

The TERROR of DEVILS'



MYSTERIOUS!

**A Thrill-Packed Yarn of
Amazing Adventure in the
Chinese Interior**

FASCINATING!

THRILLING!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

INTO THE UNKNOWN!

MOUNT KULSHAM, they called it on the maps, but to the natives of the desert lands in which it stood its evil reputation had gained it the name of Devils' Mountain.

"And an apt name at that!" thought Alan Steerforth, a good-looking young Englishman, as he

stared up at its awe-inspiring heights from the cockpit of his little two-seater aeroplane.

Certainly there was something sinister about the aspect of the great mountain. Silhouetted as it was against the red sky of sunset, it seemed to take on the shape of an incredibly huge primeval monster, and the grotesquely shaped peaks that hid its

MOUNTAIN!



By ROWLAND HOWARD

summit might well have been the palisade surrounding a dwelling-place for demons.

For Alan Steerforth and the party of seven other explorers who were at that moment pitching their tents on the oasis at the foot of the mountain, it was the end of a long journey. Six months had they spent in the mysterious Gobi Desert, unearthing the grisly remains of prehistoric monsters, and one task only remained before they began their long trek through the Chinese interior back to civilisation.

The projected task, which was Steerforth's, took the form of an attempt to fly over the summit of the mountain. It was a task fraught with deadly peril, and a hundred experts had called him mad when he packed up the plane for the journey. But the prospect of probing the mountain's secrets had long fascinated the young explorer, and he felt a thrill run through him at the thought that at dawn on the morrow he would set out on his great quest.

In the quickening dusk he glided

downwards, and in so doing his keen eyes saw in the distance the gleam of fires that told him they were not alone in this remote land. It was with a feeling of slight uneasiness that he climbed out of the cockpit and greeted his comrades.

"And phwat d'ye make av ut, me bhoy?" asked Mick O'Brien, the big, simple-hearted Irish cameraman of the party who was to go up with Steerforth.

"It's going to be the stiffest job of our lives, Mick—but we'll make it!" replied the pilot, with a grim smile. "By the way, Doc., I noticed a number of fires about ten miles west of us."

"Luminous phenomena indicative of combustion, eh?" remarked Dr. Molyneux, the bespectacled leader of the expedition, whose only failing was his inability to use small words where big ones would do. "Your statement, Steerforth, generates apprehensions as to the possibility of our work being subjected to interference from unfriendly natives!"

"Faith, an' Oi'd rather have trouble wid the natives than the banshees they say haunt that mountain!" said Mick O'Brien, as he frowned up at the darkening mass of Mount Kulsham. "Glad Oi am, Alan, that we're goin' up in honest daylight, an' gladder still Oi'll be whin it's all over!"

"Bother your old Irish superstitions!" laughed Steerforth, as he sat by the fire and started on his rations of bully beef and biscuits. "Air-pockets and currents will be our enemies to-morrow—not mountain banshees!"

"What's that?" asked Ralph Shaw, a young scientist of the expedition.

They listened in wonderment to the

noise that had suddenly begun to echo down from the heights of Devils' Mountain. It was a noise such as none of them had ever heard before—a hideous chattering and wailing that seemed to shake the starlit sky. Brave though they all were, not a man among the explorers could repress a shudder as that terrifying din filled the air.

"For the love av Pete, phwat is ut?" asked Mick O'Brien hoarsely.

Dr. Molyneux was peering upwards through his big horn-rimmed spectacles.

"My personal impression is of inordinate dissonance emanating from a considerable altitude!" he said, in quick tones that betrayed keen inward excitement. "Is it, I wonder, the voice of the 'spirits' by which the credulous natives of these parts believe the mountain to be inhabited?"

"Arrah! We moight have known no good would have come av spendin' a noight under a mountain av divils!" cried Mick O'Brien. "Faith, an' Oi'd sooner spend a noight in the haunted room av the ould castle at——"

"Look!" yelled Ralph Shaw, and there was terror in his voice.

The whole party jumped to their feet, staring at the sky. They saw them simultaneously—two nameless black shapes that were descending at frightful speed right on to the camp.

A shriek arose from the native porters behind them, while the Britishers stood petrified with horror. A roaring tempest seemed to strike the camp. Something huge and horrible came—passed—and was gone.

