speed look like? Seventeen miles in a minute, nearly fifteen hundred feet per second. Well, a howitzer shell is a slower travelling kind than a gun shell, and its muzzle velocity would be about a thousand to fifteen hundred feet per second. A thousand miles an hour would mean that any part of the earth could be reached from London within, say, thirty hours. The Bachelet Solenoid Flyer might do it. Just imagine it is the year 1990 and you are going for a trip aboard it.

WHEN the orange light glows, passengers will sit well back in their seats, at the same time firmly grasping the rail in front and bracing the feet against the sockets provided. This position must

be maintained until the light turns to green. The car will in no circumstances start until all passengers have complied with this request."

Well, we are off on a run to Glasgow in the Solenoid Flyer from Southampton, and the notice you have just read is prominently displayed in front of you. The car is quite roomy, not unlike a large saloon-bus of the old nineteen-thirties. The seats are more like sockets; they are of a special spongy material, similar to sponge rubber. There is no sign of illumination, merely a soft green radiance everywhere. No windows, though; that's a disappointment, but you can go down to the tail end to experience the thrill of seventeen-miles-a-minute travel if you like. We shall go, of course, but they say nobody can stand it for more than half-a-minute. Funny, that! What about the pilot? Well, he doesn't do it, either—the car is quite automatic; he can stop it if necessary, but only at stations. Even then, headquarters can override his decisions and bring him further along if they wish.

Hallo! There goes the light! It's turned to an orange glow. Sit back, grasp the rail, brace your feet—and wait. Feel the pressure at your back? We're off, with a swishing noise as the roller skids, on which we've been standing, carry the weight for a split second. Then the repulsion magnet lifts us into mid-air and the giant solenoid rings get to work. In eight seconds we are at half-speed; one—two—three—four, there's the green light. Now we can sit up! But as we are in a stopping car, the orange light will glow for Oxford in a matter of three-and-a-half minutes. So that we can have a good look round, we shall get off when we pull into Birmingham. That will be in a matter of ten minutes, as we generally have to stop in Oxford for a couple of minutes. There's the orange light!

Now you feel it—eh? Don't forget you have been hurtling along at a thousand miles an hour and that you've got to be stopped in what seems to be a few yards. Actually, it takes eight miles to stop comfortably; that's half-a-minute. Ah, here we are; very nicely, too. But we are just gliding through; no passengers or mail, so off we go again. Let's get up, when the green light goes on, and take our look out of the tail windows. Right—come on; bet you won't look out more than half-a-minute!

The windows are shuttered; this wheel draws them to one side. Now, then—open! It's a marvellous sight, but it certainly gives you a very queer feeling down in the inner regions. Perhaps it's the solenoid rings, for we pass through fifteen every

second—you can't see much landscape, can you? But, look, there's the Stratosphere Mail off; he's a good deal slower than we are here, but he can whack us when up in his own bit of the sky. D'you know we've exceeded the half-minute? It doesn't seem so bad, after all. But there's a gong; they know we aren't in our seats, and it means the light will go for Birmingham. Just in time!

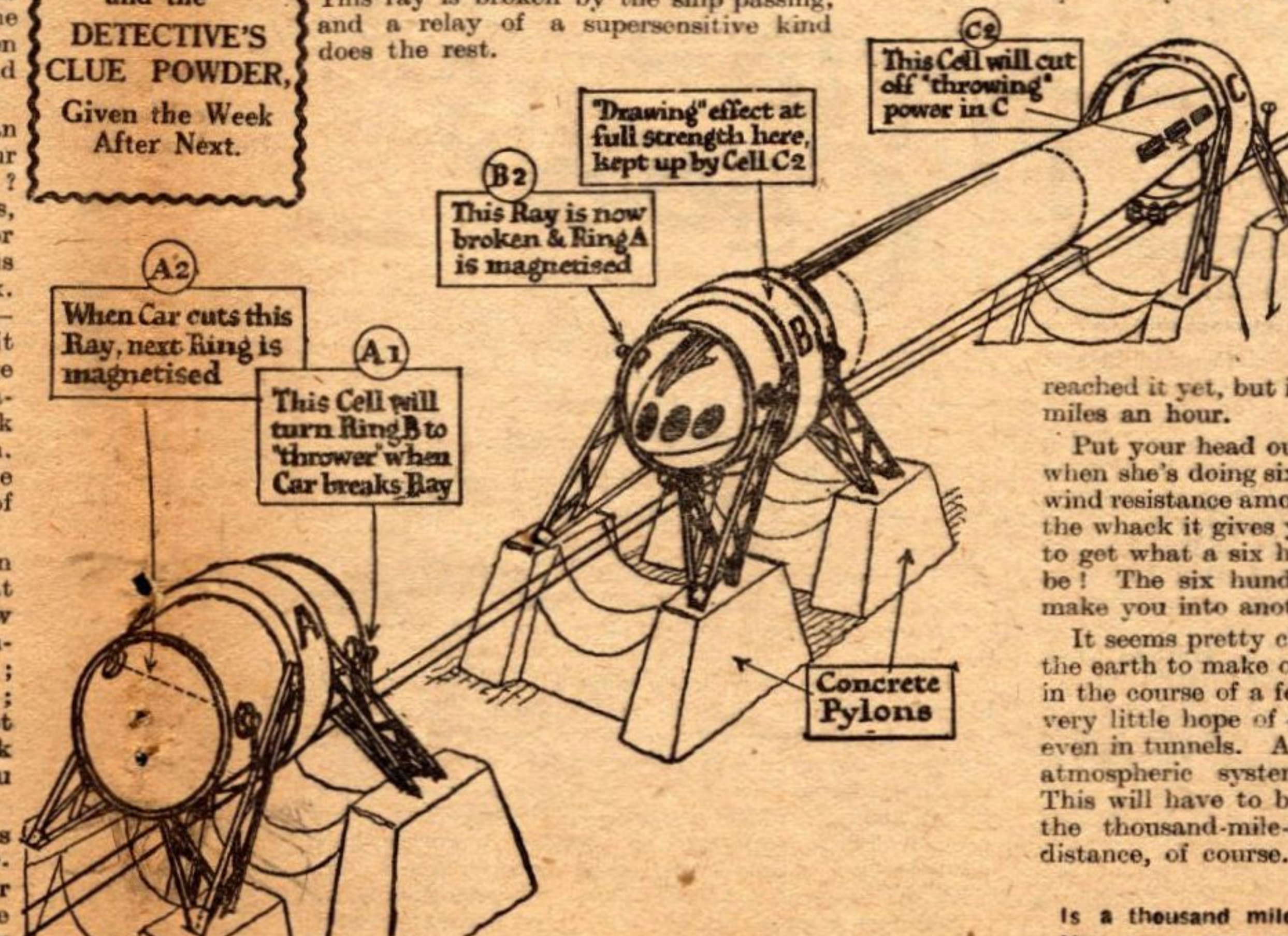
We'll get out here and see something of the working of the system, though you can't see a great deal more than you can by the main tracks across country.

A few words here about the principles involved in this new system of transport would be interesting. It is an old principle, based on the action of a coil on a bar, or cylinder of iron. It was first thought of by Bachelet, a Frenchman, whose car had a track made of magnets above which it was suspended. It was pulled and pushed alternately by solenoid rings, which are just coils (in our case, of aluminium ribbon), through which strong currents are passed as required. For the technicians, here's a small diagram to show how the thing works. Observe that the car is always within the field of at least two of the solenoids, one shooting, the other attracting, and its terrific forward speed, once attained, smooths out any sensation of jerky motion. Occupying about half the length of the car is a tubular, cobalt-steel permanent magnet.

The huge speed keeps the ship from dropping, and thirty impulses, fifteen pushes and fifteen pulls every second keep up the motion. Only when speed has dropped to about half do the big repulsion magnets underneath come into action.

Switching on the coils and reversing the current is done by light-sensitive cells, two to each coil, with an invisible ray to play on them. This ray is broken by the ship passing, and a relay of a supersensitive kind does the rest.

Look out for Wonderful Surprises on the Way, Chums—A Grand Series of Scientific Chats and Brand New Stories of Adventure and Thrills. Don't Miss the AMATEUR SLEUTH'S SECRET MESSAGE DUPLICATOR—Given Next Week—and the DETECTIVE'S CLUE POWDER, Given the Week After Next.



There is a very thick aluminium floor running the whole length of the car. This is for lifting purposes at the stations. The car itself is made of an alloy of beryllium and magnesium, with a trace of copper, the lightest alloy we have so far. A full complement of forty passengers with their luggage allowance actually weighs more than the car itself, with all its length of 120 feet. The magnet cylinder weighs about a third of the whole amount, which is 8,000 pounds altogether, say 3½ tons.

The big fans on these bridges are to absorb the terrific air blast at our tail, which would pick up a large car and throw it a hundred yards away. They have cut down the tail-blast enormously in the newer ships, though, and we never hear of accidents now.

All the time we've been talking, Ariel has been making for Glasgow. It's now—let's see—10-35; she's just pulling out of Edinburgh! This is the time-table: Southampton, depart 10-0; Oxford, 10-6-30; Birmingham, 10-12-00; Manchester, 10-19-00; Carlisle, 10-28-00; Edinburgh, 10-35-00; Glasgow, arrive 10-38. Sounds pretty slick, you'll agree! Four hundred and twenty miles in thirty-eight minutes, including stops; that makes an average of 663 miles an hour. Deducting thirteen minutes for stops, we get exactly a thousand, which means that we must touch about twelve hundred in between.

When we get to Glasgow we shall get a chance to see something of the working of the big Stratosphere 'planes; they say that in the latest type 1,500 miles an hour is a normal speed. Keeping the hull from overheating through air-friction is the chief problem. After a certain speed is passed, the wind doesn't cool; it heats up the metal surface, just by friction. Almost like the shooting-stars!

Meteorites coming in from outer space hit our atmosphere at any speed from ten miles a second up to fifty. We have seen them and checked their height at eighty miles up, and even there the air friction heats them to white heat and then vapourises the solid nickel and iron of which they are composed! That's what air will do, even in its thinnest and most rarefied form. What will it do to our seventeen-mile-a-minute outfit—when we have got it?

We don't know what the limit of possible speed in the air may be—we haven't reached it yet, but it may well be short of a thousand miles an hour.

Put your head out of the railway carriage window when she's doing sixty or so if you want to see what wind resistance amounts to! You'll have to multiply the whack it gives your face by much more than ten to get what a six hundred mile an hour wind would be! The six hundred mile breeze would instantly make you into another martyr to science!

It seems pretty clear we shall have to get right off the earth to make our thousand, and we shall do this in the course of a few years only from now. There's very little hope of doing anything like it on wheels, even in tunnels. And the drawback to the sort of atmospheric system described above is friction. This will have to be overcome to get anything near the thousand-mile-an-hour speed. Let alone the distance, of course.

Is a thousand miles an hour possible? Watch the Mag. for a chat on the way it may be accomplished.

