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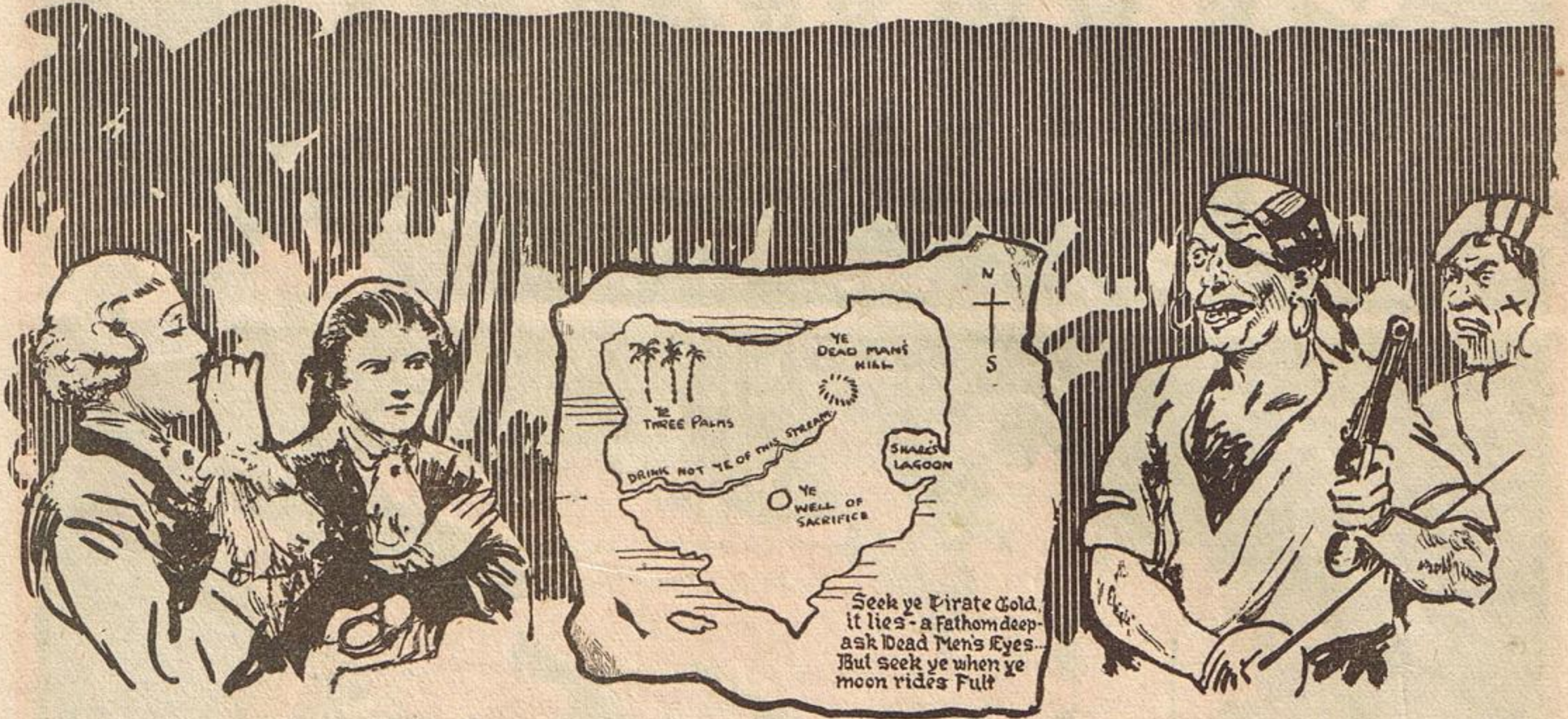
The RANGER

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SWIN

The Treasure of Dead Man's Isle



A nerve-tingling story of treasure-seeking adventure, by Hedley Scott.

AFTER MANY PERILS LANGLEY MORGENSEN HAS AT LAST REACHED THE ISLAND ON WHICH IS HIDDEN A VAST STORE OF PIRATE TREASURE. ON THE ISLAND, TOO, ARE PIEL SAMONARD AND THE CHEVALIER—AND NOW BEGINS A BATTLE OF WITS BETWEEN ALL THREE RIVALS TO WIN THE TREASURE HOARD!

Escape!

WITH the suddenness of the tropics the blue sky became blotted out, and a velvety blackness enshrouded Dead Man's Isle as in a garment. Simultaneous with the merging of day into night there arose a wailing and lamentation from a hundred throats.

Black-skinned islanders, with long spears, faced due west and offered up a dirge to their gods, blaming themselves for the escape of one who had been destined as a human sacrifice.

The Chevalier St. Moreau, who knew something of the Pacific Islanders' language, smiled grimly to himself, for he was the subject of that weird incantation. His slim figure was pressed into a friendly hollow, shadowed by a sun-bleached boulder, around which grew tangled creeper and short, spiky grass. By the Chevalier's side lay Langley Morgensen, the youth who had helped him escape the horrible fate which had already overtaken Black Michael.

The pair of them watched and waited, afraid even to move a muscle. Not far distant from them towered the roughly hewn totem pole, whose gargoyles of a head pointed directly to the Well of Sacrifice. At the bottom of that murky pit lurked a monstrosity of Nature to whom the islanders were wont to throw their human victims at set periods of the year.

Langley Morgensen shuddered as he heard again in his troubled mind the death scream of Black Michael, and visualized the terrified, helpless giant being thrown into that loathsome pit. A like fate had been intended for the

Chevalier, but the devilish natives had been so preoccupied in the tragic end of Black Michael that he had seized the opportunity of rolling clear.

Then, with the suddenness of black magic, Langley Morgensen had appeared, knife in hand, and severed his bonds. Thereafter the pair of them had raced for their lives, with a horde of yelling natives hard at their heels. Only the darkness had saved them from capture, for Dead Man's Isle offered little else in the matter of protection. With the dawn their capture would be a certainty, for over a hundred keen-eyed islanders would be seeking them. For a few hours, however, Langley and the Chevalier were safe.

Raising his head a trifle, Langley saw a number of shadowy figures halt within a couple of feet of where he and his companion lay. By stretching out a hand the youngster could easily have seized a brown leg.

He flattened himself into cover and nudged the Chevalier to keep silent. For the space of half an hour the group of natives stood muttering and gesticulating, and the fugitives breathed with relief when they moved off.

"I know not how ye came to be upon this isle," whispered the Chevalier; "but 'tis to your presence here, gallant sir, that I owe my life."

In the darkness Langley smiled. Strange it was to hear the musical voice again. But memory of their parlous plight sobered him and turned his thoughts into more practical channels.

"Come the dawn, monsieur, an' our lives won't be worth a moment's purchase. Do ye try and think of a plan."

"Ye speak sensibly as only a Morgensen can," replied the Chevalier.

The pair of them relapsed into silence. The Chevalier St. Moreau was the first to break it.

"The only way, gallant sir, is for us to seize one of the native canoes. They lie beached on the western side of this island. Can ye think of a better plan?"

"Similar thoughts were in my own mind," answered Langley, "for I did see the islanders come ashore from the top of yonder hill. The canoes will be guarded, of a certainty, and ye are without a weapon. Do ye take this dagger and pistol—"

"And ye, gallant sir?"

"I will rely upon my trusty rapier, monsieur. Come!"

The pair of them rose off their knees and peered intently into the blackness around them. Then at a signal from Langley they began to worm their way past the hill and onwards to the western side of the island. More than once they came within an ace of capture, for groups of islanders were everywhere, but cautiousness and luck eventually brought them within sight of the beached canoes.

Two tall natives, who leaned on their spears like statues, so immobile were they, loomed up in shadow. Pressing themselves flat into the ground, Langley and the Chevalier rested awhile before they made the attack which spelled life or death to them.

"One cry, monsieur, and we are doomed," whispered Langley. "We must be swift, merciless, and silent."

The Chevalier murmured assent. Of a sudden the two sentinels turned about, providing opportunity for a surprise attack of which neither of the two fugitives had dreamed would come their way. And in that moment Langley and the Chevalier rose up stealthily and silently and sprang.

The unsuspecting guards fell easy victims to cold steel. No cry rang out; just two muffled thuds as their lifeless bodies crashed into the sand. Next moment Langley and the Chevalier were exerting all their combined strength to run one of the clumsy canoes down to the water's edge. As it floated they sprang in and seized a paddle apiece. Then, with united efforts, they sent the long, up-curved prow of the canoe scuttling out to sea, the deadly silence of night being broken only by their laboured breathing and the steady drip, drip of the water against the paddles.

For half an hour or more neither of them spoke; and then something which had obviously been puzzling the Chevalier forced him to break the silence.

"Whither away, gallant sir?" he asked, resting for moment. "Ye seem to be running a parallel course with the shore."

"Ye speak truly," answered Langley. "'Tis in my mind to reach the lagoon on the far side and seek sanctuary aboard Piel Samonard's craft."

The Chevalier started.

"Samonard? The deuce!" he exclaimed. "I thought I heard friend

Piel's voice the while I lay a prisoner by the well. How comes he here?"

"He came ashore with a landing-party, monsieur," explained Langley, "and the natives ambushed them. 'Twas his voice ye heard right enough. Of the party he was the only one to escape. He flew towards the shore as fast as his legs would carry him, and doubtless is aboard now."

The Chevalier creased his handsome face into a frown. Then he laughed lightly and musically.

"'Tis mighty providential that Samonard should be so near at hand. His ship, the Island Queen, shall be our ship an I be not mistaken. This is luck indeed!"

They paddled on.

"Tell me, monsieur," said Langley at length, "after ye escaped from my ship with that cowardly rat Black Michael, how ye came to fall into the hands of the islanders?"

The Chevalier shrugged his shoulders. "We were adrift in an open boat, as ye know. Without food or water we passed many days of torment, until at length we ran aground on an island. The rest is simply told. The natives fed us, nursed us back to health, only to bring us to Dead Man's Isle as a sacrifice to their gods."

He paused, then went on again.

"Right humbly do I crave your pardon, gallant sir, for my past misdeeds. I fear my greed got the better of me when I thought that old Josiah's treasure should be mine, and mine alone. I served ye an ill trick, a treacherous trick, but my soul has tormented me ever since. I swear by all the saints that from now on I will deal fairly and honourably with ye, lad."

Langley said nothing. Time was when the laughing Chevalier had professed to be his friend. But that friendship had not stood the test of time. Greed of old Josiah Morgensen's gold had severed it, and the Chevalier St. Moreau had been revealed to the youth who had hero-worshipped him as a man with the "face of a woman and the soul of a fiend," even as old Lawyer Shanks in far away Brixham had cynically declared.

A pained expression settled on the Chevalier's handsome countenance.

"Ye do not believe me, lad?"

"I shall never believe ye again, Chevalier," replied Langley bluntly. "But have no fear; neither ye nor Samonard shall cheat me of my inheritance. Josiah's treasure is mine—and mine alone. Do ye regard me as your enemy, and that, despite the fact I saved your life an hour or two ago. For the moment it suits both ye and I to call a truce. Have done!"

No more was said. The canoe forged on, each powerful double stroke bringing it nearer and nearer to Piel Samonard's anchored brigantine. But the Chevalier and his companion were destined not to find the sanctuary they sought in the Island Queen, did they but know it.

Hemmed in by Savages!

"STIR your stumps, ye spineless rats!"

Piel Samonard's dominant voice sent the crew of the Island Queen scuttling about their various tasks. Those that lagged were the recipients of hefty kicks from the giant's sea-boots.

At any moment Piel Samonard expected an attack to be made on the brigantine, and as it was impossible to weigh anchor and head out to sea in the darkness, he was making such preparations aboard as would give the islanders who had butchered his men, all the trouble they were looking for should they attempt to board the brigantine.

For himself, he hardly closed his one sound eye in sleep that night. Apart

from his anxiety a deep wound caused by a native's spear thrust was troublesome in the extreme. He numbered his crew and swore under his breath when he discovered the total to be thirty all told. Thirty faint-hearted sea dogs, for faint-hearted they were since he had told of the slaughter of the landing party, against six score screaming savages.

Every sound during the night brought Samonard eagerly to the rail, listening—straining his one gleaming eye to pierce the enshrouding darkness. Like the Chevalier and Langley, he heard the sustained wailing of the islanders, but attributed the cause to his own escape. When eventually it died down Samonard grew more suspicious. He knew these Pacific islanders of old. They would think nothing of boarding a craft like the Island Queen even if she bristled with defiance, and once aboard, the lives of the crew would not be worth a snap of the fingers against such heavy odds as four to one.

Having ordered all gun ports to be cleared and made ready for action, Samonard called the crew aft and addressed them.

"Do ye pay heed to what I say," he said by way of commencement. "I have told ye that your comrades who went ashore with me will never tread these decks again. We were ambushed by a hundred or more dark-skinned sons of Satan."

A growl went up from the crew. "This accursed treasure isle swarms with the black brutes," resumed Samonard, "and it's their lives or ours. Do ye remember that should the heathens raid us." Then, by way of encourage-

ment he shifted to another "tack." "Until we clean up these black carrion we can never put our hands on old Josiah's treasure?"

Came another murmur from the crew—they were by this time a little weary of hearing about this fabulous treasure, which had brought them across thousands of miles of ocean. Moreover, they did not trust their giant skipper, or put any reliance in his oft-repeated promises of sharing the treasure with them. Piel Samonard's reputation and greed were such as to nullify any promises of that nature. Not a few of them, too, were homesick, Piel, glaring at the sullen faces about him, seemed to read their thoughts like an open book.

"Slap my thighs!" he jeered. "Ye are a pretty spineless mob! Are ye afraid to try conclusions with these black devils? If so ye can say your prayers now and say good-bye to Josiah's treasure—rot his bones—at the same time!"

"Can't we stand off from the island, cap'n, and wait events?" asked one surly Devon man. "Seems mighty like suicide hanging about 'ere waiting for a hundred or more savages to come aboard!"

"Ye numbskull!" spat Samonard. "Can I move the brigantine through this accursed darkness? Do ye want to foul the reef and end up by giving the sharks a beanfeast?"

There was no answer.

"I'll see if some rum can put heart into ye yellow-livered rats!" snarled Samonard. "Bring up a puncheon—an' look slippy about it!"

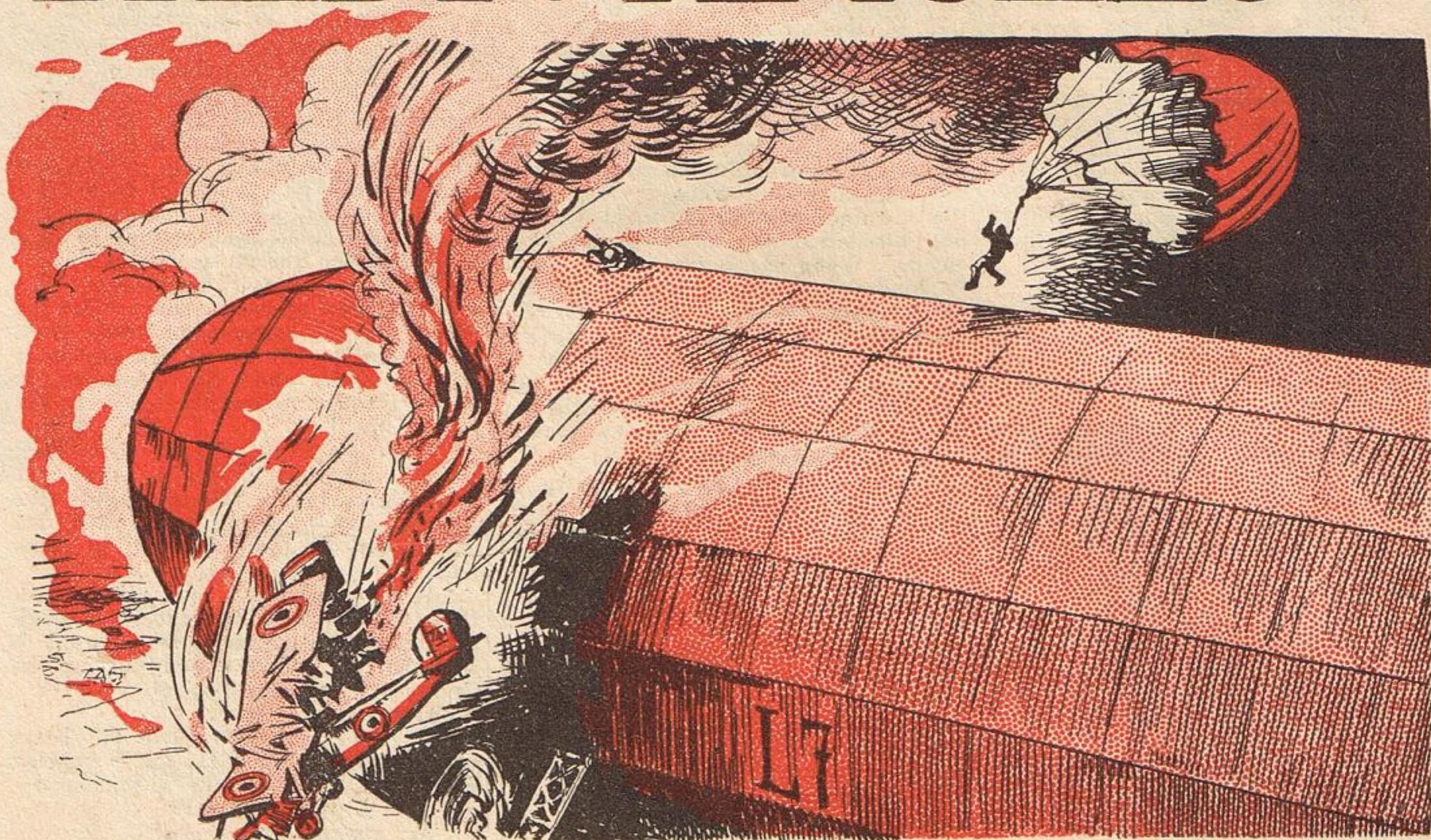
"Ay, ay, cap'n!"

(Continued on page 10.)



Samonard thrust his way towards the rail of the ship, fighting furiously. And every time his huge sword hurtled downwards, a black-skinned savage went to his "happy hunting ground." "Have at them!" roared Piel Samonard above the din. "Stand by your cap'n!"

BALDY'S ANGELS!



DAREDEVIL THRILLS IN THE AIR IN THIS LATEST STORY OF BRITAIN'S CRACK FLYING SQUADRON. BY CAPTAIN ROBERT HAWKE.

JOHN HENRY DENT IS A CHEERFUL "IDIOT"—AND HE'S ALSO A CRACK PILOT! HE MADE A MISTAKE IN SENDING HIS GENERAL A TELEGRAM INTENDED FOR HIS "BEST GIRL"—BUT HE MAKES NO MISTAKE IN BRINGING DOWN A GERMAN ZEPPELIN!

The "Angels" in London.

IN O. 1 DEFENCE SQUADRON at the Weald Aerodrome, to the north-west of London, was considerably "livened" up. It was livened up by the order of General Sir John Oakham, who

was in charge of the London Defence area.

General Oakham, although an extremely able officer, had been severely criticised in the Press for some weeks past.

The Zeppelins had been playing havoc with London. Hardly a night passed but they were over, droning far out of sight in a pale liquid sky, and dropping their bombs all over the vast city.

The newspapers criticised General Oakham heartily, without considering any of his difficulties. They said that something ought to be done to prevent the Zeppelins bombing the city.

They hinted that General Oakham was not quite "up" to his job—in which, by the way, they were quite wrong.

The general, however, thought it best to take some notice of the newspaper campaign. He made arrangements with the Command in France, and borrowed the famous "Angels" Squadron.

And the Angels Squadron were only too delighted at the chance of coming back to London for a space, so that their work could be interspersed with the delights of home and the city.

Young Mr. John Henry Dent was absolutely in his element. John Henry shone in two ways. He was acknowledged to be the finest single-seater fighting pilot on the entire Western front. And he was famous as the Royal Flying Corps fashion-plate.

This visit to London set John Henry writing frantic telegrams from various towns in France as he passed through on the transport train.

The telegrams were addressed to his tailor, who received almost a shipping load of instructions about new uniforms, which were to be built with the utmost speed.

The telegrams also set fluttering the hearts of various beautiful damsels who resided in and about London.

John Henry was a great ladies' man. And he meant to waste no time whilst this glorious spell of work at home lasted.

Young Mr. Dent, however, was never good at detail work. In the first place, he found on arrival that the bill at his tailor's was just about twice what he had expected it to be. And in the second place, he discovered that his flirtatious arrangements had been made more enthusiastically than wisely.

At Weald Aerodrome there awaited him a letter from a charming creature known as "Ookums"—or "Snooky," or "Snooky-Ookums," according to the enthusiasm of young Mr. Dent's mood.

It was a slightly harsh letter. The lady had discovered that John Henry had also communicated in sentimental terms with her bosom friend.

There was also the letter from the tailor.

Young Mr. Dent perspired and held his head. He became enraged—the tailor's bill enraged him most, for he prided himself on being able to deal with the ladies in all circumstances.

He had a long and bitter conversation with Baldy Atlee, the colonel of the squadron, on the subject of uniform allowance. Baldy was not sympathetic.

It was typical of young Mr. Dent, therefore, that he impetuously telegraphed the War Office, complaining bitterly that the meagre uniform-allowance dished out to officers of His Majesty's Flying Corps on Home Defence, was not sufficient. He remarked, in fact, that he had to walk about like a tramp—that in these distressing

circumstances he was unable to entertain a lady friend.

