

THE POPULAR

FIRE WORKS & SALE HERE



CUT THIS OUT.



POP CARDS
 G. P. S.
FAMOUS FOOTBALLERS
VICTOR WATSON OF WEST HAM.
 West Ham have for many years had a reputation for producing centre-forwards of International standard. Victor Watson is one of them. Secured from a junior club at Cambridge, Watson became the regular centre-forward of the Hammers in 1923, and helped them to the Cup Final. In the same season was capped by England, whose attack he also, led against Scotland last season, scoring two goals. A real centre-forward, clever in dribbling, and a terrific "shot" with either foot.

ISSUED BY
THE POPULAR
 FAMOUS BOYS' STORY PAPER.

Fold back along dotted line.



Jewel Film Company were in Surrey. Raynley said this was a stroke of luck, and applied to the County Council for rights to use the broken bridge for "Burning Beacons." The scenario writer of the company put in extra scenes, bringing in the broken bridge for a thrill, and all had been arranged. Raynley had ordered the broken half-arch to be shored up and strengthened to take the weight of the car, which would be driven to within a foot of the lip. Then the car would be withdrawn, the shoring posts knocked away, and another car, faked up to be like the previous one, and with dummies in it for actors, would be shot over the top, the scene completed, and the wreck below cleared away. It seemed like something which would interest the chums, though there was really nothing exciting in it—that is, the acting of it.

The day arrived, and keen and attentive, Denny and Bob sitting beside Starling, bound and helpless in the car, listened to Raynley's parting injunctions.

"I needn't say anything to you, Starling," said the producer. "But you two boys, remember you are supposed to be young toughs. Talk to each other out of the corners of your mouths; have a vulgar sneer on your lips, and jerk your thumbs over your shoulders when indicating directions, as I've said before. Sway your shoulders like real scoundrels when you walk. Remember, you're doing a criminal action in capturing and binding and running off with the hero. So look furtive and a bit desperate. Do as you did at the last rehearsal, and you'll do well. Remember, Harkley, drive slowly to within a foot of the lip of the bridge, then stop, put in the reverse, and draw out again.

"Leave me to get the fake car and dummies shot over. We'll do your scene below as soon after as possible, so you two and Mr. Starling will have to get down into the gully and stand by the wreckage till I'm ready with the camera for you. Starling must be carried down. I'll have a stretcher there, ready, for I don't want the binding ropes to look different below from what they were above. But I'll talk again about this. For the present we'll do scene fifty-eight. Now then, into the bushes, and come staggering out with Starling. Camera ready, there?"

"Ay, standing by, sir."

"Good! Then get on with it, you. You're too slow for a funeral, you, Harkley and Burdett. Pep in it, mind, and forget you're acting. Live it—live it!"

Denny and Bob came staggering out from the bushes, carrying the bound form of Starling between them—no light task as they well knew from a previous experience. They did not have to act puffing and blowing, but did it naturally.

Glancing furtively round them, from right to left, they made for the car, Raynley's rating at them through the megaphone coming to their ears:

"Don't turn your face away from the camera so often!" Pause. "Don't hide your captive from the camera, you blockheads!" Another pause. "Your captive's struggling, you wooden idiots! Clout him over the head! More of a sneer, Burdett! Don't act, Harkley, for the love of Mike! Live it—live it!"

Denny and Bob, perspiring and a bit panicky throughout their ordeal, bundled Starling into the car, and then Bob did a bit of good work which brought a howl of delight to them via the megaphone. He crouched low suddenly, and looked swiftly towards the

camera, with drooping lips, a wrinkled nose, and desperate, furtive wild eyes. Then he sprang into the driver's seat, and Denny, wiping his forehead with his sleeve, with a quick, frightened look at the camera, nipped in beside Bob and slammed the door.

Bob drove off swiftly, still glancing quickly here and there, and Raynley danced with delight.

The scene ended, and Raynley ran up to the car shouting:

"Fine—fine! You boys are warming up to it! Now scene fifty-nine. Pull up a minute till the camera's in position. Now! Drive like blazes, and don't forget the furtive looks and occasional alarms!"

On sped Bob towards the broken bridge. Then, at the signal, he pulled up and waited for the camera to get down by the scene of the bridge—scene sixty of the scenario. At the signal that all was ready Bob let in the clutch again and flew onwards towards the bridge.

HOW TO COLLECT OUR COLOURED PICTURES!

On the cover of this week's issue you will find the sixth of our unique series of Coloured Pictures of Famous Footballers.

By the side of the picture appears a frame, in which is a description of the subject of the coloured picture—this week it is V. Watson, of West Ham.

Now, all you have to do to make our coloured pictures just like a cigarette card is to cut out the whole tablet containing the picture and the frame. Then hold this piece of paper so that the frame backs on to the coloured pictures, paste a thin piece of card between the two, and you have a coloured card that you can put in your album of cigarette cards.

NEXT WEEK:

**FRED COOK,
of Portsmouth.**

A wild feeling of madness seemed to make Bob's brain swim. What if he were to lose his wits and go crashing on, right over the lip? What if he, although he had to go slowly near the bridge, excitedly made a mistake and accelerated instead of stopping with only a foot to spare between them and destruction? The young motor driver laughed wildly to himself as he thought of it. Then, drawing near to the camera, he began to study facial expression once more. Denny acted well, and the chums looked exactly as if they were flying from danger of discovery, two criminals with a kidnapped man aboard their car.

Bob slowed down as close to the gap in the road as he dare. And as he slowed, just before the front wheels of the car passed out on to the overhanging archway, there was the flash of a red head at the roadside, and Sandy Munro, cut and bruised, collar awry, covered with dust, leapt at the running-board of the car and sprawled across Denny's knees.

Raynley howled with fury. Bob glared indignantly at Sandy for spoiling

a good scene, and in that flash Sandy jammed his foot on the foot-brake, and swept Bob's foot off the accelerator pedal. The car moved a yard on to the broken archway, then stopped dead. There was a slight rumble below, the road cracked right across, the crash of falling masonry was heard in the gully, and the car bumped as it began to feel the drop over the almost sheer edge of the gully.

Guardian Angels!

THE car had bumped down on to its framework on the road. The half-arch had broken with the weight of the engine, and the front wheels of the car were sticking out over the drop. The height made Denny and Bob turn dizzy as they stared at the gully over the windscreen. Sandy had undoubtedly saved them! If Bob had driven right out on to the broken archway—

Raynley saw what had happened. He at once realised that the broken archway had given way under the weight of the front wheels of the car, despite the shoring-up work below. He came running over excitedly, the camera-man with him, the camera on the latter's shoulder.

With a towing span of steel wire rope the car was hauled away from its precarious position, and investigations started. It was discovered that the props below the archway had recently been cut nearly through with a saw! Sandy was telling Raynley all about it.

"I was fed-up, sir, and went into the wood alone to try to work off my bad temper. I heard the men discussing what had been done. They said the car would be sure to go over into the gully. They said that Denny and Bob would be all right, having their arms free. They'd get hurt, but probably not killed. But Mr. Starling, being bound and helpless, would be sure to bring up against something with his head—"

Raynley was livid with fury.

"Search the wood!" he roared. "Lead the party, Munro! I'll see into this. Starling, you've had a narrow escape—"

"And a quarter of a reel of film has been ruined," broke in Starling coolly. "Any extra pay for having to do the rotten business all over again, Raynley?"

Raynley laughed bitterly.

"Thank your stars for your neck, that's all," he said. "Now about the police—"

Starling was now free of his bonds. He drew Raynley aside, and the pair talked for a while. At last Raynley nodded, and turned towards the men and women about him.

"All for scene sixty-two below into the gully!" he said. "We'll do scene sixty over again later. I'll get sixty-one completed. Miss Hatherleigh, please accompany Mr. Starling and the others below."

Miss Hatherleigh, the leading lady, dressed as a wild girl of the mountains, set off chattering and frightened, with Starling. She did all she could to draw Starling into conversation regarding the accident that had just happened. But Starling, although he seemed most anxious to please Miss Hatherleigh in everything, would not be drawn to talk. He reiterated:

"What should I know about it, Ethel? Forget it! That's the best!"

thing to do with unpleasant things. I think young Munro was a brick, don't you?"

"He's a dear, and I'll never forget what he has done for you, Hervey—"

Bob and Denny, grinning, pushed on ahead.

Soon after they had got down to below the broken bridge the fake car had been shot over the lip and was lying in a terrible condition of wreck below. The smash had been filmed. Bob and Denny shuddered at the practical demonstration of what would have happened to them had not Sandy saved them. The dummies were lying in ghastly positions, sufficiently natural for the purpose of the film. It was horrible to look upon even this disaster of dummies and an old, useless car.

Starling was bound up again. Bob and Denny were pulled about a bit by Rayley, the kerchiefs round their necks twisted awry, and their faces, already whitened and touched up for the camera, made horrible by smears of black paint to represent blood. The chums then lay down in place of the dummies, eyes staring and ghastly, fingers hooked, and jaws dropped. Starling writhed and twisted in agony near by, and, to the sound of Rayley's bullying via the megaphone, Miss Hatherleigh, the "wild girl of the mountains," rushed on to the scene in horror, and fell on her knees beside Starling.

There was some love stuff here; the girl released Starling from his bonds, and the man, risen by the help of the girl, shook his fist savagely at Denny and Bob—lying as if dead—and then staggered out of the picture leaning on the slim figure of the girl.

The scene ended, and Denny and Bob rose. Rayley's good temper was restored. The superb acting of Starling and Miss Hatherleigh had filled him with delight, and he slapped Bob and Denny on the shoulders.

"You did well, boys," he said. "You'll have to do scene sixty over again, but there'll be no danger this time. By the way, I ask you, as a favour to me, not to say anything about this accident to the broken archway. Only a few of us know it was engineered. We're all going to keep mum. Can't say why. You will, won't you?"

The chums promised, and, feeling that the mystery was even more baffling than ever, got back to Guildford, for the light had failed, and no more photography could be done that day.

In their room that night Sandy, having been unsuccessful in leading the search-party for the men he had heard plotting, the chums discussed matters in detail.

"It was an attempt to kill Starling, for sure," said Bob.

"Maybe a love motive. You've noticed Starling and Miss Hatherleigh?"

"Bah! What rot!" said Bob.

"Denny, I'm surprised at you. That explanation would be all right for a photo-play, but not for yours heartily. If so, why doesn't Starling put his hated rival out of the way by telling the police?"

"H'm, yes; I'd forgotten that. It's still a jolly old mystery, then—eh?"

"Jollier and older than ever," cut in Sandy. "But I say this—if Starling doesn't make a move soon, I wouldn't give tuppence for his chances of winning through safely, whatever the mystery is."

"Well, comrades," said Denny, "Sandy being right, as he mostly isn't, I propose we help Starling on the quiet."

"How?" said Bob. "He won't let us barge in at all."

"By being near him as often as we can. We can watch him, and be handy while we are all together here in Surrey. For instance, he's going down to Ditchling Beacon for a trip to-morrow. Ditchling Beacon's a hill, and has nothing to do with burning beacons, which means sort of alarm beacon things, like lighthouses. I think we'd like to see Ditchling Beacon, too, don't you?"

"Yes; I've heard it's a jolly nice spot," said Sandy. "A run down there in Ermytrude would be most pleasant."

"Ermy's been feeling neglected of late," said Bob. "I hear that the view from the hill at Ditchling is great."

"Right," said Denny. "Here's one for sweet slumber. I never heard of Ditchling Beacon till yesterday, when Starling told me he was going there. But I must confess I've a burning longing to see Ditchling Beacon. Ditchling Beacon is—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob. "You babble on like a brook, Denny. Good-night! Last man in blows out the candle."

The Fight at the Mill!

HERVEY STARLING did not take the straight road to Ditchling. He was driving a two-seater car of the sporting type, but he drove very steadily. How steadily can be judged from the fact that Ermytrude, clanking and rattling a mile behind, could easily keep in touch.

Starling was out to see Surrey, and he knew how to choose a picturesque route. The roads were good, and the variety of the scenery was delightful. Here would be a wild sweep of pine land, miles of waste open, rocky spaces, veritable Wild West scenery; then would come a perfect picture of typical English scenery—hills and trees—perfect humming Surrey lanes, an occasional Surrey water-mill, droning its labour in unison

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Etc., etc.

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with the wash of water, and the distant lowering of cattle.

The chums were glad to be out on the road in such glorious weather, and they almost forgot the task to which they had set themselves—namely, being the temporary guardian angels of Hervey Starling, the film star.

They were brought back to the grimness of things with a jerk, however. Sandy had been keeping the sharpest look-out of all. Denny was day-dreaming, and Bob's business in hand—that of driving Ermytrude—left him no time for anything but thought to keep his engine running and the gears from jamming when changing, which had to be done often in Ermytrude.

"Look out!" yelled Sandy, suddenly. "Starling has swerved. He's on the crest of the next hill! I'll bet he's met trouble again! Let her rip, Bob!"

Bob accelerated pace, and Ermytrude vibrated in every part as the old van clattered on down the hill and took the next slope with a rush. To the glory of Bob's driving, she got up the slope on top gear, and lurched over the crest like a switchback-railway car.

They flashed past Starling's car, drawn on to the grassy bank at the roadside, empty! Sandy and Denny were all eyes now. At last Sandy cried out to Bob to stop. Bob caught the words above the frightful din of the engine, shut off power, and pulled Ermytrude up within fifty yards—a feat with Ermytrude.

In the fraction of a split second Sandy was out on to the road, running back towards Starling's car. Denny and Bob were close behind.

"There!" cried Sandy, pointing to the grassy bank.

Denny and Bob looked over, and saw the trail in the long grass—the trail of four or five pairs of feet. It passed through the hedge, and the chums followed it up, bursting through the hedge like lumbered guns going into action.

The trail led them across a small paddock. They followed it with ease, and saw signs where the feet had trampled the grass about here and there, as if in a struggle. But the chums did not wait to investigate closely. They followed on with all speed.

Through another hedge they burst, and here they met two men, lying in ambush. The men leapt at the chums. But the comrades were ready for any surprise, and they fought savagely. Bob knocked out one of the men with a perfect upper-cut, and Denny was pressing the other man hard. Sandy and Bob together sailed in, and Bob struck as hard as he could—and that was hard—sufficiently strong enough to keep the man quiet for some time.

On went the chase. "Look—a water-mill!" gasped Denny at last. "Working, too! We'll yell for assistance; the miller and his men will turn out!"

But they didn't, for the mill was obviously the objective of the captors of Hervey Starling. They had the actor in their grip—two at his shoulders and two at his legs. And they were oscillating his big frame steadily. Starling was senseless.

"They're going to pitch him into the mill-stream!" yelled Bob. "The wheel—it's working! Quick, chums—dash in!"

The comrades rushed at the villains—brutal-looking men, four in number, under the command of a thin-faced, cunning-looking person rather loudly dressed. But Starling was in the stream even as his chums' first blows got home.

Out of the corner of their eyes the plucky comrades of the road saw the mighty splash as Starling's bulky figure took the swift current. And on the actor was swept, relentlessly, powerfully, a course that would brook no check.

The great, churning wheel of the mill roared close by. And Starling's body was being whisked along ever faster in the narrowing course of the mill-stream.

The ruffians fought to hold the chums back from the stream. Bob went back with a cry, chin in air, knocked out. Denny dodged a swinging blow from one of the ruffians, and crashed his fist behind the man's ear. Sandy broke free and ran towards the mill-stream.

Two of the men now rushed Bob towards the water. The young motor-man was sent hurtling into the water, to go drifting, a helpless, senseless form, towards the wheel, in the wake of Starling.

Denny broke clear of his men, and, frantic with fear, he rushed after Sandy. All Burdett's thoughts were for Bob. Bob would be ground to death, smashed beyond recognition by the mill-wheel! He was helpless. Denny was too far behind to help Starling; but he could intercept Bob.

Springing high into the air, the plucky youth flew out over the swift stream. He entered the water with a mighty splash, and, gasping and coughing, he clutched at Bob's clothing.

He got a grip. He clawed round for Bob's collar, then turned on his back and kicked out frantically for the opposite shore. He felt the cruel current gripping at his legs and arms. He saw the bushes and banks of the stream flash by as the current swept him on. Now the mill-wheel seemed to tower above him; its terrible roar sounded in his ears. He saw the legs of Hervey Starling career into the air then disappear in the boiling cauldron at the foot of the mill-wheel.

Denny clutched at the now narrowed sides of the mill-stream. His feet felt bottom, but he was torn along. His hand gripped the top of one of the border planks, but the weight of Bob was too great. His grip was torn away, huge splinters in his hand.

The great wheel seemed to smash down on top of him. Well, he had Bob! He had done his best. He braced himself to choke back his yell of fear, when the great wheel seemed to slow down, and, as he reached it, it stopped.

Denny, almost senseless, weakly clawed at one of the slimy paddles. He gasped and groaned, and a red mist seemed to blot out his vision. Then strong hands closed on his coat collar, he was hauled upward, still gripping Bob, and he knew no more till he opened his eyes in the grinding-room of the mill.

Sandy was there, anxiously bending over him. Sandy was dripping wet, too—apparently only just out of the water. "Bob?" gasped Denny weakly.

"All right, Denny, thanks to you, old pal," said Sandy huskily.

"Thank Heaven!" said Denny fervently. "Starling—er—have you found him?"

"Yes; and he's living. Been right under the wheel. But I stopped it in time," spoke Sandy swiftly. "I rushed into the mill and rammed a balk of timber through a window into the spokes. It trapped Starling below, but it saved you and Bob. I dived down and hauled Starling out. He's terribly mangled, Denny. Oh, he's in a terrible state! A picnic party saw us speed up

after we saw Starling swerve. They heard me yell. They followed closely; a fine group of young men, fit medicine for any band of toughs. The brutes who pitched Bob in ran, the others following. We're all all right, Denny."

"Thank Heaven!" repeated Denny simply. "Sandy, you're a real little pal!"

Starling was taken quickly back to Guildford in the picnic party's big touring-car. The chums followed on in Ermytrude. Nothing could be done by them for Starling that day. Raynley had taken charge of the actor, and had called in two doctors.

