KNOCKOUT

FUN BOOK

1946

GREETINGS

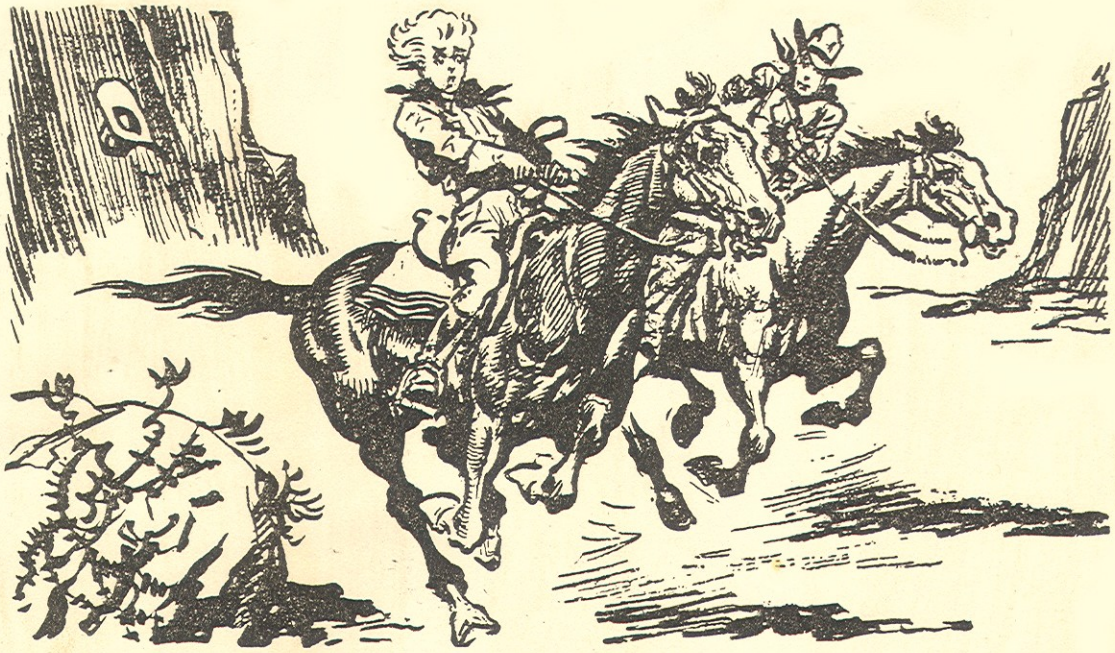
to the Owner of this Book, to whom I hope it will bring many a happy hour. I have tried very hard to make this the best-ever issue of the best-ever Fun Book, and I hope you will be as proud to own it as I have been to produce it.

If, when you look
Through this book
It brings a smile,
I'll
Think it worth while.

THE EDITOR

THE GREMLINS SEE THE SEA

Frontispiece



OLD HANK AND YOUNG JIM

A Thrilling Adventure in the Wild West

Hank's Secret

When Young Jim came out of school, the sheriff of Porman's Creek was talking to the schoolmaster in the playground. But that was none of Jim's business. The sheriff's horse stood in the road just outside the school, but Jim didn't pay much attention to that.

At least, not at first. But, suddenly, there was a wild shout and the boys and girls who had come out of the schoolhouse scattered left and right as a big bay mare came charging down the road. On its back was a young girl about Jim's age, and it was quite clear that the horse was running away with her.

As she sped past Jim he could see her white face and the fear in her eyes. She was tugging at the reins but her strength was not enough to check the mad rush of the runaway horse. She was in great danger, and Jim knew it.

He acted swiftly. In a flash he bounded into the saddle on the back of the sheriff's horse and rode after the girl.

"Heck!" he muttered. "Gotta stop thet mare, somehow."

Faster and faster he rode along the trail out of town. He knew how to ride and he coaxed every ounce of speed out of the sheriff's horse. Nearer and nearer he drew to the frightened girl until he was riding close beside her.

"Hang on!" he panted. "I'll stop her!"

Leaning over perilously, he managed to grab the runaway's bridle, and hung on to it grimly. He turned his horse in a wide circle, forcing the runaway round as he went.

The speed slackened gradually. The runaway was snorting and panting, but Jim had it under control now. The gallop became a trot, then slowed to a walk.

The young girl looked at Jim. Her face was still pale, but she smiled with relief.

" Gee ! " she said. " Guess you saved my life, Jim."

Jim flushed.

" Glad I was able to stop your bronc," he said, " but yuh don't want to tell anybody——"

He broke off, for there was the sheriff riding up on a borrowed horse, saying :

" Guess thar ain't much need for Miss Maisie to tell anyone, Jim. We all saw what yuh done. And a mighty slick bit o' work it was, too."

Then he turned to the girl.

" Yore pop oughtn't to let yuh ride thet mare, Miss Maisie. She's too powerful for yuh. Guess I'll see yuh home—thet is if Jim will lend me my bronc and take this 'un back to the schoolmaster."

" Sure," said Jim. " I'll do thet."

So the sheriff rode off with Maisie, whose father owned the Double T ranch away over the mesa. Mr. Allen had always given Maisie everything she wanted, but the big bay mare was certainly not a wise gift.

Jim rode the other horse back to school and handed it over to the schoolmaster.

" Nice work, Jim," said the schoolmaster. " You sure saved Maisie's life."

Jim flushed again. He hadn't thought he was doing anything very clever. In any case, he couldn't have stood by and done nothing. He didn't like being showered with praises, anyway, so he said, " Thank you, sir," and set off for home.

He lived in a tumble-down shack on the edge of the desert with old Hank Hutchings. His father had been called for service with the U.S. Army, and there was no one else in the world to look after Jim. Old Hank had agreed to have him because Jim's father had once saved his life.

Old Hank hadn't liked the idea, really, but Jim turned out to be such a bright, cheery lad that they got on together pretty well, although Hank would never admit it to anybody.

The people of Porman's Creek always declared that Hank was an old miser. They said he had a secret gold-mine somewhere, and often went into Thorn City with gold nuggets and came home with dollars. But nobody had ever proved it. Jim knew that Hank had secrets, but he had long since learned that it made the old man very angry to be asked questions about them, so he just didn't bother.

And it so happened that old Hank had been in to Thorn City that day. Jim didn't know why and hadn't asked. But as he trudged along the trail Jim heard the rumble of wheels behind him, and, turning, saw old Hank coming along, driving the buggy, with old Betsy the mule between the shafts.

" Hiya, Grandpop ! " he called.

Hank frowned down at him.

" Yore late gittin' home from school ! " he snapped. " How come ? "

" Ooh, jest hangin' around, I guess," said Jim. He couldn't tell old Hank about Maisie and what he had done.

" Waal," said Hank, " yuh'd better hop up and ride home. It'll save yore boot leather."

So Jim climbed on the buggy and sat beside Hank. He noticed that there was a bundle in the back, wrapped up in sacking, but he didn't ask what it was. If Hank thought he ought to know what it was, then he'd tell him.

Hank drove on. Jim shot a glance at him. The old man was frowning and looked annoyed about something.

" Had a good day, Grandpop ? " asked Jim.

" Nope ! " snapped Hank. " I bin and spent too much money ! "

Jim's eyebrows went up in surprise. " What on ? " he wanted to know.

" Yuh mind yore own business," growled Hank, giving the mule a flick with his whip.

Not that the mule took the slightest notice of that. She just cantered on her way, and all was peace.

But not for long. Suddenly, as they rounded a bend in the trail, a man leapt out from behind a boulder and levelled a gun at Hank's head.

" Hold it, old timer ! " he rasped.

He wore a black neckerchief over his face so that it was impossible to see who it was. His clothes looked pretty good, considering—better, thought Jim, than most hold-up guys would wear.

Hank hauled on the reins and the mule stopped.

" Now git off'n thet buggy ! " ordered the masked man.

Hank got down. He forgot Jim, and the hold-up man wasn't bothering either. Jim had slid under the back of the seat and lay in the back half-hidden by that parcel wrapped in sacking.

" What's the idea ? " cried Hank. " Yuh cain't rob me ! I ain't got nawthin——"

" Skip it ! " snapped the bandit. " Guess we all know yuh don't go to Thorn City for nawthin'. Whar's yore dollars ? "

" Ain't got any ! " said Hank.

" Oh, yeah ! " sneered the bandit. "Keep yore hands up. I'm a-goin' to search yuh ! "

He laid his gun down on the dash-board of the buggy, and proceeded to feel in Hank's pockets for dollars.

Jim peered over the seat of the buggy and saw his chance. He reached for the gun and got it. Then up he jumped.

" Reach for it, yuh rat ! " he cried.

The bandit spun round in alarm. Jim pressed the trigger, the gun exploded, and the bullet whisked the bandit's hat off his head.

That was enough. The bandit turned and bolted for it. Jim fired after him, his bullets kicking up dust round the robber's feet. The man reached his horse behind a big boulder, leapt into the saddle and rode away like the wind.

Hank mopped his brow. " I'm mighty obliged t'yuh, young Jim," he said. Then he paused. " Gimme thet shooter ! " he demanded.

Jim handed it over and old Hank turned it over and over, then stared at the letters carved on the butt : T. A.

Old Hank scowled darkly. " T. A.," he muttered. " Tod Allen, or I'm a lizard ! "

" Don't be silly, Grandpop ! " cried Jim. " Mister Allen owns the biggest ranch in these parts. A guy like that wouldn't hold yuh up."

A queer look came over old Hank's face.

" Thet's all yuh know about it," he said, and stuffed the revolver into his pocket.

For the rest of the way home old Hank said not another word. But Jim could do nothing but wonder whether those initials did mean that the gun of the hold-up man belonged to the richest rancher around Porman's Creek. He forgot the strange bundle in the buggy.

The Missing Man

It was after old Hank and young Jim were finishing their tea that the sound of horse's hoofs sent Jim to the window. He peered out and glimpsed a man riding towards the shack.

" Gee ! " he cried. " It's Mister Allen hisself ! "

" What ? " roared Hank. He started to his feet, sending his chair crashing over behind him. He darted to the window, watching the rancher dismount. " Thet crook ! " he muttered. " And he've got the sass to come hyah ! "

Jim stared at old Hank. " Why shouldn't he come, Grandpop ? " he asked. " Yuh don't know it was him yuh met on the trail ! "

Hank brushed him aside. " Guess I knows more'n yuh do," he snapped.

Then came a rapping on the door. Jim made to open the door, but again old Hank pushed him on one side. Hank opened the door and stood there, scowling at his visitor.

" What d'yuh want ? " he asked curtly.

Mr. Allen smiled wanly.

" Say, Hank," he said, " must yuh stay thet way with me, after all these years ? I never done yuh no wrong."

" We was out on the desert," said Hank. " I had a di'mond, didn't I ? Yuh and Dave Spence left me in the night and the di'mond went with yuh. Then yuh got yuh a ranch. Yore rich and I'm poor."

Mr. Allen flushed. " Fifteen years ago thet happened," he said. " And I tell yuh, Hank I never took yuh diamond. I left yuh 'cos yuh was wantin' to go south and I wanted to go north. Dave kind-a agreed with me and he went along wi' me. He's my foreman now."

" And I lost me di'mond," said Hank. " Who took it ? "

"How should I know ? " cried Mr. Allen. " I never took it. We left yuh asleep, and thet's all I know."

" Yuh sold thet di'mond and bought yuh ranch," accused Hank.

" It's not true ! " cried Mr. Allen angrily. Then he smiled again. " Aw, fergit it, cain't yuh, Hank," he said. " Yore sore at me because I've got on a bit, although I ain't so rich as yuh might think, right now."

" I know thet ! " growled Hank. " Mebbe thet's why yuh tried to hold me up on the trail——"

" Me ? Hold yuh up ? " gasped Mr. Allen. " I did no sich thing ! "

Hank whisked out the revolver and held it so that the rancher could see the initials on the butt—T. A.

" Is this shooter yores ? " he snapped.

Mr. Allen gaped at the gun. " Heck ! " he cried. " I lost a couple o' shootin' irons last week ! "

" Hooey ! " hissed old Hank. He stuffed the revolver back in his pocket, then darted across the room and snatched his old blunderbuss off the wall over the fireplace. He levelled the thing at the rancher.

" Think I'm bein' tricked all me life ? " rasped old Hank. " Now, yuh'd better turn around and scram, Tod Allen, afore I shoots ! And don't yuh ever come this-a ways again. D'yuh hear ? Go on ! "

" Put it down, yuh crazy galoot," cried Mr. Allen. " I've come to say thank ye to young Jim for saving my Maisie's life."

" I ain't listening," snapped Hank. " So git goin' ! "

Mr. Allen shrugged his shoulders. " Waal," he said, " I'm mighty obliged t'yuh, Jim. Guess Hank won't let me say any more right now. Mebbe we'll hev another chance to talk, later on."

" Yuh'll stay away from Jim, thet's what ! " retorted Hank. " I'm shootin' in two minutes. Better git ! "

Mr. Allen turned and went, striding back to his horse. Hank watched him ride away, then came back into the shack, kicking the door shut behind him.

" The dirty crook ! " he said as he sat down at the table. Then he glared at Jim. " What's all this about young Maisie ? " he asked.

Jim told him briefly. " It weren't nawthin', really," he said.

Hank nodded. " Yore a great guy, Jim," he said. " I got nawthin' agin Maisie. But her father's a crook."

" S'pose yuh kin prove it, or yuh wouldn't say it," said Jim.

" I cain't prove it, but I knows it," retorted Hank. " 'Twere fifteen year ago. Thar was me and Tod Allen and Dave Spence out on the desert, hopin' to find gold. I'd found a di'mond, see ? We sorta had a row as to which way we should go next. I was for goin' one way and they wanted to go another. Anyway, while I slept they left me. I woke up next morning and I was alone. And my di'mond had gone ! Tod buys himself a ranch and said he'd found enough gold for thet. But I know whar my di'mond went, tho' I couldn't prove it."

He got up and reached for his hat. " Lissen, Jim," he said. " The less yuh hev to do wi' the Allens, the better I'll like it. And now I'm takin' the buggy. Gotta job to do out on the desert. Shan't be more'n a hour."

He went out, and while Jim was washing up the tea things he heard Hank drive away in the buggy, along the trail that wound its way across the desert.

Jim felt unhappy. He didn't like this crook business. He had heard talk that things weren't quite right up at the Double T ranch. There were whispers of cattle stealing going on. But no one had ever said a word against Mr. Allen.

The thought of Maisie's father being a crook, like Hank said, didn't sound right. Jim felt sure there was something wrong, somewhere. He liked Maisie and he hated the idea of her having her heart broken.

He was still thinking about it, two hours later, and Hank had not come back. The sun was beginning to sink and the shadows were lengthening. Jim began to worry and went outside to listen. He couldn't hear the buggy, but he did hear horse's hoofs.

And suddenly Maisie came riding up, astride a pony which she could manage easier than the big mare.

" Jim," she said, " guess I had to come to say thank you." Then she broke off.

" But what's the matter, Jim ? You look worried."

" Guess I am," he said. " Grandpop's gone out on the desert. He said he wouldn't be gone an hour. He's been gone nearly three."

" Gosh ! " said Maisie. " That's bad. He's an old man and a night on the desert won't do him any good. What'll you do ? "

" I'm going out to find him," said Jim. " Mebbe he's had an accident, or sumpin'."

" But you don't know which way he went."

Jim pointed to the marks of the buggy wheels in the dust. " I'll follow his trail," he said firmly.

" I'll come too," said Maisie.

" The desert ain't fit for a girl," retorted Jim.

" You might be glad of someone to ride fast with a message for help," she suggested. " I'll come, Jim."

There was a deal of sense in what Maisie said, and Jim knew it. So they set off together into the desert. Maisie rode her pony and Jim walked, following the trail left by the buggy wheels. Jim's father had been a trapper and had taught Jim all there was to know about trailing. It was easy for Jim. What worried him was that the sun was sinking fast, and he might not be able to follow the trail once darkness set in. So he walked as fast as ever he could, farther and farther into the heart of the desert.

There was no sign of Hank. Now and again Jim would stop and listen. Sounds travel far on the desert at dusk. He hoped to hear the familiar squeak of the buggy wheels. But it was in vain.

But he did hear something—the most unexpected sound to hear on a desert trail. It was the low mooing of cattle !

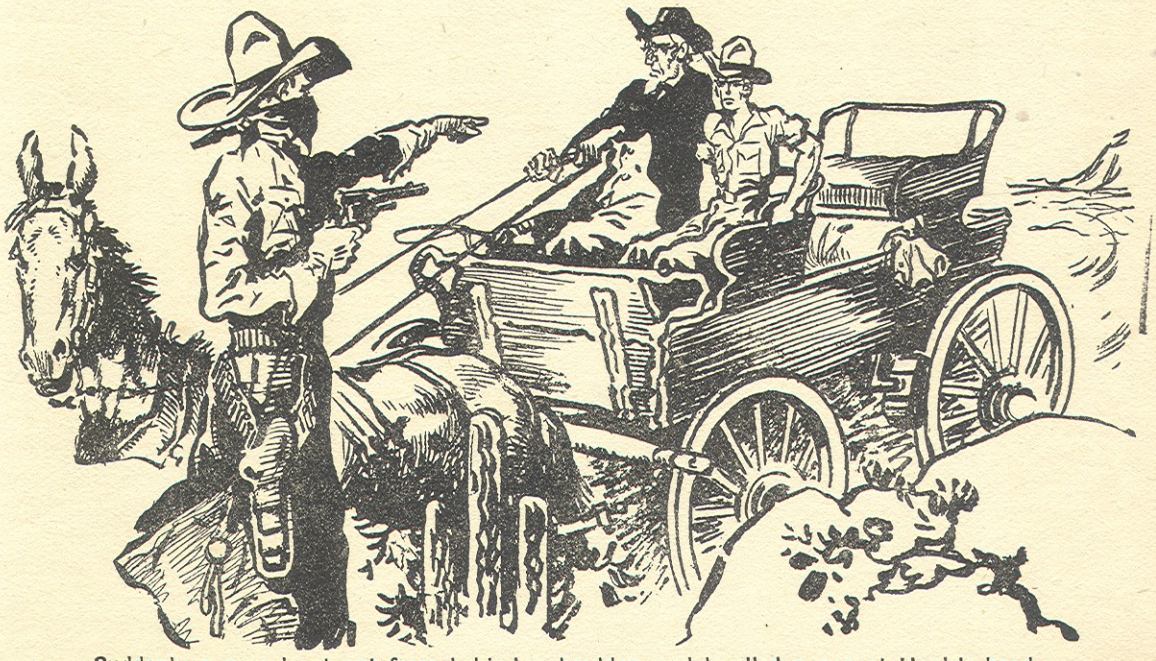
Rustlers

JIM stood very still. Maisie sat astride her pony, staring at him, wild-eyed.

" Did yuh hear it, too ? " asked Jim.

" Sure," said Maisie, in a whisper. " But it don't make sense, Jim. Who'd bring cattle on the desert where there's no grass and no water ? "

" Thet's what I'm a-goin' to find out," declared Jim. " Better git off'n yore pony, Maisie, and walk a bit. Only keep well behind me."



Suddenly a man leapt out from behind a boulder, and levelled a gun at Hank's head.

The sun had dropped below the skyline and the great boulders cast dense shadows. Jim crept forward stealthily. The lowing of the cattle sounded louder and louder as he advanced. There seemed to be quite a number of them.

Jim knew very well that cattle would never wander on the desert of their own free will, so there must be men with them. He kept a sharp look-out as he walked, and he made not a sound.

Then, suddenly, he stopped. Maisie stopped too, and she clapped one hand over her pony's muzzle in case he should whinny and so betray their presence.

" Stay hyah ! " Jim whispered. " I'm hevin' a look-see."

He crept on a bit, then climbed to the top of a big rock. The light was pretty dim and uncertain, but in a wide dip he could make out a lot of cattle bunched together, and close by were men seated on the ground. He saw the buggy, too, with the old mule in the shafts.

Was this one of old Hank's secrets ? Was he in league with a gang of cattle thieves ?

The next instant Jim knew he was wrong. Hank wouldn't do a thing like that. He felt sure of it. Maybe Hank had blundered into the rustlers, and they had captured him to stop him giving the alarm. Maybe they had killed him.

Jim went cold as he thought of it. But the next moment he was aware of a man creeping round the rock on which he stood. The man had seen Maisie. He held a gun and was stealthily approaching her.

Jim didn't hesitate. He leapt off the rock and came down smack on top of the man. They went rolling over and over on the ground, struggling furiously.

Jim shouted to Maisie. " Ride for it, Maisie ! Rustlers ! Tell yore pop ! Quick ! "

Maisie didn't like the idea of leaving Jim, but she knew she couldn't really help him. To ride for help was the wise thing to do, and she did it. In a flash she was in the saddle, and turning her pony, rode back the way she had come.

And Jim wrestled with the man, wriggling and fighting. He tried to free himself, lunging out fiercely. The man's head hit a rock and he went limp. The impact had knocked him senseless.

But the disturbance had been heard ! Other men were coming with torches. Jim scrambled to his feet and made a dive for a rock. He was a fraction of a second too late. Rough hands grabbed him and held him. Bearded faces peered at him through the gloom.

" Heck ! It's old Hank's kid," said someone. " Come to look for the old man, I guess."

" Okay ! He's found him ! " chuckled another man. And they dragged Jim to the hollow where the cattle were milling round restlessly.

And there Jim found old Hank. The old man sat on the ground with his back against the buggy wheels. His hands were tied behind his back and his ankles were securely bound.

Close by a man was busy blowing at a fire, trying to make it blaze. The flames spurted up, and by the lurid glow Hank saw Jim.

" Hiya, Grandpop ! " said Jim cheerily. He wasn't letting these rustlers think he was scared.

Hank glared up at him. " Young Jim ! " he cried. " How come yuh don't stay home when I tells yuh ? "

" Yuh didn't tell me," replied Jim. " Yuh was gone a long time so I followed yore trail."

" Yuh idjit ! " rapped Hank. " When I wants yuh help I'll ax for it. Ain't it bad enough fer me to be cotched by these rats ? Now, yore here ! Heck, I'll take my belt t'yuh when I gits yuh home ! "

The rustlers laughed at him. " Ain't he grateful for the kid comin' to save him ? " they chuckled.

Jim kept on grinning. He wasn't minding Grandpop's bad temper. He knew it was only because old Hank was worried about him.

Besides, the rustlers hadn't said a thing about Maisie. The only one who had seen her lay senseless on the trail. The others didn't know that Maisie had gone riding hard to fetch her father and the sheriff.

But they would soon know. That sentinel on the trail wouldn't remain senseless for long.

And old Hank was saying: "I could get free, mebbe, and fend for meself. Now I gotta save yuh as well, yuh pesky idjit! Yuh jest wait till 'I gits yuh home. I'll belt yuh, I will!"

The rustlers laughed. If they hadn't they'd have heard a shout from down the trail. But Jim heard it and knew that the sentinel had recovered consciousness and was coming to tell about Maisie.

Something had to be done quickly, and Jim did it. One man held him by the shoulder. Suddenly Jim seemed to collapse. He just crumpled and fell, and the burly cattle thief lost his grip on his shoulder for a second.

It was enough! Jim wriggled away and dived forward amongst the astonished rustlers. He dived straight for the fire and kicked it broadcast. Blazing embers shot this way and that, and some of the flaming fragments shot amongst the cattle.

In a flash the cattle were stampeding. Bellowing with fear, they bolted. Jim dived right across their path and only just got clear. Then he dived into the shadows amongst the boulders and ran as hard as he could go.

His idea was to run in a circle and get back to the trail where Maisie and the sheriff would come to the rescue. It was the best thing he could do. Maybe if all the rustlers went after the stampeding cattle he could creep back and rescue Hank. Maybe he'd try.

But it wasn't so easy to find his way on the desert in the dark. He kept on running, but somehow he didn't seem to find that trail. And then he saw a light ahead. It was a fire!

Had he run in a circle and come back to the rustler's camp? He slackened his pace, keeping his eye on the fire. But it wasn't the same fire he had kicked about. This was another camp. He could make out an old donkey tethered near by, and a small tent pitched before the fire.

He stumbled towards it, and out of the tent came a ragged old man whose white beard reached down to his waist. He had a gun in one hand, but luckily he caught sight of Jim in the flickering firelight.

"A kid!" he gasped. "How come?"

Jim raced up to him, panting.

"Whar am I?" he cried. "Yuh've gotta tell me. Thar's cattle thieves—cattle stampedin'—an' old Hank——"

The old man grabbed him by the arm. "Easy, son!" he said. "Is it Hank Hutchings yore talkin' about?"

The Other Gun

JIM took time to get his breath, then he blurted out all that had happened to him. The old man listened gravely.

"So yore young Jim, huh?" he said. "Guess I've heard Hank talk about yuh. Hank's my best buddy, and old Jeff Dickerson ain't the man to go back on a pal. Lissen!"

He held up one gnarled hand. Jim listened. They could hear the thunder of the stampeding cattle coming towards them. Maybe there were other sounds—the thunder of horses' hoofs—but it was the cattle that worried old Jeff Dickerson.

"They're headin' fer the canyon," he said. "If so be they keep on thet way, they'll go plumb over the precipice. Grab a brand, son, and come on!"

He snatched up a burning brand from the fire. Jim did the same. They raced away through the darkness, the old man leading the way. The ground sloped sharply, and Jim was suddenly aware of a precipice to one side of him.

"Up hyah, son!" shouted the old man, scrambling up a shingly slope.

Jim followed and stood beside the old man on the top. Just then the moon slid out from behind a bank of cloud and flooded the desert with light. They could see the cattle racing towards them. If they kept straight on they would come over that slope and down to the precipice.

"Wave yore brand!" yelled Jeff Dickerson.

So they brandished their flaming torches, and yelled and hollered as loudly as they could. The cattle came thundering on, nearer and nearer.

" Stand fast ! " cried the old man.

He planted his feet firmly and waved his burning brand high in the air. Jim did the same as the cattle came charging towards them ! Would they turn, or would Jim and the old man go down under those thundering hoofs ?

Just when it seemed hopeless, the leading cattle saw those waving flames and heard the loud shouts. First one beast, then another, sheered off, turned and ran away to the north. The rest followed.

Jeff Dickerson kept on yelling and waving his torch. The herd milled round in a circle and soon were running back the way they had come. But they were tiring and slowing down.

Jeff and Jim ran after them, keeping them moving as best they could. And suddenly there was a blaze of lights, and the thunder of horses' hoofs. A man shouted : " Hold it ! We got 'em."

There seemed to be no end of men riding amongst the rocks. Cowboys cracked their stock whips and bunched the herd together and rounded them up.

" Guess they're the rustlers," said Jeff.

" Then we kin git back to their camp and rescue Grandpop," said Jim. " Come on ! We haven't been seen ! "

He knew where he was, now. He noticed a queer-shaped rock he had seen before the rustlers had captured him.

" This way ! " he called.

He ran like a deer and came to the rustlers' deserted camp. Hank was still there, bound hand and foot, seated against the buggy.

Jim took out his clasp knife. " Gosh, Grandpop ! We gotta work fast. Come on ! We saved the cattle from goin' over the cliff, but them rustlers got 'em rounded up again. We'll git yuh away——"

" Who's ' we ' ? " demanded Hank.

And then Jeff Dickerson came up, grinning.

" Hiya ! old timer," he said. " Guess thet kid o' yourn hev turned the trick for yuh."

" Jeff ! " cried Hank. " And I didn't want anyone to know."

" Know what ? " asked Jim.

Jeff laughed. " Guess I were broke," he said. " Hank bought me an outfit and didn't want anyone to know about it, son."

" I'm a miser, see ! " rasped Hank, as Jim cut the cords that bound him. " Everybody says so, and I likes' em to say so. Young Jim, ef yuh tell anybody what I done I'll belt yuh ! "

Jim grinned. " I'm mum, Grandpop," he said. " S'pose yuh run into them rustlers on your way home and they cotched yuh to stop yuh givin' the alarm."

" Thet's how it was," admitted Hank. " But git goin' afore they come back. Ef we stays hyah——"

But men came riding into the hollow. Jim turned to bolt, but a shout stopped him. " It's okay, young Jim ! "

Then Mr. Allen and the sheriff of Porman's Creek rode up with a posse of men. And they had the rustlers with them, all under arrest !

" So it's yuh agin ! " growled Hank, scowling at Mr. Allen.

" Sure it's me," grinned the rancher. " We got the cattle and the rustlers. An' look who's boss o' the thieves ! "

Hank looked. " Dave Spence ! " he gasped.

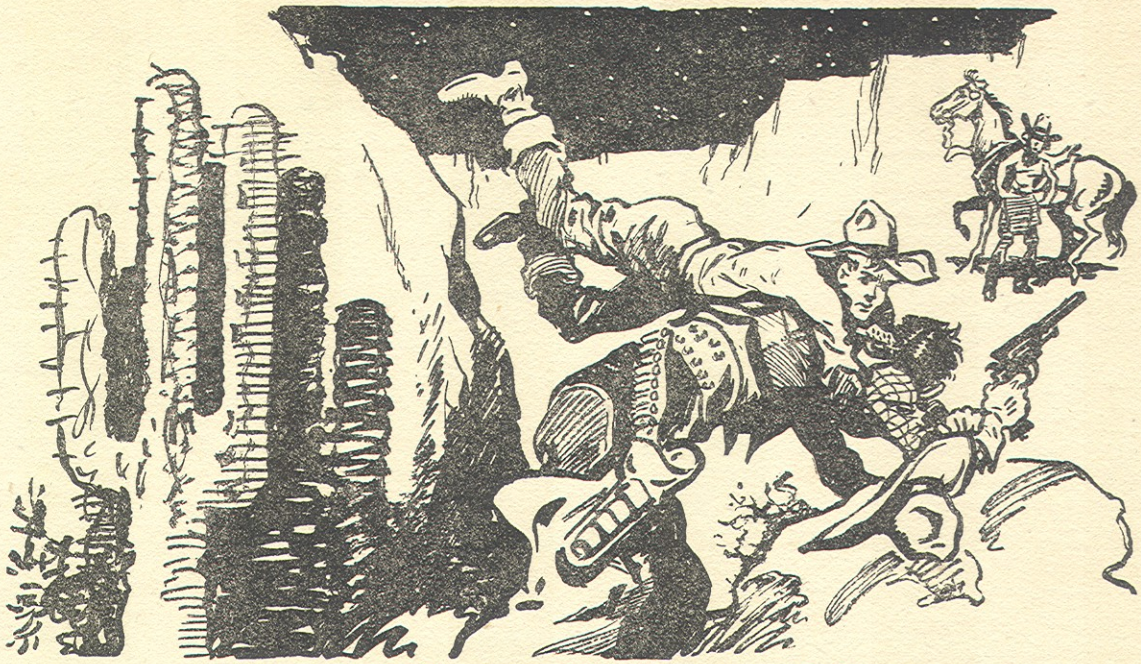
" Thet's right," said Mr. Allen. " My foreman, robbing me ! " He took a revolver from Dave Spence's holster and looked at it. " Heck ! " he cried. " See this, Hank ? "

He held it out and Hank could see, in the moonlight, the initials, T. A., carved on the gun butt, just like the one Hank already had in his pocket—the gun the hold-up man had used on the trail !

" Didn't I tell yuh I lost a couple of 'em ? " said Mr. Allen. " It musta bin Dave who held yuh up on the trail."

Dave grinned evilly. " Sure it was me. I'm caught and I've gotta go to jail, so yuh might as well know. I bin doing things like this for a long time. But it's over now. Yuh've got me to rights ! "

Mr. Allen looked sad. " Guess I've helped yuh quite a bit through the years, Dave, but I never expected yuh was crooked. Did yuh steal thet di'mond off'n Hank fifteen years ago ? "



Jim leapt off the rock and came down smack on top of the man.

Dave grinned again, shamelessly " Sure, I did. Got a hundred dollars for it, back in Texas City."

The sheriff whisked Dave and his rustlers away, and rode with them to the jail at Porman's Creek. Hank looked at Mr. Allen.

" Guess I'm sorry, Tod," he said. " Better hev yore gun back."

The two men shook hands, and so a quarrel of fifteen years' standing was cleared up.

They rode back together along the trail, Mr. Allen on his horse and old Hank and young Jim in the buggy, while old Jeff Dickerson returned to his lonely camp.

Hank said : " Jim, ef Maisie wants to come and play any time, it's okay by me. But, if yuh tells her about what I done fer Jeff Dickerson, I'll belt yuh, mind ! I'm a miser and I means to stay a miser ! "

Jim grinned. " Grandpop," he said, " yore a great guy ! "

" Aw, boloney," growled Hank. But he grinned as if he liked it !

THE END

DON'T BE HAD !

If the following sentence is punctuated correctly, it will make sense—try it !

GEORGE WHERE CHARLES HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD PLEASED THE EXAMINER BETTER.

The answer is underneath the riddles.

Now have a shot at these riddles.

1. Why are tall people more lazy than short ones ?

   Because they are always longer in bed.

2. What is the difference between a bottle of medicine and a hearthrug ?

   One is shaken up and taken, and the other is taken up and shaken.

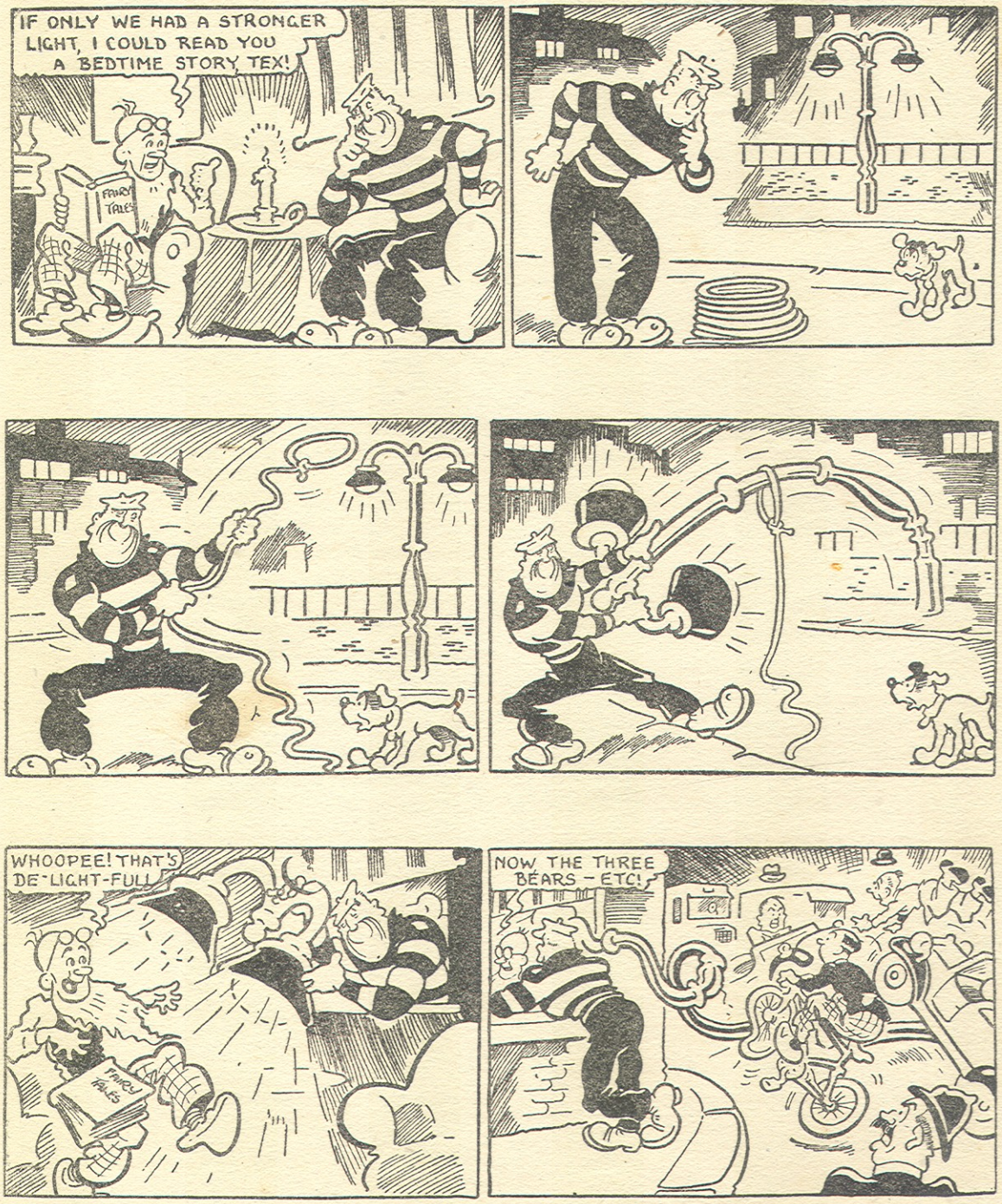
3. How many peas are there in a pint ?

   One.

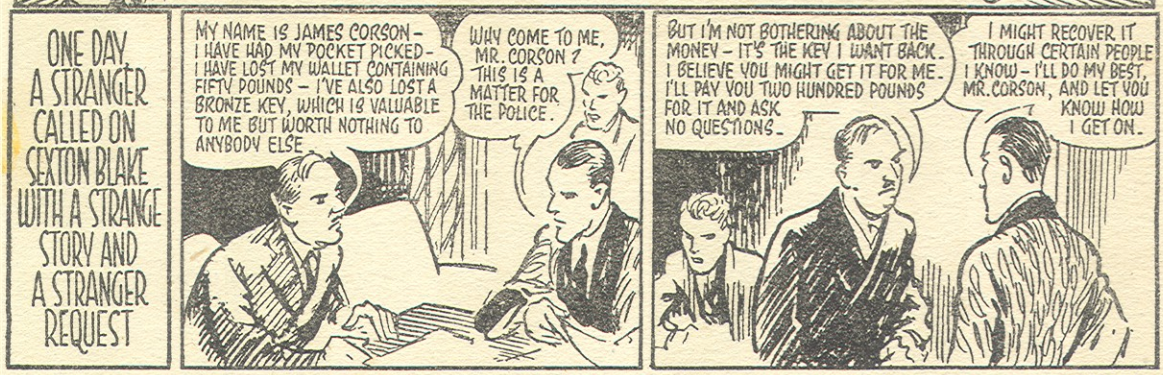
Answer to " Don't Be Had."

George, where Charles had had 'had had,' had had 'had.' 'Had had' had pleased the examiner better.

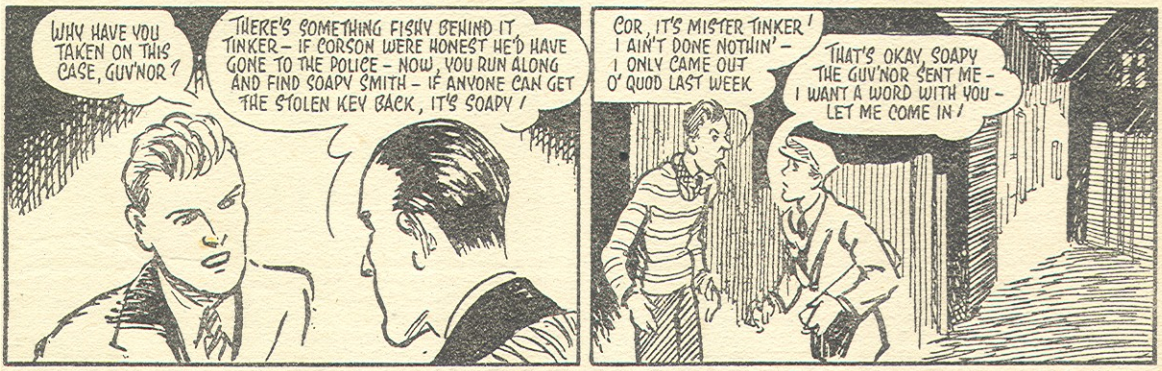
TOUGH BUT TENDER TEX



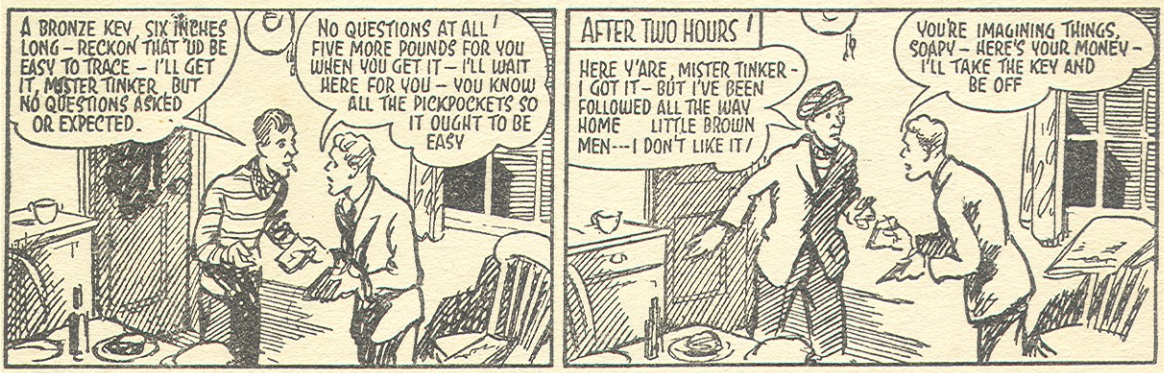
SEXTON BLAKE and the BRONZE KEY



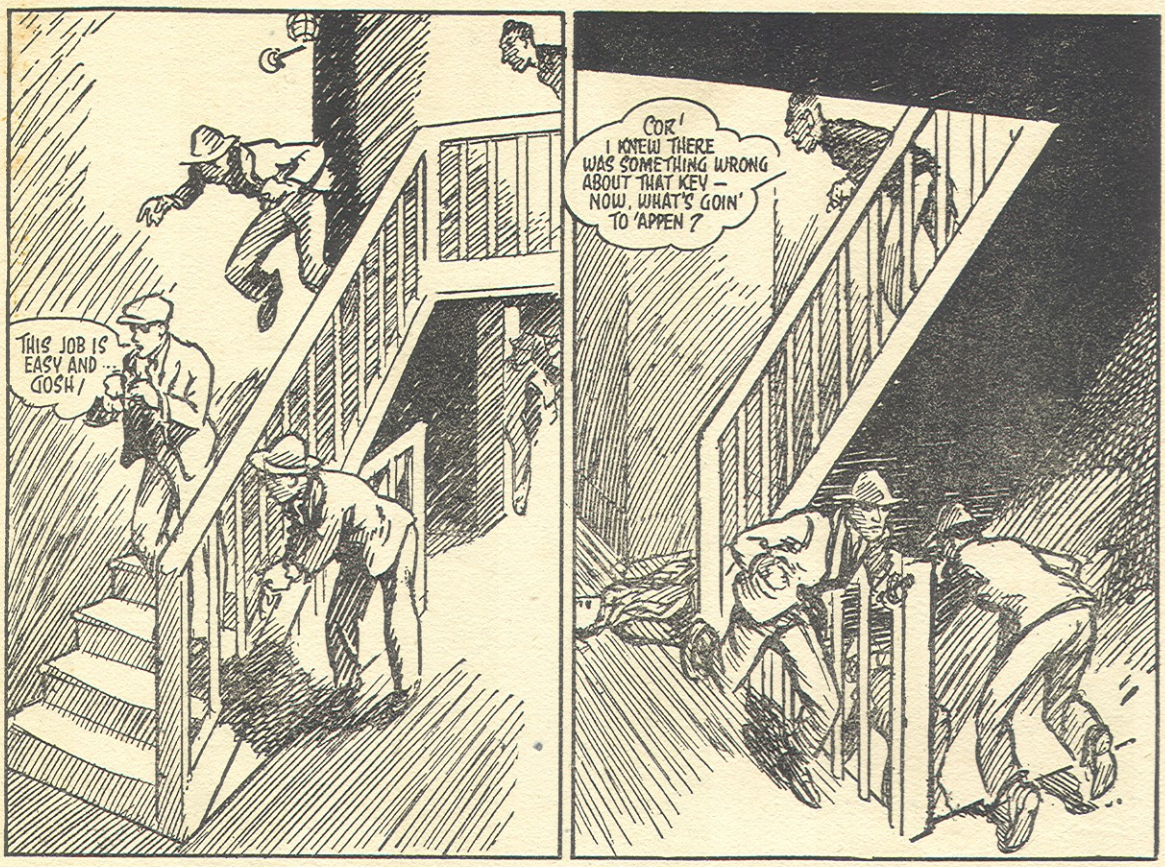
1. It was a strange request James Corson made to Sexton Blake. He had had his pocket picked in the street and had lost his wallet, containing fifty pounds, and a Bronze Key. He didn't care about the loss of the money. That didn't seem to matter to him at all. But he was very anxious to get the bronze key back, and pay two hundred pounds for it, too! "I must get it back!" he persisted. "I don't care how you do it or what it costs—only get that key for me, Mr. Blake. I'll ask no questions!" He knew that Sexton Blake could get into touch with the thieves of the underworld and induce them to help him to trace the key. But it wasn't the sort of case Sexton Blake usually took on.



2. Still, Sexton Blake said he would do it, and Corson went away, well satisfied. But Tinker was very much surprised. "Why did you take it on, guv'nor?" he asked. Sexton Blake smiled grimly. "There's more in this than meets the eye, Tinker," he said. "Now run along and find Soapy Smith. If anyone can find the thief who picked Corson's pocket, it's Soapy." Tinker knew his guv'nor spoke nothing but the truth, and in next to no time he was on his way to the East End of London. He soon found Soapy Smith, who was scared to see him. Soapy thought Tinker wanted to arrest him for something. Tinker, however, soon told him what was wanted.

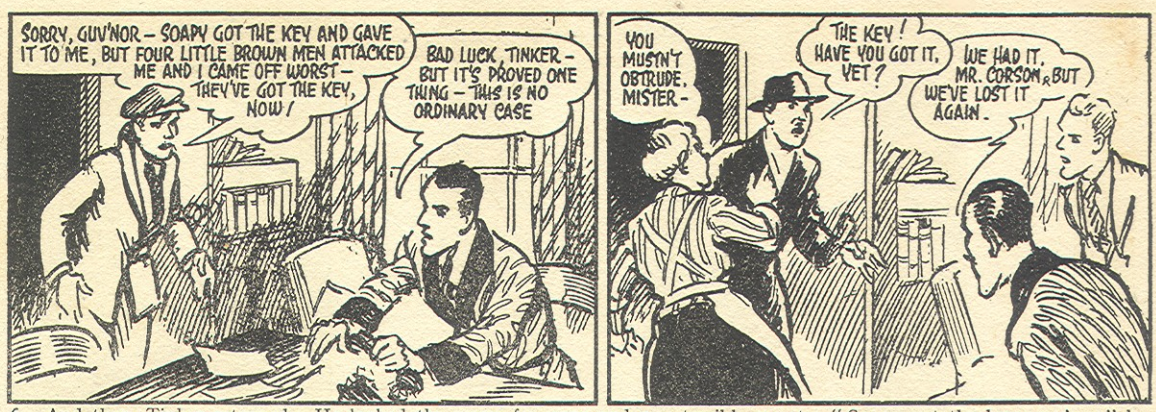


3. Soapy thought it over for a moment. "A bronze key, six inches long. That ought to be easy to trace. I'll get it, Mister Tinker. But no questions asked." Tinker promised to ask no questions, and Soapy hurried away. Tinker waited in Soapy's lodgings. He had given Soapy five pounds and promised him another five when he got back with the key. It took Soapy two hours, but he managed it. Tinker heard his footsteps on the stairs. Then, breathlessly, Soapy burst into the room. "I've got it, Mister Tinker," he said, "but I've been followed all the way back—by little brown men! I don't like it!" Tinker laughed at his fears as he took the key.

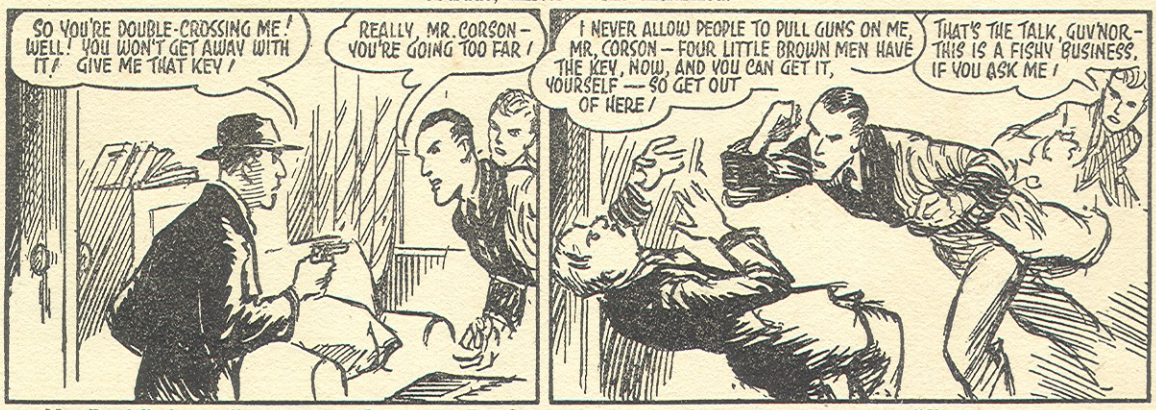


4. "You're imagining things, Soapy," he said, and, paying over the extra five pounds, he left the room and went down the stairs. He didn't pay any attention to Soapy's fears. "This job is easy!" he told himself. But he hadn't reached the foot of the first flight of stairs when things happened. Someone leapt down the stairs behind him, landing on top of him. Tinker went crashing down to the landing. Something heavy hit him on the head and he knew no more. Soapy came out of his room, wondering what had caused that crash. He saw Tinker lying there—saw, too, two little brown men, running for their lives down the stairs to the street outside.

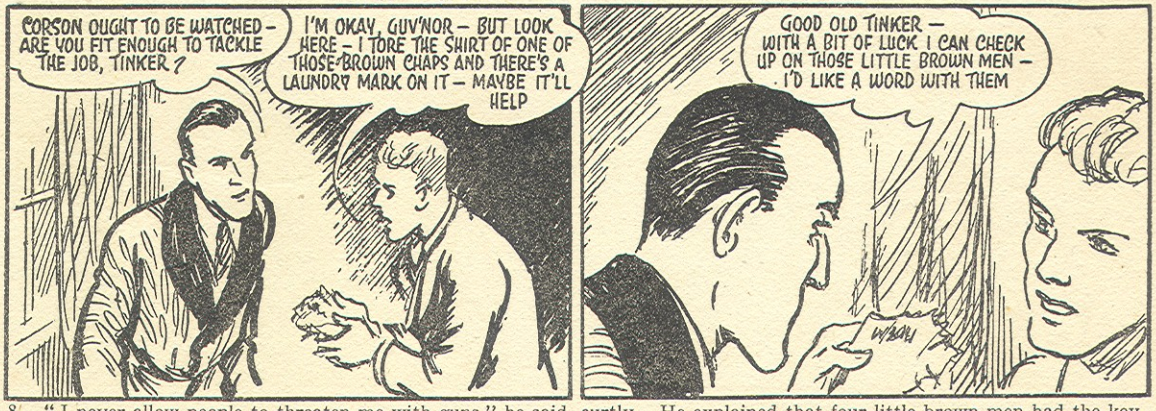
5. But if Tinker thought that the case would be all over once the bronze key had been secured, Sexton Blake thought differently. While Tinker was waiting at Soapy Smith's, Sexton Blake was busy on the telephone, talking to Inspector Coutts at Scotland Yard. He asked Coutts if he knew anything about James Corson. Coutts said he knew something, but not much. He knew that Corson had been a trader in the East Indies and that his papers were in order. But why Corson was in England and what he was up to nobody seemed to know. That didn't seem very helpful, really, yet Sexton Blake had learned one thing. Corson had come from the East Indies.



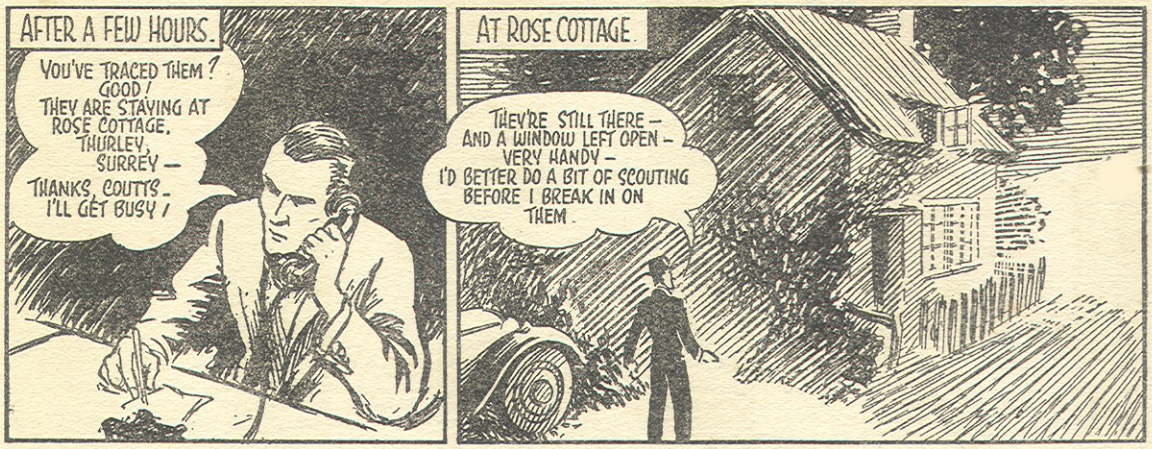
6. And then, Tinker returned. He looked the worse for wear and was terribly upset. "Soapy got the key, guv'nor," he said, "and gave it to me. Then four little brown men attacked me and—they've got the key now!" Sexton Blake didn't blame Tinker for what had happened. After all, Tinker wasn't to know that four little brown men were interested in the key. "Anyway," said Sexton Blake, "it proves what I suspected, that there is more in this case than meets the eye." And at that moment James Corson burst into the room. Mrs. Bardell, Sexton Blake's housekeeper, tried to keep him out, and failed. "You mustn't obtrude, mister!" she exclaimed.



7. Mrs. Bardell always did get her words mixed. But Corson was very much excited and agitated. "The key! Have you got it yet?" he cried. Sexton Blake turned to face him, very coolly. "We had it," he said, "but we've lost it again!" As he heard that, Corson's face flashed and his eyes glinted dangerously. He thought Sexton Blake had found the key and was keeping it for himself. He pulled out a revolver and covered Sexton Blake. "So you're double-crossing me!" he raved. "Give me that key!" But Sexton Blake knew how to handle him. He lunged forward and, before Corson knew what was happening, felled him with a shrewd blow to the jaw.

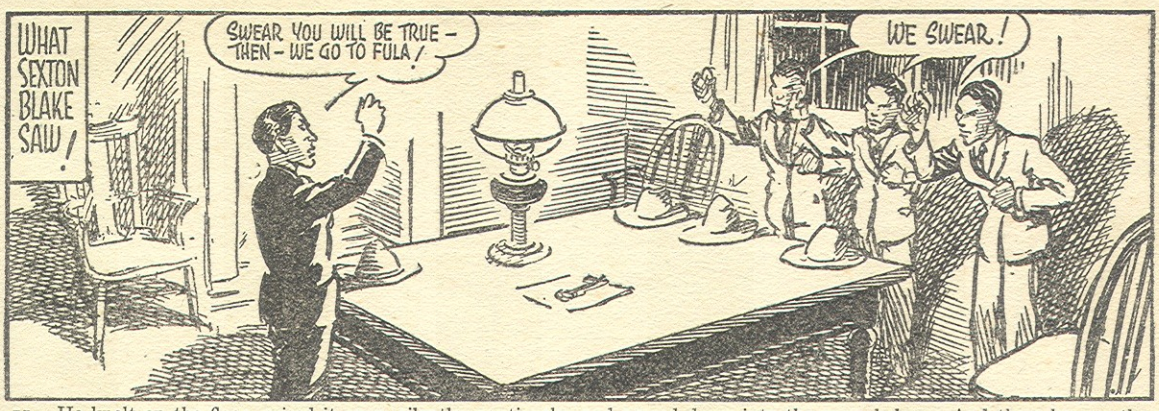


8. "I never allow people to threaten me with guns," he said, curtly. He explained that four little brown men had the key. "And now," he went on, "you can get it yourself!" James Corson didn't stay to argue. He went! "He ought to be watched," said Sexton Blake. "Are you fit to take on the job, Tinker?" Tinker said he was. "But, before I go, guv'nor," he said, "look at this. I tore the shirt of one of those little brown men and it's got a laundry mark on it." Sexton Blake took the scrap of material from Tinker and examined it. "Fine!" he murmured. "With a bit of luck I may be able to trace those little brown men. I'd like a word with them!"

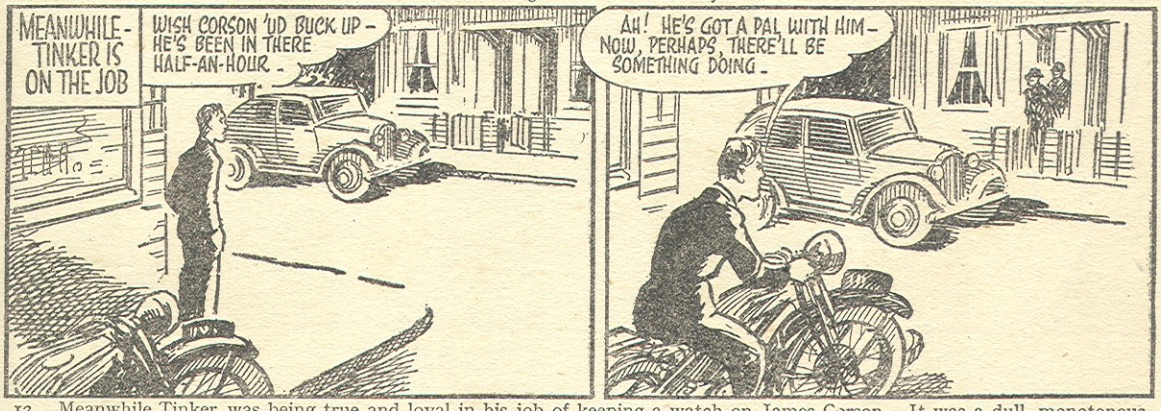


9. So Tinker hastened off to get on the trail of James Corson, find out where he was living and what he got up to—in fact, find out all he could about him. Meanwhile, Sexton Blake got busy on the telephone, mainly to Scotland Yard. The telephone wires buzzed for some hours as he followed the trail of the laundry mark. And after a time the news came through. The four little brown men were staying at Rose Cottage, Thurley, Surrey. Right away, Sexton Blake got out his car and drove down to Thurley. He found Rose Cottage easily enough. From the light in the downstairs window it was clear that somebody was at home. Sexton Blake approached cautiously.

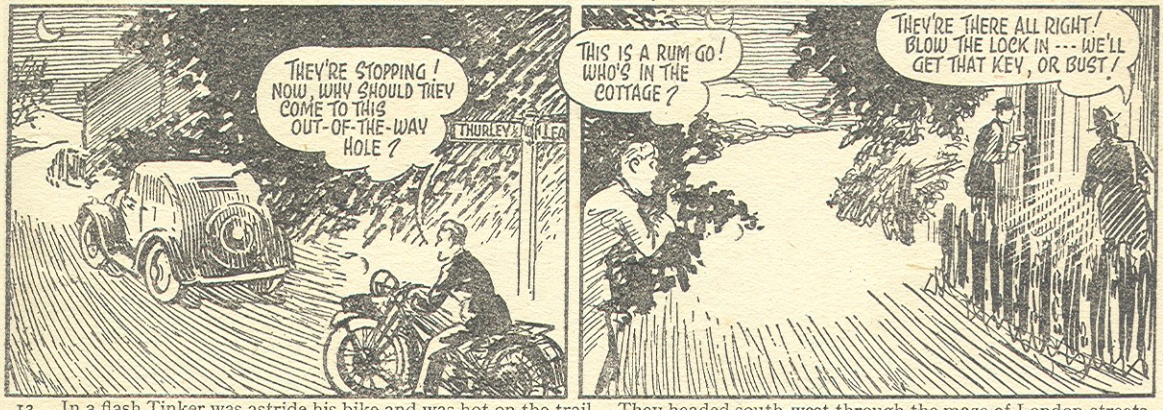
10. He reckoned it was better to find out what was going on in that downstairs room before he burst in on the little brown men. He noticed that the upstairs window was open and that there was ivy growing against the wall of the cottage. It was easy enough for him to climb the ivy and climb over the window-sill into the bedroom above the lighted downstairs room. And like bedrooms in many old-fashioned cottages, there was a trap-door in the floor. In the old days many cottages had no stairs. The top floor was reached by a ladder up to the trap-door. When the stairs were built in the trap-doors were often left. And this one was a help to Sexton Blake.



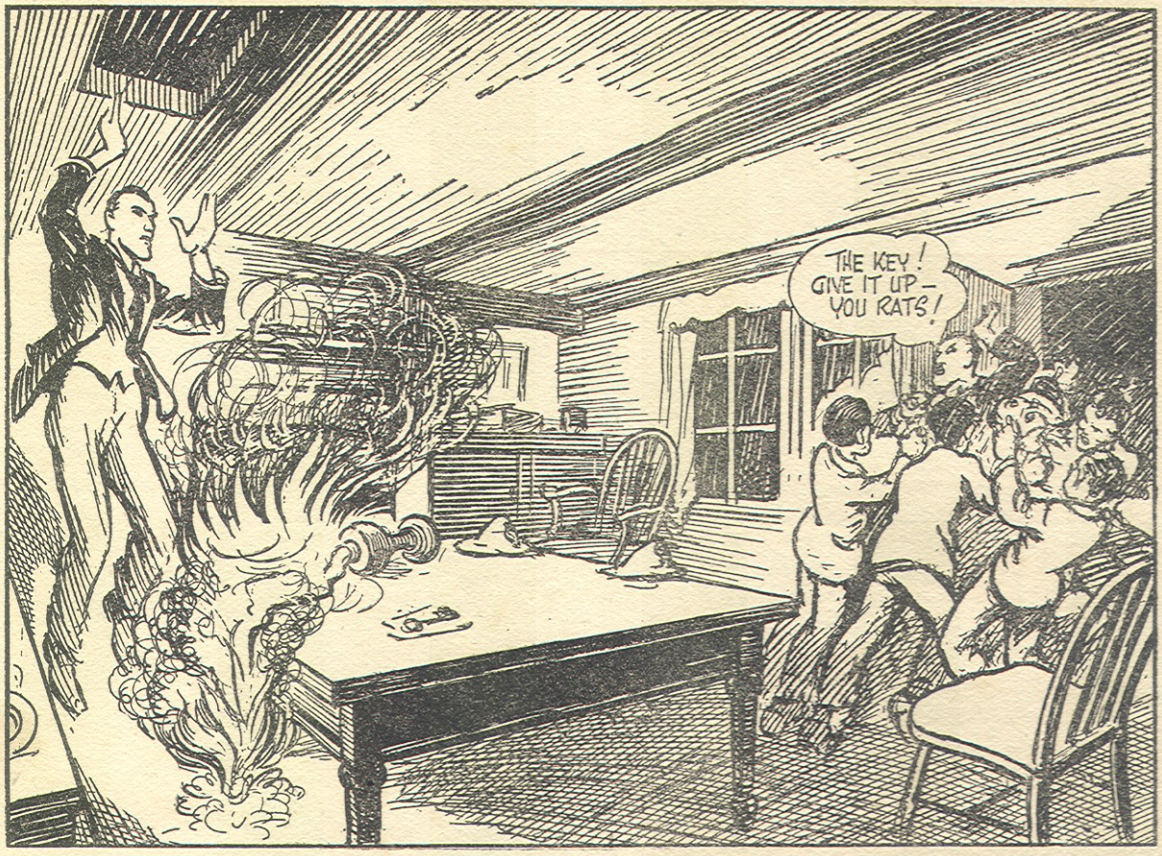
11. He knelt on the floor, prised it open, silently, cautiously, and peered down into the room below. And there he saw the four little brown men. He judged them to be East Indians of some sort. Maybe they were Malays. He could not be sure, and it hardly mattered just then. On the table was the bronze key, gleaming in the rays cast by the oil lamp that also stood on the table. At one end of the table one little brown man stood with his right arm upraised in some sort of salute. At the other end were the remaining three brown men, also with their arms upraised. But it was not a sort of Hitler salute. They were swearing to be true and loyal.



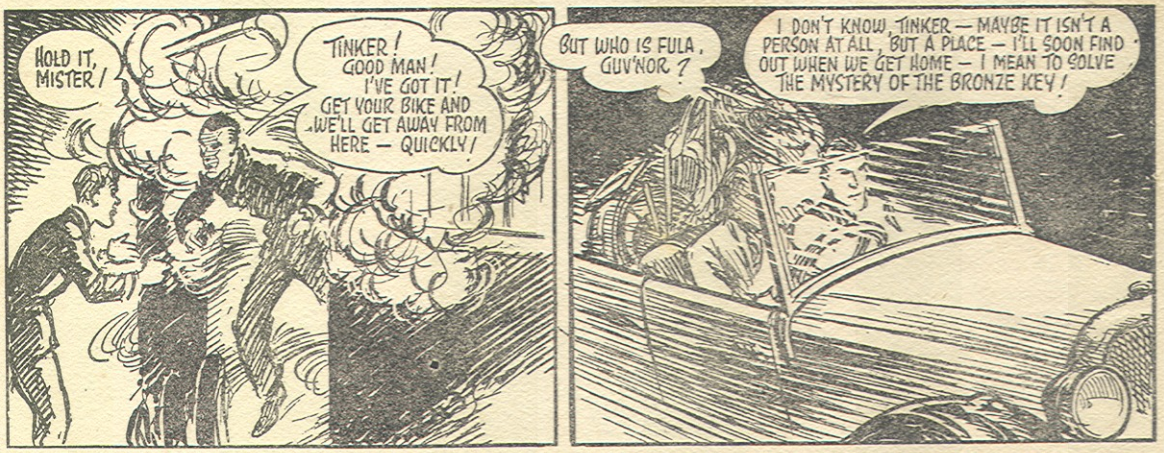
12. Meanwhile Tinker, was being true and loyal in his job of keeping a watch on James Corson. It was a dull, monotonous job. He trailed Corson to his hotel. There, Corson got out his car and went to a southerly London suburb. He stopped his car outside a house and went inside. Tinker remained outside, on the corner of the street, his motor bike close handy. He got very fed up waiting, but at long last Corson reappeared. He had with him another man. Who and what he was Tinker had no means of telling. He waited and watched. Corson and his pal went down to the car and got in. Corson took his seat at the wheel and off they went.



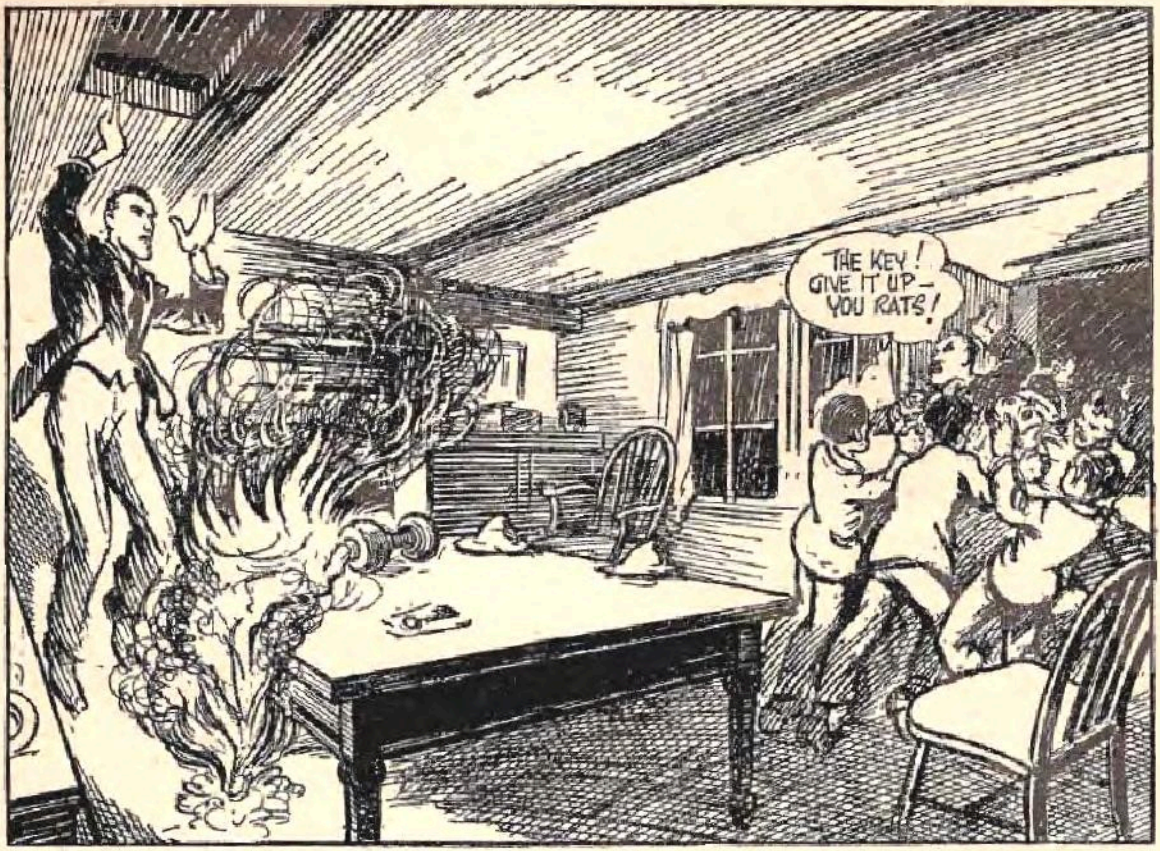
13. In a flash Tinker was astride his bike and was hot on the trail. They headed south-west through the maze of London streets and out into the leafy lanes of Surrey. Tinker saw a signpost bearing the name Thurley. And then he noticed that Corson had drawn the car on to the grassy verge beside the road and was stopping. So Tinker stopped, too, and placed his bike under the hedge. Ahead was a cottage, with light streaming from a downstairs window. Corson and his pal stealthily approached the cottage. Corson was peering through a chink in the blind into the room. His pal was by the door, gun in hand. "Blow the lock in!" said Corson.



14. The gun exploded, and the lock was blown clean off the door. Corson and his pal charged into the room, eager to get their hands on the key. Naturally, the little brown men turned to fight—leaving the key lying on the table. In the scrap they upset the oil lamp and the oil caught fire. It was Sexton Blake's chance, and he seized it. He leapt down from the trap-door and grabbed the key. He didn't stop to put out the fire. Why should he? Corson was yelling: "The key! Give it up, you rats!" But Sexton Blake had it and meant to get away with it. Corson and his pal and the little brown men were too busy scrapping to notice him at all.



15. Sexton Blake charged right through them, scattering them in his mad rush. It was a daring thing to do, but it took them all by surprise. It succeeded, too! For he gained the open air. And, to his surprise, there was Tinker! Tinker thought it was Corson or his pal coming out and prepared to tackle him. But he soon discovered his mistake. "Good man, Tinker!" cried Sexton Blake. "I've got it! Get your bike. We've got to get away from here!" Tinker needed no second bid. He piled his bike into the back of Sexton Blake's car. And together they drove back to London. "They mentioned [illegible] Sexton Blake. "I don't know where or what it is, but I mean to find out!" *(Con*



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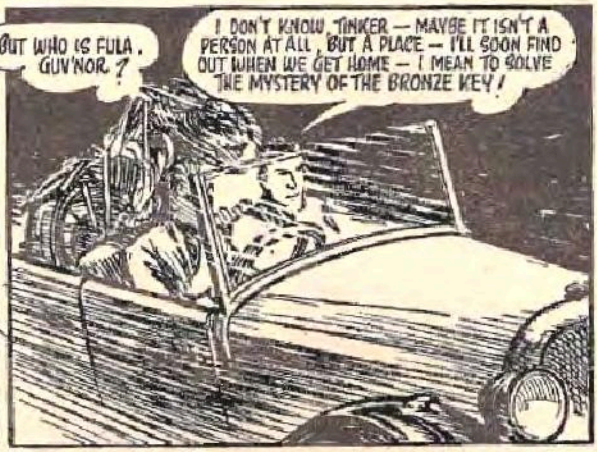

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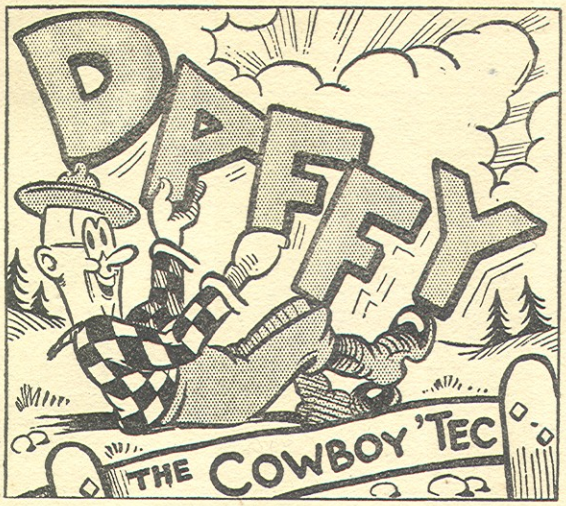
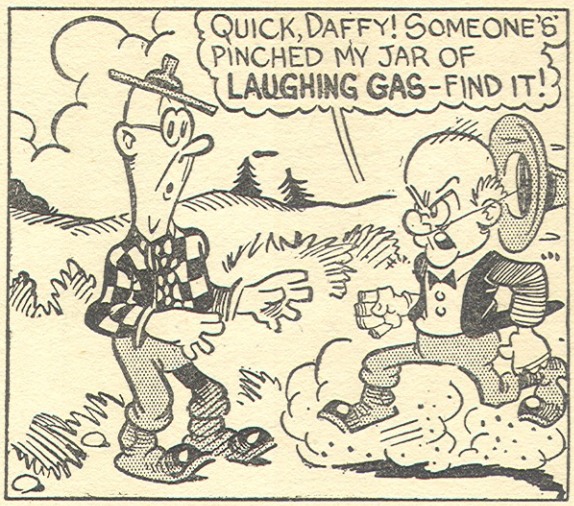
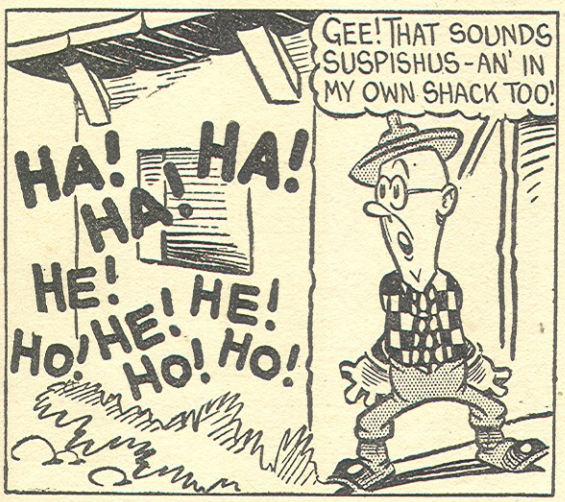
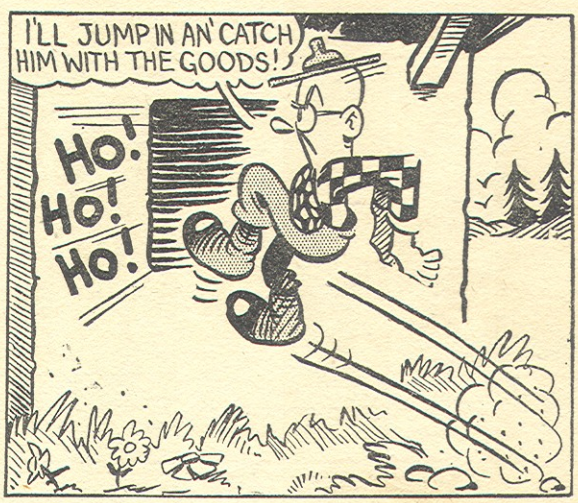
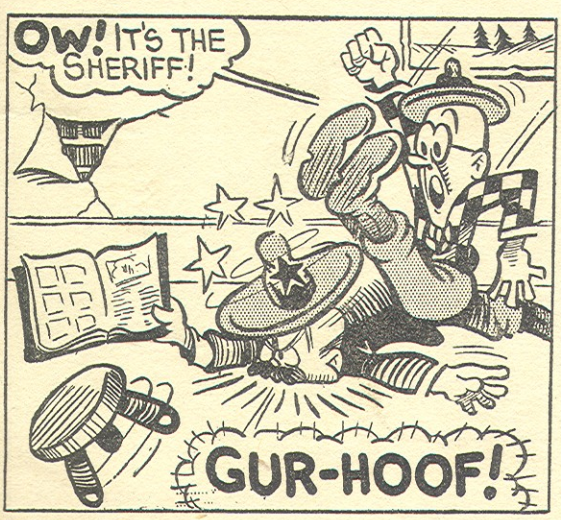
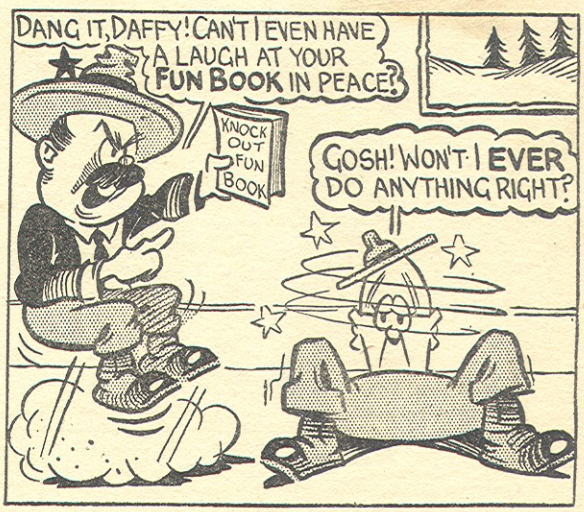

DAFFY
THE COWBOY 'TEC


QUICK, DAFFY! SOMEONE'S PINCHED MY JAR OF LAUGHING GAS-FIND IT!


GEE! THAT SOUNDS SUSPISHUS-AN' IN MY OWN SHACK TOO!
HA! HA! HA!
HE! HE! HE!
HO! HO! HO!

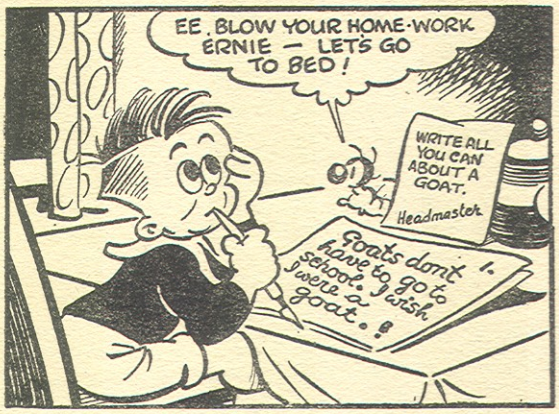

I'LL JUMP IN AN' CATCH HIM WITH THE GOODS!
HO! HO! HO!


OW! IT'S THE SHERIFF!
GUR-HOOF!

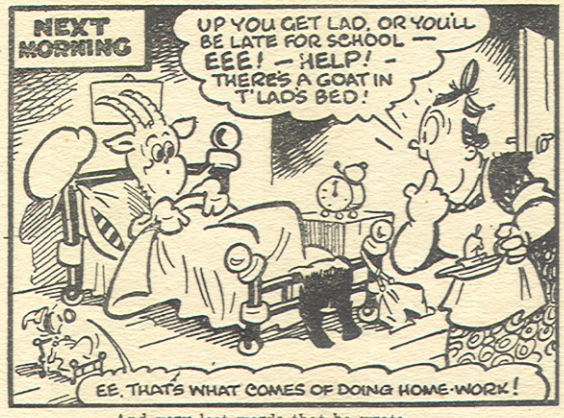

DANG IT, DAFFY! CAN'T I EVEN HAVE A LAUGH AT YOUR FUN BOOK IN PEACE?
KNOCK OUT FUN BOOK
GOSH! WON'T I EVER DO ANYTHING RIGHT?

OUR ERNIE - - -

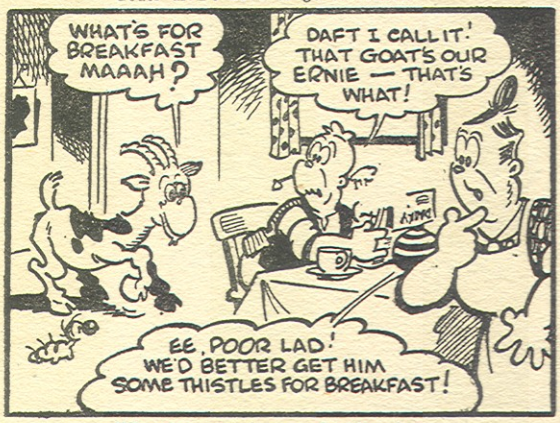
MRS. ENTWHISTLE'S LITTLE LAD



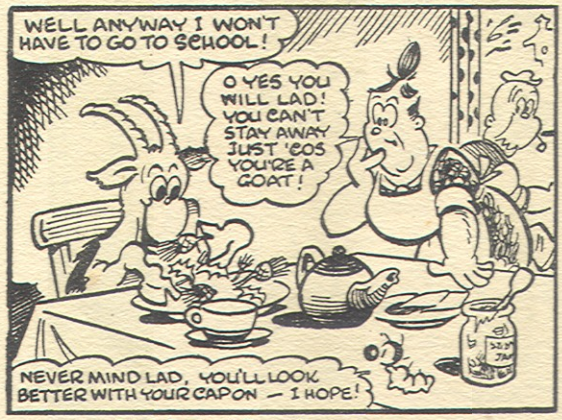
According to Headmaster's note
Lad had to write about a goat,
And so he wrote that, as a rule,
Goats didn't have to go to school.



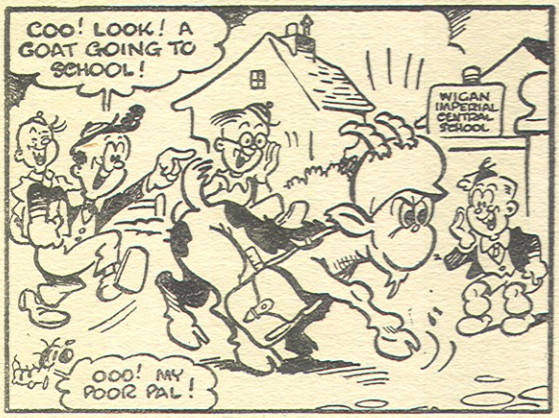
And very last words that he wrote
Were that he wished he were a goat;
Of course he never thought, or knew
His silly wish were coming true.



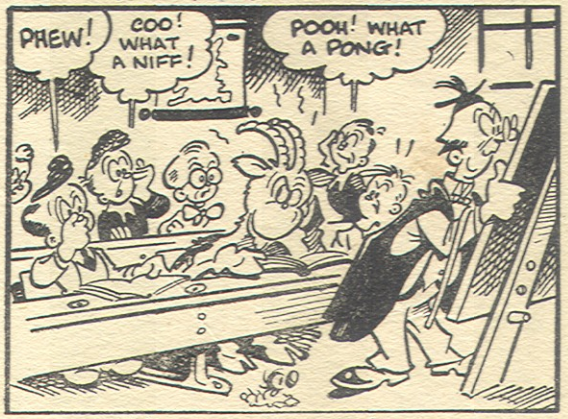
When he came down to brekker, he
Were more like goat than Ernie E.,
And pa looked daft, and ma turned pale,
To see their lad with horns and tail!



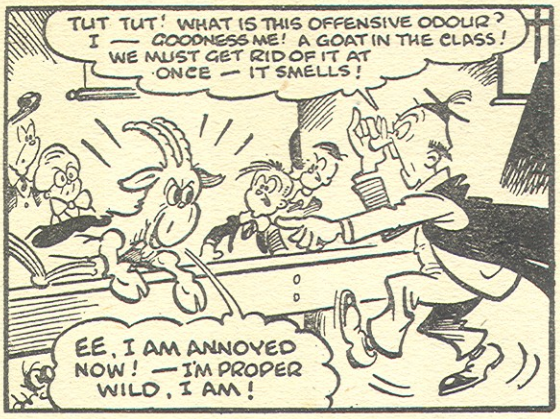
Cried Ernie, "Ee, well, anyway,
I needn't go to school to-day!"
But ma said, "You can't stay away
Just 'cos you're goat, lad. O, nay, nay!"



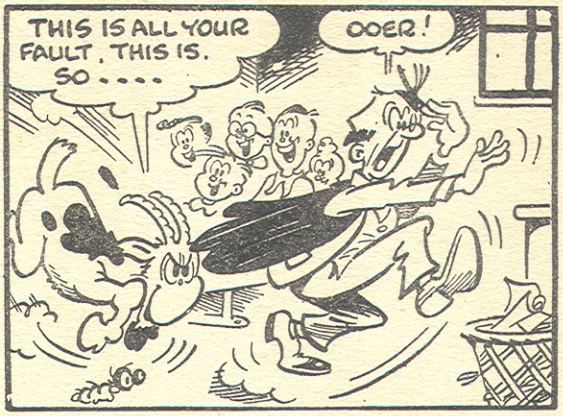
So over prongs lad dragged his lid,
And all his pals laughed at our kid,
'Cos it's unusual, you'll agree,
To see goat make for standard three.



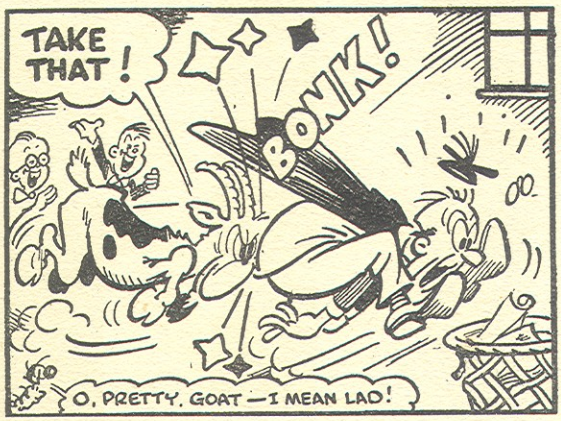
With queer expression on his face,
Lad took his seat in usual place,
And master spotted nothing wrong
Though class complained about the "pong."



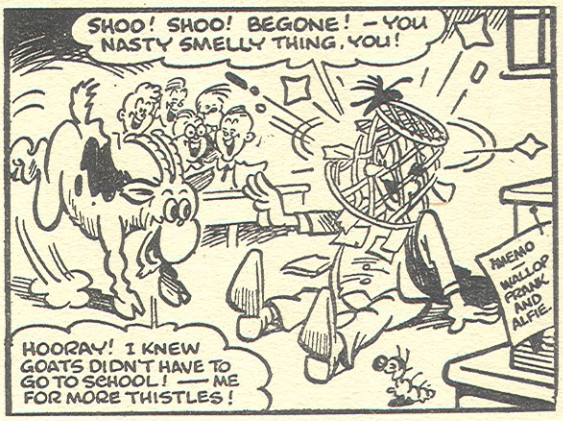
But still the odour grew and grew,
Until at last the master knew
Something wrong were come to pass,
And turned to find a goat in class.



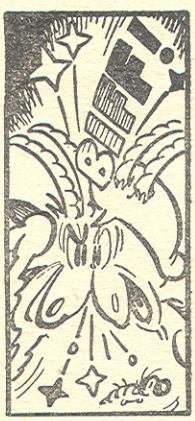
He cried "Tut! Tut! We must get rid
Of this young goat—this silly kid!"
But Ernie, filled with rage, cried "Ee,
I'll teach you to make fun of me!"



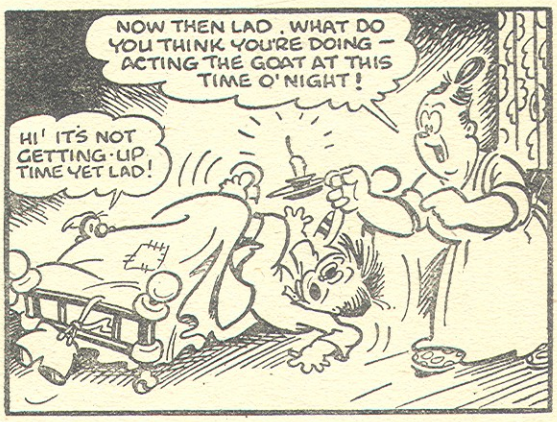
And so he took a running jump,
And hit his master mighty thump,
Catching him blow that made him smart
Where jacket ends and trousers start.



Cried master, "That's enough from you!
Begone, you smelly thing! Shoo! Shoo!"
And Ernie shouted "Hip, hooray!
No more school for me to-day!"

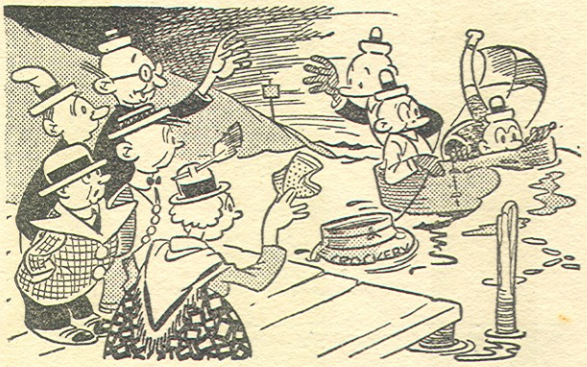


So back to field went young Entwhistle
In search of lunch, and found a thistle,
But rival goat came at a dash
And he and lad met with a crash!

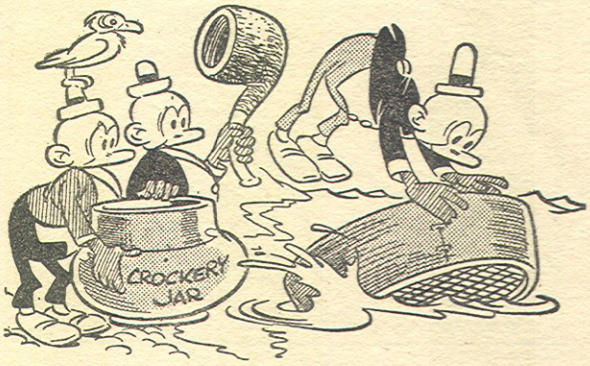


It were a dream, and out of bed
Our lad had landed on his head;
Cried ma, "You gave me proper fright
Acting the goat this time o' night!"

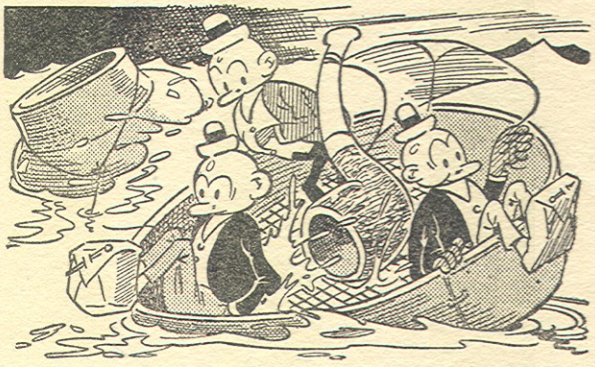
They went to sea



They went to sea in a Sieve, they did ·
In a Sieve they went to sea ;
In spite of all their friends could say,
On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,
In a Sieve they went to sea !
And when the Sieve turned round and round,
And everyone cried," You'll all be drowned ! "
They cried aloud, " Our Sieve ain't big,
But we don't care a button, we don't care a fig,
In a sieve we'll go to sea ! "
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live ;
Their heads are green and their hands are blue,
And they went to sea in a Sieve.

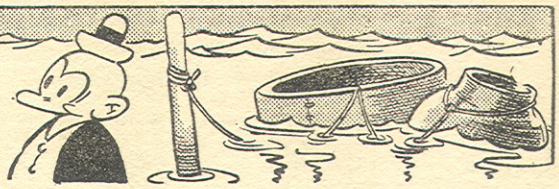


They sailed away in a Sieve, they did,
In a Sieve they sailed so fast
With only a beautiful pea-green veil
Tied with a riband, by way of a sail,
To a small tobacco-pipe mast :
And everyone said who saw them go,
" Oh, won't they be soon upset, you know !
For the sky is dark, and the voyage is long,
And, happen what may, it's extremely wrong
In a Sieve to sail so fast ! "



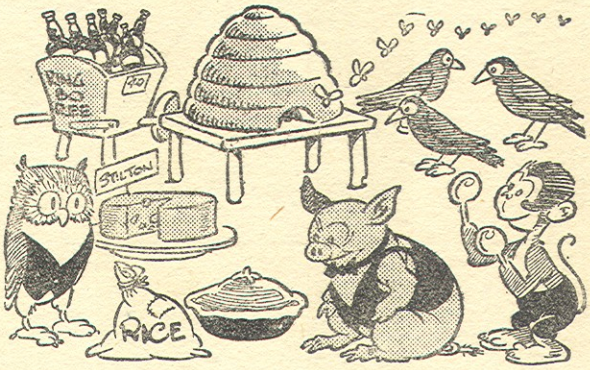
The water it soon came in, it did—
The water it soon came in ;
So to keep them dry they wrapped their feet
In a pinky paper all folded neat,
And they fastened it down with a pin.
And they passed the night in a crockery jar.
And each of them said, " How wise we are !
Though the sky be dark, and the voyage be long,
Yet we never can think we were rash or wrong
While round in our Sieve we spin ! "

in a sieve!



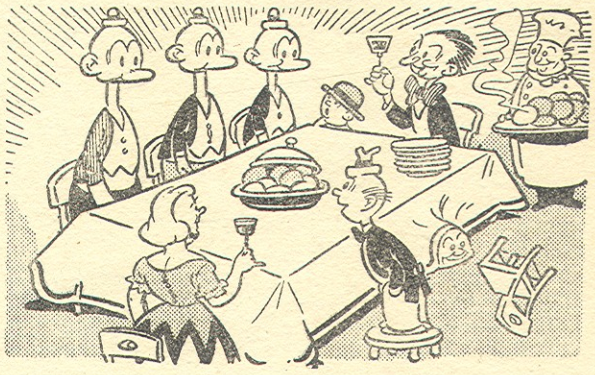
And all night long they sailed away;
And when the sun went down
They whistled and warbled a moony song,
To the echoing sound of a coppery gong,
In the shade of the mountains brown.
"O Timballo! How happy we are
When we live in a Sieve and a crockery jar,
And all night long in the moonlight pale
We sail away with a pea-green veil
In the shade of the mountains brown!"

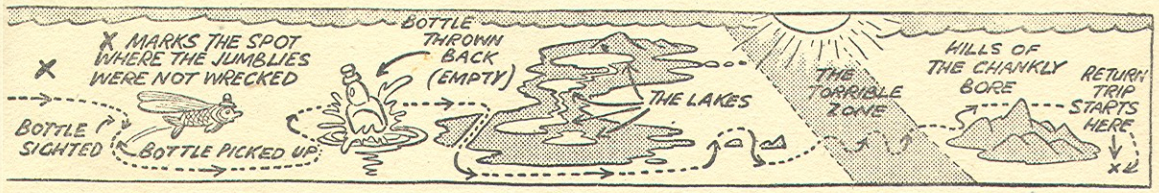
They sailed to the Western Sea, they did,
To a land all covered with trees,
And they bought an Owl, and a useful Cart,
And a pound of Rice, and a Cranberry Tart,
And a hive of Silvery Bees.
And they bought a Pig, and some green Jackdaws,
And a lovely Monkey with lollipop paws,
And forty bottles of Ring-Bo-Ree,
And no end of Stilton Cheese.



