

COMET

THE BACK PAGE
IS A FRONT PAGE
TOO!

3^D EVERY
MONDAY

No. 229. December 6, 1952

THE SKY EXPLORERS

THE RULER OF THE PLANET ROMA COMES TO LOOK
AT HIS PRISONERS, THE SKY EXPLORERS!



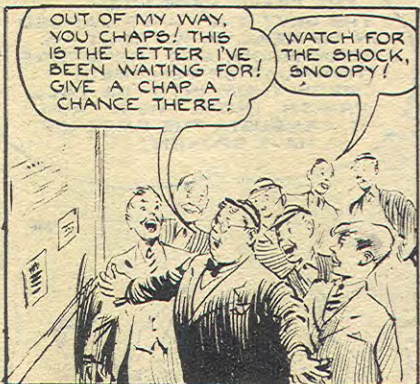
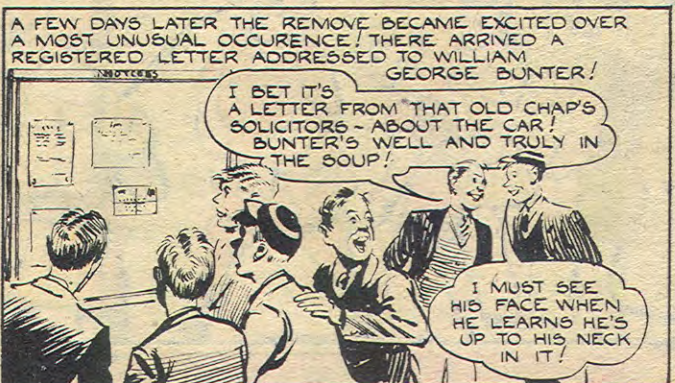
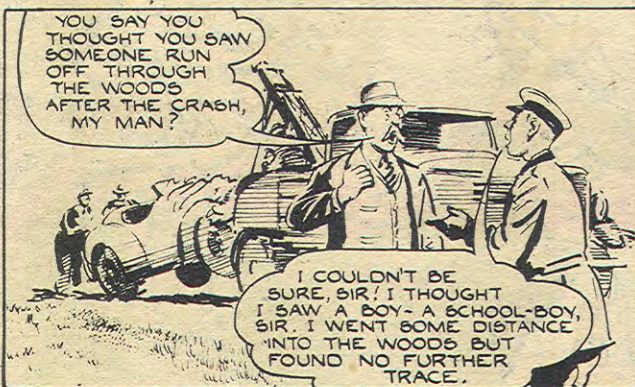
PETER, ANN, AND THEIR
INVENTOR UNCLE,
PROFESSOR JOLLY, WITH
KOSMO, THE SPACE-PATROL
MAN, HAVE REACHED THE
MYSTERIOUS PLANET
ROMA, AFTER FINDING A
THREE THOUSAND YEAR
OLD SPACE-SHIP FROM
ROMA ADRIFT IN SPACE.
BUT ALL THE ROMANS
WHO KNEW HOW TO
MAKE MACHINES AND
BUILD SPACE-SHIPS LEFT
THE PLANET LONG AGO,
AND THE ONLY PEOPLE
LEFT ARE ANCIENT
ROMANS, WHO HAVE
MADE THEM PRISONERS!



(More pictures on the centre pages)

Hazeldine, Snoop and Skinner of Greyfriars wanted to go to a village dance, but missed the bus through Bunter. They "borrow" a car, but crash into a tree. They run into the woods, where an old gentleman asks Hazeldine his name. He says he is William George Bunter. The old gentleman goes off saying, "You'll hear from my solicitors, boy!"

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN





Dear Master Bunter.

We enclose the sum of £50 as a slight token of our client's appreciation of your politeness and good manners when he recently met you in the Popper Court woods.

It has long been his custom to present, on the morning of his birthday, £50 to the first person he meets whose name shall resemble his own. As your Christian names and final initial fulfil these conditions, the money is sent to you.

Yours faithfully,
W. Jones



The Lion and the Horse



Ben Kirby found the most wonderful horse in all the West—only to lose it again! Here is the thrilling story of his quest to make the wonder horse his very own!

Based on the Warner Bros. film of the same title.

THE great black stallion was the grandest horse Ben Kirby had ever seen.

His glossy coat gleamed in the sun and the prairie wind rippled his black mane. His head was held proudly, his wide nostrils flaring warily and his bright eyes sweeping this way and that for signs of enemies that might threaten the safety of his herd.

For the black stallion was king of that wild herd.

There are few places left on earth where you can find herds of wild horses, but this southwestern corner of Wyoming was one of them.

That was why Ben Kirby had come there, along with Matt Jennings and his outfit of wild horse hunters.

They sat their horses now, up on the ridge, looking down on this herd which they had been trailing for days—the black stallion's herd—close on a hundred horses, all of them fine animals. But not one of them was a patch on the big black king horse.

"Listen boys," said Matt Jennings. "We've got to get in behind them and surprise them. Then we keep on their tails until we run them into the canyon."—They had already fenced off one end of that canyon—"Now keep it quiet and let's go!"

As Ben and the other riders spurred towards the herd, Jennings called across:

"Ben—get up on the hill and keep an eye on 'em. When we get a fence across the open end of the canyon, haze 'em back towards us!"

So it happened that Ben Kirby was on hand when the trapped herd thundered up the canyon and stopped at the fence of brushwood. He saw the black stallion run up and down its length, pick the weakest spot, and kick it down.

A moment later the whole
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herd was free again, thanks to the cunning of their black leader.

Ben Kirby grinned to himself as Jennings and the others took off again after the fleeing herd. That certainly was some stallion!

Ben saw the other riders wheeling and swerving on their trained cow-ponies, cut the king horse away from his herd-mates. He saw the black horse, strangely wise, double back in his tracks and hide under a rocky overhang so that Matt Jennings, cunning old horse-hunter that he was, missed him completely.

Ben Kirby grinned and decided that, come what may, the black stallion was the horse for him, and as he cantered away, Ben followed.

He was out of sight and ear-shot of the others when he got near enough to make a clean throw of his lariat over the stallion's head.

In an instant the king horse was off like the wind. Ben spurred his own mount to

follow, keeping the rope snubbed taut around the horn of his saddle.

But it was like having a whirlwind on the end of his lariat. The tough rope snapped like cotton and the wild stallion was away again, trailing half the broken rope behind him.

Ben spurred his horse and sped after him.

A river gave him the chance of catching the stallion again, for the wild horse plunged in to swim across. Ben kicked off his boots and followed the trailing end of the broken rope floating just a foot or so beyond his reach.

He snatched a grip on it, just as the stallion scrambled up the further bank. Ben was dragged skidding for a few yards as the horse took off at a gallop, then he managed to snub the rope around the bole of a tough shrub.

The black stallion was caught! Up went the horse's head in anger and dismay as he tried to free himself.



Ben grabbed at the broken end of the lariat just as the stallion scrambled up the bank. He felt as though he was being dragged by an express train!

"Easy, boy, easy!" Ben gasped as he hauled on the rope. "Easy, son. Thought for a minute I'd lose you!"

The black stallion reared and plunged desperately, trying in vain to rid himself of the rope.

Ben took him away and hid him in a roomy cave in the hillside.

He wanted to keep this horse for himself, for he had grown to love the handsome wild creature. He knew, however, that he belonged as much to Jennings and his men as to himself; just as the rest of the herd when caught would belong as much to him as to the others.

Thoughtfully he made his way back to the camp, wondering what he could do.

NIGHT had fallen by this time, and Jennings and his men were eating a roughly prepared meal by the light of the camp fire.

"Hey, boy, where you been?" asked Collier, one of the men, as Ben loomed up through the distant shadows.

"Bout time you showed up. Did you find the stallion?" asked Jennings.

"Yea, I found him," grunted Ben without a smile, wondering how Jennings would take it if he suggested he should keep the stallion as his share of the whole capture.

"Well, where is he?" asked Rocky.

"Wish I knew," answered Ben, playing for time. "Ever tried to rope a cyclone?"

This raised a laugh, especially when Ben asked for permission to trail the horse for another two days. He hoped to have made up his mind by then.

One of the men suggested that Ben had a "crush" on the stallion.

Ben admitted that he had, but when Rocky suggested that the horse would be good in a rodeo, he protested violently.



Ben took the stallion and hid him in a deep cave in the hillside.

"He's too good a horse to waste on a rodeo!" he said, his heart suddenly heavy.

Jennings and his men were thinking of the good price the black horse would bring, but Ben only thought of the animal himself and the good friend he would make. More than ever he wanted the stallion for his own.

"We all got a share in that bronc, Ben," said Jennings, eyeing Ben curiously.

"Yeah, I know, Matt," answered Ben gloomily.

Jennings decided to get Ben to ride back to Powder Springs to arrange for the corrals in which the captured herd was to be kept. He gave him his orders.

"You gonna move the herd tomorrow?" asked Ben, looking up and wondering about the stallion he had left in the cave.

"Yeah. When you finish at Powder Springs you can hunt your stallion for two or three days. I imagine, though, he's fifty miles away by now!" answered Jennings.

Ben said nothing but prepared some food to take with him and put it in a canvas bag. He was off very early the next morning.



Matt Jennings didn't look up. "We sold the black stallion for six hundred dollars!" he said.

Jennings and his men stayed behind for a while in order to catch one or two of the herd which were still free.

Two of the men, hunting around, caught sight of Ben's food sack near the entrance to a cave. Ben had forgotten it that morning when he had come to see the stallion and bring enough food to last the horse while he was away.

Looking round, curious to know why the sack should be left there, the men saw hoof marks in the sand leading into the cave.

They were looking into this when they caught sight of the black stallion far inside the cave.

The stallion saw them too, and hating and distrusting men as he did, he stampeded towards them.

The men made a mad dash for safety and got clear, though much shaken. After a while they roped the stallion. They brought him back to Jennings and the others with great difficulty, for the horse was enraged at being roped once more.

At Powder Springs, when Ben came along after finding the black

horse missing from the cave, he saw the black stallion in the corral. Jennings had sold the rest of the herd to a horse dealer.

"Thought you'd cheat us, eh, Ben? Making me believe you were out hunting that horse, when you had him all the time!" said Jennings sourly as Ben approached. "You never meant to bring that horse in!"

Ben looked at Jennings squarely.

"No, I didn't, Matt," he said. "But I didn't intend to claim my share of what you're gonna get for the herd. Keep my share of the deal. Just let me keep the stallion. I'd give everything I've got to keep him!"

"Trouble is," said Jennings slowly, "I don't think you've

the roping-in of steers.

There was prize money for the winners and Ben managed with his reckless riding to win some of it.

It was hard going and he ran the risk of breaking his neck if he were thrown heavily. But he knew in his heart that the stallion was worth it all, and that there would never be another horse like him.