Miss Ookums—or Snooky—was amazed beyond all measure when she received that telegraph. She was also indignant.

General Oakham, at the War Office, was also alarmed when he received a telegram couched in the following terms:

"OOKUMS, DARLING, AREN'T YOU AN ASS? STILL I LOVE YOU DEARLY AND I'LL MEET YOU AT THE PALACEUM RESTAURANT AT SEVEN O'CLOCK TO-MORROW EVENING. BELIEVE ME, YOU'RE THE ONLY, ONLY ONE, KISSES AND MORE KISSES, FROM LITTLE JOHN."

Both General Oakham and Miss Snooky—or Ookums—read their respective telegrams several times over and exhibited alarming changes of countenance.

For the blithe Mr. Dent had quite cheerfully and haplessly got the addresses mixed!

Having no idea of his mistake, he dressed with the utmost care on the following evening, and polished his famous monocle until it shone like a heliograph.

Since only half the squadron were on duty at a time, this evening was "off" for John Henry Dent by permission. He whistled happily as he strode to the near-by station and caught a train. From Baker Street Station he hailed a taxi and rolled up to the Palaceum in style.

Officers and their fair companions were pouring into the glittering entrance of the Palaceum in a constant stream. The scene was a bright one.

It also showed some small amount of confusion, for military policemen were standing at the door and putting brief questions to every officer who appeared.

The fact was that General Oakham resented being addressed as "Ookums" by any junior officer in his Command! He also resented being called an ass, and told that he was the only, only one!

An invitation to the Palaceum did not mollify his wrath in the slightest degree. By his order, the military policemen were present and a red-tabbed assistant provost-marshal was grimly pacing up and down within the foyer.

A Ticking Off for John Henry.

HAPPILY, John Henry elbowed his way into the Palaceum—to stop in some surprise as a military policeman touched the peak of his cap and spoke.

“Are you Lieutenant J. H. Dent, of No. 1 Defence Squadron?” said the man—for about the two-hundredth time that evening.

“Bullseye the first time, dear old scout!” grinned John Henry. “Slap on the coconut, don’t you know! Will you have a cigar or a bag of nuts? But why the jolly old question?”

“One moment, sir,” said the policeman in relief. “Will you step this way, sir?”

John Henry stepped that way, suddenly thinking that his wire had caused the War Office to become repentant and send an envoy to chat things over with him. How they had found out where he was coming this evening he hadn’t the faintest idea. Still, the War Office had many sources from which they obtained their information.

The assistant provost-marshal approached John Henry as the policeman made a sign. Young Mr. Dent beamed.

“What-ho! What-ho! What-ho!” he said. “I must have shaken jolly old Oakham up pretty severely with my little message! I suppose you’ve come to chat things over, dear old Staff person? But sit down—make yourself at home. What are you goin’ to have?”

The provost-marshal rocked dizzily upon his feet. He had thought—to put the most mild interpretation on John Henry’s wire—that the officer who sent it had been under the influence of wine at the time. Yet this officer, who faced him beamingly—and with such amazing insolence—was most certainly as sober as any judge.

The provost-marshal drew a deep breath, collected all his talents together—and spoke for fully five minutes without stopping.

He was somewhat of an artist at speaking. It was his job in life to “choke off” young officers who had slightly overstepped the bounds of discipline. He, there and then, choked off John Henry with such thunderous might and vim that young Mr. Dent seemed to be on the point of strangulation.

John Henry, indeed, gasped and gulped. He spluttered like a stranded fish. He flapped his arms—he nearly fell flat on the floor when that wrongly-addressed telegram was produced and thrust beneath his nose.

It took John Henry fully half-an-hour

to convince that A.P.M. of the mistake that had been made. And when he had done so his throat was hoarse.

“Dear old Brass-hat!” gasped John Henry. “Dear old staff person, you simply must believe me! Dash it all, you must realise how it all happened! You will tell the jolly old general, won’t you? What I mean—tell him I apologise in all kinds of different attitudes! Tell him that I’m rubbin’ my jolly old nose in the dust! I mean to say—dash it all—”

The provost-marshal had some difficulty in repressing a grin. Now that this amazing mix-up had been explained, he certainly believed every word of it. No officer in his sober senses could have acted as John Henry had done—and meant it.

After all, he had put his own name and squadron on the back of that telegram, according to regulations—which he certainly would not have done if the wire had only been an insolent jest, played upon a person in high authority.

The A.P.M., in fact, had an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh wildly. But it was his business to keep up discipline at all costs. Even though this was a silly mistake, John Henry must be punished by the rigid code of army law.

“Very well, Lieutenant Dent,” said the provost-marshal, keeping his voice cold and dignified by a considerable effort. “Officers are not expected to make mistakes—you must get that very firmly into your head. And in order that you may learn your lesson fully, you will at once return to your aerodrome and report for duty! Your evening’s leave is cancelled! Meanwhile, I will place this explanation before General Oakham, and I think perhaps that he will take a lenient view of it.”

“Oh, what-ho!” gasped John Henry—thankful to be let off so lightly. “Thanks most frightfully, dear old provost-marshal. I’ll go at once—but you won’t forget my little words of remorse for the excellent old general? What I mean—”

The staff officer dismissed him abruptly and turned away at once. He had to. He couldn’t keep a straight face any longer.

But as the rest of that hotel stared in wonderment at the spectacle of a senior staff-officer weeping and heaving with mirth, for no apparent cause, Lieutenant Dent strode forth, trembling with relief.

He hailed the first taxi that passed and caught the first train back that was available. He tottered into the mess, aching for the chance to pour out his story into the ears of some sympathetic listener.

But as he reached the door of the mess it jerked open violently and he was almost

bowled over by a rush of officers who came tearing out.

A bell was ringing brazenly from somewhere about the building, and Colonel Baldy’s voice rose, roaring like a bull.

“Every one on the tarmac!” he was yelling. “Take off in two minutes! Follow my course to the north-east!”

John Henry turned about and ran with the stampede. He knew well enough what had happened. A flock of German Zeppelins had appeared from somewhere over the coast, and been reported to the defence squadrons around London.

All fighting machines were being ordered into the air.

John Henry raced into his sleeping-hut and tore his leather flying kit off its hook. He danced wildly on one leg as he pulled on sheepskin trousers. He tore along to the hangars and helped sweating mechanics to run his machine out with the rest. He clambered up into the cockpit, and knocked his engine controls forward as the propeller was swung round.

Lights flashed and orders were yelled all about the noisy crowd of machines. Baldy, in the lead, with a white light on his tail, moved forward—and with a mighty roar of thunderous open exhausts, the squadron moved after him.

They gathered speed, and a hurricane wind swept back, tearing at the bent backs of the mechanics and billowing the canvas of the squat, low hangars.

With exhausts flaming like comets, the squadron took off in a sweeping arrow-head formation that howled away into the dark sky at a steep climb.

The comets disappeared. Only the thunderous drone was left to echo about the dim countryside.

John Henry kept his eyes fixed on Baldy’s tail-light, and breathed a sigh of relief. He was glad there was a raid—glad he was in time to take part in it.

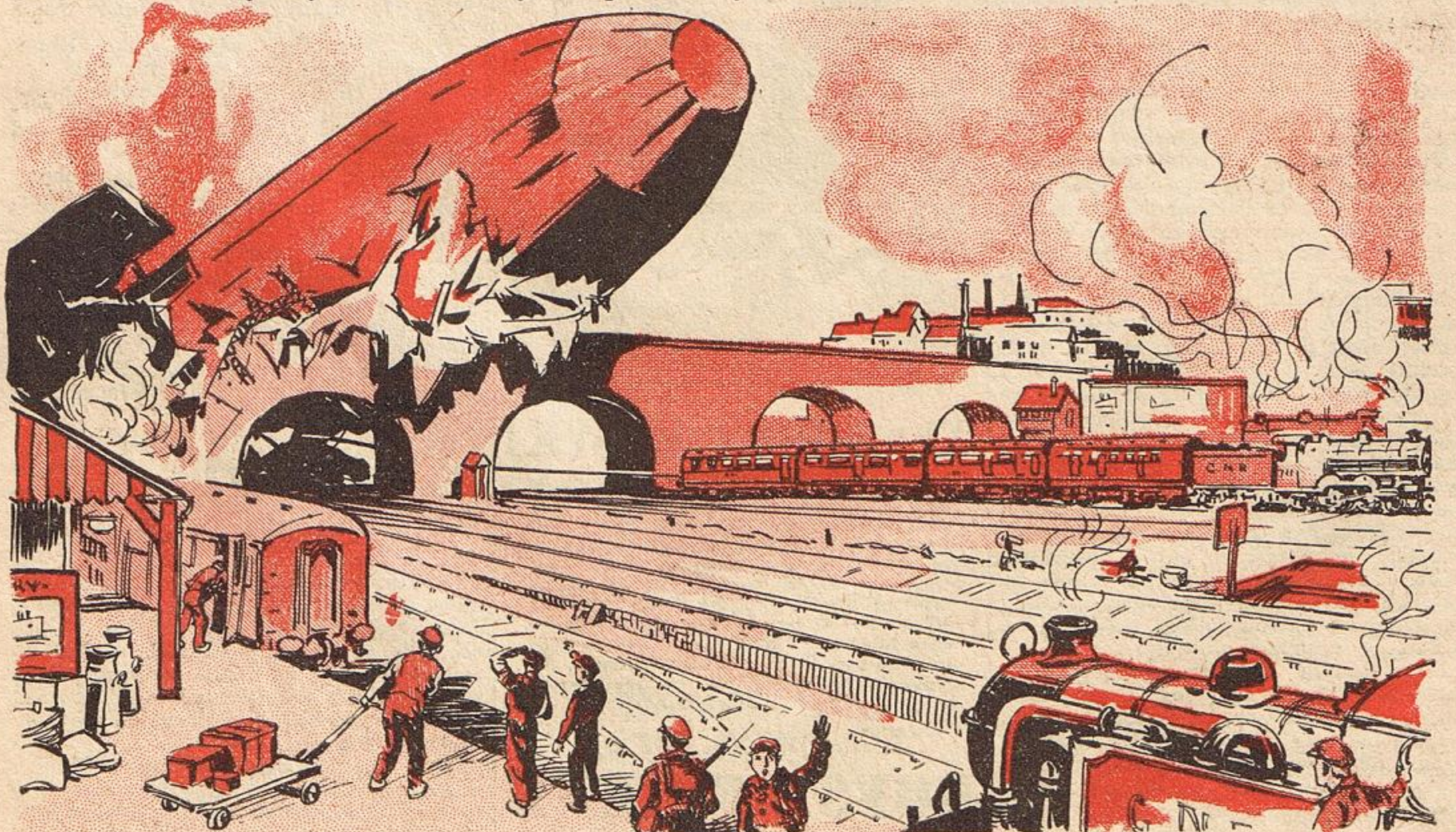
A little spot of extra-special good work to-night would, if reported to General Oakham, undoubtedly turn aside that worthy’s wrath!

General Oakham, however, was destined during the next twenty-four hours to get the surprise of his life!

John Henry’s Zeppelin Ride!

FOR the most part, John Henry found the evening’s action boring in the extreme—and amazingly disappointing.

The first two hours’ flight resulted in nothing whatever. The Zeppelins were not found. And, moreover, an army of



The Zeppelin, dragged along by the express by its trailing cable, smashed against the railway bridge with a mighty crash. There came the rending and shattering of aluminium girder-work, and the cries of the doomed airship’s crew.

clouds rolled up over the London district—clouds which the German aerial headquarters fully expected, by reason of wireless weather reports from various secret sources.

The Angels returned to their headquarters and refilled with petrol. Baldy put them on a roving commission—each to fly according to his own ideas and see what he could find, while his petrol lasted, for a second two hours.

The squadron, broken up far and wide over the skies, was still in the air at the approach of dawn. Young Mr. Dent was feeling cold and miserable. He had got well away from all his comrades, and he had frankly given up hope of seeing anything remotely resembling a Zeppelin on this trip.

At which precise moment he caught sight of one! It was a real Zeppelin—a large and fat Zeppelin, swinging along with its engines still, just above the shelter of a low cloud.

John Henry decided forthwith that it looked like a sausage on a pile of mash.

“‘Mash’ is the word!” he told himself delightedly, as he dived down towards that airship and patted one of his guns lovingly. “Here’s where you jolly well get mashed, my little floatin’ Fritz! Thanks awfully for turnin’ up! When you slide down to take your last bump, dear old General Oakham will be writin’ to ask for my photograph! Now then! Mind your eye, Fritz!”

In a giddy, roaring dive he swept down upon that Zeppelin, the crew of which immediately started their engines with frantic speed.

John Henry pulled out of his dive at the last moment and swept along the length of the airship, his guns dancing and jerking as flame and lead whipped out of their muzzles.

He had a momentary vision of a cat-walk gunner toppling over sideways and then sliding away out over the bulging side of the great ship. He went up and over in a howling stall-turn and came back again to finish the work he had started.

He saw a brown-clad figure jump up out of one of the ladder-holes and grab the gun which that dead marksman had left. The second figure whipped the gun round and fired at long range just as John Henry dived and began shooting.

Then alarming things happened—they happened in precisely the same instant.

Two perfectly-aimed bullet bursts crossed each other. The second gunner pitched limply over his weapon on the Zeppelin top—and John Henry saw his own propeller fly to pieces in a spreading hail of chipped wood.

At the same moment he saw flames. Flames, indeed, leapt up in a ragged, searing array before him. They stung his face and scorched his eyes. Their vicious heat robbed him of breath.

For the bullets fired by the Zeppelin gunner had found his petrol-tank in a crashing burst of lead and phosphorus.

The tank “went up” at once.

But even as it exploded, John Henry jumped like a startled cat.

He flung himself up out of his seat and yanked on his parachute-ring. He kicked himself clear of the diving, blazing little machine as it whirled downwards like a flaming torch. His flying clothes were scorched and glowing in a dozen places—he felt half dead already—he fell sideways like a stone, and his helpless machine swerved away from him in a fiery spin.

John Henry’s parachute opened when he was forty feet from that Zeppelin top. The jerk took all the remaining breath out of his body. And, gasping like a fish, he watched his machine whirl down, missing the Zeppelin narrowly, and breaking up in flaming fragments as it went.

Five seconds later his swinging feet bumped and dragged along the Zeppelin top, and the parachute, released of his weight, billowed down sideways, cockling up and rendering itself completely useless.

Moreover it was a danger. John Henry was sprawled on the airship fabric with every chance of that limp parachute dragging him off by its drifting weight.

If it did drag him off, the odds were

about a thousand to one against its opening properly to support him on his dizzy progress towards the earth, which was about two thousand feet below that thick cloud.

Young Mr. Dent acted instinctively. He rolled over, unclipped his harness, and let the parachute float away.

He got to his knees and stared about him. Even now he could hardly believe what had happened. But, by being stranded on an enemy Zeppelin, he saw that he had probably only exchanged one form of death for another!

Whereupon that second gunner gave a gasping groan. John Henry scrambled towards him—only to find that that sound was the last the unfortunate gunner would ever make upon this earth.

But he found something else!

The second gunner was dressed in the uniform of the English Royal Flying Corps. Even though he was lying face-forward over the gun, John Henry could see the wings badge on his uniform, and a glitter of medal ribbon.

He backed away as something touched his ankle. John Henry jerked round and found a square-headed German Zeppelin-officer grinning up at him.

Fortunately—as he afterwards found—Young Mr. Dent’s eyeglass had become unshipped from his face during that wild parachute dive. Also his leather flying helmet left only a small portion of his countenance visible—as was the case with the dead man, lying over the gun.

The German flying officer noticed no difference between the two. In fact, from his present position he could not see the gunner at all.

“Ah, Hans, you’re a great fellow!” he said admiringly. “Your shooting was excellent—kolossal! We saw the Englander machine from our places in the control car below—it passed us, flaming like a torch! But now the Herr Kommander says you must hurry and do your little job. The fall of that burning machine on the ground below will possibly bring a flock of others up to chase us.”

John Henry had learnt a smattering of German during his years of flying over the fighting-lines in France. He realised in a flash that he had been mistaken for the dead man in British uniform, up above!



The NIGHT HAWK!

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At all Newsagents.

But he was so amazed that he could only gasp.

At that moment, however, the iron ladder shook and another officer came swinging up. He yelled to his comrade to bring John Henry down—by the Herr Kommandant’s orders. The other officer obeyed. He caught John Henry’s belt and dragged him down on to the ladder.

John Henry spluttered and gasped. He tried to protest in the best German he knew—but his accent was unmistakably English.

This made the two officers roar out with laughter. They vowed that John Henry was “kolossal.” They vowed he was a most brilliant fellow—that he could imitate the pig-Englander to perfection!

They rushed him along through the girder-work into the bottom of the ship and stood him beneath an enormous drum, upon which thin wire was coiled. The end of that tough, thin wire was fitted with a hook—and the hook was speedily coupled up to a harness which the officers buckled over John Henry’s feebly-struggling body.

Young Mr. Dent gasped when the platform beneath his feet dropped down, showing itself to be a trap—and showing the billowing sea of cloud just below.

The drum began to unwind swiftly—and John Henry went down with a rush.

A senior officer, with gold decorations upon his cap-peak, appeared at the opening and shouted down a final message.

“Don’t forget,” he yelled, “the line will pick you up when you have completed your work. We shall lower it just by the main railway-crossing to the south of the town of Ranley at nine o’clock to-night. Nine o’clock! Jerk the wire heavily when you are hooked up! Good luck!”

“Zeppelin Down!”

JOHN HENRY sank down at quite a dizzy speed into that damp, enveloping army of clouds. About three minutes later he came out, wet and almost paralysed with fright, on the lower side.

In the cold half-light of dawn he saw that he had less than a thousand feet to go. He recognised the country almost at once, and knew he was in the region of Harrow.

He felt absolutely helpless and prayed that the wire wouldn’t break. He landed somewhat heavily on the ground—started to run away instinctively—and was pulled down flat on his back by the tug of the wire.

With trembling hands John Henry unhooked that wire from his belt and staggered to his feet. The hook swung in the air—it swung high—it travelled upwards quite swiftly and was soon lost to view.

Young Mr. Dent held his head, stared about him almost wildly—and then laughed.

His laughter was half-hysterical, but the humour of the situation struck him vividly. He knew that if he lived to be a hundred no one would believe his astonishing story! He knew that he had had the most miraculous escape that had ever come his way. And then he remembered something.

He remembered the parting message that had been shouted by that senior officer of the Zeppelin. And many things became clear.

The dead gunner up on the airship-top was obviously a spy; it had been the intention of the Zeppelin crew to lower him down to the ground—as they had lowered John Henry. The spy, in his British uniform, would then spend a day in enemy country, no doubt carrying papers which would admit him to important places where he could learn many confidential matters!

Then the spy was to return to Ranley railway-crossing and wait for that wire to come down out of the darkness at nine o’clock. He would hook it on his belt, give a jerk, and be forthwith pulled up into the airship waiting silently above the dark clouds.

A very neat little plan! Germans

were thorough in everything. They had no doubt waited for special weather, in order to carry out this scheme. Their reports would be telling them exactly how low the cloud-banks were to be expected over any part of the country.

John Henry had an idea.

It was an idea that needed some considerable time in being carried out, because it could not take place until nine!

Young Mr. Dent made his way across country and found the Ranley railway-crossing.

He walked into the town and had a belated breakfast. He became friendly with an unusually pretty waitress, who fortunately had the afternoon off, and during the afternoon he took her to the pictures.

He didn't leave her until eight o'clock, when he said blandly that he had got to pop away and bring down a Zeppelin!

The girl let him go, with the impression that she had just parted with one of the cheeriest—and greatest—liars she had ever met in her life.

But she shared with General Oakham a sensation of utter and blank amazement when she read the newspapers on the following day.

At half-past eight Lieutenant John Henry Dent climbed up into the signal box at the Ranley crossing and held a serious conversation with the surprised man in charge.

The outcome was that the signals were set against a London express train which passed the box at 8.55. The express did not have to wait long before the red light against it turned back to green—but during those few moments Lieutenant Dent had been busy.

He had found a wire dangling in the air and he had hooked that wire on to the shackle at the end of the last coach of the express! He gave the wire a mighty jerk—and he ran back to the signal box, waving his arms and shouting.

The express started up and puffed away, gathering speed.

John Henry went up into the signal box and sent a telegram.

Two thousand feet above a wire drum moved slowly inside a Zeppelin, and the man in charge of it appeared puzzled. It

was working very slowly. The electric motor geared to it was running hot with the strain—and the man in charge thought the fault lay within the motor itself.

Forward, in the control car, the Zeppelin commander was looking puzzled, too. He had had a trying day. The dead spy, up on the cat-walk, had been found—and so, in revenge, he had come back, according to orders, to pick up whoever had tricked him.

No doubt the man in question was coming up the wire with inflammable Verey pistols in his hands, and a parachute attached to his back.

He would fire at the Zeppelin in order to set it alight directly he was within range, and he would then release his hook and drop away on the parachute.

That was what the Zeppelin commander expected—and he had every machine-gun on the ship trained down along the wire, to riddle the trickster with bullets directly he appeared out of the clouds below!

In case of aeroplanes being summoned to the spot to help the capture, the commander had started up directly he knew his man was on the wire. He set a course to cross London and make for the coast. But now he found that his ship was careering along at full speed, even though the engines were just warming-up at three-quarter throttle.

After about five minutes of this curious progress the ship suddenly went into a giddy nose-dive and swept down like a falling arrow.

