

PREHISTORIC MONSTERS IN MANCHESTER!

# Boys' 2D Magazine

EVERY SATURDAY



TALES OF COWBOYS, FOOTBALL, FUN AND THRILLS!

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LAUREL & HARDY HERE NEXT WEEK. Get Ready, Boys!

## NEXT WEEK'S BUMPER

# XMAS FEAST



**M**Y DEAR CHUMS,

The biggest and best Christmas number of the old *Mag.* will greet you next Friday morning. For weeks I have been planning this immense budget of Yuletide fare—jokes, Xmas yarns, articles, and other grand attractions smothered with snow and ice pictures by famous artists. The result has surpassed my wildest dreams. Never before had such a **Magnificent Christmas Number** been placed on the bookstalls.

First on the bill is another story scoop. Nothing less than a great new series featuring **Laurel and Hardy.**

Yes, chaps, Laurel and Hardy greet you in next week's Xmas Number in a reeling, gasping, chuckling exploit that has never appeared before, even on the films. How these two great laughers, down and out in New York, get a job as escort to a gangster at a rival gunman Christmas party will hold you in tucks of mirth. And the big surprise at the end of this realistic yarn is one big GASP!

Get ready to greet Laurel and Hardy next week.

Out in the wilds of the Frozen North-West, Christmas and Old England seem a long way off. But

### The Blizzard Ranger

sees it through. Just as he braves countless perils amid the frozen wastes of the Big Woods to get his man! You'll like the **Blizzard Ranger** whose acquaintance you make next week.

### Frozen Flight

introduces those old sky favourites, Ian and Johnny Chisholm, and tells of their exciting adventures when the season of goodwill descends on the Western Front.

Here's another ripping story plum to swell the pudding next week. Nothing less than a brand-new yarn of the Xmas exploits of Johnny Gee & Co. with the

### St. Giddy's Christmas Circus.

And Smiler Burke—the No-Luck Puncher. This is his first Christmas with you *B.M.* readers so his yuletide exploits are extra good. Funny? I laughed all through

### Smiler's Merry Xmas,

A special feature contributed by The Jester will provide you with some really good jokes and puzzles for the Christmas Party and of course there will be the next instalment of the Menace of the Monsters. Now get ready for this splendid treat.

Your sincere friend, THE EDITOR.





*(With which is incorporated "Pals.")*

EERIE ADVENTURES IN A CASTLE  
OF STRANGE SECRETS.

A TALE OF TERROR AND THRILLS  
THAT WILL HOLD YOU ENTHRALLED



Gaunt, Black, Menacing against the Midnight Sky, the Turrets and Towers of Meremore Castle Hide the Most Amazing Mystery of the Twentieth Century. What Peter Kipps and his Pal, Jimmy, Discover there Told Below.

By the Author of **TERRORLAND.**

.....

### Hurled into Mystery.

THE storm raged menacingly. The howl of the wind sometimes rose to an unearthly shriek as of a being in torment, at others it fell to a low, dismal moan. Yet through it all Jimmy Lattiner rode with dogged determination.

"We're not going to be beaten by a blinking storm, my son!" he had sung out to his chum, Peter Kipps, who was riding on the pillion of the motorcycle. "We're going home for Christmas!"

Since then they had left the last town behind, and now they were on one of the wildest, loneliest sections of the Yorkshire moors.

"Are we on the right road, Jimmy?" yelled Peter Kipps.

"Jiggered if I know!" roared Jimmy. "This one's rottenly bumpy. I think I went wrong—at that fork, ten minutes ago. . . . Hallo! There's a third road here. We'll chance it."

Dimly, he had seen a road leading off to the left. He turned into it, hoping that it would take him

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



back to the main highway. The wind, howling and whistling mightily, hit them broadside on, and Jimmy had some difficulty in steering a straight course. Sleet drove furiously across the vast, dark moorland, soaking and chilling the two riders.

The road gradually degenerated into a mere cart-track, and the motor-bike skidded along deep, muddy ruts, bounced jarringly in unseen potholes, until Jimmy soon regretted leaving the larger route.

Next week, chaps, it is here. What? Why? — THE MONSTER XMAS NUMBER OF THE MAG! You'll be thrilled by the exploits of Dan and Whurl in FROZEN FLIGHT. And if you want laughs, don't miss LAUREL AND HARDY.

"Wooh!" gasped Peter from the pillion seat after a particularly violent bump. "Take it easy for goodness' sake! Hadn't we better turn back?"

"Let's see what's at the bottom of this hill?" shouted Jimmy, peering intently forward. "I caught a glimpse of a light... Hallo! What the—Hold tight!"

The descent, which had started ordinarily enough, had suddenly become precipitate. The hill dropped away almost like a cliff, and Jimmy Lattimer found it impossible to hold the skidding, slithering motorcycle. Rapidly the dizzy speed increased; they dropped with a horrible, lurching motion. For a second the misty sleet cleared, and Jimmy caught a glimpse of a low, stone wall...

"Look out!" he bawled.

*Craaaaash!* The mo'-bike struck the wall with fearful force. Peter was jerked from the pillion, and went hurtling through space like a stone from a catapult. Instinctively he relaxed, preparing for the shock of landing.

At the very top of the arc, however, he felt a dull shock, and his right shoulder thudded hard against something wet and cold. He heard the rending of cloth... then he was hanging mysteriously in mid-air. At that juncture, the driving storm clouds broke raggedly, revealing a watery moon, and Peter was able to catch a glimpse of his surroundings.

He saw, vaguely, as though it were something unreal, a great, grey stone wall. Immediately below him there was a wide, arched doorway. And seeing these, he knew what had happened. The immense iron-studded doors were closed, and above them there was an ancient portcullis, with extending spikes. Peter's clothing had fouled one of the spikes, and he was suspended. He laughed.

"Well, I shall have to hang around for a bit," he said. "Hi, Jimmy! Where are you?"

"Help!" came a gasping cry from below. "Peter! I'm sinking! This mud... it's sucking me under..."

Peter looked down. Before the moon was again covered by the scudding clouds, he saw Jimmy struggling desperately in a black, moving substance.

In a moment he knew what it was. A mud-filled moat. The motor-cycle had crashed into the low wall just near to the space where the drawbridge should have been.

With the agility of a monkey, Peter half-twisted, grasped the wet, rusty iron of the portcullis, and freed himself. For a second he hung, and then dropped. He landed on the stone ledge just in front of the iron-spiked grille. An electric torch flashed in his hand, and the beam sliced the darkness and showed him the moat—with Jimmy, in the very middle of it, struggling desperately.

"Well, you fell into something soft!" grinned Peter. "Want any help?"

He was an irrepressible youth, and his sense of humour was of a peculiar sort. He saw something comic in the most distressing situations.

"Don't rot, Peter!" panted his chum. "I'm being sucked under, I tell you. This mud—is dragging me down. It's—it's horrible."

Jimmy Lattimer was a sturdy, brawny lad of sixteen, as plucky as any in the land; but this vile moat frightened him. The slimy, heaving mud gripped him like monstrous wet hands, relentlessly dragging him deeper and deeper.

"Catch hold of this," said Peter crisply.

He had realised his chum's fearful predicament, and, unwinding his enormously long woollen scarf, he slung it across like a rope. The end fell in the mud, within Jimmy's reach. Like a drowning man he seized it.

"Nothing to worry about," said Peter. "I'll soon have you out."

But he was wrong. With tremendous power the mud held Jimmy, sucking him to a dreadful, suffocating death. Frantically Peter Kipps pulled on the scarf, his heels jabbed against the ancient stones, his muscles straining almost to breaking point.

After what seemed an eternity, Peter began to win this grim tug-of-war. Slowly, reluctantly, the mud gave up its victim and at last Peter dragged his chum to the safety of the stone ledge.

It was some moments before they recovered and scrambled to their feet. There was a strong contrast between the two. Whereas Jimmy was broad and sturdy, Peter was an excessively skinny youth, with perky, sharp-cut features and laughing brown eyes which reflected his irrepressible sense of humour.

"There's only one thing to do," he said practically. "We've got to climb this gate."

"Yes," said Jimmy. "If we stay here we shall freeze to death; and it's death to cross the moat."

With the wind howling a dismal, fiendish accompaniment, Peter again brought his scarf into service. He tossed up the knotted end, and looped it successfully over one of the protruding iron spikes. Like a lean and elongated monkey, he swarmed up to the top of the arched brickwork over the portcullis, and Jimmy Lattimer, with heavier movements, followed.

Vaguely through the driving mist, they made out the dark bulk of a mediæval castle, with gaunt, forbidding turrets and towers and battlements. In one or two of the lower windows were lights—dull, strange lights, glowing blood-red. At sight of them Jimmy started, and he clutched almost fiercely at his chum.

"I know where we are, Peter!" he muttered huskily. "This is Meremore Castle. It's the home of the Marquis of Meremore—known all over the moors as the Grim Marquis."

### Red Danger.

PETER KIPPS laughed heartily at his chum's frightened tones.

"What am I supposed to do—shudder?" he asked. "I don't mind shivering if you like—but that's because I'm cold."



"Look here, Peter, be serious for once," urged Jimmy, crouching low on the wall. "The people about here talk of the Grim Marquis and his lonely castle only in whispers. They tell terrible tales of him. He's lived here like a hermit for years; he never ventures out, and they say that no stranger has ever crossed the threshold of Meremore Castle."

"I don't know who 'they' are, but they're wrong," retorted Peter. "We're practically in, aren't we? Let's get down and give the old boy a knock. He can't refuse us shelter on a night like this."

Jimmy was silent. He had been born and bred on the Yorkshire moors, and from childhood he had heard the grim, sinister stories of Meremore Castle. Peter Kipps was a Londoner, practical, ever-ready for action, and now he lowered himself on the inner side of the wall, so that he was hanging only by the tips of his fingers. Then he allowed himself to drop. The distance was farther than he had thought, and he landed with a thud which jarred every bone in his body. Before he could warn Jimmy, the latter had dropped, and he went sprawling.

"My hat!" gasped Jimmy, sitting up. "The wall's four or five feet deeper on this side. We've got in, Peter—but we can never get out!"

"Who wants to?" asked his chum. "I'm after supper—and a nice warm bed."

The wind drove the sleet in their faces as they advanced across the dark courtyard towards the

"Brrrrr!" shivered Jimmy, at last. "Why don't they answer?"

Peter gave the bell another great tug, but in the same moment both he and Jimmy heard the heavy, measured footsteps of somebody approaching. Fearfully they whirled round, and through the snowy smother they beheld two enormous men mounting the steps. Nearer and nearer they came with measured tread. Then an electric lamp sent forth a dazzling beam, revealing the two boys in clear-cut vividness. Nearer came the men, and in the vague reflection of light it could be seen that their sleeves were rolled up revealing hairy, muscular arms. Each wore a thick, leather apron. Their eyes were masked. Not a word did they utter, but they stood towering above the boys.

"Hallo, twins!" said Peter, grinning.

But Jimmy was aware of a cold sensation which went trickling down his spine. The strange attire of these silent men set a chord of memory stirring in his brain. He remembered pictures in his school-books dealing with the Spanish Inquisition. These men were clad like professional torturers!

"We had an accident," he managed to say, his voice strange and hoarse. "We got on the wrong road, and—"

Before he could say any more, the giant men moved silently forward. One of them seized Jimmy in a



**HEADLONG INTO HORROR!—Craaaaaash!** The mo'bike struck the low wall with incredible force, and the two chums went hurtling across the moat.

bold-red windows. As they drew nearer they dimly made out a great flight of crumbling steps, with a massive iron-studded door at the top. With an unnameable fear clutching at their hearts, they mounted the steps, and Peter, with the aid of his electric torch, found an ancient bell-knob.

He tugged hard, and both boys heard, mysteriously far away, a deep, low clanging. The bitter cold wind seemed to cut through them and the storm-driven sleet stung them like icy evil fingers, as they waited in silence.

bear-like grip, and held him so that he could not move a limb. In the same way, Peter was held.

"Easy, there!" cried the irrepressible Peter. "Stop your tickling, Jock!"

Still without a word, the strange servants switched off the electric torch, and moved forward. At the same time, the massive iron-studded door swung open, as though operated by some magic force. Jimmy and Peter were taken into a lofty hall, with panelled walls and a vague, shadowy staircase which was just visible in the background.



"Well, we're in," said Peter, cheerfully.

His coolness and good humour failed to nullify completely the strange feeling of evil that to Jimmy seemed to pervade the place. He was scared—by something uncanny, unknown.

Candles were burning in the old-fashioned sconces; but they were not ordinary candles. Of enormous size, they were blood-red in colour. They burned with a red flame, bathing that vast hall in weird, ruddy radiance.

The two boys were marched right across the great hall, and their feet resounded on cold stones. A big panelled door was opened, and they were thrust through into an apartment which was, apparently, the library. For great bookcases, reaching to the very ceiling, concealed most of the panelled walls.

*Thud!* The door closed, and the boys heard the harsh turning of a key in the lock. They were alone. And for some moments they stared about them in silent wonder.

There were more of the red candles burning here—and a fire blazed in the great open grate.

"Well, this is a rummy way to treat us—but the fire's nice and warm," said Peter, as he moved across to it, and spread his hands out to the blaze.

"You're an exasperating blighter, Peter!" Jimmy said gruffly, joining him at the fire. "Don't you realise that everything is—is fantastic? That moat, the silent servants, the blood-red candles—"

"Red for danger, eh?" nodded Peter.

"That's it—danger!" muttered Jimmy. "I can feel it in the air. There's something terribly evil about the whole place. Let's clear out while we've still got the chance. Come on! We'll try the window."

Some instinct, as strong as a shout of warning, urged Jimmy Lattimer to make this move. He was the first to fling the heavy curtain aside, and they found themselves in the deep casement of a window. The moon was shining fitfully again, and they caught a glimpse, outside, of a broad belt of glimmering blackness.

"Look! It's the moat!" whispered Jimmy, exultantly. "It runs flush with this wall of the castle—and we've only got to jump across and we're free."

He was tugging at the great fastening of the windows; and, suddenly, the handle turned. With a creak, the windows came open, and the cold snow-laden air beat upon the boys' faces.

*Clang!* Ere they could move an enormously heavy metal grille swung right across the open window, shooting from one side of the casement to the other. Jimmy, who had been about to lean out of the window, was half-caught by the moving metalwork, and thrust violently back.

*Clang!* Thoroughly scared they spun round—and saw that a second grille had swung into position across the inner opening of the recess. They were caught like rats in a trap.

### The Man with Crimson Eyes.

PETER KIPPS was the first to recover, and—as usual—he grinned. But there was a tense look in his eyes for even he was getting scared by these strange happenings.

"According to all the rules, the next thing ought to be the entry of the ogre," he remarked coolly.

Jimmy's reply died in his throat. With goggling eyes he stared into the room. Somebody else was there—yet Jimmy was ready to swear that the door had not opened. A man was standing near the fireplace—a tall, impressive figure, with a clean shaven face and white hair, in immaculate evening dress. Yet his hair and his shirt front looked red in that mysterious night.

"I regret that you should have been startled," said a calm voice. "But the guests of Meremore Castle are not supposed to leave by the window. You are not the first to make the attempt; hence my simple precautions."

The inner grille slid silently back, vanishing into a recess of the panelling. The boys walked back into the main body of the room, Jimmy leaving a trail of mud on the soft carpet.

Even Peter was serious now; for there was something indescribably sinister about the man who stood before them. Not only in his figure—but in his voice, too. It was soft and utterly toneless, yet it held an evil menace as vividly apparent as a haystack on a hilltop.

"I am the Marquis of Meremore—and I do not encourage guests," said the man in evening dress. "How did you get across the moat?"

"We're not guests—really," cried Jimmy. "It was only by sheer accident we crossed the moat..." He described what had happened; how they had lost their way, how they had slithered helplessly down the hill, and had then crashed into the stone wall.

"What you are telling me, I know already," said the Marquis impassively. "My servants heard the crash; they have already flung the wrecked machine into the moat—where it has been sucked down to be for ever lost. But for the fact that one of you was accidentally flung across the moat, you would never have entered the castle. Now you'll never leave it!"

Cold fear gripped the two boys; there was something uncannily horrible in the eyes of the Grim Marquis. They seemed to paralyse, fascinate, as a snake hypnotises its prey. They were like the eyes of a demon.

"Never leave the castle?" choked Peter, hoarsely.

"Never!" said their host. "Your machine has passed for all time from human ken; my men are obliterating every trace of the motor-cycle's track—so that none shall know it ever came near the castle. To the world you will be dead—and you will remain my guests for ever!"

The man in deadly earnest! The icy menace of his ghastly toneless voice proved that. And the very calmness of his utterance made it all the more terrible. With a tremendous effort Jimmy snapped out of the paralysing fear that gripped him.

