

POCKET MONEY FOR EVERY READER! 5/- FOR SIX RESULTS! GREAT NEW FREE FOOTBALL COMPETITION!

# The Boys' <sup>2<sup>d</sup></sup> REALM

OF SPORT AND ADVENTURE



## Jack Sam and Pete!

All the moggies are after the mayor! Read about Pete's latest side-splitting stunt in this week's rollicking long complete yarn of fun and football.

## CATS!

"Two-free thousand different kind ob cats—and dey climb all ober old Gumboil! I dunno what he hab done to make all dem moggies so affectionate—mebbe dey tink he am a new kind ob cats' meat!"

The 1st Chapter.  
Pete's Little Snack.

**I**N with it!" "Now then, Danny!" "Shoot, man!" "Well saved, goalie!" Pete, Seahaven Rovers' custodian, was playing the game of his life that afternoon, and even now, when his goal was being bombarded from all angles, he still grinned cheerfully and went about his job with the cool assurance of a master.

Together with Jack and Sam, Pete had settled down in Seahaven quite recently, where he had bought a controlling interest in the Seahaven Rovers' Football Club.

It wanted exactly three minutes to the final whistle now, and the Rovers' opponents—Northburn Rangers—were pressing with the fierce desperation of a side that sees an eleventh-hour chance of equalising.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, as he swung his right fist and sent the ball sailing away over the roof of the grand stand. "Try again, old hoss!"

The suggestion was excellent in every way, but no sooner was the ball in play again than it became obvious that the home forwards had shot their bolt. Tired, dispirited, and disappointed, they played in a listless manner, which brought a shout of good-tempered raillery from their supporters, and it was entirely due to their own apathy that Jack Owen, the visitors' centre-half, was able to go through on his own and beat their goalie with a rasping shot that shaved the under-side of the crossbar and flashed into the net.

The game was restarted, the referee consulting his watch as the Rangers' skipper touched the ball to his inside-right, and within ten seconds a long, shrill blast brought the momentous game to a close.

A mighty, reverberant shout went up from the Seahaven fans who had made the journey to Northburn.

"Hurrah!" "Well done, Rovers!" "Good old Pete!" "Pete's the bonnie boy!"

"Dat was a very enjoyable snack ob football, old hosses," observed Pete, as he and the others trooped into the dressing-room. "M'yes! And, talking ob snacks, I am reminded most forcibly ob de fact dat I am feeling rader faint. Smatter ob fact, I don't seem to hab de strength ob a little kitten!"

A chuckle broke from the players as they ran their eyes over Pete's magnificent frame.

"Perhaps you didn't have enough to eat at lunch-time," suggested Wipple, the fair-haired skipper.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack and Sam.

"Dis is no laughing matter, you boys!" declared Pete, turning upon them with a grave, owl-like face. "You know perfectly well dat de doctor told me dat I must keep my strength up. It pains me to tink dat you should be guilty ob dis ill-mannered visibility!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, image, how could you?"

The windows rattled merrily as the players shouted with laughter and gazed across at the player manager's troubled countenance.

"What's de matter now?" growled Pete, glaring from Jack to Sam. "What's wrong with 'visibility'? Isn't an educated gentleman allowed to use a long word widout you fatheads making fun ob him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, hold me up, somebody!"

"Help!" Pete breathed hard and ran his fingers through his woolly thatch.

"I reckon it's time some ob you people consulted a dental specialist," he declared. "You ought not to be allowed widout a keeper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "A dental specialist!"

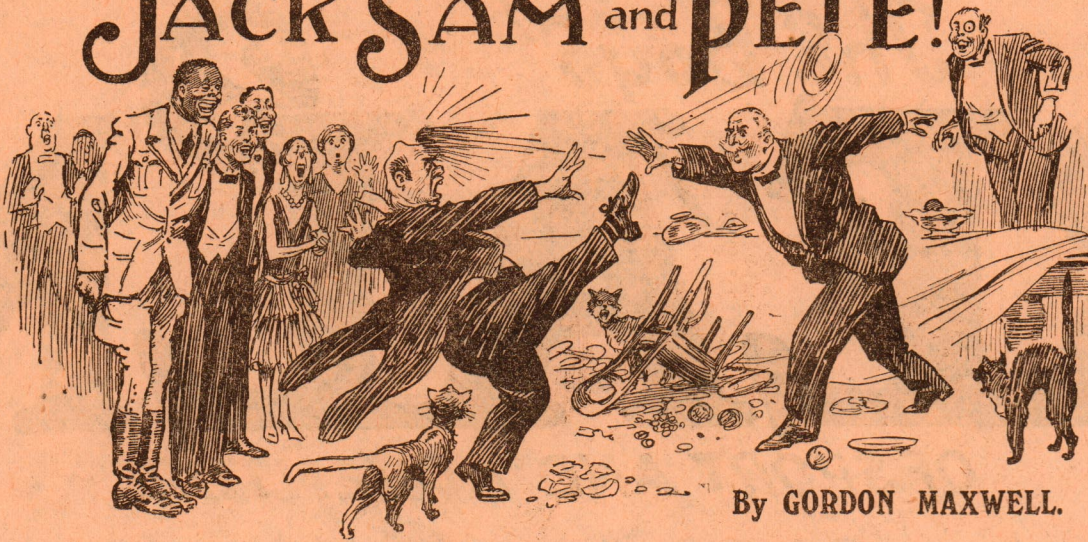
"Now den, Sammy, what's wrong wid dat?" demanded Pete, grabbing his American chum by the hair and thrusting him back against the wall. "Let me hab any more of this rudeness and I shall bang your fat head against de wall-paper—so!"

"Say, that hurt!" shouted Sam. "And de next one is going to hurt more!" growled Pete. "Are you going to tell me—"

"Sure! Sure!" shouted Sam.

COME AND HAVE A LAUGH WITH PETE!

## JACK SAM and PETE!



By GORDON MAXWELL.

This Week's Long Complete  
Story:  
PETE IN SOCIETY!

"But don't pull my hair out by the roots, you ass! In the first place, you meant risibility, didn't you?"

"Ob course I did!" nodded Pete. "Dat's exactly what I said. You fellows couldn't hab been listening to my learned discord!"

"Discourse! Discourse!" shouted Sam, as the other players went off into shouts of laughter. "Say, image, do you mind putting my scalp back in its place?"

Pete released his chum and remained thoughtful.

"Now, what was I saying when I— M'yes! I hab it! I tink I mentioned dat I was feeling rader faint." He shook his woolly head mournfully. "I can feel myself wasting away to a shadow! It was very foolish ob me not to have had a meal at lunch-time."

"A meal!" laughed Jack. "You wolfed enough food to keep an ordinary man for a week!"

"Jack," reproved Pete severely, "how often hab I told you to always tell de truth? All I had at midday was two-free pounds ob sausages, a kate and sidney pudding, two-free cutlets, potatoes and greens, a couple ob apple dumplings, two-free slices ob seedy cake, a chunk ob cheese, a small loaf, and four-five cups ob coffee. Now den," he ran on, looking round at the circle of grinning faces, "is dere any gent here who will say dat dat snack was enough for a full-grown man?"

"Surely you could have had some fish?" said Meldam, the burly left-back.

"H'm! Dat reminds me," said Pete. "I forgot to mention that I had a couple ob lobsters, a Dover sole, and some fried potatoes!"

The players were still laughing heartily as they ran off to the shower-baths.

## The 2nd Chapter.

## "Gumboil" Turns Up!

**G**OOD-AFTERNOON, gentlemen! Can you spare a moment?"

The polite question was addressed to Jack, Sam, and Pete as they were about to leave the dressing-room. The other players had preceded them, as they had a train to catch, but time meant nothing to the comrades, who preferred to travel by road.

"We can spare as many moments as you please, sir!" answered Jack, smiling into the handsome, tanned face of the well-dressed stranger.

"Then come along to my private room, gentlemen. My name is Trenton, and I happen to be chairman of this club."

"I am more than pleased to make your acquaintance, Sir John," said Jack. "I think I know all your records by heart!"

Trenton, who had been a really great athlete in his day, gave a low, mellow laugh.

"I'm afraid my record-making days are over, Mr. Owen," he said. "I'm becoming an old man, you know!"

"You look remarkably fit for an old man, sir," laughed Jack, glancing at the well-knit, perfectly-proportioned body of the baronet.

"Well, here we are!" laughed Trenton, opening the door of a comfortably-furnished room and waving them inside. "Scout round for chairs, will you? If you want anything in the refreshment line you'll find it in that cabinet. I'm a perfect host!"

The room echoed with his mellow laugh as they seated themselves, and

the comrades decided that seldom had a man made such an immediate appeal to them. Trenton looked exactly what he was—a sportsman and a gentleman.

"You people played a magnificent game to-day," he said, genuine admiration in his mellow voice.

"And so did the Rangers," said Jack.

"I agree," returned the baronet. "But they couldn't stay the distance. However, I suppose you've guessed that I didn't drag you in here for the sole purpose of discussing to-day's game, so I'll get down to brass tacks. Was your father at Rundle's?" he asked, looking across at Jack.

"He was, sir," answered Jack, "and in after years he used to brag of the fact that the great J. T. Trenton had been his fag at school!"

"I thought I wasn't mistaken about you, Owen," laughed Sir John. "You're your father's son, right enough! Same complexion, same nose, same tilt of the head!"

"Was his father a very clever man, Sir John?" asked Pete, in a quiet voice.

"A brilliant man," came the immediate answer. "He had a wonderful brain!"

"H'm!" returned Pete. "Dat is where father and son differ!" There was a general laugh.

"You mustn't take any notice of Pete, Sir John," said Jack. "He's incurable. I expect he'll address you as 'Old Hoss' in a moment."

Pete looked positively shocked as he turned to the baronet.

"Now, do you tink I'd do such a ting as dat, old hoss?" he inquired, in a pained voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you what, you fellows," said Sir John, after the laughter had subsided. "I shall be grateful if you'll forget that I've got a handle to my name, and put me on the footing of an old friend! For I feel that I am a friend of yours, seeing that I fagged for dear old Gordon Owen!" He smiled round at the comrades. "Is it agreed that there's to be no more 'Sir John'-ing?"

"Dat's agreed, old hoss!" grinned Pete.

"Good! Now then, I want you fellows to come down to Marshington Towers for a few days. I am having a number of people down for a long week-end, and I shall be really delighted if you three will join the house-party. I'm afraid I'm springing this upon you rather suddenly, but that's a weakness of mine. I do things on the spur of the moment, you know! I can provide you with plenty of sport, and there will be dancing in the evening, and all that sort of thing. Now then, what do you say?"

"Personally," answered Jack, "I shall be delighted to accept your invitation."

"Sure!" drawled Sam. "It's very kind of you!"

## CUSTARD!

"Dere's one ting about old Gumboil, he am always ready to make me laugh—but I neber knew he was so bery fond ob custard dat he would shampoo himself wid it!"

Jack and Sam exchanged glances. "No," drawled the latter, without a smile. "As a matter of fact, I've never seen you looking so fit and well as you do to-day. You've got quite a colour!"

"Well, all I can say, boys, is dat I'm not feeling fit and well," declared Pete, rolling his eyes. "I—I tink I'm likely to hab a nervous breakdown at any moment. Ob course, I've not mentioned it, but I've been right off colour for weeks. My heart thumps, and bright lights stab me in de eye. And—and I don't sleep at night."

"I'm surprised to hear that, image," said Jack gravely, "for I happen to know that there have been seven complaints about your snoring during the last week!"

"P'raps so, old hoss," said Pete, "but I just snored in order to make myself believe dat I was asleep! Den again, boys, I—I come over kind ob giddy, so dat I don't know where I am, or what I'm doing. Now, wouldn't it be awful if I had one ob dese attacks ob giddiness when I'm driving de car? Dere would be a smash up for certain, 'cos de road to Leatherton Mowbray is considered to be de most dangerous in England—a kind ob deathtrap, if you understand what I mean?"

"Yes, we know what you mean, image," chuckled Jack, "and allow me to tell you that there's nothing doing if you think you're going to back out. You promised Trenton that—"

"That's so," put in the baronet, with a laugh. "As I've told you, I can offer you plenty of sport, and perhaps there's no harm in my mentioning that I've got the finest chef in England!"

A spark of interest dawned in Pete's dark eyes.

"Beg pardon, old hoss?"

"I said that I've got the finest chef in England," smiled Sir John. "The man's simply wonderful, and if you're fond of perfectly-cooked food I—"

"Nuff said, old hoss!" grinned Pete. "I tink I shall be well enough to come, after all!"

Marshington Towers proved to be a fine old mansion, standing in many acres of park land, and the avenue of elm-trees through which they passed had all the grandeur of an aisle in an ancient cathedral.

The three comrades looked about them with interested eyes as they passed into the panelled hall, with its lofty ceiling, its trophies of the chase, and the great, open fireplace, in which blazed aromatic logs. In less than five minutes even Pete began to feel thoroughly at home.

(Continued on next page.)



**CROWNED WITH THE CUSTARD!** The enraged colonel reached slammed it full on to Gumboil's head. "Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "It's fine to see you two habing your li'l bit ob fun!"

At the luncheon hour the baronet and his guests appeared to be upon the best of terms with the world as they strolled across the hall on their way to the dining-room.

"Lunch is quite an informal, go-as-you-please kind of meal with us," explained Sir John; "for people come in just when they like. Most of 'em are on the golf course this morning, so I don't expect them back yet awhile."

As he had predicted, they found the dining-room deserted, save for one person—a thick-set, baldheaded man who had his back to them as they passed through the doorway.

"I may as well start the introductions at once," smiled Trenton. Walking ahead of the comrades, he approached the solitary diner and placed his hand lightly upon a broad shoulder.

"I want you to meet three friends of mine," he said, smiling down at his guest.

"Charmed, I'm sure!" said the thick-set man, in a throaty voice.

Then he stood up and turned round, and the comrades found themselves face to face with Amos Gumbрил!

**The 3rd Chapter.  
Amos Finds Trouble.**

**A**MOS GUMBRIL hated Pete with a black, all-absorbing hatred that amounted to monomania. The two had clashed almost from the day the comrades had landed at Seahaven, and Gumbрил's hatred of Pete had increased steadily from the moment of their first meeting.

Amos had a knack of getting most of the things he desired in this world, but in the matter of Seahaven Rovers Football Club he found himself up against a brick wall. His great wish was to own and control the club, and in order to gratify that wish he had schemed and plotted to have Pete disgraced and hounded out of the town. But on every occasion Pete had managed to get the better of the affair. Indeed, many were the occasions upon which he had made Gumbрил the laughing-stock of Seahaven—and Amos was mayor! Small wonder, then, that the bull-necked, bald-headed fellow did not love Pete as a brother!

And now, by some trick of Fate, they found themselves face to face in Marshington Towers—fellow-guests beneath the same roof!

The tense silence did not last for more than three seconds, and it was Jack who stepped into the breach.

"I think we have already made the acquaintance of this gentleman, Trenton," he said, treating Amos Gumbрил to the suspicion of a bow. "Good!" cried Sir John heartily. "Splendid, my dear fellows! I am more than pleased that you know each other!"

Amos Gumbрил tried to control himself as he looked down the room, yet his heavy features were a mask of hate as he fixed his smouldering little eyes upon his enemy.

"Good-morning, old hoss!" said Pete, with an expansive smile that threatened to bisect his dusky countenance. "Dis is a pleasure dat I did not expect. I didn't expect to find you here, but I'm glad I came!"

"And your presence here is an outrage that I did not expect!" snarled Amos, a wave of angry blood rushing to his head. "Am I right in thinking that you are here as a guest?"

"Perfectly right, old hoss!" "Huh!" snorted Amos in disgust. "I should imagine that your place is in the servants' hall!"

"Really, Gumbрил!" protested Sir John, colouring with displeasure. "I thought I mentioned that Pete is a friend of mine!"

"Then I must say that you've got a very poor taste in friends!" flashed Amos.

"So it seems," returned the baronet biting. "I hate to have to remind you, Gumbрил, but please remember that you are my guest, and that these three gentlemen are here at my special invitation. I have not the ghost of an idea as to why there is friction between you, but on this occasion you are wholly to blame for the unpleasantness!"

"So you side with the grinning hound, do you?" fumed Amos, quivering with fury.

"It's not a matter of siding with anyone, my dear fellow," said Sir John patiently, "but I think you might restrain yourself whilst you are staying under my roof. After all, you must remember that there are other guests here in addition to yourself. Why can't you bury the hatchet for the next day or two?"



**PETE TURNS PALE!** "Hab I gone pale?" asked Pete, and he swayed as he rolled his eyes. "I'm not feelin' bery well, Sammy. 'Smatter ob fact, I hab come ober kind ob giddy; I tink I'm likely to hab a nerbous breakdown in two-free minutes!"

Amos Gumbрил's thick lips curled back from his ugly teeth. He looked positively hideous at that moment.

"It is a scandal that you should allow this black hooligan inside your doors, Sir John!" he declared. "It is an insult to your other guests!"

"I think I am the best judge of that, Gumbрил!" returned Trenton, his voice icy.

"For two pins I'd pack my bag and clear out!"

The baronet remained silent. "But I'll see him drawn and quartered before he'll drive me away!" shouted Amos, clenching his massive fists. "I'll stay here! I'll see the hound humiliated! I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried a fresh young voice, and the next moment a good-looking youngster burst into the room and gazed upon the troublous scene with surprise in his blue eyes. "Do I hear the strains of a spot of bother, or something?"

"Not at all, old hoss!" grinned Pete. "It's merely the canary exercising its lungs!"

"This is my son, gentlemen!" smiled Sir John. "Tom, you young scoundrel, you're going to meet Jack, Sam, and Pete, of whom you have heard so much!"

A lot of handshaking followed, and it was at once obvious that Tom Trenton and Pete were going to become great pals.

Sir John, meanwhile, was talking quietly to Amos Gumbрил.

"Please don't make matters too difficult for me," he said.

"Why not send the fellow away?" asked Amos. "After all, one expects to meet gentlemen in a country house!"

"Quite so!" agreed the baronet. He turned his head and smiled across at the others. "Come along, you laggards! Sit down where you like and get busy!"

"I've finished!" snarled Amos, thrusting his chair backwards with a violence which overturned it. "I'll go!"

Leaving the chair where it had fallen, he jerked his bullet head at his host, snorted angrily, and strode heavily out of the room.

"I tink," observed Pete, a mischievous light in his dark eyes, "dere is going to be some fun before Amos Gumboil is very much older! M'yes!"

The comrades did not see Amos again until a few minutes before the gong for late dinner was due to give tongue. A wave of colour overspread Gumbрил's pouchy countenance when he came down and saw that Jack, Sam, and Pete were on the best of terms with everyone. Nobody took any particular notice of him, and neither was he greeted effusively when his host introduced him to the company.

So much for his staying in in order to witness Pete's humiliation!

His enemy, as a matter of fact, was giving a whimsical account of a wild boar hunt, and a shout of laughter went up when he came to the climax.

Amos was not within earshot, but

no sooner did the roar of merriment ring out than he grunted and strode across the room. He confronted Pete with blazing eyes.

"I wouldn't mind betting a pound to a penny that that laugh was at my expense!" he cried, choking with rage.

A sudden silence settled upon the company as he made the extraordinary accusation, and most of them looked at him as though he were some rare and unlovely zoological specimen.

"I assure you dat you are quite wrong, old hoss!" declared Pete, with a bland smile. "I was certainly talking about wild boars, but your name didn't come into de story!"

The others chuckled as Gumbрил's face turned a decided shade of purple.

"I don't believe you!" shouted Amos, his massive bulk quivering with rage. "You are telling a deliberate lie!"

Pete, who was on his best behaviour, spread his fingers and shrugged.

"I can only refer you to dese gentlemen," he said.

"I assure you, sir," said a grey-haired, poker-backed, military-looking man, "that what Pete said is perfectly true. Your name did not crop up!"

Fortunately for everyone concerned, the dinner-gong boomed through the house at this moment, and the company split up into twos and threes and strolled out of the room.

**The 4th Chapter.**

**Amos Finds More Trouble!**

**P**ETE was grinning cheerfully as he entered the magnificent old banquet-hall in the company of Colonel "Curry" Bristling, a purple-faced, fiery-tempered warrior, who had taken a

liking to the Rovers' player manager. Bristling took immediate likes and dislikes, and the fierce manner in which he glared at Amos Gumbрил suggested that the Mayor of Seahaven possessed all those qualities which he—the gallant colonel—disliked most in a man.

"Nasty bit of work, sir!" he rasped, turning to Pete. "Unpleasant person! Reminds me of something I've seen at the Zoo! And he's going to sit facing us, confound him!"

"Smatter ob fact," grinned Pete, "he's got a bery sweet nature!"

"What's his name?" grunted the colonel, glaring at Amos across the table.

"Gumboil, old hoss!" Bristling grunted.

"Gumboil—eh?" he echoed. "And a very good name, too, sir! Hate gumboils! Neither useful nor ornamental!" He looked straight into the mayor's little eyes. "What's he looking at me for, the infernal hound! Is there anything the matter with him?"

"Hush!" warned Pete, lowering his voice. "Hahn't you heard de sad story?"

"What sad story, sir?"

Well knowing that Gumbрил's little eyes were boring into him, Pete ran on:

"He's what is called a catsomaniac," said Pete, lowering his voice.

"What's that?"

"I should hab tought that anybody would hab known dat," said Pete. "A catsomaniac is obviously a mentally-deranged person who has a passion for collecting cats! The bery word speaks for itself!"

"Cats! Cats!" snorted Bristling. "I hate the things! Loathe 'em! I'd have 'em all destroyed! Has he got a lot of 'em?"

"A lot?" echoed Pete, with a

pitiful smile. "He's got thousands ob dem, a whole cattery full ob dem! Never destroy a cat, my dear sir; always send dem along to him! I'll gib you his address after dinner!"

"I don't like his face," rasped the colonel; "but I suppose he means well, confound him!"

"He's got a sweet and beautiful nature, as I've told you," declared Pete, looking dreamy.

"I'll get some cats for him!" grunted his companion, with a kind of vicious generosity. "I'll get hundreds of the mangy brutes and send 'em to him! I bet he'll be mighty grateful, the baldheaded old reptile!"

"I'm sure he will!" said Pete, with conviction. "He won't know how to tank you!"

"Nobody seems to be speaking to him," rasped Bristling, "and I don't blame 'em! Cats!"

"I s'pect he's tinkin about his pussies," said Pete; "wonderin how dey're getting on widout him! I'm told dat he knows dem all by name!"

"I wonder what he'll call mine when I send 'em along?"

