

"THE BLACK PIRATE"—STARTS TODAY!



Knockout

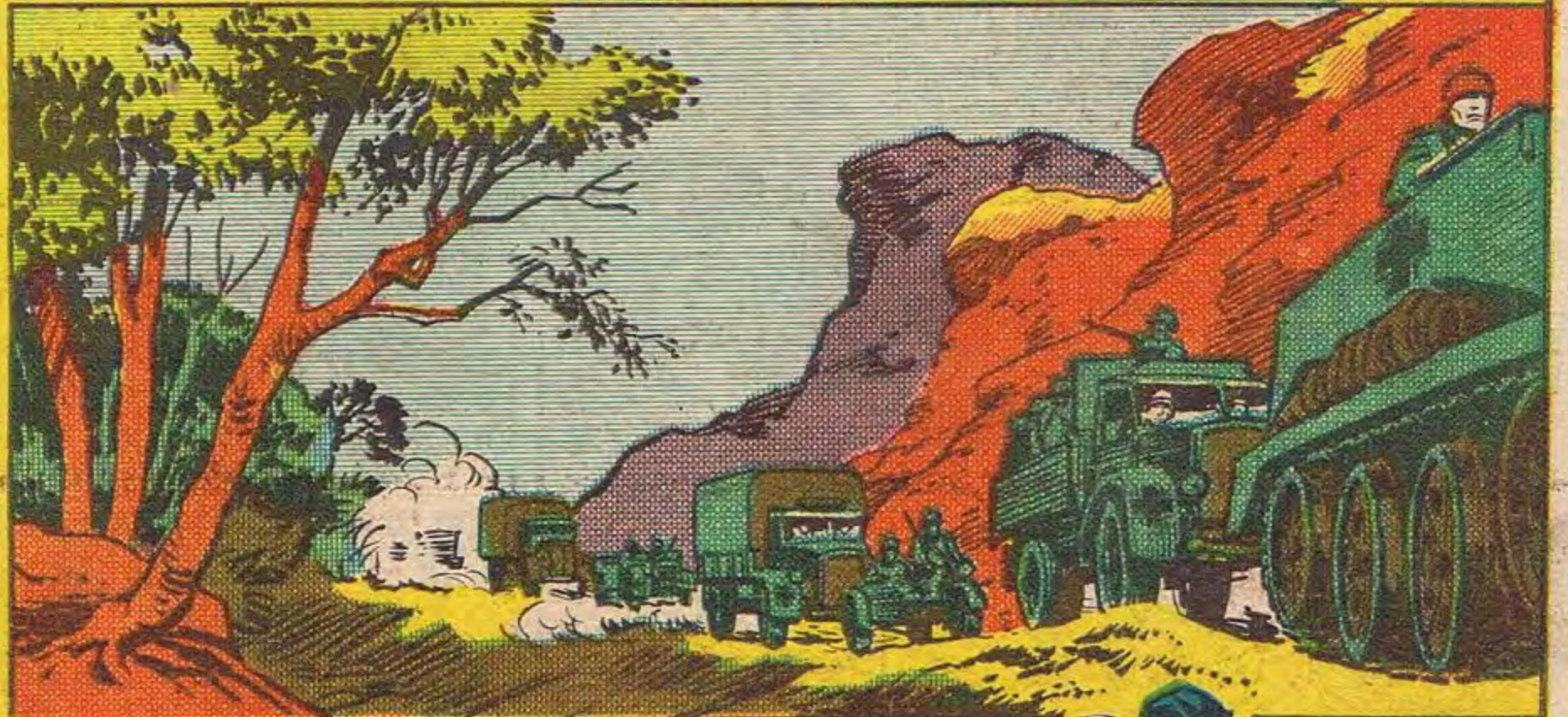
26th NOVEMBER, 1960

EVERY WEDNESDAY 4d

Battler Britton

FIGHTING ACE

Wing-Commander Battler Britton, the famous fighting ace, was trying to hold a battered and bombed airfield in Crete so that wounded men could be evacuated. As the Red Cross convoy appeared, a German column was spotted rushing towards the airfield along another road!



BATTLER BRITTON SWIFTLY SNATCHED UP A BOX OF HAND GRENADES AND SHOUTED TO SERGEANT FORMAN...

QUICK, SERGEANT. RUN DOWN AND WARN THE RED CROSS CONVOY. GET THEM UNDER COVER CLOSE TO THE AIRFIELD!

RIGHT, SIR!

HAND GRENADES 36 (MIL. X)

THE FAMOUS ACE LASHED THE GRENADES TO THE BACK OF HIS MOTOR BIKE AND ROARED AWAY ACROSS THE ROUGH BUMPY GROUND...



IF I CAN BLOCK THE ROAD, IT'LL HOLD THOSE HUNS UP FOR A BIT!

HE RUSHED FORWARD AND TIPPED THE GRENADES OUT UNDER A MASSIVE GRANITE BOULDER...

LUCKY THEY WON'T GO OFF UNTIL THE PINS ARE PULLED!

BATTLER TIED THE ROPE TO A SMALL ROCK AND THEN PULLED THE PIN FROM ONE OF THE GRENADES...

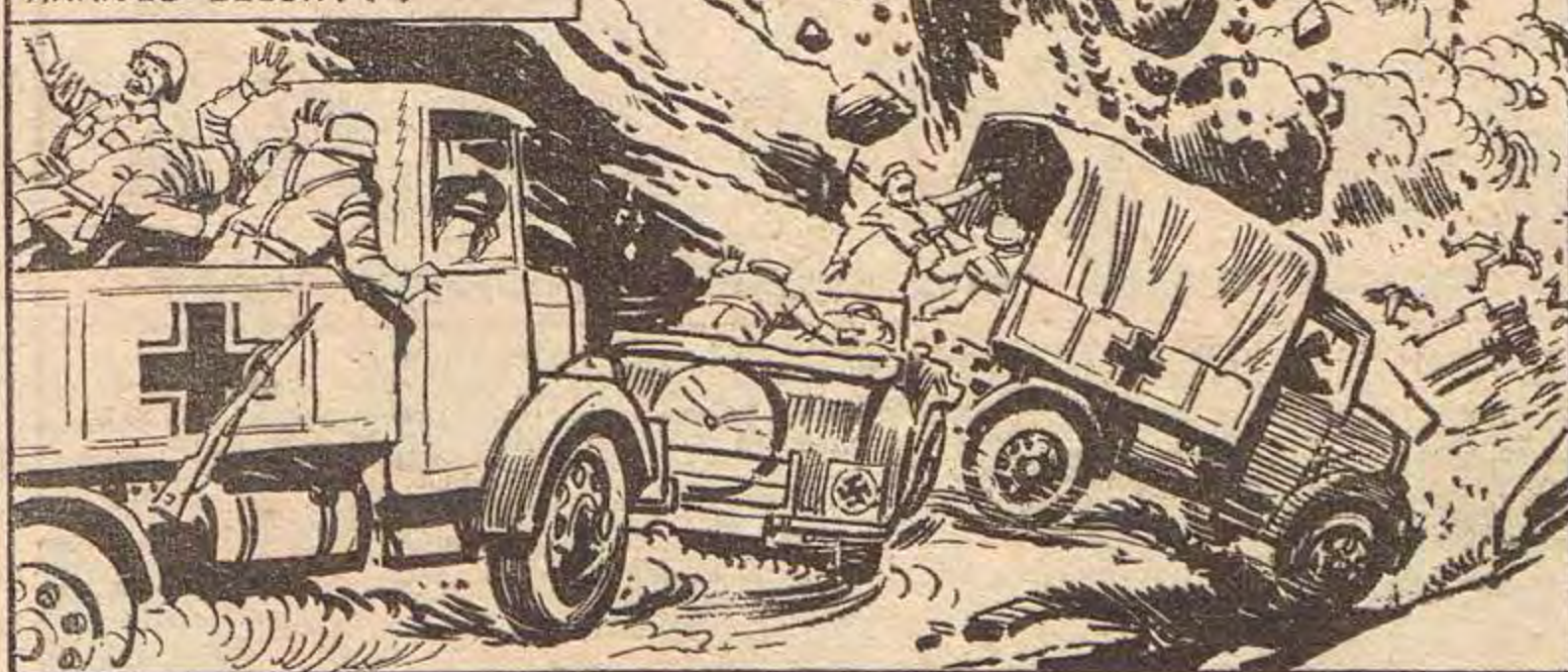
THEN PAYING OUT THE ROPE BEHIND HIM, HE RAN LIKE A HARE TO THE ROCKS WHERE HIS BIKE LAY...

BATTLER CROUCHED DOWN AND PULLED... ONE... TWO... THREE... FOUR LONG AGONIZING SECONDS PASSED... THEN WHOOMP!

ONE GOOD HEAVE SHOULD DO THE TRICK... I HOPE!

(Continued on next page.)

TONS OF SHATTERED ROCK, EARTH AND DEBRIS THUNDERED DOWN ON TO THE ROAD. . . JUST AS THE FIRST TWO GERMAN TRUCKS ARRIVED BELOW. . .



LIVID WITH RAGE, THE GERMAN COMMANDER LEAPED FROM HIS CAR AND RAN TO THE SCENE OF CHAOS AND CONFUSION AT THE HEAD OF HIS COLUMN. . .

CURSE THE CUNNING BRITISHERS! THEY MUST HAVE MINED THE CLIFF ABOVE! IT'LL TAKE HOURS TO CLEAR THIS MESS

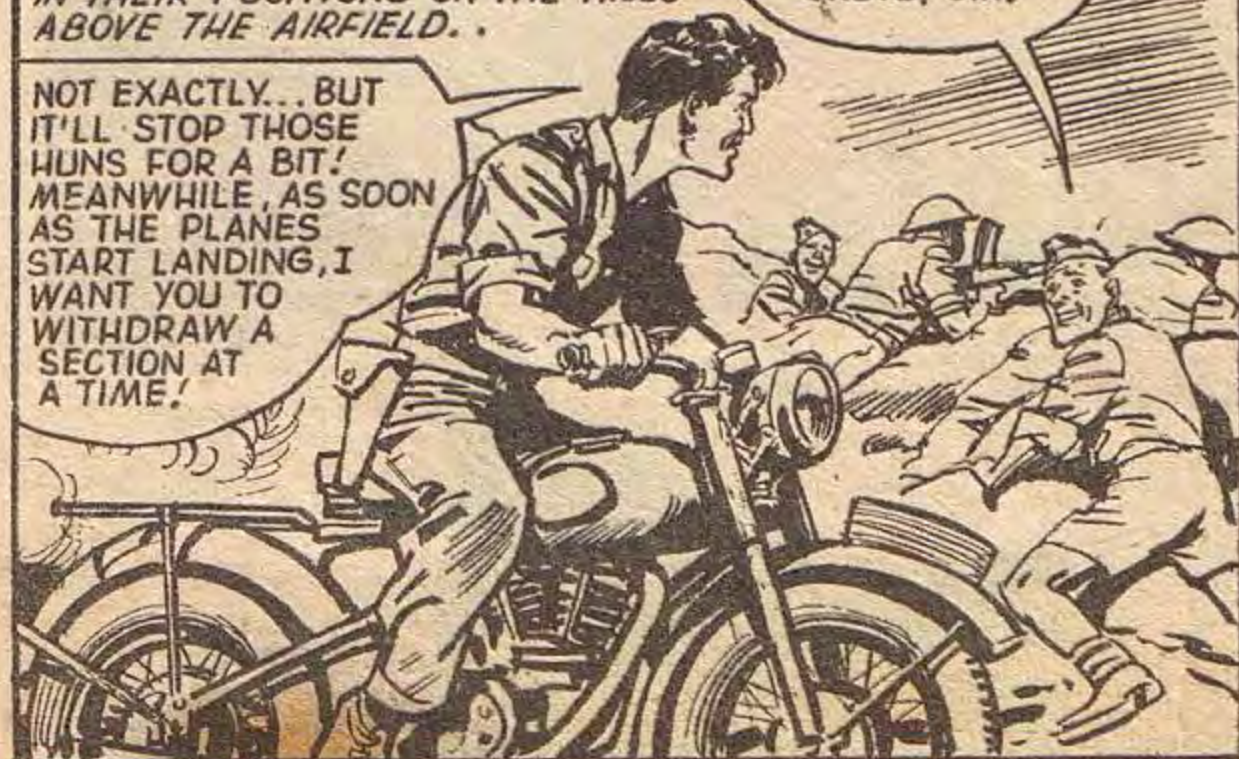
WE SHALL HAVE TO ADVANCE TO THE AIRFIELD ON FOOT, HERR COLONEL! IT CANNOT BE MUCH FURTHER!



MEANWHILE, DELIGHTED BY HIS SUCCESS, BATTLER HAD RACED BACK TO THE RAF MEN IN THEIR POSITIONS ON THE HILLS ABOVE THE AIRFIELD. . .

COR! LOOKED AS IF YOU'D BLOWN UP HALF GRETE, SIR!

NOT EXACTLY. . . BUT IT'LL STOP THOSE HUNS FOR A BIT! MEANWHILE, AS SOON AS THE PLANES START LANDING, I WANT YOU TO WITHDRAW A SECTION AT A TIME!



BACK AT THE BOMB-TORN AIRFIELD, THE LAST CRATERS HAD BEEN FILLED IN AND SERGEANT FORMAN AND SOME OF THE PILOTS WERE SHEPHERDING THE RED CROSS LORRIES INTO THE TREES. . .

OKAY, YOU DRIVERS. GET UNDER COVER! WE DON'T WANT ANY JERRY PLANES TO SPOT YOU!

RIGHT, SARGE!



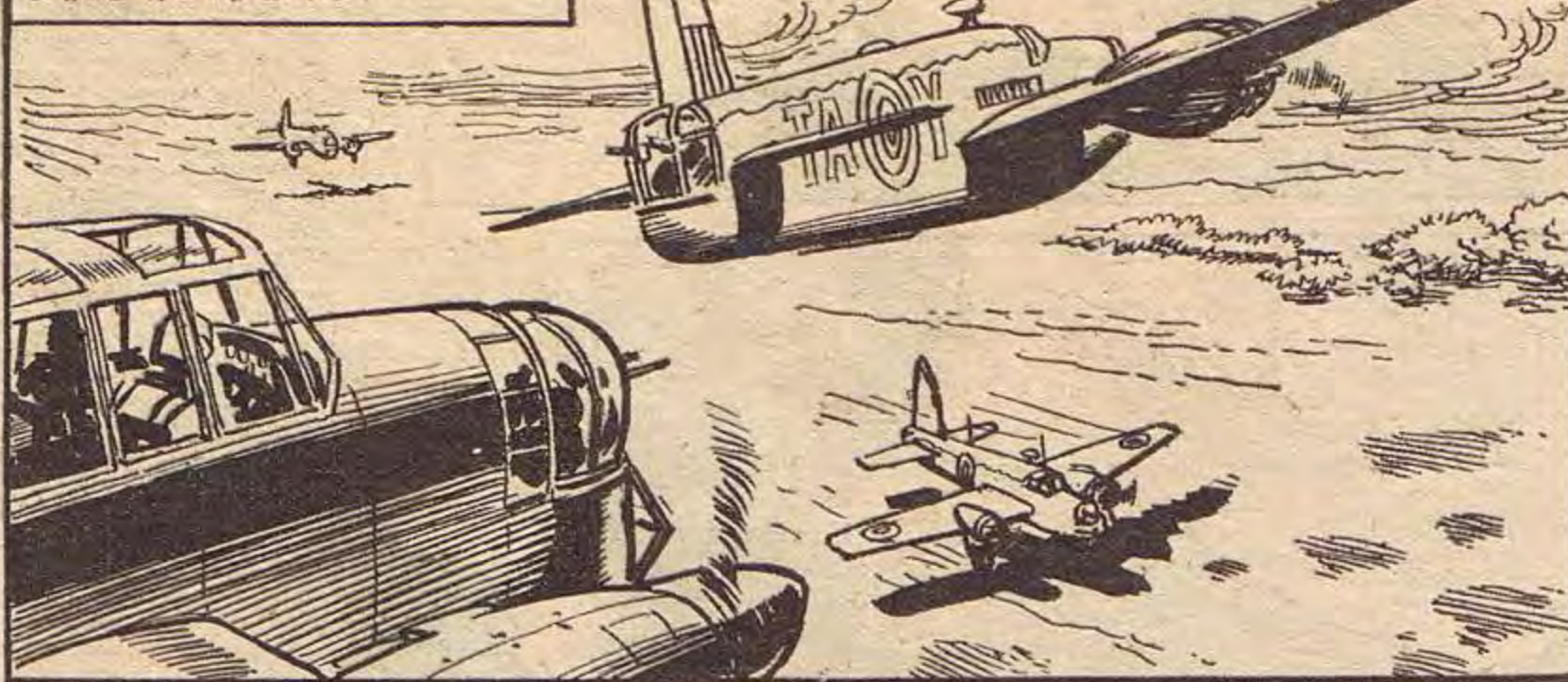
ONE OF THE R.A.M.C DOCTORS JUMPED DOWN AND SPOKE TO A PILOT WHO WAS SCANNING THE SKY. . .