"Peter—the door!" he yelled. "Our only chance is to escape—*now!*"

He flung himself bodily at the Marquis. His clenched fist swung upwards, smashing with terrific force upon the clean-shaven chin. So sudden was that attack, so unexpected that the Marquis reeled back against a big desk in the centre of the room. He slithered right across it to crash into the chair on the other side. Man and chair went sprawling to the floor together. Jimmy was one of the finest amateur boxers in England, and that right fist of his contained dynamite.

Without even glancing round, Jimmy rushed at the door, with Peter by his side. But before they could even reach it something else happened. Flanking the door, on either side, were two gleaming suits of armour, standing on high pedestals. Suddenly the two suits of armour came to life; they swung round, metal arms reaching out to seize Jimmy and Peter in a cold grip.

With a sudden clattering crash, the armour fell to pieces—revealing, beneath, two impassive-faced giants, dressed in tunics. So these men had been here all the time!

"Hold them!" said the Marquis of Meremore, and in his voice was the ring of cold steel. He



advanced round the desk, one hand gingerly massaging his bruised chin.

"You shall pay for that blow," he said, fixing his strange eyes on Jimmy. "You shall pay for it with ten thousand different agonies!"

"Hang it all!" suddenly blurted out Jimmy. "I don't believe you're the Marquis of Meremore at all! I've seen a photograph of the Marquis somewhere and—"

A hoarse, savage cry silenced him. Panting, the man in evening dress crouched like an animal for a moment, as though about to hurl himself upon the

"The light of your electric torch was white—the light of day is white," said the Marquis, in a whisper. "Never again will either of you see the light of day."

"Do you mean to kill us?" asked Jimmy boldly.

"No, I shall not kill you," said the Man with Crimson Eyes. "You shall work and incredible wealth shall be in your hands, wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. But you shall never enjoy its benefits—and as I hate white light, so you will grow to hate red light! Night and day you will be tortured by it; you will work in an inferno." He spun round



IN IRON HANDS.—"Peter—the door. Our only chance!" yelled Jimmy. But before they could escape two figures in armour came to life. They were seized in cold grips.

chums. It was in that moment that Peter flashed his electric torch—which he had held ready in his hand.

The result was staggering. The white beam of light, lanced through the blood-red radiance of the room like a searchlight, revealing the unearthly, dead-white face of the Marquis—and something else. His eyes, wide open and staring, were all wrong. They were blood-red in colour—pupils and iris alike—standing out vividly in awful contrast to the whiteness of his face. So devilish, so ghastly, were those eyes that Jimmy and Peter gasped with horror.

A wild, animal scream rent the air; the Marquis leapt forward like a maniac, and with one blow he knocked the torch out of Peter's hand. Shuddering in every limb, he staggered back, covering his eyes with his hands.

There followed a silence—tense, dreadful.

At last, the Marquis of Meremore looked up; the white light had evidently had an agonising effect upon his eyes, but it was now passing. This, perhaps, was an explanation of the red-burning candles . . .

upon the guards. "Take them!" he commanded. "Take them to the Cage."

"He thinks we're a couple of birds," murmured Peter, but his tone belied the lightness of the words.

The boys were forced out of the library, back into the great, lofty hall, with its crimson candles. They passed towards the rear, and then went down a long corridor, where their footsteps echoed hollowly on the stone flagging. And still there were candles with the red flames.

Soon they turned into a wide stairway which led into an enormous basement room with stone walls and a stone floor. The roof was arched, like a crypt. Only one or two of the red candles were burning, and it was difficult to see for more than a few feet in any direction.

But the boys could not fail to notice a metal cage, about four feet in diameter, and rising to a point at the top—something like a parrot's cage—which stood in the centre of the room. Near by there was a crudely constructed winch, round which was an enormous amount of thick rope. A beam was thrust diagonally upwards, and the rope passed over a



pulley at the end of this beam, and was then connected with the top of the cage.

"Enter!" said the Marquis of Mercmore ominously. "Look at the windows well, for it will be your last look upon the outer world. You go to the world below—my own world."

A door of the cage was already open, and Jimmy and Peter were thrust in. *Clang!* The door closed, and there did not appear to be any lock.

The Marquis pulled at a lever, and at the same time the two giant servants operated the winch. The cage rose a foot from the floor, and a great trap-door, operated by some sliding arrangement, opened, leaving a yawning gulf below.

"Good-bye!" mocked the Man with Crimson Eyes. "You go down—and down—never to return."

He signalled to his servants, and the cage, with its two prisoners, commenced the descent into the mysterious abyss.

### Well of a Thousand Mysteries.

"WHAT price Christmas next week?" asked Peter Kipps, breaking the silence.

"How the dickens can you think of Christmas now?" said Jimmy. "I'm responsible for this mess, Peter. What a fool I was to take that side road!"

"No good worrying about that," said Peter philosophically. "But I say, where are we going?"

He fumbled in his pockets for a box of matches. He struck one, and the tiny flame enabled the boys to see beyond the confines of their cage. A circular, ages-old stone wall appeared to be moving upwards past them. They needed no telling that they were being dropped to the bottom of an ancient well.

"It's—it's unbelievable," said Jimmy, passing a hand over his eyes. "It's like a nightmare! That horrible moat of mud—the red candles—that red-eyed devil—and now this cage—dropping into the bowels of the earth."

"We're certainly in a tight spot," agreed Peter, and the serious tone of his voice surprised Jimmy. "And we don't look like getting out of it, either. Isn't this well ever going to end?"

They knew that they had descended something like two hundred feet—and still the cage continued to descend. Suddenly, however, there was a change. They felt it rather than saw it; there was a difference in the sound, as the cage dropped. There were no tiny echoes; an absolute and uncanny silence seemed to press upon them.

"What's happened?" muttered Jimmy, staring through the bars. "We're at the bottom of the well by now, surely? Strike another match, Peter!"

Peter did so, and when he gazed out beyond the cage he nearly dropped the match in his amazement.

"Jumping catfish!" he ejaculated. "There's nothing! The walls have gone!"

"But they can't have gone—it's impossible!" gasped Jimmy.

He stared out intently—but saw only stygian blackness—blackness which seemed to extend for ever. And now they were both aware of suffocating waves of heat rising around them.

"We're still descending," Peter muttered, and a great fear gripped him. "You can tell that by the feel of the cage. That means we've got to the bottom of the well, but . . . Jimmy!" he gasped, clutching wildly at his companion. "Am I mad? Look! Down here—at our feet!"

Jimmy stared down between the bars that formed the cage bottom, and it seemed that his heart missed a beat.

Incredible, fantastic though it seemed, he gazed upon a vague scene of lurid mystery. There was a

deep red glow that seemed to shimmer and quiver on the air, coming as though from a blast furnace. Figures were moving—men. But they looked tiny! With a start, Jimmy realised that the men were a full thousand feet below him!

"It's impossible, Peter," burst out Jimmy breathlessly. "Either that, or we're mad! Ten minutes ago we were in an old English castle. And now . . .!"

"It's not impossible," said Peter, trying to speak calmly. "We're in a cavern—a vast subterranean cavern. In the top of it there's a hole—leading into the old well. Look at the rock walls on every side. They go up to a point at the top, but drift away to nothing below. This is what old Nick meant when he talked about the 'world below.'"

A chill of despair gripped Jimmy, and he shivered despite the increasing heat.

"It's the end of us," he muttered. "Once down here we can never escape! Never!"

Down—the cage descended, until the boys could distinguish the human figures. There were quite a number of them, moving about with strangely sluggish actions. They were men wearing little else but shorts—and their skins were dead white. About a hundred yards away there was a great gap in the floor, and beating up from this came the lurid glow. There were figures about its edge, some operating a winch, not unlike the one in the castle. And those figures, outlined against the blood-red fire, were fantastic and grotesque.

At last, with a little jar, the cage struck the rock floor. As it did so several of the men of the cavern moved forward. They pulled the door open, and the boys walked out. Then they experienced a shock; for they moved only with the utmost effort. Their limbs had become as heavy as lead, and both Jimmy and Peter felt that a half-ton weight had been placed on their shoulders.

The heat was stifling, and the very air was different. The boys' chests heaved painfully as they gasped for air. Now the men who had opened the cage moved away without a word. Like the guards above, they were Silent Men.

"What does it mean?" choked Jimmy. "They haven't grabbed us—or—or anything! They've just left us to wander off on our own."

"Let's have a look at that pit," suggested Peter. "I say, can you smell a rotten, funny niff?"

They passed two or three of the Silent Men, who were moving in that queerly sluggish manner, yet none stopped them. Again, the boys noticed the dreadful whiteness of the Silent Men's skin. No doubt they had been in this cavern for years, and their skins, untouched by the sun, had turned a flat, dead white. There was something repulsive, something reptilian, indeed, in the appearance of the unfortunates.

Dragging their feet, Jimmy and Peter reached the lip of the pit. They looked down—and then they received another shock. For they stared down for a sheer two thousand feet. It was an incredible drop. The pit was three or four hundred yards wide—a great, jagged gash, and there, at the very bottom, red fire seethed and bubbled, and an ominous roaring sound came faintly upwards to the ears of the two boys.

"It's earth fire!" gasped Peter Kipps, his senses reeling. "The molten heart of the earth."

There could be no other explanation. That molten fire, two thousand feet below, was, indeed, caused by a river of lava, or some such earth fire, which flowed on its endless course.

The boys watched fascinated. They saw the Silent Men operating the winch; they saw a pair, doubtless of some metal unknown in the world above,

(Continued on page 35.)



PEN A JOKE AND WIN A PRIZE PEN!

# The JESTER'S REALM

Footballs 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.

## "SAFE."

MAN (to sportsman with gun): Where are you going—shooting rats?

SPORTSMAN: Yes, but you need not worry. You're not worth a bullet.

(Fountain pen to HERBERT PORTER, Transport House, Commercial Road, Redcliffe, Bristol.)

## MEAN TRICK.

BILLY: There was a smash-and-grab raid at the jeweller's to-day.

JACK: Did the crooks get off with it.

BILLY: No. They were Scotch and came back for the brick.

(Fountain pen to D. SMITH, 14, Torbay Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester.)

## BREAKING IT GENTLY

AIRMAN: Have you ever heard the saying, "See Naples and die"?

PASSENGER: Yes.

AIRMAN: Well take a good look at it, for we're over Mars now and something's gone wrong with the engine.

(Fountain pen to R. BEAUFOY, 1, Coventry Street, Stoke, Coventry.)

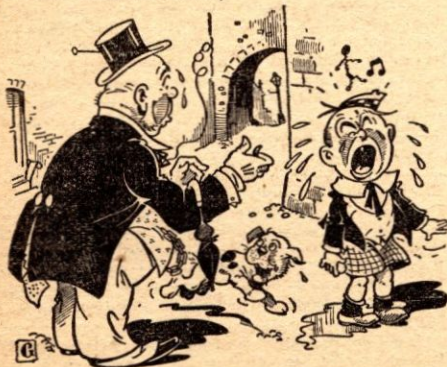
## WHACK, WHACK!

PUPIL: Do you think it's right to punish people for things they haven't done?

TEACHER: Why, of course not, Willie.

PUPIL: Well, I didn't do my homework.

(Fountain pen to T. FELTHAM, 212, High Street, Ponders End, Middlesex.)



Old Gent: Why are you crying?

Jimmy: I will tell you if you give me a penny.

Old Gent: Well, here's one.

Jimmy: Thank you, that's what I was crying

for!

(Football to MAURICE HURRELL, 6, Trefusia Terrace, Flushing, Nr. Falmouth.)



Boss: What work can you do?

Applicant for Job: Blimey, I thought you wanted a foreman!

(Football to EDWARD ROWLAND, 62, Kettering Terrace, Mile End, Portsmouth.)

## HARD TIMES.

TRAMP (meeting gent on lonely road): Have you seen a cop around here, sir?

GENT: No.

TRAMP: Then hand me out your gold watch and chain.

(Fountain pen to C. MADIGAN, 3, Nottingham Street, Dublin.)

## JOKE COUPON.

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

Boys' Magazine, 2/12/33.

## CAUGHT NAPPING.

BILL: Did you hear that tale about a bed?

ALGY: No.

BILL: That's where you lie.

(Fountain pen to F. POSTING, Taynton, Kenley, Surrey.)

## SNIP, SNIP!

MOTHER (to Father): Fancy, Greta Garbo earns five hundred pounds a week!

LITTLE JOHN (listening in): Well, if she has all that money it's time she had her hair cut.

(Fountain pen to R. BROWNE, 6, Arley Avenue, West Didsbury, Manchester.)

## A NEW CAR.

POLICEMAN: You cannot park your car here.

MAN IN CAR: But it's a cul-de-sac.

POLICEMAN: I don't care if it's a Rolls-Royce; you cannot park here.

(Fountain pen to C. A. MARLOW, Barbourne, 40, Handsworth Wood Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham.)

## TIDY LAD.

MA: You were a tidy boy not to throw your orange peel down in the bus. Where did you put it?

FREDDY: In the pocket of the gentleman sitting next to me.

(Fountain pen to GEORGE GLOVER, 38, Angrave Street, Dalston, London, E.8.)



THE CHEM-MYSTIC KID'S MOST  
AMAZING MIX-UP!

Meet Gerald the Equinostrocerfoxaphant!  
The Quaintest Animal in the World.



### Mixed Monster.

**T**OMMY PINK, young laboratory assistant of Doctor Theophilus Hypo, was busy tidying up the Doctor's apparatus, that fatal day that saw the birth of Gerald, the Equinostrocerfoxaphant. Maybe the reader is inclined to say at once, "There ain't no such animile!" Well, there wasn't—until Tommy knocked over the test-tubes.

Dr. Hypo, you see, was going away that day to attend an important scientific conference on the Continent. But the learned old boy was not one to waste time. He had arranged that an experiment should be maturing while he was away. What this experiment was, Tommy didn't know, but the Doctor had told him to connect a new electric incubator to the mains and give the laboratory a general tidy up.

And it was while he was tidying up that Tommy knocked the test-tubes into the sink.

There was a row of them in a rack, each half-filled with a sticky-looking fluid and with a dab of cotton-wool poked into the top of the tube. They were preparations of *Endocrine hormones*—whatever that meant—and the Doctor had been working on them for the last week.

Tommy had the presence of mind to thrust home the plug of the sink before the precious fluid drained away.

"Gosh!" Tommy told himself. "That was a narrow squeak! Might have jiggered up the Doc's experiment altogether!"

Tommy hastily selected another set of sterilised test-tubes and carefully ladled out the fluid from

Gerald trotted merrily down the street oblivious of the sensation he was causing. Tommy pedalled frantically in pursuit.

the sink and filled them with it one by one. Of course, it didn't occur to Tommy that the preparation in each tube was not the same—and that it was now all mixed up!

He had just cleared away the debris of the accident when Dr. Hypo entered the laboratory carrying an ostrich egg.

"Ah, Mr. Green," said the Doctor—getting Tommy's name wrong as usual. "I see you have everything ready. Splendid! Please hand me a sterilised hypodermic syringe from the cupboard—er—size number one."

Dr. Hypo placed his ostrich egg on the bench, and then, with a delicate surgical drill, made a tiny hole in the shell.

"They were kind enough to let me have this egg at the Zoo," the Doctor chattered, as he examined the rack of test-tubes that Tommy had just replaced. "Let me see now—third test-tube from the end. That's right—preparation of hormones of a cockerel."

"Gosh! Guv, we ain't goin' to have an ostrich runnin' about the place, are we?"

Dr. Hypo filled his syringe from the third test-tube and made an injection through the hole he had drilled in the egg.

"Don't be alarmed, Mr. Green. The egg will probably take at least a week to hatch—and I shall be home by then. If it should hatch-out earlier, I want you to feed the creature—it will be quite



small—and look after it carefully until I return. Here is the temperature at which to keep the incubator—don't let it vary."

As the Doctor was speaking he was carefully stowing the doped ostrich-egg into the incubator. He closed down the lid and switched on the apparatus, and then he looked at his watch.

"Dear me! I must hurry! Good-bye, Mr. Green! I'll be home on Saturday!"

But Dr. Hypo was a long way out in his estimate of the time it would take to hatch that egg. When Tommy Pink came to examine the temperature of the incubator the next day, he was attracted by a pecking noise from within. He opened the lid and there was Gerald pecking his way out of the shell!

Gerald looked like any normal infant ostrich—brown fluff, big round eyes, and a small, sharp, yellow beak. It was not until the next day that Tommy Pink realised there was something wrong somewhere.

Gerald had grown to twice the normal size of an ostrich and was already getting too big for the incubator. Furthermore, Gerald had four legs and a tail—and ears! Tommy didn't know much about Zoology, but he was certain he had never seen an ostrich with four legs before.

The third day of Gerald's career he found his voice and his feet. When Tommy opened the door of the laboratory Gerald trotted forward to greet him in a friendly fashion, crying "Moooooo!" like a cow. Tommy was certain this time. No member of the ostrich family ever said "Mooo!"

In fact, Gerald, now that he had become more mature, did not look so much like a bird at all. He looked more like a sort of Zoological jumble-sale!