"I wonder!" murmured Pete, stoutly refusing to let his imagination have full rein. "I'm told," he ran on, "that he always carries a cat or two about wid him. Just for company, you know, in case he gets lonely! But I don't know how true it is, ob course! People say dat he's got a secret pocket, and dat—"

"Meece-ow! Meece-ow!"

"You're right! You're right!" rasped the colonel. "Confound the feller's impudence! Did you hear it?"

Pete shook his head. Of course he had not heard a cat, seeing that the strange "meowing" was his own ventriloquial effort.

"No," he answered. "What—"

"Mee-ow!"

"There!" snorted Bristling. "You heard it that time, didn't you? One of his mangy brutes—"

"Yes, I tink I did," confessed Pete. "It wasn't very loud, was it?"

"No; kind of muffled! I'm going to ask him about his—"

"Meece-ooooow!"

All eyes were upon Amos Gumbрил by this time, and it was obvious that everybody suspected him of harbouring a mouser beneath his bulging shirtfront. The plaintive, wailing noise certainly came from that direction.

"Excuse me, sir," snorted Colonel Curry Bristling, "but is it possible that you've got one of your confounded cats up your shirt, sir? Take it away, sir! Drown the brute, sir!"

"Der-der-do what?" gasped Amos, looking as though he would explode at any moment.

"I know all about it!" grunted Bristling, his eyes flashing fire. "I know you've got one of your cross-eyed cats in your secret pocket!"

"Cats! Cats!" snorted Gumbрил. "I hate the sight of 'em! Do you think I carry the beastly things about with me? Do you really believe—"

"Meece-ooooow!"

"There!" cried Bristling, in triumph. "What was that, sir? Answer me, sir!"

"He's very touchy about his hobby," whispered Pete. "All dese catsomaniacs are! They declare dat dey hate cats, yet dey just live for de gentle creatures!"

Amos, purple of face, was holding the centre of the stage, and he began

(Continued on next page.)

**Special Topical Semi-Final Yarn Next Wednesday!**

Here's another mirth-making yarn! All Seahaven is turned loose with picks and shovels—looking for buried treasure!

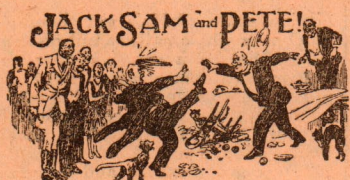


Gumbрил tries to get the treasure-hunters to dig up the Rovers' ground—but Pete has a say in the matter!

**"PETE'S TREASURE HUNT!"**

A side-splitting long complete yarn of the Semi-finals. Gumbрил is sorry that he ever tried to get his own back on good old Pete. This lively story is a real winner.

**NEXT WEEK!.....ORDER IN ADVANCE!**



(Continued from previous page.)

to grimace in a most unlovely fashion as necks were craned in order to get a really good look at him.

"This feller collects cats, you know," volunteered Colonel Curry Bristling. "He's got a cattery full of them, and he knows them all by name! And—"

"What are you talking about, you maniac?" thundered Amos, lifting a mighty fist and bringing it down with a force which shattered his soup-plate and sent its boiling contents spurting in all directions.

This catastrophe was altogether too much for Pete.

"Yah, yah, yah!" he roared, swaying back in his chair and making the banquetting-hall echo with his mighty guffaw. "I'm afraid I can't compliment you upon your table manners, old hoss!"

A moon-faced waiter was soon busy with napkins and a crumb-tray, and he was on the point of departing with the debris when a fierce cat-fight broke out almost beneath his feet. At least, such was his impression. Uttering a wild yell, he jumped high into the air and released his grip of the crumb-tray and its contents, and by a great stroke of bad luck—for Amos Gumbri!—the whole lot descended upon his bald head with a rattle and a clatter that almost drowned Pete's roar of laughter.

"Yah, yah, yah! Dere's no need to get excited, old hoss!"

The merriment had become general by this time, although the ladies tried to look shocked and sympathetic.

"Better than a pantomime!" chuckled the gallant colonel, turning twinkling eyes upon Pete. "I didn't think the feller could be so amusing!"

The words reached the burning ears of Amos Gumbri!, and he was speechless and on the verge of collapse as he gripped the arms of his chair and seated himself.

"Mee-ooow! Fzzzzzzsh! Wow-wow-wow! Mee-ow!"

Amos emitted a roar of fury and leapt out of his chair with a suddenness which suggested that he had planted himself upon a six-inch tin-tack, and cold perspiration was streaming down his flabby cheeks as he pushed his chair back and looked for the mangled corpse of the unfortunate pussy. But there was no sign of a cat, and the expression of utter bewilderment that crept into his face sent the whole party into convulsions.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Yah, yah, yah! You'll be de death ob dis child, my poor old hoss!"

"I know I shall, you black scoundrel!" thundered Amos, swinging round upon his enemy. "I believe that you're at the bottom of the whole business!"

"My friend had nothing whatever to do with it, Gumboil!" rasped the colonel, his eyes blazing. "You know perfectly well that you keep some of your confounded cats in your secret pocket!"

Gumbri!'s prominent Adam's apple disappeared behind his collar as he glared at the purple-faced warrior and gulped noisily.

"The whole thing is most unfortunate, my dear fellow!" declared Sir John, hoping to pour oil on troubled waters.

"You should keep your beastly cats under proper control!" growled Amos, dropping heavily into his chair.

"But they're not my cats!" laughed Trenton. "We don't keep cats!"

"I 'spect dey strayed in!" observed Pete.

Amos was glowering as he fixed his wicked little eyes upon the speaker. "You should know, you black hound!"

The 5th Chapter. The "Catsomania"!

THAT, it seemed, was to be the end of the cat episode, for afterwards conversation became general, and Amos Gumbri! appeared to be forgotten. The dinner went smoothly from that moment onwards, and even Gumbri! was looking pleasant and contented by the time the coffee and liqueur stage was reached. He had, as he phrased it, "done himself well,"

and he was in a condition to pay a glowing tribute to the contents of Sir John's wine-cellar. Amos felt mellow—at peace with the world.

He even went so far as to start a conversation with the neighbour on his right, who happened to be Tom Trenton.

"I suppose you'll soon be going out into the world to make a name for yourself, my boy?" he said, in his most pompous manner. "Always remember that honesty is the best policy!"

"Yes, Mr. Gumboil!"

"My name is Gumbri!, you young idiot!" growled Amos, flushing with anger.

"But your coloured friend, Mr. Pete—"

"That scoundrel is no friend of mine, boy!" broke in Gumbri! testily. "Furthermore, I refuse to discuss him! Kindly understand that!"

"Certainly, sir!" murmured Tom, looking contrite. "Talking about making a name for oneself, I suppose you've done things, sir?"

Amos sat back in his chair, smiled in a superior kind of way, and thrust his thumbs into the armholes of his white waistcoat.

"You're quite right, my boy," he admitted. "I am a man who has done things! As a matter of fact, I—"

He paused for a moment, so Pete, the ventriloquist, put the rest of the sentence into his mouth:

"I—er—would do anybody!"

It so happened that a sudden silence came at that precise moment, so everyone in the banquetting-hall heard the words, and felt perfectly convinced that they had been uttered by Amos.

"But that's not strictly honest, sir," said Tom, with a smile. "Doing people, I mean!"

"Eh? What's that?" snorted Amos, going very red as he realised that he was again the centre of attraction. "What's not strictly honest? Eh? What?"

"You said you would do anybody if—"

Had You Heard Dis One?



I hab just heard anudder story about Sambo. Next time I meet Gumboil I'm going to tell it to him, and see if I can't raise a smole on his lubly features.

Sambo and anudder feller got a job in a timber-yard. Dey had to carry planks from a stack into a shed. De foreman noticed dat Sambo was only carryin' one plank at a time, while de odder feller carried two.

"What am de idea ob dis?" says de foreman. "Why am you only carryin' one plank, Sambo?"

"Golly, dat's all right!" says Sambo. "Can't you see dat my mate am too lazy to make two journeys, so he am talking both planks at once!"

I tink dat ought to cheer Gumboil up a bit. Yah, yah, yah!

"I said nothing of the kind, you lying little hound!" growled Amos.

"Smatter ob fact, I heard you wid my own shell-like ears," put in Pete. "Ob course, I hab no doubt dat you were speaking de truth—"

"I haven't said a word about doing anybody!" shouted Gumbri!, puffing out his florid cheeks, and glaring round at the smiling faces. "I would have you know that I am a man of honour, a man who is respected and looked up to wherever he goes! I don't say that in a bragging sense, but merely to prove that I am—er—that I am—er—"

He snapped his fingers as an aid to hitting upon the right expression, and he was still hesitating when Pete helped him out.

"I am a bat-faced, baldheaded buffoon who ought to be behind prison bars!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Dat's de second confession, old hoss!"

He was an expert ventriloquist, and so perfect was his mimicry and voice-throwing that no one of the company suspected the true state of affairs. That is, no one, with the exception of Jack and Sam, who knew that their chum found no lingual difficulty in putting words into another person's mouth. It is safe to assume, then, that Pete's usual mode of speech was all part of his fun.

All eyes were upon Amos Gumbri!; it was obvious that nobody loved him.

"What the deuce is the matter with the lot of you?" he exploded at last. "You don't think that I called myself a baldheaded buffoon, do you? And you don't think I'd say that I ought to be in prison, do you?" He was wild-eyed as he glared round. "You—you've all gone stark, staring mad! I ought to know what I said! I ought to—to—"

"Be in a nice, quiet home!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "All catsomania get a bit funny at times," he said, turning to Colonel Curry Bristling. "His mind is wandering at de moment, but he'll be all right in de morning. All you can do is to humour de patient, so pretend not to notice anything if he starts to swallow knives and forks and tings!"

"Huh!" grunted the warrior, glaring across at Amos, who was struggling to speak. "Better warn the ladies, hadn't we? Feller might get vicious and start biting somebody. Looks a bit like a cannibal. Nasty light in his eye!"

"Yes, it might be a sound scheme to warn de ladies," said Pete.

Bristling lost no time in disseminating his item of information, and within a matter of seconds Sir John and his guests were looking at Amos with a pitying light in their eyes. They even smiled at him in a sorrowful kind of way, and Amos was perspiring freely as he produced a red

handkerchief and mopped his moist brow.

"What's the matter with 'em?" he asked himself, as an old gentleman he had never before seen in his life beamed at him with fatherly sympathy. "They've all gone crackers! Or perhaps it's me that's barmy!"

He didn't know it, perhaps, but the last words were audible to his immediate neighbours.

"There you are!" rasped Colonel Bristling, turning to Pete. "The feller admits dat he's mad!"

"I'm beginning to think that I am!" snarled Amos. "What's more, this place is more like a lunatic asylum than a country house!"

"Humour the poor fellow!" came shrill whispers from both ends of the table.

"Do these catsomania get violent?" asked Bristling.

"Sometimes," answered Pete promptly. "Gumboil once gnawed a lump out of a fireman's helmet! And den dere was de occasion when he got his teeth embedded in de back ob a policeman's neck— But I won't go into details!"

"Why not? Too painful?"

"De policeman tought so!" Pete grinned across at Amos, who was still perspiring beneath a battery of pitying, sympathetic glances. "And how are you feeling now, my poor old hoss?" he asked.

Gumbri! gripped the arms of his chair and swayed slowly across the table.

"I'll answer that question—later!" he growled, in a hoarse, melodramatic whisper.

The sinister threat was meant for Pete alone, but everybody heard it, and a few seconds later the hostess rose, and the ladies left the hall.

"Now, sir," rasped Colonel Curry Bristling, fixing Amos with a glowing eye, "I think it's up to you to let us have the truth about your many cats, sir!"

"And I think it's up to you to mind your own confounded business, sir!" snorted Amos, half-rising from his chair in threatening fashion. "I've stood a great deal from you, and—"

"And I've stood a great deal from your many cats, sir!" rasped the warrior, his eyes bulging from their sockets. "I hate the things, yet you expect me to sit down to dinner with them—"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "I haven't got any cats, you doddering, ruby-nosed old idiot!" shouted Amos, getting thoroughly roused. "I hate cats—"

"Then why do you carry one behind your shirt-front?" demanded the colonel.

Amos Gumbri! heaved a mighty sigh—and his shirt-front bulged.

"Dere you are, old hoss!" cried Pete. "I saw de cat move!"

"And so did I!" shouted Curry Bristling. "I'm going to look inside your shirt-front, sir!" he declared, shaking a fist at Amos.

"You're going to do nothing of the kind!" snorted Gumbri!, his massive frame quivering with fury. "Place so much as a little finger on me, sir, and I'll—"

What he threatened to do will never be known, for the heated argument was interrupted by the sound of combat coming from beneath the table. The snarling, spitting, hissing noise made it quite clear that two infuriated cats were settling a little difference in the usual manner, and the ear-splitting racket must have been heard all over the mansion.

"What have you got to say to that, you scoundrel?" shouted Colonel Bristling, jumping to his feet, and tapping Amos on the nose with a fruit-knife. "Are they cats or— or mice, you lying old maggot?"

"How dare you take that liberty!" roared Gumbri!, snatching up a slice of water-melon and attempting to ram it down the gallant warrior's throat.

Gurgling and spluttering, Curry Bristling reached for a dish of custard, and clammed the sticky mess full on to Gumbri!'s head, and from that moment the combatants pelted each other with anything that came to hand.

The cat fight, which was still in progress, added appreciably to the general uproar.

The climax of the Bristling-Gumbri! battle was reached when the gallant colonel had a brain-wave, and fastened the nut-crackers to the other gentleman's ample nasal organ.

"Ow! Wow!" roared Amos, struggling to free his nose from the vicelike grip. "Leggo, you hound! Ow!"

Bristling merely gave a sardonic grin and increased the pressure, so

(Continued on next page.)

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"LET 'EM ALL COME!"

"We've got no shirts, we've got no boots—but we know the way to win!" say the Ramblers.

# GINGER = FOR PLUCK!

BY ROBERT MURRAY.



"What do we care who we play, Dutton Defiance or Bates Road 'A'! We'll meet 'em at home, and we'll meet 'em away! LET 'EM ALL COME!" (The Ramblers' War Song.)



**How This Rousing Story Started.**

UPON the death of his uncle, Terry Tyrill—popularly known as Ginger—finds that he is now the owner of Raggs' Rents, a block of tenements in the poor district of Steelvale; he also inherits the sum of five hundred pounds.

Raggs' Rents are in a shocking condition of disrepair, and Terry decides to spend the five hundred pounds in renovating them. He also decides to live there himself.

Terry makes friends with Sergeant Boom—an old soldier who has a steel hook in place of his right arm and a wooden stump for his left leg.

Ginger joins Raggs' Ramblers, a team composed of boys from the Rents.

Henry Crocker—managing director of Steelvale United—wants to buy the Rents, but Terry—through his lawyer—refuses.

Crocker tells Ginger he can sign on for Steelvale United—providing he agrees to sell the Rents.

The boy refuses, and Crocker, in his rage, accidentally drops a lighted cigar down the back of his own neck!

(Now read on.)

**He Asked For It!**

"HELP! HELP! I'm on fire! Fetch some water! I'm burning to death!"

Neither Ginger Terry Tyrill nor Wallis McKee, the manager of Steelvale United F.C., had the vaguest idea of the extraordinary accident that had befallen Henry Crocker. They could only stand staring in open-mouthed bewilderment and consternation as the corpulent director suddenly commenced to bellow and caper and tear frenziedly in his efforts to rid himself of his coat and waistcoat.

Finally he flung himself headlong to the floor, where he commenced to wriggle about and roll over and over, like a whale with the stomach-ache.

"Suffering cats, he's suddenly gone mad!" gasped Ginger uneasily, leaping up on top of the big roll-top desk. "Mind he doesn't bite you! Hadn't you better ring for the police?"

Wallis McKee grabbed at the telephone, and then made a flying leap to the other end of the office, as Henry Crocker suddenly stood on his head and waggled his legs in the air. The red-hot cigar-end was doing its work well. It was firmly lodged in the small of the man's back, and there was a distinct odour of burning cloth.

"Good—good gracious, what is the matter, Mr. Crocker?" quavered McKee, sheltering himself behind one of the big armchairs. "Are you feeling ill?"

"Ill! I'm burning to death, you infernal idiot!" bellowed the football director, leaping to his feet again, and ramming himself backwards against the nearest wall. "Can't you see the whole of my back's in flames! I'm being cremated alive! Wow! Help!"

But neither Ginger nor McKee could see the slightest sign of any conflagration, and they gazed in growing alarm as Crocker grabbed at a large bottle of ink, jerked out the cork, and proceeded to pour the black liquid down the back of his neck.

"Mad as a hatter!" muttered Ginger Terry, from his perch on top of the roll-top desk. "Anyone would think he imagines he's got a lobster down his back, or a couple of scorpions. Gosh! Where's he going to now?"

Evidently the contents of the bottle of ink had not proved efficacious, for, leaping and plunging like a Charleston-mad kangaroo, Henry Crocker suddenly wrenched open the door,

and dashed out of the clubhouse on to the football ground.

The first person he caught sight of was one of the groundsmen, who was walking towards him, carrying a pail in one hand and a long-handled broom in the other. The man halted, and seemed half inclined to drop his burdens and take to his heels as the football director came dancing at him, hatless and coatless.

"I'm on fire! Throw that over me!" roared Crocker, pointing fiercely to the brimming pail. "Do you hear what I say? Throw that over me!"

"What's that? Throw this over 'e, sir?" gasped the groundsman foolishly. "Tha' can't mean it!"

"Do, as I tell you, you blathering idiot!" bellowed the football director, and promptly got the surprise of his life as the dumbfounded groundsman obediently lifted the pail and overturned it on top of his head.

The tin bucket did not contain water, as Crocker had inaccurately surmised. The groundsman had been on his way to stick up some fresh bills and posters, and the pail was three-parts full of viscid, slimy, evil-smelling paste, that deluged the unfortunate director from head to foot.

Spitting and snarling with fury and disgust, Crocker promptly butted the luckless man full in the stomach, and went galloping in the direction of the dressing-rooms. The cigar-end had long since been extinguished, but he still imagined that he could feel it sizzling against his backbone. Bursting through half a dozen footballers, who were still congregated in the home dressing-room, he dived head-first into the big plunge-bath, which was still filled with hot water!

"Great snakes, who was that?" exclaimed one of the United team, goggling with amazement.

"Seems like someone trying to commit suicide," hazarded another, and then a yelp of surprise burst from the whole bunch of them as a head came bobbing up from the depths of the bath, and they recognised the crimson, furious countenance of the club's managing director.

"Bless my boots if it isn't the boss!"

"It's Mr. Crocker, sure enough! What's he been trying to do?"

Willing hands stretched out to assist Henry Crocker to clamber out of the bath. He was soaked to the skin, and puffing and blowing like a grampus, but at least the hot water had cleansed him of the greater part of the thick, sticky paste that had been poured over his head at his own express wish.

"Bust my buttons, what's the matter, guv'nor?" queried one of the players. "What did you want to go jumping in there for?"

"Diving for pears, of course, you bleating nincompoop!" snarled Henry Crocker irritably. "Where's McKee? Oh, there you are, you incompetent idiot! What do you mean by allowing me to be nearly burned to death, and not lifting a finger to help me?"

Wallis McKee, who had hurried into the dressing-room after his employer, tugged at his moustache and shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"I hadn't the remotest idea what was wrong," he said candidly. "I thought at first that you'd gone off into a fit. Even now I don't know what occurred."

"Fit be hanged!" gulped Crocker, shaking himself like some huge water-spaniel. "It was a lighted cigar burning a hole in the middle of my spine!"

"A lighted cigar?" echoed McKee. "How the dickens did a lighted cigar find its way down the middle of your back?"

"How the heck do you think it got there?" hooted the irate director. "I tell you again, you're an incompetent, asinine effigy, McKee! The best thing you can do is to clear off back to the office, and ring up my house. Tell them what's happened, and instruct one of the servants to bring me along an entire change of clothes. Meanwhile, I'll have a rub-down, and wait in here."

**Rogues on the Ramp!**

HENRY CROCKER was in a considerably better humour by the time he had had another hot bath, and changed into the dry garments that arrived for him ten minutes later. But then recurred the memory of his unsatisfactory interview with Ginger Terry Tyrill, and he had worked himself up into a fine rage again by the time he had pranced back to the office, where Wallis McKee sat turning over some papers.

"Where's that infernal young upstart, Tyrill?" bellowed Crocker, charging through the door, after he had reassured himself that Terry was no longer there. "Where is the cub? By thunder, I'll flay the hide off him!"

"He's gone! I—er—rather think you frightened him away," replied the manager.

"Frightened him away! I'll scare the life out of him before I've finished!" threatened Crocker. "Did you ever know such a pig-headed, obstinate, ignorant young scut? Here I'm trying to do him a good turn—sign him on for the United, and buy his wretched slums off him—and he turns round and insults me to my face!"

Wallis McKee knew nothing about the value of Raggs' Rents. He had been ordered to play a certain part, and he had done it; now, having met Terry Tyrill, he was rather ashamed of what he had done.

"Did you actually intend to sign young Tyrill on for the United, Mr. Crocker?" he asked quietly.

"Yes; but he'd never have had a chance to play for the club. I'd have seen to that!" replied Crocker, with a malicious grin. "And you nearly put your foot in it. What did you want to overdo it for and give the cub to understand that he knew how to play football?"

"I wasn't overdoing it. I was speaking the absolute truth," replied McKee bluntly. "I had the surprise of my life when I went along to Raggs' Rents this afternoon. I expected to see a mob of young hooligans scrambling a ball about on a piece of waste ground. Instead of that, I saw one of the best games I have seen for some time, and I can assure you that young Tyrill is worthy of a position in any team in the Third Division. He is an ideal centre-forward, and if he was playing for the United it would make all the difference to the club. Tyrill is bound to make a big name for himself in football one of these days."

Crocker scowled scornfully at the football manager.

"Well, it won't be with the United, unless the brat alters his mind, and decides to accept my offer," he grunted. "I'm not going to have all my plans spoiled by that insufferable prig. He must be crazy, else he wouldn't be living in Raggs' Rents, and playing football with a team of street arabs!"

"There are some promising players

in that team!" declared McKee boldly. "I'd like to have the handling of them for a few months. In addition to young Tyrill, the goalie and the left-back are almost up to first-class form. Tell you what, Mr. Crocker, I believe that if Raggs' Ramblers, played the United tomorrow, it would be a toss-up which side would win!"

"Bah, you're crazy!" snapped Henry Crocker disgustedly, as he stamped out of the office.

The football director had received one of the biggest surprises of his life that afternoon. He had been quite confident in his own mind that he had evolved an absolutely infallible means of persuading Ginger Terry Tyrill into selling Raggs' Rents, and the latter's emphatic refusal had come as a staggering blow.