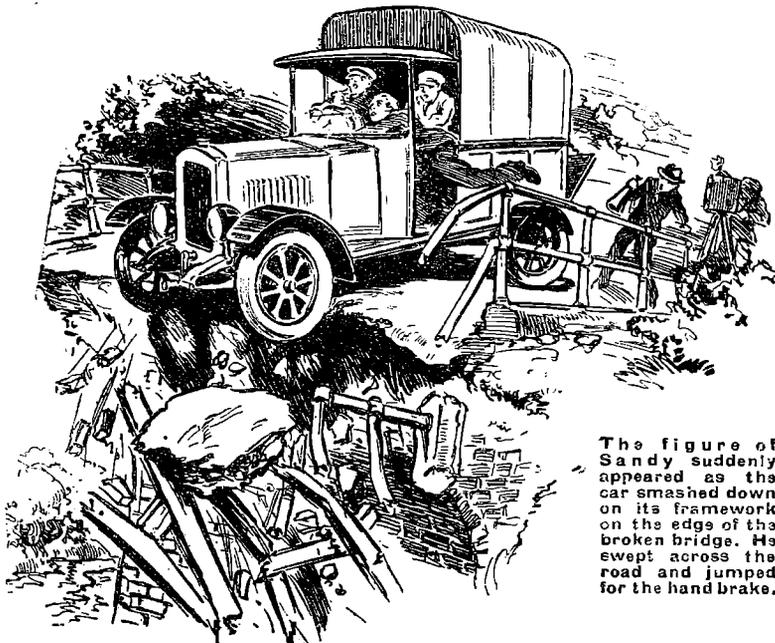
Three days after the terrible happenings at the mill the chums were called

attacked. But you know now. I ask you again, boys, to keep close in regard to this business. Raynley is in my confidence, too."

The chums promised. They could do no other. After all, it was Starling's affair.

Raynley kept the chums on for some time, giving them work as supers here and there. They were waiting for Starling's complete recovery to complete scene sixty of "Burning Beacons."

Further trouble was, however, saved all concerned regarding Starling's secret. Starling's sister sensed something wrong, and her husband, though an ex-crook, being not a bad sort of fellow at bottom, confessed all to his wife. She at once persuaded her hus-



The figure of Sandy suddenly appeared as the car smashed down on its framework on the edge of the broken bridge. He swept across the road and jumped for the hand brake.

round to Starling's bedside. Starling was conscious, but terribly battered by his experience under the mill-wheel.

The film star thanked the chums for what they had done, and complimented Sandy on his smart headwork, when there was not the fraction of a second to spare—the headwork that had undoubtedly saved his life.

"Boys," said Starling weakly, "I want to confide in you and trust you, as gentlemen, to act as I decide. My sister's husband, unknown to her, was once a crook, and should be serving in prison for his crimes. But he is going straight now. I could land him and the men who were once his companions, the latter still desiring to carry on criminal work, in prison any day. They know it, and, unknown to my sister's husband, have tried to get me out of the way, for I have threatened to talk if they commit any more crimes. You see, I have the men watched by a private agent.

"How can I report, though I s'pose I ought to, without putting my sister into a terrible position? Well, I don't intend to do so merely to save my own skin, and I must confess that my own skin and my sister's happiness are the only two things that interest me. Well, boys, this has appeared in the papers—this mill tragedy. You, I hear, have breathed no word to reporters and have referred the police to me, saying truthfully you don't know why I was

band to confess to his own crimes, and take his gruel.

All this came in a letter to Starling. Starling protested strongly, but his sister's husband took the plunge. He crossed his own particular Rubicon, and proved himself a man.

"Do you know, chums," said Denny, when it was all over and they were speeding, more or less, down towards the West Country in Ermytrude—"do you know, I rather admire that brother-in-law of Starling's, for all he was once a crook. Let us hope that the influence of a good woman in his life will continue to have the good effect it has started with, and that it will make an honest man out of a rogue who has settled his account with the world by taking his gruel."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob.

"And Starling's safe," put in Sandy. "May we often see his sporting face on the screen. He's safe, that's the main thing."

"So is Charlie Chaplin," drawled Denny. "Do you know, I fancy Raynley wasn't sorry to see us go—"

And Denny and Bob and Sandy could have sworn that Ermytrude indulged in a horrible, grating laugh as Bob changed gear at that moment.

THE END.

(In the soup and in the thick of adventures again next week, our Three Chums A-wheel show what dare-devils they are.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 615.

Phantom Ship Puts the Wind Up the North Sea Fisheries!



FIGHTING FISHER of the FISHERIES

The Phantom of Scuttler's Bank!

"**A** YE, ye can laugh if ye like!" declared old Ben Burton indignantly. "But it's true, I tell ye! I saw it wi' me own eyes, an' I wouldn't go near the Scuttler's Bank agen if ye paid me a million."

"Rot!" said Kid Fisher, the boy skipper of the trawler, "Catchalot." "Catch me chucking up a good fishing ground like the Scuttler's Bank because a number of white-livered rabbits think they've seen a ghost ship. Strikes me ye must have been sampling some o' that Dutch Schnappes, Ben."

"I ain't the only skipper what's seen it," declared Ben. "Look at Dick Harrison. He saw the ghost ship, and ran his ship ashore as he was coming into port. Sam Swiller lost his nets just after he'd seen the ship, an'—"

"Well, I'm going to sea to-day," declared Kid, "and it'll take a flotilla o' ghost ships to scare me off the Scuttler's Bank, where the best fishing of the season is to be found. Come on, Tim—don't let's waste time."

He turned to his chum and second hand, Tim Gurnet, and, waving a farewell to Ben Burton, the two lads moved off along the quay to where the trawler, Catchalot, with steam raised, was awaiting the return of her skipper.

Kid, as he took the wheel and piloted the trawler out of the river Tyne, was deep in thought. The tale of a phantom vessel which had appeared and disappeared mysteriously in the vicinity of the fishing grounds had been the one topic of conversation in the fishing fleet for the last few days, and had caused some consternation amongst the superstitious fishermen, many of whom had refused point blank to take their trawlers anywhere near the Scuttler's Bank so long as the ghost ship was reported to be in that vicinity.

Kid Fisher was not superstitious. And Kid was making direct for the Scuttler's Bank, where, ghost ship or no ghost ship, he intended to carry out a night's trawling.

Night was already wrapping the grey North Sea in a velvety blanket of darkness when the Catchalot arrived on the fishing ground and commenced to shoot her nets. When all was ready Kid handed over the charge of the trawler to his second hand, promising to relieve him and take over the watch at midnight.

Tim was instructed to call Kid at once if anything out of the ordinary occurred, THE POPULAR.—No. 615.

but it was not until just before twelve that Kid was called, and when he made his way to the wheelhouse Tim reported that nothing unusual had been sighted. Kid took over the watch, determined to keep a good look-out, and, if possible, to discover what was behind all the mysterious stories that had been told.

An hour slipped by, and another. Shortly after two in the morning Kid's keen eyes were peering into the darkness, when he was suddenly spurred into activity.

A dim, ghostly shape had appeared over to the starboard side, as though from nowhere. The vessel—for obviously it was a ship of some description, carried no lights, and was almost upon the slow-moving Catchalot before Kid caught sight of her.

Snatching up a megaphone he bellowed into the darkness

"**Me! I Eat Ghost Ships!**"

Says Skipper Fisher.

"Hi, you flat-footed, long-legged sons o' sea-cooks!" he roared. "Where the blazes do you think you're going? Can't you see my lights? Clear off, you swab-sided sea lice! You'll be into my nets in a minute!"

The two vessels were well within hailing distance. Closer and closer came the phantom stranger, until it seemed that she would crash into the trawler. Kid rang the engine-room telegraph, and swung over the wheel, narrowly avoiding the oncoming vessel, just as it seemed that a collision was imminent.

Then, breaking the darkness, there came from the decks of the stranger a mysterious phosphorescent light, strangely pale and bluish-green. It shone around her decks, lighting them up with ghostly radiance, and Kid gasped at the scene which was so mysteriously presented to him.

The vessel was a small one, and had but two masts, with the yards all awry. No sails were set upon her—and yet the vessel was making headway through the water. Not a soul was to be seen on her decks at first, but as she swept nearer to the Catchalot a shadowy figure detached itself from the deeper shadows which masked the poop, and Kid felt a sudden chill shooting through him as the figure became clearer.

For it was a man in the attire of a seadog of a couple of centuries earlier, with wide-brimmed hat thrust close on his forehead and ringleted curls hanging down over his shoulders.

On came the strange vessel, slipping past the Catchalot with that grim, silent figure staring out ahead. Then, as the figure passed the place where Kid was standing, gazing fascinatedly out of the wheelhouse window, its hand swept off the broad-brimmed hat, and the face of it gleamed strange and ghostly in the spectral light that enshrouded the ship.

Small wonder that even the lion-hearted Kid was taken aback!

For the face was the face of a skeleton—a grinning death's head that stared at him with malevolence in its gaze and eyes that seemed to burn like red-hot coals in their bony sockets.

Only for a moment or two was it visible, and then the pale, ghostly radiance died down and was succeeded by a blackness that was all the more intense because of the light that had gone. There came a swishing of water, and the phantom craft had passed and was rapidly disappearing astern of the Catchalot.

And at the same moment came a ripping, tearing sound that spurred Kid into activity. Forgetting everything else for the moment he dashed from the wheelhouse and ran to the after end of the trawler, yelling out for all hands on deck as he did so.

He was too late!

Only too well did he know what had happened, and realise what that ripping, tearing sound betokened.

The phantom had cut straight into the trawls which the Catchalot was dragging behind her, and in the space of a few seconds they had been cut adrift. When the crew, aroused by Kid's cries, started the winch to which the nets were made fast, nothing but a few stray ends of wires and net were hauled aboard.

The trawls were gone—for good. For, although Kid kept the Catchalot cruising round and round throughout the whole night, searching for the nets which had been cut adrift, not a sign of them was seen.

Nor was the phantom seen again. It had vanished utterly, and, with its going had gone also the trawls and gear which meant everything to Kid Fisher and his crew.

A Secret of the Sea!

"**W**ELL, skipper," said Tim Gurnet. "I reckon there's nothing else to be done but to cut into port and get a new set o' gear. It's a heavy loss, but we can't do anything else."

Kid thought deeply. It was morning, and, although they had scoured

the seas for signs of the missing gear, nothing had been seen. It seemed hopeless to hang on there, doing nothing except waste good coal in keeping the Catchalot steaming around. But Kid was by no means satisfied concerning the phantom vessel which he had sighted on the previous night.

"I don't want to cut into port, Tim," he said. "I've got a theory of my own about that ghost ship. Strikes me she's no ghost ship at all. If she was she'd have gone through the nets like mist. If you ask me anything, her whole game was to cut the nets adrift, and she probably had special cutters fixed on her bows."

"But why should she want to collar the gear?" asked Tim. "Trawls and nets are no good to a ghost ship."

"She didn't want 'em," said Kid. "But she wanted to get rid of us. Can't you see her game? She doesn't want us messing around Scuttler's Bank at night, so she cuts the nets adrift, hoping that we'd go back to port for more, and give the bank a wide berth in future. I'm hanging on, Tim, even if it does mean losing a catch."

His chin stuck out pugnaciously, and Tim, knowing by the signs that Kid Fisher had got his fighting blood roused, did not attempt to make him change his mind.

For the rest of the day the Catchalot cruised around aimlessly. Kid was waiting for nightfall, hoping that he would sight the phantom again. What he was going to do if that happened he did not know, but he decided to be guided by circumstances. He got in as much sleep as he could during the day, for he knew that he might be compelled to spend the greater part of the night awake.

When darkness fell the Catchalot was cruising around in the same position as she had been on the previous night at the sighting of the strange ship. There was not another vessel to be seen, for the rest of the fishing fleet had been content to seek pastures new, where the chance of having their trawls cut adrift did not exist. But Kid Fisher was sticking, and, with eyes constantly searching the darkness, he was on the alert.

Tim stuck by him in the wheelhouse, waiting for he knew not what. It was nearly midnight before Kid, who had been scanning the horizon through his night glasses, turned to Tim with an eager light in his eyes.

"She's coming, Tim!" he breathed. "I can just make her out—over there! She's heading for us, and she's going to repeat last night's stunt. Take charge of the ship, Tim, and after she's past sheer off and douse your lights. Keep a look-out, and hang on—till I come back."

"Till you come back?" he repeated. "I say, skipper, what's the game? Where are you going?"

"Wait and see," answered Kid, and the next moment he had swung out of the wheelhouse and made his way aft, where he hid himself in the shadows which wrapped the deck.

Slowly but surely the strange craft approached. Again, shortly after she

had loomed up close on the starboard side of the trawler, the ghostly light sprang into being. But this time it did not thrill Kid—it merely made him smile. And when Kid Fisher smiled things generally happened.

They happened this time. Kid waited while the strange vessel shot alongside the Catchalot, and the phantom figure aboard her revealed himself, as he had done on the previous night. Then the ghostly light vanished and Kid watched his chance.

The shadowy form of the vessel glided past. With a sudden spring Kid leaped upon the bulwarks of the Catchalot, and then, exerting all his energy, he jumped!

For a moment he was suspended in mid-air, with the water below him, between the Catchalot and the strange craft. The next minute Kid had landed right on the stern of the ghost ship, and was hanging on grimly.

Then he made his first discovery.

The vessel, which had appeared, in the ghostly light, to be an old-fashioned ship, constructed of worm-eaten wood, turned out to be composed of steel, which, Kid assumed, had been cunningly painted to represent wood.

Dropping flat on his face, Kid wormed his way along to the break of the poop and gazed down to where the shadowy figure, still discernable in the light of the stars, was still standing on the main deck of the vessel. The figure stamped three times on deck, and the sound of his sea-booted feet rang hollowly. The deck, also, was of steel.

Suddenly a light sprang into being. A hatch in the deck had been opened and the light had sprung from it. The man on deck bent down.

"I reckon that's scared 'em somewhat," he said, with a chuckle. "We're not likely to be interrupted to-night, Jake."

The man addressed as Jake pushed his head out of the hatch.

"You'd better nip down inside," he said. "They might come nosing around, like that packet did last night. Better we should be missing if they do."

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed the first man. "There's one thing—we won't need to keep under too long."

He swung himself into the hatch, and Kid saw him disappear below the deck into the lighted interior of the vessel. There came the clang of steel upon steel, and the hatch suddenly closed. Then came a swish of water, and the deck upon which Kid lay tilted suddenly.

Then, with a swirling of water, the entire vessel began to slide beneath the waves, so swiftly that Kid had hardly time to realize what was happening before he found himself on the surface of the sea.

He struck out desperately, and found himself alone upon the surface. The ship had entirely disappeared—had sunk swiftly and silently far beneath the waves that now lapped Kid and looked as though they would drag him down, also, to the depths beneath.

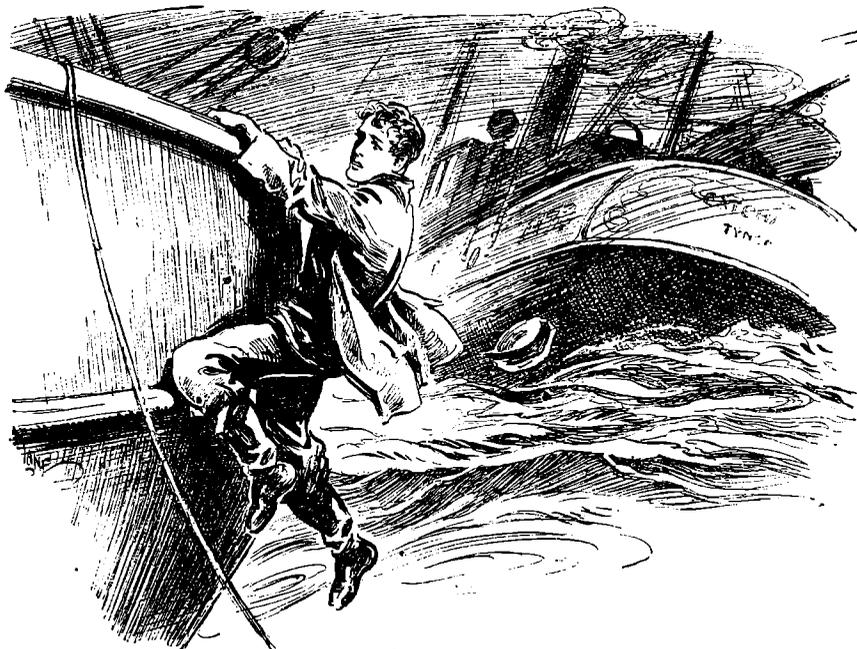
But Kid was a strong swimmer, and he battled desperately until he had shot well away from the vortex made by the sinking vessel.

He was alone on the face of the waters—and far away in the distance he could see the stern light of the Catchalot, growing steadily fainter as Tim Gurnet, obeying his instructions, was sheering off, leaving the boy skipper swimming desperately for his life!

"A submarine!" gasped Kid. "Gosh, why didn't I think of it before? That accounts for the way she appears and disappears so mysteriously. A camouflaged submarine, rigged up with false upper-works to make her appear to be an old-time brig!"

Deep Sea Salvage!

KID'S position was a distinctly unenviable one. The Catchalot had gone, and there was not a sign of a light on the face of the waters. Kid knew, too, that the chances of him being picked up by any other craft were exceedingly remote.



As the shadowy form of the ghost ship glided past, Fisher gave a spring from the Catchalot and landed with a crash on the strange craft.

Scuttler's Bank was a shallow in the North Sea, and deep-sea vessels avoided it. Under ordinary circumstances there would have been a number of fishing vessels employed on the bank, but these had been frightened off by the reports of the spectral ship.

Kid knew he could manage to keep himself afloat for some time, despite the fact that he was fully clothed. Ever since he had been a youngster Kid had taken to the water like a fish, and was one of the best swimmers in the fishing fleet.

But to keep himself afloat until dawn brought Tim Gurnet and the Catchalot back to the scene—that was asking too much!

"I reckon I'm a goner if something doesn't happen before much more time has passed!" said Kid grimly to himself. "I certainly never expected that craft to sink beneath my feet."

Again he peered out into the darkness, striving to catch a glimpse of a light—but he saw nothing, and his heart sank.

