



Gan Waga's Birthday!

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An amusing Complete Story
of the famous Eskimo and
the Crew of the "Lord
of the Deep"

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By SIDNEY DREW

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THE FIRST CHAPTER

Ching Lung tries to Borrow a Polar Bear

YOU may be interested to know, my dear Gan Waga, or, on the other hand, you may not be interested to know," said Prince Ching Lung, "that in the village of Slopwash-in-the-Sludge there still resides, healthy and still wonderfully active, a certain gentleman, Ebenezer Slipey, who takes his beer and baccy regularly, and never forgets to trot round for his old age pension when they're weighing out the goods."

↳ Gan Waga the Eskimo, who was seated on the floor doing nothing in particular, grunted.

"Whys I be ninterested in old 'Nezer Slipey, hunk, Chingy?" he asked. "I not knows 'Nezer Slipey."

"Because he is a gay and giddy one," said the Prince, yawning behind the newspaper. "Dear old Ebenezer Slipey, bless his blue eyes and golden curls, claims to be nearly a hundred and twenty years old. He can't remember Julius Cæsar taking his first trip to England and handing the ancient Britons a few nasty ones, but he can remember the return of the

Duke of Wellington after the battle of Waterloo, where the great emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, got it rather nastily in the neck. It's Eb's birthday to-morrow, and the proud villagers of Slopwash-in-the-Sludge are going to squirt off rockets and things in Eb's honour."

"I not tink a hundred and twenty much olderfuls than that."

"I hadn't noticed it, Gan," said Ching Lung, throwing the newspaper aside. "In fact, I shouldn't have thought it. When were you born?"

The plump Eskimo shook his head. Dates and figures were very foggy things to Gan Waga.

"I nots surer, Chingy," he answered, with wrinkled brow. "It either the umpteenth of September, or the ninety-tooth of October."

"Well, that's getting near it," said Ching Lung gravely. "It's rather useful to be born on two different dates, for then you can have two birthdays. Do you happen to remember the exact year? I suppose you were there when it happened—unless you were out at the time?"

"I sureness was there, Chingy," said the Eskimo, "but I not certain of the year. Oh, yes I am, old bean, it was two millions and two."

Prince Ching Lung shook his head doubtfully as he lighted a cigarette.

"That doesn't seem to be quite right, Gan. There's a trifling error somewhere. According to your date you're not born yet, and not likely to be for quite a long time. Still, my stout lad, the year doesn't matter, the day is everything. What we have to decide is whether your birthday falls on the umpteenth of September, or the ninety-tooth of October. As you weren't born in this country, we can't pay our bob or so for a copy of your birth-certificate. To settle between the two doubtful dates, let us strike a sort of average, not with a brick or a hammer or with our fist, but with our brains. I should say, Gan, that the correct date of your birthday is Wednesday next, Mapril the thirty-second-and-a-half. If there are months called October and September, why not Mapril?"

"That rightness, Chingy old dear," said the Eskimo, nodding. "It is Maprils, Chingy. I members now, it nots Septobers, Chingy."

"And who is Ebenezer Slipey, anyhow?" said Ching Lung. "Why should the Slopwash bunch squirt off squibs and fire rockets for that ancient dodderer? We'll give you a birthday, Gan. We must do something to waken ourselves up. Just a little family party, you know, but done in style, something that will make you think of home sweet home. And we'll get the invitations out in good time, so that they'll have no excuse for not buying you presents. Yes, Wednesday is the date. On Friday they start taking in stores."

When Prince Ching Lung spoke of taking in stores, he referred to the steam yacht *Lord of the Deep*. The beautiful vessel had been overhauled and reconditioned. She had coaled, and was lying in Porthampton Harbour at her old moorings, the very queen of the big, busy harbour—in her new white paint, shining funnel, and varnished spars.

"You have to pay some of the 'spenses, Chingy, unless I gotted nuff money, Chingy," said Gan Waga. "They want a lots to eats."

"How much have you got in ready cash, Gan?"

Gan Waga had a handful of coppers, a sixpence, a packet of chewing-gum, a collar stud, a ball of string, and several cigars.

"Abouts six hundred pounds and tenpence, Chingy," he said, examining his wealth, for Gan Waga was as hazy about money as about dates.

