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AND Nose Cap
INSIDE**



THE BOYS' PAPER THAT IS BOOMING

VOL. XXII—No. 595—July 29, 1933

REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION
BY CANADIAN MAGAZINE POST

The Dandy Cowboy Is Here Next Week, Chums!



**COMPLETE YOUR
B.M. MODEL
Next Week**

Write to The Editor,
200, Gray's Inn
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London, W.C.I.



MY DEAR CHUMS,
There is bound to be a rush for next week's grand story number of *Boys' Magazine* because, with the **elastic motor, the propeller shaft and the steel retaining pin given inside every copy**, you will be able to complete your models of the *Boys' Magazine* Tractor Fuselage Monoplane. When these accessories are fitted to your models, a few finishing touches and then—presto! your glistening squadrons will be ready to take the air.

A special page of hints on how to fly the monoplane will appear in the *Mag.*, and if you follow these simple instructions and have carried out those already given for the actual assembling of the aeroplane, it should travel 150 feet through the air.

If any reader cannot get his machine to take the air our aeroplane designer has offered to put it right for him. If you send your 'plane to me at the above address, with stamps to cover return postage, he guarantees to return it to you in proper working order.

Now get ready for the
Remaining Parts for Your 'Plane
in next week's grand story number!

The gift is accompanied by a tip-top programme of smashing yarns. First on the bill is a long complete tale featuring the Dandy Cowboy and his Bar-Eight Boys. A new menace comes to the West in the **Phantom of the Pueblos.**

The more credulous punchers on the ranches around the Border believe the Phantom is an incarnation of one of the old Pueblos gods, but Rex Remington is made of stronger stuff. Rustlers are abroad and cattle disappear from all the ranches except one run by Roarer Seames.

Thrills begin when Rex rides into Border City to consult with the sheriff about these rustlings, but he finds that Roarer has stolen a move on him. He has convinced the sheriff that Rex is the rustler. Reward notices are out for the Dandy Cowboy's capture. But astride Firefiend, his coal-black stallion, Rex can show a clean pair of heels to any sheriff's posse. Outlawed, with his Bar-Eight boys in gaol on a trumped-up charge, he works to bring Roarer and the Phantom to justice. He discovers the Phantom's

lair in a deserted Pueblos rock village. Here, amidst the gaunt cliffs and crags, he plays a lone hand.

I must specially draw your attention, chaps, to the contents of

Next Week's Thrill Library.

A new, long complete thriller featuring Bulldog Hamilton, the get-em-all adventurer. From the title—"The Ship of a Thousand Fears"—you can guess this yarn is a real smasher.

Bulldog, holidaying in a lonely village at the mouth of a river in the Essex flats, stumbles on a baffling mystery. Four men have disappeared in these mysterious waters. The authorities can find no trace of them, but Bulldog suspects a strange ship anchored out in the bay. It is commanded by Captain Cragg, an old sailor with a wooden leg, whose mate, Binroo, is a giant Filipino. The ship has already been searched, of course, and nothing suspicious discovered, but our adventurer is not satisfied.

He swims out towards the ship under cover of night, accompanied by Bob Turner, a young fisherman, but Bob also disappears in the dark depths. Bulldog, however, manages to haul himself atop of the Death Bank Buoy and from there sees a mysterious signal from the Ship of a Thousand Fears.

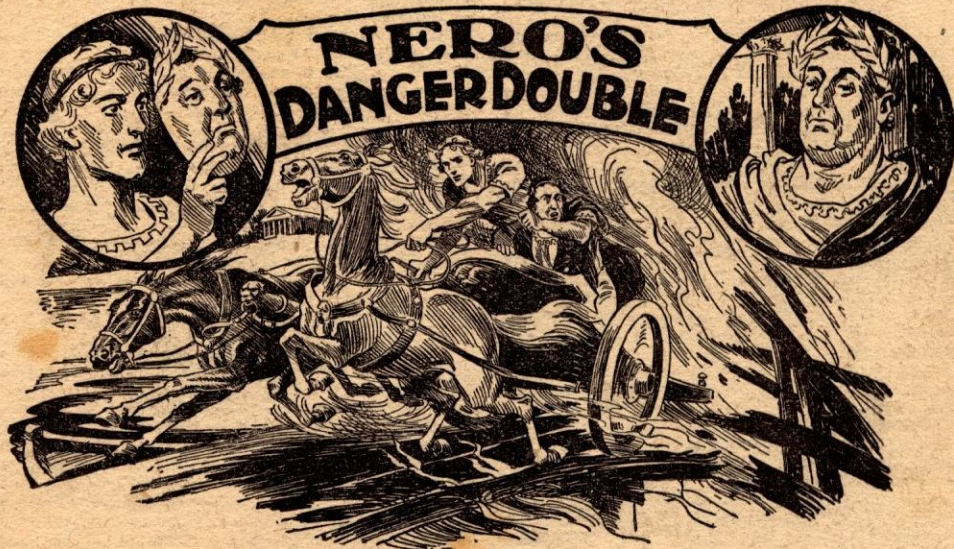
Five ominous flashes! Does that mean they have got their fifth victim? Before he can swim away Bulldog is himself captured by Binroo and taken aboard.

The hold of the ship gives him a surprise. It is fitted out with all the strange furnishings of an Indo-Chinese temple and here are the other captives. They are to be sacrificed by Captain Cragg's employer, an Indian Prince, to the God of Blood. The reason for the Indian's elaborate plan and how Bulldog turns the tables are told in this unique story next week.

Those who are following the adventures of Jimmy Hart, of the S.O.S. Squadron, and Ian and Johnny of the Red Devils (and judging from the letters I have received that means all my readers), will not be disappointed in next week's episodes. Johnny and Ian penetrate to the interior of the Chateau of Secrets, and what they find there will keep you tense and thrilled all through. I will not spoil the surprise in

(Continued on page 8 of Thrill Library.)

THE THRILLING EXPLOITS OF ERICUS, THE BOY GLADIATOR!
In this Great Tale of the Glorious Days of Ancient Rome, Ericus Saves
the Emperor with a Mad Masquerade.
MAGNIFICENT COMPLETE YARN CRAMMED WITH NOVEL EPISODES



Up, Scipio! So-ho, Jugurtha! Ericus Urges On His Steeds in a Grim Race to Save Rome from the Incendiary's Torch.

A Dastardly Plot.

THE Demon Charioteer's face was a black thunder-cloud. The reins around his great hand, he tugged.

"Gently, Scipio! So-ho, Jugurtha!" he cried.

But the two splendid white Parthian horses harnessed to the pole of his racing chariot, seemed to sense that for once the big driver was out of humour.

Indeed, the thoughts of Ericus the Briton were not concentrated on the race before him. He was angry. And more than that, vague depths of fear were stirring in his heart.

The big, grim charioteer, as the biggest circus star of the time, held a certain sway over the people. Even Nero, the monster of Rome, stood in awe of him.

And he had prevailed on Cæsar to give his compatriots a square deal in the circus—made him promise that the captured Britons should not be thrown to the beasts in the arena, or otherwise senselessly sacrificed. They were to be sent instead to a *lanistra*, a training school for gladiators, and given a fair chance in combat.

"But now, held the Druid's Stone, Cæsar hath gone back on his word," growled the big charioteer savagely.

He knew. For he had been at Ostia, the fashionable

sea resort, with Cæsar and his entourage. And a galley loaded with prisoners in chains from the far-off isle had put into the Mediterranean port.

Ericus learned that they were to be put in cockle-shell boats in the Circus Maximus, to fight against monsters of the deep. The great amphitheatre could be flooded by pipes laid straight from the sea over the Alban Mountains, and the *Naumachia*, or sea spectacle, was a new show with which to enthrall the thrill-crazy mobs of Rome.

And now Nero was coming home in triumph to the games in the Circus Maximus from a supposed campaign in Britain—whereas in reality he had been at his villa in Ostia.

They were drawn up on the heights of a plain at Ostranum, the whole of Cæsar's entourage. From their height they could see mighty Rome, mistress of the world, spread out, white, calm, and majestic, as if in sleep. From her seven hills reared her white temples and gilded domes.

Ericus guessed, however, that Rome no longer slept. Thousands of people were proceeding eagerly towards the Circus Maximus.

Why then did not Cæsar press on to Rome, to obtain a few hours of rest in his golden palace before the opening of the games? Instead he had halted the procession here at Ostranum, and within sight of the city walls had organised a chariot race.

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

"By the infernal gods, there is more to it than meets the eye!" growled Ericus under his breath.

He had no love for the infamous Nero, who posed as the sublime artist. It was common gossip in the Imperial City that Nero had completed his "Troyad," as he called it—but it was not a hymn of lament over the burning of Troy.

Those verses were meant for Rome—and Nero was longing to declaim them. What a spectacle! Rome on fire!

And what a fearful thought for the citizens of Rome! For Nero would not rest satisfied until he had carried out this whim of his crazed brain.

The demon charioteer had no thought of Rome burning, however, as he waited in a line with seven other chariot drivers for the start of the wild race. Very little regard either had he for his competitors in this race.

They were for the most part fops— young patricians They wore the purple edge to their *togas*, signifying that they belonged to Cæsar's intimate circle, the *Augustales*.

There was Paris, though, the famous actor from the theatre of Pompei. Built on classic line he might be, but his dark face, crowned with a garland of flowers, had a roguish, cunning look. He had the pose of the *nil admirari*—to wonder at nothing, to be bored by everything.

It was rudely shattered suddenly, however, as Ericus, his thoughts wandering, allowed the wheel horse on his right to cavort too far. There was a collision with the horses of Paris.

Instantly both drivers were taxed to restrain their steeds. Horses reared as they tugged back hard on the reins. There was a great clatter and jingle of harness. Paris shouted vile things.

"By Pollux, 'twas done *malafide*," he snarled as he got down, leaving the reins with his groom. "Art a trickster, Ericus. 'Twas done to get me out of the race." Full of fury, the actor mouthed wickedly, and suddenly lashed out with his whip. "Take that, slave and son of a slave!" he panted.

The lash caught Ericus across the cheek, and raised a weal. The big race driver, usually so genial, suddenly lost his own temper. His face suddenly became as dark as the very thunder of Jupiter. With a bound he was down from his chariot.

The other drivers had the impression of a tempestuous whirlwind, and then they saw Ericus the Briton, his arms raised aloft, holding Paris as if he would dash his brains out on the ground. And the actor shrieked with the fear of death.

"Pooh! 'Tis only a mummer, a fellow of masks and music," the big charioteer said contemptuously, and he lowered the half-swooning Paris. "Get thee to thy chariot, fool, and meddle not with Ericus the Briton," he commanded roughly.

And then suddenly Ericus bent down. His pulses drummed madly at what he saw on the ground. A manuscript! He read words in Greek letters that set his heart afire.

"By all the infernal gods!" he gasped. "Cæsar hath here empowered this actor dog to set fire to Rome!"

He picked up the manuscript and read on rapidly. The fire was to break out on the great wooden suspension bridge built from the Cæsar's golden palace on the Palatine heights to the Circus Maximus.

This bridge passed over all the wretched huts on the slopes of the Aventine, and indeed, one of its supports was the Emporium—Rome's great storehouse for grain, which was near the Circus. The whole would blaze like a mighty inferno. But the diabolically wicked cunning part was that the fire had been arranged to break out *at dawn that morning!* When thousands of people were packed tight like

sardines in the Circus, Cæsar meant them to perish, as well as Rome.

That was why he was here on the heights overlooking the Imperial City. He was waiting for Rome to burn.

Ericus looked up, the papers crushed in his strong hands. His face was savage, fearful. "I must stop this—yet, I have no time!" he gasped.

Just then the bugle blew for the commencement of the chariot race.

Ericus leapt for his chariot and seized the reins. And as the chariots surged forward, the Briton was with them. He was going to race. He would get first to the winning post, and seize Cæsar—then on to Rome with his Imperial prisoner, to stop the fire.

The Emperor Kidnapped.

HE was aware of Paris, the actor, thundering in his chariot by his side, his whip playing like lightning over his horses, while he strained forward, all intent on winning.

Did Paris know he had seen the Cæsar's instructions to set fire to Rome? Was he straining to get to Nero first? The Briton's lips tightened as he saw the venomous glance the actor cast him.

"By the light of Helios, I must win!" ground out the chariot driver.

The race was over two-miles-and-a-half, on a circular track, round a wooden palisade. It was a race where skill and judgment were the essentials.

The eight chariots swept along like the wind. Lucan, the poet, was ahead, setting a cracking pace. He literally tore along from the start. But Ericus was content to lie back.

They were thundering round the curve now, for the long uphill finish. The Briton steadied his team of white Parthians. Now—now it was coming! The drivers were turning on the steam, madly lashing their horses.

Now Ericus smiled grimly as he strained forward, his whip cracking like gunshots with the rest. His gallant steeds were racing at an electric stride. All in a few moments the aspect of the race changed. For the other teams—all except Paris—the actors could not stay.

From three lengths behind the Briton commenced to overhaul—threading through the beaten horses now—straining madly. His white Parthian horses reached level with the actor's greys, and Paris lashed out frantically at his own horses, goading them on with merciless strokes.

Delirious shouts went up from the watchers on the benches at the finishing tapes as the horses raced neck and neck. Down came the actor's whip again and again. But his greys were done. And Ericus was passing—passing . . .

With a snarl Paris picked up a short iron bar from the floor of his chariot, and made to fling it at the victorious Briton's head. But Ericus saw the move. His whip lashed out and wound itself with a crushing *cra-ack* round the miscreant's wrist. With a wild scream Paris dropped the iron bar.

Cr-r-r-unch! It fell between the felices of Paris's wheel, shattering three of the spokes. There was a sudden sickening crash, and the track was blocked with a wrecked chariot, a kicking, plunging mass of horses. And Ericus the Briton tore on to victory.

Nero stared through his emerald coldly. The wreck of Paris's chariot did not please him. The actor was his favourite. But at the shouts that acclaimed the victor, he forced a smile to his face, and took up the laurel wreath with which to crown Ericus.

Grim-faced the Briton marched up to the master of Rome. It seemed as if he were about to raise his arm in salute, but he did not. Suddenly with a shout—

"Incendiary! Hear me all—Nero hath planned to burn Rome!"—he dashed in, caught the Emperor round his rather ample middle, and yanked him sheer out of the box.

In a few strides he had reached his chariot with his royal captive, and, as he urged his horses, they sprang forward into their stride again, racing for Rome.

Behind sounded wild cries—sounds of pursuit. The *Augustales* were driving their chariots madly. This big, grim barbarian had captured the divine Cæsar.

Rome A-Fire.

"WE'LL beat them, eh, Scipio! Jugurtha!" cried Ericus in his strangely deep, musical voice.

He tore through the Ostian Gate, his horses' hoofs making a tremendous clatter on the flagstones. The sun had burst forth in all its glory by now, but there were few people about to gape as the chariot careered along the Flaminian way. All Rome, it seemed, had gone to the Circus.

It would go hard with him now if he were caught,

got to his feet in the chariot, leaning over, trying to grasp at the reins, making desperate efforts to pull up the chariot. But now they were flying round the top wall of the Circus Maximus, and looking down as if into a great bowl, they saw a sea of faces.

"Hail, mighty Cæsar! Hail Ericus the Briton!"

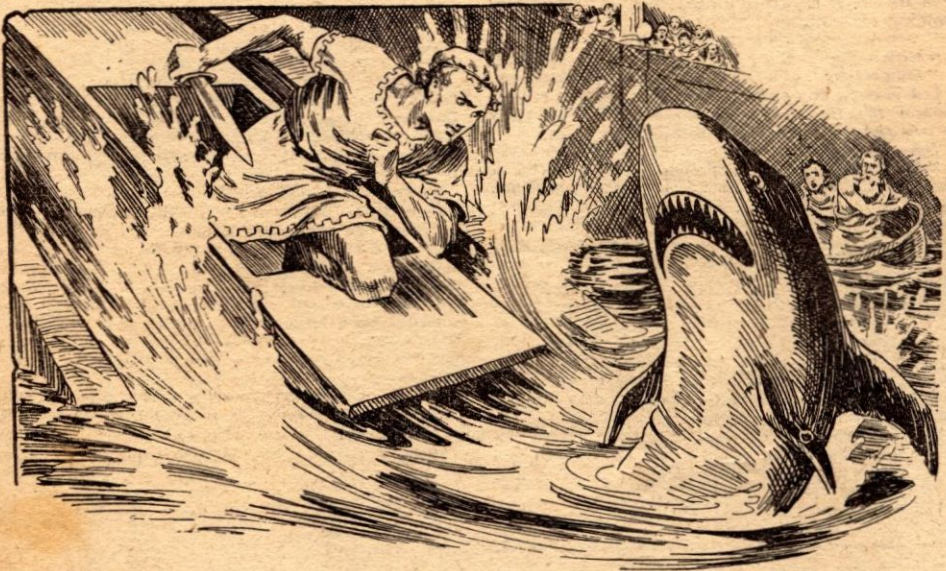
It looked as if those two were driving the chariot together round the Circus walls. And the crowd went mad with delight to see their Emperor thus, in the company of the idol of the Circus.

But now, suddenly, as the chariot raced round the walls for the triumphal arch, it happened. Smoke and flames rose from that great arch leading over to the Palatine hill! It was on fire!

A terrified mad yell burst from the thousands crammed in the Circus Maximus as they saw it.

The Briton's team of white Parthian steeds thundered on to the bridge, through clouds of dense stifling smoke. The bridge underfoot was crackling flame. Terrified, yet game, the horses plunged on.

Ericus had but one thought in his mind now—to reach Nero's Golden House. There, right over the Alban mountains, pipes were laid on from the sea.



ORDEAL BY WATER.—The shark's white belly gleamed as it came for a full third of its length out of the water—rearing to charge at Ericus.

for the *Augustales* would have excuse now to put the hated British chariot driver to death.

As for the Cæsar himself, he was crouched down in terror, half-swooning, so much did the chariot sway and jump in its mad flight.

He came in sight of the Circus Maximus. They would never catch him now. He sent his horses tearing up the long slope of Nero's newly constructed arch. It was all made of wood, as many of his structures were. It ran right round the high walls of the Circus Maximus, this triumphal way, and then by an immense aqueduct it bridged the gulf over to the Palatine hill.

Racing up to the high walls of the Circus, Ericus was suddenly surprised to see Nero come to life. He

if he could have those pipes turned on, and set the water flowing down the aqueduct—

The other charioteers had stayed, appalled, on the walls of the Circus. To risk their lives on that burning bridge—not they. Ericus, however, was determined to reach the aqueduct pipes—or perish with Nero.

At last! The gates of Nero's palace were before Ericus. He dashed his horses through, and raced to the Imperial reservoir, supplied by the *Aqua Claudia*.

Ericus knew that the workmen there could feed the supply of water through pipes to the burning bridge, for such had been the intention, to supply the Circus with water. Quickly now he commanded the workmen to open the pipes, and his command

was backed up by the presence of Caesar himself. The workmen soon got to work.

Racing back to the gates, the charioteer saw the huge earthen pipes belch water on to the wooden bridge. The flood of water tore down on its switch-back course, rapidly extinguishing the flames in a great hissing cloud of steam and smoke.

Rome was saved!

Centurians, toiling up the long hill in their chariots, arrived at the palace gates to inform the Emperor Nero that he was the hero of the vast mobs. He and Ericus. They believed that their Caesar had driven them in order to save Rome.

The Caesar recovered his colour somewhat. He smiled.

"By Pollux, it was well done," he said. "How we drove, you and I, Ericus, eh? We literally flew like Icarus."

His gross, red face, with its curls and garland, lit to a queer aura by the stomacher of green gems he wore, took on a meaning look as he met Ericus's surprised stare. The Briton's eyes became cold and hard.

"Oh, divine Majesty, I have the papers to prove that there was a plot to burn Rome," he whispered, bending forward.

"You will give those to me," said Nero, smiling, but with a glare in his eyes like that of a jungle beast.

"Of a surety," said the gladiator, folding his arms. "But it must be only when the greatest and best of Caesars releases the British prisoners from their fetters and the terrible fate destined for them."

Nero looked sour.

"You press me hard, Briton," he said with a threat in his voice. "But this time I give in. Tonight, in the Circus, the prisoners shall be handed over to you."

In the Circus Maximus

IN the height of the day Caesar appeared at the Circus Maximus—and never was such a triumph for the vain Emperor. The great mobs rose to him.

And then, when his flatterers had persuaded him to play and sing from his gorgeously decorated tribune, there was dead silence in the Circus as he took up his lyre! The crash of cheers that greeted the song's end! The greatest and best of Caesars!

Such fulsome flattery and adulation went to the inane Nero's head. More than once there had come a cry for Ericus, the great gladiator. He, too, had driven to save Rome.

But Nero was determined that the demon charioteer should not share in his triumph.

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BOYS' MAGAZINE LEAGUE COUPON.

Boys' Magazine, 29/7/33.

"By Pollux, his next appearance in the arena shall be his last!" Nero swore to himself as he leant forward in his chair, like some mighty sinister god. He commanded silence with an upraised arm, and a dead hush fell instantly.

"Friends, Romans," he cried in his weak voice, which nevertheless carried shrilly throughout the amphitheatre. "At dark, Ericus, the gladiator, will appear before you on yonder rostrum"—he pointed to the high wall opposite, to which a fight of stone steps led up. "The gladiator will demonstrate to you his powers afresh in a strange contest," he added meaningly.

And the vast mob was thrilled. For to see Ericus fight was a great circus sight—and too rarely seen.

ERICUS the Briton little dreamed of the trap into which he was falling as he mounted the stone steps to the high rostrum in the Circus Maximus that night to receive the frenzied, delighted acclaim of the mob of Rome.

How they cheered as he stood there on the heights, with great, brass swinging lamps overhead revealing the wondrous symmetry of his form.

Ericus believed that the captives from Britain were to be delivered to him by the Caesar now. Up this fight of steps, he could lead them over the Triumphal Arch, out of the Circus and to safety.

Suddenly the wild cheering and the thunderclap noise produced by the stamping of feet on the wooden flooring ceased. A dead silence fell.

Ericus gripped his hands. Dark gratings beneath those white walls opened, and the Britons came into the arena.

They walked, quite calm and composed, some with folded arms. Giants of men most of them were, clad only in animal skins and sandals. The mob watched tensely. Nearer and nearer the barbarians approached the stone steps leading up to the heights where Ericus the Briton stood. It was a strange and eerie scene, and it held the mob quiet, watchful, tense.

Suddenly a hoarse shout exploded from Ericus's lips.

"Caesar hath tricked me!"

These were not captive Britons at all; he recognised them now. They were a company of giant Gauls, notorious in Rome because they were slaves of the actor, Paris, and acted as his bodyguard.

Even as he recognised them, the Gauls broke into a determined rush, making for the steps of the rostrum.

As they mounted up the stone steps like a charging company of shock troops, the Briton realised the trap into which he had fallen. To the tensely watching crowds it would look as though he had willingly undertaken to fight against such fearful odds. But almost certainly he would be overcome, the precious papers would be taken from him, and he would meet his death.

Ericus, however, after the first shock of surprise, tensed to resist the onslaught. As the foremost man came at him, Ericus sprang at him, and they crashed together with a fearful shock.

Ericus, however, quickly recovered, and, catching his enemy in a wrestler's embrace, he lifted him high above his head. A piercing shriek of fear left the giant Gaul's lips as Ericus hurled him through the air.

"Ah!" A mighty gasp went up from the populace as the body of the giant Gaul was dashed lifeless on the stone flags of the arena far beneath.

But that was only one; another had closed with Ericus in mortal combat. While others sought to come to close quarters, these two blended as if in one mass, while their bones cracked and their teeth grinded under the terrific strain.

Then suddenly it was all over. By some trick of wrestling the Gaul was sent catapulting through the air. A mighty gasp went up from the dense crowd to echo the thud of his body on the flagstones far beneath.

Now they were all around him, but Ericus the Briton could not be held down. With a sudden burst he was free, and another man was hurled from aloft to his doom.

During this terribly unequal struggle Nero had appeared on the high stone parapet by the side of the gladiator. Bodies were falling, like leaves it seemed, for Ericus, aflame with anger, had hurled three more of the giants to their doom in quick succession. And now the rest were fleeing precipitately in terror from this gladiator, who seemed like a man possessed.