Then, dimly to his ears, came the noise of swirling water, and Kid took heart again. Suddenly he remembered the words of the man aboard the submarine.

"We won't need to keep under too long!"

Those were the words.

Was the submarine coming to the surface again, then? Kid gazed over in the direction whence the noise of disturbed water had come. The next moment he felt like giving a cheer, for a shadowy shape had pushed its prow from the depths, and even as Kid watched the camouflaged submarine came slowly back to the surface.

With long, powerful strokes, Kid made for it. He was just in time to catch hold of the dummy bulwarks of the upper works, and then he was dragged up as the submarine rose. In a few minutes he was lying flat on the dripping decks of the poop, and the submarine was on the surface.

Kid grinned.

"Guess I'm going to discover what their game is now!" he said, crouching in the shadows at the break of the poop.

With a clang the hatch in the submarine's deck was opened. The next minute a couple of men came on deck and commenced hauling up some heavy tackle. A shaded light was rigged up on deck, and more men came from below.

Kid gave a gasp of amazement, for he had recognised the tackle and gear which had been brought on deck. It was diving apparatus!

There were two diving-suits and an air-pump. Even as Kid watched, hardly daring to breathe lest he gave away his presence, he saw two of the men don diving-suits. A derrick was rigged out-board, and, while two men handled the air pump, the divers were slowly lowered over the side.

The man named Jake took charge of the operations, and the work proceeded slickly, as though all concerned realised that they must do as much as possible before the coming of dawn rendered it necessary for them to submerge again, and remain hidden.

"Whatever it is, they're evidently up to no good!" thought Kid. "If it was legitimate diving work they'd carry it out in daylight, and they wouldn't need to try to scare fishing vessels away from the bank."

THE POPULAR.—No. 615.

He could do nothing but watch, taking care that no false move betrayed him to the men on deck. An hour went by; then, apparently in answer to a signal from the divers at work on the sea bed, a weighed line was lowered overboard from the derrick.

While the two men at the air pumps continued with their work, the man Jake, and one other, set a small electric winch going, and before long the line was coming back from the depths. As it came up, Kid saw that a wooden case was attached to the end.

The case was swung inboard, and then, by the light of the shaded lamp, Jake prised it open—and gave a cry of triumph as he saw the contents of the case.

Kid was hard put to it not to echo his cry, for the case was packed full of heavy bars, which gleamed dull yellow in the light.

Bullion!

Bars of gold that had remained, no one knew for how long, on the bed of the ocean!

But Kid could make a shrewd guess concerning whence they had come. During the days of the Great War many vessels had found their last resting-place on the bed of the North Sea—and many of those vessels had carried bullion, destined to pay for munitions supplied to the Allies.

On the Scuttler's Bank, therefore, a wrecked vessel must lie—probably a merchant vessel which had been torpedoed by a German submarine. And there she had lain, guarding her treasure until this day!

Kid could see it all now! By some means or other these men who formed the crew of the submarine had discovered the whereabouts of the sunken treasure ship, and had decided to salvage the bullion. But the fact that they had no legitimate right to engage in the salvage work was proved by the fact that the business had been carried out in secrecy.

The possibility of the work being interrupted by a chance fishing vessel had been guarded against by scaring off the superstitious fishermen. When they had refused to be scared off—as Kid had refused—the method of cutting their trawls and nets adrift had been carried out, in the hope that they would immediately make their way back to port, and thus leave the submarine's crew free to carry on their nefarious business undisturbed.

"All right, my hearties!" muttered Kid to himself. "You owe me a new set of gear, and I'll take my oath that I get it from you!"

The work was still proceeding. Kid, however, was beginning to be cramped and chilled, for a cold breeze had sprung up and was whistling around his sodden garments.

He decided to rise to his feet and rub his cramped limbs, and, as carefully as he could, he did so. It was a false move!

As he rose his feet stumbled on the slippery deck, and he almost fell. In throwing out his arms to preserve his balance he made a further clatter.

The next moment the man named Jake had swung himself around, and whipped out a revolver, while his companion, tipping up the hanging shaded light, held it so that the beam of light fell fully on the spot where Kid was standing, revealing him as though it had been daylight.

Crack!

Jake's revolver rang out, and a spurt

of flame stabbed the darkness as a bullet winged its way towards Kid!

The End of the Ghost Ship!

QUICK as a flash Kid dropped.

He had seen, the moment that the light was turned on him, that Jake was going to fire, and his promptitude saved his life, for the bullet whizzed harmlessly past his right ear.

Before Jake could pull the trigger again Kid had acted. Springing to the break of the poop he took a flying leap, and the next moment, as the poop was some eight feet or so higher than the main deck, he was hurtling through the air.

Crash!

He landed fair and square on Jake's shoulders before that worthy could dodge. Down went Jake, and down went Kid. The revolver clattered to the deck, and Jake stretched out his hand to get it. Before he could do so, however Kid's leg-of-mutton fist had crashed on the side of his jaw, sending his teeth rattling.

Jake gasped. There had been all Kid's force behind that blow—and Kid was no light puncher. At the same moment the man who had been holding the light jumped forward. As he did so the light swung on its flex, and for a moment the scene was plunged into darkness. The light swung back again in time to show Kid that the second man was making a leap for him.

Kid's foot shot out. It caught the man's ankle, and he fell with a crash to the deck. Kid, tearing an arm tree from the clutch of Jake, snatched up the fallen revolver. Seizing it by the barrel, he clubbed it and brought it down with a crashing blow on Jake's right temple. Jake gave a groan and collapsed.

The second desperado had leaped to his feet again and launched himself at Kid.

Litho as an eel, Kid twisted and threw himself clear. The second man dropped upon Jake, and Kid leaped to his feet and swung round, revolver in hand, to where the two men who had been working the air pump had sprang to the aid of their companions.

"Get back to the pumps!" Kid ordered. "You flat-footed idiots, d'you want your pals below to be suffocated?"

Whether it was the necessity of continuing the air supply to the divers, or whether the sight of the revolver in the hand of the determined Kid worked the oracle Kid did not know, but the two men retreated, and recommenced work on the pumps, doubtless to the relief of the divers, who must have been gasping for air during the brief period they had been left unattended.

Kid turned to the second man, and covered him with the revolver.

"Haul your pal over there, beside the pumps," he ordered. "And keep away from the hatch. Is there anyone else down below?"

The man shook his head.

"That's all right, then," said Kid. "Now I reckon I've got you all where I want you, but I'll make sure that you haven't any shooting-irons on you first. Come up to me, one by one, and let me give you the once over."

It was done, and Kid levelling the revolver with one hand, and keeping a sharp look-out, ran his free hand over

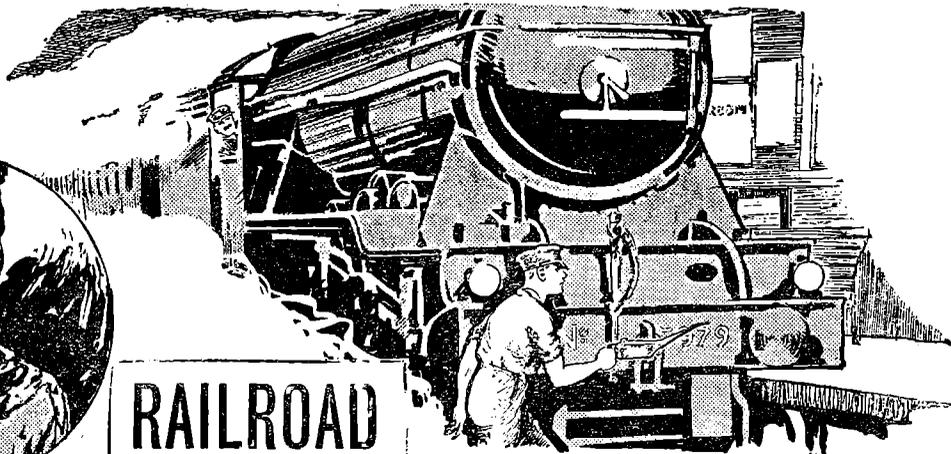
(Continued on page 12.)

MIDNIGHT MAIL HELD UP BY ARMED BANDITS!



Dave's Gang!

RAILROAD DAVE!



VERY quietly Dave slipped towards the edge of the running-shed at Millington Junction, and stood gazing from the corner to a stretch of roofed-in railway line which ran alongside the main shed. At the front of the sloping roof there hung a powerful arc-lamp, and it flung a vivid, bluish-white light down on two engines which stood on the line.

The foremost of these two engines was a mighty, ten-wheel-drive locomotive, known as the old Experimental No. 8, also known as the unluckiest engine on the line. It didn't look a bit unlucky as it stood there, because from buffer beam to tender it positively shone. Everything polishable was polished, and the engine looked so spick and span that it might have come out of the shops that morning.

The reason for this unwonted brightness lay in the striving shapes of four overall-clad cleaners. They were working like mad with oiled swabs and rags and metal polish. This was because Dave Myers had a couple of muscular arms and a pair of useful fists on the end of them.

The four boys slaving on the big engine formed Dave's gang of cleaners. Dave himself was a lean, clean-limbed boy, with the grey, keen eyes of a real railwayman. Up and down the famous line he was known as "Dave o' the Midnight Mail," because it was he who oiled round the crack flyer's engine when she pulled in at the junction at midnight.

Dave's father, until he had been pensioned off, had been the driver of the mail. It was Dave's ambition that some day he would stand where his father had stood on the footplate of the great express locomotive.

He stood a moment watching the cleaners, then turned as a step sounded on the cindered earth behind. He found himself looking into the ruddy, cheerful features of Foreman Hayes, the man in charge of the running-shed.

"Got 'em going nicely now, Dave?"—and the grey-haired foreman nodded towards the boys swarming over the old Experimental. "Making a real job of her, they are. Have you done those two tankers?"

"Done 'em an' forgotten 'em," Dave answered. "I left the boys doing this

while I shoved the kettle on the brazier for tea."

"Well, you've shown 'em how to clean an engine, anyhow," the foreman grunted. "By the way, here's something for you." And he pulled a gleaming object out of his pocket. "It's one o' them new pistol-type oilers, and I've bagged it for you so's you can use it on the midnight mail's engine. Catch hold!"

He tossed the thing to Dave. It had a big, fat butt which contained oil. There was a rounded barrel, with a trigger jutting beneath it. The thing was actually a forced-feed oiler, but made in pistol form so that it would be handy to use.

"She'll shoot a jet of oil a good fifteen feet," the foreman went on. "The idea of it is that you can drive oil where the old squirts wouldn't reach."

Dave grinned as he took the pistol-oiler. He levelled it and pressed the

IT WASN'T A REAL
GUN

That Helped Dave Save the
Mail!

trigger. From the muzzle a thin streak of oil shot outwards and zipped against the wall.

"Don't start smothering the place with oil," the foreman grunted. "An' keep that thing to yourself, because you're the only lad that's got one. If the other gangs see it they'll want one like it, or else they'll pinch it off you."

To Save the Mail!

FOREMAN HAYES ambled away, and Dave moved towards the Experimental. One of the four cleaners had disappeared, and Dave spotted him at the back of the mighty loco. Instead of polishing the

rear buffers he was now leaning against the tender, his swab across his shoulder as he did an imitation juggling act with three lumps of clinker.

Dave paused and lifted the new oiler. One second later a gout of oil took the cleaner just behind the ear and made him jump a foot into the air.

"What about those buffers?" asked Dave! and the cleaner grinned amiably as he wiped the oil away.

"You're worse than old Hayes," he grunted. "Can't a bloke amuse himself for a— What's that?"

He came forward to examine the new oiler. The others gathered round, and for five minutes they stood taking pot-shots with it at the huge cranks on the old Experimental's driving-wheels, then the thing refused to squirt more oil.

"It's empty," observed Dave. "I'll hop over to the platform store and refill it. I'll use it to go round the mail's engine when she comes in."

"An' talking about the mail," one of the cleaners said "what about all of us going over there with you and giving her a rub up while she's standing at the platform? We could get round her in two minutes and take some of the dust off. She'd look smart then when she runs into Kirby."

"That's a good idea!" exclaimed Dave.

They arranged it between them, then Dave hurried over to the platform oil store. This was a small shed at the end of the main line platform, and already passengers for the express were waiting there. Dave refilled his new oiler, and it was just as he came out of the store that the lamplight caught the face of a man coming down the platform.

The fellow's collar was turned up against the cold November night air, and the brim of his soft hat was pulled down all round, so that but little of his features could be seen. Yet, in the moment that Dave glimpsed him, he saw that there was a scar low down on the man's cheek—a scar that struck one corner of his mouth and twisted his lips to the travesty of a smile.

Only one man in the world had a scar like that, and that man was Scammell.

Dave stood in the shadow of the doorway, watching intently. Scammell had once been a driver on the Midland line, but he had been discharged for negligence. Dave knew he hated the railway

for which he had once worked, and that he was consumed with a mad desire for revenge.

Scammell had tried time and again to upset the famous mail, and the railway police were looking out for him. He knew this, and it was a tribute to his nerve that he should risk appearing on the junction platform, where, if he were recognised, a score of men would instantly pounce on him.

As Scammell came down the platform, Dave saw him pass a man who nodded almost imperceptibly. This man was a hard-faced, thick-set, strongly-built fellow, and there was something very tense and grim about him as he stood there.

A few yards farther on another man nodded to Scammell, then another, and another. They were all like the first—sinister fellows.

"They're a shady lot!" Dave grunted to himself. "They're up to something, by gosh! And it's Scammell, all right, although you wouldn't guess it to look at him now, all muffled up. Wonder what they're after?"

Dave thought quickly. He knew that he ought immediately to inform the junction police, who would arrest Scammell out of hand. At the same time, it was obvious that the man had some scheme on; and arresting him might not stop it, because his confederates would still be able to go through with it.

"I'll see what they're after first," Dave told himself. "There'll be plenty of time to grab 'em when the mail comes in if they try anything."

He hesitated a few moments longer, then hurried back to the brazier in the running shed, where water was boiling for tea. Every night Dave carried tea to the foreman and to the crew of the express engine. To-night his mates in the gang helped him, and they were all standing at the end of the platform waiting for the mail when the train was signalled.

From where he stood Dave could just see Scammell and one or two of the men, all waiting for the train. With a roar the famous flyer came thundering out of the night, the great locomotive rumbling to a halt where Dave stood with the others.

The moment that it stopped, his gang swarmed over the engine, the driver and the firemen staring blankly at them as Dave handed up the cans of tea.

"It's all right; it's only my gang!" he grinned. "They're going to give your old puffer a rub up!"

Then he brought his pistol-oiler into action, and for the moment forgot all else as he shot yellow oil on the cranks and coupling-bars. The new oiler was quick in its action, and he had thirty seconds to spare when he had been round the engine.

He looked down the platform. It was clearing now, as new passengers went aboard. At the near end he could see Scammell boarding the train, too! The fellow slipped into a coach even as the thought was in Dave's mind. Then porters were clearing the platform and slamming the doors.

"All off!" roared Dave to his mates, and the driver of the big loco tooted his whistle, as a signal to the gang of cleaners. They came tumbling down, leaving behind them an engine that looked astonishingly smart for the short time they had worked on her.

They grouped by Dave as he slipped his oiler into the pocket of his overalls, and then took the tea-cans from the fireman.

"Quick work, boys!" the driver called, as he watched for the guard's

signal. "We look the smartest engine on the line now. Thanks for— Here we go! Good-night, boys!"

The guard's whistle shrilled. The blastpipe roared, exhaust belched from the smoke-stack, and the great loco rolled slowly forward, with Dave staring down the cleared platform.

Scammell and his sinister companions were all aboard the mail. There was no chance of getting him now, even if Dave wanted to. The express was off on its two hundred miles non-stop journey to the North—off, with the scoundrelly Scammell on the train!

Slowly the lighted saloons and coaches drew past Dave, and as they rolled by he made up his mind. He saw the rear van trundling towards him, its speed slowly growing. And as it went he turned to his companions.

"Scammell's on the mail!" he yelled. "I saw him get aboard! Come on, all of you!"

As he shouted, the guard's van rolled past. He sprinted for the back of it. A jump carried him from the rear coupling to a buffer, then he was safe on one of the treadplates, and hanging on. With him came the others, clawing their way on to the back of the van, mounting the treadplates, and steadying themselves by the stanchions that were bolted at the sides.

The midnight mail rolled into the darkness, with Scammell and his crooks aboard, and Dave and his mates hanging on behind.

Dave Shows His Mettle.

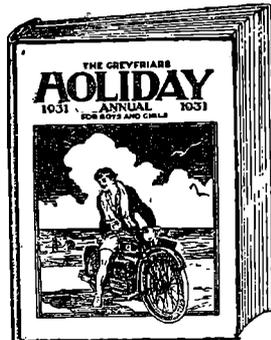
"WHAT'S the big idea, Dave?"

A cleaner roared the words above the crash and rumble of the van as it began to gather speed.

"Scammell's on the train!" he yelled again in reply, and that was about all he had a chance to say, because the express began to get into her stride.

The treadplates on which they stood were about a foot wide, and some six inches deep; and six inches of flat steel isn't much support when it is moving at a pace rapidly mounting to fifty miles an hour. It was all they could do to hang on, even with the stanchions to aid

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them. A moment's relaxation would have seen them flung to the death waiting on the sliding permanent way below.

It was impossible to talk, because of the roar. Dave hung on, the wind whistling past his ears, and dust whirling all round him. There was no chance whatever of getting into the train. For one thing, to have tried to move would have meant displacing another fellow, which was risky. To get on to the van roof, even, meant taking some chance.

In a little while they roared over a viaduct, getting a glimpse of the deeps below and a taste of the icy wind that raged down the valley. Dave began to realise that his impulsiveness had placed them all in an awkward and dangerous position.

It had been cold to start with. He felt chilled through already, and it was certain that they would be half-frozen long before the train covered the two hundred miles before it. Cold hands would lose grip, and that meant dropping off. And dropping off meant—

By craning his head, Dave could see through the grimy window into the guard's van. The guard was making up a sheet on a little desk at the side, and because of the noise of the train he couldn't hear the sound Dave made when he rapped on the window. Presently the guard began to stack up and sort out luggage, whistling cheerfully all the while.