He had never dreamed that the lad would turn down his offer to sign him on as a professional playing member of the Steelvale United F.C.

"Thunder and lightning, the cub was eager enough to play for the club a few weeks ago!" muttered Crocker, as he left the football ground and turned towards the town. "He can't possibly be satisfied as things are. Raggs' Rents can't be bringing him in more than a couple of pounds a week, and he's living in one room at the tenements. It's just pig-headed obstinacy on his part, but I'll get the better of him yet. I've got to get the better of him!"

Crocker knew that he was in a tight corner. Unless he could get possession of the Rents within the next few weeks he would be in Queer Street. The council would not hesitate to claim their forfeit for his failure to fulfil his contract, and by that time the United would probably have gone under as well!

No wonder the football director was in a black mood as he stamped along, swinging his umbrella, and chewing savagely at the butt of his cigar; he was so engrossed in his thoughts that he jumped nervously as two men suddenly stepped into the middle of the pavement and confronted him.

"Oh, it's you, Rawson!" grunted Crocker, as he recognised the lanky form of the weasel-faced man who collected the rents of Ginger Terry Tyrill's tenements. "What do you want to see me about now?"

Lem Rawson was not alone. He was accompanied by a hulking, rough-looking individual, with shifty eyes and a blotchy complexion. This was Jake Coon, the late porter of Raggs' Rents, who had been superseded by Sergeant Boom.

"Good-evening, Mr. Crocker! I was wondering if there was anything more I could do for you," replied Rawson, with an oily smile.

"Do for me? What do you mean, man?"

"I was wondering if there was any way in which I could assist you

to gain possession of the freehold of Raggs' Rents," continued the rascally collector meaningly. "I fear you will find young Tyrill a stubborn fellow to deal with. He is sentimentally opposed to selling the Rents, as it would entail the tenants being evicted from their homes."

"Humph! You seem to know all about it!" snapped Crocker. "As a matter of fact, I've just seen young Tyrill, and he refuses point blank to accept my offer. He told me he wouldn't sell me the Rents for all the money in Steelvale—curse his obstinacy!"

"Perhaps if we put our heads together we could find ways and means of compelling him to sell?" suggested Rawson, with a cunning twist of his thin lips. "This is a friend of mine who has no reason to love young Tyrill, and he is quite willing to assist you in any way he can. He used to be porter at the Rents before he fell foul of Tyrill, and got discharged. Mr. Coon—Mr. Crocker."

Henry Crocker nodded curtly at the introduction. He didn't like the look of Mr. Coon. Still, he was the type of man who might have his uses, and Crocker was prepared to go to almost any lengths to secure the freehold of Raggs' Rents.

"Tyrill! The young scut! I'd like to get my 'ands on 'im one of these dark nights!" growled Jake Coon evilly. "Took my job away from me, 'e did, and give it to that old fool Sergeant Boom. Cuss the brat, I ses, and the Rents as well! I'd like to see the 'ole blessed place burnt to the ground!"

Henry Crocker stared, and drew a deep breath.

"That's a good idea!" he said.

"A good idea! What do you mean?" queried Rawson quickly.

"I mean, that it would be best for everyone concerned if the Rents were to be burned to the ground," replied Crocker, with assumed carelessness. "The place is a disgrace to Steelvale. It's not fit to keep pigs in! It is in such a state of dry rot that I should think it was liable to catch fire at any moment!"

"It would burn like tinder," agreed Lem Rawson, stroking his long nose thoughtfully. "The whole place would go up like a candle factory, and there wouldn't be much left of it by the time the fire brigade arrived. If anything like that happened, young Ginger Tyrill would be mighty sorry he hadn't sold when he had the opportunity!"

"It must be insured?" jerked Crocker.

"For practically nothing," informed Lem Rawson. "I happen to know that the insurance companies refuse to take a big risk on the premises unless an extortionate premium is paid. Yes, it would be a good thing for you if the Rents went up in smoke, Mr. Crocker. It would save the expense of pulling the place down."



**WELL PASTED!** "I'm on fire—throw that over me!" roared Crocker. He didn't know that the bill-poster's pail contained paste and, as the startled man obeyed, the slimy, sticky mass deluged the football director from head to feet!

Henry Crocker glanced meaningfully at the rascally rent-collector.

"Yes, I'd give two hundred pounds to learn that the tenements had accidentally caught fire, and been razed to the ground," he said slowly. "It would settle the whole question."

Lem Rawson's eyes glinted, and he nudged Jake Coon warningly in the ribs.

"Two hundred pounds? I should think it would be worth more than that to you, Mr. Crocker?" he said suggestively. "Accidents will happen, you know, and five hundred pounds wouldn't be a big sum to pay, under the circumstances."

Henry Crocker was silent for a moment, and then gave a careless shrug of his shoulders.

"Yes, I dare say it would be worth five hundred to me," he said, with an ugly laugh. "And I'd willingly pay that sum to the first person who sends me a message to the effect that Raggs' Rents has been reduced to ashes!"

And, with a nod of his head, Henry Crocker went striding on his way, leaving Lem Rawson and Jake Coon staring at one another, with greed in their eyes and evil thoughts in their hearts!

**The Ramblers' War-Song!**

**G**INGER TERRY TYRILL did not wait to see what further antics Henry Crocker performed as he charged across the football ground, striving to get rid of the smouldering cigar-end that had slipped down the back of his neck.

"Serve the rotter right if he roasts!" was Terry's muttered remark as he departed from the United's enclosure. "He deserves all he gets; he's as crooked as a corkscrew, and one of the biggest hypocrites that ever lived!"

Terry was thoroughly disgusted with the result of his visit to the football ground, and he regretted that he had not followed his first impulse, and completely ignored the message he had received from Wallis McKee.

"It was a good try-on, but it didn't succeed!" he thought, as he made his way back into the town. "I knew there was something fishy about the whole affair, the moment Crocker entered the room. By gosh! I'd like to know who it was told him that I'm the new landlord of Raggs' Rents. I didn't know that anyone save Solomon Catchpole knew anything about it."

"There's no doubt about it, Henry Crocker's a cunning dog, and I might have fallen for his offer if he hadn't made it so apparent that he and McKee were acting a little scene for my special benefit. But if I'd signed on for the United I don't suppose he'd have allowed me to play for the team. It was all a big bluff. I reckon it'd be just as well if I told Mr. Catchpole what's happened."

But Ginger Terry Tyrill's visit to Solomon Catchpole proved a fruitless one. It being a Saturday evening, the old solicitor's office had been closed for some time, and the lad did not think it worth while to call upon him at his home address.

"It can wait," he decided to himself, as he made his way back towards Raggs' Rents. "I don't suppose for one moment that it was Catchpole who informed Crocker that I was the new owner of the tenements. I only hope to goodness it doesn't go any farther! I shouldn't like Sid Yates, Sergeant Boom, and all the others to know that I'd been wearing false colours all this time. They might not take it in the right way, and think that I'd been taking a rise out of them."

More than anything else Ginger Terry valued the friendship of Sergeant Boom and his chums of the Ramblers' team. He had found greater happiness and companionship at Raggs' Rents than he had known all the years he had lived with old Noah Raggs. Though it was still his besetting ambition to become a professional footballer, and play for one of the big League clubs, he was quite content to remain with the Ramblers until the right opportunity came his way.

He realised that Henry Crocker had not been sincere in his offer to sign him on for the United. It had merely been a trick whereby he had hoped to gain possession of the freehold of Raggs' Rents, and once that deal had been completed the odds were that Ginger would never have been given a chance to kick a ball for Steelvale club.

But Ginger didn't know what to think regarding Wallis McKee, the United's new manager. He had



**A SHOCK FOR SLOAN!** Sloan uttered a howl as the giant cracker exploded, then he went hopping down the street like a kangaroo with its tail on fire!

seemed genuinely anxious to obtain his services; it was quite possible that Crocker had duped him as well, and used him as a tool towards attaining his own ends.

It was dark by the time Ginger arrived back at the Rents, and unaccustomed sounds of revelry reached his ears as he passed through the archway into the courtyard.

Laughter and merry voices mingled with the strains of a somewhat wheezy gramophone. There was a clatter of cups and saucers, a stamping of feet in tune to the music, and, above all, the hearty, stentorian voice of Sergeant Boom was distinctly audible.

"My hat! The sergeant seems to be entertaining to-night," muttered Ginger, moving towards the porter's lodge, where lights were shining behind the drawn blinds that obscured the windows. "I'll bet my boots that's Tom Carter I can hear talking now, and Sid Yates as well."

"Here's to Raggs Ramblers! May we finish up top of the League this season!"

"Hear, hear! Good old Ramblers!"

"We've got no shirts, we've got no boots, but we know the way to win!" sang Tom Carter lustily.

"What care we who we play? Dutton Defiance or Bates Road 'A'? We'll meet 'em at home, and we'll meet 'em away! Let 'em all come!"

A roar of delight greeted this dreggerel, and, with pardonable curiosity, Ginger approached the door of the porter's quarters and cautiously turned the handle.

The door opened right on to Sergeant Boom's sitting-room, and it was a cheerful scene that met Terry's gaze. The members of the Ramblers' Football Club were there in full force. Several of them were grouped around the table, at the head of which sat Sergeant Boom, puffing at his pipe and beating time to the music with his steel hook. Tom Carter was perched on the back of an armchair, Huggins was squatting on the coal-scuttle, and Sid Yates was busy by the sideboard, pouring out cups of cocoa and cutting slices of cake and big wedges of bread-and-butter.

A bright fire was burning in the grate, crowned by an enormous kettle, that was singing as gaily as the occupants of the room.

Hayes, the outside-right, switched off the cheap gramophone and searched through a pile of well-worn records.

"Give it a breather, laddie," barked Sergeant Boom, tapping his pipe on his wooden leg and refilling it from a metal tobacco-box. "I should like to call attention to the fact that one of the chief members of the club is still absent from this meeting."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Sid Yates. "Where's Ginger? That's what we all want to know! Wasn't he told that we were holding a sing-song this evening?"

"I called at his lodgings, but Mrs. Bates told me he'd changed his clothes and gone out over a couple of hours ago," informed Huggins, digging his teeth into a thick slice

of cake. "He can't have come back yet or he'd have got the message I left for him."

"Things don't seem right without Ginger," grunted Yates. "What are you going to do about it, sergeant?"

"I shall enter him as absent without leave, and clap him into the guard-room as soon as he returns!" declared the old soldier grimly, and then joined in the general shout of delight that went up as Ginger pushed the door farther open and thrust his smiling-faced, red-crested head into the room.

"Hurrah! Here he is!"

"Good old Ginger! Jump to it, old son! We've been waiting for you!"

"Looks like it," grinned Ginger, as he surveyed the merry throng. "You seem to have wolfed every bit of grub and every spot of cocoa there is. Why wasn't I informed of this gladsome gathering?"

"Because you weren't to be found when we wanted you," replied Sid Yates, as he forced the newcomer into a chair and placed a steaming cup and a mighty slab of cake in front of him. "You slid off before we had a chance to tell you. Where the pink ink have you been? Didn't you know that we held a sing-song once a month—that is, every time we've sufficient funds to provide some grub? You're liable to be heavily fined if you don't turn up in future. We'll let you off with a caution this time!"

"Very well; but you must let me stand for all the grub at the next meeting," insisted Ginger. "Get on with the good work; I don't want to miss all the fun."

It proved to be one of the happiest evenings that Ginger had ever spent. The Ramblers were a musical lot. There was scarcely one of them who could not sing a good song, and Sergeant Boom obliged them with a couple of items, de-

livered in a voice that almost brought the ceiling down.

Then the Raggs Ramblers jazz band got going. A variety of instruments were brought into use, ranging from Sergeant Boom's concertina and Huggins' home-made one-string fiddle to a toy drum and sundry cooking utensils, which produced more discord than harmony.

The fun was at its height when Ginger suddenly noticed something that put him on the alert at once. He was seated opposite a small mirror that hung over the fireplace, and in which was reflected the door leading out into the courtyard.

He was almost certain that he had head the handle move slightly, and an instant later he knew that he was right. The knob was slowly being turned by someone outside, and already the door had been opened a fraction of an inch, and Ginger fancied that he could catch the glint of an eye applied to the aperture.

He said nothing to his companions. They were too busily engaged in banging, blowing, and plucking at their crude musical instruments, and, picking up his plate, as though he intended to help himself to another piece of cake, Ginger rose from his seat and stepped across to the sideboard, which stood against the wall on the hinge side of the door.

Then on tiptoe he crept stealthily across, and with a lightning movement grabbed the handle and jerked the door violently open. There was a strangled cry of dismay, and a figure that had been crouching outside fell headlong forward into the room, measuring its length on to the floor.

In an instant the jazz band had ceased to play, as the instrumentalists leaped to their feet.

"By gosh, someone's been spying on us!" cried Sid Yates angrily. "Who is the sneak? Grab him, Ginger!"

But Sergeant Boom was the first to reach the side of the sprawling eavesdropper, and, affixing his steel hook in the collar of his coat, jerked him forcibly to his feet.

A roar of surprise and indignation escaped his lips as he found himself staring into the sullen, snarling countenance of Sloan, the leader of the Doolan Street gang.

**Sloan Gets It!**

**I**N an instant the room was in a turmoil, and Sloan blinked his eyes uneasily beneath the grim, unfriendly glances which were directed at him. He crouched like a cornered rat, his fists knotted, and his lips curled back over his jagged, yellow teeth.

He would have made a dart for the open door but for the cold steel hook that was fixed in his collar.

"Sabres and shrapnel, it's Sloan!" blared Sergeant Boom, twisting the hooligan round like a joint on a roasting-jack. "And the infernal ruffian's been spying on us!"

"The rotten, sneaking hound!" growled Tom Carter. "Are there any more of his pals outside, Ginger?"

Ginger shook his head as he glanced out into the deserted courtyard, and then closed the door again.

"You can bet your boots the beggar was up to some mischief," declared Huggins. "While we've got him here we might just as well try and find out what he and his gang have done with our new Soccer kit that was stolen last night."

There was a general roar of agreement. Sloan started and glowered defiantly around at the circle of stern, accusing faces.

"I dunno wot you're talking about," he snarled. "I don't know nothing about your darned football clobber. You lemme go. I ain't done no 'arm!"

"No; you didn't get a chance to, but I'll bet you didn't come here just to listen to our music," jerked Sid Yates. "I reckon you had some dirty scheme up your sleeve."

"What's that he's got in his right-hand pocket?" asked Ginger quietly. Sloan squirmed and wriggled protestingly, but Sergeant Boom held him tightly, and, amid a roar of excitement, dived his free hand into the hooligan's bulging pocket and brought into view an enormous jumping cracker. It was a most formidable sample of pyrotechnics, almost a foot in length, and must have cost the leader of the Doolan Street gang quite a pretty penny.

"Ah! So that was your game, was it?" roared the old soldier, his moustache bristling with anger. "Meant to try and blow the whole lot of us up, did you? By James, this means a firing-party for you!"

"Cut that daft talk out!" snarled Sloan uneasily. "I tell you I ain't done no 'arm!"

"No, but you meant to make a hash of our sing-song," challenged Huggins. "What about it, sergeant? Here's one of the enemy caught in the act of spying, and armed with a dangerous bomb. How about a drumhead court-martial?"

This idea was seized upon at once, and almost before he knew where he was Sloan had been tried and found guilty, and Sergeant Boom proceeded to pass sentence.

"The prisoner ought to be taken out and shot, but we'll let him off lightly this time," he said grimly. "A dose of his own medicine won't

(Continued on next page.)

**EVERYBODY'S READING IT!**

Dr. Birchmall: "How comes it, Mr. Merryman, that no copies of the 'Magnet' have been sent up to the school this week?"

Mr. Merryman (local newsagent): "Why, sir, all the boys are away on holiday."

Dr. Birchmall (with some heat): "That's no reason why I shouldn't get my copy, is it?"

Mr. Merryman (with a faint gasp of amazement): "B-b-but I didn't know that such a learned gentleman as yourself read the 'Magnet,' sir!"

Dr. Birchmall (proudly): "Why, I've read those funny stories about Billy Bunter for nine hundred and ninety-six weeks, my dear chap. If you want a good laugh, Merryman, always turn to the 'Magnet.'"

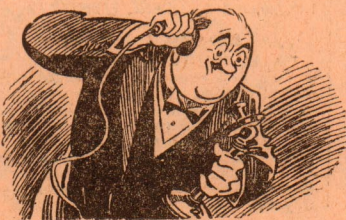
Mr. Merryman: "I do, sir, and it's my firm opinion that a better boys' paper doesn't exist."

Dr. Birchmall: "Bravo, Merryman! I see you're still a boy at heart, although you're growing old like me. Now you won't forget my copy this week, will you?"

Mr. Merryman: "Bless you, no, sir! I'd sooner miss my Sunday dinner than miss my 'Magnet,' so I know how you feel about it. I'll bring it up myself right now."

**The MAGNET Library.**

Every Monday. Price 2d.

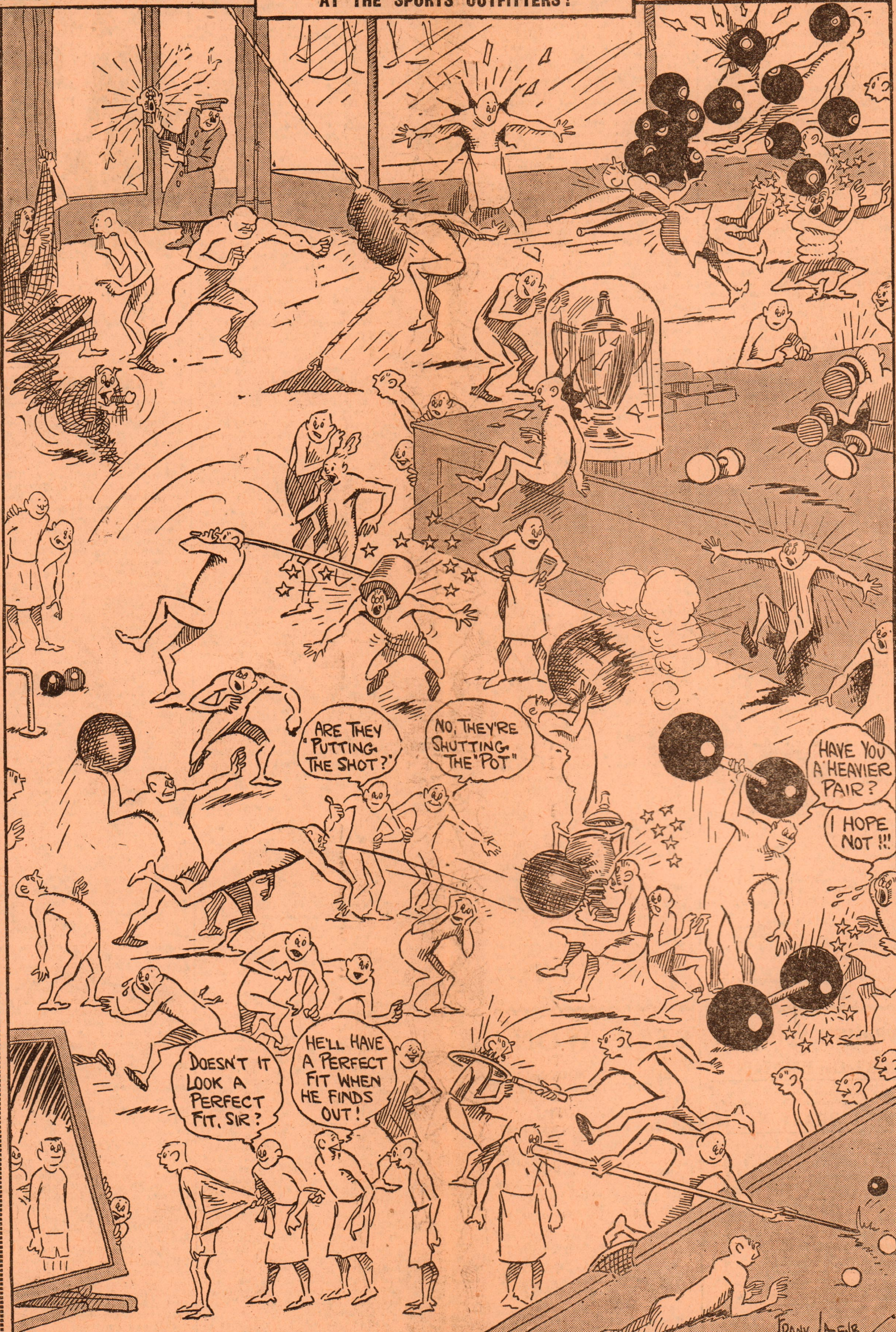


# THE BINGO BOYS.

AT THE SPORTS OUTFITTERS!

DID THEY  
FIT YOU  
OUT?

NO, THEY  
THREW  
ME OUT



ARE THEY  
"PUTTING  
THE SHOT?"

NO, THEY'RE  
SHUTTING  
THE "POT"

HAVE YOU  
A HEAVIER  
PAIR?

I HOPE  
NOT!!!

DOESN'T IT  
LOOK A  
PERFECT  
FIT, SIR?

HE'LL HAVE  
A PERFECT  
FIT WHEN  
HE FINDS  
OUT!

FRANK LEIBER



GINGER-FOR PLUCK!



(Continued from previous page.)

do him any harm. Tie his hands together, Huggins."

In vain Sloan snarled, struggled, and kicked furiously. His hands were pinioned firmly behind his back with his own muffler, and then his ankles were tied with a length of rope in such a manner that he could just walk, though it was quite impossible for him to run.

With the thought of the stolen football kit still ranking in his mind, Sergeant Boom did not intend to spare the young hooligan. Amid roars of laughter he charred some corks in the fire and proceeded to blacken Darby's face until he looked like a full-blooded negro minstrel.

Sid Yates cleverly manufactured an enormous paper bow, and pinned it beneath the gangster's chin, while Hayes added the finishing touches with an old forage-cap belonging to Sergeant Boom.

By the time they had finished Sloan's own parents would not have recognised him. Save for the flow of unpleasant language that came from his lips.

"You jest wait; I'll smash the lot of you for this!" he whimpered, trembling with rage and chagrin as he gazed at himself in the mirror. "I'll get my own back."

"You're going to get a bit of your own back right now!" chuckled Sergeant Boom, as he picked up the enormous jumping-cracker, and tied it securely to the tail of the hooligan's coat. "It's your own property, and you're welcome to it. Perhaps it'll learn you not to come spying round here any more. Take him outside, boys!"

Supported on each side, and with his ankles hobbled, Sloan shuffled out of the room and was escorted as far as the exit from the Rents.

"Now hop it as quickly as you can!" ordered Sergeant Boom, and at the same time he dexterously applied the glowing bowl of his pipe to the fuse of the big jumping-cracker.