THE RAILWAY OF THE FUTURE.—Where the Arrow Solenoid Line crosses the L.M.S. electric freight track from Glasgow.



# THRILLS!

In the Clouds and the Big Tent Tops! Gigantic Wonder Yarn of a Circus on Secret Service!



## DOOM to the FLYING CIRCUS

THE CIRCUS DAREDEVILS! Top o' the Bill for Fun and Thrills. Meet 'em Below in Another Exploit Against THE MENACE OF THE SCARRED HAND!

By H. WEDGWOOD BELFIELD.

"THE Jade Buddha," murmured Captain Storm. "It bears the worst of all the Chinese curses. And you say the Red Avenger is after it?"

Dick Derring, the boy acrobat of Sangster's Flying Circus, nodded. Two years before, when the Flying Circus had encompassed the fall of Chang the Mighty, he had taken the idol from Chang's city. Now Chang's son, Hsuan, had appeared as the Red Avenger and Dick, accompanied by his pal, Don Hawkins, had come to the *Hoang-Ho*, Captain Storm's vessel, for the Buddha.

The men of the Red Avenger had tracked them to the vessel, however, and a pitched battle ensued. Dick and Don escaped with the Buddha in their plane. They were brought down, however, in a desolate part of Spain and it was many hours before they could find any habitation.

They found a lonely inn at last, but while they were having a meal the landlord sent for the Civil Guard. They arrived and were about to place Dick and Don under arrest, when the Red Avenger's Chinks attacked the house.

Dick and Don managed to get outside to the car

of the *Guardia* captain. But the gate was closed . . . the Chinks were waiting . . . and behind, the Civil Guard were breaking from the inn.

### The Plunge To Peril.

DICK weighed up the chances in an instant. The Chinks waiting by the closed gate, with knives gleaming wickedly in their hands . . . Vulpez and his men crashing from the inn behind and carrying carbines . . . yellow man and Spaniard alike athirst for his and Don's blood . . . "Got to be the gate," Dick ground out. "Hang on, Don!"

He crouched over the steering wheel and slammed his foot down on the accelerator pedal. The crazy old car bucked viciously and then leapt like a living thing at the gate. A thrown knife came through the windscreen, slicing through the leather of Don's flying helmet. The second Chink was bunching himself for a leap—with a pantherish spring had gained the running board, clinging with one hand, while he swung a deadly-looking knife with the other.

But Don was there. He had found a spanner, and he slung it with deadly aim, straight at the snarling,



yellow face. It thudded squarely into the man's bared teeth, spoiling his aim, though it did not make him lose his hold of the car. He swung the knife again.

**Crash!** Ere the blade fell, the car had charged the closed gate like a battering-ram. Rusty wings and radiator crumpled up under the impact, but, somehow, the ancient vehicle held together, smashing its way through. There was a high-pitched cry from the Chink as a whirling plank caught him and flung him from the running-board; a hail of flying glass and chunks of wood; then they were through with the rough mountain-track, going left and right, before them.

To the left it dipped steeply, winding a tortuous path to the valley far below. Dick swung the wheel that way, realising that the old car was more likely to keep moving on a down grade.

Yells sounded behind them, punctuated by the sharp crack of carbines. The Civil Guard, however, were far from being crack shots, and the bullets whistled harmlessly overhead. With Dick's toe hard on the pedal, they went bumping and clattering down the precipitous mountain-track.

Dick gave a tight laugh.

"With luck, we're going to win through," he yelled jerkily. "Those beggars can scrap it out to a finish among themselves, and—crumbs!"

The front wheel struck a boulder, and the car bounced a foot into the air. It came down with a jolt that all but pitched the two lads into the roadway; then Dick whipped his foot off the accelerator pedal and slammed on the brakes as a hairpin bend showed ahead.

How he got the car round it he never knew. Her offside wheels scraped the grassy verge, and she heeled over to a dreadful angle; then she was careering down another fearsome strip, with the road zig-zagging like a twisted ribbon below, and, right above them now, the inn they had just left. And from the inn men were running, scrambling down the precipitous slope, sliding and slithering, with the evident intention of cutting them off.

The race wasn't over—not by a long chalk! For a man on foot, by risking his neck in a straight descent of the mountain-side, might easily beat a car compelled to stick to the twisting road.

Another hairpin. Round it with screaming brakes. On again, with an appalling racket, swooping across the track of the scrambling men—red-garbed servants of the Avenger! Another bend—a sharp crack somewhere in the chassis—and this time the old car, seeming as if she would shake herself to pieces, did not slacken speed to take it.

"Brakes bust!" howled Dick. "Get ready for a bump."

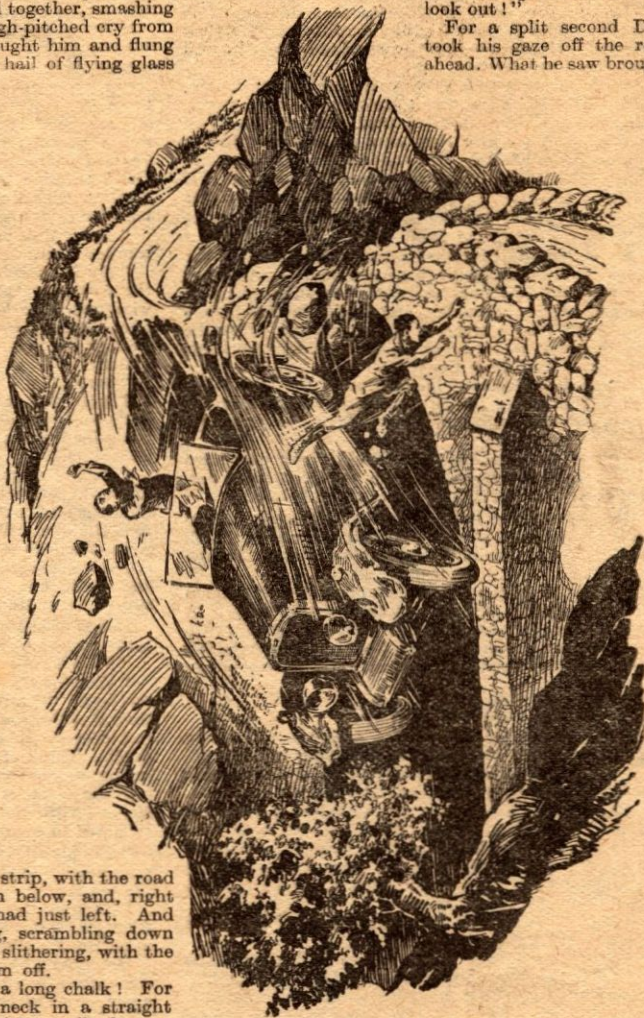
But there was no bump. More by luck than judgment, Dick brought the rocking vehicle round. Ahead, the road dipped more steeply than ever, its

stone-strewn surface inviting disaster; on the left there was only a low wall of loose stones between the road and an eighty-foot drop into a gorge where a mountain torrent raced.

Don flashed a glance up the slope where the men were running. Then he yelled a hoarse warning.

"Great powers! Look—look out!"

For a split second Dick took his gaze off the road ahead. What he saw brought



**PLUNGED FROM THE PRECIPICE.**—The car skidded, lurched sideways, and crashed through the wall of the bridge. As the machine went over Don leaped for the parapet.

a startled gasp to his lips. A great boulder, accompanied by an avalanche of smaller stones, was smashing down the hillside—with the three chinks who had dislodged it, watching from higher up the slope. They had timed things so cunningly that, fifty yards or so on, it would crash upon the car.

With the brakes gone, there was not a hope of avoiding the crash, unless—



Dick saw a chance—and took it. His foot jabbed at the accelerator pedal and gave the car every whiff of gas she would take. Nobly the ancient vehicle responded to the call for speed, but faster that leaping boulder came bounding down upon them.

Its shadow seemed to hang over them; the thunder of its progress deafened them; and then Dick drew a deep breath of relief. They were through—by the very skin of their teeth. But—no! A smaller boulder, bouncing like a rubber ball, struck the car's tail, slewing the rear wheels towards the wall and the gorge beyond.

With masterly skill Dick swung her straight again, and then the worn tyres, innocent of any tread, played him false. Another skid, and no chance of rectifying it, for now they were on a narrow bridge spanning the chasm. The car lurched sideways, her tail coming round to smash through the wall as if it had not been there; for an instant the back wheels spun over space and the car tilted sickeningly.

"Jump!" shrieked Don.

He suited the action to the word, even as the car went over. His hands fastened on the weakened parapet, but the stones broke away under his gripping fingers. Again he made a clutch, digging his fingers frantically into a niche in the stonework. Then he was dangling, with his legs kicking over space and his chin on a level with the roadway.

Clinging there, Don looked round for Dick. No sign of him on the bridge; and eighty feet below the water swirled in yellow foam round the wreckage of the car.

Cold fear clutched at Don's heart. Dick was down there, trapped perhaps beneath the overturned car, and there was nothing he could do to help him.

He had not seen the boy acrobat's lithe figure leap from the ancient car as it struck the water. Dick had dived deep, swimming under water to the bridge, out of sight . . .

Running footfalls jerked Don back to a realisation of his own peril. The Chinks were on the bridge. A yellow hand gripped his wrist, yanked him back into the roadway. Before he could rise to his feet, something heavy crashed down on his head, and Don was out to the wide!

### Castle Sinister.

DON opened his eyes slowly, conscious of nothing at first except a furious throbbing in his head. It was a minute before the memory of the end of that hectic chase came back to him.

He turned his head and saw that he lay on a low settee in a great, tapestry-hung hall—a room that gave him the impression of the banquetting-chamber of some feudal castle. A yard away, two men were talking, and the sight of them cleared Don's brain as wind blows away smoke.

They were the Red Avenger—son of Chang—and Kung the Killer.

With some half-formed purpose in his mind, he heaved himself up, only to flop back helplessly as thin, strong chains tightened on his wrists and ankles.

At the sound the Red Avenger whirled round. He was wearing the mask of red material that covered all his features except his yellow, tigerish eyes, and they regarded Don with a faintly mocking smile.

"We meet again, bird-man," he said sibilantly. "You wonder where you are, eh? You have doubtless heard of Don Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza, one of the grandees of old Spain. No? Well, Don Antonio was chief inquisitor in his time. His collection of instruments of torture, which he amassed in his castle here, was unique; and his descendants have taken a pride in adding to them. Unfortunately for them, they were driven from Spain during the

recent revolution, and the castle put up for sale. I bought it."

"Can't see what that's got to do with me," broke in Don.

The Red Avenger shrugged.

"The foreign devil may—in time," he hissed. "When the jade Buddha is mine, I shall permit myself the pleasure of watching you die—slowly. Kung here will not be disappointed a second time.

"When you've got the Buddha!" repeated Don tauntingly.

The Avenger's eyes flamed.