By this time the express was roaring into the open, deserted moorland beyond the viaduct. She was doing a mile a minute now, and Dave and his mates knew all about it. The wind whistled straight across the chill moors, and it felt as though it was arriving non-stop from the North Pole. It drove icy draughts down Dave's neck and robbed his hands of all feeling. A boy near him slipped, and for one awful instant only Dave's quick clutch saved him from falling off; then he regained his feeling and clung on.

Inside the warm and comfortable van the guard was still whistling cheerily as he worked. Dave peered enviously at him, and then he saw the guard suddenly stop, straighten up, and turn his head to the far end of the van. By craning, Dave could see farther in, and he almost fell off at the sight which met his gaze.

Just inside the van was standing one of the husky men whom Dave had seen on the junction platform. A handkerchief covered the lower part of his face, and in one hand he held a revolver, the menacing muzzle covering the startled guard. Dave saw the man's eyes flash, and he seemed to speak viciously. Then the guard moved sideways to his desk, as though at the man's behest.

For perhaps half a minute the man stood there covering the guard, not saying anything further, and not doing anything. Then, without a moment's warning, there came the tearing scream of suddenly-applied brakes and the express began to slow, as though some gigantic hand was trying to push it back.

"Somebody's pulled the communication-cord," one of the cleaners yelled, his voice lost in the uproar.

They felt the van bucking and jumping on the rails as it came to a grating, grinding stop. The moment that it checked Dave dropped to the ground and ran to one side.

The train had halted on a curve. The door of the firebox was open as the fireman had been about to coal up when the automatic brakes were applied. In the ruddy glare from the furnace Dave saw a man leap out of the darkness beside the line and mount to the foot-

plate. As he went, the light glinted on the weapon that he held. He checked, covering the engine crew, then he disappeared into the cab.

Back of Dave his mates cowered, cold, forgotten in the sudden excitement, for most of them had seen the armed man in the van.

"There's a car over there, Dave—look!"

A moorland road ran close beside the track. On it, all lights doused, stood a car. Near by was a man who stood staring intently towards the train.

"By gosh, they're bandits!" Dave gasped; then he went running towards the nearest coach, with the others after him. Cautiously they climbed up the footboard until they could look in.

It was a saloon, in which passengers had been lolling half asleep. They were awake now—wide awake. At one end stood a man who wore a mask; in either hand he held a menacing revolver. At the other end of the saloon were two more men, each with weapons and each stripping passengers of their valuables.

The passengers were putting up no fight. Probably they were too dazed.

Many of them had been fast asleep when the hold-up had occurred. One or two made a protest, but for the most part they silently allowed themselves to be robbed. There was precious little else they could do.

"Bob down, quick, or that chap on the road'll spot us!" Dave gasped.

"Scammell's planned this—they're railway bandits! I saw one of 'em get up the engine, too. Scammell must have pulled the communication-cord to stop the train here, and now they'll rob everybody in it."

He stood staring out towards the car, then caught one of his mates by the arm as an idea came to him.

"Here, I'll go and prevent that car getting away—I'll do it somehow. You others move along the train on the other side and stop by the engine. I'll meet you there, then we'll think of something. It'll take those crooks some time to get through the train. Watch out you're not spotted!"

And with the words he left the line and went slithering down the bush-dotted embankment to the road beyond. He crossed it, and padded silently over the lumpy grass towards the car. The bandit in charge of it was some little distance ahead of the machine, watching the train.

Dave could see a group of three men working in the leading coach; they had the forward guard in there with them, holding him up like the rest of the passengers. This meant that there were nine in the gang altogether, including Scammell, who was the fellow with two revolvers holding up the people in the first coach.

Dave reached the car, keeping it between the bandit on the road and himself. To try to puncture the tyres meant that the man's attention would be attracted by the hiss of escaping air. To lift the engine-cover and get at the engine would make a noise. Baffled, Dave crouched, trying to hit on something.

All the four doors of the big car were open, ready for the bandits to leap in when they returned. It was a huge, fast-looking and powerful saloon, as it needed to be if all the gang were going to get away on it. Dave crept stealthily forward until he was at the driver's door and peering in.

There was a small dashlight burning, and it lit up the switchboard. Dave saw the ignition switch, and he glimpsed wires running from beneath it. With

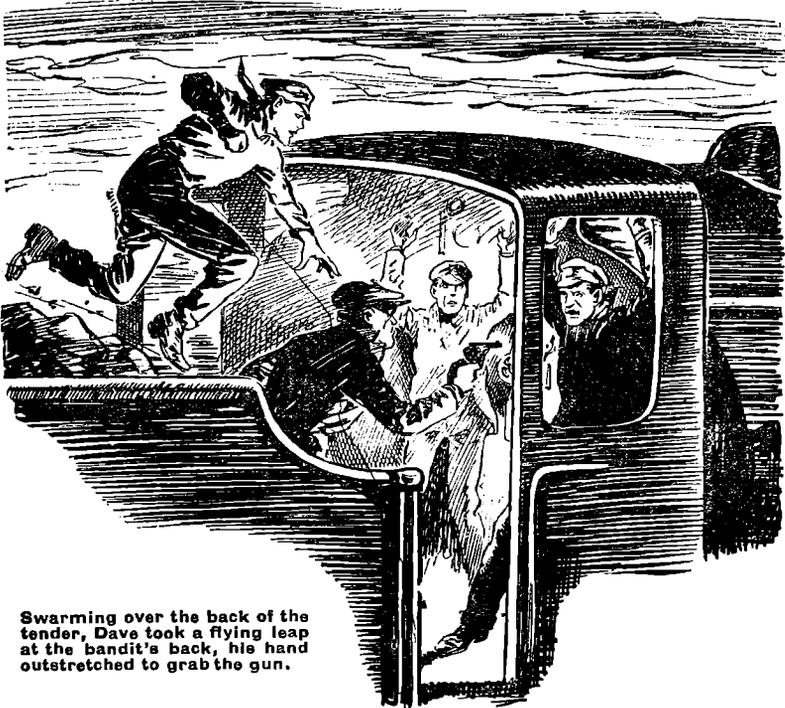
the sight of them he reached out for the ignition wires, and a snatch of the hand wrenched them from their switch, the bared ends glinting in the weak light.

Dave twisted the two wires together and tucked them back behind the switchboard, grinning triumphantly and thanking his luck that he knew something about cars as he did so. In doing that he had cut off the ignition, and no power on earth would start the engine

ning forward as he dropped, and one of them hissed:

"Those bandits are in the second coach now, Dave—they've cleaned out the first one. We could collar 'em if half of us go in the third coach and half through the first—we'd get 'em front and rear then!"

"They're armed!" Dave exclaimed. "They've all got revolvers! We can't tackle 'em on our own, and—"



Swarming over the back of the tender, Dave took a flying leap at the bandit's back, his hand outstretched to grab the gun.

until the wires were disconnected. Also, it would take the driver a long time to discover what was the matter; he wouldn't guess that the ignition switch had been tampered with.

Dave slipped away. In seconds only he was around the end of the train, and had joined his mates where they were waiting back of the tender.

"I'll settle this chap on the engine, then we'll see about those on the train," Dave gasped; and before the others knew what he had in mind he was swarming up the back of the tender: Over the piled coals there he crept, and he saw that the bandit on the footplate was standing with his back to him.

Dave wondered if the man by the car would spot him, but he had to chance that. He crouched on the coals, tensed, and then took a flying leap at the man, his knees dropping for the fellow's shoulders, and his right hand going for the gun.

Dave's feet slithered on the piled coal as he jumped, and the bandit half turned. All he saw was a taut figure diving at him out of the blackness, then Dave hit him with a terrific crash. In the moment that he struck the man the driver grabbed for the fellow's revolver.

An instant later and the bandit was sprawling on the hot footplate, with Dave on his chest and the driver ramming the revolver in the man's neck.

"Keep him covered!" Dave gasped. "There's more of them on the train!"

And then he pitched himself out of the cab in a flying leap to the ground, leaving the driver and the fireman gasping.

The little gang of cleaners came run-

"Get away! You've just jumped on that chap up there!" the cleaner grunted. "I'm game to chance it. The passengers will help bring 'em down if we go for their guns. Come on, we'll—"

He broke off.

Out on the night air there shrilled the vibrant note of a whistle. It came from the bandit's car, a shrilling, warning call of alarm.

Dave Does the Trick!

THE man by the waiting car had seen Dave overpower the fellow who was holding up the engine crew. The whistle was a danger signal to the rest, and ere the call had died away the masked bandits came tumbling pell-mell from the coaches, dropping to the track and racing for the road.

It was just as well that the gang had taken alarm. If Dave and his mates had attempted to tackle them on the train it is certain that some of them would have got shot. As it was, a plucky passenger took a bullet in the arm for trying to stop one of the bandits as he got away, and the crackling roar of the revolver rang out through the sound of the whistle.

Dave glimpsed the gang getting away from the train on the other side. Like a streak Dave dived under the buffers.

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between the tender and the first coach, with the others sliding after him.

The bandits were going full pelt for the car, and Dave could hear the driver grinding away at the self-starter in an effort to get the engine going.

"Steady!" Dave gasped, as they slithered down the banking. "They can't get away. I've shoved the engine out of action! Go easy, or they'll see us and start shooting."

They checked in the bushes at the bottom of the slope, just as the first of the bandits reached the car and dived in.

"Creep up now!" hissed Dave. "I'll get close, an' I think I can hold 'em up, I've an idea. You all close in when I shout!"

They went forward. There was a wire fence between the railway and the grass stretch bordering the road. Dave led the way through the wires, then he squirmed forward, half on his chest and moving at a slant to get to the back of the car.

The bandits were all in it now, with the driver still trying to start up. Doors were crashing open all along the train behind, and men were leaping down.

From the car three shots elammed on the night, coming with vivid streaks of fire that lit up the grim faces of the masked men as they shot. The roar of the kicking revolvers checked the passengers who were starting in pursuit, while the danger threatening the train took the bandits' attention from the grass-grown stretch by the fence.

Unseen, Dave led the way forward until the little gang from the running-shed were behind the car and on the edge of the road.

"Now!" he gasped.

And he raced across the road to the other side as swift as a leaping hare, with the others coming one at a time after him. Together they crouched in the darkness, facing the closed car.

"You stop here until I shout to you!" Dave grunted.

And then he went silently forward. There wasn't much need for silence. The bandits were shooting fiercely now, blazing intimidating bullets which sung above the train or plugged, hissing, to the ground between.

"What's Dave goin' to do?" a cleaner gasped. "He ain't got a revolver."

"Yes, he has! One of the bandits must have dropped it, and Dave's picked it up!" one of the others said tensely.

And in Dave's right hand showed a weapon that glimmered faintly through the darkness.

All the bandits were now leaning towards the train save two, who alternately cursed the driver and urged him to greater efforts. Dave crept up unseen, then he suddenly leaped to the footboard.

"Hands up, the whole lot of you—quick!" he yelled; and the driver let up a scared cry as he found Dave on the footboard, with the muzzle of his weapon stabbing a bare inch from his ear. "Up with your hands—up, or I shoot!"

The two men facing the driver shot their hands towards the roof of the car. Those facing the train did not turn their heads; they lifted their hands instinctively, and as they went up Dave roared:

"Come on, boys!"

His little gang came on the jump. They didn't need telling what to do. Almost before the bandits knew what was happening, their weapons were being snatched from their fists.

One of the men behind the driver was

Scammell, and his thin, scarred lips snarled off his teeth as he glowered at Dave. He made an effort to use the weapon he held, but one of the cleaners got at his wrist in time.

"Shout to the train crew!" he ripped. "Get somebody down here, and—I'll let you have it if you try to get away!" He snapped the words at one of the men. "Keep outside the doors, you fellows! Give me plenty of room to shoot!"

One of the cleaners went running to the train, yelling as he went. After that the coaches simply spilled men—the guards, the engine crew, passengers—all came tearing towards the stranded car, and at Dave's words the bandits were hauled out and lined up.

"It's Dave again!" the driver of the midnight mail gasped. "He stopped 'em!"

"I pulled the ignition switch wires off the car an' twisted them together," Dave explained. "That's why they couldn't start the car. Shove these bandits in one of the guard's vans—there's no time to explain now."

The passengers began to stream back to the train, with the cleaners guarding Scammell. It was by the fence that Scammell broke free. He did it without any warning. A mad, tearing twist of his arms sent the boys who held him flying, then he whirled round and went racing back to the car.

"After him!" Dave yelled.

Ere they could come near him he was at the car and diving a hand past the ignition switch—ho'd heard Dave tell how he had disabled the engine.

A wrench, and the wires were parted. A second later and the starter-motor was turning with just enough power in the battery to heave it over. The engine responded almost at the first turn; then the car was roaring away, with Dave flinging himself at it as it went.

One of the open, swinging doors caught him at the shoulder and knocked him aside. He pitched full length, while the car went thundering away into the night, with the leader of the bandits getting away scot free.

The engine driver and some of the passengers came running back, and the driver helped to pick Dave up.

"Dash it! I wish I'd been quick enough to stop him!" Dave grunted. "He's worse than all the others put together!"

"Never mind, my boy! You've done a mighty good night's work, from what I can hear of things!" a passenger told him. "We're going to start a collection for you, anyway, just as a little recognition of what you've done."

"I don't want a collection!" Dave grinned. "I only happened to think of a way of—"

"Go on! Let 'em collect!" one of Dave's mates said. "We can do with some new footer kit for the junction team. Pity we didn't get Scammell, though. Why didn't you shoot at him instead of trying to get on the car? You've got a revolver!"

"Eh—revolver? I know I haven't!" Dave exclaimed.

"Well, you had one when you held the bandits up in the car."

Dave grinned suddenly.

"I hadn't. This is what I held 'em up with."

He held out the pistol-oiler that Foreman Hayes had given him at the junction a little while before.

THE END.

(Meet Dave in another roaring tale of the Railroad next week!)

FIGHTING FISHER OF THE FISHERIES!

(Continued from page 8.)

the prisoners. None of them had revolvers, and Kid grinned as he motioned them to go back to their posts.

"Now you'd better get this right," he said significantly. "You'll keep those air pumps going for the benefit of your pals, but you'll leave them down for the time being. That puts four of you out of commission. As for you"—he turned to the unoccupied man—"you'll sit down on the deck next to Jake, and keep your mouth shut. Even if there is anyone left below in this submarine they aren't dive so long as the hatch is open—and I'll put a bullet through the first blighter who tries to close it! Get me? Right! Then we'll just make ourselves comfortable until the jolly old Catchalot comes around here, and she'll be on the scene bright and early with the dawn. So just settle yourself down and wait!"

It was a long wait, but Kid didn't mind. He could go without sleep for the major part of the night, and he was thoroughly enjoying himself. When the first flushes of dawn appeared on the eastern horizon Kid smiled as he saw the well-recognised lines of the Catchalot looming up out of the morning mist. The Catchalot, with Tim Gurnet at the wheel, nosed herself near to the camouflaged submarine.

"Send the dinghy over, Tim!" yelled Kid. "I've got a crowd o' sharks here. And bring a wire towing-hawser. We'll take this prize back to port with us."

Ten minutes later a party from the Catchalot were aboard the submarine, and the prisoners were transferred to the trawler's hold. Then the divers were brought to the surface—to find themselves also prisoners.

Jake, who proved to be the captain, had come to by that time, and had joined his men in the hold.

Kid made a hasty survey of the interior of the submarine, but, as he had been informed, there were no others aboard her. Leaving one of the Catchalot's deckhands in charge, the submarine was immediately taken in tow, and the trawler, with Kid in charge, headed her way westward to the Tyne.

Down to the water-line she looked like a brig of a hundred years ago.

But under the waterline she bulged, and showed herself in her true colours as an old German submarine.

Kid learned the true facts later when an Admiralty official paid a visit to him aboard the Catchalot.

As he had surmised, the vessel which lay on the bed of the Scuttler's Bank was a British merchant ship which had been torpedoed when carrying a cargo of bullion. As she had been sunk with all hands the exact whereabouts of the wreck were unknown, otherwise she would have been salvaged by the Admiralty years before.

But those aboard the submarine had known where the wreck lay, although they were ignorant of the fact that she carried bullion. It was Jake who co-ordinated the two facts and decided to line his pockets at the expense of the Admiralty.

THE END.

(Fighting Fisher gets himself mixed up in another unpleasant adventure next week!)

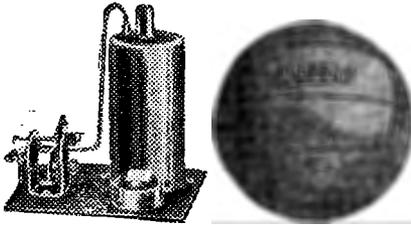
CHOOSE YOUR OWN XMAS PRESENT!

SPECIAL FIRST PRIZE

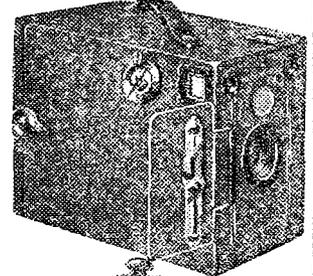
A Complete
"LISSENOLA"
 Two-Valve
 WIRELESS SET.

**WHICH WILL
 YOU HAVE?**

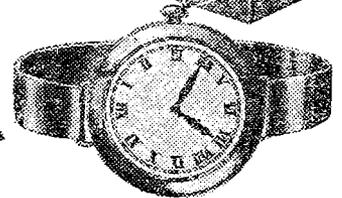
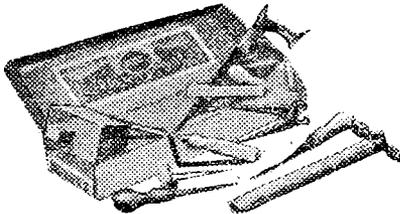
or—A No. 6
"MECCANO"
 Model-Makers' Outfit in
 CHOICE OAK CABINET.



**50 OTHER
 MAGNIFICENT
 PRIZES.**



Other prizes described elsewhere in this issue.



HOW TO WIN!

JUST cast your eyes over all these top-hole prizes we offer you here, decide which one you want most of all, then set to, now, in this FREE contest and try to win it. Although this is the Third Week of the competition any New Readers can still join in by asking their newsagent for the two previous issues of POPULAR, which contain the two earlier puzzle-sets and the Full List containing the answers.

