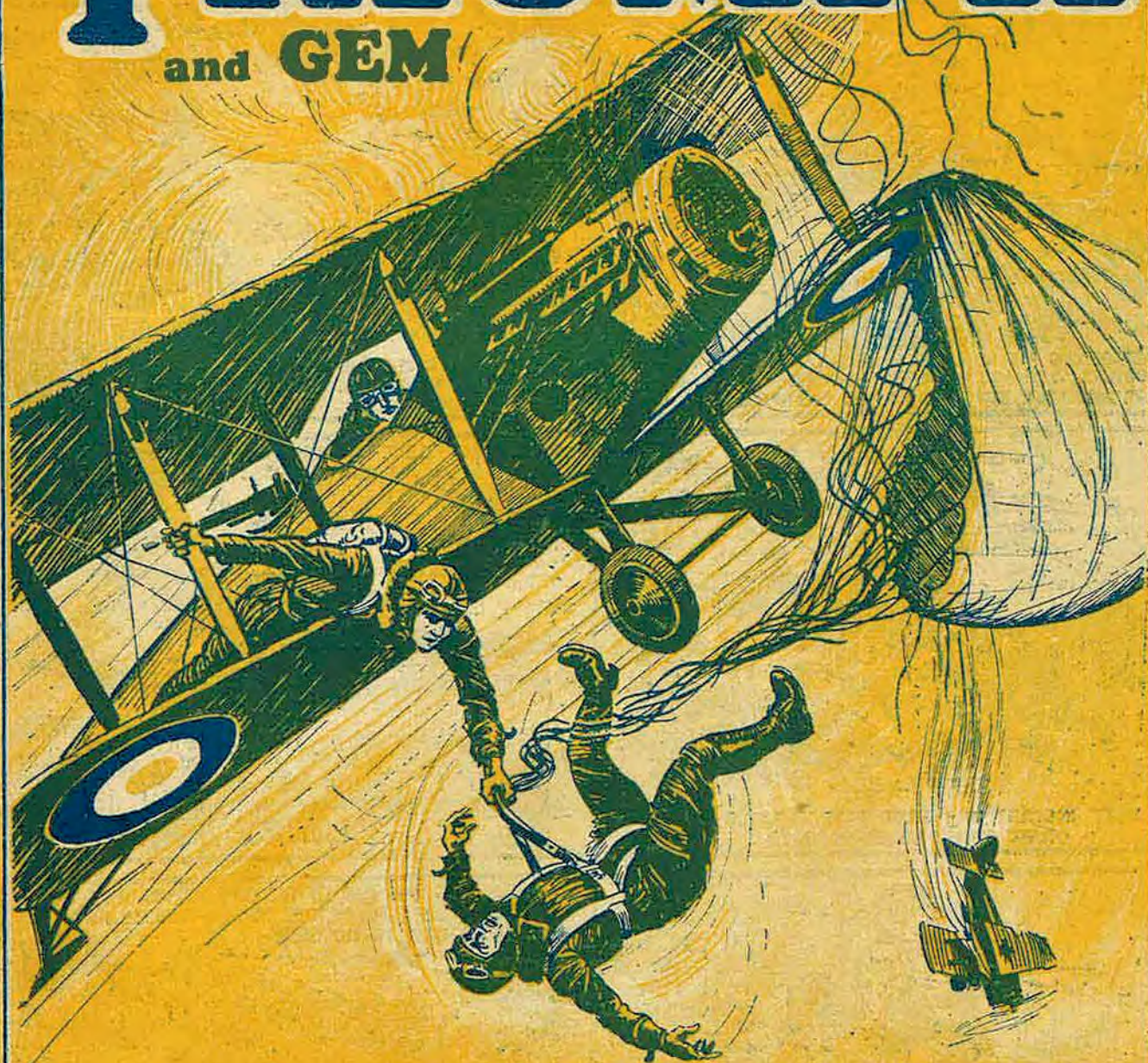


TRIUMPH 2^d
Every Tuesday

MAD CAREW AND FOOTBALL CRACKSMAN INSIDE

TRIUMPH

and GEM





DERICKSON DENE

IN

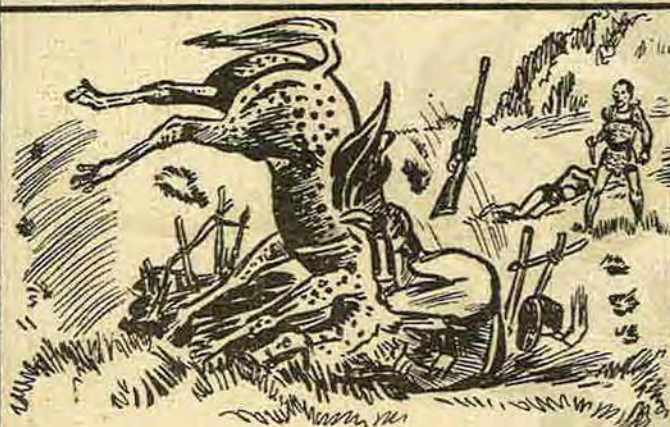
SABOTAGE AND WAR

SYNOPSIS

DERICKSON DENE, INVENTOR, IS MAROONED ON AN UNKNOWN PLANET. ROLF, HIS MECHANIC, IS CAPTURED BY THE PEOPLE OF A REBEL CITY, WHO PERFORM AN OPERATION ON HIM THAT MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO LIVE LONG OUT OF WATER. DENE RESCUES ROLF, AND WITH THE AID OF A HORSE THEY ESCAPE ACROSS A MARSH. BUT PRESENTLY ROLF'S STRENGTH GIVES OUT AND HE COLLAPSES. MOUNTED TROOPERS CATCH UP WITH THEM, AND THEY ARE CORNERED.



PREPARED TO PUT UP A FIERCE RESISTANCE, DENE PULLS OUT HIS KNIFE AND FACES THE ONCOMING TROOPERS, WHO ARE EVIDENTLY BENT ON TAKING HIM PRISONER. SUDDENLY A MARSH-HORSE PITCHES OVER AND BOTH HORSE AND RIDER DISAPPEAR INTO A GAPING HOLE IN THE GROUND.



NEXT INSTANT THE SAME FATE BEFALLS THE OTHER MARSH-HORSE TROOPER

CAUTIOUSLY DENE APPROACHES THE PITS



CIRCLING THE PITS, HE MAKES A STARTLING DISCOVERY — A STOUT CREEPER STRETCHED BETWEEN TWO POSTS! THE PITS HAVE BEEN COVERED WITH BRANCHES AND EARTH — EVIDENTLY A MAN-CONTRIVED TRAP!

ROLF STAGGERS INTO ONE OF THE PITS HOPING THAT THE WATER WILL HELP HIM, OF THE MARSH-HORSES AND TROOPERS THERE IS NO SIGN



"DECEIVED BY A COWARD." MAD CAREW MAKES A THRILLING CAPTURE IN THE AIR

MAD CAREW'S DAWN PATROL



THE WHITE FEATHERS

"MAJOR CAREW, I need scarcely remind you that these dispatches are of a most vitally secret nature. If they fell into the hands of the enemy, together with the code word, without which it is impossible to decipher them, there would be far-reaching and disastrous results."

General Harding, the Wing Commander, as he spoke these words in an almost voiceless whisper, gazed warningly across the table of Mad Carew's little office, with eyes that contained a far from friendly glint.

Both these two—the wing commander, and Mad Carew, the famous War Ace Flying Major of Squadron No. 333, R.F.C.—were stern and relentless disciplinarians. But that was the only thing that they possessed in common.

General Harding believed in ruling with a mailed fist, and in using the power that his rank bestowed upon him, to drive his subordinates under threat of dire penalty if they failed to carry out his bidding to the letter.

Mad Carew was in no way a more lenient taskmaster, but it was the dynamic, fire-eating little ace's boast that he would never pass on to a junior officer a task that he could not, or would not care to, tackle himself.

"Let me get this right, general," he said quietly. "The document has been sent to you from England so that you can decode it, and decide what action should be taken concerning its contents."

"Yes," General Harding snapped. "I am passing it on to you. The document expounds a theory for projecting liquid fire from aeroplanes, and I want your report on its practicability."

"The authorities do not contemplate using such a weapon," General Harding continued. "They intend to lock up these documents with the code word in some safe-deposit vaults in London, and keep them there as a sort of secret weapon; only to be brought out again, should the enemy discover, and bring into use, a similar sort of device."

"How many people in France know the secret code word?" Mad Carew demanded.

"When I have passed it on to you, only two—you and I," General Harding answered. "It was sent out to me in a sealed dispatch by one of our most trustworthy King's Messengers. I have read the document myself, and now I am passing it on to you so that you may read it, and report upon it. The King's Messenger will call here for your report and for this dispatch in twenty-four hours' time, and will then convey it straight back to England. And so the document, you see, is perfectly safe, because it could not possibly be deciphered by anyone who did not know the code word. As you will have to decode the document, I will pass this word on to you. The code word is—"

"H'st!" The hissed warning from Mad Carew caused General Harding to bite his tongue as he threw a startled glance over his shoulder.

As the little office was empty, excepting for

their two selves, the general turned somewhat petulantly back upon Mad Carew.

"There is no one to overhear," he said testily.

With a jerk of his hand Mad Carew flicked a piece of paper across the table.

"Write it on there—in pencil!" he snapped.

General Harding complied sullenly. Mad Carew took the paper, and swept his ever alert eyes over the single word: "Fire-brand."

With a quiet nod of his head, he took matches from his pocket, and, striking one, applied the tiny flame to one corner of the paper.

The flames flared up, and, devouring the frail slip of paper, transformed it into black, coiling ash, which Mad Carew crushed to powder with his fingers.

And then Mad Carew folded the document, and placed it in a drawer of his desk.

The general rose testily to his feet.

Mad Carew had crossed the room, and had opened the door in readiness for the general's departure.

At that moment the shrill blast of a whistle rang out. From across the aerodrome came the crisp, commanding voice of the officer in charge of the air guard post.

"Enemy aircraft approaching! Stand by all gun teams!"

A split second later the Bad Lads were to be seen sprinting smartly from out of their mess-hut, and, doubling to their "alarm posts," calmly donning their "battle-bowlers," and adjusting their gas-helmets to the "alert" position.

From out of the silence that had settled over the drone, the throb of a high-flying Mercedes engine could be clearly heard.

General Harding threw an alarmed glance skyward.

"An air raid!" he gasped. "Which is the way to your dugout, Major Carew?"

But Mad Carew had already left his side, and was at that moment barking orders in a stentorian voice for Sandy MacTavish to have his Bristol Fighter wheeled from its hangar.

The drone of the Mercedes engine grew louder and louder, and then a jet-black Fokker swooped down from out of the sky towards the centre of the flying field.

Mad Carew stopped dead on the edge of the tarmac. This was not a hostile raid. The pilot of the swooping plane was tilting something—a bulky object—out from the cockpit.

It was a sack which burst open almost as it left the swooping plane, and the next moment a shower of white feathers, like gigantic snowflakes, were fluttering down towards the ground.

An angry gasp rang from Mad Carew's lips.

He had recognised the black-painted plane, with a skull-and-crossbones in white upon its fuselage, as belonging to a German ace who had recently appeared upon the sector opposite to Squadron No. 333.

It was Count von Steine, the "Black Hauptmann," commander of a German ciquis of crack pilots who called themselves the "Death Staffel."

"Purple thunder!" Mad Carew rapped fiercely. "White feathers, eh? So that German rat thinks we're afraid of him, does he? He'll learn different before he's very much older!"

The Fokker was now climbing steeply up away from the spreading cloud of feathers.

Its pilot, the Black Captain, Count von Steine, leaned out far over the rim of his cockpit to wave mockingly down at the Squadron No. 333 flying field.

Mad Carew shook his fist up at the Death Squadron plane and then his eyes became glued to something that was appearing into view in the centre of the wind-tossed feathers.

It was a small parachute with a basket swinging underneath it containing a live pigeon.

Joker Jameson was the first to reach the parachute's strange cargo as it touched the ground.

He released the basket and, followed by all the Bad Lads, carried it across to Mad Carew.

"It's a carrier-pigeon, major," he cried, "and there's a sealed envelope addressed to you attached to the basket. The bird is probably intended to carry your reply to the Black Hauptmann's letter back to Germany!"

"It's probably challenging the major to an air duel!" cried Mike Cotton, of C Flight, with eyes afire with excitement.

Mad Carew ripped open the envelope and perused the contents, watched eagerly by the Bad Lads. When he lowered the crested sheet of paper his war-bitten face bore an expression that they all knew well.

The waxed tips of his little moustache were bristling like miniature horns—a sure sign that the fiery little ace was donning his warpaint.

"Yes, boys, Count von Steine has challenged me to a dog-fight," he said, with eyes aglint. "He is returning in an hour's time, and he dares me to go up alone to meet him above this aerodrome. Sandy MacTavish, get my Bristol Fighter ready!"

"Ay, ay, sorr!" answered the dour old Scot chief-mechanic eagerly. "She'll be in first-class fighting trim for ye—and if that windbag Fritz brings over a faster plane than I send ye up in, major, then I'll never wear a tartan kilt again."

"Oh, boy, this is going to be good!" Joker Jameson chuckled. "The dandiest dog-fight of the war—and we're going to be in the stalls to watch it."

FORBIDDEN TO FIGHT

MAD CAREW had signed to his adjutant and best pal to return with him to the orderly-room. Upon entering it they had found the little room seemingly deserted.

And then suddenly, to Mad Carew's amazement, Tabby Hart began pointing towards the table in the centre of the room.

Mad Carew stared at the table with his eyes widening with dawning incredulity.

The long tablecloth moved slowly to one side and the crimson face of General Harding appeared into view.

"Er—Major Carew—er—give me a hand, please," the general stammered. "I—I—er—er—"

—appear to have become wedged between the legs of this table."

Tubby upended the table and, after a struggle, the general succeeded in freeing his portly frame from the table legs and scrambling to his feet.

"I—er—dropped a coin and it rolled under the table," he stammered.

"Should I call your car, general?" Mad Carew asked. "Count von Steine dropped a note to say that he would be returning in an hour's time."

General Harding glared fiercely at Mad Carew.

"Why did that insolent German send that pigeon to you?" he asked. "I saw it floating down under the parachute."

"He has challenged me to a duel," Mad Carew told the general.

General Harding coughed.

"Read the note to me, please, Major Carew," he said.

"Certainly—here it is," Mad Carew rapped.

"To Major Carew, Squadron No. 333.—The white feathers eloquently convey to you my opinion of you and your squadron. You may have the reputation of being an air ace, but I very much doubt if you have the courage to meet me alone in the sky, man to man. I will give you the chance to test your fighting skill against mine—if you have the pluck to accept this, my challenge to you, to a dog-fight to the death. I will be back, flying above your aerodrome, alone, in exactly one hour from now. If you are not too frightened to come up and meet death from my guns, then send a reply to this effect by the accompanying carrier-pigeon. I am calling your bluff, Major Carew; you have fooled most people into believing that you are a fearless sky-fighter—but you have not fooled me. Signed, Von Steine, the Black Hauptmann, Commanding the Death Staffel."

"H'm; and what do you intend to do about it, Major Carew?" General Harding asked.

"Do? Purple thunder—there's only one thing to do!" Mad Carew barked. "Captain Hart, get a pigeon-carrier message-form ready, and take down my reply."

Tubby produced a pad of message-forms no thicker than cigarette-papers, and a pencil.

"To Count von Steine," Mad Carew dictated, "I shall have much pleasure in keeping the appointment that you suggest—"

"Wait, Major Carew."

Mad Carew jerked questioning eyes towards General Harding.

"You must not accept that challenge," General Harding rapped. "As your wing-commander, I absolutely forbid you to accept it. Have you forgotten the business which brought me to this aerodrome? It is imperative that now you have seen the document of which I speak you should take no unnecessary risks."

"Purple thunder! And let this perish!" Hun believe that I am afraid of him?" Mad Carew roared. "I'll be hanged if I will let him boast all over Germany that he offered to fight me over my own drome, and I hadn't the pluck to accept his challenge."

"You will send a message refusing to fight Von Steine!" General Harding snapped. "And you will show me that message before it is attached to that pigeon's leg."

Tubby Hart glanced anxiously at his dynamic little commander, half-fearing that Mad Carew would fly into an ungovernable rage. But to his amazement Mad Carew began slowly nodding his head.

"All right, general, if you insist—then my hands are tied," Mad Carew said gruffly. "Captain Hart, destroy that message and take down another."

Stroking his chin thoughtfully, Mad Carew began dictating:

"To Count von Steine, Commanding the Black Staffel."

"Your insulting message to hand. Your suggestion interests me considerably, but do you really think that you could put your boast into execution? You will not, however, get the chance to test your sky-fighting skill against mine, as I shall not be in the air waiting to meet you in an hour's time from now. We must leave the future to prove whether

or not I am the coward that you have been so pleased to call me."

"Hand that to the general to read, Captain Hart," Mad Carew said brusquely, "and then give it to me to sign."

General Harding read through the message carefully, word by word, and then, nodding his approval, handed it on to Mad Carew.

The Flying Major, with a sidelong wink at Tubby, pretended to read it, with his pencil poised over the text.

