KNOCKOUT FUN BOOK 1947

HULLO, EVERYBODY!

Here's three hundred and sixty-five days' laughter and jollity for you in the 1947 edition of the KNOCKOUT FUN BOOK.

Don't forget that some of your friends may not have had the luck to get copies themselves, so—

SHARE YOUR FUN WITH EVERYONE,

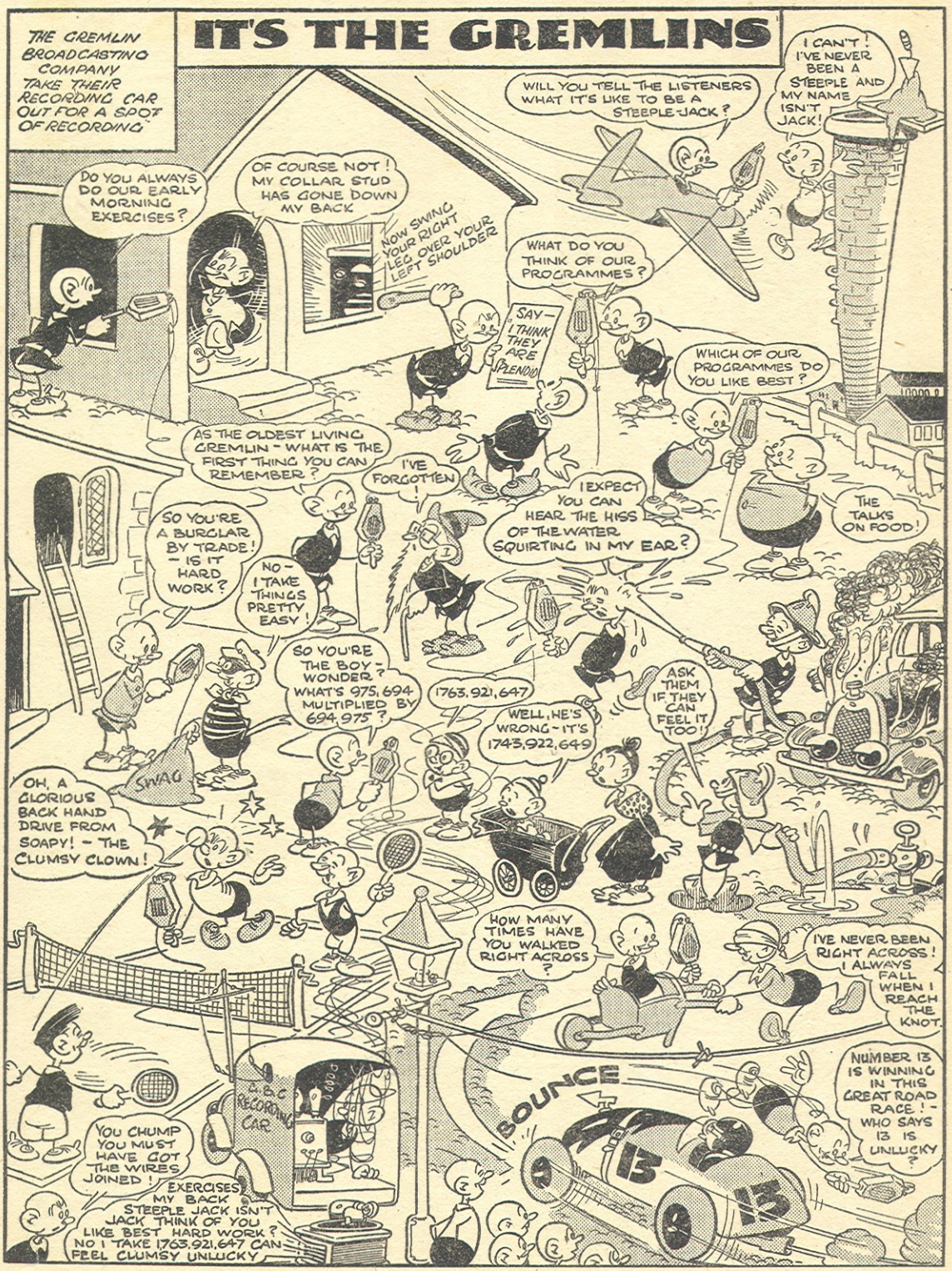
and happy reading to you all!

THE EDITOR

THE MEETING IN THE MEADOW

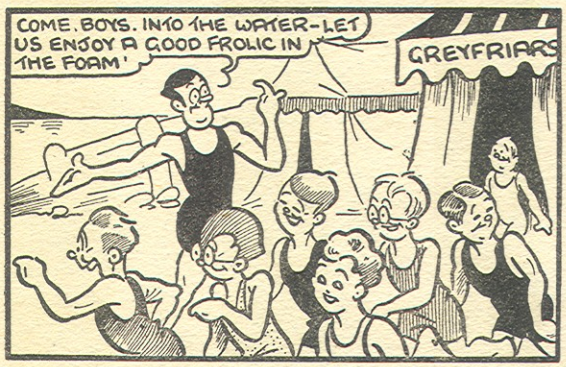
Frontispiece KO

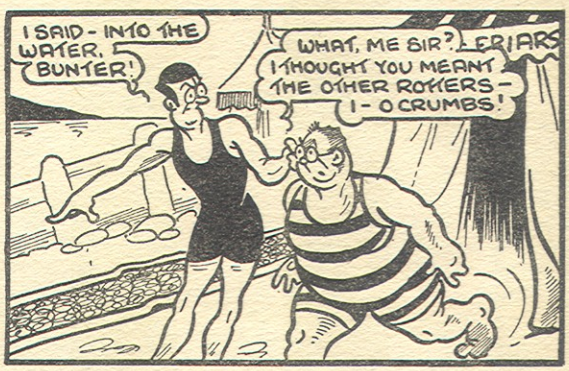
Mr. Badger calls a Meeting of the Woodland Folk to decide what is to be done about the threat to their homes. *(See story on page 33.)*


IT'S THE GREMLINS
THE GREMLIN BROADCASTING COMPANY TAKE THEIR RECORDING CAR OUT FOR A SPOT OF RECORDING
DO YOU ALWAYS DO OUR EARLY MORNING EXERCISES?
OF COURSE NOT! MY COLLAR STUD HAS GONE DOWN MY BACK
NOW SWING YOUR RIGHT LEG OVER YOUR LEFT SHOULDER
WILL YOU TELL THE LISTENERS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A STEEPLE-JACK?
I CAN'T! I'VE NEVER BEEN A STEEPLE AND MY NAME ISN'T JACK!
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF OUR PROGRAMMES?
SAY— I THINK THEY ARE SPLENDID
WHICH OF OUR PROGRAMMES DO YOU LIKE BEST?
THE TALK'S ON FOOD!
AS THE OLDEST LIVING GREMLIN - WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU CAN REMEMBER?
I'VE FORGOTTEN!
I EXPECT YOU CAN HEAR THE HISS OF THE WATER SQUIRTING IN MY EAR?
SO YOU'RE A BURGLAR BY TRADE! - IS IT HARD WORK?
NO - I TAKE THINGS PRETTY EASY!
SWAG
SO YOU'RE THE BOY-WONDER? WHAT'S 975,694 MULTIPLIED BY 694,975?
1763,921,647
WELL, HE'S WRONG - IT'S 1743,922,649
ASK THEM IF THEY CAN FEEL IT TOO!
OH, A GLORIOUS BACK HAND DRIVE FROM SOAPY! - THE CLUMSY CLOWN!
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU WALKED RIGHT ACROSS?
I'VE NEVER BEEN RIGHT ACROSS! I ALWAYS FALL WHEN I REACH THE KNOT
B.B.C. RECORDING CAR
BOUNCE
13
NUMBER 13 IS WINNING IN THIS GREAT ROAD RACE! - WHO SAYS 13 IS UNLUCKY?
YOU CHUMP YOU MUST HAVE GOT THE WIRES JOINED!
EXERCISES MY BACK STEEPLE JACK ISN'T JACK THINK OF YOU LIKE BEST HARD WORK? NO I TAKE 1763,921,647 CAN FEEL CLUMSY UNLUCKY

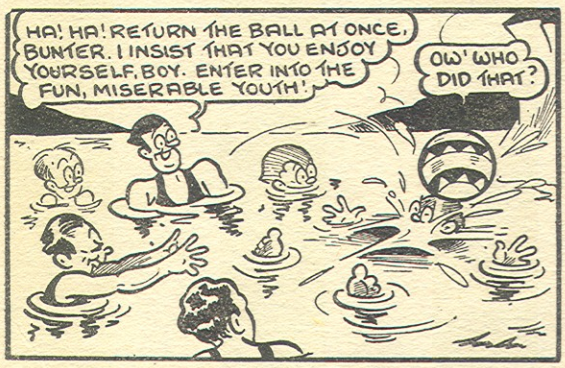
BILLY BUNTER

THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH.

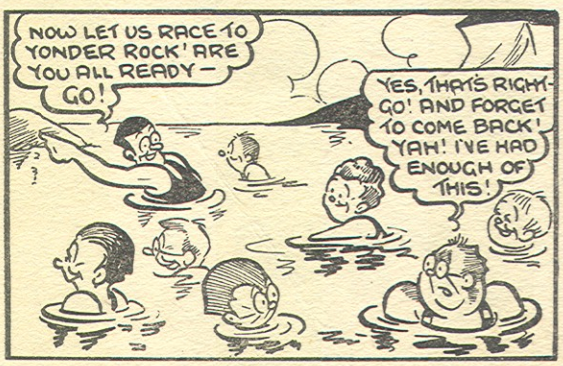


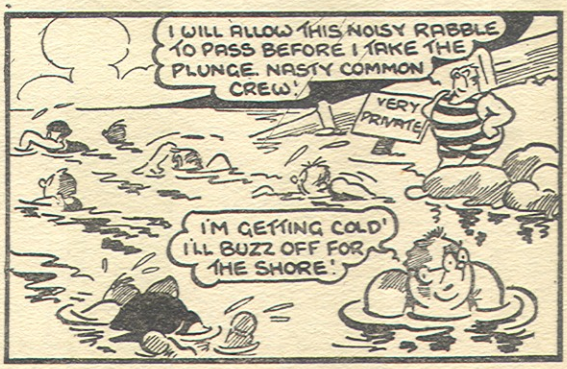


1. The Greyfriars lads were down at Roll-on-the-Sea for the day, chums, and Quelchy decided to have a splosh-about in the mighty ocean. Coo, the lads were bucked—all except William George Bunter. He always did shrink from water.

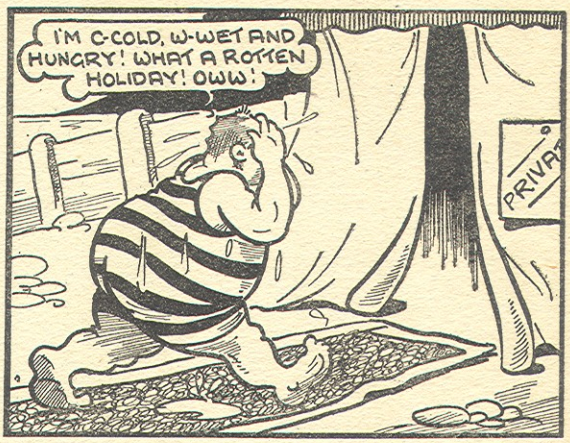


2. But Quelchy grabbed him by the ear and forced him to the foam, bustled him down the beach and shoved him in the sea. And there they played water polo. How Billy hated it—especially when the ball got him on the napper and half-drowned him.

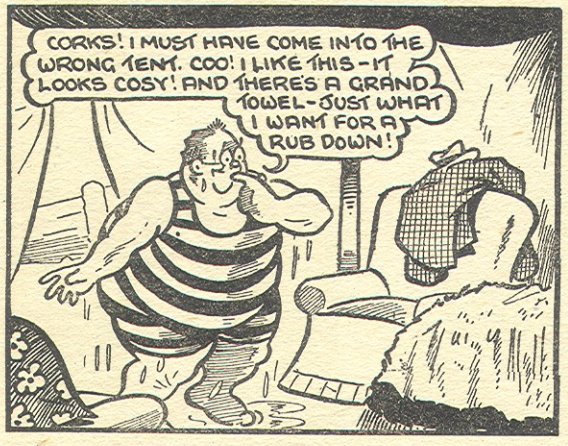




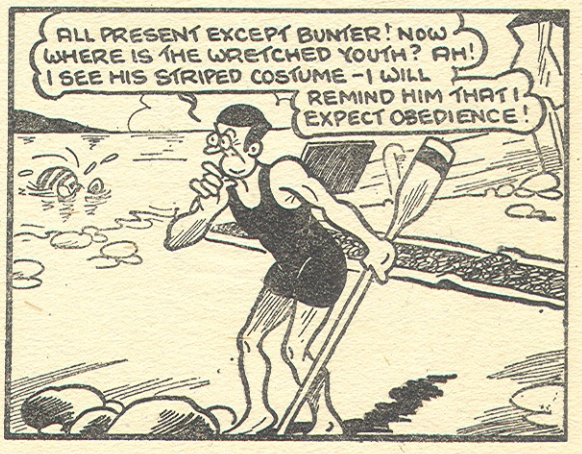
3. Then Quelchy started a race to yonder rock. Billy let 'em race! He'd had enough of slopping about in water. It made him wetter than usual. Meanwhile, Lord Proppahposh waited for the rabble to fade before he started his paddling.



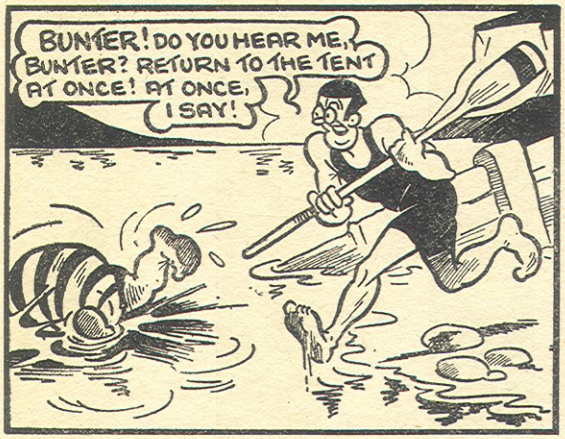
4. He didn't notice our Billy left behind by the rabble and crawling out of the mighty ocean. Of course, when Billy got out of the water the tide went out, so Lord Wotsit had farther to go to reach the sea. Not that Billy cared a hoot. He had wetness all over him, in his eyes, ears, nose and mouth. He was wobbling like a jelly with cold. Likewise he was fed-up.

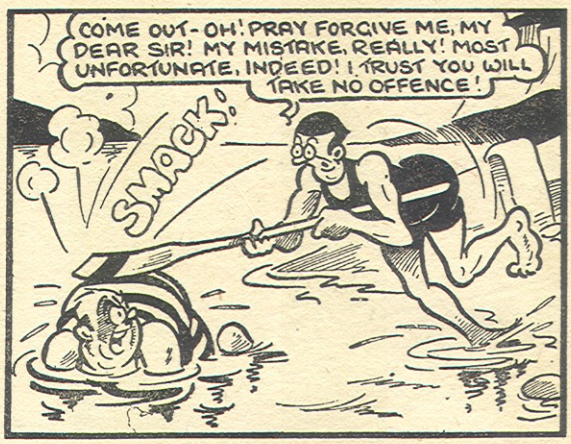


5. And, not looking where he was going because of the briny in his peepers, he stumbled slap into a tent. He thought, at first, it was the Greyfriars' tent, but it wasn't. Still, there was a real posh towel waiting to be wiped on—rather different from Billy's utility rubber. So why not use it? There wasn't much towel for so much boy, but our Billy never was fussy.

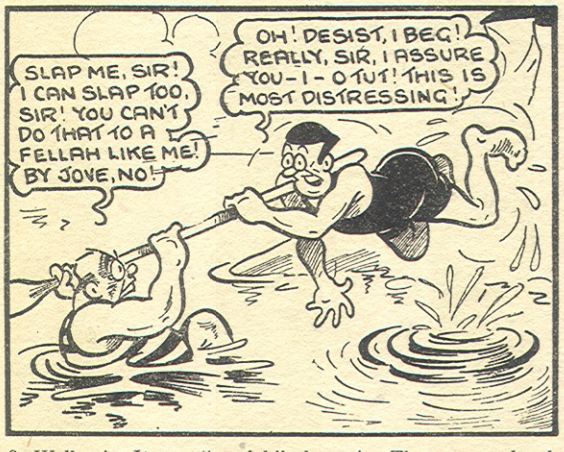


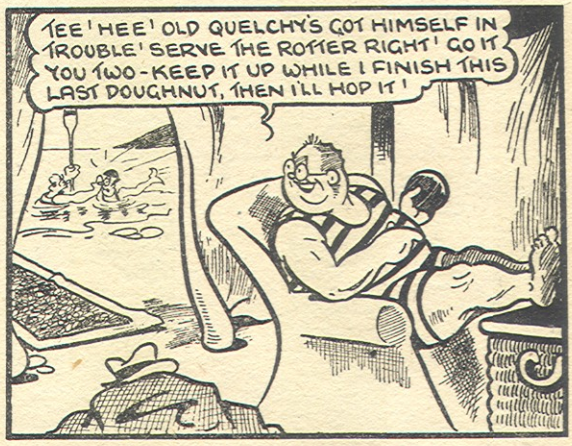
6. But Quelchy had won the race to yonder rock and had brought the lads back again. "Back to our tents, boys," he burbled. "Do not dally lest you catch a chill." Oh, a very wise old bird was Quelchy. But just in case he'd left a little lad in the mighty ocean, he counted 'em in. And one was missing! But 'twas not a little lad. 'Twas Bunter!



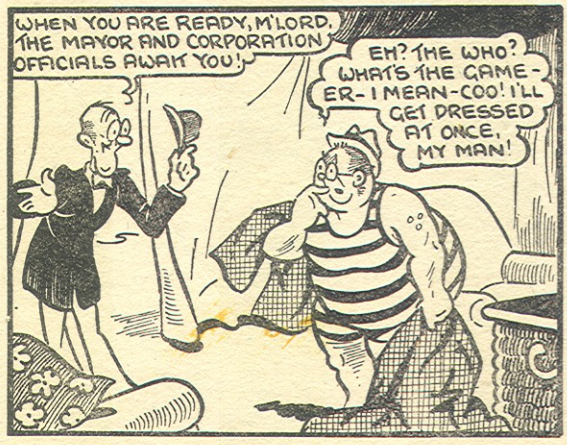


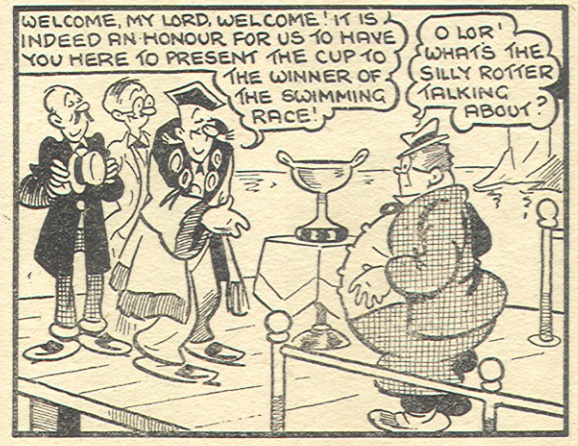
7. Moreover, he was not drowned, for Quelchy could see the rear portion of his striped swim suit bobbing about in the mighty doings. Coo, Quelchy was annoyed! How dare Bunter stay in when he was told to come out! He'd show him! And seizing an oar, Quelchy dashed into the surf, boiling with anger. And he slapped that striped swim suit heartily.



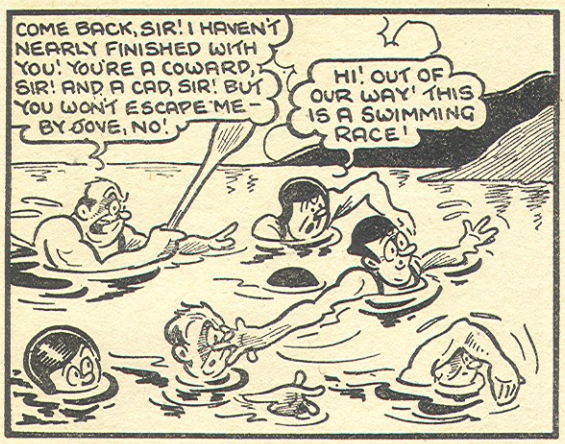


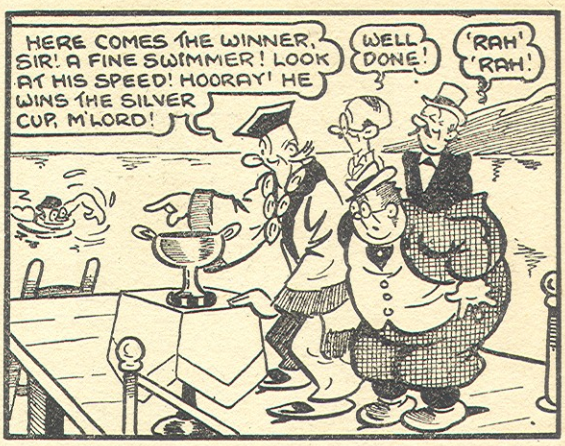
8. Wallop! It was "oarful," chums! There was a howl, and up popped the bather's head. To Quelchy's horror, 'twas not our Billy at all! 'Twas Lord Proppahposh, and he simply hated having his swim suit knocked about like that. He got hold of that oar and pulled Quelchy down. In two ticks there was a naval battle going on. But Billy didn't care!



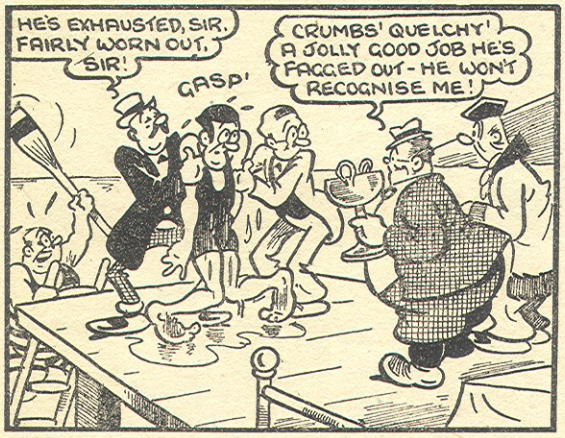


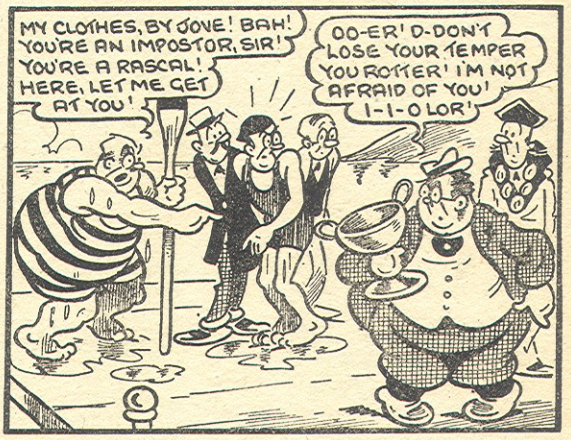
9. He had found some grub in that tent and was intent and in tent putting it where the moths couldn't get at it. He wanted to finish the grub, but before he could hop it, a gentleman's gentleman—his lordship's batman, in fact—said that the Mayor and Corporation were waiting for our Billy. Leastways, they were waiting for somebody!



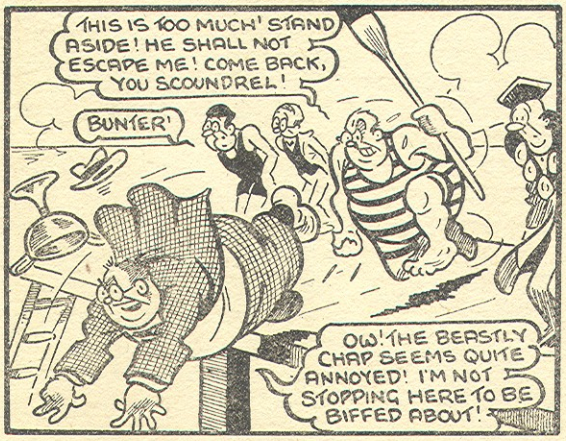


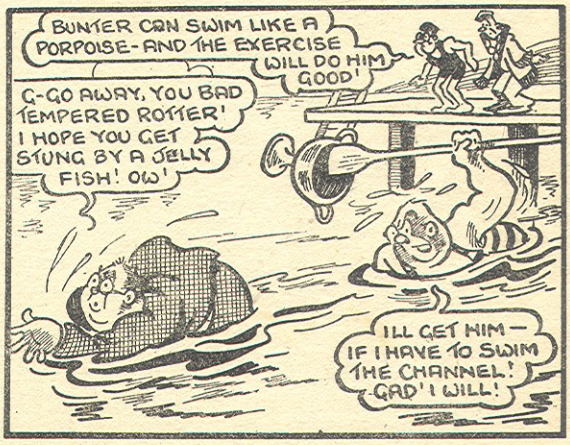
10. So Billy dressed in the only togs he could find and went off to see the Mayor and the other old fossils. He couldn't do anything else without giving away the fact that he wasn't Lord Proppahposh. Maybe the gent who came wasn't a servant after all. Maybe he was the Town Clerk. Billy didn't know. Meanwhile, Quelchy was racing away from old Proppahposh.



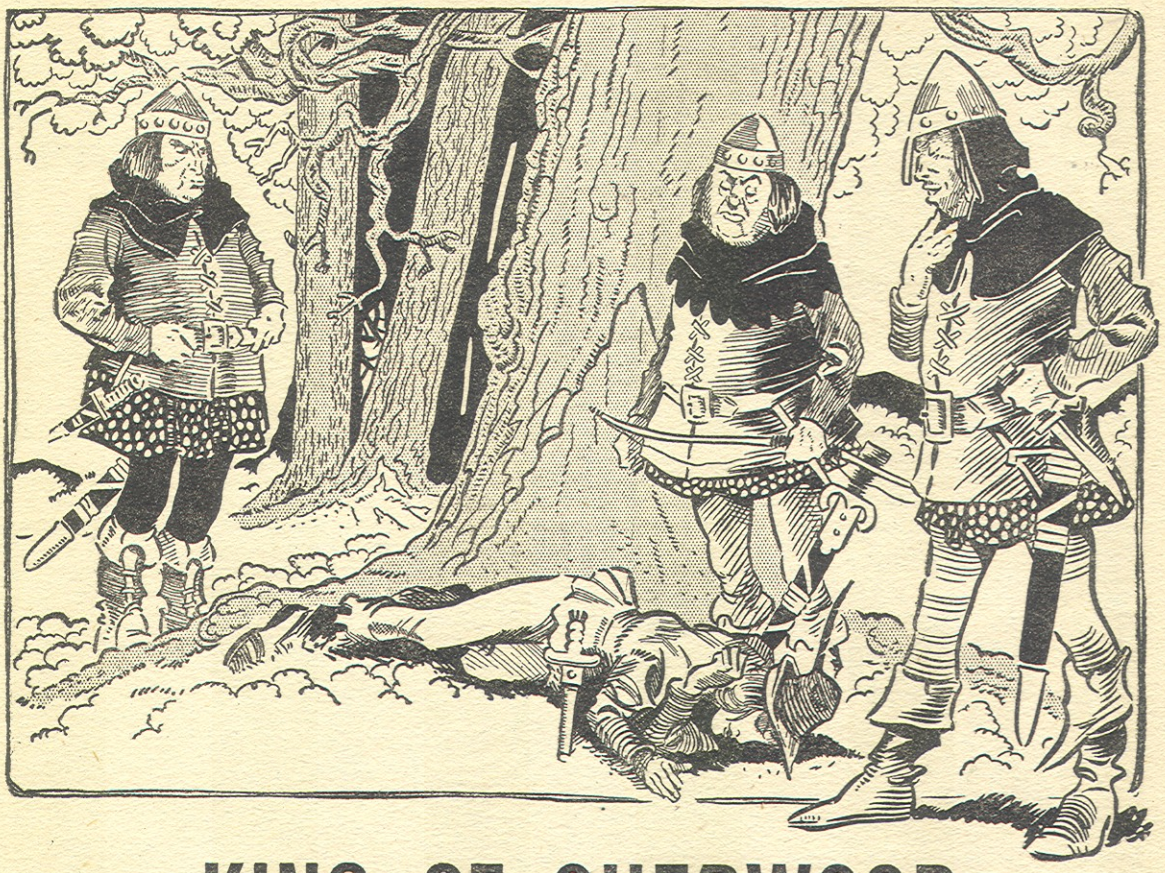


11. In fact, he had the breeze up so much that he raced the racers all the way to the pier. And the Mayor said he'd won and would m'Lord hand him the Cup! Billy grinned. He reckoned Quelchy was far too exhausted and out of puff to recognise him. And he was right! But although Lord Proppahposh didn't recognise our Billy, he did recognise his own utility suit.





12. Crumbs, that did it, chums! Lord Proppahposh still clutched the oar, and he was real mad. Billy wasn't staying there to be biffed around. He dived into the mighty ocean and Lord Proppahposh dived too. And what happened after that is nobody's business, chums. Our Billy had a tough time, and now he says you can keep the mighty ocean!



KING OF SHERWOOD

A Thrilling Tale of the Days of Robin Hood, and How He and His Merry Men Fought the Norman Barons!

Maid Marion's Peril

FOR a hundred and fifty years the English had writhed under the sway of the Norman barons—conquered but defiant, since Harold, the last of the Saxon Kings, had died at Hastings, valiantly defending his banner and the honour of England.

Young Dirk o' the Fens shivered as he shifted his gaze from the grim fortress of Nottingham Castle to the leafy surroundings of Sherwood Forest. The castle, emblem of Norman tyranny, was garrisoned at this time by French troops, and other foreign hirelings. The open glade shimmered in the heat of the sun and near by, Jonkyn, Dirk's little donkey, cropped contentedly at the luscious grass.

Dirk stretched himself on the greensward and rested on a ragged elbow.

His face broke into a grin as Jonkyn, full of the joy of living, kicked his hind legs in the air.

"Aye, Jonkyn," the boy murmured. "Happy y'are, no doubt. But then there's good reason, d'ye see, for I'm your master—and a good master withal!"

Jonkyn brayed as if in agreement, and shook his shaggy head, his eyes twinkling roguishly in Dirk's direction.

Dirk continued:

"But lookee, Jonkyn, I'm a Saxon

and we Saxons have Norman masters. There's the difference, my friend. You have a Saxon for a master and so are happy. I —why, every Norman lout is my overlord, and so "—he sighed—" my life at times is a heavy burden."

He fingered a few trinkets laid out on the grass beside him.

" To think, Jonkyn, that I, the son of a Fenland thane, should have to sell combs, knives, ribbons and the like, to earn an honest living in this, my own country!"

He plucked a grass-stem and gnawed at it savagely.

" Home pillaged and completely destroyed, my father slain because he sought to defend his property. Aye, there is much these Norman thieves have to answer for —and in all England, only one man who still fights for freedom—one man, and his name, my stout Jenkyn? Why, Robin Hood to be sure! "

Dirk rolled over on to his back.

" Mayhap things will change when King Richard returns from the Crusades," he muttered. " Who knows? He's a Norman, true, but at least he's a just man. In the meanwhile, that villainous brother of his, Prince John, reigns supreme—wreaking his cruel will on the Saxon poor, squeezing their almost empty purses dry to pay his taxes. John, John—'tis not an ill name, Jonkyn! Forsooth! 'tis your own, but methinks I do you an injustice to call you by the same name as our ruler."

He crossed his legs, thrust his hands behind his head and stared up at the blue sky. The sun shone upon the forest, and the air was laden with heat.

Willy-nilly, Dirk's thoughts wandered aimlessly, and his eyes opened and closed drowsily. He had just partaken of a frugal meal of bread and cheese, and he was tired.

All morning he had been trying to sell his wares to the soldiers in Nottingham Castle, but had been met only with jeering laughter. One dagger only had he sold, and, in exchange, had received a groat, flung at him by a burly ruffian.

Suddenly the peace and quiet of Sherwood was broken by several hoarse voices, shouting amid the ring of steel.

Dirk opened his eyes, blinked and leaped to his feet. He strained his ears as the voices wavered and seemed to die away in the distance.

He stood silent for a while and then shrugged his shoulders.

" More violence," he said curtly, and commenced to pick up his goods. " I must be off. It ill becomes even an innocent passer-by to become entangled in Norman villainy "

He whistled to Jonkyn, packed the trinkets into a shabby leather saddle-bag, and was about to mount the donkey, when he heard the sound of laboured breathing—then rapid footsteps—and the bushes parted as a young man reeled into the glade.

The newcomer stumbled, sought vainly to retain his footing, but fell to one knee as Dirk ran forward.

The man's left arm and hand were stained with blood. Long, curly yellow hair streamed over his shoulders.

" A Saxon," said Dirk to himself, for no Norman born possessed hair of that distinctive colouring.

" Leave me, lad—the Normans are after me! " groaned the wounded Saxon, and Dirk was strangely surprised, when he heard the voice. The jerkin of soft doeskin that clothed the shapely body, the Lincoln green tights and leather boots were the costume of a man—but the voice was a girl's!

Eyes wide-open, Dirk stared down into the girl's lovely face. What mystery was this? Who was the girl? What was she doing dressed as a man? His mind ran riot with questions but he realised that there was no time to put them into words.

The girl winced and bit her lips as, without thinking, Dirk grasped her wounded arm.

" Quick! " he cried. " Into the forest—let us seek shelter there! "

Despite his earlier statement that no good could come of being " entangled in Norman villainy," he had already decided that he would help this girl.

Wearily, she braced herself and, with Dirk's help, stood up. He carefully placed her undamaged arm around his neck and led her into the shady woodland.

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Wearily, she braced herself and, with Dirk's help, stood up. He carefully placed her undamaged arm around his neck and led her into the shady woodland.

And now, like the baying of a pack of bloodhounds on the trail, there surged through the forest the roar of their pursuers.

The girl said, " I blundered right into a score of men-at-arms then . . . gave a good account of myself, though . . . downed one of the rogues . . . but too many of them . . . wounded me in the arm . . ."

Her voice trailed away and she sagged in Dirk's arms.

" 'Tis of no avail, lad. I can go no farther."

Behind them the Normans were drawing nearer, following the trail of blood left by the wounded girl.

Desperately Dirk looked round at the sturdy oaks, searching for a hiding place—but too late. The jingle of mail came to their ears, and through the trees they saw sunlight glinting on armour breastplates.

" Leave me, lad," begged the girl. " Run—or you, too, will be taken."

Dirk shook his head resolutely.

" For the first time, I've done running from Normans," he replied quietly, and drew his dagger.

The girl frowned.

" Leave me, I say." Her eyes narrowed. " If you would do me a service, make your way deeper into the forest ! "

" But——" began Dirk. The girl shook her head as though she knew what he was going to say.

" The Normans will not follow you. This is Robin Hood's domain. Already they are deeper than is good for them. Find Robin . . . tell him Maid Marion has —has been captured and——"

Her eyes grew dull, and closed as her head fell back. Dirk lowered her gently to the ground. He listened for a moment to her heavy breathing, and then, as a small body of soldiers rushed through the trees towards him, he turned and vanished into the forest.

One of the Normans sought to follow him, but a companion caught hold of his arm and jerked him back.

" Fool," rasped the cautious one. " Let well alone. D'ye wish to fall into the hands of Robin Hood? He and his outlaws deal unpleasantly with Normans."

His rash friend muttered something to himself, but proceeded no further. He turned on his heel and rejoined his comrades, who were now gathered around Maid Marion.

One of them grinned, and rubbing his hands together, murmured, " A goodly prize, friends. 'Tis Maid Marion herself, Robin's fair lady. A right royal reward we'll receive from the Sheriff for this day's work, for the capture of the lass would lead to the downfall of Robin Hood. We'll spring a trap using Marion as bait—and Robin will walk into it as sure as my name's Red Dickon for, mark my words, he'll seek to rescue the girl, though devils bar the way."

Dirk Meets Robin Hood

MEANWHILE, Dirk was on his way to find Robin Hood, when suddenly a broad Saxon voice shouted at him, " Halt there ! " Dirk stood stock still. He was still bewildered by the turn of events.

Who was Maid Marion ? Where and how should he find Robin Hood? Robin Hood—this seemingly fabulous hero, who gaily flaunted his love of justice and freedom in the very faces of the Norman barons. He was soon to receive answers to all his questions !

" Halt there ! " and a stalwart figure, clothed richly in scarlet and green, bestrode the narrow trail leading through the forest. An arrow on a strung bow was aimed at Dirk's heart.

He fingered a hole in his threadbare jerkin, and thrust his head forward, trying to look bolder than he felt.

" Who—who are you ? " he wanted to know. He tried to summon a strong note into his voice, and was horrified that his voice should sound so weak.

The man facing him raised an eyebrow.

" And prithee, stripling—who holds this bow ? "

" Why, you do, sir ! "

" In that case, pert youngster, I ask the questions. What do you here ? "

Dirk felt that, behind the severity in the voice, there was an underlying teasing tone. Quick to perceive that the words held no real menace, he said outright :

" I seek Robin Hood ! "

The other pursed his lips and whistled softly between his teeth, but the arrow, pointing at Dirk, was as steady as ever.

" I seek Robin Hood," repeated Dirk.

" So do many people," answered the stranger. " May I ask why you are so anxious to meet Robin Hood? Know you not that he is declared an outlaw with a price on his head? "

Despite the man's words, Dirk felt somehow that he was one of Robin Hood's men, and he said :

" I do not care if Robin Hood has been outlawed by the Normans ! "

" Robin does," interposed the stranger.

" That isn't what I mean," returned Dirk. " What I mean to say is that I must see Robin Hood at once ! "

His lips tightened as he saw the stranger's face become alert. He decided to tell him the urgent news.

" Maid Marion has been captured by the Sheriff's men," he cried.

" What? " cried the man, utterly astonished at this message. Then he lowered his bow. " What's that you say? Maid Marion captured? "

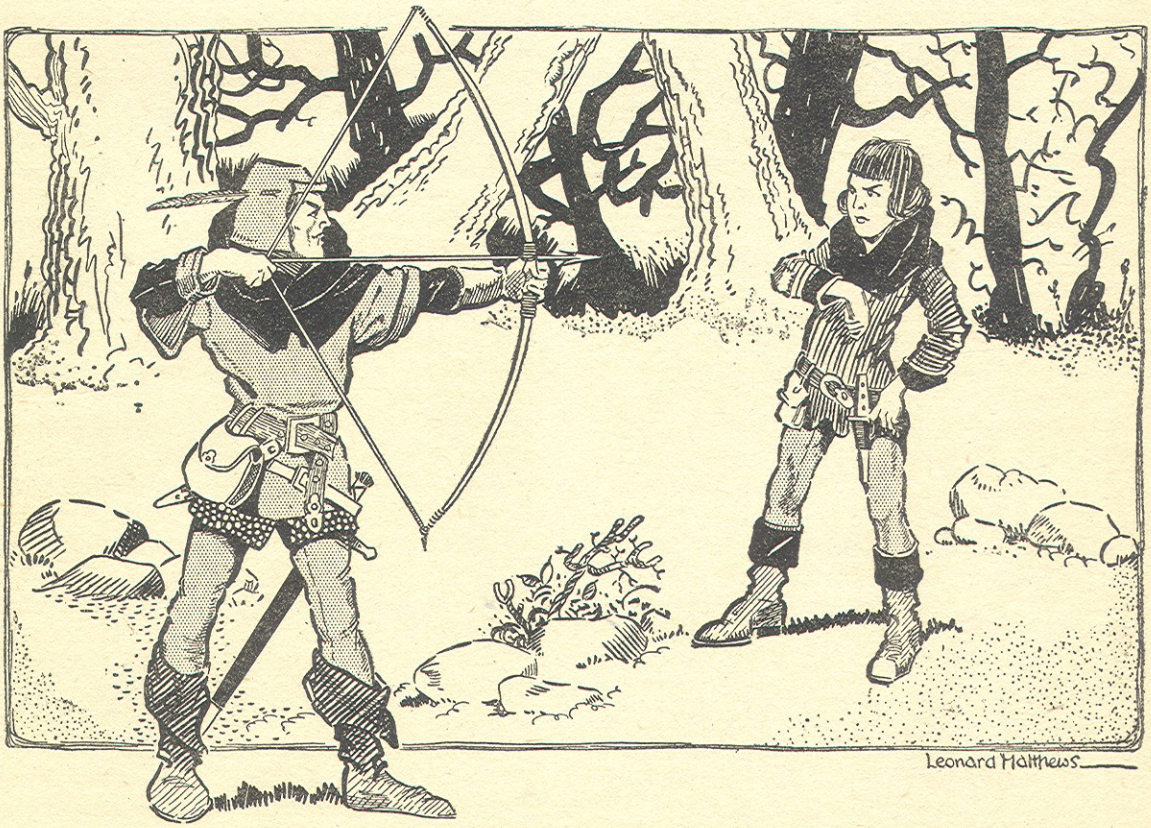
" Yes," cried Dirk, and the stranger saw that he spoke the truth.

" Follow me," he ordered. " I'll take you to Robin."

He strode silently forward, and Dirk fell into step beside him.

The boy saw that his companion knew the forest well, taking many short cuts through the trees. Sometimes, they found themselves knee-deep in ferns, and several times they had to wade across streams.

Dirk laboured along at his side as they went deeper and deeper into the heart of Sherwood Forest. He thought of the travellers' tales he had heard from time to time—of how it was possible to travel three days on horseback through Sherwood, and never see the sun. He had



" Halt there ! " rapped a broad Saxon voice, and Dirk stood stock still.

hardly believed this at first, but now he saw that it was true.

Darker and darker grew the forest, and the air became colder, where the sun could not break through.

Beneath his feet Dirk trod a thick carpet of bracken and dead leaves. He looked up at his companion. As if aware of this, the man looked down at him and said :

" If this is true, lad, it is indeed bad news."

As he said this, he slid round the gnarled trunk of an age-old oak tree. Dirk followed, and as he reached the farther side of the tree, it seemed to the boy as though he had stepped into Fairyland.

Out of the gloom of the wood, he was almost blinded by the brilliant sunlight, flooding a large clearing. He saw a number of men lounging idly, and in the centre of the clearing, burned a huge fire and a great haunch of venison revolved slowly on a turning spit.

A man over six feet in height was hacking a chunk out of the roasting meat. In his jaunty hat was a goose-quill and, apart from the knee boots of untanned leather, he was clad in Lincoln green. He looked over his shoulder, and Dirk saw a handsome man turn towards him. At the same moment, the stranger beside him called out, " Robin ! Bad news, I fear," and gestured towards Dirk.

Robin Hood, for it was none other, strode across the grass to where Dirk and his companion stood, and asked hastily :

" What is it, Will ? "

For answer Dirk stepped forward and told Robin Hood of his adventure, earlier in the day, and of Maid Marion's wounded arm.

While he was speaking, all Robin's Merry Men gathered round him. When Dirk had finished his story, Robin looked round at his outlaws.

A huge giant on Dirk's right thrust himself forward. " 'Tis a trick ! " he bellowed. " 'Tis an obvious snare, Robin ! Marion's safe—she can always be trusted to look after herself ! " He jerked his head in Dirk's direction. " The boy's a decoy—a tool of the Sheriff's ! "

Robin shook his head doubtfully.

" Nay, Little John," he said, smiling at the giant, " this lad speaks truth—I know it. What say you, Will ? 'Twas you found the youngster ! "

Will Scarlet fingered his chin.

" He's telling the truth, Robin. Marion's been missing for over three hours ! "

" Then we must find her," replied Robin simply, " and that right soon."

So this, thought Dirk, is Robin Hood—the man who helped the weak and the oppressed. The man who had refused to bend his knee to the Norman tyrant and so, like Dirk, had been deprived of his birthright and title—it was whispered that Robin Hood was really Robert, Earl of Huntingdon. A price was on his head, and he had retreated to Sherwood Forest, where he had mustered around him every Saxon who was young enough and courageous enough to bear arms against the common enemy.

" 'Tis well that you have brought me this news of Maid Marion, lad," said Robin Hood. " I thank you for your trouble ! " Dirk blushed, pleased to have praise from such a man. Robin continued, " She's a member of my band. We were betrothed before I was hunted into the forest. We plan to marry some day when I come into my own."

Dirk nodded.

" I see," he answered, but it wasn't until later that he learned how the gracious Lady Marion Fitzwarren had followed Robin into exile, to take her place at the side of the Saxon outlaw.

Will Scarlet, laid a hand on Robin's arm. He looked concerned.

" Let us now make our plans," he suggested.

" Yes, Will, we must needs make haste. 'Tis the only way. I already have a plan ! "

There was a rustle of excitement among the Merry Men.

" Speak, Robin," said a deep voice. " Speak, my son—let's know your plan ! The Normans surely need a lesson ! "

Dirk was amazed to see that the speaker was dressed in the attire of a Friar. He was a small, stout man, with twinkling eyes.

Robin laughed.

" Good Friar Tuck, not only you, but all my men, shall this day give them a lesson they will never forget ! "

Dirk was tense with excitement.

" Can I join you, Robin ?—I'm a Saxon," he said proudly. Robin glanced at the lad, a smile in his eyes.

To back up his words, Dirk told him swiftly of his own misfortunes. How his father had been slain by the Normans and his home destroyed.

A shadow passed across Robin's features.

" Who was responsible for all this ? " he asked.

" Hubert de Mandeville," said Dirk.

Little John, the giant, who appeared to be sorry that he'd doubted Dirk when he arrived, placed a large hand on the boy's shoulder.

" Hubert de Mandeville—the Sheriff of Nottingham ? " he said, and looked straight at Robin.

The outlaw leader smiled grimly.

" Dirk, you shall take your place with my men ! I owe you a debt today that shall be repaid without delay," and his smile boded naught but ill for Hubert de Mandeville, the evil Sheriff of Nottingham.

Without any delay Robin unfolded his plan to his comrades. As he finished, Will Scarlet raised a brown hand.

" But, Robin, you will be in deadly danger ! One man against the whole garrison——"

His leader waved his words aside.

" There is no time now for argument, Will ! As soon as you receive my signal you know what to do ! "

Will knew from experience that nothing he could say would stop Robin carrying out his plans, once his mind was made up !

He shrugged his shoulders and the outlaw band began to make their preparations for Robin's plan.

To Rescue Maid Marion

THE summer day was drawing to its close as a lonely figure approached the drawbridge of Nottingham Castle. Over one shoulder was slung the carcase of a boar, but the man carried the heavy load with ease.

As he neared the portcullis, a Norman soldier, sword drawn, barred the way.

" How now, sirrah ? " he cried. " Bespeak your errand ! "

The man carrying the boar was Robin Hood, but the Norman soldier had no idea of this.

" I am one of the Sheriff's foresters," he explained, speaking with a Norman accent. " I have slain a boar for the Sheriff's banquet tonight ! "

The soldier looked at him suspiciously, saw the forester's uniform and then, feeling that it was safe to do so, beckoned Robin into the castle-yard.

" Ye're late, man," he called out after Robin. " The banquet has already started ! "

Robin smiled to himself. His plan was working !

He shifted the boar on to his left shoulder so that his sword-arm was free, and made straight for the castle-keep, whence came the sounds of noisy revelry.

Sieur Hubert de Mandeville, Sheriff of Nottingham, was entertaining an old friend, Gui of Gisborne. He, too, was a villain, and was feared for his cruelty and violence.

A page and a couple of brawny soldiers passed Robin as he marched boldly up the massive steps. They took him for one of the Sheriff's foresters. The steps led to the main door of the castle-keep, along a dark passage towards an open doorway.

Robin halted on the threshold of the dining-hall, which was lit by many torches.

Norman knights in chain mail sprawled over tables, which were heavily laden with all sorts of goodly fare. Robin thought of the hardships of the poor Saxons, and it made him very angry to see these Normans gorging themselves while they starved. There were rich capons, haunches of venison and beef, dish after dish of tasty neats' tongues, and roast pheasants, and, in fact, almost every imaginable table delicacy.

Opposite from where he stood, Robin could see Hubert de Mandeville, who sat in the centre of the hall. On his right hand sat Gui of Gisborne.

For a few moments none of them saw Robin ; then Gui of Gisborne happened

to glance towards the door-way. When he saw who was standing there, he could hardly believe his eyes! It was not the first time he had seen the bold outlaw.

With a savage snarl he staggered to his feet and flung out an unsteady arm.

"Robin Hood," he snarled.

When Hubert de Mandeville heard that name, he started in his chair and, looking towards the door, he too saw Robin Hood.

As more and more heads were turned in his direction, the clamour of the feast, the loud voices and singing became a murmur.

Robin waited until the hall was quite silent and then, still carrying the dead boar, he swaggered forward and came to a halt in front of de Mandeville and Gisborne. Only the width of the table separated them.

"A dead boar for a stupid boor," Robin cried, and flung it on to the table. As he said this, he looked at the silken boar's head stitched on the front of de Mandeville's surcoat, for this was the emblem which the Sheriff carried on his banners of war.

The Sheriff was so astonished that he could hardly speak or move. It was Gisborne who first recovered from the shock.

His swarthy face flushed with rage as he flung back his hair from his forehead.

"So," said he, "the fly walks into the spider's web!"

Robin smiled. His hand fondled his sword-hilt, while his quick eyes darted from left to right. The Norman knights, recovering from their shock, began to gather menacingly about the outlaw.

De Mandeville clenched his fists on the table-top.

"Did ye think to rescue Marion—by yourself?" he sneered.

Robin nodded.

"Where is she?" he asked quietly.

The Sheriff lost control of his temper.

"Imprisoned in a dungeon, you knave!" he roared.

The sinister Gisborne twisted his lips.

"And you shall keep her company, Master Outlaw," he whispered. "And you shall pay heavily for this impertinence."

Then, as he saw how calm Robin remained, a shrewd expression crossed his face, and he stirred uneasily. He glanced uncertainly at the outlaw chief and decided to act at once.

"Seize him!" he cried.

Robin's sword leaped from its scabbard as the Normans advanced. With a laugh, he cleared the table in a single bound, and landed lightly between Gisborne and Mandeville.

His sword-hand flashed sideways and the iron hilt caught Gisborne a mighty blow on the chin. At the same time, his left fist landed heavily on de Mandeville's nose, and the two Normans fell to the floor, Gisborne being unconscious.

As quick as lightning, Robin took one step forward, and in a single movement, he threw over the heavy table in the very faces of his enemies on the other side.

Bellows of rage and cries of anger came from the knights, as they collapsed in a huddle under the table.

Robin Hood stepped back and, laughing again, he looked upon the scene of wild confusion.

Aroused by the noise of conflict, a large body of men-at-arms swarmed into the Banqueting Hall. This was exactly what Robin was waiting for. He knew that ere long the news would spread through the garrison that he, Robin Hood, the feared outlaw of Sherwood Forest, was in the castle. He knew, too, that everybody would, therefore, make for the castle-keep.

He turned, leapt over the bodies of the knights, and raced across the hall towards a large window, which was half-hidden behind a magnificent tapestry.

Swiftly, he took down a burning torch from its place by the wall, and held it to the tapestry, and at once a wall of flame shot upwards. Robin swung round to fling the torch at the oncoming men-at-arms.

And now his life depended on the quickness of his sword-arm. Behind him were roaring flames—in front of him, the furious soldiers. Could he hold out until help reached him? He knew it was coming, but would it be in time? He turned to face his enemies.

Robin Hood's sword-hand flashed sideways and the hilt caught Gisborne a mighty blow on the chin. At the same time, his left fist landed heavily on de Mandeville's nose, and the two Normans fell to the floor.

Battle!

MEANWHILE, Dirk o' the Fens, accompanied by Little John and Will Scarlet, crouched behind a bush, and peered excitedly towards the Castle.

About him, waiting, behind trees and bushes, and lurking in ditches, were Robin Hood's Merry Men. Dirk's heart beat fast with excitement.

All eyes were fixed on the castle-keep, for Robin had promised that, from there, he would give the signal to attack!

Dirk thought again of the sunny afternoon when he had been gazing at the Norman fortress, and thought how much grimmer it looked now, in the pale light of the moon.

He was startled from his thoughts, as Will Scarlet exclaimed tensely:

"Look—the signal!"

From one of the windows in the keep there burst a tongue of flame. Little John placed his fingers to his lips and emitted a shrill whistle.

At once the Merry Men broke from cover, and raced towards the castle drawbridge.

Robin's plan had worked, for most of the guard, alarmed by the news that the outlaw chief had been cornered in the Banqueting Hall, had left their post to join in the excitement! So, as luck would have it, they had forgotten to raise the drawbridge, and the outlaws stormed across it, their swords glinting in the moonlight.

The remnant of the guard endeavoured to put up a half-hearted defence against the Merry Men, but they were soon overcome. Dirk caught a glimpse of Friar Tuck laying about him lustily with his trusty quarter-staff and then, tearing himself loose from the clutching hands of a bewildered soldier, he followed Will Scarlet up the steps of the castle-keep.

The rest of the outlaws, hallooing and yelling, streamed along in his wake, leaving Little John and two other stalwarts to guard the drawbridge.

It was not difficult for Will Scarlet to find the entrance of the Banqueting Hall for, ahead of the Merry Men, he could hear Norman voices raised in anger and pain.

He halted on the threshold leading to the hall. Dirk joined him.

Will Scarlet saw Robin Hood, facing a group of soldiers. His clothing was torn, and Will knew that he must have had a hard fight by the number of wounded soldiers lying on the floor.

Will Scarlet beckoned cautiously to the outlaws and, one by one, unnoticed by the Normans, they slipped into the Hall.

"Bows!" came Scarlet's order, and every outlaw raised the yew bow he clenched in his left hand. A hundred arrows were strung across the bows and aimed towards the battling men-at-arms, who were still unaware of the outlaws.

Robin was fighting hard, but behind his enemies he had seen his men, and he smiled with relief.

Will Scarlet lifted his horn and sounded a solemn note. As the sound rang through the room, the soldiers turned, their swords raised. They gasped with amazement as they saw a hundred menacing arrows pointing at them.

"Lay down your arms," Scarlet ordered.

De Mandeville, seeing some of his men obey, lurched across the broken table, and shouted:

"Rogues—villians!" Mad with rage, the Sheriff picked up a battle-axe and advanced upon Robin Hood.

"Stay where you are, de Mandeville," rapped Will Scarlet, and an archer beside him levelled his bow at the Norman. Robin shook his head.

"Let him come, Will," he called out heartily, his eyes on the Sheriff, who advanced upon him with his battle-axe.

Then followed a battle such as Dirk had never seen in his life. Sword and battle-axe crashed violently against each other, and the two men stumbled backwards and forwards across the floor, watched eagerly by both Norman and Saxon.

The axe spun swiftly in de Mandeville's powerful fist, but every blow he dealt was skilfully met by Robin's glittering blade. The Sheriff's blows grew wilder and wilder, but he could not beat down Robin. At last, feeling that his limbs were getting weaker, he decided to try to end the fight

with a single, heavy blow. He advanced upon Robin, intent on felling him.

He had nearly reached him when, with a quick movement, Robin threw his sword aside, and awaited the Sheriff's attack.

De Mandeville flung himself forward—but Robin was too quick for him. With a lightning movement, he swung forward and sideways, and as de Mandeville brought down the axe, the outlaw seized the axe-head in his bare hands, and wrenched it from the Sheriff's hands!

Robin dropped the axe and, before de Mandeville could escape, he caught him round the waist.

Lifting the Sheriff bodily, he strode towards the window and a few seconds later there was a loud splash, as De Mandeville fell into the moat.

"Now we must rescue Maid Marion," said Robin. "To the dungeons!"

"I know the way," Dirk called out. "Follow me!"

He had seen the entrance to the dungeons during his visit earlier that day.

"Lead on, then, lad," answered Robin, and Dirk led the way out of the keep.

One of the guards, who had stayed at his post, stood outside the barred door leading to the dungeons. The entrance was on the far side of the keep and the soldier did not see the outlaws as they crept along within the shadow of the wall.

They had nearly reached the door which led to the dungeons when Dirk stumbled against a stone. The guard came running up immediately, and, hurling himself at the boy, he threw him to the ground. Fortunately, Robin Hood was close at hand, and as Dirk scrambled to his feet, he caught the guard a blow on the jaw which knocked him unconscious.

Swiftly Dirk stooped and whipped the dungeon keys from the soldier's belt, and he and Robin went in.

At once there were excited cries of "'Tis Robin—'tis Robin Hood!"

Hearing the name, Maid Marion came quickly to her dungeon door.

"Robin! Robin!" she called, and her voice was filled with relief.

As Robin strode up, Dirk unlocked the door and Maid Marion ran out. Then he set the other prisoners free.

Out into the castle yard again, Robin blew a note on his horn, and the outlaws came surging from everywhere.

"Away! Away!" cried Robin Hood, and, once across the drawbridge, he and all his company made for the forest. By this time the fire had spread, and when the outlaws looked back they saw huge flames leaping skyward from the castle.

Suddenly Dirk remembered Jonkyn wondering where he could be, and a few moments later there came the sound of pattering hoofs and through the trees came the little donkey, with Friar Tuck riding him.

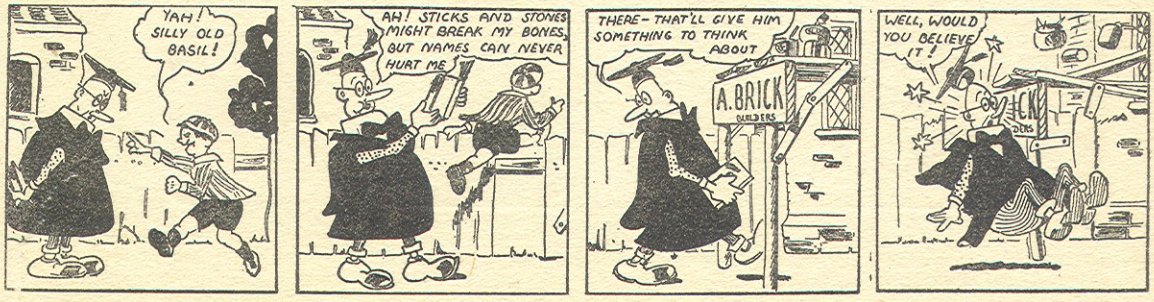
"I found him wandering in the greenwood," the Friar said to Dirk.

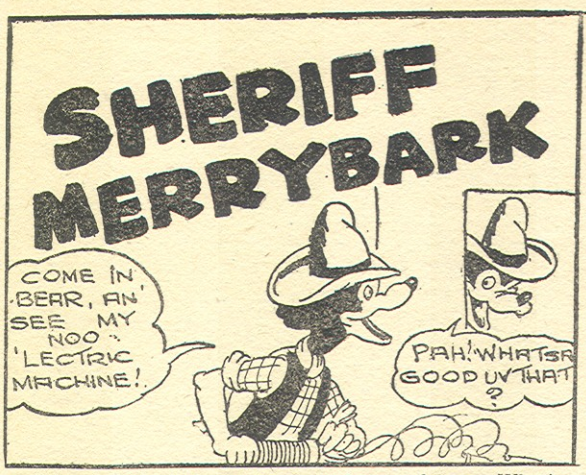
Dirk patted Jonkyn's nose, and, looking up at Robin Hood, he asked, "May we both stay with you, sire?"

"Yes, and welcome to you, my merry little man," cried Robin Hood, and, patting Dirk's shoulder, he and all the merry throng went on their way into the heart of Sherwood Forest.

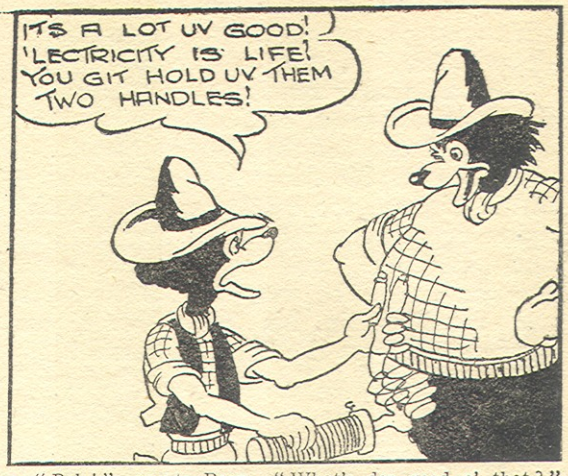
THE END

BOOKWORM BASIL - - - - HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE!

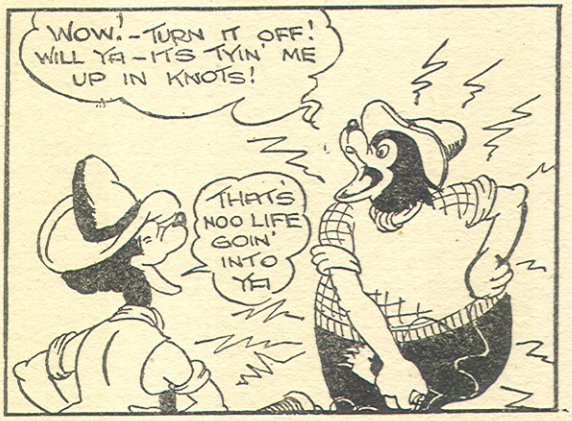




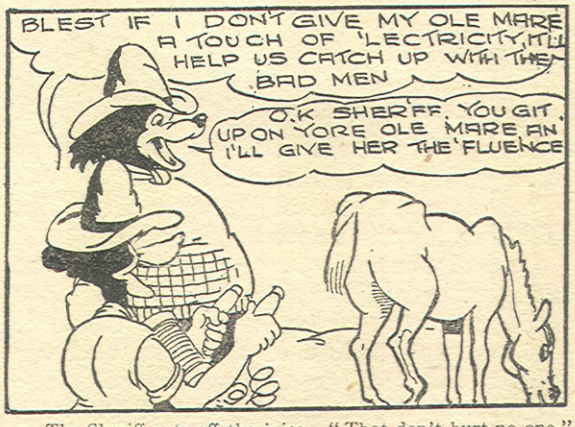
1. Hiya, folks! Just you take a look around here. What's the Sheriff up to? Is he trying to knit a suit of armour with all that wire? Bear rolls up to nose around, and Sheriff Merrybark says, "Come an' look at my noo 'lectric machine."



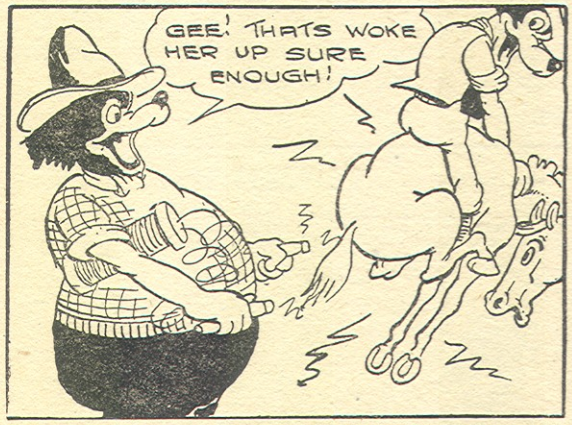
2. "Pah!" grunts Bear. "What's der good o' that?" "'Sa lotta good," says the Sheriff. "'Lectricity is life. Just you hold them two handles!" Bear does so, thinking there is nothing in it, but the Sheriff switches on the juice.



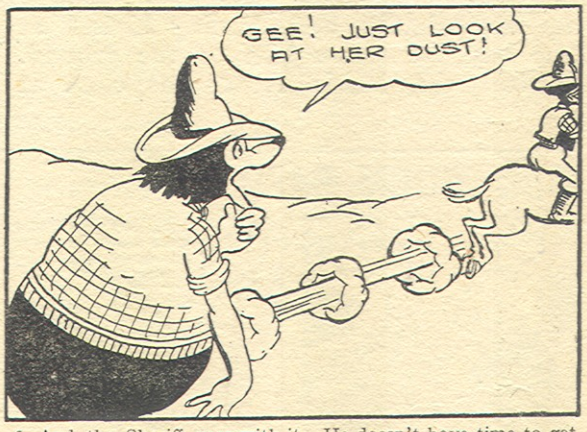
3. And does that Bear get a shock? I'll say he does! You could have put a bulb in his mouth and used him as a lamp standard. What the Bear doesn't like is that he can't let go o' the thing. "Turn it off, will ya?" he howls.



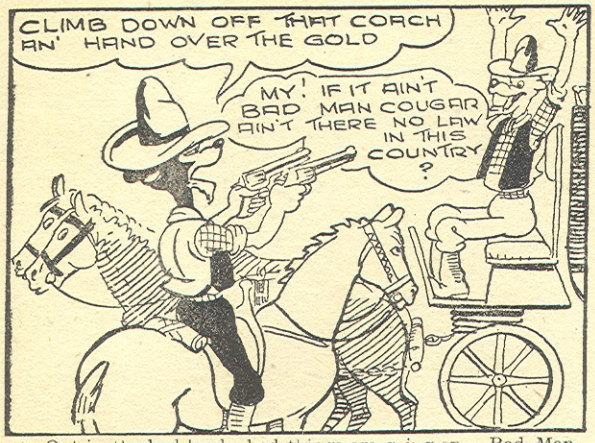
4. The Sheriff cuts off the juice. "That don't hurt no one," he says. Bear isn't so sure, but Sheriff Merrybark says, "Guess I'll give my mare a bit. Might wake her up and help us catch up with the bad men around here."



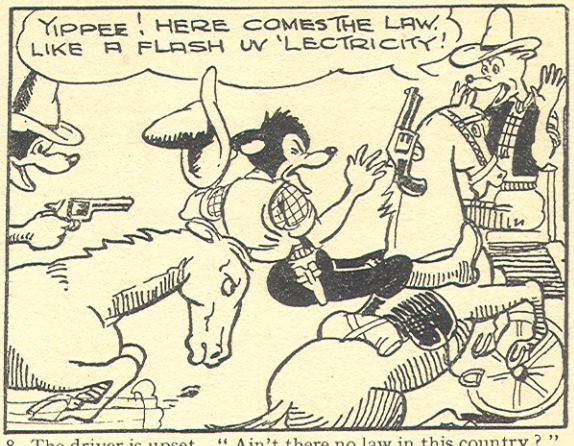
5. So Bear takes the new machine and the Sheriff sits on the old mare. Bear gives the old mare just a little bit o' juice in the tail. Yippee! Does that horse wake up? Well, it shifts off in a mighty big haste.



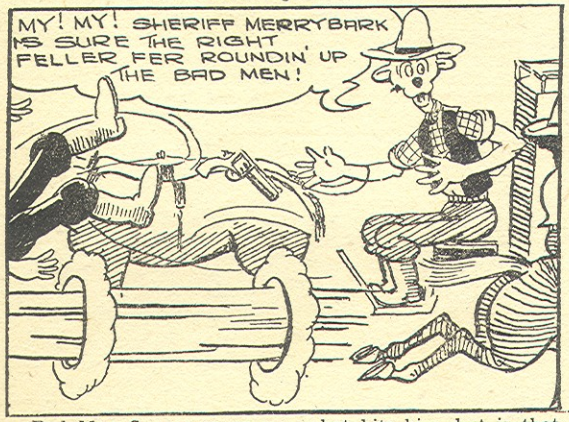
6. And the Sheriff goes with it. He doesn't have time to get off. Bear is mighty surprised. He just watches them disappear into the distance, and over the skyline. He's left in a cloud dust. Well! Well!



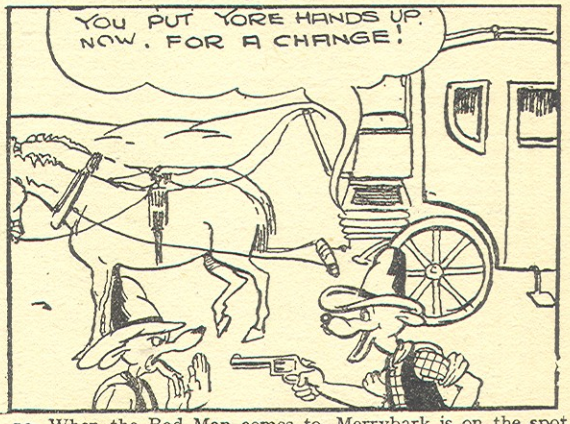
7. Out in the bad-lands, bad things are going on. Bad Man Cougar is holding up the Creaking Canyon stage coach. "Hand over the gold!" he roars.



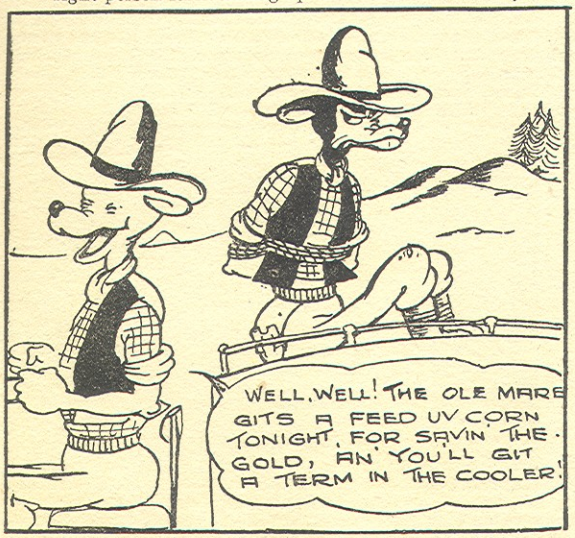
8. The driver is upset. "Ain't there no law in this country?" he asks. Then the law comes flashing along! It's Sheriff Merrybark, still going strong on the old mare.



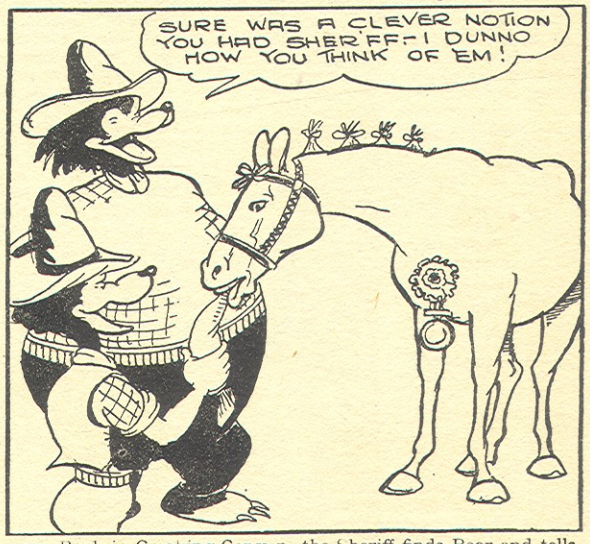
9. Bad Man Cougar never sees what hits him, but is that driver pleased? Yes, sir! "Sheriff Merrybark is sure the right person fer rounding up the bad men!" he says.



10. When the Bad Man comes to, Merrybark is on the spot and soon has him trussed up on top o' the coach. The Sheriff drives off and the old mare ambles along behind.



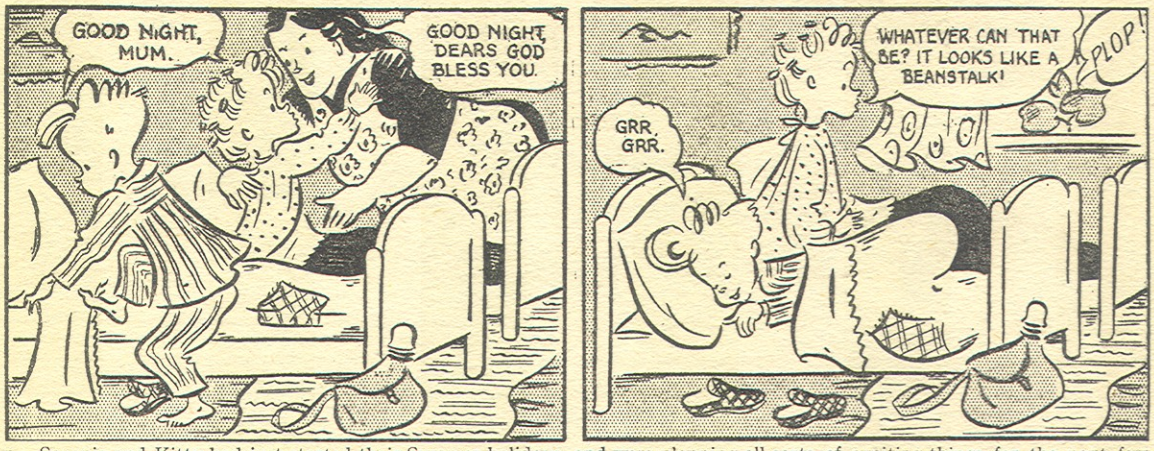
11. She has used up all her electric juice—and a bit more. "The ole mare'll get a feed o' corn to-night," the Sheriff tells the Bad Man, "but you'll go in the cooler."



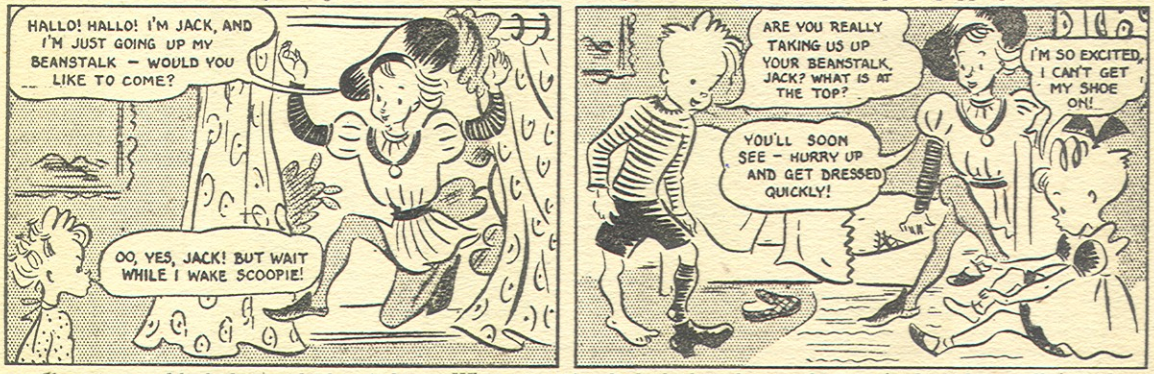
12. Back in Creaking Canyon, the Sheriff finds Bear and tells him all. "I dunno where you get these ideas," says Bear, "but they're mighty clever." Hot work, Merrybark!

SCOOPIE and KITTY

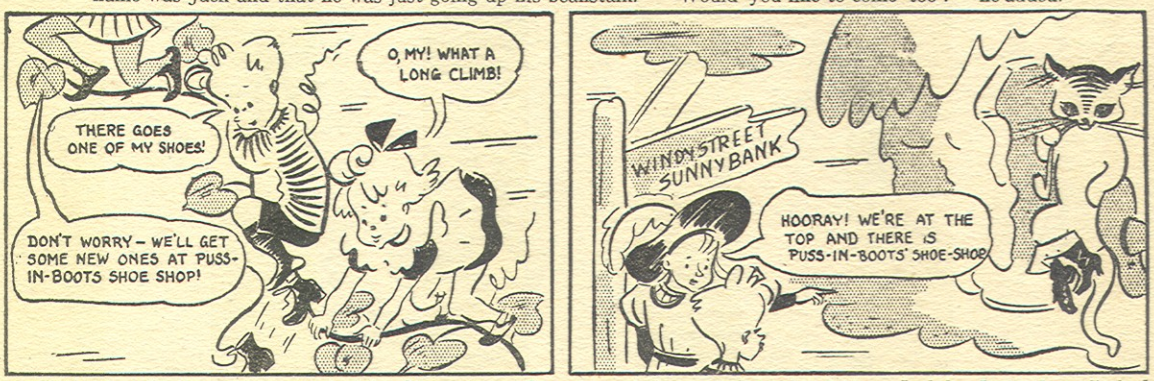
HAVE A WONDERFUL ADVENTURE WHEN JACK TAKES THEM UP HIS BEANSTALK!



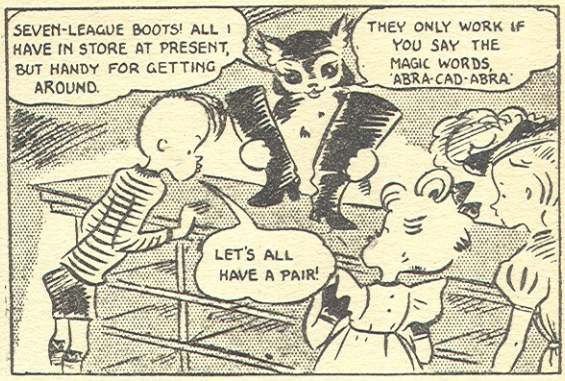
1. Scoopie and Kitty had just started their Summer holidays, and were planning all sorts of exciting things for the next few weeks. But the first day was almost too hot for anything, and they'd lazed about in the garden most of the time. When their mother had tucked them up in bed and said " Good night " to them, Scoopie was very nearly asleep, and it was not long before he had dozed off. But Kitty thought of what they'd do next day. Suddenly she heard a queer popping sound outside.



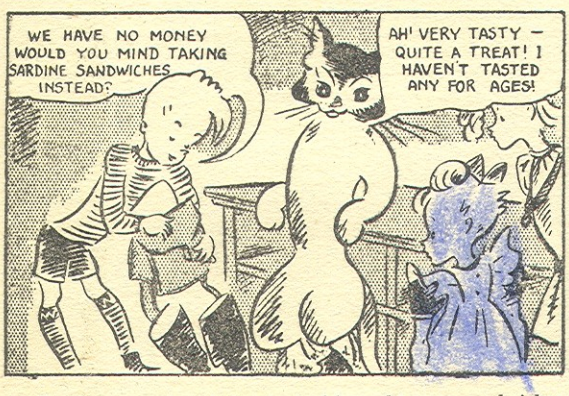
2. She sat up and looked towards the window. What a surprise she had when she saw the top of a large beanstalk just above the window-sill ! The popping sound was made by the bursting bean-pods. In a few seconds the top of the beanstalk had shot up beyond the window and Kitty jumped out of bed to see what was going on. But before she reached the window, something most surprising happened ! A stranger leapt from the beanstalk, and landed on the window-sill. He told her that his name was Jack and that he was just going up his beanstalk. " Would you like to come too ? " he added.

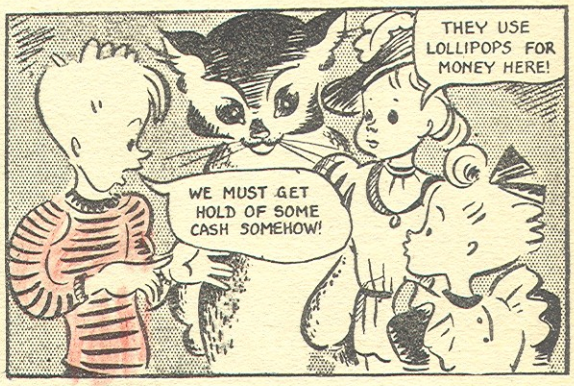


3. Kitty thought it would be wonderful. She woke up Scoopie, and they got dressed quickly. Led by Jack, they climbed out of the window and on to the beanstalk. By now it had grown so high that they could not see the top of it from where they were. They had climbed a good way up when Scoopie lost one of his shoes. But Jack said he needn't worry, as he could get a new pair at Puss-in-Boots' shoe-shop. A little while later, they reached the top of the beanstalk, and there was Puss-in-Boots, standing outside his neat little shop. He was smoking a pipe and wearing his famous boots. He carried a large slouch hat.

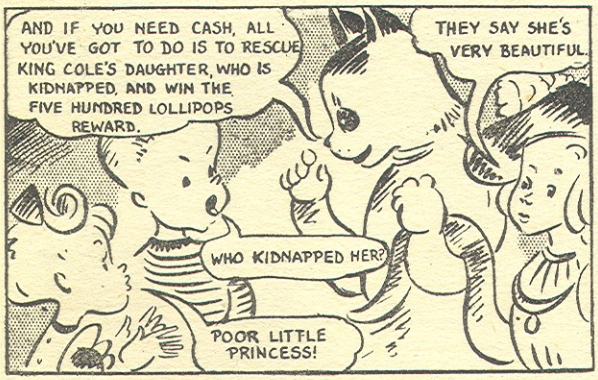


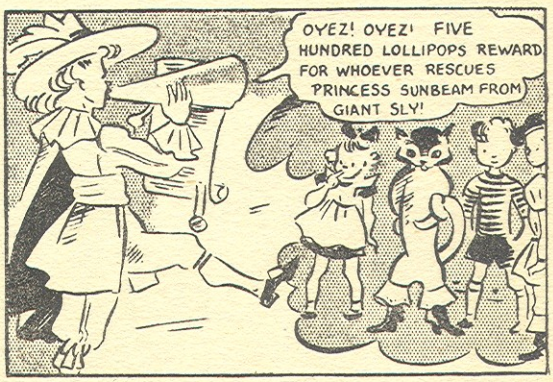
4. He came forward to greet them, and saw that Scoopie had lost one of his shoes. "I see I have a new customer," he said. "Come in." He led them into his shop, and searched about for a pair of shoes that would fit Scoopie. But the only things he had left in stock were seven-league boots. These boots were very special, and Puss-in-Boots explained that the magic in them worked when the wearer said the word, "Abra-cadabra." Scoopie, Kitty and Jack though it would be marvellous if they each had a pair of these wonderful boots. Puss-in-Boots measured their feet, and got three pairs to fit them. Then Scoopie suddenly realised that none of them had any money.





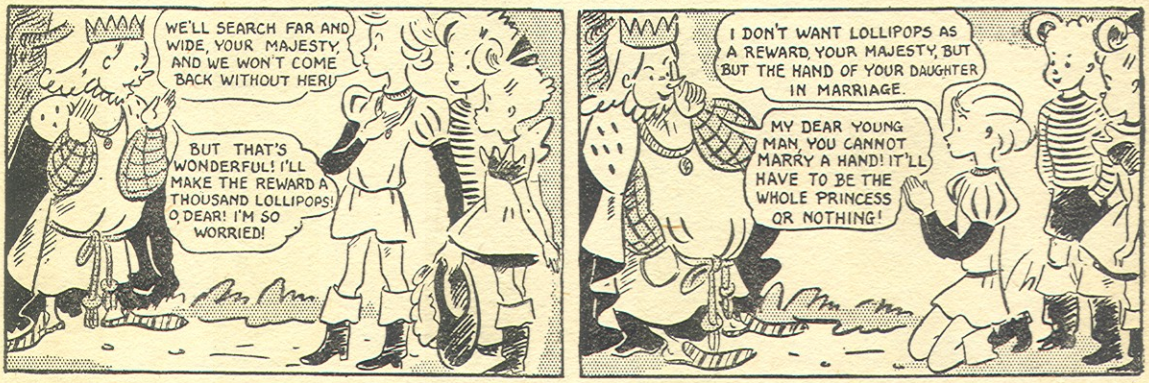
5. But he remembered that he had brought some sandwiches with him. Turning to Puss-in-Boots, he asked him if he would accept sardine sandwiches instead of cash. Now Puss-in-Boots hadn't tasted sardines for a long, long time, and he thought it was a grand idea to have them in payment for the boots. He explained to them that in this strange land at the top of the beanstalk, lollipops were used for money .They were all wondering how on earth they could get hold of some lollipop cash, when Puss-in-Boots told them something very interesting. He said that there was a reward of five hundred lollipops for whoever rescued Princess Sunbeam. Princess Sunbeam was the daughter of King Cole, and she had been kidnapped!



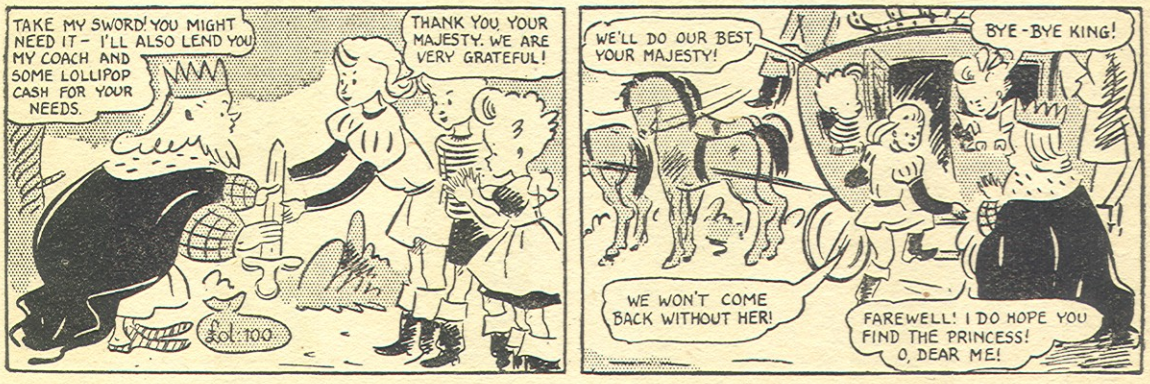


6. Well! Scoopie's eyes nearly popped out of his head when he heard that, and he and Kitty and Jack wanted to know all about how it had happened. "Who kidnapped her?" asked Scoopie, but just at that moment the Town Crier came past Puss-in-Boots' shop and they found out from him. They heard him announcing the reward for the one who would rescue the princess from Giant Sly! "Giant Sly!" exclaimed Jack. "How awful for the poor princess!" They decided to go and find King Cole to see if he could tell them anything which might help them to find the princess. They asked Puss-in-Boots to tell them where King Cole's castle was.

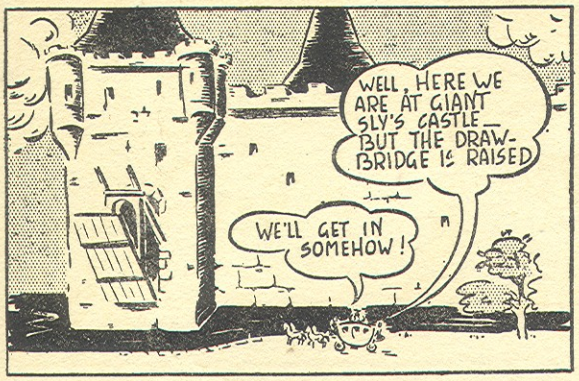
7. He told them of a short cut to the castle grounds, but on their way, they saw the king himself. He was standing dolefully by a rabbit hole. Jack, Scoopie and Kitty went down the woodland path to meet him. They wondered what he could be doing there, all by himself. As they came near, they heard him muttering to himself. " I wonder if she can be down this rabbit hole ? " he was saying. When he heard them coming, he turned, and they all bowed deeply. He told them how sly Giant Sly was, and was wondering if he could have hidden his daughter down a rabbit hole. Kitty thought it was a crazy idea, and said so to Scoopie.



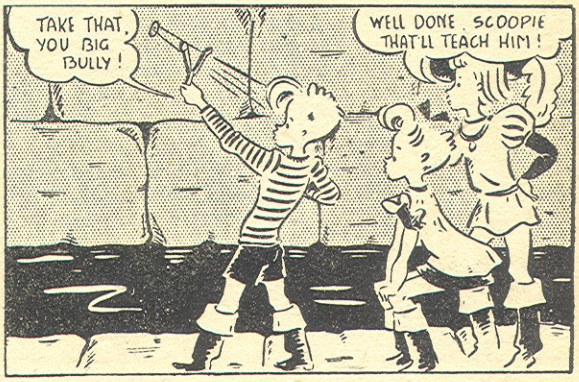
8. The poor old king was terribly worried, and told them that Giant Sly might have hidden her anywhere. They stood up and Jack promised the king that they would search far and wide, and in fact, that they wouldn't come back without her. This good news cheered the king, and he lost his worried look and became quite jovial. He was so pleased that he said he would make the reward one thousand lollipops instead of five hundred. But Jack, kneeling humbly before the king, said that he didn't really want the reward in lollipops, but that he would like the hand of the princess in marriage. When he heard this, the king smiled.



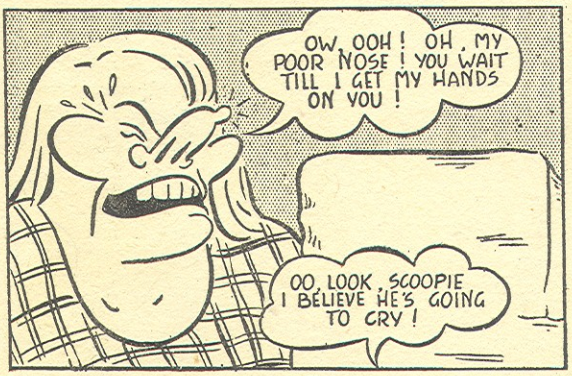
9. " My dear young man," he said, " you cannot marry a hand. It'll have to be whole princess or nothing ! " Jack thanked him and rising, he presented Scoopie and Kitty to the king, and told him that they were anxious to join in the search for the lost princess. Then the king became more cheerful than ever. He was really quite helpful, in fact ! He handed Jack his sword, saying that he might need it. He also said they could have the loan of his coach, and gave them some lollipop cash for anything they might need during their search for the princess. The king sent a messenger to order the coach to be prepared, and in a short while it was ready, and the king bade Jack, Scoopie and Kitty farewell.

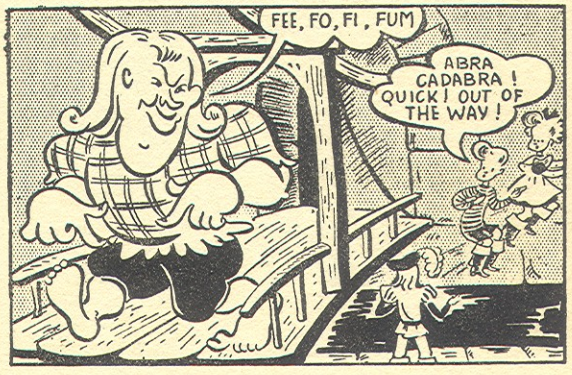


10. They travelled for a long while and noticed that the country was quite different from King Cole's domain. It was much more barren. At last they came to a gigantic castle. It looked dark and forbidding, and as they approached, they noticed that the drawbridge was up. But Jack was not discouraged, and said that somehow or other they would get inside the castle. But they didn't see wicked old Giant Sly wandering about among the battlements above them, and they got quite a shock when they heard him shouting at them to go away—or else they'd get a pail of water thrown over them. Jack shouted back, and told him that they had come to rescue Princess Sunbeam, and that he had better let her go.

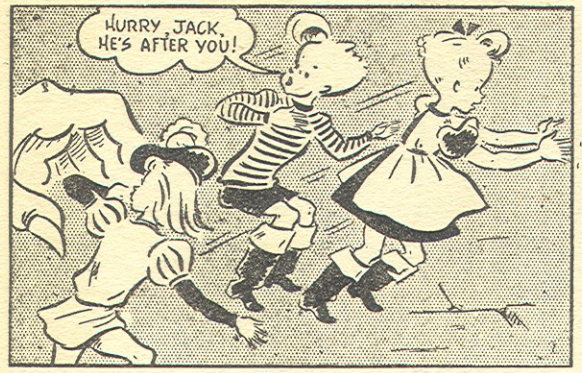


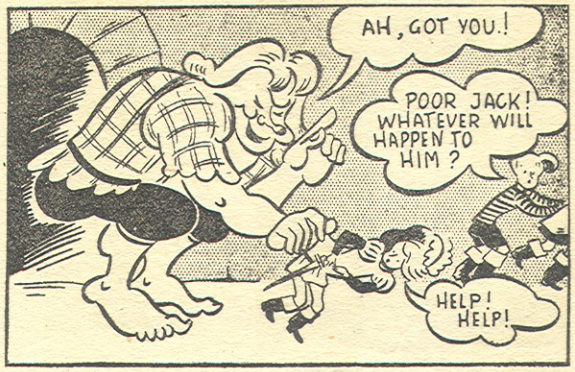
11. A few seconds after that, a terrific shower of water fell on them, soaking them to the skin. They were all so angry with old Sly, that none of them felt afraid of him. They wondered what they could do to punish him for his mean trick. Then Scoopie had a sudden inspiration! He whipped out his catapult, and picked up a fairly large pebble. Taking very careful aim at the unsuspecting giant, he let fly the pebble. The giant had been roaring with laughter ever since he'd thrown water on them, but now his laughter was cut short by a very sharp pain at the tip of his nose! Peering down, he saw that Scoopie carried the catapult.



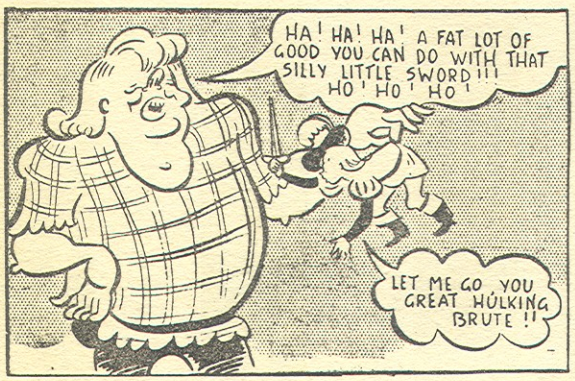


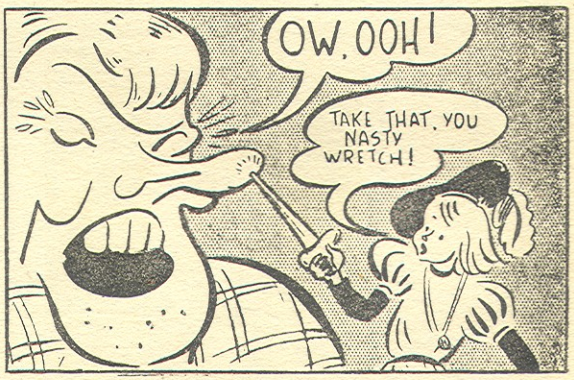
12. Jack and Kitty thought that it had been a jolly good bit of aiming on Scoopie's part, but the giant was absolutely furious. Leaning over the battlements, he shook his fist at them, and threatened them. Then he disappeared, and the next thing they noticed was that the drawbridge was being lowered. Shortly after that, they heard an angry grunting sound, and Giant Sly came rushing across the bridge. "Fee, fo, fi, fum!" he yelled, as he approached Scoopie, Kitty and Jack. Then Scoopie suddenly remembered their seven-league boots. "Abra-cadabra," he shouted, and Kitty did the same. And their boots took them sailing into the air.



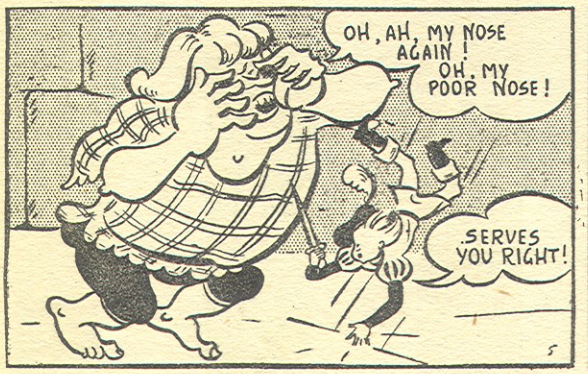


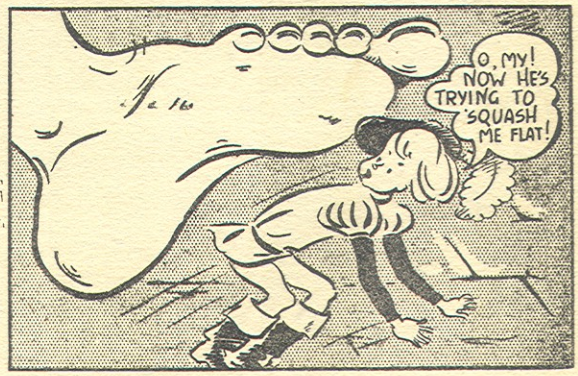
13. But what about poor Jack ? Things had happened so swiftly, that he hadn't thought of saying the magic word in time ! Scoopie tried to warn him. " Hurry, Jack, he's after you ! " But he was just too late. The giant's hand came down and grabbed Jack. "Ah ! Got you ! " he bawled, as he swept Jack off the ground. Scoopie and Kitty wondered whatever would happen to him. They were quite a long way off by now, and hoped that Jack would be able to think of some way in which to escape from the giant. They knew he was very brave but, of course, he couldn't beat the giant by fighting him, as he could have done with someone of his own size.



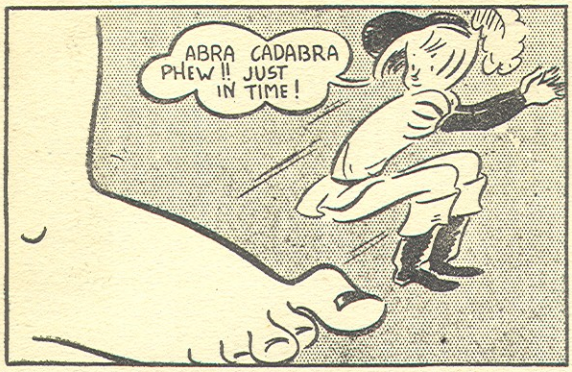


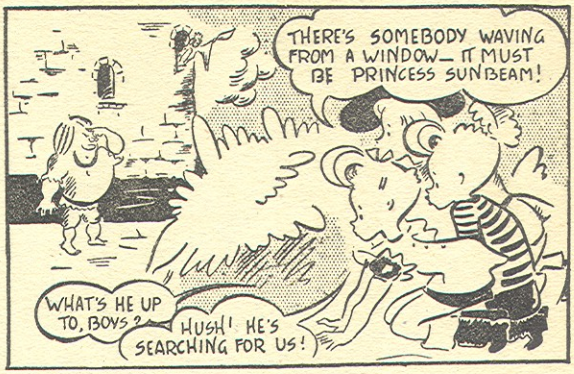
14. Kitty and Scoopie were looking back at the giant and Jack, when they saw Jack draw his sword very suddenly from its sheath. " Oh, Scoopie," cried Kitty, " however can he hope to get the better of the giant with that sword ? " " Well," Scoopie replied, " we'll just see what happens." But they didn't feel very hopeful, for as they watched, they heard the giant roaring with laughter again, and he cried : " Ha ! Ha ! A fat lot of good you can do with that silly little sword ! " But, as Jack was dangling in the air, he took a swift, unexpected jab at the giant's nose. Well, it was certainly a surprise to that giant, and he let out such a yell of pain that it shook even Scoopie and Kitty !