But the strange thing was that, in the flickering, uncertain light of the lanterns overhead, it seemed to the fiercely yelling populace that Nero, the Emperor of Rome himself, had taken some part in this vanquishing of the mighty Gauls. For the Emperor, cunning to a degree, had been making motions as if fighting off a horde of enemies.

The din of shouting that now went up at Ericus's amazing victory was for Nero as well as the mighty Briton.

"Hail, Ericus, the great gladiator!"

"Hail, mighty Cæsar! *Habet*—he has it! Greatest and best of Cæsars! He is no mere man, but a god!"

The mighty Briton turned storming upon the Emperor of Rome, his eyes flashing with anger.

"Hath tricked me, O illustrious Cæsar," growled the demon charioteer. "Yea, verily, thou hast robbed me of the papers," he added in a sudden gust of terrible anger as he felt beneath the folds of his tunic, to find that the papers were gone. The cunning Cæsar, or else one of the Gauls, had taken them from him surreptitiously during the struggle.

In his anger he made a terrible gesture, as if to hurl the treacherous Cæsar to the flagstones twenty feet below.

"Stay—for pity's sake!" cried Cæsar, terrified. "It would mean your death. The populace would tear you limb from limb!"

The Briton paused, collected himself. He realised the truth of the Cæsar's words. In a sense he had acted as Nero's danger double, and had made him appear as a hero in the eyes of the populace. Nero, seeing the gladiator's indecision, added cunningly:

"Behold, they are flooding the arena for the *Naumachia*—the sea spectacle. Hark to me, Ericus. I have a plan by which the captives from Britain may go free."

Perforce Ericus the Briton listened to the cunning Nero.

Lictors had swiftly dashed into the arena, and the bodies of the slain Gauls were removed to the *spoliarium*. Everything was done with dispatch. Now hissing pipes commenced to flood water into the arena. The impatient populace cheered and stamped.

In ten minutes the mighty arena looked like the canal at Venice, lit by fairy lamps, swinging in profusion on cables overhead.

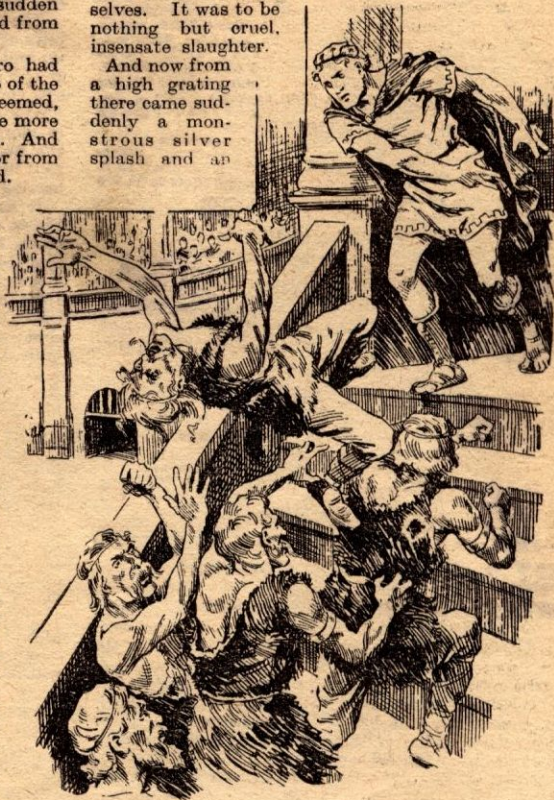
The bloated Cæsar, standing with the great gladiator on the heights of the Circus wall, had cunningly expounded the plan that had come into his fertile brain.

Already, from a high grating ten cockleshell boats, used by the Britons in those ancient times, had been

propelled into the flooded arena, each boat containing a captive from the far-off isle.

The eyes of the mighty Briton on the walls were narrowed with fear and anger; for he saw that his compatriots had naught but their paddles with which to defend themselves. It was to be nothing but cruel, insensate slaughter.

And now from a high grating there came suddenly a monstrous silver splash and an



THE GLADIATORIAL SAMSON.—A piercing shriek of fear left the Gaul's lips as Ericus flung him through the air.

upflung geyser of water from the arena—the shark had come on the scene; a monstrous grey nurse shark it was, netted by fishermen, off a far-off coast.

There are few things, if any, more swift than a grey nurse. With a sinuous sweep of its tail, the great elliptical brute flashed away through the dark waters, but seen by the thunderous thousands of the populace. The mighty amphitheatre resounded to a din as of a million steam syrens.

The demon charioteer drew a hissing breath as he watched.

"See, O great gladiator," said the cunning Cæsar. "Take this sword, and this mask—and go kill the shark. Then your countrymen shall be freed. I, Cæsar and Emperor of Rome, swear it!"

Nero held out to the Briton a lifelike mask of himself. It was made by the mummers of the theatre of Pompei for him.

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He had it in his mind that if Ericus killed the shark, the great amphitheatre would resound to the cheers of the mob, for him, Cæsar, the great immortal. If Ericus died, the waters streaked with his gore—well, he, Cæsar, would come to life again in his box, to receive the cheers of the multitude. It was a plan to deify himself in the eyes of the mob.

Ericus knew all this, but he snatched at the mask in feverish haste. A scheme, too, had hatched in his brain. He put not his trust in this corrupt, crazed emperor, but in himself.

"By the Druid's Stone, I'll do it!" he cried through the raging tumult of the mob.

In a few moments he had sprung up the steps to the great waterchute, slanting down into the flooded arena. A gondola-like boat was held in the water that poured down from the tanks, and a Centurion handed the gladiator his short broadsword as he climbed into the boat.

"Let go! Away!" shouted the grim-faced Ericus.

A mighty shove, and the craft was hurtling down the long waterchute.

Suddenly, Ericus remembered the mask of Cæsar, and he put it over his face a moment as the boat swished down under the canopy of fairy lights.

Such a swell of acclaim rose from the great Circus Maximus then as threatened to rend the walls. They thought it was Cæsar, fickle mob, swayed by any mad, reckless act of bravery!

Swoosh! With a mighty splash the craft entered the water. Ericus had no need of the mask now. He hurled it from him—for a massive dark streak, indistinct in its swiftness, came for him.

The shark's white belly gleamed, as it came a

full third of its length out of the water in a plunge at the gladiator's craft. Its massive jaws crunched the ornamented prow with the pressure of millstones. Its great body thrashed against the craft, capsized it. Ericus was swept through the water as though he had been caught broadside in a breaker.

The shark turned in a flash, and charged back, its jaws agape. As it came, the gladiator suddenly shot up and over it, his body curved like a bent bow and struck downwards for the vulnerable spot, the small, soft spot on the crown of its head.

The great shark lashed madly and rocketed away in mortal agony, blinded in one eye. Sheer out of the water it hurtled, and there was a cannon crash as it hit again, and tore blindly forward like a rocket, leaving a trail of blood in its wake.

It crashed against the arena wall, and the very Circus seemed to shake. Then it lay still, lolling on the heaving water, dead, while the arena thundered and thundered again to the cheers of the mob.

But Ericus was striking through the water to the Britons in their half-flooded cockleshell boats. His own plan was now to be put into effect, and he shouted to them, told them to dive under the water with him.

For Ericus had seen the effect as he hurled down the Gauls from that high rostrum. Their bodies had hit a certain large flagstone, and had up-ended it. Ericus had heard that there was a secret way out of the arena into the catacombs under the Aventine hill; he had seen the *victors* hastily replacing the large flagstone, and he knew he had tumbled upon that secret exit.

Now, diving sheer down, he groped about with his hands, and presently encountered a ring bolt; he pressed, and the pressure of water aiding him, the cunningly devised flagstone was up-ended, and the water surged through.

Through in the boiling flood darted Ericus, and after him the captives he had rescued. They were swept along through a broad passage that presently widened out into the catacombs, the water flowing away into the broad Tiber near by.

In the Circus, Nero was taking the cheers of the multitude. The flooded arena, now bared, revealed no sign of the captive Britons or Ericus. To the mob it seemed a miracle. And Cæsar had done it.

Thrilling, eh? But just wait until you get on to "The Phantom of the Pueblos"—a grand, long yarn featuring the Dandy Cowboy. It appears complete next week. Don't miss the elastic motor for your B.M. Model 'Plane.

'PLANES BY POST.

If you missed the parts for

OUR GRAND FLYING MODEL MONOPLANE

given last week, send immediately to

The EDITOR,

"Boys' Magazine,"

200, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1,

enclosing 3½d. in stamps (2d. for the fuselage, mainplanes, tail, rudder and chassis, and 1½d. for postage). Only a limited number of these are for disposal.

FULL INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT THIS WEEK'S GIFT.

ASSEMBLING OUR FREE MODEL 'PLANE!

**THIS WEEK: HOW TO FIT THE
NOSE-CAP AND PROPELLER.**



THE envelope inside every copy of this week's *Boys' Magazine* contains the metal nose-cap and the metal propeller blank. Next week you will be given the special elastic, the propeller shaft, and the retaining pin which secures the elastic inside the fuselage at the rear or tail end.

You will already have assembled the cardboard parts presented with last week's issue, and I urge you not to become over-anxious to see the machine flying but to wait until next week until all of the parts are in your hands. For one thing you must use the correct quantity and size of elastic, and you will need also to study the special flying instructions which will be included in next week's issue.

A model aeroplane will not fly with any sort of elastic; the correct quantity as well as the correct quality (that is to say, having the necessary degree of elasticity) must be used, otherwise either too much or too little power will be developed and the model will fail to fly. The elastic to be given next week is of the correct length and careful tests have been made regarding the exact number of turns to be placed on the elastic skein, so may I repeat the warning to wait.



Fig. A.—If the nose cap will not fit over the nose of the fuselage, open it a little with the round end of a bradawl handle or similar tool.

propeller shaft will be passed. The back edge of the nose-cap (the saucer edge so to speak) has a slight outward bend, and it is probable that the cardboard nose of your model will not immediately enter it. A little careful shaping of the nose of the model, so that its square section is altered to a round section, will ensure that it neatly and tightly enters the nose-cap.

If you still find that you are unable to make the nose-cap fit, you may slightly spread the nose-cap itself with a bradawl handle as shown in the sketch (Fig. A). Fig. C shows the nose-cap correctly fitted.

Take a little trouble with the fitting of the nose-cap; if you make it too free a fit this will not matter because the tension of the elastic will keep it in place.

You can now turn your attention to the propeller, and this is really the most important part of the model, for unless it is correctly shaped (which you must do by bending the blades in opposite directions) you will waste a great deal of the power which you store up in the elastic by winding it. Very carefully study diagram B, and you cannot go wrong. Each

tip should make Fig. C.—A view of the nose, showing an angle with the nose cap forced over the front of the fuselage. about 30 degrees. You will find that the special tin-plate of which the propeller is made bends quite easily, and that you will easily be able to correct any inaccuracies in bending.

The propeller is made to unwind in an anti-clockwise direction, and when the model is held in the hand and the propeller released, it should drive a column of air towards the tail. The propeller will not drive the model if wound the wrong way.

Many beginners think that it does not matter in which direction the propeller revolves; this, of course, is quite wrong. If you have a file handy you may remove any burrs on the edges of the propeller. You may also be making a mental note of the position in which the propeller shaft, to be given next week, is attached. That, too, may only be attached one

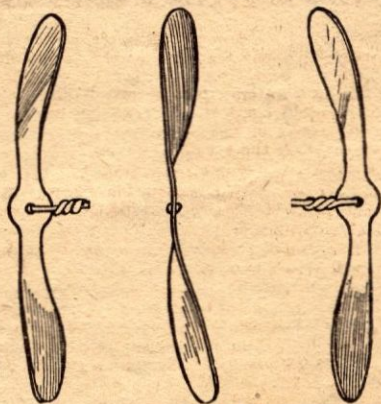
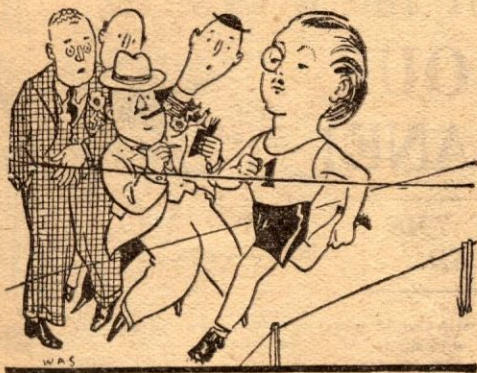


Fig. B.—These three diagrams show three views of a correctly bent propeller. The left-hand sketch is a side view, the centre sketch is a front view (looking towards the tail), and the right-hand sketch is an opposite side view to that on the left.

way, so that the propeller acts as a tractor, not a pusher. When unwinding the hollow sides of the propeller blades meet the air first.

The three views will make the shaping of the propeller quite easy. Having arrived at this stage, finally go over the model to make quite certain that each mainplane is bowed up the correct amount, that the camber is exactly the same on both wings, that the rudder is perfectly upright, that the tail is true

(Continued on page 8 of Thrill Library.)



As the judges stand agape,
Before the winner breaks the tape
Says the Runner.....

Sharp's the word
and
Sharp's the Toffee
I like best of all

DOOM TO THE FLYING CIRCUS

(Continued from page 31.)

have you—and you are very precious to your dog of a master."

"Meaning Mr. Hannibal Sangster?"

"Even so," purred the Avenger. "Listen. You see where you are. This is a room in the mosque of El Kantora."

Dick gave a start. El Kantora! Then he wasn't more than a mile away from his pals of the Flying Circus.

"You have been brought here as the bait that will bring the circus to its doom. In a little while I shall have a visitor—the honourable Hannibal Sangster. He comes at my bidding—to discuss terms. Also—"

He broke off suddenly as a gong tinkled far away. His lips parted in an evil smile, he turned to Don.

"He comes. You shall hear, but not see nor speak." He spun round on his two servants. "Gag the dog."

It was done in a moment. Roped to the pillar, Dick could not lift a finger nor make a sound. In a sort of helpless despair he watched Hsuan pass through a doorway into a room beyond, leaving the two servants of the Scarred Hand to guard him. From the same room, a moment later, came an outraged voice which he recognised as Hannibal Sangster's.

"Where's that yellow hound?"

Dick would have given anything for the chance to shout one word of warning to the boss of the Flying Circus. He knew without any doubting that Hsuan had prepared a trap—that, with the springing of that trap, doom, complete and certain, would descend upon the circus. But Dick could only listen hopelessly to the voices which came with startling clearness through the closed door.

"Listen, you yellow hound!" Dick could imagine

the circus boss shaking a beefy fist in the Avenger's face. "You've got Dick Derring here! Lemme tell you this, you dirty double-crosser, if you don't hand him over, here and now, I—I'll—"

"Silence!" interrupted Hsuan. "If it were my will, my followers could strike you down ere you could touch that weapon in your pocket. But I am ready to make an arrangement with you, foreign devil. You have under arrest a certain servant of mine the honourable Dr. Fu—also a jade Buddha that is my property—"

"And what if I have?"

"Also," continued the Avenger suavely, "I have certain young man named Derring, who is dear to you. Let me tell you, there is nothing I would like better than to tear him limb from limb—to put out his eyes—to rend his flesh with red-hot pincers. But, I am willing to surrender this youth if you, in turn, surrender Dr. Fu and the jade Buddha. Your answer, foreign devil?"

There was a long silence. Sangster hesitated. He knew that surrender of the Buddha meant a dreadful doom for the world. On the other hand, refusal to surrender it meant death—and a terrible death—for Dick Derring. And Sangster loved Dick as if he were his own son. Dick or the world?

Sangster's answer came at last.

"Guess you've got me. It's a deal! I'll swap the Buddha and grand-dad for Dick. Where is he?"

Hsuan laughed softly.

"I want some assurance that you will keep your share of the bargain before I hand him over," he said suavely. "Also I cannot produce him at once, since he is far from here."

"And suppose I don't trust you?" put in Sangster.

Hsuan shrugged. "The feeling is mutual. Listen, here is an arrangement to satisfy both of us. At sunset you shall bring Dr. Fu and the Buddha to the mosque here, and so that you may know in time that I am ready to hand over the youth, he shall be shown upon the platform at the mosque tower, from which the *mueddin* chants his call to prayer. It is agreed?"

"Reck'n I can't do anything else," growled Sangster. "But—lemme tell you this! If you've hurt so much as a hair of that boy's head, I'll smash you yet—and that's my last word. S'long!"

As he heard the sound of his retreating footfalls Dick made one last desperate effort to make a sound.

But the effort availed nothing. A moment later the Red Avenger returned to the room.

"You heard, foreign devil?" he purred, a mocking grin in his slant eyes. "At sunset Dr. Fu and the Buddha will be in my hands. Harken to the wisdom of the Red Avenger. You will indeed appear upon the *mueddin*'s tower. But that is a sacred place that cannot lightly be defiled by the touch of an infidel. Also ye know that this is the time of a great Moslem feast, and the city is filled with Arabs who bear hatred for the infidels in their breasts. While waiting for the *mueddin*'s call to prayer, they will see you on the sacred tower."

Hsuan's smile grew wider.

"A little stone may start an avalanche. You understand? Smaller things than that have started a holy war. And when they see the holy *mueddin* fall from the tower, apparently slain by your hand, naught will stay their wrath. They will burn the Flying Circus with fire and put all within it to the sword.

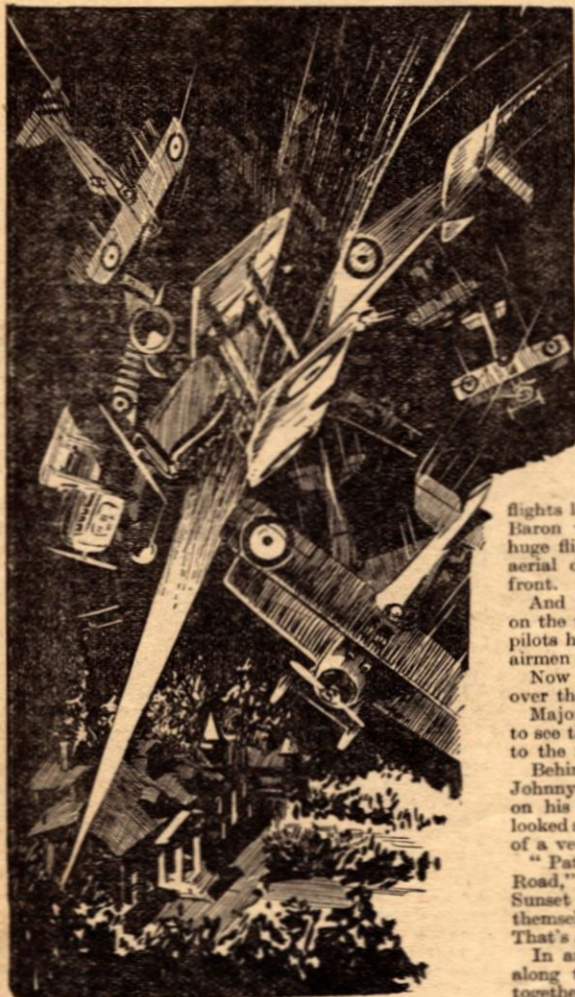
One more episode—the most thrilling of all—then we say "Good-bye" to the pals of the Flying Circus. Get ready to give them a rousing send-off next week, chums.

KNIGHTS OF THE AIR! MORE SKY HIGH THRILLS WITH THE ACES OF THE CLOUDS IN THIS GRIPPING COMPLETE SHOCK TALE.

CLOUD ACES!

The Chateau
THIS WEEK: *of Secrets*

Drama, Excitement,
Mystery, Thrill on Thrill
in This Grand War-time
Flying Tale, Chums!



Sunset Patrol Mystery.

FIVE pursuit ships were on the line of the Red Devils' drome, five red-and-blue Bristol fighters, trembling, straining to be off the leash.

The rays of the setting sun flashed on their wings, on the machine-guns that nestled against the cowls, and brought sharply into relief the grim men, helmeted, goggled and swathed in heavy clothes who climbed into the cockpits.

They banded jokes, retorts. Fighting grins were on their faces. "Hope we get some perfectly good Huns!" sang out the leader of the flight.

The rest of the squadron was out on the field to see them off. There was an air of tenseness, excitement. Everyone felt the hot flush of victory.

At dawn that morning the Nth. Pursuit Squadron, the famous Red Devils, had taken the air, all five

flights led by Johnny Chisholm. And they had met Baron von Fulke's feared tango circus. The two huge flights clashed, and there followed the fiercest aerial dogfight that ever raged over the Western front.

And now thirty of von Fulke's ships lay smashed on the terrain of France, thirty of his crack fighting pilots had gone to whatever Valhalla is reserved for airmen of the war.

Now it was the turn of the sunset patrol to fly over the lines, the last flight of the day.

Major Drissol, the C.O., had come out in person to see the departure, and he was talking in low tones to the flight commander.

Behind him stood a bronzed young flight lieutenant, Johnny Chisholm, in his khaki, with the silver wings on his breast gleaming above decoration ribbons, looked scarcely more than a boy. But he had the poise of a veteran ace.

"Patrol the lines in the direction of the Malmaison Road," Major Drissol was saying to the leader of the Sunset Patrol. "But don't fly over the woods themselves—and keep clear of the Chateau Noir. That's all. Take off, and good luck!"

In another moment the five ships were shooting along the field. They banked, roared, and came together high above the ground, where they jockeyed into formation and tore for the front.

As the racket of their engines died away, Johnny lit a cigarette.

"Well, they're gone!" he said in an odd, hard voice.

A hand clapped on his shoulders. Behind him stood a big blond skyman, inches taller than Johnny and thicker set, with a handsome, utterly reckless face. It was Squadron-Leader Ian Craisholm.

"Smatter, fellow!"

The big, blond warbird was smiling, his eyes warm on his brother. "Everybody else is frightfully bucked. Lord, what a job you did to-day. Got nearly all the Heinies, kid."

"Nearly all—except von Fulke himself," said Johnny in a low tone.

His brother laughed and clapped his hand affectionately on his shoulder. "Come in the Major's office, and we'll talk this over," he said.

Thus far he had no chance to discuss matters, for he had been under doctor's orders to rest owing to his eyes, injured in a night-bombing raid against von Fulke. But his eyes were all right again now. He sat down in the Major's office, curious to learn why Johnny was so tense, watchful.

"Now, let's have it, fellow," he said quietly.

Johnny's fair brows were knit. "I ought to have got Baron von Fulke," he burst out. "I had him clear in my sights, but he got away from me. Look here, Ian, the Baron isn't the sort to be smashed like that. It's, maybe, a bad hunch—but I feel things are going to happen. I dunno. Let's wait until the patrol comes back—if it does!"

It was a long wait. An hour-and-a-half lengthened into two, and still no sound of the drone and roar of motors outside. Gradually the tension grew.

The telephone bell cut into their inner thoughts. Major Drissol took up the receiver, and his mouth under his close-clipped moustache suddenly tightened.

"Yes? Major Drissol, C.O. Nth Pursuit, speaking." There came the sound of a distant voice talking into the receiver, and the Major clicked it back on the hook slowly.

"You were right," he said slowly, painfully. "The whole flight of five 'planes gone—vanished. That was Artillery getting in touch with me. One of their observation 'planes saw our flight. They were making after a Fokker Flight, who were tearing away over the Foret de Gar. And then suddenly our 'planes dropped their noses, and went spinning down to the forest. Gad! I tell you this is terrible—what ghastly thing has hit us?"

Johnny had stood up. He was breathing sharply. "The Foret de Gar," he repeated. "That's where the Chateau Noir is—you remember, Ian, we were forced down in the grounds with a defective engine. It suddenly and mysteriously went wrong."

"Yes. The Professor von Fulke, that devilish German scientist who took us prisoners, boasted that he did it with some sort of ray," said Ian dubiously. "But—"

"Depend on it, that's what's brought the flight down," said Johnny quickly. "As soon as the Professor extends the range of that ray—why, he can wipe out every Allied ship in the air. We've got to get to the Chateau of Secrets, Ian—find out what it is—and smash this thing!"

The Challenge From The Air.

A FLAT, throaty drone came quivering through the waiting stillness.

"They're coming back," hissed the Major, darting outside the office. Out on the field all the rest of the squadron were peering anxiously up into the night sky.

The sound grew louder and nearer.

"Those are not British engines—they're Mercedes motors!" Blurted Johnny. "It's a Fokker flight—they're raiding us."