THINK THE PLANES WILL BE LONG? SOME OF THESE CHAPS ARE BADLY WOUNDED! THEY'VE ALL HAD A VERY ROUGH TIME!

I'VE NO IDEA, DOC! WE HAD A MESSAGE THE KITES WERE COMING! I ONLY HOPE THEY GET HERE BEFORE THE JERRIES!



BUT TEN MINUTES LATER THE FIRST PLANES ARRIVED, WINGING LOW OVER THE ROCKY ISLAND AS THEY CAME IN TO LAND.



AS THE WOUNDED WERE CARRIED AND HELPED ABOARD, THE SOUNDS OF FURIOUS BATTLE ECHOED OVER THE AIRFIELD.

THAT FIRING SOUNDS DARNED NEAR! WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE?



IT'S BATTLER BRITTON AND THE REST OF OUR CHAPS! THEY'RE TRYING TO HOLD OFF A GERMAN COLUMN! I HOPE THEY CAN CHECK 'EM LONG ENOUGH FOR THESE POOR BLOKES TO BE GOT AWAY!

AT THAT MOMENT A PANTING RUNNER CAME RACING DOWN TO SERGEANT FORMAN.

SARGE... THE WING COMMANDER SAYS HE'S SENDING THE CHAPS BACK A SECTION AT A TIME! YOU'RE TO FIRE A RED ROCKET WHEN ALL BUT THE LAST PLANE'S GOT AWAY. WE'RE TO PULL OUT IN THE LAST ONE!

OKAY, JIMMY! GET BACK AND TELL HIM WE'RE CLEARING THE WOUNDED AS FAST AS WE CAN! BUT WE NEED AT LEAST ANOTHER HOUR!



BACK ON THE HILLS, THE TOUGH GERMAN TROOPS WERE SLOWLY ADVANCING! BUT UNDER BATTLER'S COOL AND DARING LEADERSHIP, THE RAF MEN WERE FIGHTING LIKE DEMONS...

ACH! WHY DO THEY STILL FIGHT WHEN THEY CANNOT WIN? THEY ARE MAD!

THEY ARE BRITISHERS, HANS! ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?



A STICK GRENADE EXPLODED WITH A SULLEN BLINDING CRASH BESIDE TWO RAF MEN ON A BREN, WOUNDING THEM BOTH...

AAAGH!

QUICK...GET THOSE MEN OUT! I'LL TAKE OVER THE GUNS!



BATTLER CROUCHED BEHIND THE BREN GUN AND SENT A SCYTHING HAIL OF STEEL-JACKETED BULLETS DOWN INTO THE GERMANS...

WE CAN'T HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER! WHEN ARE THEY GOING TO SEND UP THAT ROCKET?

THERE WERE ONLY TEN MEN LEFT WITH THE FEARLESS ACE NOW AND AMMUNITION WAS RUNNING LOW. YARD BY YARD, THE GERMANS WERE CLOSING IN ON THEM. THEN ALL AT ONCE THERE CAME A YELL...

THE RED ROCKET! BATTLER.. I MEAN, SIR...IT'S THE ROCKET FROM THE AIRFIELD!



BATTLER REALISED THAT IF THEY ALL PULLED OUT, THE ENEMY WOULD RUSH THEM AND THEY WOULD NEVER GET AWAY. SOMEBODY HAD TO STAY BEHIND...

BACK TO THE AIRFIELD...GET MOVING! I'LL FOLLOW LAST OF ALL. HURRY!

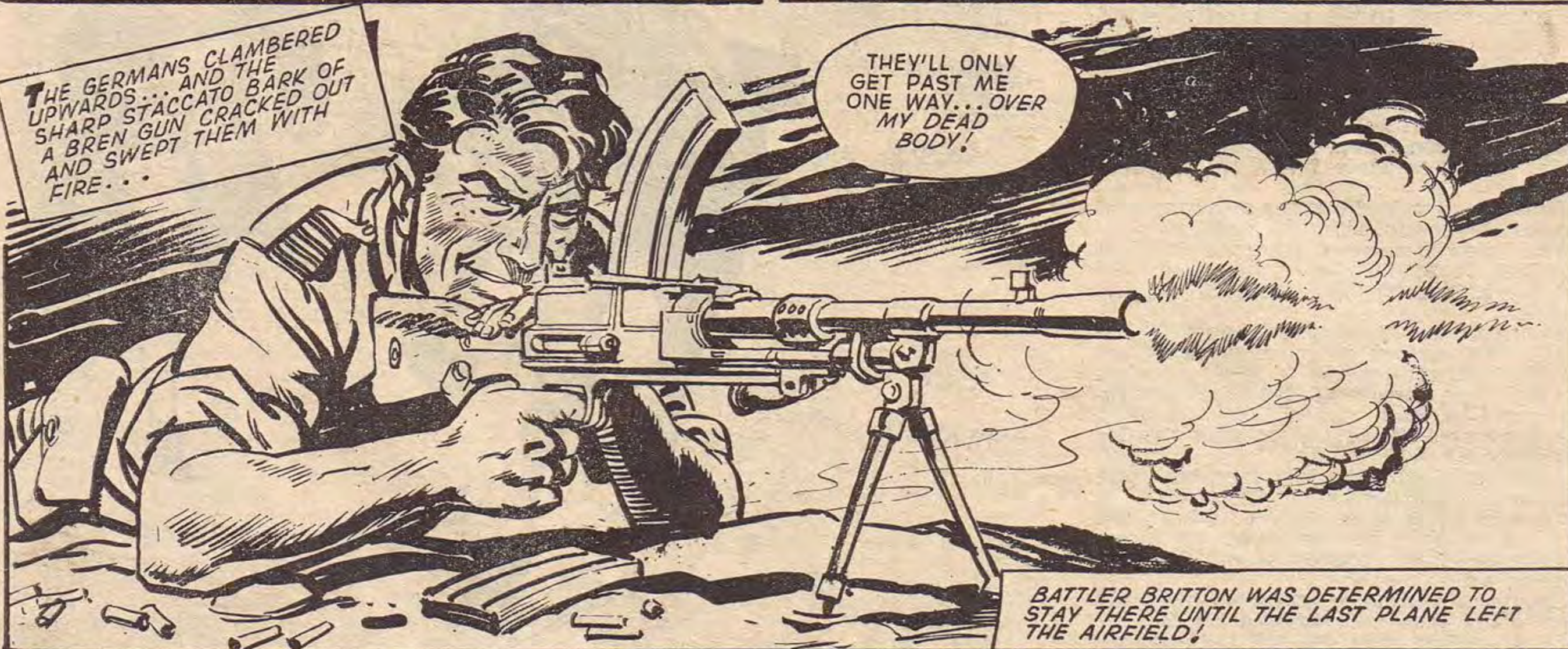
ONE BY ONE THE GUNS ABOVE THE GERMANS WENT SILENT. THE COMMANDER SHOUTED TO HIS MEN TO RUSH THE HEIGHTS...

NOW...UP WITH YOU! THE AIRFIELD LIES BEYOND! IT WILL BE IN OUR HANDS BEFORE NIGHTFALL!



THE GERMANS CLAMBERED UPWARDS...AND THE SHARP STACCATO BARK OF A BREN GUN CRACKED OUT AND SWEEPED THEM WITH FIRE...

THEY'LL ONLY GET PAST ME ONE WAY...OVER MY DEAD BODY!



BATTLER BRITTON WAS DETERMINED TO STAY THERE UNTIL THE LAST PLANE LEFT THE AIRFIELD!

So, the gallant lone defender remained! Next week . . . Battler Britton at bay!

THE NIGHT RIDERS

When Dick Turpin and his band of nightriders discovered Doctor Brindle was a villain, they exposed themselves to his vengeance.

Suspecting the owner of the moated house was actually Dick Turpin, Brindle joined forces with Grassgreen, the Chief of the Bow Street Runners. But when he led Grassgreen and some of his constables into the moated house via a secret passage-way, a mysterious explosion put them to flight.

A local magistrate named Drake then journeyed to London to fetch Moses Spouts and other constables who could recognise Dick Turpin. (Now read on.)

LESTRANGE'S WARNING

It was snowing, and the wind was preparing for a blustering night, for the carriage had not gone a stage before the trees were tossing their bare limbs to the leaden sky and groaning like giants in pain.

The post-boys, in short great-coats buttoned up to their chins, hurried the horses along, and strained their eyes for the welcome sight of the place where they would be paid off and their services dispensed with.

No sane man would dream of exposing himself to such weather for more than twenty miles; so, with their legs and arms going, whips cracking, and shouting, they kept the horses alive to their duty after sending them along at a gallop.

The carriage rolled and swung, jostling the inmates against each other, and making conversation almost impossible.

But the travellers were not inclined for much talking. Mr. Drake was either asleep or feigning to be so. Moses Spouts, resting his head on his hand, dwelt on his wrongs; and the three constables, squeezed in a row on the opposite seat, passed a bottle from one to the other, and were happy as long as there was anything in it.

"Whoop! Hallo! Steady, you nags!" came a shout.

"Ah! The end of the second stage," said Justice Drake, throwing open the door and admitting a small snowstorm.

"And a good job too," remarked one of the post-boys, rolling out of the saddle. "Ten shillings a mile wouldn't tempt me back to the pigskin tonight!"

"Nor me, either," said the other. "Gents, I shouldn't advise you to go any farther until the morning."

"Nonsense!" Drake replied. "We must go on, if we can find men brave enough to ride. Now then, jump out, all of you, and warm your toes while I talk to the landlord."

Lanterns were flashing, and men ran about outside the comfortable old hostelry.

The landlord received his guests with a doubtful look, but a word from the magistrate caused him to bend in the middle.

"Horses, post-boys, your honour?" he said. "Of course, we country folks are made of different mettle to those who live in the close streets of London! Everything will be ready sir, in twenty minutes, and guarantee the next stage after this for ten guineas."

Justice Drake made a wry face, but there was no help for it.

"A man needs to be wealthy to bear this sort of thing," he remarked to Moses Spouts. "Thank goodness it only happens once in a lifetime!"

Spouts nodded as he quenched his thirst from a big glass and stamped his feet.

"But, sir," he said, "it will be worth all the money if we nab Turpin. Excuse me!"

He dug Drake in the ribs with his elbow, and the magistrate looked indignant.

"What is that for?" he demanded.

"I beg your pardon for taking the liberty," Spouts said. "You seemed to have overlooked the rewards that are offered for Turpin."

"Curse the rewards!" said Drake. "All I want to know is that such a scoundrel is out of the world. If I find myself five hundred guineas on the wrong side of the ledger, I shall be more than satisfied."

"But you'll receive a baronetcy, or perhaps be raised to the peerage," Moses Spouts whispered. "Sir Robert Drake would sound well, but Lord Ashleythorpe much better."

The magistrate, like most men, was not armour-proof against flattery. Indeed, Spouts had spoken what had been dwelling in his mind, but he shook his head and smiled.

"Such honours are for men who are nearer to the king," he said. "Little notice is taken of a country squire, no matter what he may do."

Horses were soon out again, and two hardy, middle-aged men ready for the saddle and to face the black, stormy night.

A parting look at the lamps, the slamming of a door, a shout from an ostler, and off again. How it snowed! In mad drifts of great flakes it whirled and danced in all directions.

Now it came in writhing sheets, looking as if it must condense into a solid mass and sweep all before it.

But a bellow from the wind, and away it went to deepen the drifts or lie upon the uplands until a still more angry gust sent

it flying down into the hollows.

Progress of the carriage was slow. Often the horses plodded painfully through the snow at a foot pace.

Two or three times they stopped with steaming flanks and hanging heads, but the post-boys were old hands, and knew how to encourage the poor brutes to greater exertions where whip and spur would have failed.

Morning showed white wastes of hilly country, with houses like huge lumps of snow heaped roughly together.

In one village they met the snow-plough at work, and followed by a crowd of joyous boys and men frozen out of their occupations. It was splendid fun for the youngsters, who pelted each other with all the ardour and vigour of youth.

The arrival of the carriage was hailed with glee, but there was no rejoicing by those inside, where there were blue noses, pinched faces, and chilled bones.

More horses, more post-boys, noon and then night. It seemed as if the tedious journey would never come to an end; but at length a post-boy, seeing the glimmer of lights, raised himself in the stirrups, and shouted that Deal was in sight.

Later, in a room of the sleepy old coaching inn, Drake and the constables shook hands and greeted each other like men who had been rescued from death.

"Fill the glasses, and put your best on the table," Drake said to the landlord. "We'll rest here, and tomorrow we'll see Ashleythorpe. Any strangers staying in the house, landlord?"



"Let me see the captain at once!" cried Lestrangle as he swung himself out of the saddle. "There is danger, and very close at hand!"

"No," was the reply. "There are no customers in the house save yourselves. The last one went away on horseback as your carriage drew up at the door. I wonder you did not see him, as you had the door open at the moment he started."

"A man on horseback!" cried Moses Spouts. "What was he like?"

"Like a young farmer," the host replied. "He was a stranger to me, but that goes for nothing, as all sorts of people come here."

"Even Dick Turpin," laughed Drake. "What a terrible surprise it must have been for the French gentlemen!"

"The news gave me such a shock that I haven't got over it yet," the landlord replied. "Whenever I hear a horse galloping, I run upstairs for my blunderbuss."

"I thought you were going to say you ran upstairs to lock yourself in your room," Moses Spouts said. "Ha, ha! You don't mind a joke."

"Not when it isn't carried too far," the landlord replied. "It is not likely that a monument will be erected to my memory as a hero, but I've as much pluck as any man that pocketed high wages at Bow Street without earning them."

It took Moses Spouts some time to recover from this verbal slap in the face. Looking foolishly into his glass, he said:

"Well, what about the man who rode away just as we arrived?"

"What about him indeed?" demanded the landlord, whose wrath was still at full furnace heat. "He paid for what he ordered and conducted himself like a gentleman, which is more than some do when they come here with their swaggering town manners."

"Come, come," said Drake, "don't let a trifle upset us. It is time we had supper and went to bed, for if ever men needed rest we do."

"All right," replied the landlord. "I hope the funny man of the party won't eat too much and have bad dreams."

Telling the buxom servant of the inn to look after the guests, he went to the door, and started at seeing the man he had just been talking about standing beneath the porch with his horse's head thrust affectionately under his arm.

"Landlord," the man whispered, "I must have a bed and my horse a stable here. A great drift has blown into the hollow of the road, and it will be risking my life to try to pass through it."

"Very well," said the landlord; "but what is all this secrecy about?"

The stranger held up two guineas, and the landlord put out his hand instinctively.

"I see," he said, lowering his voice, and putting his thumb over his shoulder, "you don't want them to know that you are staying in the house? So be it. Lead your horse round to the back door, and I'll attend to you. You are not Dick Turpin, are you?"

"Do I look like Dick Turpin?" asked the other softly. "Take my word for it that he is in a snigger place than the streets of Deal on a wild winter night! Still, I have my reasons."

"You keep them, and I'll keep the two guineas," the landlord remarked. "That's a fair bargain I think."

When the landlord was showing the stranger upstairs to a snug, out-of-the-way little room at the back of the house, he winked several times for his own edification.

"Not Dick Turpin!" he muttered, as he returned. "Of course not, but I'll bet the guineas he gave me and two more besides that he knows more about Turpin than he cares to tell!"

Early next morning the man—who was no other than nightrider Marcus Lestrage—was astir, and galloping with all speed to Ashlethorpe.

As he drew near to the moated house, he became excited, and no sooner was he across the drawbridge than he flung himself out of the saddle.