Everybody was knocked off their feet. The gunners were sent sprawling, and the enginemen rolled like bouncing balls about their narrow cars.

A couple of thousand feet does not take long to travel at a speed of over sixty miles an hour.

The commander fought himself free of sprawling officers and bawled incoherent orders. But he was too late.

There came a mighty rending crash and the whole crew were mixed up in a wilder chaos than before.

They saw lights appearing on the ground, surrounding them; they felt their ship smashing and breaking beneath them; they were surrounded by the tearing and

ripping of fabric—the crashing and shattering of aluminium girder-work!

Then, to their amazement, they saw that they had come to rest on a railway line, with the enormous airship buckled upon a low bridge which crossed the line!

There was a large station just ahead of them and porters, policemen, and uniformed men were rushing up in a crowd.

Young Mr. Dent had spent a few minutes earlier in the day in looking up the course of that railway line. He saw the bridge just outside King's Cross—knew that the train, with its towing wire, would speed under that bridge during the last mile before entering the station!

That was why he sent his telegram.

That was also why General Oakham's eyes nearly started out of his head when the buff form was handed to him.

"Dear old General-Person," it ran.

"Terribly sorry about the last telegram, but this one's the goods! Will you please collect Zeppelin which is lying just outside King's Cross Station? I thought that the most convenient place to leave it. Chin-chin,

"Johnnie."

The general frankly could not believe his eyes! But he had to believe his ears when he received a frantic telephone-message from King's Cross Station, only a few minutes later!

But meanwhile young Mr. Dent was having rather an unpleasant time. He was on the telephone, having just rung up a certain Miss Ookums—or Snooky—and told her the stirring story of his night's adventures.

At that very moment, however, young Miss Snooky—or Ookums—had just slammed down the telephone-receiver.

She had said she was insulted!

In fact, she had advised young Mr. Dent to go and tell his story to a peculiar regiment sometimes known as "the Horse Marines."

(John Henry's back on the Western front again next week, and Fritz soon knows all about it! You'll be thrilled—and amused—by his amazing adventures. Don't miss this grand yarn.)

GREAT NEWS! GLORIOUS NEWS! IMPORTANT NEWS!



The Chief Ranger is always pleased to hear from his buddies. Address your letters to: **THE CHIEF RANGER, THE RANGER, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.**

GEE, buddies! That's an unusual start to our weekly pow-wow, but I've got such a heap of unusual things to say to you that I am all excitement to unburden myself.

For the past two weeks I have been hinting about a

WORLD'S RECORD FREE GIFT SCHEME,

and now I can tell you more of the details of it. Firstly, this wonder scheme

STARTS IN TWO WEEKS' TIME!

Got that? Good! Now just listen in! A special series of **SUPER STAMPS**, showing **EVERY BOY'S WORLD IN PICTURES**, has been prepared, and no less than **SIX OF THESE WONDERFUL STAMPS** will be presented to Every RANGER Reader for a number of weeks, beginning in a fortnight's

time! Isn't that great and glorious news! For the same period, too, our splendid Companion Papers, "MODERN BOY" and "MAGNET" will also each contain **SIX** of these **SUPER STAMPS**. The complete series of these colourful pictures consists of

144 STAMPS

divided into six sets of twenty-four stamps each. Each set, of course, illustrates a different subject. Thus, one set shows the latest types of aeroplanes; another, rough-riders of the world; another, ships of the world; and so on. Every one of these stamps is perfectly printed, in full colours, and is a work of art in itself. You'll go just crazy over the delightful task of collecting the six complete sets.

BUT THIS IS NOT ALL!

EVERY READER collecting these

super stamps will be able to obtain a magnificent **20-PAGE ALBUM**, which is designed to hold the entire series of 144 Stamps. Can you beat that for an offer? Do you blame me for calling it a world's record Free Gift Scheme?

In next Saturday's issue of **The RANGER**, I shall explain to you all how you can obtain one of these magnificent albums, so don't miss my Special Announcement next week.

Tell all your pals the glorious news. No boy, or girl for that matter, must miss this stupendous scheme. Remember, the **FULL DETAILS** will be given to you in next Saturday's All-Star number of **The RANGER**.

FALLING 2,000 FEET!

Ever stood on some very high spot—the top of a cliff, say—and come over all giddy when you looked down? Then you will know what Corporal Hilmer Turner, of the United States Navy, felt like the other day when the aeroplane in which he went up as a passenger started suddenly spinning to earth from a height of 2,000 feet. The pilot had fainted, and the machine was absolutely out of control. But did the corporal lose his head? He did not. Instead, he leapt for the controls, steadied the wildly-spinning plane, and brought it down in complete safety. The marvel of it was that the corporal had never before handled a plane's controls. No wonder they gave him the Distinguished Flying Cross!

The Chief Ranger

Simple Sammy Strong!



HERE'S A ROLLICKING YARN
WITH A SMILE IN EVERY
LINE.

officer offensively. Like most people in the town, he had no use for Parker, who was a slum landlord, and a tyrant to his workpeople. "Is that all you've got to say?"

"You bet it ain't!" barked Parker, going red about the ears. "Listen! I've had young Sammy Strong to dinner to-night, and the dirty little thief has walked off with twenty pounds in Treasury notes. I left him alone for a few minutes, and he must have pinched the dough while I was out of the room. But he won't get away with it, by thunder, 'cause I've taken the numbers of the notes! I want you to arrest the thieving scoundrel right now. I'll come to the station in my car, and we'll go to the coffee-stall together! I want to be present when you make the arrest!"

The fleshy face of Alderman Parker Plimsoll was twisted into a gloating grin as he stepped out of his flashy motor-car, and swaggered into the police station, where the inspector was awaiting him.

It was not more than twenty yards from the police station to the coffee-stall, and the officer curtly declined a lift in Parker's flashy automobile. Pushing his way through the crowd round the counter, he gave Sammy Strong a friendly nod.

"I'm afraid I've got a nasty bit of trouble for you, young 'un!" he said.

"I know," returned Sammy, his innocent gaze upon Alderman Parker Plimsoll. "I'm looking at it!"

"I want no lip from you, you thieving hound!" blustered Parker. "You won't be so mighty smart when you find yourself behind iron bars! Officer, I give this scoundrel in charge! I accuse him of stealing twenty pounds out of my house!"

"That's a very serious charge," remarked the police officer. "What have you got to say about it, Sammy?"

"Nothing much," answered the youngster, "except that this good-looking chimpanzee is talking through his hat! I certainly didn't take his twenty pounds—"

"That's a foul lie, you scoundrel!" bellowed Parker. "Now I come to think of it, I saw you slipping something into your raincoat pocket! It was the coat that you're wearing at this very moment!"

"Perhaps you'd like to search me, old warrior?" suggested Sammy.

"You bet I would!" barked Plimsoll, evil triumph in his beady eyes. "I'll soon find the missing notes, inspector! You watch me!"

Ducking beneath the counter, Sammy stood before Alderman Plimsoll, and lifted his arms above his head.

"Which pocket, old warrior?" he asked.

"The inside pocket, you pest!" snorted Parker. "I'll find all I want in there!"

A troubled expression passed across Sammy's freckled features as he looked from Parker Plimsoll to the burly inspector.

"You don't mean—" began the latter.

"I'm afraid he'll find something in that pocket, sir," confessed Sammy, in a low voice vibrant with guilt.

"Didn't I tell you so!" chortled Parker Plimsoll. "Come here, you thieving hound!"

Wrenching open Sammy's raincoat,

MANY TIMES HAS PARKER PLIMSOLL, THE TYRANT, TRIED TO GET THE BETTER OF SIMPLE SAMMY—AND COME A CROPPER. NOW HIS LATEST STUNT NOT ONLY PROVES A "SELL" BUT LANDS HIM IN A POLICE CELL INTO THE BARGAIN!

Sammy Scores Again!

LET us forgive and forget, my dear boy; let us be real good pals! I've got a kind nature, if you only knew it, and the thought that we are bad friends keeps me awake at night!"

Sammy Strong, who had dined at Plimsoll Lodge, nodded his red head, and smiled across at Alderman Parker Plimsoll, his host.

"That's too bad, old warrior!" he murmured, with ready sympathy. "I've heard that a wipe over the bean with a mallet is a sure cure for insomnia!"

"Let us bury the hatchet, my dear feller!" added Parker, emotion in his throaty voice.

"I'd like to, old warrior," returned Sammy, gazing fixedly at Plimsoll's hairless dome. "But I haven't got a hatchet with me!"

He and the well-nourished alderman had been at loggerheads from the day Sammy opened a coffee-stall in direct opposition to Plimsoll's Cafe in Market Square, Stony Bumpford. Naturally enough, there had been no love lost between the two, and matters had come to a head when Sammy captured at least ninety per cent of Plimsoll's trade.

For months past Parker's all-consuming idea had been to bring Sammy to the gutter, and have him kicked out of the town, and it was with this amiable intention in mind that he had

thought out all manner of cunning schemes to bring ruin upon his youthful competitor. But, so far, all his dirty tricks had rebounded upon his own head.

Then, one bright August morning, Sammy had received a letter from Parker Plimsoll, a friendly epistle asking the youngster to dine at Plimsoll Lodge. This sudden change in the attitude of his sworn enemy made Sammy suspicious at once, but he was not a fellow to bear malice. So he accepted the invitation, and had dinner with Plimsoll, and he had to admit to himself that the alderman made a most entertaining and hospitable host. Having enjoyed an excellent meal, they yarned about sport and other things, and Sammy was on the point of taking his leave when Plimsoll made his final appeal.

Standing beside Sammy on the doorstep, he thrust out a pudgy hand.

"Pals, eh, my dear boy?" he said, creasing his flabby features into an oily grin. "Good friends for ever!"

"That suits me, old warrior!" nodded Sammy, his innocent gaze upon the other. "I like to be pals with everybody. Thanks for the feed."

Whistling blithely he strolled down the gravel path, and set off towards the town, and he might have had a big surprise could he have seen the sudden change that came over Parker Plimsoll's broad countenance.

"Got the fiddle-faced little pest at last!" chortled the well-fed alderman, gloating triumph in his beady eyes. "This is where he gets it bang in the neck. I said I'd get him, and I have, by thunder!"

Waddling into the dining-room he snatched the telephone receiver off its hook.

"Give me the police station," he barked, "and make it snappy!" Then: "Hallo! Is that the inspector? Good! Alderman Parker Plimsoll speaking!"

"Well, what about it?" asked the

he thrust his fleshy hand into the inside pocket, and the next moment he ripped out a shrill squeal of terror, and leapt about four feet into the air.

"Wow! Ow! Wottizit!" he yelled, waving his arm round his hairless dome; and a thunderous roar of laughter went up from Sammy's customers when they saw the big ferret that had attached itself to Parker's plump fingers. "Elp!" bellowed the alderman. "Kill the brute, someone! Get a gun! Blow its brains out!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" Unnerved by the volume of sound, apparently, the ferret suddenly released its grip of the alderman's fingers, and landed upon the hairless dome; then, finding the foothold too precarious, it slithered down Parker's moist brow, and took a firm hold of his nose.

"Wooosh!" yelled Plimsoll, giving a wild leap into space. "Citizens of Stony Bumpford, 'elp your alderman!"

"Just a tick, old warrior!" shouted Sammy, darting beneath the counter and reappearing with a pail of water. "Shove your head in here, sir! Mandeville isn't fond of water!"

"M-M-Mandeville!" stammered Plimsoll.

"The ferret, old warrior!" grinned Sammy. "Go on; submerge the old cranium!"

Dropping to his knees, Parker Plimsoll thrust his hairless dome beneath the surface, and a moment later Mandeville hopped out of the pail, ran up Sammy's leg, and made himself comfortable in the inside pocket of the raincoat.

"All clear, old warrior!" called Sammy.

Spluttering like a walrus, Alderman Parker Plimsoll withdrew his head from the bucket and tottered to his feet, and his beady eyes were glinting with hate and fury as he glowered across at his youthful enemy.

"You've got my twenty quid, you scoundrel," he bellowed; "but I mean to find it, even if I have to search every nook and corner of this town! Put that in your suds and wash it!"

Burglar Plimsoll!

TRADE being unusually brisk, Sammy did not close his coffee-stall until eleven o'clock that night. He was tired after a hard day's work as he set off for home, but not so tired that he failed to notice a bulky figure that trailed after him in the shadows. The tubby figure bore an unmistakable resemblance to Alderman Parker Plimsoll, even though it was disguised in a long mackintosh and a big check cap.

Parker was on the track of his twenty pounds.

Reaching his modest house, Sammy locked the front door and switched out the light in the hall, and the whole place was in darkness by the time Parker Plimsoll slipped through the gate and crept round to the rear of the premises. Making no sound, the amateur cracksmen tried the back door, and found it locked. Next he turned his attention to the window, and a grunt of satisfaction escaped him when he saw that it was open an inch or two at the bottom.

The rest was easy.

Wheezing like a punctured accordion, he heaved his well-fed frame on to the sill and cautiously raised the lower sash; then, his thick lips stretched into a cunning grin, he swung his stumpy legs over the sill, and dropped into the scullery.

"Ugh!"

A stifled grunt broke from him as he landed in a bath of cold water, and he was soaked from spats to waistline as he clambered out of the bath and stood shivering in the middle of the room. With every nerve on the alert, ready to fly at the slightest suspicious sound, he remained motionless, and listened; but the house was as quiet as the grave.

"I'd brain the idiot who left the bath under the window!" muttered Parker Plimsoll. "This is going to do my

rheumatics a bit of good—I don't think!"

The unfortunate mishap did not sway him from his purpose, however, and the light of grim determination burned in his beady eyes as he switched on an electric torch and padded across to the door. Passing into the narrow passage, he crept along until he came to a door that was standing slightly ajar, and on peering into the apartment he saw that it was a bed-room. Loud snores came from the bed in the corner, and a glimpse of red thatch told Parker that he was in the presence of his youthful enemy.

Still making no sound, he advanced into the room, and took stock of his surroundings, and a low grunt of satisfaction escaped him when he caught sight of a large cashbox upon the dressing-table. Having assured himself that Sammy was still in heavy slumber, he crept across the room and opened the cashbox, and his little eyes lit up as they alighted upon a neat wad of green Treasury notes.

"Gotcher!" muttered Parker, snatching up the notes and stuffing them into his side-pocket. "How about that, you fiddle-faced little pest?"

Chortling to himself, he passed out of the room, and made for the scullery window, and no sooner did he drop into the garden than a heavy hand clapped him on the shoulder with a force which made him sag at the knees.

"Good-evening!" greeted a deep-toned voice. "Caught red-handed, eh? Or were you just putting the cat out?"

Starting violently, Parker Plimsoll looked up at the burly figure that dwarfed him, and it was with a deep sigh of relief that he recognised Inspector Stark, the officer in charge of Market Square Police Station.

"Who are you, anyway?" grated Stark. "Out with it!"

He whipped off the big check cap, revealing the fact that Plimsoll was wearing a black mask over flabby features that had been liberally smeared with dirt.

"It's—it's quite all right, my dear feller," stammered Parker. "I'm Alderman Parker Plimsoll, y'know! It's just

a practical joke! Very funny! Haw, haw, haw!"

"You don't say!" growled the inspector, thrusting his hand into Parker's side pocket and producing a wad of notes. "Know anything about this dough?"

"Know anything about it, you big cheese!" snorted Plimsoll recklessly. "The stuff's mine, my own personal property! I can prove it. I have the numbers! I—"

"Hallo, there!" put in Sammy's cheery voice from the window. "Nasty-looking brute you've got there, inspector! A burglar's been in here, and it looks as though you've nabbed him! Yes, that's the fellow! He stepped into my patent burglar-trap and got a soaking! I'll come right along and charge him!"

"This is monstrous!" protested Plimsoll. "You can't charge me—me, Alderman Parker Plimsoll, the most influential citizen in Stony Bumpford! You can't—"

"Can't we?" grated Inspector Stark, hustling the captive out of the garden. "We'll see about that! I caught you on enclosed premises, and that charge alone is enough to get you three months of the best and brightest! Get a move on, Sammy!"

Parker Plimsoll looked like a man stunned as he realised how delicate and dangerous was the position in which he had put himself, and so appalled was he that he uttered neither threat nor protest on his way to the police station. Once inside, Inspector Stark planted him in front of the sergeant's desk.

"Take full particulars about this fellow," came the brisk order. "Charge him with being on enclosed premises. More serious charges may follow. Put him in the cells for the night!"

"B-b-but—" stammered Alderman Parker Plimsoll, coming out of his trance. "This is preposterous—an outrage! The whole thing was a practical joke—"

"Tell that to the magistrate in the morning!" snapped the inspector.

(Continued on page 15).



Wrenching open Sammy's raincoat, Parker thrust his hand into the inside pocket. The next moment he leapt about four feet into the air. "Wow! Ow! Wottizit!" he yelled, and a thunderous roar of laughter went up from Sammy's customers when they saw the big ferret that had attached itself to Parker's plump fingers!

THE TREASURE OF DEAD MAN'S ISLE!

(Continued from page 3.)

Three or four of the crew moved with alacrity. This was more to their liking. They quickly returned with a puncheon of rum which Samonard broke open with one mighty blow, and at his bidding the crew helped themselves. It was a fatal move on the part of Piel Samonard. The strong liquor went to the heads of the crew and "put such heart" into them that they started to quarrel among themselves. Knives and cutlasses soon clashed together, pistols spat into the darkness, and by the time an hour had passed, the crew of the Island Queen had been reduced to twenty-four!

Samonard went in and out among the quarrellers, smiting right and left with fearless abandon.

"Ho! Ye gutter rats! Does a man's portion of rum knock ye silly? Then taste ye a man's hand!"

Out of the six men sprawling on the decks, two of them owed their release from this world to Samonard's mighty fists, whilst among those who remained upstanding after that drunken brawl, four nursed their cracked heads, and swore that one day Samonard would be made to pay the price.

What remained of the rum, Samonard hurled overboard without compunction, and it was that act which provided totally unexpected results. The silence of the night was suddenly shattered by a fiendish yell, which was followed by a number of other chattering voices raised in inquiry. Peering over the rail into the dark depths below, Samonard saw that which sent him rushing back to his muddled, befuddled crew.

"Quick, an ye value your lives!" he bawled. "The heathens have crept up under cover; they'll be swarming aboard any moment. Jump to it, ye lily-livered beauties!"

In a moment the decks of the brigantine were abustle. Men drew their weapons hastily, and strained their eyes through the gloom.

From the water below came no attempt at stealth or silence now. The islanders, yelling and screaming their challenges, drew their canoes under the hull of the brigantine and began to swarm up her sides like bees round a beehive. That half-emptied cask which Piel had thrown overboard had landed in the foremost canoe and knocked out two of the natives; it had also given the unsuspecting crew of the Island Queen warning of the attack.

Bang!

Samonard dipped the nose of one thirty-two pounder gun until it was trained full on a canoe of heaving humanity. As the fuse bit home into the powder, a lashing ball screamed in among a score of black bodies, wreaking terrible execution. The bottom of the canoe fell away under the crashing impact, and in a moment those natives who had survived the shot, found themselves swimming for their lives, while about them darted the snouts of waiting sharks.

"Ho, ho! How did ye like that dose of medicine!" roared Samonard, drawing his huge sword. "Come hither, ye swabs, and taste Piel's steel!"

All around him rose yells of mortal agony, screaming defiance, and the clash of steel. As fast as the natives were beaten back over the rail and hurled into the sea, so others took their places.

Dashing from one place to another, to stiffen the falling courage of his men, Samonard whirled his huge sword in a

cleaving circle of destruction. He presented a truly magnificent figure in his rage, abandon, and bulldog-like courage. As his men were pressed back by weight of numbers, so Samonard would charge to the rescue and relieve the tension, his bull-throated voice raised on high.

"Give it to them, my beauties! Slit them up! Ho, ho, ho!"

He was bleeding from a couple of wounds already, but he paid scant attention to them. His energy seemed inexhaustible, his courage unquenchable.

But odds were beginning to tell. The islanders, roused to savage fury by the determined defence and the loss of many of their number, piled over the rail of the brigantine in a dozen places at once. Samonard's depleted crew fell like chaff before the sickle, albeit they gave good account of themselves.

The decks were strewn with the fallen of both sides, but the outcome could only mean the entire annihilation of the sea dogs.

Black-skinned islanders fell screaming back into the sea, unable to clamber back to the attack by reason of their wounds, or unable to defend themselves against the attacks of the waiting sharks. The air resounded to shrieks and groans and curses.

For half an hour the battle waged hot and furious, the twinkling stars in the velvety blackness above seeming to mock at the puny efforts of the outnumbered humans below.

Perspiring at every pore, Samonard thrust his way towards the rail of the ship, where a little band of defenders were hemmed in by five times their number. And every time his huge sword hurtled downwards, a black-skinned savage went to his "happy hunting ground."

"Have at them!" roared Piel Samonard, above the din. "Stand by your cap'n!"

His arrival put new life into the few remaining upstanding members of the crew; they fought back with redoubled fury, backing the while to the poop deck.

"We're done, cap'n!" gasped a sturdy Bristol man. "The black scum outnumber us by six or more to one."

"Courage!" bawled Samonard. "Do ye retreat to the poop deck, and then stand clear of the eighteen-pounders! Methinks Samonard will have the last laugh yet!"

The gallant band retreated, losing three of their number en route, but leaving for dead twice that number of the enemy on the bloodstained decks.