Instantly the Major gave a startled oath and darted away. In a few moments the 'drome was transformed. Great moving white beams of searchlights were probing up into the sky to find the raiders, and when they lit on five tiny black mosquito-like spots—the Fokker flight—the anti-aircraft guns started to crack.

But the Fokkers were flying high, and they did not dip their noses.

Suddenly Ian gave a startled cry.

"One's hit!"

Hoocoom! It was coming down in a crazy falling leaf. And clear in the cold searchlight's beam the watchers saw streamers of ebony black smoke issuing from it. Now it was coming down in its last crash-dive, to dig its nose in the field.

But no! The 'plane's nose jerked up from disaster, screaming low over the ground. Ian saw something that made his teeth click together. In the cockpit of that howling 'plane sat a live German, and as he roared over the field he pulled off his sinister black flying helmet.

He was revealed, the monocle in his eye flashing fiendishly, his square head shaven so that it looked like a skull. It was the Baron Frederich von Fulke, Germany's supreme air ace.

Certainly he could fly. That idea of lighting flares to his 'plane, to make believe he was on fire, and coming down in a nosedive needed nerve and skill.

"Look! He's dropped something—a message container!" cried Ian.

They raced for it and picked it up. As the 'plane zoomed up, roaring away into the darkness, Ian and Johnny, with the Major peering over their shoulders, read the insulting challenge of Germany's premier ace.

To Kapitän Ian Chisholm,

Fool's luck has made you an ace of the clouds. I challenge you to meet me in personal combat at noon to-morrow directly over the lines between our two airdromes.

No other 'plane of the German Imperial Air Arm will be in the sky. I give you my word.

With compliments,

RITTMESTER THE BARON FREDERICH VON FÜLKE.

"The rotter!" rapped Johnny indignantly. "It's some sort of trap, Ian; I shouldn't take it on."

"But—I'm going to," chuckled the big, blond skyman grimly as he carefully folded the piece of paper.

He wrote his reply, terse and to the point, accepting the challenge, while he had a ship warmed up for flight.

An hour later he dropped the message on the German Baron's drome.

* * * * *

BY dawn the next morning the news that the British and German aces were to clash in the clouds had spread all over the sector.

Officers provided themselves with field glasses, and the Tommies in the trenches eagerly looked forward to the air duel.

As for Ian and Johnny, until well into the wee sma' hours they planned and talked with Major Drissol.

Flight-Sergeant Tornado Wills came into the office, saluted, and sat hunched over the table with the strained flight officers for two hours. Then he went out, and the furious roar of a motor-cycle broke out. Tornado drove away.

By the break of dawn, the big flight-sergeant had become attached to the balloon section. In fact morning's light saw him four thousand feet high in the air in the bobbing basket of an observation balloon—"a darned rubber pig," as the big flight-sergeant called it disgustingly.

Still he knew the value of the great swaying, bobbing balloons.

That balloon was right over the Malmaison Road, and from his swaying lurching basket, the big sky-sergeant could overlook the woods. More, through strong binoculars he could see the Chateau Noir. It had until lately been a secret German 'drome, the quarters of the Hun front-line espionage.

The red devils had bombed it thoroughly, however, and the Huns had changed base in a hurry.

Tornado's job was to report anything he might see going on at the Chateau of Secrets. The Major sent out the dawn patrol the next morning, with instructions to steer clear of the woods, and to avoid combat, if possible. He did not want to lose another flight, if he could help it.

The dawn patrol came teetering back for breakfast, all five 'planes intact, at which the Major heaved a sigh of relief. But the pilots told of their motors "conking," of long glides to get home. They had seen the flash of Fokker wings, but not been attacked. "I tell you it's Professor von Fulke's beastly ray," said Johnny excitedly. "He's developing the range; I bet he's working day and night." Major Drissol's mouth tightened. "You bombed

coming through in the morse code from Tornado Wills in the observation balloon.

Have seen men in grounds Chateau Noir. Evidently from their actions, they are filling in holes made by bombs.

Seen no 'planes landing, but this looks as though they are preparing the chateau as a 'drome again.

Silence followed. The Major looked at his two officers. "We're going to send out a flight to bomb that infernal chateau." "No, don't do that—" began Johnny, when a door opened and an orderly came in. He brought a message from Baron von Fulke.

In insulting terms the Baron asked that Tornado's observation balloon be hauled in for the fight in the sky at twelve o'clock.

And when I have killed you (he added), I am going to kill off your flight, one by one.

"I thought it was a trick," flashed Johnny. "They want to get that balloon out of the sky. Tell 'em no!"

He jumped up. "Major, I suggest I go out and ride herd on that balloon," he said quickly. "The Huns will try to knock it down now they've discovered it."

"Right," said Major Drissol. And Johnny saluted quickly and raced out of the room.

Ian's duel in the air with Baron von Fulke was to take place at twelve o'clock, and it was now but eight in the morning. Johnny raced for the hangars.

In a few moments more the roar of a Spad's engine broke out, spluttering, choking. The lad in flying "Teddy bears" climbed in and goosed the motor. He took off in a surging, toppling run, and lifted in a long slant into the sky.

Ten minutes later he was thundering with throttle wide high over the lines. He looked down at the snake-like, writhing trenches, erupting volumes of rolling smoke, punctuated by flashes of fire.

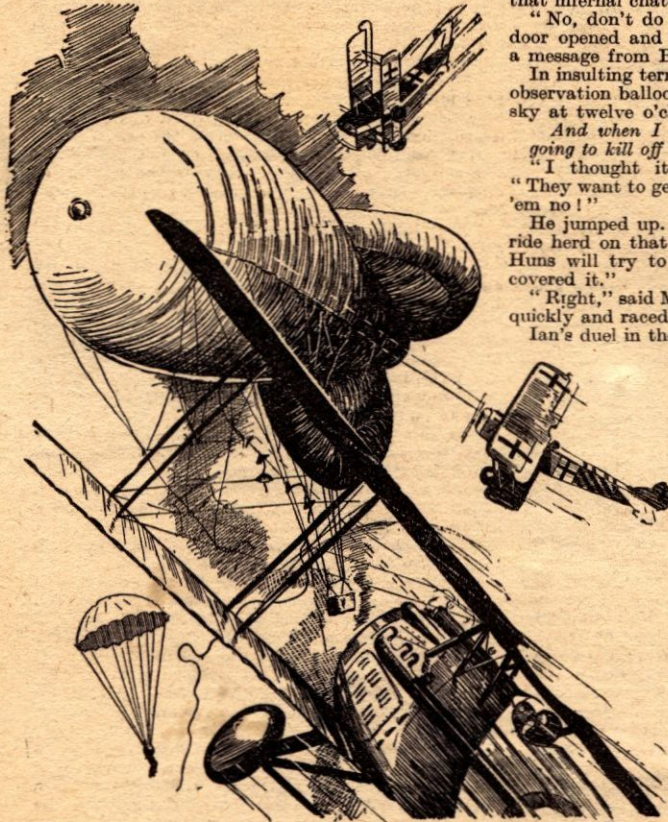
His thoughts broke off.

Looking ahead, he saw the ungainly shape of the sausage three miles distant. It hung ludicrously in the air at about four thousand feet, yawing towards the north. Then suddenly his face went white and his breath hissed between his teeth. Out of the clouds directly above the "rubber big" came two "Heinie divers."

One was slightly ahead of the other, and they were diving down the half-mile of sky from the cloud at terrific speed. Howling down, with guns ripping out long bursts of flame-centred tracer smoke.

Flight-Sergeant Wills' other observer in the basket with him had jumped. His figure brought up with a jerk five hundred feet below as his parachute blossomed out in a burst of white cloth.

But not the big sky sergeant—he had orders to stay with the balloon. A snap glance showed Johnny that Tornado was standing, holding his binoculars to his eyes. Then he pencilled swiftly on a chart attached to a piece of three-ply. Gallant Tornado was doing his job to the last, though death flashed and roared down at him.



THE BATTLE FOR THE BALLOON.—Hands clamped on the Bowden trips of his guns, Johnny hurtled straight for the steel cable. He must release the balloon—or the Heinies would shoot it down.

that chateau once. Why didn't you raze it to the ground?" he flashed.

"I tell you we tried," said the boyish young flight-lieutenant earnestly. "Our bombs ringed all around the chateau—it's got a strange, cupola tower. But darned if we could get a direct hit on that chateau. There's something uncanny about it."

With slitted eyes the officers in conference looked at one another over the table. The atmosphere was charged tight with a tension that seemed as if it must burst in a torrent of ungovernable menace—danger—death to their gallant flying boys.

Suddenly there was a violent thrumming from the radio in Major Drissol's room. A message was

Johnny closed his eyes to shut out that scene.

When he opened them again, however, a wild shout of relief tore from his throat as he saw the familiar shape of the sausage, still yawing on the end of its cable.

The first attack had failed. The diving Boche, seeing an Allied ship coming up at them in a sheer zoom, had veered from their target to smash it down. There was a Boche sitting on Johnny's tail now, and his bullets were stitching holes along his fuselage.

The ground crew were now pulling the sausage in on its cable. But they were too slow—too slow. If Johnny could not fight off the Fokkers, Sergeant Willis was a goner.

For a few moments Johnny fought wildly, flashing about the sky. A Fokker flashed past, and he fired instantly. The two Fokkers were round him like a mad catherine wheel—before his sights, then gone.

A sudden fear got him that he had lost one. Zooming sheer up, he turned over on his back, coming out at a higher elevation. Just as he expected, one of the Boche was climbing back in the direction of the sausage.

Johnny gritted his teeth as he went across the sky at him like a stabbing rapier, his Vickers jumping, stuttering crazily along the cowl, empty shells flying away in the slipstream. The Fokker banked away, and once again the sausage was saved.

But Johnny knew it could not go on for ever. And suddenly a wild idea came into his brain. He'd turn his guns on the steel cable which held the balloon. A prolonged burst would snap it, send the sausage soaring up into the clouds quicker than any plane could climb.

Banking around, he thundered straight for the steel cable. His hands were clamped down on the Bowden trips of his guns. Guns were streaming steel. They flamed and shook and chattered as they spewed their stream of cupro-nickel slugs. Sparks flew from the cable, yet—

"It won't break!" gasped Johnny. He knew that in another second he would have to rudder away.

And then suddenly, as if in response to the fierce dictates of his will, the cable parted. Instantly the big sausage balloon, with its dangling swaying basket, was racing up skywards for the clouds. Tornado, who had been calmly taking potshots with a revolver at the flashing warbirds of Germany, now waved his arm as if in farewell.

Instantly the two vengeful Fokkers thundered at Johnny. A savage fury flooded through the young flight-lieutenant's veins. His motor roared as he darted across the sky to meet them head-on; but the two enemy ships split away from him fan-shape.

Johnny was too wise in aerial tactics to go after one of them, for the other would immediately be sitting on his tail. In a wild chandelle he roared up, and at the top of his ceiling fell into a stall.

Down he bugled, sliding a thousand feet through the sky. Striking like a maddened hawk at one of the Fokkers. Wires shrieked tautly, like a banshee's wail, and above the screaming howl of his motor came the deadly handclap of hammering gun breeches.

Slugs smashed into the Fokkers, until they found the tank. The plane became a huge ball of fire as if from a Roman candle.

The Boche pilot scrambled out of the cockpit like a monkey and crawled back to the tail assembly. He seized the rudder surface with a frantic grasp, but a second later was thrown off into space.

He had, at least, saved himself from a flamer, for the next moment the burning wings of his aeroplane yawed through space.

The Secret Safeguard.

STRAIGHT at Johnny, with the abandon of the Furies, came the other Fokker. Mad clatter—a short Spandaus burst that smashed into Johnny's empenage. But only a short burst. Johnny zoomed up sheer, went over on his back, and plunged down spinning.

His turn now. He was aware that something like a red-hot poker had plunged into his arm—it seemed useless. But there was the Fokker for a moment in his sights.

His guns broke into a mad clatter.

The Fokker shuddered, reeled sideways. The pilot looked back with a stricken face, pale with the knowledge that he was trapped, hand in hand with death. Then he was howling down the sky.

And then it happened. Johnny felt something like a mighty electric shock—his engine spluttered, died—as he saw the earth merry-go-rounding beneath him.

"Gad, they've got me! That cursed ray—" gritted Johnny.

Instinct told him at once that the Germans had operated their deadly ray from the chateau. The Fokker was not affected; its engine was probably equipped with some safeguard against the ray. But Johnny smiled grimly—the Huns had switched that ray on too late—his second Fokker was roaring down sky to do him.

Johnny shouted suddenly—no, it wasn't! Slowly, inch by inch, the Fokker's nose lifted. The wounded Hun was trying to make a landing—a last bid for life. Closer came the earth. Ah! A triangular field! The Fokker reeled, side-slipped down, then banked around, and went shrilling down for a neat landing.

The young British flier put his plane down for a deadstick landing.

"If I can find out what it is that protects that Hun plane from the ray—" he thought.

The plane floated down like a thistle-down in a perfect three-point landing, and rolled to a standstill.

Johnny pushed up his goggles, and dragged out his Colt as he clambered over. Swiftly he darted over to the Fokker marked with the Maltese crosses.

Though his own left arm pumped pain cruelly, Johnny managed to hoist the German out of his cockpit, and found that he was wounded in the legs and body.

Johnny felt that he could do nothing for him, as he laid him down on the grass near his plane. War was war. There were things one had to thrust from one's mind. Johnny remembered sharply that he was on the track of a red-hot mystery.

First taking away the German's Luger, the young British flier darted back to his own plane and raised the engine cover. A short inspection showed him that the magneto was burned out by the ray.

But the German's? He raced back to the Fokker and examined the engine. Hope thrilled through him as he saw that the mag. was O.K. It was protected by a queer disc, like a small gramophone record. The young sky devil had no doubt that that disc absorbed the whole shock of the ray and nullified it.

"If I can only switch over mag.!" he breathed; "and get back to the 'drome—Warn them! Gosh, Ian mustn't go out for that duel with von Fulke at noon."

He worked feverishly, unscrewing the mag. from its casing. In the tumult of emotions that throbbled through his brain, he was unmindful of the wounded enemy.

He had almost finished his task when suddenly he noticed that the wounded German had crept over the grass, and was lying almost at his feet, near

the undercarriage of the gleaming Spad. There was a look of hate on his trim-moustached face as he peered up.

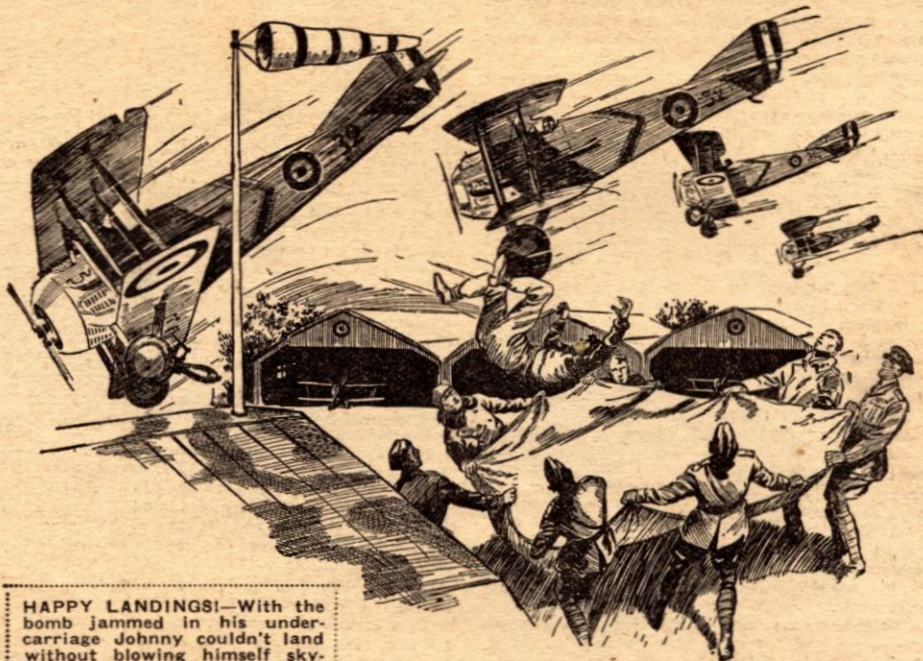
He was evidently quite helpless, yet Johnny felt a thrill of terror and fear such as he had never known before as he gently removed the German to a safe distance, and handed to him his small brandy flask.

The German took it with a queer smile of triumph on his lips, and lifted it weakly. Some sixth sense warned Johnny, and he had a panicky idea that

chance flight of Fokkers. He realised, too, that he had been in the air an hour-and-a-half, and there was only petrol enough in his tank for half-an-hour more of flight.

"Gosh, if I don't turn back, I'll never reach the British lines," he gritted.

But he kept on—until suddenly he caught sight of the balloon, settling through the clouds. He could make out the minute figure of Flight-Sergeant Tornado Wills, clinging to one of the cable strands



HAPPY LANDINGS!—With the bomb jammed in his undercarriage Johnny couldn't land without blowing himself sky-high. So the ground staff got ready with the "fireman's blanket."

the Hun had worked some mischief. But he put the idea from him as impossible.

A tug on the propeller, and his hot Hiso motor was roaring in full-throated power.

Johnny climbed in, gunned her full out, and she went tearing like a race-horse over the field. A hundred yards' run, and he went up like a pole-vaulter; banking, climbing.

The young red devil roared up through the clouds, his mind torn two ways. He wanted to get back to the 'drome in a hurry to warn Ian, to give him the 'ship he was flying so that, at least, he would be protected against the devilish ray device of Professor Fulke, the Baron ace's scientist father.

Otherwise he would smash in the sky duel.

On the other hand there was the Flight-Sergeant. Tornado Wills, who, riding high in the balloon basket, was being carried into German territory. When eventually he landed, he would be taken prisoner.

"I've got to go after him," Johnny breathed. "For one thing, he may have gained important information."

Every moment was taking Johnny farther into German territory, where he would be prey for any

beneath the massive rounded belly of the gas-container.

"The gas release valve must have failed," gritted Johnny. "And he's using a knife to stab the sausage. He's an unlucky blighter!"

He set his nose in a dive. Soon choking, clammy mist surrounded him as he went through a dense bank of cloud. If he were attacked now—

Suddenly a sharp cry broke from Johnny's lips as he came out with a swish and roar into clear sunshine, and surveyed the terrain.

He recognised it instantly. The *Forêt de Gar*—a great wood of gnarled, stunted trees, and set in its midst like a green jewel the wide lawns and the squat, ugly edifice of the Chateau Noir, with its strange, cupola tower, like the great bald head of some squatting giant.

The balloon was dropping rapidly now, due to the fact that its supply of gas was dwindling. Johnny gritted his teeth as he realised that it must land amongst the trees.

"Gosh! He's got it—poor Tornado!"—broke from Johnny suddenly.

With all the awkwardness of a huge, lumbering jungle animal the hulking bag ploughed into the gnarled stunted trees beneath. Johnny saw the basket smash with jarring impact. Then the huge bag flattened and spread around it.

Johnny was just about to drop in a flashing dive

down the sky to investigate closer when the thing happened.

From the huge cupola tower of the Chateau emanated a great purple ray, like a broad searchlight, bathing his 'plane in its sickly glare. At the same time the tower below seemed riven as if by lightning, which streaked and zig-zagged around it. Johnny banked away instinctively, but he was unscathed.

He realised that the strange device in his 'plane had absorbed the whole shock.

Looking over the cowl, he saw running figures. One he recognised as that of the stocky, bloated Professor Fulke. Another in a close-fitting military greatcoat was undoubtedly the Baron ace. He was staring upwards, shaking his fist as if dumbfounded at the British pilot's escape.

Another glance showed no sign of life from that collapsed balloon. Gritting his teeth, his face white, Johnny swung his 'plane in the direction of the British lines. He had to get back, and warn the squadron.

Flying under the fringe of the cloud strata he tore for home, with exhaust stacks belching flame as if he were on fire behind.

* * * * *

THE familiar bald patch amidst the woods that was the Red Devils' 'drome at last loomed up beneath Johnny, and he was preparing to go down in a wild, fish-tail landing—writhing to lose flying speed, instead of banking—when from the ground a tricolour marked British ship shot up like a rocket.

"Ye gods! It's Ian!" gasped Johnny.

Squadron-leader Ian going to his rendezvous in the skies with the cunning, treacherous Baron von Fulke! Johnny had got to stop him.

Frantically he leant over the cowl, making a gesture as of waving him in, a familiar gesture with flight-leaders.

Ian grinned, and waved back, but was continuing in a climbing bank—when suddenly he seemed to stare, became rigid in his cockpit, and then whipping around so sharply that he was jerked back in his seat, he tore with motor gunned at Johnny's 'plane

The young flight-leader watched him with amazement.

It changed to wild horror the next second. Johnny cried out in sheer terror. He had the greatest shock of his war-flying career. So much so that his taut nerves seemed to snap.

For Ian, his brother, was firing at him!

But then as he banked around, narrowly averting a stall he realised that Ian had fired merely to keep him from landing. Ian roared past him, stood up and came banking around again.

In a few seconds he had chalked some words on his fuselage. With a wild thrill Johnny read them: *Look under.*

Craning over the cockpit he stared down, and then suddenly felt a hot prickle of shock course through him. For there was a live bomb hanging from the wheels of his undercarriage.

"That cunning Boche!" gritted Johnny. "He must have tied it to the wheel when he crept up!"

The young flight-leader realised that if he attempted a landing, there would be a terrible explosion. The 'plane and everything would go up. It would be the end of him.

And yet what could he do? His petrol was running out. He would *have* to land.

He saw Ian wildly fishtailing in. His brother's 'plane squatted down, and Ian leapt out, running for the hangars, shouting to the men.

In a few moments more Johnny saw the men of the squadron running with a besenau hangar held

between them. They were holding it out, looking upwards, and he realised what they wanted him to do.

He had got to put his 'plane into a glide, and as it sailed overhead, dive from the cockpit into that hangar.

"I've got to do it!" the young fier gritted.

It was hazardous enough, for as he came banking around from a thousand feet into the wind, the engine stopped altogether. Undercurrents made the stick loose in his hand. Any moment a stall might come—a horrid swoop down, and crash. Then—a fearful explosion!

He pushed the stick forward, got the 'plane into a gliding angle. Then frantically tearing out his handkerchief, he tied the stick and stood up.

The 'plane was shrilling down in a sickening drop, like a fast lift. It was going to pancake—but it would go over the heads of those sky comrades of his, holding the hangar. Johnny stood up nervously, commenced clambering over the side of the fuselage.

Now—it was now, or never. The 'plane was shrilling above the hangar held out by the men of the squadron—shrilling down to crash!

Johnny dived.

Only when he was hurtling down in a sheer drop for the centre of the hangar did the young flight-leader remember with a white blaze of terror that the 'plane he had abandoned contained the secret safeguard against the German scientist's diabolical ray.

Even as he landed safely in the great hangar held out by his sky comrades, it came—

Crash! That horrid sound that tears at the tortured nerves of all war fliers—the sound of a 'plane crashing; things crunching, breaking, snapping all at once. Then the explosion—giant, harsh bellows, upshooting geyser of flame!

"Let me get out, for the love of Mike—"

Johnny jumped from the canvas as they lowered it to the ground. They thought he was suffering from shock, as indeed, in a sense he was. But the young flight-leader knew more than they did.

In a frantic endeavour to save the secret device, he tore at the burning wreck of the 'plane. He dashed into the wall of flames, seized a burning wing with his bare hands and tugged. Fearful the rest of the fliers ran to restrain him, to drag him back. Ian caught his brother.

"I tell you it's in there," Johnny cried. "... in the motor, the—"

He said no more. Suddenly he fell back from the heat that was like the backblast from a furnace, fell in Ian's arms. . . . Fell away into a terrifying sea of blackness. . . . They carried the young flight leader away to the sanatorium. Squadron-leader Ian would not allow them to remove his brother to the hospital at base. He knew that Johnny would never get better, fretting, chafing.

Besides, he held some vital secret.

What was it? It was in the motor, he had said before he faded out. Even while he was being carried away, the crash wagon rushed out on the field, and hoses were turned on the blazing wreck.

Ian had sent one of his flight with a message to postpone his duel with the Baron von Fulke until the next day. The big, blond skyman sensed a menace, a mystery as big as a thundercloud. It was his duty to probe it; not to risk his life senselessly.