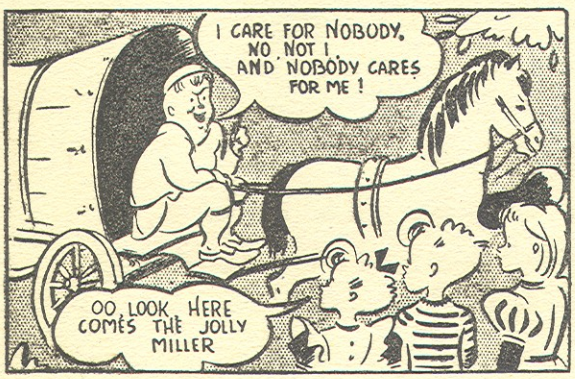


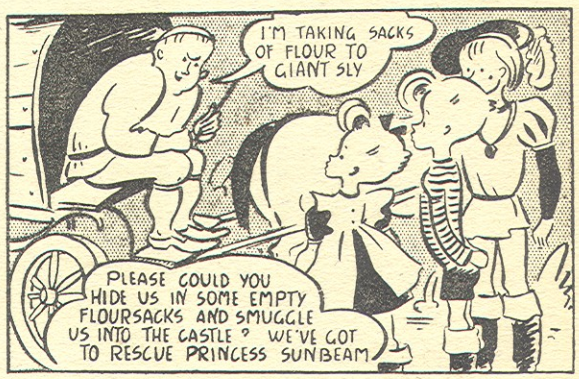
15. The next second, Jack felt himself falling through space—the giant had dropped him quickly—then he landed with a bump on the ground. Giant Sly was feeling so sorry for himself, moaning and groaning, that he didn't realise that he was giving Jack a chance of getting away ! But Jack was just about to run out of the giant's reach, when a great shadow came above him, and looking up, he was horrified to see Giant Sly's enormous foot a little way above him. " O, my ! " he cried, " now he's trying to squash me flat ! " Scoopie and Kitty hardly dared to look—they were so afraid for Jack ! They really thought he'd be squashed !



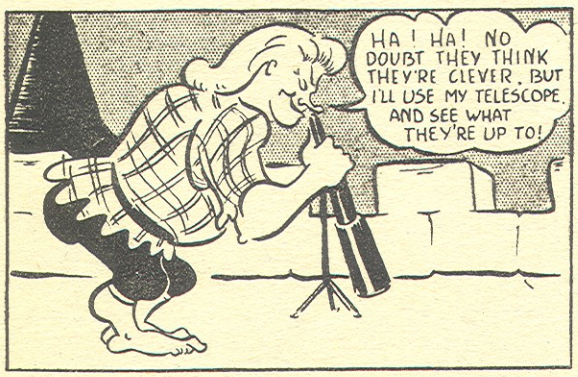


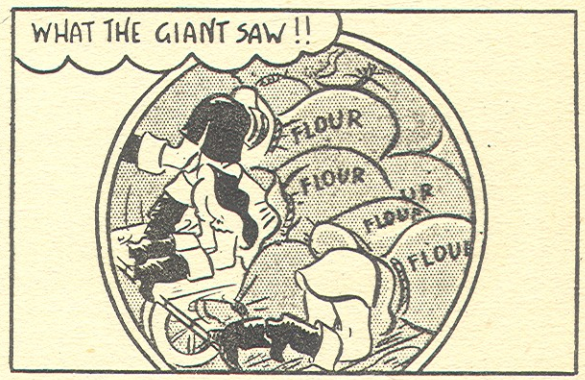
16. But half a second before Giant Sly's foot came down with a smack on the ground, Jack remembered the magic word. "Abra-cadabra!" he yelled, and he floated easily into the air. At the same moment, Kitty and Scoopie heaved a great sigh of relief! Oh, how glad they were to see their friend safe and unhurt. They were hiding behind a bush in the castle grounds, and soon Jack saw them, and joined them. They were watching Giant Sly when something caught Jack's eye. Looking to see what it could be, he saw that it was a handkerchief being waved by someone from one of the castle windows. "It must be Princess Sunbeam!" he said to Scoopie and Kitty.



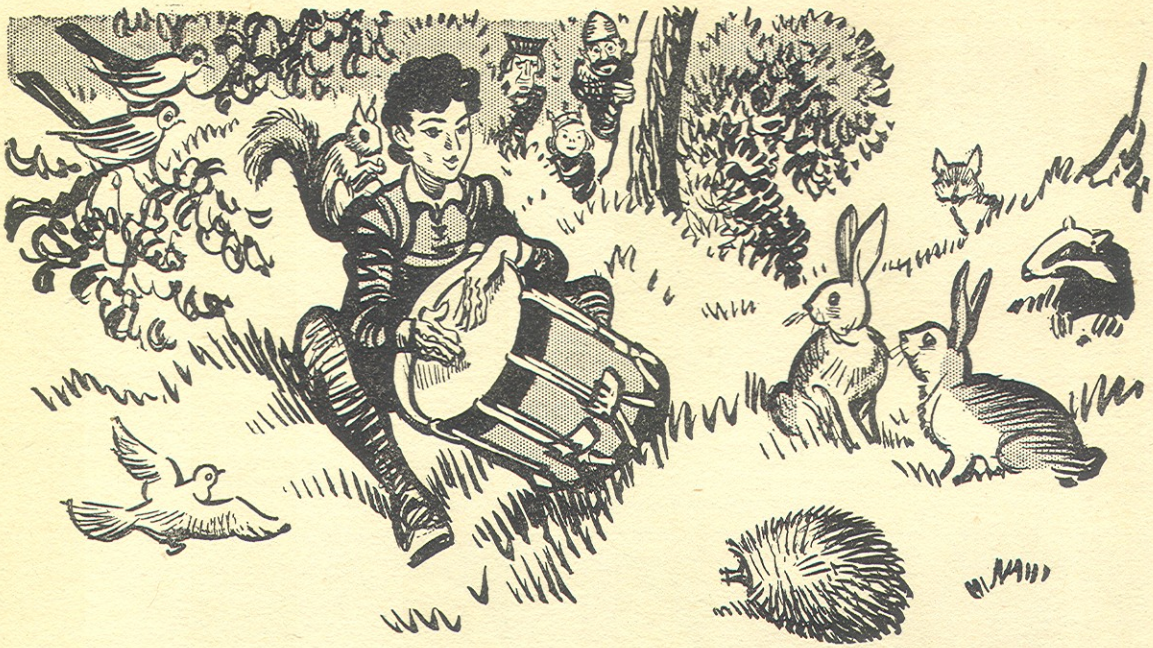


17. This set them all thinking of a plan to get into the castle. They weren't feeling very hopeful about it, because they thought that now Giant Sly might be on the look-out for another attempt on their part at getting into the castle. But very soon, they heard a cheerful song. It came from somebody who was riding towards the castle. They thought they knew the song, and when the singer came up to them, sure enough they saw that he was the Jolly Miller. He said that he was taking sacks of flour to Giant Sly, and this gave them an idea. They asked if it were possible for them to be smuggled into the castle by getting into some empty sacks.





18. The Jolly Miller thought that they would be quite safe, and he loosened the ropes round some of the sacks. But they didn't know that in the meanwhile Giant Sly had decided to do a little spot of spying. He kept a telescope up on top of the castle, by the battlements, and just as Scoopie, Kitty and Jack were feeling pleased with their plan, and actually getting into the sacks, he put his eye to the telescope! He saw the three of them getting into the flour sacks on the miller's cart. "Ha! Ha!" he laughed. "They think I can't see through their little tricks!" But what the giant didn't know, was that the Jolly Miller had his eye on him! (*Continued on Page* 164.)



RANSOM FOR A KING!

Exciting Yarn of the Days of Richard II, and How Gipsy Joe Foiled a Traitor Earl

A Traitor in the Camp ?

YOUNG GIPSY JOE, the King's drummer boy, came back to camp shortly after sunrise and when all the soldiers were astir. The royal banners were waving bravely over the tent of young King Richard the Second, a boy no older than himself, but with heavy cares of State on his shoulders.

Tired and grubby, Gipsy Joe exchanged a cheery word with the sentries, and made his way to where the King's horses were stabled. No one knew the Essex countryside as he did, and because of that he had been out to scout during the night to gain more news of bold Wat Tyler and his rebels.

He sluiced himself at a trough of cool spring water, and was drying his face on a rough cloth, when a clumsy hand thumped down on his back and sent him sprawling in the dirt.

"Oho! How now, me young cockspadger?" boomed a familiar voice. "Did you learn aught of those plaguey rebels?"

Little Gipsy Joe looked up at the giant form of Sergeant Rugg, bodyguard to the King, then rose with aching back and began to wash again.

"Perchance I did, Master Rugg," he said, turning from the trough, "but the news is for the ears of my royal master."

The big simpleton shrugged his mighty shoulders.

"So be it," he grunted. "Go you, and break your fast, me pippin. I bade the cook save a pancake for you. When you have lined your bread-basket, sound the "assembly" because the Boy-King and me liege, the Earl of Carven, will inspect the yeomen on parade."

He aimed to give Gipsy Joe another lusty clump on the back, but this time the boy stepped nimbly aside. So, smiting only the empty air, the giant sergeant lost

his balance and plunged his arm up to the elbow in the water trough.

With a merry chuckle, Gipsy Joe hurried away to the cookhouse, where he had a hasty breakfast before fetching his little drum and sounding the " assembly." Amid a lively bustle, the King's horsemen, the bowmen and pikemen gathered in an open field between the royal camp and the woods. Captain Oakes and other leaders barked orders, and all stood to attention as King Richard the Second came from his tent, closely followed by the lean-faced Earl of Carven. Sergeant Rugg had taken up his post nearby, and now came at their heels, a massive figure with the sun reflecting from his iron breastplate and the huge sword that only he could wield.

Gipsy Joe stood erect, his little drum by his side, at the end of the first rank of archers. His gipsy strain showed in his brown face, his dark curly hair, and the small brass ear-rings that he wore. But none was more loyal to the Throne than he, and by his skill with horses, his ready wit and courage and his merry nature, he had become a firm favourite of the young monarch.

Walking slowly and with dignity, the King reviewed his soldiers, a proud smile adding to the charm of his boyishly handsome face. It was the Earl of Carven who, every now and then, drew back to mutter a bitter reproach to one soldier or another for some fancied slackness in bearing or dress.

Since the Earl of Essex had been wounded in an affray with Tyler's rebels, Carven had become the young King's chief adviser and commander of the forces. He was a man who seldom smiled. When he did, his mouth merely twisted into what looked like a sneer. His eyes were hard and bright, always seeking for faults. No one liked him, and little Gipsy Joe, who was often commanded to attend the King, had most cause of all to regret the power of this unpopular noble.

When the inspection was over, King Richard beckoned to Gipsy Joe, awaiting the royal command.

" Hither, my bold drummer boy," he said. " How fared you in the night ? "

" Well, methinks, Sire," answered Gipsy Joe, noting that both the Earl and Sergeant Rugg had edged closer to listen. " I hied me to Hogsleigh Castle, and lay among bushes to keep watch and ward. 'Tis sure, indeed, that Wat Tyler and his knaves are in the old castle, and they are there in great strength, armed with bows and arrows, pikes and cudgels. Heavy stones have been carried up to the ramparts, and placed all in readiness to hurl down on the heads of any attackers."

" 'Tis ill news," muttered the young King. " I fear 'twill cost the lives of many brave soldiers to dislodge the rabble from this stronghold."

" Perchance 'twould be better to wait, Your Majesty," Gipsy Joe suggested. " Yonder at Hogsleigh I crept near to a rebel outpost and heard two of the knaves a-talking. There be trouble, it seems, for Master Tyler be hard pressed to find silver to share among his followers. These knaves will not stay long under his banner if they get no pay."

The lips of the Earl of Carven curled in a faint sneer.

" As your loyal subject and faithful adviser, Your Majesty," he murmured, laying a hand on the boy-king's shoulder, " it be my duty to remind you that more bags of silver are needed for paying our own goodly men. Already there be grumblings among those soldiers whose pockets are empty."

" We are not unmindful of our duty," retorted King Richard quietly. " Tomorrow I will ride forth to London Town, there to attend to certain duties of State. You and my bodyguard, the worthy Sergeant Rugg, shall ride with me and bring back four bags of new silver coins from the Royal Mint, enough to make payment in full to all our loyal soldiers here in the camp."

" So let it be," said the Earl. " But in the matter of these rebel rogues at Hogsleigh Castle, it would be well to question this young gipsy more closely. Oft-times he sallies forth from the camp alone, and who knows whither he goes or to whom he speaks ? "

A flush came over Gipsy Joe's cheeks. It had been rumoured that a traitor lurked in the royal camp. This was because Wat Tyler always seemed to know what was going on."

" Zounds ! " growled Sergeant Rugg. " I trow there be none more loyal than me young cock-spadger."

Carven glared, but had no chance to give reproof, because the boy-king turned roundly upon him.

" What be this talk ? " he snapped. " I will wager the royal crown that our Gipsy Joe be true to the core. If so be you have proof to the contrary, speak in plain terms, me noble lord, else keep a bridle on your tongue."

The gipsy drummer boy drew himself erect. The king himself had issued the challenge on his behalf, and now Carven must give fair proof of his evil words.

" By me halidom ! Perchance 'tis time for plain speaking, sire," said the Earl with a baleful gleam in his eye. " Methought that stripling was up to no good yester-e'en when I rode back from Maybrick town. He was in yon woodland beyond the valley, rat-tatting on his drum which was muffled lest the sound should reach our camp. What meaning had this drum-play ? Was it not to inform rebel bands on the prowl that he was a-coming ? Or, peradventure, 'twas a signal arranged with Master Tyler who would gain news by this queer way of a-beating on the drum."

" What say you to this, my Gipsy Joe ? " asked the King.

" That me noble lord be mistaken in my intent, Sire," answered Gipsy Joe promptly. " 'Tis true I beat on the drum, but for an innocent purpose—to bring along to me the small wild creatures that live in yon greenwood."

The Earl laughed harshly.

" What fairy tale be this ? " he scoffed. " Think you I be a numskull, boy ? "

" Yes—er, nay, me lord," stammered Gipsy Joe. " Yet my words be simple truth."

A smile flickered on the Boy-King's face. Both he and Sergeant Rugg had delighted to go exploring in the woods with the little drummer who had strange powers like most gipsy folk.

" Come ! We will put this matter to the test ! " he cried. " Let us hie to the greenwood, and see with our own eyes."

Thinking he had sown new seeds of distrust, Carven welcomed the suggestion, sure that the test would prove the boy to have spoken falsely. But they did not go at once because a cart laden with apples and pears came rumbling into the camp, and the Earl who was also the Keeper of the King's Purse, said he would pay the driver for the produce.

The driver was a softie known as Silly Sam, the only yokel allowed to come and go freely. This " daftie " was known to deal with the rebels, too, buying for his master the pheasants and rabbits that they poached on the estate of the Earl of Essex. He never brought news of the slightest use. Silly Sam was quite harmless ; such a simpleton, indeed, that he had once stood with a fresh egg balanced on his head whilst an archer cracked the shell with a well-aimed glancing arrow and caused the yolk to trickle down over Sam's ox-like face.

So, on the arrival of Silly Sam, Carven went to his tent and fetched a purse full of small silver coins and gave it to him. This done, he set out with King Richard for the woodland, followed by little Gipsy Joe and the giant Sergeant Rugg.

Presently, they came to a clearing.

" Here we will hide ourselves," the King said. " Lie low among these bushes and make no sound. My drummer boy must have a fair chance, forsooth."

" I grieve, Sire," sneered Carven, " that you should suffer this time-wasting nonsense."

But he went to cover at the edge of the wood, as did the King himself and the giant sergeant. Then little Gipsy Joe crossed the clearing, squatted cross-legged on the grass, and, when all was quiet, began softly rapping his little drum with his finger-tips.

For many minutes nothing at all happened. He persisted with the gentle music, and now and then made sweet whistling sounds with his pursed lips. At length, a

beady-eyed squirrel came down a tree and began to play near his feet. Another came along, and then two rabbits, a mole and a hedgehog. Birds fluttered in the greenwood and settled near him, and one of the timid squirrels made so bold as to run up on to his shoulder.

Other little creatures joined the happy throng, among them three more hedgehogs with slow, unsteady gait. The snout of a badger poked between high tufts of grass, and soon the animal drew nearer and seemed to enjoy watching the play of the smaller creatures and birds.

One and all knew by instinct that little Gipsy Joe was their friend, and would not harm a hair or feather of any of them.

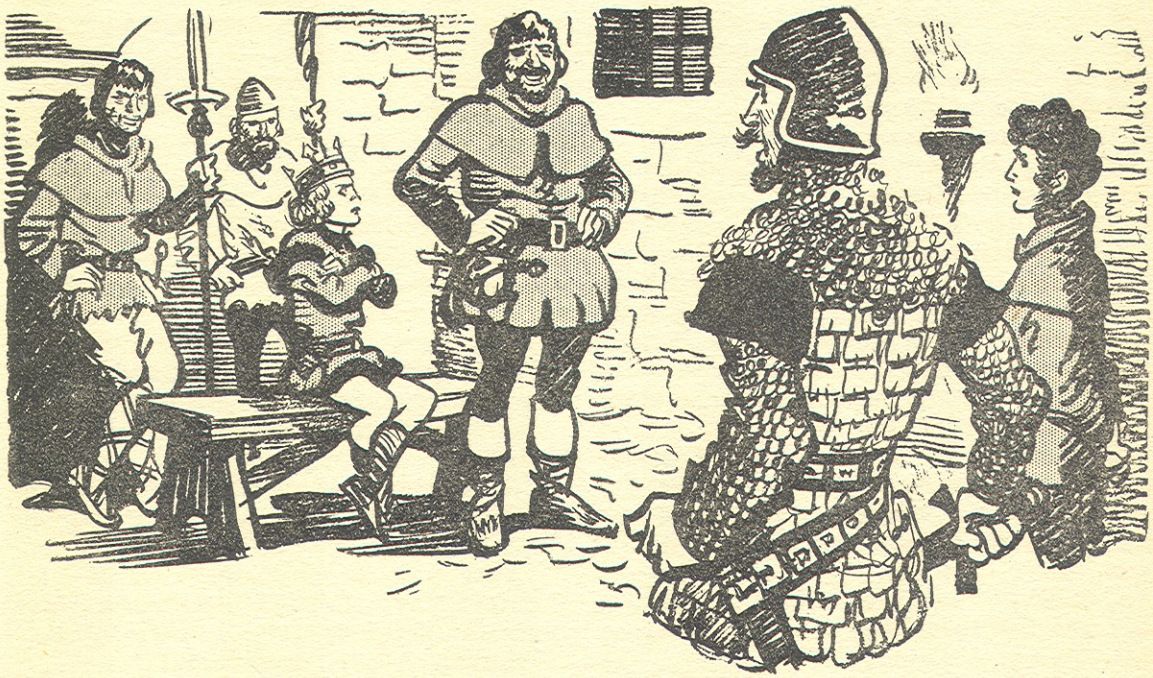
" Pah ! "

Angered by the pretty scene that proved him so wrong, the gaunt Earl of Carven uttered a grunt of disgust. And in a trice, the hedgehogs rolled themselves into prickly balls for protection, and the other animals and birds vanished more quickly than they had come.

Young King Richard jumped from cover, and clapped his hands in boyish glee.

" Marry ! 'Twas a merry sight, my Gipsy Joe ! " he exulted. " Methinks you have proven to the noble lord that you spoke truly at the camp."

No more was heard from the Earl of Carven about Gipsy Joe being a traitor, and on the next day he appeared to be in mellow mood. He and the King were to ride to London Town to attend to State affairs and to get four bags of silver from the Mint. Sergeant Rugg prepared to go with them, but at the last minute the Earl persuaded the King that a bodyguard was not needed.



Seated on a bench, was young King Richard, guarded by Seth Murdock.

" Only Sturdy, the dray-horse, can carry the big lout, Sire," he remarked. " The nag be too plaguey slow, and would but hamper us on our journey."

" Methinks you be right," King Richard agreed, " though you should speak of my trusty bodyguard with more respect. We two will ride alone to London Town, and since our journey be secret, Wat Tyler's rebels will not be lurking on the road. And we can with ease bring back four bags of silver between us."

Thus it was arranged, much to Sergeant

Rugg's disquiet, and in due course the King and nobleman rode forth on the journey to London.

Within the Castle

It was late afternoon two days later. A drizzle of rain fell from leaden skies, and the ground in the royal camp had been churned into mud by the trampling of men and horses.

A sharp look-out was being kept for young King Richard and the Earl of Carven, now due back from London Town. And their coming was sought the more eagerly because they would be bringing pay for the soldiery.

As time passed anxious questions began to be asked. No one really believed that any rebel bands would be prowling in the country between the camp and London, where they might be trapped by patrols of the King's horsemen. Captain Oakes himself, a clever and zealous officer, regarded it as quite safe for the King and Earl to ride by road, and across country on a journey that could be done in little more than three hours.

Suddenly there was an excited movement of the soldiers gathered along the outskirts of the camp. A lone horseman appeared, riding hard round an arm of the woodland.

" Odds bods ! 'Tis me Lord Carven ! " boomed Sergeant Rugg. " And he be in sorry plight, methinks ! "

The Earl was sagging in the saddle. His torn doublet and hose were bespattered with mud, his face grimy and wet with perspiration. Clods of muddy turf flew from the galloping hoofs of his steed, whose panting breaths were coming like steam on the damp air.

The rider drew rein and Rugg clutched the bridle. Willing hands helped the distressed nobleman to dismount.

" The King ? Where be the King ? "

That was the question chorused by the soldiers, who had forgotten for the moment about the pay they were expecting.

The Earl gasped for breath. His eyes looked wildly round the throng of rough, anxious faces.

" The—the scurvy knaves—the rebel rogues ! " he choked. " A barricade was laid in Langdon Lane a good three leagues from here, and when we stopped a full score of the rapscallions did pounce hotly upon us."

" The King ? " exclaimed Captain Oakes, pressing past little Gipsy Joe and others in the throng. " Have they harmed our liege lord the King ? "

Carven breathed hard.

" Nay—nay," he panted. " They have taken our young King as captive. His noble steed, Snowfire, was led away toward Hogsleigh Castle."

Captain Oakes groaned.

" You fought for him, I doubt not, me lord ? " he said, a trace of sarcasm in his tone.

" Right m-manfully," the Earl replied. " Alack, the treacherous rogues disarmed me in the first surprise, and forsooth I soon was helpless as a babe unborn. Seth Murdock, a captain of Tyler's band, was there, with cunning Nick, his son. They seized our four goodly bags of silver, and set me free to bring a message to the camp."

Murmurs of anger rose from the rough soldiery.

" To Hogsleigh ! " shouted some of them. " Let us root these rats out of their plaguey nest ! "

" Nay, not so fast, good yeomen ! " implored the Earl. " If an attack in force be made, the rebels will kill our beloved King, and this we dare not risk."

" How say you then ? " demanded Captain Oakes. " What message bring you, me lord ? "

" That Wat Tyler awaits emissaries from the camp," answered Carven. " He will receive us under a flag of truce, and will state his terms. Methinks his intent is to hold the King to ransom. Alas, I now be in poor fettle to sally forth, else would I go myself to beard this ruffian in his lair "

Then, before being assisted to his tent, he cast a baleful glance toward little Gipsy Joe, and added :

" 'Tis passing strange the rebels should have laid this ambush in our path By some means they gained an inkling of our London journey, and I have long suspected there be a traitor in this camp "

A council of the captains was held, and a little later Gipsy Joe was ordered to sound " assembly " for the King's horsemen. Soon a large company rode forth, led by Captain Oakes, and in the drizzly grey of evening, encamped in a fold of the hills within a mile of Hogsleigh Castle. Leaving the horses, Captain Oakes went forward on foot, accompanied by the giant Sergeant Rugg and little Gipsy Joe, who had been chosen to act as guide.

The ancient castle, once deserted, but now a stronghold of the rebel horde, loomed dark and grim on a hog's-back hill. Gipsy Joe led the way between the gorse bushes and up a path towards the oaken gates set in the greystone walls. The voices of rebels shouted a challenge, and Captain Oakes waved a large white flag that he bore, and answered that they had come to " hold council with Master Tyler."

Strongly escorted, the trio were taken inside, and there in a large room aglow with rushlights, they saw Wat Tyler surrounded by many of his rebel ruffians. Seated near by on a bench, guarded by Seth Murdock and his grinning son, was young King Richard, whose quiet dignity made striking contrast to the rebels' coarse rowdyism.

Captain Oakes, the sergeant and drummer boy saluted their King, who greeted them with brave words and a smile.

" Oho ! Here be our visitors ! " chuckled Wat Tyler. " They be plaguey glum of face, me men ! Perchance it pleases them not to see King Dick in such plight."

Captain Oakes drew himself up stiffly.

" Give heed, rebel ! " he snapped. " Release our sovereign lord the King, or you will plead mercy in vain when we take this castle by siege or storm ! "

" Ha ! Such threats make me quake—with laughter," jeered Tyler. " Enough of such empty banter ! In a dungeon under this council chamber be four bags of silver from the King's Mint. 'Twas well we were able to seize this money, but the sum be not enough for the needs of our good rebel cause. Bring four more bags of silver, Master Oakes, and the royal stripling shall go free."

Young King Richard spoke up right boldly.

" Heed him not ! " he cried. " Pay no price for his treachery. To get silver from the Mint needs the royal warrant, and that I will never sign and seal ! "

" Fie ! There be silver in plenty at the camp, I trow," scoffed Wat Tyler. " Methinks, Master Oakes has brought bags of silver in readiness to pay ransom,

OUT WITH THE FISHING TACKLE!

Tom and John went fishing in the river one day, and you can find out what they caught if you rearrange the letters of the words in the list below. You should be able to discover the ten different freshwater fish they had in their bag at the end of the day. If you can't get all of them, turn to Page 69 for the answers.

1. Rphce
2. Hcora
3. Onmnwi
4. Embar
5. Aprc
6. Kpei
7. Lblir
8. Kable
9. Cakesblick
10. Undoegg

Their fathers thought they would like to do a spot of sea-fishing, and here are the ten fish they caught. If you're stumped by any of them, you'll find the answers on Page 69.

1. Eaclip
2. Troutb
3. Rgirehn
4. Osle
5. Ulibath
6. Cdo
7. Akhe
8. Traps
9. Nightiw
10. Elkcream

and these be hidden not far off, while he makes play to bargain. But I have stated my price. Bring four bags of silver coins within the week, or King Dick will surely meet a sorry fate!"

Further talk was useless, and a few minutes later Captain Oakes, Sergeant Rugg and little Gipsy Joe were outside the castle and plodding down the hillside in the drizzly darkness.

"A plague on the varmints!" Rugg growled. "The day will come when I will split the midriffs of Master Tyler and Master Murdock, too."

Soon they were out of earshot of the rebels on sentry-go, and Gipsy Joe bade his companions to halt. His nimble brain had been busy, and he explained how, after all, they might gain the King's release. It was a bold plan, but possible, in spite of the danger.

"I' faith! The young pippin be smart as a weasel!" grinned Sergeant Rugg, as he listened to the plan. "Here be a chance worth the taking!"

In high hope Gipsy Joe led the way up the hill again, but it took him much careful searching, before he found the secret entrance to the castle, which he had once discovered while playing here, long before joining the royalist army on the outbreak of the rebellion.

Kneeling on the ground, Sergeant Rugg dragged away the turf overgrowing an old flagstone, and raised the stone, revealing a hole too small for the captain and himself to enter. But little Gipsy Joe could get inside with ease, and he went down some steps and lighted the lantern they had brought with them. Then he moved on silently through an underground passage. This was the secret way of escape, dug by one of the barons who had once lived at Hogsleigh. Now, by this passage, the King's drummer boy was able to get into the castle.

His task was to find the dungeon under what the rebel leader called the council chamber. The sound of gruff voices raised in revelry reached his ears; he heard, too, the slow footfalls of a sentry who paced up and down a tunnel bordered by the dungeons.

Behind one or two of the bolted doors were rebels who had offended Wat Tyler, and were undergoing punishment. Gipsy Joe guessed as much from the shuffling noises from within, but gave no heed to them. Instead, he put out the lantern light and waited till the ruffianly sentry was at the far end of the tunnel.

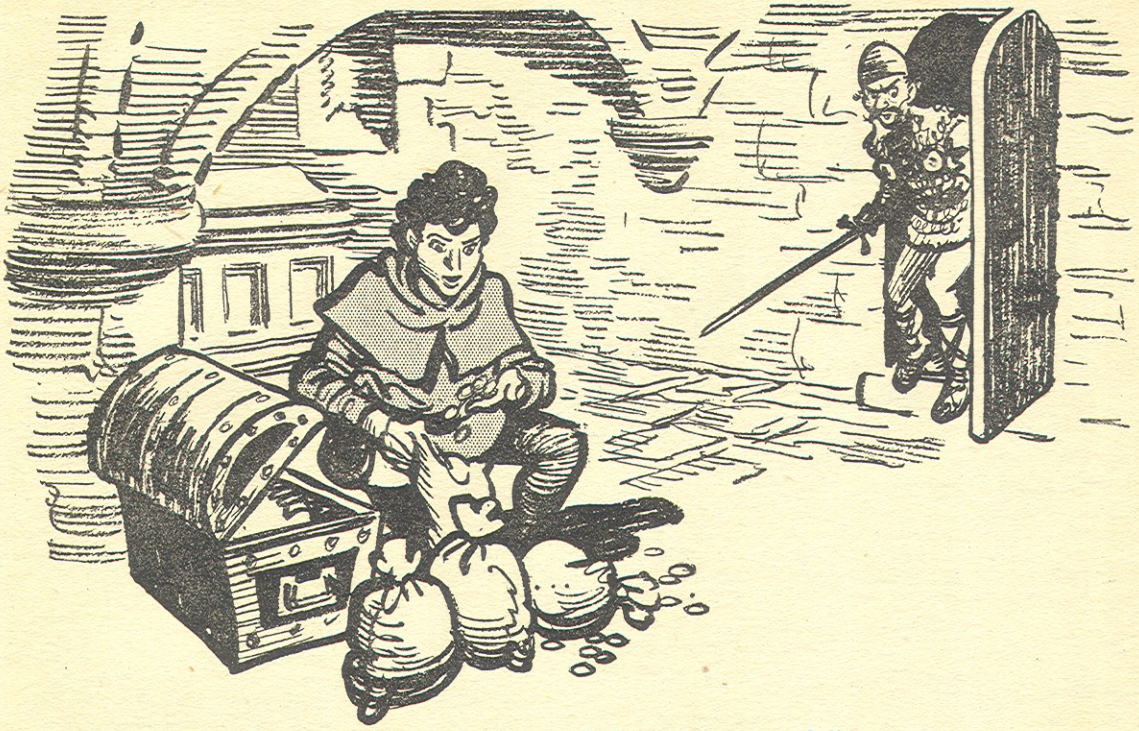
Rushlights set on brackets enabled him to see well enough for his purpose, and he slithered forward cautiously and pushed open two or three of the unbolted doors. Then, in the dim glow, he saw four bags of silver in one of the dungeons, and an open chest nearby with some loose coins in it.

He darted inside, set down the lantern and waited with baited breath. Several pieces of cord lay near his feet, and a purse which he recognised to be one of those given by the Earl of Carven to Silly Sam in payment for farm produce brought to the camp. The purse was cut along its lacing, and the boy noticed writing on the inner side of the leather. Curiosity impelled him to pick it up and put it in a pocket; at that moment the rebel sentry returned, and stopped just autside the door.

Gipsy Joe waited with every nerve a-tingle. The man at the door thrust it wider and peered in at the bags of silver. A hoarse gasp escaped his lips when he realised that someone was lurking in the dungeon, and on the instant Gipsy Joe struck him down with a blow to the jaw!

As the rebel fell with a dull thud his head hit the stone wall, and he was sent sprawling senseless to the floor. Stooping over him, Gipsy Joe gagged him with a large red handkerchief, and trussed him hand and foot with the cords.

Now to fulfil the real purpose of his bold exploit! Satisfied that the coast was clear, the drummer boy dragged two bags of silver through the tunnels, and handed them up to Captain Oakes and Sergeant Rugg awaiting at the secret exit. Once more he made the perilous journey, and so brought back the other two bags of coins.



The man paused at the door, and peered at the bags of silver.

" Right bravely done, me perky cock-spadger ! " said the giant sergeant delightedly. " Now can we pay the ransom for our King ! "

The three crept through the drizzle and darkness a little farther down the hillside, then turned and strode up again bearing the bags of silver. Again they were admitted to Wat Tyler's presence, and the rebel leader received them with a triumphant smirk.

" Well did I know," he chuckled, " that there was more of this goodly money not afar off ! With eight bags of silver—four here and four in me dungeons—I can pay me trusty men for a six-month ! 'Tis well indeed ! So begone with young King Dick, and let him beware when next he falls into our hands."

So they gained the release of the King, but when Wat Tyler and Seth Murdock took the bags down to the dungeon, they speedily saw the trick played upon them. Within a minute or so, a hundred rebels were charging down the hill in hope of catching the King and his bold companions. But the soldiers were ready, and riding forth, scattered the mob in short order ; then many dismounted and hurried afoot to the castle.

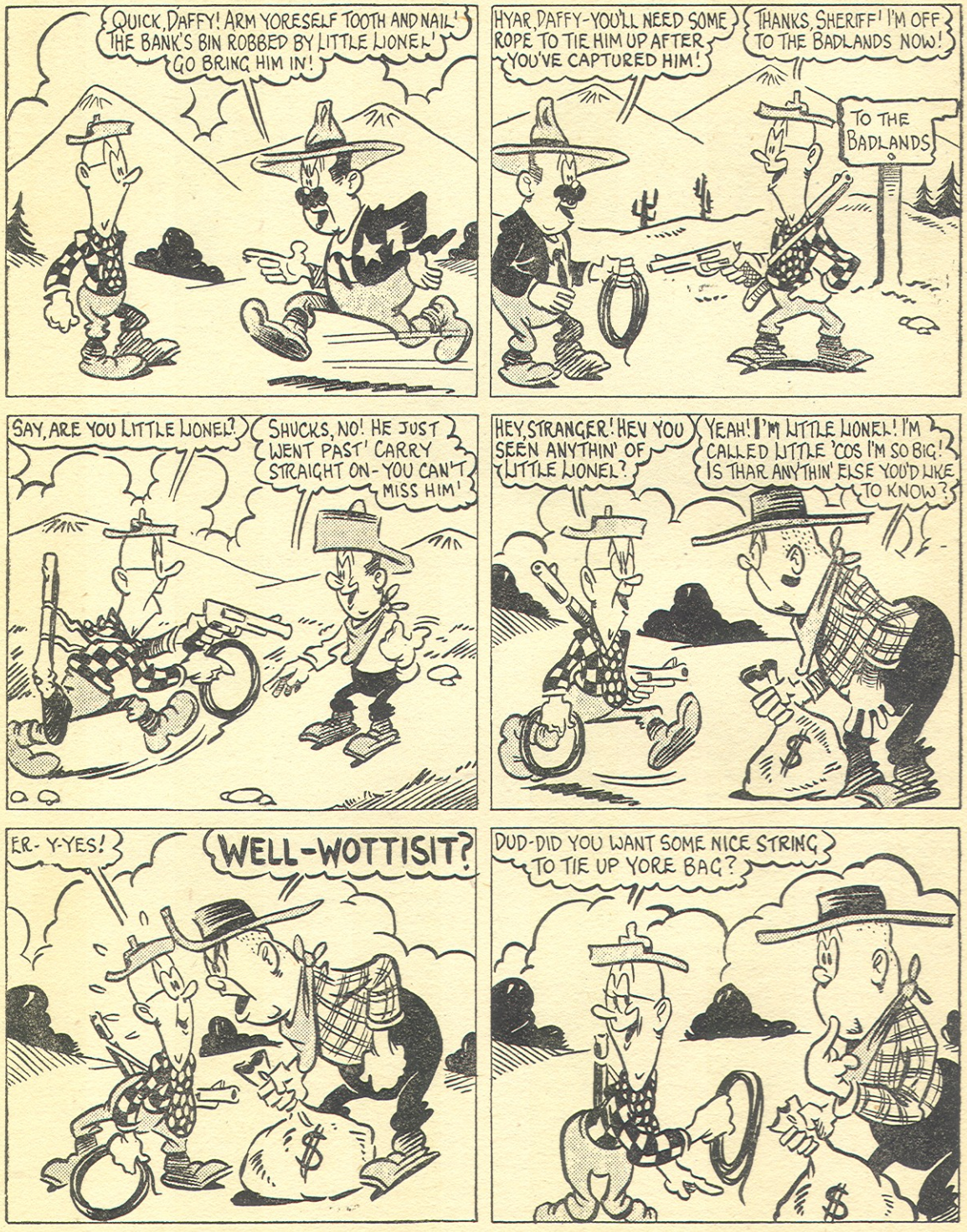
The gates were wide open. The remaining rebels supposed it was their own men coming back, and great was their confusion when the King's soldiers surged in and routed them from their stronghold !

So Wat Tyler's band was driven away, leaving many slain behind them. The silver was re-taken, and King Richard of England rode back in triumph to the royal camp at the head of his horsemen.

On the inside of the purse that little Gipsy Joe had found was a message. It was in the handwriting of the Earl of Carven informing Tyler of the Boy-King's journey to London Town. He had tried to make people suspect Gipsy Joe, when all the time it was he, Carven, who was the traitor in the camp, and none was sorry when he was sent to well-deserved imprisonment in the Tower.

THE END

DAFFY - - - - THE COWBOY 'TEC



HAROLD HARUM-SCARUM

BY GEORGE ROCHESTER

How Harold Hare, in spite of all his crazy notions, saved the homes of the Wild Wood Folk

Harold Breaks Up a Tea-Party!

"WHOOPS!" yelled Harold Hare, and bounded gaily over a bush.

Next instant there were tiny yells of fright and dismay. For Harold had landed right on top of Dicky Dormouse's tea-party!

The tea had been set on a nice big toadstool, covered with a snowy-white tablecloth. Round the toadstool had been sitting little Miss Mole, Willy Worm, and Dicky Dormouse himself. But now the four of them had been sent flying, amidst a perfect shower of cups, plates and saucers, cakes, biscuits, and sandwiches.

"Oh, dear, can't you look where you're going?" cried Dicky Dormouse, picking himself up.

"Clumsy thing!" cried little Miss Mole. "You've spilt the tea all over my frock!"

"I've swallowed a c-c-crumb!" wailed little Willy Worm. "I'm choking."

"Joking!" yelled Harold Hare. "That's the idea, Willy. That's the spirit. Treat everything as a joke and you'll always be happy like me, tra-la—you'll always be happy like me!"

"He didn't say joking," smiled Miss Mole. "He said he was choking!"

"Oh, choking!" cried Harold. "That's different! Well, turn him upside down and bump his head on the ground. That'll cure him."

Then he started to sing:

"When you find that a crumb has gone down
the wrong way,
And you choke till your face is quite red,
There's only one way to get rid of that crumb,
And that is to stand on your head!"

"But, honestly," he went on, as Miss Mole patted Willy on the back, to help him get rid of the crumb, "I didn't mean to upset your tea-party. I never saw you until I'd landed right on top of you! Ha, ha! You did look funny, I must say, flying about all this way and that! Never mind, I'll help you to pick everything up."

" But you've smashed the table ! " grumbled Dicky Dormouse, looking at the toadstool, the stem of which was quite broken.

" Pooh ! You don't want to worry about that ! " cried Harold. " There're heaps more tables growing around here. Dozens of 'em—hundreds of 'em. What's one silly table matter ? "

" But that was our extra-special table," cried little Miss Mole. " It was such a pretty one and it was so nicely sheltered from the wind."

" And it was just the right size of table for me to sit up at," squeaked little Willy Worm, who had got rid of the crumb which had gone the wrong way.

" All right, all right, don't make such a fuss," cried Harold. " I daresay the table will mend. If you ask Susie Spider I'm quite sure that she'll be only too pleased to tie it together again for you with some of that nice strong, shiny sticky web of hers. Anyway, I didn't break it on purpose. And that reminds me. I want to ask you something ! "

He glanced about him as though to make certain that no one was listening. Then, lowering his voice, he whispered :

" *When did the cowslip ?* "

" When did the what ? " demanded Dicky Dormouse, staring at him.

" When did the cowslip ? " repeated Harold in a thrilling whisper.

Dicky looked helplessly at little Miss Mole.

" Have you any idea what he's talking about ? " he asked.

" No, I haven't," said Miss Mole. " But I never have. Neither has anybody else. He's always saying the silliest things."

" This isn't silly," whispered Harold. " It's most frightfully important ! You've no idea how important it is ! *When did the cowslip ? If you don't know, you had better ask me !* "

" Well, we ARE asking you," squeaked Willy Worm. " When DID the cowslip ? "

" When it saw the snowdrop ! " yelled Harold, bounding delightedly about and laughing fit to split his furry sides. " Ha, ha ! The questions is : ' *When did the cow slip ?* ' and the answer is : ' *When it saw the snow drop !* ' See ? He, he, he ! Oh, my, I've taken you all in ! "

" Why, it's just a silly riddle," cried Willy Worm in disgust.

" Of course, it's a riddle ! " guffawed Harold. " What did you think it was ? It's one of the best riddles I've ever heard ! Well, I'll have to be going ! I'm in an awful hurry. Toodle-oo ! "

He bounded merrily away, singing at the very top of his voice :

" If you see a Cowslip
Always help her up,
Else you'll have no butter to
Put in your Buttercup ! "

Next instant he had turned round and was coming back again in great leaps and bounds.

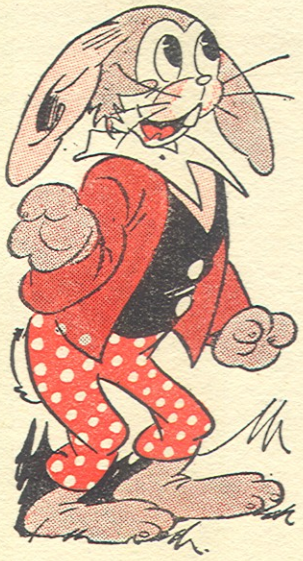
" How silly of me ! I was going the wrong way ! " he cried, as he passed Dicky and his two friends. " But I'm going the right way now. At least, I hope I am. Pip-pip ! "

" Foolish animal ! " sighed little Miss Mole, as Harold vanished from view through the wood.

" I wonder where he is going, anyway ? " said little Miss Mole.

" I bet he doesn't even know himself," snapped Dicky Dormouse.

But that's where Dicky was wrong !



For Harold did know where he was going. He was on the way to the post office to buy a stamp for his mother. The post office was in an old hollow tree and it was looked after by Miss Jenny Wren.

As Harold bounded gaily along, he suddenly saw another Dormouse coming towards him. This was little Dozey Dormouse, Dicky's tiny brother. Dozey had a little school satchel on his back and as he was coming along Harold could hear little sobbing sounds coming from him.

" Hallo—hallo ! " he cried. " What's the matter with you, young Dozey ? What're you crying like that for ? "

" I've been kept in," wept little Dozey. " That horrid old Mr. Owl k-kept me in because I couldn't do my tables."

" Couldn't do your tables ! " repeated Harold. " It's a very queer thing," he went on, " the way you Dormouses—sorry, you Dormice, I mean—will keep harping on about your silly tables. Your brother Dicky's just been making no end of a fuss about a stupid tea table, and now here you are, all upset about some other silly tables——"

" Multiplication tables," put in Dozey, dabbing at his eyes with a tiny pocket handkerchief.

" Oh, multiplication tables ! " said Harold. " Well, you know the rule about how to multiply, don't you ? If you don't, I'll tell you." He sang :

" To multiply, say, 4 and 3,
You must divide by 5,
Then add the number of the bees
In Farmer Grunter's hive ;
When you've done that you must subtract
The sum of 8 from 3,
By then I have no doubt you'll find
You're just as daft as me ! "

" There—there ! " he went on, patting Dozey on the shoulder. " Don't you worry about any silly old tables. I never do. I never worry about anything. WHOOPEE-EEE ! " He yelled so loudly that little Dozey gave a startled jump.

" Now I'll tell you what," went on Harold, " it's no use your going home for tea because, for one thing, the tea-table's broken, and, for another, I expect they've

finished by now. So you come along and have tea with me, see ? It'll cheer you up no end, and mother's got some extra-special Strawberry Jam. It's simply scrumptious ! Umm-mmm ! "

He smacked his lips in such a way that it made little Dozey's mouth fairly water. For he simply doted on Strawberry Jam.

" Oh, thank you so much, Harold ! " he cried, his tears quite forgotten. " I'd love to come and have tea with you ! "

" Come on, then ! " cried Harold. " I've just got to get a stamp at the post office first. Mother's writing to ask some cousins of mine, over at Heather Hill, to come and stay with us for the school holidays ! "

He and the little dormouse set off for the post office. But they hadn't got very far when Harold came to a sudden halt.

" Hallo, look there ! " he exclaimed.

" Where ? " squeaked Dozey.

" There ! " said Harold, pointing with his paw. " It's Freddy Fox. He's hiding behind that bush, and he's watching something. I wonder what it can be ? "

" He looks awful interested in it, whatever it is ! " said Dozey.

Freddy Fox certainly did look interested. He was a smart, sleek sort of a fellow, and he was standing perfectly still behind a bush, with his fine, sharp head thrust forward and his ears pricked. Whatever he was watching was evidently on the other side of the bush.

" Come on, let's give him a fright ! " giggled Harold.

" Oh no, Harold—we can't do that," said Dozey. " It—it wouldn't be polite. Besides, he might be cross ! "

" Cross ? " tittered Harold. " I don't care if he is cross. Come on ! "

He crept silently forward, followed by Dozey. Freddy Fox was so intent on whatever he was watching, that he didn't hear Harold until he suddenly yelled :

" BOO-OOO ! "

Freddy Fox gave such a jump that he leapt about a foot into the air, whirling round as he did so !

" Oh, it's you, is it ? " he cried fiercely, landing on his four feet and looking so cross that even Harold was alarmed ! " What d'you mean by it, you great lout ? "

" It was just a bit of fun," sniggered Harold.

" Fun ? " repeated Freddy Fox savagely. " This is no time for fun. D'you know what's happening ? "

" No, what ? " gulped Harold, for he had never seen Freddy in such a rage before.

" Just look through that bush and you'll see," hissed Freddy. " This is the worst day—the frightfullest day—THE MOST TERRIBLE DAY IN THE WHOLE HISTORY OF THE WILD WOOD ! "

Freddy Fox Has Strange News

HAROLD HARE gaped at Freddy with bulging eyes. As for little Dozey Dormouse, he fairly shivered with fright.

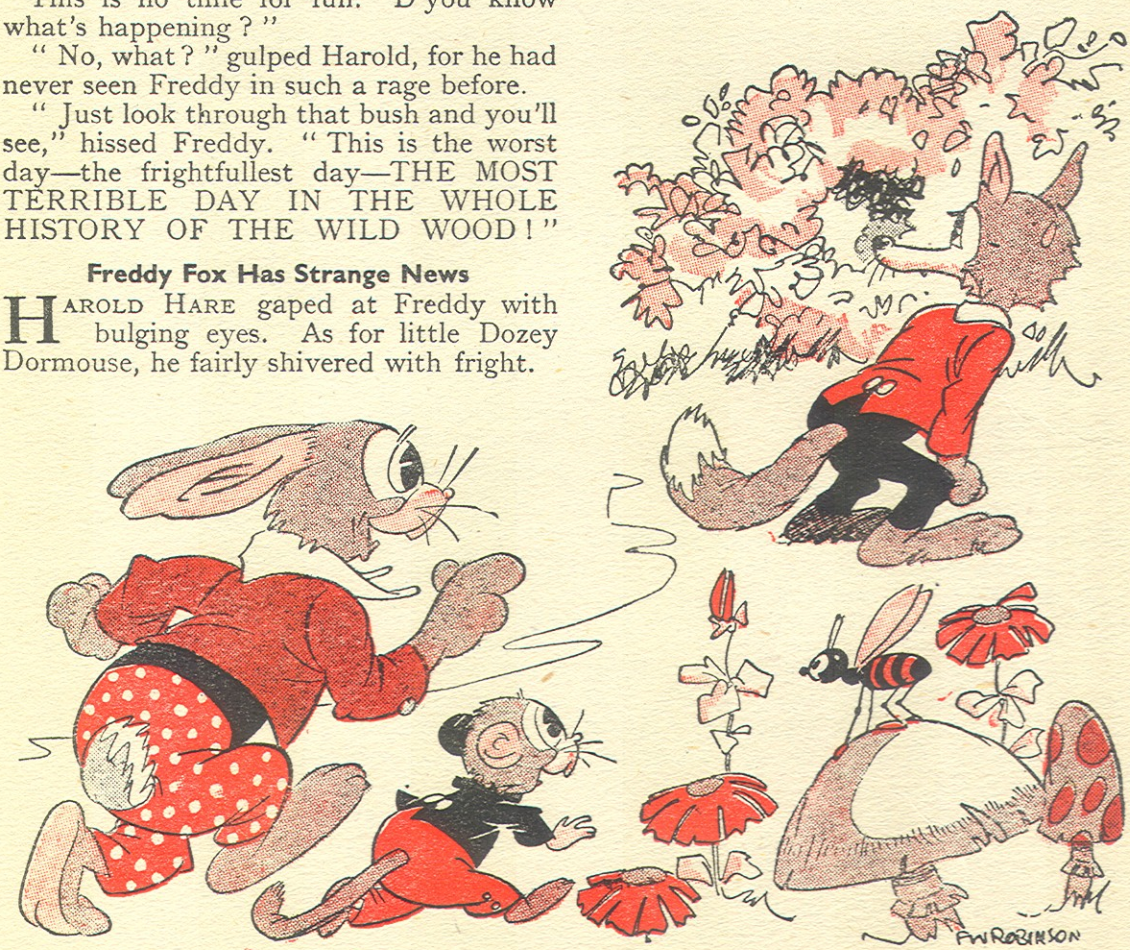
" But—but what's happening ? " gasped Harold.

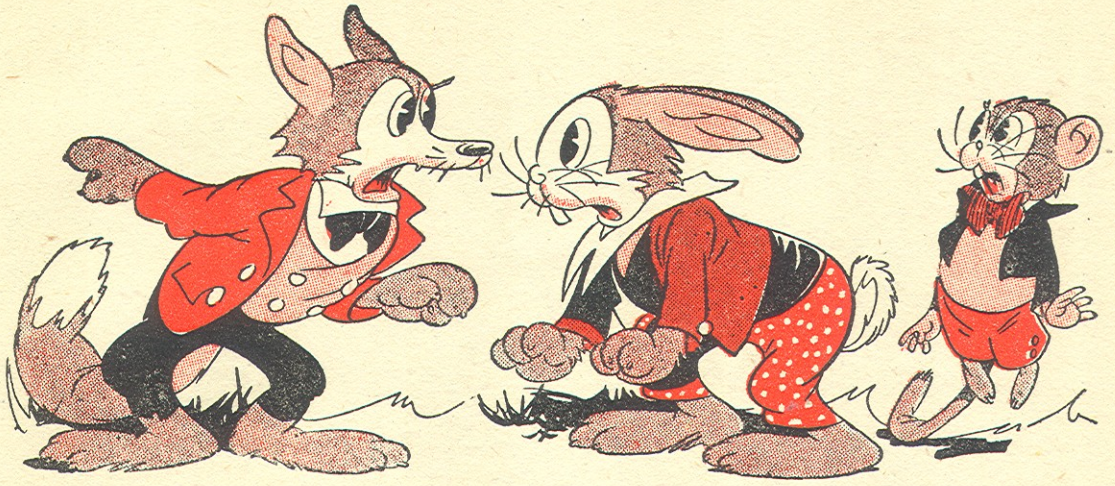
" Look through the bush and you'll see ! " cried Freddy excitedly. " Go on, take a peep ! "

Harold crept forward, he peeped through the bush. As he did so he gave a start. For on the other side of the bush were four men.

One of the men was looking through a thing like a little telescope mounted on a long, slender tripod. Two of the other men were measuring the ground with what looked like a long piece of tape with marks on it. The fourth man was writing something in a notebook.

As Harold watched, he began to get all his old cockiness back. For the men didn't seem to have any horrid guns or snares with them, like some of the humans





who sometimes came walking through the Wild Wood.

Harold wondered why Freddy Fox was so alarmed. So far as he could see, the men were engaged in some mysterious but harmless business which had nothing at all to do with guns and snares which so terrified the furred and feathered folks who lived in the Wild Wood. Harold proceeded to tell Freddy so.

" I don't know what you're getting so frightened about," he said, turning to him. " I don't like humans any more than you do, but I can't see that those four are doing any harm."

" Oh, you can't, can't you ? " sneered Freddy.

" No, I jolly well can't ! " retorted Harold.

" You wouldn't, of course," said Freddy scornfully. " If brains were made of wood you wouldn't have enough of them to make little Annie Ant a pen-holder."

" Is that so ? " sneered Harold, trying terribly hard to think of something clever to say.

" Annie Ant has a pen-holder," put in little Dozey Dormouse meekly.

" Yes, of course she has ! " yelled Harold triumphantly. " She's *got* a pen-holder. So what would she want another one for, eh ? Just you tell me that, Freddy Fox. What would she want another pen-holder for when she's already *got* one ? "

" Oh, help ! " groaned Freddy, shaking his head and staring at Harold in a hopeless, despairing sort of way.

" What's the matter with you ? " demanded Harold. " Aren't you well ? Oh, I know what it is," he went on, brightening up. " You're frightened of those four humans. Well, you don't have to be. I'll look after you. I'll protect you. You leave it to me. I'm not frightened ! "

With that he started to sing at the top of his voice :

" Who's the chap who doesn't care ?
Who's the chap to take a dare ?
Who's as strong as Old Man Bear ?
Who has courage rich and rare ?
'Why,' so all the folks declare,
'It's HEEDLESS, HANDSOME HAROLD HARE!'"

" Oh, for goodness' sake, shut up, will you ? " cried Freddy Fox crossly. " You'll be singing the other side of your face in a minute, when I tell you what's wrong ! You think those men on the other side of this bush are harmless, don't you ? "

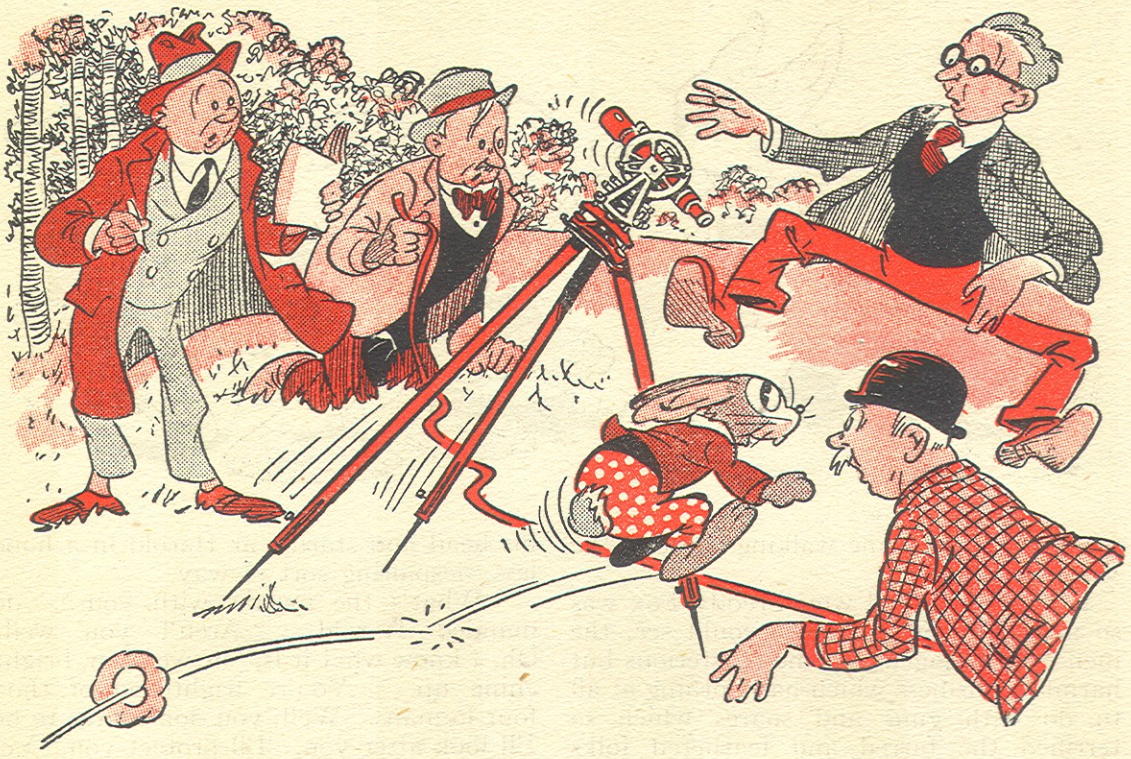
" Yes, of course they are," began Harold. " They haven't got a gun or a trap between them——"

" No, they've got something a thousand times worse ! " cut in Freddy. " D'you know what they're doing ? "

" No," gasped Harold. " What—what are they doing ? "

" They're measuring ! " cried Freddy.

" Measuring ? " repeated Harold. " Oh,



well, there's no harm in measuring! Billy Bunny and I did a bit of measuring ourselves the other day. We each had a lovely juicy lettuce leaf, and we measured them to see whose was the bigger——"

"I don't mean that sort of measuring, silly!" cut in Freddy savagely. "They're measuring the ground. They call it surveying. And do you know why they're measuring the ground?"

"No!" murmured Harold.

"Oh, do tell us!" quavered little Dozey Dormouse. "You're making me ever so, ever so curious. Why are they measuring the ground?"

"*Because,*" said Freddy, in a low, horrified voice, "*they're going to build a town here!*"

A Visit to Grandpa Badger

HAROLD HARE stared at Freddy in amazement. As for little Dozey Dormouse, he was standing stock-still, as though frozen with fear.

"Going to—going to build a town?" gasped Harold.

"Yes," said Freddy. "A place where humans live in great brick and stone things which they call houses."

"But—but how can they build a town *here?*" exclaimed Harold. "I mean to say, it's all trees and bushes and things!"

"They'll cut the trees down and pull the bushes up by the roots," said Freddy in a trembling voice.

"WHAT?" cried Harold, his eyes nearly sticking out of his head.

"You heard," said Freddy.

"D'you mean—d'you mean that they'll cut down old Mr. Oak and Mr. Elm and Mr. Chestnut and Mr. Beech and all those other grand old men of the woods?" cried Harold, aghast.

"Yes, and they'll pull up the Briar Bush family and the Laurels and the Rhododendrons and all the rest of them," said Freddy. "And they'll build their dreadful houses right on top of the Primroses and Violets and Cowslips and Buttercups and Daisies, and all the other flowers—and then there won't be any flowers any more."

" Boo-hoo ! " wept little Dozey, sobbing again.

" And that's not all," went on Freddy, trying terribly hard to keep his voice steady. " It'll mean that *we'll* have to go —every one of us ! "

" Go ? " gulped Harold. " How d'you mean—*go ?* "

" I mean that every single one of us will have to leave the Wild Wood, because there won't be a Wild Wood any more," said Freddy. " It'll all have been cut down or pulled up, and instead of trees, bushes and flowers, there'll be nothing here at all except those brick and stone things called houses."

" Oh, dear ! " cried Dozey, and two tears ran down his little face. " Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! "

" But this is awful ! " cried Harold, staring at Freddy Fox. " Are you sure you're not making a mistake ? I mean, how d'you know that they're going to build a town here ? "

" Because I've seen them measuring before," said Freddy. " Do you remember when they cut down Burnside Plantation and then put up a row of their ugly stone houses ? Well, I watched them measuring then. In any case, I've been listening to those four men talking, and I've heard enough to know that they jolly well *are* going to build a town here ! "

" But they can't ! " cried Harold wildly. " How dare they cut down our lovely Wild Wood ? Why, our families have lived here for years and years and years. And old Mr. Oak, who's the oldest inhabitant of the wood, has been here for hundreds of years ! "

" I know," said Freddy sadly. " But these humans don't care about that. All they care about is putting up their horrible houses."

" But what'll we *do ?* " cried Harold, more wildly than ever. " I mean, where will we go if we have to leave the Wild Wood ? "

" Goodness knows ! " said Freddy helplessly. " We'll find some place, I suppose. There's one thing. We animals can move. It's different with the poor old trees and the bushes and the flowers. They can't move, poor things."

" I'm not going to stand it ! " yelled Harold. " I'll teach those humans that they can't come cutting our Wild Wood down ! "

Next instant, with a terrific bound, he leapt right over the bush, and crashed violently into the thing which stood on the three long, slender legs of the tripod.

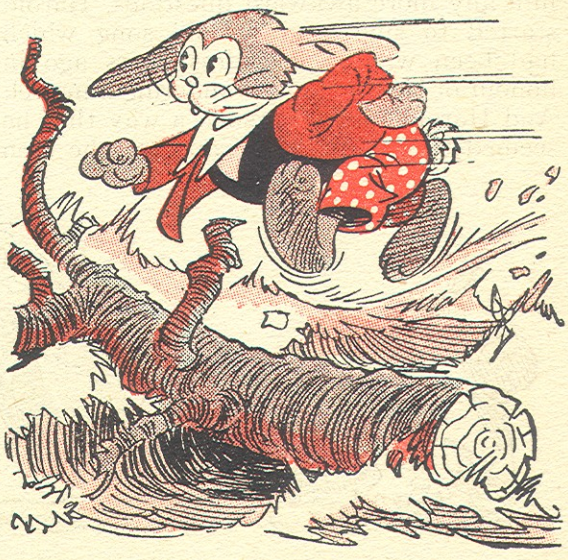
The thing—which is called a theodolite, and which is used by men measuring land on which they are going to build—went over with a crash. The man who had been using it got such a fright that he nearly jumped out of his skin.

" It's a hare ! " he roared, glaring furiously after Harold, who was bounding away amidst the trees. " It's a hare what's knocked the theodolite over ! "

" I only wish I were big enough to knock you over as well ! " thought Harold, as he bounded away. " Anyway, I jolly well hope that I've broken that thing of yours ! "

He had broken it, all right. So much so that the man who had been using it had to take it home to get it mended, and that made him crosser than ever.

Harold was moving in a circle, so as to avoid the angry men and to rejoin Freddy Fox and Dozey Dormouse again. He was feeling wildly excited, for he knew that



he had struck the first blow against the enemies who meant to destroy the lovely Wild Wood and everything which grew there.

"We'll not give in!" yelled Harold, as he bounded along. "We'll not be beaten. HURRAH!"

Then he suddenly stopped as a voice said:

"Hallo, Harold! What are you so excited about to-day?"

It was old Mr. Oak who had spoken. Strong, kind, gentle Mr. Oak who was the oldest inhabitant of the Wild Wood. Harold stared up at him, a lump in his throat. He loved old Mr. Oak, as did everybody else who lived in the wood.

How dreadful, thought Harold, to think of poor Mr. Oak lying on the ground with all his strong branches crushed and broken. It was enough to make anyone cry to think of it.

"Why are you looking at me like that, Harold?" asked Mr. Oak. "Is something wrong?"

"Something wrong," thought Harold, blinking thoughtfully. Yes, something jolly well was wrong. But he wasn't going to tell Mr. Oak anything about it. Not yet, at any rate.

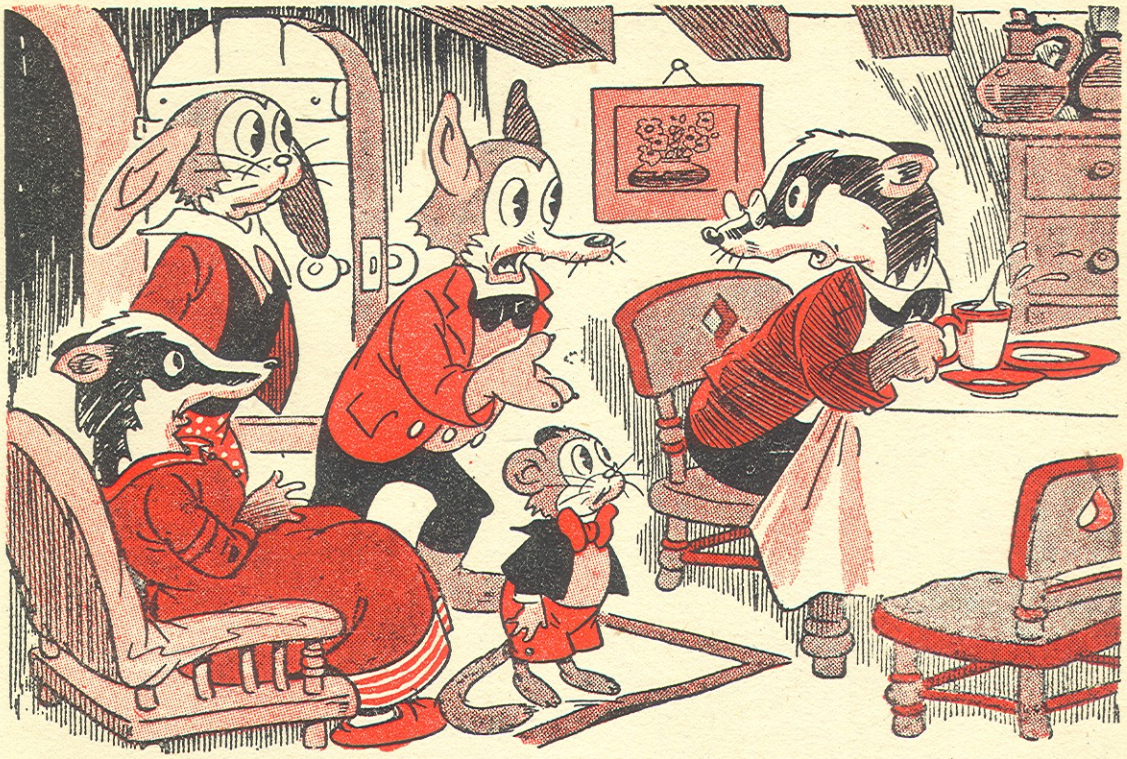
"I—I reckon I'm just a bit out of puff," Harold panted unsteadily. "I've been running pretty fast."

Then, so that Mr. Oak wouldn't ask him any more awkward questions, Harold started to sing a grand old song which had been written countless years ago in honour of Mr. Oak by a wandering minstrel. And Harold sang it in such a way that he seemed to be hurling defiance at the men who meant to cut down the Wild Wood. This is how it went:

"The Oak Tree is stately and strong,
And stately he stands in his pride;
Knights, squires and friars; Crusaders and priors,
Through the Wild Wood he's seen them all ride;
Or abide
For a while 'neath his branches so wide.

"He has given his shelter to all,
And as the long years have unrolled,
Before him the story of old England's glory
He's seen page by page to unfold;
O, the Bold!
Who wrote it in letters of gold!"

"Yes, letters of gold indeed, Harold," sighed old Mr. Oak. "What a grand old country England is. I'm proud to be an



English oak. Many's the strange and stirring scene that I've witnessed, and I hope I'll live to see many more."

Well, he wouldn't stand stately in his pride very much longer if the men had their way. No, he'd be chopped down and become a withered old tree. That was unless something was done about it. And something jolly well *was* going to be done about it, Harold told himself fiercely.

He knew that if he stayed talking to Mr. Oak any longer, he would be certain to see that something was wrong. So he shot away as fast as ever he could go, leaving Mr. Oak staring after him with a puzzled look on his gnarled old face.

Harold hadn t gone very far before he met Freddy Fox and little Dozey hurrying towards him.

" I say, what are we going to do ? " cried Harold. " Have you thought of anything yet, Freddy ? "

" No, I haven't," said Freddy.

He was a very cunning, sly sort of a fellow, and, as a rule, he could think of no end of clever wheezes. But this time he was completely beaten. He could think of no plan at all that would stop the men cutting down the Wild Wood and building a town on it.

" Well, anyway, I knocked over that thing on long wooden legs," cried Harold triumphantly. " That was *something !* "

" Yes, it was something," agreed Freddy, " but it wasn't very much." He turned to little Dozey. " I do wish you'd stop snivelling ! " he grumbled.

" I c-can't help it," sighed little Dozey. " I'm so unhappy. Boo-hoo ! "

" Well, so am I unhappy, if it comes to that ! " cried Freddy. " But there's no use crying about it. We've got to *do* something ! "

" Yes, but WHAT ? " cried Harold.

" We'll go and see old Grandpa Badger about it," said Freddy. " He might know what to do."

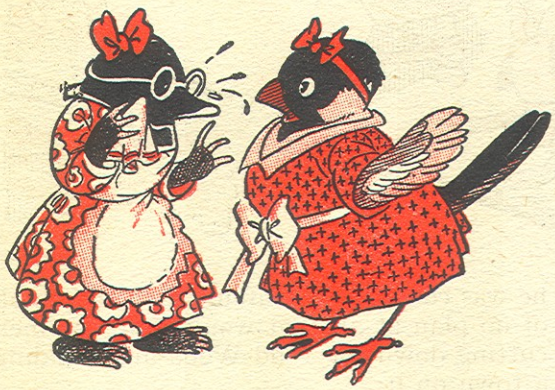
" Yes, so he might—that's a good idea ! " yelled Harold, for old Grandpa Badger was the wisest old animal in the whole of the Wood. " Come on, let's go and see him now ! "

He was so excited that he turned and bounded swiftly away, quite forgetting that poor little Dozey Dormouse couldn't possibly keep up with him, even if Freddy might.

" Hi, not so fast ! " cried Freddy, chasing after him with little Dozey scuttling frantically along beside him. " We can't all run as quickly as you can ! "

" Oh, sorry ! " cried Harold, stopping and squatting down to wait for them. " I got carried away by excitement ! "

" You mean, you got carried away by those four legs of yours," retorted Freddy, coming panting up with little Dozey. " Sometimes I think they're not legs at all,



but just springs, the way you go bounding and leaping about ! "

" Ha, ha ! " laughed Harold, holding his sides and rocking with mirth. " What an idea ! Springs instead of legs !

Then he started to sing :

" What makes me leap and bound about
Just like a rubber ball ?
It's 'cos my legs are springs of steel,
And not real legs at all ! "

" I must remember that," he gasped, wiping tears of mirth from his eyes. " It's one of the funniest things I've ever heard ! You—you do say some comic things, Freddy ! "

" Well," said Freddy, " if you've quite finished laughing, we'll go to see old Grandpa Badger."

" Oh, my goodness, yes ! " cried Harold, looking terribly serious all of a sudden. " I was forgetting. Come on ! "

The three of them hurried along until they came to old Grandpa Badger's front door, which was hidden behind some bushes in the side of a steep bank.

Taking hold of the little brass knocker on the door, Freddy beat a *rat-tat-tat.* A few moments later the door was opened by kind old Mrs. Badger. She smiled at her three visitors and said :

" Good afternoon, children. Do come in ! "

" Good afternoon, Ma'am. Is Mr. Badger at home ? " asked Freddy, as he, Harold and little Dozey followed Mrs. Badger down a steep, sloping passage which led down to the cosy rooms of old Mr. and Mrs. Badger.

" Yes, he's having his tea, Freddy," said Mrs. Badger, leading the way into her kitchen. " Here he is ! "

Old Grandpa Badger looked at the three visitors with a kindly smile.

" Come in, come in ! " he cried. " Find yourselves some chairs and have some tea. There's plenty of cake left, and lots more in the pantry."

" Oh, Mr. Badger, thank you ever so much ! " cried Freddy, in a trembling voice. " But we don't want any tea. We couldn't eat any tea——"

" Couldn't eat any tea ! " put in old Grandpa Badger, looking very much surprised. " Dearie me ! This is the first time I've heard of youngsters not wanting any tea, especially when there's lots of lovely cake to eat ! "

" Yes, but Mr. Badger, the most awful thing's happened," cried Freddy. " That's what we've come to see you about. Oh, you don't know how dreadful it is ! "

" Well, tell me all about it, Freddy," said old Grandpa Badger kindly. " What is this dreadful thing that's happened ? "

" Well, a lot of humans intend to chop the Wild Wood down and build a town on it ! " cried Freddy.

The Meeting in Primrose Dell

WHEN he heard those awful words, old Grandpa Badger gave such a violent start that he nearly upset his tea cup. As for old Mrs. Badger, she gave a

cry of dismay and sank down on a chair, as though all the strength had left her.

" Freddy, you're—you're joking ! " gasped Grandpa Badger.

" I'm not, Mr. Badger," cried Freddy earnestly. " I've been watching them measuring the Wood and I heard them talking. They're going to chop all the trees down and pull the bushes up and build a town and then there won't be a Wild Wood any more ! "

" But this is dreadful ! " cried Grandpa Badger, in great alarm. " When did you see these men taking measurements, Freddy ? "

" This afternoon," cried Freddy. " Harold and little Dozey saw them, as well ! "

" That's right ! " yelled Harold so loudly that old Grandpa Badger nearly jumped out of his chair. " They had a thing on long wooden legs with them, and I knocked it over on purpose, didn't I, Freddy ? "

" Yes, that's right," said Freddy.

" And I'd have knocked all those horrid men over, too, if only I'd been strong enough," cried Harold. " I'm not frightened of them. I'm not frightened of anybody——"

" Oh, be quiet and stop boasting ! " cried Freddy. " The trouble with you is you talk too much ! Let's hear what Mr. Badger has to say."

" I don't know what to say," confessed old Grandpa Badger in a very trembly sort of voice. " This is dreadful news, Freddy—the worst I have ever heard ! "

" Dearie me ! " wailed old Mrs. Badger, sitting in her chair with her apron to her eyes.

" There, there, don't upset yourself," comforted old Grandpa Badger. " There's nothing so bad that it can't be mended ! "

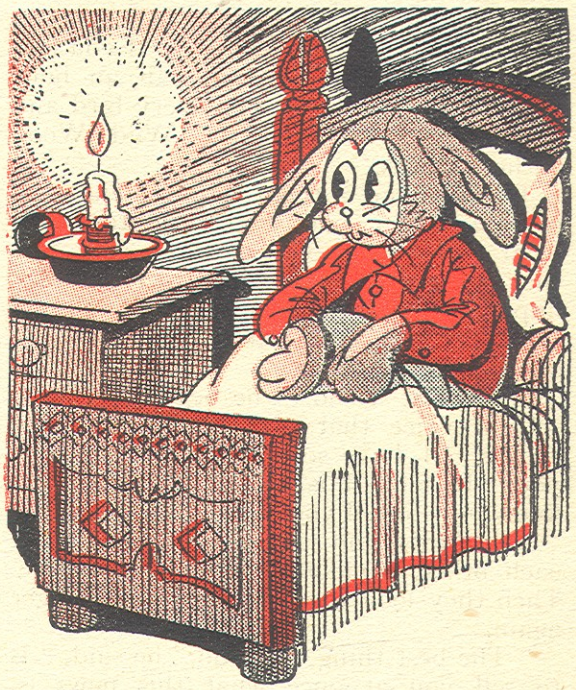
" But I don't see how this can be mended," wept old Mrs. Badger. " We're only animals and we can't do anything against MEN."

" No, that's true, I'm afraid," groaned old Grandpa Badger. " That's true ! "

" And if they're going to cut the Wild Wood down," went on Mrs. Badger, " we'll have to leave this happy little home of ours. Oh, it's too cruel ! "

" Can't you think of *anything* we can do, Mr Badger ? " asked Freddy desperately.

" Not at the moment, Freddy," confessed Grandpa Badger sorrowfully. " I'll do my best to think of something, but I'm afraid we must be prepared for the worst ! After all, we're only animals and there is little that we can do against men. But I only wish I could think of a plan," he groaned. " However, it would be wrong of me to raise false hopes ! But there's one



thing," he went on, turning to Freddy, " All the birds and animals in the wood will have to be warned about this. We'll have to have a meeting. Run and tell everybody to meet in Primrose Dell in half-an-hour ! "

" Yes, righto, Mr. Badger ! " cried Freddy. " ' Come on, Harold ! You, too, Dozey ! "

" I think Dozey had better stay here with me for now, Freddy," said old Mrs. Badger, who was jogging the little Dormouse up and down on her knee and crooning to him one of the lullabies of the Wild Wood which went like this :

" Round and round in woodland dells,
See the fairies dancing, singing,
To the sound of silvery bells,
Softly from the Bluebells ringing."

So leaving little Dozey to the care of Mrs Badger, Freddy and Harold dashed off to summon all the birds and animals to the meeting in Primrose Dell.

" We won't tell them what the meeting's about," said Freddy as he and Harold raced along. " We'll leave it to Grandpa Badger to tell them that. We'll just say that it's a most important meeting and that everybody must come to it."

Well, everybody did come ! If you had peeped into Primrose Dell half an hour later you would have seen every bird and animal who lived in the Wild Wood gathered there.

The whole lot of them were tremendously excited. They hadn't the slightest idea what the meeting was to be about. But they knew that it must be something very important. Then suddenly they all fell silent as old Grandpa Badger rose to address the meeting.

" My dear friends," he began in such a solemn voice that everybody held their breath, " I have some very bad news for you In fact, it is so bad that I hardly know how to tell you ! "

The birds and animals all looked at each other, wondering what it could be. Then they looked at old Grandpa Badger again.

" The best thing I can do," he said, " is to tell you at once what this news is. Then you will know the worst. But we must be brave."

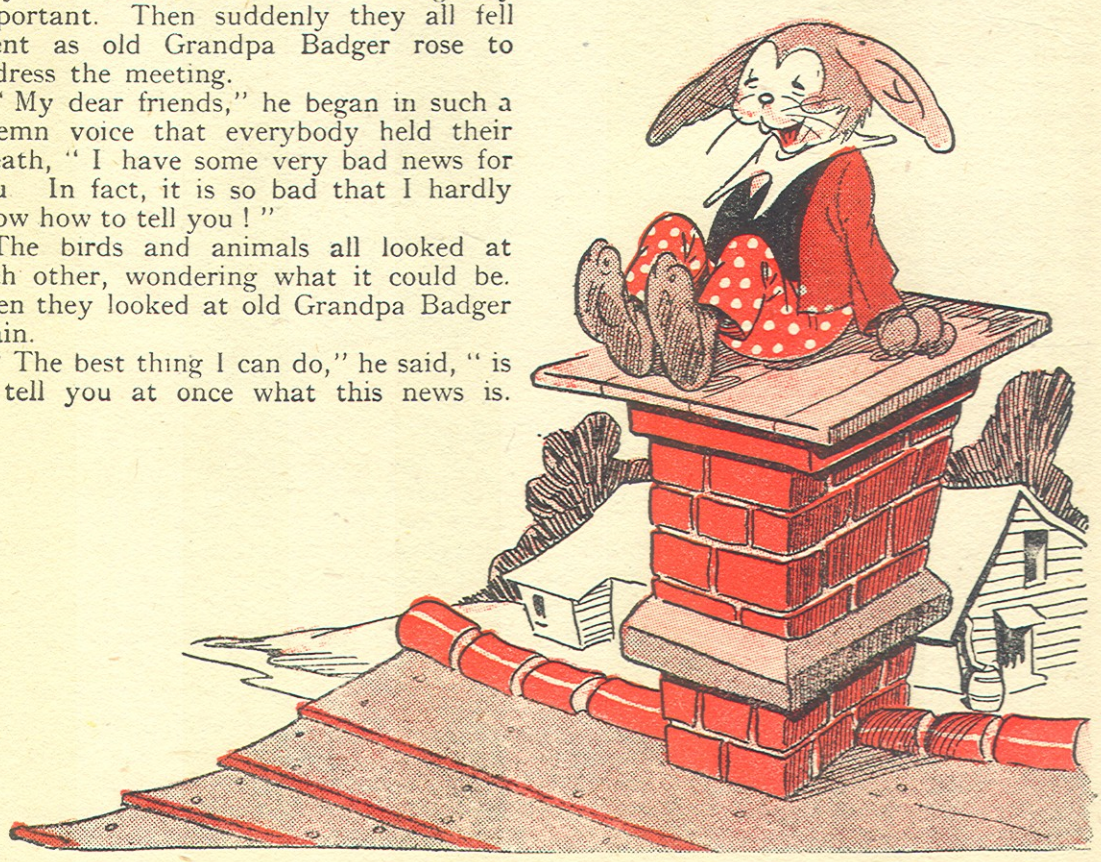
" Oh, dear ! " cried all the birds and animals. " What ever can have happened ? "

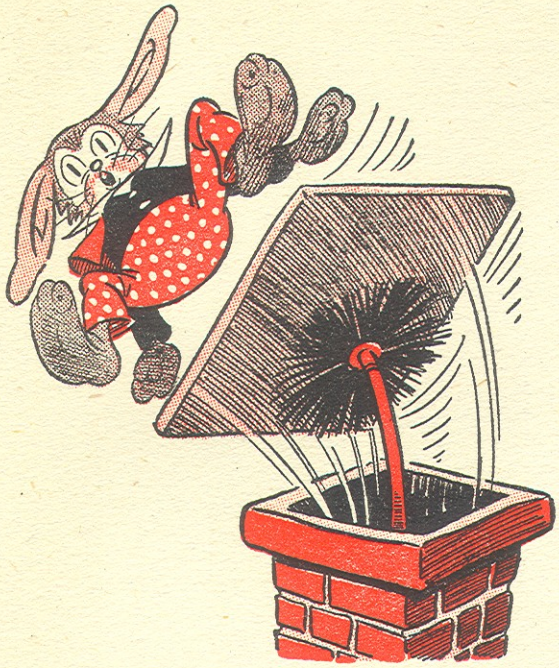
Next moment they knew. For in a trembling voice, old Grandpa Badger cried :

" Men have been measuring in the Wild Wood They mean to cut it down and build houses where our homes now are."

A great cry arose from all the birds and animals, as they heard these dreadful words. They knew that the words must be true. Old Grandpa Badger would never have said them if they weren't true.

" I have called this meeting," he continued, holding up one of his paws for silence, " so that we can talk over what is the best thing to do, and to see if we can find a way to stop these men cutting





the wood down and building a town instead."

Well, they talked and they talked. They talked while the sun went down, and they were still talking when the moon came up—a great, round yellow moon, which looked down on the meeting in Primrose Dell with a very puzzled expression on his kind old face.

But, talk as they would, nobody could hit on the vaguest plan for saving the Wild Wood.

"Does anybody happen to know where these men live?" cried Slinky Stoat at length.

Slinky was leader of the Stoat Pack, and a very sleek, smart, handsome fellow he was.

"I think I know where one of them lives!" cried Bertie Blackbird. "There's a great lot of planks and pails and saws and axes, and things like that piled up at the back of that big house on the top of the hill. I saw them there this afternoon, but I never *dreamt* what they were for!"

"The saws and axes will be used to chop down the Wood, for sure," groaned old Grandpa Badger. "The man who lives in that big house on top of the hill must be the Builder."

"What's a Builder, please?" cried little Sammy Squirrel.

"I'll tell you what a Builder is, Sammy," said old Grandpa. "The men who build these houses of brick and stone always work in packs. Each pack has a leader and this leader is called the Builder."

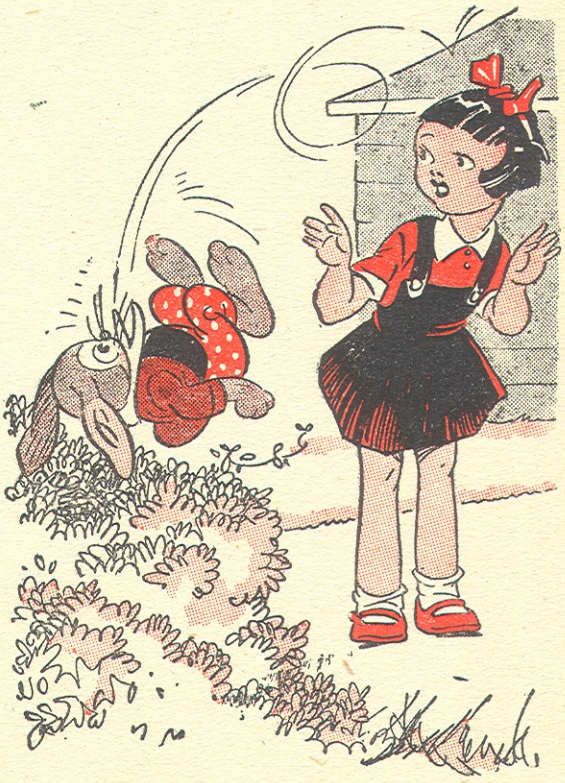
"What a horrid name!" sighed little Miss Mole.

"Yes, isn't it?" cried Bessie Bullfinch. "If anybody called me a Builder I—I don't know what I'd do!"

"I know what *I'd* do," cried Willie Water Rat. "If anybody called *me* a Builder, I'd push him into the river."

"Good for you, Willie!" yelled Harold Hare, clapping his hands—or, rather, his paws. "Yes! That's the idea! Push 'em all into the river. That'll put a damper on their scheme!"

Then, lifting his head, he sang:



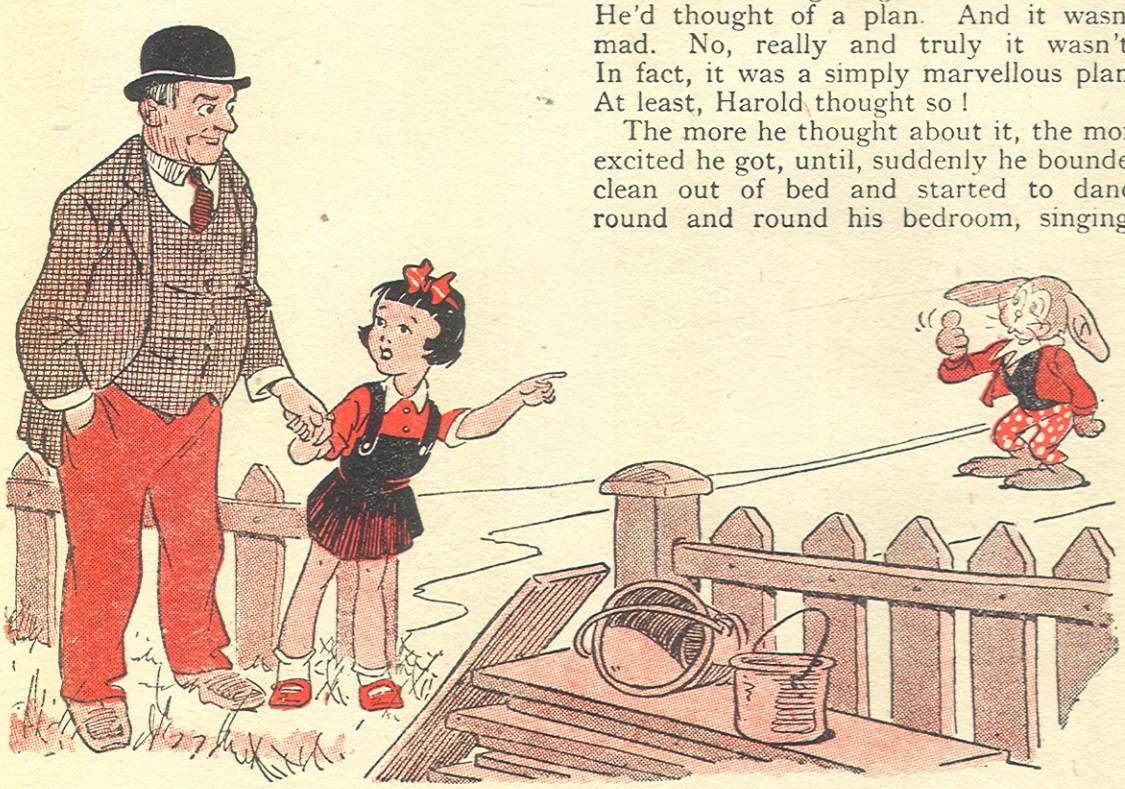
" Down with all the villains of the Building Pack ;
What we ought to do is to tie 'em in a sack ;
Tie 'em in a sack, and tie it, oh, so tight,
Then throw 'em in the river in the middle of the night ! "

" Why in the middle of the night ? " asked Bessie Bullfinch.

" Because night rhymes with tight, silly," answered Harold. " Everybody knows that. Hallo, what's old Grandpa Badger saying now ? "

Old Grandpa was saying :

" Well, my dear friends, we must all go home to bed now. And we must all think and think as hard as ever we can, and see if we can think of a plan to save our dear old Wild Wood and all our happy homes In the meantime, in case we can't think of a plan, I will look round and try to find some other place where we can all live in peace and safety—but it will mean that we will have to take all our furniture and everything away with us, and set up house somewhere else. It's dreadful to think of such an awful thing, but—but that's what we might have to do ! And now Good-night —and God bless you all ! "



Harold Does Some Planning !

THE meeting broke up and the birds and animals went off to their homes to which they might very shortly have to say good-bye. The younger ones were put to bed, but the elder ones sat up ever so late talking and talking about what could be done.

Poor little Dozey Dormouse was so unhappy that it was ages and ages before he fell asleep. Harold Hare didn't even try to go to sleep. He sat up in bed with his candle lighted and his nightshirt on, thinking and thinking until his head was in an absolute whirl !

But all the plans he thought of for saving the Wild Wood were so completely mad that even he could see that they wouldn't work.

Suddenly, however, after hours and hours of thinking he gave a violent start. He'd thought of a plan. And it wasn't mad. No, really and truly it wasn't ! In fact, it was a simply marvellous plan ! At least, Harold thought so !

The more he thought about it, the more excited he got, until, suddenly he bounded clean out of bed and started to dance round and round his bedroom, singing :

" I've got it! . . I've got it!
Hurray! Hurray!
I know jolly well what to do!
That horrid old Builder will soon be away—
He'll take his whole pack with him, too! "

He didn't sing very loudly, of course, in case he woke up his father and mother, who were sleeping in the next room. Having finished his song, he rushed to the window and peeped out.

The big yellow moon was sinking low in the sky and Harold knew that it wouldn't be very long before it was dawn. Fairly shaking with glee, he slipped into his clothes and crept softly from the house.

Once outside, he bounded swiftly away through the wood, until he came to the little house, where the Dormouse family lived. Bending down, Harold tapped on the little window of Dozey's bedroom.

Dozey awoke with a start. He looked towards the window with startled eyes.

" Who's—who's that ? " he squeaked.

" It's me—Harold ! " cried the visitor, just loud enough for Dozey to hear him. " Come on, get up ! I want you ! "

" But it's not time to get up ! " squeaked little Dozey.

" Yes, it is ! " cried Harold excitedly. " How dare you lie there snoring your silly little head off when I've thought of the most marvellous wheeze you've ever heard of ! Come on, get up at once—or I'll come in and yank you out by the tail ! "

" Oh, dear, I suppose I'll have to get up," sighed little Dozey, pushing back the bed-clothes. " He'll never go away until I do ! "

He got out of bed and took off his tiny pyjamas. Then he began to dress while Harold waited impatiently outside.

" Come on, hurry up ! " he cried, tapping sharply on the little window again.

" I *am* hurrying ! " cried Dozey. " You don't give anybody time ! I must brush my hair ! "

" Brush your *what ?* " cried Harold, who couldn't hear very well through the window.

" My hair ! " squeaked little Dozey. " I must brush my hair ! "

" Brush your chair ? " hooted Harold indignantly. " I never heard of such a thing. What d'you want to brush your chair for, you silly little fathead ? We're not going to sit down, if that's what you're thinking. We've got work to do. Brushing your chair, indeed.

" My *hair !* " squeaked Dozey desperately. " HAIR ! "

" Oh, your hair ! " cried Harold. " Well, why didn't you say so at first ? Anyway, we've no time to bother about your silly hair. Come on, come on—you're keeping me waiting ! "

" Coming ! " squeaked little Dozey.

A few moments later he had joined Harold outside.

" Now, come on ! " cried Harold bounding away with little Dozey scuttling frantically along beside him. " We haven't a moment to lose. It'll be daylight within a few minutes ! "

" But where are we going ? " cried Dozey breathlessly. " And what *is* this marvellous wheeze of yours ? "

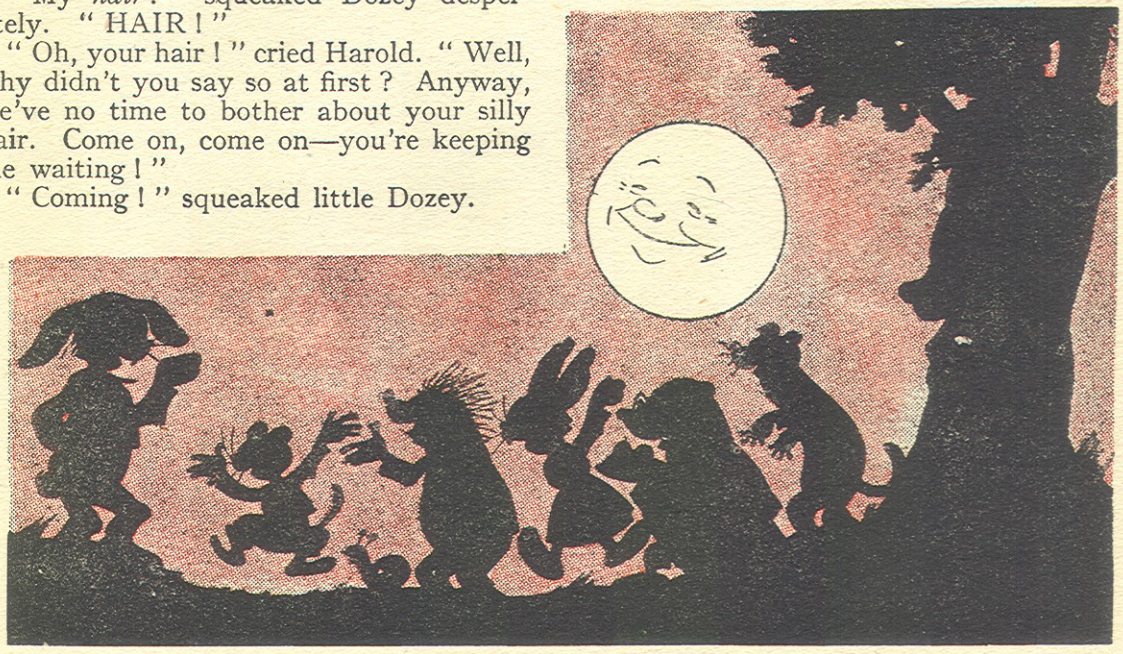
" We're going to the big house on top of the hilll where the Builder lives," cried Harold. " And my marvellous wheeze will save the Wild Wood from him and his silly Pack ! "

" Oh, Harold, not really ? " cried little Dozey, his voice trembling with excitement.

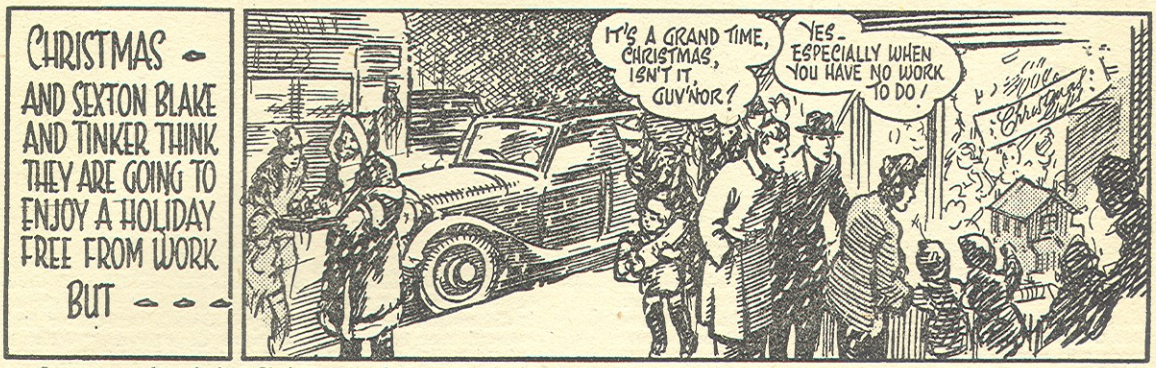
" Yes, really ! " cried Harold triumphantly as he bounded along. Then he started to shout at the very top of his voice :

" Who drove the Builder from his lair,
Amidst a cloud of choking smoke ?
Why, none but CLEVER HAROLD HARE,
THE HERO OF THE WILD WOOD FOLK ! "

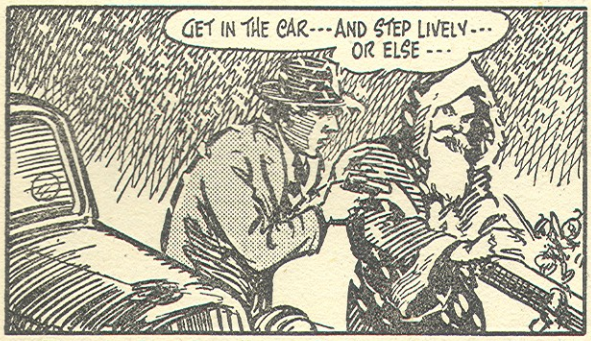
(*Continued on page 186.*)



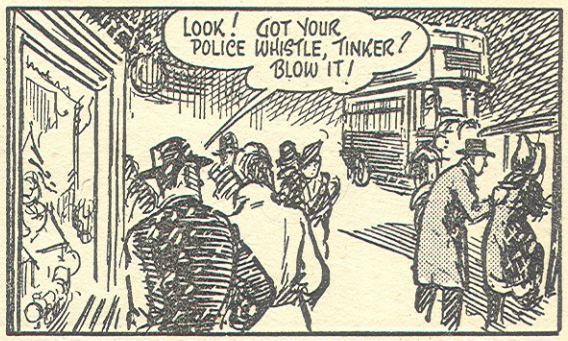
THE MAN WHO KIDNAPPED FATHER CHRISTMAS



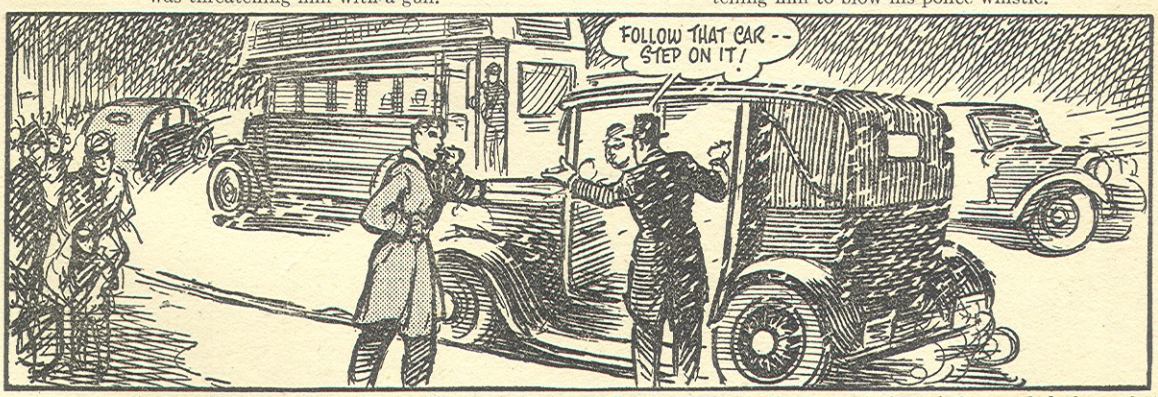
1. It was two days before Christmas, and snow was falling fast. Although it was late evening, in Oxford Street the glare of lights and the brilliantly-lit shop windows made it seem like day. Outside a toy-shop, little children were clustered like moths. Even Father Christmas himself was there, standing in the snow, with presents for the children. Sexton Blake and Tinker looked on, smiling. "It's a grand time, Christmas, isn't it, Guv'nor?" cried Tinker happily. "Yes," smiled Sexton Blake. "Especially when you have no work to do!" Tinker grinned. They had just started their Christmas holiday and were having a walk round before they returned for dinner at Baker Street.