"You mean—your friend has it—and he escaped?" he snapped. With scarcely a pause he went on, softly, sibilantly: "It is well. He may for a little while evade pursuit, but assuredly the followers of the Scarred Hand will track him down ere nightfall. Dead or alive, they will bring him here—and the Buddha with him. And then—then can the world fear the vengeance of the Son of Chang."

"You think you can do what Chang couldn't?" taunted Don.

"My honourable father was but human," snapped the Avenger, "and it is human to err. Also, it is a wise man who learns by the errors of those before him. Chang trusted to the might of arms, yet he had that in his grasp which would have given him the victory."

"Sure?"

There was a purpose beneath Don's taunts. Sufficiently goaded, the Red Avenger might divulge the grim secret of the Buddha at which Cap'n Storm had hinted.

"Yes, foreign devil." Hsuan jerked himself forward, yellow eyes aflame. "See I can read your mind like an open book. You would know of the jade Buddha. Well!" He laughed softly. "Where is the harm in telling you? Inside the jade Buddha is death—a death that will slay young and old, strong and weak, king and commoner; a death that will spread faster than wildfire."

Don caught his breath. A flicker of understanding came to him.

"Plague?" he whispered.

"Worse than the Black Death," smiled the Red Avenger. "Once the bacteriological cultures inside that Buddha are loosed—and neither fire nor water can destroy them—naught can stay the march of death. Think of it! It will stride across continents, laying waste countries and armies—striking terror into the hearts of all. And then will the Red Avenger strike—with the armies and the 'planes I have collected in a secret place."

"Sounds all right," nodded Don. "But what about your armies—yourself? How are you going to escape the plague?"

"That is the Buddha's second secret," said the Avenger, a mocking smile in his eyes. "Engraved upon the Buddha is—"

He paused, flinging back his head as a gong boomed somewhere in the depths of the house. It boomed again—a third time—

"They have returned," Hsuan hissed. "And since they dare not return without him I seek, they have brought with them the jade Buddha. Open the door, Kung."

Kung padded across to the wall, flinging aside some curtains and disclosing a massive oaken door behind it. He drew it open, and three servants, armed with great curved swords and wearing flowing red robes, slid into the room. Behind them came two others whom Don remembered having seen at the Inn of the Seven Sins. He craned his neck, but there was no sign of Dick.

"Where is he?" the Red Avenger snapped the question in his own language at the bigger of the two



last-comers; and the man, shaking at the knees, made a low obeisance.

"We have searched the gorge from end to end, master," he lisped. "There is no sign of him—no mark to show that he had scrambled out. That we swear, O lord of might. Perchance the foreign devil, and the sacred Buddha ye seek, lie at the bottom of the river—"

Don gave a defiant laugh—with a touch of relief in it.

"And perhaps they don't, Hsuan," he cried. "It doesn't do to count your chickens before they're hatched."

"Silence, spawn of evil!" barked the Avenger. He turned to his men, speaking in a swift Chinese dialect that Don could not follow.

Dropping back on to the divan, he stared at the opposite wall. Something like triumph gleamed in his eyes. He didn't seriously think that Dick was at the bottom of the river—Dick was a slippery customer, as he had shown a thousand times in the past. Wherefore, Don grinned, until—

His gaze came to rest on a window high up in the wall. Then he stiffened suddenly. Somebody was there, crouching on the broad sill. Don almost yelled his surprise.

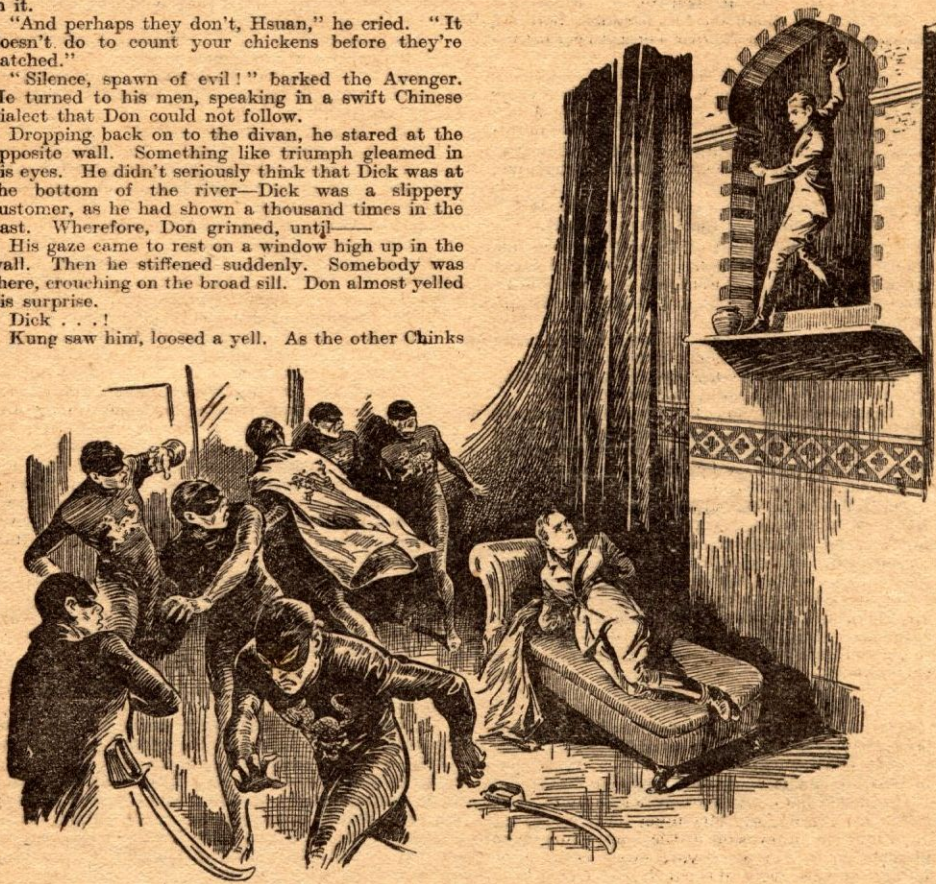
Dick . . . !

Kung saw him, loosed a yell. As the other Chinks

loosed upon the world a horror greater than the Red Avenger!

### Dick's "Big Bluff."

WITH the crashing fall of the Buddha, consternation descended upon the great hall. As if to escape the invisible death, the Red Avenger and his followers fled through the doorway, slamming the great, oaken door after them. Only



THE IDOL OF DEATH.—"You want the Buddha? Then have it!" cried Dick, and he swung back the idol. Knowing its deadly contents the Chinks scattered in terror.

whirled round, Dick straightened up, lifting something in his hands. His voice carried down to them in a laughing, ringing shout.

"You want the Buddha? Have it then!"

He swung the thing in his hands above his head. He did not know of the Terror he was loosing. The Avenger shrieked. Don shaped his lips for a yell that would tell Dick to hold his hand. But—too late!

The Buddha was in the air—dropping—. The Chinks were scattering, following the lead of the Avenger.

The thing struck the floor—shattered into a thousand pieces! And Don, dry-lipped, with a catch in his throat, told himself that Dick had unwittingly

Don stayed, held by those steel chains to the divan; and Don, knowing of the Death that was abroad, felt a chill of horror surge over him.

He realised that this meant the end of everything—of Hsuan's crazy scheme of world domination, of the world itself perhaps. For Hsuan had said that the antidote to the plague was the Buddha's second secret—and the Buddha was smashed! The plague unchecked, would sweep the world.

A ringing laugh brought Don's gaze back to the window. He saw Dick tensed for a leap. Before he could shout, his acrobat pal was in the air, leaping with outstretched arms for an immense chandelier that swung from the middle of the ceiling.



## MAGNETIC COMPASS



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He caught it, swung for a moment by his hands and leapt again, turning a complete somersault ere he landed on the top of a massive, oaken table. A lithe bound, and he was on the floor at Don's side.

"Here we are!" he grinned. "Looks like I've given those birds a bit of a scare. Guess they mistook me for a ghost."

Don said nothing. It wasn't the moment to tell Dick of the real reason for the Avengers' flight.

"If they'll only keep out of the way for a couple of minutes," Dick rattled on. "I'll have you out of those chains. Then we'll beat it before"—he paused—"before they rumble I'm not a ghost," grinned Dick.

Again Don said nothing. It was a disturbing thought that they might be the first two victims of the plague—that even now they might be drawing the death-dealing microbes into their systems.

But Dick appeared to be untroubled by such thoughts. He flung a quick glance round him and pounced upon a sword that had been flung away by one of the stampeding Chinks.

"Look out!"

Swinging the huge, curved weapon, he slashed at the steel chain securing Don's ankles. The razor-edged blade bit through the steel as though it had been rope. He slashed again and again, severing the chain twice within an inch of Don's wrists, so that the manacles fell away like cuffs with broken links. Then, as Don heaved himself to his feet, he coolly glanced round the room.

"I guess that's our way," he said, pointing to a lower window. "The moat's below. Feel ripe for a swim?"

"Sure! But—"

"Come on, then! I've got a notion those Chinks will be barging in soon, and we want to be out of the picture before they come!"

He smashed at the window with the borrowed sword, dealing mighty two-handed strokes that hacked clean through the frame. The castle echoed with the crash of falling glass and splintering wood, and distant shouts and the rapid beating of a gong added to the clamour.

"Up you go!"

Dick pushed his pal on to the broad sill, and Don glimpsed the dark waters of a moat some ten feet below. He did not hesitate. A leap, a splash, and the water was closing over his head. A moment later he was striking out for the opposite bank, and Dick had dropped with a second splash beside him.

They scrambled from the water together, and Don shot a glance over his shoulder at the grim pile of the castle, rising sheer from the water. He got a glimpse of a red-garbed figure rising above the battlements had yelled to Dick to run.

"Right-oh!" Dick pointed to a grove of trees, a couple of hundred yards away. "Make for those trees. I've got a van there—pinched it. With any sort of luck..."

They ran on. The van was there, drawn up beside a presentable imitation of a road. They tumbled into it, Dick behind the wheel and jabbing at the self-

starter; the engine fired, he crashed in the gears, and they were off.

"Done it!" grinned Dick. "Seasy! There's a town and a railway about five miles down the road. If our luck lasts, we'll be in Madrid in time to meet Hannibal Sangster and the rest of the crowd in the morning."

Don shuddered. He remembered... the silent death. Perhaps even now they were carrying the dread germ to spread the plague among their pals of the Flying Circus.

"Yes, you've done it," he remarked lugubriously.

Dick turned a grinning face on him.

"Sure! What's worrying you? You sound as if we're going to somebody's funeral. Thinking about that Buddha?"

"Yes. If you only knew—"

Dick laughed softly. "That's just the joke. I do! I heard every word of the Avenger's confession. You see, I was up at the window all the time—"

Don stared horrified.

"And you pitched the beastly thing—"

"Take a look at this, chum."

