

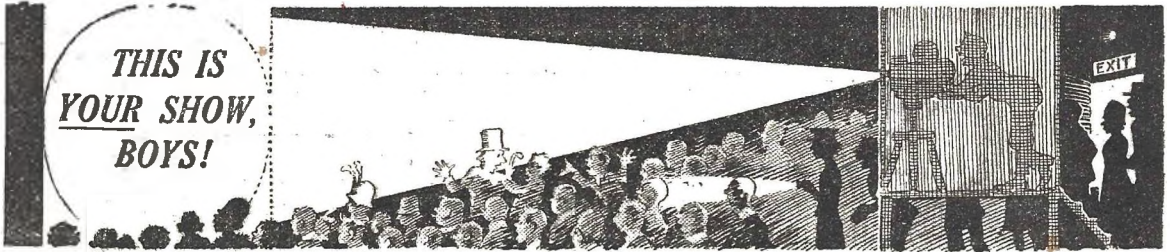
DANDY FREE GIFTS FOR READERS!

THE **STARTLER**

VOL. I. Nº 10 MAY 3, 1930 EVERY MONDAY 2^o



**THIS IS
YOUR SHOW,
BOYS!**



THE VANISHING TRICK.

Jock: "D'ye ken that your hens come over into ma gairden?"

Sandy: "Ah, I thoct they must be daein' that."

Jock: "Whit maks ye think sae?"

Sandy: "Because they never come back."

(Prize to C. Stanley, 144, Guinness Trust Buildings, Kennington Park Road, S.E.11.)

WHAT AN EAR!

"I can hear a pin drop twenty yards off."

"Really?"

"Yes—a rolling-pin!"

(Prize to L. Hoffman, 16, Union Square, Islington, N.)

Farmer: "What are you doing up that apple-tree?"

Boy: "Please, sir, there's a notice that says, 'Keep off the grass'!"

(Prize to R. Saywell, 12, Owen Place, Bilston, Staffs.)

HOW IT HAPPENED!

Wrecked Airman: "I got into an air-pocket."

Yokel: "Ay, and was there a hole in it?"

(Prize to W. Folkard, 201, Queen's Road, Norwich, Norfolk.)

ONE FOR THE SERGEANT!

Sergeant: "What do you mean by coming on parade with such dirty boots, Brown?"

Brown: "Well, you never saw a good soldier show a clean pair of heels, did you?"

(Prize to L. Broad, 29, Edward Street, Wrexham.)

Old Lady: "Is that a man-o'-war, my good fellow?"

Sailor: "No, it's a tug, lady."

Old Lady: "Oh, I see—it's a tug-o'-war!"

(Prize to E. Welton, 90, Percy Road, Southsea, Portsmouth.)

HIS GOLF SOCKS!

First Tramp: "I see you've got your golf socks on to-day."

Second Tramp: "What do you mean by golf socks?"

First Tramp: "Why, they've got eighteen holes in them, haven't they?"

(Prize to Ian MacGillivray, "Peel House," Kirkinilloch, Dumbartonshire.)

BUSINESS!

Angry Creditor: "Where's your father?"

Young Ikey: "Fader's gono away."

Angry Creditor: "I don't believe you, Now tell me where he is, and I will give you sixpence."

Young Ikey: "Make it a shilling, an' that vill include the sixpence Iader promised me for not tellin'."

(Prize awarded to Leonard Steele, 44, Lorne Street, Burslem, Staffs.)

The STARTLER

Mother: "Come, Freddie, kiss your Aunt Matilda!"

Freddie: "Gosh, ma! I ain't done nothin'!"

(Prize to R. McNulty, 34, Wansford Street, Moss Side, Manchester.)



THE IRISH WAY.

Irish Judge: "Are yo guilty or not guilty?"

Prisoner: "Not guilty, me lord."

Irish Judge: "Then what are ye doin' here wasting our time?"

(Prize to W. Ferris, 3, Cameron Road, West Hartlepool, Co. Durham.)

A FRUITY ONE.

Lady (in grocer's shop): "Have you anything in the shape of oranges?"

Assistant (new to the job): "Yes, mum, tomatoes."

(Prize to Allan Edwards, 8, Swan Hill Road, Scarborough.)

QUITE CORRECT!

New Teacher: "What's your name?"

"Tom, sir."

"Don't say Tom. Say Thomas." To another boy: "And what's your name?"

"Jackass, sir!"

(Prize to F. Evans, 58, Colegrave Road, Stratford, E.15.)

Ma: "And what are you going to do when you have had enough to eat at the party, dear?"

Tommy: "Why, come home, ma."

(Prize to G. Bedley, 43, Stroade Road, Fulham, S.W.6.)

THE WAY TO WIN A PRIZE.

The jokes on this page are good 'uns, aren't they, boys? They've all been sent in by lucky readers who win prizes for them. There's no reason why YOU shouldn't win a bonzer prize for a smart joke, is there? Right! Then send in your effort, ON A POSTCARD, to-day, and address it:

"Joke Competition."

THE STARTLER, No. 10,

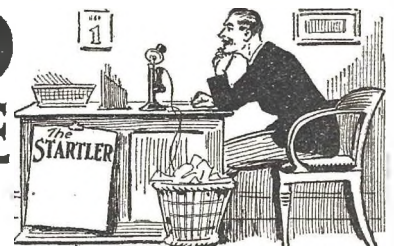
5, Carmelite Street,

London, E.C.4 (Comp.)

All entries must reach here by Wednesday, May 10th, the closing date, and the Editor's decision is final.

COME INTO the OFFICE

and have a cheery
chat with the Editor.



HERE WE ARE AGAIN!

HOW DO, BOYS? Gee, but don't the weeks fly round, eh? Seems as if it was only yesterday that I was having my first weekly chat with you.

And I might just say here and now, that of all the jobs in connection with getting the good old STARTLER ready for you each week, it's this chirpy chat that I like best of all. Seems to bring us all so close together and pally, somehow, doesn't it?

While I'm writing this now I'm wondering just what you're all doing. Very likely learning up that secret sign of the STARTLER League, eh? Or telling your pals what a real top-notch paper ours is. Good for you, boys!

THAT FREE GIFT SCHEME.

Here, I say, didn't I tell you that I'd got some startling surprises coming? Well, how's this week's terrific Free Gift scheme? That's enough to make your mouths water, I'll guarantee.

And what's more, there's going to be a list like that on view for several more weeks to come. So just you keep yourselves awake and watch out for your name. You never know, you know.

Those lads who are asked to sign their names as witnesses on the coupon on page 6 can also prepare themselves for startling shocks.

Do you want to know why? Certainly! Well, I'm going to include some of their names and addresses in the Free Gift Lists later on. Didn't expect that, did you, boys?

I bet you'll all be falling over yourselves filling in coupons as witnesses now. Let me tell you this, the chap whose name is in the list can rely on getting a rattling good free gift.

He'll be after showing it round to all his gang mates—and it'll be the talk of the town in less than two shakes, believe me.

STARTLER LEAGUE GOING STRONG!

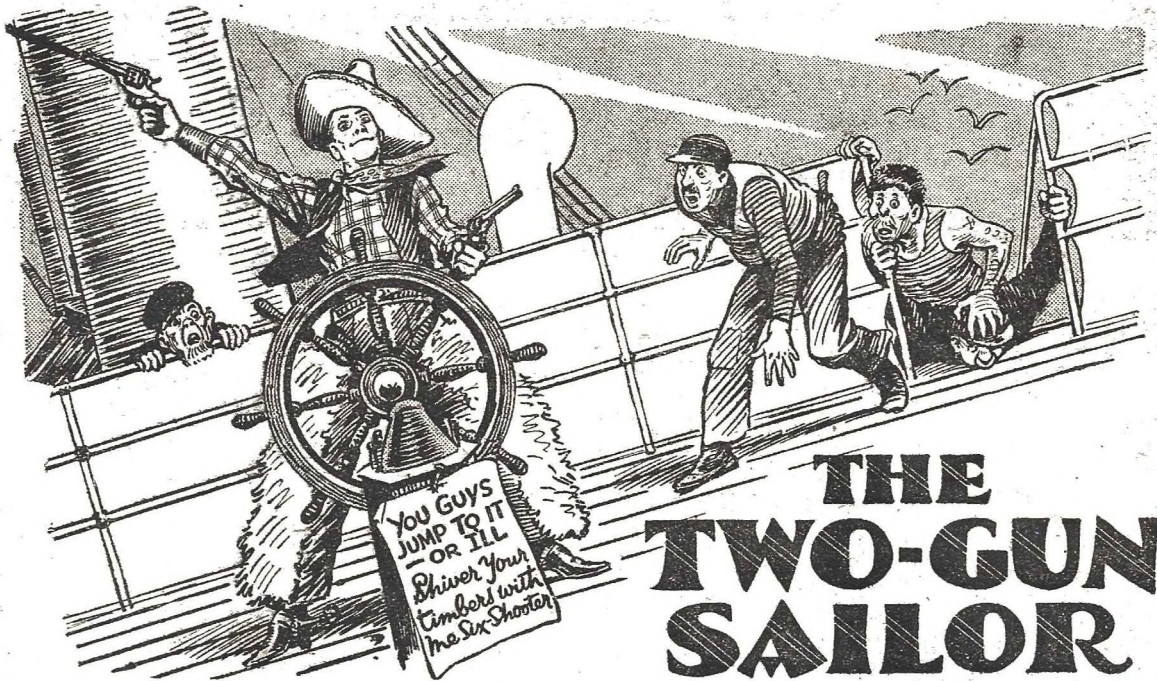
By the way, have you signed that Startler League coupon yet? Get busy, boys, because I can promise every one of you that the Chief Startler's a chap who believes in doing a thing properly when once he rolls his sleeves up. He's that sort of a fellow, take it from me, and he means to make that League of his a regular humdinger affair.

No half measures with him, and the various ideas and schemes he's got in hand for Startler League pals are enough to fill a book—and a whacking big book at that.

Now, lads, don't get left out in the cold. Just sign his coupon, and you'll chortle like turkeys when you get your Badge and Certificate.

Yours till next Monday,

THE EDITOR.



THE TWO-GUN SAILOR

THE COWBOY SAILOR!

THE Two-Gun Kid from Texas strode along the Las Pigano main street, which led from the docks and cattle pens. He'd just come from driving a herd of Hertford shorthorns from over the Border to the Las Pigano.

It had been a tough job, riding the cattle through lone-handed, and the Two-Gun Kid felt he was entitled to a holiday. He hesitated for a moment outside a saloon which told the world by a battered sign that it was "The Happy Harbour." The last time the Two-Gun Kid was there had been with a bunch of the boys, and they had had a regular dust-up with Toni Schmeltz, the half-breed proprietor.

The Two-Gun Kid's lean young face wore a grin as he recalled that scrap.

It seemed that history was repeating itself as he entered. A bawling, yelling crowd milled round two central figures in the saloon.

Sailors and punchers, peons, vaqueros, and hard-bitten two-gun men were gathered there. They were roaring abuse at a battered Mex and bellowing highly-coloured advice at a bucko sailor. The two were engaged in spoiling one another's beauty.

The sailor seemed to be having the best of it, and he knew it. He showed yellow teeth in a wide-faced grin.

His mighty fist, like a block of granite, connected with the Mexican's already pulped face. With a groan the Mex crashed against the bar, then slumped flat down on his back.

It was then that the Two-Gun Kid butted in.

"Tackle someone more your own meat!" he cried.

The words snapped across the saloon like a gun-crack. The Two-Gun Kid, tall, broad-shouldered, chapped, and gunned, bow-legged from much range-riding, thrust his way to the sailor.

"The Two-Gun Kid!" muttered Toni Schmeltz, diving for the shot-gun he kept under the counter.

Toni knew trouble when he saw it! "Outa here, youse guys!" screeched Toni, waving his shotgun. "I ain't wantin' no trouble!"

Under the menace of that deadly-looking gun the crowd surged towards the doors. The Kid and the sailor were swung with them outside.

The Kid's open hand met the sailor's face with a crack. It was a good, stinging swipe, and left an angry patch on the sailor's swarthy cheek.

With a yell he jumped forward, to be met with a straight left that snapped his head back and made him see most of the stars in the universe. The Two-Gun Kid was usually content to let men fight their own battles, but the way this lout had been tackling the Mexican had made him see red.

The bucko sailor was Hurricane Belcher, first mate of the s.s. "Shark," lying in the harbour beyond. He was a big-fisted terror, a bully who ruled by strength and fear.

When the Two-Gun Kid Breezed along, the Toughest Crew on the Seven Seas thought he was a Hurricane!

Some of his crew were with him—a shifty-eyed, good-for-nothing bunch. To keep well in with their lambasting mate, they proceeded to join forces with him.

Hemmed in too closely by milling fists for gun action, the Kid made no effort to reach for his holsters. Back against the wall, he slammed at every face he saw.

A fist crashing into his throat made him choke for a second. Then, when his eyes cleared, he saw Hurricane Belcher's face leering in front of him. With every ounce of strength behind him, he lunged at it. His fist landed square on the mate's nose.

Another fist smacked at the Kid's jaw, and he stumbled.

"Back up, kid!"

A strong voice encouraged him. He caught a fleeting glimpse of a hard, tanned face, a sabre-scar running across the side of one cheek. Vivid blue eyes glinted with the light of battle, and a peaked cap was stuck on one side of a close-cropped head.

Someone had come to help the Two-Gun Kid. The scrap began to wage a bit more evenly. The circle cleared a bit, and the Kid got more space to move. The man who had joined forces with him gave a shout of joy as he knocked a swarthy sailor kicking.

In the clearing, the Kid spotted Hurricane Belcher. He sprang like a tiger, and landed a right hook, swung short and heavy, followed by a couple of piston-like straight lefts.

The man toppled without a groan, clean out. His head met the pavement with a smack, and he lay still.

"Gosh! You've killed him!"

In the pause after that terrific swipe, the Two-Gun Kid heard his new chum breathe the words. For a moment the blood froze in his veins. Then a husky voice cut in.

"Scatter! The cops!"

The Kid was dazed and hesitated for a fraction of a second. Then he felt his arm gripped.

"C'm on, kid! Bolt!"

The Kid found himself tearing down the road to the right, through a narrow alley, and cutting between a couple of crazily-built saloons. They reached a wharf. With a quick scramble over a bulk of rusting chains they dropped into a waiting dinghy.

The man with the scar gripped a pair of oars, and the dinghy moved across the harbour. The Kid crouched low in the stern.

"Gosh! You've killed him!" The words kept buzzing in his head.

"Who are you?" he snapped suddenly.

White teeth flashed in a grin.

"Cap'n Glory, of the Shark!"

The Kid's lips pursed to a whistle.

"You're Cap'n Glory, huh? 'Flash' Glory?"

"Yeah! Object?"

"Uh-huh!" exclaimed the Kid, with-

The STARTLER

What very light thing can you not hold for long?

out meaning. "I've heard of you. Tough guy, aren't you?"

"Kind of," admitted Glory, still grinning. "And you?"

"Called the Two-Gun Kid," the lad answered. "It's a name that earns respect."

"Oh, yeah!" drawled the other. "Best change it, then. Call yourself the Two-Gun Sailor. You're comin' aboard the Shark as my mate, seein' you knocked mine cold."

"See here!" replied the Kid. "I'm a cow-puncher—not a tar-handed sea-cook. Ropin' cattle's my job."

"Some people might call you somethin' else if you'll remember what's happened to Hurricane Belcher," remarked Cap'n Glory grimly. "You're mate of the Shark now. What you don't know about the sea you'll learn."

The Kid's face whitened at the mention of Hurricane. Then he nodded his head miserably. He didn't mind going to sea, no matter how tough the ship, but he hated being forced to do anything—and here was force, with the shadow of a hangman's rope behind it! It was like running away—and that was a thing the Kid had never done.

Cap'n Glory's eyes glinted coldly. A handsome, lean face his, with a jaw hard as iron. The Kid knew he was in a tough school as the dinghy bumped against the fenders of the Shark!

MAN TO MAN.

EVEN to the Kid's inexperienced eyes the Shark was a beauty. But at the moment he wasn't interested in the ship—of which he was second in command!

He sat on the edge of a bunk clasp- ing his head, that now ached and throbbled. He was at sea with the famous Cap'n Glory.

The captain was supposed to be a gun- runner, smuggler, pirate—everything evil on the Seven Seas. A man-eating fighting machine!

Yet despite what he knew—or thought he knew—the Two-Gun Kid found something likeable about the hard-bitten sailor. Those keen eyes that stared straight at you; the fellow's utter recklessness and devil-may-care, you-go-to-Jericho attitude.

Surely a man like that couldn't be the scoundrel that people made out!

"Sea-sick?"

An amused voice floated down the companion-way. The Kid jumped to his feet, to see Cap'n Flash Glory's dark face grinning down at him. He scowled at the man's flashing white teeth.

"Sick? No," he answered. "Have we started?"

"Running out of the harbour now, son," came the reply as Glory slipped down the companion-way. "Guess you musta been pretty well occupied with your thoughts not to have heard the racket, hey? What's biting you?"

"I got something biting me all right," the Two-Gun replied. "To think that just a few hours back I'd driven a bunch of cattle down to the port, an' here I am now, a murderer, sailing with a rotten crew and a crooked captain!"

Cap'n Glory's eyes blazed as his fists clenched. Thin lips drew to a tight line across his hard, lean face. Then the spasm of anger passed.

"So you've heard what they say about Cap'n Glory, hey?" he drawled. "Cap'n Glory, outcast of the sea! An' you believe all you hear! You would, you stiff! An' what are you goin' to do

about it, you rope-throwin', hoss-ridin' gun-thrower?"

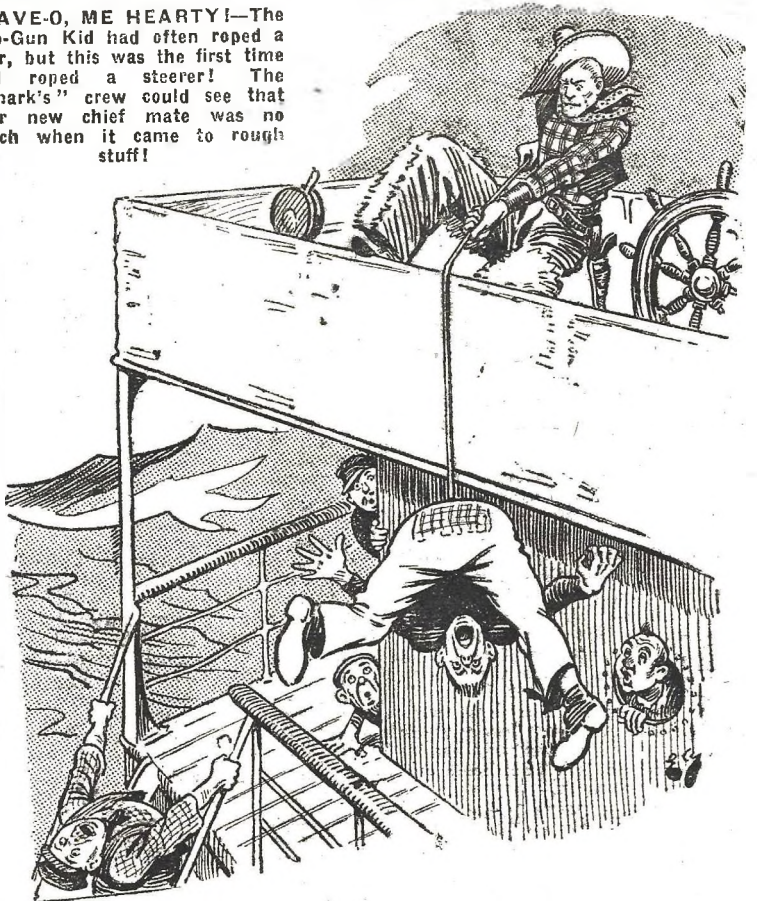
The Kid flushed.