The nerve-shattering din died away and the explorers woke out of their momentary stupor. From the shadows beyond the camp fire's glow came a rush of feet as the native porters poured in, wailing hysterically.



"Look!" yelled Ralph Shaw, and there was terror in his voice. The whole party jumped to their feet, staring at the sky. Two nameless black shapes were descending at frightful speed right on to the camp!

"They got one of the men!" said Alan Steerforth huskily. "I saw them snatch him up like a bird snatches a grub! It was ghastly!"

Dr. Molyneux faced the yelling natives, his arms gesturing fiercely for silence.

"Silence, if you value your skins!" he shouted furiously, in the native dialect. "Who is missing?"

The trembling lips of the head man framed some half-inarticulate words and Dr. Molyneux listened attentively. When the man had finished, he shouted another stern order for silence, then rejoined the Britishers, his face grim and set.

"You were right, Steerforth," he said, in the stress of the moment

omitting even to employ his usual elaborate phraseology. "In fact, it's even worse than you thought. Whatever those—those things were, they carried off two living creatures of our party—a man and a mule. The men think they were devils."

"And who'd be bold enough to say they were far wrong, begob?" ejaculated Mick O'Brien. "Ye're not suggestin' they were man-eatin' birds, Doc?"

"There was no time to see what they were—but they were horrible beyond words!" said Ralph Shaw, with a shudder. "What can we do?"

Before Dr. Molyneux had time to reply, the problem was solved for them. During the hubbub of the

native porters, a party of horsemen had been approaching the camp from the bush, and now, in a sudden and momentary lull, the thudding of hoofs could be heard. Instinctively, the Britishers turned in the direction from which the sound was coming, and their eyes saw the flickering of lights near at hand.

"Mongols from the camp that I saw!" said Alan Steerforth, between his teeth. "They may be friendly—but I doubt it!"

"Your guns—quick!" snapped Dr. Molyneux. "But utilise them only in the ultimate extremity; we cannot afford to make enemies unnecessarily here!"

The explorers ran for their rifles; but they scarcely had time to secure them before the invading Mongols were upon them. The lights from their flaming torches and from the camp fire of the explorers shone on faces that were wild and ferocious and eyes that gleamed with a fanatical light.

"Halt!" shouted Dr. Molyneux, as the porters scattered wildly before the newcomers. But a guttural order from the leader of the Mongols drowned the rest of his words. A score of wild-eyed men reined in their mounts and leaped to the ground, swords drawn as they rushed into the fray.

"Let 'em have it!" yelled Alan Steerforth, and his own gun roared out, winging one of the raiders as he dismounted. But the defenders' preparations were too late. The time for shooting had gone and already they were using their guns as clubs. The din of a furious hand-to-hand battle filled the camp.

It was a sharp and merciless fight while it lasted, and a dozen of the enemy were lying about disabled before the finish. But the odds were

too great against the defenders and the end was inevitable. Soon the Mongols had closed in on them, and at last, by sheer weight of numbers, had overwhelmed them and forced them into submission.

"And phwat's goin' to be the end av us now, bhoys?" demanded Mick O'Brien, from the arms of three ugly Mongols.

"Speculation is inopportune since the facts are easily ascertainable!" panted Dr. Molyneux, regaining his gift for polysyllabic expression now that the fight was over. "Possibly the gentleman who is about to address me may bring enlightenment!"

The leader of the raiding band had approached the explorer and saluted him. Now, he began to rattle off a fire of remarks which were almost completely unintelligible to most of the captives. Dr. Molyneux listened in silence. When the Mongol's rapid fire of speech had ended, he looked round at the rest.

"Tell us the woirst, Doc!" urged Mick O'Brien.

"My news is of a lugubrious character, I fear!" said Dr. Molyneux. "These Mongols, who have been living on this oasis for some time, are in a state of terror from the mountain 'devils' and are looking for some means of appeasing their wrath. They have made us prisoners with the idea of leaving us on the mountain side to be carried away by the 'devils,' hoping thereby to propitiate them and escape further visitations!"

"Then it's certain death for us!" remarked Shaw grimly. "It means either that we starve slowly or else —"

He did not finish the sentence, but they knew what he meant. It was starvation or else a sudden swoop from those nameless horrors of the

night which, but a few minutes before, had spirited away man and beast to take them to a fate which none could bear to contemplate!