"You must have been robbing a bank," said the Prince. "There's no doubt you've been robbing me again, for those are my cigars. Your six hundred pounds and tenpence won't go far with the appetites those chaps Prout, Maddock, and O'Rooney carry about with them, so you'd better leave it to me. You can pay next time when it's my birthday, so waddle, my bouncing boy, and find Joe. Joseph is a trustworthy sort of merchant, so breathe in his ear that I'd like to see him on the strict Q.T. And don't let the other rascals know a thing."

Gan Waga waddled on deck, discovered Joe the carpenter, and gave him Ching Lung's message. Joe gave the Eskimo a suspicious glance out of the tail of his eye to see if there was a catch in it, spat into the sea, went below, and tapped at the door of the Prince's cabin.

"The blubberbiter sent me, sir," said Joe, "told me you wanted me, but you can't tell half the time whether he's pulling your leg or not."

"He's not tugging your leg this time," said Ching Lung. "I want you to get hold of your pal the third engineer and do something for me before we start taking in stores. They've finished all the refrigerating-plant, haven't they?"

"All finished, brand new and up-to-date, sir. There's not a yacht afloat with such a plant. It's perfect!"

"And there's nothing down there?"

"Only about enough grub to last the crew a week, sir," said Joe. "We're getting it fresh mostly."

"Right," said Ching Lung. "I want the cold-room to give a party in, so help yourself to a cigar, and I'll tell you what I want done."

There is nothing pleasanter in this world than a pleasant surprise, so the Prince did not pay a visit to the cold-room with Joe until he learned that Mr. Thomas Prout, Mr. Benjamin

Maddock, the bo'sun, and Mr. Barry O'Rooney had gone ashore. They had gone to Mr. Mandolini's famous circus, which was paying its annual visit to Porthampton. Ching Lung wanted to give them a pleasurable surprise, but they were curiously suspicious, and if they had seen the Prince and the yacht's carpenter together they would have imagined things.

It was easy indeed for the Prince to get things done, for he was open-handed and generous to a fault, and a great favourite with the crew. He inspected the cold-room and issued his instructions to the carpenter and the third engineer.

"I'll foot the bill, Joe," he said, "so do it properly. And tell your men that I don't want it talked about. When it's finished they can all shake a loose leg ashore with free tickets to the circus and a good supper afterwards."

Joe was a hustler, and so was the third engineer, a stiff little Yorkshire man who hailed from Scarborough. Gan Waga came down to see what was going on, but finding the Eskimo in the way, Joe ordered him to be thrown out, so the Eskimo wandered back to the Prince, who had a fountain pen in his hand and a sheet of paper before him.

"I wish you could keep away from me for about five minutes in the twenty-four hours, Eskimoses," said the Prince. "I'm writing the invitation-cards for your birthday party.

And I wonder what the guests would like for dinner."

"Blubber-pies and strawberry jams very niceness stuffs, Chingy, and so are tallow cangles and parsley," said Gan Waga.

"Yes, I know, but they don't always have a whale or two for sale in the fish market, so we can't make certain of blubber-pie," said Ching Lung. "Whales seem to be a bit

scarce this season. I think we can manage the tallow candles and parsley sauce, if the chef will cook them. He's more used to French dishes than Eskimo cookery, but you can ask him if you like."

Gan Waga gave a grin that displayed two rows of magnificent white teeth.

"I not tink I better go to the old chef," he said. "The last times I went into



Just before dusk there was an alarm of fire, and Prout, Maddock, and O'Rooney were called away to put it out. (See Chapter 2.)

his galley, Chingy, he threw a hambone at me and chased me out with a big iron saucepan-pots. He seemed a bit angrifuls about sometings. He said I a nasty fat thieves, the rudeness man. And I never touches his old galley, only a few roast chickens, and a veal and ham pie, and a leg of pork, and some muttons chopses, Chingy. A very bad-tempered chaps to make so much fussness abouts a bit of stuff like that, hunk? I not think he loves me, Chingy."

It was blowing rather hard, so having finished his writing, Ching Lung put on a pair of rubber boots and an oilskin, and Gan

Waga piloted him across the tumbling harbour in the motor-launch. People on the quay, who were shivering with cold beneath their overcoats, shivered harder when they saw the bareheaded, barefooted, thinly-clad Eskimo, with the salt spray shining on his face, steady the launch with the boat-hook for the passenger to step ashore. There was sleet in the wind as well as spray, but Gan Waga liked it.