Back and back until the nearest of them brushed against the gaping brass muzzles of the eighteen-pounders. There, hurriedly, Piel Samonard lit a fuse to the already loaded cannon. The blacks came on, shrieking their war-cries. The fuse sizzled menacingly, found contact with the deadly gunpowder.

Bang!

There was a searing flame, a rolling cloud of choking black smoke, and a leaden ball tore through the ranks of the screeching blacks with a venomous hiss.

The sea dogs raised a cheer at the deadly passage the ball cleft in the ranks of the islanders, but as Piel Samonard touched off another fuse the blacks scattered in all directions.

The second ball merely thrummed through deserted decks, bringing down halyards and a tangle of corded rigging. It was not the first time the islanders had encountered the "white man's magic," as they called gunpowder and shot.

And while Piel Samonard and the remnant of his crew rested for the space of a few seconds, the black-skinned raiders began to swarm down upon the party from behind. In that surprise attack three more men fell before the spears of the islanders, and Samonard swore roundly.

He was face to face with death, albeit his courage never wavered. In less than half an hour he knew that he and his men would have to succumb.

"Listen, ye scallywags!" he panted. "Do ye scamper below, man the boat by the stern, and wait for me. This black-skinned mob haven't done with Piel Samonard yet!" The men hesitated. "Shiver me! Get moving if ye desire to live! It's our only chance!"

Through the narrow opening in the poop deck which led to the skipper's and first mate's cabins, and which gave access to the bowels of the ship, the exhausted sea dogs dragged their weary limbs, leaving Piel Samonard to fight off any of the natives who ventured to stop them.

When all were through the aperture and scuttling below, Piel whirled his sword on high once more, hewed down a giant native with that one deadly swipe, bolted through the aperture, bent double, and slammed the door in place.

He straightened himself on the other side, and laughed harshly as he heard the clamouring natives drumming their spears on the thick deck. Then, picking his way through the murky darkness, and knowing every inch of his ship as a good skipper should, he reached eventually the powder magazine.

For a few seconds he stood there, mumbling strangely, the while his busy fingers jammed a length of fuse tape into the nearest barrel of gunpowder. And those mumblings would have amazed any who could have heard them, for Samonard, the ruthless, the merciless pirate who had blown sky high many a proud ship, was loth to blow up the Island Queen.

Stripped of his ferocity, then, Piel Samonard, the giant, looked like nothing so much as a naughty child doing something for which he knew he would be mighty sorry for ever after.

Even as he touched off the fuse, from the lighted lantern which he had snatched up en route, he brushed a hand across his eyes and gulped down the lump that rose in his throat.

"Good-bye, ye old friend!" he murmured. "Piel Samonard will never forgive himself for this foul deed, but 'tis all he can do to save his miserable carcass."

The fuse gained ground to the powder and its bright sizzling told Samonard that it was time to go.

Turning on his heel, he ran as if for dear life, his giant figure bent grotesquely to avoid collision with the decking above.

To the rearmost porthole in the stern-castle he panted, and breathed an oath of relief when he saw his four men, all that remained of the entire crew, standing anxiously in the boat which wallowed under the bellying shelter of the stern-castle.

"Pull for your lives!" he snapped harshly, as he scrambled through the porthole and joined the waiting men. "Pull, burn ye! The ship'll go sky high in less than a minute!"

The men pulled. They knew now why their skipper had lingered.

He grinned at them wolfishly in the darkness as they laid on the oars with a will. Then he turned his single glittering eye on the Island Queen. The natives were still clamouring and beating on the door of the poop. They were still yelling when there was a deafening explosion which seemed to rock the world, a vivid, darting tongue of yellow flame which split the blackness of night in a livid weal, and, rocketing skywards, soared, a jumble and tangle of wreckage in a hissing, awe-inspiring stream.

Involuntarily the rowers rested on their oars, magnetised by the devilish majesty of the explosion and what it meant to them.

Not a soul aboard the Island Queen, heavily laden as she was with gunpowder, would ever live to tell the tale

of that tragic outcome of an uneven fight!

Of all that vast company of black-skinned islanders not one held the breath of life when the flying debris of that once proud ship settled on the heaving waters and slowly sank to a final resting-place.

"The Island Queen served us to the last," said Piel Samonard, in a strangely troubled voice, when the blanket of darkness set in once again. "To the last! 'Twas the only way!"

Then, as if half-ashamed of his weakness, he swore luridly and turned on his men.

"Burn ye, why the devil do ye gape like that? Pull, ye lazy lubbers! Pull for the shore, or I'll rope's-end every mother's son of ye!"

The men obeyed. In silence they beached the boat and clambered wearily on to the firm sand. They had no fear of any attack from the islanders, for it was safe to assume that the whole tribe had joined in that surprise attack upon the brigantine; safe, also, to assume that not one survived.

For long minutes Piel Samonard gazed through the darkness to where his good ship had lain at anchor, cursing the fates which had made his sacrifice of those trusty oak planks a necessity. His men said nothing. Exhausted, they sank down and dressed each other's wounds, wondering idly what their fate upon this barren, luckless isle would be.

The Traitor!

WHILE they mused thus a long-prowed canoe, containing the Chevalier St. Moreau and Langley Morgensen, put into an inlet half a mile away from the survivors of the brigantine. The two men scrambled ashore. From the distance these two had seen the sudden blaze and knew what it meant.

"Think ye all aboard went up with the ship?" asked the Chevalier at length.

Langley shrugged his shoulders. "It looks to me, monsieur, as if Samonard fired the ship on purpose. 'Twas no accident. Did we not hear the yells of the islanders? That means the ship was attacked. Ye will remember, monsieur, that the crew of the Queen numbered barely two score—"

"Mon dieu! What chance would they have against a hundred or more?" said the Chevalier. "But surely Samonard, even if compelled to fire the ship, would first make sure of his own skin?"

"More than likely, monsieur," answered Langley. "But we must wait till dawn to find the answer to that."

He threw himself down, closed his eyes, and, with the ease of an adventurer, fell asleep on the moment. For days he had not rested to the full, and outraged Nature took her toll. The sun rose and was riding high in the heavens when he blinked himself into wakefulness and eased his cramped muscles. His mouth was dry and parched, his tongue swollen, and he remembered then that the natives had brought ashore with them several goatskin bags, presumably stocked with drinking-water.

Stretched out on his back, Langley mentally decided that he would make for the spot on the western side of Dead Man's Isle, where the islanders had landed, and look for those precious bags. Then he bethought him of the Chevalier. His blinking eyes turned to left and right in search of the renegade Frenchman's slim figure, but there was no sign of him.

Langley's lips curved into a scornful smile.

"The traitorous dog!" he muttered. "He has deserted me again."

He felt for his rapier and exclaimed his joy when he found it was still in

its customary position. With that trusty blade he was not afraid of the Chevalier, Piel Samonard, or both of them together.

Much refreshed by his long slumber, he sprang to his feet, got his bearings from Dead Man's Hill, and began to traverse a route to the western side of the island. He reached the spot where the two sentinels lay grim and silent in the sand, whooped with joy at beholding the water-skins, and rushed headlong towards them. Suspiciously at first he sampled the crystal clear liquid the nearest bag contained, then drank his fill. Then, burying the remaining water container under a pile of loose stones, he slung its companion across his shoulders and trudged manfully towards Dead Man's Hill.

On the summit of this bleak, sun-bathed prominence he shaded his eyes with his hand and stared to all points of the compass. He trembled with joy at the dim shape of a craft, with all sails set, bearing towards the isle, and frowned darkly the next moment as he caught sight of a small group of figures a quarter of a mile away from him. In the clear morning sunshine he easily recognised the towering proportions of Piel Samonard and the silken shirt on the diminutive figure standing beside him.

"The traitor!" hissed Langley. "So the Chevalier joins the other side! Ho, before long there shall be a reckoning. And unless I be mistaken, that fine craft heading this way is my own schooner, the Santa Perdua."

Relief surged through him as he made the discovery, for the coming of the Santa Perdua meant succour, in the shape of the faithful Ben Grant and his men; and they would be needed against such cunning, formidable foes as the Chevalier and Piel Samonard.

Careless now whether he was discovered by the latter, Langley stood upon the hill, humming an old sea chanty. He smiled grimly to himself as he saw Samonard, the Chevalier, and the four sea dogs turn and begin to march in his direction. It was obviously their intention to climb the hill and survey the island, doubtless to find his whereabouts.

To save them the trouble, and to keep from them the arrival of the schooner until the last possible moment, Langley Morgensen descended the rugged hill and strode towards them fearlessly. In his hand, gripped tightly, was his beloved rapier.

Samonard was the first to espy the youngster. He halted in his tracks in amaze, and his great, rumbling laugh echoed and re-echoed over the island.

"Slap my thighs! 'Tis the young cockerel himself! Ho, ho, ho!"

The four sea dogs clapped their hands to their swords. In Langley Morgensen they beheld an enemy, if all that Piel Samonard had told them be true. The Chevalier laughed aloud, musically, flicked a spot of dust from his silken shirt, and advanced.

"Well met, gallant sir!" he greeted. "I was awake betimes and thought to bring about this alliance before ye awoke!"

"Ye thin-lipped liar!" Langley retorted coldly. "An I am not mistaken, ye did but steal away from me to barter with that grinning, evil-faced rogue beside ye."

"Ho, ho, ho!" croaked Samonard. "The cockerel still crows! How like his rascally Uncle Josiah he looks when roused."

"An ye come within distance of my blade, ye double-dyed scum," said Langley, "ye will find that Morgensen the younger be as formidable a foe as Morgensen the elder. Do ye stay where ye are!"

Samonard chuckled, muttered some

thing to the Chevalier, and came to a halt.

"Come, come!" he bawled at length. "Is it not high time that we called a truce? Do ye think there is not sufficient of old Josiah's treasure to split between the three of us?"

Before Langley could make answer there came a growl from the four sea dogs.

"Ye be forgettin' us, cap'n!" voiced their spokesman. "If there be treasure at all on this thrice accursed island, then we all share it."

"Ay, ay!"

"So ye shall, my pretties," wheedled Samonard, winking slyly at the Chevalier. "That makes seven of us, all told, Master Langley. What say ye to sharing alike?"

"A Morgensen shall not share with such scum as ye," replied Langley. "Do ye keep your distance. And before ye talk of sharing the treasure, do ye find it," he added mockingly.

Piel Samonard bit his lip. He knew that within a confined circle marked by the staring skulls of dead and gone buccaners Josiah's treasure lay buried, but he was as far from guessing that hiding-place now as when he had first set out to locate it. On the other hand, Langley Morgensen, in a burst of inspiration, reckoned he knew just where that treasure lay concealed.

He had called to mind that the grinning skulls enclosed a circle wherein stood the Well of Sacrifice; he remembered that the hideous mask of the totem pole also pointed directly to the well. Was it in the well itself that old Josiah's ill-gotten hoard lay buried?

If so, 'twas in keeping with the old sea dog's character. And what meant that riddle: "But seek ye when the moon rides full"? For long hours Langley had tried to solve that, but he knew that until the moon did ride full in the heavens he would never find the answer.

He eyed the ruffianly-looking group before him with disdain, saw that already they suffered the pangs of thirst, and felt himself master of the situation.

"Do you throw down your weapons," said Langley, "and I will give ye a drink of fresh water apiece."

The four sea dogs laughed aloud. They had caught sight of the stream which bubbled out of the hill, and knew not that it was poisoned.

"Think ye we need your precious water?" they scoffed, and without further ado rushed headlong to the stream, knelt down, and bathed their faces in the treacherous crystal-clear depths, and drank greedily.

They were Samonard's men, and he could have warned them of their folly, but he chose not to. As for Langley, he stifled the impulse to tell them that the stream was poisoned, regretted it the next moment, and regretted it too late. The four sea dogs, the last of the ill-fated crew of the Island Queen, collapsed where they knelt, and never moved again.

"Just the three of us," cackled Samonard mirthlessly. "Will ye share now, my pretty young cockerel?"

"Never, with such an evil rat as ye!" snapped back Langley.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when Piel Samonard's huge fist snatched a glittering dagger from his belt, and with a clever upward movement, he flung it with deadly force straight at the mocking youngster before him!

(Will the dagger end Langley's quest for old Josiah's hidden hoard? There's thrills galore in next week's concluding chapters of this stirring story.)

The QUEST of the BLUE DIAMOND



THE ADVENTURES OF JIM, BUCK, AND RASTUS WILL GIVE YOU A REAL THRILL AND A HEARTY LAUGH.

THE TRAIL OF THE BLUE DIAMOND HAS LED JIM, BUCK, AND RASTUS—AND RORY, THE DOG—HALF-WAY ROUND THE WORLD. NOW THEY ARE HEADING FOR THE CITY OF THE DEAD, WHERE THEY FACE DEATH TIME AFTER TIME WITH THEIR USUAL COURAGE. . . . WHEN THEY DEPART FROM THE CITY OF THE DEAD THE BLUE DIAMOND IS IN THEIR POSSESSION!

CHAPT. 33

The Ambush.



IN the heart of the African jungle a camp fire glowed dully. It was noon, and Jim, Buck, and Rastus had called a halt for two reasons. Firstly, it was the proper thing to rest in the

heat of the noon-day, and secondly, they needed food. Rastus and Rory, the dog, were particularly hungry. They needed the fire, not to warm themselves, but to cook the deer flesh.

As they were practically on the Equator, the heat was so intense that they were almost tempted to live on fruit alone, and so dispense with the fire for cooking the meat.

"Golly, it's warm!" groaned Rastus, mopping his brow.

"If you feel the heat you can guess what it's like for us. We're not niggers," said Buck.

"Neber said you were, sah," replied Rastus. "Dis child can't feel what you feel, and he don't want to, neider. Don't know what we come here for."

"Well, I'm blowed!" exclaimed Buck. "We've come all this way, and we're camping on the blessed Equator, just to get back for you the Blue Diamond that was stolen from you. We smash up El Kelb's army, rescue Ras and his bride

from the clutches of the dog-faced chieftain, then find out that the diamond was sold to Jebel-el-Kumri, the king of the City of the Dead. We start marching to that city, and now you say you don't know what we're here for!"

"Golly!" cried Rastus. "I nearly forgot dat sparkler. Got to get him back. Dis child wants a tiepin. Could do wid some grub, too," he added, reaching out and stabbing a deer steak with his fork.

Rory sat up, a bone between his paws, sniffed suspiciously at a bush near by, and growled warningly.

"Dat's enuff ob dat, Rory," cried Rastus. "No need to start dat growling at ebery monkey in de bush, when dere's Buck ober dere. Go, and growl at him!"

But Rory took no notice of his master, and started to his feet barking furiously. "Quiet!" ordered Rastus. "Lions don't come near fires. We'm as safe as houses in de bank! Quiet, Rory!"

As he spoke he held the deer steak impaled on his fork in the air. There was a strange rustling in the thicket, and there came to Rastus' ears the sound of a sharp twang. Then something that glittered in the sunshine shot across the clearing, and an arrow transfixed the deer steak, wrenched it, fork and all, from Rastus' hand and carried it away into the bush on the far side of the camp.

"Golly!" yelled Rastus, leaping to his feet. "Dat was no lion, but it was a monkey trick, dough! Dat was a man, and dis child'll teach him to take de food out ob dis child's mouf! After him, Rory! Seize him, boy!"

"You idiot!" shouted Buck. "Come back! There may be dozens of 'em! Come back!"

But Rastus and Rory had already given chase. There was another twang, and another arrow whistled past Rastus' head. Then, close behind Rory, he crashed into the thicket in full pursuit. He caught a glimpse of a dusky figure pelting off ahead of him. The man carried a bow in one hand, while a quiver of arrows, possibly poisoned, hung from his shoulder.

His clothes consisted of a grass belt and a loin-cloth, and it was not long before Rory put on a spurt, gave a wild leap, and was hanging from the loin-cloth, which he gripped between his teeth. And there he hung, streaming out behind the fleeing figure like a living tassel on a dingy sash,

while Rastus raced along in the rear trying his hardest to catch up.

Meanwhile Jim and Buck had snatched up their guns and were following the beaten trail through the thickets, shouting as they ran.

"Stop, Rastus! Come back!"

But there was nothing that could anger Rastus more than depriving him of his food, unless it were being cruel to dumb animals. He would not stop, and began to overhaul the fugitive, whose speed was decreased considerably by the weight of Rory on his loin-cloth.

"Stick to him, boy!" cried Rastus.

He saw the man leave the thickets and dart into a clearing. Rastus followed, but he caught his foot in a root, stumbled forward helplessly and fell head over heels into the dell. At the same time something came down with stunning force on his head, and a million lights flashed before his eyes.

Any ordinary man's skull would have been split open by the force of that blow, but Rastus was no ordinary man. He sat there, blinking owlishly, and suddenly realised that the bushes all round the clearing into which he had blundered were full of armed men.

Then he saw that the fugitive's loin-cloth was split at the hem and a strip had fallen from it. Rory dropped with the strip, and the man, thus freed, whipped out a knife from his belt and aimed a savage blow at the dog.

That was more than enough for Rastus. His senses came back to him with a rush, and up he jumped.

"Hey, dat's ma dog, sah!" he yelled. "Golly, you touch dat dog and I'll carve you into little bits!"

A man suddenly loomed before him, barring his way, but only for a second. Rastus' great fist crashed into his face and shot him across the clearing. The next instant Rastus had dashed forward and gripped the fugitive's wrist with such strength that the knife dropped from his nerveless fingers.

Then armed men came from every bush, until Rastus was surrounded. He saw spears, arrows and knives all around him.

"Golly!" he exclaimed. "What's de game? Ring-a-ring ob roses, or kiss in de ring?"

Someone shouted a hoarse command, and the sun flashed on the steel of their

weapons. A spear was hurled, but Rastus ducked and it whizzed over his head. At the same time Rastus grabbed the man he had been pursuing by the ankles, and with a wrench he stood upright and whirled himself round and round, madly, furiously, swinging his captive at arms length, so that the fellow was describing sickening, giddy circles, while held horizontal, thus clearing a space round Rastus.

Round and round went Rastus, so fast that his enemies could scarcely make out his dizzy figure. They could not strike a blow nor discharge an arrow for fear of hitting their comrade. They could only stand and watch, while Rory kept darting out at them from under Rastus' shuffling feet to snap at their shins.

Then came several shots. Men fell, wounded, and Jim and Buck came charging to the rescue. Rastus knew he couldn't keep up swinging that human weapon for ever, and with a yell of defiance he let go his hold of the man, with the result that the unfortunate fellow shot up into the air and crashed into the branches of a tree, where he hung howling for mercy.

"Yah, yah, yah!" guffawed Rastus. "Dat bird am going to build his nest. Hi, golly!"

Rastus found himself in a ring of foes, with Rory, Jim and Buck fighting fiercely, holding the enemy at bay, but without any hope of escape. There were at least fifty negroes gathered round them. But the pals gave such a good account of themselves that the foe withdrew to a reasonable distance.

Then one big fellow, obviously the officer in command, stepped out and spoke in English.

"No use fighting," he said. "You kill some ob us, but we kill all ob you. You throw down your guns, come wif us to de City ob de Dead. Maybe our king spare your lives."

"Well, buddies," said Buck, throwing down his gun, "we can't fight this crowd. Besides, we want to go to the City of the Dead, and this is our chance, I reckon."

"It seems like it," agreed Jim. "We shall have to surrender."

"Dey'll hab to make up my dinner dey spoilt," said Rastus. "Den dis child will go and talk to their king—what's his name?—Dribble old Comrade, or something like dat."

"Jebel-el-Kumri," said Jim. He turned

to the officer commanding. "We have come all this way to see your king, whose name, I believe, is Jebel-el-Kumri."

The negro shook his head vigorously. "Jebel-el-Kumri is no longer king ob City ob de Dead," he declared. "El Kumri is now a prisoner and is to hab his head chopped off. Our king is now Ahaseribangwasello."

"Golly!" gasped Rastus. "Fancy signing cheques wid a name like dat! What's it mean, old boss?"

"It means de man wid de red hair whom de gods hab elected to rule ober de City ob de Dead. Dat's what it means!"

"Den dis child'll call him Carrots!" declared Rastus.

"But who in thunder ever heard of a red-headed nigger?" exclaimed Buck. "Is your king a black man?"

"King Ahaseribangwasello is a negro with hair as red as de setting sun," said the officer solemnly. "The god sent him out ob de jungle to rule ober us, and now Jebel-el-Kumri has been declared an impostor and will hab his head chopped off to-day."

"That's awkward," said Jim thoughtfully.

"Mighty awkward for Dribble-old Comrade," said Rastus. "De poor man won't be able to blow his nose after his head's chopped off."

"Take us to your king as soon as possible," said Jim. "We would like to speak to him about a certain private matter."

The weapons of the three pals were gathered together and placed in charge of a big negro. The enemy formed up in pairs and the column marched off, with their prisoners in the centre, but not before they had taken the precaution of tying the wrists of the three pals behind their backs.

"I don't like the outlook a bit, buddies," said Buck. "I never yet heard of a nigger with red hair. I know Rastus is always a bit hot-headed, but you can't call his hair red-hot."

"Did you eber see anyting dat was black hot?" asked Rastus.

"No," replied Jim, with a laugh. "But, joking apart, this story of the negro king with red hair being sent by the gods out of the jungle sounds to me like a lot of nonsense. It seems as if some impostor has fooled the superstitious natives;

Jebel-el-Kumri will lose his head and his crown—"

"Golly! He can't lose de one widout de oder," declared Rastus.