"Um! Perhaps these two 'nots' should be underlined," he mused. "'You will NOT, however,' and 'I shall NOT be in the air!' Yes, I think that makes my meaning clear."

Mad Carew jabbed his pencil at the two words, but, instead of underlining them, he swiftly scratched them out, thus changing the meaning of the sentence completely, and accepting Von Steine's challenge.

Then he scrawled his signature to the foot of the message, and then handed it across to Tubby Hart.

"Send it off at once, Captain Hart," he said, "and then please inform MacTavish that I shall not be needing my Bristol Fighter. No, wait! As the machine has been prepared for the air I might as well use it for a reconnaissance flight. You have no objection to that, I suppose, General Harding?"

"None whatever, providing that I have first seen, with my own eyes," the general replied, "that carrier-pigeon dispatched with your reply to Count von Steine."

"I'll try to remember that," Mad Carew answered dryly.

Tubby Hart, rolling up the flimsy message, placed it into a little metal container, and, watched closely by General Harding, attached it to the homing pigeon's leg.

A few minutes later General Harding, little dreaming that the bird was carrying Mad Carew's acceptance of Von Steine's challenge, watched the pigeon soar up into the air, and, after circling the drome once, set off as straight as an arrow towards Germany.

And then General Harding took his departure.

HOLDING his roaring Bristol Fighter in a tight spiral, Mad Carew soared skyward with the Squadron No. 333 flying field diminishing beneath him as if it were being sucked down into a swiftly revolving whirlpool.

His war-bitten face bore an expression which boded ill for Count von Steine. His strong jaws were grimly set. He was going up for a fight to the death with the Black Hauptmann, in direct defiance of his wing commander's orders.

News spreads rapidly in a war drome. Crowded on the tarmac below was the entire personnel of Squadron No. 333.

"Hallo! Here comes the lamb—beg pard'n, wolf—to the slaughter!" cried Joker Jameson.

An excited thrill swept over the tarmac. From out of the grey Western sky had appeared a tiny dark speck, growing rapidly with each passing second. In a short while it had materialised into a fast-moving, jet-black Fokker, with the sinister skull-and-crossbones of piracy gleaming whitely upon its fuselage.

It was the Black Hauptmann, arriving for the aerial battle against Britain's foremost air ace.

An anxious hush—a silence of almost breathless suspense—settled over the Bad Lads' tarmac. Although the Bad Lads had every confidence in the sky-fighting skill of their beloved leader, they were all too experienced at aerial combat to be able to forget that in a dog-fight the fortunes of war could swiftly see-saw from one direction into another.

One little tiny ship, one brief error of judgment, and the cleverest fighter of the two might find himself at the mercy of his opponent's unforgiving guns.

The Black Hauptmann was no opponent to be taken lightly—supposing this morning the luck of the grim game should be on his side.

Mad Carew, as he circled to await the jet-black plane, was sizing his man up—as a

boxer will take the weight of the man striding confidently forward to meet him from the opposite corner of the ring.

Count von Steine raised one hand into the air in a mock salute. He was wearing the jet-black flying helmet and fur-lined black overalls, which had been the cause of him being nicknamed Black Hauptmann.

Grim-jawed, Mad Carew returned the salute, and then jabbed his thumbs at his triggers to test his guns.

Rat-tat-tat-tat!

The jet-black Fokker shied in the sky like a full-blooded steed, and then, dipping one wing-tip, came skidding down at Mad Carew in a space-annihilating dive.

"They've started!" Joker breathed hoarsely.

The sky duel—ace versus ace—had begun! How would it end?

None of the thrilled watchers, in his wildest guess, could have accurately forecast how this fierce dog-fight was going to finish.

Mad Carew, instead of attempting to escape from out of the pathway of the count's deadly guns, kicked his Bristol over into a wing-testing roll, and, keeping his joystick pressed over hard, brought his guns up underneath the Fokker's whirling propeller.

Rat-tat-tat-tat!

The breath-robbing suspense at Mad Carew's daring tactics held the Bad Lads spellbound. Until suddenly a spontaneous cheer rang from their lips.

The Black Hauptmann had swerved, as if in sudden panic, from the fight.

Already, with only the first burst of shots exchanged, Mad Carew had got his crack opponent on the run.

With a grunt of satisfaction, Mad Carew soared up past the banking Fokker's tail and kicked sharply at his rudder-bar, bringing the Bristol up and over in a tight immelman.

It was a masterly piece of flying which placed the German pilot at the mercy of his guns. Now he was diving straight at the jet-black plane, with its black-garbed pilot quartered by the crossed-hairs of his Aldis sights.

And this meant that the Black Hauptmann had only a few brief seconds to live! It hadn't taken Mad Carew long to prove his superiority over this boastful German—Count von Steine was at the mercy of his guns!

And then, even as his thumbs came into contact with the triggers, a sudden growl of mingled anger and contempt was wrung from Mad Carew's lips, and he jerked his hands savagely from the corded-ring surmounting his joystick.

And his guns remained silent—sparing their intended victim's life.

The Black Hauptmann had thrown both hands up into the air in a gesture of surrender. The great Count von Steine was admitting defeat, and pleading for his life to be spared.

"The white-livered skunk!" Mad Carew barked savagely. "Purple thunder, and he had the confounded insolence to unload white feathers above my drome! I've a good mind to let the rat have it!"

But Mad Carew knew that nothing would ever induce him to pour a twin stream of lead into the cockpit of a man who had thrown in the sponge, however contemptible that surrender might be.

Disgust, instead of triumph, filled his whole dynamic little frame. This hadn't been a fight at all! A victory too easily won seemed to be no victory at all.

But G.H.Q. would rejoice at the capture, alive, of such a great enemy ace. Great enemy ace—an ace with feet of clay!

With contempt written all over his bronzed face, Mad Carew signalled to the surrendering German pilot to land.

Count von Steine nodded, and, on half throttle, swooped down to Squadron No. 333's tarmac.

The Bad Lads crowded around his plane.

"Tough luck, Count von Steine!" Joker cried generously. "What was it—engine trouble, or jammed guns?"

"It was neither!" Mad Carew barked, pressing his way through the crowd. "It was an attack of cold feet!"

With a faint, mocking smile on his cruelly thin mouth, Von Steine nodded his admission to this accusation.

"I know when I haven't a chance, Herr Major," he said. "After that clever immelman turn I knew that you had me at your mercy. Knowing that I was beaten, it would have been foolish to have continued with the fight. Do you not agree with me, Herr Major?"

Without deigning to reply, Mad Carew turned towards Tubby Hart.

"Captain Hart, kindly telephone Wing H.Q. and inform General Harding that Count von Steine has flown over here and given himself up," he snapped. "You needn't mention that I took the air to accept his challenge. Through no fault of my own I have not disobeyed orders—there was no dog-fight worthy of mention."

THE BLACK HAUPTMANN EXPLAINS

FOLLOWING the usual courteous custom of the R.F.C., the Bad Lads took their prisoner along to the mess, where he became their guest.

In vain did the Bad Lads try to appear at their ease with Count von Steine, and they found it impossible to treat him with the hospitality which they had often extended towards other enemy airmen whom, through adverse circumstances, had become prisoners of war.

They could not get it out of their minds that this hawk-faced Boche in the black leather flying-suit had first seen fit to suggest that the Bad Lads were cowards by dropping white feathers over their drone, and had then, himself, surrendered without putting up a fight to Mad Carew, like a white-livered rat.

"You do not understand," said Count von Steine at length in his strange, guttural voice that seemed to mock at everyone and everything. "I see your major's guns fixed upon me, and so, not wishing to die, I throw up my arms in surrender. If a man is beaten he is wise to surrender—as I did!"

"That's all very well," Captain Bob Steel interposed suddenly. "But if you were scared of dying, then why did you issue that challenge to Mad Carew?"

The mocking smile on the Black Hauptmann's face expanded to a low laugh.

"Perhaps it was because of this silly war—I have had enough," he answered. "It will be no disgrace for me in Germany when it is learnt that at last I have been beaten in the air by an enemy airman with such a tremendous reputation as your great Major Carew."

Mad Carew stared at the sharp-featured German as if he could scarcely believe his ears.

"You mean," he snapped, "that you came over here with the intention of giving yourself up? That all along you never meant to fight?"

"You have guessed my secret, mein herr," Von Steine sneered. "An air ace cannot last for ever. I have had enough of the war; I shall be content now to spend the rest of the war in one of your excellently managed prison camps."

The Black Hauptmann turned to Mad Carew as his last statement was received in silence.

"Herr Major," he said, "if we can go somewhere a little more private than this, I can tell you something of immediate importance. Something concerning a big air raid that is planned for to-night!"

Mad Carew hesitated. Count von Steine's manner, even more than the words he spoke, was angering the major almost beyond endurance, but if the Black Hauptmann could tell him anything about a big air raid, then it was Mad Carew's duty to suppress his own feeling and listen to any information that might very probably save the lives of hundreds of people.

"Come across to my orderly-room," Mad Carew said crisply. "Captain Hart, kindly act as Count von Steine's escort."

A gleam appeared for an instant in the Black Hauptmann's deep-set eyes. With the same mocking smile upon his thin lips he

permitted Tubby Hart to lead him from the Glory Hole.

Joker Jameson, crossing the mess, took a pair of tongs from the fireplace and with them picked up the glass out of which the German had been drinking.

With a grimace, he carried it across to the stove and smashed it to splinters among the glowing embers.

"It's probably highly contagious, blokes," he cried. "Eugh! Open the window, someone, and let some fresh air in. I feel I want a bath after having been near to that despicable maggot. Funks in the air, and is then willing to give his own pals away to make things easier for himself! I vote, blokes, that we forget that he's a prisoner of war, and when the major's finished cross-examining him, we'll give him back those white feathers he had the sauce to drop on us!"

"Hear, hear!" roared the Bad Lads. "Hear, bloomin' hear!"

THE information that Count von Steine was willing to impart fairly took Mad Carew's breath away.



A cloud of white feathers fluttered to the ground, and in the centre of them was a cage containing a carrier-pigeon. Count von Steine was sending a challenge, and the means of answering it.

Whilst loathing the cowardly informer, Mad Carew was inwardly feeling highly elated. If they were being told the truth—and this could be easily verified later—then they were gleaming information of unfathomable value.

The Black Hauptmann spoke freely about an air raid of unusually large proportions that he claimed was to be launched on the British back-areas that evening.

A few key questions from Mad Carew brought startling answers, and at the end of ten minutes Mad Carew felt convinced that he had already learnt enough to lessen considerably the damage from this air raid.

"I can even show you the route which our bombing planes will take," Von Steine said. "If you will let me see a large scale map of this sector."

Mad Carew produced a map and outspread it upon the orderly-room table.

"Follow the course of my finger, mein herrs, and I can promise you a big surprise," the German said, with a bland smile.

Mad Carew and Tubby leant eagerly forward with heads together over the map, and their prisoner thrust his closed fist towards them and pointed with his index finger to a town far behind the German lines.

Too late Mad Carew saw the almost colourless jet of vapour that shot suddenly from between the German's bent thumb and his knuckles.

The dynamic little air ace leapt back instinctively as a pungent stinging smell assailed his nostrils.

"Look out, Tubby—gas!" he hissed.

A deep, mocking laugh on a muffled note echoed up from behind them. Already their heads were enveloped in a bluish-grey vapour.

Jerking round, Mad Carew saw Von Steine staring mockingly at them through a pair of round goggles attached to a light gas-helmet. "Purple thunder, you fend—what's the game?" Mad Carew roared.

A thousand sledge-hammers started sud-

denly to work inside his brain. With an almost superhuman effort he tried to hurl himself at the sneeringly triumphant hawk-face of the Black Hauptmann.

Horror and dismay gripped at his heart-strings; he could not move! His muscles had become ironbound and frozen as if encased in ice.

He reeled once upon his feet, from side to side, and then, with a myriad lights blazing before his eyes, and his throat swollen and inflamed, so that no sound could escape his lips, he suddenly grew stiff and pitched forward, like an overbalanced log, to the floor.

Dimly, as he lay there with eyes smarting as if splashed with brine, and brain throbbing until it seemed that it must burst the confines of his temples, he saw Tubby Hart sprawl forward into a limp and inert heap across the table.

Again the mocking, triumphant laughter of the Black Hauptmann rang, like a fiendish nightmare, upon his ears, and then darkness closed upon Carew and he remembered no more.

GROUND IN DISGRACE

"THERE goes the major, blokes! Gosh, look, he's off for a flip in Von Steine's black Fokker! I wonder why? Look, old Sandy is just going to swing the prop for him!"

There was a puzzled note in Joker's voice as he stood with the crowd of Bad Lads who were staring towards the tarmac from the windows of the Glory Hole.

A few minutes ago, keeping carefully out of sight, they had seen a dapper little figure wearing Mad Carew's familiar, well-worn flying suit and helmet, cross the flying field towards the Death Squadron Fokker, and bark concise, crisp instructions to Sandy MacTavish.

Had they had any doubt as to the identity of that five-foot-four airman, which was not the case, those doubts would have been dispelled by the little waxed false moustache which Count von Steine had donned just before leaving Mad Carew's orderly-room.

The Black Hauptmann had made his plans with painstaking thoroughness. He was of much the same build as Britain's famous little air ace, and the false moustache, combined with a natural flair for impersonating other people, had filled him with confidence that his dare-devil trick would succeed.

Sandy MacTavish was completely deceived. The voice that barked to him to swing the Fokker's prop was such a clever imitation of Mad Carew's voice that the astute old chief mechanic leapt to obey the orders without a moment's hesitation. There was always fireworks in the flying field if Mad Carew's orders were responded to in anything other than double-quick time.

The Bad Lads watched the Black Fokker climb steeply from the flying field and head towards Germany, and then at a signal from Joker they filed from the mess-hut, and tipped towards the orderly-room.

"S-s-sh!" Joker hissed. "Stay here, blokes. I'll go and ask Fritz if he would like a look round the drome, and then when he comes out, you blokes pounce on him, bung a hand over his mouth so that he can't shout out, and then lug him over to that empty hangar, where the tar and his own white feathers are waiting for him."

Grinning broadly, Joker tapped lightly upon the orderly-room door. There was no response, and so he tapped again—this time louder.

Puzzled, Joker Jameson turned the handle, and pressed the door open. A strangled gasp of alarm escaped his lips.

Tubby Hart was sprawled over a large-scale map outspread upon the table. Mad Carew, looking dazed, and as white as death, was crawling slowly towards the door, as if each movement of his limbs was almost more than he had strength to cope with.

He tried to speak, but as yet no sound would come from his paralysed lips. He could only blink silently into Joker's astounded, distressed face.

"Why, what's happened, sir?" Joker gasped. "Who's done this? Where's Von Steine? Then it was him taking-off in the Fokker?"

The truth was slowly dawning on Joker's bewildered brain. The Bad Lads, crowding to the open door, stared into the room, scarcely able to believe the evidence of their own eyes.

Mad Carew's private den looked as if it had been swept by a tropical typhoon. File cabinets and desk drawers had been torn open, and their contents strewn all about the room. The floor was practically covered with maps and records, correspondence, and Army orders, report sheets, and flying charts.

Mad Carew was slowly regaining the use of his limbs. Tubby Hart groaned, and, opening his eyes, gazed bewilderedly around.

At that moment Sandy MacTavish approached the doorway. His jaw sagged

suddenly open as his saucer eyes came to rest upon Mad Carew.

"Hoots, Major Carew, sorr!" he gasped. "This canna be you! It was yourself that I helped to take-off not three minutes back. By the guid Saint Andrew, major, then it was ye prisoner that I started up the Fokker for!"

"So Von Steine has got away, eh?" Mad Carew barked, finding his voice at last. "Why did you let him go?"

"It wasn't Sandy's fault, major," Joker answered. "We all saw Von Steine, and were tricked into believing it was you! He'd helped himself to your flying outfit, and he was wearing a false moustache, just like yours, major."

"All right, MacTavish!" Mad Carew barked. "The only person to blame for this is myself—for letting that clever fiend trick me into thinking that he really meant to surrender because he was tired of the war."

His eyes flashed wildly around the disordered room. Suddenly, with lips thinned to a bloodless straight line, he leapt to the drawer of his table and tore it open.

A savage curse rang from his lips. The drawer was empty!

Now the Black Hauptmann's reason for this dare-devil raid was all too evident. He had stolen the coded dispatches concerning the secret liquid-fire gun for use in aerial warfare.

At that moment a crisp order from the entrance gates came floating through the frosty air:

"Guard, turn out!"

And then: "Guard, present arms!"

Mad Carew's eyes jerked in unison with Tubby's eyes towards the window.

"It's the general, major," Tubby Hart said gruffly. "I suppose he's come straight over because I phoned up and told him that Von Steine had landed, and given himself up as a prisoner of war."

Mad Carew nodded his head, and then, with an impatient wave of his hand, dispatched the Bad Lads back in silent dismay towards their mess-hut.

"This is tough, major, and I'm mighty sorry," Tubby said quietly. "It's given the general the chance that he wanted to slang you."

General Harding paused at the open door, and stared questioning into the paper-littered room.