"I shall be just an hour," said Ching Lung, pointing to the harbour clock. "It's just going to strike one. Be here for me when it strikes two."

"I hitch up and waits fo' yo', Chingy," answered Gan Waga. "I snoke a cigar, and ifs yo' morer longfuls I take a nice nap."

Ching Lung boarded a passing tram, and alighted at Porthampton's most famous restaurant, when, as it was lunch-time, he hoped to find an old acquaintance, Mr. Mandolini, the proprietor of the world-renowned circus. Mr. Mandolini was there, red-faced and prosperous, with a massive gold watch-chain across his ample waistcoat, and a hundred-guinea diamond stud in his shirt front.

"By jimps!" cried Mr. Mandolini, rising so quickly with outstretched hand that he overturned his chair, "why it's a real treat to meet your Highness again. Thanks for answering my letter about them Chinese jugglers. It was a bit of a liberty, but I hadn't time to go to Paris and see 'em for myself. When you wrote telling me they were real good; I knew I could take your Highness's word for it, and booked 'em by telegraph. And, by jimps, they are good, too, the smartest thing in their line I've struck yet."

"Oh, I was quite sure you'd like them," said the Prince. "They come from my province; and I've had them up at the palace once or twice to entertain the Court. We'll have a bottle of champagne, if you'll join me in one. I haven't time to lunch with you, but if it won't put you out of your way, I want you to lend me a few oddments for one evening only. Do you happen to have a stray polar bear with a gentlemanly temper?"

"By jimps, I'm sorry," said Mr. Mandolini. "I've only got one, and she's a lady with a

cub. Since that cub arrived she's been anything but ladylike. I'd lend her to your Highness willing enough, but, by jimps, you'd have a handful with her and the cub. Must it be a polar bear?"

"A polar bear would be more suitable," said Ching Lung, "but if I can't get one, I suppose I must do without."

"There's my big grizzly, Thork," said Mr. Mandolini. "He's a born thief, almost as big a thief as my biggest elephant, Bazbaz, but old Thork is as gentle as a stuffed guinea-pig. If you floured him or dusted him over with chalk, he'd pass for a polar bear in a crush. He's not on the programme this week, so if your Highness will tell me when and where you want him, I can send him along."

Ching Lung accepted the loan of Thork, the grizzly bear, with thanks, and made some further requests, which Mr. Mandolini duly dotted down in a fat pocket-book with a gold-cased pencil. Then, the champagne bottle being empty, the circus-proprietor and the Prince shook hands once more, and fastening a serviette round his ample neck, Mr. Mandolini commenced his lunch with a dozen oysters.

As the clock was striking two, Ching Lung prodded Gan Waga out of his placid slumbers with the butt-end of the boat-hook.

"Br-r-r! Why you don't get frozen stiff is a mystery to me," said Ching Lung. "Rattle up that engine and let's get into the warm."

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Invitations

"LETTERS, gentlemen," said the steward. There were only two people in the booby-hutch, Mr. Benjamin Maddock, the bos'un, and Mr. Barry O'Rooney, and there were three letters. A smell of white paint still lingered there. A new stove had been put in, and also four comfortable wicker chairs upholstered in scarlet, and a new scarlet cloth covered the table. The painters had scraped off the coloured prints of racehorses and professional boxers that had formerly decorated the walls, but a new supply had arrived, and Maddock was hanging them up.

"Bedad, Oi wonder phwat this is, Ben," said Barry O'Rooney. "There's wan for me, wan for you, and wan for Prout, wid the names and addresses typewritten and gilt edges on the envelopes loike a brass-band. And be jabers, Oi do belave they're scented."

Barry O'Rooney sniffed the envelope, that diffused a faint odour of musk, and then opened it and drew out a long, gilt-edged card. He read:

"Gan Waga requests the pleasure of the company of Barry O'Rooney, Esquire, at his birthday party on Wednesday next, at six-thirty p.m.

There will be a little dinner in the Eskimo style, to be followed by mirth, music, and song.

"N. B. — Evening-dress (furs) essential. These may be obtained on loan by applying to the store-keeper.

"The merry blubberbiter is umpteen years to-day,

He was born in icy regions where the polar bears hold sway.

If you can't afford a present you had better keep away,

From Gan's gay and glorious birthday in the morning."