"He could, idiot, if he took his crown off!" said Buck.

"Can you take de crown ob your head off, Buck?"

"Oh, it's too hot to argue with a fool of a nigger," growled Buck. "Get on with the sermon, Jim."

"The point is," continued Jim, "it will make it all the more difficult for us to get hold of the Blue Diamond. If the King Aha—whatever his name is—is an impostor, as I believe, he is likely to have us executed right away. He will know that his trick will not fool us, and he will be only too eager to kill us before we can give the show away."

The danger was very real to both Jim and Buck, but Rastus was chuckling over something that evidently amused him very much.

"I don't see anything to laugh at," declared Buck irritably.

"Den you look at Rory!" said Rastus.

Rory had had a length of cord, made of entwined creepers, fastened to his collar, and he was led along by the man Rastus had used as a flail, and then flung up into the tree. The fellow seemed little the worse for his rough handling. But Rory hated being on a lead, and was doing his utmost to resist going anywhere, with the result that he was being dragged along, his collar almost throttling him as he slithered along in the dust of the trail.

"Dis child hab only got to giv de word," said Rastus, with a chuckle, "and Rory will bite two-free lumps out ob dat man's legs."

"Well, don't do it," exclaimed Jim. "Or you might have Rory killed. You mustn't let him bite the fellow."

"Can't spoil his trousers," said Rastus, "'cos he hasn't got dem on to-day. Golly, boys, seems dis is a Scotch regiment ob nigger soldiers—de Cannibal Highlanders! Dere ain't a pair ob hiking shorts amongst de lot ob dem."

"Don't know about cannibals," said Buck slyly, "but maybe they eat dogs, and they'll have Rory on toast if you upset them."

"Golly! If dey do I'll eat dem, king and all!"

In his anxiety he gave a wrench at his bonds, then he grinned at his pals.



Rastus was an expert ventriloquist, and when Rory came forward, sat on his hind legs and curtsayed before the throne, a squeaky voice seemed to come from the dog's muzzle. "Afternoon, King Carrots the First! Nice weather for the time of the year!"

"Dey can't tie knots nohow," he said. "One more wriggle and dis child could get free."

"Well, don't—not yet," advised Jim. "We've got to see this king of theirs first." "Better dat way, p'raps," agreed Rastus. Then he called to Rory. "Walk properly, Rory, old hoss!"

Rory ceased his opposition and trotted obediently at the heels of the big nigger who led him.

And so they marched on along the trail through the jungle towards the City of the Dead, which was now ruled over by a red-headed nigger, sent by the gods out of the jungle!

CHAPTER 34.

The End of the Quest.

THE City of the Dead was, in reality, a native village set amidst the ruins of an ancient civilisation.

As the three pals approached the place they saw nothing but ancient temples and palaces, formerly built of stone, but now fallen into ruins. Great columns, plinths, stone steps, lay about everywhere, overgrown with creepers and shrubs, while many trees towered above the ruins.

The half-naked, native troops led them along the trail to where a flight of steps ran down into a dark abyss between two piles of stone debris and splintered columns. Below, they found themselves in a vast hall that had once doubtlessly formed part of some great banqueting chamber, or the floor of a vast temple.

The place was lighted by torches perched in sconces on the wall, the smoke from which clung to the lofty roof, finally filtering away through the crevices in the uneven stones. There were hundreds of natives assembled there, and they parted with one accord so as to form an aisle along which the party marched, amidst a rumble of excited voices.

At the far end of the aisle, the pals glimpsed an enormous negro, clad in a leopard skin. His thews were astonishing, his biceps tremendous. But what looked most incongruous of all was the mass of curly, auburn hair that surmounted the coal black face. He sat on a throne that was, in actual fact, formed by the fallen blocks of masonry.

Several skins of wild animals had been tastefully draped over the almost natural throne, in order to soften the surface of the stone to the royal limbs. Hefty native sentinels and the royal bodyguard stood on either side of the throne, armed to the teeth. It was plain that the red-headed nigger on the throne, however much he trusted to the superstitions of the natives, was taking no chances.

The officer commanding the party that had captured the three pals, marched up to the steps of the throne, halted, raised one dusky hand in salute, and cried out in a deep voice:

"Hail, Ahasueribangwaello!"

"Hallo, Carrots!" shouted Rastus.

If Rastus' salutation was impertinent it proved one thing beyond all doubt. The man on the throne knew English! He started to his feet, levelling an accusing finger at Rastus.

"Kill that man!" he roared.

One burly sentry sprang out to obey, his great, broad-bladed spear held ready to strike. But he never got the chance. With a jerk Rastus snapped the cords that bound his wrists. A leap saw him snatch the spear from the sentry.

First he broke the spear in twain, and flung the fragments at King Ahasueribangwaello. Then he gripped the big sentry round the waist, lifted him from his feet, and hurled him at the king. But the king ducked, and the sentry flew over beyond the throne and came down with a thud somewhere in the dusty recesses beyond. No one knew whether he broke his neck, was stunned, and only had a headache, for no one ever troubled.

"Golly! Dat man was no good as a killer! Why not try to do de job yourself, King Coppernob?"

The king and his court seemed dumb-founded by Rastus' display of strength,

and could only stare in amazement. Then, realising that one of his prisoners was free, the captain of the party, greatly daring, stepped forward to secure Rastus again—if he could.

But Jim determined to try a bold move, and he moved to the forefront.

"Wait a bit!" he cried. "Rastus, like the rest of us, is a British subject. You harm him and you'll suffer for it!"

Jim banked on the fact that as the king knew English he would understand what he meant. And he was right. The king made a gesture and the guard withdrew.

"Who are these men?" asked the king, in surprisingly good English for a negro.

The officer told his majesty how the pals had been captured in the jungle, and how they had actually been on their way to the City of the Dead.

King Ahasueribangwaello motioned the pals to approach the throne, which they did.

"Well?" he said irritably. "I'm the king here. What d'you want?"

"Unbind us, first, then we'll talk!" snapped Buck. "This is not the way to treat visitors! Take these cords off us!"

"Golly!" exclaimed Rastus. "Dis child do dat job!"

He glanced around and his eye fell on a knife stuck in the king's belt. He sprang up the steps to the throne and snatched the weapon away, then darted back again.

"Lend us your toof-pick, red-hot!" he said.

Two slashes with the knife freed Jim and Buck. Then, quite calmly, Rastus climbed the steps to the throne again and replaced the knife in the king's belt.

"Ta, Ginger!" he said, retracing his steps.

RANGER DAN'S BULL'S-EYES!

If you know a good joke, send it along to Ranger Dan. If it makes him laugh he'll publish your story and send you in return a handsome prize. Address your joke to "RANGER DAN'S BULL'S-EYES," THE RANGER, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Ranger Dan's decision is final.

HARD LINES.

Charlie: "Daddy, what was the date of the Battle of Waterloo?"

Father: "I'm afraid I don't know."

Charlie: "And to think that tomorrow I shall be punished for your ignorance!"

(A Pocket Wallet has been awarded to J. Newbould, 44, Lower Street, Leeds.)

A DUD MACINTOSH.

Sandy MacIntosh, who prided himself on the nobility of his ancestors, was having an argument with a London taxi-driver.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked, drawing himself up to his full height. "I am a MacIntosh."

"I don't care if you're an umbrella!" exclaimed the taxi-driver. "I want my fare!"

(A Useful Penknife has been awarded to L. Argent, 33, Ponsonby Place, London, S.W.1.)

POOR JIMMY.

Jimmy's mother was a great believer in cleanliness, and would insist on his washing at least three times a day.

"How you are growing, my boy!" said a visitor one day.

"Well, what can you expect?" replied Jimmy dolefully. "Mother waters me all day long!"

(A Grand Prize has been awarded to P. Long, 58, Harriet Street, Winnipeg, Canada.)

EXERCISE.

Doctor: "And do you take exercise after your bath?"

Patient: "Oh, rather! I generally step on the soap as I get out!"

(A Torch has been awarded to E. Greenhalgh, Elswick Sanatorium, near Kirkham, Lancs.)

The king gasped at the audacity of the act, and his cheeks worked spasmodically as he fought to control his rage.

"Do that again and you die!" he growled.

"No need to do it again, old hoss," replied Rastus. "So long as your men don't bind Jim and Buck. Wait a bit, dough. Rory ain't made his bow. Step up, Rory, and say 'How do' to de king."

Rastus was an expert ventriloquist, and when Rory came forward, sat on his hind legs and curtseyed before the throne, a squeaky voice seemed to come from the dog's muzzle.

"Afternoon, King Carrots the First. Nice weather for the time of the year!"

The court gasped. Some looked scared, some wanted to laugh, but daren't. The king glared in helpless rage, not sure whether he was having his leg pulled or not. He leaned one arm on the side of his throne, and wedged his chin on the palm of his hand.

"Look here!" he snapped to Jim. "Say your business. If it pleases me I'll grant your request and you can go. Otherwise, you shall die—all of you—here and now!"

"Well," replied Jim, "we are searching for a Blue Diamond that belongs to our friend, Rastus, here, but was stolen from him in New York City. We have followed the trail across the world, and came here because we understood it had been sold by El Kelb, the dog-faced chieftain, to Jebel-el-Kumri, the king of this place."

"Jebel-el-Kumri is no longer king of the City of the Dead," growled the king. "These people had a prophecy delivered to them many moons ago. It said that when the gods sent a negro with red hair through the jungle they would know he was the king the gods had sent. The gods sent me, and the people hailed me as their king. Jebel-el-Kumri refused to give up the throne, therefore he must die. But of this Blue Diamond I know nothing. I did not know there was such a thing in the world. How much is it worth?"

"Thousands and thousands ob pounds, old hoss," said Rastus. "We wouldn't follow de trail ob dat jewel across de world if it wasn't worf a fortune!"

Jim nudged him to be quiet, but the damage was done, and nothing could recall the words. The eyes of the red-headed king gleamed wickedly.

"I will have this Blue Diamond found," he said. "In the meantime, the business of the court must go on. Jebel-el-Kumri must be beheaded. Stand on one side. I will deal with you later."

The three pals obeyed, because there was nothing else to be done. The king gave orders in the native tongue, and hefty native soldiers brought a great stone block which they set down before the throne. Then the courtiers parted to make a path for two armed men who escorted between them a negro, whom the pals guessed to be Jebel-el-Kumri, the deposed king of the City of the Dead. He was a dignified negro, elderly, with a sort of turban set on his woolly pate, and in the front of that turban gleamed a blue jewel.

Jim and Buck stared at the man and failed to notice the jewel in the turban. Only Rastus actually saw it and guessed what it was. Jim and Buck were too aghast at the man who walked behind the ex-king, with a gleaming axe over his shoulder. He was the headsman!

King Ahasueribangwaello was glaring at his rival with hate on his face. He would not feel really safe on the throne until the real king was dead. In his hate he, too, failed to notice the Blue Diamond in Jebel-el-Kumri's turban.

"You have scorned the man sent by the gods to rule over this people," said the red-headed impostor. "Therefore, you must die!"

"Die! Die!" echoed the courtiers loudly.

Jebel-el-Kumri drew himself up to his full height. His wrists were bound behind his back, but that could not take away from his natural dignity.

"You are no man sent by the gods!" he retorted. "Kill me, if you must. I do not fear death, even at your hands."

I would rather die than bow the knee to such an impostor as you!"

He spoke in the native dialect of which Jim had a smattering, and could more or less translate it for his pals.

The red-headed king glowered with rage and waved his hand peremptorily.

"Behead him!" he commanded gruffly. The ex-king was forced to his knees by one of the soldiers, another pressed his shoulder down, lower and lower, until his neck rested on the stone block. The headsman stepped forward, saluted the king, turned, and swung his gleaming axe. As the great weapon hissed through the air the courtiers drew in their breath. They watched the glistening blade. It came crashing down.

But Rastus suddenly leapt, with hand outstretched. He gripped the headsman's arm and arrested the blow. His other fist was clenched and he struck, with such force that the powerful executioner was shot backwards to collapse in a senseless heap three or four yards away.

In a second, the pals were together, ready to meet their foes, standing by one another without question. King Ahasueribangwaello was on his feet, yelling like a maniac.

"What d'you mean—interfering with the execution?"

"You ain't going to cut dat man's head off," said Rastus.

"Why not?"

"'Cos, old hoss, dere's my blue diamond on his turban, and I ain't going to stand by and see dat jewel ob mine knocked about!"

"The Blue Diamond!" gasped the red-headed king.

Jebel-el-Kumri, amazed by this unexpected intervention, had risen to his feet, staring about him like a man in a dream. The impostor strode from his throne towards him, eyeing the gleaming jewel that shone in the doomed man's turban with greedy eyes. He reached out with one trembling hand and snatched the turban from Jebel-el-Kumri's head.

"Mine!" he muttered with evil joy.

He tore the jewel from the turban and

gripped it in his hand, while he cast the headgear from him with contempt.

But Rastus' hand came out and grabbed his wrist.

"Drop it, Carrots!" cried Rastus. "Dat belong to dis child!"

"Curse you!" hissed the impostor, whipping out his knife.

Rastus grappled with him. He caught the knife hand and forced the king back against the stone block, forced him down on his back with one tremendous wrench. Then he banged the knife hand on the stone until the man dropped the knife, and rubbed the knuckles of his other hand unmercifully against the rough edge of the stone until the Blue Diamond dropped to the floor.

In a flash Rastus released his man and seized the great jewel. But Ahasueribangwaello thirsted for revenge.

"Kill——" he began, commencing to rap out orders to his soldiers. But Rastus spun round him.

"Certainly, sah! Anyting to oblige!"

One hand grabbed the red-headed monarch by the throat, another slapped down on his mouth, throttling his utterances. The man was lifted from his feet violently, and cast down with terrific force on the stone floor, just as Rory, thinking that Rastus was being hurt, dashed into the melee, barking furiously.

The dog made a dive, as he thought, for the monarch's legs, but the man slithered on the stone. What Rory actually bit in his hurry was the mop of red hair, and it came away in his jaws. He dashed here and there, worrying the flaming wig as if it were a rat, while the impostor lay squirming on the floor with a frizzy head as black as that of Rastus himself.

"Yah, yah, yah!" Rastus guffawed. "Why don't you keep your hair on, old hoss? Golly, de cuss is moulting!"

"Behold!" roared Jebel-el-Kumri. "Behold, the impostor!"

It was Jim and Buck who released the bound king. But Ahasueribangwaello scrambled to his feet, took one look at the savage courtiers, then fled back towards the throne, reading his sentence in their

glowering eyes. He leapt to the seat of the throne, then vaulted over the back, hoping to make his escape in the shadows beyond.

But a man suddenly rose up and barred his way—the man Rastus had tossed over the throne. The fellow was armed. A knife flashed in the light of the smoky torches, the impostor cried out—then dropped. Ahasueribangwaello had gone to answer for his sins!

With great dignity, Jebel-el-Kumri strode to the throne which was his by right of birth, while the ashamed courtiers hailed him king as readily as they had yelled for his death a moment before. Now, they understood how they had been tricked.

Jebel-el-Kumri turned to the three pals. "To you, strangers, I owe my life and my kingdom," he said. "Who are you and how have you come here?"

Jim explained their presence, and how they had followed the trail of the Blue Diamond across the world. He offered to pay Jebel-el-Kumri any sum he liked to name for the big jewel, but the monarch would not hear of it.

They argued about it and eventually the monarch gave way. The pals paid in ivory and gold dust what Jebel-el-Kumri had paid to El Kelb, and the Blue Diamond passed once more into the ownership of Rastus.

After some days they took their leave of the King of the City of the Dead, and made their way back to the coast, where they obtained berths aboard a vessel bound for Southampton. Within a month they were walking the streets of London, with Rastus dressed in the height of the fashion, the valuable Blue Diamond scintillating in his violent red tie.

They had decided to settle down in London for the rest of their lives, but it was doubtful how long Buck, at least, could put up with town life, and if Buck went off in search of adventure the others would go with him. As Rastus said:

"No use talking, old hoss. You can't part us three, no how!"

End.
(Don't miss next week's details of our Grand Free Gift Scheme. Get your RANGER early.)

SIMPLE SAMMY STRONG.

(Continued from page 9.)

Having given particulars about himself to the sergeant, Parker was hustled down the echoing stone corridor to the cells, there to spend an endless night upon a hard bed that made him think longingly of his sumptuous bed-room in Plimsoll Lodge.

"The red-headed little blot!" he muttered again and again. "But I'll get him, by thunder! He'll pay for this outrage!"

Alderman Plimsoll's case came on at eleven o'clock the following morning, and the great man appeared to have regained most of his bluff and bluster as he swaggered into the dock. All the magistrates were well known to him, of course. Indeed, at least one of them was in his debt to the tune of a hundred pounds, or more. Life looked brighter to Parker Plimsoll as he winked at the mayor, upon whose grocery stores he had a substantial mortgage.

"Parker Plimsoll," intoned the clerk of the court, "you are charged with being on enclosed premises for the purpose of committing a felony. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty, dear boy!" answered Parker.

"Treat the court with respect, sir!" snapped his worship. "Misbehave again and I will commit you for contempt!"

"The accused pleads not guilty," intoned the clerk. "Call witness for the prosecution!"

Inspector Stark went into the witness-box and described all that had happened the previous night, and it soon became obvious that Parker was as good as convicted. The case against him was cast iron.

"I went into the house to get the

notes that Sammy Strong pinched from me last evening," shouted Parker. "The inspector's got the dough——"

"That's so," agreed Stark. "This is the money I took off you, Mr. Plimsoll. And you still insist that the notes are yours?"

"You bet I do!"

The notes were passed to Parker, who glanced at them and said they were his property.

"In that case, your worship," announced the inspector, turning to the magistrate, "I shall charge the accused with being in possession of counterfeit money. The notes are forgeries, and he admits that they are his property!"

"I admit nothing!" bleated Parker in a panic. "Those notes ain't mine and——"

"May I say a word, sir?" broke in Sammy Strong, from the well of the court.

"Well?"

"Those notes were stolen from me, sir," explained Sammy, his innocent gaze upon Parker's flabby countenance. "It's stage money, and it cost me sixpence."

"I understand," remarked his worship, smiling. "I see! We will drop that particular charge. However, the other one—that of being found upon enclosed premises—still stands, and I sentence you, Parker Plimsoll, to one month's hard labour——"

"You—you do what, you horse-faced old crow?" barked Parker. "You—you——"

"In addition," broke in his worship, "I sentence you to another month's hard labour, making two months, in all!"

"I won't stand it, you—you——"

"You were saying, Mr. Plimsoll?" murmured his worship, fixing Parker with a nasty look.

"You—you nice, kind old gentleman!" finished Parker meekly. "I apologise for losing my temper," he added, playing for safety, "but you mustn't forget that I missed twenty quid after Sammy Strong left my place last night."

"Your worship," broke in a well-dressed young man from the public gallery, "I think I can throw some light upon the matter. I am secretary to the Stony Bumpford Hospital, and last night I found twenty Treasury notes in the collection-box. Also, there was a scrap of paper, saying that the money was a gift from Alderman Parker Plimsoll!"

"Stammering cats!" came a low growl from the dock.

In a flash Parker Plimsoll realised what had happened, saw through the whole business. Sammy knew all the time that the notes had been "planted" upon him, and on leaving Plimsoll Lodge he had gone straight to the hospital and put the generous contribution into the collection-box!

"I'll get you for this, Sammy Strong!" roared Parker, as a burly policeman hustled him from the dock. "You'll pay dearly for this dirty trick, you pest! I'll—I'll——"

Sammy continued to smile in his calm, guileless way as the throaty voice died down to a faint rumble, and from afar came the metallic clank of chains and a heavy thud as the door of a prison cell closed upon Alderman Parker Plimsoll.

THE END.

(You'll like Peter the Painter, and his pals, Corker and Basher. Meet 'em in a gripping complete yarn next Saturday, entitled: "Peter the Painter!")

The Fourth Form at GRIMSLADE!



MANY UNRULY BOYS HAVE ARRIVED AT GRIMSLADE SCHOOL, BUT NEVER ONE LIKE JIM DAINTY. NOW COMES THE TASK OF TAMING THIS HOT-HEADED REBEL, AND DR. SPARSHOTT PROCEEDS TO DO IT—WITH LIBERAL DOSES OF THE BIRCH!

Whose Cake?

"MEIN gootness!" exclaimed Fritz Splitz.

The fat German junior jumped.

Fritz was in Study No. 10, which, like all the studies at Grimslade School, was on the ground floor, with a window overlooking the quad. Fritz had a parcel in his hand, which he was about to lift out of the window, when the door-handle turned.

Quick as thought, Fritz dropped the parcel in a corner, gave the armchair a push towards it, and he was sitting in the armchair when the door opened and Jim Dainty came in.

The new boy at Grimslade gave the German junior a nod, and crossed to the study cupboard. Fritz watched him uneasily with his saucer-eyes.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Dainty, staring into the cupboard.

"Mein goot, Tainty, vat vas te matter?" asked Fritz.

Dainty looked round at him with a frown.

"I've asked some fellows to tea," he snapped. "I left the grub here—now it's gone. What—"

"I hope tat you tink not tat I touches tat grub, Tainty," said Fritz, with dignity. "Chermans do not do such

tings as tat. Tose pad poy from Redmayes' House—Chinger and Pacon and Pean—"

"Ginger Rawlinson, and Bacon and Bean!" Dainty ran to the window. "Did you see them?"