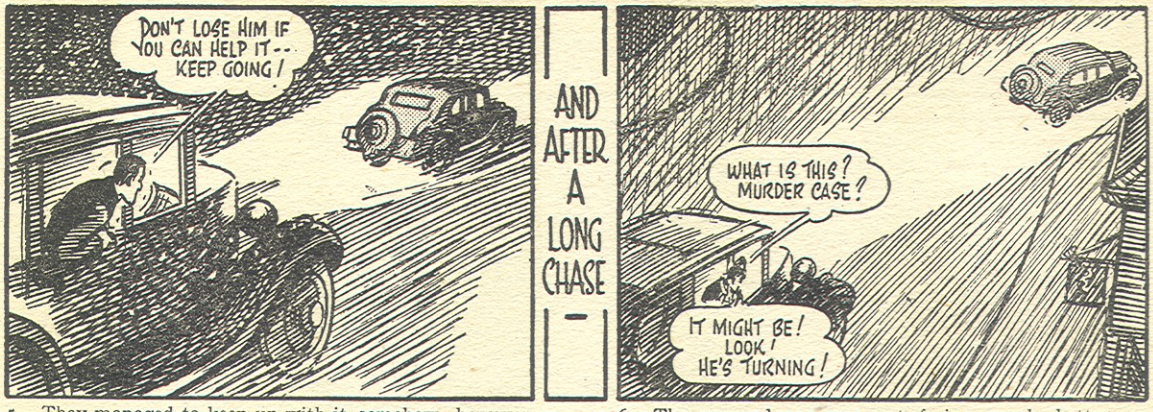
2. The man dressed as Father Christmas was arranging the toys on his tray, when a sleek, black car drew up beside him and a man stepped out. Father Christmas turned round to look at the newcomer, but received a shock which made him drop his tray and toys on to the snowy pavement. The man was threatening him with a gun.



3. Sexton Blake, chancing to glance round did not miss the scene. His eyes flashed as he saw Father Christmas stepping into a car at the point of a gun. It had all happened so quickly and silently that none of the passers-by had noticed it. Sexton Blake attracted Tinker's attention, telling him to blow his police whistle.

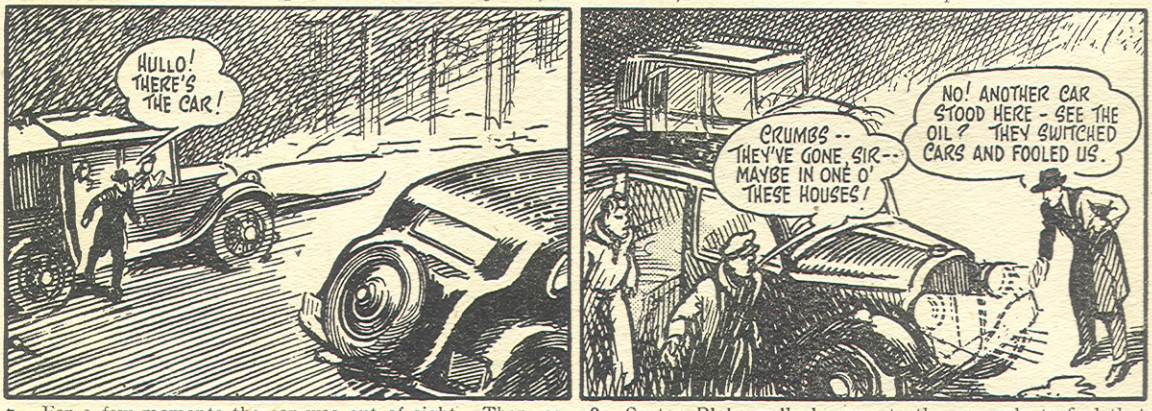


4. Tinker took the scene in at once. The car was just moving off when three shrill blasts of his whistle sounded above the roar of traffic. Sexton Blake was standing on the kerb and soon brought a taxi-cab over. The taxi had hardly come to a standstill when Sexton Blake jumped into it. "Follow that car!" he cried to the astonished cab driver, pointing to the car which had carried off Father Christmas. It was just visible among the traffic. As the taxi moved off, Tinker scrambled in and sat beside Sexton Blake. It was a difficult job, keeping track of a car in such crowded streets, and more than once it seemed they would lose it.



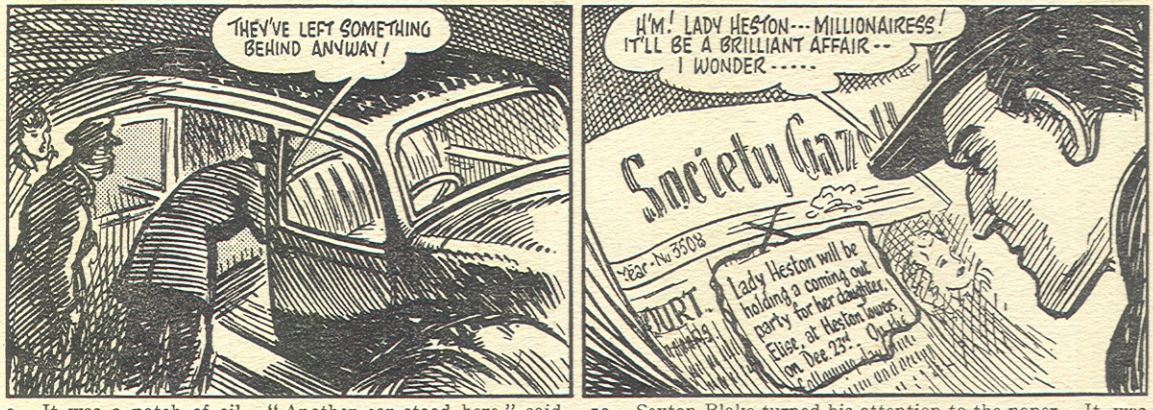
5. They managed to keep up with it somehow, however. The car had turned east and the roads gradually became less crowded. As the speed increased, the chase became more and more dangerous. More than once, the taxi-cab skidded along the treacherous road. But the driver was an experienced man and kept the other car in sight.

6. The pursued car was not faring much better, so it did not make much headway. Blake's taxi-driver had guessed that he and Tinker were detectives. "What is this? Murder case?" he asked in an awed voice. "It might be!" replied Sexton Blake, but suddenly broke off, for the car had taken a sharp turn to the left.



7. For a few moments the car was out of sight. Then, as the taxi skidded round the bend—missing a lamp standard by a few inches—they saw it again. It was parked on the opposite side of the road. At Sexton Blake's request, the taxi came slowly to a halt. Sexton Blake stepped out. Tinker followed, relieved at still being in one piece!

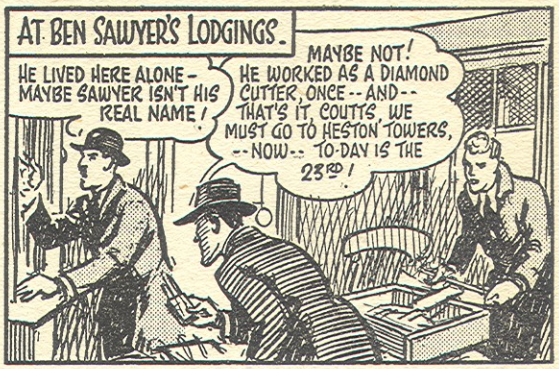
8. Sexton Blake walked across to the car, only to find that it had been abandoned. "Crumbs!—they've gone, sir!" cried the taxi-driver. "Perhaps they're in one o' these houses!" he suggested, pointing to the rows of squalid houses which bordered the road. Sexton Blake did not seem to think so. He had caught sight of something in the road.



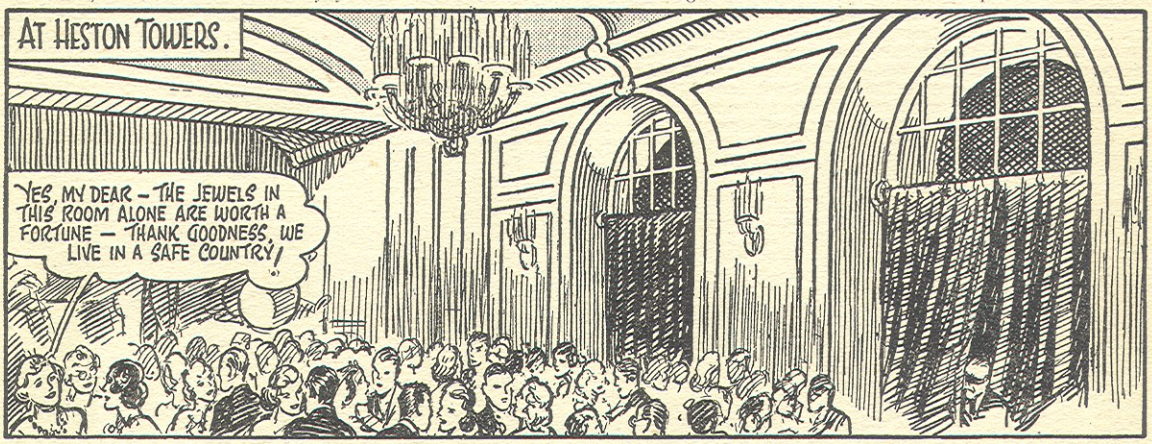
9. It was a patch of oil. "Another car stood here," said Sexton Blake. "They switched cars and fooled us!" There was nothing else that could be done, but Sexton Blake thought he would make a search of the car. Except for a paper lying on the back seat, there was nothing which might serve as a clue to the identity of the kidnappers.

10. Sexton Blake turned his attention to the paper. It was a society paper, about a week old. He noticed that one small paragraph on the front page had been heavily pencilled. It was just an announcement that there was to be a coming-out party for Lady Heston's daughter. "I wonder——" started Sexton Blake, but left the sentence unfinished.

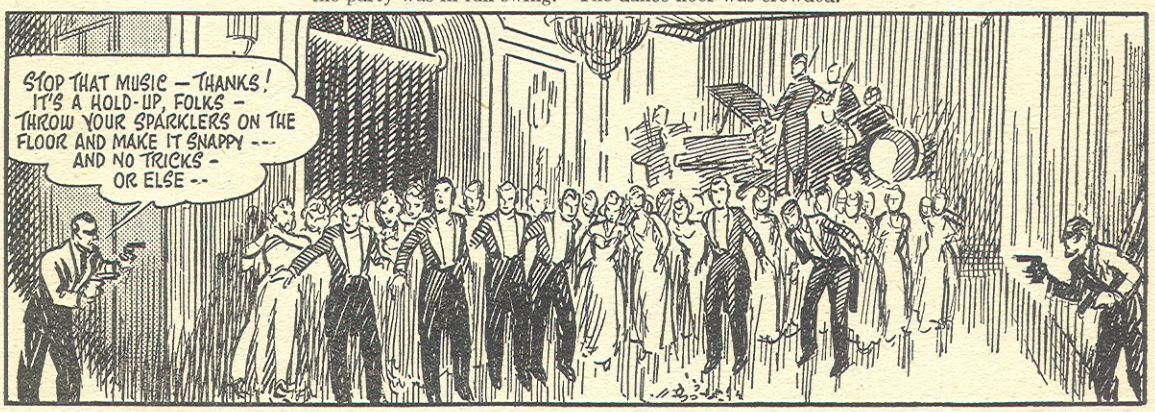
11. A few minutes later, a large police car came to a halt beside the abandoned car. Out of the car stepped Detective Inspector Coutts of Scotland Yard. He said that a constable had come on to the scene just after Tinker had blown his whistle, and 'phoned a report through to him. Many policemen had seen the chase, so it had been an easy job to find Sexton Blake.



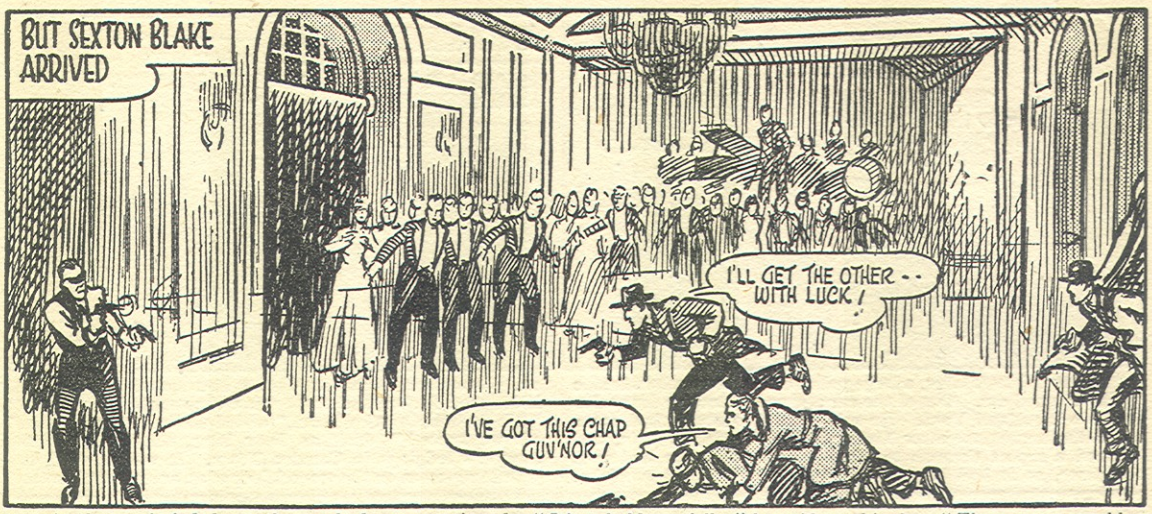
12. Detective Inspector Coutts had found out that the kidnapped Father Christmas was a chap named Ben Sawyer. "He lives in Camden Town," added the inspector. "That's all we know!" Half an hour later, they were at Ben Sawyer's lodgings in Camden Town. It was a small bed-sitting-room on the second floor of an apartment house.



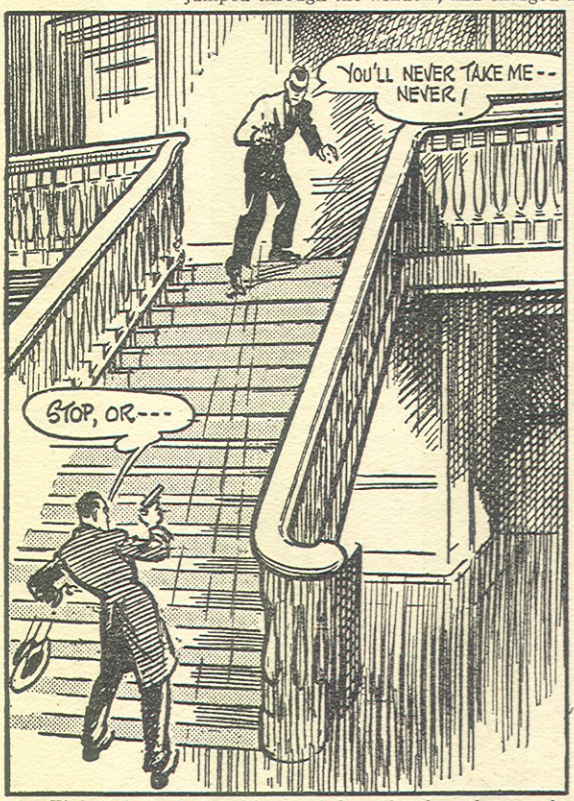
13. Sexton Blake, Coutts and Tinker made a thorough search of the room, but this brought nothing very helpful to light, and Tinker was disappointed. As they were about to leave, however, Sexton Blake found a set of strange instruments, and became quite enthusiastic. They were diamond cutting tools. "We must go to Heston Towers at once!" cried Sexton Blake. "To-day is the 23rd!" The coming-out party at Heston Towers was being held on that date! Already, at Heston Towers, the party was in full swing. The dance floor was crowded.



14. The band was playing, but the merry buzz of laughter and talk could be heard above it. Nobody heard one of the great windows being forced open. Neither was anyone aware that two men had climbed into the room and were hiding behind the heavy curtains. Suddenly, one of the men broke out from behind the curtains and rushed across the dance floor. He was wearing a mask and carried a couple of revolvers. The other man, similarly masked and armed, also stepped into view. With guns threatening them, the dancers were brought to a sudden halt and could only look on in frightened surprise. Some of the women screamed. Unaware of what was going on, the band continued to play. "Stop that music!" shouted one of the masked men.

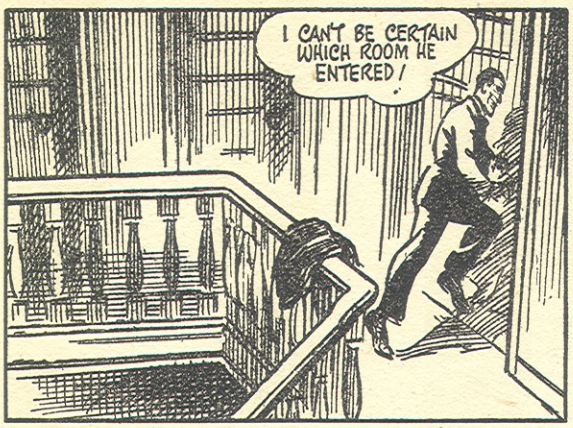


15. As the music faded out, the masked man continued. "It's a hold-up, folks," he said mockingly. "Throw your sparklers on the floor!" He waved his guns menacingly. "No tricks or else——" he threatened. The guests were powerless. Valuable rings, necklaces, bracelets and other jewellery were thrown on to the floor. The crooks grinned as they watched the pile of valuables grow and grow. They would not have felt so good if they had known that Sexton Blake, Tinker and Coutts had just arrived and had seen what was going on through the open window. Sexton Blake did not waste time. He drew his gun, jumped through the window, and charged at the crook on the opposite side of the hall.

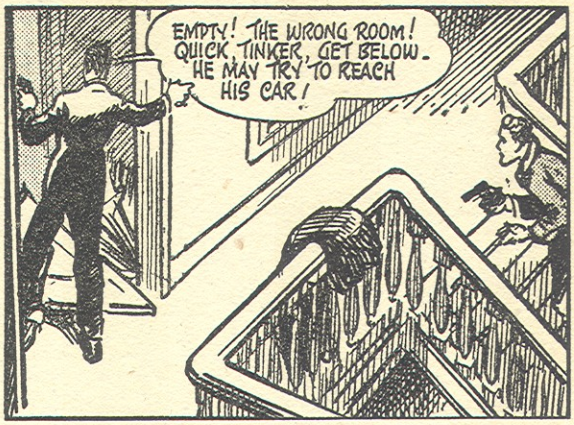


16. Tinker dashed after him, and brought the other crook down with a well-timed attack. Coutts came to help, before the crook could use his guns. The other crook fired two shots at Sexton Blake, missed, and fled out of the dance hall. Sexton Blake ran after him and saw him rush up a flight of stairs. The crook paused at the top and faced Sexton Blake.

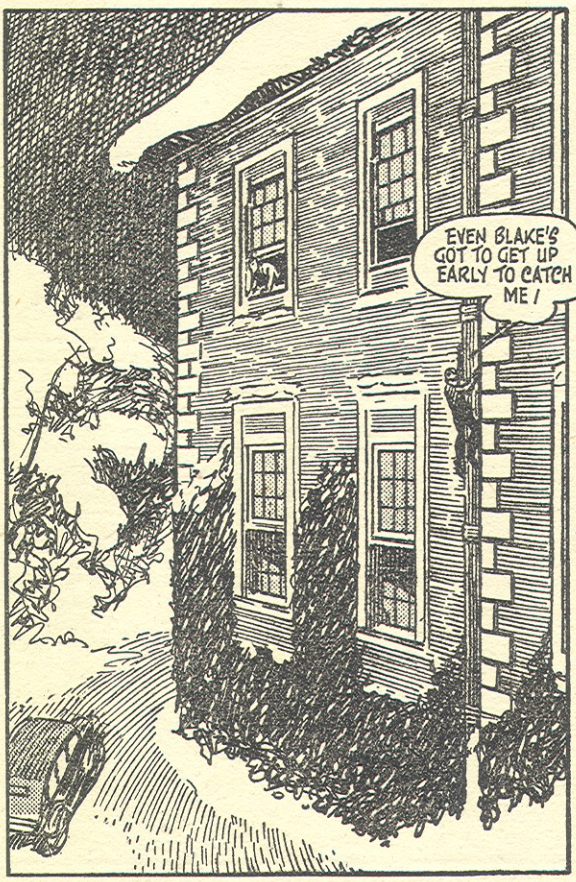
17. "Stop!" cried Sexton Blake, levelling his pistol. The crook was not giving in, however. "You'll never take me!" he growled. He fired some more shots, which Sexton Blake dodged, and dived through a door which opened on to the landing. Sexton Blake raced up the stairs. He tried the door-handle of the room into which he thought the crook had gone. The door was locked.



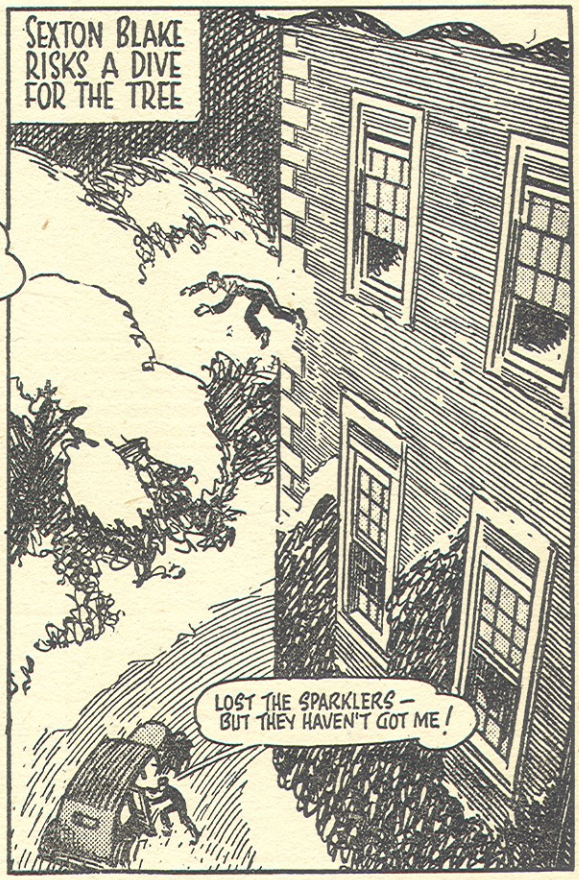
18. Sexton Blake whipped off his coat and thrust his shoulder against the door. He wasn't certain through which door the crook had gone, but as this one was locked it seemed that it must be the one. After several charges at the door, the lock gave. The hinges also broke, and the door fell into the room with a crash.



19. Gun in hand, Sexton Blake looked round the room. It was empty! It had probably been locked for some private reason. Tinker was coming up the stairs to help, and Sexton Blake turned towards him. "Quick, Tinker, get below!" he ordered. "He may try to reach his car!" The crooks were sure to have a car outside, for a quick get-away.

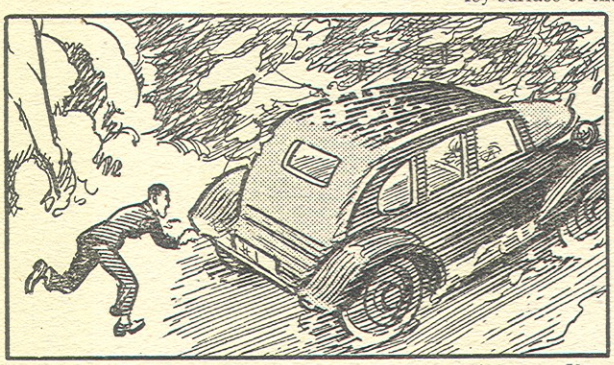


20. Tinker hastened to obey, and Sexton Blake stepped over the broken door to the window. Opening it, he looked out. He made out the shadowy figure of the crook, climbing down a large drainpipe at the side of the house. He could have picked him off with his pistol, but Sexton Blake did not want to use his gun.

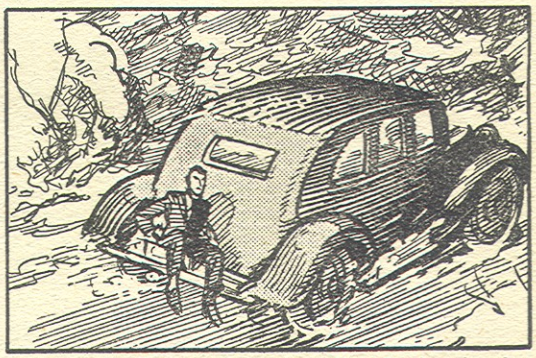


21. As he thought, there was a car waiting for the crook, who had now reached the ground, and was making for the car. Sexton Blake heard him say, "Lost the sparklers—but they haven't got me!" He was speaking to someone in the car. Sexton Blake ground his teeth. It seemed as if they would get away. He had to stop them somehow!

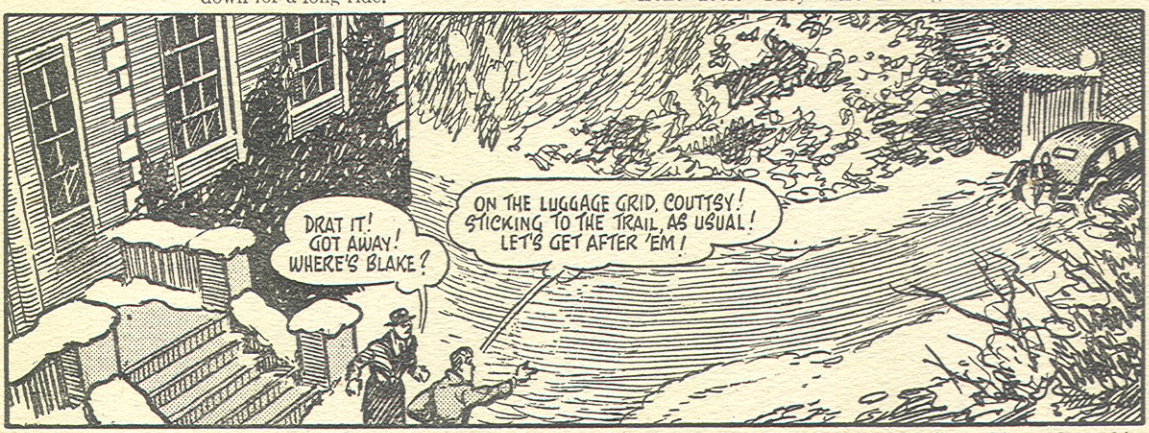
22. Sexton Blake looked below. Not very far down was a tree which sagged under a weight of snow. Suddenly, making a quick decision, Sexton Blake hurled himself out of the window on to the tree. His luck held, for the tree withstood his weight and he was able to slip harmlessly on to the soft snow on the ground below. He had taken a great risk, for had the tree not held him he might have been very badly injured. Even as he picked himself up, the crook's car started to move. They had not the slightest idea that Sexton Blake was so near. The car was moving quite slowly, for it could not get a proper start on the icy surface of the drive.



23. Sexton Blake ran forward in an attempt to catch it up. He kept low, so that he wouldn't be seen reflected through the back window in the driving mirror, and easily gained on it. He made a dive at the luggage grid and hauling himself on to it he settled down for a long ride.

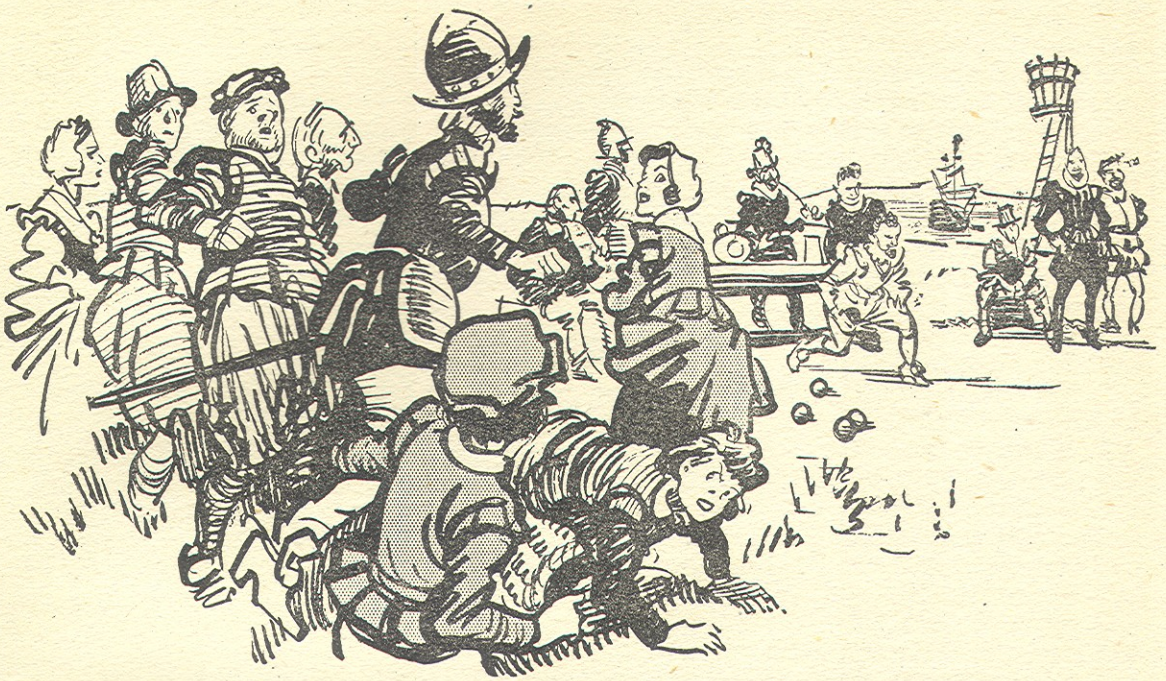


24. Sexton Blake smiled to himself, as he thought what the occupants of the car would say if they knew he was there. It would probably have been very unpleasant! Meanwhile, Coutts and Tinker had just come out of the front door. They were looking for the crook's car.



25. The other hold-up man had not been so lucky as his accomplice. Coutts had slipped the handcuffs on him and put him in the charge of several of the male guests whom he had tried to rob. There was no chance of escape now! When Coutts caught sight of the car disappearing down the drive, he halted with annoyance. "Drat it! Got away!" he cried. "Where's Blake?" he asked fiercely. Tinker grinned, because he had spotted his chief on the luggage grid. "On the luggage grid, Couttsy!" he said cheerfully. "Sticking to the trail as usual!" He saw that there was no time to lose and added: "Let's get after 'em!" (*Continued on Page* 106.)

(END OF FIRST PART.)



DRAKE'S CABIN BOY

A Grand Story of the Days of the Spanish Armada, and of how a Stowaway Helped to Save England

The Door Ajar!

TOM BARTON had no right to be anywhere near Plymouth Hoe, but he could not resist the temptation to go out of his way to loiter there and watch the sea captains playing bowls.

He lost all count of time as he gazed spellbound at men whose names were world famous—men who sailed to the far corners of the world, discovering new lands, fighting the Spaniards, and sailing home with the treasure of the Indies in the holds of their ships.

He saw Francis Drake there, and John Oxenham, Walter Raleigh, and many others, smoking their long pipes, laughing and chatting as they played.

Tom stood there, his basket on his arm—the basket in which he had been carrying the medicines and herbs compounded by his master, Phineas Huxford, the apothecary. Tom had delivered the medicines and drugs and was on his way back to the dingy shop which he hated so much.

He had been apprenticed to Phineas Huxford by the Guardians of the Town. Tom's parents had died several years before, and after living in an orphanage for a while, where he was half starved, he had been sent to work for Phineas Huxford.

He worked hard, too, and got nothing for it but his keep. He was little better than a slave, although the apothecary was supposed to pay him a shilling a week in wages.

Tom craved for adventure. One day, he promised himself, he would leave the apothecary's shop and sail away aboard

some tall ship to seek his fortune in the far Indies! Why not?

He gazed at Francis Drake and the sea captains. How he envied them! If only he could sail with them—now—to-day——

He was still day-dreaming, forgetting that many other people were also standing around watching the famous adventurers. He was completely lost in his dreams, when he was suddenly thrust violently on one side.

Tom slipped and fell on his basket, buckling it out of shape.

"Who did that?" he cried, springing to his feet angrily.

If it had been another boy there would have been a fight in the twinkling of an eye. But it wasn't a boy at all. It was a seafaring man, who had dashed on to the bowling green and caught Francis Drake by the arm.

They stood barely five yards from Tom, so that he could hear what they said.

The newcomer was breathless and agitated.

"My lord!" he panted. "They're coming! I've seen them!"

"Who's coming, man?" asked Drake. "Must ye spoil a good game——"

"The Spaniards, my lord! Hundreds of ships! An armada. We sighted 'em and they fired at us, but we outsailed them and made port, to warn you, my lord!"

Drake puffed at his long pipe. Tom crept closer, his eyes wide with astonishment.

"Just where did ye sight 'em, man?" asked Drake.

The newcomer spoke rapidly of sea-miles and compass bearings, but it meant very little to Tom.

Drake gazed at the sky for a moment, then at the nearest weather-vane. Then he smiled calmly.

"All right," he said, with a chuckle. "There's time to play this game out and beat the Spaniards afterwards!"

Stooping, he sent a wood trundling across the green.

And then a church bell rang, reminding Tom of the time. He snatched up his buckled basket and ran to the town, through the cobbled streets, to the dingy shop of old Phineas Huxford, the apothecary.

He knew he was late. He knew he would be whipped. It had happened a good many times before. But he had news—startling news. England was in danger! The Spaniards were coming!

He fairly burst into the shop. Old Phineas was coming out from behind his dusty counter, as disagreeable and scowling as ever.

"Where've ye been, ye good-for-nothing lout?" he rasped. "Ye should have been home an hour agone! I'll make ye smart——"

"But I have news, sir!" cried Tom. "Listen——"

Then Phineas saw the basket.

"Odds fish! The basket! Ruined! Ye'll pay for that——"

"But, if you'll listen, sir. It's big news——"

But Phineas had grabbed a stick. He clutched hold of Tom by the shoulder and laid into him with the stick for all he was worth.

"I'll give ye news!" he panted. "An hour of my time wasted! What news could ye bring?"

Tom squirmed under the blows, then suddenly wrenched himself free and fell back against the wall, panting.

"You should have asked that before you started hitting me!" he retorted boldly. "But I'll tell ye! The Spaniards are coming—hundreds of ships. I heard a man run and tell Master Drake, down on the Hoe."

Phineas went pale. But it was only for a minute. He started after Tom again.

"So that's where ye've been idling, is it? Down on the Hoe! I'll take the skin off your back, I will!"

But Tom dodged him now. "It wasn't my fault the basket got broken," he said. "The man who brought the news knocked me over in his hurry."

"A likely tale!" snapped Phineas. "Get up to your room. And stay there! Ye'll get no food or drink this day. Begone! Out of my sight!"

He made a dive at Tom, stick upraised to strike. So Tom darted out of the shop by the door at the back and up the rickety stairs to the bare attic which was his room.

He half expected old Phineas to come after him and give him another beating. But it didn't happen. Instead, Phineas came out of the shop and went into his parlour, calling : " Simon ! Simon ! Where are ye ? Quickly ! It's news ! They're coming ! "

Tom stopped half-way up the stairs. Simon was the swarthy, fox-faced nephew of old Phineas. Tom never liked him. Simon had arrived in a strange manner in the middle of the night, four weeks before. Until he had come Tom had had no idea that Phineas had a nephew.

It was something of a mystery. Simon never went out. He stayed out of sight behind the shop. Sometimes he would peer through the curtains into the alley that ran behind the buildings, as if he were scared of someone coming. Sometimes he would spend much time whispering with old Phineas, and Tom had heard money clinking.

Once Tom had picked up a coin off the parlour floor. Gold it was. But it wasn't English money. Old Phineas had caught him with it—found him studying it. Tom had received a good beating for that. Phineas had accused him of stealing it. What was stranger, Phineas said that, if he dared tell a soul he had even seen the coin, he'd go to jail as a worthless vagabond and get a flogging into the bargain.

Oh, yes, there certainly was a mystery surrounding Simon Huxford ! But Tom hadn't bothered about it very much, though it did make him wonder why the news he had brought should be so important to the swarthy Simon.

So he crouched on the stairs. Below him was the parlour door—ajar. He could hear them talking—eagerly, excitedly—inside.

" The brat brought the news," Phineas was saying. " Our friends have been sighted. Drake's been told ! "

The gruff tones of Simon sounded.

" Drake's the man I fear more than anybody else ! "

" Well, you know what to do," retorted Phineas. " The time has come. Ye'd best get aboard—now ! It's all fixed for ye ! "

" Ah ! " breathed Simon tensely. " The time has come. I'll go ! "

Tom heard them move towards the door of the parlour. He didn't wait, but sped up the stairs and into his attic. There was no lock on the door, and he had no chair to wedge against the handle. Maybe old Phineas would soon come up to give him another beating.

He sat on his low truckle bed, waiting. The bed clothes were little better than rags, but it was all he was used to and he knew nothing better.

How he hated his life of slavery ! How he hated the apothecary's shop ! He'd rather go sailing away and take his chance fighting the Spaniards than stop here living a life of hardship and unhappiness.

But Phineas didn't come. It was unusual. Tom began to wonder what was going on. He heard a deal of scuffling below stairs. Then, in the fading light of evening, he heard a door open—and shut.

He went to his window, opened it and leaned over the sill. He was in time to see Simon Huxford sidling away down the alley, muffled up in a great sea cloak.

" Funny," thought Tom. " He comes, and stays in, never going out until word comes that the Spaniards are approaching the shores of England. What does it mean ? " He sat down, trying to make it out.

Tom remembered that strange coin he had picked up. Could it have been Spanish ? Even if it were, how had it come there ?

Spies ! Tom thought the word without uttering it. After all, what else could he make of all this ? Yet he had not the foggiest notion what Simon Huxford could do to harm Drake or help the Spaniards.

All the same, there was fear in his heart —fear for Francis Drake and England.

Simon Huxford was disappearing out of the alley. Tom made up his mind in a flash what to do. He clambered over the sill of his tiny window. It was lucky he was half starved and thin or he would never have managed it.

Cautiously he lowered himself to the

sloping roof of the outbuilding below. He slid down, rolled over and hung from the guttering for a brief moment. Then he dropped to the ground.

In a flash he was out of the yard and away down the alley. He ran as hard as he could through the streets, heading for the Hoe. He had lost sight of Simon Huxford, but that didn't matter. His one idea was to find Francis Drake and warn him.

A crazy idea, perhaps. It was little enough he had to tell. Yet he felt in his heart there was danger. He couldn't explain it or prove it, yet he felt it was so.

But when he came to the Hoe there was no one there—no one playing bowls—no one loitering there. The crowd had shifted to the waterside. In the offing the ships were at anchor, boats plying between them and the shore. Most of the ships had their sails flapping as if they were about to set sail.

Tom saw Francis Drake's ship. He knew it all right! Hadn't he gazed at it dozens of times, longing to get aboard her somehow?

But it was Drake he wanted. Where was Drake?

A boat left the hard, the seamen rowing her out into the Sound.

"There goes Master Drake!" someone shouted. "Give him a cheer! He'll beat the Spaniards, he will!"

The watchers raised a lusty cheer. But Tom stood by the water's edge, disconsolate, sick at heart. Drake had gone aboard! How was he to reach him now? Who would take him out to Drake's ship? Who would take any notice of a skinny, half-starved, pinch-faced, ragged apprentice lad?

He stole away, feeling utterly helpless.

And that was when he saw the small boat drawn up on the shingle, the oars on the thwarts.

Tom took a quick look round. No one was watching him. They were all too intent on the famous seamen going out to man their ships to fight the Armada.

Tom thrust the boat out into the water, clambered aboard, unshipped the oars, and started rowing. He was awed by his own daring, but he wouldn't turn back now. What happened to him hardly mattered. He had to reach Francis Drake somehow.

So he rowed out into the Sound as the light began to fade in the evening sky—rowing and pulling until his muscles felt fit to crack under the strain.

The Slinking Man

WHAT was one small boat among the hundred that were plying to and fro between the shore and the tall ships in the Sound? No one bothered to bestow a second look at Tom, rowing out towards Drake's ship. If anyone saw him they naturally thought it was just a lad anxious to get a closer look at Francis Drake.

It was easy enough for Tom to get under the carved prow of Drake's ship. He grasped the anchor rope and swarmed up it to the deck above. He didn't stop to wonder what would become of the boat he had borrowed. No doubt it would drift away and be recovered.

He was too excited to bother. Then he was afraid. There were many seamen and soldiers crowding the main deck. Francis Drake was standing there at the break of the poop talking to them. Tom could hear snatches of what he said.

"England—in danger! Fight—all Spaniards—ask no mercy—grant no mercy——"

The men were cheering every sentence. Tom crouched behind a huge coil of rope, watching. He wondered if Simon Huxford were there. He couldn't see him.

And Tom began to realise that he might have acted too hastily. Maybe Simon Huxford hadn't come out to this ship. Even if he had it was little enough Tom had heard to prove him a traitor or a spy.

How could he go to Francis Drake and explain why he was there? No one would believe him! Maybe they would search the ship and find that there was no such man as Simon Huxford on board. Tom would look silly then!

Yet, there was still that feeling deep down inside him which kept telling him he was right.

The seamen started moving about the

ship. Tom darted to the side and peered over into the gathering dusk. The boat in which he had come was many yards away, drifting on the tide. There was no going back now.

He dived into the coil of rope behind which he had been hiding, and crouched low, not sure what to do for the best. Maybe, if he kept very still, no one would see him. He could wait and watch for Simon Huxford.

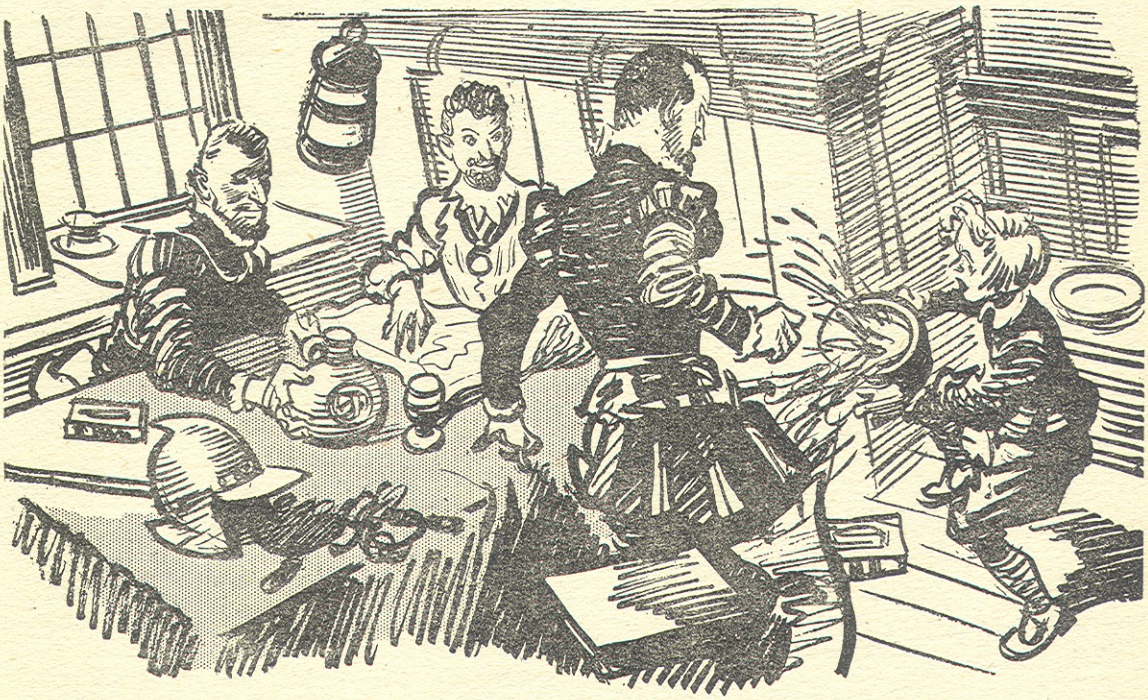
The seamen were cheering excitedly. They hauled on the ropes. They toiled at the windlass. The anchor came up from the depths. The sails were dropped from the yards and pulled taut.

The ship stirred—moved. She was sailing away from Plymouth to fight the Spanish Armada. Other ships were following. Bands played on the poop, and pennants fluttered in the evening breeze.

Tom lay very still in the coil of rope. The ship began to pitch and toss, dancing to the waves. It wasn't nice for Tom. He was a landlubber, after all, and it made him ill. But he dared not move—dared not——

So night came down, and it was cold. The sea grew rougher and the waves came crashing over the prow. Somebody shouted an order about another cable. Men came running along the deck and up to the fo'c'sle.

Tom crouched there, peering up at the sombre sky. Suddenly a dark figure came between him and the sky, and a lantern flashed. There was a gruff exclamation and a strong hand grabbed him by the shoulder. He was hauled from his hiding place, bodily, and stood there on the wet deck, shivering.



The bowl of soup shot from Tom's hand, and bespattered the officers.

" By thunder, a stowaway ! " cried the man.

Tom was frightened, but he stood his ground.

" I want word with Master Drake ! " he said. " It's urgent——"

" Word with Master Drake, eh ? " the man growled. " Aye, ye'll get that, ye will ! And a flogging to boot, as like as not. 'Tis not stowaways Master Drake

wants to bother with this night! Come on!"

Tom was dragged aft, along the heaving main-deck and along the gangway beneath the raised poop. A door slid back and Tom was thrust into a roughly furnished cabin, where the light from the sea lanterns dazzled him. He cringed back, blinking.

"A stowaway, captain!" said the man. "Hiding in a coil of rope up on the fo'c'sle, he were."

Tom's eyes grew accustomed to the light. He stared at the burly bearded man who sat at the table. He was face to face with Francis Drake himself.

He felt awed. Once again he realised how weak his story would sound. He had an idea Francis Drake would not believe him. He was aboard and he could watch out for Simon Huxford. That was enough.

And Drake's voice boomed in the confines of the cabin.

"How, now, boy! What's this?"

Tom made up his mind to brave it out.

"I'm an apprentice, my lord," he said. "'Prenticed to Phineas Huxford the apothecary, and I hate the life. I'm starved and beaten and cannot call my soul my own. I heard all that was going on. I knew England was in danger. You're in danger too, my lord, and——"

Drake put back his head and laughed, long and loudly.

"Francis Drake in danger!" he guffawed. "Who'd ha' thought it. So ye've come to save me, lad. Is that it?"

"Yes, my lord," said Tom, almost in a whisper. "I've always been for the sea. I saw my chance. That's all."

Drake stopped laughing. "'Tis a daring thing ye've done, lad," he said. "But who am I to condemn ye for that? I've been daring all my life. But we can't have idlers aboard this night. Ye'll work your passage. Take him away, Dickon, and he'll get me a meal. There's time to eat before we find the Spaniards. Maybe he'll wish he hadn't come before many hours are out!"

"Aye, captain! I'll see he works," growled the seaman.

So Tom was dragged away to the cuddy where the stores were kept. He had to work hard enough, running to and fro between the store and Drake's cabin, as the officers took their last meal before fighting the Armada.

And Tom was feeling ill. The frenzied pitching of the ship was too much for him. He couldn't keep his feet. He was battered and bruised in half an hour, tumbling against the bulkheads.

Then, as he carried a bowl of soup into the cabin, the ship gave a lurch. Tom simply sprawled into the cabin. The bowl of soup shot from his helpless hand, crashed on the table and bespattered the officers seated there.

They started to their feet with angry cries. One man grabbed hold of Tom and raised a big fist to strike him.

But there was a dull boom. A hoarse cry arose from the men on the deck above.

"The Spaniards! The Spaniards!"

The man who held Tom just dropped him. Every officer in the cabin made a rush for the deck. Tom was thrust on one side and fell headlong as they swept past him.

Then he was alone. He could hear the wind howling and the waves crashing on the deck above him. Then came the deeper booms of the guns.

Tom left the cabin and staggered up on deck. He saw the Armada two miles away—saw them clearly as the moon slid out from behind the storm clouds. The guns flashed. A cannon ball splashed in the sea not a cable's length away.

The seamen were toiling at the guns. The soldiers saw to their arquebuses. Some were already mounting the rigging so as to shoot down on the decks of the Spaniards when they got nearer.

A seaman caught Tom by the arm. "No idlers!" he shouted. "Get powder to the guns! I'll show you!"

The fight went on. Tom was taken to the powder hold. He struggled on deck again with a keg and made his way to the first gun he could see.

"More powder!" roared the gunners. "Hurry, boy!"

By now, some of the Spanish ships were almost upon them.

The cannon balls came thick and fast. Men were shouting news of ships sinking. Tom glanced up and saw the towering deck of a Spanish galleon almost on top of them. A cannon ball whistled over his head.

But he wasn't frightened. He was too busy to be frightened. It was—" Powder, boy ! " " More powder ! " " Where's that brat of a stowaway ? "

There was no time to think—hardly any time to breathe, it seemed. A galleon blew up and the fragments of spars crashed around them.

For hours it went on, and Tom was so weary he could scarcely drag one leg after the other as he staggered up the ladders and along the decks with the powder kegs.

He had forgotten Simon Huxford—until he saw him ! There he was, slinking along the deck. It was the sudden glare from an exploding galleon that gave him away. It was in the brief blaze of lurid light that Tom saw the face of the slinking man !

Yes, it was Simon Huxford ! There was no doubt about it ! Whether Simon knew Tom was aboard it was impossible to say. He may have heard of the stowaway, but no one had yet asked Tom for his name and he had never given it. And in the darkness it was possible that Simon hadn't seen Tom's face.

Tom watched Simon go down the ladder. He went after him. Feeding the hungry guns was a duty completely forgotten now. Simon was a traitor and a spy. Tom couldn't really prove it, yet he felt it was so.

He moved stealthily down the ladder to the deck below, then away among the hastily stowed barrels and stores. He saw Simon ahead of him, moving purposefully as if he knew just what he meant to do.

Then he passed from view round a bulkhead. Tom quickened his pace. He slipped off his old, battered shoes. His bare feet made no sound.

But where had Simon gone ?

Tom came on another ladder leading down to the bottom-most hold. He crept down it—a step at a time. There was no light here. The ship was rolling and tossing. Now and again the guns roared and the ship trembled. The timbers were creaking and complaining all the time as the seas crashed against her hull.

Then came the scraping of a flint. There was a spark—a flame.

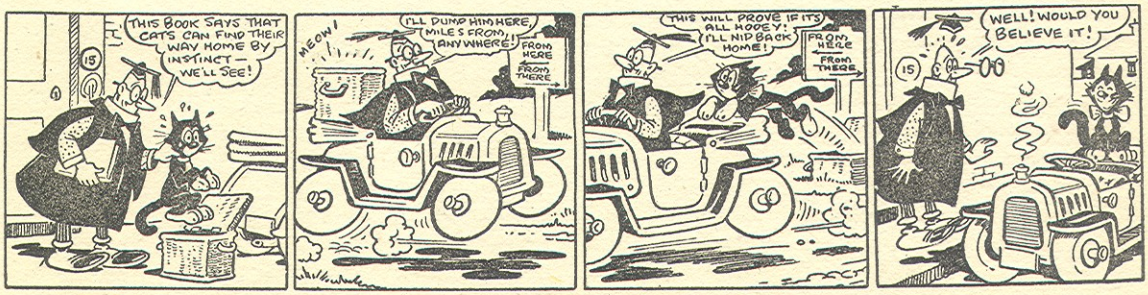
Tom was at the foot of the ladder. He ducked low behind a barrel. Peering round it, he saw Simon Huxford kneeling close to the side of the ship. He was pressing his chest against something—he was turning something. Tom heard a strange grinding noise.

Tom was no sailor, and the light wasn't too good. The candle Simon had lit was between him and Tom. It wasn't easy to see clearly what the man was doing.

But in a few moments Tom guessed that Simon was boring a hole in the ship's side ! He meant to sink the ship !

Tom went cold with anger at the

BOOKWORM BASIL - - - - HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE!



treachery of it. He guessed easily enough that the Spaniards would be only too glad if Francis Drake went to his death that night. But how did Simon Huxford expect to escape with his life? That was the problem.

But there was no answer to it then. In any case, one hole had been bored. Tom saw the water flooding through in a steady gushing stream. Simon Huxford had shifted to another spot; placing the auger to the timber, he was boring another hole.

Tom left his hiding place.

"You traitor!" he cried shrilly.

Simon Huxford started to his feet. Tom simply hurled himself at the man. He saw the big auger raised to strike—and dodged. It missed him, and he clawed hold of Simon round the waist—grappled with him.

The ship lurched and plunged, flinging them to the floor boards. They fought there madly. But Simon was the stronger. He wrenched himself free. His face was convulsed with fury.

"You!" he gasped. "You'll pay for this meddling! You'll never live to——"

"Help!" shouted Tom. "Help! Here's a traitor—a spy! Help!"

What with the storm, the booming of the guns and the pounding of the seas it was doubtful if his cries could be heard.

Simon Huxford stood over him for a brief moment. Once more the big auger swished through the air. Tom rolled out of the way and the iron hit the deck a shattering blow. The auger snapped in two.

Simon turned to fly. Tom was on his feet in a flash and diving after him. He got a grasp on the man's waist from behind and hung on. Simon tried to shake him off, but couldn't. Again and again he swung himself round to batter Tom against the ship's timbers. All the time Tom was shouting: "Help! Help! Treachery!"

And the water was gushing into the ship's hold through the one hole Simon had bored.

Would help never come?

"Help!" shrieked Tom.

His senses were slipping from him, but he saw the gleam of light as a lantern shone down the ladder.

A gruff voice said: "Where's that brat of a boy?"

"Help! A traitor!" shouted Tom.

There came the rush of feet. Simon Huxford spun round wildly. Tom's head struck a beam—a crashing impact—and his senses left him. He didn't know that Simon had gone running madly along the reeling hold to the for'ard ladder. Tom just lay there limp and senseless with the sea water swirling about him.

There were wild shouts of alarm. Someone was plugging the hole in the ship's side, but Tom knew nothing about it.

Simon Huxford was away up on deck, hotly pursued by two seamen. He gained the upper deck, and not two cables' length away was a Spanish galleon.

Still holding half of the broken auger in his hand, Simon dashed across the deck and leapt boldly into the seething waves, shouting in Spanish as he did so.

Seamen said afterwards he reached the galleon and grasped a rope flung to him. No one was ever sure. The guns of Drake's ship boomed and the galleon reeled away and was lost in the murk and mists of the stormy night.

But Tom knew nothing about it. Strong arms had raised him up and carried him from the hold.

Tom knew nothing until well into the next day. Then he opened his eyes and stared around him.

He was in Francis Drake's cabin, lying on his bunk. What was more, there was Francis Drake himself, seated at the table, watching him, a quiet smile on his bearded face.

"Well, my young stowaway," he said. "So ye saved my ship last night."

Tom tried to sit up.

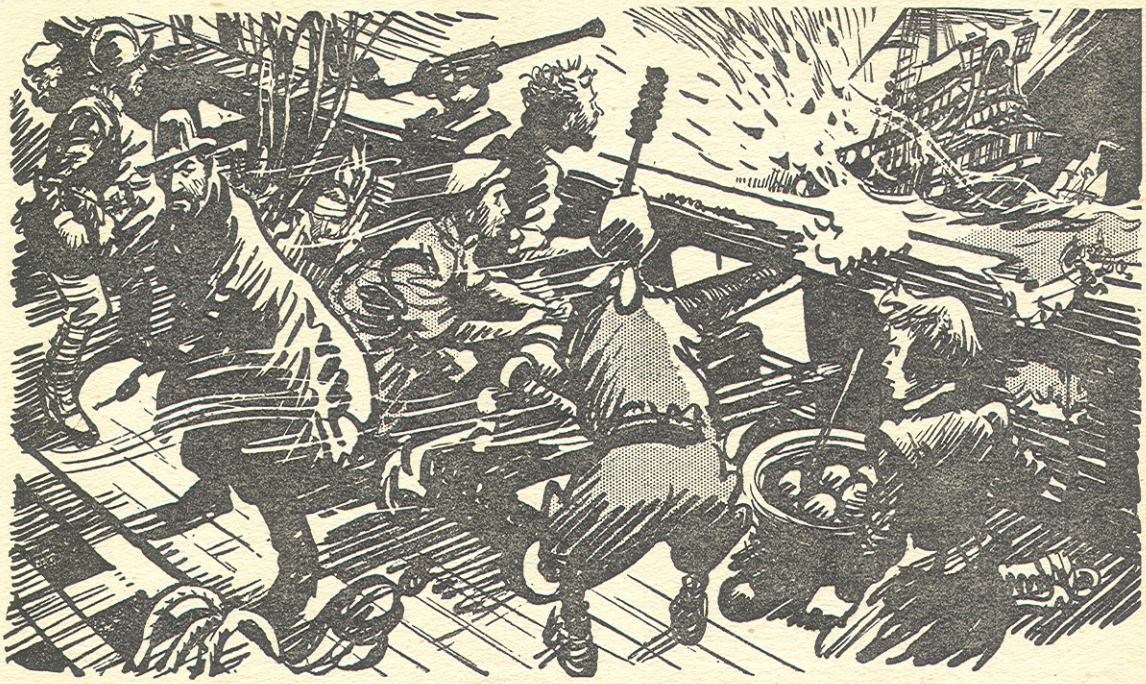
"Nay, lad," said Drake. "Lie quiet. Can ye talk?"

"Yes, my lord," said Tom. "I think so."

"Then tell me, lad. How did ye find that traitor trying to scuttle my ship?"

"I recognised him, my lord," said Tom. "I came because I knew he was coming aboard to do you hurt. That's the truth. That's why I dared to be a stowaway——"

And he told the whole story, how he had



Suddenly Tom spotted Simon Huxford, slinking along the deck !

loitered on Plymouth Hoe and had his basket buckled—how he had been beaten by old Phineas Huxford—how he had heard the talk in the parlour behind the apothecary's shop—how he had escaped and borrowed a boat.

" I'm glad I saw him in time, Captain," he said.

" So am I ! " Drake cried.

" Did you whip the Spaniards, sir ? " Tom asked.

" Aye," said Drake. " We're heading for the Thames now. We've no more shot and no more powder. The Armada is scattered and fleeing north. We'll get more powder and shot and chase them to the North Pole. But "—his voice was very solemn, it seemed—" last night might have been the last for Francis Drake if it hadn't been for a stowaway boy ! "

" I'm glad I stopped him, my lord," said Tom. " You see, I couldn't be really sure till I saw him at it."

Drake came over and took his hand.

" Ye're a poor, thin sort of lad," he said, " but good food and sea air will build ye up to what ye ought to be."

" You mean—I can stay aboard your ship ? " he asked.

" I need a cabin boy when next I sail to the Spanish Main. Would ye like to come ? "

Tom gasped, his eyes wide with delight.

" What's your name ? " asked Drake.

" Tom, sir—Tom Barton. But I'm 'prenticed to Phineas Huxford."

" After this—after what we know," said Drake, " Phineas Huxford won't bother you again. Will ye be my cabin boy, Tom ? "

" There's nothing I'd like more, sir," said Tom. " I'll serve you faithfully—that is, if the gentlemen will forgive me for spilling the soup."

Drake threw back his head and laughed till the beams seemed to quiver.

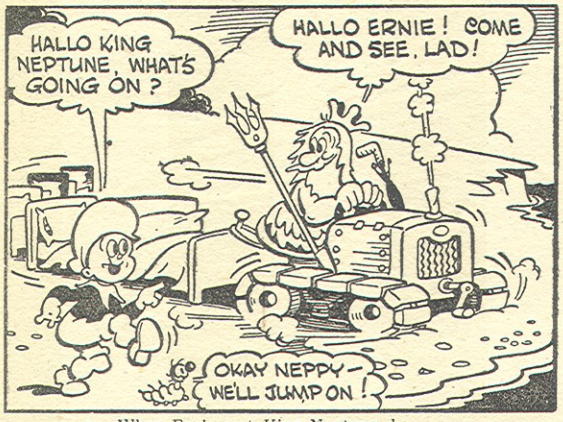
" Tom, my lad, they've forgiven ye long ago. 'Tis better to spill soup than sink an English ship. Ye're my cabin boy. Now try to sleep, lad."

Drake went on deck. And Tom tried to sleep. But he was too much excited. He was Drake's cabin boy ! He wouldn't have changed places with anybody else in the world.

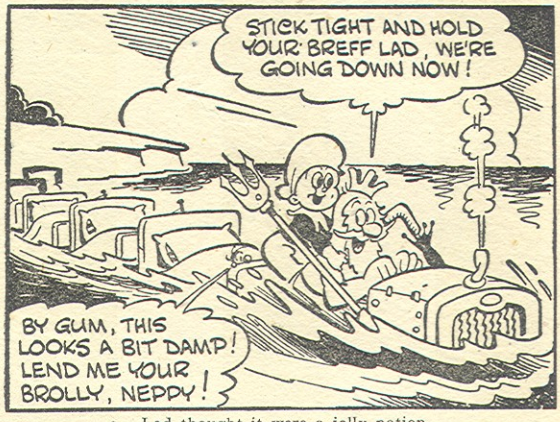
THE END

OUR ERNIE - - -

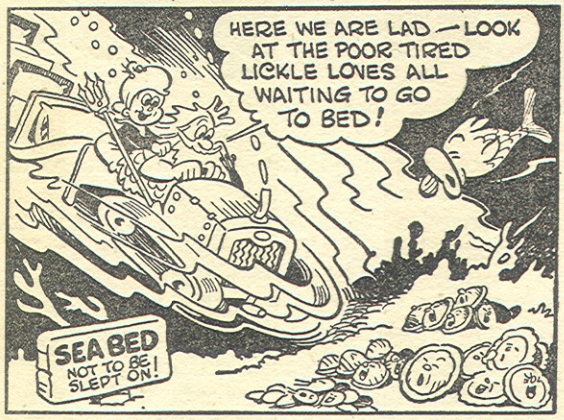
MRS. ENTWHISTLE'S LITTLE LAD



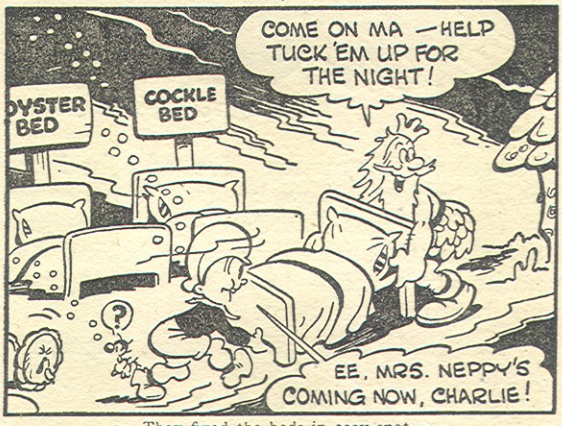
1. When Ernie met King Neptune, he
Were just returning to the sea,
And with him he were taking down
Convoy of beds he'd bought in town.



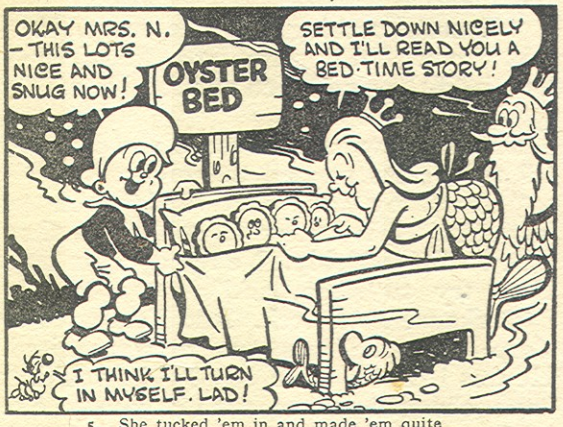
2. Lad thought it were a jolly notion
To take a trip beneath the ocean,
And so accepted Nep's invite
To come and stay with him the night.



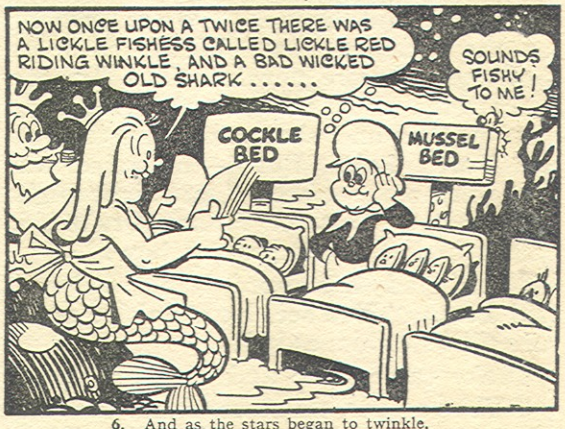
3. So down they went to fishy-land,
And there, upon the sea-bed sand,
The oysters lay, and Neppy said
" Poor lickle loves! They want their bed! "



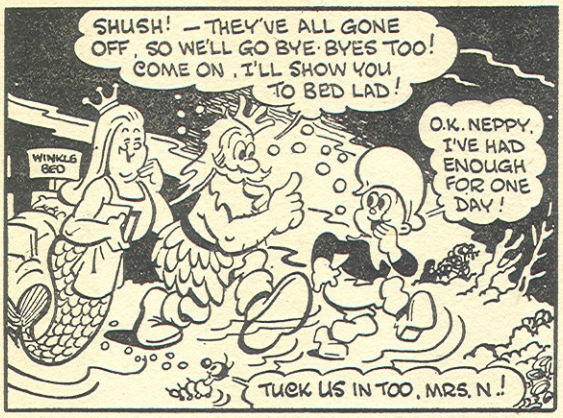
4. They fixed the beds in cosy spot—
Each kind of shell-fish had a cot—
And Mother Neptune came to see
That all were comfy as could be.



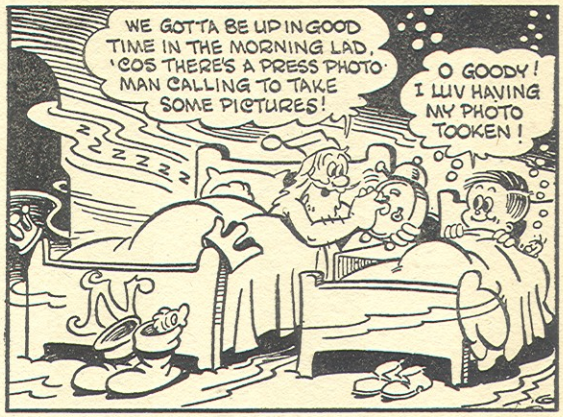
5. She tucked 'em in and made 'em quite
Warm and cosy for the night,
And promised 'em if they were good
She'd read 'em fairy tales, she would.



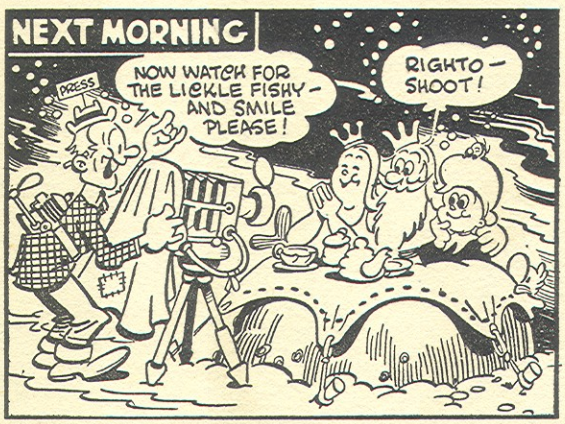
6. And as the stars began to twinkle,
She read tale of Red Riding Winkle,
And bad old shark who, in his fin,
Always carried winkle pin.



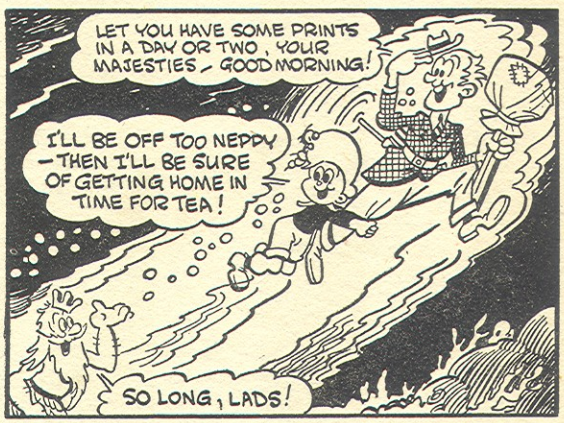
7. Soon fishy peepers ceased to peep,
And all the shell-fish were asleep,
So job was done, and Neppy said
'Twere time they all got off to bed.



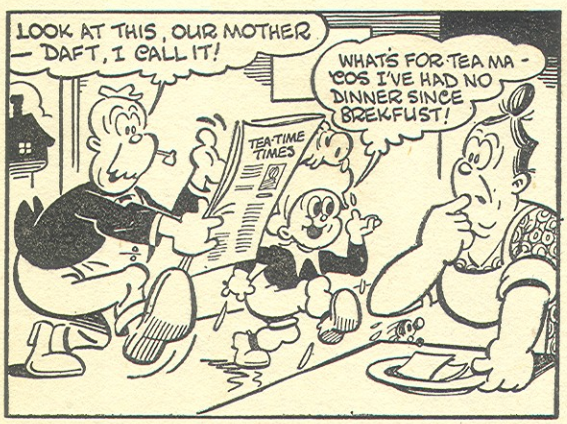
8. Cried Neppy as they all turned in.
" I'll set this clock to make a din
And wake us up just as it's dawning,
Cos we'll be busy in the morning.



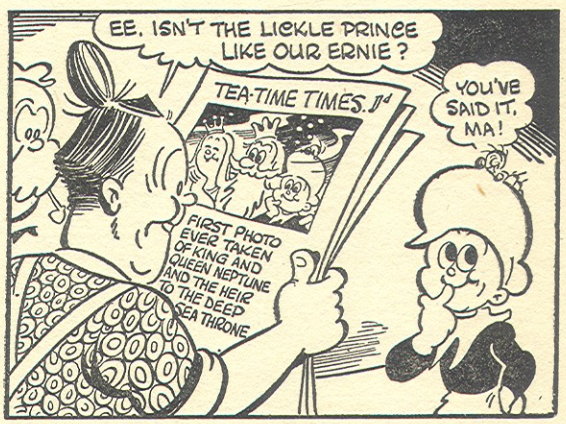
9. A photo-man is due, you see,
To take a snap of ma and me;
He says it's for the local Press,
So that's where we'll appear, I guess."



10. So Ernie sat with Royal pair,
And had his photo taken there
Beneath the waves, in Winkle Town,
Where Neppy wears his royal crown.

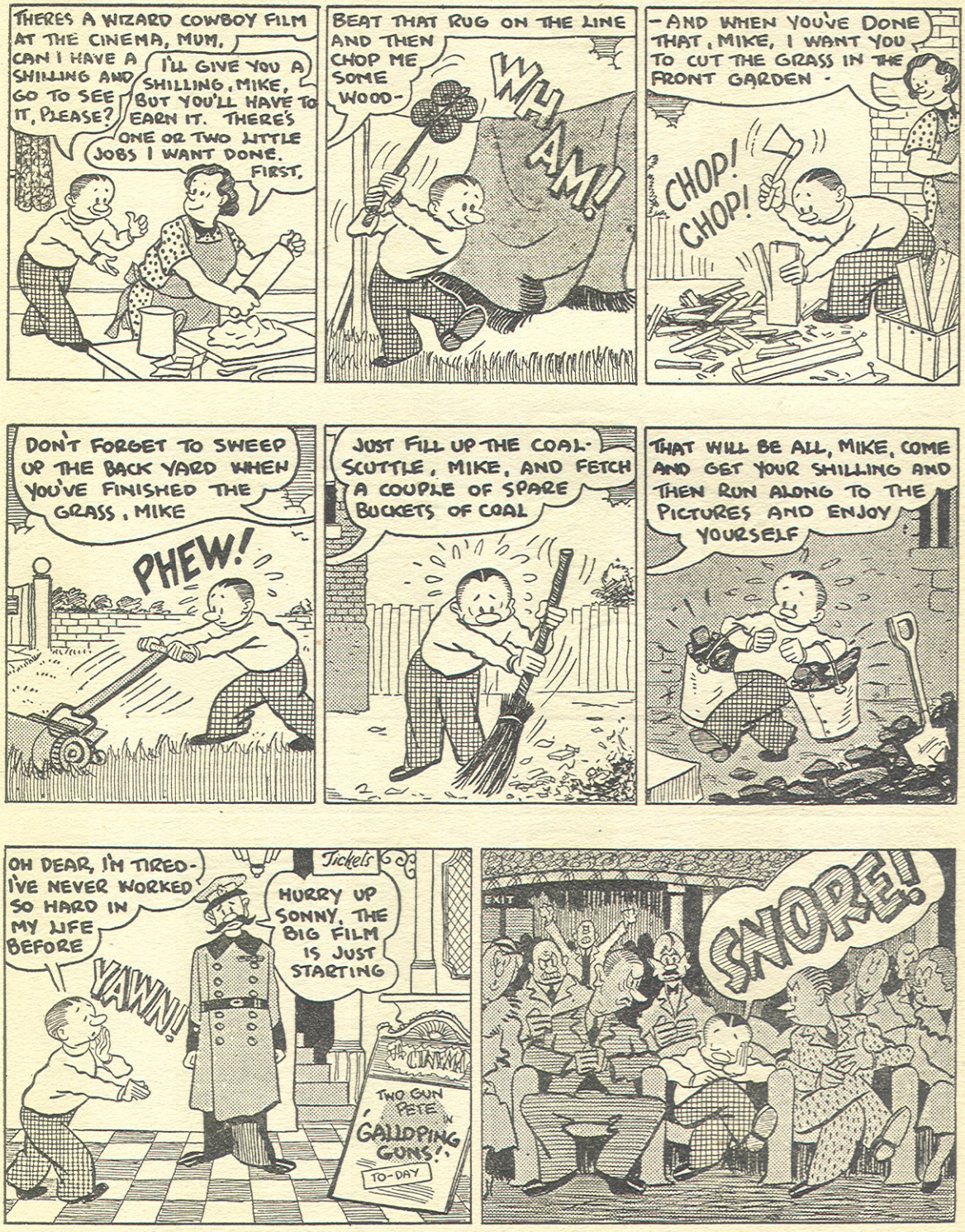


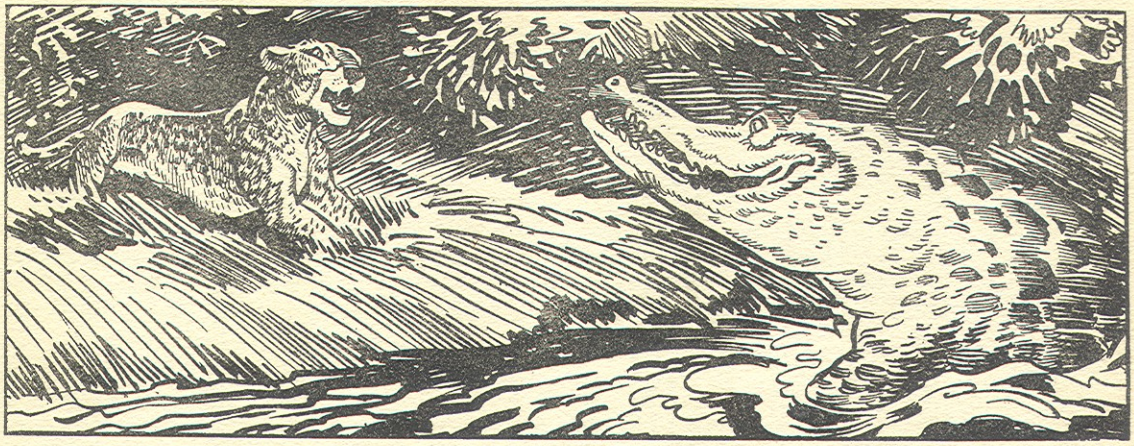
11. When lad got home he found his pa
Just showing local news to ma,
" It's daft, ma! That it is!" cried he,
" And when you see it you'll agree!"



12. Said ma, " Ee, I see what you mean!
It's queerest thing I've ever seen!
Why, bless my soul, I do declare
Our lad's just like King Neppy's heir!"

MIKE


THERES A WIZARD COWBOY FILM AT THE CINEMA, MUM, CAN I HAVE A SHILLING AND GO TO SEE IT, PLEASE?
I'LL GIVE YOU A SHILLING, MIKE, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO EARN IT. THERE'S ONE OR TWO LITTLE JOBS I WANT DONE. FIRST,
BEAT THAT RUG ON THE LINE AND THEN CHOP ME SOME WOOD-
WHAM!
-AND WHEN YOU'VE DONE THAT, MIKE, I WANT YOU TO CUT THE GRASS IN THE FRONT GARDEN -
CHOP! CHOP!
DON'T FORGET TO SWEEP UP THE BACK YARD WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED THE GRASS, MIKE
PHEW!
JUST FILL UP THE COAL-SCUTTLE, MIKE, AND FETCH A COUPLE OF SPARE BUCKETS OF COAL
THAT WILL BE ALL, MIKE, COME AND GET YOUR SHILLING AND THEN RUN ALONG TO THE PICTURES AND ENJOY YOURSELF
OH DEAR, I'M TIRED- I'VE NEVER WORKED SO HARD IN MY LIFE BEFORE
YAWN!
HURRY UP SONNY, THE BIG FILM IS JUST STARTING
Tickets
CINEMA
TWO GUN PETE IN GALLOPING GUNS! TO-DAY
EXIT
SNORE!



THE HUNGER TRAIL

Thrilling Story of a Day in the Life of a Jaguar

THE river that wound its way through the South American forest was in flood. The torrent had swept down from the distant mountains, and the river had suddenly become twice as wide as usual. And one piece of land that had formerly jutted out into the stream had become an island.

That was unfortunate for the jaguar which had been trapped there by the rising flood. There was no food for him on the new island, and although he could swim he shrank from the attempt because of the " logs " that floated motionless on the surface of the swollen river.

But the time came when hunger drove him frantic. He know that those things in the river which looked like logs were really alligators and his deadly enemies. But he was likely to die of starvation, anyway.

He stood on the shore of that new island and roared his defiance at them. And a jaguar's roar is a terrifying sound. Maybe it was not altogether a roar, but a cross between a snarl and a cough. But when any animal in the South American forest hears it there is a scurry for safety immediately.

The alligators began to sheer away from those parts, but they didn't go far. The jaguar measured the distance between the shore of his island and the edge of the forest beyond the strip of water. And he took a desperate chance.

There was a splash ! The next instant the jaguar was swimming strongly for the farther shore, as hard as he could go.

Most of the cat family can swim, but few of them are really fond of the water. The jaguar, however, is quite partial to swimming—at least, when there are no alligators around.

Our jaguar was a big fellow—fully seven feet from his nose to the tip of his tail. He was of a rich tan colour, with black spots, like a leopard. But a leopard's spots are always in clusters of four. A jaguar's spots are in clusters of five. He had a massive head, huge paws and great claws, and could tackle almost anything that came his way.

But those alligators were more at home in the water than he could ever hope to be. The moment he started swimming they knew he was there. The " logs " seemed to roll over and sink out of sight. They were up to their usual tricks—swimming beneath their prey to seize it and drag it under the water to drown.

Our jaguar swam with all his might, fairly hurtling himself through the water.

He sensed that an alligator was close behind him and spurted. The great jaws of the alligator crashed together within an inch or two of his tail.

There was one more frantic spurt and our jaguar was in the shallows. He spun round, snarling at the swollen river. The alligators didn't follow him ashore. A battle there would have been unlucky for them. They were disappointed, but they let him go.

The jaguar, still snarling, turned to go into the forest. He was very hungry indeed. He sniffed the air and came to a sudden stop, standing very still, his eyes glaring. And out of a thicket came a creature, something like a pig. It stood only about fifteen inches high, and had a snout like a pig.

It was a peccary. Our jaguar might have been more wary at any other time, but he was desperately hungry. Without a sound he crouched and sprang. The peccary never had much chance. All the same, it was round in a flash and fighting. There is hardly any animal so plucky as a peccary. This one couldn't get away and perished there by that thicket, where the great orchids scented the air.

But a second before it died the peccary squealed. It felt no pain. It was just sending a signal to its tribe—a signal of danger. Our jaguar grabbed its prey—then dropped it again. For out of the forest came a strange noise, the breaking of twigs and the scampering of many tiny feet.

The jaguar knew what it was; and turned to face the forest, snarling angrily. And out of the tangle grass, from under every bush, from behind every tree, came peccaries. There were hundreds of them—fierce little creatures that knew no fear—creatures that could bite and tear.

Our jaguar knew he was up against it. He could kill a lot of those peccaries, but he knew they would hang on to him until he was exhausted. He couldn't fight hundreds of them and get away with it.

Those peccaries could do anything—except climb. So our jaguar gave a challenging roar and leapt at the foremost peccaries. He bounded not at them but over them. In so doing he gained the edge of the forest where the great creepers hung down from the tall trees.

In a flash he was up the creepers. They broke under his weight, but he was high enough to leap at a sturdy bough. He was safe, but the peccaries surged round the foot of the tree, daring him to come down.

The jaguar snarled at them, but he wasn't going down. The trees were so thick they were entangled. He crawled his way from bough to bough, from tree to tree. For a time they followed, on the ground, then, at last, they lost him in the tangled foliage overhead.

So our jaguar came down to earth. He was still close to the river, and his hunger was, if anything, worse. So he went to the shore and stretched himself out on a fallen log that jutted out over the water. He lay there very still, gazing at the water.

A big fish swam that way. The jaguar tensed. Then there was a lightning stroke of his paw. The fish was struck and knocked ashore, and the jaguar leapt on it, eagerly, and fed. Even so, it wasn't a big meal—just a snack.

He had barely finished that snack when there was a rustle in the bushes. Our jaguar crouched flat to the ground as out of the thicket came a tapir—a strange-

looking creature, almost black, smooth-skinned like a pig, and with a snout that was half way between a pig's snout and a shortened elephant's-trunk. In size, it was as big as a small donkey.

Here was food enough and to spare. The tapir was suspicious, standing there, waggling its absurd snout about sniffing the air. Then it scented the jaguar and turned to fly for its life. But the jaguar had started after its meal a second before. Three bounds and a terrific leap landed it on the tapir's back.

But a tapir is pretty powerful. It could not bite and claw at the jaguar, and the jaguar could not get its paw under the tapir's head so as to break its neck—its usual way of slaying its prey.

So the tapir's chief object was to get the jaguar off its back, and to do that it dashed away among the trees, looking for a low bough under which it could dart and which would give the jaguar a nasty crack.

But there were no boughs quite low enough around there, so the tapir stampeded through the reeds to the river with the idea of taking to the water. Maybe he would have succeeded. No one will ever know. Maybe the jaguar would have broken his neck in another few seconds.

If you're good at solving problems—try these

The answers are given below.

Here are six English towns, each having two syllables. Can you guess what they are from these descriptions?

1. A hill; a landing place.
2. Ancient; a meat.
3. Evening; pretence.
4. To spoil; entrance to field or garden.
5. A number; trees.
6. To rouse from sleep; meadow.

Here are fourteen towns which have got jumbled. See if you can disentangle them, and put the letters in their right order.

1. Chinrow
2. Drove.
3. Treeex.
4. Cradre.
5. Noghwrit.
6. Hicwisp.
7. Rinthbog.
8. Lostrib.
9. Overpillo.
10. Menrcheats.
11. Thoumary.
12. Elffished.
13. Omnightant.
14. Tryabunrec.

Answers:

The six English towns are: 1. Torquay. 2. Oldham. 3. Evesham. 4. Margate. 5. Sevenoaks. 6. Wakefield.

And here are the fourteen jumbled towns: 1. Norwich. 2. Dover. 3. Exeter. 4. Redcar. 5. Worthing. 6. Ipswich. 7. Brighton. 8. Bristol. 9. Liverpool. 10. Manchester. 11. Yarmouth. 12. Sheffield. 13. Nottingham. 14. Canterbury.

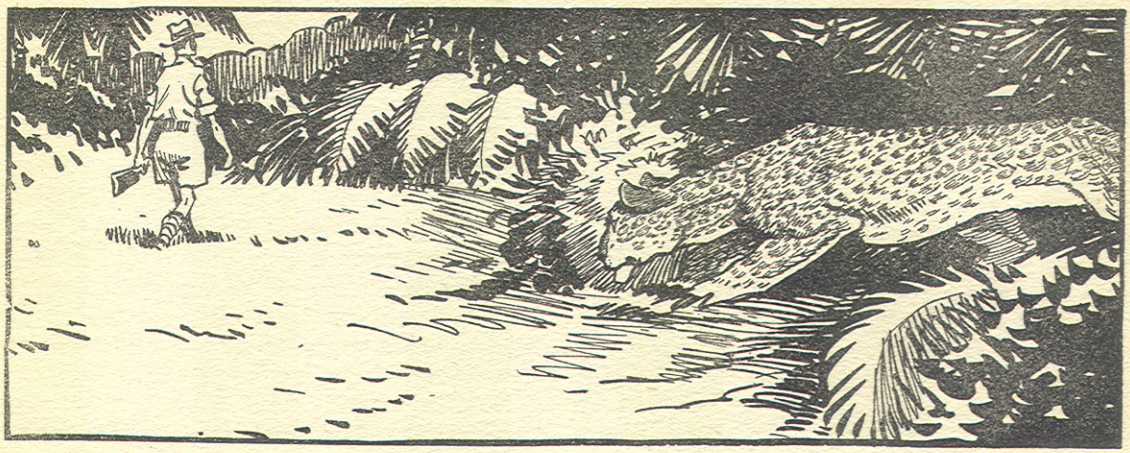
ANSWERS TO FISHING PUZZLE ON PAGE 29:

The boys caught:

1. Perch. 2. Roach. 3. Minnow. 4. Bream. 5. Carp. 6. Pike. 7. Brill. 8. Bleak. 9. Stickleback. 10. Gudgeon.

And their fathers caught:

1. Plaice. 2. Turbot. 3. Herring. 4. Sole. 5. Halibut. 6. Cod. 7. Hake. 8. Sprat. 9. Whiting. 10. Mackerel.



But neither of these things happened, because the tapir trod on something, half buried in the mud.

It was a great snake, fifteen feet long—an anaconda. The snake uncoiled and struck. Tapir and jaguar went flying, as if struck by a battering ram. One went one way, and one the other. The snake seemed to hurtle itself forward, and the last our jaguar saw of the unfortunate tapir was its helpless struggles as the coils of the snake closed around it.

So the jaguar's meal was lost to him, and he went off into the jungle in a very bad temper. It was bad enough to be hungry, but to get so close to a good feed only to have it snatched away from him drove him crazy.

It is often when in a passion that men do things which, in their calmer moments, they would never dream of attempting. It is the same with animals. And the jaguar, very hungry, and in a crazy passion, threw caution to the winds.

He had been roaring at intervals, hoping his challenge would send some creature scurrying to safety, and thus betraying its presence by its movements. Nothing happened. And then, the jaguar, sniffing the ground, came upon a strange scent.

Man! At any other time he would have turned aside and given man a wide berth. But his ravenous hunger drove fear from his mind. He followed that trail through the forest, in deadly silence. The man was following the forest trail—a narrow path that wound in and out among the thickets and the tangled trees.

The jungle undergrowth and creepers grew so densely that the man could not make very much progress.

Our jaguar followed, padding along eagerly. It was a long trail, but the jaguar cared nothing about time. The sun was low and might drop below the skyline at any moment, plunging the tropical world into blackness.

Our jaguar hastened to make his kill before that happened. He saw the man ahead of him, calmly sauntering along the trail, his gun under his arm. The jaguar left the trail and took to the bushes on one side. He slithered along under the foliage, almost flat to the ground.

He was catching up on the man. Soon he would be within leaping distance. Now he was within leaping distance. He crouched for an instant, under a thicket, his tail twitching. Now was the time for him to make his spring! He leapt—but as he leapt he caught a movement beside the trail. Then something hit him, even while he was in mid-air—and stopped him. When he hit the ground he was dead. He never even heard the report of the gun that had shot the bullet at him.

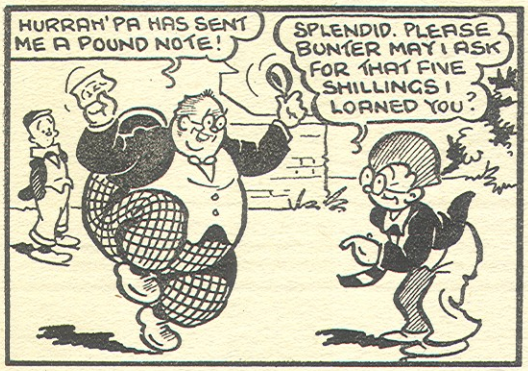
And he had not seen the second man on the trail—the second man who grinned at the first man, and said:

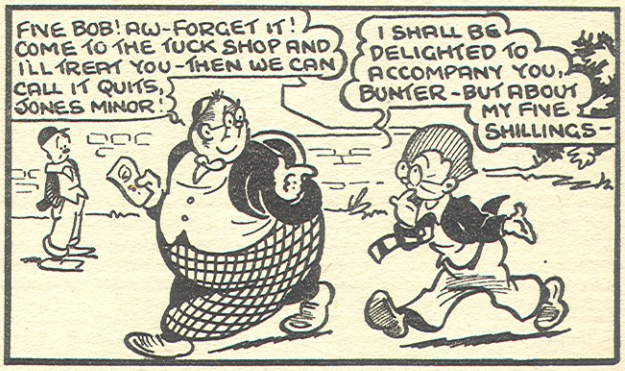
"Lucky I was lazy and dragged behind, Jim. I spotted that jaguar just in time!"

THE END

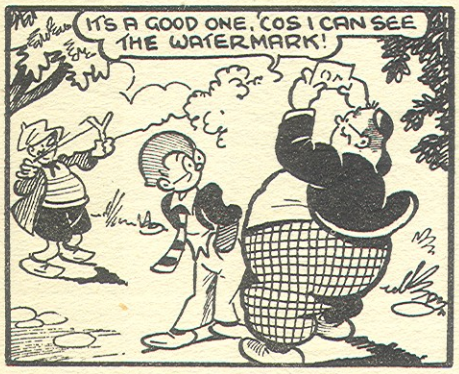
BILLY BUNTER

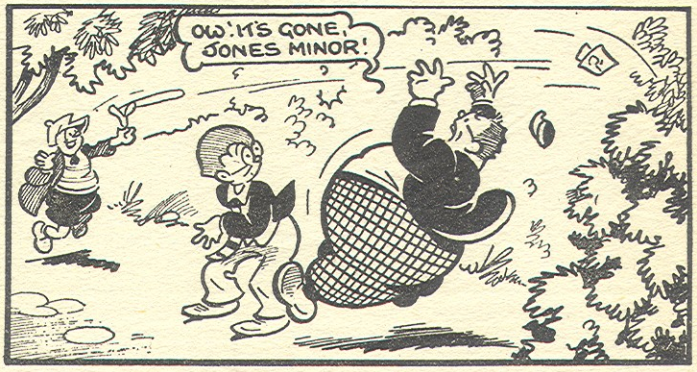
THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH.



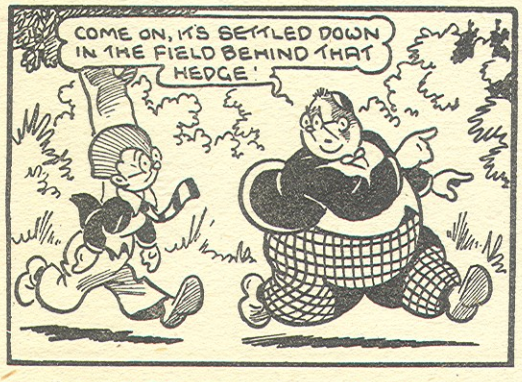


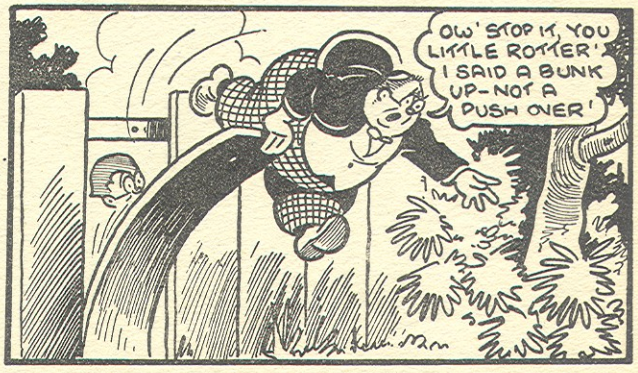
1. Well, would you believe it, chums! William George Bunter is in funds! His dad sent him a postal order for a pound! Think of that—in doughnuts! But every rose has its thorn, chums, and our Billy's joy was suddenly dampened a bit.



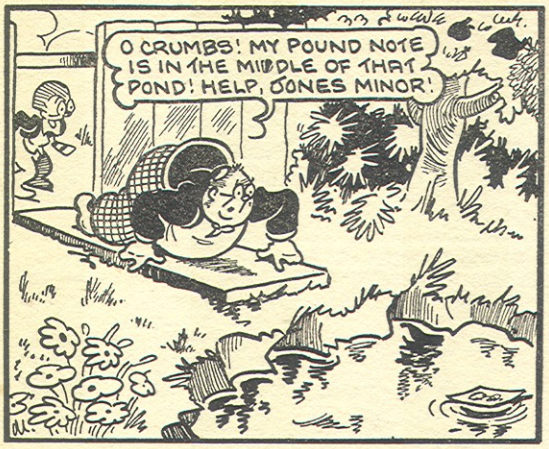


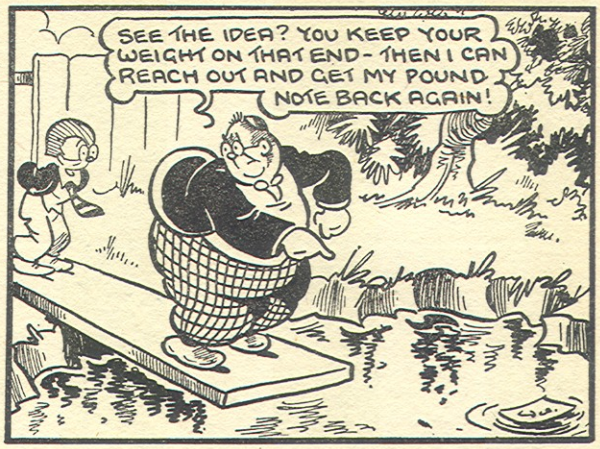
2. 'Cos Jones Minor had to remember the five bob Billy owed him! Fancy thinking of a thing like that when a postal order arrives! But our Billy has a heart of gold, he has! He said Jones Minor could help him spend the pound and maybe get a bun out of it.



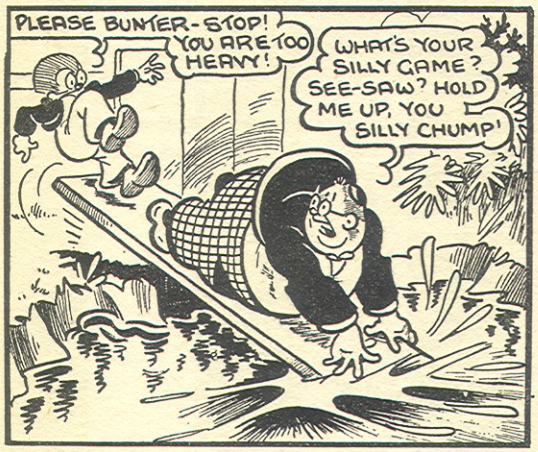


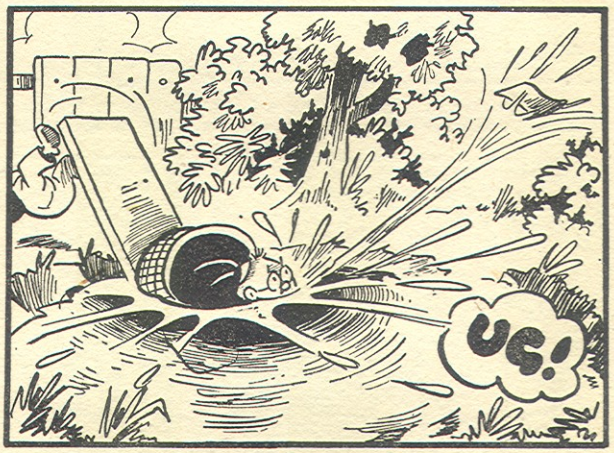
3. But while Billy was holding up the pound note to make sure it was good, a town kid with a catapult scored a bullseye. The note was whisked from Billy's hand over the fence. Coo, Billy was annoyed! He had to have a leg-up to get over the fence.