"If it'll ease your mind any, I'll let you know you didn't kill Hurricane Belcher, son! You only outed him. But I wanted to get rid of him for the rest of the voyage, and I wanted a mate who could scrap and handle men as well as he could. You fitted, and you helped me get rid of him!"

"Then you tricked me, you crook!"

The words were snapped out, and Cap'n Glory flushed. The Kid took a step forward, then stopped under the un- wavering threat of an automatic.

HEAVE-O, ME HEARTY!—The Two-Gun Kid had often roped a steer, but this was the first time he'd roped a steerer! The "Shark's" crew could see that their new chief mate was no slouch when it came to rough stuff!



"Son, get this!" said Cap'n Glory crisply. "You're mate of this vessel. What you don't know about seamanship, I'll teach you. You've got the toughest crew that ever sailed. They'll kill you as soon as look at you—a knife in the back, a shove overboard! You may hate me like poison, but you're my officer—and you've got to stand by me!"

The Two-Gun Kid stared straight back at Flash.

"I get you, Cap'n Glory," he said. "But understand this! You're crooked! What you're running I don't know, but if I get a chance to queer your pitch, to stop whatever crooked game you're playing, I'll grab it with both fists!"

An amused smile twisted the cap- tain's thin, straight lips.

"I invite you to help yourself with both hands, son," he mocked. "New York's our port, an' if you find any smuggled stuff aboard you may hand me over to the Customs with your own gun-slinging hands. Meanwhile, remember you and I are the only men except, perhaps, McDowell, the chief engineer—who has nothing to do with it—who can control the crew. Control

'em we must, or they'll grab the ship and send us to the bottom. I had a second mate, but he was so pally with the crew that I disrated him, and sent him for'ard to bunk with his cronies."

"What's your cargo?" demanded the Kid suddenly. "Why should the crew want to grab the ship?"

"The crew'd grab the ship just for the sake of sending me to the bottom," said Cap'n Glory. "As for the cargo—reckon you said you knew it'd be somethin' crooked?"

The Kid flushed and his lips tightened. Then suddenly realising that he had to make the best of a bad

job and stay on the ship till it reached port, he shrugged his shoulders.

"All right," he said. "Come on, Cap'n Glory, an' show me how you run this tub of yours. If I can ride a herd of five hundred head through the Rio Grande an' not lose one of 'em, I bet I can run a bunch of lop-sided sea-crooks to New York!"

Cap'n Flash Glory's eyes twinkled. An admiring look crossed his lean face. There was no doubt about it—he re- spected this new young mate of his.

HOT WORK ON DECK!

ALTHOUGH he knew little about ships, the Two-Gun Kid realised that the Shark was rolling and pitching far more than she ought, although there was a pretty heavy swell on. He found the reason when, as they stepped on to the bridge, Cap'n Glory nudged his arm.

A figure was lolling against the wheel idly. The spokes twirled and whirled unchecked—the fellow supposed to be on duty was almost asleep.

"Your job!" murmured Cap'n Glory.

slipping out of sight. "Get her back on her course!"

Then he slipped out of sight.

The Two-Gun Kid hesitated. He was new to the job. Then he pulled himself together and jumped forward.

"What do you think this ship is?" he snapped. "A water-front dross-house? Get her back on her course!"

His voice cracked like a whip. Two men standing forward looked hastily in the direction of the bridge. The man lolling at the wheel started violently.

He was a tiger-eyed, swarthy, unshaven lout. He stared at the Kid in amazement. His jaw dropped as he saw the lean young face, the cowboy's gaudy silk shirt, the crossed gun-belts and ornamented chaps, high-heeled riding-boots and curved, gold-ornamented conchas and spurs.

"You dropped off'n a Christmas-tree?" he sneered at last, his eyes blazing. "Who d'you think you are? Take them woolly pants off!"

"You're talkin' to the mate of the Shark!" snapped the Kid.

The helmsman's eyes stared unbelievably. Then suddenly his face paled.

"You!" he muttered contemptuously. "What's happened to Hurricane?"

"Left ashore," the Two-Gun Kid retorted. "Look lively an' get back on your course!"

"You talk to Bull Morgan like that, you sawn-off, cow-punchin' rabbit!" snarled the man suddenly.

He let go the wheel, which spun round violently, and started towards the Kid.

The Kid's fist flashed out at once and caught Morgan on the jaw. The man's head jerked back. His hand dived to his hip. As he saw that move, the Two-Gun Kid's hands flashed to his own guns.

Morgan never stood a chance when the Kid's hands flashed to his holsters with the speed of lightning. He did not shoot to kill but to disable.

With a howl of agony, Bull Morgan gripped his left hand, which had been shot clean through. His blunt-nosed automatic dropped to the deck.

The Two-Gun Kid jerked his guns contemptuously.

"Never pull a gun till you know who you're against," he remarked. "Now get back on your course!"

Although the gun-play had lasted for seconds only, the ship was dancing and plunging like a porpoise. Bull Morgan tried to swing the wheel over, but his damaged hand stung badly.

The Kid swung round to the idle two or three gathered in the fore well-deck below the bridge.

"Here—you!" The Kid pointed to a brutal-looking sailor, who glared up.

"Wotcher want, cowboy?"

Again the Kid's hands flashed to his holsters with lightning speed. His guns were out and spitting savagely.

"Yeah! Cowboy!" he snapped.

"That's me! Dance for me, you mis-branded crumple-horns! Dance!"

Heavy forty-five slugs spattered the decks at the feet of the loafers. One nicked the leather of a sea-boot. With howls of rage and fear, the men fairly hopped under the hail of bullets.

"Higher!" roared the Kid, grinning.

The man he wanted at the wheel turned and started to run. Bullets sent splinters of wood up at his heels. The Kid slid one gun back to its holster and unhitched the manila lariat swinging at his hip.

A couple of swings round his head, a deft twist of his wrist, and the lariat swung out and settled neatly over the shoulders of the running man. Hand over hand the Kid hauled him up over

the bridge-rail, then stepped close to him.

"Get this!" he snapped. "I'm mate of the Shark, and as soon as you begin to understand that the better you an' mo'll get on together. Get to the wheel! And you, Morgan, get that hand attended to!"

Both men gave the Two-Gun Kid a poisonous look. Morgan shuffled down the bridge-ladder, and the ship resumed her normal course.

"Good kid!"

The words were spoken warmly as Cap'n Glory stepped from behind the chart-room.

Somehow, the Kid felt a glow at Cap'n Glory's words.

For four hours the Kid stood on the bridge with Cap'n Glory, learning what he could from the orders the captain snapped out occasionally. Gradually he picked up the first rules of seamanship. Once Glory spoke of Bull Morgan.

"Watch that man!" he advised shortly. "That's my disrated second mate. I ought to have sent him ashore when I got to port. If there's going to be trouble aboard, I'll stake my last pea-jacket that feller'll be the ringleader!"

The Kid looked at him curiously. Here was a man who was supposed to be a no-good sailor, patrolling the seas for what he could get, talking of other men being crooks! Then Flash Glory spoke again.

"Here, Two-Gun, you've had enough of this bridge for a time. Get below and turn in for a spell. Hurricane's cabin is yours now. I guess it may need a bit of a turn-out before you get used to it!"

the bills of lading. He felt he owed Cap'n Glory an apology. Perhaps the man was straight, after all.

He came across a little black book, tucked away beneath some volumes of navigation. He picked it up and flipped the pages over. Suddenly he stiffened, his eyes gleaming.

"Rum-runners!" he exclaimed.

There, clear enough in the book, were set out various transactions for cases of liquor that had been placed aboard the Shark at different dates. The book showed that the ship was now carrying a bulky cargo of the illegal stuff.

"Trying to bluff me he was carrying a straight cargo!" the Kid thought.

His eyes blazed. Tucking the black book into his shirt pocket, he leapt to the companion-way.

The Kid was going to have this out with Cap'n Glory!

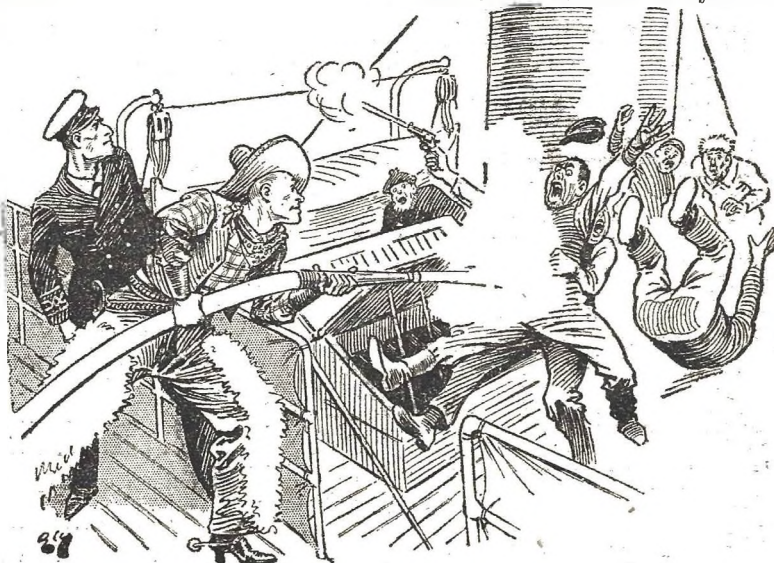
MUTINY!

"TRYIN' to bluff me that you're not running a crooked ship! It's about as straight as a corkscrew! And here's the proof of it!"

Scorn and anger were in the Two-Gun Kid's voice as he thrust the book under Cap'n Glory's nose. Flash took the book and flipped the pages over, looking mightily astonished as he read.

"Cases of liquor in the hold—hidden under the beef, I suppose!" snapped the Kid, his eyes gleaming dangerously. "An' you had the nerve to tell me that I could hand you over to the Customs with both hands if I found—"

"Just a minute, Kid!" Glory's voice



LETTING OFF STEAM!—The Two-Gun Sailor met the mutineers' rush with a jet of steam hissing from the hosepipe. Bull Morgan didn't like THAT Turkish bath as it caught him right on the waistcoat!

"You needn't kid yourself that I'm going to stay on this packet long enough to get used to anything!" retorted the Kid as he slid down the ladder.

He noticed for the first time the untidiness of Hurricane Belcher's cabin. Blankets thrown around anywhere. The desk screwed to the deck was a disordered mass of papers.

With a grunt of disgust, the Kid started to clear the place up a bit. He glanced through various papers on the table, discovering them to be bills of lading for a cargo of frozen beef that they were carrying to New York.

The Kid flushed as he read through

was low when he spoke. His blue eyes looked bewildered as he stared at the Kid. "D'you really think I'm a rum-runner? Gee! I knew I had a reputation, but I never thought—"

"Aw! Don't bluff me any more!" snapped the Two-Gun Kid. "I thought that I was dealing with a man, even if he was a hard case. But you're nothing more than a double-crossin', lyn' skunk!"

A spasm of anger shook Glory. Then he mastered it.

"I swear," he said, and his voice rang convincingly, "that I know absolutely nothing about it! Why, man—"

BOYS, STOP HERE FOR OUR BIG FREE GIFT SCHEME

Something whizzed between them. There was a thud, and a short knife stuck quivering in the woodwork of the chart-house. Both wheeled to the bridge-rail. There was sudden uproar as the crew rushed aft.

The leader had one hand bandaged—it was Bull Morgan!

“Get ‘em, boys!” he snarled, waving a hand towards the bridge. “They murdered Hurricane. They’re going to run the liquor for themselves!”

“Ah! I can see daylight now!” Cap’n Glory snapped. “Bull Morgan was in league with Hurricane!”

His hand flashed to his hip. A nickelled gun made its appearance.

“Get back, you lubbers!” he roared. There was a ragged fusillade from the crew. Flash and the Two-Gun Kid ducked for shelter.

“Look’s kinda tough!” Cap’n Glory chuckled to the Kid as they crouched behind the chart-house.

There was a shout from below, then the patter of scampering feet. Risking a look, the Kid peered over the bridge. A dozen figures were rushing aft.

Immediately his guns roared. Four men dropped to the deck, wriggling. The others galloped back to cover.

The Two-Gun Kid groaned “Gosh! I’ve only five bullets left!”

“I have two!” grunted Glory. Suddenly the Kid’s face lit up.

“Have you got a steam hose?”

“We’ve got one, but you’ll have to get off the bridge to get it, young ‘un.” But already the Two-Gun Kid was on all fours, crawling across the bridge to where the steam-hose box lay on the other side of the bridge-deck.

The Two-Gun Kid covered the last few yards to the box with a sudden dive. He heaved the lid open and dragged out the hose. He could hear Bull Morgan bawling to the men to rush the bridge.

Even as he heard the first scrape and patter of feet across the decks, the Kid fitted the brass nozzle to the hose-pipe. His fingers sought and found the brass wheel controlling the steam. Then, crouched behind the hose-box, he let the mutineers get close to the bridge—then suddenly switched on the steam!

There was a suck and spit, then a mighty roar as the high-pressure steam gushed out from the nozzle. Bull Morgan, well in front, got the first blast of the hissing steam. It caught him full in the chest and sent him reeling.

The Two-Gun Kid’s lips tightened as he sprayed that deadly steam. It was far more effective than even a machine-gun! The mutineers could not stand against it. They howled for mercy.

With a twist of the wheel, the Kid shut off the steam. Glory leapt over the bridge and was among them.

“You’ve lost your leader!” he snapped. “We’re within three days of New York, and that liquor’s going to be handed over to the Customs with a full explanation of how it got on this ship. Now then, I’ll give you this chance. Work as sailors should work, and I’ll see that none of you get dragged into anything.”

There was no doubt about what the crew wanted to do. One and all, thoroughly cowed, they set about the work of clearing the decks.

“Geel!” said Cap’n Glory to the Kid. “I did a good thing for myself when I shipped you instead of Hurricane!”

The Kid gripped Cap’n Glory’s hand. “This kinda game suits me,” he chuckled. “an’ I’m stayin’! I’m the Two-Gun Sailor!”

(The Two-Gun Sailor steers you slap-bang into a storm of thrills next week!
The STARTLER



LOOK IN AT THIS, BOYS!

A Dandy Free Gift if Your Name's Here!

Here's a startling "Startler" stunt, boys: Bonzer gifts for you, absolutely FREE! Perhaps there is one waiting for YOU this very week. Look in the list of names below and see. If you do find your name there, sign the Claim Coupon underneath, get two pals to sign name and address it, and give their ages as witnesses—then paste the coupon on a postcard. Send it to us at once, and YOUR FREE GIFT will come to you without delay.

If you do not find your name here, fill in the Registration Form on the opposite page and post it to us. Then look out for your name. Remember, FIFTY GIFTS will be given each week, and one of them may come to you!

All Coupons and Forms must be posted to:
"Startler" GIFTS, 5 Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

RONSON MACHINE GUNS, FLYING-FOOL PLANES, BIG-SIX PISTOLS, SPRING-HEELED JACKS, CONJURING OUTFITS, ETC.

Just for Signing Your Name.

- D. Case, 4, Tuffolds Close, Manor Sheffield; D. Cook, 33, Shorndean St. Catford, S.E.6; N. E. Potter, 21 Sherbrooke St., Lincoln; R. Roberts, 48, Whitcliffe Rd., Cleckheaton; H. M. Douglas, 15, Murray St., Annan; F. G. Wright, 6, Ordish St., Burton-on-Trent; A. Allison, 22, Wilfred St., West Wyalong; J. Cunningham, 9, Letham Rd., Strathaven, Lanarkshire; R. Long, 61, Stonehill St., Anfield, L'pool; T. Roffey, 51, Planet St., St. Georges, E.1; T. Richardson, 37, Chatsworth St., Belfast; J. Williams, 107, Summer Rd., Peckham S.E.15; M. E. Evans, 79, St. John's Rd., Deptford; C. Willis, 2-41, George St., Parade, B'ham; J. Aubrey, 2, Delta St., New Basford Nottingham; S. Lait, 2, Third Av., Selly Park B'ham; J. Barrett, 215, Lightbourne Rd., Moston, Manchester; F. Andrews, Strawberry Farm, Acle New Rd., Nr. Yarmouth; G. Young, Saxtonhurst, 182, Bromham Rd., Bedford; A. Green, 50, Tynedale Ave., Crews; A. Drewery, 31, Alicia St., Charles St., Hull; T. Almond, 21, Mosley St., Blackburn; F. Bower, 17, Midmay Rd., Islington N.1; C. Moore, High St., Nayland Colchester; W. Reay, 24, Pallister St., S Shields; J. G., 91, Dartmouth Pk. Hill Highgate N.19; J. Dunlop, 2, Clutha St., Ibrox, Glasgow; J. Court, 7, Stanley Villas, Pinner; W. Glover, 4, Gt. Charlotte St., L'pool; W. Billings, 57, Hemlock Rd., W.12; H. Cattle, 194, Market St., Eastleigh, Hants; A. Freeman, 105, Selsey Rd., Edgbaston, B'ham; I. Noone, Clarke House, Curragh Camp, C. Kildare; A. Guest, 197, Knights Hill, W. Norwood S.E.27; S. Dixon, 499, Borough Rd., Birkenhead; H. Hobbs, 29, Christie Rd., Hackney, E.9; I. Bonner, 17, Newton Place, B'ham; S. Gurner, 319, Old Kent Rd. S.E.1; M. Tillett, The Hunters Inn Swanmore, Hants; P. Broadbent, 12, Royal Ave., Douglas, I. of M.; R. Milledge, 33, Elm Rd., King's Farm Estate, Gravesend; D. Edmiston, Knockklayde Villa, Lodge Rd., Coleraine, Co. Derry; W. Shaw, 26, Farmer St., Heaton Norris, Stockport; T. Williams, 48, Oxford St., Gordys, Aberdare; L. Platts, Byram Hall Cuit., Byram Pk., Ferry Bridge, Pontefract; A. Felkin, 29, Gilmour St., Kilmarnock; J. Mailley, 36, Alice St., Paisley; R. Bradley, 28, Cumberland St., Pimlico S.W.1; Wm. Watson, 107, Chalifoner Rd., W. Hartlepool; F. Grigg, 64, Kennet Rd., Reading.

IF YOUR NAME APPEARS ABOVE—SIGN HERE!

CLAIM COUPON for Free Gift.
As my name appears in the list above, I hereby claim one of your Free Gifts, as promised. May 3rd.

SIGNED..... AGE

ADDRESS

Names of Two Witnesses:

SIGNED..... AGE

ADDRESS

SIGNED..... AGE

ADDRESS

Your claim for a dandy Free Gift must reach "The Startler" office not later than Wednesday, May 7th, 1930.