"Why, what's been happening here?" he said. "Well, where is the Black Hauptmann?"

Mad Carew hunched his shoulders. General Harding started violently, and then glared savagely at him.

"Well, come on; out with it, Major Carew!" he cried angrily. "Where is Count von Steine?"

"Well on his way back to Germany by now, I imagine," Mad Carew answered grimly.

For a moment it looked as though General Harding was upon the verge of an apoplectic fit.

"You mean," he gasped, "that he landed here, and you have allowed him to escape again? Why did he come over? Was it anything to do with that challenge? Did you go up to fight him in direct defiance of my orders?"

"Yes, I did!" Mad Carew barked. "You'd better hear the whole story."

Without sparing himself, Mad Carew related how he had tricked General Harding, and had accepted Von Steine's challenge right under his nose.

He then related how the Black Hauptmann had surrendered, just so that he could land at Squadron No. 333 drome.

"He completely fooled me—I admit it," Mad Carew continued. "He pretended that he had important information to give away to me, and so I brought him in here. All that he wanted was to get Captain Hart and myself alone, in order to enable him to use this syringe-gun containing some potent drug in gas form, and put both Captain Hart and myself to sleep, so that he could then search this office for what he had come over here to steal."

General Harding's face suddenly changed from crimson to a sickly greyish pallor.

"You—you mean that coded document?" he gasped hoarsely. "D-did he get away with that?"

Mad Carew nodded his head grimly. "All right, you needn't die of fright!" he snapped. "They haven't got the code word, and so there's no great harm done—yet."

"How dare you speak to me in that tone of voice!" General Harding cried fiercely. "I should have thought that you would at least have the decency to be humiliated after this disgraceful affair!"

"I'm not proud of it," Mad Carew answered fiercely. "But we can all make mistakes at times."

"It will be the last that you'll ever make as a squadron-leader in France!" General Harding interposed fiercely. "I might have overlooked your direct and insolent disobedience had you been able to hold so valuable a prisoner. But the manner in which you have allowed him to trick you, and steal that valuable document, proves that you are not worthy of the rank you hold. You will hand over your command to Captain Hart until I send someone else to command the squadron, and consider yourself to be under open arrest."

The general swung savagely round upon Mad Carew's dismayed adjutant.

"You will be in temporary command of this aerodrome until other arrangements are made, Captain Hart!" he rapped. "And one of your responsibilities will be to see that Major Carew is delivered over to Wing H.Q. to-morrow at 9 a.m., to appear before a field officers' court of inquiry."

Still quivering from head to foot with rage, General Harding stormed away to his awaiting car, leaving Tubby Hart staring despondently at the infuriated face of his deposed squadron commander.

A bitter laugh escaped Mad Carew's lips.

"Well, and that's that, Tubby!" he grunted. "Grounded and lost my command, and so I suppose this'll mean back to England in disgrace, and a training camp job for the rest of the war."

MAD CAREW GETS DESPERATE

THE hours slipped by, but time now meant nothing to Mad Carew—nothing excepting that each hour that passed brought him nearer to the humiliation of being sent home to England in disgrace.

He realised he could not take to the air in pursuit of Count von Steine, even if he had thought that worth while, for to do so would only have got Tubby Hart into trouble.

If Mad Carew disobeyed the general's orders he did not only get himself into trouble, but Tubby Hart, the new commander of the squadron, as well.

Mad Carew was pacing up and down his orderly-room with the sullen impatient fury of a caged lion.

Suddenly he stopped, brandishing his clenched fists in a paroxysm of rage above his head.

"Purple thunder, Tubby! I'd willingly give ten years of my life for just one more dog-fight," he cried savagely. "If that dog-fight was against that rat Von Steine."

Tubby Hart remained sympathetically silent. What could he either do or say? He was suffering nearly as much mental torture as Mad Carew himself.

Suddenly the intermittent throbbing of a high-flying plane came down from out of the greying afternoon sky. Dashing to the door, Mad Carew watched a black plane of the Black Hauptmann's Death Squadron circle overhead, and then saw a message-container are down towards the flying field, carrying a tail of coloured ribbon in its wake.

Mad Carew's eyes narrowed angrily as he picked up the container and opened up the sheet of paper, and recognised Count von Steine's cramped, birdy handwriting.

"Dear Major Carew" (he read),—"I learn from our secret agents—who keep us well informed about most things—that you are in disgrace. It deeply grieves me to think that any

action of mine should be the cause of your being sent back in disgrace to England.

"You have nothing to lose by further disobeying your general, and so why not come up and meet me for a little sky scrap—this time over Germany. If you have the courage to accept this challenge, which I do not for one moment doubt, you will find me circling around above Le Chateau Rouge, just before dusk to-night, when I shall be only too glad to shoot you down. I will not surrender this time."

"Very sincerely yours, mein herr,

"VON STEINE,
(The Black Hauptmann)."

"P.S.—You had better bring a gunner with you in your rear cockpit, as we have just received an order from higher authority that the Black Squadron may only go into action carrying gunners."

"Purple thunder, Tubby! There isn't much that the German Secret Service doesn't find out!" Mad Carew cried grimly. "Don't I wish that I could accept this rat's challenge!"

"Then why don't you, major?" Tubby said quietly. "It's quite true what he says—you're nothing to lose by disobeying orders once more."

Mad Carew shot a grateful glance at the pal who was now in command over him.

"No, Tubby, even if you used your authority and ordered me to go, I wouldn't take a plane up from this drome," he said. "I'm in trouble, but that's no reason why I should drag you into the mire after me. I'm in your charge, under open arrest, and General Harding would have you court-martialled if you gave me permission to take-off in a squadron plane."

Tubby Hart snorted angrily.

"Let him court-martial me then!" he cried. "I've no wish to stay out here if you're being sent back to England. See here, major, if you shoot down Von Steine, then G.H.Q. would over-rule Harding, and give you back command of this squadron."

For a second—but only for a second—Mad Carew hesitated, and then he shook his head vigorously.

"Nothing doing, Tubby: it's too risky," he said. "I needn't say that I appreciate your offer, but I couldn't go and fight Von Steine with the knowledge that I would be throwing your whole future career into the balance. No, Tubby, the Black Hauptmann will have to wait in vain for me to-night."

For several seconds Tubby Hart stared thoughtfully out of the window; then, without a word, he rose to his feet and strode from the hut.

Mad Carew saw him disappear into the Glory Hole.

"What's he up to?" he muttered. "He's got something up his sleeve, I know!"

And then, five minutes later, Tubby emerged from the Glory Hole again, dabbing his right eye with a handkerchief.

When he entered the orderly-room he was grinning broadly, and when he lowered the handkerchief from his eye it was to disclose one of the juiciest black eyes that Mad Carew had ever seen in his life.

"Purple thunder, Tubby! Where the blazes did you get that from?" he gasped.

Tubby's grin broadened.

"Joker Jameson gave it to me, and, by thump, can he hand out a straight left, major!" he chortled. "He didn't want to do it, but I used my authority, and told him that if he hadn't blacked my eye in two minutes' time he'd be grounded for a month. That settled it, and this beauty is the net result."

"You threatened to ground Jameson unless he blacked your eye!" Mad Carew gasped.

"Tubby, have you gone crazy?"

"No fear, major! This is my alibi," Tubby grinned. "Now you can take up a plane, and if you don't come back I'll take this peach of a black eye over to the general, and tell him how you laid me out, and then took a plane without my permission. If you come back—as I'm certain you will—Von Steine will be no more. Your return will mean that you have shot down the Black Hauptmann. General Harding will hardly be able to press for your

expulsion to England at a time when G.H.Q. will be patting you on the back for getting rid of the ace commander of the German Death Squadron."

Mad Carew's eyes gleamed, and shooting out his hand he closed his fingers in a warm grip upon Tubby's arm.

"You're a good friend, Tubby!" he cried a trifle huskily. "And, purple thunder, I'm going to make the most of this chance that you've opened up for me. But I've got more to do than just shoot that rat, Von Steine, down from out of the sky; I am not coming back without those coded documents which the Black Hauptmann stole from this room!"

"I guessed you'd say that, major," Tubby said, with a grimace. "And I only wish that I could come along with you. Oh, and by the way, major, I regret I have to report an attempt at blackmail by Captain Jameson. Mad Carew looked swiftly up to see a grin hovering about the corners of Tubby Hart's mouth.

"Blackmail?" he echoed.

"Yes, major," Tubby answered. "Joker has threatened to blow the gaff about this black eye to General Harding unless I persuade you to let him be in your back cockpit when you take-off to meet the Black Hauptmann."

Mad Carew's eyes glinted warmly.

"Stout fella!" he said. "See Jameson at once, Tubby, will you please, and tell him that I do not intend to return without those stolen documents—and that this means that the chances are that I shall never return at all!"

"Joker knows that already, sir," Tubby said quietly.

"And he still wants to come with me? Purple thunder, Tubby, is it surprising that

I'm proud to be the commander of Squadron No. 333?" Mad Carew said, with a strange huskiness in his voice. "Please convey my compliments to Captain Jameson, and inform him that I very deeply appreciate his offer—and that he is to be ready to take-off with me in ten minutes' time!"

NEVER had a more resolute and determined expression been stamped upon the war-bitten face of Mad Carew than when, a short while later, he lifted a two-seater Bristol Fighter up from Squadron No. 333's flying field and headed it into the blood-red setting sun.

He knew—and Joker Jameson, triumphantly waving a taunting farewell to the envious Bad Lads from the back cockpit, knew—that the odds were weighed heavily against the safe return of this plane to its home drome.

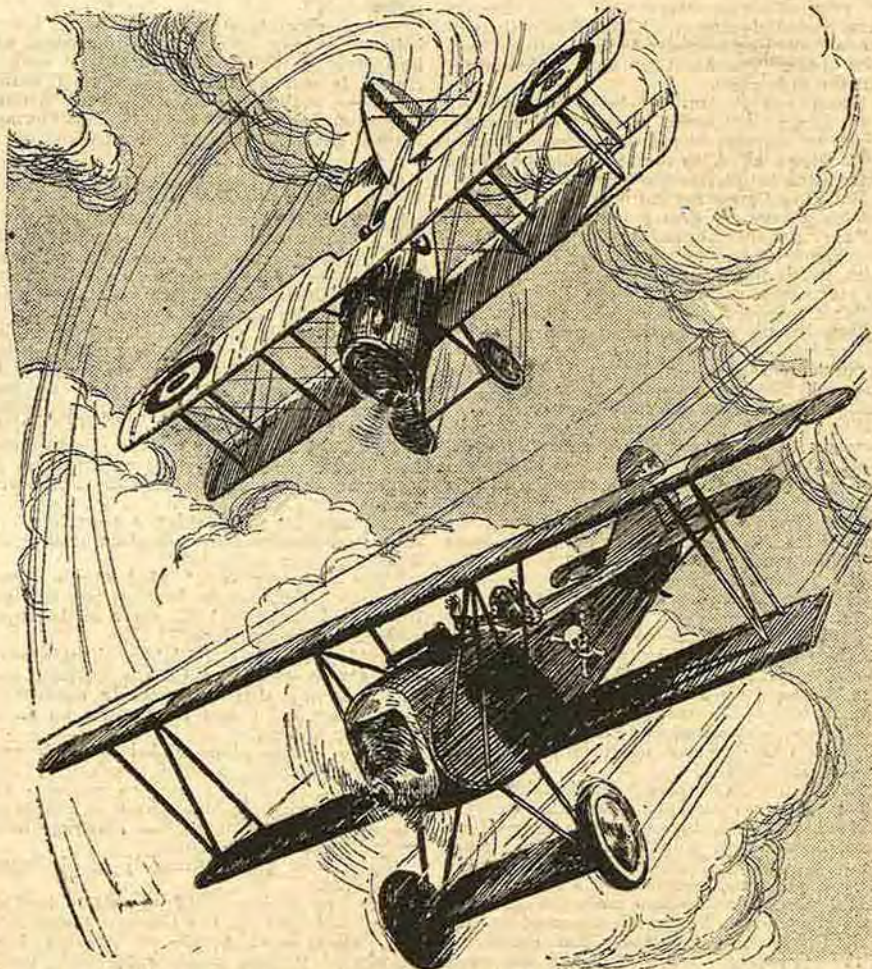
It was a mission of death that Mad Carew was embarking upon; he was not deceiving himself into believing, in the depth of his heart, that he had one chance in a thousand of landing behind the enemy lines and recovering the stolen coded document.

But he was grimly resolved not to return without it.

Le Chateau Rouge was ten miles back, behind the German lines. Had it been a hundred miles Mad Carew would not have hesitated.

He was a man under arrest! He had just one chance in a thousand of saving everything that he held dearest in life. Von Steine must die in this duel!

It must be death to the Black Hauptmann—or death to himself! And then, if he was the victor, the most hazardous part of his self-imposed mission would commence!



Count von Steine threw his arms above his head in an unmistakable sign of surrender. A bad attack of funk had caused the vaunted German Air Ace to give up the fight almost before it had started.

Suddenly Mad Carew stiffened in his cockpit and the battle-glint blazed from his eyes. Joker was thumping the wall of the cockpit at his back.

His dauntless gunner, too, had seen that jet-black plane, circling just ahead and 1,500 ft. below them.

The low cloud ceiling formed a camouflaging background to the Bristol Fighter.

The pilot of the Fokker had not seen them yet; even though the two planes were close enough now for Mad Carew to recognise its black-garbed pilot as the ruthless Black Hauptmann.

Gunning his motor to the full, Mad Carew lifted the nose of the Bristol up into the wraith-like wisps of fleecy cloud, his object being to get between Von Steine and Germany.

The quick-witted little air ace hadn't overlooked the fact that the Black Hauptmann's challenge might be a trick to lure him into a trap.

Suddenly, when barely more than a hundred yards separated the two planes, the Fokker's gunner saw the Bristol, and thumped his pilot's shoulder warningly.

Von Steine, instead of turning to meet the British plane, banked steeply round towards Germany, with a black cloud of smoke from his exhaust trap proclaiming the vigorous opening of his throttle.

"See that, Joker—the rat's running for it!" Mad Carew bellowed. "It's a trap, eh? But, purple thunder, that's not going to scare us off!"

Count von Steine had turned in his cockpit; he had dragged something from his pocket and was waving it in the air.

In the rose-tinged sunset, Mad Carew, with a quick intake of breath, recognised the sheaf of papers. They were—they must be—the vital coded document. The Black Hauptmann had been allowed to bring them back into the air because they were useless without the code word.

Count von Steine had been instructed to lure Carew into some awaiting air-ambush, when an attempt would be made to capture Mad Carew alive, so that he could be forced afterwards to disclose the code words.

But Mad Carew needed no bait to persuade him to pursue the fleeing German.

"He's got that document with him, Joker!" he roared. "And he's not going to get away with it this time! He's going down if I have to lock wings with him!"

"O.K., major! That suits me!" Joker bellowed, letting a short warming-up burst rip out of his Lewis gun.

Suddenly Count von Steine realised that they had seen the Bristol Fighter too late to escape from a fight by running from it.

The British plane, with altitude in its favour, and the hands of a master at its controls, was howling down from out of the sky like an avenging fury, overtaking the Fokker hand over fist.

Mad Carew's hawk-like eyes had narrowed behind his goggles until they were little more than flickering pin-points of fire.

His thumbs jabbed savagely at his triggers inside the cord ring surmounting his joystick.

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat—

White splinters flew away like silvery darts from the black Fokker's tail assembly. Count von Steine, with a strangled curse, snatched up his plane in the start of a vertical loop.

All hope of showing Mad Carew a clean pair of heels was shattered now; he would have to stay and fight!

At the top of his loop he kicked his plane savagely over, swinging up its tail.

He hoped that, by making this split-arc turn, he would be able to dive straight down on to the Bristol Fighter's tail and have the British plane completely at his mercy.

But the German ace had made the fatal mistake of under-estimating his opponent's skill.

Mad Carew, anticipating that manoeuvre with that uncanny sixth sense which had made him an ace among aces, had brought the Bristol screaming up in the wake of the German plane.

A strangled scream echoed shrilly from between Von Steine's terror-bared teeth.

The two planes were racing to meet each other, each with their guns red-lipped, as the gap between their whirling propellers shrank away at an alarming rate.

White hot Spandau lead hammered a pepper-pot design of ominous black holes in the wing—above Mad Carew's head, perilously close to his petrol tank.

But, with his jaws squared, he held his howling engine to its task and the plane to its vertical climb.

Count von Steine's nerve suddenly cracked beneath the testing strain. The prospect of a midair collision had turned his blood as if to water in his veins.

With one arm upthrown in front of his face, he ceased fire and kicked his Fokker frenziedly over into a strut-straining bank out of the pathway of the climbing British plane.

At the same instant his whirling propeller was shattered to fragments by the hammering bullets from Mad Carew's Vickers.

The steep bank turned the Fokker wheels towards the Bristol—and offered to Joker Jameson a target that brought a fierce shout of triumph from his lips.

His finger tightened swiftly upon the trigger of his Lewis gun.

With eyes blazing excitedly, he saw his bullets write their death sentence in grim black holes up the underside of the Fokker's fuselage.