"Let me see the captain at once," he said to Jem Peters. "There is danger, and very close at hand, too!"

"Danger!" Peters muttered, trotting along in front of Lestrage. "This place is so thick with dangers, mysteries, ghosts, and such like that you couldn't separate them with a knife."

"What news?" Turpin asked, as Lestrage stood before him.

"Bad! Drake has been to London and returned with some constables."

"For the purpose of identifying me," nodded Turpin understandingly. "We'll not call it bad news, but it is serious enough."

"And I could not get back last night because of the snow drifts," Lestrage explained. "Roads and ditches were level with snow, and so dark that a man could not see his horse's head!"

"Don't worry," said Dick Turpin; "you did your best. It's a pity, but I fear we must break up our pleasant little party. Ring the bell; we'll have the others in, and hear what they have to say."

The bell had scarcely ceased to tinkle before Beetles, O'Flynn, Tom King and young Flick answered it. Quickly the news was told.

"Now you know all about it, the question arises: what is to be done?" said Dick Turpin.

"If Justice Drake thinks proper to take

In another instant he gave a sudden start of alarm and stepped back sharply.

A carriage was approaching, and as its window was suddenly opened Moses Spouts poked out his head and peered at the moated house!

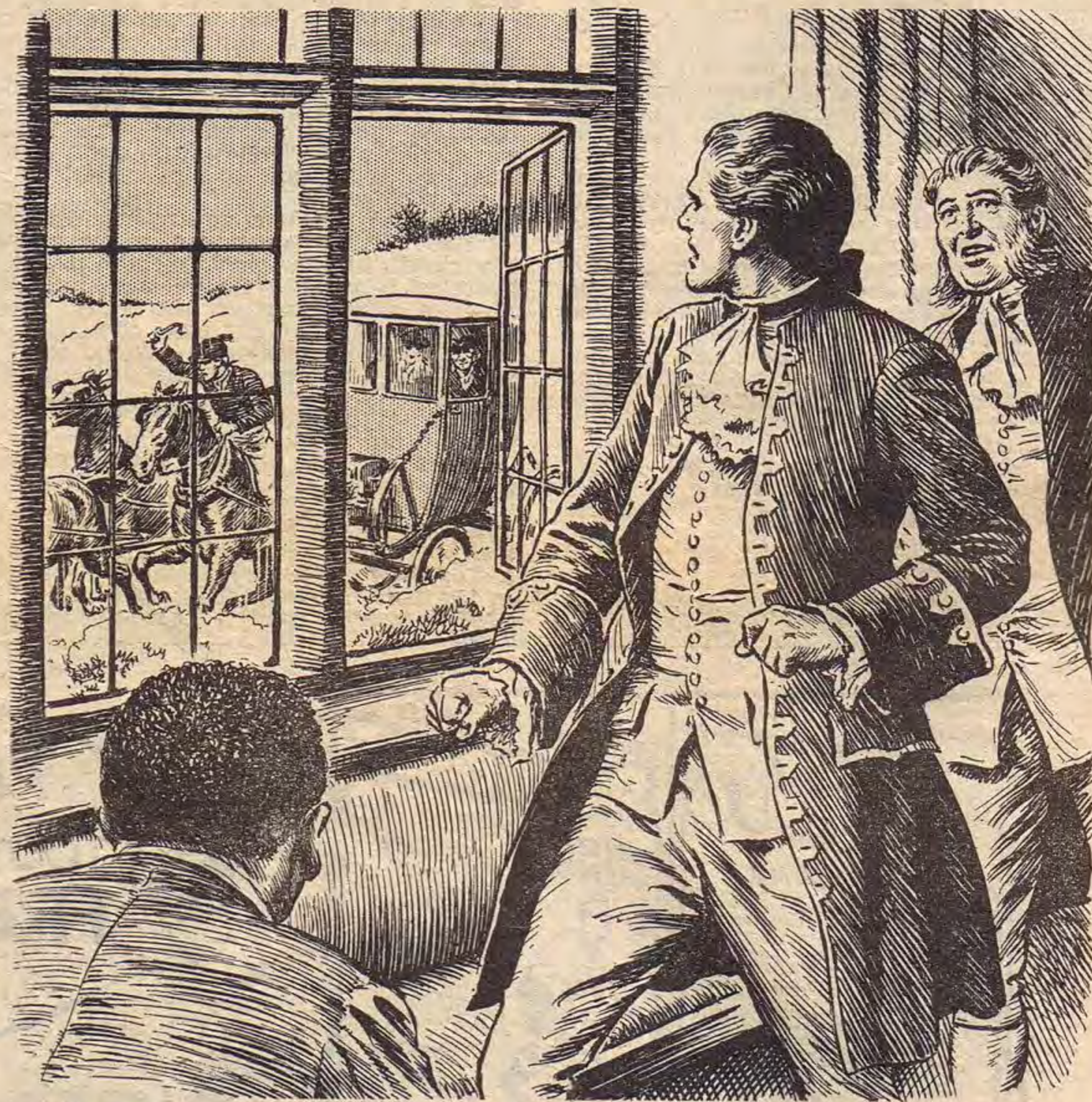
It appeared that someone pulled him back, for, as his face disappeared, the window went up and the blind came down in two angry jerks. The carriage rolled on towards the village at as quick a pace as the horses could be persuaded to make.

To Dick Turpin there seemed no time to be lost now.

In an hour at the most Moses Spouts would come to the moated house, and all the fat would be in the fire if he caught sight of any of the faces known so well to him.

Flick and Marcus Lestrage were not at all perturbed at being left to play the parts of maid-servant and footman.

"King had better take Pat O'Flynn with him, and Peters and Beetles will as usual



Dick Turpin gave a start of alarm, and stepped back sharply. At the carriage window had appeared the face of Moses Spouts . . . peering at the moated house!

a journey, what should hinder Mr. Palmer doing likewise?" King demanded. "Beetles, Peters, and O'Flynn must be got out of the way as quickly as possible, of course, and I'll clear out, too, and you, captain, had better remove yourself to some inland place near Dover for a few days."

"And Flick? You have left him out," said Dick.

"I'll stay on as the maidservant," Flick said. "Marcus Lestrage shall remain and act as footman, and there you are, you see."

"I see danger in that arrangement as far as you are concerned," Turpin said, looking grave. "You imitate a girl's voice and manners splendidly, but—"

"There, there, captain," Flick interrupted, "you must not be full of doubts at such a time as this. You can trust me to take care of myself, and as for Lestrage, he might walk into the midst of all the Bow Street Runners without the least fear."

"Then so it must be," Turpin said. He went to the window and opened it.

"Nice weather for travelling," he remarked, shrugging his shoulders.

keep each other's company," said Dick Turpin. "Get along to Dover, and I will do my best to meet you there. But if you find the town too hot for you, hurry on to Rochester."

In vain did King urge upon Turpin the folly and danger of risking a journey alone, but Dick was not to be dissuaded.

"Trust me that my way is the better one," he said; "besides, I have made up my mind, so there is an end to the matter. Peters and Beetles had better start without delay."

"Massa Peterers," Beetles said, as they hurried off for their horses, "me hab no wish to refer to de deportlements and de politers, but me do beg ob you to keep your temper and not try to bully me."

"To bully you!" Peters repeated.

"Well, den, to vex me," Beetles said. "De vexers do more harm to a man dan punching him lubly head."

"It's like a dream to hear him!" Peters muttered. "He's preachin' ag'in the werry thing he's guilty of hisself."

"Massa Peterers," Beetles went on, "you

(Continued on next page.)

must take great care ob yourself dis drefful weather. What colour ob a muffler will you put roun' your froat? Dere am a deep red one dat suit your lily-like complexion."

"Never mind my complexion," Peters said, feeling his blood beginning to tingle with wrath. "I'll look after myself."

"No," Beetles replied, "it am my duty to look after de fr'en' ob my youth whether him like it or not. If you am not careful your whiskers will be a mass ob icicles before we reach Dover."

"Your head will be a mass of something not at all like icicles if you ain't quiet!" Peters snarled. "Whoa! Whoa! Steady while I get the bridle over your head!" he added to his restless horse.

"Dat horse ob yours am inclined to de friskies owing to being too much in de stable," Beetles remarked. "Him as fiery as him massa."

At that moment Turpin strode into the stable, and went direct to Black Bess' box.

"You fellows clear off without any more talking," Dick said.

"Dat what me hab been saying de last quarter ob an hour," Beetles said.

"What liars they must be at the place where he comes from," Peters muttered. Then aloud: "Captin, why don't you take someone with you. Someone you can depend on?"

"So I am," he replied, throwing his arm affectionately round the mare's neck, "and so I would be by asking any of my brave followers, but it is not to be."

The last hope fled from Peters' breast.

There was no escaping from the fate he trembled to think of. He was doomed to be the companion of the irrepressible Beetles!

"One o' these times," he sighed to himself, as he climbed like a weary man into the saddle, "I shall be found dead o' some awful shock in a lonely place, and it will be all through that black varmint!"

"Goodbye, captin," said Peters.

"Goodbye, Jem," Turpin returned. "Enjoy yourself as well as you can under the circumstances. But why do you speak so sorrowfully? Look on the bright side of the picture, man. We'll throw dust in these clever fellows' eyes, and be back here again in less than a week."

"I doubt if you will ever see me ag'in," Peters observed, trying to squeeze a tear out of his eyes by rubbing them until they were redder than his whiskers. "I've got a presentiment that my career is coming to a hend. Last night I dreamt of a hegg-boiler, which, of course, means that the sands of my life are running out."

Turpin put out his hand, and turned his head aside so that he might laugh unseen. In ten minutes Beetles and Peters were gone.

Pat O'Flynn watched them as they rode side by side at a sharp pace along the snowy road.

"Begorra, they haven't spoken to each other yet!" Pat said. "But they'll be at it soon, and, bedad, they've made a start!"

Pat laughed as he went to find Tom King.

He found him in earnest conversation with Turpin.

"Dick," King said, "if you find yourself in a snare it will be much better to come back here, where there are a hundred and one hiding places, than to run the risk of being chased on a road full of ruts and black ice under the snow."

"As you say, there are plenty of hiding places, and room for all; but if Spouts and his merry men took possession of the house we should starve," Turpin replied. "Besides, we could not take our steeds into secret passages."

"No; that is where we are helpless."

"Tom," Turpin continued, as he wrung his friend's hand warmly, "believe me that I worked it all out. Go we must, and the fewer of us seen together the better. Bess is much faster than any piece of horseflesh we have at our command. Would for all your sakes, that we had half a dozen like her."

"That is impossible," King said. "All England cannot show such a number."

"That being so, there is safety for you and me in my going alone," Dick replied. "Goodbye, Tom. If you find Dover clear of sharks put up at the Harp and Trident, and order a good dinner for me. Now go, and go cheerfully. There is cold enough in the land, so keep a warm heart."

"The warmest corner is always kept for

you, Dick," King said. "Hark! The road is calling to me. I must be off. The Harp and Trident, say you? Good! There shall be a place kept at the table for you, and I'll eat nothing until you come."

The chair was destined to remain vacant, and Tom King to go dinnerless that day.

He and Turpin parted after one more grip, a grip that sent their blood running to their shoulders, and then Dick walked rather sorrowfully back to the stables.

Black Bess neighed joyously as she heard his footsteps, and turning her head, greeted him with eyes full of affection.

"Why, lass," he said, patting her velvety nose, "but a few minutes back I was with you. So, so! You must be quiet. Bess, there is danger—great danger—ahead. Something tells me so, and I feel it in my heart, but never a word did I drop to my friends, nor gave them a look that might betray what I know must be, and very soon will be."

Black Bess looked at him with wistful intelligence, as if she understood every word.

"My old enemies are here in numbers," Dick continued. "There are enough of them to invade the house, and it is impossible for me to tell how many are lurking on the road. Bess, they will kill your master if they can without taking the trouble to drag him to London."

Black Bess tossed her head, and brought her foot down angrily, as much as to say, "Why, master, of all men in the world, you are surely not losing heart?"

"But they shall have a good run and plenty to do before they catch us," Dick went on. "If we find ourselves in a trap there is no getting out of we'll fight to the last. Bess, my beauty, I'd rather put a bullet through your brain than have the agony of knowing, even for a single moment, that you had fallen into their brutal hands. So, courage lass; we'll let dull melancholy go. In an hour I will come back for you, so eat well of your corn, for you will have need of it before the day is done! What lies ahead may well put both of us to the test!"

(To be continued next week.)

famous INTERNATIONAL TEAMS 29

TURKEY

COLOURS - WHITE SHIRTS WITH RED STRIPE AND THE CRESCENT AND WHITE STAR. WHITE SHORTS, BLACK STOCKINGS WITH RED TOPS. FOOTBALL IS PLAYED IN TURKEY ALMOST THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

famous SOCCER CLUBS 75

WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS

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COLOURS - SHIRTS, GOLD. SHORTS, BLACK. STOCKINGS, GOLD AND BLACK HOOPS. GROUND - MOLINEUX GR. WOLVERHAMPTON.

famous INTERNATIONAL

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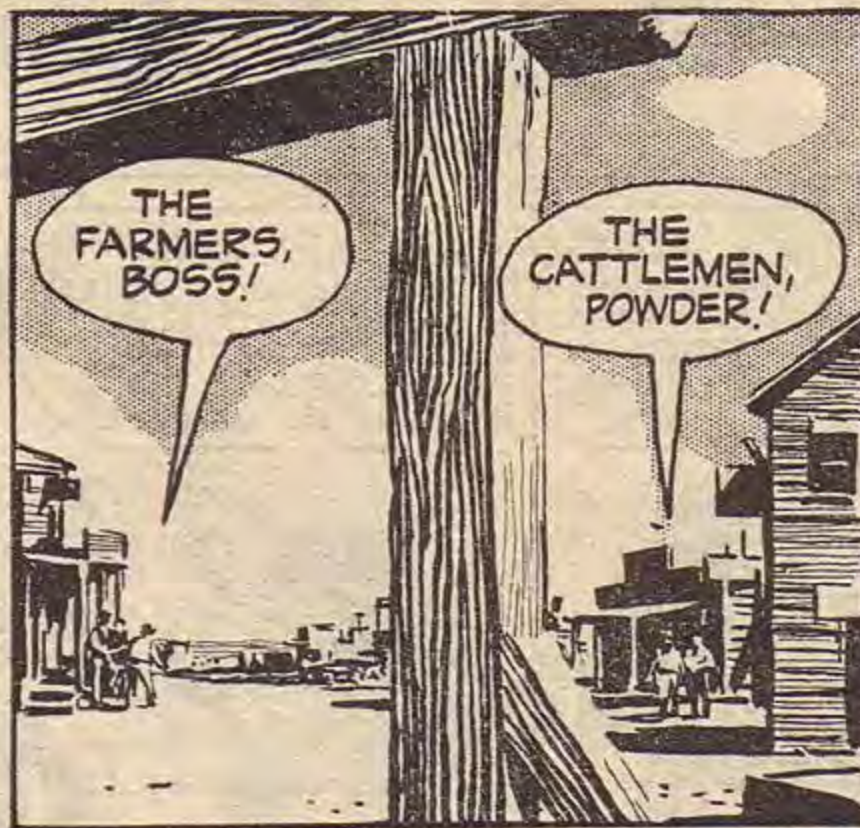
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XL25

VENGEANCE TRAIL

Matt Marriott and Powder Horn tried hard to persuade trail-boss Andy Carper to head his big herd of cattle away from the small farms at Coldwater Creek. But Carper refused, and in a stampede, Matt's family were killed. Peace-loving Matt was at last convinced that he could only obtain retribution . . . with a gun!



Will Matt be forced to use his new guns before he is ready? See next week's **KNOCKOUT**!



THE HEAVYWEIGHT CHUMP OF HIS SCHOOL

BILLY BUNTER



THAT CONCLUDES THE EXAM, BOYS! HAND IN YOUR PAPERS! ~ TO-MORROW YOU MAY ALL TAKE A HALF-HOLIDAY TO REST AFTER YOUR EXERTIONS.

HOORAY!

CRUIKEY! FAT LOT OF GOOD ME HAVING A DAY OFF WITH NO MONEY TO BUY CREAM BUNS!

GOOD OLD WHARTON! LET'S TREAT HIM IN THE TUCK SHOP!

LUCKY BEAST WHARTON ~ WHAT'S HE DONE TO BE SO POPULAR ANYWAY?