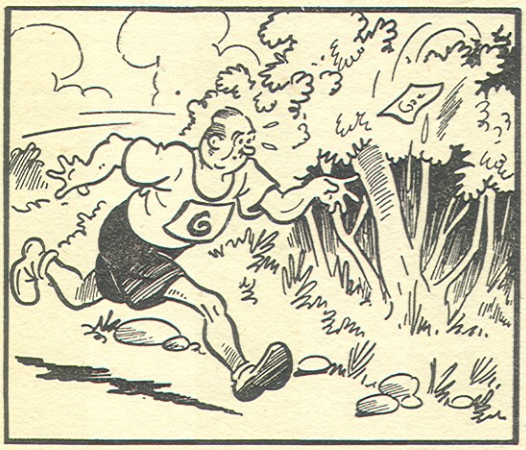


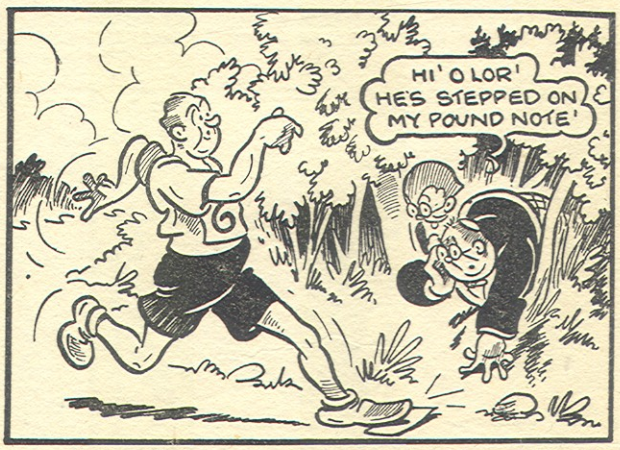
4. But that fence wasn't made to bear the weight of two-ton Billy. The plank planked down with a wallop, and Billy found himself flat on his tummy gazing at the muddy waters of an oozy pond. And in the middle of the oozy pond floated the pound note! But was it lost? Not much! It takes more than a niffy pond to keep our Billy away from a pound's worth of doughnuts.



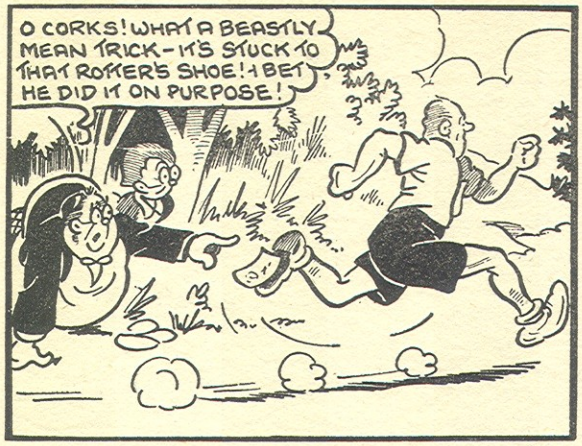


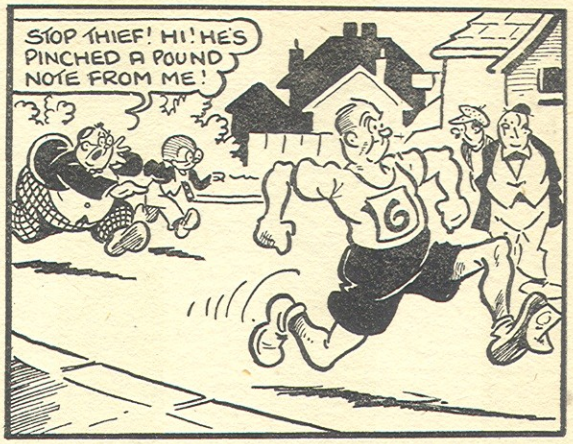
5. He had a Bunter notion. He slid the plank over the oozy water and stretched himself upon it. Jones Minor had to stand on the other end to keep the plank from tilting. But Jones Minor was either not smart enough or not beefy enough to do it. Up tilted the plank and down went our Billy—splosh into the oozy stuff. And what an oozy splash there was that day!



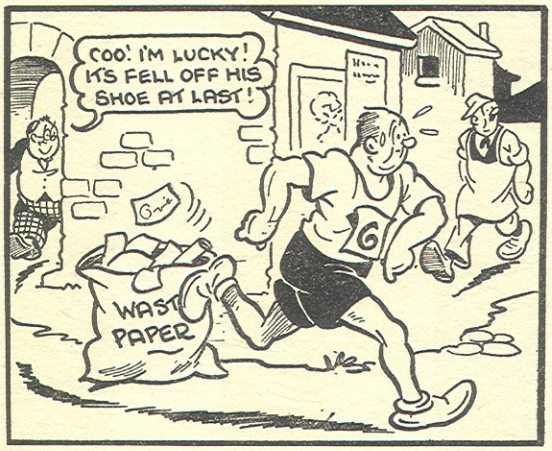


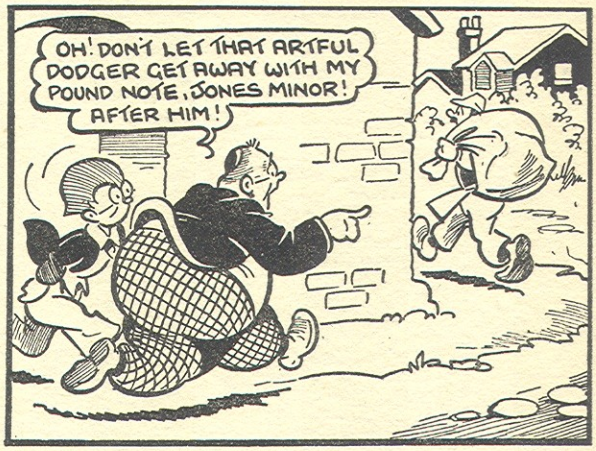
6. Our Billy drank quarts of ooze, pints of tiddlers, and a few tadpoles. But what was worse, one splosh of water lifted the pound note high into the stratosphere and over a hedge. And there was a racing chap running like mad from here to there. And he put his foot down on that pound note. Billy was just in time to see it happen. Coo, what beastly luck!



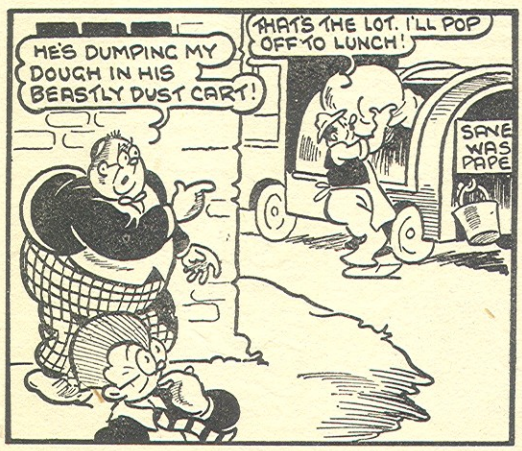


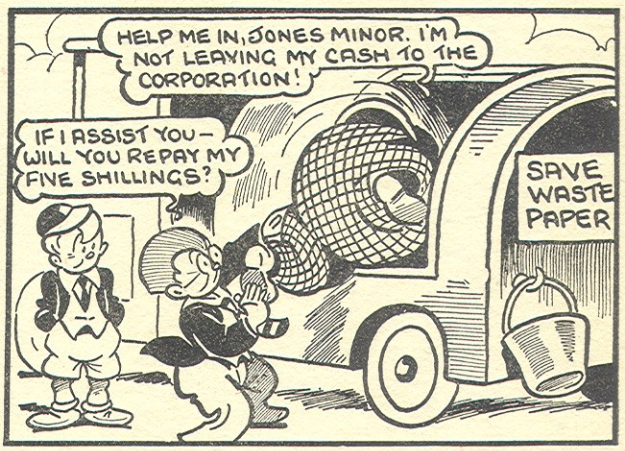
7. And, as you know, chums, racing chaps wear spiked shoes. The result was that the pound note got well and truly spiked, and the runner ran off with the note spiked on his spikes. Billy spiked—er, spoke—to the gent, but he was in too much of a hurry to get there to bother with our Billy. "Stop, thief!" yelled Billy, dashing after the racing chap like a crazy tank.



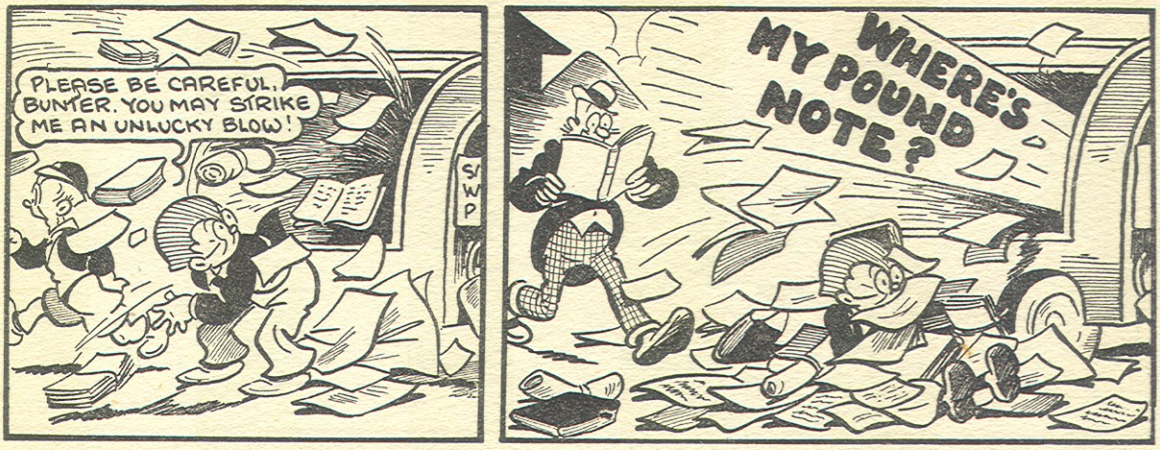


8. On and on, and on again, went the racing runner. And Billy was a good second. But on turning a corner, hard by Pancake Alley, the racing runner flicked his foot. The pound note came unspiked and was neatly tossed into a sack of waste paper waiting to be collected by the salvage man. Billy heaved a sigh of relief. Now he'd get his note back—perhaps. Perhaps not!

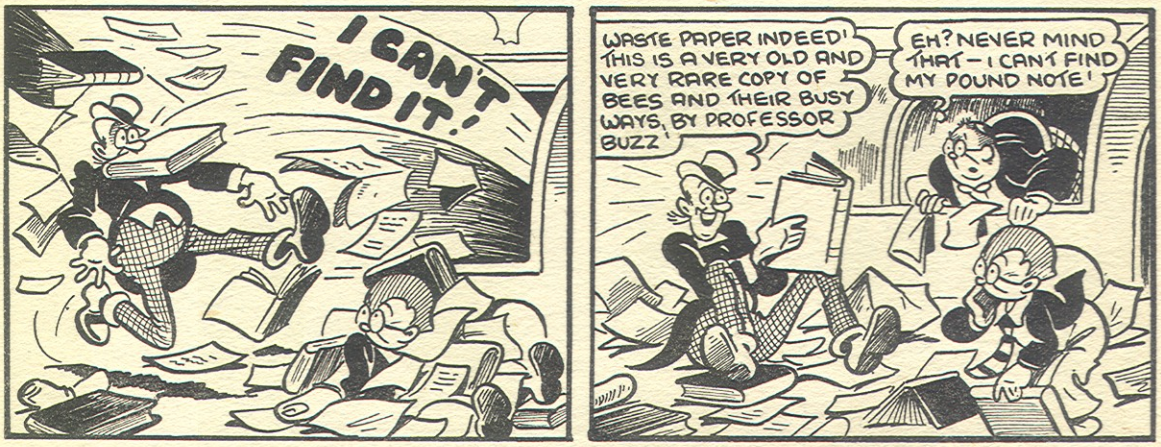




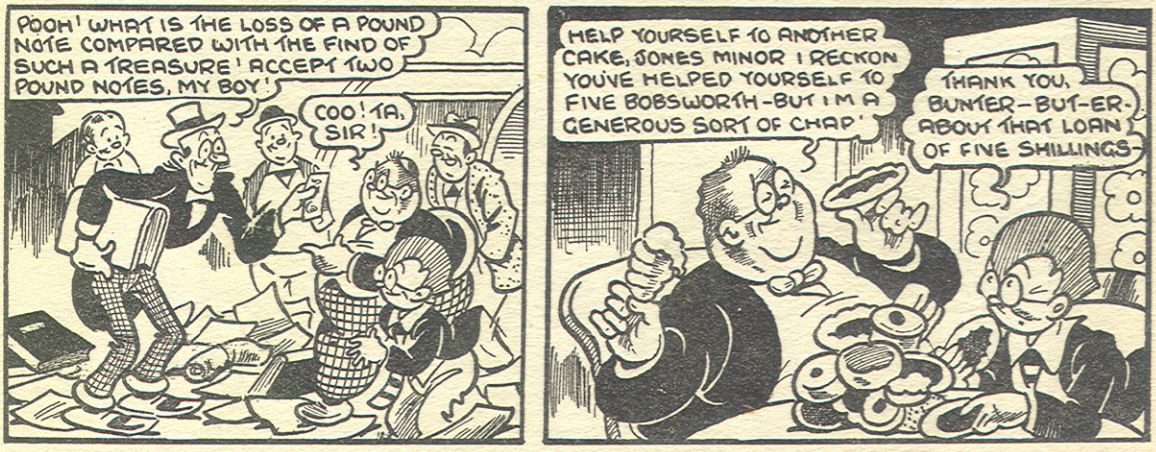
9. There's many a catch in this sort of thing, chaps, as Billy found out. For as he ran up towards that sack of waste paper the salvage man caught it up and toddled away to the salvage van and tipped the lot inside. And then the aforesaid salvage man popped off to munch, leaving our Billy gazing at a big van, inside which was a pound note—which was his and his alone!



10. "I'm going in after it!" he cried, the light of battle in his eyes, and his jaw sticking out with determination like the prow of a rowing boat! And Jones Minor gave him a leg-up. With a heave and a ho in went our Billy. And then the snowstorm began! Rather a hefty snowstorm, too, chums. It snowed old paper for quite a while in bits, pieces, chunks and volumes!



11. And out of the depths of the salvage van came the despairing cry of our Billy: "WHERE'S MY POUND NOTE?" The stuff came out of the van, fast and furiously. And one chucked-away book whizzed out and caught a passer-by a nasty crack in the teeth. "I can't find it!" wailed Billy. But the passer-by grabbed the book that had bit him and chortled!



12. Wonders will never cease, chums. That book was a treasure to that old gent, and he was so pleased at finding it he forgot about his loosened teeth and told Billy to forget the pound note he'd lost, 'cos here were two to take its place! So you just see, chums, how good a thing it is to save paper, 'cos if Billy hadn't bothered about paper flapping around he'd have missed a feed!

THE COWBOY CONJURER

Read how the Cowboy Conjurer and his pal Lefty, saved an old man's fortune from the hands of a crook

On the Trail of the Outlaws

"DURN it, pardner, it sure beats me whar yuh gits them thar animiles!" gasped Lefty Logan.

The little man tipped his broad-brimmed stetson hat on to the back of his carroty head. Then he mopped his freckled face as Lefty gaped at the two white rabbits which Big Bill Dawson, the Cowboy Conjurer, had just pulled out of his own headgear.

By now Lefty should have been used to Bill's clever conjuring tricks, which he practised on horseback, but the tricks never failed to astonish Lefty, who was a simple sort of chap. They had brought Bill fame and riches.

"Yuh sure are some disillusionist!" Lefty gasped admiringly.

"Ef yuh mean another word for conjurer—it's illusionist, Lefty," Bill grinned, as he made a magic pass with his hands. "Presto!" he shouted.

Lefty blinked in amazement. The rabbits had vanished!

"Yuh're a gizzard—that's what yuh are—a gizzard!" gulped Lefty.

"Yuh mean—a wizard!" chuckled Bill.

His pal's weakness for using big words incorrectly, never failed to amuse the Cowboy Conjurer.

Lefty leant over and thrust one horny hand into his saddle-bag, as the two pards rode along the dusty trail which wound its way towards Three Trees township. His fingers felt for his pocket dictionary. Instead, they encountered something soft and warm.

"Jumpin' gophers!" Lefty gasped. "It's—it's them animiles!"

He stared down at the rabbits which had slipped into his saddle-bag most mysteriously.

"It's — it's discreditable — discreditable!" Lefty gulped.

"Yuh mean—incredible!" laughed Bill,

using the right word to describe something which seems impossible. Then he flicked his fingers close to Lefty's big ears —and produced a couple of eggs.

" Gosh ! " Lefty gasped, nearly falling off his horse.

Once more Bill's fingers quivered. The eggs disappeared. In their place the Cowboy Conjurer produced a fat roll of what appeared to be crisp banknotes from the thin air.

" Gosh, pardner ! " gasped Lefty, goggling at the money. " Say, what are we goin' t' th' Bank fer ? "

Bill grinned. " Guess that hombre, Don Quenton, wouldn't take this hyar phoney money to pay off the loan on Dad's ranch," he drawled. " This cash may look like the real thing, Lefty, but it ain't ! You oughter know this stuff by sight now, Lefty. It's the dud dough I use in my act—it's what they call theatrical money ! "

" When yuh starts them tricks o' yourn, I sure don't know nuthin'," muttered Lefty, as the Cowboy Conjurer made another magic pass, and the roll vanished.

" Come on, Lefty," Bill drawled, as he bent low over the sleek neck of Magic, his white horse, and urged him into a gallop. " It's high time yuh an' me got to th' Bank an' collected that 30,000 dollars ! "

As the two buddies thundered along the trail, both their faces were thoughtful. For while Bill and Lefty had been away, touring the Golden West with a circus show, and making big money, old John Dawson, Bill's dad, had been having a pretty thin time, back at Bar X.

A lot of old John Dawson's cattle had been stolen by Bad Jake Rafferty and his gang of outlaws. All attempts to recover the cattle and bring Bad Jake and his hoodlums to justice, had so far failed. Then a dry spell had caused more of old John's beasts to die through lack of water.

To keep things going at the ranch, to buy more steers and to pay his men, old John had borrowed a lot of money from the Bank. Now the mortgage had been bought from the Bank by Don Quenton, a neighbouring rancher, who had long wanted to own Bar X. In fact, more than once in the past he had made old John offers for the place, but these offers had been refused. And this was the day that Don Quenton had the legal right to take over Bar X, lock, stock and barrel, if he were not paid his 30,000 dollars by sundown.

" If only Dad had written an' told me he was in trouble," Bill muttered, " I'd hev sure come back pronto an' squared things up. I wish he hadn't left me to find out accidental like ! "

" Guess yuh're dad sure didn't want yuh t' lose anythin'—mebbe yuh're job—because of him," Lefty muttered. " Besides, he's that thar proud——"

Lefty broke off as the thunder of quickly approaching horses' hoofs reached their ears. The next moment Sheriff Mason and a posse rode around a nearby bluff. The Sheriff reined his horse to a standstill.

" Thar's trouble at Dead Man's Gulch," the Sheriff shouted. " Jest got a message through. Bad Jake an' his hoodlums agin.' Care to tag along ? "

" Sorry, Sheriff," Bill drawled regretfully. " But we gotta git to th' Bank pronto. Urgent business ! "

" Okay," the Sheriff shouted, as he rode off.

As the two pards continued on their way, both looked a bit glum. For they would have dearly loved to lay their hands on Bad Jake and his hoodlums. But getting that money for Bill's dad was more important just then.

Suddenly, as they rounded a bluff and came within sight of the huddle of shacks and the three stunted trees, from which the little township took its name, they heard the crack of several shots. Looking down into the main street they saw tiny puffs of smoke, and a cloud of dust raised by whirling horses.

Big Bill's eyes narrowed. As if by instinct, his hands slid to his gleaming silver holsters, where his twin six-shooters snuggled, and which he could use with the speed of greased lightning, when necessary.

" C'm on, Lefty ! " Bill growled, bending over Magic's sleek neck.

Thundering down main street, Bill

reined Magic to a slithering standstill, abreast of a tall, mournful-looking gink called Al Satian. His empty guns, which were still smoking, dangled at his bony sides. Al was shouting: " Thar they go ! Th' durned coyotes ! "

The pards were just in time to spot a bunch of riders vanish from sight, as Bill shouted : " What's up, Al ? What's happened ? "

" Git after 'em—don't let 'em git away !" Al yelled. " It's Bad Jake an' his hoodlums. They gits the Sheriff outa th' way with a phoney message an' then they rides up and scatters all the hosses that are left, and stages a hold-up ! They cleaned out the Bank—in fact, they took every cent. Don't let 'em git away, Bill ! They got away with my five dollars, I only put in this morning, as well ! "

" Yuh're five dollars ! " Lefty groaned in dismay. " W-what about our 30,000 dollars ? "

" C'm on, Lefty ! " Bill rasped, knowing there was no time to lose.

The Cowboy Conjurer urged Magic forward with a whispered word and a gentle touch of his knees. The great horse was away like the wind with Lefty close behind.

" We sure hev gotta git that thar dough back ! " Lefty gasped.

Bill nodded grimly. They had got to bring Bad Jake to justice and recover the stolen money, so that Bill could use some of it to pay off Don Quenton by sundown. If not, old John would have to lose the ranch he loved. But Bill vowed inwardly that he wouldn't fail his father, though he hadn't much time at his disposal.

" Thar they go ! " Lefty exclaimed suddenly.

The Cowboy Conjurer's hands slid to his holsters. His six-shooters shone dully in the hot sunlight, as Bill and Lefty stormed forward. Both were ready to start shooting as soon as they came within range of their quarry.

The outlaws had disappeared behind a bluff. Beyond the bluff, Bill knew, the trail stretched in a straight line for five miles between the canyon's steep, smooth walls. That would be their chance, Bill reckoned, to catch up with the outlaws. The fact that the odds against them were about five to one didn't worry either of them in the slightest !

Then, as they thundered around the bluff, both Bill and Lefty got a big shock. They shaded their eyes, reined their sweating horses to a standstill, and stared, dumbfounded, into the distance.

For Bad Jake and his boys had vanished ! Men and horses had completely disappeared, as if into thin air. The long, straight trail was entirely empty !

In the Hands of the Hoodlums

THE two puzzled pards stared at each other in amazement. Then they rode forward, inspecting the trail.

" Them hombres sure rode this way, Lefty," Bill muttered. " There are th' marks of th' hoofs ! "

Lefty scratched his head in bewilderment. He twisted his neck this way and that, searching for some sign of the missing hoodlums. But in vain !

A couple of hundred yards further along the trail Bill suddenly reined Magic to a standstill. He leapt down and examined the ground closely. Then the Cowboy Conjurer gave a low whistle.

" Look, Lefty," Bill muttered, " here's whar the hoof-marks end ! They don't go no further—and yet——"

Both pards surveyed the scene. To their right, the smooth rock wall rose steeply for hundreds of feet into the air. No man or beast could possibly climb it. To their left, lay an old Indian temple, embedded in the solid rock. The temple was a well-known landmark. It was supposed to have been carved by the Indians out of the cliff wall, long before the white man came to the West.

Strange tales were told about that temple ! Folk around those parts believed the place was haunted. Riders, after dark, had heard strange sounds coming from the temple, and had seen lights moving. Don Quenton, for one, had sworn that he had actually seen the ghost of an Indian chief, in full war paint, walking among the ruins !

" C'm on, Lefty ! " Bill whispered.

As the Cowboy Conjurer leapt into the saddle, he cried loudly : " Them guys hev sure done a vanishing trick all right ! We can't do nuthin' more hyar. We'll hit th' trail an' git th' Sheriff ! "

Bill swung Magic around. He rode back the way they had come, with the puzzled Lefty bringing up the rear. As the pards rounded the nearest bluff, Bill reined Magic to a halt and leapt down.

" What's th' big idea, buddy ? " Lefty asked, as Bill tethered Magic to a nearby tree-stump, and Lefty did the same with his own horse.

" If them hombres ain't hidin' in that thar temple," Bill answered, " I'll sure eat my stetson. C'm on, Lefty ! " he growled. " We're goin' back pronto. But we sure don't want them hoodlums to know it. 'Cos if they think we know where they're hiding, they'll sure start shootin' at us ! "

Slowly and stealthily Bill led the way. The Cowboy Conjurer kept close to the cliff. He took advantage of every scrap of cover and shadow.

" Yuh ain't a-goin' inside that thar temple, are yuh ! " Lefty gulped, as the two pards lay sprawled side by side behind a small boulder at the foot of the cracked steps.

" Ah sure am ! " Bill muttered huskily. " Ef Bad Jake and his hoodlums are in thar, I'm sure goin' to git 'em ! "

" W-what about th' spooks ? " Lefty stammered.

" Spooks, my foot ! " the Cowboy Conjurer muttered. He laid a hand on Lefty's wrist. " Don't yuh see, kid, if once we let them guys give us the slip, we'll never git a chance to grab that dough and save Bar X ? "

The little man nodded. " Guess yuh're right, Bill," he answered. " Spooks or no spooks, ah'm game ! "

" C'm on, then, follow me," the Cowboy Conjurer whispered.

Slowly, they wriggled up the cracked temple steps. Any moment both Bill and Lefty expected to hear the sound of a shot from the dark and dismal interior. Taking advantage of every scrap of cover, Bill and Lefty dodged across the forecourt, skipping from pillar to pillar, their guns at the ready.

They worked their way into the ruins. The towering pillars and overhanging rocks cast dark shadows and prevented much daylight from penetrating. Still no sound reached their straining ears, not even the soft movement or scrape of stealthy foot, not even a quick, indrawn breath, not even the faint click of a gun trigger, grasped by some hidden hoodlum. The only thing they could hear was the moan of the wind through the ruins, and the soft, slow drip of water from some unseen spring.

Lefty's heart pounded like a steam-hammer as he peered uncertainly around him. The little man wasn't so worried about Bad Jake and his cut-throats as about the spooks of which he'd heard so much. Any minute Lefty expected to see the ghost of that Red Indian chief, which Don Quenton had described so vividly.

Slowly and thoroughly Bill and Lefty searched the whole place. But they found nobody. The entire temple appeared to be uninhabited by any living being.

Bewilderment and disappointment were mingled in the Cowboy Conjurer's voice, as he muttered : " C'm on, Lefty. Thar ain't no one hyar ! "

Lefty gulped as they reached the open air. " Ah sure am glad to be outa thar ! " he exclaimed, turning towards Bill.

The Cowboy Conjurer squatted on the top step, with his back to the rock wall. He stroked his nose as the little man dropped down beside him.

" Thar's somethin' mighty queer goin' on, Lefty," he growled. " Men and hosses don't jest vanish into thin air ! "

" Mebbe that thar Red Injun's got 'em," Lefty gulped.

" Spooks ? " scoffed Bill. " Horse-feathers ! All the same—it ain't natural ! "

" N-nope—it's—super-natural ! " gulped Lefty, getting the right word for once.

Bill slapped his knee angrily and jumped up. " Them hombres are sure around hyar some place," he scowled, " an' ah'm goin' to locate 'em, ef it takes all day ! "

The Cowboy Conjurer stared up and

down the trail, as he considered his plan of campaign.

" Look hyar, Lefty——" Bill began, as he swung round.

He broke off and stared blankly at the spot where his pard had been squatting. For Lefty had vanished, silently and mysteriously, just like Bad Jake and his Gang !

The Cowboy Conjurer gave a husky exclamation and spun round in search of his missing partner ! Bracing himself with his back to the rock-face, Bill cupped his hands and whistled and shouted. The sounds echoed and re-echoed mockingly ; but there was no answer.

Suddenly Bill sensed that something else was wrong. But before he could move, a grimy hand grabbed his neck, half-choking him. Struggling wildly, Bill was dragged bodily back through an opening in the rock face. He knew then that there must be a secret opening, operated by hidden machinery, and this opening must be large enough to let in men and horses walking in single file.

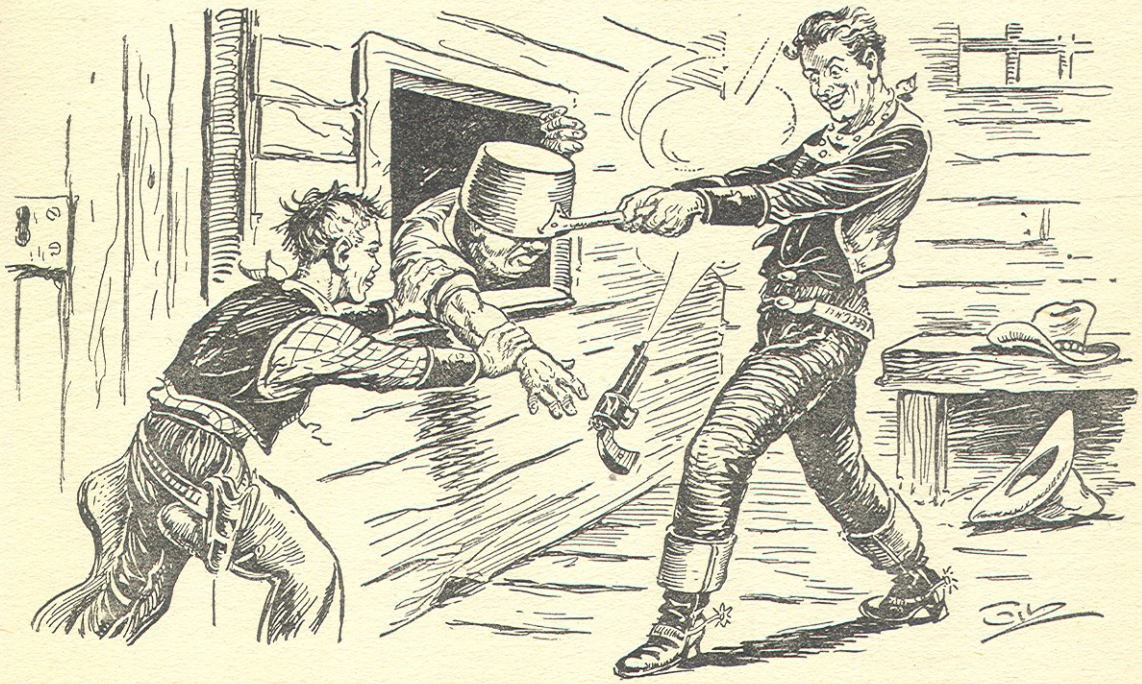
As the secret panel in the rock face slid back into place, with a low rumbling sound, shutting out the daylight, a bright torch was flashed in Bill's face, and a harsh voice snarled : " March, buddy ! "

Bill felt the cold muzzle of a Colt boring into his back and this showed him that the speaker meant business. The voice continued : " An' no tricks, cowboy, or ah'll sure fill you so full o' holes, yuh'll——"

The light from the torch played on the walls of what appeared to Bill to be a long, low-roofed rock-passage. As the Cowboy Conjurer stumbled forward, the passage twisted sharply at right-angles. As he rounded the bend the Cowboy Conjurer could see daylight ahead. A moment later he found himself in the open air.

Blinking in the strong sunlight, Bill gave a low exclamation. He realised that he was now on the other side of the towering cliffs, and behind the temple. The rock walls towered on every side of the small saucer-shaped enclosure in which the Cowboy Conjurer now stood.

Bill's captor urged him towards a shack a few yards away. Outside it several tough-looking guys lounged and leered at him. Then, as the shack door opened, Bill's lips tightened. He saw a tall, sallow-faced



Bill swung the saucepan downwards with force and speed, right over Cookie's head.

hombre, with a scar slashed across one cheek, stride out. Bill knew him all right. He was Bad Jake Rafferty!

Bad Jake's yellow teeth were bared in an evil grin, as he glared at the Cowboy Conjurer.

"Welcome to th' hideout, cowboy!" Bad Jake jeered. "Okay, Pete, yuh know what t' do with strangers what come snooping round whar they ain't wanted!"

"Git movin', cowboy!" Pete snarled, jabbing the muzzle of his gun harder still into Bill's back.

The Cowboy Conjurer was hustled into the shack where Cookie Stevens was just finishing a plate of steak and onions. He paid no attention to the visitor, as Pete hustled Bill through the door of a partition, which divided the shack in half.

Bill found himself in a small room, dimly lit by daylight which streamed through a tiny barred window, set high in the wall. A doleful figure, squatting on a low wooden form, jumped up to meet him.

"Bill!" gulped Lefty. "So them hoodlums got yuh, too?"

Behind Bill, the door slammed. A heavy wooden bar fell into place. From outside Pete's sneering laugh reached the prisoners.

"Jest try conjurin' yer way outa thar, cowboy!" he cried scornfully.

The main door of the shack banged shut as Pete and Cookie went out. The two pards stared dismally at each other. Helpless prisoners in the power of Bad Jake and his gang, what chance had they now to bring the bandits to justice, recover the stolen money and have that 30,000 dollars ready to pay old John Dawson's debt to Don Quenton by sundown? How could they hope to save Bar X—now?

Trap for a Hoodlum!

EVEN as Bill and Lefty stared dismally at each other, the sound of hoarse shouts reached their ears, followed by the jingle of harness and the dull thud of horses' hoofs. It sounded as if the outlaws were on the move.

"Hop up on ma shoulders, Lefty," Bill rapped. "Mebbe yuh kin spot somethin' from that thar window!"

Lefty obeyed and he was just in time to see Bad Jake and his henchmen leading their horses slowly towards the mouth of the cave.

"Mebbe, ef th' gang's goin' we can bust outa hyar——" Bill began as Lefty dropped to the floor again.

Bill swung round and gave the door a kick. Instantly, the flap of a serving hatch next to the door opened. Cookie Stevens, who had been left behind to guard Bill and Lefty, leered through. In his hand he brandished a six-shooter.

The Cowboy Conjurer's brain was working fast. Somehow, they had got to make their getaway, but how?

"Say, what about a bite o' grub, pard?" the Cowboy Conjurer drawled. "Ah'm sure peckish!"

"Waal, cowboy, why don't yuh conjure yerself up a coupla hard-boiled eggs?" Cookie tittered.

"Waal, I might, at that, if yuh kin loan me a saucepan," the Cowboy Conjurer drawled. "Yeah, an' I might even find a coupla rabbits; one for yuh, and one fer me an' Lefty, too!"

Cookie licked his thick lips. If there was one thing he enjoyed it was a nice plate of rabbit stew.

"Yuh ain't kiddin'?" Cookie scowled, suspiciously.

"Yuh git me a saucepan, buddy, an' yuh'll see!" Bill replied.

"What's the big idea, pal?" Lefty hissed, as the hatch slammed shut.

"Yuh'll see!" Bill grunted. "An' if th' trick works, we'll sure be outa hyar before yuh kin say 'Jumpin' gophers'!"

"Here y'are, cowboy," Cookie snapped, tossing a big saucepan to Bill through the reopened hatch. "Now let's see what yuh kin do!"

Cookie leaned his fat elbows on the hatchway shelf. At the same time he toyed carelessly with his six-shooter. His head and shoulders were hunched halfway into the room. Cookie's little piggy eyes watched the Cowboy Conjurer narrowly.

Bill took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves. Solemnly, the Cowboy Conjurer lifted the saucepan, taking a firm grip upon the handle with both hands. He started putting over his usual patter.

" Yuh see, folks, ah've nothin' up ma sleeve," Bill drawled, as he began to edge towards the interested Cookie. " Yuh kin see—thar's nothin' up ma sleeve," he repeated. " An' thar's nothin' in this hyar saucepan, either. It sure is jest an ordinary pan—no false bottom—no secret compartments whar anythin' kin be hidden——"

Bill went on talking fast, as he lifted the saucepan higher and higher in the air. He turned the pan upside down as he drawled : " Yuh kin see thar's nothin' in it, can't yuh ? "

Bill held the pan at such an awkward angle that Cookie had to crane his neck to see into it. This meant that the little hoodlum had to thrust his head and shoulders even further through the hatchway.

" Yeah," he agreed. " Ah kin see thar's nothin' in it ! "

But the next moment there was something in that saucepan—Cookie's fat head ! For, suddenly, Bill had swung the saucepan downwards with force and speed right over Cookie's head !

Cookie's gun went off with a roar ! A bullet whistled past Bill's ear and embedded itself in the wall. At the same moment, Lefty leapt forward and grabbed the wrist which held the weapon. He gave it a quick twist. Cookie let out a muffled howl, and dropped the gun like a hot cake.

By then, Bill had dragged the struggling, half-dazed outlaw halfway through the open hatch where he stuck fast ! The Cowboy Conjurer lifted the saucepan off Cookie's head and flung it on the floor.

" C'm on, Lefty ! " he gasped.

The two pards grabbed the stout form of Cookie, as he shouted and yelled and uttered all sorts of frightful threats. Bill had picked up Cookie's gun and with two or three heavy blows he had broken the door down. He now spun round and pressed the muzzle of the gun into the outlaw's fat neck.

" Whar's Bad Jake headin' fer and how d'yuh git outa this hyar dump ? " he shouted. " Spill it—or——"

Cookie really thought that Bill meant to pull the trigger if he didn't talk. The little hoodlum lost no time in stammering out the information. The next moment—only pausing to snatch a lantern—Bill and Lefty were racing for the mouth of the cave. A few seconds later they stepped through the secret exit, which opened as Bill pressed a small bit of rock jutting out from the rest. They ran to where their horses were tethered.

" C'm on, Lefty," Bill gasped, as he sprang on to Magic's back, " if the rest o' th' gang hev scattered an' Bad Jake's ridin' fer Bar X, as Cookie says, an', I guess, Cookie was too plumb scared t'lie—it sure means only on thing ! "

" An' what's that, pard ? " Lefty cried.

" Why, that Bad Jake must somehow have heard that Don Quenton's ridin' out to Bar X just before sundown to collect that 30,000 dollars from dad," the Cowboy Conjurer rapped. " An' Jake's out to steal that dough. Jake doesn't know he's already mussed up our plans by robbin' th' bank——"

" Unless we kin capture Jake an' git th' dough off him at th' ranch," Lefty said eagerly.

" Yuh've said it, Lefty," Bill grunted grimly.

Without wasting another second, the two pards rode fast in the direction of Bar X. But already the sun was low in the west. The chief question which worried both was—would they be in time ?

Don Quenton Tricked !

As old John Dawson stood upon the ranch-house steps at Bar X, the sun was sliding slowly towards the horizon.

Old John's pipe lay cold in his hand. His heart was heavy, for he felt that only a miracle could save Bar X now.

The old man's eyes stared sadly across the misty prairie. Here he had been born and bred. Here he had lived for more than sixty years. He had reared a family, built a fine ranch—none finer, he knew, anywhere in the West—and now——

The clatter of hoofs roused him from his daydream. Don Quenton came clattering round the angle of the outbuildings ; Don Quenton had come for his money !

As the Mexican, fat and swarthy-faced,

dismounted and swaggered up the steps, old John did not notice a lurking figure crouching behind a nearby water-butt.

Don Quenton smiled mockingly, showing his gleaming white teeth. He waved a hand, the fingers of which bore many rings.

" I have come for my money, Meester Dawson. You have it, yes, Meester Dawson ? " he purred.

" Sorry, Don Quenton," old John said huskily, as he led the way into his office, " Ah sure haven't ! " He put out a pleading hand. " Guess if it hadn't been fer that thar bank robbery, my boy Bill would hev been hyar by now with th' dough. Ef you'd only give me a little more time, Ah'm sure Ah kin square things up——"

Don Quenton shook his black head.

" Your leetle troubles are your affair, Meester Dawson," he purred. " A bargain ees a bargain. Unless you give me my money—unless you pay me in full——"

Old John stared wearily at his visitor. He realised it was useless to plead with Don Quenton. The Mexican swung round to the window. His dark eyes glittered triumphantly.

" Eet ees sundown, Meester Dawson," he declared. " And you have not paid the debt." He drew a deep breath. " Bar X ees mine ! "

" Not quite, Don Quenton ! " a voice snapped.

Startled, the Mexican swung round with an exclamation.

" Bill, my boy ! " old John gasped gladly. He rose and took a step towards the tall figure of the Cowboy Conjurer, framed in the doorway.

" Hyar's yuh're dough, Don Quenton," Bill snapped.

As Bill strode into the room, the Cowboy Conjurer whipped out a fat envelope and flung it on to the desk. The next instant, another voice broke in.

" Raise 'em ! Put up yuh're hands—all o' yuh—or——"

The masked figure at the window—a six-shooter in each hand—climbed over the sill, as Bill and his father raised their hands.

" Pesta ! What ees thees——" Don Quenton cried angrily.

" Raise 'em—yuh——" repeated the masked bandit harshly.

Muttering under his breath, the Mexican obeyed.

" Okay, Jake, ah guessed yuh'd sure show up on th' trail o' thet dough ! " Bill drawled.

" Bad Jake Rafferty ! " old John gasped.

The next moment the outlaw stiffened, as the cold muzzle of a six-shooter rammed into the bandit's back.

Then Lefty's voice cried :

" Drop them gats an' raise your hands, old hoss ! " As he spoke he scrambled over the sill. He had stayed outside under cover, waiting for Jake.

With a curse, Jake obeyed, as Bill turned to Don Quenton.

" Count th' dough an' then beat it ! " he said coldly. " Got a receipt ready, dad for him to sign ? "

Don Quenton counted the money and old John handed him a receipt to sign.

As he signed, he muttered : " You hold thees man while I get the Sheriff ! "

" Okay ! " the Cowboy Conjurer agreed.

As Don Quenton lumbered towards the door he stumbled. The next moment the Mexican barged heavily into Lefty, sending the little man staggering. The gun fell from Lefty's hand.

Seeing his chance, Bad Jake took it. With one flying leap he was through the window, and was beating it towards where the horses were tethered.

As Quenton helped Lefty to his feet, Bill leapt after the outlaw. Whirling his lariat, the rope snaked out with deadly accuracy. Even as Bad Jake reached the first of the horses, the loop landed neatly around his shoulders. The noose tightened with a jerk. Uttering a howl of rage and despair, Jake landed flat on his back in the dust, as old John's boys came tumbling and running from all directions.

" Search him, Lefty ! " Bill growled, as they lugged the outlaw to his feet.

But, although Lefty made a thorough job of it, not a sign of the missing money did he find.

" Spill it, Jake," Bill growled, " where's that dough ? "

" Ah guess yuh'd sure like to know," Bad Jake spat, his eyes glaring hatred. " Waal, ah ain't talkin—see ! "

The outlaw broke off and goggled in astonishment. For the Cowboy Conjurer suddenly shot out a hand towards Lefty. Before the amazed eyes of his audience, Bill drew a long, gleaming sword apparently straight out of his partner's mouth !

With that gleaming sword poised in the air, Bill swung round to the outlaw.

" Ef you won't talk, Jake, yuh'd better entertain the boys until th' Sheriff shows up ! " he scowled.

He winked at Lefty who nipped forward, reached up and took a firm grip of Jake's long nose. Jake struggled madly, but he was too firmly held by Al Satian and another tough guy. Jake had to breathe through his mouth.

" Okay, gents," the Cowboy Conjurer cried. " As yuh see, ah hev nothin' up ma sleeve. Ah will now cause this hyar sword to disappear inside this doggone coyote an'——"

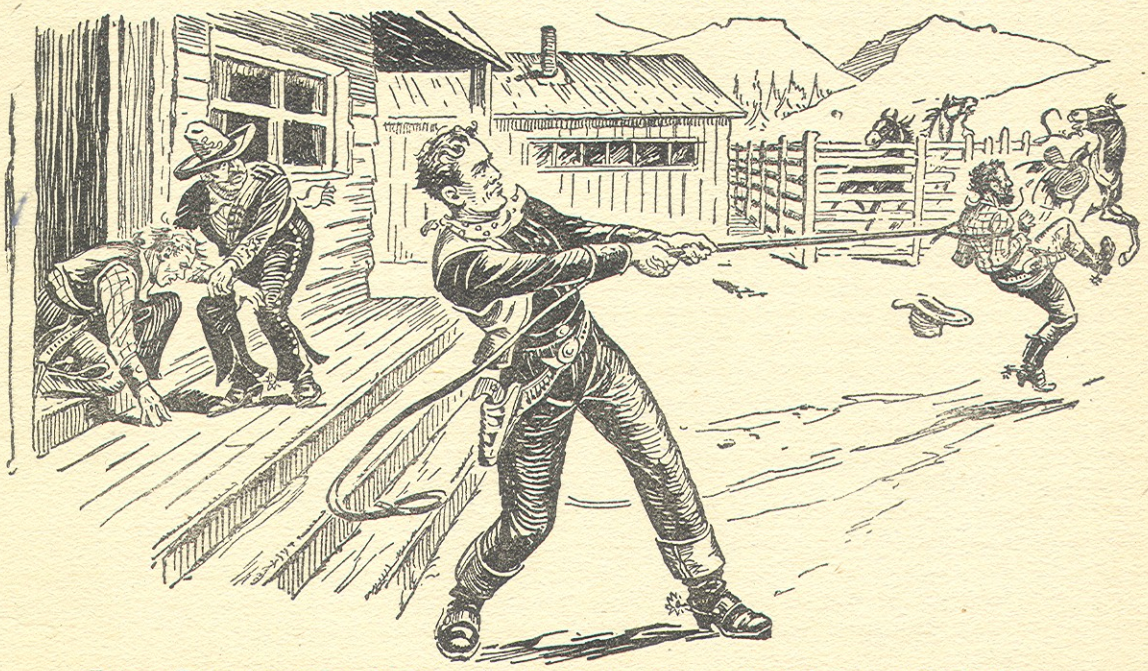
Weird and wonderful sounds came from the terrified Jake, as he tried to speak. With a tremendous effort, the outlaw gurgled : " Ah'll tell yuh—ah cached that thar dough under—th' floorboards—at th' shack—at th' hideout. It's all thar—every dime—ah——"

The Cowboy Conjurer made a magic pass. The sword vanished. Bill raced towards the spot where Magic was tethered. The next moment he was away like the wind.

After some hard riding the Cowboy Conjurer reached the shanty, and peered through the window. He was startled to see a shadowy, masked figure crouching over the floorboards. There was no sign of Cookie Stevens. Probably he had scrammed for the border the moment he had been able to wriggle free from the hatch.

Stealthily, Bill slid one leg over the sill, gun poised. " Raise 'em, stranger," he snapped.

The stranger twisted. A gun gleamed in his hand. It cracked and a bullet knocked Bill's six-shooter out of his grip. Bill leapt forward and overturned a table, deflecting a second bullet which went harmlessly into the tough wood. The edge of the table sent the stranger staggering. Bill seized his arm, twisting it fiercely.



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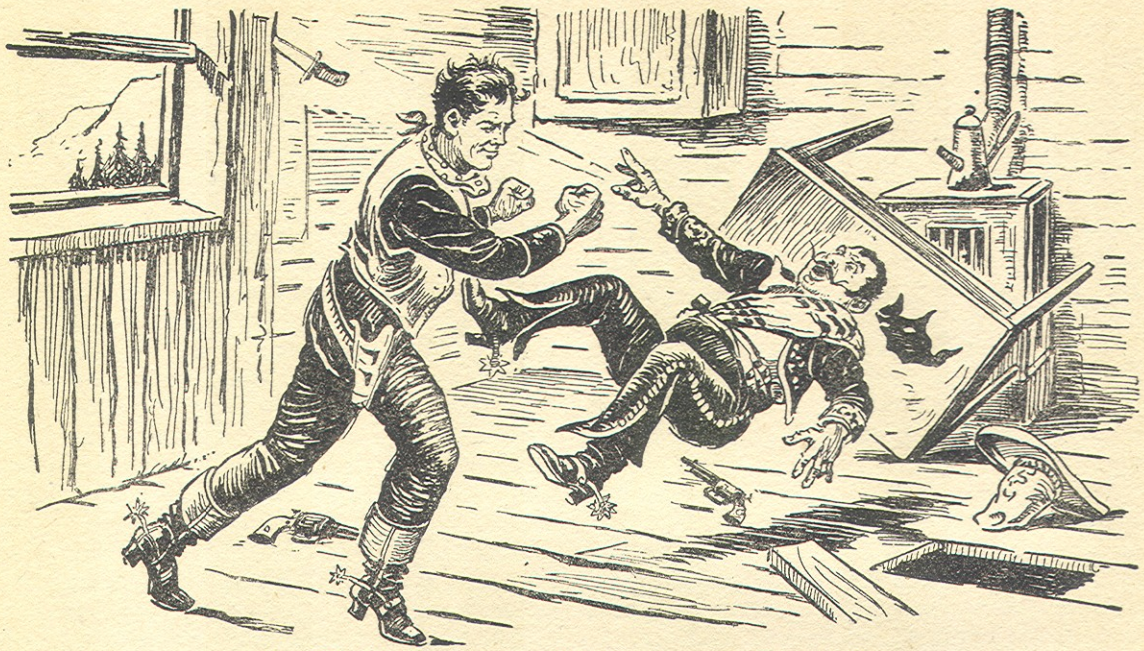


As Bill hit the stranger, the man's mask slipped off.

The man lost his grip on the gun which fell to the ground with a clatter. Bill clenched his fist, and hit the stranger. As he did so, his mask slipped.

" Don Quenton ! " Bill gasped.

The Mexican's features twisted evilly. A knife flashed in his hand. Bill ducked. The next moment the Cowboy Conjurer's fist shot out with the power and precision of a battering ram. The blow caught Don Quenton on the point of the jaw. The knife flew past Bill's head and buried itself in the wall.

As Don Quenton staggered, Bill packed a second punch to the Mexican's jaw. His knees gave way. Without a sound he slumped down, just as the door crashed open and Lefty, followed by Bill's dad, Sheriff Mason and the posse crowded in.

Panting, Bill knelt and thrust his hand into the hole in the boards. He drew out a fat wad of banknotes and tossed them to the Sheriff.

" Thar's the missing bank roll," Bill exclaimed, as the Sheriff caught them neatly in his hand.

" Bad Jake's confessed everythin'—hoping to save his own skin, Ah guess ! " said the Sheriff.

" Guess Don Quenton put Bad Jake on to robbing th' Bank so as to make sure Ah wouldn't git that 30,000 dollars for dad in time," Bill drawled. As he spoke, he glanced knowingly at the Sheriff.

The Sheriff nodded. " An' jest to make sure, he told Jake to be around at Bar X to snaffle thet dough, even if yuh or your dad did manage to rake it up from some place," the Sheriff said grimly. " It sure is a good thing that his little game was spoilt ! "

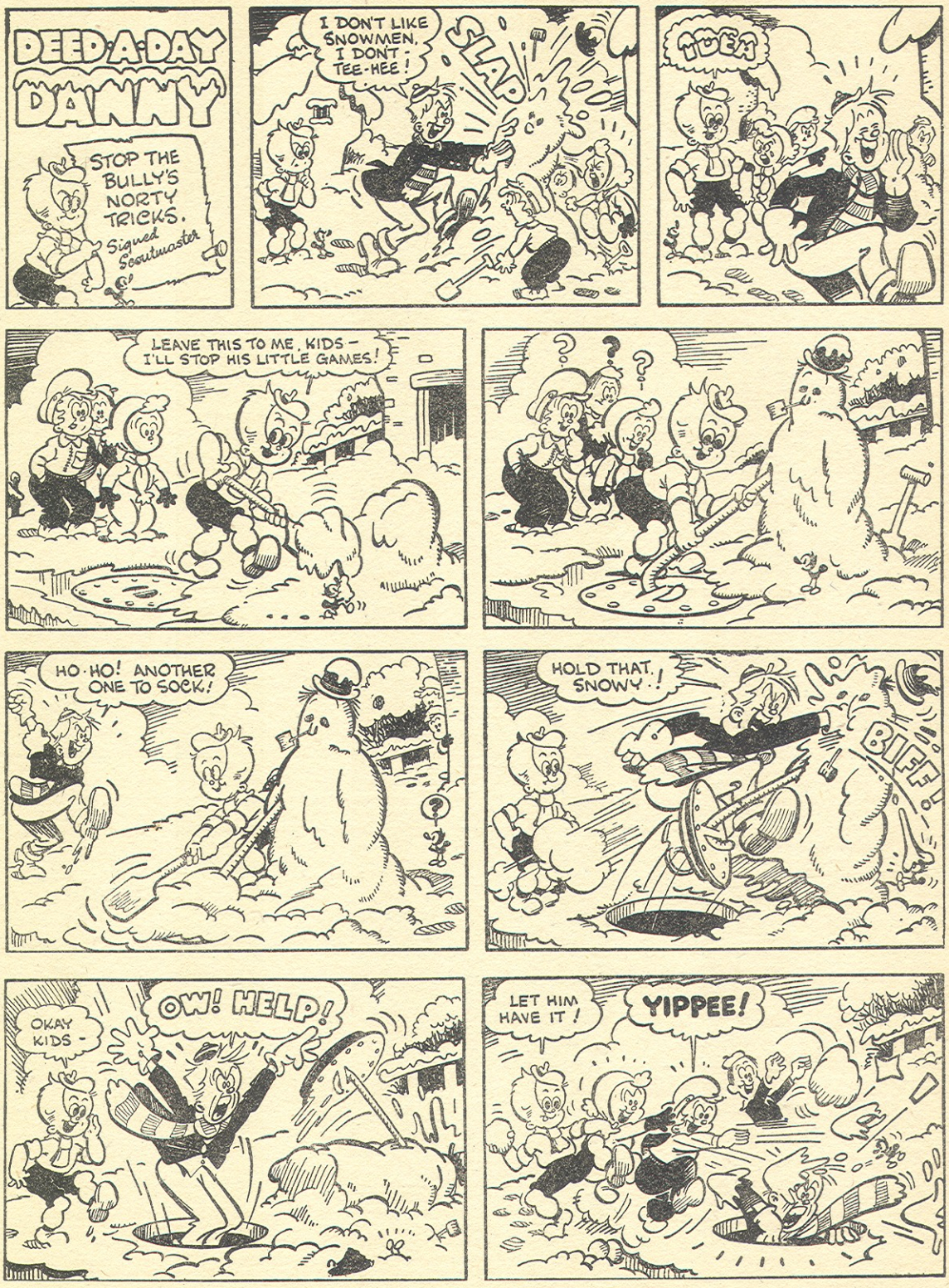
The Sheriff paused to toss a fat envelope to the Cowboy Conjurer: " Hyar's yuhre theatrical dough," he chuckled. " It was sure smart to palm that dud stuff off on Don Quenton at th' ranch——"

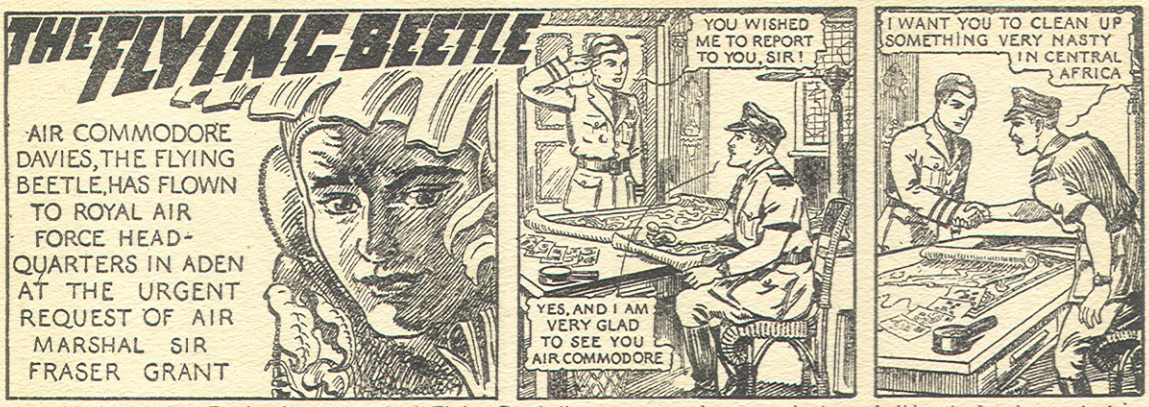
Bill smiled, and turning to his pard, he said: " Now everythin's okay at Bar X, we'll be on our way, won't we, buddy ? "

" It's th' call of the historics—that's what it is," the little man chuckled happily. as he leant forward to pat his horse's neck.

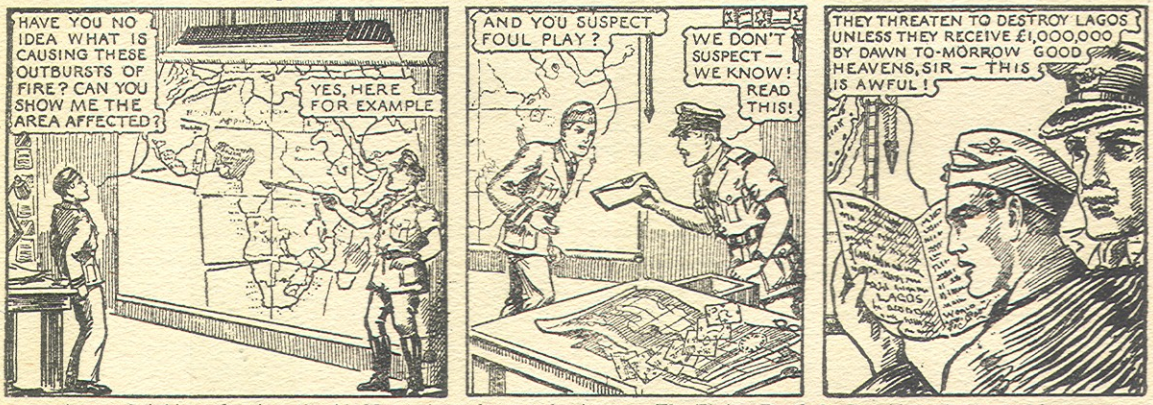
" Ef yuh mean—play-acting, Lefty, it's —histrionics ! " laughed the Cowboy Conjurer, as the two pals went out to where their horses were waiting.

THE END


DEED-A-DAY DANNY
STOP THE BULLY'S NORTY TRICKS.
Signed Scoutmaster
I DON'T LIKE SNOWMEN. I DON'T TEE-HEE!
SLAP!
YOEK
LEAVE THIS TO ME, KIDS - I'LL STOP HIS LITTLE GAMES!
HO-HO! ANOTHER ONE TO SOCK!
HOLD THAT, SNOWY!
BIFF
OKAY KIDS -
OW! HELP!
LET HIM HAVE IT!
YIPPEE!

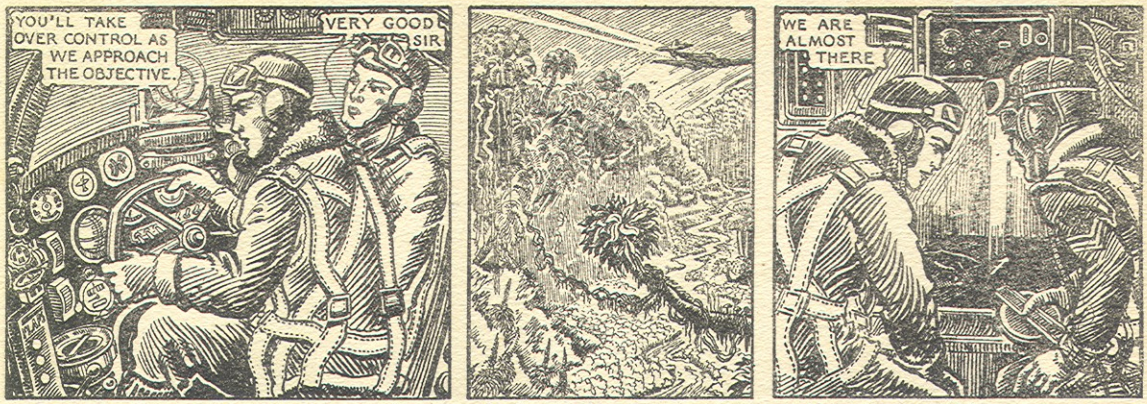


1. Air Commodore Davies, known as the "Flying Beetle" to most people, was enjoying a holiday in London. As he walked around the streets of the great city, people sometimes glanced at him—attracted by the sight of his uniform. Little did they realise that they were so close to the most daring Secret Service agent of the time. One morning he received a telegram from Aden. It said simply: VERY URGENT REPORT AT ONCE—FRASER GRANT. The Flying Beetle got to work at once. That afternoon he boarded a fast plane at Northolt aerodrome. At nine o'clock the next morning he reported to Air Marshal Sir Fraser Grant at the R.A.F. Station, Aden.

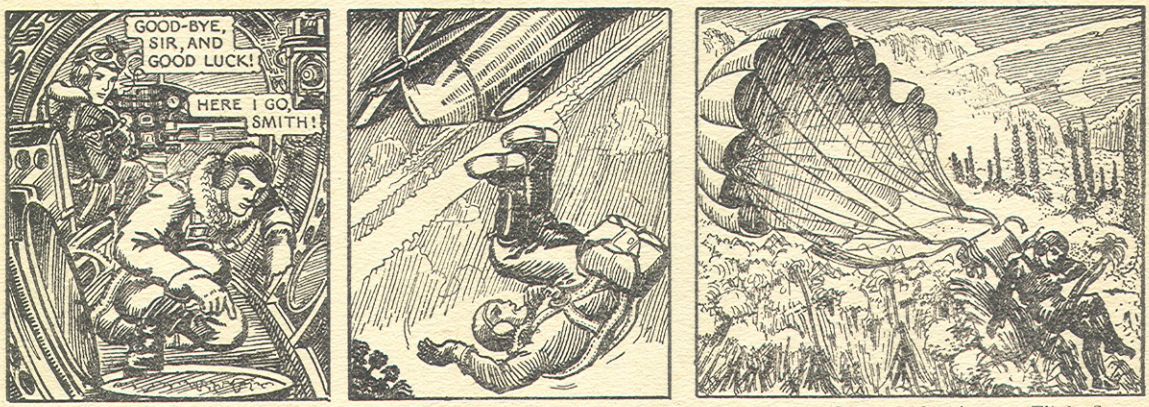


2. After a brief introduction, the Air Marshal got down to business. The Flying Beetle had no idea why he had been summoned, but he soon found out. "I want you to clean up something very nasty in Central Africa," said the Air Marshal, his pale and haggard face reflecting the worry in his mind. He went on to explain how fires had been breaking out in a certain area of Nigeria, sometimes razing whole plantations and native villages to the ground. He did not know how the fires were caused, but realised that it was some form of "foul play." "That is not the worst," went on the Air Marshal, and he showed the Flying Beetle a note that he had received. It was a threat to destroy Lagos, the capital of Nigeria.

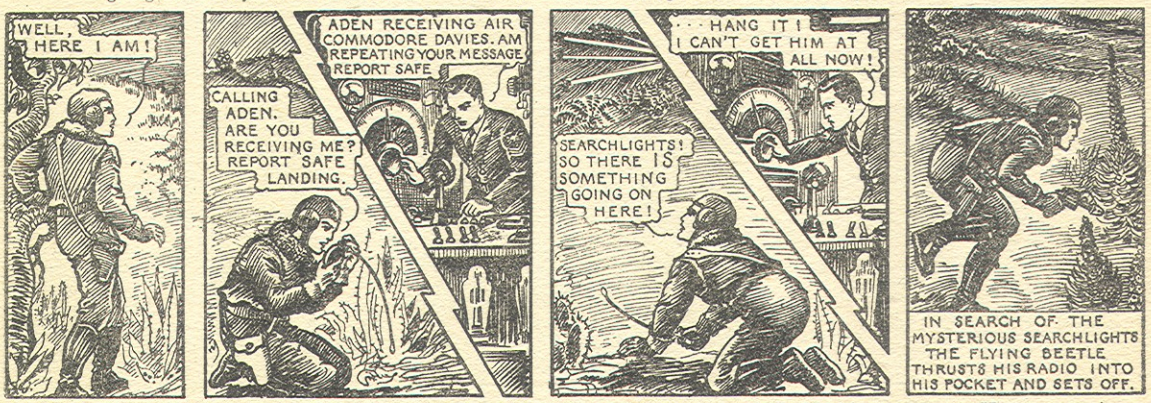
3. The note was unsigned, but the writers said that the only way to save Lagos would be to give them one million pounds. Then there were some details as to how the money should be secretly transferred to the unknown crooks, but the Flying Beetle was not concerned with that. He vowed to save Lagos and deal with the crooks, whoever they might be. For the rest of the day he studied maps, photographs and any information the Air Marshal had which would be of help in this strange affair. A two-seater jet plane was being specially prepared for the super-fast flight he would have to make. It was twilight when Air Marshal Sir Fraser Grant saw the Flying Beetle off on his mysterious mission to Central Africa.



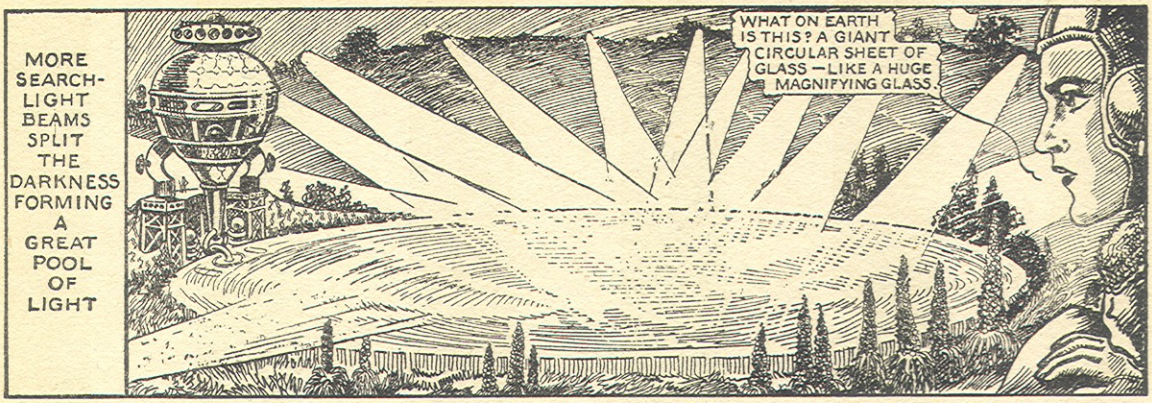
4. As the Flying Beetle's plane soared into the sky, the Air Marshal turned to one of his officers. "If anyone can save us," he said, "he will!" The plane was travelling at the speed of about six hundred miles an hour, which meant that the journey would take just over four hours. Seated in the navigator's seat was Flight Sergeant Smith, ace pilot of the Middle East Royal Air Force. The Flying Beetle was to make a parachute descent on the suspected area, while Smith would fly the plane on to Lagos. The latest type of radar equipment was installed in the plane, so their route could be accurately traced. After what seemed an interminable time, they arrived over their objective.



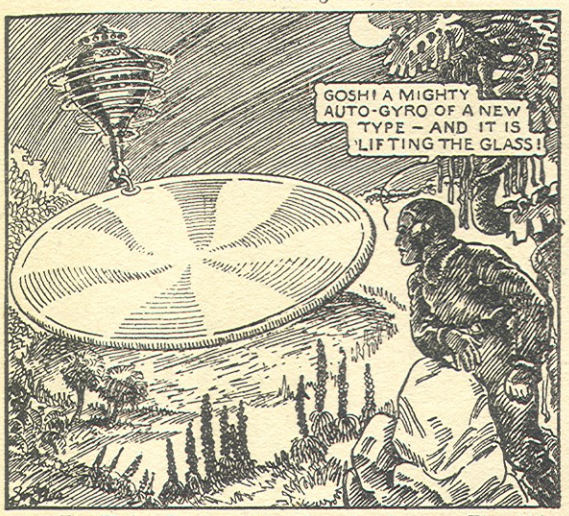
5. "Here I go, Smith!" cried the Flying Beetle, as he opened up the parachute hatch and prepared to jump. Flight Sergeant Smith wished him the best of luck, as the Flying Beetle dived out of the plane. A night jump on an unknown spot was a very risky thing, although there was a bright moon, which was a great help. Anyway, the Flying Beetle had to take the risk. His parachute opened perfectly and he had time to survey the ground below him. The tropical forest was much thinner here, and there were large areas of clear gound. "If anything is going on here," thought the Flying Beetle, "it's going to be very difficult to find it!" It would be like looking for a needle in a haystack.

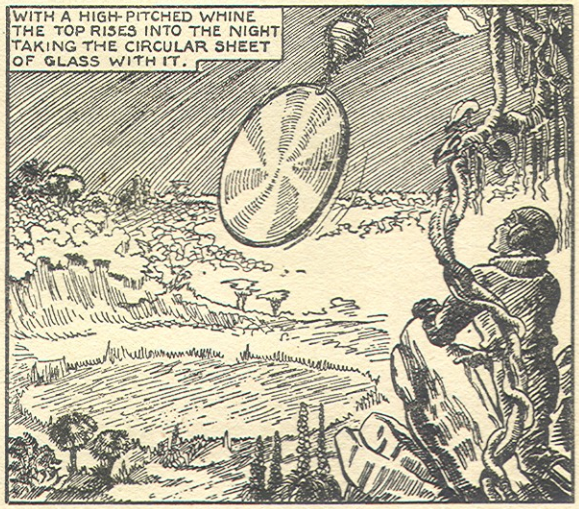


6. The Flying Beetle made a safe landing among some young palm trees, and quickly hid his parachute. He was carrying a small portable wireless set, and he sent a message back to Aden saying that he was safe. He looked at the luminous dial of his watch and saw that it was a few minutes to one o'clock. He knew that he had only a few hours in which to save Lagos. It seemed an impossible task. He could not waste time sending wireless messages, so he put the transmitter away. Suddenly he caught his breath. Not very far away he saw several searchlights flashed on. "So there is something going on here!" he murmured triumphantly.



7. Clutching a gun, just in case he should be seen by someone, he ran towards the searchlights. He noticed that they were all focused in the same direction. He made for this spot, and, suddenly, as he broke out of a clump of trees, he found himself looking down directly on to it. He was amazed at what he saw! Lying in a great hollow in the ground, lit by all the searchlights, was a vast circular plate of glass. The size of it was astounding. "It's like a huge magnifying glass," thought the Flying Beetle. There was something else which attracted his attention. Attached to the great sheet of glass was a fantastic-looking machine. It looked like a huge top, supported on a complicated structure.



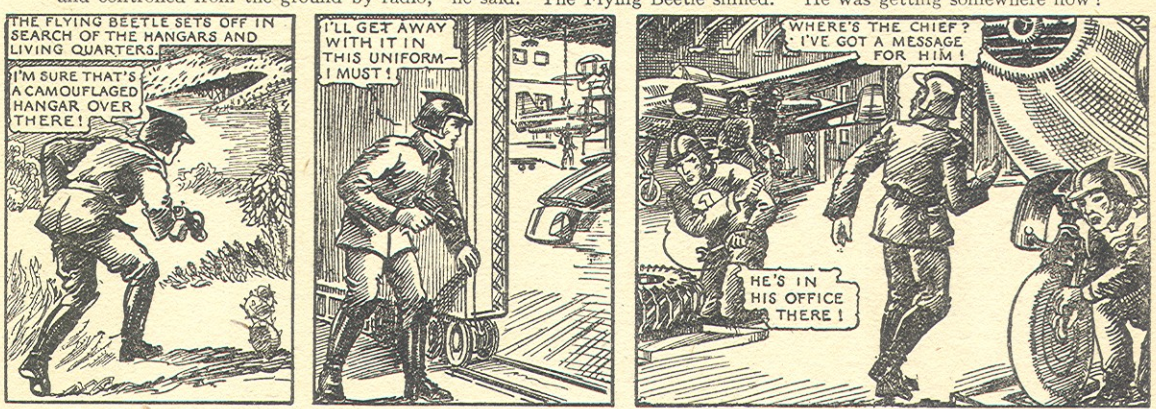


8. The Flying Beetle had no idea what it was. Then things started to happen! A sudden high-pitched whine broke the stillness of the night, and the upper part of the weird machine began to spin like a top. The noise grew louder and louder until it seemed that something would explode. But as the great machine spun faster it began to rise! "A mighty auto-gyro of a new type!" gasped the Flying Beetle. "And it's lifting the glass!" Sure enough the immense auto-gyro was rising into the air and the great sheet of glass was lifted with it. Within a few minutes it had vanished from sight, and one by one the searchlights went out.

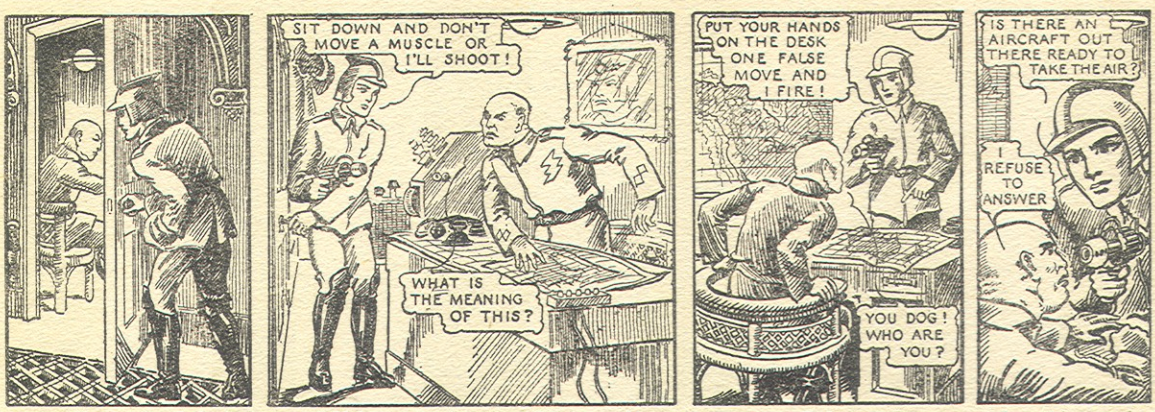
9. Then all was quiet again. It all seemed as unreal as a dream. Then the Flying Beetle sprang into action! "There must be living quarters here somewhere," he thought. "But they'll be well hidden!" He set out to find them, stepping warily down the hillside. He hadn't gone far when he nearly tripped over a cable. "This must supply power for the searchlights," he said to himself, then he noticed that there was a searchlight only a few yards away. And he could make out the figures of two men standing just in front of it. He saw that this was his chance. Having stepped over the cable, he kept low and crept stealthily towards the two men.

10. Hidden behind a bush, he listened to their conversation. They were both well armed with the most modern type of sub-machine gun, so he realised that it would be impossible to tackle both of them. He noticed that they were both wearing a strange uniform. The Flying Beetle ground his teeth. "There must be a whole army of men here," he thought. Even the Flying Beetle admitted that he had to deal with a tough problem! At last one of the guards went away, and he seized the opportunity to act. Jumping from behind the bush, he hurled himself at the sentry. The sentry turned round too late! He was knocked senseless.

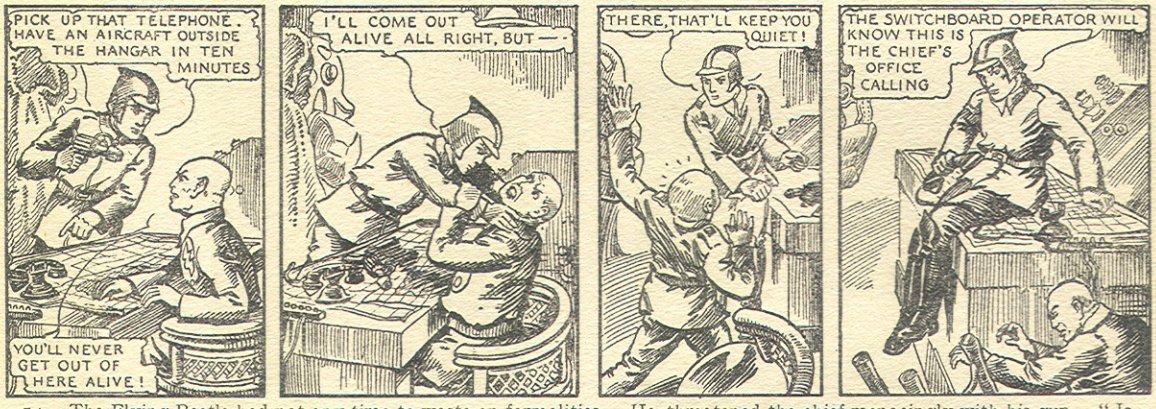
11. There was a coil of rope hanging inside the guard's uniform and the Flying Beetle made good use of it. When the unconscious guard revived, he found himself bound hand and foot. Under the threat of the Flying Beetle's gun, the guard talked quickly. He said that the great sheet of glass acted as a burning glass. When the sun rose, its rays would be concentrated on Lagos, which would burn up in a matter of minutes. "What's the motive power of that humming-top-machine?" demanded the Flying Beetle. The guard was too terrified to refuse to answer. "It's driven by atomic energy and controlled from the ground by radio," he said. The Flying Beetle smiled. He was getting somewhere now!



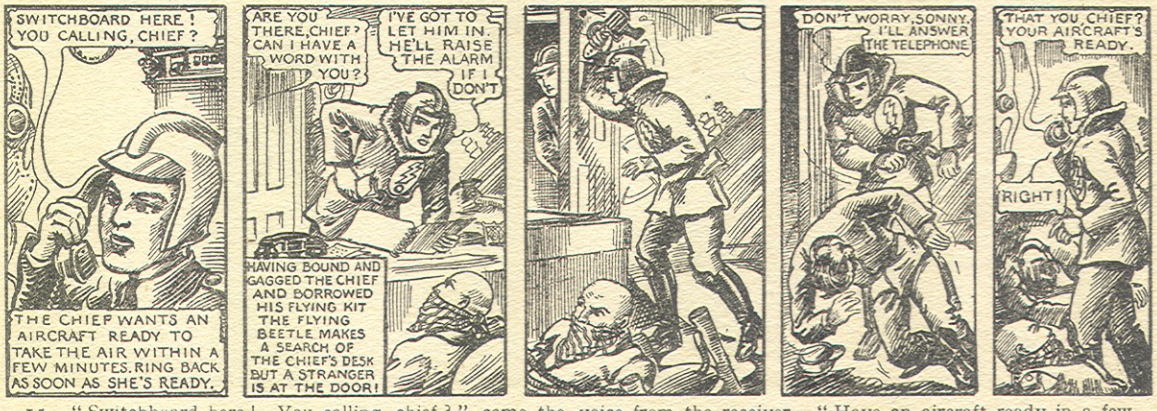
12. The Flying Beetle acted quickly. He exchanged clothes with his prisoner and left him tied up and gagged. Not far away was a suspicious-looking mound. The Flying Beetle thought it might be a camouflaged building, and walked towards it. He was not mistaken. Peering inside a great door, he saw that it was the interior of an aircraft hangar. The very latest designs of jet and rocket planes were being built and overhauled. Mechanics, in the same strange uniform, were everywhere. The Flying Beetle realised that he would have to use bluff. He marched boldly into the hangar. "Where's the chief?" he demanded of the nearest mechanic. "I've got a message for him!"



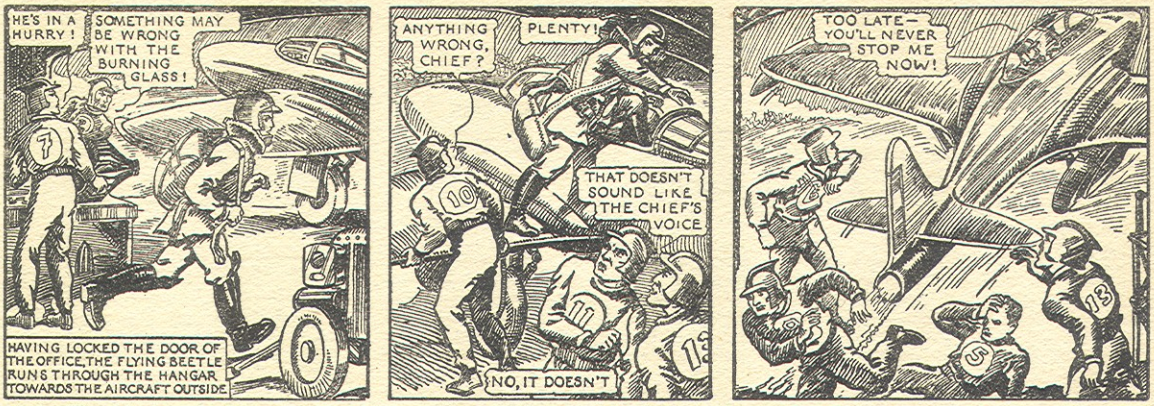
13. The mechanic looked up. "He's in his office there!" he said, pointing to a small door. He suspected nothing, and took no more notice of the newcomer. The Flying Beetle did not knock at the door. He opened it quietly and stepped in. There was only one occupant in the room—a bald, thick-necked man with a brutish face, who was examining a map on his desk. The Flying Beetle was inside the office and had shut the door behind him before he was noticed. In his right hand he held his gun, fitted with a special silencer. "What's the meaning of this?" thundered the thick-set man, rising to his feet. He was obviously the chief.



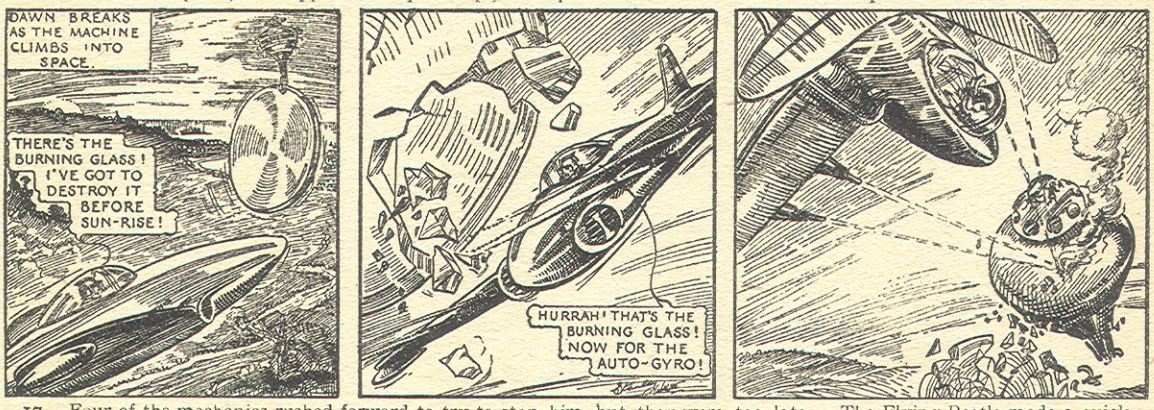
14. The Flying Beetle had not any time to waste on formalities. He threatened the chief menacingly with his gun. "Is there an aircraft ready to take the air?" he demanded, but the chief stubbornly refused to answer, even with the gun pointing straight at him. "Pick up that telephone and have an aircraft ready outside in ten minutes!" went on the Flying Beetle. The chief did not act, and the Flying Beetle saw that he was just trying to play for time. Seconds were precious, so he suddenly swung his fist and sent the chief crashing to the floor—senseless. Then he picked up the telephone on the chief's desk.



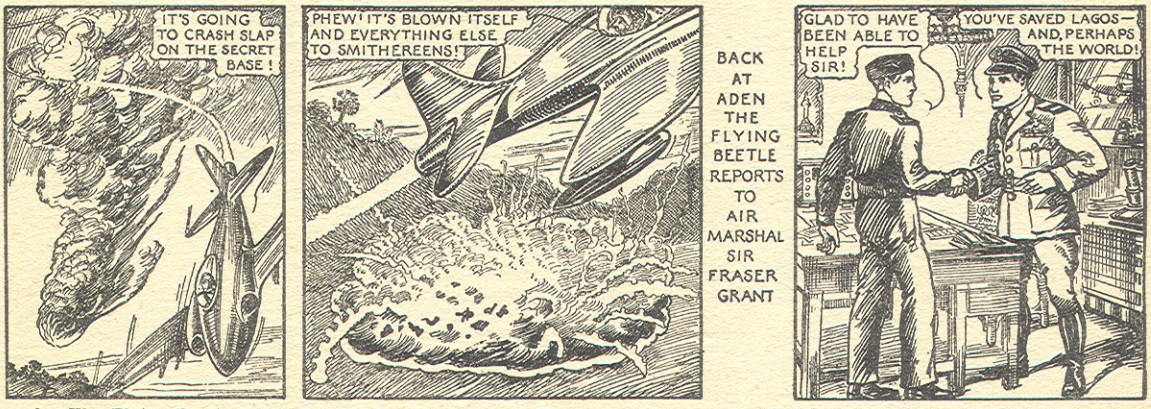
15. "Switchboard here! You calling chief?" came the voice from the receiver. "Have an aircraft ready in a few minutes!" ordered the Flying Beetle. "And ring back when it's ready!" The switchboard must have been completely taken in by the bluff, for no questions were asked at all. Looking round, he saw that the chief showed signs of recovering, so he quickly bound him up with some rope that was in one of the desk drawers. An old duster served for a gag. With great haste, the Flying Beetle made a search of the chief's desk. In one drawer was the chief's flying kit, which he put on quickly. He also took several documents in case he should need them as evidence.



16. The telephone bell rang, and at the same time there was a knock at the door. The Flying Beetle opened the door to admit the stranger, but knocked him out as he came into the room, with a blow from his gun butt. The stranger slumped to the floor. Then the Flying Beetle heard the 'phone ringing. It was the switchboard calling, to say that the plane was ready. Locking the office door behind him, the Flying Beetle ran through the hangar to where the plane was waiting. All the mechanics took him for the chief, but they were very curious to know why he was in such a hurry. As he climbed into the plane, he snapped out a quick reply to a question. The mechanics were suspicious of his voice.



17. Four of the mechanics rushed forward to try to stop him, but they were too late. The Flying Beetle made a quick dive at the controls and switched the engine on. The jet of hot air from the tail drove them back. The plane shot forward and in a few minutes he was airborne. Higher and higher climbed the plane, and the Flying Beetle looked about him. In the distance, he suddenly spotted the great burning glass, suspended in the air by the atomic-driven auto-gyro. With a surge of triumph he aimed his plane towards it. The plane's cannon barked and the shells crashed into the great burning glass. In a few moments it was utterly destroyed!



18. The Flying Beetle had not finished yet, however. He turned his plane round for another volley, and this time the auto-gyro went spinning down, like a ball of flame—straight towards the secret base. Suddenly there was an enormous explosion! Everything turned red and the ground below became a raging inferno. The atomic power of the auto-gyro was now out of control! As the Flying Beetle turned the plane towards Aden, he looked down and saw that the secret base was now completely destroyed! His mission was over! Later that day, the Flying Beetle reported to Air Marshal Sir Fraser Grant. "You've saved Lagos," said the Air Marshal, congratulating him heartily, "and perhaps the world!"

Come Into the PUZZLE DEPT. and Sharpen Your Wits on These!

HERE'S FUN—and perhaps a feather in your cap, if you're as smart as we think you are! We have filled these two pages with puzzles we want you to try—none of them really hard, but they do get a little more difficult as they go on.

So out with your pencil, and no looking at Page 176 (where we've printed the answers) until you've had a really good crack at all the twenty-two teasers here and on the opposite page.

Then you may check your solutions and see whether old Professor Fiddlesticks—he's our puzzle-maker!—has caught you or not.

NUMBER ONE on the list is short and sharp—and so must *you* be! A big Cockney and a little Cockney were listening to Bow Bells. The little Cockney was the son of the big Cockney, but the big Cockney was not the father of the little Cockney. Why not? *(1)*

PUZZLE Number Two for a riddle. What is—

In this and also that,
In those, yet not in them,
In while, if not in what,
In whole, though not in when,
In rely, but not relations—
In all, in Christmas decorations?

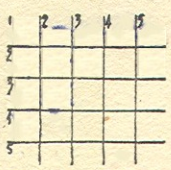
(2)

AND a word puzzle of another sort: Which letter of the alphabet—and the same letter every time—can be inserted into these 4-letter words *to turn them all into 5-letter ones?*

ONES PATH FATS SENT MINE

(3)

HOW about a toy crossword? Clues are provided as usual, but note that while all the answers to them one way are words, all the others are letters. Now for it!



Clues ACROSS: 1, Erected. 2, Made. 3, Shaped. 4, Formed. 5, Put up.

Clues DOWN: 1, Insects. 2, Employ. 3, Sees. 4, Measures. 5, Meals.

(4)

NEXT for a very easy one. Old Fiddlesticks was numbering off the pages of his new note book. When he got up to page 70 *how many figure 5's had he used?* *(5)*

MORE figures for you! Professor Fiddlesticks has a season ticket, and the number on it consists of five figures which, added together, total 38. The last figure is one more than the first, and the second is half the fourth. Number, please? *(6)*

A proverb in pickle. Can you pick one letter from each of these couples—to discover a saying you certainly know?

LO TO SO OK BO BE IF TO
OR ME AY OF UP LA HE
PA UP

(7)

LAST summer little Fatima Fiddlesticks went to spend a holiday with her aunt who lives at the seaside. But puzzling being in her blood, as you might say, she left her address in the following fiddling style. Can you "read" it?

SIMS MAFITA CSEDDLIFTSKI
WOT, SCOTA DORA
CLOAKBLOP

(8)

FATIMA, by the way, is only one of the Professor's children. He has several. In fact, each of the Fiddlesticks boys has as many brothers as sisters, yet each of the Fiddlesticks girls has twice as many brothers as she has sisters.

How many of them altogether? *(9)*

THEN, as you are so ready at reckoning, there is also this one: A train 100 yards long takes 5 seconds to pass a certain signal at a certain rate. Presently, and still moving at the same rate, it has a bridge 100 yards long to cross. How long will it take to cross the bridge entirely? *(10)*

SKELETON SUM—

(***,*** × *) + 9 = 7,777,777.

Fill in the missing figures! *(11)*

PROFESSOR FIDDLESTICKS had ten playing cards—five black ones and five red ones—which he shuffled well and then laid face downwards on the table.

"Now, then," he asked a friend, "how many cards must you pick up to make *sure* that you have taken at least two red ones?"

Well, what is the correct answer to that one? *(12)*

2	9	4
6	1	8
7	5	3

YOU may or may not know that a magic square is a square of figures which adds to the same in each column, each row, and each of the long diagonals (that is, from corner to corner). Now the one here is all right so far as the rows and columns are concerned; they add to 15 in each case. But not the diagonals. So which three figures must you move to make the square truly "magic"—that is, adding to 15 all ways? *(13)*

THE other day our door-bell rang and the following telegram was delivered. You can guess whom it was from, but what was the code used?

EQPHKPGF VQ DGF VQFCA—
CO JCXKPI UJKTV YCUJGF—
HKFFNGUVKEMU

(14)

AT the end of last term Billy Bunter's examination papers included a general knowledge test. It consisted of six questions. Of course Billy got them all wrong, but Jones Minor answered all correctly, and here are *his* answers:

(a) Black Bess. (b) "Per Ardua ad Astra." (c) A 5-pointed white star. (d) Reply, if you please. (e) "For Valour." (f) 32 degrees.

What were the questions? *(15)*

FOR the last one on this round you'll have to think harder still. Old Fiddlesticks was testing four of his children to find out what they knew about birds.

"Look," he said, "at these pictures numbered 1, 2, 3 and 4. They are four common birds—which of you can tell me their names?"

And these were their answers:

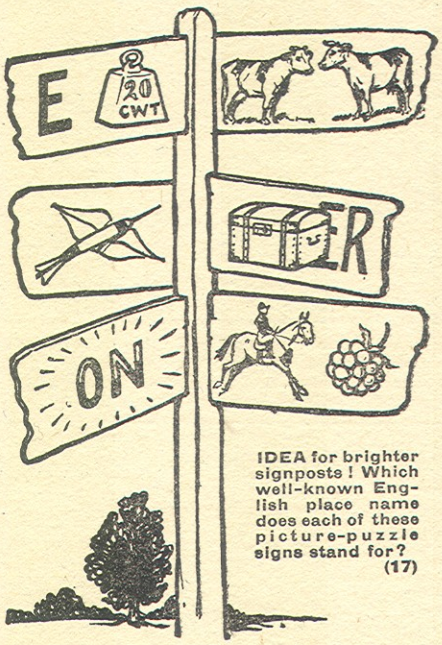
	1	2	3	4
A	Jay	Owl	Emu	Tit
B	Emu	Tit	Owl	Jay
C	Tit	Emu	Jay	Owl
D	Emu	Owl	Jay	Tit

"H'm," commented the old boy. "A bright lot, aren't you? *You*, Erasmus, got them all wrong, and the rest of you each got two right only!"

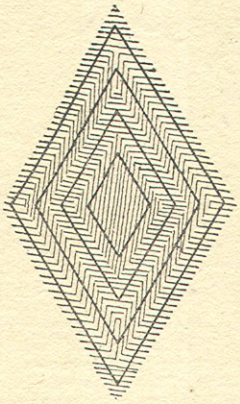
What were the correct answers really? *(16)*

And now over to the picture-twisters on the next page.

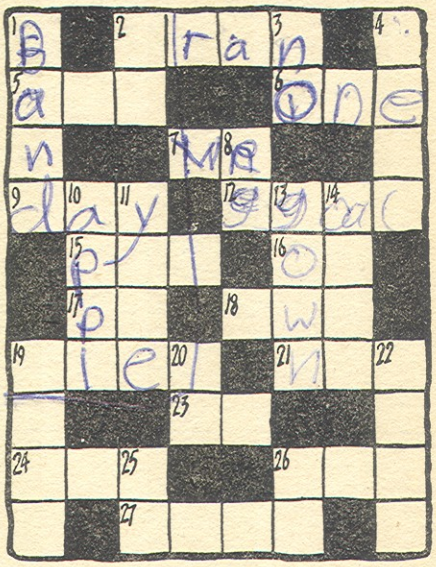
A PAGE OF POSERS IN PICTURES, TOO



IDEA for brighter signposts! Which well-known English place name does each of these picture-puzzle signs stand for? (17)



AN "eyeful"—which doesn't get any better the longer you look at it. Look hard at the picture above and say which of the diamonds is out of line with all the others! (19)

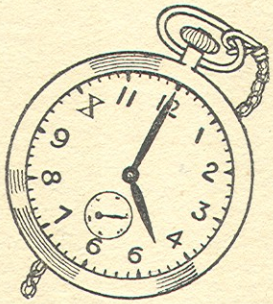


CROSS-FIGURES—to be solved in the same way as a crossword, except that all the answers are numbers instead of words.

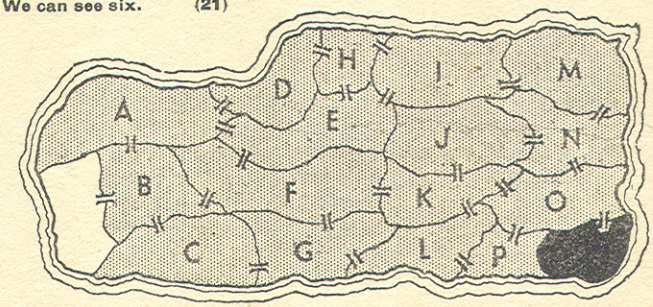
Clues ACROSS: 2. The date on this book. 5. The three figures total 25. 6. First two figures equal the last! 7. Cricket team. 9. Farthings in a £. 12. Pounds in a ton. 15. Same as "6 Across" reversed. 16. Two dozen. 17. 9 x 3. 18. Two gross. 19. "A quarter past ten." 21. 89 x 9. 23. Yards in a cricket pitch. 24. Pounds in a hundredweight. 26. Days in a year. 27. William the Conqueror's year.