With a final volley of threats and imprecations Sloan hobbled away as fast as he could go, only too anxious to get amongst friends who could rid him of his ridiculous disguise.

Bang! Sloan uttered a howl of dismay and alarm, and jumped three feet in the air as the big cracker commenced to fulfil its purpose.

He almost lost his balance and pitched forward on his nose, but managed to recover himself and give another startled leap as a second violent detonation sounded in the region of his coat-tails.

Bang! Bang, bang!

It was the funniest thing Ginger Terry Tyrill and his chums had ever witnessed. Realising that it was impossible for him to run, Sloan altered his method of locomotion, and, placing his feet together, commenced to hop, bounding away down the street like a kangaroo with its tail afire.

Bang! Bang!

At each report the hooligan uttered an involuntary yelp of alarm, and made a leap that would have done credit to a grasshopper.

And then another figure appeared on the scene—that of a tall, majestic police-constable, who came sauntering along, and stopped dead as the jumping cracker expired with a final deafening report.

Then he darted across the road, (Continued at top of next page.)



THEY'RE ALL PRIZEWINNERS!

IS YOUR CLUB HERE THIS WEEK?

PRIZE FOOTBALLS.

Each week the Editor awards three Full-size Match Balls for the most interesting paragraphs concerning readers' football clubs. ALL CLUBS MENTIONED IN THIS FEATURE, other than those winning footballs, WILL RECEIVE A TABLE FOOTBALL GAME! All letters should be addressed to the BOYS' REALM, "Prize Footballs," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.



How They Began.

CARLTON ALBION F.C. (NOTTINGHAM) started three seasons back. They got going thanks to a local sportsman who spotted a party of fellows dribbling a small ball about the streets. This looker also spotted talent, and asked the players what about a team. The proposal was jumped at. The dribblers were all keen, with the result that in a few weeks enough money was forthcoming to provide a pitch, known as the "Poultry Farm," also a set of shirts. The team joined the Red Triangle League, and has never looked back, only being beaten by Dale Rovers after a mighty struggle by 7-4. The Carlton Juniors team has sprung out of the original eleven, and the Juniors are doing well in the REALM League, Nottingham Section. (Football Game.)

More Cash Wanted.

BLAENAVON CORRIES (BLAENAVON). Despite sundry financial difficulties such as will crop up at times, the Corries have put in a lot of stiff work, and emerged victorious. They had a tough match with Cardiff City "A," but Corries won 4-3. Good luck, Corries, and watch for the Football Game which I am sending along this week.

Hot Stuff.

PARK VILLA F.C. (BYKER). This team wants to come into the REALM League—and why not? Mr. E. Oliver, Section Secretary of the Crumlington and District formation, Stable House, West Crumlington, Northumberland, is the man to help. Park Villa signed on a new centre-forward on Saturday morning, he played in the afternoon against Murton Street Rovers and Villa won 2-1. The new broom scored the two goals. (Football Game.)

A Patched Ball.

BLUE CRUSADERS (CLAPTON PARK) have had their lickings, but of late victory has been with them. There have been exciting matches. The Crusaders look forward to the time when all the team will have jerseys, and when the patched ball will give place to something better. The number of patches on it is five. (Football Game.)

Sticking Together.

DARRAN UNITED A.F.C. (MOUNTAIN ASH). This team has suffered the same as others through the bad times which marked the start of the season. As a result finance is low, but there is good hope the club will not have to break up, for there is a splendid sporting spirit in the team. During the strike they had to cycle to fixtures. Despite every adverse circumstance, however, Darran has some thumping good achievements to chronicle. They will register more yet. Stick it, Darran, and stick together. That's my advice, and have a shot at the Football Game which will reach you this week.

No Defeats.

ADISON STREET STAR F.C. (SUNDERLAND) started off this season with an unbroken record of successes. Never been beaten! They have a good pair of backs, and a dashing centre-forward; the outside right is all right, and knows the way to goal! They whopped an extra powerful team 3-0. That's the stuff, Star! Take a Football Game this time.

That Bit of Good Luck.

BIRCOTES JUNIORS F.C. (BIRCOTES). Times are much better up north now; with the boys all working again a

3d. sub. per week towards inevitable club expenses is coming in, with the result that the team hope to enter the REALM League next season. I, for one, shall be surprised if this does not come off. You have a capital record, Juniors. True, it was rotten luck to lose your star centre-forward and top-scorer, but these things will happen. (Football Game.)

Players All.

LONG ROCK JUNIORS F.C. (LONG ROCK, CORNWALL). This gritty little club is playing up well, and have beaten all opponents except four. They have a super inside-right who has piled up most of the goals. (Football Game.)

A Majority Figure.

BEARWOOD JUNIORS F.C. (SMETHWICK) was formed at the beginning of last season, and had quite a successful time. This season they are still on the up-grade, having played 14 matches and won 12. They have a fine forward line who can take as motto "Nulli Secundus," and have found the net 97 times. Hodgetts, the outside-right, is the crack shot with 21 to his credit. The other four fighting forwards, namely Shaw, Scriven, Morris, and Weekes, all play a sound game. (Football Game.)

Holding Their Own.

EAGLESHAM AMATEURS F.C. (EAGLESHAM) were formed only this season, and depend on the available talent of their small village. They have met some hot teams and have been licked a good few times, but the defeat of yesterday turns out to be the triumph of the morrow. Eaglesham stuck it manfully and have climbed to a middle position in the League. Clubs which had walloped them have had a taste of the walloping. Their centre-forward has scored 23 goals. They have a crack goalkeeper who is cut out for bigger things. Eaglesham Amateurs are now a really solid, virile phalanx, and can face the future with a smile. (PRIZE FOOTBALL.)

A Good Send Off.

TITFORD ROVERS F.C. (LANGLEY, BIRMINGHAM). This club got going after a visit to the pictures by a few fellows whose motto seems to be "Do It Now!" Result: that same night a subscription was started, and the originator of the notion had a committee meeting in the kitchen at his home. A few days afterwards a team was picked. One of the members had an uncle who was secretary to a Handsworth team, and thanks to this individual's good offices, the players were fitted out with blue-and-white striped jerseys for the outlay of 6s. The club

"PRIZE BATS AND BALLS!"

In two weeks' time the awards for "Prize Footballs" will be changed to one prize of 10s., while Football Games will continue to be awarded as at present. At the end of May "PRIZE BATS AND BALLS" will take the place of this feature and will continue throughout the cricket season. Paragraphs concerning cricket clubs are now invited; they will be dealt with in the same way as the notes of footer clubs above. Entries should be addressed to "Prize Bats and Balls," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.

lost its first game 6-3, but has been going strong ever since. (PRIZE FOOTBALL.)

A Steady Rise.

PELSALL OLD TOWN F.C. (PELSALL) was formed last season; their luck was bad, for Old Town suffered six successive defeats. But after that they only lost one match. The bad industrial conditions in the early part of the year were against football, but the boys all put their shoulders to the wheel. Twenty-one friendly games were played, and they won the lot, scoring 72 goals against 7. (Football Game.)

Doing Their Best.

HALFWAY SCHOOL SENIORS F.C. (SHEERNESS) want a bit more luck, but they are thoroughly game, and have their eye on the future. Owing to resignations the team requires pulling together a bit. Their trainer is doing his bit. Last season they only lost two matches. (Football Game.)

All Smiling.

GODWIN ROAD F.C. (FOREST GATE) have had a topping season. Their average age is 12; the teams they meet run to 13-14, but Godwins have not lost a match out of the fourteen they have played. Their goal average is 91 for, 2 against. Can you beat it? They won the Shield last year; were runners-up the season before, and won it the year before that. More good luck to you, Godwin Road, and see what you can do with the PRIZE FOOTBALL which is en route to you.

Hail, Rain, or Sunshine!

WOMBWELL ST. MARY'S (WOMBWELL, near BARNESLEY) always turn a full team out whatever the weather may be. They have had some bad luck, but are not daunted. They were too late for the REALM League last season, but kept things going with a series of friendly matches. Only once were they able to play at home. On that occasion they borrowed a ground. Wombwell shows a steady rise. They must get into touch with the secretary of the Jump Section, Mr. J. Banner, 30, Milton Road, Jump, near Barnesley. (Football Game.)

Good Old Magpies!

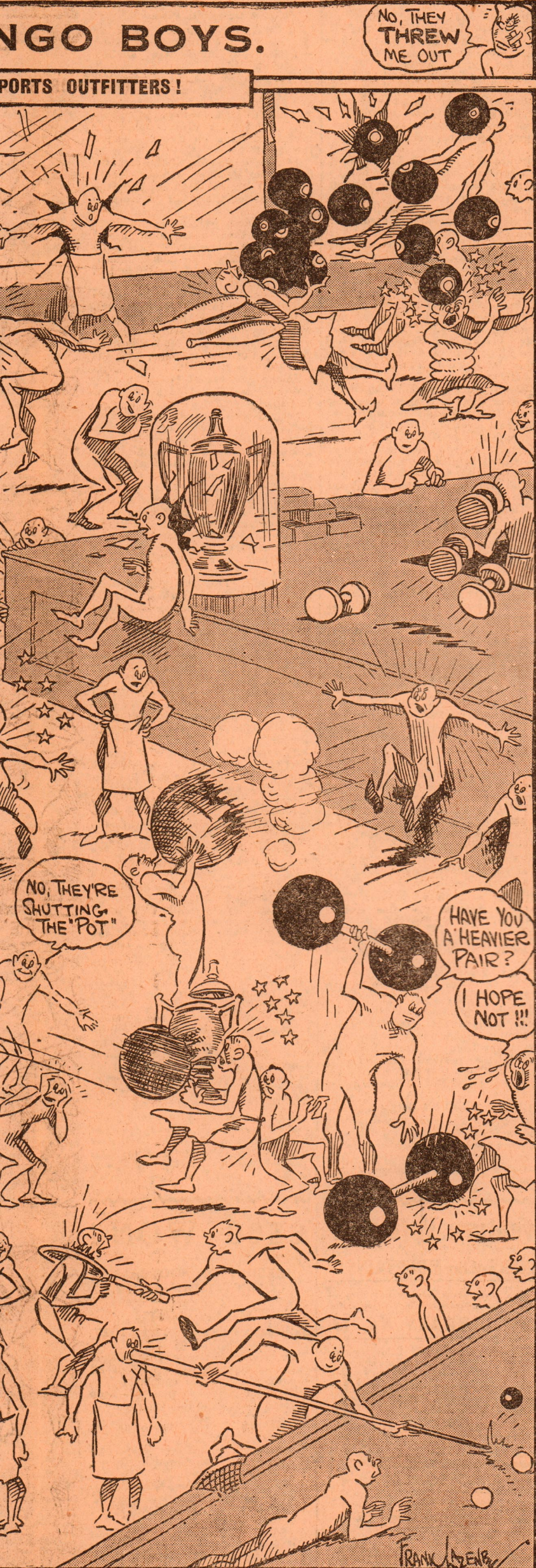
ST. JOHN'S F.C. (LYTHAM) are known as the Magpies and with reason, for, like their namesake, they can collect things—but their speciality is goals! They have won all their matches this season, in one case netting 15 goals to 2. (Football Game.)

Doing Well.

SAINT TERESAS A.F.C. (DUBLIN) had a poor start because of lack of funds, but luckily something tons better than cash—namely, the right spirit—was there and a smart raffle was devised which brought in the ready, and enabled equipment to be obtained. The Saints have done jolly well, and their dashing centre-forward, Delany, has 41 goals to his credit. They joined the Pembroke District League, and were runners-up at the end of the season. This season they are in the Altar Boys' League, and doing well. (Football Game.)

Successful Sheffield.

UNITY CELTIC (SHEFFIELD). This is their first season in any league. They started playing friendlies and never lost a match. They then entered Grayson's League, and have carried on in great style, only losing one match out of 17 games, while their goal average is 75 for, 22 against. Well played, Unity. Look out for the Football Game which will be coming your way this week.



(Continued from previous page.)

and laid a heavy hand on Sloan's shoulder.

"I suppose you know as there's a law against letting off fireworks in the street?" he said sternly. "I shall want your name and address, me lad!"

Sloan was too infuriated to make any reply, and the policeman twisted him round towards the light of a near-by street-lamp.

"Love of Mike, it's a blessed nigger!" he gasped, whilst Ginger and his companions bugged their sides and positively shook with suppressed laughter. Wot's the game, Sambo? Can't you talk English?"

"Course I can, you blockhead!" choked Sloan. "Can't you see that I'm tied up? Undo my arms and legs, and don't stand there asking silly questions!"

Bang!

The cracker had not quite finished. It emitted one final explosion that caused the constable to jump as though he had been shot. Then he grabbed Sloan again, and dragged him towards the street-lamp.

"Wot sort of a game do you think you're playing?" he demanded indignantly, as he freed the lad's legs and arms. "Wot's the idea of tying yourself up and hopping about here letting off fireworks? Escaped from a blessed circus, have you—or an asylum?"

"Ain't you got no sense? D'you think I'm doing this for fun?" spluttered Sloan frenziedly. "Call yerself a policeman, you cock-eyed, batter-brained—"

"Here, that's enough o' that, me lad!" snapped the constable. "You'll 'ave to come along with me to the station!"

But Sloan had no intention of accompanying the man in blue to the police-station. Suddenly lowering his head he butted the constable vigorously in the stomach, and, leaving the latter doubled up like a jack-knife, turned tail, and went tearing away down the street as hard as he could go.

In a trice the constable had recovered himself; groping for his

whistle, and puffing and blowing like a grampus, he went thundering in pursuit of the leader of the Doolan Street Gang!

**Fire at Rags' Rents.**

**P**URSUED and pursuer were soon swallowed up in the darkness, with Sloan leading the policeman by a good twenty yards, and as the sound of running footsteps died away in the distance Sid Yates rubbed his ribs, which were aching with laughter, and wiped his streaming eyes.

"My hat, that's the funniest thing I've ever seen!" he choked, clutching at Ginger for support. "I shouldn't think Sloan would dare come spying round this quarter again in a hurry!"

"He certainly got a dose of his own medicine!" chuckled Huggins. "I suppose it was his intention to chuck that cracker into the room where we were having our sing-song, but Ginger happened to spot him just at the right moment."

"If that copper nabs him he'll find himself in the police-court to-morrow morning, and he'll probably try and drag us into it?" suggested Tom Carter uneasily.

(Continued on next page.)

THE "REALM" CRICKET LEAGUE—MORE DETAILS BELOW!

The Boys' Realm Football League

Any reader interested in the League should write to the Football Editor, (enclosing a stamped and addressed envelope), who will send the fullest possible information by return of post. His address is: THE FOOTBALL EDITOR, THE BOYS' REALM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. A FULL LIST OF SECTIONS AND SECTION SECRETARIES appeared in the BOYS' REALM No. 401.

**Taking Stock.**

This seems to be a good time to look round and see just what the REALM Football League has accomplished this season. In the first place, the number of completed Sections in existence has multiplied by three, and the enthusiasm for the League has grown by about ten times what it was before.

Just now I am flooded with letters concerning what Section Secretaries hope to do next season, and there is a great deal of correspondence from other footer enthusiasts who want Sections to be formed in their particular districts—so that, speaking generally, matters indicate that the 1927-8 season will be a really tremendous one.

For the coming season—perhaps it is yet rather early to discuss it, but a hint or two isn't out of place—I hope that the trophies offered by the REALM will be even more attractive than they are at the moment. This is certain to stimulate even greater interest.

to three Divisions, or perhaps more. I will appreciate any advice from you. If you think it wise to start this season, I will do so."

I have written to Mr. Robson at length. To anyone who knows anything of Sunderland there will be not the slightest doubt as to the result of the efforts of the writer of this letter. Sunderland will have a Section which should jump to the front. Football up there is a mighty serious proposition. Of course, it is a bit far on in the season now, none the less, the quicker Sunderland gets going the better for all concerned. A Section takes time to find its feet. Preparation for the 1927-8 season cannot start too early. The more spade work done now, the bigger the results when play begins next season.

**Portadown.**

Things are going very smoothly with our new Section at Portadown. Mr. Norman Cully has sent me a copy of the "Portadown Times," with a special reference to the BOYS' REALM League.

together with a lively handbill advertising a dance in aid of the Section funds. Special funds were wanted in order to defray the expenses of sending a team for an inter-Section match at Nottingham.

Early though it is, six clubs have applied for admission to the REALM Cricket League, and Leicester hopes to be first in the field with a complete Section for this new formation.

**A Referees' Meeting.**

The Leicester Section will shortly be holding its first referees' meeting, when these officials will be at liberty to freely discuss incidents which have taken place during the season, and to settle matters which will be helpful for the 1927-8 term.

It has been arranged that, next season, every referee in the Leicester Section will have a badge, and they are forming a Referees' Association. This is an excellent scheme. Referees are usually regarded as rather queer birds, who sort of come and then go away again; but they are really awfully decent fellows—which is not always easy to remember when you're well away with the ball and the whistle blows for offside!

However, when the refs get together, it is certain that they will evolve schemes that will be beneficial to the smooth running of the Leicester Section. It is running smoothly enough now, but I know that these officials will have their jobs smoothed for them once they have a chance to suggest how some small items can be bettered.

**Cups Issued.**

In accordance with the constitution of the League, Sections which have qualified duly received their Cups the first week in January. The issue of these trophies brought me a whole pile of appreciative letters, the general theme of which was: "We expected something pretty good, but nothing quite so fine as this!"

All the Cups were exhibited in the areas to which they belonged, and a great amount of local interest was aroused; this culminated in piles of applications for registration forms from clubs which had seen the trophies and wanted to compete.

**Kilmarnock.**

News from this Section is eminently satisfactory. Howard Thistle top the League—11 points for 7 games played; Crookedholm Rosebank and Caprington Thistle both have 10 points, Crookedholm for 5 games, and Caprington Thistle for 6 games played.

Crookedholm is now the only team in the League with full points. Hillhead Victoria have dropped only one point; Galston United being next on the table. St. Marnock's and Kilmarnock Victoria "A" are doing well.

The Championship is still very open, and there are likely to be stirring games before the destination of the REALM Cup is decided.

**A Trial Game.**

Reverting to the match against Nottingham, Leicester arranged two trial matches, the last one taking place on February 14th—Reds v. Blues, the former winning 4-2. For the Blues, both goals were scored by Harding, who is a really hard-working centre-forward—and anybody who hasn't played at centre hasn't any idea what a tough job it is nowadays. Most backs seem to regard a centre-forward as someone who ought to be rolled out flat at any and every opportunity! Well done, Harding!

**The "Realm" Cricket League.**

This has been definitely decided upon. Full details will be published in the REALM in about two weeks' time.

The Cricket League will be run in Sections on almost precisely the same lines as the Football League is conducted at the moment, and it will have the great advantage of keeping together clubs who have competed during the football season. It is certain that the nucleus of the new formation will come from teams already registered with the REALM, but, of course, newcomers for cricket only will be welcomed.

Secretaries who want advance particulars of the Cricket League should write immediately, addressing their letters to:

**Reading.**

Reading is very keen, and many more clubs will be registered before next season. In this Section, Meccano F.C. has changed its name to Thames United. Reading Caledonians have taken the place of St. George's, who have dropped out for this season. Everything is O.K. at Reading, and enthusiasm is the order of the day. Jolly good luck to this formation and its go-ahead secretary!

**The Tables.**

Coalville A.V. are right at the top of the First Division of the Leicester Section, being nothing less than seven points ahead of the runners-up, Wanlip Albion; the Coalville boys look like certainities for the Championship, and, with a 116 goals for and only 20 against, it looks as though they have a smashing forward line and an impregnable defence.

St. Matthews, Old Cross, and Spinney Hill have all got games in hand of Wanlip Albion, and may challenge the latter at any time. Down at the other end of the table, Burtons and West Imperial are having every kind of tough luck there is—and still they keep on trying! I think there is as much credit—maybe more!—to teams that keep on pegging away against misfortune, than to clubs who are at the top of the tide, with honours coming thick and fast. Stick it, Burtons and Imperial—there's another season after this!

The Sports Editor,  
THE BOYS' REALM,  
Gough House,  
Gough Square,  
London, E.C.4.

**Bedford.**

G. Gulliver, 7, Church Walk, Kempston, near Bedford, tells me he has hopes of establishing a Section in this area. But so far there is everything to be done. Now then, Bedford, get going! I can see a Pilgrims' F.C. making rapid progress and forming the nucleus of a grand formation.

**The Leicester Section.**

A very interesting letter from the secretary of this fine Section covered a number of cuttings from local papers,

These applications should be accompanied by a three-halfpenny stamp or a stamped and addressed envelope for the return of the particulars.

There is nothing like starting early on a job like this. Secretaries can be assured of an immediate reply.

**The Leicester Section.**

A very interesting letter from the secretary of this fine Section covered a number of cuttings from local papers,

**Sunderland.**

There is enthusiasm enough bubbling up at Sunderland for this important northern centre to have a Section of its own. I quote from an interesting letter to hand from Mr. N. Robson, 6, Victoria Buildings, High Street West, Sunderland. He says: "Would you please send me a dozen forms for next season, as I expect it is too late now for this season. We have a team here at present which is second from top in our League. I was wondering if it is possible for us to play a friendly with, for instance, a team selected from Jarrow, as they are the nearest in your League to Sunderland? If you appoint me as Section Secretary for Sunderland I think I could bring the Sunderland Section up

**THE "REALM" CRICKET LEAGUE!**

Are you interested in a "REALM" CRICKET LEAGUE? Preliminary arrangements are now being made, and the new formation will be run on exactly the same lines as the FOOTBALL LEAGUE. Inquiries from clubs are invited, and letters should be addressed to the Sports Editor, THE BOYS' REALM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. Full particulars will be sent in return for a stamped and addressed envelope.

**The Second Division.**

In this table Coalville A.V. Reserves are at the top. By the way, in case anybody is curious, the "A.V." stands for Albert Villa, but Coalville don't use that part of it except when they're all dressed up for parties.

Evington are runners-up here, with Aylestone likely to pop it across them any old Saturday. Latimer United are close behind, with a couple of games in hand.

Y.M.C.A. Juniors are a team who seem to be fighting against odds, but I understand that they are steadily improving, and there is still time for them to climb much higher.

"Trust Sloan to show the policeman a clean pair of heels!" assured Sid Yates. "He knows every inch of this quarter, and there's a hundred and one twists and turnings he could dive into and vanish. And the copper didn't recognise him. He'll be looking for a coal-black nigger, and I don't suppose there's one to be found in all Steelvale."

The footballers returned to Sergeant Boom's quarters, but the interruption caused by Sloan's unexpected visit had brought their impromptu concert to an end. As it was now close on ten o'clock the party split up after a few minutes' conversation, and retired to their respective homes.