HAVE YOU NOT HEARD, BUNTER? BRAVE WHARTON DROVE OFF A BANDIT WHO WAS ABOUT TO SNATCH THE SCHOOL SPORTS FUNDS FROM OUR HEADMASTER YESTERDAY!

OH! SO THAT'S WHY THE KIDS ARE LASHING OUT FOR LEMONADE AND CAKES FOR OLD WHARTON!

JUST THINK! ALL THAT LOVELY GRUB ~ JUST FOR BEING BRAVE!

LOOK! QUELCHY IS GOING TO BANK HIS SALARY IN COURTFIELD! I'LL SHOW THE OTHER KIDS WHAT A FEARLESS FELLOW I AM!

FIVE POUNDS AND FOUR POUNDS MAKES NINE POUNDS ~

I SAY SIR! YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE A BRAVE AND HEROIC BLOKE FOR A BODYGUARD! ME FOR INSTANCE!

HM! PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT, BUNTER!

HURRY UP IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE MY BODYGUARD, BOY! THE BANK CLOSES AT THREE!

BODYGUARD BUNTER! HO! HO! WHAT A LAUGH!

GR! YOU GIGGLING BEASTS WILL BE GLAD TO BUY ME CREAM-BUNS AND LEMONADE TOO WHEN YOU SEE WHAT A HERO I AM!

GREAT SCOTT, BUNTER! IS THAT MEDIEVAL GARB REALLY NECESSARY?

RATHER, SIR! ~ I COULD TACKLE FIFTY BANDITS IN THIS, SIR! LET 'EM ALL COME!

OH DEAR! IT'S A BANDIT!

BUB-BUB-B-B-BANDIT, SIR! WHERE? OH CRUIKEY!

PEEP BO!

YAROO! HELP! ~ SAVE ME SOMEBODY!

YOUR BRAVE BODYGUARD HAS BUNKED, MATE! HAND OVER THE LOVELY LOLLY!

HELP!

OH, WELL DONE, WHARTON AND CHERRY, YOU FEARLESS FELLOWS! I CAN SEE THAT BOASTER BUNTER IS NOT SUCH A HERO AS HE PRETENDS!

WHO'S AFRAID?

BEASTS! BEASTS! BEASTS!

A LITTLE LATER MR. QUELCH WAS MARKING THE BOYS EXAM-PAPERS ~

HM! LET ME SEE WHERE THIS BOY WENT WRONG!

SIX POUNDS PLUS FOUR POUNDS MAKES TEN POUNDS ~

EE! QUELCHY IS COUNTING HIS MONEY! I'LL STAGE A HOLD-UP AND RESCUE HIM!

I SAY, YOU LITTLE LOAFER! THAT SILLY SCHOOLMASTER HAS A FISTFUL OF BANK NOTES! ~ YOU COULD PINCH 'EM EASY AS WINK ~

PLUS ANOTHER SIXTY POUNDS!

HEE! HEE! NOW I'LL BASH THAT LITTLE BANDIT ON THE BONSE AND BECOME THE HERO OF GREYFRIARS!

HAND OVER THAT CASH!



Plump for another feast of mirth with our all-round fat funster next week!

BILLY BUNTER'S SIX OF THE BEST

TASTY TUCK-BOXES
for YOUR JOKES



All jokes printed with their sender's name win a Billy Bunter Tuck-Box packed with FRY'S delicious Chocolate Creams, Crunchie, Punch, and Turkish Delight!

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Write your joke on a postcard, add the names of your two favourite stories in KNOCKOUT, and attach this coupon

**BILLY
BUNTER'S
SIX OF
THE BEST**

MORE TUCK-BOXES TO BE WON . . . JUST FOR FUN! SEND YOUR JOKE IN NOW!

THE BLACK PIRATE



THE SPANISH MAIN!
TRADE-ROUTE OF THE MIGHTY GALLEONS OF SPAIN BEARING THE GOLD OF THE NEW WORLD BACK TO THEIR NATIVE HOMELAND. GOLD TO EQUIP MORE ARMIES AND NAVIES TO TERRIFY EUROPE INTO SUBMISSION BEFORE THE SPLENDOR OF SPAIN.



OUR STORY STARTS AS A FIGHT ENDS—A BITTER HARD-FOUGHT BATTLE BETWEEN THE SANTA JOANNA, SPAIN'S FINEST GALLEON-O'-WAR AND THE CRIMSON CROSS, A SMALL ENGLISH MERCHANTMAN. DISMASTED, HOLED BELOW THE WATER-LINE, THE CRIMSON CROSS WAS A SLOWLY SINKING WRECK.

OUT-GUNNED AND OUTNUMBERED THE ENGLISHMEN HAD BEEN COMPELLED TO SURRENDER—BUT ONLY WHEN A MERE HANDFUL OF SURVIVORS REMAINED. NOW THOSE PITIFUL REMNANTS OF A ONCE MERRY CREW WERE WALKING THE PLANK, ONE BY ONE.



AT LAST, THE ONLY ENGLISHMAN LEFT WAS CAPTAIN JONAS FAIRFAX, A TALL, HANDSOME SEAMAN WHOSE SUN-TANNED BROW WAS GASHED BY A SWORD-STROKE. WORDLESSLY, SCORNFULLY, WITHOUT HESITATION, HE WALKED THE PLANK. NO PIKE WAS NEEDED TO URGE HIM ON HIS WAY.



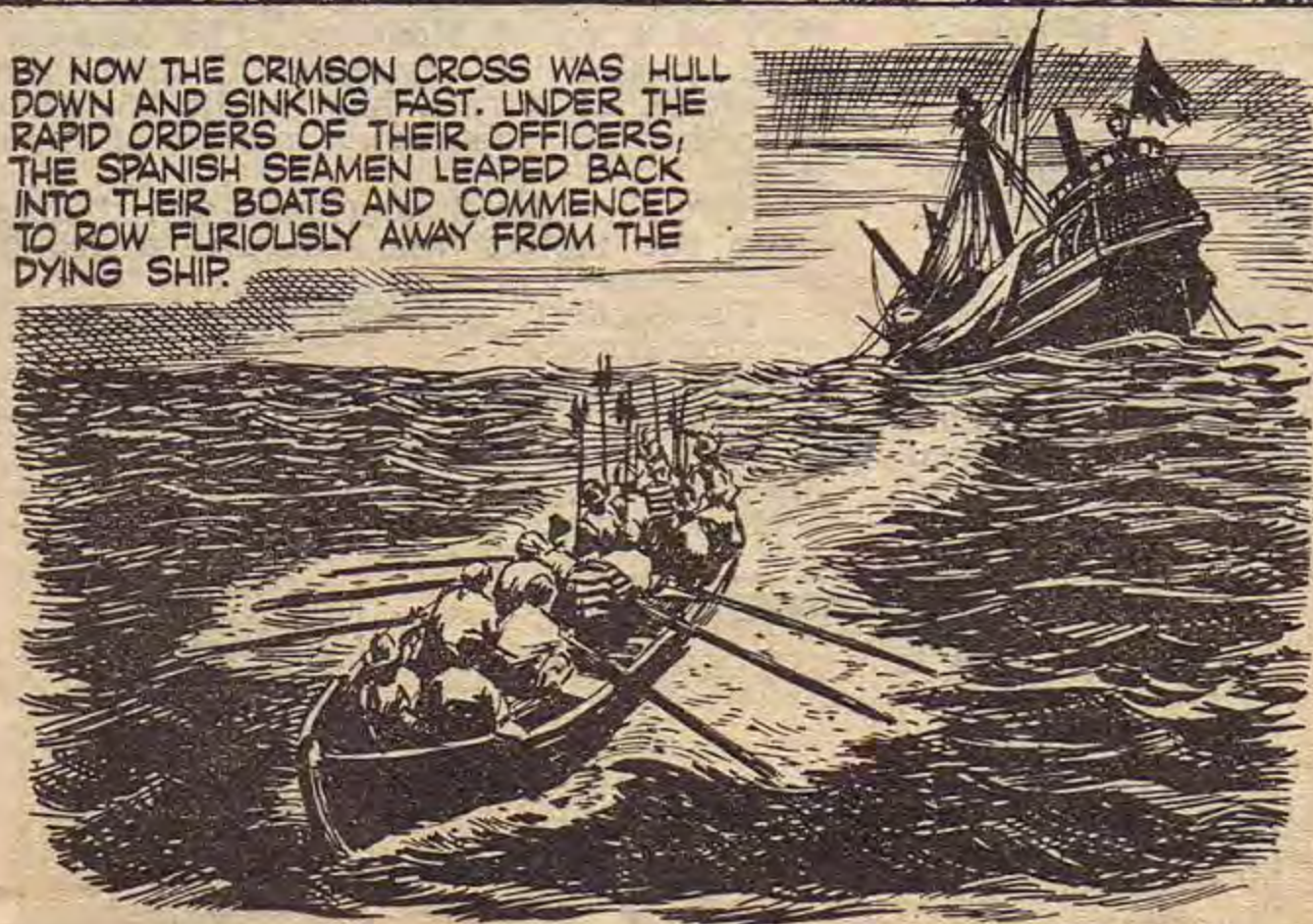
ONLY WHEN HE STOOD ON THE BRINK OF THE FATAL DROP—AND ETERNITY—DID THE CAPTAIN UTTER A WORD. IN FAULTLESS SPANISH, HE SPOKE MENACINGLY. 'I AM A PEACEFUL SEAMAN, ENGAGED IN LAWFUL ENTERPRISE YOU HAVE WANTONLY ATTACKED ME, SENORS, DESTROYED MY SHIP, MURDERED MY MEN!'

THE SPANIARDS SNARLED THEIR HATRED OF THE FEARLESS SEA-CAPTAIN BUT DAUNTLESSLY HE CONTINUED: "NOW HEAR ME, ALL YOU SPANISH DONS IN YOUR FINE ARMOUR AND PLUMES, AND REMEMBER WHAT I SAY. YOU SHALL PAY DEARLY AND IN FULL FOR YOUR FOUL CRIMES TO-DAY. THE CRIMSON CROSS SHALL FOREVER BE A SIGN OF RETRIBUTION TO YOU. WATCH FOR IT AND BEWARE!"



AND THEN TO THE WOLFISH HOWLS OF THE SPANIARDS, CAPTAIN FAIRFAX FLUNG HIMSELF INTO THE SINISTER WATERS BELOW. THERE CAME A FLURRY OF FOAM, THE SUN-GLINT OF A SHARK'S FIN AND THE WAVES WERE DYED AN OMINOUS RED. A SPANISH OFFICER LAUGHED. "LIKE ALL ENGLISHMEN, A BRAGGART TO THE END," HE SNEERED.

BY NOW THE CRIMSON CROSS WAS HULL DOWN AND SINKING FAST. UNDER THE RAPID ORDERS OF THEIR OFFICERS, THE SPANISH SEAMEN LEAPED BACK INTO THEIR BOATS AND COMMENCED TO ROW FURIOUSLY AWAY FROM THE DYING SHIP.



AND THEN FROM A MASS OF WRECKAGE AND BROKEN SPARS ON THE DECK OF THE CRIMSON CROSS, THERE WARILY EMERGED—A BOY! WOUNDED, BRUISED AND BATTERED, HE STARED WITH HORRIFIED EYES ABOUT HIM, REMEMBERING THE HAPPY DAYS HE HAD SPENT ON THIS ONCE-TRIM SHIP.



THE BOY WAS RICHARD FAIRFAX, SON OF THE CAPTAIN OF THE CRIMSON CROSS. FROM HIS HIDING-PLACE HE HAD WATCHED IN STARK DESPAIR THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER. SUDDENLY, HIS EYES FELL ON HIS FATHER'S SWORD EMBEDDED IN A NEARBY BROKEN MAST. HE WRENCHED IT FREE.



THEN, TURNING, HE GAZED WITH BITTER HATRED AT THE MAGNIFICENT SPANISH GALLEON BATHED IN THE GLOW OF A CARIBBEAN SUNSET, AND, RAISING HIS FATHER'S SWORD, HE EXCLAIMED IN RINGING TONES: "I SWEAR VENGEANCE!"

"YES, VENGEANCE ON YOU ALL, CREW OF THE SANTA JOANNA! MY FATHER WARNED YOU AND I SHALL REDEEM HIS PROPHECY! BEWARE THE CRIMSON CROSS! I WILL REPAY!"



AND AS THE GOOD SHIP CRIMSON CROSS SANK TO ITS FINAL REST BELOW THE BILLOWING WATERS OF THE SPANISH MAIN, A LONELY FIGURE CLUNG TO A FLOATING PIECE OF WRECKAGE... AND ONE OF THE STRANGEST STORIES OF ALL TIME WAS ABOUT TO UNFOLD!



You can follow the stirring adventures of THE BLACK PIRATE in your next **KNOCKOUT**!

THE FIGHTING FOUR

By Owen Conquest

When Jimmy Silver came to Rookwood School as a new boy on the Classical side he soon discovered there was a fierce rivalry between the Classics and the Moderns.

Jimmy gained distinction in a number of "rags" against the Moderns, and also won the friendship of his three study-mates, Lovell, Raby and Newcome.

Tommy Dodd and Co. of the Modern side threw out a challenge to the Classics, saying they would take on any four they cared to nominate. (Now read on.)

A FOUR-HANDED MILL!

LOVELL eyed Jimmy Silver in a doubtful way at the tea-table in the end study.

"Can you box?" he asked suddenly. Jimmy grinned into his teacup but made no reply.

"You see, this is important," remarked Raby. "Tommy Dodd can box. He's knocked me out, as a matter of fact. Cook and Doyle are hot stuff. And young Towle is all there, too. They can put up a good four. And if we're licked, it means no end of kudos for those Modern cads. They'll call themselves the top side at Rookwood, if they knock us out."

"You three all right?" asked Jimmy Silver. "You can keep your end up?"

"Aren't we called the Fistical Three?" demanded Lovell. "But what about you? Can you box? I know you squashed Smythe; but Smythe's a slacking toad. Could you stand up against a real good socker? If you can't, just you say so at once, and I'll pick another fellow along the passage. Jones minor isn't bad."

"Well, I can box," said Jimmy Silver. "You've got some gloves here. Suppose we have a round or two before we go down to the gym? Then you can see."

"Jolly good idea," said Lovell, relieved. "I'd like to have you in the mill."

So, when tea was over, the table was dragged into a corner, and Lovell fished out two pairs of boxing-gloves.

"If you can stand up to me, you can stand up to any of that tribe," he remarked. "I'd undertake to whop any Modern in the Fourth or the Shell, excepting perhaps Tommy Dodd. I admit he's a real handful."

"Leave him to me," suggested Jimmy Silver.

Lovell snorted.

"Yes, I'm likely to leave him to you, I don't think! I expect he'd knock you out in one round. I'm taking Dodd on myself. Still, let's see what you can do."

They removed their jackets and donned the gloves. Raby and Newcome sat on the table to watch. Lovell began with a rather pressing attack, to find out whether his new chum could stop him. He soon discovered the answer to that question. He found his guard knocked up, and a hard glove planted on his chin, and he sat down with a shock that shook the study.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Lovell.

"Sorry if I hit rather hard," said Jimmy Silver, as he helped his study-leader to his feet. "I forgot! Not hurt?"

"Nunno! You try that again."

Lovell was much more cautious this time. He was a good boxer, and he played up well. But it was no use. He soon realised that what Jimmy Silver did not know about the manly art of self-defence was not worth knowing.

Jimmy Silver's hand and eye were as quick as lightning. Lovell, much to his astonishment, found himself driven round the study, and he brought up in the fender, where Jimmy Silver proceeded to deliver a series of taps on his nose and chest.

"Hurray!" chortled Raby. "He's got you, Lovell! Chuck it now or you'll be

tired! You've got to be in form for the Moderns."

Lovell peeled off the gloves, regarding his vanquisher with wonder.

"Blessed if I thought you had it in you!" he confessed. "Why, you young ass, when you were first here, and I was looking for trouble with you, I thought you were a funk, because you didn't want to have it out. And you could have licked me all the time!"