And in twenty years they all came back—
In twenty years or more.
And everybody said, "How tall they've grown!
For they've been to the Lakes, and the Torrible Zone,
And the hills of the Chankly Bore!"
And they drank their health, and gave them a feast
Of dumplings made of beautiful yeast;
And everyone said, "If we only live,
We, too, will go to sea in a Sieve—
To the hills of the Chankly Bore!"
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
Their heads are green and their hands are blue,
And they went to sea in a Sieve.

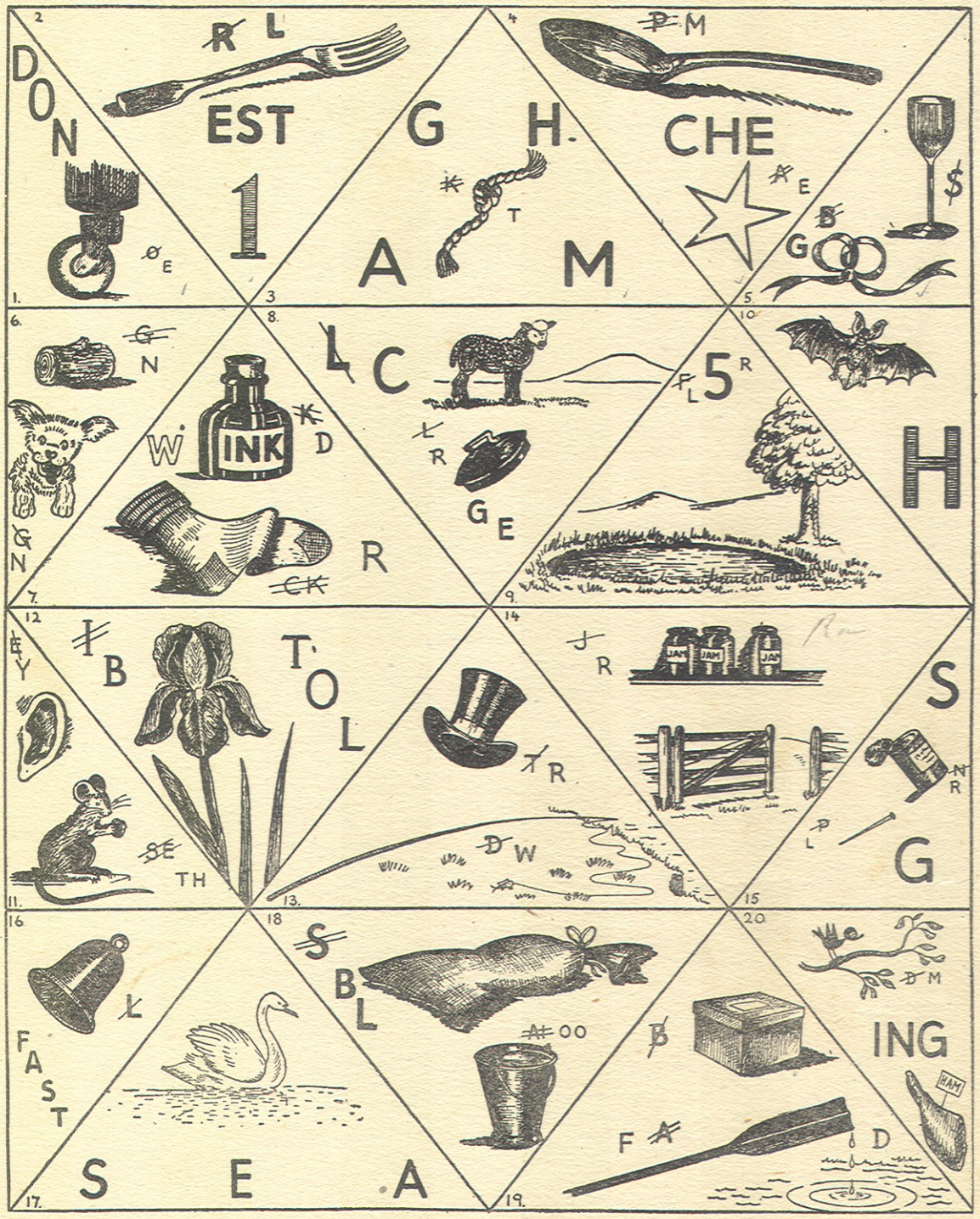
EDWARD LEAR.

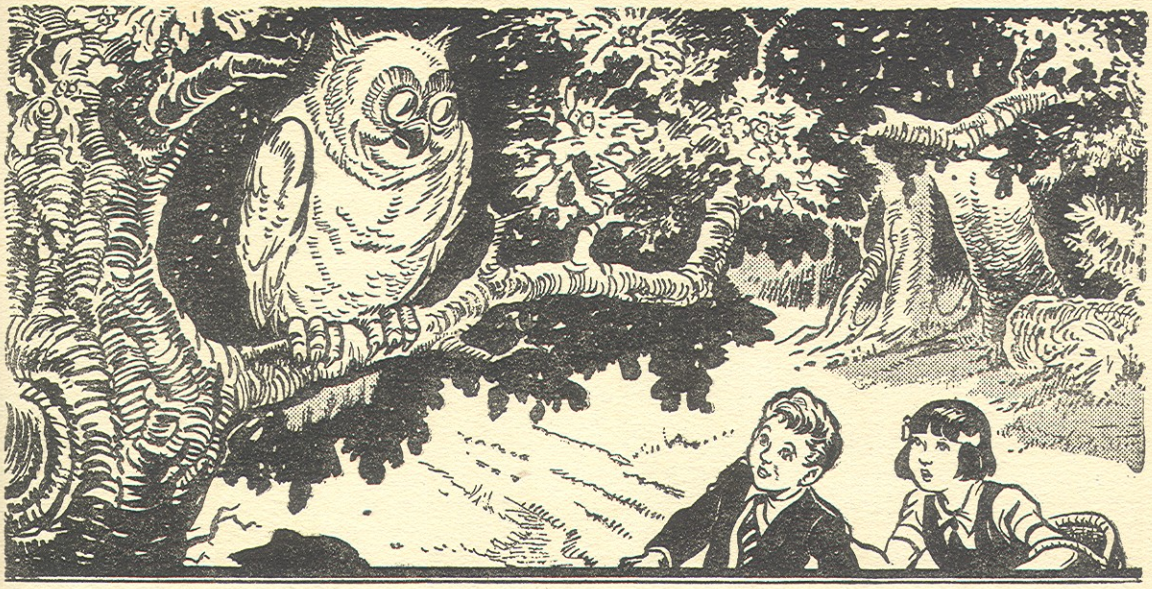




CAN YOU SPOT THE TOWNS?

In each of the twenty sections below, a town is represented. Perhaps your own home-town is among them! You'll find the answers on Page 184.





NOWHERE LAND

Strange Adventure in a Land of Mushroom Houses

The White Owl Guide

YOUNG Jimmy Burton and his sister, Jessie, were looking for mushrooms.

"Let's try Tyler's Wood," suggested Jimmy. "That's the sort of place to find them."

Jessie thought so too, and a few minutes later the two children were walking along a little path through Tyler's Wood.

It was a beautiful sunny morning, and the light shining on the brown and orange leaves of autumn made the woods look like fairyland. At last they reached a clearing and paused by a huge oak tree, so tall that it seemed to touch the sky.

"This is the place for mushrooms, Jimmy," said Jessie. "There ought to be some in that long grass over there."

So with their eyes glued to the ground, Jimmy and Jessie began to search the soft green grass.

Suddenly, from the stillness of the wood, came the sound of hearty laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled a voice among the trees. "Ha, ha, ha! Fancy looking for mushrooms in a wood! Well, I never!"

Jimmy and Jessie looked about them in astonishment. There was nobody to be seen—they seemed to be quite alone.

But a moment later the laughter was repeated, and this time they realised that it was coming from above their heads. They looked up, and there, in the branches of the huge oak, was an owl who peered down at them. His head was tilted sideways, and he seemed to be regarding them with much amusement.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he chortled. "Mushrooms in a wood, eh! Well, I never! Toadstools—oh, yes, lots of toadstools, but not mushrooms. Ha, ha, ha!"

The two children gazed at each other in astonishment as they watched this great white owl hop up and down on the branch with glee. He was certainly the merriest-looking bird they had ever set eyes on.

"Good-morning, Mr. Owl," said Jessie sweetly, when she had got over her surprise. "You shouldn't laugh at us really, you know. We haven't been in the

country very long. We're evacuated." Jessie was very proud at the way she pronounced this last word.

"Ho! Ho! I see," replied the white owl, very good-humouredly. "You want to find some mushrooms, but you don't really know where to find them?"

"That's right," broke in Jimmy excitedly. "We want to take some back to Auntie. So please tell us where they grow."

The owl half-closed his big round eyes for a moment, then he ruffled up his feathers and laughed so hard he nearly fell off his perch.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he chuckled. "Certainly, I can tell you where the best mushrooms grow. Nowhere Land, that's where. Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy and Jessie looked at each other in dismay.

"But we'll never find Nowhere Land, Mr. Owl—not by ourselves, anyway. Do you think you might take us—please?"

The owl stopped laughing and was still for a minute. "Yes! I'll take you. Oh, rather! Why not? King No-body isn't very good-tempered these days; doing nothing seems to have worn him out lately. Do him good to have visitors!"

The owl fluffed up his feathers and remained silent for so long that both Jessie and Jimmy thought he had gone to sleep.

"Thanks very much," they said together, after having noted that the white owl still had one eye open!

The owl shook himself, gazed all round him, then, with a flutter of wings, flew down from his branch and settled on Jimmy's shoulder. His large round eyes sparkled with laughter.

"Turn round three times, both of you," he chuckled, "then knock three times on the tree-trunk."

The children did as they were told, Jimmy knocking his hand on the bark of the tree so hard that he skinned his knuckles. For a moment or two nothing happened, then with a faint creaking sound the side of the big oak opened, revealing a little hall-way from which a staircase ran down into the earth.

"That's the ticket!" squeaked the owl approvingly, as the two children stared in amazement. "Pop inside! It's quite all right, but be careful how you go down the steps, they're getting a bit rickety now."

Cautiously Jimmy entered, with the white owl securely perched on his shoulder; close behind came Jessie, her aunt's shopping basket clasped firmly in one hand. The inside of the tunnel was lit with tiny lanterns. It seemed to the two children that the long descent into the earth would never cease, but suddenly the stairs ended and Jimmy found himself on firm ground.

"So far, so good," laughed the owl merrily. "Now follow this tunnel until you come into the daylight."

Bravely, certainly more bravely than he felt, Jimmy strode along the narrow passage with his sister hanging firmly on to the end of his jersey. Just as Jimmy was beginning to wonder whether or not he would ever see daylight again, he was dazzled by a sudden brilliant shaft of sunshine. The tunnel had come to an end.

For some moments the two children could only rub their eyes, to get accustomed to the brightness, but on getting a tap from the white owl's beak, Jimmy opened his eyes wide. It appeared that they were standing on a steep hillside, whilst below them stretched the funniest countryside they had ever seen.

Long white roads circled and zig-zagged everywhere and seemed to have no beginnings and no end. Everywhere that the roads crossed each other, there were tall signposts with a message of "To Nowhere and back," or "This way for Nothing-in-Particular." The trees and shrubs which grew alongside the roads were of the brightest green Jimmy and Jessie had ever seen, while dotted everywhere were huge mushrooms. They were not ordinary mushrooms, however, for as the two children looked closer they could see windows and chimney pots. They were houses—mushroom houses!

"Come on, you two, don't spend too much time staring," said the white owl excitedly; "we've got to get on a train now."

With a quick movement, he hopped off Jimmy's shoulder, and, on reaching the ground, began to strut down the hillside, taking it for granted that the two children were following. The white owl looked so funny stumping along on his huge claws that Jessie wanted to laugh. But Jimmy, seeing the look on his sister's face, shook his head warningly.

Wherever they walked they saw unusual things. Rabbits lay sleeping under each shrub, dogs were aimlessly chasing their own tails, and large cats lay basking in the sun.

At last the owl turned round and called out, " Here we are, this is the railway station ! "

Jessie gasped. Right in front of them was a little station of red brick, but the queer thing was that the actual railway-line just ran round in a large circle like the track for a toy-train. The two youngsters caught up with the white owl, pushed past the sleeping station master, and got on to the platform.

" Why is everyone asleep ? " asked Jessie curiously.

" They're not asleep," replied the owl, chuckling. " They're doing noth ng, that's all. Whoever heard of anyone doing anything in Nowhere ? "

" I suppose, then," said Jimmy, " that this train doesn't go anywhere either. That's why it runs round in a circle."

" That's quite right," winked the owl, bouncing up and down like a white fluffy ball. " That's why all the people live in mushrooms too—they don't have to build them ! "

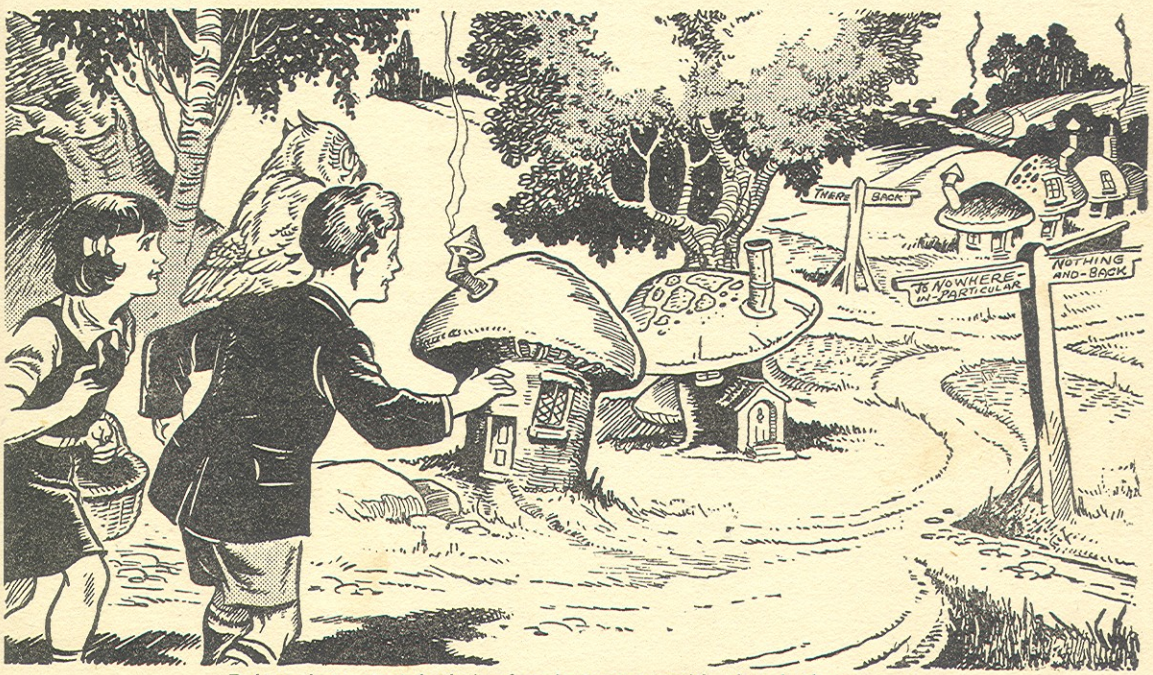
" As a matter of fact," the owl went on, " now I come to think about it, there isn't any train. You see someone has to drive the engine and that would be doing ' something.' Old King No-body soon put a stop to that."

" Are we going to see the King ? " asked Jessie and Jimmy together.

" Of course you're going to see him—he'd be jolly cross if you didn't," squeaked the owl. " We shall have to walk, that's all. It will make it more fun, though."

Once again the owl set off, with the two children close behind. The three of them walked up the long white roads, some of which were in urgent need of repair.

Suddenly the white owl said, " There's



Below them stretched the funniest countryside they had ever seen.

the palace of 'Nothing Doing'," and pointed with his wing towards a beautiful white castle, which had apparently risen from nowhere. At least it seemed a beautiful white castle at first glance, but as Jessie and Jimmy looked closer, they were able to see large cracks in the stone-work.

"It could do with a bit of doing up," said Jimmy loudly. "Look how all the wood has rotted!"

"Hush!" hissed the white owl urgently, his claw over his beak. "You mustn't let King No-body hear you say that. It would annoy him like anything!"

With Jessie on one side of him and Jimmy on the other, the owl stumped across the drawbridge and through the castle gates. The guards were leaning on their pikes gazing vacantly into space. They took as much notice of Jessie and Jimmy as if they hadn't seen them. The owl went up great flights of marble stairs which, much to Jessie's disgust, looked as though they had not been swept for weeks! At last the owl stopped outside a huge iron-studded door, and turning to the two children, said:

"This is where the King is. I do hope he's feeling happier to-day."

The owl tapped three times on the door with his powerful beak, and the great door swung open. Jessie and Jimmy found themselves in a large white room which would have sparkled if someone had taken the trouble to clean it! Long cobwebs hung from the tall pillars that supported the ceiling, and as she looked at them, Jessie longed to get busy with a broom. There, in front of a blazing fire, snoozed the King, clad in a dingy old dressing-gown, his crown tilted forward over one eye. Beside him on the table stood a pile of dirty crockery. Jessie and Jimmy looked in astonishment, and as they approached the throne, King No-body awoke. With a tremendous yawn the King stretched his arms above his head, clutched wildly at the air for support—then tipped over backwards, with the chair on top of him! Crash! With a little cry, Jessie rushed forward to help him, and with the aid of Jimmy, succeeded in getting the King back in his chair. The owl looked on with a blank expression, and his feathers shook a little.

King No-body was a little plump man with red rosy cheeks and a nose like a ripe cherry. His hair, which was white, stuck out from under his gold crown like a wire brush. Two eyes of the brightest blue were hidden by heavy bushy eyebrows shaped like question marks. It would have been a merry face, but King No-body wore a discontented look.

"Thanks," he said grumpily. "I don't know who you are, or where you come from, but thanks anyway."

He turned and glared at the white owl, who returned the King's gaze with a stare so unblinking that the King was forced to turn away.

"They're Humans," said the white owl happily. "Thought I'd bring them along to visit you—they might cheer you up."

"Nothing cheers me up now!" said the King sadly. "Can't say I'm very pleased to see you to-day. You never stop laughing—it fair gets me down!"

The owl winked one large eye at Jimmy and his sister, and unseen by the King, extended one claw to his sharp beak. Jessie and Jimmy thought that the time had now come for them to take a hand, and Jimmy stepped forward.

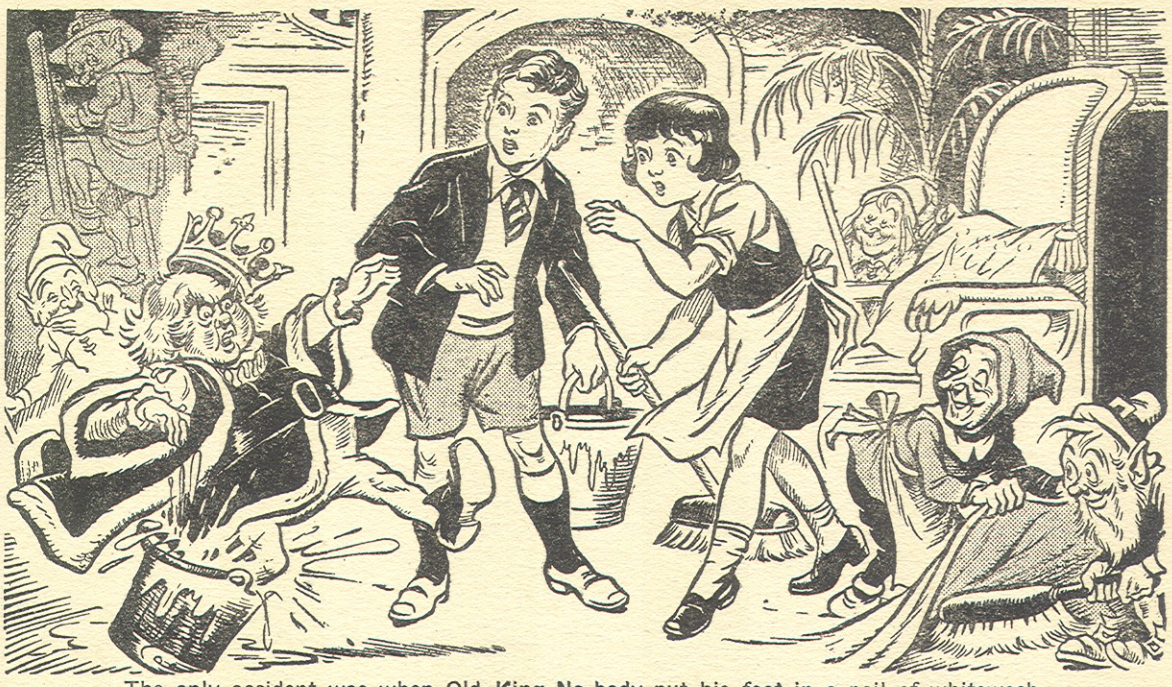
"I'm Jimmy Burton, your Majesty," he said in his best party manner, "and this is my sister, Jessie."

Jessie curtsied daintily, and gave the King such a sweet smile that King No-body blushed redder than ever, and had to cough behind his hand to hide his embarrassment!

"Pleased to meet you," grunted the King, in a very half-hearted manner. "What are you two strangers doing in Nowhere Land? Enjoying yourselves doing nothing, I'll be bound! Dodging school, perhaps?"

"Doesn't anyone work in Nowhere Land, your Majesty?" asked Jimmy, uncertainly.

"'Course not," yawned the King. "I've reigned here since the big oak was an acorn, and I've spent the whole time doing nothing. In fact," he went on



The only accident was when Old King No-body put his foot in a pail of whitewash.

proudly, " my subjects say they've never had a King who did less or did it better, for that matter. How's that for a record?"

" I think you're very lazy, your Majesty," answered Jessie swiftly—so swiftly that she scarcely realised what she said.

The King sprang from his throne as though stung, hurled his crown on the floor and proceeded to stamp on it ! He didn't stamp on it very long, however, because he was only wearing thin carpet slippers. But the children seemed to irritate him, for he leapt about the room like a jumping cracker, tearing wildly at his white hair.

" Now you've done it ! " whispered the white owl, but he didn't seem at all worried !

Jimmy watched in amazement. The King had, by this time, worked himself up into such a state that he had to stand still to puff and blow !

With another sweet smile, Jessie walked over to the poor old man, and without the least trace of nervousness helped King No-body back to his chair. Jimmy was going to apologise for his sister's rash words, but, to everyone's amazement, the King burst out crying, and large tear-drops rolled from his eyes on to the ground.

" I'm awfully sorry, your Majesty," said Jimmy and Jessie together, while the white owl hopped from one claw to the other, clucking like a hen. It was either clucking or laughing, anyway !

" To think," snuffled the King between his sobs—" to think that anyone should call me lazy, after over one hundred years of doing nothing ! Lazy !—and by a couple of humans too ! "

" Well," said Jessie decidedly, " if you're not lazy, why don't you wash those dirty dishes up ? Why, I'll do it myself ! "

Without another word, and before anyone could stop her, she had gathered up the dishes, and with the white owl walking approvingly beside her, left the room.

As soon as she had gone, King No-body stopped crying and commenced to blow his nose loudly on a large red handkerchief. Jimmy, after waiting anxiously for a few minutes, said to the King :

" Jessie didn't mean to be rude, your Majesty. What she really meant was, that perhaps if you were to decorate the

palace a little, and get your subjects to mend the roads—perhaps, well perhaps, you'd feel happier. It might help pass the time away."

This was a very long speech for Jimmy, and after he'd made it he felt quite pleased with himself. King No-body looked at Jimmy doubtfully, from a rather watery blue eye, then he began to brighten up a bit.

"We'll clean my crown! Yes, indeed! Oh, my! Maybe it would help a little. I'm so terribly tired of doing nothing! I'll make all the 'No-bodies' work as well—yes, rather!"

From outside came the noise of dishes being washed, and a few minutes later Jessie re-entered the room, armed with a broom, duster and ash-pan. The owl, looking very, very wise indeed, was perched on her shoulder.

For the next hour or so the only sounds that could be heard were brushings and bangings. Jessie was going to work with a will, whilst Jimmy and the King rushed about doing just as they were told. At the end of this time it was difficult to believe that they were in the same room—it was so spotless and sparkling! The crockery, now all shining brightly, was hanging up neatly on the royal dresser. The white owl just sat and winked; he was a very wise old bird indeed!

Old King No-body seemed like a new man. His eyes shone, his face beamed, and he capered up and down the room.

"Call the royal household, fetch whitewash and pails," he yelled to the white owl. "We'll decorate the palace!"

With a flutter of wings the white owl left the room, but reappeared a few seconds later, accompanied by some funny little men from the mushroom houses.

They were jolly little fellows, with round shining faces, green suits and red trousers. Each one either carried a bucket of whitewash or a large brush.

Never had Jimmy and his sister enjoyed themselves more than they did in the short time that followed. The little "No-bodies" dashed everywhere, painting, splashing, hanging from the picture rails, whilst the King shouted orders!

What good fun it all was! The only accident was when Old King No-body put his foot in a pail of whitewash, while stepping back to admire his handiwork!

The white owl hopped on to Jimmy's shoulder and whispered: "Time you were getting back, isn't it? What about dinner?"

Jimmy wasn't very anxious to leave now, but he led Jessie to the King.

King No-body turned to the children. He said a little sadly. "You've come to wish me good-bye, haven't you?"

"I'm afraid so, your Majesty!" replied Jessie and Jimmy together.

"Too bad! I hate to see you go, after all you've done for me! Still, you will come back again, won't you?"

"Yes, rather!" the children replied.

The King's face fairly beamed as he heard these words.

"Now what did you really come to Nowhere Land for?" went on the King, chuckling softly.

"For mushrooms, your Majesty," replied Jimmy readily.

"So that's what you brought them here for, you artful old rogue!" gasped King No-body to the white owl.

"I'm afraid the ones that you've already seen are far too big for you to carry home; but give me your basket and I'll fill it with the finest mushrooms you've ever tasted! You'll want to come back to Nowhere Land then, if only to get more!"

The old King was as good as his word, and a little later brother and sister were making their way back to the hillside, with a basket heaped full of the loveliest white button-mushrooms they had ever seen.

"Did you really take us there just to get these?" Jessie asked the white owl.

"Or did you take us there because you knew that we would make King No-body happy?" said Jimmy.

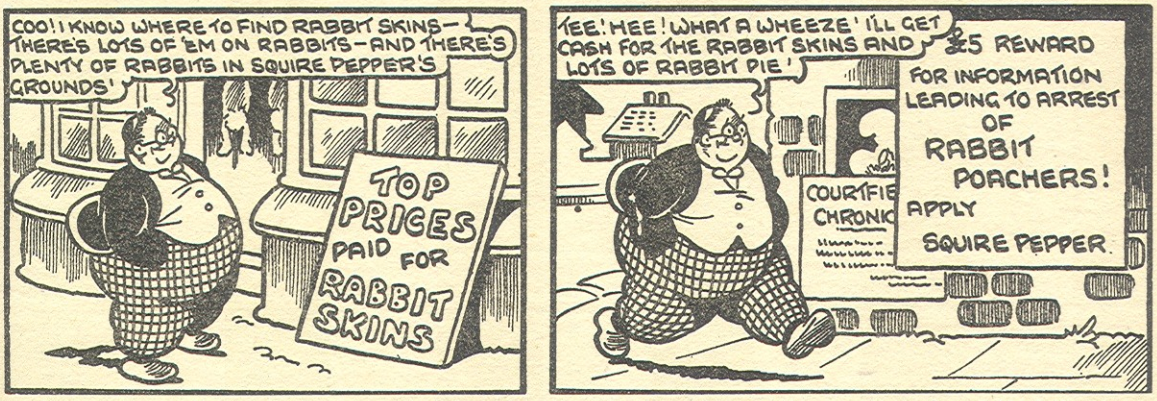
The white owl, looking very knowing, tapped the side of his beak with a large claw.

"Fancy looking for mushrooms in a wood!" he chuckled, and more than that they could not get out of him.

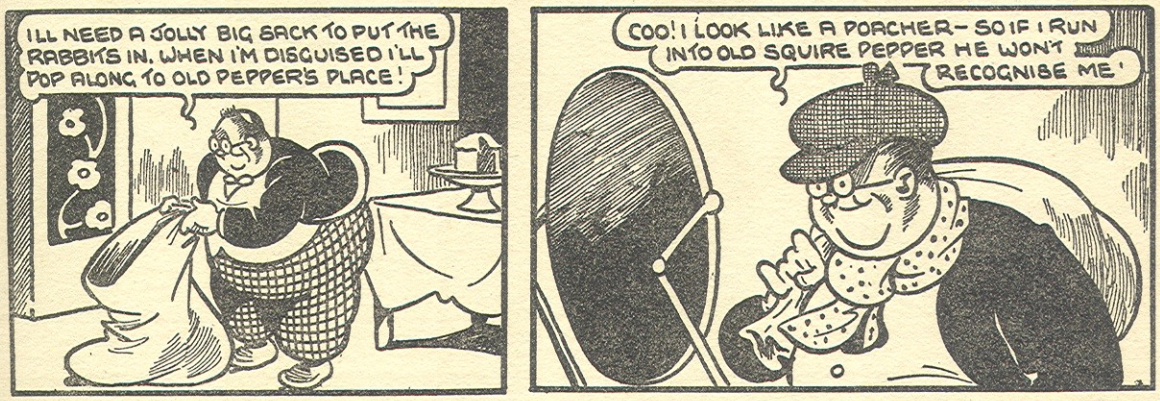
THE END

BILLY BUNTER

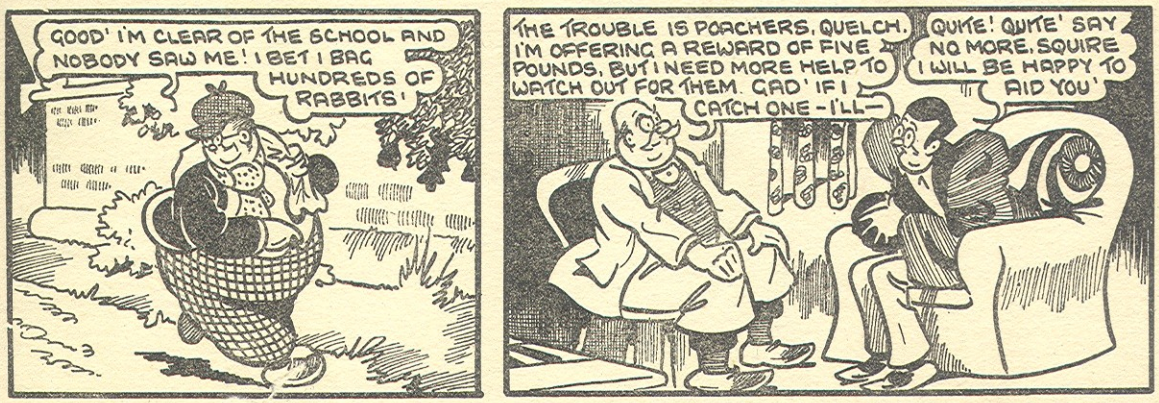
THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH



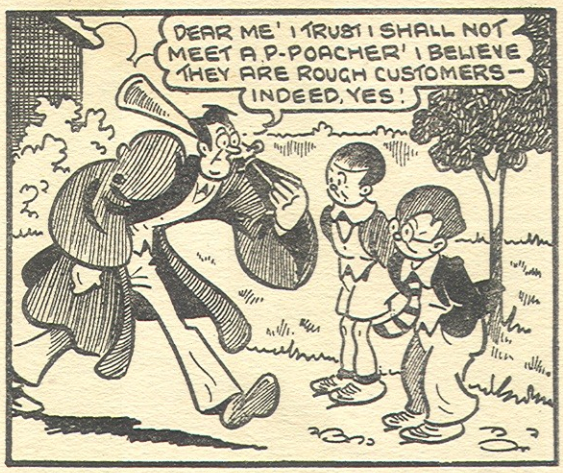
1. William George Bunter, the fattest pupil at Greyfriars, if not in the world, went for a toddle in Courtfield, t'other day, chums, and noticed a notice. It told the world that the chappy inside the shop would pay best prices for bunnies' overcoats.



2. Now, our fat chum was hard up—as usual. This looked like easy picking! All he had to do was to snaffle a few bunnies, and sell the skins. He didn't notice the other notice put up by Squire Pepper about poachers.



3. Having disguised himself as a poacher and got the sack, he plodded off to Squire Pepper's very private rabbit warrens. Meanwhile, the fruity old Squire was asking Quelchy to help him defend his bunnies from the pesky poachers.

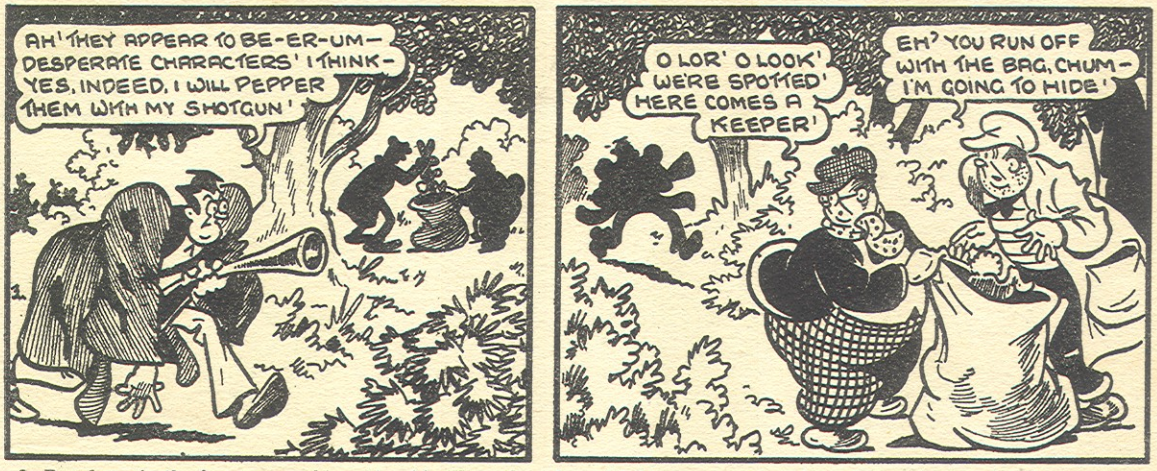


4. Now, Squire Pepper was real mustard about looking after his bunnies. He was also a Governor of Greyfriars. Therefore Quelchy thought he'd better show willing. Therefore, he popped out to pot poachers with his second-best blunderbuss.

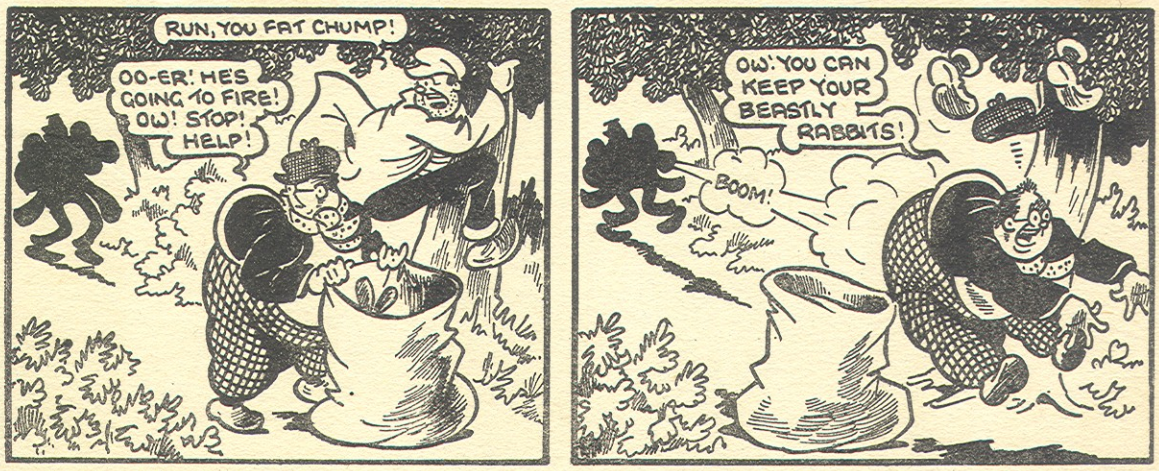
5. Meanwhile, and during all this, our Billy was hard at work catching bunnies—or trying hard to do so. But the furry little animals didn't play fair. When Billy pushed his mitt in at the front door, they skedaddled by the tradesmen's entrance.

6. Coo, Billy was wild. He glimpsed a white powder puff vanishing round the corner and promptly gave chase. With a wild hallo—a yoicks and a tally ho!—he pursued the bunnies. But Bertram, the Bunny Bagger, was there!

7. He gave our Billy a rough push in the face and said: "I'm collectin' rabbits, too!" Two bunnies were already in his bag. But the next minute he relented. "You can be my mate, see?" he said. And very kindly, he let Billy carry the bag.

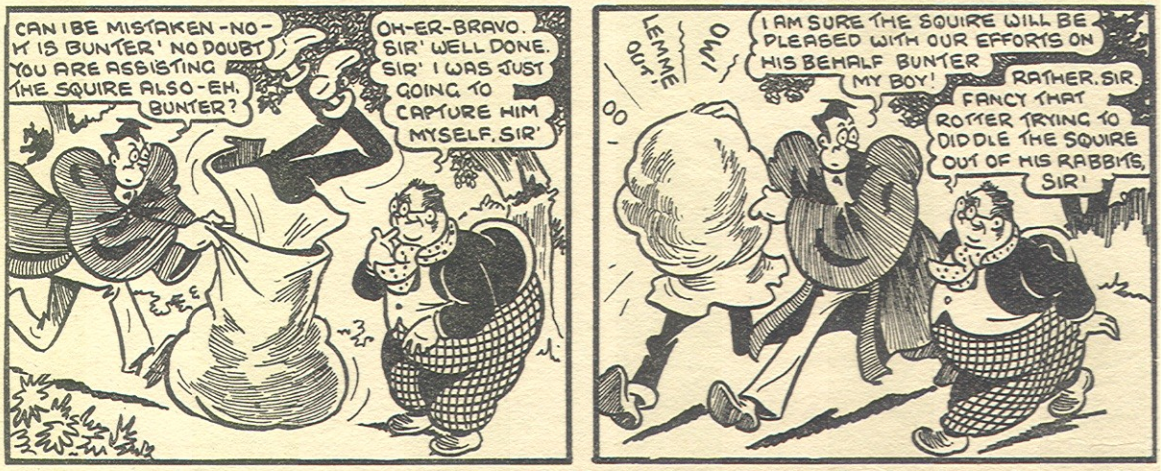


8. But down in the forest, something stirred! 'Twas Quelchy, with his secret weapon! And Quelchy heard and saw things stirring, too—two dark, furtive figures, bagging bunnies like billy-ho! Quelchy had the wind-up. But he knew his duty.

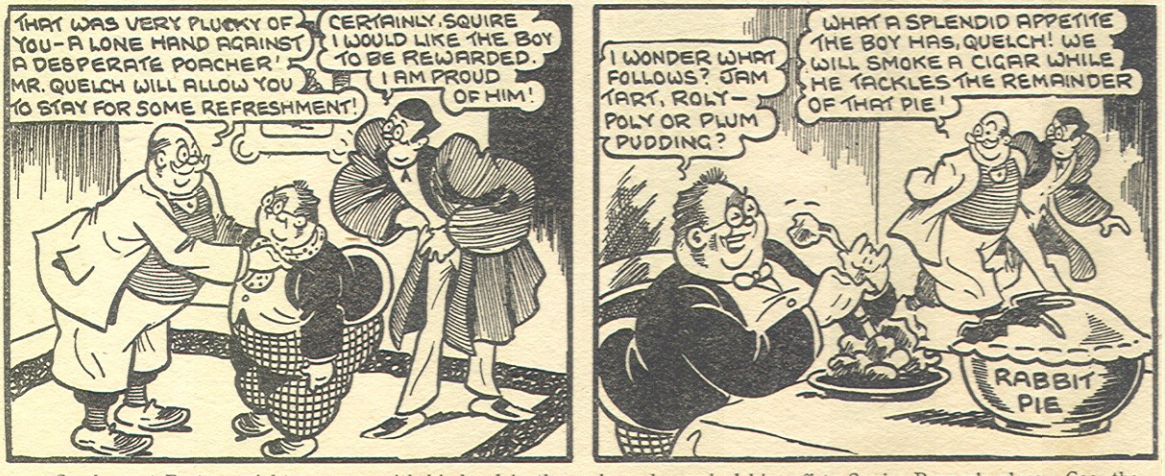


9. He charged! Bertram saw him coming and shinned up the sycamore. Our Billy was holding the bag. Quelchy pointed his gun, shut his eyes and fired. There was a boom—and howl! Billy stopped the lot with his pants!

10. Down on his knocking knees fell Billy, half stunned! And Bertram, scared suddenly by the boom of the blunderbuss, lost his hold in the sycamore and fell out faster than he climbed in — and he got the sack! Then that Billy gasped.



11. For the blunderbuss merchant was none other than Quelchy himself. As Quelchy galloped up, he saw Bunter. "No doubt you, too, are assisting the Squire," he panted. Billy's mighty brain acted fast. "Oh, rather!" said he.



12. So they set Bertram right way up, with his head in the sack, and marched him off to Squire Pepper's place. Coo, the Squire was pleased. Bertram, naughty lad, went to gaol, but our Billy had a jolly good feed.

THE HAPPY HEDGEHOG

by GEORGE ROCHESTER

What's the News?

HAPPY, the hedgehog, slowly uncurled himself. He had been sound asleep, rolled up like a little brown prickly ball. But now it was dawn and very soon the sun would be up.

" It's going to be a nice day," Happy told himself, blinking about him with his bright little eyes. " Oh, yes, it's going to be a perfectly splendid day."

He loved nice days, when the sun shone and everything was bright and warm in the woods and fields.

" I've promised to have breakfast with Billy Rabbit," he reminded himself. " Goodness, I'd better be getting along. I don't want to keep Billy and his Mummy waiting."

He got to his feet and set off towards where Billy Rabbit lived.

" Good morning, Happy ! " cried a host of bluebells, nodding and bowing their heads gaily to him in the faint morning breeze. " How are you this morning, Happy ? "

" I'm very well, thank you," replied Happy politely.

" Have you heard the news ? " cried the bluebells in their sweet little voices, which sounded just like tinkling silver.

" No," said Happy. " What news ? "

" What, do you mean to say you haven't heard the news ? " cried the bluebells in astonishment.

" No, I haven't," said Happy. " What is the news ? "

But the bluebells seemed far too much surprised to answer him. They were bowing and nodding to each other and crying :

" Just fancy. Little Happy hasn't heard the news ! "

" But what news is it ? " cried Happy, fairly dancing with impatience and excitement, for he was a very inquisitive little fellow and loved to know everything that was going on. " Do tell me. What is the news ? "

But the bluebells just kept on nodding and bowing to one another and crying :

" He must have been asleep not to have heard the news. Why, we thought everybody had heard it."

" But what is it—what is it ? " cried Happy, more excited than ever.

But the bluebells didn't seem to hear him. They were far too busy telling one another how astonishing it was that little Happy hadn't heard the news.

" Oh, my goodness, won't anybody tell me ? " cried Happy in despair. " Anyway, I can't wait here any longer. I'm late for breakfast, as it is. I'll have to be going ! "

He scuttled away as fast as ever he could, puzzling his head as to what the mysterious news could be. His way led him past a pond where the reeds and the rushes were

all whispering together in the morning breeze.

" Ah, there's little Happy," they whispered. " He's sure to have heard the news."

" I haven't ! " cried Happy, nearly frantic with curiosity. " What is this news which everybody's talking about ? "

" What, haven't you heard ? " whispered the reeds and the rushes.

" No, I haven't ! " cried Happy. " Do tell me. Oh, please, do tell me ! "

But, like the bluebells, the reeds and the rushes seemed so astonished to learn that Happy hadn't heard the news that they started whispering to one another :

" Just think of that ! "

" Fancy little Happy not hearing the news ! "

" Why, we thought everybody had heard it ! "

" Yes, even little Dozey Dormouse has heard it, and you know what a sleepy little chap he is."

" And old Ferdinand Frog's heard it, and you know what a dull, lazy old fellow he is ! "

By this time poor little Happy was nearly bursting with curiosity.

" What's happened—*what's happened*—WHAT'S HAPPENED ? " he cried, dancing wildly about.

But the reeds and the rushes were still too surprised to take any notice of him.

" Of course, he might have been asleep when it happened," they whispered.

" Yes, that must be it ! "

" But, even then, you'd think that somebody would have told him by now ! "

" Oh, my goodness, I'll go silly in a minute, if they don't tell me what's happened," cried Happy. " But I can't wait —I really can't. I'm awfully late for breakfast and I can't keep Billy Rabbit and his Mummy waiting any longer."

He scuttled away as fast as ever his little legs would carry him. But, as he rushed along, he wondered just what this mysterious and exciting news could be.

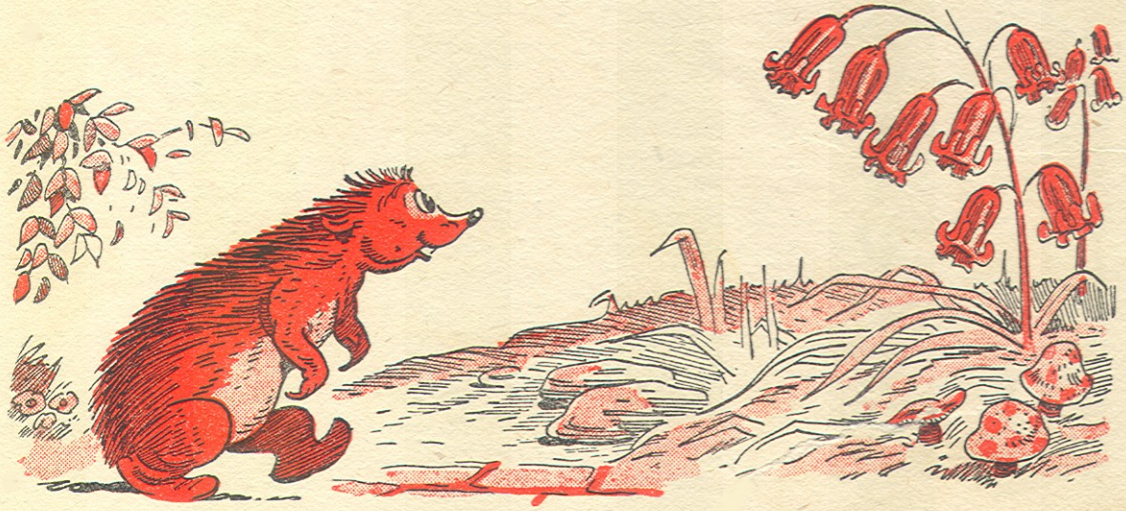
Then suddenly he stopped and looked up. For, high in the sky above him, the Skylark had started to sing :

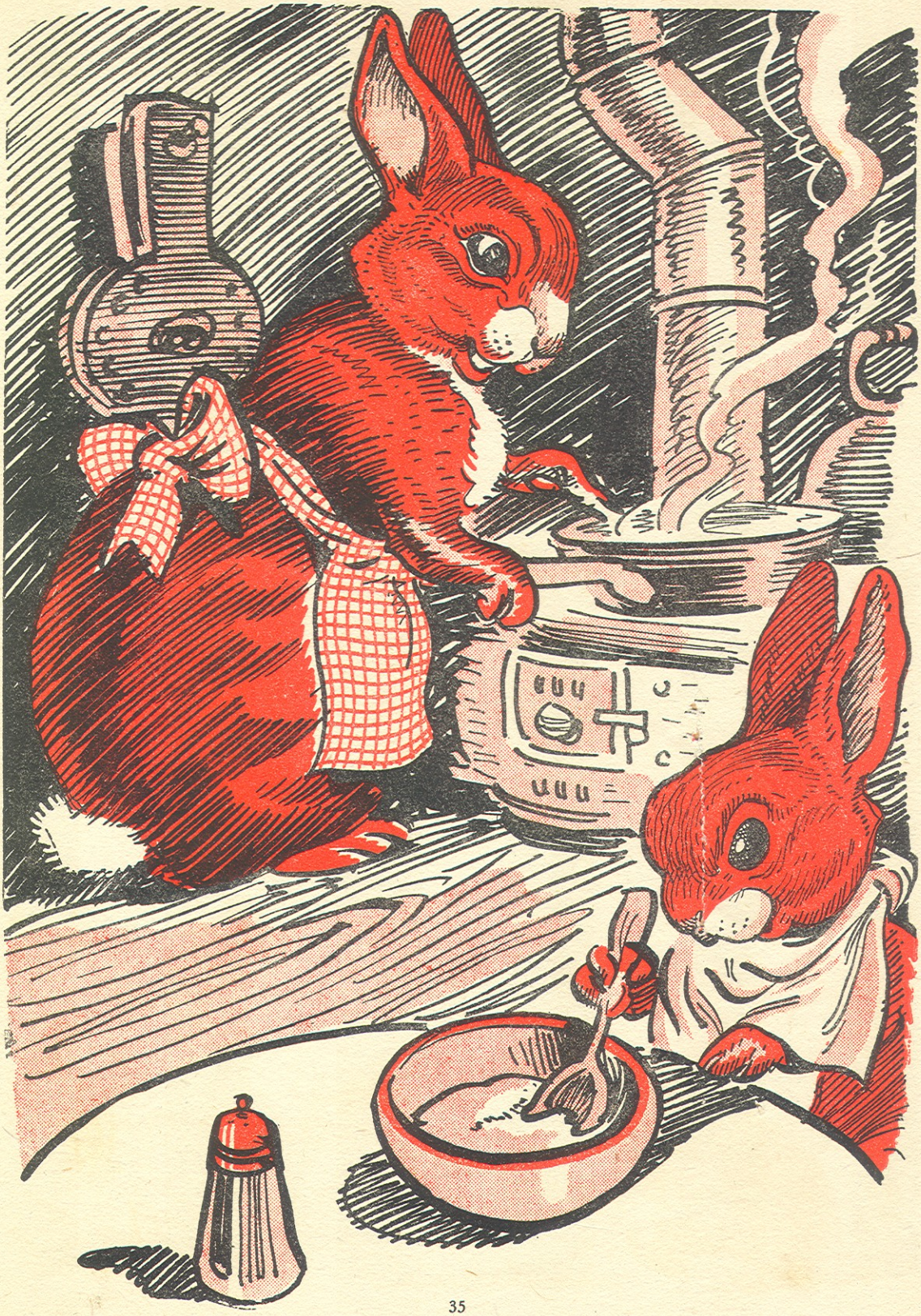
" Hallo, little Happy, I see you down there—
But this news has upset me, I really declare ! "

" What news ? " cried Happy. " Oh, do, please, tell me. What is this news that everybody's talking about ? "

The Skylark got such a shock when it heard this that it had to flutter its wings for a moment to keep its balance. Then it sang in a voice shrill with astonishment :

" It can't really be true that you haven't yet heard?
Oh, come, little Happy, that's much too absurd ! "

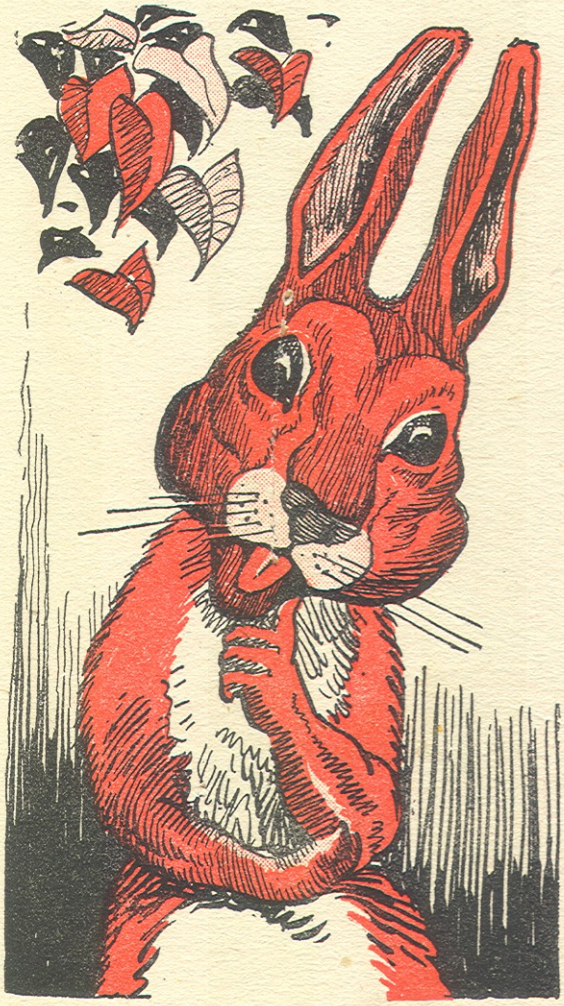




" It isn't—it isn't ! " cried Happy. " I haven't heard a thing. Nobody'll tell me ! The bluebells were talking about it as I came along ; so were the reeds and rushes, but they didn't tell me what it was."

The Skylark stared down at him in greater astonishment than ever. Then it cried :

" Well, I'm bound to confess I'm a most surprised bird,
I can hardly believe that you haven't yet heard ;
It's so inconceivable ;
Quite unbelievable ;
I thought everyone knew—I did, 'pon my word ! "



" Well, I don't ! " wailed poor little Happy. " I don't know anything about it at all. I do wish you'd tell me——"

" Tell you what, little Happy ? " cut in a voice, and Happy saw Freddy Fox hurrying by. " What do you want to know ? "

" The news ! " yelled Happy, scuttling madly after him. " Nobody'll tell me this awful exciting news that everybody's talking about."

" What, not heard the news ? " cried the fox, halting and staring back over his shoulder at Happy in absolute amazement. " Why, I thought everybody had heard that. But I can't stop—I can't stop. I must hurry on to the meeting ! "

" What meeting ? " yelled Happy, nearly out of his wits with curiosity. " Oh dear, he's gone ! Oh, how tiresome and aggravating everyone is this morning. Oh, why won't somebody tell me the news ? "

A sudden thought struck him.

" Perhaps Billy Rabbit knows ! " he cried excitedly. " If Billy doesn't, his Mummy is sure to. She'll tell me ! "

Next instant he was scuttling along as fast as ever he could go ; and he never stopped running until he reached the Warren, which was the name of the place where Billy Rabbit lived.

As Happy scuttled down the hole, which was really the long entrance passage to Billy's home, the most lovely smell of porridge and frying bacon came to his sharp little nose.

But Happy was too excited to think about that. All hot and breathless, he burst into the kitchen where little Billy Rabbit was sitting at the table with a bowl of porridge in front of him and a bib tied neatly round his neck.

Mrs. Rabbit was standing at the stove, frying some lovely rashers of bacon.

" Why, here you are, Happy ! " she cried. " We thought you couldn't be coming."

" Yes, so we did ! " cried Billy Rabbit, giving his porridge such an excited smack with the back of his spoon that he sent a lot of it flying all over the table. " I'm so glad you've come, Happy. Hurrah ! "

" Have you heard the news, Mrs. Rabbit ? " burst out Happy, standing staring at her with his eyes nearly popping out of his head.

" The news ? " repeated Mrs. Rabbit, shaking her head. " No, what news is this, Happy ? "

" Oh dear, d'you mean to say you haven't heard it ? " gasped Happy.

" No," said Mrs. Rabbit. " Billy and I haven't been up very long, and then I had to get the breakfast ready. I haven't been out anywhere yet to hear any news, Happy. What has happened ? "

" That's just what I don't know," cried Happy, in despair. " But something awful exciting's happened. Everybody's talking about it—the bluebells and the reeds and the rushes and the Skylark and Freddy Fox and everybody ! "

" But if they're all talking about it why don't *you* know what it is, Happy ? " cried Billy.

" Because somehow they never told me," cried Happy. " They all seemed to think that I *ought* to know and they just somehow never told me ! "

" Well, get your breakfast, Happy," said Mrs. Rabbit, putting a lovely bowl of porridge and cream on the table for him.

" Then you and Billy can run out and discover just what this wonderful news is."

The Meeting in the Meadow

No sooner had they finished their breakfast than Happy and Billy scuttled outside to try to find out just what the news was all about.

Happy did pause a moment to thank Mrs. Rabbit very much for his breakfast, for he was a very polite little hedgehog.

No sooner had he and Billy got outside the Warren than they were nearly knocked down by Harold Hare, who came dashing along in great leaps and bounds.

" Out of the way—out of the way ! " yelled Harold, who, being a hare, was quite hare-brained. " Don't stop me—I'm off to the meeting ! "

" What meeting ? " cried Happy, as he and Billy scuttled madly along after Harold.

" The meeting in Buttercup Meadow ! " bawled Harold, shooting swiftly ahead. " We're going to talk about the news ! "

" What news ? " screamed Happy. " *What news ?* "

But Harold Hare was already out of earshot.

" Oh dear, isn't it awful ? " Happy almost wept. " Nobody'll tell us what the news is. I've never been more aggravated in my life ! "

" Never mind," said Billy, consolingly. " If we go to the meeting in Buttercup Meadow we're bound to hear what the news is."

" Yes, come on ! " cried Happy. " Let's hurry ! "

As they hastened along, they found that they weren't the only ones who were hurrying towards Buttercup Meadow. As a matter of fact, nearly all the birds and animals of the woods and fields were making towards the meadow.

There were Dozey Dormouse and Sammy Squirrel, Willy Water Rat and Ferdinand Frog, the sleek and handsome Stoat pack, and their cousins, the Weasels, a whole crowd of rabbit cousins of little Billy ; Tommy Thrush and Bertie Blackbird,

Charlie Chaffinch and Billy Bullfinch and a whole host of others.

They were all chattering excitedly among themselves, and, although they listened with all their ears, Happy and Billy could only catch the most tantalizing bits of conversation, which really told them nothing at all, but only served to increase the mystery.

" Hurrah, here we are at the meadow ! " cried Billy suddenly. " My word, what a crowd ! "

There certainly was a crowd in the meadow, and it was the most excited, chattering crowd of birds and animals that Billy and Happy had ever seen.

They were all gathered round a grassy mound, on the top of which wise old Mr. Mole was standing, his spectacles on his nose and a little walking-stick in his claws.

Panting and breathless, Happy and Billy joined the crowd, and very soon squeezed themselves well to the front.

" Silence, now—silence, please ! " cried Mr. Mole.

No sooner had he said the words than a hushed, expectant silence fell on all the birds and animals. Little Happy fairly trembled with excitement.

Mr. Mole stared slowly round at the circle of birds and animals, and both Happy and Billy thought how very solemn and sorrowful he looked.

" My dear friends," went on Mr. Mole, " this is, indeed, a sad day for us."

At these words a great sigh came from all the birds and animals, just like the sighing of the wind. As for Dozey Dormouse, he burst into tiny little sobs and buried his face in his handkerchief.

" Oh dear, I wonder what's happened ?" whispered Happy to Billy in great alarm.

" S*s*-ssh, we'll find out in a minute ! " whispered Billy. " Listen ! "

" I never thought," went on Mr. Mole mournfully. " that any of us would live to see such an unhappy day as this. When I heard the news I was so shocked that you could have knocked me down with the petal of a primrose. Even now I can scarcely believe it."

" Believe *what?* " squeaked Happy, agitatedly.

" *Ss-ssh !* " cried all the birds and animals around him.

Poor little Happy relapsed into silence. But by this time he was nearly off his head with worry, curiosity and anxiety. What *could* have happened ? he asked himself wildly.

" Unless we do something about it," went on Mr. Mole solemnly, " the woods and the fields will never be the same again. That is why we are assembled here this morning. To decide what we are going to do about it. *Because, my friends, we must do something about it !* "

Happy could stand this no longer. He felt that in another moment he would burst. So he yelled at the very top of his voice :

" Must do something about *what*, Mr. Mole ? *What* must we do something about ? "

Mr. Mole gave a violent start. Then he lowered his head and stared down at Happy over the top of his spectacles.

" Do you mean to say you haven't

heard?" he exclaimed, in such a shocked sort of voice that, in spite of himself, poor little Happy felt really ashamed.

"No, I haven't heard, Mr. Mole," cried Happy, piteously. "Nobody would tell me. They all seemed so surprised that I hadn't heard that they never thought to tell me."

"Dear me, dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Mole, shaking his head and staring at Happy as though he couldn't believe his ears. "How extraordinary. Why, I thought that everybody knew."

"Knew *what?*" screamed Happy, fairly dancing with impatience.

"Don't shout!" said Mr. Mole severely. "I'm not deaf!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Happy. "I'll go mad in a minute—I know I shall. Oh, won't somebody tell me what's happened?"

"I'm trying to tell you, but you will keep on interrupting," complained Mr. Mole. "Can't you keep quiet for a moment?"

"No," said Happy. "I mean, yes—yes, I can!"

"Then kindly do so," said Mr. Mole. "Now, my little friend, if you haven't heard the terrible news, you must prepare yourself for a very great shock."

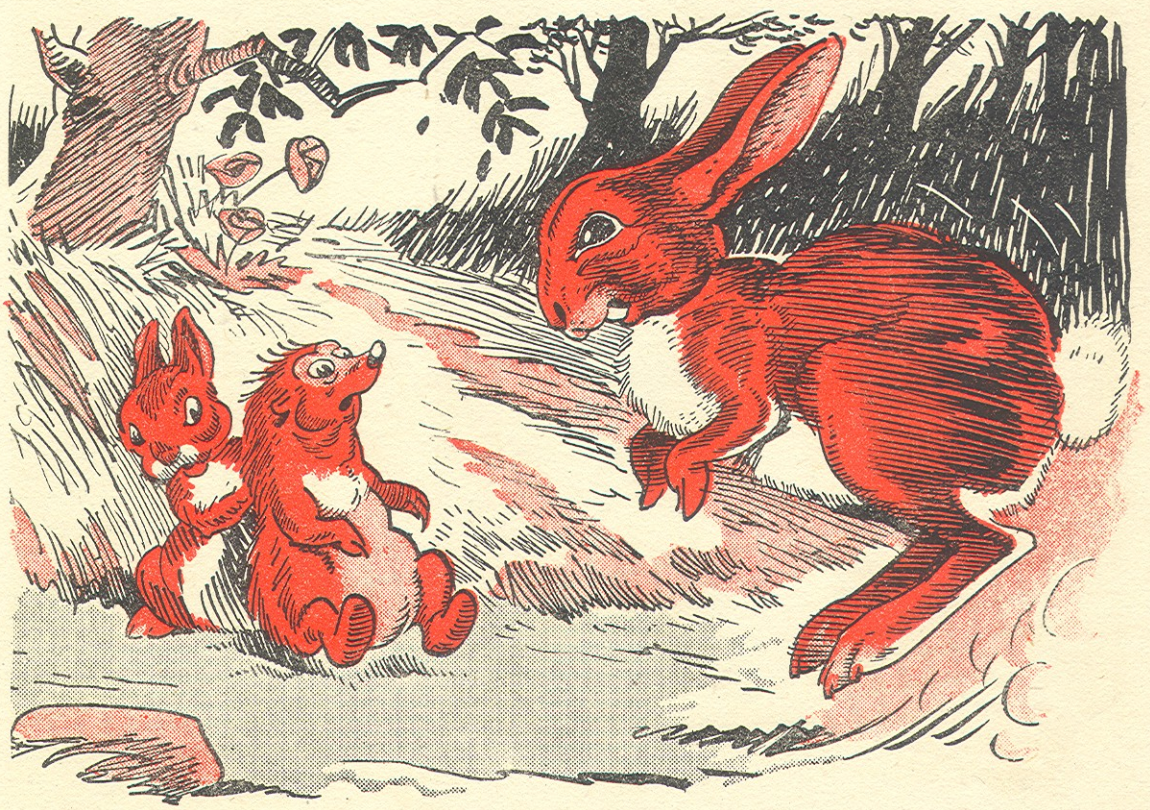
"All—all right!" gulped Happy, wondering what on earth could be coming.

Mr. Mole took another good, long stare all round the assembled company. Then he looked solemnly at Happy again.

"THEY'VE got Grandpa Badger!" he announced.

At these frightful words, Happy's eyes opened so wide with horror that they looked like two bright little buttons. As for the other birds and animals, some of them started to cry quite openly, while the Dormouse's sobs became so loud and choking that it really sounded as though he were going to have convulsions, or something equally upsetting.

"Got—got Grandpa Badger?" gasped Happy.



" Yes," said Mr. Mole sorrowfully. " THEY caught him during the night. In a net," he added.

Happy stared at him in horror. He knew only too well who THEY were. THEY were those horrid two-legged animals, who prowled about the woods and fields with snares and nets, and things called guns, which made a frightful bang and spouted out fire and lead.

" Which of the THEYS was it who caught Grandpa Badger, Mr. Mole ? " gulped Happy.

" It was that nasty, wicked, bad-tempered farmer creature called Farmer Grunter ! " yelled Harold Hare. " I know, because Oswald Owl told me—and Oswald Owl saw it all happen ! "

Happy gave a groan of sheer misery and despair. For of all the horrid, wicked two-legged animals, who tried to snare them and trap them and shoot them, Farmer Grunter was by far the worst.

If poor old Grandpa Badger had fallen into his hands, then there could, indeed, be little hope.

" But why did he want to catch poor old Grandpa ? " cried Happy. " Grandpa's never done him any harm."

" I know he hasn't," yelled Harold Hare. " Grandpa Badger's never done anybody any harm. But this dreadful Grunter creature is going to sell him to a Zoo. Oswald Owl heard Grunter saying so to those other ugly two-legged creatures who work for him."

" What's a Zoo ? " asked little Billy Rabbit.

" A Zoo, Billy, is a prison for animals," said Mr. Mole sorrowfully. " The two-legged creatures keep animals in cages at Zoos, and then the others go along and stare at them."

" But don't they ever get out ? " gasped Billy. " The animals, I mean ? "

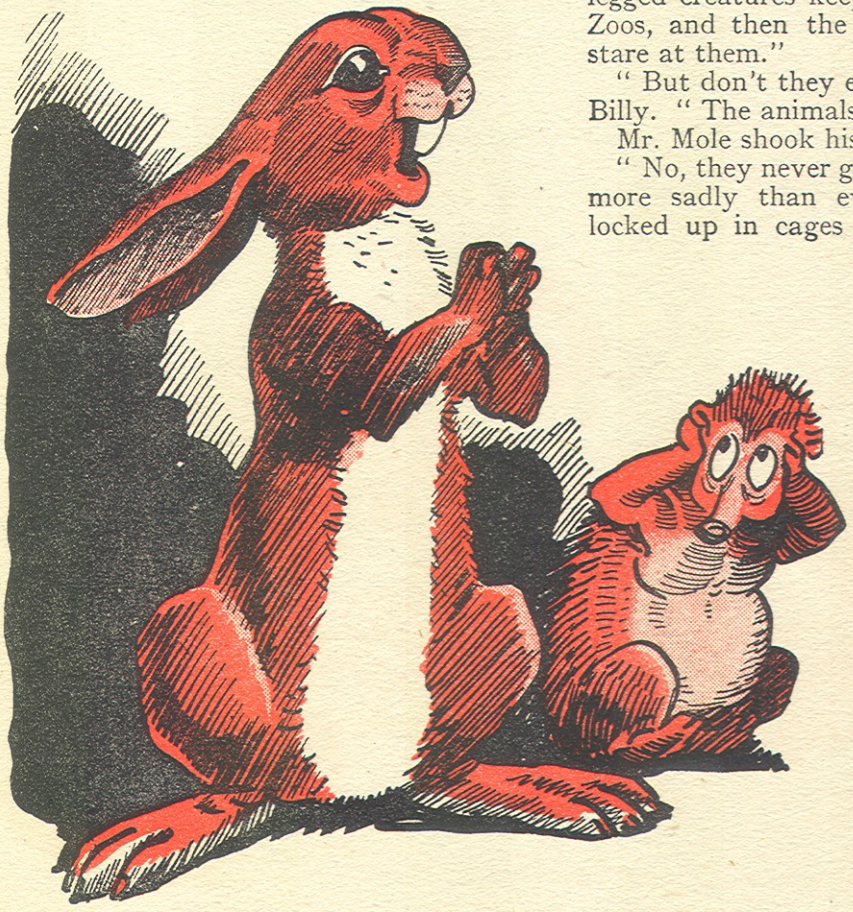
Mr. Mole shook his head.

" No, they never get out, Billy," he said, more sadly than ever. " Once they're locked up in cages in a Zoo they never get out at all."

Poor little Billy was so upset at this, that two great big tears welled up in his eyes and rolled slowly down his face and fell to the grass.

" Grandpa Badger used to give me n-n-nuts ! " sobbed the Dormouse, weeping as though his tiny heart would break.

" Yes, and he used to give us wild berries and roots in the winter time when the ground was hard and we couldn't get any," cried a lot of Billy's rabbit cousins.



" I know he did," nodded Mr. Mole solemnly. " Grandpa Badger was the wisest, the kindest and the dearest old man in the woods. None of us ever went to him in vain, either for advice, for food, for shelter, or for anything. He was the friend of us all."

" Yes, the friend of us all ! " cried the birds and the animals, many of whom were sobbing almost as hard as the Dormouse.

" Well, what's to be done—what's to be done ? " yelled Harold Hare, jumping madly about. " We must do something to stop him being sold to a horrid, hateful Zoo by that nasty, greedy Grunter creature."

" Yes, we must do something," agreed Mr. Mole. " That is why we are holding this meeting. We must think of some way of rescuing poor Grandpa Badger. Has anyone any ideas ? "

" Yes, I have ! " bawled Harold Hare. " I know how we can rescue him ! "

" How ? " cried Mr. Mole and all the other birds and animals excitedly.

" Let's go and gobble up everything in horrid old Grunter's garden ! " yelled Harold.

" But, Harold, that won't rescue poor old Grandpa Badger," cried Mr. Mole.

" Won't it ? " demanded Harold, staring rather stupidly.

" No," said Mr. Mole. " It won't."

" Oh, well, never mind, then," cried Harold. " Just wait a minute and I'll think of something else."

Mr. Mole sighed and turned again to the assembled company.

" Has anyone else got any ideas ? " he asked.

" Where is poor old Grandpa Badger now ? " quavered little Happy.

" He's locked in a stable," sobbed the Dormouse. " I know, because I w-went to see. Being little, none of those great, big, nasty humans noticed me. I slipped into the stable and th-th-there was poor old Grandpa locked in a box with some bars down the front just like a c-c-cage."

" Locked in a box inside a locked stable ? " echoed Happy, in horror and dismay.

" Yes, but that's not all," wept the Dormouse. " The stable is guarded by that awful great savage brute of a dog called Snatcher."

" Oh dear ! " groaned Happy and lots of the other birds and animals, for they all knew Farmer Grunter's great savage dog, Snatcher.

" Did you speak to Grandpa Badger, Dozey ? " cried Willy Water Rat.

" Yes, of c-c-course I did," sobbed the Dormouse.

" What did he say ? " cried a score of anxious voices.

" He said that we weren't to worry about him," wept the Dormouse. " He said that he reckoned his luck was out, but that we weren't to grieve for him. He was ever so, ever so brave. I've never heard anything so brave in all my life. I cried buckets and buckets."

" I wonder you've got any tears left," sniffed Freddy Fox.

" Don't be so heartless ! " cried Sammy Squirrel.

" I'm not being heartless," retorted Freddy Fox. " But crying won't rescue poor old Grandpa. We've got to *do* something ! "

" Yes, but *what ?* " cried all the birds and animals despairingly.

" I know ! " cried Harold Hare, giving a great bound into the air. " I know how we can rescue him ! "

" How ? " cried everyone, including Mr. Mole.

" Let's go and chase that horrid Grunter's great silly sheep all over his fields ! " cried Harold triumphantly.

" Yes, but, Harold, that won't rescue Grandpa Badger," pointed out Mr. Mole.

" Won't it ? " cried Harold, looking quite crestfallen.

" No, of course it won't, you great silly juggins ! " snapped Freddy Fox. " Look, why don't you go and knock your head against a fence for a bit ? "

" What for ? " demanded Harold.

" To stir your brains up," said Freddy.

" My word, yes, that's an idea ! " cried Harold. " I think I will ! "

He bounded away, and, with a grin, Freddy Fox turned to Mr. Mole.

" Now *I've* got an idea," he said.

" Have you, Freddy ? " cried Mr. Mole eagerly, for, like everybody else, he knew how sly and cunning Freddy Fox could be.

" Yes, I have," said Freddy. " The man to whom Farmer Grunter is selling Grandpa Badger isn't coming for Grandpa until the moon is up to-night. I know that, because Oswald Owl heard nasty old Grunter telling his men so. Didn't you, Oswald ? "

" That's right," said Oswald Owl.

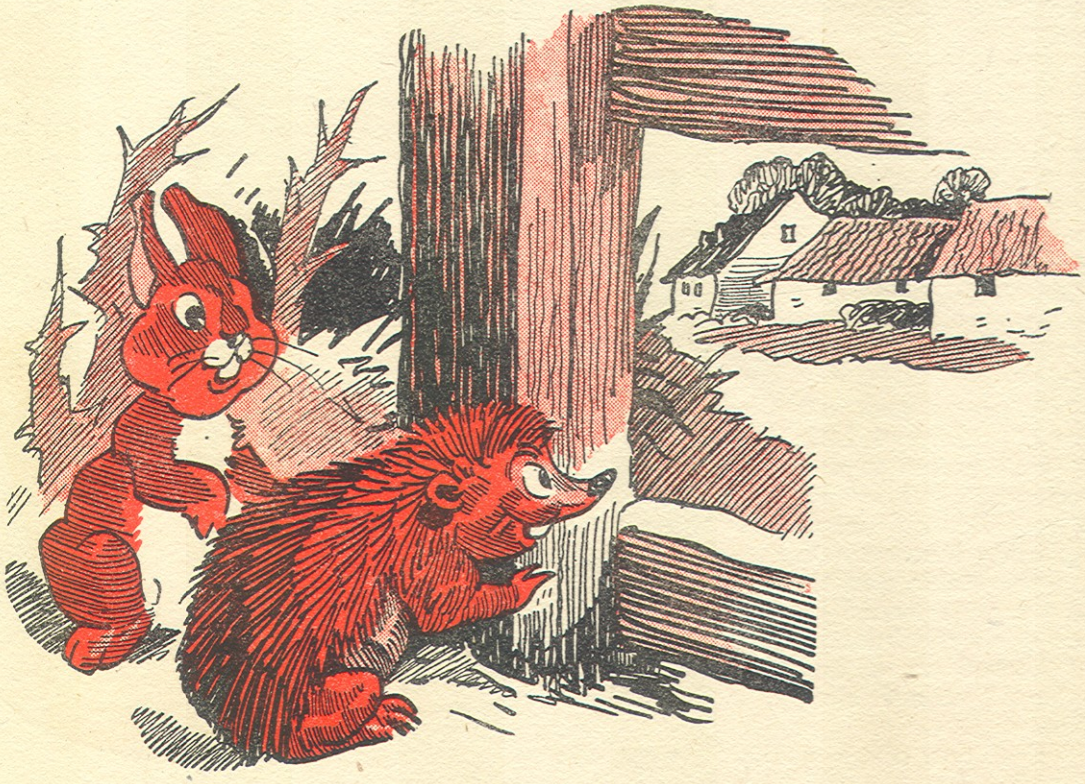
" Well, then," went on Freddy, turning to Mr. Mole again, " what I suggest is this. I'll collect all my relations from all over the countryside. Then to-night we'll raid old Grunter's farmyard and carry off all his chickens."

" Yes, but how will that rescue Grandpa Badger ? " demanded Mr. Mole, looking very puzzled.

" Well, don't you see ? " said Freddy slyly. " Old Grunter will be so mad at losing his chickens that he might be willing to swop old Grandpa Badger for them."

Mr. Mole shook his head.

" He won't," he said. " What he'll do is to get together all the people who work for him and they'll all come after you and your relations with those horrid gun things which go bang."



" Besides," put in Slinky Stoat, the sleek, sly leader of the Stoat pack, " there won't be any chickens left to swop, once Freddy and his relations get hold of them. They'll gobble them up, bones, feathers and all."

" Who will ? " cried Freddy Fox.

" You will ! " said Slinky Stoat, eyeing him steadily. " You and your cousins and your uncles and aunts and the whole bunch of you. I know you Foxes ! "

" Oh, do you ? " sneered Freddy. " And I know you Stoats. Proper turn-coats, that's what you are. Brown coats in the summer and white coats in the winter. What's the idea ? "

" That the Law of our Pack," said Slinky, tilting his sharp little nose in the air in the most conceited manner.

Then he said this rhyme :

" *Brown in the summer is the coat of the Stoat,*
But when winter comes, then white is his coat."

" Swank-pots ! " sneered Freddy Fox. " One colour of coat is good enough for us Foxes, and we're as smart as you Stoats any day of the week——"

" Now, now, please, don't let us have any quarrelling ! " put in Mr. Mole pleadingly. " I'm afraid your plan for rescuing Grandpa Badger won't work, Freddy. Has anyone else got a plan ? "

But no one had. For poor old Grandpa was locked in a box, the box was inside a locked stable, and the stable was guarded by a great savage dog.

That was what baffled them all, as, indeed, it might well have baffled anyone.

One or two of the company did put forward plans. But they were either such silly plans, or so far-fetched, that they were no use at all.

" Well, then," said Mr. Mole mournfully, " all I can suggest is that we adjourn the meeting and that each of us thinks and thinks and thinks just as hard as ever he can, and tries to hit on a plan by which we can rescue Grandpa Badger. We have until to-night in which to think out a plan, because the wicked two-legged creature who is going to take Grandpa to the Zoo isn't coming for him until to-night."

He paused a moment, then went on :

" What I think we ought to do now is to go and call on poor Mrs. Badger and tell her how dreadfully sorry we are that her husband has been caught by that frightful Farmer Grunter creature. We will tell her that we are all doing our very best to think of a plan to rescue Grandpa. That might cheer her up."

" Yes, it will, it will ! " cried all the company eagerly. " Come on, let's go and tell her ! "

Spying Out the Land

" OH, Billy, isn't this awful ? " cried little Happy, as he and Billy Rabbit scuttled along with all the other birds and animals. " I loved dear old Grandpa Badger. He was always so kind and gentle."

" I know he was, Happy," said Billy in a choking sort of voice. " And he used to tell us the most lovely stories. He was so wise and so c-c-clever. As Mr. Mole says, the woods and fields will never be the same without him, Happy."

" I know they won't," agreed Happy. " But he hasn't gone to that dreadful Zoo place yet, and he's not going, either. We've jolly well *got* to rescue him, Billy ! "

" Yes, but how ? " cried Billy.

" We'll find a way," said Happy. " We've just *got* to find a way ! "

By this time, they and the rest of the company had arrived outside Grandpa Badger's home. It was burrowed deep down into a slope which was covered with bushes.

Mr. Mole led the way inside. Happy and Billy kept close beside him. They were followed by Freddy Fox, Slinky Stoat, Willy Water Rat, Percy Partridge and all the rest of the company, including Harold Hare, who was more excited than ever after knocking his head against a fence to stir his brains up.

" I say, what are we going to do now ? " yelled Harold.

" Ss-ssh, don't make such a noise ! " chided Mr. Mole.

" Yes ; but what are we all barging in here for ? " demanded Harold.

" We're calling on poor Mrs. Badger to tell her how sorry we are about her husband being caught," explained Sammy Squirrel.

" Whoopee ! " yelled Harold. " What a wizard idea. Shall we sing to her ? "

" What d'you mean, sing to her ? " snapped Freddy Fox.

" Well, it'll help to cheer her up ! " cried Harold. " I've got a lovely voice ! "

With that, he started to sing :

" The other day I saw a snail
Standing on its silly tail ;
I asked it what it did it for.
It said because its feet were sore ! "

" *Ss-ssh !* " cried Mr. Mole. " Harold, if you must sing, go and sing outside ! "

" But then Mrs. Badger won't hear me," protested Harold.

" She doesn't want to hear you," hissed Slinky Stoat. " None of us wants to hear you. So shut up ! "

" Ha, jealous, I see ! " said Harold loftily. " Jealous of my lovely voice, that's what it is ! "

By this time Mr. Mole, Happy, Billy and those in the forefront of the company had reached Mrs. Badger's big, clean, comfortable kitchen.

They all trooped in, and there was old Mrs. Badger sitting on a chair. She was looking very quiet and sad, but ever so brave.

" Good-morning, Mrs. Badger," said Mr. Mole in an awful solemn voice. " We have come to say how terribly, terribly sorry we are to hear about your poor husband, and to tell you that we mean to rescue him if it is at all possible."

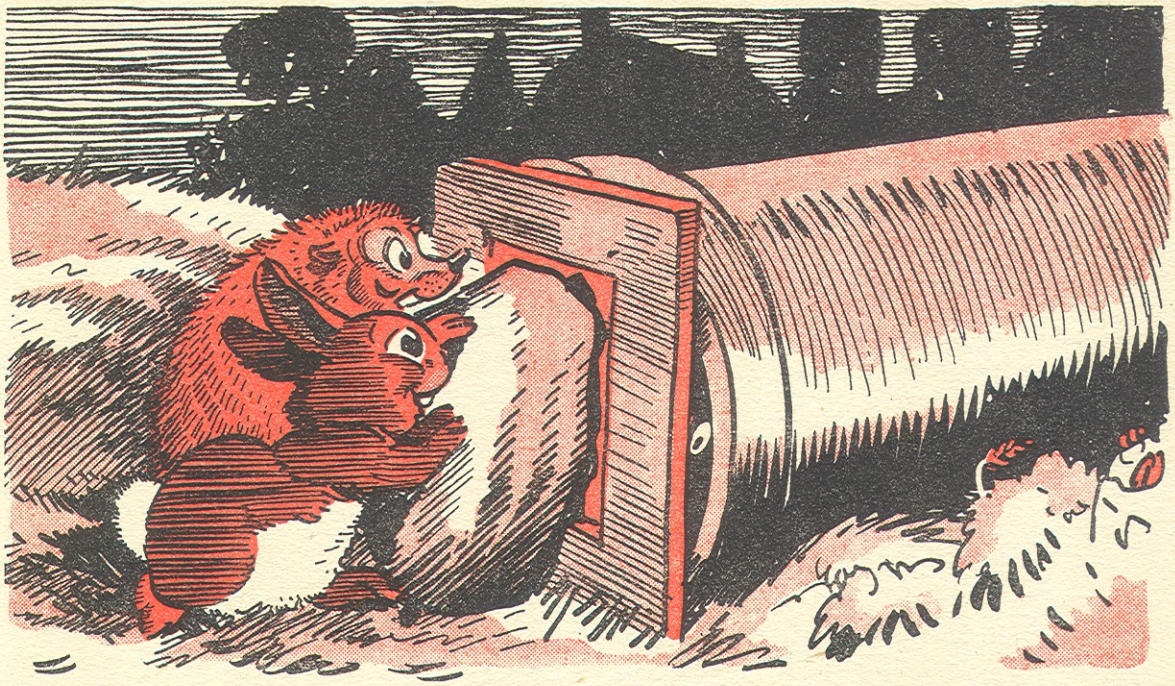
" Thank you, Mr. Mole," said Mrs. Badger, rising. " Thank you all very much indeed."

" It must have been a great shock to you," said Mr. Mole, taking off his spectacles and wiping them.

" It was," faltered poor Mrs. Badger. " He had just stepped out for a breath of fresh air in the moonlight when THEY threw that awful net over him and caught him. THEY were waiting outside for him."

" Boo-hoo-hoo-oo ! " sobbed the Dormouse.

" Will somebody take that Dormouse outside ? " whispered Freddy Fox fiercely. " He'll upset Mrs. Badger, that's what he'll do."



" He can't help being tender-hearted," protested Sammy Squirrel.

" Tender-hearted, my foot ! " sneered Freddy Fox. " I'm tender-hearted, but I don't go blubbering and bawling all over the place."

" That's right ! " yelled Harold Hare so violently that everybody jumped. Then he started to sing :

" Freddy Fox has a tender heart,
But he doesn't blub and bawl ;
In fact, you'd never really think
That he'd got a heart at all ! "

" Harold, please ! " cried Mr. Mole agitatedly. " You mustn't make that noise in here—you really mustn't ! "

" No, I should jolly well think not ! " snapped Freddy Fox, glowering at Harold. " He seems to think that this is a party, instead of a very sad and solemn occasion. I vote that he and the Dormouse be put outside."

" No, no," cried old Mrs. Badger hastily. " I'm sure that Harold is just trying to cheer us all up. And as for the poor little Dormouse, I think it's ever so, ever so kind of him to feel so upset about my poor husband. I'm sure," she went on, dabbing at her eyes with the corner of her apron, " you're all being very, very kind to me indeed."

" You and your husband were always very kind to us, ma'am," said Mr. Mole solemnly. " It breaks our hearts to think that he is no longer with us. But we'll rescue him yet," he cried, gripping fiercely on the handle of his little walking-stick. " We'll rescue him yet ! "

" I'm sure you will," said Mrs. Badger bravely, drying her eyes with her apron. " Now if you will all sit down I'll make you some tea and give you some cake."

" Oh, goody ! " cried Willy Water Rat, rubbing his tummy. " I love cake."

" So do I," cried Sammy Squirrel. " Especially when it's got nuts in it."

" I've got some nice cake with nuts in it, Sammy," said Mrs. Badger, putting a great big kettle on the gas-stove. " Now, Happy, perhaps you and Billy will help me to set out the cups and the saucers and the plates."

Happy and Billy were only too pleased to help, of course, and very soon all the company were eating the most lovely

cake and drinking tea with rich, yellow cream in it.

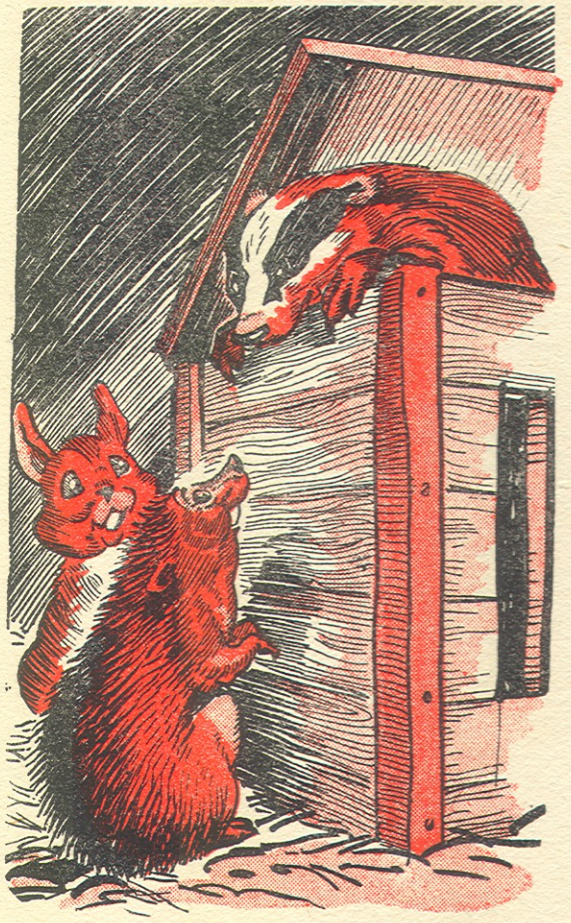
As they did so, Mr. Mole talked with Mrs. Badger about the rescuing of old Grandpa Badger. But he had to admit that he didn't yet know how it was to be done.

As for Happy, he was sitting in a corner with Billy, eating his cake and drinking his tea and looking very thoughtful indeed. Suddenly he whispered :

" Listen, Billy, when they all go you and I will stay behind and help Mrs. Badger to wash up."

" Yes, of course we will," agreed little Billy readily.

" Then we'll slip along to horrid old Grunter's farm just by our two selves," whispered Happy.



" But what for ? " demanded Billy.

" To spy out the land," whispered Happy excitedly. " I'm beginning to get an idea about how we might rescue poor old Grandpa Badger. But we'll have to spy out the land first."

" Oh, do tell me, Happy," whispered Billy eagerly. " What is the idea ? "

" I'll tell you later," promised Happy. " I haven't got it properly worked out yet. I can't, either, until we've spied out the land."

" What are you two whispering about over there ? " demanded Freddy Fox, eyeing them suspiciously.

" We're saying that's the third piece of cake you've had," said Billy cheekily.

" Oh, are you ? " snapped Freddy Fox, glowering at them. " Then just mind your own business, will you ? "

" Yes, if you'll let us," said Billy.

" Lettuce ! " yelled Harold Hare, who was sitting on the floor with his back against the wall and his plate balanced on his knees. " Who's talking about lettuce ? Golly ! I couldn't half do with some lettuce. I love lettuce—lovely juicy lettuce ! "

Then he started to sing :

" Let us have some lettuce,
Some jolly juicy lettuce ;
Oh, get us some lettuce,
For that's the stuff for me ! "

" Did you ever hear such a row ? " demanded Freddy Fox, turning in disgust to Slinky Stoat.

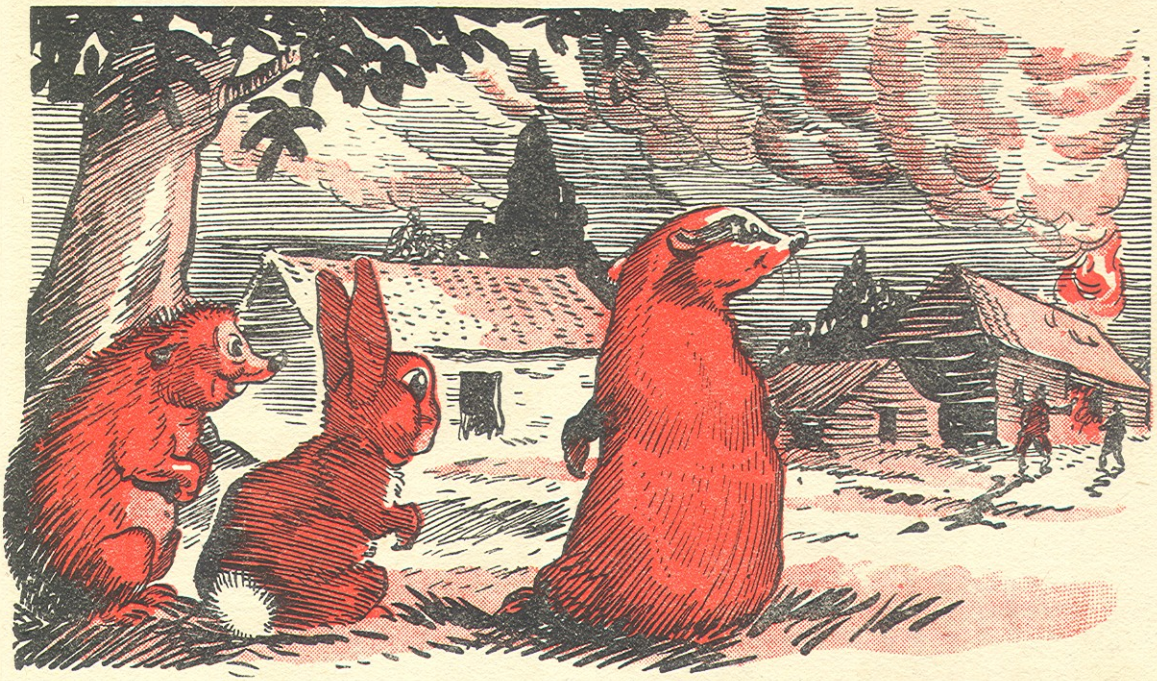
" No, I'm hanged if I did," replied Slinky. " I'd rather hear Cuthbert Corncrake singing, and that's bad enough."

He broke off, as Mr. Mole rose from his chair and cried :

" Well, if you are all ready, I think we had better go now. I have told Mrs. Badger that we are going to do our very best to rescue her poor husband and that she is not to give up hope."

" I'm sure it is very kind of you all," faltered Mrs. Badger.

A few minutes later, after having thanked Mrs. Badger very much for the lovely cake and tea, the company trooped off to hold another meeting in the meadow.



Only Happy and Billy stayed behind. And after they had helped Mrs. Badger to wash up, they bade her good-bye and scampered excitedly away.

" And now for the farm ! " cried Happy, when they were outside the Badgers' underground house.

" Yes, but we must be careful of that great, nasty, savage dog," said Billy.

" Pooh ! he'll never see us if we're careful," cried Happy. " Come on ! "

They scuttled away through the woods and across the fields until they got near to Farmer Grunter's farm. They went more slowly and carefully then, until they reached the long grass and nettles which grew outside the farmyard wall.

Creeping along through the grass and nettles, they reached the farmyard gate and peeped inside.

" Which stable do you think poor old Grandpa Badger can be locked in ? " whispered Billy Rabbit.

" That one there, of course," whispered Happy, pointing with his tiny paw towards a stable, outside which a big, savage-looking dog was standing. " Where that great, horrid Snatcher is."

" Oh, yes, of course ! " said Billy. Then he gave a shudder and said : " Oh, Happy, I do hope that dreadful Snatcher doesn't see us ! "

" He won't, if we keep quiet," whispered Happy. " Now let's have a good look at the place."

With his bright little eyes he took a good stare through the gate at the stable and all round the farmyard. Then suddenly he gave a start.

" Look, Billy—look there ! " he whispered excitedly.

" Where ? " demanded Billy.

" There ! " said Happy, pointing with his little paw. " Do you see that great, long, tunnel sort of thing lying over there near the wall ? "

The long, tunnel sort of thing was really an old disused drain-pipe. But neither Happy nor Billy knew its proper name, of course.

" Yes, I see it," said Billy. " What about it, Happy ? "

" It's given me an idea ! " cried Happy, fairly quivering with excitement. " You remember when we were at Mrs. Badger's I told you that I was beginning to get an

idea about how we could rescue old Grandpa Badger. Well, that tunnel sort of thing has shown me how we can work it ! "

" How ? " cried Billy eagerly.

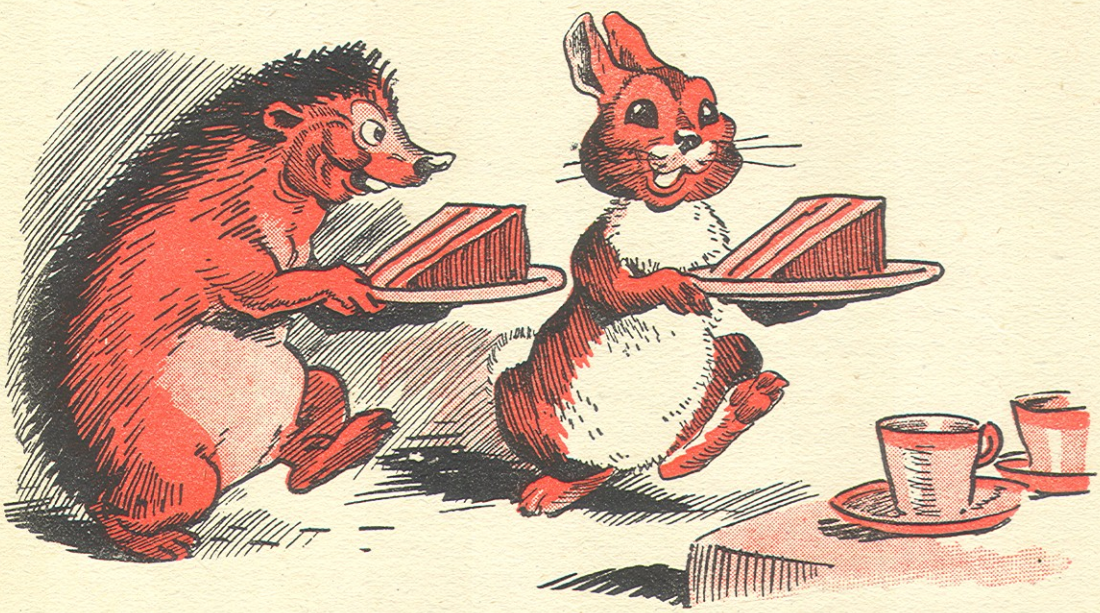
" Come away and I'll tell you," whispered Happy. " Come on. Oh, goodness, this is marvellous ! "

A Trap for Snatcher

But when Billy had heard Happy's plan for rescuing old Grandpa Badger, he didn't seem to think it so very marvellous. In fact, his eyes fairly bulged with fright and astonishment.

something if we're going to rescue old Grandpa Badger. We can't get him out of that nasty stable and out of that horrid old box without taking *some* risk. And just think how grand it'll be when we bring him home, with everybody cheering their heads off and mad with joy and shaking him by the paw, and clapping him on the back. Yes, and shaking us by the paw as well, because it'll have been us who've done it. Oh, Billy, won't that be wonderful ? "

He sat gazing at Billy with shining eyes. But Billy was still quite frightened.