"Ja! Ja wohl! Tey jump in at te vindow—"

"Why didn't you stop them?" growled Dainty. He stared out into the quad. If Ginger & Co., of Redmayes' House, had raided that study in White's House, they had got clear; they were not to be seen in the quadrangle.

"Ach! I gannot fight mit tree of tem!" said Fritz. "I could fight two—any Cherman can fight two! But tree—"

"Oh rats!"

Jim Dainty swung himself from the window. Fritz Splitz started up from the armchair in alarm.

"Mein goot Tainty," he shouted, "you go to Redmayes' House after tose pad poy—mein gootness!" Fritz broke off in dismay, staring at Dainty, who was cutting across the quad towards the other House at a run. "Ach! Tat Tainty is te poy to ask for troubles, ain't it?"

And Fritz Splitz looked quite thoughtful, as he pulled out the armchair and retrieved the parcel hidden behind it. Really, Fritz hadn't meant to send the hot-headed new boy butting into a hornet's nest. He had only wanted to prevent Jim from looking about the study for the missing tuck.

However, Dainty was gone now, and it could not be helped. And Fritz dropped from the window in his turn, with the parcel under his arm, and proceeded to look for a quiet and secluded spot, where he could dispose of the tuck. Fritz really was a kind-hearted fellow, in his way, and he hoped that Dainty would not get damaged. But he was soon too busy with the tuck to remember Jim's existence.

Jim Dainty arrived at Redmayes'

A MAGNIFICENT SCHOOL-LIFE STORY PACKED WITH ACTION AND ADVENTURE—AND A SPICE OF HUMOUR, TOO! BY FAMOUS FRANK RICHARDS.

House at a run. A red head looked out of one of the junior study windows, and Ginger Rawlinson yelled to him.

"Hallo, White's cad! What do you want on the decent side of the quad?"

Jim headed for Rawlinson's window. It had not occurred to him to doubt Fritz's statement. He was new to Grimslade, but he knew that raids and rags were incessant between the two Houses. He reached the window, and jumped.

"My hat!" ejaculated Ginger, as the new boy at White's caught him round the neck. "Oh, crumbs! What the thump— Whoop!"

Ginger sagged over the window-sill, sprawling. He wriggled and spluttered, as Dainty clambered over him into the window. In a moment more, Jim had jumped into the study, where Ginger's chums, Bacon and Bean, stared at him in amazement.

There was a large cake on the table, and the Redmayes' juniors had been about to sit down to tea. It was the twin of the cake Jim had missed in No. 10 over the way. Mrs. Sykes, at the school shop, sold those big plum cakes at five shillings each, and they were naturally much alike.

Dainty grabbed it up from the table. Ginger Rawlinson turned from the window, panting for breath and red with wrath. His face was as red as his hair.

"Collar him!" he gasped.

"What-ho!" exclaimed Streaky Bacon and Sandy Bean together.

The three hurled themselves at Jim Dainty. The cheek of a White's junior, especially a new fellow who had been hardly a week at Grimslade, raiding their tuck under their eyes, almost took their breath away.

Dainty dodged round the table. "Hands off, you rotters!" he shouted. "Did you think I was going to let you keep my cake, you cheeky fatheads?"

"Your cake!" roared Ginger. "It's my cake! Collar him!"

The three enraged Redmayes' juniors rushed round the table after Dainty; Ginger and Bacon took one side, Bean the other. Dainty had the cake under one arm. With the other he grasped the edge of the table, and tilted it up, sending it rocking at Ginger and Bacon, with a shower of crockery. There was a crashing and smashing of crocks, and a roar from Ginger and Streaky. At the same moment, Sandy Bean reached Jim and grasped him.

The next moment he rather wished he hadn't. Dainty's right came up in a terrific uppercut that caught Sandy under the jaw.

"Oooogh!" spluttered Sandy Bean, as he spun across the study. He landed on his back with a crash.

Jim made a leap for the window. Ginger and Streaky leaped in the way. Jim Dainty sprang back, and jumped at the door.

He tore the door open and rushed out, slamming it after him. An instant more, and Ginger & Co. were at the door.

"He—he—he's got our cake!" gurgled Ginger. "Bagged our cake under our noses! I—I—I'll break him into little pieces—I—I'll—I'll—"

He dragged at the door-handle furiously.

But the door did not open. Evidently Jim Dainty was holding the handle on the other side.

"Get that door open!" spluttered Sandy Bean. "Oh, my jaw! Wow! Get that door open, you ass! Woooh!" "He's holding it!" gasped Ginger. "Lend me a hand."

Ginger grasped the door-handle with both hands, and tugged. But the grip outside was strong, and the door did not open. Ginger's chums jumped to help. Streaky Bacon threw his arms round Ginger, and pulled him as he pulled the door. Sandy Bean threw his arms round Streaky, and pulled him as he pulled Ginger.

With three pulling against one, the door had to open. But Ginger & Co. did not expect it to open quite so suddenly as it did. Jim Dainty had suddenly let go. There was no resistance as the three stout lads pulled in unison, and the door flew wide open, hurling Ginger & Co. in a sprawling heap to the study floor.

Bump! Crash! Bump!

"Ow! Oh, my napper! Woooh!"

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Gerroff!"

"Yaroooh!"

Three enraged and breathless juniors sprawled and struggled, what time Jim Dainty trotted out of the House with the cake under his arm. Jim lost no time in getting across the quad. He crossed it as if he were on the cinder-path. He tossed the cake in at the window of No. 10 in White's House, and clambered in after it. Dick Dawson and Tommy Tucker were in the study now. They stared at him.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Dawson.

"All serene!" gasped Dainty. "Those Redmayes' cads raided the cake—but I've got it back. Ready for tea."

A few minutes later Fritz Splitz, with a fat and shiny face, came into the study, wiping cake crumbs from his capacious mouth. He found the three juniors sitting down to tea—round a handsome plum cake. Fritz stared at that cake as if mesmerised. It seemed to the fat German the ghost of the cake he had just devoured round the corner of the House.

"Mein gootness! Vat—" he ejaculated.

"All serene, Jerry!" said Dainty. "I got the cake back."

"You—got—te—cake—pack!" gasped Fritz.

"Yes—sit down and have some."

"Mein gootness!" gasped Fritz. "You—you find tat cake in Chinger's study?"

"Yes—they'd raided it, as you told me. What are you goggling at?"

"Oh, notting!" gurgled Fritz. "Mein gootness! Kolossal! I tinks tat I have some of tat cake! It looks as goot as te odder."

"Eh! What other?"

"Ach! Nothing—nothing!" gasped Fritz. "It look a goot cake, and I tinks tat I have a leetle."

And Fritz helped himself to the cake—not, however, to a little. He helped himself to a lot.

Asking for It!

TRAFFORD, captain of Grimslade and head of Redmayes' House, stared into Study No. 5 in that House. Tall, rather lean, and very handsome, Trafford of the Sixth belonged to one of the oldest families in Lancashire. He was in Redmayes' House of Grimslade as a matter of course; that being the Lancastrian House. In White's House, over the way, they sported the white rose of York.

There was a faint grin on Trafford's face as he stared into Ginger Rawlinson's study. Three Redmayes' juniors had sorted themselves out there, amid overturned table and chairs and scattered crockery, and they were all talking at once, with great emphasis, and rubbing a variety of bumps and bruises. They continued to rub the bumps and bruises, but ceased to talk, as the captain of the school looked in.

"Well what's this fearful row about?" asked Trafford.

"Oh! Nothing!" said Ginger airily. Ginger & Co. were thirsting for blood; but it was not the game to bring seniors and prefects into junior rows.

"I saw a White's kid nipping out of the House with a cake under his arm," drawled Trafford, "and I heard what you were saying."

"Oh! It's all right, Trafford."

"Quite! I shall see that it is! There's to be no gathering of the clans, and no raid on the other House!" said Trafford. "Cut all that out! It seems that that new kid, Dainty, has butted in and bagged your cake! I'll walk over to White's and see him. You will stay here."

"I—I say, Trafford—" stammered Bacon.

"That's enough! If you leave the House you'll get six!"

Trafford walked away, leaving Ginger & Co. dismayed. Those heroes of Lancashire had intended to call up their comrades and raid White's in force. But the "Wars of the Roses" at Grimslade had to be kept within limits, and Trafford's word was law.

"Rotten!" growled Sandy Bean, rubbing his chin.

It was rotten, but it could not be helped; and Ginger & Co. proceeded to set their study to rights, instead of going on the warpath.

Trafford strolled across to White's House. In the doorway he exchanged a nod with Yorke, the captain of White's, and walked on to Study No. 10 in the Fourth. He tapped at the door of that study and opened it.

Four juniors, who were just finishing a plum-cake, rose to their feet. Fritz's saucer-eyes fixed on Trafford with alarm. He could guess why that Redmayes' prefect had come, and he did not want the true history of that plum-cake to transpire. Trafford, however, took no notice of the German junior. He gave his attention to Dainty, and Fritz sidled to the door and vanished.

"This won't do, Dainty," said Trafford. "I saw you getting away with that cake—which you seem to have devoured since. I came to take it back—but as that's impossible now, I must trouble you to walk to the tuckshop and buy another exactly like it."

Dainty stared at him.

"You see," explained Trafford, "there's a limit. As you're new here, you may not understand that. A certain amount of ragging among the fags doesn't matter. But raiding grub from the other House is too thick. I won't whop you, as you're a new kid; but—"

"You jolly well won't!" snapped Dainty. "It was my cake."

"Don't talk rot," snapped Trafford. "I saw you scudding off with it."

"I dare say you did! But if they've told you about it—"

"They haven't told me a word. Fags are not encouraged to sneak at Grimslade," snapped Trafford. "You ought to know that by this time."

"I know it was my cake," said Jim doggedly. "It was bagged from this study, and I bagged it back. And that's all."

"That's not true," said Trafford quietly. "I happen to know it's not true, Dainty."

Jim's eyes blazed.

"Are you calling me a liar?" he demanded savagely.

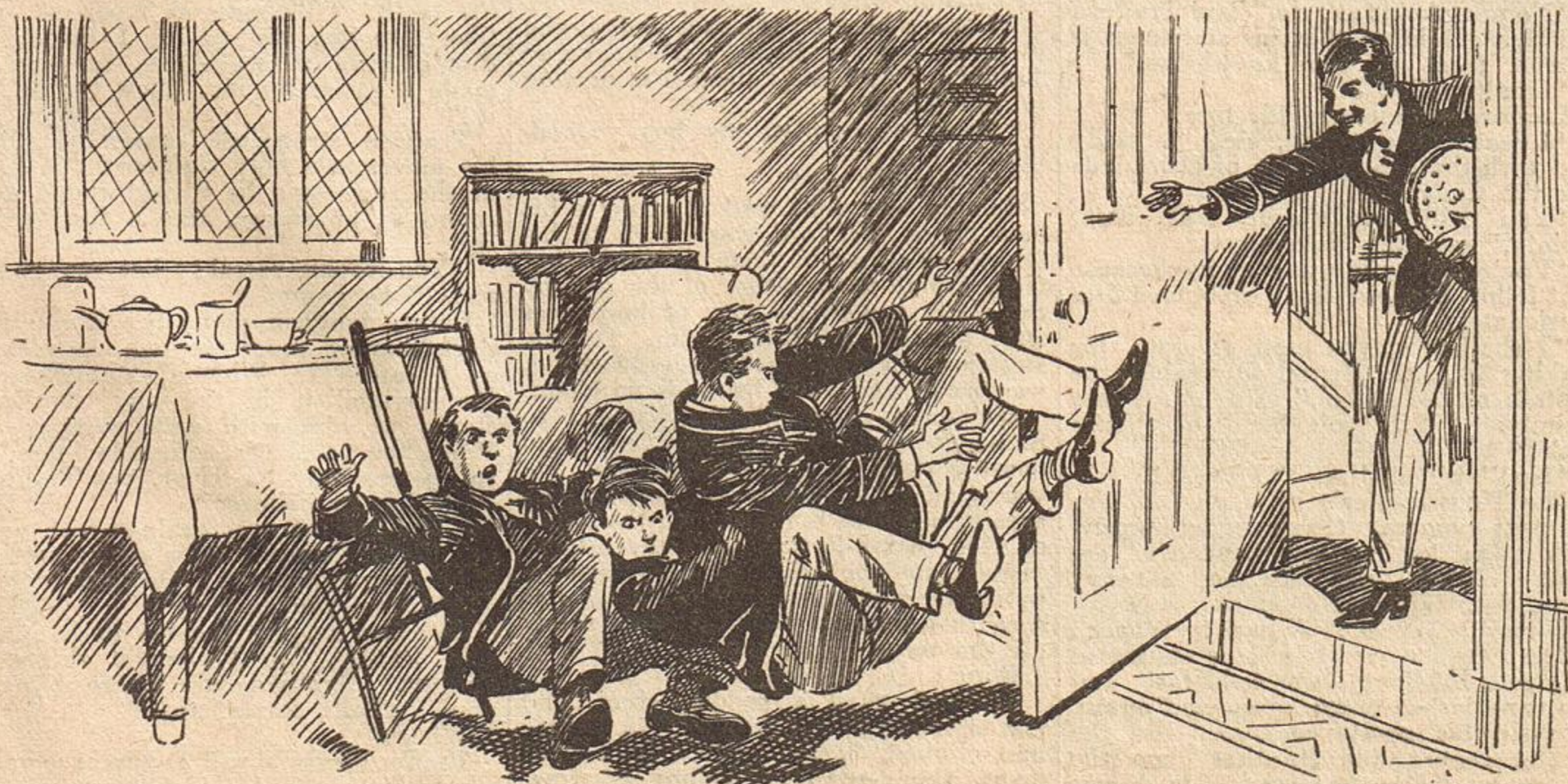
"I am!" assented Trafford, with a nod.

"Liar yourself, then!"

"Dainty!" gasped Dawson, while Tommy Tucker stared at the new fellow in horror. Jim did not heed them. He stood glaring defiance at the captain of the school.

Trafford did not speak for a few moments. He stood looking steadily at the flushed, defiant face of the new junior. Dawson and Tucker looked on, with bated breath. Fritz Splitz had already made himself scarce.

Defiant, angry, passionately reckless, Jim Dainty's face looked; but it did not look the face of a fellow who would tell



Ginger & Co. did not expect the door to open quite so suddenly as it did. Jim Dainty had let go and there was no resistance as the three stout lads pulled in unison. The door flew wide open, hurling Ginger & Co. in a sprawling heap to the study floor.

a lie. But Trafford knew that his statement was not true; for he had been in the school shop that afternoon when Ginger & Co., combining funds, had bought the cake. Trafford's face grew grimmer and grimmer.

Jim Dainty had attracted more attention, and given more trouble, than any new fellow that had ever come to Grimslade. "Sammy" Sparshott, the young headmaster, had somehow brought him into line—and the fellow who had started as a reckless rebel, had come to respect the Head, and nothing more had been heard of his wild resolve to run away from the school.

But Jim Dainty was far from tamed yet—as his answer to the captain of the school showed.

In the brief pause, Jim turned away from Trafford, stretched out his hand to the last remnant of the cake, and picked it up. Trafford's eyes gleamed.

"Put that down, Dainty!"

"Shan't!"

"Dainty!" exclaimed Dawson.

"Oh, shut up!" said Dainty gruffly.

Trafford made a stride forward and grasped the new junior by the shoulder. With a swing of his sinewy arm, he hooked him out of the study.

"Let go, you bully!" panted Jim. "I'll hack your shins."

"Better not!" said Trafford grimly.

He hooked the junior along the passage. Dainty struggled in his grasp, but the powerful senior held him like an infant, strong as he was. There was a sudden howl from Trafford as the junior hacked him.

"Oh! Oh gad! You young scoundrel!" gasped Trafford.

"Let me go, you rotter!"

Trafford strode on, with a grip of iron on the junior's collar. Dainty had no chance for another hack; his feet trailed along the floor as he was swept on. Trafford arrived at Mr. White's study, tapped, and entered, jerking the struggling junior at arm's length after him. The Housemaster laid down his pen and rose, staring.

"Dainty again!" he said grimly. He reached for a cane.

"I have to report this junior, sir, for raiding a cake belonging to juniors of my House."

"It's a lie!" yelled Dainty.

"What?" roared Mr. White, grasping the cane.

"It's a lie—a rotten lie! It was my cake, and I took it back, and I'd do the same again!" yelled Dainty.

Mr. White stared at him.

"I suppose there is no mistake in the matter, Trafford? This boy is reckless, wilful, and rebellious; but I should not have suspected him of lying."

"No mistake at all, sir," said Trafford quietly. "I know that his statement is untrue, from my own knowledge."

"Liar!" yelled Jim.

Trafford compressed his lips.

"I leave him to you, sir," he said; and with that, the captain of Grimslade left the study.

"You will bend over that desk, Dainty," said the Housemaster.

"You're not going to cane me because that fellow has told lies!" exclaimed Jim passionately.

"I shall cane you most severely, for making such an accusation against the captain of the school," said Mr. White grimly. "Will you bend over that desk?"

"No!" yelled Jim. "I won't!"

The Housemaster's grip was on him the next moment. He struggled fiercely, recklessly; but he was bent over the desk. With a grim face, and a heavy hand, Mr. White laid on the cane.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! The new boy at Grimslade struggled and yelled. But he was held fast; and the cane lashed down again and again. Not till his resistance ceased did the caning cease; and by that time the licking was rather a record. Mr. White released him at last, and pointed to the door with the cane.

"You may go!" he said curtly.

Jim Dainty almost staggered to the door. He hardly knew how to get back to his own study. He staggered into Study No. 10 in the Fourth, his face white, and his eyes burning. Dick Dawson was there, and he gave a low whistle as Dainty came in.

"My hat! You look as if you've been through it!" he said.

"I'll make that rotten liar sit up for it, somehow!" muttered Dainty, between his teeth. "That cur Trafford is—"

"Oh, can it!" snapped Dawson. "Trafford's the most decent man at Grimslade, though he's a Redmayes' man."

"I tell you he's a liar!"

"And I tell you you're a fool!" snapped Dawson, and he left the study.

Jim was left alone, leaning on the table, gasping, hardly able to suppress his groans. He had been punished—unjustly. He did not blame the Housemaster; all his bitterness and vengeance were directed towards Trafford.

Mr. White had had to take Trafford's word—and Trafford had lied—lied! And he was in the Sixth, captain of the school—out of reach of vengeance.

But was he? It was on vengeance that Jim Dainty's thoughts were running, with a fierce and passionate determination.

Thrashing Trafford!

"SAMMY" SPARSHOTT, headmaster of Grimslade, glanced round him rather sharply. The hour was late, and Dr. Sparshott was taking a turn in the quad before going to bed. Both Houses were closed for the night, only from one window a light gleamed into the quad, the window of Trafford's study in Redmayes' House. Outside that window grew one of the ancient oaks of Grimslade, an oak that had been a young tree in the days when Robin Hood roamed the forests of Yorkshire.

Sammy Sparshott had rather wondered why Trafford was sitting up so late, and had glanced at the open, lighted window. As he did so, he fancied that he saw a shadow flit round the massive old oak. If a junior was out of his House at that late hour, it was a matter for Sammy to look into, and he left the path and strode towards the lighted window.

But if anyone had been there, he had vanished now, and Sammy concluded that he had been mistaken. Trafford, hearing him, stepped to the window.

"You're up late," said Dr. Sparshott. "Swotting, what?"

"I had a hack on the shin to-day, and it bothers me a little, sir," answered Trafford. "As I can't sleep, I'm putting in some Greek."

"Don't over-do it, my boy. Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Sammy Sparshott walked away to his own house, Trafford went back to his Greek. Neither of them dreamed that from the thick branches of the oak by the study window, a pair of keen eyes were watching them. Jim Dainty, stretched on a stout branch overhead, was out of sight, and he made no sound.

Hidden in the oak, he listened to Sammy's footsteps dying away, and heard a door close in the distance. He was glad that Sammy had gone. His eyes gleamed as they fixed on the figure of the Sixth-Former in the study, visible in the light. He waited—patiently—and did not stir till he was sure that Sammy Sparshott was safely off the scene.

Clink!

Trafford gave a sudden start, and stared round at his window. A pebble had clinked on the pane. In amazement, the captain of Grimslade rose, stepped to the window, and stared out into the starlit quadrangle.

No one was in sight. Sammy Sparshott's door had closed a quarter of an

hour ago, and all was silent and still. Trafford stared into the starlight. It was unlikely that any fellow could be out of his House, playing tricks on the captain of the school. For a long minute the Sixth-Former stared, then he closed the window and turned away from it, perplexed and puzzled.

Clink! Crack!

He spun round to the window again. This time there could be no mistake—another pebble had struck the pane and cracked it.

"My hat!" ejaculated the captain of Grimslade.

He shot up the sash and leaned from the window, staring round him in the dim starlight. Over his head, the thick branch of the oak brushed the wall with its tip. He could see nobody—but it was certain that someone was in the quad, pelting his study window. He leaned farther out, staring to right and left. It did not occur to him for the moment to look upward.

From the branch overhead, a looped rope suddenly dropped. Before Trafford knew that it was coming, the loop was round his shoulders, as he leaned out over the sill. He gave a convulsive jump as the rope was dragged from above, and the noose tightened.

He was lassoed!

"Why—what—" spluttered Trafford, in amazement. He clutched at the rope to drag it loose.

It tautened instantly. One of his arms was in it, pinned down to his side.

Like a fellow in a dream, Trafford felt himself dragged from the window.

