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# Boys' 2D Magazine

EVERY SATURDAY



**THE RIDDLE OF THE ROVERS—Grand Football Detective Tale**  
VOL. XXIII—No. 601—September 9, 1933

REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION  
BY CANADIAN MAGAZINE POST.

ESB



# A SURPRISE ON EVERY PAGE Next Week!



The Editor is Always At Home to Readers at  
200, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.  
DROP HIM A LINE.

MY DEAR CHUMS,

Crowds of fellows have written congratulating the old *B.M.* on the Working Models of a Speedboat and an Aeroplane given with our paper recently. One and all they ask for more—and I'm not going to disappoint you. In fact, I have just finished planning a whole series of these astonishing gifts with the designer. The factory is now busy manufacturing the metal parts, and very soon the first gift will be in your hands. In addition to these working models, which will open up a fascinating new pastime for you for the darker nights, I have prepared some smashing new story surprises. Yarns of the air, featuring some daredevil new fliers in war and peace; new stories of school, football, adventure and detective mystery, pirates, highwaymen, cowboys—indeed, no subject a boy finds thrilling has been forgotten. And you are to dip into these great new story programmes with next week's grand special number of the Red Wonder Mag.

### A Surprise on Every Page

is the motto for next week. If you are not surprised and delighted with the good things—well, I'll be a disappointed man.

One reader, Leslie Brown, of Bristol, wrote me the other day saying that he hoped the wonderful gifts and enlarged numbers of the *Mag.* now being provided would not be so costly that we should have to raise the price of *Boys' Magazine*. No, Leslie, though the actual value of our paper has been greatly increased, its added popularity will make it possible still to produce it at the humble price of two coppers (pennies, not policemen!).

### Prizes for Handy Men.

M. F. Parsons, Tenterden, Kent, also sent me an interesting letter the other day. He suggests that in addition to the science and engineering chats that appear in the *Mag.*, we should tell you how to make various things for yourselves. "It would be possible," he writes, "to invite readers to describe things they have made themselves—such as an electric light for their club-room, etc.—and publish the best each week in the *B.M.*."

Well, chaps, I am always ready to adopt my readers' suggestions, and I think this is a jolly good idea. Therefore, I have arranged to run each week a Readers' Own Page, and to the sender of each article published I will award a 14-carat Gold-nibbed Fountain Pen.

Now, you handy men—roll up. Write your articles on one side of the paper only, using not more than two hundred words. Rough sketches of your models, etc., should also be given to show how they are made up. Send them to me at the above address, then watch the *Mag.* for your contribution to appear.

### How to Make a Television Set.

A number of readers have also written about the article on Television which appeared in the *Mag.* recently. They ask how to make a Television set for themselves. Of course this apparatus is rather complicated and expensive, but our Science Expert has been getting his head to work and he has designed a set which, provided you possess some old wireless parts, can be constructed quite cheaply. This fascinating article will appear in next week's number of the *B.M.*

### The Thrill Library.

The dandy little eight-page supplements which are presented free every week will soon be ready for binding into one dazzling volume. Here's a chance for handy men to tell us on The Readers' Own Page (Continued on page 26).





PHWEEEEEPP! FALCON SWIFT KICKS OFF THE NEW FOOTBALL SEASON IN THE GRIPPING SPORT AND CROOK DRAMA BELOW.

# THE RIDDLE OF THE ROVERS



### The "Must Win" Team.

"ROLL on, Saturday!" said Chick Conway, ecstatically.  
On the other side of the breakfast table, Falcon Swift, the famous Monocled Manhunter, sat

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

opening his morning letters. At Chick's words he glanced across at his young assistant with a twinkle in his keen eyes.

"Impatient for football, laddie?" he asked dryly. "Tell me of a game that is its equal, boss," retorted Chick. "Did you see this bit in the paper about the Prestwick Rovers. They've signed on the famous Hal Fletcher, from the North, as centre-forward. I'd give quids to see the opening match."

"You might see it for nothing," replied Falcon Swift imperturbably. "Curious that you should be reading an item concerning Prestwick Rovers, laddie. This letter in my hand is from 'Happy' Jim Salter, the team's manager."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" ejaculated Chick. "What does he want, boss? Not a matter of business, surely?"

"It appears to be," replied the Sporting Sleuth. "Salter wants me to run down to Prestwick and see him 'urgently.' He says there's something fishy



going on, and he hints that the matter might be very serious. He says further that he'd regard it as an honour if I would consent to play for the Rovers in their opening match." Falcon Swift's eyes twinkled afresh. "Feel like a spot of practice, laddie?"

"Let's go!" retorted Chick promptly.

They left their Half-Moon Street chambers later in the morning, after Falcon Swift had attended to one or two important matters. The detective's powerful Hispano-Suiza carried them rapidly into the country, and they were soon on the outskirts of the big town of Prestwick. The football enclosure, spick and span for the new season, though parts of the stand were still in the hands of workmen, was bordered on one side by the wooded estate of Prestwick Old Manor, and the surroundings were unusually picturesque.

"Happy" Jim Salter, big and bluff, came out of his office in the grand stand as soon as he heard the quiet purring of Swift's car.

"This is mighty good of you, Swift," he said gratefully, as they shook hands. "I got your wire, and hurried straight back from lunch. The boys will be along presently for practice—but for the moment we're alone."

As they went into the manager's office, Salter's expression changed. His characteristic jollity left him, and he looked a very harassed, worried man.

"The trouble is, although I'm certain that foul play is intended—if not already afoot—I can't give it a name," he said, with a helpless shrug. "Perhaps you'll think I'm making a mountain out of a mole-hill, Swift; but I've had this 'hunch' ever since old Horder died, a few weeks ago."

"So old Simon Horder is dead?" said Falcon Swift. "I'm sorry to hear that, Jim. He was very good to the club, wasn't he?"

"Some called him mad," replied Jim Salter thoughtfully. "He kept wild animals as a hobby—lived like a hermit at the Old Manor. A young upstart named Lemuel Horder has inherited the property, but I'm not so much afraid of him. It's the lawyer, Jasper Drill, I'm suspicious of. I've known him for years; slimy, slippery, underhand, ruthless."

"But how can this unpleasant gentleman harm you, or the club?" asked Falcon Swift.

"Well, here's the position," replied the manager. "Everything was going fine; we were looking forward to a record season, and my directors secured the transfer of Fletcher, the famous centre-forward. Unfortunately, old Horder died, and the affairs of the estate are virtually in Jasper Drill's hands. I know for a fact that he wants to get this enclosure away from us. Our agreement—our lease—remains valid however, for another seven years."

"Then why are you afraid of Drill?"

"Because there's a clause in that agreement—and it is a very unusual one," replied Jim Salter. "Old Simon Horder, in order to instil keenness into the club, worded that clause himself. Simply, it amounts to this. The club can retain possession of the ground, year after year, *always providing that we win the opening match of each season.* And I believe Drill's planning some kind of monkey business."

"So that you will lose to-morrow's match?" asked Falcon Swift.

"Yes—and I'm worried," said Jim Salter. "I'm so worried, in fact, that I asked you to come down, Swift—just to keep your eye on things. With you here I shall feel comfortable."

"Well, we'll see," said the detective indulgently.

While they were still talking, voices sounded in some other part of the grand-stand. A squat, square-cut man, in a sweater came in to report that the team was ready for practice.

"Hallo, Sam!" said Falcon Swift.

"Why, bust my eyesight!" ejaculated Sam Samms, the trainer. "This is a big day for the old club, sir! Mighty glad I am to see you."

"Any objection if Chick and I turn out for a kick or two, with the boys?" asked Swift.

"Any objection! Come right along to the dressing room, Mr. Swift, and I'll fix you up," said the trainer, his eyes sparkling.

He turned to the door, but found that it was opening. A biggish man, square-shouldered, carrying a suit-case, stood there.

"This is good!" went on the trainer. "You'll be Hal Fletcher?"

The newcomer removed his cap, revealing a head of fiery red hair. His face seemed open enough; but Falcon Swift, who was a keen judge of character, took an instant dislike to the new footballer. There was something about the set of his eyes, something about his mouth, which made Swift distrust him. And the detective had a vague, illusive impression that he had seen Hal Fletcher before.

"We're glad to welcome you to Prestwick Rovers' Club, Fletcher," said Jim Salter. "I've heard good things about you, my lad, and I'm relying on you to lead the forward line to victory to-morrow."

"Nothing easier, sir," grinned Fletcher. "I'll put up a good show to-morrow."

"Well, supposing you change, and give me a sample this afternoon?" suggested Jim Salter, rather sharply.

He, too, seemed to have taken an instinctive dislike to the man; but it was scarcely fair to judge him yet.

Falcon Swift and Chick were soon changed, and Chick, at least, was as happy as a sandboy to be in footer togs. Falcon Swift, too, was already feeling the urge of the wonderful sport, and his nerves were tingling with real joy as he felt the turf beneath his studded boots.

The other members of the team were lively, jolly, enthusiastic lads. One or two of them were real characters—as, for example, "Beefy" Bullock, the giant sixteen-stone goalie. He was large rather than fat; his face was round and red and it wore a constant grin. Then, in complete contrast, there was "Grief" Moffat, the Rovers' pivot. Not only did he look melancholy, but every word he uttered generally contained a pessimistic note. At heart, however, he was stout and courageous, and his skill on the field was celebrated.

Falcon Swift paid keen attention to Fletcher, the new centre-forward. The man seemed clumsy, somehow, and revealed little skill. But, since it was only a practice he was perhaps deliberately holding himself in. He had come to Prestwick Rovers with a fine record; he had been signed on a fortnight ago by the club directors, in accordance with the necessary regulations.

The leather, joyously booted out of the goal by Beefy Bullock, fell at Falcon Swift's feet. The detective was off like a flash, dribbling the ball with that rare skill of his which had so frequently aroused the enthusiasm of multitudes. On he went, and then, suddenly, he passed the ball to Fletcher. The newcomer trapped the leather neatly, and streaked goalwards. One of the backs tried to intercept him, and Fletcher adopted a curious little trick. There was a peculiar sideways swing of his body as he half halted; he fainted, side-stepped rapidly, and then ran on, leaving the back beaten.

"Good work!" commented Jim Salter approvingly.

But Falcon Swift's jaw had suddenly hardened, and behind his famous monocle his eye was gleaming with enlightenment.



"We're staying here, Chick—until after to-morrow," said the detective, as his young assistant joined him.

"Great Scott! Have you twigged something already, boss?" asked Chick breathlessly.

But Falcon Swift had moved on. A moment later he deliberately charged Fletcher, and, somehow, he was clumsy. They both rolled over. In that moment, the detective obtained a near view of Fletcher's red hair as they sprawled on the ground. The Sporting 'Tec even succeeded in pulling a couple of the footballer's hairs out by the roots.

Later, when the practice was over, and while the players were changing into their ordinary clothes, Falcon Swift had a word with Chick.

"See these hairs, laddie?" he said, in a low voice.

"Look at the roots."

"Why, the hair is dyed!"

"Exactly," said the Monocled Manhunter, in a grim voice. "I'll tell you something else, Chick. That man, calling himself Fletcher, is no more Fletcher than I am. The last time I saw him he was playing in a convict team in Bleakmore and his name was 'Gat' Skinner. I recognised him from a peculiar dodging trick he uses on the footer field. He escaped from jail a year ago and has eluded the police ever since."

The detective's suspicions were increased soon afterwards, when he was in the manager's office. Fletcher came in, and Mr. Salter handed him some papers which required his signature.

"You'll have to sign these, Fletcher, before you play to-morrow," said the manager. "Just read them through. Here's a pen . . ."

"That's all right, sir," said the new footballer. "Do you mind if I take the papers to my lodgings? I'll read them through at my leisure, and bring them back in the morning, signed."

He said no more, but made his exit somewhat hurriedly. Jim Salter frowned, but thought little of the incident.

Falcon Swift, on the other hand, knew just why the imposter had not signed. He dared not sign—for his fake signature would have given him away.

However, Beefy Bullock came in with the "boys" just then, and he made the brainy suggestion that he and the other players should spend the night on the football ground—camping.

"Might as well be on the safe side, sir," said Beefy eagerly. "We know that you're worried about that rotter, Jasper Drill. He might try to monkey with the pitch during the night, mightn't he?"

Jim Salter looked towards Falcon Swift, who nodded.



THE CLUE TO THE CHARGE.—As if by accident, Falcon Swift charged the new centre-forward. As they rolled on the ground the 'tec managed to pull out two of the footballer's hairs.

"Then—then you can expose him?"

"I could—but I'm not going to," replied Falcon Swift. "I'm going to find out what his game is—why he is here, masquerading as an honest footballer. Jim Salter is right, Chick; there's something infernally fishy going on here."

"It's quite a good idea," said the detective.

And so, that night, the Rovers camped in the dressing-rooms and cubicles of the grand-stand. The supposed Fletcher, who had looked startled at first, was with them. Incidentally, so were Falcon Swift and Chick Conway.



It turned out to be a wild, stormy night, with a rising wind. A fitting night for villainy! And villainy there was—in plenty!

### Footballer in a Cage.

EXCEPT for the blustering and moaning of the wind, complete silence reigned in Prestwick Rovers' ground. Beefy Bullock and Grief Moffat and the other players were sound asleep in the temporary beds they had rigged up. As a matter of fact, it was Beefy's turn to keep "watch." But after ten minutes of rigorous duty, he had nodded, had yawned, and had then dropped off into a sound, snoring slumber.

It was past midnight, and there seemed little likelihood, now, of any treachery. Yet there was a movement . . . A figure, black and mysterious, slid from the shadow of the grandstand, and then cut across towards the high terracing.

"Well, I've got clear from there," muttered the false Hal Fletcher.

He looked carefully round into the gloom, the wind buffeting him. He was satisfied that he had slipped away unknown to a soul. Yet at that very moment, two keen people were watching him—observing his every movement. Falcon Swift and Chick Conway were on the job.

"Not a sound, laddie!" Falcon Swift whispered, as they followed their quarry. "There's grim work for us to do. This man will lead us to the scene of action."

Once beyond the high fence, the bogus footballer struck off across the wooded grounds of Prestwick Old Manor. Presently, the house itself came within sight. It was a quaint old mansion, and it stood in total darkness, its turrets and gables echoing to the moan of the night wind. All the lower windows were shuttered, and the whole place possessed an air of desolation and sorrowful dilapidation.

"Gat" Skinner—for Falcon Swift's identification was correct—had his instructions. Having reached the weed-grown terrace, he skirted along for some distance, climbed an angle of the old house, and then halted in a deeply recessed doorway. He gave three slow raps, followed by two sharp ones. And soon the door was opened.

"You are late!" said a cold, impatient voice.

"And who wouldn't be?" retorted Skinner.

"Nice blooming place for a meeting, isn't it? I had to be careful, too. Do you know that Swift is with the team—Falcon Swift, the dick?"

"I knew it," said the other sharply. "Did you successfully avoid him?"

"You bet I did—like I'd avoid poison!" replied the gunman. "I've brought some papers—"

"Come with me," said the other.

He closed the door, and they both went down a dark passage, and then, at length, into a back room, where a candle was burning on a rickety table. Skinner's companion was a large man, clean-shaven, with hard, unning features.

On the other side of the table stood a younger man. He was dressed in plus-fours, his face was heavy, with deep bags under the eyes. Lemuel Horder, who had inherited the Prestwick Old Manor estate, was a dissipated-looking man.

"I don't like it, Drill," he muttered, as he surveyed the new arrival. "I didn't reckon on such a man as Swift being in the game. If he should get 'on' to us—"

"Well, what of it?" broke in the lawyer. "We're going to make certain that the Rovers lose to-morrow—that's all. What can Swift do? Nothing, my white-livered young friend!"

He spoke contemptuously. For years he had had Lemuel Horder in his power; he had advanced him

money; waiting only for the day when the old man would die.

Drill had a big lawyer's practice in Prestwick; and he happened to know that the railway company was planning a new electrified branch line—and they needed the Old Manor property. They wanted to run the permanent way right across the site of the football ground, and the estate, too. Drill was ready to sell—at a colossal figure. But nothing could be



The caged footballer watched in horror as the ape lunged from its cage.

done whilst the football club held the legal rights of the enclosure. If they lost the first match of the season, to-morrow, Drill would be able to pounce, and turn the club out, neck and crop.

"The whole game is simple," said Drill curtly. "We've got Fletcher safe. Skinner will take his place in to-morrow's match—and ruin it. As soon as the game is over, Fletcher will be released. But he won't be able to prove anything—and people will laugh at his story. Now, Skinner, let me see the papers. They need Fletcher's signature, eh? Well, we're ready."

He glanced at the papers, nodded, and moved towards the door. Then he paused for a moment to pull a silk hood completely over his head. It was black, and there were only two eye-slits. Lemuel Horder did the same.

"Lumme!" said Skinner, staring.

Hardened though he was, he was already getting the creeps. His companions moved down a stone-flagged passage; presently they came to a heavy door, and, opening this, Jasper Drill passed down some steep steps. They were now in the capacious cellars of the old mansion.

A figure, grotesquely humped, emerged from the darkness, and came within the beam of Drill's torch. It was Old Timothy, a bent, hunched man of great age. For over fifty years he had been Simon Horder's body-servant. He was little more than half-witted now, and he was completely in Jasper Drill's power.

There was a fetid odour in the air. The light of Drill's torch revealed two great iron cages. One was much bigger than the other, and its bars were as thick as a man's arm. The other cage, on the far



side of the cellar, was made of slimmer bars, and a man was moving restlessly about in that strange prison.

"Here, hold on!" panted Skinner. "What—what's that thing in the other cage?"

The crook-lawyer swung his light round, and Skinner gasped. He beheld, in the full light, an enormous, hideous ape. The creature stood behind the great bars, clutching at them, mouthing, its eyes glinting evilly.

the murmur of voices from below. Cautiously, he opened the door.

". . . Better sign, Fletcher," came the rasping voice of Jasper Drill. "Or would you like me to put you in the other cage—with our hairy friend?"

"You devil!" came a panting, desperate voice. "I won't sign! I don't know what your filthy game is, but I'm not afraid of you. I don't know who you are—"

"And you never will," interrupted the crook-



THE FIEND FREED.—With a swift movement Drill slid his upraised hand along the wall and pulled down a lever. The door of the ape's cage swung open and the beast leapt out.

"Here, I'm getting out of this!" gasped Skinner. "Don't be a fool," said Jasper Drill, with a laugh. "The old man had a fancy for wild animals; he kept quite a menagerie. All the rest have gone, and this ape is to be disposed of this week. But for the present he's handy."

And Drill laughed more evilly than ever as he opened the second cage, and passed in.

"THIS way, Chick," whispered Falcon Swift. The Monocled Manhunter, with every nerve tense, had forced a way into the old house, through a shuttered window. He and Chick were in a musty-smelling room, where the old furniture was covered with dust-sheets.

"What are you going to do, boss?" whispered Chick.

"My plan is to rescue the real Hal Fletcher," replied Falcon Swift. "Have you got your gun handy? You might need it!"

Like shadows they crept out into a passage, and as the wind whined and howled outside, they moved slowly forward. Apparently, they had the great house to themselves; but a flash of Falcon Swift's torch now and again showed him unmistakable footprints on the mildewed passage floor.

Soon, they came to the cellar. Falcon Swift heard

lawyer. "Don't be a fool. These are your own papers, connected with your transfer to Prestwick Rovers. Can't you read?"

"I won't sign," blazed the plucky footballer. "This man has impersonated me, hasn't he? He's going to play in the match to-morrow—and ruin the game."

"If you must know, yes," gritted Drill impatiently. "And that will mean that the club will finish its tenancy of the enclosure—"

"I think not, Mr. Jasper Drill!" came a clear, ringing voice.

The crook-lawyer swung round with a gasp. The next moment he was gazing into the muzzle of Falcon Swift's gun, and the light from the detective's torch was blazing into his infuriated eyes.

"Your game is up, Drill!" said Falcon Swift curtly. "No, don't reach for a weapon. Put your hands up—and keep them up. You too, Skinner. Yes, I know you—I knew you almost from the first minute."

**The Cellar of Fear.**

IT was a tense, dramatic situation. Lemuel Horder, frightened, had backed away, his arms upraised. Jasper Drill stood against the wall, motionless, similarly helpless. Only the burning glow of his



eyes through the hood told of his murderous fury. The great ape, moving restlessly up and down behind its bars, was opening its vile mouth, and emitting savage roars. Now and again it released the bars, and thumped its great hairy chest, producing a loud, hollow, drumming noise.

"Come, Satan!" said Drill suddenly.

His right hand streaked swiftly along the wall, and he caught against a projecting lever. Too late, Falcon Swift realised that this was a method of opening the ape's cage. For the great barred door swung back, and the gigantic Satan came charging out.

The creature emitted a savage roar and charged straight at Falcon Swift—as Drill knew it would. For the sight of firearms aroused the creature's primeval fury.

*Crack!* As the Monocled Manhunter fired, Jasper Drill leapt forward and flung up the detective's arm. The bullet went over the giant ape's head. The next second Falcon Swift was a prisoner—grasped in the enormous arms of that jungle monster.

The detective felt that his ribs were being crushed as he was pressed against the ape's chest. He was almost overpowered by the fetid, animal stench. Chick Conway, realising his master's danger, leapt to the rescue; but Lemuel Horder thrust out a foot and tripped him. Chick went crashing over, and before he could rise, both Lemuel and Skinner were upon him, holding him down.

"Timothy—Timothy!" shouted Drill. "Tell this beast to put its prisoner in the smaller cage."

Old Timothy, a grotesque figure, had strange power over the ape, and when he raised his piping voice, the brute took heed.

Drill himself unlocked the door of the smaller cage. Fletcher tried to force his way out, but he was driven back. The next moment Falcon Swift was thrust inside, and the ape, under old Timothy's guidance, went back to his own cage, where it was securely locked in.

By this time, the unfortunate Chick had been brutally knocked on the head, and he was half-unconscious. The crooks entered the cage, and whilst Skinner and Lemuel held Falcon Swift down, Drill emptied the detective's pockets. Gun, torch, keys, pocket-knife—everything was taken away from Swift. Then, at length, Chick was thrust in with him—also deprived of every personal effect.

"Now lock the cage," commanded Drill, breathing hard.

Old Timothy obeyed. The door was of enormous strength, and it was fitted with a powerful lock.

"You are a rash man, Mr. Falcon Swift!" said Jasper Drill, discarding his silk cowl. "You have entered a death trap. Since you know me—since you can ruin me—I've no alternative but to settle with you for good."

Falcon Swift made no reply. He was furious with himself for having fallen a victim to Jasper Drill's wiles.

The rascally lawyer's first move now, was to force Hal Fletcher to sign the papers. Fletcher did so, for his nerve was shaken, and there seemed no alternative. Drill had threatened to lock him in with the giant ape—and the prospect was unnerving.

"Take the papers—and get out!" said Drill, turning to Skinner. "Carry on just as I ordered. I'll deal with Swift. You'll have no trouble at your end. Here!"

The lawyer led the way across the cellar to the far corner. He touched a projecting brick, and, as though by magic, a part of the wall swung back, revealing a black hole. The gunman hung back, hesitant.

"What's this?" he asked suspiciously.

"Don't be a fool," retorted Drill. "You've got a

torch, haven't you? This tunnel leads directly into the dressing-room in the Rovers' grand-stand. Old Simon Horder built it for his own use. But why should I stand here telling you this? Get going, you fool! You'll find a door at the other end, but you'll have no difficulty in opening it."