Here you have the Third Set of six more easy questions—can you answer them? Of course you can—and get top marks, too!—because the pictures themselves really give you the answers. And as a further guide, we have already given a short list which includes the answer to every question in the entire competition. Now could anything be simpler?

As you find the answers, write them IN INK, and in block letters underneath. Then cut out the whole tablet and keep it by you, together with the two previous sets, until next week, when six more simple questions will be given. The contest will last for only five weeks and with the final set you will be told how and where to send in your entries. The Competition Rules were given earlier in the contest, and will be reprinted later.

Keep all your puzzle-sets
by you until the final week.

"QUERIES" SET 3.	
<p>13. A popular American game—What is it?</p>	<p>14. This is the outline of — What?</p>
<p>15. What refreshing fruit is this?</p>	<p>16. This liner made the fastest Atlantic crossing.</p>
<p>17. A famous footballer's name in puzzle form.</p>	<p>18. And the name of a port near the sea.</p>

SEVEN-FOOT CROOK HEAVES TON WEIGHT SAFE OUT OF WINDOW!



STAR of FLEET STREET!



A Puzzling Affair!

BOOM! Boom! Boom!
The hour of midnight tolled from the City clocks. But, despite the lateness of the hour, Fleet Street still presented a scene of considerable animation.

On either side of the road stretching away up to the Strand stood numerous motor-vans, their engines panting and throbbing, awaiting the early editions of the great London dailies, which even now were on the machines.

And every now and then, from big, gloomy buildings, trembling to the thud and roar of giant presses and heavy machinery, dashed small boys, as black as imps from the pit itself, bearing poles laden with empty beer-cans, which they returned with later, filled with steaming tea for the thirsty printers.

The great centre of newspapers had reached its busiest hour.

From the direction of the Strand two small yellow lights blinked and winked in the middle of the road. There came the sharp honk, honk, of a hooter, and gradually the lights resolved themselves into the lamps of a taxicab tearing along at breakneck speed.

There was a grinding of brakes as the taxi stopped with a jerk outside the imposing offices of the "News Wire." A figure sprang out, thrust a note towards the driver, and, slamming the taxi door with more force than was necessary, pushed open an outer door marked "Editorial only!" and dashed along a stone-flagged passage to the lift.

The lift attendant, who had been dozing on a stool awoke with a start and stared.

"Good heavens, Mr. Rush! What on earth's happened? Your collar is covered with blood, and—"

"Cut the cackle and run me up, Jenkins. Come on; sharp's the word!"

The liftman with difficulty restrained his curiosity. He stepped into the cage beside his passenger, slammed the gate, and sent the cage whining up the shaft. It stopped on the third floor, where the passenger himself opened the gate and strolled along a passage to the news editor's office.

Kent, the news editor of the "Wire," started up and eyed the figure that entered his sanctum in blank astonishment. For the usually immaculate crime expert of the "Wire" certainly presented an extraordinary spectacle. His face was scratched and bleeding, his hat and tie were missing altogether,

while his jacket was torn almost to ribbons.

At that moment Timothy Rush, Fleet Street's most brilliant crime reporter, was hardly recognisable. That he had been in the wars was apparent, and he did not seem to have had things all his own way.

"What the—" began Kent in amazement, but Rush cut him short. "Has the last edition gone through yet?" he demanded, sinking into a chair.

"Not so far, but it is pretty near time. Why? What have you got?"

"I've got one of the most extraordinary stories we have had for a long time," said the crime reporter, gently rubbing his damaged face. "Incidentally, I believe I've got a couple of ribs put out of joint, too. You know I got the tip from one of my scouts that an attempt to enter a house in Broxham Gardens, Bayswater, would probably be made to-night?"

"Well, I put Detective-Inspector Marsham wise to what I knew, and with a couple of plain clothes men we went

A ROUGH- HOUSE!

along to watch the house. The owner, who was out of town for a few days, had been warned of what might happen, and he had left his keys with one of the men at the local police station, with instructions to enter the place and have a look round if anything of a suspicious nature occurred during his absence.

"We patrolled round and round the house, but not a soul came near. Then, from an upper window, Marsham saw a flash of light, as though someone had momentarily switched on an electric torch.

"One of the plain clothes men saw it, too, and Marsham concluded that someone must be on the prowl inside the place. But how they could possibly have got in with four of us patrolling round is a mystery I haven't yet solved."

"Marsham decided we ought to enter, and since he had collected the key from the station, we were able to do so without kicking up any row. We left one of the men on guard inside the porch, with instructions to lam into anybody who might try to get away.

"We had reached the third floor when

I detected a faint sizz, sizz, coming from the room on our right.

"That's the room where we saw the light," whispered Marsham, tugging at my arm. "And there's someone inside, too."

"Marsham got frightfully excited. "There are three of us," he said, 'and if we burst into the room we can bag whoever is there before they have time to start any tricks. Wait until I give the signal, and then charge the door.'"

Timothy Rush helped himself to one of Kent's cigarettes, and then continued:

"Well, old Marsham gave the signal, and we piled on top of that door for all we were worth. The door was never meant to stand such treatment. And it didn't. It went down with a crash, and the three of us landed inside the room on our hands and knees.

It was pretty dark, mark you, but as soon as we got to our feet—and that didn't take long when we didn't know who or what was in the room—we spotted the mysterious prowler standing across the other side of the apartment before a small but substantial steel safe.

"The curious sizzling noise we had heard had ceased. But by the curious odour that permeated the room I guessed pretty well that it had been caused by an oxy-acetylene outfit which could have been extinguished only a second or so before.

"We made out the figure at the safe with some difficulty; but, believe me, Kent, when it moved there was something distinctly uncanny about it. The fellow, whoever he was, didn't speak a word. He just turned and raised his arm as though daring us to advance.

"I think he was the biggest man I have ever seen. He seemed to stand at least seven feet high, and his shoulders were as broad and powerful-looking as those of an ox. I couldn't see his face very well, but I believe he wore a mask of some sort.

"The game's up, my friend,' said Marsham, advancing into the room, 'and it will be better for you if you come quietly!'

"But this huge fellow simply turned and glared at us. I tell you, Kent, I could see his eyes gleaming in the dark with a sort of orange-coloured glow. It was uncanny!

"Well, if you are going to give any trouble, that's your look-out,' went on Marsham, walking towards the safe. 'Come on, you fellows, give me a hand.'

"The other man who had accompanied us followed Marsham across the room, and I trailed up in his rear.

"I tried to switch the lights on, but

they were apparently not in working order; so we had to manage as best we could. But by the pale light of the moon streaming in at the big windows I saw Marsham go up to the man we had surprised.

"I arrest you—" he began, when there was a terrific roar, followed by a heavy thud. Something struck me in the pit of the stomach and collapsed on the floor at my feet. It was Marsham!

"Well, as you know, Kent, although I am rather slim, I am pretty useful in a rough-and-tumble. When I had helped to drag Marsham to his feet I signalled to the other man to give me a hand. I meant to get that big fellow, or know the reason why.

"We both advanced on him at the same time. I intended putting a jiu-jitsu grip on him. But before I could do so I felt myself going up, up, up, and then down swiftly and suddenly. Something yellow seemed to dance before my eyes, and I realised that I was somewhere across the opposite side of the room to where I was a few seconds before.

"This big fellow seemed to go mad then. If he didn't speak he made up for his silence by action. And, by Jove, there was plenty of that! He barged across the room at us and grabbed Marsham under one arm and myself under the other.

"We both fought like fury; but, despite all that, we were as powerless as a couple of new-born children against our opponent. Then this chap picked up every article of furniture he could lay his hands on and flung them across the room in a sort of blind fury. He smashed every window there was, pulled the light fittings from the ceiling and the walls and flung them at us.

"But, Kent, the strength of that man was amazing! It seemed pretty obvious to us at the time that we were dealing with a madman. Marsham pulled out a truncheon he had brought with him, and, taking careful aim, sent it whirling across the room. It caught our burglar friend dead on the temple, and even from where we were we could hear the sickening thud of the hard wood meeting flesh.

"Any ordinary man would have dropped like a log; but not so this one. He gave a peculiar grunt of pain; then, with a roar like some wild animal, he put his long arms round the safe and tugged at it.

"And, Kent, we distinctly heard the rending of the wooden floor as that part of it which was fastened to the bottom of the safe came away. The fellow, having got the safe free, grunted again, and raised it to his shoulders.

"Imagine that, man! It would have taken three men like you or I to just move it; but this fellow actually lifted it up on to his shoulders!

"Look out!" I cried to Marsham. "He's going to throw it at us! For Heaven's sake, move, man!"

"Marsham dashed to the door of the room and out on to the landing, the other man and myself following. We got clear just in time. We heard the big fellow inside lumbering round and round, bellowing and roaring alternately like a child and a beast. There followed a terrific sound of splintering wood, and then a dull thud outside the house like something heavy striking the ground.

"It's the safe!" yelled Marsham, who was staring into the room over the debris of the door. "He's thrown it out of the window!"

"But before we could make any move the burglar suddenly sprang out on to the ledge, and the next moment he had

vanished. The window was about forty feet from the ground, but when I looked out there was no sign of him."

Timothy Rush paused for breath. "Well, that's the story, Kent," he said at length. "And the evidence of it is the state of the room where it occurred; and that heavy steel safe which, for the simple reason that we couldn't move it, still remains in the front garden of that house where our friend the burglar hurled it.

"Marsham has posted a man over it; and in the morning I intend having a look at it to see whether I can get any sort of clue to this mysterious burglar's identity."

Kent, who had listened to the reporter's story, too engrossed to interrupt with questions, simply whistled.

"Great Scott!" he gasped, having overcome his astonishment somewhat. "That's a good story, and no mistake! And I suppose that explains the pretty condition you are in, Rush?"

Timothy Rush nodded. Kent pushed over a pad of copy paper, and Timothy Rush extracted a fountain-pen from his vest pocket. There followed a steady scratch, scratch, as with lightning rapidity he reeled off a graphic description of the extraordinary affair he had just described to the news editor.

When it was finished he thrust it into an envelope and sent it in to the printers.

"It's a curious yarn," he said; "and there are several points about it I have not cleared up. How did the man get into the house unobserved when four of

us were patrolling round it? What is the secret of his enormous strength? And where did he go to when he disappeared out of the window? There's just a few teasers to get on with, and there are plenty more equally puzzling."

And with that Timothy Rush borrowed a hat from a rack in the news-editor's room, bade Kent good-night, and left for his chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The House of Death!

IT was nearly eleven o'clock before Timothy Rush rose the next morning. After bathing and dressing, the keen young reporter left his chambers, looking more like a rather foolish young man-about-town than a quick-witted reporter.

He arrived at his office still puzzling over the affair of the previous night; he made straight for his private room, an apartment the walls of which were lined with various works on criminology, and sank into an easy-chair.

He had not been seated long before the door burst open and a red-headed youth thrust his cranium round the portal and grinned.

"Mornin', Mr. Rush! Bin fighting the cat again? I see yer face is in a narsty mess this morning."

A large chunk of india-rubber, deftly flung by the reporter, caught the red-headed youth squarely in the left eye. He ducked, let off a wild yell, and



The strange crook's grasp closed over the safe—there was a rending of woodwork and then the fellow raised the safe clean off the floor on to his shoulders.

lobbed up again with a red eyelid and a big grin.

"Can't kill me, Mr. Rush," he said. "But seriously, sir, you 'ad a 'ot time of it last night, according to all accounts. Wish I'd been with yer, Mr. Rush."

And the red-headed youth sighed regretfully.

"Well, you might have been if you hadn't been away with a cold," smiled Mr. Rush. "But what's brought you to this room, Nunky? I thought you had orders—"

"I know, Mr. Rush," interpreted the red-headed one, whose proper nomenclature was, curiously enough, William Whitehead, but who was more generally known to the staff of the "Wire" as Nunky. "But if you'll come and have a look at the tape, sir, there's somethink coming through on it that I thought might interest you—and if it does, perhaps you might take me along with yer, Mr. Rush."

Timothy Rush threw his cigarette into the grate, and followed the boy into the big news-room. The constant traffic in and out of reporters, the whirring of telephone bells, and the incessant clack, clack-clack, clack-clack of the tape-machines, made conversation difficult.

But Rush had no difficulty in locating the particular machine Nunky had referred to. He picked up the long, narrow strip of white paper it had already ticked out, and quickly ran his eye over it.

"Time 10 a.m.," he said. "The body of an elderly Hindu was discovered by the police at 32, Broxham Gardens, Bayswater, this morning in a terribly mutilated condition. There is little doubt that the man, whose name was Bundarith Lal, a native of Calcutta, was murdered—"

The message broke off, uncompleted, at this point, and Timothy Rush turned to Nunky who was standing near.

"It doesn't seem to be much," he said. "But since I have got to go down that way in connection with last night's case, we may as well go along and see what has happened. Curious this, too, should be in Broxham Gardens."

And with that Timothy Rush left the office, closely followed by Nunky. He emerged into Fleet Street, where he hailed a passing taxi and instructed the driver to put them down at Broxham Gardens.

Arrived at the scene of the tragedy, Rush dismissed the cab and ascended the steps leading to the house of death. A plain-clothes man, who was on duty inside the hall, saluted as he recognised the reporter.

After a few words of greeting Rush obtained permission to view the corpse, and left the office-boy in the hall until he should return. The plain-clothes man had assured him that nobody else was about the house, so he anticipated being able to make his investigations without interruption.

Rush found the room where the murdered Hindu lay, and, as he entered, he paused on the threshold and emitted a low whistle of surprise. For the room certainly presented an extraordinary spectacle.

It was completely wrecked.

The pictures were torn from the walls, heavy Indian vases lay smashed upon the floor, while what had once been tables and chairs lay in splintered fragments in every corner of the apartment. Hardly an article of

furniture remained whole, and not one single pane of glass remained in the windows.

But Rush took little heed of this. Across the far side of the room, on a couch where it had been placed by the police, was the remains of what had once been Bundarith Lal, covered by a white sheet.

Timothy Rush examined the remains with interest, endless questions chasing themselves through his now keenly alert brain. For the body of the elderly Hindu was torn and ripped as though he had been in combat with some maddened lion or tiger, rather than anything else.

The reporter straightened himself and once again surveyed the wrecked room, his keen glances taking in the heavy grand piano which had been turned over on its side, and from which one of the massive, carved legs had been torn.

"Looks as though a gang must have entered and deliberately smashed the place up," he thought. "It hardly seems possible that one man could have made such a mess on his own. By Jove, though, I wonder—"

Crash!

There came the sound of falling furniture, followed by the soft pad, pad, of running feet from one of the other rooms.

Timothy Rush swung round and faced the door. The plain-clothes man in the hall below had assured him that there was no one but himself in the house. Who then—

As the reporter was turning, these things rapidly over in his mind, a figure attired in some sort of dark tweed flashed by the open door of the room in which he was standing. There was something vaguely familiar about the individual, and at the same time something that struck Rush in the momentary glance he obtained as distinctly sinister.

He dashed to the door and craned his head in the direction of the stairs up which the mysterious figure had vanished, shouting at the top of his voice for him to stop. But he might just as well have shouted to a stone wall for all the notice that was taken of his commands.

Rush saw the tweed-clad figure pause for a moment, heard the sound of splintering wood, and dodged back just in time to avoid one of the wooden banisters which was hurled at him with no inconsiderable force.

There came a wild roar from below as Nunky and the plain-clothes man, attracted by the sound of the first crash, came tearing up the stairs, each grasping a weapon of assault.

"I don't know who the thump could have been knocking around the place," panted the plain-clothes man as he drew level with Rush, "but I'm certain when we first broke in and searched there was no one here. Quickly, Mr. Rush, he's getting out of the fanlight!"

The plain-clothes man was right, for even as the little party took the stairs three at a time, they saw the figure in tweeds crouch for a moment, spring into the air like a giant cat, and then clutch the framework of an open fanlight that led to the roof.

"My hat!" gasped Nunky. "The chap must be a blessed acrobat. We shan't be able to reach him without a pair of steps."

A remark that was true, for the fanlight was certainly six feet from the ground, if not more.

Rush and Nunky, who were the first

up the stairs, arrived on the small landing at the top just in time to see the tweed-clad figure vanish, slamming the fanlight behind him. There came a clatter of falling slates as he made his way over the roof.

Timothy Rush followed a few moments later, with Nunky and the plain-clothes man bringing up the rear.

Over the slates dashed the pursuing trio, regardless of danger to life and limb; regardless, too, of the rapidly collecting crowd that was watching them curiously from the gardens below, intent only on capturing the mysterious prowler from the house of the dead.

They were hot on the track now, only a few yards separating them from their quarry, who was making directly for the edge of the roof at the side of the house.

"We've got him now!" shouted the plain-clothes man triumphantly. "He can't go any farther or he'll fall off the blessed roof into the gardens. Come on, Mr. Rush, this— Great Scott!"

The Scotland Yard man broke off short and stared with wide-open eyes at the figure in tweeds. For instead of resigning himself to capture, or falling off the roof, as the Yard man had seemed to anticipate, their quarry had made a wild spring—a hopeless, suicidal one, so it would have seemed—from the eaves to a point about four feet away, where a number of telegraph wires crossed from over the house.

Then, hand in hand, the wires swaying gently beneath his weight, the figure progressed, leaving the three pursuers staring in amazement at his broad back from their vantage point behind a chimney-stack.

Already, followed by the plain-clothes man, Timothy Rush was making his way back to the fanlight through which they had emerged on to the roof. His one idea for the present was to get inside the house and to the ground below as soon as possible.

But when he eventually emerged into the gardens themselves, he found that the figure had disappeared from the wire as well as from view.

After a few inquiries, Rush learned that his quarry had dropped from the telegraph wires on to the roof of an empty house, standing just at the rear of Broxham Gardens.

The reporter lost no time in locating the house, and with a skeleton-key he unlocked the front door and entered. The sound of loud and heavy groaning attracted the party to the top floor, where in a room, the means of ingress indicated by an open fanlight, they found the tweed-clad figure writhing on the floor.

"Come on, my friend!" began Rush grimly, advancing into the room. "The game's up. I—"

A hoarse roar cut him short, and as the figure—who was evidently injured in some way—turned, Timothy Rush found himself staring into the glowing eyes and hairy face of a gorilla!