"Shure, an' it's meself that would rather they murdered us in cold blood than lave us at the mercy av those craithures!" muttered Mick O'Brien, whose superstitious fear of the mountain "devils" was only one degree less than that of the Mongols themselves. "Phwat are we goin' to do, Doc?"

"I can tell you!" shouted Alan Steerforth, as the leader of the captive explorers hesitated. "Doc, I've got an idea—the greatest idea you ever heard! Tell them that at dawn to-morrow we'll hunt out the mountain 'devils' in their lair and destroy them! See if they'll fall for that!"

Dr. Molyneux's eyes widened in the flickering reflection of the camp fire flames.

"You are indicating that if they'll permit you to carry out your flight to the summit, you can make them believe you've put an end to those creatures? But I'm afraid, Steerforth, that unless you can actually accomplish it——"

"Well, why not?" retorted the young pilot, eagerly. "We're scientists, and this is a scientist's job! Let me go up and find out what they are and where they are; then we can put our heads together and find a way of dealing with them and so help these afflicted natives and at the same time save ourselves!"

There was a murmur from the captured explorers. Dr. Molyneux's eyes gleamed with a sudden hope.

"Steerforth, my boy, your suggestion shows most commendable mental initiative!" he said. "If only I can convince them that we can deal with these 'devils'——"

He broke off and started speaking rapidly to the Mongol leader in his native tongue. The Mongols listened, indifferently at first, then with growing interest till they almost hung on the white man's words.

A torrent of argument followed Dr. Molyneux's speech. Opinions were evidently sharply divided. At length, the Mongol leader held up his hand for silence and, when the noise had died down, addressed Dr. Molyneux again.

The face of the white leader was still tense when he turned back to his comrades, but his eyes were shining behind his big glasses.

"We've got a respite," he said. "They have never seen or heard of an aeroplane, but I've told them we have a magic dragon that carries us into the air and they've agreed to release two of our party at dawn to-morrow to go and fight the 'devils.' But if the two fail——"

"Phwat then, Doc?"

"The rest of us die!" said Dr. Molyneux soberly. "Heaven knows, Steerforth, how it lies in your power to destroy an army of 'devils' possessed of the power of our late visitors. But it's a respite."

"And while there's life there's hope!" said Steerforth, joyously. "It's a trip into the Unknown, Doc. But it gives us a chance and that's all we can ask!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

THE FLYING FURIES!

AT dawn on the following morning, after an hour of feverish activity, Alan Steerforth and Mick O'Brien climbed into the little aeroplane in which all hopes were centred. Heavy leather suits, electrically heated, protected their bodies against the intense cold they would

encounter in the upper regions and oxygen masks hung round their necks, ready for use in the rarefied air into which they would fly.

While a crowd of Mongols stood away at a respectful distance, Dr. Molyneux, temporarily released for the purpose, gave the propeller a twist. The engine roared out an almost immediate response. A few seconds later the plane took off and, amid a howl of amazement from the natives and from the Britishers a cheer that gave expression to a desperate hope, roared away over the little camp to the forbidding mass of the mountain of mystery.

Upwards, ever upwards! Below, the panorama of sandy plain and stony foothills moved steadily away as they soared skyward. The camp, with its seething crowd gazing up at the diminishing speck in the sky, became a mere dot on an infinity of landscape.

"Everything O.K., Mick?" asked Alan Steerforth, through the mouth-piece of the telephone that connected him with his passenger.

"Not a throuble in the wor-rl'd if it weren't for the bhoys bein' in the camp an' meself flyin' to meet the banshees on this divil-ridden mountain!" answered Mick, who, despite the heavy odds that existed against the resultant negatives ever seeing the inside of a developing-room, was busily preparing his movie camera for use. "Alan Steerforth, me bhoys, would ye be thinkin' we can race 'em if we meet any av the evil craithures?"

"I'm thinking nothing about it till we meet them," was Alan Steerforth's cheery reply. "Get busy with your camera and forget the blessed banshees!"

Soon, they had donned their masks and turned on the life-giving oxygen.

The altimeter was creeping steadily up—10,000 feet, 15,000 feet and then 20,000 feet were registered by its quivering needle and still it moved forward.