The other end of the rope was passed over the stout oak branch, and Jim Dainty dropped from the branch, throwing his weight on the rope. Taken utterly by surprise, and hardly believing that this strange thing was really happening, Trafford was dragged headlong through the window.

Instantly Jim Dainty took a turn of the rope round the trunk of the tree. Trafford swung in the air, his feet two yards from the ground.

"What—" he gasped. "Who—"

One arm was pinned and helpless. With the other hand, he tore at the rope. But the noose was tight, and his weight on the rope made it impossible for him to loosen it. He was a helpless prisoner, swinging at the end of the rope, and with starting eyes, he saw the shadowy figure of a junior knotting the other end of the rope round the trunk.

"Dainty!" he gasped.

Jim rose to his feet, with gleaming eyes.

"Yes, you rotter!" he said, between his teeth. "Wriggle as much as you like—I've got you now! I fancied I should have to wake you up—you've made it easier for me. Now you're for it!"

Trafford struggled frantically. But his movements only tightened the grip of the rope—and he turned round and round as he swung, like a fowl on a spit.

"You young rascal! Let me go at once!" he panted.

Dainty laughed savagely. From the dark shadow under the oak, he picked up a cane—Mr. White's stoutest cane. He swished it in the air. Trafford stared at him with unbelieving eyes. What the rebel of Grimslade intended to do was only too clear, yet Trafford could hardly believe it.

"You got me a thrashing—with your lies!" said Dainty. "Now you're getting it back—with interest! Catch on?"

"You—if you dare—"

"You're too big for me to handle," said Dainty, "so I thought this out, and now I've got you where I want you! That's for a start!"

Whack!

Trafford gave a yell as the cane rang across his back. He kicked out wildly, but it was easy for the active junior to dodge his lunging feet. He spun

(Continued at foot of next page.)

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round at the end of the rope and the cane rang on him again.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

At the end of the rope, Trafford of the Sixth swung and turned, and plunged and kicked and struggled.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

He could not elude the lashing of the cane, which came hard and fast on his back and legs as he turned and writhed.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

As a junior at Grimslade, Trafford had had his share of lickings. As a senior, he had never been licked—till now! But the licking he was getting now put into the shade any licking he had ever had as a lower boy.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Jim Dainty was putting his beef into it. Every lash of the cane rang like a pistol-shot. Louder still rang the yelling of the captain of Grimslade. His voice woke every echo of the quad.

"I had a dozen!" said Jim Dainty, between his teeth. "You're going to have two dozen, you rotter! Yell as loud as you like—I've got lots of time to give you what you've asked for, you liar!"

"Help!" roared Trafford.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Windows and doors opened in both Houses. Lights flashed into the dusk of the quadrangle. Voices called and shouted.

The whole school was alarmed.

The cane lashed and rang. Jim Dainty expected to be interrupted, but, as he had said, he had lots of time to finish his task. Trafford spun round on the rope as the junior, dodging his frantic kicking, lashed and lashed. The captain of Grimslade was getting the most terrific thrashing that had ever been administered to any Grimslader.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

It seemed like some awful dream to Trafford. Jim Dainty's face was set and savage as he thrashed away with the cane. All he had had from his Housemaster, and much more, was

passed on to the captain of the school. Trafford spun like a top, as the cane thrashed and thrashed.

But there were hurrying footsteps in the quad now, shouting voices. Sammy Sparshott's deep voice was heard. The Head of Grimslade was the first to reach the spot. Jim saw him coming, saw the amazement and wrath in the face of the headmaster, but he did not cease to lash at the fellow spinning on the oak branch.

"Boy!" roared Sammy Sparshott.

He rushed up and grasped Dainty by the shoulder as the cane was falling again. Jim was spun backwards in Sammy's herculean grasp.

"Boy! Dainty! Trafford!" Sammy Sparshott was not easily surprised, but he was almost babbling now. "Boy! Are you mad? What—"

"I've thrashed that rotter!" said Dainty, between his teeth. "He told lies, and got me licked! I've given him the same! Now you can do as you like!"

Mr. Redmayes and a dozen fellows were on the scene now. They jumped to release Trafford.

Jim Dainty, in the Head's grasp, was walked away unresisting. He knew that he had to answer for what he had done, and he was ready to face the music. But the look on Sammy Sparshott's face as he led him away almost scared even the reckless rebel of Grimslade.

Light at Last!

G RIMSLADE SCHOOL was in something like an uproar the following morning. Fellows of both Houses grouped in the quad, excitedly discussing the amazing happening of the night.

Ginger & Co. and the rest of Redmayes' House thrilled with indignation; but they were no more indignant than their old rivals of White's.

What was going to happen to Jim

Dainty was a burning question. At any other school it would have been the "sack." But Sammy Sparshott prided himself on the fact that no man was ever sacked from Grimslade. Grimslade's mission was to take any sort of material and knock it into shape—and Sammy Sparshott never owned to failure.

Dainty in a week at Grimslade had already collected more lickings than most fellows collected in a whole term. They did not seem to have done him much good. How was "Sammy" going to handle a fellow who had strung up the captain of the school and thrashed him?

After breakfast that morning the Head's sentence was known. Jim Dainty was flogged before the assembled school, which infliction was to be repeated three times a week till the end of the term, with detention tasks for two hours a day and every half-holiday.

It was a sentence that almost took Grimslade's breath away, and showed that Sammy was in his grimmest humour. Dainty took it with dogged sullenness and defiance, and made no sound under the Head's birch.

Stiff as the sentence was, every fellow heard it with approval—with one exception. Fritz Splitz heard it with dismay. Often and often had the fat Rhinelander pinched tuck that belonged to other fellows, and just as often he had told fibs about it, and sometimes it had led to trouble. But never had it led to such trouble as this.

Fritz was quite concerned about "tat poor Tainty!" But he was more concerned about himself, and kept his own counsel.

After class that morning Jim Dainty came out with a set and savage face. He passed Trafford of the Sixth in the quad, and gave him a scowl. The captain of Grimslade took no notice of

(Continued on page 23.)

LOST CASTLE

A THRILLING
STORY OF A
FEUD BETWEEN
COWBOYS AND
GUNMEN AMID
THE MOUN-
TAINS OF THE
WILD WEST.



FOR TWO REASONS ARE PETE FRANKLIN AND BIG BOSS KRAMER ENEMIES. KRAMER KILLED PETE'S FATHER, AND HE ALSO WANTS THE VAST TREASURE WHICH PETE AND HIS COWBOY PALS HAVE FOUND IN LOST CASTLE. PETE & CO. DON SUITS OF ARMOUR AT THEIR CASTLE FORTRESS AND BECOME KNOWN AS THE IRON MEN. THEY CAPTURE KRAMER AND SOME OF HIS GUNMEN, BUT LATER ALLOW THEM TO GO FREE. THE BIG BOSS PROMPTLY RACES HIS MEN IN FAST CARS TO TAKE POSSESSION OF LOST CASTLE.

Kramer Takes Lost Castle!



PETE and his cowboy pals, all dressed in their suits of armour, and mounted on armour-clad horses, rode on at a steady pace, reaching the foothills and Hell's Kitchen after dark and

deciding to camp there.

They kept watch, and in the morning resumed their journey. Another halt for the night, and then they came within view of the rock face in which nature had bored the opening of the secret pass that led to Lost Castle.

The wide spaces in front of the mountain were bathed in silver moonlight, and watchers lurked among the rocks and

boulders, for the cowboys had seen them. And yet not one shot had been fired at them.

"Pete," said Mike Cassidy, as he swung his lance from left hand to right and changed over the reins, "do you get the drift of it? Kramer's gunmen are closing in behind. Didn't you see those horsemen galloping up at sunset?"

Pete Franklin, looking just like a black knight, nodded.

"I saw 'em, Mike," he answered. "Kramer must have left definite orders behind before he left Bullwhacker. I'll bet his gunmen are sitting on the trail like a swarm of ants. They don't mean that we should ever get back to Bullwhacker, pals."

Then Ben Nathan pointed, the moonbeams striking flashes of silver from his bright steel armour.

"Look there," he called out.

The Iron Men looked. Over at the base of the mountain, which rose sheer from the plateau, stood a black car.

They had passed several other abandoned cars the day before, parked near the trail. Pete read the story correctly now.

"This one is Kramer's own car," he said. "Reckon the Big Boss was so saddle-sore he wouldn't risk riding till they got here, though how they managed to drive that car up that stone-strewn trail licks me."

"Hosses dragged it," said Mike. "There were hoof-prints enough."

Pete urged his horse over towards the stationary car, lance pointed as if about to charge.

"Hey, Pete!" called out Pat O'Connor. "Go easy! Maybe they've got a machine-gun in there!"

Pete reached the car. He pushed in the wind-screen and the glass of the doors with some smacking blows of his lance, and peered inside the automobile. A glance showed him that it was empty.

Pete climbed down, told Red not to move and, taking off his gauntlets, drew a box of matches from his pocket. Then he

opened the bonnet and, striking a match, dropped it on the carburettor.

Instantly a burst of flame leapt skyward. The wind caught it and blew it over the cylinder caps, and in a second the car was a mass of roaring flame.

Pete caught the bridle, steadied Red, and climbed back into his saddle, spear in hand. The car was wrapped in flames when he rejoined his pals.

"Kramer won't be ridin' back," he said, as they all moved on together.

They had to stoop and ride with caution into the narrow pass which led to Lost Castle.

Pete rode in front, in spite of protests.

"Kramer aims to get us as we ride along here, shouldn't wonder," said Ben Nathan. "All he's got to do is mount a machine-gun in the cutting and mow us down."

"He won't do that," answered Pete confidently.

"Won't? Why not?"

"First, we're wearing this bullet-proof armour. Second, if he did get us and our hosses, we'd block up the narrow path, and he and his men could never get back."

"They could remove the dead," argued Mike Cassidy grimly.

"Try movin' dead hosses and dead men wearing heavy armour," retorted Pete, "in a cutting that runs for miles and isn't more'n ten feet wide anywhere, and only six feet mostly. No, Kramer's banking on getting us at the castle."

And so it would seem, for they passed through the secret cutting without mishap and emerged on to the mountain trail which ran along the gorge to Lost Castle. There they camped, waiting for sun-up.

Relieving the horses of the weight of their armour, they set them loose in a sheltered place, and then ate and rested. They were by this time so enured to hardship and exertion, and the weight of their armour that they could have slept standing up. And, strangely enough, none of them questioned the wisdom of their latest adventure or doubted that they would win through.

They did not even worry about Kramer and his gunmen who were so near to them, or wonder how many men the Big Boss had taken with him to the castle. That the inevitable battle would take place where the trail narrowed along the gorge and the drawbridge spanned the closing gap, the cowboys knew for a certainty, and they were thrilling with anticipation.

As the black sky changed to blue and the blue to grey, Pete, who was on guard, roused his pals. They lit their oil stove and cooked breakfast as a sheet of gold spread from east to west and a new day came.

The thin end of the night had passed without alarm. They ate, they strapped the body armour on their horses, and donned their helmets and such of their mail as they had discarded for their sleeping. Then, in a golden glory of sunshine, they passed along the trail with the pack horses in between.

Pete remembered with a thrill his first sight of the gorge, and the way Lost Castle had burst upon him as he turned a corner of the rocky trail. It loomed up just as surprisingly now. One moment there was no sign of the mountain fortress; the next, the Iron Men swept round a bend, and Lost Castle lay right in front of them, seeming to rest on the trail, but really

separated from it by the seemingly bottomless gorge.

As the cowboys rode on, their armour jangling and clanking, the castle suddenly reeled away from the road and frowned upon them beyond the deadly gap. And as this happened Pete reined in Red to a halt and, using his lance as a pointer, cried:

"Mike, Hank, boys, look! The drawbridge is down!"

They crowded close behind him in a bunch, Hank being so near the brink that it needed only one false step of his horse to carry him clean over it.

They craned forward in the saddle to see the better. Pete was right. The drawbridge was down. Kramer had gained an entry into the castle. Kramer and his gunmen were there!

Bombed!

As this surprising and unexpected fact hammered itself home, a bullet sang past Pete's helm. Instantly he pulled his visor down. The shot came from one of the gun ports, he reckoned. Indeed, he saw the smoke curl upwards a second later.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang! Bullets thundered along the gorge and sang about the Iron Men, spattered on helm and body armour, and rattled off the armour the horses wore.

Hank drew his horse back from the brink of the pit and edged him inwards. The iron-clad cowboys in the rear hauled their horses round and, with the pack horses following, cantered to the safe shelter of the bend.

Pete, Hank, and Mike followed, feeling glad when they were safe behind the sheltering wall, for their horses' legs were unprotected, and it needed only a bullet in shin-bone or neck or fetlock to bring one down.

"Pete," said Mike Cassidy grimly, "Kramer and his dirty dogs are cleverer than we thought. Never guessed they'd find the back way into the castle. And now, what with Kramer there and the trail blocked by machine-gunners, things don't look so pretty."

"Bunk!" said Hank Davis, with a snort. "We brought some bombs with us from the stores. We can clear the pass with those."

"Just hand me out a couple," said Pete.

Hank dismounted, undid some of the packages, got busy with hammer and chisel and, prising up the lid of a box, drew out of it some hand bombs. He had cajoled them out of Penfold at the stores, who had got them for the military.

"Let me use 'em, Pete," Hank begged. "No, you lop-eared yearling!" grinned Pete, through his open helm. "I brought you boys into this mess. The one who takes the risks is me."

"The same one who gets all the fun," grumbled Hank.

"Well," said Pete, "if that's the way you feel about it, prepare to ride along the plateau and throw some of those bombs in at the gun ports after I've stirred up that machine-gun crew."

"How you going to stir 'em up?" asked Mike, lighting up a cigarette which did not tone in too well with his sixteenth century helm.

Pete pointed upwards. "Over the rocks," he answered. "An' I've got my six-guns, too!"

Almost immediately Pete, with a bag full of bombs slung from his shoulder, began to climb, whilst Pal Moore posted himself just behind the wall of rock that marked the turn of the trail, from which shelter he was able to see what Kramer's men were at. Pete, hampered by his armour, found the climbing slow, but he went on and up resolutely. He had just got above where Pal Moore stood on guard, when Pal called out to him.

"Watch out, Pete! The machine-gun corps is coming along the cliff trail!"

Pete scrambled to a boulder just ahead of him and peered over the top of it. A glance showed him that Pal was right. The machine-gunners were coming along, carrying the machine-gun mounted on a tripod stand. Behind them trailed an escort of a dozen men. They were all laughing and joking.

"The Big Boss has got the castle, Blink," one of the men shouted out to the man in charge of the machine-gun crew. "Waal, there's a treasure there that'll make us all rich for life. As for Pete Franklin and his Iron Men—they can't ride along this pass with us hyar. We'll get some clear shootin' once we're round the bend. An' you fire that machine-gun low. Git the 'osses legs,

see. Drive 'em over into the gorge, and then see us wipe out Pete an' his pals."

Pete's lips tightened behind the iron helm.

Blink! Then the burly man with the beard who was giving orders to the machine-gunners must be Blink McRosty, one of the killers who had shot his dad. Pete's blood went suddenly cold.

But his fingers which released the pin of a bomb were warm and throbbing! The gunmen came along in a hurried scramble, eager to get their machine-gun in action before the Iron Men had ridden too far along the trail. It was Pete's warning shout to Pal that made them stop and look up sharply.

"Get right away from that wall, Pal," Pete called down. "There's something coming over."

Pal ran, his armour clanking at every stride.

Wham!

Pete's black armour-clad arm and helm showed above the boulder as he hurled the bomb down. Blink McRosty and his machine-gun crew were so taken by surprise that they stood staring upward at the figure above them. None of them made an attempt to move. Pete held the bomb a few seconds before he crashed it down, and the explosion took place at almost the very instant it struck the rocky ground below.

Crash! A flash of light, a spreading billow of smoke, and the men went down right and left, three of them—including Blink—going sheer over the edge and tumbling into the bottomless gorge.

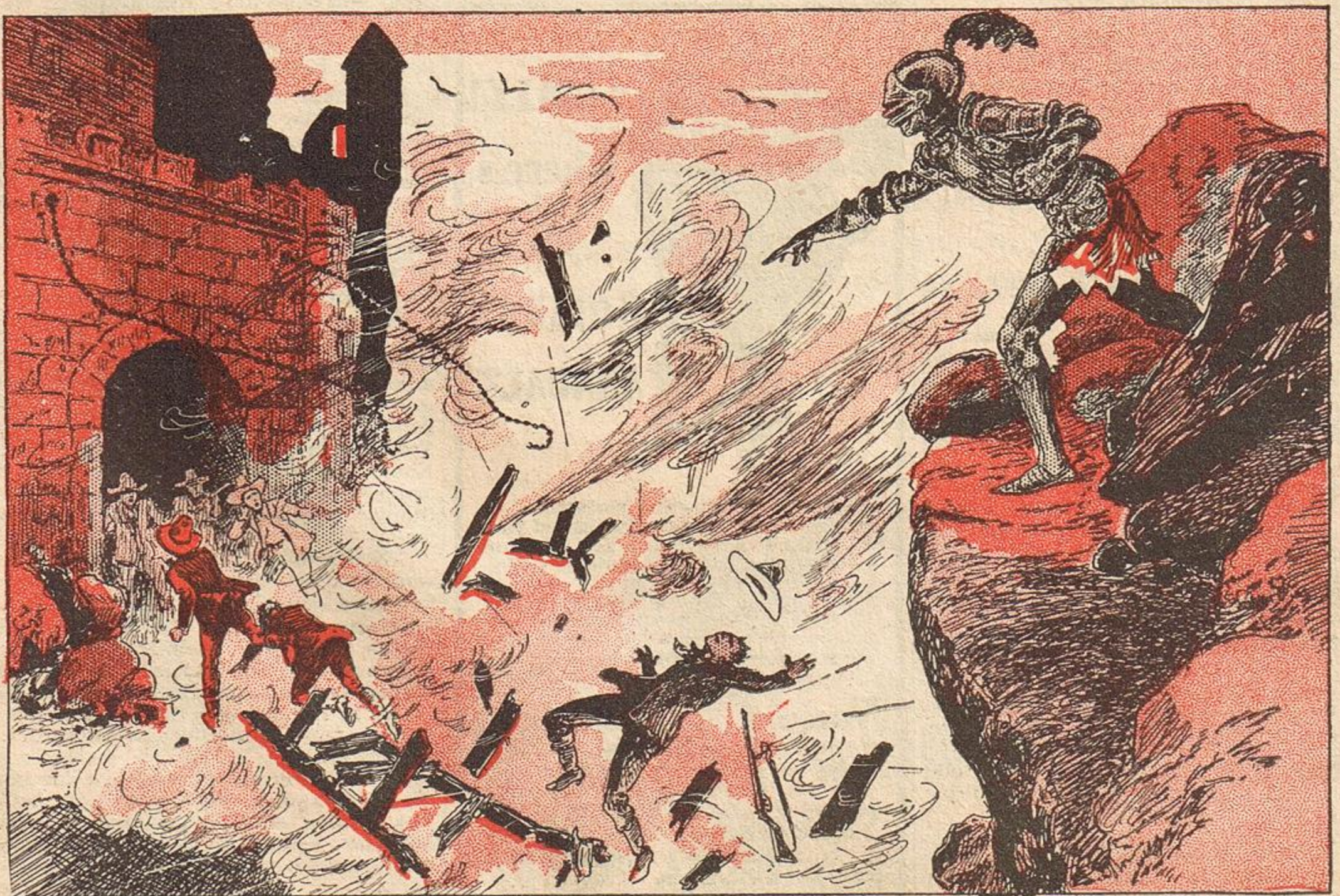
They carried the machine-gun with them.

Of the rest, one, in turning to run, swung outward. He remained for a moment balanced on the brink of the gorge, with his hands spread high above his head, then with a strangled cry plunged out of sight.

Two other men lay still upon the trail. The survivors went limping and groaning back towards the drawbridge on which some men were standing, drawn out of Lost Castle by the noise of the explosion.

Pete crept onward over the boulder-strewn face of the mountain, thinking hard, and as he went on slowly he thought of a plan that made him chuckle.

There were two ways into Lost Castle, and Kramer had used them both. But



For a few seconds Pete remained motionless, like a black statue. Then he hurled a bomb sheer down to the drawbridge. It burst with a blinding flash of light and blur of smoke, and the whole middle of the bridge was torn away!

get rid of one way in, and there would be left only one way out. Kramer's men would not be so keen to defend the trail now. If they could be driven right back, why—then Kramer's army would be robbed of half of its effectiveness!

Pete climbed on, cramped and hampered by his mail, yet glad enough to wear it, for a bullet aimed through one of the loopholes of the gallery above the gun battery struck his steel helm, only to glance off harmlessly.

Up and on and down again, going wherever the narrow trail led, Pete managed at last to gain a place among the boulders which commanded the drawbridge.

It was here that Kramer's men had sheltered when they had attacked the castle.

Pete scrambled down. Each great boulder lent sufficient shelter for two or three men, and Pete knew that men had fashioned these shelters, perhaps when Lost Castle was attacked centuries ago.

Bullets whistled past him as his black armour showed. Men were firing from the drawbridge, and out of the gun ports, and from the open gateway of the castle. In a swift glance Pete saw Kramer there. And between the explosions he heard Kramer roar:

"He's in black armour. That one's Pete. Get him. Can't any of yer see straight?"

Suddenly Pete stood erect and darted out between two great boulders. For a few seconds his black figure remained motionless, like a statue. Then he hurled a bomb, having removed the pin, sheer down to the drawbridge.