ANOTHER LIST NEXT WEEK! If your name isn't included above, keep a close look-out for it next week, lads!

What pet can you tread on without being cruel?

Bungo Bang snapped the switch of the instrument in his hand, and immediately Pete was able to move his face again.

"What was it?" he howled, glaring fiercely at the smiling Bungo. "What's happened? What's the matter with my face? I thought I'd been paralysed, or something!"

"Paralysed?" shouted Bungo Bang, suddenly. "Paralysed, that's it! You've got it, Pete. You've got it!"

"Got what?"
"Why, the secret of this!" Bungo Bang held up the little torch that he'd found in the secret cavity of his father's chest.

"What is it?" grunted Pete. "A torch? Don't see what that's to do with it!"

"But it isn't a torch!" cried B. B. excitedly. "It's much more exciting than that. It's father's ray-pistol!"

"R-ray p-pistol?"

"Sure! I heard dad speak of it once or twice. But I never knew whether he was pulling my leg or not, and I've never set eyes on it before to-day!"

"Yes, but what does it do?" grunted Pete.

"Do?" echoed B. B. "Well, you've seen what it does! Point this pistol at anyone, and it paralyses their muscles for the time being, as long as the ray covers them. First I paralysed that mouse of yours, Pete. Then I paralysed the muscles of your hand and arm, so that you couldn't move it. Then I paralysed your face, didn't I?"

"My sainted aunt!" gasped Pat. "It doesn't seem possible!"

"Well, it is possible!" replied Bungo Bang with a smile. "My hat, what larks we'll have with it, too. And—gosh!—won't we have some fun with it this afternoon?"

"You mean you're going to try out that ray-pistol at Blackpool?" gasped Pat.

"Exactly!" observed Bungo Bang. "We go there this afternoon to cheer St. Monk's on against their Soccer rivals. After the match we bunk—catch on? We bunk, and we put it across ye worthy folk of Blackpool with pa's ray-pistol. What-ho for some real fun, laddies!"

FUN WITH THE RAY PISTOL.

"THREE goals to two! What a game!" chortled Pete, as the Fearful Four left the ground of the Blackpool school team St. Monk's had been playing. "But we only just scraped home! Talk about excitement!"

Pat and Pon nodded, but Bungo Bang

seemed hardly to have heard Pete's voice. He was looking thoughtful, and when B.B. looked like that it was pretty sure he was hatching some excitement for someone. Resting in his jacket pocket was the ray-pistol.

"Where to now, O king?" asked Pat of B.B. "We'll have to get a move on, 'cause the return train goes in an hour."

"Who cares about the return train?" snorted Pete. "If we lose it we shan't

be missed in all that crowd. Besides, we can scramble over the wall if the gates are closed when we get back, and roll-call's always later on Saturday night, especially after an away match."



Riding bareback on a lion! JUBAL—the Jungle Boy, does it every day and thinks nothing of it. You must join in his adventures in a corking new series called

LORD of the LIONS

They start in next Monday's

THE STARTLER

"Come on, you chaps!" said Bungo Bang suddenly. "We'll buzz along to the Tower."

"What, the Tower Ball-room on the front?" asked Pat. "Why go there?"

"We're going to the Tower Ball-room because it's the best place to try out the ray-pistol, get me?" replied B.B.

"The ray-pistol! Guess I'd forgotten all about that!" said Pon.

"Well, don't forget it! We're going to cause some sensations with it at the Tower, or my name's not Bungo Bang, son of the—Hullo, here's a tram! Jump on!"

The Fearful Four climbed aboard the tram bound for the Tower and went on top, right up in the front, where, by leaning over the rail, they could see the driver.

"We're nearly at the Tower, Bungo," said Pete, after they had been jolting along for ten minutes or so.

B.B. nodded as the tram began to bump across a busy square in which half a dozen roads met. It was here that the son of Bungo had a brain-wave. Suddenly he chuckled, and, leaning over the side of the tram, he pulled out his ray-pistol and aimed it at the driver.

The driver had already stopped the tram in the middle of the square, and the ray-pistol did the rest. Could the driver move his mitts to start the tram again? No. He struggled like mad to shift 'em as a fat bobby on point duty waived him on, but he just couldn't!

Wasn't there excitement! You see, where the tram stuck it blocked all the busy thoroughfares. Lines of traffic were waiting to pass through. Buses, lorries, private cars and carts were all held up. Bobbies were dancing from one foot to another, and pedestrians were standing and staring at the paralysed tram-driver with sagging jaws.

"Hi!" bellowed a burly bobby. "Get a move on! What's the idea?"

"Thee get a move on the'sen!" yelled the tram-driver, struggling like mad. "How the heck can I get a move on when me hands are stuck?"

By this time every bus, lorry and car in the neighbourhood was hooting like blazes. They were all fed up with waiting, and let themselves go. The Fearful Four had never heard such a hideous row, but through it all Bungo Bang kept his ray-pistol fixed on the poor old tram-driver, who couldn't understand what had happened to his hands.

"Look here, lad, you'll be for it if you don't shift that tram!" shouted the exasperated bobby on point-duty. "What's the game?"

"How can I, when I can't move me hands?" howled the tram-driver.

"Pack it up, Bungo! Pack it up!" spluttered Pete. "I'll burst in a minute if you don't stop it! Oh, my giddy aunt, what a mess!"

The sides of the juniors were fairly aching. All other japes were simply put in the shade beside this one.

"Yep, give it a breeze!" gurgled Pon, rolling with mirth. "Talk about a scream! Oh, my hat!"

Bungo Bang nodded and grinned. Then he switched off the 'fluence, and the tram-driver found he could use his hands again. A few seconds later the tram was bumping on, surrounded by hundreds of vehicles which had been held up by the stoppage.

"That's just a beginning," said Bungo Bang calmly. "When we get to the Tower the real fun will start!"

BAGGING THE BANDITS!

WHEN the Fearful Four reached the Tower Ball-room they found there was a posh ball on that night. Admission was by ticket only, and the faces of Pat, Pon and Pete fell.

"That's done it, Bungo!" said Pat. "No admittance without a ticket. We've only got about four bob between us. Looks as if we're stumped!"

"Bosh!" grinned B.B. "Follow your uncle and watch out!"

The Fearful Four marched up to the doors of the Tower, where there was a big commissioner on duty. He glared suspiciously at the lads, and stretched out a hand to bar their path.

HARRY HOBO AND PIMPLE THE PUP

QUITE SUF-FISH-ENT!



"Now then, tickets, please!" he growled.

"We haven't any!" replied Bungo Bang sweetly.

"Then you can't come in, my lad! Clear off now, and no larks!"

"But we are coming in!" observed B.B. coolly. "And you won't be able to stop us!"

"Ho, won't I?" exploded the commissioner.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Bungo Bang to his pals.

The Fearful Four advanced as the commissioner doubled his fists and prepared to repel boarders. Then something seemed to hit his hand and run up his arm like an electric shock. It was B.B.'s ray-pistol getting into action! The man tried to hit out, but nothing happened. His right arm wouldn't move an inch, nor would his left when he brought that on the scene.

To say that the commissioner was surprised was to put it mildly. He spluttered with rage and bewilderment and was just going to roar for help when B.B. transferred the ray on to his mouth, so that he couldn't say a word.

Next moment the Fearful Four were through the barrier and had disappeared in the crowd, leaving the man at the door wondering what had happened to him, and far too dazed to try to stop them.

"Done it!" grinned Bungo Bang cheerfully. "I said we'd get in! And now for some fun!"

Once inside the Tower, the Fearful Four made a beeline for the café and ball-room. A civic ball was being held and all the nobs of Blackpool and elsewhere were present. It was some do!

The chums soon got so busy nosing round the Tower that they didn't realise how the time was going. Already the train by which they were due to return to St. Monk's had left without them!

"Now to business!" chuckled Bungo Bang, fingering the ray-pistol in his pocket.

The Fearful Four entered the great ball-room. The floor was crowded. All around them stood johnnies either in fancy-dress or evening togs. As there were so many people in fancy-dress, the F.F. did not look at all out of place in their school togs.

During the next ten minutes, Pat, Pon and Pete had the time of their lives. B.B. trotted round, fixing folks' faces, paralysing chappies shaking hands, so that they couldn't stop, creating confusion and bewilderment everywhere he went. It was the jape of the century. There wasn't a doubt about that.

Then, just as they were in the thick of the fun, the big commissioner, who hadn't been able to leave the door till now, loomed up out of the crowd. He saw the Fearful Four just as they saw him.

"Quick! Bunk!" bawled Pete. "Ho, there you are!" roared the commissioner, making a dive.

The Fearful Four were just going to do a bunk, when something else attracted their attention. Suddenly four masked men appeared on the scene. They gained the centre of the floor, and their leader had a gun in his hand!

At first the guests thought it was a joke of their host. But they soon realised that it wasn't!

"Put 'em up!" snarled the masked leader, brandishing his revolver.

"The first person who interferes is going to get plugged, and don't forget it! My men are coming round to relieve you of a few valuables. It'll be better for you not to resist!"

Bandits! In a moment everyone had started jabbering and screaming, and getting in a fine old panic. But the gun in the masked man's hand was a pretty safe argument. No one dared to resist.

"My hat, hold-up men!" snapped Pat to B.B.

"Correct!" smiled Bungo. "And this is where my ray-pistol comes in really useful, see?"

"How?" Pat inquired.

B.B. lowered his voice and spoke very quickly into the chums' ears. When he had finished they nodded.

"Get me?" whispered Bungo.

"Sure!" replied Pon and Pat, and Pete nodded as well.



THE INVISIBLE BULLET!—Up went Mr. Raikes' arm, to bring down the cane—but then Bungo Bang got his ray-pistol into action! Old Raikes suddenly found that he couldn't budge that arm of his an inch!

Next moment, Bungo Bang had pushed his way through the crowd of frightened guests and stepped into the open. The leader of the gang had his back turned to B.B., and he didn't notice for a moment that anyone had stepped out of the crowd. Then turning, he spotted Bungo, and in a flash his revolver was levelled at the son of Bang.

"You get back, if you don't want to get plugged!" he shouted angrily.

Bungo didn't budge an inch, and with a snarl, the desperado made to fire his revolver. But, all of a sudden, something hit the thief's hand and he found he couldn't move it an inch! Once more the wonder ray had come into action. Growling, the bandit tried to press the trigger, and failed.

Next moment B.B. had given a shrill whistle. Even as he signalled, Pat, Pon and Pete, the burly commissioner and half a dozen attendants emerged from the crowd and came shooting across.

While Bungo had been advancing across the floor, the boys had been explaining to the commissioner what they intended to do, and, good fellow that he was at heart, he had backed them up right from the start.

The masked man, who was a notorious jewel-thief who had held up house-parties and similar big functions all over the country, and had made colossal hauls, stood rooted to the spot for a moment, vainly trying to press the revolver-trigger, and not being able to move his fingers an inch.

When he saw the game was up, and that the attendants had seized his assistants, who had been taken off their guard when their leader had been held up, he gave a shrill whistle. This was a signal to a man outside to fuse the lights and allow the robbers to get away under the cover of darkness to fast cars, which were awaiting them nearby.

All the lights went out at once, and the chief bandit tried to run. But he couldn't! His feet were stuck because B.B. had transferred the direction of the ray.

Next moment the three chums were on the scene. The chief bandit disappeared under Pat, Pon and Pete. Dust and French chalk rose in clouds, and the revolver went skating across the floor out of reach. By the time Pat, Pon and Pete had finished with him, the bandit wished he'd never seen the light of day.

Eventually the lights came on again revealing a very battered crook and four dusty but triumphant-looking juniors.

Next minute the police were on the scene, grabbing the four crooks and taking particulars. A white-haired old boy, who was evidently a big pot of some sort, came hurrying across.

"My lads, how can I ever thank you?" he beamed, shaking the boys' hands as if he would never leave off. "What bravery, what courage, what pluck!"

The old chap couldn't say enough or do enough for the lads. Then Pat spotted a clock nearby and nearly had ten fits. He knew the last train back to St. Monk's went about nine, and it was ten to nine already. In the excitement they'd lost all count of the flying minutes. Hastily Pat grabbed B.B.'s arm.

"Gosh, Bungo, we'll have to scoot!" he gasped in alarm. "Last train goes at nine. We've only got ten minutes!"

Next moment the Fearful Four were shooting out of the Tower like mad. They did the distance to the station in record time, and arrived just as the "right away" whistle shrilled. They simply shot through the barrier in one solid bunch, bowling over porters who leapt to intercept them.

In a second they swung open a door in the last coach, and tumbled inside. For a minute no one spoke, not even Bungo Bang. Then Pete sat up and looked dolefully round.

"Well, we've had our fun, you chaps!" he growled. "And now we've got to pay for it! My sainted aunt, there's going to be the dickens of a bust-up when we get back, mark my words!"

THE BEAKS WHO COULDN'T WHACK!

"WELL, we're in the soup now," groaned Pete.

The Fearful Four were sitting on their respective beds in the punishment-room, trying to look on the bright side of things, and, with the exception of Bungo Bang, not succeeding very well.

"Guess you're right!" said Pon gloomily.

"Well, when we land back two hours after call-over, and looking like tramps into the bargain, it's not surprising the beaks get a bit waxy!" said Pat dolefully. "And now we're booked for a flogging! And don't look so blessed cheerful, Bungo!" Pat added. "Gives me the jim-jams seeing you smiling with a flogging in the offing! You haven't got anything up your sleeve, have you?"

"Always look on the bright side, Brother Pat!" grinned B. B. "No, I have nothing up my sleeve; that is, nothing that will help us very much,

I think. But you never know. Things may turn out all right."

Just then came a heavy tramp outside the punishment-room. Next moment the key grated in the lock, and old Raikes, their Housemaster, entered.

"Wretched boys, follow me!"

Silently the Fearful Four followed the Housemaster downstairs to Big Hall where all the school were assembled.

"Crikey, a public flogging!" said Pat, licking his dry lips.

Two minutes later the F. F. were on the platform in full view of the whole school.

"I intend to make an example of you boys before everyone present," said the Head sternly. "Your disgraceful behaviour warrants your immediate expulsion, but on consideration, I have decided that a public flogging will meet the case!"

Of course the F. F. might have explained all about their capture of the bandits, which would certainly have told in their favour. But they weren't the boasting sort. They weren't going to blow their own trumpets even to miss a licking.

First, Pat was hoisted on the porter's back amid an impressive silence. The Head brandished the birch, getting a firm grip on it before commencing operations. He raised it in the air, and then, just as it swept down, B. B. brought his ray-pistol into action.

This was the card he had had up his sleeve!

The Head's arm stopped dead in mid-air, and never had anyone seen such comical bewilderment on the beak's face. In vain he tried to move his arm, but it stayed put without shifting an inch. Then B. B. switched off the ray, and Dr. Lakeman's arm fell to his side.

"Very strange, very strange!" murmured the Head. Then he turned to Mr. Raikes. "Perhaps you will perform the office, Mr. Raikes," he said.

"I think I must have cramp in my arm, or something of the kind!"

"Very well, sir!" replied the Housemaster, a gloating gleam in his eyes.

But the same thing that had happened to the Head, happened to old Raikes. He could no more get as far as Pat than the Head. The more his arm stuck, the harder he lashed, while loud titters sounded all over the hall.

"I cannot understand it, sir!" cried the bewildered Housemaster, turning to the Head. "My hand keeps on coming over numb. It is very curious!"

"So does mine, so does mine, Mr. Raikes!" cried the Head nervously.

Just then B. B. switched off the fluence, but before the Housemaster could reply, a servant hurried into the hall and spoke to the Head in low tones.

"Sir Ponsonby Gillet! Why, yes, of course, I will come immediately!" said the Head, telling the porter to let Pat down. Next moment the Head had disappeared.

"Well, what do you make of that?" grunted Pete. "Looks as if old Sir Ponsonby Gillet's called. He's our new governor. Awful big pot, so I've heard. He's been threatening to inspect the school for weeks. Now he's turned up just at the wrong moment!"

Hardly had the words been spoken, than the Head was back, and behind him walked the new governor, Sir Ponsonby Gillet. And when the F. F. saw Sir Ponsonby, they pinched themselves just to see if they were dreaming. The new governor of St. Monk's was the very same old boy who had congratulated them on nabbing the bandits the night before, at the Tower Ball-room!

"Yes, those are the lads!" laughed Sir Ponsonby, bustling forward. "My dear sir, I thought I recognised their caps. And they went rushing off, too, scarcely waiting for a word of thanks. Magnificent modesty. You ought to be proud of them, sir, proud of them!"

As for the F. F., they could only stand and stare. In about ten seconds the whole business had been explained by Sir Ponsonby, and the F. F. had been forgiven. Moreover, the new governor insisted on the whole school giving three cheers for the F. F., and also got the Head's permission for the school to have a half-holiday to celebrate.

"Well, I'm blown!" gasped Pete, when they were back again in Study C. "I can't believe it all happened."

"Oh, it happened all right!" grinned Pat. "Don't forget B. B.'s ray-pistol!"

"Yes, that's right!" observed Bungo Bang, digging his hand into his coat pocket for the queer little instrument that had turned up trumps.

He fished it out and gazed at it fondly. "You're going to be very useful to me," he said, and directing it at a fly that was buzzing in the window, he gave it a last trial before putting it away.

The fly went on buzzing, and in the space of a few minutes, Bungo realised that he had worked the pistol to death.

"Ah well, it has done its job," he said, as he replaced it in his father's old chest.

And there the little instrument lies to this day, nothing much to look at—but what a story it could tell!

(Next week B. B. gives a midnight conjuring show, and proves himself a real "tricky" customer.)



FALL IN!—

**FOR NEXT MONDAY'S GRAND
BIG LAUGH, BIG THRILL NUMBER, LADS!**

Messenger Mick, Two-Gun Sailor, Will o' the Whips, Bungo Bang, the Hobo Tec, The Chief Startler, and Willie Keepit will be there. And there's another great new pal for you in a bonzer new yarn—

LORD of the LIONS

Meet 'em one and all boys, in Next Week's

**DON'T FORGET—
More FREE GIFTS
NEXT Monday, too!**

THE STARTLER

The HOBOTEC

 * PRISON FOR TWO PALS!
 * *****

"RUFÉ, when you decide that you've had enough grub, perhaps you'll remember that we haven't a red cent between us, and that we may have to move from here in one big hurry." Rob Saunders, the Hobo Tec, was speaking to his big black pal, Rufus Napoleon Washington and he went on: "Restaurant owners are apt to be rather fussy about feeding hoboes for nothing. In addition, I am almost certain that fellow in the corner over yonder is one of the Vampire's men."

Rufus Napoleon Washington stopped in the middle of pushing a tremendous wedge of apple-pie into his mouth.

"Wassat, boss?" he gasped. "One ob de Vampire's men?"

Rob Saunders nodded. Rob was a railway detective, and the big, six-foot-four negro was his assistant. They travelled about the country dressed as hoboes, or railway tramps, and their hobby was putting railway crooks where they belonged—in gaol!

The Vampire, whose name Rob had just mentioned, was a bloodthirsty criminal whom Rob and Rufe had come up against many a time, and had prevented from pulling off some big coups. The Vampire had sworn to "get" both the hoboes, and Rufe, for one, never forgot that threat.