The black plane shook spasmodically from nose to tail, and then dropped away into space like a wounded bird.

And from out of its engine licked ravenous, merciless crimson flames! It was a "flamer" for the Death Squadron plane!

The Black Hauptmann and his gunner commenced to career earthward in a blazing coffin.

"Good shooting, Jameson!" Mad Carew bellowed grimly. "That coded document will be destroyed with them—and so our work is done! It was an easier job than I anticipated—Purple thunder, I'm wrong! Our work is not yet finished! That German rat has got a parachute! He's bailing out!"

THE FIGHTING SKY DEMON

A FIGURE in black leather had dived bodily from the front cockpit of the blazing plane, and was now following in the wake of its comet-like tail of fire and smoke, with the silken fabric of a large parachute snapping above his head.

Then, after all, the great Count von Steine possessed feet of clay! He had so feared the consequences of an aerial encounter with Britain's foremost air ace, that he had brought with him a parachute, a thing that in those days few planes carried, so that, in the event of his scheme to lure the Britisher into an air ambush meeting with failure, he would be able to escape from the Britisher's vengeance.

And now he was making a parachute descent from the doomed black plane, leaving his hapless gunner to his fate!

"The cowardly cur!" Mad Carew hissed fiercely. "And, purple thunder, he's still got that coded document! It won't be destroyed with the burning plane."

Banking the Bristol Fighter sharply over, Mad Carew circled round the German ace, who was now drifting smoothly earthward. Von Steine had thrust his goggles up on to his flying helmet.

As the British plane glided smoothly past him the German grinned mockingly, and waved his hand in a derisive gesture. He knew full well that Mad Carew would never use his guns against a man swinging helplessly beneath a parachute.

Mad Carew glared furiously at his taunting enemy.

Now Von Steine would be able to land in safety, and possibly the German Secret Service, after days, weeks, or perhaps even months of tireless, painstaking work, would be able to decipher the vital document without the need for the code word.

"He's not going to get away with this, Joker!" Mad Carew roared. "I'll get that dispatch from him if I have to go down to

the carpet after him, and fight him for it on the ground!"

"Fraid we're going to have no chance to do that, major!" Joker shouted grimly. "Look over there—to the west!"

Mad Carew's eyes shot sharply round. His teeth came together with a low snap. In the direction of Joker Jameson's pointing finger he saw fully a dozen jet-black Fokkers heading through the gathering twilight towards them.

It was the remainder of the Black Hauptmann's Death Squadron!

They had been waiting in a sky ambush for Mad Carew, and when he had failed to turn up, led to them by their ruthless leader, they had come in search of him.

The reason for this ambush was all too evident.

Count von Steine had planned to capture Mad Carew alive.

The German planes were to force him to land, and then the Germans would be able to use all the means at their disposal—possibly torture—to compel Mad Carew to tell them the secret code word.

One burning resolution blazed in Mad Carew's brain, to be swiftly followed by a second.

He would not let himself be captured alive, and he was going to make one last desperate effort to recover that vital document from Count von Steine.

Swinging over his joystick, he banked the Bristol Fighter sharply towards the parachute.

The approaching Fokkers were still only small black dots in the distant sky. There were still several precious minutes before they could arrive upon the scene.

Von Steine's mouth shaped a scream of terror as he saw the British plane coming straight at him, as if its pilot intended to chaw him to pieces with the blades of its whirling propeller.

At the last possible moment Mad Carew snatched back his joystick, and kicked hard at his rudder-bar.

The plane rose sharply, and the next moment its left wing-tip was ploughing through the parachute's shrouds, and ripping into its silken envelope.

As the stout fabric became entangled with the Bristol's lower wing, Joker Jameson, swiftly realising Mad Carew's intention, clambered out from the rear cockpit, and threw himself down headlong upon the lower wing, with his right hand grasping a strut to save himself from being torn away into space by the screaming slipstream.

And then Mad Carew, kicking steadily at his rudder-bar, and pressing his joystick over to the right, tilted the Bristol Fighter smoothly over into the start of a right-hand spin.

The action swept Von Steine—hanging helplessly at the end of the parachute's tangled shrouds—up and under the plane's landing wheels, so that Joker, shooting out his left arm, was able to grasp the stout leather of the German's parachute harness.

The tangled chute was filling with wind, and threatening to cripple the British plane.

Like greased lightning Joker, hooking his right arm around the strut, used that hand to press over the quick-release buckle on the harness, freeing the parachute from the German's body.

The parachute was swiftly whisked away by the wind, and Mad Carew rolled the Bristol on to the other wing-tip, thus enabling Joker to swing the captured German spy up on to the wing at his side.

"Now hand over that paper, you rat," Joker bellowed, "or I'll push you off into space!"

Only for a moment did Von Steine hesitate. Their position was perilous enough. White to the very lips, he tore the precious paper from his pocket, and Joker, his right arm still hooked around the strut, closed his fingers eagerly upon the papers.

"But you'll have to land, pig-dog!" Von Steine roared, white to the lips with terror. "My planes are surrounding you."

(Continued on page 12.)

SNOW, HAIL, SHINE OR RAIN, WHO CARES NOW THAT—

IT'S

ST. JIM'S

AGAIN!

THIS WEEK:
WELL PLAYED, TALBOT

A STUDY CELEBRATION

KILDARE, school captain of St. Jim's, came along the Shell passage in School House, and stopped at the door of Tom Merry's study.

But he did not enter. It would have been difficult for the smallest fag in the Second Form to have entered that study just then, let alone the stalwart Sixth-Former, for the study was crammed.

And the noise that proceeded from that famous study resembled a super-pandemonium. Tom Merry & Co. were celebrating. When the chums of the School House celebrated they could generally be heard at a considerable distance, but on this occasion they were surpassing themselves.

In the excitement that reigned in the study, no one observed, for the moment, the big, good-looking captain of St. Jim's gazing in with a smile on his face.

Tom Merry was on his feet. He was making a speech—"jawing," as Blake described it. But his "jaw" was constantly interrupted by cheers. Indeed, there were more cheers than speech, and it was not easy to follow the speech.

But the juniors did not mind that. The study table was spread in a festive style, with good things galore, and they attracted more attention than Tom Merry's speech.

Round the table the guests were packed, and all chairs were occupied by one or two juniors, while many more were standing.

For the occasion was one of unusual importance, and Tom Merry's friends had rallied from far and near.

Tom Merry, as we have said, was on his feet. His study mates, Harry Manners and Monty Lowther, shared a chair.

The four chums of Study No. 6, Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, occupied a form that had been captured from somewhere and dragged in.

Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn somehow contrived to seat themselves on one chair. It was a tight fit, and led to slips and pushes and loud protests.

Then there were Reilly and Lumley-Lumley, and Kerruish and Hammond sharing chairs.

There was also Figgins & Co. of the New House, the deadly rivals of Tom Merry & Co., but not looking very deadly at the present moment. Indeed, they were looking exceedingly lively, and Fatty Wynn especially was enjoying himself.

There were two or three other fellows, too. The study was large for a junior study, but how so many fellows could cram themselves into it was a mystery.

No wonder the door was left open, and a full view of the festive scene could be obtained from the passage.

The table had been shoved up close to the fireplace, and Tom Merry was actually standing on the kerb. Opposite him, across the table, was Talbot.

Talbot of the Shell had a whole chair to himself. It was easy to guess from this circumstance that Talbot was the guest of honour. Talbot was smiling, and his face was very bright and cheerful.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows—" Tom Merry's voice came through the buzz.

"Hear, hear! Pass the nuts!" "Lowther said there was a pie!" This came from Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff of the New House.

"You remember you said there was a pie, Lowther?" "So there is—or was!" said Monty Lowther.

"Somebody push a jar of jam down the neck of that porpoise! Order for the speech!"

"Weally, Lowther!" This from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth, the elegant swell of the School House. "Weally, dear, boy, that is hardly polite to a respected visitant from the other side—"

"Gentlemen!" roared Tom Merry. "Order!"

"Gentlemen, we have met on this suspicious occasion—I mean auspicious occasion—for reasons you well know. Talbot, here present—"

"Bravo, Talbot!" "Hurrah!" "In the House match this afternoon Talbot covered himself with—"

"Mud!" interrupted Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!" "Glory!" roared Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus.

"Talbot played up like a Trojan," pursued Tom Merry. "Gentlemen, I need not describe the match to you—"

"Hear, hear!" "Both sides played at the top of their form," went on Tom Merry. "School House perhaps a bit better than New House—"

"Hear, hear!" from the School House fellows.

"Bosh! Piffle!" from Figgins & Co.

Tom Merry was very warm, as his trousers were dangerously near the fire as he stood in the fireplace. But a trifle like that could not be heeded on an occasion like this. He shifted his legs a little and resumed.

"School House won this afternoon—" he went on, then had to stop as groans came from Figgins & Co., and cheers from his own supporters. But he made himself heard again at length.

"School House owes its victory to the play of Talbot. A finer exhibition has rarely been seen on the St. Jim's ground—"

"Hear, hear!" "And so in conclusion—" "Time you got to that bit," remarked Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "In conclusion," roared Tom Merry, "I rise to propose the health of Talbot of the Shell. Long may he play for the School House of St. Jim's, and give the New House wasters socks!"

"Hear, hear!" "Fathead!"

"Gentlemen, three cheers for Talbot of the Shell, and good luck to him!"

Roars of applause. "Hear, hear!" chimed in a hearty voice from the passage, and the juniors suddenly left off cheering and looked round and beheld the smiling face of the captain of St. Jim's looking into the study.

Then there was a general chorus: "Come in, Kildare!"

TALBOT'S LUCK

KILDARE grinned. The invitation was hearty, spontaneous, and general.

But exactly how it was to be accepted was not clear. So Kildare did not accept it. He stood in the doorway.

"Make room for Kildare, you fellows," said Tom Merry. "Come in, Kildare! Awfully good of you to give us a look in! You've come to the feed?"

"Not exactly."

"Oh, but come in! It's an honour to entertain the skipper of the school. Make room, some of you chaps! Could you hang your feet out of the window, Herries? We saw you watching the match, Kildare. What did you think of Talbot's goal?"

"Topping!" said Kildare. "Hurrah!"

Talbot of the Shell flushed with pleasure. Praise from the captain of the school was praise indeed.

"The fact is," said Kildare, "that's what brought me along. I guessed Talbot would be here when I heard the thundering row you were making. No, I won't come in, thanks. Darrel expects me to tea. I wanted to speak to Talbot, if I may interrupt for a moment."

"Sure, it's a pleasure to hear ye interrupt!" said Reilly.

"Yaas, wathah!" "Well, you know we've playing Rookwood on Saturday? Their first eleven is a tremendous team," Kildare went on. "It's a new fixture, and a tough one. Well, you know some of my men are laid up?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry wonderingly. "I dare say I'm going to surprise you," said Kildare, with a smile, "but I've been watching Talbot play to-day—I've watched him before—and I've come here to ask him to play in the school first eleven next Saturday."

There was a general gasp.

A Shell fellow asked to play in the first eleven of St. Jim's—that tremendous team which was selected from the Sixth Form in both Houses, with a few lucky members of the Fifth thrown in!

It was not unheard of, for such a thing had happened before, when the great team had been in a bad way through some of its

members being crooked. But it was enough to make the juniors gasp and to make Talbot's eyes dance with delight.

Tom Merry stared blankly. Perhaps for a moment there was a little pang of disappointment because the request had not come to him. He was captain of the junior eleven, and he had been passed over for Talbot. But loyalty to his chum and delight in his good luck immediately chased away any personal feeling.

"The first eleven!" gasped Tom.
"My hat!" said Figgins. "Quite sure you don't want a New House chap, Kildare? If you want a goalkeeper, there's Fatty!"

Kildare laughed.
"I don't want a goalkeeper. I want a winger to take Langton's place, as he's crooked. What do you say, Talbot?"

"Say!" gasped Talbot.
"You'd like to play?"

"Well, rather!"
"Then turn out to-morrow for practice with the first eleven," said Kildare, "and I'll put your name in the list when I post it up."

And, with a cordial nod to the juniors, Kildare walked away down the passage.

He left Tom Merry's study buzzing with excitement. Congratulations were poured on Talbot from all sides.

If the junior thus honoured had shown any signs of swank, feeling would doubtless have been different. But Talbot bore his blushing honours with becoming modesty.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "You are in luck, you bound! But Kildare is quite wight. If he wants a really good man for the first eleven he can't do better than come to the Lowah School for one. Of course, he might have looked into Sunday No. 6—"

"I should say so!" said Blake. "I don't deny that Talbot plays remarkably well for a Shell chap, but in the Fourth—"

"Rate!" said Tom Merry. "Kildare's done the sensible thing. If there's a junior in the school who's fit to play in the first eleven it's Talbot. He's a giddy tower of strength in the junior eleven."

"Oh, rot!" said Talbot, colouring. "Don't pile it on. Lots of fellows here are quite as good as I am."

"Kildare doesn't think so," grinned Figgins. "I congratulate you, kid, though I fancy there will be some sore feelings in the senior Forms. Lots of seniors would jump at the chance of getting into the first eleven. There's Cuts of the Fifth, and Sefton of our House. Sefton has been bothering Monteith, our House captain, to put his case before Kildare. We all know that—"

"Sefton's no good," Tom Merry cut in; "though, as a matter of absolute fact, I'll bet Kildare might have put him in had he kept himself fit. But Sefton's slacking has now given Talbot his chance—and jolly good luck to him!"

"Hear, hear!"
"Yaas, wathah! I considah—"

"Pass the cake!" said Fatty Wynn. "While you're considering, ask someone to give me some lemonade. I want to drink Talbot's health!"

The feed went on with great glee. All the juniors, including the New House fellows, were glad that a junior was to be played in the first eleven in the Rookwood match.

It was an honour for the Lower School. And, despite their jokes about their own claims, all the fellows agreed that Talbot of the Shell was a good selection.

Talbot was a really wonderful player for his age, and since he had been at St. Jim's he had won golden opinions on the footer field.

When the celebration came to an end Figgins & Co. were escorted home to their House by a crowd of School House fellows, on the most amicable terms.

For once the keen rivalry and warfare between the Houses slept. It was generally kept in a very lively state by the juniors, though the seniors somewhat frowned on it.

Time had been when Monteith, captain of the New House, had been very much up against old Kildare, and if Sefton of the Sixth

could have had his way he would have been so still.

But in these days Monteith pulled well with the captain of the school, and even Tom Merry & Co. admitted that the New House skipper was a decent sort of chap. His old jealousy of Kildare seemed to have gone.

Sefton of the Sixth was standing in the doorway of the New House when the merry party of juniors came up. They were singing "Siegfried Line" in a chorus that could be heard from one end of St. Jim's to the other, and the bully of the Sixth greeted them with a scowl.

"Not so much thundering noise!" he exclaimed.

"Hallo, Sefton!" said Figgins affably. "Top of the evening!"

"You're late in your House!" growled Sefton. "What do you mean by staying out?"

"Special occasion," urged Figgins. "House match to-day, you know. We've been celebrating."

"Take fifty lines each, you three," said the prefect, "and get indoors at once!"

"Weally, Sefton," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "on an occasion like this—"

"Cut off, you School House sweeps!" said Sefton.

"Bai Jove!"
"Good-night, you chaps!" said Figgins. "See you to-morrow, and give you the kybosh!"

Shouting their farewells, Tom Merry & Co. trooped back across the dusty quad, and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn entered their House under the morose eye of Sefton.

Sefton of the Sixth did not like Figgins & Co., which—as Figgys had remarked, more truthfully than he probably realised—just showed what sort of a chap Sefton was.

"I suppose you were only joking about those lines, Sefton?" Figgins remarked persuasively. Sefton scowled.

"You'll find I wasn't!" he snapped.
"But look here—" began Fatty Wynn indignantly.

"Shut up and clear off, or I'll double 'em!"

"Oh!" said Figgins. "Then I won't tell you the news."

"Eh? What news?"

"Oh, nothing—only about the new name Kildare's putting down for the first eleven," said Figgins carelessly.

Sefton's eyes glistened. It was his great ambition to shine in the first eleven of St. Jim's, though he never took the trouble to keep himself fit for it.

"Whose name?" he asked quickly.
"Good-night!" said Figgins.
"Hold on! You needn't do those lines."

"Thanks!"
"Whose name has Kildare put down for the eleven?"

"Talbot's," said Figgins cheerfully. "Come on, you chaps! Not much time left for prep!"

"Figgins"—Sefton caught the Fourth-Former by the shoulder and swung him back—"what do you mean? You dare to cheek me!"

"You asked me," said Figgins.
"You're trying to pull my leg, you young hound!" said Sefton, his face inflamed with anger. "Kildare would never play a junior!"

"Well, he said so."
"Is that the truth?"

"Yes!"
Sefton released the junior, clenching his hands. His rage was so great that his hard, sharp face went quite pale. But his anger was not directed against Figgins—it was against Kildare. He gritted his teeth venomously.

"Talbot! A junior! He's putting him in the first eleven! It's impossible!"

"Fact! For this occasion only, I suppose. Tain't a permanency!" grinned Figgins. "It's because Langton's laid up, and Talbot's a grand winger, you know. Kildare wants him for the Rookwood match. They're hot stuff, the Rookwood First, though their junior eleven would make a cat laugh."