So he stuck it grimly and found at the end of the ten days that he had made just enough money to buy the black horse.

Ben went back to Powder Springs and found Jennings playing poker in the saloon.

"I've got the rest of the money," he said cheerfully to Jennings. "With what you owe me I've now got five hundred



Ben tramped from rodeo to rodeo, always asking the same question—had anybody seen his lost black stallion.

got enough. The price is five hundred."

Now the amount of Ben's share of the price of the herd was two hundred and fifty dollars.

Ben hadn't enough. He sighed deeply.

"Oh!" he said. "All right, Matt. But give me a little time to find the rest of the money, will you?"

After a moment's thought Jennings agreed to keep the stallion for ten days, to give Ben a chance to find another two hundred and fifty.

"Don't sell him till you hear from me!" were Ben's last words.

"Ten days!" said Jennings curtly.

Ben had now to make two hundred and fifty dollars in ten days, with no means of raising it except by his horsemanship.

The only way he could apply his riding ability to make money quickly was by stunting in a rodeo. He made up his mind to do this.

In the ten days following he had a rough time of it, competing with expert horsemen in the riding of bucking broncos and

bucks!"

Jennings played a card.

"What happened to you?" he said. "We expected you yesterday. The stallion brought six hundred."

Ben could not believe his ears. "You sold him?" he asked.

Jennings looked up.

"I owed it to the boys to make the best deal I could," he said and handed Ben the cheque for his share of the sale.

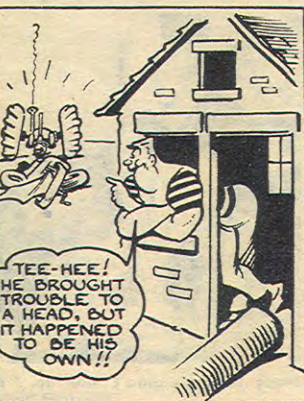
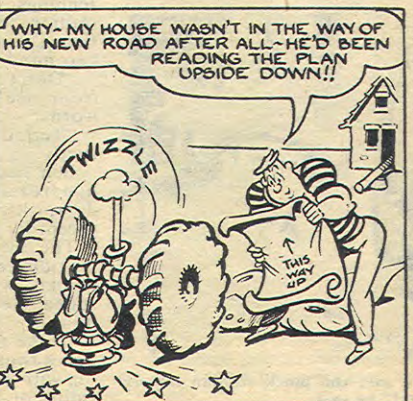
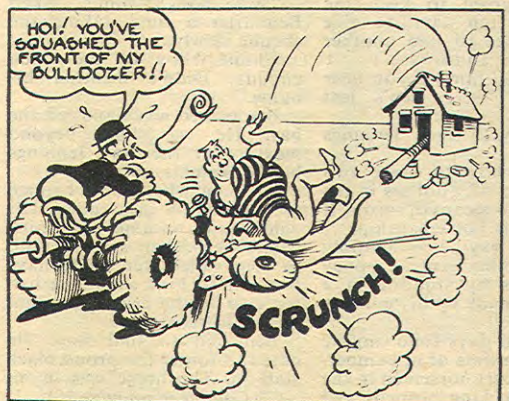
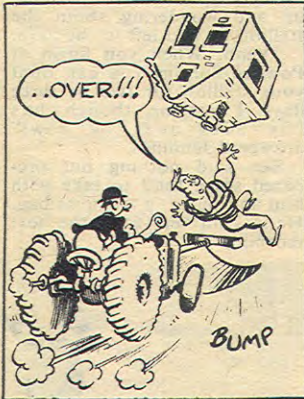
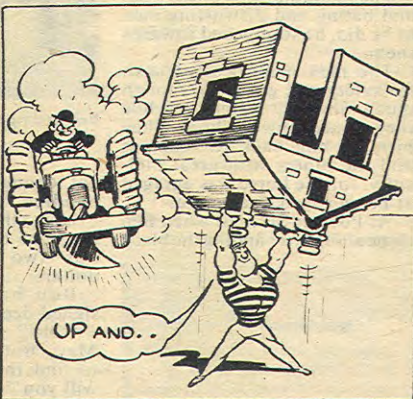
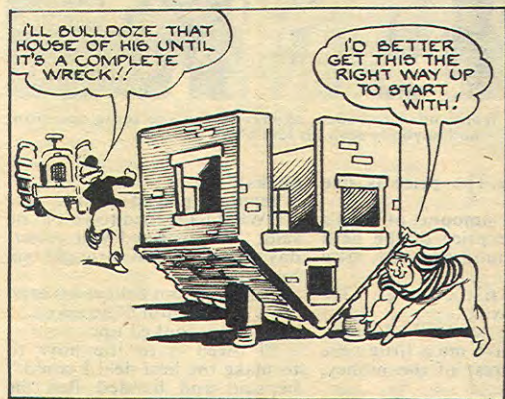
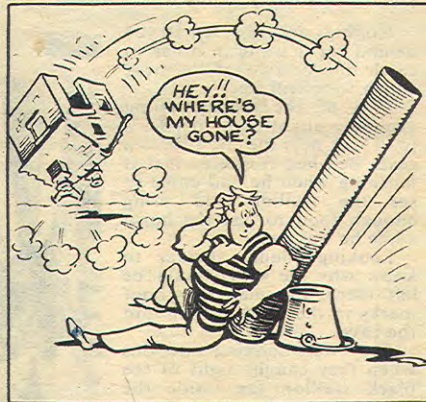
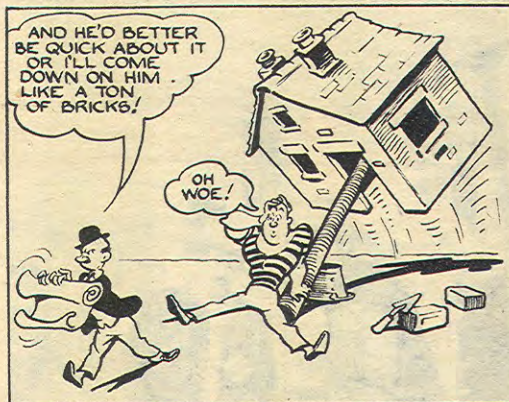
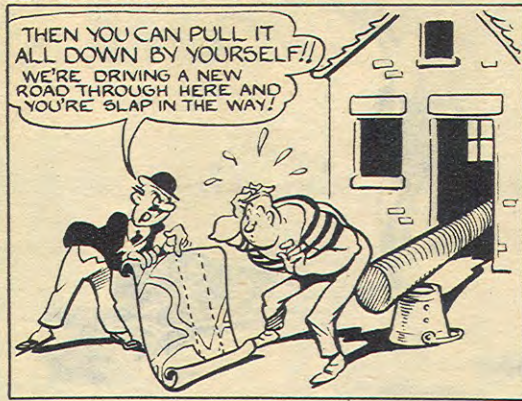
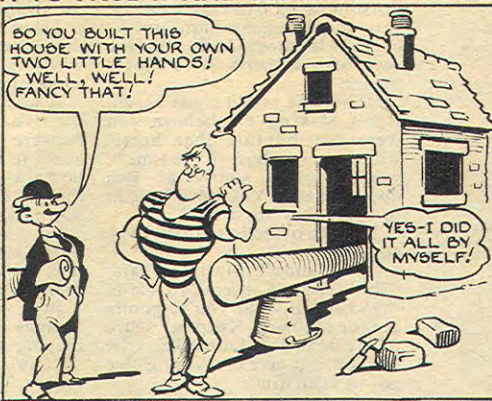
"Who bought him?" asked Ben after a time, taking the cheque slowly.

"Some fellow on the rodeo circuits. Didn't mention his name."

Ben turned away and left the bar. He was hurt beyond measure at the way Jennings had broken his word.

He knew what would happen to the stallion in a rodeo. His wild and untameable spirit would be broken and the faith in men which Ben could have brought to him would be lost for ever in the cruel treatment he would receive.

Ben had to find him. He couldn't forget the proud black stallion. The horse was in his (Continued on page 17)



BOB HARLEY - SPECIAL AGENT

Malcolm Franklin was an inventor and he built the mighty "Prowler," a huge tank-like craft which could reach the very deepest parts of the ocean bed by crawling along on its ten powerful tank-track "feet."

The Shark was a ruthless crook—a modern-day pirate—who had become dictator of the South American country of Incaragua. He stole the "Prowler," to use it as a weapon of war, for the "Prowler" could sink any ship in the world by attacking it from below.

But the Shark had two fearless enemies—Malcolm Franklin himself and Bob Harley, the young Special Agent from Scotland Yard. They were determined to foil the Shark's schemes for making war, and to get the "Prowler" back from him.

They had a good friend in Amanda Prando, whose father, General Prando, was the rightful ruler of Incaragua, for if they could overthrow the Shark they would put General Prando back in power.

After many thrilling adventures Bob and Franklin managed to capture the Shark's powerful jet-propelled strato-bomber, and had a desperate battle with Incaraguan jet-fighters over the jungle.

As the bomber dived at tremendous speed into the tree-tops Bob and Franklin made a daring last-minute escape. . . .

At the enormous speed of the bomber, no man could possibly have got out in the ordinary way. But special seats were fitted which could shoot out, carrying the pilot and observer with them, so that they could float down in safety on big parachutes.

Bob Harley hung swinging from his parachute harness just level with the jungle tree-tops. Half a mile ahead of him a great column of thick black smoke shot with tongues of orange fire, marked where the doomed bomber had torn its way into the trees.

Away to his left, Malcolm Franklin was floating down on a second parachute.

The only sounds were the chattering of the jungle creatures, terrified by the crashing bomber and the high whine of the distant jet fighters, still miles up in the sky.

Bob flung up his arms to protect himself from branches as he swept down and past them. The ground below rushed up to meet him—and then there came a jerk and his fall stopped suddenly.

He was dangling in the shade of the great jungle trees. His parachute had tangled in the branches high above him.

Below him was dense green undergrowth, with here and



As they clung to the top-most branches of a tree the paratroopers fell past them, near enough to make out that they were well armed and tough.

there outcropping chunks of rock.

"Here goes!" Bob muttered to himself, and knocking open the big bronze release buckle of his chute harness, he dropped the remaining eight or nine feet to the ground.

As his feet crashed through the dense branches and leaves Bob was very thankful for his strong flying boots, for he had heard many stories about the poisonous snakes which infest the jungles of South America.

"Aho-o-oy Bob!" Malcolm Franklin's voice echoed through the trees.

"Coming, chief!" Bob battled through the tangled creepers and bushes until he came up with Malcolm Franklin. Franklin's parachute, like Bob's, had tangled in the tree-tops.

Franklin held up a hand for silence as Bob reached him. Bob stood still, and as the noise of his own movements ceased he could hear the growing noise of the enemy fighter planes in the sky above them.