His head was still ostrich, in a rough, general sort of way, but it had such novel additions. At the end of his beak was a curved horn like that of a rhino. He had ears like a rabbit, and a beard like a goat; between his ears was a large cock's comb as worn by the fowl family. He certainly had a long ostrichy-looking neck, but a mane like a horse's sprouted from it. His front legs had a horsey look about them, too, but at the base of his neck two things like the fins of a fish grew. The rear part of him was indisputable pure elephant, except the tail, which was bushy like a fox's. Tiny wings were sprouting on his back!

"Well!" gulped Tommy. "It's real enough—and I s'pose the Doc knows what he's at! Come here, boy—good dog!—I mean ost—now what the deuce are you, anyhow?"

"Mooooooo!" said Gerald, rubbing his peculiar head against Tommy's coat.

After Tommy Pink had fed the creature and improvised a collar and chain—for Gerald was getting too big to leave floundering about alone in the laboratory—he went and looked up the dictionary.

But the dictionary had never heard of anything like Gerald, and Tommy had to coin a word to suit him. He was to be called an Equinostrocerofoxaphant—that is, on formal occasions—he was Gerald to his friends.

And how that Equinostrocerofoxaphant grew! The day before Dr. Hypo was due to return, Gerald was the size of a pony! Tommy was forced to take him out of the laboratory in case he smashed the whole place up, and house him in a large shed in Dr. Hypo's back garden.

He got him tied up to a stout staple which seemed firm enough on that day, and it held all right until Tommy returned to feed him again the next day—

but—alas!—Tommy failed to reckon on the rate at which Gerald was growing.

The morning of the day on which Dr. Hypo was due to return, Gerald was the size of a powerful horse and a baby elephant. He reared, moo'ed and fluttered joyfully when Tommy arrived to feed him, but Tommy failed to notice that he had almost



**HARRYING THE HUNTERS.**—Horsemen and hounds turned tail, howling with fear, as the fox they thought they had treed came for them. It was Gerald.

dragged the staple, to which his rope was secured, away from its fastening.

"Well," Tommy said to Gerald. "Jolly good job the Doc's coming home to-night—you're getting a bit too much of a handful, my lad!"

Tommy devoted all the morning to making Gerald comfortable, and then, as everything seemed safe, he trotted off to the local cinema to see *King Kong*.

### Gerald Gets Gay.

IT was the middle of the afternoon when Gerald dragged out his staple. It clanked at his forehoofs and he looked at it meditatively for some time with his head on one side. Then he swallowed



it, just to show that he had a lot of ostrich habits, after all.

The Equinostrocerfoxaphant trotted out on to Dr. Hypo's lawn with his peculiar mixed-up gait, pricked up his rabbit's ears at the unfamiliar sounds which floated into the garden from the neighbouring busy street, and then commenced to sniff round the garden. It did not take him long to pick up Tommy's scent. It led to the garden gate, which was locked. But this didn't worry Gerald. He gave a flying leap, his front legs rearing over the gate and his cumbersome elephant legs fluttering over with the assistance of his wings.

Thus did Gerald emerge from the seclusion of Dr. Hypo's garden into the great wide world. A policeman—one of those stolid, very sensible sort of policemen—was the first to see him as he followed Tommy's trail into the main road. He blinked at Gerald several times; then he said: "I'm a liar! That's what I am!"

Others were not so doubtful as that policeman. In ten seconds Gerald had cleared that street for a quarter of a mile in both directions—merely by presenting himself. He trotted merrily down the street, his beak close to the ground, totally oblivious to the sensation he was causing.

The scent led him, at last, to the door of the cinema whither Tommy had gone that afternoon. Nobody worried Gerald for the price of admission. He just trotted in, and the attendants scattered on all sides!

The Equinostrocerfoxaphant trailed Tommy I ink to the end seat of the back row and squatted in the gangway. None of the spectators saw or heard him, for the cinema was heavily carpeted and their attention was held by the gripping exploits of *Kong*. Next to Tommy sat an old gent, who was ridiculing the picture in a loud, annoying voice.

"Such twaddle!" said the derisive one. "As if they could expect us to believe in such creatures!"

There were a lot of "shushing" noises from other members of the audience.

"It's not twaddle!" Tommy Pink felt compelled to say. "It's been proved by science that prehistoric animals like that did exist an'—"

"Fiddle-faddle! Nonsense, I say—such creatures never did and never will exist except in the imaginations of—Oooooooo!"

Tommy turned quickly and stared as the derisive old gent let out a yell of alarm. Said gent, leaping four rows of seats in front of him, dived for the exit. The man had looked round casually as Tommy spoke to him and caught sight of Gerald sitting peaceably there beside him!

The gent's precipitate exit naturally attracted attention as to its cause, and in another second Tommy was astonished to see the rest of the audience rushing in panic to the various exits! He had barely time to realise what was happening when he found himself alone midst a waste of empty seats.

"Well," gasped Tommy. "They're a nervy crew—I must say! Fancy bein' scared of a movie-picture. I—"

"Moooooo!" Tommy swung round as Gerald's plaintive howling interrupted his remark.

"Gerald! You!" gasped Tommy, springing to his feet. "How on earth—! Here—come on! Out of it!"

He gave Gerald a whack on the flank, thinking this the best way to drive him out of the cinema. But Gerald had never been whacked before and it appeared to be an astonishing experience for him. He reared up on his hind legs. Tommy ducked just in time to avoid his pawing hoofs, and then, more frightened than angry, Gerald bolted for an exit.

"Gosh!" yelled Tommy. "Come here, you chump. I didn't—"

But Gerald was offended and had already departed. Tommy dashed after him to the entrance of the cinema. Way down the street he saw a cloud of dust and identified it as the wayward Equinostrocerfoxaphant bolting at a pace which took Tommy's breath away.

"Here! Gimme that!" said Tommy, knocking a youth off his bicycle and jumping into the saddle. "It's urgent! I'll bring it back!"

The remarks only came to the disbicycled youth as fading, far-away sounds, for Tommy was already pedalling like mad in the wake of Gerald.

But pedal as he would, Tommy was outdistanced in no time. Yet he stuck to the trail—it was not hard to see which way Gerald had taken by the singular scarcity of people. Soon, the house-lined streets gave way to country lanes. Tommy seemed to whizz for miles, but at last, well out in the country, he climbed from the bicycle almost exhausted and sank down to rest by the wayside.

"S'no use! He's got clean away! Lor! I can't t'ink what'll happen now! Maybe it'll turn vicious an'—"

"Mooooooo!"

Tommy sprang to his feet.

"That's him! He's in the next field!"

His weariness forgotten, Tommy scrambled through the hedge opposite, whence the lowing had come. He found himself in a large meadow with no sign of Gerald anywhere.

Tommy searched round the field to find the cause of the lowing, and then suddenly let out a wild yell as he discovered it. An instant later he was bawling across the field for dear life, with a great black bull charging after him!

Suddenly Tommy caught his foot in a piece of turf and fell headlong. He lay there, expecting to feel himself tossed into the air the very next second. Nothing happened.

He risked a look up and back at the bull. It wasn't looking at him at all, but staring past him with an expression as near astonishment as is possible on a bovine countenance. Tommy followed the direction of the bull's bloodshot optics and saw—Gerald!

"Moo!" said Gerald to the bull, whereat that beast immediately turned tail and fled for all it was worth.

### Yoicks! Tally-ho!

**T**OMMY sprang to his feet and grabbed hold of Gerald's ostrich-like neck, and commenced to pat the creature soothingly.

"Good boy! Good boy! Hey! Whoa—don't get frisky now! Uncle Tom'll take you back home where—Hey! Whoa back!—Ouch!"

As Tommy had grabbed Gerald round the neck the glare of a hunting horn had rung out from somewhere near Gerald immediately became restive. He reared up, flung Tommy aside, and leapt clean over the hedge of the meadow. Tommy sprang up and pushed his way through the hedge regardless of scratches. He arrived in the road again in time to see Gerald streaking down the lane.

Then, from the opposite direction, came a swarm of dogs, hurtling on the track of Gerald. They were followed by a crowd of red-coated huntsmen, with the M.F.H. at their head.

"A scent at last," Tommy heard one of the huntsmen shout as he hurtled past. "Yoicks! Tally-ho!"

"Gosh!" gulped Tommy. "He must smell like a fox to these hounds—it's no good trying to argue with dogs! Where's that bike!"

Tommy found his abandoned bicycle a few yards down the road. He climbed on to it and was presently pedalling for dear life after the huntsmen.

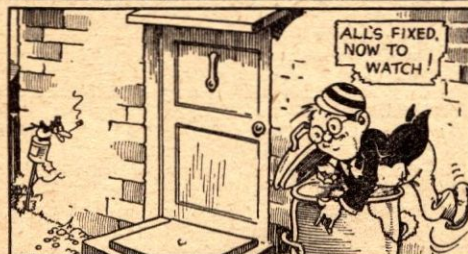
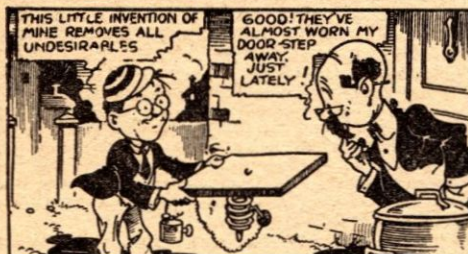
A gruelling, two-mile ride brought him up with the



This Week : **ALGY'S DUSTBIN DOORSTEP TRAP!**



# ARTLESS ALGY'S BUST-UP BRAINWAVES!



hunt. He found the dogs swarming round a big oak tree, baying and snapping and leaping up at a big fox's tail which dangled down through the foliage.

"Hey! Stop!" yelled Tommy leaping from his bike. "That's not a fox!"

He rushed over to the foot of the tree, kicking and lashing about among the snarling dogs, trying to drive them away.

"Gad, sir!" bawled the M.F.H. "Get away from those hounds! D'you want to spoil the day's sport! Stand away there!"

"It isn't a fox, you chump! Hey! Gerald, show yourself!"

Gerald, who had taken one of his flying leaps into the branches of the tree before the dogs came in sight, evidently recognised Tommy's voice. For his head appeared attached to his long, snaky neck and stared down through the foliage. The hounds were near enough to see there was something unusual about this fox. They drew back. Tommy made soothing noises and finally persuaded Gerald to descend.

"Gad, sir!" said the M.F.H. "Is this a joke?"

What on earth d'you call that—Look out! It's coming!"

There was no doubt that Gerald was annoyed at the way he had been treated. He broke away from Tommy and charged madly at the hounds.

Horsemen and hounds turned tail with howls of fear, and presently Tommy, left standing beneath the oak tree, witnessed the astonishing spectacle of the whole hunt in full flight across the fields with their late quarry charging angrily after them.

"Oh, my gosh!" moaned Tommy, clapping a hand to his perspiring brow. "There he goes again! I'll never catch that there animile!"

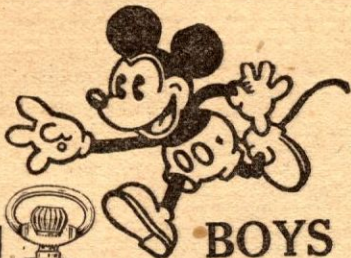
He sprang to his bicycle again and pedalled off grimly in the wake of that reversed foxhunt.

THE shades of night had fallen when Tommy Pink pedalled wearily up to Dr. Hypo's house and leant his borrowed machine against the railings. He had lost track of the chase after the first fifteen minutes, but he had searched doggedly for Gerald. At last he had abandoned the task as hopeless and returned home.

(Continued on next page.)



## THE XMAS GIFT FOR A BOY OR GIRL



6/11



### BOYS & GIRLS!

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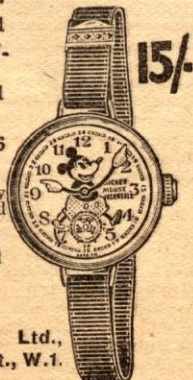
### A CHUCKLE A MINUTE!

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### THAT UNHAPPY HATCH PATCH!

(Continued from previous page.)

At the door of the house he met Dr. Hypo hurrying out with a worried expression on his face.

"Hello, guv," said Tommy sheepishly. "You back? I've got some rather funny news to tell you about that—"

"Not now, Mr. Green, please. I've just fixed an appointment with my oculist. I've just imagined I've seen the strangest creature in the laboratory! It must be some form of—"

"Why, it's Gerald! That's not imagination, guv—honest! That's what came out of the incubator!"

"Mr. Green! I am astounded!"

"So was I at first—but it was like this—" and Tommy hastily stammered out Gerald's history. Afterwards he led the Doctor back to the laboratory and stroked the tired but happy Equinostrocero-foxaphant squatting on the laboratory floor.

"How strange! How extraordinary!" said Dr. Hypo. "But still I don't understand Mr Green. You see, all I did was inoculate that ostrich egg with a preparation of chicken hormones—the hormones, you know, are the types of gland fluids which decide whether a creature shall grow feathers or fur and so on. But this—this—mix-up—it's almost unbelievable!"

"Mix-up!" said Tommy, so suddenly that Gerald perked up his head and stared at him. "That's it! Tell me, Doc. Were all the preparations in those test-tubes different?"

"Indeed they were! Let me see, there was elephant, horse, fox, goat—"

"That's it! Guv'nor, I mixed 'em all up accidentally when I spilled the test-tube rack. Y'see, I thought the stuff was all the same and I filled each test-tube with it after they'd all spilled together. I'm awfully sorry, sir, but y'see—"

"Don't apologise, Mr. Green. From a scientific point of view I'm amazed—nay, delighted at the result. But I think—er—I had better ring up the Zoo right away and see if they will look after this creature for us."

Thus did Gerald the Equinostrocerofoxaphant find his final home in the local Zoo, where he still remains—the only specimen of his kind.

Funny? M'yes. But wait until you read the Xmas exploits of Smiler Burke, the No-Luck Cow-nurse, in next week's Bumper Xmas Number.

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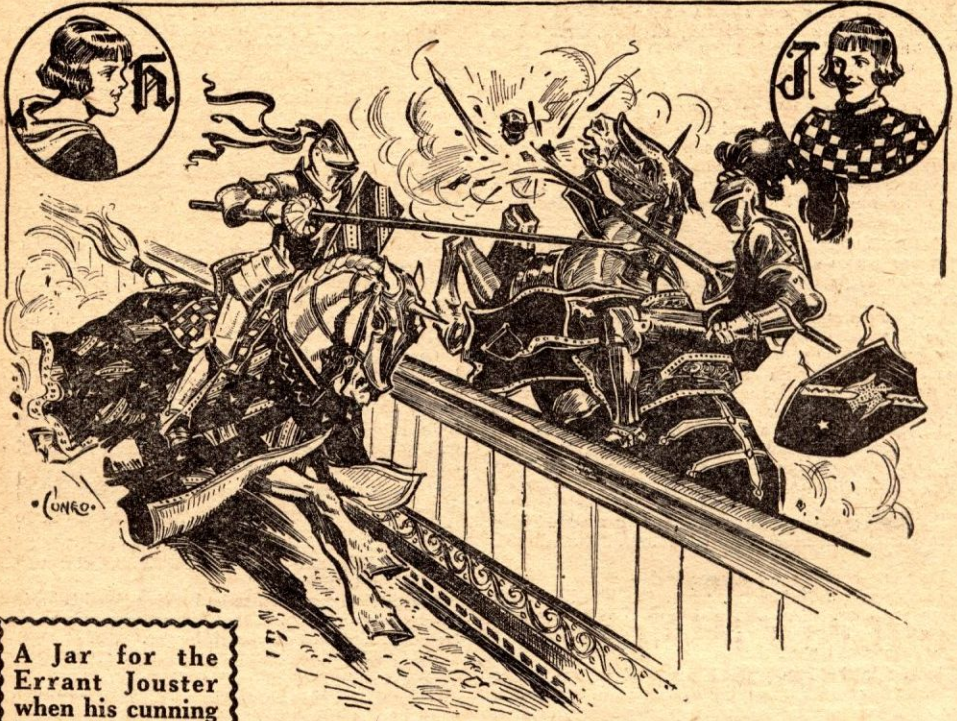
**BOYS' MAGAZINE LEAGUE  
COUPON.**

Boys' Magazine, 2/12/33.



Our Grand Old-time Thriller of the Gallant Knights!

## THE TWINS OF THE IRON GAUNTLET



**A Jar for the  
Errant Joust  
when his cunning  
Plot Goes Astray  
—thanks to the  
Daring of the Boy  
with the Mystery  
Brand.**

**Dastardly Plot.**

**T**HE knight in the grey plume swayed in his saddle, hung on precariously for a moment, then pitched headlong to earth, a jangling heap of heavy armour, inert and helpless.

"Hubert o' Mardale! He wins! Hubert o' Mardale wins!"

The exultant cry broke from thousands of throats as the hero of the hour dropped his lance and grasped his opponent's steed lest it trample its fallen master.