Like it? Then you'll not be disappointed in next week's smashing long complete yarn in this great sky series. Complete your Model Monoplane next week, chaps.

THE 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.

Tramp : I've asked for money ; I've begged for money ; and I've cried for money .

Gent : Have you ever tried working for money ?

Tramp : No, sir, I'm going through the alphabet, and I haven't got to W yet !

(Cricket bat to S. BULLOCK, 17, Trafalgar Road, Kettering, Northants.)

CHALLENGED.

Walter was going to have a birthday party, and his father insisted on his inviting a neighbour's son, Dick, with whom Walter had quarrelled. After much arguing, the boy promised to do so.

On the day of the party, however, Dick failed to turn up. Walter's father became suspicious.

"Did you write Dick?" he asked.

"Of course, father," replied Walter. "I not only invited him—I dared him as well!"

(Fountain pen to HARRY E. RICHARDSON, 9, Cowper Road, Rathmines, Dublin, S.W.1, Ireland.)

JOKE COUPON.

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

Boys' Magazine, 29/7/33.

AN OVERSIGHT.

DINER : Waiter, there's a fly in my soup !

WAITER : Lumme, sir, I thought I got 'em all out !

(Fountain pen to R. E. PITCHER, 6, Catherine Terrace, Chapel Road, Ramsgate, Kent.)

IN HARMONY.

FATHER : Why do you want to be a musician, my boy ?

BOY : Because my work would be all play !

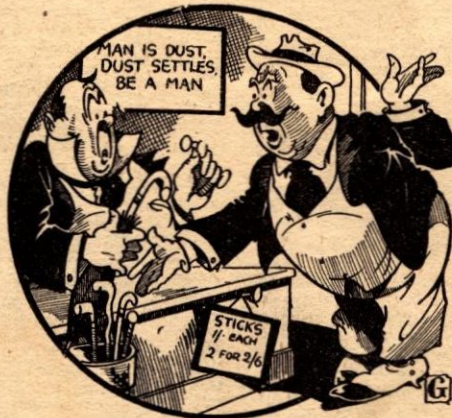
(Fountain pen to H. JACKSON, 14, Bond St., Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey.)

ENOUGH.

SERVANT : There's an old clothes man at the door.

ABSENT-MINDED PROFESSOR : Tell him I've got all I need !

(Fountain pen to A. H. BERRYMAN, 10, English Street, Armagh, North Ireland.)



Irate Customer : The umbrella I bought from you a week ago is not much good.

Shopkeeper : How is that, sir ?

Irate Customer : Well, I left it in a restaurant yesterday, and it was still there when I went back for it to-day.

(Cricket bat to BOBBIE RICHARDS, Bryntirion School, Bridgend, Glam.)

A SERIOUS COMPLAINT.

A nigger, one day, bought a ham in a shop. Two days after he returned the ham complaining it was bad.

"But it can't possibly be bad," remonstrated the grocer. "It was only cured four days ago."

"Den it hab had a relapse," said the nigger.

(Fountain pen to W. JAMES HARRIS, 55, Trevenson Street, Camborne, Cornwall.)

SOLD OUT.

VISITOR (in village store) : A packet of small candles, please.

PROPRIETOR : There bain't a candle in the place, sir. Oldest inhabitant 'ad 'is hundredth birthday yesterday !

(Fountain pen to P. M. EASTWOOD, Bengeo School, Hertford.)

A TEAM.

SCHOOLMASTER : Have you finished your list of the eleven greatest men yet, Jones ?

JONES : No, sir ; I can't quite decide on the wicket-keeper !

(Fountain pen to RALPH HOLLAND, Needham, near Harleston, Norfolk.)

IMPEC(K)ABLE.

BILLY : Did you call me a blockhead ?

JIM : No ; I told you to keep your hat on, there are woodpeckers about !

(Fountain pen to TONY REES, 25, Kingsbury Rd., Erdington, Birmingham.)

WELL BOWLED.

OLD GENT (at cricket match for first time) : 'E must be a wunnerful bowler, 'e do 'it the bat every time.

(Fountain pen to FRANK MOSS, 63, High Street, Manningtree, Essex.)

THE BIGGEST GUN IN THE WORLD is the Hero of the True Science Chat Below!

The OTHER SIDE of the MOON



THE great meteor, which was seen to cross the British Isles the other night, bears in it one of the secrets of the universe. A secret which many astronomers would give much to have in their possession!

The fact is, that it was no meteor at all, though its flight was certainly a meteoric one. At present we are anxiously waiting for news of the place at which it actually fell, but the fact that it has arrived shows that there is a fair chance that that secret is locked somewhere inside.

Well, here's the whole story.

For many years men have cast longing eyes on the other bodies in the universe, and have felt a desire to view them clear of the cloudy atmosphere of the earth. Who was to be the first human being to see what the moon's other face was like? For, as you know, we never see the other side, and unless we can take a turn round it, we never shall.

A group of scientists and engineers had got together, and with the help of a mathematician of international reputation, produced a scheme by which it was believed that a shell could be sent on such a voyage. The first one was to be experimental only, not carrying a passenger, but it would be equipped with a battery of astronomical instruments and cameras.

Early last year the calculations were completed, and work begun. A remote spot in Central Siberia was selected, three hundred miles from civilisation, and a railway track laid down to connect it with the branch from the trans-Siberian Railway at Yeniseisk.

Briefly, the principle worked out thus. The shell was to have a series of rocket charges in its base, and these would be fired at successive intervals, to maintain the outward velocity against the counter-attraction of the earth. The initial velocity would be provided by the gun, in which a series of increasing charges of propellant explosive would be fired.

A muzzle velocity of about sixty miles per second was regarded as sufficient to throw the shell clear of the atmosphere without much loss of velocity. So long as a distance of approximately one thousand five hundred miles could be achieved before the first rocket charge had to be fired, they thought it would do.

Such a velocity could be attained, even though it was quite forty times as great as anything which had been attained by any gun on earth up to that time. That wasn't the difficulty. The real trouble lay in protecting the contents of the shell against the terrific shock of the discharge. In the end, a most

To See the Hidden Side of the Moon is only one of the Projects of the Projectile whose Propulsion Into Space is described this week by our science expert.

elaborate system of oil buffer arrangement was devised, the inner shell being free to float inside the outer one. Obviously, windows had to be provided in the outer shell, but these were quite small, and made of solid quartz, eighteen inches thick.

In the illustration you will see that the muzzle does not project very far out of the ground. The whole length of the gun is four thousand feet, and of this length about nine-tenths are below ground.

At the "breach" end—which has no breach block



of course—the bore consists of a special high carbon steel tube, made up of welded sections of plate. These plates are four inches thick. After these are steel bands or hoops, six inches square in section, each layer of hoops overlapping the inner ones; the total thickness of these amounts to eight feet

(Continued on page 24.)

GIGANTIC NEW EPIC OF THE AIR! Mystery and Daring in the Clouds.
JUST BEGINNING ITS TRIUMPHANT RUN.

The S.O.S. Squadron!

You'll Enjoy Every Word of This
Wondrous New Flying Yarn, Chums.

By HAMILTON SMITH



FINISHED! Driven from the R.A.F.! Life seemed very hard to Jimmy Hart, the young airman, whose skill and daring had earned for him the nickname "Ace."

He had been up in a new 'plane, having a target practice, when from the clouds had swooped a mysterious scarlet machine, its guns blazing at Jimmy. Superior speed and armaments had soon triumphed, and Jimmy was smashed from the skies by the sinister attacker.

The authorities had laughed him to scorn at the inquiry. Attacked in these times of peace! It was ridiculous, they said. Jimmy was dismissed for crashing the 'plane—kicked out!

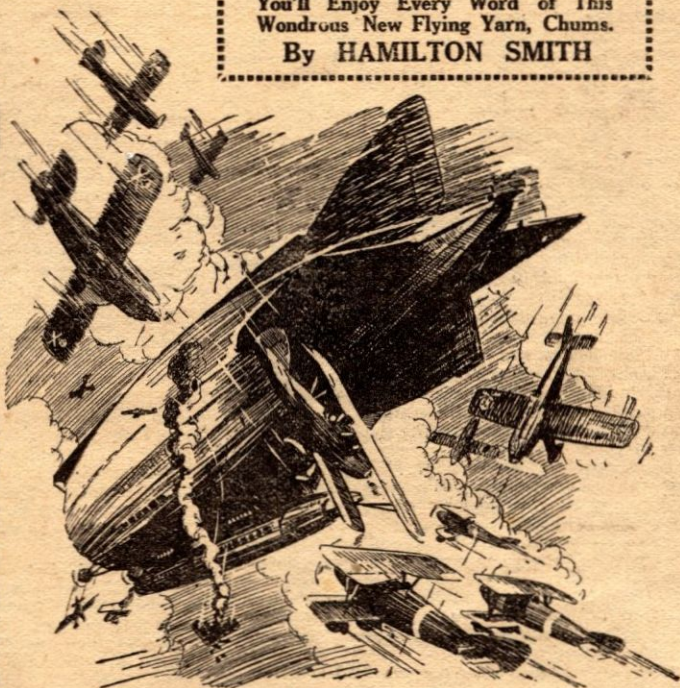
Now despair gripped him. All his hopes were shattered. Now he could never lead a squadron of gallant English air aces. And then when he was in the bluest fit of despair, he was visited by a mysterious stranger—Captain Vane, who got down to business at once.

"Have you any idea as to why you were attacked and by whom?" he asked.

"No, unfortunately, I haven't," replied Jimmy.

"Then I will tell you! It was a man named Zinberg." Jimmy started. He had met Zinberg once at Baghdad, when on service there. "He must have thought that you had learned his secret—a secret that threatens to wipe the white races from the earth," Vane told Jimmy. "With his wealth and power, he is the master-mind behind this fearful plot. Yet all his devilish cunning would be useless without the support of the Secret Council of Five, who rule supreme in the mystic land of Tibet. They are the Lords of Life and Death. At their command, the yellow hordes they rule will be launched at the white peoples. Death in its most terrible forms will ravage the world.

"I and a handful of men have formed what is



known as the S.O.S. Squadron," Captain Vane went on, "to fight a lone and desperate battle against these evil forces. But we are in urgent need of men—of the right sort. Will you join us?"

Jimmy rose, his eyes shining with a daredevil light.

"I'm with you, sir," he cried eagerly.

Captain Vane took Jimmy by 'plane to a giant airship, hovering twenty thousand feet above the North Sea. It was the aerodrome of the S.O.S. Squadron, and there Jimmy met his future comrades, Wolfe, Kerdin, von Elk, and others, tried men all.

Hardly had they arrived, when one of the mysterious scarlet scouts appeared, and, under a flag of truce, Zinberg boarded the airship. He was clad in red flying leathers, which made his dark, swarthy face stand out in sinister contrast, and his lips were twisted in a cynical, scornful smile.

"I have come to give you an ultimatum, Captain Vane," he said. "Either you cease interfering or I will blow you and this airship to pieces."

"I take no orders from you," retorted Captain Vane.

Zinberg smiled, and with a quick bow was gone, his machine thundering into the distance.

A few minutes later, the white-faced wireless operator came running to Captain Vane, a message in his hand.

"This has just come through, sir," he babbled. "Wirelessed from Zinberg's 'plane.'"

You made light of my warning, Captain Vane, but when I was aboard your airship I concealed a time-bomb where you will never find it. Within three minutes you will be blown to smithereens.

The Secret Base.

CRUMPLING the message in his hand, Vane swung on the mechanics.

"Which of you brought Zinberg to the control-room?" he cried.

"We did, sir," answered one of the men, indicating two of his companions. "Staines and Richardson and me!"

"But didn't you see anything?" snapped Vane. "Didn't you see Zinberg with this bomb?"

"No, sir," stammered the man, "We didn't see no bomb."

"Perhaps Zinberg is bluffing," suggested Fawcett, one of the pilots.

"No!" Vane shook his head decisively. "I know him too well to believe that. We've got to search the ship—every inch of it between here and the control-room. We've got two minutes in which to find that bomb or be blown to smithereens. Come on!"

He ran towards the steel ladder which led down into the control-room, followed pell-mell by white-faced mechanics and powder-grimed pilots.

Frantically they commenced the search, some rushing along the corridor which led to the lift and the control-room below, others hunting frenziedly in the dark corners and amidst the shadowy girders of the hangar.

On each side of the corridor which led to the lift were the curtained sleeping cubicles of the mechanics; and Jimmy Hart, despite his wound, commenced a hectic search of them.

Vane, Wolfe and von Elk followed suit. Remorselessly the seconds ticked away. They were doomed, thought Jimmy, and fear gripped him—fear of the dreadful peril which would be free to sweep the world, if the S.O.S. Squadron went sky-high!

Then Jimmy, rushing along the corridor to another cubicle, suddenly slipped on a patch of oil and sprawled full length. For a few moments he lay—winded. Before he could get to his feet a faint, sinister sound came to his ears.

Tick-tick-tick-tick! Puzzled, he listened intently and, as he did so, the full significance of it flashed into his brain. Zinberg's time-bomb! It was there—below the floor of the corridor. Jimmy acted. Like a madman he dug his fingers into the interstices between two of the polished boards. As he thought, one of them was loose, probably an inspection plate for some electric wiring. It came away and Jimmy saw a small, black cylinder about the size of an electric torch. With a strangled cry the boy pounced on it.

It was the bomb! He knew that the instant he picked it up. For from the inside of the cylinder came the steady, mechanical ticking that had betrayed its presence to his keen ears.

Blanched of face, Jimmy dashed from the cubicle, the infernal machine in his hand.

"I've got it!" he screamed. *"Out of the way!"*

Men leapt aside to let him pass as he rushed along the corridor in the direction of the hangar and the steel ladder which led to the flying deck. His eyes

were staring and his face was contorted like that of a madman. At any instant there might come the blinding flash and terrific, reverberating roar which would wipe him and his comrades out of existence.

Through the hangar he dashed, and ran desperately up the ladder to the flying deck.

The instant he gained the platform he hurled the black tin cylinder far outboards. It arched through the air, glinting wickedly in the sun. Suddenly there came a tremendous, ear-splitting roar, a sheet of lurid flame, and the mighty airship plunged wildly as it was caught in the terrific upward blast of the explosion.

"Thank heaven!" gasped Vane, catching Jimmy in his arms as the boy reeled on the swaying platform. "You were just in time!"

The ship's surgeon, Doctor Ahlers, was soon busy after that attending to the hurts of the pilots who had been wounded in the fight with Zinberg's sky wolves. But the injuries were nothing compared to the frightful doom from which the airship and its crew had just escaped, and everyone aboard the ship was light-hearted and jovial.

It was but a natural reaction after the stirring events of the past few hours. When it became known, however, that Captain Vane had ordered the course to be laid at full speed for the airship's base, the officers and crew quickly settled down to normal routine.

"Where is our base?" asked Jimmy Hart as, after snatching a few hours sleep, he sat that night at dinner in the brilliantly lighted dining-room, with Wolfe and the other pilots.

"It's in Tibet," replied Wolfe. "We will not arrive there until to-morrow night, for it is essential that we land under cover of darkness."

Mention of Tibet recalled to Jimmy his conversation with Zane, after the lad had been dismissed from the Air Force. That gaunt and sinister land was ruled over by the secret Council of Five—the power behind Zinberg.

"Who exactly are the Council of Five?" he asked Wolfe.

The grim-faced second-in-command did not answer for a moment, and when he spoke his voice was very grave.

"They are five aged and high-born priests of Buddha," he replied. "The hordes of the East worship them as being immortal. It is said that no man has ever seen their faces. They are far more powerful than the Dalai Lama who rules in Holy Lhasa, the forbidden city of Tibet. They are the voice of Buddha. Their lightest word is law. At their command the millions of Buddhists in the East will hurl themselves with fanatical frenzy into war."

"But why should they support Zinberg?" demanded Jimmy, his brow furrowed in a puzzled frown.

"That is easily answered," replied Wolfe. "Tibet knew a high and advanced civilisation when mastodon and sabre-toothed tiger roamed the primeval swamps and forests of Britain. For hundreds of years Tibet flourished as a great empire. But her power has long since waned, her glories have faded. It is to recapture world power and to sweep our present civilisation into oblivion that the Council of Five are supporting Zinberg."

He paused, and Jimmy was silent, awed by the stupendous forces of evil that were at work under the cloak of peace. This alliance between Zinberg, with his vast wealth and influence, and the Council of Five, who could throw millions upon millions of men into the field, was a terrible and menacing one.

"What we've got to do," continued Wolfe, and his voice was hard and steely, "is to smash both Zinberg and the Council of Five. If we fail—but we

must not fail! The result would be disastrous, beyond belief. The whole world would be turned into a great battlefield and death, swift and terrible, would lurk everywhere."

He was silent, and a few minutes later he left Jimmy to himself. The young air ace's brain was in a whirl, could not comprehend the tremendous issues at stake.

Throughout the night and all the following day the airship drove north-eastwards across Asia, flying high above the cloud belt.

It was when dusk had deepened into night, that the monster of the skies passed over the lofty and rugged peaks of the Kwen Luni mountains, which formed an unscalable rampart on the northern boundary of Tibet.

Once the range was passed the ship began to lose height. The cloud belt had long since been left behind and a yellow moon hung in the cloudless sky. Jimmy, standing on the promenade deck with von Elk and Fawcus, gazed fascinatedly down on rugged heights and deep, shadow-filled gorges. Far to the south, cold and silent, yet touched with a strange and awe-inspiring beauty, towered the snow-covered peak of mighty Everest.

"By Jove!" breathed Jimmy. "It's a grand sight!"

"Yes, from the air," nodded von Elk grimly. "But you will not find a crueler land, my friend, peopled as it is by the black-robed priests of the Council of Five, who rule by sorcery and black magic."

He raised his hand, pointing.

"But look!" he went on. "Yonder is our roosting place."

Gazing in the direction indicated, Jimmy saw what appeared to be a vast pool of golden light lying high up in the midst of the desolate hills ahead.

The hydrogen-kerosene engines of the ship were running now at quarter speed, and dropping her nose, she commenced to glide down towards the pool of light.

"Our base," explained von Elk, "is the huge crater of a long extinct volcano. Its floor is of solidified rock and lava, as flat as a billiard's table and more than half-a-mile in diameter. As you can see, the landing ground is flood-lighted when the squadron is doing night flying."

Down and down into that vast crater of golden light dropped the airship, blowing off gas and with her engines barely ticking over. Dark, moving blobs on the ground below gradually resolved themselves into the heavily muffled forms of many men. Then the mooring ropes went snaking out from the catwalks, to be seized by the landing party on the ground. The airship settled slowly down to the

crater floor, and with her car bumpers feet only from the ground, she moved towards the vast and brilliantly illumined cave which was her hangar.

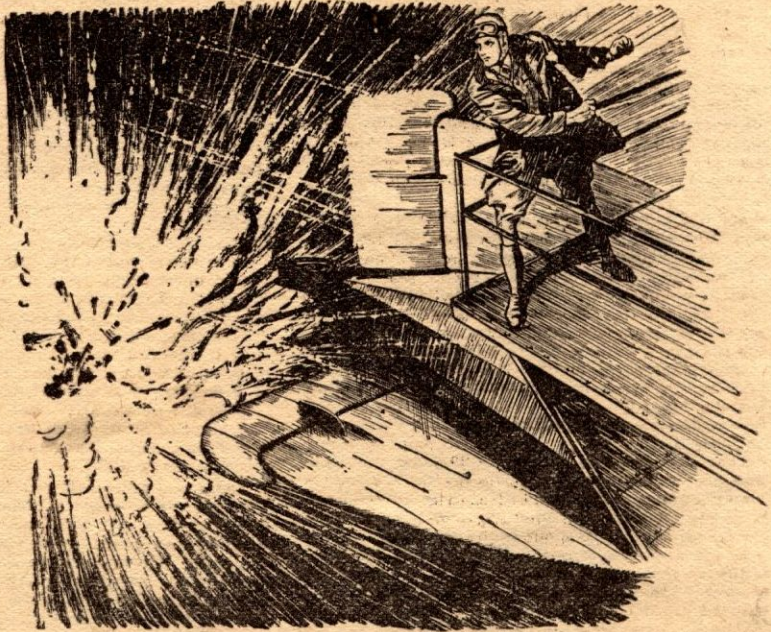
The monster of the skies had come safely home to roost!

Wings of Death.

THE airship was at once taken over by warmly clad mechanics, fitters and riggers. Thankfully, the pilots of the S.O.S. Squadron and the ship's officers and crew sought their quarters, situated in sparsely furnished caves, with which the sides of the vast crater were honeycombed.

Jimmy was allotted quarters in the same cave as Fawcus, and following the example of his old companion, he turned in at once and was soon sound asleep.

Morning brought a summons to all the pilots to attend Captain Vane in his quarters. When they were seated round the heavy table in the commander's cave, Vane said:



THE BOMBSHELL BURSTS!—In the nick of time Jimmy Hart flung the sinister black cylinder far into space.

"I have received a wireless communication from Prendergast, who is at present in the Russian town of Tomsk. One of Zimberg's ammunition trains, carrying one thousand tons of high explosive, leaves Tomsk to-morrow noon for Urga, in Mongolia. We are going to intercept that train and blow her up!"

"One hundred and twenty miles north of Urga," went on Captain Vane, "the railway track crosses a bridge which spans a dried-up river bed. The ammunition train will cross that lonely bridge after nightfall. We will blow up the bridge, just before she reaches it. What do you think, gentlemen?"

The pilots murmured their approval of the scheme and Captain Vane proceeded:

"Four machines only will be necessary for this

raid. I will take Wolfe, Fawcus, and Hart. We will leave at noon to-day, refuel at our depot on the banks of the Kena River, stay the night there and proceed to the bridge to-morrow."

The men were dismissed and the pilots selected for this hazardous venture, set about making their preparations. At noon, Jimmy, muffled in heavy flying kit, clambered up into the cockpit of his machine which, with those of Vane, Wolfe, and Fawcus had been brought from the airship.

"You had better be prepared for trouble during the flight," Captain Vane warned him. "Our machines are well known by this time to Zinberg's men. If we are sighted by any of his aircraft they will attack at once and we will have to fight for our lives."

Each of the four machines, therefore, carried ammunition belts, and synchronised guns had been cleaned and oiled. Vane paused for a last word with Kerdin, whom he was leaving in command, before swinging himself into the cockpit of his machine.

Within a few moments engines were thundering at full revolutions, and as Captain Vane raised his gloved hand, the chocks were whipped away from in front of the undercarriage wheels. The four, black, fighting monoplanes swept forward across the floor of the crater to take the air in a steep upward climb.

They flew in close diamond-shaped formation, heading northwards and climbing as they went. Up and up they went to clear the towering peaks of the mountain range, and the cold grew intense, numbing. Jimmy crouched low behind his cockpit windshield, trying to find some protection from the icy slipstream of his whirling propeller, as they thundered on.

The afternoon was merging into dusk when suddenly Captain Vane whipped his Zeiss glasses from their rack, and pressing them to his eyes, scanned eight tiny specks high in the sky to starboard and coming towards him at a terrific speed.

With a muttered exclamation he thrust the glasses back into their rack and his face grew stern and set. Next instant there broke from his cockpit a white Verrey light.

It was the signal to his three companions to prepare for battle!

The oncoming machines were so close now that through the deepening dusk Jimmy could see they were red scouts of Zinberg. Following Captain Vane, he pulled back his control stick, in an endeavour to get the advantage of height before the enemy closed.

The move was anticipated, however, and the leader of the red scouts was already climbing. At seventeen thousand feet the red fighting scouts made contact with Vane's black machines.

Captain Vane wheeled his machines towards the red scouts and his guns started their vicious staccato stutter.

Each of Vane's pilots picked on an enemy machine to attack. The pilot of the red machine towards which Jimmy was thundering, whipped forward his control stick and went earthwards in a screaming dive. Undoubtedly his idea was to hold the dive just long enough to obtain sufficient speed to take him up in a zoom which would give him the advantage of height over the boy.

Like a terrier after a rat, Jimmy hurtled down on his tail, the snarl of his blazing guns audible above the roar of high-powered engines.

The red pilot slumped forward over his controls and, as his machine went plunging earthwards in the death dive, Jimmy whipped back his stick and went soaring up and up into the dusk in an almost perpendicular zoom.