"Boss, Ah done t'ink it am about time we shifted from dis li'l spot if dat man am one ob de Vampire's new gang. De Vampire suah ain't no bosom pal ob mine at all, he ain't!"

Rob nodded his head.

"Go right along, Rufe, and settle the bill," he whispered. "You said you could get us a feed, and that you would settle the bill. Well, now's the time to start. You fooled the restaurant-owner into feeding us by showing him a roll of paper with a dud ten-dollar bill wrapped round it, making him think you had a lot of money, and now you had better settle up."

Rufe hastily swallowed the remainder of the apple-tart and called the waiter.

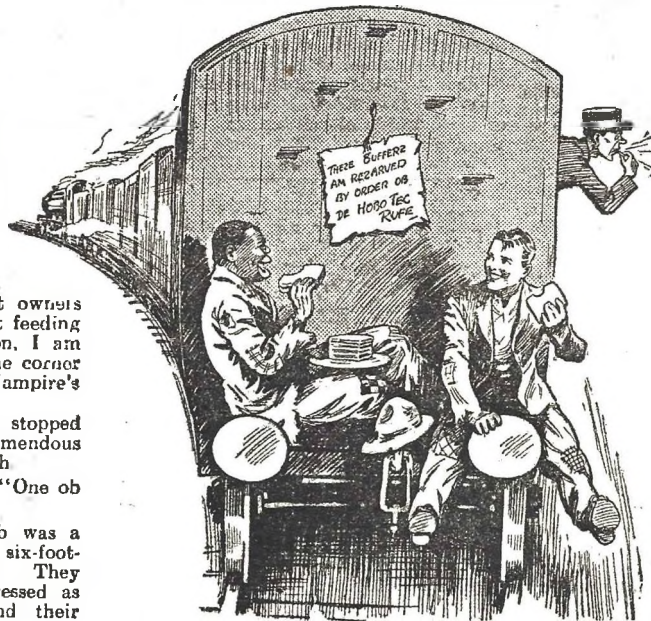
"Send de manager here, bo!" he ordered.

The manager came, and Rufe addressed him with a grin.

"Have you eber had anybody in here who couldn't pay de bill, boss?" he asked. "Cause if you haven't, yo're starting right now!"

The manager's eyes almost popped out of his head as he looked at the negro; then, when he realised that Rufe was telling the truth, and that he had no money to pay for his huge meal, he let out a bellow of rage, and yelled aloud for the waiters.

"Run for it, Rufe!" yelled Rob, and made a bee-line for the door, taking the big nigger's arm and dragging him along with him. But before the two hoboes could get out of the door a



horde of at least a dozen yelling waiters had fallen upon them, and in a trice Rob and Rufe were in the midst of a glorious old scrap. If the waiters had been the weedy, undersized brand so often associated with restaurants, things might have been all right for the two hoboes, but unluckily for them the waiters were anything but poor specimens.

The manager of the restaurant had had customers who couldn't pay their bills before now—he had had quite a lot of them, in fact—and all the waiters he engaged, were big, husky fellows, fully capable of dealing with men who, unable to pay for what they had eaten, tried to make a get-away.

It was, therefore, pretty hopeless for Rob and his dusky pal right from the very first. They put up a gallant fight,

"Look here, boss, I dunno what—" began Rufe.

Crunch! A cunningly-wielded life-preserver hit him across the back of the head, and the negro slumped down unconscious.

The Vampire, for the white-whiskered old gentleman was none other than the railway crook in disguise, laughed grimly.

"Now I'll go back and get the hobo himself!" he chuckled. "He thinks a lot about the nigger, and we'll be able to force his hand."

Ten minutes later Rob received a note. It was terse and to the point.

"I have captured Rufe, your assistant. I am going to pay your fine and get you out of here if you agree to help me. If not, then the negro dies at once.—THE VAMPIRE."

Rob knew the Vampire too well to doubt that he would do as he threatened. He scribbled "Yes" across the back of the note, and ten minutes later he was sitting opposite the

Vampire in a big covered car.

"Listen, hobo, I have you trimmed this time!" grated the crook. "There is a big consignment of jewels coming through this town this afternoon on the west mail-train. I want those jewels, and in addition I am robbing the biggest bank in this town, and I want to get away without anyone knowing how. You are going to wire through to the traffic manager that the mail is to be stopped here, and that her crew are to leave her. Spin him any yarn you like. Tell him you have a chance of capturing me, if you like. He'll believe you, because you have never let him down yet. You'll take the mail-train out of town, and I shall be on the footplate with you. We'll stop and pick up five members of my new gang, then we'll sail away west."

Rob listened in silence.

"And if I don't?" he asked quietly.

The STARTLER

Seventy Miles an Hour Down the Devil's Slide—with a man-killer on the footplate.

but the odds of thirteen against two—for the man Rob had said was a spy of the Vampire had joined the waiters in their attempt to secure the two hoboes—were far too big, and though several of the waiters emerged from the dust-up rather the worse for wear, Rob and Rufe were at length pinned down, and when a policeman arrived hot-foot upon the scene the two hoboes were marched off to the local gaol.

The Vampire's spy hurried off. He had been keeping an eye on the two hoboes all day, and now he had something to report that would please his boss.

Neither the Hobo Tec nor Rufe knew anything of this. They were dumped in separate cells to await their trial next morning, and a bail of twenty dollars each was wanted before they could go out of prison.

The Vampire uttered an ugly laugh. "If you don't, then your nigger pal will die!"

"Very well!" said Rob grimly, his lips set in a thin line. "I'll do it!"

—————
DANGEROUS FREIGHT!
—————

ACROSS in Pine Cloud's telephone office, Rob sent through a call to the traffic manager of the A. W. and C. Railway fifty miles away.

"Hallo, this is the Hobo 'Tec'!" he said. "I want you to send a wire through to Pine Cloud here to have the west mail stopped when she comes through here. You'll have to hurry—she'll be along any minute now. In the order you must say that the train crew are to leave her in the station. I am going to take her out. There is no danger at all, but I have a great chance of capturing the Vampire, and I need the train."

The traffic manager was puzzled, but he agreed to do what Rob said. He had perfect faith in the Hobo 'Tec.

"Only be careful, Rob," he finished. "There are two wild gorillas in one of the rear coaches, being shipped west to a menagerie. Watch out for them."

The Vampire's scheme went off as intended, and when they had picked up the five gangsters, the Hobo 'Tec was forced to leave the engine-cab and go into the mail-coach, where the loot from the bank had been stowed, and where the safe containing the consignment of jewels lay. Two of the Vampire's men took over the engine.

The train was started again, and soon the speed crept up to sixty miles an hour.

Rob was forced to go over and look at the loot, consisting of four big cases of gold bullion. He started as he looked at the cases, for on the floor against the wall lay Rufe, his big black pal, trussed up like a fowl!

The Vampire prodded Rob in the ribs with the muzzle of his gun.

"Well, mister clever Hobo 'Tec, what do you think about this little haul?" he jeered. "You haven't all the brains. Just take a peep at that gold—it's the last you will ever see. You are going through that window in half a minute, when the speed has jumped a little higher. A bullet is much too good for a skunk like you!"

Rob smiled, though it cost him something to do so. His coolness drove the Vampire to fury.

The arch-crook strode across to the window and flung it open wide.

"Sling him through!" he snapped. "He won't smile when he hits the track outside, and gets smashed into a thousand little pieces!"

Rob shook off the hands of the men who were going to lead him to the window. He walked across there by himself, with the Vampire's gun trained on him all the time.

"No need to push me!" Rob smiled. "I'm quite capable of going through a window on my own."

A moment later Rob had disappeared out of the window!

"Well, that's the end of the Hobo 'Tec!" laughed the Vampire.

Then the crook walked across to where Rufe lay, and kicked him. He jerked an order out to the three gangsters clustered round the cases of gold.

"Up with this gibbering nigger and fling him after his boss. We shall be

well rid of both the interfering fools then. Slick, now!"

When the Hobo 'Tec jumped through the carriage window, he had not crashed down on to the iron-hard flints that lined the railroad bed. He would have fought until they had riddled him with bullets before submitting to that fate. Rob knew every inch of that stretch of railway, and he knew when poisoning to jump that the train



YOU CAN'T GUESS
what that means, can you?
But—YOU'LL SOON KNOW
if you turn to page 21.

would soon be passing one of the automatic mail-bag snatchers, a contrivance that takes mails from passing trains in a net, and holds out another bag of mails to be taken in by a special arm that is swung out from the side of the last mail coach.

That was the reason the hobo had jumped on to the window-ledge himself, and prevented the gangsters from looking out of the window.

Rob had leaped well and true. His fingers, steely strong, had grabbed the arm that was holding out a mail-bag, and though the wrench hurt his muscles horribly, he had held on.

"So far, so good," muttered Rob to himself. "Now I've got to get back to that middle coach and see if I can stop the Vampire from throwing Rufe out of the window, as I'm afraid he will do. I'm afraid there are no more mail-catchers to save him."

—————
GREAT GORILLAS!
—————

THE mail-train was ripping past at well on for seventy miles an hour, and the Hobo 'Tec tensed himself for the shock. He saw sticking out of the last coach the special arm that would collect the bag of mail to which he was clinging.

Crash! Rob felt the arm strike the bag. Then he felt himself whirled through the air, and a second later he hit the middle of the floor of the last mail-coach with a thump that shook every bone in his body. But he was unhurt, and in a flash he was on his feet.

Rob raced at top speed through the corridor that connected the coaches. He was half-way through the third coach when something warned him of danger. Jumping to one side, the Hobo 'Tec managed to evade the vicious attack of a big gorilla. Another launched itself at him, and Rob had to dodge again wildly.

"Gee!" he gasped. "I'd forgotten all about the gorillas the traffic manager warned me about."

By a miracle, Rob evaded the huge apes' rush once more; then he had a brain-wave.

"Glory! I'll lead them into the coach where the Vampire and his gang are. They'll cause a bit of a sensation, and perhaps I'll be able to do something to stop the Vampire's scheming."

He darted for the door that led into the next coach, whipped it open, and,

leaving the door wide ajar, he raced through. The gorillas, fighting mad, raced after him, clawing one another in their eagerness to get hold of this human who dodged them so easily.

A few seconds later, Rob burst into the fifth coach, just as the Vampire and his men were lifting an unconscious negro to the open window. Rufe had struggled madly, in spite of his bonds, and the Vampire had been forced, after three vain attempts to get him thrown out, to hit him over the head with a pistol.

"Look out!" Rob yelled the warning as he burst into the coach, and in an instant the little space was a scene of utter confusion.

Only one gorilla stayed to fight; the other spotted the ladder that led up through the roof on to the coach top, and scenting a way to freedom it went up there and through the trapdoor like a trapeze artiste. It was a good job it did, too! The other gorilla flung itself across the floor, downed the Vampire with one sweep from its great hairy arm, and, falling across him and the unconscious Rufe, attempted to throttle the negro and the Vampire at one and the same time.

Rob flung himself into the fight at once. He pulled desperately at the great beast's muscular arm, while the three gangsters did the same on the other side.

Suddenly the door of the coach leading through the corridor opened, and in came one of the gangsters who had been driving the engine. He was scratched and bleeding, and his coat was torn half off his back.

"A gorilla dropped into the cab and downed Simpson!" he panted. "The train is running wild, and we're on the Devil's Slide. We'll smash off the line unless someone gets into the engine-cab to shut off steam—we can't go down the Slide at this speed!"

At that instant the gorilla heaved up madly. The four men had slackened their hold for a moment as they listened to the gangster's story. With a wild scream the gorilla tore free, bounded on to the window-ledge, and crashed out on to the line.

So that was that! Rob turned to the Vampire, who had risen to his feet unhurt, and was staring at the Hobo 'Tec as if he were a ghost.

"We must have been switched on to the wrong line," said Rob curtly. "The bridge at the bottom is closed for repairs. If we get down the Slide in safety we shall smash up at the bottom. The middle span of the bridge is down."

The Vampire's face whitened.

"A—a truce, hobo! I don't know how you're still alive, but as you are, see if you can stop the train. You know more about engines than any of us. Stop the train and I swear that I'll clear off and leave all the loot here. Will you do it, hobo?"

Rob looked hard at the Vampire. "It's a bargain, Vampire," he said suddenly. "I stop the train and you clear off and leave all the loot."

The next instant Rob had dashed through the corridor door and was heading for the front of the train.

He climbed out of the first coach on to the roof, and, jumping from there to the top of the tender, he looked down into the cab of the engine. Only then did he realise that he had come out without a weapon of any sort. Rob's own automatic had dropped out of his pocket

THERE'S ROOM FOR YOU IN THE STARTLER LEAGUE. JOIN NOW! 13

when he had been struggling with the gorilla.

With a grunt he steadied himself, and then jumped down off the top of the tender on to the footplate of the engine, where the fear-maddened gorilla stood waiting.

THE VAMPIRE LAYS A TRAP!

AS Rob alighted on the footplate the great hairy beast that occupied the engine-cab made a vicious grab at him. Rob had reckoned on this, however, and the instant his feet touched the steel plates he leapt lightly to one side. Then, diving nimbly under the raging beast's paw, he clutched desperately at the steam-throttle. Half-way down he got it, then he had to jump for his life, the gorilla missing him by a fraction of an inch.

Rob realised there was only one way of escaping from the gorilla, and that was by getting out of the cab.

The Hobo 'Tec was forced out on to the front of the engine, and the gorilla, mad with rage, followed him.

Rob caught hold of one of the many little pipes that ran up the side of the hot boiler, and hoisted himself to the top of the engine. He slipped down the other side, and back into the cab, while the gorilla scrambled after him.

Once in the cab Rob wasted no time. He had about five seconds to spare before the gorilla entered the cab again.

The Hobo 'Tec jammed off steam, threw the gears into reverse, and then clapped on the brakes. He had no time to do more.

Then he turned to face the infuriated gorilla.

The gorilla was just scrambling round the side of the cab and on to the footplate when Rob grabbed the sledgehammer the fireman used for breaking coal.

He hit the oncoming gorilla one smashing blow between the eyes, and the gorilla took no further interest in revenge for the time being.

The train was now slowing down, but they were almost on top of the bridge. It was a question whether they would pull up in time or not. Rob opened the steam-throttle to its widest, took off the brakes, and allowed the engine to run in reverse gear.

"If it runs over now, it runs over," he muttered. "But I'm going back now to see what game the Vampire and his men are playing. I trust him as far as I trust that gorilla."

The gangster who had been knocked out by the gorilla when it had first rushed on to the engine footplate had now recovered consciousness. Rob searched him and took his automatic.

"I'll need this," he grunted, and, jerking the fellow to his feet, he started for the middle coach of the train where he had left Rufe and the Vampire.

Back in the middle coach the Vampire was getting ready to bolt for it.

"We've got to skip, boys," he was saying. "We can't take the loot with us now. The workmen from that repair camp a hundred yards down the line would soon stop us from carting away a dozen boxes of bullion. What we'll do will be to get away now, and come back to-night for the loot.

"And listen," continued the Vampire,

3-5-30

"The Hobo 'Tec will be as dead as mutton before nightfall. One of you fasten your automatic pistol against the side of the coach, so that the muzzle is pointing directly to the centre of the corridor door. Then another of you tie a string across the bottom of the door at ankle-height. Connect that string to the trigger of the automatic, and when the hobo comes in to see what we have done, he'll catch that string and jerk the trigger of the pistol—and he'll get a bullet clean through him, and that will see his finish. All set? Right, get that done, and then we'll go. We'll come back to-night."

In the excitement of the moment they had quite forgotten Rufe, who lay on the floor. He had been quiet all along since the Vampire had hit him with the gun, but now he was conscious again. A nigger's head is pretty tough, and it takes a really hard biff to lay him out for long.

When the Vampire and his men had gone out he started to wriggle and twist. He chewed savagely at his gag, but it

then a slim figure toppled slowly forward and fell face downwards on the floor.

Mad with rage at his master's fate, Rufe made one terrific, convulsive effort, and succeeded in bursting his bonds. Seconds later he had ripped off the gag.

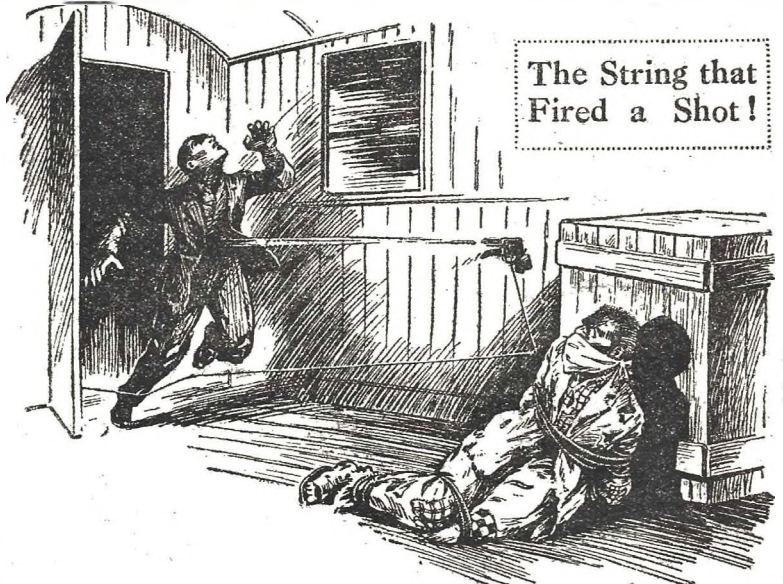
"Boss—boss—you'se ain't daid—boss?" said Rufe hoarsely, bending over the still figure on the floor.

"No—I'm all right, Rufe!"

The negro almost collapsed from sheer shock at the sound of the well-known voice. Rufe's eyes grew round as saucers as he spied the figure of the Hobo 'Tec advancing through the open doorway!

"Golly!" gasped the darkie weakly. "Ah suah t'ought you'se was shot up, boss. Who am dis guy?" And he indicated the still figure that lay sprawled on the floor.

"That," said Rob, "was the gangster the Vampire left to drive the train, and who was knocked out by the gorilla. I thought there might be a warm reception waiting for me when I came back,



The String that
Fired a Shot!

THE VAMPIRE'S LITTLE TRAP!—Rufe couldn't shout a warning to the Hobo 'Tec because he was gagged. As the door opened, the revolver went off with a bang, and the newcomer pitched forward. It looked like the finish of the Hobo 'Tec!

was thick cloth, and defied all his efforts. The bonds, too, had been well tied, and try as he might, Rufe couldn't free himself.

Then suddenly he stiffened. Footsteps were coming along the corridor—light footsteps, like those of Rufe's master, the Hobo 'Tec.

Sweat rolled down the big darkie's face in streams as he tried to cry out a warning. He bumped his feet on the floor, but the advancing feet did not slacken their speed.

Suddenly the door was drawn wide open, and in the dark Rufe saw a dim figure outlined—the figure, Rufe was sure, of his boss, the Hobo 'Tec! He tried to call out a warning that would save his boss from falling into the death-trap, but the gag prevented him.

The figure in the doorway moved, the string tightened. Then:
Crack!