Emerging out of a bank of light cloud at 20,000 feet, they came into a region of crystal-clear air and saw, for the first time, the desolate grandeur of the great mountain's upper heights. A wilderness of ice and snow stretched away from them into the distant haze, while immense peaks of bare grey rock towered above them, it seemed, to the very sky.

Mick O'Brien soon had his movie camera going, pausing only at intervals to take still shots with the ordinary cameras that were also in his outfit.

An amazing phenomenon came into view as they rounded one of the great peaks. Right down the mountain-side a huge cloud of powdery snow was rising upwards from a gorge that extended down as far as the eye could see. In the bright sunshine it looked like a gigantic white serpent writhing down to the foothills.

"And phwat d'ye make av that?" asked Mick, through the telephone.

"It's a vast air-current blowing up from some natural funnel in the mountain!" came the pilot's reply. "Get all the pictures you can of it, for it knocks spots off Niagara Falls from this position!"

"Shure, an' it's meself that belaves the whole place is haunted!" muttered Mick, as he bent over his camera once more.

Still they climbed, till at last they were at the crest of the mountain. Then, as they peered down, they saw the summit below them—and with it a sight that froze the blood in their veins! For in the huge, shadowy, boulder-strewn hollow that formed the

top of the mountain, reclining in a sleep which changed to wakefulness as the roar of the plane disturbed them, were scores of black creatures of stupendous size and nightmarish hideousness.

"Merciful heavens! The banshees!" Mick O'Brien's husky voice breathed through the telephone.

he had gazed was one that would have inspired fear in any human being. The loathsome creatures that littered the summit of Devils' Mountain were fully thirty feet in length. Their necks were long and sinuous and their bodies fat and ungainly, with two stumps of legs just sufficiently long to enable them to waddle



"Let 'em have it!" yelled Alan Steerforth as a score of wild-eyed Mongols rushed to the attack. His own gun roared out, winging one of the raiders as he dismounted. Then the din of a furious hand-to-hand battle filled the camp.

"Not banshees, but animals!" yelled back Steerforth. "Animals such as no living man has ever seen! Keep your camera going, Mick, and for heaven's sake don't lose your head!"

The hands of the young pilot were shaking as they moved over the controls, for the sight on which

about on land. But it was the wings and head that brought the feeling of revulsion to the airmen. The wings, fleshy, furry, bat-like members, had an enormous spread. The head, immense in size and snake-like in appearance, was crowned with a row of waving air-suckers—by which alone the hideous creatures could

have survived at this height—over gaping jaws that revealed double rows of serrated teeth.

With a roar that awoke the echoes of the foul place the aeroplane skimmed across the sleeping-den of the monsters. Then, as the creatures bestirred themselves, arose a sound that drowned the engine and filled the air with its deafening discord. It was that weird wailing and chattering that had echoed down from the mountain-top the night before. The next instant a dozen of the monsters were moving over the ground with the slow, sticky movement of giant sloths, and a moment later their huge wings were spreading and they were soaring up at the intruder.

The airmen realised at once that, lethargic and ponderous as the great creatures might be on land, they were like flying furies in the air. They shot upwards like shells from a battery of guns.

Alan Steerforth wheeled in a desperate attempt to turn back on his course. He had known from the previous night's experience that they could swoop at tremendous speed, but he had not reckoned on their being able to reproduce that speed in soaring. Unfortunately, however, they seemed almost capable of that incredible achievement. Too late the young pilot repented of his daring in flying over them.

A host of fleeting black shadows suddenly blotted out the sunshine that bathed the mountain-top. Something huge and terrifying flew straight at the nose of the aeroplane and a shattering blow shook her from tip to tail. A strangled animal wail rang out.

The black shadow fell away and a grinding sound told of damage to the plane. With a sickening sense of

horror Alan and Mick suddenly realised that the wounded monster had torn away both propeller and engine with one blow of its mighty wing.

From a gaping hole in the cockpit they stared with fascinated eyes at the dread vale below them. Only the high wind and strong currents of the mountain-top prevented them dropping like a stone. As it was, they were drifting downwards at quite an uncomfortable speed, with the black forms of their hideous hosts whirling furiously around them as they descended.

Crash!