The pair of them were sitting in the long grass and nettles outside the farmyard wall.

" But, Happy, it's going to be terribly, terribly risky," cried Billy fearfully.

" Oh, no, it's not." said Happy. " I know it might sound so at first, but it's not if you think about it long enough."

" But suppose that dreadful dog, Snatcher, catches us ? " cried Billy.

" He won't catch us," said little Happy. " Not if we're smart. How can he catch us ? "

" Yes, but he might ! " cried Billy.

" Pooh, pigs might fly ! " cried Happy scornfully. " Anyway, we've got to risk

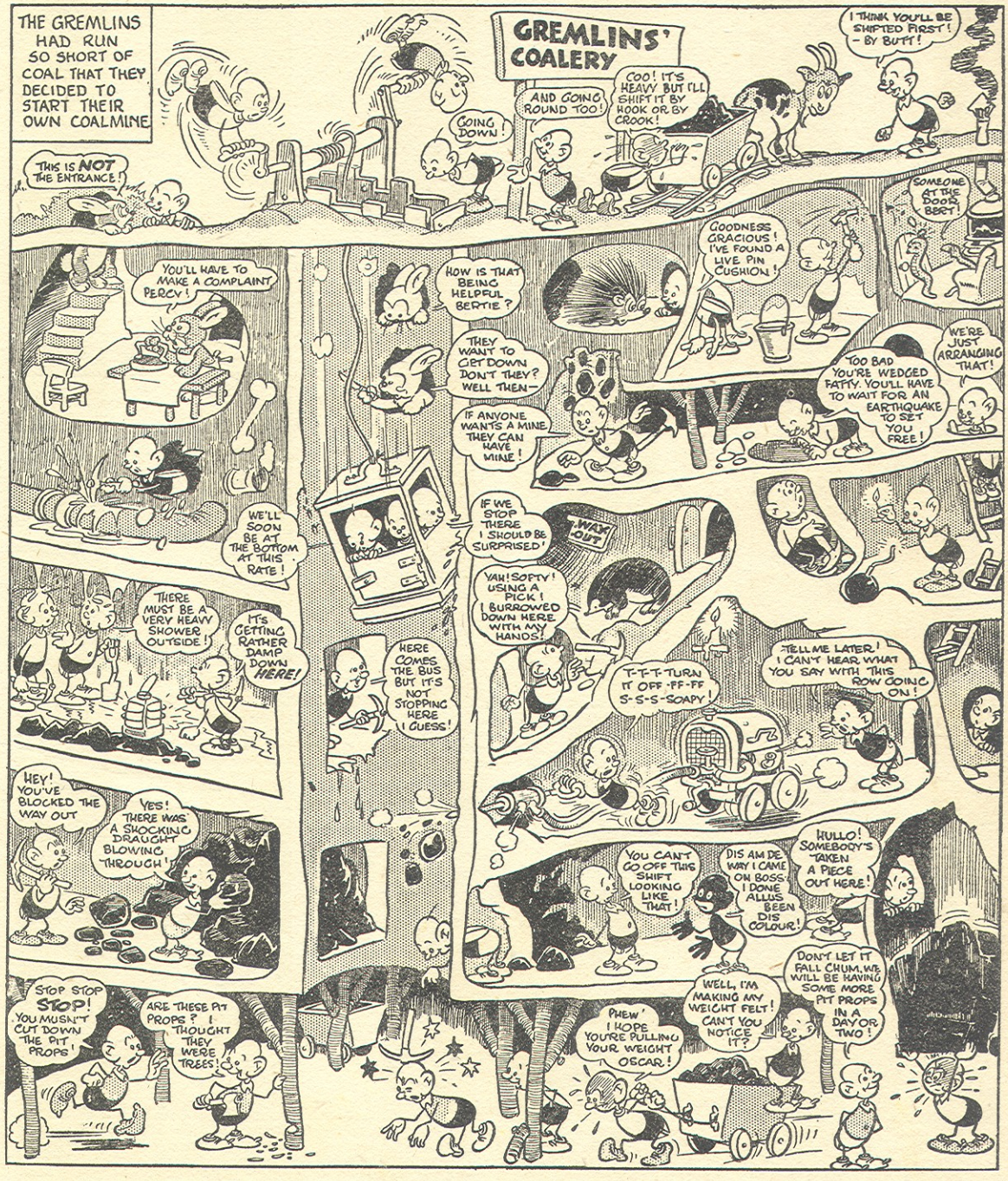
" Suppose something goes wrong ? " he quavered.

" Nothing will go wrong ! " cried Happy. " How can it ? Look, I'll tell you what. We can't do anything until to-night. So let's go now to that old house under the willow tree, where Mr. Otter used to live. Then we'll spend all the rest of the afternoon in practising my plan. We'll keep on practising and practising the rescue until we know exactly what to do. Come on, let's go ! "

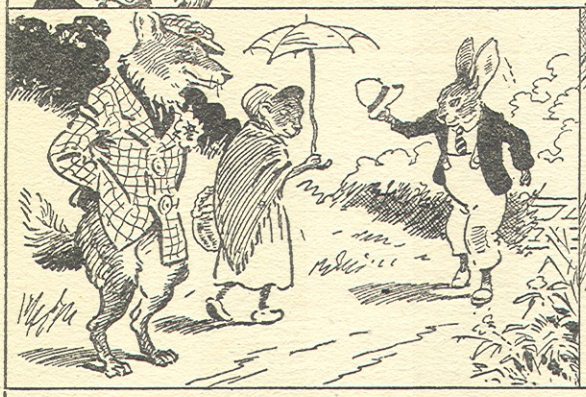
He scuttled away, followed by Billy. They went first to the old house where Mr. Otter used to live. It hadn't been

(*Now turn to page* 176)

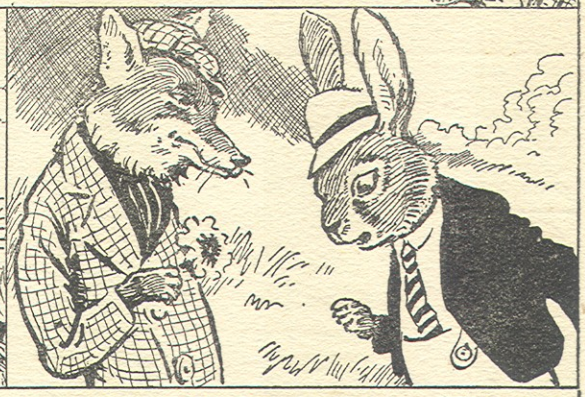
IT'S THE GREMLINS



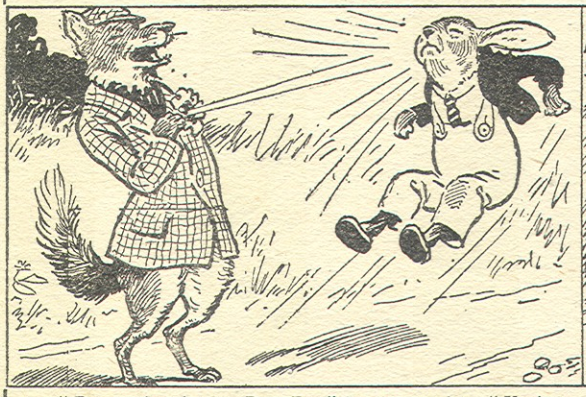
BRER RABBIT AND THE STRAWBERRIES



1. Brer Rabbit was walking along the road one fine morning, when he met Missus Dormouse. Being mighty perlite, Brer Rabbit takes off his hat, he does, and he sez, sez he: "I hopes I see you well, Missus Dormouse." And Missus Dormouse sez she is pretty middling. Brer Rabbit passes on his way.

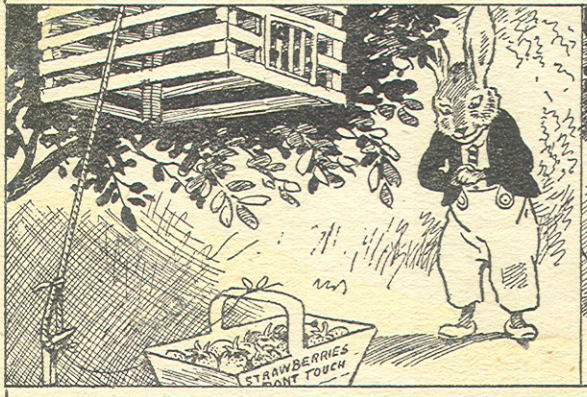


2. And there was Brer Fox grinning at him. "This road is mighty crowded this morning," sez Brer Rabbit, sez he. Brer Rabbit was on his way to Mister Man's strawberry garden, so he didn't want a crowd watching him. But he greeted Brer Fox like he was a long-lost brother and glad to see him.

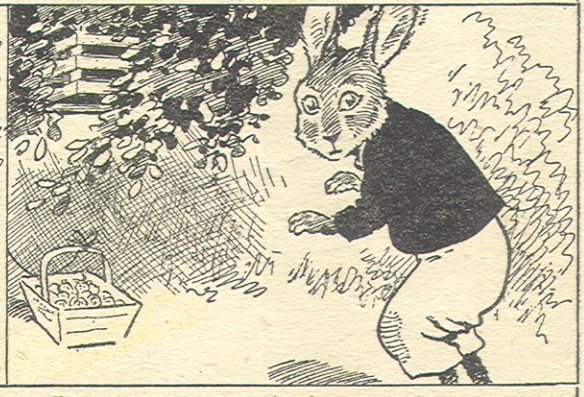


3. "For goodness' sake, Brer Fox," he sez, sez he. "You've got your best clothes on. Mebbe you're gwine to a wedding," he sez. Brer Fox he grinned, he did, and sez: "Mebbe I is, Brer Rabbit, and mebbe I isn't." And Brer Rabbit sez, sez he: "Folks only has buttonholes at a wedding, Brer Fox." he sez.

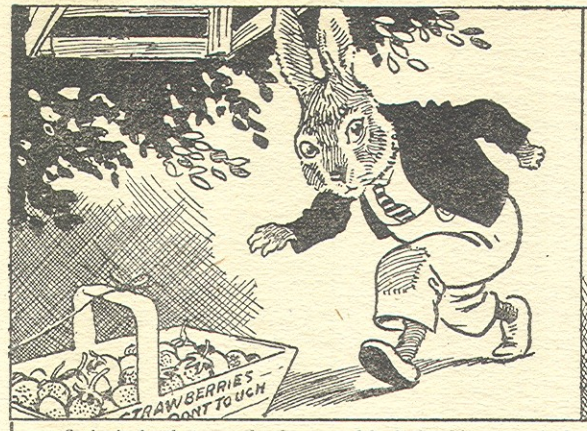
4. "I wears this flower 'cause it smells good," sez Brer Fox, sez he. "You smell it, Brer Rabbit." So Brer Rabbit steps up and takes a sniff. Then Brer Fox presses a rubber bulb what he has in his side pocket, and a spurt of water shoots out of that flower right into his face. Brer Fox laffed himself sick.



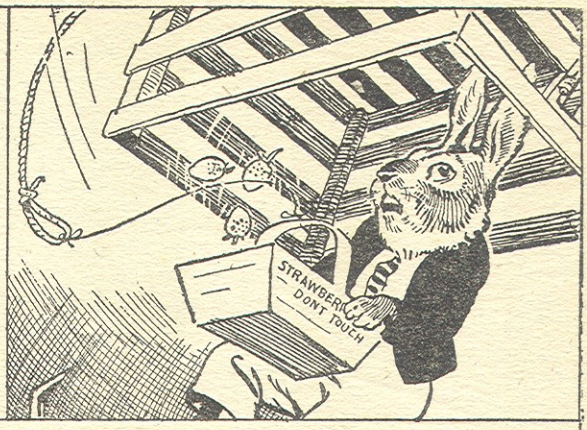
5. But poor old Brer Rabbit, he goes off feeling mighty sore, and mighty damp, too. But he soon forgets 'bout all that, 'cause he comes to Mister Man's strawberry garden. And if there's one thing Brer Rabbit jest loves, it's strawberries. And what does he see but a basket full o' strawberries.



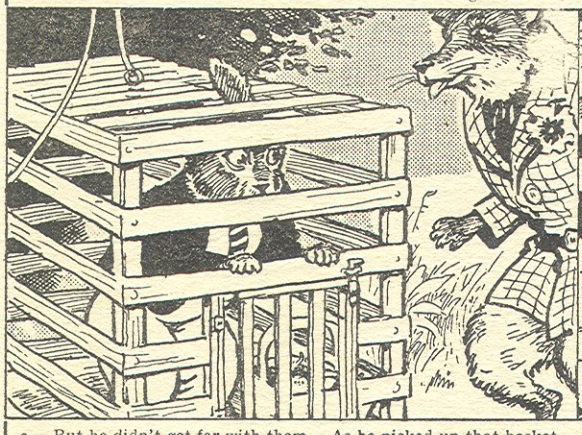
6. There it was, on the ground under a tree with nobody to look after it at all. So Brer Rabbit he looks this way; then he looks that way. And there's nobody around as far as he could see. And the strawberries jest lay there in the basket, and Brer Rabbit allowed they'd go bad left there on the ground.



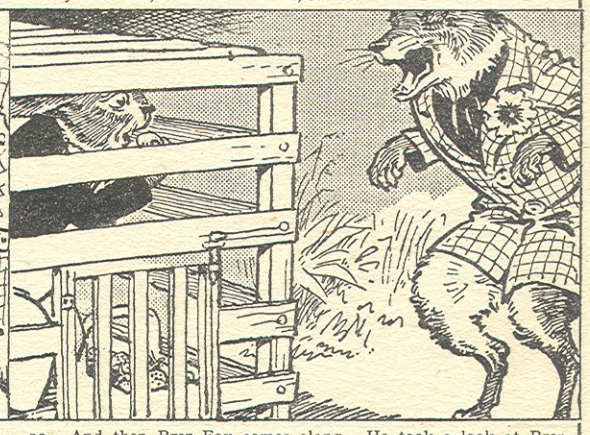
7. So he looks that way, he does; and he looks this way. And there's nobody anywhere near. He couldn't see Mister Man and he couldn't scent him. And the strawberries were jest too inviting, they were. "If I has one or two," sez Brer Rabbit, sez he, "Mister Man won't even miss them." So he goes nearer.



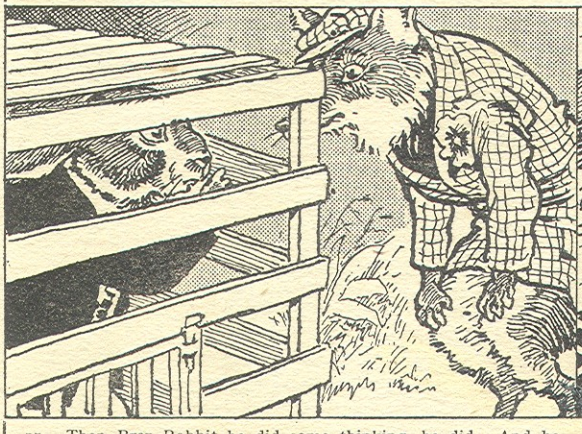
8. And the nearer he got to those strawberries the better he liked 'em. It seemed a shame to take only one or two. There was Missus Rabbit at home, and all the children. They liked strawberries, too. "Mebbe Mister Man left them strawberries there jest for me," sez Brer Rabbit, sez he. And he took them.



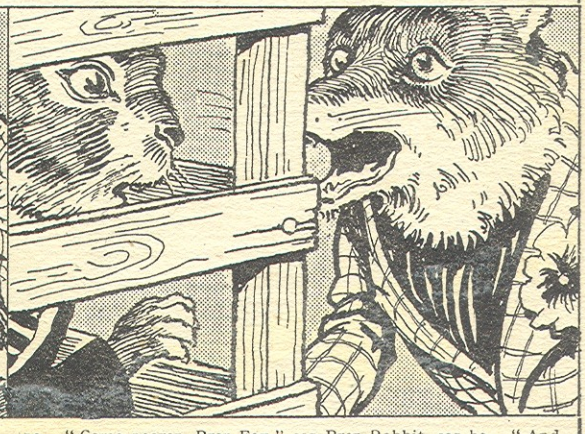
9. But he didn't get far with them. As he picked up that basket off the ground, a wooden crate came down plonk out of the tree. And before Brer Rabbit knew what was happening, there he was —cotched. "Ooh, dear," sez Brer Rabbit, sez he. "Now what'll I do? Mister Man will beat me when he finds me!"



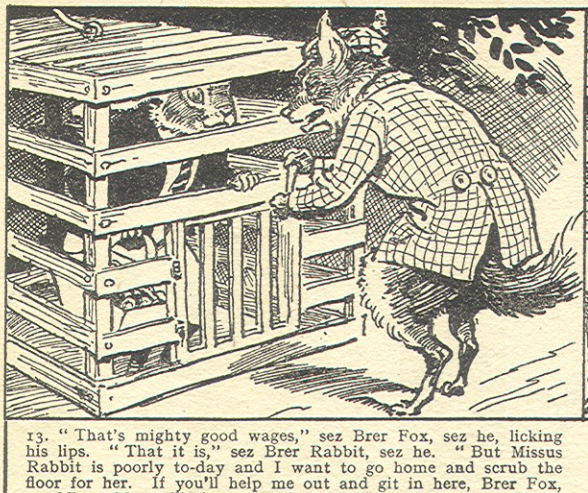
10. And then Brer Fox comes along. He took a look at Brer Rabbit in the trap and laffed, and laffed, and laffed. "Oh, my goody!" he laffed, holding his sides. "The clever Brer Rabbit is nicely cotched," he sez, sez he. "Won't Mister Man larrup your hide when he comes!" And he goes on laffing.



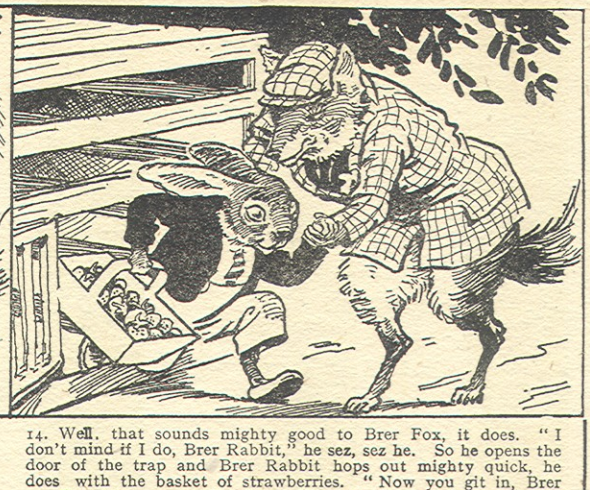
11 Then Brer Rabbit he did some thinking, he did. And he ups and sez, sez he: "You've got it wrong, Brer Fox. I isn't cotched. I's working for Mister Man." Mister Fox stops laffing then. "Is that so, Brer Rabbit," he sez, sez he. "And how might you be working for Mister Man in that there crate?"



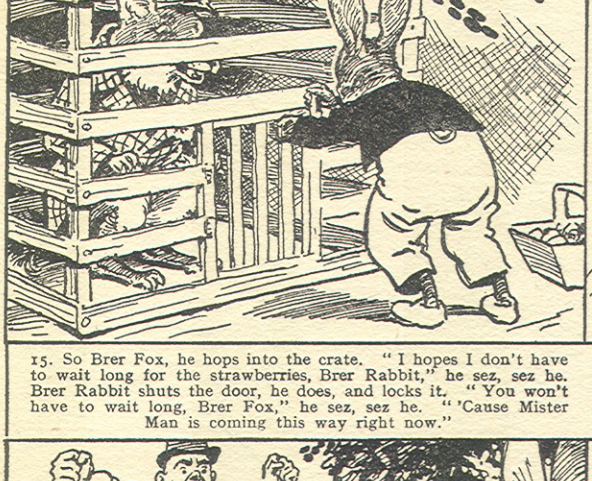
12. "Come nearer, Brer Fox," sez Brer Rabbit, sez he. "And I'll tell you. I'm hiding" he sez, "and watching." "What for?" Brer Fox axes him. "I'm watching for the thief who steals the strawberries," sez Brer Rabbit, sez he. "And this basket o' strawberries is my wages. But I'm tired of the job."



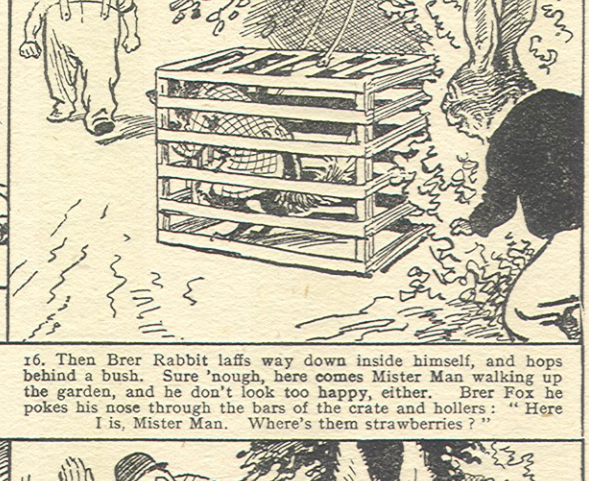
13. "That's mighty good wages," sez Brer Fox, sez he, licking his lips. "That it is," sez Brer Rabbit, sez he. "But Missus Rabbit is poorly to-day and I want to go home and scrub the floor for her. If you'll help me out and git in here, Brer Fox, Mister Man will give you a basket o' strawberries, too!"



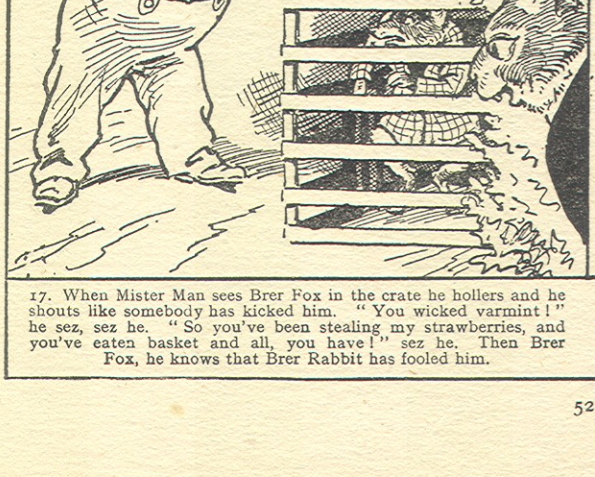
14. Well, that sounds mighty good to Brer Fox, it does. "I don't mind if I do, Brer Rabbit," he sez, sez he. So he opens the door of the trap and Brer Rabbit hops out mighty quick, he does with the basket of strawberries. "Now you git in, Brer Fox," he sez, sez he, "and I'll shut the door for you."



15. So Brer Fox, he hops into the crate. "I hopes I don't have to wait long for the strawberries, Brer Rabbit," he sez, sez he. Brer Rabbit shuts the door, he does, and locks it. "You won't have to wait long, Brer Fox," he sez, sez he. "'Cause Mister Man is coming this way right now."

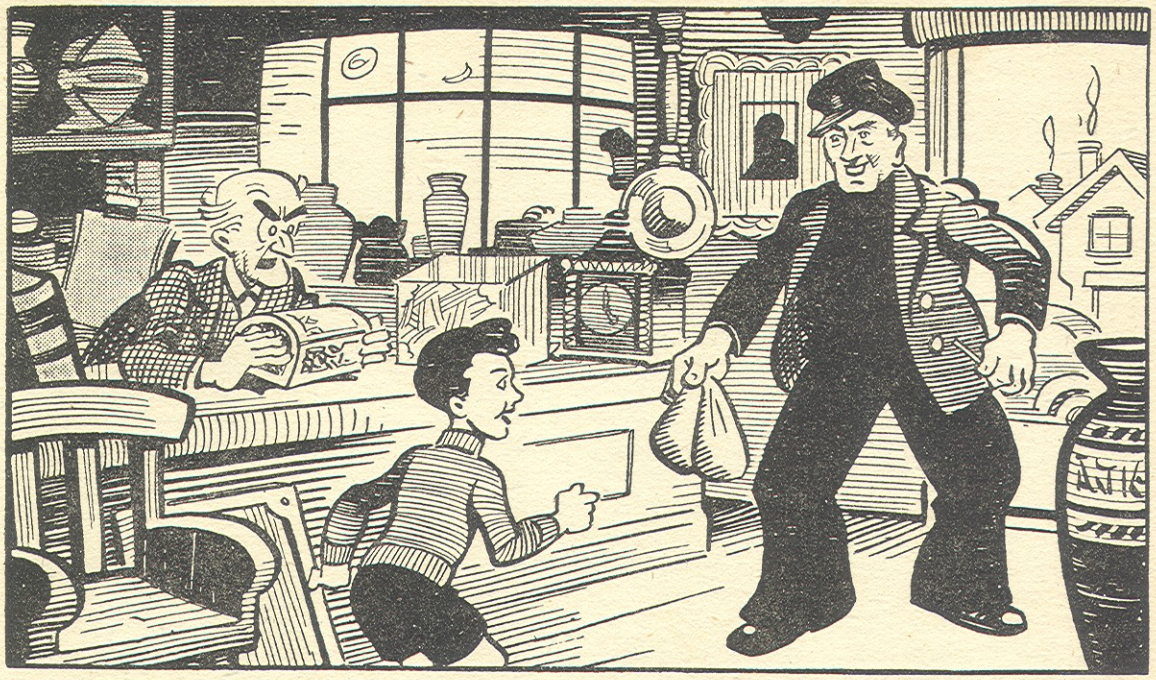


16. Then Brer Rabbit laffs way down inside himself, and hops behind a bush. Sure 'nough, here comes Mister Man walking up the garden, and he don't look too happy, either. Brer Fox he pokes his nose through the bars of the crate and hollers: "Here I is, Mister Man. Where's them strawberries?"



17. When Mister Man sees Brer Fox in the crate he hollers and he shouts like somebody has kicked him. "You wicked varmint!" he sez, sez he. "So you've been stealing my strawberries, and you've eaten basket and all, you have!" sez he. Then Brer Fox, he knows that Brer Rabbit has fooled him.

18. "No, I ain't, Mister Man!" he squeals. He tried to explain, but Mister Man he ain't listening at all. He opens the crate and drags Brer Fox out. And he larrups him good and hearty, he does. Brer Fox hollers for mercy, but Brer Rabbit just laffs and toddles home with his strawberries.



MICKEY'S PAL THE WIZARD

A Sailor brings Mickey a Surprise Packet of Seeds

The Mysterious Seeds

It was Saturday morning, and Mickey and Betty Royston planned how they would spend the day, as they finished their breakfast. It was a scanty meal of dry bread and weak tea, for their uncle, Silas Marley, was the meanest man in Barchester.

"We'll put the flowers in the boxes, and take them up to the school first," said Mickey. "Then——"

"What's that about flowers?" asked Silas Marley, looking up from a borrowed morning paper.

"We told you about them some time ago, Uncle, when the teacher gave us some seeds. You said we could use the greenhouse and some boxes. Now that the plants are big enough, they'll be sold to help the Seamen's Comfort Fund," explained Betty. "We raised a fine lot, and I expect they'll fetch quite a lot of money—maybe a penny each."

"Hu, hu!" cackled Silas. "They fetched tuppence each, and the fella I sold 'em to 'll make fruppence—so you needn't go to the greenhouse. It's empty."

"Then we'll take the money along to teacher instead. There were three hundred and seven plants—say, six hundred pence—that's two pounds, ten shillings. Teacher will be pleased," said Mickey.

"You can have the one and two, and that's more than the seeds were worth by a long chalk. But the plants grew in my greenhouse and my boxes, and the time you spent on them was my time, 'cos I'm keeping you, see!" grunted Silas, getting up. "I'll be back in five minutes, so you two keep an eye on the shop!"

"You stingy, horrid old man!" shouted Mickey. "That was our money! You've stolen it!"

"Call me a thief, would you?" yelped Silas, and clouted his nephew's ears.

" Another word out of you, and the pair of you go out of here ! " and he ran out, slamming the door.

" Whatever shall we say to teacher ? " said Betty miserably.

" I'll tell the truth. But I wish I had the money, and I wish Uncle Silas could be punished for treating us in this way ! " muttered Mickey.

With an odd swishing sound, a cloud of greenish smoke swirled through the door, and, as it touched the ground, it changed into the tall figure of a brown-skinned, bearded man, in green, Eastern robes. He was Akbar el Bagrag, an old-time wizard, whom Mickey had released from a brass bottle, in which he had been imprisoned for thousands of years. To show his gratitude, he was always ready to give Mickey anything for which he wished.

" So ! Here am I, beloved youth ! " he boomed, in his deep voice. " Behold, I will grant thy wishes, and I think it would be well to take to thy teacher more than the sum out of which thy uncle hath diddled thee, seeing that the cause is good. Here are three gold pieces of the mighty Sultan Mahmoud, worth more than thou dost require. And as for thy uncle, it may be that thou shalt laugh at him ! Ararack ! Lakhoum ! Peace and plenty ! "

With these words of power the wizard vanished, leaving on the table a big box of Turkish delight, a couple of pounds of best chocolate, a large jar of honey, and three heavy gold coins decorated with queer, Eastern letters.

" Quick ! Let's hide everything before uncle sees them ! " exclaimed Betty, and, putting the coins in his pocket, Mickey helped her to hide the sweets in their attic.

As they were coming down again a man, who looked like a sailor, came into the shop and laid a fine Chinese lacquer box on the counter.

" I see you deal in this here sort o' thing," he said. " How much will you gimme for this ? "

" My uncle will be back in a minute," replied Mickey, " and he'll probably buy it, and make a lot out of it. But you ask for three times as much as he offers you, and you'll get a fair price," replied Mickey. " Here he comes ! "

Silas came in and examined the box. He saw that it was valuable, and knew that he could get at least ten pounds for it.

" I'll give you three quid for it," he said, but the sailor shook his head.

" No go, guv'nor. I want nine quid for it," he said.

Silas nearly fainted at that, but, after a long wrangle, bought the box for eight pounds. Then the sailor beckoned Mickey who was standing at the back of the shop.

" Here's something for you, young 'un." He dumped two small leather bags on the counter. " This one's full of seeds o' the Mjun Wonder Flower, and the stuff in the other bag's the fertiliser that makes 'em grow so fast you'd hardly believe it ! Put some o' the seeds in good soil, water 'em with a teaspoonful of fertiliser in four gallons of water, and you'll be astonished, for they come up in a night. So long ! "

With a nod and a wink to Mickey, he strolled out—and Silas made a jump and grabbed the two bags.

" He gave them to me ! " cried Mickey indignantly. " Surely you're not going to sneak 'em ? "

" What's yours is mine," chuckled Silas. " D'you think I brought you two brats up on thin air ? "

" Not much else ! " retorted Mickey. " But those seeds won't do you any good. You'll be sorry you stole them ! "

" Come on ! " whispered Betty, tugging at Mickey's sleeve. " Leave him alone, and see what happens."

The pair slipped out and ran to the schoolhouse. Of course, Mickey couldn't tell the teacher about Akbar el Bagrag, so he merely said that a friend had given him the three gold coins for the fund, instead of the plants. Then they returned home by a back way, for they wanted to see what their uncle was going to do with the Wonder Flower seeds.

Silas was very busy. He hadn't told the children anything, but he had learnt that day that the Farmers' Association was going to hold a meeting in Barchester Town Hall. The Mayor would preside and afterwards give the farmers tea. The

Mayor had a large nursery garden just outside the town, and most of the farmers bought seeds and plants from him.

" If that sailor was telling the truth, those seeds may sprout in time for me to sell the farmers some of the seedlings. I ought to get a good price out of 'em," he chuckled to himself. " They always pay well for something new."

So he collected all the flowerpots, jars and boxes he could find, and filled them up with good rich soil. Then he opened the bag of seeds. They were very small, so he had to put a tiny pinch in each flower-pot.

While he was doing this, Mickey and Betty returned and, peeping through the hedge at the bottom of the garden, they saw him hard at work in the greenhouse. He was sowing the seeds and mixing the fertiliser powder with water in a big watering-can. He had used the first batch, and was mixing the second when the shop door-bell rang. Silas growled, rinsed his hands in the watering-can, and ran indoors. He wasn't going to lose a customer if he could help it !

As he disappeared, Mickey dived through the hedge, ran into the greenhouse, and hoisted the watering-can on to a high shelf above the door. Then, half closing, the door, he balanced the can on top so that it would topple over on to anyone entering the greenhouse. Then he raced back to cover.

" Oh, Mickey, you shouldn't have done that ! " cried Betty. " It might hurt uncle if it falls on his head ! "

" It couldn't ! His head's solid bone ! " replied Mickey. " First he stole our plants, and then he grabbed the seeds the sailor gave me, so he deserves anything that's coming to him. Let's get away before he comes back."

Silas had found the Mayor in his shop. They weren't good friends, for the Mayor had fined him several times for small offences, but this morning His Honour was smiling genially.

" Ah, good morning, Marley ! " he said. " I've just been looking at that batch of plants you sold to Capper this morning. They're a good lot. How did you grow them ? I mean, did you use any special treatment ? I want to give a little talk to the Flower Farmers to-morrow, about the best way to grow fuchsias and delphiniums. What fertiliser did you use ? "

Now, Silas knew very little about gardening, but he didn't want to tell the Mayor that, so he said :

" I believe I've got something better than I've ever used before ! I got it from a sailor this morning, and he said it would surprise me—but I don't know what it is."

" Let me see," said the Mayor, so Silas led him outside and at once saw something very strange and wonderful.

Most of the flower-pots, in which he had sown the seeds and then watered with the fertiliser, stood in rows outside the greenhouse. When Silas left them, they had been full of brown earth, but now the earth was hidden by a growth of small, green leaves and buds, for the seeds had sprouted. No wonder Silas stopped with a gasp of surprise, and pointed a shaky finger at the pots.

" They—that's them," he stammered, " and the seed hasn't been in a quarter of an hour ! That's what this fertiliser has done. Ain't it wonderful ? "

" Er—— I suppose so," agreed the Mayor. " But really, Marley, a quarter of an hour is a very short time. Surely you're making a mistake ? "

" Seeing's believing, ain't it ? " sneered Silas. " I tell you, I put seeds into those pots not a quarter of an hour ago, and watered them with fertiliser, according to directions—and now they've all sprouted up. But you come into the greenhouse, and I'll show you the stuff."

Luckily for the Mayor, Silas trotted ahead. When he shoved open the greenhouse door, Mickey's booby trap worked perfectly ! The watering-can turned over neatly, and poured two gallons of mystery mixture over his head, face and body, before falling to the floor. The Mayor laughed heartily.

" Queer way you have of washing yourself, Marley ! " he chuckled. " Still, every little helps. I'm afraid I can't wait till you dry yourself, but if those things keep on growing, you might bring me a

specimen. It's very interesting. However, I'm due on the bench now, so I'll be off! Good morning!"

"Orright!" growled Silas. "That varmint Mickey did it. I'll punish him for this!"

"Reasonable correction, only, remember!" said the Mayor with a smile, as he left Silas. "No violence, remember!"

He hurried away, while Silas, who felt most uncomfortable in his wet clothes, hastily stowed away the remainder of the seeds and fertiliser, and went indoors to dry himself and put on dry clothes.

His skin itched frightfully, and the backs of his hands were disappearing under a thick growth of hair! With a spasm of dismay, Silas ran into the shop and glared at his tingling face in the mirror.

What a shock he had! The fertiliser, which had made the seeds sprout so swiftly, had had the same effect on his skin, and his face and neck were covered with long black hair. Yelling with rage, he snatched up a stick and dashed out. He meant to give Mickey a good thrashing.

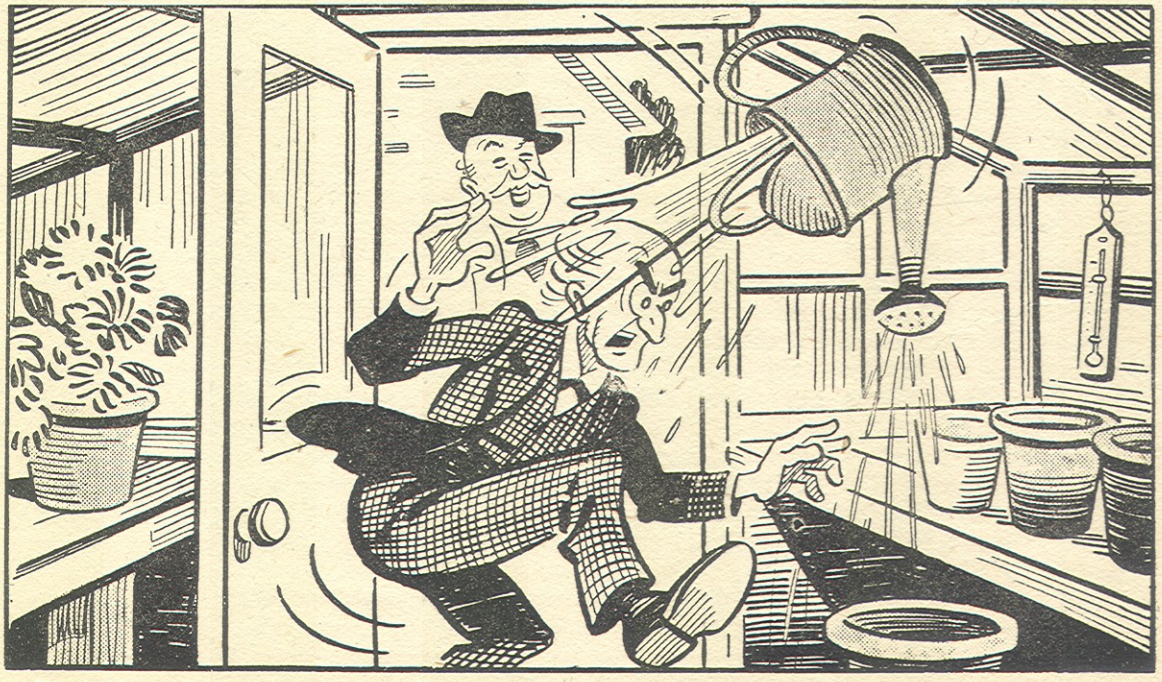
"Let's go and see Mr. Middleton," said Betty, as the pair slowed down to a walk at a safe distance from home. "Perhaps Uncle Silas will have cooled down by this afternoon; but I don't think you should have made that booby trap, Mickey!"

"I'm not sorry!" declared Mickey defiantly. "Come on! I wonder if there are any more animals at Mr. Middleton's!"

Mr. Middleton was a dealer in animals, and he also ran a tea garden, which he called the Ark, because, before the War, he had kept monkeys, parrots and other foreign creatures in an old barge. But lately he had seldom had anything but kittens and puppies and pigeons, but, since Mickey and Betty loved animals, they liked these just as well.

"Hello! Here we are again!" said Mr. Middleton cheerily, as he saw Mickey and Betty. "You're in luck this time," he added, "for I've got a fine big pal for you who's called Neb, which is short for Nebuchadnezzar! Hi, Neb! Come here!"

One of the Ark doors opened and out came a big chimpanzee, wearing one of Mr. Middleton's old suits, and a broad smile on his face. Chuckling loudly, he ran forward and shook hands with Mickey and Betty.



The booby trap worked perfectly! The watering-can poured two gallons of mystery mixture over Silas!

" He's boarding with me while his owner's on a trip to America," explained Mr. Middleton. " He has been brought up like a human child and is quite tame. You can take him for a short walk if you like, because he's perfectly trustworthy, except that if he sees any fruit, grapes or bananas he'll try to get them ! "

" Well, as there have been no grapes or bananas in the shops for years," said Betty, " it'll be all right. You'll behave yourself, won't you, Neb ? " she went on, stroking the chimpanzee.

" Eee ! Ee-eee ! " squealed Neb, and, turning a somersault, clutched Betty's hand and waddled towards the gate. Mickey followed.

" Let's go back to the school and show him to Teacher," he suggested. " He's fond of animals. I wonder if you're fond of teachers, Neb !? "

" Eee-eee! " replied Neb, and made a noise like " Yes ! "

But, to get to the school, they had to cross the market-place, and Neb had to stop at every stall, first at the fishmonger's, next at the ironmongery and junk, and then at the greengrocer's. There were four wilted-looking cabbages, some leeks and beetroots on the stall, but no fruit of any sort, so it seemed strange that Neb should pull up and start yelling at the top of his voice, while he pranced up and down, like a cat on a hot stove !

" What's the matter with you ? What d'you want ? " asked Mickey. " Come on ! There's no fruit there ! "

" Yes, there is, Mickey ! Look, up there—that bunch of bananas made of plaster ! " cried Betty. " He thinks they're real ! They're only sham, Neb dear ! "

But Neb didn't understand. With a wild howl he tore his hand from her grasp, leapt on to the stall and, swinging up on the crossbars, grabbed the plaster bananas !

" Now then, matey, easy on ! That there cost money ! " yelled the greengrocer.

" Eee-eee ! " screeched Neb. Then, having discovered that the yellow plaster wasn't eatable, slung the bunch at its owner's head, who dodged, snatched up a broom, and——

" Stop ! " screeched Betty. " He's a good chimp, but he's as strong as three men, and he'll beat you up like anything if he starts fighting ! "

" Come down, Neb ! " begged Mickey. " I wish I had some real bananas off a real tree for you, but I—— Oo ! Look, Betty ! "

" Lummee ! " gasped Smith, the greengrocer. " I never saw nothing like that before. I do believe it's real ! "

" Eee-eee ! " squealed Neb, and leapt from the crossbars of the stall to the stem of a ten-foot banana tree which, with a flicker of green smoke, had suddenly shot up alongside when Mickey uttered his wish, for the wizard, Bagrag, loved to fulfil his wishes at once ! A couple of bunches of beautiful ripe bananas hung from the tree and Neb snatched at them. He chewed up half a dozen in double quick time, then handed down a bunch or two to his friends. But while he was amusing himself, by flinging some of the fruit among the crowd which had quickly gathered, up came the village policeman, Biddle, a very pompous ass.

" What's all this ? " he thundered. " Who gave you permission to grow bananas here, Smith ? Have you got a permit to sell them ? "

" I didn't grow 'em, and I ain't selling 'em, and the tree wasn't there half a minute ago," replied Smith, calmly peeling his third banana. " Better ask the chimp, or the kids with him. It's nothin' to do with me ! "

" Animals aren't allowed to go loose in the market-place ! Where's his collar and chain ? " rumbled Biddle, turning on Mickey and Betty. " You'll be fined for this ! "

" He's not a dog ! " cried Mickey indignantly. " And he behaves just as well as most children. He'll give you a banana if you ask him," he added.

But Biddle said, " You've got to come along with me. This has got to be looked into. Come down, you ! " he continued, gripping the stem of the banana tree and shaking it.

" Eee-eee ! " yelled Neb, hurling a dozen bananas at the policeman.

" Assault the p'lice in the execution of their dooty, would you ? " yelled Biddle.

He pulled his handcuffs out of his pocket, intending to fasten Neb's wrists together, but the chimp was too quick for him ! He darted behind a stall and disappeared.

" Don't touch him ! " shouted Mickey, but Biddle raced in pursuit.

He thought Neb had gone towards the High Street, so he ran that way, but, as he turned the corner, Neb came out of a barrel, in which he had been hiding, and ran to Betty.

" Take him home, quick ! " said Mickey, " I think Uncle's coming. I can hear his voice ! " And, as Betty went off, Mickey followed the crowd towards High Street.

Quite a lot of people saw Silas Marley race out of his shop, but none knew him, for all his features were lost in streaming black hair. He whizzed round the corner at the same moment that Biddle came round the other side. They met with a crash !

Biddle's mind was full of Neb, so he thought he had caught the chimp. At this moment, as the two fought and shouted, up came Mickey.

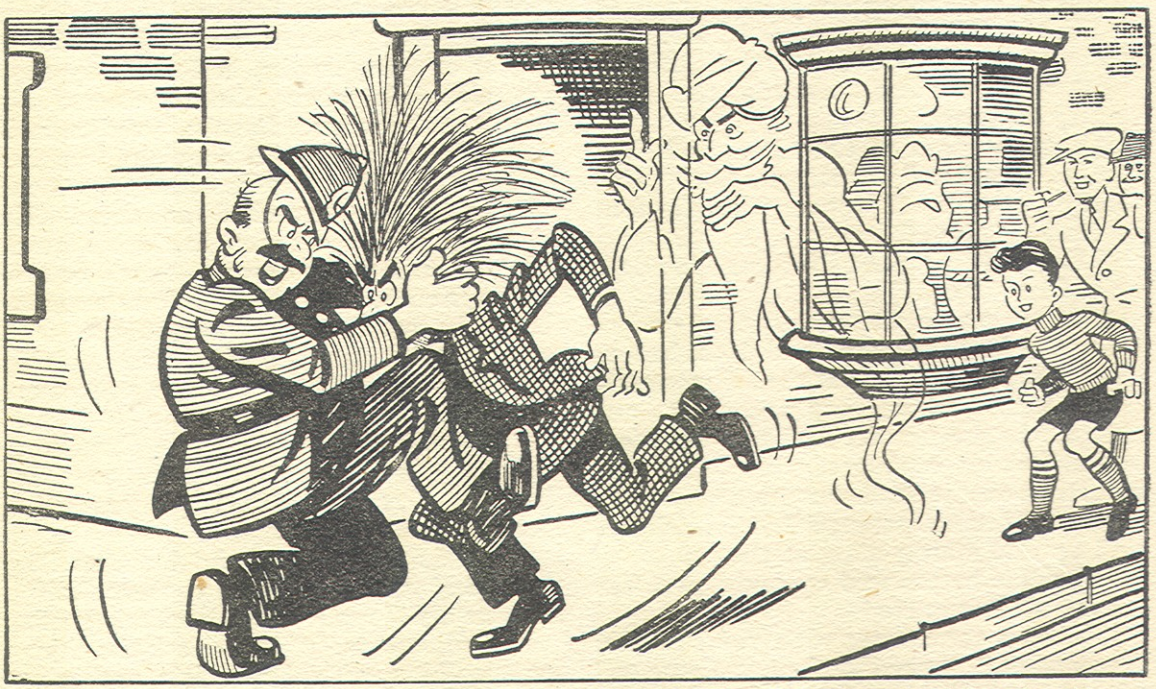
He recognised Uncle Silas by his voice. Something had to be done at once, if worse trouble was to be avoided.

" Oh, Mr. Bagrag, I wish you'd fix everything so that there's no trouble for anyone ! " whispered Mickey.

Once more a cloud of green smoke appeared. It hovered over the fighting pair for a moment, hiding them from all eyes, then disappeared. There stood Biddle rubbing his eyes, while Silas Marley, clean-shaven and close-cropped, had halted in front of Mickey, holding out his hand.

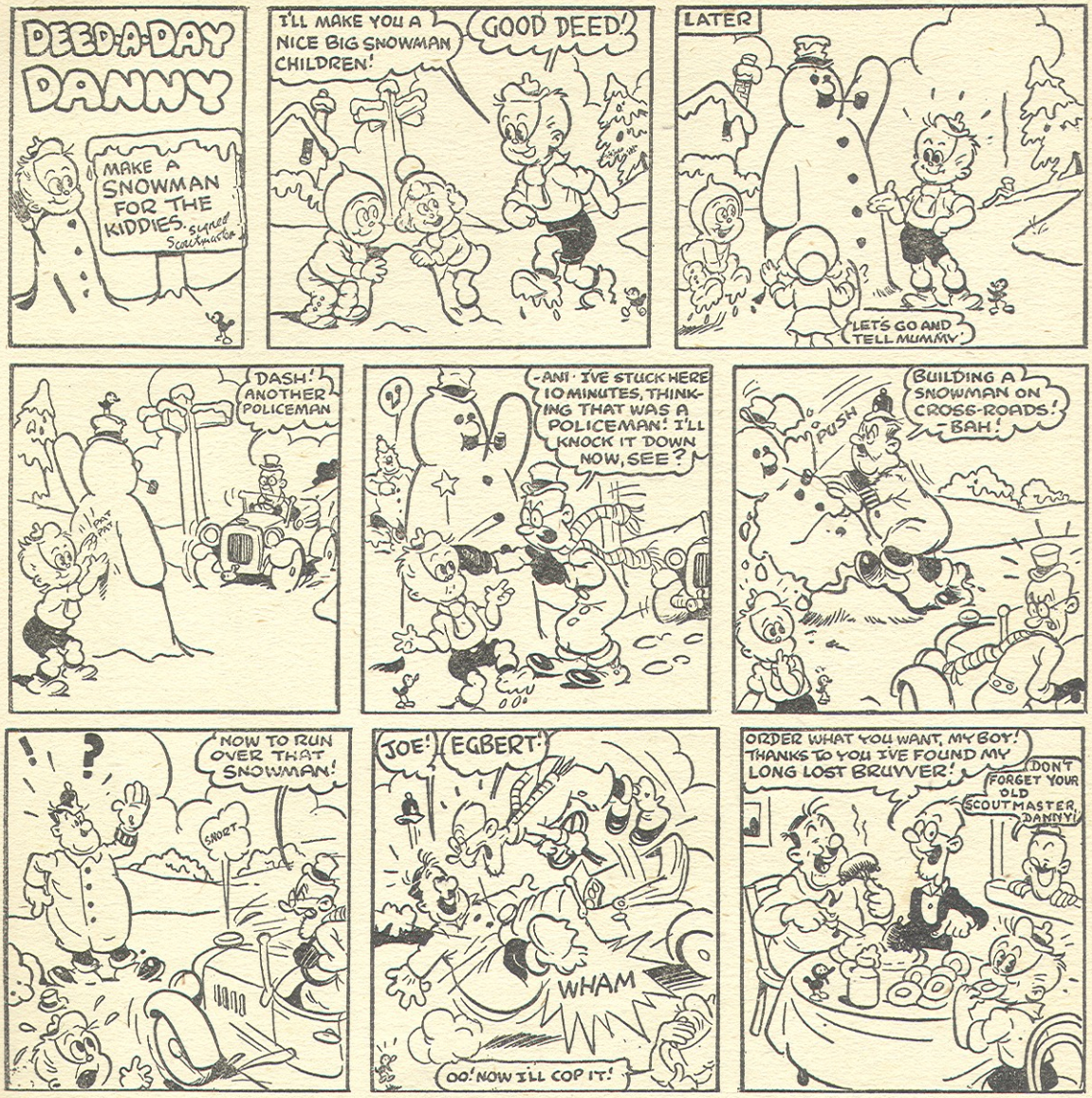
" I've been having a horrible dream," he said. " And I've been thinking that you and Betty deserve that money for those plants, so here you are ! "

And he put two pounds, ten shillings into Mickey's hand, and was quite nice to the children for a whole week afterwards.

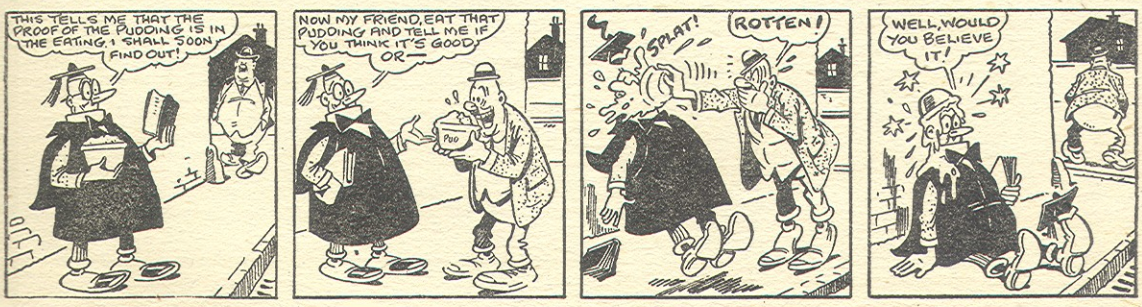


Silas whizzed round the corner at the same moment that Constable Biddle came round the other side. They met with a crash !

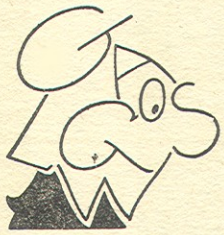
THE END



BOOKWORM BASIL - - - HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE



NOW TRY THESE BRAIN-TICKLERS!



HERE are some puzzles which we hope will amuse you. They have been prepared for you by our expert and wangler-in-chief

Professor R. U. Shaw

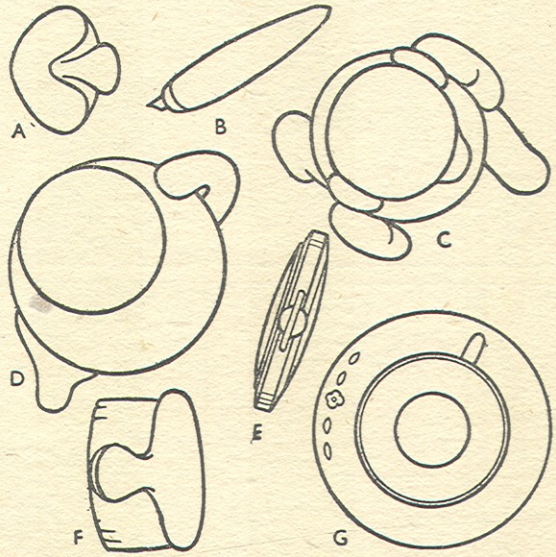
He's a funny old chap, but you will find that there isn't much he doesn't know about puzzles. One of the funny things about him, too, is that he now lives in —— and here's your first puzzle. As you will see, the Professor has drawn his own portrait, and if you look at it carefully you will find that it is made up of letters which spell the name of a well-known city. Can you "read" it? *(1)*

THE other day Professor R. U. Shaw found that if a certain set of five figures is taken away from another five-figure number, the difference is 12345—yet if you add them together instead, the result is 54321. Funny, isn't it—well, what were his two sets of figures? *(2)*

RIDDLE-O! What is an easy way of doubling money? *(3)*

AND another, and one which is almost true: What was it that made the thunder clap? *(4)*

THE Professor took the family for a day in London last week, to "see the sights." They started royally, as you might say, with ———m ———e, then they went to gaze on the ———s —f ———t, and then over the way to ———r ———y. Next they bussed it into the City to see another great church, —t ———'s ———l, while the next stop was the ancient ———r —f ———n. Finally, one more bus ride brought them to a show of another sort (and some horrors thrown in l) at ———e ———'s. To what places did they go? *(5)*



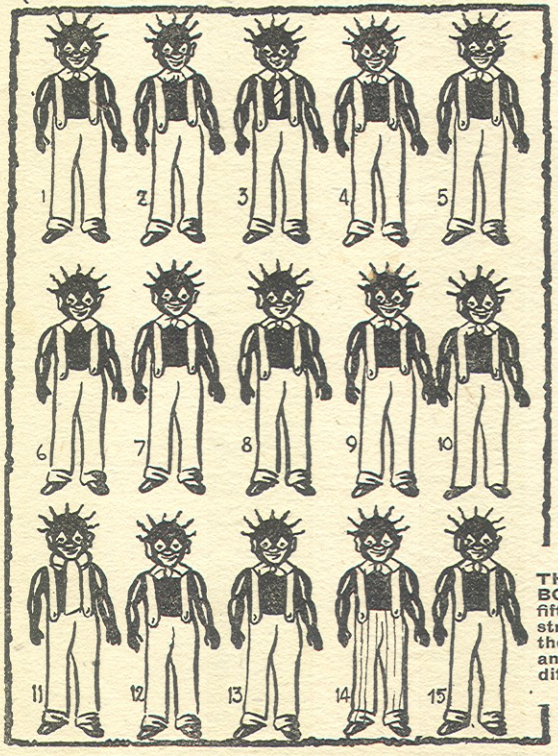
WHICH IS WHAT? The artful artist has drawn these unusual views of seven ordinary objects, just to see if you can recognise them like this. Can you? *(6)*

AS you might expect, the Professor also has a code all his own, and he sent somebody a "wire" as follows:

MIT XFOR OUS ONDO (stop) OU NSWE EGARDIN
LEVE ROBLE L RON (stop) HA LASGO (stop)

How do you think the full telegram should read? *(7)*

SMITHY, Smarty, and Sammy are pals and all athletic. Only two of them play football, however, while two play cricket, and two hockey. Sammy doesn't play one of Smithy's games; Smarty plays cricket, but doesn't play one of Sammy's games. If Smithy doesn't play football, then Sammy doesn't play the other game Smarty plays—but if he does, well he does! Can you tell who plays what? *(9)*



THE TEN LITTLE NIGGER BOYS. What? Are there fifteen of them? Then five strangers must have joined the party, so study the picture and spot the five which are different from all the rest! *(8)*

THE K.O.F.B. SPECIAL PUZZLE CORNER

ANSWERS ON PAGE 184

THE missing letter—it's missing no fewer than ten times from this row of letters ! Can you see which it is, and fit it in correctly to complete an amusing sentence :

OMAUGHENAMEOROISESORO

(10)

SAY—with what you can fill a box without increasing its weight ! *(11)*

PORTRAIT—of a scarecrow. You will notice that the bits of stick around him form letters. And if you put them in the right order, they will spell the names of two well-known crops. (12)

FEELING HUNGRY ? Then put two letters before MA, and the same two letters in the same order after PA. Then add the same four letters to PA, rearrange them and they will become something else you eat. *(13)*

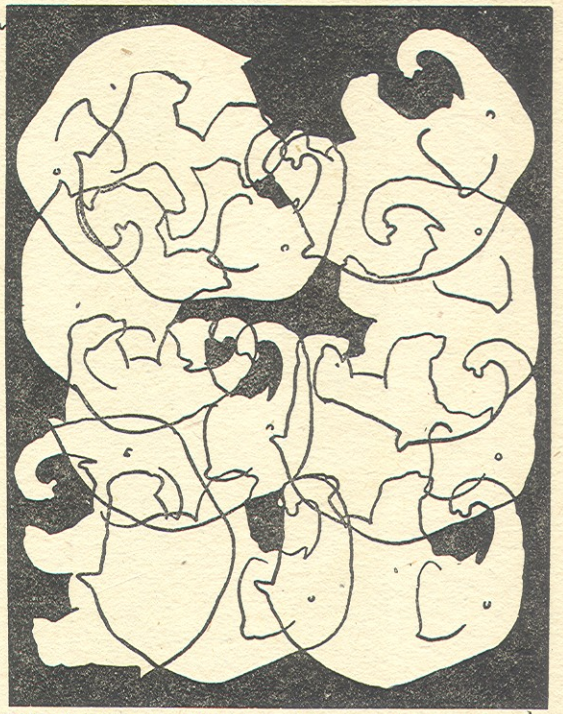
TEA FIGHT ! Professor R. U. Shaw has some children ; two in fact—a boy and a girl, Freddy and Freda. Recently they had a tea party for six friends, also a brother and sister in each case, and you might like to find out how they all sat at table. The table was round and the order was boy—girl—boy—girl, as usual, with no boy sitting next his own sister. Jim's sister was not next to Tom, whose sister sat on Peter's left-hand side. Who sat next to whom ? *(14)*

CAN you take away one letter from each of the groups on the right, and shuffle the remaining letters to make words answering the clues ?

A flyer : AROPELEANS
Animal : BEARBIT
Ship : SURECRIB
A game : ICETRICK

(15)

IF—just if, mind you !—Chess were played with a ball, Darts with a bat, Football with a board, Hockey with pawns, and Snap with a stick—well, what would you expect to use at Cricket ? *(16)*



THE JUMBLED JUMBOS. What happened, we don't quite know, but it so frightened all the white elephants in the royal stables of Jumbodia that they went into this awful huddle—which makes it a little awkward to see how many of them there really were. Can you tell ? (17)

AS you've been getting on so well, now we'll make them a bit harder for you. How's this for one : Farmer Jooks had 2 and three-fifths haystacks in one field and 3 and two-ninths in another. He had them all put together. How many did he have then ? *(18)*

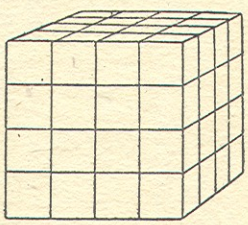
WHILE we're on figures, too, there's this : Just two numbers—added together they make 84 ; dividing the larger by the smaller you get 6 ; multiplying them together gives a total of 864. Odd, isn't it ? Well, what are these friendly numbers ? *(19)*

A CUBE OF CUBES ! This is the Professor's parting shot at you.

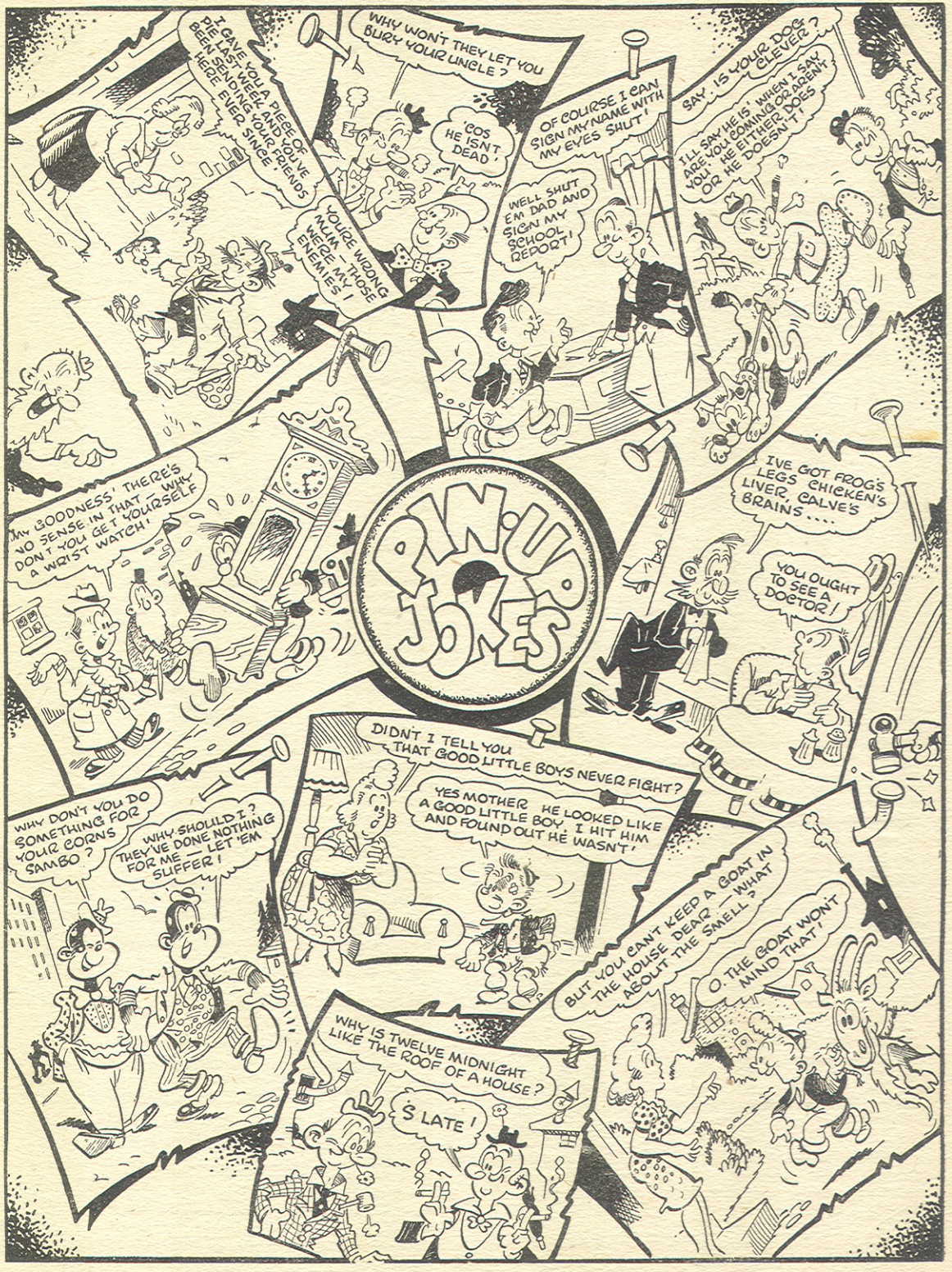
He has made this cube of cubes—64 of 'em in all. Right so far—good ! Then he has glued them all firmly together as a solid square, and has dropped the whole thing into water, completely wetting it.

Now the Professor wants you to answer these questions :

(a) How many of the cubes are wet on one side only ?
(b) How many on two sides ?
(c) On three ? (d) On four ? *(20)*
(e) How many of the cubes remain completely dry ?

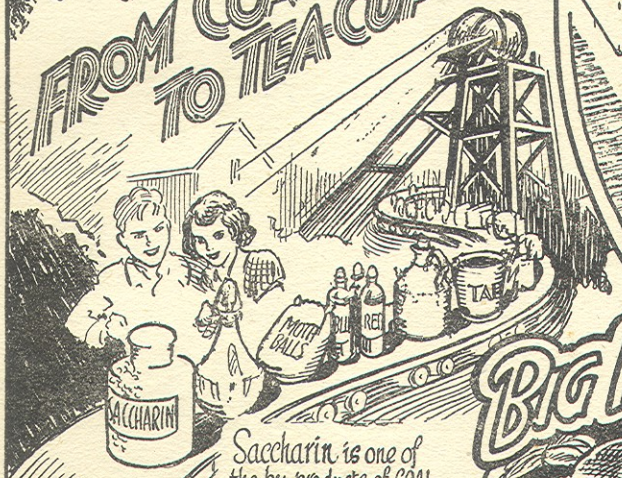


And that, thank you, is that ! Now you can look at Page 184 where you will find the answers to all these posers. Let's hope the Professor hasn't made any mistakes himself !


I GAVE YOU A PIECE OF PIE LAST WEEK AND YOU'VE BEEN STANDING OUTSIDE OUR FRIENDS HERE EVER SINCE
WHY WON'T THEY LET YOU BURY YOUR UNCLE?
'COS HE ISN'T DEAD!
YOU'RE WRONG MUM — THOSE WERE MY ENEMIES!
OF COURSE I CAN SIGN MY NAME WITH MY EYES SHUT!
WELL SHUT 'EM DAD AND SIGN MY SCHOOL REPORT!
SAY, IS YOUR DOG CLEVER?
I'LL SAY HE IS! WHEN I SAY ARE YOU COMING OR AREN'T YOU, HE EITHER DOES OR HE DOESN'T!
PIN-UP JOKES
MY GOODNESS! THERE'S NO SENSE IN THAT — WHY DON'T YOU GET YOURSELF A WRIST WATCH!
I'VE GOT FROG'S LEGS CHICKEN'S LIVER, CALVE'S BRAINS....
YOU OUGHT TO SEE A DOCTOR!
DIDN'T I TELL YOU THAT GOOD LITTLE BOYS NEVER FIGHT?
YES MOTHER HE LOOKED LIKE A GOOD LITTLE BOY I HIT HIM AND FOUND OUT HE WASN'T!
WHY DON'T YOU DO SOMETHING FOR YOUR CORNS SAMBO?
WHY SHOULD I? THEY'VE DONE NOTHING FOR ME — LET 'EM SUFFER!
BUT YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOAT IN THE HOUSE DEAR — WHAT ABOUT THE SMELL?
O, THE GOAT WON'T MIND THAT!
WHY IS TWELVE MIDNIGHT LIKE THE ROOF OF A HOUSE?
$ LATE!

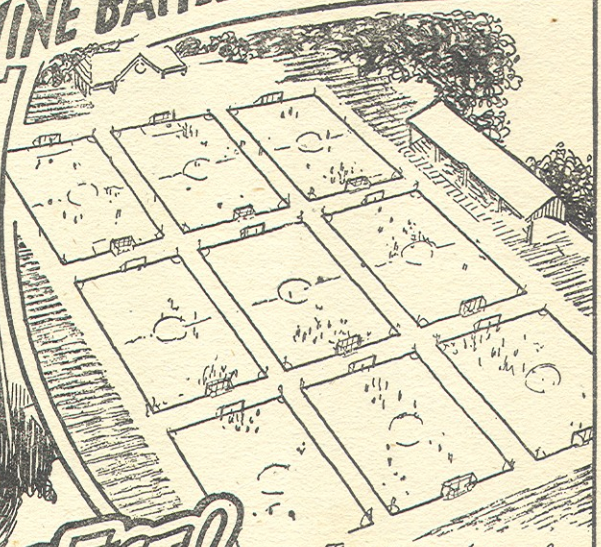
Willie Wise Says

FROM COAL MINE TO TEA-CUP



Saccharin is one of the by-products of COAL
Others include
Carbolic Acid - Aniline Dyes - Perfumes and Moth Balls

NINE BATTLES OF WATERLOO!

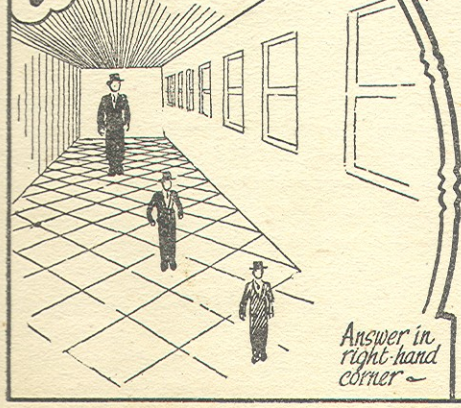


There is enough room for nine football fields on the area of WATERLOO STATION, LONDON - Waterloo is the largest station in Britain and covers an area of 24½ acres -

BIG FIST!

THE MALE FIDDLER CRAB grows one claw half as big as himself and if he loses it he grows another - His mate falls in love with his handsome claw -

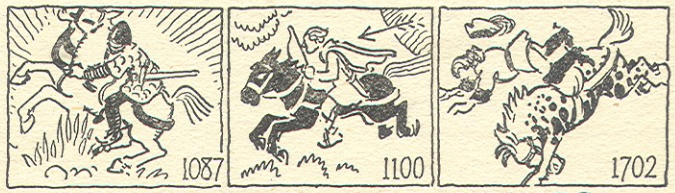
WHO IS TALLEST?



Answer in right-hand corner -

Three Mounts end Three Reigns.

AND THEY WERE ALL WILLIAM



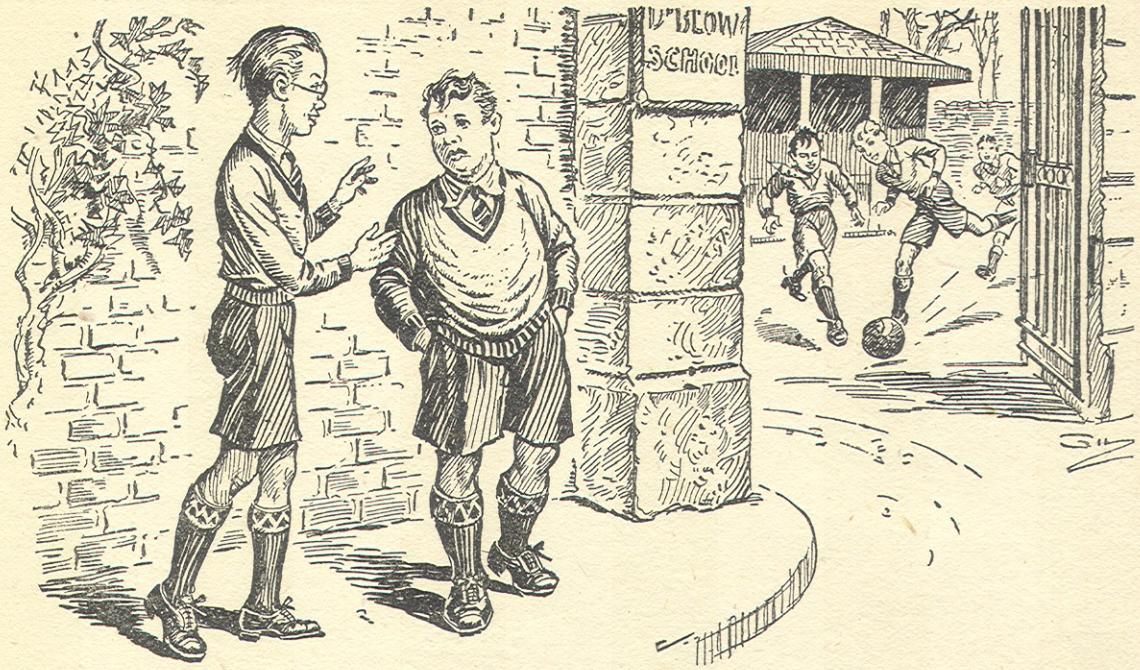
CONQUEROR ○ RUFUS ○ ORANGE ○

William the First's horse trod on hot ashes and the shock caused his death -

William the Second was riding through the New Forest when he was shot by an arrow -

William the Third's horse stumbled - He was thrown and fatally injured -

All the same height -



AUNT MYRTLE COMES TO STAY

How a Fat Boy was Saved from Starvation by his School Chum and a Crystal-Gazer

Uninvited Guest

ONE bright summer morning, Tommy Tucker was seated at the breakfast table, tucking into a hearty meal, and thoroughly enjoying it. With a knife in one hand, a fork in the other, and a plate of eggs and bacon in front of him, he was content. Birds were singing, the sun was shining, and all was peaceful.

Tommy was a fat chap, but he didn't mind being fat, and wouldn't have minded being even fatter! His greatest pleasure was eating, and his one regret was that he sometimes could not eat as much as he would have liked.

But he wouldn't have been so pleased with things that morning, if he had known of the approaching threat to his comfort and peace of mind.

Aunt Myrtle, tall and thin, with a loathing for fat people, and a belief that food, like medicine, was only to be taken in small doses, was, at that moment, sitting in a railway carriage, rapidly approaching the little village of Winterbourne Newton, where Tommy lived!

Aunt Myrtle didn't often visit the Tuckers, but, when she did, she always managed to upset the feeding arrangements! Within a very short time, Tommy would find himself eating raw carrots, and other tasty bits, designed to be "good for you"!

Now, if there was anything Tommy hated, it was people who were keen on doing him "good." He was not faddy where food was concerned, but he felt that a growing lad needed something a bit more substantial than a raw carrot!

On this particular day, Aunt Myrtle was worried. She had a presentiment—a feeling that something dreadful was going to happen. And when she had a presenti-

ment, she felt sure that something dreadful really would happen.

Only that morning, she had spilt the salt at breakfast, and inadvertently walked under a ladder. And to-day was Friday, the Thirteenth! And she felt really quite worried!

At last the train steamed into the little wayside station of Winterbourne Newton. Aunt Myrtle hailed a taxi, and, with two trunks and a hat-box, started on the last stage of the journey to the Tuckers.

Mrs. Tucker, herself, opened the door to the unexpected guest. She was somewhat taken aback when she saw her visitor, and her mouth opened in surprise. Mrs. Tucker was a nervous little woman, and, although she was very fond of her sister, she was also a bit scared of her!

Aunt Myrtle took advantage of her sister's speechlessness to enter the house, and was quickly followed by the taxi-driver with the luggage.

"That'll be three-and-six, ma'am," he said.

Aunt Myrtle felt in her purse.

"Tch!" she exclaimed. Then she turned to Mrs. Tucker. "Pay the man, dear, please. I've run out of change."

Mrs. Tucker hurried off to find her purse, wondering vaguely why she should be so meek and obedient.

When she returned from paying the taxi-driver, she found Aunt Myrtle standing by the fire in the drawing-room. Aunt Myrtle was still worried, and was absent-mindedly playing with the ornaments on the mantelpiece. She was holding two costly Chinese vases in a very precarious position, and Mrs. Tucker opened her mouth to tell her sister of the risk she was taking, but her courage failed her.

"How nice to see you, dear," was all she said, as she rang for Jane to make some tea for Aunt Myrtle.

Tommy arrived home for lunch from school in high spirits. He breezed into the dining-room, all set for a good square meal. Then he stopped dead, and his face fell; for there, sitting bolt upright at the table—was Aunt Myrtle!

"You're rather late, dear!" she exclaimed, by way of welcome.

All Tommy could manage in reply was a weak smile. He sat down at the table, his appetite, for once, fading away. But he cheered up a bit when Jane brought in the roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. He grasped his knife and fork, and prepared to enjoy his meal.

But before he could prong the first forkful, his aunt shrieked, "Stop!"

Tommy stopped. That voice would have stopped an express train!

"D'you know what you're doing?" asked Aunt Myrtle.

"I'm eating my gug-grub," stammered Tommy, quailing under the gimlet eye of his irritating relative.

"You're ruining your constitution!" she bellowed. "You're slowing down your blood stream! You're wrecking your health! You're—tchah!" Words failed her. "Here, give me that!" she cried, grabbing the laden plate from under Tommy's nose! Mrs. Tucker was too much amazed to say a word!

Aunt Myrtle left the room, and her voice could be heard, loud and strident, arguing with the cook. Presently, she returned and replaced the plate in front of Tommy.

"There!" she said. "That is what you want!"

But it wasn't. For Aunt Myrtle had removed most of the food, leaving behind only a few carrots. Tommy stared at them in dismay! He turned to his mother for help.

But Mrs. Tucker had spent the morning with Aunt Myrtle — she was feeling whacked already.

"Your aunt knows best, dear," she murmured, looking anxiously at her own plate.

"The boy is much too fat!" cried Aunt Myrtle. "He needs a strict diet! Within a fortnight, I shall have reduced his weight by several stones. It will make a different person of him!"

She was right there, thought Tommy, gazing dolefully at his carrots.

For the rest of the meal, he and his mother had to listen to Aunt Myrtle. She spoke about her presentiments. She told them about the salt, the ladder and the

date, and threw out all sorts of suggestions as to what awful thing might be going to happen. Tommy could have told her what he hoped it would be!

He went to school that afternoon with an empty feeling under his pullover, and no hope for the future!

At the school gates Tommy spotted Archie Woodall, and he brightened a bit. Archie was a tall, very thin lad. He was brainy, too, and being so different from Tommy in every way it was surprising that the two had struck up such a firm friendship.

Tommy, having a great regard for Archie's brain power, felt that here was the chap who could help him in his time of trouble. He hailed him.

Archie gave one look at Tommy and his eyebrows shot upwards, for Tommy's usually cheerful face wore a crestfallen expression.

"What's up with you?" inquired Archie.

"Aunt Myrtle's come to stay!" said Tommy, simply.

Archie understood. He had met Tommy's Aunt Myrtle before and, though he himself had no interest in food, he could sympathise with Tommy!

"I say, that is hard cheese, ol' boy," he drawled.

Tommy gave him a withering look.

"Is that all you can say?" he asked, sarcastically. "At a time like this, when I want someone to rally round, you stand there and blather about cheese! Why, even the very mention of cheese makes my tummy get up and beg!"

"Sorry, ol' boy," murmured Archie. "But what d'you want me to do?"

"Can't you think of some plot to get rid of the aunt?"

Archie wrinkled his brows.

"You'll have to give me time, you know," he said. "Can't think of anything at a moment's notice."

"Oh, that's all right," said Tommy, heavily. "Plenty of time. She's only starving me to death, that's all! And if she doesn't do that, she'll drive me crazy with the drivel she talks! She's always going on about her presentiments. She's sure that something dreadful is going to happen, because she walked under a ladder and spilt the salt on Friday the Thirteenth. Well, I wish something would happen—to her! But you just take your time," he added, turning away in disgust.

And, in turning, he missed the look of dawning intelligence which appeared in Archie's pale, blue eyes. Archie had thought of something. The Woodall brain was at work!

"I've got it!" cried Archie.

Tommy swung round and waited.

"Your aunt is superstitious!" said Archie. "Is that right?"

"Superstitious!" echoed Tommy. "She is crackers!"

"Well, look here," said Archie. "There is a fair comin' to the village to-morrow, isn't there? And the high spot of the show is Madame Clare Voyante—the famous fortune-teller. I've seen her name on the adverts!"

"Well, so what?" asked Tommy. "I can't see how that helps!"

Archie ignored him.

"You just bring your aunt to the fair. I'll see this Madame Doodah and get her to persuade your aunt that it is very unlucky to keep you from your good square meals! She'll do it all right, especially when she knows there'll be ten bob for the job."

"And where are we going to get the ten bob?" asked Tommy.

Archie's face fell.

"Never thought of that!" he said. "How much have you got?"

"About threepence ha'penny!"

"Mm!" Archie thought hard. "Have to figure out somethin'—that's all!"

So it was arranged. Archie was to do the business part of the scheme. He collected some of his own and Tommy's school books for changing into cash, and promised to see the fortune-teller when the fair opened. Tommy's part of the job was to cart his aunt to the fair, and make sure she nibbled the bait.

The next day dawned bright and clear, and Tommy had regained some of his old cheerfulness. He whistled a tune as he came down to breakfast.

His aunt thought that his good humour was due to the diet he was on, and she launched into a talk about the advantages it would have on his health ! Tommy groaned, but he listened. He was waiting his opportunity.

At last the talk turned to Aunt Myrtle's presentiments, as it nearly always did when she started a conversation. It was now Saturday, the fourteenth, but Aunt Myrtle was still worried. She had had a dream during the night which she was sure was an ill omen !

Aunt Myrtle paused to take a sip of her coffee, and Tommy got in a word.

" I've been thinking about your presentiments, Aunty," he said politely, " and I think it would be a good idea for you to see a reliable fortune-teller about them. I know there's one coming to the village this morning, with a fair, and I believe she's really good ! Why not go to see her ? "

Aunt Myrtle was thrilled at the news ! She had intended to visit a fortune-teller, to put her mind at rest, but she thought she'd have to wait till she got back to London. However, she didn't want to sound too enthusiastic.

" Well——" she began, and Tommy held his breath. " Yes, I think I might as well go to the fair. You can take me this afternoon, Tommy."

Tommy's heart leapt ! And that afternoon, as he walked with his aunt down the hill to the village green where the fair was in full swing, he was almost in his usual high spirits !

They found the fortune-teller's tent without much difficulty. It was set apart from the other tents and stalls and was painted brightly in yellow and red.

Outside the entrance, which was covered with a heavy veil, stood a large, beefy man. He was persuading the crowd to " roll up " and have five bob's worth of the future ! He also collected the cash.

Tommy spotted Archie standing to one side of the tent and craning his long, mournful face to scan the crowd. Archie saw Tommy at the same moment, and beckoned to him. Tommy excused himself to Aunt Myrtle, and walked over to his pal.

Aunt Myrtle watched him go and speak to the tall, thin fellow. How nice, she thought, it would be if she could get Tommy as thin as that !

But even she had to admit, at second sight, that Archie really was a bit too thin. He looked as though he would be carried away by the breeze at any moment !

Tommy hurried over to Archie, eager to hear the news of the success of his part of the plot. But Archie had sad tidings !

" Things have come unstuck," he murmured mournfully.

Tommy's face fell.

" What's the matter ? " he asked, in a disappointed way. " Don't tell me the fortune-teller won't play ! "

" Worse than that ! " said Archie. " She's on the other side ! "

" Why ? What did she say when you saw her ? "

" Well, I didn't actually *see* her," replied Archie. " I couldn't get into her tent without giving the bloke outside five bob. I only managed to scrape ten bob for those books, and I didn't want to waste any of that ! So I sent her a note. I explained fully how you were wastin' away from the treatment your aunt was givin' you." (Tommy shifted his great bulk from one foot to the other, and nodded.) " And I appealed to her good nature to help you, enclosing the ten-shilling note in the envelope."

" And what was her answer ? "

" This ! " said Archie shortly, handing over a scrap of paper.

Tommy read the note quickly.

" I will do no such thing," it read. " Dieting can do no one any harm, and I have been a great believer in it for some time. Schoolboys are always over-eating, and I imagine your friend is no exception. I am glad that his aunt is taking steps in the matter, and, when she comes to my tent this afternoon I shall do my best to encourage her."

Beneath the signature was a P.S. which read :

" Enclosed please find ten-shilling note."

" All I can say," breathed Tommy, " is thank goodness she doesn't know what

my aunt looks like! We don't want anyone to encourage Aunt Myrtle!"

"I hate to disappoint you, ol' boy," said Archie, "but everyone who goes into that tent gives their name and address to Madame, so that she can send them their horoscope."

"And d'you mean to say that you gave her my aunt's name?"

"Well she had to have some way of identifying the ol' battle-axe, y'know," said Archie quietly.

Tommy groaned.

"Then, at all costs, we must stop Aunt Myrtle going anywhere near that tent!"

They both turned. Aunt Myrtle was just handing five shillings to the man outside the fortune-teller's tent, while he held the curtain for her to enter!

In the Fortune-Teller's Tent

AUNT MYRTLE wrote her name in a book, handed to her by Madame Clare Voyante. Then she sat opposite her and looked around.

The fortune-teller looked at the name in the book and her eyebrows rose slightly. Then she fixed her eyes on the crystal globe before her. Aunt Myrtle watched, fascinated.

The fortune-teller was very much like Aunt Myrtle to look at. She had the same kind of sharp features and thin mouth, set in a firm line. So far, neither of them had spoken. They were not a very jolly pair as they sat, their eyes on the crystal.

The tent itself was very dim, being lit only by an oil lamp, hanging from the tent pole. Shadows flickered here and there in the corners and danced around the long, slender fingers of Madame, as she gazed into the depths of the crystal.

Aunt Myrtle never moved. At last the fortune-teller spoke.

"You have a nephew?" she said, in a low, musical voice.

Aunt Myrtle nodded, thrilled that she should know so much. But before Madame could speak again there came an interruption.

"Are you in there, Aunty?" asked Tommy from outside.

"Ah, there is my nephew now!" said Aunt Myrtle to the fortune-teller. "Can he come in? This should prove most instructive to him!"

"Certainly," cried Madame. "I should like to see him!"

"Yes, Tommy," called Aunt Myrtle. "You may come in, if you like. But be very quiet!" Again her eyes became fastened to the crystal ball as it reflected the poor light from the oil lamp.

The curtains at the doorway parted—but not to reveal the portly figure of Tommy. Instead a tall, thin form almost floated into the tent! It was Archie, and he crept silently round to the back of Aunt Myrtle's chair.

"Keep quiet, dear," said Aunt Myrtle, without looking up from the crystal and completely unaware that Archie, and not Tommy, was standing behind her. "Continue, Madame. You were saying something about my nephew."

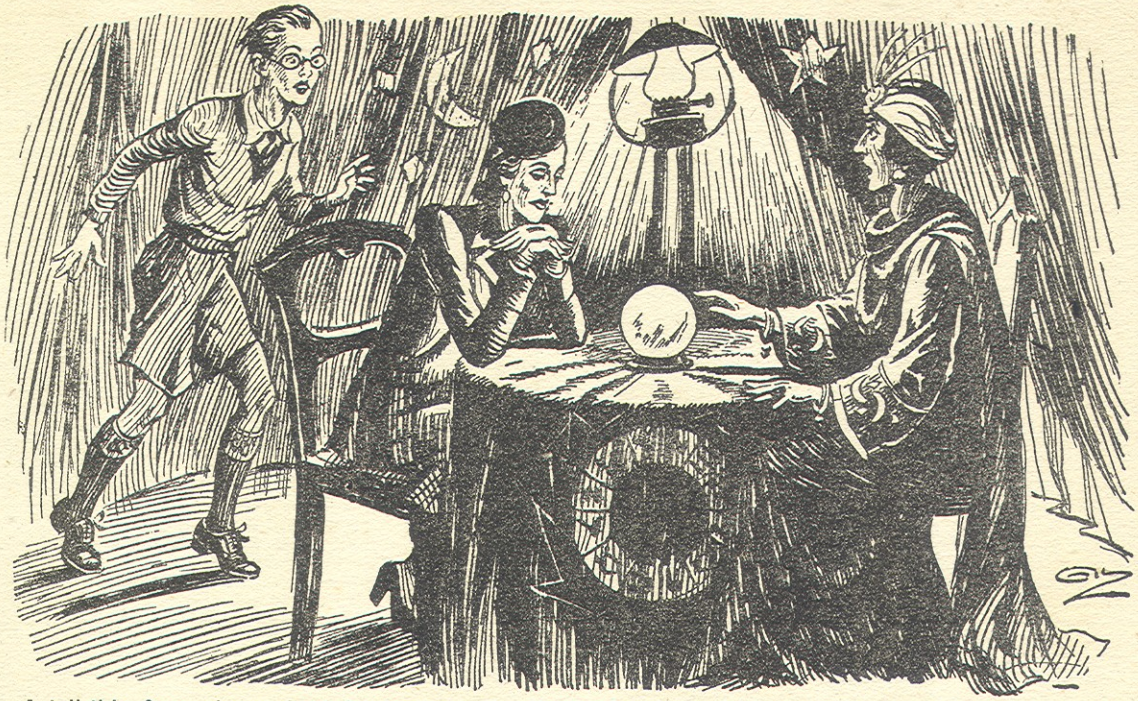
But the fortune-teller was looking at the "nephew," as though she could not believe her eyes. Was this frail, thin creature the boy who had been robbed of his food? Then the note had told her the truth! An injustice was being done! The boy was being slowly starved! In fact, Madame began to wonder how he had kept alive, in that state, for so long!

And in her hands, Madame realised, was the power to right the wrong. A few words from her would convince this foolish woman who now sat opposite her that she must make amends for what she had done.

Madame spoke to Aunt Myrtle for five minutes without stopping! She told her exactly what she had done in the recent past, and what she must do in the near future, or else—well, Madame would hold out no hopes for Aunt Myrtle's future peace of mind!

Aunt Myrtle listened with amazement—and a growing horror. When the fortune-teller had finished she turned to find Tommy. But "Tommy" had slipped out quietly.

Archie and the real Tommy went back to the Tuckers together, after spending the ten shillings, now no longer needed, on



A tall thin form almost floated into the tent. It was Archie, and he crept silently round to the back of Aunt Myrtle's chair.

the fun of the fair. Aunt Myrtle met them at the door.

" Your mother's out," she said to Tommy, " so I've got tea ready for you ! "

Archie was introduced, and Aunt Myrtle asked him to stay to tea with them. While he was chatting to Aunt Myrtle in the hall Tommy made a bee-line for the dining-room—he just had to have a peep at the tea-table !

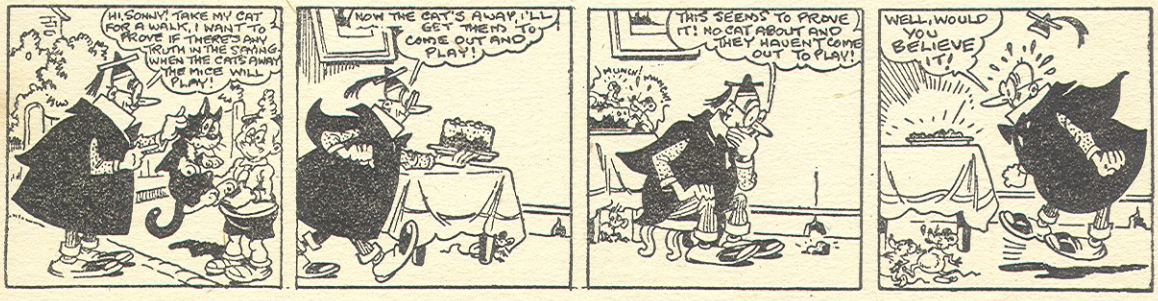
There were sandwiches, sausage-rolls, cakes, bowls of fruit and jugs of cream in glorious array, with plenty of ginger-pop to wash it all down !

It was the end of Aunt Myrtle's reign of terror at the Tuckers.

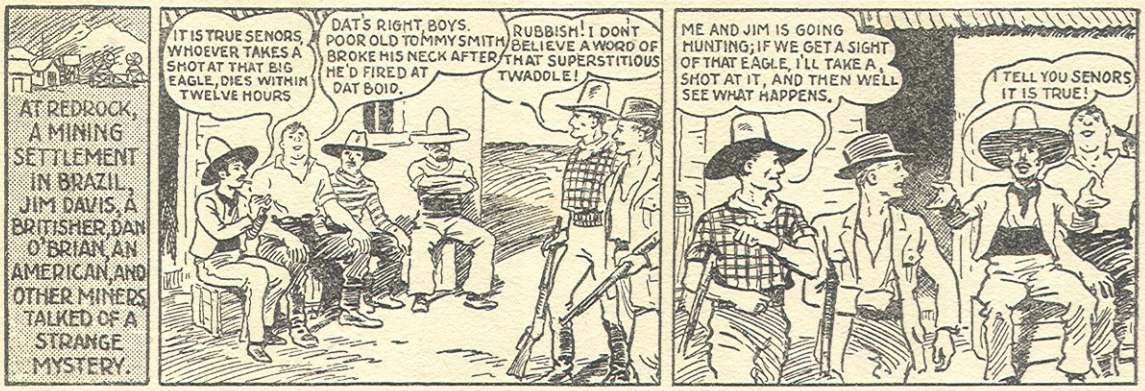
In fact, for the rest of her stay, she did her best to make up for the past ! And Tommy found that he was quite looking forward to her next visit. He was his old cheerful self again, and once more birds were singing, the sun was shining, and all was peaceful.

THE END

BOOKWORM BASIL - - - HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE



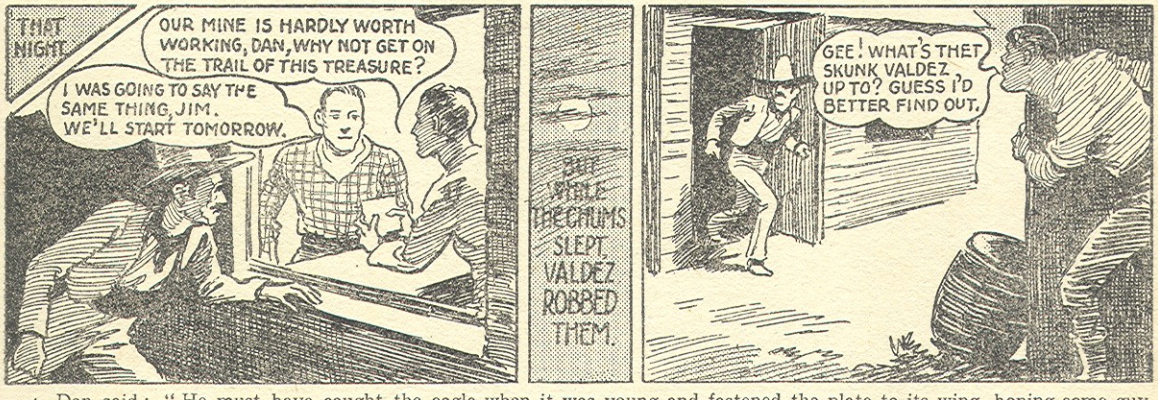
THE EAGLE'S SECRET.