"It can't be true!" exclaimed Sefton.

"Kildare must have been joking. He would never dare. By Jove, if he does—"

Sefton did not finish the sentence. He hurried down the steps and disappeared across the quad towards the School House.

Figgins grinned at his comrades.
"The noble Sefton is wrathful!" he remarked. "Looks as if there's going to be a row, my sons."

"Kildare will boot him out if he cheeks him!" remarked Kerr.

"Good luck to him if he does!" said Figgins. "Come up and do your prep!"

And Figgins & Co. went up to their study, quite unmoved by the thought that their prefect might be "booted" out by Kildare.

Indeed, if that should happen, Figgins & Co.'s only regret would be that they were not there to see it.

SEFTON MAKES A CALL

"THERE will be trouble over the way." Darrel of the Sixth made that remark. Kildare frowned a little. He

was in his study, with Darrel, Langton, North, and Mulvaney major of the Sixth. Langton was "crooked" for the footer match with Rookwood; his ankle had been damaged in practice and was not likely to be right again for some time.

Kildare had been much worried by the crocking of his best winger, especially as two other regular members of the first eleven were laid up with colds.

"I don't see why there should be trouble," said Kildare, with a knitted brow. "Monteith is a sensible chap. We used to have our little bits of friction, but that's all over. Monteith sees as well as I do that we ought to pull together for the sake of the School."

"The School comes before the House."

"Yes, but Talbot being a junior—"

"He's the player we want," said Kildare. "I know it's rather unusual, but I suppose a football captain is entitled to use his own judgment?"

"Hear, hear!" said Mulvaney major. There was a loud knock on the door, and Sefton came in. The four School House seniors looked at him a little uncomfortably. It was Sefton of whom Darrel had been thinking when he predicted that there would be trouble "over the way."

"Come in!" said Kildare, as cordially as he could.

He did not like the bully of the Sixth, and it was not easy for him to assume a friendliness he did not feel.

Darrel pushed a chair towards Sefton, but the New House prefect took no notice of it.

"I've just heard something," he said. "I suppose it must be simply a joke—a silly joke—but I thought I'd ask you, Kildare."

"Go ahead!" said Kildare.

"You haven't finished making up the eleven for the Rookwood match?"

"Yes; I've settled that at last."

"May I ask who's taking Langton's place?"

"Talbot of the Shell."

Sefton's lips came tight together.

"Then it wasn't a joke?"

"If that's what you heard, it wasn't a joke," said Kildare. "Langton's crooked, you see, and we wanted a winger. I've watched Talbot's play, and I think he could keep his end up. Of course, playing in a senior match will be rather a trial for a junior, but I really think young Talbot will fill the bill for this occasion. He has a pace that is simply wonderful, and his passing is splendid."

"And you think the New House will stand for it?" exclaimed Sefton fiercely.

Kildare began to look grim. The demand was made so truculently that it was scarcely possible to reply in a friendly manner. But Kildare did not want to quarrel.

"Why, yes," he said mildly. "The New House chaps have confidence in me, I suppose, as captain of the team."

"We don't believe in rotten favouritism on our side!"

"Ahem! I think you'd better go, Sefton," said Kildare dryly. "After all, you are not a member of the eleven."

"Whose fault is that?" snapped Sefton.
 "Your own, if you want me to answer. If you took the trouble to keep yourself fit, and turned up to practice regularly, you'd have as good a chance as anybody else. I'd rather play a Sixth-Former than a junior, of course."

"Which means that you consider that kid Talbot a better player than I am?"

"Certainly. He's as fit as a fiddle. You're not."

Sefton shook with rage.

"Look at the list!" he said. "You've got six School House in the team to five New House—I mean, you had. Three of your men are crooked. You filled up two places with School House fellows. Now you give the last place to a School House junior rather than let in another of our House. Do you expect us to look on that as fair play?"

"Yes."

"Then you'll be disappointed! We don't." "I don't want your opinion, Sefton. I'll talk it over with Monteith, as vice-captain and a member of the committee. You haven't anything to do with it."

"I should be in the team if I had fair play, and while there are seniors able and willing to play you've no right to put a junior in the first eleven."

Kildare rose to his feet.

"That's enough, Sefton; you'd better go!"

Sefton glared at him, his fists clenched and his eyes burning. It looked for a moment as if he would attack the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare read the thought in his expression, and his own hands closed. He was quite prepared to throw Sefton neck and crop out of the study, prefects though they both were.

But Sefton evidently decided it wiser not to attack the brawny school captain, for he turned on his heel and strode from the study, closing the door after him with a bang that rang through the School House.

Kildare resumed his seat, and Darrel smiled slightly.

"I hope that's the end of it," he remarked.

"Of course it's the end of it," said Kildare.

"If Monteith takes up Sefton's cause—"

"He won't."

"Well, I hope he won't."

"It won't make any difference if he does," said Kildare. "I shall stick to my guns. I've acted as I judge best, and I think I've done right. I'd rather resign than be dictated to. I think Monteith will take a sensible view of it. Sefton's in his House, but Monteith knows my reasons for not including Sefton in the eleven. He agrees with me the fellow's not reliable enough to be counted on to train properly."

Darrel said no more, and the subject was dropped.

Meanwhile, Sefton, almost blind with rage, was striding away from the captain's study. Tom Merry & Co. were chatting in the Hall, and they looked curiously at Sefton as he came striding by. The loud bang of the door had reached their ears, of course, and they knew Sefton had been to see Kildare.

Sefton paused as he saw them and fixed his eyes on Talbot of the Shell. He had not dared to give vent to his rage in Kildare's study, but at the sight of Talbot's handsome face he could restrain it no longer.

"So you are in the team, you young hound!" he said fiercely.

Talbot met the enraged senior's glance calmly.

"Kildare says so," he replied.

"Yes, you've contrived to wedge yourself in somehow, you cunning young wheedler!"

"You have no right to speak like that," said Talbot quietly. "Kildare selected me of his own accord. It came as a surprise to me."

"You young liar!"

"You'd better get out!" said Talbot.

"You—you have the cheek to shove yourself into the first eleven—you fawning young schemer!" Sefton choked with rage.

"You—Hands off, you young hounds!" he roared as Tom Merry & Co. made a rush at him.

"Kick the cad out!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yaas, wathah—throw him out!"

Sefton struggled in the grasp of the juniors,

but they were too many for him, and he was sent whirling down the steps of School House, rolling breathless into the quadrangle.

"Now come back if you dare!" shouted Tom Merry.

Sefton picked himself up, panting. The juniors lined up on top of the steps ready for him. But Sefton was too infuriated to count odds. He charged up the steps like a bull. Another moment, and the juniors would have had him again, but a sharp voice rang out:

"Stop!"

It was Mr. Carrington, the Housemaster. Tom Merry & Co. reluctantly dropped their hands. Sefton halted on the top step, panting.

"You—you saw what they did. They—"

"I saw it!" said the School House master sternly. "And I heard what you said to Talbot, Sefton. I am not surprised that the boys treated you roughly. You cannot expect

and then—well, he won't be fit enough to play for the first eleven when I've done with him! Perhaps Kildare will play me then!"

That evening Talbot was walking in the school grounds when he heard a step behind him. He looked round, and his handsome face set grimly as Sefton of the Sixth came towards him.

A bitter look came over the prefect's face as he approached Talbot.

"I thought I saw you out here," he said.

"Well, what do you want?"

Talbot saw an ashplant under the prefect's arm, and he suddenly realised that Sefton must have seen him come out into the grounds and followed him.

His handsome face hardened. If the bully of the Sixth had come looking for trouble, Talbot was fully prepared to give him all he was looking for, and perhaps a little more.

Big as the Sixth Former was, the Shell



"Kick the cad out!" exclaimed Tom Merry. Sefton struggled in the grasp of the juniors, but they were too many for him, and he was sent whirling down the steps of School House.

them to respect a prefect who acts in so contemptible a manner."

"I—I—" stuttered Sefton.

"You will beg Talbot's pardon, or I shall report your words to the Head!" exclaimed Mr. Carrington.

"What?"

"Instantly!" rapped the Housemaster.

Sefton looked as if he would suffocate. But the stern look on the Housemaster's face awed him. He dared not be taken to the Head. It was a bitter pill for the bully of the Sixth to swallow, but he had to get it down.

"I—I—I beg your pardon, Talbot!" he stammered.

Then he turned and strode away across the quadrangle, quivering with rage. The cup of his humiliation was full.

A BULLY BEATEN

"I'll get even with young Talbot!" muttered Sefton, as he reached his own study. "I'll get hold of him when there's no master and none of his pals about,

fellow had no fear of an encounter. He was as hard as nails, and though Sefton was evidently out to thrash him, it was likely that the bully would meet with a surprise.

"I apologised to you," sneered Sefton. "because a master chose to interfere. I suppose he heard me say you'd been selected for the school eleven. Queer the reason some people are made a fuss of!"

Talbot looked the bully fearlessly in the eyes, but did not reply to the taunt.

Sefton stared back at him and then chuckled softly, taking a grip on the ashplant.

"I suppose you know I'm going to lick you?" he said.

"I know you're going to try," Talbot answered contemptuously.

That was enough for Sefton. He made a rush at Talbot, the ashplant in the air.

But Talbot was on his guard, and as the prefect bore down on him he side-stepped quickly.

The next moment he was under Sefton's guard, and his right came up in an upper-

out that jarred every tooth in Sefton's head. The prefect staggered back, dropping his hands.

In a twinkling Talbot jerked the asphalt from Sefton's hand, and with a swing of his arm sent it whirling away. It dropped twenty or thirty yards away.

Then the Shell fellow faced the bully of the Sixth, his hands up, his eyes gleaming. "Now come on—use your fists!" he exclaimed.

Sefton came on like a bull. Talbot had to give ground before the heavy rush, but his guard was unbroken.

Sefton's heavy fists never reached their mark. He paused, winded by his furious attack, and then Talbot closed in like lightning.

Crash, crash! came his right and left, full in the flushed face of the Sixth Former. Sefton struck out blindly, and Talbot caught a hard knock and his cheek was cut by the ring Sefton wore.

He did not heed it. He closed in, hitting out with all his strength, and Sefton's left eye closed up, and his nose spurted red.

The Sixth Former was staggering now, and Talbot had no mercy on the bully. His attack came like lightning—right and left, left and right—till a powerful drive right on the mark doubled Sefton up like a jack-knife, and he dropped gasping on the ground. Talbot stood over him, his fists clenched, his eyes glittering.

"Do you want any more?" he asked, in a low voice. "If you don't you'd better clear off!"

Sefton staggered up blindly, standing very unsteady on his feet. He gave Talbot a glare of deadly hatred, but he evidently did not want any more, for he turned and staggered away.

The fight was over. Talbot rubbed his cheek. There was a triumphant smile on his lips now.

He knew why Sefton had attacked him. It was not only to wreak vengeance on him. After the terrible thrashing Sefton had meant to give him, the junior would not have been fit to play in the Rookwood match—that was undoubtedly Sefton's chief object.

But the terrible thrashing had not come off. Talbot laughed as he thought of it. If the school learned that the bully of the Sixth had been thrashed by a junior, his humiliation would be bitter.

But Talbot was not the fellow to triumph over a beaten foe, and he did not intend to say a word.

A WELL-EARNED VICTORY

THE next day, after morning lessons, Talbot went down to football practice with the first eleven.

It was unusual to see a member of the Sixth at practice with those mighty men, and a crowd of juniors gathered to watch him.

MAD CAREW'S DAWN PATROL



(Concluded from page 8.)

Those were the last words ever spoken by Count von Steine, the Black Hauptmann.

The next moment the first burst of bullets from his own planes whistled around Joker's head; then, dropping suddenly, they smashed daylight through the crafty, evil brain of Count von Steine.

One glance told Joker Jameson that the figure that had grown limp in his arm was now past all human aid.

Allowing the lifeless German ace to slide away into space, Joker made a swift dive back for his cockpit.

At the same instant six jet-black Fokkers, swooping in upon Mad Carew, sent a dozen

Tom Merry & Co., nobly chucking their own practice for the sake of backing up Talbot, stood in a group by the pavilion, in an enthusiastic mood.

It was undoubtedly an honour for the Lower School to have a junior included in the first eleven, and they all agreed that Talbot was first-rate, and that there wasn't an atom of swank about him.

He threw himself into the practice, and Kildare was quite satisfied with the form he showed.

Sefton was looking on at the practice with a sneering smile on his face.

He had something else besides a smile on his face—a big bruise on one cheek, a slight swelling of the nose, and a bluish shade round one eye. Sefton looked as if he had been in the wars.

He had been agreeably surprised not to receive any chipping on the subject from the School House juniors. He had fully expected that the story of his licking by Talbot would have become common talk in the School House, and that Tom Merry & Co. would gloat.

But Talbot had evidently said nothing about it, and Sefton was greatly relieved.

Not that he felt a spark of gratitude towards Talbot for keeping his humiliation a secret. If anything, that generosity added to his hatred. But he was very glad, all the same, that the school did not know that he had been licked by a Shell fellow.

The New House prefect hoped to see Talbot fail to play up among the tremendous players of the Sixth, but he was disappointed. The Shell fellow held his own very well, and even the New House onlookers admitted that he filled Langton's place remarkably well for a junior.

THE day of the great match arrived, and all St. Jim's turned out to give the Rookwood team the warm reception they deserved.

It was a tremendous game. From the kick-off the play was hard and fast.

Talbot played inside-right, and he had Monteith, the New House captain, on his right. They played together like clockwork.

It was not easy to get through the Rookwooders; they were in great form. But twenty minutes after the kick-off Monteith made one of his rapid rushes down the touchline, and passed in to Talbot as he was charged, and Talbot centred deftly to Kildare just before he fell to the heavy weight of Bulkeley.

Kildare slammed the leather in with a shot that beat the goalie to the wide, and there was a roar from two hundred and fifty throats.

"Goal! Goal! Hurrah!"

And the crowd saw Kildare clap Talbot on the shoulder as they walked back to the centre of the field.

Monteith, Talbot, and Kildare shared the credit of that goal, and it was first blood to St. Jim's.

streams of deadly lead hammering ominously into his wings and tail-assembly.

And then Mad Carew became a fighting sky demon.

Within three minutes three Fokkers were sent careering earthward in flames—two from his Vickers, and one from Joker Jameson's gun.

The remaining nine closed in upon him, and tried to force him to turn back towards Germany; but Mad Carew, with a wild laugh and a sizzling burst of Vickers' lead, cut his way clean through their midst, and set off in a high-speed dash for home.

His work was done. The coded document was recovered; Von Steine was dead, and all that mattered now was to escape back to the British lines with the secret code word still safely locked up inside his brain!

Three more German planes fell to the deadly guns of that Bristol Fighter before at last the shell-scarred waste of No Man's Land was reached, and the six survivors of the Death Staffel gave up the pursuit without showing the least trace of reluctance, and turned and headed for home.

But Rookwood played up hard, and the next goal was theirs, Bulkeley scoring it.

Just before half-time, however, the St. Jim's forwards made a fierce attack on the Rookwood goal. The ball, sent in from Kildare's foot, came out from the fist of the goalkeeper—only to meet Talbot's head and shoot into the net like a pip from an orange.

The juniors yelled themselves hoarse. "Goal! Good old Talbot! Goal!"

The whistle went for half-time with St. Jim's leading by the odd goal. Any doubts about Talbot's ability to keep his end up were dispelled now. Kildare's choice of the junior winger was fully justified.

Langton, who was looking on, declared that his place was jolly well filled, and that he himself couldn't have done better.

After the re-start, Knowles of Rookwood equalised with a deadly shot, and the match went on in ding-dong fashion. There were brilliant attacks and defence on both sides, but the attacks did not materialise.

Anxious glances were cast towards the clock tower over the elms. Time was getting close.

"Don't let it end in a draw, for goodness' sake!" grunted Jack Blake. "Only five minutes to play, and two all! Play up, Talbot!"

"Play up, dear boy!"

"Talbot—Talbot! On the ball! Oh, well, trapped! Well passed!"

The St. Jim's forwards were swooping down. Kildare was over—a fair charge. Talbot had the ball, and was speeding on.

Would he have time to take a shot at goal? The backs were almost upon him, and Kildare was nowhere. The goalie was watching, all eyes and hands.

There was no chance of a shot. Out went the ball to outside-right. It was the last chance. Head-over-heels went Talbot, fairly charged by one of the backs. But a shout arose from the St. Jim's crowd, swelling to a terrific roar, as Monteith sent the ball in with a long shot from the wing.

The goalie was clutching at the ball. It missed his finger-tips by an inch, and lodged in a corner of the net.

With one stentorian roar St. Jim's burst out into a roar of triumph.

"Goal! Goal! Goal!"

Then the whistle went, but in the uproar nobody heard it. Juniors and seniors were fairly laying back their heads and roaring: "Goal! Goal!"

Kildare's choice had been justified, and in the eyes of his chums Talbot would be a hero for many a long day to come.

The only person who took no delight in the team's victory was Sefton; but he didn't matter!