A gout of red flame spurted from the muzzle of the automatic. There was a dull thud as the bullet struck home, and

despite what the Vampire said about a truce. So, you see, I sent this man in first. The Vampire has shot the first man of his new gang, and when I have gaoled or put out of the way the other four and the Vampire himself, we are going to have a long holiday. I'm serious this time, Rufe."

"Den let's hit de Vampire's trail right away, boss!" grinned Rufe.

"I'm willing," smiled Rob; but then, watching his big pal, he saw a thoughtful expression suddenly come to his face.

"Look here, boss," said Rufe suddenly, "Ah suah tink dat dere's one thing to be done befoh we hit de trail of de old Vampire. Ah—"

"And that one thing, Rufe, that we've got to do is to have a jolly good meal, isn't it?" grinned the Hobo 'Tec.

"Boss, you're suah right fust time!" came back Rufe. "Let's hit de food-trail right away!"

And they did.

(Look out for the two hoboes next Monday in another thumping yarn, about a rocket train, boys!)

The STARTLER

MESSENGER MICK

SCALPED!

"DRIPPING!" roared "Pimply" Banks, the bad-tempered manager of the branch of the Union Delivery Company at which Messenger Mick worked.

Nine times out of ten Mick would have leapt to the word of command. Banks was quite surprised when he did not appear this time.

"DRIPPING!" thundered Banks again.

In two ticks Mick was at the door of the manager's office. He was stuffing a pocket-comb out of sight as he clicked his heels smartly.

"Did you want me, sir?" he asked. "Want you?" echoed Banks. "I've been shouting for you for the past five minutes. What's the matter with you, my lad?"

Then he caught sight of the comb just before it disappeared.

"Oh, so that's it!" the manager sneered. "Well, Dripping, it'd pay you better to keep your ears open and attend to business. You're always combing your hair, or polishing your boots and buttons, or brushing your trousers. Your hair will get you into trouble yet!"

"Yes, sir! Sorry, sir!" "Here, take this letter to Richmond!" Banks snapped, thrusting an envelope into Mick's hand.

"Right, sir!" replied M.M., clicking his heels, and scooting for the door.

M.M. dashed for the nearest Metropolitan railway-station. Half an hour later he was tootling along Sheen Road, Richmond, between lines of posh houses with large gardens.

"Lumme! Reckon all the nobs live round here!" thought M.M. "This must be what a bloke over the wireless called 'a burglar's paradise.' Bet it is, too! Come to think of it, ma was saying only yesterday what a lot of burglaries had been going on around Richmond. Tons of 'em! Guess it must be a gang on the job!"

M.M. promptly forgot all about those burglaries for the time being, when, on rounding a curve in the road, he saw a fair.

"Crimson ramblers!" Mick gasped. There was a collection of small booths, swings and roundabouts, a merry-go-round, and gaily-painted caravans.

"Gee-whizz!" murmured M.M., breaking into a run. "This is where the fun commences! Just one peep now, my lad, and then a real look on the way home. Don't forget you've got a message to deliver in double-quick time!"

M.M. moved round the various booths, plastered with highly-coloured bills informing all and sundry that the Fat Lady and Human Skeleton were now on show, to say nothing of Billy the Battling Goat and Basher Bullock the Pummeling Pugilist.

"Brimstone and treacle, this is the life!" chuckled Mick. Then his eyes riveted on a big, beefy-faced bloke standing on a box on the outskirts of the fair. He was roaring at the top of his very hoarse voice.

The STARTLER



HERE WE ARE AGAIN!

A leather case stood on the grass beside him, and next to it a top hat, which the beefy fellow had removed as he got warmed up.

What he said made M.M. prick up his ears and take notice.

"Here y'are! Here y'are!" he was bawling. "The chance of a lifetime! If you don't take your chance now, ladies and gents, you won't never get another. Come along now! Walk up!"

The merchant waved a small bottle of coloured liquid in the air.

When is a Goat not a Goat?
—When it's ALL BUTT!

M.M. also does a bit of butting
in and bottles up a burglar
this week.

"Here y'are! Rumble's Refined Reliable Remover! Removes 'air in 'arf a tick! No more shaving cream! No more razors! R.R.R.R. does the trick in 'arf the time. All for sixpence!"

Mick was at the back of the crowd, and there was so much row going on all over the fair-ground that he didn't catch exactly what the fellow was saying.

It wasn't surprising, therefore, that M.M. mistook "Remover" for "Restorer."

"Come on now, gents!" the big bloke was bawling. "R.R.R.R. is guaranteed! You'll never regret taking a bottle! I've only a few left! Take my advice and plank down sixpence!"

M.M. squirmed through the crowd, and, unearthing a tanner, grabbed a bottle of Rumble's Refined Reliable Remover of Hair. Poor old Mick! He didn't realise he was buying a bottle of "Remover" and not "Restorer."

"That's the stuff, my boy! That's the stuff!" beamed the big bloke, as M.M. thrust the bottle into his pocket and hurried back to the road.

"I'll have to get a move on!" M.M. murmured. "Then I can have another dekho at this show as I come back! Lumme! I'm glad I popped in! A bottle of hair restorer for a tanner. That's a bargain if you like!"

It didn't take M.M. long to uncork the bottle and pour a liberal dose of the stuff into his palms. He smothered that posh hair of his with the liquid, carrying his pill-box under his arm.

"Great scarlet runners!" Mick chuckled, as he saw his reflection in shop windows and mirrors. "Great stuff, this hair restorer. I can feel it sprouting already!"

M.M. certainly did feel something queer going on up above. He hadn't stuck the stuff on more than five minutes before his scalp began to tingle like anything. It was almost uncomfortable.

"Golly! It ain't half powerful!" he muttered. "If I'm not careful I'll have to go and get my hair cut before I go back to the U.D.C."

M.M. trotted on towards his destination, gazing sideways at his reflection in shop windows and mirrors, and he fancied that he could tell a big difference already.

Eventually, Mick struck out into open country where there were no shops, so he couldn't see his hair. But he could feel it all right. The top of his head was fairly burning.

"Brimstone and treacle!" Mick thought. "Reckon I'm getting my money's worth out of this hair restorer all right. Think I'll put some more on. No sense in doing things by halves!"

He uncorked the bottle again and gave his scalp another liberal dose of the R.R.R.R. The pins and needles became fifty times worse, but M.M. bit his lip and forced himself to grin and bear it.

"Luvaduck! What a surprise for the other chaps when I get back!" he murmured. "Wish I had a mirror, though. I'd like to see how it's getting on!"

Mick didn't attempt to put up his hand and feel his scalp—it was too sore!

The R.R.R.R. was doing its work only too well. That hair remover was supposed to be used in small quantities, and M.M. had used about half the bottle!

Quite unaware that anything was wrong, Mick reached the big house where he had to deliver the letter. Forgetting his hair for a moment, he remembered that this was one of the houses which had been burgled by the gang who were operating in the district.

Apparently they worked from information supplied by servants employed at the various houses they looted, though how they got that information the police had so far been unable to discover. Anyway, they seemed to have the lie of the land like an open book, and knew exactly

where all the most valuable plate and stuff was to be found.

By the time Mick reached the front door the remover had done its worst. Mick was as bald as an egg! And the funny part was that he thought he'd got a fine crop of hair!

When a footman opened the door in answer to M.M.'s summons, he nearly fell over. The sight of a messenger-boy as bald as an egg tickled him.

"From the United Delivery Company!" said M.M., handing over the letter and clicking his heels.

"T-that's r-right!" spluttered the footman, taking the message. "I say, my lad, what's up with your head?"

"Ain't you seen a fine head of hair before?" inquired Mick scornfully.

"F-fine h-head of h-hair!" gurgled the footman. "Lumme, what a neck!"

He stared at M.M.'s bald top-knot, and Mick nearly burst with pride. This was the first time that posh hair of his had attracted so much notice.

"Look here!" said M.M. confidentially. "If you want a posh crop of fungus like mine, you take my tip and pop down to the fair near Richmond High Street. There's a bloke there who's selling tanner bottles of hair restorer. I got one just now, and you can see the result! Top-hole, ain't it?"

Then, with a cheery nod, M.M. departed down the drive, with the footman staring after him.

"You'd better put your hat on, my lad," the footman bawled at last, "or you'll get sunstroke!"

"Now, what does he mean by that?" thought M.M.

His scalp was still tingling so much that he daredn't run his fingers across that fine crop of hair he imagined had grown.

At last Mick reached the outskirts of Richmond again, and spotted a mirror in a draper's window. With a grin of anticipation he shot across the road to take his first peep at the result of the wonderful hair restorer.

Then M.M. stood stock-still and wondered if he was dreaming.

"My sainted aunt!" he breathed, stunned by what he saw.

His beautiful hair-parting had vanished, and there remained nothing but a head as bald as an egg. At that moment Mick would have given anything—his alarm clock, his precious autograph-book, or any of his other treasures—never to have set eyes on Rumble's Refined Reliable Remover.

★ GETTING BILLY'S GOAT! ★

"BRIMSTONE and treacle!" gasped Messenger Mick. "What's happened?"

He put up his hands and gingerly touched his smooth, glistening top-knot from which every scrap of hair had dis-

appeared. M.M. stood like one turned to stone, stunned by the shock.

"Lumme!" he groaned. "If that isn't the giddy limit! This blooming hair restorer's a swindle!"

He dragged out the offending bottle and glared at it fiercely. But it didn't do any good just glaring.

"Jingo!" he thought. "I reckoned I'd cause a sensation when I got back to the U.D.C., and there ain't much doubt about it!"

"Hey! Get your hair cut!" yelled a passing urchin.

Mick's pink face went as red as a beetroot. He hastily stuck his pill-box on his head but it didn't cover all his baldness, not by a long chalk. Although he pushed it first on one side and then on the other, first at one angle and then another, the baldness still remained as prominent as ever.

"Crimson ramblers!" gasped Mick. "I've got to get my hair back somehow! Best thing I can do is to find that bloke who sold me this hair restorer and ask him what he's going to do about it!"

M.M. set off at once. People stared and grinned at his baldness.

"Oh, gosh!" muttered M.M., as he broke into a run when the fair-booths

"Hope he hasn't packed and gone!" muttered M.M., keeping his eyes peeled. "If he has, I'm in a proper mess!"

When he was almost giving up hope, Mick spotted his man and dashed forward.

"Here y'are! Here y'are!" the chap was bawling. "The chance of a lifetime! Come along now!"

"Hey!" shouted Mick, pushing his way through the crowd. "What about my hair? Thought you said your blooming stuff was hair restorer? Hair restorer! Look what it's done to my nut!"

"What's the matter with you?" howled the big, beefy-faced man. "Who d'you think you're talking to, my lad?"

"I'm talking to you!" hooted Mick.

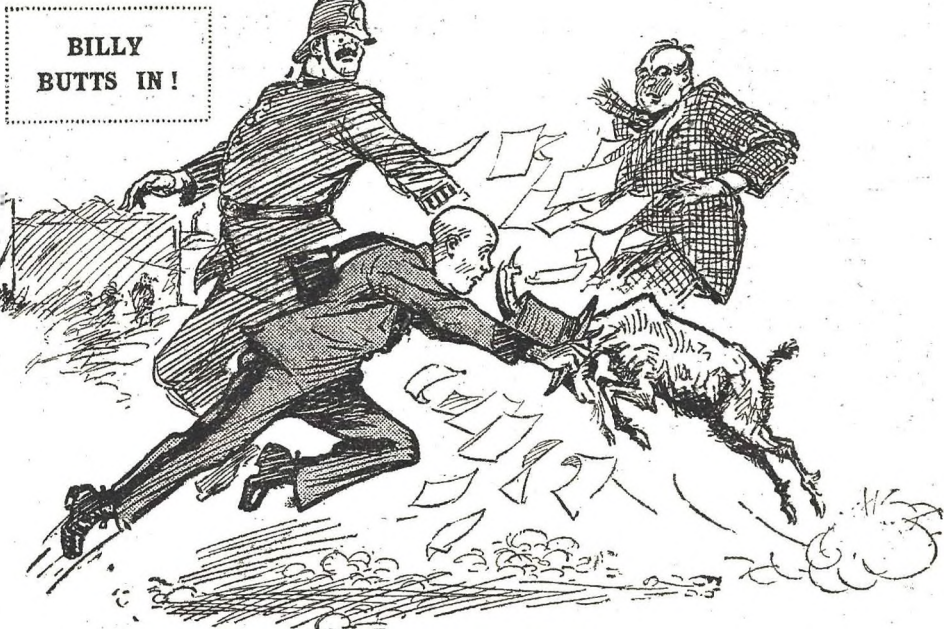
It wasn't often that M.M. lost his rag, but when he'd expected to get a posh crop of hair and had gone bald instead he had some excuse for it.

"What about my hair?" he demanded. "I want my money back!"

M.M. pulled out the bottle, half full, and planked it down on the table before the astonished pedlar.

"You can keep your blooming hair restorer. Hand over my sixpence!"

The big, beefy-faced chap looked at Mick for half a minute as if he'd like



M.M. PUTS "THE LID" ON IT!—Slam! Mick brought the top-hat down hard on the goat's horns—and the pedlar's face went white as he saw the shower of papers come out of his ruined hat. Between them M.M. and Billy the Battling Goat had stumbled on a crooked game!

hove in sight. "I'll go dotty pretty soon if I don't get my hair back. Lumme!"

He was feeling real panicky. Suppose he couldn't get his hair back? Suppose he was doomed to be bald for the rest of his days?

"Luvaduck! I'll never buy another bottle of hair restorer as long as I live!" he moaned, dodging in and out of the crowd and attracting considerable attention.

"Hey! Who let yer out, baldy?" howled a voice in his ear.

"Coo! Look at the human billiard ball!" jeered someone else.

Tripping and stumbling over feet and tent-ropes and wooden stakes, M.M. searched high and low for the big, beefy-faced man. He was getting hotter and more anxious every moment.

to eat him. Then, instead of bursting into a rage as Mick had half expected, he threw back his head and laughed till the tears stood in his eyes. Mick could only stand and gasp with rage.

"Hair restorer be blowed!" choked the big bloke, when he'd recovered. "That ain't hair restorer! It's hair remover! You've got it all wrong, kid! That there lotion's to be used for shaving!"

"N-not hair restorer?" gurgled M.M., his eyes nearly popping out of his head. "Do you mean I've made a mistake?"

"You sure have!" grinned the pedlar. "Here y'are, folks!" he shouted, turning to the interested spectators. "See what Rumble's Refined Reliable Remover does. That lad came and bought a bottle an hour ago. Then he 'ad a beautiful 'ead of 'air. Look at him now!"

M.M. could have gone for that pedlar tooth and nail. Having a bald head was bad enough, but that the fellow should shout about it got Mick's goat. Desperately, he looked round for something to cover his baldness.

Then he saw the pedlar's top-hat. It was a big topper, grey, with a curled brim. Mick saw that a whole crowd had collected to stare at his bald head. That was more than he could stand.

He went the colour of an over-ripe tomato, then dived for the topper at the pedlar's feet. He jammed it on, over his ears, so that his baldness was hidden.

Next moment Mick was running like mad, twisting and turning in and out of the booths. He'd got to get away from the stares of the crowd. He'd got to think things out and decide what was best to be done.

"Hey!" shouted the pedlar. "Come back! What about my hat!"

Mick was past worrying about the pedlar's hat. All he knew was that the topper prevented folk from seeing his baldness.

"Lumme! Wish I'd never seen this blessed fair!" gasped Mick, as he dodged through the booths with the pedlar and a bobby, who had appeared as if from nowhere, in hot pursuit. "Goodness knows what old Banks'll say when I get back! And won't the fellows crow? Brimstone and treadle! Then there's grandma, too! If she sees my bald head she won't half kick up a dust. She's always saying I ought to leave me hair alone and not muck it up with lotions and things."

"Hey, come back! D'you hear?" bawled the pedlar's angry voice, as he and the bobby chased after Mick.

M.M. tore along, having lost all sense of direction. All around him stretched booths, caravans, merry-go-rounds, and a shouting, jostling crowd.

Stumbling and plunging, M.M. ran, with the bobby and the pedlar gaining rapidly.

"Lumme! I can't keep this up much longer!" Mick groaned. "If only I could give 'em the slip!"

Desperately he dodged round the back of the booth, which announced in flaming letters that "Billy the Batling Goat" did his little piece six times daily.

Just then it was Billy's grub-time. He was tethered at the back of the tent on the end of a long rope, quietly enjoying his mid-day meal.

Billy spotted a top-hatted messenger-boy come shooting round the angle of the tent with a bobby and a big, beefy-faced man in tow.

Billy wouldn't have cared a toss about that, only it so happened that Mick tripped over the rope by which the goat was tethered, giving Billy a nasty tug under the chin, and rousing his bad temper.

Billy was famed far and wide for his temper! When Billy was in a wax, everyone kept clear.

That hefty tug under the jaw knocked Billy's front teeth together with a snap. For a moment he was too surprised to do anything. Then he got into action.

Mick had uprooted the stake, so that Billy was free to take matters into his own hands. He ignored M.M., who was sprawling full length on the turf, and shot straight for the oncoming pedlar and the policeman.

"Look out!" grunted the constable, dodging.

He just missed Billy's outstretched horns, but the pedlar wasn't so lucky.

The STARTLER

Billy's fifty-horse-power head-buffers rammed the big, beefy-faced man good and proper. He must have felt as if the Flying Scotsman had hit his pants at sixty miles an hour.

The pedlar let out a howl, then sailed through the air in a graceful curve. He disappeared through a canvas flap into a nearby tent which housed a joy-wheel.

Just then the wheel was in action, and the pedlar hit the centre of it, burying his face among a dozen locals, bringing down the pole which held the tent up.

The canvas walls of the tent sagged, and the whole thing collapsed in a giddy, whirling, whizzing mass.

The joy-wheel went on, mixing up men, canvas and pole in terrific confusion. Talk about a mess! Mick had never seen anything like it.

At last the joy-wheel stopped, got jammed by the weight of canvas, and bulges appeared everywhere as the victims crawled out wherever they could find an opening.

MICK'S HAT TRICK!

MEANWHILE, Billy, with a war-like gleam in his eyes, had been chasing the bobby, who had dodged the goat's attempts to butt him in the waist-coat.

Just as the pedlar crawled from beneath the fallen tent, Billy changed his tactics, spotted Mick, and came at him like a bullet from a gun.

"Ha, there's the young scoundrel!" roared the pedlar, pointing at M.M. as he staggered to his feet. "He's stolen my hat! Arrest him, constable!"

The pedlar was fairly dancing up and down with excitement. Even if M.M. had stolen his hat there didn't seem any need for all this anxiety. Anyone would

in the lining of the hat, and the goat's horns had thrown them to the four winds. "You young rascal!" shouted the pedlar, in a panic.

His face was grey with fear, and his eyes nearly started from his head as he bent down and hurriedly began to collect the sheets.

"You'll pay for this! You'll—" His voice choked with emotion. "Officer, arrest that young scoundrel! I can see to these papers!"

"That's all right, sir!" said the bobby good-naturedly, as he collected the sheets near him, keeping a wary eye on Mick at the same time, in case Mick should decide to do another bolt. Then the constable's expression changed.

"Here, half a mo!" he grunted. "What's this?"

He was staring at the sheets in his hand. The big, beefy-faced man looked as if he wanted to sink through the earth.