Ginger was not sorry to get to bed. It had been an eventful day, what with the match against Bates Road Athletic and his subsequent interview with Henry Crocker and Wallis McKee; it was of the former's cunning duplicity that he was thinking as he blew out his candle and slid in between the sheets.

Ginger was not tired of Raggs' Rents, but he knew that the time was bound to come when he would have to leave the tenements and adopt some sort of a career for himself.

It had never been his intention to remain at the Rents any longer than it would take him to see for himself how his tenants lived, and if all the stories he had heard regarding the state of the premises were true or not.

He had satisfied himself on that point, and he had instructed Solomon Catchpole to spend every penny available in putting the tenements into a proper state of repair. More than that he could not do.

"No, I sha'n't be able to remain here much longer," he thought to himself. "I should be a poor specimen if I was content to settle down and live on a couple of pounds a week, when I might be able to get a job as a professional footballer. I shall be jolly sorry to leave the Ramblers. I only wish I could take the whole bunch of them with me—Sergeant Boom included."

Finally Ginger fell asleep, and the next thing he knew was when he found himself sitting up in bed coughing violently, and wondering what it was that had awakened him.

It was pitch dark, and he knew that he could not have been asleep for more than a couple of hours. It was unusual for him to awaken before the early dawn. Ginger coughed again, and sniffed suspiciously at the atmosphere.

"Smells like something burning," he muttered uneasily. "Perhaps someone's been burning some rubbish out at the back. I saw a bonfire smouldering there a few evenings ago."

Ginger was out of bed at once, and thrusting his head through the open window, peered down on to the piece of waste ground where the Ramblers' pitch was situated. It suddenly struck him that Sloan and the Doolan Street gang might have made further reprisals by setting their clubhouse on fire, but there was no sign of anything of that nature, and the cold night air was entirely free of any smell of burning.

And yet he could sense it again as soon as he drew back into his room! The young footballer did not waste any more time. Lighting his candle, he slipped on his coat and trousers, then flung open his bed-room door.

A thin wisp of acrid smoke set him coughing again, and his heart gave a leap of alarm as he peered down the narrow hall and saw a crimson glow shining through the crack beneath the front door!

Quick as lightning, Ginger darted down the hall, and unlocked the door. He wrenched it open, then recoiled in horror at the sight that met his gaze.

The lower part of that particular block of tenements seemed to be blazing furiously. Great clouds of smoke, and vivid tongues of flame were leaping up the staircase, and he could hear a fierce crackling noise and a sizzling of bubbling paint.

And he was not the only one who had been aroused. Somewhere in the distance he suddenly heard an alarmed shout of: "Fire! Fire!" and realising that there was no time to be lost, Terry closed the door again to keep out the smoke, then he darted for the bed-room occupied by Mrs. Boyd and her husband.

"Dress yourselves as quickly as you can!" he ordered, when he had got a sleepy response to his rapping on the door. "There's a fire broken out underneath, but there's no reason to be alarmed."

In less than a couple of minutes, the Boyds had made their appear-



**WELL DONE, GINGER!** Ginger was almost suffocated by the clouds of pungent smoke which billowed around him. Inch by inch he edged his way along the narrow ledge, with the crippled kiddie clinging to his shoulders, and Sally coming gamely behind.

ance, white-faced and trembling. The landlady was clutching a cago containing a parrot, and her husband was laden with a bundle in which were all the articles of value that he possessed.

"Fire? Where is the fire?" bleated Mr. Boyd, a diminutive, narrow-shouldered man with a large moustache and no chin. "Mary, fetch me a bucket of water."

Mrs. Boyd screeched aloud as Ginger cautiously opened the front door again, and revealed the crimson flames leaping up the staircase.

"Mercy on us, Mister Tyrill! We shall be burned to death! My poor Polly—what will become of my poor Polly!"

"Dang your infernal parrot!" yelled Mr. Boyd, who had never before dared to utter such a sentiment in front of his wife. "We're cut off. We shall never be able to escape from here. And you never paid your insurance money last week, Mary!"

At any other time, Ginger would have found humour in the situation, but he realised that it was impossible to leave the tenement by way of the staircase.

"Don't lose your heads. There's nothing to be frightened about!" he said sharply, as he slammed the door, and darted down the hall towards his own bed-room overlooking the football ground. "This way, I'll soon get you out of here."

The young footballer knew that it was futile to expect any assistance from his panic-stricken companions. They were on the second floor, and his room was not much more than twenty feet from the ground.

He flung the window wide open, and snatching the mattress from the bed, pushed it through the aperture. Then he deftly, but securely, knotted the sheets and blankets together, and attached one end to the iron bedstead.

"You first, Mrs. Boyd," he ordered briskly. "You'll find it as simple as walking down stairs if you do as I tell you."

Mrs. Boyd had the quality of obedience if nothing else. She suffered the other end of the improvised rope to be looped under her arms, then, still clutching tenaciously at the parrot-cage, slid over the window-sill and allowed herself to be lowered slowly to the ground beneath.

Her husband did not stay to ask whether he was to go next or not. Flinging his bundle out into the night, he grabbed the knotted blankets and slid hastily down, landing full on top of his wife, who, having recovered from her first

spasm of terror, promptly slammed her beloved spouse over the head with the parrot-cage. The latter promptly collapsed, and a raucous squawk and a flapping of wings announced that the parrot was free, and had set out on a tour of exploration.

Ginger had done his part, and he could not be troubled with the domestic troubles of his landlord and landlady. Tossing his few belongings into his bag, he flung it through the window. He was about to slide after it, when a sudden thought struck him, and sent a pang of alarm stabbing through his heart.

What of Sally Norris and her crippled brother, who occupied the opposite tenement? They, too, must have been cut off by the blazing staircase, unless they had managed to make their escape by some other means!

"By James, I've got to find out if they're all right!" muttered Ginger grimly, and deliberately turned away from the open window and charge into the billowing clouds of smoke which were sweeping down the passage.

A scorching blast of heat met him as he wrenched open the front door. The landing appeared to be a sea of flame, and he could see the paint bubbling on the door opposite.

"Sally! Sally! Are you there, Sally Norris?" he shouted at the top of his voice.

He was not certain, but he could

have sworn that a faint, appealing voice answered his call. Tearing off his coat, Ginger Terry darted into the kitchen, and saturated the garment beneath the water-tap.

Then, wrapping it around his head and shoulders, he retired to the farther end of the hall, poised himself for a moment, and darted forward at full speed, making one mighty leap across the flaming landing.

He crashed shoulder first against the opposite door; to his relief he heard the lock give, and he pitched forward into the hall beyond. Ginger was on his feet again in an instant, and jammed the door shut again to keep out the flames.

"Sally—are you there, Sally?" he shouted huskily, and instantly the slender figure of Sally Norris appeared at the farther end of the passage.

"Oh, Ginger, I'm so glad you've come!" she cried, her voice trembling slightly. "We can't get out. I tried the stairs, but they were all ablaze, and there's huge flames darting out of the windows beneath us."

"Don't you worry—I'll soon find a way out," assured Ginger, squeezing the pretty girl's hand encouragingly. "Where's your young Johnny? Not frightened, is he?"

Johnny, Sally's cripple brother, was seated helplessly on the edge of a chair, with a blanket wrapped around him, and a scared look on his white face.

"Hallo, Ginger! I knew you'd come!" he greeted Ginger Terry; "Never mind about me. If only I could walk I could look after myself, and Sally wouldn't leave me when she had the chance."

"All right, nipper! Nothing to worry about!" jerked Ginger Terry; but there was a lump in his throat as he strode across the floor.

There were only two rooms in the tenement, and both faced on to the courtyard.

Ginger's heart sank as he peered out of the window. The tenement below was blazing like a furnace, and a curtain of leaping flames spouted out between them and the ground. Even if he had had a rope, it would have been impossible for him to make any use of it.

Shouts of alarm reached his ears, while dimly through the smoke and flames he could see people rushing about the courtyard below, though doubtless it was impossible for them to see him.

"You see, it's impossible for us to escape," said Sally Norris, a sob in her voice. "You've flung your life away for nothing, Ginger. Oh, why doesn't the fire brigade come?"

"They will, in a minute. The station's right at the other end of the town!" jerked Terry.

He was still leaning out of the window, peering keenly to right and left, and his eyes narrowed as he noted a stone ledge, about a foot in width, that ran the entire length of the building.

If only they could make their way along it, they could gain one of the adjoining tenements, which were in no danger from the fire below. It would be a perilous task at any time, and one that was utterly beyond the powers of Sally's crippled brother!

Ginger jerked himself back into the room. The floor was scorching hot beneath his feet, and wisps of smoke were beginning to curl up between the warped boards. The rafters were likely to collapse at any moment!

#### A Desperate Plan.

IT was no time for delay or lengthy consideration, and Ginger's mind was already made up.

"I'll soon get you out of here, but you've got to do exactly as I tell you, Johnny," he said cheerfully, turning his back towards the cripple boy. "Put your arms around my neck, and hang on tight! That's the style!"

Tearing down one of the curtains from the window, Ginger Terry passed it around himself and the boy, and tied the latter securely to his back.

"Now, close your eyes, and don't dare open them again until I tell you!" he said sternly. "That's the only way, Sally," he added, indicating the window and the ledge just beneath it.

The girl nodded, with brave understanding in her blue eyes, and, quite undisturbed by the added weight on his back, Ginger stepped over the window-sill, and stood upright on the narrow ledge, with his face towards the wall.

Smoke and flames gushed up below him as he shuffled a couple of feet to the left.

Sally Norris was as game as a pebble. She knew exactly what was expected of her, and her bobbed hair gleamed like spun-gold in the crimson flames as she, too, took her place on the ledge and grasped Ginger's extended hand.

There the two of them stood, side by side, flattened against the wall, with raging flames and a sheer drop of about twenty feet beneath them.

"Remember, Johnny, don't you dare open your eyes!" cautioned Ginger severely.

"I won't. I've got them so tight shut I don't think I shall ever be able to open them again," replied the plucky cripple boy. "I feel quite safe with you, Ginger."

"Then you feel a mighty lot safer than I do," thought the young footballer grimly, pressing himself as close as he could against the rough wall, and shuffling along inch by inch. "If this ledge should happen to give way—and it feels none too safe—the whole three of us are goners!"

The heat was intense, and Ginger Terry was almost suffocated by the clouds of pungent smoke that billowed up from below, completely obscuring himself and his companions from the people who were dashing excitedly about the courtyard.

Sergeant Boom's stentorian voice was distinctly audible above all others, and it was evident that he was doing his best to preserve order and appease the alarmed folks.

"Ginger, are we almost there?" asked Sally Norris in a low voice.

"I think you'd better let go of my hand in case I fall. This smoke is beginning to make me feel dizzy."

"If you fall, then we all fall!" replied the lad fiercely. "Hold your breath as much as you can; we sha'n't be long now."

The short journey to the adjacent tenement seemed almost interminable. The weight of the lad on his back threatened to overbalance Ginger at any minute, but he set his teeth and raised himself on tiptoe in order to squeeze himself closer against the wall.

(This is a terrible plight for Ginger and his plucky pals. But they're not giving in yet! Look out for next week's stirring instalment of this popular serial—and don't forget to order your REALM in advance!)

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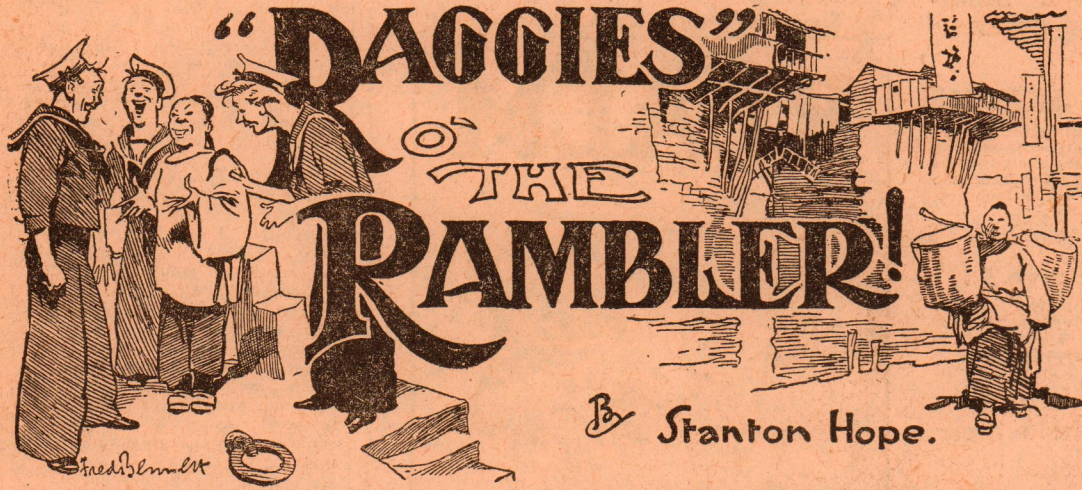
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**BLOWN UP BY RICE!**

The merry raggies show the Chinese pirates a thing or two this week. The yellow men have never been blown up by rice before!



A ROLICKING COMPLETE STORY OF FUN AND ADVENTURE IN CHINA!

**The 1st Chapter.**

**Corny Turns Up Again!**

**T**HERE he is! There's old coffin-face!

With that whoop of joy, Boy "Shiner" Bright hurried across the teeming street in Hoochow, China, towards a doleful-faced young bluejacket who had just come out of a Chinese chemist's shop. Hot on Shiner's heels followed little Tich Bailey and Woo Sam, the messboy, also of the gunboat Buzzfly.

"Good old coffin-face!" cried Shiner. "We've been looking for you!"

Boy "Dusty" Rhodes, who carried a number of bronze discs threaded on string, looked anxiously at his chums. They had originally served on H.M.S. Rambler, where they had become great pals, or raggies. Now they had been transferred to the Buzzfly.

"What's up?" he demanded. "Has ole Petty Officer Gurney sent word to say as we've got to go back to dooty?"

"No, my merry pessimist," answered Shiner. "We're as free as the giddy squirrels that play about the Temple of the Three-legged Dormouse—and jest about as broke, too."

"And talk about hungry!" piped Tich. "I could almost eat one of those ship's biscuits we use as plates aboard the Buzzfly!"

Little Woo Sam, the messboy, linked arms with Dusty Rhodes. "Me velly hungly, too," he murmured. "Me also velly fond of nice kind ole coffee-face."

"Huh!" grunted Dusty, eyeing Woo suspiciously. "I've just changed my last bob and got these Chinese coins for it. I'm a-goin' to buy one o' those little chow-chow pups."

"Fiend Dusty allee same buy nice pup already," smiled Woo. "Chinee cash coins worth three ha'pennies!"

"Threelia'pence?" hooted Dusty. "The beastly old swindler!"

Unwilling to carry the heavy coins about, he thrust the whole lot into the hands of a deaf-and-dumb beggar. So overcome was the Chink at this princely gift that he thanked Dusty exuberantly in pidgin English and hurried off to buy a feed of fried jellyfish and bamboo-sprouts. Immediately he had gone, a suave Chinaman in blue poplin jacket and trousers shuffled up to the boys and shook hands with himself.

"Truly, Blitish boys are velly kind to Chinee poor," he murmured. "It would be gloat honour for this person if boys join in nice feast in honour of naming little one who belongee my blother."

They didn't quite get the hang of this; but Woo explained that the Chinaman wanted them to attend a kind of christening. Woo also said that it was considered lucky to have white people attend, and the Chinaman's brother would be sure to esteem it a great honour if they would go to the feast.

"Well, spike me!" cried Shiner. "Never let it be said that I refused to bring luck—especially at a feast! Right-ho! Thanks very much," he said, turning to the bland Chinaman. "We're ready. Lead on, Plumduff!"

So the Chinaman led the way to a rather imposing bungalow with wide steps leading up to a veranda. There Shiner & Co. paused, for a loud, familiar squeal sounded from farther down the street. Coming towards them under full sail was their ship's mascot, Corny the camel!

**This Week's Story:**  
**THE MYSTERY JUNK!**

"Now, who the thump let him loose again?" ejaculated Shiner.

Not anxious to miss the feast by taking him back to his grazing ground, they decided to ignore Corny. But Corny refused to be treated in this offhand way. Emitting another squeal of recognition, he came loping up, his splay feet hurtling out in all directions from his ungainly body. With playful affection, he tried to rub his head against Dusty's collar, and the raggie sat down heavily on the lowest step.

"Push off, you silly freak!" ordered Dusty fiercely.

With the strange perversity of his species, Corny suddenly lost interest in his young masters and took a fancy to a dust-bath. While he was rolling over and over in the dusty street, kicking his splay feet delightedly in the air, to the amusement of a big mob of Chinese children, Shiner & Co. took the chance of diving after their host into the big bungalow. There they were asked to wait while the Chinese went into another apartment.

For the sake of their appetites, it was perhaps as well that they did not see the actions of their kindly host after he had left them. First the fellow roused a burly Chink who was sleepily smoking in another part of the building, and addressed him as "my illustrious master, Wong."

As the Chinese spoke in a swift whisper the eyes of Wong, the pirate—the deadliest enemy of the Navy in general and the raggies in particular—lighted with wicked gloating. He adjusted square tortoiseshell spectacles on his face and neatly arranged a pair of black moustaches on his upper-lip. Clapping his hands, he summoned some of his servants—who were really pirates in disguise—and gave them swift orders to prepare a feast.

Turning again to his informant, he issued more directions, and the traitor who had led Shiner & Co. into the trap hurried away to summon more pirates and perform certain other errands.

The minutes passed, and Shiner and his pals began to shift uneasily in their seats. The sound of a meal being laid in an adjoining room, however, revived them somewhat.

"A bit late in starting the giddy christening, ain't they, mates?" remarked Shiner. "Still, I can hear the guests arriving."

Then the heavy sliding door of the room was drawn back; a burly Chinese in green-and-yellow robes, and wearing the red button of a mandarin, bowed himself into their presence.

"Welcome to the feast, most honourable and illustrious sahibs!" he said, in a husky voice. "Me velly glad my blother bling you to honour my despicable home. You would likee somet'ing to eat?"

"When it's convenient, admiral," said Shiner. "We're ready for the kick-off if you are."

The boys followed the disguised Wong into the feast-chamber, little knowing that this "christening" was nothing more than play-acting on the part of their deadliest enemies to get them in their power. For it was Wong's happy notion to supply them with dope in their drink, keep

them hidden until night came, and then take them out of the city to avenge himself on them.

There was much bowing and scraping on the part of the Chinese "guests" to the unsuspecting raggies. Shiner & Co. were seated on a long bamboo seat, with a small table in front of them, and a savoury stew of octopus, seaweed, jellyfish, soy beans, and rats' tails set before them.

"Er—m-my appetite ain't so good as it was, mates," mumbled Dusty, eyeing the grub. "I—I think I'll pass this up and tackle the next course."

The next course was snails in aspic, and Dusty passed that up, too, as did his pals. Boiled birds'-nests, stuffed rice, also failed to tempt them, somehow, and water-buffalo steak with toasted grasshoppers and savoury lizard sauce left them cold.

Then, with joyous eyes, they saw a number of Chinese pastries brought in; some which looked almost as honest as large English jam-tarts. Involuntarily the raggies hitched up their sleeves and smacked their lips. "You wantee somet'ing to dink as well?" murmured the disguised pirate chief, and smiled as the chums nodded.

A variety of drinks—including ginger-pop—were brought in by retainers, and the Chinese who had asked the raggies to the feast appeared, holding two squirming bundles wrapped up in embroidered shawls.

"Hallo! Let's have a look at the twins!" piped Tich.

"No can do," answered the Chinese. "It is not the custom of Chineemen to unwrap babies for evil spirits to pinch. P'laps you likee nurse them!"

He thrust the two bundles into Dusty's arms, and mentioned that one of the twins was to be named Pink-Eyed One and the other Little Fat Blossom.

"Nice sort of names," commented Shiner—"though I don't know but what Bill and Maggie would sound a bit more homely, so to speak."

Some ginger-pop was poured out

for the raggies, but Dusty, in trying to prevent one of his charges from dropping to the floor, knocked the table over, spilling the lot. The disguised pirate chieftain drew a sharp breath of chagrin, and sent a retainer to fetch some more; also, he ordered some more dope to put in it.

Musicians were playing in a far corner, and as they finished, little Woo Sam, after setting a big jam tart he had bagged on a bamboo seat, got up and offered to do a few conjuring tricks.

Taking a sugary pastry that looked something like a doughnut, he borrowed Dusty's silk scarf from round his neck—without asking permission—and wrapped the pastry up in it. Then he rubbed the silk vigorously between his hands, and—hey, presto! the doughnut had vanished.

"Heap goo!" remarked Wong.

The messboy bowed; then, with a smile, thrust his right arm up Wong's loose left sleeve. He had been intending to reproduce the doughnut, but his intention changed suddenly, and he brought to light a jade-handled dagger instead.

Wong and the pirates were plainly taken aback, and so were Shiner & Co. For a moment it seemed as though Wong was going to strike down the conjurer, but, with a disarming grin, Woo restored the weapon. So innocent was the expression on his face that Wonky, the pirate, was quite deceived.

"A velly cleber trick!" he commented. "For long time me have honourable dagger, for plenty bad men walk at night in highways of Hoochow."

Woo did one or two other simple tricks, and, pushing his jam-tart farther along the bamboo seat, sat down beside Shiner. From the corner of his mouth he whispered:

"Big Chinee man in square specs allee same Wonky. Me see tattoo-mark on debased arm."

"Great whelks!" muttered Shiner. "Dusty, old sport, it's time you handed back the covered twins and put on your black silk that young Woo borrowed!"

A look from him prevented Tich drinking from a goblet which had been set down before him.

They all twisted their faces into smiles as Wong strolled across to inquire how they were enjoying their fresh drink.

"Please squattee down and join us!" invited little Woo.

Smilingly Wong settled himself on the seat beside the little Chink, completely spoiling the shape of that large jam-tart. For a few moments the pirate chieftain chatted; then, as he rose with the jam-tart adhering to him, little Woo hitched a large Chinese cracker to the back of his robe, dexterously struck a match, and applied a light to the short tuse.

Bang! Wonky leaped four feet into the air.

"Wow!" In a moment all was confusion, and Shiner & Co. leaped to their feet.

"Look out!" yelled Woo in Chinese. "The British Navy!"

In sudden alarm, some of the pirates dashed for the exit, only to

find it barred by Corny. The mascot of the Buzzfly had been snoozing in the sun after his dust-bath, and now, attracted by the smell of eatables, had invited himself to the feast.

As the pirates hurled themselves back out of his way, he loped to the long trestle table laden with queer grub, and put his big forefeet upon it.