Next week's fine St. Jim's story features Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the chief role. He tumbles upon a "wemarkable mystery—the maffah of 'Levison's Double.'" Don't risk missing this splendid yarn. If you haven't ordered next Tuesday's issue yet, order it to-day.

A merry, deep-throated laugh rang from the lips of Britain's foremost sky-fighter, Mad Carew.

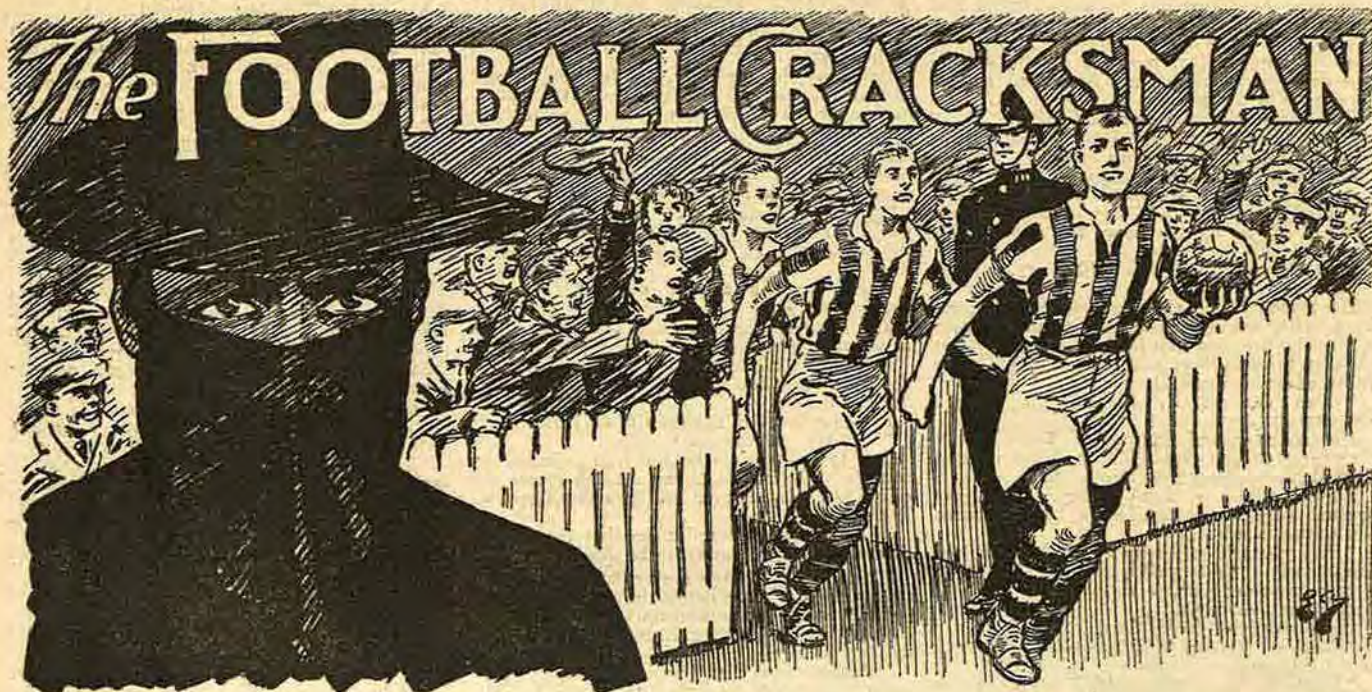
"So much for General Harding, eh, Jameson?" he roared. "With Von Steine dead, six of the Death Staffel shot down, and that coded document recovered, he'll never dare to relieve me of my command and send me back home to England to a training camp. What say you, Joker?"

"No fear, he won't, major!" Joker chortled merrily. "If he tries to, he'll get it from C.H.Q., where the chicken got the chopper! And I say, major, I've just thought of something—I needn't have given old Tubby Hart that black eye, after all, need I? Never mind, I've been owing the old boulder one for months. All adjutants ought to be given black eyes at regular intervals."

And Mad Carew, happy in the knowledge that he was still likely to remain commander of Squadron No. 333, chuckled merrily.

Another fine yarn of Mad Carew, Demon Air Ace, in the TRIUMPH next week. Don't risk missing it. If you haven't ordered next Tuesday's issue yet, order it to-day.

CENTRE-FORWARD'S SENSATIONAL PREDICAMENT! FRAMED FOR MURDER!



"WE'LL FOOL 'EM YET!"

THE thousands of Milton Rovers fans who every Saturday yelled themselves hoarse cheering the dazzling play of Steve Bradshaw, the Rovers skipper and centre-forward, would have been thunderstruck if they could have seen their popular favourite now.

Steve, a sinister crouching figure dressed all in black, was staring with unbelieving eyes at a dead man. A dead man who, only a few seconds before, had been a living, breathing, talking human being.

Steve's tense face was shadowed by the slanting brim of a broad black hat. His eyes glittered from behind slits in a black mask. In his black-gloved hand he gripped a gun. But it was not Steve's gun which had fired the shot which had killed the man.

Steve had turned cracksmen for secret reasons of his own. Late at night he had come to the office of a local bookmaker named Bethmann, to find out how much he knew about a gang of crooks who were out to ruin the Rovers.

Before Bethmann could utter a word of what he knew he had been shot dead.

Steve tensed. Some sixth sense warned him that danger lurked behind his back. He started to whirl, then froze as a cold, harsh voice spoke grimly:

"Drop that gun, Black Mask! We've got you cornered!"

Steve turned slowly in the direction of the menacing voice.

Three men were stepping threateningly through a curtained doorway behind him. Heavy, gaudy-coloured scarves were round their faces, so that only their eyes showed. All three were armed.

The man who had spoken stood in the centre of the trio. He was big and broad-shouldered. His whole attitude suggested a cruel, ruthless strength. His voice and bearing betrayed him as a man who would stick at nothing to gain his ends.

Steve knew that it was he who had fired the shot that had killed Bethmann.

Steve let his gun drop to the carpet. He had no choice. A man had committed murder once this evening, and would do so again if it became necessary.

But Steve was not quite beaten. He still had one trick in reserve. His glittering eyes were fixed mockingly on the gunman.

"So you're the Boss!" he remarked. "I've been waiting for a chance to meet you."

"Take a good look!" snarled the crook. "It'll be your last chance!"

"Perhaps we could do a deal," Steve proposed.

He had no intention of coming to terms with the Boss, but he wanted to keep the man talking.

The Boss uttered a snarl.

"I don't make deals with anyone!" he snapped. "And I don't allow anyone to get in my way! When you decided to muscle in on my racket, Black Mask, you made a big mistake!"

He jerked his chin at Steve and spoke tersely to his two confederates.

"Take him!" he snapped.

The men closed in on Steve from either side. They grabbed his arms and pulled them behind his back. Then they hustled him over towards the desk where the dead man sprawled.

The Boss gave a gloating chuckle as he reached towards the telephone.

"Listen to me, Black Mask!" he snarled. "I think it will interest you."

Rapidly he dialed a number.

"Give me Inspector Collins!" he rapped.

He looked up over the telephone, and his eyes glowed with savage amusement as they contemplated his victim.

Then he jerked his attention back to the telephone.

"Am I speaking to Inspector Collins?" he asked quickly. "This is Mr. Bethmann. I'm speaking from my office in the Midland Union Building. I understand that you're looking for a crook called the Black Mask. Is that right? Then you'd better come quickly, because I've caught him!"

He stooped and picked up Steve's gun. He put his mouth close to the phone and screamed:

"Quick! Help!"

Then he held the gun close to the telephone and fired a shot across the front of the mouthpiece.

Boom!

The roaring explosion rocked the room. The Boss uttered a wild, prolonged scream; then, with his lips close to the mouthpiece, he said in a husky whisper:

"He got me, inspector! The Black Mask!"

With a sweep of his arm the Boss knocked the telephone flying off the desk and sent it crashing to the floor.

With a wrench he tore the wires out of the

wall to disconnect the instrument, to make sure that nothing more that was said in the room should be heard by anyone at the other end.

He slipped Steve's gun into his pocket and laughed jeeringly.

"How do you like that?" he sneered. "Neat frame-up, eh?"

"If you think you can get away with this you're crazy!" Steve told him curtly.

"What's to stop me?" sneered the Boss. "Do you think Inspector Collins'd believe a word of it if you told him the truth?"

Without waiting for an answer he gave a slight nod and jerked:

"O.K.! Bop him!"

One of Steve's captors swung the butt end of a gun down on the back of his head with stunning force.

Steve went out like a light. His knees buckled and he sagged helplessly in the grip of his captors. They let him fall to the carpet with a crash.

"Nice figuring, Boss!" said the man who had hit Steve with the gun.

The Boss bent down. He was holding his own gun—the one which had fired the shot that had killed Bethmann. He thrust it into Steve's limp, black-gloved hand.

"Now we're all set," he declared with satisfaction. "The police station is only two blocks away. Inspector Collins will be down here before you can say knife!"

One of the men was peering from the window. He saw a police car whirl round the corner at the end of the street and speed towards the building.

"Here he comes now, Boss!" he exclaimed.

"Let's get going!" snapped the Boss. "We've cut it fine!"

The other man stooped over Steve's sprawled figure and whispered:

"Wait!"

"What do you think you're doing?" snarled the Boss.

"I'm trying to get his mask off," explained the crook. "May as well have a look at his face while we've got the chance."

In another couple of seconds the secret of Steve's identity would have been revealed.

Then, somewhere in the front of the building a door slammed with a muffled crash, and running feet echoed along the corridors.

The Boss grabbed his henchman by the collar and hauled him off.

"We got no time for that!" he snapped.

"We'll know who he is soon enough when Collins lays hold of him. We've gotta beat it." Swiftly the three men backed through the curtains, opened a door behind it, and vanished.

Swift, anxious feet pounded up the stairs. The door of the office burst open, and a man charged into the room.

But it was not Inspector Collins.

It was Sam Harris, the Rovers' trainer, the only man who knew Steve's secret.

Sam pulled up with a gasp as he surveyed the scene. The murdered Bethmann was sprawled across his desk in a pool of blood. Steve, huddled on the floor, had the killer's gun under his limp hand.

Sam Harris uttered a horrified cry.

"Steve!"

He leaped round the desk, dropped to one knee beside Steve, and rolled him on his back.

Then he propped him into a sitting position, shaking his shoulders and pinching his cheeks in an effort to rouse him.

"Snap out of it, Steve!" he begged desperately.

He looked round anxiously. There was a water-jug on the desk. He grabbed it, and dashed the contents into Steve's face.

Steve uttered a faint groan. His eyes opened slowly. He reached a hand towards his aching head.

"Pull yourself together, Steve!" cried Sam desperately. "The police are on their way. I saw Inspector Collins in the car. He'll be here at any moment."

Steve struggled to his feet.

"Good old Sammy!" he gasped. "I knew I could rely on you!"

"I was on the watch outside," explained the trainer. "As soon as I saw you standing in the room near the window with your hands in the air, I knew that something had gone wrong."

"Smart lad," grinned Steve.

The trainer stared at him, wide-eyed.

"But what happened?" he gasped. "I know Bethmann was a dirty crook, but you shouldn't have killed him!"

"I didn't kill him!" Steve retorted tensely. "It was that fellow who calls himself the Boss. He shot Bethmann and tried to frame me for it!"

Steve went cautiously towards the main door and peered out.

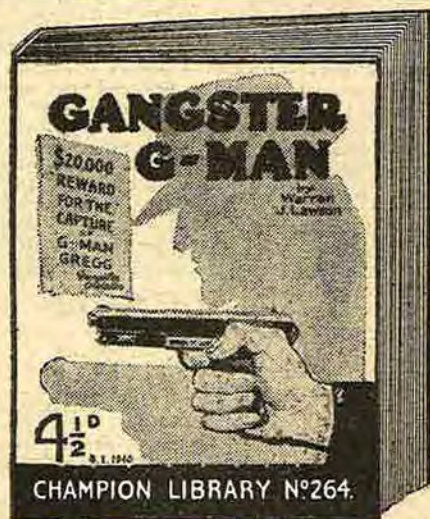
Then Sam grabbed at his arm.

"Listen!" he whispered tensely. "They're coming up the stairs. We're trapped!"

Steve jumped back swiftly into the room, closed the door, and turned the light out.

"Gently, Sam—don't panic!" he whispered. "We'll fool 'em yet!"

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BEHIND THE CURTAIN

INSPECTOR COLLINS was mounting the stairs towards the top floor of the building on tiptoe. Two detectives followed close at his heels.

Reaching the top floor, Collins paused and slipped his gun out of his pocket. He looked back over his shoulder, and made a stealthy gesture, warning them to take care.

He approached a door that had Bethmann's name painted on it in gold letters, and hammered on it with his clenched fist.

"Open up, Black Mask!" he shouted. "And you'd better have your hands in the air when we come through, because we'll come shooting."

There was no answer to the inspector's shouted words.

The office on the other side of the door was as silent as a grave.

Inspector Collins grasped the knob, hurled the door wide, and plunged into the room with his gun drawn.

His eyes blinked against the darkness.

"Lights!" he rapped tersely.

The two detectives behind him switched on torches. The bright beams flashed across the office, and played over the sprawled figure of Bethmann.

The inspector uttered a smothered exclamation as he leaped towards the desk.

"Shot clean through the head, by thunder!" he declared. "And here's the gun!"

He stooped and picked up the gun carefully by the barrel, handing it back to one of his assistants.

"Take care of that," he instructed. "We'll have it tested for finger-prints, though I doubt whether we shall find any. Black Mask is too cute to slip up as easily as that."

"But where did he go?" asked one of the detectives.

"He may be hiding here somewhere," answered Inspector Collins. "Give me the light."

He flashed the torch round. Suddenly he stiffened, held up his hand in warning to his men to keep quiet, and pointed silently.

The torch beam was shining straight towards the curtains that covered the second door out of the office—the door through which the Boss and his men had come and gone.

Inspector Collins gradually lowered the torch, so that the circle of light travelled down the curtain until it came to the floor.

There, sticking out from the bottom of the curtain, were the toes of a pair of shoes!

Inspector Collins permitted himself a grim smile of triumph.

Black Mask was cornered at last. Unable to escape from the office in time, he had taken refuge behind the curtain, not knowing that his shoes were betraying his hiding-place.

With the torch in one hand and the gun in the other, the inspector tiptoed softly across the room until he was facing the curtain with the gun not a foot away, the muzzle pointing straight at the spot that would cover the heart of the hiding man.

"All right, Black Mask!" Collins said in a loud, clear voice. "Come out! You're covered."

There was no movement from behind the curtain.

The inspector's face was grim and hard. He reached out and tore the curtains aside. He started to rip out a command.

"Hands—"

His voice broke off abruptly. There was nothing behind the curtain except a closed door. There was no one standing in the shoes.

Once again Black Mask had fooled the inspector.

With a growl of rage, the inspector stooped and picked up the shoes. Then he ripped the door open. He saw a short, narrow corridor ending in a stone staircase.

"That's the way he went," snarled the inspector. "The trick with the shoes was just a stunt to hold us up while he got a bit of a start on us. But he won't be able to go very far, or very fast, in his stockinged feet. Come on! After him!"

Gun in hand, he led the way through the door. The two detectives were close behind him. The rattle of their heels on the stone

staircase grew gradually fainter as they clattered down flight after flight in full cry.

A silence fell on the darkened office.

It was a silence that was broken after a time by a faint creak. The door, which the inspector had flung open and which had remained open while the office was being examined, now started to swing away from the wall.

Steve and the trainer crept out from behind it.

Steve's eyes twinkled with dare-devil amusement behind his black mask. He was enjoying the situation immensely. Not so Sam Harris. With a shaky hand clutching a balled-up handkerchief, he mopped at his perspiring brow.

"Phew!" he muttered hoarsely. "That's the worst couple of minutes I ever spent. I'd rather go to gaol a dozen times than go through that again!"

Steve slapped him encouragingly on the shoulder.

"Chin up, Sammy!" he chuckled. "I don't think we've much to fear from Inspector Collins."

"I don't see how you can say that!" croaked Sam. "Even before this business to-night Collins suspected that you were the Black Mask. Now he'll be after you more than ever."

"I hope he is!" grinned Steve. "We'll have some fun with him."

Sam shuddered.

"You're the first bloke I ever met who saw anything funny in being chased by the cops!" he declared.

"It's time to be going," Steve said quietly. "I think I hear them coming back."

On tiptoe, Steve and the trainer slipped through the door and went quietly down the stairs to the ground floor. They entered a room at the rear of the building, clambered through a window, and dropped noiselessly into an alley.

They faded away like two shadows, while, up on the top floor, Inspector Collins was snarling viciously because once again Black Mask had managed to give him the slip.

HALF an hour later, Inspector Collins was ringing the bell outside Steve's flat.

It was Sam Harris who opened the door.

"Why, inspector," gulped Sam, "this is a queer time of the night to be paying calls!"

"This is a queer time of night to find you in someone else's lodgings!" retorted the inspector. "What are you doing here?"

"I've moved in with Steve," the trainer said. "We thought it would be cheaper to share expenses. Besides, I've got to be here to give him some special attention. He came a cropper in the match this afternoon."

"Where is Bradshaw?" snapped the inspector.