At the top of the zoom he rolled on to an even keel, and glanced down. He saw one of the red counts

rake the black machine of Fawcus from tail-plane to engine cowing.

The nose of the black monoplane dropped, a tongue of flame licked back from the riven petrol tank; then, enveloped in blood-red flame, Fawcus and his machine went plunging to their doom, leaving a tail of swirling black smoke.

Crouched over his controls, eyes like points of steel, Jimmy went roaring down on the red scout which had got Fawcus. Bullets ripped rudder and tail-planes to ribbons, the red pilot leapt to his feet, clawing at his throat. He pitched lifeless across his controls, and his machine dropped its nose, plunging out of the fight with engine thundering at full revolutions.

Pulling a whirling wing turn and with gun ablaze, Jimmy tore in at another red scout which was attacking Wolfe. Driving in from the flank as he was, every bullet from his gun was whanging into the vitals of the scarlet scout. As he pulled back his stick to roar low over its upper plane, he saw it reel out of the fight and go hurtling earthwards, its pilot vainly trying to control the machine.

The fight had not yet been on three minutes, but fighting with a vicious fury, Vane and Wolfe had already accounted for three of the enemy and only two now remained.

These two, obviously realising that discretion was by far the better part of valour, wheeled frantically out of the fight, and with noses down and engines thundering at full revolutions, they tore back the way they had come.

Pursuit was hopeless, and wearily waving on Wolfe and Jimmy, Vane picked up his course again for the Kena River.

Poor Fawcus had gone. But as his three comrades roared on through the dusk they found consolation in the knowledge that he would have asked no better death than to die in the cockpit of his machine.

Less than thirty minutes later, control sticks were shoved forward and the three black monoplanes dropped down, to land near a clump of thick timber on a flat stretch of ground near the Kena River.

"Well, here we are," said Vane, when the others had climbed stiffly from their cockpits. "We will spend the night here, and, thank goodness, the quarters are good."

There was no sign of any habitation, but Captain Vane moved towards a large clump of trees. The others walked with him, talking of the fight, and as they did so a great, bearded man appeared from out the trees. He was clad in a dirty, sheep-skin coat, and wore a round cap of the same material. The leather belt about his waist carried both gleaming axe and loaded gun holster.

"Greetings, master!" he growled.

"Greetings, Nikolay," returned Vane. "See to the picketing and fuelling of the machines then join us at the hut."

The hut to which he referred was a small, log-built structure situated in a small clearing within the shelter of the timber. It was crudely furnished with a table, one or two chairs, bunks and a store cupboard.

In the centre of the floor a stove glowed redly, and having divested themselves of their flying kit, Captain Vane and his two companions gathered gratefully round it. A few minutes later Nikolay returned, having made the planes secure.

"I think you had better know this, master," he growled, as he set about preparing some food for the airman. "The soldier rabble of Zinberg have been here."

"What?" snapped Vane.

Nikolay nodded. "Yes, two days ago," he went on. "Six of them came here and asked many questions."

"And what did you tell them?" demanded Vane sharply.

Nikolay's bearded lips parted in a grin.

"Nothing, master," he answered. "Nothing at all. My papers are in order. As you know, they describe me as a woodcutter in the employ of the Yarkana Company, who own the timber on the banks of this river."

Captain Vane was silent a moment.

"I don't like it," he said uneasily. "If the soldiers suspect that we have drums of fuel hidden near here, surely they would either have made a search for them or arrested Nikolay for further interrogation."

Blazing Guns.

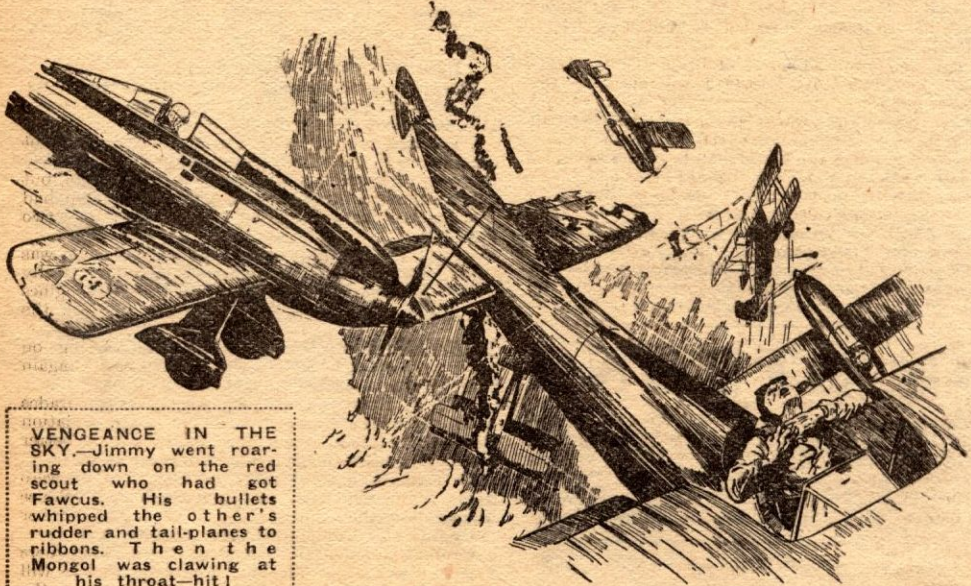
WOLFE and Jimmy leapt to their feet.

"The soldiers!" rapped Wolfe.

The battering on the door continued and again the grating voice demanded them to open the door.

"Quick," rapped Vane. "The guns! Train them on the door!"

Wolfe and Jimmy leapt to obey, and seizing the oiled Lewis guns which were lying on the table, they placed them so that their wicked muzzles covered the door.



VENGEANCE IN THE SKY.—Jimmy went roaring down on the red scout who had got Fawcus. His bullets whipped the other's rudder and tail-planes to ribbons. Then the Mongol was clawing at his throat—hit!

"One would think so," admitted Wolfe. "But they're such cunning devils. In any case, I think we ought to mount a guard until morning."

Vane agreed and it fell to Jimmy to take first watch. As he paced up and down on the dark fringe of timber he was joined by Wolfe who said:

"We are bringing a couple of the Lewis guns into the hut in case we do receive a visit from any of these soldiers. Give me a hand with them, lad!"

Obediently, Jimmy helped him to dismount the unceasing Lewis guns from the rear cockpits of two of the machines, and laden with the weapons and drums of ammunition, they returned to the hut.

As soon as he had dumped his load on the table, Jimmy returned to his guard duty. Two hours later he was relieved by the burly Nikolay and thankfully returned to the hut, where Vane and Wolfe were seated at the stove.

Closing the door and slipping the heavy wooden bar into its socket, Jimmy crossed to the stove and for half-an-hour or more chatted with the other two.

"Well," said Vane, rising at length. "I think you fellows had better turn in. I'll relieve Nikolay—"

A sudden thunderous knocking at the barred door of the hut drowned his last words. Then a harsh voice cried in Chinese:

"Open this door!"

"Ready?" said Vane tersely. "Fire the moment I open the door!"

He picked up the crude oil-lamp from the table, and approached the door, which was creaking and groaning under the mighty blows of rifle-butts. Cautiously he lifted the heavy wooden bar; then, with a quick movement, he whipped open the door.

Instantly a dozen or more yellow-faced, grey-clad soldiers tumbled across the threshold, and Vane hurled the lamp full into their midst.

Simultaneously the machine-guns on the table, roared into life, lurid, blood-red flame stabbing viciously from their muzzles. In an instant the doorway was full of struggling, jostling, screaming soldiers, dreadfully illumined by the leaping, writhing flames of the shattered oil-lamp.

Every moment the din and horror increased, as the bullets from the Lewis guns mowed the attackers down. The hut reverberated to the terrible screams of the dying and the deafening crash of exploding cartridges.

Then mercifully the last flickering flame from the burning oil went out, and a pall of blackness hid the gruesome shambles in the doorway. But stabbing vividly through the darkness, the Lewis guns still belched leaden death. Screaming and cursing, those of the soldiers who still lived turned and fled frantically from that hut of doom.

"Cease fire!" Vane's voice cut through the

darkness. "We've got to get out of here at once before they return with reinforcements."

"I only hope the swine have not damaged the machines!" rasped Wolfe.

Had they been put out of action, then, indeed, everything was lost. With one accord Vane and his two companions stepped over the grotesquely huddled forms in the doorway and ran towards their airplanes.

To their vast relief, they found the machines undamaged. So confident had the soldiers been of capturing the men that apparently they had decided to leave the machines intact.

"I wonder what's happened to Nikolay?" said Wolfe grimly, staring about him in the darkness.

"I do not know," replied Vane. "I am afraid he has met his doom. However, we'd better get off."

He turned to Jimmy.

"Run back to the hut and bring the machines-guns," he said. "Wolfe and I will start up the engines."

At the double Jimmy retraced his steps through the darkness in the direction of the hut. As he neared it, moving through the black shadow of the trees, he thought he heard a soft step behind him.

His senses reared in warning and he whirled. Too late! Something descended with crushing force on his skull, his knees gave way, and he pitched face foremost to the ground.

When next Jimmy opened his eyes, it was to find himself seated lashed to a chair in the hut. At the table sat Nikolay, a grin on his bearded lips. Half-a-

dozen grey-clad soldiers armed with rifles and fixed bayonets were standing behind his chair.

"So, Mr. Hart," drawled Nikolay. "We meet again."

Jimmy started, staring at the man with distended eyes. "Zinberg!" he gasped incredulously.

"Yes," smiled the other. "I am Zinberg. "My men hanged the real Nikolay when they visited this hut a few days ago. I think my disguise to-night was very successful. But then, if I may be permitted to say so, I am a past master in the art of disguise." His voice became harsh and rasping, and his eyes spat venom. "We thought we had Vane and Wolfe and you to-night easily. That is why we bungled. Vane and Wolfe have escaped. But we have you, Mr. Hart, and you are going to tell us where Vane's base is."

"I am not!" retorted Jimmy.

Zinberg's chair scraped noisily, as he rose and strolled to the stove. Slowly, and with a fiendish grin, he pulled out a red-hot bar of iron.

"I think you will tell us, Mr. Hart," he said suavely. "If you refuse, I shall be under the painful necessity of loosening your tongue with this iron."

With the iron in his hand he approached Jimmy.

"For the last time," he said, "where is your base?"

Tortured to tell! But Jimmy Hart is made of stern stuff. Will he yield to the terrors of Zinberg? Next week's gripping chapters of this fine flying serial will tell you.

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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOON

(Continued from page 18.)

This thickness is maintained for a thousand feet of bore! Now you can see why a railway was necessary to the constructors! The diagram shows that all this steel was embedded in an enormous block of concrete forty feet in thickness at its base, sunk more than three thousand feet in the earth. Some engineering feat, just to have a look at the other side of the moon!

On the day appointed, the charges had been carefully lowered to the bottom by the winding gear, and all was ready. The shell was suspended in the muzzle by four cables, with slip hooks to release it electrically at a signal. Everyone retired to the watching point on a hill about four miles away.

To the mathematician who had made all this possible was given the distinction of releasing the shell.

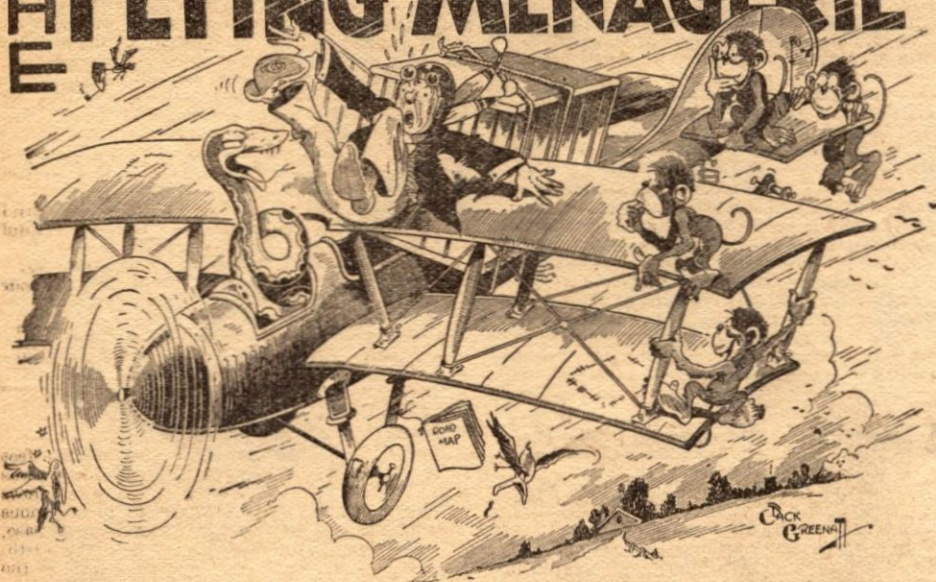
Nervously, he took the switch, and then with an effort, made contact. There was an interval of perhaps twenty seconds, and then the small building in which they all stood, collapsed in what seemed to be an earthquake. A vast billowing cloud of white flame and brown smoke seemed to fill the sky round the gun, and then about twenty seconds later, the most appalling crash of thunder ever heard by mortal man rent the sky. The cloud of smoke formed into a huge mushroom shape, many miles in diameter, billowing upwards as it dispersed. It was not clear sky again for two days after, so vast had been the release of gases from the propellant charges.

And now, while the builders of the gun are still waiting to get back to it and examine it, the shell has returned! According to their estimates, it should be somewhere in the Pacific Ocean, but it will float indefinitely if it is undamaged. As soon as we can get the news, *Boys' Magazine* readers can rely upon it, we shall hand it out. Already, a volunteer has come forward, willing to undertake the hazard of a voyage. His story, if he returns alive, should be well worth the reading.

Look out for more news from our science expert.

HEN PECK, THE AMAZING AMATEUR AVIATOR, HERE AGAIN IN ANOTHER LONG AND LAUGHABLE TALE OF HIGH JINKS IN THE AIR!

THE FLYING MENAGERIE



Hen Didn't Guess what he had Bitten Off when he took on a Carrying Job for Bedsock's Circus until the Menagerie Made Merry in Midair.

Hen's Air Taxi.

FARMER HICK stood in his meadow and watched the "airplane" swing down-wind and land a little bumpy twenty or thirty yards away.

"Yon b'y's a reet 'un!" Farmer Hick told himself with a proud shake of the head. "Handles that there loike he were ridin' t'owd mare!"

The "b'y" in question was then climbing out of the pilot's cockpit of the plane—a ginger-headed, rustic looking youth, with a straw dangling from the corner of his mouth. This was Henry Peck, known familiarly as Hen, and he had until recently been employed as help on the farm. Nowadays, Hen Peck was contemplating more ambitious things than remaining a mere farmer's boy. Some time before, he and Farmer Hick had ascended in a home-made aeroplane and their subsequent adventures had resulted in their winning first prize at a Crazy Flying Competition quite unexpectedly. With this money Farmer Hick had paid off the mortgage on his farm and purchased for Hen another (second-hand) "airplane," the home-made article having been shattered in a crash.

With this new machine Hen Peck proposed to supplement the income from the farm with the profits from an air-taxi service, which he was to run himself.

"Un's noice an' steady on t'controls," said Hen

Peck proudly, as Farmer Hick approached. "At a good flyin' speed, Oi can let go t'stick an' t'rudder an' she buzzes along steady loike!"

"Best not try none o' they stunts, Hen Peck," muttered Farmer Hick, "or tha'll't be comin' a cropper an' all! Hast put notice up?"

Hen Peck grinned and led his boss to the gate of the meadow. A board, decorated with rural hieroglyphics, was nailed to the gatepost:

HENRY PECK. AIRMAN. BY AIR TO ANYWHERE—CHEEP.

Passangers or goods carried—makes no odds. Apply within.

"But Oi don't think as how yon'll be enough, Mister Hick," commented Hen Peck, as he admired his handiwork. "So Oi thought mebbe Oi'd put one o' they 'vertisements int' *Pidsnorton Battle-Cry* loike, an' stick up another notice int' market place."

"Just as tha loike, Hen," agreed Farmer Hick. "Tha can take pony an' trap an' drive into Pidsnorton when it suits thee."

"Oi'll mebbe go now," said Hen, dragging off his flying helmet. "They do say as there be no toime like t'present!"

It was after Hen Peck had visited the offices of the *Pidsnorton Battle-Cry* and while he was engaged in putting up his notice on the public notice-board in the market place, that Isaiah Hobbleday, the local carrier, came along to voice his disapproval.

"What's this here 'bout n'airplane?" he said to Hen, angrily. "Tryin' to do me out'er me business, is you, with them noo-fangled ideas?"

"No, Mister Hobbleday," said Hen, a little taken

aback. "Oi never thought on it. Un's an air-taxi service what—"

"Air-fiddle-fiddle!" snorted Isaiah Hobbleday. "Tha's tryin' to pinch me business what Oi worked night an' day this ten year to build up. It didn't oughter be allowed Oi say; Oi'll—"

"Which of you gents is Mister Peck, the pilot?" said a new voice, the property of a large gent with waxed whiskers.

"That be Oi," said Hen proudly, casting a look of scorn on the angry Isaiah Hobbleday.

"You don't look much like a pilot," said the stranger, looking at Hen rather doubtfully. "Is it you that's running the aeroplane hire service?"

"Yessir," said Hen in a business-like tone. "By air to anywhere!"

"S'pose it's all right," said the stranger. "Well see here, Mr. Peck, I've got an urgent job for you. I'm one of the staff of Bedsock's Circus and Menagerie that was playing here last week. But I'm in rather a fix. The circus is opening again at Muckham this afternoon, you see. The rest of the show travelled there by road overnight, but I was delayed with the animals I have in my charge, and I intended to catch the train this morning in time to be at the matinee in Muckham. Now I've gone and missed the last train to get there before the matinee is due to start."

"That's be a great pity, sir," butted in Isaiah Hobbleday, "but mebbe now, Oi could take 'ee along in me waggin. Oi can get 'ee to Muckham inside three hour an' a half."

"That's far too long," answered the stranger. "The matinee starts at two-thirty. You see, it doesn't matter about me being there personally. It's the animals I have in my charge that I must get there in time."

"Animiles!" said Hen Peck, a little surprised. "Oi can't take no lions an' tigers an' things in my 'plane, mister. 'Tain't big enough—sides, Oi—"

"Nothing as big as that, I assure you," smiled the stranger. "It's only four small monkeys and they're in a light cage that won't overload your machine. The snake will stow away in the second cockpit, I should think."

"The snake!"

"Oh, you need have no fear. It can't get out of its basket. The lid's locked. What do you say, Mr. Peck? Will you help me out?"

"Well," said Hen, dubiously. "Oi didn't reckon on carryin' snakes an' monkeys loike—but Oi'll take the job, sir. Where's t' monkeys?"

"They're at the railway station. Come along, I'll help you to get them into your trap."

Isaiah Hobbleday, glowering with rage, watched Hen Peck and his first client hurry away. As a matter of fact Hen's aeroplane was not in the least likely to interfere with the carrier's business. It would be too expensive a mode of transport for the short distances back and forward to market that local farmers employed Isaiah for.

"Drat him!" he grunted. "Oi don't believe 'un has got a real air'plane. Oi'll go to Hick's farm an' see if 'tis true!"

And with that the Pidsnorton carrier climbed into his slow-motion wagon and started off towards Farmer Hick's.

A Lively Load.

"DING me sides!" Farmer Hick remarked when Hen Peck arrived back at the farm. "Yon's a comic cargo!"

"Aye! But didn't Oi say as t'air'plane would soon git plenty o' work. Gent from Bedsock's Circus got left behind an' wants me to get these here to Muckham in time for t'show s'afternoon. Will you give us a hand, Mister Hick?"

The cage of chattering monkeys was not heavy, but it was bulky—large enough, in fact, to hold Hen Peck himself. Farmer Hick assisted him to take it out of the trap and carry it to the aeroplane.

"Hafter tie 'un on t'fuselage with ropes," remarked Hen.

Farmer Hicks assisted Hen Peck to make the cage fast to the fuselage just behind the cockpits, so that it would not upset the machine's balance in the air. Meanwhile, the four monkeys within made faces at them through the bars and screeched and chattered at them angrily.

So intent on their business were they, that neither of them noticed that Isaiah Hobbleday had driven up in his old wagon and was watching them with a scowl over the hedge of the meadow.

While Hen ran back to the trap to get the basket containing the snake, Farmer Hick gazed doubtfully at the cage perched somewhat precariously on top of the fuselage.

"Be trouble if yon monkeys fall off in t'air," he told himself.

Then Farmer Hick had an inspiration. Inside the rear cockpit was a parachute, which Hen had constructed himself, but which had proved to be quite efficient. It was not enclosed in the usual satchel, but the fabric was held by a slender thread which only required a sharp tug to open it. Farmer Hick took the harness of the parachute and slipped it through the bars of the cage, and made it secure.

"There," he said, satisfied. "If yon monkeys fall they won't come to no harm, now."

Hen Peck returned from the trap carrying the basket containing the snake, gingerly. He stowed it in the rear cockpit, and then said:

"Now, Oi got bags o' toime to git to Muckham, Mister Hick. (an Oi have a bite t'eat 'fore Oi start."

"Suttinly, lad. Tha dinner's on t' table ready for thee."

Hen Peck and Farmer Hick had no sooner disappeared in the farmhouse, than Isaiah Hobbleday pushed his way through the hedge and hurried over to where Hen's aeroplane waited in readiness for the flight.

With a malicious grin on his face, he examined the fastenings of the cage and was about to tamper with them when he noticed the latch which held the cage door, which was faced upwards. He could see it could be easily opened and needed no key. He looked into the cockpit where the snake's basket was stowed. The fastenings of that were something similar.

Isaiah Hobbleday chuckled to himself and unlatched both the cage and the snake's basket, so that they only required a little pressure, such as the creatures within could give, to force them open.

"That'll teach 'un," he told himself as he hurried out of the field and back to his cart.

"BE a grand air'plane this'n!" Hen Peck told himself proudly, as the machine, looking somewhat unusual with its cage of monkeys, climbed to a comfortable height and set its nose towards Muckham. "Flies along easy as if it knowed where it were agoin'!"

Hen lolled back easily in the pilot's cockpit, his fingers lightly on the controls, and breathed deep appreciative gulps of air.

"It be a grand loife—'n airman's!"

Hen had no sooner disposed himself of this sentiment, than he felt a cold shiver run down his spine and his whole frame seemed to freeze stiff with horror. And no wonder, for here he was in mid-air, alone, yet he could feel somebody had hold of him by the ear!

Summoning all his courage, Hen forced himself to

urtz his head. A small, brown, hairy face stared back at him, blinking two round eyes like glass beads and grinning and chattering at him indignantly. "Jiminy!" gasped Hen. "It's yon monkeys! They're loose!"

Hen stared in horror past the monkey nearest him. The monkeys had got the lid of the cage completely open. One of them was swinging backwards and forward on it over empty space and evidently enjoying the experience immensely. The other two were playing a boisterous game of touch over the tail-plane and the rudder-fin.

"Hey! You varmints!" shouted Hen. "Git back wi' 'ee! Ye'll fall off!"

He made a wild grab at the monkey immediately before him. It gave a squeal of delight, dodged him easily and leapt on to the top of his head and perched itself there, tickling Hen's nose with the end of its tail.

Hen Peck thrust up his hand swiftly and grabbed the monkey by the scruff of the neck and brought it down squirming and wriggling.

"Keep still, can't ye!" spluttered Hen. "Have some sense will 'ee!"

Hen stretched himself backwards precariously, letting go of the controls, and thrust the wriggling monkey in his hand towards the open cage. He managed to get it inside, but as he did so a second monkey leapt on to him, ran cheerfully along his arm and dived into the folds of his coat.

Hen burst into a roar of uncontrollable laughter and commenced to wriggle.

"Stoppit! Oi'm ticklish! Oi can't bear it Oi can't!"

Hen let go of the captured monk which immediately darted out of the cage, took a flying leap through empty space and swung on the landing wires of the mainplane as if on a trapeze. But Hen was too busy to admire the feat.

He thrust his hand into his coat and dragged forth the monkey burrowing within. Then he leant over and thrust it towards the cage.

"Got one of 'ee anyhow," he grunted, triumphantly.