One of Dick's hands left the steering wheel, to rip open the Zip fastener of his flying suit. Something nestled inside. Don took a glance at it... gasped

"The Buddha! But—"

"Hsuan's going to be peeved when he finds out I dropped a flower-pot among 'em," grinned Dick. "I guess he'd be annoyed too, if he knew that I was hanging under the bridge all the time his killers were looking for me—that, instead of them trailing me, I trailed them to the castle."

It was some ten minutes later that they reached the railway station. Their drenched flying kit excited some comment, and there was a lengthy harangue with several men of the *Guardia* and two or three officials before they were allowed to board the train which, half-an-hour later, steamed into the station.

Luckily, they had their papers intact, enough money for a little judicious bribery, and, at last, they were shown to their carriage by a fussy little stationmaster. Dick hung out of the carriage window as the train pulled out of the station.

"Adios, señor. And—oh, crumbs!"

"What's up?" asked Don, as he slumped back into his seat.

"A couple of the Avenger's crowd coming in at one gate, and old Vulpez at the other," jerked Dick. "And—" He thrust his head through the window again as a chorus of yells came from the station they were leaving behind. "Glory be! There's a scrap started. Vulpez is trying to arrest the Chinks, and—I hope it keeps him busy for a few hours," he added, sinking back into his corner with a grin. "Next stop Madrid, old son."

### The Threat.

THEY reached Madrid without mishap and, since they were still eighteen hours ahead of the Flying Circus, put up at a quiet hotel. It was eight o'clock by the time they had made a meal, and by nine the pair of them were sound asleep in the room they shared.

They slept the round of the clock.

Sunshine was streaming into the room when Dick awoke and reached out for his watch, which he had placed on the table beside the bed. It was not there!

Two minutes later he discovered that Don's watch had vanished too. Also their wallets and the whole of their loose cash. And—the jade Buddha!

"The Avenger?" breathed Don.

Dick shook his head.

"No, I reckon not. The Avengers wouldn't stay



# HORNBY

## SPEED BOAT WEEK

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# HORNBY SPEED BOATS

to empty our pockets; they'd take the Buddha and clear." But we've got to get it back before anything happens," he muttered.

They dressed and went downstairs, where they interviewed the manager. He was a voluble little Spaniard who wagged his hands excitedly on hearing that they had been robbed. He took down a list of the things that were missing—a list from which Dick omitted the jade Buddha—inspected the room and interrogated the whole of the staff. The result of his investigations was exactly nothing, and he suggested calling in the police.

In the midst of their investigations, the Flying Circus arrived, making a spectacular flight over the city; and Dick and Don drove in a car through streets packed with cheering crowds to the meadow where the big tent was to be pitched.

Dick grinned as he saw the crowds of reporters and cameramen.

"Fat hope we've got of a quiet word with the boss," he growled.

As a matter of fact, it was not until three hours later, when the work of erecting the big tent was well under way, that they managed to corner the great Hannibal Sangster.

"Saw you were here an' so I guessed everything was O.K.," he said, mopping his forehead. "Got that perishing idel, I reckon?"

"Got it—and lost it again," nodded Dick.

The showman's usually cheery face knit into a frown as they told him of their adventures—darkened to a scowl when he heard of the Buddha's deadly secret.

"What are you doing about it?" he snapped.

"We want a few more hours off, boss. We'll give you our word we'll be back for the opening show to-night. If it's an ordinary hotel-thief who's pinched

the Buddha, it's an even chance he's got rid of it already—to some curio dealer in the city. So Don and I thought of going the round of the shops, and—"

He stopped. From outside came a sudden shout in a voice that the pals recognised as belonging to Jerry the Clown.

Something in the shout sent them running into the next cabin, where they found Jerry looking a little white and shaken, and pointing to a quivering knife with its point buried a good inch in the table. "Some rat of a Spanish onion slung that at me," he bellowed.

Dick shook his head. "That's not a Spanish knife, it's—"

He gripped the red haft and tugged the knife from the table; a piece of paper transfixed by the point fluttered to the floor, and he picked it up. "Thought so! A little reminder from the Avenger."

There was writing on the paper. His gaze travelled over the closely-written words:—

*Last night you tricked me, foreign devils. I bow my head to your cunning. But the arm of Hsuan, son of Chang, is long. Disaster, that will resound throughout the world, will overtake the Flying Circus at its performance to-night, unless the Buddha is in my hands ere then. One of the Scarred Hand waits on the steps of the church in the Calle del Arsenal as the clock strikes five. You will hand the Buddha to him, and, take heed—trickery will not serve you twice.*

Dick drew a deep breath. An ultimatum! Four o'clock already, and disaster for the Flying Circus if the Buddha was not handed over at five!

How can Dick and Don get back the Buddha? What terrible disaster has the Red Avenger planned? Don't miss next week's stupendous incidents, chaps.



**CAUGHT NAPPING** (Continued from page 17.)  
him. Dan reached stealthily for an old sack which lay nearby on the cellar floor. He opened the mouth of it and suddenly whipped it over Percy's head.

"*You! Ow! Goooooglooph!*" His astonished yells sank swiftly to a subdued gasping inside the sack. In the excitement, however, the bomb was knocked clean out of Percy's hand, and it exploded with a dull thud on the stone floor of the cellar.

"Quick! Tie him up before that blamed bomb—*Yhhrrrrrrrr!*" Dynamite Dan's sentence was suspended suddenly to accommodate a yawn. He tied the mouth of the sack as securely as he could, fighting against the sleep which was overcoming him. Dan cursed, but the chloroform had him in its grip. He slipped wearily to the ground, his mutterings lapsed into a sleepy protest and then merged imperceptibly into a snore.

Percy realised suddenly that nobody was holding him at all. What was that snorting noise? Snoring! Yes! They were asleep!

The whole truth of the matter came to Percy in a flash. Those bombs sent people to sleep!

Percy considered the matter carefully for a moment. He felt for his handkerchief, covered his lips and nostrils, and began systematically to grope for the mouth of the sack. When he found it, it was the work of a moment to undo it, for Dynamite Dan had been overcome before he could tie it securely. Percy climbed out, and as he had guessed the four crooks were slumbering peacefully. He found the door, a flight of stone steps, and then emerged into the sweet upper air to take a deep breath.

As luck would have it, a policeman was the first person he set eyes on.

"Quick. Crookth! Anarchithth! Down in the thellar!"

Percy hastily lisped out the whole story and then descended again to the depths followed by the policeman, whom he had warned against the fumes. Alas! In the moment of triumph misfortune came upon Percy. He tripped over Dynamite Dan's prone form and fell sprawling into the cellar. In a moment he was up again, but he had dropped his handkerchief. Hastily yelling an explanation to the policeman he clapped his hand over his mouth and rushed into the

upper air. Too late! He had inhaled some of the fumes and felt the sleepiness overtaking him.

Summoning every effort he hailed a passing taxi. "Fixit Corporation—can't keep awake—tell Mithter Bogg . . ."

Percy Bodkin stumbled into the taxi and fell fast asleep on the floor.

**P**ERCY must have slept several hours, for when he awoke on the settee in J. Bertillon Bogg's office it was approaching evening.

Percy sat up and blinked around. He half opened his mouth to say something when he suddenly became aware of another person in the office. A young man dressed in a uniform which was strangely reminiscent of those dreadful pyjamas.

"Prince Alfredo of Izatzo," J. Bertillon Bogg said in answer to Percy's questioning glance. "Come to thank you for catchin' them anarchists. The police informed him as soon as they got them in the lock-up! And also," went on J. Bertillon, with glee, "to sell me the uniforms of his bodyguard. I'm going to have them slightly altered and sold as pyjamas—our stock's runnin' low!"

"But—"  
"You see," said the Prince, "I shall not need them any more. The dastardly Government has sold my country to the Brazilians to build a greyhound track on it."

"But the pyjamath," spluttered Percy. "You're not thelling them really, Mithter Bogg!"

"Selling 'em! Say! I've just given the manufacturers another order for ten thousand more. The first lot's nearly gone—all the drapers in town is buyin'. I've just heard from the police about those sleep bombs! I didn't know nuth'n about it before—and once the public gets a craze there's no stoppin' 'em! T'ain't my fault if the newspaper goes and prints big headlines about our pyjama inducin' sleep! Everybody thought it was them."

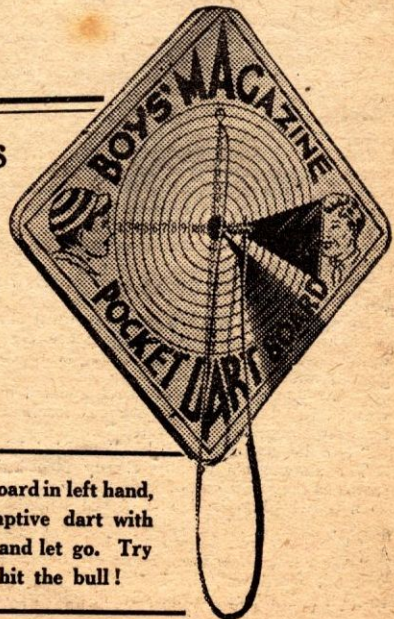
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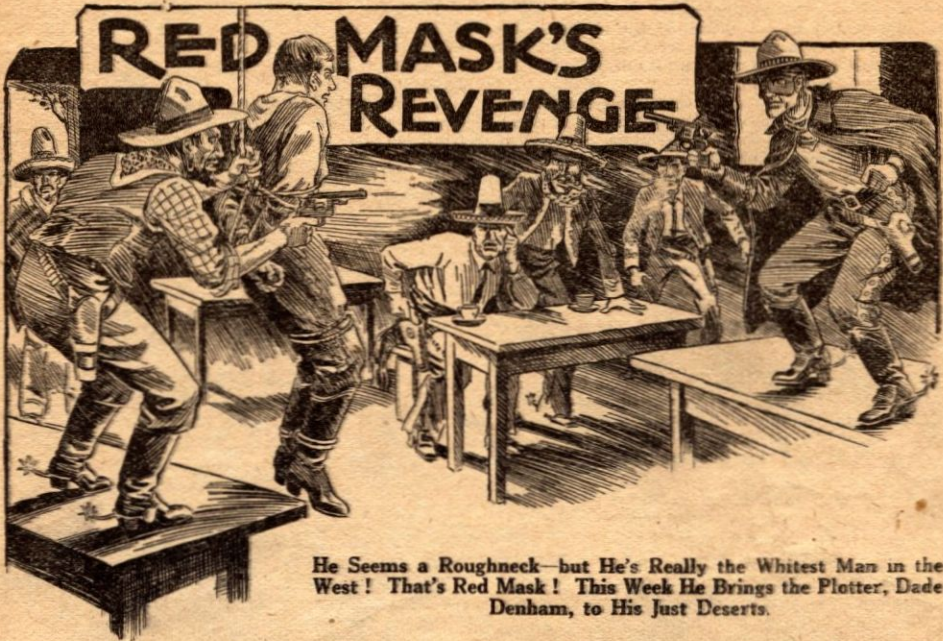
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Hold Board in left hand,  
pull captive dart with  
right—and let go. Try  
to hit the bull!