Skinner passed through into the darkness, and Jasper Drill closed the secret door. Then he gave orders to old Timothy; strong ropes were brought. It was the lawyer himself who fastened the ropes round and round the bars of the ape's cage, those bars next to the door. The ropes were entwined from the floor to the cage's roof.

"I regret to tell you, Mr. Swift, that Satan is a dangerous animal," said Jasper Drill, at length, as he went to the smaller cage on the other side of the black cellar. "When he is hungry—and he will be later on—he is more ferocious than ever. I hope you will not be disturbed by the ape's movements; but I regret that I must now leave you in total darkness. It is my intention to go home now—and to keep away from the Old Manor completely. I shall take Old Timothy with me."

There was such an evil note in his voice that even Falcon Swift felt a quiver pass down his spine.

Without another word, Drill passed up the stairs—and he drove Old Timothy and Lemuel Horder before him. The prisoners were left in absolute darkness. They heard the upper door locked and bolted. They heard, too, the slithery, shuffling movements of the great ape.

"What's the game, boss?" came Chick Conway's voice—and the detective was pleased to note that it was steady. "Why did Drill fasten the ape's cage door with ropes?"

"There can be no doubt of Drill's fiendish purpose," said the Monocled Manhunter. "He has left the ordinary bolts and lock of the ape's cage unfastened. He has secured the door by means of the heavy ropes."

"I don't get it, even now, boss," said Chick.

"Yet it is obvious enough," came Falcon Swift's ominous reply. "The ape knows that it can bite through the ropes in time—or perhaps unravel them with its great fingers. At all events, after some hours, the brute will succeed in getting out of its cage—and Jasper Drill will have had nothing to do with its escape. Do you see the hideous cunning of it?"

"Well, we're safe from the fiendish thing," said Fletcher. "Our own cage is locked and bolted."

"But the bars are very much thinner—and they can be bent and twisted by the ape," said Falcon Swift quietly. "We can do nothing to escape—for the bars will defy all our efforts. But the ape can force a way in within a few minutes. And then..."

It was unnecessary for Falcon Swift to say any more. Chick and Fletcher knew the worst, and they were almost petrified with horror.

They crouched there, in the inky darkness, listening to the horrible, stealthy movements of the giant ape. How long would this ordeal last? When would the brute escape—and attack then?

### Drill's Last Fling.

**H**APPY Jim Salter was less happy than ever as he stood talking in the sunshine, on the pitch, opposite the grand-stand. It was morning now, and the gale of the night had blown itself out. The day promised to be glorious for the "kick-off" of the footer season.

Beefy Bullock and the other players were standing about, and all were looking puzzled.

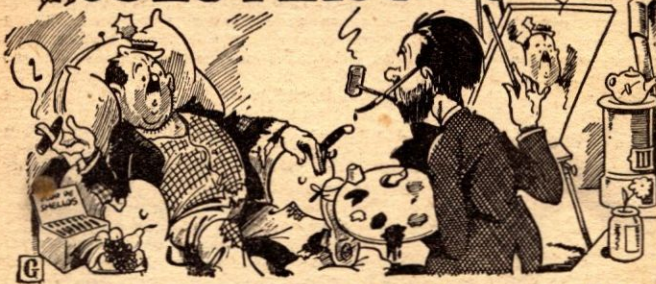
"Well, that's all we know, sir," said Beefy, with a

(Continued on page 10.)



Win a B.M. Football and start the Season well!

# The JESTER'S REALM



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

Tramp (to artist who is painting his portrait): Hey, guv'nor, I've been lying here for a good time now, can't I have a rest?

(Football to JOHN WALLER, Finstall Park, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire).

## BRAVE INDEED!

COLONEL: A brave soldier is always found where the bullets are thickest. Now where were you during the battle, Smith?

PRIVATE SMITH: In the ammunition wagon, sir!  
(Fountain pen to RICHARD HUGHES, Isnage, Bentley, Hants.)

## JOKE COUPON.

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

Boys' Magazine, 9/9/33.

## FROM SMOKE.

BROWN: See that man over there? He's got the biggest estate in the country!

BLACK: How did he get it?

BROWN: Oh, tobacco!

BLACK: Gosh, how many coupons?

(Fountain pen to RONNIE BURNS, 18, Beresford Road, Dingle, Liverpool.)

## GETTING IN IT.

TEACHER: Can any of you name a liquid that won't freeze?

VOICE (from back of room): Hot water, sir!

(Fountain pen to DONALD GILL, 30, Flouery Field, Woods Moor, Stockport.)

## BOTH.

LANDLORD: You'll have to pay your bill or leave.

BOARDER: That's very nice of you. My last landlord made me do both.  
(Fountain pen to GEORGE MAY, 54, Board School Road, Woking, Surrey.)

## PUFF! PUFF!

TEACHER: What is wind, Johnny?

JOHNNY: Air in a hurry, sir!

(Fountain pen to DONALD NEWBOLD, Heather Lea, Gores Lane, Formby, Liverpool.)



Landlord: Now, look here, I want my money!  
Tenant: Oh, that's all right, I thought you wanted mine!

(Football to L. PREECE, 7, Charlbert Street, St. John's Wood, N.W.8).

## HIS JOB.

FATHER: Well, my boy, what are you going to be when you grow up?

SMALL SON: I'm going to drive a water-cart.

FATHER: Drive a water-cart! Why do you want to do that?

SMALL SON: So that I won't have to work on wet days!

(Fountain pen to HAROLD ORMOND COX, 1, Clifford Street, Gisborne, New Zealand.)

## SMARTING.

"Now, my son," said the conscientious father, "tell me why I punish you."

"That's it," blubbered the boy indignantly.

"First you pounded the life out of me, and now you don't know what you did it for."

(Fountain pen to J. TURNER, "Sleagill Head," Newby, Penrith, Cumberland.)

## SNAPPED.

BILL (taking photo of his chum who in the meantime has fallen head first over the edge of cliff): It's no good, Jim, I don't understand your camera. I can only see your feet!

(Fountain pen to T. KINDERSLEY, 8, St. James's Square, Bath, Somerset.)

## EAR! EAR!

BURGLAR (to mate who has knocked over a plant): That's right, deafen 'em so they won't be able to hear us!

(Fountain pen to J. ENTWISTLE, 43, Queen Street, Bromley Cross, near Bolton, Lancs.)

## STUD-IED CARE.

SHORT-SIGHTED DENTIST: There! Absolutely painless.

PATIENT: Absolutely, but it's my collar-stud you've taken out.

(Fountain pen to REG. PRATT, 34, Alma Street, Wellingboro', Northants.)



## THE RIDDLE OF THE ROVERS

(Continued from page 8.)

hunch of his great shoulders. "When we woke up this morning, Mr. Swift and the boy had both gone."

"It's likely enough that he's gone home—back to London," said the false Hal Fletcher. "It doesn't matter much, sir. We can win the game against Middletown without Mr. Swift's help."

But Happy Jim was convinced that something bad had happened. Yet he could not go to the police, for he had no scrap of evidence to offer them.

**I**T was about that time that Satan, the ape, obtained his freedom.

The prisoners had spent hours of anguished waiting. Seldom, indeed, had Falcon Swift known such agony of mind. Yet he was thinking more of his companions than himself.

The prisoners were now able to see. There was a little grating, high in the roof of the cellar—and this was connected with an air shaft. A tiny ray of daylight trickled down, and the absolute darkness of the cellar was dispersed. The shape of the ape, vague and monstrous, could be seen as it moved out of its great cage.

"Now for it, boss!" muttered Chick, taking a firm grip of himself.

"Courage, laddie!" whispered the Monocled Manhunter.

But Satan was in no hurry. He prowled about the cellar, thumping his chest occasionally, growling and uttering strange noises deep in his throat. Now and again he came to the smaller cage, and glared through at the captives. Perhaps the brute did not realise—that he could get at his victims . . .

**H**E'S coming! He's attacking!" shouted Hal Fletcher hoarsely.

The giant ape, after hours of aimless prowling, had suddenly seemed to realise the possibilities. At first, it had grasped one of the bars of the smaller cage by chance; and, exerting its strength, the bar had bent. The ape had moved away, then it had come back.

The three prisoners crouched at the rear of the cage, watching in that dim light. And now they saw Satan exerting his full strength; they saw the bars bend like thin wire . . . a great gap was made . . .

"He's coming through, boss!" muttered Chick. "This looks like the end."

Falcon Swift, filled with agony, said nothing. He just gripped Chick, and thrust him back, as though to protect him. Indeed, an idea suddenly came to him.

"When the ape attacks, laddie—then will be your chance," he said tensely. "I will take the force of the attack, you slip through the opening in the bars. You too, Fletcher—"

Suddenly there was a loud snap. One of the bars cracked like a carrot, and hung loose. Other bars bent, and now Satan, finding an opening big enough, came squeezing through.

But Falcon Swift, in that second, had seen a ray of hope. The Monocled Manhunter leapt forward. With one swift jump he was sitting on the ape's shoulders—perched there as the monstrous creature bent double, in order to squeeze his way through the opening.

**Thud!** Swift had seen a loose bar overhead. He drove it down with all his strength—straight into the ape's back. And there it sank in, jamming.

"Quick—the other opening!" yelled Swift. "It's our only chance. He's trapped for the minute."

They escaped from the cage—using, as their exit, the very opening which Satan had made for himself.

Meanwhile, the ape was caught, held by that jagged bar, writhing, twisting, and rending the air hideous with its snarling, roaring voice.

"The secret door!" Falcon Swift panted.

He had seen the brick which Jasper Drill had used during the night. He leapt at it, tugging, pushing, pulling—using pressure in every direction. At first nothing happened. Chick and Hal Fletcher were by his side, but their gaze was turned back towards the cage.

"Look—he's free!" yelled Chick suddenly. "He's coming for us, Boss! It's too late!"

"No; we're in time!" thundered the Sporting Sleuth.

Even as he spoke, the door opened, and Swift gave his two companions a mighty shove that sent them hurtling through. As the detective followed, a hairy hand reached out at him and caught at his shoulder. Somehow, he managed to wrench himself free. He was through the doorway. The ape tried to follow; but Chick and Hal had sensed the danger now, and they threw all their strength against the inner side of the secret stone door.

It crashed to, locking itself automatically. They had escaped—and the giant ape was robbed of its prey!

Through the tunnel raced the trio. They reached the door at the other end—the door which led into the dressing-room under the grand stand. They burst out—and at that very moment Jim Salter was in the dressing-room, ordering the players to take the field.

"Hurrah!" yelled Chick. "We're in time, boss!"

Happy Jim leapt forward.

"Mr. Swift!" he gasped. "Great Heaven! What—what has happened?"

"A great deal—but there's no time to explain," replied Swift, and as he spoke he stepped smartly forward, grabbed "Gat" Skinner, and held him in an iron grip.

"This man is not Hal Fletcher," he said calmly. "Fletcher is here—by my side. Skinner, the game is up. Chick, fetch a policeman."

And five minutes later, Prestwick Rovers ran out upon the field of play amid the tumultuous applause of the crowds.

Both Falcon Swift and Fletcher seemed unaffected by their terrifying experience. Within three minutes of the kick-off, the Sporting Sleuth, playing at inside-right, received the ball from the Rovers left-back. The Sporting "Tee" pounced, he trapped the ball brilliantly, and in a second he was away. A mighty roar arose. Like a being imbued with magic speed, Swift carved his way through the Middletown defence. On—on—beating man after man, twisting, side-stepping.

**Slam!** It was a low, terrific drive, and the ball went sizzling into the far corner of the net.

"Goal! Well played, the Rovers!"

But the Middletown team, undaunted by this early reverse, swept down the field from the kick-off with short, snappy passes from each of the forwards, across the field and back the ball flashed. They reached the goal area. Their centre-forward, a famous international, had the ball, and he was not a man to waste an opportunity. He sent in a sizzling cross-shot for the top left-hand corner of the goal that left Beefy standing.

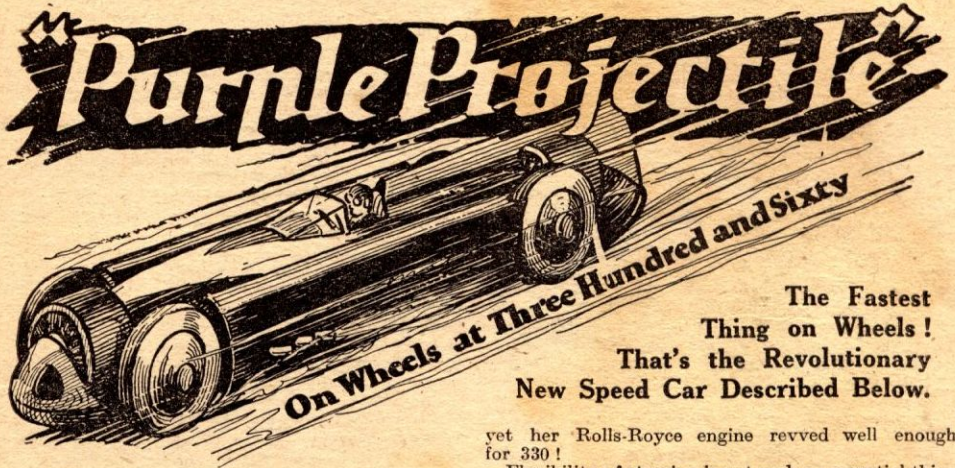
"Goal!"

Amidst wild excitement and the enthusiastic cheers of the Middletown supporters, the teams lined up again. This time the Rovers went away with a rush. But now the visitors' defenders were prepared, and they withstood the attack. The ball was cleared, and for some time there was a scramble in mid-field.

(Continued on page 18.)



A DREAM THAT MAY COME TRUE! The B.M. Engineering Expert Designs the New Record Breaker.



The Fastest  
Thing on Wheels!  
That's the Revolutionary  
New Speed Car Described Below.

THERE'S going to be a big push shortly for the distinction of being the first man to get along on wheels at 300 miles an hour. Who's going to be the lucky man? And what sort of a car is he going to drive?

Sir Malcolm Campbell laid it down quite firmly, after his last shot at Daytona, that one engine, driving one pair of wheels only, hadn't much chance. One engine perhaps, but it's got to drive four wheels.

Well, there's no difficulty about that, four-wheel driving is old now, but it's a good principle. Just as common sense as four-wheel braking, in fact; nobody wants a car to-day with all its brakes on the back wheel only. Next thing we shall have four-wheel driving universal, and then—four-wheel steering.

Bearing in mind the remarks made by Sir Malcolm, and putting in a few notions of our own, we have designed a car to put up a record which should stay put for a bit. All we want is a builder—the driver will be easy—and a track where he can show what can be done. Daytona's all right, but you can never be sure of a good surface. That's a thing you *must* have, a little unevenness, caused by the slight ripple effect left by the waves on the sand, and the car is all over the place. *Blue Bird* had a very rough time of it on account of these ripples. So little did she and her driver like it that they decided that 276 m.p.h. would do for that occasion. And

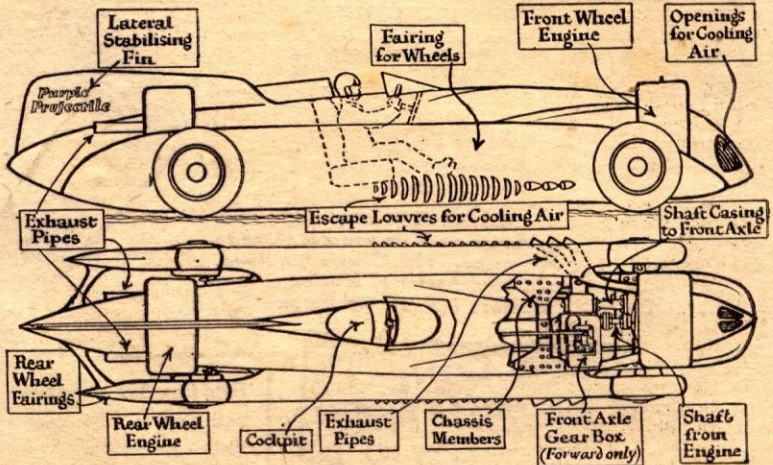
yet her Rolls-Royce engine revved well enough for 330!

Flexibility of steering is not such an essential thing with a record-breaker which has to keep an absolutely straight course for a matter of eight or nine miles. For that reason we stick to front-wheel steering only.

There are two revolutionary points about this new design. The first is the matter of the engine, or, rather, engines. We are going to drive our car with two engines—no, that's not new, we know; but this part of it is. We're making each engine drive one pair of wheels only.

Again, our engines are going to be air-cooled radials, such as are used in high-powered aeroplanes. The radial has fully proved itself in service as highly reliable and compact. So well-liked are they, that it would be safe to say that there are twice as many radials at work as all the rest put together.

The great advantage of air cooling is that all the extra weight of water-tanks, radiator and circulating pump is cut out. No tiresome water-joints to make



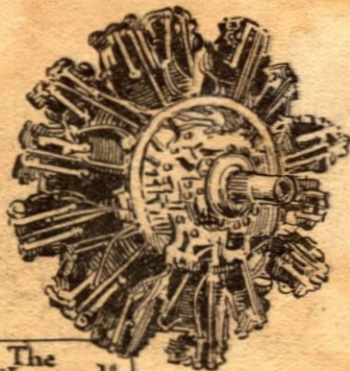
Our expert's diagram showing his design and layout for a car that he considers will do 360 m.p.h.



secure or to leak. No worry about the water, whether it's all boiled away!

Having made an intensive study of the type, we are fitting our car with two Armstrong-Siddeley "Leopard" engines.

The "Leopard" is the most powerful air-cooled unit in the world, its 14 cylinders giving 840 horse power at 1,700 revolutions a minute. The cylinders are set in two rows, but otherwise it is a straight-



The  
"Leopard"  
Engine

forward job, and there's no supercharger. The lay-out is fairly clear and there should be no particular difficulty about supplies of cooling air.

To provide this air when the "Projectile" is standing with engines running, blowers have been provided in the streamlined nose and tail. The eight lower cylinders are cooled from below, while the opening at the top provides for the others.

Notice that both engines have "Townend" rings enclosing them. These rings are much in favour in aeroplane work, as they reduce the "drag" of the uneven cylinder heads passing through the air, and therefore add to the speed.

The "Projectile's" wheels are 3 feet 6 inches in

## DON'T BE BULLIED

Send Two Penny Stamps for some **SPLENDID LESSONS** in **JUJITSU** and Handsome Photo Plate of Jap Champions. The Wonderful Japanese Self-Defence without weapons. Take care of yourself under **ALL** circumstances; fear no man. You can have **MONSTER** Illustrated Portion for P.O. 3/2. **SEND NOW** to "YAWARA" (Dept. B.M.), Blenheim House, Bedford Lane, Fetham, Middlesex. Practical Tuition, London School.

diameter, so they have to revolve at 2,880 revs. a minute for 360 miles an hour. Some buzz! That means we shall have to gear up, as the engine only runs at 1,700. The gear-boxes will give three speeds, the top gear being at 1 to 1.7.

Talking about gears now, you'll remember that these record-breakers must have a reverse gear to comply with the rules of the game. Our car will have a reverse all right, but it drives only on the back axle, to save complication. Of course, each engine has its own gear-box, but they are controlled by the same single lever. This would make it quite impossible for any mistakes to happen when reversing.

Much more comfortable quarters will be available for the driver, as you can see by the plans. No water-tanks or radiators, the two engines together need only a third of the space required by a 12-cylinder V-type engine. Then we haven't got to provide for a huge torque tube alongside the driver as in previous cars. He will be comfortably supported midway between the engines. Why, he might be driving a Rolls-Royce! Or an Armstrong-Siddeley, perhaps we ought to say.

Our illustrations give an idea of the car's appearance; we don't give the plans, but they are ready for the man who will put up the money for the record!

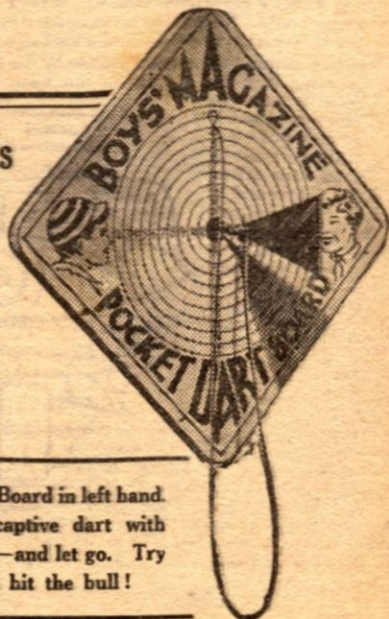
More technical chats by our Science Expert on the way, chaps. Don't miss our ripping new "How to Make" series, starting soon.

## FREE! Patent Pocket Targets

(Equipped with Metal-tipped Winged Dart).

For Four Coupons. Begin Collecting To-Day.

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



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



OUR GREAT  
NEW FILM  
THRILL SERIES

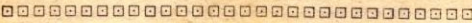
# FORTUNE OF THE FILMS

DRAMA BEHIND  
THE EYE OF  
THE CAMERA.

# The LIGHTNING DESTROYER



WITH 'PLANE AND FILM CAMERA  
TO PHOTOGRAPH A WAR!



### The Train Attack.

DICK FORTUNE, of the Empire Film Corporation, witnessed the affair and thought nothing of it beyond that it was a particularly dreadful outrage.

It occurred on the boat-train from one of England's greatest ports. He had a compartment to himself in one of the long corridor coaches. The train was almost empty. It had met a transatlantic liner, which had crossed with the minimum of passengers, most of whom had got off at Cherbourg. In fact, there was only one other man in the whole of the coach, and he was in a compartment further up. Dick had been down to the port to see about filming the docks there. His visit had been unsuccessful.

The Empire Corporation, indeed, was in a very bad way. Formerly it had made short two-reel fill-up films, producing one a fortnight with a stock company. Then its male lead, Morgan Vawley, had been shown to be a notorious criminal, and had been arrested by the police. Somehow, this had set the trade against the Empire Corporation, and its studio became empty and silent.

Old Vincent Ralway, its owner—for there really was no Corporation, that being only a high-sounding name—was at his wits' end. One of the pioneers of the industry in Britain, he hated to see his ancient



production unit going into the limbo of the lost. His director left him, together with his two camera-men. They had had offers of other jobs. His acting staff secured contracts elsewhere or else haunted the purlieus of Wardour Street with many others—hoping against hope and dreaming of stardom. Only Dick, with a few faithful stage hands, a lad with a lot of bright ideas and considerable all-round knowledge of the films, stuck to him.

Since the leaving of the camera-men Dick had practised with the big cameras and was highly proficient with them. In fact, there was little Dick could not do in connection with films. At a pinch, he could act.

He was coming over this deplorable position, and the refusal of the dockland authorities to have their property filmed, while the train was roaring towards



## BOYS, LOOK!

Build an electric motor in 5 minutes. The most educational toy of the decade. Has speed of 2,000 r.p.m. Will run from single dry cell. **FULL KIT OF PARTS** and simple instructions for assembly, 1/- (postage 2d.), crossed P.O.'s only. **POWELL BROS., 33, Water St., Manchester.**

### 20 inch TELESCOPE 1/-



No. 1. Extended length 20ins. (closed 9ins.) 3 Telescopic Joints, 2 lenses, 1/. **SPECIAL OFFER No. 2** Size. Extended length 24ins. (closed 10ins.) Fitted with 5 Brassbound Telescopic Joints and 2 lenses, 2/., postage 3d. (Colonial 3d.). **Garrying Cases, 6d. extra.** Also Compasses 1/-, 1/6, and 2/-. **Field Glasses 5/- (post 3d.).** **A. HERBERTS (Dept. B.48), 41, Welham Road, Streatham, London, S.W.16.**

London. He had travelled first class, though the Empire Corporation could not afford it, because Vincent Ralway said that impressed people.