But Hen had spoken too quickly. He thrust the monkey into the cage, grabbed the lid and slammed it to as swiftly as he could. Alas! Friend monk was swifter still. As the lid swung over he darted out again like a streak of lightning, and Hen found to his chagrin he had nothing but empty space in the cage, while the monkey took up a position on the very end of the rudder.

The two other monkeys darted past him and joined their chum who was still having a whale of a time swinging on the struts and wires between the mainplanes. Hen Peck slipped back into his cockpit and gripped the aeroplane controls in despair.

"Gotter do summat!" he concluded at last. "They monkey's'll fall off sure enough if Oi don't!"

Suddenly a look of grim determination came into Hen's rustic countenance. He set up the nose of his machine and climbed to a height that was discreet in view of his contemplated plan to recover his charges. When he had climbed sufficiently high he levelled out and set the controls, so that the machine would fly along as steadily as possible.

Then, gingerly, he leant forward, and stretched as far as he dare towards the wings. The nearest monkey removed itself to a distance that was about one-inch further than Hen's utmost limit, and sat down to commence a series of what seemed to be monkese rude remarks.

"Ding the animile!" muttered Hen in desperation.

"Kern here!"

Desperately he thrust himself half out of the

cockpit. The aeroplane lurched over suddenly, and Hen shot out.

With a wild yell he flung out his arms. They gripped a mainstrut miraculously and Hen hung to it like grim death his feet dangling terrifyingly in empty space!

"Hellup!" screamed Hen, instinctively. "Hell-up! Hellup!"

His chin was just level with the lower wing. The monkeys came and sat in a row just in front of him and contemplated his helpless state with interest. Then, growing tired of studying his purple visage they invented interesting modes of diversion. First one of them experimented to see if his nose was detachable, by the decidedly crude method of



A QUANDARY IN THE CLOUDS!—The cage had been tied to the fuselage firmly enough to hold the monkeys, but Hen's extra weight was too much for the knots. The cage began slipping.

trying to pull it off forcibly. This failing, it seemed to occur to him that it might be screwed on somehow, and he commenced to twist Hen's olfactory organ in a decidedly painful manner. Another monkey discovered a lock of Hen's ginger hair poking out of his helmet, and after chewing it awhile and finding it inedible followed the example of his fellow and tried to detach it forcibly.

Meanwhile, the aeroplane was swaying desperately from side to side, owing to its lack of control and the

extra weight of Hen Peck clinging for dear life to its right wing.

In a few seconds, Hen knew, the machine might roll into a spin and hurtle downwards to a disastrous crash. Exerting every ounce of energy he managed to fling one leg on to the wing. The monkeys instantly scuttled away to the other end of the wing.

Gasping, straining every muscle, Hen Peck succeeded at last in getting wholly on to the lower wing. Clutching the struts and flying wires, he crawled, with his heart in his mouth, towards the cockpit, clambered in and was just able to right the machine as she commenced to dive downwards towards the earth.

WHAT HO—SHE FLIES!

Thousands of B.M. Model Tractor Fuselage Monoplanes will Take the Air Next Week. See YOURS is among them by completing your 'Plane with the

ELASTIC MOTOR, Etc.

given away inside every copy of Next Saturday's MAG.

He sank back with a gasp into the pilot's seat. Something wriggled beneath him. For a second he sat amazed, and then rising from the seat again he looked down. Hen Peck's eyes almost burst from their sockets.

It was a snake!

HEN PECK fairly shot out of that cockpit again. Somehow or other he found himself perched on top of the petrol tank on a level with the upper wing.

The snake raised its head and hissed at him, evidently strongly resenting being sat on. While Hen had been hanging precariously on the wing, the snake had pushed open the lid of its basket in the rear cockpit and crawled into the forward cockpit, where it was warmer, being nearer the engine.

"Shoo!" said Hen feebly to the snake. "Buzzorf wi' you!"

But the snake only continued to hiss at him from out the cockpit venomously.

Suddenly the aeroplane's nose shot up unexpectedly. Hen yelled as he felt his grip on the upper wing dragged away. He turned a somersault in mid-air, was vaguely conscious of the tail of the 'plane apparently rushing up towards him, and then *crash!*—he landed right smack in the cage tied behind the rear cockpit.

The sudden impact made the 'plane dart into a half-loop. The lid of the cage swung over and slammed shut again as the machine lurched over. The 'plane side-slipped and then recovered for a moment, for she was a pretty steady old crate and was high enough to make recovery possible.

Hen Peck shoved savagely at the lid of the cage, intent now on getting out and saving the machine from a crash, snake or no snake! The cage door would not budge, however. He renewed his struggles viciously and then his terrified eyes strayed to the lock outside the cage. The latch had slammed into place with the impact! He was a prisoner!

Hen gasped with horror, at his position. He was absolutely helpless, and to add insult to injury the four monkeys hopped over and made faces at him.

And then to Hen's horror he felt the cage slipping. It had been tied to the fuselage firmly enough to hold it when it contained only the monkeys, but Hen's weight was too much for it. He watched, fascinated with horror, as the ropes slowly parted.

One of the ropes gave at last. Hen's heart leapt as he felt the cage slip over the side and hang dangling by one slender thread. He renewed his attack on the cage door hopelessly.

The last thread parted. Hen Peck and cage shot away into space, Hen yelling despairingly and the four monkeys looking down at him from the tail of the abandoned 'plane with evident amusement.

Hen gripped the sides of the cage as he fell and shut his eyes in anticipation of the shock that would smash the cage and himself to fragments. It seemed a long time coming, and he opened his eyes again.

"Seems a long way down," he gasped.

He realised that instead of hurtling pell-mell to earth, he was floating down quite gently. He looked up and saw the white, wide circle of a parachute spread out above him, attached to the cage!

Hen Peck gulped. Words were beyond him. How the parachute had come to be attached to the cage he didn't know and didn't care, for Farmer Hick had omitted to tell him of his last-minute precaution.

The cage landed with a slightly jarring bump in a field full of tents, and Hen saw through the bars of the cage that he had landed in the very field that Bedsock's Circus had made their pitch. A number of men hurried over to him in astonishment and hastily unlocked the cage. Hen Peck stepped out gasping with relief.

"Please, sir," he said to a large, red-faced man, smoking a size-nine in cigars. "Oi've brought the monkeys en' t'snake from Pidsnorton!"

"You've what?" said the large man, who proved to be Bedsock, the circus proprietor himself. "Where?"

Hen looked up and pointed towards an aeroplane floating wildly to earth out of control.

"They be up you, but they'll soon be down!"

Hen's aeroplane crashed three seconds later. The undercarriage crumpled like matchwood, the prop smashed with a crack like a cannon shot, and all the stays snapped, but luckily the 'plane landed flat and the main structure remained undamaged.

They hurried over. Four monkeys popped up their heads from the rear cockpit, a little scared but unhurt. The snake was still sleeping peacefully in the pilot's cockpit.

"Fainting jellyfish!" said Mr. Bedsock, the circus proprietor. "What's this—a stunt?"

"It was 'n accident, sir," said Hen, looking sadly at his crashed aeroplane.

"But the caged-up parachute jump is a great stunt, boy!" said Bedsock slapping him on the back. "That's the greatest draw a circus could dream of! See here! I'll pay you fifty pounds if you'll do it again at my next three performances while I'm in Muckham! What's more, if you'll do it, I'll foot the bill for repairs to your machine."

"Well, said Hen slowly, "Oi don't moind that. Oi've done it once, an' Oi might as well do 'un again. Oi'll take job on wi' pleasure, sir!"

* * * * *

THE following day Isaiah Hobbleday happened to be driving near Muckham, when an advertisement for Bedsock's Circus caught his eye.

Hen Peck. *The Daredevil Parachutist.*

He will take a parachute jump caged up and absolutely a prisoner! Don't miss it! Most thrilling spectacle ever staged by a circus! Procured at enormous expense by the management, for three performances only!

"Drat that b'y," snarled Isaiah petulantly. "He allus falls on his feet!"

More laughs with Hen Peck and his comical home-made 'plane next week, chums. Look out for this ripping complete fun tale. And don't miss the elastic motor and propeller shaft for your B.M. Monoplanes—given free.

EVERYBODY'S READING THIS GIGANTIC NEW YARN OF THE DAREDEVILS
OF SANGSTER'S CIRCUS ON SECRET SERVICE.



DOOM TO THE FLYING CIRCUS

By
H. WEDGWOOD BELFIELD.

Backs to the Wall.

IT was a shattering discovery that, for the moment, took Dick utterly aback.

Luck had played them the scurviest trick imaginable—had brought all their carefully laid schemes crashing in ruins. Either themselves or the Secret Service man, acting alone, would have scooped the trick and inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Red Avenger. And now . . .

A wolfish howl from below, rising above the brazen clamour of gongs, jerked him out of his thoughts.

Dick knew what it meant. The Avengers, streaming up the stairs to investigate the cause of the commotion in Dr. Fu's work-room, had discovered the unconscious sentry on the first landing. He could hear them chattering excitedly—know that in another moment they would come streaming up the last flight of steps like a pack of wolves.

Dick jerked himself to his feet, yanking the Secret Service man up with him.

"We're for it," he jerked, "unless we look slippy. Listen! Don and I came for Dr. Fu. We've got the Buddha, but Dr. Fu holds the key to the whole bally business."

X jerked his head towards the darkened room.

"He's back there—roped up. I—"

"Good!" Dick gave a hard laugh. "We're going to get away—and take him with us."

X spoke again. "I fixed it up. There's a rope ready to drop from the window—slide down. . . a 'plane—"

"Right!" Dick laughed breathlessly; things were looking rosier than he had dared to hope. With luck they'd make their getaway, but—they had to be quick, for already the Avengers were pounding up the stairs. "You and Don get the doctor down the rope and beat it for the 'plane," he went on jerkily. "I'll be after you when I've fixed the door. Got to keep these yellow hounds back for a bit."

He was closing the door as he spoke, his hands fumbling for the bolts. Then a groan broke from him. The door fastenings

were useless, wrenched clean from the woodwork. He remembered that this was the door which had gone down under the Avengers' previous assault; it had not been repaired, and now it would offer no barrier to the rabble mounting the stairs. But the Avengers had to be stayed, and Dick reckoned he was the fellow to do it.

"Here! Take care of this." He slipped the jade Buddha across to the Secret Service man and accepted a snub-nosed automatic in return. "Now—beat it. I'll handle that crowd."

There was no time for argument, and, leaving



Don and X to do their bit, Dick sprang to the landing, to be greeted by a howl of execration from the Chinks climbing the stairs.

The light was poor—just a few straggling moonbeams slanting through a window over his head—but it showed the swarming, red-garbed figures mounting towards him. Even as Dick appeared, a knife sliced past his ear and a bullet smacked into the wall behind him. He spotted the man with the gun and fired an answering shot.

The fellow flung up his arms with a cry, crumpled up and went pitching backwards down the stairs.

For a moment that checked the rush—but only for a moment. Snarling like rabid wolves they came on again. Thrice Dick's automatic cracked, sending bullets crashing into the packed mob of men. Each time a body went hurtling backward, sweeping others off the stairs in its fall.

But he was dealing with men who had no respect for death—a frenzied rabble egged on, though he was not to know it, by the offer of a fabulous reward for his capture.

Clawing their way over the bodies of their fallen comrades, they swarmed higher. A thrown knife grazed Dick's shoulder, leaving a long red gash. But the circus star paid no heed to it, beyond that his teeth snapped more tightly shut.

The leading Chink was within a yard of him now. He levelled the gun and pulled the trigger, but nothing more than the click of the hammer answered the action.

The automatic had jammed!

There was no time to free the mechanism. He slung the useless weapon into the snarling yellow face and drove his fist after it, sending the Chink hurtling backward with a choked-off yell. Two more men, clinging to the next lower step, went down with him, and Dick, telling himself that his pals should be clear by now, waited for no more.

A bound carried him back through the doorway into the room which had been Dr. Fu's laboratory. Sight of the bottles stacked on the benches gave him an idea, and, gathering several in his arms, he dashed back to the landing and flung the lot down the stairs.

What was in those bottles he never knew, but, following the crash of the breaking glass, a medley of agonised yells rose from below. Then there was a muffled explosion and a flash of flame.

"Guess that's going to keep them quiet for a bit," he muttered with a tight laugh. "So—here goes!"

He reached the window and found the rope. Leaning over the sill, he saw two dim figures, carrying something between them, making good speed across the courtyard below. With a chuckle he grasped the rope, slung his legs over the sill and prepared to slide after his pals.

But now the wound in his shoulder was paining him. He was slow, and he all but lost his grip as the weight of his body came upon his arms and an agonising pain stabbed through them.

Gritting his teeth, he started to slide. He was halfway to the ground before anything happened. Then a man's head and shoulders appeared at the window. Dick saw them, with the moonlight full upon the snarling features, the pointed ears and red, wolfish eyes, and at a glance he recognised—Kung the Killer.

A knife glinted in Kung's talon-like hand. Dick saw its keen edge press against the rope—saw the strands fray and fly—and then . . .

He was falling like a stone.

It was a twenty-foot drop, and Dick remembered nothing after he hit the ground with an appalling crash.

DON and the Secret Service man found escape easier than they had expected. They were unchallenged as they sped across the courtyard, with the roped and helpless Dr. Fu slung between them—since, to a man, the sentries had deserted their posts to join in the battle on the stairs.

But Don wasn't happy. He hated to leave a pal, and this looked like desertion even though the fate of the world depended upon his making a getaway. When they had crossed the yard and had reached the scrub, he halted and looked back to where the building from which they had just fled reared its gaunt and broken walls against the starlit sky.

At two of the windows showed a dull red glare—fire! From another, plain in the moonlight, a dark figure was sliding down a rope.

Don gave a whoop. "He's done it," he cried. "Good old Dick! Looks as if he's handed the Avengers a surprise packet, too. Get moving, chum. Dick'll be along in a brace of shakes."

They pushed on, purposely keeping to the open so that Dick should see them. Again Don glanced back, to see a shadowy figure tearing after him. Satisfied that Dick was on their heels, he bent all his thoughts on the task of reaching the hidden 'plane in the minimum of time.

X knew the ground. Unhesitatingly he led the way to a gap in the massive wall surrounding the city. Before them, the ground sloped steeply to the jungle, and in a level space at its edge, where the trees flung velvety-black shadows, was the large, cabined 'plane.

How the Secret Service man had succeeded in landing there without being seen from the city, Don could only surmise. Expert airman as he was, he realised the hazards and the difficulties of the feat. As they reached the machine, a high-pitched shout shattered the silence behind them.

Don caught his breath.

"They're after us, and—"

Something hissed in the air. There was a cry from the Secret Service man. He stumbled and pitched on to his knees.

"They—they've got me. Knife—get away—while you've got the chance. They—"

Don waited to hear no more. Stooping, he picked up the Secret Service man in his arms and placed him in the roomy saloon. Then with less ceremony he slung the helpless Dr. Fu in beside him, and ducking under the wing, swung the propeller. He was sliding down into the pilot's seat when a running man bobbed up among the shadows, grasped the fuselage and started to swing himself into the saloon.

Don grinned as he rammed the engine control full out. Dick was aboard; nothing mattered now. . . The 'plane surged forward, skimming the trees as he pulled over the joystick—climbing steeply to the stars.

"Done it!" breathed Don.

Keeping the 'plane climbing, he looked over his shoulder, meaning to yell to Dick that X was in need of attention. But no shout left his lips. At that very moment something pricked him between the shoulder blades—and simultaneously Don's blood seemed to turn to ice in his veins.

For he was looking into the red eyes of Kung the Killer!

The Killer K-O-ed.

DON'S thoughts raced. He realised that he must have made a mistake about that running figure he had supposed was Dick. It had been Kung—and Dick had been left behind. Perhaps—the sickening thought pierced Don's brain like a knife he was lying dead in that flaming building below.

But . . . Kung's snarling voice sounded through the roar of the engine.

"Bring the bird-machine to earth, foreign devil," he said, and the knife pressed harder into Don's back.

Don gritted his teeth. That meant defeat—defeat in the moment of success—and for the world it meant disaster. No, better death than that! At least there was a chance that, if they crashed, the Buddha would be shattered into a thousand fragments and, anyway, Dr. Fu would perish with them. That might be the crash as well of Hsuan's crazy schemes of world domination.

He held the 'plane to a steady climb.

"Fool!" howled Kung. "You hear me, foreign devil?"

Don laughed recklessly. "Sure! I heard you. And if you want to go down, you'll take her down yourself. I'm calling your bluff—see? Stick your knife into me and take over the controls."

Snarling like a wild beast, Kung drove the point of his blade into Don's flesh. But it went no deeper than an eighth of an inch, and, despite the pain, Don laughed through his teeth. Bluff—that was it! Kung couldn't fly the 'plane himself; there had been a hint of terror in his last shout.

Higher Don flung the 'plane. At six thousand feet the knife no longer pressed into his back. Then, on a sudden impish impulse, he made the machine stand on its tail.

And terror sent Kung crazy.

Like a leaping tiger he hurled himself atop of Don. They grappled, lurching against the instrument-board, while the machine rocked like a ship in a gale and then went into a spinning nose-dive. Talon-like hands clawed at Don's throat, fastened there and tightened remorselessly. Kung's snarling face, with the red killer light in his eyes, was within an inch of his. . . .

Down they went, crashing to disaster . . . with the flaming building seeming to leap up to meet them. . . . Desperately, Don drove his fist with all his remaining strength under Kung's chin. The Killer's head went back, and Don smashed in another punch to the same spot. The grip on his throat relaxed, and at that moment the 'plane rolled over.

As from a catapult Kung was hurled from the cockpit, making a despairing grab at the wing as he whirled through space.

Then he was gone, somersaulting downward, as Don made an instinctive grab at the controls. How he got the machine back on to an even keel, he never knew; but somehow he did and shot a glance downward.

A thousand feet below was the flaming ruin . . . a black speck, which might have been Kung, dropping straight into the heart of the furnace. Then, suddenly as if Kung had been a bomb, the burning building dissolved in a crashing explosion.

Don went sick. It might be the end of Kung the Killer and of the Red Avenger's lair, but . . . what of Dick Derring?

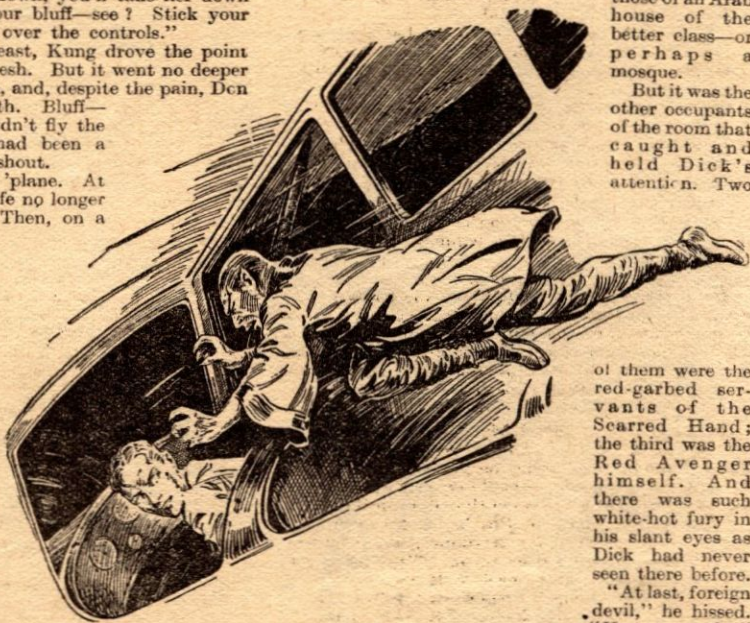
Instrument of Doom.

DICK struggled back to his senses to find himself roped hand and foot to a stone pillar. It was a minute before his spinning brain began to work; then in a flash he remembered everything—Kung slashing through the rope, the fall, and darkness—and questions went coursing through his brain. What had happened since? Where was he now?

Forcing his eyes open, Dick looked round. He was in a place which he knew at a glance was not the City of the Dead; shafts of sunlight slanted on to a splendid mosaic pavement, the decorated walls were

those of an Arab house of the better class—or perhaps a mosque.

But it was the other occupants of the room that caught and held Dick's attention. Two



MAD COMBAT IN MID-AIR.—Terror sent Kung crazy as the machine pitched and rolled. Like a leaping tiger he came at Don.

of them were the red-garbed servants of the Scarred Hand; the third was the Red Avenger himself. And there was such white-hot fury in his slant eyes as Dick had never seen there before.

"At last, foreign devil," he hissed. "You are caught."

Dick said nothing. His brain was clearing and he was thinking fast. He

wanted to know if Don and X had got clear, if Hsuan had recovered the Buddha. Well, there was a way of learning that.

"Yes, you've got me," he nodded; then he laughed defiantly—tauntingly. "But you've lost the Buddha and your precious Dr. Fu."

The Avenger's eyes flamed. "It is true that the other dogs escaped me," he snarled, "and took with them the Buddha and the honourable doctor. Also that they destroyed the City of the Dead, and slew Kung and many of my servants. For that, you, foreign devil, shall pay."

"That won't help you to get the Buddha back," put in Dick. "You've lost, Hsuan! You're smashed—as Chang was smashed!"

"Silence, dog, ere I have your tongue cut out." The Avenger was beside himself with rage, but he calmed suddenly. "All is not lost," he went on. "I

(Continued on page 10.)

THE PRESTO SLEUTH! Everything Happens when Professor Bill Presses the Button—but he Doesn't Need His Amazing Electric Gadgets to Find Him Thrills!

THE STRATOSPHERE TRAP



**THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T
BE WARNED!**

A Plot to Smash his Wonder Space Balloon—but Professor Pickering Pooh-pooed the story. So Bill Had to Save Him in Spite of Himself.

great astronomer had publicly announced that if he won he would use the prize money to endow a new scientific institute.

"Ik-k-akk-okk!" said the Presto Sleuth, speaking with staccato distinctness.

Freddy McNutt grinned. The marvels of this roof bungalow were ever novel to him. At the quaint words, supplemented by others, rapid changes took place in the room. The sideboard seemed to melt into the wall, and its place was instantly taken by a neat dressing-table. Two comfortable-looking beds arose from cavities in the floor, after the floor itself had slid back with a series of faint, metallic clicks.

Professor Bill's home was full of such wonderful gadgets; it was a scientific box of tricks, every one of them invented by the redoubtable Bill.

Within a few minutes the pair were in bed.

"I'm not a bit sleepy, Chief," said Freddy. "Couldn't we have just ten minutes of the dance music from the restaurant below?"

"Ten minutes, then—although that kind of music isn't calculated to lull anybody to sleep," chuckled Bill. "Remember, we have to be up by four-thirty. It's a twenty-mile run down to Sir Anthony's Surrey home."

He pronounced some more queer-sounding words, and an object rather like a picture-frame slid noiselessly down from the ceiling, until it hung midway across the bed. The surface of it was opaque and misty, but as the lights of the room automatically dimmed, a wonderful scene appeared upon that screen, and music sounded as though from nowhere.

It was Professor Bill's latest invention—an advanced system of television, known only to himself. He had installed the apparatus in the great, popular restaurant of Krell House, on the second floor of the mighty building. It was one of London's most popular resorts, and the dance band was at the best.

"This is what I call real comfort," grinned Freddy lazily.

There was something almost uncanny about this scientific marvel. They appeared to be looking through a window into the very restaurant itself. The only real difference was that everything was in

Professor Bill Scents Treachery.

"**T**IME for bed, kid," said Professor William Trafford, rising from his easy chair.

"So early, Chief?" asked Freddy McNutt, in surprise.

The Science Sentinel and his young assistant were in the comfortable sitting-room of their bungalow on the roof of Krell House, in the Strand, London's highest and finest building. Professor Bill, untidy as ever, nodded.

"We've got to be up mighty early, kid," he said. "Have you forgotten that Sir Anthony Reeve, the great astronomer, is ascending to the stratosphere at dawn? We're going to be there to see the ascent."

The brilliant young inventor, who was, in fact, a science detective, was greatly interested in the forthcoming experiment. He knew that Sir Anthony was keen upon winning the *Daily Record* £10,000 prize for the world's record stratosphere ascent. The

miniature. People were sitting at the tables, at supper; waiters were gliding to and fro; dancers were fox-trotting on the central floor.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Professor Bill, with a sudden sharp intonation in his voice. "Hal-lo!"

"What is it, Chief?" asked Freddy, struck by the change in Professor Bill.