"Fancy that, now," grinned Barry O'Rooney. "Bedad, Oi loike the poethry. Oi'll wager, Ben, the prince sat up all night wid fourteen wet towels tied round his brow and a chunk of oice on his head composin' that rubbish. 'Av you can't afford a present you'd bether keep away.' Sure, the only present that fat owl is loikely to get from me is a tin of rat poison wid

written instructions how to take it and doie quick. Is yours different, or just the same as moine, bhoy?"

"Just identical, only the name, souse me," said the bos'un, comparing the two invitation cards. "I don't think I'll go ashore to buy any birthday presents. How about a rope with a noose in it, and a few bows of pink ribbon tied on to make it look pretty. I could fasten on a card, too, souse me, wishing Gan Waga joy and hoping he'd hang himself with the rope before his next birthday came round."

"A very nate oidea, bhoy," said Barry

O'Rooney, "only Oi'm afraid the Iskimo won't oblige, he's such a cantankerous beast. Ask him to do a little koindness loike that, a little thing that would plase everybody, and, bedad, he'll turru ut down. Hur-roo! Here you are, Tommy, my bould son," he added as Prout came in. "You've got an invitation to



Prout & Co. stepped, it seemed, into another land. "Glad to welcome yo' alls to Wagaland, old dears," said the Eskimo. "Just like homes, hunk?" (See Chapter 3.)

a birthday parrty. Oi've read the rules, and it sames we can't be present widout a present. Ben is giving a rope wid a noose in it, and Oi'm giving a full-size tin of rat poison, hall-marked, jewelled in every hole, warranted to kill a whole thribe of Iskimos av instructions are followed out."

Mr. Thomas Prout gave a slow grin as he inspected his own card of invitation.

"It wouldn't be much good giving him a loaded revolver with directions how to blow his brains out, for he's got no brains to blow out," he said. "By honey, I think a penn'orth of monkey nuts would about suit the case. Fur suits, eh? It's some jamboree in the cold-room, I guess."

"And thim little jamborees wid Prince Ching Lung behoind thim want a considerable amount of watching," said Barry O'Rooney.

"Sure, darlints, if I show up I mane to put a life-preserver in wan pocket and a knuckle-duster in the other. Go we must, or they'll think we're afraid, and the O'Rooneys, whose proud motto is 'Hit hard, bedad, and hit ofthen,' know no such word as that. Av there's any twist in it or any thricery or foul play, that oil-tub of an Eskimo will have given his last birthday party, for his name will be mud."

"I'll help, souse me," said the bo'sun.

"And I'll be lying somewhere handy, by honey, to put on the finishing touches," said Prout.

In the morning, when Ching Lung strolled into the saloon of the Lord of the Deep, a steward brought in the letters.

"There are some parcels for Gan Waga, your Highness," he said. "What shall I do with them, as I never know where to find him."

"He's sure to find me, so you may as well leave them here," said the Prince. "Have you called Mr. Thurston?"

"Yes, your Highness. Mr. Thurston will be here in ten minutes, but he told me to ask your Highness not to wait for him."

Ching Lung placed Gan Waga's parcels on a side table, and had just finished reading his correspondence when Rupert Thurston joined him. Thurston, after a greeting, also opened his letters.

"A nuisance," he said. "I can't attend that birthday party, for I must go to London. Will you give it a miss and go with me?"

"I'd have gone if you'd spoken sooner, old man," said Ching Lung, "for any old day would have done for Gan Waga's feast, but I've got everything prepared and the presents are beginning to arrive. And now that I think of it, we can't put it off on account of the stores. Stretch a point and get away by the eight o'clock train. I'd like you to hand Gan out his gifts with a few appropriate remarks."

"Then I'll telephone up and see if it can be managed, Ching. It's some documents my lawyer wants me to sign. Shall I help you to some grilled sole or don't you want any breakfast this morning? The coffee is at your

end, and, if it won't tire you too much, I'd like a cup."

"Excuse my absent-mindedness, but I was thinking," said Ching Lung. "There are three parcels for Gan by this post, and I suppose they're from Prout, Maddock, and O'Rooney. I'd like to open them and see what the bounders have sent. It would help you a bit if you knew beforehand what was inside. I know as a stump speaker you have a quick and ready wit, but it would be helpful."