It was when he had reached that stage that a man came hurrying past his compartment. He was a rosy-cheeked little fellow with a mild face, and he checked at Dick's door and glanced in uneasily, as though he expected to find a foe in every compartment of the train. Dick remembered that uneasy look afterwards.

The train was crashing on its way. Dick heard nothing and saw nothing. He did not observe the plump little man hurry on along the corridor, nor did he see him come face to face with another man who had stepped across the junction from the next coach.

A bludgeon lifted and fell, and the plump man crumpled in a heap on the floor, where he lay, senseless.

The attacker pitched his bludgeon out of the window and stooped over his victim. Then, with a quick glance along the empty corridor of the coach he had left, he began to crawl along the floor of the coach in which Dick sat. The lower parts of the doors in this corridor were of wood, and thus the attacker was able to pass Dick's compartment unseen.

He passed Dick's compartment, straightened himself, and turned back, tearing Dick's door open, his face indicative of the liveliest apprehension and horror.

"Sir," he gasped. "Something's happened. I was coming along the corridor . . ."

Dick was outside. He could see the feet and lower legs of the victim. Dick gave his informant a swift glance. He was a good-looking fellow, youngish and with an open, honest sort of face with twinkling eyes. He looked a little shabby.

With him, Dick went to the unconscious man, and it was Dick who pulled the communication cord and brought the express screaming to a standstill. The passengers surged round. Vanton—which was the name of Dick's informant—told his story, and Dick bore it out.

The train went on, and it reached the terminus. Scotland Yard men were waiting for it. The passengers were interrogated. Only Dick and Vanton had something to tell—and that little enough. They were allowed to go, leaving names and addresses with the police. Naturally, during all this Dick and Vanton struck up some sort of acquaintanceship. In fact, they finished the journey together, and it emerged that Vanton was a practised airman, though now unable, through Stock Exchange losses, to indulge in the sport. He said he would call and see Dick at the studio, and Dick, who rather liked him, said he would be glad to see him.

Dick, making his way round to the platform for Surbiton, bought an evening newspaper. He had to travel to Surbiton because the studio was out on the Hook-Leatherhead road. The newspaper flared with headlines.

Nearly sixteen years after the end of the European War, the long-threatened war in mid-Europe seemed about to begin. Two great armies had mobilised and were marching. Frantic efforts were being made by other Powers in the direction of peace.

Dick read it and was interested. He did not connect it with himself, with the plump little man who had been attacked on the boat express, nor with the smiling, innocent-looking Vanton.

Yet while he was in the Surbiton train various things happened.

To begin with, Vanton went straight to one of those hire-and-drive-yourself car agencies, secured a machine and paid lavishly for it, and went out along the western road to a point near the railway. There he picked something up which he had pitched out of the train window after knocking out the plump man.

Secondly, the police found that Vanton's address was a false one.

Thirdly, somebody in Whitehall heard of the attack on the plump man and all kinds of Governmental telegraph lines were cleared and sizzled excitedly.

Fourthly, a net was spread over all England, shutting in the man Vanton, a net in which they hoped to catch him.

Meanwhile, the great armies marched on. And the next day Vanton called on Dick Fortune.

### A Screen Scoop.

THE papers mentioned nothing of the search for Vanton, for that was a secret matter of high Governmental importance, and Dick did not know that the man approached the studio across the fields from a wood, in which he had been hidden. Vanton was spruce and clean and shaved, and he had a marvellous idea.

"I," he said, "am an airman of great skill. If you can get hold of a powerful 'plane, say nothing to anybody, and let me fly it and bring a camera with you, I'll put you on to the biggest film scoop of the century. But it's got to be dead secret, else your rivals will get hold of it, or you'll be stopped by the authorities."

"What is it?" asked Dick.

"This! There's going to be a great war in mid-Europe. The first battle of that war will open at any hour. What about a film of it? It's never been done. An air film showing the first clash of two great armies.

It was an idea. That it might transgress certain obscure governmental laws did not matter. Dick went to Vincent Ralway, and the old man decided to take a chance.

With the need for secrecy emphasised by Vanton, Dick engaged a big, fast monoplane in his own name. The whole thing went through slickly.

Vanton came over with him to the 'drome, and Vanton wore goggles and a helmet, so that nobody knew him. They did not say where they were flying, and they had no passports. They were not necessary.

An hour after Dick left, a detective from the Special Branch of the C.I.D. called at the studio and asked to see him. Old Vincent Ralway said he was out on location and would not be back until late. It was only when the Special Branch man told Ralway certain things in a guarded fashion that the old man went into a panic and told the truth.

The C.I.D. flashed wires all over the place; but they failed to effect anything; for by that time Dick was far away, flying east with Vanton at the joystick of the 'plane.



✓ The machine flew on, hurtling towards its destination, and the muttering thunder of war grew louder—waiting only for the coming of the man called Vanton.

### Dick's Discovery.

DICK had flown across a country thick with the seeds of death. Behind the army he had seen all the preparations for mobilisation, roads choked with transport, little country towns in which men were gathered by the score, come in from the countryside, men with suitcases and bags, trekking to the colours under the summons, railways bearing war freights of all kinds eastward, great guns, tanks.

The 'plane flew across the prospective battle line, a high hill range dipping eastward. The hills were scarred with trenches already, the trenches being dug below their summits in the approved fashion. Dick secured some pictures of these activities, while pretending to fly straight on.

Some military 'planes were up, but they did nothing. War was not yet declared. The right of the airways still held, and a civilian 'plane could fly where it listed.

Leaving the hills behind, they came over the army of the aggressor, and Dick's camera got to work. He photographed an army corps stretched out across two great main military roads; he secured pictures of dumps and a busy railhead, and of troops practising the manoeuvres of death in a field with all that enthusiasm which young soldiers who have never been under fire bring to their drilling.

The 'plane soon left the battle line behind, and through his telephone Vanton asked: "Do you think they'll fight? Is it worth waiting for?"

Dick hesitated. "No. We'll get back with this stuff and have it developed. It's good enough for a scoop."

Vanton smiled, but Dick did not see the smile. Suddenly the engine ceased to roar and pull, and the aeroplane took to itself a long slanting dive earthwards.

"What's the matter?" Dick cried.

Vanton's voice came over the 'phone. "Engine's cut out. I'm trying to restart it."

He appeared to be doing something, but Dick could not see what. They were launching towards a range of gaunt hills set about with drear plain, scrub-covered and dotted here and there with low clumps of trees.

The engine made no effort to start and Vanton panted: "I'll have to make the best landing I can. We must trust to it that nobody finds us and we have a chance to do some repairs. Ignition, I should say, from the complete cut-out. There's plenty of juice."

Dick felt a bit uneasy. It might be dangerous to land in this wild country which was on the verge of war. All kinds of "incidents" occurred under such circumstances, and the death of two Englishmen in a place where thousands of men might die within

twenty-four hours, was nothing—like swatting a fly and forgetting it.

Vanton's landing was perfect. The 'plane touched, skimmed through the light scrub, and came to a standstill at the entrance to a small gully in the foothills of the gaunt range. Vanton straightened himself and dropped out of the driving-seat. Dick also straightened himself and was about to climb after Vanton when his eyes fell on the dashboard of the 'plane.

The engine switch was at the off!

For a split second Dick was very still, staring at the switch, and in that split second he seemed to see the alarmed face of the plump little rosy-cheeked man who had fled along the train corridor, to see that man's feet and legs as he lay sprawled at the coach end . . . and to see Vanton summoning him to the "discovery" of the crime.

Dick climbed to the ground and was aware that Vanton was staring at him. He wondered if the man had observed that he had seen the switch. He wondered, also, if he were being a fool. Vanton might have switched off when he found the engine would not start. That was quite possible—probable.

There was a short and curious silence when at last



A TOSS FOR THE TROOPER.—The cavalryman was close behind Dick, when the boy slung himself from the saddle and pulled his horse across the man's path.

he stood on the ground. It was so awkward a silence that, with a chill at his heart, Dick realised that Vanton had attacked the plump man on the train and had tricked him to the hilt.

### Just Like Lightning.

IT was Vanton who deliberately precipitated crisis, as though he understood deception no longer served him. He suddenly produced a heavy pistol and said: "Keep quite still. You've served me well enough. I had to get out of England without delay. I'll tell you why."

He produced from inside his flying-coat a bulky envelope and showed it to Dick.

"The man who—er—met with an accident on the train was Professor James Swannervale, the eminent



scientist. He had just perfected a method of killing men in thousands by touching a little button. He was taking his formula to the War Office, at their request. I work for these people"—vaguely indicating the surrounding country—"and as we are thinking about war we thought the Professor's invention would assist us to win it. Indeed, without that invention we shall not go to war. By the way, the details of the invention would only bore you. It is a question of projecting particle and hitherto unguessed high explosive on the wind, as gas is now projected, and firing it electrically through radio. It literally blows armies to pieces. Extraordinarily fascinating, eh?"

He smiled. There was no need for him to explain more. Dick knew how he had been used, knew how Vanton had cunningly planned his escape from an England which was alive with men hunting him.

Vanton, keeping at a distance, and with his gun handy, tore the envelope open.

"Here," he said, "is the secret formula for projecting what I believe the Professor called X One—an explosive beside which T.N.T. is a mild squib powder, and here are his directions for using the electrical radio power that simply causes it to split the atmosphere through which it floats. Like lightning, my friend. Just like lightning. Oh, and here is a sample." He exhibited a perfectly white powder in a little envelope. He put the whole into his pocket.

It was just then that two horsemen appeared. They wore the conventional field grey of European armies. Across their saddles were rifles. They carried sabres. They rattled over to where Vanton and Dick were standing and they looked at them stolidly.

Vanton began to speak. He indicated Dick. One of the horsemen slung himself to the ground and snatched Dick's camera. Dick did not understand a word of what they said. The cavalryman showed the camera to his mate. His riderless horse was restless, and Dick could ride.

Dick suddenly hit Vanton across the jaw and jumped to the untenanted saddle. There was a yell. He was low across the horse's back, slamming for the hills as fast as he could go. A rifle spoke behind him. His horse lurched slightly, but held on. It had been pipped. The second cavalryman was coming up hard. Dick flung a glance across his shoulder. The second rider was overhauling him now, for his horse was faltering. Dick took a big chance.

The man was very close when Dick slung himself from the saddle and pulled his horse across the man's path. The two horses collided. Dick was rolling over and over on the ground, shaken, but unhurt. The wounded—and as it turned out—dying horse, simply went earthwards and did not move again. The unhurt horse staggered and threw its rider, who, by the greatest stroke of luck in the world, fell on his head and was knocked clean out.

Dick ran to the bridle of the man's shaken mount and steadied it, talking to it softly until it stayed still, with slightly drooping head. Nobody was in sight, for the chase had taken them into a maze of gullies in the hills. They must be a fairish distance from Vanton, and Dick got a quick idea.

He began to tear off the uniform and riding boots of the knocked out trooper. The man was not a particularly big fellow, and when Dick tried on his things he found they fitted him tolerably well. The man's steel helmet partly covered his face, and when he mounted the horse he could easily, at even a short distance, have been mistaken for the trooper. He found to his delight that slung at his saddlebow was his own camera, attached by its shoulder sling.

He started to amble back. His plan was a simple

one. He would draw very near to Vanton and then stick the man up with the rifle and force him to lay the papers and powder down and retreat to a distance. Then Dick would collar them and risk getting away alive.

But his plan was not carried through. He came at last to the end of the gullies and heard a hail. Looking across the scrub towards the plane he saw a little knot of cavalrymen standing about Vanton. They were evidently of the same party as the two men who had come upon them and who had been riding ahead.

It was impossible for him to approach them. He had, in fact, committed a crime, whether in peace or war, for he had stolen a trooper's uniform and masqueraded in it. The shouts of the men were now more insistent, and one or two began to ride to meet him. Dick swung his horse round and bolted, and in that action he betrayed himself.

Even then, however, he had no idea of long flight. He was not going to be beaten by Vanton. He was, if possible, going to get back that formula and that sample of X One. His one fear was that Vanton would go off under escort to army headquarters, leaving the troopers to hunt him down and kill him like a rat.

They were hunting him all right, and it is possible that Vanton would have gone to H.Q., but for that blow on the jaw. Vanton wanted to be in at the kill. So he came with them, riding a soldier's horse, and leaving the dismounted man to guard the aeroplane.

Dick had no intention of going far. In a twist of the gullies he jumped from his horse, gave it a resounding slap, and sent it scurrying on its way, while he scrambled up a bleak hillside, all rubble and stone and boulder, and got down in cover near its top.

The cavalcade came sweeping on his trail. They would have gone on, but that the steel helmet he wore caught the sun and glistened abominably. One of them saw it, and pointing, reined in his horse.

There was a hurried consultation. Then two or three of the men stood up in their stirrups and fired. Dick wanted to shoot back, but he decided that would be madness indeed. Instead, he unslung his camera, and as the men shot at him he began to take a moving picture of them.

This done, he slid away through the boulders and scurried down the far side of the hill.

His scrambling journey afoot brought him once more in sight of the plane, and he wondered if he dared try to fly even if he could get its engine started. But that would only take him away from Vanton, and he calculated they wouldn't worry much, provided they had the formula. It was that which was the trouble.

During this run he observed that the sky had become overcast and sullen, and a few drops of heavy rain splashed down at him. Evidently a storm was brewing!

He struck up a further hill. The horsemen had followed him, but afoot, for their mounts could not stand on the precipitous slopes. Vanton was with them, and the keen evil of the chase had entered into his soul.

Dick's second climb took him to bigger hills, and a gaunt and upfurling range of dark fangs biting towards the sullen, cloud-driven sky, almost innocent of vegetation, unpeopled, with a strange biting horror lying over them.

Dick, running hard, with his pursuers now and again getting a glimpse of him as he hid of them, with the heavy rainspots thickening, and with thunder like great guns muttering uneasily in the distance, came upon a spot where the hills were cut clean by a narrow ravine that went deep as a giant's sword cut. On its



far side was boulder-strewn ground, naked rock and arid waste.

At its edge stood a short, thick tree, and over this tree a creeping plant had woven itself into a tightened mass. The ravine was too wide to jump. If Dick could not cross it he was caught.

He began to tear at the creeping plant, casting anxious glances behind him. He ripped off great lengths of its stout stem, fumbling them into a twisted state, working feverishly and against time.

The storm was increasing. Lightning stabbed with vicious, kicking suddenness from the lowered clouds that scudded northward. The rain was heavier, drenching, and he was glad, even in those moments, that his camera was impervious to weather.

He got a pitiful kind of rope made and he hitched one end of it round the lowermost branch of the stunted, strangled tree. Then, taking the other end, he went backwards and ran forward. He thus swung clean out over the ravine.

As he did this a rifle cracked and the twisted stems above him jerked, and some of them parted as the lucky bullet tore through them.

This accident caused him to hesitate half a second, and he thus did not loose his hold of his rope, and lost the "throw" of his momentum. He crashed back against the ravine's edge, and had to scramble to the top again.

The soldiers and Vanton were coming along the ridge he had not long crossed, hurrying in a knot, glistening with wet. One of them stopped to fire at him as he reached the flat ground once more; but the bullet went wide and he ignored it, and essayed his backward retreat and run forward yet again.

The storm had really burst now. Thunder crashed continuously, as though a bombardment had started in earnest, and the vivid forks of lightning lanced and slashed across the tortured skies, flickering everything with a weird, blue radiance in which objects stood out momentarily and cinematically with startling clearness.

Another run and another take off. But his foot slipped on the edge. He swung hardly any distance, but crashed back pitifully, his plan ruined.

The soldiers and Vanton were now not more than thirty yards from him, and he guessed he was as good as lost. There remained now nothing for him to do but to try and make a fight of it, and he bitterly regretted having thrown away the rifle of the trooper whose uniform he wore.

He turned and ran along the edge of the ravine. A shot went after him, sizzling through the driving rain. It missed. He looked sideways, and, doing so, realised that the ravine was crossed by another just ahead of him.



He was trapped, and that sideways glance had shown him that Vanton had taken a rifle from a trooper's hand and, mounting to the top of a great boulder, had pulled the weapon to his shoulder. Vanton was taking careful aim. Dick turned and stood quite still. This was the end of it, and he would show them how to meet the end when it came. His flight was ended.

Vanton steadied the gun. Dick kept his eyes open by a great effort.

And then there was a crash like the breaking of the dams of doom. White vividness flashed downwards. He saw the muzzle of Vanton's rifle touched by blue fire. He heard an explosion that seemed likely to rend the hilltop itself; and he remembered Vanton's words about X One.

"Just like lightning . . ."

**THE LIGHTNING FLASH GUN.**—White vividness flashed downwards and Vanton's gun was enveloped in blue fire. There was a terrific detonation as X One exploded.

Of Vanton and the troopers and the boulder on which Vanton had stood with the dangerous steel barrel of the rifle under the lightning, there was no sign—only a great scorched wound on the hill's head.

OLD Vincent Ralway chuckled and rubbed his hands.

"They're showing that news film at every picture-house in the country, Dick," he said. "That was some ride you put in on the cavalry horse you found, across the frontier. The picture . . ."

Dick smiled. "That's what I wanted—to get the picture through," he said; and added softly: "And to stop the war by getting hold of that formula."

Dick Fortune is already a firm favourite with B.M. readers. Look out for more gripping yarns of this grand hero of the Silver Screen.



## THE RIDDLE OF THE ROVERS

(Continued from page 10.)

Then the Rovers' centre-half had the ball, and with a low, swift pass sent the ball to Hal Fletcher. Deftly the centre-forward took the ball on the run and was away before the defenders realised he had the leather. In a weaving, swaying run he sped towards the goal.

With amazing skill he tricked one of the backs. But the other man came across like a meteor. Hal steadied, and, as the full-back crashed into him with a square shoulder-charge, he sent in a stinging shot high for the goal.

Like a panther the goalie leapt. His fingers just touched the ball—and tipped it over the bar. A huge sigh broke from the crowd, like the moan of a sudden gust of wind, and next instant thunders of applause greeted that wonderful shot and the equally marvellous save.

The corner-kick was taken, but a full-back cleared with a mighty kick, and the game swept to the other end of the field.

Then followed amazing football, swift, clean, skilful. From one end of the field to the other the play flashed with lightning-like speed. Attack followed attack, but each defence was sound and rock-like. The swift raids broke and failed.

At last half-time came with the score still level: the crowd stirred and stamped impatiently. They were roused by this gripping game.

And all the time, in his remote corner in the stand, Jasper Drill had watched the play, fuming and frightened. He was finished, but he was determined that the Rovers should not win and that he would get even with Falcon Swift. How, he did not know, but as the teams lined up for the second half, he racked his brains, trying to think of some way of satisfying his lust for revenge.

And suddenly his eyes alighted on some apparatus that had been used by the workmen, who had been completing the improvements to the stand. There was a huge oxy-acetylene lamp, and a fiendish grin convulsed the crook-lawyer's face as his eyes fell on this. Falcon Swift should not live to triumph!

The referee's whistle shrilled, and from the kick-off things happened with a rush. The Middletown centre passed to his inside man, who sent the ball out to the right wing. Winger fastened on to the leather and streaked down the line like a stag. He steadied and centred—a beautiful, dropping shot, right into the goal-mouth.

The Middletown centre-forward jumped, with two of the defenders. He was just before them. His head met the ball even as Beefy rushed out to try to punch clear. The ball rebounded over the goalie's outstretched arm, into the net.

"Goal! Hurrah!"

The Rovers were losing two goals to one! Ruefully Beefy picked the ball out of the back of the net and booted it up the field.

Once again the ball was centred, the ref's whistle peeped and the leather was in motion. Then commenced a dour, ding-dong struggle.

The Rovers pressed continuously, launching raid after raid upon their opponents' goal. About ten minutes from the end, Falcon Swift got the ball from a half-back and sent a quick pass out to his wing man. Winger took the leather along the touch-line for a few yards then centred to the Sporting Sleuth. Falcon Swift steadied himself to shoot, but a defender was coming at him and he saw, out of the corner of his eye, that Hal Fletcher was standing unmarked. With a deft side-kick he passed the ball to the centre-forward.

Bam! Hal took the ball first time, and sent it goalwards like a cannon ball. The goalie flung himself full length, just touched the whizzing leather with his finger-tips, but next moment the ball was in the back of the net.

"Hurrah! Goal! Well played Hal!"

Deafening cheers rent the air, caps were flung high and the Rovers' supporters almost danced with excitement. But as the teams kicked off again there was one man in the stand who did not cheer. Jasper Drill, his face contorted with rage and fear, rose from his seat and made his way towards the players' exit and entrance, where stood the workmen's oxy-acetylene lamp. Drill was desperate; he had got to stop the Rovers from winning.

There were only five minutes to time when the crook-lawyer reached the great lamp standing some yards behind the Middletown goal. Play was in the Rovers' half while Drill fumbled with the apparatus, adjusting it.

The ref. was looking at his watch now. Only two more minutes to go! The crowd was on tenterhooks, but suddenly a tremendous lifting roar went up. The Rovers' centre-half had broken from a melee with the ball at his feet.

With a clever, "scissors" movement Falcon Swift and the winger changed places and the detective had the ball. He bored in towards the goal, beat the back and had only the goal before him. He steadied, his foot swung back—and at that moment a great licking, roaring jet of flame spouted from the oxy-acetylene lamp, seemed to reach like a giant, searing finger for the Sporting Sleuth.

Jasper Drill pumped oxygen madly. His face was a hideous mask of hate, and horrible cackles of fiendish laughter broke from him.

The crowd gasped and the sound was like the moan of lost souls. Then cries of horror arose on all sides only to change next moment to roars of applause.

For Falcon Swift's cannon-ball shot had beaten the Middletown goalie—and the famous sleuth himself was safe. The instant the flame had leapt towards him, he had seen it and flung himself flat. Despite Drill's frantic efforts, the devastating gout of fire had dwindled.

Suddenly a shrill, horrible animal cry rose high above the roar of the spectators, silencing them. Fearfully Drill turned his head to see the great ape, Satan, bearing down on him, its huge, slavering jaws agape, tiny, red-rimmed eyes filled with hate. Somehow it had broken free of its underground cellar! And before it was the man who had kept the brute shut up.

"Help! Help!" screamed Drill, as the monstrous ape lumbered at him. The lawyer turned and dashed on to the field of play. But it was all over in a moment.

Satan reached its victim, whirled him in its mighty arms, and there sounded a dull, sharp crack. Jasper Drill grew limp, his neck broken.