Among all that cheering throng none were more jubilant than the two lads, John and Hal, serfs in the service of the fallen Earl of Risely. They thumped each other's backs and capered for very joy as they pushed their way from the lists in the hope of reaching the near-by castle before their absence was discovered; neither the earl nor any of his upper servants was light-handed with a whip and the boys had no permission to be away from their duties.

"Bestrew me, Hal, but Sir Hubert's a fighter! Would we served him instead o' yon . . ."

"I could tilt a lance," broke in Hal, stopping and throwing himself into position as though he verily had a lance and was mounted on the most mettlesome of chargers. "Didst see the trick o' Sir Hubert's wrist as he thrust? 'Twas thus, and thus, a-n-d-d-d THUS!"

John laughed as his brother made an end of his imaginary foe.

"In truth, Hal, you were never born to wash platters i' the kitchen," he paused and pushed up his sleeve, revealing an Iron Gauntlet branded on his upper arm. "Someday we'll know the meaning o' these and know who we really are. I'll warrant me our father was no serf! He was noble as . . ."

A harsh, cackling laugh interrupted him and the lads found themselves gripped in hands of steel, though they belonged to a mis-shapen little creature scarce four feet high. He was dressed in rough leathern breeches and a square of rawhide in which he had cut a hole for his head and tied the ends about him with a length of hemp. His long, hairy arms were bare; his pig-like eyes set deep under a low, overhanging forehead; his matted hair hung about him in unkempt, dirty masses.

"Ho, ho!" he cackled. "So this is where ye be, my blue-blooded sluggards! I'll warrant me it'll be red enough when your master lets a little o' it from your lordly backs wi' his thong!"

Giving the lads no time to answer, he loped off at almost incredible speed, using his enormously long arms to swing himself forward like some gruesome monkey.

"Come, John! We must cut through the woods to get to the castle before him."

Reaching the castle, the lads hastened to a point at which they knew they could climb the wall, thereby avoiding the barbican and the guard at the draw-bridge. Swimming the moat, they clambered over.



They were running towards the servants' quarters, when, turning the corner, they almost bumped into the earl and his friend, a renegade French knight named De Berg.

"Certes, John, into the armourer's workshop till they pass! They won't see us there."

Then a new and disquieting thought struck him and he changed his mind.

"Do you hide here. I'll run right round and chance being caught or that fat cook will baste me well ere the earl starts on me. We'll meet presently."

John nodded and dived into the dim workshop. To his dismay the earl made straight for it. In desperate haste John scrambled up on to the metal smoke screen over the forge and lay flat. Not a moment too soon! For the earl came stamping angrily in, followed by De Berg and the dwarf.

"Now, De Berg," he rasped. "I've no mind to measure lances with that devil in armour again, but I'm here as ye requested. What's thy plan for his undoing?"

The Frenchman smiled evilly, as he took a tiny tube of rolled leather from his pocket, and tipped a few grains of greyish powder from it into his palm. Carefully replacing the stopper and restoring the tube to his pocket, he picked up a shaving of wood from the floor, folded the powder within it and placed the little package on the anvil. Then he picked up one of the armourer's hammers.

"The Rood, De Berg, I've better to do than stand here watching thee play with chips o' wood and . . ."

"Patience, good m'lord! Patience, sir earl! Thine enemy is good as dead already. Watch! Stand back a little."

De Berg swung the hammer and—  
*Bang-g-g-g!* The roar and the blinding flash came together. The earl was hurled violently into one corner while De Berg pitched into another; the dwarf screamed with terror.

John felt the iron plate heave under him, but it held. He could see nothing of what had happened, for dust and smoke—that hung in a dense, black, choking cloud. John coughed with the others, but none noticed it.

"A thousand pardons, m'lord Earl, I beg," gasped De Berg, as soon as he could speak. "I used but a few grains, yet it was too much in this small place."

The earl choked and swore as De Berg helped him to his feet.

"Holy saints, De Berg, wert thou other than quartered knight I'd ha' thee flayed alive for a wizard!"

"Thus shall we rid thee, sir Earl, o' Hubert o' Mardale."

"Then will I forgive thee, wizard or no wizard," exclaimed the earl. "We'll have no peace while that tool o' Henry Lancaster's can muster his men on our very doorstep do we but kick our own dog or bid a serf be flogged. I'm all impatience! What is thy plan, and how comes gunpowder to explode without fuse or touch-light?"

"This is not gunpowder, m'lord. It was made by a Flemish apothecary wherewith to ignite gunpowder without need o' touch-light. The man died, none knowing the secret of how to prepare the mixture, but I got his small store of the powder. If it is smitten . . . if it is but dropped from the hand to the floor, it explodes with devastating force."

"How will it serve our purpose?" demanded the earl.

John, realising he listened to a foul plot to kill Sir Hubert of Mardale in cold blood, lay very still. Should he be caught now, death slow and terrible would be his lot!

"*Nom de Dieu*, that is easy! Make thy lance-head hot in the forge and split it almost across about two thumbs' breadths from the point. When it is cold, fill the split with the powder and set bee's wax around it to hold it in place. Then, if you but touch Sir Hubert with the point, he will be blown to pieces."

"Dost want me to die b'the torture!" cried the earl. "By Heaven, man, questions would be asked . . . the lance would be examined!"

"And who will probe the miracle? Who will dare question the decrees of Providence?" laughed De Berg. "Whoever heard of lance-heads that explode and kill?"

"I sooth, thou art cunning, De Berg!" exclaimed the earl. Then aiming a kick at the dwarf he added: "The fire, hunchback! We'll do this work ourselves."

So closely had John's attention been riveted on the plot that he had failed to notice his own predicament. But as the dwarf lighted the fire and plied the bellows vigorously, it soon became apparent. For the plate upon which he lay was growing hotter and hotter.

Great beads of sweat broke out on his face; his breathing became difficult. This way and that he writhed and twisted, biting his lips to keep back the groan of pain as the heat became more and more unbearable. Only the fact that his leather breeches and jerkin were still wet from his swim in the moat enabled him to hold out at all.

Gradually his heat-dazed mind became aware of a dull clanging, and he knew it was the hammer on the anvil.

"They're splitting the lance-head to kill Sir Hubert! They're splitting the lance-head to kill Sir Hubert! They . . ."

The sentence seemed to be beating into his brain as the hammer clanged below. His brain was reeling! He could not hold out much longer.

*Ssss-s-s-s!* The vicious hiss broke into the lad's almost numbed brain and a dense cloud of white, swirling steam shot up to the roof. Having split the point almost from the lance, they had plunged it, in order to cool it, in the vat of water kept by the forge for tempering armour.

John saw his chance and took it. Rolling over, he jumped to his feet and sprang for the huge beam supporting the roof. His badly scorched fingers closed on the wood but he was too overcome to hang on. He fell plump into the great vat, and in an instant was seized by the hideous dwarf.

## In The Lists.

HAL had spent a miserable night. He had searched everywhere, within and without the castle, but no trace of John had been able to discover. He was still missing when Hal was chased off to bed.

The lad spent the night rolling, sleepless, on his miserable straw pallet. For he feared that his brother had fallen foul of their cruel master and the dwarf.

Though neither knew it, John and Hal were the sons of one who had sacrificed everything to loyalty. When Richard the Third had exiled Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Hereford and now King Henry the Fourth of England, the lad's father had gone with him into exile. When Henry returned triumphant, the father had been told that his two baby sons, upon whom he had set the brand of the Iron Gauntlet, were dead. In truth, they had been seized by an outlaw named Ralph, whom their father had once had flogged for robbing an old man . . . an outlaw who by trickery and fraud, had now become Ralph, Earl



of Risely. Knowing nothing of these things, the lads had been for years ill-treated servants in his employ.

At the first streak of dawn, Hal rose and dressed himself. Quietly he withdrew the heavy bolts, well knowing how dear he was likely to pay for it were he caught, and let himself out into the castle yard.

Almost at once his quick ear caught a subdued whistle from somewhere above. He ran across the yard and looked up at the castle. John was peering from the slit that served for a window in the chamber occupied by the dwarf. The lad put his finger warningly to his lips to indicate the need for silence, yet he managed to convey to his brother the fact that he wanted him urgently.

Hal dashed inside, mounted the stairs leading up into the north tower three at a time, shot round the corner . . . into the steel-like arms of the dwarf.

"Got ye, b'the saints, m'lordly platter-swiller. I thought it must be you the noble swine-herd was aw'histing," he croaked, showing his fang-like teeth in an evil grin. "Come along wi' me where ye'll be safe."

Despite Hal's frantic struggles the dwarf carried him down to the noisome dungeons below. He dropped him like a sack of bran into one of the cells, slammed the door and shot home the heavy bolts.

Meanwhile, in the dwarf's room, John waited in a fever of impatience for his brother. Gradually his hopes fell until at last he heard the champing of horses and the movements and shouting of the men-at-arms, the clanking of armour and accoutrements. And he knew that all was lost unless he could soon get free. For the Earl of Risely and his attendants were riding to the tourney where Sir Hubert was to be treacherously killed.

The dwarf, having spent a considerable time in carefully removing any marks of the fire from the earl's lance, had taken the deadly weapon to the lists for him. He returned and was standing near the kitchen, watching, when the earl, De Berg, and their retinues departed for the joust. He had come back to enjoy his breakfast before going to the tournament ground.

The fat cook was angry at the loss of his assistant on so busy a morning when everybody wanted breakfast at the same time. He had thought to have a few minutes' rest when the dwarf put in an appearance wanting breakfast.

"Am I never to be done wi' ye?" he grumbled, waddling to the fireplace and picking up a great copper dish of boiling soup. "Why can't ye come in like other folk, ye heathen? An' where's that lazy rapsullion, Hal? Hasten ought of him?"

"He's where you'd be, had I my way, ye fat spoiler o' good food . . . in the dungeon. There he'll stay till I let him out, an' that won't be yet."

"Won't it, ye black, hairy, imp o' ugliness! So you put him there an' I've had to slave like a . . . 'Take that!'"

And he slammed the bowl of soup on the dwarf's head. The copper pan wedged firmly, the scalding soup streaming about his ears. He danced round the kitchen, howling with pain, while the irate cook, having discovered his assistant was held by the dwarf, waddled off to free Hal.

The moment the cook opened the door Hal shot past him and raced upstairs. The door of the dwarf's room was still locked, but with a joyous shout John answered Hal's call. Quickly John outlined the plot against Sir Hubert.

"Never mind me, Hal! Run like the wind and tell Sir Hubert! Haste ye, brother!"

"Keep good cheer, John," cried Hal. "I'll be back in no time!"



**THE FURNACE OF FEAR.**—"Thus shall we rid thee, Sir Earl, o' Hugh o' Mardale . . ." As he listened to the plotters, John felt the smoke screen on which he lay growing hotter and hotter. Soon he must reveal his presence.

Hal met the dwarf staggering blindly up the stairs, holding his scalded head between his hands and moaning to himself. The lad butted him in the stomach, sending him bumping helplessly down the stone steps until he reached the bottom of the flight, bruised and unconscious.

Hal was about to leap over his prostrate enemy, when his eyes fell on the great iron key, threaded on the dwarf's rope girdle. In a trice his knife had severed the rope, and, gasping for breath, he raced back up the long flight of stairs.

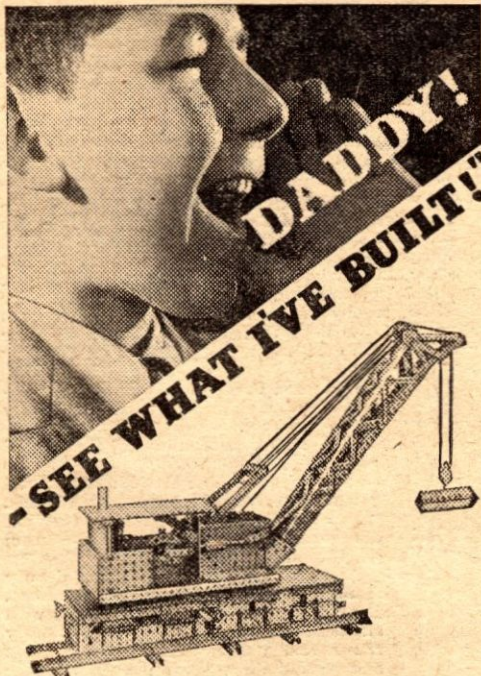
"Come, John, an' for the love o' Sir Hubert, tarry not till we're beyond the barbian!" he

(Continued on page 36.)









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# MECCANO

## THE GUN SMOKE GOLD TRAIL

(Continued from previous page.)

that first o'n file Discovery and claims fer his friends, which they'll make out aforehand. The rest take their chances? How's that?"

Captain Lubano's snarl changed suddenly to an ugly laugh. His men were solidly behind him now because they guessed that he knew the location. But they had taken no care to lay in stores of food. And he had the Dandy Cowboy's sled laden with grub. He meant to do the 'punchers out of the gold. "Awri," he snarled. "I race weeth ze dogs. Yew weel git lost in ze blizzard, or thrown ovaiv dat precipice. Dat best yo' not race against Ignace Lubano."

And turning, he began whispering with his tough-looking gang.

Meantime, the deputy marshal departed on the trail to the gold. It was arranged that, two hours after, Rex and the breed should start on the race to register claims.

CHEER upon cheer rent the still frosty air of Pine City.

The Dandy Cowboy had just come up to the starting line with his sled drawn by seven Northland huskies. Already at the line waited Ignace Lubano, snarling as he restrained his own snapping dogs. He bestowed upon the Dandy Cowboy a wolfish grin.

Before them stretched a long white run, glittering in the dark gloom of winter. But that keen glittering snow was more and more beginning to look like greasy fat under the dark, lowering storm clouds.

Rex's face was stern and set. He was thinking of Lone Pine, whom he had left with only a store of deer meat up there in the snow-bound hills. Rex meant that the Indian and his tribe should be made rich by the gold.

"Th' breed rec'n's thet Lone Pine has cashed in?" he thought grimly. "But wait!"

The sudden crash of a gun shattered the frozen silence. At that signal the two sleds jumped forward. The 'breed, snipping pieces of hair from his dogs, took the lead.

But if he thought that he would easily outpace Rex, he was mistaken. Hours passed, and Ignace Lubano looked back. His face was distorted with astonishment and rage.

Rex was gaining! And Lubano knew that the end of the long, gruelling race was in sight.

"Mush, mush yo dogs!" cried Rex with mounting excitement. "Keep the pace, Whitefoot. We're gaining, boy. Ah, that's a grand chap, Redwood!"

Now they were surging up a mountain shelf that overlooked the frozen river on their left. It was precipitous and awe-inspiring, that drop but a few yards to the left of them. But Rex cared nothing for the dangers it offered. In the frozen valley on the other side he knew was the location of Lone Pine's gold strike. The winning post. There the deputy marshal would be waiting to adjudge the winner who should be first to stake his claims. But neither rival knew that with the deputy marshal stood an Indian, impassive of face. Nor that at the precise moment the Dandy Cowboy drew up with the 'breed, Deputy Marshal Hancock was saying in a growling voice to the dumb Indian.

"Point out th' skunk that tortured yo and tore out yore tongue fer gold, Lone Pine."

The Indian who could not speak raised his arm to point at Ignace Lubano.

But before that could take place disaster came down upon the two racing dog teams. Deliberately the 'breed swung his own team around so that his



sled slowed sideways, crashing into the Dandy Cowboy's leading dog.

The result was a fearful debacle. Rex's sled rose, canted, shot over the edge of the ledge and turned completely over, dragging the dogs in a tangle after it.

Instantly Rex leapt from the sled, knife in hand. Throwing himself flat, he slashed and slashed again—and saved from the precipice four of the dogs who lunged forward on the trail as the harness parted.

"Blazes!" rapped the Dandy Cowboy, and gathering the dogs' traces raced ahead with the blood drumming hot and angry in his temples.

He saw the 'breed running, hot-logging it down the slope as fast as he could go. The 'breed's sled, too, had gone over the side in that crash.

Now he was running alone, determined to win the race afoot.

But at that game he was no match for the Dandy Cowboy. Rex caught up, then pounded on to the waiting deputy marshal, with the statuesque Indian by his side.

"I win," the Dandy Cowboy panted. "And Marshal, yuh gotta arrest that 'breed fer—"

But Marshal Hancock's lips were pursed and his eyes grim. "If I arrest yuh both," he said grimly. "Fer th' time being yuh can go free while I investigate. But be ready to answer to the law!"

Five minutes later he was bending beside the stiff frozen body of One-Punch Corrigan, examining it like the old sleuth of the snow wilds he was.

"H'm! Fell from th' 'puncher's sled, I reckon. Now this here is a queer turn."

Two hours he spent making notes in his book. Suddenly he looked up with a start as he heard the swish of snow-shoes, the rattle of many men's voices. Dim snow-whitened figures moving at a distance towards him.

The gold stampede had arrived on the scene. They had braved the blizzard—and had got through successfully. Hastily the deputy marshal covered the body with snow.