"They're coming down to look for us!" snapped Franklin. "They'll be sure to spot those two parachutes caught up in the tree-tops. This part of the jungle won't be too healthy then. They'll pepper it with machine-gun fire from low-level! Come on!"

Franklin set off through the trees and Bob followed.

"I spotted something as my parachute came down," he explained. "There's a sort of

valley over this way—a perfect maze of rocks and gullies. We can find cover there and we may manage to dodge 'em until it gets dark."

Bob wasted no breath replying, but hurried after Franklin.

Then the first of the searching fighters screamed like a banshee over their heads. It would take the pilots a little while to spot the parachutes—all the same, Bob and Franklin couldn't count on much time.

They plunged out into the sunlight on the rocky floor of the valley. A huge scaly lizard scuttled away as they ran, and then there came the mounting scream of another fighter sweeping near. They crouched in the shelter of a big rock as it swept over their heads.

"He won't have spotted us—moving too fast!" panted Bob. "Those big white parachutes are another kettle of fish, though!"

Franklin nodded and pointed ahead. "Over here!" he said. "Up among those clefts in the valley wall—come on!"

A minute later they were scrambling up the face of the rock inside the narrowness of a "chimney" or cleft which zig-zagged upward towards what appeared to be some sort of a broad ledge.

The ledge, when they reached it, was about half the size of a tennis court. Franklin gave a cry of satisfaction and sprinted across it.

"I thought so!" he said. "I thought there was a cave here!

Come on—it'll give us protection from any gunfire and they won't spot us from above!"

A moment later they both sat down panting inside the welcome shade of the cavern.

Outside more of the fighters sped above them.

"They're not opening fire," said Bob.

"Perhaps they haven't spotted those chutes yet," guessed Franklin. "Perhaps, though, they've got orders not to shoot. The Shark might want us alive, for some reason or other." Malcolm Franklin began to un-zip the fastenings of his flying suit. "Phew! These outfits are all very well 'way up at eight miles high—but not in the jungle."

Bob followed his chief's lead and stripped off his tightly-fitting suit and round helmet.

Above them the searching fighters roared and swooped. But there was no gunfire.

"Got any plans, chief?" asked Bob.

"Only if we can shake off pursuit," replied Malcolm Franklin. "If we can give 'em the slip when it gets dark we can head south towards the Porto Visto river—it's only a mile or so. I picked this locality to crash the strato-bomber—I was hoping they'd think we'd gone west in the crash, but those chutes catching in the trees messed things up. Anyway, we're near enough to the river to be able to find it by night, and then we'll

(Continued on next page)

head downstream for Chilka's village."

By now they were out of their flying suits. It was a good job that they were near the river, thought Bob, as he slid an automatic pistol—his only weapon—into the pocket of his khaki shorts. They had nothing other than what they stood up in. No food, no water. But the river might provide them with both.

The Shark's fighter planes crossed and recrossed the sky above them.

Malcolm Franklin frowned and moved carefully to the cave mouth. Keeping well in the shadow from the overhang of the rocky roof, he stood looking intently upward for a moment or two.

"What is it, chief?"

"I don't like it, Bob," replied Franklin quietly. "I've been watching those confounded fighters. They're all passing dead over the top of us—whichever way they're flying." His voice was drowned by the snarling scream of another jet fighter sweeping low overhead.

"They're all concentrating on this valley. They're not bothering a hoot about those two parachutes, which must stick out like a couple of sore thumbs."

"D'you think they saw us crossing the valley or climbing up here?"

"I don't see how they could have done." Franklin turned to face Bob again, and frowned. "And we didn't drop anything that they could pick out from the air."

Bob shook his head.

"There wasn't anything we could have dropped. But perhaps it's just by chance they're flying over the top of us."

"I don't think so." Another fighter flashed across above them, its shadow flickering swift as a whip-lash across the cave mouth. "There you are—that one flew over from due east. The one before that came from the north, but they both flew exactly overhead! They know we're here, Bob!"

"But how, chief? I don't see how they could possibly have got any sort of a fix on us, and you just said—"

"Got a fix on us!" Franklin almost shouted the words as he cut in on what Bob was saying. "That's just what they have done! They're using their radios to pick up our exact position! I was a nitwit not to guess that at once!"

Bob looked bewildered as Franklin crossed to the two discarded flying suits and started searching through them. Suddenly he gave a cry.

"Here, look, Bob—inside the tops of the flying helmets!"

Bob looked, and saw something he hadn't noticed before. Packed close inside the crown were several tiny shapes, some round, others flat, and running between them were coloured wires.

Bob was no wiser than he had been.

"What are they?"

"They're miniature radio senders. Those two suits we were wearing are Incaraguan Air Force jobs—as up to date as any in the world—and these gadgets are rescue aids. I expect they were switched on automatically when we parachuted out. The idea is that they send out a tiny signal, so that rescuers can locate a pilot in distress. We're in distress all right—but they aren't rescuers!"

"Couldn't we put 'em out of action?"

"No point in doing that—they know we're here, now." Franklin stood up, and let the suit he was holding flop to the floor. "Our best chance is to leave these things here, and then get as far away as possible. Thank goodness we spotted those gadgets when we did!"

"Shall we chance going out the way we came?"

"We may have to. But let's see where this cave goes to, first. It's quite light back there—" Franklin pointed into the depth of the cave, away from the entrance. "—there may be another way out."

Leaving the flying suits with their radio tell-tales on the floor

level of the tree-tops, when a new sound was added to the screaming whines of the jet-fighters.

It was the unmistakable thrumming roar of a slower, heavier, aeroplane of some sort. They stood, propping themselves against a branch of the nearest tree, which spread its leaves around them, and they searched the sky anxiously.

The newcomer flew into sight. It was a fat-bodied, powerful four-engined machine. A transport plane thought Bob.

"A troop-carrier!" exclaimed Franklin. He stepped forward into the branches of the tree, and swung himself towards the great trunk. Bob followed, and from there they worked their way out on the further side, where an easy leap carried them to the next tree, which grew crowded close beside the first.

In this way they moved through the branches of four or five trees, until they came to one which gave them a view of the valley they had just left, away on their right.

Before them was a break in the trees, forming below them a clearing, where only undergrowth covered the ground.

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where they lay, they moved further into the cave. It narrowed sharply, and at first seemed as if it might come to a dead-end. Then it turned suddenly, and widened out again. As they followed its course, it got lighter, and then, as they turned another corner, it ended.

But before them, stretching upwards and away, a cranny sloped, to end in a slanting line of blue sky.

"Up you go, Bob," Franklin wasted no time, but cupped his two hands together to form a footstep for Bob. Bob sprang swiftly upward, and then, wedging himself into the crannie's narrowness, he stretched a hand downward to help his chief up.

For the next ten minutes, they used backs, elbows, knees, feet and hands, to wriggle and clamber a way upwards towards the daylight above them.

At last they sat in the shelter of a cleft, looking down upon the jungle tree-tops. They had come out on the other side of the mass of rock that formed one wall of the valley.

Over their heads, the fighters were still speeding, but for the most part the towering rocks hid them from view. They were keeping a close watch on the cave where the tiny radio senders still peeped out their signals.

They sat for a moment or two to get their breath back, and then Franklin led the way down the rock face towards the jungle below them.

They had just reached the

"Look!" Franklin pointed up into the clear patch of sky above and ahead of them.

The big machine was turning over the valley, and as it turned something dropped from a door in the side of the fuselage.

The something tumbled over and over, and then a parachute opened, and they saw that it was a man. He was followed by another, and then another.

As the great machine thundered back over their heads, the parachutists were still dropping. Indeed, the nearest of them dropped a scant dozen yards from where they crouched, close to the tree-trunk.

They saw clearly his khaki uniform, topped with a crash-helmet like dirt-track riders wear, and they saw the stubby machine-gun, clutched close to his chest. The transport-plane roared on its way, circling the valley, and throwing a cordon of armed para-troopers around the little valley.

"We just got moving in time!" whispered Franklin, "Our best hope now is to lie doggo, until we get a chance to move without being spotted. You can bet your life they'll start to search outwards, as soon as they find we're not in the cave!"

As he finished speaking, there came the noise of yet another aeroplane. The jet fighters were drawing off, now that they had done their job of locating the quarry, and leaving the actual capture to the para-troopers. This last aircraft that drew near now was again a

slower machine—slower, even, it seemed, than the troop carrier. For what seemed an age they could hear the sound of its engines without being able to see it.

Then it appeared, dropping low over the tree-tops.

It was a big helicopter, with twin "windmills", one at each end of its queer banana-shaped body.

Malcolm Franklin gripped Bob's arm tensely.

"I believe it's going to make a landing—here—in this clearing!"

Rotors thrashing the air, the machine sank slowly down, to settle itself gently onto the dense underbrush. It was easy to see, when Bob thought about it, why the pilot had chosen this particular clearing, for it commanded the entrance to the rocky valley.

Then, as they watched, a figure stepped out of the machine, a figure whose head was completely encased in a sinister mask of polished steel.

It was the Shark himself!

In his hand their arch-enemy held a small microphone, the wires from which trailed back into the helicopter. As the engines were shut off, and the rotors stopped spinning, the Shark spoke, and his voice echoed harshly through the jungle, magnified a dozen times by loud-speakers carried on the helicopter.

"Surrender, Franklin. You have no chance of escape. Come out with your hands up. We know you are there!"

He stopped speaking, and then they saw his head turn sharply, and stay turned, as though he was listening to something. Bob looked questioningly at Franklin, and they both listened tensely.

The Shark might have been listening for the reply he hoped to hear from Malcolm Franklin—but his head was turned away from the valley.

Then Bob too, heard yet another new sound. A soft, throbbing murmur, like a well-tuned car—

"Bob!" Franklin hissed in his ear "I know that sound! That's the exhaust beat of the Sea-Jep! That can only mean one thing!"

"Amanda—?"

"Yes—Amanda! We left the Sea-jep with her. She must have seen the strato-bomber crash in the jungle, and seen the smoke of its burning, too. She's brought the jeep up river to look for us!"

The sea-jep was like a car, but it was specially built so that it could be driven under water—provided that the depth was not too great.

Driving under the water of the river, Amanda would not have seen the other planes in the sky.

Now, bent upon finding and helping her friends, Bob and Franklin, she was driving straight into a trap!

Next week: A battle of wits!

THE WHEEZES OF WILLIE WIZZARD

WILLIE'S BURGLAR TRAP

MR. HALFSUN, the assistant headmaster at Gandybar School, was busily writing on the blackboard. He had his back to the class.

"And in 1066," he was saying, as he wrote, "William the Conqueror landed..."

He stopped. Frowning, he swung round to face the boys. "Someone," he went on sternly, "is eating sweets. Stand up, boy, whoever you are!"