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the Yard man. "A—gorilla!"

"Yes, and dressed like a man, too!" added Timothy Rush grimly. "There's a lot of jiggy-pokery about this, and I think I've got an idea what it is. An'how, I'll tell you later."

The cornered animal glared angrily at the men and the boy, but its injuries were such that it could not rise from the floor—a fact that was just as well for Timothy Rush & Co.

"Better not touch the brute!" said

(Continued on page 28.)

a wave-length far beyond anything used for ordinary broadcasting, he suddenly heard a voice speaking. With a sweep of his hand he closed a switch and picked up the microphone.

"Hallo—hallo! Who's speaking?" he said, then threw over the switch to "receive," and waited.

"Station G K B 7 calling," came the answer. "Professor Ranter, of America, I'm trying to get Mars. Who are you?"

Across went the switch again, and Ned answered:

"Station X of London calling. I'm after Mars, too. What are our chances?"

"Never heard of Station X," came the reply; "and I don't think much of your chances, anyway! This is going to be a Ranter stunt this time. Still, you're welcome to try!"

Ned was about to answer "Thanks!" but he thought better of it. If this American experimenter was really trying to get into touch with Mars, there was no time to be lost in words if he was to get the other planet first. And defeat at this stage—after three weary years of work building his station—was something which he refused to consider.

The idea of a rival caused him to become more alert. He was working now as though he was sending out some S O S message upon which lives depended. Steadily, methodically, he increased his wave-length, listening for any sound which would help him in his search for Mars.

Once or twice he heard the American cut in on his wave-length, and smiled as he recognised the voice saying:

"Hallo, Mars! America calling!"

Apparently Professor Ranter expected the Martians to know all about Broadway and the Wild West, or perhaps he was only making sure that his British

rival didn't afterwards claim the credit for himself.

He increased his wavelength again, and steadily he searched on, while his ear-phones remained silent.

Then suddenly he sat upright, stiff and alert. Had his imagination played a trick on him, or had he heard a voice? Carefully he removed the reaction coil back a little, and listened. There it was again—a little clearer, though still too far off to catch anything more than a sound itself.

Ned was alive now as never before. His hands shook with excitement, and his head bent forward as though to hear better. At that moment the whole house might have burnt about him without his being any the wiser.

A slight turn of the condenser, Louder came the voice. As he heard it he thrilled with a sense of adventure. Without asking, he knew that he had achieved what most people held to be impossible. There was something unearthly about that voice from the void. It was high-pitched—too high-pitched for even a woman of this earth—and it spoke in a husky sort of whisper that was uncanny.

"Earth-beings! Earth-beings! Can you hear Mars?"

White with excitement, his hand trembling like a leaf, Ned switched over, and picked up the microphone. Then—

"Confound it!"

The valves burnt down! His set had failed him at the moment of victory.

A few weeks later Ned King sat in the transmitting-room of the great wireless station at Storm Island. As his own set had let him down, the young

scientist had applied to the Government, and now he had at his disposal the most powerful wireless station in Europe.

Nothing was left to chance. In one of the great receiving and transmitting rooms two sets of apparatus were prepared—one for Ned King and one for Lieutenant Samson, the wireless official. If either of them became ill there would be one left to carry on.

At nine o'clock they took off their coats, adjusted the earphones, and settled down to tune in to Mars.

Up—up 30,000, 40,000, 45,000 metres. Still no sound reached them.

Lieutenant Samson was watching his valves now with a critical eye. Unlike Ned, he had never used a wave-length such as this before, and did not like doing it now.

The young scientist's face was set and grim, but quite unperturbed. He was listening-in on 50,000 metres now, searching delicately around for any signs of the message they sought.

For a full hour they searched thus without hearing a sound. It was like walking through an empty house after nightfall.

Then suddenly Ned turned to see that the relay instrument was at hand to take down any message from a spare set beside him, and at the same moment the lieutenant heard a faint "Hallo!"

Tense with excitement, they waited. Again came the faint "Hallo!" followed by more words which they could not catch. But even if they had not known they were listening to Mars, there was something about that voice which proclaimed the fact that it was coming to them from millions of miles away.

It was like a voice from the far past calling across the years.

The voice was talking again now. Clearly came the voice of the Martian: "Earth-beings, this is Mars calling."

With a trembling hand Ned closed the switch and picked up a microphone.

"Hallo, Mars!" He tried to speak casually, to keep the excitement out of his voice, but failed. "Hallo, Mars! This is an Earth-station talking. Can you hear?"

He switched over and listened. For five minutes he waited in silence—even wireless waves cannot travel to Mars in a second—then back came the reply:

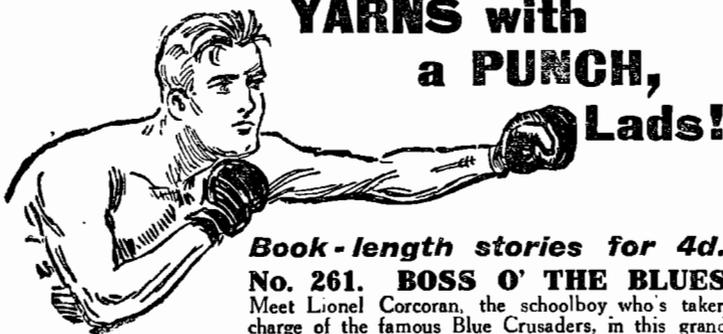
"I hear you, Earth. We speak little your tongue. Here everything is wireless speech, which you would not understand. Mars has had wireless for two thousand years, but we only hear your messages for a few summers. Hallo! Mars switching over for your reply!"

Ned picked up the microphone again. "Hallo, Mars! Earth calling. For years our great pioneers have said that you were trying to talk with us, and no one believed them."

He switched over again and waited for the reply.

"We hear and see many things on earth which we cannot understand," the Martian continued. "At first we do not understand your words, but after a while our scientists discover what you mean by always listening to you."

"I talk now from a Martian city, one of the last four great cities left to us. Yet I can visit the earth at one minute or talk with the Martians who have gone by air-fort to attack Venus for attempting to wreck our communications with



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other planets. Do you never travel from your earth and visit your neighbours?"

As in a dream Ned switched over again.

"Hallo, Mars! I hear you. We have only just learnt to fly. Our pilots cannot reach many miles from the earth. But if you can fly from world to world, why have you never tried to reach us?"

He tuned-in ready for the reply.

"We have!" came the Martian's voice. "For hundreds of years fleet after fleet of our fastest and best air-forts have tried to invade the Earth, but always the cold has turned them back. In Mars our winter is far hotter than the hottest day around your world. We have—"

The voice suddenly faded away, and the earphones were silent.

Evidently some disturbance in the atmosphere had cut him off from the Martian station. He began to tune down again—feeling in the excitement like a man in a trance—when another voice reached him for an instant and was gone again. Curious, for he was still on a wave-length of over 40,000 metres, Ned lengthened his wave-length slightly.

He could hear the voice again now, but it was not Mars. It was a cynical, harsh voice speaking in English with Mars. So he was not the only man who had talked with the Red Planet. Anxiously he listened-in while scraps of conversation reached him.

"With the Martian air-forts and an alliance between us, the whole world with its riches would be in our power," the voice was saying. "Your forces can reach the earth in four weeks. I can guide you to a hot climate, once anchored a mile over Europe, and you would have the Continents at your mercy. Then with the knowledge that I possess, Mars would be the ruler over all the planets—the supreme power of the universe."

For a full hour Ned listened while this breathless plan to conquer mankind was discussed between the Martians and some traitor who was selling the whole world to the enemy from outside. And as he listened Ned King realised that just as it was wireless which had enabled the Martians to get into touch with the Earth-beings, and which would enable them to attempt an invasion of the world, so it was wireless which could checkmate the peril and prevent a Martian landing on our planet.

As he realised that the Martian who had spoken to him was simply throwing dust into his eyes while planning an invasion, his face grew grim.

All that day code messages were flashing through the ether between Storm Island and Whitehall—messages which caused the Government to order Ned King to stand by at all costs, and led to a hasty meeting.

Day after day Ned listened from Storm Island while the nameless traitor, which the directional apparatus showed to be speaking from somewhere in the East, discussed plans with Mars.

Then came the fateful message from Mars that the air-forts were leaving, and would be relying upon messages every day in order to get the direction for their course.

This was exactly what Ned had been waiting for—the one thing that offered a loophole of escape. At three o'clock that morning the young scientist played his first stroke in the war of the worlds. He jammed the atmosphere in the direction of the enemy earth station an hour before the first directional message was due to reach the Martians.

His plan was to prevent any message reaching the oncoming enemy except those that he sent out—and his messages would most certainly not bring the Martian air-forts above Europe.

A week later the Martians were still steadily approaching the earth—and their ally in the East was still vainly trying to tear down the terrific atmospheric jamming which kept him silent.

But against him was Ned King and three of the most expert wireless operators ever trained.

It was only when the Martians were within three days' travel of the earth that Ned revealed his counter-plot which would save the world—and the Martians themselves—from war.



Clearly through the telephone receivers came the words: "Earth-beings! Earth-beings! This is Mars calling!"

"The kind friend who invited them here to conquer us," remarked the scientist, "was clever enough to plan to guide the air-forts to the Mediterranean region. He knew that as Mars has a climate very much hotter than anything known on the earth, that if the Martians were put down straight in Russia, or any northern latitude, without having time to get accustomed to the climate, they would die like flies. So much I know from the messages which he has been vainly trying to get through to them."

He paused to read a radio message which had just been picked up from the Martian fleet.

"My plan is simply to guide them on such a course that they will land—if they land at all—within the Arctic Circle. And here"—Ned waved the message which had just reached him—"is the proof that that plan will succeed. This message is an urgent demand to know why the air is getting so cold as they draw nearer to the earth. By tomorrow night there will only be two chances left for them—to turn back on the verge of success, or to land and perish amid the eternal snow."

During the next twenty-four hours Ned King and his assistants never left the wireless-room for an instant.

Then, with the Martian fleet within

six hours of the earth, the tense expression on the scientist's face changed to a look of relief. Clearly now he could hear the Martians calling to their home stations. They spoke in their own language, so the words meant nothing to the earth-listener, but there was no mistaking those wild, entreating cries. The Martians were calling for directions that would carry them southwards away from the ice and snow that meant death!

Fainter and fainter grew the sounds, until at midnight they had ceased altogether, and Storm Island searched in every direction without getting any trace of the would-be invaders. The air-forts were beaten. Either they had crashed to earth near the Pole, or they

had managed to ascend and escape. In any case, the world was saved.

It was a month later when the second half of the riddle of Mars—the identity of the unknown station that had first treacherously invited the Martians to attempt the conquest of the world—was solved for Ned King.

The end of the puzzle came with a report that a large house on the edge of the Soudan desert had been destroyed by fire. Upon discovery a fortnight later large amounts of twisted wire and burnt-out electrical apparatus had been found among the debris—and the body of an Arab who still wore earphones clipped across his head.

As Ned King heard the news he turned to Lieutenant Samson. "The vengeance of Mars," he said simply.

He slid back into a chair and lit a cigarette, while, thousands of miles away, at the North Pole, the eternal snows closed round a number of strange-looking steel airships which had mysteriously dropped from the skies.

THE END.

(Fighting Sea Pirates by Wireless! See next week's amazing story of Ned King, Radio Wonder!)

THE POPULAR.—No. 615.

THE FISTICAL FOUR!



A Slight Misunderstanding!

PUT on your best bibs and tuckers!" Jimmy Silver of the Fourth gave the order.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood had come out of the School House, and Jimmy Silver had stopped to take a letter from the rack and read it.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome waited while he read it, interested to know whether it contained a remittance or not.

Jimmy Silver's face brightened up as he read it. There was evidently good news in the letter, though no remittance was visible.

"What the dickens—" began Lovell. "Best bibs and tuckers!" repeated Jimmy firmly.

"Look here, we're going to rag the Moderns this afternoon," said Raby warmly. "We've arranged that already."

"Blow the Moderns this afternoon!" replied Jimmy Silver. "I'm going to the station to meet my cousin, and you are coming with me."

"It means wasting an afternoon," said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver snorted.

"I tell you it's my Cousin Phyllis—a stunning girl! I've told her about you fellows, and she wants to see you, too. Of course, she doesn't know what a set of rowdy hooligans you are."

"Good-looking?" asked Raby.

"She's my cousin!" said Jimmy loftily, evidently regarding that as sufficient information on that point.

"Like you?" asked Newcome.

"Yes, a good deal like me."

"Well, I suppose a chap can be civil to her all the same; she can't help her face," said Raby considerably.

"You silly chump! My cousin's the best-looking girl in the kingdom!"

"But you said she was like you—Here, hold on!" Raby dodged behind Lovell. "I don't want to give you a thick ear to show your cousin."

"You burbling ass—"

"Well, we'll look after her, if you make a point of it," said Lovell. "It's wasting an afternoon, but anything for the sake of a pal. You stood by me when my uncle came down last week."

Jimmy Silver snorted.

Meeting Lovell's uncle was one thing, but meeting Cousin Phyllis was quite

another. Meeting Cousin Phyllis was a great privilege. But as Lovell & Co. had never seen Cousin Phyllis they couldn't be expected to be very enthusiastic "on spcc," as it were.

"Well, you'll have to change your collars and make yourselves look a bit respectable," growled Jimmy.

"Look here, my collar's all right."

"If you don't put on your best bibs and tuckers I won't take you."

"Oh rats!"

"Hold on!" broke in Tommy Dodd, who had listened with great interest. He and his chums, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle, of the Modern House, were lazing by the School House door. "May I make a suggestion?"

The four Classicals sniffed. They did not value suggestions from Moderns.

JIMMY'S TERRIBLE COUSIN!

She Makes Hay of the Tea!

"Kick those Modern worms out!" said Lovell.

"But I've got a really good suggestion to make about entertaining Jimmy Silver's cousin," pleaded Tommy Dodd. Jimmy looked at him rather suspiciously.

"Well, you can go ahead," he said.

"Your cousin's coming down to Coombe, I suppose—"

"Yes. Changes at Lantham at three, so I suppose it will be the three-thirty local train at Coombe."

"And she's a nice girl—what?"

"Yes, you duffer!"

"Well, she ought to be met by some decent fellows who'll look after her properly," said Tommy Dodd. "I'll tell you what. You Classical chaps can go and play mar-bles—"

"Eh?"

"Or hop-sotch, or whatever your special game is—"

"You cheeky ass—"

"And we'll go and meet your cousin," said Tommy Dodd calmly. "We're the nicest chaps in Rookwood; and Doyle specially is a ladies' man, being Irish. We'll take care of Cousin Phyllis for you."

"Sure, it's a foine idea, intoirely," said Tommy Doyle heartily. "Lave it to yer superiors, dear boys!"

"I don't mind," said Tommy Cook generously.

"Is it a go?" asked Tommy Dodd, as

Jimmy Silver glared at him speechlessly. "You see, the young lady will get a much better impression of Rookwood by seeing us first, and you Classical ruffians can dawn on her gradually afterwards, and it won't be so much of a shock—"

Tommy Dodd had no time to finish. With one accord the Fistical Four rushed upon him, and the three Tommies went spinning out of the doorway and rolling down the steps.

They landed in the quadrangle with loud roars.

"That's for your cheek!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Now, chaps, up to the dorm for our best bibs and tuckers!"

Held by the Enemy!

ADOLPHUS SMYTHE, of the Shell, was adorning the steps of the School House with his elegant person when the chums of the Fourth came out in their best bibs and tuckers. The elegant Adolphus extracted an eyeglass from his waistcoat and jammed it in his vacant eye and blinked at the four.

"By gad," he remarked, "you're lookin' almost respectable!"

Lovell paused, but Jimmy Silver marched him on.

"Look here," said Lovell, "we've got lots of time to bump that cad! We haven't got to start for an hour yet."

"Lots of time, but we're not looking for rags now," said Jimmy. "Have you forgotten your best bib and tucker? Adolphus can wait."

"Well, let me give him one dot in the eye—"

"Bow-wow!"

Jimmy marched his chums onward, and Adolphus Smythe remained unbumped. The Fistical Four were heading for the tuckshop, it being necessary to lay in some rather extra supplies for tea in the end study. Cousin Phyllis couldn't be offered merely a sardine and a chunk of cake. Tea in the study had to be something extra special that afternoon.

Outside Sergeant Kettle's little tuckshop in the old clock-tower there were a crowd of Modern juniors. The three Tommies were there and Towle and Lacy and several more of the Modern Fourth. They were watching the School House across the quad, and as the Fistical Four came in sight Tommy Dodd chuckled.

"Walking fairly into the trap, by jingo! No need for us to go and fetch 'em, they're coming!"

And all the Moderns chuckled.

Jimmy Silver frowned as the Modern crowd formed up before the doorway of the tuckshop. Having changed into their best bibs and tuckers, the Classicals were not, for once, looking for rags with the Moderns. Their previous plan had been to spend that afternoon giving Tommy Dodd the kybosh. But circumstances alter cases.

"Buzz off!" said Jimmy Silver. "Let's get in, you Modern duffers!"

"We've been looking for you," said Tommy Dodd. "We hadn't decided whether to come to your dorm for you. Now you've saved us the trouble."

"Look here—"

"We want you to come for a walky-walky," explained Tommy Dodd. "Take their arms, dear boys, like affectionate and loving schoolmates!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Best bib and tucker, or no best bib and tucker, the Fistical Four could not stand that. They stood shoulder to shoulder, and put their hands up as the Modern crowd surrounded them. But the Moderns were in great force. Tommy Dodd was a great general, and he had overwhelming odds on the spot. The Classical Four were fairly rushed away, resisting manfully, through the stone archway into Little Quad.

"Will you chuck it?" shouted Jimmy Silver, struggling furiously with three pairs of hands on him. "What's the little game, you silly duffers?"

"You're the little game."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Held on all sides by the Moderns, but still resisting, the Fistical Four were marched across Little Quad and into the wood-shed. The Moderns, chuckling gleefully, crowded in with them.

"Look here, you rotters," said Lovell, "we've got our best togs on to go and meet a lady—"

The Moderns roared.