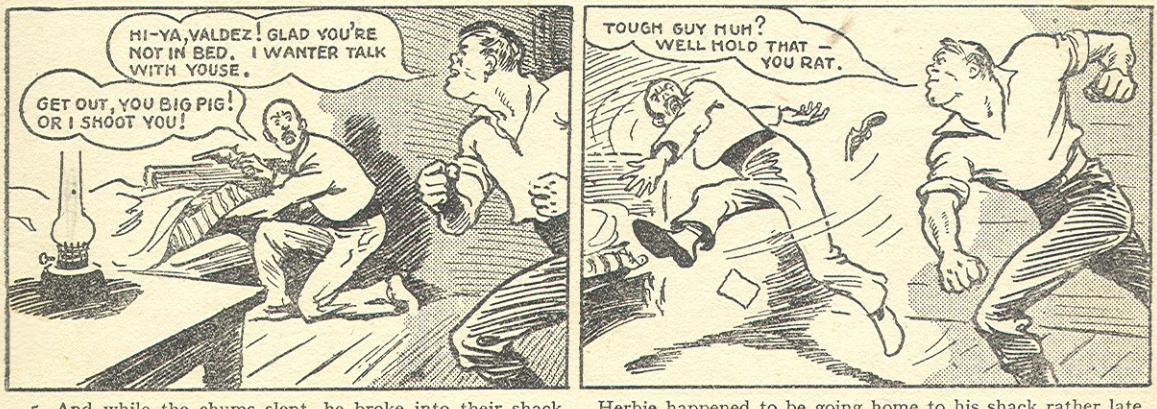
1. A strange mystery brooded over the mining settlement of Redrock, in Brazil. From time to time, a big eagle was seen hovering in the sky or flying from the mountain peaks in search of its prey. And it was said that whoever dared to fire a shot at it met his own death soon afterwards. It was Valdez, the Brazilian, who declared it was true. Herbie, a big, bull-necked American from New York, was sure it was true, too. "Poor old Tommy Smith broke his neck after he'd fired at dat boid," he said. But Dan O'Brian, another American, didn't believe it. His pal, Jim Davis, a Britisher, agreed with him.

2. "Anyway," said Dan, "me and Jim is going hunting, and if we see that eagle we'll take a shot at it and see what happens." Herbie didn't like the sound of that. Valdez went on protesting that the story was true. But the pals set out, and sure enough, up in the foothills, they saw the big eagle high up in the sky. "There it is, Dan!" cried Jim. Dan brought up his gun. "Okay," he said, "I'll keep my promise. I'll bring him down." It was a snap shot, but Dan was a first-class shot. He fired, and the eagle came fluttering down—dead. "Now we'll see if there's any truth in it," declared Dan.

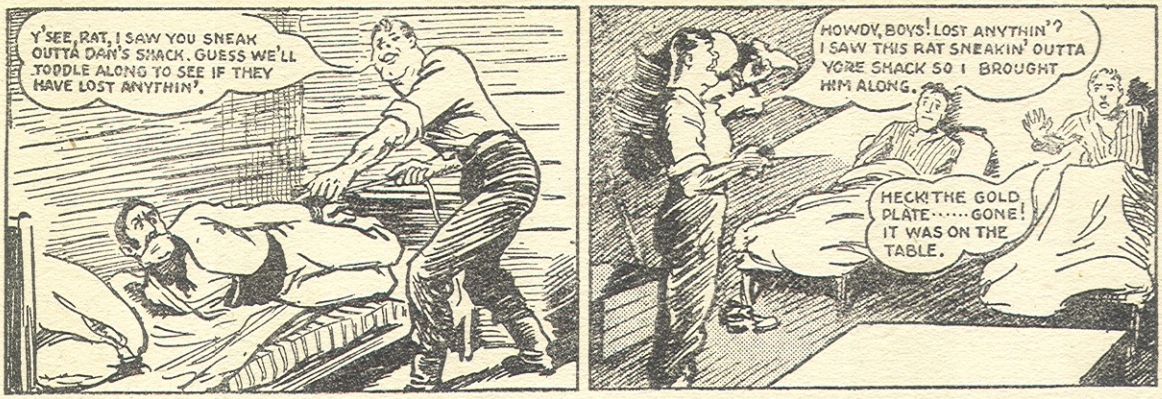
3. They made their way to the spot where the eagle lay dead, and stooped over it. Jim took hold of one of the huge wings and spread it out. Then he suddenly exclaimed: "Gosh, Dan, look at this!" Under the wing, fastened in place with gold wire, was a golden plate, beaten thin, with words scratched on it. They took it off and read the rough message. "Am starving midst untold wealth," it said. It gave the latitude and longitude of the place and it was signed: "Harry Conrad," and dated, August, 1930. It was clear that Harry Conrad had found a fortune at the place indicated, but had been unable to get away with it. Maybe he had been injured.



4. Dan said: "He must have caught the eagle when it was young and fastened the plate to its wing, hoping some guy would find it and go to his rescue." Jim pointed out that if Conrad had never been rescued, then there was a fortune waiting to be picked up at the spot noted down on the gold plate. So they went home and sat talking about it, far into the night. Their mine at Redrock wasn't worth very much, so Jim suggested they should sell out and go in search of this treasure. Dan was willing enough. And they made up their minds to start the next day. But they didn't know that while they talked, Valdez had been listening at the window.



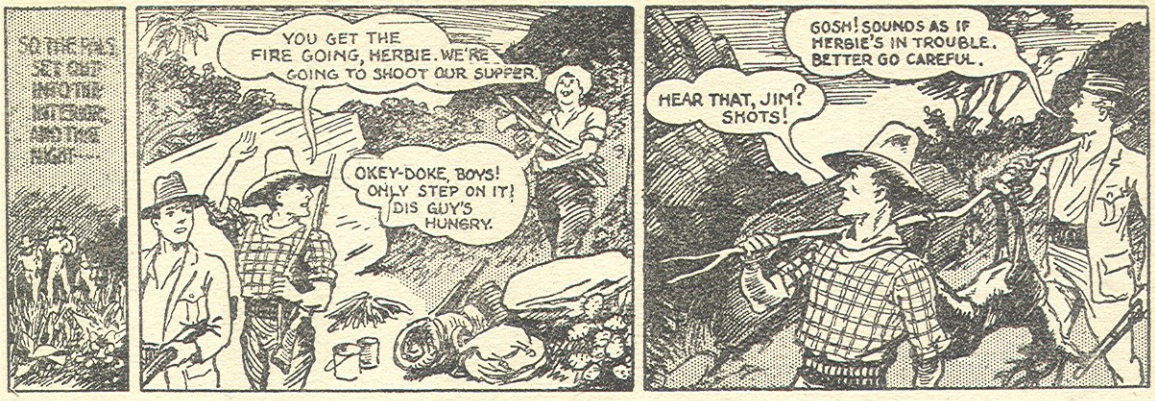
5. And while the chums slept, he broke into their shack. Herbie happened to be going home to his shack rather late, that night, and he saw Valdez sneaking away. Herbie meant to find out what it was all about, so he followed Valdez home, then burst in on him unawares. He was just in time to catch Valdez hiding something under his mattress. "Hiya, Valdez!" cried Herbie. "I wanter talk with youse!" Valdez spun round, pulling out a gun. But Herbie was on him in a flash and knocked him senseless with one blow. Herbie was so big and strong it only needed one smack from his leg-o'-mutton fist to lay out any man. Valdez went down like a log.



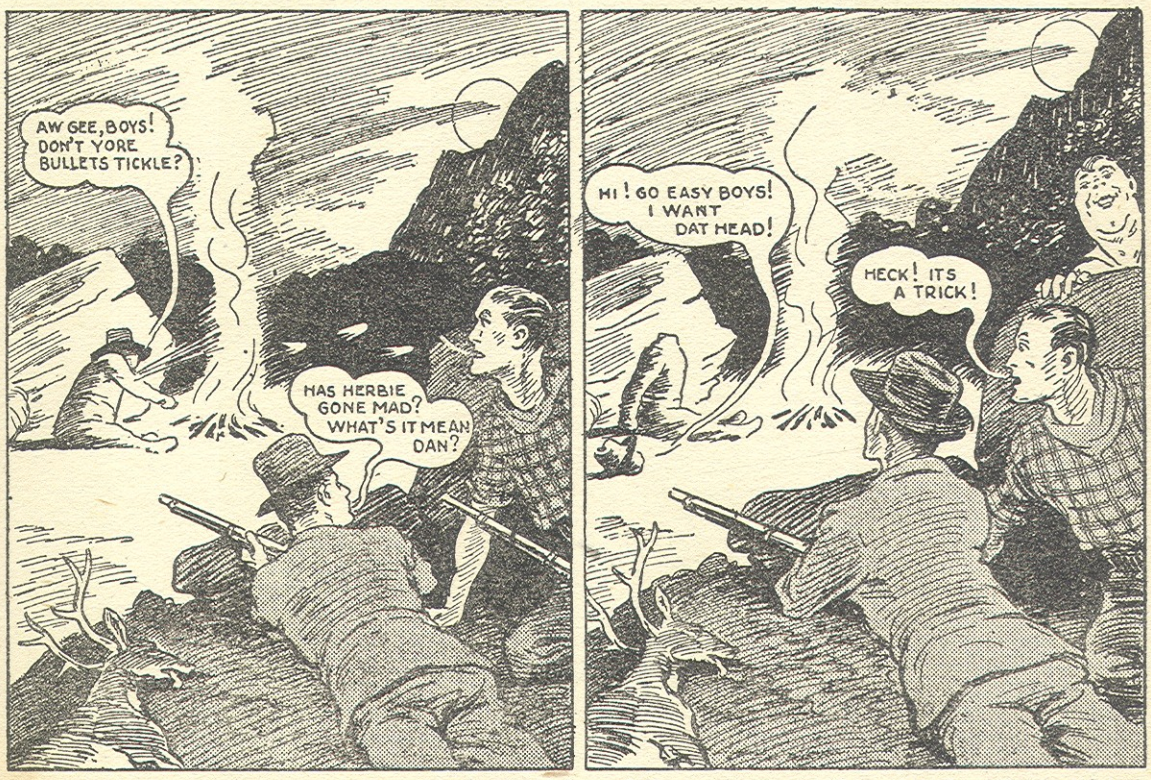
6. When he eventually came to his senses again, Valdez found himself on his bed, neatly trussed up and gagged. Herbie was taking no chances. He knew that if Valdez yelled for help, quite a number of unscrupulous Brazilians and half-castes would come running to his aid. Tossing Valdez over his shoulder, with the greatest of ease, Herbie carried him across to the shack where Dan O'Brian and Jim Davis lived. They woke up with a start as Herbie entered with his strange burden. "Howdy, boys!" he cried. "Lost anythin'?" He explained how he had spotted Valdez sneaking out of the shack. And Dan sat up in bed, gazing at the table.

7. "Heck!" he cried. "The gold plate! Gone! It was on the table!" Herbie grinned at them. "T'ought dat gold plate was yours, boys," he said, "so I took it off Valdez. When I've tanned his hide I'll kick him out." He sat down on a bed, put the trussed Valdez across his knees, and thrashed him as if he were a child. Valdez squirmed and raged, but he was helpless. But Jim was worried, for Valdez had seen the writing on the gold plate and that meant that their secret was a secret no longer. But Dan said: "We'll go after that treasure just the same. And if Valdez dares to butt in, so much the worse for him!" He meant it, too!

8. By that time, Valdez was properly cowed. Herbie snatched the gag from the rogue's mouth and cut his bonds, then kicked him out of the shack into the night. "Get out, rat!" he cried. He guessed that Valdez wouldn't dare to come back that night. And, having shut the door, Herbie turned to Jim and Dan. "What's it all about, boys?" he asked. They told him about the gold plate they had found on the eagle's wing, and how they meant to set out the next day to locate the treasure. "Gee, cain't I come, too?" asked Herbie. Dan grinned, and said: "Okay. Guess we owe you a lot already, big boy." Jim was willing, for very good reasons.



9. Herbie was big, and as strong as two ordinary men. He was loyal, too, and a good pal. He would be a great help to them. So, the next day, they set off from Redrock and plunged into the interior. For hours they trudged through the dense forests until they came to the foothills. As night approached they decided to camp. Jim picked the best place, and they left Herbie to collect wood and get a fire going. "We're going to shoot our supper, Herbie," said Dan. Leaving Herbie behind, Jim and Dan went off hunting. They sighted a deer, and after a long stalk, Dan got a shot home that killed the animal. They cut a pole from a tree, and tying the deer to it started carrying it home to the camp. By that time, the shadows of night were coming down. It would soon be dark. They were both tired and hungry. But as they came down the mountain side, Dan pricked up his ears. "Hear that, Jim?" he cried. "Shots!" Jim listened. "Gosh!" he exclaimed. "Sounds as if Herbie's in trouble. We'd better go careful."

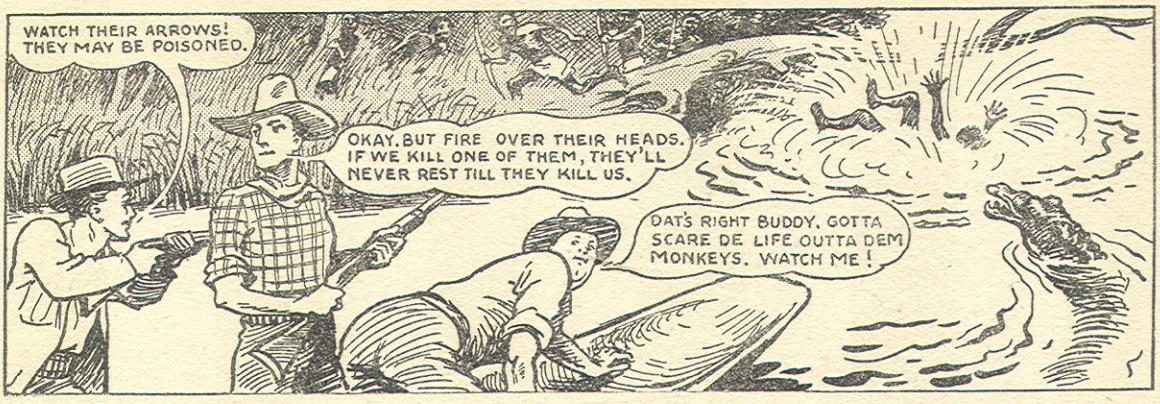


10. They left the deer lying on the ground and crawled forward to a spot amongst the rocks where they could look down on the camp. By that time, the shadows were darker and the light uncertain. They saw the camp fire flickering in the gloom, and saw Herbie seated beside it. And on the other side of the rocky clearing men were firing at Herbie. Jim and Dan could see the flashes of their guns. Again and again they fired, yet still Herbie remained seated by the fire. Suddenly Herbie spoke. "Aw gee, boys!" he said. "Don't yore bullets tickle!" Jim stared in amazement at Dan. "Has Herbie gone mad?" he asked. "What does it mean?" Before Dan could answer, Herbie's head rolled clean off his shoulders. And the head said: "Hi! Go easy, boys! I want dat head!" Dan gasped and exclaimed: "Heck! It's a trick!" He wasn't at all sure what sort of a trick it was, but he knew jolly well that Herbie couldn't speak after his head had been knocked off like that. But as they lay there watching and wondering, Herbie rose up from behind a rock. For a little while, they didn't know he was there. "It's a trick," said Dan, again. And Herbie said: "Sure, it's a trick, boys!"

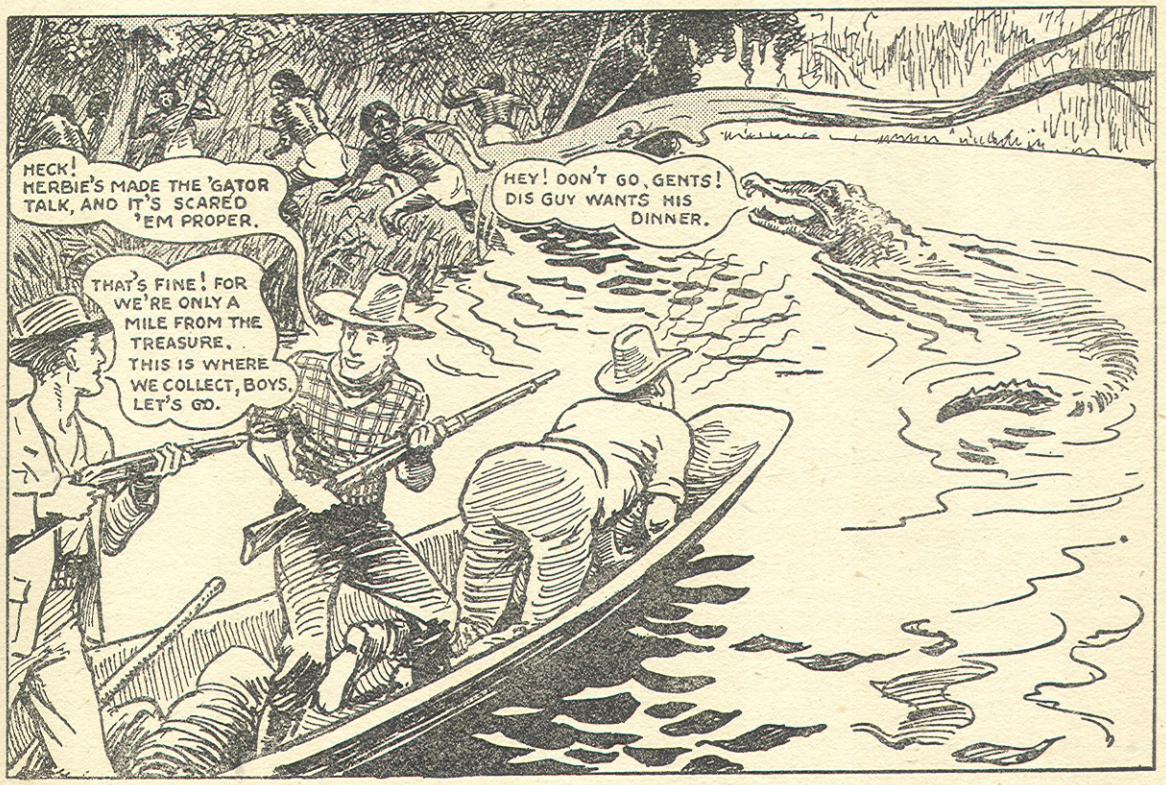
11. They gaped at him in astonishment. "Y'see, boys," grinned Herbie, "I'm a ventriloquist. I can throw my voice where I likes." He went on to explain that when he became aware that a bunch of gunmen were snooping round the camp, he rigged up a dummy to look like himself, then went into hiding to see what happened next. He knew he could not tackle the gunmen single-handed. "Nice work," said Dan. "You fooled 'em proper, Herbie. Now, we'll fool 'em some more." The idea was to crawl round behind the gunmen and take them by surprise. It would be interesting to see who they were and why they were attacking the camp. At the proper moment, Dan yelled: "There they are! Charge 'em, boys!"

12. The gunmen heard the words and fled, thinking a crowd was coming for them. Jim, Dan and Herbie waded into the rogues, knocking them left and right. The gunmen were mostly Brazilians and didn't like the idea of a hand to hand fight. Shooting from behind a rock was more their mark. Jim recognised one man, however. "Look!" he cried. "Valdez is one of them." Dan said he guessed that from the first. Valdez had got together a bunch of scoundrels as villainous as himself, and had sneaked up on the camp, hoping to shoot the pals and get that gold plate. But he had failed.

13. Valdez and his rogue pals scattered and fled, and no more was seen of them. The chums spent the night in peace, one always staying awake on guard. In the morning, they continued on their way over the ridge of the mountains and down to the forest on the other side. It was tough going and Herbie didn't like walking. When they came to a river he nosed around amongst the reeds and found a canoe. "Why not borrow dis yer canoe?" he suggested. "It'll sure save our feet." So they paddled down the river until they came to the region indicated on the gold plate.

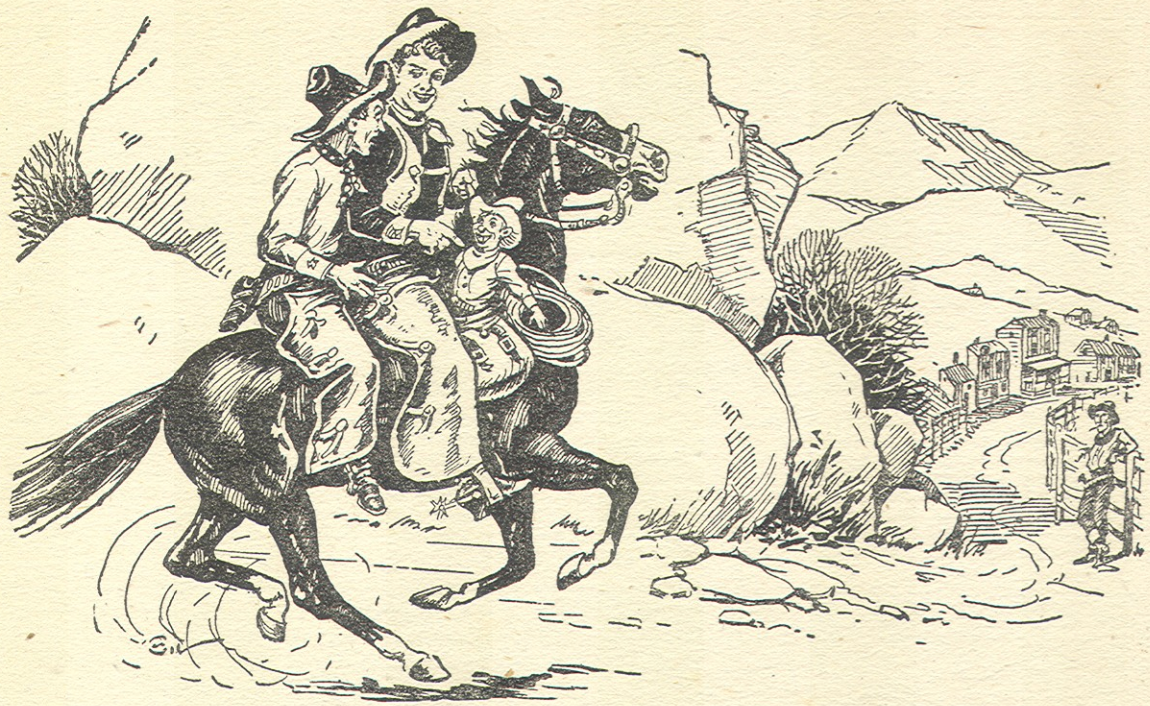


14. " We ought to land around here," said Jim. But they couldn't, for suddenly a tribe of natives appeared on the river bank and began to fire arrows at them. Luckily, none of the pals was hit. " Better watch the arrows," said Jim, " they may be poisoned." Dan was worried. " Okay," he said. " We'll have to fire at them. But fire over their heads. If we hurt one of them they'll never rest until they have wiped us out." He knew the ways of the natives in those parts. And as they drew nearer, one of the natives, who had been lying on a bough overhanging the water, let fly an arrow. It missed its mark, and the native accidentally fell into the river. There was a tremendous swirl in the water, and the ugly snout of an alligator showed, speeding towards the unfortunate native. Herbie was saying: " Dat's right, Dan. We gotta scare de life outta dem monkeys. Watch me! " Herbie had a notion what to do!



15. Luckily, the native who had fallen into the water could swim like a fish. He realised his danger, too. He was out of the water in a flash and scrambling up the bank. All the same, the alligator's jaws snapped unpleasantly close to his heels. And then a voice seemed to come from the alligator. " Hey! " it cried gruffly. " Don't go, gents. Dis guy wants his dinner! " The natives heard it all right. Maybe they didn't understand English, but they thought the voice came from the alligator and they were scared out of their wits. They went dashing off into the forest as hard as they could go. " Herbie's scared 'em proper," said Dan. Jim grinned. " That's fine," he said, " for we're only a mile from the treasure, and we ought to land here if we want to collect. Let's go, boys! " They had safely accomplished the first half of their daring venture, but the toughest part was yet to come. Will they find the treasure?

(Continued on page 154.)



THE COWBOY VENTRILOQUIST

Wild Doings in the Wild West!

Fight on the Trail

DANNY DENVER, the cowboy ventriloquist, heard a shot. He pricked up his ears.

"Sounds like somethin's up, Billy!" he drawled, talking to his doll, whose cheery face stuck out of his saddle-bag.

Billy, the doll, was dressed in cowpuncher's clothes. He wore a small Stetson hat on his red head. He was Danny Denver's pal, and Danny would talk to him as though he were human, and then cause the doll to reply. Danny got a lot of fun out of treating the doll as his pal. Besides, it helped him to keep in practice with this ventriloquising.

Guessing, perhaps, that the shot was only from some stray cowboy herding cattle on the move, Danny leant over and pulled the wires at Billy's back.

Billy twisted his head, opened his mouth and grinned.

"Mebbe there's a war on, Danny!" muttered Billy, as Danny threw his own voice, so that it sounded just as if the doll had really spoken.

At that moment Danny rode around a bluff. Below, the trail fell away sharply. A couple of hundred yards off, two figures were struggling in the dust.

A touch of Danny's knees sent his black horse, Tony, leaping forwards.

"Somethin' sure is up!" Danny muttered.

"Yeah—the sky!" retorted Billy, as Danny threw his voice again—just out of habit.

As Danny thundered down the trail towards the scrappers, they parted company. One of the men made a dash for his horse. The other dashed after him, tripped over a tree-stump and fell flat. By the time Danny reined to a standstill by the fallen man, the other had leapt on

his horse and vanished along the winding trail.

" Stop him ! After him—the darned coyote ! " shouted the wiry little cow-puncher, as Danny jumped down and helped him up.

" You okay ? " Danny drawled.

" Sure, sure, I'm okay ! " yelled the other. His bright blue eyes were furious ; his voice choked with anger. " Whar's ma hoss ? Ah'll git him, that darned ——— ! Steal ma map, would he ? Ah'll fill him so full o' lead he'll drown next time he has a bath———"

" Drown ? " cried Danny.

" Yeah—he'll be so heavy ! " retorted the little guy.

" What's the trouble, stranger ? " Danny went on. " What were you an' that coyote fighting about ? "

" Yuh give me a lift into Three Trees township an' I'll tell you ! " growled the other. " But there ain't no time to waste. I gotta git on that galoot's trail an' git ma map back———"

By the time Danny and his new-found friend, Buster Benson, thundered into Three Trees main street, the cowboy ventriloquist understood everything.

It seemed that Buster's old man had struck it rich in some gold rush. But a gang of outlaws, led by Black Mike, were on his trail. So the old man buried his gold so that those bad men couldn't steal it from him.

Buster's dad had meant to return later and collect the gold ; but he had an accident, fell off his horse and broke a leg. So the old boy drew a map to show where the gold was hidden and gave it to Buster to go and get it.

Black Mike had found out about this. Playing a lone hand, he had held up Buster and forced him—at the point of his six-shooter—to hand over the map.

But Buster—as the bad man grabbed the map—had managed to kick the gun out of the outlaw's hand. A scrap had followed. And although Black Mike was bigger than Buster, the latter had been getting the best of things. For—for all his small size—Buster packed a mighty wallop in both fists. So Black Mike had bunked and made his escape.

" If that skunk gits to whar my dad hid that thar dust," Buster repeated grimly, " he'll pinch the lot, Danny ! "

" Don't yuh worry," replied Danny, " we'll find him an' stop him, won't we, Billy ? "

" You've said it, boss ! " piped Billy, from the saddle-bag.

" Jumping gophers ! What the——— ? " gasped Buster, staring down at Billy in amazement.

" Don't worry ! " grinned Danny. " That's only Billy, my talking doll. You see, I'm a ventriloquist. When I throw my voice, it sounds just as if Billy is speaking ! "

" By Jimminy, you sure gave me a turn, Danny," gulped Buster.

Danny saw a tall, thin cowboy, leaning against a near-by post, and asked him if he'd seen a guy called Black Mike ride that way.

The tall cowboy took off his hat and scratched his head.

" What—was he a tall, tough-lookin' hombre, with a black beard, black hair, a scar on his left cheek an' ridin' a piebald horse ? " he asked slowly.

" Yeah—that's him ! " cried Buster eagerly. " Hev yuh seen him ? "

" No, I ain't seen a sign of him, being as I've been fast asleep ! " drawled the cowboy.

" Jumping Jimminy ! " snorted Buster angrily. " Why didn't you say so before ?"

" Come on, Buster," said Danny. " Let's try the saloon ! "

The cowboy ventriloquist tethered Tony to the rail as a brown riderless horse came galloping down the street.

" Why, it's Andy ! " Buster cried. He gave a shrill whistle. " That pesky galoot, Black Mike, scared Andy off. He was goin' t'leave me to foot it back into town if yuh hadn't come along, Danny ! "

Buster tethered Andy alongside Tony. Then Danny and Buster strode through the swing doors into the saloon.

As they walked inside, the tinkling piano stopped. There was a sudden hush

which warned Danny that something was wrong.

" Say," drawled Buster, " has anyone around hyar seen a guy named Black Mike ? "

For a moment no one spoke. Then a tough-looking guy, with a cauliflower ear, who was leaning against the bar, swung round. His name was Cauliflower Joe, and he was a pretty tough customer.

" Suppose we hev ! " snarled Cauliflower Joe. " What's it to yuh ? "

" We've gotta little business to settle with Black Mike, that's what ! " scowled Buster.

Cauliflower Joe's big hands suddenly flashed to his holsters. Danny and Buster found themselves staring down the wrong ends of two gleaming guns.

" Yuh two hombres git outa hyar ! " roared Cauliflower Joe. " We don't like strangers in these hyar parts ! Scram ! "

Danny and Buster Get the Wrong Man

" Go on—get going ! " roared Cauliflower Joe. " Ah'll count six. If you ain't outa hyar by then—I'll fill yuh so full o' holes yuh'll look like mom's tea strainer ! "

With a snort, Buster took a step forward. The gunman backed a pace. Even behind his two six-shooters, the look on Buster's face half-scared him. Cauliflower's fingers trembled on the triggers of his two guns.

" Stay whar yuh are ! " he rasped.

That one step took him back against the angle made by the counter. Danny noticed it and acted quickly. The pointed corner stuck sharply in Cauliflower Joe's back. At the same moment a harsh voice, which seemed to come from right behind him, snarled :

" Raise 'em, you durned coyote ! Raise 'em, and drop them guns, or—you're dead mutton ! "

Mistaking the point of the counter stuck in his back for the muzzle of a gun, Cauliflower let his Colts clatter to the floor. He raised his hands as Buster stooped to grab the guns.

" Now," Buster shouted, " has any guy hyar seen Black Mike lately ? " He waggled the guns threateningly. " Come on, now—shoot ! Unless yuh want me to start shootin' ! "

The bartender and the rest of the boys in the saloon had twisted their necks, looking for the guy who'd told Cauliflower Joe to raise his hands. They couldn't see a sign of him. That was because Danny had thrown his voice cleverly once again and just at the right moment. It had really sounded as if the voice had come from behind the outlaw, and Cauliflower Joe had been completely fooled. The sharp angle of the counter sticking into his back had done the rest.

" Black Mike's on top ! " gulped the bartender, scared at the sight of those guns and Buster's fierce expression.

He nodded towards the stairs.

" Come on, Danny ! " snapped Buster. " Guess Black Mike planted this hyar guy to stop us. But he'll find out his mistake ! "

" Yuh'll find Black Mike in Room 4 ! " said Cauliflower Joe sullenly.

Racing up the stairs Danny and Buster reached the door of Room 4. Rattling the handle, Buster found it was locked. From inside the room they could hear loud snores. Outside stood a big pair of boots, evidently returned from being cleaned, for they shone so you could almost see your face in them.

" Huh, I guess Black Mike's asleep ! " grunted Buster. " Now's our chance, Danny. We'll grab that map and git away before he knows what's hit him ! "

Both Buster and Danny put their shoulders to the door.

" Heave ! " cried Buster.

" Crash ! "

The door wasn't half as tough as they had expected. Their combined weights were too much for it. The door flew open. Buster and Danny flew forwards.

Wham !

They both landed bang on top of the sleeping figure on the bed.

" Yow ! Gug ! Gug ! "

Weird and wonderful sounds drifted upwards.

" Grab him, Danny ! " panted Buster

" Don't let him get away! We've sure gotta get that map! "

Crash! Bang! Wallop!

Between them Danny and Buster had the dickens of a job to hold their prisoner down. Wrestling and rolling all over the floor, the bed gave way. Blankets and sheets ripped, pillows gashed, feathers flew in all directions and the three struggling figures rolled about.

Buster, manfully clinging to the guy's legs, panted :

" Sit on his face, Danny! Sit on his face! "

" I—I can't find his—face! " Danny panted back.

Suddenly Danny let out a cry of dismay. He let go as if he had been holding on to a hot piece of coal.

" Look out, Buster! " Danny gulped. " We've got the wrong guy! "

" W-what? " gasped Buster.

The angry red face which had suddenly popped into view from beneath the pillow certainly wasn't that belonging to Black Mike. Even at a distance Danny had caught a good glimpse of the outlaw, enough to be certain that he and Buster had made an awful mistake.

" Galloping gophers! " gulped Buster.

He let go in a hurry, too!

Staggering to his feet, the chap who faced them was at least six foot three in his socks. He had a black beard, a red face and a nasty look. His name was Piccolo Pete.

" Yuh—yuh—coyotes! " he rumbled. His black eyes glittered with rage " Yuh—yuh—why I'll—I'll——"

His hands leapt to his holsters.

" B-beat it! " stuttered Buster.

They dashed for the doorway.

Bang—bang—bang!

Bullets from Piccolo Pete's six-shooters whipped and whined about them, peppered the passage at their flying heels.

" Quick—in hyar! " hissed Buster.

Tumbling inside, Buster slammed the door shut behind them as Piccolo Pete rushed into the passage.

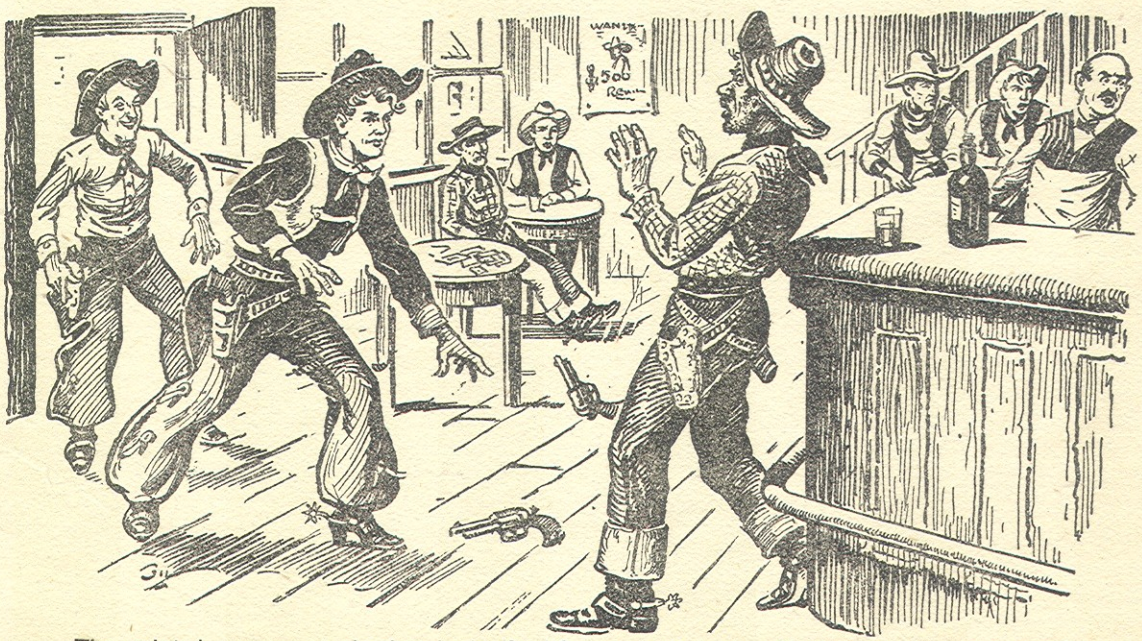
The next moment the gunman tripped over his boots.

Crash!

With a yell, he landed flat on his face with such force that he knocked a picture off the wall.

Wham!

The picture fell forward and framed his



The pointed counter stuck sharply in Cauliflower Joe's back. He thought it was a gun!

head and shoulders as Piccolo Pete started to scramble up.

"Yow! Ow!" yelled Piccolo Pete, bursting with rage.

Pulling the picture-frame off, he flung it on the floor. Then he leapt towards the door of the bedroom opposite and started hammering on it.

"Open up, you galoots!" Piccolo Pete bellowed. "Open up—or I'll shoot my way inside. Open up!"

Chase After Black Mike

EVEN as Danny and Buster tumbled into the room opposite, and the door slammed, Buster gasped: "Look!"

They had spotted a dark figure scrambling over the window-sill. And Buster recognised the guy's back view all right.

It was Black Mike.

In a flash Buster and Danny guessed what had happened. Cauliflower Joe had tricked them. He had told them the outlaw they were after was in Room 4, when he wasn't, and in the meantime he must have tipped off Black Mike about what had happened below. And now Black Mike was out to make his getaway.

Gun out, Buster leapt towards the window. By then Black Mike had vanished. Buster and Danny craned their necks out of the window. They were just in time to see Black Mike shinning down a near-by drainpipe.

"Stop! Stop!" Buster yelled. "Come back hyar—you durned coyote—or I'll sure pick yuh off ke——"

The next moment the drainpipe, which was not built to stand Black Mike's thirteen stone weight, creaked in protest. It came clean away from the wall just where he clung.

Then it started to bend over the street like a bit of bamboo. Any moment Buster and Danny expected the pipe to snap in two. Clinging on dizzily, Black Mike let out a yell of terror.

"Hellup! Hellup! Save me!" he howled.

"Look out, Buster!" cried Danny. His big hands started to unwind the lasso wound around his waist.

The next instant the rope whizzed through the air, just as the drainpipe snapped in two. With a yell of despair, Black Mike hurtled towards the street below. But not for long. The falling noose of the rope snicked slickly around the outlaw's waist. The rope tightened. Black Mike's headlong progress was arrested with a jerk which made his ribs rattle.

The next moment the desperado swung giddily towards the wall. It looked to the outlaw as if he was in for a tough time, as if he'd be bashed against the side of the building. Luckily for him, Black Mike missed the wall. Instead, he swung feet first straight through a ground-floor open window.

Inside, Cauliflower Joe was standing grinning to himself. He was tickled to death at the smart way he'd tricked Danny and Buster. But that grin was soon wiped off his ugly face. For Black Mike's heavy boots hit him—*wham!*—right under the chin. With a yelp, Cauliflower Joe fell slap on his back with a thud that shook the whole saloon.

Up above, Danny and Buster were both hauling in the rope as fast as they could. Before Black Mike had a chance to tell Cauliflower how sorry he was, the rope tightened. Black Mike made a quick backward exit again, and swung dizzily aloft.

"Yow! Hellup!" screamed the outlaw.

Before Black Mike knew quite what had happened, Buster and Danny had grabbed him by the shoulders and the collar and had hauled him over the sill, back into the room.

As the outlaw landed on his knees, the door crashed open. Piccolo Pete heaved his way inside, both guns blazing.

"Look out!" yelled Danny to Buster.

The next moment Piccolo tripped clean over Black Mike's crouching figure. Both guns flew into far corners of the room out of harm's way.

Danny and Buster leapt to help Piccolo up. Shaking with rage, Piccolo pushed their helping hands away.

"Yuh—yuh!" he choked. "Ah'll—Ah'll——"

" Stick 'em up ! "

Piccolo found himself staring down the muzzle of one of his own guns, held by Buster.

" Raise 'em ! " Buster ordered fiercely.

Nearly bursting with rage, Piccolo glared at Buster. He had no choice but to obey.

" Now, see hyar," growled Buster. " We don't want any trouble with yuh ! "

" Yuh—yuh ! " spluttered Piccolo.

" Guess it was all a mistake, see ! " Buster went on quickly. " We were after Black Mike, and some guy told us we'd find him in Room 4. We didn't realise he was kiddin' us, see ! "

Piccolo Pete started to calm down. Besides, Piccolo had other things on his mind just then. He nodded sullenly.

" Git going ! " snapped Buster.

"Say, what about my guns ? "

" We'll drop 'em outa this window. You kin pick 'em up outside ! " Buster retorted.

Even as Piccolo Pete turned to obey, Danny let out a shout.

" Hey, stop ! Come back ! "

Buster and Danny were just in time to see Black Mike crawling out of the door. His head and shoulders were just on a level with that pair of boots of Piccolo's, over which he'd tripped when he'd rushed out of his room a few minutes before.

Like one man, Buster and Danny pounced. Grabbing one wriggling leg each, they hauled the outlaw back inside. Danny slammed the door shut after Piccolo.

" Search him, Danny ! " hissed Buster, as he turned and tossed Piccolo's guns out into the street, and Danny removed the lariat.

" Come on, hand over that map," Danny rapped. " If yuh don't, we'll go through your gear with a toothcomb ! "

" I—I ain't got any map ! " Black Mike snarled.

" Oh, yeah ? " snapped Buster. " Waal, we'll soon see about that ! Search him, Danny ! "

While Buster kept the outlaw covered with his gun, Danny searched him thoroughly. But there wasn't a sign of the missing map.

" I told yuh I ain't got any map ! " Black Mike protested.

" Take off them duds ! " Buster roared.

" W-what ? " yelped Black Mike.

" Take 'em off ! Git a move on ! " shouted Buster.

" B-but it's mighty c-cold ! " bleated Black Mike.

Buster pulled out a box of matches.

" What about burning 'em off him, Danny ? " he growled. " That'd keep him warm, too, wouldn't it ? "

Black Mike thought Buster really meant it. Scared stiff, he starting removing his clothes in record time.

But though Buster and Danny searched every inch of them, they found no sign of the missing map.

" I—I told yuh I hadn't got th' map ! " Black Mike whined, shivering with cold.

Buster grabbed him by the shoulders.

" See hyar—whar's that map ? " he cried, between gritted teeth. " Yuh spill the beans, or we'll—we'll lower you outa that window—jest as you are ! "

" Yuh—yuh wouldn't ! " gulped Black Mike. " I'd—I'd catch me death o' cold. I'd——"

" Spill th' beans, then ! " scowled Buster. " Yuh-ve jest got ten seconds to——"

Black Mike guessed Buster wasn't kidding—and as he didn't fancy braving that icy north-easter in his birthday suit, he gave in.

" All right—all right. I'll tell yuh ! " Black Mike gulped. " I pushed that thar map into one of them boots in the passage jest now. I figured I might make a getaway an' pick th' map up later, when th' coast was clear ! "

" What ? Th' boots outside Room 4 ? " Buster gulped.

" Th' ones belongin' to——? " gasped Danny.

" Come on, Danny, what are we waiting for ? " cried Buster.

They dashed out into the passage just in time to see those boots disappearing along the corridor.

Unfortunately, they weren't by them-

selves. They were on Piccolo Pete's big feet.

Bank Hold-up

STEALTHILY, Buster and Danny followed Piccolo Pete out into the main street. At the corner by the bank, Pete stopped and looked around him furtively. The next moment, he turned sharply and entered the bank.

" D'you really think Black Mike did put that map in one of them boots ? " Danny whispered.

Buster nodded grimly.

" Black Mike was too plumb scared to tell a fib that time ! " he answered.

By then, Buster and Danny had reached the bank's main window. They peered over the frosted portion. Then they both gave a gasp.

" Suffering snakes ! " hissed Buster. " It's a hold-up ! "

Standing in front of the cashier's window was a tall man. In his hands gleamed two six-shooters. A black silk handkerchief masked the lower part of his face.

" It's Piccolo Pete ! " Buster hissed. " Mask or no mask, I'd know that guy anywhere now ! "

Two other customers who were in the bank had their hands raised high.

" Hand over that dough ! " Buster and Danny heard the gunman snarl. " And don't try an' tell me you ain't got no big dough, see. I know ten thousand dollars came in by mail this afternoon ! "

The white-faced cashier slung a big canvas bag across the counter.

" Okay ! " snarled Piccolo Pete. " Now, jest you gents keep your hands raised high, see ! An' don't be in too much of a hurry t'call th' sheriff, if yuh want t' live to a ripe old age ! "

" Quick, Danny ! Lasso him as he comes out. We'll save the bank's dough and get our map back at th' same time ! " hissed Buster.

But by then Piccolo Pete had backed to the open window on the other side of the building. The next instant the outlaw leapt through, jumped on his horse, which was waiting, and was away down the trail like the wind.

Absorbed in watching Piccolo Pete, neither Danny nor Buster had noticed Black Mike, who had dressed hurriedly, and had now come out of the saloon with Cauliflower Joe and the rest of the gang.

They hadn't noticed the gang split up, either, one section riding off up the trail, the other riding down, as Piccolo Pete disappeared into the bank.

" Come on, Danny, after him ! " Buster cried.

He and Danny dived across the street to where their horses were tethered. A split second later they were galloping like mad in chase of the bank robber.

Behind them Danny and Buster heard faint shouts as the bank cashier gave the alarm. The sheriff came tearing on the scene too late to do anything but hastily assemble a posse.

By then, Piccolo Pete, Buster and Danny were far down the trail in a cloud of dust.

" Jumping rattlers ! We mustn't let that guy get away with that thar map in his boots ! " Buster groaned.

Danny's blue eyes ranged the winding trail ahead. He reckoned they were just about keeping up with Piccolo Pete, but not gaining an inch.

Suddenly, as they rounded a bluff, Danny reined Tony hard.

" Look, Buster ! " he cried.

Along the trail ahead, Piccolo Pete had been riding hard and fast, but suddenly he came off his horse and rolled in the dust. Then, as he staggered to his feet, figures suddenly appeared. One leapt to stop Piccolo's riderless mount. The others closed in on the bank robber, guns levelled.

Leaping from their horses, Danny and Buster tethered them to an outjutting rock. Then swiftly—puzzled and bewildered—they stumbled stealthily under cover of the rocks to within a few feet of the point where the bank robber had come off his horse.

" By Jimminy," whispered Buster, " it's Black Mike and his gang ! "

Danny's blue eyes swept the trail. He spotted the taut rope still strung across it. It was this rope which had swept Piccolo off his horse.

" Git them thar boots off, Piccolo ! " Black Mike was snarling.

He shook his two six-shooters.

" Go on—git 'em off—or——" Black Mike growled.

" You — durned coyote — you'll git what's comin' to yuh for this ! " stuttered Piccolo Pete.

" Git 'em off ! " Black Mike repeated.

His fingers trembled on the triggers of his six-shooters.

With an oath, Piccolo Pete sat down in the dust and pulled off his boots.

" Git 'em, Cauliflower ! " rapped Black Mike.

Cauliflower Joe dived a grimy hand into each boot in turn. The next moment he pulled out a crumpled piece of paper. It was the missing map.

" Nice work, Cauliflower ! " chuckled Black Mike. " The map plus a cool ten thousand dollars in banknotes, all ours. We'll git goin' afore the sheriff an' those two other nosy guys git around ! "

Two of Black Mike's men grabbed Pete's arms and tied them to his sides.

" Yeah, I heard yuh was after that thar bank-roll, Piccolo ! " Black Mike grinned. " Yuh sure talked too much in th' saloon th' other night, didn't yuh ? "

" Ah'll git yuh fer this ! " croaked Piccolo Pete, his eyes blazing with hatred.

" Brother, by th' time you come out o' jail you'll be too old t' git anybody ! " chuckled Black Mike. " Git goin' ! "

With another harsh laugh, Black Mike fired a couple of shots at Pete's feet.

White-faced, Pete started back for town at an unsteady run, while Black Mike and his men stood and roared with laughter.

" What are we going to do ? " whispered Buster to Danny. " We sure can't tackle all that gang—just the two of us. Guess we'll hev to follow 'em and——"

" Mebbe lose their trail ! " muttered Danny. " No, Buster, I've got a better idea ! "

Wriggling as close as he could, Danny took cover behind a big boulder only a couple of feet from where Black Mike and Cauliflower Joe stood.

" Nice work ! " rasped Black Mike. " Ten thousand dollars in banknotes an' that thar gold to split between us——

" Split, hey ? That's what yuh think " came a voice.

Black Mike and Cauliflower got to blows over the rude things they seemed to be saying to one another. They didn't know the cowboy ventriloquist was playing a trick on them.

To Black Mike it sounded just as if Cauliflower had spoken. Actually, Cauliflower hadn't said a word. It was Danny throwing his voice and imitating the way Cauliflower talked.

" Split it, hey? Yuh've got some hopes ! " came that voice again. " There ain't gonna be no split ! "

Black Mike swung round. His face was black as a thundercloud.

" What—what did yuh say? " Black Mike rasped.

Cauliflower Joe looked puzzled. He had heard a voice. But who had spoken, he just did not know. He twisted his head in search of whoever had spoken.

Just then Danny threw his voice again. As Cauliflower Joe's face was turned away, Black Mike didn't know that Joe's lips weren't moving.

" Thar ain't gonna be a split ! Me an' th' boys are taking the lot, see ! " Cauliflower seemed to say.

" What ? " yelled Black Mike " Why, you pesky two-timer——"

" Don't try an' get tough with me, you big stiff ! " the voice which seemed to be Cauliflower Joe's went on. " It won't do you no good ! "

Startled, Cauliflower Joe turned to find himself staring down the gun-barrels of Black Mike's six-shooters.

" What—the——? " gulped Cauliflower. " What's up, boss ? "

" Yuh know what's up ! " shouted Black Mike in a rage. " You pesky no-good son of a weasel ! Doublecross me, would yuh ? Raise 'em—raise 'em—or I'll—— ! "

" I—I ain't doublecrossing yuh, boss ! " gulped Cauliflower, shooting his hands heavenwards. " W-what's the big idea ? "

" I heard yuh th' first time ! " shouted Black Mike. " Nope, thar sure ain't going to be any split. I'm taking that thar map, the gold an' the bank dough, see, for myself ! "

Two shots rang out. One of the gang ran forward, gun-barrels smoking, as Black Mike's Colts clattered to the ground, shot clean out of his hands.

" Grab him, boys ! " cried Cauliflower. " He's nuts ! "

Leaping forward, Cauliflower's right fist shot out. He smacked Black Mike right under the chin. Mike landed flat on his back in the dust. But he was soon up again. Mike's left returned the compliment. *Wham !* With a howl, Cauliflower fell flat. His bullet head knocked against a rock, and Cauliflower saw stars.

The next moment Black Mike was the centre of a first-class free-for-all as the rest of the gang joined in the scrap. Black Mike disappeared beneath a mass of struggling figures.

Suddenly, Buster caught Danny's arm. " Look ! " he cried. " The sheriff ! "

Even as Buster spoke, the sheriff and his grim-faced posse rode up.

" Break it up ! Break it up ! " shouted the sheriff, firing shots into the air from his six-shooters.

Buster and Danny dashed forward.

" The bank dough's in that saddle-bag, sheriff ! " Danny cried, as the gang suddenly stopped scrapping and raised their hands high.

Buster slipped his fingers into the breast pocket of Cauliflower Joe's check shirt. He pulled out the map, as Danny explained to the sheriff and his men all that had happened.

When Danny told him how he'd kidded Black Mike by throwing his voice to make it sound like Joe talking, the sheriff had a good laugh.

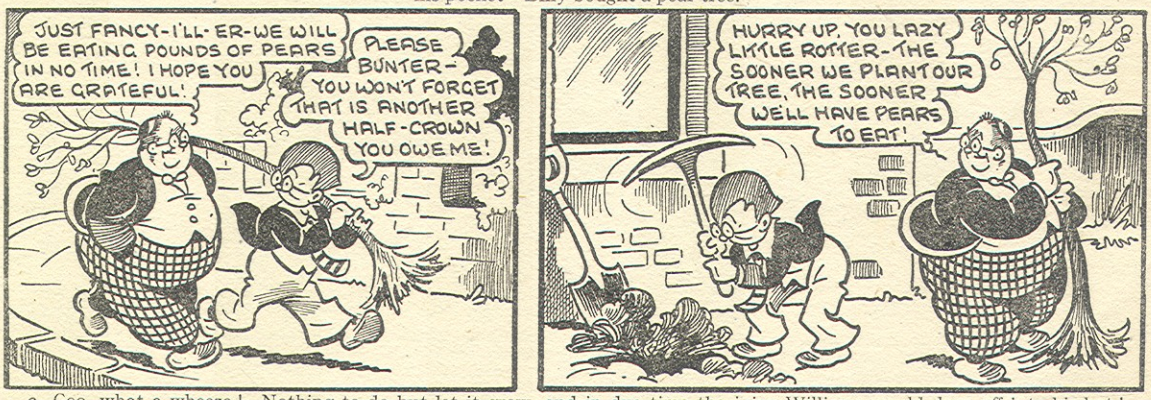
" Yuh must sure give us a turn with your doll down at th' saloon to-night," drawled the sheriff. " We sure hev somethin' to celebrate ! "

" Mebbe ! " chuckled Danny. " But, first, I've gotta see that my buddy, Buster, collects his gold safely. So long, sheriff ! "

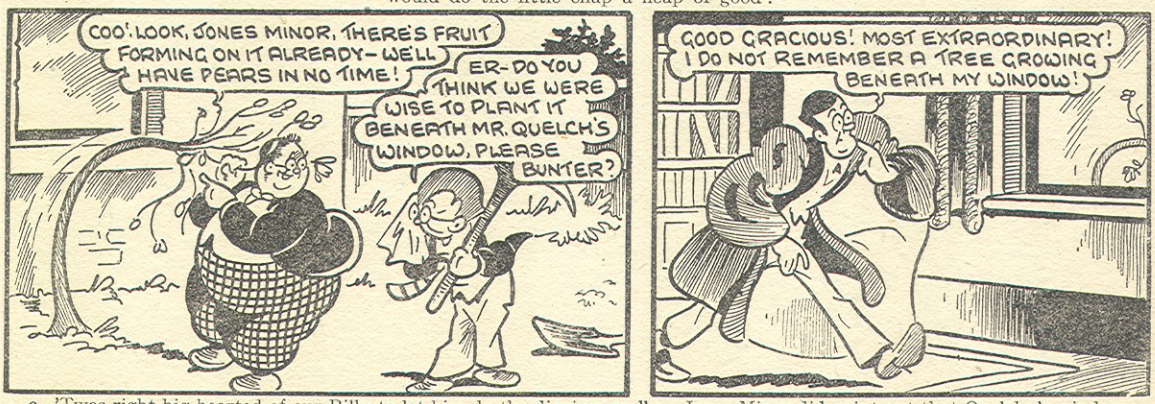
With a wave of his hand Danny turned his horse westwards beside Buster's. A few hours later the hidden treasure was snugly stowed in their saddle-bags as they rode back to Three Trees to give the promised show, before riding back to give Buster's dad the good news and the gold.

THE END

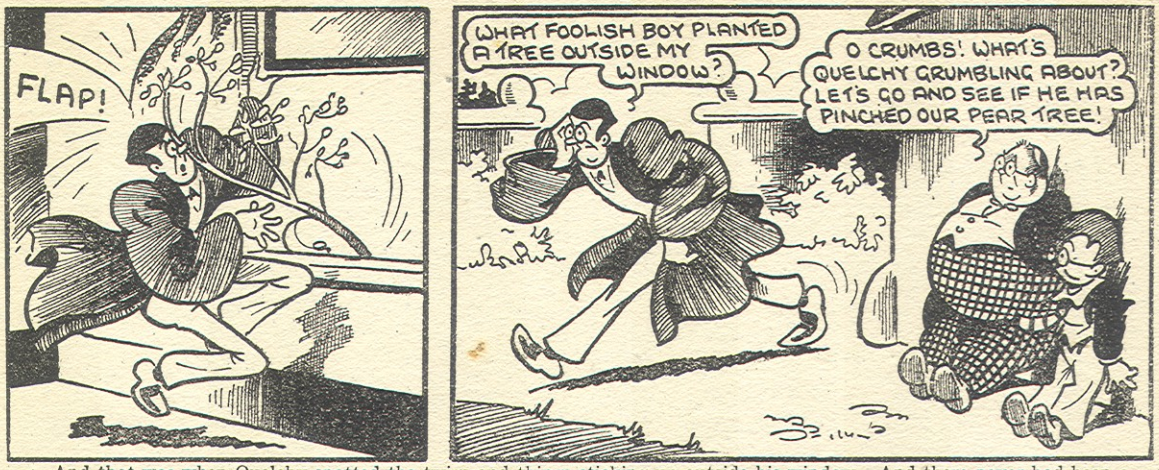
1. If there's anything William George Bunter likes better than a ripe, juicy pear it's a pair! So when he saw a poster telling all whom it might concern that there were fruit trees for sale—and knowing that Jones Minor had half-a-crown in his pocket—Billy bought a pear tree.



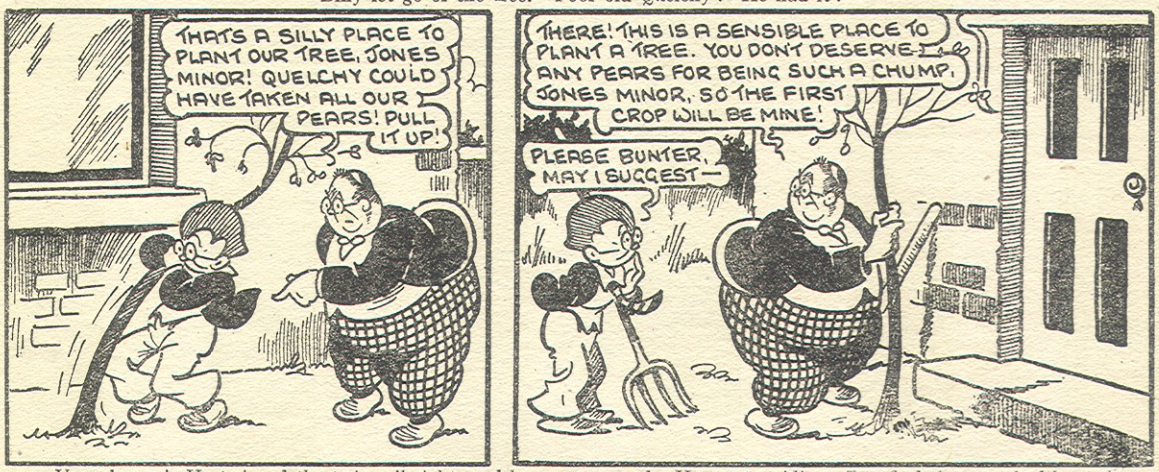
2. Coo, what a wheeze! Nothing to do but let it grow, and in due time the juicy Williams would drop off into his hat! 'Twas as easy as that! All he had to do was to plant the thing. So Billy showed Jones Minor where to dig. The exercise would do the little chap a heap of good!



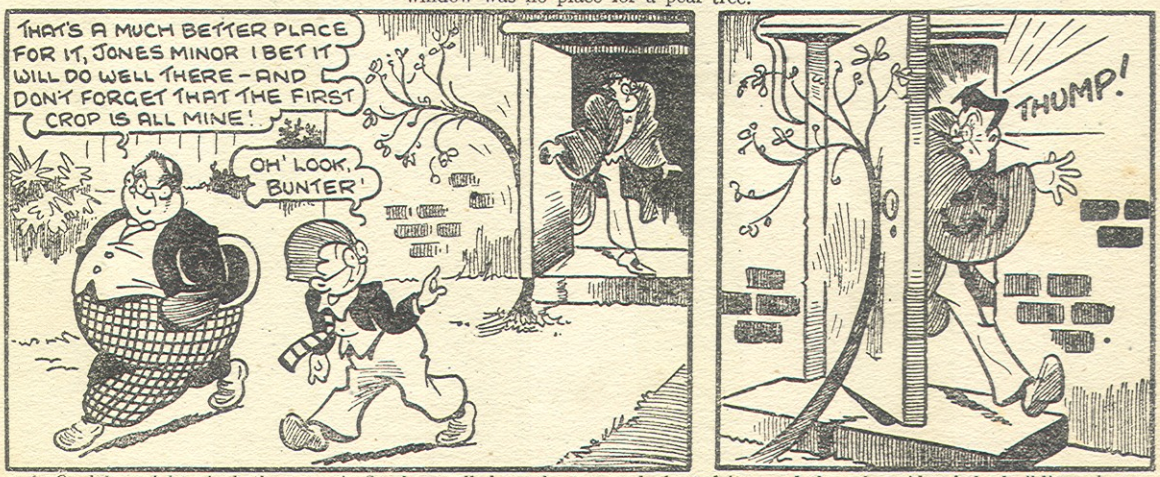
3. 'Twas right big-hearted of our Billy to let him do the digging, really. Jones Minor did point out that Quelchy's window was just there, but Billy didn't let a little thing like that bother him. He pulled down the tree to show Jones Minor that fruit was already showing on the tree.



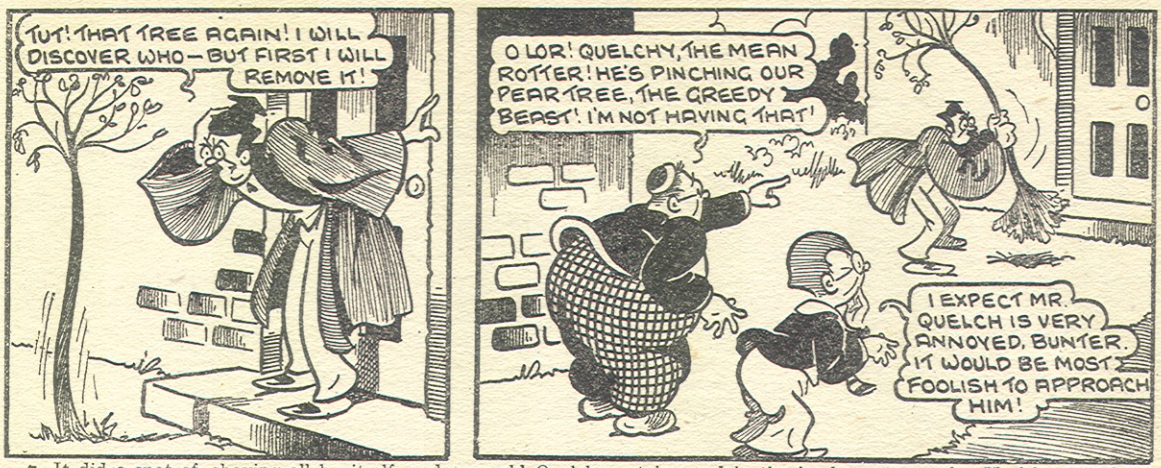
4. And that was when Quelchy spotted the twigs and things sticking up outside his window. And there never had been a tree there before! Was somebody playing Jack the Giant Killer around there? Quelchy threw up the window just as Billy let go of the tree. Poor old Quelchy! He had it!



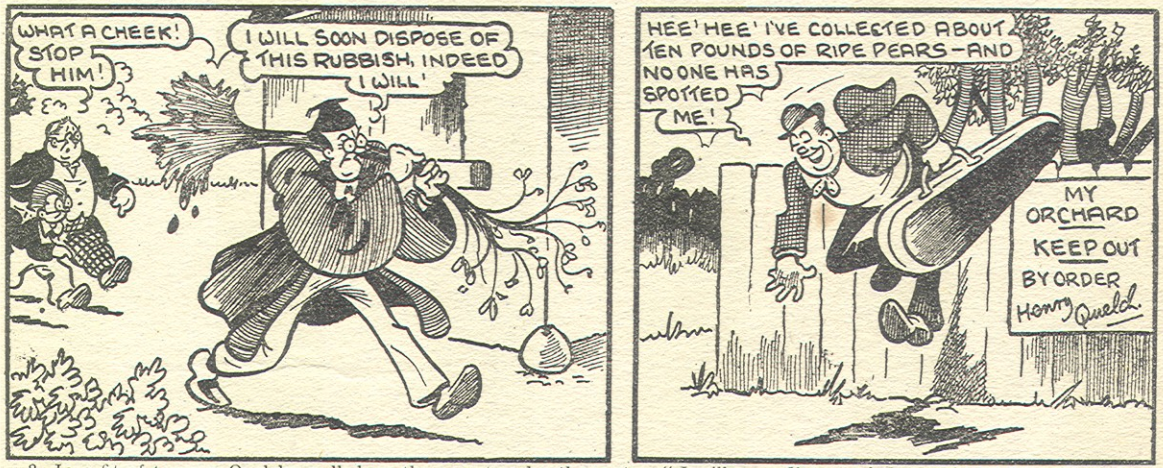
5. Yes, chums! He twigged the twigs all right, and he was annoyed. He went striding off to find the wretched boy who had done this to him. He didn't spot Billy and Jones Minor, but they spotted him. Billy realised then, that under Quelchy's window was no place for a pear tree.



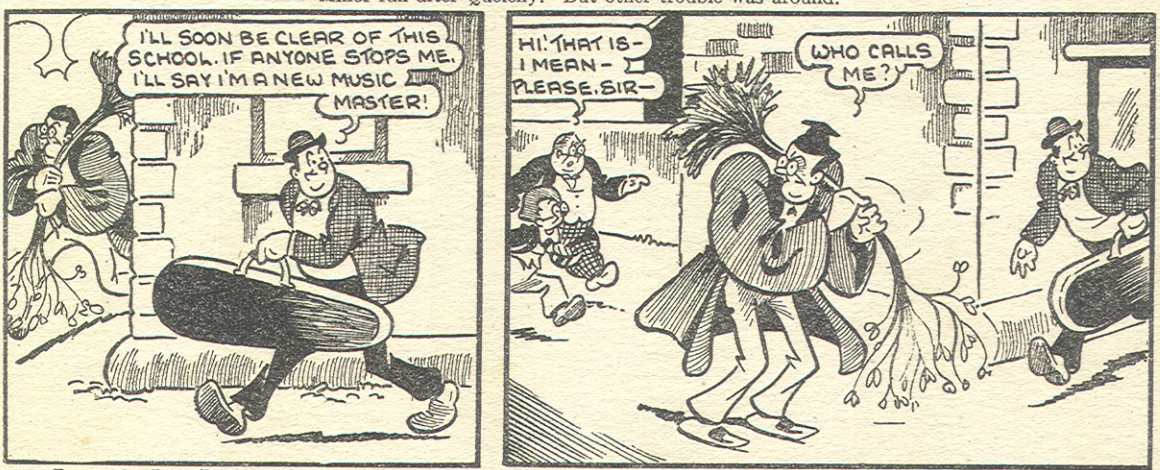
6. Quelchy might pinch the pears! So they pulled up the tree and planted it round the other side of the building, close to the back door. But Quelchy came out, and shoved the tree back and the tree didn't like it a little bit.



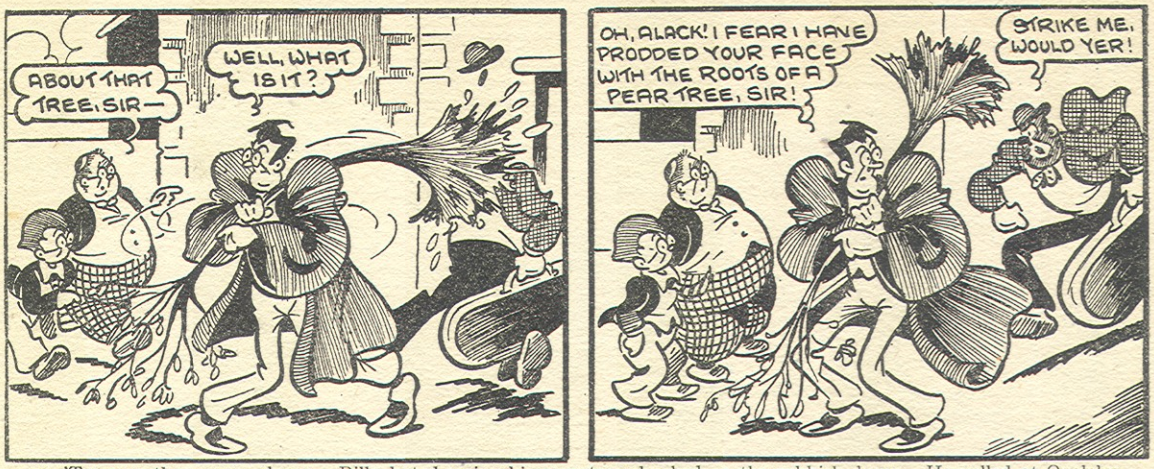
7. It did a spot of shoving all by itself, and poor old Quelchy got jammed in the jamb, so to speak. He felt properly squashed! And, really, he was annoyed—and amazed! For, believe it or not, when he looked for the shover he found the tree! It must have walked round after him!



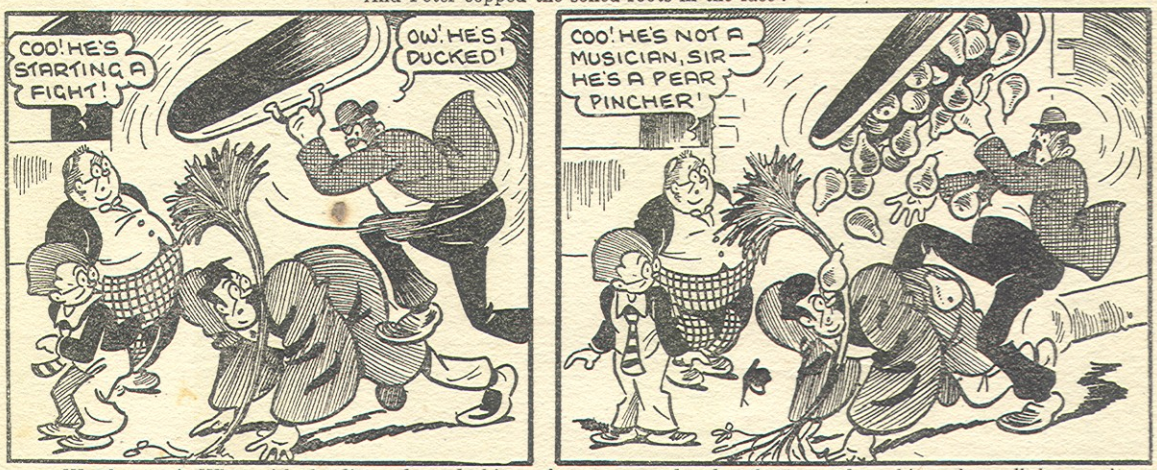
8. In a fit of temper, Quelchy pulled up the pear tree by the roots. "I will soon dispose of this rubbish!" he snapped, nastily. And Billy began to get really wild. "He's pinching our pears!" he barked. "After him!" Billy and Jones Minor ran after Quelchy. But other trouble was around.



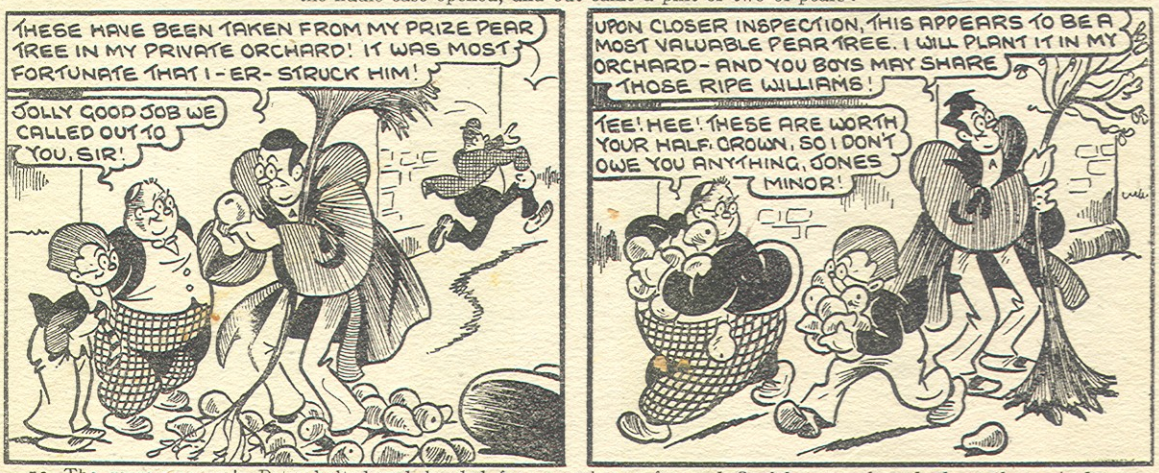
9. Peter, the Pear Pincher, was hopping over the fence of Quelchy's orchard. And he carried a fiddle case full of pears. "Hee, hee!" he chuckled. "If anyone sees me I'm the new music master!" He and Quelchy ran into each other.



10. 'Twas on the corner, chums. Billy hated seeing his pear tree chucked on the rubbish dump. He yelled at Quelchy. "Hi, sir! About that tree?" he called. Quelchy heard his fruity voice and turned sharply, saying: "Who calls?" And Peter copped the soiled roots in the face!

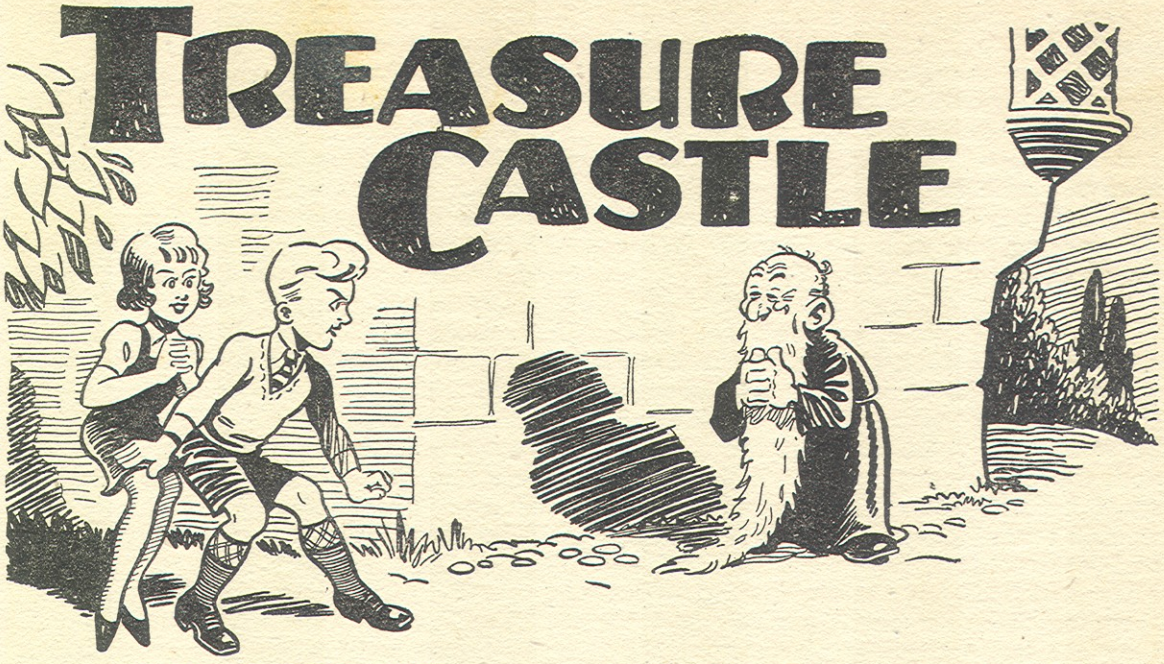


11. Was he sore! What with the dirt and woody bits, a few worms and a slug that went down his neck—well, he wasn't standing for that! And raising his fiddle case he aimed a blow at Quelchy. But Quelchy ducked, the blow missed fire, the fiddle case opened, and out came a pint or two of pears!



12. The game was up! Peter bolted and headed for somewhere safer, and Quelchy was pleased about that. And on closer inspection he decided that Billy's tree was a pippin. So he kept it and gave Billy the fruit. Nice work!

TREASURE CASTLE



The Old Man's Treasure

TOM and Susie were beginning to feel rather tired when they saw it. They were standing on a slight rise and down below them, in the hollow, was the queerest house they had ever seen! It was like an old-world castle with tall grey turrets and a very high stone wall all round it.

They dashed down the slope to have a closer look and found a big wooden door which was closed but unlatched. Tom pushed it wide open. In front of them was the most beautiful garden they had ever seen, and they ventured down the path.

"If we could only see somebody who could tell us the quickest way home," said Tom, "because, you know, it'll soon be dark and we don't want to get lost on the moors at night."

"And if they're very nice people here, perhaps they'd let us have a cup of tea and some bread and jam," Susie suggested, for she was already feeling hungry and wishing she was sitting down to a big tea at home.

Tom was just going to answer when they rounded a corner of the house and saw a little old man standing in the middle of the path. Tom thought he had better explain why they were there, but it was the old man who spoke first. He came towards them bowing and chuckling and rubbing his hands.

"Good-evening, children! Good-evening, my dears! Now, isn't it charming of you to come and see a lonely old man like me? But, of course, I was expecting you to come along to help me!"

"But, please sir, I'm sure you've made a mistake," Tom said politely. "We've never been here before and we only called to see if you could tell us the best way home because I'm afraid we've got lost."

"And—and perhaps let us have a cup of tea and some bread and butter, because we're dreadfully hungry," Susie put in hopefully.

And then the old man started to laugh again. He chuckled and bubbled with mirth so much that Susie felt sure he would have the most terrible hiccups before he had finished.

"But of course you shall," he wheezed between the chuckles. "Now wasn't it rude of me not to think of that at once? Then a lovely feather bed for the night and a great big breakfast in the morning! How would that be?"

Tom said it would be wonderful but,

if the old man didn't mind, they really must try to get home that evening. But the old man, laughing and chuckling again, just wouldn't hear of it. He said they might easily get lost on the moors and if such a thing did happen he would always blame himself.

" And besides all that," he finished, " supposing you met the Giant ? Whatever would you do then ? "

" The Giant ? " they both cried.

But the old man wouldn't tell them any more. He took them into the house, showed them to a bedroom and brought them a tray of wonderful food. He said he would call them early in the morning and told them not to try to leave the room before that. They promised they wouldn't and it was not long after they had eaten that they were fast asleep. They had still felt rather worried about spending the night there, but all the food they ate made them so sleepy that they couldn't stay awake long enough really to worry.

It had not been light very long when the old man himself came and called them and told them to get dressed. When they were ready to go downstairs, they opened their door and found that he was waiting for them on the landing. He asked them if they had had a good night and, still chuckling good-naturedly, he led them down to the kitchen where there was another big meal laid out on the table for them. When they had eaten all they could, Tom stood up and turned to the old man.

" Thank you very much for such a lovely breakfast," he said. " Now, please could you tell us the quickest way to get home ? "

" Oh, dear, dear, dear—but surely you couldn't be as ungrateful as all that ? " said the old man, smiling his most charming smile. " You don't mean to say you're in such a hurry to run away and leave a poor old man all alone again ? And besides, who's going to pay for it all ? "

" Pay for all what ? " asked Tom.

" All what ? Oh, but you really are unkind. Why, there's your bed and two suppers and two breakfasts. But, of course, I suppose you think I must be a very rich man because of all my gold."

" I don't know anything about your gold," said Tom a bit crossly. " And I'm afraid we haven't any money with us, but if you'll let us have your address, I know our parents will send it on to you. How much do we owe you, please ? "

" Just one day's digging," said the old man. " And, you know, I'm afraid you'll have to do it because if you don't there'll be no more food for you. Ha ! Ha ! Fancy getting no dinner ! Wouldn't that be a terrible thing for two charming little children like you ? "

Tom was feeling quite cross by now and he tried again to make the old man let them go. But it was no good. He was still bubbling over with good-nature, and Tom couldn't get any sense out of him at all.

" You'll really hurt my feelings soon," he said quite sadly when Tom had finished. " Can't you see how happy I am to have you here. And, just think, I can spend the whole morning making the most delicious dinner for you both whilst you do a bit of digging for me. And besides, if I let you go now, you'd be able to tell everyone all about my beautiful gold and treasures—and that would never do, would it ? "

" Then, if you won't let us go home we shan't do any work for you. And I've told you before, we don't know anything about your gold and treasures," Tom said.

" And I've told you before, no work, no food, and you can't possibly escape. But, there now, we're all being very silly. Please do this bit of work for me and I'll get the most wonderful meal ready for you that you've ever seen. Then we can all be happy, can't we? Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Tom didn't argue any more, but tried to think what was the best thing to do. And whilst he was still thinking, the old man told the children to follow him to the far end of the garden. As they noticed last night, the first part of the garden was very beautiful but, the farther away from the house they went, the rougher and more untidy everything became until at last it was just like part of

the moors. Finally the old man stopped in the middle of a very rough patch.

" I want all this part dug and weeded and when you've done that you'll have earned enough to pay for everything."

" But it'll take a terribly long time," said Tom.

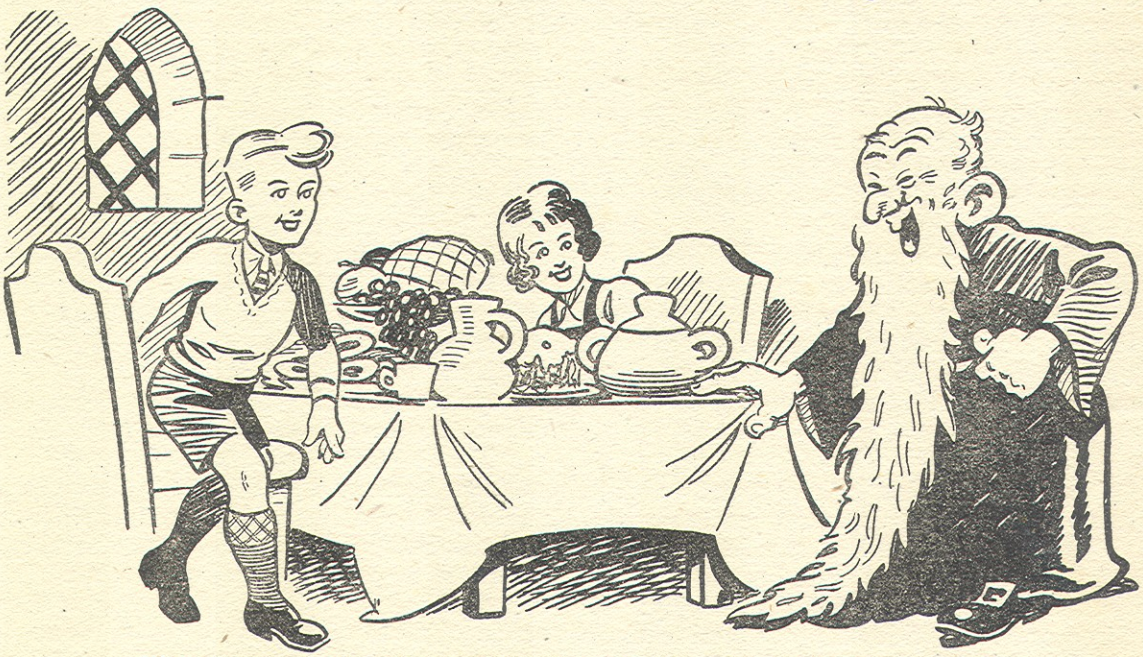
" Now fancy a big boy like you saying that ! " laughed the old man. " You know, if I weren't so old I'd love to help you so that we could all work together. But I'm terribly old. Perhaps you won't believe me, but I'm so old that I don't know what my age is. But there, I'm forgetting all about the work and that'll never do, will it ? Don't forget to work as hard as you can, and at dinner time come down and have this wonderful meal I'm going to start getting ready."

Then the old man tottered back to the house chuckling and laughing to himself as if he had never been so happy before. But Tom and Susie stood and looked at each other. They were wondering if they'd ever manage to dig and weed such a huge piece of ground. The old man had told them that there were some spades in the garden shed which stood by the far wall. They fetched these and then waited a minute whilst they tried to decide the best place to start.

" Oh dear, I'm sure it'll take days and days to do all this," said Susie, as she stared at a big blackberry bush beside her.

" H'm, it'll take years and years if you don't make a start sometime ! " said a strange voice which seemed to come out of the bush. They both turned round quickly, and then got the surprise of their lives. A very large black and white cat strolled out, stretched, yawned and blinked his yellow eyes at the two children.

" Yes," he said again as he scratched his ear very gently, " years and years. If you've got to do a job, then you might as well get on with it, you know."



When they had eaten all they could, Tom stood up and turned to the old man.

So the two children started to dig and, as they worked, they talked about the old man and his treasure. Somehow they felt a lot better now that they had met the Cat.

" I wonder where the old man keeps all his treasure ? " Susie said to Tom as she picked up a very heavy spadeful of soil.

" I don't know," said Tom, " but I'd like to see it, wouldn't you ? Perhaps

he'd let us because, although he won't let us go home, he's really very kind and you can't help liking him in a way, can you ? "

The Cat stopped his washing for a minute and fixed his great yellow eyes on the children.

" One thing he'll never do is to show you his treasure," he said, and promptly returned to the job of licking his tail.

" But why not ? "

" Simply because he's never seen it himself ! " replied the Cat.

And then Tom and Susie heard the whole story. The old man had heard that there was a lot of gold hidden somewhere about the place and had saved up all his money for years so that he could buy the house and garden. That had been a long time ago and ever since he had been slowly digging every inch of the garden in his search for the missing treasure, but he had never been successful. The truth was that nobody but the old man even believed there was any gold to find.

Quite suddenly they heard a loud noise like two steam rollers going along a road.

" Ah," said the Cat as he looked up and left his tongue out by mistake, " that must be the Giant. He gets later and later every morning ! "

The Helpful Giant

THE two children looked round quickly, and just at that moment they saw the Giant. He strode over the garden wall as if it had been no higher than a couple of stones in a rockery. In three or four strides he was beside them and immediately sat down.

" Good-morning, Cat," he said.

" Good-morning, Giant," said the Cat. " And how are you this morning ? "

" Tired," said the Giant. " Even more tired than I was yesterday."

" You always are," said the Cat, as he flicked his tail backwards and forwards to dry it. " But I don't think much of your manners this morning. Haven't you seen our two new friends here ? "

The Giant leaned over on to his elbow and closed his right eye.

" No," he said. " I hadn't noticed them. How do you do, children ? "

Tom and Susie stared at him for a moment and then decided there was really nothing to be frightened of. They told him how they had arrived and then showed him the huge piece of garden they had got to dig and all the bushes they had got to pull up.

" I think the least you can do is to help them," said the Cat. " Just wake your right eye up and do five minutes' work."

" I couldn't possibly do that, Cat. And, besides, my right eye is having the most beautiful dream all about my dear brother who got lost," replied the Giant.

" It's about time you stopped dreaming about that brother of yours and started to look for him. And now, if you don't help the children," said the Cat, as he walked slowly behind the Giant, " I shall tickle your nose with my tail, and you know you're never quick enough to catch me."

The effect of the Cat's words was amazing. In a moment the Giant was on his feet and tightening the leather belt around his jerkin. He looked down at the two children, and his huge, ugly face broke into a friendly smile.

" You know, I'm terrified of Cat. He always seems to be tickling me when I'm asleep. Now, what do you want me to do?"

" That's easy," said the Cat. " Just pull up these old bushes and throw the rubbish into a heap. Then the old man will think the children have been working hard and be very pleased with them. It's five years since you did even five minutes' work. I'll stay here until you've done it, otherwise you'll fall asleep in the middle."

In less than five minutes the Giant had got his enormous hands around the bushes and pulled them out by the roots. He threw them over his shoulder and they landed neatly by the wall at the far side of the garden. He seemed to do it as easily as either Tom or Susie might have pulled a weed out of their father's garden at home.

" Thank you very much indeed, Giant," they said, when he had finished.

" That's quite all right," said the Giant. " You see, it only——" He stopped speaking suddenly, and, with a noise that

made the ground shake, he fell down and didn't move. At once the children ran forward to ask if he was hurt.

" Don't worry," said the Cat, as he sharpened his claws on a tree trunk, " he's only fallen asleep. He often goes off like that. Now, I think I'll go and get my cream before I catch the mice. Would you like to come down to the house with me? When the old man sees all those bushes in a heap he'll think you've worked hard and be very pleased with you."

As they walked down to the house the children were so interested and excited by all that had happened, that Susie had quite forgotten to be frightened, and Tom had forgotten to be cross.

When they got to the house they saw the old man standing at the back door. His wrinkled face was full of smiles, and he looked delighted to see them. Before he could say anything, the Cat told him that all the bushes had been pulled up, and that they were hungry and thirsty. The old man said that was wonderful and declared that the beautiful meal was just ready for the children, and that he had some lovely milk waiting for the Cat.

" Cream," said the Cat. " You know perfectly well I don't drink milk ! "

" I'm afraid we're very short of cream to-day," said the old man, screwing up his little face.

" Then in that case, I shall have to tell the Giant where all your gold is," said the Cat, with a twinkle in its yellow eyes.

" Oh, please, Cat, you couldn't do that. He'd take all my beautiful gold away if you did."

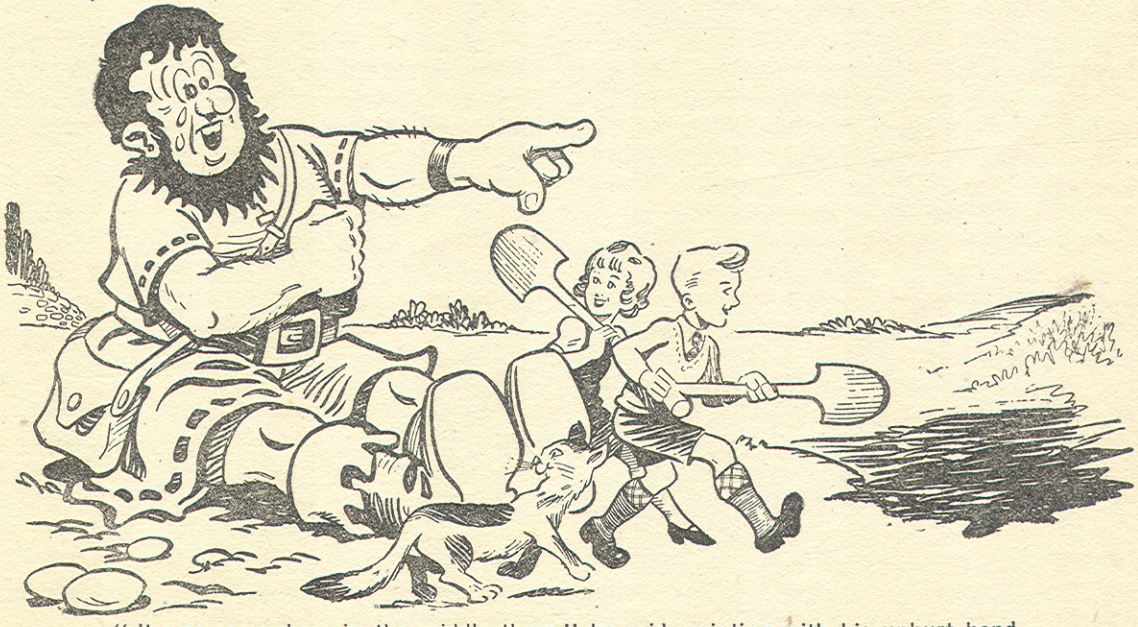
" Then you'd better fetch my cream," replied the Cat.

The old man shook his head playfully, but trotted off into the kitchen to see what he could find. The Cat told the children that the old man was terrified of the Giant and always believed that he came into the garden to look for the gold.

" But, as I've already told you," said the Cat, " the old man doesn't know where the gold is himself."

The meal that the old man gave them was indeed wonderful. But although he was so kind and generous, he insisted that they should return to their work as soon as they had finished eating. As they were walking towards the rough patch again, Tom suddenly had a bright idea.

" Why shouldn't we try to dig a hole right under the wall, so that we could crawl through and come up on the other



" It was somewhere in the middle there," he said, pointing with his unhurt hand.

side," he said to Susie. "Then very early in the morning, perhaps we could escape."

Susie agreed, and in a few minutes they had started to dig. But it was terribly hard work, because the wall seemed to have sunk such a long way into the ground. Once Tom's spade hit something very hard, and they both wondered if it might be the hidden treasure of the old man. But they discovered that it was only part of the foundation of the wall. When they had got well started on the tunnel, they decided to have a rest because it was so hot. They sat on a tree trunk and watched the dragon-flies, as they raced backwards and forwards over the top of a small pond that was half overgrown with weeds.

Suddenly there was a loud roar behind them, and they turned round to see that the Giant was waking up. He got to his feet, stretched, rubbed his eyes, and walked over to the wall. Because he was so sleepy and not looking where he was going, he put one of his huge feet right on top of the tunnel they had been digging. His legs seemed to give way under him and, with a frightened shout, he fell over sideways. Tom and Susie leapt to their feet and ran in the opposite direction in case he should fall on top of them. But they were too far away. With a crash that made them think a whole mountain must have collapsed, he fell on his side with his elbow right in the middle of the pond. Of course, there was a terrific splash and a roar of pain, such as nobody had ever heard before. Although he seemed to be partly stunned, he managed to get into a sitting position where he sat rubbing his elbow.

As soon as they saw there was no more danger, Tom and Susie ran over to see if there was anything they could do to help.

"Are you very badly hurt, Giant?" Tom asked, as he walked up to him.

"Oh, my arm, my arm!" the Giant cried.

"Do you think we could rub it for you?" Susie suggested.

"No, no, don't touch it! It's broken in half! It'll never be any good to me now!" the Giant cried, and it really looked as if nobody would ever be able to console him again.

Just then the Cat walked up. He stood for a minute twitching his tail and looking at the Giant with his great yellow eyes wide open.

"Stuff and nonsense," he said, "of course it's not broken!"

"Oh, it is, it is!" said the Giant, louder than ever.

"Indeed!" said the Cat. "We'll soon see about that. Just keep still for a minute whilst I have a look at it. It's really quite easy to find out, you know. I'll just stick one claw into your arm, and if you manage to move it, you'll know it's not broken."

The Giant stopped crying at once.

"No, it's not broken really. It's just that it hurts me so much."

"Then stop moaning about it at once, then! There are enough fussy people around here without you having to fuss as well."

"It's all very well for you to talk," said the Giant sulkily. "Now, you haven't got as far to fall as I have. And, anyhow, you've got nine lives and I've only got one!"

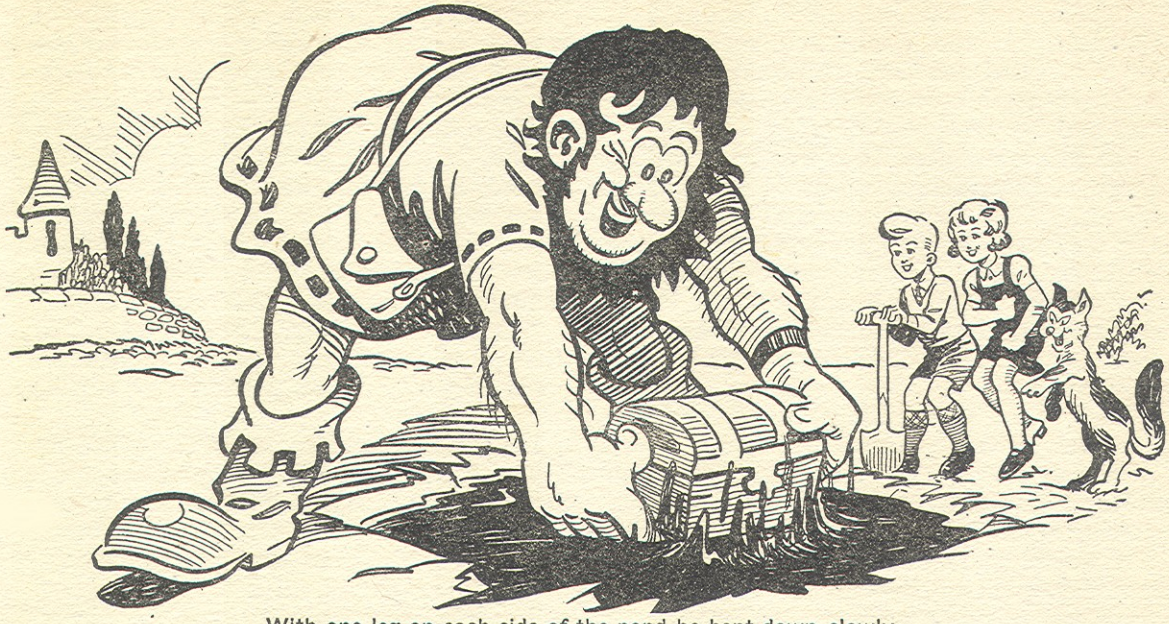
"Now, let's have no more grumbling, but try to tell us what happened instead," said the Cat.