# THE MASKED MYSTERY MAN IN MEXICO! Grand Long Complete Tale of the Boys of the Bar-Eight Ranch, Chums!



He Seems a Roughneck—but He's Really the Whitest Man in the West! That's Red Mask! This Week He Brings the Plotter, Dade Denham, to His Just Deserts.

## The Fighting Twins.

RIDING furiously through the night, Jack Jakers, foreman of the Bar-Eight Ranch, strained his ears for sounds of pursuit.

Through the wild tattoo of his own horse's hoofs, the creaking of saddle leather and jingle of spurs, he heard another sound, like a muffled drum beat rolling through the night; and he knew it was the hoof-beats of more than a score of riders—the worst gang in the West.

"I reckon they're follering me," the fighting foreman gritted.

He had just made an audacious raid upon Dade Denham's ranch. Ostensibly a peaceful rancher, the huge, black-bearded Dade Denham was in reality the secret power behind the rustler gang that had menaced and plundered the Pecos Valley so long. But he had been too cunning, so far, to be forced into the open.

He had got a certain young Westerner in his power, and had used the young man's daring and enterprise, had made him chief of his border bandits. An atmosphere of mystery, that had been built up around this border chief, had served Dade Denham's purpose well. Señor Red Mask was the man everyone held to account for the rustling.

And Señor Red Mask was the Bar-Eight foreman's twin brother, the dead spit of him, so alike that they could not be told apart.

It was to rescue his brother, Jerry Jakers, that the fighting foreman had raided the Twin Spot Ranch. And he had succeeded in getting his brother away, just when Dade Denham and his villainous gang had been torturing him, for Señor Red Mask had turned against his cunning and evil master.

Now Jack Jakers saw that his brother, thus far lying inert across the saddle, had opened his eyes. The night air and heady rush of riding had revived him after the torture.

"You, Jack?" he breathed. "But—Dade Denham, and that half-breed skunk..."

"I fixed 'em," said the fighting foreman grimly. He had, indeed; when he had leaped from the balcony on to his brother's torturers, he had taken the hanging lamp with him and had almost set fire to the Twin Spot Ranch. With a merciless rain of blows, the fighting foreman had beat Dade Denham into insensibility, even as the Big Shot had solved the riddle of the two Red Masks. But Dade Denham was tough as nails. He was in a terrible rage when the rest of his men rode in, and furiously he had directed them to give chase to the two fugitives.

So the fighting foreman's instinct was right. The drumming hoof-beats in the night were horses and riders in stern, relentless pursuit.

"They're on us, Jerry," the Bar-Eight foreman breathed. "Th' hoss can't carry th' two of us, and get away with it."

"You ride on alone," whispered Señor Red Mask. "I'll hold 'em off."

"Not on yuh'r life," exclaimed Jack Jakers energetically; "we're gonna make a stand, feller—and right hyar."

He pulled the tired horse to a halt. Señor Red Mask's guns had been taken away from him, so Jack Jakers handed his brother one of his own Colts and a handful of shells. They made the horse lie down, and entrenched behind it waited for the oncoming rustlers.

*Thuddah-thud-thud!* The approaching dust cloud under the pale stars and the rising Texas moon



resolved itself into a company of masked men, who swooped and divided riding round the two Red Masks.

*Br-rang!* The battle started with a crash. The gunshots were like an endless roll of thunder. Leaden slugs whined and screeched around the two brothers with the venom of a swarm of angry bees. But they were returning the fire with grim determination—and they were taking toll.

The continuous harsh firing split the heavens and rolled like thunder. Nor did the two fighting brothers go unscathed. A bullet ploughed along Señor Red Mask's cheek like a red-hot knife. Another tugged at his scarf like an urgent hand. Jack Jakers cursed softly as he felt the burn of a bullet along his thigh. It seemed that soon those eerie, whining messengers of death must find them both.

Riding around on his black horse at a respectful distance out of gunshot, Dade Denham made a trumpet of his hands and yelled at the top of his voice:

"We got yuh, Red Mask—and yuh, th' other. Yuh're daid men!"

Jack Jakers' lips curled back from his white teeth almost wolfishly as he rose and cupped his hands to his mouth. "If we cash in our chips, yuh lose yuhr diamonds, yuh dog robber and low-down ornery thief!" he yelled derisively. "I've done buried 'em on th' plain, and thar ain't no one tuh tell whar they are when I'm gone."

He grinned at the instant yell that rose from Dade Denham.

"Take 'em alive. Yuh cain't kill th' skunks—gotta take 'em alive."

In reality the fighting foreman of the Bar-Eight had the diamonds safely with him. To conceal them, Dade Denham had strung the diamonds amongst the cut-glass beads of a lampshade. The Bar-Eight foreman had seized that lampshade when he had raided the Twin-Spot Ranch.

Dade Denham had a passion for diamonds, and with the proceeds of each rustling raid he had added another gem to his collection. Moreover, some kink, some strange twisted knot in his brain, had caused the scoundrelly rustler king to have engraved on the piece of cut glass above each diamond the brief details of each diamond's purchase price. Thus:

*Flying Y.  
June, 1933.  
2,000 head.*

In its way it was a unique confession of his misdeeds sufficient to determine the Bar-Eight foreman to stick by the diamonds, which he was resolved should be divided amongst the despoiled ranchers whose cattle had been rustled.

Now there was a lull in the firing, the masked rustlers conferring together. Jack Jakers was fearful as to what would happen next.

And then in the comparative silence, with only the wind sighing in the sage, there came a sound, low and soft and mournful—yet significant.

"Whoop-a-loo-roo!"

The fighting foreman gripped Señor Red Mask's arm. His expression was tense, excited.

"It's the Bar-Eight call—Rex and some of th' boys," whispered Jack Jakers tensely. "Now watch out—th' skids are greased, and things'll be sliding fast."

### The Red Mask Trio.

LYING out in the brush, with guns drawn, ready to join in the fight, were a trio who had become far-famed in the South-west cattlanelands.

The trio consisted of Rex Remington, the Bar-Eight boss, a lithe, tall pantherish puncher, immaculate

in Oregon chaps, green silk shirt and a high-crowned cream sombrero; Bud Malone, the fat cowboy, and last but not least Wun Lun, the little Chinkee cook of the outfit.

The Dandy Cowboy's face was a fighting mask, lips grim and compressed, eyes darkly flashing, like bits of Arctic ice as he pushed his guns forward.

"Come on, fellers," he rapped. "Time we took a hand."

Originally it had been a party of five that had started out from Desert Edge, to lend aid to the Bar-Eight foreman, if he should require it. Directly he heard the gunfire, however, the Dandy Cowboy had dispatched Tex McNaughten and Hoppy Wannagan back to town to collect a posse.

The Dandy Cowboy was nobody's fool. He could



With cries of superstitious fear the bandits fled in all directions.

tell by the sound of the firing that there were a score or more of desperate gunmen out there on the rolling sage plain—killers who would stop at nothing.

Besides which, as he had ridden through that secret trail, through deep gullies thick with shrub and trees the Dandy Cowboy had suddenly seen Dade Denham's trail herd, and it had given him an idea.

It was a mighty herd of cattle, probably of five thousand head. The Dandy Cowboy shrewdly guessed that all of that vast herd had been rustled from surrounding ranches in the Pecos valley. Every "cow critter" would, of course, be branded over with the solid Twin-Spot.

But Rex was determined that that herd should not be sent on the trail to Dodge City, where a buyer probably awaited it—not until it had been looked over.

Now, as he saw Jack Jakers and Señor Red Mask in deadly peril of their lives, the Bar-Eight boss determined that, come what might, he and his two companions must chip in on the game.

"We'll walk our hosses up to them, then go riding amongst them with guns a-roaring," he whispered.



But Wun Lun, the little almond-eyed Celestial, plucked at his leather gauntleted arm.

"Look," he hissed. "Allasame Wun Lun got plan!"

He pointed. The yellow Texas moon had risen above the distant ridges of the hills now, and it lit the dastardly rustlers brightly.

They were mounting, each brandishing a sort of syringe instrument in his hands. They had been bending over a can on the ground, filling the syringes. It was foul poison gas they proposed using again to subdue Señor Red Mask and his Bar-Eight foreman.

The stuff had been invented by a scientist to deal with locusts on the rich lands of Alfalfa and gramma grass in Southern Texas. During a recent train hold-up some cans of the stuff had been stolen.

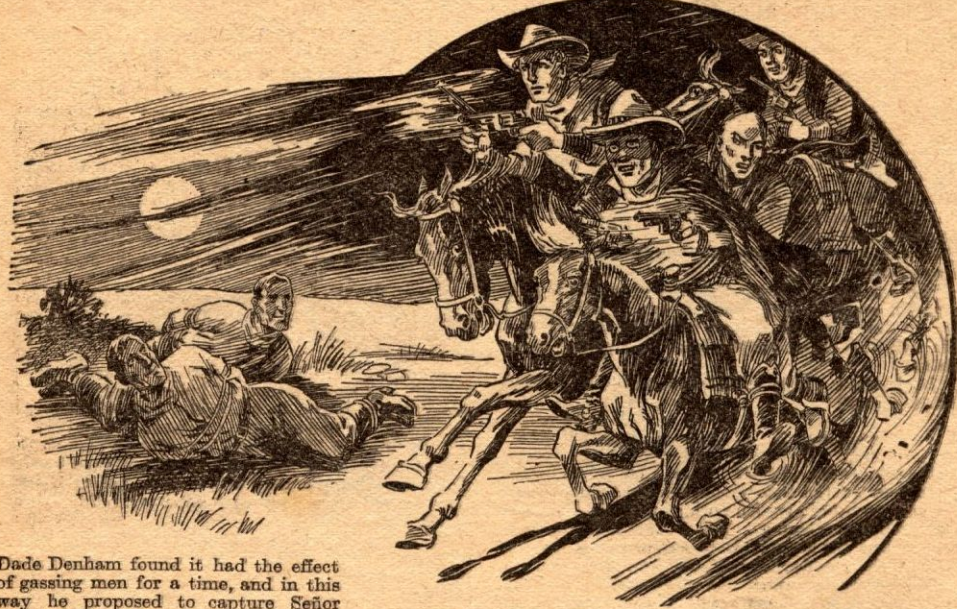
And that's what it was—a thing of frail silk and twisted rubber, with a little whirling propeller. The fighting foreman remembered sharply that Wun Lun built such 'planes for amusement. But this one served a purpose, for as he stretched up a hand to get it, Jack Jakers saw that its white wing bore a message.

*The Boss says for you to give yourselves up. Watch the diamonds—and watch for us.*

**BUD MALONE and WUN LUN.**

"Dang 'em," gritted Jack Jakers. "Reckon they're right, though. This gas is shore coming over soon."

Jack Peters got to his feet, tearing the stringed diamonds from the lampshade. He did not know what to do with them, where to conceal them now.