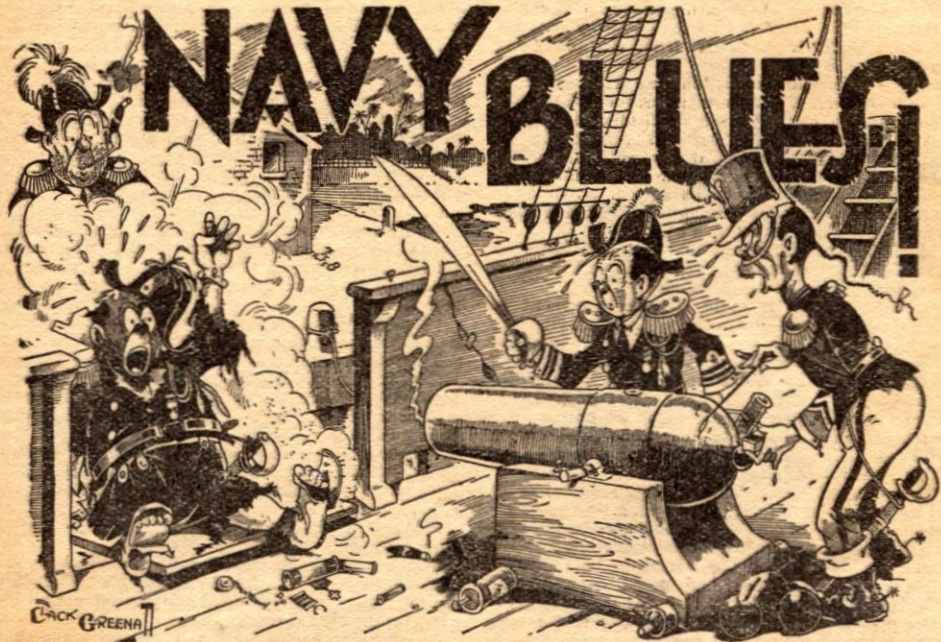
*Crack-crack-crack!* Falcon Swift, leaving nothing to chance, had brought a gun on to the field with him, strapped to a body belt. He emptied the magazine into the huge ape, and the brute went sprawling over, dead.

After a consultation it was decided that Falcon Swift's goal should count and that the Rovers had won, for the ref. had been about to blow his whistle as the ape had appeared. The Rovers' ground was safe—thanks to the valiant efforts of the Sporting Sleuth.

Get ready to welcome a grand new Mag. thrill-maker next week, chums. Black Feather of the Clans makes his bow in a colourful complete yarn of the Scottish Highlands.



THEY'RE IN THE NAVY NOW! | The Comical Crew of the Happy Haddock Become the Navy of Nodoia. Laughs Galore.



A Snappy Salute! Admiral of the Fleet Keelson was less than three yards away when An How fired the Salute—which was tough on the Admiral.

### A Dark Plot.

THE Fleet of Nodoia stood in the harbour of Propicetaxl, decorated with bunting and with the naval ensign of the little South American State flying proudly above.

The Nodoian Navy consisted of one ship, lately registered in the British Merchant Service as the *Happy Haddock*, tramp steamer, Captain Keelson, master. Since its appointment as the Navy of Nodoia the name had been altered to the nearest Spanish equivalent—*El Pescado Feliz*. How Cap'n Keelson and the lads of the *Happy Haddock* came to get this singular job is a long story. Sufficient to say that they drifted into the affair quite by accident, as usual.

But it was a big chance for those merry seamen of the old tramp. Pip, the cabin boy, was now Commander Pipweedle, Dutch Jud, the bos'n was Rear-Admiral Jud, Slim Small and Fat Burns had both been appointed Admirals, and even An How, the Chinese cook, had been promoted Lieutenant-Commander. Cap'n Keelson, of course, was Admiral-of-the-Fleet, and Hettup, the mate, Vice-Admiral. In fact, the Nodoian Navy was positively blistering with admirals.

Also, an assorted variety of uniforms had been supplied by the proud Government, for in Nodoia they are great on uniforms. The *Haddock* herself had a warlike addition to her equipment in the shape of two ancient brass cannon, as used by the Spanish Armada.

Our story opens, then, with the admirals of the Nodoian Fleet parading on deck of the flag (and only)

ship and giving each other orders—there was some confusion as to who was the superior officer of who. Cap'n Keelson was ashore in the company of Mr. Hettup, visiting the telegraph office to see if there were any orders for the Fleet from the Central Powers.

"I tell you, blokes," Commander Pipweedle was saying. "When the old man—I mean the Lord High Admiral Keelson—comes aboard, we oughter give him a salvo!"

"You know he ain't keen on them fancy foods!" grunted Fat Burns—Admiral Burns, beg pardon, "Good plain fare, sez he—that's what—"

"Garn—you lubberly sea-clam! A salvo ain't nuth'n t'eat. I mean a salute. Fire one o' the guns outer disrespect."

"Don't see no sense in it, I don't," replied Fat. "What if it hits him?—he won't come aboard at all then!"

"Pipe down, you chump! The gun ain't loaded proper, it ain't!"

"Well," chipped in Admiral Slim Small. "If you're gonner do it, you'd better stir your stumps. Here comes the skipper an' the mate."

Admiral Keelson and Vice-Admiral Hettup were indeed at that moment making their way along the dockside to the *Haddock's* gangway. Pip didn't waste any more time on words. He signalled to Lieutenant An How, and together they hurried over to one of the antique guns and hastily loaded it with powder.

Cap'n Keelson and Mister Hettup were already making their way up the gangway.

"Company!" roared Pip, drawing his sword and giving himself an unpleasant biff on the nose with the back of it in an attempt to present-arms smartly, "Shun!"

Nobody took the slightest notice except An How. His knowledge of English Naval orders was very



limited and he thought this must be the new term for "Fire." So forthwith An How pulled the cord that touched off the powder in the old-fashioned gun.

It was an unlucky moment—for Cap'n Keelson. He was in such a position on the gangway that his head was barely three yards from the projecting muzzle of the cannon.

There was a roar and a blinding flash in which the Cap'n's yell of alarm was drowned, but soon the sulphurous clouds of smoke floated away and revealed a transfigured, battered Admiral-of-the-Fleet. Cap'n Keelson's face was covered in soot, his eyebrows had gone and part of his whiskers, and the clump that remained was badly singed.

"Stap me!" shrieked the skipper. "What's this! Mutiny! Firin' on your Cap'n! I'll—"

Cap'n Keelson didn't finish his remark but bounded up the remainder of the gangway intent on exhibiting his fury in a more physical manner.

Pip didn't think it quite the ideal moment to explain. He ducked under Cap'n Keelson's hurtling fist and darted down the only line of retreat—the gangway whence the skipper had come. An How, a little puzzled by the turn of events, promptly followed.

Two seconds later Commander Pipweedle and Lieutenant An How were tearing along the dockside as fast as their legs could move, with a sooty-faced yelling Admiral rushing after them.

"Down here!" gasped Pip, darting round a corner and into the open door of a cargo shed. "Get under them sacks over there! S'no good tryin' to reason with the ole man when he's in his tantrums!"

An How didn't need the advice to be repeated. Half-a-second later they had dived out of sight beneath a pile of sacks. They heard Cap'n Keelson clatter past the shed, then presently stop and return.

"Stap me!" they heard his angry voice mutter presently. "Where they got to? I'll paste 'em proper when I catch 'em! I will!"

The muttering voice retreated in the distance, Cap'n Keelson evidently flummoxed by their hiding place.

"Better lie low a minute or two," whispered Pip to the chink cook, "an' give the ole man time to recover his temper 'fore we go back to the ship."

An How agreed, and they waited where they were for some minutes. Just as they were at last preparing to move, however, they were arrested by the sound of fresh voices approaching the shed. Instinctively they remained in their hiding place. They heard a number of men enter the shed.

"That was the old fool," said a voice, "but for that cursed old skipper and his ship we should have got the guns into Nodoia. The revolution would have been finished by now and I should have been President! Pedro de Miraflores! *Caraja!* If I had my will—"

Pip pricked up his ears. So this was Miraflores, the man who was plotting to overthrow the present government of Nodoia. The man whom the *Happy Haddockites* had quite accidentally frustrated and had been rewarded for their act by being appointed the Nodoian Navy.

"Listen," said another voice. "I have a good plan. Why not make use of these gringo sailors who call themselves the Navy? They are simple fools—"

Pip restrained himself from passing violent remarks in reference to this matter with a strong effort.

"—and we could easily dupe them. Forge an order from the president, Jurez, to Cap'n Keelson telling him to go and arrest Jurez and his supporters in the Government house. The Gringo Captain is simple. He knows not the president by name or sight—he received his commission from the local officer here in Proptetaxl—and we can deceive him into thinking

they are a band of plotters *against* the Government instead of the Government itself. Order him to arrest them and throw them in prison. Once they are safely out of the way we can proclaim the Government of Nodoia overthrown and you as president."

Pip heard Miraflores' oily chuckle with disgust.

"It is a clever scheme! *Nombre de Dios!* And a funny one. It shall be done—tomorrow. Sit down, *señor*, we will discuss details!"

The *señor* referred to did sit down. Unfortunately, he chose the one spot out of that pile of sacks under which Pip and An How lay hidden.

"*Ouch! Gerroff!*" gasped Pip involuntarily, as the sudden weight descended on his tummy. "That's me!"

In his squirmings he flung out a wild fist which smote An How in the Oriental optic. The pile of sacks began to erupt violently and pass remarks in Chinese, and the hefty *señor* leapt up with a yell of alarm.

"*Caraja!*" shouted Miraflores. "Eavesdroppers! Seize them or we are ruined!"

Dozens of hands grabbed An How and Pip and hauled them forth into the light of day. They found themselves stared at by a ring of dusky, Latin-American faces, with Miraflores' swarthy olive countenance in the centre.

"They are seamen from the *Haddock!*" grunted the revolutionary plotter. "Secure and gag them quickly. They must be kept prisoners until our plan is executed!"

"Here! Hold hard!" started Pip. "I—*glooph! Blaa! Gl!*"

His remarks were cut off suddenly by the application of a gag. In a couple of minutes both he and An How were securely bound and gagged and pushed out of sight behind the sacks.

Miraflores signalled to his men to leave the shed. When they were out of earshot of their two victims, he said:

"We must do it at once. Those two might free themselves and reveal our plan and then we are lost. We must prepare our forged message at once!"

### Arresting a Government.

IT was just after Cap'n Keelson had washed the soot off his face and had ceased to lament the loss of his eyebrows, that a sort of hotel commissaire marched up the gangway of the *Haddock*, saluted everybody in sight, and demanded Admiral Keelson. "S'me," said Admiral Keelson, saluting smartly. "What's to do, General?"

"Important dispatch from the President de la Nodoia! Orders for the Fleet."

"'Bout time," said the Admiral, taking the long, official-looking envelope and tearing it open.

"Here, what's it say? Stap me! It's all in dago language!"

The gent in the posh uniform took the dispatch and translated as follows:

*Orders to the Admiral-of-the-Fleet from the President de la Nodoia.*

*For the glory and liberty of our country, whereas:*

*It has become known to the President and the Government of Nodoia that a band of dangerous revolutionaries are plotting to overthrow the present Government and ruin our gallant little country. Your orders are to proceed at once to the city of Sanjango, three miles inland, and arrest these enemies of the State and confine them to the State prison! neither the police nor the army being able to do the job, as he has gone on his annual holiday. The conspirators will be found in the place known as "Casa d'Estado" in Sanjango. The name of their leader is Miguel Jurez.*

*Nodoia for ever!*



"Stap me!" said Cap'n Keelson. "Didn't expect a job like that. All right, General, me an' the Navy'll be right along."

The dispatch-bearer saluted and left the *Happy Haddock*, grinning to himself. Cap'n Keelson, of course, didn't suspect that it was one of Miraflores' men in disguise, nor that *Casa d'Estado* means "State House" and was the headquarters of the Nodoian Government.

"Hey!" he yelled. "Admiral Hettup, mobilise the dinged Navy, will yer? We gottter march to a place called Sanjango immediate!"

Admiral Fat Burns rushed down below decks and emerged with his trombone. He believed in doing things properly. He at once proceeded to blow the bugle call, "Lights out!" with vigour. It was the only call he knew, but it served the purpose.

The assortment of admirals and things lined up on the deck, and Admiral Keelson inspected them proudly.

"Fine body o' men," he commented. "Two men missin', I see, but we'll have to go without them. Shun! Left wheel an' quick march."

Admiral Burns marched at the head of the

and proved to be a little more imposing than the rest of the buildings of the capital of Nodoia.

They found a sentry at the gate, curled up and slumbering soundly, using his rifle-butt as a pillow.

The Nodoian Navy marched past him boldly, and all the challenge they got was a loud snore. Cap'n Keelson drew his sword and waved his men on into the interior of the building.

"We'll search the place till we find the conspirators!" cried the skipper. "But be careful, boys, they might show fight."

Cap'n Keelson boldly thrust open the door of the *Casa* and strode in, followed by the rest of the Navy. They found themselves in a large, low-roofed hall. In the centre was a long table at which six or seven men sat in various sprawling attitudes, for the Government of Nodoia take things easily in the off-season between revolutions.

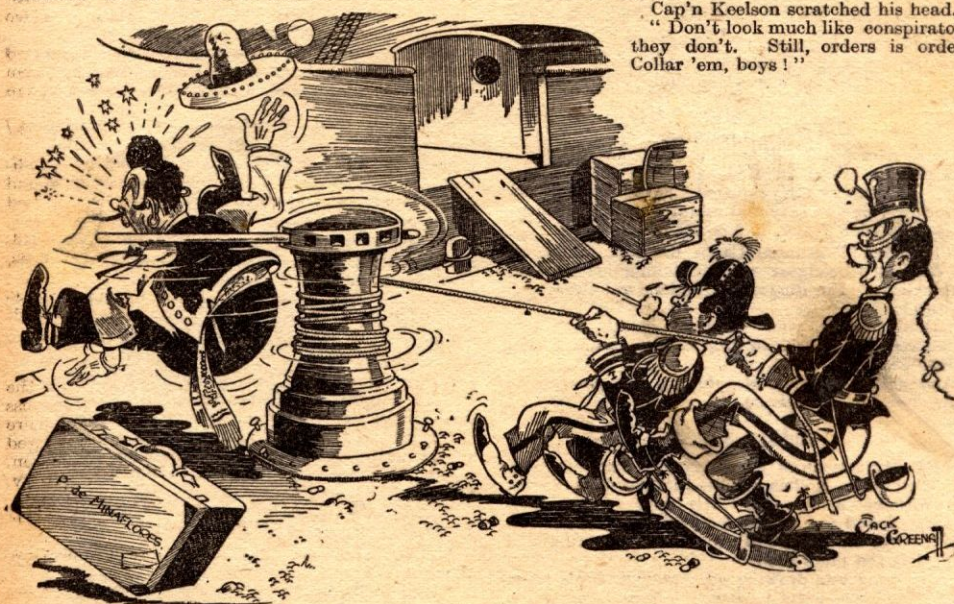
"Lookin' for a bloke called Jurez," said Cap'n Keelson. "Know him?"

A dark-faced gent with an imperial beard sat at the head of the table, with his feet propped up on it, smoking a cigar. He made a "Howdy-do" sort of gesture to the Cap'n and said:

"That is me, *señor*."

Cap'n Keelson scratched his head.

"Don't look much like conspirators, they don't. Still, orders is orders. Collar 'em, boys!"



SENT SPINNING.—Pip and An How tugged suddenly on the rope, the capstan whirled round and the handle caught the abscending president a smack in the neck.

procession, blowing his trombone lustily and playing the "Campbells are Coming." As soon as they had passed out of the little port and were on the road to the inland town of Sanjango, another procession followed with less pomp and splendour. It consisted of Miraflores and his men, ready to seize the reins of government as soon as President Jurez was disposed of.

A two hours' tramp along the dusty tropical road brought the Nodoian Navy to the outskirts of Sanjango. It seemed an even sleepier place than Proptictaxi. The *Casa d'Estado* was well known

The Navy let out a wild whoop and rushed towards the Governors of Nodoia, who woke up suddenly. Cap'n Keelson pounced over to Jurez and clapped a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"I arrest you for conspirizin' agin the Government. Best come along quiet!"

"But, *señor*, you haf made the mistake. I am——"

"None o' your lip, now. Kerm on."

Some moments later, the Government of Nodoia was marched out of the *Casa d'Estado* in custody of the Navy. A few inquiries by Cap'n Keelson directed the procession to the State jail, where a jailer,



suffering from the national somnolence handed him over the keys without any inquiries, and the late Government was consigned protestingly to the cells.

"Now, boys," said Cap'n Keelson when it was done. "I s'pose we'd best pop back to that place an' see if we can find any treasonable papers an' things."

"Okay, Admiral," said the Navy in chorus, and back they marched.

As they reapproached the government building they heard loud cheers issuing forth and the cry "Miraflores! President Miraflores!"

"Miraflores!" gasped Admiral Keelson. "Stap me! Why he's the gink—"

The Admiral didn't bother to complete his sentence but hurried back into the hall, followed by his crew. Inside, they stopped dead with amazement. Around the table was another group of men, cheering the swarthy revolutionary Miraflores, who stood at the head in the President's position. He laughed as Admiral Keelson entered and shouted a greeting.

"Welcome, Admiral of the Fleet! Without knowing it you have overthrown a tyrannical government and saved Nodoia. Greet your new President, Pedro de Miraflores."

There was a moment's silence while the Navy stood aghast.

"Sink the ole lugger!" gulped Admiral Small. "So that was the President and the Government what we soaked an' shoved in clink! Here, Cap'n, gimme them keys, I'll—"

"Stop!" shouted Miraflores. "Nodoia now has a new President and a new Government. If you release those men in jail I will treat it as a counter-revolution and have you arrested—and shot for mutiny! But"—Miraflores tone changed—"Admiral Keelson, under my rule you may still retain your appointment as the Nodoian Navy, if you wish."

"Stap me!" grunted Cap'n Keelson, taking off his Admiral's headgear and scratching his head in perplexity. "I'm dinged if I understand these here politics!"

"Don't worry your head about them," said Miraflores. "Go back to Proprietax and await my orders."

And seeing nothing else for it, the bewildered Navy followed his advice.

### Nodoia Saved.

THE excitement of the revolution had long ago died down, Nodoia accepted its new government without a murmur, the new Government celebrated and went home very pleased with themselves—and still Pip and An How lay bound and gagged in the cargo shed.

As evening was drawing on, however, Pip's heart beat with hope, when he heard somebody enter the cargo shed. He strained hard and kicked and wriggled about until the newowner's attention was attracted to the pile of sacks.

"Nombre de Dios!" said a voice. "What is this!"

There was a lengthy pause, no doubt as the leisurely Nodoian considered the matter, and Pip renewed his struggles. At last the sacks were dragged aside to reveal him and An How lying beneath.

The Nodoian gave vent to a stream of remarks in Spanish and then at last commenced to release them.

"We've got no time to waste, An," said Commander Pipwee, as they chafed their cramped limbs. "That Miraflores said he was going to send that message to the skipper to-morrow. We must warn the Cap'n and the Government of his plan."

Without a word of explanation to the startled native they dashed out of the shed and along the docks towards the *Happy Haddock*.

A hundred yards from the boat, An How stopped suddenly and pointed excitedly ahead, Pip followed the direction of his pointing finger and he gave a startled little cry.

For there was the plotter, Miraflores, alone and hurrying stealthily along the dock towards a little rickety schooner moored in the harbour. In one hand he carried a great portmanteau, which seemed to be heavy.

"It's him!" said Pip. "See here, An, we're going to change our plans quickly! We'll collar him and hand him over to the President to put in jail—that'll stop his revolutionary capers altogether!" And the cabin boy whispered some instructions to the cook.

They crept stealthily nearer to Miraflores who had halted on the dockside near a capstan, used for hauling in boats. As usual, there was a long wooden handle, by which the capstan was turned, and round the standard was the hawser to tie to the boat. Cautiously Pip reached out and seized the end of the rope.

"Now!" he cried. "Heave!"

Together he and An How tugged on the rope, twisting the standard of the capstan round like a top. The long wooden handle was whirled round with it and caught the usurper a resounding thwack in the back of the neck.

"Gloop!" said Miraflores as his presidential frontispiece flattened itself painfully on the hard ground and his big portmanteau hurtled out of his hand. Then he quietly followed the custom of the country and dropped off to sleep.

"Gosh!" said Pip. "We've gone an' laid him out. Don't matter, though! You grab that bag and gimme a hand. We'll take him along to the Cap'n and tell him the whole plot."

So the President of Nodoia was hauled between them to the dock of the *Happy Haddock*. The whole Navy, including Admiral Keelson was on deck when they arrived.

"Stap me!" said the skipper. "Where you two bin all this time? You missed the revolution an' everything, an'—Stap me! It's im—the president!"

"President noth'n!" said Pip. "He wants to be president but we've stopped his little games. Listen, Cap'n, he intends, to-morrow, to forge a despatch telling you to—"

"But he's done all that!" shrieked Cap'n Keelson. "He is the President!"

"Despatch for Admiral Keelson," said a voice at the Cap'n's elbow.

"Read it," gulped Cap'n Keelson to the messenger. The man tore open the despatch and read it out loud.

*Miraflores a traitor. To-night absconded with the state treasury to Proprietax. Intends to fly country in ship. Capture him at all costs or Nodoia is ruined.*

D'ARTEAGA, Vice-president.

Before the message was completed the whole crew of the *Happy Haddock* had pounced on Miraflores' portmanteau and torn it open. It was full of gold and Nodoian treasury notes!

"Stap me!" gulped Admiral Keelson. "We saved the country from ruin. Fall in, boys, we're gonna march him back to Sanjago right away, an' take a hand in this here government ourselves."

Cap'n Keelson and his comical crew of the "Happy Haddock" take a hand in the government of Nodoia in next week's screaming mirth tale. Look out for fun and fireworks, chaps.



THE AMAZING EXPLOITS OF THE SCIENTIFIC SLEUTH!  
This Week: The Mystery of the Stolen Invention.

# THE STONE EATER



Eaten away by the Destruction Spray the base of the giant column collapsed. Just in time the two sleuths soared away on the Parachute.

## Into the Storm.

"PASS the mustard, kid," said Professor Bill.  
"Right! Coming over, Chief!" grinned Freddy McNutt.

He did not pass the mustard in the ordinary way; he pressed a little button, and the mustard-pot went gliding silently and mysteriously over the snowy-white tablecloth, to halt in front of Bill's plate.

The Science Sentinel and his young assistant were at supper in the comfortable sitting-room of their bungalow on the roof of Krell House, in the Strand, London's mightiest building. Professor William Trafford, youthful and untidy, was very different from one's conception of a brilliant scientist. Yet he was more than that; he was a man of practical action, an inventor of genius, and the first man in the world to establish himself as a science detective.

Suddenly, the opaque flower-bowl in the centre of the table glowed with a strong, greenish light, and the young professor looked up quickly from his newspaper.

"Telephone, Chief," said Freddy.

The Science Sentinel did not move from his chair. He merely pressed a hidden button, and spoke in a normal voice.

"Hallo!" he said. "Professor Trafford speaking."

"Thank heaven I have found you at home, professor!" came a clear but agitated voice from

the luminous flower-bowl. "A terrible thing has happened, and I need you at once."

"Who is it speaking?" asked Bill. "But one moment! You are Sir William Minter, are you not?"

"Yes, yes, and I am speaking from my country home near Netherton, Bedfordshire," came the voice. "My house has just been burgled, Professor Trafford; I was surprised by a gang of crooks led by that notorious criminal, Skeen. . ."

"And your Destruction Spray?" asked Bill keenly.

"They have got it!" came the groaning reply.

"I'll be with you in half-an-hour," said Bill, with characteristic promptness, and he switched off.