"Monson!"

"Eh?"

"There—sitting in that corner alcove with Dr. Drummond Wrass!" said the Presto Sleuth tensely. "Freddy, this looks—ugly. Monson in company with that crook scientist, Wrass!"

"Even now I don't understand, Chief," confessed Freddy helplessly. "I know, of course, that Dr. Wrass entered a stratosphere balloon for the *Daily Record* competition, but he withdrew it last week, and left Sir Anthony Reeve with a clear field. I can't see—"

"Perhaps you'll understand that there is mischief afoot when I tell you that the man with him—Monson—is Sir Anthony's assistant!" snapped Professor Bill. "And what can that mean, kid, but treachery? Those two should be the keenest of rivals. And look at them! As thick as thieves!"

"Thieves seems to be the right word," muttered Freddy shrewdly.

COULD Professor Bill only have heard as well as seen the plotters, he would have looked even more grim.

Monson, small, wiry, rat-like, was nervous as he sat facing his companion in that secluded alcove.

"But is the game worth all this risk?" he asked uneasily.

"Worth it! Don't be a fool!" retorted the crook scientist. "The *Record* prize is a mere trifle of what I shall gain. I shall become world famous; I can get money from a hundred different quarters. With Reeve completely out of my way there will be no risk whatever—and I am leaving you to deal with Reeve."

Monson nodded. He was so deeply in this plot that, weeks ago, he had supplied Wrass with the full specifications of his employer's invention, with its great metal globe containing delicate scientific instruments, and its other unique features. Even at this moment, Wrass was building his machine—to use after Sir Anthony's should have been sent hurtling to destruction. Monson knew that Wrass was crooked; but he did not know that he was an impudent adventurer.

"Your employer is a fool!" said Wrass fiercely. "He talks of using the prize money to endow some ridiculous institute or other. I need the money for the furthering of real science. With the great fortune which will come my way I shall render science a service which will be remembered throughout the centuries."

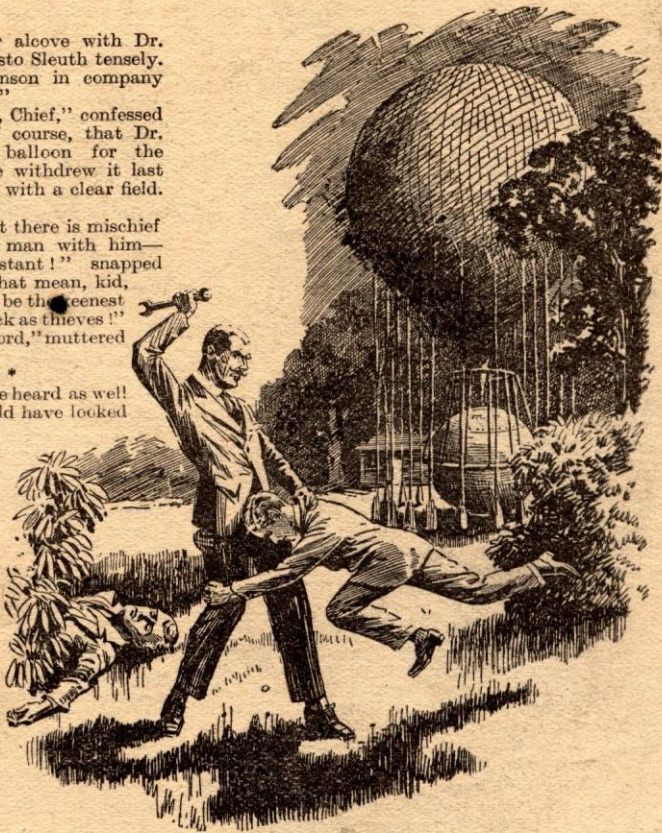
"Could it not be done in some other way?" muttered Monson. "Why should Sir Anthony be killed—?"

"Silence, fool!" snapped the other. "Must you talk so openly? This way is the only way. With Sir Anthony alive, how could I use a replica of his balloon? He must die—by accident—in the

cause of science. You will survive—you will tell the tragic story. It is all so simple."

He leaned across the table, and handed Monson a little glass phial, with a sealed stopper.

"Take this!" he said in a low voice. "You will use it when you are in the air—so that it shall do its



TO SAVE HIS PAL—Jimmy McNutt tackled the villain low. But before he could grapple with him Monson's spanner crashed down.

work five minutes after you have dropped from the globe in your parachute. As for the rest"—he shrugged. "There is a sudden unforeseen explosion, tens of thousands of feet in the air. Sir Anthony's metal globe bursts itself into a million fragments. Who shall know the cause? Your employer will go down in history as a martyr to science."

PROFESSOR BILL leaned forward eagerly, clearly, on that magic screen, he saw Dr. Drummond Wrass pass something which glittered across the table; he saw Monson take it, and Monson's hand was hesitant.

"Get yourself dressed, kid!" said the Science Sentinel crisply.

He added some staccato words, and the television

screen vanished noiselessly into the ceiling; the electric lights came on.

"Where are we going, Chief?" asked Freddy eagerly.

"To Sir Anthony Reeve," replied Professor Bill. "There's dirty work afoot, and we've got to put a stop to it!"

They both dressed at lightning speed. Bill approached a blank section of the wall, and he must have passed through an invisible controlling ray, for although he uttered no word, the wall opened, revealing a cupboard-like cavity. In this, curiously enough, were two bucket seats, like those of a motor-car.

"In with you, Freddy!" said the Science Sleuth crisply.

They both sat down. The sliding door silently closed, and at the same moment Professor Bill and Freddy McNutt went shooting downwards.

It was a breathless descent—a rapid drop from the very roof of the skyscraper to the basement.

It was no ordinary lift, for the pair, sitting in those bucket seats, had no floor beneath them; the seats themselves were gripped by metal clamps which projected from the sides.

The whirring changed its note; the descent slackened, and then, suddenly, the bottom of the shaft was reached.

The bucket seats dropped neatly into the front section of Professor Bill's powerful racing car! As they touched, the iron clamps automatically released themselves, and the steel door of the private garage slid back.

Whirrrrrrrrr! Bill touched the self-starter, the engine sprang into life, and the lean, lithe car sprang into motion.

Professor Bill did not believe in wasting time. Exactly twenty-seven seconds ago he had been in his private bungalow on the roof; now he was driving his car into the Strand.

The Great Stratosphere Plot.

IN record time Professor Bill's car raced down into Surrey; it turned into the long drive of Wellin Manor, and the home of Sir Anthony Reeve, the great astronomer, was soon in sight. Somewhere in the spacious grounds, hidden in the darkness, lay the mighty balloon with its great metal globe—ready for the dawn ascent.

The Presto Sleuth knew, at all events, that he had arrived at the Manor long before Monson could get here. And that was all that mattered—now.

"You cannot see Sir Anthony, sir," said a determined-looking butler when the visitors presented themselves. "He is sleeping in readiness for his great ordeal, and he gave strict orders that he was not to be disturbed before four a.m."

"Nevertheless, you will take in my card—and my compliments—and tell him that I must have an immediate interview," retorted Bill.

"It's as much as my place is worth, sir—"

"And it may be as much as Sir Anthony's life is worth!" snapped Bill. "Man alive, must I force my way into Sir Anthony's very bedroom?"

It was what he did in the end. The butler, faithful to his orders, remained granite-like in his refusal. Bill, characteristically enough, thrust him aside, strode across the hall, and mounted the stairs, with Freddy McNutt at his heels. The butler, protesting angrily, followed—and Bill was shrewd enough to allow the man to pass as soon as they had all reached the landing.

"Thank you!" said Bill coolly, as the butler rushed forward to a certain door and attempted to bar the way. "This is all I wanted to know."

"Sir Anthony will have the police on you for this!" panted the butler hoarsely. "He'll sack me, too—"

"I'll see to it that you don't lose your job, my friend," interrupted Professor Bill. "There's one other question I wanted to ask you. Where is Mr. Monson?"

"He's in the grounds, sir—with the stratosphere balloon," said the butler eagerly. "If you'll come down I'll take you to him."

"Many thanks—but my business is with Sir Anthony." And Professor Bill boldly walked into the bedroom, leaving the butler aghast.

"In Heaven's name, what is all this commotion?" asked an impatient voice.

Professor Bill touched the switch, and the electric lights sprang into life. The famous astronomer, a middle-aged man of learned appearance, was sitting up in bed.

"I tried to keep them out, Sir Anthony—" began the butler from the rear.

"Yes, yes, I'll explain," said Bill, closing the door on him, and turning. "Sir Anthony, let me apologise for this apparent intrusion. My name is Trafford—Professor William Trafford."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Sir Anthony, who was lost in anger and amazement. "I've heard of you, my fine young friend! They call you the Science Sentinel, do they not? What rubbish! What are you doing here?"

"I have good reason to believe that Monson, your assistant, is a traitor to you," replied Bill steadily. "You believe him to be on guard in the grounds; I left him in London, in close association with Dr. Drummond Wrass."

"You are talking sheer nonsense," broke in Sir Anthony hotly. "Monson has been with me for years; I would trust him with my life. How dare you come bursting into my bedroom in defiance of my orders? Get out—or I'll send for the police!"

In vain Professor Bill tried to tell him. Sir Anthony only grew the more furious.

"Very well," said Bill, with compressed lips.

Without another word he strode out, and he and Freddy narrowly escaped being kicked from the house on their necks. Bill said nothing until they were halfway down the drive.

"That was unexpected," he remarked ruefully. "So this fellow, Monson, is in a position of absolute trust. It's queer, kid, how unbusinesslike these great scientists are—how blind they are."

"But what are we going to do, Chief?" asked Freddy.

"We'll take a look at the stratosphere—and wait for Mr. Monson," replied Bill grimly. "I want to have a few words with that gentleman. It's clear enough that he deserted his post, and that he will be back at any minute."

They struck across the dark grounds, and presently, breaking free of some trees, they walked out upon the grassy parkland. There, dimly visible against the night sky, was the immense balloon, with its unique metal covering, gleaming in the starlight.

Suddenly, a dim figure leapt out of the blackness, and something whirled through the air. *Crash!* It descended with sickening force upon Professor Bill's head and the Presto Sleuth rolled over without a cry.

"You—you devil!" gasped Freddy McNutt.

He leapt round upon the man who had struck the murderous blow; tackled him low, but before he could grapple with him, the heavy instrument—it was a spanner—whirled again. Freddy doubled over, stunned. Monson gulped feverishly as he stood over his two victims.

He had been lurking in the drive when the pair had come down; he had overheard their words, and

he had guessed their mission. It was safer to deal with them drastically. One look he took at Bill, and the colour fled from his rat-like face.

"Professor Trafford!" he gasped.

The one man in all the scientific world he had most reason to fear! With Professor Bill suspicious of the plot, anything might happen! In that second, Monson knew that his association with Dr. Drummond Wrass was known, and in his panic he decided upon a desperate course.

He ran madly to the metal sphere, which was held to the ground by scores of staked ropes. But before he could take any action, he saw a light in the distance, and presently Sir Anthony, half-dressed, and wrapped in a dressing-gown, appeared.

"Is everything all right here, Monson?" asked Sir Anthony.

"Why, yes, sir," replied Monson, in mock surprise.

"Huh! Just as I thought!" fumed the great astronomer. "That young fool didn't know what he was talking about!"

sealing trap-door. Ruthlessly, he removed weighty scientific instruments from two steel compartments within the commodious globe. Then he dragged Professor Bill and Freddy McNutt through the darkness; he imprisoned them in the steel compartments.

When the great explosion came, they should share the same fate as Sir Anthony Reeve!

The Mid-Air Menace.

THE start of the great ascent was made in the clear light of a perfect dawn. Many reporters, notably those of the *Daily Record*, were on the spot, to say nothing of a battery of newsreel cameras.

For the rest, the work of "launching" the stratosphere was undertaken by Sir Anthony's own men—honest, horny-muscled yeomen from his estate. The gigantic balloon had been inflated the previous day; now, at dawn, only a few remaining cylinders of compressed gas were transferred into the envelope.

Sir Anthony was full of hope. It was his ambition to rise higher from the earth's surface than any other living man. If he succeeded, his recording instruments would tell a wonderful story.

Little did he know that his villainous rival was building a replica of this stratosphere ship—to be used after Sir Anthony was dead—"a martyr to science." Wrass could never accomplish his purpose if Sir Anthony lived.

The two daring air explorers were encased in voluminous heat-proof suits; even their heads were completely encased in helmet-like headgear.

The last word was given; the trap-door of the metal globe was sealed; the army of men at the ropes received the signal to cast off.

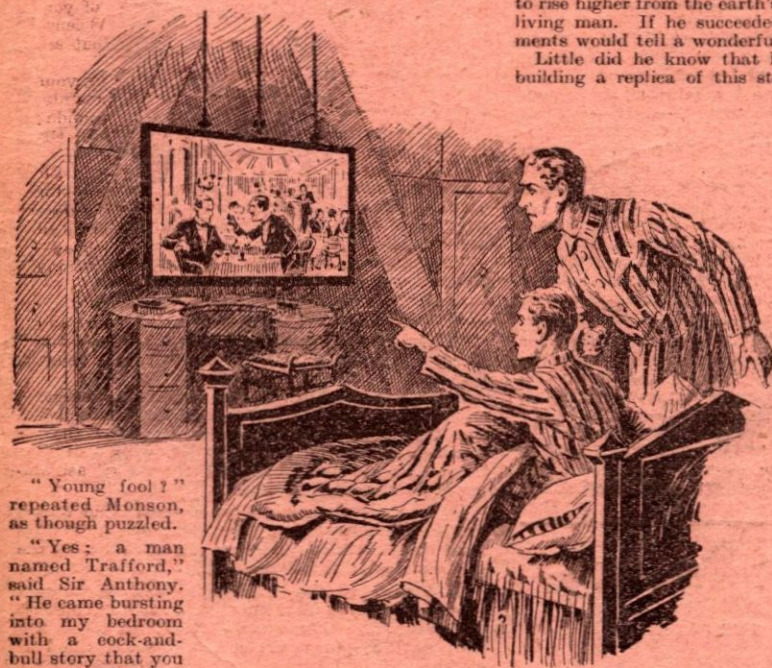
And up rose the immense balloon, shining like gold in the dawn sunlight, a thing of beauty. Cheers rang out, and the sounds reached the ears of Sir Anthony.

Up went the stratosphere—up—up—with increasing speed. Sir Anthony was giving his full attention to the scientific instruments; to the various dials.

"Sir Anthony!" came a sudden clear, commanding voice.

Through his headgear, the astronomer heard his name; he swung round and started. An untidily clad young man, with blood smeared across his forehead, had appeared from a steel compartment in the side of the globe which should have contained special instruments. . . . Professor Bill.

"You—your infernal young scoundrel!" gasped Sir Anthony, wrenching his headgear free. "How



THE TELL-TALE TELEVISION SCREEN.—"Monson!" exclaimed the Presto Sleuth. "He's plotting with the owner of the Stratosphere balloon's deadly rival."

"Young fool?" repeated Monson, as though puzzled.

"Yes; a man named Trafford," said Sir Anthony. "He came bursting into my bedroom with a cock-and-bull story that you were in London, plotting against me with that impostor, Wrass."

"But, Sir Anthony, you didn't believe—"

became Monson, sick with fear.

"There, there! Of course not," said the astronomer. "I sent the young idiot about his business. I'm quite satisfied, Monson. Now, perhaps, I shall be able to get an hour's sleep before the start."

Then, indeed, did Monson know how narrowly he had escaped exposure! But for Sir Anthony's trust in him, the game would have been up.

No sooner was he by himself than he entered the strange metal globe by means of the hermetically

dare you? Are you telling me that you smuggled yourself—"

"I am telling you, Sir Anthony, that your assistant, Monson, is planning your death!" snapped the Science Sleuth. "It was he who imprisoned me here, after knocking me on the head. I recovered some minutes ago. I believe my young friend, Freddy McNutt, is here, too, for he means to destroy us all, and wipe out the evidence— Yes! As I thought!"

He had opened the other steel compartment, and Freddy, still unconscious, rolled out. But before Bill could attend to him, a cackling laugh sounded.

The supposed Monson had removed his disguising headgear, and he stood revealed as Dr. Drummond Wrass himself!

"Fools!" he gritted. "When I knew that you were interfering in my affairs, Trafford, I came on this mission myself. I could not trust Monson."

"Great Heavens!" panted Sir Anthony. "Then—then it was true! My young friend, I did you an injustice—"

"It was the last thing in this world that you will do!" broke in the crook. "See! We are already six thousand feet up—and I must leave you." He laughed madly. "Only a few minutes, gentlemen, and then you will be blown to dust—and Science will be entertained by one of its greatest mysteries."

"If we are blown to Eternity, you will be blown with us!" snapped Professor Bill, reaching forward.

But there was a sudden metallic clang; the steel door in the floor of the globe sprang open, and Dr. Drummond Wrass stood on the edge of the abyss. With deliberate calmness he took the sealed glass phial from his pocket and hurled it to the metal floor, where it broke into a thousand fragments. A thick, oily liquid spread glutinously over the smooth floor.

"Gentlemen, in five minutes you go to perdition!" said Dr. Wrass evilly. "What you see on the floor is a chemical which will vaporise in just five minutes; and that vapour, combining with the oxygen in this globe, will make an explosive mixture which will blow you and the stratosphere into dust!"

"You fiend!" gasped Sir Anthony, horrified. "There is no escape!" shouted Wrass with a hideous laugh. "If you open both doors of this globe you will only accelerate your destruction.

Attempt to wipe up the chemical, and you will precipitate the explosion, for that will speed up the vaporisation. You are doomed, my friends!"

And with a final laugh of triumph he dropped clean through the floor opening—for, concealed in his mass of cold-resisting clothing, there was a parachute.

But, like many another, he laughed too soon! As he fell through, a portion of his clothing caught against the door, and there was an ominous sound of ripping. Down plunged the crook scientist, and when he pulled the rip-cord, nothing happened! For the parachute was rendered useless. Down he dropped like a stone—to certain death!

"Look!" panted Sir Anthony. "The maniac has committed suicide! He is falling headlong—"

"And we are hurtling into the upper air," broke in Professor Bill rapidly, his gaze intent upon that ominous chemical pall. "Sir Anthony," he continued, "there's one hope for us. We must get up into the rigging of the balloon—and cut the globe free."

Sir Anthony stared.

"But my wonderful sphere!" he exclaimed, in dismay. "My instruments! They will fall to destruction—"

"Better for them to be destroyed than us!" said Bill. "Even now there is hardly a hope that we shall be in time."

He leapt at a corresponding trap-door in the roof of the globe; in a moment he had it open, and wriggled through. He assisted Sir Anthony up—and then Freddy.

The great balloon was at a tremendous height; the cold was so intense that their fingers seemed to freeze as they clutched at the ropes. They became dizzy in that rarefied atmosphere.

"Cling to the ropes—and obtain a firm hold!" shouted Professor Bill. "Your knife, Freddy. Quick!"

As he was speaking, he was slashing at the great ropes which held the globe—and he was thankful that they were not metal cables. One after another was slashed through; and finally, with a sagging lurch, the metal globe tore itself free, the last remaining ropes snapping like cords.

Like a stone the globe dropped—and like a rocket the freed balloon shot up; but Professor Bill had his hand on the control valve, and he was allowing the gas to escape at its fullest capacity.

They watched the gleaming globe fall, the sunshine sparkling on its metal sides. . . . And then the globe vanished; there was a blinding flash of dazzling light at the spot where it had been, a cloud of smoke. . . .

Boom—craaaaaaash! The explosion came to their ears, devastating and stunning. And only a few seconds earlier they had been within that sphere. . . .

Thanks to the courage and brilliance of the Presto Sleuth, Sir Anthony Reeve was saved. It was Sir Anthony himself who controlled the balloon as it neared the ground. A good landing was made, and although the great stratosphere vessel was wrecked, Sir Anthony lived to make another attempt. Monson, fleeing from justice, was caught and sentenced to his just deserts.

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Ledoux. Even worse than the heat and fatigue, was the dreadful thought of what would happen to them should any wandering band of veiled Touaregs chance that way.

Devil Ledoux, yellow teeth showing in a wolfish smile, had told them what would happen when he left them lying exhausted on the sand, unable to stand any longer the awful pace of the march under the hundredweight of kit which he had forced them to carry. He had spoken gloatingly of fearful, unspeakable Arab tortures. Out of pity Hans Baer, the mighty German, and Karloff, the Russian giant, had offered to carry the boys if the others would share the weight of their kit. Instantly Devil Ledoux had flown into violent rage, had struck Hans in the mouth with the muzzle of the revolver, which he had kept trained on the *légionnaires* during the whole of that mad march.

"Observe that I am in command here," he had snarled. "Let the brats lie. That is what they get for joining the Legion under false pretences—calling themselves men!"

It was true that these two sixteen-year-old boys had given their ages as nineteen, when they joined the Legion for a "lark." How they regretted having given themselves for five years into Ledoux's hands!

So, with rifles unloaded, the *légionnaires* had been forced to go on, growling in their throats, leaving the boys to die, as they thought, on the desert.

"We shore gotta do it," broke out Pete Holt, forcing his long legs to an increase in the weary pace. "Devil Ledoux ain't gonna git our names on his cemetery list. Not any."

"They say he's killed twenty men, one way and another," Jerry muttered hoarsely, wiping stinging sweat from his lean, bronzed young face. "An' you can bet he'll half-kill us when he finds we've left our kits in the desert."

Peter nodded as he thrust back his peaked, linen-flapped képi to wipe his smarting eyes. They had left everything but their rifles and water-bottles. Sergeant Ledoux, who was in charge of the post since Captain Fontaine had gone back to Sidi-bel-Abbes with his shoulder sliced by an Arab *fissa*, would mete out fiendish punishment for such an "offence."

"The fiend!" muttered Jerry—then he broke off with a painfully leaping heart, as Pete, who had been staring intently across the billowing blinding sands, let out a sudden, hoarse exclamation. "What—what is it, Pete?"

"Dust cloud," the keen-eyed Arizona boy said between his teeth. "It's Ay-rabs, buddy, or I miss my guess. An' the way they're comin', they aim to cross our trail!"

Arabs, here, far from any caravan route! Then they could only be Touaregs, the Forgotten-of-God! And the fate of a *légionnaire*, a hated *Roumi*, who fell into their hands alive, would be unspeakably horrible.

"Quick!" Jerry jerked himself from a daze of horror. "They won't have seen us yet, because our dust cloud isn't so big. We've got to dig ourselves in!"

They had kept in the tracks of their comrades, and though these were fast being blown over by the desert wind, there was still enough of them to hide their own trail. Quickly they ran back, rounding the shoulder of a rocky outcrop. Whichever way the approaching riders came, they would avoid these broken rocks.

"That cleft!" cried Jerry, and then they were working frantically, scooping blown sand from a rift in the rock. Panting and sweating, with only their hands as tools, they dug for their lives, trying to scoop a hollow large enough for both to crawl into, before the Arabs appeared over the next ridge.

"Hurry—for the love of Mike!" Pete gasped as he raised himself cautiously on the rock and peered. "They're comin' right this way—an' they're on hosses!"

Horses! Swift raiders' horses! Desperately, frantically, with bleeding hands and cracking muscles, the boys worked, momentarily expecting to hear the yells of wild riders, cascading down the ridge behind them.

At last! Almost exhausted, they crawled into the emptied cleft, and Jerry was dragging back some of the sand they had removed, making a bank behind which they could lie, hidden.

They were barely in time. A dozen veiled, mounted figures topped the ridge and followed by the whole band of sixty odd, had changed direction suddenly—were coming directly for the rocks!

"They're on to us! They seen our dust!" Pete gasped, and an icy fear gripped Jerry's heart as the leader came level.

Would they pass? Would they—no! With a shouted command, the leader halted his horse opposite the cleft, and leapt to the ground. Then he walked across the rocks, straight for the boys' hiding-place!

Instinctively the boys tensed, gripped their rifles, ready to sell their lives dearly. Suddenly, the Arab swung aside to another cleft, showing no sign whatever of being aware of their presence, and thrusting his arm into the hole, drew forth a piece of paper.

Jerry and Pete breathed a little sigh of relief as they watched him glance rapidly through the message. Then, with a word to the others, he remounted and shouted an order. A moment later the band was moving off, shaping a course parallel to the trail of the *légionnaires* back to the post.