Who had killed One-Punch Corrigan? Was it Rex, or his erstwhile partner, Ignace Lubano? The deputy marshal did not know, but he meant to get to the bottom of this mystery, and in his own fashion.

### The Big Showdown.

**L**ONE PINE grunted. He stood beside his gold claim. He knew he was being watched.

The Indian took up a pan of muck he had dug from the frozen ground and commenced washing it. One pan after another of dirt he washed. The yield seemed enormous. At last with a great handkerchief filled with gold and black magnetic ore, he bent over

a bucket of water containing mercury—he plunged the handkerchief in.

The mercury separated the gold from the magnetic ore, and left a glittering mass. Placing this on a shovel over the camp fire, the Indian watched it till it frizzled and the mercury rolled out. The



MY GUN, GREASER!—Rex and the Mex wriggled forward frantically. Could they capture the colt before it went over the edge?

result was a gold nugget as big as his fist which he held up surveying it impassively.

Suddenly he looked up as he heard a growl of triumph.

"Up weeth yew hands, Siwash dog," snarled a soft sibilant voice. Facing him was Ignace Lubano, with at his back a grinning blizzard blackened gang of ruffians. It was two days after the storm, and all the wild seeds of the gold camp were backing up the 'breed in his play now. As for the marshal, he was powerless, one man against many. He had disappeared, and no one knew where he was to be found.

Rex Remington and his Bar-Eight 'punchers were camped on the other side of the river. They kept an armed camp, and were entrenched behind snow works. For they knew that the mob on the other side of the river were hungry and desperate.

But—they had discovered the gold!

Ignace Lubano was grinning all over his blizzard-blackened face.

"Please to put ze hands up," he said softly. "Wan leetle move, just wan, zat ees wrong and I shoot."

Lone Pine's action was sudden and startling how-



ever. He made a jump, and disappeared down one of the holes in the muck he had dug. There was a tunnel dug through into another hole. And while the mob peered down, Lone Pine sprang up from the farther hole and ran for his life towards the frozen river.

"After heem!" screeched the 'breed. Shots whistled past Lone Pine's ears as he scrambled down on the ice. Reckless, he slushed over the frozen river, to get to the other side—and friends.

Not for nothing, however, was it called Mad Woman River. Though the temperature was forty below zero, the current in its centre was so swift that ice would not form.

Lone Pine leapt from floe to floe as he came to the centre. Then suddenly the impassivity on his copper brown face broke.

*Crack! Crack!* The burn of a bullet in his thigh pulled him up, balancing perilously. He tried to leap to another floe—slipped, and was under the icy water. He reappeared, clutching at a great cake of ice frantically as it swirled past. The sleeves of his leather coat stuck, but the fierce current was pulling, dragging with irresistible strength. Only a few seconds more could he hold out.

From the other river bank came a great shout. "Coming! Hang on!"

A swift lithe figure swept out on the ice on snowshoes. Two six-guns in the hands of the Dandy Cowboy spoke with shattering reports. The crooks on the other side of the river crouched back from that unerringly accurate fire. One screamed in agony with a shattered arm.

The Bar-Eight 'punchers were coming behind. It had been the work of a few moments on seeing Lone Pine's peril; to chop down a long slender spruce, and trim its branches to a pole. This Wun Lun and Bud Malone thrust out over the firm ice, bridging the water to the floe. While the rest of the 'punchers exchanged snap shots with the gangsters on the other bank. They got the better of the exchange, and the discomfited ruffians retired deeper behind the scrubby bush.

While Lone Pine worked his way up on the ice, Lubano moved too far, and with a strangled cry plunged into the swirling waters.

Swiftly the pole was pushed over the ice, and like a drowned rat, half-frozen already, he was pulled out. The 'breed's feelings were by no means soothed when upon the scene from nowhere appeared Deputy Marshal Hancock, grave and collected as he walked out on the firm ice.

"Thanks a hull heap fer stepping across," he drawled. "'Fraid I've gotta put yuh under arrest on certain charges."

"Wat dat?" shrieked the frozen, enraged 'breed. "Yew wan beeg fool! W'at 'bout dat mans"—he pointed to Rex. "Wan tam he keel beeg mans Corrigan."

"That's all right," said the marshal, his lips pursed and his eyes grim. "I arrest yuh both on suspicion."

And arrest them both, he did, pinioning their arms behind their backs, and tying their ankles together with rawhide ropes. Before making away with his captives on his sled, however, the grim deputy strode over to the Bar-Eight 'punchers.

"The Injun salted that claim over thar," he said. "Th' gold's on this side river. But mining law is yuh've gotta reach bedrock afore yuh register a claim. Them rough-house thugs air using a porcupine boiler. To-night they'll get to bedrock, and won't find nary any gold. They'll be main hungry, too. Likely they'll try to raid yuhr side of the river. Look out."

"Shore will," growled Tex McNaughten, and his low angry growl was taken up by the rest of the 'punchers.

MARSHAL HANCOCK went away with his two bound prisoners. He took them up the shelf of rock running along the mountain side, that night, and there on the mountain trail at the precise spot where the sleds had plunged over the side he lit a blazing camp fire.

"Now," he said at last, taking his pipe from his mouth. "Come clean. Which of yuh killed One-Punch Corrigan?"

But he did not seem to be listening for an answer. Suddenly he was alert, staring down into the valley below. There was unwonted activity down there.

For hours the lawless gangs on the other side of the river had been busy with the porcupine boiler, thawing down to bedrock, according to mining regulations.

The porcupine boiler has pipes spreading, hissing



The Sharp-shooting Badmen.

with steam. The muck can be thawed and dug out speedily with this device. The gangs had brought this in over the trail in place of grub, which they now badly needed.

On their side of the river the Bar-Eight 'punchers were hard at it, cutting spruce wood, making a fire, then digging down. A much slower and more laborious process. Suddenly, however, enraged yells from the other side of the river, signified that the lawless element realised how they had been tricked by Lone Pine. They had panned out their dirt—and found no gold.

Bud Malone came running suddenly, gun in hand from his look-out post behind frozen earthworks hastily thrown up.

"A mob of thirty has crossed the river, and's coming a-gunning," he panted.

"We're shore gonna stop 'em," growled Tex McNaughten.

They spread to shelter behind their frozen earthworks. As the mob came on, their guns spoke a bitter language of defiance. The leaders of the horde tried to storm the earthwork. Guns snarled at close range.

Up above on the mountain shelf Marshal Hancock watched with gleaming, fierce eyes under shaggy brows. His lips were thinned, but occasionally he



muttered. He seemed to have forgotten his two bound prisoners on the rocky shelf.

"Th' horde's too many fer them cowboys, I reckon," he muttered suddenly, grimly. "They're pushing 'em back. Shore will get that gold claim afore th' 'punchers git to bedrock. Guess I'll go and lend a hand."

He was turning when suddenly he exclaimed again.

The Dandy Cowboy peering down saw that the hard pressed cowboys were carrying something bulky to lay in the hole they had dug. Lone Pine was with them, gesticulating. The law officer on the mountain path turned hastily.

"I gotta leave yuh to settle th' argument," he growled over his shoulder. "When I come back I wanna know who killed Corrigan. And I want tuh know bad."

Just for a moment his eyes seemed to wander under the beetling brows. Then he strode away into the shadows.

But he did not go far. Once before when he had to take a dead man in to headquarters over the frozen wastes, the law man had been attacked by wolves. Then he had set the stiff dead body upright with stones around it, knowing it would be more formidable to the attacking wolves thus.

It was a variant of his plan that he now adopted.

Slowly, surely he pushed the stiff figure of One-Punch Corrigan forward into the light of the camp fire.

Suddenly Lubano saw it, and the 'breed screamed.

"Corrigan! Yew haf come back. After I hit yew weeth ze mallet, to git ze map! Mercy! Yew haf come back... to kill."

A great deal more he screamed in his terror, making full confession of his crime to the listening law officer. Suddenly his rolling eyes espied a gun on the edge of the trail. How had it got there? Who had left it there.

"Tiens! I keel you Corrigan, kill yew thees tam," he shrieked. "Why yew not spik. I kill you."

In his fear and terror he rolled over towards the gun.

But Rex had seen it too. And believing that after all Corrigan must be alive, he rolled frantically over to try to stop the 'breed getting the revolver and shooting the strangely silent man.

Neither could get at the gun with his hands. But Rex in the drama of the moment forgot that. He

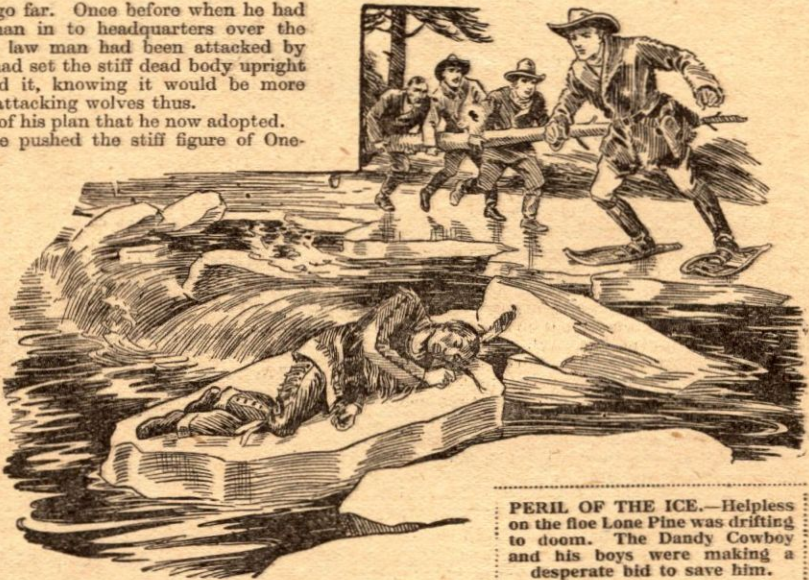
tried to push it with his body over the edge, but the 'breed fighting like a cat, got to it and got the trigger guard between his teeth. He pulled back.

And that did it.

Suddenly a harsh stentorian roar lifted from the valley below just as the triumphant lawless horde crowded round the hole, with the cowboys, far outnumbered in unwilling retreat. That roar was a concentration of high powered explosive being detonated. Bodies were flung in all directions. It was a terrible slaughter of the lawless horde.

Scarcely had the shattering echoes died when Deputy Marshal Hancock walked out of his place of concealment.

"Yuh done give yuhrself away, 'breed," he said grimly. "What's more when yuh pulled th' gun, back, yuh det-nated that explosive that's blown your gang to Hades. Guess it's reached rock bottom for th' mining 'punchers, too, and I'll hev tuh allow



PERIL OF THE ICE.—Helpless on the floe Lone Pine was drifting to doom. The Dandy Cowboy and his boys were making a desperate bid to save him.

their claim. Lone Pine thought of th' wheeze of fixing a wire tuh th' gun, and as fer th' explosive, it was brought on th' sied by the Dandy Cowboy hyar. He aimed tuh use it in reaching rock bottom. Yuh weren't steasing no sied of grub, 'breed. 'Pears like tuh me yuh've over-reached yuhrself all ways." And with that remark the Bar-Eight boys and Lone Pine were prone to agree as they sat round camp fires round their lucky strike that night.

Prepare to meet—Laurel and Hardy, the Famous Film Funsters, in next week's Grand Xmas Number, Chums.

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## ENGLAND INVADED BY PREHISTORIC HORRORS!

A Tale of Tremendous Thrills, Telling of the Extraordinary Feat of Professor Laban Twick, the Scientist who Never Smiled; with Bigshot Bruce, Harry Langham and Pongo.

This Week:

### THE DINOSAURS INVADE MANCHESTER!

# THE MENACE OF THE MONSTERS

"THEY'VE all come ashore—my specimens," muttered Professor Laban Twick, as huge shadows appeared and vanished in the darkness. "They're loose in the land—loose in the land."

He started to run across the shingle, followed by his companions—Harry Langham his nephew, Bigshot Bruce the greatest adventurer who had ever lived, and "Pongo" Mansfield, Harry's chum.

In the Place of Mists the Professor had found a spot where Life had stood still for incredible centuries and had brought a vast cargo of prehistoric monsters to England. During a terrible storm, however, the vessel had been wrecked on that Dorset coast.

The most hideous invasion that ever man conceived was beginning. The Menace of the Monsters had come to Britain.

At once Bigshot Bruce set about wiping out the fearful menace. A small herd of mammoths were exterminated with the aid of tanks. A naval plane helped to destroy a flight of pterodactyls. A mighty, fearsome stegosaurus met its doom.

Yet the task seemed hopeless. For news came from all parts of the havoc wrought by the monsters. A nightmare thing had been seen at Arthur's Seat above Edinburgh, and to that spot Bigshot Bruce, the Professor, and the boys went.

Suddenly from the darkness the monster appeared and seized the Professor. He was lifted high in the coils of one of the huge snakes, and poised above his head were the gaping jaws, with the long, poison fangs.

#### Killer Coils.

THE reptile, Harry knew, was at least a hundred-and-fifty feet long. A number of them had been aboard, prisoned in a great case of glass, interlaced and cast with steel—poisonous, pulsing, twisting masses of speckled and stinging death.

And here, on Arthur's Seat, in the quiet of that Scottish night, above Edinburgh, the captive had captured its captor!

"Don't kill it!" Bruce yelled.

Harry could not then understand why he shouted this command. The Professor's danger was infinitely dreadful. One touch of those dripping fangs and nothing known to science could save him.

The Professor himself was now quite still, enfolded

in the thickening coils. They could see his head and feet. He was not unwrapped in the thickest part of the monster, else he had not been seen at all.

Bruce panted: "Harry, Pongo. Take a chance. Jump about in front of it. Keep it watching you. If it strikes... well, you've tried."

Still they didn't understand him; but they obeyed. The officer and Bruce vanished, running into the darkness.

The boys jumped about in a fashion which, in less tragic circumstances, would have been comic; but which now was literally a dance of death.

The great snake watched them with its staring, lidless, distant eyes. Its head began to sway slightly. Harry wondered if it were going to strike down at them.

He saw the sway of the massive hammerlike head suddenly cease. The comparatively thin, whipcord height above the Professor hooked into a menacing attitude. The monster had resolved to strike down on these two puny things which, capering before its vision, distracted it.

Thunderbolt death would have dropped on the two boys but for a sudden happening away in the darkness.

Through the mighty body ran a tremendous convulsion. To the amazement of the boys the Professor dropped from loosened folds and grovelled on the face of the earth like an insect beneath the massiveness of the deadly creature that now thrashed in quick and awful movement.

And Bruce's gun boomed.

It was a shot to save three lives—the lives of the boys and the Professor. The exploding bullet hit the snake full in the mouth and literally blew its head to pieces.

Bruce, shooting, had yelled: "Lie down by the rocks!"

Their brains fortunately grasped exactly what he meant. To try and run for it would have been futile. They flung themselves in the shadow of rocks, while more than a hundred feet of steel-wire muscle thrashed around in its death agony.

It crossed the rocks beside which they lay. It pounded at them; but the height of the rocks kept the foul body off them until at last it lay, partly coiled, quivering, dead.

Bruce stood, white-faced, tight-lipped. The



officer was swinging a big hatchet Bruce had brought up with him. He was a gigantic fellow, a typical Highlander, and as strong as a lion.

"You see," said Bruce, "no constrictor can constrict unless his tail has a grip of something immovable. The fanciful pictures you may have seen of a man in the coils of a great snake on clear ground are all wrong. The constrictor must have a gripping place. Further, had I instantly shot this beast, its immediate muscular contraction would have crushed the Professor's life out of him. I had to keep it from striking him while we got to work with the hatchet. Our soldier friend here would, I think, knock the bell right off one of those mallet try-your-strength things at a fair. We found this chap's tail coiled round a tree, and we risked all on one blow of the chopper. It severed the vertebral column and slacked him off. Then I shot him."

The Professor was on his feet and was rubbing his face thoughtfully. He did not speak, but he was obviously unhurt. They went and inspected the snake closely. Some fifteen feet from its tip the hatchet had bitten deep. The blow had been a tremendous one, and marvellously directed. It had cut into the whipcord muscles and severed the long and wonderful backbone formation of the creature.

The Professor then started to speak until he realised that the reptile's head had been blown to fragments.

He stood and stared. He murmured something about an irreparable loss to science unless they could catch and imprison another such thing, that roamed about the country.

"But you'd have been killed, sir, if Mr. Bruce hadn't shot its head away!" protested Harry.

"Tut, tut!" The Professor made a little noise with the tip of his tongue. "Don't discuss unimportant matters, my boy, when we are face to face with what I regard as a major catastrophe."

Harry fell back from him. Pongo sighed deeply. They took the news down to Edinburgh.

### The Horned Horrors.

THEY left Edinburgh forty-eight hours later, and in something of a hurry. They had been more or less feted in the northern city, and the headless body of the monster was on view, the public crowding to see it and marvelling at its innensity.