"Are we travelling down by car, Chief?" asked Freddy, leaping to his feet.

"Not by car—that would be too slow," replied Bill. "Great Scott! The childish carelessness of these great scientists!" he added helplessly. "I warned Sir William Minter, a week ago, when he demonstrated his Destruction Spray to a number of fellow scientists. I was there, too—and so were a number of newspaper representatives. The whole story came out in the next day's newspapers."

"I remember, Chief," said Freddy, nodding. "Sir William has discovered a marvellous chemical spray which eats away solid brick and stone. I couldn't believe it—!"



"It's true—I saw the demonstration with my own eyes," snapped Bill. "But we mustn't waste time in talking. Come!"

They went out upon the broad, flat roof of Krell House. It was not yet eleven, and London lay, a blaze of light, beneath them. It was a stiflingly hot night, and black clouds were massing in the south-west.

"There are storms about, kid," said Bill. "Looks as though we might have a rough passage."

There was a squat metal structure farther along the roof; but at a touch from Bill, magic happened. The roof of the structure slid back like a shutter, vanishing mysteriously, and the ends and sides dropped into hidden slots. And there stood revealed a black, wicked-looking 'plane.

Leaping into the cockpit, with Freddy by his side, Bill touched something, and the engine sprang into life. Within a few seconds the propeller was revolving, but there was scarcely any noise. It was more like the powerful purr of a dynamo.

"Hold tight!" said Bill crisply.

He pulled a lever, and the 'plane was catapulted forward along a special runway; she soared clear of the roof, mounting like a rocket. Within a few seconds she was two thousand feet up, heading over the north-western suburbs of the great metropolis.

Bill kept the 'plane steadily climbing, for there were dense storm-clouds ahead. Bill's object was to rise above them. But the higher he flew, the more alarming became the conditions. Vast cloud-banks, inky black, seemed to close in round the speeding machine. Occasionally, a vivid flash of lightning would tear the clouds asunder; and at times Bill and Freddy would be tossed and pitched by the mighty forces of nature.

Bill's judgment, and his sense of direction, were both unceasing. His instruments, illuminated for him in the cockpit, were accurate enough; but he knew his direction without them. And presently, pointing to a glow of light far below, and some distance ahead, he announced that they were nearing their destination.

"That's Netherton," he said. "Sir William's place is some miles further north."

Zzzzzzz! A blinding, devastating flame of blue electricity seemed to explode the clouds within five hundred yards of the rocking 'plane; fire, cerise and mysterious, played round the propeller and the wing-tips. There came an ear-shattering boom, and the thunder rolled with dread tumult.

A particularly violent storm was raging right over Netherton, and the deserted streets were being drenched by a cascade of water.

Zzzzzz-zzzzzzzzz! There came another flare of lightning, and this time a fork of fire seemed to leap

out of the clouds and hurl itself at the 'plane. Both Bill and Freddy felt numbed; the machine staggered, and a blaze of fire played round the engine and the whirling propeller. Out of the corner of his eye, Bill saw the left wing partially disintegrate.

"The lightning's got us, Chief!" yelled Freddy. Yellow, scorching flames were flaring from the engine; they came curling back towards the very cockpit.

"Catch hold, kid—and hang on for your life!" shouted Bill.

Freddy found himself clutching at a cold metal ring. He was dizzy, for the 'plane had gone into a deadly spinning dive.

Suddenly, Freddy felt a jerk. He caught a glimpse of something black and huge, which billowed out. In a great flare of lightning he recognised it; and by this time he and Professor Bill were clear of the doomed 'plane.

Bill had used an emergency parachute; it had opened well, and now, tossed in the storm wind, the pair were dropping.

### The Pillar of Death!

**C**RASH-BOOM-OOOOOOM! The thunder was like the explosion of an ammunition dump; it half-stunned the Science Sentinel and his assistant as they were tossed about amid the wind and rain.

"Pity about the old bus—but we ought to be with Sir William in good time," said Bill, with all his customary coolness. "Hang on, kid. It won't be long before we hit."

"I'm all right, Chief," panted Freddy.

The parachute was unusually large, for it had been designed by Professor Bill to support the weight of two men. Bill had seen, with relief, that the wind was driving them clear of the town. They would probably land somewhere on the outskirts, and . . .

But no! The wind, by some freak of the storm, had changed about. Bill now saw that the parachute was drifting over the big central square of the town, and he had a quick hope that they would land in the ornamental gardens, in the square's centre.

But, towering up from those gardens, there was an immense pillar of stone—a great column with a carved marble group at the top, representing soldiers in action. It was, in fact, the famous Victory Monument of Netherton—a Column which even dwarfed the famous Nelson Column in Trafalgar Square.

And the parachute was drifting down—straight towards it!

"Grab something, kid!" yelled Bill.

Fate was against them. They seemed to be clearing the column, but at the last second an eddy of wind sent the parachute swerving sideways.

**Crash!** They struck heavily on the stone parapet at the top of the monument, and Professor Bill clutched at the stonework about him, gaining a firm hold. Freddy staggered, slipped, and would have hurtled to death but for his companion's coolness and swiftness of action. Bill flung out an arm, grabbed Freddy's clothing, and dragged him back from the abyss. The parachute, falling limply, festooned itself about the carved figures, and clung there, flattened to the marble by the drenching rain. Professor Bill undid the fastenings, and released himself and Freddy.

"Phew! That was near enough for me, kid," said Bill, with relief.

They were safe for the time being; but the Science Sentinel was exasperated by this culminating stroke of bad luck. He and Freddy, marooned at the top

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of the Victory Monument, might be compelled to remain there for hours.

Their fall had attracted no attention, for the streets were deserted. Not a soul in the town knew of their plight, and amid such a tumult of thunder and driving rain it would be futile to shout. In any case, there was no way in which they could be immediately rescued. The tallest fire-escape could not reach them.

"Well, we're dished; we can't do anything to help Sir William," muttered Bill gruffly.



THE SLEUTH FROM THE SKY.—With a splintering crash Professor Bill and Freddy smashed through the glass dome of the bank, landing right on top of the crooks.

"What about the parachute?" asked Freddy. "It's still all right. Couldn't we drop the rest of the way?"

"Too risky," said Bill. "There are buildings everywhere, and it's even odds that we should break our necks."

He watched, idly at first, a big closed car which splashed its way along the road at the north side of the square. Instead of continuing along the side of the main street, the car turned sharply into a narrow

alley, and stopped alongside a great, new, concrete building which looked like a bank, or a block of modern offices.

"Look, kid!" he muttered tensely.

In a blazing, prolonged flash of lightning they saw masked men dismount from the car; and whilst three or four stood on guard at the alley's exit, two others were holding a strange-looking instrument against the bare concrete of the great building.

"Great Scott! It's the crooks!" gasped Freddy, realising the truth of the situation in a flash. "They've got Sir William Minter's Destruction Spray—and they're using it in front of our very eyes, and we can do nothing!"

\* \* \* \* \*

ROD SKEEN and his gang had intended to get clear away from Netherton that night; but as soon as the storm had broken, Skeen had turned back.

For this was an opportunity in a thousand! The semi-flooded streets had sent every pedestrian for cover; even the buses and most private cars had stopped, owing to the difficulty of seeing in the blinding rain.

And there, in the centre of the town, was the great new building of the Central Counties Bank!

"Boys," said Rod Skeen, "it's a cinch! We'll break this bank wide open, and give Netherton something to remember us by."

The Destruction Spray instrument was shaped something like an oxygen cylinder, and quite capable of being held by one man. Projecting from its nose there was a long nozzle, with a control lever in a handy position for operating.

*Sissssss-sissssss!* To the accompaniment of the rolling thunder, a spray of invisible chemical shot out from the instrument's nozzle. It looked something like smoke, and it was sent with terrific force against the concrete wall of the bank.

The effect was magical; it even startled Rod Skeen, who already knew, from the reports, what an extraordinary invention it was.

The solid concrete disappeared as though by magic. It did not merely melt, like hot butter before a flame, but vanished into nothingness. A round gap began to show itself in the wall—a hole twenty-four inches in diameter, almost circular, the same shape, in fact, as the spray.

In less than one minute the two-foot wall was completely penetrated, and Skeen gave a low cry of triumph.

"We're as good as in, boys!" he gloated. "We can't go wrong now..."

He broke off, his jaw dropping. For a second he thought he was witnessing some freak of the storm. A tiny point of fire, like an orange ball, had come hurtling down from the upper air. It struck one of the sentries, and seemed to explode in a blaze of lightning. The man fell prone.

And Professor Bill, on the top of the Victory Monument, chuckled. He was using his own patent electric gun. It was a modern improvement on the revolver—for whilst it rendered its victims helpless, paralysed, it did not kill. Instead of a bullet, it sent



forth an electric discharge, like a miniature fire ball. "Bull's-eye first time, kid," said Professor Bill happily.

He took aim again, and he pulled the trigger, and another of those "electric bullets" went speeding on its way. Again the aim was true; another sentry was struck as though by lightning, and he fell like a log to the wet pavement.

But this time Rod Skeen had followed the direction of the fire ball, and he saw, too, the figure of Professor Bill outlined in a lightning flash.

"Gosh! It's Trafford, the Science 'Tec!" he grieved. "There's no other man who could act in this way. Get to cover, you guys! This bird's poison!"

An inspiration came to him. He did not know how Professor Bill came to be at the top of the great column, but as he saw that stone monument, he saw the possibilities.

"Take the spray, Nick!" he snapped. "We've got this Trafford guy where we want him!"

He repeated his orders, and two of his men went running across the flooded road, the rain beating down upon them. They plunged into the ornamental gardens, and reached the great base of the mighty Column.

*Sssssssssss!* The spray commenced its work, and the stone melted visibly.

"She's going!" gasped one of the men. "Quick—we'd better get back!"

They raced away across the square, and in their rear they heard a groaning and a grinding, and they knew that the Column was about to fall.

At the top, Professor Bill and Freddy McNutt knew it, too. Bill took a chance. Like lightning he had freed the parachute and grasped it firmly. It was the only chance now. Before, the risk had not been worth taking, but now it was either this or certain death.

"Grab hold, kid!" yelled Bill.

They allowed the wind to send the parachute billowing out. And at the same second the Victory Column rocked away from beneath their feet. They

## YOUR EDITOR'S CHAT

(Continued from page 2.)

how they bind them! Next week's thriller in this section is one of the best yet—and that, I know, is saying something! It features Pete the Pearl Diver and his pal Tim Anthony in

### Peril Lagoon!

The quest of the Cavern of Shadows—a hive of mysteries hidden 'neath the bed of the Pacific—will keep you tense and thrilled all through. It is only with the help of Aloma's shield that they come through with their lives.

### Zip of the Z.P.

is a new B.M. hero you'll be glad to meet. Z.P. stands for the Panama Zone Police—and Zip is the nickname of one of their youngest and most daring officers. His exploits are one long series of exciting events in the Canal Zone.

Other first rate favourites booked for next week are the Bullseye Sheriff in "Bullseye's Bad Lads!" a rollicking yarn of fun and thrills in the Wild West; Cap'n Scar of the *Scavenger* versus "The Wreckers of Black Rock"; the S.O.S. Squadron; The Crew of the *Happy Haddock* in their last adventure in Nodolia and a double length, long complete story of drama and new thrills in the Highlands, featuring Black Feather of the Clans.

Don't forget—A Surprise on Every Page next week.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

were dragged off the parapet by the wind, and carried away, whirling in the rain and gale.

"THERE she goes!" gloated Rod Skeen.

The Victory Monument fell just as a great factory chimney will, after the steeplejacks have done their work. For a second the column swayed, then it reeled right over, and midway in its fall it split in the centre.

*Craaaaaaaacaaaah!* The destruction wrought was terrific. Those thousands of tons of stone fell across the other part of the square—opposite to the bank. Shops and buildings were reduced to pulp, and electric light standards were destroyed by the dozen. Almost within a couple of minutes, escaping gas and fused electric wires had caused flames to leap from a dozen different places. A whole row of shops and offices were set afire, and the alarm spread like magic.

No attention was paid to the other side of the square—where the crooks now had a clear field. They penetrated the bank, and they advanced into the great central lobby.

WITH a shivering, splintering crash of glass, Professor Bill and Freddy went hurtling through a great, domed skylight. As Bill had feared from the first, they had fallen on top of one of the buildings, and it seemed that death was near.

By an amazing stroke of fate, they had landed on the bank building, and now they dropped like stones—to be pulled up mercifully by the parachute ropes, which had got entangled amongst the iron girders of the broken skylight.

That dome surmounted the central lobby of the bank—into which the crooks had just penetrated. All around there was an imposing marble staircase, and elevators, too. The building, although impressive, was not particularly high. Thus, when Bill and Freddy pulled up with a jerk, hanging on to the parachute ropes, they were only a comparatively few feet above Rod Skeen and his men. Glass had fallen in cascades, and the crooks had scattered wildly—thinking that when the monument fell, the building had been struck by lightning.

In a flash, the Science Sentinel took in the situation. "Come on, Freddy!" he shouted. "We've got them!"

He dropped, releasing himself from the parachute—landing fairly and squarely upon the shoulders of Rod Skeen. Both went rolling over, Skeen cursing. As Bill leapt to his feet, he caught a glimpse of Freddy alighting, and in a moment he was by Freddy's side, and his electric gun was out.

"Hands up, Skeen!" he said coolly. "I've got you!"

"Trafford!" gritted Skeen, and his fingers crooked round the trigger of his gun.

*Puff!* Bill's gun spoke first; a fireball leapt across the short distance, and Rod Skeen, screaming, fell back smothered in a dozen electric flashes.

Freddy, quick to take advantage of the confusion, had leapt forward and seized the Destruction Spray. He turned the nozzle of it on the other crooks.

"Move a foot, and I'll turn this handle!" he threatened.

It was enough; the crooks flung their guns down and surrendered.

IT was another triumph for Professor Bill, for he returned the Destruction Spray to the grateful Sir William Minter, and handed over the desperata gang to the police.

The Sleuth of the Seas is coming next week! Captain Scar with his nameless crew of the "Scavenger" in another unusual 'tec tale of the briny.



THE BOY SLEUTH WITH A WATER PISTOL. Final Complete Tale in this Grand Detective Series Featuring The Taxi Tec and Wolfgang.



## DEATH IN LAUGHTERLAND!

### Kidnappers Abroad.

"I'M going ter drive the ME 2, Ginger!"

"No, yer ain't! I am! Tiny said I could!"

Almost since dawn a motley crowd of excited youngsters had been streaming into the underground garage in the Euston Road where Tiny Tom Hinton, the Taxi 'Tec, plied his double-barrelled trade. The good-natured little sleuth was taking the boys from the Taxi Drivers' Orphanage for their annual treat to the Fun City at Tidemouth Bay, and it generally proved an exciting and strenuous experience.

The boys were all of an age to be clamorous and self-assertive. Even the armless beggar who stood outside the garage smiled at their animated conversation as they all filed inside.

"All O.K., Smutty?" grinned Tiny.

"A couple more ter come yet, mate," replied the mechanic.

"We haven't got too much time," remarked Tiny, glancing at his watch. "I'd better go out and see if they're on the way."

He strolled out into the Euston Road, and paused to drop some coppers into the tray suspended from the armless beggar's neck. At that moment a taxi-cab glided up to the kerb, and a well-dressed man and an equally smart ten-year-old boy, with a jolly, freckled face, jumped out. The boy was such a marked contrast to the ragged youngsters he had been welcoming that Tiny stared in astonishment.

The beggar also noticed the wealthy appearance of the newcomers, and shuffled forward, whining: "Spare a copper for a poor 'armless bloke wot 'as lost 'is harms!"

While the gentleman fumbled for a coin, his taxi,

which had rolled off, was replaced by another—from which two masked men leapt out on to the pavement!

One of them swung a spanner in the air, and struck the stranger a crushing blow on the back of the head. He collapsed in a limp heap. At the same time the other ruffian grabbed the startled boy by the arms and tried to hustle him into the cab.

It had all happened so suddenly that even Tiny was taken by surprise. But in a flash the instinct of the sleuth asserted itself. Darting forward, he grasped the struggling boy, and with his free hand whipped out his famous water-pistol and shot its contents into the kidnapper's face. Blinded by the powerful jet, the man relaxed his grip and toppled backwards into the cab.

Tiny swung round to deal with the other fellow, when the beggar, rushing up and down shrieking: "Police! police!" crashed into him and sent him staggering to one side.

By the time that he had recovered himself both crooks had tumbled into the cab, which roared off at lightning speed, and disappeared among the traffic.

A couple of excited policemen speedily appeared on the scene, but Tiny knew that there was little hope of capturing the would-be snatchers.

"It's too late!" he declared. "They've got away—thanks to that blundering idiot of a beggar!"

A few minutes later, seated on the running-board of the ME 2 inside his garage, he was listening to a sensational story. The gentleman, who had recovered from the blow, explained that he was Sir Walter Wellerby, the well-known millionaire racing-motorist, and the boy Wally was his only son, now on holiday from Eton.



"Would you believe there could be a ruffian so cold-hearted as to make capital out of a father's affection?" demanded Sir Walter. "My life has been made miserable by a scoundrel called Felix Wolfgang!"

"What?" exclaimed Tiny.

"You know him? He has threatened to kidnap my son unless I pay him a million pounds! The police admit they are almost powerless, and the only thing they can suggest is that you take care of Wally until they can lay this fiend by the heels."

Tiny was thoughtful. "Well, Sir William," he muttered. "I will do my best to look after your son."



**MENACED BY THE MYSTIC.**—"The name is Wolfgang!" boomed the Indian's voice. At that moment Smutty's hands were seized from behind and the point of a knife pricked his chest.

The moment the millionaire had gone, however, Tiny looked at Smutty, and then at the rows of wondering faces regarding him from the taxi and lorry. "Well, this about puts the lid on our treat!" he remarked glumly.

"Why, mate?" demanded Smutty. "If you arst my advice you'll carry on wiv it. Dreas Wally up like one of these 'ere kids, and 'e'll be as safe as 'ouses."

Tiny sprang to his feet. "By Jove!" he exclaimed. "For once in a while your advice is quite sound, old lad! Here, sonny," he turned to Wally, "get out of those swell togs and pretend you're a cabby's orphan!"

Wally grinned. "I say, what fun!" he chuckled. Then his face fell. "I don't like leaving my old school muffer behind, though," he remarked, as he unwound several yards of brightly coloured scarf from his neck.

"I'll wear it for yer, mate!" chimed in a grubby-faced youngster known as Ginger. "I'd like to be a toff for a change!"

An hour or so later two merry car-loads of youthful fun and jollity were bowling along the main road towards Tidemouth Bay. Wally and Ginger had

been awarded the place of honour beside Tiny, who sat behind the steering-wheel.

"Gosh!" gasped the Eton boy. "This old bus is a scorcher! Can I take the wheel, Tiny?"

"I'm afraid not," smiled the Taxi 'Tec. "You might want to knock up the speed to a hundred m.p.h."

"You 'arf promised to let me drive 'er, Tiny," complained Ginger. "I told that old beggar I was goin' ter take the ME 2 down to the Fun City."

"You told whom?" cried Tiny.

"That ole beggar. 'E was a rummy cove!" chuckled Ginger. "'E's a ventriloquist, an' 'e kept us in fits!"

Tiny turned pale. What a fool he had been! The armless beggar was probably Felix Wolfgang, the Tiger Man, and he knew that they were going to spend the day at the Fun City!

### Smutty's Misfortune.

THE treat was such a howling success from the start that Tiny almost forgot his qualms after an hour or two of riotous fun at the vast Pleasure Ground in Tidemouth Bay. And young Wally Wellerby enjoyed himself as much as any of them.

Tiny was a great host; and Smutty provided much amusement by continually saying that he wanted to have his fortune told.

"I want ter 'ear that I'm going to get through six fortunes and marry the Queen o' Sheba!" he declared. "But p'raps I should only be told to beware of a tall, dark man!"

It was a true word spoken in jest. Not even Tiny's keen eyes

had noticed the two sinister-looking men who had been shadowing the party.

Suddenly Smutty stopped in front of a large, striped tent, which, according to the legend above the entrance, was the mysterious lair of "Rajah Sinji, the Indian Mystic," who offered to read the future for sixpence.

"'Ere! I'm going in to 'ear the worst!" proclaimed the jovial mechanic.

"Well, hurry up," laughed Tiny. "We're all going on the Scenic Railway now. Meet us at the other end!"

The clamorous party trailed off under Tiny's guidance, and Smutty, parting the curtains, peered into the mystic gloom of the tent.

"Come in," said a deep, sepulchral voice.

A dark-skinned man swathed in the robes of an Indian rajah was seated cross-legged on a pile of silken cushions. In a few moments he was studying Smutty's somewhat soiled palm and gazing into a crystal.

"You must beware of a tall, dark man," muttered the seer. "He has only one arm, and his name—I cannot read it distinctly."



"Ere!" stammered Smutty uneasily. "Wot's all this abah?"

"If you will permit yourself to be blindfolded," went on Rajah Sinji, "I will cast a spell on you and you will be able to see your enemy in a vision!"

Before Smutty could protest, a red silken scarf was bound securely round his eyes by somebody standing behind him.

"The name," boomed the voice of the mystic, "is Felix Wolfgang!"

Smutty leapt to his feet. But ere he could rip off the bandage his wrists were seized behind him in a vicious grip, and the sharp point of a knife pricked his chest.

"If you call out you are a dead man!" snarled the Rajah.

The next instant the scarf was torn from his eyes, and he found himself staring at Felix Wolfgang, who had cast aside his borrowed robes. Two ruffianly men were pinioning his arms behind his back.

The Tiger Man pressed the long, curving knife which he grasped in his single hand against the mechanic's breast. "Tell me which is Wally Wellerby among all those brats!" he hissed.

"Go ter blazes!" retorted Smutty fearlessly.

"Very well. I have a means of forcing you to tell," continued Wolfgang. "Gag him, Jake. Fix his ankles, too. We shall have to work quickly, or

Railway, he instantly grasped the significance of this mysterious journey.

"Drop him there!" rasped Wolfgang; and his confederates dumped the helpless mechanic on to the track at the bottom of a steep dip that was hidden from the eyes of the public.

"Now, you obstinate ass," hissed Wolfgang, stooping over him and wrenching off the gag, "will you tell me how to identify that young whelp?"

Smutty set his lips. "Garn! 'Op it!" he jeered.

"Do you know what you are doing?" asked the crook in a menacing tone. "You are sending Tiny and all the brats to their death! They will be coming in the next car—young Wellerby among them—and when it hits you they will all be shot off the edge to be smashed to fragments a hundred feet below! Now will you tell me—before it's too late!"

Smutty twisted in anguish on the rails, unable to make up his mind. Then suddenly he gasped out: "Orl right! You win, you law skunk! You'll know 'im by the pink scarf 'e's wearing!"

It cost him an effort to sacrifice poor Ginger in this way, but he reflected that the little Cockney would be less likely to suffer at Wolfgang's hands than Wally Wellerby.

Wolfgang grinned triumphantly, and was about to signal his men to remove Smutty from the rails when a chorus of wild, delighted shrieks rent the air,



GOING WITH A SWING.—As the swing-boat swooped towards the roundabout, Wolfgang launched himself from the roof and his single hand clutched at the edge of the boat.

someone may discover that fellow." He indicated the real rajah, whose unconscious form lay half-concealed among the cushions.