"Perhaps; but it's a bit shabby, Ching," said Thurston. "Of course, Gan Waga wouldn't mind at all. I'm a trifle curious, I admit, to know what sort of presents those chaps could send Gan Waga. I'm puzzled myself, and can only think of cigars. What are you giving him?"

"Not a solitary thing, except doing the paying. What could I possibly give his Serene Fatness when he looks upon everything in the world that belongs to me as his own personal property. It's a good thing I'm small, for if my pyjamas fitted him I should be buying fresh pyjama suits every week. On reflection, you're right about those parcels, so we'll leave them alone, and I'll fix up a few dud presents. Only do 'phone that off and catch the late train or drive up by car, for I'm hoping you'll enjoy yourself for half an hour."

Just before dusk there was an alarm of fire. There was a lot of smoke down in the forehold, and Prout, Maddock, and Barry O'Rooney were called away with others to discover the fire and put it out. They found no fire, but they were a long time away, so they did not see the tug that came alongside the yacht. Of course, it was only a dummy fire arranged by the carpenter to get the mariners out of the way.

In good time Mr. Thomas Prout came into the booby hutch carrying three bundles of furs, for the yacht voyaged far and wide at the whim of her millionaire owner, Ferrers Lord, and she carried in her store-room an ample supply of clothing suitable either for frozen Arctic seas or burning tropic skies.

"There's ten quid a-piece on them, by honey," said Prout. "I had to sign a chit saying we'd be responsible for loss or damage before that thief of a store-keeper would hand 'em over. He says it's a new rule. All the



The five musicians came out of the igloos, and they thumped the cans as they sang. "A little Eskimo music and a little song in honour of Gan Waga," said Ching Lung. (See Chapter 3.)

stuff is fresh, and he's got to account for it."

"Bedad, ut's iligant goods," said Barry O'Rooney, handling the soft warm fur. "Av anything happens, ut will be up to you, Tommy, for you did the signing, not us. And anyway, a miserable durthy little thirty quid wouldn't be missed at all at all by such a bloated millionaire. Wait until Oi get insoide this lot, bhoys, and Oi'll look the handsomest woild man from Borneo you iver sot oies on."

Except that they were a good deal too clean, they resembled three Arctic explorers when they had donned their fur suits.

"Oi'll tell you phwat," said Barry O'Rooney, "for Oi've got a swate oidea. Aftther the parrtly, Oi'll change and take you two

ashore and up to ould Mandolini, the circus man. Oi'll sell you to him for a hundred quid a toime as woild gorillas from Central Africky. The ould bhoys would niver dhraem you were anything ilse, for you're gorilla to the life. Oi'll give you a foile so you can foile the bars of your cages in the middle of the noight, and we'll share the plundher. How's that for a brain-wave, you ugly, hairy monsther's?"

"Cut it," growled the bo'sun, "or I'll give you a oner that'll make that bit of brain you've got rattle inside your skull like a nut. It's just on time, souse me. Now we'll see what this game's all about."

Prout slipped a flash-lamp into one capacious pocket of his fur coat, and a short

life-preserver, wrapped round with tow, to render it less dangerous if he had to hit anyone with it, into the other. Then he followed Maddock and Barry O'Rooney along the alley way and down below to the door of the cold-room.

They knocked on the steel panel and stepped, as it seemed, into another land.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

The Presents

"By honey," said Mr. Thomas Prout, clapping his gloved hands, "that's good, that is, rattling good."

Fine snow was falling from a cloudy sky, but it was not altogether cloudy, for a few stars were shining as well as four mock moons. There was thick snow on the ground, or, rather, the floor. From the sky, too, hung many icicles, and they must have been pretty long ones, for their roots appeared to be up in the stars. There were ice hummocks and icebergs, and the landscape, cleverly painted, seemed in the dim light to merge away into a vast dreary snowfield.

Squatting on an iceberg, very much at home, well floured and well stuffed with buns, was Thork, the big grizzly bear. Near him, in a pool of water, a seal was rolling, and two other seals, even happier and more at home than Thork, lay on a slab of ice after a glorious feed of fresh cod and silver whiting. Near the pool were two igloos or snow huts, and in the space between an iron pot was boiling. Gan Waga, furred to the eyes and smoking a cigar a foot in length, extended a hairy paw to each of his guests.

"Glad to welcomes yo' alls to Wagaland, old dears," he said. "Just like homes, hunk? Is yo' too warmness opens the merry old window."