Fear still lived in Edinburgh, for Bruce warned the good folks there that it was possible that this thing, like the modern hamadryad, might have a mate, and that mate might be ranging the hills to destroy. Nobody knew for certain. Even the Professor was hazy on the point. Indeed, as he kept pointing out with chuckles of triumph, a great many theories regarding these monsters were being destroyed by encounter with the reality of off them.

However, at the end of forty-eight hours news was flashed all over the country that two men had been found on a Cheshire road trampled to death.

The hoofmark of the beast was making itself visible all across the wide country. Bruce decided to go down that way.

"We'll run down to Manchester," he said. "And stay there for a day or so and see if any news comes in from the surrounding district."

A Rolls Royce was placed at their disposal. The citizens of Auld Reekie could not do enough for the man who had killed the terror at their gates.

The big Phantom made nothing of the run from across the Border to south Lancashire, and, threading its way through the widespread dinginess of that vast industrial area, it brought the adventurers into Manchester.

The Professor, by this time, had completely recovered from his experience. In fact, in Edinburgh, he had lectured at the University with considerable *éclat*.

They put up at the finest hotel in the city, and Harry thought that the Professor had never looked more incongruous than when he sat down in its ornate dining-room or sprawled and fidgeted in its great and crowded lounge.

They reached Manchester on a Friday night, and to the delight of Pongo and Harry they found that the following afternoon two local football teams were playing at their ground near the hotel. Here was a local Derby worth seeing, and all thoughts of the monsters and everything else were temporarily swept from their minds.

It was a fine day, cold but not freezing. The ground was soft below foot without being slippery, and a wan sun shone without sufficient brilliance to interfere with vision; an ideal soccer day, in fact. The ground was packed almost to its limit when the rival teams came through the



IN THE GIANT'S COILS!—The mighty reptile lifted the Professor high in its awful coils. Yet Bigshot Bruce yelled: "Don't Shoot!" Why?



barrier, and Bigshot Bruce, Harry, and Pongo, ensconced in the vast crowd, lost in it, joined in its shouting as the rival skippers tossed for choice of ends.

Here, there is no space for a description of the game. Though not first-class football, it was keen and robust. Both teams seemed to drag out that little extra something which invariably makes a local Derby such a thrilling spectacle.

They were one all at half-time, and the score was a just one. The home team's herculean centre-half had put in the work of two men, as usual. The visitors' forward line had displayed some dazzling movements which had broken on a rocklike defence.

Harry and Pongo were completely blank on the subject of monsters. They were up to their necks in the game. Bruce was enjoying the play almost as much as the boys. The Professor was chatting with several very learned gentlemen at the hotel, and the subject of their talk was certainly not football.

Second half was even better than the first. The two teams were giving full value for the entrance money. Great play, clean play, fast play and clever. A goal to the home side fifteen-minutes from the end, and fifty per cent of the crowd in a state of hysteria.

Five minutes from the end, the visitors' outside left tricked two men. He was through and no living man could have stopped his cannon ball shot.

And as the whistle shrilled for the kick-off, death descended from the heights of the Peak district upon that pleasure-mad gathering.

A huge shadow seemed to darken the green arena and above the grandstand, running the entire length of the pitch, reared a monstrous, hideous head. Behind it were two more.

"Horned dinosaurs!" Bruce yelled to the boys. "They're coming through."

It was true enough. Three great horned dinosaurs were passing through Manchester like a typhoon. Why the gigantic beasts should have descended on the sprawling mass of that packed industrial area, will never be known; but Bruce always theorised that hunger and rage drove them to it.

Yells of terror rent the air. The players were at a standstill. A mad stampede was started by the crowd for the exits. And then the foremost monster hit the steel and concrete stand. It simply trod on it and the vast structure wilted and collapsed, crushing scores of people.

Then the first dinosaur was on the pitch; players were scurrying all ways in mortal fear. Followed by its companions the monster lumbered across the turf and over the terrace opposite the stand, leaving behind indescribable horror and chaos. And while they went through the streets, killing and destroying, Bruce and the boys struggled to get free of the terror-stricken crowd.

The shops were packed to the doors by struggling people who sought to keep themselves from the pavements. Two cars, trying to make a dash across a semi-deserted street by the General Post Office were attacked and fragmented. Their occupants were dead in an instant.

Two electric trams were tusked and flung sideways through shop windows, like toys.

A motor-bus was tilted over and caught fire in Mosley Street, and the flames of it licked at the face of the thing that had smashed it.

The dinosaur's cries were terrifying. Its eyes had been burnt out, and, maddened, blinded, horrifying, the monster charged all ways like thunderous death itself.

Detached from its fellows, it crashed down Mosley Street and hit the Free Trade Hall in Peter Street, while the occupants of the near-by hotel waited terrified for destruction.

Then it lumbered on. Anything or anybody that got in its way simply went under. It hit walls and buildings. It tore out shop fronts. It smashed in the doors of dwellings and of offices. It blundered all over the place and there was no staying its progress.

At the bridge over the Ship Canal near Water Street it went sideways into the water, smashing lighters to the bottom under its fall. There it splashed and roared and tore, trampling up-stream. Meanwhile, its two companions had run full tilt into Market Street and a chaos beyond description.

Bruce and the boys were simply hemmed in by a yelling crowd. They saw the traffic of the street destroyed. They saw the shops wrecked. They saw people mangled and flung high.

They themselves managed, at the last to squeeze out of that pack, much as the inside of a pear will squeeze out under thumb and finger pressure. They managed to reach Albert Square.

It was surging with people, but a way could be threaded through the fleeting multitude. Bruce and the boys fought on. The big game hunter wanted to get back to his hotel and his guns.

The monsters had swung aimlessly off Market Street and were coming into Albert Square. One of them hit the John Bright Memorial and that mass of masonry went over like a toy thing a child has built from wooden bricks.

Round the Square the things trundled. They bored on their way. They threaded through to Deansgate, and Bruce and the boys reached their hotel.

Out came the guns and the great shell-shaped, explosive cartridges. Away went Bruce and his two young assistants. They did not ask for the Professor.

And here, while Bruce treks through crowded streets, fighting now to get near the destroyers instead of away from them, we might diverge for just a moment and consider the Professor.

A floor waiter suddenly burst into his room and gasped: "The beasts, sir! They're here!"

"The . . . what? My good man . . ."

Through the open windows came the yells and shrieks of the mighty stricken crowd. The waiter had had a glimpse of the blinded one and was able to be graphically descriptive.

"Like a moving hill, sir, with two great tusks on his snout. Like a rhino, only fifty times as big."

"Not fifty times," said the Professor sharply. "Hm." He stroked his chin. "Horned dinosaur, beyond all doubt. Quite interesting. I think I'll go out and have a look."

To the waiter's amazement, the calm and detached person went hatless into the shrieking streets . . . to have a look!

So we'll turn again to Bruce and the boys. By the time they got into the turmoil, the two seeing monsters were smashing down Chester Road. They had wrought a havoc which is inconceivable, and it seemed to have enraged them further. Their passage down the Chester Road was something in the nature of a destructive fight.

They travelled fast. Any traffic they met was trodden underfoot. Any humans they met they killed. They broke down every lamp standard they encountered as they might have smashed down slight trees under their bulk.

If either of them reeled or rolled sideways he simply brushed, with his metalled flanks, the front from shop or house. It was as though two magnified tanks slashed through southern Manchester and tore away for Cheshire—the county to which they first had wandered ere setting foot in the bare Peak district.

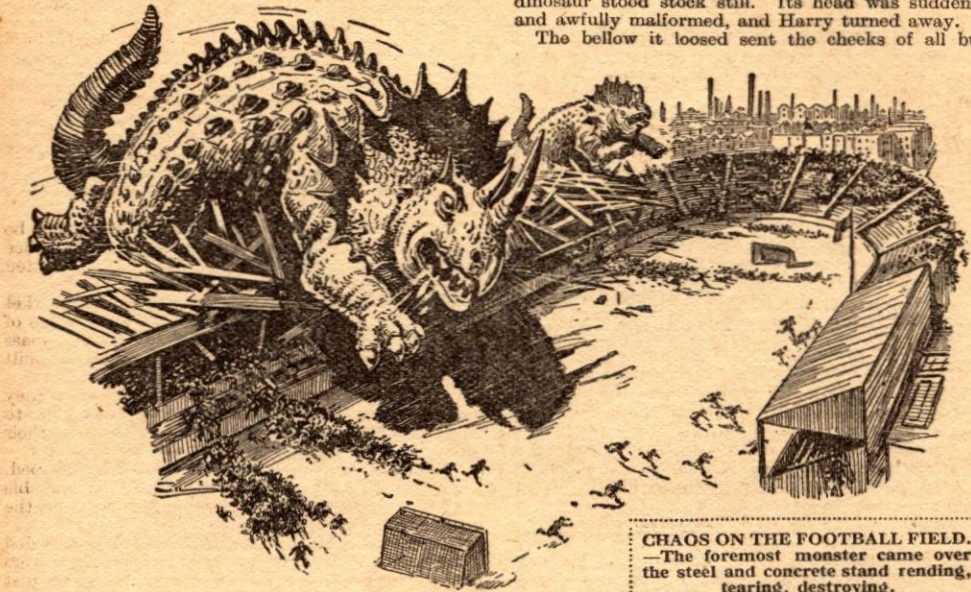
Wild confusion indicated the presence of the third,



the blinded, creature, which had wrought awful destruction in and around the Ship Canal and had managed to get out of that waterway and had barged past St. Mary's Gate towards Victoria Station.

Its movement was known, because men flung word of it from mouth to mouth. Bruce fought his way towards the big station.

The beast had checked round about the station



**CHAOS ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD.**  
—The foremost monster came over the steel and concrete stand rending, tearing, destroying.

area, swung all ways, moaning with pain. By a miracle it missed the Cathedral. It nearly turned down Fennel Street; but it stumbled, slipped, and when it had recovered it was still heading for the station.

No picture of its entry into the station can be painted in words. It simply smashed in. It carried away a great portion of the booking office. It slew two clerks who sought to get out of that office—slew them by chance, for it could not see them. It came to the platforms and trains.

It surged all ways. It ran into a locomotive and overturned it. The locomotive's steam-pipes burst, and scalding steam and the flames of hot coals lifted around the savage creature.

It heaved itself clear and regained the flatness of the open space above the platforms, and there it stood, heading this way and that, swinging its massive tusks, lowering them, bellowing . . . dazed, unable to proceed in any direction.

So Bruce came on it. He was followed by three courageous policemen who had helped clear a way for him, and by the boys.

Thus they were face to face—the great beast, blinded and, therefore, cornered—for whichever way it went it hit something, and Bruce, the boys and the three policemen.

Nobody watched them. Nobody dared go near that station.

Bruce selected the left eye socket. He said: "When I hit him get ready for storms!"

The three big policemen stood passively. Harry and Pongo, though they had done this before, were quivering with excitement and anxiety, and it flashed across the more imaginative brain of Harry that there

might come one time when the great bullets would not hit right home . . . and then . . .

The monster began to lumber forward. It came slowly and uncertainly. The lesson of the overturned locomotive had not yet been forgotten by it.

The big gun boomed like thunder in the comparatively enclosed space of the station.

Another dulled explosion followed it. The dinosaur stood stock still. Its head was suddenly and awfully malformed, and Harry turned away.

The bellow it loosed sent the cheeks of all but

Bruce white as death. It tried to lurch on. The second gun was at Bruce's shoulder, steady as a rock.

Into the mangled side of that wrecked head he put another T.N.T. charged bullet.

The dinosaur's lurch stopped. One of its tusks was gone, as was half its scarred, burnt face. It was an almost headless thing which suddenly rolled sideways, its short, plated legs kicking feebly.

Bruce clicked the bolt of the gun home and gave it another bullet, warning the policemen to keep clear.

And on Manchester there was sudden peace. Terror had flung itself southwards away from the stricken city; and terror had died swiftly, mercifully and surely within the partly wrecked Victoria Station.

The word went round. Crowds surged about the station. Crowds surged into the streets. The police were all out, trying to keep order.

Bruce, meanwhile, got through from the station to the hotel on the telephone. He asked for the Professor. He was informed that on hearing of the presence of the dinosaurs that gentleman had gone out, hatless, "to have a look."

Bruce groaned and turned to the boys.

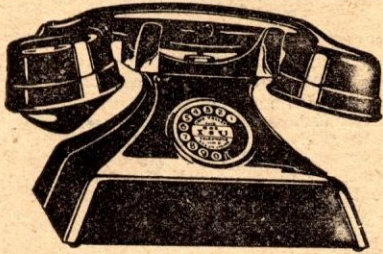
"I was afraid so. He left to investigate. I wonder where he is? He should never have gone alone. He's no idea of danger nor of anything else. I'd give anything to know where he is at this moment."

As a matter of fact, the whereabouts of the Professor can be accounted for thuswise.

Away in the Chester Road, a man who had escaped with his life, had returned to search for the car he had abandoned when the terror came. It was a

(Continued on next page.)





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## THE MENACE OF THE MONSTERS

(Continued from previous page.)

small saloon of nine horse-power, and of a well-known British make.

He did not find that saloon, and he did not find any traces of its having been wrecked.

For, to tell the truth, the saloon was spinning southwards at considerable speed. In it was the Professor, driving absent-mindedly, having the most hideous escapes from crashes . . . hot on the trail of the two dinosaurs!

### The Professor in Pursuit.

THE Professor never knew exactly where he drove that night. He had a blurred vision of interminable streets, of small houses, as he fled through the big area of industry. Ahead of him—for they had had a long start—the dinosaurs still lurched on, and their trail was easy to follow.

They left destruction and cleared streets behind them.

But at last the houses thinned. At last the dark streets—for the lamps were wrecked—ceased to enclose the spinning little car.

The Professor was away south of Warrington, heading straight for Chester and going like a fire engine. True, the car swung a little from side to side, but that was because the Professor wasn't thinking about driving the car at all, but about all manner of other things—such as Waldheim's ridiculous theories and the dinosaurs ahead of him.

He had viewed the destruction they had wrought with considerable dismay, plus some academic interest. This interest was not due to callousness, let it be said, but purely in the interest of science.

He was not far from the outskirts of Warrington, and there were, in fact, still some houses scattered about round him, when the uttermost disaster descended upon him.

He had completely taken his attention from the road—by which is meant that while his eyes watched it, while he drove mechanically, his brain did not think about it, but wandered around other things—when he swung a corner.

In front of him he saw something which the night's illusion magnified to the size of a hill, set inconceivably across the road. He realised instantly that one of the dinosaurs had stopped in its flight and was standing right athwart the way.

He tried to jab his foot on the brake, missed, and, instead, brought it hard down on the accelerator; which was to be expected of him.

The little car jumped like a kitten. Its bonnet hit the offside front foot of the monster and crumpled as though it had hit a cliff. The car slowed round, turned over and stayed over, its engine still running madly, for the accelerator had got jammed down.

And the Professor, shaken and struggling, saw the immense mass above him move . . .

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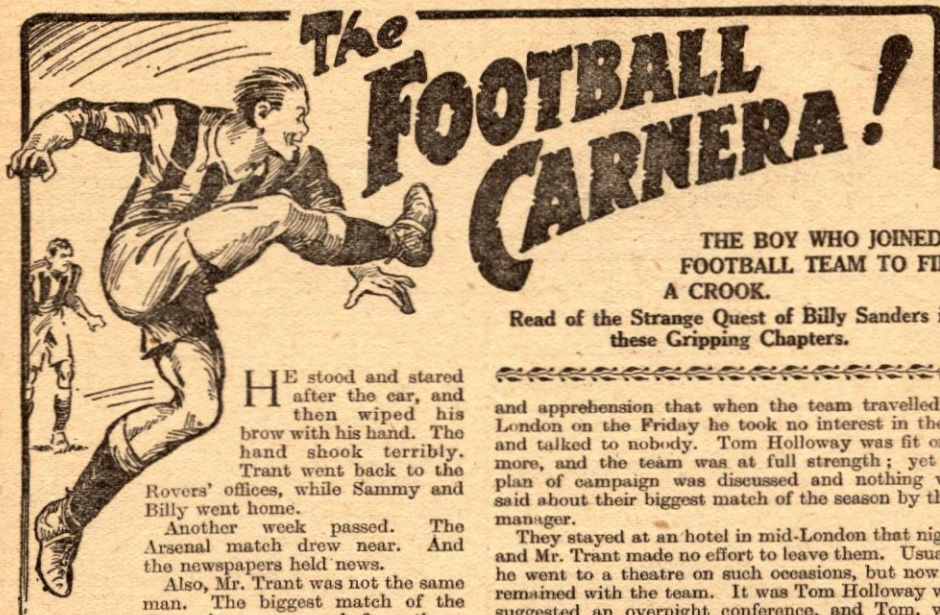
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THE BOY WHO JOINED A FOOTBALL TEAM TO FIND A CROOK.