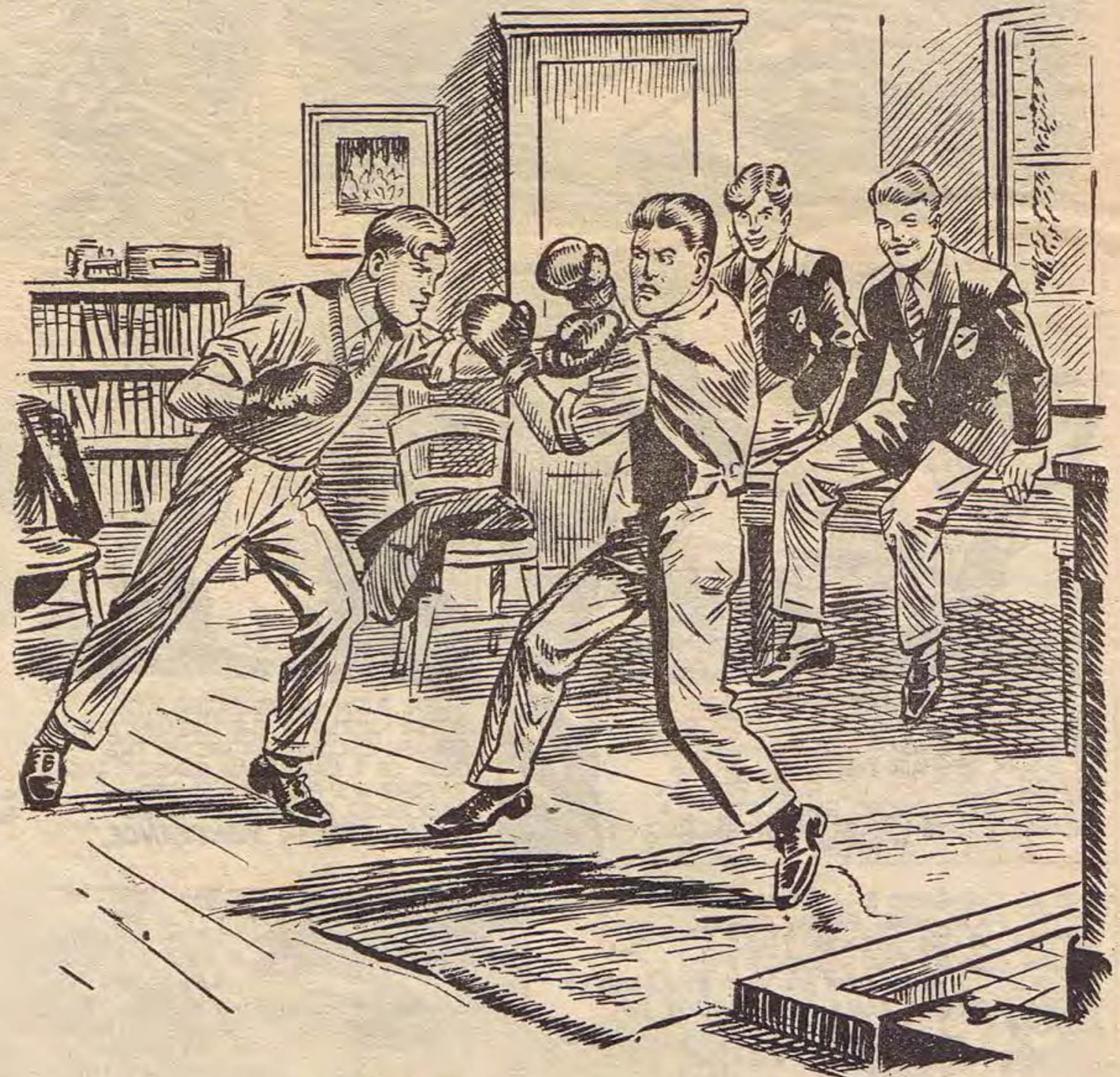
Jimmy Silver laughed.

"So long as I lick Tommy Dodd, that will be all right," he said. "Leave Tommy Dodd to me, won't you?"

Lovell nodded.

"You bet! You'll handle him better than I could."

A few minutes later Jones minor looked into the study, with an excited expression. The boxing-match between the rival champions was causing a great deal of excitement in the Lower School.



Jimmy Silver's hand and eye were as quick as lightning, and Lovell found himself driven round the study.

"You fellows ready?" he exclaimed. "The Modern microbes are in the gym. Leggett's saying that you're afraid to show up."

"We'll jolly soon show 'em whether we're afraid," growled Lovell.

The Fighting Four strode out of the study. Jimmy Silver had proved his right to be a member of that select circle, and to share that honourable title.

The chums of the end study had recognised the fact that their new comrade well deserved to be dubbed a fighter. And he had been so modest about it that they

had never suspected his ability. They felt their liking and respect for Jimmy increase with the unexpected discovery.

There was a tremendous crowd of juniors in the gym. Both parties were well represented, and keenly interested in the boxing match.

Tommy Dodd and Co. had come over with an army of Moderns. The Moderns were keener on gymnastics than the Classics, as a rule, but in the Fighting Four they had opponents worthy of their steel.

"Here they are!" sang out Lacy. "Here come the rotters who chucked a footer match away!"

"You Modern misfits chucked it away!" retorted Lovell.

"Well, and now we'll chuck you after it," said Tommy Dodd. "You're jolly well going to have a thumping good hiding for planting that idiot Smythe on us!"

"It was your fault!"

"Rats! We're ready, if you are!"

"Ready to knock you right off the earth!" said Raby disdainfully.

"Sort yourselves out," said Tommy Dodd with a snort. "Give me any man you like. Bet I can knock spots off any rotten Classic at Rookwood. Who's your man?"

"I am," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha! They're putting the new kid up against me!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Is that a little joke of yours, Lovell?"

"Sure. Have a good laugh," said Lovell. "You'll find it a real smashing good joke, too! I'll take you, Cook, and Doyle can

take Newcome, and Towle can have Raby!"

"O.K. Fix it how you like," said Tommy Doyle. "I'll whop any Classical in the school."

"Fowler's keeping time," said Tommy Dodd. "Where's Fowler? I say, Fowler!"

The big Fifth-Former came through the eager crowd of juniors. Fowler of the Fifth was a boxer, and he had kindly consented to take that contest under his wing. He took out a big silver watch.

"Off with your jackets! Get the mittens on! Sort yourselves out! Three-minute rounds, and one-minute rests," said Fowler of the Fifth. "I'll stop you before any damage is done; but if you don't put up a good fight I'll whop you all round myself. Now then!"

"And the side that wins is Top Side at Rookwood for the rest of the term," said Tommy Dodd quickly.

"Done," said Lovell at once.

The juniors formed a wide ring, crowding round to see the four-handed mill. The two quartettes faced one another, Tommy Dodd and Jimmy Silver measuring each other with their eyes. Fowler regarded his watch, and gave the word.

"Time!"

"Go to it, Classics!"

"Go to it, Moderns!"

And Classics and Moderns went to it!

Most of the spectators expected to see Jimmy Silver knocked out in the first round by Tommy Dodd, who was well known to be a mighty man with his fists. But they were disappointed. Jimmy held his ground well. Through that round and the next he held his own, but without doing much attacking.

But the wise ones observed that Tommy Dodd's attacks did not materialise. In the fourth round Jimmy Silver seemed as fresh as ever, and Tommy Dodd was getting a little excited. He had expected to knock out the new boy very quickly, and the fact that he hadn't succeeded rather rattled him.

The fourth round finished the contest between Newcome and Tommy Doyle. The Classical champion had put up a good fight, but the Irish junior was a little too good for him. And there were loud Modern yells when Newcome was counted out. It was the first victory to the Moderns.

But there was a change of fortune in the fifth round. Lovell put Tommy Cook on his back with a mighty swipe, and Cook was unable to toe the line for the next round. Then it was the turn of the Classics to yell, and yell they did till the gymnasium rang.

"Level so far," Jimmy Silver remarked to Lovell, as he rested after the fifth round.

"Looks all right for our side—what!"

"How are you feeling?" asked Lovell anxiously.

"Still breathing, chum! Don't worry."

"Time!"

Two pairs of combatants stepped up for the sixth round at the call of time. Both finished, and the seventh started amid great excitement. The seventh round saw the end of poor Raby. Towle was pretty nearly out on his feet, but he was just able to toe the line for the eighth round, and Raby wasn't.

So that was another victory for the Moderns, and they made the gym ring with their yells.

Tommy Dodd and Jimmy Silver stepped up again. The excitement was tense now. Both the champions were showing signs of damage, in spite of the gloves, but both were determined and full of pluck.

The hopes of the Moderns were high; they had every faith in Tommy Dodd, and if he knocked the new kid out the Moderns would secure the coveted title of the Top Side at Rookwood for the rest of the term.

These were thrilling moments. The Classics were agog with anxiety. Would their man succeed in knocking out the great Tommy Dodd and making the four-handed mill a draw? All depended on Jimmy Silver.

"Time!"

The combatants separated. Jimmy Silver sat down on the knee Lovell made for him, and Lovell fanned his heated brow. Webb was performing a similar service for Tommy Dodd.

"They'll be Top Side if he beats you," said Lovell to Jimmy.

"He won't beat me!"

"Time!"

Breathless silence as the ninth round started. Tommy Dodd piled in for all he was worth. The Classics scarcely breathed as they saw their man give ground. Jimmy seemed to sink back, and Lovell groaned as Tommy Dodd rushed in. But it was only a feint. The apparently fagged boxer suddenly stiffened up. Most of Tommy's blows were smothered, and then Silver closed in, still hitting hard.

Crash, crash, crash came left and right, right and left, and Tommy Dodd went down with a heavy bump.

"Yippee!" roared the Classics.

Fowler of the Fifth began to count:

"One—two—three—four—five—six—"

Tommy Dodd staggered up. Jimmy Silver could have knocked him out as he rose. But he kept his hands down till Tommy was fairly on his feet. There was a growl from some of the Classics. This wasn't a time for their champion to be taking any chances. But Jimmy's sporting action had lost nothing. Tommy Dodd was really groggy now, and another right-hander laid him on the floor again.

Fowler started counting again.

"—five—six—seven—eight—"

Tommy Dodd just managed to stagger to his feet before "nine" was called.

Somehow he summoned enough strength to launch a counter offensive. He swung wildly at Jimmy Silver—rights and lefts—and the Moderns nearly raised the roof with their lusty yells of encouragement.

"Go it, Tommy! Now you've got him!"

"Up the Moderns!"

"Rah! Rah! Rah! Tommy's winning!"

Then came a right-hander from Jimmy Silver which floored the Modern again.

"Time!"

Tommy Dodd had never been so glad to hear the call of time. He staggered to Webb's knee.

"That will do," said Fowler of the Fifth. "You can't go on, Dodd."

"I'm as fit as a fiddle!" howled Tommy Dodd. "I tell you I can lick any Classical kid that ever came to Rookwood!"

The Fifth-Former hesitated, then smiled. "Well, time!" he called.



Jimmy was carried from the gym in triumph.

It was the tenth round. Tommy Dodd put into it all he was worth. But one of his eyes was closed, and with the other he did not see very clearly.

Jimmy Silver met his attack with counter-attack, and his punches came out like steam-hammers. In less than a minute Tommy Dodd was on his back, gasping.

Fowler began to count. Tommy Dodd made an effort to rise, and sank back again.

"One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine—out!"

Then from the Classical crowd burst a roar that made the roof shake.

"Bravo! Hurrah! Classics win! Hurrah!"

"It's a draw," said Fowler of the Fifth. "Two wins on each side. Now shake hands."

Tommy Dodd had staggered up, leaning heavily on Cook. He grinned a twisted grin as Jimmy Silver held out his hand. He took it readily enough.

"You're a good man!" he gasped. "We'll try it over again some time. But you've done me now, and it's a draw. Oh, my eye!"

Tommy Dodd's friends helped him away. He had put up a plucky fight, and the four-handed mill had ended in a draw. The great question as to which was Top Side at Rookwood remained unsettled. Probably it never would be settled. But it had been a tremendous mill.

The Classics surrounded Jimmy Silver. Lovell, Raby and Newcome were brimming over with delight. Well had their new chum upheld the honour of the end study.

"Shoulder high!" shouted Hooker.

And Jimmy Silver, with one eye closed and his nose very bulbous, was mounted upon the shoulders of the cheering juniors, and marched out of the gym, in triumph.

Right into the House and up the stairs they marched him, and did not put him down till they reached the end study. Then, with a final cheer, the Classical juniors departed, and for the next half hour the bathing of the eyes and noses was the principal occupation of the Fighting Four.

(So Jimmy Silver established himself as one of the most popular juniors at Rookwood. It was not long afterwards that he was elected Captain of the Fourth, and many were the adventures which befell him and his chums. One of them starts in next week's KNOCKOUT. Be sure to read of the strange web of mystery which ensnared one of the most popular boys at Rookwood.)

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

★ **HURRY!** ★

★ **HURRY!!** ★

★ **HURRY!!!** ★

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BLARNEY

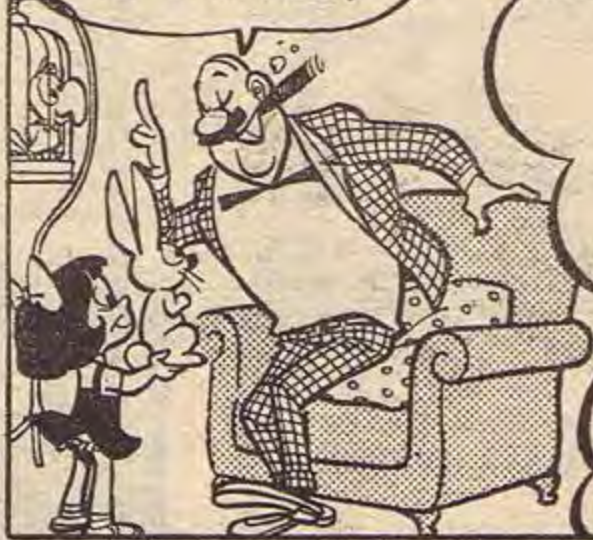
BLUFFER

HE'S BRITAIN'S BIGGEST BRAGGER!

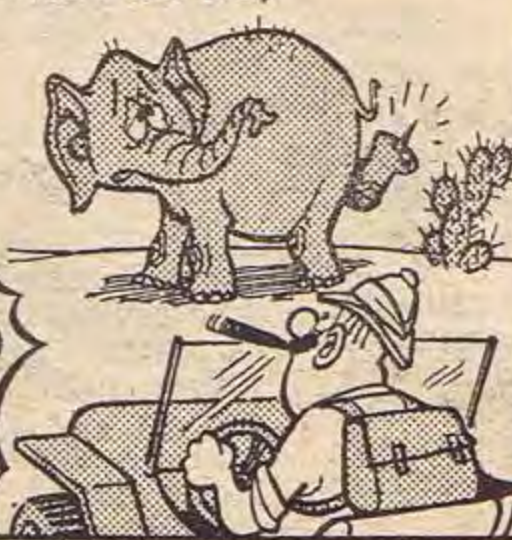
No wonder an elephant never forgets!



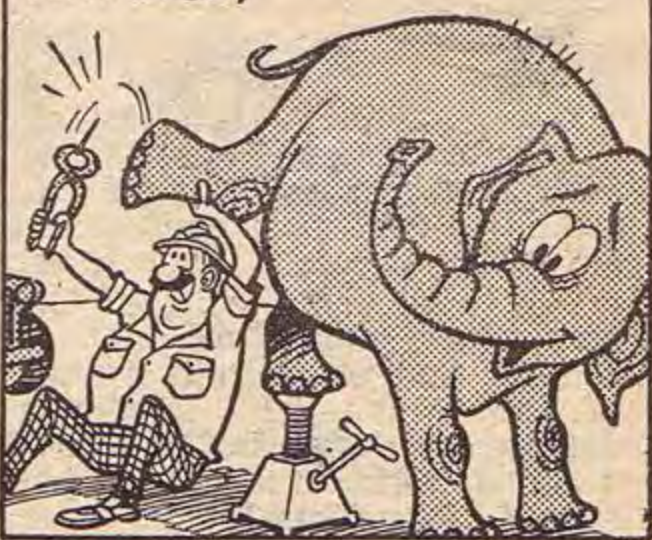
I LOVE PETS TOO, TOPSIE! LET ME TELL YOU A STORY OF MY KINDNESS TO ANIMALS!



"I WAS ON SAFARI IN AFRICA WHEN I CAME UP TO A POOR ELEPHANT WHO HAD GOT A CACTUS THORN IN HIS TOOTSIE!"