Simpkins Minor shuffled to his feet uneasily. Mr. Halfsun glared at him.

"A hundred lines!" the assistant head snapped. "What are you chewing, boy?"

"Toffee, sir," said Simpkins with difficulty, shifting the lump of confectionery from one side of his mouth to the other.

"Go outside and empty your mouth," Mr. Halfsun ordered. "Put the rest of that disgusting stuff on my desk. Now, as I was saying, William the Conqueror landed in Sussex..."

When he had finished talking and writing things on the blackboard Mr. Halfsun set an essay. While the boys were scribbling earnestly, Mr. Halfsun eyed the bag of toffee which Simpkins Minor had put on his desk.

He looked around quickly. No one was watching. Every boy was busy. Mr. Halfsun took a piece of toffee from the bag with a fast, silent movement. He popped it into his mouth.

"H'm," said Mr. Halfsun to himself. "It tastes good!"

Ten minutes later, however, he began to feel less happy. The lump of toffee would not become any smaller! A horrible thought struck him. It must be some of Willie Wizzard's Everlasting Toffee!

At that moment the door of the classroom swung open. Dr. Gandybar, the headmaster, strode in.

"Ah, Mr. Halfsun," the headmaster began. "What lesson is this?"

"Shloop, ugg," replied Mr. Halfsun as he tried in vain to get some words past the sticky lump in his mouth.

"What's that?" rapped Dr. Gandybar.

"Schliorst, schir," his unhappy assistant said.

Then he swallowed hard, to get rid of the toffee.

A moment later he said: "History, sir."

"Do you usually chew sweets during history lessons?" asked Dr. Gandybar icily.

"No, sir," cried Mr. Halfsun. "The fact is, sir, a boy was eating some of the stuff and I felt I must try it to see, er, to see..."

"Quite so," growled the Head. "Perhaps you will come to my

study later. We will discuss the point a little further there."

Dr. Gandybar swept out of the room.

Red in the face, Mr. Halfsun looked at his grinning class.

"Wizzard!" he rapped.

Willie Wizzard jumped to his feet in surprise.

"Yes, sir?" Willie said.

"Wizzard," said Mr. Halfsun slowly. "That toffee Simpkins Minor was chewing was some of the Wizzard Everlasting Toffee. I suspected it. That is why I was, er, testing it. When the headmaster came in."

Willie's face showed amazement.

"Begging your pardon, sir," he began. "It can't be, sir! I haven't made any of that toffee for months and months, sir!"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Halfsun. "Do you doubt my judgment, boy? Come to my study after this lesson!"

Willie did go to the assistant head's study. Afterwards he went to his own room, tenderly rubbing the place where Mr. Halfsun cane had smitten.

Jimmy Bash, Willie's pal, was waiting.

"Six of the best," Willie reported sadly to his friend. "He certainly can whack, old Bathbun. He still wouldn't believe that I hadn't made any Everlasting Toffee lately, the rotter!"

"Hard luck," sympathised Jimmy. "He must be in a bad mood today, that's all."

Willie chuckled. "One thing," he said. "I bet he gets a good old wiggling from Gandybar for chewing the stuff himself. That won't put him in any better mood tomorrow, though!"

WHEN lessons started the next morning Mr. Halfsun did not indeed seem to be in a better mood.

Soon he was looking less cheerful still as a pungent smell began to fill the air of the classroom!

The assistant headmaster started to sniff suspiciously. He turned his eyes towards Willie Wizzard and glared.

Willie, who was sniffing too, felt a cold chill of horror creep down his spine. He recognised the smell!

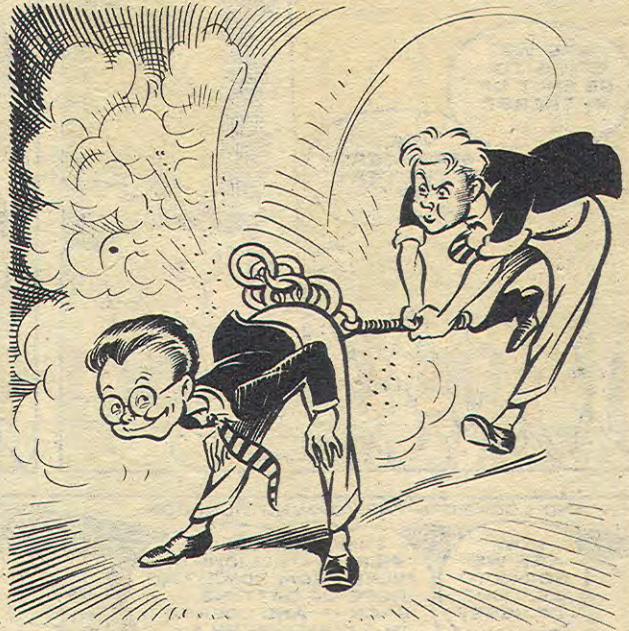
It was the smell of a Wizzard Super Moth Ball!

Slowly Mr. Halfsun put a hand into the pocket of his gown. He pulled out a round white object.

"Wizzard," he said. "This is one of your Super Moth Balls. I recognise it. How did it come to be in my pocket, sir? What have you to say?"

Willie gulped. "Begging your pardon, sir," he began. "It can't be a Super Moth Ball, sir. I haven't made any..."

"For months and months,



Jimmy Bash helped Willie Wizzard to test out his Trousers Protector with the aid of a carpet beater!

eh?" the assistant head interrupted grimly.

"That's right, sir," groaned Willie.

"First the toffee, and now this!" Mr. Halfsun rapped. "You had better explain all this to the head!"

He pointed to one of the other boys. "Johnson, you will be in charge of the class while Wizzard and I visit Dr. Gandybar," he ordered.

Willie miserably followed Mr. Halfsun out of the classroom.

That evening, in his room, with his tender spot still more tender after another whacking, Willie talked over the whole mystery with Jimmy Bash.

"I kept saying that I hadn't made any Everlasting Toffee or any Super Moth Balls for months," he said to his pal. "Halfsun and Gandybar were not impressed."

"They might take a fellow's word," sympathised Jimmy.

"Why," Willie went on, "I even invited old Gandybar to come here and look at my file of formulas. He could then see the dust on those two formulas for himself. That dust proves I haven't touched them for months!"

He moved towards his file of formulas as he spoke.

"I'll show you," he said, as he searched the file. "In fact, I've a jolly good mind to take them to old Gandybar in the morning, just to prove... Jumping jellybeans!"

"What's wrong?" asked Jimmy quickly.

"They've gone!" howled the schoolboy inventor. "Both formulas are missing!"

"Cool!" cried Jimmy. "You mean—someone's taken 'em?"

"There's no other explanation," Willie cried. "They couldn't have walked away! I wonder if any more have gone?"

He looked through the file from end to end. Gloomily he reported to Jimmy that at least half a dozen other formulas had vanished!

"This is serious," muttered his friend. "And what is even more serious is, someone inside the school must have pinched 'em!"

"Of course," agreed Willie. "Otherwise Simpkins Minor would not have had the toffee, and the moth balls would not have turned up in the Bathbun's gown."

"What shall we do?" asked Jimmy. "Go straight to the head?"

Willie looked thoughtful. "No," he said at last. "Gandybar will only call the school together and ask the culprit to confess. Then all that will happen is, the thief will keep quiet and destroy the formulas."

"H'm," muttered Jimmy. "And, of course, you don't want the formulas destroyed. You want them returned."

The schoolboy inventor nodded.

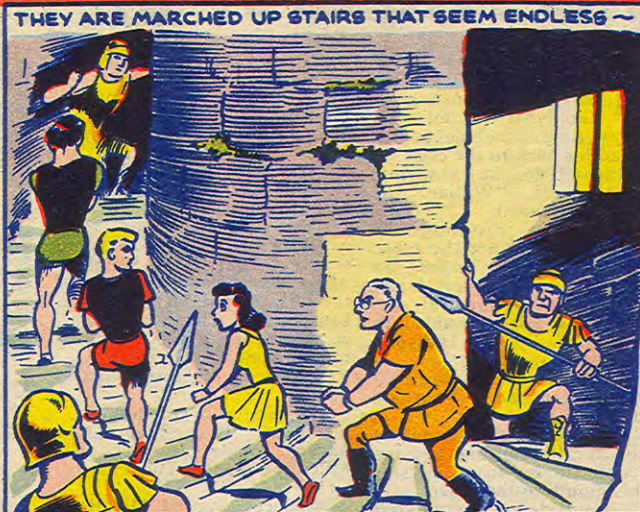
"We must try to trap the robber ourselves," he said firmly. "I think I can rig up a device."

(Continued on page 17)

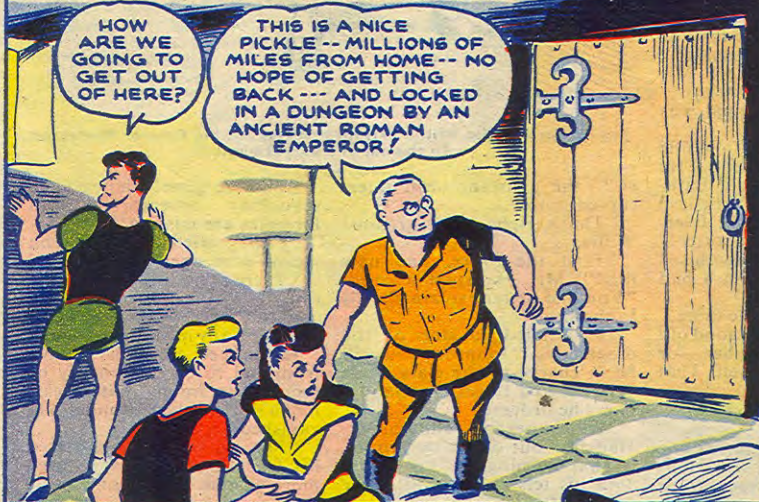
AND SO THEY ARE
MARCHED AWAY ---



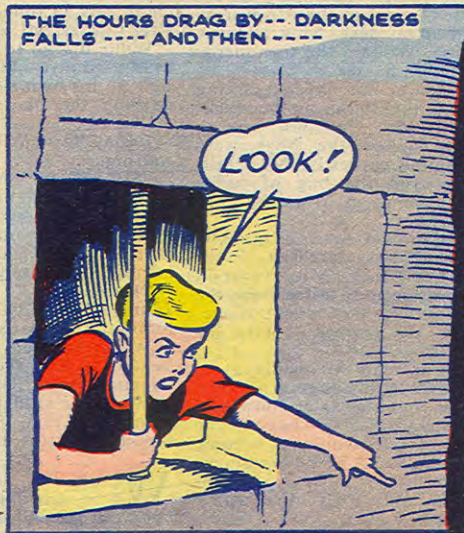
THEY ARE MARCHED UP STAIRS THAT SEEM ENDLESS ---