They landed at last, with a shattering impact that almost knocked them senseless. Where they were, for a moment they had no idea. They only knew that they were lying in the wreckage of the cockpit and that a black cloud of flying furies was rushing downwards to destroy them.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THE SNOW SERPENT!

IT was a desperate moment; but in such moments the human instinct for self-preservation finds ways of escape where none seem to exist. That was what happened on this occasion. In the moment when their fate seemed sealed and their brains had become numbed with the realisation of the horror that threatened them, the wrecked airmen found themselves leaping out of the cockpit and diving into a little alcove formed by an overhanging crag.

The swooping monsters thudded to the ground with a screaming and chattering that awoke hideous echoes in the cup-shaped mountain-top. But for the moment their intended human prey had eluded them, for the opening to the alcove was far too small for their gigantic bodies.

Crouched against the rock-face in their little hiding-place, Alan and Mick looked at each other. Had their faces been visible, they would have been seen to be strained with intense anxiety, but as they were concealed by their oxygen masks and goggles, they registered their feelings with expressive gestures instead.

Their plight hardly bore contemplating. They had a reserve oxygen supply strapped to their backs and the batteries that heated their clothing were intact; but it would be only a matter of hours before oxygen and heat both gave out—and when that happened, death, within a few minutes, was certain.

Even if the supplies of oxygen and heat had been greater, escape seemed impossible, for in the open they could hardly hope to elude the horde of monsters that menaced them, and in any case knew that a descent on foot of the colossal ice-bound mountain, with its great precipices and sheer walls of rock, was out of the question.

The telephone apparatus having been destroyed, the stranded airmen had recourse to pencil and paper. Alan wrote: "Are your heat and gas coming through all right? Mine O.K."

"Me too," wrote back Mick. "But I can't see how we'll get out of this mess at all. Got any hunches?"

"The plane's in order but for the engine." This from Alan.

Mick responded with: "For the love of Mike what's the use of it to us if the engine's missing?"

Alan wrote back: "I had gliding in mind, but it wants a lot of thinking about. It's the problem of getting away from these creatures. Let's think it over."

They did so. The result in Mick's

case was evidently not encouraging, for after an interval of a quarter of an hour he took up his pencil again and wrote: "Sure, and it does seem tough, everything ending like this entirely. I wouldn't mind for myself so much, but it's worrying to know that when we don't return the rest will pay for it."

"Stop croaking," was Alan's reply. "There's still a chance. Taking bearings, I see we've landed not far above that snow spout—the thing we saw writhing down into the plain like a white serpent. If we could hang on to the cockpit and go over the top in the plane, that air current might give us a fairly easy glide most of the way down, and I should be able to manage her the rest of the way."

"Sounds like suicide to me, but anything's better than just dying here," wrote Mick. "I'm with you, boy; but don't forget the plane's a lot heavier than the average glider."

"The engine's the heaviest part, and that's gone," Alan scribbled. "Of course, I realise that she's not a glider and the odds are that we shall crash. But there is the chance that the air current extends far enough down to keep her buoyant to the bottom. Is there any hope of getting away while the beasts are sleeping? Daytime seems resting time for them and we may be able to slip away quietly without arousing them."

Sure enough the black monsters of the mountain-top began to lumber off soon after and in a short period all had gone. Hope rose high in the breasts of the airmen.

But that hope was speedily extinguished at their first attempt to move from the alcove. Ere they had taken half-a-dozen steps, there was a stirring in the shadows of the cupped mountain-top, and from all directions

the weird monsters of Devils' Mountain were advancing upon them, grotesque and ridiculous in their awkward gait, but terrifying in their size and strength. Frantically, the two Britishers raced back to the alcove and sought again the welcome shelter of its rocky walls.

They eyed each other through their heated goggles with eyes that had a hunted look in them. Slothful as the monsters might appear on land, it was evident that they had the instincts of wolves on the track of prey—that their watch for the human beings who had fallen into their lair would not relax for an instant. Even the remote chance of escape that lay in a wild leap into the air over the mountain-side in the engine-
plane seemed denied them.

The two explorers were in an agony of mind. Staunch and unselfish both, their thoughts in this dark hour turned to their comrades, prisoners in the hands of fanatical devil-worshippers and doomed to die now that they could not help them.