"Bedad, we're not too hot yet, but we'll tell you whin we are," said Barry O'Rooney. "That's a nice bear you've got, but would you moind keeping ut on the chain, for Oi wouldn't loike him to make a mistake and imagine Oim a hambone. Yes, ut's all very loifelike."

"I don't see any chairs, souse me," said the bo'sun, with one eye on the bear. "If

we have to sit on the snow, Gan, will you excuse me a minute while I run and get a hot-water bottle? I'm wearing a pair of borrow'd trousers, you see, and they might shrink with the damp."

"And do you mind turning the snow-storm off at the meter?" added Prout. "It's too real, by honey, and it gives me a cold nose."

Joe the carpenter, who was also in furs, brought forward a bench and a table. There was another knock, and as Rupert Thurston came in with the collar of his motoring coat turned up above his ears, Ching Lung crawled out of one of the igloos.

"Before the gifts are presented," said the Prince, "we'll have a little Eskimo music, and a little song in honour of Gan Waga."

The musicians came out of the other igloo, five of them. Their instruments were of a primitive kind, and consisted of tin cans and walrus-ribs. Their faces were very yellow and sad-looking, and their voices dirge-like as they thumped the cans and bones and sang:

"It's cold, so cold at the old North Pole

That your whiskers freeze if you stop to sneeze

And they sell no wood and you can't buy coal,

So you have to sit and cough and wheeze,
And you feed on blubber, for there ain't no cheese,

And the polar bears have a nasty squeeze,
And your nose gets froze and your hands and knees,

Oh, it is a rotten hole.

Please take us back to Colney Hatch,

For we're tired of the old North Pole."

They ended this dirge with such a banging of tins and bones that the startled seals scuttled into the pool, and Thork shook about half a bushel of flour off himself and came down to see what was the matter. As Thork seemed to want a seat on the form in the front row, Barry O'Rooney politely made room for him. Thork took a roll instead, scattering the songsters and nearly upsetting the pot.

"Don't worry, Barry," said Ching Lung. "I believe he's a vegetarian, but I know he never eats pork, so you're in no danger. We'll chain him up before he rolls the igloos

flat. He doesn't look so pale as he did, so he must be getting sunburnt. Out of it, you hairy villain."

After this little delay Rupert Thurston proceeded to hand over the presents. Some of them were bulky, so Joe dragged them forward on a sledge. There was a barrel marked "Super Fine Whale Oil," and a case labelled "Fresh Walrus Livers in Pure Treacle," and another case supposed to contain that favourite Eskimo delicacy "Pickled seals' feet in refined tallow-candle jelly." Gan Waga bowed his gratitude.

"Dears, dears, I only wish they was fulness and not duds, Chingy," he sighed. "I never had walrus livers in treacles, but it must be

lovelifuls, and I could eats about six or seven-teen yards of it now, old duck."

As Thurston opened the first parcel, which had come by post, Prout, Maddock, and Barry O'Rooney nudged each other and grinned.

"A token of affection to his friend Gan Waga from Tom Prout," said Rupert Thurston, reading the card. "A bottle by the feel of it and something good, I'll wager. Here you are, my lad, a bottle of anti-fat mixture. Take it according to directions and you'll be thin in a week."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" laughed the three mariners loudly. "That's the stuff to give him, lots of it and often."



"A little gift to remind you of the happy day, Gan, from your staunch friend, Mr. Benjamin Maddock," said Rupert Thurston gravely. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Barry O'Rooney. (See Chapter 3.)

"I a jolly good mind to bash yo' over the faces with it," said Gan Waga. "I don't want no nanti-fatness. Yo' so thin yo' jealousful of me."

"Order, order, please," said Rupert Thurston. "What have we here? 'To dear Gan Waga on his birthday, with all love and esteem from Barry O'Rooney.' A tin of cigarettes, I think. No, it isn't a tin of cigarettes. It says on it 'Slautrims' Rat Poison—a swift and certain death to rats, mice, spiders, fleas, bugs, beetles, and other vermin. Harmless to cats, dogs, and children. A charming gift, indeed. Will you try it now, Gan?"

Ching Lung grinned, and the three mariners rocked with laughter on the form until it fell over. Gan Waga was making for them with the rib of a walrus, but Ching Lung and Joe held him back and told him to be good. Then Rupert Thurston opened the third parcel.