The Giant tried to smile, but he told them that he'd fallen on something very hard and sharp in the middle of the pond, and suggested that perhaps the children would like to get their spades and find out what it was. Tom immediately ran off to fetch the spades. He felt very sorry for the Giant, and thought that the Cat might have been a little kinder. After all, it was quite true that he had got a long way to fall.

When he returned, the Giant looked up and smiled.

"It was somewhere in the middle there," he said, pointing with his unhurt arm. "A little to the right of——"

"Oh, rats!" muttered the Cat under his whiskers. "He's gone to sleep again! Anyhow, you know it's in the middle, and he's managed to splash all the water out, so it should be quite easy."



With one leg on each side of the pond he bent down slowly.

The children got to work at once and it wasn't long before Tom gave an excited shout.

" Look, Cat, a great big metal chest. Perhaps—perhaps it's the gold we've found ! But it's much too heavy to move. The Giant will have to do it for us."

" I believe you're right ! " said the Cat, as he leaned over the edge of the pond. " There's only one thing for it. I shall have to tickle his nose with my tail until he wakes up ! "

The Secret of the Pond

THE Cat backed away from the edge of the pond and then walked quietly over to where the Giant lay snoring. He waved his bushy tail to and fro across the Giant's nose.

" One of these days I really will teach him to sleep a little less ! " he said.

Of course, there was a lot of grumbling before he finally roused himself, and went over to the pond. There was a pained expression on his face as he looked down at the Cat.

" Surely, Cat, you don't expect me to pull it out of all that mud ? "

" Yes, I do," said the Cat. " Come on, and show that you're a sport ! "

The Giant looked at the Cat for a second or two, and decided to be a sport. With one leg on each side of the pond he bent down slowly, and, gripping the tin chest in his enormous hands, picked it up as easily as if it had been a box of chocolates.

" That's fine ! " said the Cat. " And now you'd better open it."

The Giant smiled a little sleepily and then bent down again to open the tin.

" There you are," he said, " but I can't think why you're so excited. It's only full of brick-ends ! "

And it was ! The two children and the Cat all looked inside to make sure, but the Giant had spoken the truth. Susie felt a little like crying, but the Cat was just fed up. He swished his tail backwards and forwards and then slowly returned to the pond. He picked his way to the middle, very carefully, because he hated to get mud on his white feet.

" Hi ! " he suddenly called out. " Come and look at this ! "

The children didn't need calling twice. They dashed over to see what the Cat had found ; and, when they saw, they were much too surprised to speak. There, exactly where the tin had been, was a huge hole.

" Whatever can it be ? " Tom asked.

" It's far too dark to see anything clearly," said the Cat, " You'd better go and get a stick or something, so that we can find out how deep it is."

In a few minutes Tom was back with a large stick which they used for probing about. They soon discovered there was a flight of stone steps leading down into the darkness. The Cat suggested he should go down alone as he was able to see in the dark better than the others. So down he went, and left the children to wait for him at the top.

They were so excited that each minute he was away seemed like an hour. Strangely enough, the Giant had not fallen asleep again. He and the children stood staring at the hole and wondering what the Cat would find down there. Tom turned round to pick up his spade, and suddenly took hold of Susie's arm and pointed.

" Look," he said, " here's the old man coming up to see how we're getting on with the digging ! "

" Oh, whatever shall we do ? " Susie cried. " He's sure to see the tin chest filled with brick-ends and then he'll see the hole in the pond."

Tom thought for a minute, and then turned to the Giant.

" Quick, Giant," he said, " you must help us. I know, put the chest back on top of the hole and sit on top of it, and if the old man says anything you can just pretend to be asleep."

" I think that's quite a good idea," said the Giant, " and it's not often I think it's a good idea to do any work ! "

And, for the first time since they had known him, the Giant really hurried. In fact except that the pond was dry, everything looked just as usual by the time the old man got up to them.

" Aha, my little friends, so you're not doing any work this afternoon ! " said the little man, laughing and chuckling as usual. " You know, that's really very naughty of you. And very unkind, too. To think of that beautiful meal I gave you and then you won't even do a little bit of digging for me."

" Oh, but we will," Tom said in his politest way. " You see, it's really all your fault. We ate so much of your lovely food that it made us too sleepy to start digging straight away."

The old man was so pleased with Tom's reason that he forgave them at once. He patted them both on the back and told them to try to get a bit done before tea-time. He was just going to leave them when he saw the pond with the Giant sitting asleep in the middle of it.

" Dear, dear, dear," he sighed. " My little pond has dried up and there's that great big silly fellow sitting right in the middle of it all ! "

He walked over towards the pond and Tom felt sure he was staring at the end of the tin chest when the Giant came to their rescue. He suddenly stretched his terrific arms over his head and yawned with a noise like an earthquake.

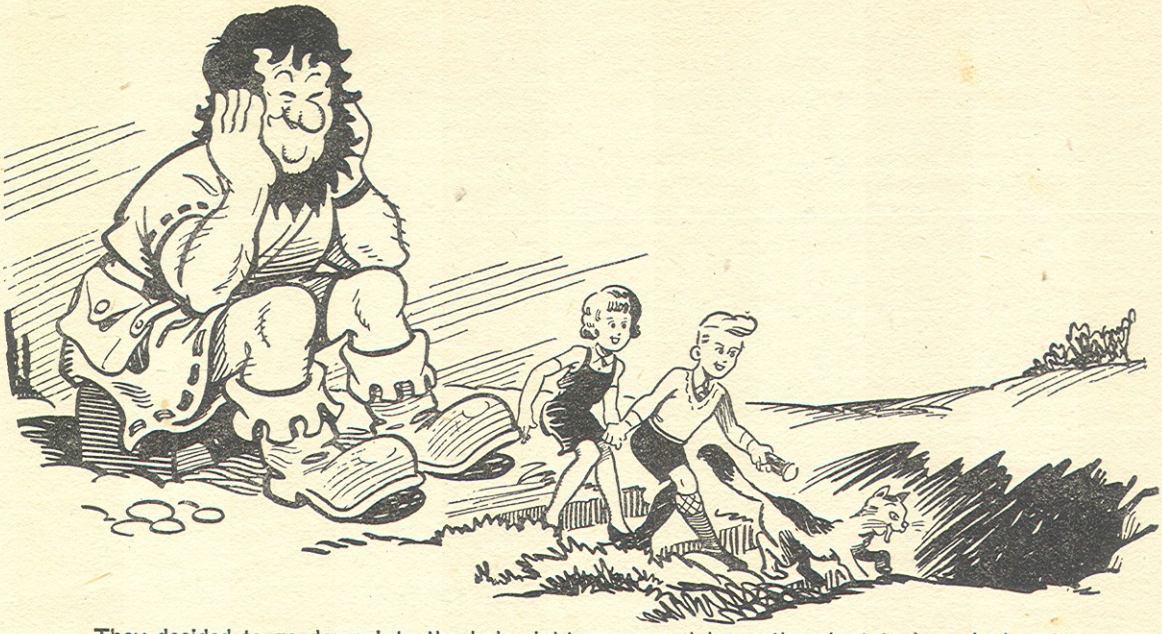
The old man jumped into the air and ran back to the house as fast as his little legs would carry him. He was so frightened that he never even looked over his shoulder to see if anyone was following him.

" Dear me, how nervous he is ! " said the Giant. " But then, he always seems to think I want to eat him. And I only want to be kind to the little fellow ; but I thought I'd better frighten him just then in case he started to ask too many questions ! "

" I was afraid he would see the chest and that you had gone to sleep," said Tom.

" I can stay awake sometimes, you know," said the Giant. " And now I think we'll move the chest again in case Cat is ready to come back. He'd be fearfully cross if he got shut down there for a long time, wouldn't he ? "

As soon as the chest was moved out of the way the three of them stood around the hole and waited. It wasn't long before they saw two bright lights moving about in the darkness down below. They were the Cat's eyes. He came up the steps and blinked his eyes in the sunlight. He looked a bit cross, so Tom lost no time in telling him about the old man and how they frightened him away.



They decided to go down into the hole right away, and leave the giant to keep look-out.

Cat carefully wiped a bit of cobweb from his whiskers and stared at the Giant.

" What did you find down there, Cat ? " Tom and Susie asked.

" I really couldn't see much at all," the Cat replied. " But I've been thinking. I know the old man keeps an electric torch on the mantelpiece in the kitchen, and the next thing we'd better do is to get hold of that."

" But how ever can we ? " Tom wanted to know.

" Oh, it's perfectly simple," said the Cat. " You and I will go down to the house, and you can ask for a cup of tea. At the same time I'll walk in the long grass and get my feet wet, so that I shall leave dirty marks all over the kitchen floor and, whilst the old man is grumbling at me, and wiping up the mess, you can look round for the torch. Then, of course, you can just slip it into your pocket."

" That's a good plan," Tom said.

He and the Cat went down to the house. While the old man was grumbling, and following the Cat about with a floor cloth, washing away the muddy footprints, Tom had plenty of time to look for the torch. But it wasn't on the mantelpiece ! As soon as the old man walked out to make the tea, the Cat jumped on to the dresser and pushed a big vase of flowers on to the floor. The old man came running in at once and glared at the Cat, who was just settling himself down on the dresser and curling his tail around his paws.

" Oh, Cat, you are clumsy ! " he said. " Just because you can't look where you're going you've upset the water all over the floor ! "

The Cat stared at the old man and flicked his right ear.

" Pooh ! " he said. " I wanted to sit down here and the vase was in my way, so I had to move it."

With a shrug the old man went off to make the tea, and the Cat spoke to Tom in a whisper :

" I'm sitting on the torch. It was behind the flowers and there was nothing else I could do except push the vase on to the floor. You'd better put it into your pocket quickly ! "

No sooner had Tom drunk his tea and the Cat had his saucer of cream, than they returned to the top of the garden. They found that the Giant, instead of being asleep, was chatting to Susie all about his

dear brother who had disappeared so long ago.

They decided to go down into the hole straight away and leave the Giant to keep a look-out.

" You're much too big to get down here, anyway, so you can make yourself useful by staying on guard instead," the Cat told him. " And don't you dare to go to sleep ! "

" All right," said the Giant, " I'll keep awake ! "

The Cat disappeared into the hole and the children followed him. It was very dark, and Tom switched on the torch at once. The three of them walked down a long, narrow passage with brick walls on both sides. After a short while the passage opened out into a large room or cellar. The roof and sides were built of bricks. Then, as Tom flashed his torch on to the far wall, they saw that it was covered from floor to roof with shelves. They ran across the room to have a closer look. Each shelf was filled with small tin boxes of all shapes and sizes. And they were terribly heavy.

" The treasure ! " whispered the Cat under his whiskers. " We've found the old man's treasure ! "

Just at that moment there was the loudest roar they had ever heard. Even the tins on the shelves rattled together.

The Cat stood quite still—then all his hair bristled and his back arched !

A Giant's Brother

AFTER the roar there was silence for a minute, and then came a queer sort of noise, rather like a crowd of people crying. Then heavy, shuffling footsteps coming slowly nearer and nearer.

" Get over into the far corner," said the Cat. " I will deal with this ! Don't forget to keep your torch shining on the end of the passage so that you'll know what's happening."

The children did as the Cat suggested. They had only a moment to wait before they saw the cause of all the noise. It was another giant !

" Good afternoon, Giant the Second ! " said the Cat, just as if it was the most ordinary thing in the world to meet giants all over the place ! Tom and Susie both stared at the new giant, and decided he was so like their friend, the sleepy Giant up above, that it was hard to believe they were two different people.

In the meantime, the giant was rubbing his eyes and blinking in the bright light from Tom's torch.

" Who are you ? " he said at last in a terribly loud voice.

" We're friends of your brother," said the Cat.

And then, of course, Tom and Susie remembered. This must be the long-lost brother about whom Giant was always talking. But the Cat's words had made the new giant terribly excited.

" Do you really mean you know my brother ? " he asked.

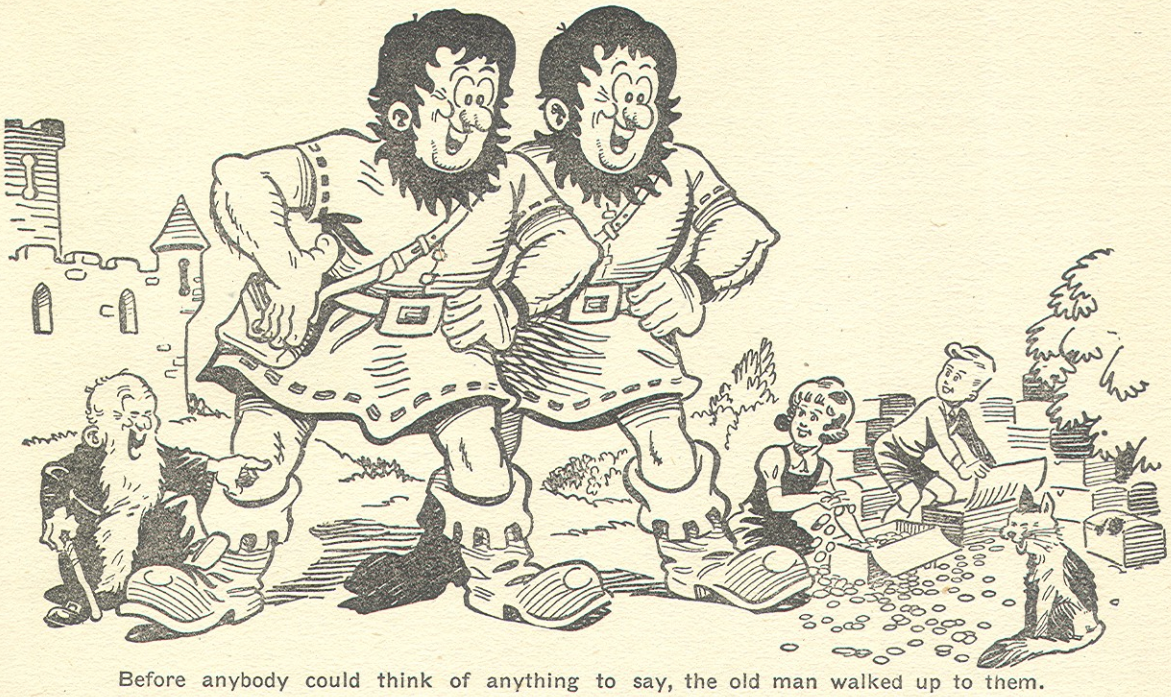
" Oh dear, I'm so happy—and so dreadfully hungry ! "

" Well ! " cried the Cat in surprise. " Did you ever hear anything like it in your life ? One of them always tired and the other always hungry. Just like a couple of overgrown babies ! What about telling us why you and all the treasure have been locked up down here, and what you've been doing all the time ? "

Then the new giant started to tell them the whole story. He didn't know how long it was, but many years ago he and his brother had been very, very rich, and had lived in the Old Man's house. One night a lot of men had arrived at the house and stolen all the treasure. One giant had managed to escape and run away over the moors, but the men had bound the brother up with strong chains and carried him and all the gold into this underground passage. They had brought many sacks of dry bread and barrels of water down as well and told the giant that they were going to block up both ends of the passage and leave him to take care of the treasure until they were ready to fetch it away.

" And for some reason they never came back for it ! " the Cat remarked wisely, as he switched his tail backwards and forwards across the dusty floor.

The new giant agreed that the men had never come back, and then went on



Before anybody could think of anything to say, the old man walked up to them.

with his tale. His food had been running shorter and shorter, and only yesterday he had eaten his very last crust, and this morning he had drunk his last mug of water. He had spent all his time trying and trying to get out of the underground passage, but as he had had to live on dry bread and water, he had become too weak to force his way out.

" Yes, I see," said the Cat, and paused to scratch his ear gently, while he thought out what they had better do. " As far as I can see, you had better wait quietly down here, while we go back and make the hole big enough for you to get through ! "

So Tom, Susie and the Cat left the cellar, went back along the narrow passage and climbed up into the garden, where, as usual, they found the Giant lying fast asleep.

" Ouch ! " said Giant, as he sat up suddenly. " I do wish your tail didn't tickle so, Cat. Now, what do you want me to do ? "

" We want you to get a spade and make that hole about three times as big," answered the Cat.

" But I couldn't possibly do that, Cat. You know I'm too tired. And I don't really want to go down there very much."

" But we've just found your brother down there," said the Cat excitedly, " and he would like to come up here very much to see you ! Now will you do it ? "

Of course, these words had a terrific effect on the Giant. He sprang up, and tearing off to the hole, he grabbed two spades and started to dig with both of them. The Cat, sitting with his tail curled round his paws, smiled and winked in a knowing way.

" But the quicker they get together the better," he said, " then they can listen to each others' grumbles and we needn't be bothered with them any more ! "

Now, because the Giant really was in a hurry, it seemed no time at all before there was an enormous hole where the pond had once been. As soon as he had finished he lay flat on the ground and, putting his head through the hole, shouted as loudly as he could for his brother. At once there

was such a running and shouting down below that Tom and Susie wondered if the roof of the underground passage would fall in. But everything went well. The Giant helped his long-lost brother up into the garden and then followed the heartiest handshakes the children had ever seen.

" What about the treasure ? " said the Cat in a loud voice. " You'd better fetch it all up here, so that we can see what we're doing."

It was very hard to persuade the two brothers to start work, but in the end the Cat got his own way. It was arranged that while the giants fetched the boxes of treasure from the shelves, Tom and Susie wou ld stay in the garden and take them as they were handed up.

" But you must promise not to open even one of them until my brother and I are with you," said one of the giants. " It is our gold, you know ! "

" Come on," said the Cat. " Hurry up and don't talk so much ! " He twitched his ears and stared at the giants with his huge yellow eyes.

For once the giants were too much excited to grumble at the Cat or to argue with him. They went down to the underground passage and started to bring the boxes to the surface, where Tom and Susie were waiting for them. One by one the boxes were arranged in a row, as the children staggered backwards and forwards with their heavy loads.

At last the giants returned to the garden and said there were no more.

" Then that makes fifty," said the cat. " How about opening them now ? "

Tom and Susie were so excited that they hardly knew what to do with themselves, and as for the giants—well, all their fingers seemed to be thumbs as they struggled to unfasten the iron clasps which had got very rusty. It was only the Cat who remained calm. He washed his whiskers and blinked his eyes in the sun, but never once turned them away from the treasure.

Suddenly the new giant gave a great shout as he undid the first box and tipped everything out on the ground. Hundreds of golden sovereigns rolled and flashed and glittered in the sun.

" Here's the old man coming up the garden," said the Cat. " We'd better tell him all about it."

Before anybody could think of anything to say the old man had walked up to them.

" Oh dear me, dear me, you're all playing again instead of working. This will never do, you know. And who is this other giant ? I've never seen him before."

" That is our Giant's long-lost brother," said the Cat. " We've just found him and the treasure as well ! "

The Cat said this just quite casually. And then, of course, the old man became as excited as everybody else and ran from box to box, letting the gold run through his hands. " All mine ! All mine ! " he kept saying.

Of course, it was very difficult for the Cat to explain that it all belonged to the giants, and not to the old man. And then he suggested that perhaps their old friend the Giant could think of some way out of the argument.

" Yes," said the Giant. " I've got a very good idea. The house is much too big for my brother and me and there's also more gold than we could ever use, so how would you like to live here with us, have everything you want and spend as much as you like ? "

The old man was so grateful that he could not thank the giants enough.

Then Tom thought it was about time he said something.

" I really think Susie and I ought to go home now," he said. " But we should love to come and see you sometimes."

The Giant bent down and rested his huge hand on Tom's shoulder.

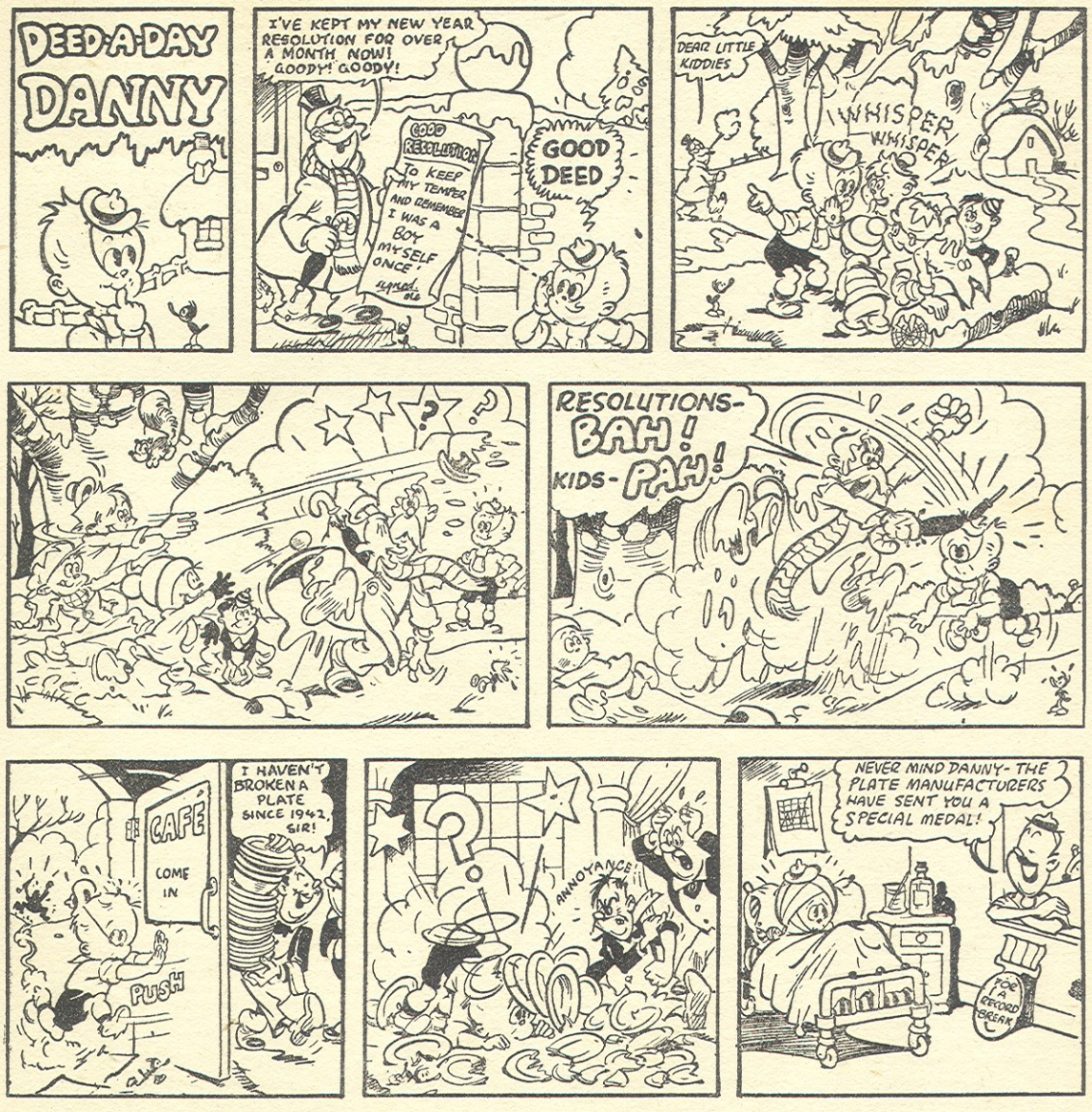
" I want you both to come as often as you like," he said.

" And you've been very kind and helpful to us, Cat," Tom said.

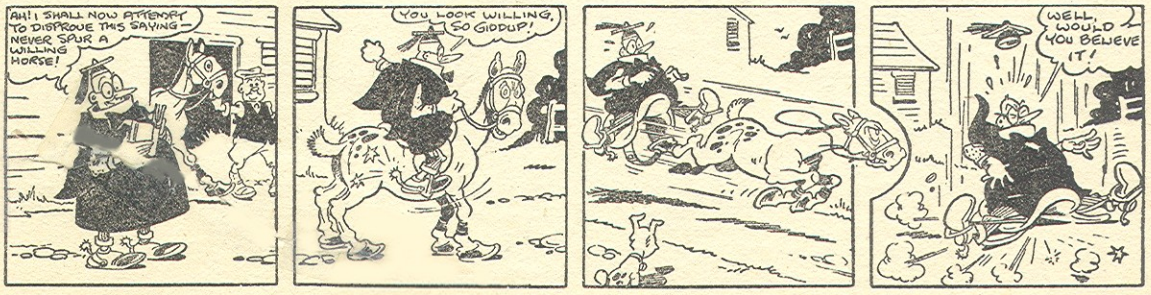
Then Cat started to purr, and Tom and Susie knew that he felt quite flattered.

After they had walked a little way down the garden the two children looked back. The old man was still running about playing with the gold. They heard the old giant say : " I am so sleepy ! " and the new giant say: " I am so hungry ! "

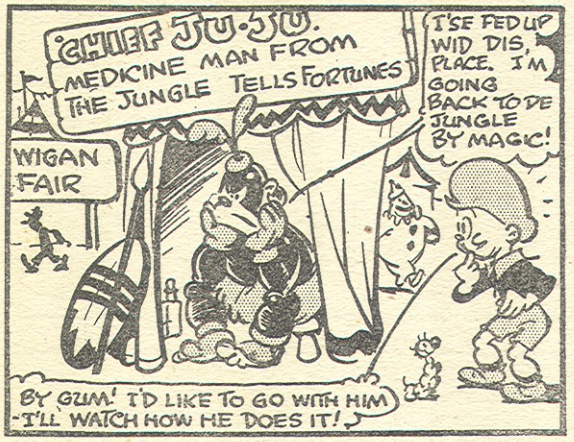
THE END



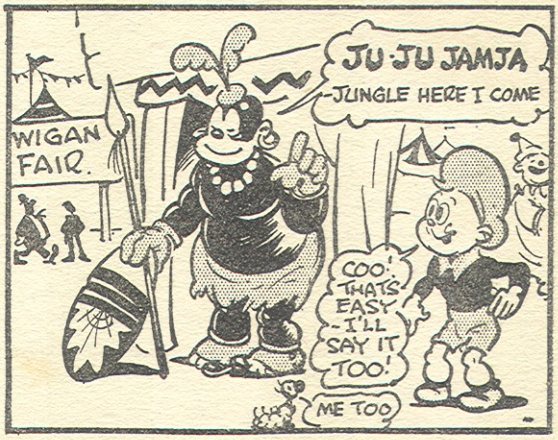
BOOKWORM BASIL - - - HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE



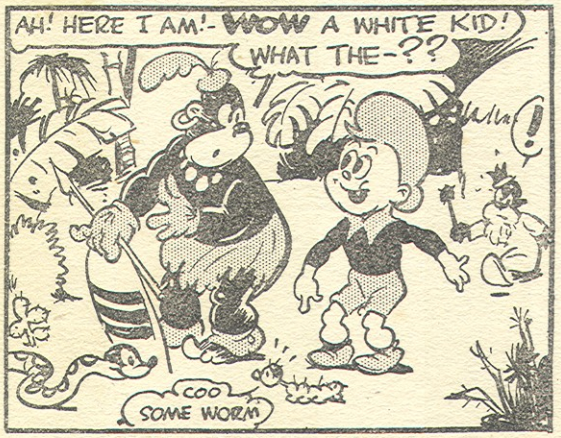
OUR ERNIE - - - MRS. ENTWHISTLE'S LITTLE LAD



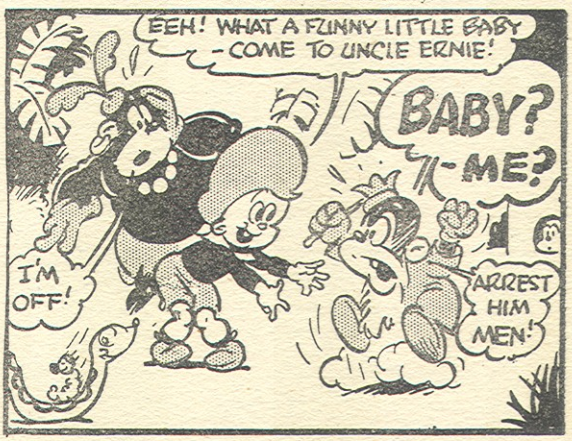
Our Ernie had a bob to spare—
So off he went to Wigan Fair,
And came across a magic man—
" Ee," cried the lad, " an African ! "



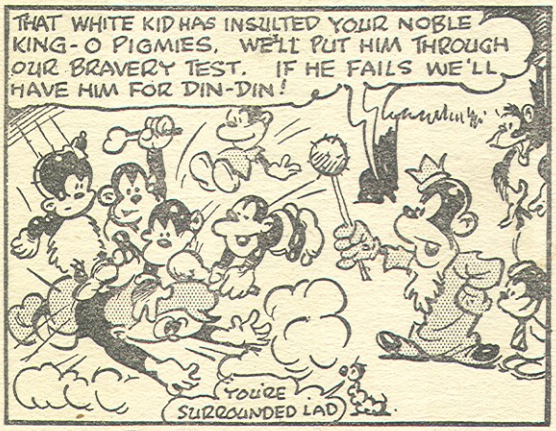
Man said to lad, " I'se feelin' tragic—
" I'se goin' home—with help of magic ! "
He said some words that sounded funny—
To take him back where it was sunny.



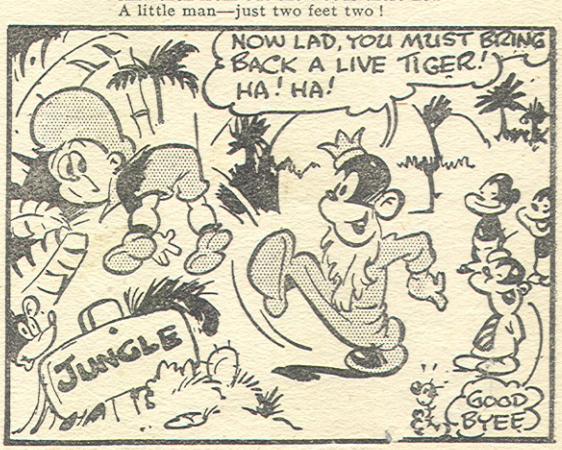
Lad listened to him—word for word,
And said exactly what he'd heard ;
Then flew through air with greatest ease—
And landed under jungle trees.



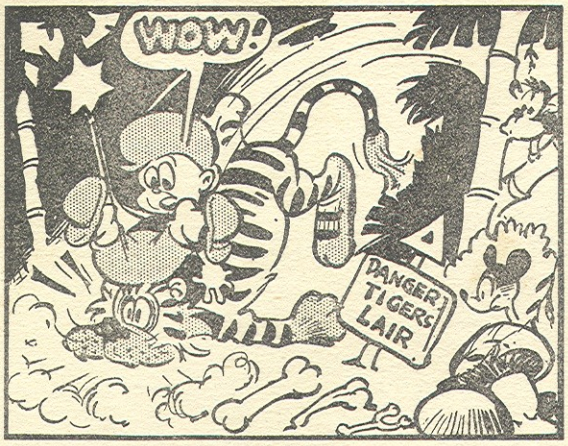
The black man, seeing lad there, too,
Cried : " Wow—just fancy meetin' you ! "
And then from out the woods there flew
A little man—just two feet two !



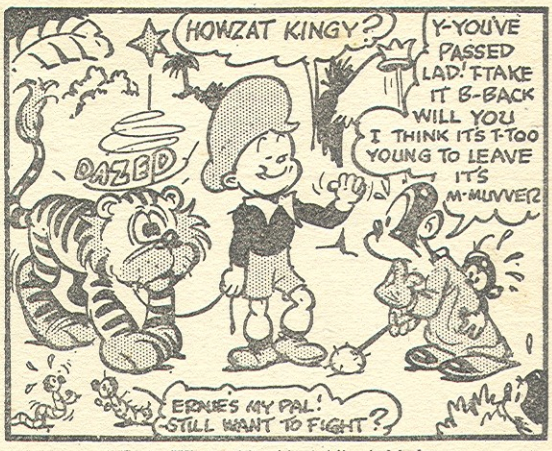
Ern thought that he were just a child—
Which made the man feel wild as wild.
" I'm Pug, the Pigmy King ! " he cried ;
" Arrest that lad, and tan his hide !



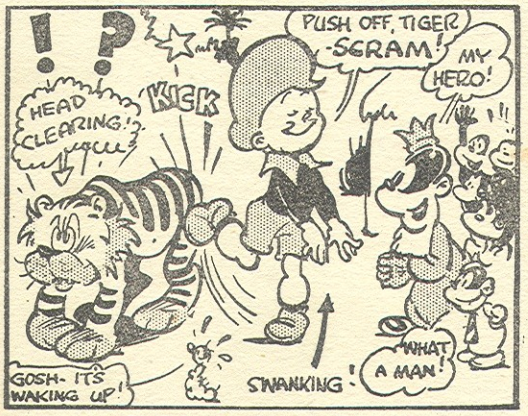
" And then we'll put the little pest
Through patent tiger-catching test,
And if he fails we'll eat him up—
He'll make a tasty bit of sup ! "



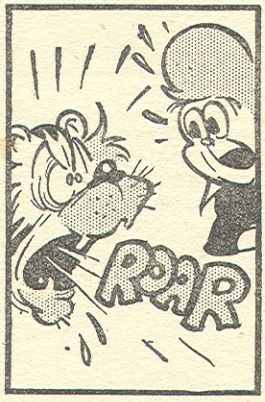
He didn't give the lad a chance,
Instead—he gave him kick in pants
And once again through air he sped,
And landed right on tiger's head!



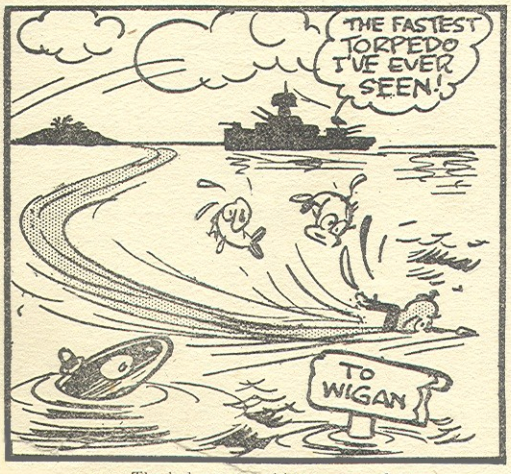
" Ee! What a bit of luck!" cried lad—
" This tiger-catching's not so bad!"
He tied a string round tiger's neck,
And said, " I'll show 'em now, by heck!"



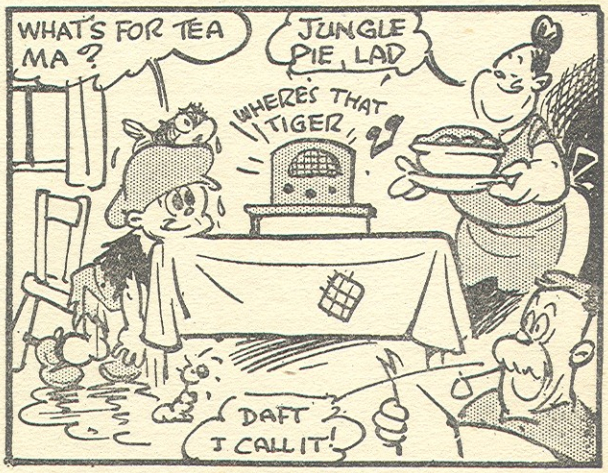
The lad swanked back to Pigmy King,
And cried: " I've got him on a string!"
But king said, " Take the thing away—
I don't want tiger-pie to-day!"



So Ernie gave the tiger kick,
And said: " Push off now—hop it—quick!"
But tiger's head began to clear,
And in his eye were nasty leer!



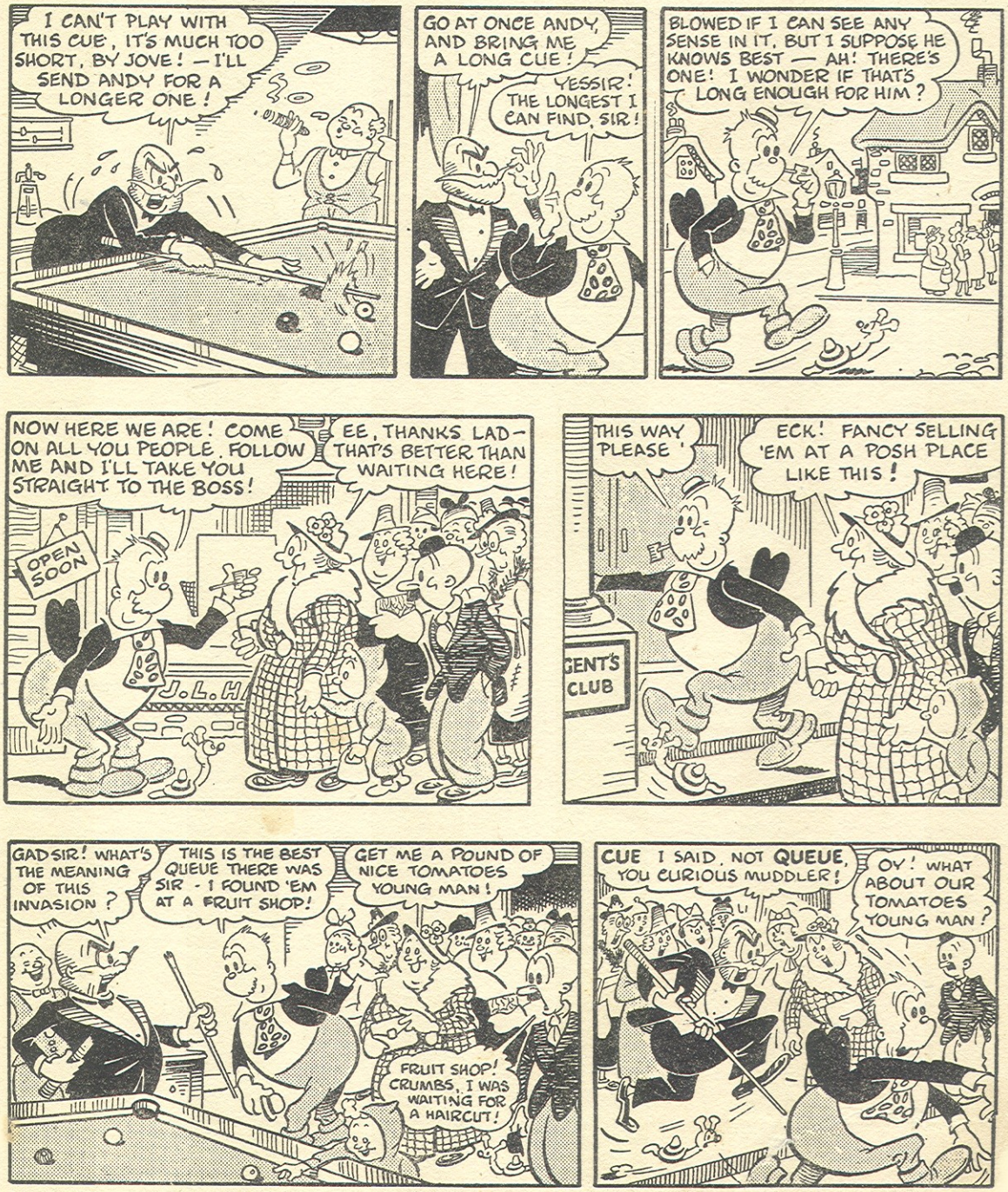
The lad was swanking more and more
When tiger gave a sudden roar;
Which meant in tiger language " SCRAM!"
So Ernie fled to sea—and swam!



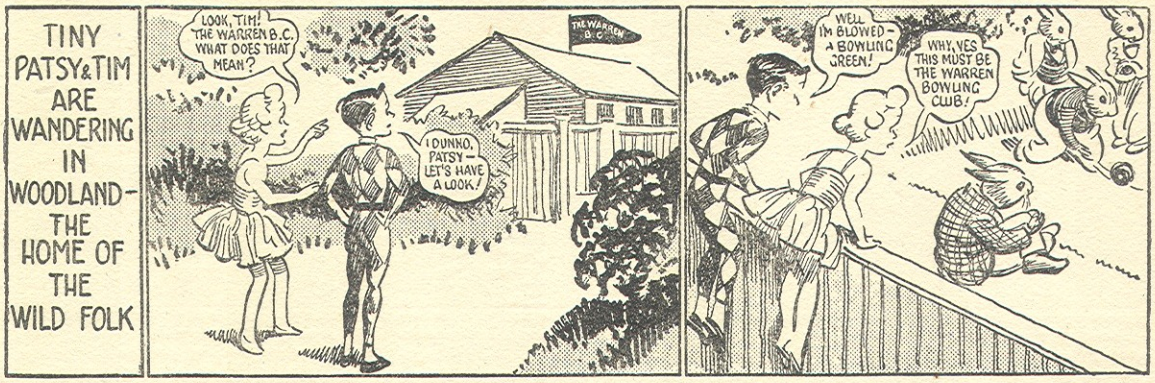
Lad landed home at half-past three
And asked his ma: " Now what's for tea?"
" It's jungle-pie—I told you so—
And ' Tiger Rag ' on radio!"

HANDY ANDY

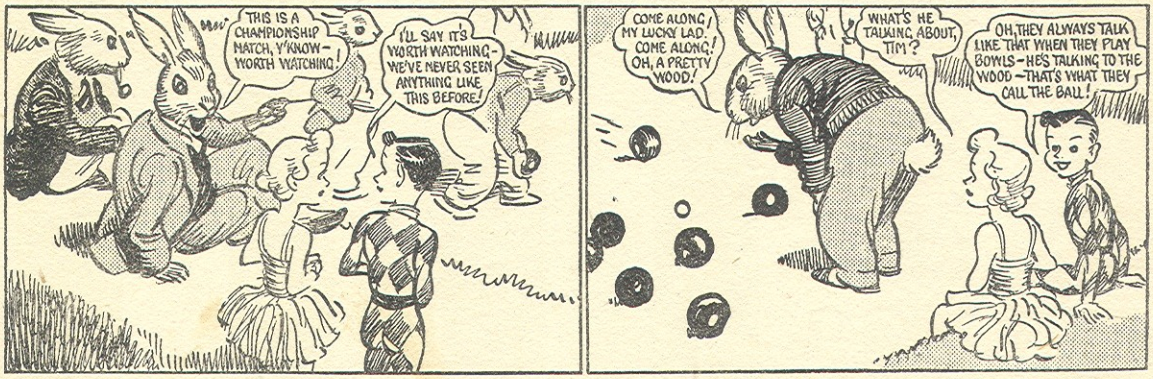
THE ODD JOB MAN



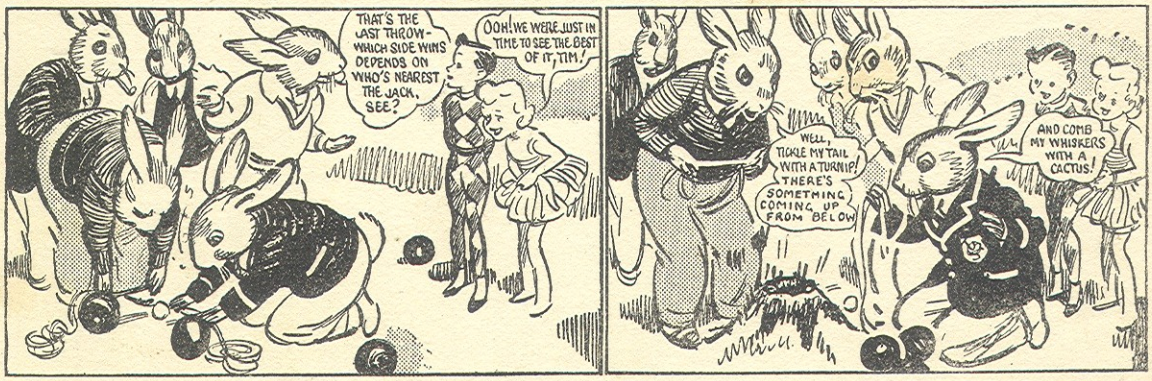
PATSY AND TIM



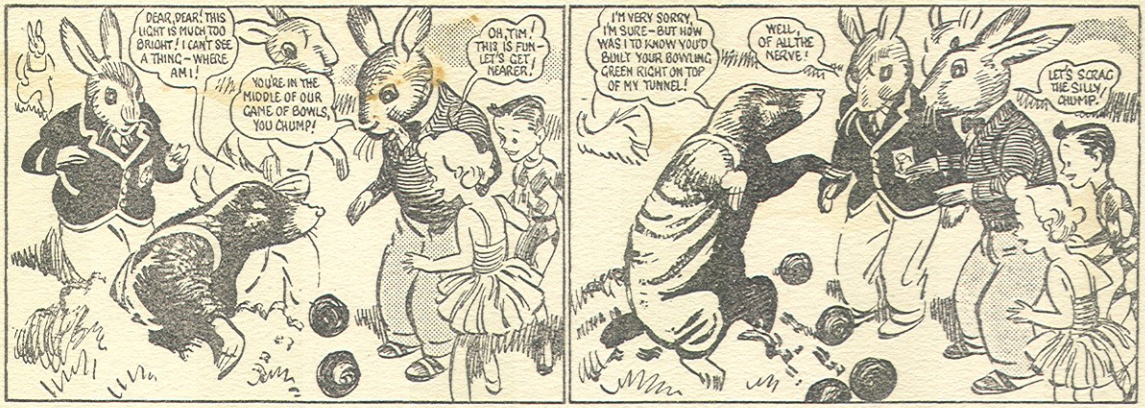
1. Patsy and Tim were the tiniest boy and girl in the world. They had swallowed some of their uncle's wonderful Dwindling Pills, and so they were able to go to all sorts of places that no ordinary children could reach. One day they found a secret glade in the woods where all the animals talked and dressed just like real people. They came across a signpost which pointed the way to "The Warren," and at the end of the path, Patsy clapped her hands with delight. They'd reached a bowling-green.



2. But the most wonderful thing of all was that rabbits were playing bowls! Patsy and Tim stared around. They had never seen anything like this before. The bunnies were dressed in blazers and flannels. All round the green were other rabbits, watching the game with great excitement. Patsy and Tim could see that it was a jolly important match. They went through the tiny gate into the bowling green. They were very quiet, as they didn't want to disturb the players. But the bunnies didn't bother. Mr. White-Paws soon saw Patsy and Tim and called to them to come over. He wasn't a bit surprised to see them, and explained that a championship match was on and told them to sit down and watch.

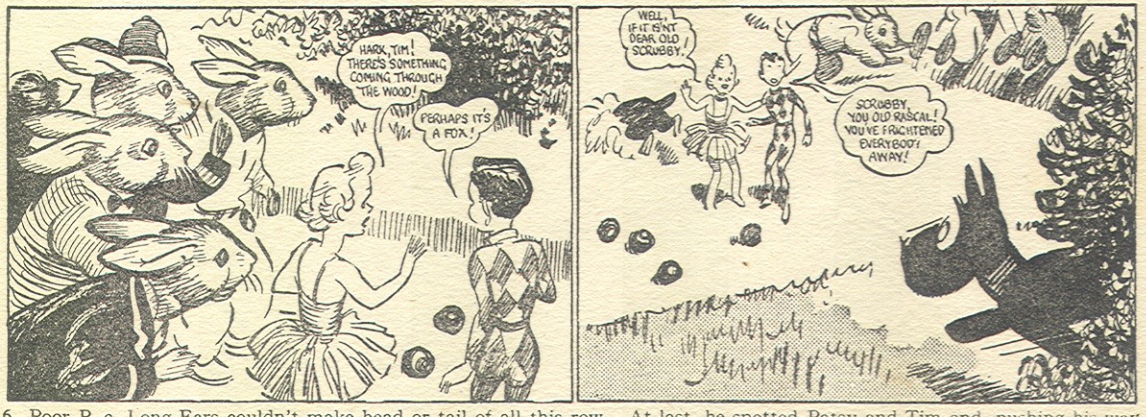


3. Patsy and Tim sat on a grassy bank near the edge of the green. Tim told Patsy how the game was played. It was ever so exciting, because the match was nearly finished. Suddenly there came a shout from the spectators. The last bowl had been played, and they were all eager to see who was the winner. Patsy and Tim jumped down on to the green. Mr. Tufty-Tail, wearing a white pullover, told them that the bowl nearest the jack was the winner. Patsy and Tim knew that the jack was the little white ball, but which big bowl was the nearest was a proper puzzler. It had been such a close game that each bowl seemed to be as close as the other. A tape measure was brought.

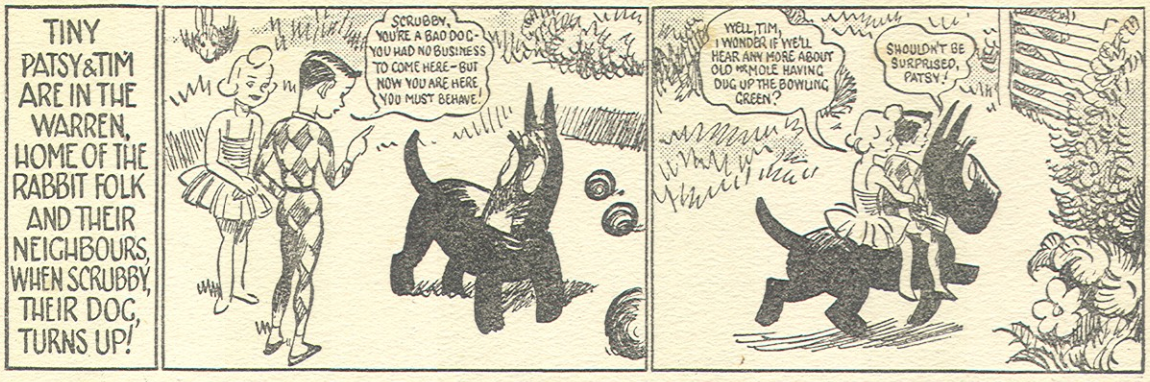


4. But the winner of the championship was never decided. Just as the bunnies were measuring the distances between the bowls and the jack, the ground began to shake. Something was coming up through the ground! What could it be? Patsy and Tim watched breathlessly as the ground cracked and heaved. Suddenly, to their great surprise, the head of a mole popped up! Patsy and Tim thought this was great fun, but the bunnies didn't think there was anything funny about it. Mr. Mole had messed up their bowling match. They scolded him good and proper, as he blinked in the sunlight after the darkness underground. He said he was sorry, but how was he to know that the bowling green had been built over his tunnel?

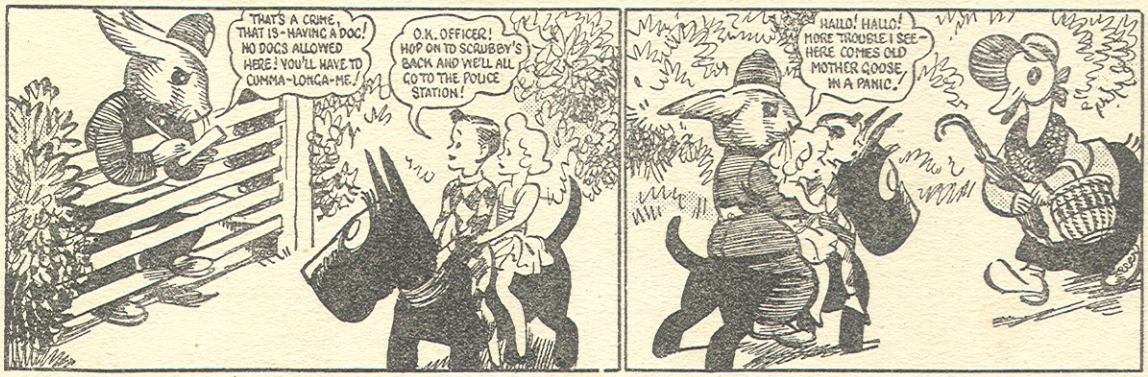
5. Mr. Mole blamed the bunnies for building their bowling green in such a place. The bunnies said that Mr. Mole had no right to go tunnelling without looking where he was going. Patsy and Tim stepped back a bit—it was no business of theirs; but Tim was about to ask Mr. Mole and the bunnies to shake paws and be friends when a newcomer arrived. He was P.-c. Long-Ears, the village policeman. P.-c. Long-Ears pulled a note-book and pencil from his pocket and asked what all the trouble was about. At once, the argument started again, as Mr. Mole and the Bunnies all spoke at the same time.



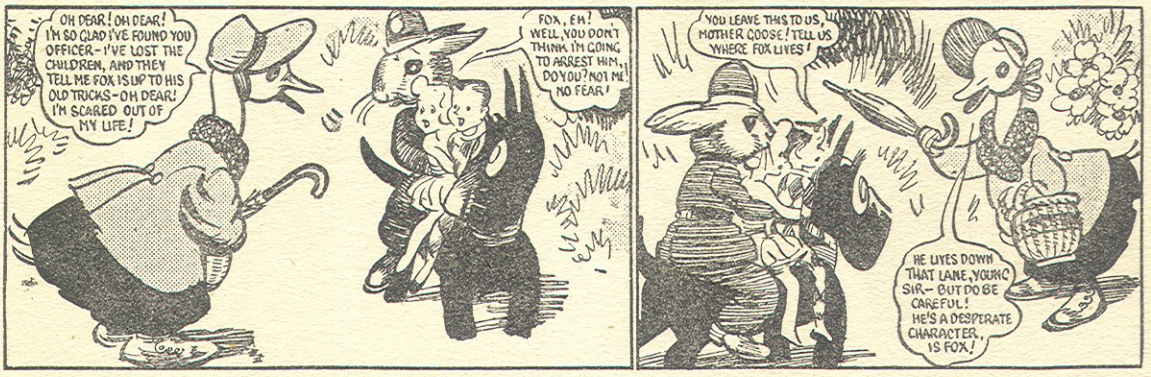
6. Poor P.-c. Long-Ears couldn't make head or tail of all this row. At last, he spotted Patsy and Tim and, pushing his way through the crowd of bunnies, he came over to them. When our tiny chums told him that they had seen all that had happened, P.-c. Long-Ears sighed with relief. Thank goodness somebody knew something. He was just telling them to appear in court the next day, when there came a sudden commotion among the bushes. Next moment, all the bunnies turned and ran. Coming from the bushes was a dog who raced towards Patsy and Tim—it was Scrubby, their grand Scotty chum.



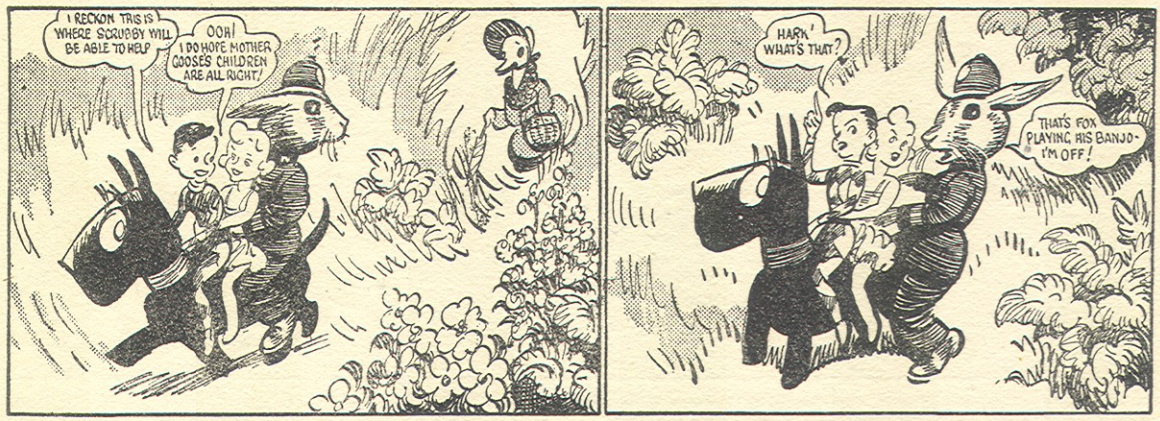
7. Patsy and Tim gasped with surprise, and Tim was jolly annoyed with the little dog because he'd frightened the Rabbit Folk away. He gave Scrubby a good ticking-off! But the little Scotty looked so sorry that Tim couldn't really be angry for long. But he knew that the Rabbit Folk wouldn't show their faces again until Scrubby was gone, so he said to his sister that they'd go for a ride. But Patsy and Tim were to meet P.-c. Long-Ears again—and sooner than they expected. They were riding happily along on Scrubby's back. And were wondering whether they'd see their rabbit friends again, and if they'd hear anything more of Mr. Mole, when P.-c. Long-Ears suddenly popped up from behind the gate.



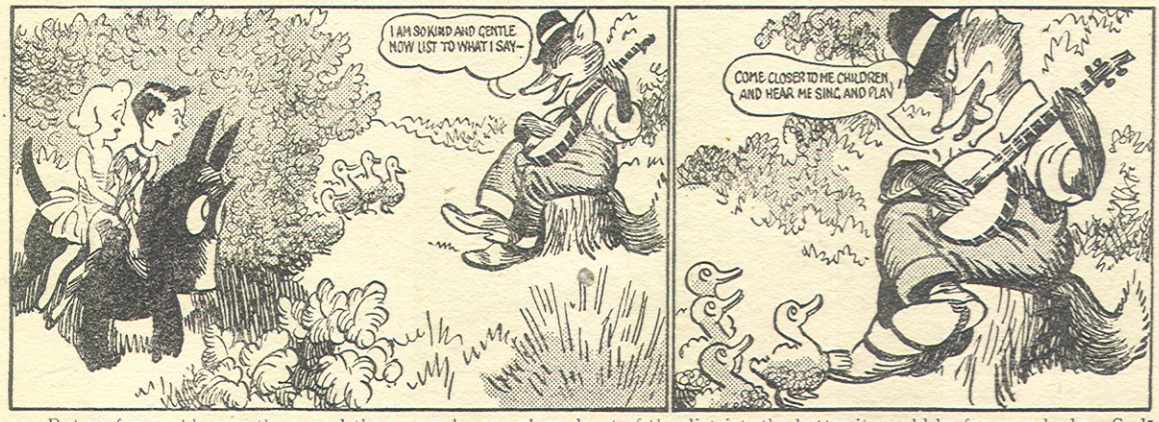
8. P.-c. Long-Ears looked terribly important. No dogs were allowed in The Warren, he said, and he arrested Patsy and Tim on the spot. But he didn't march them to the police station like an ordinary policeman. He climbed up behind Patsy on Scrubby's back to ride there. Patsy and Tim thought that this was ever so funny until they met Mother Goose. Poor Mother Goose was in a proper panic. She'd been out doing her Saturday shopping, but when she got home again, she found that her children were missing! Patsy and Tim were so sorry for her. She told them that she wouldn't have minded in the ordinary way, but she'd heard that Fox was about.



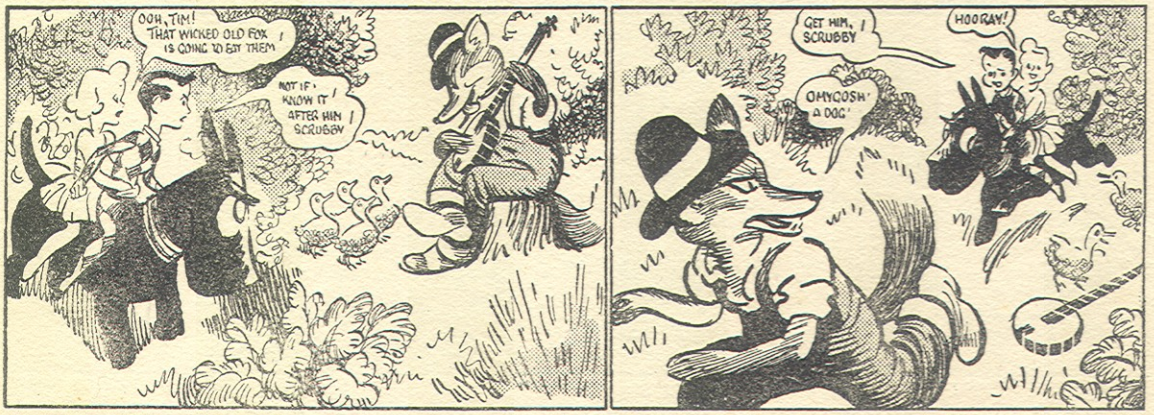
9. No wonder Mrs. Goose was worried. Old Fox was the terror of the district. When he was on the prowl nobody was safe, and if he got near her children, he would carry them off to his den. Patsy and Tim turned to P.-c. Long-Ears. What would he do about it? The bunny copper wasn't at all keen on tackling Fox. Tim told him not to worry, and said that they would come to help. Then Tim turned to Mother Goose and asked her where Fox lived. It wasn't very far away, so Tim tugged at Scrubby's collar and set him trotting along a narrow path. Both Tim and his sister were ever so thrilled. This looked like being an exciting adventure.



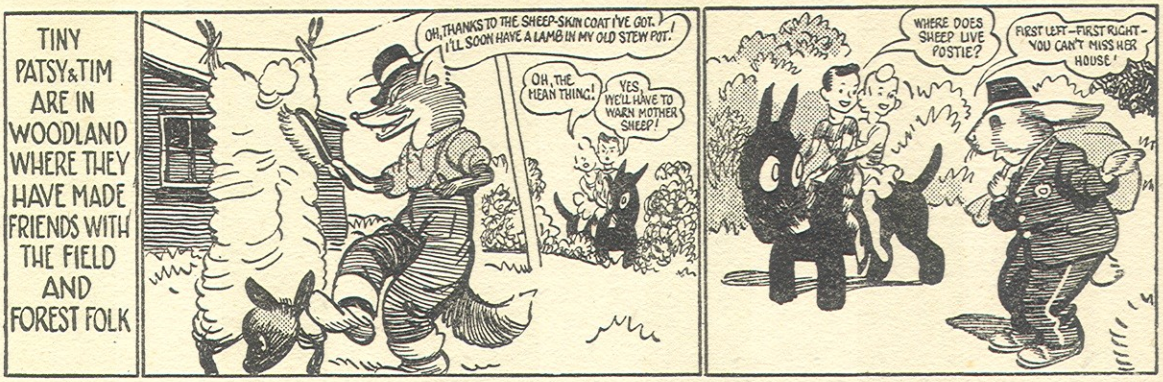
10. Patsy and Tim weren't the teeniest bit scared of meeting old Fox. If he tried to be really nasty, then Scrubby could tackle him, but the main job was to save Mother Goose's wandering children. Would they be in time ? Tim kicked his tiny heels into Scrubby's sides to make him go faster, and the Scotty simply galloped along the path. Mother Goose smiled as she watched them go. She was sure that Patsy and Tim would save her children. P.-c. Long-Ears held tightly to Patsy as Scrubby bounded along. He'd had a few tussles with Fox before and always had the worst of it. He tried to warn Patsy and Tim.



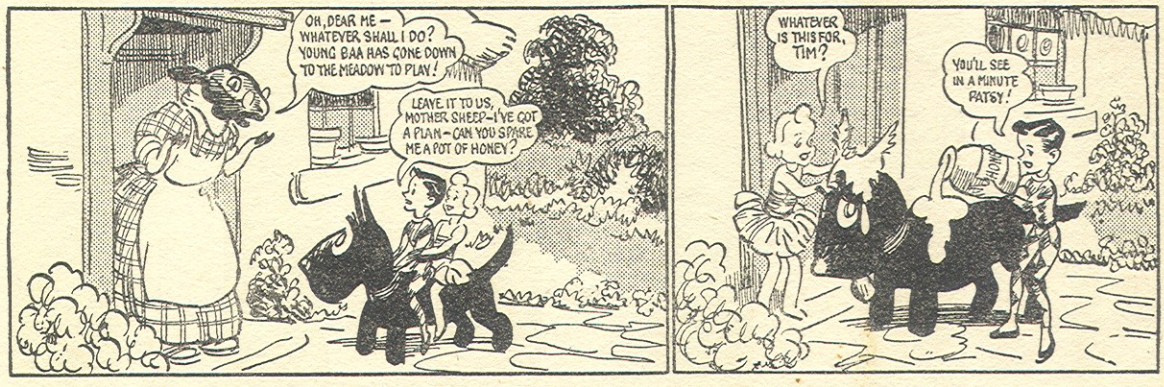
11. But no fox could scare them, and the sooner he was cleared out of the district, the better it would be for everybody. Suddenly Tim tugged at Scrubby's collar to stop him. In the distance could be heard sounds of music. P.-c. Long-Ears listened for a moment, then he slipped from Scrubby's back. These sounds were Fox playing his banjo and they were too near for his liking. Without even saying good-bye, P.-c. Long-Ears scooted for safety. Tim urged Scrubby forward until they reached a clear space. There, on a stump, sat Fox, singing, and walking towards the old rascal were Mother Goose's children!



12. Patsy and Tim watched old Fox as he sang a song about how kind he was. They knew this was just a trick. As soon as Mother Goose's children got near enough, he'd grab them. How could they stop Fox from carrying out his plan? Mother Goose's children were coming nearer. Soon he'd stop playing his banjo and grab them! Patsy and Tim would have to act quickly! Suddenly Tim shouted, "After him, Scrubby!" With a loud bark, Scrubby sprang out from behind the bush and Fox, seeing him coming, dropped his banjo with a clatter. Then, jumping to his feet, the cunning old rascal ran for his life.

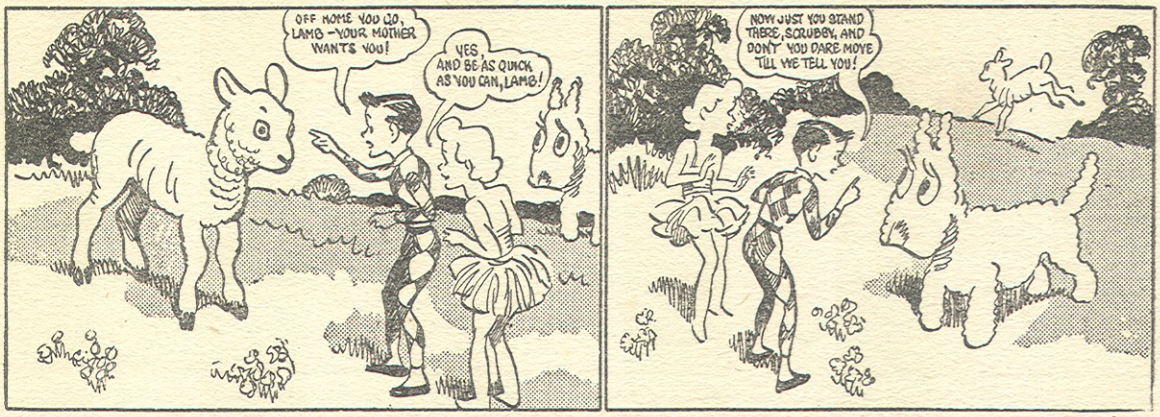


13. But wicked old Fox wasn't frightened for very long. Only about an hour or so after Scrubby had chased him away from Mother Goose's children, they came upon him singing another of his songs! They'd been riding on the back of their Scotty dog, Scrubby, when they heard the sound of someone singing. Tim knew that the voice belonged to Fox. He rode Scrubby among the bushes behind Fox's cottage, and there was the old rascal brushing up a sheepskin that was hanging on the line. Tim knew at once that Fox was planning to have a lamb for his lunch. The first thing to do was to find Mrs. Sheep and warn her.

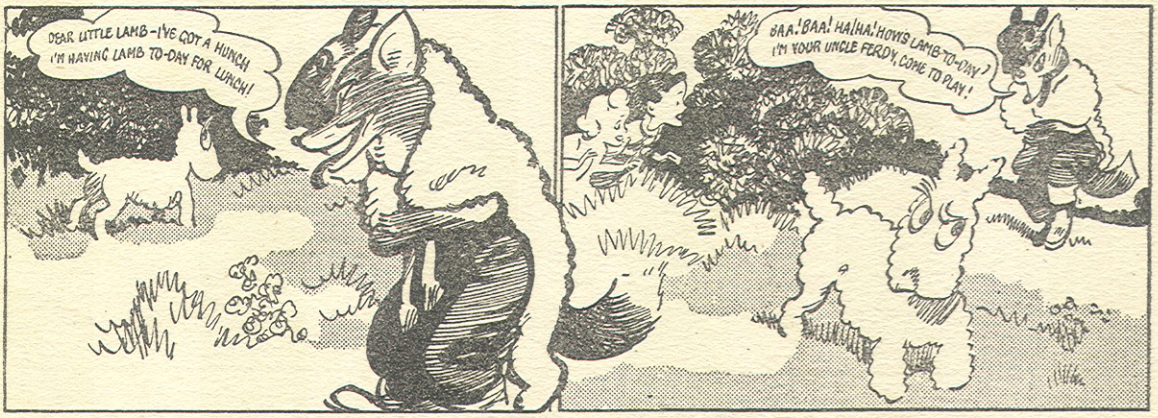


14. Luckily, Patsy and Tim met Postie White-whiskers and he showed them the way to Mrs. Sheep's cottage. Poor Mrs. Sheep was in a proper panic when Patsy and Tim told her about old Fox's trick. They guessed he'd dress himself in the sheepskin and Bobby Baa-lamb, who was playing down in the meadow, wouldn't know the difference until it was too late. But old Fox wasn't the only one who could play tricks. Tim asked Mrs. Sheep for a jar of honey and for some of her cast-off fleece. While Mrs. Sheep was looking out the wool, Tim took the jar of honey and poured it over Scrubby. The Scottie didn't like it a bit, but he trusted his tiny master so much that he stood still and let Tim do it.

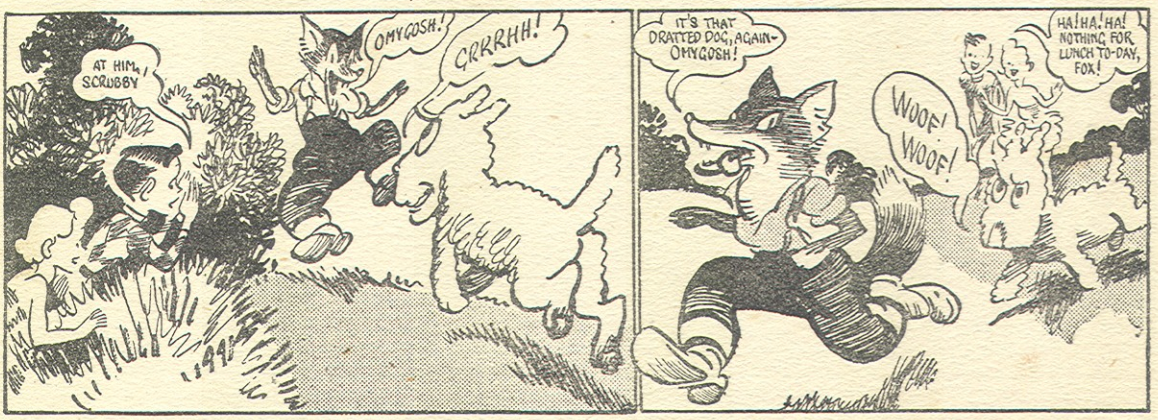
15. Tim was just pouring the last of the honey over Scrubby when Mrs. Sheep came back. She had her arms full of wool, and Tim told her to spread it out on the ground. That done, Tim told Scrubby to roll in the wool and the little Scotty obeyed. Patsy laughed, as she watched Scrubby roll among the wool. She had seen through Tim's trick. Old Fox was in for a surprise! Scrubby looked like a funny sort of lamb. That was just what Tim wanted, and off they all went to the meadow. Scrubby, in his doggy way, felt a bit of a fool, but he was willing to obey his tiny master and mistress. Patsy and Tim weren't very long in finding Bobby Baa-lamb.



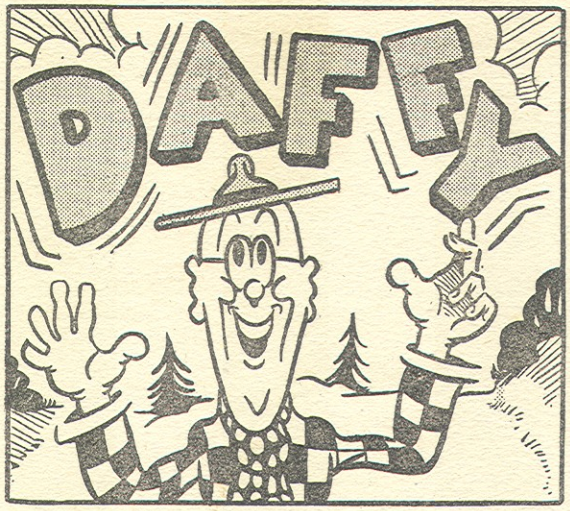
16. They found him frisking in the meadow. Both of them were jolly glad they had beaten old Fox and arrived there first. Bobby wasn't the least bit frightened of Patsy and Tim and, when they told him to go straight home, Bobby obeyed. But first of all he had a good look at Scrubby. What a funny looking lamb Scrubby made! When Bobby Baa-lamb bounded away for home, Tim turned to Scrubby. He asked the Scotty to stand still and to wait for whatever happened. Scrubby wished that whatever was going to happen would happen very soon. It was a very hot day, too hot for wearing wool!

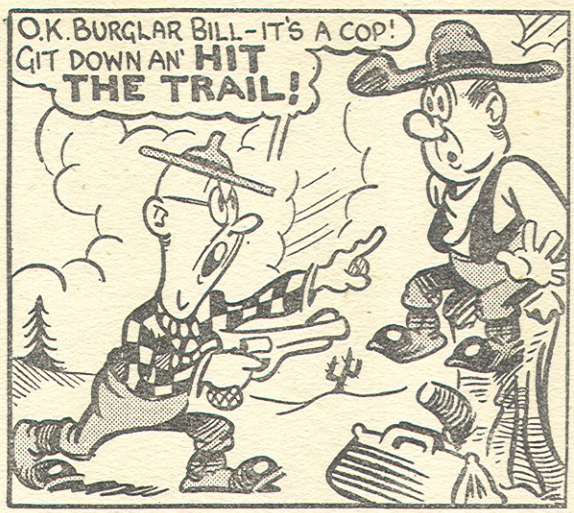


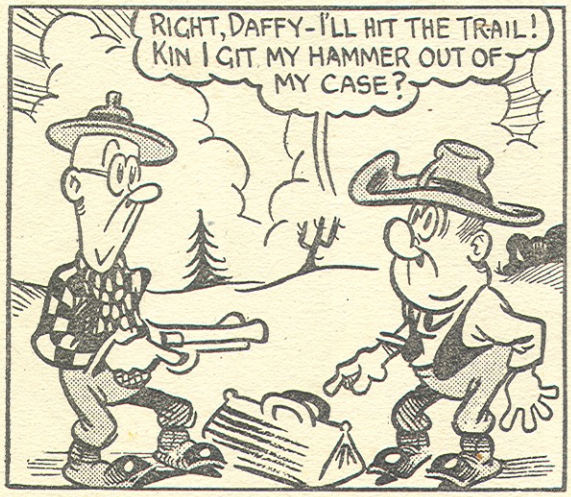
17. Patsy and Tim could hear old Fox singing in the distance, and with a last word of warning to Scrubby, he and his sister dodged into the shelter of a bush. They were only just in time. Old Fox appeared, wearing the sheepskin that he'd been brushing. He licked his lips when he saw Scrubby standing alone in the meadow. Fox kept singing all the time, trying to make the lamb think that it was his Uncle Ferdy coming to see him. Of course, Scrubby wasn't taken in by this. They'd had one or two tussles before, and the little Scotty was more than willing to have another one.

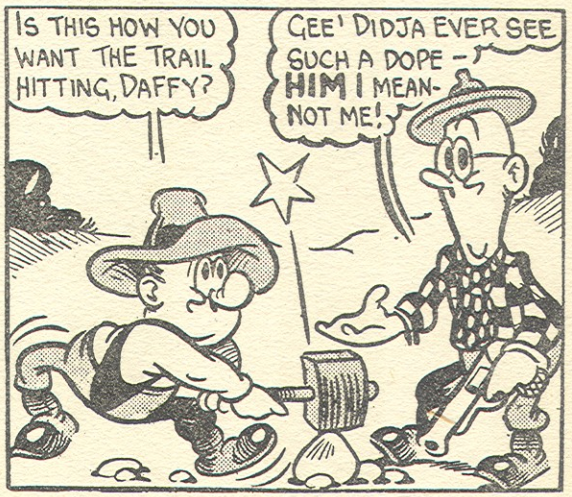


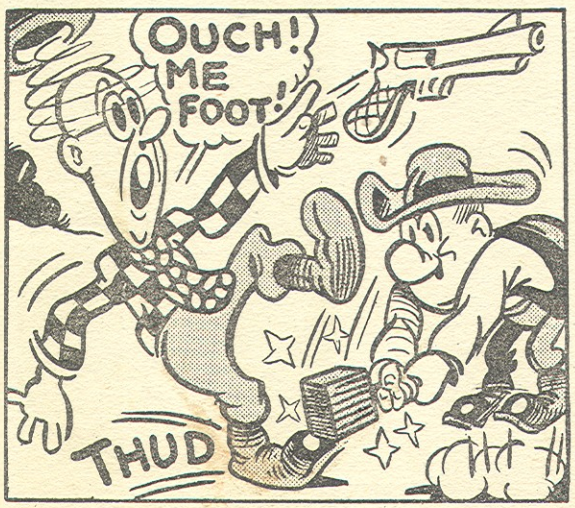
18. Patsy and Tim watched from behind the bush. Good old Scrubby! He was playing his part perfectly, and Fox was completely fooled! Still singing, the old rascal came nearer and nearer. Scrubby frisked a little bit closer to him—and then he sprang! Gosh! Old Fox got such a fright that he dropped his sheepskin! And what's more, he had no time to sing now. As soon as he spotted Scrubby under the wool, he ran as fast as his legs could carry him. Barking furiously, Scrubby chased the old rascal, and Fox was so upset that he made up his mind that he would never have lamb for lunch again!

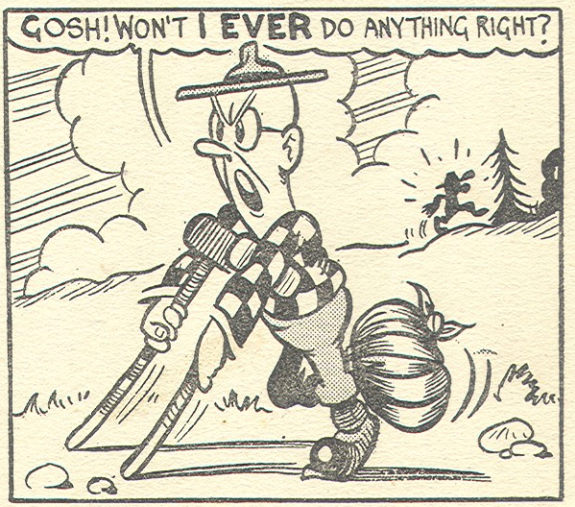

DAFFY


O.K. BURGLAR BILL - IT'S A COP!
GIT DOWN AN' HIT THE TRAIL!


RIGHT, DAFFY - I'LL HIT THE TRAIL! KIN I GIT MY HAMMER OUT OF MY CASE?

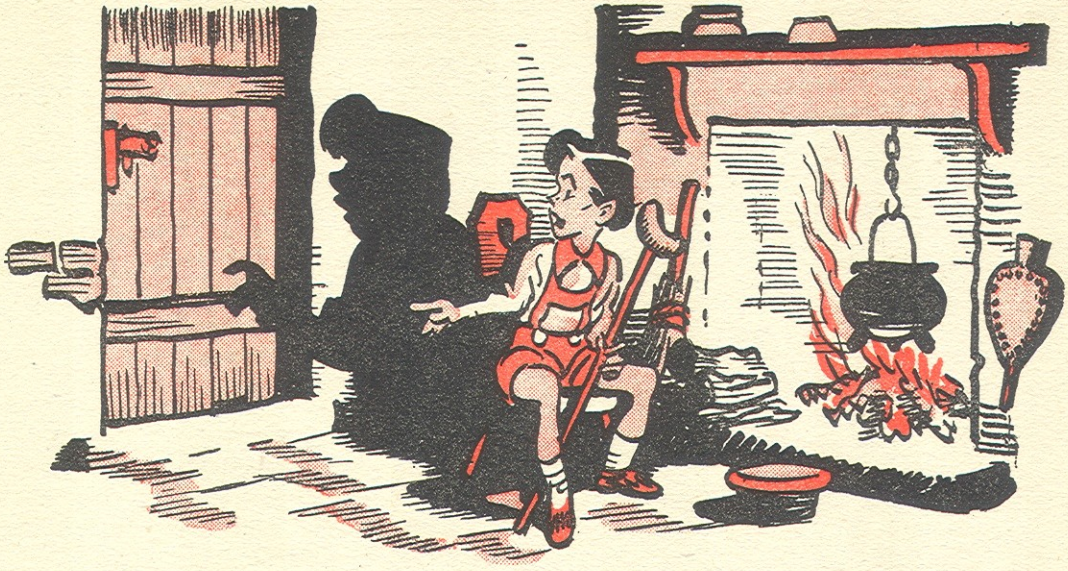

IS THIS HOW YOU WANT THE TRAIL HITTING, DAFFY?
GEE! DIDJA EVER SEE SUCH A DOPE - HIM I MEAN- NOT ME!


OUCH! ME FOOT!
THUD


GOSH! WON'T I EVER DO ANYTHING RIGHT?

SEEN AT THE ZOO—

(Answers on page 184)



LAND OF LITTLE PEOPLE

A Very Surprising Story About the Pied Piper of Hamelin

Strange Visitor

LITTLE Hoppity was sitting hunched up over the fire. He was listening to the storm which was howling round the lonely little cottage in which he lived with his uncle.

He was a thin, pale-faced little boy. By the side of his chair was his crutch, for Hoppity was a cripple. One of his legs was thin and shrunken and was shorter than the other. It had been so ever since he was born.

As he sat listening to the wind howling round the cottage, and to the rain lashing in great gusts against the shuttered window he gave a sudden start. For he thought he had heard someone knocking at the door.

Turning his little white face towards the door, he listened intently. No, he had not been mistaken. Someone was knocking at the door.

But who could be abroad at this hour and on such a night, he asked himself. Perhaps it was a traveller who had lost his way. But it might be a robber. Who knew?

Hoppity shivered, for his uncle was away and he was all by himself in the lonely little cottage. As he listened, the knocking was repeated. He could hear it above the tumult of the storm.

"It must be a traveller," he told himself bravely, "and I cannot let him wait out there."

Taking his crutch, he hopped towards the door. But his heart was thumping, because he couldn't help thinking that it might be a robber.

Reaching the door, Hoppity pulled back the bolt and lifted the latch. As the door opened, a great gust of wind and a sheet of driving rain swept into the room. But standing there in the darkness, Hoppity could see the figure of a man.

"Hallo, little one!" said the man. "May I come in?"

"Yes, sir, come in, if you are honest," faltered Hoppity.

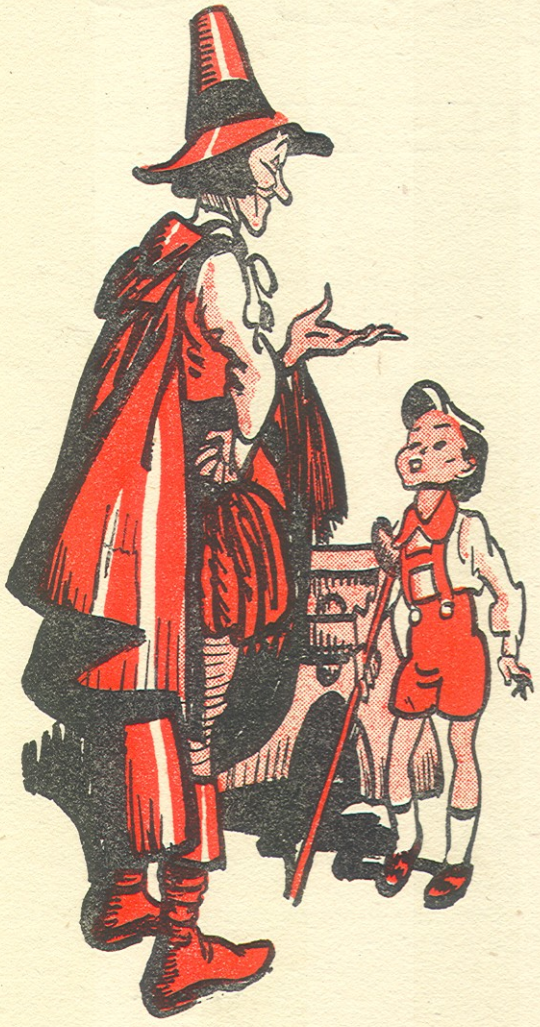
The man laughed and stepped past him into the room.

"Have no fear, boy, I am honest enough," he said, as Hoppity closed and

bolted the door again. "Or, at least, I think I am."

Hoppity turned and looked at him. As he did so, he blinked in surprise. For never had he seen anyone so strangely dressed as this caller. The man was wearing a tall, conical hat, old and brown in colour, a long, brown cloak, brown knee breeches and hose, and long, pointed shoes turned up at the end.

He was tall and thin, but it was his face which drew Hoppity's gaze. It was a lean, tanned face with the merriest and kindest blue eyes which Hoppity had ever seen. They were so kind and merry, indeed, that all of a sudden Hoppity felt very, very happy and very, very glad that this stranger had called.



"My word, what a night!" said the man, taking off his soaking brown hat and his drenched and dripping cloak. "I must thank you, little one, for giving me shelter."

"I am pleased to give you shelter, sir," said little Hoppity.

The man looked at him curiously for a moment, then turned and drew a chair up to the fire.

"Come and sit down, for I must warm myself," he said, stretching out his long legs to the heat. "Then we will eat."

Hoppity, who had seated himself opposite him on the other side of the fire, felt a sudden lump in his throat.

"I am afraid I can offer you nothing to eat, sir," he faltered.

The man looked at him with his merry blue eyes.

"Why, how is that, little one?" he asked.

"Because there is nothing to eat in the house, sir, except a few dry crusts to which you are more than welcome," said Hoppity.

"Nothing in the house except a few dry crusts?" repeated the man. "Why, how is that?"

"It is all we have, sir," gulped Hoppity.

The stranger leaned forward and laid his hand gently on Hoppity's knee.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Hoppity, sir."

"Why, that is a queer name," said the man. "Why do they call you that, little Hoppity?"

"Because I am lame, sir. I—I hop along on my crutch and so they call me Hoppity."

"I see," said the man slowly. "And who lives here with you, Hoppity?"

"My uncle, sir, but he is away. He has been away for three days now."

The stranger frowned.

"Do you mean that he has been away for three days and has left you all alone?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir."

"Does he often leave you alone like this, little Hoppity?"

" Yes, sir."

The stranger's frown deepened.

" Where does he go, this uncle of yours?" he demanded.

" To market, sir."

" But surely that does not take him three days ? "

Hoppity was silent. The stranger looked at him and his eyes were now so kind, so full of pity and of love, that somehow Hoppity could have cried.

" Come here, Hoppity," he said.

Hoppity slid off his chair and hopped to him. The man put his arm around the little boy's thin shoulders.

" Tell me about yourself, Hoppity," he said gently.

Hoppity did so. Somehow he just couldn't help it. With his head resting against the stranger's shoulder and with the stranger's arm around him, he poured out everything that was in his lonely little heart.

His eyes were wet with tears, which he strove valiantly to keep back, as he told how he lived with his uncle because his own parents were dead. He told how his uncle beat him most cruelly, how he starved him and jeered at him because he was lame.

He said, also, that he had no playmates and no friends at all, because, being a cripple, he could not run and jump and join in the merry games of other boys and girls.

The stranger listened in silence, but his arm tightened comfortingly about Hoppity's shoulders. And when Hoppity had finished, he said :

" And now would you like me to tell you who I am, Hoppity ? "

" Yes, please ! " cried Hoppity.

" Then I will ! " cried the stranger. " But first we must have some supper. See here ! "

He picked up his cloak and from a large pocket he took a bulging leather pouch from which he produced a cold chicken, a string of sausages, a small loaf of bread and a chunk of lovely, creamy cheese.

" Get the frying pan, little Hoppity," he cried, " and we will fry the sausages and have a grand supper ! "

The Piper's Strange Tale

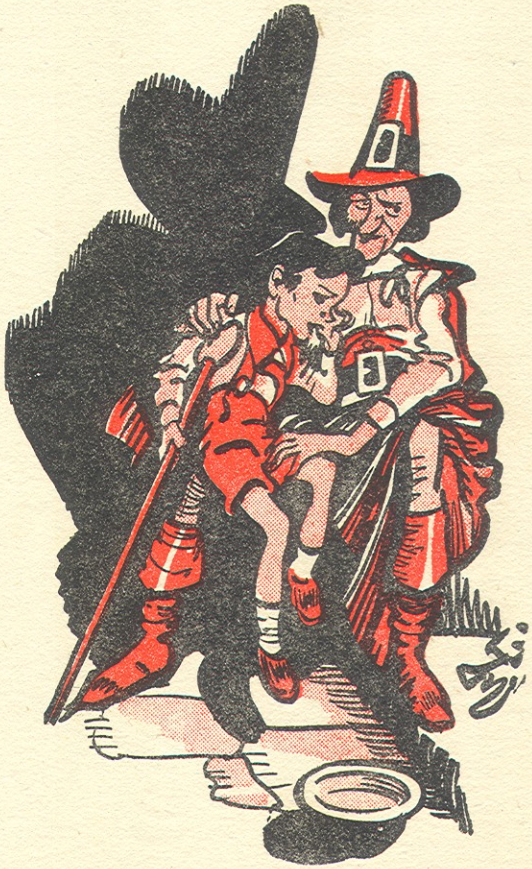
THE supper which followed was the grandest meal that Hoppity had ever had. It was not so much the good things to eat—the sausages, fried golden brown, the cold chicken, the lovely creamy cheese and the bread—which made it so jolly, as the company of the merry, blue-eyed stranger.

He told riddles, jokes and stories which made Hoppity laugh like anything. Then, when supper was nearly ended, he said :

" Tell me, little Hoppity, have you ever heard of the Pied Piper of Hamelin ? "

" No, sir," said Hoppity.

" Well, then, I'll tell you about him," said the stranger. " A long time ago the town of Hamelin suffered terribly from a



plague of rats. There were rats everywhere. Rats in the cupboards and rats on the stairs, rats in the beds, on the tables and chairs. In fact, wherever you looked there were rats. And, try as they would, the people of Hamelin could not get rid of them. So what do you think they did, Hoppity ? "

" I don't know, sir," said Hoppity.

" They offered a reward—a big bag of money—to anyone who would rid them of the rats," said the stranger. " Then one day a wandering piper came to Hamelin and said he would rid the town of every rat that was in it."

" And did he ? " cried Hoppity.

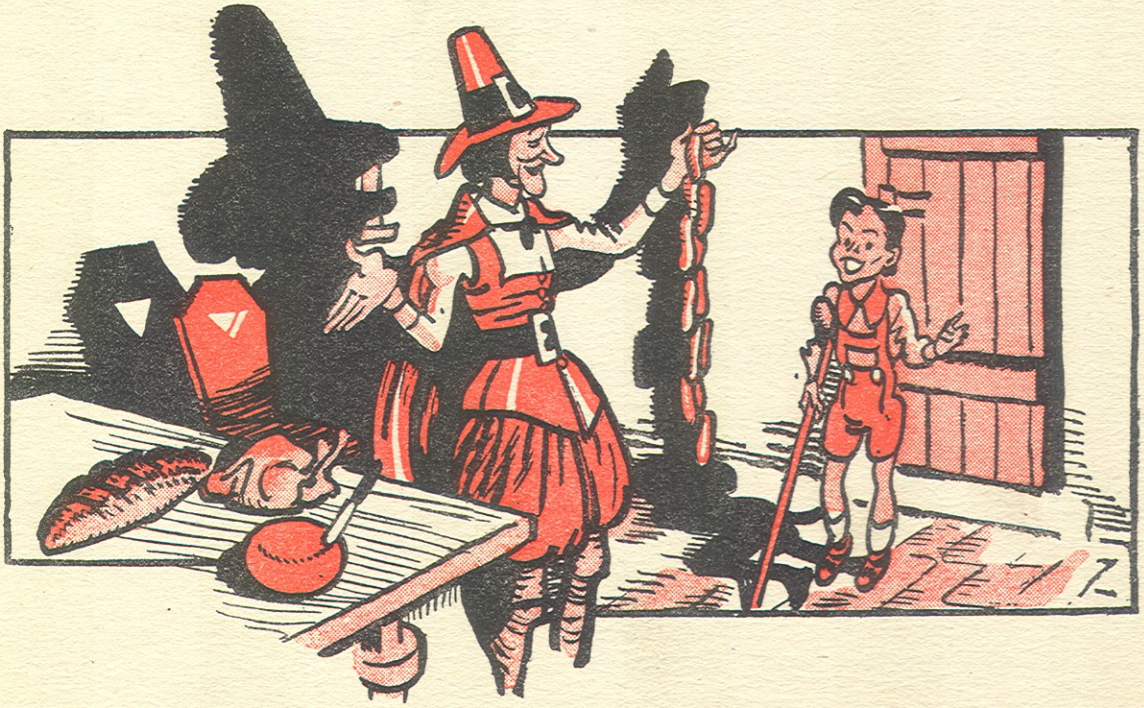
" Yes, he did," said the stranger. " He played a tune on his pipes, and it was a tune the rats could not resist. The moment they heard that tune, they came pouring out of windows and drains and doors, from under tables and cupboards and floors. In a great swarm, thousands and thousands of them, they followed the tune of the pipes. The Piper piped them out of the town and into a river, where all but one, who was a very strong swimmer, were swept away and drowned. Then the Piper returned to the town to get his reward. But what do you think happened, Hoppity ? "

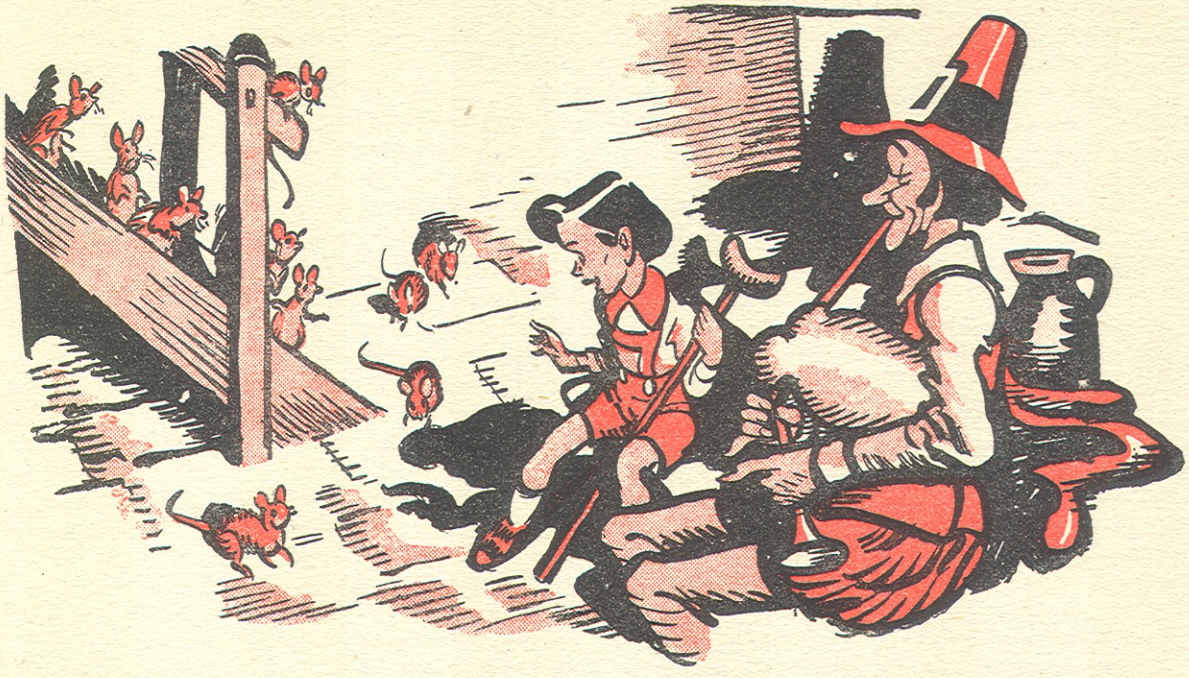
" What ? " cried Hoppity, his eyes shining with excitement.