They crouched back against the rock, desperately racking their brains for a solution to the problem. But the hours went quickly and ideas came all too slowly.

The sun was low in the west, and a drowsiness that betokened the petering out of their oxygen supply was beginning to creep over them when at last inspiration came to Alan Steerforth. He had been looking across the dip at the trail of petrol that had leaked over the ice-bound rock when the engine fell and rolled down into a cavity on lower ground. Suddenly he threw out his arms in a frenzy of excitement. Mick roused himself to read the message he started writing immediately afterwards.

"Have you got a match or lighter?" was the message.

Mick's answer was to produce a box of safety matches from an outside pocket. His colleague took it and scribbled a second message.

"There's a trail of petrol starting outside which ends up at the engine. Expect tank has leaked dry by now, but the fumes inside it should make it as good as a bomb, and it's resting in a hollow which may add to the effect. We'll fire it, hoping to scatter them, then push off in the plane. Agreed?"

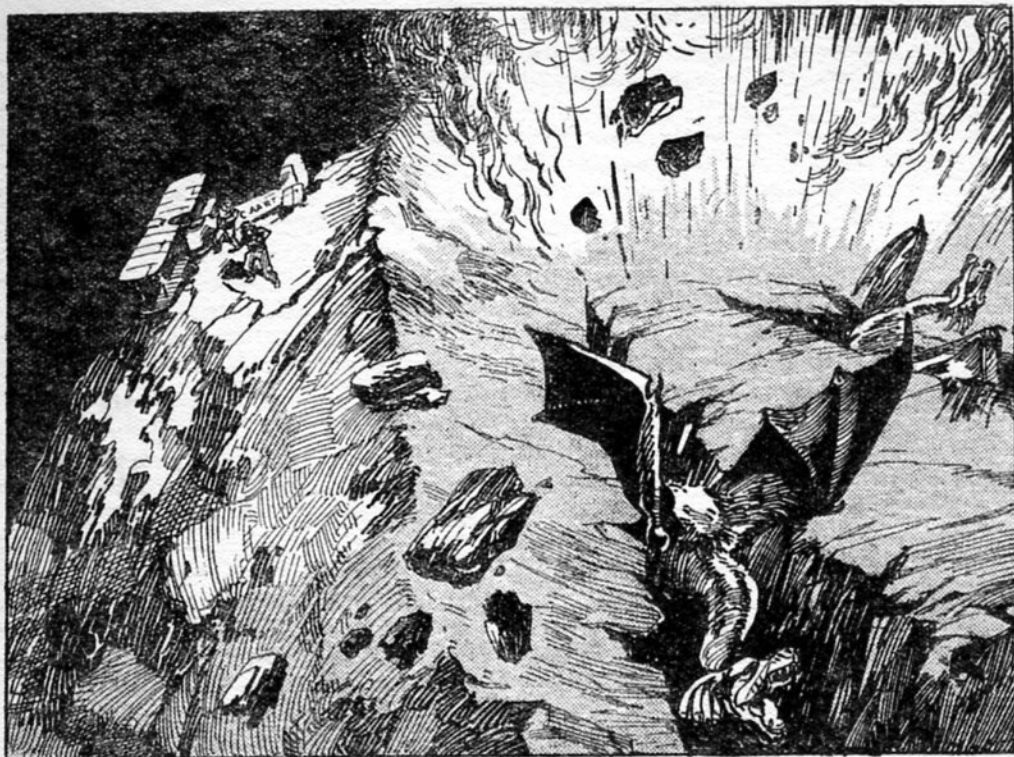
For answer, Mick put his arms round his comrade's shoulders and hugged him.

Both knew that it would be only a matter of minutes now before the oxygen gave out and they fell into a sleep from which there would be no awakening, and both preferred a last desperate fight to such a tame and ignoble surrender to fate.

Throwing off, with a mighty effort, the drowsiness which was rapidly dimming their senses, they prepared for their bid for freedom. For the hundredth time since their landing, they measured with their eyes the distance separating them from the plane, which was sheltered behind a huge crag almost on the edge of the mountain. Alan scribbled out detailed instructions as to the exact position his colleague was to take up in the cockpit; then they stood ready.

Alan struck the match and sent it skimming across to the glistening spot where the petrol trail began.