In a few moments Smutty was gagged and bound hand and foot. Then Wolfgang lifted a flap at the back of the tent, and his two villainous confederates picked up the helpless mechanic and carried him out into an enclosed space.

With Wolfgang leading, the little party speedily made its way towards the towering supports at the back of the Scenic Railway. The one-armed crook had evidently planned the coup in advance, for he flung open a door in the vast backcloth of the erection, revealing a flight of rough wooden steps.

"All clear!" he whispered, turning to the others. "I settled the man in charge."

When they eventually carried Smutty out through another low doorway on to the rails of the Scenic

and the wooden structure vibrated with the thunder of approaching wheels.

### The Man-Hunt.

LEAVING Smutty to enter the fortune-teller's tent, Tiny had steered his vociferous charges towards the turnstile of the Scenic Railway. "How many can we get in one car?" he asked the smiling attendant.

"Eleven, sir," said the man, and then suddenly stared at Tiny. "Say, aren't you Tom Hinton?"

"Why, if it isn't—" Tiny checked the name that rose to his lips. The man was none other than



Inspector Cassidy of Scotland Yard—in disguise. "What are you doing here?"

"We understand that Felix Wolfgang has been seen," replied the inspector in a low tone. "We suspect a raid on one of the pay-docks, and as this place takes the most cash, I'm just waiting!"

"He's after bigger game than that!" remarked Tiny. "Look here, Cassidy, it's lucky I met you. These kids want me to drive the car; can you be arranged?"

"Sure thing!" returned the disguised inspector; and, explaining the position to the driver of the next car due to leave, he ushered Tiny and eleven of his young charges into it.

The air rang with delighted yells as the car glided off and swooped up and down.

"Enjoying it, Wally?" Tiny shouted, turning to the boy at his side.

"Wally ain't 'ere," replied Ginger uncomfortably. "E said he didn't wanner come, so I changed places wiv him."

The news was so disturbing that Tiny hardly noticed the lightning swerves and descents of the wild ride. But as they whirled breathlessly to the crest of a mountainous rise, and saw an equally precipitous descent unrolling beneath them, Ginger gave a shriek of alarm—and clutched his wrist.

"Stop!" he yelled. "There's a bloke on the line!"

Tiny's heart missed a beat as he saw a motionless form lying in the cup of the valley immediately below them. He cast a frenzied glance on all sides to see if there was any possible chance of averting the catastrophe. His eyes caught the gleam of water.

It was the Water-Chute pool lying below them on one side of the Scenic Railway.

Realising that they would all probably be killed, anyway, he gave a violent wrench at the steering-wheel. In a flash the loaded car left the rails and shot into the air like a torpedo.

The next moment, with a sound like thunder, the water went up all round them in a blinding sheet; and everything was blotted out.

As he came to the surface Tiny was relieved to see other heads bobbing about him.

The car had, of course, disappeared, but already the pool was alive with craft, as various watermen pushed out the emergency boats to pick up the survivors.

When Tiny at length stood dripping on the bank amongst a crowd of wet but cheerful boys, he turned urgently to one of the rescuers. "How many?" he panted.

The man made a hasty count. "Ten," he replied.

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"Only one lost. That's poor little Ginger. I suppose we are lucky," muttered Tiny gloomily. "Tell them to stop the Scenic Railway at once. There's a boy on the lines!"

"No, there ain't, mate," said a voice at his elbow, and Smutty appeared. "That was me. Wolfgang tried to do me in, but I just bin released by one of the carpenters."

"Then where's Wally?" gasped Tiny.

At that critical moment a loud and indignant yell made everybody turn.

"No, yer don't! 'Op it, I tell yer! I ain't Wally Wallaby, nor Kenneth Kangaroo, neither!"

Tiny gave a gasp—and began running. A man who had joined in the rescue work in a motor-launch was struggling with young Ginger some distance away. He had grasped the boy's bright muffler, but Ginger, hastily twisting round, eluded him—for the man was handicapped by having only one arm!

"After him, everybody!" shouted Tiny. "That's the man who caused the smash!"

Wolfgang saw that the game was up and he took to his heels. In a flash the boys from the Taxi Drivers' Orphanage were in full cry after the escaping crook.

Wolfgang made for the thickest part of the pleasure ground, hoping to escape among the numerous side-shows. Tiny, however, rapidly overhauled him and stretched out a hand to seize his shoulder. But the crook twisted to one side and leapt straight into the saddle of a wooden horse rotating round a merry-go-round!

Tiny stumbled, and nearly fell; and by the time he had regained his balance the cunning crook had been whirled round to the other side. The Taxi Teo put on a burst of speed, and rounded the whirling just in time to prevent Wolfgang from leaping clear—and the crook was forced to remain on the horse and continue his circular career!

"Stop the machine!" roared Tiny, making his voice heard above the din of the mechanical music.

As the revolving animals slowed down, Ginger, who had come pelting up with the rest of "the pack," gave a rousing shout.

The crook was scrambling up among the supports, making rapid progress in spite of his armless sleeve, and in a few moments he had reached the tawdry wooden canopy.

"Treed!" muttered Tiny grimly. "We've got him now!"

But he had reckoned without Felix Wolfgang. The swings were situated near by, and one of the boats, worked to its maximum arc by two hearty youths, spun every now and then to within a few feet of the roof of the merry-go-round.

Just as Tiny was beginning to clamber up the supports, Wolfgang saw his chance. The moment that the boat was launched on its journey towards him, he flung himself from the roof and clutched out with his single powerful hand. A gasp of amazement went up from the crowd below as they saw the crook's perilous feat crowned with success. The next instant, hanging by one hand to the flying-boat, he sailed through the air above their heads, to drop lightly to the ground at the bottom of the boat's swing and sped away.

"Good heavens! the man is a wizard!" gasped Tiny. "After him, boys!"

Once more the pack was in full cry. Wolfgang twisted and turned past the side shows and at last dashed into the car-park, leapt aboard an empty car and started the engine.

With a shattering roar the car lurched forward and swung out through the gates of the car-park.

(Continued on page 32.)



**THE LATEST FLYING MACHINE** A Fascinating Chat about an Amazing New Invention

*Enter, the*

**ORNITHOPTERYX!**



**AEROPLANES DON'T REALLY FLY!** That is the Startling Statement of the Famous Sky Pilot who describes a Machine that really will, below, Boys.

THAT'S a big fellow coming over, mighty quiet too. You can't hear a sound; suppose he's got his engines switched off. All the same, where does he keep his airscrews? Can't see any at all myself, can you? It's too big for just one of those glider fellows, but it looks as if that's what he is. Wonder if he's coming down—not a bad sort of place for an ordinary 'plane—but no use for a glider, there's nowhere for *him* to jump off.

He *is* coming down! Can you see how his wings seem to be moving, there, now as he you can see the edge of the wing opening out just like feathers. Here, we'll stick tight, this looks like something new, with a vengeance!

There, he's down, on landing wheels all right, not much run either, but of course they all have brakes in their landing wheels now. Here's the owner, getting out, so far he looks like anyone else, nothing to worry about there! Looks as if he wants us as well, we'd better go and see what he wants.

"Hi, young fellows! Are you game for a new experience?"

"All depends on what it is, sir. Some of the new things don't always turn out as well after a bit! We're always willing to have a go, all the same."

"Oh, there's nothing dangerous in my new machine here, and I thought perhaps you'd care to come up for a flight."

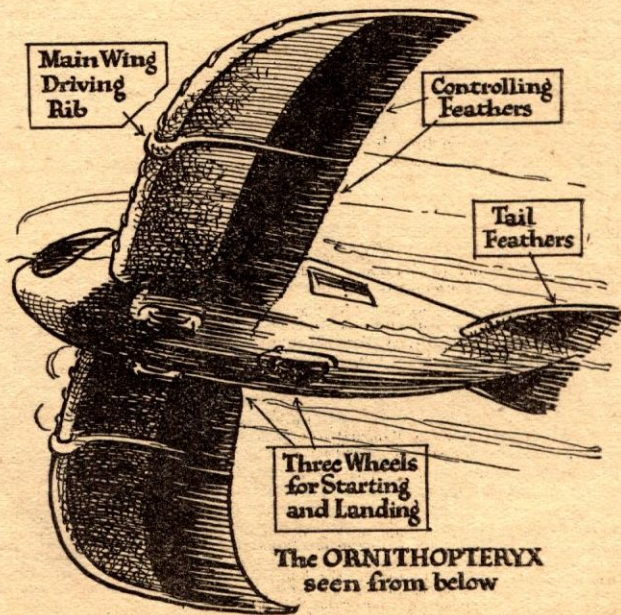
The two chums looked at each other; it couldn't be true! To be invited to go up in a 'plane, and that a super bus as this one clearly was—well! They certainly would, and were ready to take any chance. Without delay, they made for the machine.

"We thought perhaps you'd come down for petrol, sir, but there's no

pumps about here; nowhere nearer than Soundford, five miles cross country."

"Petrol? No, nasty smelly stuff; wouldn't do for me—nor oil, though I use a drop of lubricating oil here and there. We only use water, and not much of that, either. The fact is, we are actually the first Flying Machine. Nobody has ever flown before this machine, which we call the Ornithopteryx, came on the scene. She only took to her wings to-day, and you two chaps are the first passengers."

The boys climbed into the cabin, and a complete



**The ORNITHOPTERYX**  
seen from below



surprise awaited them. Here was no confined cabin space, but a wide covered deck, glass on three sides, and some kind of translucent framework. The roof was glass, and in the centre was a large round table. On this could be seen all the country round, something like a pictorial map. *Camera Obscura*, of course, but what a jolly good one.

A man was in the nose of the machine, and in front of him was a sort of keyboard, just like a piano. The other controls were much the same as those of an ordinary 'plane, but above the keyboard were rows of gauges with pointers. There was absolutely no sign of engines, no smell of oil.

The engineer pulled a small lever on either side of his perch, and with a throbbing which turned to a deep-throated hum, the great machine rolled smoothly forward at a good speed. On her carriage wheels, the pilot explained.

Then the wonderful things began to happen. The pointers on the dials had been showing increased pressures, and when they passed a red mark on the dials the engineer slowly drew forward another pair of levers on either side of the first two. Instantly the two main wings began a rhythmic up-and-down movement, just like a giant bird's wings.

The dial pointers were showing nearly maximum pressure, when our two young friends, looking out of one of the side windows, suddenly realised that they were nearly a hundred feet off the ground. What's more, they seemed to be making a fair speed.

The beating of the wings was still going on slowly, but quite silently. The pilot, who had been watching the altimeter and air-speed dials, gave an order to Akroyd, who then put the landing wheels lever to neutral. Then as the altimeter showed 350 feet, he put the wings to "maximum progress neutral." At this position, power was cut off.

"Now, I'll show you how to fly," said the pilot. Seating himself at the keyboard, he began to watch the dials keenly. If one pointer flickered back, he pressed the nearest key, if it advanced too far, he pressed a key on the opposite side. As the boys watched, he told them that the keys were in three

sections, each controlling the movement of a large sort of twisting feather in the wings. There were 44 keys, black ones, on the starboard side, to control the feathers on that wing. In the centre were 22 white keys controlling the tail feathers, while there were 44 more black keys to work the port side wing feathers.

"And that's all," said the pilot, "we just use the wing power to get up off the ground, and afterwards, by playing with the power of the winds which always blow, make them lift us as high as we like. We only need a wing pressure of 7 pounds to the square inch, and that's easy. The red mark on the dial shows 7, and when the pointers reach that, we know we're off the ground."

"What've we been wondering, sir, is how your wings are driven."

"Quite simply. We combine small quantities of hydrogen and oxygen together, and as you know, an electric spark brings about the union which converts them into water. The energy set up is the power which drives the beating wings. By the way, you're Soundford College chaps, aren't you?!"

"That's right, sir."

"What about landing on the playing fields?"

What a chance! The pilot turned the machine with his rudder wheel, and all the keys on the starboard side went down together, by themselves, automatic wing-tip control he explained.

As the College buildings hove in sight, they could see the crowds of fellows with faces upturned to watch this new machine, which swung round to drop into the big cricket field.

There was not the slightest thud or any other indication that the machine had touched ground, but the pilot showed them that every one of the pressure gauges indicated its maximum.

Can't you see our two fellows stepping it out of the cabin, with all the chaps around?

Our Science Expert will be here again next week in another ripping chat. Look out for an entirely new series of articles on how to make things.

## KIDNAPPERS OF FUN CITY

(Continued from page 30.)

"Look out!" warned Tiny, as he saw it racing straight for him; and he leapt to one side. The crowd parted as the car surged towards them and flashed out through the exit of the Fun City in a cloud of blue vapour.

"He's not free yet!" rapped out Tiny. "Where's the ME 2?" He raced for the space where he had parked his shabby old racing-cab—and then recoiled with a gasp. The ME 2 had vanished!

"Somebody's pinched the ole bus, Tiny!" cried Smutty. "Ere, 'op in the lorry."

Tiny did not need to be told twice. He sprang for the driving-seat, Smutty gave the crank-handle a couple of sharp turns and the engine thundered into life. The next moment the Taxi 'Tec was driving the lorry out through the exit, with Smutty mounted on the running-board.

As they reached the road they saw Wolfgang disappearing round a bend in his stolen car. Tiny's foot went down hard on the accelerator, and the lorry zoomed along in noisy pursuit.

Fortunately, they came out on to a narrow road winding in and out through the downs so that Wolfgang was unable to go all out. Suddenly Smutty gave a warning bellow. Round the wrong side of a bend a few hundred yards ahead flashed a familiar vehicle, skidded across towards the other bank, righted itself by a miracle and then came zigzagging at colossal speed towards the fleeing crook.

"Great heavens above!" gasped Tiny. "There'll be a smash! That's the ME 2!"

It was—and the reckless, red-cheeked driver was young Wally Wellerby!

He had just succeeded in knocking the speed of the cab up to ninety when he found himself rushing towards Wolfgang's car. The crook, half paralysed with fright, gave a frantic wrench at the steering-wheel to avert a head-on collision. His stolen car skidded into a ditch with a rending crash, and turned over, its wheels whirling in the air.

Tiny, acting with lightning decision, drew into the side of the road, to allow the speed-cab to flash past like a meteor, missing them by a hair's breadth. It drew up with a scream of brakes forty yards further on, and Wally, white-faced and panic-stricken, sprang down from the seat. He came running to the scene of the accident.

"I say, that's torn it!" he gasped, as he found Tiny and Smutty bending over the unconscious form of Felix Wolfgang. "I—I thought I'd slip away and have a trial spin in your bus. Have I killed him?"

"Unfortunately, no," was the Taxi 'Tec's astonishing answer. "But you've captured Felix Wolfgang, the Tiger Man, and that's something that I haven't been able to do myself!"

The Tiger Man safe under lock and key at last. But still the Taxi 'Tec goes on with his amazing sleuth work. More ripping yarns of Tiny Tom Hinton coming soon.



GIGANTIC NEW EPIC OF THE AIR! Mystery and Daring in the Clouds.

# The S.O.S. Squadron!

You'll Enjoy Every Word of This  
Wondrous Flying Yarn, Chums.  
By HAMILTON SMITH



**J**IMMY HART, smiling, fair-haired ace of the air, joined the S.O.S. Squadron, a bunch of daredevil fighters formed by Captain Vane to combat Zinberg in his dastardly plot to conquer the world. With the plotter was the Secret Council of

Five, rulers of the mystic land of Tibet, who were ready to launch against the white races the millions of yellow men they controlled.

Time and again Zinberg tried to smash the S.O.S. Squadron from the skies, but in vain. He at last succeeded in capturing Vane and Jimmy. Ere he could wreak his vengeance on them, however, the remainder of Vane's squadron appeared and bombed the plotter's base.

Vane and Jimmy escaped in one of Zinberg's 'planes, only to be involved in an air fight with some of Zinberg's scouts. Since the machine Vane had taken was only a single-seater, Jimmy travelled on the undercarriage, thus giving Vane a free hand.

Suddenly, during the fight, Wolfe swooped down, thundering wing-tip to wing-tip with Vane, and pointed frantically to Vane's undercarriage.

Vane's heart missed a beat. Something had happened to Jimmy.

## Smashing the Bombers.

**V**ANE'S first thought was to pull clear of the fight, so evening up, he gave his fighting scout open throttle, and thundered away towards the south.

Wolfe went with him, flying almost wing-tip to wing-tip, his eyes behind their goggles fixed on Vane's undercarriage. A burst of bullets from Zinberg's gun had shattered the struts of one side of the undercarriage, and Jimmy was hanging precariously on the broken, straining woodwork. Any moment it would give, and the young ace would hurtle to his death.

There was no time to make Vane understand Jimmy's terrible position. Wolfe would have to trust to luck—and to his own flying skill—to save the lad.

He pointed first to Jimmy and then to his own empty rear cockpit. In a fever of anxiety, he repeated the gesture, and the second time Vane nodded to indicate that he understood.

Wolfe pushed forward his control stick, and pressing on the rudder bar, swerved down under Vane's scout. Inch by inch he crept in towards the undercarriage, hoping that Vane would keep a straight course. And all the time he kept his eyes fixed on the shattered undercarriage, that seemed to be giving, cracking. . . .

Suddenly the single strut supporting Jimmy snapped. The lad dropped helplessly . . . dropped straight into the rear cockpit of Wolfe's 'plane as he roared below.

"Okay?" yelled Wolfe.

"Yes, thanks," replied Jimmy, through set teeth.

With a triumphant roar of high-powered engine, Wolfe pushed forward his control stick, then yanked it back and swooped up in front of Vane. By signs Wolfe made his leader understand what had happened, and a look of relief passed over Vane's face.

It was time then to see how the fight was going, but on looking round to scan the sky behind, Vane saw that the black machines of the S.O.S. Squadron were following, token that the remnant of Zinberg's machines had either been shot down or had drawn off.

So it was home then for the crater, and a few hours later the S.O.S. Squadron dropped down to land in its lonely eyrie amongst the hills. Vane was forced to make a pancake landing, and he partially crashed his 'plane, but was unhurt.

"We must evacuate this base without delay," said Vane, at the conference which he called amongst his pilots. "Now that Zinberg knows its location he will be here bombing at any hour. We will proceed to our emergency base on Franz Josef Land, in the Arctic Ocean, and commence clearing out of here right away. Get the machines and everything we can take loaded aboard the airship!"

Throughout the remainder of the day there was great activity in the camp. When dusk was deepening into night, the mighty airship, like some primeval monster, emerging from its lair, moved slowly from the vast cave which housed her.

Throughout the night, with her deck and cabin windows steel-shuttered to hide her lights, she hovered over her eyrie, climbing with the dawn to twenty-seven thousand feet.

In the great hangar in her hull, the pilots of the S.O.S. Squadron were standing to their fighting scouts. For Vane knew that if anything was certain in this world it was that Zinberg would come to bomb the base.

And come he did shortly after the red rim of the sun had swung up above the hills to drive the shadows out of the deep and rugged valleys.

It was Leyton, the navigation officer, standing at the great curved window of the control-room, with powerful glasses pressed to his eyes, who first spotted him.

"My hat!" he exclaimed to Vortz, who was adjusting one of the dashboard gauges. "He's bringing plenty of machines with him this time. There are three squadrons of ten machines each."

And he snatched up the telephone which connected with the hangar, to report to Vane.



"Very good, Leyton!" replied Vane, and laying down the receiver, he turned to his grim-faced pilots and ordered them to their cockpits.

"Concentrate on the bombers first," he said. "If we can attack before they've dropped their bombs, we'll blow them to pieces in the air!"

Swinging himself up into his own cockpit, he switched on. Next moment the hangar reverberated deafeningly to the thunder of his engine, the trap-door in the floor swung open, and sliding down the runway, the black monoplanes shot off into space.

Jimmy was next, and Wolfe and Kerdin came after him, followed by the remaining members of the Squadron, and at twenty-two thousand feet they fell into fighting formation.

Suddenly the watching pilots saw Vane's hand whip upwards. Next instant, control-sticks were whipped forward, and the S.O.S. Squadron went hurtling down towards Zinberg's three squadrons in a screaming nose dive.

At twelve thousand feet, gloved hands were clamped tightly round the triggers of synchronised guns, and, belching leaden death, the S.O.S. Squadron tore down on the big red bombers.

Wildly the great machines wheeled, seeking protection from their escorting scouts. But there was no protection to be found from that merciless attack! As the S.O.S. Squadron thundered through them, there came a deafening roar of high explosive, audible above the mighty thunder of the engines, and three of the bombers dissolved in lurid, blinding flame.

But the S.O.S. Squadron was through and going earthwards in a screaming nose-dive and it was the escorting scouts who took the full blast of that terrific explosion.

Whirled like leaves in the scorching eddies of the devastating concussion, some crashed into each other, and locked together, went plunging earthwards to their doom.

Others with wings, struts and flying wires torn and smashed in utter confusion went spinning to complete destruction on the rocky heights below.

Twelve scouts in all were lost in that first dreadful explosion. Before the wildly wheeling remnant of them could fall into any semblance of formation again, the S.O.S. Squadron had gone skywards in a thundering zoom, and with guns ablaze, was screaming down to finish off the fight.

Right through Zinberg's scouts and bombers went the black machines and again above the thunder of the engines came the deafening roar of high-explosive, as two more bombers blew up in mid-air with their cargo.

The pilots of the other bombers had the sense to release their bombs, and having done so, turned their noses back the way they had come and thundered out of the fight, leaving the shattered and reeling remnant of the escorting scouts to cover their retreat as best they could.

But the pilots of the scouts had something more urgent to do than cover the retreat of the bombers. So harried were they by the deadly, snarling guns of the black monoplanes that it became a case of every man for himself.

So those who could, pulled out of the fight, and wheeling towards the north, thundered away, leaving the slower bombers to look after themselves.

There were only four bombers left and everyone of them landed, buckling their undercarriages amongst the rocks and boulders of the hills.

It had been a swift and brilliant victory for the S.O.S. Squadron, and Vane fired the Verey signal ordering his pilots to return to the airship.

"I don't know whether Zinberg was with that

bunch, or not," he said grimly, when he and his men were once again aboard the airship, "but it's been an expensive raid for him. And now we're going to do a bit of bombing."

"Are we?" grinned Jimmy.

"Yes," nodded Vane. "On our way north to the Arctic Ocean we pass over his great submarine base at Kazim. We'll blow it to smithereens as a little acknowledgment of his visit of this morning."

### Out of the Clouds.

FLYING at a height of thirty thousand feet the giant airship drove northwards throughout the day and when the pilots were seated at dinner in the brilliantly lighted dining-room that night, Vane said:

"By Leyton's reckoning we should be over Zinberg's submarine base at dawn in the morning. For the last seven hours we have been flying through thick cloud and Leyton is of the opinion that the belt stretches beyond Kazim. If that is so we will be able to approach unobserved and attack before they can get to their anti-aircraft guns."

"We attack with the dawn, then?" grunted Wolfe.

"Yes," replied Vane. "I will take six machines on the raid and each will carry four twenty-five-pound bombs."

Jimmy and his fellow-pilots turned in early that night, for stirring work lay ahead.

The navigation officer's reckoning turned out to have been correct. When the great airship hovered high in the cloud belt at the hour of dawn, Wolfe went down in his monoplane and returned to report that Kazim lay less than three miles to the west.

"Then we'll get the job over without delay," said Vane, and a few minutes later his machine shot down the steel slipway out of the airship. The other raiders followed and in V-formation drove down through the swirling greyness.