"In bed," said Sam.

"I want to see him!" barked the inspector.

"Can't you leave it until the morning?"

begged Sam. "Steve needs to rest. He's had a hard day."

"I can well believe that!" retorted Inspector Collins sourly. "Stand aside!"

He shouldered his way past the trainer and strode into the bedroom. Then he pulled up with a smothered gasp.

Steve, wearing a pair of gaudy pyjamas, was lying in bed. But that was not what made the inspector gasp.

Steve's right leg, heavily bandaged and fastened in splints, was rigged up in a kind of sling over the bed.

Steve and the trainer had put in some fast work since getting back to the apartment.

Inspector Collins scowled fiercely.

Steve grinned at him cheerily.

"Hallo, Collins!" he greeted. "You'll be missing your beauty sleep. Why the worried frown? Sit down and tell me all your troubles."

Steve's bantering tone made the inspector's face turn crimson with wrath. He stabbed his thumb at the bandaged leg in the sling.

"What's going on here?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Treatment for the leg. Sam's handiwork,"

said Steve airily. "I came a cropper in the match this afternoon, and had to leave the field for a bit. But, of course, you know all about that. You were there!"

The inspector clenched his teeth. "Bradshaw," he rapped, "I want to know just where you've been to-night. The truth, and no alibis."

"Have a heart, inspector!" grinned Steve. "Where could I go, all trussed up like this?"

"Were you in the Midland Union Building half an hour ago?" rapped the inspector. "Answer me, yes or no."

"Yes or no?" laughed Steve. "Me in the Midland Union Building with a leg in splints? What are you getting at, Collins? I'm not sure that you've got any right to come bustling in here, shooting questions at me. Anyone would think you suspected me of something criminal. I think I ought to get annoyed with you."

"Listen, Bradshaw!" snarled the inspector. "The crook who calls himself Black Mask murdered a man to-night, and for that I mean to get him if it's the last thing I do!"

Steve's eyes widened in mock surprise. "You don't say!" he exclaimed. "This is getting quite a rough neighbourhood, isn't it, inspector? Tell me, have you any idea who this Black Mask is?"

"I've got a darned good idea!" exploded the inspector. "And the day I arrest him is going to be the happiest in my life! That day won't be long in coming."

"Splendid!" purred Steve politely. "Give me a ring on the phone when you nail him. I shall be interested to hear the news."

The inspector got up and strode angrily towards the door. On the threshold he swung round.

"I wasn't fooling, Bradshaw!" he rapped. "Black Mask left a clue behind him to-night that is going to put a rope round his neck."

With that he clapped his hat on his head and strode out in a towering rage.

As soon as the inspector had gone Steve swung his leg out of the sling, jumped out of the bed and hobbled stiff-legged to the window. He watched the inspector get into his car and drive away.

Then Sam rushed into the room, wild-eyed and panicky.

"They're really on to us this time, Steve!" he gulped in horror. "We've got to leave town while we've got the chance."

"Keep your head, Sammy, old scout!" smiled Steve. "There's nothing to be scared of while we sit tight. But leave town? That would be a confession of guilt."

"But Collins said he'd got a clue!" protested Sam. "You must have overlooked something, Steve."

Steve snapped his fingers contemptuously. "I don't believe it!" he declared. "I think Collins was bluffing. He wants to scare us into doing something rash, so that he can nab us. But we aren't going to fall for it, Sammy boy!"

"BRADSHAW MUSTN'T PLAY"

THE following day Steve read all about the happenings in Bethmann's office in the local newspapers.

Sam Harris shivered as he read the headlines. But Steve seemed to find them vastly amusing, for he chuckled frequently as he read the accounts.

He didn't believe that the police had any clues at all, except for the killer's gun which Collins had picked up. It was quite impossible for the police to trace the gun to Steve, since it had never belonged to him, and he had been wearing gloves when it was thrust into his hand.

He was equally certain that the real owner had taken precautions to see that it would never be traced back to him.

As the week wore on, and the police made no further moves, Steve's feeling of confidence increased.

Saturday morning arrived, and the whole thing seemed to have died down. Black Mask had dropped off the front pages of the newspapers, for there was nothing fresh on the case to report.

On the Saturday morning the Rovers travelled by train to Forborough, to play a First Division League match against Forborough Athletic.

The players occupied a corridor coach, and Steve did not fail to notice the two bowler-hatted men who continually prowled up and down the corridor, pausing to scrutinise the Rovers players every time they passed the door of the compartment.

The trainer nudged Steve. "You're being shadowed!" he whispered.

"I'd noticed that," Steve answered calmly. "I don't like the look of it," whispered Sam huskily. "You'd better not play this afternoon. Go sick. Then, if there's anything wrong, you can bunk."

Steve looked at him in amazement. "You don't know what you're saying, Sam," he protested. "Do you think I'd let the Rovers down just because a couple of detectives insist on following me around?"

When the team left the train at Forborough, the detectives left it, too.

A coach was waiting at the station to take the players to the Athletic's ground. The detectives tagged along behind in a taxi.

Steve looked behind, then grinned at Sam. "They're still sticking close," he grinned.



"What does this interruption mean?" demanded the referee. "Steve Bradshaw mustn't play this afternoon," replied Inspector Collins. "I must insist that he accompanies me to the police station at once. I want to question him about the murder of Bethmann!"

"We'll find 'em a couple of spare jerseys, so that they can come on the field with us."

"I smell trouble," groaned the trainer, but Steve only grinned.

A big crowd had travelled over from Milton to see the match, and they gave Steve a terrific cheer as he led his men out on to the field for the kick-off.

The players gathered round the goal area and fired in pot-shots at Fred Lockhart, the Rovers goalie, to give themselves a leg-loosener, while Steve trotted towards the middle for the toss.

Grinning broadly, Steve shook hands with the referee and the Athletic's skipper, who tossed the coin.

"Heads!" guessed Steve. "It came down tails."

The Athletic skipper chose his end. Steve swung round and clapped his hands at his team to bring them trotting to their positions.

The referee rolled the ball on to the centre-spot, and stepped back with the whistle between his lips.

Steve, the ball at his toe, awaited the signal to kick-off.

The referee was just about to blow his whistle when there came an amazing interruption.

"Wait! Don't start the match yet!"

Three figures had suddenly invaded the pitch, and were hurrying towards the centre-spot. They were Inspector Collins and his two detectives.

Steve's eyes narrowed thoughtfully. The referee strode to meet the trio. "What does this mean?" he asked curtly.

"I'm sorry!" snapped Collins. "I am Inspector Collins. Steve Bradshaw mustn't play in this match this afternoon. I must insist that he accompanies me at once to the police station. I have some questions to ask him in connection with the murder of Bethmann."

All the players came running up now. The boing of the crowd was tremendous. Fred Lockhart uttered a snort of protest.

"There must be some mistake!" he exclaimed. "Bethmann was murdered by Black Mask!"

"Steve Bradshaw is Black Mask!" said the inspector deliberately.

"I hope you can prove these charges, inspector," said Steve coldly, "otherwise you will find yourself in a very serious position."

"Of course I can prove them!" said the inspector, with a grim smile. "I told you that you'd left a clue behind, didn't I? You thought I was bluffing, but that was where you were wrong. Just think a moment. Remember the shoes—those shoes that you left under the curtain to trick me? You overreached yourself that time, Bradshaw. I've still got those shoes. I'm going to take a cast from your foot. I've taken one from the shoes. A comparison will prove beyond all doubt that you were in Bethmann's office the night he was murdered. Better come quietly, Bradshaw!" he rapped. "The game's up!"

More remarkably fine chapters of this intensely thrilling story next week. Don't risk missing them. If you haven't paid that visit to your newsagent yet, go to-day and make sure he will save a TRIUMPH for you next Tuesday.

BRITAIN'S ACE SECRET SERVICE MAN TAKES BIGGEST RISK OF HIS LIFE TO GET



Suddenly two powerful searchlights sprang to life. Burt saw the side of the quarry, and something else which interested him far more—

WHEN THE TELEPHONE RANG

MR. WAINWRIGHT'S shabby frock-coated figure was a very familiar one to the North End district of London. Most people were sorry for him, for although he was very amiable he seemed to make no friends at all. Moreover, he lived entirely by himself in a small flat.

Quite a number of people nodded and smiled at the man in the old-fashioned tailed coat as he came home one evening, and, entering a modest block of flats, climbed the steps to his front door.

Inserting the key in the lock, he turned it not once, but three times.

It was perhaps rather unusual to treble-lock a door, but, after all, it only went to prove that Mr. Wainwright was of a rather nervous disposition.

Entering the hall, he switched on the light and then passed through to the dining-room. His hand reached out and pulled down the switch, and then he stood as though paralysed, for a strange, bizarre sight had presented itself to his gaze.

Seated at his dining-room table was a young man. He was leaning forward, with his elbows on the table-top; but the thing that fascinated Mr. Wainwright was the sight of the two deadly guns in the stranger's hands.

Both of them were trained upon Mr. Wainwright.

It then seemed that Mr. Wainwright was not so very nervous, after all, for he recovered his composure with surprising quickness, and when he spoke his voice was harsh with anger.

"What's the meaning of this tomfoolery?" he demanded. "How dare you enter my rooms! And how dare you menace me with guns! I'll have you know that the police—"

The young man with the guns smiled. "You can cut it out, Mr. Alfred Wainwright," he said, and his voice was sharp. "I've been wise to your real name for quite a number of days. I've every reason to believe that you were christened Hans Housa."

Just for a moment Mr. Wainwright's eyes flickered.

"You're mad!" he rapped. "Stark crazy! My name is Wainwright, and everyone in this district will vouch for my good character."

"Of course they will," replied the other. "You have been very careful to build up quite a nice little reputation for yourself. As a matter of fact, there are quite a lot of things about you that I admire, but now that our two countries are at war I'm afraid my admiration must take a back seat."

Again a queer light came into the other's eyes.

"Who are you?" he demanded. The young man at the table smiled so

WITHIN THE NAZI'S WEB

A Burt Kennedy Spy-Thriller

broadly now that he looked indescribably youthful.

"You pain me, Hans," he said. "I should have thought that mine was the one face with which you would be familiar. It seems that I'm not so well known as I thought I was. But if you're interested, my name happens to be Burt Kennedy."

For the first time Mr. Wainwright showed real feeling. His mouth sagged open, and he took a quick step backwards.

"Burt Kennedy!" he gasped, and there was sheer, unutterable horror in his voice.

It seemed that the name had struck terror to his very soul.

"Yes, Hans," said the other, "I'm Burt Kennedy. Perhaps you'll realise now that your little game is up."

Mr. Wainwright looked at Burt Kennedy as though he would never be able to tear his gaze away.

He was looking at Great Britain's master-spy—the one man above all others the Nazi regime wished to see dead.

Mr. Wainwright's hands had been hanging limply by his sides, but now Kennedy saw that in his right hand he was holding a round object. In a flash he realised he must have taken it from the tail-pocket of his old-fashioned coat.

"You fool!" Wainwright hissed. "Do you think I'm not well prepared for a situation such as this? Why—"

He didn't have a chance to say more. Even as he spoke he pitched the small object forward, and it burst on the table right in front of Burt.

Strangely enough, the young Secret Service man didn't fire. As the small object landed on the table he was already on his feet.

Then, like an acrobat, he came diving across the table. His arms went round Mr. Wainwright's middle, and then he crashed down on top of him.

"You don't put me out of action with tear gas!" snapped Burt. "Or with anything else."

He lifted his victim once, in order to bang his head against the floorboards, and then gripped him by the coat collar and dragged him out of the room, closing the door on the swirling fumes.

A moment later he opened the front door. Outside stood three keen-faced men.

"O.K., boys!" said Burt. "In you come. But 'ware of gas."

WHEN Mr. Wainwright, alias Hans Housa, recovered consciousness four men were bending over him.

A cry choked in his throat when he saw that his pockets had been rifled, and that Burt Kennedy was going through his private papers.

The young Secret Service man appeared to be greatly interested in the contents of a small diary.

"Well, Hans," said Burt, "we're just going to turn this flat of yours inside out, and then we'll take you away."

Hans Housa made a mistake then. Before he replied his gaze rested for a moment upon the telephone.

"All right," he growled. "You've bowled me out, so there's no sense in my kicking any more. But you'll waste your time if you search the flat. You don't think I'd be foolish enough to keep incriminating papers for any common-or-garden burglar to get his hands on, do you? If you're going to take me away from here, the sooner we leave the better."

But Burt Kennedy laughed.

"No, Hans," he said. "I think we'll hang on a little longer. I've a queer feeling that at any moment we may be receiving a telephone call."

He saw the other's eyes flicker, and he knew his guess had been a good one.

It was perhaps ten minutes later when the telephone bell rang shrilly. Instantly one of Burt's companions clapped a hand over Hans Housa's mouth.

Burt lifted the receiver.

"Well?" he demanded.

A voice at the other end spoke without any trace of accent.

"Is that Alfred Wainwright?" it inquired.

"Speaking!" said Burt.

"Good!" was the reply. "A meeting has been arranged for eight o'clock to-night."

Before Burt could acknowledge the message there came a click at the other end.

His unknown caller had rung off.

Burt looked down at Hans Housa and smiled.

"So, Hans," he said, "a meeting has been arranged for to-night, has it, and it's to be held at eight o'clock. Well, I don't know where the meeting is to be held, but perhaps your diary will give me this information."

The contents of the diary appeared to be completely meaningless, for every entry was in code; but, flicking the pages over, Burt chuckled.

"We've discovered the secret of this code," he said. "I can read your entries as easily as though they were written in ordinary English."

Suddenly his gaze became arrested.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Here it is! The meeting to-night is to be held at Johnson's Warehouse, Riveredge. I note, too, that only the side door of the warehouse is to be used."

Again he saw that strange flicker in his prisoner's eyes.

He turned to two of his men.

"We don't need him any more," he said. "You know where to take him, and there's a car outside."

At the door Hans Housa turned his head.

Had any of his acquaintances seen him then they would probably have failed to recognise him, for his face was twisted with fury.

"Make the most of your triumph, Kennedy," he rasped, "for you're not going to live very long! I may have failed, but there are many others to follow me. As far as we're concerned, you're already as good as dead."

"Well," said Burt, with a chuckle, "for a dead man I'm still able to kick pretty heavily. Take him away, boys!"

The door closed behind Hans Housa, and when he turned to the last remaining Secret Service man, Burt's eyes were alive with excitement.

"This is the most important capture we've made to date!" he exclaimed. "I've been trailing Housa for days, and I've discovered that he's one of Carl Streeter's right-hand men."

"Carl Streeter?" queried the other. "He's something to do with submarines, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Burt. "We've discovered that he's been working for the supply depots for the German submarines that are out in English waters. I've even received a hint that the biggest depot of all is actually situated in this country. Well, I've an idea that when I got to this meeting to-night I shall see Carl Streeter himself. If that happens, I hope to know all about his secret depot before dawn."

He looked at his watch.

"We've got to hurry, Jim!" he added. "It's your job to get the big car ready. You

know exactly what to do. As for me, I've got to go after Hans Housa, for it's very necessary that I should have another little interview with him."

When Burt left the flat he inserted the key in the lock and turned it three times.

"Hans Housa always made sure," he said, "so there's no reason why I shouldn't do likewise."

ON THE TRAIL

WHEN Burt Kennedy's interview with Hans Housa was only half over, the unfortunate Nazi agent was clad only in his underclothes, for his suit was taken away from him and was quickly donned by Burt.

Then, settling himself directly opposite the Nazi agent, Burt took out a make-up box. A few deft dabs to his face and he had completely altered his expression.

When at last he pulled a soft hat over his eyes he was Hans Housa to life.

At exactly quarter-past eight that evening Burt Kennedy crossed a warehouse yard. Coming to a small door set in the side of the building, he rapped smartly upon it.

A shutter was pulled back and a pair of eyes peered out at him. Then, slowly, the door was opened.

Burt Kennedy stepped into a dark passage-way.

"You're late!" snapped the doorkeeper. "The others have been wondering if anything has happened to you."

Burt shrugged his shoulders.

"In these days one must take care," he said. "I suspected that I was being followed, and had to make sure."

"Well," said the other, pointing to a gleam of light which showed underneath a door, "the others are waiting for you. You'd better go straight in."

"I will," said Burt, and stepped close to the doorkeeper.

Despite the darkness he gauged his distance perfectly, and his fist struck the man right on the point. As he started to fall, Burt's arms closed around him.

Having placed him on the floor, Burt struck him again with an object which he took from his pocket.

"Sorry," he murmured, almost under his breath, "but the lives of thousands of British seamen may depend on your being unconscious for the next five minutes or so."

He opened the outer door then, and left it standing ajar before he went down the corridor.

Coming to the door, he opened it and passed through.

For a moment he stood blinking in the sudden light. Then, when he saw the half-dozen men seated round the table, he knew an infinite satisfaction.

For one of those six was the man he most wanted to meet at that moment—Carl Streeter.

Streeter, a tall man with a hawk-like face, flashed him a sharp glance.

"Sir," he rapped—and he might have been a Nazi officer giving orders on the parade—"the time was eight o'clock. You are fifteen minutes late. Why?"