Read of the Strange Quest of Billy Sanders in these Gripping Chapters.

HE stood and stared after the car, and then wiped his brow with his hand. The hand shook terribly. Trant went back to the Rovers' offices, while Sammy and Billy went home.

Another week passed. The Arsenal match drew near. And the newspapers held news.

Also, Mr. Trant was not the same man. The biggest match of the Rovers' year was before them,

and he seemed to take no interest in it. More than once, Sammy and Billy caught him studying newspapers, and so they, too, studied them and found small paragraphs which interested them.

The Sunday papers, after the Portsmouth game, told how a man had been snatched from outside the Rovers' ground and carried off in a closed car. Identity unknown.

On Monday night, two men walking along Frith Street, Soho, London, were suddenly hit over the head, bundled into a high-speed tradesman's van, and whirled away into nothingness. Identity still unknown.

On Wednesday, three men in different parts of London were kidnapped. And still nobody came forward and inquired of them. Only the evidence of passers-by told of the outrage.

On Wednesday night, after midnight, two men broke into a low lodging-house off the Waterloo Road. They forced a sleeping man from his bed, and they conducted him from the place. The men were masked and wore gloves. The sleeping man was not seen again.

On Thursday afternoon, two men were strolling in Richmond Park. They were snatched away and vanished.

On Friday, a man travelled on the Continental Express to Folkestone. It was believed by the police that he fled from danger. He reached Folkestone, but he never trod the decks of the mail-steamer. In some fashion, he was hooked out of the crowd and taken off.

Kidnapping after kidnapping—widespread, suddenly executed, cunning, and leaving no trace. The newspapers printed leaders on it. They deduced that here was a war of criminal on criminal, for if the vanished men had been law-abiding somebody would have come forward and spoken to the police about them.

Mr. Trant had sunk into a state of such misery

and apprehension that when the team travelled to London on the Friday he took no interest in them, and talked to nobody. Tom Holloway was fit once more, and the team was at full strength; yet no plan of campaign was discussed and nothing was said about their biggest match of the season by their manager.

They stayed at an hotel in mid-London that night, and Mr. Trant made no effort to leave them. Usually he went to a theatre on such occasions, but now he remained with the team. It was Tom Holloway who suggested an overnight conference, and Tom, who really ruled it; though Trant, as usual, sat at the head of the table.

The discussion went on and ended, and all the players went to bed.

The following day was bright and cold, but not freezing, so that the conditions were ideal for football. They went to the Stadium in a motor-coach, knowing that four train-loads of their supporters had come up to Town to cheer them.

The ground was packed, as was the great double-decker stand and the old stand. It seemed as though all London had tried to see the most revived team in the country, and their tear-away goal-getter.

And still Mr. Trant was silent, white-faced, pre-occupied, and as yet neither Billy nor Sammy saw the real reason for his fear.

The teams trotted out amid a crash of cheering. Billy felt slightly strung-up. They had to win this match. Here, he knew, were two of the finest teams in the country before the record crowd of that season. Could either of them win? Was it possible that either of them could lose?

The whistle was shrilling in mid-field. . . .

### A Game of Games.

BILLY saw Gunson shaking hands with the famous captain of the Arsenal, and then took a look round at the great ground, packed to the limit. He felt as excited as though he were at a Cup Final. Here was a game of games.

He knew all about the famous Arsenal strategy and plan. That had been fully discussed by Tom Holloway, without Mr. Trant's assistance. And he knew the skill and danger of the Reds.

Made important looking by being called the W formation, their famous plan had, when analysed, a very simple and clever fundamental idea behind it, and it depended on several factors.

The fundamental idea was the drawing of the opposing defence. This had been demonstrated often, and just as often had heated and partisan



sporting reporters informed the world that the other team had all the play and were unlucky to lose.

The Reds mainly played three forwards—the two extreme wingmen and a centre. All three had to be dangerous goalgetters and swift raiders. The Arsenal were fortunate in having on their wings the two greatest players in those positions since the War.

The second factor on which the plan depended were the two inside men. These had to be super players, halves and forwards combined, men who made the unexpected pass, the swift and strategic move that sent one or more of the three spearheads in front of them launching through a scattered defence.

Again the Arsenal were fortunate. They had the greatest inside left of all time, and their inside right was not far behind him.

This arrangement allowed their centre-half to lie right back and help cover the goal, for actually they had four other halves playing in front of him. Also—and this was what the critics failed for a long time to see—it deliberately allowed the opposing team to appear to press throughout most of the game, for naturally three forwards unbacked by attacking and advancing halves, could not make the progress of five forwards.

But—and this was the big word in the plan—that very territorial advantage lent aid to the Arsenal's plan. Ultimately the ball would be got away to one of their lightning raiders. He would have very little opposition to encounter, and, into the bargain, the two wing men had perfected a system of passes on the run from one side of the field to the other.

Thus goals resulted, and when the machine worked well, many goals.

This was the team the Rovers were meeting, so that it is no wonder that Billy felt as taut as a strung harp string.

The Rovers had won the toss and the game was on. Murch and Rance had instructions to lie out on the wings and crush their wingers. In the middle the Arsenal had one of the most dangerous centres in the game, and Gunson knew that his bit that afternoon was not going to be easy.

Varney and Lacey had been told to hold themselves in readiness to help in the defence, but they had been given no specific instructions to play the W game, which was not suited to the Rovers' particular skill.

On Sammy alone they depended—whether he could, once or twice, elude the Arsenal's tall, stopping centre-half and break past their roeklike backs.

The ball was away, and the best left wing in modern football was juggling with it. Murch for the moment was beaten, and the winger cut in, flicked it back, and the centre took it first time. Billy jumped and got it over the bar, while the crowd rocked.

Billy breathed deeply. Here was an example of the Reds' first time shock tactics.

The corner was placed a bit far out, and Gunson got his head under it and dropped the ball at Rance's feet. Rance swerved, beat his man, and slid it to Harraway.

Curiously enough, the occasion, plus his recent experience seemed to have keyed the boy up to big things. He took the pass perfectly, and flashed away down the chalk, while the crowd wondered at him. He was at least as fast as their own flying winger.

Right half was beaten. Right back challenged. In came the ball, and Sammy lunged for it. But the stopper was there. Sammy lost his chance. He saw the ball slung in a long high swerve across the wing to the left, where winger snatched it, cut in and backwards to beat Murch, continued inside, and slid it down the middle when crowded.

Swift work, accurate work, with Gunson coming in at the right second and booting clear ere Billy was forced to handle.

And the Rovers away again—a long kick from Rance to the right and little Andrews twinkling for all he was worth goalwards.

He was tackled and robbed by the left back, and the ball was carefully placed forward. Centre had it. He fainted. The ball went out to his right and the winger was away.

He cut in. Billy tensed himself. He knew that this man was as deadly a goalgetter as any pivot in the country. He got in his shot, though hampered, and Billy just managed to put it round the post.

The corner went behind after a melee and Billy kicked away to his left. Rance beat the forward to it, and got Harraway through. The boy was dazzling that afternoon, and it is to be believed that the International Cap he ultimately secured, found its beginning in his play that day.

He had the half floundering. Inside right was there to help, but Harraway got rid of the ball swiftly, with a pass that came across like a shot at goal right to Sammy's feet.

Sammy took it, got it down to the turf and went on like a bull. Centre-half challenged, but Sammy's massive shoulder was there a split second too early for him and he was brushed aside.

Backs closing in. Left half coming over. Sammy loosed one of his armour plate smashing drives, and no goalkeeper in the world could have stopped it.

For a second there was a silence, then the ground reeled with the thunder of applause. It was a great goal, from a great pass, and driven in like lightning from twenty-five yards out.

And now the real Arsenal showed, the team which, time and again, has pulled a deficit round into a victory. They played a little faster, but just as coolly. They executed some bewildering movements which simply played the Rovers' defence.

In vain Gunson and the two inside men dropped back. The Reds were not to be denied.

Five minutes from half-time their inside left, feinting to put his centre through, slipped the ball to his winger, who, cutting in obliquely past Tom Holloway crashed home a shot that Billy did not even see.

Half-time one all. A great game played at breaking speed, clean and clever.

In the interval Gunson changed his tactics slightly. He released Murch from his close watch on the outside left and told him to stick to the inside left like glue and check him opening up the game at all sorts of unexpected angles.

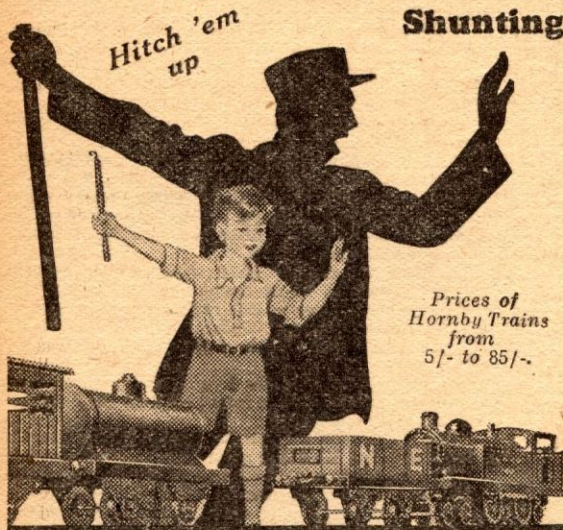
He drew back Varney definitely to half duty and told him off to mark the winger. The Rovers would play four forwards all through that half, and Andrews would be left on the right to look after himself.

Out they came again and off went the ball. The Arsenal, as usual, smashed through in a big attack. The Rovers defence wilted. It split and Billy saw the danger. The centre-forward had it and ran through. He steadied himself and Billy was gifted with the anticipation of a Sam Hardy, the man who made goalkeeping look easy. He was across his goal as the centre's foot hit the ball, and he caught in his arms a shot he would never have saved had he been the other side of the net.

He cleared amid cheers—and the Rovers got Harraway into motion.

The boy was the thorn in the Arsenal's side that afternoon, the one incalculable something which upset their cool calculations. Away he went. Half failed once more to stop him. Lacey was up this time, and when Harraway, challenged, flicked the





Hitch 'em  
up

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# HORNBY TRAINS

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ball back, the untidy but cool inside man Billy was there to take it and, being himself challenged, flicked it off the Reds' boot to the feet of Sammy.

Sammy tried another of his famous bursts and the crowd held its tens of thousands of breaths. But centre-half was right there this time, and a mad yell told of Sammy's robbing and of a cool placing of the ball up the home right wing.

Winger was away. Across the ball went, from right to left, accurate as a billiards shot, with the Rovers spread-eagled and unready. Outside left took it on the run, sliding it before him on the carpet, chopped it back to his inside man, inside punched it down the middle—all three passes done like lightning—and centre let it go for goal.

Cheering like thunder. A picture goal. Billy on the floor. The ball rattling the back of the net. Arsenal leading 2—1. They lined up again.

Swift play now, with the Rovers striving to equalise. Then—a long pass from Tom Holloway across and up the field which found Harraway on the run. Harraway was through, travelling at speed. He slowed round the back in a fashion reminiscent of the great Charles Buchan's body swerve.

The goal before him. Gunson standing stock still, wishing it was Sammy who had the gilt-edged chance. The boy shot as the other back rushed him, and the scores were equal.

If the play had been fast before, it became fierce now. But the Rovers' defence were playing like supermen. They spared themselves not one little bit.

Billy saved shot after shot, and it was from one of his clean catches and quick punts, with two men rushing him, that the ball dropped in the centre circle within a yard of Sammy.

Sammy got it and bolted with it. He clung to it desperately. He knew there were only a few minutes to go, and it was now or never. He was like a tank charging down mid-field, and he was twenty or thirty yards out when the backs and centre-half so closed in on him that further progress was impossible.

He loosed a pile driver. Even at that distance it was travelling with terrible force and great accuracy. The catlike keeper of the Arsenal got up and across to it and beat it out, and it was the Rovers' luck that he should be forced to beat it to his right . . . and their left wing.

For Harraway was following up like a crack sprinter out for a record. He fastened on it as it dropped and he banged it back ere the keeper's feet had touched the ground once more.

Thus the great game ended, with the Rovers three to the Arsenal's two, and the proudest moment of young Harraway's life was when the Arsenal skipper shook his hand and congratulated him on his display.

The Rovers were top of the League, a position they were destined to hold against all comers until the end of the season: and great was the joy among the members of the team until, later that evening, they found that three of their number were missing.

Those three were Frank the manager, and Billy and Sammy. Three more added to the list of amazing and apparently aimless kidnappings which had taken place within the past week!

### Mad Mummery.

SAMMY and Billy had the very haziest of ideas regarding their kidnapping. Like others, they had been snatched off a busy street, bundled into a car, great cloaks flung over them which blinded,



hampered and well-nigh stifled them, and then they were whirled away to an unknown destination.

That destination was revealed to them that night. Once again they found themselves in the presence of the Rajah of Kilshahnistan, and in his great Easternised ballroom in the walled palace.

The boys were amazed to find that they were not the only prisoners. Trant was there, and with him were ten others.

By the Rajah stood Mahmet Singh and Ali Khat. Two giant Nubians guarded the alooved doorways, and they were armed with broad-bladed scimitars. The bizarre east had come to life in what had once been a British ballroom.

"So here we are," said the Rajah, in his Oxford English. "All gathered together quite comfortably. Trant, I think you will pay me the compliment of admitting that I am a good harvester, eh?" He smiled and sucked Turkish delight, dipping his fingers into scented water at his side. A slave wiped those fingers dry on a square of spotless silk, which was instantly thrown away.

"What's the idea?" asked Trant, sullenly. "You can't get away with this, you know, even if you are a Rajah. You'll lose your job before you've finished."

The Rajah's brows darkened. This was so near to the truth that it peevd him. The Secretary of State for India had pretty well made it plain only twenty-four hours earlier. The Rajah's evil workings in Kilshahnistan were ended.

Then he smiled, a fat and unctuous smile which caused his eyes to disappear in two little arched slits.

"I've gathered together the Brethren of the Bear," he said. "It's taken me some time to locate and mark them all down, but I think you'll agree I've now succeeded." He looked along the line of ten men, with Trant at its end. "The Brotherhood is about to hold its last meeting. I, an eminent member of it, am going to dissolve it entirely. Pleasant . . . er . . . Trant . . ."

He sucked more Turkish delight. He still smiled. But the shadow of death stood at his shoulder and leered at the thirteen prisoners before him.

Trant's cheeks were the colour of snow. He said nothing, as the Rajah clapped his hands. Instantly slaves rushed to do what bidding he pattered in Kilshah. He himself got up and smiled.

"I'm going out," he said. "This room is to be prepared as a Lodge Room of the Brotherhood of the Bear. We are going to initiate our two young friends into that most noble order. Then I am going to wipe the order out. A whim, Trant, of course. It will delight my peculiar leaning towards the theatrical and the deliberate to see you conduct an initiation ceremony—knowing that it is also the last of all ceremonies. And, by the way, I shall preside as the Great Bear in the absence of that gentleman."

He walked out. Ali Khat stayed and supervised. Mahmet Singh went with his terrible master. Things were moved. A big scarlet carpet was spread across the floor. A dais was set down with a big chair on it, a table before the chair. On the table was an effigy of a bear. The chair behind the table was carried in the effigy of a bear. The Rajah had got the main points right. A tall lamp giving forth a beautiful blue light was set near the chair.

The slaves vanished, but as they did so Ali Khat said warningly: "All you gentlemen should know that you are watched from these alcoves. I merely speak to warn you, not to threaten you." He said this in his smooth and easy voice, but his eyes gleamed metallically as he spoke.

The Rajah came in. He still wore his robes. There was no effort anywhere to duplicate the fantastic cloaks and hoods of the regular meetings. But he

was announced in what the boys now knew was the ordinary ritual.

"Prepare for the coming of the Bear!" It was the voice of Ali Khat.

They all stood up in front of the chairs provided for them. The Rajah took his place in the chair, and dropped his gavel head on the table.

"The essential secrets of our Order shall be preserved!" he chanted.

The men mumbled fearfully: "They shall be preserved!"

But there was none of the flummery of searching outside for eavesdroppers. The Rajah, knowing his slaves stood around, dispensed with that pleasant ceremony and got to work.

He forced Trant to act as sponsor for the two boys. There can be no doubt that the man found a huge and evil glee in this mumming of an absurd ritual, in forcing men condemned to death to go through the ridiculousness of their friendly society's ceremonies.

Trant faltered over the long and absurd oath of fidelity to the order. He forgot some of the lines the boys had to repeat.

The Rajah took a sharp dagger and scored Trant's cheek with it. He did it quite calmly. The man fell back screaming, and the Rajah said: "One of the punishments for dereliction of duty, you know, Trant. You recall your oaths in the later degrees. You have forgotten your lines, and that's neglect of duty. I can repeat them."

He made the boys speak after him while Trant stood by dabbing at his wounded cheek, hardly able to stand for very terror.