"PRONTO I JACKED JUMBO UP AND REMOVED THE CAUSE OF THE TROUBLE! GEE! OLD JUMBO WAS GRATEFUL!"



"WELL, THE NEXT INSTANT AN AFRICAN SNOWSTORM BLEW UP AND I CAME UPON SOME SNAKES FROZEN STIFF BY THE BLIZZARD!"

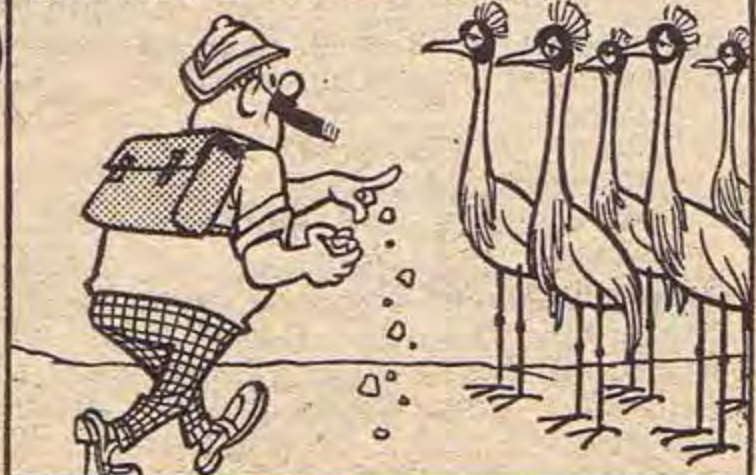


"STRAIGHT AWAY I FIXED THOSE FROST-BITTEN WRIGGLERS UP WITH NICE WARM OVERCOATS I MADE OUT OF ODDS AND ENDS FROM MY OWN WARDROBE!"



THANKS, MATE! WE WON'T FORGET THIS!

"THIS AFRICAN BLIZZARD GOT WORSE AND WORSE! I SAW SOME CRANES SO STIFF WITH THE COLD THEY COULDN'T EVEN BEND THEIR NECKS TO PICK UP CRUMBS I THREW THEM!"



"I'VE ALWAYS LOVED BIRDS! HAVE A TURKEY FOR DINNER EVERY CHRISTMAS! IN NO TIME AT ALL I'D FIXED THOSE POOR CRANES UP WITH WARM WINTER WOOLIES, TOO!"



"SUDDENLY A HORDE OF PROWLING SAVAGES SPRANG AT ME! THERE WAS ONLY ONE ESCAPE - HAND OVER FIST ACROSS A ONE-ROPE BRIDGE!"



"HALF-WAY ACROSS I CAME UPON A GAP IN THE ROPE!"



"THEN IN THE NICK OF TIME A COUPLE OF SNAKES SLIPPED ACROSS AND BRIDGED THAT GAP FOR ME!"



ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER!

"I TOOK TO MY CANOE BUT I GOT THE WIND-UP WHEN THE WIND DROPPED AND LEFT ME BECALMED IN MID-STREAM!"



"ONCE MORE MY JUNGLE PALS, GRATEFUL FOR MY GOOD DEEDS TO THEM, STEPPED IN AND SAVED ME FROM THOSE SNARLING SAVAGES!"



"THEN MY JEEP SPRANG A PUNCTURE ON A PRICKLY CACTUS-BUSH! IT WOULD HAVE BEEN 'CURTAINS' FOR BLARNEY IF MY OLD PALS THE CRANES HADN'T GIVEN ME A LIFT, JUST IN TIME, TOO!"



"WHICH ALL GOES TO SHOW EVEN THE WILDEST ANIMALS HAVE THEIR GOOD POINTS!"



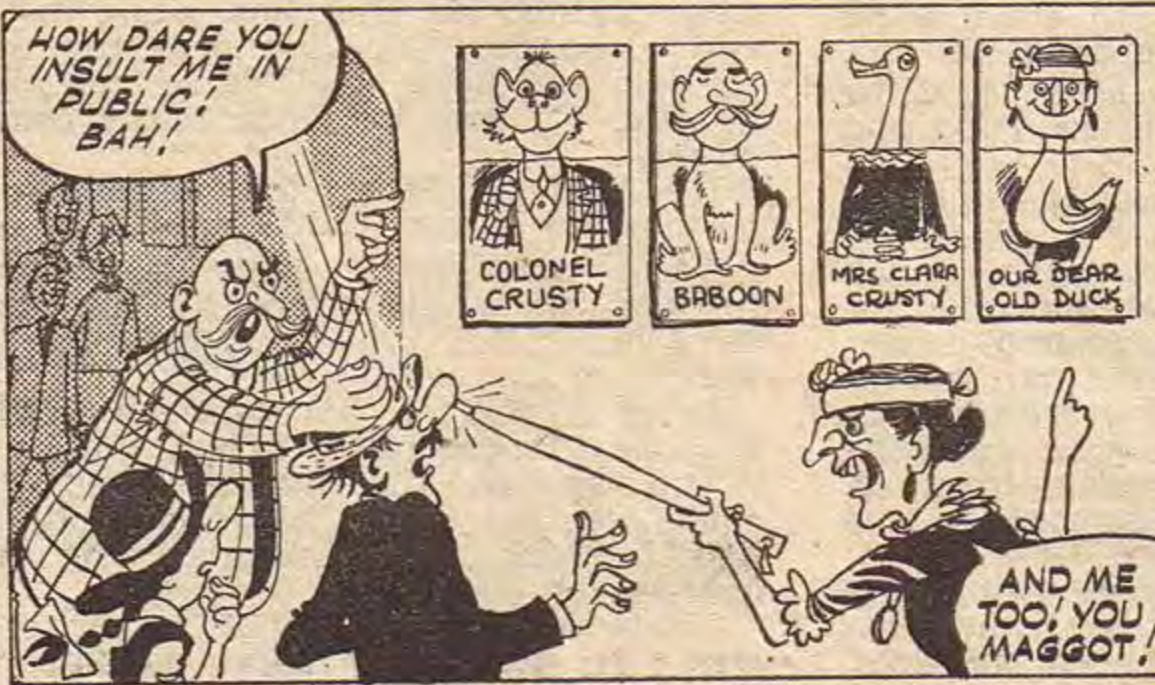
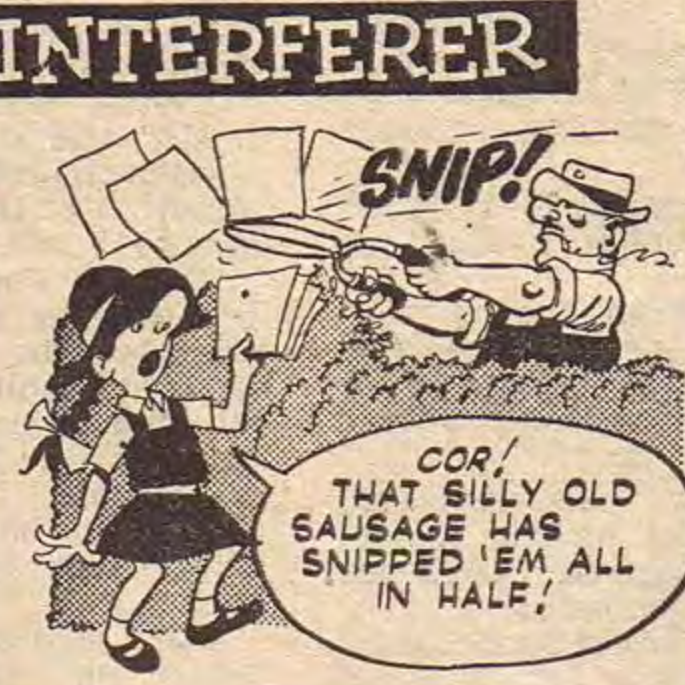
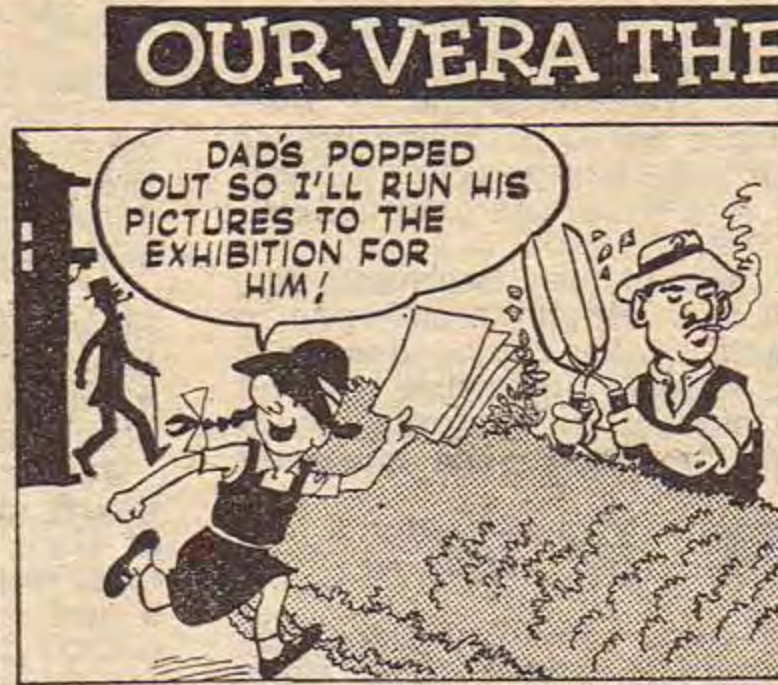
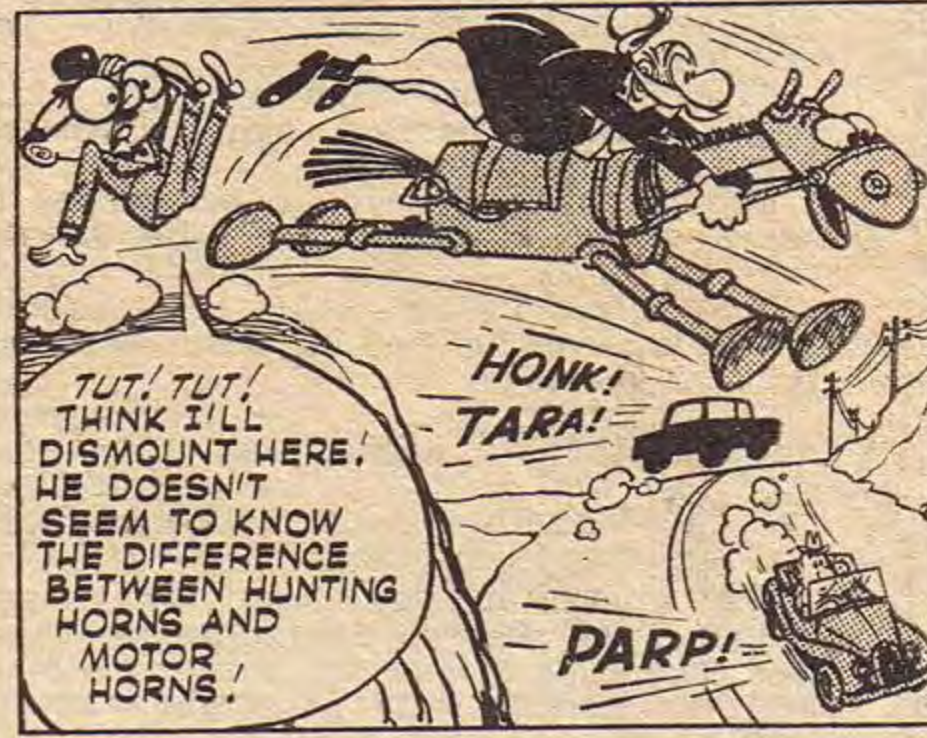
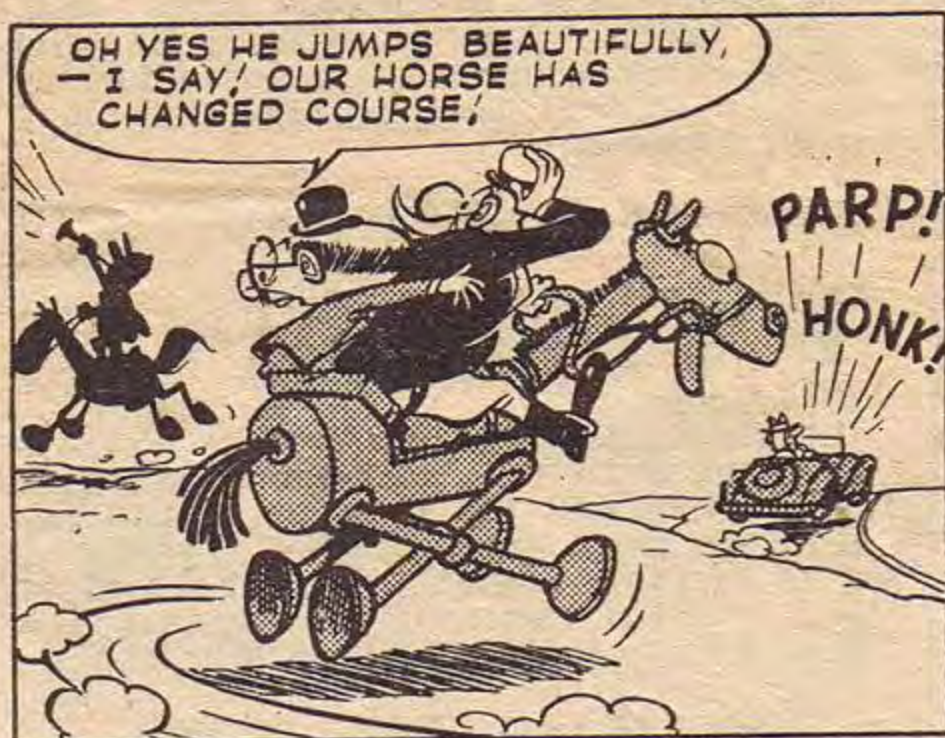
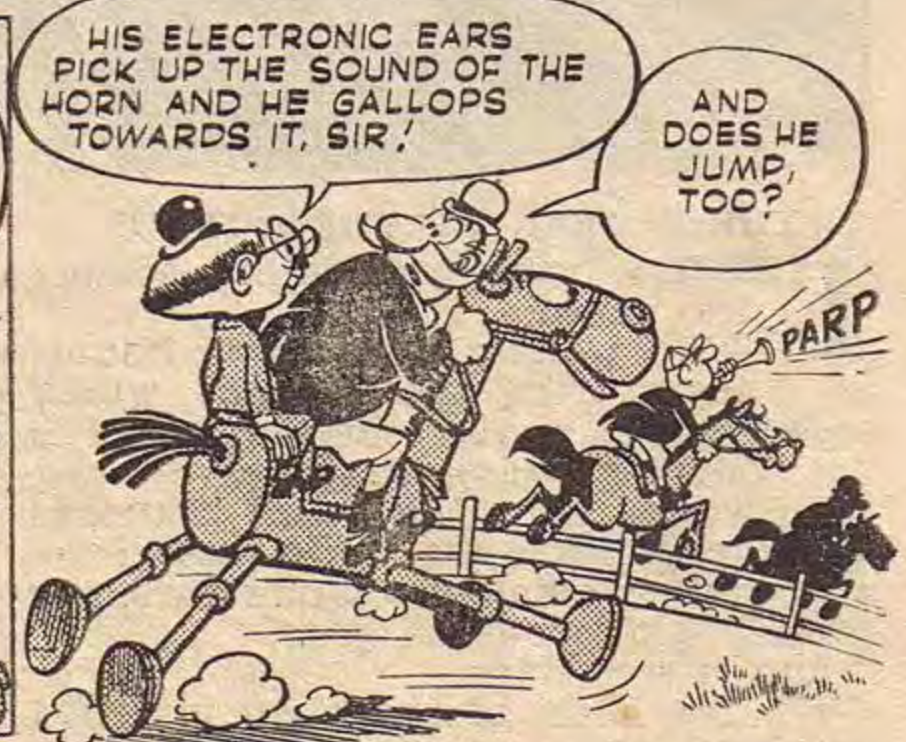
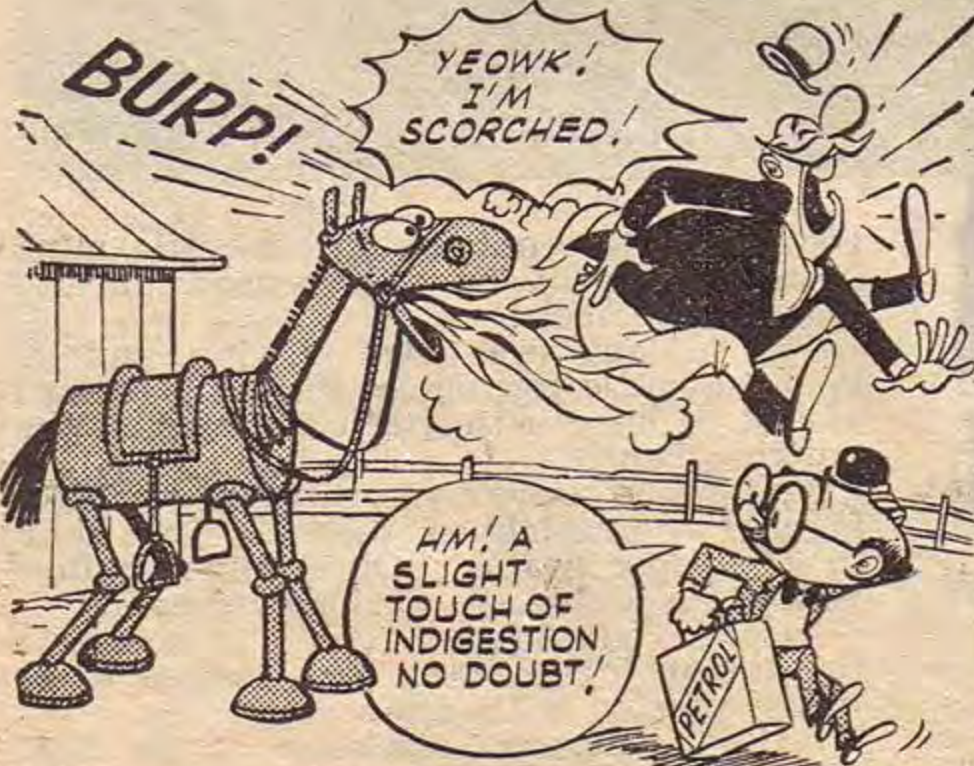
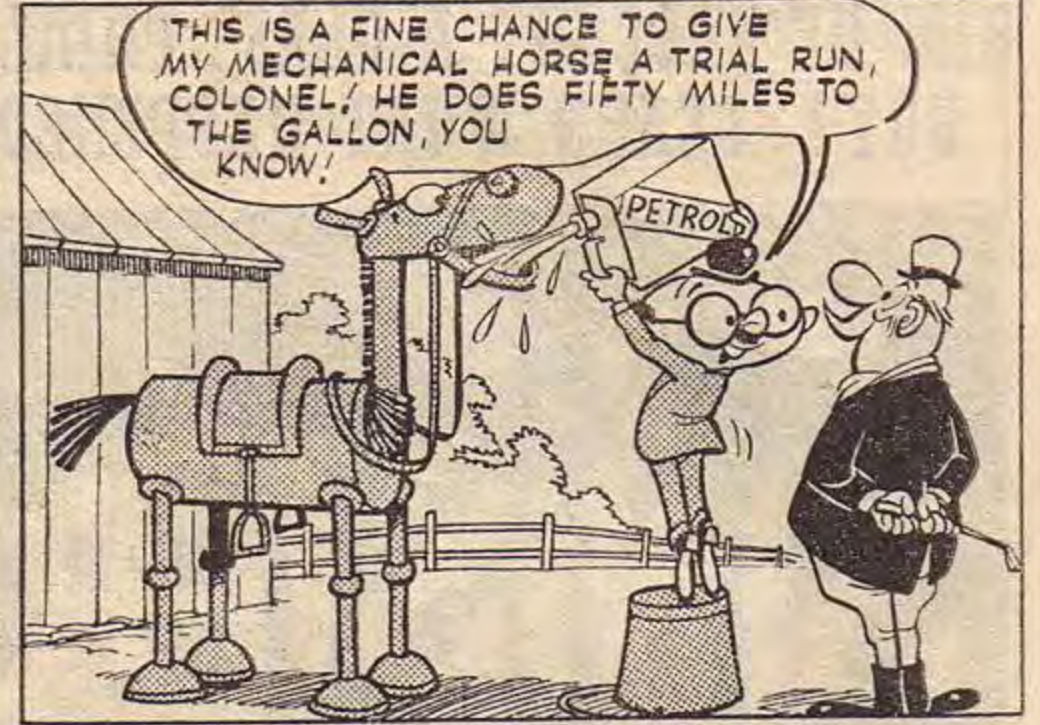
MY PET HEDGEHOG HAS GOOD POINTS TOO! YOU'VE BEEN SITTING ON THEM!