**THE DUMMY BANDIT.**—Wun Lun crouched behind the dummy of Red Mask as the three Bar-Eight Boys swept down on the bandits, guns blazing. It looked as if Red Mask was going a-gunning!

Dade Denham found it had the effect of gassing men for a time, and in this way he proposed to capture Señor Red Mask and Jack Jakers.

"Tell 'em give in; me got plan," whispered the little Celestial again, fumbling in his blouse.

The Chinkee cook was a bit of a conjuror, and always had something up his sleeve, to produce in times of crisis. This time was no exception, and as he whispered his plan sibilantly to the two punchers, they stared, nodded, and chuckled.

\* \* \* \* \*

**SEÑOR RED MASK** and Jack Jakers, waiting for doom—waiting and watching those masked rustlers with their sinister gas syringes circling them like Indians, drawing ever nearer on their horses—listened and waited for something to follow that faint *whoop-a-loo-roo!*

"When they git within shooting distance, let 'em have th' whole works," gritted Jack Jakers, raising his gun. "How many shells yuh got, Jerry?"

Señor Red Mask did not reply. He was looking upwards at a silent thing floating towards them across the empty space of night. His teeth clicked together.

"Why, it's a model aeroplane!" he exclaimed incredulously.

so he dropped them on the ground. And the next instant both he and Señor Red Mask shot up their arms.

"Don't come at us with th' gas," shouted Jack Jakers; "we give in!"

With a hoarse cry of exultation, Dade Denham rode at the head of the masked rustlers. He had the twins lashed cruelly with thin manilla rope and flung down on the ground. A shout of rage broke from his bearded lips as he seized the despoiled lamp shade.

"Whar are th' diamonds? By grab, I'll flay yuh alive if yuh don't tell."

"I'll find them for yuh," said Jack Jakers steadily. He could see the demon raging within this man, and only hoped that his Bar-Eight pard would put in an appearance soon. As for the rest of the rustlers, they were gathered round in awe, staring down at the two Red Masks, as they thought. And there was something uncanny in the resemblance the twins



bore to each other that struck a superstitious fear to their hearts.

Dade Denham saw their wondering fear. "What's th' matter with yuh-all?" he roared. "D'yuh think he's got his ghost with him, yuh fools, why—"

He broke off. He saw that his words had only served to heighten their dread. And it was at that psychological moment that there came a startling intervention.

The Bar-Eight pards had been watching the scene tensely, and now it seemed the right moment to intervene. Wun Lun slid up on to his trained piebald pony, Pot Luck, and commenced to advance upon the big gang of rustlers.

But before him, in the saddle, he supported a life-like dummy of Señor Red Mask. It was actually some gaudy cowboy outfit stuffed with saddle blankets and other odds and ends that the Bar-Eight trio had carried. The red cloak, mask and tall hat of the mysterious rustler, completed the effect.

The brilliant moonlight now flooded the country as deceptively as a theatre limelight. And in that atmosphere the dummy of Señor Red Mask looked fearfully realistic. The Dandy Cowboy and Bud Malone watched behind with grim chuckles, as the pony advanced with Wun Lun hunched low behind.

It looked like the masked, cloaked bandit was advancing with loaded Colts ready to blaze. Dade Denham suddenly saw it, and a startled yell was wrenched from him.

Not one, but two—three—Señor Red Masks! It was too much!

If he was fear-stricken, the condition of his men beggars description. His shout riveted their startled gaze to the apparition, and terrified squeals and yells rent the air as they dived hastily for their horses.

"Look out! They're all around! Señor Red Mask's ghosts!"

### The Posse to the Rescue

**C**RANG, crang, crang! Wun Lun immediately disproved the theory that he was some sort of spectre by firing with both guns round the sides of his realistic dummy. The little Chinaman was ably backed up from two different points in the night by the Dandy Cowboy and Bud Malone.

The rout was complete. Yelling with terror, the rustlers swung to horseback and spurred away, filling the night with the hard, drumming beats of their horses' hoofs.

Only Dade Denham had recovered his senses. Reining around, yelling savagely, he tried to get some of his followers into a sufficient state of subjection to go back with him.

But by that time the mischief was done. Wun Lun had arrived on the scene, and he slid off his pony, his yellow face split by a vast grin, and with a sharp-edged cooking knife gripped in his paw.

"Ali," he chuckled.

As he slashed the ropes that bound Jack Jakers and Señor Red Mask, Rex and the fat cowboy came up, guns in hand and chuckling grimly at the success of the ruse.

"Look out, though," cried the Dandy Cowboy suddenly. "The coyotes are coming back."

Dade Denham with nine of his masked men came at them in a drumming, headlong charge. Guns cracked with a sound like a giant kettledrum being furiously beaten. The Bar-Eight pards fought back, flames flickering like serpents' tongues at their gun-muzzles, as they feverishly pulled triggers. But they were forced to beat a retreat.

They had not enough horses between them, and men afoot cannot equally match furiously riding,

circling horsemen on the sage plain. And this time there was no doubt that Dade Denham meant to kill.

In the remorseless hurry of those fierce moments Wun Lun's antics were strange, not to say grotesque. He took no part in the fighting, but was doing a sort of solemn war-dance in his peculiar sandals.

"Here, let's get out of this," rapped the Dandy Cowboy, blowing the smoke from his guns; and they broke for the cover of the brush, rapidly prodding fresh shells into the chambers of their Coits.

They plunged down into the gully—there to make a last stand. The firing recommenced as they wormed themselves back among the bushes. But then suddenly Bud Malone gave a yell and pointed over the rise of the plain. A dust cloud was moving there at a rapid rate.

"The posse!" Bud Malone cried exultantly. "Now, by crackey, come on yuh yellow-livered galoots—come on and eat some lead!"

But this was the last thing Dade Denham and his cohorts intended to do. Directly they saw the posse, they wheeled hastily and rode away in the opposite direction.

Jack Jakers struck his head and gave a sudden cry of consternation as he saw Dade Denham bending over the saddle, searching the ground.

"Th' diamonds! By the cursed stars, I done forget 'em and left 'em lying on th' ground. The skunk'll get 'em!" the fighting foreman ejaculated fiercely.

"Hoki," hissed a sibilant voice, and they looked round to see the grinning Wun Lun. "Me got diamonds—Wun Lun velly great man. No pigeon pie about that!"

Grinning, he displayed the thick heels of his sandals. They were scooped hollow, and filled with some sort of putty, in which the diamonds had got stuck when he had stamped on them.

"Th' li'l pest!" growled Bud Malone admiringly.

Just then the horsemen of the posse from Desert Edge came drumming up with a rush, and the Dandy Cowboy fell to serious discussion with the Sheriff at the head of affairs.

"He's got a great herd out there, waiting to go on the beef trail—and I'm betting it's a rustled herd with the brands blotted over," the Bar-Eight boss gritted. "We've got no evidence against him, Sheriff, but we're entitled to take a look at that herd—and the more we crowd Dade Denham now, the more scared he'll be that we've got the goods on him."

"Yuh're dead right," growled the Sheriff. "We're riding, boys—let's go!"

The whole posse, with the Bar-Eight pards broke into a gallop over the plains towards the vellely where Dade Denham's trail herd was gathered under the coldly glittering stars.

**R**EX'S hunch that they were getting the rustler king cornered was more nearly correct than he knew. Dade Denham did not ride back to his ranch, but towards the trail herd gathered in the valley, all manner of ideas for escape seething in his brain.

But hard upon his heels were riding the Bar-Eight pards and the posse from Desert's Edge. Rex Remington pulled up his horse within a dozen feet of Dade Denham, whose eyes glittered blackly at him.

"We've come to look over your stock, Denham," the Dandy Cowboy said brusquely, waving a hand towards the sea of tossing horns.

Dade Denham's beard jutted as he threw back his head and laughed derisively.





REX'S RUSE.—Suddenly the Dandy Cowboy whipped out his guns and pumped lead at a steer. He wanted to see if the beast had been rustled and branded over its original sign.

"Look 'em over all yuh want," he jeered. "And when yuh've done, I guess I'll look over yore men and Señor Red Mask thar—for some valuable stones I'm missing."

The Dandy Cowboy ignored the remark. He and others rode round the huge herd, peering at the brands of the animals nearest them. All wore the solid Twin-Spot! What was behind those two black circles on the animals' hides was a matter for conjecture.

"You keep some stock—mighty big stock. You are sure those steers are all yours?"

"Yuh're danged whistling," croaked Dade Denham with a hoarse laugh. "Every crittur is mine."

Rex decided to work his hunch. It was a risk which might land him into trouble if it came unstuck. Still, he pulled out his Colt suddenly, and firing at a brindle steer plumb centre, knocked it through the head, down and dead.

"Hyar, what th'——" Dade Denham, howling, rushed forward.

"All right; I guess you can have me in the courts if I prove wrong," said the Dandy Cowboy coldly. Opening his clasp-knife, he dismounted and knelt by the dead animal. Swiftly he cut the hide in a circle round the Twin-Spot brand, and peeled it off before the rest could realise what he was doing.

Then a shouted curse came from Dade Denham as he realised how he had been given away.

Underneath was the Flying Y brand, for, of course, the animal had been branded as a yearling when its hide was thinner.

"After him," shouted someone, and gunfire broke hideously through the night. Dade Denham, realising that the game was up, had spurred his black thoroughbred savagely, and was away in a twisting snake-like course, to dodge bullets—away towards the Rio Grande, and beyond, into Mexico.

"Leave him tuh me," shouted a voice. "He's my man, I tell yuh, and I'm gonna get him."

The cry came from Señor Red Mask. He was

foraging his red stallion, Danger, now, and his mask had appeared again on the upper part of his face.

He withheld his fire, for he had few shells left. Also, if it were possible, he was resolved to take Dade Denham back alive. His path had not been straight, but it was wide enough to turn in. If he took Dade Denham back, with the evidence the Pecos Valley ranchers could furnish, it was quite possible he might get a free pardon.

These were the thoughts that spurred Señor Red Mask on, after his quarry.

Now they were entering the brush country. Under brilliant moonlight the stunted growth covered mile after mile of as treacherous country as could be found anywhere. Ahead Dade Denham was quiring his horse to desperate efforts, but there was a mad grin now on his bearded face—a grin of triumph.

He was nearing safety—and he was leading Señor Red Mask into a trap.

As his horse plunged along hidden trails, suddenly there yawned before them the Sink. It was a mighty bowl, or depression. Its descent was steep, almost vertical. Far distant, beyond the jungle of brush that covered the valley floor, was the gleam of water. The river marked the border boundary into old Mexico—and this Sink was the lair of some of the most desperate outlaws of the West.

Dade Denham knew it. As he plunged his horse recklessly down the fearful descent, he knew that some of the most powerful Mexican rustler chiefs were watching.

His plunging horse had come upon a long glade, invisible in the blackness. It took form before him now, a narrow passage between the mesquite, utterly veiled from the moon. Suddenly Dade Denham leapt from the saddle, and his horse clattered on.