Clues DOWN: 1. The year the War started. 2. The "sweet" age. 3. Same as 2 reversed. 4. Yards in a mile. 8. One dozen. 10. Multiply "12 Across" by 3! 11. "4 Down," backwards. 13. Last two figures are four times first two. 14. Double "12 Across." 19. The unlucky number twice over. 20. Cards in a pack. 22. Add 3 to "2 Across." 25. Shillings in a guinea. 26. Three dozen. (20)

PROFESSOR FIDDLESTICKS' eldest boy is a bit of a dab hand at fretwork, as you see, and he has cut this panel containing the shapes of umpteen different articles. Of course we know you can recognise some of them—but take your pencil, hang on to your hat, and see if you can name them *all*? (18)

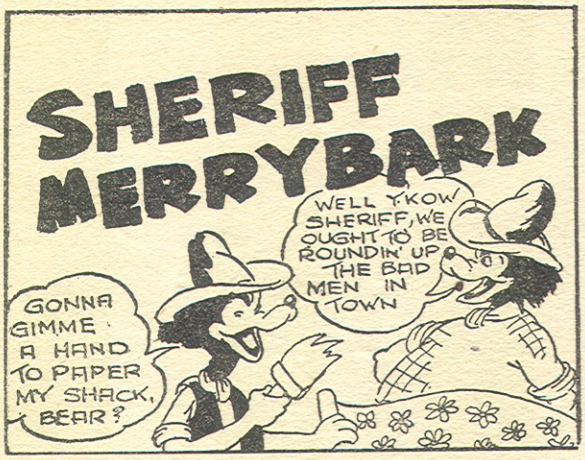


OF course you can tell the time—but can you tell how many mistakes the artist has made in this drawing of a watch? We can see six. (21)

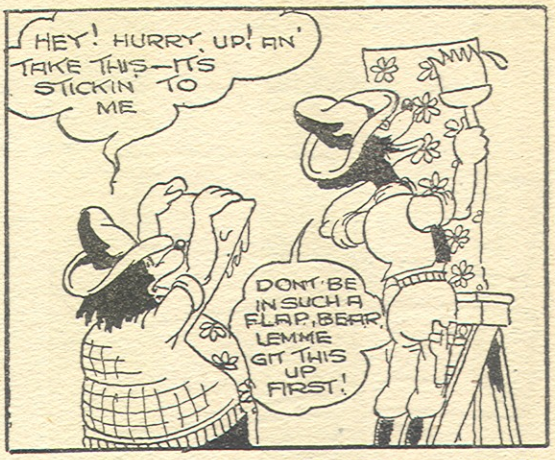


THE Island of Doodlebom is not in your atlas, so here is a map of it with its counties marked out—and note that each county has one bridge into at least one of its neighbouring counties. Now the King of Doodlebom wants to go from the white county to the black county, visiting every county once only and without crossing any bridge or entering each county more than once. What must his route be? (22)

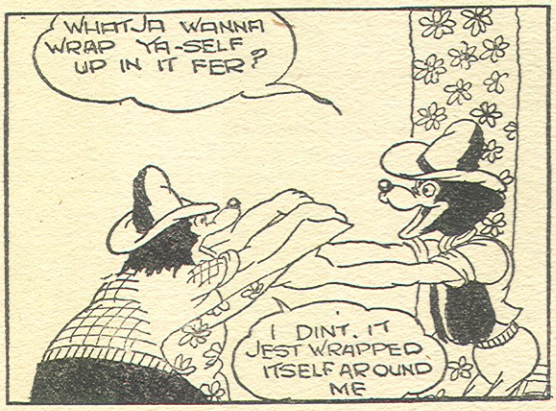
Answers on Page 176



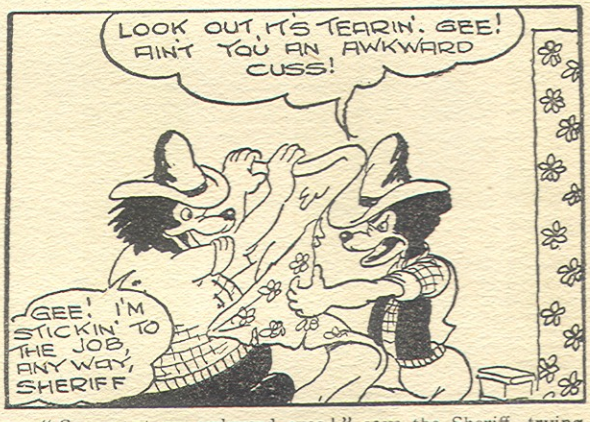
1. Sheriff Merrybark is always up to something. Just take a look at all that paste and paper. "Gonna help me paper my shack?" asks the Sheriff. Bear doesn't like the idea. "Guess we ought to be roundin' up the bad men in town," he says.



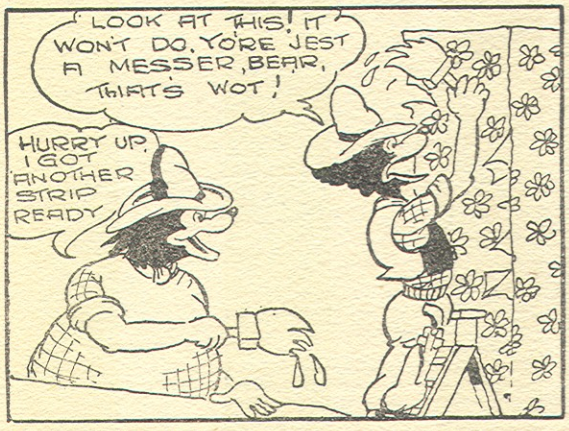
2. Bear gives way, though, and decides to help. He reckons the Sheriff is getting mighty particular all of a sudden, but he doesn't say anything. Standing on a pair of step-ladders, the sheriff is already on the job.



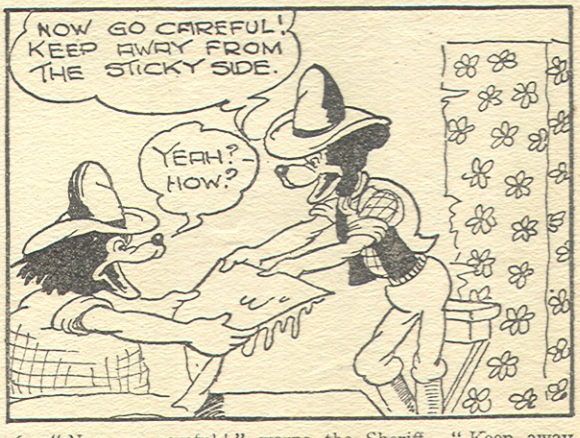
3. Bear gets busy, too, and soon has a strip all covered with paste, but pasty paper sticks to other things as well as walls. He soon finds that out. "Hurry up, Sheriff," he cries. Bear sure has got himself in a mess!



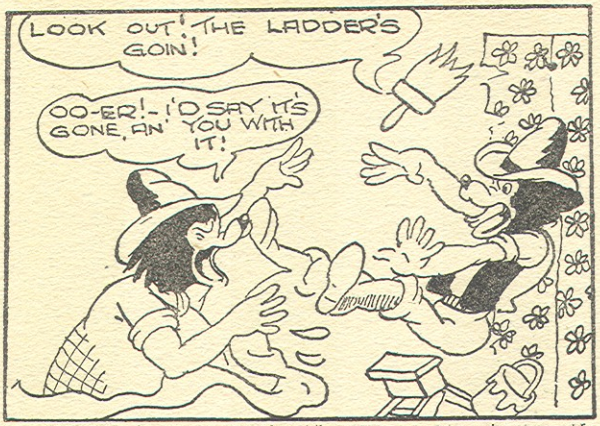
4. "Gee, what an awkward cuss!" says the Sheriff, trying to pull the paper off Bear. But that's no easy job. No, sir! "Gee, I don't mind stickin' to the job!" says Bear. "But I don't like the job stickin' to me!"



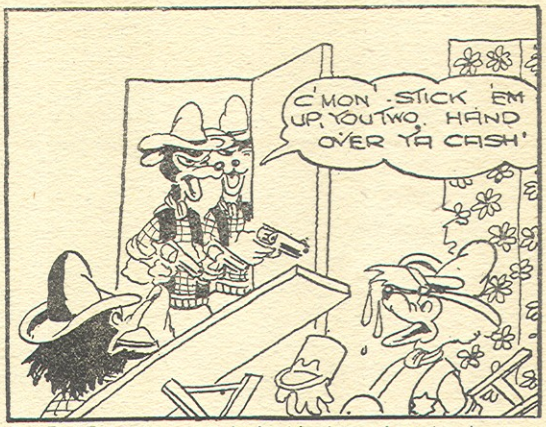
5. Sheriff Merrybark gets quite annoyed. "You're just a messy kind of a messer!" he tells Bear, as he pulls off the paper. But Bear only grins, and daubs paste all over another sheet. "Hurry up, I got another strip ready," he calls.



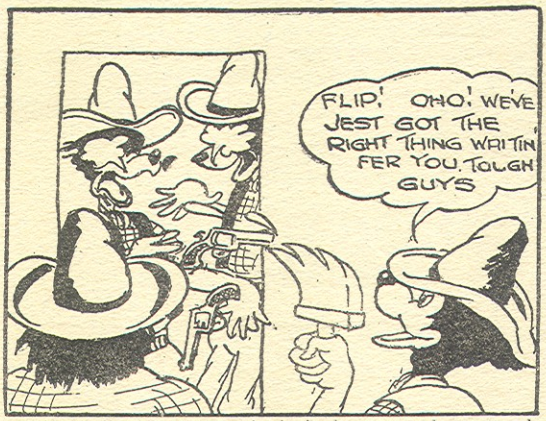
6. "Now, go careful!" warns the Sheriff. "Keep away from the sticky side." "How?" asks Bear, but he manages a bit better this time. The Sheriff climbs to the top of the steps and leans over to take the paper from Bear.



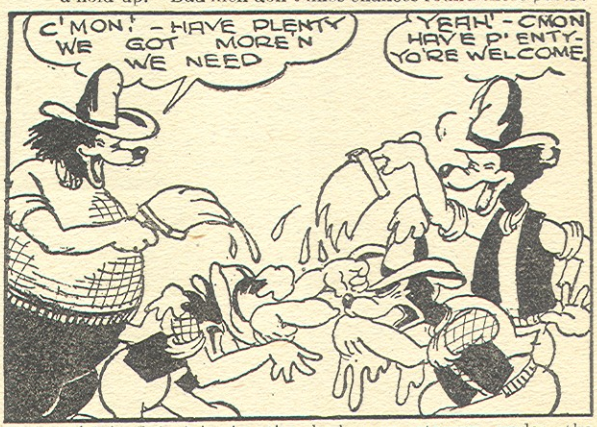
7. And that is where the Sheriff makes his big mistake. He leans over a bit too far and down he comes paper and all. Bear thinks this is great fun.



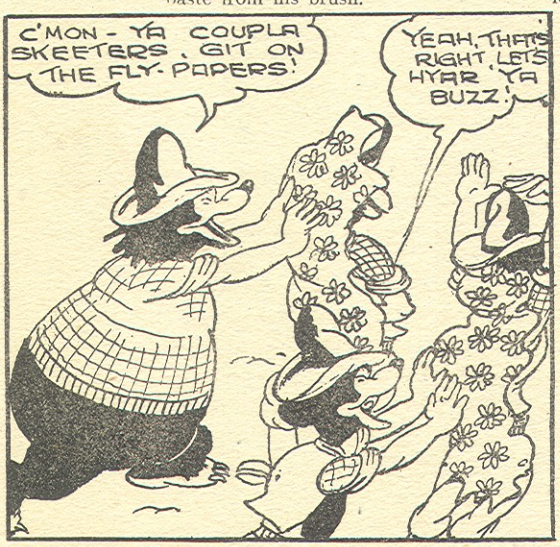
8. But Bear also comes in for his share of trouble, because at this moment Pesky Pete and Slippery Sam decide to stage a hold-up. Bad men don't miss chances round these parts!



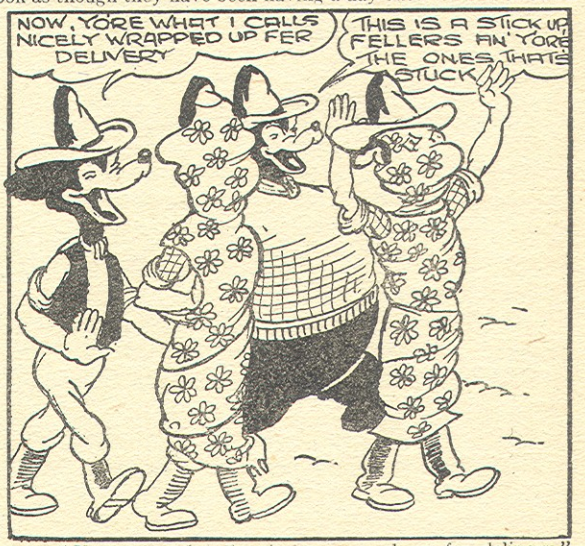
9. Now Sheriff Merrybark isn't in a mood to stand any nonsense, so he lets fly with a nice fat, juicy dab of paste from his brush.



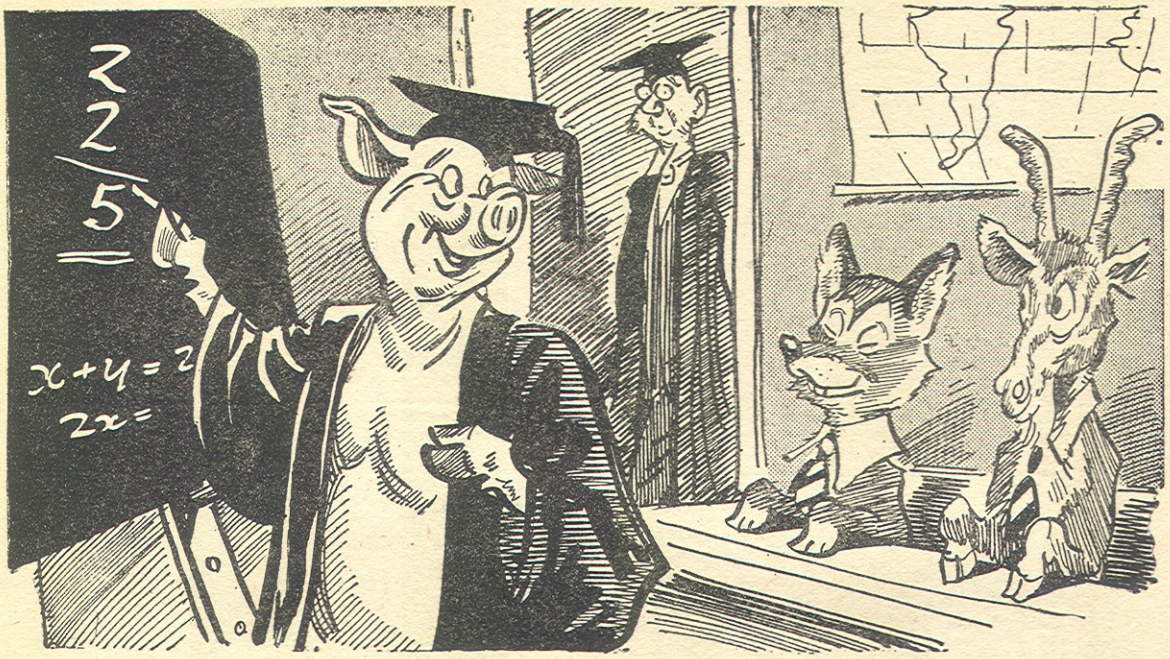
10. Splish! Splosh! As the bad men stagger under the sheriff's attack, Bear joins in the game, and in no time at all they look as though they have been having a day out with Bill Stickers.



11. "C'mon!" roars Bear. "Get on yore fly papers, you couple o' skeeters!" Those bad men began to wish they had stayed at home and helped with the washing.



12. "Yore what I calls nicely wrapped up for delivery," grins the Sheriff, leading them off to the cooler. "Yes," agrees Bear. "We've got you guys covered, haven't we?"



HOW ABOUT A PARTY?

Read about the Queer Results of a Science Master's Experiment!

Mr. Mopp Experiments

"THIS is very awkward!" cried Mr. Pepper, the headmaster of St. Cuthbert's School, as he paced crossly up and down in his study. "It is very awkward indeed!"

"What is?" asked Mr. Mopp, the science master, who was standing watching him.

"Why, these Christmas holidays," cried Mr. Pepper. "They start to-morrow and Mrs. Pepper and I had arranged to go away for Christmas instead of staying here as we usually do."

"And has something happened to prevent your going?" inquired Mr. Mopp sympathetically, blinking at him through his spectacles.

"I'm afraid so," cried Mr. Pepper. "When I arranged for Mrs. Pepper and myself to go away for Christmas, I quite forgot about the two animals we have here."

"Ah, I see!" exclaimed Mr. Mopp. "You mean the pig and the goat."

"Yes, the pig and the goat!" cried Mr. Pepper. "As you know, Mopp, I purchased those two animals in order to interest the boys in farming and agriculture. Well, all the boys and the staff will be away for the Christmas holidays, and if Mrs. Pepper and I are away as well who is to feed the pig and the goat? Tell me that!"

"Why not Jobling, the janitor?" suggested Mr. Mopp.

"Because he's going away as well," cried Mr. Pepper. "He always spends Christmas with some married sister of his. He'll be back here immediately after Christmas, he says, but I can't leave the pig and the goat to starve until then."

"Certainly not!" agreed Mr. Mopp.

"Then the only thing to be done," sighed Mr. Pepper, "is for me to cancel the arrangements I had made for Mrs. Pepper and myself, and to stay here to look after the two animals."

"No, no!" said Mr. Mopp hastily.

" No, don't do that. I'll tell you what. I'll look after them ! "

" You ? " cried Mr. Pepper, staring at him in surprise. " D'you mean to say you'll *stay* here and look after them ? "

" I'll be very pleased to," said Mr. Mopp quickly. " No, don't thank me. It's not being unselfish on my part. In fact, it suits me very well indeed. You see, I'm in the middle of a very important scientific experiment and I would like to stay on here for another week or so until I finish it. As a matter of fact, I was going to ask you if I could stay, before you mentioned this—er—this goat and pig business."

" Well, that's fine ! " cried Mr. Pepper, beaming all over his face. " That's splendid—excellent ! Then you'll stay on and see to the feeding of the pig and the goat. But will you be able to stay until Jobling, the janitor, comes back ? " he asked anxiously. " He'll be back immediately after Christmas—the day after Boxing Day, to be precise ! "

" Oh, yes, I'll stay on till then," said Mopp. " I'll be very pleased to."

" Then thank you very much indeed ! " cried Mr. Pepper, seizing the science master's hand and shaking it as though it were a pump handle. " You've certainly solved our problem for us. Mrs. Pepper will be delighted—more than delighted. I must go and tell her ! "

He released Mr. Mopp's hand and darted from the room to bear the glad tidings to Mrs. Pepper. The next day the holidays started, and, by evening, Mr. Mopp had the whole school to himself.

How quiet and still everything was, now that the boys, masters and servants had gone. To anyone else but Mr. Mopp there must have been something awfully lonesome—even creepy—about the silent, deserted corridors and empty classrooms.

But Mr. Mopp was so wrapped up in his work that he scarcely gave it a passing thought. Being a science master and a very studious sort of man, he was always making some experiment or other in his spare time. But the experiment upon which he was now engaged was easily the most important he had ever tried.

That first night of the holidays, when he was alone in the school, he got so much interested in his experiment, and so excited that he forgot all about bed, and worked nearly all night in the science laboratory.

" There ! " he cried at length, pouring some boiling hot, reddish-coloured liquid into a basin. " If I've mixed all the stuff properly, it ought to work. If I haven't, then I'll have another try. In the meantime, I'll put this mixture outside to cool ! "

He couldn't place the basin on the window-sill, because it sloped too much. So he placed it on the ground outside the window and went off to bed.

Morning found him fast asleep, but it found the school pig and the goat very wide awake. The boys had made such pets of them that the two animals were allowed to wander around pretty much as they pleased.

While Mr. Mopp lay blissfully snoring, the pair of them wandered around outside the school buildings, looking for something to eat. Mind you, Mr. Mopp had fed them the previous evening, but they were always on the look-out for some extra tit-bit.

Consequently the pig's eyes gleamed with sudden greed and excitement as he spied the basin of reddish liquid which Mr. Mopp had set down outside the laboratory window. He scuttled towards it, buried his snout in it and took a good drink. As he did so, a remarkable thing happened. For he jumped back and cried in a human voice :

" Golly, it doesn't half taste funny ! "

The goat paid no attention. He had been following the pig and now he, too, was taking a drink of the reddish liquid. No sooner had he done so, however, than he gave a violent start and cried in a human voice :

" Goodness, what a queer taste ! "

The pig stared at him, his little eyes nearly bulging out of his head.

" Why, you're like me ! " he gasped. " You're talking the very same way as those humans talk ! "

" So I am ! " gasped the goat. " I—I just can't help it. Whatever can have happened to us ? "

" It must be that stuff we've just drunk ! " cried the pig. " It—it can't be anything else. We were all right before we drank it. I mean, we couldn't talk in human voices before we drank it ! "

" No, neither we could ! " gasped the goat. " I say, how awfully strange ! Whatever can the stuff be, do you think ? "

" I haven't the slightest idea," said the pig. " But no wonder it tasted funny ! "

He broke off, staring at a fox which was coming warily towards them.

" I say, here's Frankie Fox coming," he whispered excitedly, turning to the goat again. " I suppose he thinks that it's safe to snoop around here now that it's holiday time and all the humans, big and small, have gone away. Let's get him to take a drink of that stuff, shall we ? "

" Yes, let's ! " said the goat eagerly.

But the fox didn't need any persuading to take a drink of the mixture in the basin, for the cold, fine weather had made him thirsty.

" Hallo, Porky ! " he said, in animal language, of course, as he trotted up. " How are you, Georgie ? Hallo, what's that stuff in that basin ? It looks good ! "

He took a sniff at it and then a drink of it. No sooner had he done so than he gave a jump and cried in a human voice :

" Great Chicken Coops ! What is it ? "

" He ! He ! He ! D'you hear that, Georgie ? " cried Porky, the pig, giving the goat a delighted nudge. " It's made him talk in a human voice, in the same way that we do ! "

" But what is the stuff ? " cried the fox.

" We don't know," said Porky. " But I'll tell you what. I don't know how you two chaps feel, but besides being able to talk in a human voice I *feel* different. I mean, I feel as though I want to run about and play games with a ball and do exactly the same sort of things as those humans do ! "

" So do I ! " cried the goat. " It's queer, but that's exactly how I feel. I mean, if ever I saw a book I wanted to eat it. But I wouldn't want to eat it now, I'd want to *read* it ! "

" It's strange you should say that," said the fox, staring at him, " because I've taken a sudden very strong fancy to see myself wearing those queer collar and tie things which humans wear."

" So have I ! " cried Porky. " I'd love to wear a collar and tie. Come on, let's go and find some. There's bound to be heaps of them in the school somewhere ! "

A Big Surprise for Mr. Mopp

HAVING wakened up and had a bath and breakfast, Mr. Mopp hastened off in the direction of the laboratory. In order to reach it he had to pass several of the empty classrooms. As he was doing so, he gave a sudden violent start. For from one of the classrooms was coming the sound of merry laughter and voices.

" Goodness gracious me ! Whoever can that be ? " gasped Mr. Mopp. " I thought all the boys had gone home. In fact, I *know* all the boys have gone home ! "

The door of the classroom was standing ajar. Mr. Mopp approached it on tip-toe and peeped round it into the room. As he did so he got such a shock that he nearly jumped right out of his skin.

For standing on its hind legs by the blackboard was a pig, wearing a master's gown and mortar-board. Seated each at a desk, watching the pig, were a goat and a fox. Both of them were wearing a collar and a school tie.

" Now, boys, attend to me, please, boys ! " cried the pig in a human voice which was an excellent imitation of Mr. Pepper's voice. " I am going to give you a simple sum in arithmetic, boys. Georgie Goat, if you don't remove that smile from your face I will remove it for you with the aid of my cane. Frankie Fox, will you kindly pay attention ? I am standing here, not outside the window. Now, boys, if a trotting pig called Trotter had four trotters how long would it take trotting Trotter's four trotters to trot him trottingly to Trotfield and back ? "

" I'm dreaming ! " gasped Mr. Mopp, in the doorway. " I—I must be ! "

He spoke aloud, with the result that the pig, the goat and the fox heard him. But if you think that they were at all frightened, you are very much mistaken.

" Why, hallo, here's Mr. Mopp ! " cried the pig cheerily. " Good-morning, Mr. Mopp. How are you ? A merry Christmas to you, as you humans say, if it isn't a bit too early to wish you that ! "

Mr. Mopp made no reply. He just stood hanging on to the door and gaping at Porky as though he could believe neither his eyes nor his ears.

" You're looking surprised," went on Porky cheerily. " That's because I can talk in a human voice, I suppose. Well, Georgie Goat and Frankie Fox can talk in human voices, as well. Speak up, Georgie, and you, Frankie. Say ' Good-morning ' or ' How d'you do ? ' or something to Mr. Mopp."

" Good-morning sir ! " chorused Georgie and Frankie in their human voices.

" Where—where did you get the power to talk like that ? " gasped Mr. Mopp.

" It's a very queer story, Mr. Mopp," cried Porky, " but it's no fib, I assure you. We saw a basin of reddish-coloured liquid standing on the ground below the laboratory window and we each took a drink of it——"

" *What !* " yelled Mr. Mopp, in such a voice that the three animals fairly jumped.

" It wasn't our fault ! " began Porky defensively. " We saw the basin of stuff there and we thought perhaps it had been put out for us, so we took a drink of it——".

" And now you can speak in human voices ! " cried Mr. Mopp, letting go of the door and starting to caper excitedly about the classroom, snapping his fingers joyously above his head. " I've done it ! I've done it ! I've done it ! " he yelled. " Hurrah ! Hurrah ! Oh, happy, happy day ! I've done it ! HURRAH ! "

" Hurrah ! " bawled Porky, not having the slightest idea what Mr. Mopp was so excited and happy about, but thinking he had better join in. Then he cried : " What is it you've done, Mr. Mopp ? Do tell us ! "

" I've succeeded in my experiment ! " cried Mr. Mopp, his spectacles fairly gleaming with joy and triumph. " That was my Thorking Mixture which you drank and it's worked—*it's worked ! Hurrah !* "

" Your Thorking Mixture ? " repeated Porky, puzzled. " What's that, Mr. Mopp ? "

" It's a mixture which I've been trying to invent for a long time," cried Mr. Mopp. " It gives animals the power to think and to talk just like human beings. It's really a Thinking and Talking Mixture. But that's much too long a name to use. So I've run the words Thinking and Talking into one and called them Thorking, see ? "

" Yes, I see," said Porky, after thinking this over for a moment. " So that's how Georgie and Frankie and I can talk in human voices and think just like human beings, is it ? "

" Yes," cried Mr. Mopp. " I finished making the mixture late last night and I put it outside the laboratory window to cool. I must confess that I forgot all about the possibility of you and the goat taking a drink of it. I never intended to experiment on you. I wouldn't dream of taking such a liberty in the absence of Mr. Pepper, the headmaster. I hope you don't mind ? " he concluded anxiously.

" Mind ? " cried Porky, with a jolly laugh. " Of course we don't mind. We wouldn't have missed this for anything. Would we, you chaps ? " he demanded of the goat and the fox.

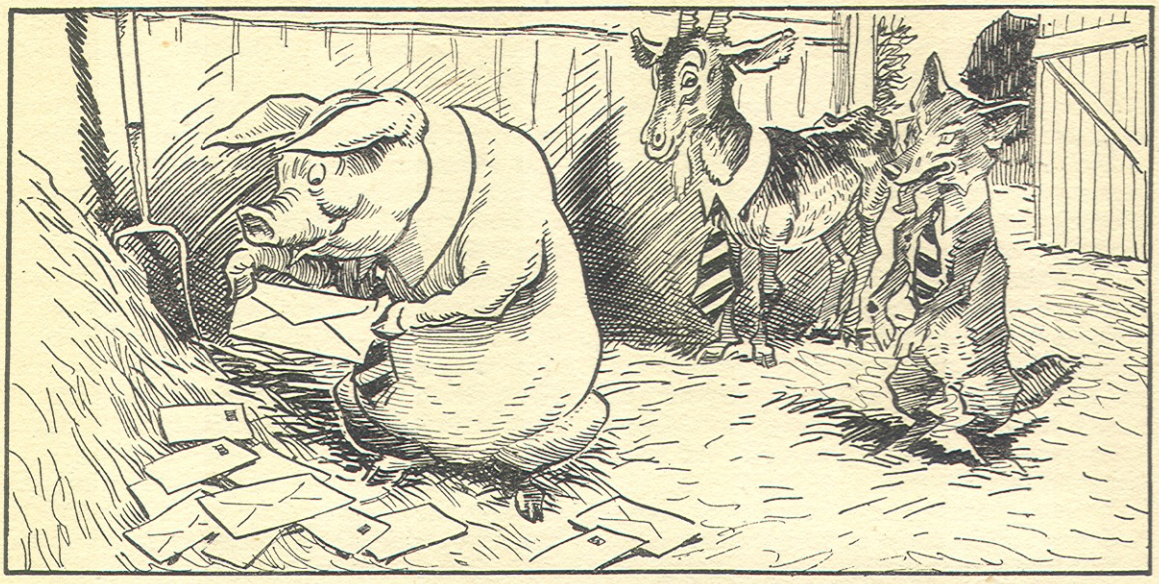
" No, you bet we wouldn't ! " they cried gaily.

" Well, I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure," said Mr. Mopp. " It's very sporting and decent of you to take it like this, I must say. I'd like to reward you. In fact, I intend to reward you——"

" No, no, there's no need for that ! " put in Porky. " We don't want rewarding. Honestly we don't, Mr. Mopp ! "

" But I insist ! " cried Mr. Mopp. " Particularly as it's Christmas time. I'm going to make the three of you a present. Now just tell me what you'd like."

" Well, I know what I'd like," said Porky, his eyes fairly gleaming. " I'd like to go to one of these Christmas parties that I've heard the boys talking about during term time. There always seems to be heaps and heaps of the most gorgeous grub and I'm sure that George and Frankie would like to go to one, too."



" I say, we're not half popular! " cried Porky jubilantly. " I vote we accept every single invitation! "

He turned to the goat and the fox and cried :

" Who's for a party ? "

" Me ! " yelled the goat and the fox together.

" Then that's what we'd like to do, sir," said Porky, turning to Mr. Mopp again. " We'd like to go to a Christmas party ! "

" Yes, but I'm afraid I—I don't know anyone around here who's giving a party," stammered Mr. Mopp.

" Pooh, that's easily got over ! " cried Porky. " That Thorking Mixture of yours certainly gives me ideas, Mr. Mopp. What about putting an advertisement in the local newspaper asking some kind-hearted boy or girl if they will invite a talking pig, a talking goat and a talking fox to their Christmas party ? "

" I know the local newspaper," cried Georgie Goat. " I've eaten dozens of copies of it ! "

" He means he's digested the contents," sniggered Frankie Fox.

Well, after some further discussion, Mr. Mopp promised to put an advertisement in the local newspaper, as Porky had suggested. The replies were to be addressed to Porky himself and they simply poured in.

Every boy and girl in the neighbourhood seemed to be having a Christmas party, and one and all begged Porky, Georgie and Freddie to come. Those children who hadn't been going to have a party wrote to say that they would give an extra special one for Porky, Georgie and Frankie.

" I say, we're not half popular ! " cried Porky jubilantly, as he, Georgie and Frankie went through the letters on the afternoon before Christmas Eve. " D'you know what ? I vote we accept every single invitation and go to the whole lot, what ? "

" Yes, let's ! " cried Georgie and Frankie excitedly.

" Come on, then, we'll write accepting every invitation ! " cried Porky.

The three of them scuttled off to the nearest classroom, where they sat themselves down at a desk apiece and wrote accepting the invitations.

Of course, their spelling was bad and their writing was worse, but that didn't matter a bit. Nor did they worry about the fact that three or four of the parties were being held on the same day.

" We can easily look in at each of 'em for an hour or so and tuck away as much grub as we can," giggled Porky. " He ! He ! He ! This isn't half going to be a jolly Christmas ! "

It certainly was. Porky, Georgie and Frankie were the guests of honour at every party, and you'd have been amazed at the plum puddings and cakes and jellies and other good things which they tucked away —particularly Porky.

All the other guests were terribly eager to know how the three animals could talk, of course, but Porky explained it by saying quite truthfully that it was because of something they had drunk.

" You ought to go on the stage," said one little girl to Porky. " I'm sure everybody would *love* to see such clever talking animals as you and Georgie and Frankie ! "

" Perhaps they would," said Porky, who was sitting with a paper cap on his head, " but we don't want to go on the stage. Besides, the effect of that stuff we drank will wear off in a few days, then Georgie and Frankie and I will just be our ordinary selves again."

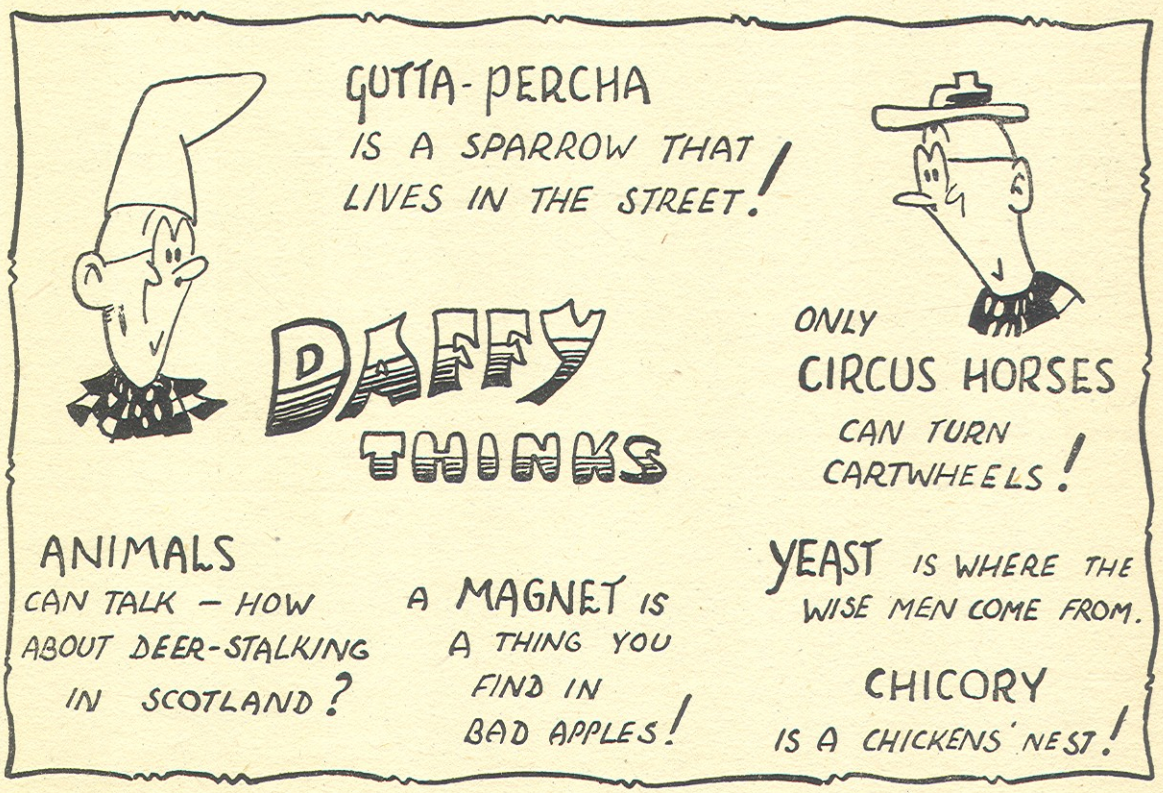
Porky knew this was true, for Mr. Mopp had told him so.

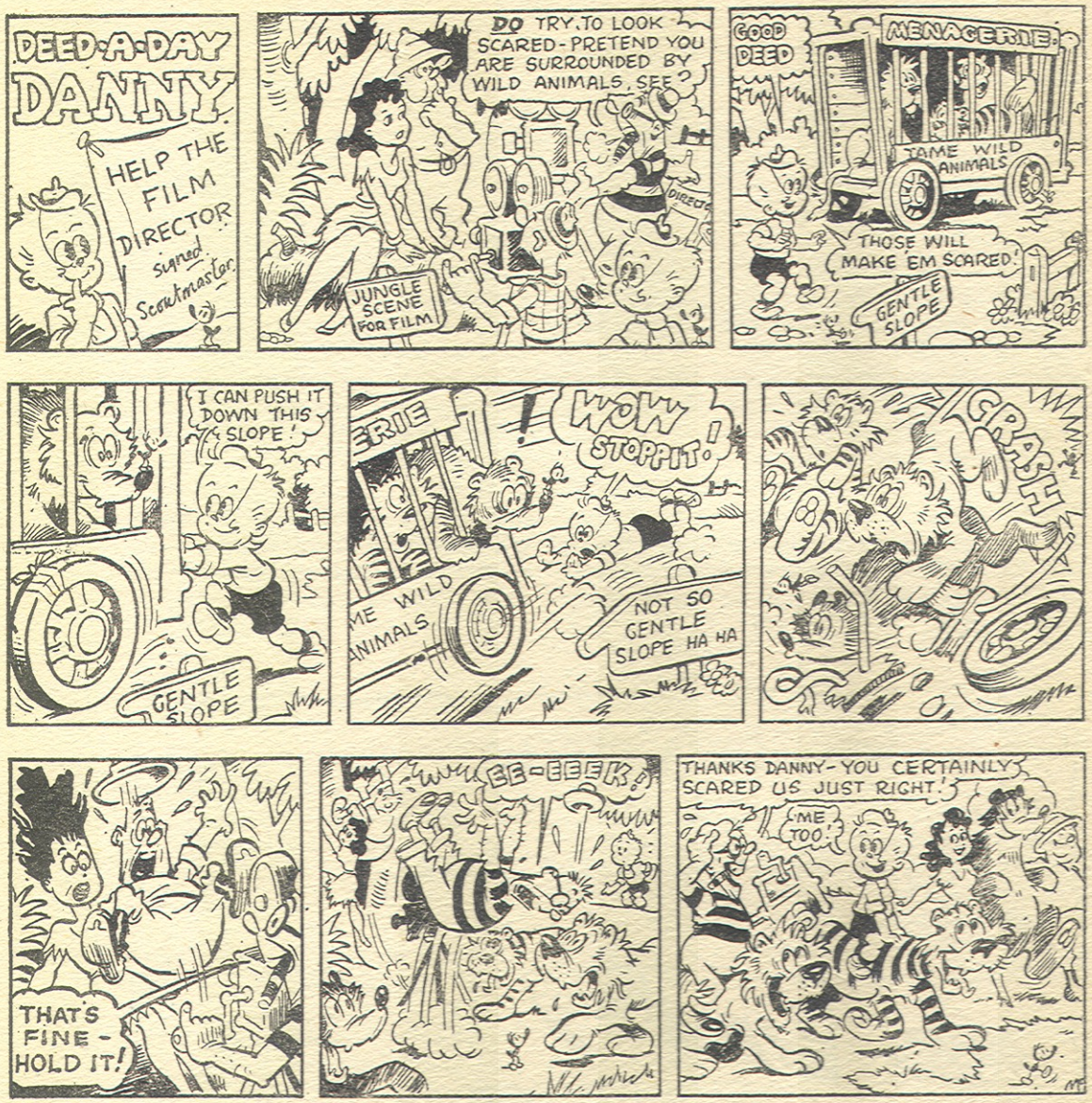
" Oh, what a shame ! " cried the little girl. " You don't want to be just an ordinary pig again, do you ? "

Porky gave a laugh.

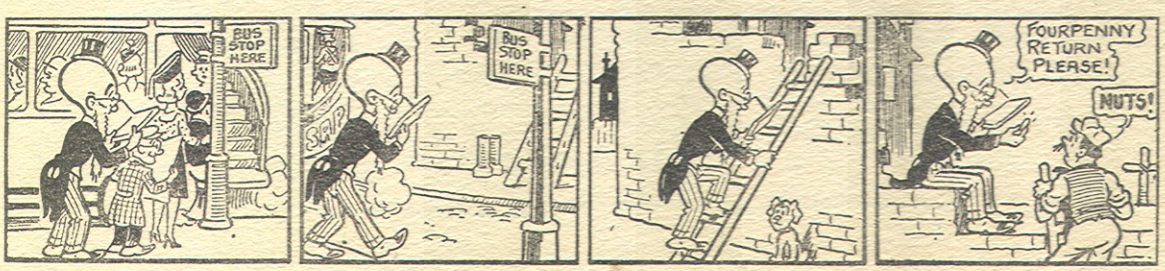
" Yes, I do," he said. " Being able to talk and think like you girls and boys has been an awfully jolly and exciting adventure and this has been the happiest Christmas Georgie and Frankie and I have ever had. But think how *awful* it would be if we had to do lessons as you have to, and if we had to keep on washing ourselves and dressing-up every day and all that sort of thing. No, you can take it from me that animals have the best time of all—that is, if they're kindly treated—and Georgie and Frankie and I won't really be sorry when we're just our ordinary selves again. D'you mind passing me some more of that cake ? Thank you very much ! "

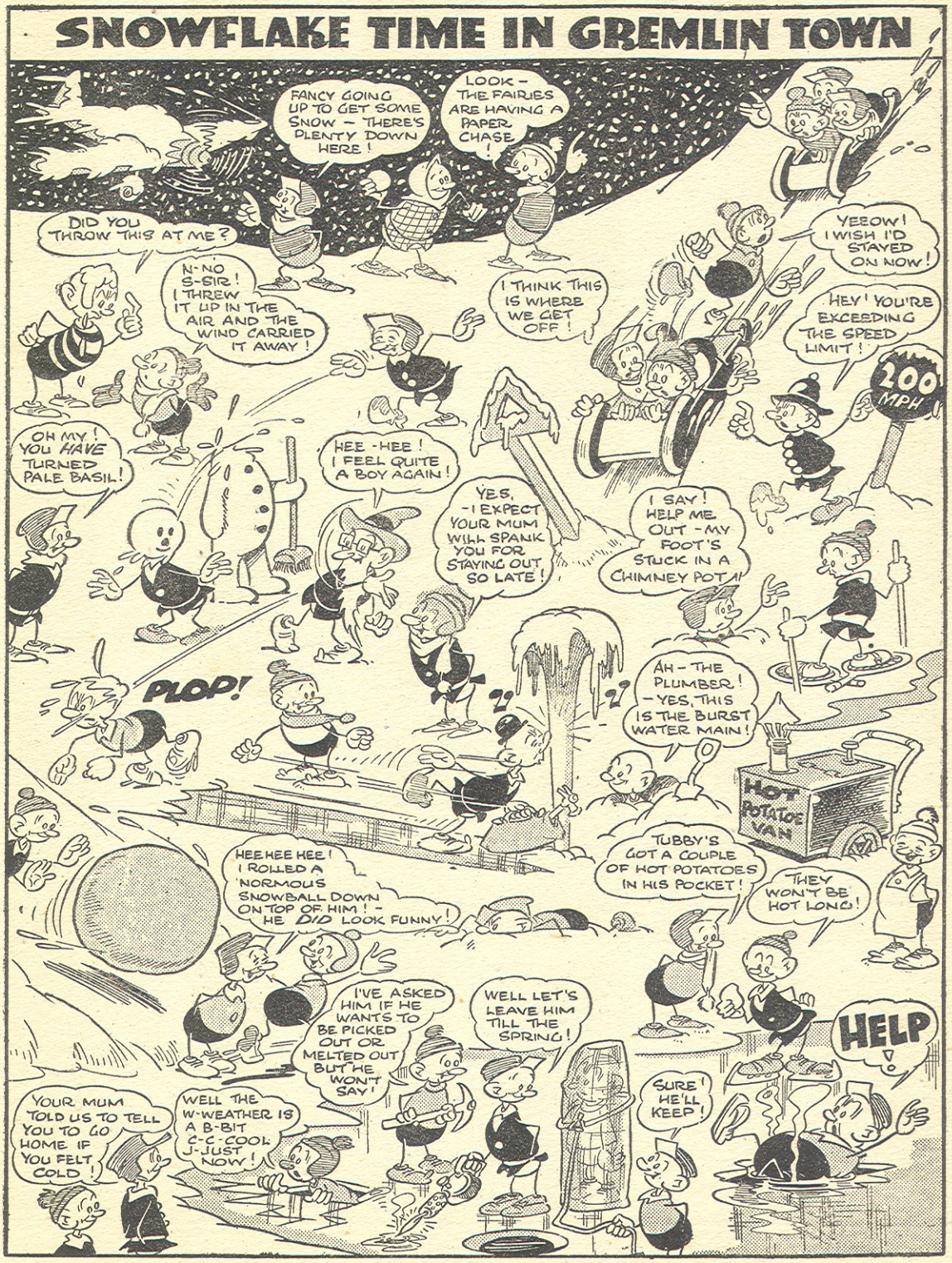
THE END



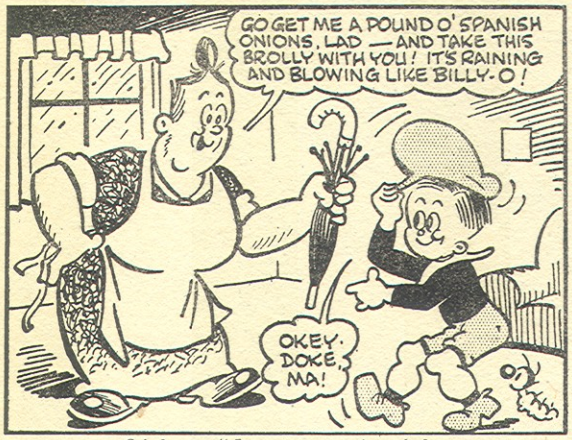


PROFESSOR PEANUT - - - - - HE ALWAYS FORGETS TO REMEMBER!

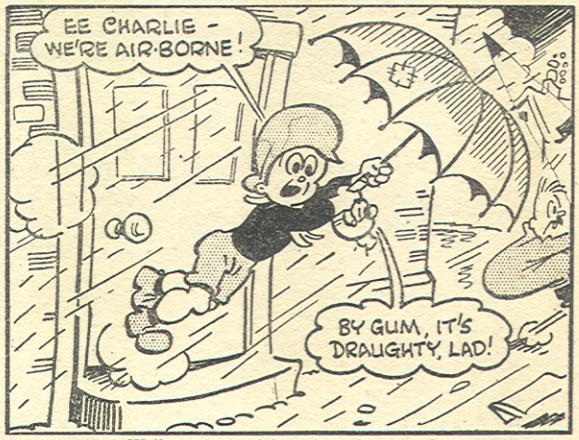



SNOWFLAKE TIME IN GREMLIN TOWN
FANCY GOING UP TO GET SOME SNOW – THERE'S PLENTY DOWN HERE!
LOOK – THE FAIRIES ARE HAVING A PAPER CHASE!
DID YOU THROW THIS AT ME?
N-NO S-SIR! I THREW IT UP IN THE AIR AND THE WIND CARRIED IT AWAY!
I THINK THIS IS WHERE WE GET OFF!
YEEOW! I WISH I'D STAYED ON NOW!
HEY! YOU'RE EXCEEDING THE SPEED LIMIT!
200 MPH
OH MY! YOU HAVE TURNED PALE BASIL!
HEE-HEE! I FEEL QUITE A BOY AGAIN!
YES, – I EXPECT YOUR MUM WILL SPANK YOU FOR STAYING OUT SO LATE!
I SAY! HELP ME OUT – MY FOOT'S STUCK IN A CHIMNEY POT!
PLOP!
AH – THE PLUMBER! – YES, THIS IS THE BURST WATER MAIN!
HOT POTATOE VAN
TUBBY'S GOT A COUPLE OF HOT POTATOES IN HIS POCKET!
THEY WON'T BE HOT LONG!
HEE HEE HEE! I ROLLED A 'NORMOUS SNOWBALL DOWN ON TOP OF HIM! – HE DID LOOK FUNNY!
I'VE ASKED HIM IF HE WANTS TO BE PICKED OUT OR MELTED OUT BUT HE WON'T SAY!
WELL LET'S LEAVE HIM TILL THE SPRING!
HELP
YOUR MUM TOLD US TO TELL YOU TO GO HOME IF YOU FELT COLD!
WELL THE W-WEATHER IS A B-BIT C-C-COOL J-JUST NOW!
SURE! HE'LL KEEP!

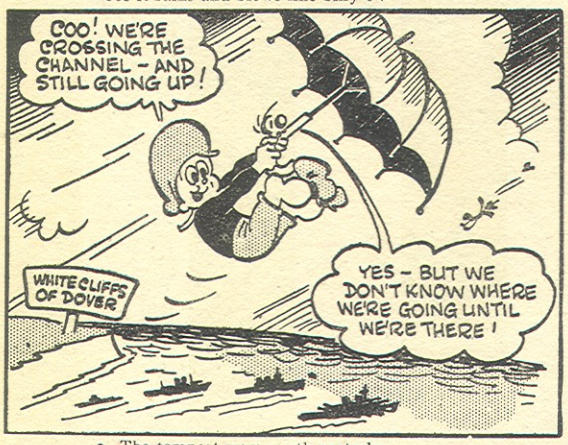
OUR ERNIE - - MRS. ENTWHISTLE'S LITTLE LAD



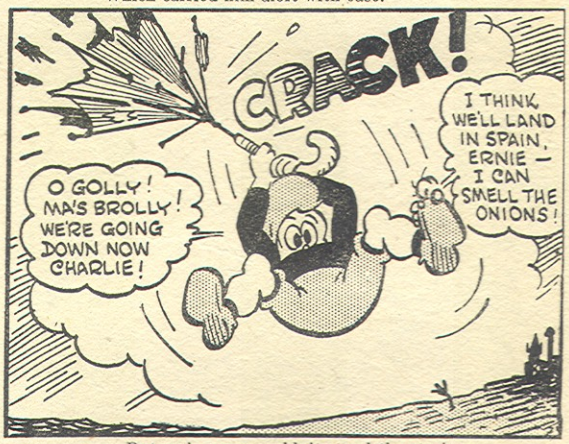
1. Cried ma : " I want some onions, lad,
And if you'll fetch 'em I'll be glad,
And take this brolly when you go
'Cos it rains and blows like billy-o ! "



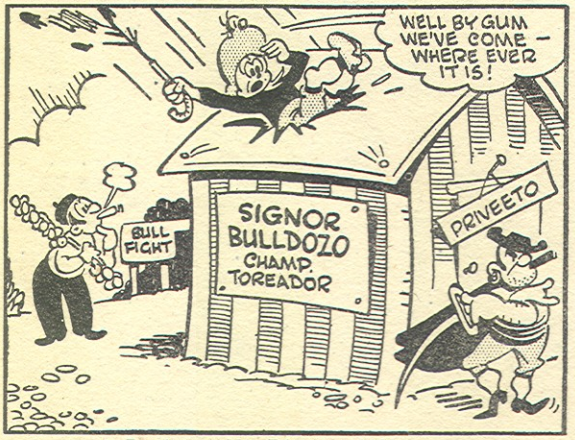
2. Well, ma were right—the rain came down
And wind blew lumps off Wigan town ;
And lad were lifted by the breeze
Which carried him aloft with ease.



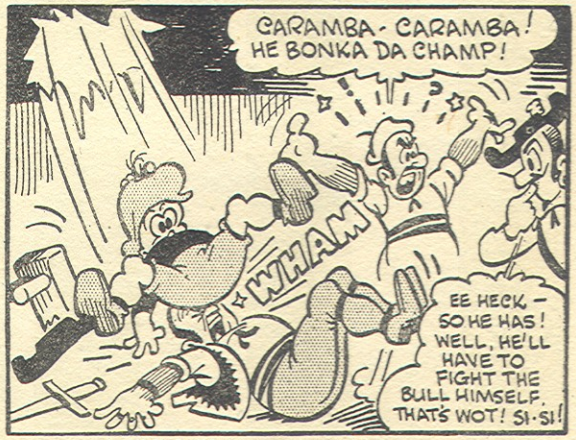
3. The tempest were north-easterly
So lad were driven out to sea,
Travelling south-west ever faster,
Saved by brolly from disaster.



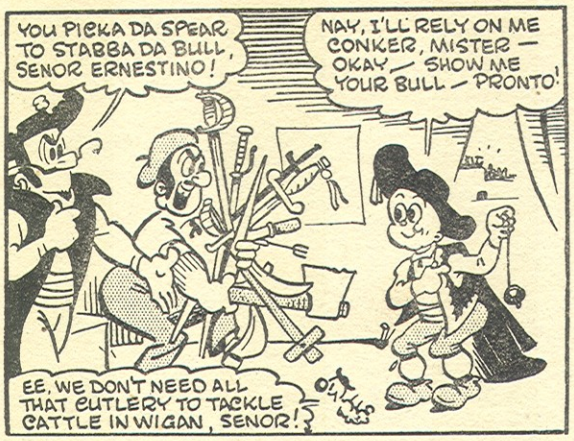
4. But ma's gamp couldn't stand the strain,
And as he fluttered over Spain,
It suddenly went in reverse,
And lad were faced wiv deff, or worse.



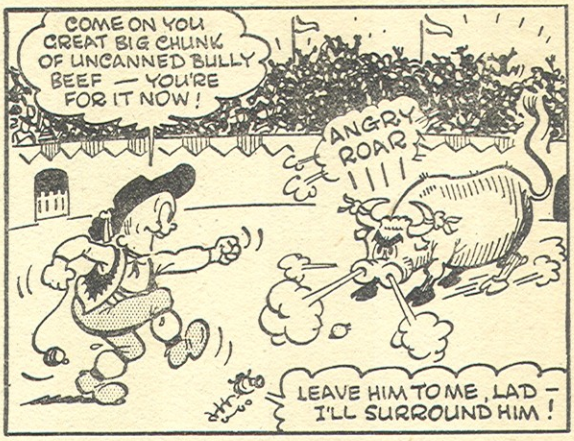
5. Result were Mrs. E.'s young kiddo
Landed down near old Madrido,
Slap on a Spanish bullfighter's lid—
It knocked the poor chap daft, it did !



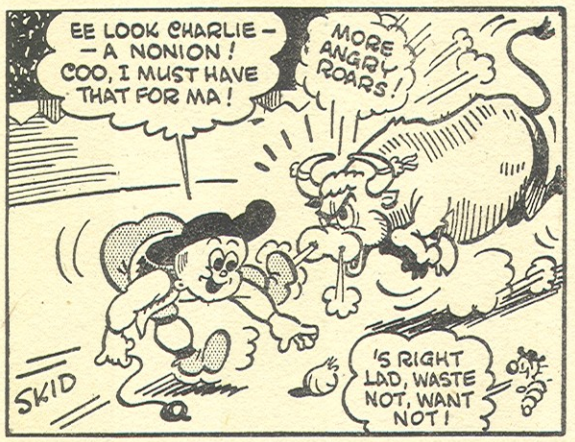
6. Well, bullfight were due to begin,
And lad had done bullfighter in,
So Spaniards came to him and said
Zat he moost fight ze bull instead.



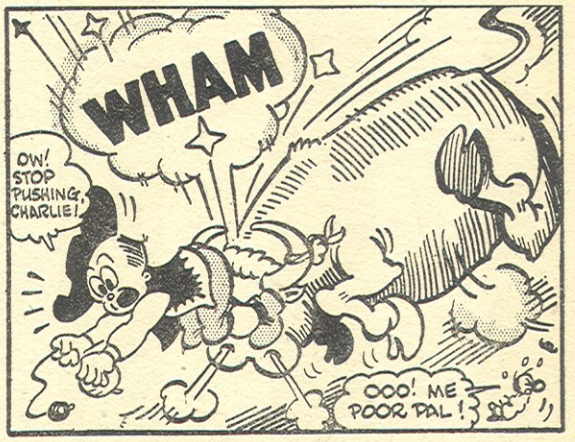
7. They offered lad some prodders, and
Dressed him up to beat the band,
But he preferred to use his conker
With which to deal the bull a bonker.



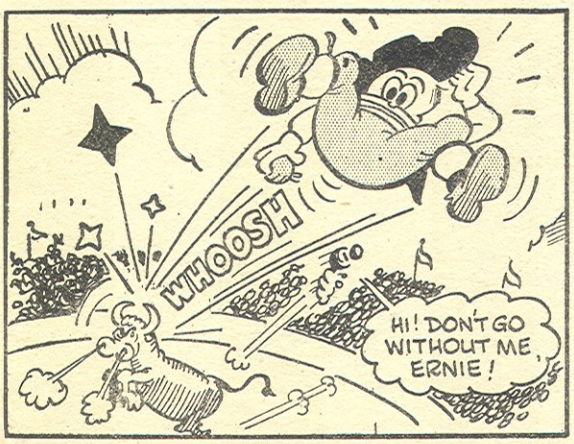
8. So giving conker trial swing,
Out Ernie toddled into ring;
At same time, from another door,
Fierce bull dashed out with angry roar.



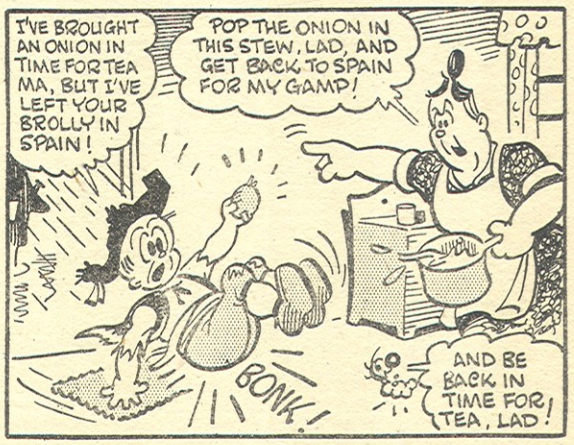
9. Now, how the onion got in ring,
Unless some Spaniard flung the thing,
I wouldn't know, and couldn't say,
But there, right in lad's path it lay.



10. The bull saw Ernie bending, so,
Took chance to deal him hefty blow
On part of carcase, which, as rule.
He used to sit on form at school.



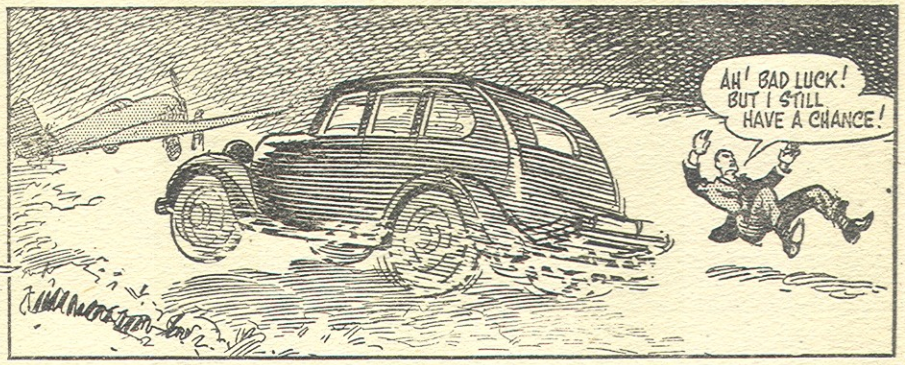
11. And as he flew through Spanish air,
Poor Ernie cried: "Ee, I don't care
About this queer bullfighting game,
I'm sorry now to Spain I came."



12. Cried ma: "I see you're back lad, and
You've got an onion—Ee, that's grand!
But back you go to Spain—by golly,
Them Spaniards don't get my best brolly!"

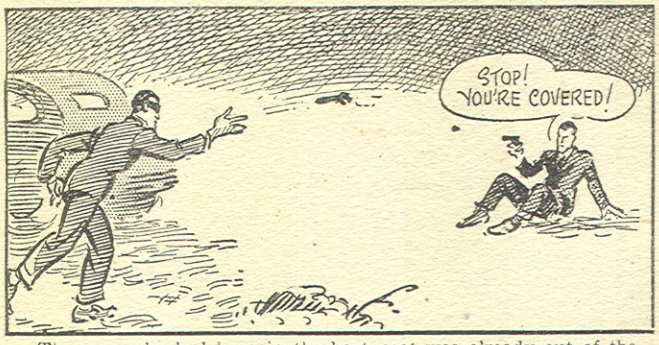
THE MAN WHO KIDNAPPED FATHER CHRISTMAS

SEXTON BLAKE HAS TAKEN A DESPERATE CHANCE IN TRYING TO CAPTURE THE MAN WHO KIDNAPPED FATHER CHRISTMAS



(*Continued from page 54.*)

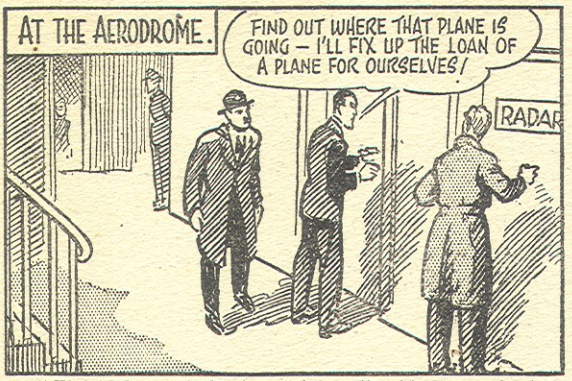
1. Numb with cold, Sexton Blake hung on to the luggage grid of the crook's car. There were only two men in the car. Sexton Blake was interested in the person at the back. He was the man who had kidnapped Ben Sawyer, the Father Christmas pedlar. The man at the wheel was probably no more than the crook's personal bodyguard and driver. The car travelled north for some time, then suddenly turned through a gate into a field. Sexton Blake was taken by surprise, and as the car swung round he was thrown off the luggage grid into the thick snow. He was not hurt, but as he picked himself up he saw that the car had stopped. "Bad luck!" he muttered. "But I still have a chance!"



2. The man who had been in the back seat was already out of the car. Sexton Blake spotted him and drew his gun. "Stop!" cried Sexton Blake. "You're covered!" The man wheeled round, surprised, his eyes glinting through the mask that he was still wearing. He did not lose his wits, however, for as he turned round he hurled something that he'd held in his hand.

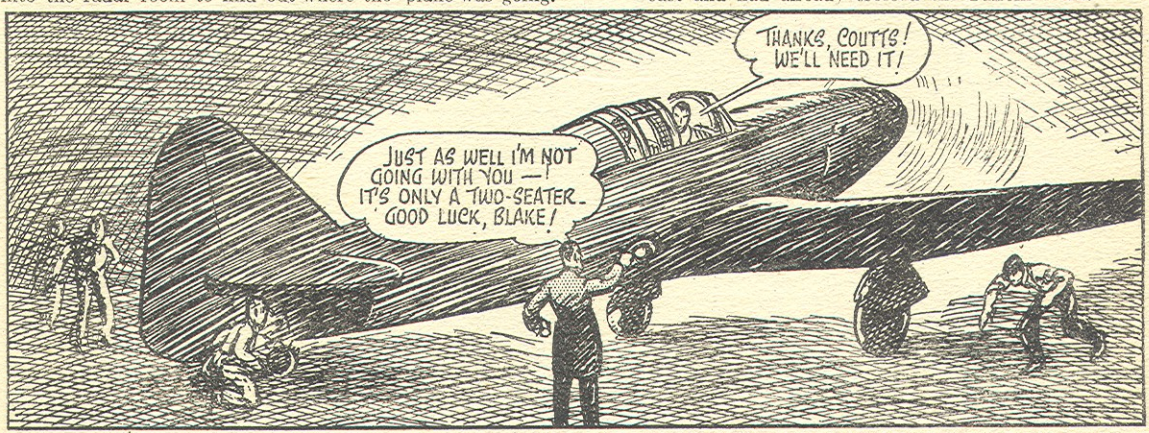
3. It was a heavy adjustable spanner. Sexton Blake saw it too late. He tried to dodge, but the spanner hit him just above the temple. The heavy blow stunned him—he fell backwards in the snow—unconscious. The crook leapt into the 'plane that was waiting for him.

4. The crook switched on the controls and the engine roared into life. He taxied the 'plane out into the field for a take-off, and his car was driven away. Sexton Blake was soon revived by the cold snow, and sat up slowly, just as Coutts and Tinker arrived on the scene in a black police car. They had set out in pursuit of the crook's car, but had lost trace of it. The roar of the 'plane's engine had led them to the spot. They were just too late, though. As they caught sight of Sexton Blake, the crook's 'plane roared up over their heads. "Oldbury aerodrome's over there, Guv'nor!" said Tinker, knowing the district well. Sexton Blake nodded, and they all jumped into the police car.

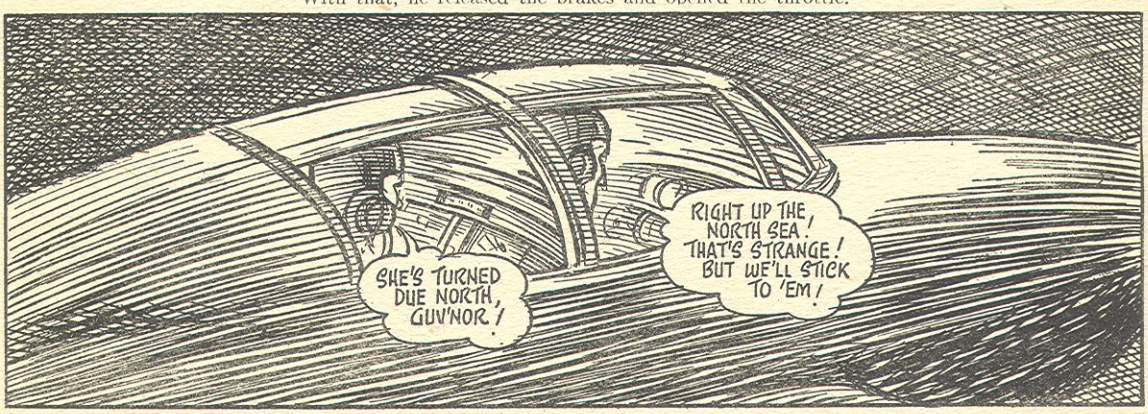


5. "They'll keep track of that 'plane," said Sexton Blake. "And maybe loan us another!" Travelling at a terrific speed, the police car was outside the main entrance of the airfield in a few minutes. Sexton Blake quickly showed his card and they were let through immediately. Tinker went into the radar room to find out where the 'plane was going.

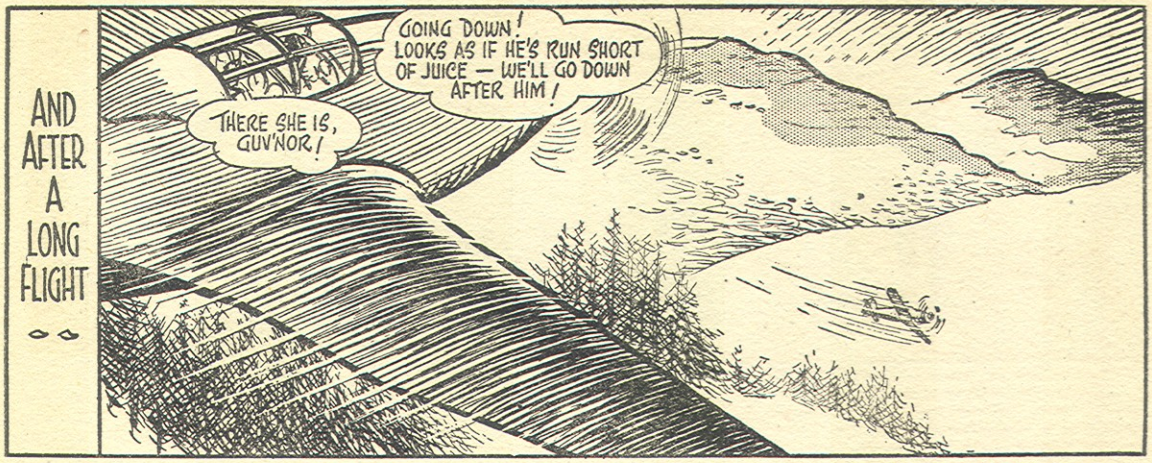
6. Sexton Blake managed to obtain permission to borrow a 'plane. Coutts realised that if he were to go, too, he would have to obtain permission from Scotland Yard. This would have taken a little time, so he left the case with Sexton Blake. Tinker came in to say that the 'plane was heading north-east and had already crossed the Suffolk coast.



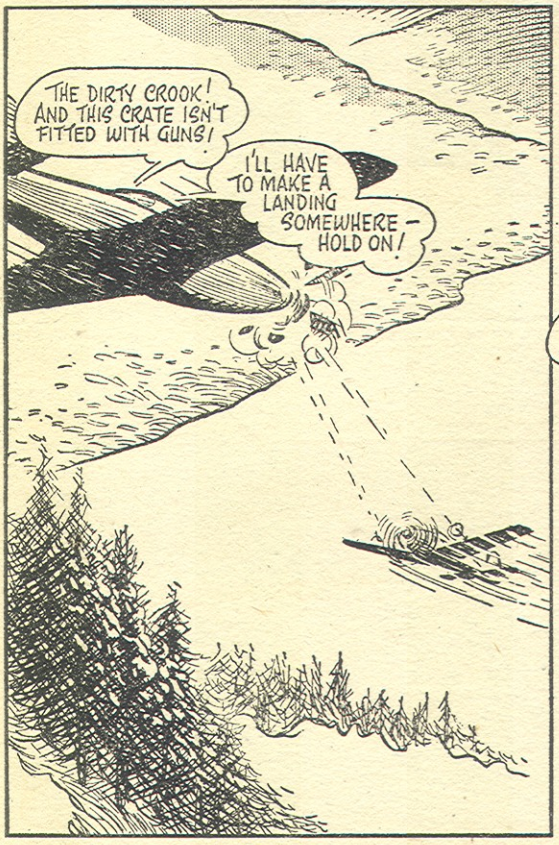
7. Sexton Blake and Tinker saw that there was no time to waste and, quickly getting into flying kit, they ran outside to where their 'plane was waiting. It was a converted "Defiant" monoplane. Sexton Blake was familiar with the type, so he did not need any instruction for operating the controls. He jumped into the front seat, and Tinker climbed in at the back to act as navigator. The engine spluttered and then coughed into life. Mechanics pulled away the chocks. Coutts stood beside the 'plane. "Good luck, Blake!" he shouted above the roar of the engine. "Thanks, Coutts," replied Sexton Blake. "We'll need it!" With that, he released the brakes and opened the throttle.



8. Snow did not hinder the take-off, for the run-way was heated from underneath. As the 'plane rose, Sexton Blake retracted the wheels and set the course north-east. In the back seat, Tinker had a radar panel in front of him. With it he was able to trace the course of the crook's 'plane. "She's turned due north, Guv'nor!" he shouted suddenly down the inter-communication tube. Sexton Blake nodded and changed direction. "Right up the North Sea!" he replied. "That's strange!" Sexton Blake thought he might, after a little while, have turned westward and made for the Scottish coast, but he seemed to have no such intention.



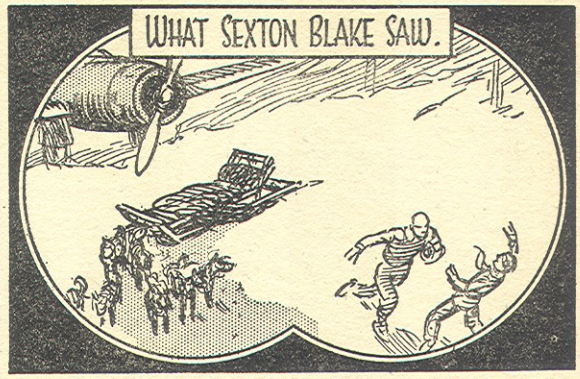
9. For about two hours Sexton Blake flew on. As the dawn broke, the 'plane was in sight of a rugged-looking coastline. "Norway!" breathed Sexton Blake. Tinker, who had been tracing the course of the other 'plane, suddenly let out a cry of triumph. He could now see the crook's 'plane in the dim light. He pointed her out to Sexton Blake. They were well inland now, and Sexton Blake was not surprised to see the other 'plane suddenly dive down. "Looks as if he's run out of juice!" exclaimed Blake. "We'll go down after him!" But the crook had obviously seen their 'plane, for he suddenly banked round and came up towards them. Two streaks of red suddenly appeared out of the 'plane's wings.



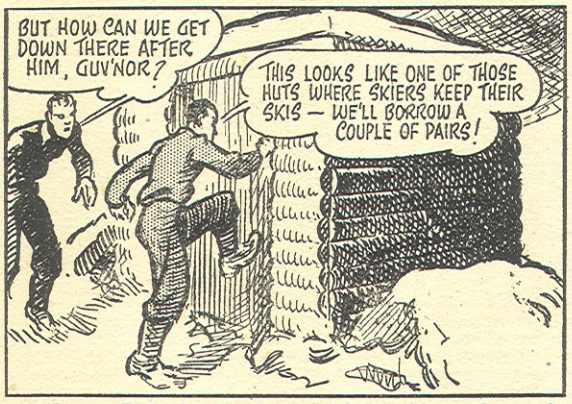
10. Sexton Blake knew what it was and gave the control stick a sharp push to the right. The 'plane wheeled over, but not quite soon enough. The machine-gun bullets missed the actual 'plane but struck the airscrew. "The dirty crook! And this crate isn't fitted with guns!" blazed Tinker. The airscrew was smashed and useless.

11. "I'll have to make a landing somewhere!" said Sexton Blake. "Hold on!" He switched off the engine and let down the under-carriage. He glided down on to a stretch of snow. The wheels sank deep and the snow soon brought the 'plane to a halt—just in front of a sheer precipice. "Crumbs!" cried Tinker, getting out of the rear seat. "We've made it!"

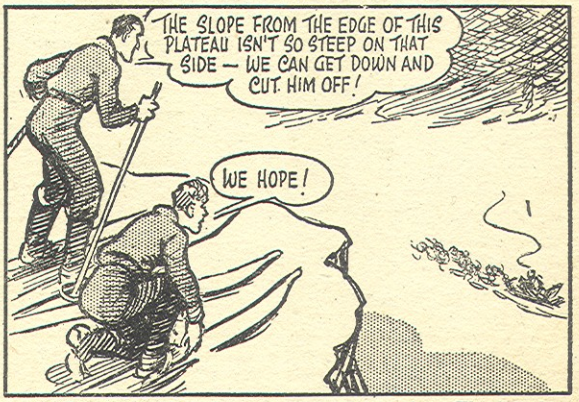
12. The crook had landed his 'plane in the valley below. "He must have run out of juice," said Sexton Blake, who had joined Tinker. They noticed that a man was riding up to the crook's 'plane on a sleigh drawn by a team of huskies. The crook climbed out of his 'plane and was rushing at the new-comer. Sexton Blake whipped out his binoculars.



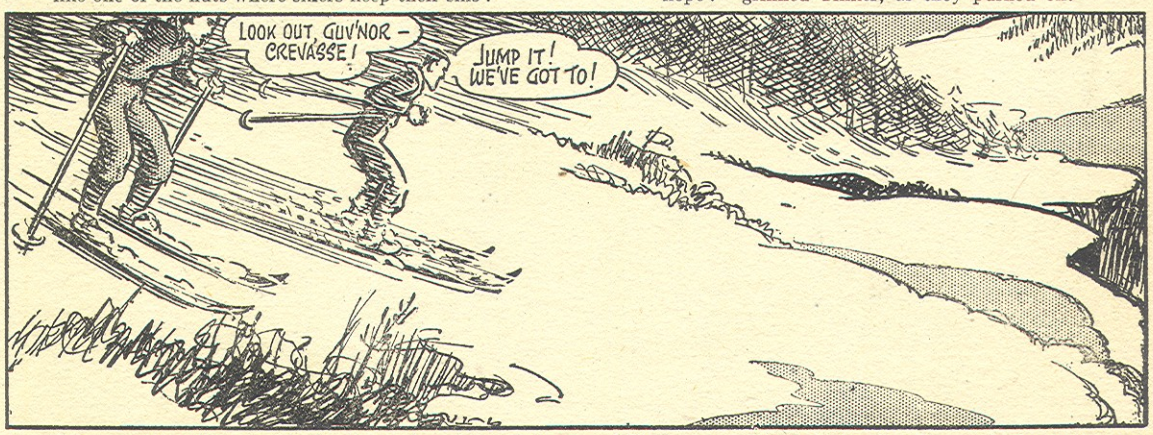
13. Sexton Blake thought that the new-comer might have been one of the crook's accomplices. But he was obviously not, for, looking through the glasses, he saw the crook deal the new-comer a sharp blow on the jaw. In a flash, Sexton Blake realised that the crook wanted the dog-sleigh so that he could make a quick get-away.



14. Sexton Blake heard the crack of the whip as the crook drove off, leaving the owner lying unconscious in the snow. "How can we get down there after him?" asked Tinker. It seemed as if their long chase was to end fruitlessly. But Sexton Blake had seen a small log hut and said, "This looks like one of the huts where skiers keep their skis!"



15. His idea was to borrow a couple of pairs. The hut door was not locked, and in a few minutes they had put on the skis. The plateau on which they were standing did not slope down so steeply on one side as on the other. "We can get down and cut him off!" said Sexton Blake. "We hope!" grinned Tinker, as they pushed off.

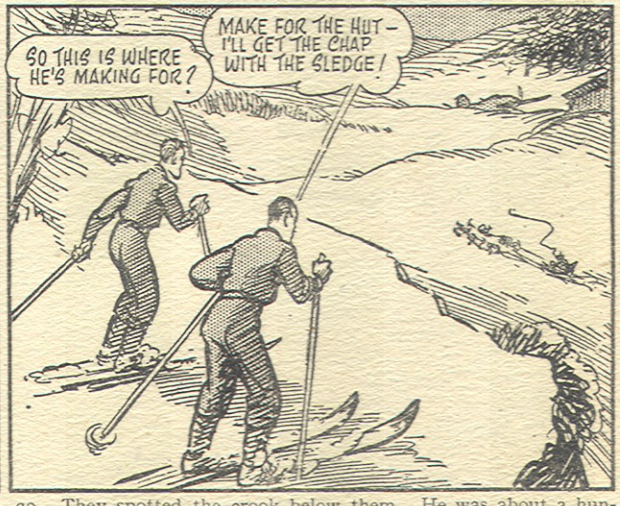


16. They were travelling beside the steep edge of the plateau, and Tinker was quite enjoying it, although he knew that one slip of his skis might have sent him over the edge! Even Sexton Blake, who had had much more experience on skis, knew it was risky. Rounding a bend, Tinker suddenly shouted out a warning. "Look out, Guv'nor!" he cried. "Crevasse!" Right in front of them was a great gap. It was at least twelve feet wide, and there was no other way round! At the speed at which they were travelling it would have been impossible to stop. Sexton Blake saw that there was only one way out. "Jump it!" he cried. "We've got to!" Being in front of Tinker, Sexton Blake reached the crevasse first.

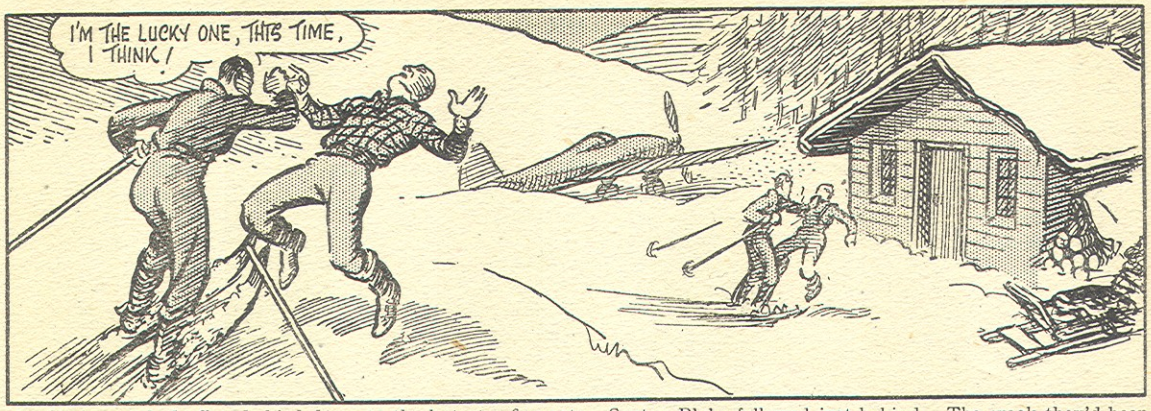
17. With a great push of his alpenstocks, he leapt into the air and saw the dark, gaping crevasse below him. Just behind, Tinker braced himself for the jump. "Crumbs!" he cried. "I don't think much of this!" He had not lost his nerve by any means, though. He was always willing to try anything.

18. Luck was with Sexton Blake, for he cleared the crevasse. He landed on the other side in a flurry of snow, and immediately looked round to see how Tinker was faring. Tinker had just pushed off into the air and was sailing gracefully across, leaving a trail of snow behind him. He cleared the crevasse with only an inch to spare.

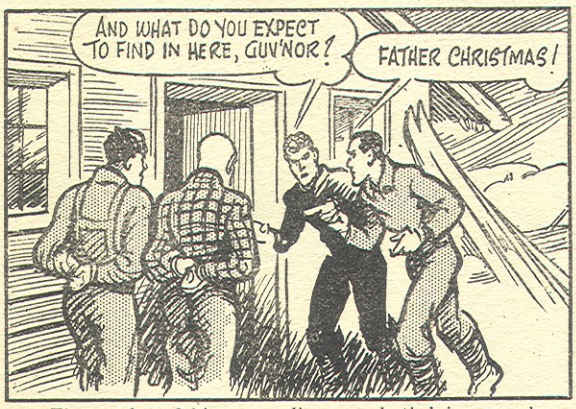
19. "Gosh!" breathed Tinker in great relief. "We've done it!" Sexton Blake grinned, and told Tinker to slow up and keep quiet. "We're almost there!" he said. A moment later they came to a spot which overlooked the lower end of the valley. They stopped and looked around. They were both out of breath, and felt quite glad to stand still for a few moments.



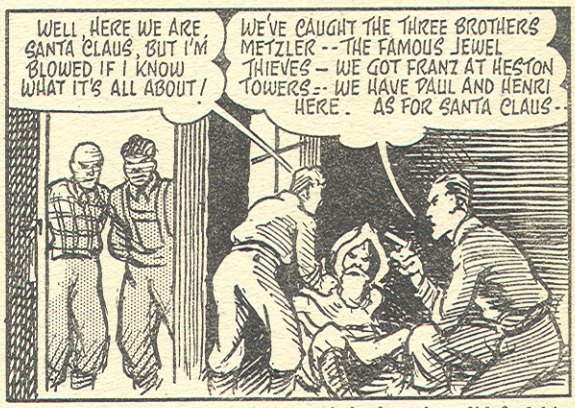
20. They spotted the crook below them. He was about a hundred yards away, frantically driving his team of huskies. Not far away was a log hut, and there was a small single-engined monoplane standing beside it. "So this is where he's making for, is it?" said Tinker. Sexton Blake realised that someone was sure to be inside the hut. "Make for the hut," he told Tinker. "I'll get the chap with the sledge!"



21. Tinker pushed off and skied down to the hut at a fine rate. Sexton Blake followed just behind. The crook they'd been trailing had just pulled up outside the hut and jumped off the sledge. Tinker flew past him and the crook started up in amazement. He thought he had given Sexton Blake and Tinker the slip some time ago! He let out a shout and someone came running out of the hut. Then he turned round, only to come face to face with Sexton Blake. Sexton Blake tackled him, and brought him down with a swing of his fist. Tinker dealt in the same way with the man who had rushed out of the hut.



22. The crook and his accomplice were both lying senseless in the snow, so it was an easy job to put the handcuffs on their wrists. However, they soon came to, and Sexton Blake kept them covered with his gun. He and Tinker had removed their skis, and decided to make a search of the hut. Sexton Blake said that he expected to find Father Christmas.



23. Sure enough, in one corner of the hut they did find him —and he was bound securely. Tinker could not understand what the mystery was all about, but Sexton Blake explained. The three Metzler brothers had been caught, one at Heston Towers and the other two outside. The Metzler brothers had been wanted by Scotland Yard for several years.

24. Sexton Blake did not see where the kidnapping of Father Christmas came in, but as soon as he was released, Ben Sawyer explained himself. He had once been a diamond cutter and had been sent to prison for handling stolen jewellery. He had been going straight ever since, and had refused to work for the Metzler brothers. So they had kidnapped him!

25. Next morning, Sexton Blake and Tinker reported to Coutts. They took Ben Sawyer along with them. The Metzler brothers were already in jail, awaiting trial. Lady Heston had sent a cheque to Sexton Blake, but he wanted to show his admiration for a man who could keep straight when things had gone against him. "You have this, Ben," he smiled, "and a happy Christmas to you!"

SEEN IN THE KITCHEN

Each of the nine sets of pictures below represents something seen in the kitchen. To find out what they are, write down the first letter of the name of each object, and then rearrange them in their right order. For example, T for Tap, L for Leg, P for Pen, E for Egg, and A for Apple. You will find the answers on Page 176.

THE BOY WHO WANTED THE MOON

And the Strange Story of How He Got It

Puggy Makes a Fuss!

"BOO-HOO-HOO-OOO!' howled Prince Puggy.

'What's the matter now?" cried his nurse crossly.

"You've spread gooseberry jam on my bread," grumbled Prince Puggy. "I don't like gooseberry jam. I hate gooseberry jam. I won't eat gooseberry jam. I want some other sort of jam!"

"There is no other sort of jam to-day," cried his nurse. "Come now, be a good boy and eat your nice bread-and-butter and gooseberry jam!"

"SHAN'T!" screamed Prince Puggy.

To show that he meant it, he picked up the plate of bread and butter and gooseberry jam and hurled it to the floor, smashing the plate to pieces.

"Oh, you bad, naughty, wasteful boy!" cried his poor nurse. "I'll tell your father about you, that's what I'll do!"

"I don't care!" yelled Prince Puggy. "You can tell my Papa, and my Papa will say that I *should* have had some other sort of jam for my tea. My Papa will say that you have no right to give me gooseberry jam for my tea when you know that I don't like gooseberry jam. My Papa will be ever so, ever so cross with you for giving me gooseberry jam. My Papa lets me have what I like!" he screamed.

"Alas!" thought his nurse with a sigh, "this is only too true!" For if ever there was a child who was absolutely spoilt by his father, it was Prince Puggy! If he wanted anything he had only to ask for it, and his father, King Archibald, would let him have it!

"Well, if you won't eat your nice bread-and-butter and jam," said the nurse, "be a good boy and drink your tea."

"Shan't!" cried Prince Puggy.

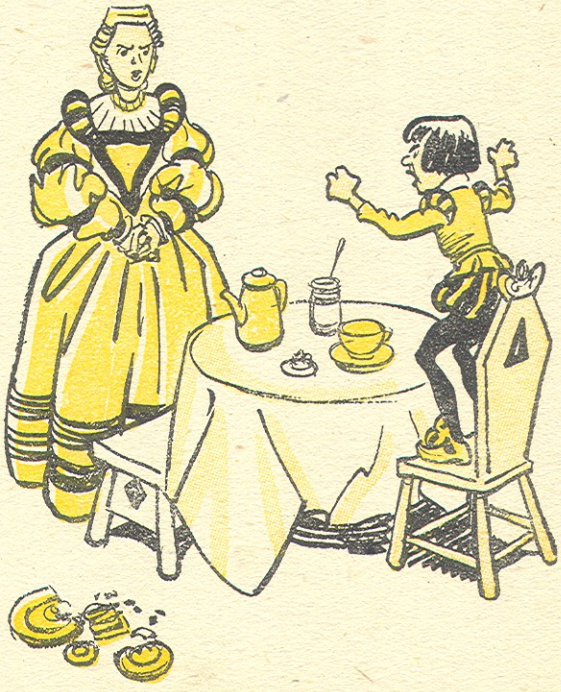
With that he promptly knocked his teacup over. He did it on purpose, of course, and the tea spread all over the nice, clean table-cloth.

"Oh, you aggravating little creature!" cried his nurse. "I've a good mind to give you a smacking!"

"You dare!" jeered Prince Puggy. "Just you dare, and I'll kick you on the shins. I'll kick you and kick you and kick you until your nasty, horrid shins are black and blue all over."

As you see, Prince Puggy was anything but a nice boy. In fact, he was the worst-tempered, greediest, most selfish and ill-mannered boy that you could ever meet.

He had been christened Pugnacious Octavious and a whole lot of other high-sounding names, but we won't bother



about that. Behind his back everybody called him Puggy, for he was a fat, podgy boy with a pug nose and a face the shape of a suet dumpling.

He was quite capable of kicking his nurse on the shins, as that poor woman knew only too well. He had done it before and he would do it again, and she sometimes wondered why she didn't give the job up altogether. But it is not everybody who can be a nurse in a royal palace, even if it is to a bad-tempered, horrid little boy like Prince Puggy. So she stayed on.

"I am not going to pour you out any more tea," she said, as she mopped up the tea which Puggy had spilt, "so you must eat your cake without any."

"I want some more tea!" yelled Puggy.

"You are not going to get any," said his nurse.

"I WANT SOME MORE TEA!" roared Puggy, beating furiously on the table with a spoon.

"You are not going to get any," repeated the nurse, pale but determined.

"I WANT SOME MORE TEA, I TELL YOU!" howled Puggy, banging madly on the table with the spoon and with his other fist. "I WANT SOME MORE TEA—I WANT SOME MORE TEA—I WANT SOME MORE TEA!"

He was in such a temper that he flung the spoon wildly at his nurse. She saw it coming and dodged it. The spoon flew across the room. The door was opening, for King Archibald had heard the noise and was hastening to discover what it was all about. As he stepped quickly

into the room, the spoon hit him a terrific smack right on the nose.

" Oww-ww-www ! " cried the king clutching at his nose, and dancing madly about. " Oww-www ! "

He was a tall, thin man with a long head, shaped just like an egg. His head was bald nearly all over, which made it look more like an egg than ever.

Behind his back folks called him King Baldy. Some pretended that it was short for King Archibald, but everybody knew that it was because he was so terribly bald.

" Oww-www ! " he cried, still clutching his nose—his eyes watering with pain. " What hit me — what was it ? "

" It was a spoon ! " cried Prince Puggy. " I flung it at this stupid Nanny of mine, but she heard you coming and she ducked so that it would miss her and hit you. *She* did it, Papa. It was her fault. It wouldn't have hit you if she hadn't let it ! "

" Is that so ? " said the king, blinking at him through his watering eyes. " Is that so, Pugnacious ? " repeated he, for he always called the prince by his proper name. " But why were you flinging a spoon at her ? "

" Because she wouldn't give me any tea ! " bawled Puggy. " She spread some horrid gooseberry jam on my bread-and-butter, although she knows I hate it, then just because I accidentally upset my tea-cup, she wouldn't give me any more tea. She's a nasty, hateful, spiteful old meanie, that's what she is ! "

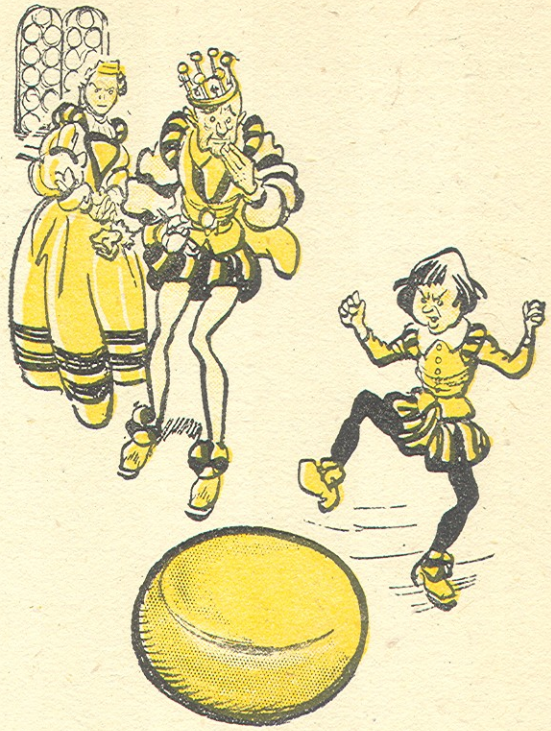
" Is that true ? " demanded King Archibald, staring very coldly at the poor nurse. " That you wouldn't give the prince any more tea, I mean ? "

" Yes, it is, Your Majesty," she cried bravely. " And I will tell you why ! "

She thereupon told the king exactly what had happened and how naughty Puggy had been. All the while she was talking Puggy kept crying :

" Oh, what a fib ! Oh, what a whopper ! Don't believe her, Papa ! She's making it all up, Papa ! "

Now the king knew perfectly well that



the nurse was not the sort of person to make anything up. But he always stuck up for Puggy and could never see the slightest wrong in anything the spoilt young rascal did. So when the nurse had finished he cried :

" Tut ! Tut ! Tut ! You ought to have more patience with the boy, you ought really. If he wanted some more tea, you should have given him it. He can have anything he wants. Anything at all ! "

" I want the moon ! " bawled Puggy.

His father gave quite a jump.

" You want the what ? " he demanded, staring at Puggy as though he couldn't believe his ears.

" I want the MOON ! " roared Puggy. " I was looking at it through my bedroom window last night and I want it to play with. I'd have told you before, only you've been out hunting all day ! "

" But, Pugnacious," cried his father in dismay, " you can't have the moon. Nobody can have the moon. The moon's away up in the sky——"

" I know it is ! " bawled Puggy. " But

I want it. I want it to play with. I must have it. I'm going to have it. If you don't get it for me I'll kick and I'll cry till I'm sick. BOO-HOO-HOO-OOO!"

The King Gives An Order

"BUT, Pugnacious," cried King Archibald in greater dismay than ever, "think of all the lovely toys you've got. And think of the fine ponies you have——"

"I'm sick of my ponies!" sobbed Puggy. "And I'm sick of my toys. I don't want them. I want the moon!"

"But, Pugnacious, my pet——"

"I WANT THE MOON!" roared Puggy, leaning back on his chair and kicking so hard at the underneath part of the table that he nearly kicked everything off altogether.

"Well, goodness me, I don't know what to do about this!" groaned the king, turning to the nurse. "Do you?" he demanded.

"No, Your Majesty, I don't," replied the nurse.

She knew perfectly well what she would do about it if she had her own way. And that was to give Puggy a sound smacking. But she knew that the king would be both angry and horrified if she so much as suggested such a thing.

"This is really very awkward—very awkward indeed," muttered the king, rubbing his chin, thoughtfully. "I can give him most things. In fact, I can give him everything. But the moon is a different matter altogether—a different matter altogether," he repeated helplessly.

"I want the moon!" bawled Puggy. "Boo-hoo-hoo-ooo! I want the moon!"

The king gave a violent start. He had been struck by a sudden brilliant idea.

"Then you shall have it, my pet!" he cried triumphantly. "You shall have it. Wait here!"

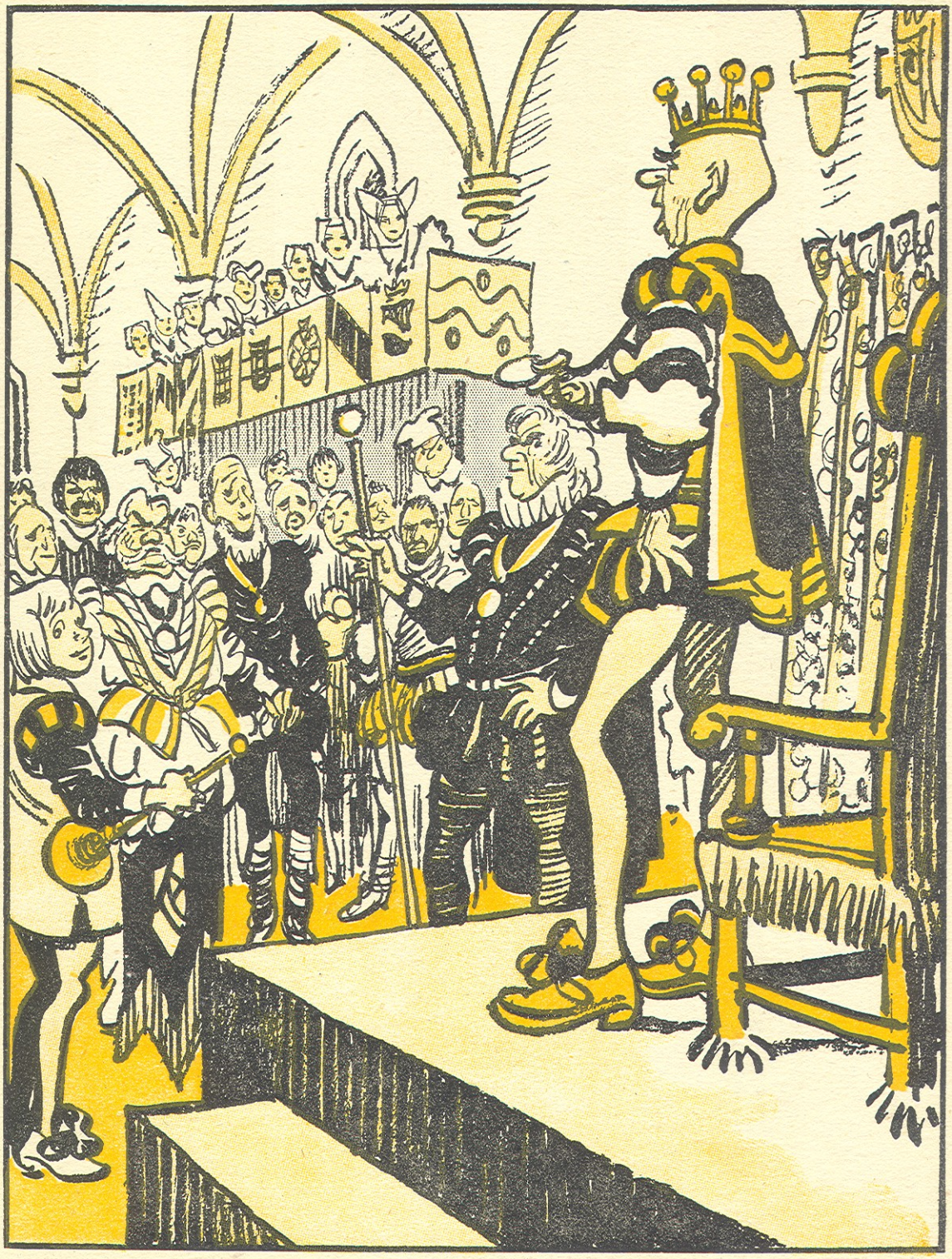
He dashed from the room as fast as his long thin shanks could take him. Where he went doesn't matter, but if you really want to know he went to the kitchens. Within a few minutes he was back, bearing in his arms an enormous round yellow cheese.

"There!" he cried triumphantly, placing the cheese on the floor and rolling it towards Puggy. "There is the moon for you, my precious little Pugnacious. Isn't Daddy clever to have got it for you so quickly?"

He gave the nurse a delighted nudge with his bony elbow to draw her attention to his cleverness. With a sniff Puggy got down from his chair and ran to play with what his father had hopefully described as the moon. Next instant a perfect scream of rage nearly split King Archibald's ear-drums.

"It's not the moon!" yelled Puggy, kicking furiously at the cheese. It's not the moon at all! It's just a great, nasty, horrid, smelly cheese! Oh, what a mean trick!"

"But, Pugnacious, my lamb, the moon is *made* of cheese!" cried the king, in



despair. "Isn't it?" he demanded, turning to the nurse for support.

"I really don't know, Your Majesty," she faltered. "I'm not as clever as you."

"I don't care if the moon *is* made of cheese!" bellowed Puggy, still kicking madly at the enormous cheese. "This isn't it. This is a cheese from the kitchens. Think I don't know. Pooh!"

Well, that's the way he went on until bedtime, screaming and yelling with temper and bawling for the moon. Even when his nurses—four of them—had got him to bed, assisted by the king himself, Puggy was no better behaved. He yelled and struggled and kicked his nurses, and then he kicked the bed-clothes right off the bed on to the floor.