" The people of Hamelin wouldn't give him the reward," said the stranger. " Now that they were rid of the rats, they just laughed at the poor wandering piper and tried to drive him out of the town."

" What a shame ! " cried Hoppity.

" Yes, but the piper had his revenge on those wicked people of Hamelin," said the stranger. " He left the town, playing his pipes. But this time the tune he played was such a jolly, lilting, magic tune that all the little children of Hamelin left their studies and left their play and came running after him. Every little boy and girl in Hamelin was there, dancing merrily along behind the piper. They just couldn't help following that lovely tune he played. He piped them out of town and along a road until he came to a mountain. The mountain opened and he passed in with all the little children following him. Then the





mountain closed again, and, from that day to this, neither the piper nor the children have ever been seen again ; all except one, who was a little lame boy. And that, Hoppity, is the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin."

" It's a lovely story ! " cried Hoppity, clapping his hands with delight. " I wonder what happened to those children, and where the Piper took them inside the mountain."

The stranger looked at him and smiled. Then, thrusting his hand inside his jerkin, he brought to view a set of old and curiously carved wooden pipes.

" Listen, Hoppity ! " he said softly.

Placing the pipes to his lips, he began to play a weird and haunting tune. As he did so, an amazing thing happened. For, from out of a hole in a corner of the room popped a rat. It was followed by another and another. Others came running swiftly down the dark and narrow staircase which led from the bedroom above.

As though drawn by the music of the pipes, the rats swarmed up on to the table. Hoppity watched with bated breath and shining eyes. Thrusting back his chair, the stranger jumped to his feet. Still playing the pipes, he marched towards the door. Leaping down off the table, the rats followed him.

Opening the door, the stranger piped them outside into the darkness. Then taking the pipes from his lips, he leapt back into the cottage, slammed the door, and laughing, turned to Hoppity.

" Well, what do you think of that, little one ? " he cried.

Hoppity had risen from his chair. He was standing gripping the edge of the table with his thin little hands, his face white with excitement.

" Are you—are you——" he gasped, but could not finish the sentence.

" Yes, I am he ! " cried the stranger. " I am the Pied Piper of Hamelin, little Hoppity ! "

Adventure for Hoppity

HOPPITY stood frozen to the spot, staring with eyes as wide as saucers. His heart was thumping and he was trembling in every limb. He did not know what to do. His first impulse was to sink down on his knees in front of this really wonderful man, the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Three swift strides took the Pied Piper to him. He placed his arm around Hoppity's shoulders.

"The storm has passed and the night is fine," he said. "You are coming with me, little Hoppity!"

"With—with you, sir?" stammered Hoppity.

"Yes, for it is little ones such as you for whom I am always seeking," said the Pied Piper gently. "You will be happy if you come with me, Hoppity."

"But I—I cannot leave uncle, sir," faltered Hoppity. "He will beat me most cruelly, if I run away."

The Pied Piper laughed.

"Your uncle will never beat you again," he said. "Come!"

Turning, he put on his hat and cloak. Then placing the pipes to his lips, he started to play such a merry, happy, lilting tune that, had he not been a cripple, Hoppity knew that he would most certainly have danced.

Still playing, the Pied Piper moved towards the door.

"Wait, sir, wait!" cried Hoppity, snatching up his crutch.

Next instant he was hopping quickly across the floor in the wake of the Pied Piper. Forgotten was his uncle, forgotten was everything. All that little Hoppity knew was that he must follow the merry, lilting tune of the pipes.

Still playing, the Pied Piper marched out of the cottage with Hoppity limping quickly along after him on his pitiful little crutch.

As the Pied Piper had said, the storm had passed. But it was still very windy with great dark clouds scudding swiftly across the moon. Along the dark and shadowy road marched the Pied Piper with Hoppity hopping along behind him. And always, even above the strongest gusts of wind, Hoppity could hear the music of the pipes.

Just where the Pied Piper was taking him, Hoppity didn't know. Nor did he care. His thin little face was smiling and in his heart was such a joy and happiness that he could have cried.

On and on they went, the Pied Piper tall and erect, his pipes to his lips, his cloak blowing out in the wind. Not once did he look round. He seemed to know that Hoppity was following him, as, indeed, he was.

But after a while poor little Hoppity began to feel tired. He could not go as fast as he had been going. It seemed as though, without looking round, the Pied Piper knew that, as well, for he slowed his pace. But always he piped that lilting, merry, magic tune.

Then suddenly Hoppity saw in front of them a great mountain. The road they were following stopped at the foot of the mountain. But when they reached the end of the road, a strange thing happened. For the mountain opened as though by magic, and the Pied Piper marched into inky darkness.

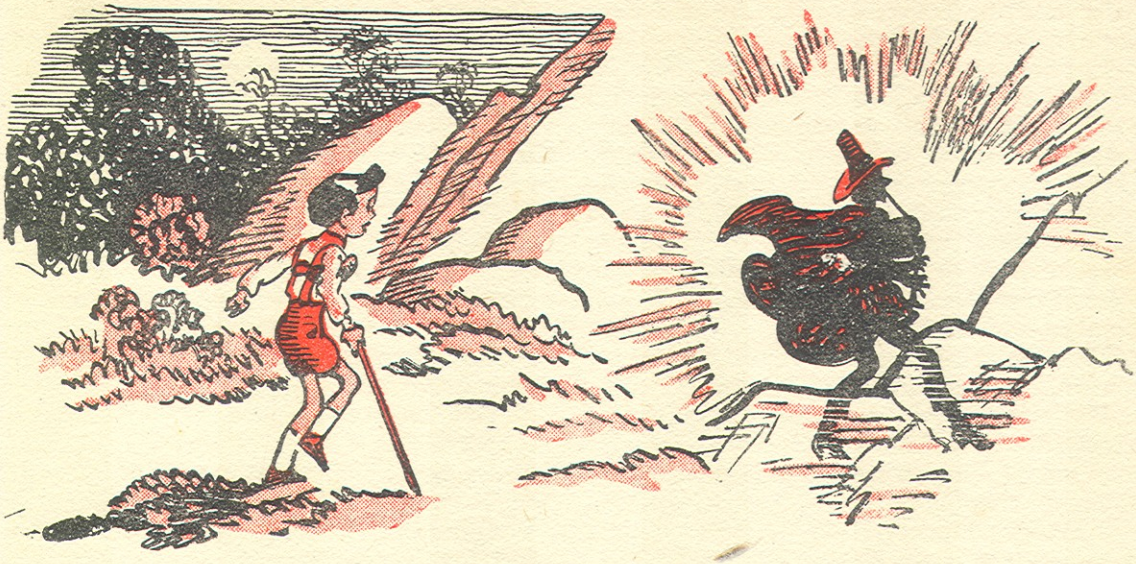
Hoppity followed. He was not afraid. No one could be afraid when following the music of those pipes. Nor was there the slightest fear of Hoppity losing himself in the inky darkness. All he had to do was to follow the pipes, which he did, hopping bravely along on his crutch.

Then suddenly he saw ahead of them a shaft of golden light and he guessed that they had walked right through the mountain and were coming out on the other side. This guess was correct, for the shaft of light grew bigger and bigger and brighter and brighter until suddenly Hoppity limped right out of the mountain into brilliant, golden sunshine.

And now the Pied Piper halted. Taking his pipes from his lips, he put his arm round Hoppity's shoulders. For a moment he did not speak. Instead, he let Hoppity's gaze take in the lovely scene before them.

And lovely, indeed, it was. So lovely that little Hoppity caught his breath and stared with shining eyes. For here was a land of golden sunshine, of sparkling streams and gorgeously coloured flowers, of cherry blossom and trees laden with luscious fruit. Brilliantly coloured birds flashed past in the sunlight, and away in the distance was a great Castle built of what looked like glistening silver.

The whole of this lovely, sunlit land was



surrounded by high mountains, the tops of which were tinted with rose and silver and gold.

" Oh, sir, isn't it beautiful ? " cried Hoppity.

" You like it, Hoppity ? " asked the Pied Piper.

"Oh, I love it !" cried Hoppity. " I never thought that anything could be so beautiful as this ! "

" This is where I brought the little children of Hamelin," said the Pied Piper. " It is where I bring all little children who are unhappy in the outside world. That is why I have brought you here. You will be very happy here. Welcome to the Land of Little People, Hoppity."

Hoppity could not speak. He was already so happy that his eyes were full of tears, but they were tears of joy.

" Come ! " said the Pied Piper.

Taking Hoppity's hand in his, he led him down a soft, grassy slope, sprinkled with flowers, to a shallow, sparkling stream.

" Take your shoes and socks off and wade in the stream, Hoppity," he said.

" But, sir, I—I cannot without my crutch," stammered Hoppity. " I have never been able to wade like other boys and girls."

" Try it this once," said the Pied Piper gently.

Hoppity did so, for he would have done anything in the world which this marvellous man told him. Sitting down, he took off his shoes and socks. Then, picking up his crutch, he hopped into the shallow sparkling stream. As he did so, an amazing thing happened. For, as the water lapped around his bare legs, his crippled leg became of a sudden as well and as strong as his other leg.

" Throw away your crutch, little Hoppity ! " cried the Pied Piper gaily. " Throw away your crutch, for you will never need it again ! "

His heart bursting with gratitude and joy, Hoppity threw away his crutch and it went floating away with the stream. Then, rushing from the water, he fell on his knees in front of the Pied Piper, and, seizing his lean, brown hand, he smothered it with kisses.

" No, no, Hoppity, you must neither kneel to me nor thank me," said the Pied Piper quietly, raising him up. " For I feel as great a joy in seeing you well and strong as you feel in being well and strong. Now let me see you leap and jump and gambol ! "

Hoppity did so. He leapt and jumped madly about, performing such antics that the Pied Piper laughed and laughed until he had to hold his aching sides And Hoppity laughed, as well ; laughed more

gaily and more merrily than he had ever done in his life before.

For now he was like other boys. Now he would be able to join in their games and romps. It was all so wonderful, so marvellous, that he could hardly believe it. But it was true. He knew that. And he was so happy that he jumped and leapt and danced about until he was so breathless that he had to stop. As he did so, the Pied Piper took him by the hand and pointed and said :

Then he called out, " Here are your playmates ! Come and meet Hoppity."

Hoppity turned and looked. Coming racing towards him was a crowd of boys and girls. They were waving to him and shouting merrily :

" Hallo, Hoppity !"

" How are you, Hoppity ? "

" Hurrah for Hoppity ! "

Reaching him, they crowded round him, patting him on the back and shaking him by the hand and saying how glad they were to see him. And as Hoppity looked at their happy, laughing faces he knew that he—the boy who had never had a friend—had now a whole host of friends.

" Come on, let's have a game ! " they cried, dragging him away. " We know some lovely games and we'll teach you them ! "

Hoppity looked at the Pied Piper, who was standing watching and smiling.

" Yes, run along, little Hoppity ! " he said. " We will all meet again later ! "

With that the Pied Piper strode away, making towards the great silver castle which stood gleaming in the distance.

The Silver Castle

THE hours which followed were the most wonderful that Hoppity had ever spent. He ran and he romped and he played with his new-found friends. He also made many wonderful discoveries about this lovely land to which the Pied Piper had brought him.

The fruit on the trees, for instance, was his for the picking. If he wanted any he just picked it and ate it. There were no interfering grown-ups to say that he mustn't.

The gorgeously-coloured flowers had the most marvellous scents, the brilliantly-hued birds were so tame that they would alight on his hand, and the sparkling streams were full of flashing, darting fish, the like of which Hoppity had never seen in his life before.

" Oh dear, if only I could stay here for ever ! " sighed Hoppity.

" But you are going to stay here for ever ! " cried his friends. " We are all staying here for ever. This is the Land of Little People. It is our land and we never leave it ! "

" But where do we sleep ? " asked Hoppity.

" In the Silver Castle yonder ! " cried the boys and girls, pointing to the great glistening Silver Castle. " We have the most lovely bedrooms and playrooms and the most wonderful toys you ever saw. It is the Pied Piper's Castle. He is the Kindest Man in All the World ! "

" He is, indeed ! " agreed Hoppity from the very bottom of his heart. " I never knew that anyone could be so kind as he. But is the Castle really made of silver ? "

" Yes, come on, we'll show you ! " cried the others.

They raced away towards the Castle with Hoppity in their midst. As he ran along as swiftly and as sure-footed as any of them, Hoppity felt that all this must be a dream. But he knew that it wasn't. It had really happened and it was true.

As they approached the Castle, he saw that the great walls and turrets and gleaming towers really were made of silver, which shone and glistened in the sun. In the courtyard of the Castle were some men wearing costumes of a bygone age.

" Who are they ? " Hoppity asked his companions.

" They are the Pied Piper's servants," he was told. " But they are all good, kind men just like the Pied Piper himself. They never use a cross or angry word, for everyone is happy here, as you will find, Hoppity ! "

Inside the Castle, Hoppity saw wonders which made him gasp. In the children's playrooms were books and games and

toys, the like of which he had never imagined; and on the walls of their bedrooms were painted beautiful pictures of Nursery Rhyme folks, many of whom poor little Hoppity had never even heard.

There was also an indoor swimming pool, the water of which was as clear and cool as crystal. There were thick carpets on the floors and stairs, so soft and deep that the feet sank into them. The furniture was so rich and beautiful that Hoppity wondered if he would ever dare even to sit on one of the grand chairs.

Then there were the huge kitchens, spotlessly clean, where plump and smiling cooks were baking the loveliest pies and cakes and tarts for the children to eat. But among the sights which excited Hoppity as much as anything were the clean, cool stables in which were dozens of ponies for the children to ride.

"Oh, isn't it wonderful?" he gasped, his eyes shining with happiness.

"Shall we have a ride?" cried one of the children.

"Yes, come on, let's!" cried the others excitedly.

The sleek, handsome little ponies were soon saddled and bridled. Then, getting on to their backs, the children galloped merrily away, Hoppity with them.

This was the very first time in his life that Hoppity had ever been on a pony. But he wasn't in the least bit frightened, for somehow or other he just knew that he wouldn't fall off.

"Come on, let's have a race to that cherry tree yonder!" cried one of his playmates, pointing to a blossom-covered cherry tree away in the distance.

With cries of glee, the children galloped gaily away towards the cherry tree. But suddenly a strange thing happened. The sunlight began to fade as though the sun were going behind a cloud, and yet there was no cloud in the sky. What was more, the singing of the gaily-coloured birds became suddenly hushed, the gorgeous flowers began to close up and the fruit-laden trees began to droop.

"Whatever's happened?" cried Hoppity in alarm.

"Rein in—rein in!" cried one of the children, throwing up his arm and reining in his pony. "I know what's happened. There's a stranger in our land!"

"A stranger?" gasped Hoppity.

"Yes," cried the other. "We have never had a stranger here before, but the Pied Piper has warned us that if ever a stranger does manage to reach our land we will be warned by the sun getting dim, the birds ceasing their singing, the flowers

closing their petals and the trees drooping. There is a stranger here somewhere ! "

With their ponies huddled close together, the children stared about them with frightened eyes. Then suddenly one of them cried :

" *Look, there he is !* "

Hoppity and the others looked in the direction indicated. Coming hastening towards them was a big, rough-looking man with a heavy stick in his hand. As Hoppity looked at him his heart missed a beat and he went white with fright.

" It's my Uncle Kaspar ! " he gasped.

" Your Uncle Kaspar ? " cried his playmates in astonishment. " Why, however has he got here ? "

" I don't know ! " gulped Hoppity, nearly crying with shame to think that his cruel uncle should have found his way into this happy land where all was love and kindness.

" Well, never mind, we must flee and warn the Pied Piper ! " cried his playmates. " Come on, quick, before that nasty Uncle Kaspar catches us ! "

They wheeled their ponies to gallop away. But already the man had seen Hoppity and recognised him.

" Stop, you brat ! " he roared, brandishing his stick and breaking into a run. " Stop, d'you hear ? I'll teach you not to run away from home. I'll break every bone in your skinny little body when I do catch you ! "

But Hoppity and his playmates were already galloping madly away towards the Silver Castle. As they reached it, they met the Pied Piper hastening across the courtyard.

" Have you seen the stranger, children?" he cried.

" Yes, sir, yes ! " they cried. " It's poor Hoppity's wicked uncle ! "

" Never mind, I will deal with him ! " said the Pied Piper. " Have no fear, my little ones ! "

And he strode on out of the courtyard to meet the cruel intruder who had found his way into the Land of Little People. As the children watched him go, they saw the Piper's hand clutch his pipes.

Uncle Kaspar Dances

THE name of Hoppity's uncle was Kaspar Snarl. He was a bad-tempered man at the best of times, but now he was absolutely trembling with rage. As he saw the Pied Piper coming striding towards him, he took a fresh grip on his heavy stick and his cruel face became twisted with rage.

" I know you ! " he roared.

" Do you ? " said the Pied Piper, coming fearlessly on.

" Yes, I do ! " shouted Kaspar Snarl. " You're the villain what took that brat of a nephew of mine away last night ! "

" How do you know that ? " asked the Pied Piper.

" Because I saw you ! " roared Kaspar Snarl. " I was just coming home when I saw the pair of you leave the cottage and make off along the road. So I followed you by the light of the moon to see where you were going and what you were up to."

" And what did you see ? " asked the Pied Piper.

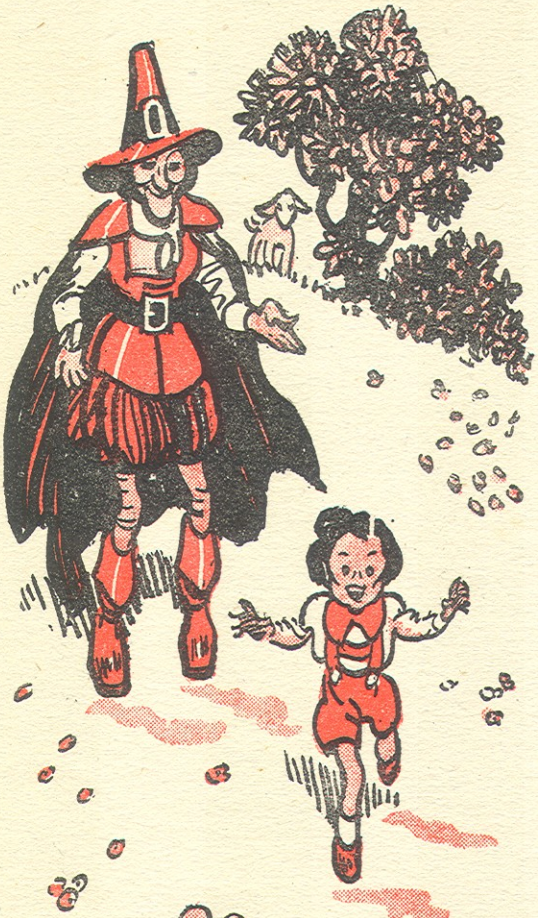
" I heard you playing them pipes of yours and I saw the pair of you walk right into the side of that mountain there ! " cried Kaspar Snarl, jerking his thumb backwards over his shoulder. " Before I could follow you the mountain had closed up again. So I had to climb right over it to see if I could find you the other side."

" And you have found us," said the Pied Piper.

" Yes, I've found you," shouted Kaspar Snarl furiously, " and I'm going to break your head for you for kidnapping that skinny brat of a nephew of mine. Then I'll get hold of him and take him home and beat the life out of him for running away with you ! "

With the words, he rushed at the Pied Piper with his stick upraised. But the Pied Piper had whipped his pipes to his lips and was already playing a merry, lilting tune.

The effect of that tune on Kaspar Snarl was very astonishing. Instead of bringing his stick down on the head of the Pied Piper, he started twirling it about in his hand and dancing clumsily to the tune of the pipes.



Faster and faster played the Pied Piper and faster and faster danced Kaspar Snarl. The man was already getting dreadfully short of breath and the perspiration was fairly pouring down his face.

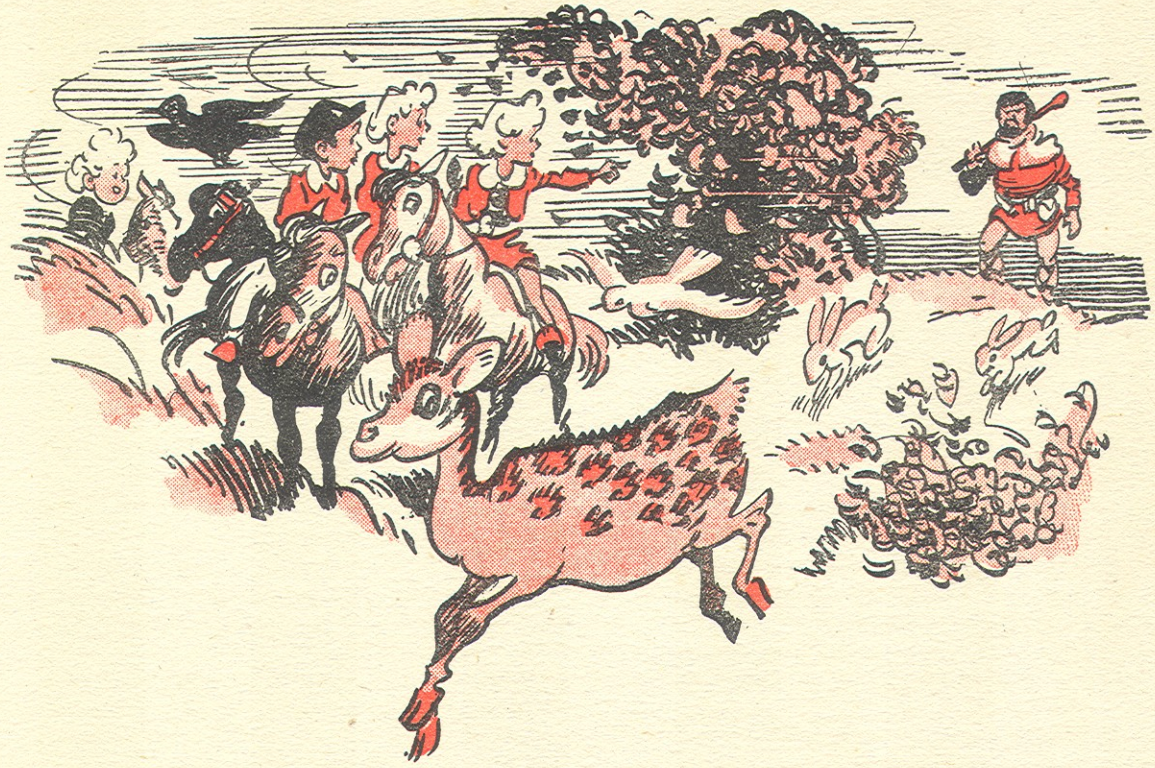
" Stop it ! " he gasped. " Stop playing them pipes, will you ? "

But the Pied Piper only laughed at him with his merry blue eyes and kept on playing faster and faster until Kaspar Snarl was leaping about so madly that his heavily-booted feet seemed scarce to touch the ground.

Then, swinging on his heel, the Pied Piper started to march back towards the Castle with Kaspar Snarl dancing and prancing and cavorting behind him and twirling his great stick to the tune of the pipes.

Hoppity and the rest of the children were lining the silver battlements of the Castle ; and all except Hoppity cheered and clapped and laughed with glee as they saw wicked Kaspar Snarl dancing helplessly in the wake of the Pied Piper.

Hoppity didn't laugh or clap, because he was still very frightened of his cruel uncle and he was terrified lest, by some means or other, Kaspar Snarl might get the better of the Pied Piper and drag



him—Hoppity—back to the lonely little cottage.

As they reached the courtyard where the Pied Piper's servants were standing, the Pied Piper stopped playing and swung quickly round to face Kaspar Snarl. But the moment the pipes stopped playing Kaspar Snarl sank to the ground in sheer exhaustion. He was so tired and worn out by his dancing that his legs would no longer support him.

" Take him inside and put him to bed," said the Pied Piper.

" Yes, master ! " said his servants.

They picked Kaspar Snarl up and, carrying him into the Castle, they put him to bed. Thrusting his pipes back into his jerkin, the Pied Piper climbed up on to the battlements. At sight of him the excited crowd of children swarmed round him, laughing and clapping their hands with glee.

" Where is little Hoppity ? " asked the Pied Piper.

" I'm here, sir," gulped Hoppity. Then he cried : " Oh, sir, I am so sorry that uncle has come here and spoiled everything ! "

" He has spoiled nothing at all, Hoppity," said the Pied Piper gently. " Nor will he. When he has rested I will take him home and he will never come here again."

" But he knows now where I am, sir," gulped Hoppity. " He knows about this Land of Little People, and he will tell everybody. Oh, sir, I have brought misfortune to you and to all these friends of mine who have been so kind to me."

" No, you have not, Hoppity," insisted the Pied Piper. " For when your uncle is home again he will know nothing about ever having been here. He will have forgotten all about it. I will see to that ! "

How long Kaspar Snarl slept he never knew. But he awoke to find one of the Pied Piper's servants standing by his bedside holding a tray on which was the most delicious-looking food.

" Is that for me ? " demanded Kaspar Snarl roughly, for he had awakened terribly hungry.

" Yes, it is for you," said the servant.

" Then let's have it ! " snapped Kaspar Snarl, snatching the tray from the servant's hand. " Then I'll settle accounts with that nasty fellow with the pipes. I'll wring his neck for him, that's what I'll do ! "

Next moment he was gulping down the food as though he had never had a bite in his life before. He had just finished when there came to his ears the faint, lilting music of the pipes.

The instant he heard the pipes Kaspar Snarl's legs started to twitch and jerk for all the world as though he were dancing. Getting out of bed, he danced across the floor and picked up his stick. Then he danced from the room and danced downstairs and out into the courtyard.

With his old, brown, conical hat on his head and his brown cloak around him, the Pied Piper was marching out of the courtyard. Dancing and prancing and twirling his stick, Kaspar Snarl pranced after him.

Without so much as a backward glance, the Pied Piper marched straight towards the mountain. As he reached it, still playing his pipes, the mountain opened and the Pied Piper passed in followed by the dancing, prancing Kaspar Snarl.

Right through the mountain they went and out on to the road beyond. It was night time again on this side of the mountain, but the moon was up. Piping, piping, the Pied Piper marched on along the moonlit road while behind him pranced and cavorted the utterly weary Kaspar Snarl.

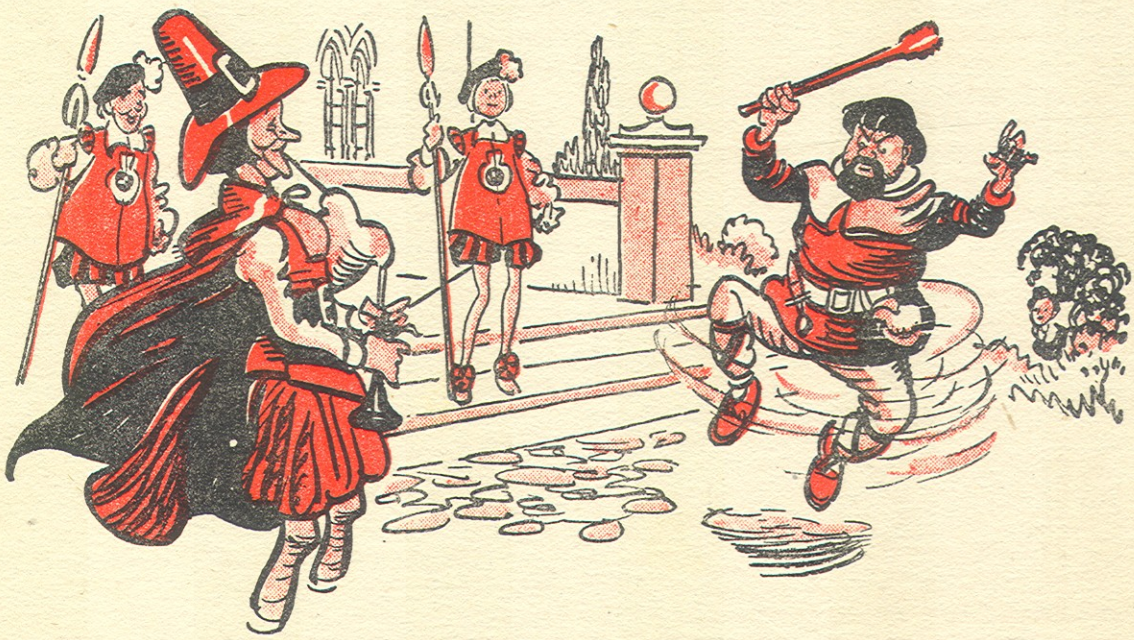
And thus, at length, they reached the lonely little cottage. Not until he was right inside the cottage did the Pied Piper take his pipes from his lips. The moment he did so Kaspar Snarl's legs gave way beneath him and he collapsed on to a chair.

" You are tired, my friend ? " said the Pied Piper with a smile.

" Tired ? " groaned the wretched man. " I'm that tired I could sleep for a week and my feet is that sore I don't know where to put them."

" Then drink this," said the Pied Piper, taking a small flagon of wine from a pouch at his waist. " It will give you dreamless slumber and soothe away your aches and pains."

Taking the flagon with a hand which



trembled through sheer weariness, Kaspar Snarl swallowed the contents at a gulp. Then his eyes closed and he fell sound asleep on the chair, his snores echoing through the cottage.

The Pied Piper stood watching him for a moment. Then, with a smile, he turned and left the cottage, closing the door behind him.

Along the road sounded the sweet and elfin music of his pipes, growing fainter and fainter until it died softly away in the distance.

It was morning before Kaspar Snarl awoke. He stirred, stretched himself and blinked sleepily about him.

" I must have gone to sleep on a chair," he muttered, rising. " Where's that Hoppity ? Where is the brat ? I'll tan the hide off him when I do catch him. Fancy him letting me go to sleep on a chair. Hoppity, where are you ? HOPPITY ! "

But no Hoppity answered.

" HOPPITY ! " roared Kaspar Snarl, working himself up into no end of a rage.

But still no Hoppity answered.

" Oh my, just wait till I get hold of the little wretch ! " cried Kaspar Snarl furiously. " I'll give him something for this. I'll teach him to be here when I want him ! "

Snatching up a stick, he went clumping angrily upstairs to Hoppity's little bedroom. But Hoppity wasn't there. Neither had the bed been slept in.

" Queer ! " muttered Kaspar Snarl. " Wherever can he have got to ? "

You see, the wine which the Pied Piper had given him had indeed given him such a deep and dreamless sleep that he had quite forgotten all about his visit to that happy land beyond the mountain. He couldn't remember having been there at all and having seen little Hoppity and all the other children.

" He can't have run away ! " he roared. " He wouldn't dare to run away ! "

In his rage, Kaspar Snarl hit the empty bed such a blow with his stick that he broke it, so that it sagged in the middle.

" Aw, hang it, that's done it ! " he snarled. " Now I've gone and broke the bed. But it's that nasty little Hoppity's fault, not mine. I won't half make him pay for this when I do catch him ! "

In a worse rage than ever, he clattered away downstairs and out on to the road.

" HOPPITY ! " he roared, glaring about him. " Where are you, you miserable little brat ? How dare you hide from me ? Show yourself at once ! "

But Hoppity neither showed himself nor answered. And for the rest of that day Kaspar Snarl ran about crying to everyone he met :

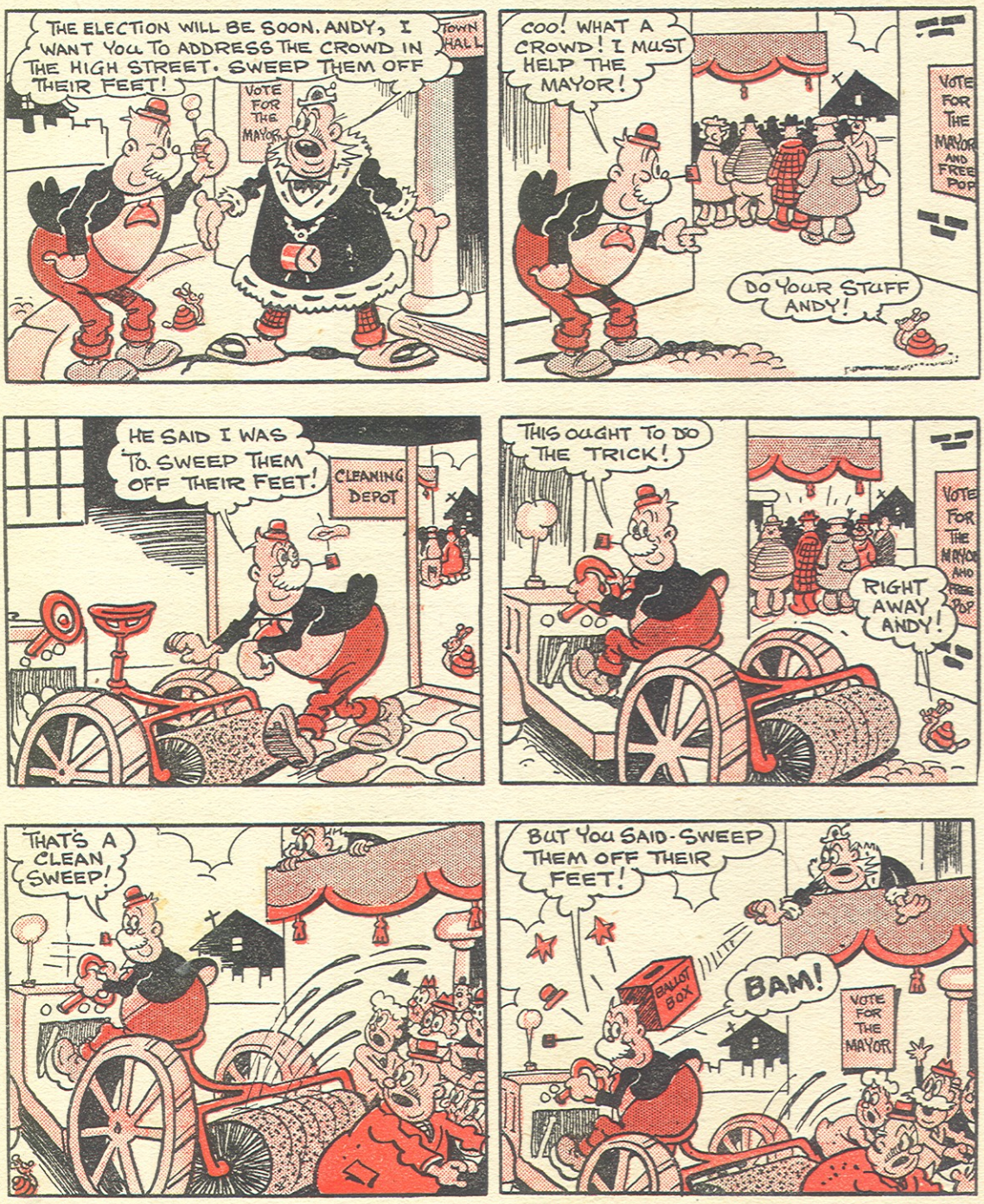
" Where's Hoppity ? I can't find Hoppity. Have you seen him ? "

But nobody had seen Hoppity. For he was living in the Land of Little People, beyond the mountain, where lives the Kindest Man in All the World, the Pied Piper of Hamelin. And there you will find little Hoppity to this very day.

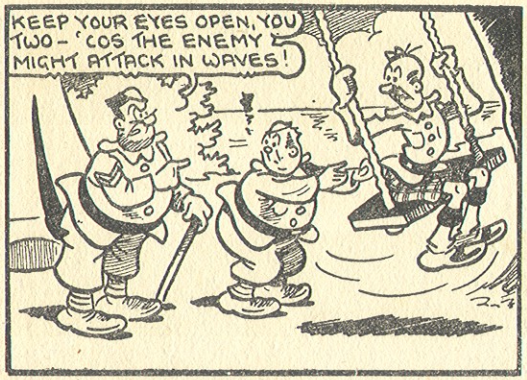
THE END

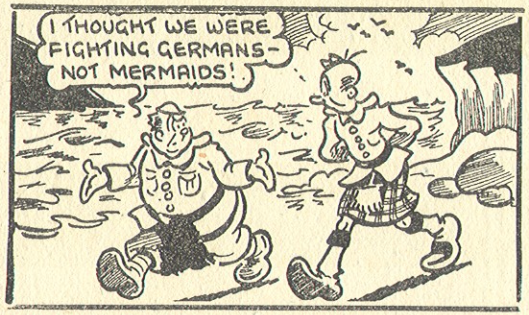
HANDY ANDY

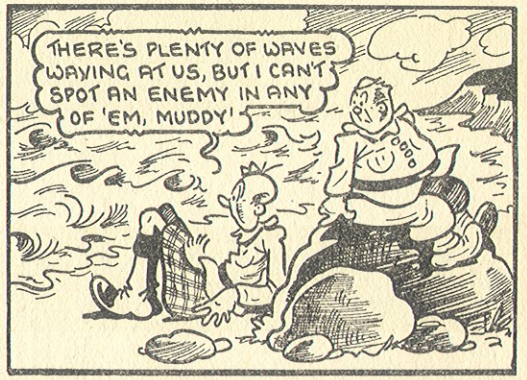
THE ODD JOB MAN

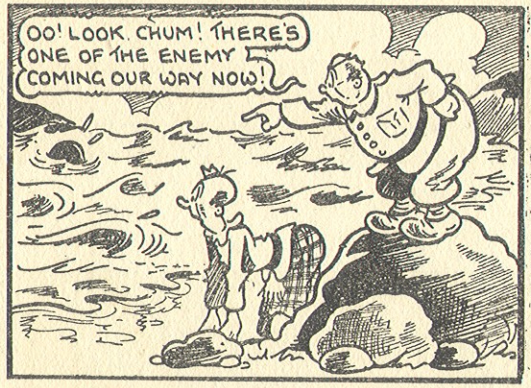


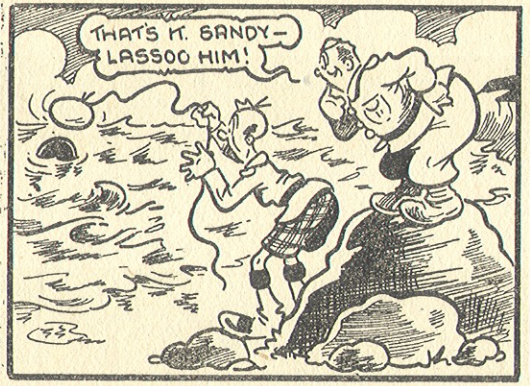
SANDY AND MUDDY

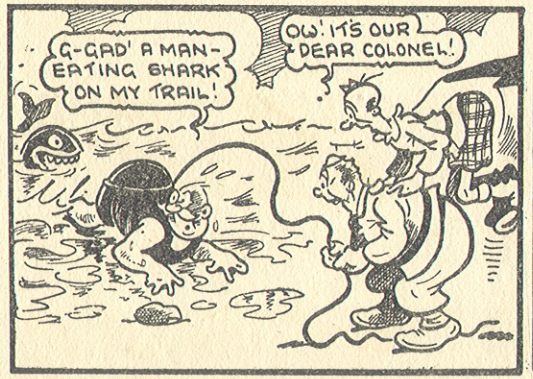


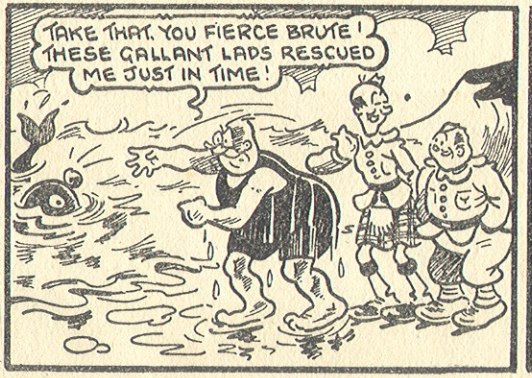


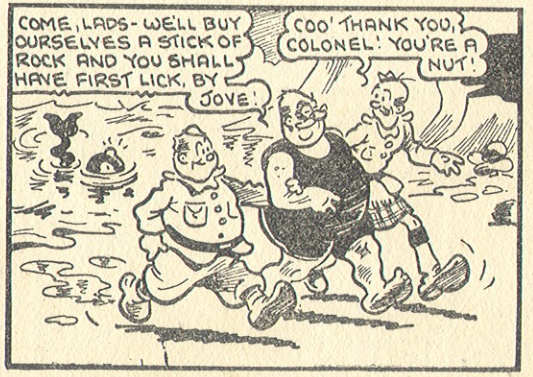




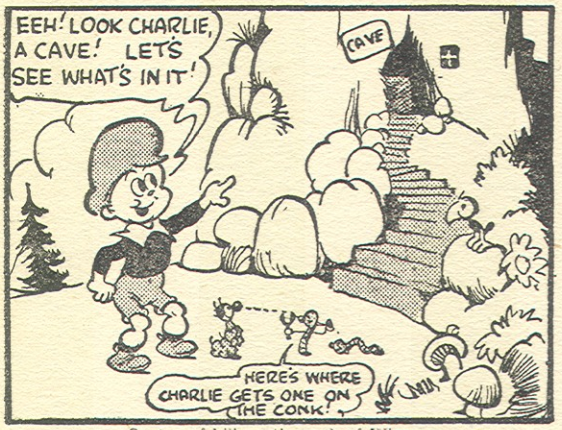




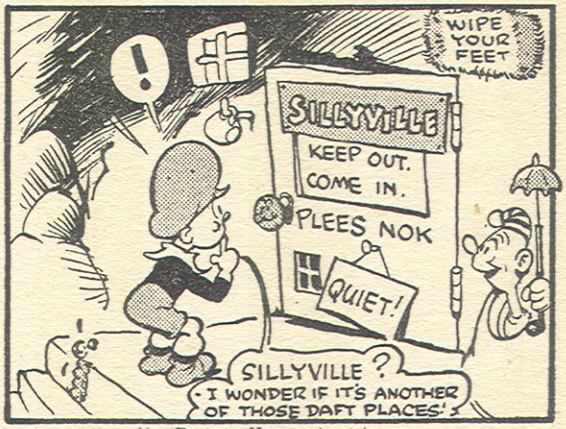




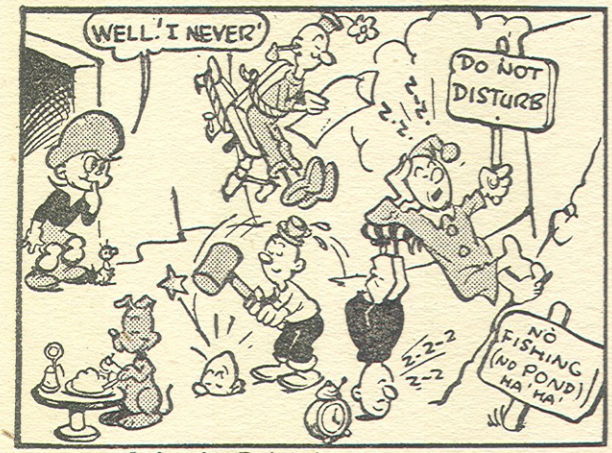
OUR ERNIE - - - MRS. ENTWHISTLE'S LITTLE LAD



1. On top of hill north-south of Wigan,
There is a cave—a jolly big 'un,
And though way in is big and wide,
Most folks is scared to peep inside.

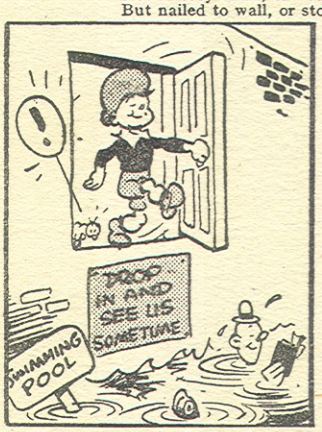


2. Not Ernie! Happy shout he gave
And promptly dashed into the cave,
And so to daffy place he came—
Sillyville—that were its name.

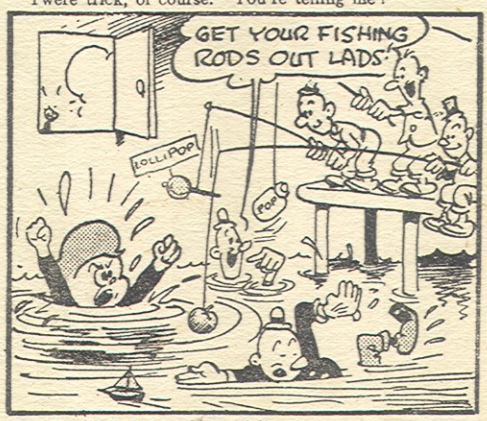


3. In first place Ernie took a peep,
Bunch of chaps were fast asleep,
Not in easy chair, or bed,
But nailed to wall, or stood on head.

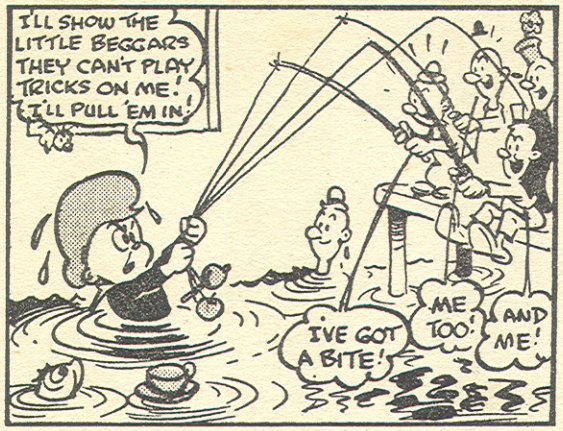
4. Next Ernie came to swimming pool,
Where folk pay sixpence, as a rool,
But this pool had large notice—FREE!
'Twere trick, of course. You're telling me!



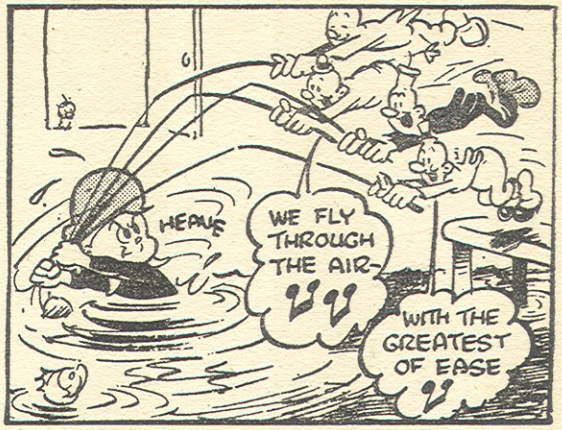
5. Lad opened door and walked right in—
Right into water up to chin!
And man in water reading book,
Stopped reading while he had a look.



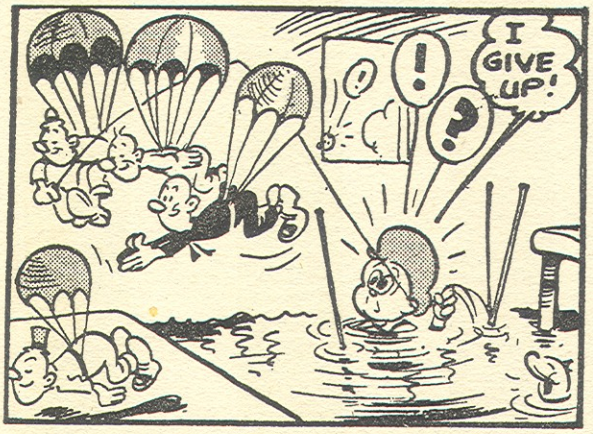
6. Well, lad could see folks there were potty,
Barmy, crackers, daft, and dotty.
'Cos no one who were not quite mad
Would start to fish for little lad.



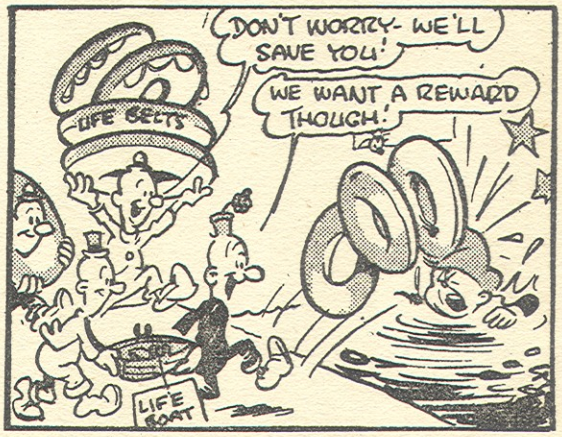
7. " By gum," cried lad, " this is no joke,
I guess I'll show these crazy folk.
They can't do this and that to me!
I'll pull 'em into bath! You see!"



8. So Ernie heaved, then gave a lurch,
Which pulled the dafties off their perch,
" Ha, ha!" cried lad. " Now you'll get wet!
I'll teach you to behave, you bet!"

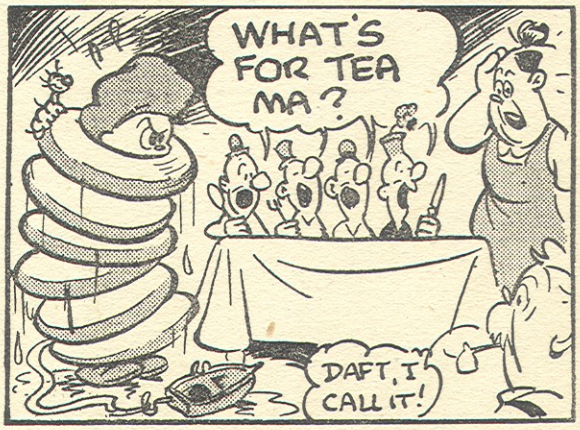


9. But dafties didn't care a hoot,
Each one were armed with parachoot,
With which they sailed through air with ease,
Like daring man on his trapeze.

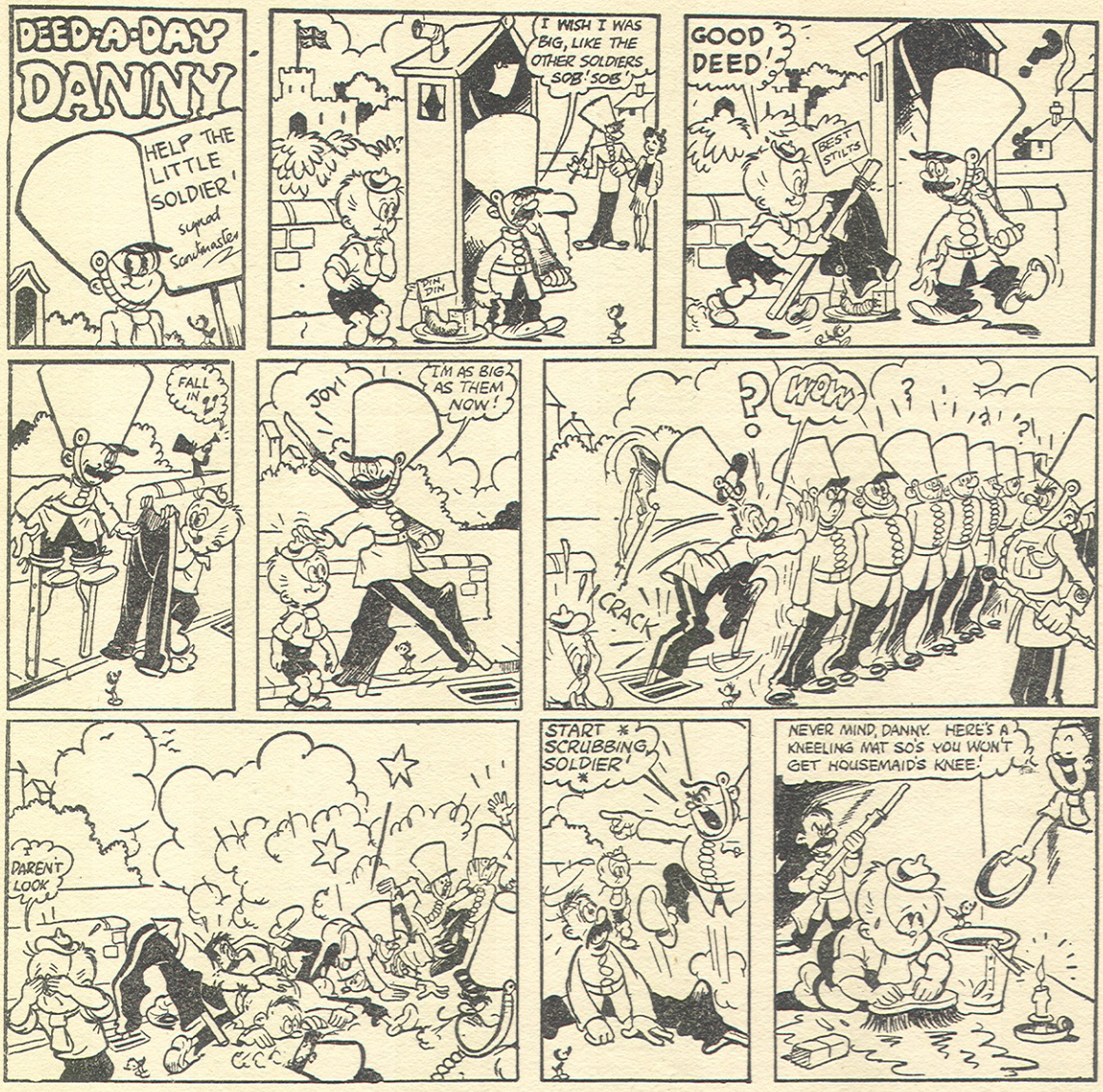


10. Then they got lifebelts for our lad,
And 'twere a norful time he had,
They cried, " We'll save you, lad! Not harf!
You mustn't drown in our new barf!"

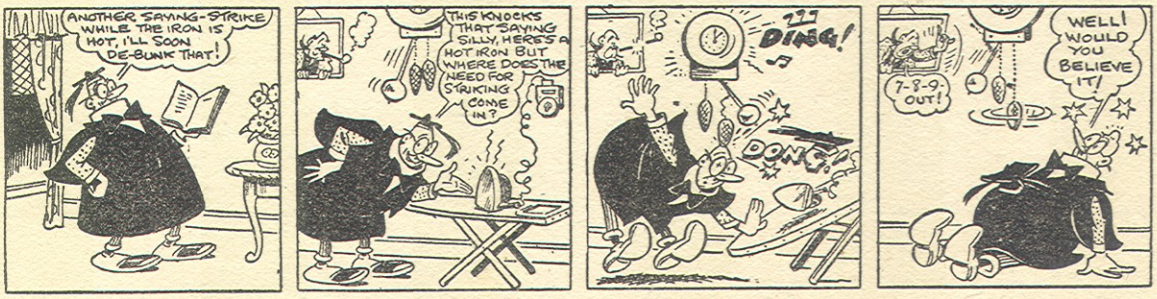
11. By time they got lad save on shore,
Sillyville clock struck half-past four.
" Well, well," they said, " how nice! Now we
Can take you home and have your tea!"

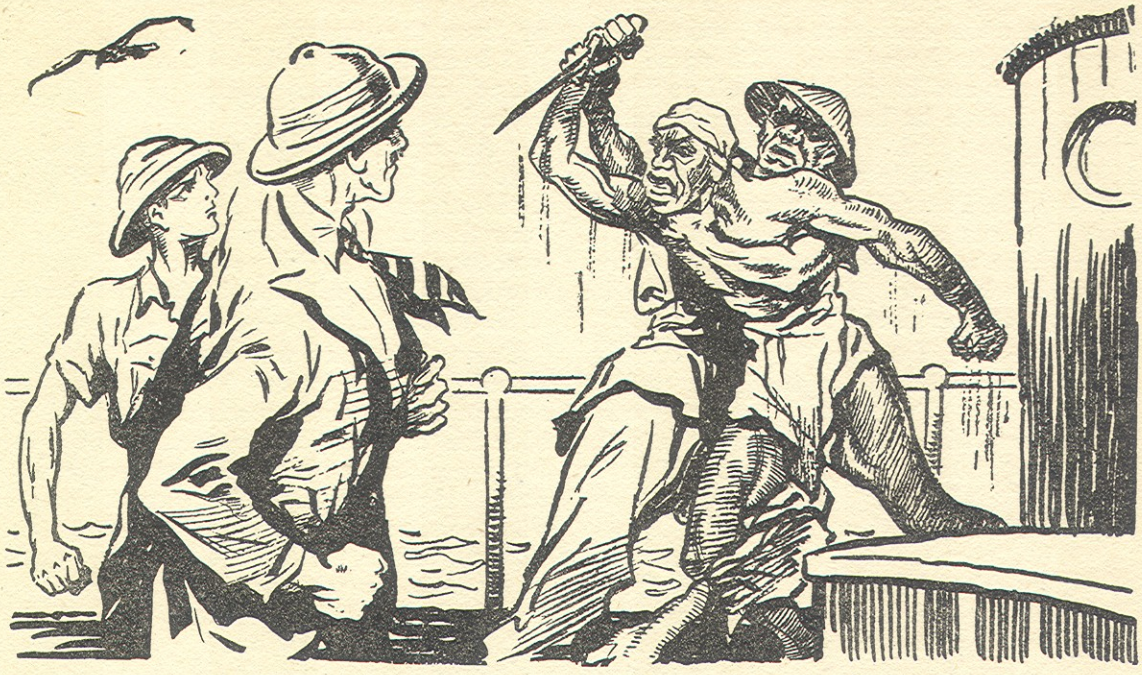


12. And so they did—as you can see.
Four voices shouted: " What's for tea?"
What Ernie thought we cannot tell—
Life-belt gagged him. Just as well!



BOOKWORM BASIL - - - HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE





THE DRAGON OF DADO LI

A Story of Thrills and Adventure in the Southern China Seas

An Unwelcome Visitor

DADO LI is a rocky island that lies far away in the Southern China Seas. It isn't a big place—only a few miles across. In fact, when seen from a distance, Dado Li just looks like a huge, flat-topped rock sticking out of the sea.

There are only two breaks in the rock-bound coast of Dado Li. One is a cove with a small strip of sandy beach called Cherry Blossom Bay on the south side of the island. The other opening is on the north side and it is nothing more than a large crack in the cliffs. But it had the exciting name of Dragon's Bite because, according to the ancient Chinese legends, Dado Li had once upon a time been a dragon's den.

Three British people lived on Dado Li. One was Peter Duncan, who made his living by diving for sponges from the sea-bed. The other two were his wife and fourteen-year-old son, Danny Duncan. The boy was very much like his dad, tall, curly-haired and always wearing a cheery expression. The other inhabitants of Dado Li were the divers who worked for Peter Duncan. These were islanders, with one exception—Charlie Lee, the head diver. Charlie had actually been born in San Francisco's Chinatown and it was there he had first met Peter Duncan. Charlie had two big weaknesses—one was to dash around Dado Li in a very ancient Tin Lizzie, and the other was to use American expressions when talking pidgin English.

One morning, Danny and his dad were aboard the Humming Bird, Peter Duncan's small fishing vessel. They were getting the boat ready to take Danny's mother to a neighbouring island for a holiday, but now all scrubbing had stopped with the arrival of a smart motor-launch. Danny and his dad watched a boat put

off from the launch, carrying a big, fat man in a white duck suit and Panama hat. Peter Duncan knew him. His name was Van Bruten and he called himself an island trader, though he had his finger in many pies.

Van Bruten didn't even offer to shake hands with Peter Duncan as he climbed from the boat aboard the Humming Bird. Instead, he merely nodded and pulled out a big, black cigar. It was only when he had lit his cigar that Van Bruten spoke.

" Look here, Duncan," he said bluntly. " You don't need three guesses as to why I am here. I've been sending special messengers with offers to buy Dado Li from you, but you won't sell. That is right, isn't it ? "

" Sure," replied Danny's dad.

" Well, that's why I'm here myself," continued Van Bruten. " Y'see, Duncan, I'm thinking of retiring from business and I've been looking around for a place in which to settle down. Now, Dado Li suits me down to the ground. I've taken a big fancy to this island of yours—and I mean to get it. If you want more money, then let's get down to business. What's your price ? "

" Dado Li is still not for sale," replied Peter Duncan simply. " You see, this is *our* home. The prices you offered me were fair enough but it is something that you wouldn't understand, Van Bruten. This is our home. I do my sponge diving and, though I'm not making a fortune, I'm happy. That's the answer—we are all happy here and happiness is a thing money just can't buy."

Danny was watching Van Bruten, but the trader showed no sign of his feelings. He was a man who wasn't easily beaten, and after pacing the deck for a few seconds, he returned to the attack. He offered Peter Duncan a still higher price ; offered to find another island—until Danny's dad stopped his arguments.

" Look here, Van Bruten," he said, and waved his hand towards Danny. " My son here was born on the island, so let's ask him." He turned towards the boy and added, " Do you want to leave Dado Li, Danny ? "

" Oh gosh, no ! " cried the boy, leaping up from the overturned bucket where he had been sitting. " I don't want to leave —and neither does mum. Please don't leave here, dad ! "

" All right, Danny," smiled Peter Duncan. He put his arm round the boy's shoulder and turned to the trader. " That's your final answer, Van Bruten. Dado Li is not for sale. And if you mention another word about it, we'll set the famous Dragon of Dado Li after you—won't we, Danny ? "

Danny's answer was a roar of laughter —and the effect on Van Bruten was amazing. Now, he made no attempt to hide his anger and disappointment. His fat figure seemed to swell even more with rage. He called Peter Duncan all sorts of silly fools, but Danny's Dad just stood and smiled. Then, with an effort, the trader controlled himself and, whirling on his heels, strode off across the deck.

" Hi, mister—look out ! "

It was Danny who called the warning, but Van Bruten was in such a rage that he paid no heed. Also he was too blind to see what Danny had just spotted. Down came his foot on a slab of scrubbing soap lying on the deck.

Swoooosh ! That soap was wet and slippery. Van Bruten's foot came down heavily upon it and next second the trader was skidding towards the low rail of the Humming Bird at a terrific speed. In vain Van Bruten tried to stop himself. Suddenly he hit the rail and disappeared over the side with a mighty splash.

Danny and his dad, still laughing, rushed to the rail, but Van Bruten's boatmen were already on the spot. It was no easy job getting their fat master aboard the little rowing boat, and Danny and his dad roared with laughter as they watched.

" Go on, Van Bruten," shouted Peter Duncan. " Our tame dragon here likes fat, so hurry up before he catches you. Go on. Oopsadaisy ! "

At last, Van Bruten managed to scramble into the rowing-boat and it made for the launch as fast as the boatmen could row her. Danny and his dad saw the dripping figure of Van Bruten climb aboard the launch, but before he disap-

peared into the cabin, the trader stopped to shake a fist in their direction. Next minute, the launch was under way and heading out of Cherry Blossom Bay for the open sea.

" Well, Danny, that's got rid of him," said Peter Duncan when they managed to stop laughing. " But we've wasted a lot of time and we'll have to get cracking to have the Humming Bird ready to take mum over to see the Thomsons on Tato Island."

" Okay, dad," replied Danny. " But what I can't understand is why Van Bruten is so eager to get Dado Li all of a sudden ! "

" Neither do I," replied his dad. " Up to some more of his shady tricks, I suppose, but he doesn't worry me. He's not getting Dado Li, and that's that. Now, stop talking and begin working."

The Monster of the Deep

It was a fortnight later, and Danny had forgotten all about Van Bruten. His mother was still over at Tato Island and the boy was able to spend all day diving with his dad. Now, as he stood at the tiny wheel of the Humming Bird, steering to his dad's directions, Danny was as happy as a king. He was steering the boat towards Dragon's Bite on the north side of the island. There was no possible place to land there. The sides of the cleft dropped straight into the sea, but in the deep water so close to the land, Peter Duncan hoped to find better sponges.

" Port your helm, Danny," shouted Peter Duncan from the bows. " Come on over a bit more. That's it. Easy now—easy." Then his voice rose to a roar. " Come on Charlie Lee, anchor away ! "

Two other divers were already leaping towards the mast. Then, as the anchor splashed into the blue sea, the sail was brought down and the Humming Bird came gently to a stop. The other divers were already standing beside the rail wearing nothing but short cotton trunks.

" Well, you grinning idols," said Peter Duncan cheerily as he saw their expressionless faces, " you all know that this is a new ground, and you don't have to dive if you don't want to. Are there any volunteers ? "

" Plentil, boss," chimed in Charlie Lee. " Me head diver and me fix things okay. Tommy Bong here is best diver, so he go first." He turned to Tommy Bong : " How's that by you, buddy ? "

Danny laughed. Old Charlie Lee was a scream with his mixture of pidgin English spiced with sayings he'd picked up in San Francisco. Tommy Bong did not answer. He couldn't, because, as he lowered himself over the side, the diver gripped a knife in his teeth. This knife was razor sharp and served for protection and also for cutting the sponges from the sea-bed.

Danny leaned over the rail and watched the diver. Down, down, down ! Usually the water was so clear that bottom was easily seen, but at Dragon's Bite the water was deeper and was also overshadowed by the towering cliffs. Danny watched the outline of the diver growing fainter, until he was lost from sight. But only for a second.

" Gosh, dad ! " yelled Danny suddenly. " Something's happened to Tommy ! He's coming up already—and he's coming fast! "

The boy was right. Tommy Bong had suddenly shot from the shadows under Dragon's Bite, and was frantically clawing his way to the surface. He had lost his knife and as the diver came nearer, Danny could see the expression in his eyes. There was only one thing that could make a man's eyes look like that—sheer terror !

In a few seconds, Tommy Bong had reached the surface and was scrambling aboard the Humming Bird. Danny's heart was thumping with excitement. Tommy was an experienced diver and something very unusual must have happened down below to scare him like this.

Everybody clustered round as Tommy heaved himself aboard and flopped out flat on the deck. But the diver was only there for a few seconds and leaping to his feet, he let loose a torrent of the native dialect. It was too quick for Danny to follow but the effect on the others was electrical. Their yellowish faces seemed to turn green as they leaped to the anchor and the sail.

" What's wrong, Dad? What's the ——" began Danny but he suddenly stopped speaking as his heart seemed to jump right into his throat. Among all the jabber of Chinese, the boy could hear one word being repeated—and that word was " Dragon " !

" Yes, Danny," said Peter Duncan, seeing the expression on his son's face. " You've got it. Tommy says that he has seen the Dragon of Dado Li down below. It's nonsense, of course, so we'd better stop it now."

Peter Duncan stepped forward to where Tommy Bong and others were setting the sail faster than it had ever been done before. " Now, Tommy, what's all this—" he began, but the former faithful diver grabbed a knife from one of the others and whirled on Peter Duncan. It was only a lightning move by Charlie Lee that stopped the blade from striking home.

" Don't make any tlouble now, boss," said the head-diver calmly. " Tommy is sure scared stiff, so best go home now. Everything be allee lightee later, or maybe hunky-dory, too."

Peter Duncan saw the wisdom of Charlie's words and let the crew sail the Humming Bird back to Cherry Blossom Bay. The only explanation that he could think of was :

" There is no doubt that Tommy did see something down there. Maybe it was an outsize in sharks, and with all this talk about the Dragon of Dado Li, his imagination did the rest. "And then suddenly Peter Duncan laughed. " Cheer up, Danny," he said. " Dragons went out of date donkeys' years ago, and we'll find the truth when Tommy calms down."

But Tommy Bong did not calm down. Down below he had seen a black monster resting on the bottom, which had turned a huge fiery eye in his direction. It could be nothing else than the Dragon of Dado Li, which had come back, as the legends had prophesied. That was Tommy's story and he stuck to it.

Worse still, the others believed him. Panic swept through the island and all the divers began a wholesale evacuation. It was so bad that Peter Duncan had to mount guard with a rifle to stop the Humming Bird from being taken.

Danny felt sorry for his Dad. This was a big blow after all the happy years on the island, and the boy knew well enough that no one would return, and that no new divers would come near the island once the story got around.

" And there is someone else who is sure to hear it," said Peter Duncan. " And that's Van Bruten. He won't worry about any fairy tales about dragons, and he'll be after Dado Li again. Yes, he's got me, because if I do have to sell, it will be at his price."

The Dragon's Claws

By the afternoon only Danny, his Dad and Charlie Lee remained on Dado Li. All the others had gone, but the head-diver, with his San Francisco upbringing, did not have the same superstitious beliefs as the islanders. When Peter Duncan asked Charlie if he wanted to go, he answered :

" This baby ain't quittin', boss. Me allee lightee. Me big shot and no big fish can scare dis guy."

" Thanks, Charlie," replied Peter Duncan. " Now nip over to your hut and get some things. You will stay in the bungalow with Danny and me until we get this trouble cleared up. Savvy ? "

" Sure, boss, me savvy," grinned Charlie. " Me go ! "

" And you come back," chipped in Danny with a laugh. " You go—you come back pronto."

Off went Charlie, chugging merrily in his ancient car. His hut was over at the other side of the island, but Charlie wouldn't even walk ten yards if his car were handy. It only seemed a few seconds after the noise of the engine had died away that Danny heard it again. Charlie was coming back—and he was driving at a more furious pace than usual, even for him. He pulled the car up outside the bungalow with a jerk that nearly shook it to pieces !

" Oh, boss ! " cried Charlie, and for the first time Danny saw the cheery Chinese shaken out of his usual calm. " Oh,

boss ! " he cried again. " Dlagon on Dado Li sure 'nuff. Me see——"

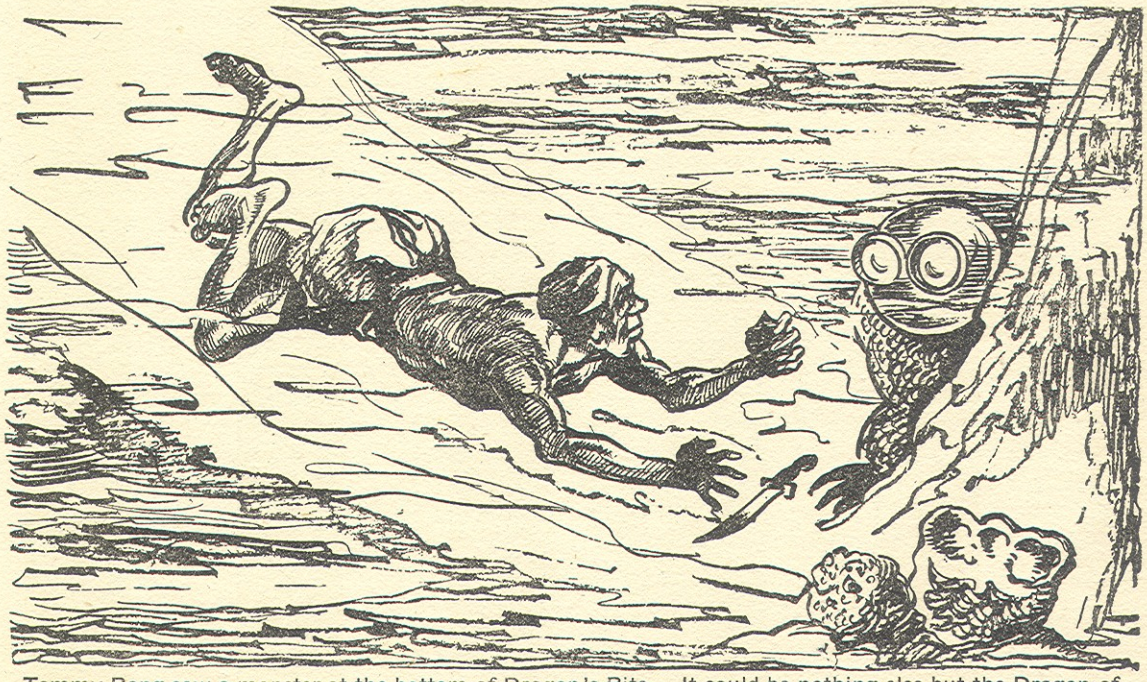
In a flash Peter Duncan leaped forward. He gripped his head-diver by the shoulders, shaking him, and his voice was grim. " Shut up, Charlie ! " he said. " There are no such things as dragons. Savvy ! Let's have a look at what you saw."

Danny clambered into the car after his Dad, and Charlie drove off. They were heading for Dragon's Bite and the boy's heart thumped with excitement. He did not doubt that Charlie had seen something —but what could it be ? In a few minutes they reached the great crack in the cliffs, and Charlie stopped so suddenly that Danny was thrown into the bottom of the car. When the boy managed to clamber out, his Dad was kneeling on the ground, looking at something to which Charlie was pointing. Danny ran forward, stopping suddenly, and letting out a whistle of sheer surprise !

There, on the edge of the cliff, was the imprint of a huge, scaly claw !

Danny stared speechlessly. The imprint was more than three times the size of a man's hand, and he could see where the points of the claws had dug into the ground. Also, clearly defined, were marks shaped like fish scales. About a yard away was a similar imprint. Danny walked to the edge of the cliff and looked over. On its sheer side he saw long scratches. Something had climbed the cliff from the sea, and had rested its claws on the edge of the cliff as it peered over Dado Li !

" I just can't figure it out," said Peter Duncan, almost to himself. " This washes out what I said about the shark, and I've never heard of a sea serpent with claws.



Tommy Bong saw a monster at the bottom of Dragon's Bite. It could be nothing else but the Dragon of Dado Li !

They are claw marks all right, and——"

" And dragons have claws," said Danny thoughtfully.

Peter Duncan gave his son a queer look as he rose to his feet. He was silent for several seconds, then he said, " Danny ! Charlie ! Get into the car and go to the stores beside the bungalow. Bring the rifles and some dynamite. Here's the key, Danny. Hurry—I'll stay here and watch."

Danny didn't stop to ask questions. He clambered into the car with Charlie. There were only two rifles in the stores, but

Danny nipped into the bungalow and grabbed his Dad's automatic from a drawer. This would do all right for him, he decided, and then he and Charlie set off again to cross the island.

As they raced back towards Dragon's Bite, Danny suddenly realised that time was against them. In the excitement of the evening, he had forgotten how quickly the tropic night would come upon them. The light would fade out as though a lamp had been turned down.

" Oh, hurry—do hurry ! " cried Danny. He was desperate now, and, to his horror, he saw that a sea mist was creeping in over Dragon's Bite.

They had almost reached the spot where they had left Peter Duncan, when Danny saw an enormous dim shape, very near the cliff edge. A little distance away Danny saw another, much smaller shape—a human shape. He clutched Charlie's arm.

" Look ! " he cried. " There's Dad, and the dragon's going for him ! "

Peter Duncan had turned at the sound of the car, and at that moment, the dragon leapt towards him. Danny whipped out his automatic as the car came to a stop, but his hand trembled, and the bullet flew wide. The automatic clattered to the ground, as, half-fainting, Danny fell against Charlie.

Seeing Peter Duncan off his guard, the dragon brought down one of its sharply-clawed forefeet, and sent his victim sprawling.

At that moment, the sun's rim sank below the horizon, and Danny saw the dragon lift up his Dad, and spreading its wings, disappear over the misty edge of the cliff.

Danny and Charlie staggered to where the dragon had stood, and looked over the edge of the cliff—but the darkness and the mist had swallowed them out of sight.

For a long time Danny stood on the cliff edge, a numbed feeling of helplessness holding him rooted to the spot. His father had disappeared in the clutches of the dragon, and there was nothing he could do about it.

Presently Charlie took him by the arm, and led him gently away.

Driving through the night, they returned to the bungalow, but neither of them thought of quitting, and at dawn the next day they were back at Dragon's Bite.

The Dragon's Den

" I DON'T suppose it will make any difference to dad now," said Danny, as he fixed a detonator and short fuse to a stick of dynamite. " But if we can blow this dragon to smithereens it will be something at least."

But the dynamite didn't have the desired effect. Charge after charge was exploded in Dragon's Bite, but there was no sign of the dragon, either dead or alive. Danny and Charlie decided to give it up and as they were crossing to the car, the boy stopped and pointed.

" Ho, Charlie ! Look at that—never seen that before."

Just beside the car was a huge crack in the ground, and they crossed over to it.

" Gosh, Charlie," said Danny. " It looks like the entrance to a tunnel. Perhaps this might be where the dragon lives, eh ? See, the earth and stones are loose compared with the other parts. Perhaps the entrance has been blocked for years and the explosions of the dynamite have shaken them loose. There might be another entrance under the cliff. Get that spade and torch from the car and we'll investigate. Are you game ? "

" Sure thing, baby," replied Charlie without hesitation. " If you go—allee light ! Me go, too. You betcha ! "

Danny was right. The explosions had certainly uncovered the entrance to a tunnel, and after they had cleared the opening with the spade, the going was pretty easy. Charlie, with his rifle in one hand and the torch in the other, led the way. Danny, gripping his automatic tightly, followed, his heart simply thumping with excitement.

Down, down, down ! The tunnel wasn't so steep as Danny had expected. It wound downwards in a steady spiral and, apart from having to climb over some mounds of earth where the tunnel had fallen in, they had a pretty easy passage. After about twenty minutes, Charlie switched off the torch.

" Be pletty careful, now, Danny," he whispered. " There's light ahead ! "

The boy peered over Charlie's shoulder. The tunnel had run into a level, straight section, and ahead, Danny could see a greeny, glowing pool, and although the passage was dark, light was reflected through the water.

He realised that this pool must be one end of an underwater tunnel, leading out to the open sea through the face of the cliff. Danny gripped his gun tighter. Could this cave be the dragon's den ?

Inch by inch, Danny and Charlie edged forward. The going was slow but silent. At last the opening was reached, and Danny found himself looking into a huge cavern. But in spite of himself, the boy felt a pang of disappointment—there wasn't the faintest sign of the dragon or of his dad.

" Gosh ! What a let-down ! " said Danny. " All this excitement for nothing ! Look over there, Charlie. See that small cove with the water. I suppose if you dived into the pool you would come out into Dragon's Bite. Never knew there was a cave there, did you ? "

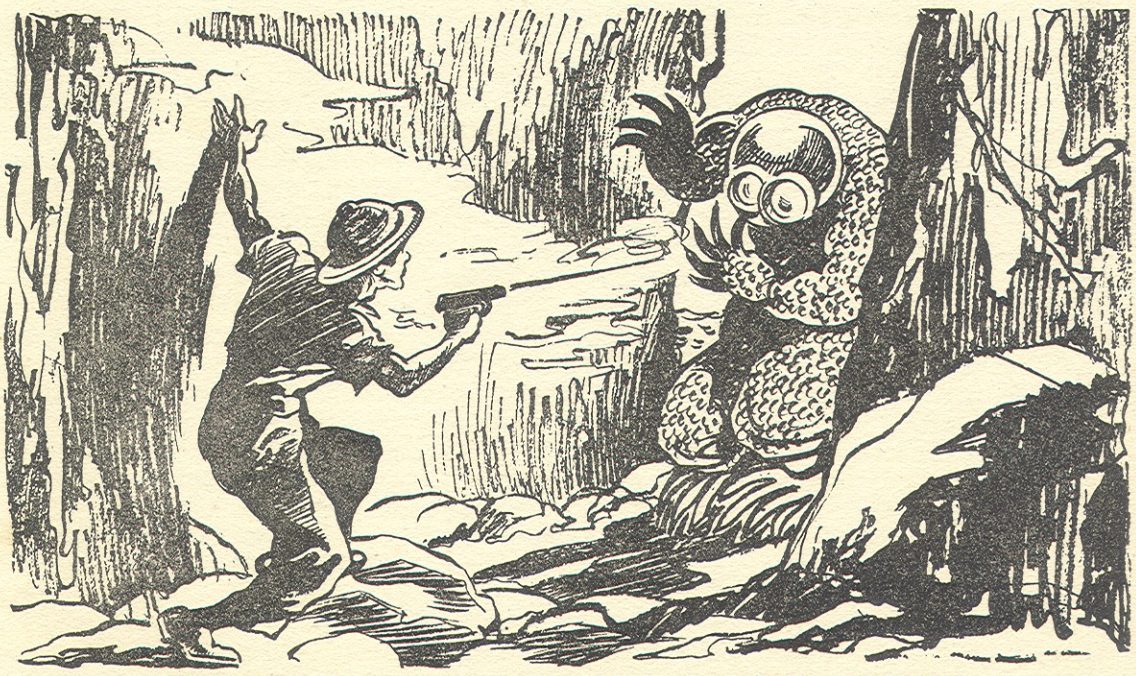
" No, sirree," replied Charlie. " But me now think other caves here."

Charlie had switched on the torch again and was already walking through what seemed to be a crack in the wall. In the dim, greeny light Danny could see others. Perhaps they were on the right trail after all.

Danny began to follow Charlie, but something made him turn and glance again towards the water—the seaward entrance to the cavern. As he did so, he opened his mouth to shout, but the terrifying sight in front of him froze his voice in his throat.

There, in the eerie light, was the dragon. It was emerging from the pool inside the cave, and Danny could see the water glistening on its scaly sides. He saw the great fore-claws and a queer round-shaped head. Then, as the monster moved forward, the spell that held the boy broke.

Up came Danny's automatic, and he squeezed the trigger until the magazine was empty. Crack ! Crack ! Crack ! It was wild shooting, and Danny knew that all the bullets didn't hit the target. But some of them did. Danny saw the monster stagger—and then come on !



Up came Danny's gun, and he squeezed the trigger. He saw the monster stagger.

Gosh! What kind of creature was this that bullets could not stop?

Danny felt in his pocket for his extra clip of cartridges. It had gone! It must have fallen out during the climb down the tunnel. The dragon was now clear of the water and rising on its hind legs. The light was too dim for Danny to see clearly, but what he did see was enough to terrify even the strongest man!

The dragon had come forward with a queer, jerky motion. A few more steps and it would be upon him! Danny looked round. Could he reach the entrance of the smaller cave where Charlie had disappeared? As he attempted to move, the dragon lurched forward again.

What little light there was suddenly became blotted out. Danny saw the huge shadow tower above him, and he shut his eyes. His head swam, and he felt dizzy as he waited for the clutch of those huge claws.

But suddenly, the cave rocked with the sound of two shots—rifle shots! Danny opened his eyes—and there was the dragon, falling back from him. It staggered, then fell to the ground in a crumpled heap. Beyond, at the entrance to the smaller cave was Charlie, and beside him, with a still smoking rifle in his hand, stood Peter Duncan!

Danny could hardly believe his eyes!

"Dad! Dad!" Danny rushed across the cave. "Dad, is it really you?"

"Yes, Danny, it really is, and I'm still alive and kicking," said Peter Duncan. "Charlie found me tied up in that smaller cave. That makes you wonder; but come on and have a good look at the Dragon of Dado Li."

Charlie switched on the torch as they crossed over, and Danny gaped at what he saw. The scaly sides of the monster were just like the chain mail that the knights of old used to wear. The queer, round-shaped head was like a diver's helmet. Peter Duncan was taking this off—and then came the final shock.

"Van Bruten!" gasped Danny.

"Yes, son," said Peter Duncan. "The dragon of Dado Li is Van Bruten in a suit of chain-mail. That's why the light bullets of your gun didn't stop him, but the heavier rifle bullets did the trick. One got through and nicked his shoulder. Let's get off the fancy dress and we'll attend to him."

As Charlie and his Dad took off the chain mail, Danny had a closer look, and saw that the claws were made of steel and cleverly jointed. They fitted on to the hands and feet, and that's what made Van Bruten look so big. But their main purpose was to climb the sheer cliff of Dragon's Bite. There was still one thing that puzzled Danny—the wings.

"Oh, they can easily be explained now, son," said Peter Duncan. "They are all part of this ingenious invention, and Van Bruten carried them folded on his back. They were no good for flying, but acted like a parachute. But fetch some water, and we'll bring him round, and I'll tell you the story after I get him locked away."

An hour or so later, Van Bruten, with his wound properly bandaged, was locked in the store-room. Charlie had cooked some food and, as they ate, Peter Duncan told his story.

"It was really I who gave Van Bruten the idea, when I made that crack about setting the Dragon of Dado Li after him," said Danny's dad. "He raked up the history of the island and then got the idea for his fancy dress from a picture of a knight he happened to see. Then he met a crook inventor, and got him to make the whole outfit."

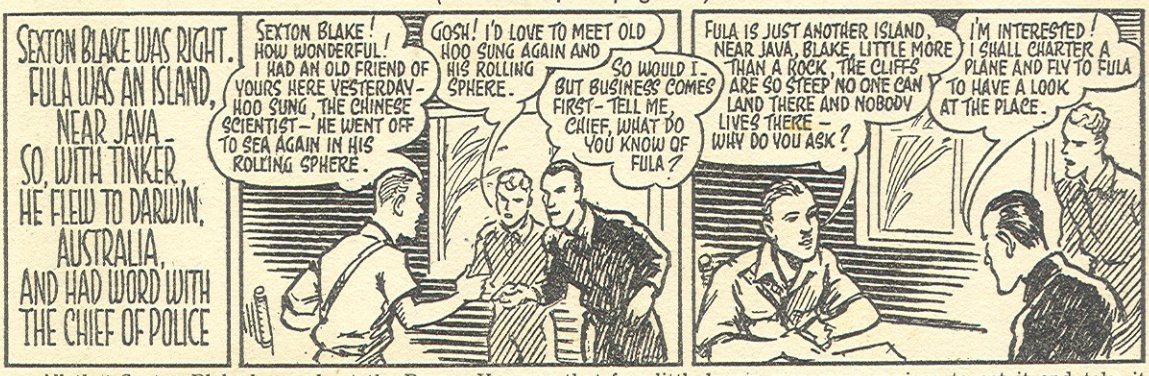
"But why did he go to all this length just to get Dado Li?" Danny asked.

"Because," replied Peter Duncan, "Van Bruten was all set for making a fortune, and we were in the way. He had been told that World Wide Airways were opening a route across this way, and that Dado Li would make an ideal stopping place, with its flat top. Van Bruten planned to build hotels and all that sort of thing, and turn the island into an airport and holiday resort. But, thanks to you and Charlie, the only hotel he will have is a gaol on the mainland! Now, there is one other point. You will be wondering how he got here without us

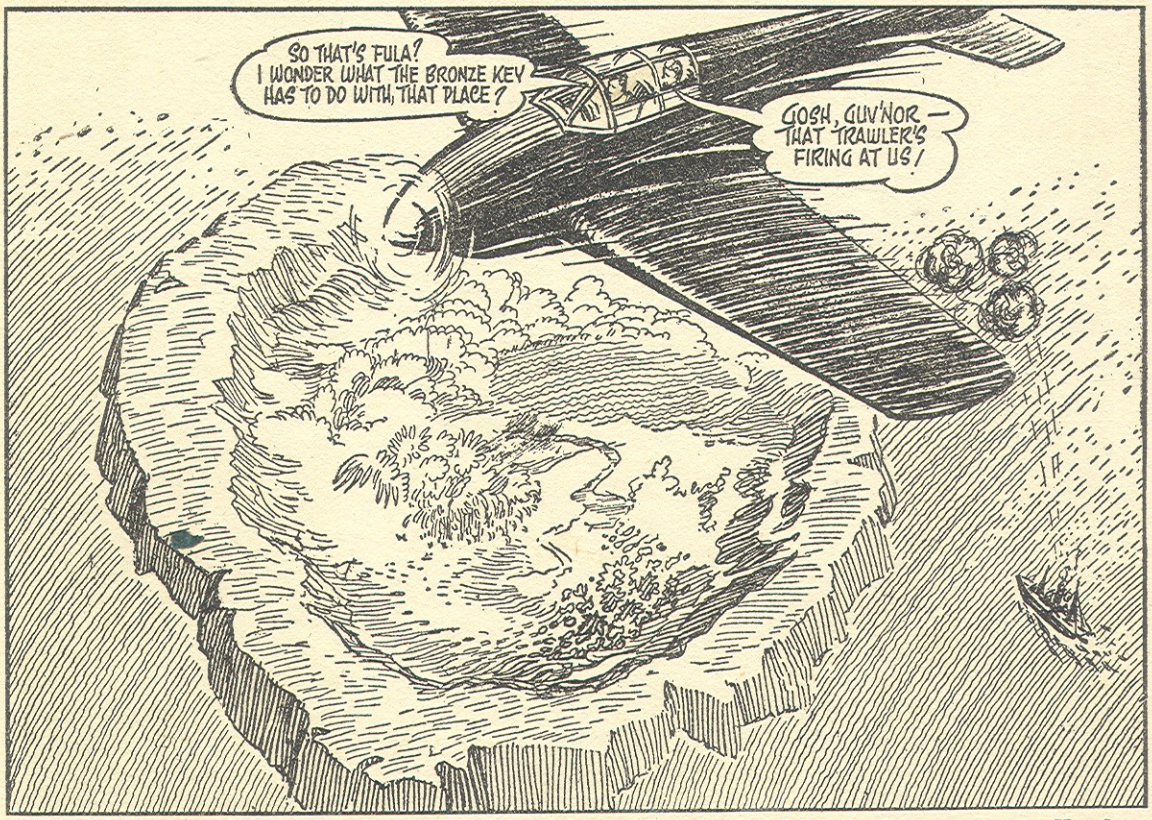
(*Now turn to page* 169.)

SEXTON BLAKE and the BRONZE KEY

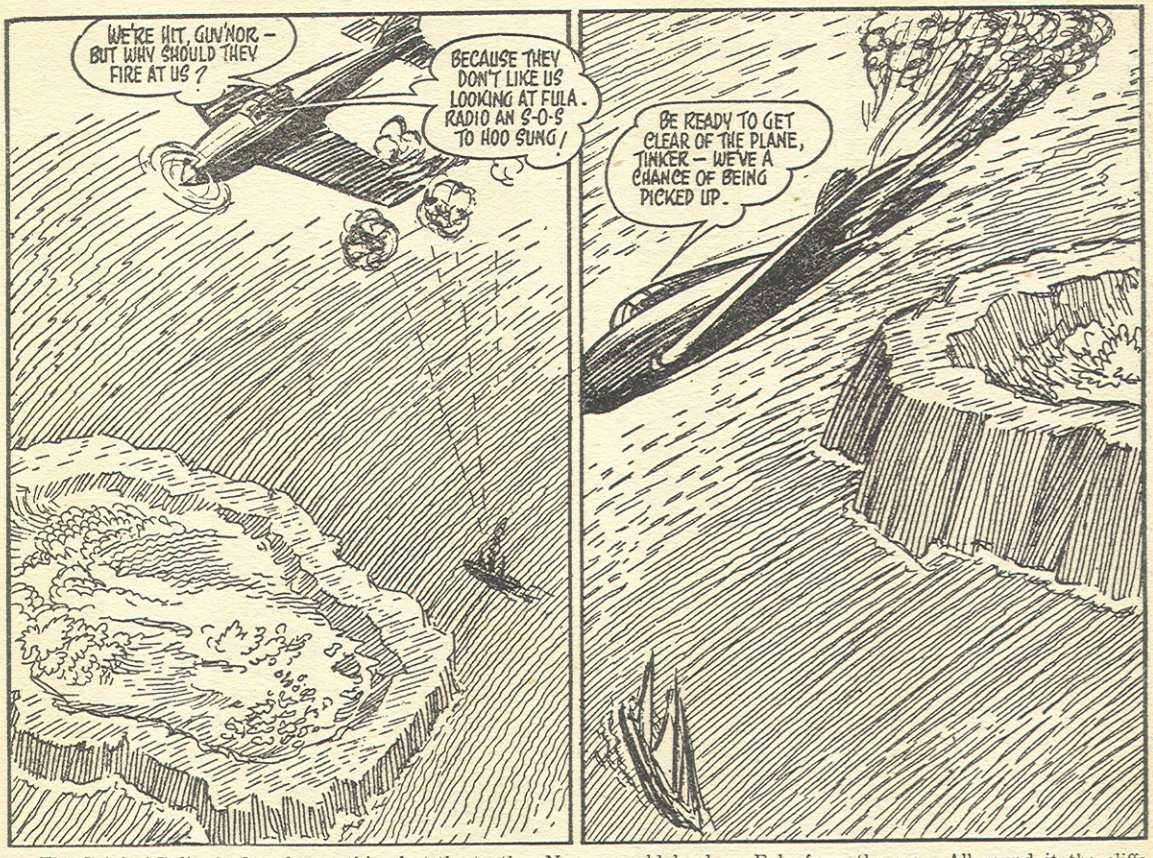
(Continued from page 16.)



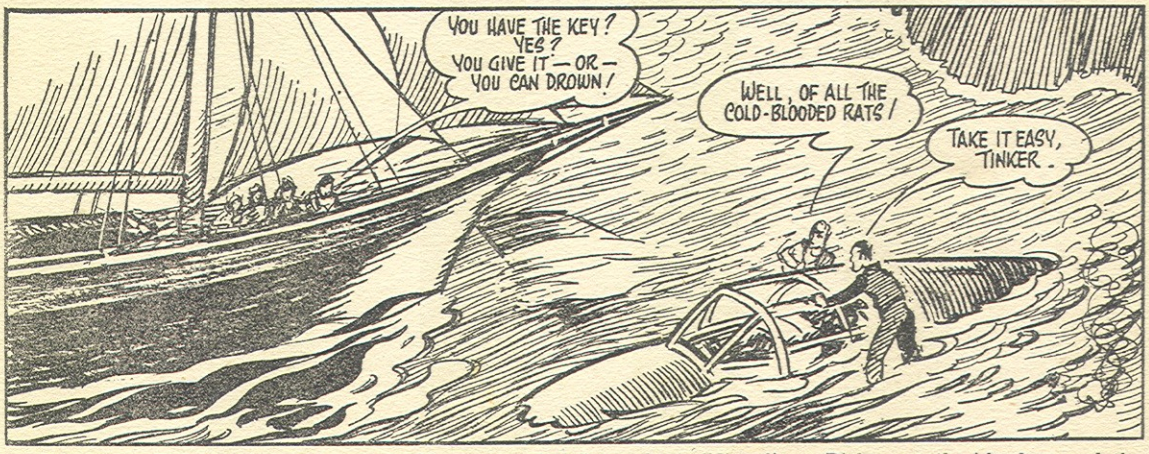
1. All that Sexton Blake knew about the Bronze Key was that four little brown men were anxious to get it and take it to the island of Fula, in the East Indies. At least, Sexton Blake had heard them mention Fula and had since discovered that Fula was an island. Also, James Corson, an East Indian trader, aided by a pal of his, was trying to get hold of the Bronze Key. The secret of the Key was obviously on the island of Fula, so Sexton Blake and Tinker flew to the Far East. They came to Darwin, Australia, and had a word with the Chief of Police. Sexton Blake had met him before and was greeted with enthusiasm and a piece of amazing news.



2. The Police Chief said he had recently met an old friend of Sexton Blake's—Hoo Sung, the Chinese scientist. Hoo Sung had invented an enormous iron ball that could travel anywhere, on land or sea, and even under the sea. Sexton Blake and Tinker had had many wild adventures during the war with Hoo Sung in the Rolling Sphere. They would have been glad to meet Hoo Sung again, but there was work to do. The Police Chief explained that Fula was an uninhabited island. No one could land there, he said, because the shores were precipitous cliffs which no human being could scale. Anyway, Sexton Blake chartered a plane and went to see for himself.