His riata was uncoiled in an instant, and he knotted one end to the base of a stout mesquite, then ran, stretching the rawhide rope across the glade. With heels braced he waited.



Señor Red Mask was coming on fast. He came at a rush, seeming to gain speed. Dade Denham held his line taut.

*Crash!* Señor Red Mask, utterly tired, concentrating all his energies on racing after the riderless horse ahead, was taken all unwarmed. Caught fairly at the knees, his red stallion floundered, plunged and went down with a crash like that of a roped steer.

Red Mask, flung clear of his horse, hit the ground with a terrific impact. Gasping, dazed, he tried to scramble up, but as he did so the muzzle of Dade Denham's six-gun pressed between his shoulder blades.

"Gut yuh, hombre. Jest stay put."

Gasping, the beaten border chief looked up through the slits in his mask to see dark-skinned evilly smiling Mexicans, wrapped in their *serapes*, their faces illumined by the glow of their cigarettes under their tall, sugar-loaf hats, as they stared down at him.

### Rustlers' Town

SEÑOR RED MASK was taken unconscious across the river to the Mexican town of Rio Vista. It was a strange town, and the Mexican *Rurales*—the police of the Border—never visited there. They dared not. Rio Vista was a sink of iniquity, where all the scum of humanity gravitated. Rustlers' town!

Then, too, there was always the Casa la Baile. That was the rendezvous of the *bandidos* and rustlers of the border. There was a great room, crowded with little tables, and here cloaked, swarthy men sat, drinking *mescal*.

There was a clatter of horses outside. Señor Denham had arrived, accompanied by three swarthy Mexican chiefs—the worst rustlers along the border. Dade Denham swung off his horse heavily, and though his black eyes sparkled with the devil's light of unholy anticipation, he was in evil humour enough to be brutal—to bully anyone who would suffer it.

"Hey, *mozo*," he called sharply. "Lead my horse around to the stable." He urgently beckoned to a man in nondescript Western garb, with a brick-red face and white whiskers. And because that man did not stir quickly enough for him, he gripped his whip, and a savage, wolfish snarl convulsed his features.

"Yuh doggone cowpoke! Take my hoss—and quickly, darn yuh!" He brought the quirt down with blinding force across the man's shoulders.

The old Westerner, with the white moustache and black patch over one eye, broke away, ducking and stumbling.

"All right, yuh coyote. Yuh think yuh can hit Fidler," he grunted.

But the astonishing part was that it was not Fidler, the old-timer of Desert Edge. In the stable he whipped off the eye-patch and the false white moustache, and donned, instead, the garb of a *caballero*, guns and a cloak. And now he looked remarkably like Señor Red Mask, but it was not even he.

It was Jack Jakers, his twin brother.

"Th' time's coming for a showdown, Dade Denham," grunted the Bar-Eight foreman.

### The Death Duel

LIFE was throbbing to a high note inside the Casa la Baile. Bandits and rustlers crowded round the tables applauding wildly with glasses in their hands.

"Brava! Bueno!"

A dancer had just performed on the stage. More, the great Señor Dade Denham had bought free wine for all. Oh, he was a great man!

Dade Denham, his bearded face a mirror of his ugly mood, stood up.

"Hombres, I'm gonna give yuh a li'l show tuh-night that'll be a wow," he grinned round crookedly. "And Señor Red Mask, he's gonna play a big part. Lookit up thar!"

He jerked upwards with a horny thumb. Lights were now cunningly directed on a broad beam overhead, and there, lying gagged and bound hand and foot, was Señor Red Mask.

"He's greasy meat, hombres. I done caught a cougar tuh feed on him. Look up thar."

He pointed again, and up on the broad beam they saw a cage. In it was a great yellow beast, crouched and lashing its tail. Amidst the gasp that arose the door of the cage was pulled open by a rope, and with cat-like liteness, the fierce cougar came out on the beam.

It growled fiercely, a deep, throaty growl as it saw Señor Red Mask—and leapt. Its quick tread along the beam made the watcher's scalp prickle.

Snarling furiously, the great cat raised a paw, its fangs bared as it made to deliver that flicking powerful blow that would maim horribly, if it did not kill at once.

*Br-rang! Br-rang!* Two shots that seemed like tons of exploding dynamite deafened the ears of those in the room. The great cat with a last wild blood-curdling shriek fell dead from the beam.

The room fell to dead silence. Everyone had turned his head to stare at a masked, cloaked figure that had leapt up on one of the small round tables.

Señor Red Mask? No, not Red Mask, but Jack Jakers, fighting foreman of the Bar-Eight.

"Git up on th' table, and draw, Dade Denham—so no one else gits hurt!" cried the Bar-Eight foreman. "Quick—or I'll knock yuhr teeth back with lead."

Dade Denham leapt on the table. His bearded face was convulsed. But he had a trick up his sleeve, for suddenly he slackened a taut rope—and Señor Red Mask came swooping down from the beam on the rope.

His face a sickly yellow, a gun gripped in his free hand, Dade Denham shielded himself behind Señor Red Mask's body. His gun crashed, once—twice. Jack Jakers took a staggering step on the table, but remained upright.

The gun in Jack Jakers' hand now in line jerked slightly, steadied and belched a stab of orange flame. He shot but once.

Dade Denham's face was a mask of deadly terror as his legs buckled and he sank on his knees to the table, and then crashed to the floor.

The room shrieked, roared. Then came the boom of three swift reports, and all the lights went out. In the darkness, Jack Jakers staggered across to his brother.

"We can get out of this by th' rope, feller," he breathed, as he cut his brother's bonds.

They escaped from that seething den, climbing down the roof to the street where their horses and the faithful Fidler awaited them. And they rode out through the timbered gate, both racked with pain, both reeling a little.

Dade Denham was dead, but Señor Red Mask? Had he done enough to earn redemption? Was he free to leave Mexico, and ride in whatever state he like, a free citizen?

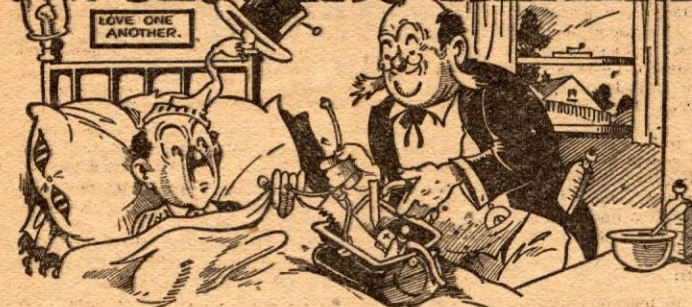
Time alone would tell.

A crashing yarn of Red Mask next week, telling of his efforts to clear his name. Don't miss this gripping tale in which the Dandy Cowboy and his 'punchers' play a prominent part.



## A Pen or a Bat for a Good Wisecrack

# JESTER'S REALM



Cricket Bats 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.

**Doctor:** Well, and how are the broken ribs this morning?  
**Patient:** Quite well; but I've had a stitch in my side all day.  
**Doctor:** Excellent! That shows that the bones are knitting!  
*(Cricket bat to ROBERT YOUNG, 82, Eldon Street, South Shields, Co. Durham.)*

**EASY.**

**SMALL BOY (to grocer):** If I bought a dozen eggs at 1s. 2d. per dozen, 6-lbs. of apples at 4d. per lb., and 8-lbs. of sugar at 2½d. per lb., how much change should I get out of 5s.?

**GROCER:** Why, 2d., my boy!

**SMALL BOY:** Thanks, very much, sir; that's a sum in my homework to-night.

*(Fountain pen to NEIL MCCUBBIN, 4, Taylor Avenue, Kilmarnock.)*

**JOKE COUPON.**

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

Boys' Magazine, 3/6/33.

**ON REFLECTION.**

**BOOTBLACK:** Shine your boots, sir?

**GENTLEMAN:** No!

**BOOTBLACK:** So that you can see your face in 'em, guv'nor!

**GENTLEMAN:** No!!

**BOOTBLACK:** Well, I don't blame yer!

*(Fountain pen to JACK SCOTSON, 15, Queen Victoria Street, Rochdale.)*

**GOOD DOG.**

**BUTCHER:** Why are you whistling outside my window?

**TOMMY:** I've lost my dog, and every time I whistle your sausages wriggle!

*(Fountain pen to HARRY AUSTIN, 36, Cold Harbour Lane, Kemsley Village, near Sittingbourne, Kent.)*

**TIME WILL TELL.**

**UNCLE:** What will you be when you grow up, my boy?

**BILLY:** Father often calls me a donkey, but I s'pose I will grow into a man!

*(Fountain pen to STANLEY STONEHAM, 88, Upper Walthamstow Road, Walthamstow, E.17.)*



**Cat Burglar (below):** The front door's unlocked, Bill!  
**Accomplice (above):** Aw, c'mon up here—ain't yer got no professional pride?  
*(Cricket bat to ALEX RUSSELL, Corrie Terrace, Corrie, Isle of Arran.)*

**ARTISTIC.**

**FIRST STEEPLEJACK:** Where's that mate, Bill, you took on yesterday—the chap that used to be an artist?

**SECOND STEEPLEJACK:** Oh, he was too conscientious! Soon as 'e laid a couple o' bricks 'e stepped back off the scaffolding to admire 'is work!

*(Fountain pen to ALEX. LAWRIE, 76, Glasgow Road, Dumbarton, Scotland.)*

**A BOOM.**

**PASSER-BY:** What's the idea begging with a hat in each hand?

**BEGGAR:** Business was so brisk I had to extend the premises!

*(Fountain pen to FRED MOODY, 17, Corporation Street, Ardwick.)*

**ONE METHOD.**

**NOVICE:** Is it necessary to knock me down like that?

**BOXING INSTRUCTOR:** Bless you, no. I could show you twenty other ways!

*(Fountain pen to R. MORISON, Inaclete House, Anfield Plain, Co. Durham.)*

**GOOD GROUNDWORK.**

**GOLFER (to caddy, after missing the ball and cutting up a piece of turf):** Most extraordinary!

**CADDY (sarcastically):** Yes—a bit out of the common!

*(Fountain pen to D. R. LIEBERT, 3, Sunbury Court Island, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex.)*

**IN CHARGE.**

**BOBBY:** Dad, what were you in the war?

**FATHER:** I was a battery sergeant!

**BOBBY:** High or low tension, Dad?

*(Fountain pen to H. G. HOLT, 501, Mansfield Road, Sherwood, Nottingham.)*



## OUR GREAT SERIAL TALE OF THE SINISTER SOCIETY OF SEVEN.



# THE MASTER OF MASKS

By JOHN HUNTER

HE would have added an order which would have sent Mr. Brame Sentence down to a dungeon and death within the hour, when a man came rushing into the room—the O.C. of the Guards' battalion stationed in the castle. He saluted quickly.

"Your Majesty. The people! Hear them?"