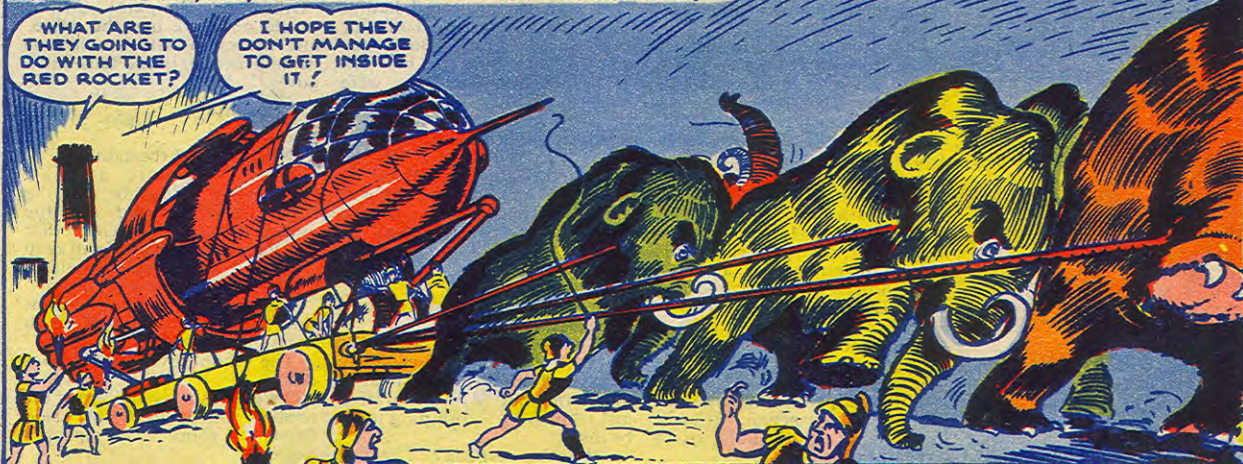
--- AND LOCKED IN THE TOPMOST DUNGEON.



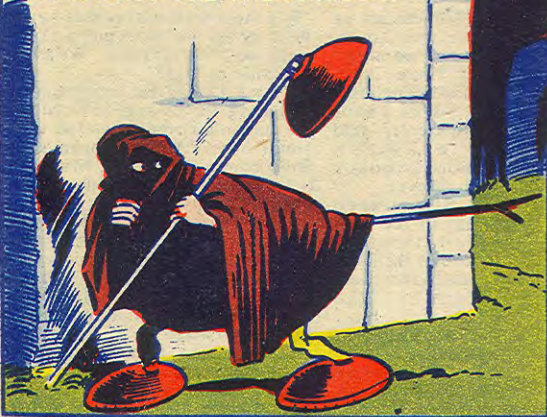
THE HOURS DRAG BY -- DARKNESS
FALLS --- AND THEN ---



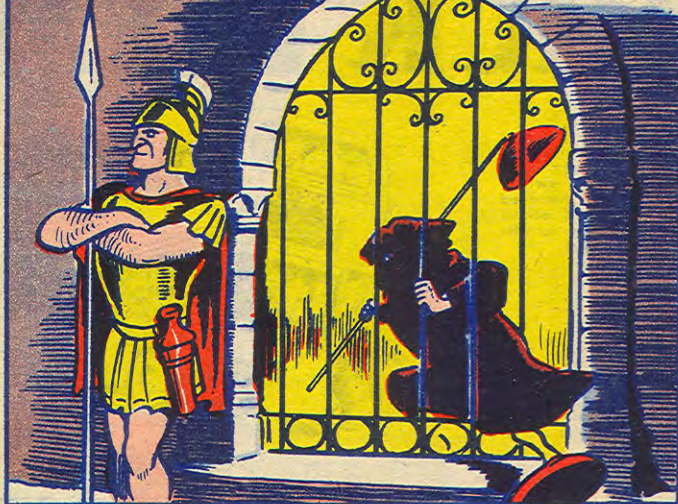
THE RED ROCKET, TOO, HAS BEEN CAPTURED BY THE ROMANS!



THE SIGHT OF THE CAPTURED ROCKET SENDS THEIR SPIRITS LOWER THAN EVER. EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE GOING WRONG, AND THEIR CHANCES OF EVER SEEING THE EARTH AGAIN SEEM TO HAVE VANISHED. BUT -- UNKNOWN TO THEM -- A STRANGE, CLOAKED FIGURE APPROACHES THE TALL PRISON.



THE ODD-LOOKING LITTLE PROWLER SNEAKS PAST THE GUARDS.



HE REACHES THE WALL OF THE TOWER, AND STARTS TO WALK STRAIGHT UP IT WITH THE AID OF HIS STRANGE FEET, HIS STICK, AND HIS TAIL.



PSSST!
HELP ME IN,
PLEASE!

YIPE!
WHAT WAS
THAT?



MY FRIENDS,
I HAVE COME
TO RESCUE YOU.
MY NAME IS
FIDDYCAT, AND I
AM AN INVENTOR!



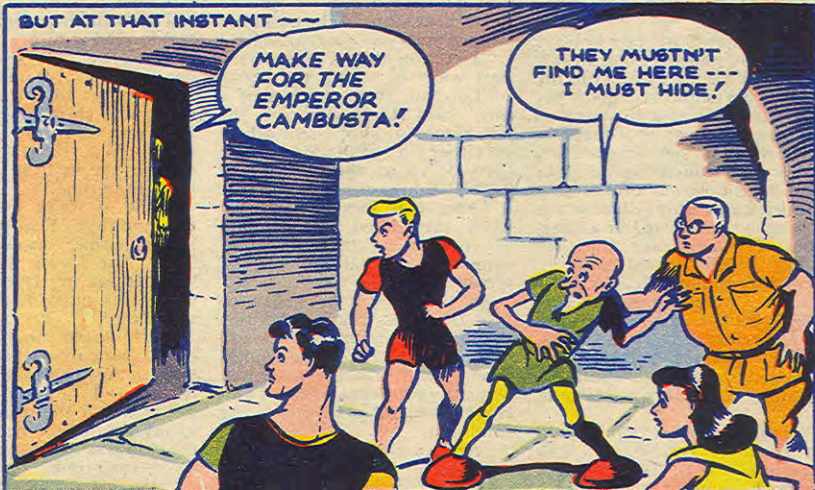
LET ME EXPLAIN. CAMBUSTA THE EMPEROR, IS OPPRESSING THE PEOPLE OF ROMA, UNTIL THEY ARE NEARLY READY TO REVOLT. AND HE ISN'T REALLY THE TRUE EMPEROR. HIS BROTHER SHOULD SIT UPON THE THRONE. WE THOUGHT THAT YOU WOULD HELP US TO FIND HIS BROTHER, AND TO OVERTHROW HIM!



BUT AT THAT INSTANT --

MAKE WAY
FOR THE
EMPEROR
CAMBUSTA!

THEY MUSTN'T
FIND ME HERE ---
I MUST HIDE!



Next week: The Emperor makes a bargain but gets a nasty shock!

COMET—December 6, 1952—11

THE FARES GO UP WHEN MICK TRAVELS ON A LONDON BUS!

MICK THE MOON BOY

The bus soared up into the air and started to fly swiftly forward a hundred feet or more above the jammed traffic below!



"Sometimes we are and sometimes we aren't in these jams. It all depends."

"Well, I hope we aren't," said the woman more anxiously than ever.

She stared out of the window at the solid line of traffic in which they were caught. The small boy clutched her hand.

"We aren't going to belate, are we, Mum?" he cried. "We're not going to miss seeing him?"

"I—I hope not," faltered the woman, and it seemed to Mick, who was watching her, that she was nearly crying.

"But we can't miss him!" wailed the small boy. "We mustn't. If we miss him, he'll think we haven't come. Aw, why don't

this nasty old bus get a move on?"

The bus moved forward with the line of traffic, then stopped again with a jerk. The woman bit her lip and although she didn't say anything Mick saw that she was looking more upset and distressed than ever. He leaned forward and said:

"Excuse me, ma'am. It's no business of mine, I know, but do you want to get somewhere quickly?"

The woman turned her head and looked at him.

"Yes, we do," she said and her voice was trembling. "We want to get to the docks. My husband's ship sails in half an hour and we want to say goodbye to him. He's a sailor and this voyage he'll be away for a long, long time."

"And if we're not there to say goodbye, Dad'll think we haven't come," wailed the small boy. "And I want to see him. I want to see my Dad. Aw, why don't this nasty old bus get a move on?"

Mick could understand the poor woman's distress well enough now. It would be terrible for her and the little boy if they didn't reach the docks in time to say goodbye, especially when the ship was to be away for such a very long time.

"We left in plenty of time, as well," she went on unsteadily.

"It's these traffic jams that have held us up. I'd have got a taxi, only we can't afford it. We had to come by bus."

"And Dad'll be waiting and watching for us and he'll think we haven't come!" wailed the small boy. "And we promised we'd come. Didn't we, Mum?"

"Yes, son," she said miserably.

"Don't worry!" said Mick abruptly. "You'll be there!"

He slipped from his pocket a little round instrument like a very small wrist watch. He held it hidden in his hand and pressed a switch on it. As he did so a most amazing thing happened.

For the bus suddenly soared up into the air and started to move swiftly forward a hundred feet or more above the jammed and teeming traffic below.

"Goodness gracious, what's happened?" gasped the woman.

Hank could have told her what had happened, but he didn't. Only he amongst the amazed and frightened passengers on the crowded bus knew that the little instrument which Mick had slipped from his pocket was one of the marvellous scientific gadgets which the Moon Boy had brought with him from the Moon.

It was a gadget which cut out the law of gravity. In other words, it made things lose all their weight and float up into the air. Not only that, but it could make the things move forward through space at any speed Mick desired. It was all controlled by the tiny, glittering instrument, which Mick had hidden in his hand.

By this time, as you can well imagine, the flying bus was in an absolute uproar. Passengers had leapt to their feet and were gripping the backs of the seats in front of them and gaping down with bulging eyes at the streets and traffic one hundred feet below.

And down there the folks thronging the pavements had halted dead in their tracks and were gaping up at the flying bus as though they couldn't believe their own eyes, as indeed they couldn't.

The traffic down there in the streets was also getting into a most frightful tangle as, instead of watching where they were going, drivers of vans, buses, cars and all the other vehicles stared up in open-mouthed astonishment at the flying bus speeding smoothly past above their heads.

On the top deck of the flying bus a big, stout, important-looking gentleman roared at the petrified conductor:

"This is outrageous! Outrageous, I say! How dare your confounded driver take the bus off in this most dangerous and

(Continued opposite)

THE FLYING BUS

"GOSH, but there's a mighty lot of traffic here, Mick!" exclaimed Hank Luckner, the twelve-year-old American boy. "Does it ever stop?"