"Now, my lad!" snapped the bobby, staring hard at the pedlar. "You'll need to explain these!"

"What's up?" asked Mick, not knowing whether he was standing on his head or his heels, what with his bald head, and the chase and Billy, who by now was wandering aimlessly round, the hat over his horns blinding him.

"Give me those papers!" the pedlar shouted suddenly, attempting to snatch them.

The constable was too quick for him. With a deft movement he caught hold of the fellow with a proper police grip.

"Hey, what's this for?" shouted the pedlar. "I ain't done nothing!"

"Ain't you?" returned the bobby. "Well, perhaps you can explain how you have these interior plans of all the big houses round Richmond in your possession? Looks as if you're the fellow who's been working with this gang of burglars, supplying information."

"It's a lie!" shouted the pedlar frantically. "I don't know nothing about it, straight I don't! I'm an honest man, I am!"

Just at that moment a sergeant came up, attracted by the rumpus. The constable explained everything in low tones, and when he had marched the pedlar off the sergeant turned to Mick.

"Well, you seem to have tumbled into trouble to-day, son!" he laughed. "But you've allowed us to catch a very dangerous man."

"Is he really something to do with the burglars?" Mick asked.

"Pretty certain," replied the sergeant. "As far as I can figure it out, that pedlar goes round to the big houses selling his wares, and getting on good terms with the servants. Then he wangles out of 'em sufficient information to make a plan of the interior of the place. When his pals the burglars break in they know exactly where all the valuables are located!"

"Gee-whiz!"

"But, I say, kid!" added the sergeant. "What's the matter with your head?"

Mick explained in doleful tones.

"Well, never mind!" said the sergeant. "If it hadn't been for your mistake we might never have caught the chap. Come over to the tuck-booth and have a feed."

"Thanks very much, sir!" said Mick gloomily, running a rueful hand over his shining pate. "I'm all for a feed any time, but what I really want now is a bottle of REAL hair restorer!"

(Mick's "hair-raising" adventure next week is a "top-notch" laugh-raiser!)

RESULT OF OUR "STARPICS" CONTEST:

550 WINNERS EACH GET A POSH PRIZE.

There was a record entry for Starpics, lads. No reader sent in an absolutely correct list. The prizes have been awarded to 550 readers who were most nearly correct—the prize-list being specially increased. Owing to lack of space, the prize-winning names are not published, but the list can be seen at "The STARTLER" office, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

have thought that the hat was worth its weight in gold.

"Look out!" gasped M.M., dodging the goat's rush. "You behave yourself, my lad!"

Three times the goat rushed, and three times Mick avoided him. The bobby wasn't going to interfere until Billy had been settled with. Then the fourth time Mick stumbled, and instinctively he whipped the topper from his head and used it as a fender against the oncoming Billy.

Crash!

Billy's horns went straight through the pedlar's hat, and stuck there as Mick jammed the topper well down. At the same time the air was filled with flying sheets of paper.

There must have been at least twenty sheets. They had evidently been placed

WILL O' THE WHIPS



NEARLY SHARK-MEAT!

IT was Chuck Kirby's keen eyes that first noticed the upheaval in the water about half a mile out to sea. He and Bill Willow, better known as Will o' the Whips, were sprawled on a sandy beach on the East coast of Australia.

Some miles to the southward lay the busy city of Sydney, but this part of the coast was lonely. The chums had been into the city from the Bush for stores. They had hired a dinghy and rowed up the coast to this quiet spot.

When he saw the splashing out at sea, Chuck sat up and pounded Bill on the chest to wake him up from his doze.

"Someone in trouble!" he snapped.

Bill jumped to his feet, one brown hand shielding his eyes from the glare of the sun. He could make out the dark, bobbing head of a figure that thrashed its way feebly through the blue water, the water creaming to foam as the figure occasionally thrashed its arms about.

A black, triangular fin was darting round about, drawing closer to the swimmer. It was the tiger of the seas, and terror of Pacific waters—the shark!

Chuck and Will o' the Whips raced down to the dinghy they had beached a few yards above tide-mark. Bill's famous stockwhip dangled from his wrist, as usual, as he sprinted.

The pals heaved the dinghy through the soft sand, then got her afloat. Even from that distance Bill had seen that the swimmer was almost exhausted, that there was little enough time for them to act.

They both bent to the oars like a couple of lifeboatmen, sending a cream of foam flying up from the bows of the little craft. Bill made out that the dark head of the swimmer was that of a man, and he sent an encouraging shout across the water. Suddenly, when they were within a few yards of him, Chuck stood up in the bows.

"Stand ready with your whip, Bill!" he snapped. "I'm going over before that shark gets a bite."

The chums knew each other's qualities down to the last tick. Bill knew that Chuck was like a fish in the water, while the young Britisher was aware that his pal, with the whip in his hand, was as good a defence as it would be possible to meet anywhere.

Chuck parted the blue waters as clean as a whistle, and struck out in a powerful "crawl" towards the sinking man. Will o' the Whips shipped one of the oars; the other he shoved astern and sculled the dinghy after his chum. With his free right hand he shook out the coils of his whip.

He saw Chuck's head surge near the swimmer's. Then the drowning man seemed to give up altogether, and disappeared from sight.

Chuck drew in a mighty breath, turned head over heels and dived. When he came up again he had the insensible man with him.

It was at that moment that Will o' the Whips saw a swirl of water beside Chuck and his burden. There was a glimmering of white. The shark was about to make its kill!

In a flash the whip-master's hand twitched. The lash hissed out and into the water, just as a sharp-pointed head appeared. Chuck forged away from the shark's head in the nick of time. The whip-lash, tough as steel, and nearly as hard, bit into the shark's tough hide. There was a terrific upheaval of waters as the enraged monster swung its tail.

The Pearl Poacher thought he was in EASY STREET!
—But Will's Whip soon put him in QUEER STREET!

As the shark swerved away, the whip flashed out again, this time to coil lightly round Chuck's outstretched arm. The lad gripped the whip as Bill took the strain and heaved Chuck and the stranger through the water.

When they reached the side of the

dinghy Bill heaved the unconscious man over the gun'le, while Chuck scrambled over the stern.

When they got ashore, it took the chums almost twenty minutes to revive the rescued man. He appeared to be half-starved, and greedily lapped at the water they held to his lips. He was not more than twenty years of age, and despite his haggard looks there was something open about his face that told them he was a decent sort.

He sat up when Bill took the billy-can of water away.

"Thanks!" he gasped. "I was just about done in when you chaps turned up. I must have been swimming something like fourteen or fifteen miles."

Bill stared. "Don't talk too much, son," he advised. "Guess the shock's upset you a bit."

"I'm better now, thanks," returned the other. "Name's Andrews—Tom Andrews—" His eyes fell on the coiled whip beside Bill, and he turned suddenly.

"Say, are you Bill Willow—Will o' the Whips? And is this your chum, Chuck Kirby?"

Bill nodded. Tom Andrews' face lit up. His hand shot out and gripped Bill's, then Chuck's.

"What luck!" he exclaimed. "What a stroke of luck! I've heard of you—who hasn't? But it was more than I dared hope to run across you!"

Bill moved uncomfortably, while Chuck stared out to sea. Both of them felt awkward whenever someone reminded them how well-known they were and how much they were admired. By now many of their adventures had been broadcast throughout Australia and the Pacific Islands.

"Did I hear you say you'd been swimming fourteen or fifteen miles?" asked Bill, more to change the subject than from curiosity. "Seems a mighty long way!"

Andrews' face grew grim. His blue eyes took on a steely light.

"Although my yarn doesn't concern you two personally, I've been hoping to meet up with you for the last four days. I'd heard you were in this part of the world. For four days I've been adrift from Pepiti in an open boat, and it's

18 What's the difference between an old boot and a special constable?

given me time to think of many things. I got within sight of land when the seams had sprung and the boat was leaking badly. I was just about done in, and fell asleep when I ought to have been baling her out.

"Next thing I knew was I was in the sea, with the water gurgling over where the dinghy had been. Way out on the horizon I saw the shore-line, an' I just swam, an' swam, then swam some more!"

There was a bitterness about the lad that he couldn't quite hold back, a flash in his eyes that spoke of deep anger.

Will o' the Whips rose to his feet. "If you're rested a bit," he said, "we'll be rowin' back. We'll be pleased to hear your yarn, Andrews."

THE PEARL POACHER.

"EVER heard of Von Stahl?"

Tom Andrews fired the question at Bill and Chuck.

Chuck shook his head at the question, but Bill nodded.

"The German trader?" he queried.

"A tough proposition, got a bad reputation among the islands?"

"The same," answered Tom. "Well, he comes into this yarn—he and a Dutchy the name of Meyer."

"Meyer!" Bill exclaimed. "I didn't know the two were in Co. He's a pearl expert, isn't he? Got big offices in Sydney."

"Right again," agreed Andrews.

"But they sure are in Co. Von Stahl's one of the biggest pearl smugglers and poachers in the Pacific, and he works hand in glove with Meyer, although the Government haven't tumbled to it yet. Von Stahl poaches pearls from any hardworking trader's lagoon, and dodges Government duty by selling them at a lower price to Meyer."

"Meyer has his own way of getting rid of 'em. I can't prove this, but I'm pretty sure of it. I didn't know, however, when I first went to Meyer for help, about six weeks or two months ago."

"I'd been trading around the islands when I hit Pepiti. It's a tiny island, rather off the beaten track. I'm pretty good at diving in the native style. While I was at Pepiti, which is uninhabited and never seems to be visited, I came across a small lagoon—absolutely pure oyster ground that had never been worked. I drew a rough chart, took the bearings, and came back post-haste to Sydney to get an outfit."

"I knew of Meyer, and I put the proposition to him. He agreed to fit me out with a small schooner. I didn't know it but in his inner office was Von Stahl, who overheard everything. Von Stahl and Meyer let me get clear away from Sydney to start work at Pepiti, then up came the German in his schooner!"

Andrews paused, and his eyes flamed.

"Those skunks had planned everything very prettily!" he burst out. "I only needed a small native crew—four Kanakas—for the working was a small patch, but rich. Meyer and Von Stahl knew I hadn't talked about my find, that no one in Sydney knew where I'd gone. Von Stahl came aboard my tiny schooner—and he came shootin'! Those four Kanakas were out like lightning."

"I got a bat over the head and was pitched over for dead. But the water brought me to. I swam around, but couldn't get back aboard the schooner on account of Von Stahl's crew. The lighters were all over the show. I managed to grab a dinghy moored astern. There was a small keg of water in there, and a bag of biscuits."

"I knew I couldn't get the schooner back single-handed, so I reckoned to hike back for Sydney quick as maybe. Before I got away I saw those skunks scuttle my schooner!"

His voice trembled with rage. Chuck glanced at Bill, and saw that his pal was listening to the yarn with the keenest interest.

bit of good, don't you think, Chuck?" said Bill with a smile, and Chuck grinned.

But it wasn't to be all plain sailing. Dutchy Meyer was the type of crook who didn't shift much out of his office, yet who knew everything that was going on through the medium of a spread of spies, who kept him well informed.

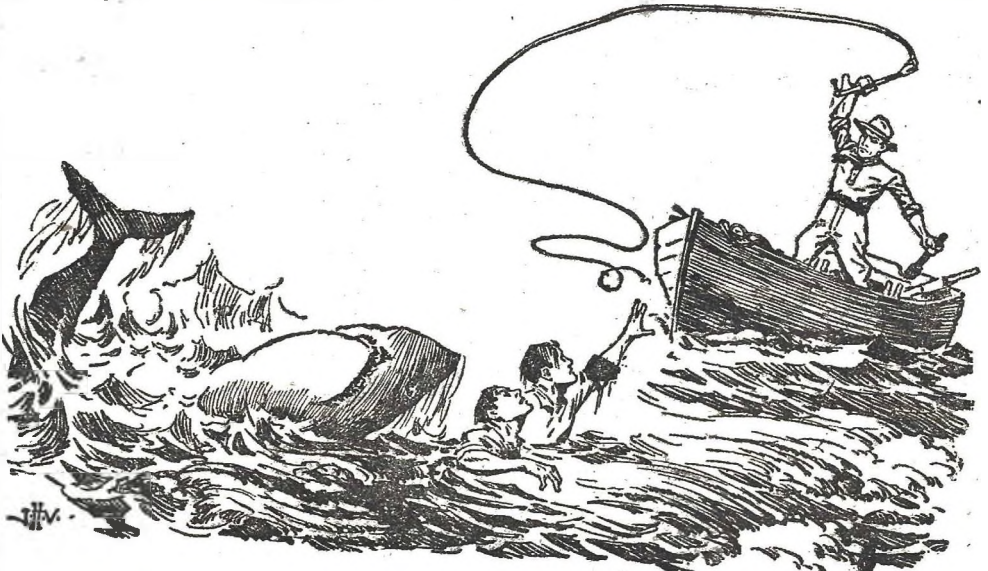
It was while Bill and Chuck were taking Tom Andrews back to Sydney that a snake-faced dock-rat had spotted the three coming up from a quay-side. This man had started and stared, taking cover hurriedly in the shadows. Then, cat-like, he had trailed the three to Bill's quarters.

After that he had scuttled to Dutchy Meyer's office with the news.

"Seen 'em with me own blinkers, Dutch!" he said.

Meyer's pig-eyes grew thoughtful; then:

"There's only one quay where they'll get a schooner. Get some of the boys and hang around there out of sight. Soon as you spot the three of 'em, put 'em to sleep. I don't want Von Stahl



'WARE SHARK!—Chuck flung up his free arm as Will sent the whip-lash curling towards him. He wasn't going to provide Johnny Shark with a free meal if he could help it!

"I got clear of Pepiti under cover of dusk," Andrews went on. "I rowed and I rigged a bit of a jury sail. Then I found that the water in the keg was brackish. Still, I stuck it. The old tub began to leak badly. Then I gradually became exhausted. You know what brackish water does—saps your strength until you haven't any left. I got within sight of land, then I must have fainted. I came to, struggling in the water. The rest you know!"

"And where do we come in, young 'un?" asked Bill, his eyes twinkling.

"Well"—Andrews spoke doubtfully—"I'd heard of you two fellers as being a couple of pretty good cobbers, and always ready for a bit of trouble and adventure. I was wondering if maybe you'd join forces with me and come back to Pepiti? If we succeed, you get a share in the pearl bed. If we lose to Von Stahl, we stand a chance of going to the bottom. But it'll be pretty good fun for you if all I hear about you is true—which I'm sure it is."

"I reckon a sea trip'll do us both a

disturbed if we can help it, although he should have nearly cleared that bed by now. See to it that they don't get away if it can be done."

Crisp notes cracked and changed hands. The snake-faced dock-rat's eyes gleamed, then he touched his forelock.

"You're a toff, Dutch! We'll fix 'em!" he leered.

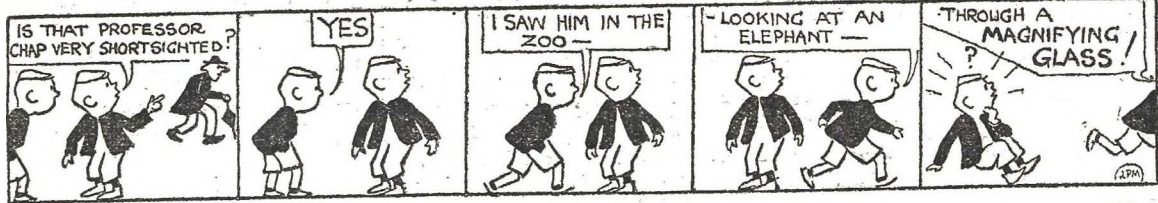
It was only a couple of hours later that Bill, Chuck and young Andrews were making their way down to a trim little schooner that Bill had chartered. They only had a crew of three Kanakas—tall, brown-skinned natives of the Pacific Islands—aboard.

Bill knew pretty well the type of man he was up against in Von Stahl. If he wanted to beat the German by force of arms it would mean chartering a ship as big as the German's itself and taking a big crew with him. Bill relied on a better way than that—brainwork!

It was getting close on dusk as the three made their way down to a small quayside where the schooner lay. They aimed to get out on the rip tide, which

CLEVER DICK

THE MIGHTY ATOM!



would carry them clear out to a favourable wind. As they swung round a corner to get out on to the quay, Andrews, who was half a pace ahead, stumbled and tripped over a rope drawn tight across the way.

An arm swept out of the darkness and a thick bludgeon caught the lad a smack on the back of his neck that sent him reeling to the ground. At the same moment a husky form crashed into Will o' the Whips, who felt a massive arm wound around his throat in a strangling grip. But out of the corner of his eye he caught sight of Chuck having a set-to with two other men.

Exerting all his strength, Will o' the Whips broke away from the grip of the man's arm and sent his fist crashing into a swarthy, bearded face. Without waiting to see the effect of his blow, he swung round.

The butt-end of his stockwhip rose, and fell with a crash on the thick pate of a man who was just about to swing his murderous club on Chuck's head. The heavy whip-handle fell where it would do most good, and without a sound the fellow slumped back. Then Will o' the Whips sailed into the scrap good and true.

There had been four of the toughs altogether, two of whom Bill had put out. Chuck had just landed a beautiful left to the jaw of his man; Tom Andrews had crawled dizzily to his feet and was pummeling at the fourth.

So long as it lasted it would have been termed a good water-front fight, with no holds barred. Actually it only lasted for a matter of seconds when Bill's whip started whistling. The biting thong caught one man a stinger, so that he would be taking his meals off a shelf for the next month, just as Andrews caught the same fellow a smack in the jaw that sent him reeling. The fellow shook his great head, then took to his heels.

He was the only one who got away—the other three lay in various attitudes, sleeping the sleep of the unjust. Bill pounced on one and heaved him to his feet. He was a huge dock worker, sandy-haired and beetle-browed. After a good heartless shaking, his eyes fluttered open.

"Who sent you? Who paid you to wrap it up for us?" snapped Bill. "No lies!"

After the gruelling scrap he'd been through, the fellow had no room left for argument. He glared at Bill.

"Dutchy Meyer," he growled. "That's all I know about it, cobber."

Bill shoved the man away, so that he nearly floundered over the quay. "Tell Dutchy Meyer you failed," he snapped.

Bill turned to his two diggers. "The sooner we get aboard the schooner the better," he said.

"Better do something about these skunks," advised Andrews. "Meyer'll get to know."

"Meyer will know soon," returned Bill grimly. "That's just who the first

man ran to. But Meyer won't be able to do a thing to stop us from getting away now. If he does follow us, we've got a good twelve hours' start. Something tells me that Dutchy won't trouble further. He's done his bit this end to try and prevent us from getting away. He'll argue that if Von Stahl, with a ship and full crew, can't defend himself against three men, he's not worth bothering about."

THE SHIP THAT DIDN'T FLOAT.

THREE days' fast sailing in a clipping breeze brought the chums within sight of Pepiti. They had kept a keen look-out for any signs of pursuit, but Bill's surmise had been correct, and Dutchy had not troubled to follow them.

The island lay low to the sea-level, save at one point, where a bluff of cliff stood out. It was, as Andrews had said a tiny island, one of many dotted around the north-east Australian coast, out of the ordinary shipping tracks.

Andrews pointed to the bluff.