It burst with a blinding flash of light and blur of smoke, and the whole middle of the bridge was torn sheer away. The men standing on it turned and raced for the castle gate as they saw the bomb hurtle downwards. Two of them just managed to leap to safety in time, dropping their guns which slithered down into the depths, but the third went down with the shattered bridge.

The men in the castle stopped shooting. And Pete, looking down as the smoke drifted away and up, saw that only the stout chains of the drawbridge remained, with the end of the bridge, which had rested on the top of the cliff, sagging downward in grotesque fashion.

And then, even as he looked, the end plunged downwards, and the chains swung with a thundering clank across the gorge, to strike against the stone face opposite and dangle there.

Kramer was deprived of his bridge. The only way out of Lost Castle for him and his men was through the mountain gate at the end of the gorge.

The Battle Begins!

A PROFOUND silence followed the bombing of the bridge. Pete had shrunk away behind his protecting boulder. He began to think out fresh plans of attack.

The gates beyond the drawbridge yawned open. Pete thought about climbing down and sending a bomb or two into the interior of Lost Castle.

But Kramer must have thought of that risk, for of a sudden there echoed much shouting and yelling inside the castle, and then the gates were closed, and the heavy bolts shot home.

Then men appeared in the gun ports. The battery was swarming with them. They began to fire at the boulder behind which Pete was crouching.

"Fire away," said Pete with a grin, as he heard the bullets striking against the solid rock. "Just you wait till we take our turn."

There is not much fun in potting solid rock, and after some minutes the firing ceased.

As the echoes died away Pete heard a galloping of hoofs along the cliff trail, the familiar clank and clang of armour which had haunted him for days.

He rose and peered cautiously out of his hiding-place.

Pete was surprised. Five iron-clad men came along at a charging gallop, bearing their lances, their shields banging against their backs as they rode, and driving the pack horses in front of them.

The pack horses were past the open gun ports and in safety before Kramer's gunmen were wise to the trick. But they began to fire when the Iron Men flashed by.

It was too late. Their radius of aim was too restricted and the armour-clad horsemen were riding hard. They had their pack horses in safety in no time.

Pete was puzzled. What was eating Hank and Mike and his pals? Why had they got scared that way?

Pete was soon to know. Within a minute or so he heard the thud of more horses treading in mass. Voices rang along the gorge.

The sounds came nearer. Pete's lips tightened. This was not a mere troop of horse that came riding along the narrow trail, but a regiment. The noise deepened to thunder, and presently into view galloped quite a hundred men, armed with rifles and revolvers, and clad in every imaginable kind of riding kit. They carried provisions, and even had with them two pack horses on each of which was strapped a machine-gun.

"Kramer's men," said Pete to himself.

He was right. As they rounded the bend and saw Lost Castle loom up in front of them, they whipped off their hats and waved them, cheering madly. Ahead of the crowd rode Fourflusher Jim with head held high enough now, all full of arrogance since he had led this crowd of killers safely through the secret pass.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" cheered Fourflusher as he brought his horse round so that he could face Lost Castle. "Where's the Big Boss? Where's Kramer?"

Kramer appeared in person at one of the gun ports.

"Glad you've come, Jim," he yelled, pointing at the rock behind which Pete was hiding. "Pete Franklin has broke down the drawbridge, and we can't get out of this cussed place. He's up in those rocks hiding. Go and get him."

Fourflusher Jim turned in the saddle and stared up at the boulders, and his

lips tightened. Out of the saddle he got, and threw the reins to one of his men. A revolver gleamed in his right hand.

"Watch me go get him," he said as he started up. "I owe Pete some. He captured me and shoved me down in the castle dungeons."

Jim climbed until of a sudden he saw black armour showing between two rocks. He fired blindly, and his aim was good—but Pete's bullet-proof armour turned the cartridge harmlessly aside.

Then Pete showed himself more fully, and Pete's own gun barked. The revolver Fourflusher held was struck from his hand, and, losing his balance, he slipped down, turning as he neared the bottom, and landing crash full on the top of his head on the hard rocky trail.

"Smashed his dome just like it was an egg shell," said one of his men, who slid out of the saddle and bent over the motionless figure.

Once again the gorge was for a moment hushed in silence.

And yet again the silence was broken by the galloping of many horses. Pete was not impressed, but Kramer's gunmen were.

"What's coming now?" shouted one of the horsemen nervously. "There was no more of Kramer's men coming up from Bullwhacker."

From the gun port out of which he was peering, and which commanded a view of the cliff far beyond the bend which hid the trail from view on the side opposite the castle, Big Boss Kramer let out a mighty deep throated shout.

"States Cavalry, by heck!" he bellowed.

Cries of consternation rang from the newly arrived regiment of mounted gunmen. The cries were repeated from Lost Castle.

Then above the din rang the clear cut note of a bugle. Tan-ta-ra-ran-ta-ran-fan-ta-ra—tan-ta-ta—taaa! The call ended in a long drawn out note. It was followed by a ringing command.

Pete was looking out of his shelter. Round the bend of the trail swung an officer. He was followed by a regiment of khaki clad soldiery, all fully armed. Above the cantering troop floated a striped flag. The men were all sun tanned, and armed to the teeth. They, too, had brought a machine-gun, Pete saw. But what did it mean?

Surely the States soldiers had not come to grab him and his pals, and let a killer like Kramer go scot-free?

The officer in command of the cavalry motioned the mounted gunmen out of his path, and squared his mettlesome horse to face the gun ports of Lost Castle.

"Is Kramer there?" he called.

Kramer showed himself, green faced and grim, his eyes glinting evilly.

"What you want me for, colonel?" he answered back.

"Kramer," said the officer in clean cut, ringing tones, "I have come to arrest you and your gunmen in the name of the United States. Spider Lewis has confessed. You are wanted for murder, for graft, for corrupting the municipality of Bullwhacker. You are wanted for killing Peter Edward Franklin, and Sheriff Notch, and those old timers, and for arson—the burning down of Franklin's Stores. Furthermore, you are wanted for—"

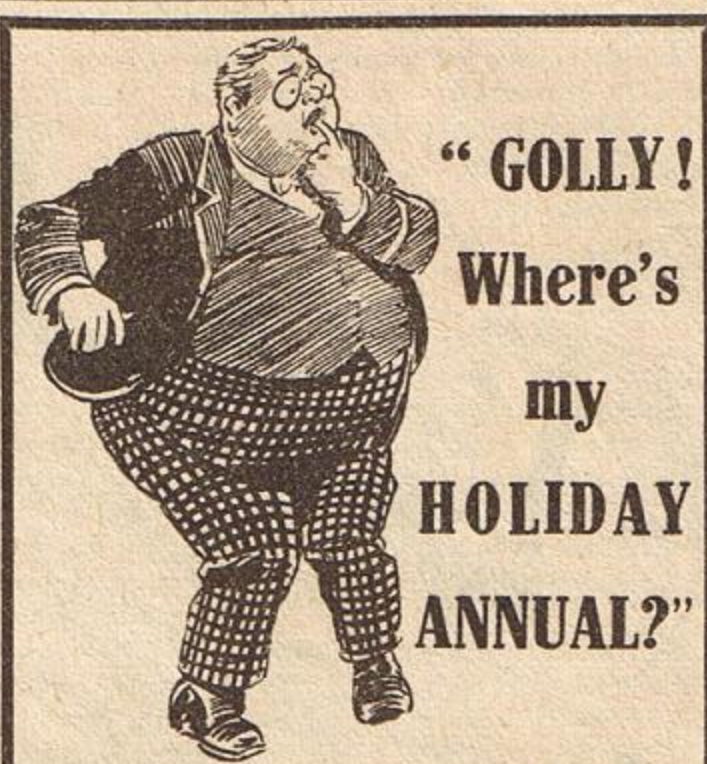
"Never mind tellin' me what I'm wanted for," howled Kramer. "Say, you get a load of this!"

Kramer snatched a rifle from Butcher Brown, who was standing next to him, and swinging it to his shoulder and taking first time aim, pulled the trigger.

His aim was true. The officer reeled in the saddle, slipped sideways and tumbled to the ground. A trooper managed to catch his horse just in time to prevent it from leaping into the gorge.

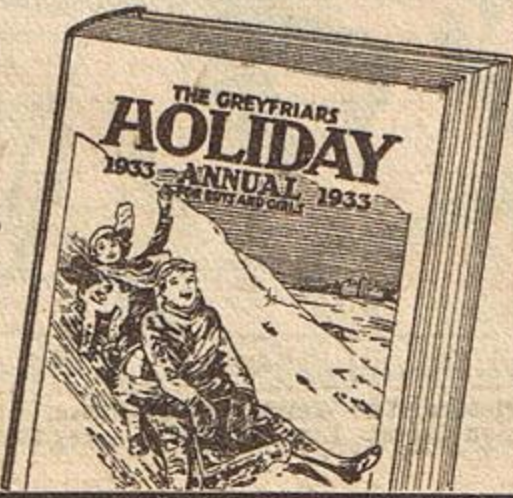
And then the troopers answered the foul shot with a regular fusillade. The battle proper of Lost Castle had begun!

(There's thrill upon thrill in next week's concluding chapters of this magnificent story. Make sure of reading them, buddies, by ordering your RANGER in advance.)



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THE FOURTH FORM AT GRIMSLADE!

(Continued from page 19.)

him, however. Sammy had dealt with the rebel drastically, and Trafford was done with him.

"Keep away from that rotter!" bawled Ginger Rawlinson, as Sandy Bean came up to Dainty in the quad.

"Look here, Dainty—" began Bean unheeding.

"Shut up and let me alone!" snapped Dainty.

"I want to ask you a question—"

"Well, I won't answer it!"

"I've been thinking—"

"Rot! You couldn't!"

Sandy's eyes gleamed.

"Lend me a hand, you men," he said.

"Dip his head in the fountain till he gives a civil answer!"

"Oh, if it's a rag, all right!" said Ginger, mollified.

Jim Dainty's hands flew up as the three Redmayes' juniors surrounded and collared him. There was a yell from Streaky Bacon and a howl from Sandy Bean as two rapid blows landed. Then the new fellow was down, and the trio grasped him on all sides. Struggling fiercely, Dainty was dragged to the fountain in the middle of the quad.

Splash!

His head went in.

"Oooooogh!" spluttered Dainty, wriggling wildly in the grasp of the three.

"Now will you answer a question?" asked Sandy agreeably. "What made you fancy that old Trafford was lying about that cake?"

"I know he was!" roared Dainty. "The rotter told lies because you belong to his House! He knew you'd pinched the cake!"

"We didn't!" howled Streaky Bacon. "We bought it in the school shop, and old Trafford saw us!"

"That's a lie!"

"Duck him!"

Splash!

"Urrrrgggh!"

"Now," said Sandy cheerfully, as Dainty came up again, gasping and gurgling. "I've asked Mrs. Sykes in the tuckshop, and found out that Dainty bought a cake the same as ours yesterday afternoon. My idea is that somebody bagged it, and Dainty thought we did the trick. Is that it, you hot-headed duffer?"

"You know you did!" gasped Dainty. "You were seen, and the fellow told me."

"What fellow?" rapped Bean.

"Find out!"

Splash!

"Oooooooooooooogh!"

"Who was the fellow?"

"It was Fritz, you rotter!" gasped Dainty. "He saw you."

There was a yell from Ginger & Co.

"You silly ass!"

Leaving Jim Dainty sprawling by the

fountain, streaming with water, the Redmayes' trio rushed away to the tuckshop. They knew that they would find Fritz Splitz there.

The fat German was there—gazing in at the window with his saucer-eyes, which he turned on Ginger & Co. as they came breathlessly up.

"Mein goot Chinger!" said Fritz. "I have tropped half-a-crown someveres. Vill you lend me vun half-crown till I finds him? Ach! Himmel! Let go mein nose! You preak me te poko. Ach! Vy for you pang mein head on tat vall?"

"You fat Hun!" roared Ginger. "You told Dainty that we pinched his cake from his study yesterday!"

"Notting of te sort!" gasped Fritz. "Ach! Tat you let go mein poko! Mein poko he is ferry painful. Ach!"

"Here comes Dainty, asking for more!" chuckled Bacon, as Jim came breathlessly up, leaving a trail of water behind him.

"Pax, Dainty!" called out Sandy Bean. "Now, Jerry, own up! Did you tell Dainty that we'd pinched his cake?"

"Ach! Himmel!" groaned the hapless Fritz, his saucer-eyes going from one to the other. "Ach! I—I tinks tat perhaps Tainty tunk that I say so. But I tink tat I cannot help vat Tainty tunk."

"What's that?" gasped Jim. "You told me—"

"It was a choke!" gasped Fritz. "Joost a leetle choke! I neffer tunk tat you would go to te odder House after tat cake! Ach!"

Jim Dainty stared at him.

He was beginning to understand now.

"You—you fat Hun!" he gasped.

"You had the cake!"

"Ach! Nein! Nein!" yelled Fritz. "I touch him not. I tink—whoop! Tat you pang me not te poko! I tells you te troot. I vas so ferry hungri. Ach! Pang me not on te poko. I own up tat I pagged tat cake. But I neffer tunk tat you would go to te odder House looking for tat cake. Ach! Pang me not on mein poko, you prute and a peast!"

"Understand now, you hot-headed ass?" grinned Sandy Bean.

Jim did not answer. Wet as he was, he hurried away across the quad to Redmayes' House. Wild yells from Fritz Splitz followed him as Ginger & Co. dealt faithfully with the fat German.

Redmayes' fellows stared at Jim as he entered the House. There was a rush at once, and five or six pairs of hands were laid on him.

"Chuck him out!" roared Sanders.

Bump!

Jim Dainty landed at the bottom of the steps.

"Come in again, you tick!" yelled a dozen voices.

Jim staggered to his feet. It was not much use going in again, and he limped

away, followed by yells and cat-calls from the crowded doorway.

He stopped at the window of Trafford's study, put his elbows on the sill, and drew himself up. The Grimslade captain was there, and he turned towards Jim with a grim face.

"You again!" he exclaimed. "What do—"

"Let me speak!" gasped Jim. "I—I—I've found out—I mean, I know now—I—I'm sorry I called you a liar, Trafford! I was taken in—a fellow pulled my leg. I really believed that it was my cake I got from Rawlinson's study—I thought you knew—I—I was a fool—" He broke off, panting.

Trafford stared at him.

"Oh! Have you found out that you are a fool?" he asked.

Jim crimsoned.

"I—I was a fool!" he stammered. "If I'd stopped to think, I might have known. I—I'm sorry!"

Trafford looked at him long and hard.

"That will do!" he said. "Cut!"

"You—you believe I'm sorry, Trafford?"

"Yes. Now cut!"

Jim dropped from the window and went. As he crossed to his own House, a flying figure rushed past him, spluttering. Three juniors were in pursuit.

"Stop him!" roared Ginger Rawlinson.

"Ach! Mein goot Tainty—yarooooogh!" roared Fritz, as Jim put out a foot.

Fritz Splitz went rolling. Jim walked on to his House, leaving Fritz in the hands of the Philistines. And the frantic yells and howls of Fritz told that he was getting the time of his life.

Sammy Sparshott had a surprise for Grimslade the next morning, after prayers. It was a brief announcement that the sentence of Dainty of the Fourth had been rescinded; Dainty having expressed his regret to the captain of the school, and Trafford having generously interceded for him. Dainty had certainly not expected that, and he could hardly believe his ears.

"Trafford's a splendid chap!" he said remorsefully to Dick Dawson and Tommy Tucker in White's House. "A really splendid chap! I could kick myself!"

"That's all right," said Tommy. "We'll kick you!"

"Good egg!" said Dawson. "We will!"

And they did—hard!

(Jim Dainty's proving a tough nut for the Head to crack, but all the same he's a likeable lad, with unlimited pluck—as he proves in next week's grand yarn. Don't miss it.)

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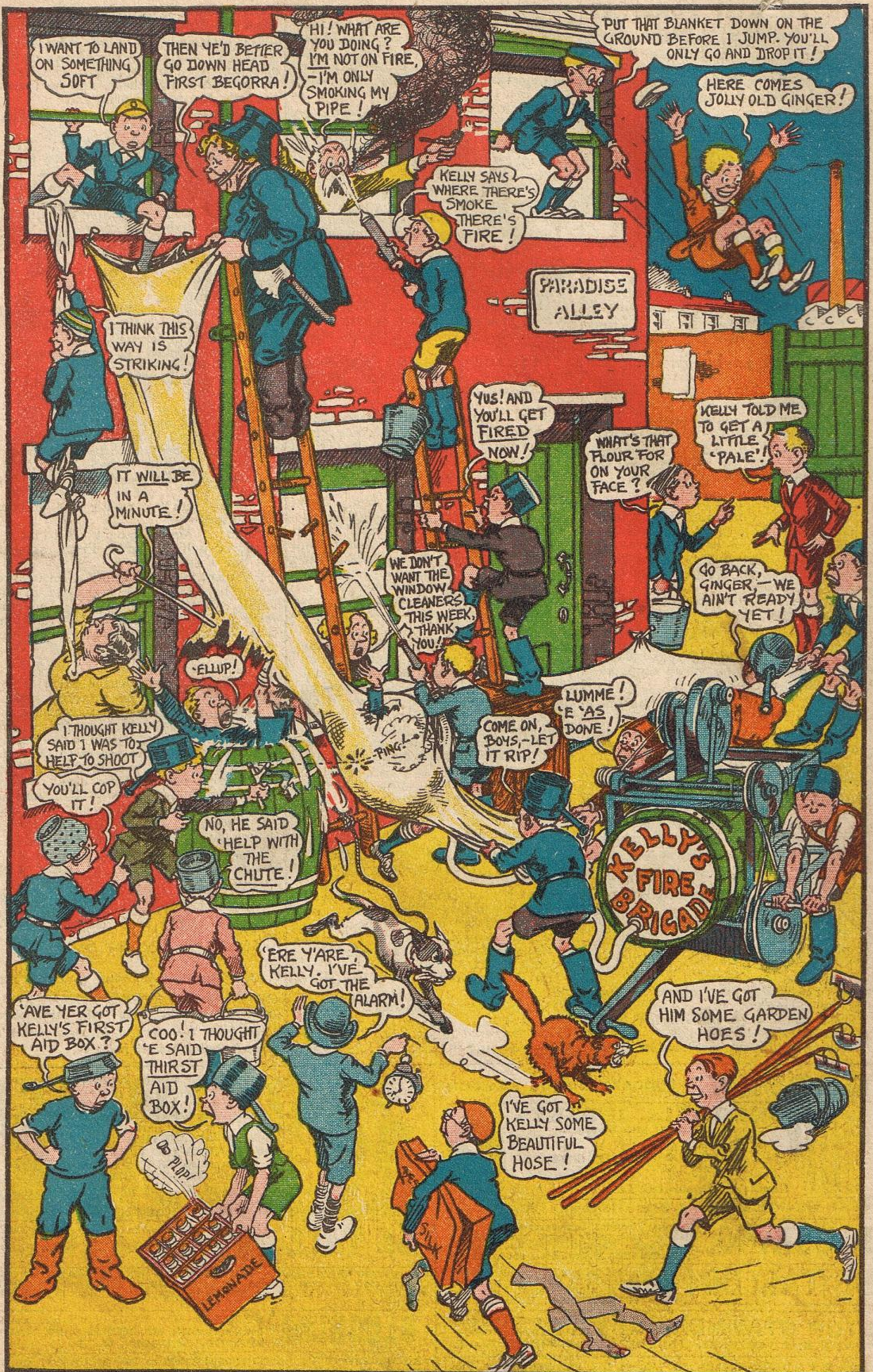
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I WANT TO LAND ON SOMETHING SOFT

THEN YE'D BETTER GO DOWN HEAD FIRST BEGORRA!

HI! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? I'M NOT ON FIRE, -I'M ONLY SMOKING MY PIPE!

KELLY SAYS WHERE THERE'S SMOKE THERE'S FIRE!

PUT THAT BLANKET DOWN ON THE GROUND BEFORE I JUMP. YOU'LL ONLY GO AND DROP IT!

HERE COMES JOLLY OLD GINGER!

PARADISE ALLEY

I THINK THIS WAY IS STRIKING!

YUS! AND YOU'LL GET FIRED NOW!

WHAT'S THAT FLOUR FOR ON YOUR FACE?

KELLY TOLD ME TO GET A LITTLE 'PALE'!

GO BACK, GINGER, -WE AIN'T READY YET!

IT WILL BE IN A MINUTE!

WE DON'T WANT THE WINDOW CLEANERS THIS WEEK, THANK YOU!

LUMME! 'E 'AS DONE!

COME ON, BOYS, -LET IT RIP!

'ERE Y'ARE, KELLY. I'VE GOT THE ALARM!

AND I'VE GOT HIM SOME GARDEN HOES!

I THOUGHT KELLY SAID I WAS TO HELP TO SHOOT

YOU'LL COP IT!

NO, HE SAID 'HELP WITH THE CHUTE!

'AVE YER GOT KELLY'S FIRST AID BOX?

COO! I THOUGHT 'E SAID THIRST AID BOX!

DO TUP!

I'VE GOT KELLY SOME BEAUTIFUL HOSE!

ELLUP!

PING!

Fire, fire, fire! Kelly's fire brigade are on the job, complete with frying pans and any old thing for helmets, and garden hoes for hose! They couldn't put a fire out for toffee—so Kelly promptly "fired" the lads from Paradise Alley when he got them home!