"I want the moon!" he howled,

pointing towards the window, through which he could see the moon, big, round and yellow in the sky. " I want it. I'm going to have it. I won't be good till I get it. So there ! "

In vain the king tried to quieten him. Puggy wouldn't be comforted or soothed at any price. All his life he had had everything he wanted. But now he had found that there was something which he wanted, but couldn't have. And, like the spoilt, bad-tempered, greedy boy that he was, he cried and sobbed and made no end of a scene.

The king even ran and brought him the famous Crown Jewels to play with. Puggy thought so little of the Crown Jewels that he flung them across the room.

" I want the moon ! " he roared. " I want the MOO-OO-OON ! "

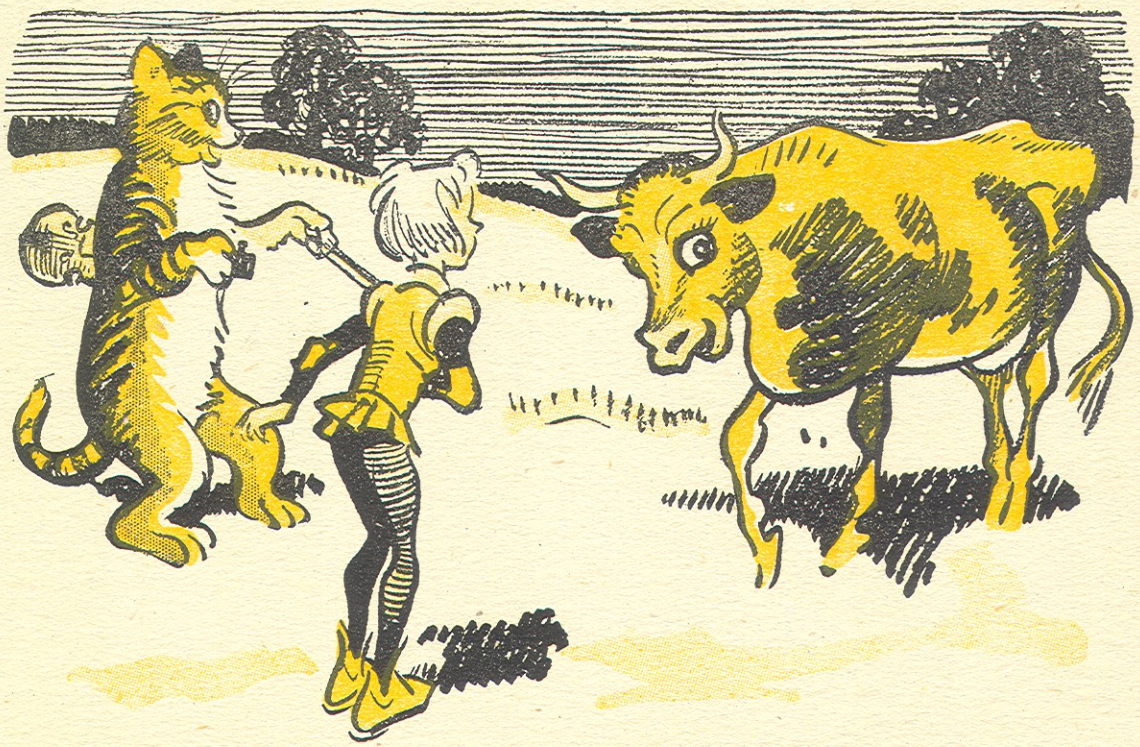
In despair his father ran off to the great hall of the palace to which he summoned all his knights and squires, his pages and his men at arms. He even summoned his grooms, cooks, scullions and other servants. Everyone in the castle except Puggy and his nurses was there, and you never saw such a crush !

" Silence for His Majesty King Archibald ! " thundered the Lord High Chamberlain, as the king mounted to a dais at one end of the great hall.

Instantly there was a breathless silence, for everyone was very curious to know why the king had summoned them to his presence.

" My lords, ladies and gentlemen," began the king, " my pages, men-at-arms, grooms, cooks and scullions—I have summoned you here to-night to give you all a very strange and unusual order. As you know, I have never denied my son, dear little Prince Pugnacious, anything he desired. He has always had everything he wanted. Well, now he wants the moon *And he must have it !* "

The assembled company stared at the king and then at each other in sheer amazement. There was not one of them there who had not, at some time or another, longed to box Prince Puggy's ears and to



box them good and hard. They all of them detested the greedy, cheeky young prince. And now the impudent little wretch was wanting the moon!

"He must have it, I say!" cried the king. "What the prince wants he must have! That has always been my firmest rule. In his quiet, well-behaved way, he told me this evening that he wished me to give him the moon. I intend, therefore, to give him the moon. So you will go and get it for me, and bring it here to the palace. Just how you will manage this, I do not know. That is your business. But I warn you," he cried, looking very fierce, "if you return without the moon I shall punish you very severely. But to the one who does succeed in bringing me the moon, I shall give a chest full of gold and precious stones and one of my castles, and all its great estates. You will now dismiss and ride out to get the moon!"

With that, he bustled off to try to comfort Prince Puggy, by telling him that he had ordered everybody in the castle to go to fetch the moon for him.

Cricket Hears a Fiddle

As you can imagine, the king's order to fetch him the moon threw everybody into a very great state of confusion. To fetch the moon, indeed! To get it down out of the sky and carry it to the palace! Why, it would be impossible!

However, the king's order had to be obeyed, and very shortly knights, nobles and squires, men-at-arms, pages, cooks, scullions, and other servants trooped out of the castle on horse and on foot.

And it was all through that dreadful, greedy, Prince Puggy that they had been sent out on this ridiculous and impossible mission. Puggy's ears must have burned fiery red that night, considering the things that everybody was saying about him!

Among the humblest of the castle servants was a poor, thin turn-spit, called Cricket. That wasn't his real name, of course. Nobody bothered about his real name. They just called him Cricket because, although he was so thin and poor, he was always as chirpy and as merry as a cricket!

Cricket's father was dead, and he had no brothers or sisters. His mother lived alone in a tiny cottage in a distant village. She was so poor that very often she didn't have enough to eat. Cricket visited her whenever he could, and he always took her a bundle of food which the cook gave him.

"Just fancy, a chest full of gold and precious stones, and a great castle and all its rich estates!" he said to himself, as he skipped along in the light of the big yellow moon. "Oh, if only I could get the moon and win such a grand reward! I would give it all to poor Mother and then she would never, never be hungry again!"

Cricket sometimes went for a moonlight stroll all by himself, and especially at times when he wanted to think things out.

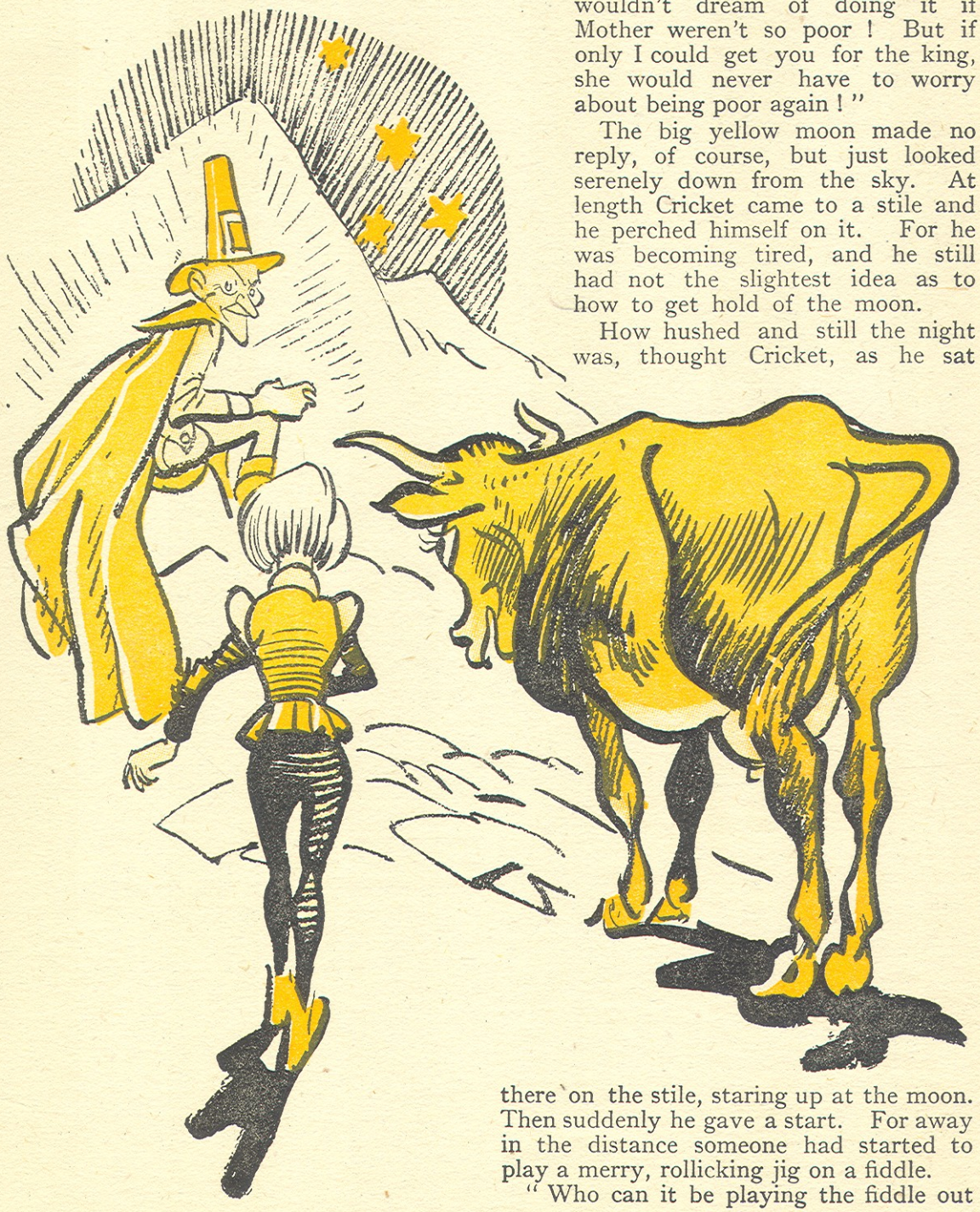
So he was quite content to be alone. But just where he was going, or how he was to set about getting hold of the moon, he had not the slightest idea.

As he ran along he looked up at the moon and sighed :

" Oh dear, if only I knew how to get you down from the sky, Old Moon ! I wouldn't dream of doing it if Mother weren't so poor ! But if only I could get you for the king, she would never have to worry about being poor again ! "

The big yellow moon made no reply, of course, but just looked serenely down from the sky. At length Cricket came to a stile and he perched himself on it. For he was becoming tired, and he still had not the slightest idea as to how to get hold of the moon.

How hushed and still the night was, thought Cricket, as he sat



there on the stile, staring up at the moon. Then suddenly he gave a start. For away in the distance someone had started to play a merry, rollicking jig on a fiddle.

" Who can it be playing the fiddle out

in the open at this time of night?" thought Cricket. "I'll go and see!"

He jumped down from the stile and ran towards the place from which the jolly, lilting music was coming. The fiddling grew louder and louder; then suddenly Cricket stopped, and his eyes nearly popped out of his head, he was so amazed!

For he saw that a cat was playing the fiddle! An enormous cat, almost as big as himself! It was sitting on the fallen trunk of a tree, fiddling away just like any musician. No wonder Cricket was astonished!

As he stood staring and staring, the cat nodded and smiled at him in the friendliest and jolliest manner. Then it started to sing:

"Hey, diddle, diddle,
The cat with the fiddle
Will play you a gay, merry tune;
Which fairies and all
First heard at their ball,
As they danced 'neath the light of the moon!"

With that, the cat started to play such a magic, merry tune that Cricket simply could not keep his feet still, but danced and capered to the joyous, rollicking notes of the fiddle.

"That's the style, Cricket!" cheered the Cat, fiddling faster and faster while Cricket's feet kept time to the mad, merry music. "Keep it up. You're doing fine. Hurrah!"

At length he brought the tune to an end with a sudden sweep of his bow across the strings. Then he sat grinning at Cricket while Cricket grinned back at him.

"Well, Cricket, what brings you out so late at night?" asked the Cat.

Instead of answering the question, Cricket said in surprise:

"How do you know my name?"

"Oh, there's not much that I don't know," replied the Cat with a smile. "A cat has nine lives, don't forget, and during my nine lives I've learned nearly everything there is to be learned!"

"Then perhaps you can help me!" cried Cricket eagerly.

He thereupon told the Cat how Prince Puggy wanted the moon and how King Archibald had despatched knights and squires, grooms and servants to get it for him. He also told of the great reward which the king had offered to whomever brought him the moon.

"I know about Prince Puggy," said the Cat when Cricket had finished, "and of all the horrid little creatures I've ever met, he's easily the worst. So he wants the moon, does he? Well, I wouldn't raise a paw to help him, Cricket, my lad, but I wouldn't mind helping you."

"Can you?" cried Cricket eagerly.

"I think I can," nodded the Cat.

Then, with another grin, he drew the bow across the fiddle-strings and started to sing softly:

"Hey, diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed to see such fun,
And the dish ran away with the spoon."

"I am the cat in that rhyme," went on

the Cat, " and the Cow Which Jumped Over The Moon is a very great friend of mine. So is the Little Dog Which Laughed. As for the Dish and the Spoon, I count them, too, among my closest friends. They're a comical pair. Always making a clatter about something. Ah, the times we've had together," sighed the Cat, " the fun and adventures, you just wouldn't believe ! "

It thereupon started to fiddle again and to sing in a very soft and dreamy sort of voice :

" The Cat and the Fiddle, the Cow, the Dog,
The Dish and the Spoon as well,
Were as merry a crew as ever you'd meet,
And many a tale could tell
Of the things they did and the sights they saw,
Not only in Fairy Dell,
But up in the hills and deep in the woods
Where goblins and witches dwell ;
In distant lands, on golden strands,
In caves of coral shell,
And quite absurd were the tales they heard
And the things which once befell ! "

" I'll tell you all about it some day," said the Cat, coming to the end of its song. " At least, not all about it because that would take ages and ages. But I'll tell you about some of the most exciting things we did. I haven't time just now, because I want to introduce you to the Cow. Come on ! "

It got up off the log and started to walk away with the fiddle tucked under its arm—or, rather, under its foreleg.

" Is it the Cow Which Jumped Over the Moon that you're going to introduce me to ? " asked Cricket, as he trotted along by the side of the Cat.

" Yes, that's right," said the Cat. " She knows all about the moon, and she'll be able to help you, if anybody can. She often jumps over the moon, just for exercise, and she's very friendly indeed with the Man In The Moon."

" Is there really a Man In The Moon ? " cried Cricket.

" Yes, there certainly is," said the Cat. " He looks after the moon and sees that it's kept bright and polished and all that sort of thing."

" But if there's a Man In The Moon," cried Cricket, struck by a sudden thought, " I don't suppose he'll let King Archibald have the moon."

" I don't suppose he will," agreed the Cat.

" But he might lend it him," suggested Cricket hopefully.

" Yes, he might do that," agreed the Cat. " Anyway, the Cow will tell you more about it than I can. Here's the field where she lives. She's over there, in the corner of the field.

Cricket Meets the Man in the Moon

THE Cat pointed towards a nice-looking brown and white cow which was lying peacefully chewing the cud. As the Cat and Cricket approached she got to her feet.

" Hallo, Buttercup ! " greeted the Cat. " I want to introduce a friend of mine. This is Cricket."

" How do you do, Cricket?" said Buttercup pleasantly, giving a sort of little bow. " I'm very pleased to meet you."

" And I'm very pleased to meet you, too," said Cricket, gazing with admiration at the famous Cow Which Jumped Over The Moon. " It is a very great honour."

" Oh, no, not at all," murmured the cow modestly.

" I think, Buttercup, that you might be able to help Cricket," went on the Cat. " That impudent young pest of a Prince Puggy wants the moon, and his father, King Baldy, has offered a whacking great reward for anyone who can get it for him. I'd like Cricket to win that reward for the sake of his poor mother, who is so kind-hearted that she would give her last drop of milk to any stray and homeless cat."

He told Buttercup the whole story. She listened with interest until he had finished. Then she said :

" I don't think the Man In The Moon would let Prince Puggy have the moon. Even if he would, it would be a terribly difficult job to get it down from out of the sky."

" But couldn't Puggy play with it up there ? " suggested the Cat.

" He might, if the Man In The Moon would let him," said Buttercup doubtfully. " The best thing we can do, I think, is to ask the Man In The Moon himself."

" That's a good idea ! " cried the Cat. " That's the thing to do. Will you take Cricket up there with you ? "

" Why, certainly, if he would like me to," said Buttercup, looking at Cricket.

" Oh, I would ! " cried Cricket eagerly. " I would like it very much indeed ! "

" Hop up on my back, then," said Buttercup.

Cricket did so, and his heart thumped with excitement as Buttercup cried :

" Hold on to my horns. Are you ready ? "

" Yes," cried Cricket, taking a firm hold of the cow's horns.

" Then hold tight ! " cried Buttercup. " For here we go ! "

The Cat was already playing its fiddle again and singing at the very top of its voice :

" With a hop, a jump and a bound,
Buttercup leaves the ground ;
To the moon she'll sail
With a whisk of her tail ;
Then back to ground
With another great bound,
Landing so neat
On her four dainty feet ! "

A hop, a jump and a bound were precisely what Buttercup took. Next instant she was sailing up and up into the night in a most enormous jump.

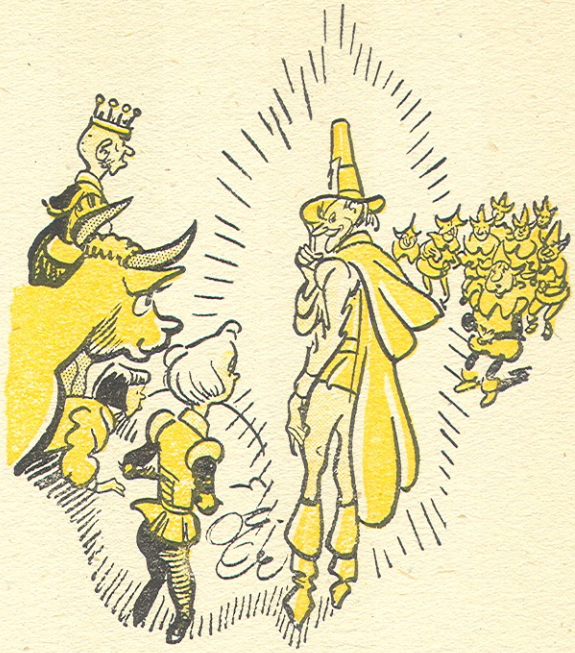
Clinging tightly to her horns, Cricket saw the great yellow moon getting bigger and bigger, at an astonishing rate. Within a few moments he could see nothing at all in front of him except the moon which was so big that it seemed to fill the whole sky.

Next instant Buttercup landed on it so neatly that Cricket didn't even feel a bump. She had landed on a flat plateau of rock which glittered like burnished gold. All around, as far as the eye could see, were mountains, valleys and plains all glittering and shining bright yellow as though they had been polished and polished.

" Well, here we are," said Buttercup pleasantly, turning her head to look at Cricket, who was still perched on her back. " And yonder's the Man In The Moon ! "

She inclined one of her horns towards a gleaming, yellow boulder on which a man was sitting clad in a long, yellow robe and wearing a tall, yellow, conical hat. Although he had his back to them, Cricket could see that the man was very tall, thin and lanky. He was sitting hunched up on the boulder in what looked like a very dejected attitude indeed.

" He doesn't seem to have noticed us yet," said Cricket, slipping down off Buttercup's back.



" No, he doesn't," agreed Buttercup. " Come, let us go and speak to him."

Together they walked towards the Man In The Moon, who was sitting with his elbows propped on his knees and with his chin cupped in his hands, staring in front of him.

" Good evening, sir," said Buttercup.

At the sound of her voice the Man In The Moon gave a start. But he did not jump to his feet. He just looked quickly round, and Cricket saw that he had a long, thin, leather-coloured face and very clear blue eyes.

It could be a very humorous sort of a face, thought Cricket. At the moment, however, there was an expression of deep gloom on the face of the Man In The Moon.

" Oh, hallo, Buttercup ! " he said. " I didn't notice you arrive." Then with a quick glance at Cricket, he said to her : " I see you've brought a friend with you."

" Yes, allow me to introduce you," said Buttercup. " This is Cricket, a friend of mine from the Earth. Cricket, this is the Man In The Moon."

" How do you do, sir ? " said Cricket, holding out his hand.

" I don't do very well, and that's a fact ! " said the Man In The Moon, shaking hands. " But I'm very pleased to meet you all the same. Welcome to the moon !"

" Thank you, sir," said Cricket.

" Cricket has something to ask you," said Buttercup. " That's why I've brought him to see you. I don't suppose for a moment that you'll be able to help him, but there's no harm in asking."

" No harm at all," agreed the Man In

The Moon politely. " Fire away, young man. What is it you want ? "

" Well, sir, I work in the kitchens of King Archibald's palace," began Cricket.

" I know the place," put in the Man In The Moon, nodding his head. " I know King Archibald as well. I've often looked down at nights on him and his palace."

" Then you'll know his son Prince Puggy, sir," went on Cricket. " All his life Prince Puggy has had everything he's wanted. But now he wants the moon. Oh, I know it's terribly greedy of him, sir, but he wants it——"

" And he can have it ! " yelled the Man In The Moon, in such a loud and startling voice that both Cricket and Buttercup gave quite a jump. " He can have it, I say ! " yelled the Man In The Moon, waving his long, thin arms in the wildest manner. " I don't want it ! I'll be glad to get rid of it ! He can have it and welcome, and I hope it does him good ! "

" But, sir, is anything wrong ? " cried Buttercup, in astonishment.

" Wrong ? " cried the Man In The Moon. " *Wrong ?* " repeated he. " I should jolly well think something is wrong ! The gnomes are taking a holiday. The whole lot of them ! The Polish Makers, the Duster Makers and the Moon Polishers themselves. They insist on it ! They're taking a month's holiday, and I just don't know who is to keep the moon properly polished during that time ! "

He broke off and strode agitatedly up and down for a few moments. Then he halted and turned to Cricket.

" Excuse my outburst," he said, " but I feel very much upset—very much upset indeed ! You see, it's this way ! "

He then explained to Cricket that the moon was kept bright and shining and polished by a swarm of gnomes called the Moon Polishers. The polish was made by other gnomes called the Polish Makers, and the dusters used for the polishing were made by other gnomes called the Duster Makers. And now the whole lot of them had downed tools and were starting a month's holiday.

" There's plenty of polish made and plenty of dusters," cried the Man In The Moon, " but there's nobody to polish the moon except myself and it's quite impossible for one pair of hands to polish *all* the moon. It just can't be done ! "

" Does it matter very much if it isn't all polished ? " asked Buttercup gently.

" Of course it matters ! " cried the Man In The Moon. " If it's not kept properly polished it won't be seen by the Earth people and then there'll be trouble ! "

" Who from, sir ? " inquired Cricket.

" Why, from the gnomes, of course ! " cried the Man In The Moon " You see although I'm the head person on the moon, I've really got to do what the gnomes tell me. They're the ones who really rule the moon. They've got a Committee of

Polish Makers, Duster Makers and Polishers and this Committee tells me what they want doing. If the Committee says that the moon must be kept polished, then it must be kept polished. If the Committee says that the gnomes are going to have a holiday, then they have a holiday. And if the Committee orders *me* to keep the moon polished while they're all on holiday, then I've jolly well got to do it ! "

" It seems hard lines, sir," said Cricket.

" It is hard lines ! " cried the Man In The Moon angrily. " It's more than that. It's very tiresome and thoughtless indeed of the gnomes to make *me* keep the whole of the moon polished for a month. But I'm not going to do it. I've got a better plan than that. I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to RESIGN ! "

" *Resign ?* " cried Buttercup, shocked.

" Yes, resign ! " cried the Man In The Moon in a ringing voice. " Cricket says that Prince Puggy wants the moon. Well, he can have it. He and that stupid, doting father of his, King Archibald. The pair of them can have my job. They'll be the head persons on the moon and I hope they'll enjoy it. I'll have them brought here now ! "

From a pocket in his long, yellow robes he took a whistle made of pure gold. Putting it to his lips he blew a long, shrill, piercing blast which reminded Cricket of the shriek of the wind in a winter storm.

" What are you doing ? " cried Buttercup, in alarm.

" I am summoning my good friend the North Wind," cried the Man In The Moon. " He will swoop down to the Earth and in his mighty but invisible arms he will carry King Archibald and his greedy son up here to the moon. Ah, here he is ! "

There came a sudden rushing mighty wind and a voice like thunder roared :

" I am here, O Man In The Moon. Can I be of help to you ? "

" Yes, you can ! " cried the Man In The Moon. " I'll tell you what I would like you to do ! "

The invisible North Wind kept rushing round and round, nearly freezing Cricket and Buttercup with his icy breath as the Man In The Moon told him that he wanted him to swoop down to the Earth and to snatch up Prince Puggy and King Archibald and bring them up to the moon.

" 'Tis as good as done, O Man In The Moon ! " roared the North Wind when the Man In The Moon had finished. " I will do anything for you, for you're my friend."

Next instant he was gone, rushing noisily down towards the Earth.

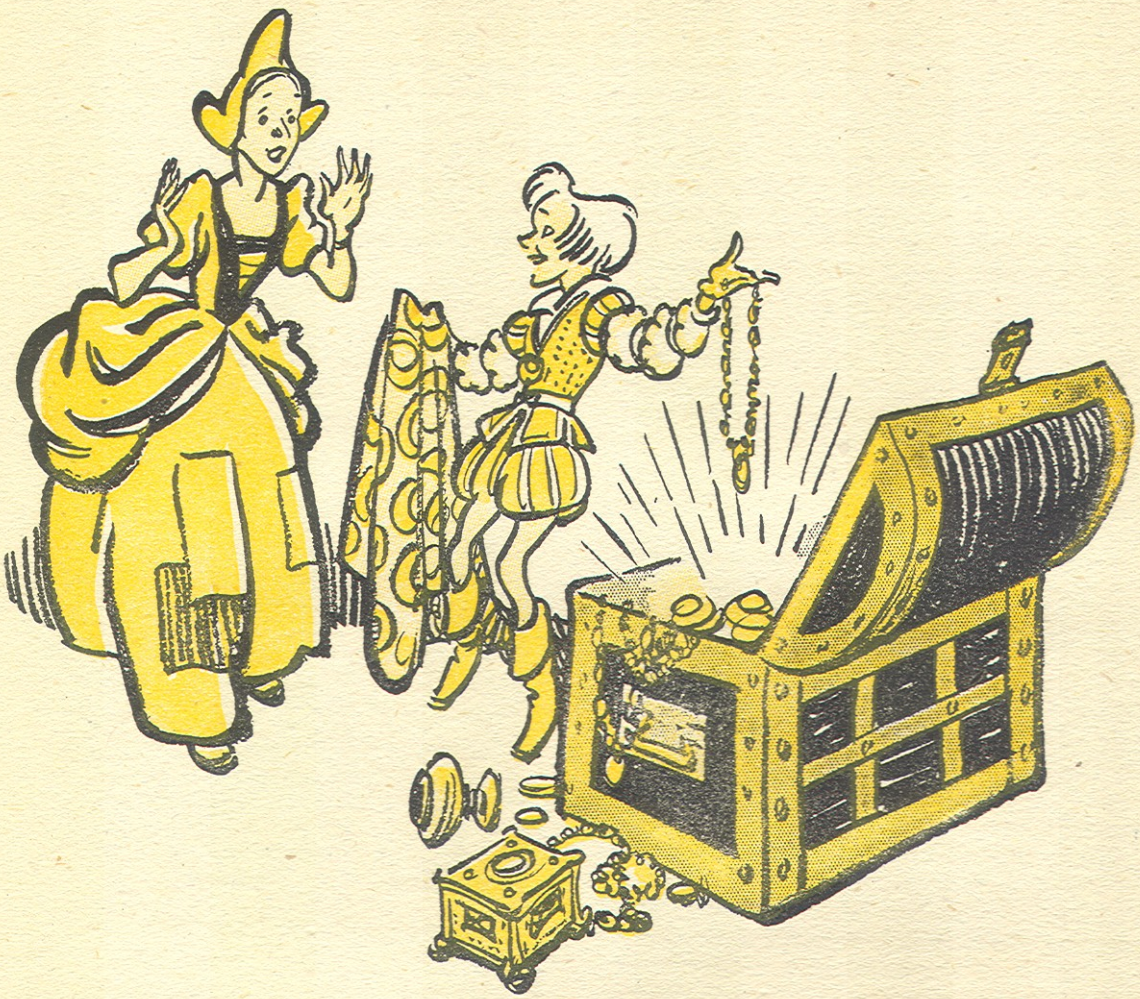
Puggy Gets a Surprise!

THOUGH the hour was late, Prince Puggy was not yet asleep. He had set his heart on having the moon and he meant to have it. So nothing would induce him to go to sleep.

Tired of his bad temper and his tantrums, his nurses had left him alone in his room. But he was still sitting up in bed, crying and kicking and bawling for the moon.

Then suddenly he got the fright of his life. For, without the slightest warning, the window flew violently open and the North Wind rushed madly into the room with a roar and a bellow.

Next instant it had scooped Prince Puggy clean out of bed and was tearing along the corridor with him. Into the king's bedroom it rushed, sending the door flying violently open.



King Archibald was not yet in bed. As he had despatched all his servants to get the moon, he was sitting on the edge of the bed giving his crown a polish. For he was very proud of his golden crown and he had it polished every night.

Well! He got the fright of his life when the door flew violently open, and he saw Prince Puggy coming rushing towards him, as though being borne in invisible but powerful arms.

Before the king could move, however, he, too, had been swept up by the rushing North Wind! Out through the window it tore with a triumphant whoop, carrying King Archibald and Prince Puggy swiftly up towards the moon!

The startled pair couldn't even yell for help, for the North Wind was travelling at such a speed that it nearly took their breath away.

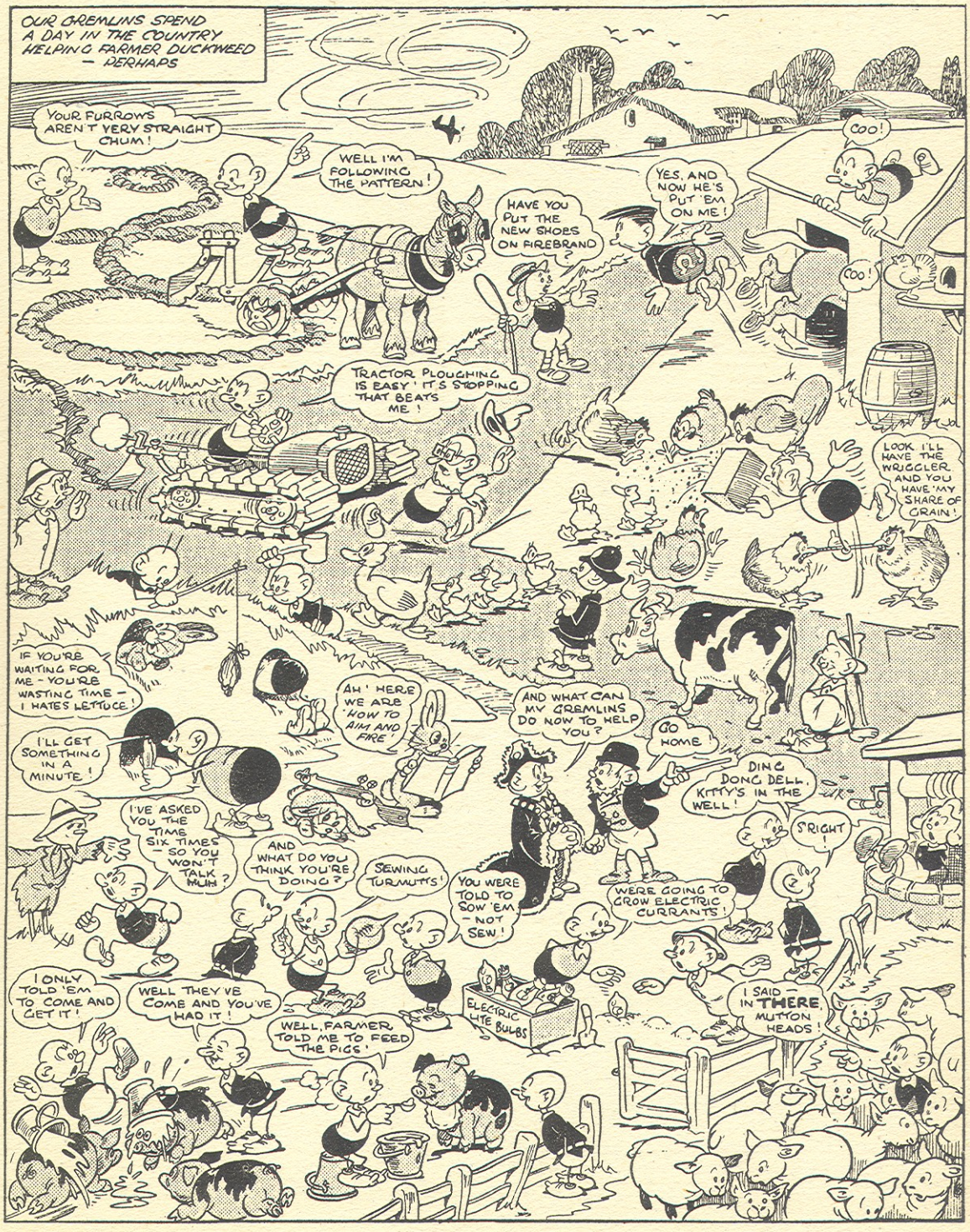
The earth rapidly dwindled as it was left behind, and the moon grew bigger and bigger as the North Wind tore towards it. Then, almost before they knew what was happening, King Archibald and Prince Puggy were dumped down on the glittering yellow plateau in front of the Man In The Moon, Buttercup and Cricket.

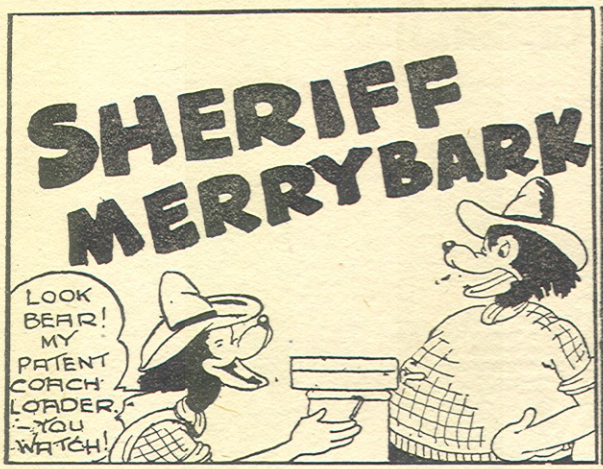
"There, O Man In The Moon!" bellowed the North Wind in his mighty voice. "There are the two humans you wanted me to fetch!"

"Thank you, North Wind, my good

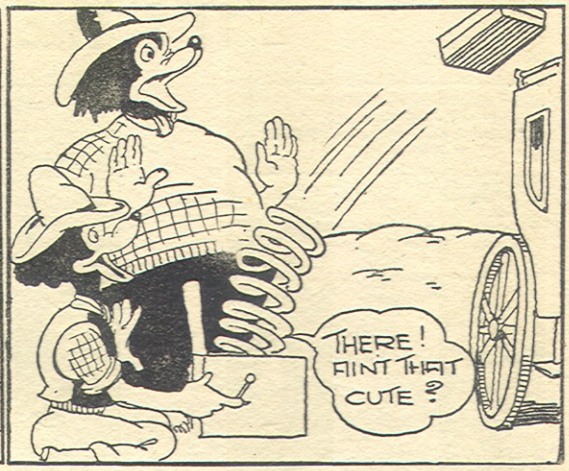
(*Continued on page* 162.)

IT'S THE GREMLINS!



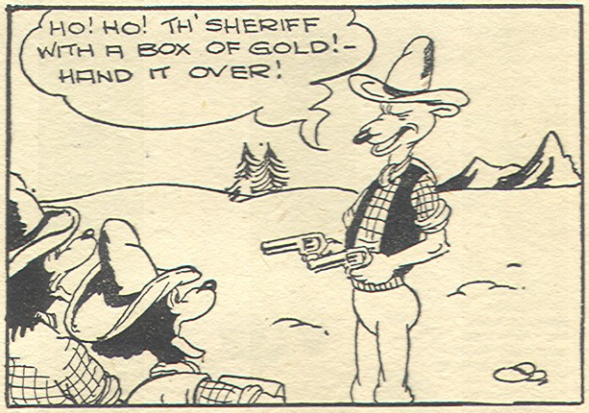


3. Why, whatever is this queer affair that Sheriff Merrybark has invented? Doesn't look much more than an ordinary box, but perhaps there's something in it. Bear rolls up to see what it is all about. "It's my patent coach-loader," explains Sheriff Merrybark.

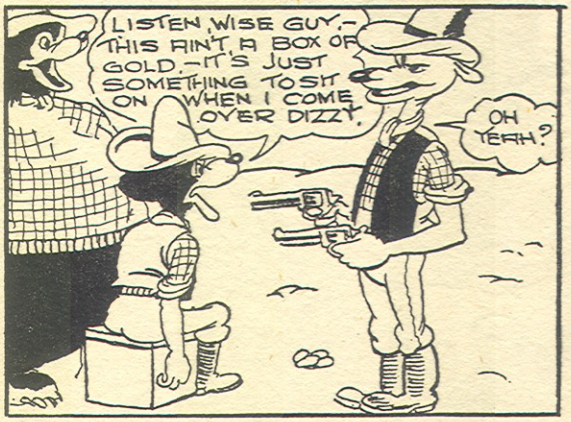


2. Bear does not catch on, but the Sheriff gives a demonstration. He puts the box on the ground near one of the mail coaches. Then he takes a case to be loaded on the coach, and puts it on top of the box. He pulls down a lever and things start to happen.

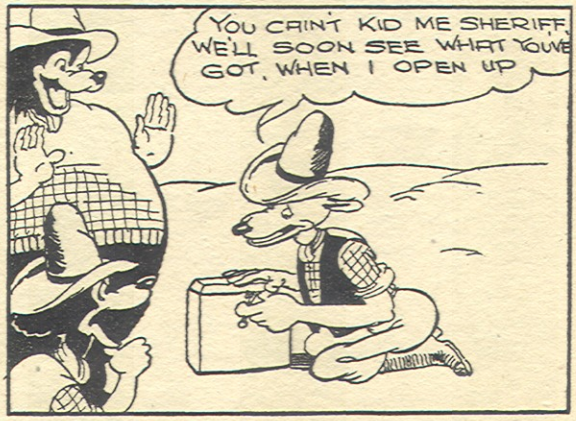
3. This gadget of his springs open like a Jack-in-the-box and the case is sent into the air, to land smack on top of the coach. Swell, eh? Bear thinks it's pretty cute, but reckons that it's more important for the Sheriff to round up the bad men.



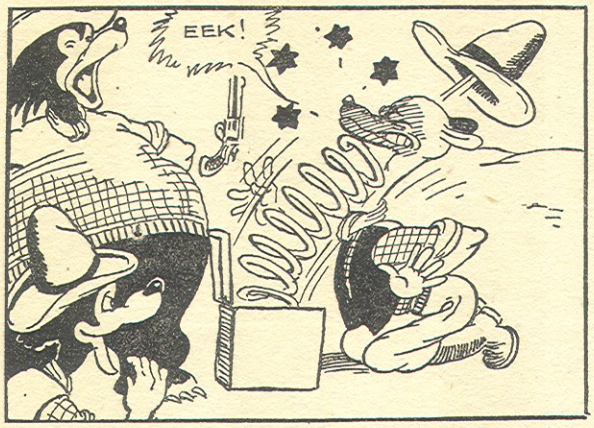
4. Sheriff Merrybark closes the box and carts it along with him. Who should turn up then, but Two-Gun Bill, the tough guy of Toppling Falls. He reckons the Sheriff is carrying a box of gold. "Hand over!" he orders, pulling out his two six-shooters.



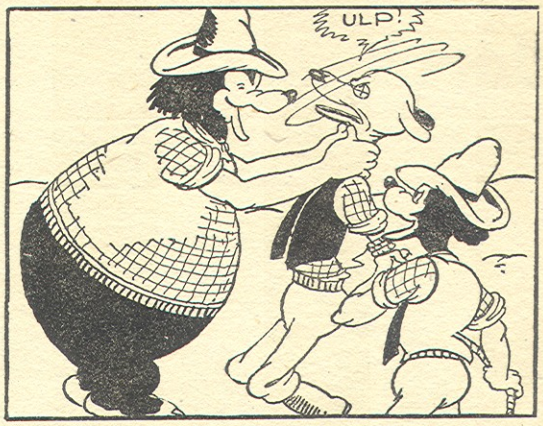
5. That's the worse of these bad men—they always think other folks must be carti g boxes of treasure around, especially for their benefit. Sheriff Merrybark points out his mistake to Two-Gun Bill. "It's to sit on when I come over dizzy," he says.



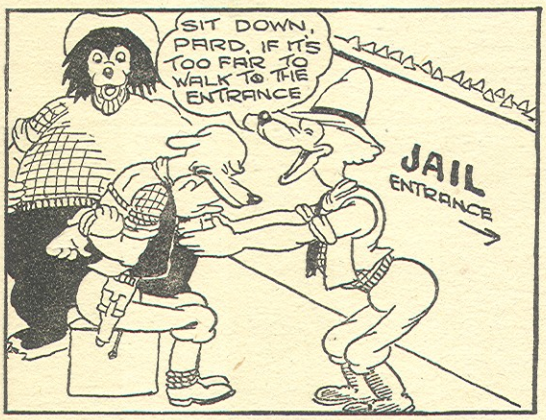
6. "You cain't kid me, Sheriff," says the bad man, and he snatches the box. "We'll soon see what you've got when I open up!" he adds. Sheriff Merrybark and Bear reckon he is talking sense now. They look on and grin.



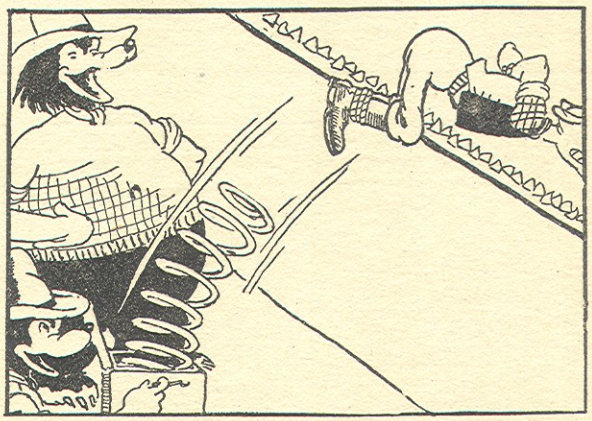
7. So he takes off the catch meaning to take a look. He soon finds out what is in the box. The secret is out in no time. Bear and the Sheriff think this is great, but Two-Gun Bill is knocked speechless.



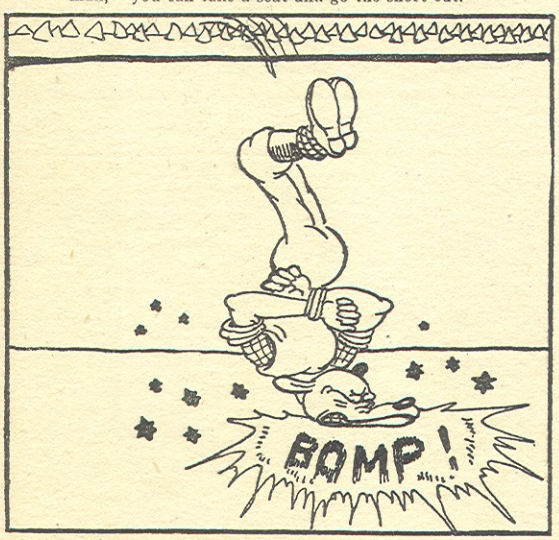
8. Bear reckons they had better take Two-Gun Bill back to the cooler. So he makes a grab at him, and then trusses him up like a chicken.



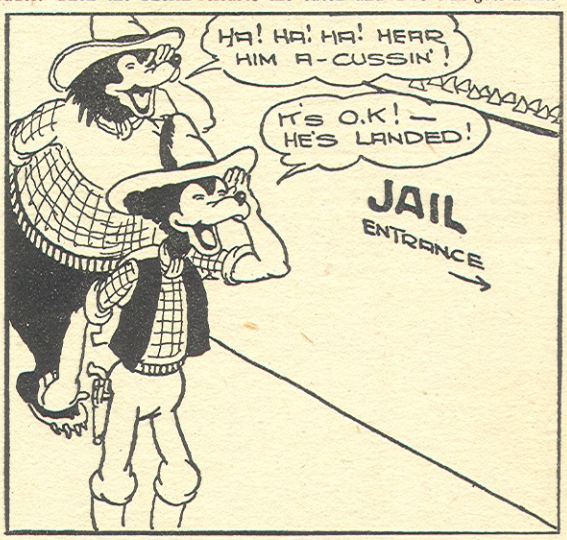
9. When they get near the jail wall, the Sheriff gets a swell idea. "If it's too far to walk to the jail," he says to the bad man, "you can take a seat and go the short cut."



10. Bear thinks the Sheriff is getting soft but he soon twigs the notion when the Sheriff makes Two-Gun Bill sit on the patent coach-loader. Then the Sheriff releases the catch and Two-Gun gets a lift.

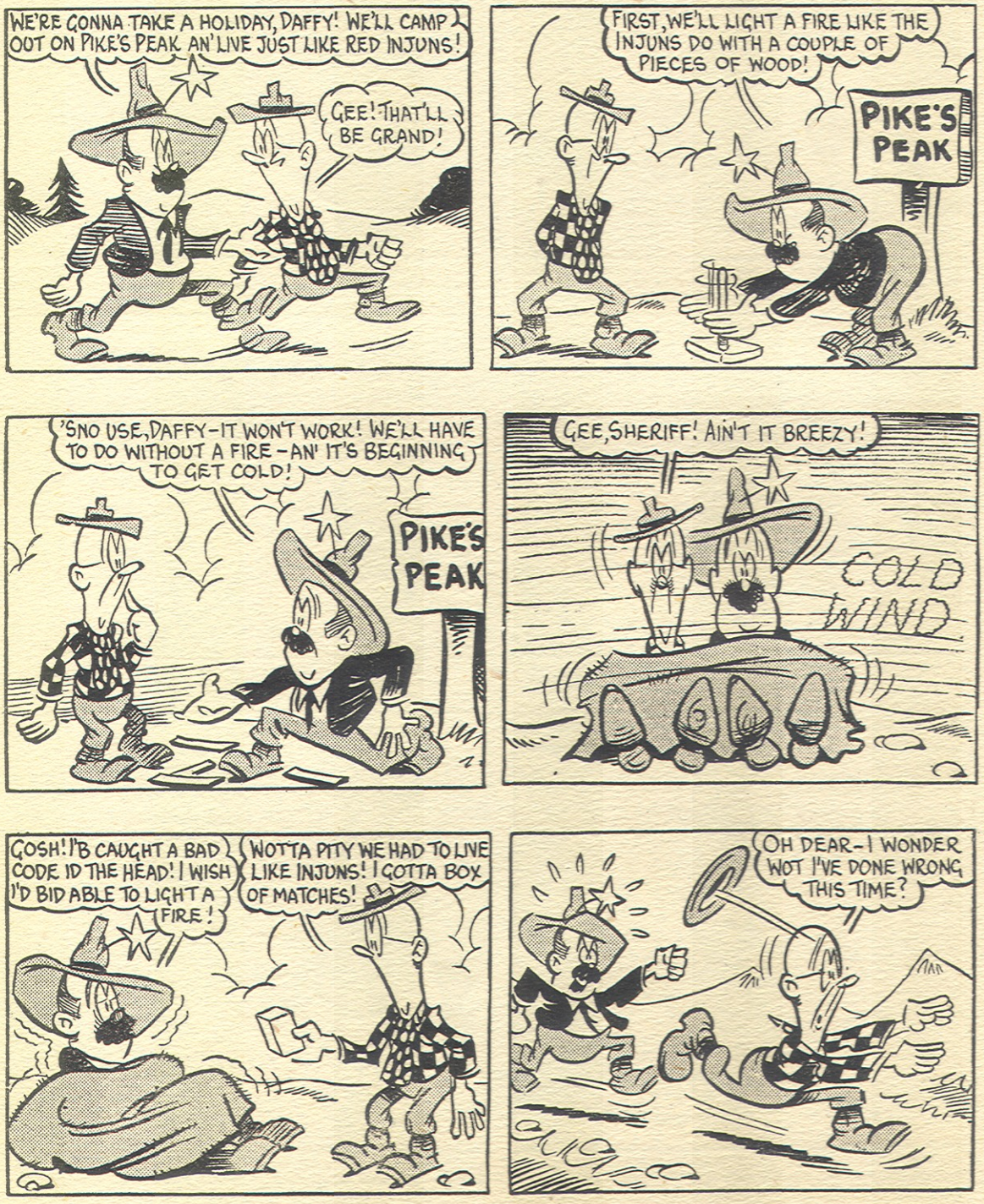


11. Does that bad man travel some? Yes, sir—and how! Over the jail wall and into the cooler. Quite a thrill for him, but he doesn't seem to like it all that much.

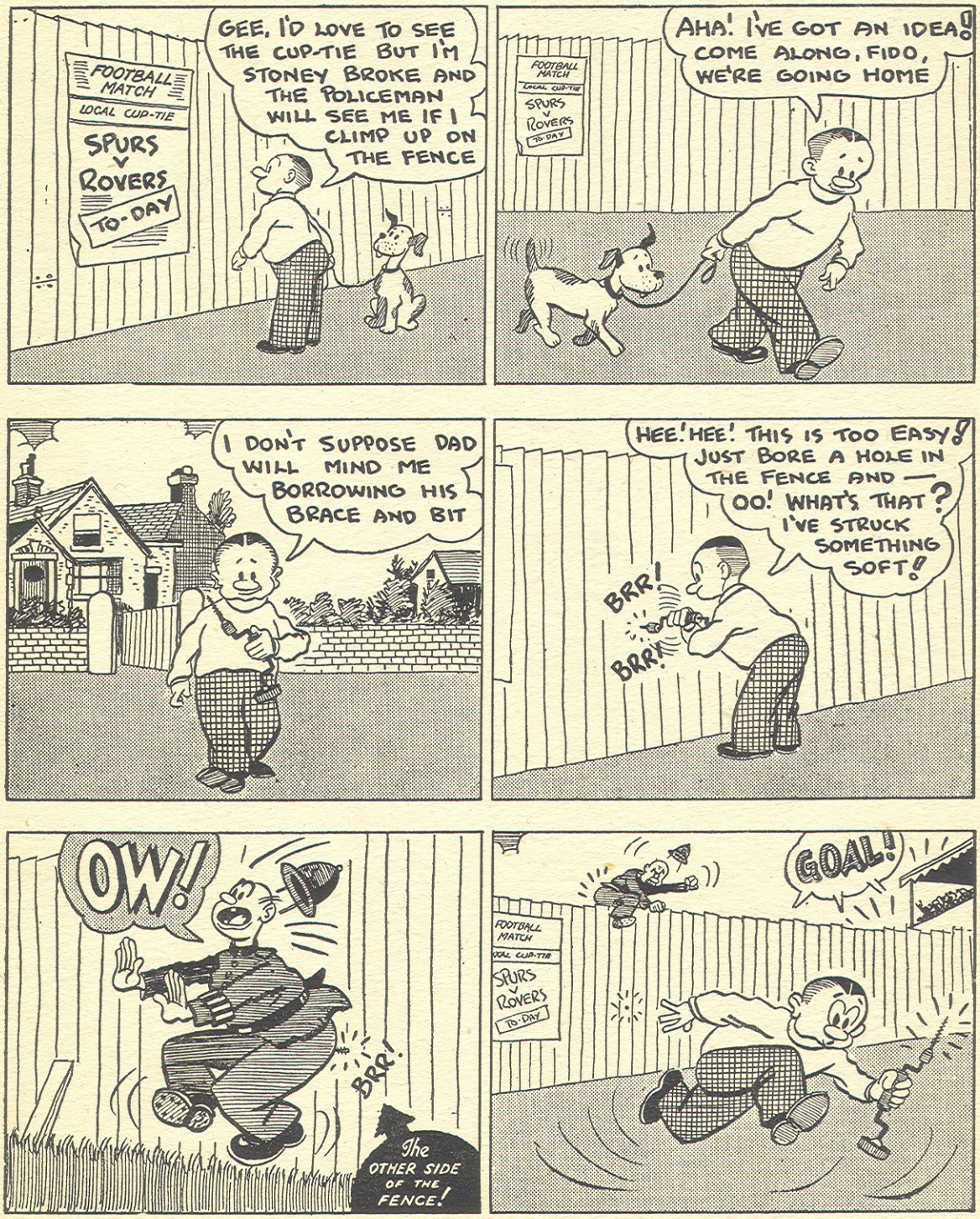


12. "He's landed," grins Bear. "I'll say you're a clever guy, Sheriff. Bad men don't stand a chance round here with you on their trail! No, sir!"

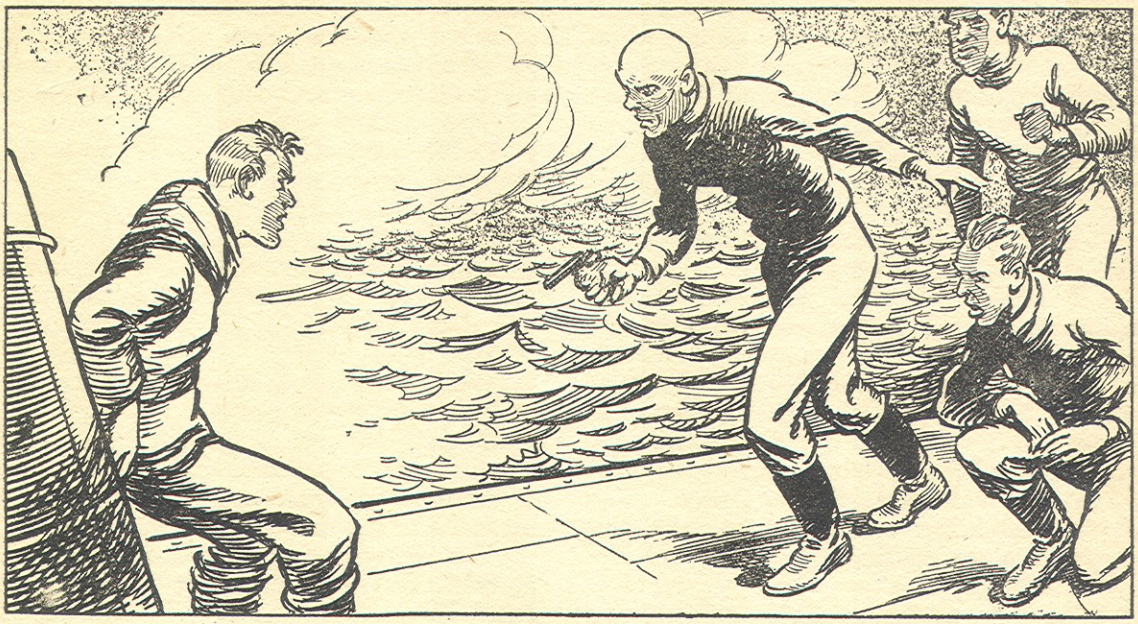
DAFFY - - - - THE COWBOY 'TEC



MIKE


FOOTBALL MATCH
LOCAL CUP-TIE
SPURS v ROVERS
TO-DAY
GEE, I'D LOVE TO SEE THE CUP-TIE BUT I'M STONEY BROKE AND THE POLICEMAN WILL SEE ME IF I CLIMP UP ON THE FENCE
AHA! I'VE GOT AN IDEA! COME ALONG, FIDO, WE'RE GOING HOME
I DON'T SUPPOSE DAD WILL MIND ME BORROWING HIS BRACE AND BIT
HEE! HEE! THIS IS TOO EASY! JUST BORE A HOLE IN THE FENCE AND — OO! WHAT'S THAT? I'VE STRUCK SOMETHING SOFT!
BRR!
BRR!
OW!
BRR!
The OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE!
GOAL!

YOU SAY YOU'VE GOT A SUIT FOR EVERY DAY IN THE WEEK! – WHY, I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU IN ANY OTHER THAN THE ONE YOU'RE WEARING!
YES! THIS IS IT!
NOW TOMMY, IF I TAKE A POTATO, CUT IT IN HALF THEN IN QUARTERS, THEN IN HALVES AGAIN, WHAT SHALL I HAVE?
CHIPS, MISS!
YES, I BEGAN LIFE WITHOUT SHOES TO MY FEET – AND NOW I'VE HALF A MILLION!
GREAT SCOTT! WHO CLEANS THEM ALL?
PIN-UP JOKES
WOULD YOU MIND WALKING UP AND DOWN OUR GARDEN PATH FOR A LITTLE WHILE – WE HAVEN'T GOT A GARDEN ROLLER!
THIS PICTURE OF YOUR LITTLE BROTHER ISN'T VERY GOOD!
NO, BUT THEN NEITHER IS HE!
DO YOU THINK THEY CAN HEAR US ALL RIGHT?
YES! SOMEBODY'S JUST SHUT A WINDOW!
FANKS
WILLIE, YOUR MOUTH IS OPEN!
I KNOW DAD, I OPENED IT MYSELF!
THIS BE THE VERY LATEST TYPE OF MILKING MACHINE!
AND DOES IT MAKE MILK AS GOOD AS COWS DO?
IS IT A SPRING MATTRESS YOU WANT MADAM?
NO LUV, ONE I CAN USE ALL THE YEAR ROUND!
BUT THAT WON'T AMUSE THE BABY, – IT ISN'T HERE!
YES IT IS – IT'S INSIDE THE DUSTBIN!
BONG!
HEY! CAN'T YOU SEE THAT NOTICE?
YES THANKS! IT'S QUITE RIGHT TOO!
FINE FOR SPEEDING



ATLANTIC PATROL

How A Young Pilot's Presence of Mind Overcame A Powerful Menace in the North Atlantic

Unknown Danger in the North Atlantic

At the seaward end of a dark and rugged valley which swept down from volcanic heights, lay the Icelandic station of Atlantic Air Patrol. Group Captain Fraser, in command of the lonely station, was standing at the window of his office, staring out at the bleak desolation around him.

To east and west of the cluster of grey stone buildings which comprised the hangars, offices and living quarters of the personnel, the sides of the valley sloped steeply to high, precipitous cliffs which rose stark and sheer from out of the sea.

The window of the Group Captain's office faced directly on to a sheltered bay where several of the beautifully streamlined aircraft of Air Patrol lay at their moorings.

Near them, on the slate-grey water, lay aircraft and fast, ocean-going launches of Air Sea Rescue, while here and there smaller launches carrying radio and engine mechanics plied between aircraft and shore.

A sudden knock at the door of his office caused Group Captain Fraser to turn from the window. As he did so, the door opened and a young, slimly-built pilot in the dark-blue uniform of Air Patrol stepped into the room, closing the door behind him.

" You wish to see me, sir? " he said, giving a snap salute.

" Yes, Raynor," said the Group Captain

Seating himself at his desk, he studied for a moment Raynor's tanned, clean-cut features, level blue eyes and firm-lipped mouth. Of all his pilots, he knew Raynor to be one of the keenest and the best.

" You are due to leave on patrol in a quarter of an hour? " he asked.

" Yes, sir," said Raynor.

The Group Captain was silent a moment, then both his voice and his eyes were troubled as he went on :

" I have had a radio message from Headquarters in London. It was in the usual code, of course, but it expressed the gravest dissatisfaction with the manner in which our air patrol of the North Atlantic is being carried out."

A faint flush deepened the tan of Raynor's features.

" We are doing everything we can do, sir," he said a trifle curtly.

" I know you are," said the Group Captain. " But that does not alter the fact that within the last month, two large ocean-going liners and three big cargo vessels have vanished without trace, on the sea lanes covered by our patrol. On top of that, two of our patrolling aircraft have also vanished without trace. You knew Murchison and Ackroyd, the two pilots who are missing ? "

" I did, sir ! "

" Two of our most reliable and capable pilots," nodded the Group Captain. " Yet the last message received from both of them was merely the ordinary routine signal that all was well. If they went down in the sea—as obviously they must have done—it was not through engine failure. Had that been the case, we would have received a signal from at least one of them. There would have been ample time before their aircraft hit the water."

" Yes, sir, I agree," said Raynor.

" Then how do you account for it ? " demanded the Group Captain abruptly, looking him squarely in the face. " Have you any theory at all ? "

" There are only two theories which, to my mind, will fit the case, sir," said Raynor, " and each of them seems beyond the bounds of probability."

" Nevertheless, I would like to hear them," said the Group Captain.

" Well, one is foul play somewhere out there over the ocean," said Raynor. " And the other is sabotage, which could be done here at the base."

" With regard to sabotage," said the Group Captain, staring at him, " you mean that an aircraft could be tampered with here in such a way as to cause it to develop some fatal fault while out on patrol ? "

" Yes, sir," said Raynor. " But the weak part of the sabotage theory is the absence of motive. How could it possibly benefit anyone to tamper with our aircraft and send two pilots like Murchison and Ackroyd to their deaths ? "

" In no way at all that I can see," admitted the Group Captain.

" No, nor I," said Raynor. " Again, the theory of sabotage doesn't tie up with the mysterious disappearance of two big liners and three cargo vessels. But the theory of foul play does ! "

" How ? "

" Well, suppose that for some reason the five missing vessels were attacked and sunk," said Raynor. " Isn't it conceivable that, in going to the assistance of a couple of them, Murchison and Ackroyd were themselves shot down by the attacker "

" Yes, but granting that for a moment," retorted the Group Captain, " why didn't either Murchison or Ackroyd radio us as to what was happening ? They could easily have signalled even as they were going in to deal with the attacker. We had no such signal from them."

" I know," said Raynor helplessly. " That is just what seems to knock the bottom out of this theory of foul play."

" Nor was any signal received from any of the five vessels that they were being attacked," went on the Group Captain. " No matter how swiftly such an attack was carried out, surely one of them could have managed to have got a signal through. In any case, who in these days would attack peaceful merchantmen and passenger liners, sailing on lawful business on the high seas ? "

" I don't know, sir," admitted Raynor.

" No, nor I," said the Group Captain, rising. " But somewhere out there, Raynor, either on or over the Atlantic lies some deadly, mysterious menace. It may be some unheard of phenomena of Nature which has caused the loss of these lives, ships and aircraft. Or, incredible though it appears, it may be the hand of man. It is up to us, the Atlantic Air Patrol, to solve the mystery and I know you will spare no effort to do so. It amounts to this, Raynor—the honour of the Patrol is at stake ! "

" I understand, sir," said Raynor quietly.

" You are off on patrol now," said the Group Captain, holding out his hand. " Good luck to you ! "

Raynor Sets Out

Clad in warm flying kit to keep out the bitter chill of those northern latitudes, Raynor took his beautifully streamlined, jet-propelled Buzzard roaring across the waters of the bay, to soar steeply up towards the grey and leaden cloud base, four thousand feet above.

Swinging on the climb, he headed southwards towards the great trans-Atlantic sea lanes and air routes which were patrolled every hour out of the twenty-four by aircraft of Air Patrol.

The Patrol had already saved many lives, both from ships in distress and aircraft down in the sea. But that was just part of the job. The pilots of Air Patrol knew the identification markings of all the great airway companies, and they were constantly on the look-out for strange or unlicensed aircraft which might be engaged in smuggling or other lawlessness.

Flattening out at a thousand feet below the cloud base, Raynor flew southwards. Suddenly a tiny green bulb glowed brilliantly on the instrument panel in front of him. It was Henderson, the pilot whom he was relieving, coming off patrol forty miles to the west of him and wishing to speak to him.

Raynor pressed the button which gave him Henderson's wave-length. As he did so, Henderson's voice came clearly to his ears :

" C 2 8 calling N 4 ! C 2 8 calling N 4 ! "

" N 4 receiving you ! " replied Raynor. " N 4 receiving you ! Have you anything to report ? "

" Oh, hallo, Raynor ! " said Henderson conversationally. " I thought perhaps you were having a snooze. I hope I haven't wakened you up ? "

" No, that's quite all right," chuckled Raynor. " I was just filling my hot-water bottle and winding the alarm clock up ! Any excitements ? "

" No, nothing at all," replied Henderson. " Cloud base lifts to five thousand five hundred just north of latitude 60, if that interests you."

" Is that all you know ? "

" It's all there is to know," retorted Henderson. " The Atlantic's as dull as ditch water at the moment. Anyway, it's all yours and you're welcome to it. Cheerio ! "

' G'bye ! " said Raynor.

He pressed the clearance button and the brilliant green bulb dimmed as he switched the wave-length back to base. He glanced at his automatic position indicator—an illuminated and steadily moving arrow on the chart in front of him—then reported his position back to base with the message :

" Have just spoken C 2 8 homeward bound. Nothing to report. All's well ! "

An hour passed as the Buzzard roared on over the grey and desolate waste of waters. Raynor was flying entirely by vision, though, had he climbed into the dense cloud bank, he could still have watched the sea below by means of the artificial eye which reflected on a glass screen, the whole vista of wild and tumbling waters, over which he was flying.

He was well over the sea lanes by now, and occasionally he saw below him some deep-sea freighter with which he exchanged courtesies over the radio.

He swung west towards the American seaboard, a thousand miles and more away. He had fixed the automatic pilot and although his eyes continually swept the sea, his mind was busy with the mysterious disappearance of ships and aircraft which he had discussed with Group Captain Fraser.

It was on and over these waters that the disappearances had occurred. Yet, the more Raynor thought about it, the more the solution of the mystery eluded him.

As the Group Captain had said, if it had been foul play, why had neither Murchison nor Ackroyd sent out a signal ? All they had to do was to speak into the radio. No matter how swiftly danger had come to them, surely there must have been time in which to send out just some brief word !

Suddenly Raynor stiffened in his seat. Away to port was the distant silver hull

and squat smoke stacks of the great White Circle liner *Silver Star*. Raynor had been expecting to sight her, for he knew that she was eastward bound from New York for Liverpool.

But, distant though she was, he could see that she had no way on her. There was no surge of water from her bows, no creaming wake trailing from her stern. She was lying motionless on the water.

Swinging his machine towards her with nose down, Raynor pressed the button which gave him Urgent Priority Call on the liner's wave-length. A tiny bulb glowed red, and, as he tore down towards the *Silver Star*, he said tersely :

" *Atlantic Patrol calling Silver Star! Atlantic Patrol calling Silver Star! Are you in need of assistance? Are you in need of assistance?* "

There came no answer nor acknowledgment of any sort from the motionless liner. Yet Raynor knew that, if her radio were functioning, she must be receiving his call and must, by International Regulations, answer it immediately !

At two hundred feet above the sea he flattened out, and, still calling the liner, he made a flat sweep around her. He was receiving no reply to his repeated signals, but he saw that the starboard rails of her great decks, rising tier upon tier, were crowded with passengers who were waving to him in what appeared to be either the greatest panic or excitement.

On the high, curving bridge a group of uniformed officers were gesticulating wildly in his direction and there came the sudden, swift, intermittent flash of an electric signalling lamp.

" Then her radio is out of action ! " muttered Raynor. " There's something radically wrong here ! "

He completed another wide, flat sweep round the mighty vessel, then cut his power and glided in towards her so as to read the signal which was being flashed from her heliograph. As he did so, however, his eye was caught by something which froze him momentarily in his seat.

For a swirling line of foam was streaking swiftly across the sea straight towards the liner!

It was a torpedo. That line of foam could be made by nothing else. Even as the incredible thought flashed in on Raynor, he switched on his power. And, in that same instant, the torpedo struck.

There came a deafening explosion, audible above the roar of the Buzzard's powerful jets. As he swooped up in a steep, climbing turn, Raynor had a glimpse of the giant liner exploding into fragments before his very eyes !

Masts, smoke-stacks, wreckage spewed upwards in a terrifying, blinding sheet of flame which seemed to fill the whole sky, and the scorching hot blast of the explosion caught the Buzzard, whirling it over and over like a leaf in a gale.

Raynor Releases Two Depth Charges!

His face white beneath its tan, Raynor fought desperately to regain control of his machine. By instinct alone he kept her nose up, then as her powerful jets drove her skywards, he righted her and flattened out.

Below him, nothing remained of the *Silver Star* save a few pieces of charred and smoking wreckage pitching on the boiling welter of sea where she had been blown to pieces.

But Raynor had no eyes for that ! He knew only too well that there could be no survivors of that frightful explosion. Every soul aboard her must have perished with the ship.

It was her murderous attacker whom Raynor wanted. She had been attacked from starboard, and over that area Raynor swept the sea in swift and ever widening circles.

Then suddenly he spotted his quarry. A few fathoms deep was a dark, gigantic and steadily moving shadow. Even as Raynor saw it, the shadow grew more vague and indistinct, as the monster dived for the dark, mysterious depths of the underseas.

Raynor had one split second in which to act. His machine carried two depth charges, small but of a deadly explosive power. There was no time in which to use his bomb sight. The raider was diving too steeply for that. He must rely on his

own judgment and the aim of his naked eye.

His finger on the bomb release, he pulled a steep wing turn, levelled up, then pressed the release. The two depth charges fell together, hurtling down into the sea at the spot where Raynor judged the sinister monster to be.

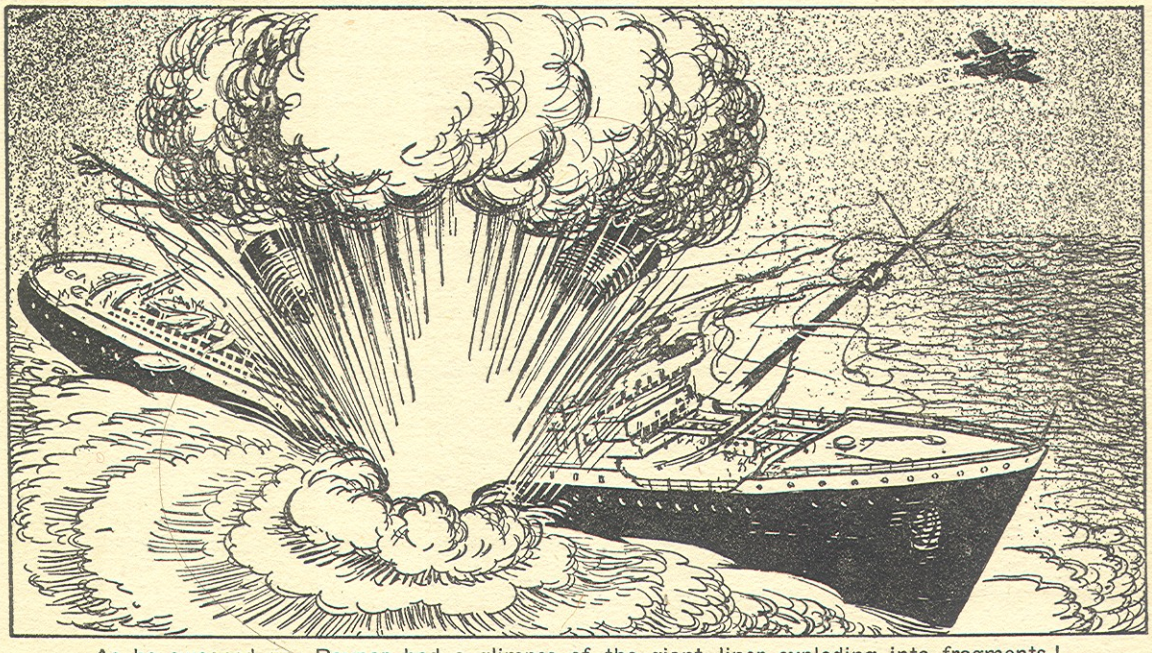
Circling, Raynor saw a gigantic spout of water, as the charges exploded. Then as the foaming, surging cauldron of sea gradually subsided, he eagerly scanned it for some tell-tale film of oil or floating wreckage.

" Base is receiving you, N 4 ! " came back the reply through space. " Base is receiving you, N 4 ! "

" Am transmitting Urgent Priority Call for Commanding Officer ! " went on Raynor quickly. " Am transmitting Urgent Priority Call for Commanding Officer ! "

" Base ready to receive Urgent Priority Call for Commanding Officer ! " came the reply, quickly repeated.

From his automatic position indicator, Raynor swiftly gave his bearings, then went on :



As he swooped up, Raynor had a glimpse of the giant liner exploding into fragments !

His heart sank as he saw neither of these signs of a kill. Yet he must have been dead on the target, he told himself, and surely no underseas craft, whatever its design and construction, could withstand the deadly force of the powerful depth charges.

However, this seemed to Raynor to be the case. The sea had resumed its grey, leaden colour and there was no trace of oil or wreckage at all. Still circling, Raynor switched on to the wave-length of his base.

"N 4 calling base ! " he began. " N 4 calling base ! Are you receiving me ? "

" At 10.21 hours N 4 on duty patrol sighted White Circle liner *Silver Star* lying at aforementioned bearings without any way on her. N 4 immediately called her on International Urgent Priority signal for seaborne craft in distress——"

The words ended abruptly, Raynor's eyes dilated and his fingers tightened convulsively on his controls. For less than a mile away a monster black form had suddenly heaved itself up from out of the sea to lie on the surface of the water.

It was fully one hundred and fifty feet in length and was shaped like some

enormous cigar. Dead amidships was a squat conning-tower, for'ard and aft of which was a flat gun-platform. As Raynor stared with amazed eyes, the figures of three men appeared on the conning tower.

" Base calling N 4 ! Base calling N 4 ! " came the voice of the home station operator over the radio. " Are you receiving me ? Base calling N 4——"

" *This is it !* " yelled Raynor jubilantly. " *Stand by and you'll hear something !* "

Leaving the distant operator to make what he could of that cryptic message, Raynor roared down towards the strange craft with wing cannon ablaze !

He had no depth charges left, for he only carried two, but his cannon fired armour-piercing shells and he meant to riddle the murderous raider like a sieve.

Then, without warning, disaster happened ! From the squat conning-tower of the strange craft shot a thin, crimson ray like a miniature searchlight beam. It fastened unerringly on Raynor's starboard wing, and, as it did so, the metal wing crumpled and collapsed as though it had been melted.

The machine plunged with nose down like a wounded bird. Raynor had a vision of the sea rushing madly up at him. He cut out the power and yanked the control column hard back with wheel across.

Next instant he hit the water with a terrific splash. There was a deafening roaring in his ears, then blackness swallowed him and he knew no more.

Raynor Meets the Enemy

RAYNOR slowly opened his eyes to see the grey, leaden sky above him. Just where he was or what had happened he couldn't for the moment think All he knew was that his head was aching intolerably and that he was lying flat on his back on something cold and hard

Then, as consciousness flowed back to him and memory stirred, he struggled weakly to sit up. But the effort was too much for him, and he sank back with a groan.

However, he had seen enough to know where he was. He was lying on an iron grating in what was undoubtedly the squat conning tower of the mysterious craft which he had attacked and which had crumpled his starboard wing with that deadly crimson ray.

Nor was he alone. Three men wearing high-necked pullovers, leather jackets and knee-high sea-boots were standing staring down at him. They muttered something among themselves, then one of them knelt down and forced some brandy from a flask between Raynor's livid lips.

The fiery, burning spirit helped to revive Raynor, and, with the man's arm around his shoulders, he managed to sit up.

" You are lucky to be alive, my friend !" said one of the other two men harshly.

Raynor stared up at him, his eyes hardening. The man was tall and slimly-built, with pale blue eyes, cold and hard as ice, thin, aquiline features and a cruel, thin-lipped mouth. In his hand was a gun.

" Just who are you ? " demanded Raynor hoarsely.

" My name is Vorzen," replied the man. " I am captain of this craft."

Raynor struggled to his feet. Leaning weakly against the rail of the conning tower, he stared at Vorzen who was watching him, the shadow of a smile on his cruel lips.

" You murderous hound ! " said Raynor, his voice trembling with weakness and anger.

Vorzen laughed.

" I would advise you to keep civil ! " he said. " I had you fished out of the sea and I could so easily throw you back. I did not show two late colleagues of yours such consideration."

" You mean Murchison and Ackroyd ? "

" I do not know their names," replied Vorzen. " But those are probably the two."

" Then you shot them down ? " demanded Raynor, his fists clenching.

" Of course," answered Vorzen, with a laugh. " They were too much interested in this craft of mine, so I let them approach, then turned my Crimson Ray on them. It generates a heat which will melt the toughest armour plating."

Raynor, his face crimson with anger, threw himself at him. But he did not realise how weak he was. He stumbled, and, as he did so, Vorzen caught him by the arms and flung him violently back against the rail.

" You fool ! " blazed Vorzen. " Do you not realise that there are three of us here and we are armed ? Try that again and I will put a bullet through you and throw you into the sea ! "

" I'm still wondering why you bothered to fish me out of it ? " panted Raynor.

" I'll tell you why when we are under way," laughed Vorzen.

Stretching out his hand, he pressed a signal button beside him. As he did so, the shrill clamour of a bell sounded down inside the great torpedo-shaped hull. Next instant, as though in response to the signal, something so incredible happened that Raynor could scarcely believe his eyes.

For monster metal wings unfolded silently and smoothly from recesses in which they fitted on each side of the hull.

" Quite a surprise, eh ? " laughed Vorzen, noting Raynor's amazed stare. " You will find, my friend, that this ship of mine is full of surprises ! "

He pressed another bell which also rang somewhere down inside the hull. No sooner had its shrill clamour died away than the stillness was shattered by the sudden deafening roar of four immense and powerful jets operating in the stern of the strange craft.

The great winged hull commenced to tear forward across the water leaving a long line of creaming foam swirling in its wake. The wind screamed past as the speed increased, the bows lifted, then smoothly and gracefully the monster soared up into the air and climbed swiftly towards the cloud belt.

" It is too cold to remain out here ! " shouted Vorzen, taking Raynor by the arm. " Come below ! "

Raynor preceded him and the other two men down an iron ladder into the hull, the atmosphere of which was warm and heavy with the fumes of oil.

" Well, what do you think of her ? " asked Vorzen, as Raynor stood staring about him at the seemingly endless tangle of pipe-lines, voice-lines, gyro-compasses, gauges, pumps, instrument dials and controls.

" I think it's a pity she isn't flying on lawful missions," said Raynor grimly. " Who built her ? "

" I did," said Vorzen.

" Where ? "

" On a lonely island in the Arctic Circle," said Vorzen. " That is where we are heading for now."

" And you are using her for piracy ? " demanded Raynor bluntly.

" Yes, why not ? " retorted Vorzen, staring at him intently. " She cost me a fortune to build, and I mean to make double that fortune out of her ! "

" How ? " demanded Raynor. " You got nothing out of the *Silver Star*. You just wantonly destroyed her ! "

" No," laughed Vorzen, shaking his head. " I have her bullion. I surfaced beside her, put her radio out of commission by an electro-magnetic ray, then gave her captain ten minutes to put his bullion overboard on a life raft under penalty of being blown out of the water if he refused. The lives of his passengers and crew being his first consideration, he put the bullion overboard for me."

" Then you submerged and blew her out of the water, you treacherous hound ! " cried Raynor furiously.

" Of course," smiled Vorzen. " I leave no survivors. You are the first man, apart from my crew, to learn of the existence of this craft."

" And why should I have been singled out for such an honour ? " demanded Raynor grimly.

" Because I want some information from you," explained Vorzen. " Those depth charges you dropped on me. They would have blown any other craft than this to pieces. As it was, they turned us almost completely over. I can use such depth charges myself, and I want every bit of information about them that you can give me."

" And then when you've got it you'll bump me off," said Raynor.

" Not unless you force me to," said Vorzen. " You have one chance of life."

" What is that ? "

" That you join forces with me," said Vorzen. " No, listen, hear me out," he went on quickly. " I can use a pilot like you, for there is only myself and one of my men who can really fly this ship. There he is ! "

He pointed to a man seated at the forward controls, then turned to Raynor again.

" Throw in your lot with me and I will make you rich beyond your wildest dreams," he continued eagerly. " It won't take long, either. A few months at most. We can't keep this game up much longer than that. When it becomes too hot for us, my plan is to divide the spoils and disappear. I've got more than a million pounds in gold and jewels already cached. What d'you say ? Will you join me ? "

Raynor's keen, alert brain was practically clear by now and he was thinking swiftly.

" If I don't join you I die, is that it ? " he said, pretending to hesitate.

" Yes," said Vorzen.

" Well, I've no particular wish to die," said Raynor. " At least, not yet. Will you give me time to think this offer of yours over ? "

" How much time do you want ? "

" Until to-morrow."

" Yes, you can have until to-morrow," agreed Vorzen, but there was a faint, triumphant smile on his thin lips, which showed that he thought he knew just what Raynor's answer would be.

" In any case," went on Raynor, " how do you know I can fly this ship ? There's a lot of difference between flying a Buzzard, and a craft like this. I'll take her over for a few minutes, if you like—just to try it."

Vorzen hesitated, staring at him suspiciously.

" You realise that at the first false move on your part, I would shoot to kill ? " he warned.

" Use your head, man ! " retorted Raynor with a short, curt laugh. " What false move could I possibly make when I'm a prisoner like this ? Even if I did manage to wreck the ship, I'd die with her, wouldn't I ? "

" Yes, it would be suicide on your part," said Vorzen grimly.

" And I'll have to handle the ship sometime, if I'm going to be a pilot of yours," pressed Raynor.

" Yes, that is true," nodded Vorzen. " I'd rather like to see how you shape, as well. Come, then, and I'll explain the controls to you and you can take her over for a few moments."

They moved forward to the controls, which Raynor quickly discovered worked on exactly the same principle as ordinary aircraft controls.

" Righto, I've got it ! " he said at length. " I can take her ! "

At a word from Vorzen, the swarthy-faced pilot vacated his seat and Raynor took over.

" Remember, I am standing behind you with a gun at your head," warned Vorzen

" Then be careful it doesn't go off," laughed Raynor.

In spite of his apparent care-free attitude, he was inwardly tense with excitement. For he knew exactly what he meant to do. The risk was frightful, of course. He had one chance in a thousand of coming out of it alive, but it was a chance he meant to take. If he failed and perished in the attempt, then the murderous Vorzen and his crew would most certainly perish with him. Raynor was determined on that !

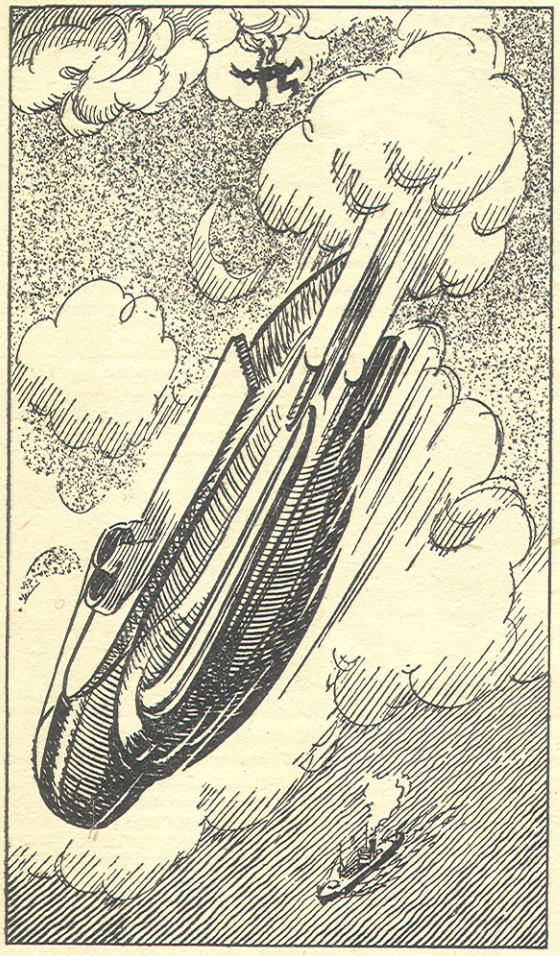
He looked at the instrument board in front of him. Their height was fifteen thousand feet and they were flying through dense cloud. But they were still over the sea lanes, and, as Raynor watched, he saw a small freighter move on to the glass screen of the artificial eye which could see down through the clouds to the sea below.

In that same instant, Raynor whirled into action. He hurled himself forward on the control column, causing the great, jet-driven ship to drop into a vertical position. As he did so, his finger jammed hard on the button which controlled the electrically-operated folding mechanism of the wings.

Outside on the hull, the wings folded

smoothly back into their recesses, and, like some screaming, black meteor, the ship shot straight down through space, driven by the full-power of her four immense jets.

Vorzen's gun had exploded, but the bullet smashed harmlessly into the instrument panel, for the swift and sudden dropping of the ship's nose had flung the man clean off his balance!



Like a screaming black meteor, the ship shot straight down through space.

Before he could recover, helpless and terrified members of his crew, also hurled violently off their balance, were piling up on top of him in the nose of the doomed ship.

As for Raynor, the instant he had pressed the wing control button, he had thrown himself sideways from the controls, and was scrambling frantically up the steel flooring of the hull, which was now in a vertical position, and making towards the now horizontal hatchway ladder.

Reaching the ladder, he worked his way out through the open hatch with the frenzied speed of despair, leaving that tangled, terrified, fighting mass of humanity piled up in the nose of the hull. Surely at any moment now, the great ship would crash into the sea!

He was still wearing his parachute, and, as he emerged from the hatch, he pulled the rip cord. Next instant the giant, invisible fingers of the shrieking air had plucked him from the squat conning-tower, bearing him dizzily aloft. It almost felt to Raynor, as if he were being suffocated by the great rush of air.

His lungs bursting, he looked down. He had left the doomed ship in the nick of time, for he was drifting well below the cloud base.

As he watched with hard, grim eyes, he saw the screaming monster strike the sea. Then, as Raynor watched, there came a terrific spout of water and then she was gone, plunging down, down into the depths, never to rise again.

And, steaming slowly towards the spot, was the small freighter, beside which Raynor had deliberately wrecked her, knowing that if he did escape the freighter would pick him up.

Half an hour later a radio operator back at the Iceland base, dashed into the office of Group Captain Fraser. He was quite out of breath with excitement.

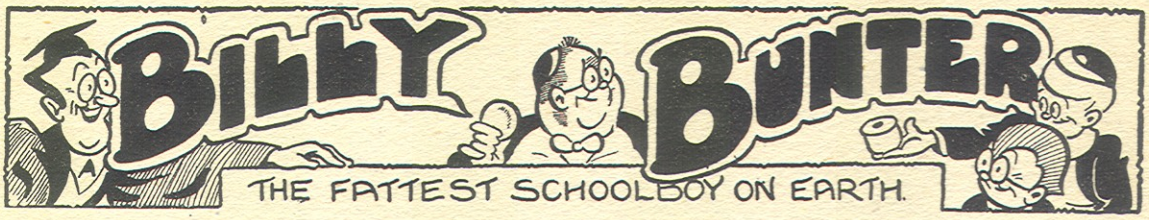
"What is it?" asked the Group Captain.

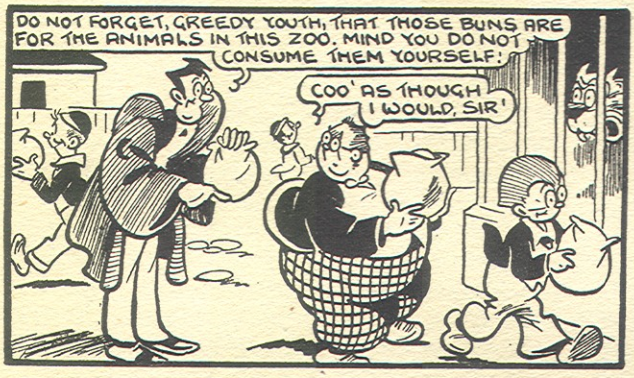
"A message from Mr. Raynor, sir!" cried the radio operator. "It's been radioed from the *S.S. Arbutus*"!

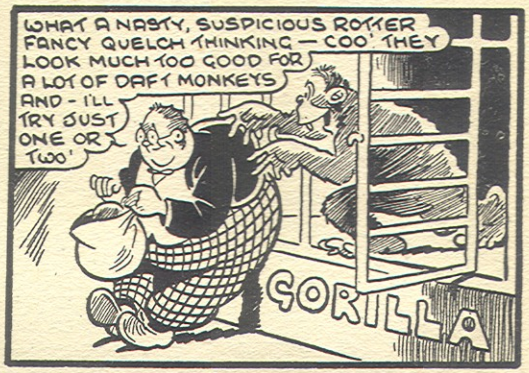
The commanding officer leapt from his chair, and eagerly took the message pad from the radio operator, and read:

"Menace removed. Will report at earliest possible moment. All's well! Raynor!"

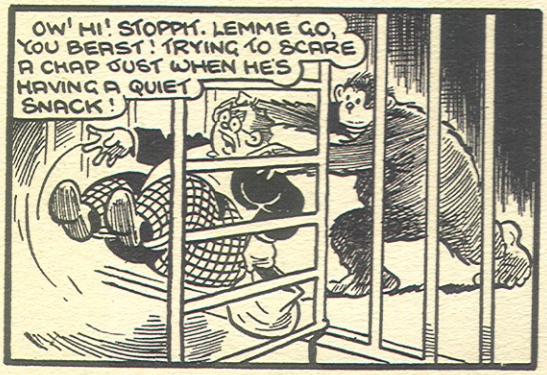
THE END

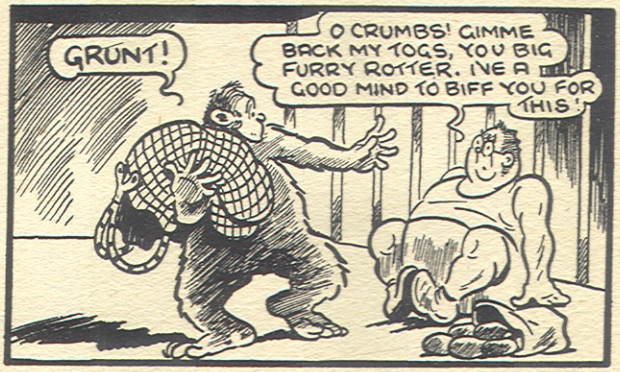




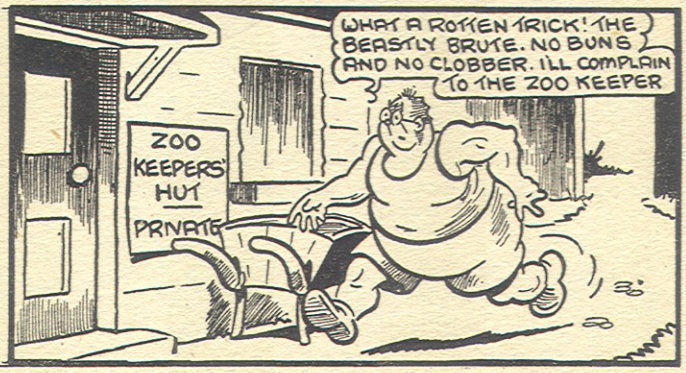


1. Quelchy took the Greyfriars' lads to the Zoo the other day—just to see who's who, you know. It was like one lot of monkeys visiting another lot, really. But Quelchy was very kind. He dished out buns all round so that they could feed the animals.

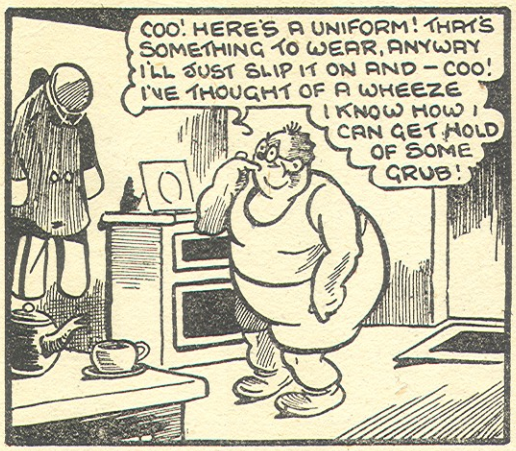


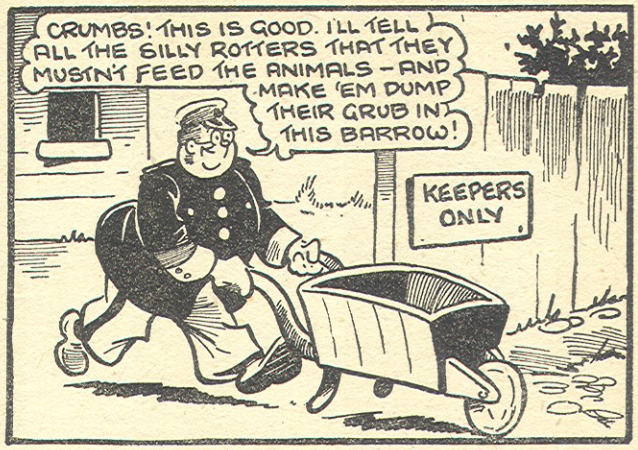


2. But William George Bunter didn't see much fun in feeding a lot of beastly animals while he was starving. He dodged out of sight to feed himself. And he backed against the cage of George the gorilla. And George took a real fancy to him, he did!

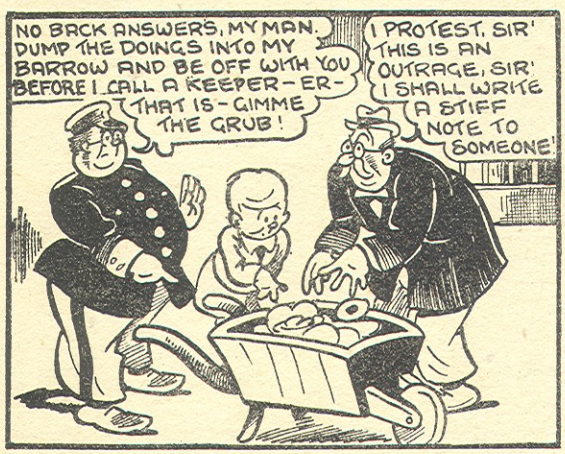


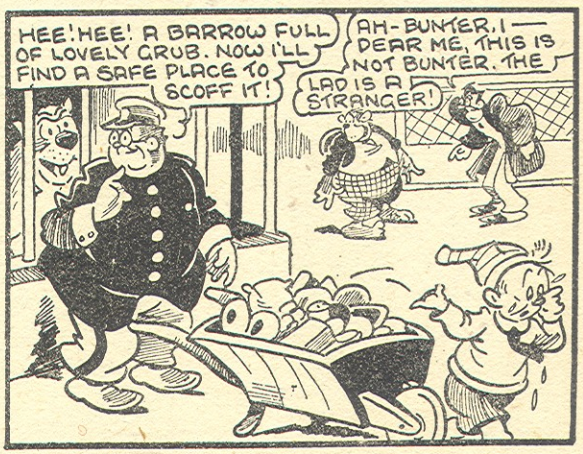
3. Before you could say "Don't, George, don't!" George had done it! He had our Billy inside his cage and robbed him of his utilities in two ticks, and then shoved our Billy outside again, shivering in his undies. Of all the rotten tricks, to be sure!



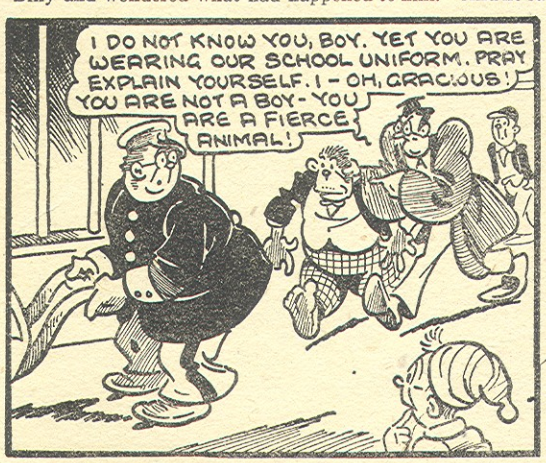


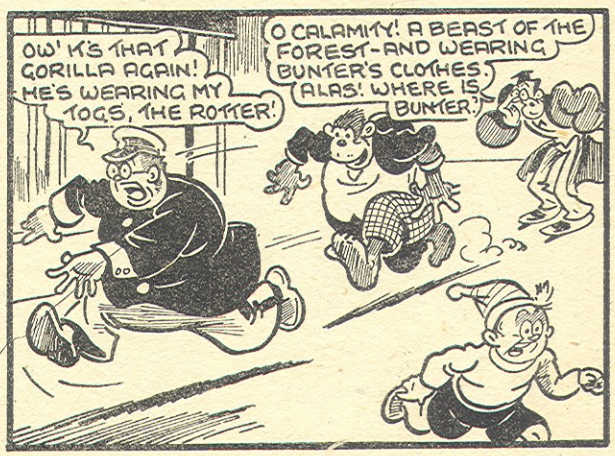
4. Our Billy dared not go back to demand his togs. He dived into a door marked " Keepers. Private." And inside he found a set of keeper's togs, which he borrowed. Likewise he borrowed a barrow to go with the suit. You see, chums, he thought he'd get folks to dump grub in the barrow for the animals, and he'd be the monkey to eat up the grub. Very Bunterish, wasn't it?