"By thunder! What a narrow squeak!" Pete said shakily, mopping his forehead as the riders went out of sight over a ridge. "An' I reckon we ain't outa the wood yet. Then guys is aimin' to attack the post, or I'm a Spiggoty!"

"I doubt it," replied Jerry, his brow wrinkled in bewilderment. "Did you see those bundles on the pack-horses? I reckon they're smuggling rifles to Morocco!"

"Then how come they's so near a Legion post, an' aimin' to get nearer? An' what's the idea o' thishyer post-box, plumb in the middle o' the Sahara?"

There was indeed some mystery afloat, but there was no time to consider it now. Thankful to be still alive, the two boys shook themselves free of sand, drank the last drops of their warm, stale water, and set off again across the burning sands.

It was when they were almost within sight of the mud walls and tall look-out platform of the outpost, that Jerry's quick ear caught the faint sound of a horse's neigh. They flung themselves flat on the ridge and peered cautiously over.

Below them, a quarter-of-a-mile away, was the Arab band, dismounted and apparently holding a consultation.

"There you are! They're plannin' an attack!"

hissed Pete—then broke off to stare in startled amazement at a broad, squat figure standing beside the tall Arab leader, a figure in the dress of a *légionnaire*.

It was Sergeant Devil Ledoux!

For a moment the boys could only gaze at each other in consternation. A sergeant of the Legion, meeting their fierce Touareg enemies alone in the desert!

"The swine's in league with them!" gasped Jerry. "That's why he isn't afraid to take us out on those mad exercise marches, and why he always takes us past those rocks. He's selling 'em information about the movements of the Legion, helping 'em through with their guns!"

"There's more to it than that, buddy," Pete muttered grimly. "I reckon we better hustle to the fort, an' warn them fellers."

They pressed on at the limit of their strength, keeping the ridges between them and the Arabs. Jerry's mind was in a turmoil. Fiend though Ledoux was, surely he could not be betraying his own men, as Pete's words suggested?

And then he remembered the story that Ledoux, who had been an Apache in the gutters of Montmartre, dared not return to France for fear of the vengeance of his gang, whom he had foully betrayed. That was why he had done two five-year periods in the hated Legion, growing more and more inhuman in his bitter exile.

There were two machine guns in the fort, and fifty Lebel rifles. What more likely than that he was offering them to the Arabs as the price of safe passage to Morocco, where he could sell himself at a high price to the Sultan?

Jerry stopped thinking as they reached the blockhouse, for he noticed a strange and sinister thing. There was no guard on the roof, none on the look-out platform; the gate was ajar!

"Say—what in thunder's happened?" Pete let out, in the strange, brooding silence.

Next second they had entered the *caserne*, and both gasped as an amazing sight met their eyes.

Forty-seven *légionnaires*, Russian, German, Italian, and French, sprawled on beds and floor and table—and their attitudes and breathing told instantly that they had been drugged!

"By Heaven!" Jerry gasped. "So that's it!"

Devil Ledoux had put something in the men's coffee, leaving the way clear for the Arab attack.

It was fiendish beyond imagining. That any white man could so betray his comrades in arms—

"What we gonna do, buddy?" Pete asked. "They'll be along purty soon, an' I reckon guns won't be all they'll want. Ledoux'll want a few Arab bullets put into these fellers—and us—so as there'll be no witnesses an' a good case for him if ever he's caught."

"We'd better shut the gate, Pete, an' try to

put up some sort of a scrap," Jerry said, and, his own weariness forgotten, he vainly tried to shake some of the drugged *légionnaires* awake. Then he burst out suddenly: "No! Let's leave the gate open. Those hounds won't be suspecting anything and they'll ride up in a bunch. If we're on the roof with the two machine-guns . . ."

"By golly! You said it!"

They went to work quickly, breaking the lock



OUTWITTING THE ASSASSIN.—

The beam of the rascally sergeant's torch swept round the cell—a gasp escaped him. "Tonnerre! Someone's loosed the rats!" he hissed.

of the magazine door and hauling the two machine-guns and cartridge belts up to the roof. Hardly were the guns mounted behind the parapet, the boys squatting behind them, when a cloud of dust to the south, advertised the coming of the Arabs.

"Hold it till they're within fifty yards," gritted Pete, his finger on a trigger.

As he had hoped, the unsuspecting Arabs rode close together, and but for Devil Ledoux, whom they recognised at once despite the Touareg robes and veil he now wore, the first volley would have meant their instant and utter destruction.

The sergeant's quick eye must have caught a gleam of the now setting sun on the muzzle of one of the guns. They saw him seize the tall leader's arm and point. Next second, to the sound of a shouted order, the Arabs had spread out and were riding like the wind for the open gate, firing their rifles as they came, and roaring their blood-chilling war cry:

"Allah Akbar! Ul-ul-ul-Ullah!"

There was only one thing to do! As Pete's gun came to chattering life, Jerry exploded into action. He vaulted the parapet and leapt to the ground outside the fort. His body felt as if every bone had been dislocated, when he staggered to his feet, and, under a whistling hail of Touareg bullets, lurched for the gate.

He burst through and slammed it shut, just as the first of the raiders, sliding off his horse in full career, leapt at the opening. Frantically he shot the bolts, and rushed for a rifle.

There was no time to regain the roof. Instead, he leapt to the gate, just as three Arabs clambered to the top. Like one possessed he thrust at them, sending them toppling back, shrieking.

He heard screams and yells above the chatter of the machine-gun, and leapt back to give Pete full play. The Arabs, in spite of their chief's shrieked orders to spread out, had rushed for the gate in a bunch. That was their undoing, for the deadly hail from the machine-gun could not miss.

It mowed them down like grass, and as those in the rear leapt shrieking on the bodies of those in front, Pete elevated his muzzle and sent them backwards upon the rest, in a cursing, struggling confusion.

Had the machine-gun not jammed, the whole of that Arab band would have been wiped out almost in less time than it takes to tell. Even as it was, over a third of them were down in a matter of seconds, and as Pete jumped for the second gun the rest turned tail and raced for their horses, leaping into the saddles and urging them away with yells and blows.

Three more Pete got as they galloped away, then they had spread out and were riding into the eye of the sun, making aim impossible, and a minute later they had dropped out of sight behind a dune.

Arrest.

"BY thunder, Pete—you saved our bacon that time!" Jerry was leaning against the wall as Pete came down, and feeling a little sick; for he had not yet got used to killing men.

"You shore mean you did—by shutting that thar gate," Pete said. "Say—did I get Ledoux, I wonder?"

He went out to examine the dead, for such sights did not seem to affect this boy, who had been reared among gun-fighting plainmen. He came back, shaking his head.

"Trust that rattlesnake to save his skin," he growled, barring the gate again. "I didn't get him."

"Then the Arabs will—for this," Jerry said, and shuddered at the thought of what would surely happen to Devil Ledoux, when the Touaregs vented their baffled fury upon him.

"Lessee if we can rouse those guys now," Pete said. "It'll be dark, 'fore long, an' it'd shore be a different proposition if those Arabs was to creep up on us in the dark."

But it was still impossible to waken the *légionnaires* from their drugged sleep. They went from man to man, shaking them roughly, tweaking their ears and slapping their faces, without avail. Even when Jerry's touch on the shoulder of Hans Baer, who was sitting on a box, brought the German giant crashing to the floor, he did no more than mutter in his sleep!

"D'you think they'll ever wake?" Jerry asked desperately; and Pete had no answer.

Suddenly they remembered the unguarded walls, and hurried out. It was almost twilight, and an expectant hush hung over the desert. Of a sudden there came a mighty hammering at the gate . . .

"Who's there?" Jerry called.

"Open up, you rats!" came a snarling answer. It was the voice of Devil Ledoux!

For a second the boys looked at each other, hardly believing their ears. That this renegade, somehow pacifying or escaping from the Touareg, should have the audacity to come back to the fort he had betrayed, was almost incredible!

"He doesn't know we know," whispered Jerry, as it suddenly dawned on him. "He's guessed who did the shooting, but he doesn't know we saw him in confab with the Touaregs."

"He's shore due for a shock when we tell him, then," Pete whispered back; and then he did a foolish thing.

He opened the gate—and they both stared into the muzzle of Sergeant Ledoux's levelled revolver.

"The hands raised!" he snarled, in English. "Up, rats!"

It was utterly unexpected; they had not dreamed he would show his hand so early. They both obeyed the order instantly, for there was that in the red-rimmed, hate-filled eyes of Devil Ledoux which showed plainly his readiness to shoot.

He glared at them, yellow teeth gnawing at his black moustache. Evidently he was thinking out his next move, and undoubtedly that move would have been to shoot both boys in cold blood if there had not, at that moment, come a sound from the *caserne*.

Next second Paul Karloff, looking dazed and sick, staggered drunkenly out. Another Russian followed.

Instantly Jerry opened his mouth to shout a warning. But Devil Ledoux was before him, taking a line that was astounding in its unexpectedness.

"Karloff! Mosjoukine!" he roared. "Arrest these mutineers!"

Speechless with amazement, the boys saw the Russians stare in surprise, then hurry forward. Then they found their tongues;

"What the blazes! You doggoned renegade—" "Arrest Ledoux! He doped you an' sold you to the Arabs!"

For one second the sergeant's face went grey with sudden fear—next, he was smiling mockingly. For the boys, in their excitement, were shouting in English, of which the Russians understood not a word. And as they struggled vainly in the grip of the two powerful *légionnaires*, he tapped his forehead.

"Le Cafard!" he grated. "The madness of the desert. To the punishment cell with them!"

It was useless for the boys to shout and struggle. The Russians, believing that *le cafard*, the desert madness, had seized them, picked them up bodily and hurried them away.

Still struggling, they were thrust into the windowless cell, dug down into the sand, and they heard the sergeant's snarling voice as he slammed and locked the door:

"Lucky for you, dogs, that I woke in time. These *cafard*-stricken rats who drugged us would have murdered you all, as they tried to murder me!"

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TO AWAIT HIS FATE! With all speed the Russian legionnaire tied the rascally Sergeant to one of the Arabs' horses. They would know how to deal with the traitor who had led them into a trap.

even a mouse could have escaped from the punishment cell.

"I say," let out Jerry suddenly.

"I've a notion friend Ledoux won't take the risk of keeping us alive for long. . . . He'll be back shortly, Pete, an' I've a plan. Let's lay up on that rafter."

It was a huge beam that helped to support the roof, and they had discovered once, when they were whitewashing the cell, that the top of it had rotted away, leaving a space between beam and ceiling.

"What's the idea?" asked Pete—and at that moment they heard a sound from outside.

"Quick!" hissed Jerry, and in an instant they

A Clever Ruse.

"BY the 'tarnal! That treacherous, yaller-livered coyote can't get away with this!" Pete cried hoarsely in the darkness.

"He is getting away with it," Jerry muttered grimly. "So long as he doesn't set a guard on the roof, nobody will see the dead Arabs or the machine-guns."

"But those guys'll know it shore couldn't have been us that doped 'em. We weren't here."

"We could have put some of those Arab drugs into the coffee before we left. It's just the sort of thing a feller does when he's got *le cafard*."

For a moment Pete's helpless fury was such that he could not speak.

"Say," he said, at last, in a trembling voice. "We gotta get outa here, an' quick! If I don't soon have a reckoning with Mister Ledoux—I—I'll bust!"

"An' if somebody doesn't soon warn the others, you'll do worse than bust. For you can bet your life Ledoux is hatching another plot to let those Arabs in!"

It was a dreadful thought, and quickly they set about, by the light of matches, looking for means of escape.

But it was hopeless. They soon saw that not

had caught the rotting edge of the beam, swung themselves up and were lying face downwards upon it, wedged tightly in the narrow space. Then the door opened quietly and a man entered, flashing a torch.

Sure enough, it was Devil Ledoux, and the glint of a pistol, equipped with a silencer, told of his deadly purpose. He swung the torch round the cell—and a great gasp left his lips.

"Name of a pig!" he snarled. "Someone's loosed the rats!" He turned and rushed from the chamber—leaving the door unlocked in his haste!

It was the thing for which Jerry had hoped. In a moment he and Pete had dropped down, and were listening intently in the doorway.

"Gee, buddy! Some stunt!" whispered Pete. "What next?"

"Thing is," Jerry muttered, "what'll he do next? If he thinks someone loosed us, he'll also think we've told our tale to someone, an' that it's all up with him."

They waited several minutes, for it might be fatal to hurry matters. If Ledoux saw them, he would shoot at once, and the fact that they had "broken" jail would be his justification.

Suddenly Pete clutched Jerry's arm with a

warning hiss. Soft steps were approaching round a corner of the mud wall.

"If that's Ledoux—jump him an' risk it!"

They almost leapt upon the dim figure that came round the building, before they realised that it was too tall for Ledoux. And then Jerry let out a breath of relief as he saw that it was the very man who could help them best—Fritz Tieck, the German ex-officer whose handsome

face was criss-crossed by duelling scars; a fine soldier and a sportsman.

"You two, eh?" he said quietly, and he might have been an English ex-officer, so faultlessly did he speak the language. "I'd come to try and get a word with you. Can you, by any chance, tell me what all this confounded business means?"

They drew him into the cell—the one place where Ledoux would never look for them now—and in a few, quick sentences Jerry told him all that had happened, from the time they had first seen the Touaregs on the desert.

Not a word did he speak during the whole recital, though once or twice the boys heard the hissing intake of his breath. When Jerry finished, he stood, his hands clenched.

"Wait here," he said, in a voice that sounded like the lash of a whip.

He was gone like a shadow, and the boys waited breathlessly for what seemed an age. Suddenly, from the other side of the fort, they heard a challenging roar—followed instantly by six shots that cracked like one.

"Ledoux! He's got Fritz!" Jerry gasped.

But next moment, to his intense relief, Fritz Tieck came softly round the corner.

"I have solved Ledoux's problem for him," he chuckled grimly. "He was nosing round the caserne, not daring to enter for fear the men had heard your story; so I scrambled over the gate and made some noise in doing it. He thought it was you, escaping, opened the gate and started firing, and I gave an imitation of three men getting shot. Now he'll enter the caserne and find that I'm missing, and I hope he'll conclude that it was I who helped you escape, and that he had the good luck to bag all three of us."

Tense though the situation still was, the boys laughed silently.

"An' what then?" Jerry asked.

"Then we will have a chance to explain to the men, and form a plan. You see, nobody has any ammunition except Ledoux. There isn't even a sentry posted."

Two minutes later they judged it safe to creep round to the caserne. Inside they found the men, still sick and dazed from their drugging, discussing the shots they had heard. Quietly, briefly, Tieck proceeded to tell them the boys' story.

They were like animals, when he had done; dreadful curses, savage growls came from their throats, as they leapt for the door. In a flash Tieck darted to the door, setting his back against it.

"What do you propose to do, my friends?" he asked quietly.

They were going to get Ledoux! Kill him! Tear him apart! Hang him! Shoot him!

"Devil Ledoux, my comrades," said Tieck, when the yells ceased, "is in the magazine, and you have not a bullet among you. Also, it is quite possible that he can bring the Touaregs upon us at any moment, by a signal."

The *légionnaires* looked from one to the other, and Michael Scarpillo, badly wanted by the Italian police, brought out a long, thin, wicked-looking knife from a scabbard that hung down his back . . .

The Second Plan.

"BY thunder! Look what he's doin'!" whispered Pete.

The two boys had volunteered for the

job of creeping up to the magazine, and through a crack in the door they now saw Ledoux.

He was working at top speed by the light of a lantern, at a table that was loaded with rifle ammunition. He was using pincers, to tug the bullets from their cases; and as each bullet came out, he jerked most of the powder from the case, put the bullet back again, and tapped it tight on the table.

He was preparing for the *légionnaires* some ammunition that would be about as useful against the Arabs as blank cartridge!

Silently the boys raced back to tell Tieck. Every moment counted now, as Ledoux's own haste proved. In a matter of minutes, perhaps, the Touaregs, waiting for no signal, would be upon them, expecting to find, not drugged men, but men whose guns would be useless.

"We'll have to rush him—get some ammunition somehow!" Jerry finished breathlessly, and the *légionnaires* growled assent. But Tieck shook his head.

"Too risky. If the Arabs are lying close, the fire he'd put up might bring them upon us before their time—and before we could burst the magazine door, which will be bolted on the inside, this time. No—we'll bring Ledoux out by a trick, if we can. We'll stage an Arab raid of our own."

Quickly, he explained what he wanted, dividing the *légionnaires* into two groups. One party had to take a slight risk by stealing out for fifty yards into the desert. Then they were to rush in, yelling the Arab war cry at the tops of their voices, and the others were to dash to the magazine.

They got the idea at once, and unhesitatingly obeyed the ex-officer. Next minute the desert party had stolen out, and the others were waiting tensely for their "attack."

It was beautifully done. A minute later, with a suddenness that was startling, the night air was rent by a chorus of hideous, ferocious yells:

"Allah Akbar! Ul-ul-ul-ul-Ullah!" It was as though a mighty host were out there on the desert, and coming nearer at racing speed. The remaining *légionnaires* seized their rifles and rushed pell-mell for the magazine, their cries of "Attack! Les Arbis! Aux armes! Aux armes!" adding to the terrific din. They hammered at the magazine door, shouting for ammunition.

"Quiet, you dogs!" Ledoux's roar rose above it all, as he flung the door open. His face was startled, angry. Evidently he was wondering why the Touaregs had attacked before the pre-arranged time.

He started handing out cartridges to the clamouring men, and got as far as holding out two handfuls. Then he let out a scream of agony. His hands were seized in those of the giant Karloff, and the bones instantly crushed like matchsticks in the Russian's terrible grip!

In that moment, Devil Ledoux would have been torn to pieces by the furious *légionnaires*, but even as they rushed for him the yells of "Allah Akbar," which had died down as the others got back into the fort, suddenly burst out anew.

The real Arabs, probably under the impression that some other desert band was stealing their rightful prey, were racing to the attack!

"The Touaregs!" roared Tieck; then his commanding voice was rising above everything, as he shouted to the *légionnaires* to leave Ledoux, to arm themselves.

Karloff swung the struggling sergeant above his head like a child, bearing him out of the crush, as Jerry cleaved his way into the magazine and swept what he knew to be the useless cartridges to the floor.

While the men were grabbing ammunition and rushing out as fast as they could, Karloff, unknown to the Arabs, stole from the fort with Ledoux. The sergeant was gagged and he was struggling but feebly.

With all speed the Russian raced to the Arab horses. There was no guard and Karloff set to work to tie the rascally sergeant to one of the steeds. They would know how to deal with him when they found the garrison prepared for their attack.

Meanwhile the raiders flung themselves at the gate—to meet an unexpected check. The gate, which Ledoux had left unbarred, had been fastened again.

Shrieking their fury, they scrambled like cats up gate and wall, climbing upon each others' shoulders. They were met by a hail of deadly lead; a hail that sent them shrieking backwards, riddled through and through by the bullets which were to have been as harmless as peas.

Dead and wounded, they fell back upon their fellows, and a terrible fire from the roof poured into the yelling struggling confusion. It was not fighting; it was sheer slaughter, a massacre.

With a wild howl of consternation as they realised the truth, a half-dozen survivors tore loose from the shambles and went racing back over the desert, pursued by a blind fire from the roof, and next moment Tieck's "*Cessez le feu!*" brought a silence that was startling after the hideous din, and broken only by the sob of a wounded Touareg from without.

It was over. The men who had thought to take the post without a shot being fired had been routed in little more than a minute.

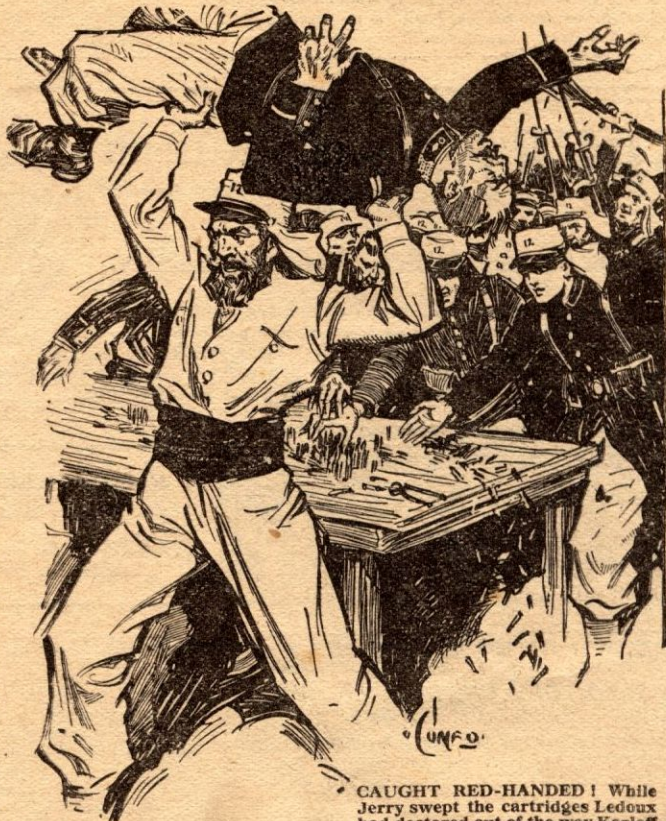
"By heck!" said Pete, as he and Jerry put down their rifles. "Them Arabs'll shore git sick of leavin' matters to Fix-it Ledoux, if things panned out this way much more."

"I think it's Ledoux's turn, next," said Jerry, shuddering.

He was right. Now the *légionnaires* were calling fiercely to each other, to Karloff. But their shouting produced no result. Sergeant Ledoux was not in the fort. Neither was Karloff. "Strange," muttered Tieck to the boys, as they moved among the vainly searching groups. "If Karloff falls foul of those Touaregs—Heaven help him!"

At that moment every voice in the fort was stilled by a dreadful, marrow-freezing sound that came from across the desert. It was a long-drawn, quivering shriek of agony; the scream of a human being in horrible, unspeakable pain.

Higher it rose and higher, till Jerry and Pete stuffed their fingers in their ears and went into the *caserne*, just as Paul Karloff shouted from outside the gate.



CAUGHT RED-HANDED! While Jerry swept the cartridges Ledoux had doctored out of the way Karloff swung the traitor up in his great arms.

"Who is it—Ledoux?" Jerry asked as Tieck came in.

"Ledoux, yes," and the German told them of what Karloff had done. "Now," he concluded, "Devil Ledoux is learning the meaning of Arab punishment. I advise you not to be present when we recover his body in the morning, for it will not be a pretty sight."

"By the 'tarnal! What a shore enough pizen country this is," muttered Pete wearily.

"An' we've got over four years to do, yet," Jerry almost groaned.

Tieck looked at them keenly, and his dulled face was kindly.

"You boys are under age, aren't you? I thought so," he said. "Well, *La Légion Etrangère* does not like to let men go, even if they are under

age; but you boys have saved this post and every man in it, and I think the people at Sidi-bel-Abbes will be feeling very well disposed towards you when you get back. I should see Captain Fontaine, if I were you, and I think you may find yourselves civilians again in a few weeks."

"Saaa! You think they'd let us quit?"

"I do," Tieck said, and added with some embarrassment, "And if you—er—happen to have no private means, I will be only too glad to give you your fares home."

They were on their feet and gripping his hand—both hands.

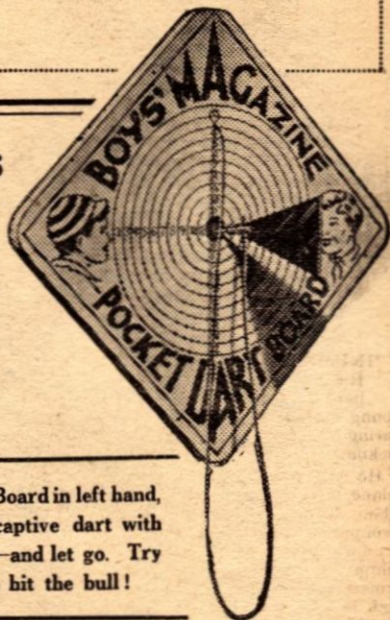
TIECK was shaking hands with them again, six weeks later, and they were on the train for Oran. Civilians once more, they were leaving Algeria, that land of heat and sand and horrors, behind them forever.

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(Continued from page 2.)

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(Continued from page 9.)

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