At two thousand feet they came out of the cloud belt, and scanning the ground below, Jimmy saw two long, curving stone piers running out into the sea to form a big, horseshoe shaped harbour.

It was Zinberg's submarine base, and facing the sea stood serried rows of long, corrugated iron huts which were obviously workshops, store-rooms and the quarters of the personnel.

But what drew Jimmy's gaze were eight big-hulled submarines lying in the harbour against the further pier, and it was towards these submarines that Vane led the formation in a screaming dive.

At a height of less than two hundred feet the S.O.S. Squadron roared over the submarines and from each bomb-rack a twenty-five-pound high-explosive bomb went hurtling downwards.

Above the thunder of the engines came a long-drawn, reverberating roar. Twisted steel wreckage spewed high into the air together with a lurid sheet of flame, and a great spouting column of water.

Banking, the black machines came about, and as they roared low over the stricken and rapidly sinking submarines six more bombs went hurtling down to complete the work of destruction.

Circling, Vane led the formation over the roofs of the corrugated iron huts, and as though realising what was about to happen, men were rushing madly away from the buildings.

Each machine had two bombs left and now these went hurtling down into the midst of the huts, dissolving those that were hit in leaping sheets of blood-red flame and high-flung, burning debris.

But from the rearmost sheds of all ten red fighting scouts had been rushed at the first sign of the invaders,



These were already taking the air to fall into formation and come thundering towards Vane and his men.

Climbing swiftly, they soon had the advantage of height. But before they could whip forward their control sticks to thunder down on the S.O.S. Squadron, Vane had wheeled his formation and was roaring away inland, climbing as he went.

But the pilots of the red scouts were grimly determined that the raiders should not escape and they came thundering in pursuit, throttles open to the full in a desperate effort to catch Vane and his companions before they could reach the cover of the clouds.

But now the advantage of height lay with the S.O.S. Squadron, but their pursuers were hard on their tails. Then without warning, and with a sudden savage ferocity, Vane wheeled to the attack.

His pilots had been watching him, guessing what was coming, and as they wheeled in his wake, forward went their control sticks and hot flame from their blazing guns licked back past cockpit windshields as they thundered down on the red scouts.

Keeping formation, holding it grimly and relentlessly, they tore their way through the red scouts, then control sticks were yanked back and they went up and up towards the clouds in a wild, soaring zoom.

A roll on to even keel, then forward went the sticks again and above the thunder of high-powered engines came the vicious snarl of synchronised guns.

Already two of the red machines were spinning earthwards in flames and as the S.O.S. Squadron drove through them again, three were reeled out of the fight to fall away into the death spin.

But this time the S.O.S. Squadron did not come through unscathed, for one black-clad pilot suddenly crumpled up over his controls and as the control stick jerked forward of its own volition, his black monoplane went thundering earthwards, to crash to its doom with engine racing at full revolutions.

The odds were now even, for there were five red scouts left in the air and five black ones. But the red scouts were coming in at Vane and his comrades from every flank, their guns blazing death.

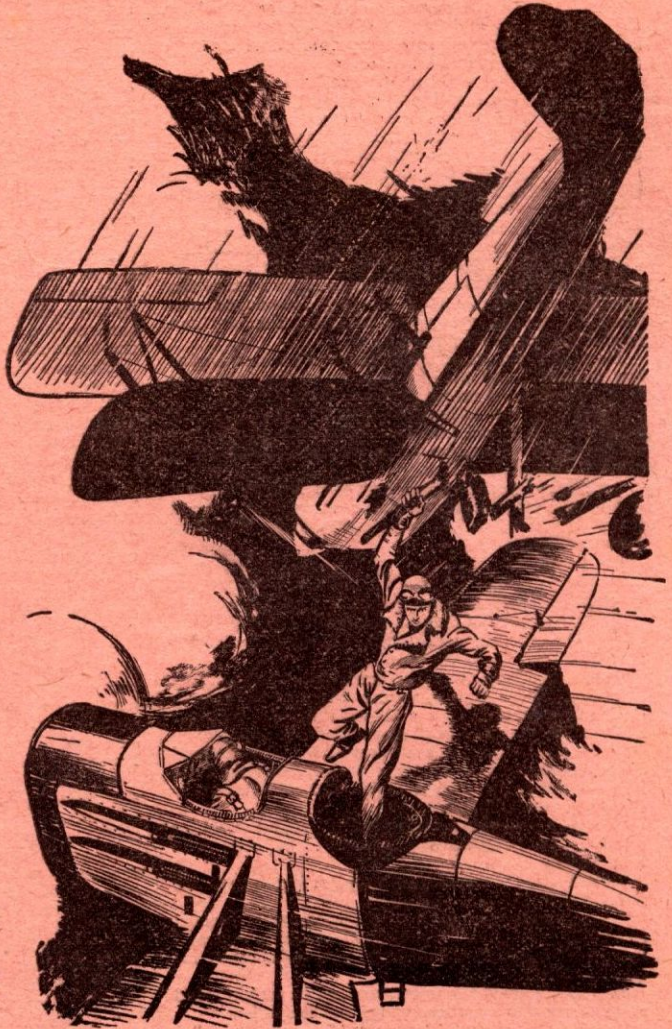
One of the red pilots, pulling a frenzied wing-turn in an effort to avoid Jimmy, laid his flank open to the boy. Jimmy didn't need offering such a chance twice, and as his foot moved on the rudder bar, he raked the red machine with bullets from tail plane to engine cowling.

With a wild scream the pilot leapt to his feet, clawing at his throat. Then he crashed forward a

limp and huddled heap across the controls while the scout went thundering eastwards in the death dive.

But in that same instant Jimmy's dashboard splintered and he felt a sudden, numbing pain in the shoulder.

The boy didn't have to look round to know what



A COCKPIT CATCH.—Wolfe swooped below Vane's plane. Suddenly the shattered strut supporting Jimmy broke away from the machine and the boy dropped—straight into Wolfe's plane.

had happened. An enemy machine had whirled into position on his tail, and as Jimmy yanked back his control stick to pull out of the range of fire in a steep climb, he suddenly tensed, a look of horror in his eyes.

For lying back from beneath his splintered dashboard was a tongue of blood-red flame. His machine was on fire!



In a flash Jimmy whipped the control stick across and kicked hard on the rudder bar, throwing the machine into an almost vertical sideslip.

The flames were gaining every instant, licking upwards and outwards and taking hold of the side of the cockpit as the machine dropped.

Choking with the smoke and fumes, scorched by the terrific heat and half-blinded, Jimmy stood up in the reeling cockpit in a desperate effort to keep control of the doomed machine.

At last, risking a quick glance down, he saw the ground less than fifty feet below and rushing up to meet him. For a long moment more he held the monoplane as she was, then whipping the stick to neutral, he evened up the rudder.

As the plane levelled up, Jimmy pulled back on the stick lifting the nose. For the split fraction of a second the doomed machine hung quivering, its engine dead. Next instant as its undercarriage wheels hit the ground in a pancake landing, Jimmy leapt out of the blazing, cockpit to fall heavily.

Simultaneously there came the hungry roar of the leaping, writhing flames as they enveloped the machine, and staggering to his feet, the boy ran lurching from the holocaust.

He was conscious of the thunder of an aero engine low overhead and above the roar of the flames he could hear the *rat-tat-tat* of a synchronised gun.

Glancing up as he ran he saw that one of the red scouts had followed him down and with gun ablaze was now diving on him as he ran from the burning wreckage of his machine.

As the red scout roared low over him something like a red hot iron seared his scalp, and he pitched forward on his face, engulfed in the black oblivion of unconsciousness.

### The Firing Party.

WHEN next Jimmy opened his eyes it was to find himself lying on the ground not far from the charred and burnt-out wreckage of his machine.

A swarthy-faced man in flying kit was standing looking down at him, as were a dozen or more men, clad in grey uniforms and with loaded revolver holsters slung on the belts about their waists.

Some little distance away stood a red scout and Jimmy assumed it belonged to the pilot who had got him on the scalp with a bullet and who was now standing watching him.

"So you've come round then?" said the fellow grimly. "Where have you and those dogs who were with you come from?"

"Find out!" retorted Jimmy, staggering to his feet.

"Yes, by thunder, and we will find out!" retorted the other savagely. "Sorge will question you and he's got a way of making people answer his questions."

He accompanied the words with a leer which boded no good for Jimmy, then turned to the soldiers.

"Bring him along to the camp!" he ordered. "I will fly there!"

With that he strode away towards his machine, leaving Jimmy to be brought by the soldiers to the camp which lay about two miles away.

Reaching the long rows of huts, half of which had been blown to pieces by the bombs of the S.O.S. Squadron, Jimmy was marched through a growling and menacing crowd of soldiers to a long, low hut which had escaped destruction during the bombing.

Lounging in the doorway was a sentry with rifle

and fixed bayonet, and as Jimmy marched up with his escort, the man jerked a dirty thumb in the direction of the interior of the hut.

"You're to take him straight in to Sorge," he said, "He's waiting with Schenk!"

Who Sorge and Schenk were, Jimmy did not know, but he assumed they were the two men in charge of the submarine base and in that assumption he was correct.

Marching him in through the doorway, Jimmy's escort took him along a stone-floored corridor and halted outside a closed door on which one of them knocked.

"Enter!" called a harsh voice, and in response to the command Jimmy was marched into the room.

It was a small, sparsely furnished room with a blanket-covered and paper-strewn table, a few wooden chairs, and a heavy iron safe. Seated at the table was a massive, bearded man, with cruel little eyes, which fixed themselves on Jimmy as the boy entered the room.

The other occupant of the room was the swarthy-featured pilot who had fired on Jimmy and the boy came to the conclusion that this was Schenk, whilst the bearded fellow must be Sorge.

Having taken careful stock of Jimmy, the bearded Sorge said harshly:

"What is your name?"

"You may as well realise now," retorted Jimmy, "that I am not going to answer any of your questions even if you talk all day!"

Fury blazed in the little eyes of Sorge, and his hands clenched on the table in front of him.

"Oh, so that's the way of it, is it?" he rasped.

"Well, perhaps there's not so many questions I want to ask you. I'm not a fool, and I know the raid this morning was carried out from Vane's airship. Eight submarines blown to pieces and half this camp, curse him. Well, you're going to pay for it!"

He rose to his feet.

"I'm going to have you shot by a firing party now," he said. "And in case you think Vane might turn up and start bombing again, let me tell you it won't save you if he does, because we have underground bomb-proof store-houses and dumps here, and I'm going to have you shot in one of those. Bring him along, men!"

In the midst of his escort, Jimmy was taken from the room, along the corridor, and out into the open, where Sorge led the way to an iron door let into the side of a mound.

Opening the door, Sorge switched on a light and descended a stone staircase to a vast underground cellar or storeroom.

Jimmy was thrust with his back against the wall, and stepping back, the soldiers stood in a line, their rifles grounded.

"I'll count three, men," Sorge informed them, "then give the word to fire. Do you understand?"

"Yes," growled the soldiers.

"All right," nodded Sorge. "Prepare to fire!"

Eight rifles were raised and levelled straight at Jimmy.

"One! Two!"

Staring fascinatedly at those unwavering rifle barrels, Jimmy knew that in two seconds now they would spurt lurid flame, and he would die.

"Three!"

One second to live! How can anything but a miracle save Jimmy from Death? Don't miss next week's thrilling episodes in this grand epic of the Air.





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This Week's Great Thriller.

## The YELLOW SERPENT

A Story of Peril and Drama in the  
Mysterious East.

### Li Hun Goes Out.

**H**ANDS in the pockets of his reffer jacket, Harry Kane picked his way between the crazy houses of the narrow Chinese street. It was stifflingly hot in Shanghai that night, the darkness like pitch, the garbage-littered street full of pitfalls . . . and shadows. There were sinister rustlings in the hot silence, sounds suggestive of padded feet tirelessly trailing him.

Twice he had stopped to listen—and had plodded on again.



Harry Kane, senior apprentice of the s.s. *Hainan*, had no nerves. Big, slow-moving, he was like a steam-roller—till he was reused; when that happened, a sixty-mile-an-hour tank had nothing on him. Back at school, somebody had nicknamed him Hurricane, and the name had stuck.

He was lost—right in the black heart of the native quarter—but that didn't worry him greatly. Sooner or later he would meet somebody to direct him to the Street of the Crimson Drops and Li Hun's shop. Meanwhile, there was nothing for it but to keep going.

• He turned a corner. A hanging lantern made a yellow splash in the darkness ahead, shedding a pale light over a creaking sign and the shuttered window beneath.

Hurricane paused a moment to decipher the Chinese writing on the sign. Then a slow grin spread over his face.

"Slap on the mark," he muttered. "Li Hun's joint! Real thoughtful of him to leave that lantern burning. Saved me—"

He broke off. The door beside him had opened. He had a glimpse in the shadows beyond of a fat, spectacled Chinaman, in a voluminous robe of glistening silk, beckoning him with a podgy hand. On a sudden impulse he stepped into the doorway, and the door closed with a soft slam.

Just for a moment he wondered if he had done the right thing. Those sinister rustlings . . . the trailing footfalls . . . there was mystery in the air. Then the Chinaman's voice came from the velvety blackness.

"You are honourable Mister Kane?"

"Yes."

"I am Li Hun. You were expected, honourable mister. Follow me."

A clammy hand closed on his wrist, drawing him gently forward. Hurricane offered no resistance, though he sensed that he was being drawn into a web of mystery. They appeared to be threading their way through the scattered junk of a shop; they passed through a curtained doorway, down a couple of steps, and Li Hun's arm swept aside another curtain.

Hurricane found himself looking into a room furnished after the Chinese fashion. Li Hun was staring at him with eager eyes—through the thick lenses of his horn-rimmed spectacles.

"Welcome to the unworthy abode of Li Hun, honourable mister," he said. "Hop Sing warned me to expect you on the night that the *Hainan* dropped anchor in the Soochow Creek. He wrote of the manner of your meeting. Hop Sing saved your life in an eating house in Cheefoo; in return, you undertook to deliver a certain package to unworthy self?"

Hurricane nodded. Li Hun's eyes brightened behind his glasses.

"You have it, excellency?"

Digging a hand into the inside pocket of his reefer jacket, Hurricane brought out a package wrapped in oiled silk and sealed with a blob of red wax. Li Hun's fat fingers trembled with eagerness as he took it and saw the unbroken seal.

"You have done well," he said with a fat chuckle. "Hop Sing made no mention of reward, and you asked for none. But twenty gold pieces is a little price to pay for the Yellow Serpent—"

"The—what?"

Li Hun shot a quick glance at him.

"You have the estimable virtue of a still tongue," he smiled. "Had you spoken one word of this thing you carried, you would never have reached the street of the Crimson Drops alive. The Yellow Serpent is indeed a dangerous possession, and the hatchet-men of the Serpent tongue are swift to strike. Their spies are everywhere . . ."

Hurricane thought of those trailing footfalls. Hatchet-men? He wondered. . . .

"Hop Sing knew he was marked," purred Li Hun. "You were but a boy . . . a Britisher . . . you gave your word. That was enough; you would not fail him. And—" Instinctively it seemed the fat merchant, thrusting the package away in his robes, lowered his voice. "—you have rendered the people of the West good service, honourable mister. The Yellow Serpent is evil; its purpose is, by fire and slaughter and worse, to make the Yellow Races supreme. In every country—in every city—the servants of the *tong* await the signal to strike. That signal will be given when Fu-Shek, Lord of the Serpent, recovers the golden emblem which would be an augury of success."

Hurricane drew a deep breath.

"And that's what I've been carrying about?" he jerked.

"Even so," Li Hun smiled behind his spectacles. "But have no fear, honourable mister. There are others, like myself, who think that only peace can bring greatness to China. To-night the Yellow Serpent will—"

And that was as far as he got. A flash of metal came skimming across the room, and Hurricane snatched at his arm as the knife sliced past. Then in a moment the young Britisher changed from a rather stolid youth to a leaping fury that was like a hurricane unleashed. He had seen a slight bulge in the curtain draping the wall, and he leapt at it with arms widespread.

He got a grip of a man's writhing body and, even as a knife slashed at him, heaved with all his might. There was a sound of rending fabric, and down came the curtain, the man a prisoner in its heavy folds.

But there Hurricane's success ended. He saw a door opening into a passage. Yellow-robed Chinks were leaping from it. Steel flashed, and Li Hun was shouting shrilly.

"The hatchet-men of the Serpent Tong!"

As he yelled, the men surged into the room, carrying Hurricane backward in their rush. He drove at a yellow chin, rocking a man back among those behind. Another Chink drove a knife at him, and he sidestepped swiftly. . . .

Padding footfalls! Sinister, creeping shadows! He understood now. He had been shadowed to Li Hun's house. The hatchet-men had come for the Yellow Serpent, and if they got it—it meant war!

He slammed another punch to an evil yellow face—shot a swift glance at Li Hun to see how he was faring—saw him swing a heavy bronze ornament and hurl it at the hanging lantern.

There was a crash . . . hot glass rained round him . . . darkness . . . and a savage rush that bore him off his feet.

He went down fighting. Something heavy descended on his head, and a million whirling stars shot out of darkness. Far away, it seemed, he heard a thin scream from Li Hun—like that of a rabbit with a weasel at its throat. Then . . . the silence and blackness of unconsciousness.



### The Black Junk.

**H**URRICANE came round, with a pain in his head as if someone were at work there with a pneumatic drill. It was a few minutes before he roused himself sufficiently to open his eyes and to look around.

Darkness met his gaze—black, impenetrable darkness. Memory began to work, and he recalled the fight in Li Hun's room. What had happened



**THE KILLER COLLARED.**—Hurricane gripped the bulge in the curtain and heaved with all his might. The curtain was ripped down and the man enveloped in its folds.

since? For a moment he lay there, ears strained to catch the slightest sound. He heard nothing, and he struggled to sit up, groping in his pocket for matches.

He could think now. Obviously the servants of Fu-Shek had come for the Yellow Serpent. They hadn't even taken the trouble to stick a knife into him. But—Li Hun?

Hurricane's fingers trembled slightly as he scraped a match along the box. The light flared weakly, flinging grotesque, dancing shadows on the curtain-hung walls. Rising to his knees, he surveyed the floor, half dreading to see the flabby corpse of Li Hun spreadeagled there. But, except for the smashed furniture and a sticky, ominous stain on a tiger-skin rug, there was no sign of the battle that had raged there. No sign of Li Hun . . . or Fu-Shek's hatchet-men . . . or—

The match burned to his fingers, went out, and he struck another. That, too, he dropped to the floor, and then, as the flame leapt up with a dying flicker, he caught a glimpse of something yellow and shining among the tangled fur of the rug.

Breathlessly he struck a third match and stooped to retrieve that shining, yellow thing.

A gasp broke from him.

It was a writhing serpent fashioned in gold, its eyes rubies that glistened like blood in the light of the match—that seemed to cast a sinister, deadly spell over him!

His thoughts raced. The Yellow Serpent! The symbol that was to spread death! And his now! He wondered how the hatchet-men had come to overlook it. Perhaps, he reasoned, they had come for Li Hun, not knowing he had received the Serpent from Hop Sing. Perhaps . . .

A sudden sound cut into his thoughts. The stealthy opening of a door . . . shuffling footfalls . . . the mutter of high-pitched voices. . . The hatchet-men of the tong had come back—for the Serpent!

There was no time for flight. In that curtain-hung room he could see no door except that by which the tong-men were entering. The match went out, and thrusting the serpent into his pocket, he leapt silently for the nearest gap in the hangings and wriggled behind them. As he did so, there was a click, the wall seemed to swing away behind him, and he stumbled into what he guessed was some sort of a cupboard. The door closed silently again, and then just on a level with his eyes showed a small circle of light.

A spy-hole! In a moment he had his eye glued to it. Four lean, wiry Chinks had filed into the room; two of them had lanterns, a third, he noted with a grim smile, had a discoloured bruise on his jaw. They were searching the room, questing here and there like bloodhounds, lifting rugs and moving furniture.

One of them tore down the curtain behind which Hurricane had taken refuge, but evidently the cupboard was indistinguishable from the surrounding wall, for the man did not investigate further.

"The foreign devil has escaped," snarled one. "Mayhap as Li Hun says he had the Serpent and has taken it away."

Another voice cut in.

"It is not here. Back to our lord master with the news. He will slay Li Hun by slow torture and send the killers on the foreign devil's trail."

Hurricane's jaw set hard. So that was it! Put the killers on his track, hand over Li Hun to the torturers! Not if he knew it! Besides, there was Fu-Shek and the Serpent tong menacing the peace of the world. If he could scotch their evil schemes, he would be doing the world a service—to say nothing of squaring his own account with the tong.

And there was a chance. A slim chance! But Hurricane was used to taking slim chances.

The hatchet-men were leaving the room—were going to acquaint Fu-Shek with the news of his escape. If he followed them. . .

With Hurricane, to think was to act. Even as the last of the thugs left the room he was groping



for the fastening of the door. It was a spring catch, and the door flew open as he depressed it. Then on tip-toe he crept after the killers, guided by the swinging lantern that was receding along a low passage.

Ahead, a door opened, and the light vanished. A minute later Hurricane in his turn reached the door, silently raised the latch and found himself in the street. Thirty yards on was a closed car, the slam of a door telling him that the Chinks were inside. A self-starter whirred; the engine—a powerful six—purred silkily; and, as the car started to move, Hurricane flung himself forward recklessly, grabbed the spare wheel and hauled himself to a precarious seat half-inside it and half across the bumpers.

The car gathered speed, shooting down narrow, twisting streets with an entire disregard of human life—bumping and swaying in the deep-rutted ways so that it was only with the utmost difficulty that Hurricane retained his perch.

They left the town behind, and then Hurricane saw the dark gleam of water. They were running on to a wooden wharf, and the squeal of suddenly applied brakes warned him that they had reached their destination.

Like lightning he dropped to the ground and ducked out of sight behind a pile of cases.

It was not so dark now. Stars glittered through a wide rift in the clouds, and their light showed him a string of *sampan*s moored beside the wharf. The four men who had searched Li Hun's room were piling into one of them; a fifth man remained with the car.

The *sampan* pushed off from the bank.

Hurricane thought fast. At all costs he had to stick on the trail of the hatchet-men. There was a *sampan* there for the taking. The difficulty was the man with the car who, at the first sight of him, would certainly raise a warning yell.

But that did not remain a trouble for long.

The creak of a baulk of timber was the first—and last—warning the Chink had of Hurricane's proximity. Then a pair of powerful hands clamped on his neck and tightened like a vice. A gurgle was the only sound he made before his limp body was lowered gently to the ground.

Hurricane wasted no time. The *sampan* was out of sight, though the splash of its oar was still audible across the water. Quickly the British lad lowered himself into another boat, cut the painter and with a push sent it floating like a shadow into the stream.

Lying flat along it, he propelled it without a sound towards a cluster of lights which marked the position of a vessel in mid-stream. The lights showed only for an instant, but now Hurricane was near enough to make out the square hull and slatted sails of a black junk.

He thrilled. There was something sinister in its appearance. It would be, he knew, crowded with servants of the Serpent tong—potential slayers to a man! The chances were that they would see the *sampan*.

He rolled over the side and dropped into the water without a splash. Then with silent, leisurely strokes he drifted down upon the junk. A trailing rope brushed his arm, and he clung to it—till the hubbub caused by the return of the hatchet-men had subsided.