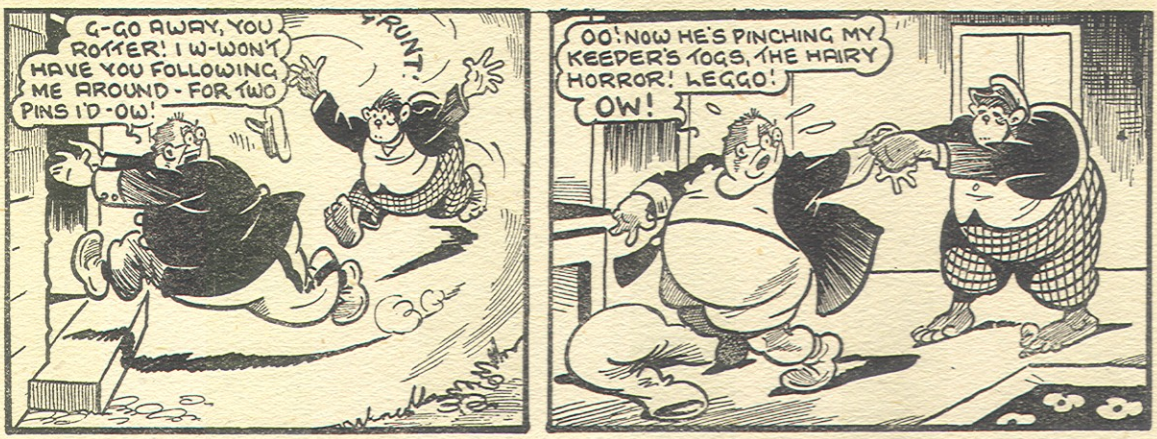


5. And it began to work, too, like a charm. He told the people if they didn't dump the beastly beasts' buns into the borrowed barrow he'd biff 'em. They didn't like it, but they bunged the buns in like anything. Meanwhile Quelchy had missed our Billy and wondered what had happened to him. And he saw a stoutish lad coming along, who looked like our Billy, but wasn't.

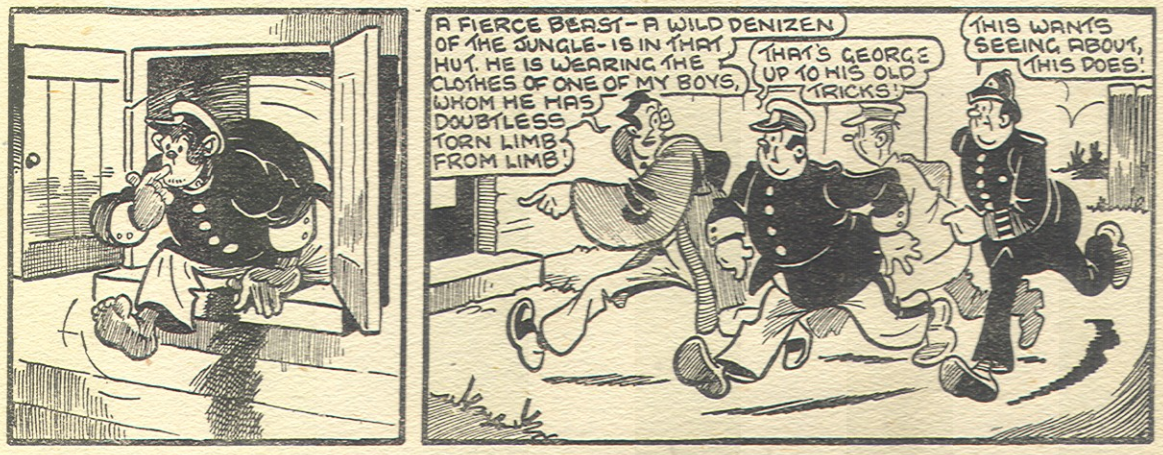




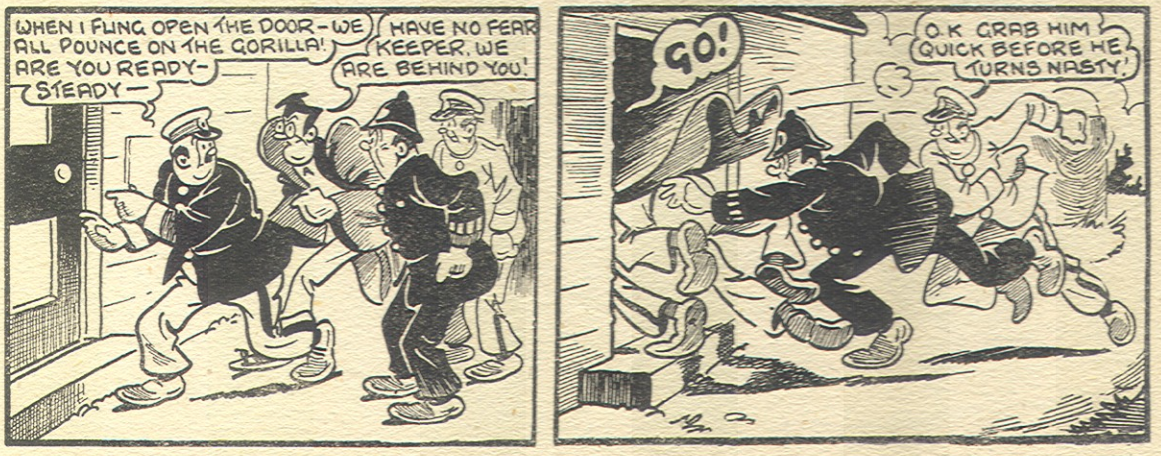
6. Quelchy was annoyed. " How dare you wear our school uniform ! " he barked, grabbing the stout lad by the ear. Our Billy heard the rumpus and turned to see what was going on. He saw George. And George saw him ! And George wanted another game with our Billy. He started a chase, and then Quelchy realised that George was a gorilla !



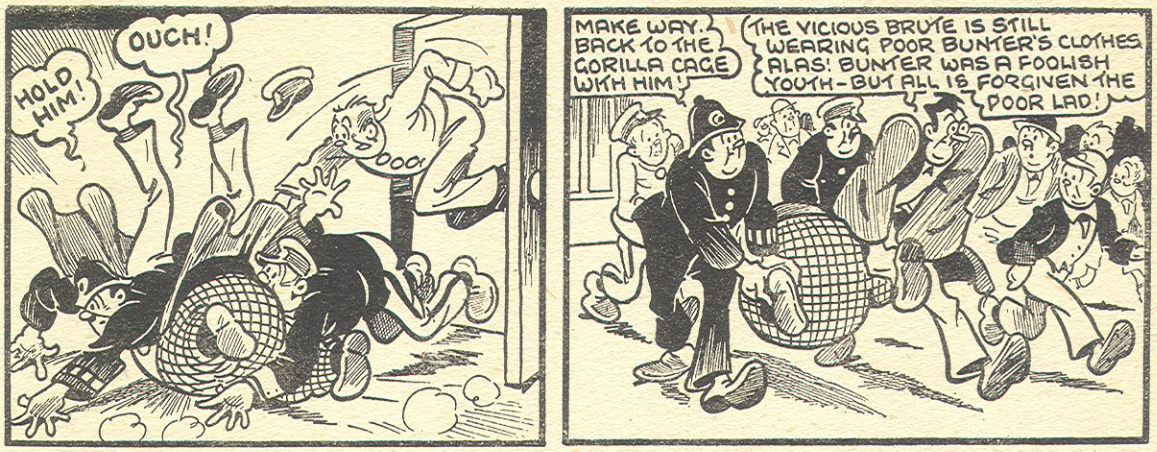
7. But our Billy wasn't stopping to see what Quelchy would do. He dropped his borrowed barrow and made a bee-line for somewhere else. He ran so fast he got there first. George, however, had a nice turn of speed and was hot on his heels. Billy dived into a keeper's room and George dived too. George liked a change of clothes and liked Billy's new togs right away.



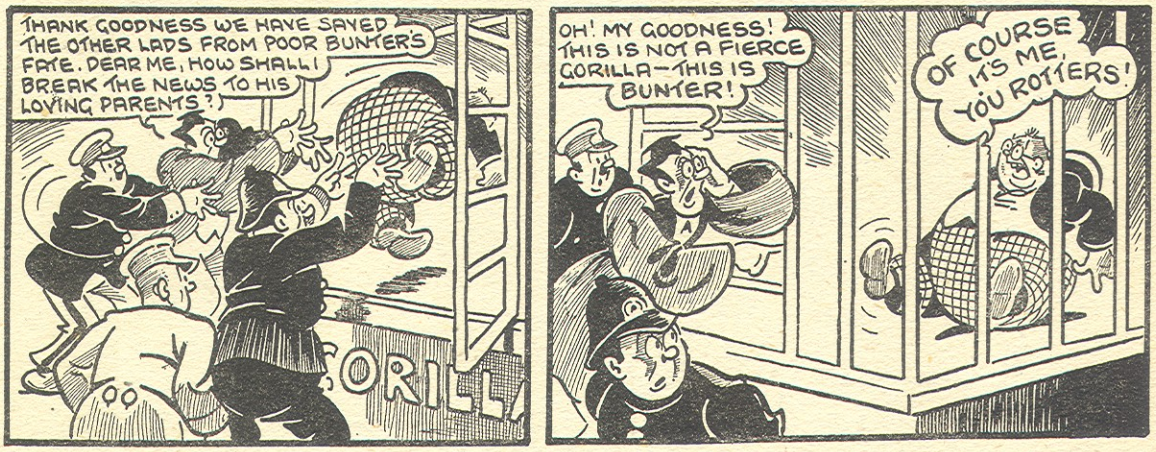
8. In less time than it takes to tell, George had the clothes off our Billy's back and on his own. Then he climbed through the window and made off. Meanwhile Quelchy, two keepers and a policeman, were hot on George's tail—if he had one. They knew which way he had gone and kept on that way. Thus they came to the keeper's room. Quelchy felt sorry for Billy!



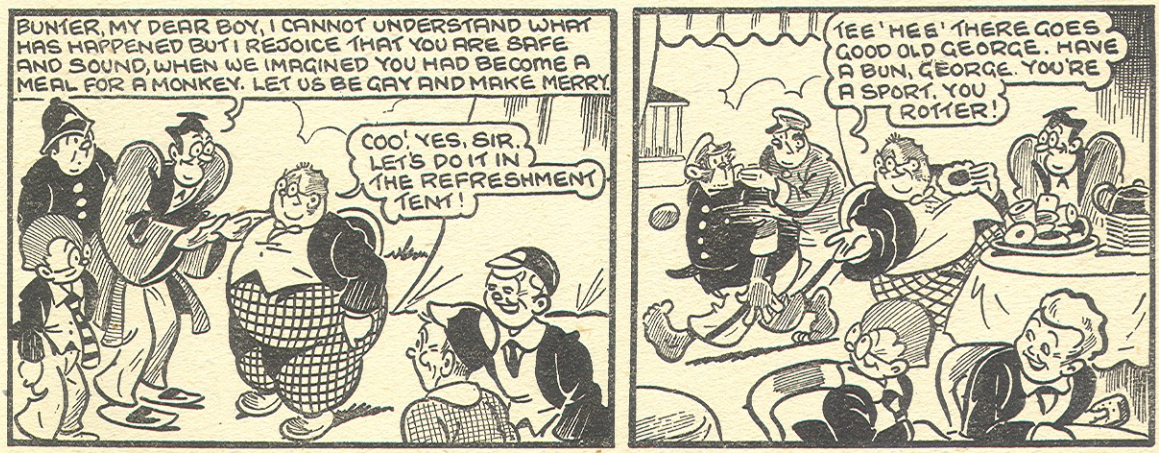
9. He was afraid Billy had been torn limb from limb and eaten off the ration. But something had to be done about it. The chief keeper got ready to open the door. "When I open it, grab him!" he said. Quelchy thought of that gorilla as he had last seen it, clad in check bags and Billy's jacket and cap. The keeper opened the door, and in they all went—whooshter!



10. They all went in together and fell on a portly form, clad in check bags, Billy's jacket and Billy's cap. They fought like the brave guys they were. They grabbed that portly doings! They weren't going to stop to argue with a savage gorilla. Not likely! And they came out carrying the portly form, panting from their exhaustion. The portly form also panted!



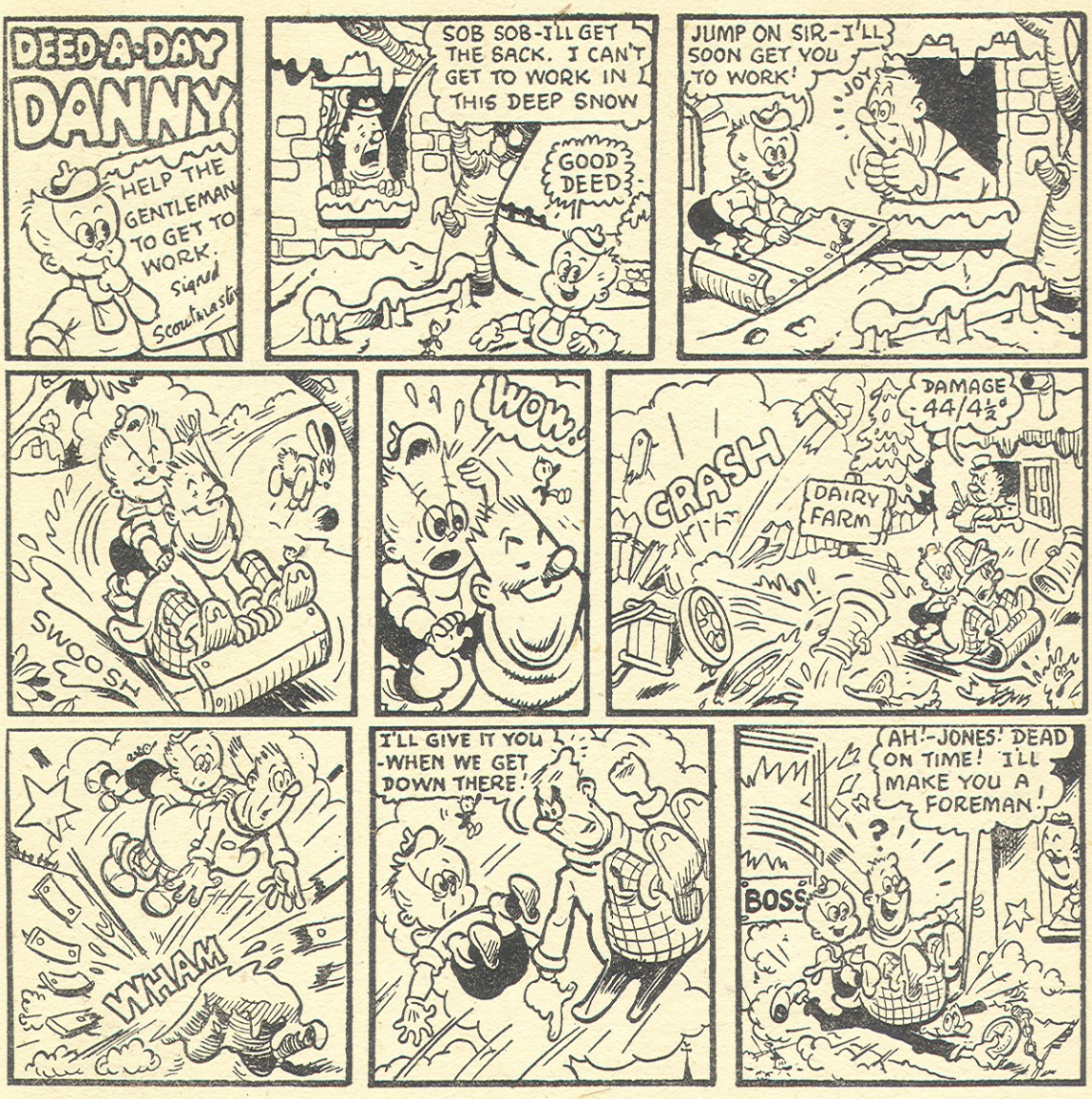
11. They carried the portly wotsit to the gorilla's cage and tossed it in. Ah, safe at last! But it wasn't George they'd popped in the cage. 'Twas our Billy. And he sat there and told them just what he thought of them. Coo, he was put out, as well as put in! Quelchy was glad, however, that our Billy was safe and sound, with limbs on, and not chewed up entirely.



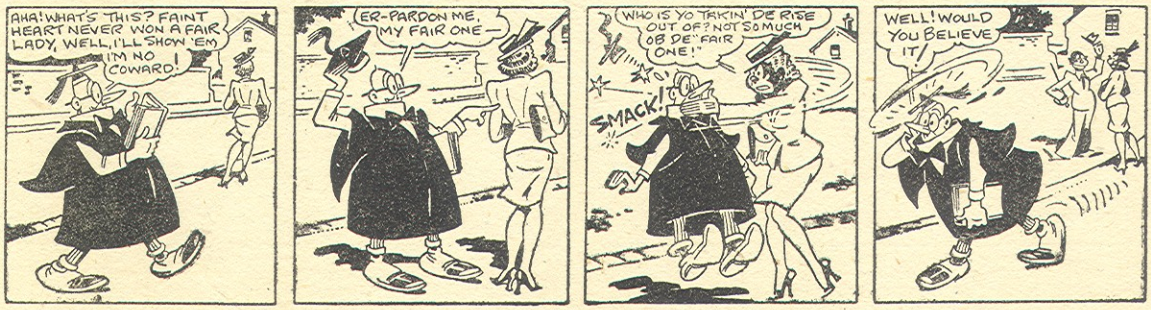
12. In fact, Quelchy felt so sorry for the shocks our Billy had had, he toddled him off to forget his sorrows in a slap-up feed. Meanwhile, the keepers found George togged up as a keeper, and arrested him on the spot. But, by that time, Billy had forgiven George. In fact, he even went so far as to toss him a bun. Noble-hearted Billy! Nice work, Billy!

SEEN IN THE GARDEN

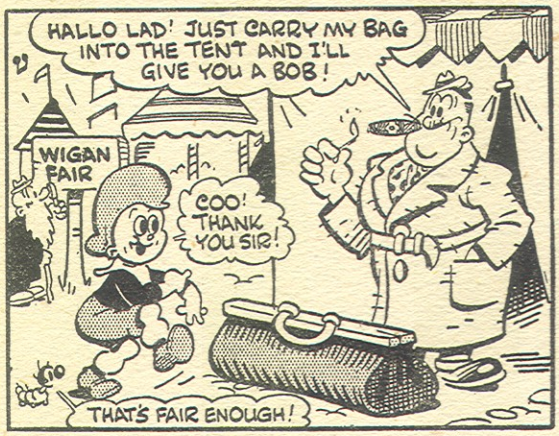
Each of the nine sets of pictures below represents something seen in the garden. To find out what they are, write down the first letter of the name of each object, and then rearrange them in their right order. For example, A for Anchor, E for Elbow, K for Key, and R for Rule. You'll find the answers on Page 176.



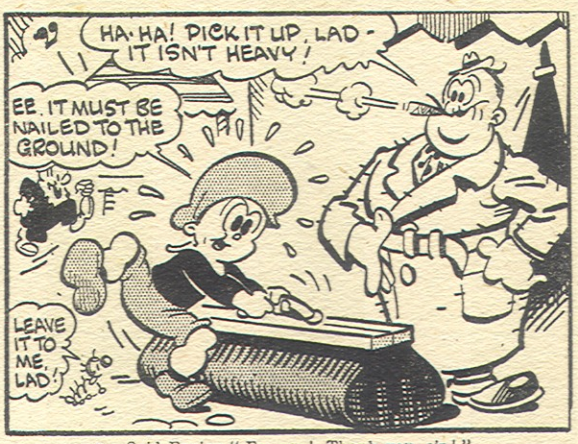
BOOKWORM BASIL - - - - HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE!



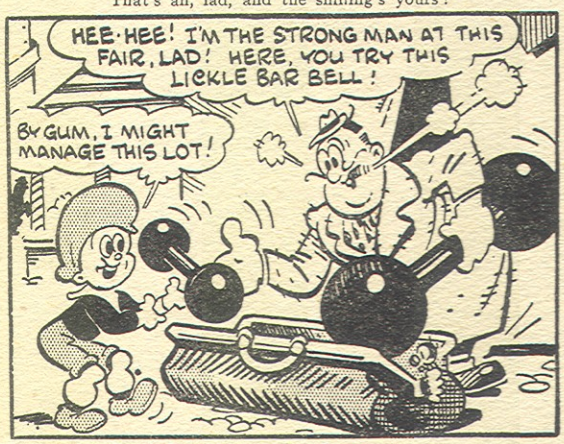
OUR ERNIE - - MRS. ENTWHISTLE'S LITTLE LAD



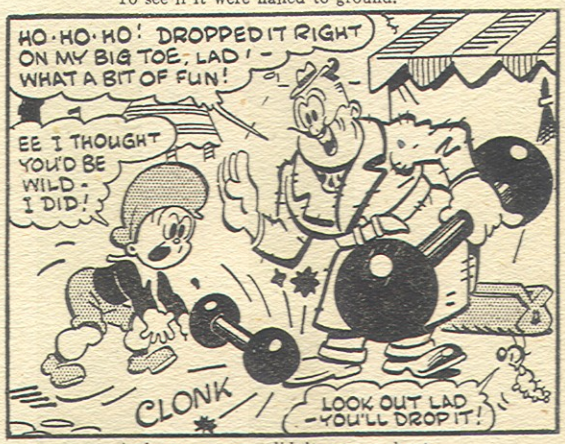
1. Cried hefty merchant, "Hallo, lad!
If earning bob would make you glad,
Just carry my old bag indoors,
That's all, lad, and the shilling's yours!"



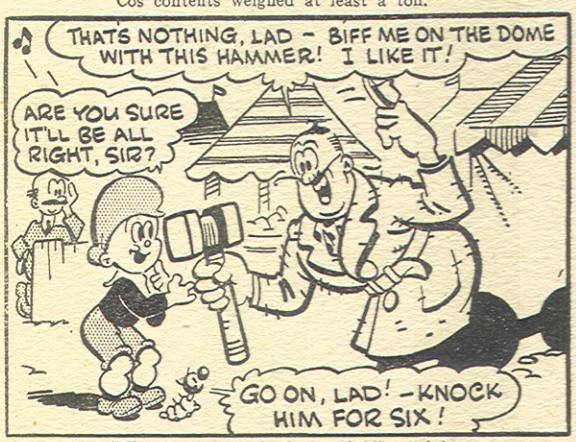
2. Said Ernie: "Ee, yes! Thank you, sir!"
But off ground bag wouldn't stir.
In fact, lad took peep around
To see if it were nailed to ground.



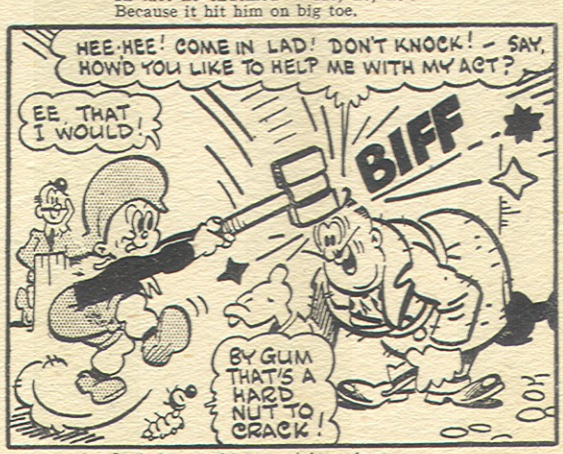
3. But hefty chap were bit of wag,
And when he opened up his bag,
Lad saw that it were bit of fun,
'Cos contents weighed at least a ton.



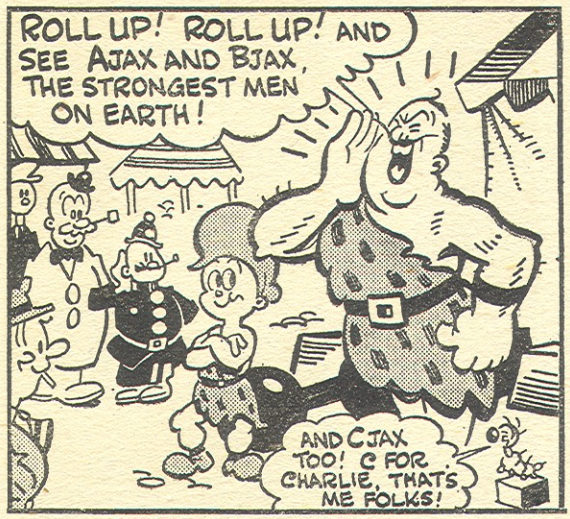
4. And strong man didn't care a hoot,
When lad dropped bar-bell on his foot.
In fact he chuckled: "Ho, ho, ho!"
Because it hit him on big toe.



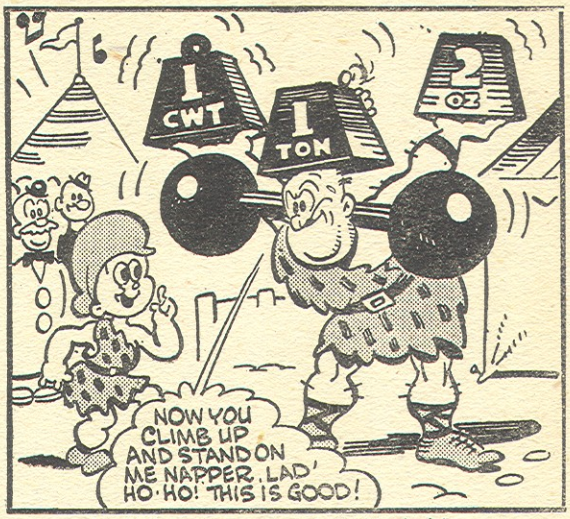
5. "That's nowt to bother with!" cried he.
"I like a biff or two—or three,
So take this hammer, lad, and I'll
Be proud to have you bonk my tile!"



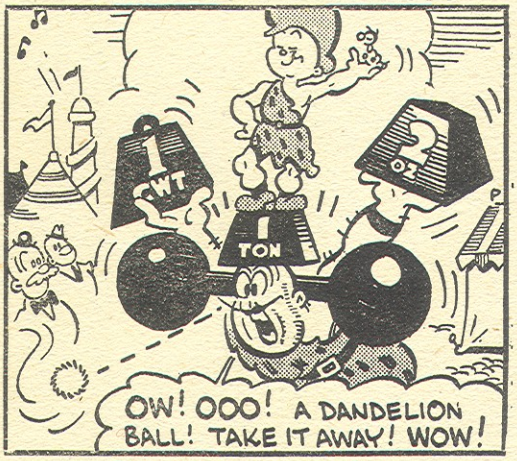
6. So lad gave him a mighty clout,
That would have knocked most people out,
But he just laughed, and that's a fact,
And offered lad share in his act.



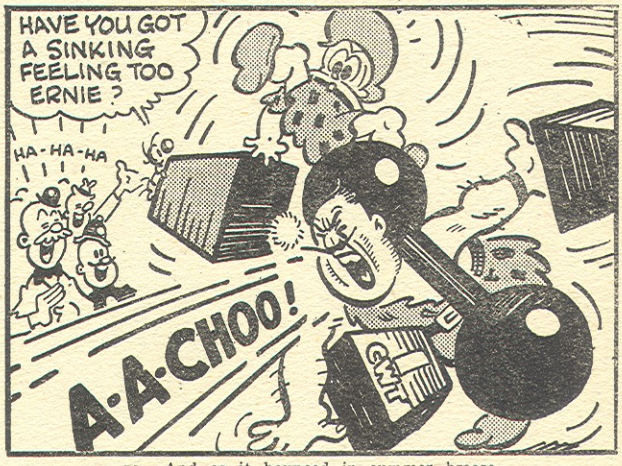
7. So Ajax and Bjax stood at door
Of tent, and Ajax gave a roar,
Inviting folk to roll right up
And see strong man and half-strong pup.



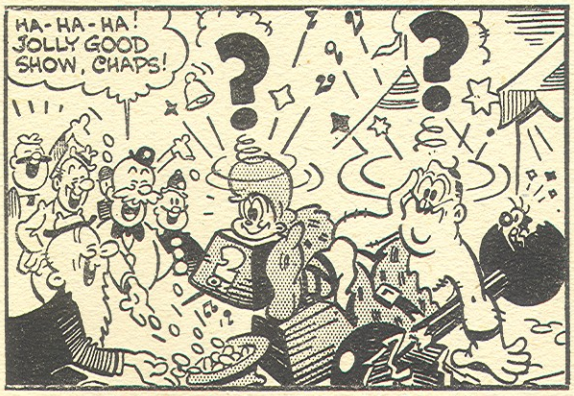
8. Well, strong man gave best show in fair,
By raising several tons in air,
And all went well, and good, and right,
Till dandelion-seed came in sight.



9. The strong man trembled as he saw
Where ball of fluff were making for;
He knew quite well—this strong man feller—
That ball would settle on his smeller.



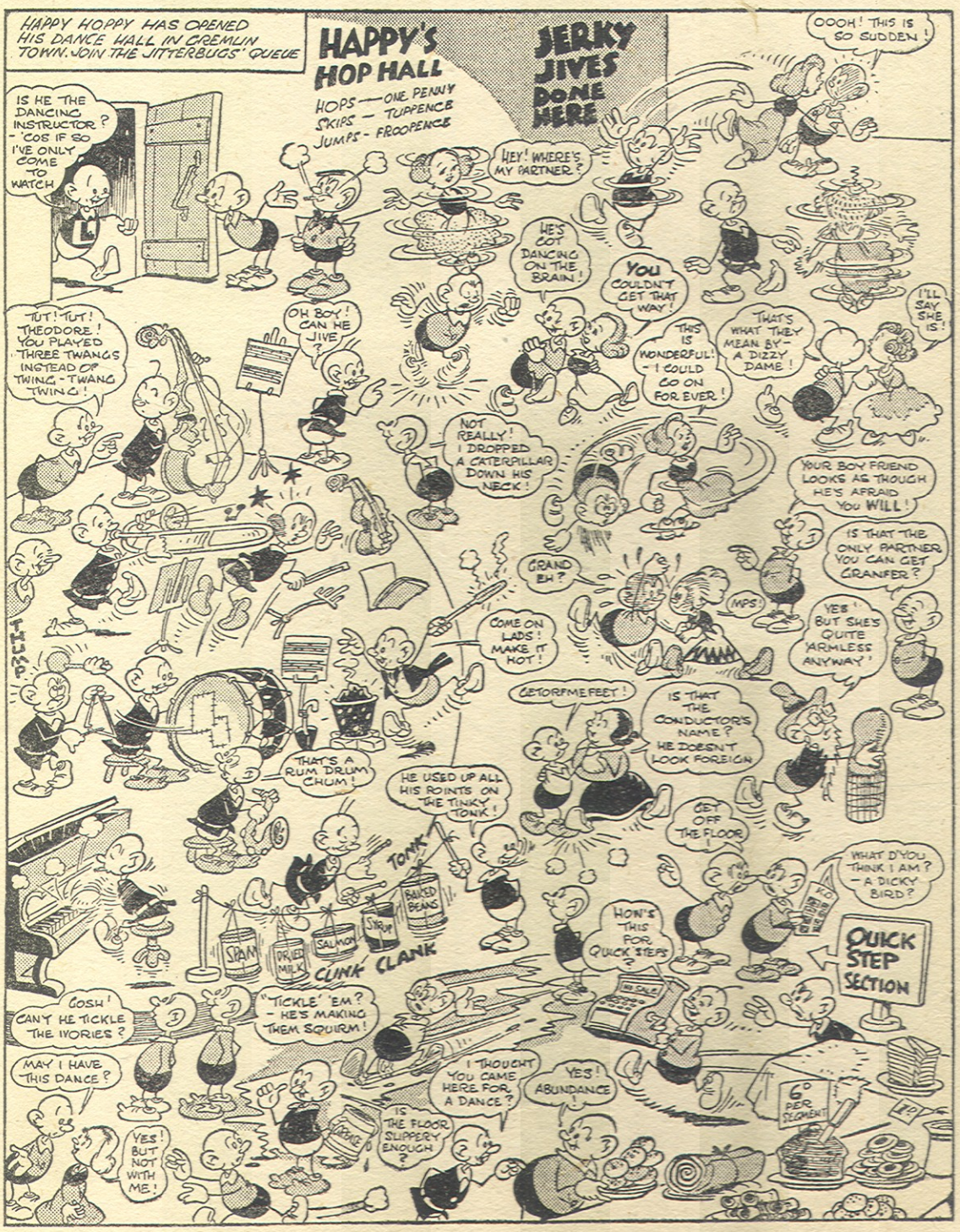
10. And as it bounced in summer breeze,
It tickled him, and made him sneeze,
And down he came—a proper crack,
With weights and Ernie on his back.



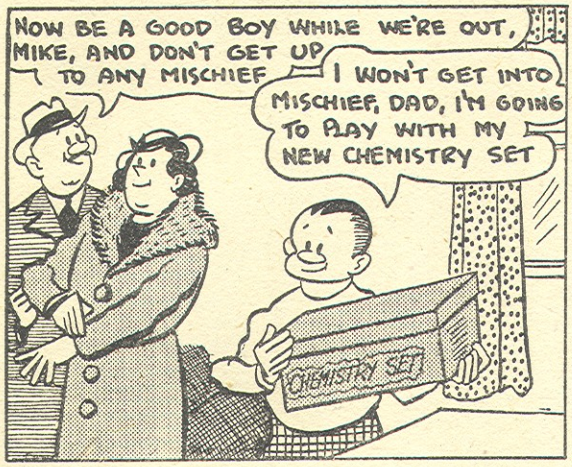
11. The crowd roared out, "Hurrah! Bravo!"
Thinking this were part of show.
And through the air, like falling snow,
Came pouring quite a heap of dough.

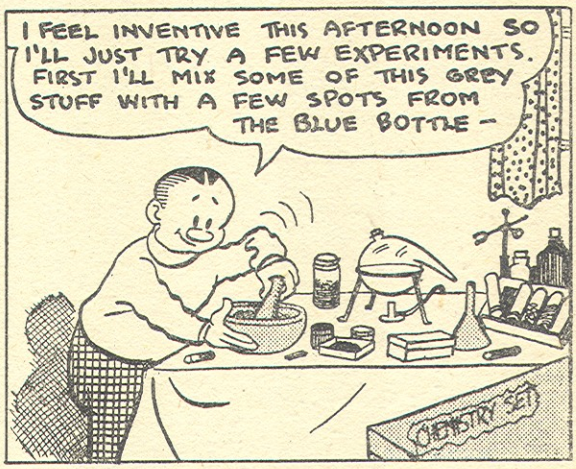
12. So in the end all came out right,
And strong man smiled with pure delight,
And lad had better tea by far
Than he'd have gotten from his ma.

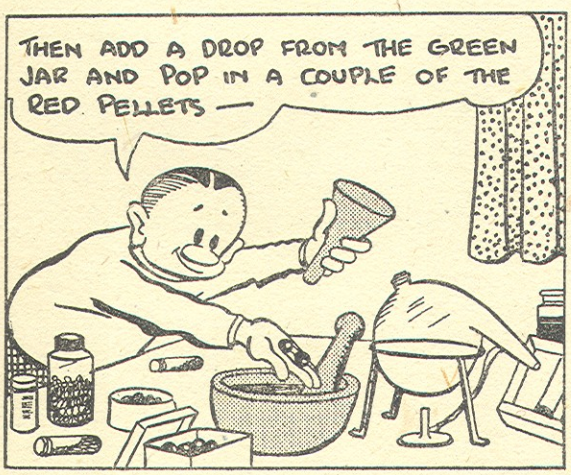
IT'S THE GREMLINS!

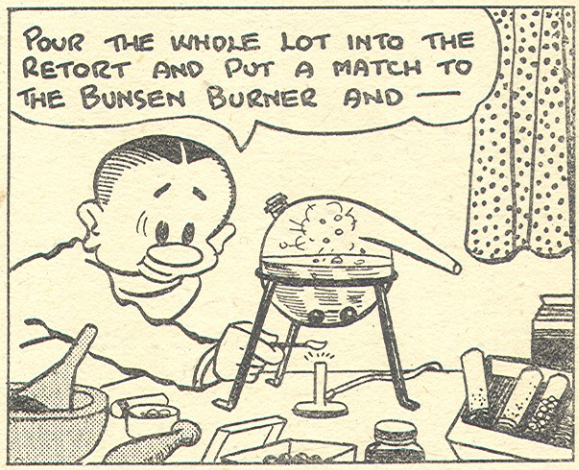


MIKE

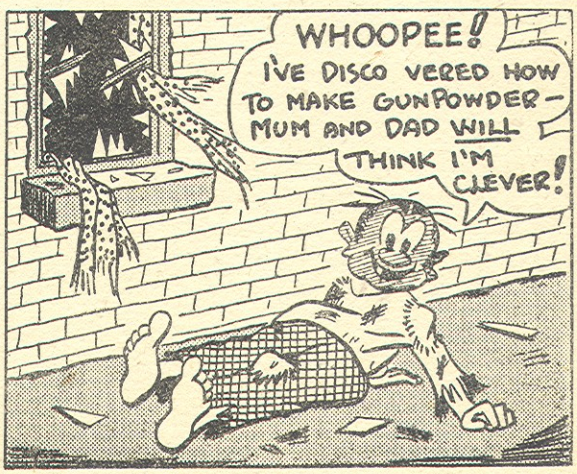

NOW BE A GOOD BOY WHILE WE'RE OUT, MIKE, AND DON'T GET UP TO ANY MISCHIEF
I WON'T GET INTO MISCHIEF, DAD, I'M GOING TO PLAY WITH MY NEW CHEMISTRY SET
CHEMISTRY SET

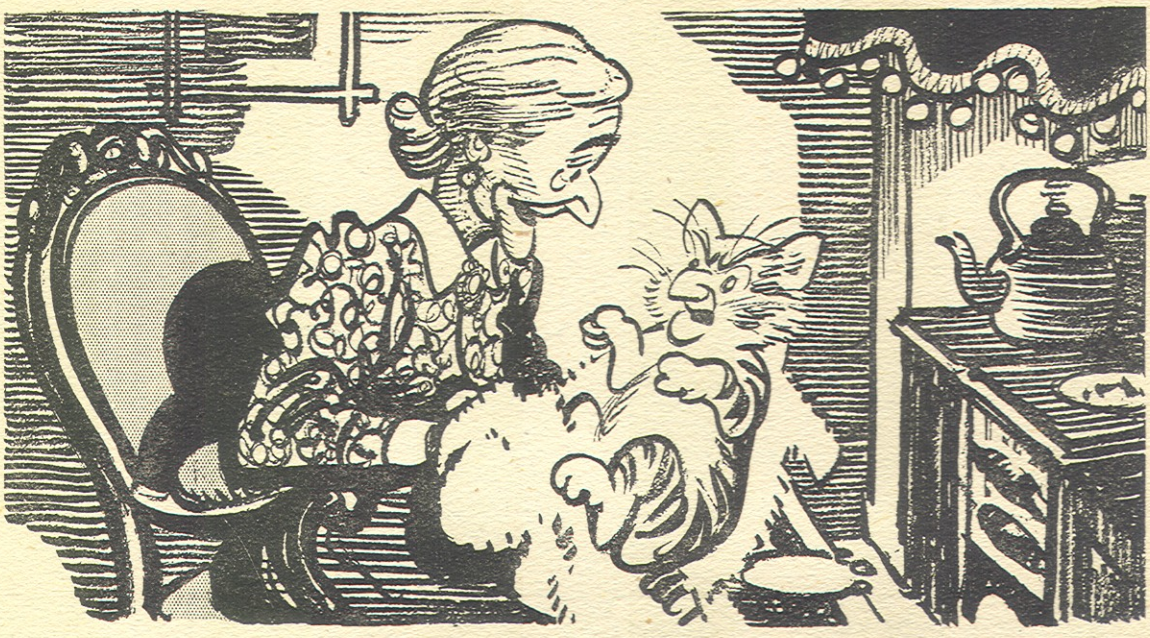

I FEEL INVENTIVE THIS AFTERNOON SO I'LL JUST TRY A FEW EXPERIMENTS. FIRST I'LL MIX SOME OF THIS GREY STUFF WITH A FEW SPOTS FROM THE BLUE BOTTLE —
CHEMISTRY SET


THEN ADD A DROP FROM THE GREEN JAR AND POP IN A COUPLE OF THE RED PELLETS —


POUR THE WHOLE LOT INTO THE RETORT AND PUT A MATCH TO THE BUNSEN BURNER AND —

BANG!


WHOOPEE! I'VE DISCOVERED HOW TO MAKE GUNPOWDER — MUM AND DAD WILL THINK I'M CLEVER!



MICKEY'S PAL THE WIZARD

What Happened to Uncle Silas when the Wizard Changed him into a Cat

Silas Kicks a Cat

"Oh, Mickey, look at that poor little pussy!" cried Betty Royston, to her brother. "Doesn't he look hungry? I'll get some nice warm milk!"

"You just let me catch you kids wasting milk on cats!" chimed in Silas Marley, the children's mean old uncle, with whom Mickey and Betty lived. Silas Marley kept a second-hand shop in Barchester High Street. "My milk bill's quite big enough as it is." Silas scowled. "Sevenpence a week—pah!"

"But, uncle, Tibbs does look so hungry——" Betty began.

Silas stamped across the shop towards the little black cat crouching close to the open shop door.

"Clear out—clear out—shoooo!" cried Silas.

As Tibbs did not move, Silas thrust out a foot. The little cat flew out into the street, as the miserable old miser's toe caught him.

"Oh, uncle, you shouldn't have done that!" Mickey Royston cried indignantly. "That was—cruel! You shouldn't be cruel to animals!"

Old Silas went red in the face with rage. "I know what I'm doing," he growled. "I don't need you to tell me what I should or shouldn't do! It's like your cheek! Take that, you brat!"

Marley's horny hand shot out. The blow sent Mickey reeling against the counter.

The next instant a column of greenish smoke came spinning down from the ceiling. It touched the floor and turned into a very tall man. He was wearing a green turban and long, green robes. He had glittering eyes, a hooked nose, and a long beard.

His name was Akbar el Bagrag, an

ancient wizard. He had been imprisoned in a bottle until, one day, quite by chance, Mickey had released him. Ever since then, Akbar el Bagrag was always bobbing up when Mickey needed help.

" Why lookest thou so sad, O youth who delighteth mine eyes ! " asked the wizard.

" Uncle boxed Mickey's ears," Betty explained. " Mickey told Uncle he ought not to be cruel to cats—and Uncle didn't like it——"

" Verily, thou art a miserable knave, Marley," thundered el Bagrag. " If thou wert a cat, how wouldest thou like to be kicked ? "

" As I'm never likely to be one, I wouldn't know ! " cackled Silas. " Tee-he-he ! "

Old Marley's laughter did not amuse the wizard. His face darkened as he thundered : " Thou no-good numbskull, Marley. Verily, thou shalt laugh on the other side of thy miserable features ere long ! "

The wizard waved his arms and vanished. So did Silas. One moment Marley was standing in the second-hand shop. The very next, he found himself clinging frantically to a cold and windy chimney-pot on the roof.

" Yow ! Help ! Lemme down ! " screamed Silas.

In the street below, neither Mickey nor Betty could see a sign of Uncle Silas.

" Oh, goodness, whatever has happened to him ? " cried Betty, in alarm. " Oh, dear, I suppose it's Mr. Bagrag up to his tricks again ! "

" Have no fear, little maiden," came the deep voice of the wizard, who had suddenly reappeared. " Thy miserable relative shall come to no harm. But, by my beard, he shall learn his lesson. Come ! "

Taking their hands the wizard wafted them through the air to a nearby rooftop. From the cover of a chimney stack, the children could see all that was going on—and it was plenty.

" Ooooh, look, Mickey," cried Betty, " that cat—over there—making all that noise. Is it—Tibbs ? "

" No-no ! " Mickey gulped. " It's—it's—Uncle Silas ! "

" Uncle Silas ? " gasped Betty, in surprise.

" Yes—look—Mr. Bagrag's turned Uncle into a cat—all except for his face. That's the same—except for those long cat's whiskers ! "

" Oh, dear, I'm sure poor Uncle will fall ! " cried Betty, in alarm.

Uncle Silas thought he'd fall, too ! He'd never been able to stand heights. By then he was feeling terribly dizzy.

" Help ! Lemme down ! Hellup ! " Silas howled.

The noise he was making sounded just like a real cat miaowing, because, although he was thinking like a human being, the noises he made when he tried to speak were cat noises.

At that moment two real cats whisked into sight.

" There he is, Tom ! " hissed Tibbs angrily, talking in cat language. " There he is ! Mr. Bagrag said we'd find him here ! "

" Why, that's Tibbs ! " whispered Betty to Mickey. " But—who's the other cat—the big one ? "

" That's Tibbs' big brother, Tom ! " Mickey muttered.

" Yow ! Save me ! Save me ! " Silas wailed.

Big Tom leapt towards him with a very nasty look in his almond-shaped eyes.

" Kick my baby brother, would you ! " hissed big Tom. every hair on his ginger back bristling. " I'll show you—you—miserable——"

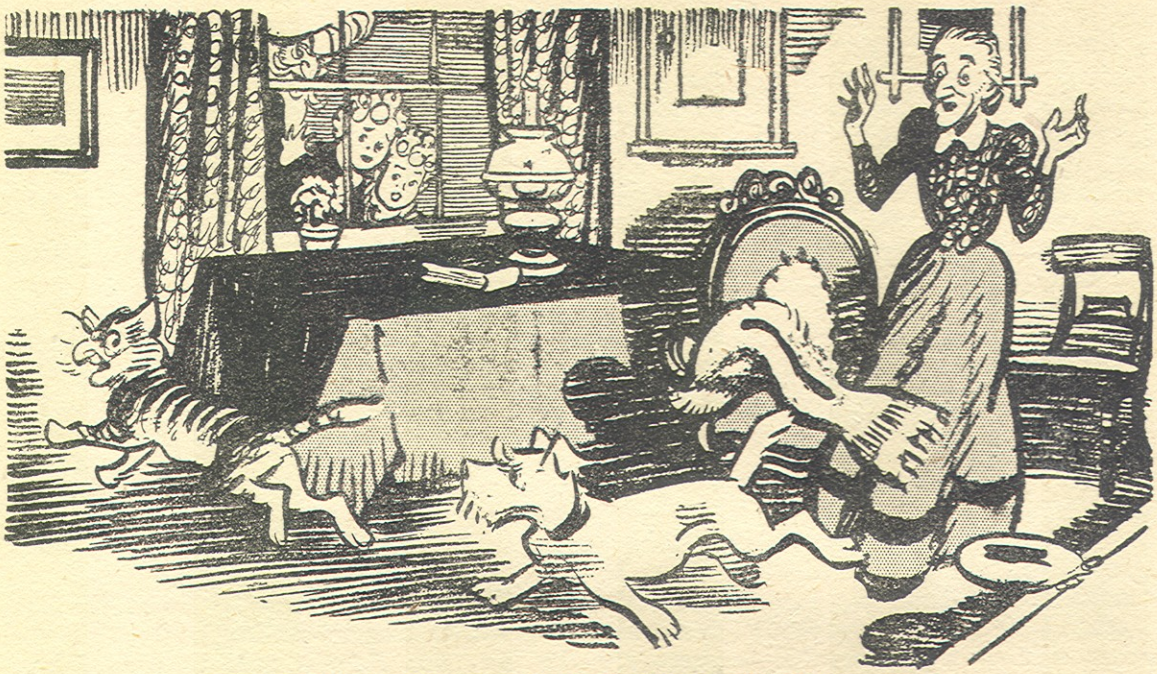
" Yow ! Go away ! Stoppit ! Save me ! " yelped Silas, scared out of his wits.

Big Tom sprang forward. Silas jerked himself back. Tom's outstretched paw just missed Silas by a hairsbreadth. The next moment Silas lost his balance, and went skating and slithering down the sloping roof.

" Oh, goodness, poor Uncle ! " cried Betty in alarm. " He'll be hurt ! "

Somehow, Silas managed to stop himself. He landed in the gutter with a thud. Then, as Tom and Tibbs came scurrying after him, Silas scampered along the gutter as fast as his legs could carry him.

" Help ! Help ! " he yelped.



The door burst open and in bounded Miss Trundleby's dog, Pongo.

At that moment, Silas reached the end of the gutter. Big Tom made a pass at him. The miser, who was now a mouser, gave one terrified glance over his shoulder. Then his paws stepped on air. With a wail of fear he dropped, fairly and squarely, down the inside of the drain-pipe.

Weird and wonderful sounds drifted upwards as Uncle Silas shot down the pipe at express speed, gathering mud and leaves all the way.

He shot out of the pipe into the yard with Tom and Tibbs, spitting and scratching, hard on his heels.

"Yow! Save me! Save me!" he yelled.

The terrific noise roused Mr. Beefo, the butcher, who lived next door. Poor Mr. Beefo was suffering from toothache. He had lain down after dinner to try to snatch a short nap. In a very bad temper at being awakened, Mr. Beefo leapt up, jerked open the window and grabbed the water-jug.

"Swoosh!" The contents drenched Silas from head to foot.

Silas spluttered violently.

Desperately he dived through the nearest open back door into Miss Trundleby's little cottage.

"Oh, you poor little thing!" she cried, for she had seen what had happened from her window.

She slammed the door to shut out Tom and Tibbs. Then, sweeping the struggling Silas up into her bony arms, she snatched up a towel, sat down in front of the fire with the wriggling, protesting Marley on her lap, and started to dry him.

"Ow! Wow! Stoppit! Leave me alone!" miaowed Silas, furiously.

"Why, what a funny little face you've got," cried Miss Trundleby, as she finished with the towel. She was a bit short-sighted without her glasses. "Why," she added, "you look almost human!"

Silas choked with anger. "Madam, I'll —I'll have you know—I—I am human!" Marley screamed. "I'm as human—as you are!"

But, naturally, Miss Trundleby didn't understand. To her, Silas's words sounded just like a cat's talk.

"There—there!" she cooed. "Would-ums like some nice milkums?"

"M-madam!" shrieked Silas. "I—I would not! I—I hate milk! Now—lemme go! Lemme down!"

Just then the door burst open. In bounded Miss Trundleby's dog, Pongo. At the sight of Silas, Pongo stopped short and growled fiercely.

"Down, Pongo, down!" cried Miss Trundleby. "Down! There's a good boy!"

By then, the magician had wafted Mickey and Betty into the garden at the back of the cottage; so that they could peep through the window and watch everything.

"Oh, goodness, poor Uncle!" cried Betty anxiously, squeezing Mickey's hand. "Pongo hates cats!"

"Grrrrrr!" growled Pongo, baring his teeth. "Wuff-wuff!" he barked. "Grrrrrr!"

Frantically, Silas wriggled himself free as Pongo leapt. Silas streaked madly for the door with Pongo snapping at his heels, while Miss Trundleby stood helplessly shouting at Pongo to come back. But Pongo took no notice!

"Grrrrrr! Grrrrrr! Wuff-wuff!" he barked, deaf to all entreaties.

"Yow! Help! Keepimoff!" shrieked Silas, as he whizzed out of the cottage through a nearby open window.

"After him, Tom!" hissed Tibbs, as Silas skidded out of sight.

"You bet!" answered Tom, grimly.

Silas swerved as Tibbs and Tom came chasing after him. He leapt into the air, bounced on a dustbin lid near the garden-fence and landed right in the middle of an empty bin next door.

Awful sounds came from within that bin as Tibbs, Tom and Pongo leapt inside after Silas.

"Oh, dear—poor Uncle—he'll be terribly hurt!" cried Betty, in alarm. "Oh, dear, if only Mr. Bagrag were here?"

Even as Betty spoke, the magician re-appeared.

"Have no fear, little maiden!" El Bagrag beamed. "Thy miserable uncle is quite safe! Presto!"

El Bagrag waved his arms and vanished again. Mickey, Betty, and Silas found themselves back in the shop. But they all knew that it hadn't been a dream, especially Silas, who was bruised all over.

"Ow! Oh, my poor old bones!" moaned Marley, holding his back. "Here—get me down that bottle of embrocation!"

As Mickey did so, he heard a soft, little miaow.

"Why, here comes Tibbs!" cried Betty. "May I give him some milk, Uncle?"

"Give that cat what you like!" snarled Silas, limping off with the embrocation. "You lock up the shop. I'm off to bed!"

THE END

MIXED BAG!

Try to solve these problems (or some of them) before looking at the answers which are given at the bottom of the page.

1. A lad collected a sack of apples for a farmer. When asked how many apples he had picked, the boy said, "Well, if I divide the number by 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6, I shall still have one over." How many apples had he?
2. I'm a number, can you guess?
   Add to me, you make me less.
3. Can you read this strange sentence?—ALL O.
4. Can you express the number 100 by writing the same figure six times?
5. There were three fathers, and each had two sons. All went to a concert, where they had reserved only seven seats. All the other seats were occupied, yet each member of the party obtained a seat. How was this?
6. Take two-fifths of an apple, one-fourth of a plum, and two-fifths of a melon, and put them together to form a single fruit.
7. Can you read these two proverbs? They are both well known, but in the first case all the consonants have been left out; and in the second, all the vowels have been left out.
   (*a*) OEAAEEEAOE.
   (*b*) TSLNGLNTHTHSNTRNNG.

Answers:

1. The boy had 61 apples. 2. One + N = None.
3. It is nothing after all. 4. 99 99/99
5. The three men were a father and two sons, and each of the sons had two sons, making seven in all.
6. LE, two-fifths of the word apple, M, one-fourth of plum, ON, two-fifths of melon, put together, form the word LEMON.
7. (*a*) Two heads are better than one. (*b*) It's a long lane that has no turning.

EVERYBODY LIKES A ROBIN

How Two Robins Became the Uninvited Guests of an Old Professor

As Pretty As a Picture

He looked just like a splash of red paint thrown against the brown of the tree-trunk. That was because the rest of him was brown, too—all except his eyes, and they were black, and amazingly bright, just like clear black beads.

Then he spoke—a long-drawn, plaintive, squeaking whistle, one quite his own, and so high that many people would not have been able to hear it! Hearing this high note, one could tell that he was a robin—a most amazingly cheeky robin, too! When he dropped the squeak, and broke into his lively, lilting song, one was sure of it.

He had just been having a fight, this redbreast of ours. Rarely indeed had he been doing anything else, for he had all his work cut out to hold his own particular corner of the garden to himself, as his and his wife's very own hunting-ground. This last fight was, however, more serious than the rest, for it had been against his own grown-up children, robins as large as himself, and very ready to test their strength.

Very much trouble had he taken to rear them in the nest in the disused rat-trap, thrown away by someone, into the hedge, but he could not afford to let them remain on his hunting-ground during winter, as there was not food for all.

One day, he knew, the time would come when he, grown old, would try to turn some future family of his out of doors, and they would either kill him or he would have to run for it. He was a very fine, bright, and proud robin, and I think he would rather have died than give in. All robins come to this death in the end, however.

After having thoroughly searched the bark of the tree to see if, by any lucky chance, the tomtits or the wrens had overlooked a grub or a chrysalis, or a hibernating spider or beetle in a cranny, he flew down on to the snow. He had known the time when one could save oneself from starvation by seeking seeds of weeds under the snow, but the sparrows and the chaffinches and greenfinches seemed to have gone over every weed many times already in this case.

He was still on the ground when two things caught his miraculously sharp eye at one and the same time. The first was something black and tufty which was twitching slowly from side to side, behind a clump of ivy, and the second was a slice of new bread, about a yard and a half away from the first.

Now, there were sparrows all round in the trees above, sitting dolefully about, watching that bread, but there was not a bird on the ground. Sparrows do not leave bread about much in winter, as a rule, but there was danger in that bread, for it was almost within springing distance of the cat, whose tail he could see twitching behind the ivy clump.

If the cat had kept her tail still, all might have been well for her; but cats never can, when they sight prey. In fact, the same habit in that giant cat, the tiger, had saved many a human life, by warning the intended victim in this way.

The robin, however, had no intention of becoming the cat's victim. In a flash he was down at the bread, had seized it, flown a foot with it, dropped it, and shot off at a tangent, just as the cat came hurtling through the air like a black bolt. She landed six inches short, as the robin knew she would. Well! He had had enough cats springing at him in his time to know that. And after she had stood glaring and snarling with rage for a minute or two, she turned away and went off.

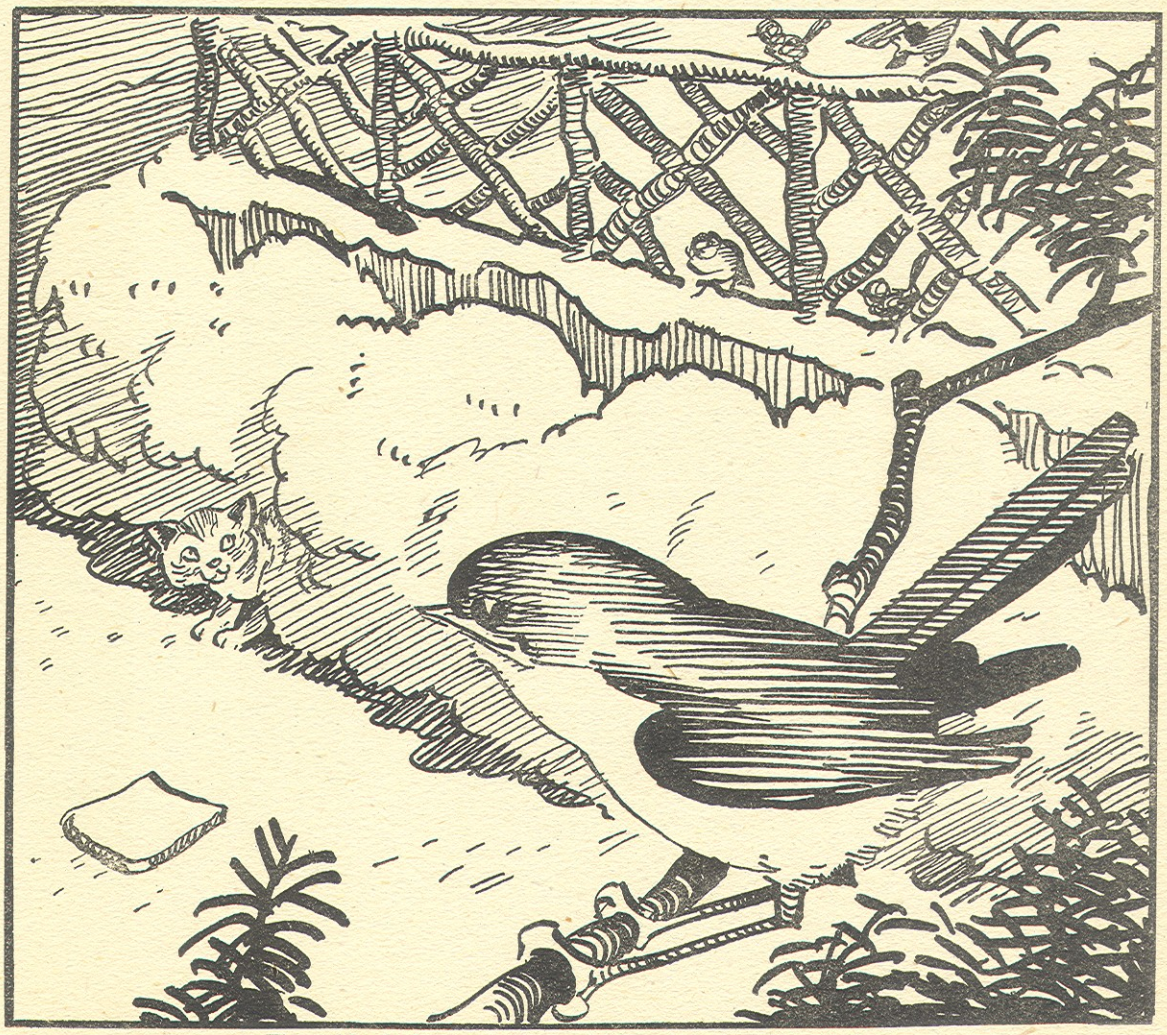
Then, with a rush and a bustle, the sparrows dropped on to that bread, and like a little red spark, the robin shot across

the snow, landing bang in the midst of that low, quarrelling crowd, and knocking one amazed cockbird one way, and jabbing his beak at another.

Those fat sparrows quickly decided that they had no use for the bread. In fact, almost before you could wink, the robin was alone with his prize!

That afternoon it began to snow heavily and steadily, and the two robins hung about round the trunks of trees, trying to get out of the terrible, biting north-east wind, which cut like a knife. They were thankful for that slice of bread then, for, if a bird has food, he can live through great cold, but if he has none, he quickly freezes on his perch. They had some difficulty, indeed, before the day closed, in getting water, but luckily for them they discovered where the kitchen sinkpipe ran out, and drank from it.

They envied the wrens, as they hunted about for a warm roosting-place in the hedge, for the little birds had made a hole in the hayrick, which was kept specially for the old pony who mowed the lawn, and they were packing into the hole one after the other, as night fell. The robins roosted in some ivy that was growing on a tree, and they tucked their little heads under their wings and were asleep in a second.



The robin had no intention of becoming the cat's victim.

But, suddenly, while it was still pitch dark, they were woken up by a sound! This sound was close at hand, a stealthy rustling! The robins were wide awake instantly. They could hear something climbing up the ivy. It was not a cat, for it made too small a noise. It could not be a snake in winter, because snakes hibernate, and a rat would have made more noise, rats being clumsy climbers. What, then, could it possibly be?

Next moment, two red eyes glared out, and a small body sprang at them out of the darkness. It was a weasel, which had been driven by hunger out of the fields into the garden. The robins did not wait, but, with great swiftness, fell, one one way, one the other way, on to the snow beneath.

And the weasel fell, too! He must have smelt them from the bottom of the tree and climbed up after them, but he missed his spring, and fell, too. He was very quick, that long, little weasel. He picked himself out of the snow as if he'd been a bouncing ball!

Quick as he was, however, the robins were even quicker, and were already flying away, so the weasel, leaping up at them, snapped half an inch below the hen robin's drawn-up feet, and missed a second time.

Then the robins fluttered off into the

Every morning the old man placed a little heap of meal-worms on the window-sill.

night and, quite suddenly, they found themselves flying towards a bright light. They were attracted to it in the same way as a moth is attracted to a candle. The light came from a window, and the robins threw themselves against the glass. They felt quite dazed.

It was at that moment that the cat, who had been prowling about, watching them all day, and waiting for another chance, sprang. She certainly aimed true, but she must have forgotten all about the window, for the next moment there was a crash, then the sound of falling glass, and into the quiet and comfortable room shot the cat, half mad with fright! The cock-robin also shot into the room, through the broken window, uttering a piercing note. The hen bird, stopped no longer by glass, flew in after them.

An old man lived in that room—he was a professor—and when he'd got over the shock of having his window broken suddenly, and seeing his three uninvited guests, he drove the cat away. Then he got some bread for the robins. He crumbled it up in his hands, and the robins had a really wonderful meal. So, really, it was through the cat that they were saved. The old man let them roost on the mantelpiece above the roaring fire, and in a very short time, both the robins became really quite tame.

He let them out next morning, and they felt very chirpy and well fed indeed. And every morning after that, he placed a little heap of meal-worms on the window-sill for them, knowing that robins relish meal-worms above everything.

So the robins never had to risk starvation again that winter. They had a comfortable and warm home.

But you mustn't think that the troubles of the robins in that garden were all over. They were on the alert from morning till night. There were other cats in the neighbourhood, to say nothing of rats and dogs and hawks.

Still, when spring came round, there were plenty of robins left, and their chief troubles came from other robins! And that may sound strange, but, nevertheless, it is true.

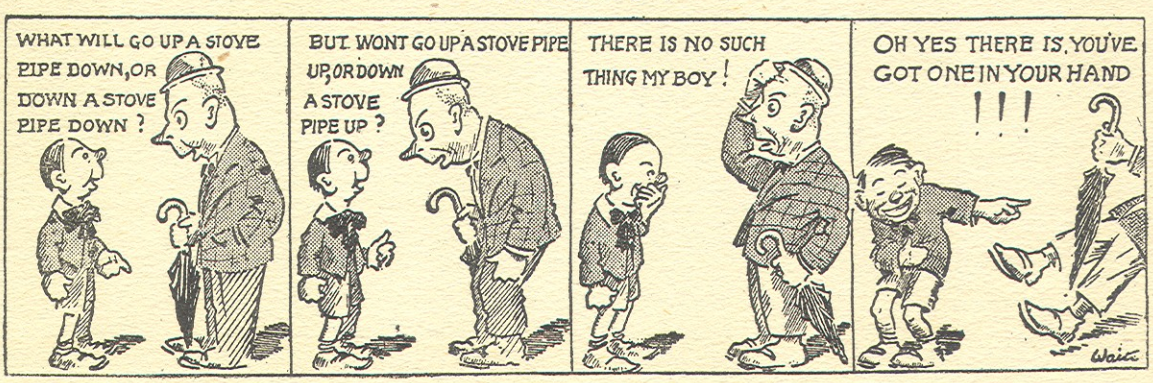
For no robin likes to share a garden with another robin, except its mate. Every cock-robin, when spring comes round, stakes out its own ground, and no other robin is allowed there for a moment. There is no other bird which will fight so readily or so fiercely as a robin, especially when another trespasses on its own domain.

Haven't you ever seen a robin come to your garden, only to be attacked and chased away by another one? Well, what is happening is that the robin who has laid first claim to your garden and the food to be found there, is driving away a robin who has come uninvited, and has no right there at all!

The old man continued to look after our two robins, and they lived happily in his garden.

THE END

SMARTY



(*Continued from page* 128)

friend ! " cried the Man In The Moon. " Thank you very much indeed ! "

But the North Wind, like the boisterous tearaway fellow that he was, was already rushing away at a terrific speed. The Man In The Moon turned to the quaking King Archibald and to Prince Puggy, who was yelling at the very top of his voice.

" Silence, you greedy young wretch ! " thundered the Man In The Moon. " You cried for the moon and now it is yours. So stop that noise ! "

He turned to King Archibald.

" All his life you have given that selfish son of yours everything he has wanted," he said sternly. " To-night he cried for the moon. Instead of giving him a good smacking, you sent your knights, your men-at-arms and your servants to get the moon for him. One of your servants, this young lad here, managed to reach the moon. To him shall go the great reward which you offered."

" But—but I don't know whether the moon *is* Prince Puggy's yet," stammered the king.

The Man In The Moon laughed, and said :

" Oh, yes, it's his ! I am the Man In The Moon. I am the head person here But I am resigning now in favour of your son Prince Puggy. From now on he is the head person on the moon ! "

" Hurrah ! " yelled Prince Puggy, beginning to brighten up no end.

As for King Archibald, he grinned all over his face, and said to the Man In The Moon :

" Well, now, that is very nice of you—very nice of you indeed ! I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure. Prince Pugnacious can now call the moon his very own kingdom, eh ? "

" He certainly can ! " agreed the Man In The Moon, with another queer laugh. " I'll now introduce you and him to his subjects."

He took his gold whistle from his pocket again and blew on it a sweet and warbling note, like the trilling of a bird. In response to this summons, an exciting thing happened. For, down over the glittering, yellow hills and up from the brightly polished valleys, came pouring hosts of little gnomes all wearing yellow suits and stockings and little yellow hats.

" Goodness gracious me ! " gasped King Archibald in fright and astonishment, as the gnomes came racing towards where he, the Man In The Moon and the rest of the little party were standing. " Are—are these my son's subjects ? "

" Yes, they are," said the Man In The Moon.

" Aw, I don't like them ! " cried Prince Puggy, clinging tightly to one of his father's long, bony shanks. " They're horrid little things—keep them off—don't let them touch me ! "

By this time the leading gnomes had reached them and were gathering in an excited circle around them. The circle grew denser and denser, until at length the plateau was packed tight with little yellow-clad gnomes.

" Now listen to me ! " yelled the Man In The Moon suddenly, and instantly every gnome was silent. " I have summoned you here to tell you that I am no longer the Man In The Moon. I am resigning the post in favour of Prince Puggy here. From now onwards he will be the Man In The Moon ! "

" Who, him ? " screamed the gnomes in dismay and derision. " We don't want a fat, ugly lump like him for our chief person. We want *you !* "

" You can't have me ! " cried the Man In The Moon. " I've resigned, I tell you. You'll have to get your new Man In The Moon to polish the moon for you during your holiday. I have no doubt that his father here, King Archibald, will be very pleased to help him ! "

" What do you mean, polish the moon? " cried King Archibald furiously. " I'm not going to help to polish the moon ! "

His words, however, were lost in the hubbub which had broken out among the vast crowd of gnomes. They had shrill, piping voices, and made a terrific din as they all started talking at once.

Suddenly twelve gnomes, more richly dressed than the others, came pushing

and elbowing their way through the throng towards the Man In The Moon.

" Here comes the Committee ! " murmured the Man In The Moon to Cricket and Buttercup.

When they had reached the Man In The Moon, the spokesman of the Committee—a very fat little gnome—cried almost tearfully :

" Oh, please, won't you withdraw your resignation and remain the Man In The Moon ? "

" No, I won't ! " said the Man In The Moon firmly.

" We'll give up our holiday and do the polishing for you, if only you'll stay on as the Man In The Moon ! " wailed the spokesman.

" I don't want you to give up your holiday," said the Man In The Moon. " I'm going to take a holiday myself."

At this the Committee went into a huddle, squeaking away very excitedly amongst themselves At length the spokesman turned to the Man In The Moon again.

" Oh, please, will you agree to this ? " he pleaded. " We'll let you resign for a month. During that time Prince Puggy can be the Man In The Moon and King Archibald can be the Assistant Man In The Moon. We'll make them do all the polishing. Then at the end of a month we'll send them home and you will become the Man In The Moon again. Oh, please, say that you'll agree to that ! " he wailed.

" Well, I don't see why I shouldn't," said the Man In The Moon, thoughtfully stroking his chin. " I don't see why I shouldn't," repeated he. Then, making up his mind : " Yes, I'll agree to that ! " he declared.

At these words the gnomes danced with joy. But King Archibald, cried furiously :

" I don't know what all this is about, but I absolutely refuse to do any polishing whatsoever, nor will I allow Prince Pugnacious to do any either ! "

" Is that so ? " laughed the Man In The Moon. " Well, I'm afraid that both you and Prince Puggy are going to do quite a lot of polishing ! "

. . . . . .

And for a whole month they polished and polished and polished the moon. They tried at first to refuse. But they very quickly changed their minds about that. For the gnomes had charge of the rations on the Moon and they kept Prince Puggy and his father without anything to eat until they promised to do the job.

But King Archibald had to rage against someone. And, believe it or not, he raged against Puggy.

" I've given in to you all your life, but I'll never do it again ! " the king would cry, as he slapped Puggy. " No, by Jingo ! I've learned my lesson this time. When we get back to the Earth—I'll make you do as you're told."

As for Cricket, he had the time of his life on the moon ! He joined in all the gnomes' fun and played at their games and they showed him all over the moon.

At length, however, the month was up and the North Wind came to carry King Archibald and Prince Puggy back home. Buttercup, who had also stayed on the moon, was to take Cricket home.

" I have one last word to say to you ! " said the Man In The Moon sternly to the king, in the presence of all the gnomes. " When you reach home you will give Cricket the reward you promised to whoever could get Prince Puggy the moon. Do you promise that ? "

" Yes," gulped King Archibald, who would have promised anything in order to get back home again.

" If you do not keep your promise," went on the Man In The Moon " the North Wind will snatch you up again one day and bring you back here where you will remain for the rest of your life ! "

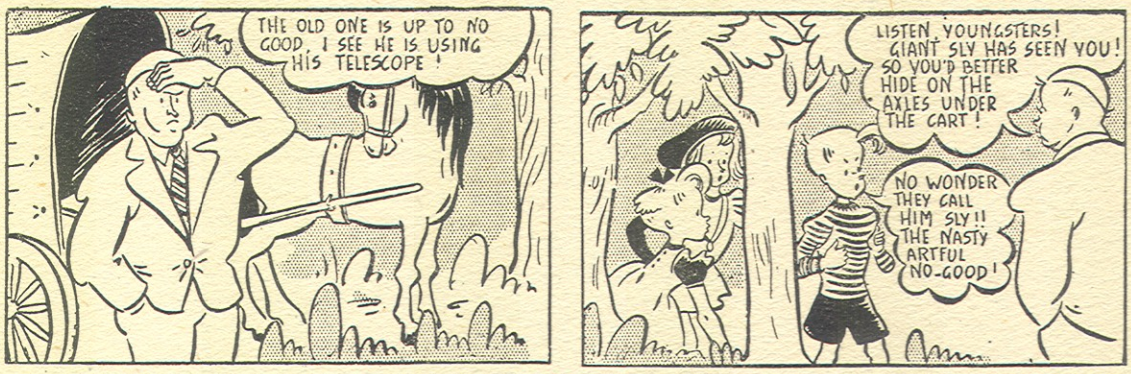
This threat so frightened the king that when he reached his palace he gave Cricket a chest full of gold and precious stones, and a castle and all its great estates.

So Cricket and his mother were no longer poor ; and one day, on Buttercup's back, Cricket means to pay another visit to his friends on the moon. As for Prince Puggy, he has changed a lot. He and Cricket are good pals now. To-day they've gone swimming together.

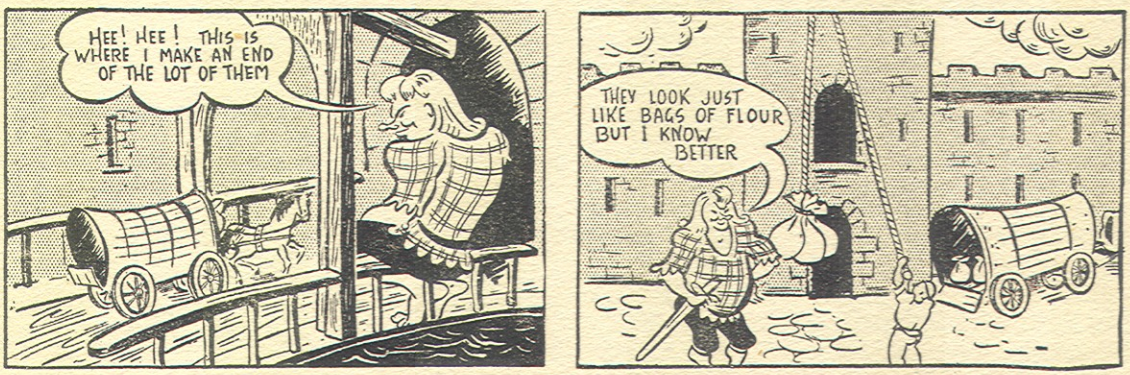
THE END

SCOOPIE and KITTY

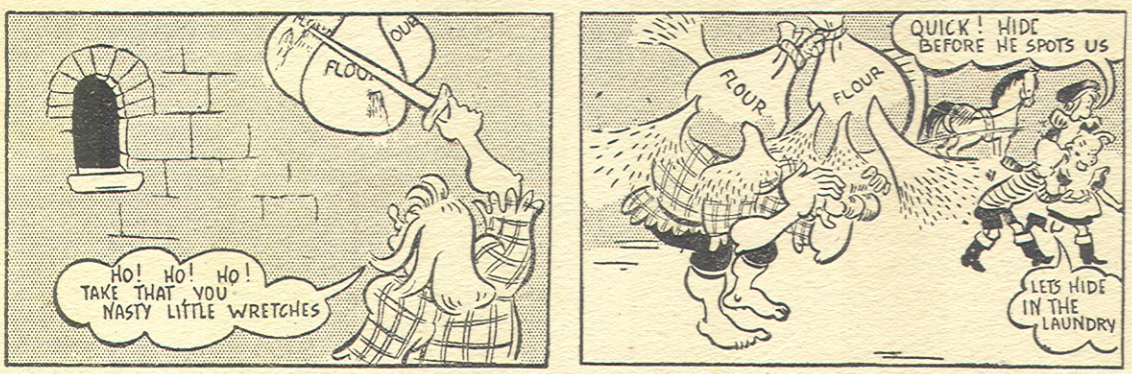
HAVE A WONDERFUL ADVENTURE WHEN JACK TAKES THEM UP HIS BEANSTALK!



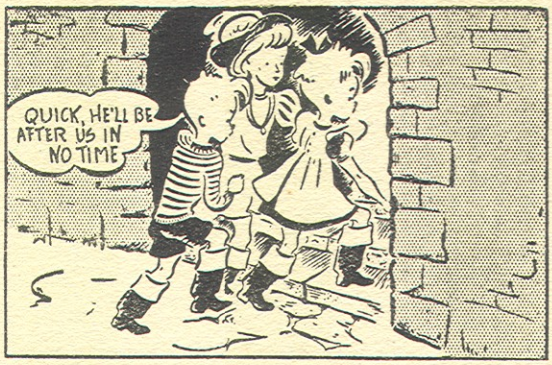
1. (*Continued from Page 23.*) It was a good thing for Jack, Scoopie and Kitty that the Jolly Miller was watching old Giant Sly, because he knew now that it wouldn't be any good for them to try to get into the castle, hidden in the flour sacks. They'd have to think up another plan if they were going to rescue Princess Sunbeam. They got out of the flour sacks, and the Jolly Miller said that they'd better hide on the axles under the cart. The three were very grateful to him, but they felt awfully cross about old Giant Sly having spied on them.

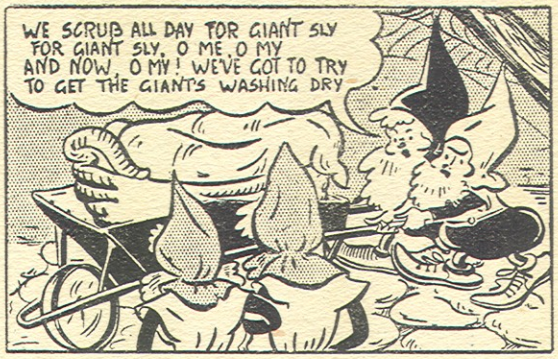


2. Scoopie said it was no wonder they called him sly. The giant had a knowing look in his eye as he sat on the drawbridge, watching the miller's cart on its way to the spot where the flour would be hoisted up into the castle's storage lofts. He thought he knew just what those sacks contained! "This is where I make an end of them!" he laughed. He followed the cart into the yard where the sacks were to be hauled up by a rope worked by pulleys. The miller was heaving on the rope, at the end of which hung three sacks. "They look just like bags of flour," he muttered, "but I know better!" He turned and strode towards the sacks.

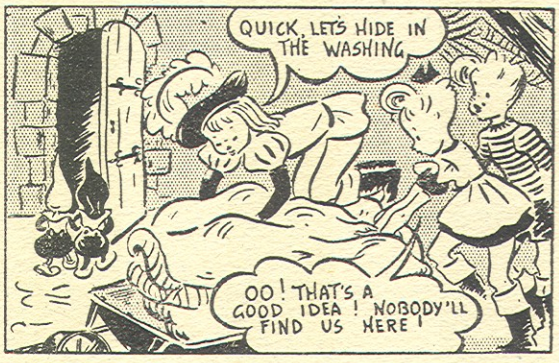


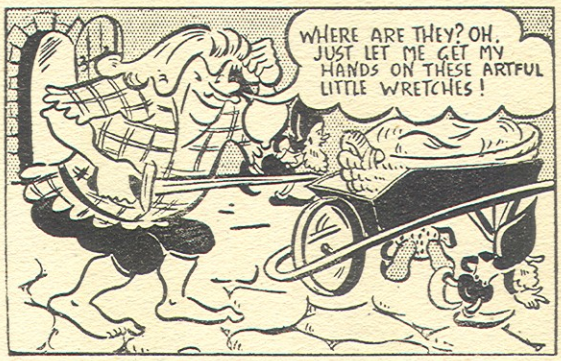
3. Scoopie and Kitty and Jack, who were hidden underneath the Jolly Miller's cart, peeped at the giant as he advanced upon the three dangling sacks. They certainly felt relieved that they'd thought of this other hiding-place!—specially when they saw Giant Sly slashing viciously at the sacks. He laughed as he thrust his sword again and again into them, thinking all the time, of course, that Jack, Scoopie and Kitty were inside them. But the giant's sword was long and sharp, and he didn't realise how many holes he had made in the sacks. He was feeling so pleased with himself that he didn't see the flour start to pour out of them!



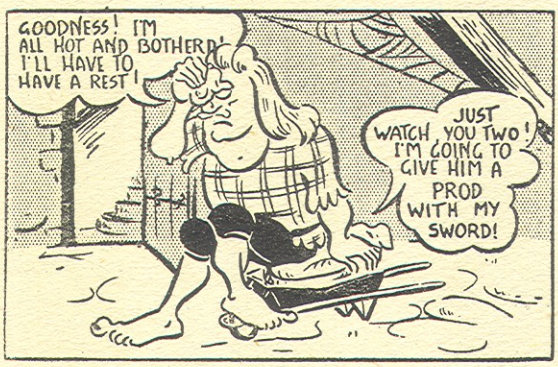


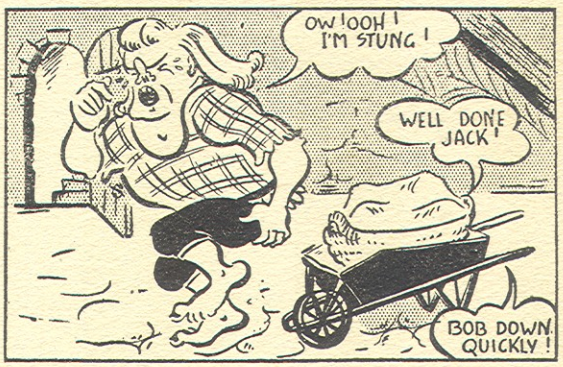
4. He was roaring with laughter, when he suddenly had a mouthful of flour, which nearly choked him! The flour was pouring out all over him, so he couldn't see a thing! And this gave Scoopie, Kitty and Jack a chance to slip off the axles of the Jolly Miller's cart and into the grain store! Scoopie saw a notice which said: To the Giant's Wash-house. "Quick," he said to Jack and Kitty, "we'll hide in here!" Looking into the room, they had quite a surprise! For they could see a number of gnomes, busy with the giant's washing. They were singing a little song about their work. Jack said to Scoopie and Kitty that they'd better all try to get into the wash-house without letting the gnomes see them. He knew that the giant would be looking for them as soon as he'd got rid of some of the flour which had half smothered him!



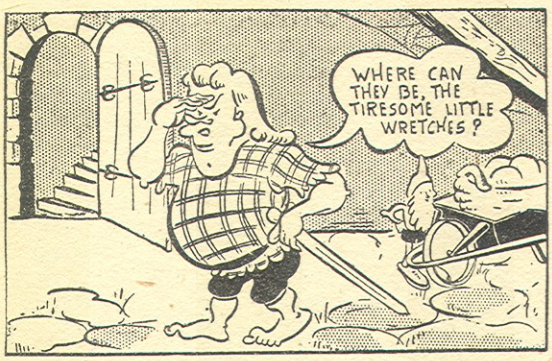


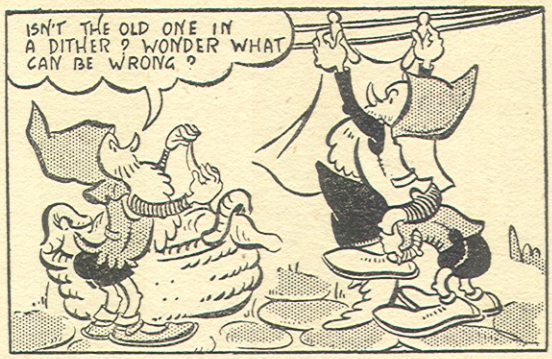
5. Scoopie, Kitty and Jack crept into the room without letting the gnomes see them, and when the gnomes went towards the door, the three of them climbed into the washing, which was in a basket on a wheelbarrow. And they were only just in time! A few seconds later, Giant Sly rushed in, flourishing his sword and shouting, "Where are they?" The gnomes couldn't make it out at all, of course, because they hadn't seen Jack, Scoopie and Kitty, who were very quiet and still in their hiding-place in the washing basket. In fact, they were completely mystified as they watched Sly raging round the wash-house waving his sword about, and peering here, there and everywhere in his search for the three friends. Suddenly, the giant came towards the washing basket, and Kitty had a fright when she heard him say that he'd have to have a rest.



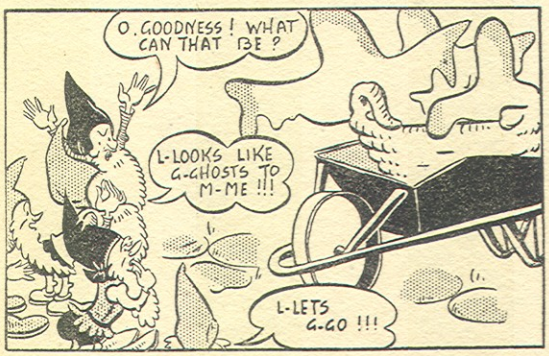


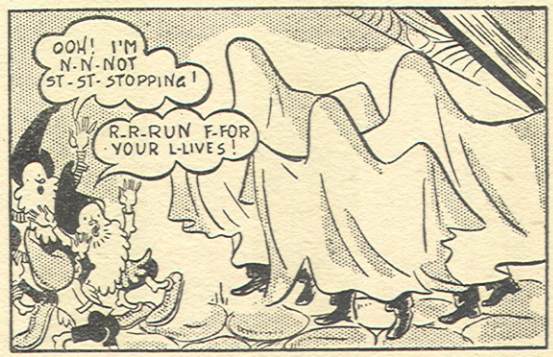
6. With a groan and a creak, he lowered himself on to the basket, and Scoopie, Kitty and Jack escaped to the other end, just in time to avoid being squashed! Jack didn't like having the giant so near, and he wondered how on earth he could get rid of him. Suddenly he had a bright idea. Taking his sword from its sheath, he crept very carefully towards the spot where Giant Sly was sitting. He jabbed his sword hard into the giant, who shot into the air with a howl of pain. "Ow! Ooh! I'm stung," he yelled. As Jack rejoined Scoopie and Kitty they could hear the giant stamping about the wash-house in a rage. They couldn't help laughing a little to think of the silly old giant having been right on top of their hiding-place without looking under the clothes!



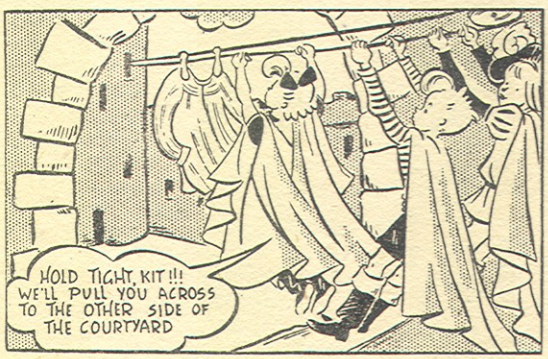


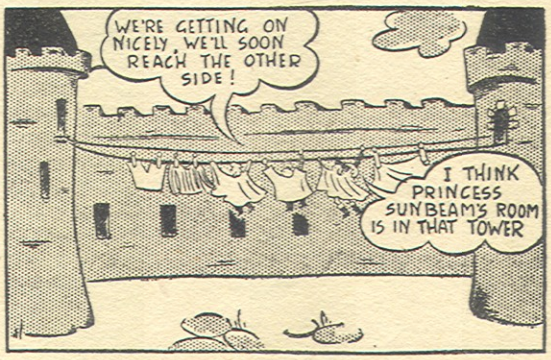
7. He went on searching for them, but still he didn't think of looking in the basket. And all the time, the gnomes had been busy hanging some of the washing on a pulley line which stretched from the wash-house across the courtyard to the castle opposite. The gnomes didn't know why Giant Sly should be in such a temper. One of them said, " I wonder what can be wrong ? " Jack, Scoopie and Kitty were trying to think of a plan to get the gnomes out of the way while they got into the castle to rescue Princess Sunbeam. They would have to hurry because the pile of laundry under which they were hidden was getting smaller and smaller, as the gnomes hung up more and more washing.



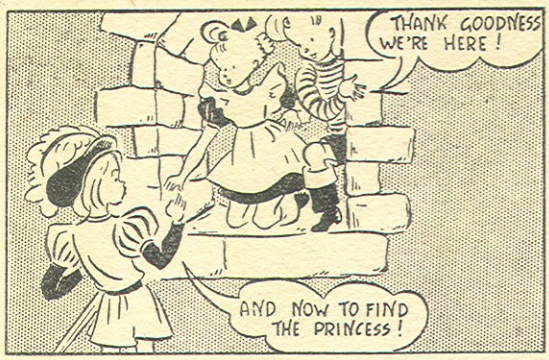


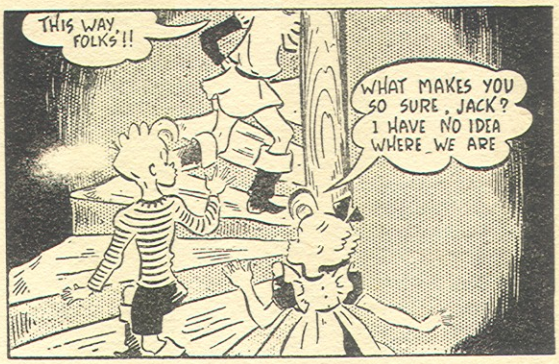
8. Suddenly Kitty had a grand idea. She said to the others, " Let's rise up out of the basket, each covered with sheets and pretend to be ghosts ! " Jack and Scoopie thought it was a jolly good plan, and the three of them crept under sheets. The gnomes were so busy that they didn't notice the three white figures until they were half way out of the clothes basket. When they caught sight of them, they wondered what on earth could have happened to the laundry, which had been lying still a moment before. They thought it must be bewitched ! And when the figures climbed out of the basket and started to walk towards them, they were thoroughly scared.



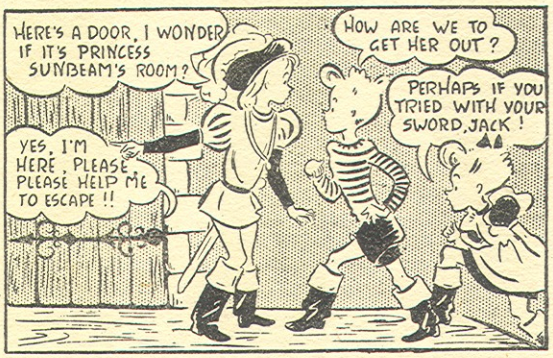


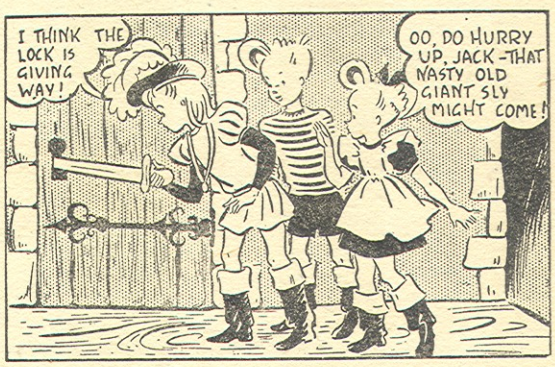
9. They decided to get away as quickly as they possibly could, and had all disappeared from sight in a few seconds. The plan had certainly worked, and Jack and Scoopie told Kitty how clever she was to think of it. Jack said that if they were quick enough, he thought it would be possible to get into the castle by pulling themselves along the clothes-line, which was worked by a pulley. But they'd have to hurry, in case Giant Sly came out into the courtyard again to look for them. Scoopie said, " We'd better keep these sheets round us, because then we'll look like clothes dangling from the line ! " When all three of them were clinging to the line, Scoopie gave them a signal.



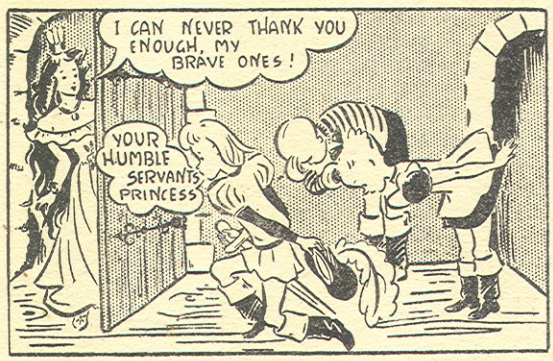


10. They all pulled on the line, and very soon they had passed through the window, and were sailing out over the courtyard, towards the tower from which they had seen the princess waving. In a few minutes, they came to the end of the line, which was fixed by one of the windows in the tower. They were glad to be able to stand on something firm again! But Jack thought there was no time to lose, and he said to Scoopie and Kitty that they should all start searching for the princess. When they went out of the door of the room in which they'd arrived, they noticed a flight of stone stairs, and Jack led the way up them. Kitty wondered why he should be so sure that they should go up instead of down.

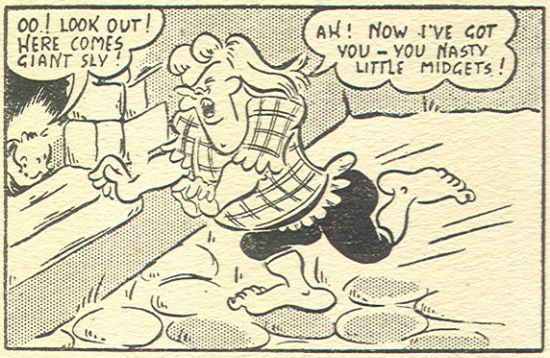


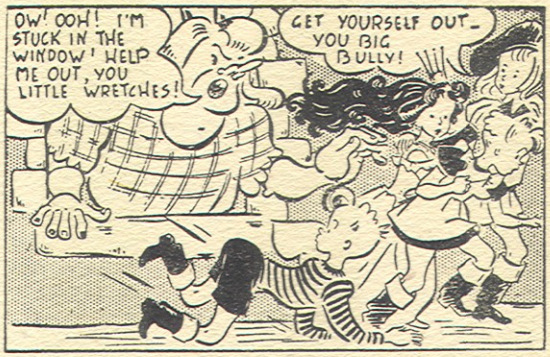


11. But Jack knew that the princess had waved from a window which was higher than the one where the clothes-line was fixed. Presently they came to a heavy wooden door. They were wondering if it could be the princess's room, when she herself called to them. "Yes, I'm here!" she cried. "Please, please help me to escape!" Jack tried the door, but it was securely locked. Kitty suggested that he should try to break open the lock with his sword. Jack thrust his sword into the lock with all his strength, and presently it started to give way. But Kitty was getting anxious. She told him to hurry up in case Giant Sly might come along. He thrust his sword into the lock and turned it.

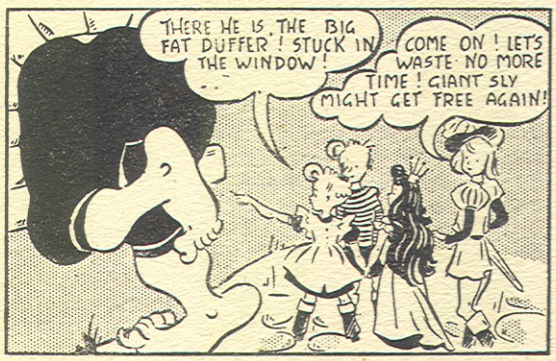


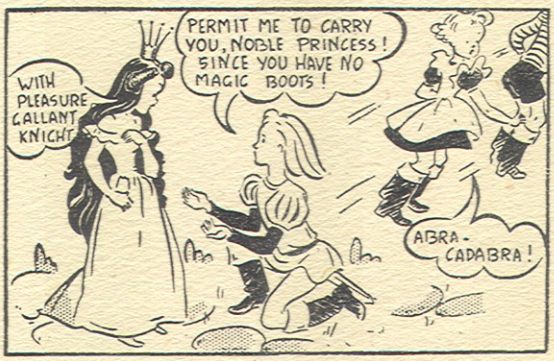
12. Then the lock gave way completely, and Jack pulled the door open. Immediately, the princess ran out, and the three friends bowed deeply. But they all knew that there was no time to lose, and they hurried the princess away down the stairs. On their way, however, when they were passing a window, they spotted Giant Sly searching about for them in the courtyard. Oh, dear! This was another setback! Now they would have to think up another plan to dodge the giant! Anyway they would get downstairs as quickly as possible, and see how the land lay when they reached the bottom of the tower. Perhaps by that time, the giant would be looking for them elsewhere.



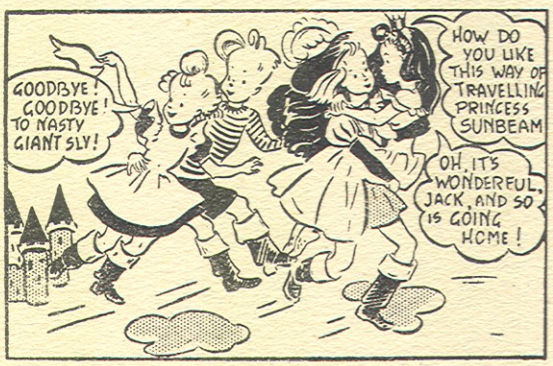


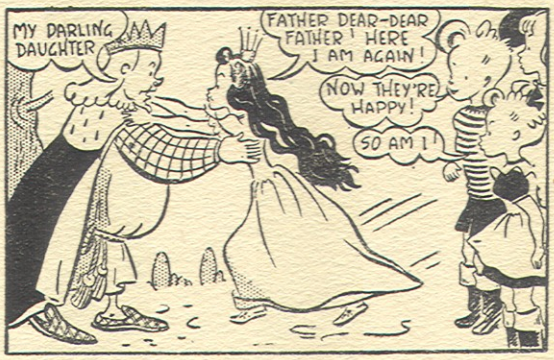
13. But unluckily for the princess and her rescuers, Giant Sly was still prowling about the courtyard when they reached the window on the ground floor of the tower. He was looking in their direction at the moment when they came in sight, and he rushed at the window with a roar. "Aha!" shouted the giant. "Now I've got you—you nasty little midgets!" Jack, Scoopie, the princess and Kitty fled from the window as fast as ever they could! It would be too bad if the giant caught them now, when they'd almost completed the rescue of Princess Sunbeam. But the giant was in for a great surprise! And so were Scoopie, Kitty, Jack and the princess!