At last the boys were done with. At last the Rajah straightened himself, standing above them on the dais, his right hand extended palm downwards before him, above their heads, and cried in a ringing voice in which mockery sounded:

"In the Everlasting Name of the Great Bear I proclaim these initiates blood brothers of the Bear. Hail, Brethren!"

And the eleven pitiful listeners mumbled: "Hail!" "Further," proclaimed the Rajah, "I exhort them to look up, to look up to me, to the Great Bear himself!"

There was a stir at the end of the great hall. The Rajah's voice died away. All looked round.

A dark figure stood alone. It was hooded, and about it, to its feet, covering it completely, drooped a great black cloak.

Its voice broke the silence.

"I challenge that statement. As a Brother of the Bear I deny that you are the Great Bear! On the hilt of the Knife of Vindication, I declare you to lie!"

Ali Khat gasped something. Four Nubians rushed into the hall, swinging great scimitars.

The cloak whipped aside to disclose that the stranger wore a tightly fitting suit of black and carried something in his hands. That something any racketeer in the States would have instantly recognised as a Thomson midget machine-gun.

The midget stammered sharply. The rushing Nubians swung round, tottering on their toes. They crashed floorwards, their scimitars sliding across the carpet of scarlet, and there they lay while the Rajah, suddenly grey about his cheeks, stammered something incoherent.

And then, just as rushing feet proclaimed the arrival of reinforcements for the Rajah, a great scream rang out.

Through an alcove a tiger rushed. It dragged with it the mangled body of a dark-skinned man.

And Mahmet Singh, shouting in English, cried: "Somebody has opened the gates of all the enclosures. The beasts are loose!"



### The Brotherhood Breaks Up.

**I**T was true enough. The beasts had found those gates open after a short interval, and chaos and horror strode under the night.

The midget gun rattled again, and the man-eating tiger sank to the floor ere it could claim another victim. Billy and Sammy rushed towards the man with the gun, and he let them rush; for they knew he was the masked stranger who had saved them more than once.

Trant and his ten companions were bolting for the doorways. Slaves were trying to tear in. Billy saw Trant meet one of these giants face to face.

An executioner's scimitar whirled like broad silver in the blue flame, and what was left of Trent topped sideways.

The gun stammered twice—viciously. The slayer went down and those with him. There was mad panic and fighting at the doorways. The man in the black drew back.

"Follow me," he panted, "and don't leave me.

life and death in Kilshahnistan. In fact, he merely became a very fat and terrified man dragging along at the heels of two more agile companions and begging them not to leave him.

He and his two friends, and the boys and their guide had barely got out of the palace when a bright brain within shut all the doors and fastened the windows and shuttered them. Thus, save the great dead tiger, all the beasts were shut out.

Also, that same bright brain switched on the great floodlights with which the Rajah—like an American beer baron—lit up his grounds at night. The six fugitives became plainly visible—to the animals and each other.

Black 'loak ran swiftly, and Billy and Sammy kept up with him. They came upon a great buffalo. He was staggering and bellowing, and a tiger was fastened like a leech to his shoulders, pulling him down. The beasts were fighting among themselves.

The gun cracked nastily. The tiger fell away, writhing and dying swiftly.

The freed buffalo should have been grateful. Instead, he put down his mighty head and, loosing himself like a tremendous thunderbolt, he charged straight at Black 'loak and the boys.

The midget gun spoke as the buffalo



**TERROR LET LOOSE.**—The midget machine-gun rattled and the man-eaters sank to the floor. Pandemonium reigned in the lodge of the Brotherhood of the Bear.

I had to let the beasts loose else we'd never have got away. Now we have to run the gauntlet of them."

They were in a narrow passage and running hard. The heavy gun trailed in its holder's hand and Sammy took it from him; for Sammy could carry it as lightly as a cane.

The noise in the palace was terrific. Panic spread like wildfire. The Rajah bolted, and with him went Ali Khat and Mahmet Singh, his henchmen in villainy. Each was out to save his own skin, and it was completely forgotten that the Rajah was lord of

rushed. He swayed slightly but came on. Three great jumps all ways took them, like toreadors, out of his path. He tore on, his hoofs tearing at the ground as he checked himself for a swing round and another rush.

But the bullets and the tiger had sapped his massive strength, and another hail of nickel-headed lead finished him off.

Black 'loak slammed another disc on to the breech. "Mind snakes!" he panted. "You can see them in this light. Don't tread on one, for goodness' sake."



Far away in front of them was one of the great gates. The people who always watched the walls had gone.

The Rajah was now only trotting. The wretched man could not run any farther. His two henchmen were well away from him and likely to make safety. Black Cloak and the boys overhauled him.

He screamed: "Don't leave me! Keep by me with that gun! A thousand lacs of rupees for that gun! Ten thousand lacs!"

"All right," laughed Black Cloak. "I'll not leave you. Come on, you dog!"

The Rajah sobbed and tried to come on. He staggered, and instead of being a soft brown, his cheeks were grey and ghastly in the pitiless light that bathed all the grounds.

They saw a tawny shape flash by some bushes, a running puma with its mate at its shoulder. The two feline beasts were out of sight as quickly as they were seen.

In front Ali Khat and Mahmet Singh had nearly made the great gate.

Black Cloak muttered: "Those two cowards will open the gates instead of waiting to climb the wall. They'll let the lot loose. I didn't think of that." And he snarled something in a language Billy did not understand.

Mahmet Singh and Ali Khat was nearing the gate. They could have ascended quite easily to the platform inside the walls by going slightly out of their way, for ladders led up to that platform at various points, for the benefit of the watchers; but the gate was nearest, and for the gate they streaked.

The Rajah, seeing Black Cloak hurry, seeing Sammy and Billy hurry with him, was again in danger of being left behind.

He grabbed Billy's arm. "You know those emeralds your uncle had? If they're still about, if he still has them, or if you have them, I'll give them to you to see me safely over that wall."

Billy shook off his hand. "I don't want the emeralds," he said quietly. "But I'll see you over the wall if we can reach it ourselves."

Ali Khat and Mahmet Singh had reached the great gates. They were standing against them, reaching up for the mighty crossbar which held them in place, when two lances of tawny flesh, bone and muscle, flashed through the air on to their backs.

The running pumas had seen them, and, as they

were not facing them, and as the beasts were half starved—the Rajah had seen to this against his feast of cruelty planned for that night—they attacked.

Down went Ali Khat and Mahmet Singh. On came Black Cloak and the boys, with the Rajah puffing at Billy's side. The machine-gun cackled nastily; but it was too late. The pumas were dead, but beyond aid were their victims.

They got the Rajah on to the platform and down to the safe ground beyond just as two Bengal tigers located them.

They stood in a British country lane. The Rajah suddenly sighed and dropped to the ground and they bent over him. He spoke with difficulty.

"You—boy—the emeralds are yours. At least I keep my word. No—don't touch me. My heart! I've known it for years. And you . . ." his dulled eyes wandered sideways. "I know you. Boris Slavski, eh, at the last! The Founder of the Order and its Destroyer. Anyhow—I can appreciate irony . . . Boy! The emeralds are yours!"

The Rajah of Kilshahnistan never spoke again.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE Rovers are a great team now, as everybody knows, and their "owner" and goalkeeper is Billy. He split the emeralds with Sammy and Slavski, who simply wandered into nowhere with his share and was lost to sight. Experts from Whipnade and Regent's Park rounded up the Rajah's beasts and found some fine specimens among them.

Of course, Billy is rich and so is Sammy, but neither of them appreciated their riches half so much as they did a medal which they, with others of the Rovers, received at the end of that season—the championship medal of the English League, Division I.

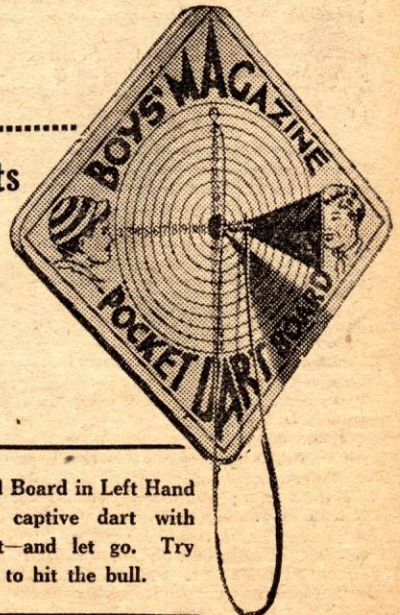
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**THE CASTLE OF RED CANDLES***(Continued from page 8.)*

filled with molten fire reach the surface; it was drawn to the edge by means of great claws, and placed on a metal cradle and wheeled away.

Jimmy turned about like one dazed.

"And we're trapped here—for the rest of our lives," he muttered. "There's no escape, Peter—"

"There might be!" interrupted Peter, and his voice was throbbing with hope. "Look there, Jimmy! The cage! Those men have put something into it—a box, as heavy as lead, by the look of it. Quick! The cage is going up again... Run—run, Jimmy!"

Jimmy ran—slowly, sluggishly, though, as yet, he did not know what was in his chum's mind. After a terrible struggle they reached the cage and it was five feet above them—well started on its upward journey.

"Jump!" yelled Peter. "It's our only chance!"

As he spoke, he leapt upwards; his fingers caught one of the floor bars, and he hung there. Jimmy leapt, too, but his fingers failed to hold on.

"Grab me!" gasped Peter.

Again Jimmy leapt, seized his chum's hanging body, and at the same moment a number of the Silent Men came running up, their lifeless white faces staring upwards. But they were just too late.

With a squirming wriggle, Jimmy climbed up Peter's body, and he, too, obtained a grip on the metal bars.

"We can't do it, Peter," he muttered. "It's hundreds of feet to the top—and long before we get there we shall lose our grip. We shall crash down—to certain death."

Peter chuckled, his good humour returning now they were leaving behind the ghastly pit of fire.

"What price this?" he asked coolly.

Again his trusty scarf was brought into use. Hanging with one hand, he knotted an end of the scarf tightly round a bar. Then the other end was knotted in the same way. The boys thus had a kind of cradle on which they could sit—whilst clinging tightly with their hands.

The last few hundred feet seemed to take hours; their arms were aching until they were in agony. At last, the cage came to rest. Just above was the room with the arched roof. The boys could see now, for the red light of the candles seemed almost bright after the darkness of their upward journey. They clung there without making a sound—and then a new horror filled them. For they thought that the sliding trapdoor would be placed into position. If that happened, they would be swept from their hold, and sent hurtling down to a fearful death, two thousand feet below.

But one of the giant guards opened the cage, removed the heavy box, and immediately walked away.

"Now—quick!" muttered Jimmy.

They struggled to the cage's side, wormed their way up, and then leapt safely to the stone floor.

"The stairs!" muttered Peter.

They ran up, reached the corridor, and then checked. Two big figures were approaching, and, suddenly, a great shout arose.

"We've been seen!" gasped Jimmy. "Here—quick!"

There was a window close at hand; he wrenched at the fastenings, and the window burst open—to reveal, outside, a flood of clear moonlight. Immediately below was the deadly moat—and beyond, grass.

"Jump!" yelled Jimmy.

They heard a kind of scream; the Man with Red Eyes was racing up. Too late! With a dual effort, the two youngsters sent themselves hurtling into space. So desperate was their spring that they cleared the moat; they landed on the solid grass bank and sprawled over. Scrambling up, they ran madly into a bank of mist which came driving down, to conceal them.

They had escaped from that castle of terror, with all its untold mysteries.

Like it? There are more adventures of Peter and Jimmy in the Castle of Red Candles on the way. Look out, chaps



## THE TWINS OF THE IRON GAUNTLET

(Continued from page 17.)

whispered hoarsely, unlocking the great door and throwing it wide.

Madly they raced down the stairs, leaped over the senseless dwarf and tore into the yard. As luck would have it, there was a horse standing, ready saddled and bridled, and the boys noticed with relief that the bridge was still down.

One spring carried John into the saddle, while his brother, laying hold of the crupper, jumped up behind him. Urging the horse forward they had thundered over the bridge and were careering down the road towards the tournament ground, ere the guard knew what had happened.

On reaching the lists Hal dropped off backwards, and hardly a second after him, his brother followed.

"Has Earl Risely fought Sir Hubert o' Mardale yet?" Hal shouted to the men-at-arms guarding the entrance to the lists.

"The heralds have but now gone to escort them to the combat," someone informed him.

Unheeding the angry shouts and dodging the weapons thrust out to stop him, Hal raced for the knights' pavilions. John, a moment later, was grabbed and thrust back.

From the enclosure rode his master and Sir Hubert; the bugles rang out. Hal was seized roughly and thrust back, not only from the pavilions and the jousting ground, but away to the back of the crowd so that he couldn't even see what was going on. He climbed a sapling, with a sense of utter failure.

John was still standing, turning his eyes about for some chance of doing what he had risked so much to do, when he caught sight of the royal standard, floating in all its glory over the great crimson and gold pavilion of the King. A plan, the very audaciousness of which took his breath away, suggested itself to his nimble mind. Full that flag down . . . and all else would be stopped until the culprit had been dragged before the King's Sheriff.

Waiting until the sentry had turned his back, the lad shinned up one of the pillars to the sloping roof of the pavilion and scrambled to the top ridge against the flag pole.

He had his hand on the rope as he looked down into the lists, but he did nothing with it. Again he was too late. The knights had already saluted the king and ridden to their own ends; and as John reached the top of the roof the king lowered his sceptre and the "charge" rang out.

John, almost stunned by what he knew must happen, sank down on the roof and groaned. As he sat down, his hand, groping unseeingly for support, ran down the rope. In order to facilitate the raising and lowering of the royal standard as the king entered and left the pavilion, the flag rope had been weighted with a stone instead of being made permanently fast.

The lad's fingers found this stone and the anger burning within him, suddenly mastered him altogether. Snatching out his knife he hacked the rope through. Then he jumped clear of the flag pole, swung the stone round and round at the end of the rope, and let go.

"The cowardly dog!" he shouted. "Would I could kill him!"

The earl had drawn his lance far back in preparation for that fatal thrust, when the stone hurtled through the air. It barely touched the lance-head in passing, but it was enough. There was a flash, and a gasp of amazement from the crowd. Sir Hubert swerved

and caught a momentary glimpse of the mortally wounded horse thudding on top of its rider, crushing him under its armoured weight.

Pandemonium broke out everywhere. A company of the king's archers, fearing treason, and seeing the lone figure standing by the fallen royal standard, fitted shafts in their bows and let fly. With quick presence of mind John dropped down the slope of the roof or he had been spitted by a dozen arrows. Instantly functionaries and retainers had seized him, and so roughly was John hauled down that the jorlin was torn from his back. By order of the Grand Marshal he was taken round to the front where the king was standing.

"Bring the boy hither," commanded Henry. "I would fain hear what he hath to say."

John found he was thrust into the king's presence, hardly knowing where to start his tale. No sooner did Henry of Lancaster, King of England, see the Iron Gauntlet exposed on John's sleeveless arm than he forgot all about the business in hand.

"Come hither, boy! Thine arm! Let me see thine arm! The Iron Gauntlet, as I live! Sir Hubert! Go, some of you! bring him. B'the mass, what means—"

The king broke off and stared at what he saw in the lists.

Hal, from his point of vantage in the sapling, had seen the dwarf, still clutching spasmodically at his scalded head, lope to where the French knight, De Berg, sat his horse, waiting to see what would happen next. The mis-shapen little creature spoke to his master and De Berg swung his horse round to ride off.

Seeing his purpose, Hal sprang down from the tree. He vaulted over the barrier into the lists and raced across the tourney ground. He reached De Berg just as Sir Hubert, having dismounted and knelt beside his adversary to make sure he was beyond human aid, rose to his feet. Hal saw him as he seized De Berg's bridle.

"Sir Hubert! Sir Hubert! This is he who plotted your death; he and my master, the earl. My brother heard them . . . *Cw-w!*"

He gave a howl of pain as De Berg brought his riding stick down on his unprotected head, but he clung on. De Berg drew his sword and the dwarf, at the same instant, leapt at the lad. Well for Hal that he did so, for it prevented De Berg from striking for a moment, and, in that moment, Sir Hubert had acted. With a well directed kick, the English knight sent the dwarf a dozen feet. At the same time Sir Hubert seized the knight and dragged him from the saddle. By this time, the men-at-arms had run to the scene.

"Seize and hold well that piece of ugliness and this renegade Frenchman," commanded Sir Hubert, hearing the king calling him by name.

"Never mind anything else, Hubert o' Mardale, save the lad that is with thee." John had told the king Hal was his brother and had the Iron Gauntlet too. "Look at his arm, Hubert! The twins of the Iron Gauntlet . . . your sons, man!"

Sir Hubert was too overcome with joy to speak. As for John and Hal they went almost mad with delight when they realised that their hero, the great Sir Hubert of Mardale, was their own father.

The funniest stories ever written for a boys' paper begin in next week's Boys' Magazine. Starring Laurel and Hardy, the Famous Film Funsters. Don't miss this boys