"A little gift to remind you of the happy day, Gan, this time, I believe, from your staunch friend and well-wisher, the bos'un," he said. "Yes, I am correct in my surmise. Mr. Benjamin Maddock wishes you to wear this little present in memory of him, and he would like you to put it on at once. It feels a bit bulky for a necklāce or a watch-chain or even for a pair of suspenders. What a sweet little thing!"

Thurston held up a halter. Pretty little bows of pink and blue ribbon were tied to it, but it was a halter all the same, and it would have explained itself even if the donor had failed to enclose a message, for it said: "Go and hang yourself," plainly enough.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Barry O'Rooney. "Bedad, that's a nasty one, Gan darlint. That's a bigger shtinger than the anti-fat'n' the rat-poison. Come, bhoy, and use ut quick. Sure, Oi'll find you a lively nail to toie the rope to, and a noice chair to jump off. And Oi say, Alanna, take a large dose of the vermin-killer afore you jump off the chair and make a good job of ut."

Gan Waga was quite angry. He had not expected presents of this insulting nature on his birthday. Once more he snatched up the

rib of a walrus and bore down on the givers of the gifts. The three mariners jumped clear, and picking up the stool, threatened to use it as a battering ram on the Eskimo, and then Ching Lung tripped Gan Waga up, and instructed three members of the band to sit on his chest till he got cooler.

"Having performed these pleasant duties, gentlemen, I'll leave you," said Rupert Thurston. "I like your company, but I don't like frozen feet. I think your presents well chosen and kindly meant, and I'm sorry to see Gan Waga so ungrateful."

"Arrah, and ut's roight you are, sir," grinned Barry. "He's an ungrateful haythen, after all the thought and throuble and expense we went to, the fat murtherin' rogue. Av we hadn't threatened to splicate him wid this ould bench he was for braining a few of us wid that big bone. Oi'll niver give him another present as long as Oi live barring a thick ear. Waste of money it is. Phvat av I to do wid the rat-poison at all af he won't ate ut, unless Oi can persuade Prout or Maddock to thry ut?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Barry," said Thurston. "Be as good as you can, for I've not too much time to catch my train to town."

Having sworn to behave like a gentleman, Gan Waga was permitted to rise. It was then discovered, to the horror of most of the guests, that Thork the bear had chewed up the tin of rat-poison. He didn't seem to like it, either, for he was snorting and coughing. Barry explained, to the general relief, that the tin had contained nothing more deadly than sawdust, and after a drink of water and a few more buns, Thork settled himself down in the snow and began to snore.

Then came the dinner, brought piping hot out of the igloos in electrically heated dishes. The dishes had peculiar names; such as "Stewed mammoth's foot, eighty thousand years old, from frozen Northern Siberia," and "Seaweed and sea cow pie," with "Lapland moss" as a vegetable, but they were very nice and tasty, and as Prout, O'Rooney, and Maddock were careful to eat only what the Prince ate; they felt fairly safe.

"Well, souse me. If they grub you as well as this all the toime in your part of the world, Gan, I wouldn't mind spending a holiday there," said Maddock. "And you needn't wear that present I sent you yet, not, at least, till after dinner. Bit awkward, using a knife and fork with thick gloves on, but I keep hitting my mouth pretty well in spite of that, so it don't signify. Gan, my lad, we'll let by-gones be by-gones. I lift this pint pot to you in all affection.

I don't even wish you dead, not till dinner's over, foritwouldn't be good manners to go on with the feast and you a corpse. Good luck, blubber-biter, and, for the sake of Mike, don't make such a row when you eat."

"By honey, I've told him that scores of times," said Prout. "He reminds me of a piggollop-ing it down with both feet in the trough. I'm enjoying it all

very much, only I'm getting like Mr. Thurston, a bit cold about the feet. But if it's home-like to Gan Waga on his birthday, things like that don't worry us. I love him to feel home-like. If he was only at home for good and all, by honey, I'd prance round this ship on my hands, howling for joy. How much is the fare back, blubber-biter?"

As Gan Waga was prevented by Ching Lung from throwing a vegetable dish at Prout the

can-and-rib band struck up another tune and the songsters warbled :

"He's a blubbery, rubbery, bouncing boy,
A buttery, plumpery How-d'ye-Go.
A jellified, jollified, genial joy,
Gan Waga our Eskimo."