"That's all right," said Tommy Dodd. "We won't damage your togs if you keep quiet. As for the lady, she's going to be well looked after. Get that rope, Towle!"

"What-ho!" chuckled Towle.

"What are you up to?" yelled Raby. "Don't be impatient, dear boy; you'll see in a minute."

The Classicals saw in less than a minute. While each of them was held securely in the grasp of two or three Moderns, Towle ran the rope round them, and knotted it, securing their arms down to their sides and fastening their legs together. There was plenty of rope, and Towle made plenty of knots.

The remarks the Classicals made during this operation were sulphurous. But the Moderns only chortled.

"Now their hankies," said Tommy Dodd.

"Look here— Grooogh!"

Jimmy Silver's remarks were cut short by his own handkerchief being jammed into his mouth and fastened there scientifically with twine wound round and round his head.

He could only glare at the grinning Moderns.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome "Groooghed" spasmodically, as they were gagged in their turn.

But there was no help for it.

"There!" said Tommy Dodd, surveying them with great satisfaction. "that's all right. Feel comfy, you chaps?"

Only an indistinguishable murmur replied. The four Classicals could not

speak. They were wondering what was to follow.

They soon learned.

"Now find 'em something to sit on," said Tommy Dodd. "They're staying here a long time, and we don't want to be inconsiderate."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The four Classicals were seated in a row on a bench. Tommy Dodd took the key out of the lock and transferred it to the outside of the door.

"Good-bye!" he said affably. "Don't worry about your Cousin Phyllis, Jimmy Silver. I'm going to meet Cousin Phyllis."

Jimmy Silver glared speechlessly.

"I think you said the three-thirty," smiled Tommy Dodd. "All serene! I shall be there—so will Doyle and Cook. We'll explain that you couldn't come—that you were detained owing to circumstances over which you had no control—"

The Moderns yelled.

"We won't mention that we were the circumstances; you can explain that to Cousin Phyllis another time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Any message to Cousin Phyllis before we go, bedad?" grinned Tommy Doyle.

"Grooogh!" gurgled Jimmy, in a vain effort to speak.

"I can't repeat 'Grooogh!' to Cousin Phyllis, ye gossoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, so-long!" said Tommy Dodd.

"If you get a little bored here this afternoon you can spend the time meditating on what silly asses you are, and how nice it is to be dished by us. Did I hear you mention, Lovell, that you were going to give the Moderns the kybosh this afternoon?"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"Is this what you call the kybosh?"

"M-m-m-n!"

"Is that German or Esperanto?"

The Moderns, chortling, trooped out of the wood-shed, and Tommy Dodd locked the door on the outside, and they walked away. Their laughter was heard dying away in the distance. Then there was silence.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another.

The afternoon's expedition was suddenly cut short. Tommy Dodd was going to meet Cousin Phyllis at the station—he was going to appropriate that young lady for the afternoon. It was a case of unexampled "nerve"; but it was just like Tommy Dodd. And while the three Tommies were showing Cousin Phyllis the sights of Rookwood Jimmy Silver & Co. were to sit in the wood-shed, chewing their gags, and chewing the cud of exceedingly unpleasant reflections.

Even if they could have spoken, their feelings were too deep to be expressed in words.

Something Like a Wheeze.

"O H, by gad!"

About ten minutes had elapsed since the departure of the Moderns, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had been wrestling in vain with their bonds, and chewing the handkerchiefs stuffed in their mouths. The eyeglass of Adolphus Smythe, of the Shell, gleamed in at the window of the wood-shed, and the Classical dandy grinned at the disconsolate row of Fourth-Formers.

Jimmy Silver brightened up a little. Smythe of the Shell was his old enemy; but, after all, he was a Classical, and, therefore, bound to lend a hand in defeating a Modern jape. Jimmy made heroic efforts to speak; but the gag was well tried, and he could only gurgle.

Smythe chuckled gleefully. He had never been able to "down" Jimmy Silver himself; but he was very glad to see him downed.

"By gad, you look a pretty set, 'pon my word!" said Adolphus, pushing the window a little wider open and fairly gloating over the unfortunate four. "You do, by gad! I rather thought there was somethin' on, you know, and when those ruffians came back without you, you know, I thought I'd rather look in, you know. Are you fellows enjoyin' yourselves, what?"

Gurgle! Gurgle!

"Like me to let you loose?"

Four heads nodded as if by clock-work.

"Then, I'm sorry I can't do it," chuckled Adolphus—"jolly sorry, by gad! But what's the little game? What have they planted you here for, dear boys?"

Gurgle, gurgle!

"Roll this way, and I'll undo the gag," said Smythe, after some consideration.

He was very curious to know what Tommy Dodd & Co. were planning, though with no intention whatever of helping the luckless Classicals.

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet. He could not walk, but in a series of kangaroo-like jumps, he approached the window. It was something to get un-gagged.

Smythe reached in and untied the twine, and jerked the handkerchief out of his mouth. Jimmy gasped with relief.

"Now, what's the little game—eh?" smiled Adolphus.

"Let us loose, Smythey."

"Can't be did," said Adolphus loftily.

"I never interfere in your fag rows, you know. Can't be mixed up in anythin' of the sort."

"You slacking idiot!"

"Oh! Good-bye!"

"Hold on, Smythey! Look here, old chap—"

"Not so much of your 'old chap.' I'm not 'old chap' to fags of the Fourth!" said Adolphus icily.

Jimmy Silver restrained the reply that rose to his lips. It was not judicious at that moment to tell the dandy of the Shell what he thought of him.

"Smythey, be a good chap, and let us loose. My Cousin Phyllis is coming to Combe by the three-thirty—"

"By gad, is she?"

"And, we want to go and meet her—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cacklo at, you ass! Come in and untie us—"

"So Cousin Phyllis is comin' at three, is she?" drawled Adolphus. "Nice gal—what!"

"Oh, ripping! Let us loose—"

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Adolphus. "You can't go, that's clear. I'll take Howard and Tracy, and go instead. Nothin' to do this afternoon, and we may find it amusin'. I'll tell her you've been dished by the Modern fags, you know."

"Look here, you silly chump—"

"Good-bye!" said Adolphus. "Rely on me to look after Cousin Phyllis."

He slammed the window and walked away, grinning. Jimmy gritted his

teeth. Evidently there was no help to be had from Adolphus.

He thought of shouting for help. But the wood-shed was in an isolated spot, and the window and door were shut. His shouts were not likely to be heard. Neither was Jimmy anxious to be discovered in so ridiculous a position.

"We'll get out of this, you chaps," he said. "I can use my teeth now, anyway."

He hopped back to the bench upon which his chums were sitting. They could not speak, but regarded him anxiously and hopefully.

Jimmy started with his teeth on Lovell's knots. His teeth were sound and strong, and he worked hard. In a few minutes the first knot was dragged loose, and Lovell had one arm free.

"There's a knife in my pocket," said Jimmy. "Get at it if you can."

Lovell, with his free hand, groped in Jimmy's jacket, and extracted the pocket-knife. He held it between his knees, and opened the blade.

The Fistical Four were all looking very bright now. Adolphus Smythe was far from dreaming of the amount of help he had given.

Lovell sawed through his own bonds with the open knife, and stood free. Then he sawed through the rope that was wound round Jimmy Silver. In a few minutes more Raby and Newcome were cut loose. They tore the gags out of their mouths, and gasped with relief.

"Groo-hooh!" mumbled Raby. "My blessed jaw's quite stiff! Now we'll make those Modern cads sit up!"

"We'll simply slaughter 'em!" said Lovell sulphurously.

"We'll skin 'em!" growled Newcome. "Come on! We'll soon get out of this now we're loose!"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Rats! Let's go and find those Modern worms! I don't suppose they've started for Coombe yet."

"We'll get a crowd of Classical chaps, and collar 'em, and mop up the quad with 'em!" hooted Lovell.

"Hold on, I tell you! Listen to your Uncle Jimmy!"

"Oh, rats, I tell you! Uncle Jimmy be blowed! Let's go and scrag the Moderns!" roared Lovell.

He started for the window. Jimmy Silver put his back to the window.

"You bull-headed blatherskite!" he said witheringly. "Shut up and listen. I've got a wheeze."

"Well, get it off your chest!" growled Lovell. "I want to get at the Moderns!"

"Those duffers are going to Coombe to meet Cousin Phyllis," said Jimmy. "Well, let 'em go."

"What?"

"Cousin Phyllis changes at Lantham. There's plenty of time for a chap to get to Lantham on a bike and intercept her at the junction. The chap can bring her to Rookwood in a trap."

Lovell's face broke into a grin. "Oh! And those Modern worms can wait at Coombe for her! Good!"

"Good egg!" said Raby.

"That isn't all," said Jimmy Silver. "I don't want to disappoint the Moderns. They are going to meet Cousin Phyllis at Coombe."

"Eh?"

"Another Cousin Phyllis," explained Jimmy.

"Have you got two Cousin Phyllises, then?"

"No, fathead! But we've got the girl's clobber that we used for 'Alice in Wonderland,' when we did our pantomime."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's the wheeze!" said Jimmy Silver, with a chuckle. "I thought it out while I was sitting there chewing my hanky—if we could only get loose in time. Well, owing to that idiot Smythe we've got loose, though he didn't intend us to. We're going to sneak out of this quietly. One chap can scoot off to Lantham on a jigger, with a note from me to Cousin Phyllis, and bring her on in a trap. And I'm going to put on the 'Alice' clobber—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And meet Tommy Dodd & Co. at Coombe. I can get in the train at the next station from Coombe, and come on just as if I'd come from Lantham."

"But—but—"

"Tommy Dodd knows my cousin's like me, so if he notices a resemblance it won't matter."

"But you're too jolly plain for a girl!" objected Raby.

Jimmy Silver only replied to that remark with a glare.

"They'll bowl you out," said Newcome.

"How can they bowl me out, fathead, when they think I'm tied up in the woodshed all the time?" demanded Jimmy. "Besides, can't I make up? Ain't I the best actor in the Classical Players' Society?"

"Not by long chalks!" said Raby promptly.

"Oh, don't jaw! I'm going to plant myself on Tommy Dodd as Phyllis Silver, and give 'em a high old time when I have tea in their study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That prospect silenced all objections. Jimmy Silver had his way, as he usually did.

Jimmy opened the window, and the four juniors dropped out one after another, and the window was closed again.

By a roundabout way, taking great care not to be observed, the Fistical Four reached the School House, and entered at the back, to carry out that stunning scheme which was to give the Moderns, after all, the promised kybosh.

Captured!

"HERE we are!" said Tommy Dodd.

The three Tommies had arrived at Coombe Station in good time for the train. They were looking very spick-and-span, and very cheery, as they strolled on the platform. Never had they dished the Classics so thoroughly, and the thought of Jimmy Silver & Co. sitting in the wood-shed, while they were meeting Cousin Phyllis, made them burst into spasmodic chuckles.

"Hallo! Classical duffers!" said Tommy Cook. "What do they want here?"

Smythe of the Shell and his chum Tracy were on the platform, lounging about elegantly, and evidently waiting for the train to come in. They bestowed supercilious glances on the three Moderns.

"We've got time to mop them up, bedad!" remarked Tommy Doyle.

But Tommy Dodd shook his head.

"Never mind them now. Remember you're here to meet a lady."

The train appeared in sight at last.

"By gad, here she is, dear boy!" said Adolphus Smythe.

A young lady of about fifteen had alighted. She was a somewhat burly young lady, but her complexion was very fresh, and her long, flaxen hair decidedly pretty. She looked up and down the platform, as if expecting to be met. Smythe and Tracy started forward, raising their shining silk toppers, and bowing with much grace. It was easy to see in the girl's face a resemblance to Jimmy Silver.

"Miss Silver?" said Adolphus.

The girl looked at him.

"Yes."

"We've come to meet you," explained Adolphus. "We— Keep away, you Modern cads, don't shove!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. had rushed up. For a moment they could not believe their eyes. But when they realised that the dandy of the Shell was going to appropriate Cousin Phyllis, they chipped in promptly and effectively.

Tommy Cook seized Smythe by the shoulders and swung him away. Tommy Doyle took Tracy by the ear, and jerked him back. Tommy Dodd stepped forward and raised his cap to the young lady.

"We've come to meet you, Miss Silver, and take you to Rookwood," he said. "Jimmy has been unavoidably detained."

Miss Silver looked surprised.

There was cause for surprise. Smythe and Tracy had not taken their "medicine" quietly. They were rolling on the platform with Doyle and Cook, engaged in desperate combat.

"Don't mind those kids, Miss Silver," said Tommy Dodd reassuringly. "It's only high spirits, you know."

"They— Are they fighting?" stammered Cousin Phyllis.

"Fighting! Oh, no! What we call a scrap, at Rookwood!" said Tommy Dodd calmly. "Let me show you the way out, Miss Silver."

Tommy Dodd gallantly escorted Miss Silver out of the station. Outside, in the old village street, he waited for his chums. In a few minutes Cook and Doyle rejoined him.

Both of them looked rather dusty and rumpled. But they had evidently been victorious. As a matter of fact, they had left the dandies of the Shell sitting on the platform, making frantic endeavours to extract themselves from the silk hats that had been jammed down over their ears.

"Excuse me, miss," gasped Tommy Doyle. "Sure those blaggards were after playin' a joke, intirely."

"Dear me!" said Miss Silver. Her voice, as well as her face, was very like Jimmy Silver's, as the Modern juniors noted.

"But we've stopped them," said Tommy Cook. "May we have the pleasure of seeing you to Rookwood, miss?"

"But my Cousin Jimmy—"

"He couldn't come," said Tommy Dodd. "He was awfully sorry—I don't think I ever saw a chap look so sorry for himself as Jimmy did when he found he couldn't come—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Doyle.

Tommy Dodd gave him a severe look.

"What are you cackling at, Tommy? There's nothing funny in Jimmy Silver's disappointment. He couldn't come, Miss Silver, owing to circumstances over which he had no control—no control whatever—and so we told him we would come."

"I am sure it is very kind of you." The three Tommies escorted Miss Silver to Rookwood in great state.

(Continued on opposite page.)

SIXTY MILLION FIREWORKS

To Let Off.

Rubber Clothes in Squib Factory.

FUN ON THE FIFTH.

SIXTY million fireworks of all sorts, shapes, sizes, prices, and startling effects—that is a very moderate estimate of the number that will be let off on the night of the Fifth. To get these bangers and hissers and soars on to the market, expert chemists and artists have been busy the year round, aided by hundreds of clever workers.

The chemists do the mixing of the ingredients, and in many cases these are very closely guarded secrets. Gunpowder alone wouldn't make a firework; there are many et ceteras mixed with it before the desired effect, whatever that may be, is attained.

The artists are the fellows who design those amazing set pieces, like battle scenes and so on. The workers themselves are very highly skilled, depending entirely on the nimbleness of their hands—for no machinery is used, for obvious reasons.

GO into a firework factory with ordinary shoes or boots on and see how quickly they fling you out! Everyone concerned has to don a special type of footwear, which fits over the boots or shoes. This is to cut out any possibility of stray explosive powder being rubbed between a boot and a floor. If that happened the whole factory would probably go sky high.

The only machinery used is for making the cases and similar jobs, well away from the explosives department. You wouldn't think people would cotton to these exciting jobs at all, yet some of the big firework factories—one of them employs five hundred hands—boast of workers who have been in their employ for a lifetime

THOSE colossal spectacles that people flock to every November 5th, representing a battle or a big-game hunting scene, may cost enormous sums of money, using up more than ten tons of fireworks at a time.

In such displays it falls to the lot of certain hands to play the part of living fireworks. Tugged up in asbestos clothes—cap and all—they appear to be just one roaring mass of roaring and hurtling fireworks. But there is more in it than meets the eye. Those fireworks are attached to the wooden outline of a man, the said outline being buckled to the daring human who takes the job on.

Having one of those incendiary things strapped to you must be rather exciting. And the breath of relief you'd give after you had "gone out" would be sufficient to puff out the sizzling wick of goodness knows how many firework-cannons!

You get a tidy old shock when you light the wrong end of a squib, but what about being one of the men who are detailed, on Guy Fawkes night, to help start off the fireworks in one of those set piece displays we were talking about just now. There may be as many as two dozen men detailed for this job, each with his own section of the firework scene to attend to. The noise and fire is terrific—and you know that all your labour is simply going up in smoke and a series of ear-drum-splitting bangs.

YOU'LL probably be interested to know that fireworks came to us originally from China, and they have remained with us for something like six hundred years. They came into their own with a real big bang when poor old Guy Fawkes made a mess of things with his own barrels of gunpowder. What a shock he'd have had if someone could have whispered in his ear before he paid for his folly on the scaffold that he was to provide excuse, year after year down to the present day, for as fine a jollification evening as any could possibly devise!

Most fellows know that laws have been passed to regulate the celebration of this most hectic day in all the year. But few pay attention to them. Pitch a lighted squib at anyone or anything—or at nothing at all—in any street or other public place, and you can be run in and fined £5. What a lot of crackers that would buy!

And the shopman who dares to sell even the mildest of crackers to anyone under thirteen years of age can be mulcted in the same sum, too!

The Fistical Four!

(Continued from previous page.)

she was a somewhat muscular young lady—taking after her Cousin Jimmy, perhaps, in that respect. But she was quite good-looking, and upon the whole, the Moderns felt pleased with their capture. They walked off to Rookwood in great spirits.

A group of Moderns were lounging in the gateway of the school, and they all smiled and raised their caps very respectfully to Miss Silver.

"Captured, by Jove!" murmured Towle. "What will Jimmy Silver say—eh?"

And the Moderns checked gleefully.

The three Tommies escorted Miss Silver across the quadrangle in great state, to Mr. Manders' house.

"But where is my Cousin Jimmy?" she asked, pausing at the doorway.

"Detained!" said Tommy Dodd sorrowfully. "He hopes to get off before you catch your train, that's all. It's very sad, but we promised him—ahem!—to see that you should want for nothing. We've got rather a nice tea ready in the study. You'll come, won't you? Jimmy—ahem!—would be disappointed if you didn't. We will do our best to give you a good time here!"

"Thank you so much!"

"Not at all, Miss Silver. This is an honour to us, all the more because we're so fond of your Cousin Jimmy."