Crash! Down went the table at Corny's end, and up went the other end, shooting the remains of seaweed jellies, rat-tail stews, pastries, and fruit all over the floor.

"Skiddoo, you lubbers—skiddoo!" Corny's advent had caused the Navy boys to pause, but at Shiner's frantic shout they dashed for the exit. Dusty, who had been about to place the infants he was nursing on to the table, made off with them in his arms as the table crashed.

Wonky, recovering from his alarm, and with the remains of the jam-tart and cracker still adhering to his back, whipped out his dagger, and hurled himself at Shiner. The youngster ducked in a flash, and, landing the enraged Chink a left hook in the region of the belt, toppled him on to a big, green seaweed jelly.

In response to Wong's angry yells two or three of the pirates recovered their pluck and tried to stop the fleeing raggies. But Shiner, Tich, and Woo lashed full out at every yellow face within arm's-length, and, reaching the veranda, bounded down the steps three at a time. Close at their heels came Dusty, carrying the twins, the Pink-Eyed One and Little Fat Blossom, who were squirming in their wrappings and emitting faint squeals. Corny, bowling over some of the pirates, followed.

Half-way down the street the raggies were caught up by an English resident in his private motor-car. He stopped as he caught sight of the running boys, and Shiner & Co. tumbled in, and were driven rapidly away from a fast-collecting Chinese mob.

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed the Englishman, after the raggies had partly explained the reason of their flight from the Chinese. "What have you got in those bundles, my boy?"

"Chinese babies, sir!" replied Dusty. "I—I daren't chuck 'em down—might hurt 'em! I—I'll return 'em when our skipper sends a party to arrest ole Wonky & Co. And, tar me, if they belong to Wonky, me only hope is as they don't grow up like their blessed dad!"

**The 2nd Chapter.**

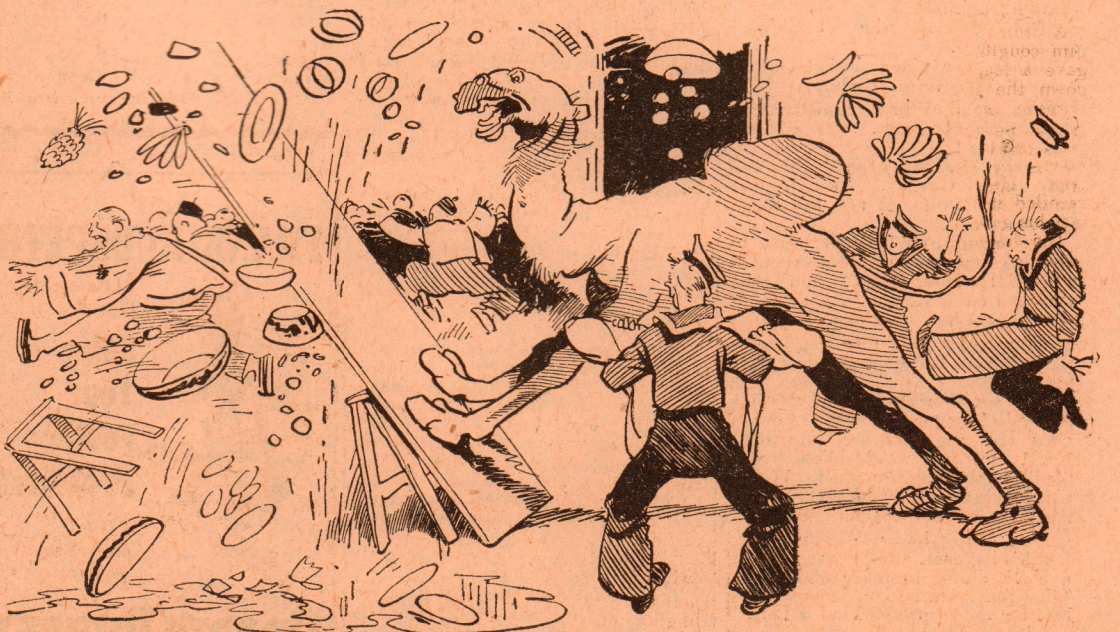
**Bitten by a Bayonet!**

**C**RUMBS! What's up?"

Tich piped the question as the chums, after leaving the motor-car, hurried to the gangway of H.M.S. Buzzfly.

Aboard the ship all was excitement and bustle. Commander Dill was pacing the quarter-deck, only pausing to put a telescope to his eye and peer towards the wide stream which joined the Canton River to Leemooon Lake, on which Hoochow was situated. Petty Officer Gurney was barking orders, and almost every lower-deck rating in the ship

(Continued on next page.)



**CORNY LENDS A HAND!**

Corny planted his feet on the table. The other end went up, shooting the remnants of seaweed jellies, rat-tail stews, pastries, and fruit all over the yelling pirates!

was holystoning decks, scrubbing paint, or polishing brass.

"Come on, me lads—come on!" the P.O. rumbled, when he saw the raggies. "The admiral's coming! Jump to it! It's just as well you've come back aboard; there's work to do!" He suddenly noticed Dusty's bundles, from which arose faint squeals. "What have you got there, me lad?" he demanded.

"Please I think it's twins!" said Dusty. "Their second name's Wonky, but I desay they'll answer to Pink-Eye and Fat Blossom!"

Gurney's brow grew black as thunder. It was not the first time he had suffered from the raggies' ragging.

"Look here!" he growled. "I'm in no mood for your funny jokes! Undo them parcels at once, you young lubber!"

As he spoke he roughly pulled aside one of the embroidered shawls, and something which appeared to Gurney not unlike the hoof of a baby mule shot out and caught him in the eye—smack!

"Ouch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the raggies.

The yelp and the following laughter brought the indignant captain upon the scene.

"What is the meaning of this undisciplined conduct?" he demanded. "Come, Gurney! Get these boys to work!"

"Please, sir," piped Shiner, "we've just seen old Wonky, the pirate, and his gang! They're in a bungalow about a quarter of a mile from here!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the captain. "I've had most reliable information, not half an hour ago, that they are occupying the mysterious Leemooon Marshes across the lake! There's a junk there commanded by a rascal called Ho Pung, which is acting as a sort of supply ship for them!"

"And this lad, sir," grunted Gurney, indicating Dusty, "says as he's brought back twins in them shawls! If so, one of the brats must be wearing infant's size in sea-boots!"

The eyes of the captain were like polished steel.

"Unwrap those shawls at once, boy!" he commanded.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

With a rough hand Gurney helped to perform the task, and Dusty's face went the colour of chalk. For the squirring bundles he held in his arms were two baby pigs!

"So this, my boys," thundered Commander Dill, "is your idea of a joke?"

"N-n-unno! N-not at all, s-sir!" stammered Shiner. "It was old Wonky as said—"

"Silence!" snapped the skipper. "This is perfectly infamous! Shades of Nelson! Be careful, boy!"

One of the young porkers squirmed itself out of Dusty's nerveless hand and dropped, squealing, to the deck. The other, brought to vigorous life by the sunshine streaming on it, also kicked itself free, butted the skipper in the belt, and dropped on to the deck with its companion.

"Bag 'em, boys!" cried Shiner desperately.

Throwing himself full-length, like a Rugger player scoring a try, Shiner managed to nab one of the escaping animals.

"Got him!" he exclaimed triumphantly.

"Other nice piecee bacon hoppee below," Woo informed him.

Then, at that precise moment, a shrill pipe rang out. The admiral was coming!

"Away cleaning gear!" bellowed the angry Gurney. "Jump into your No. 1 uniforms and fall in on the quarter-deck!"

The skipper, on his way below to don his smartest uniform, shouted "Conceal those pigs!" and then vanished from view.

Promptly Shiner stuffed the porker he had caught into the breech of a six-inch gun, and dashed below after his raggies.

The speed with which cleaning and polishing gear was stowed out of view and the tars got into their No. 1 uniforms, would have been a credit to the flagship itself. Within a few minutes the whole crew were mustered on the quarter-deck.

True, Dusty had not been able to find his bayonet, and he was wearing a black duster in place of his silk. Likewise, someone had borrowed his belt for the inspection, but a pair of shoelaces tied together did duty in its place.

Gurney, who was in a terrible flurry, pushed the doleful one into the rear rank. Shiner and Tich were in the front rank, and the two

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## SPREAD THE NEWS!

cad's of the ship, Bodger Lees and Horace Stoop, were to their left.

Pipes trilled as the admiral approached in his launch. The captain and other officers saluted, and the ship's company stood at attention as Admiral Salmon, Commander-in-Chief, came over the side of the Buzzfly, attended by his staff.

Formal greetings were soon over, but there was a pause as a small figure bearing a round white bag shuffled up and coughed gently. It was little Woo Sam, and, to the amazement of all, the little Chink went down on his knees and bumped his head three times on the hard deck.

"Bless me!" exclaimed the admiral. "What is the object of this obsequiousness?"

Woo Sam rose to his feet, and, with another elaborate bow, extended the round bag.

"Please, nicee kind admiral," he piped, "me makee request that you will honour Woo by accepting honourable gift from most humble and despicable Chinese dish-washer."

"What is the nature of your gift, my lad?" asked the admiral.

Woo thrust the bag into the hand of the great man, ignoring Commander Dill's reproving glance.

"He allee same nicee bag of plum-duff cooked in Chinese style," he explained. "Makee nicee kind admiral feel top-hole under belt. Savvy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter of the ship's company caused the admiral's face to grow purple, and he hastily disposed of the gift to his chief-of-staff, who tossed it over the gangway into the waiting launch. Unluckily, it struck the bluejacket in charge on the head, and a shower of cold plum-pudding shot over the luckless tar's uniform.

The grinning sentry on the gangway hastily shoo'd Woo Sam down below, and the admiral, obviously in a bad temper, now started to inspect the ship's company.

"Front rank—'shun! Fix—bayonets!" bellowed Gurney.

Clearly the incident of the plum-pudding had upset Admiral Salmon, and the appearance of Bodger Lees and Horace Stoop did not mend matters. Having told Gurney—who followed the august procession with a notebook—to take their names as a reminder that they were to be dealt with later, he carefully inspected bluejacket after bluejacket. Sometimes he found fault with a man's uniform, sometimes with his face—it was not shaved, or held just at the right angle from his body. Sometimes he commented on a speck of rust on a rifle, or a tiny green spot of verdigris on a bayonet.

"Front rank—stand at ease!" ordered Gurney. "Fix—bayonets!"

The admiral moved along faster as he inspected the rear rank, followed by his attendant staff.

"Tich," whispered Dusty from the rear rank in an agonised voice, "hand me your bayonet, matey! I ain't got one!"

Taking a bayonet from a rifle

without apparently showing movement is a difficult feat. Tich tried to accomplish it, but the bayonet was stiff to get off.

"Buck up!" came the melancholy voice of Dusty. "Do you want me to get the rattle, you silly freak? Hand me your bayonet!"

He relaxed into dismal silence as the admiral, scarce glancing at the two or three men on his left, halted right in front of him. The great man's eagle eyes roved swiftly over Dusty, noting every detail of his appearance. Then, although knowing the task was impossible, he deliberately and quietly said:

"Hand me your bayonet."

By this time, Tich, in the front rank, had got his "pig-sticker" from his rifle, and thinking that Dusty was getting impatient again, handed it back sharply, point first. It struck Admiral Salmon full in the stern-sheets, and the plump C-in-C. went straight up in the air as though he had been bitten!

"Wow!"

He was doing a wild war-dance round the deck, grasping his injury with both hands, when Commander Dill thrust the luckless Tich forth from the ranks.

"Put this boy under close arrest, Gurney!" he thundered.

And before the horrified eyes of Shiner and Dusty, the Little 'Un was marched below under an armed guard of seamen.

"Such disgraceful behaviour I've never struck in all my forty years in the Service!" panted the indignant admiral. "You must sharpen your ship's company up, Commander Dill! Look at this boy with the face like a sea-boot! What's his name—Rhodes? No bayonet! No belt! No smartness at all! Look at his silk, his lanyard, his uniform, his

boots, his cap, his face! Shades of the old Arethusa, they'd have flogged the young scamp round the Fleet in my young days! Put him in the report, petty officer, and, by jingo, smarten him up! Smarten him up, d'you hear?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Gurney's countenance was grim as he added Dusty's name to those in the report, and he cast a baleful glare at the dishevelled raggie as the admiral moved away.

Marching forward, accompanied by other officers, the admiral examined the appointments of the ship.

"Humph! The ship itself, at least, appears to be in order," he said grudgingly.

He paused to peer into a six-inch gun, but hurred himself back with a gasp of alarm as a curious squeak was emitted from the muzzle, and a small porker poked its head out!

Standing on the deck with trembling limbs, the admiral mopped his brow.

"I—I think this hot sun has got the better of me," he mumbled, as though to himself. "I should—er—like to see the appointments of your cabin, Commander Dill—er—especially the sideboard."

The skipper of the Buzzfly breathed a trifle more freely.

"I have a few nice cut-glass decanters, sir!" he murmured invitingly. "And as the weather is warm and—"

They went below together, and the admiral, under the skipper's hospitality, soon began to take a more genial view of life. Before he departed from the Buzzfly the ship's company had assembled again, and the great man addressed the tars on the necessity for rounding up Wong and his pirates, whose new lair was in the mysterious Leemooon Marshes across the lake.

"A rascally Chinese skipper called Ho Pung is taking supplies of rice to the marshes," stated the admiral.

"It is necessary that we should apprehend him and his crew, but if we send a cutting-out expedition this man will assuredly destroy his accounts, and all other evidences of his dealing with the pirates. It is necessary, therefore, to think of some way to take him by surprise, and any suggestions will be welcomed."

Just before the great man left the ship to return to the Canton River, Shiner hit on a notion, and after putting a request through the usual channels, went to the skipper's cabin, where the admiral was wishing the commander a genial good-bye.

"I think, sir," spoke up Shiner, "as I've hit on a way to take them Chink pirates by surprise. You see, I've read all about them there mystery ships in the War, which used to sail the seas looking like peaceful tramps. But when an enemy submarine bobbed up, down went the four sides o' the mystery ship, to show her hidden guns, all ready for action. In a shed not far from here there's a shallow-bottomed junk for sale, cheap. What about turning

that into a sort o' little mystery ship, and arming her to go after this Ho Punk, or whatever his tally is? If the blokes that go in her dress themselves up like Chinks, or even keep out of sight, the Chinese skipper o' the supply ship wouldn't suspect a thing until it was too late."

"Bless my heart! This sounds an excellent scheme," said the admiral. "You might go right ahead with it, Dill!"

"I'm pretty useful, sir, with saw and chisel," remarked Shiner, "and my raggies are, too—little Tich especially. I hope, sir, as you'll let him and Dusty out of the cooler to help with the good work."

Commander Dill also spoke up for the boys, telling the great man of their previous good work in action against the pirates. So, in the end, Admiral Salmon—who was in a much more genial mood now—relented, and Shiner, after saluting, bounded away to acquaint his raggies with the good news of their forthcoming release.

### The 3rd Chapter.

#### Shiner's Mystery Ship.

A WEEK had passed—a busy week for all hands of the Buzzfly. Shiner's bright notion had become a practical reality, for in a shed by the lakeside was a mystery junk, almost completed, except for her armaments.

On board the Buzzfly itself Petty Officer Gurney and others were getting two or three twelve-pounder guns out of the decking ready to put aboard Shiner's mystery ship. In the shed Shiner & Co., helped by Bodger Lees and Horace Stoop, were putting finishing-touches to the Puck-a-Poo, as the ungainly craft was named. At least, Shiner, Dusty, and Tich, helped by little Woo Sam, were doing the work, while their two shipmates were playing ha'penny nap.

"Well, what's the latest news of old Wonky?" asked Shiner, slapping on some red paint.

"I heard Gurney say this morning," replied Dusty, "that the old ruffian is still in the marshes. That junk skippered by Ho Pung went up to-day with some rice, so if we can get the guns in this packet in time we may be able to bag her afore sunrise to-morrow."

The raggies paused and looked at Woo Sam, who had picked up a paint-brush and was painting a big eye on the junk's bow.

"All nicee junk have eye," murmured Woo Sam. "Junk no have eye, no can see where to go."

"Stick another one on the other side, then," responded Shiner. "We want this junk to look the real goods, matey."

He clambered aboard the vessel—which was on a slipway—and looked at the great wooden flaps, which stood out at right angles, and could be lowered over the side to conceal the guns when they were put aboard.

"Come, let's go for a stroll, Stoop," said Bodger Lees, yawning and throwing down the cards. "I'm fed-up with this hole of a place."

"No, play on, matey!" pleaded Stoop, who was winning.

His pal refused, and with their oilskins over their arms, they ambled out of the shed. They had not been gone more than ten minutes before a sharp tropic thunderstorm burst, and both of them came hurrying back.

Bodger threw off his oilskin and settled down in a corner, for the muggy weather had made him sleepy. With droopy eyes he watched the work of the energetic Shiner & Co., and then stretched himself full length on his back for a snooze, not noticing that he was lying in a patch of fast-setting glue. Horace Stoop sat gloomily on a narrow bench beside a large pot of red paint, and it was not long before he was fast asleep, like his big crony.

"A blessed bright pair!" grunted Dusty.

A grin stole over the face of little Tich, and, picking up a hammer and some thin nails, he crept towards the sleeping form of Stoop. With gentle, rhythmic blows of the hammer, so as not to disturb the young cad, he carefully nailed Stoop's oilskin to the small bench. Hardly had he done the job when there were brisk footsteps outside the shed.

"Great catfish!" exclaimed Shiner, in a hoarse voice. "The admiral!"

In marched Admiral Salmon, with Commander Dill at his heels.

"Good-morning, my lads!" cried the admiral, in a ringing voice.

Shiner & Co. sprang to attention.

(Continued on next page.)

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and saluted. Dusty, forgetting that he had got a paint-brush in his hand, jabbed it in his eye. The admiral's voice penetrated into the sleep of the two cads and roused them like an electric shock.

Up leaped Bodger, and there was a harsh rip of tearing cloth as a long strip from the back of his jumper remained attached to the glue on the shed floor. Horace Stoop, too, leaped up, jerking up the narrow bench with him, and hurtling the pot of red paint from it.

Whoosh! The paint shot in a shower over the immaculate legs of the admiral and his smart white shoes!

"Thunder and lightning!"

Admiral Salmon waved his fists and stamped his feet angrily, as, with popping eyes, he gazed upon his ruined trousers, socks, and shoes. His face was beetroot-red, and, after that frantic yell, his mouth opened and closed, as though he had become bereft of speech.

"C-c-corks!" stuttered Stoop.

He stared blankly at Commander Dill, who, furious of face, was trying to mop what paint he could from the admiral's legs with his own handkerchief. Then a piece of sacking caught Stoop's goggling eyes, and he swung round suddenly to get it.

Biff! The small bench, which was attached to Stoop, swung round with him, and caught the commander a lusty wallop as he bent.

"Yapping dogfish! Who did that?"

"Pup-pup-please, it wasn't my fault, s-sir!" whined Stoop.

Turning the other way sharply, he promptly proceeded to knock the admiral's pins from under him with the other end of the bench.

"This is outrageous!" thundered the admiral, sitting up on the dirty floor. "Commander, hold a court of inquiry on the disgraceful conduct of these two boys, and deal with them with the utmost severity!"

So fierce did both the admiral and the skipper look that Boy Horace Stoop made a dive for the exit of the narrow shed. The bench stuck on either side of the doorway, and, with a tearing sound, half of Stoop's oilskin parted company with the rest that encased his lemonade-bottle shoulders.

"Report on board immediately!" roared the commander after him. "You, too, Lees. No, not a word! I'll hear all that you've got to say in due course on the quarter-deck!"

It was all that Shiner & Co. and little Woo could do to keep their faces straight. Not, however, by a flicker of a smile dared they show their amusement before the irate naval officers.

"Phew!" breathed the admiral. "Let me inspect this mystery ship at once, Commander Dill, and in the meantime, send that Chinese boy to the ship to procure for me a change of attire."

The testy manner of the admiral reflected itself in the skipper's sharp command to little Woo to perform the errand.

"Huh! The paintwork looks all right!" admitted the admiral. "What arrangements have been made for screening the guns?"

"Allow me, sir!" cried Shiner brightly. "I'll show you!"

He clambered up on to the deck of the junk and unhitched the rope attached to one of the heavy wooden flaps. On the floor of the shed the admiral was chatting with Commander Dill beneath one of the freshly cut gun ports.

"It's done like this, sir!" cried Shiner, who couldn't see his superior officers from the deck above.

With that he released the rope, and down came the heavy wooden flap—smack! It caught Admiral Salmon full on the crown of his naval cap, and, emitting a distressed gasp, the C-in-C. sat down with a bump on the floor.

"Shades of Nelson! What have you done?"

With that despairing cry, Commander Dill dropped to his knees beside the admiral, who had rolled over like a barrel near the slipway.

Speechless with dismay, Dusty and Tich stood looking on, goggle-eyed, while Shiner peered down from the deck above, scratching his head and scarce realising what had happened.

"Water! Water—quick!" cried the frantic skipper.

With great presence of mind, Dusty snatched up a bowl of liquid which happened to be conveniently near by, and thrust it into the beckoning hand of the Buzzfly skipper. The captain dashed it into the admiral's face, but, apparently, warm fish-glue had no reviving properties.

"Go immediately for stretcher-

bearers!" ordered Commander Dill, turning to little Tich. "We must get Admiral Salmon into the sick-bay as quickly as possible. This," he said, glaring at Shiner, "is the last straw, and it won't surprise me if I'm relieved of my command!"

"It—it was awful bad luck, sir!" stammered Shiner. "Naturally, I'd no idea as the old geezer—er—the admiral was standing where he'd get the flap on his figurehead! You don't think I did it a-purpose?"

Commander Dill, who had paled in the face of this last terrible misfortune, shook his head. "Never had Shiner and Dusty seen him so upset about anything before."

"No, I don't think you did it on purpose, Bright," he said, in a hollow voice. "As to what view the admiral will take, I can't say!"

"That's jest it, sir!" mumbled Dusty dismally. "There's no knowing how he'll look at it—if he lives!"

"P'rhaps he won't come to for a few days, sir," remarked Shiner, more hopefully. "In the meantime, supposing we capture this here junk in the Leemoon Marshes. The admiral is so set on us doing that that he might take a more favourable sort o' view o' things."

The skipper raised the unconscious admiral into a sitting position as the

Wild duck squawked their way in V-formation across the crimson heavens, and some herons preened themselves on a mud flat.

But Shiner & Co. and the other lads who were below saw nothing of the sunset, the wild ducks, or the herons. Strict orders had been issued that they were to keep out of sight until darkness fell. In the meantime, they had to clean their rifles, practise fire-drill and running out hoses, sort out stores, and, worst of all, listen to a long lecture by Petty Officer Gurney on naval tactics.