This sounded very nice and flattering.

Gan Waga stood up with half a pork-pie in his hand. Whatever may have been in his heart his mouth was too full for words, so he could only bow his thanks. He must have been touched, for he swallowed the lump in his throat so hard that his little black eyes started out of his head. He gulped harder and got the lump down.

"Look heres," he said fiercely,

"yo' stops it. Yo' call me any morer rubbery, blubbery, jellifieds, plumperiness, and I jolly well picks up the tables and knock yo' all sillies. How dares yo', hunk? Yo' yaller-face idgit with the big voice, yo' the worstest, so have that."

Gan Waga, who did not seem to appreciate the full meaning and beauty of the song sung in his honour, banged the half pork-pie down on the head of the nearest musician, and the angry musician retaliated by prodding Gan hard in



Soaked, wild-eyed, and ankle-deep in slush, the mariners splashed their way out. And they couldn't fall on Joe and tear him to pieces, for Joe had a wide grin on his face—and a revolver in each hand! (See Chapter 3.)

the ribs with a big walrus bone. Joe separated them as they were rolling in the snow trying to bite each other's ears.

"Now gentlemen," said Ching Lung, "this little dinner and little misunderstanding being over, we will endeavour to entertain you with an Eskimo war-dance. Shift the table and form further back. You must imagine that it is dead of night, one of those nights of intense darkness known only, I am thankful to say, on polar realms. Just before dawn the enemy Eskimos are creeping down on the igloos." Suddenly all the lights went out, including the mock moons and the stars. Mr. Thomas Prout put his hands in his pockets to see if his life-preserver and flash-lamp were quite safe. Prout had some reason for being suspicious for it was not the first little function organised by Ching Lung that he and his two comrades had been invited to. They were always, up to a certain extent, highly enjoyable; and arranged regardless of expense, but generally some sort of a hitch occurred.

"Whisht! Are you there, Tom?" whispered Barry O'Rooney. "They're too queer to please me. Do you think ut's safe?"

"By honey, I don't know; they're so full of wheezes," muttered Prout. "Get both fists ready, and if anything comes near you hit it hard. Pass the word to Ben. Never mind what it is, hit it."

Then the dawn broke, or, rather, the four mock suns threw a pale gleam over the frozen wilderness. Sitting on the bench, the three mariners surveyed the prospect. All looked secure and unchanged. Two of the seals were on the ice and one in the pool, and in the dim light Thork, the bear, was sleeping off his huge feast of buns. The only difference was that the musicians had become hostile warriors, and were stalking the igloos armed with clubs and harpoons. They uttered a shrill war-whoop, which died away amid the frozen stillness, and then the voice of Ching Lung came drowsily from one of the igloos.

"You've left the cat out, Gan," said the voice. "I can hear the poor little thing squalling. Get up and let it in."

Gan Waga's reply was drowned in another blood-curdling war-whoop as the warriors rushed at the doomed igloo and its wretched inhabitants. The fierce attackers pounded it with clubs and stabbed it with harpoons, and beat it to ruins. Shrieks of agony, that sank into sobs and gurgles and finally into stillness, came from the tumbled heap of snow, and then the yelling conquerors dragged out a fur-clad human body by the heels and tumbled it head-long into the big pot that simmered over the fire.

Then the dawn went out, and it was night again, and then just as quickly the temperature of that frozen waste changed, for somebody had turned on the steam-pipes.

With a howl Mr. Thomas Prout switched on his flash lamp. Chunks of ice were tumbling from the sky as the icicles melted, and water dripped from the ceiling. The remaining igloo was fading away, revealing the wooden framework beneath. The seals glared glassily through the mist and wet, and Thork lay undisturbed, for the real seals and the real Thork had gone, leaving only stuffed dummies.

Soaked, wild-eyed, and ankle-deep in slush, the mariners splashed their way to the locked door and howled to be let out. More swiftly thawed the snow and more dense grew the fog of steam. In the extraordinary change of climate from the arctic to the semi-tropical the snowfield had turned into a lake. When Joe at last let them out, they could not fall on him and tear him to pieces, for Joe had a wide grin on his face and a revolver in each hand.

"Sorry," said the store-keeper, after examining the furs which Prout returned next morning, "but you've made an awful mess of these. I'll send 'em to be put right, and the cost will come out of your wages. You'll be lucky if you get off with a fiver."