Then cautiously he swarmed up the rope. As he scrambled over the rail a man loomed up beside him, opening his mouth for a yell. Flush

to the mouth Hurricane hit him and knocked him backwards over the side. He was unconscious before he struck the water with hardly a splash.

Hurricane wriggled beneath a sheet of matting. Ten minutes later the junk was on its way upstream—and Hurricane was going into the biggest peril of his life!

### Temple of Whispers.

**H**URRICANE looked out from beneath the stinking folds of the matting. It was some hours later, and the junk had dropped anchor in a curve of the river. A great moon hung like a yellow cheese in the sky and flung a misty radiance over the sluggish stream and the low river-bank.

Its light showed Hurricane a cluster of men amidships. They were lowering a shapeless bundle down the side of the junk into a *sampan* alongside.

"Li Hun," he muttered. "Looks as if they're taking him along to see Fu-shek—and that means I'm going, too."

During the uncomfortable hours he had spent beneath the matting Hurricane had made his plans. He had a debt to settle with Fu-shek and his Serpent tong; he had to rescue Li Hun, who had seemed a decent sort of stick for a Chink—and Hurricane, once started upon a course of action, had a way of seeing it through to the bitter end.

Crouching there, he watched while half-a-dozen men dropped overside—waited a minute longer till the *sampan*, with two men working the sweeps, was on its way to the bank—and then silently lowered himself into the river. He was taking a big risk. A single ripple might betray him, and there were a hundred feet of open, moonlit water between him and the bank.

But he dived deep, swimming underwater like a fish and allowing the current to carry him downstream. With bursting lungs he came to the surface, gulped down a single mouthful of air, and dived again. Twice more, he rose to the surface, each time expecting to hear the crash of rifles on the junk. But the silence was unbroken, and now he was a hundred yards astern and halfway to the bank.

The *sampan* was already unloading its cargo of men, two of them carrying the limp, shapeless bundle between them.

They had melted into the moon-mist by the time Hurricane gained the bank, some two hundred yards downstream.

Bent double, he waded through the reeds, scrambled over an embankment and rolled down the other side into a swampy paddy-field, after that things didn't look too good. He was wallowing knee deep in slime, and it was only after he had floundered through the mud for a solid hour that he found a raised track.

"If this isn't the way the beggars went, I'm sunk," he muttered.

He trudged on, his sodden clothes clinging clammy to his limbs, paddy-field stretching endlessly on either hand. Half-an-hour later he saw the smudgy outline of hills ahead—and then, suddenly, the sweeping roofs of a pagoda showing black against the moonlit sky.

His pulses quickened. Was this the headquarters of the Serpent tong? Was it from this place that War would leap out upon the world? Was it here that Li Hun had been brought?



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### PERIL LAGOON,

A Gripping  
Yarn of the  
South Seas.



With the caution of a scouting redskin he started to climb a winding track. The temple loomed above him, dark and silent. Now he was near enough to see that there were ragged holes in the shining roofs—that the courtyard in front was choked with a rank growth of weeds.

A ruin—with a reputation of being haunted, perhaps! A fitting place for the clandestine meetings of the Serpent tong! He paused—went on again—started to climb wide, broken steps, choosing a path where the shadows lay like pools of ink.

The doors were open, hanging crookedly on broken hinges. Inside all was dark, save for one broad beam of moonlight that slanted across a squatting, pot-bellied idol at the farther end of the great hall into which he looked. Just for a moment Hurricane had a feeling that unseen eyes were watching him—felt the short hairs rising in the nape of his neck. Then he shook himself angrily.

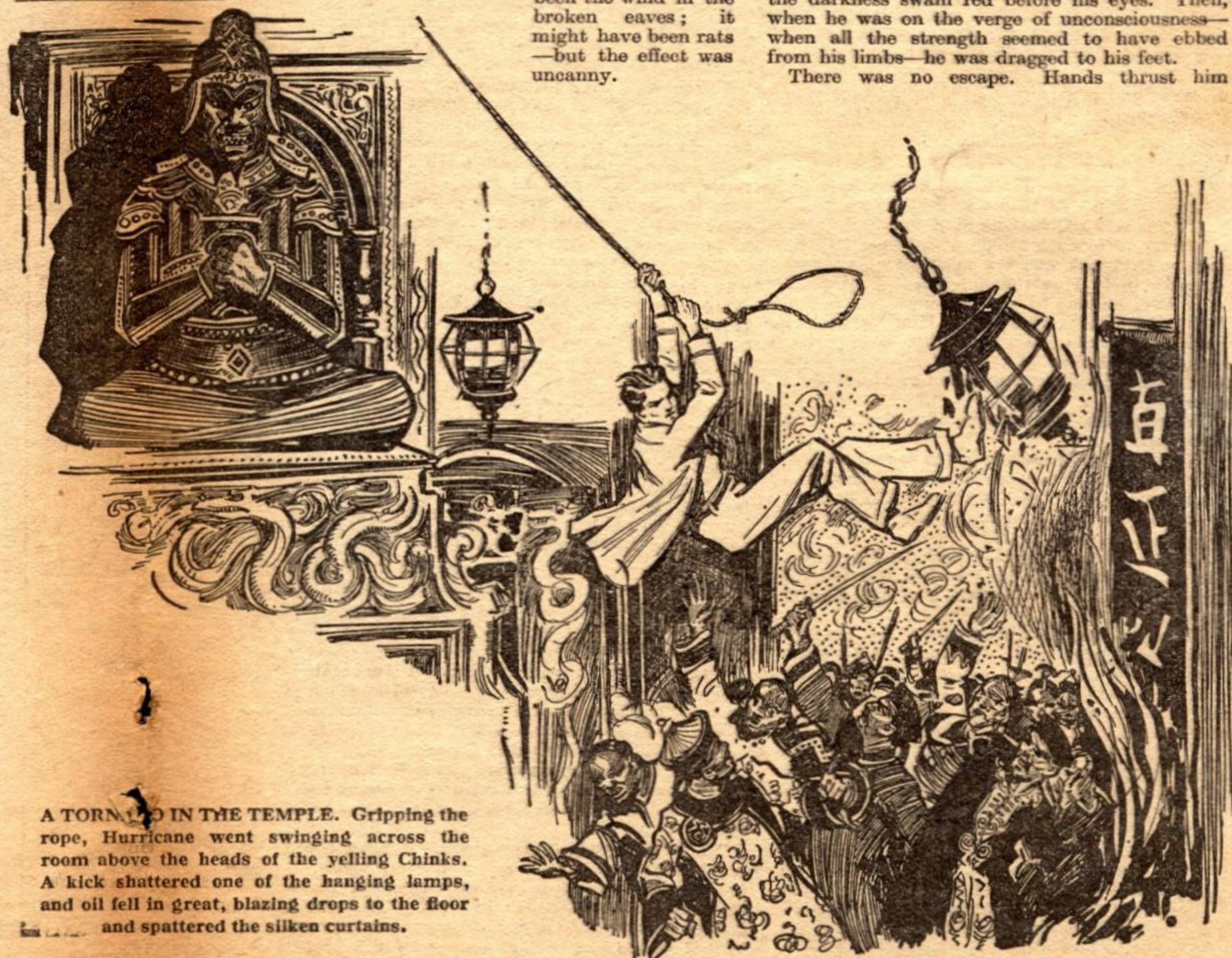
He stepped into the dark maw of the temple, treading softly across a carpet of dust. The uneasy feeling returned. The darkness was full of little whispers and sinister rustlings. It might have been the wind in the broken eaves; it might have been rats—but the effect was uncanny.

He went on again, jaw outthrust doggedly. Madness was in Hurricane's blood. More whispers . . . more rustlings. Something swooped across his face, brushing his cheek with outstretched wing . . . a bat. He laughed softly, and the laugh was flung back at him in a thousand whispering echoes.

He halted. What was his next move? He glanced at the idol, with the shaft of moonlight now touching its face . . . leering, horrible . . .

And then suddenly the future was settled for him. There were more rustlings—tangible sounds this time. Padding footfalls on the dusty floor! He glimpsed dark figures leaping from some black recess behind the idol—more to left and right, and still others behind him. He realised that he had walked into a trap, and then he was hammering at the shadowy shapes that were closing in upon him from every side.

It was a hopeless scrap, however. Hands grabbed him, dragged him down, and the fight continued on the floor, with a dozen slim, sinewy Chinks piling on top of him. It ended when, long nails tearing his flesh, a pair of hands fastened on his throat, tightening till the darkness swam red before his eyes. Then, when he was on the verge of unconsciousness—when all the strength seemed to have ebbed from his limbs—he was dragged to his feet. There was no escape. Hands thrust him



A TORN UP IN THE TEMPLE. Gripping the rope, Hurricane went swinging across the room above the heads of the yelling Chinks. A kick shattered one of the hanging lamps, and oil fell in great, blazing drops to the floor and spattered the silken curtains.



across the temple . . . down broken steps where the pungent reek of burning joss-sticks assailed his nostrils . . . along a passage . . . and a curtain at its end was dragged aside.

The sudden blaze of light dazzled him. It was a space of seconds before he saw that he was in a vast underground temple, lit by swinging, many-hued lanterns. Rich, silken hangings, embroidered with twining, yellow serpents, covered the walls, and at the farther end, towering above a mosaic pavement, was a huge and grinning idol. Round its neck was twined a lifelike golden serpent!

Hurricane's jaw hardened. This was the home of the Yellow Serpent without a doubt, and—

He was being propelled towards the idol. A man in a gorgeous robe of richest Chi-fu silk was kneeling on the mosaic pavement in front of it. One of Hurricane's captors spoke in a high, flute-like voice.

"We found the foreign devil, O lord Fu-Shek—" he began.

Fu-Shek! Hurricane gulped. He'd found the lair of the tong all right, but—he was like a rabbit that has strayed into a wolf's den. Not much hope of getting out. Fu-Shek was rising from his knees. He was fat and round, and the loose silken, serpent-patterned robe gave him an added bulk. He turned slowly and—

Hurricane found himself looking into the spectacled eyes of Li Hun!

### Deadly Serpent.

FOR half a minute Hurricane stared in utter stupefaction. Li Hun was Fu-Shek, Lord of the Serpent! Questions went racing through his brain. Into what tangle of intrigue had he blundered? What was the meaning of all that mummery in Li Hun's shop? What deep game was Li Hun playing?

Behind the thick glasses, Li Hun's eyes had dwindled to specks. His flabby lips were parted in a snarling display of teeth. Then in a high-pitched voice he flung a question at Hurricane's captors.

"Who is this dog of a foreign devil?" he rapped out.

"We found him prowling in the sacred temple, O lord Fu-Shek," one of the Chinks answered with a deep bow. "He is a spy. We brought him hither that my lord might tear the veil of deceit from his black heart."

Li Hun switched his gaze back to Hurricane. With his blazing eyes, he was less like the fat Chinese merchant of the Street of the Scarlet Drops.

"Who are ye, foreign devil?" he snarled. "Speak ere I have your lying tongue torn out."

Hurricane's thoughts raced. Li Hun—or Fu-Shek, or whoever he was—hadn't recognised him. Perhaps it was because of the mud from the paddy-fields that caked him from head to foot. That meant a chance—even though the Yellow Serpent in his pocket seemed to be burning like a thing of flame. In a flash his agile brain had settled on a line of action. Bluff—and he might even yet win a way out of the trap.

"My name's Smith," he bluffed. "Second mate of the—s.s. *Tientsin*. Got nabbed by river pirates—escaped—and lost myself in the paddy-fields. Found this place by accident—and—and I'll be mighty grateful if you'll put me on the road to Shanghai."

Li Hun's gimlet-like eyes bored into him, as if seeking to know whether he spoke the truth. But Hurricane stood their scrutiny well. At length Li Hun uttered a low laugh.

"The foreign devil's words have the savour of probability. Yet it is a foolish fly that ventures into the spider's web and hopes to escape with its life." His voice hardened as he turned to Hurricane's captors. "Hold him fast. Perhaps he may yet be of use to us."

He spoke rapidly in a Chinese dialect, and, despite a working knowledge of many Chinese tongues gleaned during two years' voyaging along the China coast, Hurricane could not follow that rapid flow of speech. Only here and there he caught a reference to the Yellow Serpent and some prisoner other than himself.

Two of the Chinks bowed themselves out of the room. Li Hun took a seat in a high-backed, gilded chair to the left of the idol and leaned back, with finger-tips joined and a bland smile on his rotund face. There was something in that smile which sent an icy shiver down Hurricane's spine.

And then came the third surprise.

A curtain was thrust aside. In the doorway behind it the two Chinks reappeared dragging a prisoner, whose wrists were roped behind his back.

Hurricane barely managed to stifle a gasp at the sight of him. His bedraggled robes were those of a Chinaman—the same glistening silk that Li Hun had worn when Hurricane had visited him in his shop. But the face above—round and chubby as Li Hun's had been—was that of a red-haired Britisher; and as the man was thrust into the room, Hurricane saw that his features were streaked with make-up.

Hurricane's bewildered brain raced again. This was obviously the man he had met in Li Hun's shop. A Britisher in disguise! But—why? It was a bigger mystery than ever. He realised however, that he was floundering in deep waters; a false move now would land him in the biggest trouble of his life.

So not a flicker of recognition showed in his blue eyes. And the other, after a momentary arching of his pencilled eyebrows, gave no hint that they had met before.

"Hearken, foreign devil," Li Hun leaned forward from his gilded chair, his spectacled gaze on the red-haired prisoner. "Ye still refuse to say what has become of the Yellow Serpent?"

"I've told you." The Britisher laughed defiantly. "It's in the hands of the British Consulate by now. One of my countrymen took it—he that carried it from Hop Sing. What's more, the authorities know of this place."

"It is a lie," hissed Li Hun. "My hatchet-men were watching the house. None could escape. Hark ye, foreign devil! I had it in mind to put ye to the torture—"

Redhead's eyes flashed defiance.

"You can do your worst, you yellow hound," he snapped. "You won't get a word out of me."

Li Hun's smooth features wrinkled into an evil smile.

"I believe you, foreign devil. I have heard it said that men of your race will give themselves to death rather than betray their country. But—the gods have smiled upon me. They have delivered into my hands one of your countrymen. Would ye see him suffer in your stead? Would



ye see him sacrificed to the Yellow Serpent when a word will save him?"

Redhead said nothing. Hurricane flashed a grinning glance in his direction.

"Tell the yellow blighter to go and boil his ugly head," he advised. "I'm not scared—"  
"We shall see," hissed Li Hun.

He issued a stream of rapid orders. Hurricane's arms were twisted behind his back, and his wrists secured with a silken cord. One of the Chinks dropped a looped rope over his shoulders and jerked it tight; and Hurricane saw that the rope passed over a pulley fixed in the ceiling. The next moment, he was in the air. He was drawn up and up till he was dangling a yard in front of the idol and on a level with its gaping, grinning mouth.

Had his hands been free, he could have touched the golden serpent coiled like a necklace around its thick throat. As it was, the play of light from the swinging lanterns upon its golden scales fascinated him. He could almost have sworn that it was alive. . .

Li Hun was speaking.

"A word will save him. Keep silent, and in one minute the Yellow Death strikes."

Hurricane glanced down. It was unreal, grotesque. He could imagine the commotion there would be if Li Hun realised the token was in his pocket. But that would only precipitate their doom.

Li Hun was ticking off the seconds, his face a smiling mask. Redhead was protesting, vainly, hopelessly.

The minute passed, and Li Hun's smile changed to a snarl of baffled fury. With a bitter oath, he heaved himself out of his chair, snatched up a padded stick and with it struck a near-by gong.

The deep, clanging tones reverberated through the temple, and—Hurricane caught his breath in a sibilant hiss.

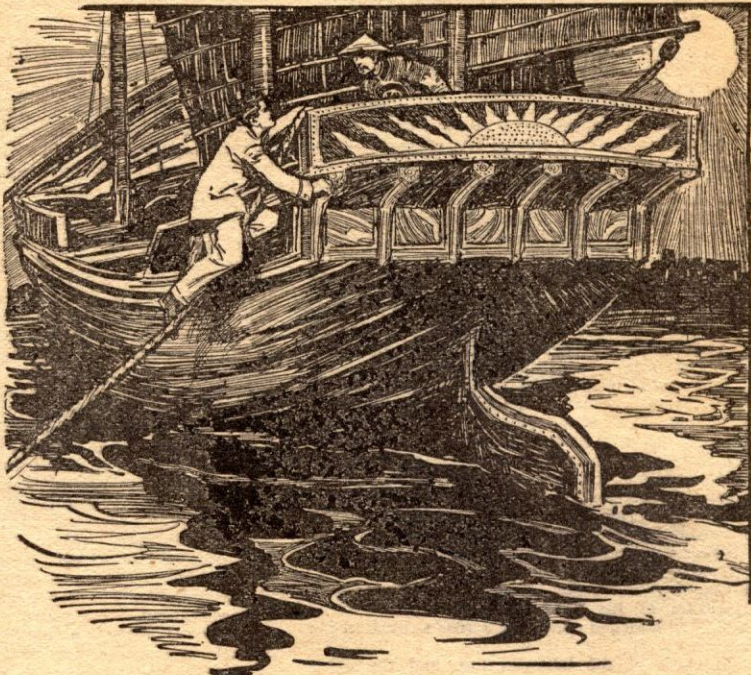
The golden serpent around the idol's neck was stirring! It was alive! A flashing shiver of light rippled over its golden scales. A flat, triangular head, with poison-laden jaws agape, reared up, and cold, deadly eyes, glittering like diamonds, regarded Hurricane for a moment.

Then its head went higher . . . nearer . . . and was jerked back for the death stroke!

## A Hurricane Strikes Li Hun.

BEADS of clammy sweat broke out on Hurricane's forehead. For a split second—that, nevertheless, seemed an age—he was numbed with horror, fascinated by the deadly glare of those cold eyes.

Dangling there, it seemed he hadn' a chance.



ON THE ALERT.—Cautiously Hurricane swarmed up the rope. As he scrambled over the rail a man loomed up beside him.

He saw the flickering, forked tongue . . . gleaming fangs, a touch of which would mean death . . . and he fought against the rising horror, tugging at his roped wrists with savage desperation.

The silken cord was strong. But Hurricane had been very wide awake when the knots were tied—had held his wrists stiffly apart, so that now, as he worked them together, the cord was slack.

A powerful jerk, and his wrists were loose. Then, even as the serpent made its strike, his right hand went to meet it. A slip . . . a fraction of an inch to right or left . . . would have meant disaster . . . death. But unerringly his fingers fastened on the slim body an inch below that deadly head. He tightened his grip like a vice, holding the squirming reptile from him at arm's length.

From the temple below came an amazed shout that quickly changed to a bellow of fury.

Spinning on the rope, Hurricane looked down upon the infuriated Chinks. They were bunched in the middle of the floor, howling like a pack of wolves. He saw Li Hun among them . . . caught the gleam of naked steel . . . knives



lifting. Then . . . "A present for you!" he shouted—and flung the squirming serpent among them.

There was a stampede among the followers of the Yellow Serpent as those writhing yellow coils pitched down upon them. A brazier went over with a crash, spilling red-hot coals in every direction; Li Hun was bowled over like a skittle with three of his men sprawling on top of him; a terror-stricken scream rang high above the din.

But Hurricane was not watching. He realised that here was a chance—and he was quick to take it. Reaching up with one arm, he caught the rope and set himself swinging like a pendulum. His feet brushed the idol's shoulder, slipped off . . . back and scraped it again. This time he caught at the carved lobe of an ear, clung tight and heaved himself erect. Standing on that lofty perch, he found it easy to slip the noose from his shoulders.

Then he was busy again. Gripping the rope, he went swinging across the room. A kick shattered one of the hanging lamps, and oil fell in great blazing drops to the carpeted floor and spattered the silken curtain hangings. Then he had crashed back against the idol with a force that sent a jarring pain through his shoulder.

The immense image swayed on its base and began to topple, slowly and majestically.

The sight of it added to the bedlam below. Terror was let loose . . . terror of fire that was licking up the wall-hangings . . . of the serpent at large on the floor . . . of the toppling god. There was a frantic stampede for the door, and in the midst of it Hurricane loosed his grip of the rope and dropped from the roof.

He landed full upon a man's shoulders, smashing him to the ground with the weight of his leap.

Hurricane was up in an instant; the Chink lay where he had fallen. Only pausing to snatch up a dropped knife, the young Britisher sprang to the side of his red-headed countryman, who had been knocked sprawling across a divan in the rush.

A slash of the knife, a tug, and the other Britisher was on his feet, coughing in the swirling clouds of acrid smoke.

"We've got to get out of this," panted Hurricane. "Come along!" And they sprang towards the frantic mob milling round the door.

A furious figure blocked their way, gun in hand. It was Li Hun. Hurricane lashed at his jaw and wheeled sideways as the weapon went off. Another punch sent the fat Chink crashing to the floor, and as he sprawled there, Hurricane caught the gleam of moving gold beside him.

The Yellow Serpent!

They heard Li Hun's thin scream as they leapt for the doorway. Then they were fighting their way up steps among a mob of Chinks who were too panic-stricken to heed who they were.

They came into the Temple of Whispers, emerged into the grey light of dawn, only pulling themselves to a halt when they gained the cover of a clump of twisted trees, a hundred yards away.

As they checked, there was a dull, muffled crash behind them. They whirled round, the ground seeming to rock beneath their feet. They saw the Temple of Whispers dissolve in a sheet of orange flame and a spreading mushroom of black smoke and debris.

Hurricane gave a breathless laugh.

"Guess that's the end of the Yellow Serpent," he said, swinging round upon Redhead. "And now do you mind telling me what it all means?"

\* \* \* \* \*

"YES, I reckoned you might want to know that," nodded Redhead. "You've rumbled, I suppose, it was I you met in Li Hun's shop. It's a bit of a tangle, so I suppose I'd better start at the beginning. My name's Corrigan, and I'm in the British Secret Service."

A glimmer of understanding came to Hurricane. "You were out to smash the Yellow Serpent *tong*?" he questioned.

"I was," nodded Corrigan. "But it seems you had to do the job for me. Anyhow, I was on the track of the Serpent emblem. I knew a fellow named Hop Sing had it, but when we arrested him in Cheefoo, we found he'd slipped it to somebody else."

"Me."

"Yes. And you were about the last person we should suspect of being the emissary of the Yellow Serpent. Hop Sing knew that. All we got out of him was a vague reference to Li Hun. Well, to cut a long yarn short, I paid Li Hun a visit and made him squeal good and hard. It was too late then to get you aboard the *Hainan*; Li Hun was expecting you along any minute. I didn't know anything about you beyond your name. So I knocked Li Hun out, togged up to look like him—and, well, you know the rest."

He paused a moment and went on reflectively.

"There were two mistakes I made. First, I failed to reckon on your being followed by the Serpent's hatchet-men—just in case you thought of double-crossing them, you know. Secondly, it never entered my head that Li Hun and Fu-Shek, boss of the *tong*, were one and the same. That sort of messed up things. Later, you can tell me how you came to breeze into the temple. Meanwhile, I've got to get on the track of that Yellow Serpent. Till we've got that—"

Hurricane thrust a hand into his pocket. Something glinted yellow in the faint dawnlight. "How's that, gov'nor?" he grinned.

An old Mag. favourite is here next week in a cyclonic long complete yarn of the South Seas. Thrills galore when Pete the Pearl Diver and his chum, Tim, go to PERIL LAGOON.

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