Shortly after dark a piece of bad fortune occurred. A smaller sail was set astern, and as the boom swung over to the wind, it caught the first lieutenant a clump on the head which completely laid him out. And, even worse misfortune, Petty Officer Gurney took command in his usual strenuous way.

"Some hopes of catching these blessed Chinks by surprise if ole Gurney is going to keep on bellowing like a bull!" muttered Dusty. "I don't believe that bloke could talk gentle-like to a nervous baby if he'd got a sore throat!" "Sides, his tictacs are all wrong!"

"You mean his tactics, matey," murmured Shiner. "You're right!

did a bit of fishing, and managed to get the spluttering Gurney neatly hooked under the back of his coat.

"All hands to the rope!" cried Shiner. "Ye-ho! Heave a-a-away!" The laughing bluejackets hauled downward on the rope, and Gurney came out of the mud with a sickening squelch.

Foot by foot they hoisted him until he was six feet above the mud; then there was a sudden rip of cloth, and down he went again with a resounding squoosh!

"That's sort of unfortunate!" grinned Shiner. "He's over his ears now, and we shall have to go overboard and dig him out by hand!"

"Sufferin' catfish!" gulped Dusty, gazing ruefully at the mud.

There was nothing else for it if they were to save Gurney's life, and over the side went the gallant tars. Well over their ankles in the soft stickiness, they got a board under Gurney, and, one at each end of it, levered him up. He had ceased to struggle, but when they had scraped the worst of the mud from his face, they saw with relief that he was still breathing. Getting him on board was another big job, and by the time the bluejackets had accomplished it their uniforms were almost as black as Gurney's.

mud flats, lighting the course and showing up the ungainly form of the anchored pirate food junk, which was under bare poles.

As dexterously as a qualified Leemoon pilot, Shiner took the Puck-a-Poo close up to the other craft, and at a signal from him the crew let the square lateen-sail down with a run. A guttural voice shouted something in Chinese from the other craft, and little Woo Sam replied in the same lingo that those aboard the Puck-a-Poo were acquainted with Wong Kiang, and had come on an important mission.

The helm of the Puck-a-Poo was put hard down, and Shiner's mystery ship came alongside Ho Pung's craft. Ho Pung, a fierce-looking ruffian in dirty yellow garments, came to the side with the rest of his crew, all armed to the teeth.

"Look out, Shiny!" cried Woo Sam. "Ole Ho Pung say that we too muchee tell fibs. He allee same now come on board nice Puck-a-Poo."

"Coming aboard us, is he?" said Shiner grimly.

Before any of the pirates' allies could make the leap across, he roared out an order. Up came the great wooden flaps, revealing the Puck-a-Poo's grim teeth.

The sight of those black-muzzled twelve-pounders and the business-like machine-guns set the Chinese rascals leaping back as though stung. Ho Pung bellowed furiously at them, telling them it was all a bluff, and his vitriolic tongue lashed a bit more pluck into them.

"Out hoses!" bellowed Shiner. "Remember, mateys, we want to catch 'em alive!"

The hoses were already rigged, the pump was set going, and streams of water shot across the short, intervening space between the two junks.

The stream directed by Shiner caught Ho Pung full in the face, bowling him over like a shot rabbit. And as the warm brown water splattered fiercely over the others they scampered like half-drowned rats for the shelter of a big hatch-cover.

The yellow skipper himself was not long in following them, and there they all crouched, while at Shiner's orders the hoses were kept playing.

The warm water ran in streams over the pirate food junk, and poured through the cracks between the ill-fitting deckboards. For half an hour the fierce deluge of water was kept up, and the guttural gasps and groans of Ho Pung's crew could be heard rising above the hiss of the water.

"Those yellow perils don't look like chucking up the sponge," remarked Shiner ruefully, "though by this time they must be feeling like blessed sponges themselves. It seems to me, chums, that, although they've still got their giddy pig-stickers and pop-guns, we shall have to board 'em and take 'em in a hand-to-hand tussle."

"Ray!" yelled little Tich. "Let me get at 'em!"

"Look 'ere, you keep behind me, you silly shrimp!" warned Dusty. "I'll bet ole Punky has eaten better things than you for breakfast afore to-day!"

Shiner yelled the order for the hoses to be turned off, and gripped his rifle by the muzzle. Before he could give the order for his men to board the junk, however, there was a terrific report on board the enemy craft, and one of the deckboards blew upwards.

Then, to the amazement of the Navy boys, they saw, by the bright light of the moon, that the deck of the enemy craft was taking an upward bulge.

Three other boards burst upward. "Jumpin' jellyfishes!" cried Tich. "What the thump's happening?"

Something that looked almost like white froth was bubbling through the great holes now appearing in the junk's deck.

"He, he, he!" tittered little Woo Sam. "Me plenty savvy! Allee same too much rice aboard nice junk, and warm water floss marshes makee it heap swell!"

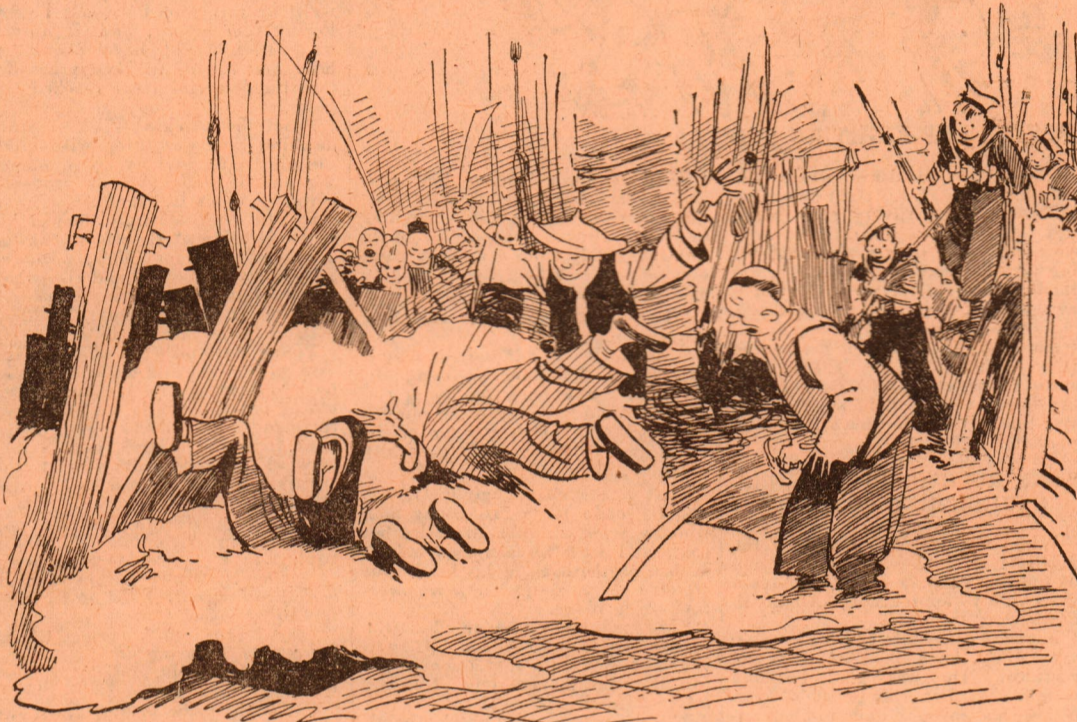
"Spike me, you've hit the nail on the head, funny-face!" laughed Shiner. "Instead of dried rice for the merry pirates, ole Punky's craft has got a cargo of rice-pudden aboard!"

There was another terrific report, and the hatchway took an upward heave, leaving a great space, into which several of the frightened pirates plunged head-first.

"At 'em, the blues!" yelled Shiner excitedly. "Never mind your arms, mates—use your fists!"

With a lusty British cheer which

(Continued on page 399.)



**DISHED BY THE RICE!** There was a terrific report. Deck planks heaved upwards and a foaming white mass of rice surged up, into which frightened pirates tumbled head-first. "At 'em, mates!" roared Shiner, as he led the boarding party over the side of the enemy junk.

tramp of the stretcher-bearers could he heard outside the shed.

"It's the only hope, Bright," he said. "To-night we must capture Ho Pung and his junk!"

**The 4th Chapter.  
Wonky's Supply Ship.**

LATE in the afternoon the Puck-a-Poo was launched with more than a dozen blue-jackets—including Shiner & Co.—already aboard her and under cover. The big wooden flaps which looked like a part of the hull concealed the twelve-pounders and a couple of machine-guns.

The first lieutenant, who was in charge, was wearing Chinese disguise, as were the two or three men who showed on deck. Petty Officer Gurney, however, was in uniform with the rest of the crew below.

Those Chinamen who happened to see the junk launched had not the foggiest idea of the real nature of the little vessel as those on deck set up the mast and sail. The wind was favourable, and, with luck, the junk should get well among the Leemoon Marshes on the far side of the lake by midnight. And the skipper of the pirates' supply ship would scarce suspect that the Puck-a-Poo was armed with twelve-pounders and a crew of well-trained blue-jackets!

Originally Commander Dill had intended to take command himself. The luckless admiral, however, had not yet come to his senses, and so the skipper remained handy to the Buzzfly sick-bay.

Borne by the scented shore wind, the junk crept across Leemoon Lake and drew nearer to the shallow water, with its mud and reeds.

What's the good of us making these flaps if we're going to sail up to the giddy pirates with all our guns a-showin'!"

Such was not Gurney's intention, though. And, going forwards, he roared:

"Leggo those flaps! Jump to it!"

He himself jumped across to Dusty, who was a bit too slow for his liking in unhitching a rope. But even as he was going to help, the junk slipped aground on a bank of black mud, and at the same time Dusty got the rope free. As the great flap leaped upward on its spring hinges to fall over the side it caught Gurney a thwack on the chest which hurtled him overboard into the thick black mud.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the crew delightedly.

Grinning faces quickly lined the junk's rail, and their laughter was more uproarious as the jolly tars saw Gurney spread out like a great frog, face downward in the mud.

"Quick, mateys!" cried Shiner, who, although seeing the humorous side of the situation, immediately realised the P.O.'s danger. "Hitch a rope to him! He'll get snuffocated!"

Dusty, without showing much enthusiasm, fetched a rope with a big hook on the end of it. Then Tich

"Shove him below, me hearties!" cried Shiner.

They quickly did so, and, to make sure that he shouldn't come up and start his roaring-lion tactics again, they thoughtfully fastened him in the small store-room aft. Then over the side again they went, and, after scraping away the thickest mud from the vessel's keel, the blue-jackets gradually levered the junk off the mud-flat.

Down below there came the sound of muffled knockings and the unmistakable voice of Petty Officer Gurney threatening to "spifficate" all and sundry. But Shiner and the rest of the crew, as they scrambled aboard again, were afflicted with a strange deafness.

"Mateys," cried Shiner, gathering a group about him, "our officer has been knocked out, and old Gurney, too, is hoarse de combat, as the Frenchers say—and he's getting hoarser every minute! Seeing such to be the case, it's up to us to bag this chap Ho Punk and his giddy food ship, and take him in tow back to the Buzzfly! Are you all game to go ahead?"

"Ay, ay!"

"You bet! That's what we come for, Shiner!"

"Right-ho! I'll go to the bow and pick out the water channels between the mud-flats, and give the course for the helmsman to steer by. Mind you, when we come up to the junk you must lie low. And for the love of Mike, Dusty, keep that chivvy o' yours out o' sight, 'cause if it's seen it'll cause a panic, and we want to make this capture quiet-like!"

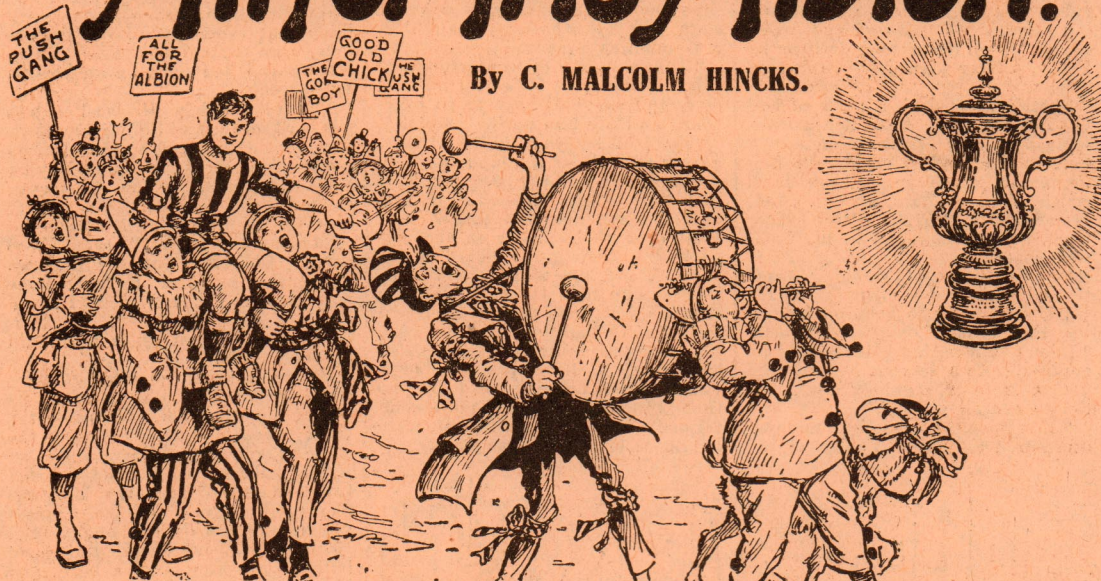
It was difficult, steering the Puck-a-Poo among the waving reeds in this mysterious part of the great Leemoon Lake. A full moon poured molten silver upon the water and the

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See the wonderful offer in our  
**New Free**  
**Football Competition**  
**TEN RESULTS - £500**  
(Details on page 388.)

**FLYING CHICK!** No, Chick doesn't sprout wings, he hires an aeroplane. He's after a Scot for the Albion team—and Chick's going to get him! It's SOME chase, and this week's rousing chapters are full of thrills.

# All For The Albion!

By C. MALCOLM HINCKS.



OUR SPECIAL CUP-FIGHTING STORY!

**GET TO KNOW—**

**Chick Chandler**, a clever young footballer and manager of Oldford Albion. Chick makes an enemy in **Fred Tomlin**, whom he has deposed from the centre-forward position. The young manager forms the "Push Gang"—which consists of all the young footer enthusiasts in Oldford—whose aim is to stimulate enthusiasm in the town for the Albion. Their mascot is a goat named Buster. Chick's three chief lieutenants are Sam Snodger, Bonsor—commonly known as Bones—and pretty **Marjorie Mainland**. Marjorie, unknown to herself, is heiress to £10,000. The only person, other than a lawyer, who does know this is Fred Tomlin.

Chick sets off to Scotland to secure the transfer of a footballer named McCraill. On the train he sees the chairman of Maston Villa—the Albion's Semi-final opponents—and immediately concludes that the Villa are also after McCraill. He suspects that Gregson—a rascally Albion director is responsible for this.

(Now get down to this week's stunning chapters!)

**Chick's Great Idea!**

**CHICK CHANDLER** sat in the first-class carriage of the Scotch Mail express, which had just left Newcastle, staring, with a puzzled expression on his face, at the sleeping man in the opposite corner.

Two things were perfectly clear to the young manager of Oldford Albion. It was not chance that caused the sleeping, podgy man to be travelling North with him in the cold grey light of a mid-March morning. The chairman of Maston Villa was also after McCraill, and it was heavy odds on him being able to secure the transfer of the Scottish footballer.

It certainly was a lick! Chick began to think rapidly. He was suspicious of Gregson. It looked very much as though the director who was so up against him had in some way conveyed the news about McCraill to the rival club; but that was something to be dealt with later on. The thing now was—could he take advantage of his discovery? The chairman of Maston Villa was a dangerous rival, a man who could offer far better terms for the Scottish player than Chick possibly could, even if the latter considerably exceeded his authority in the matter of payment.

Chick's one chance was to get there first. He knew they had to change at a junction south of Dundee, and wait half an hour for the slow local train to Pitstruther, ten miles away. It would certainly be quicker to take a car from the junction; but then Mr. Briscoe might also think of that, and, anyway, it would only mean a saving of about half an hour, not sufficient time to fix up the transfer, even with the greatest of luck.

The train bumped over some points. Mr. Briscoe opened his eyes, blinked at Chick, sleepily consulted a handsome gold watch, and then, pulling his rug tighter round him, dozed off again.

"Now, what the dickens am I to do?" growled Chick.

The express was drawing near Alnmouth. Away on his right he caught glimpses of the silvery grey North Sea, sparkling in the rather wintry sunshine. Just then a seaplane, flying very low, came in from the sea as though to alight. He lost sight of it as the train, beginning to slow down, entered a short tunnel; then, as the train emerged, he saw it descending into a large field. There were several hangars in the field, and a big board was fixed beside the railway-line. On the board was painted:

"THE RUSHTON-RIVERS AERO ENGINEERING CO., LTD."

With the engine roaring, the machine went taxiing towards one of the big hangars. The long train was now approaching Alnmouth Station.

A gleam came into Chick's eyes as, very softly, he walked out into the corridor. He was glad he had bought that first-class ticket—though he was not going to have full advantage of it—otherwise he would not have known of his rival's presence on the train. He was glad he had no luggage with him, too, for that made it easier for the plan he had so rapidly thought out.

It was just on eight when he stepped out of the train at Alnmouth. Few passengers alighted, and the little town was not yet awake. There was no taxi about, and as he set off at a rapid walk in the direction of the aeroplane works he had passed in the train, he knew he was taking a big risk; but, on the other hand, to have gone on in the train with Mr. Briscoe would almost certainly have meant failure. Now, if things went well, he did at least stand a sporting chance.

Farther along the road Chick saw a high brick wall, and it was a quarter past eight when he passed through some double gates and entered a factory yard, to be promptly challenged by a man who emerged from the timekeeper's office.

"I want to see the boss to arrange for a flight to Pitstruther," said Chick calmly, his hands in the pockets of his overcoat. The timekeeper stared at him curiously.

"There's no one at the office yet, and we don't do flights. We're a manufacturing company, and our machines only go out for tests."

"That's a lick!" said Chick, his face falling.

The train had gone on North with the chairman of Maston Villa, and Chick knew that unless he could get an aeroplane he was done, that he would be blamed for the step he had taken in trying to beat the man with the big cashbags. Miskin and his fellow-directors would blame him for not having gone on and made a fight for it. Here he was, stranded in a factory on the Northumberland coast when he should have been on his way to Pitstruther to obtain the signature of the young Scot whose services were so necessary to Oldford Albion for their Semi-final with Maston Villa.

Then it flashed upon him that everything round him looked new, the name was new to him, though he had always taken a good deal of interest in flying from a reading point of view. A new firm would be glad of advertisement.

"They'll take me!" he said confidently.

"I'm doubting it!" said the dour timekeeper. "But there's young Mr. Rushton, who's been up flying this morning, and is going to the canteen for breakfast. He's the son of the managing director, and, generally speaking, his word goes here."

That was good enough for Chick, and he made for a tall young man who, wearing an oil-stained leather coat, and with an airman's helmet pushed to the back of his head, was crossing the yard—just near a powerful-looking plane.

"My name's Chandler, I'm the manager of Oldford Albion F.C., and it's most important that I should get to Pitstruther immediately. Can you let me hire that plane?"

The young man held out his hand. "Dear old duck, I'd be delighted if it were possible! Chick Chandler—eh? Read about you, of course, and glad to meet you in the flesh; but we're not on a passenger-carrying stunt. Means special licences and yards of red tape. Never be worth our while here."

Chick took a liking to the young man, and his hopes rose.

"It would be well worth your while to take me to Pitstruther! Look here! I'm telling you this in confidence, I'm after a big transfer. You know what a fuss the Press makes over transfers, and this will be the biggest sensation ever. You know we have to meet Maston Villa in the Semi-final at Liverpool a fortnight on Saturday, and must sign on our man at once. I left the train here, and it went on with Briscoe, the chairman of Maston Villa. We're both after the same man, and I've relied on a Rushton-Rivers' plane! Some ad. for your machines—eh?"

"Dear old duck, I quite get you!" said young Mr. Rushton. "I'd just love to help you to get your man, but there's a snag, a serious snag. Passengers are only allowed to be carried in machines that are specially licensed for it, and we— Hold on, though! There's a machine belonging to a Scarborough firm that we've had for overhaul. I tested her yesterday afternoon, and she only wanted a little adjustment, and was to be ready to be taken to her owners this morning. I suppose you're prepared to pay the usual rate for a special flight?"

"Quite!" said Chick, his eyes lighting up with hope.

The airman made for a hangar, spoke to the foreman, and then took his young visitor by the arm.

"It will take at least a quarter of an hour to get her out and warm her up. Had breakfast? No? Well, come along, and have a bit with me. Flying is a poor game on an empty stomach!"

"All right," agreed Chick; and he followed the airman to the canteen.

**The Race for McCraill.**

**A**LTHOUGH the impatient Chick chafed at the delay, he realised that he was hungry, and the bacon and eggs and coffee in that rough-and-ready canteen seemed better than any he had ever tasted.

The pilot was quite unfurried. He said the machine they would be flying in was one of their early models, used for joy-rides over the sea in the summer, but that she had a good turn of speed, and, with flying conditions excellent as they were that morning, the flight of about a hundred-and-twenty miles should not take much over an hour.

Chick knew that the train he had left was not due there until half-past eleven, and as it was now not yet a quarter to nine, he cheerfully spread some marmalade on his buttered toast.

"Have to lend you a leather coat and helmet," said Rushton. "We aren't going in a liner, you know; no shelter but the wind-screen. Ever flown before? No? Oh, it's the life, my boy—the life!"

In the ordinary way Chick would have been thrilled at the thought of the flight, but now his one thought was securing the signature of Andrew McCraill. The chairman of Maston Villa was rushing northward by rail, soon he would be following him by air, and if things went well, would have about an hour and a half in Pitstruther before his powerful rival reached the place.

From the window Chick saw a machine that was fitted with landing-wheels as well as floats, standing outside a hangar, its propeller whirling round. Rushton lit a cigarette, then leisurely donned his coat and helmet. He sent a man for a similar outfit for Chick, who was all anxiety to be off, and then they stepped into the quivering plane. A clock on an ugly red brick building pointed to ten minutes to nine.

Young Rushton fixed a map in the case on the dash, raced his engine as he leisurely drew on big, fur-backed gloves, then called out a sharp command. Big chucks were pulled back from the wheels, and a big expanse of sandy grass and the silvery grey sea seemed to be rushing to meet them.