"No, never," replied his pal Mick, the Moon Boy, with a smile. "It quietsens down a lot late at night, of course, but they've got a saying over here that London never sleeps and I guess that's true!"

"Yeah, I guess so, too," agreed Hank.

The two boys were on holiday in England and were starting off by seeing the sights of London. On this particular morning they were standing at a bus-stop in the teeming, busy thoroughfare of the Strand. They were waiting for a bus which would take them to the Tower of London. Until it came along, Hank was staring in something like amazement at the dense lines of traffic which flowed past in seemingly endless streams.

There were London's big, double-decker, gay red buses, vans, lorries, taxis, private cars, coaches and almost every sort of vehicle you could think of, including horse-drawn drays and vans.

"It sure is a sight!" said Hank. "It would make the folks way back in sleepy old Indian Bend, where I come from, stare, I betcha!"

"Yes, I bet it would," said Mick with a laugh. "Here's our bus now."

The bus which would take them to the Tower of London swung out of the traffic stream and pulled up at the stop where they were waiting. They climbed aboard and went upstairs to the top deck. The bus was packed, both upstairs and down; but as Mick and Hank looked about them for a seat, a lady and gentleman rose to get off at the next stop, so the two boys slipped into the vacated seat.

"I reckon this is one of the best ways of seeing the sights of London, from the top of a bus," said Hank, gazing at the tall blocks of shops and offices on either side of the Strand and then down at the streams of traffic. "You can see everything."

"You can indeed," agreed Mick, then dived his hand into his pocket as the conductor came upstairs calling: "Fares, please!"

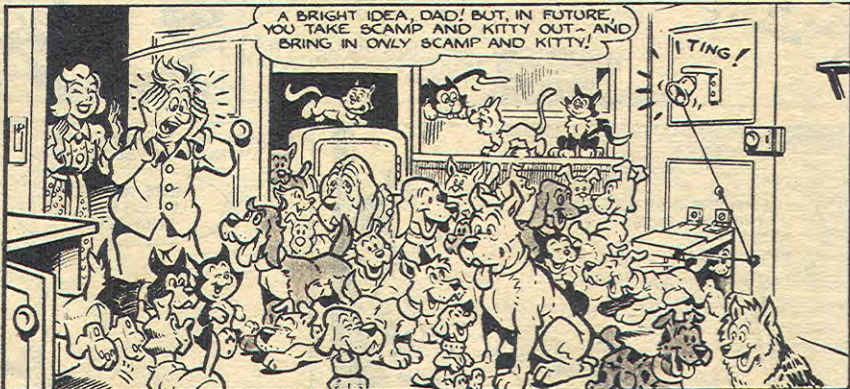
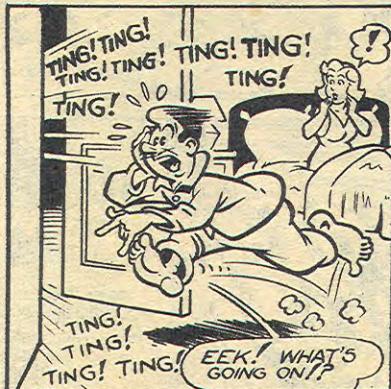
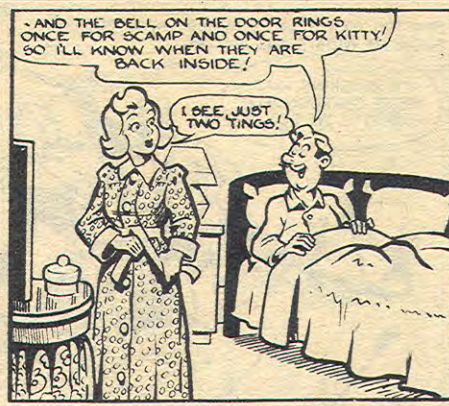
As the conductor began to take the fares, the bus became caught in a long traffic jam and stopped. A poorly-dressed woman with a very small boy was sitting in front of Mick and Hank. She said anxiously to the conductor:

"Are we going to be held up for long?"

"I don't know, ma'am," said the conductor cheerfully.



SCAMP OUR HAPPY HOUND



MICK THE MOON BOY

(Contd. from previous page)

reckless manner? Tell him to put it down immediately?"

He wasn't the only one bawling and shouting at the conductor by any means. But the conductor was as frightened and as mystified as they were. So he shot downstairs, thrust his way through the press of frightened passengers down there, and bawled through the glass panel at the driver:

"Charlie, what the heck d'you think you're doing? This ain't no way to go on. Put the bus down on to the road again, you crazy fat 'ead!"

"I can't!" screamed Charlie, who was sitting clutching tightly to the driving wheel. "It's not me what's doing it. I don't know nuthin' about it. I can't put her down!"

The conductor groaned with horror. Next moment he yelped with pain as an old lady caught him a very severe smack indeed across the head with her umbrella.

"I'll have the law on you for this, you wicked man!" she screeched. "Why didn't you tell us that this bus is a new-fangled flying contraption? I'd never have got on it if I'd known!"

"I didn't know, either!" bellowed the conductor. "It's never done this afore. I dunno

what's happened!"

By this time Thames River, with its famous Pool of London, and its docks, was just ahead of them. Upstairs on the top deck, Mick pressed another tiny switch on the gadget hidden in his hand. As he did so, the nose of the bus dropped a little and it began to glide down towards a road just by the docks.

The traffic on the road made way for it. You bet it did. In their panic to get out of the way of the flying bus, which was coming down to land, drivers swerved, backed and even mounted the pavements so as to leave plenty of room for it.

The bus landed very sweetly and smoothly on the road. With a heartfelt gasp of relief, Charlie, the driver, swung it in towards the kerb, stopped it, then leapt madly from the driving seat in case it should suddenly take off again.

He wasn't the only one who got very rapidly off that bus. The passengers simply poured off it, fighting and jostling to reach the safety of the pavement. Mick said to the woman and the small boy, as the pair of them made for the stairs:

"I guess you'll be in plenty of time to see your husband now, ma'am."

"I will," she cried, "and you don't know how thankful I am. But I'll never understand this queer happening for the rest

of my born days."

"The old bus must've known we wanted to say goodbye to Dad and it helped us!" cried the small boy, tugging at her hand. "Good old bus. Come on, Mum, Dad'll be waiting!"

Next week—The Man Who Stole Nelson's Column!

THIS IS KIT CARSON SPEAKING



Hullo there, folks,

Over the page you'll find some exciting pictures telling my story of the "White Red-man's Secret", and just in case you've missed what's happened up until now, I'll tell you about it.

This is the strange tale of two brothers who grew up without knowing each other. Their parents were killed in an Indian raid. One grew up with white folks and was called Dan. The other grew up as Deerfoot, chief of the Teton Sioux tribe.

There was a lot of mystery around these two lads. For one thing there was a sinister Englishman named Mark Raven who had tried to kill Dan, and knew some valuable secret about him. Then there was Tom Stack and Cinnamon Bill, who had killed old Nat Butler, whom Dan had known as his father. And lastly there was Lieutenant Kenrick, a cavalry officer, who had an old score to settle against Dan. Kenrick managed to get Dan thrown into jail on a trumped-up charge. Tom Stack rescued Cinnamon Bill from the jail and Dan got away at the same time. But Dan ran slap into a trap. I had been captured by Tom Stack and his gang and Dan found me trussed up like a chicken. But we were surrounded by Tom Stack and his gang, and Dan was taken prisoner as well as me.

Cinnamon Bill was just about to kill Dan and blame it on the Indians when the Indians attacked us. Tom Stack and Cinnamon Bill made a break for it with their gang and left Dan and I to the mercy of the Indians!

THE SECRET OF THE WHITE REDMAN

SWIFTLY, YOUNG DAN SLASHED THE ROPES FROM MY WRISTS AND ANKLES...

IT'S REDSKINS, KIT! WE'RE SURROUNDED! WHAT'LL WE DO....?

MAKE FOR THE CLIFF OVER THERE, YOUNGSTER! QUICK! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!

THEN, YELLING LIKE DEMONS, THE SIOUX RUSHED THE CAMP-FIRE FROM ALL SIDES

DEATH TO THE PALEFACES!

COME ON, KID!

SEE! THERE THEY GO! UP THE ROCK-FACE! AFTER THEM, BROTHERS!

DOWN FLAT ON THIS LEDGE! WE'VE GOT TO SHOOT IT OUT!

BY THE LIGHT OF GREY DAWN, THEY HURLED THEMSELVES AT US!

HERE THEY COME! LET 'EM HAVE IT, YOUNGSTER!

TAKE THAT, YOU RED SKUNK!



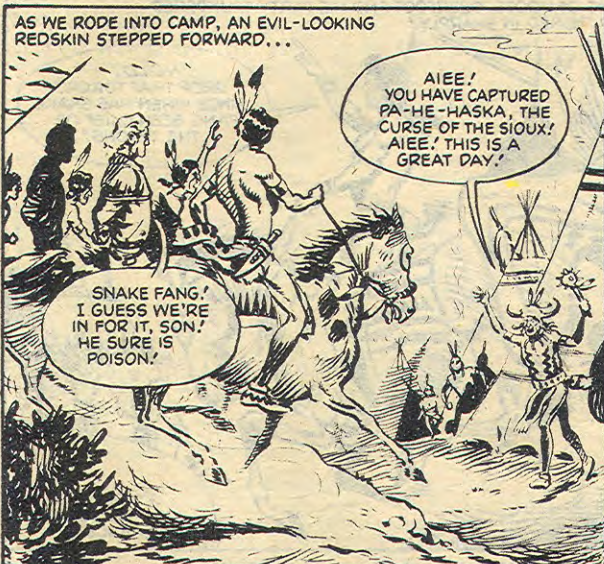
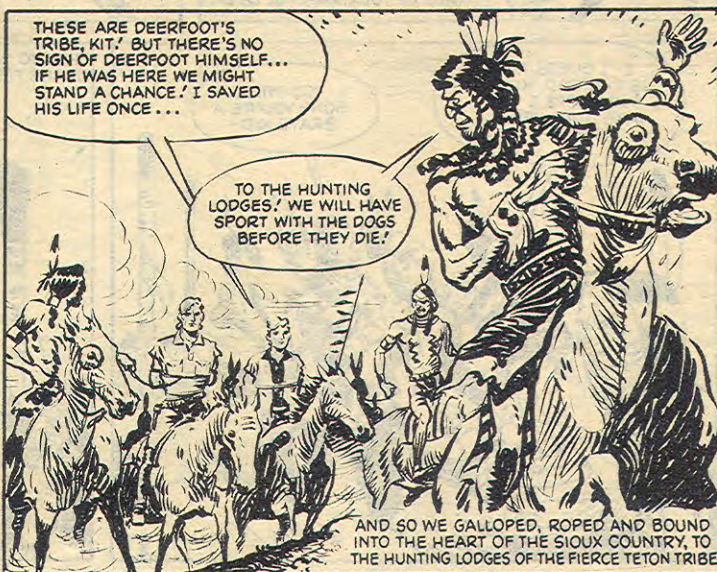
AIEE! PALEFACE DOGS SHOOT LIKE TEN MEN! BACK, BROTHERS! WE GET THEM IN THE END!