"Von Stahl's ship is standing behind that," he said. "That bluff forms one arm of the lagoon. There's a break in the reef that's big enough to take the schooner at high tide. I suppose she'll wait for that, when they've cleared the bed, and float off."

"She can't get off at low, though?" asked Bill.

"No," was the reply. "I doubt if even a small schooner could. The ship's keel will be resting on the sandy bed in ten feet of water at half-tide. But that makes no difference to us. I don't see what you're going to do. Von Stahl's a man who'll stop at nothing."

"We'll keep out of their sight behind the bluff here!" said Bill, giving orders to drop anchor.

He dropped into a deck chair and stared thoughtfully at the sea. Then his attention was caught by one of the Kanakas, who was squatting on the deck, close to the water-line, stuffing a gaping seam with oakum and soft pitch.

Will o' the Whips turned suddenly to Tom Andrews, who was staring moodily over the side.

"I know you're bustin' for action,

Tom," he said with a smile, "but I reckon we've just got to wait our time before we can do very much. What's the tonnage of Von Stahl's schooner?"

"Bout four or five hundred," answered Tom, somewhat mystified. Chuck, too, looked a bit puzzled.

"How's she built? I mean, is she caulked and seamed like this schooner, for instance?"

"Sure," answered Andrews. "I expect she's copper-keeled to a certain extent, but two-thirds below water-line she'll be seamed, same as any other trader's boat. But I don't see how that's going to help us!"

For answer, Bill walked across the deck of the schooner to a spot higher than where the Kanaka was working, where the seams were dry and hard. He took out his keen-bladed clasp-knife and began to pry at the seams. In a moment he cut through the pitch, then little fluffs of oakum began to fly out. Soon he had picked a hole clean through the seams, so that daylight gleamed through the other side. He snapped his knife shut with a satisfied air and turned to Tom and Chuck, a gleam of triumph in his eyes.

"I think I've got it, boys!" he said, leading the way down to the little state-room. "If Von Stahl were marooned on Pepiti, what would be his chances of rescue till we came back to fetch him?"

"None," Tom answered. "There isn't a boat calls here in a month of Sundays. I'm game for anything you say, Bill, but I don't think three of us have got much chance of fighting that crew."

"We're not going to fight 'em, son," grinned Bill. "At least, not just yet. We're going to sink the schooner!"

"Sink her?"

"Yes! Listen, digger. You saw that Kanaka caulking our seams, didn't you? You saw me uncaulking 'em with my knife-blade, too? That's just what we're going to do with the schooner! You've got some lengths of rubber hose aboard, haven't you?"

For the next ten minutes Bill was explaining what he intended the three of them should do. When he had described his plan there was a gleam of excitement in his two pals' eyes.

"No good bringing the Kanakas into it," he wound up. "They might make a mess of things. It remains just with the three of us!"

A soaring moon shone on the Pacific

(Continued on next page.)

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The STARTLER

as three figures slipped from the side of the little schooner into the water.

Will o' the Whips, Chuck Kirby and Tom Andrews—each was armed in the same way, with a keen, curved knife. Around each of them was wrapped a twelve-foot length of rubber hose. Keeping together, watchful for sharks, they swam steadily and noiselessly around the bluff.

"There she is, all set, from the look of things, and waiting for the tide. We just got here in time!"

Tom Andrews muttered the words as they made out the dark form of the ship ahead of them, resting on the bed of the shallow lagoon, waiting for the rising tide.

"It'll be four hours before she can float out to the reef," said Bill. "I think we may just manage to cook Mr. Von Stahl's bacon nicely."

As they approached the ship, judging from the noise that was going on deck, the crew were having a celebration at getting away from the island.

Bill raised a hand, and they stopped swimming. Taking one end of Tom's rubber piping, he fitted it into a chain hanging above the water-line.

"Stick the other end in your mouth, then get below an' do your stuff," he whispered.

Tom stuck the end of the tube in his mouth and blew through it to see there

was nothing stopping it up. Then he disappeared under the surface, the run of the hose-pipe showing that he was standing on the floor of the lagoon beside the keel of the schooner. Sure that the pipe would not slip, Bill turned to Chuck. But that lad had already fitted his hose-pipe into a staple sticking out just above the ship's water-mark, and was now below the surface, hacking at the caulked seams with his knife.

Then Bill fixed his own piece of home-made air-tube so that the end showed a foot above the water, stuck the end in his mouth, and swam under till he touched bottom.

Standing there with four feet of water above his head, Bill felt the join where the copper keel began; then his knife found the caulked seams,

It was hard work; breathing was difficult, despite the hose-pipe. Bill's arms ached under the strain, but slowly and surely the three of them worked their way along beneath the schooner, opening the seams. For three hours they worked, coming up at short intervals to rest.

Satisfied at last with their work, the three of them left the ship as silently as they had arrived and swam back to their own schooner. Once aboard, Will o' the Whips ordered a rest.

Their schooner had been drifting slowly towards the point of the bluff

when the first howls went up. There were shrieks and cries of dismay, then, across the stillness of the night the chums heard the scrape of hurrying feet across the deck of Von Stahl's schooner.

"Up with our sails, Tom, and let her have it!" snapped Bill. "All she can take, and straight for the lagoon!"

In the dawn they made out the heavily-listing shape of the ship, still standing on the floor of the lagoon, the sea washing over her bulwarks. Men were scattering in panic-stricken groups for the boats when Bill's voice rang across the water:

"Ahoj there, Cap'n Von Stahl! Tell your men not to move, or they'll be shot!" Aside to Chuck, who was cuddling his express rifle, he said: "Fire a couple of rounds overhead, just to show 'em we mean business!"

Bang! Bang!

The two bullets whined over the ship. For a second there was silence, then a guttural voice called across:

"Who are you?"

"Schooner Marian from Sydney," snapped Will o' the Whips. "Your little poaching venture's up, Von Stahl. Drop your arms overboard before you're blown to glory, then pile into the long-boat!"

It was sheer bluff, for their only arms were Bill's whip, Chuck's express, and Tom's automatic. But the bluff worked. The men flung their arms down and crowded to the long-boat.

"Pull for the shore, boys!" shouted Bill, chuckling, "And make it snappy!"

The crew of the schooner did as they were told. Bill watched them scramble out on to the beach, then ordered them to shove the long-boat out into the lagoon again.

"Vot! You vas goin' to maroon us here?" Von Stahl yelled.

Chuck's express spoke, and a bullet whined over Von Stahl's head. Without further argument, a couple of burly members of the crew shoved their captain out of the way and heaved the boat out into the lagoon. She floated on the tide towards the schooner.

"We're only going to leave you there for a week or so, Von," called Bill, as they heaved the long-boat into the stern of the schooner. "We'll be back soon for the pearls you so kindly worked for us! So-long!"

Then he turned to Tom.

"Up she goes, Tom!" he grinned. "We'll bring a Government cutter back with us to look after Von Stahl. He needs a little attention!"

A stiff breeze carried them back to Sydney in a few hours under three days. A complete report to the Government officials, who were keen as mustard after pearl poachers, made them round up Dutchy Meyer, then send a cutter along with the schooner to fetch Von Stahl and his crew off Pepiti.

Tom salvaged the pearls from the schooner's hold. He spent a vain hour trying to persuade Will o' the Whips and Chuck to accept a share in the pearling bed. Neither would listen to him, but each had to accept a small but perfect black pearl as a memento of the adventure.

(In next week's hot-stuff yarn Will o' the Whips bottles up a native raid in corking style. You mustn't miss this beezey yarn, lads!)

PERCY PUZZLEM and his WONDERFUL WAND



WATCH THE FUR FLY!

This is not a trick, just a catch: but it's a good 'un.

Ask your pal to lay a penny on the table, and you put another beside the first. Now you say:

"Jim, I'm going to ask you a very simple question. Quite easy! If you answer 'Yes' you take both coins. If you answer 'No,' I take them. You see it's quite easy and—but have you seen this trick before?"

Sure as eggs are eggs your pal will answer "No!" and you pocket the two pennies! Easy, isn't it?

CLEAN THROUGH A PENNY!

Could you pierce a hole through a penny? Don't say yes too quickly, unless you know the ONLY way.

This is how it's done. Get a cotton-reel, stand it upright on the table and over the top of it lay a penny. Now you need a cork, through the centre of which is passed a needle so that the point just shows at the bottom. Now snip the top off so that none of the needle is showing above the cork.

Stand the cork over the penny so that the point of the needle is over the hole in the cotton-reel. Now hit the cork a sound biff with a hammer. What happens? Why the needle point goes right through the penny.

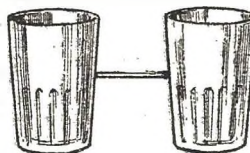
That's a trick that'll make your pals cheer like mad!

The STARTLER

A MAGIC MATCH.

Here's a mystifier with matches. Stand two glasses upon the table and support a match between the two. Now ask your pals to take away one of the glasses, leaving the match still in the same position, using only one other match.

Geel! see 'em sweat trying to make that match stick out straight from the glass. Then see 'em gasp when you show 'em how simple it is. Strike the second match and put it to the black end of the match balanced between the glasses. This will cause the head of the match to stick to the glass, and when you pull the other glass away, the match will still be there.



ANOTHER WITH MATCHES.

For this match-trick you want twenty-four matches, arranged so as to form nine squares. Like this:



Now ask one of your chums to take away eight matches and still leave two complete squares upon the table. When he's spent half the night trying to do the almost impossible, show him how it's done. Take away eight matches and leave:



CHIN-WAG with the CHIEF



STARTLER LEAGUE COUPON.

To CHIEF STARTLER. "The Startler,"
Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4,
I wish to become a member of THE STARTLER LEAGUE. Please send
BADGE and CERTIFICATE to:

NAME..... AGE.....
ADDRESS.....
Names and Addresses of Two of my Pals as witnesses.
NAME..... AGE.....
ADDRESS.....
NAME..... AGE.....
ADDRESS.....

No. 2.

HAVE YOU JOINED YET?

HOW DO, pals of the Chin-wag page? Gee, but I'm only hoping you're feeling as all-fired happy as I am just nowadays! It's all come about through this STARTLER League. I'll tell you, pals,

London Bridge Blown Away!

Fancy seeing a newsboy dashing down the road shouting that spicy bit of news about London Bridge. If newspapers had been printed 850 years ago, they'd have sold like hot cakes.

For it's exactly 850 years ago that London Bridge was actually blown away by a tremendous whirlwind which swept right down the River Thames. They rebuilt the bridge with timber, but 44 years later, in 1135, a huge fire burnt it down again.

That caused the London folk of those days to make a bit of a shindy about things, but it wasn't until 40 years later that they started building the first London Bridge with stone.

Twenty arches formed the bridge, but people went about their work so slowly in those days that it took 'em 33 years to complete the job.

Then in 1450 the bridge was the scene of a terrific all-night battle between the men of Kent and the men of London. Hundreds were killed that night. But the real battle of London Bridge took place five years later when 17,000 men, again from Kent, stormed the southern gates of the Bridge and created a regular rumpus. The artillery from the Tower of London fired at the invaders and succeeded in driving them off.

that I'm up to my eyebrows in work preparing schemes and stunts for the League, but every minute's work is a real big pleasure to me. You chaps know I've travelled about a bit in my time, and wherever I've landed there's always been something to thrill me.

But I'm certain sure there's nothing held me so interested and keen as this job of running the STARTLER League. I'm making new pals from all over the world, and we're going to have some great

adventures together when once we get the League in proper working order.

I just want to ask you chaps to fill in your coupons as fast as you like, and get two pals as witnesses to add their names, ages and addresses.

BADGES AND CERTIFICATE.

The dandy badges will be sent along, together with a jolly fine-looking certificate as soon as your coupon reaches me. You'll be wanting to frame the certificate, lads, I can tell you, because it's something to be proud of.

As for the badge, well, you can guess I wouldn't let you down with a cheap-looking thing. You'll be flashing that bonzer badge round to all your gang mates, and their eyes will be staring out like saucers when they see it—they won't be happy till they get one themselves!

I said last week that I'd show you a sketch of the badge, but there's so much on this page already that I'm holding over the sketch until next Monday. Keep a weather eye open for it, pals!

A CUTE LEAGUE CODE.

This week I'm introducing you to the STARTLER League's secret code. You'll see it on column 3, and it won't take you bright lads very long to work it out.

All you've got to do when writing the code letters is to put a dot in place of each letter and the lines marking off the particular section of the code. You'll notice my signature at the end of my chat this week—it's written in the code lettering. It just needs a little practice to get hold of the code. Always keep the sketch of the code in front of you when you're reading or writing a message, and I guarantee you won't go wrong.

I'll tell you lots more about the League next week, meanwhile tell your pals to join up with the finest League ever started. They simply can't afford to be left out in the cold.

Now for a few newsy paragraphs from two of my pals. They'll be

ABC	DEF	GHI
JKL	MNO	PQR
STU	VWX	YZ

The LEAGUE Code.

receiving beezar pocket wallets from me this week.

A NASTY COUGH!

Have you ever heard of a plant that coughs? Don't all laugh now, I'm not pulling your legs! An explorer pal of mine once told me he was out in the Sahara

Desert some years ago when he stopped dead as he heard a violent cough behind him. He turned round, his hand on his gun, expecting to see a fierce Arab facing him.

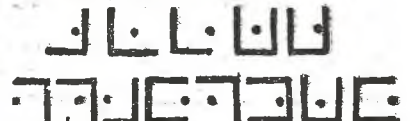
But all he saw was a plant. My pal cocked his ears and listened, and sure enough there it was again. The leaves of the strange plant screwed themselves up and—whuff!—there came a noise like a cough and a cloud of dust blew out of the plant.

He explained to me that the plant collects dust on its leaves, and every now and again it gives a terrific cough and clears itself. I was reminded of this queer plant by a letter I received from Joey Williams, of Peckham,

BOBBING ABOUT IN A BOTTLE.

Have you got a barometer in your house? Handy little things, aren't they? But I bet yours is not like the barometers used in some foreign countries. These are made of tall glass bottles in which are tiny wooden ladders and funny little green tree-frogs. When it's going to rain the little fellows hide at the bottom of the bottle, but when the sun's going to have a day-out, gee, up they pop to the top of the ladders. Thanks for this little item of news, pal Almond, of Blackburn.

Here's my code signature.



Write in to me, pals. Address your letters, Chief Startler, The STARTLER, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

Great Snakes!

Snake-CHARMING isn't exactly an easy job, and only a certain class of Hindoo seems able to practise the charm successfully. Even then the Hindoo has to show plenty of patience before he can make the cobra raise his hooded head and sway to the weird music of the funny-looking reed pipe which he plays.

In India, where travelling snake charmers are generally found, you will sometimes see a Hindoo squatted on the side of a country road, softly playing his pipe near a flat wicker-basket with a broad lid on top. Slowly the lid rises, and gradually the cobra wriggles his long, slim body into the air.

When caught, the poisonous fangs of the cobra are always removed first, in case of accidents. Sometimes the snake goes on hunger-strike, so the snake-charmer prepares for this by carrying about with him the hollow shin-bone of a goat, which he uses as a funnel. With a quick movement he fixes it in the snake's mouth, and pours milk or the contents of an egg down the cobra's throat.



GREEN AS GRASS



A PRESENT FROM SIAMI

THERE had been a lot of joking and japing going on at Barminster College since Simon Green had become school porter. Everybody called the new porter Simple Simon, and the lad from the country was looked on as the best thing for leg-pulling that had ever been at Barminster.

Green as Grass had not been in his new job for more than a day before the college boys had started their tricks on him. Even Mr. Frisby Pipe, the science-master, pulled the new porter's leg—if there was anybody near to laugh! The science-master was like that—a swanker of the first water, and a bully when he could get away with it.

Mr. Pipe thought he saw a fine opportunity for showing off when he came across Simon with a crowd of juniors gathered outside the porter's lodge. The juniors were all grinning as if they'd just had a good joke at Simon's expense, and their grins grew broader when Frisby up.

"Did you say you'd come from Pentland, Green?" the science-master asked, smirking knowingly to the boys.

There was a famous lunatic asylum at Pentland. The juniors went off into yells of laughter. It always paid them to laugh at Mr. Pipe's feeble efforts.

"Pentland, mister?" asked Simon. "I don't come from Pentland. Did you think you'd seen me there?"

Frisby Pipe frowned at that, and shot a suspicious glance at Simon's innocent face. A half-smothered chuckle from the group of lads made him flush.

"My mistake, Green!" he snapped. "Perhaps I should have said that you're going to Pentland!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The roar of laughter made Mr. Pipe feel better.

Simple Simon shook his head in a bewildered kind of way. He was a picture of rustic simplicity.

"You're too deep for me, mister," he

rather not—"

"Nonsense, Green!" broke in Mr. Frisby Pipe. "These cigars are a personal present from the King of Siam, so you need have no fear about their excellence.

"Come, Green," said Mr. Pipe, thrusting a fat cigar into Simon's hand as the lad still hesitated. "I insist!"

"Thanks, mister," murmured Simon, pocketing the cigar.

"Wouldn't you like to smoke it now, Green?" asked Mr. Pipe.

"Not just now," answered Simon. "Well, don't forget to let me know what you think of it!"

Mr. Pipe smiled round in his crafty way, and the gurgling juniors hugged themselves in delight. There was a big surprise in store for Simple Simon when he smoked that cigar!

confessed. "I bet you've made a good joke, if I could only see it. But I ain't very quick."

"Rot!" scoffed Mr. Pipe, smiling round at his admiring audience.

"Look here, Green," he went on, "it is my custom to present a really excellent cigar to every new servant. I can highly recommend these cigars, for they are a personal present to me from the King of Siam! Take one, my good fellow, with my compliments!"

"It's real good of you, mister," said Simon, "but I'd

He tore the leaf out of the notebook and handed it to Simon.

"Hadn't you better sign it?" asked Simon. "Y'see, mister, p'raps Mr. Benton wouldn't part with the goods, seeing that I ain't been at the school very long!"

"Perhaps you're right, Green!" chuckled Mr. Pipe, taking the paper and scribbling his signature.

"You'll wait till I come back, mister?"

"Certainly!" nodded Mr. Pipe.

Green as Grass went off at a plodding trot, leaving Mr. Frisby Pipe and the juniors almost helpless with stifled laughter.

* * * * *
A SLIGHT MISTAKE!
* * * * *

SIMON GREEN was smiling in his simple way as he passed up the steps of Cantell's House and entered the lofty hall. The first person he met was "Ding-Dong" Bell, the burly, red-faced Captain of Games.

"Lookin' for anyone, Green?" asked the senior.

"I've got a note for Mr. Benton," answered the lad.

"You'll find Mr. Benton in Room Number 10 on the ground floor, Green," replied Bell. "And don't, for the love o' Mike, make a mistake and go into Number 12! That's the Head's room!"

It was less than ten minutes later when Simple Simon returned to the porter's lodge. Mr. Pipe and the juniors looked serious as they waited for him to speak.

"Well, Green," prompted the science-master a trifle impatiently, "where are the articles I sent you for?"

"Mr. Benton wasn't there, mister," answered Simon, "so I left the note on his desk."

Mr. Pipe frowned. It looked as though a prime joke had come unglued.