Then they were in the air and climbing in a circle. Rushton banked in a rather alarming manner, then flattened out, and they were heading northward at an ever-increasing speed.

"She can go!" cried Chick, thoroughly enjoying it.

"Oh, she's not fast!" shouted Rushton, half turning his head. "You ought to be in our latest; she can move a bit!"

Chick wondered what his companion would call really fast. They

were going over St. Abbs Head before he had realised that they were over the Scottish border. And soon they began to descend. That feeling was rather unpleasant, but in his excitement over McCraill, Chick had little time to think about it. They descended gently on the sea, and soon a boat was beside them. Chick warmly thanked Rushton, and, after promising that his firm should have all the advertisement he could give them if the transfer went through all right, was pulled towards the shore.

A clock was striking ten. "Do you think I'd find the secretary of the football club on the ground by now?" asked Chick.

The younger of the two fishermen glanced curiously at him.

"Ye would not, mon. Ye'd find Mr. Macpherson in his insurance office in Moffat Street until half-past ten, I'm thinking."

That was useful information, and Chick, paying the men well, and receiving directions with regard to Moffat Street, set off there, inwardly greatly excited, but outwardly calm, knowing that although he was first in the race to Pitstruther, the hardest part of his task was still before him.

He found that Mr. Macpherson was a shrewd-looking Scot, who combined his secretaryship of the club with his job as local inspector of a big insurance company.

For a moment the little man was rather taken aback, but he quickly recovered, and declared that Pitstruther valued their crack centre-half at fifteen hundred pounds.

"By Jove!" said Chick admiringly. "We only value him at eight!"

Then started the bargaining. Time was getting on, but Chick dared not appear too eager. It was a strange scene—the boyish-looking young manager and the shrewd Scots business man.

Chick went up to a thousand, and Mr. Macpherson came down to thirteen hundred. There they stuck. Chick realised that if the Scot came down to a thousand at all—which was doubtful—Briscoe would be there before he could seal the bargain.

It was now twenty to eleven, and if the chairman of Maston Villa took a car from the junction instead of waiting for the local train, he might be in Pitstruther soon after eleven.

"Look here, Mr. Macpherson," Chick said, rising to his feet, "if we can't fix anything it's no use wasting each other's time. I'll go up to twelve hundred. If you won't take that it's a wash-out. I'm already far exceeding the authority given me by my directors, and I can't go to a penny more."

"Mon," said Mr. Macpherson, "we'll be getting to the ground, and

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EVERY WEDNESDAY PRICE TWOPENCE.

if Andy is agreeable—well, we'll call it a bargain!"

Chick breathed a little more freely, but he had not reckoned on the slow deliberation of Andrew McCraill. Andy might be quick enough on the field, but in the manager's office he was very slow and deliberate. To look at he was a gaunt, dour young man, with close-cropped, sandy hair.

"This is Mr. Chandler, the manager of Oldford Albion. Ye ken Oldford Albion, Sandy?" asked Macpherson.

"Och!" said the badly-wanted centre-half, without any enthusiasm; and Chick took it that the question was answered in the affirmative.

The secretary explained what had happened at the interview, how the big English club was prepared to pay twelve hundred pounds for his services, told him the sum he would himself receive, and the chance he would have of distinguishing himself beyond the border.

"Och!" said Mr. McCraill, with a glimmering of interest.

A clock had struck eleven. Andrew McCraill pondered for some minutes, and then, with a nod, and another "Och!" signified his desire to be transferred to Oldford Albion.

Another man came in to witness the signatures. Chick had got the form filled in as far as possible, but the completion seemed to take ages, and, with ears alert, and nerves tense, he heard a car stop outside.

Slowly, ever so slowly, Andrew McCraill appended his signature to the document, Chick wrote his own rapidly and boldly. Mr. Macpherson adjusted his eyeglasses, read through the paper to see that all was in order, then wrote his name neatly in the correct place, and blotted it.

"Here ye are, Mr. Chandler, and I don't mind telling ye that I'm verra well pleased with my bargain, and—"

"Mr. Briscoe, of Maston Villa, is asking to see you, sir," said a boy at the door, then he was brushed aside, and the chairman of the rival club, podgy and important, strode into the room.

"I have come to—"  
He broke off abruptly. He had taken part in too many transfers of players to misunderstand the meaning of this meeting, and he saw young Chick Chandler thrusting the transfer form into the breast-pocket of his jacket.

"Near thing, Mr. Briscoe!" said the young manager genially. "But I just win!"

The chairman's eyes seemed to bulge from his head.

"So you're the man from Oldford! Why, hang it, I saw you in my carriage just north of Newcastle, and you didn't get in front of me at the junction, for I was the only passenger to take a car."

"I took an aeroplane from Alnmouth," said Chick.

Mr. Macpherson stared gloomily at the ceiling, no doubt contemplating what a bargain he would have been able to drive if only he had been a little bit slower. Mr. Briscoe's face was a picture.

A chuckle came from the gaunt player who was responsible for the presence of the rivals in Pitstruther, and for the first time he spoke a complete sentence.

"Losh, laddie, that was smart!" he said, bringing a big, rawboned hand down violently upon the young manager's back. "Och, ye're a clever mon!"

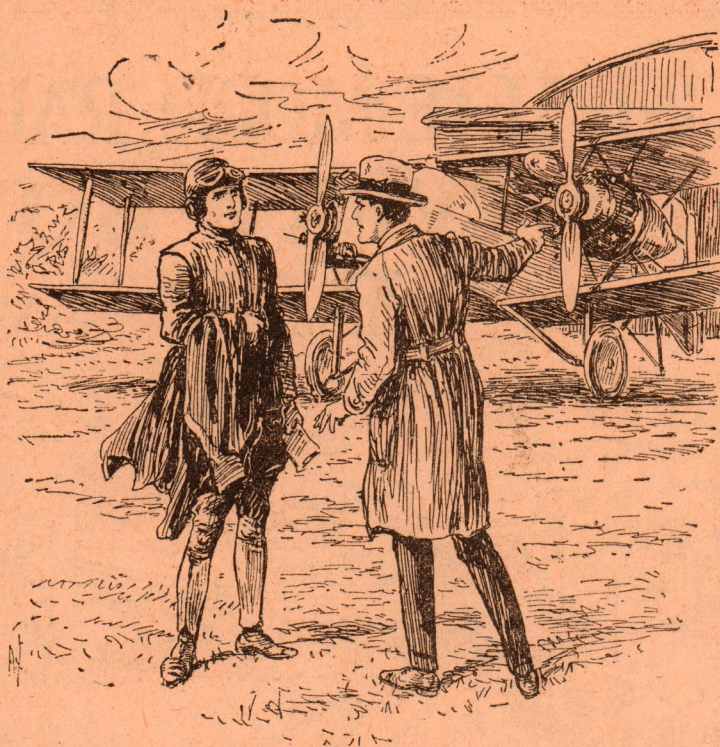
Chick on the Scent!

ON the Monday morning following the sensational transfer for that was the talk of the football world, Chick Chandler walked thoughtfully along High Street, Oldford. All over the country praises were being showered upon him, but his own board were chucking more brickbats than bouquets.

McCraill—"Sandy Andy," the crowd had christened him—had settled down fairly well in the half-back line in Saturday's home League match, though his style of play rather puzzled his partners, and it was clear that a lot of practice together was necessary if he was to shine in the Semi-final at Liverpool.

Still, they had won their match. The Push Gang had done their level best to make the Scotsman feel at home, and had voiced their delight at Chick's triumph in a manner that had made Gregson grow purple in the face.

But Chick Chandler was well aware that there was a hostile movement against him. Miskin was away in London, but would return in time



CHICK IN A HURRY! Chick strode up to the young airman. "I've got to get to Pitstruther immediately—can you let me hire that plane?" "No," said the airman.

for the board meeting that night—a meeting which promised to be a stormy one.

McCraill had not impressed the directors, and the fact that the young manager had gone two hundred pounds above the sum he had been authorised to spend to secure his signature had aroused a lot of feeling, that was carefully being fanned into flame by the astute publican.

And yet Chick still had a strong suspicion that it was treachery on Gregson's part that had made it necessary for him to hit up his offer. Briscoe, finding himself beaten, had cooled down, and the two officials of the rival clubs for the Cup had travelled home together from Scotland.

Briscoe had been quite candid as to how he had come to hear of McCraill. A racing man named Richards, who took a big interest in Maston Villa, had come round to see him, and the chairman, who had little confidence in the man who was to have taken the place of the left-half—down with pneumonia—had decided to rush north and secure the Scot, not only to strengthen their own half-back line, but to stop the Albion from strengthening theirs.

And now Chick was out to test a theory that had occurred to him.

Entering the post-office, he asked to see the assistant supervisor of the telephone exchange, a smart young friend of his who had got on rapidly.

Chick was taken to an office beyond the long room where several girls were busy at the huge switchboards, and after shaking hands with the young man in charge, promptly came to the point.

"Look here, could you let me have a list of people who had trunk calls through to Maston between half-past seven and nine o'clock on Wednesday evening?"

His friend glanced at Chick in surprise.

"It's against the regulations, but I reckon you must have a good reason for asking, Chandler, and I'll let you know, so long as I'm not brought into it. As a matter of fact, it won't be much of a list. I doubt if there were more than two or three calls for Maston during the whole shift. Wait here a tick. I'll soon find out!"

Chick waited impatiently. Of course, Gregson might have telegraphed, but he did not think that likely. It would require a long wire to make the situation clear, it would certainly have attracted the attention of the receiving and the sending clerk, and a telegram could be used as evidence, while a telephone message could not.

His friend came back. "There were two trunk calls to Maston on Wednesday evening. The supervisor was put through on official business at 6.15, and at 7.50 Mr. Gregson, of the Three Crowns Hotel, was put through to Maston 456."

"Ah!" said Chick, scarcely able to disguise his triumph. "Can you tell me the name of the man with the number 456?"

"Oh, easily!" said the young official, taking a blue-bound book and turning over the pages. "Here you are—456, Richards, Henry A., Turf Commission Agent, 19, Highfields Road, Maston."

"Thanks!" said Chick, jotting down the address. "There's been something very fishy going on. I can't explain now, and we both agree to forget this interview."

Chick was chucking to himself as he walked back to his office.

"You seem awfully bucked!" said pretty Marjorie Mainland, coming in with some letters for him to sign. "Earlier this morning you seemed worried about to-night's meeting, thinking old Miskin might go against you."

"I'm not worrying now, little girl," said Chick. "The fur will fly to-night, and I'm just longing for Gregson to stir up trouble! He'll find there's something in the mixture that goes off with a bang all right!"

And when he went into the board meeting that evening he was very glad he had something up his sleeve. Miskin, tired after his journey from London, and riled at some business going wrong, had heard that McCraill had given a very ordinary display on Saturday, and that the young manager had taken upon himself to pay two hundred pounds above his limit for him.

As soon as routine business had been settled, Gregson rose and made a strong speech. Their young manager was given a lot of authority—far too much authority, he thought—and now he had seen fit to go far beyond his rights and pledge the credit of the club to the tune of two hundred pounds purely on his own account, and secure a player who was certainly not worth the money.

"Of course," concluded Mr. Gregson bitingly, "if everything is to be left to the discretion of our very youthful manager I have nothing further to say, save that, as a board, we might as well disband. The chairman and directors have become mere figureheads."

"Quite agree!" snapped old Miskin, in his sharp, jerky voice. "I should like to hear your explanation, Chandler."

"Well, sir," said Chick quietly,

"in the first place, I maintain that McCraill is well worth the money paid for his transfer. He did not distinguish himself on Saturday, but he'll be all right once he settles down. The chairman of Maston Villa told me that he would have gone up to three thousand for him, and had it not been for Mr. Gregson giving our rivals information, I believe I should have got our man for a thousand. As it was, knowing that Briscoe was close on my heels, I dared not keep bargaining."

"The boy's mad!" cried Gregson hoarsely. But there was fear in his eyes.

The chairman turned to Chick.

"You are bringing a very serious charge against a director."

"All I know is that Mr. Briscoe told me that he got his information about McCraill from a man named Richards, and that Mr. Gregson had a trunk call through to Mr. Richards of Maston just after the meeting in my office, when you authorised me to go to Scotland and secure the services of McCraill."

The genial director whistled softly, Gregson's cronies looked uncomfortable, and the florid publican looked as though he were on the verge of a fit. His fat neck looked swollen and purple, and his face was pale.

"How did you know that?" he demanded harshly.

Chick shrugged his shoulders as he replied:

"That has no bearing on the subject. The important thing is that you were in communication with a man at Maston, and that man sent Briscoe off to foil me. But for nearly missing the train and happening to get into Briscoe's carriage, McCraill would have gone to Maston."

"This certainly requires explanation," said Miskin sharply.

"It certainly does!" declared the genial director, and gazed at the publican suspiciously.

"I—I—I—er—am afraid I may have been a little careless," said Gregson haltingly. "Mr. Richards is a big bookmaker at Maston, and I know him very well. I rang him up about a horse running at Lincoln next week, as he often gives me some useful information. I suppose I must have casually mentioned about this man we were going to get—probably thought I owed him a tip to back us—but, of course, I never dreamt that he would make use of the information against us. I shall speak very seriously to him about it!"

"I should!" said Miskin grimly, and Chick suspected that the chairman, like himself, knew that the man was lying. "This puts an entirely different complexion on the affair, gentlemen. It is clear that it was due to Mr. Gregson's—er—carelessness that Maston Villa were after McCraill, and whether or not he proves worth the money to us, there is not the least doubt that Chandler had every reason to believe he was, and if the Villa were prepared to pay three thousand for the man we have got him cheaply at twelve hundred pounds. I suggest that Mr. Gregson withdraws his vote of censure, and that the board approves the action of our manager."

The florid publican hastily agreed; he looked flabby and ill. Chick had beaten him again, and placed him in a very awkward position. There was hate in his furtive, dark eyes, and a chastened knowledge that he would have to walk very warily against this audacious young man, who had clearly rumbled his game, and who had now greatly strengthened his position at his—Gregson's—expense.

Meanwhile, Chick was coolly discussing arrangements for the Cup Semi-final, at Liverpool.

(Special Semi-final chapters from this smashing Cup-fighting yarn next Wednesday. Have you asked your newsagent to reserve your copy of the REALM for you?)



(Continued from page 397.)

reached the ears of the imprisoned Gurney below, the gallant tars leaped on to the enemy junk, several of the Chinese, including Ho Pung, showed fight.

The Navy lads quickly dealt with them, handing out black eyes and thick ears with the utmost generosity.

By the time that Ho Pung and the others on deck had been trussed up like chickens, Shiner & Co. were able to turn their attention to the other rogues in the hold.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Shiner. "It's the first time in me natural that I've ever seen chaps take a bath in rice-pudden!"

The Chinks were absolutely wallowing in it, for by this time the hundreds of gallons of warm water which had been poured aboard the junk had swelled the rice until it resembled nothing so much as a bubbling pudding.

Dusty saw one poor fellow sinking, as it were, for the last time, and thrust out a hand to aid him. Instead, the Chinaman dragged Dusty head-first into the rice-pudden, and by the time that Shiner and Tich had got him out by the feet their doleful chum presented an amazing spectacle.

"Glub, glub!" Dusty gurgled through his thick covering of soft rice. "That comes o' trying to do one turn a day."

"Well, cheer up, ole coffin-face!" cried Shiner merrily. "We bagged Punky and his whole blessed outfit, and there'll be no giddy rice for old Wonky and his pirates who are lurking round these marshes. And young Woo Sam tells me as he's found some important evidence aboard about the doings o' the pirates, and how the skipper o' this craft has been taking some of their ill-gotten gains to Hoochow and secretly selling it. Now to take the giddy junk in tow and get her to the Buzzly. I bet old Gurney won't half be pleased when we tell him what we've done!"

On the contrary, when Gurney was released, he spoke for fifteen minutes without a break on such-like subjects as mutiny, assault and battery, and how the Royal Navy was going plumb to the dogs.

Only when they got back to Hoochow with the captured junk and crew did he brighten up under the commendation that he, too, received in general with the other bluejackets.

Admiral Salmon, who had recovered from his knock-out of the previous day, was as pleased as Commander Dill at the haul, and expressed himself very proud of Shiner & Co. and the part they had played in the expedition. Very generously, he said nothing more about that unfortunate accident for which Shiner had been responsible.

The boys had had little breakfast, and with ravenous appetites they went down to the dinner that Woo Sam had prepared for them. The unlucky Dusty was late, for he had to make a complete change, owing to that strange bath into which he had fallen aboard Ho Pung's junk.

He arrived on the mess-deck in the second course, and gazed at the plates set before his raggies.

"Rice-pudden!" he gulped. And went up on deck to buy from Chinese vendors who had come aboard some chicken patties, mangoes, and bananas!

THE END.

(Look out for "Worse Than Wonky!" It's another lively yarn of the merry raggies. You can make sure of reading it if you order your REALM in advance.)

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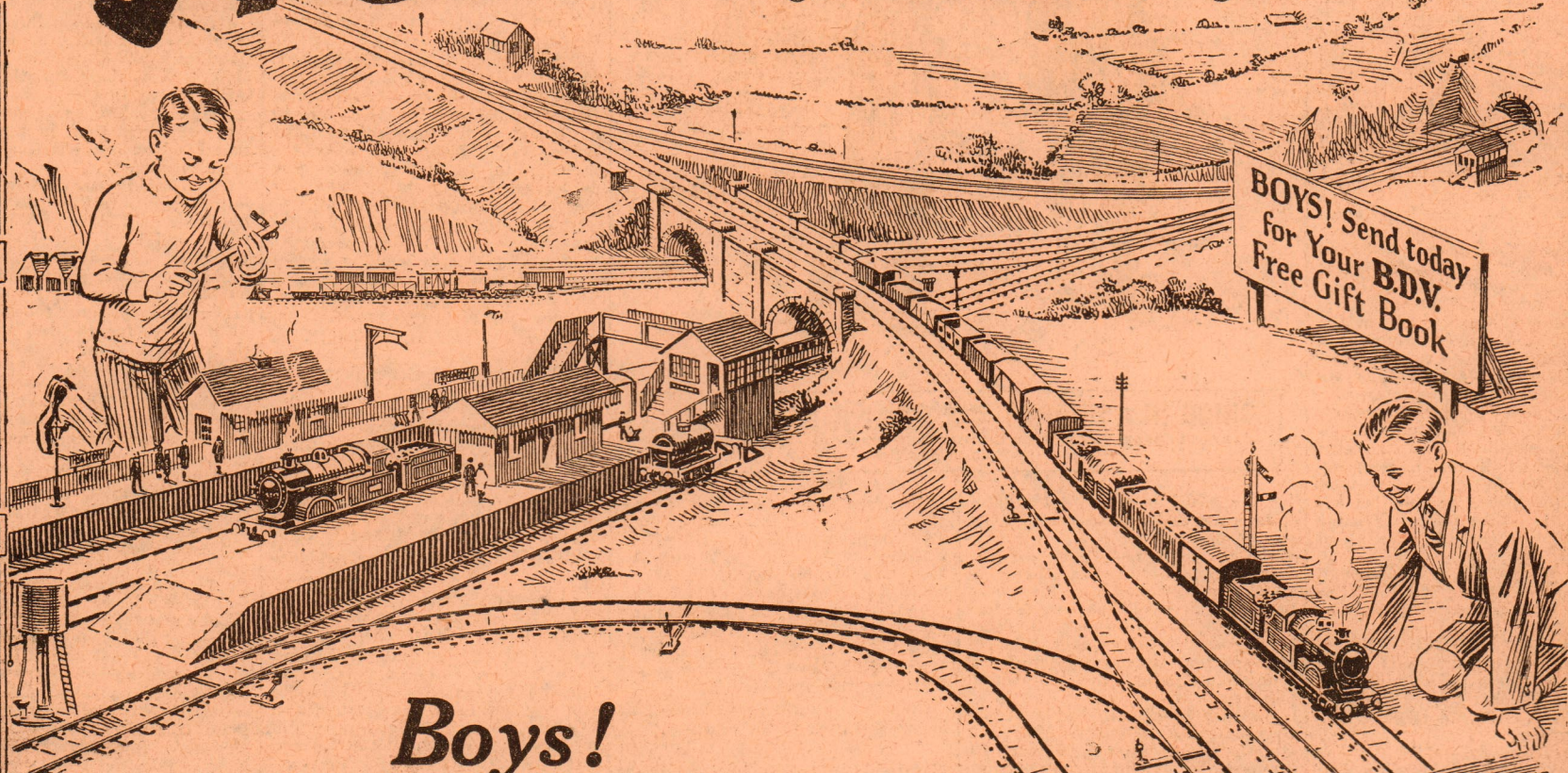


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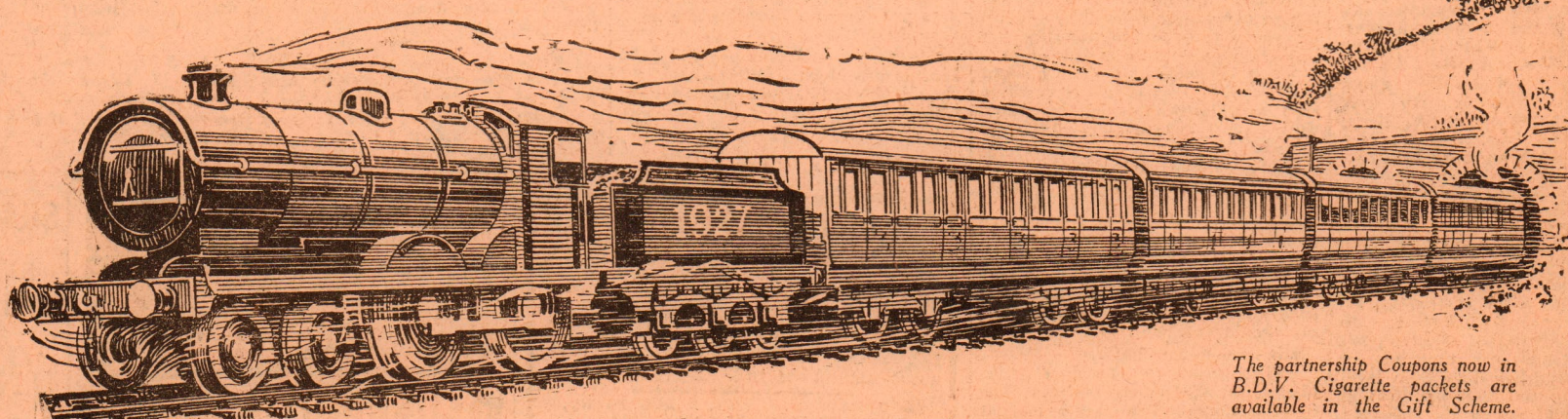
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