Listen-in to another extra-tall story by our champion Bluffer next Wednesday!

PROFESSOR

KNOCKOUT



HE CAME OUT OF THE DARKNESS . . . A MYSTERIOUS MAN FROM THE EAST. AND WITH HIM HE BROUGHT A GLASS PHIAL WHICH CONTAINED AN ELIXIR WHICH NO MONEY COULD BUY! LEARN WHAT HAPPENED TO JASPER TODD WHEN HE DISCOVERED ITS SECRET!



THE BEARER OF THE BOTTLE

THE lone hostelry stood in a soundless world.

No wailing cries came hauntingly from the seagulls which nested where waves rolled in from the sea, washing a desolate shore.

No wind stirred the gaunt branches of winter-stricken trees, nor rustled the wiry grasses about the sand-dunes, nor whined where bushes grew.

And it was dark.

The blackness of the night matched the depth of the uncanny silence.

Even the ancient timbers of the Red Fox Inn did not groan, as they might have done under their weight of years.

The sinister hostelry was as silent as the world in which it stood. It seemed to rise from the emptiness of the countryside like some evil monument, standing to mark the weird mystery of that soundless night.

Within the building stood Jasper Todd. His red-tinged eyes were glittering, and one slim, pale hand was running through the lank hair of his ruddy beard. His mouth was drawn down at one corner, revealing stone-white teeth as he peered into the surrounding shadows.

"Queer!" he murmured. "Ha, ha, ha! Very queer!"

He chuckled faintly, and his glance went to the man who leaned behind the bar, tattoo-marks showing upon his forearms. His eyes were wide and scared, and his gaze never left the lean face of the lone owner of that sinister inn.

"It's quiet tonight, Seaman Joe!" Todd muttered. "I can't remember a night so quiet as this!"

Still no sound came from the motionless world. The silence of the inn was broken only by the hoarse breathing of the frightened sailor, and suddenly Jasper Todd lurched towards the door.

"It's queer—very queer!" he repeated. "When a night is as quiet as this, something must be going to happen. Let's see what the world looks like outside!"

The latch on the door clicked as he lifted it, and he was still chuckling faintly when he drew the portal open—to start back, with a sudden cry breaking from his lips.

A man stood upon the steps, and he was such a man as even Jasper Todd had never set eyes upon before.

He had come without a sound from the dark.

He wore a long, dark robe which reached almost to his ankles, and upon his head was a turban of the same colour. His eyes were black and glittering, and his skin was as dark as the sky overhead. His arms hung limply at his sides, and he seemed almost to glide across the threshold, making no sound as he paused in the centre of the bar-room floor.

He gazed about him, his gleaming eyes piercing the shadows, and long moments passed while Todd slowly closed the door.

Then the robed man turned, and spoke surprisingly.

"A strange edifice, this!" the man half-whispered. "A strange hostelry, mine host—a place of strange things!"

He faced Jasper Todd, who regarded him with red-tinged eyes that were wide and startled.

"I feel that this room has seen black deeds," the turbaned man whispered. "And it is haunted!"

Behind the bar, Seaman Joe gasped at those words, clutching the edge of the woodwork to support himself. Todd remained half-bent, his heavy lids gradually narrowing over his eyes as he surveyed this peculiar visitor.

"Haunted by fear!" the dark-skinned man breathed in deep tones. "By wide-eyed fear that holds the tongue in fetters, and palsies the limbs! And here do ghosts walk—gliding in the gloom!"

His whispering voice died away, and Jasper Todd drew a deep breath. There was something mysterious about this man, and his manner was as strange as his words.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"I am a traveller," the dark-skinned man said. "A passing traveller, that is all."

"And what do you want?" Todd demanded.

"What would a traveller require, mine host?" the stranger asked. "Refreshment—warmth—and a little company on a night when all the world seems bonded in silence!"

Jasper Todd signed to Seaman Joe, pointing to a bottle which stood upon a shelf at the back of the bar. Joe took it in trembling hands, uncorking it and starting to pour part of its contents into a glass, while Todd turned to the customer once again.

"You'll be from India—we don't see many like you, in these parts, sir!" he said.

The stranger had remained standing where he had stopped, and a faint smile again twisted his thin lips, while his deep and whispering voice sounded once more.

"Nay, and never shall ye see me again," he said. "I pass but once, and I come no more!"

He bent a little, his glittering eyes boring into Jasper Todd's red-tinged orbs.

"And with me I bring a chance of fortune—of wealth—riches!" the Indian went on. "But I bring it only for those who have courage!"

From a fold in his robe he produced a bottle. It was tinted green, and he held it up against the light. Jasper Todd could see that it was half-filled with some liquid, which rolled sluggish and heavy against the glass.

"Here is something that money cannot buy!" he heard the Indian saying. "Did

you possess the contents of this bottle, mine host, you might be rich beyond all the dreaming of men!"

The Indian's eyes were glowing, and he held the bottle yet higher, so that it seemed almost to burn with green fire against the hanging lamp.

"It would give you power—wealth—luxury!" he exclaimed, then his voice sank to a whisper again. "Or it might plunge you into a nightmare of deadly dreams!"

Jasper Todd looked from the bottle to the Indian. The man's eyes seemed to be misty, blazing with some secret fire.

"All the mystic knowledge of the East lies here," the turbaned figure said. "This bottle holds an elixir! He who drinks of its contents steps on to fortune—or prays that the very lightning may strike him down!"

"MAY THE STARS OF HEAVEN PITY YE!"

THE Indian's whispering voice died out in a hundred tiny echoes, and silence fell about the Red Fox Inn once again.

Jasper Todd could hardly take his gaze from the bottle that the man held, and he tried to fathom the meaning of the turbaned figure's strange words.

"I don't understand you," he said at last. "D'you mean to tell me that if a man drinks what's in that bottle he becomes rich?"

"Either rich—or forever doomed!" the stranger answered. "But this phial is not for you, mine host!"

Todd stared at him, his eyes narrowed, his gaze curious and eager.

"Well, what happens to anybody that drinks from it?" Todd asked.

"The elixir brings visions," the man said. "If a man lets this draught pass his lips, he learns the road to wealth."

He paused, and his rich tones sank to a hissing whisper.

"Or, if not that," he said, "then does he see visions in which all his past comes back to him. He sees the faces of those whom he has duped—coming hauntingly, accusing him!"

Jasper Todd drew a deep breath. He had heard much of the fakirs of the East, and of their knowledge. He realised that this man must be one of that strange brethren—and the green bottle must contain a potent draught which had powers that were almost miraculous.

"If that will show a man how to become rich, then I'd like to drink some of it—ha, ha, ha!" he chuckled. "Are you ready to sell it?"

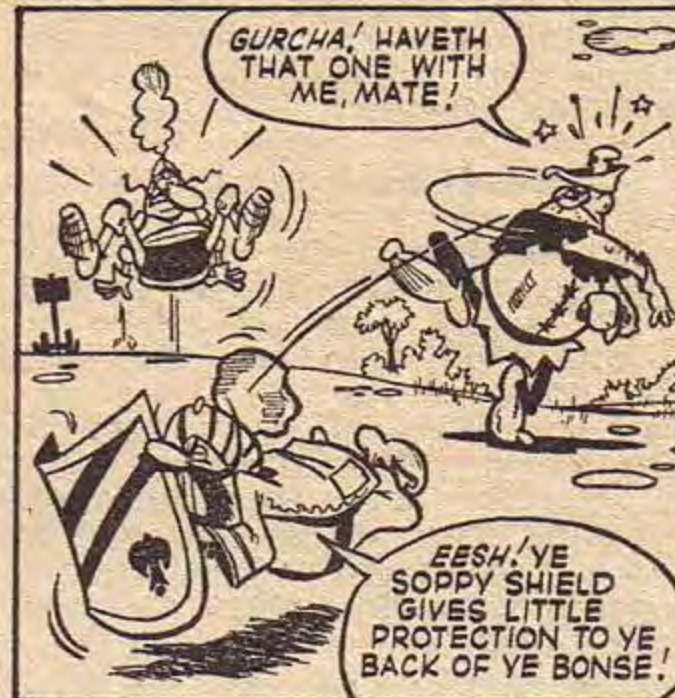
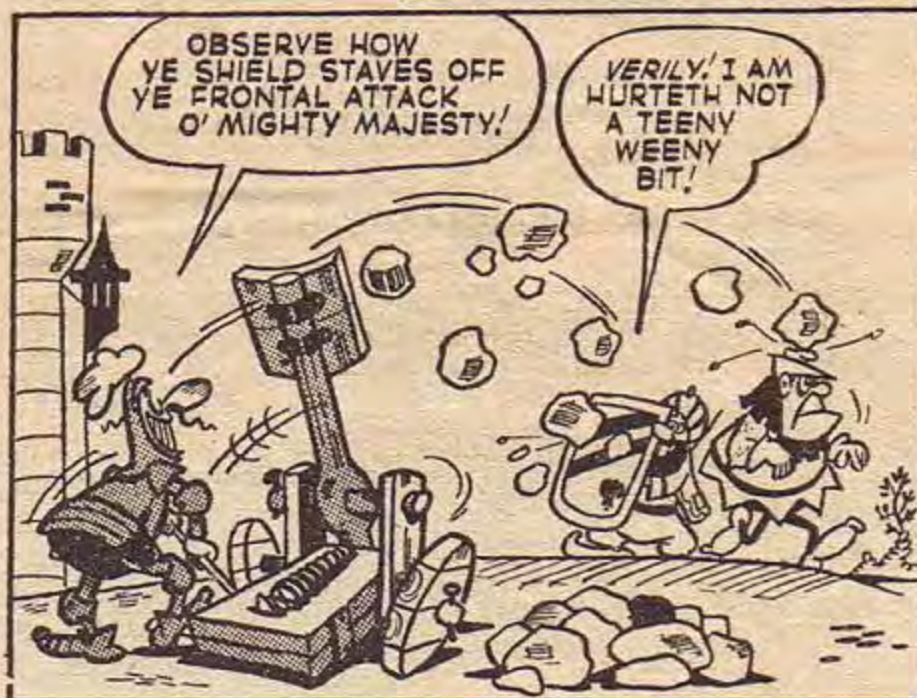
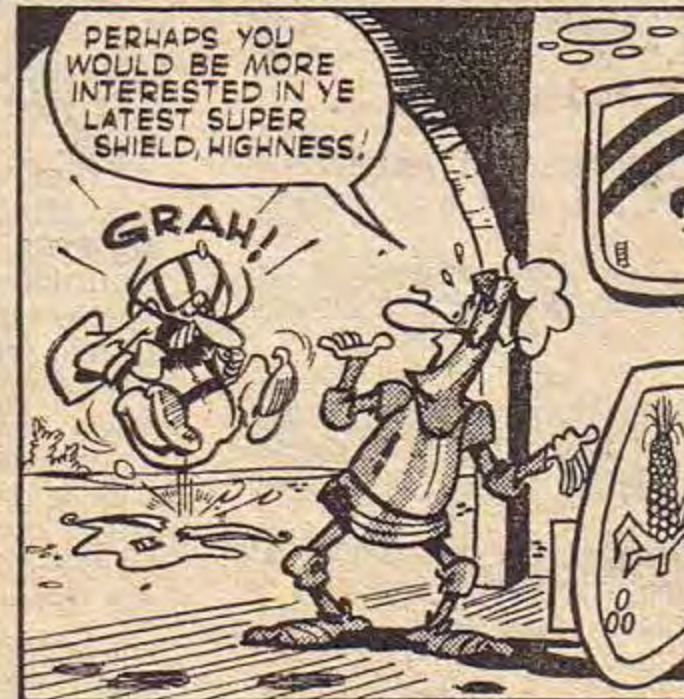
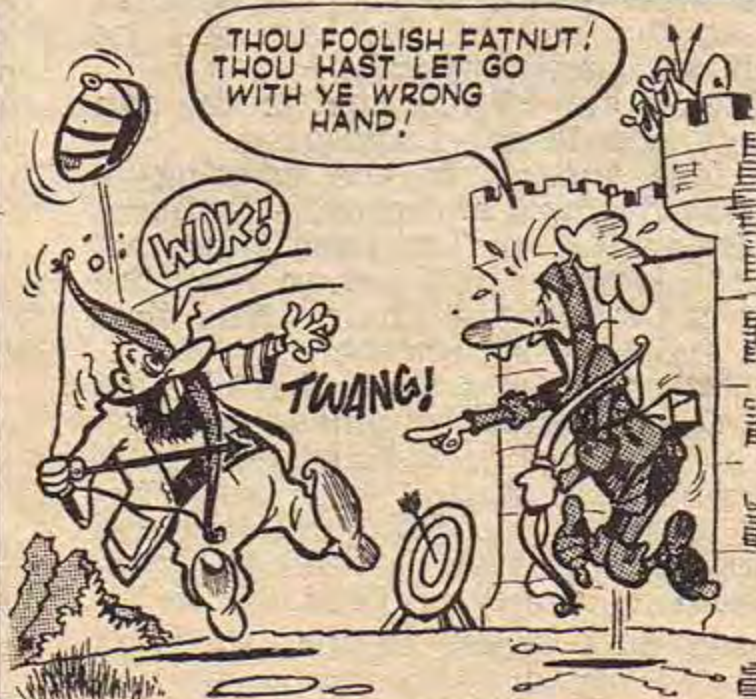
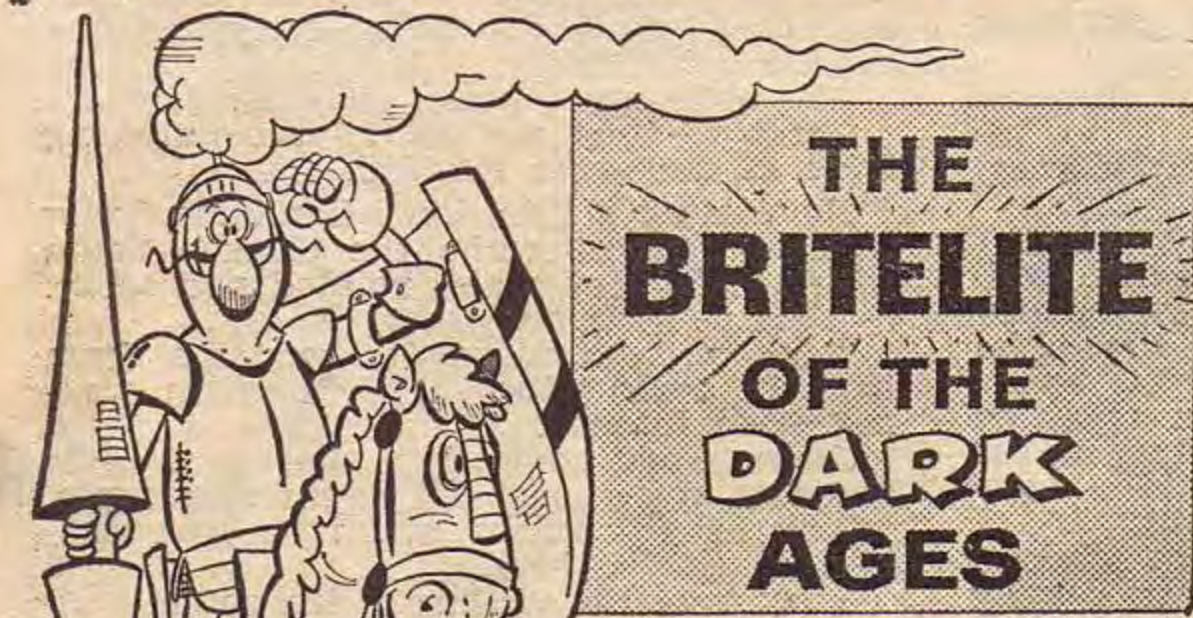
"I have, at times, sold a draught of my elixir for a handful of gold," the Indian answered softly.