The flash back was instantaneous. An ear-splitting roar shook the mountain-top, and a sheet of flame blazed over the home of the mountain monsters. It was as though the mountain had suddenly become a raging volcano. The hollow into



Suddenly an ear-splitting roar shook the mountain-top, and a sheet of flame blazed over the home of the mountain monsters. Then, before the awe-struck eyes of the Britishers, great cracks appeared, and the denizens of Devils' Mountain disappeared into unknown depths.

which the engine had rolled had, in fact, been accumulating petrol fumes and become a live "bomb" of enormous explosive power.

Jagged pieces of rock flew into the air in a shower as the two Britishers picked themselves up and raced madly to the plane which, in its protected position, had missed the force of the explosion completely. Then, at the very moment when they stood alongside the cockpit, ready to push her off and take the great leap, came the amazing aftermath.

Their awe-struck eyes were suddenly made aware that great cracks and fissures were appearing in the hollow mountain-top, and that the army of black monsters, stunned into

helplessness by the violence of the explosion, were sliding down into depths which the eye could not penetrate. Alan Steerforth's amazingly successful "bomb" had dealt the defective surface of the mountain-top a blow that had caved it in! The nesting-place of the foul denizens of Devils' Mountain had been shifted hundreds of feet lower into the centre of the mountain and changed simultaneously into a tomb, for not one of them was fated to survive the fearful drop!

With the feeling that the whole world was crumbling away under their feet, Alan and Mick pushed off, climbing into the wrecked cockpit as the engineless plane slid down the

ice-bound mountain-side towards the writhing "serpent" of powdery snow on which their forlorn hope of surviving depended.

Faster and faster they descended the slippery slope till the white trail of the air funnel seemed to be rushing to meet them. Mick crouched behind, while Alan sat in front, his eyes glued ahead of him and his hand on the control-stick. It looked as though no power could possibly be strong enough to get them into the air; but as they neared the snow-serpent and Alan moved the stick, they felt themselves leave the mountain-side and begin to ride over the terrific current that swept upwards from the gap.

Tossed and buffeted about like a cork on a stormy sea, the little plane swept earthwards down the trail of spouting snow. It was a weird and terrifying experience, to be riding through a blinding spray of snow twenty thousand feet above the earth, with the knowledge that nothing but air currents could save them from a drop to death when the snow trail ended; but Alan Steerforth, in the remains of the pilot's seat, was as coldly efficient as he would have been with the engine roaring out its cheering music.

With amazing suddenness the snow spray ended. Alan took a split second to glance over the side and he could have shouted with joy at the discovery that they were gliding with surprising evenness over the foothills below the mountain. The plane had, in point of fact, been catapulted off the current with such force as to send her on a glide of several miles towards the plains beyond the mountain.

The young pilot glanced down again and saw in the distance the ant-like figures of human beings and the gleam of a camp-fire. Taking full advantage

of the power with which the last kick of the great air current had endowed his engineless plane, he slanted her tail and guided her towards the fire, and with a slowness that was a sheer delight the earth came nearer and nearer, the ant-like figures became recognisable human beings, and the little plane at last came to rest within a hundred yards of the spot from which she had started twelve hours before.

The conquerors of Devils' Mountain heard the hysterical cries of the Mongols and the wild cheering of their fellow-explorers, and knew that victory had been won. Then everything went dark. The inevitable reaction had set in and both had fainted.

One night without molestation from the monsters of the mountain was sufficient to convince the Mongols that the white men and their "dragon" had slain the "devils" that had so long menaced their lives, and they were happy to release their captives on the following day.

"Well, it is an incredible narrative we have to relate," remarked Dr. Molyneux, as they started their long journey back across the desert. "How unfortunate that we did not manage to secure a single specimen of those engrossingly interesting prehistoric survivals before they were engulfed in the mountain! I am somewhat apprehensive that the world will be incredulous and suggest that we merely witnessed an example of the visual phenomenon known as the mirage!"

"Then the wor-ld can see that same mirage for itself, Doc., an' it'll be all aloive an' kickin'!" chuckled Mick O'Brien. "For if that fillum Oi took from the plane doesn't bate anythin' Hollywood iver thought av, then Oi'm a Dutchman!"

THE END