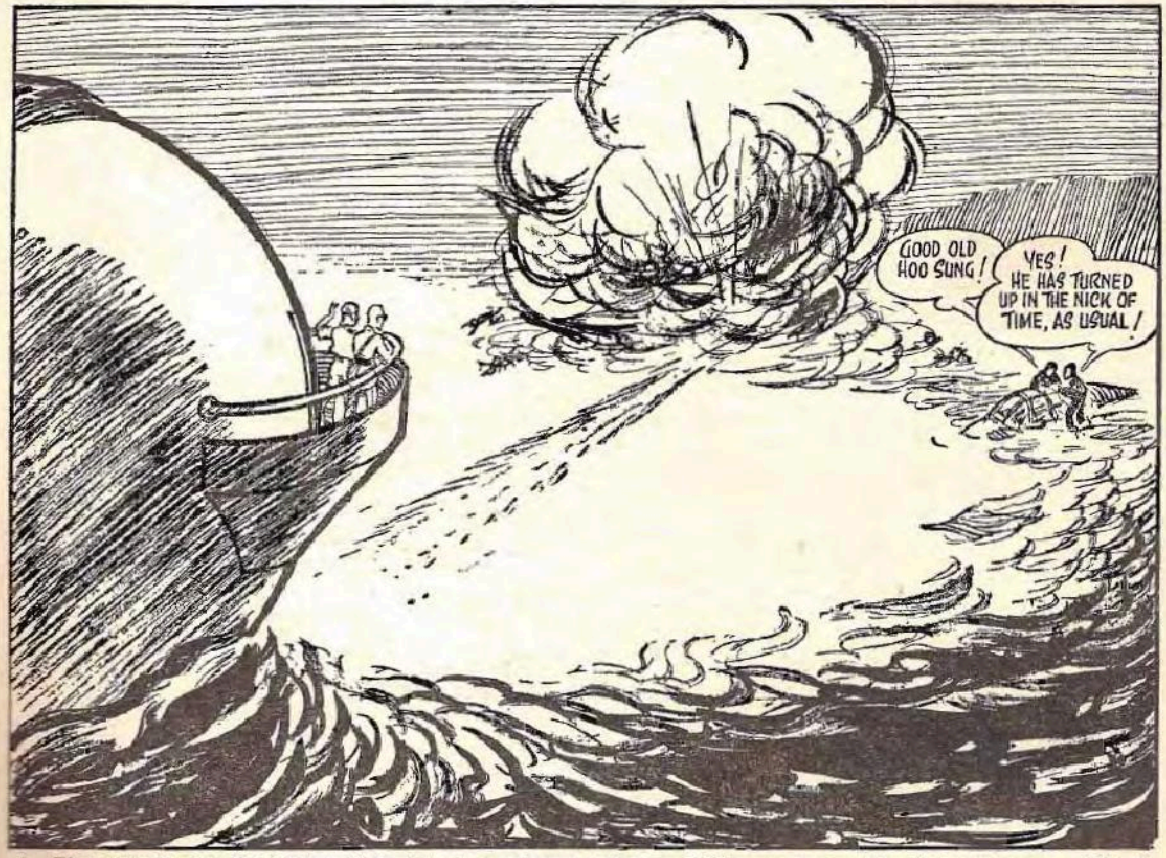


3. The Chief of Police had spoken nothing but the truth. No one could land on Fula from the sea. All round it the cliffs rose sheer from the water. In the centre of the island was a fertile basin, but it certainly looked as if no one could land there from any sort of boat. All the same, there were people who seemed very interested in Fula, for a trawler stood off-shore. And suddenly, the men aboard her opened fire with an A.A. gun. It was so unexpected that Sexton Blake could not dodge the shells that came up at the plane. And a direct hit on one wing was scored. Flames burst from the stricken wing. Sexton Blake and Tinker were in a spot!



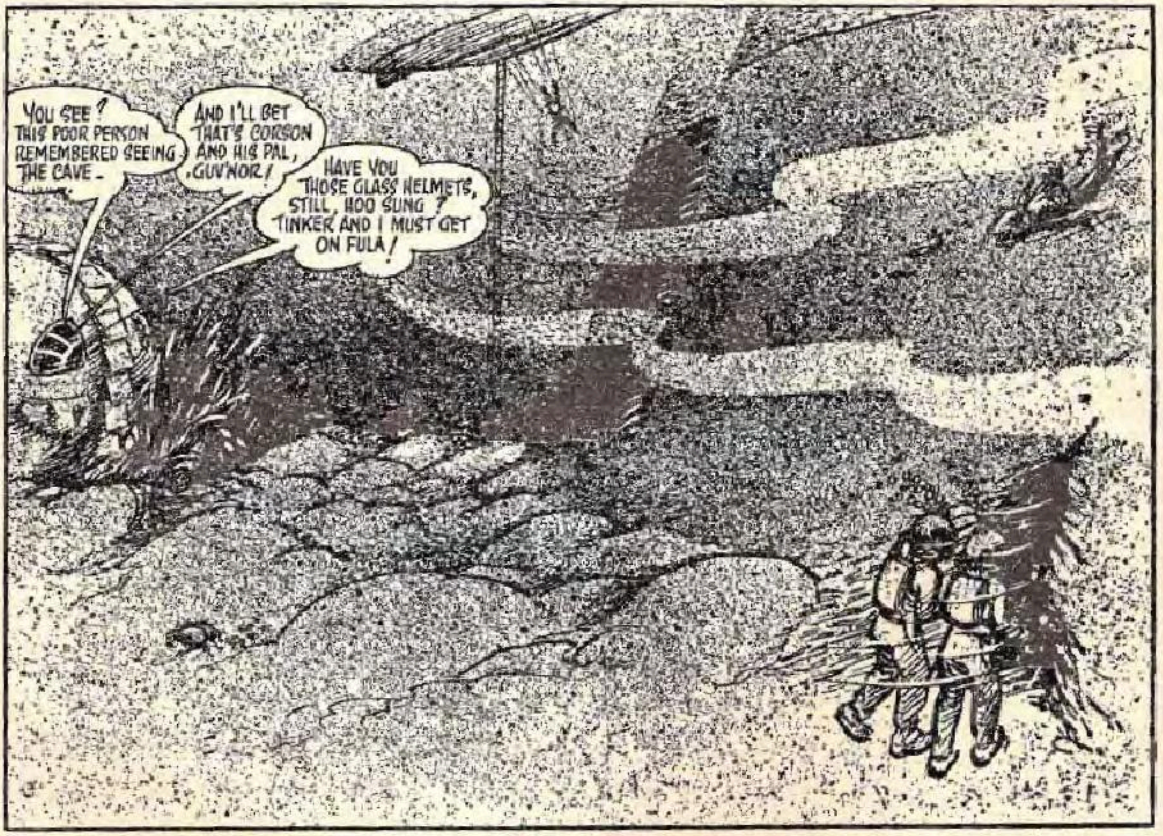
4. But Sexton Blake had not lost control. He got the plane into a long gliding dive. Right over the island zoomed the plane, and down on to the water on the far side, away from the armed trawler. But there was a schooner sailing there. Sexton Blake had spotted it long before. "We've a chance of being picked up," he said. The schooner certainly seemed a safer proposition then the trawler, whose people seemed to object to anyone being interested in Fula. So Sexton Blake made a pancake landing on the sea, as close to the schooner as he dared, and expected to be rescued. But he was due for a shock. The crew of the schooner were little brown men!

5. And one of them shouted, in awkward, clipped English: "You have the key? Yes? You give it—or you drown!" It was a cold-blooded thing to say. Sexton Blake and Tinker seemed so utterly helpless. But they weren't without help, really, for as the stricken plane had fluttered down out of the sky, Sexton Blake had remembered Hoo Sung, the Chinese scientist and his famous Rolling Sphere. The Chief of Police at Darwin had said that Hoo Sung was in those waters. So, as a desperate chance, Sexton Blake had told Tinker to radio to Hoo Sung. If the Rolling Sphere did happen to be around, rescue would be easy. But the little brown men were grinning!

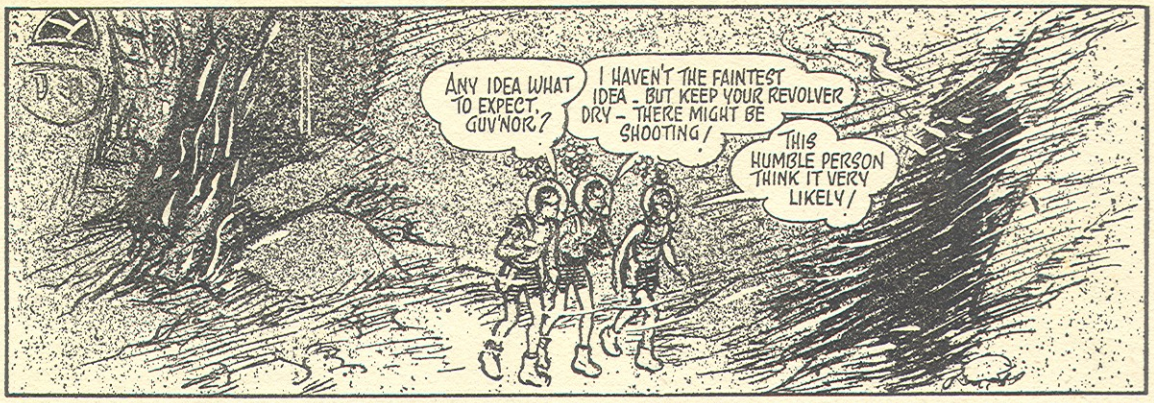


6. They thought they had Sexton Blake just where they wanted him. Tinker was enraged by their callousness. "Don't give it to them, Guv'nor," he said. But there was no need to give the key to the little brown men, for beyond the schooner a strange iron ball was rising up from the depths of the sea! It was the famous Rolling Sphere—the great iron ball that could travel anywhere on land and sea, and under the sea as well. Sexton Blake's old friend, Hoo Sung, had picked up the radio message and had come to the rescue. And Hoo Sung sized up the situation in a flash and acted. A torpedo shot from the Rolling Sphere, straight for the schooner.

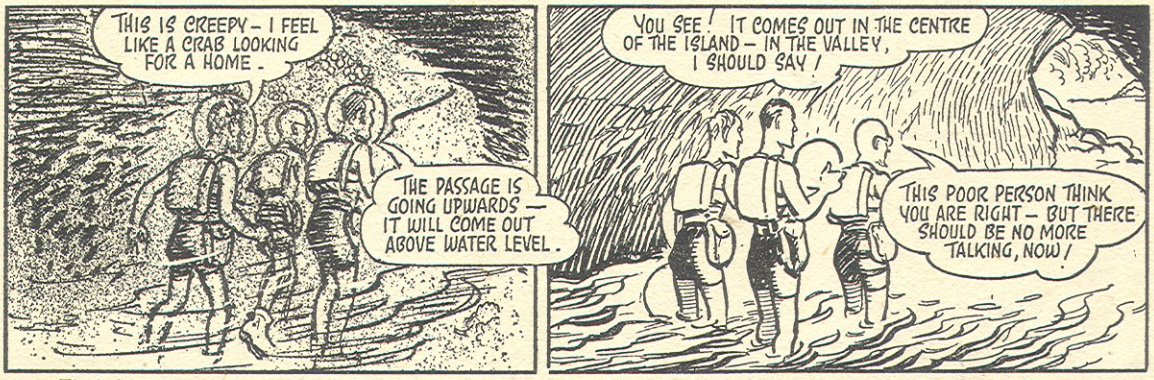
7. There was a terrific explosion—and that was the end of the schooner. The little brown men were thrown into the water. A rope ladder was let down from the outer gallery of the Rolling Sphere. Sexton Blake and Tinker were soon shaking hands with Hoo Sung and Bert, his Cockney assistant. The little brown men were picked up and put under lock and key inside the Rolling Sphere. Sexton Blake soon explained what brought him to those parts. He showed Hoo Sung the Bronze Key. "It opens something on Fula," he said, "but there seems to be no way of getting on the island." But Hoo Sung smiled mysteriously. "I know different," he said.



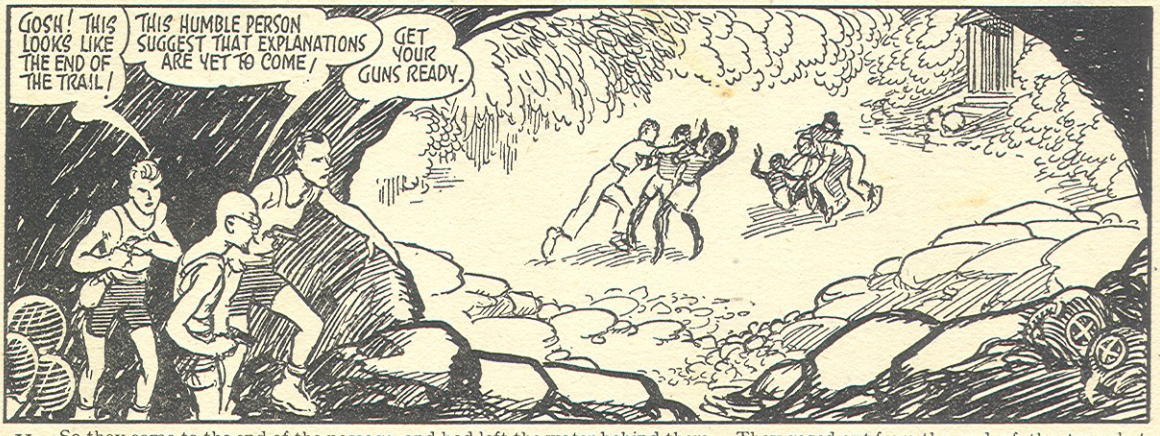
8. For some time he had been trying out the Rolling Sphere and its clever gadgets in those waters, so he knew all there was to know of the islands in those parts. Sexton Blake and Tinker went inside the Rolling Sphere with Bert and Hoo Sung. The Rolling Sphere submerged, sinking to the bottom of the sea. Then it travelled over the sea-bed to the island. They were below the spot where the armed trawler floated. And it was an amazing sight which Sexton Blake and Tinker saw from the windows of the Rolling Sphere. They could see at the foot of the cliff the opening of what looked like a cave. And two men in diving suits were entering it!



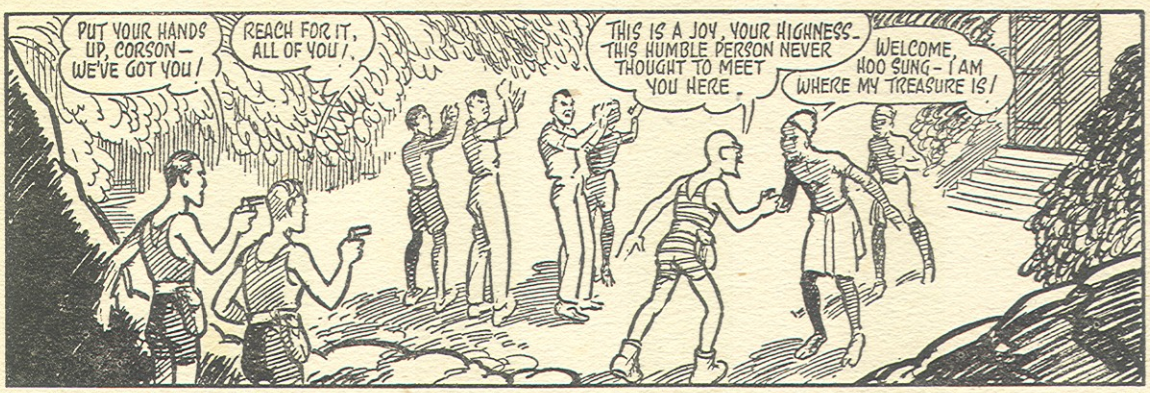
9. Those men wore special deep-sea diving suits, and carried their own oxygen, so they had no need for air-lines. They were assisted too by native divers. Sexton Blake realised then that the two men must be James Corson and his pal. They knew the way to land on Fula! So Sexton Blake asked Hoo Sung if he still had the glass helmets and breathing apparatus they had used once before when they had destroyed the Japanese undersea forts. Luckily, they were still in the Rolling Sphere. Very soon, Sexton Blake, Tinker and Hoo Sung, wearing the glass helmets, the heavy boots, and the oxygen outfits, were walking over the sea-bed towards the cave.



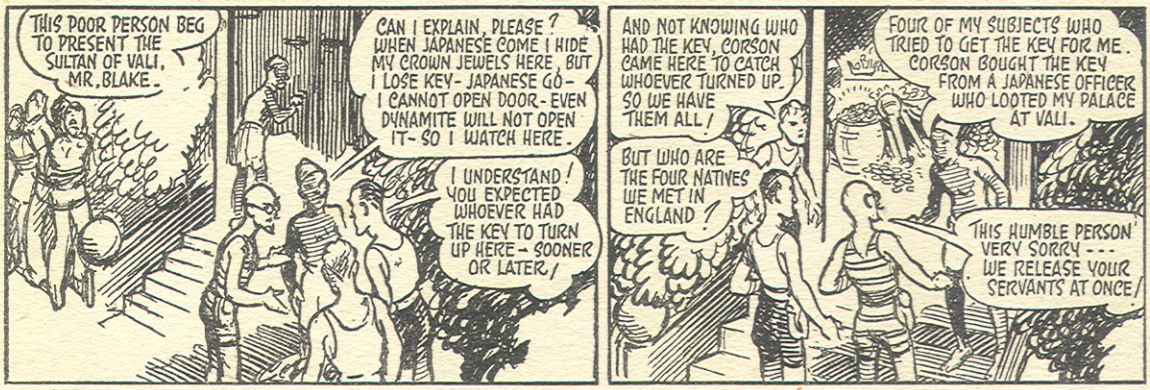
10. The helmets were water-tight, of course, and they, too, carried their oxygen supply on their backs. Their weighted boots kept them down on the sea-bed. And the glass helmets were fitted with microphones so they could speak to each other. They carried their revolvers in special water-tight holsters in case they needed them when they arrived in the interior of Fula. So they entered the cave—yet it was a tunnel rather than a cave. They realised that they were going uphill, and gradually, the water became shallower. Very soon, their heads were clear of the water. Then the level dropped still lower—to their waists —their knees. Daylight showed ahead.



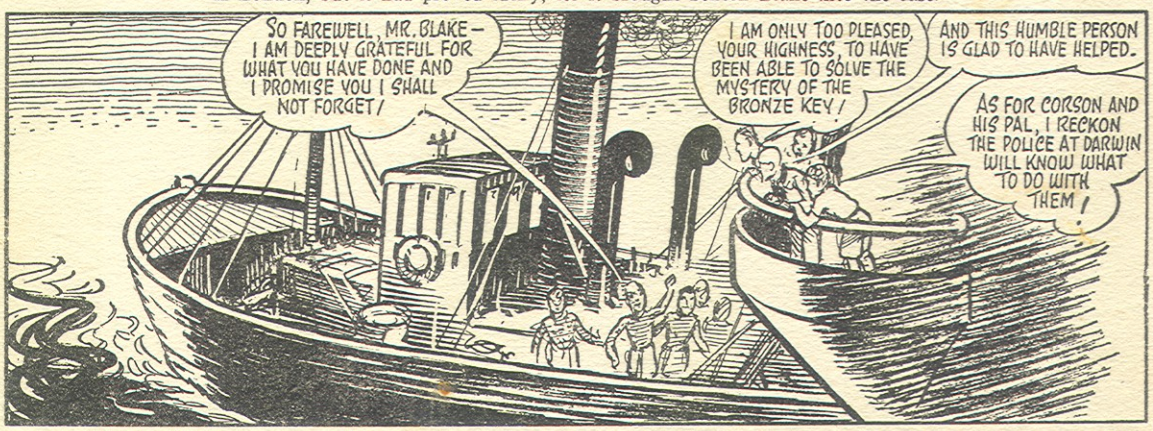
11. So they came to the end of the passage, and had left the water behind them. They gazed out from the end of the tunnel at a glen in the heart of Fula. In the mouth of the tunnel were two deep-water suits discarded by Corson and his pal. Sexton Blake, Tinker and Hoo Sung got rid of their diving outfits, too, and saw to their guns. For they had a clear view, now, of Corson and his pal aided by natives, attacking other natives. And, what was more, behind them was a strange, massive door built into the face of a cliff. "This looks like the end of the trail," said Tinker. But it was also clear that there was a lot to be explained, yet.



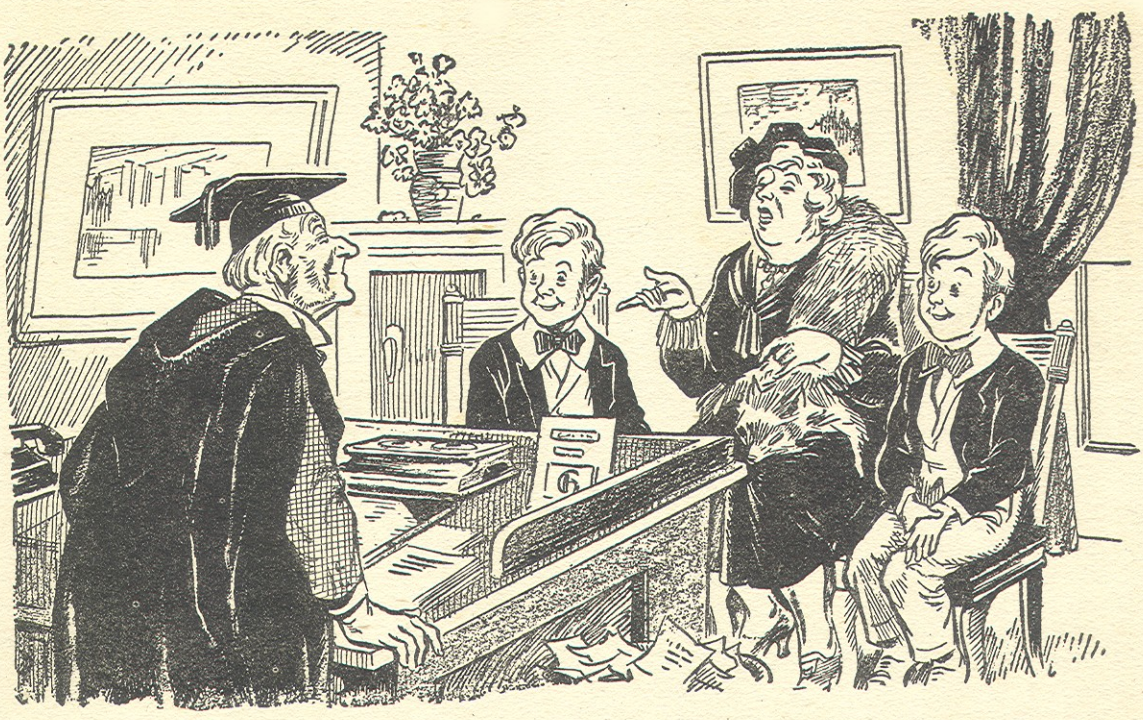
12. Sexton Blake said: "Get your guns ready!" Then he advanced, his revolver levelled. "Put your hands up, Corson!" he cried. "We've got you!" Tinker was beside his guv'nor, his gun held ready for business. Corson and his pal knew that the game was up, and they gave in. Then a strange thing happened. Hoo Sung darted forward to shake hands with one of the natives who had been struggling with Corson. "This is a joy, Your Highness," he said. "This humble person never thought to meet you here." The native was the Sultan of Vali. It was yet another mystery, but it was soon explained. The sultan's crown jewels were hidden in the vault.



13. He had hidden them there when the Japanese had captured his island kingdom, miles away across the sea. That door could only be opened by means of the Bronze Key. Even dynamite would have been useless against it. Then the Japanese had been driven from Vali. The sultan was anxious to get his crown jewels back, but the Bronze Key had been stolen by James Corson. Not that he had much chance to do anything with it. Four of the sultan's servants—the little brown men—had chased Corson round the world to try to get the key back. It was sheer chance that Corson had had his pocket picked in London, but it had proved lucky, for it brought Sexton Blake into the case.



14. And Sexton Blake, knowing nothing of what it was all about, had obtained the Bronze Key and so had come to Fula. The sultan had stayed on Fula waiting and hoping for his servants to arrive with the key. Corson and his pal had come hoping to overpower the Sultan. Then they meant to wait for Sexton Blake to get there. But Sexton Blake had beaten them. Corson and his pal were under arrest. Hoo Sung soon released the four little brown men from the Rolling Sphere. And leaving the trawler for the use of the Sultan, Sexton Blake and Tinker left Fula in the Rolling Sphere, with Hoo Sung. The case was over and the sultan was deeply grateful!



THE TRICKY TWINS

The Story of Adventure at Midnight in St. Nikolas' School

Visitors for Dr. Dunn

DR. DUNN, the headmaster of St. Nikolas' School, was writing at the desk in his cosy little study, when the door burst open and in walked Miss Tasker, the doctor's secretary. At the sudden interruption, the good doctor, who was a very nervous man, jumped in his chair! His pen sprayed ink everywhere, and his glasses fell from his nose and dangled at the end of a silk cord.

Snatching up his glasses and putting them back firmly on the end of his chubby little nose, Dr. Dunn turned and opened his mouth to ask the meaning of this noisy entry.

But as his gaze fell on the bony figure of his secretary, no words came. Instead, he sank back into his chair.

" Ah, Miss Tasker! " he said weakly.

Miss Tasker gazed at the little man down her long, pointed nose, but said nothing. It was the doctor who broke the long silence.

" Er—d-don't you think——" he began, " th-that is—couldn't you knock b-before you c-come into my room? "

Miss Tasker took a deep breath, raised herself to her full height, like a snake uncoiling before its prey, and gave Dr. Dunn a look. The worthy doctor always felt smaller than the smallest grain of sand when he received one of his secretary's looks. Ever since she had come to the school, nine years ago, she had shown the doctor who was boss.

As he asked himself many times, " What man can be firm when his legs feel like water, his tongue is trying to choke him and little shivers are playing leap-frog up and down his back? "

Miss Tasker said, " Lady Ponsonby will be bringing her sons here this afternoon." She added coldly, " You must

make a good impression ; it is not every day that we have the best people bringing their sons to be educated here. Though," she added, with a little sniff, " if you took my advice a bit more, it might happen oftener than it does."

Having spoken, she lifted her nose another two inches in the air, and stalked out of the room, leaving Dr. Dunn nervously mopping his brow.

Twenty minutes later the school porter announced Lady Ponsonby and her twin sons, Peter and Paul. They were alike as two peas, from their socks to their heads of flaming red hair !

Dr. Dunn rose to greet the trio.

" Good afternoon, Lady Ponsonby," he said cheerfully. " Please be seated," he added, nodding towards three chairs.

When they had seated themselves comfortably, Dr. Dunn turned his short-sighted gaze on Peter and Paul.

" Ah," he said, turning to Lady Ponsonby at last. " So these are the two little lads you wish to submit to my care ? I am sure we shall get on famously ! "

" Er—yes," said Lady Ponsonby, doubtfully. " This is Peter and this Paul." She patted each in turn on his head, though she was far from certain that the doctor would remember which was which.

Lady Ponsonby was a large woman. Her large hands, folded on her ample lap, glistened with expensive jewellery.

As a matter of fact, though she would not have admitted it for the world, she had never felt at ease since first she became Lady Ponsonby. Her husband had made his fortune out of Ponsonby's Patent Pea Soup.

" Splendid ! " cried Dr. Dunn, on learning the names of his new pupils. " Now," he went on, " which of you is the elder and which the younger ? "

Peter and Paul were silent. Lady Ponsonby opened her mouth to speak, but the good doctor wagged his finger at her.

" No, no ! " he cried. " Let them speak for themselves. Now, which is the elder and which the younger ? "

Peter and Paul looked amused.

" I am ! " they said together.

" Come, come," said Dr. Dunn, looking somewhat puzzled.

Lady Ponsonby had had enough of this. She could remain silent no longer.

" They're twins ! " she explained, impatiently, ignoring the doctor's efforts to stop her speaking.

This information sank slowly into Dr. Dunn's muddled brain. He sat back in his chair, frowned, polished his glasses on his spotted silk handkerchief, put them back on his nose and peered more closely at Peter and Paul.

" Oh—ah ! " he said brightly. " I see—yes—how alike they are ! "

Lady Ponsonby nodded. " Yes," she said. " It is most difficult. People are always mistaking one for the other. It works out all right in the end, though," she went on, warming to her subject. " They're as bad as each other. So if Peter is punished when Paul breaks a window, he gets his own back by smashing a vase and getting Paul's pocket-money stopped. But it *is* most difficult," she repeated.

Dr. Dunn sat and pondered. But Lady Ponsonby was getting rather tired of this muddle-headed little man. She rose to go, and Dr. Dunn came down to earth.

He escorted the wife of the Pea Soup merchant to the door, repeating many times that her sons were in excellent hands. Lady Ponsonby swept out, looking doubtful !

So Paul and Peter Ponsonby became pupils at St. Nikolas'. They were put into separate forms, for Dr. Dunn wished to make sure that no mistakes, due to their amazing likeness, would be made.

Dr. Dunn was, in fact, very good to the two new boys when they became pupils at his school. He had them to tea in his room, and generally made them very welcome at the ancient academy. Peter and Paul began to look on the kind-hearted old man more as a father than a schoolmaster. Their own father had been much too busy making more and more soup to bother much with his sons !

One day Peter was strolling along the corridor, towards the science laboratories, where his next class was to be held, when he was stopped by Monsieur Popinot,

who was Paul's French teacher and an excitable little man. At the moment he was looking very pleased with himself!

Peter had never met him before, but the little Frenchman hailed him like a long-lost brother.

"Ah!" he said, beaming all over his fat face. "M'sieur Pronsbibi, ees eet not, hein?"

Slightly puzzled, Peter recognised the name as something like his own.

"Yes, sir," he admitted, almost outdoing Monsieur Popinot with the broadness of his own grin in return.

"Bien!" said Monsieur. "I wonder eef you would go and ask Miss Tasker for a little foolscap paper. I am about to geeve you boys a leetle examination, ees eet not?" and he beamed as though he were about to give his pupils a special treat.

Peter suddenly realised that the French master was mistaking him for his brother, but he thought it a good excuse for being late for the biology lesson, a subject he found very dull, so off he ran to do the errand.

Monsieur Popinot continued on his way to his classroom. Arriving there, he trotted in through the open door. He beamed at his class—and then stood stock still! For there was Paul Ponsonby—seated in the back row of desks! Believing that it was Paul he had just sent for some paper, Monsieur goggled and murmured something, probably in French. At any rate, his pupils did not understand him, and waited for him to make himself clearer.

"Pronsbibi!" he said.

Paul had grown used to the little Frenchman by this time, and knew that he was speaking to him.

"Sir?" he said.

"Ees eet not that you have been to Miss Tasker and returned zo queek?" asked Monsieur, unbelievingly.

"No, sir," replied Paul, wondering what on earth the man was talking about.

"You will obey my orders, no?" thundered Monsieur Popinot.

"What orders, sir?" asked Paul.

"I asked you to get some foolscap paper from the Miss Tasker, ees eet not?" said

"You call me a layer?" asked Monsieur Popinot, dancing up and down with rage. "You will go at once to Miss Tasker and ask her for some sheets of foolscap."

the little Frenchman, getting very angry.

" No, sir," said Paul, again.

" You call me a layer ? " asked Monsieur Popinot, dancing up and down with rage. " You will go at once to Miss Tasker and ask her for some sheets of foolscap. Enough ! " he added, as Paul opened his mouth to speak.

Paul left the room, still very much puzzled.

At first, when he knocked and opened the door into Miss Tasker's room, he thought it was empty. And then he spotted Peter standing near the communicating door, which led into Dr. Dunn's study.

Peter put his finger to his lips and Paul said nothing, but walked silently to where his brother was standing.

Through the door, they could hear the sounds of a rather one-sided quarrel.

" But I cannot expel a boy, even if he has done what you say." Dr. Dunn's pleading voice drifted through the panels.

Then Miss Tasker's voice cut in.

" Please don't argue," she snapped. " The school will be well rid of him. After all, his father is only a grocer and the son is not fit to mix with the sons of Lord Ponsonby."

" Oh, snobbery ! " said the doctor, weakly. " I expect Mr. Wilberforce sells Ponsonby's Pea Soup. They probably know each other."

" Stuff ! " snapped his secretary, no doubt giving him a look. " You will expel the boy to-day." Her footsteps could be heard approaching the communicating door, where Peter and Paul were listening.

The two boys crept quietly from the room, snatching up a pile of paper from the desk as they crept.

" Phew ! What a tyrant ! " said Peter, when they were outside.

" Yes," agreed Paul. " Y'know, we ought to do something about this. We can't have her bullying the poor ol' Doc."

Paul nodded. " Besides, the Doc has been jolly decent to us, and we ought to help him," he said. " But what can *we* do ? "

Paul frowned and thought hard for a minute. Then his face brightened.

" I've got it ! " he said excitedly. " All we've got to do is make the Tasker look silly in front of the Doc. Then he won't feel so scared of her."

" How d'you think we can do that ? " asked Peter sarcastically. " Dress her up as a Red Indian, or something ? "

" No, fathead," replied his brother. " We'll fix a booby trap over her door, so that when she goes in her room in the morning she'll catch a few pounds of flour on her napper. You go and tell the Doc he's wanted on the 'phone in his room. When he arrives he'll see his secretary looking like Nellie Wallace in a snowstorm.

" Then, after that, every time he begins to feel afraid of her lashing tongue, he'll remember what an awful chump she looked that day."

This excited explanation made Peter's head swim a bit, but he got the idea all right.

" I think the idea smells ! " he pronounced firmly. " It will mean crawling out of bed in the middle of a cold, dark night to place bags of flour in the lion's den, so to speak. If we're caught, even the old man's title won't save us from ol' Tasker ! "

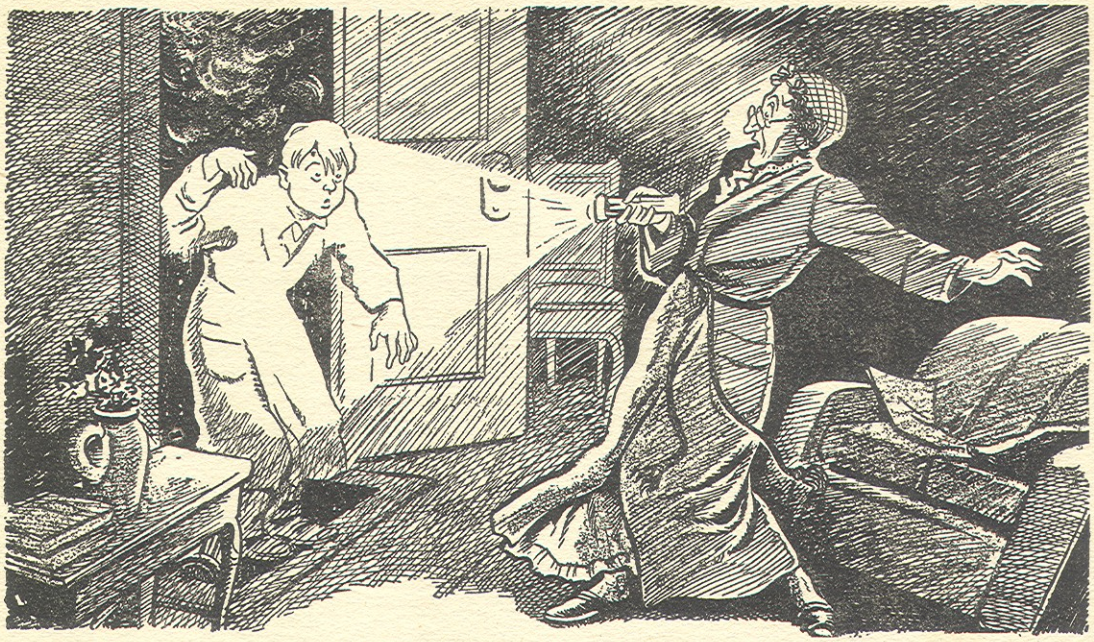
" Well, isn't it worth the risk ? " asked Paul. " After all, the Doc. has been pretty decent to us."

At last Peter agreed, and the adventure was planned for that very evening. The two brothers parted—one with paper to Monsieur Popinot, and the other, with a good excuse for being late, to the biology class.

Adventure at Midnight

THE clock in the old tower struck midnight, but Miss Tasker had not yet put out her light. She was sitting up in bed, reading from a massive volume.

She was not a pretty sight. Her hair, done up in curlers, was sticking out all round her head, and her sharp face wore a gloating look, as she pored over the page in front of her.



Miss Tasker jerked her torch in the direction of the noise, and then let out an ear-splitting yell.

As a matter of fact, Miss Tasker was eading a book of ghost stories ! On the helves around her room were many more ooks on spooks, for she had a weakness or them. She liked to be horrified ; she oved to feel cold shivers run up and down er spine, and her hair stand on end !

The book she was reading at the moment vas all about a rather barmy fellow, who isited haunted houses all over the country. Miss Tasker lapped it all up, and enjoyed t as a cat enjoys lapping up milk !

She had just reached the most exciting art of the story, when she reached the ast line of the last page, where there vas a footnote which said, " For more of he author's horrifying adventures, see ook 2."

" Tchah ! " cried Miss Tasker impatiently. For, at that moment, book 2 vas lying on the desk in her study—and he way to her study lay along dark orridors and down two flights of stairs.

But Miss Tasker was a determined oman, and she was set on reading more hrilling tales before she settled down for he night, though she did not fancy having o walk all that way in the dark to get what she wanted. She dared not switch on any lights, for fear of waking anybody.

Getting cautiously out of bed, she slid her feet into a pair of slippers and put on a brightly-coloured dressing-gown. Padding softly to the door, she opened it and peered out ; then, shaking herself, she switched on her torch and stepped boldly into the darkness beyond.

The dancing beam from her torch lit her way along the old, oak-panelled walls of the corridor. She crept silently forward. And as she walked, the darkness closed in behind her !

Miss Tasker gets a Surprise

MEANWHILE, unaware of the approaching danger, Peter and Paul were busy in Miss Tasker's study. Like all good criminals, they had first studied the lie of the land. There were two doors into Miss Tasker's study. To make sure that she got what was coming to her, the twins had decided to put bags of flour " borrowed " from the school kitchens, over both doors.

As the clock chimed the hour of midnight, Peter was keeping watch outside

the corridor entrance leading into Miss Tasker's study. Meanwhile, Paul was balancing a large bag of flour over the other door that opened into the doctor's study.

Peter, keeping watch in the corridor, suddenly heard a very faint sound. At first, he thought it was mice, and took no notice. But the sound grew louder—he realised what it was—the shuffling pitter-pat of slippered feet! Then, from round the corner, at the end of the corridor, appeared a small beam of light. Peter saw that it came from an electric torch, and to his utter surprise, he recognised the faint silhouette of the person carrying this torch—it was Miss Tasker!

The shock at seeing her, of all people, was too much for Peter! He took a quick step backward, unfortunately forgetting that he was standing with his back to the door of Miss Tasker's study.

Swoosh! Everything vanished under a cloud of falling flour. Peter had forgotten that the booby trap had already been set over that door! Groping for support, he staggered out into the corridor again.

Miss Tasker jerked her torch in the direction of the noise, and then she let out an ear-splitting yell, that would have done credit to a cornered hyena. It shattered the silence of the night!

Miss Tasker gripped the wall for support! What was this strange white figure? Little shivers ran up and down her spine! Then the figure moved!

Like a flash of lightning, Miss Tasker sprang from the corridor into her study and made for the door leading into Dr. Dunn's study.

When Miss Tasker had let out her ear-splitting yell, Paul had been balancing himself on a chair while he placed a bag of flour on top of the door leading into Dr. Dunn's study. The yell made him jump violently, and, losing his balance on the chair, he crashed to the floor. In fact, he and the bag of flour reached the floor together! So there he was, seated in the middle of a dense, white cloud, faintly lit by the moonlight from the window, when Miss Tasker hurled herself into the room!

But the school secretary did not stay long!

Screaming at the top of her voice, she pelted madly down the corridor; but suddenly something loomed up before her as she tore along at breakneck speed! Too late to stop or swerve out of the way, she collided into someone!

"Ow! Ouch!" cried Dr. Dunn, for he had got up to see what all the noise was about. Dr. Dunn and Miss Tasker crashed to the ground together!

By this time, doors all down the corridor were opening, to reveal sleepy-eyed boys and masters—lights were switched on, and people from dormitories in other corridors rushed to the scene. Miss Tasker's screams were drowned in the uproar that followed! As Miss Tasker rose from the floor, a hush fell on the scene.

She pointed a trembling finger down the corridor.

"A gug-ghost!" she shuddered.

"Where? Where?" everyone demanded at once.

But words failed the horrified school secretary. She could only point one scraggy finger towards her study. She was still pointing when the Matron led her back to bed.

And, though the school was searched that very night, nothing of what Miss Tasker had seen was found. But next morning a large pile of flour was found in the school quadrangle, just outside Dr. Dunn's study window, because by a miracle, the twins had managed to clear it away before the search parties spotted it.

. . . .

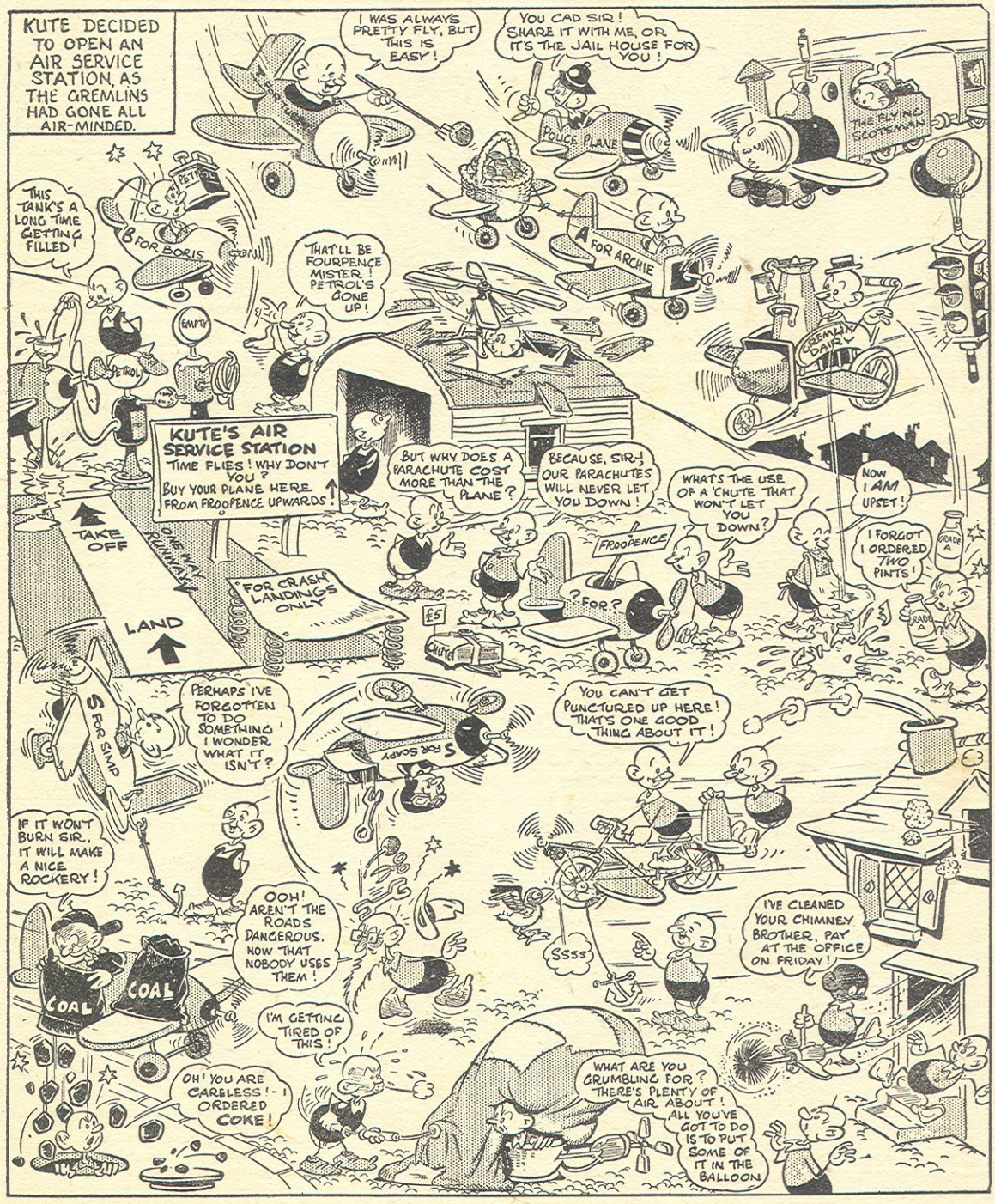
A few days later, when the school was assembled in the Great Hall for morning prayers, Dr. Dunn mounted the platform. followed by a timid, little woman.

"Boys!" he cried, beaming all over his chubby face. "I want you to meet Miss Pennyfeather, our new secretary. She will take the place of Miss Tasker, who is—er—unfortunately, has decided, rather suddenly, to leave us!"

From the throats of five hundred boys, there rose a mighty cheer, which shook the rafters of the hall! Miss Pennyfeather simpered shyly—Dr. Dunn beamed!

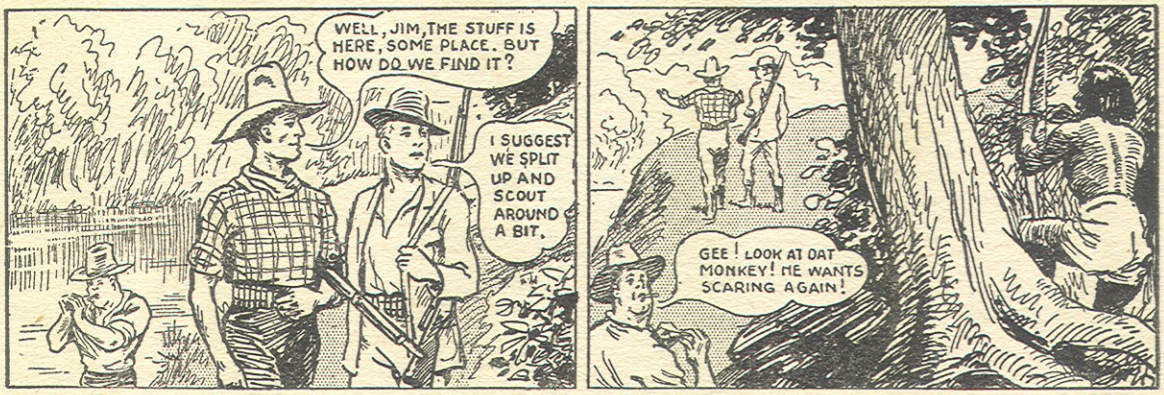
THE END

IT'S THE GREMLINS

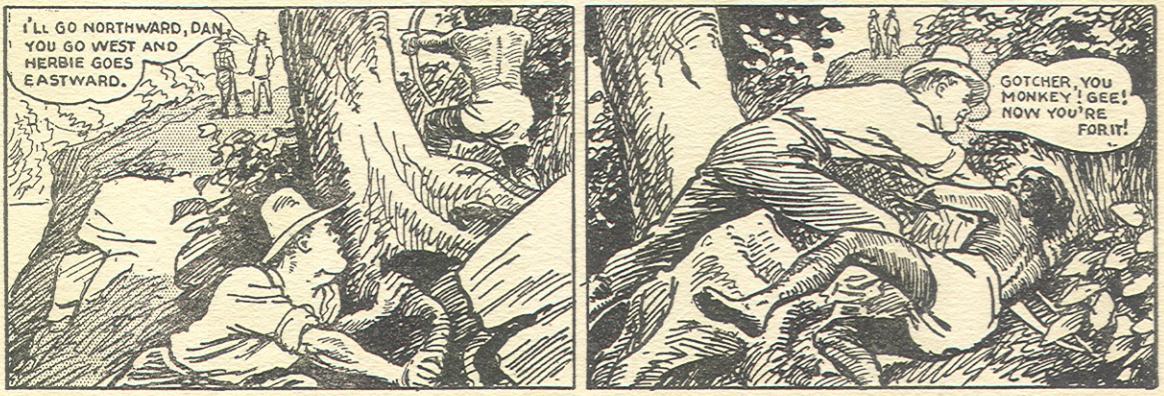


(Continued from page 75.)

1. Dan O'Brien and Jim Davis had shot a huge eagle, near Redrock, a mining settlement in Brazil. Fastened to one wing of the eagle was a thin gold plate with a message scratched on it. "Am starving 'midst untold wealth," it said, and gave the latitude and longitude of the place. It was signed "Harry Conrad," and dated August, 1930. Jim and Dan made up their minds to find the place, for if Conrad had never got away with the untold wealth, there was a fortune waiting to be picked up by somebody, and it might as well be them. And after many adventures, they found the neighbourhood of the treasure.

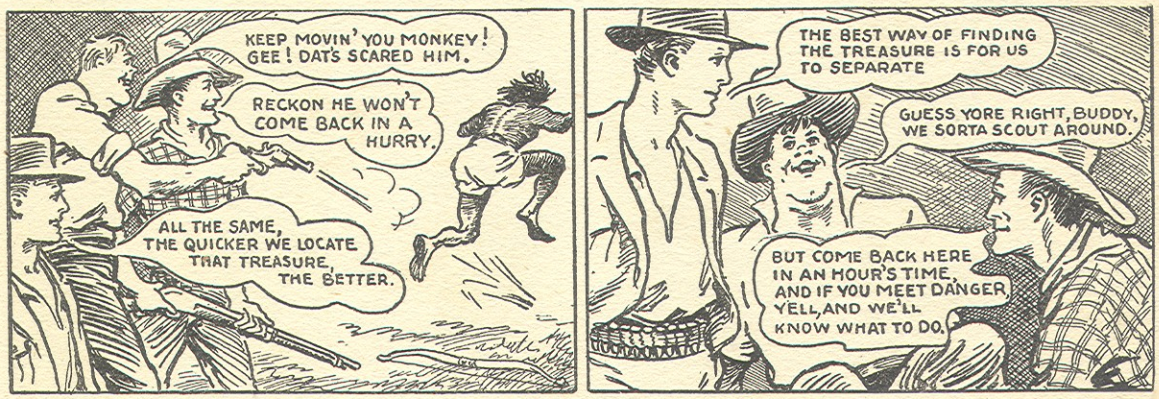


2. It seemed pretty obvious that Conrad must have been injured when he caught the baby eaglet and fastened the gold plate on its wing, hoping someone would find it and come to his rescue. No one had ever found it, apparently. So Jim and Dan, and their brawny pal, Herbie, arrived in the neighbourhood where the treasure lay hidden. They had tricked their enemy, Valdez, a villainous Brazilian, and scared off a tribe of hostile natives. The next step was to scout around in the hope of finding a clue to the whereabouts of the treasure. Herbie hung back a bit.



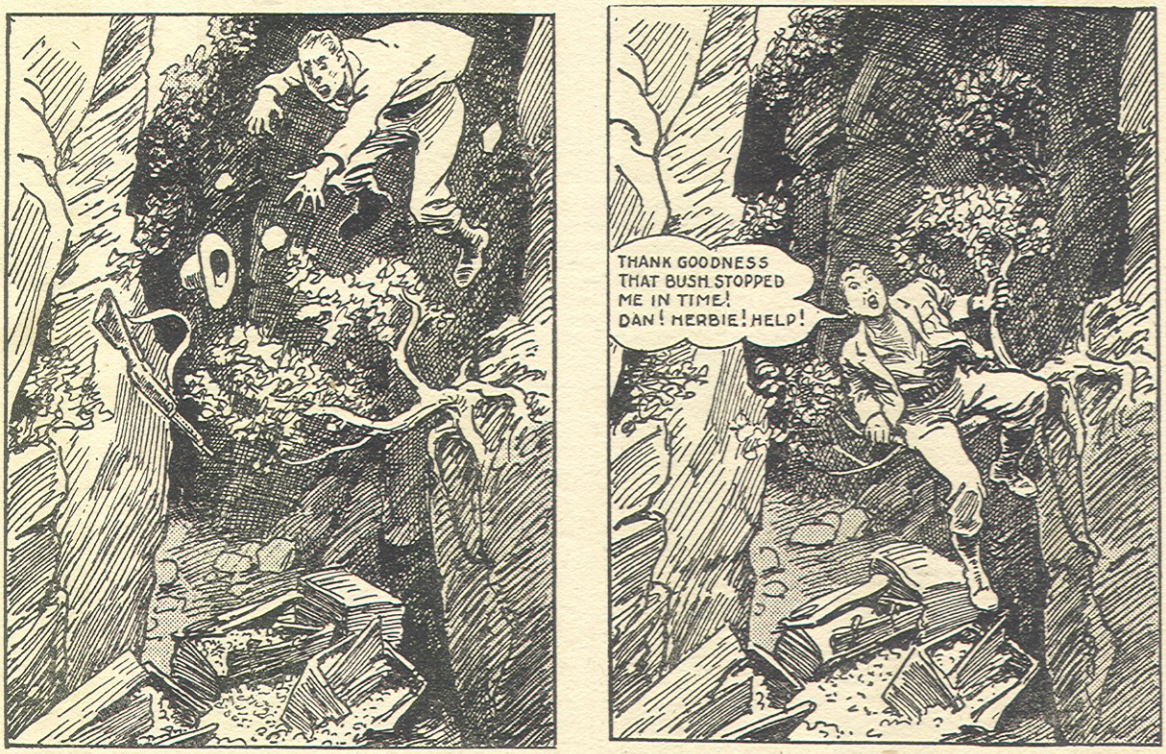
3. Herbie might be strong, but he hated walking around. It was lucky he did hang behind, for suddenly he spotted a native behind a tree with a bow and arrow, taking aim at his two pals. "Gee!" he muttered. "Look at dat monkey! He wants scaring again!" He crept away and crawled through the thickets until he got behind the native. Jim and Dan stood on a bluff making their plans for the future, little guessing the danger they were in. The native drew back his bow, ready to send the poisoned arrow speeding towards them. But the arrow was never shot, for Herbie jumped!

4. There was a fierce struggle, but the native was no match for Herbie's brawny muscles. In a few moments he was powerless. Herbie tucked him under one arm and walked up the bluff with him, towards the river. Jim and Dan watched him with amazement. "What's going on, Herbie?" asked Dan. Herbie soon told him. "Dis monkey was tryin' to plug yuh wid an arrow," he said. "I'm sure goin' to feed him to the 'gators." On the edge of the bluff, where it overhung the river, he held the squirming, terrified native upside-down by one leg. Below, in the river, the ugly alligators churned the water to foam as they swirled this way and that. It would sure go hard with the little brown man if he were dropped amongst them. He just wouldn't stand a chance at all. Jim came running to the spot. "I reckon he's scared enough!" he cried. And Dan said: "You can't do it, Herbie. Set him free." Herbie grinned broadly as he swung the native away from the cliff edge. "I sure only wanted to teach dat monkey a lesson," he said.



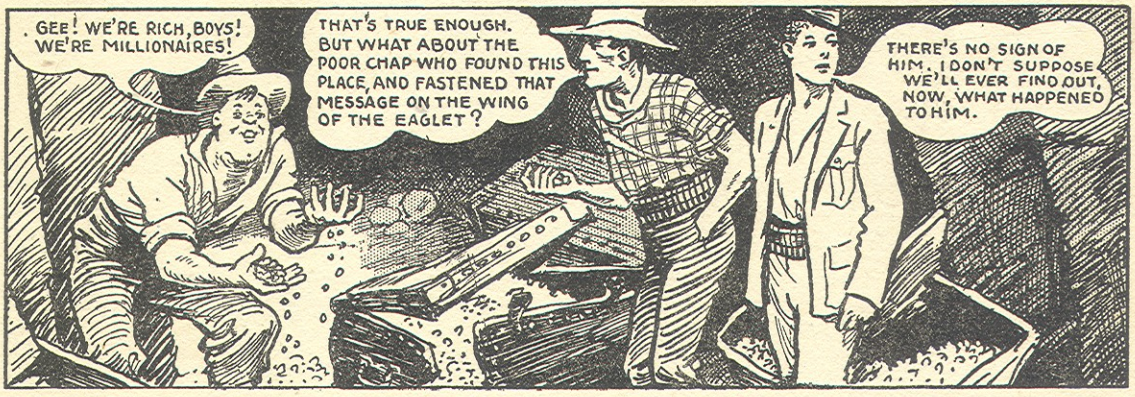
5. Herbie never meant to harm the native at all. For all his size and strength, Herbie wasn't cruel. He just wanted to give the native the fright of his life, and he certainly succeeded in that. For when, after a while, he set the little brown man on his feet, the native scuttled away for the forest as hard as he could go. Herbie helped him on his way by shooting with his revolver, so that the bullets spurted dust over the native's running feet. When he had gone, the three pals made their plans for the future. The treasure was somewhere around there, and they meant to find it. "We'll separate," said Jim. Dan agreed. "We'll each go a different direction and meet here again in an hour's time. If any of us gets into danger or difficulty, shout—and the other two will try to find him." It was the best thing they could do, and they set off, each in a different direction. Would any of the three friends be fortunate enough to discover the exact spot where the treasure lay? Each of them wondered what would befall during the next exciting hour.

6. Jim went off northward, hunting high and low for a sign of the treasure. The trouble was he had no idea what he expected to find. The forest was thick and he could scarcely see more than a few yards around him. It was hot, too, which didn't make things any easier. But he kept on, scouting this way and that, until he came out clear of the forest, on to a plateau studded with thickets. He began to feel more hopeful, for Harry Conrad, who had signed the statement on the gold plate, would have been more likely to have captured the eaglet in such country, than in the forest. Jim began to get excited. He went forward eagerly. The ground rose beneath his feet in a gentle incline. Ahead, he saw a low ridge of bushes. He took a run at them and, without thinking, leapt clean over them. It was a case of not looking before he leapt, and the next moment he regretted what he had done, for he found himself falling helplessly into a deep abyss. The ground had been rising so gradually that he'd taken it for granted that it continued to do so beyond the bushes.



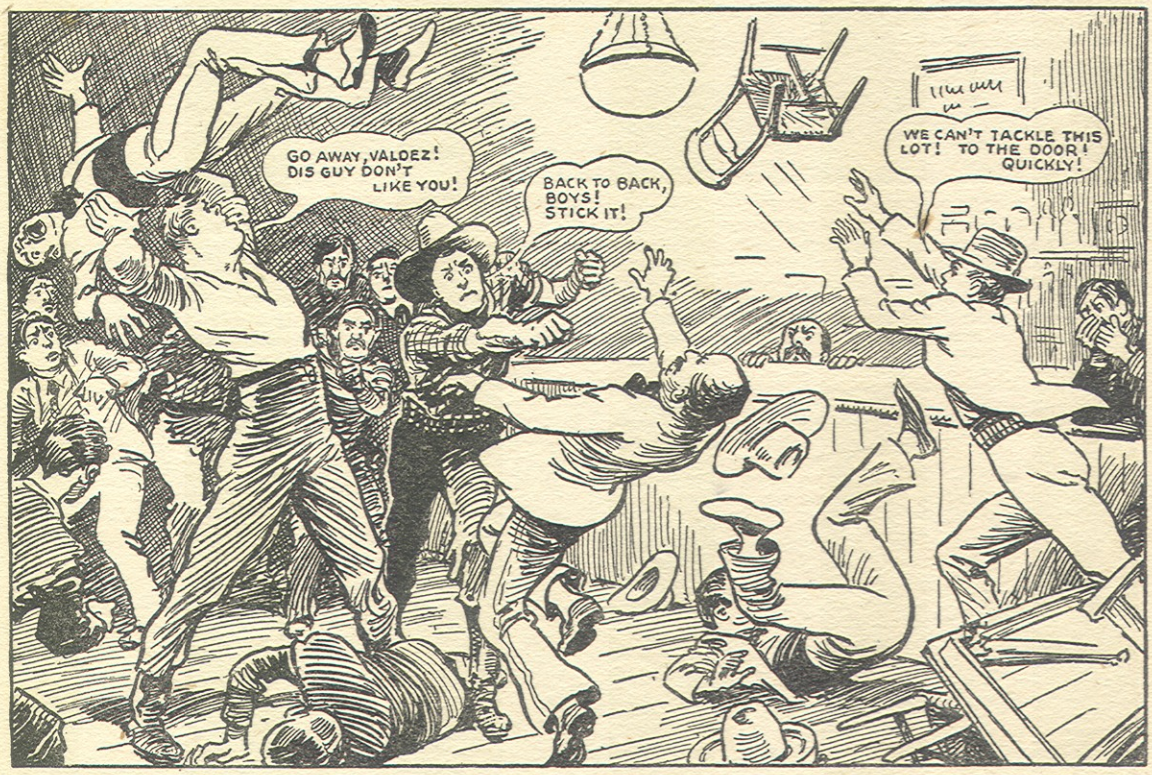
7. "Dan! Herbie!" he shouted. "Help!" He managed to yell that much—and that was all. The bushes had screened the edge of the precipice. Now, he was hurtling down into the depths, and it seemed that nothing could save him. He dropped his gun. He felt sure it was the end of things for him. But he was lucky. He crashed into a small tree that was growing out of the face of the cliff. Instinctively he grabbed hold of it, hoping against hope that it would hold him and not be pulled adrift. His luck held. Badly bruised and half dazed, he hung there until all his senses returned. The bush had stopped him just in time, saving him from being battered to pieces on the rocks below. He called again: "Dan! Herbie! Help!" His voice echoed and re-echoed along the gorge. Would his pals hear him? He didn't think there would be much chance of getting out of that gorge unless they came to his help. The sheer cliffs looked unclimbable to him. But he remembered that Herbie had brought some strong rope with him. "Good old Herbie—he thinks of everything!" said Jim to himself. He had got over the shock of his fall, and started shouting for his friends again.

8. The bush which had saved his life was not a very great way from the bottom of the gorge, so he swung for a moment by his hands, then dropped. He landed safely, and looked around him. To his utter amazement he saw old chests lying around, rotten with age, crumbling and falling to ruin. And scattered around were precious stones of all kinds—enough to make them rich for life. And then Herbie and Dan peered over the edge of the precipice. "Gosh, Jim!" cried Dan. "How did you get down there?" Jim told him how he had leapt the line of bushes and fallen into the gorge. "I'm lucky to be alive!" he said. "But—look, boys! Here's the treasure!" He told them to come down, and they needed no urging. Herbie tied the rope to a convenient tree that grew on the brink of the precipice. Very soon they were shinning down to join Jim on the floor of the gorge. It was a thrilling moment for each of them. They had found what they had come to find. It was there—waiting to be picked up!

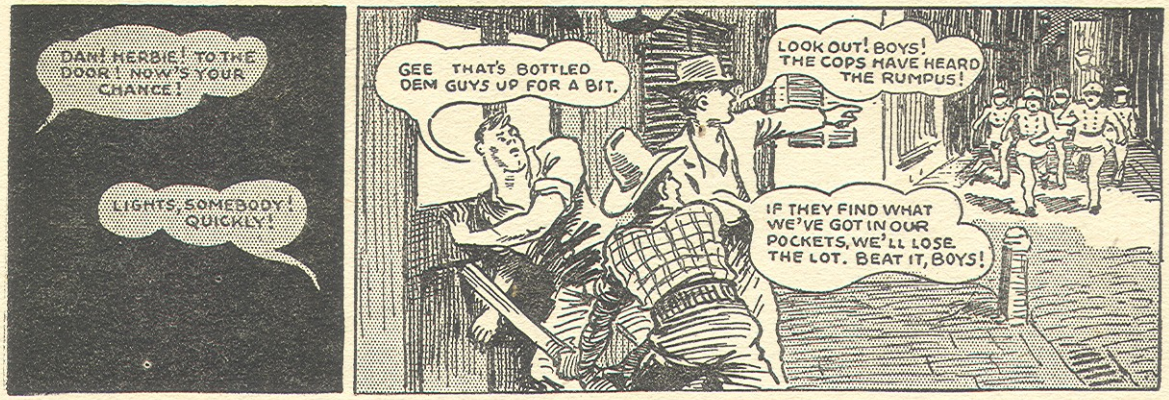


9. Herbie was madly excited. He scooped up the precious stones in handfuls and let them pour through his fingers like water. "Gee, we're rich, boys!" he kept chuckling. "We're millionaires!" Dan looked round carefully. "That's true enough," he said, "but what about the chap who fastened that gold plate to the eagle's wing?" After all, he had found the treasure first, and really had a prior claim to it all. But although they hunted everywhere through the gorge there was no trace of him at all. As Jim said, it was very doubtful indeed if they would ever know what became of him. The treasure was theirs for the taking. It must have been awful for poor Harry Conrad to have found all that wealth and yet to have been utterly helpless to do anything about it. Not that there was any sense in worrying about that too much now. The three pals would have all their work cut out to get away with the treasure, and they started to make their plans at once—and to make them wisely. They'd soon decided upon their best course.

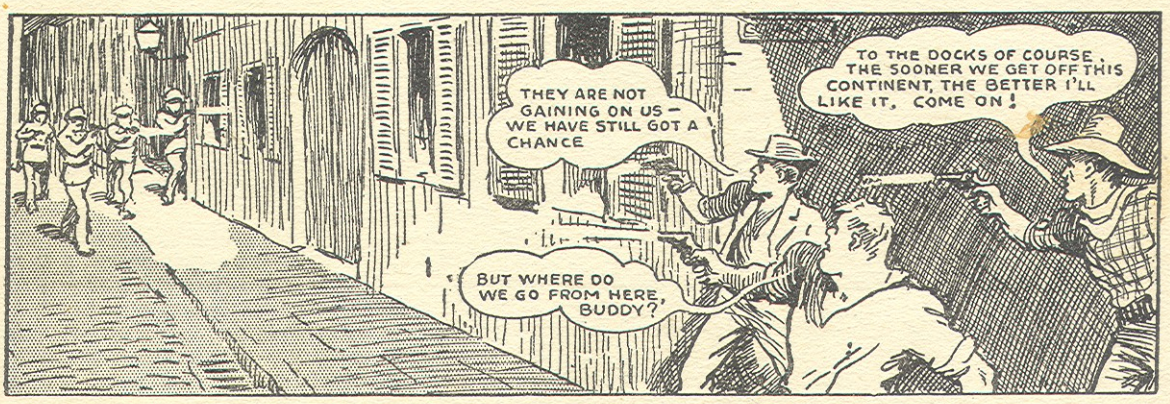
10. Dan spoke words of wisdom. "We can stuff our pockets and knapsacks full," he said, "and we'll be rich for life. There's no sense in taking more than we can carry." It was real horse-sense, as Jim agreed. They would have to make a long journey through the forests to Para in order to turn the stones into money. Anything might happen to them on the way. Herbie was quite willing, and soon had his knapsack packed tight with precious stones. Eventually they were all ready, and set out for Para. But nothing did happen to them on the way. The journey was long and tough, but they didn't have to do any fighting. The trouble did not start until they were actually in Para and seeking a lodging for the night. They went into a rough sort of hotel. They could have afforded the best hotel in the town, but they did not want to let everybody know what was packed in their knapsacks and stuffed in their pockets. And, while Jim was asking the landlord if he had a room, Dan spotted someone he knew!



11. It was Valdez, sitting there with his gang of gunmen. And he looked up and saw the three pals. In a flash he guessed that they had succeeded in their quest. That meant they had untold treasure on them. Valdez saw his chance, as he thought, and took it. He whispered to his villainous pals, and they were on their feet in a flash. "Look out!" roared Herbie, as the rogues charged. Before the landlord, or anybody else, could interfere, the fight was on. Dan fought hard and felled man after man. Herbie thoroughly enjoyed himself. His great fists did fine work, and several Brazilians bit the dust. Then he found himself face to face with Valdez. He grabbed the rogue round the waist and swung him high in the air over his head. "Go away, Valdez!" he yelled. "Dis guy don't like you!" He threw Valdez across the room, and the rogue crashed down behind the bar, where he lost consciousness and was interested in the affair no longer. But even with Valdez out of the fight, the three friends were far outnumbered.

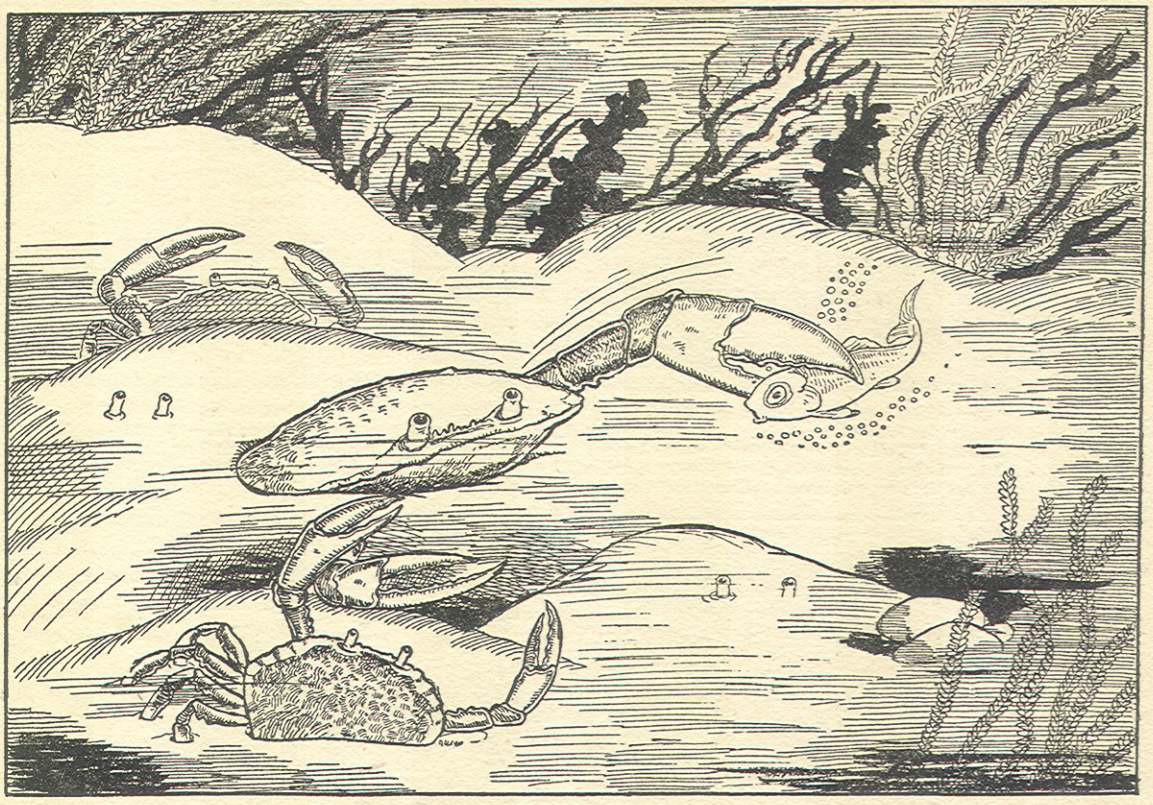


12. Jim knew they could not fight that gang for long and hope to get away. Something had to be done—and he did it. catching up a chair, he hurled at it the light. There was a crash, and the place was suddenly plunged into darkness. "Dan! Herbie!" he shouted. "To the door! Now's your chance!" Somebody was yelling for lights, but long before they could be brought the three pals had got outside, closed the door, and wedged it firm. They were free—for a time. But the police were coming to see what all the row was about. Dan knew that they were still in danger.



13. "If they find what we've got on us, we'll lose the lot!" he said. So they fled down the street with the police hot on their heels. They were firing, too. The three chums took refuge at a corner and sent the police scurrying for safety with a fusillade of shots from their revolvers. They didn't hit any of the police. They simply fired to drive them back. Then Dan gave the word and they fled away, dodging through alleys and round corners, heading all the time for the docks. For, as Dan said, the sooner they were out of Para and off the South American continent, the better.

14. And it so happened that they came to a ship moored to the quay. The skipper was just coming aboard. Dan asked him if he could take them as passengers. "We don't carry passengers," said the captain, "but we're short-handed. If you care to work your passage, you're welcome. I'll ask no awkward questions." Maybe the captain thought they were criminals of some sort, anxious to leave the country, but that didn't matter. They were soon aboard and the ship was soon sailing away, bound for London. The three chums were safe with their treasure. The wild adventure of the Eagle's Secret was over, and they would soon be enjoying their hard-won wealth.



A TEST OF PLUCK

An Adventure Beneath the Sea

Some Lucky Escapes

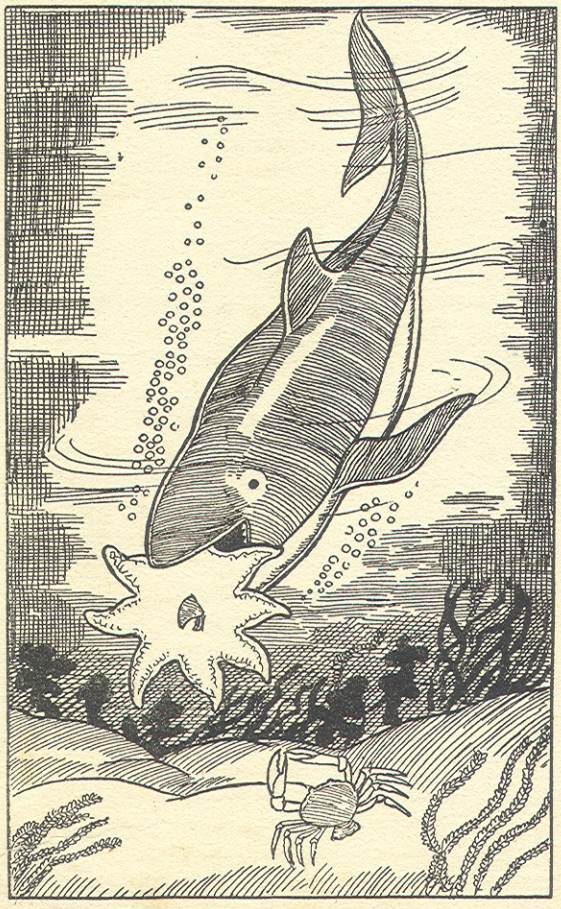
He was a crab, and at the time about which I write was certainly some months, probably years, old. He was represented at the moment by two stalks with black eyes atop, sticking out of the sand at the bottom of the sea. The rest of him was in hiding under the sand. He was waiting for something to turn up. The sand was, in fact, dotted with eyes on stalks—all waiting for something to turn up.

Presently a very little fish came nosing along. It was what we call whitebait—that is, the young of almost any fish, and this case a baby sprat. Quick as a flash, quicker than you could see, our crab, near whom it had approached, bared his right claw from the sand and struck, a round-arm, scythe-like stroke. It killed the little fish instantly; but our crab had a very tough fight to keep off his hungry fellows, who promptly rushed up from everywhere to help him dine.

In one minute the fish had been demolished, and in one minute ten seconds there was not a crab to be seen—nothing but the eyes on stalks projecting above the sand, watching, watching, watching. Suddenly our crab drew in his eyes, shut down the stalks as though they were telescopes—he could do this—and lay with them barely above the sand which covered his own armour-plate shell. A shadow had appeared in the hazy green, fog-like water, an ominous shadow which shot up and forward, and sank parachute fashion.

It was an octopus, just such a one as you may find in the rock pools east of Brighton—not big, about as large as a plate, but very nasty to look upon. It was progressing by the simple process of drawing in water through a tube and squirting it out again.

As the octopus sank slowly, its tentacles spreading out like an umbrella, our crab seemed literally to shrink into the sand. The thing was coming down right on top of him, and it fed upon crabs, too—crabs and anything else living that it could hold. Down it came and shut out the dim light. He could feel its moving folds even through his shell, and he drew back his front pair of claws, his nippers ready, for he was a big crab, and, like all his fighting tribe, anything but a coward, even though he knew that he had not an earthly chance against an octopus.



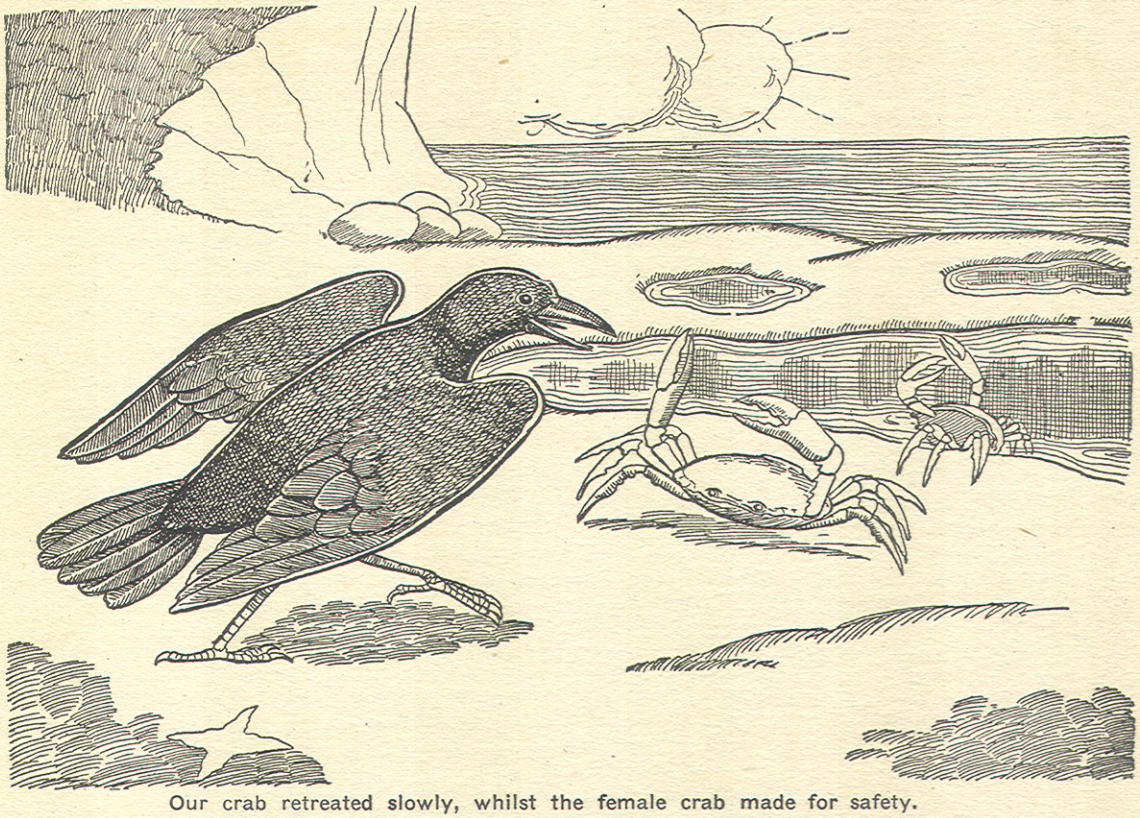
Like a torpedo, it hurled straight at the little octopus, sending the crab whirling away.

Apparently, too, the octopus must have felt him, for slowly, very slowly, as one seeks for something in the dark, the end of a tentacle came wriggling from the brute's folds, feeling for him. In a second it found him, drew back at the touch, and darted at him again. Before, however, it could reach him and enfold him, the crab had struck upwards at the soft sack-body of the horrible thing above him—struck and nipped with all his strength. Instantly the octopus squirmed and lifted, and at that instant the crab darted out from under those fearful folds and scuttled off sideways for dear life.

Before, however, he had covered eight inches of sand he was seen. Out shot a tentacle, out darted another, and he was entwined and hauled back fighting and struggling helplessly. Then a strange thing happened. Suddenly the octopus shivered all over, dropped him, and began to crawl on its feelers with amazing speed towards some rocks hard by. The crab as he fell was aware at the same instant of a commotion above, and even before he could pick himself up there shot down from the waves a great brownish fish-like thing with a flashing belly and gleaming teeth.

Like a torpedo it hurled straight at the octopus, sending the crab whirling away in the swirl of its tail, and even though the octopus tried to hide itself by ejecting a quantity of black inky fluid into the water, which we know as sepia, it was too late, and the monster, snatching it up, swerved with wonderful agility and in a flash was gone, shooting back to the surface in a halo of silver bubbles with the octopus in its jaws. It was a porpoise.

Next morning, as the first pale haze of day came filtering green down through the sea, our crab, half swimming, half walking, let the " set " or the rising tide carry him up the shelving sea-bed to the shore. All that world of sea-folk was making shorewards with the tide. From time to time vast shoals of herrings and sprats, glistening like silver, passed him, swimming as compactly as regiments on



Our crab retreated slowly, whilst the female crab made for safety.

the march, and under them numberless crabs solemnly marched sideways—all going in one direction, shorewards.

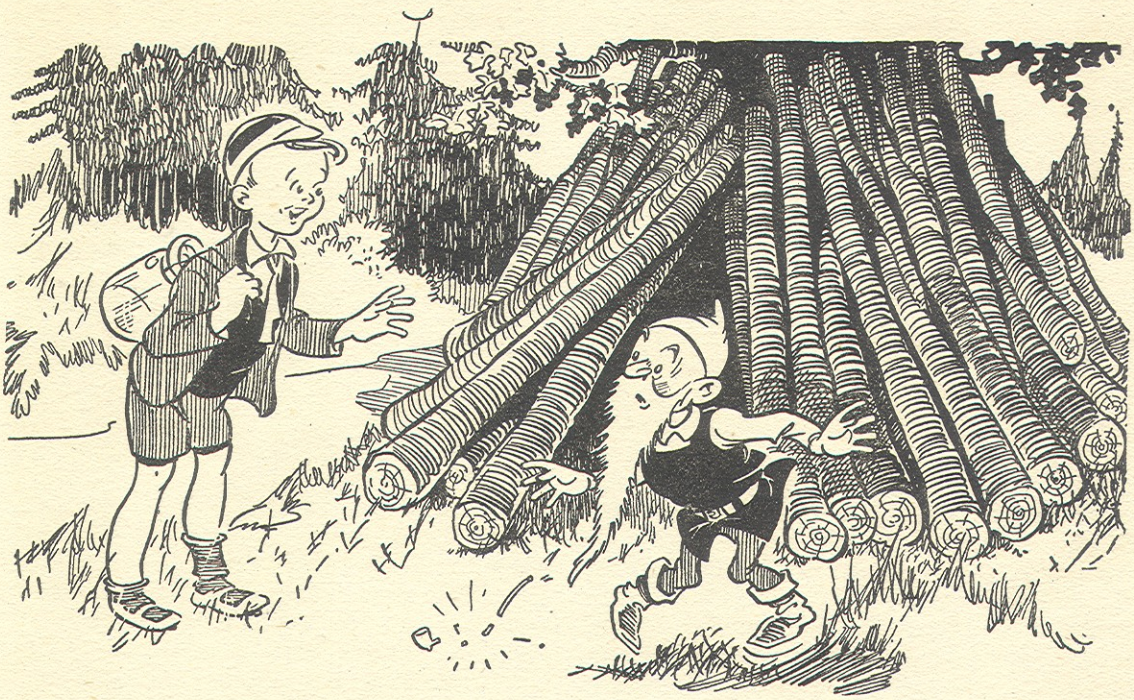
Here presently he reached the tide-line of a shelving sandbank, and here he fed, gaily fighting with his fellows for the flotsam that the waves floated in. He must have amused himself thus for hours, till suddenly, almost before he realised what had happened, the tide left him, and he was stranded high and dry on the sandbank quite ten yards from the nearest deep channel.

He was not alone, however, this crab of ours, for about a foot away was another —a plump, round, young lady crab ; and even while he looked, a great black rook settled close in front of them.

The lady crab and the deep channel lay in the same direction, and thither our crab hurried, arriving with brandishing claws held aloft and threatening, just as the rook was about to put an end to the life of the other. Now that rook was young and inexperienced, for all his size, and our crab looked so dangerous and bluffed formidability so well—which was plucky of him, seeing that a single peck from the rook would have finished his career—that the rook hesitated. He followed the crabs up, trying to screw up his courage to the sticking point, whilst the female crab made best pace for the channel and safety, and our crab kept between her and the rook, retreating backwards slowly, facing the foe.

He retired inch by inch till he felt the sand slope behind him, and at the same time heard the splash that told him his partner had reached the channel. Then, with one last flourish of his pincers, he slid sideways down into the water.

The two crabs set up a home in the long, waving marine grass, swarming with all kinds of small marine creatures for them to hunt, and there, with infinite cover to hide them from their foes, they are to be found to this day, I believe.



HELLO, RUMPEL!

Rob Went Out to Find Frogs, but Instead He Met a Quaint Old Man!

A Surprise for Bob

On a lovely sunny afternoon in early June, Rob Roy Robertson decided to go in search of some young frogs. He knew just where to find them, too. So he took a jam-jar and set off up the road over the hill to a meadow, in the corner of which was a pond which had been full of tadpoles until a week or two back. Rob knew that by now the lush grass around the banks of the pond would be swarming with baby frogs, no bigger than coffee beans.

Yet Rob didn't get any frogs on this particular afternoon. They were there right enough—hundreds of them, thousands of them—but Rob didn't get a single one because something much more important happened.

Over on the far side of the pond lay a big pine wood, where the trees stood tall and straight and stiff like soldiers on parade, and for as long as Rob could remember, a woodsman and his son had been felling the pines, removing their top branches and stacking them around the trunk of a stately oak which grew quite close to the pond, with the result that the pine poles formed a great cone, out of the top of which sprouted the upper branches of the oak.

Rob had often noticed that the efforts of the woodsman and his lad didn't seem to make any difference at all to the great pine wood, nor to the size of the cone of pine poles which always seemed to look about the same.

As he neared the frog pond, Rob was looking at the pole stack, thinking that he would come back another day and turn it into a fort, because there was room for a small person to get in and out between

some of the poles, and there were one or two quite big gaps which seemed to go back into the heart of the pile—like the entrance of a cave into a cliff.

It was while Rob was peering at one of these gaps, wondering how far back it went, that he saw a flash of red, away in the dimness of it. At least, he thought he did. So he stopped and watched. Yes, there it was again, only clearer this time. Whatever it could be, Rob had no idea. He only knew that it was red, and that it moved. So he put down his jam-jar and walked carefully around the pond towards the pole-stack to get a closer view.

He saw nothing more until he was quite close to the gap in the stack, when something happened which pulled him up with a jerk, for, out from the hole among the poles, came a queer, gnome-like little man, who stood in the sunshine and beamed happily as he gazed up at the sun and the blue sky and the little white clouds.

The newcomer had a round, chubby face, rather like that of a healthy year-old baby, and yet he had a long white beard and whiskers to match. And he was smoking a long white pipe. On his head was a red cap, rather like an old-fashioned nightcap. His breeches were of brown leather, and his high-topped boots matched them. His hands were thrust deep into his breeches' pockets.

All this Rob noticed at a glance, and then, quite suddenly, he realised that he knew who this little man was. He had his picture in a book at home. This was none other than Rumpel-stilts-kin!

"How d'you do, Rumpel-stilts-kin?" said Rob, almost without knowing he meant to speak.

The little man nearly leapt into the air in astonishment. His mouth opened and his long white clay pipe fell to the ground and smashed at his feet, and he turned two saucer-like eyes on Rob.

"B-bless my soul!" he stuttered. "W-who are you?"

"I'm Rob Roy Robertson," said Rob. "I'm sorry if I startled you and made you break your pipe."

Rumpel looked down at the shattered fragments at his feet. He kicked them away, and then, much to Rob's relief, he smiled.

"It doesn't matter about the pipe, it doesn't," he said. "You see, I've got some more inside, I have."

"I'm glad about that," said Rob. "Do you live inside the pole-stack, Rumpel-stilts-kin?"

"Of course I do, Rob Roy Robertson," said the little man.

Rob smiled at being called by all his names.

"You don't have to say all that, Rumpel-stilts-kin," he said. "Just call me Rob."

"That I will, then," agreed the little man, "and you just call me Rumpel, same as all my friends do. Which reminds me, Rob, you weren't a friend of mine, not till now, you weren't, were you?"

"No. That's true," said Rob.

"Then what I say is, how did you know my name? That's what I say."

"Well, you see, Rumpel," explained Rob, "I've got a picture of you at home, and your name is printed underneath it."

At this, Rumpel looked very thoughtful. Then he let out a long, low whistle, as though he had just thought of something very special.

"Then that solves the mystery, that does!" he said, nodding his old head in satisfaction. "I've been wondering about it for years and years, I have. I'll bet the Queen must have had a picture of me, too, and with me name printed underneath, same as you have."

"The Queen?" asked Rob. "What Queen, Rumpel?"

Rumpel gave a knowing wag of his head, and chuckled again.

"It's an old story now, Rob," he said, "but come inside and I'll tell you all about it, I will."

The Tale that Rumpel Told

ROB was surprised at what a cosy little house Rumpel had within the heart of the pole-stack.

Together they passed through the front door into a well-furnished parlour, where a

cheerful peat fire blazed in the hearth, and a steaming kettle stood close beside it. Rumpel's cat sat staring into the glowing peat blocks.

From the ceiling, which was criss-crossed with oaken beams, hung an oil lamp, the flame of which cast a comfortable glow over the simple furnishings.

" Draw a chair to the fire, Rob. Draw a chair to the fire," suggested Rumpel. " Maybe you're surprised to see a fire on a summer's day, but the sun doesn't get through the poles into my little house, so we always have a fire. Cosy—that's what I call it."

" I think it's lovely," said Rob.

" So you should, 'cos it is," said Rumpel. " Now just you make yourself comfy while I find a new pipe and get it going, and then I'll tell you about the Queen, I will."

So Rob pulled a cosy arm-chair up to the fire and waited until Rumpel came back with a new pipe and tobacco and seated himself in a high-backed, winged arm-chair on the other side of the hearth.

" Now about the Queen," said Rumpel, as he began tucking the tobacco into his long new pipe, " but for her—she—but for the Queen finding out about my name, I'd have had a big, grown-up son of me own by now, I would."

" Would you really, Rumpel ? " queried Rob politely.

" That I would ! " said Rumpel. " And I wouldn't have had a bit of a limp in my right foot, neither, either."

" Why, Rumpel ? " asked Rob. " Did the Queen tread on your toe ? "

" Worse than that, Rob," said Rumpel, " but I can afford to laugh over it now, I can, especially seeing it was my own fault. You see, Rob, the Princess——"

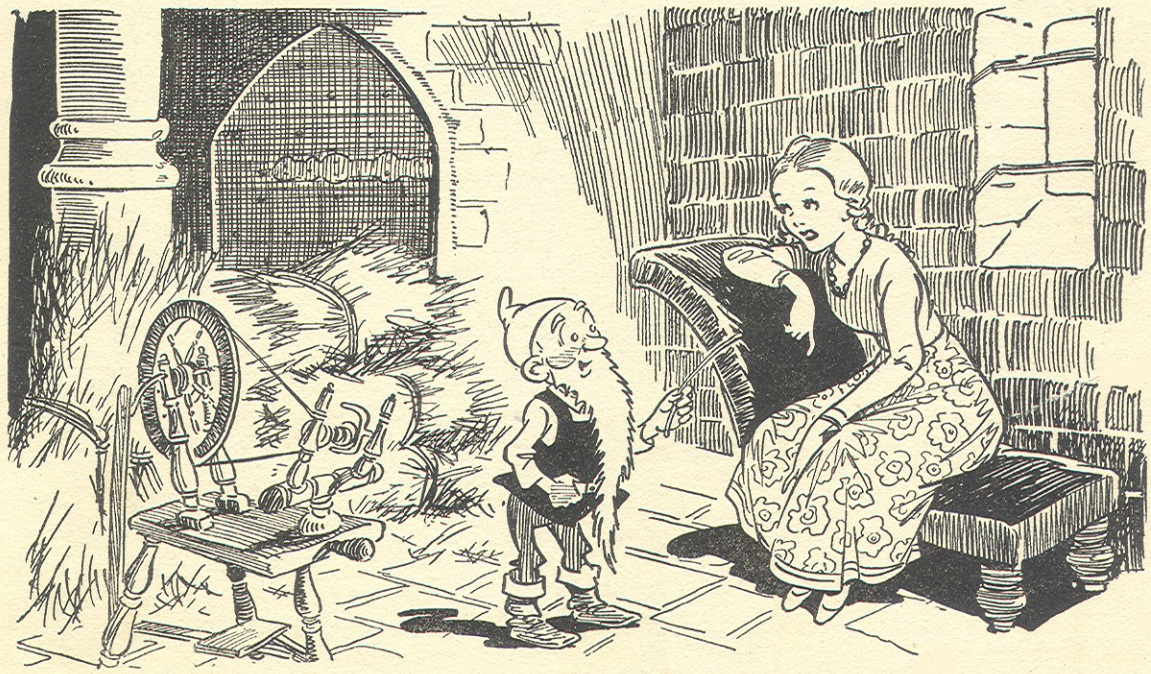
" The Queen," Rob reminded him.

" Never mind, Rob," he said, waving his pipe to indicate that it was of no importance at all." Y'see, she had to be a Princess before she could be a Queen, didn't she ? And anyway, she was really a miller's daughter, so what's it matter ? That's what I say."

" I'm sorry I interrupted you," said Rob.

Rumpel lighted his pipe and blew two perfect smoke rings into the air.

" That's all right, Rob," he said. " It makes no odds, it doesn't. But you see, the Queen had promised me her first royal baby, so when this nipper arrived, along I went to the palace to collect it. And



why not? That's what I say. Why not? She promised me, didn't she?"

"Of course she did, Rumpel," agreed Rob.

"Very well, then," said Rumpel. "Those days I used to live all alone in the woods and didn't know a soul, and I could have done with a baby for company."

"What would you have fed it on, Rumpel?" Rob inquired.

Rumpel blew another smoke ring.

"That's neither here nor there, Rob," he said. "I bet there's plenty of things grows in woods that babies would like to eat—you know, nuts and blackberries, and toadstools and the like. But that's neither here nor there, it isn't."

"All right, Rumpel," said Rob. "You go on with your story."

"Tcha!" said Rumpel. "Now I've forgot where I was. Ah, I remember—I went along to the palace and asked the Queen for the baby. And, O, my, my! Did she make a fuss! First she said the King wouldn't let her give me the kid. Then she called me a nasty, cruel wretch."

"And what did you do, Rumpel?" asked Rob.

"I didn't say a word until she got out of breath," said Rumpel. "Then I said, 'Miller's daughter or Majesty, it makes no difference, me dear. The baby's mine 'cos you promised it, so hand it over!'"

"And did she?" asked Rob.

Rumpel leaned back in his chair, blew out a bigger smoke ring than ever, and chuckled heartily.

"Did she? Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed. "'Course she didn't! She just fell to weeping and wailing and moaning and groaning till you'd have thought I'd asked her for her crown instead of just a little no-use baby-kin."

"So then?"

"So then, like a silly, I felt sorry for her, and I said 'Listen, ma'am, don't take on so. I'll tell you what I'll do. If in three days from now you can tell me my name, you can keep the little squaller.' That's what I called it, Rob—the little squaller—'cos I knew it would annoy her, I did, and I was that vexed with her for not keeping her promise, y'see?"

"Yes, I see. And did she agree, Rumpel?" asked Rob.

"She had to, Rob. Either that, or hand over the nipper. So off I went to my lonely house in the woods, thinking she would never find out my name in a month of Sundays."

"But why did she promise you the baby, anyway, Rumpel?" Rob asked.

Rumpel edged a little closer to the fire and slid his heels along the fender.

"Ah, but that goes back even further, Rob," he said. "Even further back it goes. Y'see, her pa was a miller, and seeing she was as clever as she was bonny, he used to boast about her to all and sundry, he did. So one day he thought he'd be extra clever, and he boasted to the King that his daughter could spin straw into pure gold.

"Ha! That did it! The King, being a greedy sort of a chap, took the miller's daughter and locked her in a room with a lot of straw and a spinning wheel, and told her that if she valued her life, the whole of the straw had better be gold by morning."

"What an old meany!" said Rob.

"That's the very word, that is, Rob!" said Rumpel. "He was a proper meany, was his Majesty. Well, I got to hear what was going on, because all the countryside was talking about it, so I up and I went to the miller's daughter. She was sitting in a corner of the room, weeping, when I got there.