"Then I'll buy!" Todd exclaimed.

"Nay! I have said that it is not for you!" the Indian fakir replied. "I know naught of who ye may be, nor do I care—but I feel evil in this place!" He leaned towards Todd. "It would not be wise for you to drink, mine host!"

Jasper Todd watched the turbaned man empty the wineglass that he held, still clutching that green bottle in his hand. Todd's reddened gaze never left it, as he muttered to himself.

Sir GASLITE GADABOUT (NITE)



SINISTER INN

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"Power—wealth—luxury—ha, ha, ha!" he said, below his breath. "I'd like to drink it—I'd like to see what it will do for me!"

He lurched around the end of the bar, passing through the door at the back, and leaving Seaman Joe gazing at this unusual customer.

Within minutes Jasper Todd returned. He was chuckling as he came round the bar, pausing by the fakir, and dragging golden coins from his pocket, spilling them upon the top of a table.

"There you are! Ha, ha, ha!" Todd panted. "There's gold for you, my friend—and not one handful, but half a dozen! I'll give it to you!"

He leaned across the table, his red eyes peering into the man's dark orbs.

"I'll give you all that gold for the bottle—if the elixir works, as you say it does!" he said.

"A draught from the phial will do what I have said!" came the slow-spoken answer. "But all the gold you have could not buy the bottle from me!"

"Then I'll give you this for a drink—for just one drink!" Todd hissed.

"Nay, not for a drink—not for one single drop!" the fakir answered.

He leaned towards Todd, his eyes burning. "This elixir from the East is not for you!" he whispered.

Jasper Todd straightened up. Long moments passed while he regarded the man, then he slowly returned the gold to his pockets. His heavy eyelids drooped, and a thin smile grew beneath his beard.

"Very well," he said. "Ha, ha, ha! If you don't wish to sell, I'll not try to persuade you!"

He chuckled and waved a hand towards the carved chair.

"Be seated, sir," he said. "Let me give you a drink of the finest wine that my cellar holds. I can see that you are one of high degree, and I keep the chair for my—very—special—customers. So sit down, and drink again!"

The turbaned man turned slowly, gazing at the chair. He reached out, touching the padded arm. His hand seemed to quiver as he hurriedly drew it back.

"Nay, I'll not sit there," he whispered. "An evil thing is that chair!"

Jasper Todd stared at him for a moment longer, then his tense fingers relaxed, and he chuckled.

"Ha, ha, ha! I can see that I must not be bad friends with you, sir," he said. "Well, take another glass of wine with me." He stepped to the bar. "Seaman Joe, fill the gentleman's glass again!" he ordered.

Seaman Joe obeyed hastily, spilling the richly coloured wine.

Jasper Todd's back was towards the fakir when he lifted the glass from the counter, and fingers which had been tucked into his waistcoat pocket came out, hovering for a moment over the liquid, then passing on.

Even the sailor did not see the two little pellets which dropped into the wine and were instantly dissolved.

"Ha, ha, ha! You can feel these things, can you!" Jasper Todd remarked. "Then I can see that you'd be a difficult man to trick, sir!"

He handed the glass to the fakir, smiling and chuckling all the while.

"Drink up!" he said. "Sit on one of the benches and be comfortable, sir."

He indicated a seat, and the fakir dropped on to it, resting one elbow upon the table where Jasper Todd's gold had glittered but a few moments before. He raised the glass.

"May your footsteps follow the path that you deserve, mine host!" he murmured.

Todd's eyelids narrowed as he heard that unusual toast and saw the fakir lifting the glass to his lips, but the owner of the Red Fox Inn said nothing. His red eyes gleamed as the wine passed the other's lips. He saw the fakir smile while he lowered the empty glass.

"Wine have I tasted the world over, and yours is very mellow," he said. "It is full of warm sunshine; but I had a thought that it tasted a little differently from the glass you gave me before."

"Yes, this wine grows on a man," Todd said. "Ha, ha, ha! Very often when you have drunk it you feel that you need no more."

Seaman Joe read the inner meaning of those words, and he marked the way in which Jasper Todd was watching the Indian—waiting for the drug to have its effect.

The fakir lifted the green phial which he still held, holding it against the light and smiling.

"Ay, riches—or doom!" he whispered. "That lies within this bottle, mine host. He who drinks from it is—is—" His voice slowly trailed away.

He suddenly slumped across the table, and as he fell Jasper Todd bent quickly

(Continued on next page.)

towards him, snatching the green bottle and slipped it into his own pocket.

He passed his hands beneath the man's shoulders, dragging him towards the carved chair, showing unusual strength as he flung him into it.

The fakir was inert and helpless; only his eyes moved. Todd knew that he could hear all that was said to him, but he could not move. Todd chuckled, leering at him.

"You were not so hard to trick as I thought you'd be!" he said. "You refused my gold, so I've taken what I want. Ha, ha, ha!"

He paused, his heavy eyelids dropping, meeting the fakir's burning gaze.

"And you were right when you said that beyond the chair lies darkness!" Todd jeered.

He produced the green bottle, holding it triumphantly up to the light. The liquid rolled against the glass, and Todd's smile widened.

"I am going to test this," he said. "And I am going to—to—"

He stopped, startled and gasping.

The fakir had moved!

The power of the drug should have held him motionless, but its potency was swiftly failing.

Todd stepped back, his eyes widening in amazement, as he saw the fakir come slowly upright in the chair.

He rose to his feet.

"Your drug is of but little power, mine host!" he whispered. "For but a moment did it hold me in bonds of iron. But now I have broken them!"

The fakir stared down at Jasper Todd as the owner of the lone inn crouched back from him, still clutching that green phial.

"And, since you covet that elixir—take it!" the whispering voice said. "Drink, red-eyed one—drink! And your eyes shall be opened as never were the eyes of man before!"

He moved towards the door, gliding silently across the floor. He drew the door open, turning to fix Jasper Todd with his burning glance once again.

"Drink!" he said. "And may the stars of heaven pity ye when ye have quaffed the draught from my phial!"

The door closed behind him as he passed silently into the night, and left Jasper Todd wondering what was the meaning of his strange words. And he left behind a bottle of faintly tinted elixir.

"THEY MAY COME AGAIN!"

JASPER TODD remained standing with the bottle in his hand, regarding the closed door. The fakir's last words had been charged with menace, but the red-eyed man ignored that, and suddenly paced to the window, peering out.

In the gloom beyond he could see no sign of the Indian. The man had vanished as abruptly as he had first appeared, and Todd turned back, raising the phial.

It caught the light of the lamp, gleaming, and he saw the liquid that it contained moving inside.

He glanced at Seaman Joe, and saw that the man was pale. Todd spoke shortly.

"Lock up!" he said.

"Lock up?" the tattooed man repeated. "But there's another hour to go yet!"

"Lock up, I said!" Todd snarled.

He remained by the window, watching as the sailor now hastened to obey, placing a batten across the door, and moving back to the bar.

"And now go to your room!" Todd ordered.

Todd set the green phial in the centre of a table and seated himself in his chair,

sinking back against the padding. Long minutes passed while he stared at the phial, which shone with greenish hue under the light that came from overhead.

"He who drinks—gains wealth!" Todd muttered. "I wonder if that's true?"

He picked up the bottle and withdrew its glass stopper. He raised it to his nostrils, and found that it gave off a sweet odour.

"That can't hurt me!" he murmured.

He tilted the bottle against his lips, swallowing some of its contents. He was breathing quickly when he lowered the phial again, rolling his tongue across his lips.

It had a stranger taste than anything Jasper Todd had ever known, and he sat up in the chair, looking around him, waiting for some effect of the draught.

It appeared as though the dark shadows all about the bar-room drew closer, coming nearer and nearer, and then he felt impelled to glance sideways from his chair.

His eyes were drawn to the trapdoor in the floor at the end of the bar—and he saw that it was slowly opening!

It rose higher and higher and, in the gap which it left, a pale hand appeared.

Then a face showed in the opening—a face that was haggard and grey, with burning eyes. Below it a spectral form appeared, mounting the ladder which led up from the cellar that lay below the chair. And that figure was followed by another.

The second shape was that of a cloaked man, who wore a broad-brimmed hat.

And at his heels came a third form! It was a tramp, with matted hair upon his brow, and tattered clothes shrouding his form—ghostly and unreal, save for the glaring eyes fixed upon Jasper Todd.

The seated man gazed, aghast. He tried to move or to cry out, but he could not.

Remorselessly the phantom shapes came upwards from the secret recesses of the inn, and the three were followed by one who was slim and tall, garbed in faultless evening clothes.

He was as pale as the rest, and behind him glided a man who wore an old-fashioned hat of beaver fur, and whose worn coat seemed to brush the very ground. He was like some forgotten relic of humanity—impalpable, spectral, and with the grasping air of a miser.

Todd tried to cringe, but he was forced to face the glaring eyes in those ashen faces; and after the miser there appeared a short, scowling man, whose face was as evil as that of the man who followed him—a figure which wore old clothes, although the face was young.

SOLUTIONS TO KNOCKOUT'S QUIZ ROUNDABOUT

CROSSWORD:

- Across. 1. Scarecrow. 6. Ewe. 7. Ebbs. 8. Etna. 9. Elastic. 12. Lend. 14. Oval. 15. Arc. 16. Treasures.
- Down. 2. Ambulance. 3. Retriever. 4. Own. 5. Wear. 10. Flat. 11. Alas. 13. Err.

DAFFY DISGUISES: BERNARD BRESSLAU.

JUMBLE SOLUTION: DOUBLE TROUBLE.

SPOT THE CHANGE:

- Colour of birds.
Fish's eyes.
Scales on fish's neck.
Scales on fish's tail.
Fisherman's arm.
Fishing rod.
Fishing-line.
Wave on left side.

Others followed, and slowly they paced out, grouping about the chair. They gathered round the seated figure, and from the first there came a spectral voice that drummed into Todd's brain, every accusing word a hammer-blow.

"Ye stole my jewels!" it said.

"And ye stole my gold!" the quivering voice of the miser sounded.

He pointed a thin, long, trembling finger at Jasper Todd, while the cloaked figure with the fiery eyes also pointed and spoke.

"And ye stole my papers!"

"And ye took money to send me down into the dark!" the ghostly form in evening dress intoned.

Jasper Todd cowered in the chair, while accusing voices sounded again and again, telling of the crimes which he had committed against them.

They were the victims of his chair!

And all the time they drew nearer and nearer to him until he was surrounded by quivering, accusing fingers, until fiery eyes blazed into his own, and he was pressed about by ghostly shapes which glided menacingly close to his shuddering form.

Now did he know the full meaning of the draught that he had quaffed!

Before Jasper Todd were now arraigned in phantom parade the ghostly victims of his villainy!

The green phial had not revealed the way to wealth.

Instead, it had taken him into his past, confronting him with hapless sufferers of his crooked deeds.

He closed his eyes in terror. The merged voices rang yet louder until his mind rocked under the raging words they spoke, and then the voices of his victims died slowly away.

It seemed to him that an age passed in unearthly silence before he dared to open his eyes.

When he looked around the ghosts had gone and the trapdoor was closed.

"It was only a vision—only a dream!" he muttered hoarsely.

"It was no dream!" a whispering voice answered.

Jasper Todd started.

Standing before him was the turbaned figure of the fakir!

The faint, chill light of dawn now showed at the inn windows.

Miraculously the night had passed.

"I've been asleep! It's daylight!" Todd gasped. "I dreamed it all!"

"It was no dream!" the whispering tones repeated. "You saw the phantoms of those you have wronged—and they may come to you again!"

The fakir reached out and picked up the bottle, bending towards Jasper Todd and whispering once more.

"You cannot tell when they will come again!" he said. "It may be in the night or in the dawn, or they will come in the dusk of evening. You have drunk from the green bottle, and when you least expect it those phantoms may come again!"

The turbaned figure backed to the door. The door opened, and he disappeared.

By what strange agency those wraiths had been conjured from the past Jasper Todd could not tell.

He knew only that he had seen them, and that the fear of their return must ever be with him.

The grim, sinister inn now guarded yet another secret—a secret that was fraught with more dark mystery than any of the thousand secrets it already held.

(Learn all the secrets of Sinister Inn next week—and be thrilled! Order your KNOCKOUT today!)



SPORTY

by
Reg Wootton