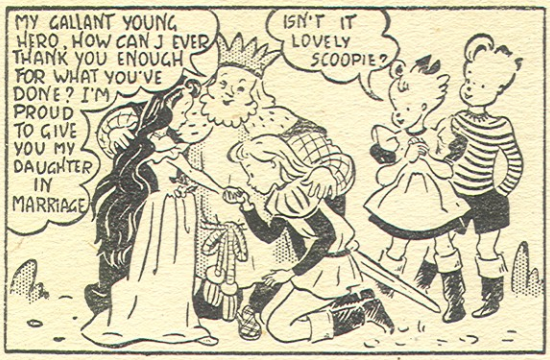


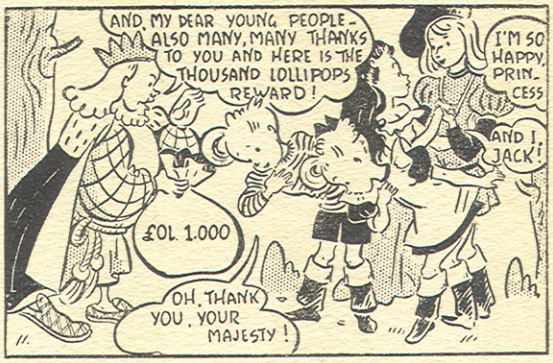
14. Giant Sly had been in such a terrific hurry to catch the princess and her three rescuers that he had flung himself halfway through the window in an effort to grab them. He didn't realise that it was a small window, and in a few seconds he was howling with rage, and telling them to help him to get out! Of course, they had no intention of helping the Giant, and Jack shouted, "Get yourself out, you big bully!" But there was no time to stand there laughing at the giant, and the four friends knew very well that the best thing for them to do was to get out of the castle grounds before the giant was able to get free of the window!



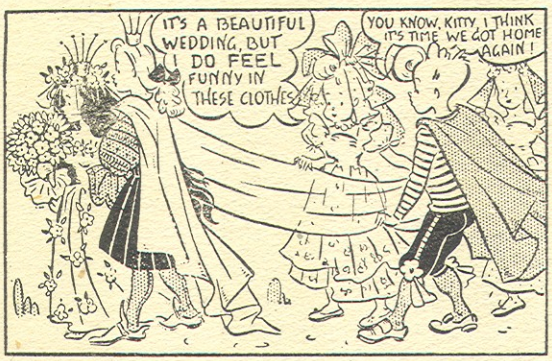


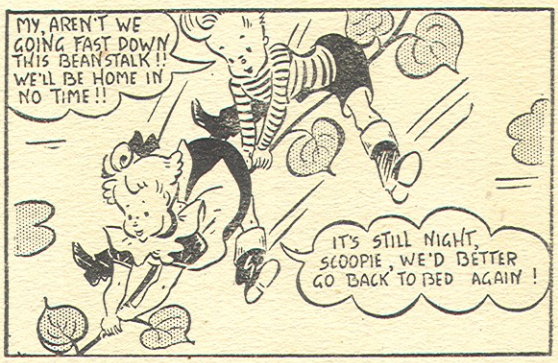
15. It was easy for Scoopie, Kitty and Jack to get away, because they were still wearing the seven-league boots which they'd got when they'd visited Puss-in-Boots' Shoe Shop. But the princess was wearing ordinary shoes. So Jack asked her if he could carry her, and she said that he could. Then he, Scoopie and Kitty said the magic word, "Abracadabra!" and they all floated into the air! They were jolly glad to be rid of Giant Sly, and the farther away they got from him, the better they liked it. Princess Sunbeam thought it was a grand way of travelling! In an hour or so they saw that they were over the palace of King Cole, and the little princess was so pleased she could hardly speak!



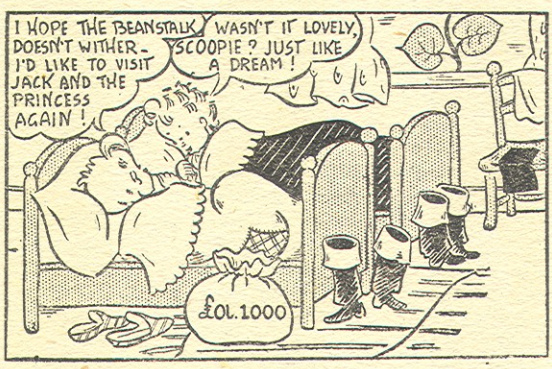


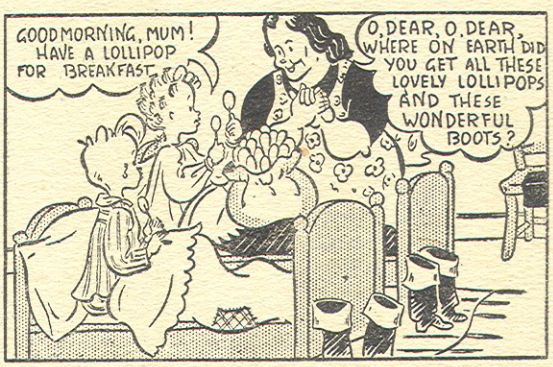
16. They saw the poor old king wandering about in one of his woods, still looking rather vague. They went down to earth and landed a few yards away from him. He could hardly believe his eyes when he saw his daughter running to greet him. He simply didn't know how to thank Jack, Scoopie and Kitty, and said that he was very proud to give his daughter in marriage to Jack. Then they all went off to the palace where the king got a bag containing one thousand lollipops. He gave it to Scoopie and Kitty as a reward for having helped to rescue his daughter from Giant Sly. They were invited to the wedding of Jack and the princess, as bridal attendants, and they knew this was a great honour.





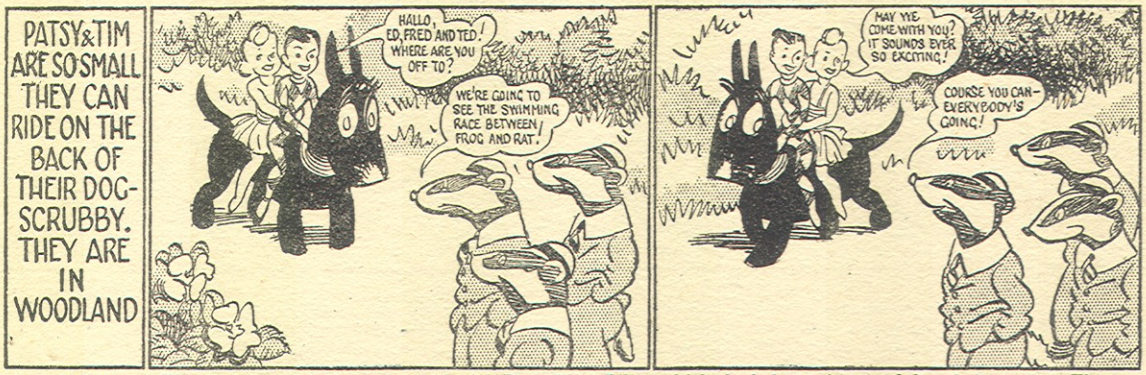
17. Princess Sunbeam looked beautiful in her wedding dress, and Jack was very proud of his lovely bride. As for Scoopie and Kitty, they were as excited as could be to be guests at such an important wedding, and they thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. But after a while Scoopie said that they really ought to be going home. So they said "Good-bye" to all the good friends they had met since they had climbed with Jack up the beanstalk, and everybody said they hoped they'd come again soon. Scoopie and Kitty said they'd come any time Jack was round their way. Jack smiled at this, and said he'd probably be around quite soon!



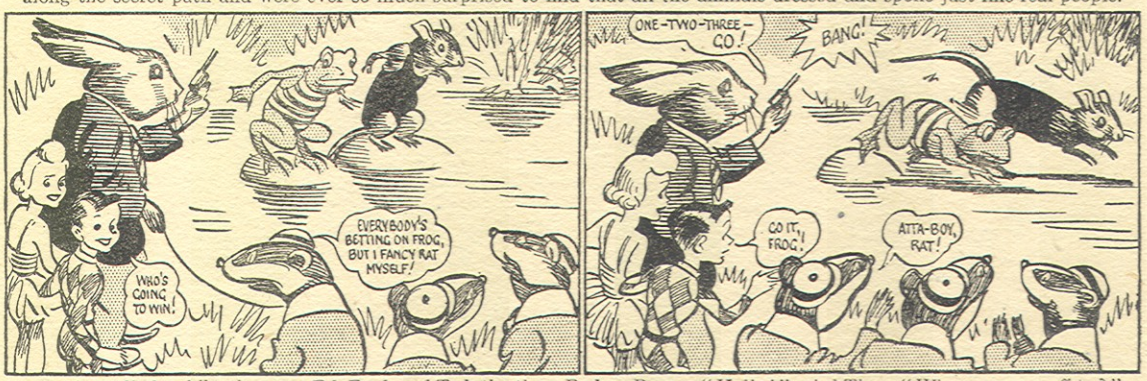


18. Then he took them back to the top of the beanstalk, and they slid swiftly down it, until they arrived right on their own bedroom window-sill. They could hear their mother bustling about in the kitchen downstairs, getting breakfast ready. So they got into bed quickly and when she came into the room, there they were tucked up in bed! Well, you can imagine her surprise when she saw the enormous bag of lollipops by their bed, and the strange-looking boots, too! When Scoopie and Kitty saw their mother's expression, they winked at each other, and, turning to their mother, they said, "Good-morning, mum! Have a lollipop for breakfast!"

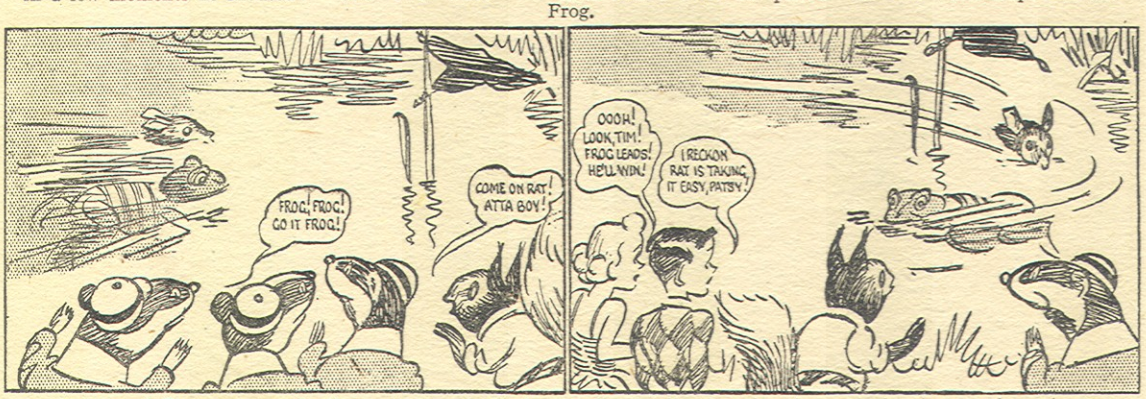
PATSY AND TIM



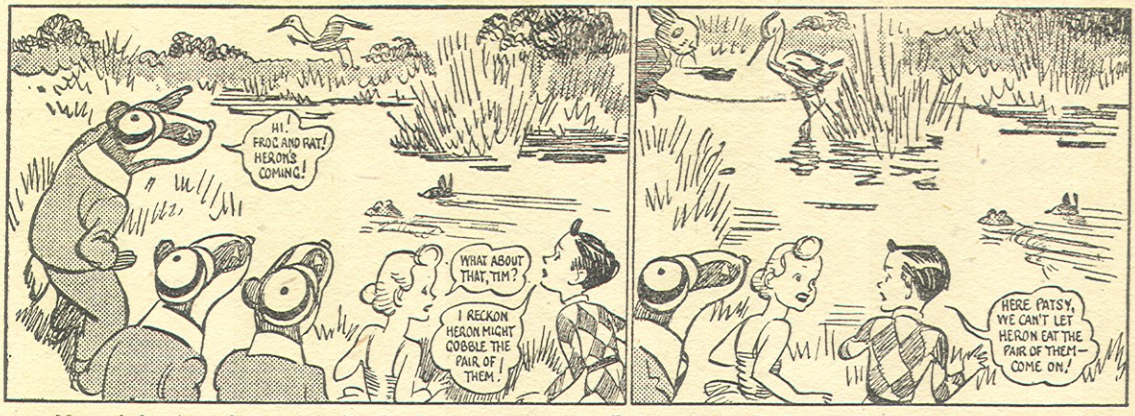
1. Patsy and Tim had swallowed some wonderful Dwindling Pills, which had been invented by their uncle. These pills made them so small that they were able to enjoy all sorts of exciting adventures denied to ordinary boys and girls. They always had their Scottie dog, Scrubby, with them for company. One day Patsy and Tim were riding down a woodland path when they came across a little notice which said : To the Squirrelry and Mole City. Patsy and Tim rode along the secret path and were ever so much surprised to find that all the animals dressed and spoke just like real people.



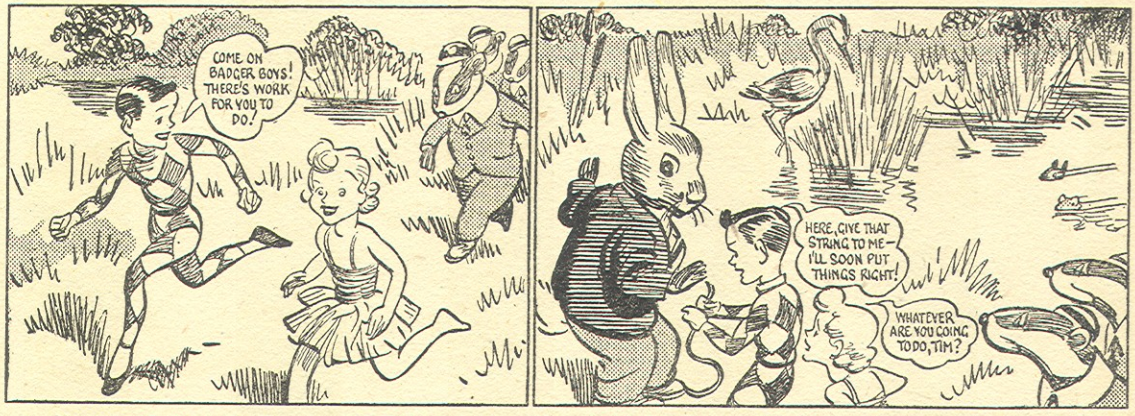
2. After a little while, they met Ed, Fred, and Ted, the three Badger Boys. "Hallo!" cried Tim. "Where are you off to?" They said they were going to see the swimming race between Frog and Rat. Patsy and Tim thought they'd like to go, too, so they and the Badger Boys all went off together. They soon reached the spot by the pond where the swimming race would start. Out in the middle of the water were two round stones, and Rat stood on one and Frog on the other. Frog had a stripey swim-suit on, and Rat wore a dark one. They were waiting for Mr. Tufty-tail to fire his starting pistol. In a few moments he shouted : "One—two—three——" then BANG went his pistol. Into the water leapt Rat and Frog.



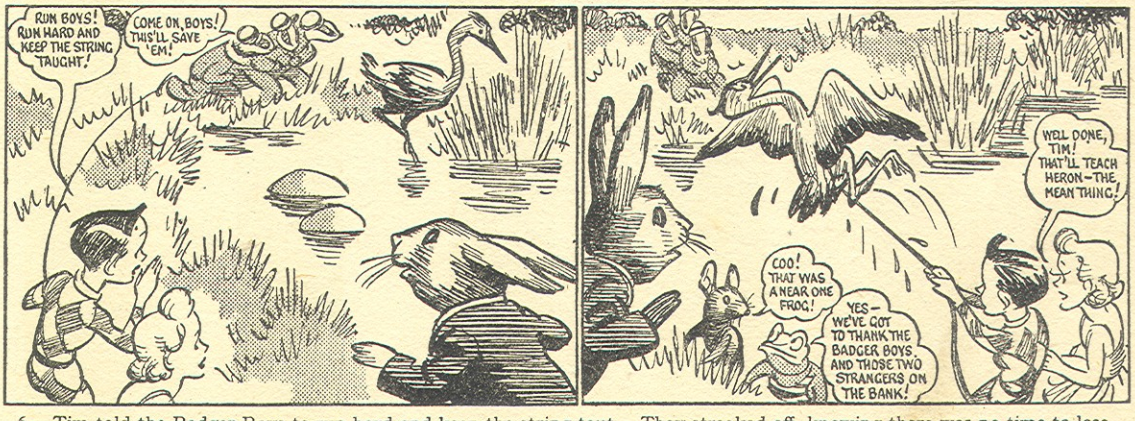
3. Patsy and Tim were terrifically excited, and all the woodland folk were shouting and cheering on the swimmers. Some thought that Rat would win and others favoured Frog. They were nearing the turning point of the race, and both were trying their hardest to be the first one round it. The point was shown by a little green flag tied to a stiff reed. It was really a lily leaf, which Duck had fixed for them the night before. When they were only a few inches away from the flag, Frog put an extra spurt on and shot in front of Rat. But in a few seconds, Rat had caught up with Frog, and they were swimming neck and neck again.



4. Most of the time, they were swimming level, but sometimes Rat was in the lead, then Frog would catch up and get in front. Most of the onlookers thought it would probably be a dead heat. Then something unexpected happened. Ed suddenly spotted a large bird flying towards them. "Hi! Frog and Rat!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "Heron's coming!" But Frog and Rat didn't hear Ed's cries. Heron stood behind a little cluster of reeds, and just opposite him was Mr. Tufty-tail, holding the cord which marked the end of the race.

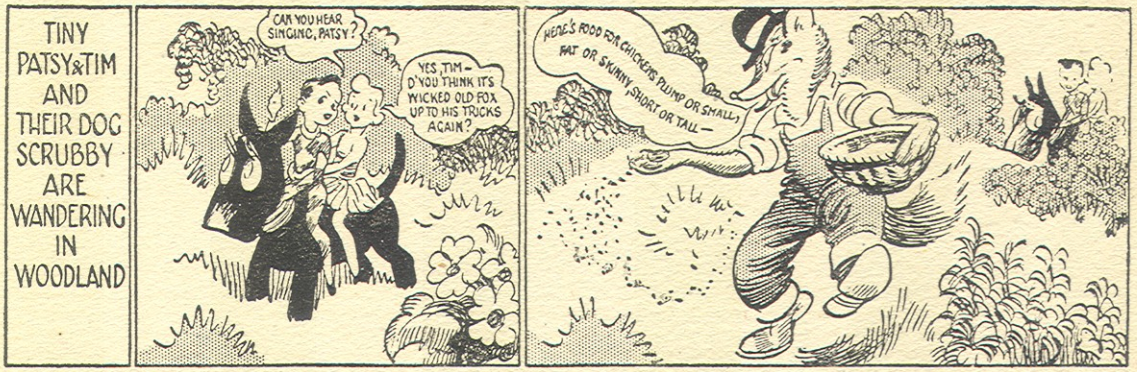


5. Nearer and nearer to Heron swam Frog and Rat. How could they be saved? Suddenly Tim caught Patsy's arm. "Here, Patsy!" he cried. "We can't let Heron eat the pair of them. Come on!" Calling to the Badger Boys to come and help, he raced along the bank towards Mr. Tufty-tail at the winning-post. The Badger Boys didn't waste time asking questions, and soon they reached Mr. Tufty-tail, who was holding the string. "Here, give me that!" cried Tim. He took the string from Mr. Tufty-tail, and thrust it into Ted's paw. Everything depended on how fast he could run.

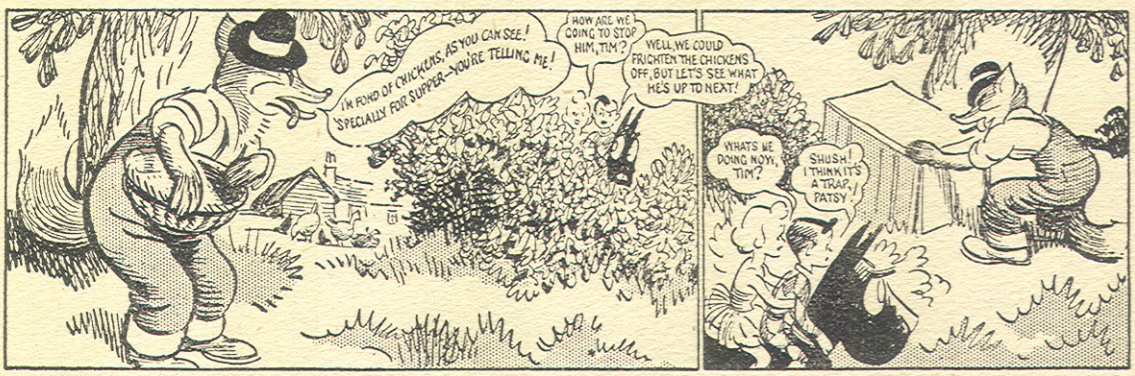


6. Tim told the Badger Boys to run hard and keep the string taut. They streaked off, knowing there was no time to lose. Soon Heron would be able to pounce on the swimmers! But now the Badger Boys were opposite Patsy and Tim, and the string was just behind Heron's legs. Suddenly Tim gave the Badger Boys a sign to pull hard. They did! Ed, Ted, and Fred together. The string flicked hard against Heron's legs and knocked him into the water! This gave Frog and Rat a chance to reach the bank, and they thanked Tim and the Badger Boys for saving them so cleverly.

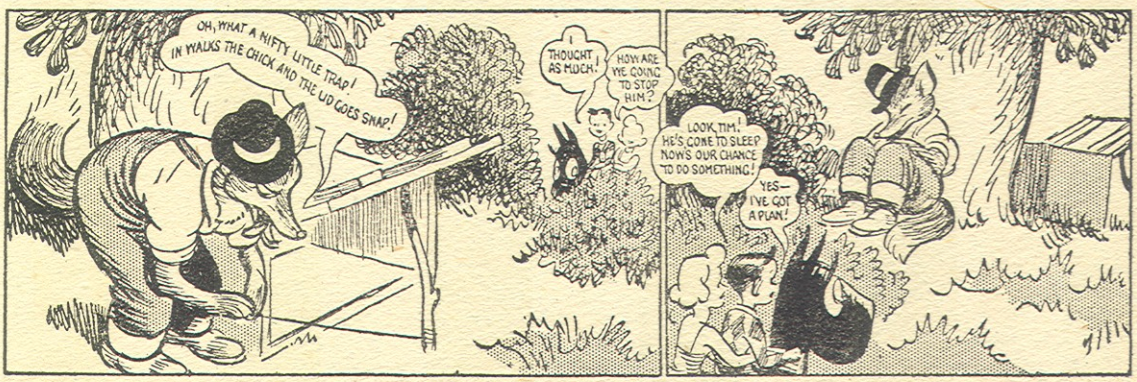
PATSY AND TIM



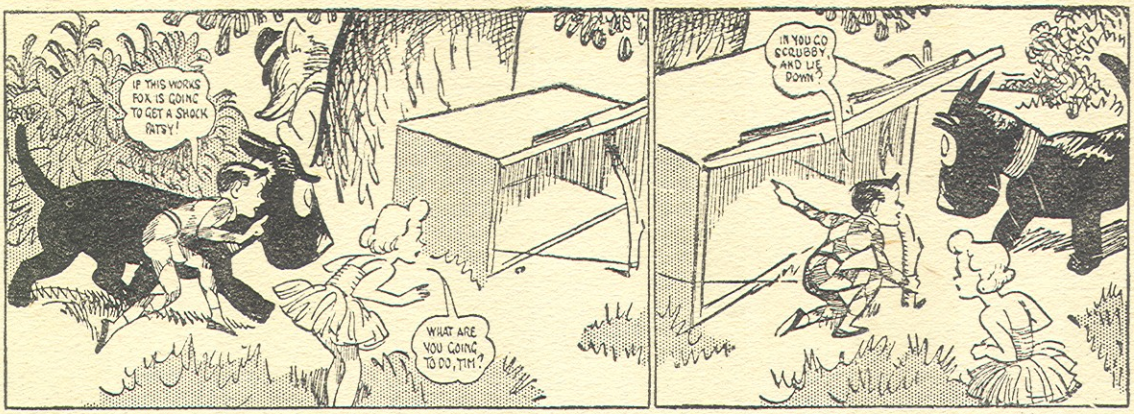
1. Patsy and Tim were having the grandest adventures ever. Since swallowing the wonderful Dwindling Pills, they were only a few inches tall. They could ride easily on the back of their Scotty dog, Scrubby, and very soon they had made lots of jolly friends in Woodland. There were the three Badger Boys, Ed, Fred and Ted. There were the Rabbit folk of the Warren—Mr. Tufty-tail, P.c. Long-Ears, and all the rest of them. Woodland was really a very happy place except for Fox who was always causing trouble. One day Patsy and Tim heard him singing as they rode along on Scrubby's back.



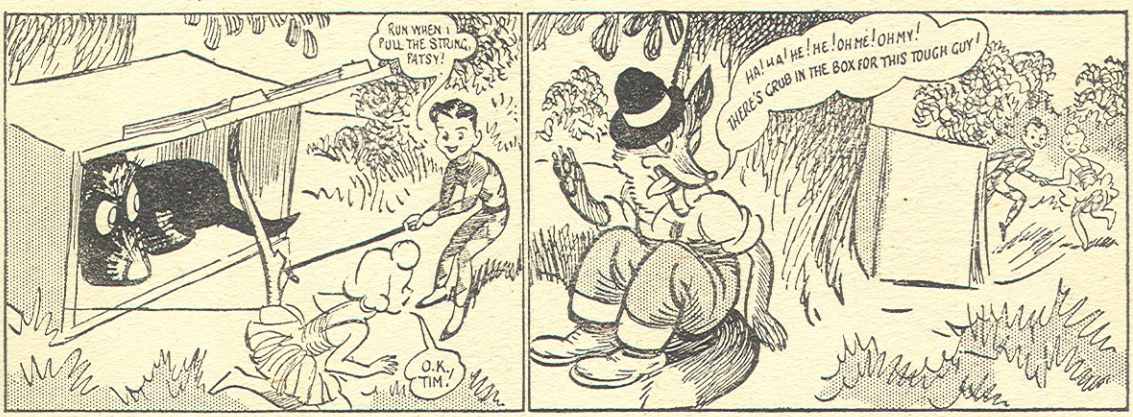
2. They had been long enough in Woodland to know that when Fox sang, he was up to some mischief. Tim tugged at Scrubby's collar and guided him behind a bush. From there, Patsy and Tim watched Fox prance across a field, scattering corn as he went singing all the time. They noticed that the trail of corn began at Chicken Cottages. They watched the cunning rascal scatter the corn right across the field, until he came to a wooden box among the bushes, The chickens would come pecking at the corn and follow the trail until they ended up in the trap!



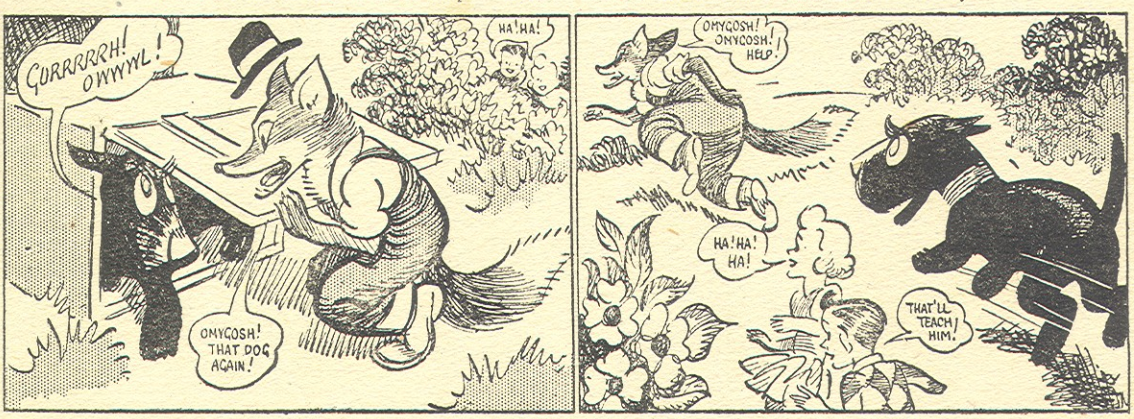
3. Very quietly, Tim guided Scrubby amongst the bushes, so that he and Patsy could see all that went on. They could hear old Fox singing as he fixed his trap. He scattered lots of corn inside the trap to tempt the chickens in. Old Fox thought it was a cunning scheme, and chuckled to himself as he sat at the foot of the tree. He began to nod and was soon sound asleep. But Patsy and Tim knew that the old rascal would be wide awake whenever he heard his trap click. What could they do to save those chickens? Suddenly Tim laughed—he had it! Softly he and Patsy slipped from Scrubby's back.



4. Patsy wanted to know what the plan was, but Tim told her to wait and see. Scrubby was needed, and Tim led him quietly towards the trap. Old Fox was still asleep, and didn't hear them as they passed him. But he'd be in for a big shock if Tim's plan worked out all right. But scrubby knew that this box was a trap. So he didn't like it at all when Tim told him to go inside and lie down. Tim patted Scrubby, and told him that it would be all right. That was good enough for the Scotty. He knew he could trust Tim. He stepped past the twig, and lay down inside the trap.'

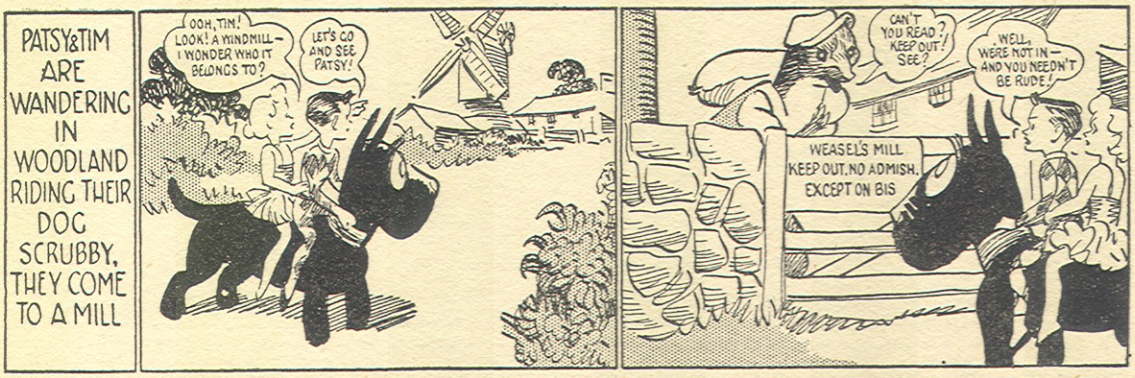


5. Taking care not to move the twig, Tim began to tie another piece of string to it. When he'd got the string firmly tied to the twig, Patsy saw through his plan. He'd pull away the twig and down would come the lid. Tim picked up the other end of the string. "Run when I pull the string, Patsy," he said. "Ready—steady—GO!" Tim tugged at the string. Away came the twig, and down came the lid of the trap with a loud bang. Old Fox heard it all right. Patsy and Tim watched Fox lift the lid of his trap. Gosh! What a shock he had when he saw scrubby!

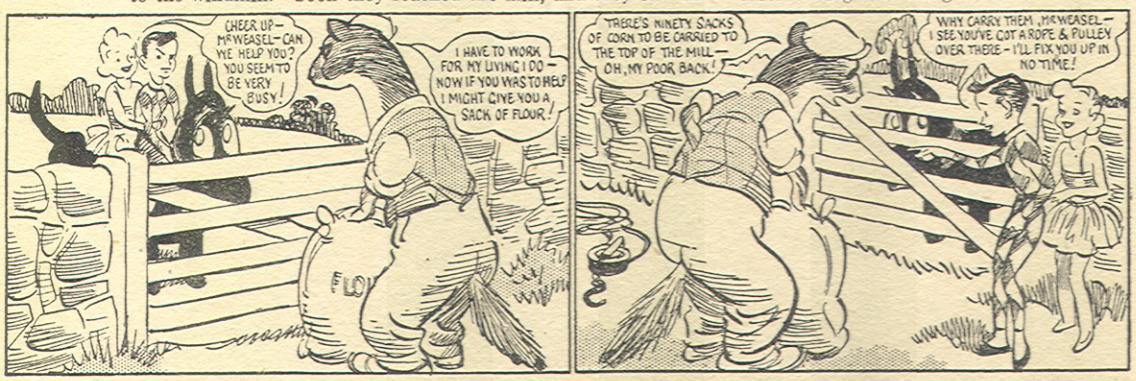


6. He had just been reaching to grab the fat chicken he was sure was inside when Scrubby growled. With a howl of terror, Fox dropped the lid, but Scrubby was more than half-way out. Barking furiously, the Scotty chased Fox until the old rascal reached his lair. It would be a long time before he'd think of trapping another chicken! As for Scrubby, he went on growling for quite a little while after Fox had disappeared. But Patsy and Tim patted him and said what a clever little dog he'd been. So he soon forgot about old Fox, and he and Patsy and Tim went off into Woodland again.

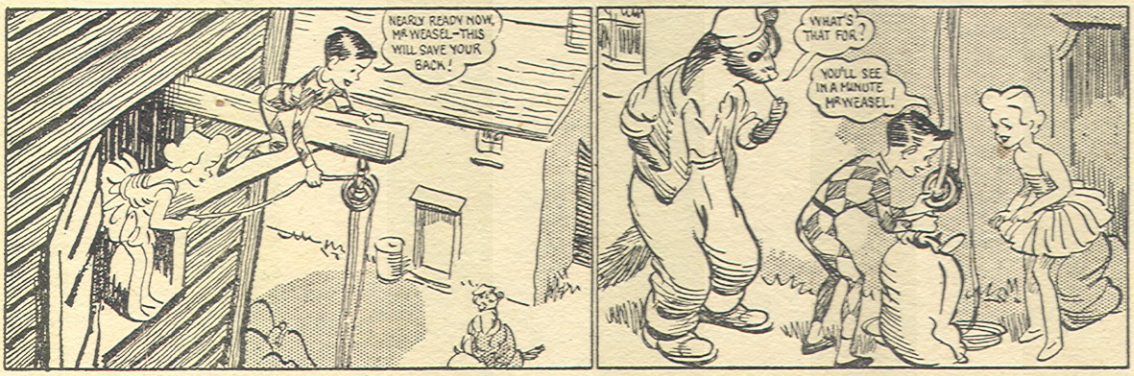
PATSY AND TIM



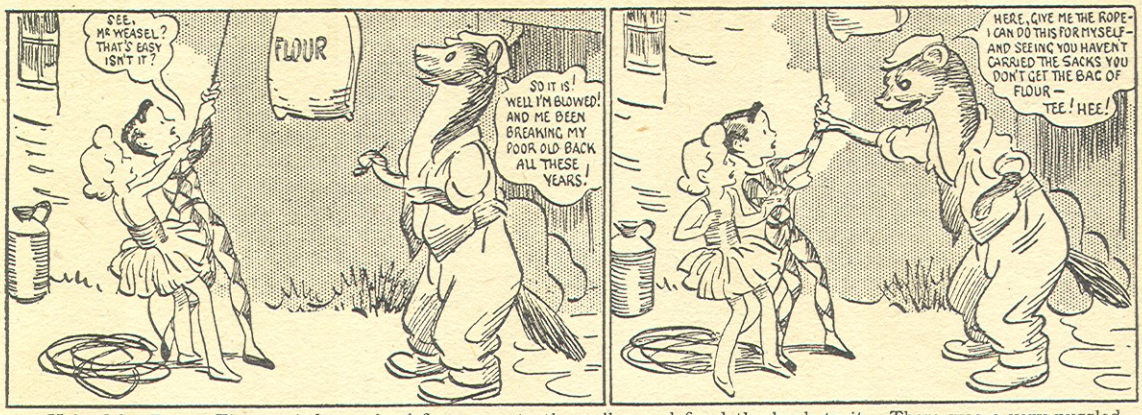
1. Patsy and Tim were having a wonderful time in Woodland. They had swallowed some of their uncle's famous Dwindling Pills, and were now so small that they could ride on the back of their Scotty dog, Scrubby. One day, when they were out riding on Scrubby's back, they saw a windmill. Patsy thought she'd like to take a closer look at it, and she asked Tim if they could go and see it. Tim thought it was a jolly good idea, and he guided Scrubby down a narrow lane which led to the windmill. Soon they reached the mill, and they saw Mr. Weasel leaning over the gate.



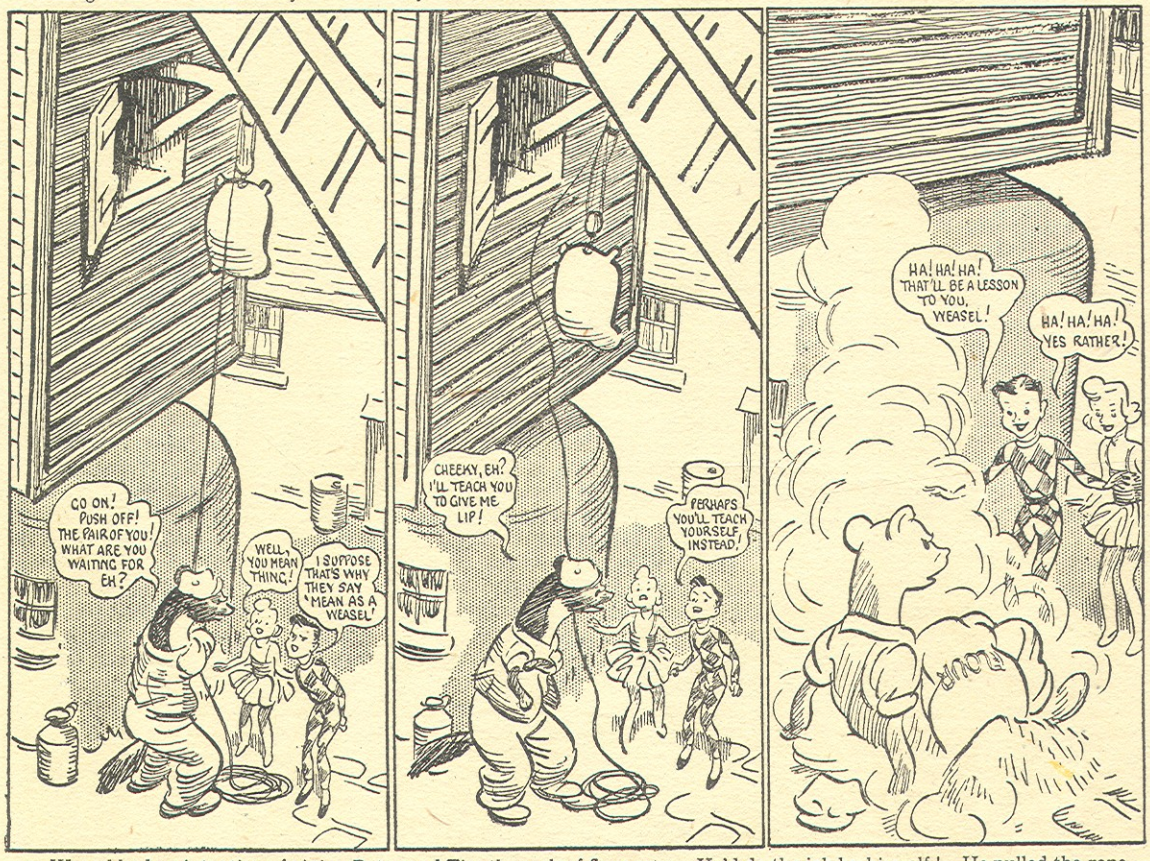
2. But Weasel was a surly sort of fellow, and he'd had a notice put on his gate which told people to keep out. Patsy and Tim saw the notice, but they paid no attention to it. They were sure that Mr. Weasel would be all right when they got to know him. Patsy asked him if they could come into the mill and have a look round, but Weasel told her and Tim to keep out. He was really very rude about it, too! Tim thought it might be because he was very busy just then. And he was right! Weasel had a lot of flour to carry to the top of his mill, and he would have liked some help. Suddenly a cunning glint came into Weasel's eyes. He asked Patsy and Tim if they would help him.



3. He only half promised them a sack of flour for their pay—the sly rascal! But Patsy and Tim didn't want any pay, and were glad to help any of the Woodland folk. Leaving Scrubby outside, they went into the yard, where Weasel told them he had ninety sacks of flour which would have to be carried to the top of the mill. It was a big job, and it made his back ache. But he was really very silly, because he had a pulley with a rope and a hook, which he'd never thought of using. So Tim showed Weasel how it worked. With his sister, he climbed up into the loft and fixed the pulley to a wooden beam which stuck out from the window. When it was firmly fixed they came down again.



4. Helped by Patsy, Tim carried a sack of flour over to the pulley and fixed the hook to it. There was a very puzzled look on Weasel's face. Patsy and Tim laughed, because it seemed funny that a cunning fellow like Weasel could be so stupid over some things. Now the hook was firmly fixed in the cord that was wound round the neck of the sack. Patsy and Tim gripped the other end of the rope and pulled with all their strength. The pulley creaked and groaned as the rope was pulled through it. Slowly the sack of flour went up until it reached the window of the mill. All that had to be done now was to swing the sack through the window. It was a grand idea, and Mr. Weasel looked very pleased. But the cunning look was back in his eyes. How silly he'd been not to use it before! He'd soon have all his sacks lifted into the loft.



5. Weasel had no intention of giving Patsy and Tim the sack of flour now. He'd do the job by himself! He pulled the rope roughly out of their hands. Well! Patsy and Tim were surprised at being treated like this. They could do without the sack of flour, but they thought that Weasel might at least have thanked them for showing him how to use the pulley. They were angry and told Weasel just what they thought of him. At first he laughed, but then he got angry, too, and rolling up his sleeves in a threatening manner, he told them to push off. He'd had to let go the rope to roll up his sleeves —and that did it! There was nothing to hold up the bag of flour, and it came whizzing down—WHOOMPH—and landed right on top of Weasel's head—where it burst open! Patsy and Tim howled with laughter. "Let that be a lesson to you!" they chuckled.

WERE YOU RIGHT?

Answers to the Puzzles on Pages 92, 93, 112 and 148

Page 92 Solutions.

1. Because she was his mother !
2. Holly.
3. C—— cones, patch, facts, scent, mince.
4. BUILT
   BUILT
   BUILT
   BUILT
   BUILT
5. Seventeen 5's.
6. Number 84989.
7. Look before you leap.
8. Miss Fatima Fiddlesticks, Two, Coast Road, Blackpool.
9. 4 boys and 3 girls.
10. 10 seconds.
11. (972,221 × 8) + 9 = 7,777,777.
12. Seven.
13. Simply move the top row to the bottom as here :

6	1	8
7	5	3
2	9	4

14. The alphabet was just moved forward by two letters all through, making, "Confined to bed . . . (etc.)."
15. (a) What was the name of Dick Turpin's horse? (b) What is the motto of the Royal Air Force? (c) What was the sign of the Allied invasion army under Gen. Eisenhower? (d) What does "R.S.V.P." mean? (e) What is the inscription on the Victoria Cross? (f) What is "freezing point"?
16. Emu, Tit, Jay, Owl.

Page 93.

17. Eton — Cowes.
    Dartmouth — Chester.
    Brighton — Canterbury.
18. Pen, spoon, cricket-bat, book, hammer, slipper, doll, scissors, electric bulb, key, glove, button, watch, pencil, ring, bell, kettle, stud, nut, pear, cap, teacup, toy soldier, boot, teapot, buckle, nib, bottle, axe—29 in all !
19. None of them—it was just an optical illusion caused by the background of zig-zag lines in the picture.
20. The solution of the cross-figure puzzle was :

    1 - 1947 - 1
    997 - - 167
    3 - - 11 - - 6
    960 - 2240
    - 761 - 24 -
    - 27 - 288 -
    1015 - 801
    3 - - 22 - - 9
    112 - - 365
    3 - 1066 - 0

21. The errors were (1) Hour hand in wrong place for 4 o'clock ; (2) "6" instead of "5" ; (3) "8" at wrong angle ; (4) wrong numeral for "10" ; (5) only four minutes between the "2" and "3" ; (6) second hand not on central pivot.
22. In this order : B, C, G, F, E, A, D, H, I, M, N, J, K, L, P and O.

Page 112—"Seen in the Kitchen."

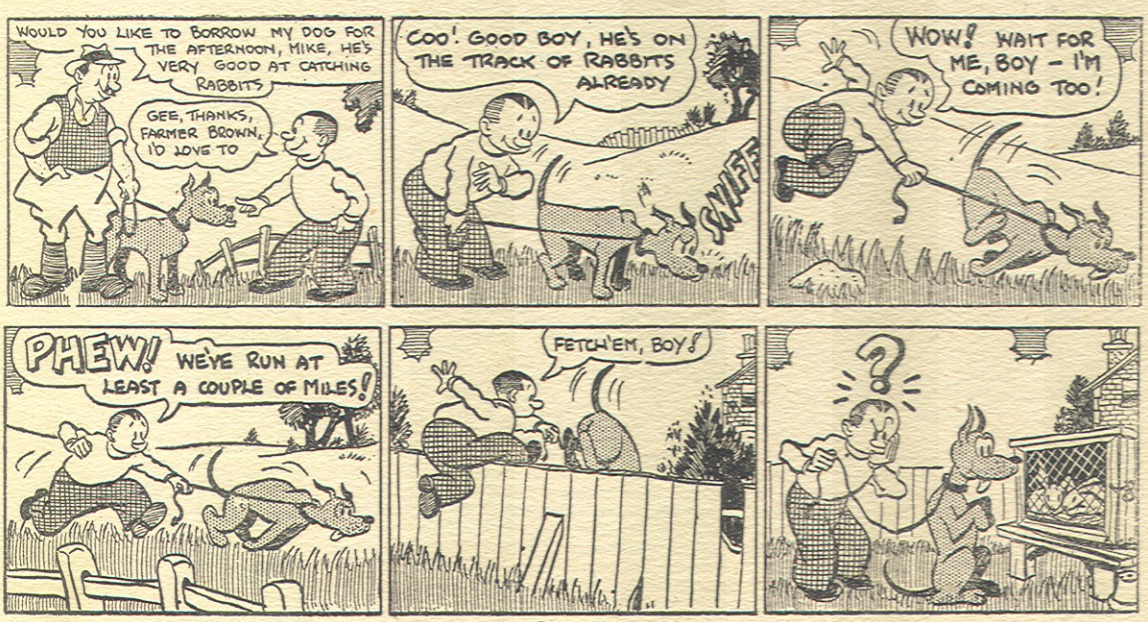
1, Plate. 2, Saucer. 3, Pan. 4, Knife. 5, Fork. 6, Spoon. 7, Oven. 8, Towel. 9, Sink.

Page 148—"Seen in the Garden."

1, Rake. 2, Spade. 3, Fence. 4, Shed. 5, Trowel. 6, Hoe. 7, Hose. 8, Roller. 9, Shears.

Marking Time ! Allow yourself 1 mark for each correct solution—except in Nos. 15, 17, 18, 20 and 21, and the picture-puzzles on Pages 112 and 148, where you can take 5 marks for each set of solutions, deducting 1 for each mistake or omission. Top score, 52. If you have 35 marks or over, you "pass out" ; for 40 or overtake a "G" ; 45 or over a "V.G." Anybody with the "possible" of 52 gets the Grand Order of the O.K.

MIKE



PIN-UP JOKES
WHY DO YOU WISH YOU WERE TOMMY JONES – HAS HE WON A PRIZE AT SCHOOL?
NO! HE CAN WAGGLE HIS EARS!
DO YOU NOTICE THAT ALL SUCCESSFUL MEN ARE BALD?
YES – THEY COME OUT ON TOP!
I WONDER WHAT CAUSES THE FLIGHT OF TIME?
IT'S PROBABLY URGED ON BY THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT!
WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE I USED TO THINK NOTHING OF A TEN MILE WALK BEFORE BREAKFAST!
WELL I DON'T THINK MUCH OF IT EITHER!
NO. I'M AFRAID THERE'S NOTHING I LIKE HERE – YOU SEE TO-MORROW IS MY HUSBAND'S BIRTHDAY AND I WANT TO GIVE HIM A SURPRISE!
WELL. WHY NOT HIDE BEHIND A CHAIR AND YELL 'BOO' AT HIM!
I AM BURNING WITH RAGE!
OH. DON'T MAKE A FUEL OF YOURSELF!
SHILLING'S WORTH OF STICKING PLASTER PLEASE!
CHEMIST
CHEMIST
HI! LEGGO MY LEGS OR I'LL BIFF YOU ON THE NUT WITH ME HAMMER!
BUT I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOUR HUSBAND WAS A MODEL HUSBAND!
SO HE IS – BUT NOT A WORKING MODEL!
N N N Z Z Z
DO YOU SPEAK LATIN?
NO! I'VE NEVER BEEN THERE!

PUNCH AND TOBY

Try these Riddles on Your F

1. What bed is never slept in?
   A river bed.

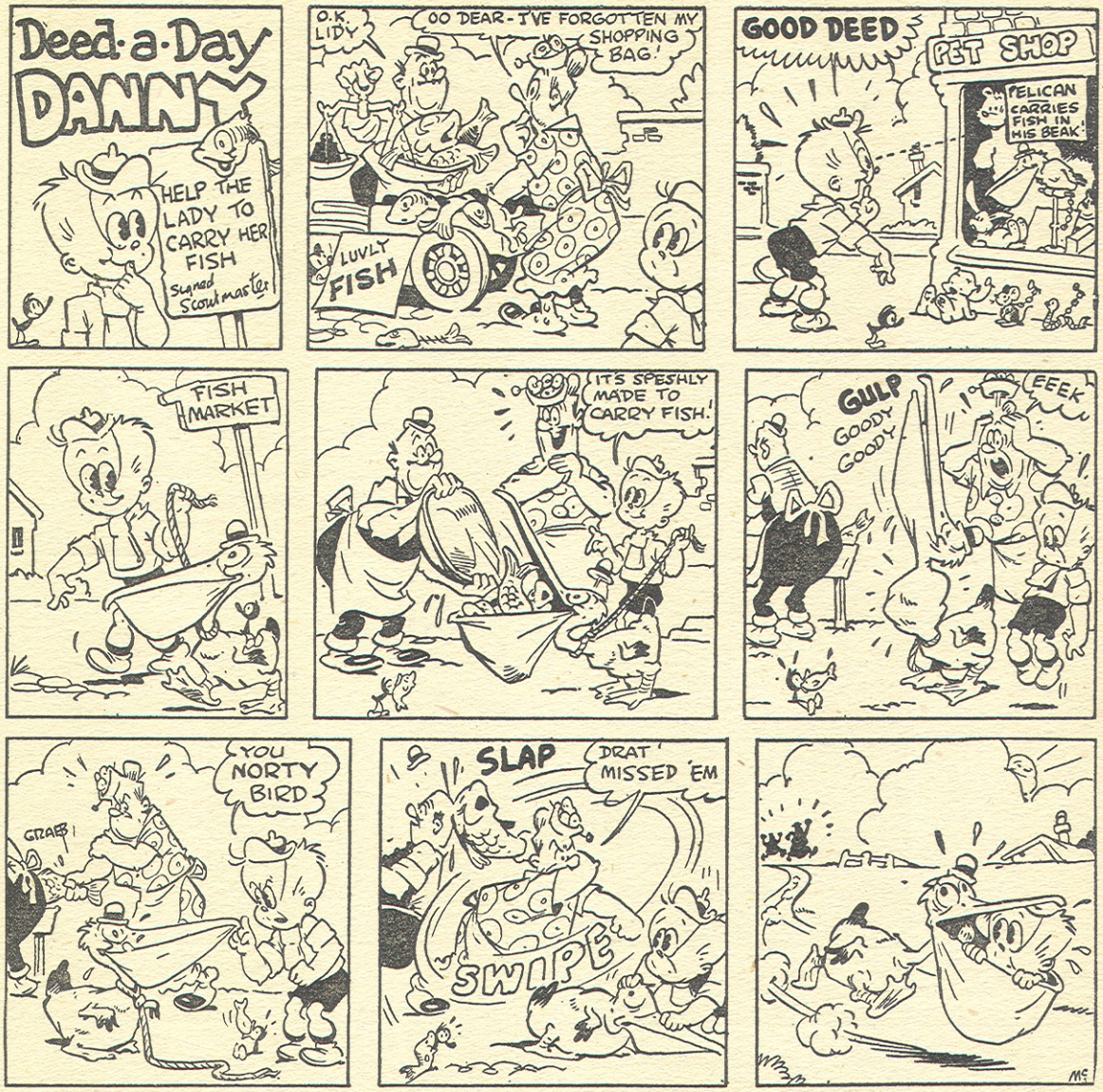
2. Why
   like
   Becaus

3. Why is a baker a strange man?
   Because he sells what he kneads (needs).

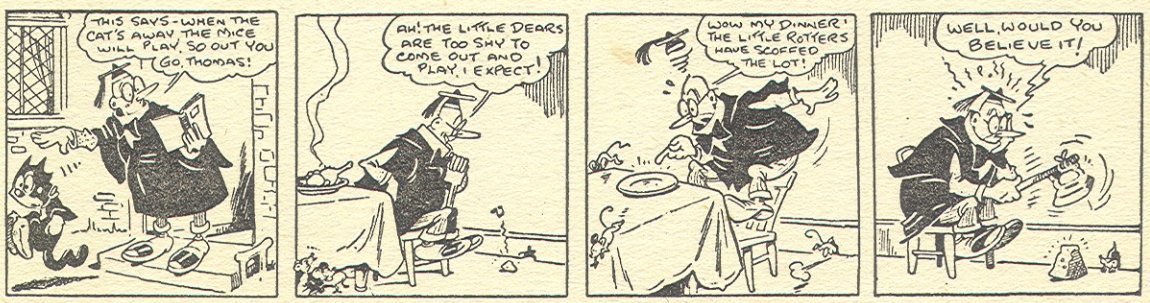
4. What is
   A hop i

5. Why is grass like a penknife?
   Because the spring brings out the blades.

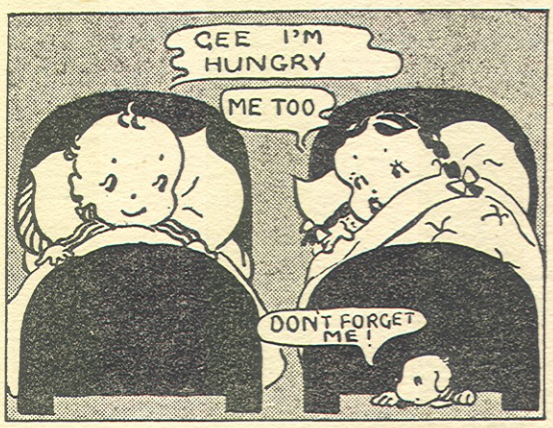
6. Why is E
   Because it



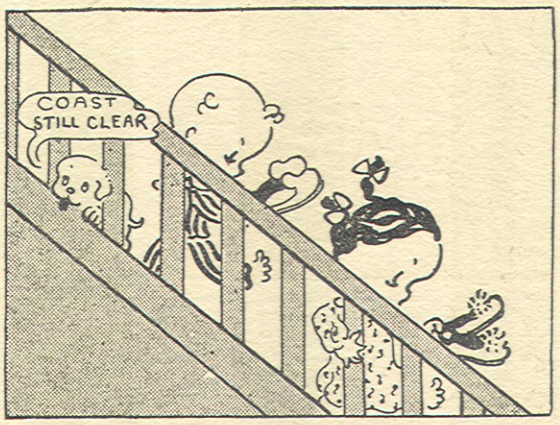
BOOKWORM BASIL - - - - HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE!



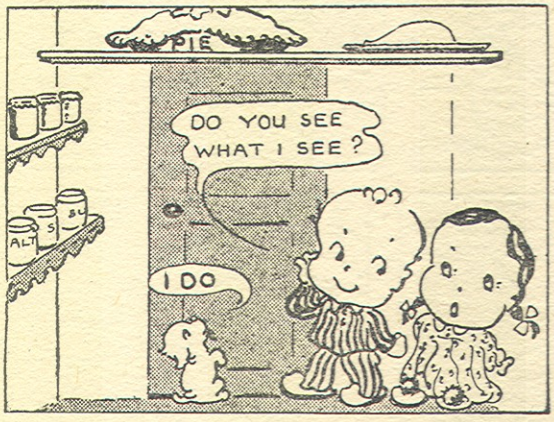
JILL AND JUNIOR



1. The hour was late, and parents slept,
But Junior knew where pie was kept.

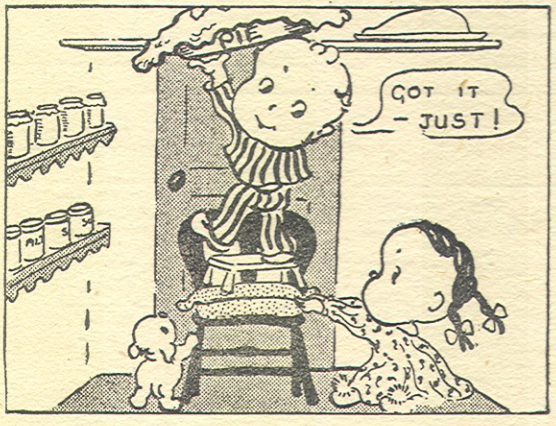


2. The youngsters both took special care
Not to tread on creaking stair.

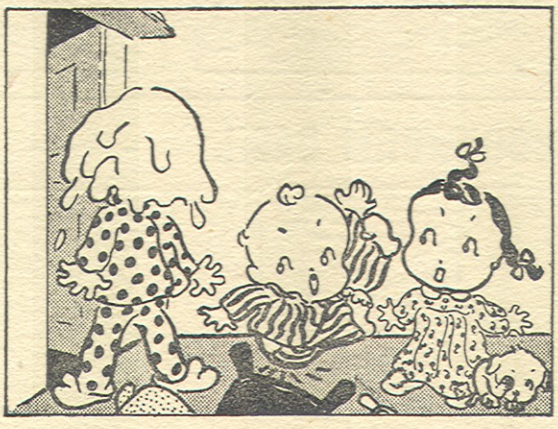


3. Above the door, a bit too high,
Was great, big, juicy apple pie.

4. Now, Ma and Pa heard noise below.
To take a look Pa said he'd go.



5. With aid of chair and things, piled high,
Junior could just reach the pie.



6. But pie went sailing through the air
And got mixed up in father's hair.

MICKEY'S PAL THE WIZARD

Strange things happened to Uncle Silas when he got into a cinema without paying for his seat

"Look, Uncle!" cried Betty Royston. "Mr. Beefo's given us two shillings for chopping some wood for him. Now we can go to the pictures!"

"Huh! Is that so?" snapped Silas Marley, their mean old uncle, with whom Betty and Mickey lived. Silas kept a second-hand shop in Barchester High Street.

"You just hand over that two shillings," he growled. "If you think I'm going to allow you two kids to waste money at the pictures, you're wrong!"

Whereupon Silas snatched the shining silver coin from Betty's hand.

"This'll help towards your keep," Silas snapped. "Now just you get busy dusting those shelves!"

"Oh, uncle, why can't we go to the pictures?" Mickey protested. "You're not paying for us. It's Mr. Beefo's money! You've no right to take it away!"

"No right, eh?" Silas snarled. "Why, you cheeky brat! So you think your old uncle doesn't know what's good for you, eh? Take that!"

As he spoke, Silas shot out a horny hand, giving Mickey a blow which sent him reeling across the shop.

The next moment a column of green smoke came spinning down from the ceiling. It touched the floor and turned into a very tall man. He was wearing a green turban and long, green robes. He had glittering eyes, a hooked nose, and a long beard.

His name was Akbar El Bagrag. He was an ancient wizard, who had been imprisoned in a bottle until one day, by chance, Mickey had released him. Ever since then he had been bobbing up whenever Mickey needed help.

"Wherefore dost thou look so sad, O youth who delighteth mine eyes?" asked the wizard.

"Uncle boxed Mickey's ears," Betty explained. "Mickey and I want to go to the pictures with the money Mr. Beefo

gave us for chopping his wood, but uncle won't let us. He's taken the money away, too ! "

" Verily, thou are a miserable knave, Marley," thundered El Bagrag. " By my beard, thou shalt be smitten into the likeness of a one-eyed mule ! "

" Oh, no, please spare Uncle, Mr. Bagrag," pleaded Betty, in alarm.

" Very well, for thy sake, little maiden, I will spare thy wretched uncle," boomed the wizard, stroking his beard. " Nay, I will do more," he mused aloud, thinking of a plan to punish Silas for his meanness. " I will take thee all to the pictures free —yea, even thy wretched uncle ! "

" Oh, Mr. Bagrag, will you really ? " cried Betty, clapping her hands.

" Presto ! " proclaimed the wizard, waving his arms, and vanished.

To their astonishment the shop faded. Betty, Mickey and Silas Marley found themselves sitting in the Barchester Super Cinema, in the best seats. One picture had just finished, and the lights had gone up.

" I'm not staying," hissed Silas, looking very cross. " Think of all the custom I'm losing. Besides, old Bagrag didn't give me a chance to lock up the shop. I'll have everything pinched ! "

But as he jumped up to go, a voice called out, " Just a minute ! Just a minute ! " and, looking round, Silas saw one of the attendants. " I didn't show you into those seats ! " she said. " How did you get there ? Where are your tickets ? "

" Er—er——— ! " gulped Silas, going red in the face, as he realised that he hadn't any tickets and couldn't very well explain that he had arrived by the magic of Akbar El Bagrag. " I'm—afraid—I—I m-must have l-lost them somewhere ! " he stammered, after pretending to search through his pockets.

" Lost them, eh ? " snapped the attendant, tossing her head, and looking at Silas very suspiciously. " Perhaps you never had them ? " she cried. " Maybe you came in by one of the exits ? " Then, turning away from Silas, she called out, " Hi, George ! "

As George, who was one of the commissionaires at the cinema, strode down the gangway, Betty felt a little scared.

" Oh, Mickey, suppose they call a policeman and put poor Uncle in prison, for getting in without any tickets ? " she whispered anxiously. " Oh, where's Mr. Bagrag ? "

" Fear not, little maiden," beamed the wizard, suddenly reappearing. He glared at Marley. " Search in thy pockets again, O Foolish One," he muttered.

As the wizard disappeared again, Silas did as he was bid. His bony fingers closed on something thin and sticky. Unfortunately for him, El Bagrag had been working more magic. Instead of Marley finding three tickets, he found himself drawing out hundreds of them.

Desperately, Silas Marley tried to tear three tickets off. But—thanks to Bagrag's magic—he could not. Those tickets stuck to his fingers like glue. More and more tickets littered the ground around his feet. The audience rocked with laughter, while the girl attendant and George grew angrier and angrier, because Silas and his antics were holding up the show.

" Huh, a joker, eh ? " George bellowed furiously.

" I—I—I——" stuttered Silas.

" Yes ; and—look—they're not even cinema tickets, George ! " exclaimed the attendant. " They're bus tickets ! "

" Oh, dear, Mr. Bagrag's made an awful mistake this time ! " Betty gulped.

The children did not realise that that wise old wizard had done so purposely, in order to make things thoroughly uncomfortable for Silas Marley and to show up his mean ways.

" Come on—come on—outside—you ! " roared George.

He grabbed Marley's arm in a grip of iron and hustled him out into the vestibule, trailing streams of tickets behind him.

" Wait until the manager hears about this," snarled George. " Trying to pass off old bus tickets, eh ? Trying to diddle us, eh ? You'll get locked up for this—you see if you don't ! "

" Oh, oh, p-please don't t-tell the

m-manager," Silas gasped; for the manager was no friend of Marley's.

That was because old Marley had recently sold him a piano that only played on about half the notes, and had the moth in it, anyway.

" It's—all—a m-mistake," Silas gasped. " Really it is! Oh, p-please don't tell the m-manager! Here—here's one and threepence. G-get me three seats—but p-please don't tell the manager! "

" One and threepence for three seats," sniffed George. " Don't make me laugh! In any case, you're in the three-and-sixpenny seats. I want ten shillings and sixpence—not a penny less. Come on! Hand over! "

With a groan, Silas counted out the cash from his well-worn leather purse. It nearly gave him a heart attack to see all that money going to somebody else; but Marley felt that even that was better than being put in prison.

" All right," George said, calming down when he caught sight of that cash. In a few seconds he returned: " Here's your tickets—but don't you dare do it again," he added.

With a sigh of relief, Silas mopped his brow. Then he started to make tracks for the street. The sooner Silas returned to the shop, the better it would be, he thought. But George grabbed his arm and swung Silas round.

" Here you are, sir! " George boomed. " That's the way back! "

It was on the tip of Marley's tongue to blurt out that he did not want to go back. Then he thought he had better not argue. Silas sat down crossly next to Mickey and Betty just as the big picture started.

" Is it all right, uncle? " Betty whispered.

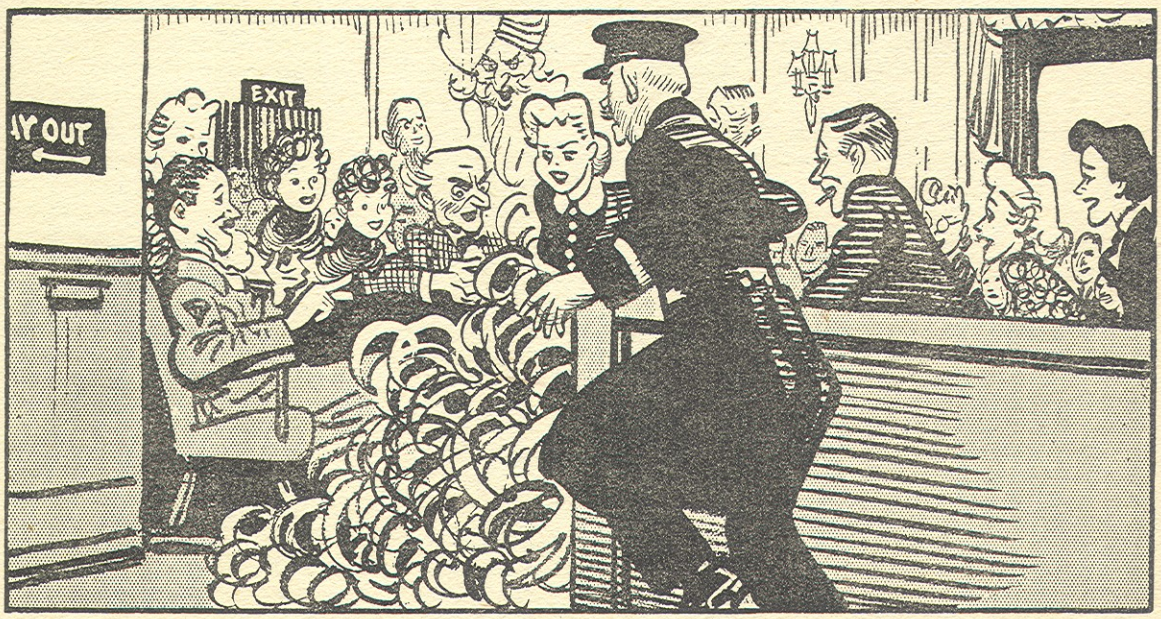
" Yes—yes—of course! " snapped Silas. " It—it was all a mistake! But if you think I'm going to sit through much of this cowboy and Indian tripe, you're mistaken! "

" Sssssssh! " whispered Betty.

But Silas wouldn't be " shushed." He hated Western films. Besides, he was still pretty sore at having had to pay out that ten shillings and sixpence.

He continued to mutter and grumble as Betty cried excitedly: " Oooooooh! Look at One-Eyed Pete! Oh, Mickey, d'you think he'll be able to shoot his way out of that ambush? Why, just look, he's simply surrounded by Red Indian braves! "

" One-Eyed Pete! Cowboys! Indians!



Silas Marley found himself drawing out hundreds of tickets from his pocket.

Bah ! " Silas snarled. " It's all faked, anyway ! "

Then a very strange thing happened. The cinema suddenly faded, as Akbar El Bagrag, who had not finished with mean old Silas yet, worked some more of his marvellous magic.

Mickey and Betty found themselves with the old wizard, hidden safely behind a big boulder, on the very same Western trail which they had just been watching on the screen !

As for Silas—he found himself standing —half-dazed—right in the middle of the dusty trail !

" Whang ! Crack ! Crack ! "

Bullets zipped around Marley, fired by the Indians hidden in trees and behind rocks. Two arrows missed Marley's head by inches and buried themselves in the earth.

" Git down, git down—you plumb crazy hombre ! " roared One-Eyed Pete, from the shelter of a nearby boulder. " Them Injuns hev sure got us in a tight spot an'——"

Another arrow whizzed by—so close that it pinned old Marley's sleeve to a nearby tree.

" Hellup ! Yow ! Save me ! " yelled Silas, as he realised where he was and what was happening.

Two more arrows twanged past within inches of Silas as he dragged his sleeve free, then One-Eyed Pete's huge hand grabbed him and dragged him down behind a nearby boulder.

" Oh, thank goodness ! " gasped Betty, as Silas was shoved quickly behind the boulder.

" Yow ! " gasped Silas.

" Say, ah sure don't know where yuh hails from, pardner," hissed One-Eyed Pete. " But ef yuh kin handle a shooter, yuh sure are welcome ! "

Then Silas realised that he was lying flat, grasping an ancient rifle which One-Eyed Pete had thrust into his hands.

" Here they come, th' coyotes ! " One-Eyed Pete rasped. " Give 'em th' works, granfer ! "

" I—I—I——" Silas stuttered.

With wild yells and shrieks, those painted braves leapt out of their hiding places and rushed towards them. Around their heads the Indians waved glittering tomahawks.

" Give it 'em, granfer ! " shouted Pete, plugging away with his own gun, as fast as he could pull the trigger.

With a moan, Silas shut his eyes and pressed the trigger. Perhaps the gun was very old ? Or perhaps it was that Silas didn't know anything about guns, anyway ? At any rate, there was a terrific explosion as old Marley's shooter blew up.

The explosion sent Silas and Pete rolling down the hillside like rabbits. With wild, blood-curling yells and whoops the Red Indians streamed after them.

" Oh dear, poor uncle, he'll be hurt, Mr. Bagrag ! " cried Betty in terror.

" Have no fear, little maiden ! " boomed the magician.

By then, a big brave had grabbed Silas by the scruff of his neck. Raising the struggling, shouting Silas high in the air, the brave whirled his tomahawk.

" Help ! Help ! " yelled Silas.

" Presto ! " boomed El Bagrag, waving his arms.

The scene faded. The children found themselves back in the cinema. The exciting instalment of the Western serial which they had been watching faded, too !

As the lights went up, Mickey and Betty looked around for Silas. But there was no sign of him ! His seat was empty !

" Oh dear, I wonder what happened to poor Uncle ? " cried Betty anxiously. " Come on, Mickey, let's run home to see if he's all right ! "

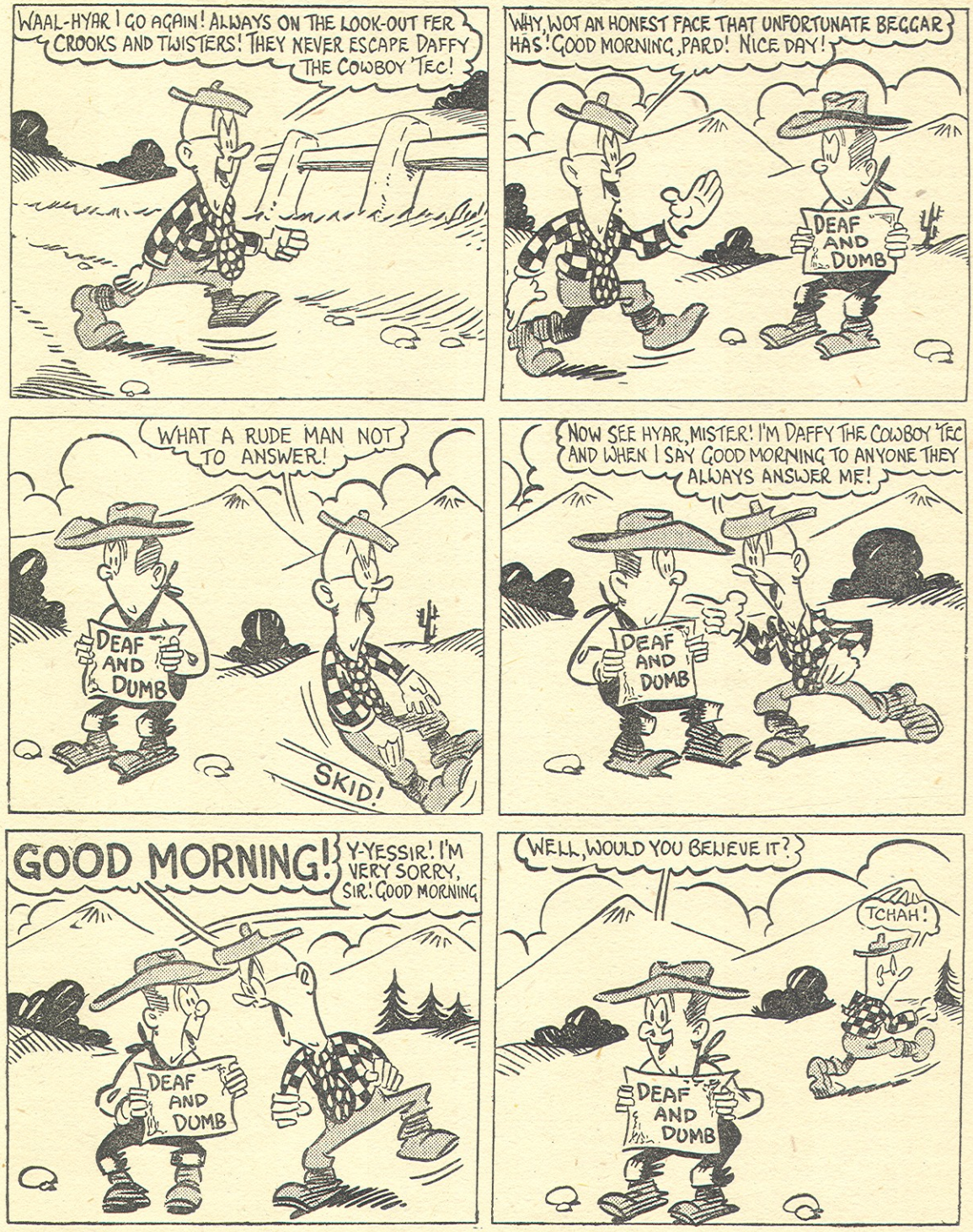
But the children need not have worried. For, true to his word, the wizard had seen to it that no real harm had befallen old Marley. When the children reached the shop, Silas was sitting in front of the fire in the parlour moaning and groaning and rubbing his bruises with embrocation.

" So it wasn't a dream, Mickey ? " Betty whispered.

" No ; it all happened all right ! " Mickey said. " I guess next time Mr. Beefo gives us some money to go to the pictures, Uncle will will let us do what we like with it ! "

THE END

DAFFY - - - - THE COWBOY 'TEC



(*Continued from page 48.*)

"Oh, Harold, do stop singing a minute and tell me what this wonderful wheeze of yours is!" begged little Dozey breathlessly, as he scampered along beside his bounding companion.

"Why, I've just told you!" cried Harold gaily. "I've just sung it to you!"

"But I don't understand!" cried Dozey. "What do you mean by driving the Builder from his lair amidst a cloud of choking smoke, Harold?"

"Well, I'll tell you!" cried Harold with a triumphant laugh. "You know what these humans do when they want to chase a Wasp family out of its nest! They smoke 'em out, don't they? You see, they send a lot of nasty smoke into the nest! It makes the poor Wasps cough and cough and sneeze until, in the end, they have to flee! See?"

"Yes," cried little Dozey.

"Well, that's what I'm going to do to this Builder!" whooped Harold. "*I'm going to smoke him out!*"

"Smoke him out?" repeated Dozey, quite bewildered. "How d'you mean, Harold?"

"You'll see!" cried Harold, as the pair of them ran out of the wood, and raced up the hill towards the big house at the top. "Ha! Ha! Ha! I'm going to give that Builder a bit of his own medicine and you're going to help!"

"But will it be *safe?*" squeaked Dozey.

"Safe?" repeated Harold scornfully. "*Safe?* I'm surprised at you asking such a question. What's it matter whether it's safe or not? We're doing this to save our homes and dear old Mr. Oak and his friends, and all the Cowslips and Bluebells and Primroses and other flowers, and all the Bushes, as well, aren't we?"

"Yes," quavered Dozey.

"All right, then!" hooted Harold. "Don't you worry about it being safe, because I'm jolly well not worrying. As a matter of fact," he went on, "it'll be perfectly safe. I'll smoke that old Builder out in such a way that he'll never stop running for miles and miles. But here we are at his house!"

He and Dozey had arrived at the back of the house where there were a lot of axes and saws, pails and planks, hammers and trowels and other things which woodsmen and builders use.

"D'you see that coil of rope there?" said Harold, pointing to a coil of thin, but strong-looking rope. Get your sharp little teeth in it. Go on, gnaw a good long length of it off for me. You'd better start gnawing about the middle of the coil, I reckon. That ought to give me a long enough piece of rope."

"Yes, but what do you want it for?" cried Dozey.

"Get busy and don't talk so much!" cried Harold. "You'll see in a minute what I want it for!"

While little Dozey got busy gnawing through the rope, Harold started examing the piles of planks and tools.

"Hurrah, the very thing!" he cried suddenly, pouncing on a small square piece of board which is used by plasterers when they mix their mortar.

Picking up the board, he placed it on his head, and, holding it there with his front paws, he walked back to Dozey on his hind legs.

"Have you finished gnawing through that rope yet?" he demanded.

"I've just finished," said little Dozey "What are you going to do with that board, Harold?"

"Well, I'll tell you," tittered Harold. "He! He! He! This is the whole giddy wheeze. You see that chimney up there on the roof?"

"Yes," said Dozey.

"Well, I'm going to get up on to the roof, taking the rope with me," went on Harold. "When I'm on the roof, I'll lower one end of the rope and you'll tie it to this board. Then I'll haul the board up on to the roof. Do you understand so far?"

"Yes," squeaked Dozey.

" Well, when I've hauled the board on to the roof," chuckled Harold. " I'm going to put it on top of that chimney and sit on it. Then when this Builder fellow lights his fire, what do you think'll happen ? "

" Well, what ? " demanded Dozey.

" The smoke won't be able to get out of the chimney," guffawed Harold. " It'll start filling the whole house instead. Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! The smoke will fill the whole house, getting thicker and thicker until the Builder will be coughing and sneezing his silly head off ! He won't be able to use his house, he'll be in the same fix as the Wasp families who can't use their nests when they're being smoked out. He'll have to run away the same as the Wasps have to, and we'll never see him any more. Ha ! Ha ! Don't you think it's an absolutely marvellous wheeze ? "

" Yes, but, Harold, suppose the Builder comes back after the smoke has gone," said Dozey doubtfully.

" The smoke will never go so long as this board is stuck on top of the chimney," cried Harold.

" Yes, but suppose he sees the board ? " cried Dozey.

" Now how can he see the board when it's stuck on top of the chimney, you silly little chump ? " cried Harold impatiently. "I've never seen such a chap as you for arguing ! Now, come on, we've got to hurry ! It's daylight already and the Builder will soon be getting out of bed and lighting his fire."

Although little Dozey could see several flaws in Harold's plan, he thought he'd better not say anything more. So he stood watching while Harold bounded up on to the top of a wooden outhouse, and from there on to the roof.

Harold had the rope with him in a coil round his neck. When he was safely on the roof, he lowered one end of the rope to Dozey, who tied it to the board. Then Harold hauled the board up, and, carrying it to the chimney-stack, he stuck it on top of the chimney-pot.

A few moments later he was sitting on the board, shaking with mirth and hugging himself with delight at his own cleverness.

Meanwhile, downstairs inside the house, the Builder's wife had lighted the fire. But within a very few minutes she was coughing and sneezing and choking, as the smoke came billowing back down the chimney, and started to fill the kitchen.

" Oh, dear, the chimney must be stopped up ! " she cried, and ran and told her husband so.

" The chimney blocked ? " cried the Builder. " I'll soon put that right. I've got some sweep's brushes which my men use to clean the chimneys of houses we repair. I'll soon shift whatever's stopping it up."

He ran and got the sweep's brushes. Fitting them quickly together, he started to shove them up the kitchen chimney, which by now was smoking like billy-o.

Knowing nothing of the brush which was being thrust up the chimney, Harold was sitting on the board on top of the chimney-pot, singing gaily to himself:

" I'm perched up so high I can touch the blue sky ;
To the Back of Beyond I can see ;
No bird that can fly was ever so high—
There's no one so clever as me ! "

" Yes, that's true, I guess ! " he giggled. " I reckon I'm the cleverest chap in the Wood. It took brains to think of this wheeze. He ! He ! He ! I wonder what that silly old Builder's doing ? I bet he's sneezing and coughing and choking his head off. He'll be rushing out of the house at any minute now and flying madly away —HELP ! "

Next instant, it wasn't the Builder, but Harold, who was flying madly away. For something—it was the sweep's brush —had hit the bottom of the board a terrific wallop, sending it flying off the chimney-pot and Harold with it !

" HELP—WHAT'S THE MATTER—WHAT'S HAPPENED ? " howled Harold, as he fell, and, hitting the slates of the roof, turned a complete somersault !

Only by taking a flying leap off the edge of the roof into a clump of bushes in the garden below, did he save himself from actually falling off the roof. He crashed into the bushes beside a little girl

with dark hair and wide blue eyes, who had run out into the garden to see the sweep's brush pop up out of the chimney-pot.

The little girl, whose name was Betty, was the Builder's daughter. Her eyes had opened nearly as wide as saucers when she had seen Harold take that wild, flying leap off the roof. And now she ran to help him as he struggled madly in the bushes.

" Why, it's a hare ! " she cried in astonishment. " Whatever could it have been doing on the roof, poor thing ? "

More frightened and bewildered than he'd ever been in his life before, Harold managed to spring from the bushes. Next instant he had cleared the garden fence at one bound and was shooting swiftly away towards the wood.

" Hi, wait, Harold—*wait* for me ! " yelled little Dozey, scuttling madly after him. " Oh, *do*, *please*, wait, Harold ! "

Harold, breathless and panting and still frightened, waited for him by the edge of the wood.

" What—what happened ? " he gasped when little Dozey had come scuttling up. " Did you see what hit me ? "

" A thing like a brush came up out of the chimney," cried Dozey breathlessly. " But, look, Harold—oh, do look ! "

Harold looked in the direction in which little Dozey was pointing. As he did so his eyes fairly bulged with surprise, for coming marching down the hill towards the Wild Wood were the Builder's men, with axes and saws on their shoulders.

" They—they came and got them when you were sitting up on top of the chimney," sobbed little Dozey. " I shouted to you, but you didn't hear. Oh, Harold, they're going to start cutting the Wood down now ! "

" So they are ! " gasped Harold. " Oh dear, this is awful ! "

" What are we going to do ? " gasped little Dozey. Oh, Harold, I'm ter-terrified ! "

" Come with me ! " cried Harold, whirling swiftly round and bounding away into the wood. " We must raise the alarm. Everybody must be warned. We must all get out of the Wood as quickly as we can!"

The alarm spread like wild-fire. "*Get out! Get out !* " they cried. " *Get out ! Get out ! The Builder's men are here !* " You never saw such a hustling and bustling, hurrying and scurrying as there was then. The animals hurriedly loaded their furniture on to little carts, while the great trees looked at each other sadly. Then through the Wild Wood rang the voice of grand old Mr. Oak.

" *Go quickly, little animals,*" he cried. " *And do not weep for us. Farewell, little friends, and may you soon be safe in some new and happy home !* "

At these brave words a great cry rose from all the animals. They were already on the move with their furniture piled on their little carts and wagons. But their hearts were heavy.

" I can't stand this," gulped Harold Hare to himself, a tear rolling down his face. " If only I'd smoked that Builder out. He m-m-must have a heart of stone to treat us like this——"

Abruptly he broke off. One last, despairing plan to save the Wild Wood and all their homes had flashed into his mind. Next instant, he was racing away at break-neck speed, rushing along faster than he had ever moved in his life before.

Bounding madly up the hill towards the Builder's house, he jumped the garden fence at one leap. He was looking for the little dark-haired, blue-eyed girl. And there she was, playing with a ball in the garden.

" Why, it's the Hare ! " she cried in surprise, as she saw Harold.

Harold gazed at her with a pitiful, pleading look in his eyes. Then he beckoned to her with one of his fore-paws. More surprised than ever, the little girl slowly approached him. As she did so, Harold turned and trotted away a few paces, looking back over his shoulder, as much as to say :

" Oh, come with me—oh, please, do come with me ! "

But the little girl, who was called Betty, didn't go with him. Instead, she ran into the house calling :

" Oh, Daddy, do come quickly. There's

a hare in the garden behaving in such a queer way ! "

Harold's heart was in his mouth when he saw the Builder come hurrying out of the house, holding little Betty by the hand. But though he was so frightened of the Builder, Harold did the same as he'd done before. He beckoned to the Builder and Betty with his paw, then he turned and trotted away, looking back over his shoulder.

" He wants us to follow him, Daddy," cried Betty excitedly. " I'm certain he does. Oh, do let us ! "

" Yes, very well, come along then," said her father, and Harold noticed that he had quite a nice, kind sort of voice.

Hand in hand, the Builder and Betty followed Harold from the garden and down the hill towards the Wood Then suddenly Harold halted, and, squatting down, he pointed with his paw towards the Wood.

" *Oo-ooh !* " gasped Betty, her eyes widening like saucers. " *Look, Daddy !* "

" Goodness gracious ! " gasped the Builder with a violent start.

No wonder he and Betty were amazed! For, winding its way from out of the Wood, came the long line of little carts and wagons piled high with furniture. And sitting on the carts and wagons, or walking beside them, were the sad little animals.

" They're leaving the wood ! " gasped Betty. " Daddy—Daddy, they're leaving the wood. It must be because you're going to cut it down ! "

" It—it looks like it, Betty," said the Builder, and his face became thoughtful.

" Oh, Daddy, you can't—*you can't!* " cried Betty, bursting into tears. " You won't drive them out like that, Daddy, will you? It's *too* cruel. Oh, Daddy, can't you build your houses somewhere else where there are no poor little animals to be driven out ? "

" Yes, I can ! " cried the Builder. " I never thought that the animals loved their homes as we do. I won't drive them out, Betty ! "

Next instant, he had left her, and was running down the hill, shouting to his men at the very top of his voice :

" Don't touch those trees. Stop, d'you hear. I'm not going to build houses here. We'll build somewhere else ! "

Betty clapped her hands and jumped for joy. Then she turned and looked at Harold with shining eyes.

" Oh, you clever little hare ! " she cried. " If it hadn't been for you, all those poor little animals wouldn't have had any homes."

Good old Harold Hare had actually hit on a plan that had worked, and he really was pleased with himself !

. . . . . .

What a grand party there was in the Wild Wood that night! It was held beneath the wide, spreading branches of dear old Mr. Oak. Every bird and animal in the Wood was there and the big, yellow moon looked down on the happy, joyful scene.

Harold Hare was the guest of honour, of course, and never had he felt so proud and gay. For although he had told them all about little Betty, the animals insisted that it was really Harold who had saved them, by bringing Betty to see the sad procession leaving the Wild Wood. Which was quite true, of course!

All the songs of the Wild Wood were sung again and again, and Mr. Oak smiled happily as the voices of the birds and animals rose in that fine old song :

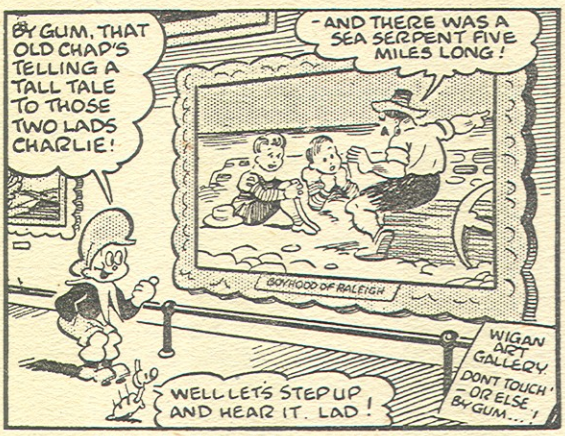
" *The Oak Tree is stately and strong,*
And stately he stands in his pride. . . ."

At length, however, everyone was so tired and sleepy, that the jolly party had to break up. But before they went off to their happy homes which had been saved, they gave three more cheers for Harold. And it would have done your heart good to have heard them cheering at the top of their voices :

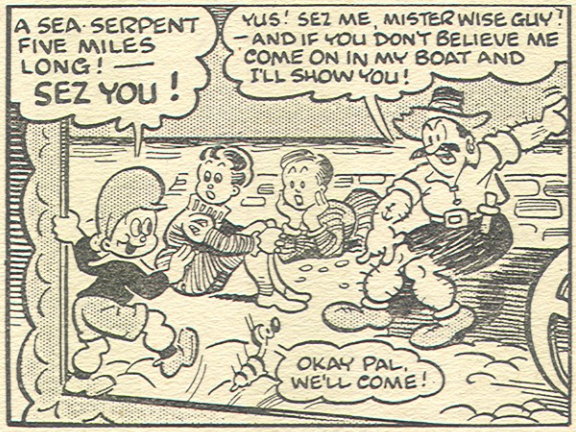
" *Hurrah for Harold—Hurrah for Harold Hare !* "

THE END

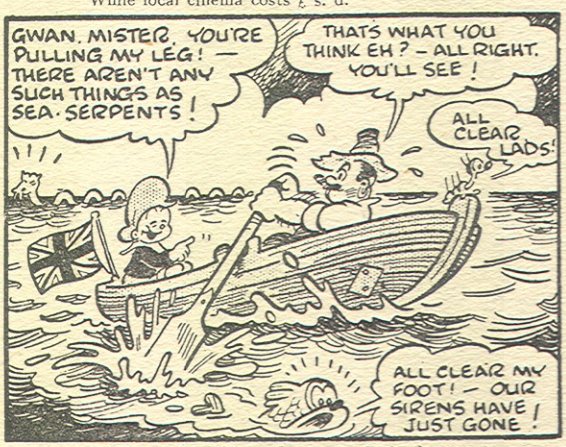
OUR ERNIE - - - - MRS. ENTWHISTLE'S LITTLE LAD



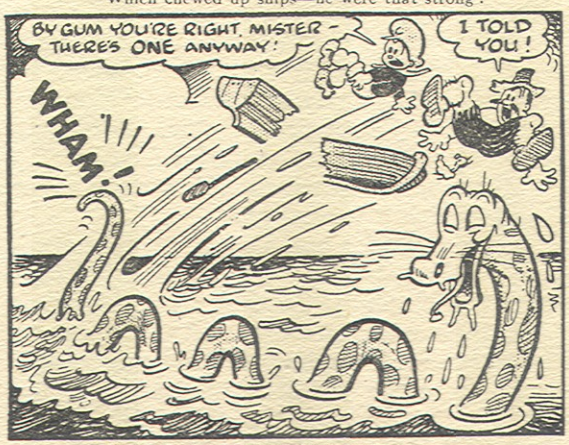
1. Wigan Art Gallery's famous, y'know,
So that's where Ernie thought he'd go,
'Cos view of pictures there is free,
While local cinema costs £ s. d.



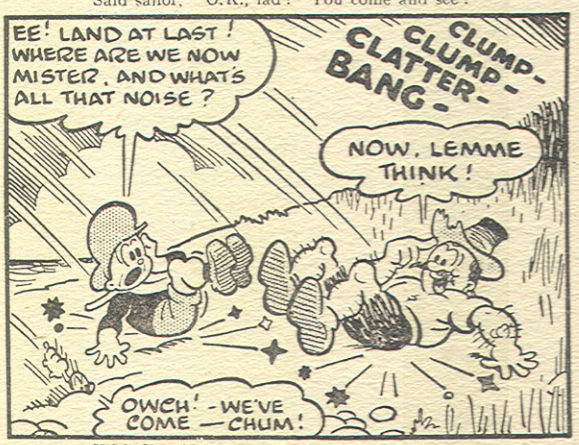
2. In frame a sailor were telling tale
Of how he went to sea on whale,
And saw sea serpent five miles long,
Which chewed up ships—he were that strong!



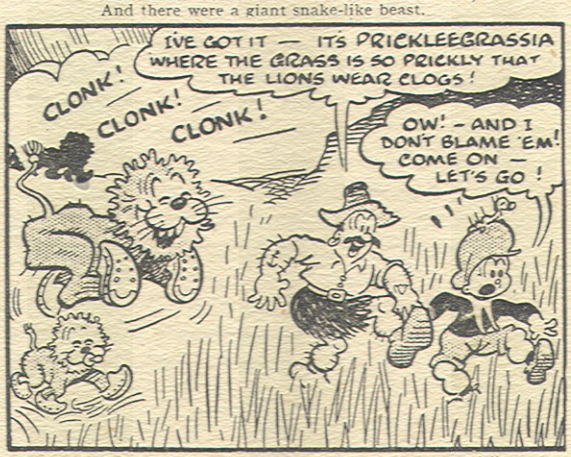
3. Cried lad, "What a whopper! Ee! Sez you!
I bet it's a yarn! It can't be true!
Sea serpent, my foot! You can't kid me!"
Said sailor, "O.K., lad! You come and see!"



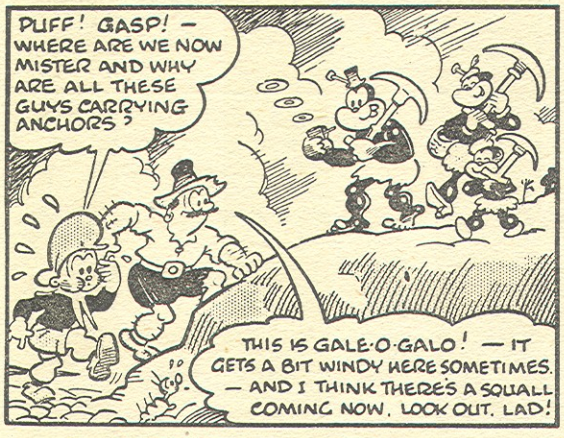
4. So off they went across the ocean,
When suddenly a rocking motion
Made them look round to the north-south-east,
And there were a giant snake-like beast.



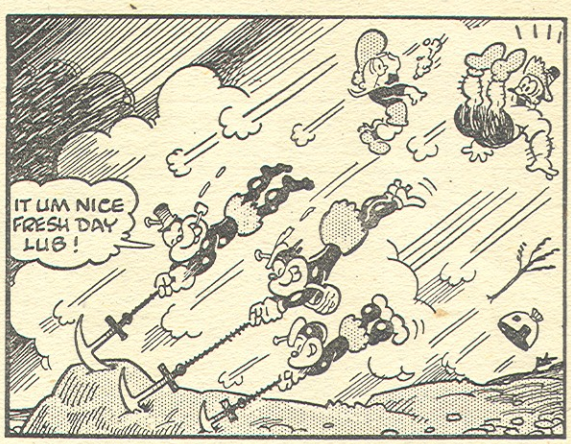
5. With flip of his tongue he flung them high
Right through clouds and across the sky,
And as they landed down with a bump,
From distance came sounds of clatter-bang-thump!



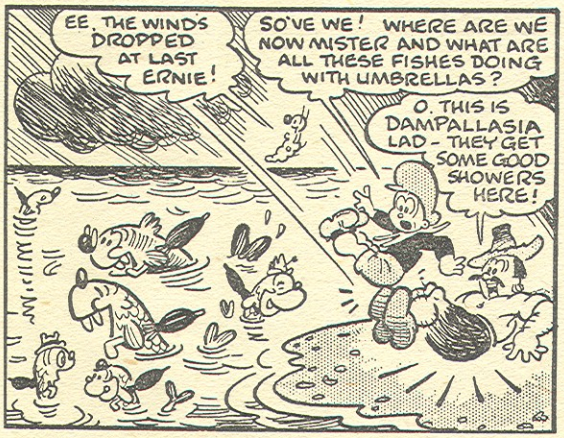
6. Cried lad, "By gum, where's this we've found?"
And sailor man said, "Ee, I'll be bound
This is a land of prickly-grass and bogs,
Where birds sing jazz, and lions wear clogs."



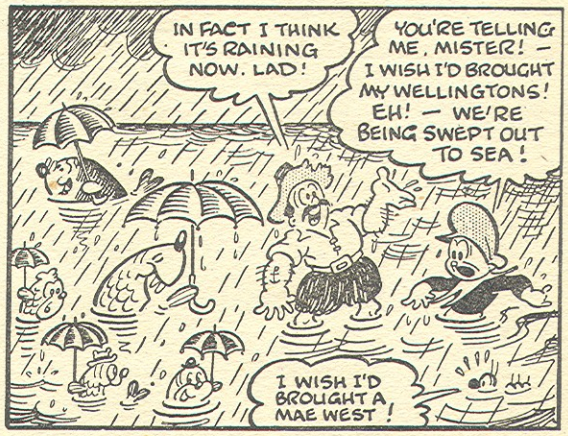
7. After living for days on nowt but figs,
And tramping for miles, they met some nigs,
And they were the queerest sort of fellers,
Who carried anchors as we do umbrellas.



8. Well, lad soon found the reason why,
'Cos out of clear blue summer sky,
Came sudden gale, that roared all day,
And what weren't anchored were carried away.

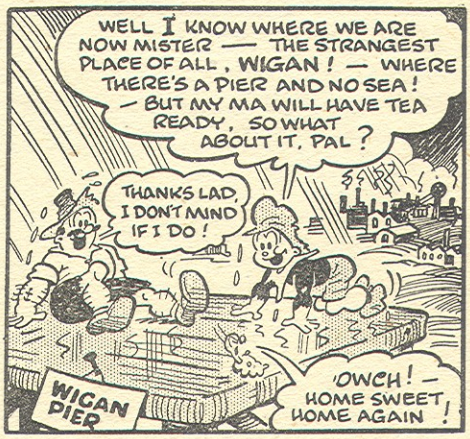


9. When wind dropped so did sailor and kid—
They dropped on patch of sand, they did,
And round that part sea were so damp
That every tiddler carried a gamp.



10. In half an hour it began to pour,
And it weren't very long before
Water were up to Ernie's knees,
As the islet sank beneath the seas.

11. Cried sailor, " If you look about,
I bet you'll see a water spout,
They're very common round here, you know—
Why, here's one now! I told you so! "



12. Well, water spout were decent sort,
And carried 'em back to Wigan port,
And having swallowed half the sea,
They were very glad of cup o' tea.

MIKE

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