And Miss Silver was escorted to the study in triumph.

A Very Merry Tea Party!

TOMMY DODD had laid in unusual supplies for that study tea.

The occasion was to be honoured in first-rate style.

It was not often that the three Tommies had a lady visitor to tea; and certainly they had never had one under such circumstances before.

They were prepared to enjoy the occasion; all the more from the anticipation of what Jimmy Silver & Co. would say afterwards.

Miss Silver seemed very pleased with her surroundings. She took the armchair. Several books happened to be reposing in the armchair, and the young lady tossed them into the grate and sat down.

The three Tommies looked a little startled. Tommy Dodd made a rush to rescue the books, which were already scorching.

"Ahem!" he stammered.

"Quite a nice little study," said Miss Silver. "Do you little boys always have your tea here?"

The Modern juniors did not exactly like the "little boys." But they nodded and grinned politely.

"Sure, we do!" said Tommy Doyle. "But it's seldom entirely that we have such a charmin' visitor to tay, bedad!"

"You must let me make the tea," said Miss Silver.

"Certainly!" said Tommy Dodd.

He had rescued the books, and he jammed the kettle on the fire. Doyle and Cook produced the good things from the cupboard, and the table was laid. Miss Silver insisted upon lading out the jam from the jar into the nobby dish which had been specially borrowed from a Sixth Form study. Knowles of the sixth did not know that his dish had been borrowed, but that was a mere detail. It was necessary to have things decent for a lady visitor, as Tommy Dodd declared, with the full concurrence of his chums.

Miss Silver ladled out the jam with a tablespoon, and when she had finished, she dropped the jar. There was a terrific yell from Tommy Doyle. "Arrah! Tare an' 'ouns! Yur-rooooh!"

"What is the matter?"

Doyle was dancing on one leg, and nursing his other foot, with both hands. Miss Silver gazed at him in surprise.

"Is that a new kind of tango?" she asked.

"Ow! Moses! Sure ye dropped the jar on me foot!" groaned Doyle.

"Dear me! What a fuss to make about a trifle!"

"Faith, it isn't a thrifle to have yer big toe squashed!"

"Poor little boy!"

"Oh, cheese it, Tommy!" said Cook. "Accidents will happen!"

"Pick up the jar," said Miss Silver.

Tommy Doyle stooped to pick up the jar. Miss Silver reached forward with the jam spoon, and pushed it down his back under his collar.

'bared back to the teeth, showing them to be dirty, black stumps.

"Ho, ho!" he chanted slowly. "So yo' will—huh? Waal, here—"

His hands shot out suddenly, and attempted to grip Cast-Iron by the shoulder.

But he reckoned without his host.

Cast-Iron dodged the great hands, and the next second a right and a left landed on Festing's cheek, bowling the man clean over the rail of the veranda on to the earth below.

He picked himself up with a snarl, and for a moment seemed as if he would tackle Sampson again.

But he evidently thought better of it, for, without a word, he turned on his heels and made his way back towards his own bungalow.

Jack's Discovery!

"WHERE'S Meakers?"

It was the following morning, and Cast-Iron had just come down to the breakfast prepared by native servants.

He had found Jack Morgan waiting for him, but there was no sign of their host.

"His servant tells me he's gone out with Festing," answered Jack.

"H'm!" grunted Cast-Iron. "I don't like it. I wonder how Festing gained the influence over young Meakers which he most certainly possesses. I'll bet I'm not very much older before I know."

The problem did not prevent Cast-Iron making a good breakfast, and Jack Morgan, too, did justice to the food the native brought.

Breakfast finished, Cast-Iron seized a year-old magazine, and retired to the veranda to await Meakers' return.

Jack seized his topee, and said he would go down to the landing-stage and see why the remainder of their luggage had not been brought up. Only two bags had been brought up the previous night.

When Jack reached the landing-stage he found Cast-Iron's canoe-boys cuddled together in a frightened group round the luggage, which lay on the ground.

In a minute Jack had approached the natives.

"Say, Yeji," he demanded, "what make for you stop along here? What for you no speak for baggage in bungalow—eh?"

Yeji, a powerful Takri, wagged his head dolefully, feeling his chest where showed a dulled bruise.

"Big fella white man make for him-um palaver," he returned sadly. "Him say 'stop along canoe baggage.' Him make plenty hand talk, hit-um Yeji, hit um other boy. No good, sar!"

For a moment Jack was speechless. The main thing his mind could get hold of at the moment was that this was the work of Festing again.

The fellow then seemed determined, for some obscure reason, not to allow the white men to remain in Daboya.

Leaving Yeji without saying a word, Jack turned in the direction from which he had come.

He was too cute to go straight to the bungalow, however.

Festing seemed to have a powerful reason for not wishing the Britishers to remain in Daboya, and he must be watched without knowing that he was under observation.

So Jack trod the last distance warily, THE POPULAR.—No. 615.

until he was walking under the veranda-side.

So far, he could not hear or see signs of life in the bungalow, but he pushed on, rounding the first corner to the rear of the dwelling.

As he did so he heard a low voice speaking close to him—a voice that was interrupted by a thunderous bellow from another man—from Festing, Jack knew.

"No—no, you don't," it said. "Yo' don't come that game wi' me, Meakers. Yo' got to stay and pay, or move and keep moving. That's my last words on the subjic!"

"But, Mr. Festing," came Meakers' voice, "I can't do it—honestly, I can't. Sampson is here from headquarters in Bombay. He's travelled over eight thousand miles to see me. Do you understand? If the chief chooses to send a man all that distance, then you may be sure he has grave suspicions of things down here. And, with Sampson on the spot, there's no way I can turn it over to you without him knowing."

A deep curse greeted this announcement, followed by the sound of stamping feet. Then Festing spoke again:

BUMPER ENLARGED NUMBER Next Week!

7 COMPLETE TALES COLOURED PICTURE SIMPLE COMPETITION

and result of "Famous Air Pilots"
Contest.

185 PRIZEWINNERS.

"Waal, that don't alter matters one cent," he said. "Yo' gotta find a way to pay up, Meakers. I don't care if ten Sampsons are here!"

There was silence for a moment. Then Festing's voice came again, lowered to a hiss.

"And if yo' clear, Meakers," it said, "yo' know what'll happen—they'll find out things. Sampson'll get on your trail; the police o' the East'll be after yo'. Yo'll get no rest in this wurld."

A heartfelt groan came from Meakers. "And there yo' are," ended Festing. "It's up to yo' to find a way. You owe me and Sneyd the money. Get it, somehow. Now go!"

Jack turned and ran back the way he had come, darting across the clearing to the edge of the jungle growth, and there pushing in out of sight.

He waited a moment, watching, and then he saw young Meakers come down the veranda steps. For an instant the young man hesitated at the bottom, his face turned towards his own bungalow. Then he abruptly swung round and set off at a fast pace towards the landing-stage.

Jack gaped at this move, then slid out of his hiding-place and followed.

On went Meakers, and then they came to the wharf itself, across which Meakers went and disappeared over the side.

"Now what in the name o' good-

ness—" began Jack; then shut up suddenly.

He had remembered an ancient-looking motor-launch that was tied up to the foot of the wharf steps.

Starting to a run, Jack crossed the rickety stage, treading lightly.

He could not prevent the rotten board creaking, however, and when he got to the steps he saw a pair of startled eyes glaring up at him.

Meakers was in the launch, busy with the mooring-ropes!

"What do you want?" he cried wildly to Jack.

"Just you, that's all," said Jack not unkindly, albeit with a touch of grimness in his voice. "You see, I know all about your trouble. Here, where are you off to? That's no good, Meakers, running away!"

But the young plantation manager heeded him not.

Next moment Meakers had shoved the launch off, and had turned to fumble with the engines. Jack saw space appearing between him and the launch—and then he jumped.

He jumped right from the wharf top, across some ten feet of water, and landed on both feet in the stern of Meakers' craft.

Meakers heard the thud of him, and staggered as the launch rocked; but before he could turn Jack was upon him.

The launch rocked violently as they fell to the bottom-boards, where Jack got a lock on the young fellow, heaving him quickly round until he had a head hold.

Then he exerted his full strength and straightened Meakers out—helpless, panting, glaring.

"Now," said Jack, "move if you like, but you'll cripple your back if you do. Take my advice, you fatheaded old galoot, and cool down and face matters quietly. Running away now, after what I've heard, won't do you any good. Best thing is to come back and see Cast-Iron; for if any man can do anything for you, he can. What say?"

Meakers jerked out a "Yes!"

Cast-Iron's Battle!

IT was an hour later when Meakers had finished his story. The afternoon had waned, and evening had arrived, with the first pale light of the moon bathing the bungalow.

The story Meakers had had to tell was an old one. He had gambled, lost more money than he could afford to lose, and the men he had lost it to were Drumm Festing and his partner, Three-card Sneyd.

The sharpers had taken his promissory note—they had taken several of them—and in the end Meakers was in their debt to a tune that almost turned his head to think of it.

Then came the vile suggestion.

Festing had pressed for payment, well knowing he could get none. And next he had put it to Meakers that the young man should pay his debts in rubber.

And so Meakers had paid away the Ruina Rubber Company's trade.

This, then, was the reason for the unaccountable fall-off in production, and Cast-Iron was sorry for the weak young fool who had allowed it.

Simply, thought Sampson, the fellow had little will of his own.

"Meakers," said Cast-Iron Sampson, "it's hard for me to say what can be

done. Festing and Three-card Sneyd something might be done. It depends upon what Festing'll do in certain circumstances. Come on, Jack! You, too, Meakers—and keep a stout heart!"

Across the clearing Cast-Iron led the way. From inside Festing's bungalow came a roar of laughter and the tinkle of glasses.

Sampson mounted the veranda steps heavily, stumping across the wooden flooring to the door, which he flung open quickly, and strode inside.

The scene that met his gaze was not a nice one. In an enormously large living-room, furnished expensively, sat two men at a table. Before them were two bottles and two glasses and half a dozen packs of cards.

Indeed, one of the men—a thin, cadaverous-featured man, who looked up furtively—had a pack of cards in his hand, on which he was making incisions with a sharp steel instrument.

Cast-Iron halted when he saw this, his eyes gleaming.

"Well, Mr. Sneyd," he said, "you're preparing to fleece the lamb, eh? Marking the cards?"

Then Drum Festing came storming to his feet, his pig eyes half shut.

"What do you want here?" he blustered, advancing on Cast-Iron threateningly. "You needn't think you can repeat last night's trick on me again! You surprised me then, but you'll not surprise me again."

"Maybe so," said Sampson coldly. "But, first, I want to tell you that Meakers here has made a clean breast of it to me. I know your lay, Festing! Card-sharper, isn't it? And I'm here to stop it!"

"Are you?" snapped Festing; but he came to a halt, in spite of himself. "And how are you reckonin' to do that, may I ask?"

"By seeing first that no more rubber passes into your hands from this plantation. And, secondly, by clearing you out of this land and out of this bungalow. It's the property of the Rulna Rubber Company."

Festing's gaunt face seemed to split slowly in a wide, leering grin.

"Aw! So that's it?" he asked slowly. "And what next? Tell me, your worship!"

Sampson's eyes glittered.

"Well, Festing," he said slowly, "seeing that you are a cardsharper, I now want back those IOU's you hold belonging to Meakers. After that you have to shift your personal dunnage down to the river, and take your hides out of it just as quick and smart as you like! Do you get that?"

The evil leer vanished from the face of Drum Festing slowly, as though the man were not quite sure of what he heard. His big mouth opened.

"By glory!" he hissed. "Are you really tellin' me to get? Are you really sayin' that you'll take back those IOU's? Now, make it plain as daylight, for I'm goin' to move shortly."

Cast-Iron nodded silently.

"Yes, I mean to say and do all that I said a moment ago," he answered. "And now start something if you want to; for as sure as you're yellow I'm going to give you more than you can hold!"

Festing's shoulders bunched suddenly, and out shot his arms.

But Cast-Iron was ready for him. Even as the big hand closed round the back of his neck, two gnarled fists ripped under the man's arms.

One took him over the heart, the other in the stomach; and Festing quickly let go his hold.



Cast-Iron led with a quick lunge to the bully's jaw, but the latter just ducked the blow in the nick of time.

"Now," snapped Cast-Iron, "I'm going to give you a little more of the medicine of which you had a taste last night! Put 'em up!"

The battle of giants then began.

Festing commenced with a sudden blow at Cast-Iron's face. It grazed the Britisher's chin, and Sampson could tell from it that this man could put plenty of steam behind his punches.

Then Cast-Iron led a quick lunge with his left that stopped before it reached its target. Over came the right on the instant—a great, smacking blow that took Festing on the mouth.

Then they closed.

Jack Morgan, in the meantime, had raced round the two combatants and taken up a station near Three-card Sneyd.

Sneyd, though, seemed to be more frightened than anything else.

Festing was working away with his head in the in-fighting, trying to use it again as he had previously used it.

Sampson was too old a hand to be caught like that again, though, for he pushed his own head over Festing's shoulder and shook the fellow with giant body-blows.

Drum Festing could not stand much of that, it seemed: for, with a heavy push, he tore himself away from Sampson and fought him at long range. Sampson, however, was not to be denied.

A sizzling left bored through Festing's guard, catching him on the chest with a hollow thump that shook him.

It was a scene from the days of the old knuckle-fighters this—a scene the like of which Jack Morgan had never before witnessed.

Great, raking blows shot out, smashing down Festing's guard like match-wood; a gnarled and knobby right caught the cardsharper a stinging blow across the bridge of the nose; another fist tore into his ribs in a gouging blow that was heard throughout the room.

Then Sampson, stepped back the slightest pace, his left shoulder hunching

back, his left arm bunched swiftly. The immense hand darted up and down for a moment and shot in with all the strength of the big Englishman swung behind it.

Festing's head snapped back; he clawed wildly at Sampson. Again there came a great fist, steady the cardsharper scientifically; and next moment Cast-Iron ripped in a right to Festing's chin.

To Jack Morgan it seemed as though the scoundrel had been suddenly shot out of a catapult. He actually left the floor—left it backwards in a lift that took him all of three yards.

And then he landed, his arms and feet slashing the wooden boarding as he came down.

Twice he rolled over before he stopped, but Jack saw all the time that the fellow was knocked clean out.

Little remains to be told of that wonderful fight and the result of it.

Twenty-four hours later Festing and Sneyd left Daboya in canoes. They took little with them—only a change of clothes and sufficient food for the journey—and they left behind them the ashes of Meakers' IOU's, which Sampson had burnt before their very eyes.

A fortnight later, when Sampson himself left, things were once more in ship-shape order at Daboya.

Meakers' eyes had been opened pretty considerably, and the young man was full of new life and determination.

Meakers, indeed, still holds the post of manager there, and the reason for the temporary loss of trade is forgotten by all parties.

Not so the fight, however: for when Meakers speaks of it—which he often does—he always refers to it as "The Battle of the Giants."

THE END.

(You'll find another Cast-Iron Sampson tale in next Tuesday's Special Enlarged issue. **AND IT'S GREAT!**)
THE POPULAR.—No. 615.

"STAR" of FLEET STREET
(Continued from page 10.)

Rush, backing towards the door. "He's broken his leg, I think, and it's certain he won't be able to get away. Come on, out of this, and I will fasten the door!"

"This was soon done, and leaving the plain-clothes man on guard outside, Rush returned to the house of the murdered Hindu, where he telephoned to the Zoo authorities, and, quickly explaining the position, asked them to send along a van, so that the wounded beast could be removed to a place of safety.

"What's the next move, Mr. Rush?" asked Nunky, when the reporter had rung off.

"I was thinking," replied Rush slowly. "I suppose you read my story in the 'Wire' this morning?"

"Not arf, Mr. Rush! About the fight with that burglar cove, you mean, sir?"

Rush nodded. "But wot's it got to do wiv this little business, sir?"

"My dear Nunky," drawled the reporter, "apart from the fact that that little business, as you call it, occurred in these very gardens—Broxham Gardens, they are called—there were a number of features about it that are almost identical with those of the present affair.

"For instance, in the house last night the furniture was smashed about—heavy

pieces that neither you nor I, nor both of us, could move. Yet they were treated as though they had been of no more weight than toys from a doll's house.

"That, my dear red-headed one, indicates quite obviously that the burglar was a very strong person. So far, so good. Well, another point is, that although four of us were patrolling round the house for some hours, we saw no one enter. Yet, later, we discovered somebody working on the safe in one of the rooms. How did that person get there?"

"The only possible way was via the roof. In a few words the mysterious samsonian burglar we fought in the dark last night was no other than our friend the gorilla."

Nunky gasped.

"Evidently a trained beast," went on Rush, speaking with a slight drawl, as was his wont when in deep thought, "and extremely useful for entering houses by way of the roof. But I think this little diary, which so far I have only glanced cursorily at, will give us the final key to the mystery.

"I extracted it from the dead Hindu's clothing when I made my first examination of the body. It was placed in a secret pocket, which explained why the police did not discover it."

Timothy Rush opened the little leather-bound book, and closely scrutinised the microscopic writing in it. It was written in Hindustani, a language of which Rush had a very useful working knowledge.

"Yes," he murmured, "a very interesting record of a number of robberies that have recently occurred in the district. More than that, as I anticipated, it is also a very interesting record of the occult as practised in the East."

Rush straightened himself up, and replaced the diary in his pocket.

"Nunky," he said, "that ape, already trained to wear men's clothes, carried out these burglaries under the influence of hypnotism!"

"Hypnotism!" echoed the boy. "Precisely. But eventually the Hindu lost his power over the beast, and then it was that it went amok, with results we now know. Bundarith Lal met his death at the hands of the poor beast whom he had used to carry out his criminal schemes by means of his mystic and uceany power."

Nunky stared open-mouthed at the great reporter.

"Mr. Rush," he said, "I've heard of such things before; but I never thought they'd happen in real life. You've got it this time, and no mistake."

"I believe I have," agreed Timothy Rush, bracing himself up. "And now back to the office to write up the story, my lad. I'm sorry there was no fight for you, but I think what I have told you will keep your thoughts occupied for a while."

And Timothy Rush proved a true prophet. It did!

THE END.

(Another full-of-pop tale of Timothy Rush, star reporter next week, chums!)



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