Through the open window, very faintly, came the sound of singing. The Lithkranians had no revolutionary song of their own, so they had borrowed the only real revolutionary song which has ever been composed . . . the Marseillaise, sung by a few in French, by a few more in Lithkranian, by most merely as a tune through which they la-laed at the tops of their voices; but, for all that, menacing, snarling, stirring, unforgettable.

Adolf rushed to a window. He looked down on the great winding landroad that led to the gates of the castle. He saw hundreds of lamps and torches dancing on the night wind. He saw the faint flickering wanness of ten thousand faces, and he knew the truth.

The people had come to Stahnfeld.

## The Fall of the Castle.

NOW all was confusion and hurry. The prisoners would have to wait. Billy, with Mr. Brame Sentence, was hustled from the room and together they were flung into a dungeon, and two soldiers were left to guard them.

The troops were manning the walls. Machine-guns were being transported to every available place commanding the castle approach.

Looted barracks and gunsmiths' shops had put a weapon into every revolutionary's hand, and they started off by firing wild rifle shots at the castle. The rifles cracked and blazed away without any control, and bullets whanged against the walls, crashed through windows, broke pictures, ripped tapestry and slew a man here and there.

The Guards did nothing at all except take cover. Adolf was in command, and he held his fire. He intended to mow down the attackers like flies when they swarmed to his gates.

In due course they swarmed, for an undisciplined crowd can never bear inaction. They came up the winding road and each side of it, scrambling up the

rock steepness in great numbers. In the castle a whistle shrilled.

The machine-guns started. It was like slaughtering sheep—just over a thousand trained men against ten times their number of fools.

The attack broke. It left men writhing and still on the road it had followed. It fled into the darkness and gathered out of gunshot, dismayed but not panic-stricken . . . yet . . .

Now it was just then, when the vast crowd, leaderless save for loud-voiced agitators and such, was surging into an incoherent mass at the foot of the hill, that two men appeared on the scene. They had crossed the river in a boat they had fortunately discovered higher upstream.

Those two men changed the history of the world. They were Sergeant Zweger of the Rifles and humble Fritz of the Hamburg docks.

Zweger's uniform would probably have got him killed, but that he slipped in the first word, with Fritz supporting him wholeheartedly. They talked to the crowd at length, and gradually the people listened.

Fritz had a spot of trouble with a gentleman whose sole business in life was fixing up strikes and preaching sedition. So Fritz knocked him out. He did it so casually that the crowd yelled with delight.

Fritz indicated Zweger. There was a soldier, an old soldier, wise in war. He was on their side. He was not against Lithkrania, but for Lithkrania. They must remember that. He was only against Adolf the Third.

They yelled that to the echo. Sergeant Zweger took command, and from that moment Stahnfeld Schloss was in great danger.

Zweger picked out some sailors and gave them command of detachments and gave them orders as to their conduct. It took an hour to accomplish all this, but it was worth the hour of waiting, while the garrison looked down and wondered what was taking place.

Men now crept up the rock face. The road was left alone. A detachment of men went down to the waterside and the quay under the crag.

The men on the rock face, spread out far and wide, hiding behind boulders, started guerrilla fire on the castle. It was irritating. The garrison could not reply effectively. The bullets kept coming through the windows. They lifted high and dropped on the battlements. They got on the nerves of the defenders. And in the dungeon below the castle Mr. Brame Sentence talked to Billy and found that Billy knew all the truth.

"Now," said Mr. Sentence after a long time, "they made a singular mistake where I was concerned. They searched me—but only my pockets. That was foolish. A man in my—profession has to travel prepared for quite a number of emergencies, and one of those emergencies, naturally, is the anticipation of being, at some time or other, locked up. So—I guard against it. Creep to the door and see if either of those soldiers is near!"

Billy peeped out through the grille. One of the



two soldiers was leaning against the wall some distance from them, his rifle at his side. Billy could hear the other one tramping away down the corridor.

Mr. Sentence smiled as Billy told him this, and lifting his left foot he slid back a section of the thick sole of his pronounced brown golfing shoes. In the shallow cavity thus revealed were one or two slim, steel instruments.

Mr. Sentence crept to the door and started work on the lock with two of these instruments. They were very flexible, and enormously strong, for though he put great strain on them they showed no tendency to snap.

Suddenly the spring of the lock clicked and the tongue shot backwards. Instantly they heard the clatter of a rifle, and the thud of the soldier's feet as he ran towards the door. He was shouting something in his own language.

Mr. Brame Sentence held the door fast until the soldier was right outside. Then he suddenly pulled the door open with his left hand and hit the soldier with his right before that astonished person could realise what had happened. It was a beautiful clean punch, half-an-inch above the point, and the man crashed floorwards without a sound.

His companion had heard his shout and was coming running back. Mr. Sentence picked up the fallen man's rifle and cocked it. As the second soldier ran round the corner he confronted his comrade's rifle, and heard Mr. Sentence's curt Lithkranian command to put up his hands. He did it without a murmur.

They tied him up, and they tied up his knocked-out friend. Billy took one rifle and Mr. Sentence the other, and, having shot back the lock of the dungeon, they left the two soldiers inside it, securely fastened in.

"Now," said Mr. Sentence, "down to the river and try and get away or . . ."

"My father," said Billy quickly. "We must try and save him."

"I thought you'd say that," agreed Mr. Sentence, "and I'm with you, my boy. Come on, but carefully."

They crept upwards and reached the castle proper.

There they encountered all manner of bustle, and they were forced to slip into a large dark room and hide, while soldiers passed and re-passed in the passage beyond.

Thus they stayed for some time, unable to get out with any chance of safety, and while they were there they heard a sudden crash of tearing feet, multitudes of gunshots, high and wild shouting and the dreadful sounds of death.

The revolutionaries had broken into the castle through the river gate.

For half-an-hour there was chaotic fighting which cannot be described. The main land gate of the castle was taken from the inside and flung open. The battalion of the Imperial Guard was hunted



A JOLT FOR THE JAILER.—Mr. Sentence abruptly pulled open the door and his right fist took the guard on the jaw before he realised what had happened.

mercilessly through room and passage, hunted and slain.

Mr. Sentence kept Billy close. It was the only thing to do—to wait until the high fever of unexpected triumph had died away.

Gradually the sounds of fighting ceased. Adolf the Third, dragged from the shelter of his troops, was in the hands of the enemy, undaunted in appearance, but inwardly frightened.

In the hall the revolutionaries made high revel. They had torn the Rat Trap down, and they had smashed a way out for its prisoner. Through the vast press two men were forcing their way—Fritz and Zweger.

And Mr. Sentence, taking Billy's hand, said: "Come on, my boy. I'm going to play the biggest gamble of my life . . . for you. I'm going to make one straight throw for a kingdom."

He led Billy into the open and towards the packed and riotous hall.

### Crown Prince Wilhelm.

MOST of the revolutionaries had gathered in the hall, and what few there were outside it were so engaged in pillage and looting that they took little notice of Mr. Sentence and Billy, who, realising the danger of carrying them, had left their rifles behind in the room in which they had been



hiding. So they came to the hall without any interference whatsoever.

At that juncture the situation in the hall was a difficult and dangerous one. The rioters had got King Karl out of the Rat Trap. He had proclaimed his identity, and the proclamation had been received with derisive roars of laughter.

The place was filled with shouting, and it was difficult to distinguish what was being said, though one insistent cry rang above the rest, a demand that the castle should be forthwith set on fire and burnt to the ground—as though in destroying it they destroyed the old order of things.

Just before Mr. Sentence and Billy reached the hall, Sergeant Ernst Zweger and Fritz managed to reach the side of King Karl, who, weak and ill after his long imprisonment, was utterly incapable of protesting his own case with any vigour.

Zweger's influence was great. He had shown them how to take the castle. He was plainly a man of brains, though he wore the hated uniform of the army.

He began to harangue them, with Fritz standing stolidly by, complete with bowler hat, which he had worn all through the battle. Slowly the crowd began to understand that this was indeed King Karl whom they had pulled out of the Rat Trap, and an angry murmur arose.

A man at the back called: "Down with all kings! Hang them both—Adolf and Karl. Down with kings and princes!"

A murmur rippled round the now silent throng. Zweger passionately demanded that Karl should be restored to his rightful place, but the murmur persisted and grew; and in the midst of all this Mr. Brame Sentence arrived with Billy.

Mr. Sentence's monocle was no longer visible. His vacuous face was set and hard and business-like. He shoved his way through the crowd regardless of protests, dragging Billy after him, and he took his stand on the big table beside Zweger, Billy alongside him.

As Zweger paused for breath, Mr. Sentence began to speak in fluent Lithkranian. Billy only recalled fragments of that speech, which was a clever one, and started off, cunningly enough, by paying a tremendous compliment to the listeners.

"... and you have brought freedom to Lithkrania by destroying that which was sucking it dry, the military despotism set up by Adolf the Third..." Loud cheers. On went the cultured voice.

"... the best among you will remember King Karl... the most benevolent of monarchs... his only desire to maintain an army consistent with the

dignity of your great country... relief in taxation... a king worthy of Lithkrania... your old respected place in the family of the great nations..."

More loud cheers, and Mr. Sentence urging Billy forward.

"... this boy... trained in the best Lithkranian and British traditions... with no desire to build up an army needing crushing taxation for its maintenance... the old conscript law to go... the son of King Karl, who has lived for years in hiding from Adolf... a boy like your boys... with your boys' ideas..."

The cheers were thunderous. Mr. Sentence beamed and whispered to Billy: "Talk about addressing the jury..."

The crowd was surging forward. Sergeant Zweger suddenly began to sing the Lithkranian National Anthem at the top of his voice. The glorious melody took hold of their emotions. Several others joined in, and within half-a-minute the great hall shook with the sound of it, and the bloodless victory was won.

When the excitement died down it was found that Adolf was missing, and it was not until morning that he was found, shot dead, and lying face downwards below the eave on which stood Stahndfeld Schloss.

THERE were many changes in Lithkrania in the next two or three months. Sergeant Ernst Zweger received a commission and is now Captain of the King's Bodyguard. The Crown Prince of Lithkrania, Wilhelm Augustus... known as Billy Trent to his friends... has only one bodyguard, however, a large and grinning German gentleman called Fritz, who, secretly to his great satisfaction, wears a marvellous uniform, and who keeps in his room a bowler hat with a bullet hole through it, the bowler hat which won the war.

The Lithkranian army is cut down to a quarter of its original size. Peace reigns in the country and the factories of prosperity buzz with activity. There is a man who occasionally visits King Karl without state or ostentation. He is known as Mr. Brame Sentence. He wears no orders, and no titles have been conferred on him. His one reward for saving Europe from war was a personal interview with the Prime Minister of England, though, perhaps he would acknowledge another—the undying friendship of the Crown Prince Wilhelm and his bodyguard, Fritz.

Every amateur sleuth should make sure of getting a Secret Message Duplicator. This indispensable part of your Detective Outfits given free in next week's Mag.

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