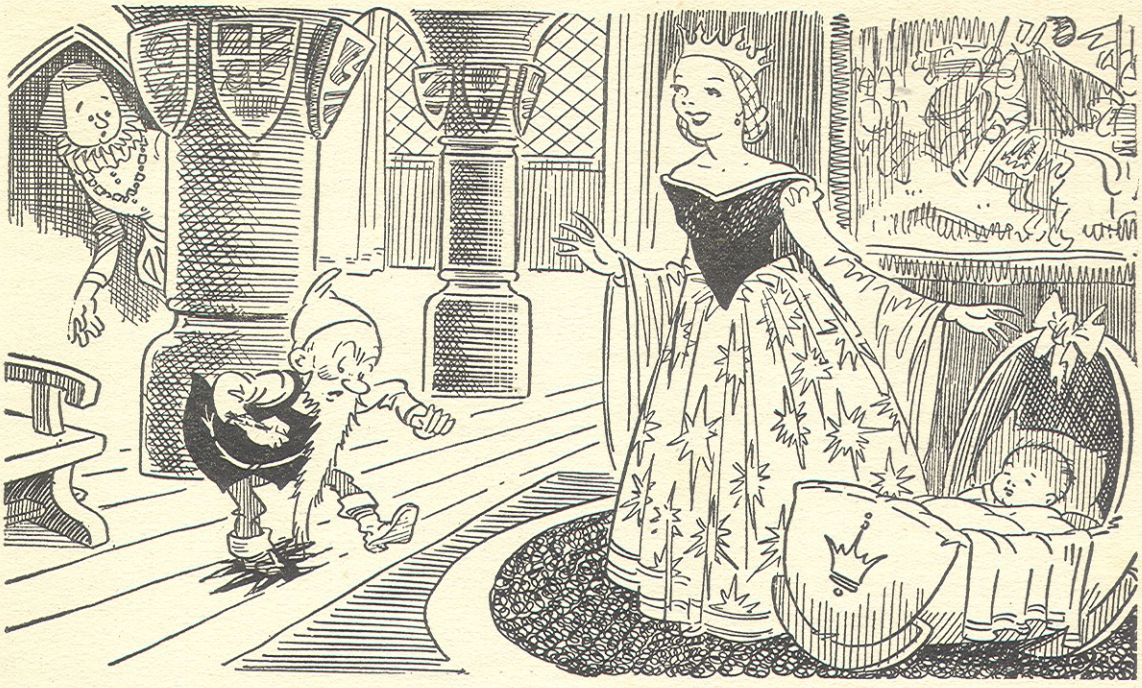
"So I said, 'Good morrow to you, my good lass'—that's how I can talk when I want to, y'know—'Good morrow to you, my good lass; what are you weeping for?'

"'Alas,' said she. 'I must spin this straw into gold, and I know not how.'

"'What will you give me to do it for you?' asked I. So she offered me her necklace, Rob, and I did it."

"You *did?*" broke in Rob. "My word! How did you do it, Rumpel?"

Rumpel shook his old head and grinned till his cheeks and his nose and his ears and his mouth and his whiskers got all mixed up together.



" Ah, that would be telling, that would," he chuckled. " It's not part of the story."

" All right," said Rob. " I'd like to know how to spin gold out of straw, but it doesn't matter—much. What happened then ? "

" Why, of course, the greedy old King took the gold and gave the poor girl another load of straw to get on with. That's what he did. So I helped her again and she gave me a ring off her finger. Here, look, Rob "—and he held out his right hand—" this is the very ring, it is. I've worn it ever since."

" Coo ! " said Rob. " Well, that proves it, doesn't it ? "

" It does that," agreed Rumpel. " Well, the next night the mean old King said if the girl would spin a great big room full of straw into gold, he would make her his Queen. So along I went and said what would she give me for doing all that lot ? "

" And what did she give you ? " asked Rob. " A set of pipes ? "

" No, Rob," went on Rumpel. " The poor lass had nothing to give, and I wasn't going to do all that spinning for fun, so there we were, as you might say.

" Well, she wept and she moaned and she groaned until I had a notion. I said, ' I'll tell you what, me dear, if I spin the straw into gold, and you marry the King, then you shall give me your first little baby for my very own.' That's what I said."

" And she said, ' Yes ' ? " inquired Rob.

" She did that, Rob. But what happened later on when I went to collect the nipper, eh ? I ask you, what happened ? "

" You told me," said Rob. " She wouldn't give it to you, and she cried, so you said if she could tell you your name when you called back three days later, she could keep the baby."

" That was the way of it, Rob, and I'm glad you've been listening so intent-fully. You listen well, you do, Rob—I never knew a better listener, I didn't."

" So ? " inquired Rob, inviting Rumpel to get on with his story.

" So back I went on the third day, and I said, ' Now, lady, what is my name ? '

" ' Is it John ? ' said she.

" ' No,' said I.

" ' Is it Tom ? ' said she.

" ' No,' said I, and I had to laugh, because I knew she would never guess.

" Then, as neat as ninepence, she said, ' Can your name be Rumpel-stilts-kin ? '

" Well, I knew I'd been tricked, and I was so wild, I stamped my right foot so hard that it went clean into the floor, and I had to use both hands to pull it out. That's what I did. And that's how I got a limp into my foot, instead of a son to me name, Rob."

" Poor old Rumpel," said Rob, reaching forward and laying a hand on the old man's knee.

Rumpel laid a hand over that of Rob, and gave his a squeeze.

" It doesn't matter much now, Rob," he said. " I was young then, and I didn't understand how these women feel about their young 'uns. And as for me poor old foot, why, that was my own fault for losing my temper, that's what."

" Well, thank you for telling me, Rumpel," said Rob, getting to his feet. " And I'm so glad to have met you."

" And I'm very glad you called, Rob," said Rumpel, " because all these years I've been wondering how the Queen got to know my name. I thought it was what they used to call witch-craft, I did, but I know better now, I do. Of course, she had a picture of me with me name printed underneath, same as you have."

Rob nodded and grinned.

" Yes," he said, " that must be it. Well, I must hurry. I'm glad you've found out at last, Rumpel, and thanks for a jolly afternoon. G'bye, Rumpel—I'll have to run now."

So, with a wave of his hand to Rumpel-stilts-kin, Rob scampered off across the meadow and danced his way home.

THE END

TRY THESE WORD PUZZLES BEFORE LOOKING AT THE ANSWERS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE

A

Can you rearrange the letters of the following words to make another word ? Example : Part—Trap.

1. Dust.
2. Page.
3. Till.
4. Toga.
5. Tang.

B

Now have a shot at these—you can make TWO other words out of each of the following :

1. Rate.
2. Reread.
3. Care.
4. Rathe.
5. Spa.

C

And you can make THREE words out of each of the following :

1. Mate.
2. Emit.
3. Bears.
4. Veil.
5. Pale.

MIXED PROVERBS—

If you rearrange the words in the following sentences, each will make a well-known proverb.
a. You before leap look. b. Does as is handsome handsome. c. Rocks rules is that that the the the the hand world hand cradle.

ANSWERS

WORD PUZZLES—

A

1. Stud.
2. Gape.
3. Lilt.
4. Goat.
5. Gnat.

B

1. Tear. Tare.
2. Dearer. Reader.
3. Race. Acre.
4. Earth. Heart.
5. Asp. Sap.

C

1. Team. Tame. Meat.
2. Time. Item. Mite.
3. Brase. Baser. Sabre.
4. Live. Evil. Vile.
5. Plea. Leap. Peal.

PROVERBS—

a. Look before you leap. b. Handsome is as handsome does. c. The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.

THE DRAGON OF DADO LI

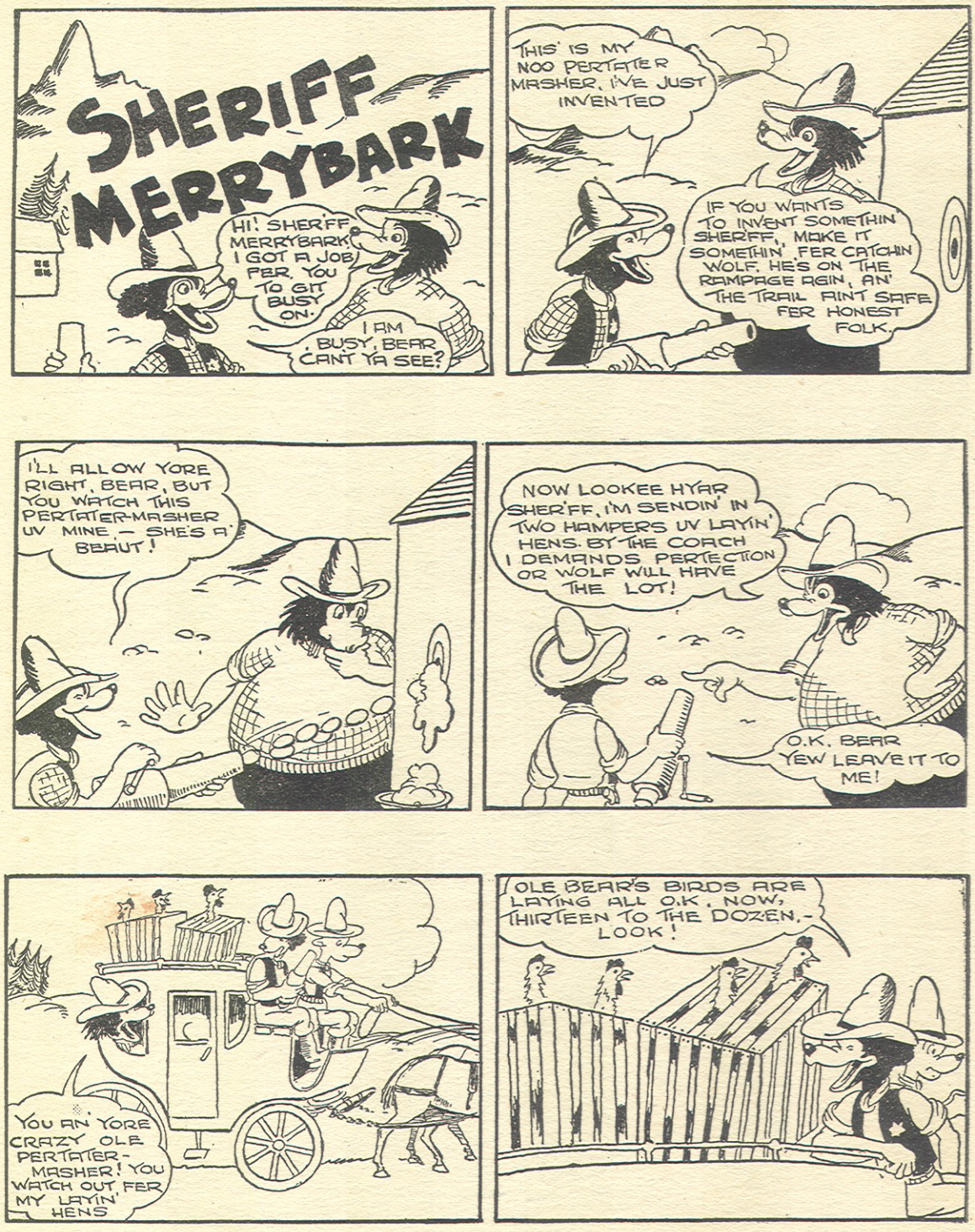
(Continued from page 140.)

spotting him, and the answer is that he used a midget submarine. But that's enough for now. We can all do with a good rest."

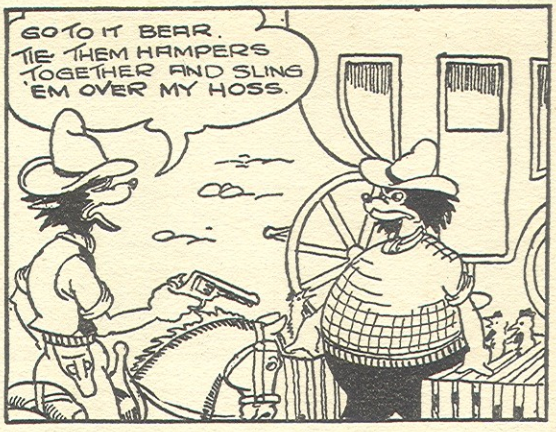
A few days later, two representatives from World Wide Airways arrived at Dado Li and bore out what Van Bruten had told Peter Duncan. Now that Danny's Dad knew why the island was wanted, he agreed to lease part of it for an airport. But he kept Cherry Blossom Bay and Danny is still living there happily with his parents.

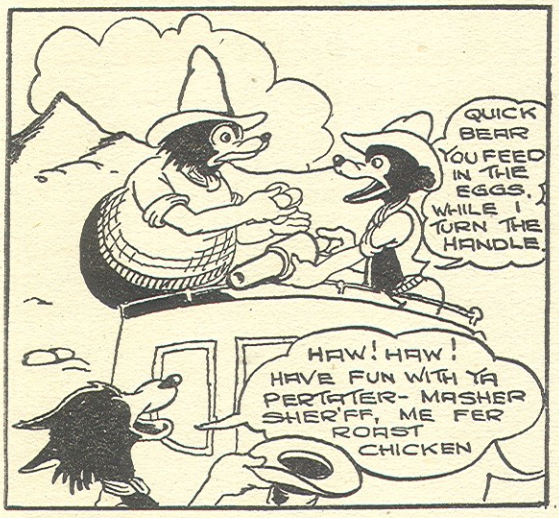
THE END

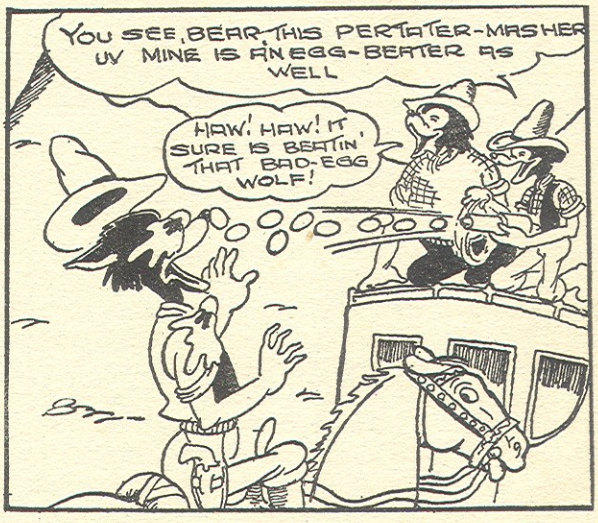
HI-YA CHUMS! MEET SHERIFF MERRYBARK

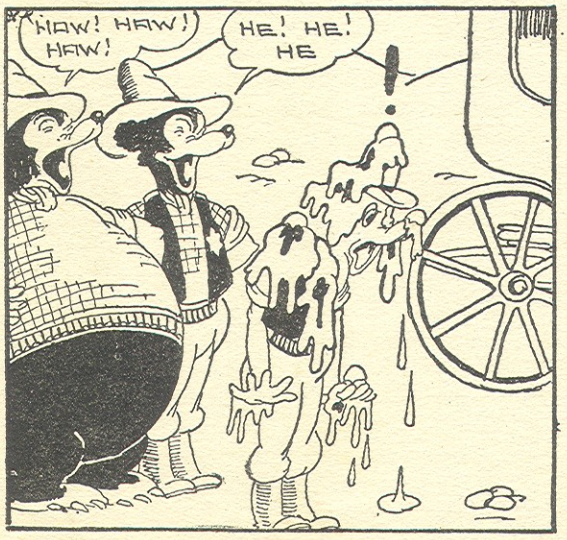


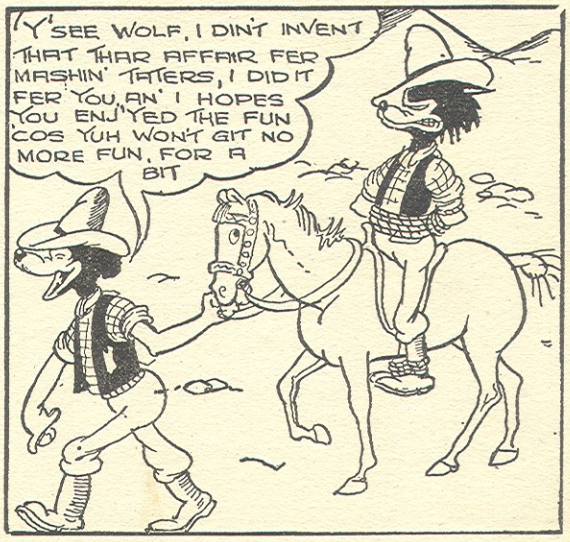
GOSH! IT'S WOLF THIS IS A HOLD-UP!
STICK 'EP UP EVERYBODY ! YIPPEE! CHICKUN FER SUPPER FER ME

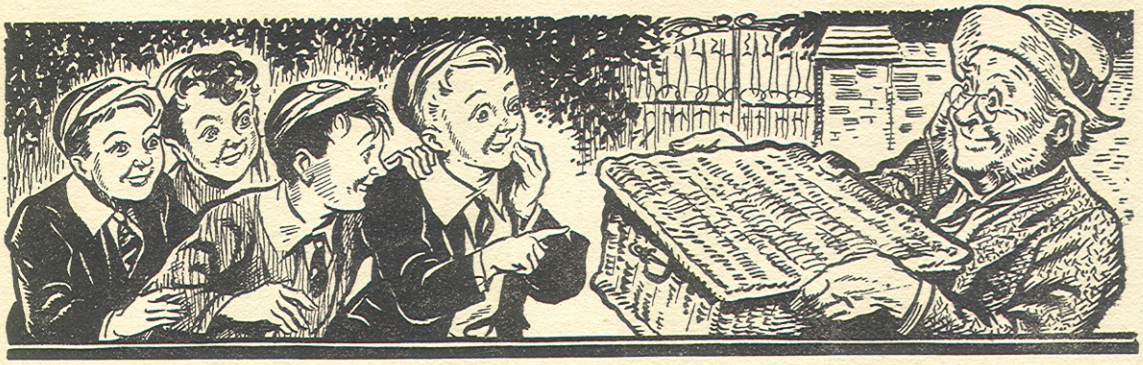

GO TO IT BEAR. TIE THEM HAMPERS TOGETHER AND SLING 'EM OVER MY HOSS.


QUICK BEAR YOU FEED IN THE EGGS. WHILE I TURN THE HANDLE.
HAW! HAW! HAVE FUN WITH YA PERTATER- MASHER SHER'FF, ME FER ROAST CHICKEN


YOU SEE, BEAR THIS PERTATER-MASHER UV MINE IS AN EGG-BEATER AS WELL
HAW! HAW! IT SURE IS BEATIN' THAT BAD-EGG WOLF!


HAW! HAW! HAW!
HE! HE! HE


Y'SEE WOLF, I DIN'T INVENT THAT THAR AFFAIR FER MASHIN' TATERS, I DID IT FER YOU, AN' I HOPES YOU ENJ'YED THE FUN COS YUH WON'T GIT NO MORE FUN, FOR A BIT



BILLY BUNTER'S STORY

I think this is the best storie in the Nockout Fun Book. The Editter was serprized when he red it, and so will you be !

Billy Bunter

A Serprize for Jack Jolly & Co.

"How the dickens can we have a picnic when we've no munny ?" Jack Jolly of the Fourth asked that question in the old gateway of St. Sam's. And Merry and Bright and Fearless shook their heads.

"Can't be done, old chap !" sighed Fearless. "I wish I hadn't sujjested it now. I knew I'd run out of cash myself, but I thought that with three of you to come to the reskew, a picnic would be plain sailing enuff."

"Unforchunitly we're all in the same boat as yourself !" said Merry, with a rewful grin. "What can we do ?"

It was a proper poser. Fearless' sujjestion of a picnic had been hailed with delite by the others. But then they had come up against a brick wall.

They were all stony !

"Looks as if that picnic's off," remarked Jolly sadly. "If only some kind friend would come along and ask us——"

"Like to come along to my picnic, boys ?"

The chums of the Fourth farely jumped as that question fell on their ears !

Turning round they were serprized to see standing behind them Doctor Alfred Birchemall, the revered and majestick headmaster of St. Sam's. He was wearing plus twos and a panner-ma hat and there was a beeming smile on his skollarly dial. He pointed meaningly to an intreeging assortment of baskets and parcels lying at his feet.

"Like to come along to my picnic, boys ?" he repeated.

Jack Jolly & Co. raised their caps. The Head's question had raised their hoaps !

"Corn in Egypt !" mermered Fearless.

"We'll come along with plezzure, sir !" grinned Jolly. "Won't we, you fellows ?"

"Yes, rather !"

"Good !" said the Head. "I'm going to have a good tuck-in under the shade of an old oak tree. It will be ripping to have somebody to carry the tuck and keep me company !"

"We'll carry the tuck with plezzure, sir," chuckled Jolly. "Pick up the Head's parcels, you chaps. Where were you thinking of going, sir ?"

"To a topping little picnicking ground on the other side of the woods, Jolly. Perhaps you know it already ? It's near a field where there's a scarecrow !"

"Why, of corse ! I know that scarecrow well, sir. Are you ready ?"

"Ready, I, ready, Jolly !"

"Then off we go !"

And off they went—shouldering Doctor Birchemall's burden of tuck with grate cheerfulness.

The chums of the Fourth could hardly beleeve their good luck. If they had had their choice, they mite have preferred an invitation from one of their own pals to an invitation from an old fossil like the Head. But beggars can't be choosers, and Jack Jolly & Co. were quite prepared to put up with the old buffer's company in return for a good tuck-in.

They tramped down the lane and across the fields in grate good spirits. It was a fine summer afternoon and even the Head himself seemed to be in a jeenial mood.

" If there's one thing I do like about you boys," he remarked, as they wound their way through the woods, " it's your willingness. It's not every yungster at St. Sam's who would jump to it so promptly if I asked him to carry my tuck to a picnic. But I'll give you your dew—you're willing."

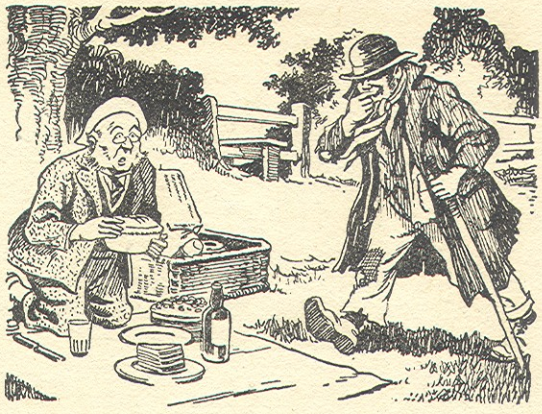
" That's all right, sir," said Bright, whose grate fault was his lack of tact. " We're always willing to do anything for a feed ! Ow ! You're stamping on my foot, Jolly ! "

Doctor Birchemall started slitely.

" Bless my sole ! What did you say, Bright ? "

" He said we're always willing to do anything in a case of need—or something like that, sir," said Jolly, giving Bright

" Surely you didn't imagine I was inviting you along to skoff my tuck ? " said Dr. Birchemall.



" Afternoon, old covey ! " roared the newcomer.

a sly dig in the ribs. " That was it, Bright, wasn't it ? "

" Ow ! Yes ! Something like that ! " gasped Bright.

And the Head nodded approvingly, and Jack Jolly & Co. smiled again.

But their smiles were fated soon to fade. Not long after their arrival at the spot near the scarecrow, they had a shock that would have taken the grin off a Cheshire cat.

Jack Jolly asked the question that bust the bombshell. He put it to Doctor Birchemall soon after he had finished setting out the good things on the Head's snow-white tablecloth.

" When are we going to start on the feed, sir ? " he asked.

And the Head fairly jumped !

" ' We ' ? " he cried. " Did I hear you say, ' When are " we " going to start on the feed ? ' Jolly ? "

" Yes, sir. When are we ? "

" Never ! " was the Head's serprizing answer.

" Eh ? " gasped Jolly.

" Chuck it, sir ! " urged Fearless. " A joak's a joak, but——"

" I am not joaking, Fearless ! " wrapped out Doctor Birchemall. " I say ' Never ! ' and that's what I mean ! "

" But you invited us——"

" I invited you to come along to my picnic becawse I wanted someone to carry the parcels ! Surely you didn't imagine I was inviting you along to skoff my tuck ? "

Doctor Birchemall cocked his head on one side and eyed the juniors with a beady eye like some inquisitive ostridge. And Jack Jolly & Co's grins vanished as if by magick, to be replaced by baleful glares.

" That's eggsactly what we did think, anyway ! " growled Jolly. " Dash it all, sir, you've brought enuff for six ! "

" I always make it a rule to bring enuff for six—and I always get through it myself without the slitest difficulty ! " snorted the Head. "I'm serprized at you boys thinking I wanted you to help me skoff the tuck. I never thought you were such a greedy lot ! "

" Oh, grate pip ! " gasped Frank Fearless. " Then aren't we going to get anything at all ? "

" Not a sossidge, Fearless."

" But you said you'd enjoy our company, sir ! "

" Quite likely ! But that duzzent mean you're going to enjoy my tuck ! "

Jack Jolly & Co. looked at each other with feelings that were too deep for words.

" Well, you fellows," said Jack Jolly, " This takes the cake ! "

" The Head takes the feed, anyway ! " groaned Merry.

" He wants jam on it ! " said Fearless tartly. " Let's go ! "

" Hear, hear ! "

" Please yourselves, of corse, boys ! " grinned the Head. " You're very welcome to stay and watch me feeding my face ! "

" You're awfully jennerous, sir ! " said Jolly with hevvy sarkasm, " but we really can't impose on you. This way, you fellows ! "

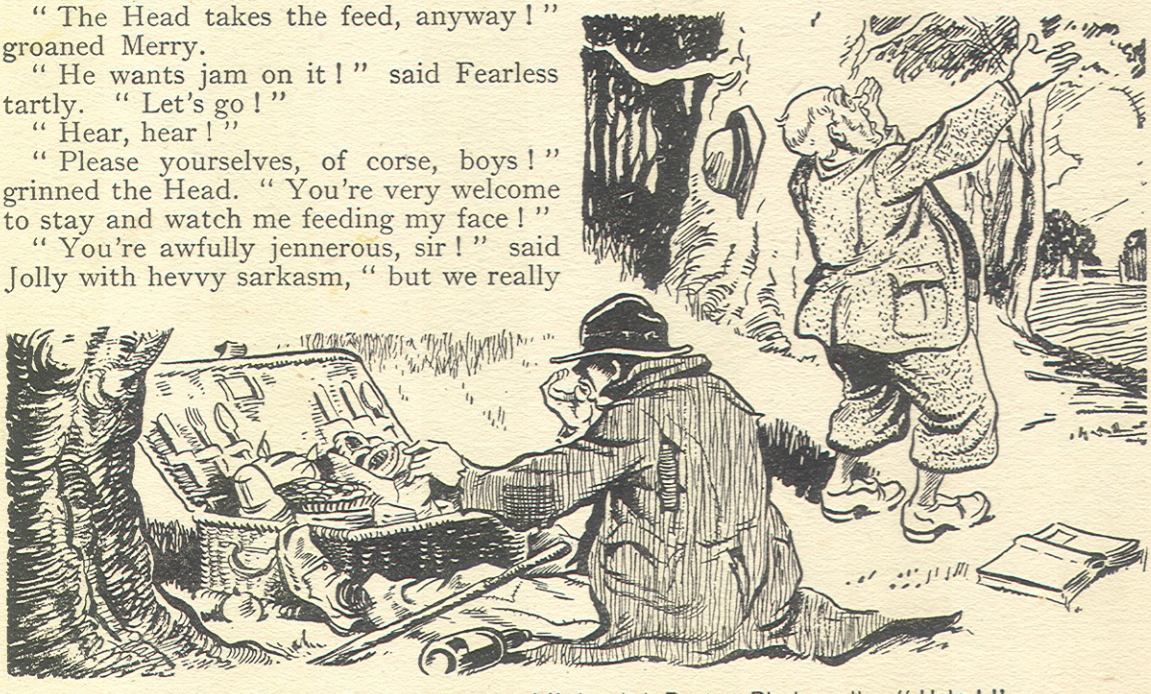
The Kaptin of the Fourth turned on his heel and tramped off, and his pals followed him.

They felt jolly wild at being diddled by Doctor Birchemall. But the Head's conshance seemed to be quite clear. He waved them farewell with the utmost cheerfulness, then turned his attention to the real bizziness of the afternoon—skoffing the tuck !

The Head was destined, however, not to be left to finish his feed in peace that afternoon.

He had hardly got into his stride, in fakt, before the sound of fresh footsteps cawsed him to look up with a start.

An eggspression of fear came into the Head's fizz when he saw who was approaching. Never in his life had Doctor Birchemall seen such a ruff-looking tramp as he saw now. The man's coat and weskit were thick with dust and his trowsis were in rags and tatters, while the bowler hat he wore pulled over his eyes looked as if it had come out of the ark !



" Jolly ! Merry ! Bright ! Fearless ! " bawled Doctor Birchemall. " Help ! "

" 'Arternoon, old covey ! " roared the newcomer, in a terrifying voice.

Beads of perspiration stood out on the Head's forrid.

" B-b-bless my sole ! "

" That grub looks good ! " bellowed the tramp. " Wot I says is this 'ere : that grub looks too good for an old covey like you ! I'll 'ave it meself ! "

" You can't—you mustn't ! " gasped the Head. " I'll call the perlice and have you arrested——"

" Haw, haw, haw ! Call away, old covey ! If you call 'ard enuff the nearest copper may 'ear yer ! 'E's only a cupple of miles away ! "

An aggernised look appeared in the Head's shifty eyes. The meer thought of his bewtiful feed falling into the hands of this tramp was suffishant to make Doctor Birchemall's hart almost fail him.

" Leeve that tuck alone ! " he wrapped out, as the tramp bore down on the tuck. But the tramp only larfed leeringly.

" Look 'ere, old covey, you buzz off, see ? " he growled. " If you don't, you'll get a clip on the ear—an' arter that you'll get a wunner on the conk ! "

He made a dive at the feast, and Doctor Birchemall hurriedly jumped to his feet and backed away. And then, in his moment of desperation, the Head had a branewave. He remembered Jack Jolly & Co.

" Jolly ! Merry ! Bright ! Fearless ! Help ! " he bawled.

" Haw, haw, haw ! " larfed the tramp. " Nobody won't 'ear yer, old covey ! "

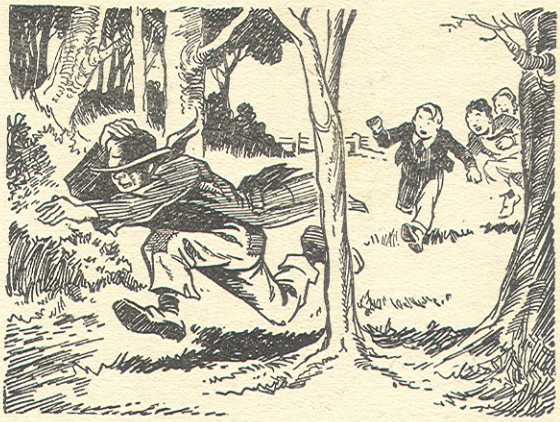
" Reskew, St. Sam's ! " yelled the Head. " Come and save the feed, boys, and I'll give you a half of it—two-thirds—three-quarters——"

" Coming, sir ! " came a yell from the woods.

It was the voice of Frank Fearless—and it sounded like mewsick to the Head's lissening ears !

" This way, boys ! " he cried. " Come and give this beestly tramp what for ! I'll hold your coats ! "

There was a thudding of footsteps across the terf. Fearless came into view and behind him were Merry and Bright. And



Fearless and Merry and Bright chased merrily after the tramp, as he hit the trail for the woods.

the Head farely danced with joy as he saw them.

The tramp danced, too—but he didn't seem to dance with joy. He danced towards the woods to put as grate a distance as possibul between himself and the Fourth Formers.

" Capture him, boys ! " cried the Head. " We'll bump him and hand him over to the perlice ! "

" I, I, sir ! "

And Fearless and Merry and Bright chased merrily after the tramp, as he hit the trail for the woods. But apparently they did not suxxeed in capturing him, after all, for when they returned a few minnits later, they returned empty-handed. This time Jolly was with them.

" He's gone, sir, I'm afraid," grinned the Kaptin of the Fourth. " I eggspect you thought I was going to cut off his retreat ; but he vannished just as though he'd never eggsisted ! "

Doctor Birchemall mopped his perspiring brow and grinned.

" Well, well, perhaps it duzzent matter, after all. Now that you've all come back, the fellow will never dare venture here again ! My boys, I am deeply indetted to you for what you have done ! "

" Don't mensh, sir ! " grinned Frank Fearless. " It's a plezzure ! "

" Prey, don't think any more about what I said before, boys," went on the

(*Now turn to page* 184.)

(Continued from page 48.)

used for a year or more and was fast falling into a terrible state of disrepair.

After that they went into the woods where, until the sun went down, they practised just how they were going to rescue old Grandpa Badger.

The more Billy practised the more his spirits rose and the braver he became until, by sun-down, nearly all his fears had gone and he was almost as brave as little Happy.

A big yellow moon was beginning to climb up into the sky when the pair of them crept stealthily back to the farmyard. Each of them was carrying on his head a little wooden door about twelve inches square which they had taken from the old tumble-down house of Mr. Otter.

" Don't make a sound ! " whispered Happy, as they reached the farmyard gate.

" I'm not going to ! " breathed little Billy.

" I see that great nasty dog's still there in front of the stable," whispered Happy, peeping through the gate. " But we're so little that he won't see us if we don't make any noise. Come on ! "

In spite of himself his tiny little heart was thumping twenty to the dozen as he pushed his little door silently under the bottom bar of the gate and crept through after it. So was Billy's heart as he did the same.

Then picking up their doors and balancing them on their heads, they crept along to where the drain-pipe was lying.

They left one door lying on the ground near one end of the drain-pipe, and the other door lying near the other end.

" Now we've got to find a couple of stones," whispered Happy. " There're plenty lying about, thank goodness ! "

It didn't take them long to find a couple of stones of the size they wanted. Exerting all their strength, they rolled one stone near one end of the drain-pipe, and the other stone near the other end.

" Now we're all ready ! " said Happy, his voice trembling with excitement. " There's not the slightest danger, if you're smart, Billy. You're not frightened, are you ? "

" N-no, not very ! " said Billy bravely.

" Right-o, get started ! " said Happy.

He dodged out of sight behind the drain-pipe. Billy advanced a few paces towards the stable, outside which the savage dog, Snatcher, was sitting. Then, lifting up his voice, Billy yelled shrilly :

" Yah ! Boo-oo ! Silly old Snatcher !
Chased Bessie Bunny home,
But still he couldn't catch her ! "

At the sound of that jeering rabbit voice, there in his very own farmyard, the savage Snatcher nearly had a fit. With a snarl of rage he leapt to his feet. Eyes blazing, he tore madly towards the voice.

Billy saw him coming and turned to flee. In that very same moment Snatcher saw Billy. With another frightful snarl, he fairly flew in pursuit.

Billy shot into the drain-pipe, rushed through it and shot out at the other end. The raging Snatcher never stopped to think. He, too, shot into the drain-pipe in pursuit of Billy.

But he was far bigger than Billy and he quickly discovered that he couldn't get through the drain-pipe anything like so quickly as Billy had done. In fact, he was so big that the only way he could get through was to crawl through.

" Quick—quick ! " yelled Billy, dancing excitedly about as the most frightful snarls and growls came from the crawling Snatcher inside the drain-pipe. " Oh quick, Happy ! "

But Happy was already busy. Lifting up the little door which he had brought from Mr. Otter's house, he slammed it against the end of the drain-pipe towards which the raging Snatcher was crawling.

" Now the stone, Billy ! " he panted. " *Quick !* "

Together, they rolled against the little

door one of the stones which they had found.

" Now the other end ! " cried Happy.

He and Billy scuttled swiftly round to the other end of the drain-pipe. It was the work of a few moments to prop the other little door against that end of the pipe and to roll the stone against it to keep it in place.

" Hurrah ! " yelled little Billy, capering madly about with delight. " We've caught the great, nasty, horrid bully, Happy. *Hurrah ! Hurrah ! "*

Then joining hands—or, rather, paws—he and Happy danced gaily about in the moonlight singing :

" *Horrid old Snatcher !*
Wicked rabbit catcher !
Now you're safe inside that spout
Until old Grunter lets you out ! "

"Oo-ooh, my, doesn't he sound mad ? " cried Billy, as from inside the drain-pipe there came the most terrible snarls and growls.

" Yes, but we can't waste any more time on him," chuckled little Happy. " Come on, we've got to get old Grandpa Badger out of that nasty box and stable before one of those humans comes to take him to the Zoo ! "

Turning, they scuttled away towards the stable. They knew how they were going to get in, all right. Happy had seen that when he had been peeping through the farmyard gate that morning.

There was a little square hole through the bottom of the front wall of the stable. It was used to drain the water off when the stable was being washed out with buckets of water swilled over the floor.

His little heart fairly thumping with excitement, Happy crawled through the hole followed by Billy. Next minute the pair of them found themselves inside the stable.

And there in front of their very eyes was the box in which poor old Grandpa Badger was a prisoner !

Happy and Billy could see him quite plainly behind the horrid bars with which the front of the box was fitted. He was lying there, staring at them in the utmost astonishment.

" Why, if it isn't little Happy and Billy Rabbit ! " he exclaimed. " Wherever have you two little fellows come from, and how have you got in here with that dreadful dog guarding the stable ? "

" He's not guarding it any longer, Grandpa Badger ! " cried Happy triumphantly. " Billy and I have got him shut up safe and sound, haven't we, Billy ? "

" Yes, yes ! " cried Billy, dancing excitedly about and clapping his little paws with glee. " And we've come to get you out, Grandpa Badger. We've come to rescue you ! "

Grandpa Badger gave a violent start.

" Rescue me ? " he cried. " But you can't do that. Even if you get me out of this dreadful box, I can't get out of the stable. I'm much too big to crawl out through that hole by which you've just come. And the stable door is locked, so I can't get out that way."

" We know you can't ! " chuckled Happy. " But we're not going out that way, Grandpa Badger. We're going out another way altogether. Aren't we, Billy ? "

" Yes, yes ! " cried Billy. " Happy's got it all fixed, Grandpa Badger. He knows how to do it ! "

" And we've jolly well got to hurry ! " cried Happy. " That horrid human will be here at any moment to take Grandpa Badger off to the Zoo. Come on, Billy, let's get the box opened ! "

Happy and Billy to the Rescue

THE lid of the box was fitted with a catch on the outside. Helped by a bump-up from Billy, Happy climbed up on to the lid and it didn't take him very long to push back the catch with his sharp little claws.

" Push the lid up, Grandpa Badger ! " he cried excitedly, dropping down to the stable floor again. " Push the lid up with your front paws ! "

Grandpa Badger did so quite easily, for, like all badgers, he was very strong.

" Thank goodness for that ! " he cried, climbing out of the box and stretching his stiff, cramped limbs. "Oh, little Happy and Billy, how can I ever thank you for getting me out of that dreadful box ? It

was so low that I couldn't even stand up in it. But now that I am out of the box, how are we going to get out of the stable ? "

" Up that ladder there ! " chuckled Happy, pointing to the wooden ladder which led up to the hayloft above. " I know all about the inside of stables, because I've slept in them more than once when the nights have been cold. You're a good climber, Grandpa Badger, and you can easily carry Billy and me up on your back."

" Yes, but once we are up there, Happy, how are we going to get out ? " asked Grandpa Badger in a puzzled voice.

" You'll see," chuckled Happy. " But we really must hurry in case that nasty Farmer Grunter and his friend come and catch us."

" Yes, of course ! " cried Grandpa Badger. " Very well, then, Happy ; you and Billy climb on my back and I'll carry you up the ladder. But hold on very tightly, mind."

" You bet we will ! " cried Happy and Billy.

They climbed on to Grandpa Badger's strong, silver-grey back. Then, gripping the rungs of the ladder in his claws, Grandpa went up it like the clever climber he was.

" Hurrah ! " cried Happy, when they had reached the loft. " Now we shan't be long ! "

He dropped to the floor and pointed to the skylight, through which a beam of moonlight was streaming, in the low, sloping roof.

" That's how we're going to get out, Grandpa Badger ! " he cried triumphantly. " Through that skylight. You can easily reach it by standing on a pile of hay. There's heaps and heaps of hay here, and if you can't manage to open the skylight you can easily break the glass with your strong paws ! "

" Yes, yes, so I can ! " cried Grandpa Badger excitedly. " Oh, what a clever little fellow you are, Happy ! "

Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him, for he said :

" But isn't it going to be rather a long drop from the roof to the ground ? "

" We've thought of that—we've thought of that ! " cried little Billy, jumping delightedly about. " At least, Happy has. All you've got to do is to bung a lot of this hay up through the skylight on to the roof, then tumble it down on to the ground and drop down on to it ! "

" My word, how clever ! " gasped old Grandpa Badger admiringly. " You seem to have thought of everything——"

Abruptly he broke off, his ears pricked and his head cocked on one side as he listened intently.

" Oh, my goodness, here's somebody coming ! " he whispered.

" It's Farmer Grunter, and the other human is with him ! " gasped Happy, as he heard the sound of human voices and heavily booted human feet approaching the stable-door. " Oh, hurry, Grandpa—*hurry !* "

Grandpa Badger did so. As quietly and as silently as anything he started gathering great armfuls of hay and piling them on the floor directly below the skylight.

" Oh, dear, here they come ! " quavered little Billy, as plainly to their ears there came the sound of a key turning in the lock of the stable-door below.

Next moment the sound of human feet filled the stable, and up the loft ladder came the sound of Farmer Grunter's harsh, bad-tempered voice.

" I can't think where that dog's got to," he was saying angrily. " But when I do catch the brute I'll give him the thrashing he deserves. I'll l'arn him not to run away when I leave him on guard——"

Next moment he let out an ear-splitting roar.

" *Where's the badger ?* " he yelled at the very top of his voice.

" It seems to have gone," said the voice of the man who was with him.

" Gone ? " bellowed Farmer Grunter furiously. " I can see that it's gone. But where can it have gone to ? It couldn't get out of the stable. The door's locked ! "

" It may be hiding in a corner somewhere," said the other man.

" Let's have a look ! " roared Farmer Grunter.

They looked, but they couldn't find the badger hiding in any corner at all.

" But it must be somewhere," bellowed Farmer Grunter, fairly dancing with rage. " It couldn't have got out, I tell you ! "

" What about the loft ? " said the other man. " Badgers are good climbers, you know. It might have gone up there ! "

" Aye, let's have a look up there ! " roared Farmer Grunter.

He had a lantern in his hand and he carried it quickly up the ladder into the loft. He was just in time to see old Grandpa Badger hoisting himself up through the skylight.

" There he is ! " he roared, making a furious dash at old Grandpa.

It was then that Grandpa Badger did what he afterwards said was the cleverest and smartest thing that he had ever done in the whole of his life.

Instead of making a frantic effort to escape before the cruel farmer could grab him, he just drew up his powerful hind legs. Next instant he lashed out with them, catching the farmer such a terrific smack on the chest that it knocked him flat on his back on the floor of the loft.

The lantern, sent spinning from Farmer Grunter's hand, crashed to the floor and broke.

" Look out ! " yelled the other man, who had followed Farmer Grunter up the ladder.

But it was too late. Already the burning oil from the smashed lantern was spreading to the great pile of dry hay in the loft. And almost before the raging farmer could stagger to his feet, the hay was burning furiously.

By that time, however, old Grandpa Badger was safely out on the roof. He had already lifted Happy and Billy out, and they were waiting there for him. There had been no time, however, to throw any hay down to the ground.

" Never mind ! " cried Grandpa Badger. " There's bound to be a rain-pipe somewhere. I can easily climb down that. Get on my back and hang on like anything ! "

Happy and Billy did so. Already the slates of the roof were getting hot and great flames were shooting up through the skylight from the furiously burning hay in the loft.

Moving swiftly along the edge of the roof, Grandpa Badger soon found a rain-pipe which ran down to the ground at the back of the stable.

" Hang on ! " he said to Happy and Billy, who were clinging to his back.

" Stay on my back ! " he cried, as he reached the ground. " I can run faster than you two little fellows ! "

He sped away across the fields, and, like all his kind, he conld run very swiftly when he wanted to.

" Oh, look—look ! " cried Happy.

Old Grandpa Badger halted and turned. Great flames were leaping up through the roof of the stable.

" Well," said Grandpa Badger gravely, " that wouldn't have happened if Farmer Grunter hadn't caught me and tried to sell me to a Zoo."

" It's his punishment, that's what it is ! " cried little Billy.

" I agree with you, Billy, said Happy.

" I haven't thanked you two brave little fellows yet for rescuing me," said Grandpa Badger in a trembling voice. " But I do thank you from the very, very bottom of my heart. And now you must come home to supper with me and let Mrs. Badger thank you, as well.

As they reached the woods a sudden, startled voice cried :

" Why, chase my tail ! If it isn't Grandpa Badger ! "

" Hallo, Freddy ! " cried Grandpa Badger, recognising Freddy Fox. " Yes, it's me, thanks to little Happy, here, and little Billy ! "

" But—but how have you escaped from Farmer Grunter ? " gasped Freddy.

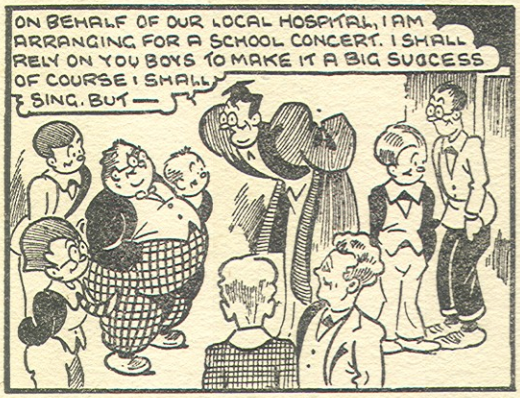
" Come home to supper and I'll tell you," cried Grandpa Badger gaily. " Collect all our friends and tell them to come to supper, as well. Bring everybody. Oh, what a happy, happy party we're going to have to-night ! "

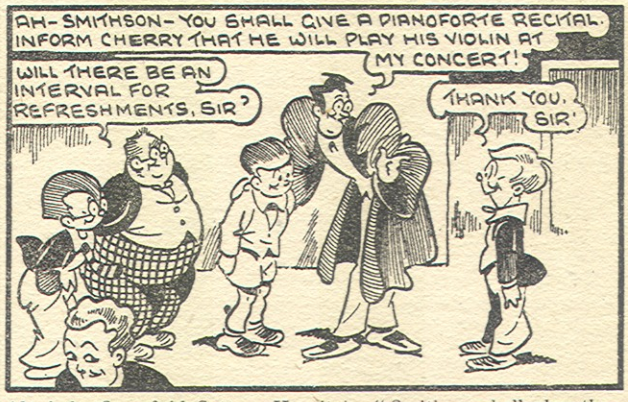
They certainly did. It was the merriest, maddest party ever held in the woods.

THE END

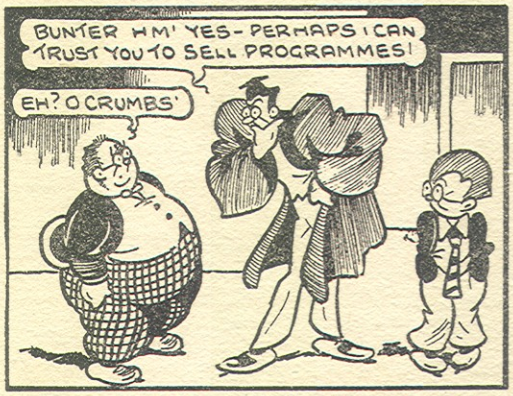
BILLY BUNTER

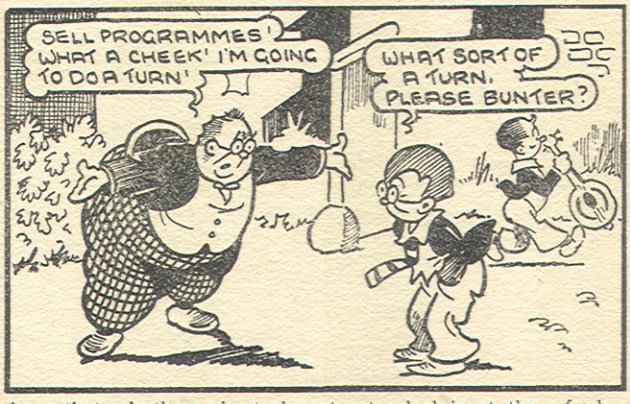
THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH



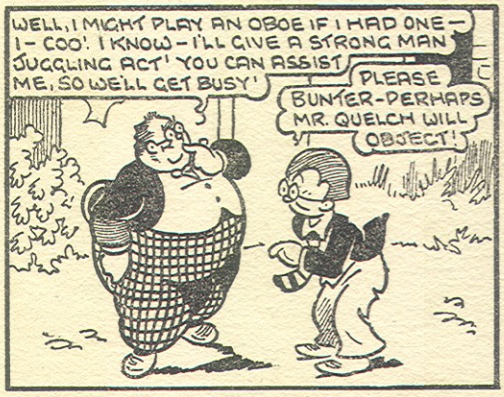


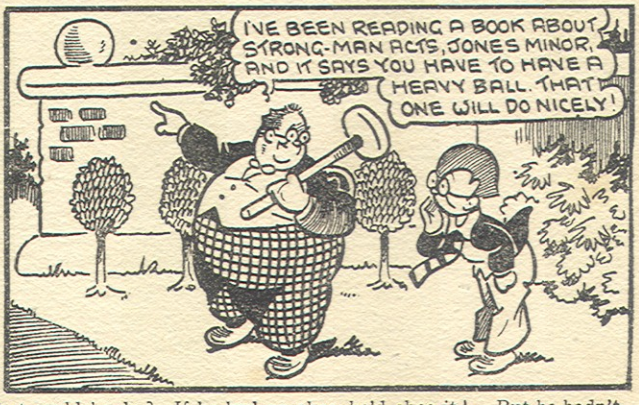
1. Quelchy was getting up a school concert, chums, in aid of the Courtfield Cottage Hospital. "Smithson shall play the piano," he said, "and Cherry, the violin." Billy decided to play "old Harry" with the refreshments if he got a chance!



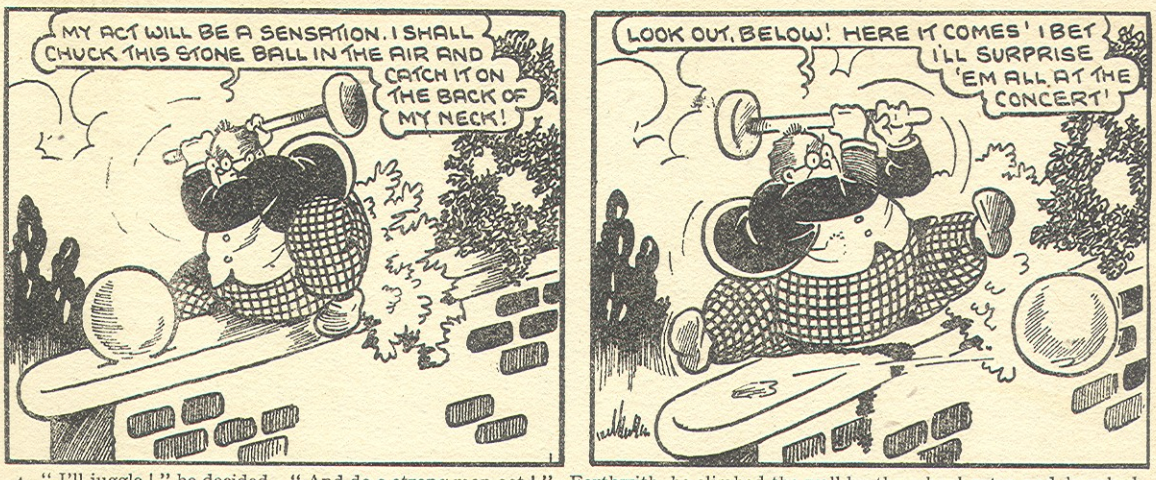


2. He asked for a job, did William George Bunter! He knew that only those who took part got a look-in at the refreshments. But Quelchy said, doubtfully: "Maybe you can sell programmes, Bunter!" Of all the nerve! Selling programmes!

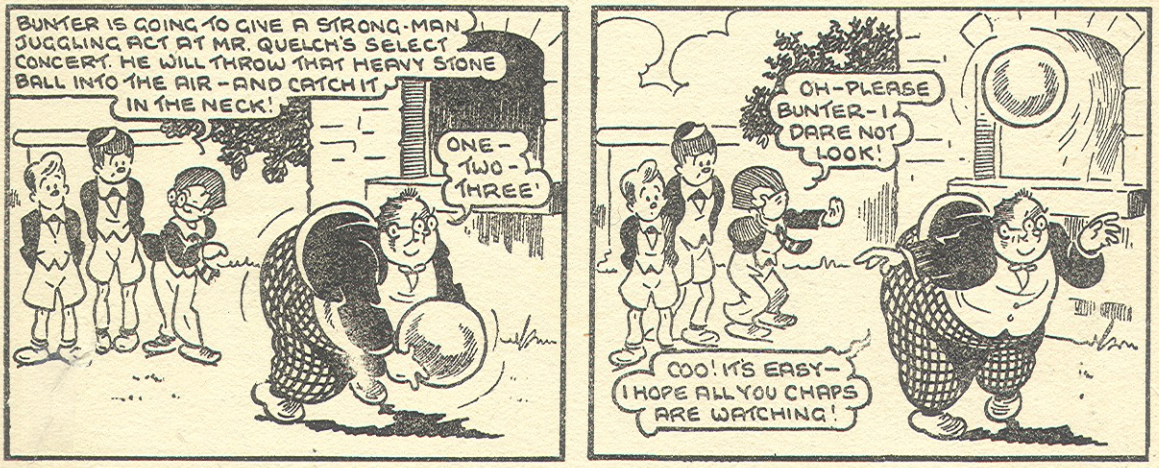




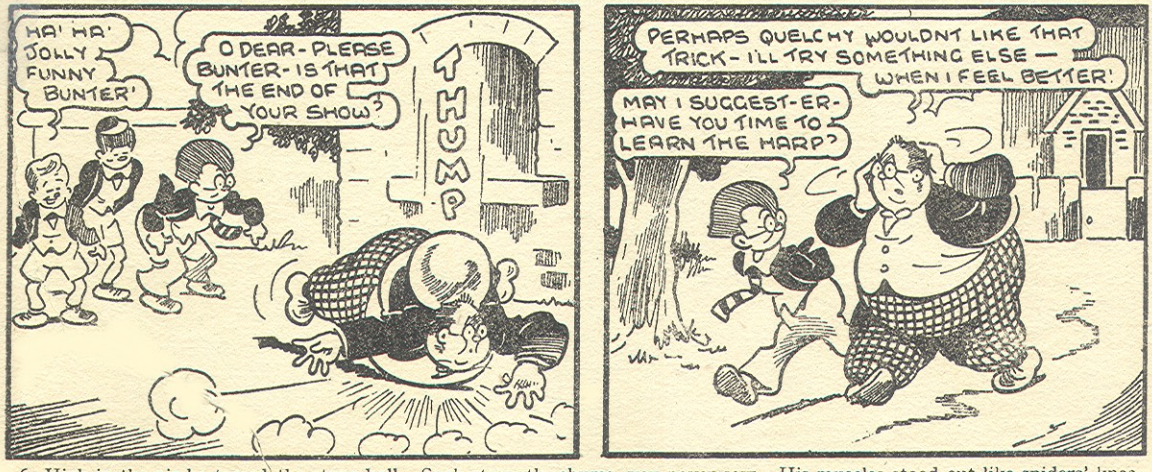
3. "I'll do a turn, that's what!" he barked. But what could he do? If he had an oboe he'd oboe it! But he hadn't. All he had was the brute strength Nature had given him. The mighty Bunter brain clicked on a corking notion, chums!



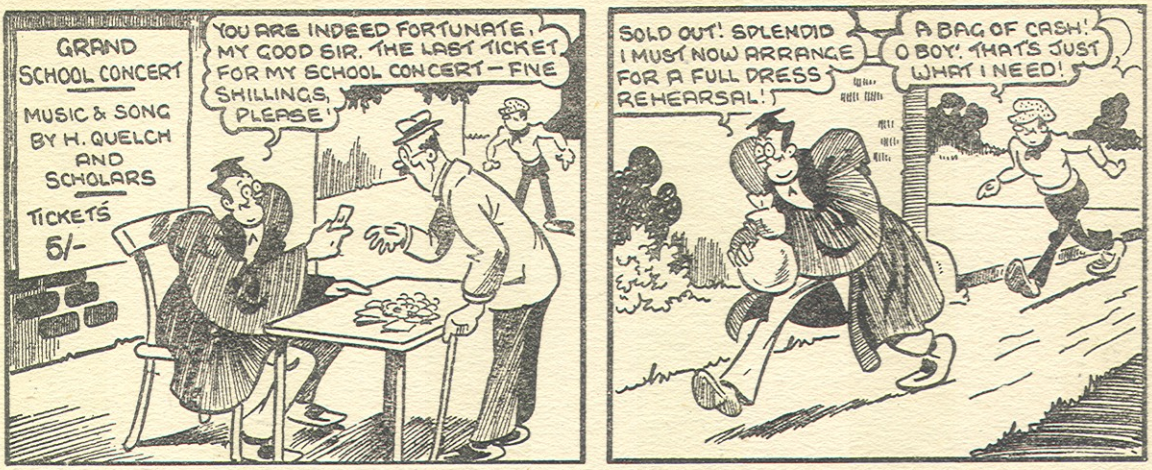
4. "I'll juggle!" he decided. "And do a strong man act!" Forthwith, he climbed the wall by the school gates and knocked off the big stone ball that made things look pretty around there. In fact, our Billy swiped it off with one wallop.



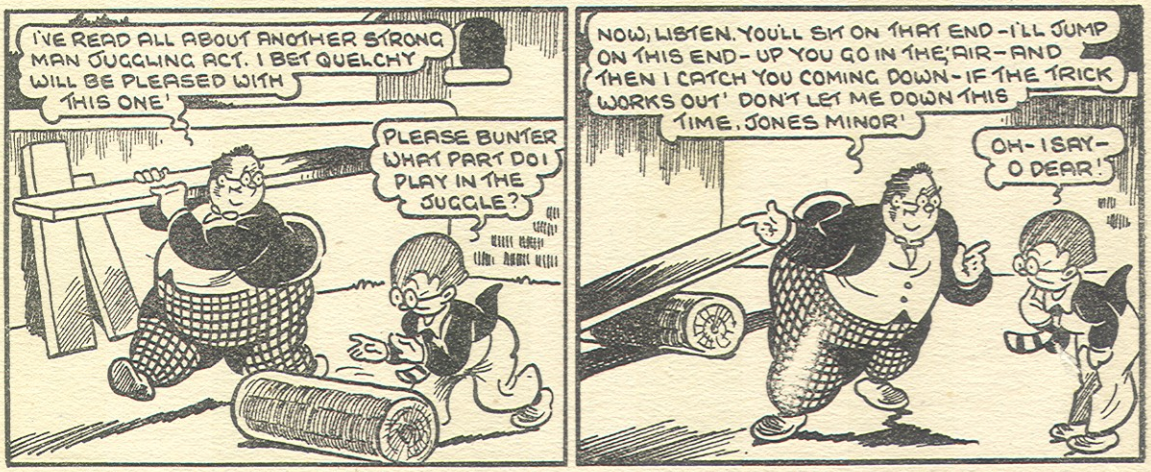
5. Jones Minor wasn't very sure about it all. You see, chums, the idea was for our Billy to juggle with the stone ball. He would toss it high in the air, and catch it neatly on the back of his neck. He started to practise his show.



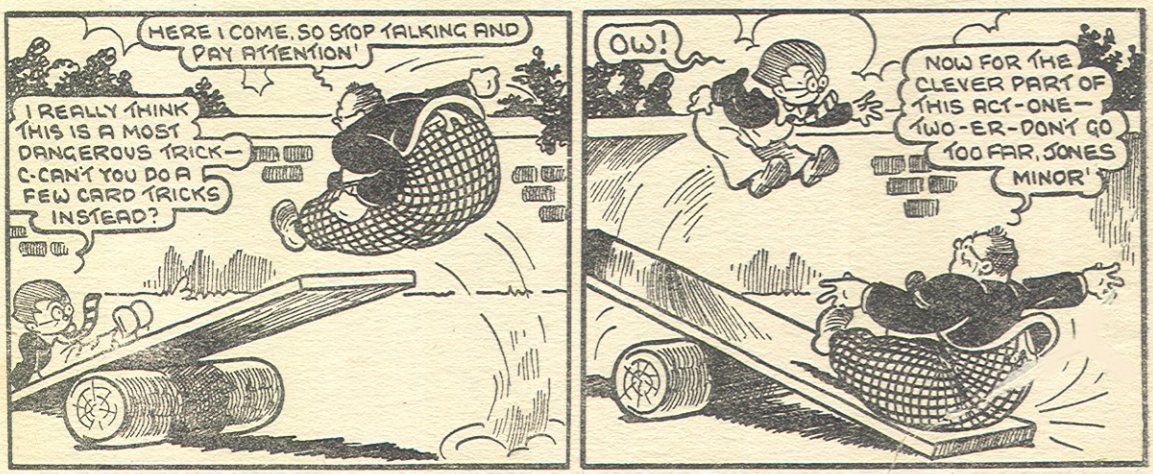
6. High in the air he tossed the stone ball. Such strength, chums, you never saw. His muscles stood out like spiders' knee caps! Up went the stone ball. The next move was to catch it on the back of his neck. And he caught it, chums! Thump!



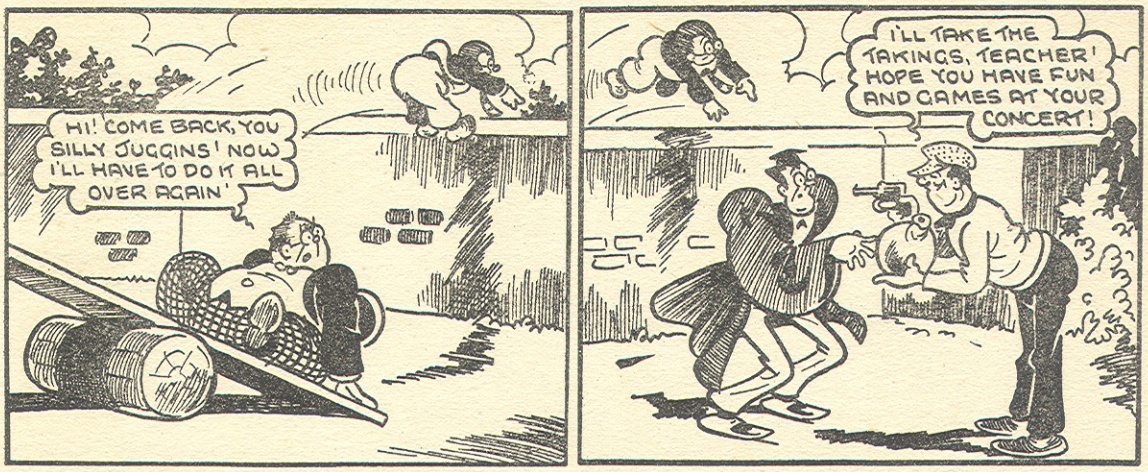
7. His back stud was smashed almost through to his tonsils. His head was whirling round and round and back again. When he picked himself up he thought he'd better try something else. Meanwhile, Quelchy was selling tickets for the concert.



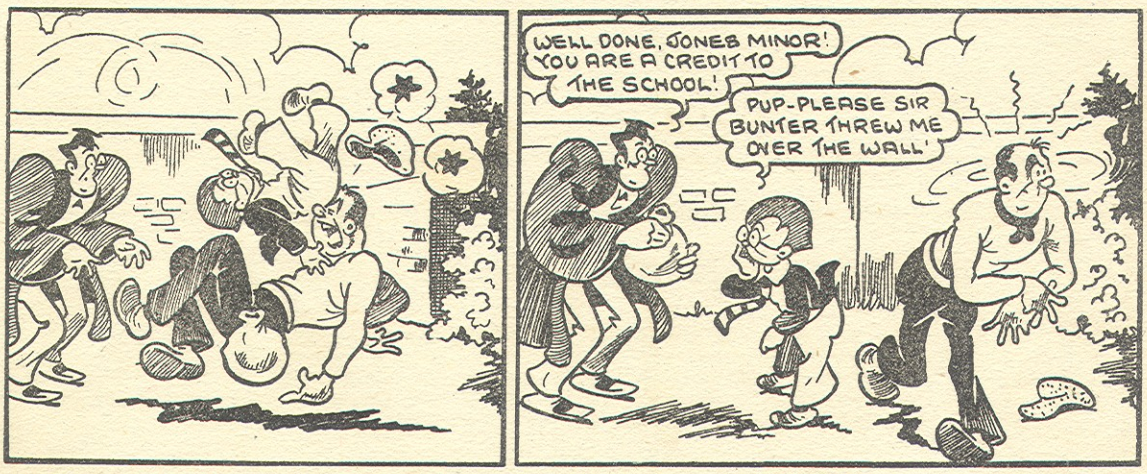
8. But kindly note the bad lad sneaking into the picture with a nasty look in his eye. He's spotted the bag of cash takings! Our Billy knew nothing about the bad lad. He needed the help of Jones Minor. They would juggle together.



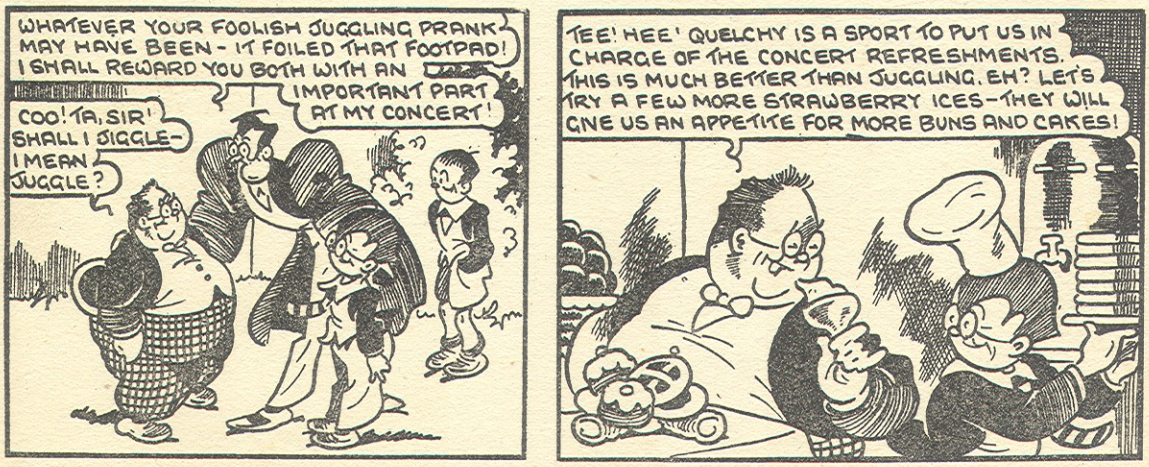
9. With a plank and a log, Billy made the finest see-saw ever seen. The idea was for Jones Minor to sit on the lower end, while Billy sat at the top end. Up would go the lower end, flinging Jones Minor into the stratosphere. And Billy would catch him!



10. Well, they tried it. Billy took a hop, skip and a jump. Plonk! Down on the plank he plonked, and up shot Jones Minor into the air. But the duffer did his stuff wrong. Instead of coming down where Billy could catch him, he sailed out of sight.



11. Right over the wall he flew, into Quelchy's back garden. And there was the big bad lad taking the cash takings from Quelchy. Oh, what a wicked world this is! Quelchy being robbed and Jones Minor baling out without a parachute!



12. But Jones Minor landed on the bad lad's head. The bad lad never knew what hit him. But Quelchy did, and Billy worked it so that Quelchy thought 'twas a clever rescue stunt. In fact, he put our Billy in charge of the eats! Coo, lucky lad!

Head, cullering slitely. " That was only a little joak on my part. I pretended I wasn't going to let you share in the feed. But all the time I was. Very funny, what ? Ha, ha, ha ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! " roared Jack Jolly & Co., in a bust of dewtiful larfter.

" Forget all about it, boys—that's the best thing ! " chuckled the Head. " Now sit down and wade in. And don't be afraid of the tuck, boys. It's there to be eaten ! "

" Thanks, awfully, sir ! " grinned the chums of the Fourth.

They needed no second bidding. They sat down round the tablecloth and tucked in to their harts' content ; and very soon a really ripping feed was in progress. The Head was so releeved that his feed had been saved that he was quite content with eating enuff for two instead of six ; while, as for Jack Jolly & Co., they found that there was plenty for everybody.

At the finish, they toasted in flowing ginger-pop the founder of the feast, Doctor Birchemall.

And afterwards, back at St. Sam's, Fearless toasted somebody altogether different.

" Here's to Jack Jolly ! " he cried. "The chap who put on a scarecrow's togs and turned himself into a tramp—to teach the Head a well-urned lesson not to be so greedy ! "

And that amazing toast was drunk with enthewsiasm !

What the Head would have said, had he heard it, goodness knows. Luckily, he didn't hear it !

Forchunitly, he was not there to hear it !

THE END

WERE YOU RIGHT ? *All the K.O.F.B. Puzzles Solved !*

These Were the PUZZLE TOWNS on Page 22

1. Doncaster. 2. Folkestone. 3. Nottingham. 4. Manchester. 5. Glasgow. 6. London. 7. Windsor. 8. Cambridge. 9. Liverpool. 10. Bath. 11. Yarmouth. 12. Bristol. 13. Harrow. 14. Ramsgate. 15. Stirling. 16. Belfast. 17. Swansea. 18. Blackpool. 19. Oxford. 20. Birmingham.

The BRAIN TICKLER Dept. (Pages 60 and 61)

1. Glasgow.

2. 33,333 and 20,988.

3. Why, just folding it !

4. It saw the lightning play !

5. Buckingham Palace, Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, Tower of London, Madame Tussaud's.

6. A, spoon ; B, pen ; C, teddy-bear ; D, teapot ; E, watch ; F, hairbrush ; G, cup and saucer.

7. " Smith, Oxford House, London. Your answer regarding clever problem all wrong. Shaw, Glasgow " — the first and last letters of each word were omitted.

8. The gate-crashers were Nos. 3, 6, 10, 11 and 14.

9. Smithy — football and cricket ; Smarty — cricket and hockey ; Sammy — football and hockey.

10. T — Tom taught ten tame tortoises to trot.

11. Holes !

12. Wheat and barley.

13. Tomato—potato.

14. They sat in this order, clockwise : Freddy, Jim's sister, Peter, Tom's sister, Jim, Freda, Tom, Peter's sister.

15. Aeroplane, rabbit, cruiser, cricket.

16. Cards, the accessory for snap in normal conditions.

17. Ten jumbos.

18. One large haystack!

19. 72 and 12.

20. a — 24 ; b — 24 ; c — 8 ; d — none ; e — 8.

. . . . And These PUZZLE ANIMALS on Page 112

1. Monkey. 2. Bear. 3. Penguin. 4. Eagle. 5. Elephant. 6. Llama. 7. Rhinoceros. 8. Kangaroo. 9. Antelope. 10. Panther. 11. Ostrich. 12. Snake. 13. Camel. 14. Dingo. 15. Armadillo.

MICKEY'S PAL the WIZARD

The Interrupted Picnic

"OH, Mickey, isn't this lovely?" cried little Betty Royston.

"Yes, it is!" agreed her brother, Mickey.

It was a Saturday afternoon, and Mickey and Betty were having a picnic in the woods. They had chosen a nice clearing in the middle of the woods, and were really enjoying themselves.

"I wish we could have a picnic like this every Saturday afternoon!" cried Betty.

"Well, so we can, as long as the weather keeps fine," said Mickey. "Hallo, here's somebody coming!"

He and Betty could hear voices approaching. Then from amongst the trees at the edge of the clearing appeared about a dozen boys. They were wearing blazers and straw hats with the red-and-black band of St. Claude's School. They had with them two big hampers.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Betty in dismay. "It's some of those boys from St. Claude's School!"

All the boys of St. Claude's were the sons of very rich parents. Some of them were very nice boys, but there were a lot of them who looked down on poor children and sneered at them because their parents weren't rich.

This particular bunch, which had just appeared with the hampers, were just about the worst boys in the school. They were a set of bullies and snobs and they nearly had a fit when they saw poor Mickey and Betty sitting having a picnic in the middle of the clearing.

"What cheek!" they cried furiously.

"This is where *we* always picnic!"

"Just fancy two beastly little town brats pinching our picnic place!"

"Come on, we'll jolly soon have them out of that!"

They rushed across the clearing towards Mickey and Betty, who had jumped to their feet.

"Get away from here, you common little twerps!" cried one of them named Marmaduke Mopp, giving Betty's cup a kick which sent it flying.

"Yes, go on, clear off!" hooted another named Ogden Pugg, putting his foot on

what was left of Mickey's and Betty's sandwiches and squashing them flat.

"Perhaps that'll teach you not to come and have your beastly picnic in our favourite picnicking spot!" cried another boy named Cuthbert Coote, giving Mickey a smack round the ear. "Go on, buzz off!"

"Stop hitting him, you great horrid bully!" cried Betty, stamping her foot and with her eyes aswim with tears. "Why don't you hit somebody your own size?"

"I'll hit you in a minute, if you don't run away!" squeaked Cuthbert Coote, pretending to imitate Betty's voice.

"You'd better not!" cried Mickey valiantly. "We've got as much right here as you have!"

"Don't argue with the common little brat!" cried Marmaduke Mopp, giving Mickey a kick. "If he doesn't go, I'll boot him out of the woods altogether."

"Stop kicking me, will you?" cried Mickey, who was ever so much smaller than any of the bullies.

"Clear off, then!" cried Marmaduke Mopp.

"Yes, scat!" snorted Ogden Pugg.

"Come on, Mickey; let's go!" quavered Betty, beginning to pick up their tea-things and put them into her basket. "One day these horrid boys will be punished for being so nasty to us!"

"Oh, will we?" squeaked Cuthbert Coote. "How awful!"

His precious pals laughed like anything to hear him trying to imitate Betty's voice. Then, as Mickey and Betty went away, they started to unpack their own hampers, which were crammed with cakes and tarts and pies and ginger pop and other good things to eat and drink.

"We were having ever such a nice time!" quavered poor Betty, as she and Mickey wandered sadly homewards through the woods. "They had no right to spoil our picnic like that, had they, Mickey?"

"No, they hadn't!" said Mickey. Then he added wistfully: "I only wish I were as big as they! They wouldn't have chased us away so easily if I were nearer their size!"

Then both he and Betty nearly jumped out of their skins! For a sudden mighty voice beside them boomed:

"Greetings, my children! Whither go ye and why do you look so sad?"

Mickey and Betty turned round. Standing gazing at them was a tall, bearded man wearing a green turban and long, green robes. His name was Akbar el Bagrag. He was a wizard who had been imprisoned for two thousand years in a brass bottle.

Mickey had accidentally knocked the stopper out of the bottle, thus releasing the wizard. The old chap was so grateful to Mickey for this that he was always popping up to grant him his wishes, to reward his action.

"Tell me, O Most Noble of Youths," cried the Wizard in his great booming voice, "why dost thou and thy little sister look so sorrowful of countenance?"

"We were having such a lovely picnic, Mr. Bagrag," cried Betty, before Mickey could speak, "and some horrid boys from St. Claude's School came and chased us away."

She thereupon told the wizard everything which had happened. As he listened, the wizard's glittering eyes fairly blazed with rage.

"By the Great Toe of Tarka! But this is too much!" he thundered, when Betty had finished. "I will smite those witless oafs into dust finer by far than the smallest grains of desert sand!"

"No, no, Mr. Bagrag, please don't do that!" cried Mickey in alarm, grabbing him by the sleeve of his long, green robe, for Mickey knew the wondrous magic powers of the wizard, and he knew jolly well that the old chap was quite capable of carrying out his threat. "Please, don't smite them into dust, Mr. Bagrag!"

"Always thou pleadest for those that treat thee most ill, O Youth of Boundless Kindness!" grumbled the wizard. "Yet I can refuse thee nought. So I will refrain from smiting the brainless sons of twenty thousand witless asses into dust. But punished they must be! I, Akbar el Bagrag, have spoken!"

He stood stroking his beard and scowling fiercely at the ground. Then suddenly his scowl vanished, and he chuckled.

" I have it ! " he cried triumphantly. " I know what I will do ! I will smite the wretches into the semblance of squint-eyed, piebald apes of hideous aspect ! "

" No, no ! " cried Mickey quickly.

But the wizard had already raised his hand and was muttering something in his beard.

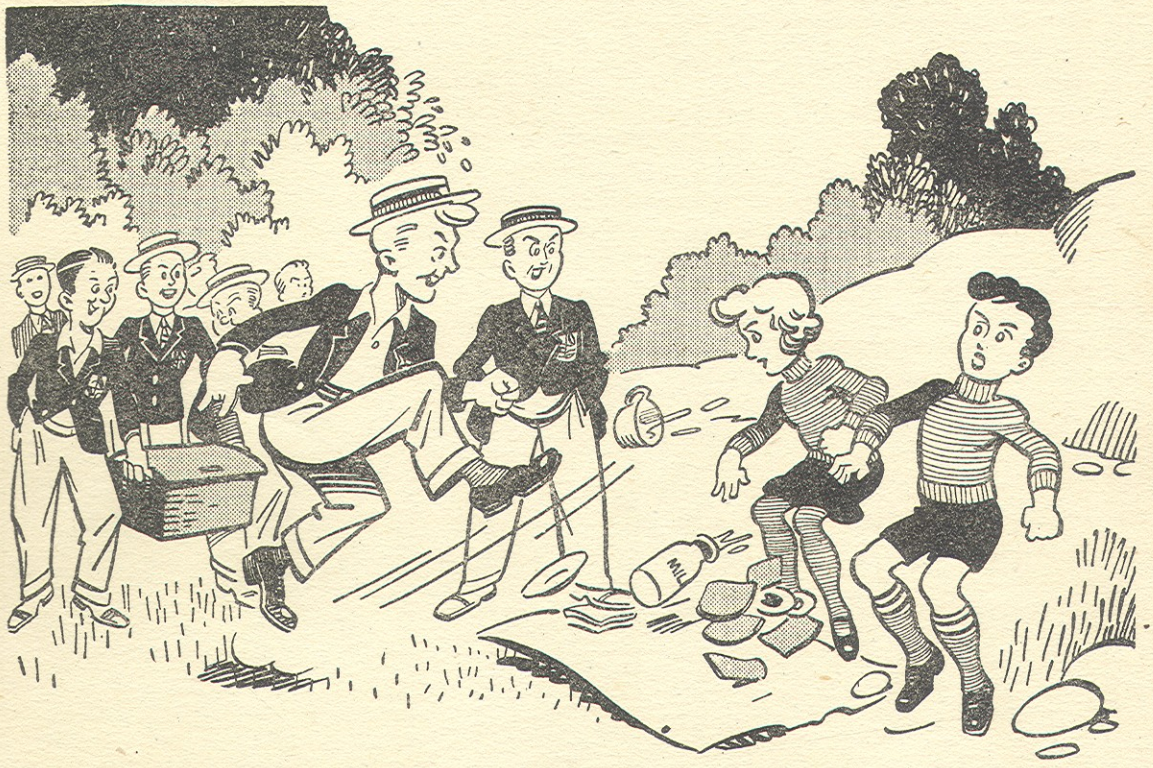
" 'Tis done, my son ! " he chuckled, looking at Mickey. " Those miserable oafs who attacked thee and thy little sister are now a swarm of squint-eyed apes of an aspect most hideous ! "

Next instant, the wizard had changed into a spinning column of greenish smoke which shot up and vanished away above the tree-tops.

Meanwhile the St. Claudites had got the shock of their lives ! They were sitting tucking into their pies and cakes and sandwiches and ginger pop, and laughing like anything to think how they had chased Mickey and Betty away when, without warning, the most frightful thing happened ! For the whole lot of them were suddenly changed into a bunch of the ugliest, squint-eyed apes you could ever imagine !

For a moment they sat staring at each other absolutely horror-stricken. Then they let out the most ear-splitting howls of rage and terror !

" What's happened ? " they howled.



" Get away from here, you common little twerps ! " cried one of them, giving Betty's cup a kick which sent it flying.

" We've been turned into apes ! "

" But how ? "

" It must be something we've either eaten or drunk ! "

" Oh dear, isn't it awful ? "

Nearly off their heads with surprise and horror, they jumped to their short hairy legs and ran aimlessly about for a few moments, crying and blubbering like the great cowards that they were.

" We'd better go and see Doctor Grumper ! " blubbered Marmaduke Mopp. Doctor Grumper was their headmaster.

" Yes, come on, let's ! " cried Ogden Pugg. " He'll get a doctor or something for us ! "

Away the whole bunch of them scuttled, leaving their cakes and tarts and pies and sandwiches and everything ! They were in far too great a fright to bother about things like that.

Mickey and Betty heard them coming howling and blubbering through the wood, and they got behind a tree to let them pass, for they thought the great bullies might try to vent their wrath and fright on them.

" Don't they look awful ? " said Mickey, peeping round the tree as the bunch of apes went scuttling past.

" It serves them right." said Betty severely. " It wouldn't have happened if they hadn't been so horrid to us. Mr. Bagrag was quite right to turn them into apes ! "

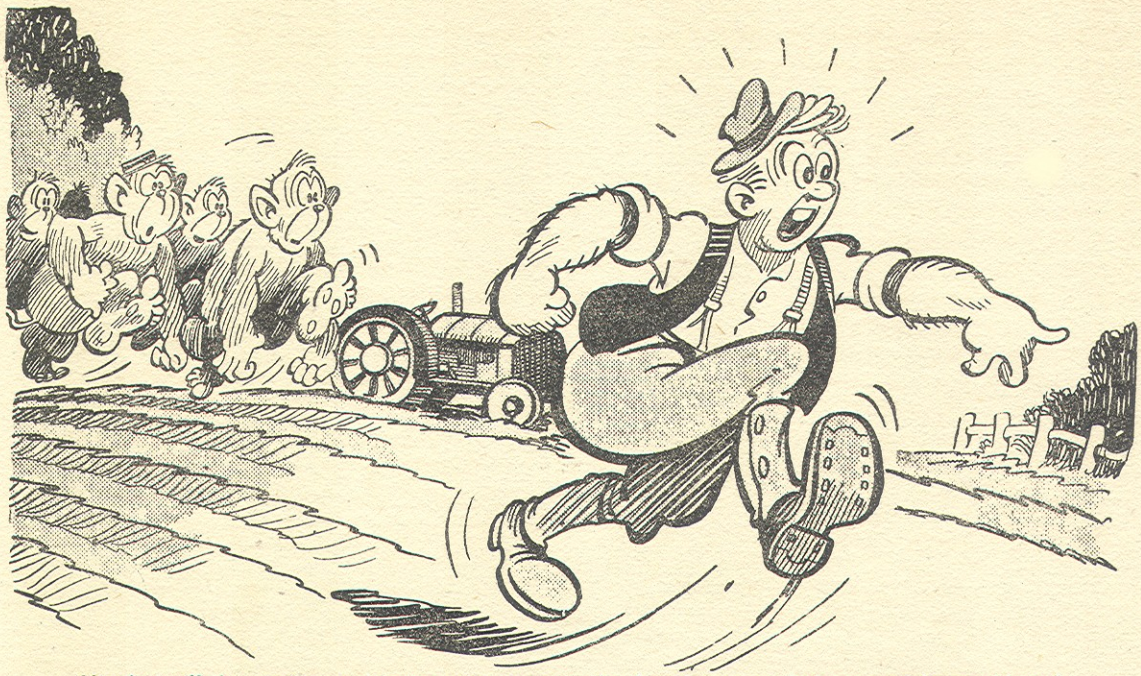
It occurred to Marmaduke Mopp that, as they had been turned into such ugly-looking creatures, it might be better to keep off the roads. So he said to his pals :

" I think it'll be better if we take a short cut across the fields. We don't want to be seen on the roads, or people'll think we've escaped from some bally circus or something ! "

His pals all agreed, because they didn't want to be chased by people with sticks, or—dreadful thought—with guns. So the whole bunch of them turned off and scuttled away across the fields towards the school.

The only person they saw was a farm labourer driving a tractor. When he saw the bunch of frightful-looking apes scuttling across the field he got such a fright that he nearly fell off the tractor ! But when he heard them blubbering and crying, and calling to each other in human voices, he shot off the tractor and tore away towards the farmhouse as fast as ever he could. His eyes were nearly sticking out

For a moment they sat staring at each other, absolutely horror-stricken.



He shot off the tractor and tore away towards the farmhouse as fast as ever he could go !

of his head, and he kept gasping over and over again :

" I'm seeing things ! I've gorn mad ! That's what it is ! I've gorn mad ! Talking monkeys ! Oh gosh ! "

He burst into the farmhouse where the farmer and his wife were sitting having tea.

" I've gorn mad ! " he wailed. " I've just seen a bunch of ugly talking monkeys crossing the five-acre field ! "

" Talking monkeys ! " ejaculated the farmer, staring at him in astonishment.

" Yes, they was talking to each other in human voices and snivelling and crying just like as if they was human," gasped the other. " It hasn't half given me a turn, I can tell you ! "

" It's the sun," said the farmer sympathetically. " You've got a touch o' sunstroke, that's what you've got, and it's making you fancy things. You lie down and have a nice hot cup of tea and you'll soon be better."

By this time Marmaduke Mopp and his pals had reached the wall which surrounded the school grounds. Being a Saturday afternoon, and therefore, a half-holiday, Doctor Grumper, the headmaster, was entertaining a party of friends to tea on the nice, smooth lawn in front of the school.

Now that they were apes, Marmaduke Mopp and his pals climbed the school wall as easily as anything, because, like all apes, they were first-class climbers.

" And now to find old Grumper," said Marmaduke Mopp. " Oh, look, there he is, having tea on the lawn. Come on ! "

One of the ladies of Doctor Grumper's tea-party was the first to spot the apes making towards them across the lawn.

Needless to say, she got the fright of her life ! So much so that she let out an ear-splitting screech.

" Oh, look ! " she cried, pointing at the apes with a trembling finger.

" Goodness gracious me ! " gasped Doctor Grumper, leaping to his feet in such a fright that he sent his chair over backwards. " What — what frightful brutes ! Wherever can they have come from ? "

None of his guests stayed to answer him. Screeching and bawling with fright, they were already tearing madly across

the lawn towards the school. Doctor Grumper followed them. And he ran so fast that he not only caught them up, but passed them and shot into the school ahead of them!

"Quick! Quick!" he panted, fairly trembling with fright. "Oh, do, please hurry!"

Next moment, as the last of his guests rushed in through the doorway, he slammed and bolted the door.

"There!" he gasped, taking out his handkerchief with a trembling hand and mopping at his brow. "Phew, what an experience! I am quite sure the brutes meant to attack us. They were making straight for us. They must have escaped from a circus or somewhere!"

"Have you got a gun?" demanded one of his guests, a red-faced, peppery little gentleman named Colonel Crowdey.

"No, I'm—I'm sorry to say I haven't," panted Doctor Grumper.

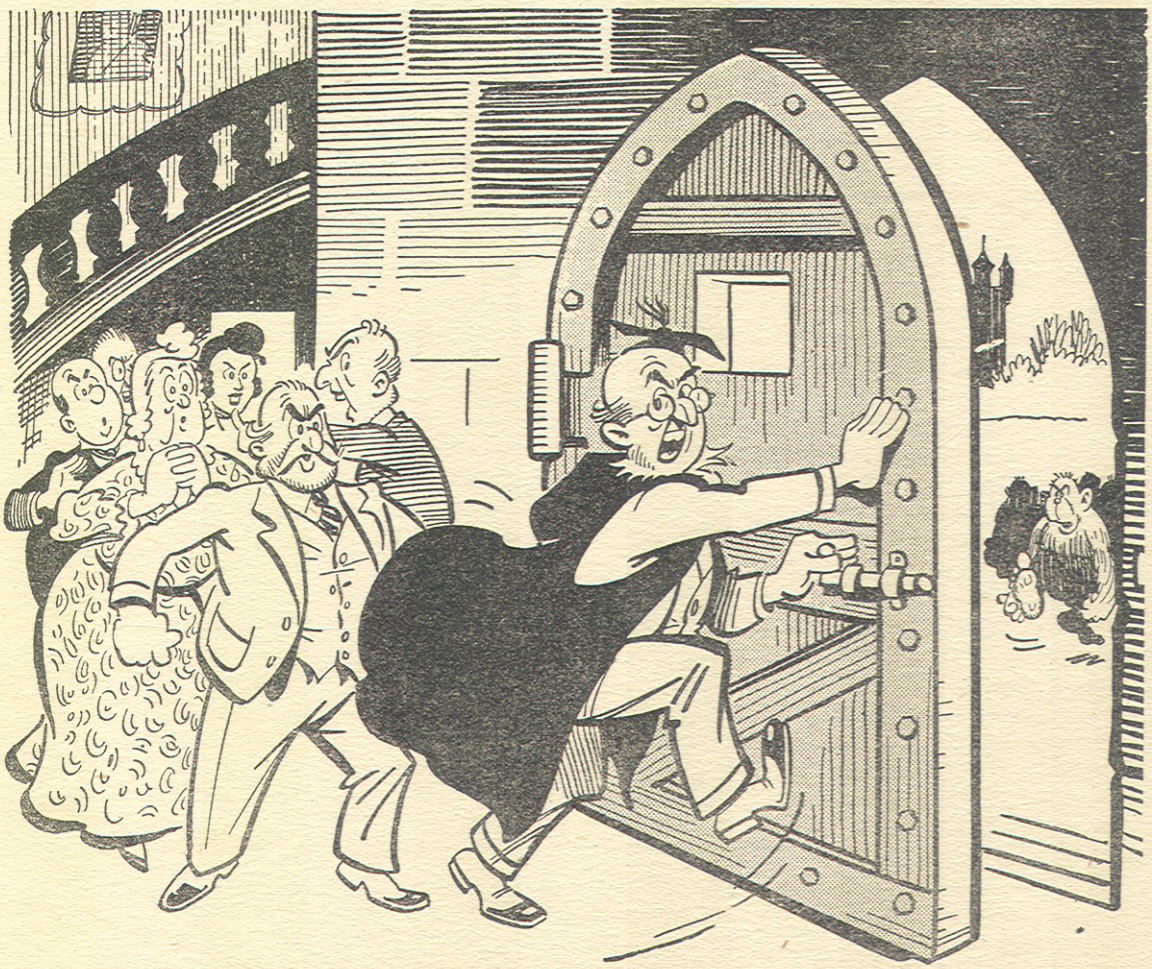
"That's a pity," snorted the Colonel. "If you had, I'd shoot them, by George! Just pick 'em off one by one from an upstairs window. Jumping Jimminy! is that them knocking at the door?"

Someone was certainly knocking hard on the door.

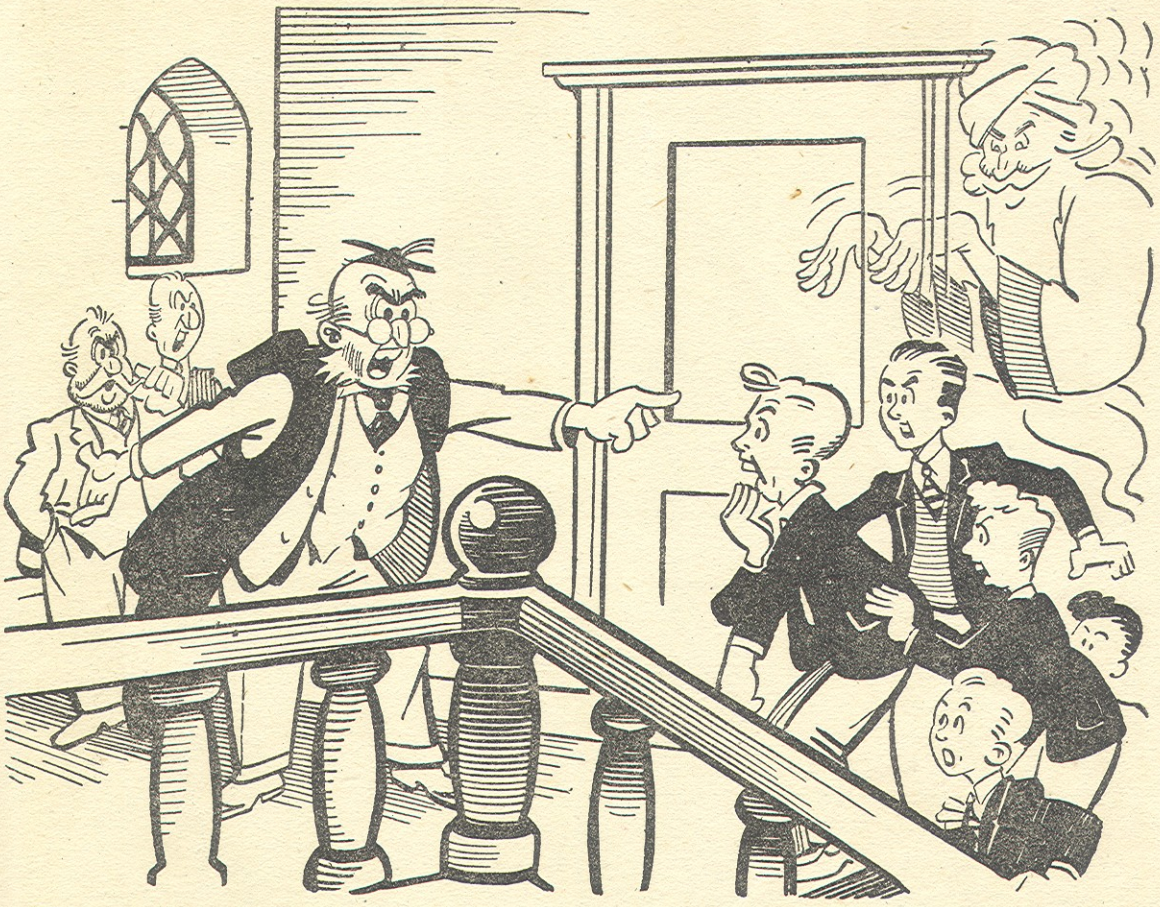
"Who's there?" bawled Doctor Grumper.

"It's Marmaduke Mopp, sir," came a voice from the other side of the door.

"Goodness me!" gasped the Doctor, pulling back the bolt. "We cannot leave



Next moment, as the last of the guests rushed through the doorway, he slammed and bolted the door.



The moment he saw they really were some of his boys, and not apes at all, Doctor Grumper nearly burst with rage.

the poor boy out there. We'll let him in!"

He pulled open the door. As he did so, he nearly fainted with fright. For, standing out there was the whole bunch of hideous, squint-eyed apes.

A frantic pushing, jostling and struggling went on as Doctor Grumper and his terrified guests fought to get up the stairs. Doctor Grumper reached the head of the stairs and rushed into the nearest bed-room. He was followed by his terrified guests, who were nearly off their heads with fright, for the apes were following them up the stairs and crying in human voices:

"Oh, sir, don't run away! We're some of your boys! Oh, sir, do send for a doctor!"

But it wasn't necessary to send for a doctor. For at that very moment the wizard, took pity on the wretched boys and changed them back into their proper selves.

The moment he saw that they really were some of his boys and not apes at all, Doctor Grumper burst with rage!

"What is the meaning of this?" he thundered. "How dare you play such an impudent trick on us. Go to my study immediately, where I will give you a thrashing which you will not lightly forget!"

But Doctor Grumper didn't carry out his threat. He could see that Marmaduke and his pals had been sufficiently punished for their prank. But, of course, they wouldn't have had their horrid adventure at all, if they hadn't been such awful little snobs to Mickey and Betty.

THE END

TOUGH BUT TENDER TEX

Printed in England and Published by The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, England. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.: for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd. This book may only be exported to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa by the appointed Sole Agent.

Where's our Bournville Cocoa?

Ooh! Doesn't it look good — just like chocolate! That's the way I like it, Mum — right up to the top. Good for me? Well, if you say so I s'pose it is, but all I know is I love the taste and so do the other chaps. Another cup? Rather! All right, young Tom, no need to push — there's enough for both of us!

CADBURY
means Quality