Burt shrugged his shoulders.

"These are dangerous times, Streeter," he said, and his voice was almost a perfect copy of Hans Housa's. "I was afraid someone was shadowing me, so I took precautions. As a result of those precautions I have something to show you. Just one moment!"

With that, he stepped back to the door, swung it open, and then stepped quickly aside.

Next moment men were flowing into the room, and Streeter and the other spies came leaping to their feet.

"We're trapped!" cried Streeter. "Housa is a traitor, and—"

He made to pull a gun from his pocket, only to stop half-way.

He realised that he hadn't a ghost of a chance, for already the room was half-filled with hard-eyed policemen.

Streeter looked for Hans Housa, but he had

disappeared. It only made Streeter the more convinced that Hans Housa was a traitor.

In a few minutes all the spies had been disarmed, and they were being held securely.

"Get them out to the cars!" came an order. "The sooner we get them away from here the better."

Two men who were holding Streeter by the arms dragged him forward. He was the first of the prisoners to leave the room.

Down the passage-way he was dragged, and then out into the yard. His guards had only taken a few steps forward, however, when something happened.

At one and the same time both his guards stumbled, and both released their grip on the Nazi agent.

In a flash he had taken advantage of the situation.

A fairly bright moon had climbed into the sky, and he was able to see near objects distinctly. It seemed that his luck was almost too good to be true, for, standing half in and half out of the yard gate was a large car.

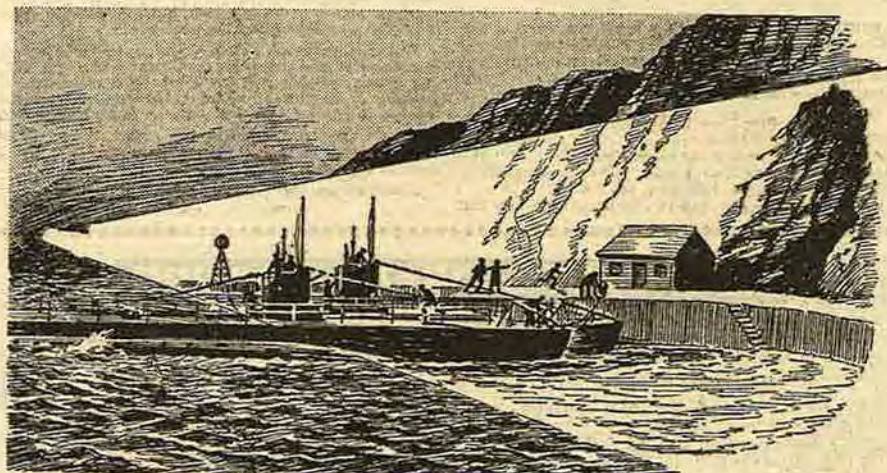
Its engine was running, and Streeter could see no one behind the wheel.

Like a hare he flew to the car, wrenched the door open and clambered behind the steering-wheel. As he had thought, there was no one inside the car.

Off came the brake, in went the clutch, and then the big car had turned out of the gates to go racing down the street.

After a few seconds Streeter heard confused shouting behind him—and then silence. He had made his escape!

"They won't get me again!" he snarled.



—Two submarines were moored to the long wharf. The searchlights focused upon them, and instantly became still. Cries of alarm came up from the cave.

"Thank goodness I've got a bolt-hole—a bolt-hole which will never be located, even if every spy in England gets on my track."

Several times he turned his head anxiously to gaze behind him. As far as he could tell, there were no pursuing cars.

The dim headlights were just sufficient to show him the side of the road, but he drove on recklessly as though it were broad daylight.

Streeter evidently knew the country well, for on half a dozen occasions he circled round big towns.

Then the car climbed steadily until it was running along a road right at the edge of tall cliffs. He could hear the angry mutter of the sea quite distinctly.

Presently the car dropped downhill for a little way, and again Streeter showed that he knew the countryside very well indeed, for suddenly, despite the darkness, he swung the car off the road and drove it right into a clump of bushes.

He chuckled as he climbed out.

"Well," he muttered, "that's that. I've got away after all."

For some minutes he stood looking back the way he had come. It soon became evident that there had been no pursuit at all.

"If they capture the others," he murmured, "I can trust every one of them. No matter what happens to them they'll never open their mouths about me."

He went forward cautiously then until he was right on the edge of the cliffs. Then, lying flat, he pushed a torch over the edge and shone it once.

Immediately from the darkness below him came two quick flashes.

"Everything is O.K.!" murmured Streeter. "It's safe to go down."

It was as he moved away from the car that a movement came from the vehicle.

It was a big car he had stolen, and at the back it possessed an enormous luggage boot.

The lid of this was now slowly lifted and a dark, indistinct figure climbed out. Had Streeter seen that figure he would have thought it was Hans Housa, but it was, of course, Burt Kennedy.

Streeter had been deliberately allowed to make his escape. His two guards had purposely stumbled and released their holds.

The car had been deliberately left in the gateway with its engine running, and the moment the police had entered the warehouse Burt had raced out to the car and had climbed into the luggage boot.

Because of the instructions he had given when Hans Housa had been arrested, the lid of the boot had been so fixed that it couldn't be opened from the outside.

Thus, when Streeter had driven away he had taken Burt Kennedy with him.

The young Secret Service man listened

THE NAZIS' SECRET

THERE was no moon now, but having been shut up in the boot so long, Burt's eyes had become accustomed to the darkness. Dimly he realised that he was descending a path into a small cave.

When he reached level ground he passed a signboard. On it, in big letters, was written:

"GREY COVE QUARRY, LTD."

He was so close behind Streeter that he could just see the spy's figure. The latter walked down to a long wharf and then, out of the shadows, two men stepped in front of him. One of them flashed a torch in his face.

"Streeter!" he exclaimed in surprise. "We weren't expecting you to-night. Has anything happened?"

"Everything has happened!" snarled Streeter in rapid German. "As far as I can make out, Hans Housa turned traitor, and every one of my men has been arrested."

"Then," gasped one of the others, "they've

discovered about Gray Cove, Ltd. We may expect trouble at any moment."

"No," snarled Streeter, "there will be no trouble here, for Housa knew nothing about Gray Cove. However, for the time being I must stay here."

The two men turned to walk alongside him, and again Burt followed. Right to the quarry face went the three men—and then they seemed to vanish into thin air.

"This," thought Burt, "gets more interesting every moment."

It was half an hour later that a man climbed the cliff path. It was Burt Kennedy, and his eyes were wide with excitement.

Going to the car, he lifted the lid of the tool-box and took out a rather queerly shaped apparatus.

It consisted of a pair of earphones and a small metal box, to which a couple of long wires were attached.

Making his way to the road, Burt stopped at the nearest telegraph post. A few minutes later he was swarming up the iron footholds.

Reaching the top, he reached out carefully and, taking the two long wires, he clipped them into the nearest telephone wire.

Placing the earphones over his head, he

was in touch with the nearest exchange in a second.

He gave a number, and in a few moments he was talking excitedly.

Conversation lasted perhaps five minutes, and then he came scrambling down again, to fling himself face downwards at the edge of the cliff not far from the car.

He had been there about an hour when he heard the sound of footsteps. Cautiously someone displayed the light of a torch.

"Here it is!" cried a voice. "It won't take us long."

Burt lay perfectly still.

One of the men scrambled inside the car, started up the engine, and then backed it out of the bushes. They took it down the road a little way, and then a voice came faintly to Burt's ears.

"All right," it said, "Let her go!"

Despite the darkness, Burt caught sight of a black shape leaping over the edge of the cliff, and then a sullen splash came to his ears.

Evidently Streeter was determined to leave no clues behind him.

The car he had taken had been driven over the cliff into deep water.

Presently Burt was anxiously looking at the luminous face of his watch.

"Time is getting on," he murmured. "They should have been here by now."

Then, with a suddenness that made him jump, night was transformed into day; for, from a little distance out to sea, two powerful searchlights suddenly focused upon the cave. They showed up everything in bold relief.

Burt saw the face of the quarry, but he saw something else which interested him far more.

That was the sight of two submarines, moored to the tiny wharf.

The searchlights focused upon them, and instantly became still.

Cries of alarm came up from the cove—cries that were drowned by a sudden explosion, and then the scream of a shell.

That first shell hit the wharf full and square, and a blinding flash of light hurt Burt's eyes.

As his sight cleared, he saw figures running in every direction. He also saw men working furiously at the mooring ropes of the submarines.

Came two further explosions, the whine of two shells, and it seemed to Burt that both submarines had been struck.

Then, as his sight cleared again, and the cloud of dust died down, he saw that the wharf was nothing but a mass of tumbled wreckage. Of the submarines there was no sign.

But up the cove path a line of men were racing.

"I hope my other men are in position," murmured Burt. "Those Nazis mustn't be allowed to get away now!"

Then, as if in answer to his thoughts, there came, from not far away, a sharp command.

Burt stood up and grinned.

"Everything has gone according to programme," he murmured. "We've certainly destroyed this Nazi web."

All the men who came running up the cliff path ran straight into the arms of a large body of military and police.

It was some time later that Burt went down to the cove. Dawn was breaking now, and he could see that the sea was thick with oil.

There was no doubt that both submarines had been sunk.

He led a party of men to the quarry, and then entered what appeared to be simply a crack in the rock wall.

But immediately it widened, and soon they were standing in a tremendous underground chamber, stacked from floor to ceiling with large cans of petrol and oil.

"You see," said Burt, "the quarry company was only a blind. They certainly quarried a little rock, but most of their men were engaged in hacking out this underground chamber."

The officer with him whistled shrilly.

"Good work, Kennedy," he said. "If you hadn't run this place to earth, they would have been able to keep submarines supplied with fuel for months on end. They probably supplied them with food as well."

Burt nodded.

"Yes," he said. "And it doesn't finish here, for the submarines at sea won't know anything has happened here, and one by one they'll be coming in for fresh supplies. Every one of them will be coming in to certain capture."

The officer looked quizzically at Burt.

"Kennedy," he said, "I'm willing to take a wager to any amount that you're the man the Nazis hate most of anyone in the world."

Next week's grand mystery-thriller introduces two new characters—Jack Murray, Ace River Cop, and Ken Sharpe, his assistant—in a story that will make you gasp for breath so exciting is it. Go to your newsagent to-day, and make sure that he will have a TRIUMPH for you next Tuesday.



TRIUMPH Office,
The Fleetway House,
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HOW-DO, PALS.—I want to thank the many of you who evidently made New-Year Resolutions to write to me. I have greatly enjoyed reading your letters, and have replied to all those who enclosed stamped, addressed envelopes, and to as many more as I have been able to manage.

I hope these New-Year Resolutions are ones that will be kept for some months to come. I am delighted that most of you seem to have the same high opinion of "The Football Cracker" as I have. It's the finest serial we've ever had in the TRIUMPH, isn't it?

There are still a few readers who write up to say that

chums who want to commence to become regular readers of the TRIUMPH cannot do so because newsagents do not stock our paper.

ANY and EVERY newsagent will order as many copies of TRIUMPH as he is certain to sell. But you, or your chum, must make him feel that you will call and pay for the copy you have ordered. I'm afraid quite a number of people, adults as well as boys, unintentionally let newsagents down sometimes. They go into a shop, order a paper, and then, perhaps being able to borrow a paper from a pal afterwards, don't trouble to cancel the order they have given the newsagent.

The consequence is that the next person who orders any paper at all—unless the newsagent knows him well, and knows he will pay for what he has ordered—is unlikely to receive the paper he has ordered, for the newsagent will not pass that order on to the wholesalers.

Once a newsagent knows he can expect a boy to come in every week for his TRIUMPH, there will be a paper reserved regularly for that boy.

Yours till guinea pigs have tails,

THE EDITOR.

CUTHBERT'S PRIZE CORNER

If you want to win a useful prize, send ONE joke, or riddle, on a postcard, to "Cuthbert," The TRIUMPH, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Add your name and address and the names of the two stories you like best now running in the TRIUMPH.

MEN OF LETTERS.

The shepherd and the old cowman were discussing the new squire.

Their conversation was as follows:

"ICEBAOBE," said the shepherd.

"EB, BE?" replied the cowman.

"I, E, B."

"YBEA OBE?"

"YEBAMP, UC."

"OIIIC."

(Useful prize to Kenneth Byfield, 29, Dudley Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex.)

EVERYONE KNOWS IT.

The lesson was geography, and the teacher asked the class:

"What is a famous country in Europe?"

Tommy Jones answered:

"France, miss."

"Good, Tommy!" said the teacher. "Next boy—what is the name of a famous town in France?"

"Somewhere," replied Jack Brown.

(Useful little prize to Dennis Jenkins, 53, Orchard Street, Llanfaes, Brecon.)

A COLD ANSWER.

A tramp went into a butcher's shop, and said:

"I hear that you have a joint to suit every purse."

"Yes," answered the butcher, "that's right."

"Well," said the tramp, "what joint have you for an empty purse?"

"The cold shoulder!" came the quick answer.

(Useful little prize to Peter Stanley, 231, Sutton Road, Walsall, Staffs.)

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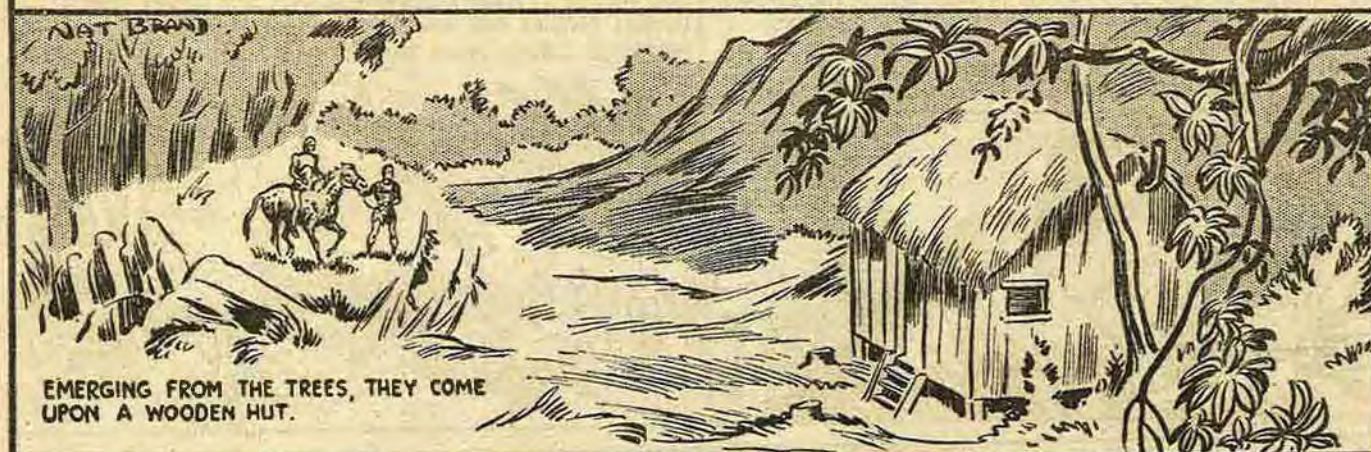
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DERICKSON DENE—(Continued from page 2)





WHILST DENE IS MAKING HALJ COMFORTABLE, HE EXPLAINS TO THE OLD MAN HOW THE HORSE CAME TO THEIR RESCUE AND ABOUT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE TROOPERS.

IT MUST BE THAT MY FAITHFUL MARSH-HORSE, KNOWING THAT I WAS IN A SERIOUS PLIGHT, SET OFF TO GET AID FOR ME. HE KNOWS THAT THE TROOPERS ARE NOT OUR FRIENDS.



I HAVE LIVED FOR MANY YEARS IN THIS SPOT. THE TRAPS AND PITFALLS I CONSTRUCTED FOR MY SAFETY. I SAVED THE MARSH-HORSE, WHEN IT WAS A FOAL, FROM THE JAWS OF A CROCODILE. FROM THAT MOMENT IT HAS BEEN MY DEVOTED FRIEND, AND KNOWS THE MARSH-LAND AS WELL AS I DO.



THE HERMIT DESCRIBES CERTAIN PLANTS AND HERBS WHICH HE WILL REQUIRE FOR HIS CURE, AND ROLF, WHO HAS BEEN HELPED BY DRUGS FROM THE HERMIT'S MEDICINE CHEST, SETS OUT TO COLLECT THEM.



UNSEEN BY ROLF, A DEADLY KING SNAKE GLIDES INTO THE BASKET OF HERBS.



MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE CABIN DENE RELATES HIS ADVENTURES TO THE HERMIT, TELLING HOW IN THE BEGGARS' STRONGHOLD IN THE REBEL CITY THEY ARE COLLECTING THE MATERIALS FOR HIS GREAT INVENTION.



ROLF RETURNS WITH HIS BASKET OF HERBS WHERE, UNKNOWN TO HIM THE POISONOUS REPTILE IS LURKING.



DENE OPENS THE BASKET AND OUT FLASHES THE ENRAGED SNAKE, WITH UNERRING ACCURACY IT DARTS AT DENE'S THROAT ONE BITE FROM THE POISON FANGS MEANS CERTAIN DEATH — AND A KING SNAKE NEVER MISSES. (TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

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