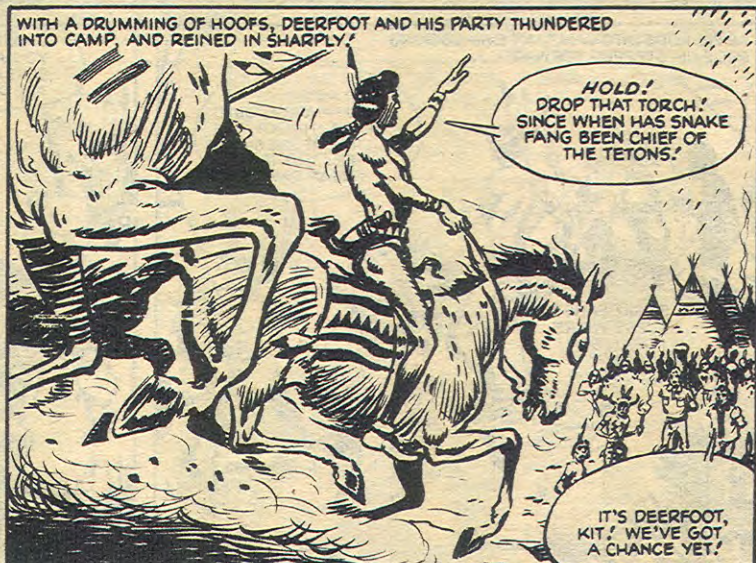
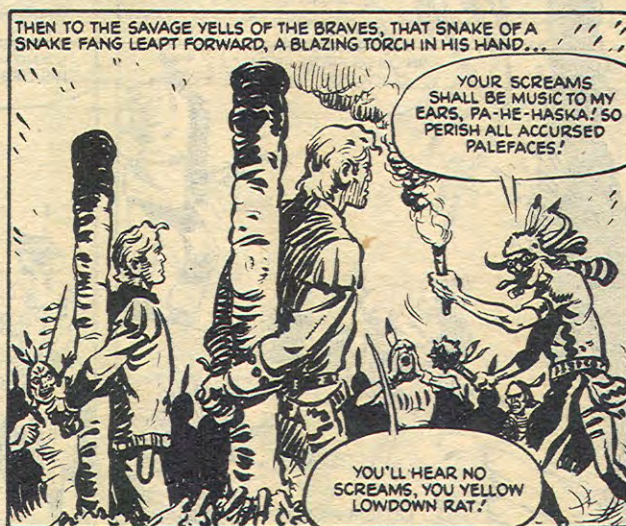
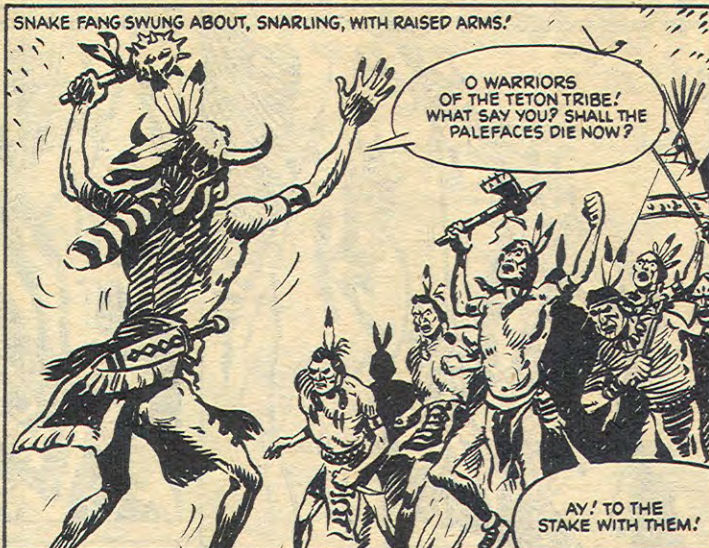
WE'VE STOPPED THEM FOR NOW, DAN, BUT THEY'LL BE BACK! LET'S TAKE A BREATH!

DURING THE LULL IN THE BATTLE, I ASKED YOUNG DAN A QUESTION THAT HAD BEEN PUZZLING ME...

TELL ME, SON... WHY DID THAT ENGLISH SKUNK WANT YOU KILLED?

I GUESS I DON'T KNOW, KIT! IT SURE IS A MYSTERY! MARK RAVEN'S HIS NAME, BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING MORE ABOUT HIM...





Will Deerfoot be able to save Kit and Dan? Be sure to read next week's thrill-packed adventure!

THE LION AND THE HORSE

(Continued from page 5)

blood and he couldn't let him go as easily as that.

So he set off with his money to make a tour of the rodeo circuits in the hope of finding and buying the stallion he had grown to love.

Slowly he made his way to each rodeo in the state, looking in each corral for the black horse.

Every bucking bronco entering the ring he thought might be this stallion, but he was disappointed each time.

He questioned every cowboy, horse owner or dealer he met but could get no definite news about the black stallion.

Disappointment followed disappointment as he visited rodeo after rodeo.

At times he had vague information given to him about a black stallion on some rodeo or other which raised his hopes, but mostly it all led to nothing.

He had to be careful with his money, too, for he would need all he had to buy the horse if he found it.

On he went, growing more heavy hearted until he felt he would never see the horse again.

At last he managed to gain

word of someone named Lacy or Macy or some similar name, who owned a big black stallion at the Rincon county fair.

He found himself at Rincon, gazing up at the rodeo notice.

MAMMOTH COMBINED EVENTS RINCON COUNTY RODEO

Under this heading was the picture of a stallion named Wildfire and the name of its owner, Dave Tracy. Wildfire was billed opposite a circus attraction, Brutus, the man-eating lion.

Ben looked and read. Wildfire. That horse was his stallion!

Ben searched the place and found his long-looked-for horse at last, shut in a corral.

He gazed at him longingly, but the horse had forgotten him and regarded him with fiery eyes as just another hated man.

Yes, it was the stallion. But how was Ben to get him away?

Would his owner sell him now, a horse which was by this time of great entertainment value, for the amount he gave for him—six hundred dollars? Next week: Ben gets sucked down into a swamp! Don't miss his breath-taking adventures!

THE WHEEZES OF WILLIE WIZZARD

(Continued from page 9)

"That's all very well," Jimmy pointed out. "But supposing something else happens in the classroom before we catch the criminal? Someone may play more practical jokes on Half-spun. And you stand a chance of getting even more whackings!"

Willie frowned thoughtfully. "I'll make a Patent Trousers Protector first of all," he decided.

"Then the whackings won't hurt! After that I shall get down to work on the burglar trap."

He had perfected a Trousers Protector by the time bedtime came, and Jimmy helped him test it with the aid of a carpet beater. This was just as well, for the following morning there was another incident in class.

This time Mr. Half-spun found that his inkwell had been filled with some Wizzard Wonder Invisible Ink. Whenever he tried to write, nothing appeared on the paper!

Once more Willie got the blame, and once more he was given a wiggling and a whacking.

Willie had the greatest difficulty in not smiling as the cane swished down. Thanks to the Trousers Protector it didn't hurt.

That evening, with the help of Jimmy Bash, he set to work on building a thief trap. It was a complicated affair of ropes and pulleys and they fixed it all up just outside the door of Willie's room.

"There!" said Willie in triumph at last. "Do you think anyone will notice it as they go into the room?"

"I don't think so," said Jimmy, with a grin. "All the works are up above the door. I'm sure no one will see that piece of cotton at ankle-level."

"Not until they walk into the cotton, break it, and set the whole lot in action," chuckled Willie. "Come on, Jim! Let's get some sleep now, and let's hope we shall catch our victim in the middle of the night!"

Next week: Willie's trap works—but on the wrong person! Don't miss the fun!

ENGINE-SPOTTERS CLUB

GOOD news for another thousand Spotters this week—and maybe you're one of them! So get out your Album and see if the number on the back is one of those printed below.

All those with Album numbers between 7,500 and 8,000 inclusive, and between 47,000 and 47,500 inclusive may send up for a present.

Is yours amongst them? If so, you may choose any one of the following presents: Cowboy Belt and Holster, Box Game, Charm Bracelet, Wrist Compass, Jack-knife, Autograph Album, Ball-point Pen, or a Water Pistol. Write the name of your choice in the space in your Album marked "For Official Use", making sure at the same time that your name and address are filled in on the Membership page. Next, on a postcard or piece of plain paper write the name of the character or story you like best in COMET—and, in a few words, say why. Slip both Album and postcard into a 2½d. stamped envelope addressed to:

COMET E.S. CLUB, 3 Pilgrim Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.), to arrive by Tuesday, December 16. Presents are despatched about a week later and Albums are returned at the same time.

Look out for more numbers in next week's COMET!

YOUR FAVOURITE DOGS. No. 18

THE BOXER

About 24 inches at the shoulder, a Boxer or German Bulldog is a fine athletic dog. He is all muscle and strength and takes quite a bit of holding when on a lead. You will always know a Boxer by his tail, or rather, by the tiny little stump that is all the tail he has. He may be fawn or tan with a smooth, short, shining coat. A Boxer is very good-tempered, but can be trained to make an excellent guard.



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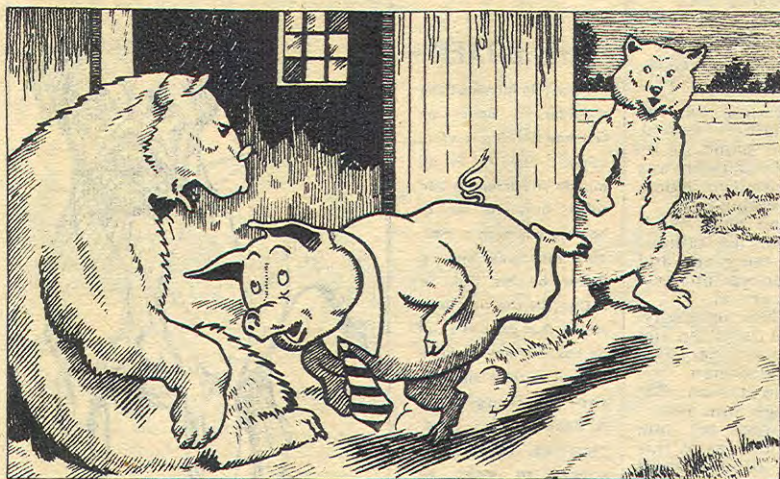
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DR GRUNTER'S ZOO SCHOOL



"Hah, wretched boy, so you have returned, have you?" roared Dr. Grunter as Tubby ran head-first into more trouble!

A PIG HUNT

"H'E'S done it again!" roared Dr. Grunter, the polar bear.

"Who has done what again?" inquired Mr. Drripp, the turtle.

"That wretched boy Tweeks has run away again!" roared Dr. Grunter, fairly gnashing his great, long, yellow fangs with fury. "But just wait till I catch him. That's all. Just wait till I catch him. I'll give him something that he'll not forget in a hurry, I'll wager!"

Dr. Grunter hadn't always been a polar bear. Nor had Mr. Drripp always been a turtle. Not so very long ago they had been two schoolmasters in charge of a party of boys who had come to Meadowsweet Farm to help Farmer Whipstraw.

One morning the whole lot of them had felt ill. So Dr. Dozey, the village doctor, had come out to the farm to give them all a dose of medicine.

But Dr. Dozey was the most absent-minded little old gentleman that you could ever meet. He had got his bottles mixed up and, instead of giving the boys a dose of medicine, he had given them a dose of a wonderful liquid which he had invented for changing people into birds and animals. And birds and animals they were doomed to remain until Dr. Dozey could find a liquid which would change them all back to their proper selves again.

Dr. Grunter, the headmaster, had been changed into a savage-looking polar bear. Mr. Drripp, his second-in-command, had been changed into a mournful-looking turtle. And Tubby Tweeks, the fat boy of the school, had been changed into a great fat pig.

And now Tubby was missing. Where he had got to Dr. Grunter didn't know. But he meant to find out. For, apart

from anything else, Dr. Grunter was keeping a close secret the fact that he and his boys had been changed into birds and animals.

He knew that if ever the news got about, the whole lot of them would be the laughing stock of every school in the country. That was why they had stayed on at Meadowsweet Farm instead of going back to school at the end of the harvest.

"This miserable boy Tweeks must be somewhere!" roared Dr. Grunter, glowering at Mr. Drripp. "And I mean to find him. Assemble all the boys. I wish to speak to them!"

A few minutes later all the boys were lined up in front of the hut where Mr. Drripp and Dr. Grunter lived, and a more curious collection of birds and animals you couldn't imagine.

"Listen to me!" roared Dr. Grunter. "That wretched boy Tweeks has run away. I want him found. Go and look for him. Hunt the high roads and by-roads. Search fields, woods and hedgerows. But keep out of sight of human beings as much as possible. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir!" chorused the boys—or rather, the birds and animals.

The gathering broke up, the birds and animals going off in all directions, some in pairs and others by themselves. One who went off by himself was Percy Peeke, a boy who had been changed into a brilliantly-coloured parrot.

Percy didn't go hunting the high roads and by-roads. He knew jolly well that Tubby Tweeks wasn't likely to be found there. Tubby was far more likely to be found where there was plenty to eat—at some house or cottage.

So Percy started to visit the few houses and cottages around

Meadowsweet Farm, swooping low over the gardens and out-houses and keeping a sharp look-out for the missing Tubby.

Then suddenly he started and gave a triumphant chuckle. He was swooping low over the garden of a little cottage not far from St. Hilda's School for Girls. And there, sprawled in a deck-chair in the garden, was fat Tubby Tweeks, the pig, with a great plate of cake beside him.

"So here you are!" cried Percy, alighting on the grass in front of Tubby. "Sitting there in that deck-chair with that great plate of cake. How've you worked it, you fat fraud?"

"Oh, so it's you, Percy Peeke! What d'you mean, fat fraud?" snorted Tubby indignantly. Then he tittered: "He, he, he! I've worked the most wizard scheme you ever heard of. I met a party of silly, soft little schoolgirls in the woods yesterday and I kidded them that I was a handsome prince who had been changed into a pig by a wicked magician!"

"You what?" gasped Percy.

"I told them that I was doomed to remain a pig until I'd eaten enough cake to make a mountain!" giggled Tubby. "And the little fatheads believed me. He, he, he! So they arranged with the old lady who owns this cottage that I should live here and they're collecting cake for me at the school—St. Hilda's School over there—and bringing it here for me to eat. I'm getting lashings and lashings of the scrummiest cake you ever tasted. He, he, he!"

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" gasped Percy indignantly. "You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, telling all those fibs to a lot of innocent little girls. Come on, you're coming back to Meadowsweet Farm!"

"I'm not!" cried Tubby. "I'm jolly well staying here!"

Percy stared at him. Being a parrot, he certainly wasn't strong enough to take the great fat Tubby back to the farm. But he was determined to get him back to the farm somehow. Then suddenly he had a brain-wave.

"Righto, stay here if you want to!" he chuckled. "But take a word of advice and keep out of old Grunter's way!"

With that he spread his gaily-

coloured wings and flew away. He hunted around until he found the Baxter brothers. There were three of them and they had been changed into three bears. Baxter major was the big bear, Baxter minor was the medium-sized bear, and Baxter tertius—or little Baxter—was the tiny bear.

Percy found them hunting through the woods for Tubby.

"It's all right. I've found the fat robber!" cried Percy, fluttering down to alight beside them.

He quickly told the three bears all he had found out.

"And now I'll tell you what we're going to do," he chuckled.

"There's a great pail of whitewash at the farm. Your two brothers can chuck it over you, Baxter major, so that you'll be all white. It'll easily wash off, being whitewash!"

"Yes, but what's the idea?" demanded Baxter major.

"Why? Don't you see?" chuckled Percy. "Tubby will think that you're old Grunter, the polar bear. You'll be able to chase him home to the farm. It'll be far better to do that than to let old Grunter catch him sitting there in that garden eating loads and loads of cake!"

"You bet it will!" chuckled Baxter major. "If old Grunter catches him there he'll absolutely spifficate him!"

About half an hour later Tubby got the shock of his life. He was lying sprawled in the deck-chair in the cottage garden, enjoying the sun and absolutely stuffed full of cake. Suddenly he heard a terrific roar and, to his horror, he saw a great white bear come bounding over the garden hedge.

Tubby didn't stop to take a second look at that bear. Quite certain that it was Dr. Grunter, his headmaster, he shot out of the garden and rushed away across country as fast as ever he could lay his fat little legs to the ground.

The bear, of course, was Baxter major. He kept heading the frantic Tubby off so that Tubby rushed madly towards Meadowsweet Farm. Then suddenly Tubby got shock number two. For as he reached the farm he ran slap into Dr. Grunter himself, who was coming to see what all the noise was.

"Hah, wretched boy, so you have returned, have you?" roared Dr. Grunter, catching Tubby a cuff with his fore-paw which made Tubby's fat head ring.

He proceeded to give the bawling Tubby the hiding of his life. Meanwhile, Baxter major was being washed down with a hose-pipe.

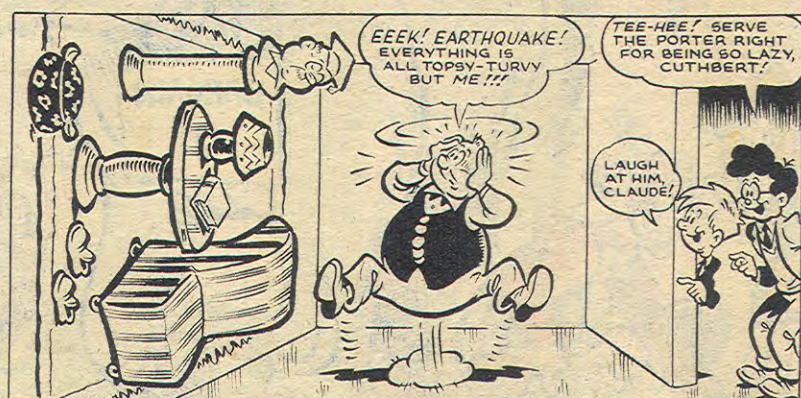
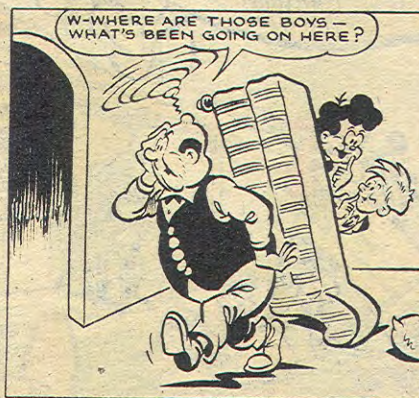
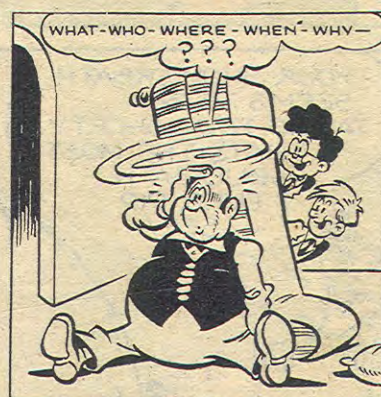
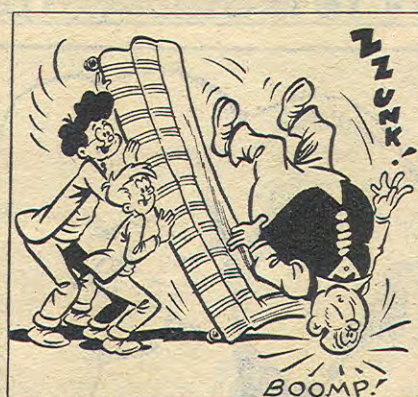
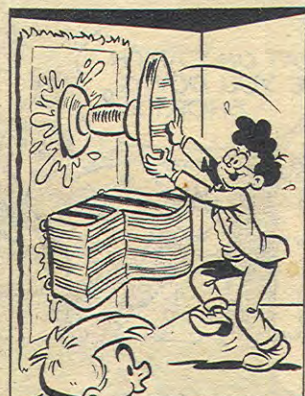
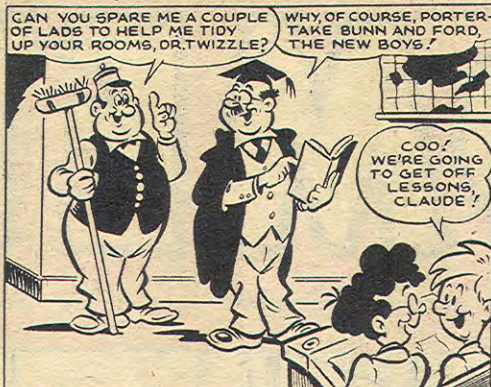
And to this day Tubby hasn't solved the mystery of there being two Dr. Grunters.

Next week: Mr. Grunter has a sideshow at the local fete!

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