"Mr. Benton is probably back in his room by now, Green," said Mr. Pipe, "so you'd better

Clang-clang-clang! The impatient peal of a cracked bell came from the porter's lodge. A scared light leapt into Simon Green's

blue eyes as he looked up at Mr. Pipe.

"That's the Head, mister!" he said. "I must get along at once, mister, 'cause he's a terror if he's kept waiting!"

"Don't I know that, you fool?" snapped the science-master, flushing slightly as he remembered the interview he had had with Dr. Chutney Todbrister that very morning.

Dr. Todbrister was a fire-eater, who did not mince his words, and he had left no doubt as to his private opinion of Mr. Frisby Pipe. Mr. Pipe had left the Head's study in a daze. He vowed that never again would he fall foul of Chutney Todbrister!

"Move, man!" he ordered as the cracked bell continued to jangle like mad. He thanked his lucky stars that it was the new porter, and not himself, who had to answer the bell.

Simon Green found Dr. Chutney Todbrister in a bad temper. No sooner did the Head see Simon than he roared like a wounded buffalo.

STRIKE The High Explosive Cigar A LIGHT! that was no match for S.S.

Pipe came "Er—Green," continued Mr. Pipe, "I want you to do a little job for me. I want you to go along to Mr. Benton, the sports master, and get one or two things for me. First of all, ask him for a square football."

A stifled splutter came from the boys, but Green as Grass just nodded in his simple way.

"What else is there?" murmured Mr. Pipe, stroking the place where his chin would have been if it didn't fall back so sharply. "Oh, I know! Ask Mr. Benton for a straight hook, a pint of dry water in a sieve, and a couple of second-hand touch-lines. Can you remember all that, Green?"

"No, mister," confessed Simon. "If you could write it down—"

"Certainly, Green!" broke in Mr. Pipe, producing a notebook. "Here we are! Please supply one square football, one straight hook, one pint of dry water in a sieve, and two second-hand touch-lines."

FREE GIFTS FROM MESSENGER MICK NEXT WEEK! WATCH OUT, BOYS. 23

"Send Mr. Pipe to me, Green!" he roared. "Tell him to come at once!"

Dr. Todbrister was a very fiery gentleman.

"Tell him if he's not here in ten seconds I'll come out after him!" he roared as Simon went out hurriedly.

Simon Green came upon Mr. Frisby Pipe near the gymnasium, and the master gave a thin-lipped grin as he noticed the scared look on the lad's face.

"It's a great mistake to let the Head bully you, Green," he said. "Personally, I believe in standing up to him and telling him exactly what I think! That's the only way to deal with him, Green!"

"Thanks, mister," murmured Simon. "Thanks for the tip!"

He was about to pass on when he suddenly remembered something.

"Hanged if I didn't nearly forget to tell you!" he said in his simple way. "My memory ain't very bright, and—"

"What have you got to tell me, Green?"

"Only that the Head's waiting for you, mister, and he says—"

"Pipe! Pipe!!"

The roar came from the far side of the quad. The science-master's face paled as Dr. Chutney Todbrister caught sight of him. The Head was standing at the open window of his study.

"Come here at once, sir!" thundered Dr. Todbrister. "At the double! D'you hear me, Mr. Pip—Pop—Peep—whatever your idiot name is!"

"I think he means you, mister," said Simon Green. "Don't let him bully you! Just stand up to—"

But Mr. Frisby Pipe was away, racing across the quadrangle. Smiling quietly, Simon followed him.

Mr. Pipe pushed open the door of the Head's study. The Head, a powerful man with a big red face, was leaning well forward in his chair, a fierce light burning in his steely eyes.

And lying upon the blotting-pad in front of him was a leaf torn out of a notebook! Mr. Frisby Pipe recognised that sheet of paper. A cold shudder rippled down his spine.

"I—I assure you that there's a— a hideous mistake, sir," he stuttered, rubbing his clammy hands together.

"And you're it, sir!" roared the Head. "I thought you were a science-master—not a half-witted numskull!"

He stabbed the sheet of paper with a muscular finger.

"What's the meaning of it?" he demanded fiercely. "Who gave you the big idea that you could play tricks on me, Mr. Frisby Pipe? Answer that, Mr. Frisby Pipe!"

"The whole thing is a most regrettable mistake, sir. In the first place, it was a practical joke—"

"A what?" snorted Dr. Todbrister. "Do you dare to stand there and tell me that you had nerve enough to play a joke on me?"

He breathed hard and reached for his cigar-box. He was fuming as he took a weed and jabbed it into his mouth.

"Do I understand that you are fond of practical jokes, Mr. Frisby Pipe?" he asked, glaring at the science-master through a cloud of cigar-smoke.

Standing as one turned to stone, Mr. Pipe was staring at the fat cigar. He seemed to be struggling to say something. Strange gurgling noises came

from him, and a look of horror settled on his pale face.

"Gug-gug—" he stammered, still staring at the big cigar as though fascinated. He couldn't understand how Dr. Todbrister had got hold of the cigar, but he knew only too well what was going to happen in a few seconds, when the cigar was properly alight!

"Look here, Pipe!" snorted the Head, pulling hard at the cigar. "I shall report you for this, and when I make a report—"

BANG!

Dr. Chutney Todbrister certainly made a report that time, for the cigar went off with a mighty explosion. The clouds of pungent black smoke that belched from the cigar made Frisby Pipe cough. Neither of the men saw Green as Grass at the window.

Black as a nigger, with his eyebrows singed and his collar dangling over one ear, Dr. Todbrister glared across at the science-master. He was in the act of getting to his feet when the door opened and Simon Green appeared.

"Is anything wrong, mister?" asked Simon, in his simple way. "I thought I heard something go off—"

"There he is, sir!" cried Mr. Frisby Pipe, pointing at Green as Grass. "He's to blame for the whole thing! I can explain—"

"Silence!" thundered the Head, standing up. "Come in, Green! Shut the door!" Then, glaring from Simon

"This is Number Twelve, you lunatic!"

"Then that accounts for the mistake, mister," declared Simon, with a knowing shake of his head. "I'm not very quick at figures. Seeing Mr. Benton wasn't here, I waited a little while. While I was waiting, I saw the cigar-box on the desk. The box was empty, and I thought of the cigar you gave me—the one that was a present from the King of S—"

"What's that?" exploded Chutney Todbrister.

"Mr. Pipe gave me an extra-special cigar, mister," explained Simon. "As I don't smoke, I thought I'd give somebody a treat!"

Muttering fiercely, the science-master gripped Simon by the shoulder.

"See here, Green!" he growled, glaring down into the other's chubby face. "I don't think that you're so soft as you look!"

"And see here, Mr. Frisby Pipe," cut in Dr. Chutney Todbrister, "I think you're softer than you look! Now, clear out, Green! I want to have a few quiet words with you—Mr. Frisby Pipe!" he added, glaring at the science-master.

Green as Grass was still smiling in his simple way as he went out. He seemed to have got the better of the weedy science-master, and from what S. S. could see Frisby Pipe was in for a hot time of it with the Head!



A STRONG SORT OF SMOKE!—Green as Grass, looking in at the window, saw Dr. Todbrister nearly jump out of his skin as the cigar the Head was smoking suddenly burst with a terrific explosion.

to Mr. Frisby Pipe: "We're going to get to the bottom of this!"

"Go on, Green!" cried the science-master. "Confess, man! Say that you're to blame, can't you? Say—"

"Me, mister?" Simon's blue eyes opened wide in astonishment as he turned to Mr. Pipe. "I don't understand. You told me to take a note to Mr. Benton, and as he wasn't in I left it on the desk."

"Which desk?"

"That desk, mister," answered Simon, pointing.

"But this isn't Mr. Benton's room, you fool!" shouted Frisby Pipe.

"Isn't it?" asked Simon. "Someone told me to go to room Number Ten—"

NOT SO SIMPLE, SIMON!

SIMON GREEN saw no more of Mr. Pipe until next morning, when the science-master surprised him by being in a very good mood. This was certainly a bit of a shock to Simon, who knew that Pipe had been chewed up so thoroughly that he had no cause to love him.

"Good-morning, Green!" cried Mr. Pipe as he strode past the porter's lodge.

"Morning, mister," returned Simon.

Mr. Pipe was outside the gates when he came to a halt and muttered with impatience. His brows were drawn

Have YOU written in to the Editor yet?

together in a deep frown as he swung round and went back to the lodge.

"I say, Green," he cried, popping his head into the little kitchen, "would you mind running up to my study? I've left a red-covered book on my desk. I'll be obliged if you'll pop along and fetch it."

"Right, mister," said Simon.

"Here's the key," said Mr. Pipe, "and be sure you lock the door when you come away!"

"Right, mister," repeated Simon, with a vacant expression on his moon-like face.

Taking the key, he was soon back with a bulky red-covered book under one arm.

"I locked the door after me, mister," he said, handing over the book and the key.

"Good!" Mr. Frisby Pipe was smiling pleasantly as he produced a wallet and took out a pound-note. "Er—Green, I'm very sorry about what happened yesterday. I'll consider it a favour if you'll take this little present, just to show there's no ill-will!"

"There's no ill-will on my side, mister," said Simon as he took the note and stored it away in the secret pocket inside his waistcoat.

Chuckling to himself, Mr. Pipe twirled his walking-stick and strode off towards the gate. It was not until two o'clock that afternoon that Simon saw him again.

The meeting took place in the Head's study, the jangling bell having summoned the new porter into the fire-eater's presence.

Dr. Chutney Todbrister went straight to the point in his usual fiery manner.

"Green," he said, his steel-grey eyes boring into Simon, "Mr. Pipe accuses you of having taken a pound-note out of his desk! What have you to say to the charge?"

Simon dropped his battered old sun-hat and stared blankly into Mr. Pipe's fishy little eyes.

"M-me, mister?" he stammered. "D'you mean that I stole a pound-note when I went to fetch your book?"

"That is precisely what I do mean, my man!" answered the science-master,

with an unpleasant smile. "As I have explained to Dr. Todbrister, you are the only person who went into the study during my absence, and you seem to have made good use of the short time you were there! A pound-note was in the right-hand drawer of the desk, and I accuse you of having stolen it! I had taken the number of it, so I shall know it all right when I see it again."

"B-but you gave me a pound-note, mister!" said Simon, looking blankly from Mr. Pipe to the granite-faced Head. "You made me a present—"

"Lies won't help your case, Green!" broke in the master. "I suggest that you make a clean breast of everything! You're a low thief, and you've been caught out! I insist upon your being searched in my presence! Do you hear that, Dr. Todbrister? I insist upon this fellow being searched!"

"And I insist upon your clearing out of my school, you dirty, unwashed scoundrel!" thundered the Head suddenly, leaping out of his chair and towering over the science-master in threatening fashion before he went on:

"Simon Green's so simple that he saw through your trick from the first. He came straight to me and asked me to look after the pound-note for a day or so! He guessed you were up to no good, you scoundrel—and he guessed right! That's how simple he is! Green as grass, by thunder! You've been a bit too clever this time, Mr. Frisby Pipe, and you're going out of my school on your ear!"

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, he caught the lanky master by the coat-collar and the seat of his pants. Without any apparent effort, he swung Mr. Frisby Pipe clean off his feet and rushed him across to the open window.

"Help!" howled the science master, but there was none at hand to help him; that is, except for Simon Green, who certainly wasn't going to interfere and prevent Mr. Frisby Pipe from getting what he deserved.

The frantic science-master, seeing what Dr. Chutney Todbrister was after, clung frantically on to the window-curtains with both hands, but a mighty wrench by the fiery headmaster saw the curtains come away in Mr. Pipe's hands with a rending sound.

"Now!" muttered Todbrister grimly, and tensed his muscles for the effort.

With a tremendous swing, Dr. Todbrister sent the squealing Pipe sailing merrily through space, a comical figure of waving arms and legs. It so happened that an evil-smelling swill-cart was passing beneath the window just as Mr. Pipe reached the top of his flight and suddenly nose-dived with the speed of a swooping bird.

In swooping like a bird, he had the misfortune to land face-first in the middle of the swill-tank. A deafening yell of laughter came from a crowd of juniors as he threw up a torrent of un-savoury spray and disappeared beneath the surface of the sloppy, stifling mess.

"I'll be rude to that fellow next time!" growled Dr. Chutney Todbrister, slamming down the window. "What are you going to do about the pound, Simon?"

"Put it back in the burglar-proof safe, mister!" answered Green as Grass, smiling in his simple way as he stuffed the pound-note into the secret pocket. "I've earned it!"

(Green as Grass will be with you again in another fortnight, boys! Look out for the sparks flying when he returns to the good old STARTLER!)



WILLIE KEEPIT Makes More Mistakes, and Raises More Smiles Next Monday.



KENCHA THE SCROUNGER.

ON THE GRUB TRAIL

STARVATION, the greatest killer the wild north ever knew, was stalking through the white wastes of the country lying close to the Arctic Circle. A blizzard, which had lasted longer than any other within memory, had raged over the land, stopping life with an iron hand.

Trappers had been forced to keep in front of their little stoves and watch with narrowing eyes their small store of food go down. All animal and bird life was forced to take cover and starve. White-winged ptarmigan had burrowed deep in the drifts, musk oxen had herded together, looking like hillocks with three feet of snow covering them.

Many animals had died, and the survivors had crawled out, thin and haggard. The clearing away of the storm meant the starting of a time of merciless warfare among the remaining animals.

Kencha, the wolverine, came from under the lee of a rock that had served as a shelter for her. She sniffed the air long and keenly. Kencha was lean and hollow-flanked, her ribs showing plainly through her shaggy fur. Her eyes were

pin points of light. She was starving. The wolverine is the killer of the northlands. Fiendishly clever, it can live where others starve. For sheer cunning in robbing traps the wolverine has no equal. It is a member of the weasel tribe, a fighter from the toes up. Trappers call it "the Glutton" and "the Injun Devil."

Kencha was getting very old. She had lost three toes in a wolf trap. Now she hobbled on three legs and a stump, and hunting was not the easy thing it had once been.

For the better part of the day Kencha scoured the drifts, searching vainly for signs of meat. Soon after midday, while the short daylight still remained, she headed over the hills into the next valley.

Kencha was never in that valley before, but some instinct seemed to tell her that she would meet with better luck on a new range. Her instinct did not let her down.

Heading down a long, snow-covered slope, Kencha saw a rough shack in the valley below. A gleam shone in her pale green eyes at the thought of it, and a pleasant glow surged through her veins.

Where there was a hut there was usually a trapper. A trapper meant traps and bait. If Kencha could have winked she would have done so, for she was an expert at removing bait from traps.

Kencha did not forget, however, that

When Kencha, the wolverine, ran up against a trap—it was the trapper who got caught!

where there was a trapper there was always a gun. Before tackling the pine wood for the trap-line she decided to take a peep at the shack.

Its owner, Pete Morrow, was not at home. He had taken the first opportunity the weather had given him to visit his last food cache—where he kept his emergency food for his trapping forays, and reset all his traps and grease them. He had started off before daylight, and would not be back before dusk. His cache was some distance away from the hut, and his trap-line

was several miles long. Each trap had to be rebaited.

Kencha, the wolverine, knew enough about trappers to realise all this.

She stalked round the cabin fearlessly. The door was fast, but once assured that no traps had been set around the hut Kencha turned her attentions to Pete Morrow's food store. It was a small sapling driven into the earth in front of the cabin, and on top was a little platform, holding Pete's meagre supply of frozen meat.

It was a poor supply, for the trapper had not been a dozen yards from his cabin during all the blizzard. The store on his little meat platform had dwindled until only about half a dozen steaks were left.

Kencha leapt, and uttered a howl as, her leap being short, she dropped down again, scraping her paws down the side of the pole. Pete had driven a number of fish hooks into the pole to guard his food supply against thieves—animals or men. Kencha had cut one pad on a hook.

Whimpering a little, she sat on her haunches, head cocked on one side, staring at the platform. There was not much meat on it, but the smell of what little there was there made Kencha's hungry mouth water.

After a long survey of the platform, Kencha got up as if to leave it, but her hunger brought her back again.

Then she padded with the clumsy, rolling motion of her kind round the hut. The second sight of Pete Morrow's little outbuilding—his pelt store—jutting from the rest of the shack, gave Kencha an idea.

She leaped on to the outbuilding, and from there to the roof of the shack. There she stood and measured the distance to the top of the platform holding the meat. It would be a good jump, and would need every ounce of her fast-failing energy. But success meant food, and Kencha had to eat!

Twice her leaps failed, and she crashed to the earth, whimpering with the pain. But the third time she was successful. Although the platform, and the pole it stood on, rocked like a young larch in a storm, Kencha stuck on.

Quickly she gobbled down the half-dozen steaks, paying no attention to their stiffness nor the intense coldness of the meat. Then she jumped lightly to the earth and started off for the pine woods where she knew, more food awaited her if she could locate the hunter's trap-line.

It was no concern of Kencha's that she had eaten Pete Morrow's supply of

Which is the Swifter, Heat or Cold?

food. She *slipped* across the snow with nose in the sn. Trap-bait was easy meat to her

◆◆◆◆◆
THE TRAP ROBBER.
◆◆◆◆◆

WHEN Pete Morrow got back and found his supply of meat gone, he was furious. He had only a small supply of beans in the shack, and a little flour, salt and coffee. Over a supper of these he faced his food problem.

He had examined the snow around the hut by the light of a lantern. His groan had been real enough when he had noted the footprints.

"Hang it: Might have known it—wolverine! Durn pesky glutton. 'Twouldn't surprise me if the ornery cuss ain't sprung some of my traps. An' me jes' needin'

every ounce o' meat I kin lay finger on. Gosh dang it! I'm hungry enough to eat wolverine flesh myself—stringy, smelly stuff though it is."

But when Pete went his round next day his rage jumped up several degrees.

Kencha was clever—she had to be, being a cripple. The wilds are far from kind to cripples. The wolverine had robbed every trap. Each one had been sprung, dragged into the open snow, and the bait eaten off it.

Finally, when, for the first time for many days, Kencha had been filled, she had a game of her own, springing the traps and dragging them about so that all the animals that hunted on that trail could see the danger that had been hidden.

"All right, ol' cock!" vowed Pete, when he saw what Kencha had done. "Ye're mighty slick, but there ain't no animal breathin' goin' to slip one over me an' get away with it! I know your sort well enough—and you'll come again! An' if Pete Morrow ain't stretchin' your hide by the week-end—well, I'll chew my own moccasins an' chuck the trappin' game up!"

Pete left his traps unbaited. He knew that game was scarce, and if the trap-raider was left to search for its own food for a day it would be all the more eager for easy meat the next day. He returned to his shack and tried to satisfy his own gnawing hunger with a poor meal of beans and strong coffee.

This starvation diet fanned his wrath, and his anger against the trap-raider grew steadily.

Daylight only lasts a short few hours per day in the region near the Arctic Circle, and it was eleven o'clock next morning before Pete set out. He had time enough to do all he wanted.

As he sucked at his little briar pipe a grin spread over his face. The weight of the extra tackle—traps, bait,

and a wonderful little bottle—grew less as the chance of revenge on the trap-raider flashed across his mind.

He used the bottle only on occasions like this. It was a powerful solution known as musk oil, obtained from a gland taken from the musk-rat. As a killer of smells the oil was great stuff.

Pete knew that he would have to kill his own scent from all traps, however clever they were, if he wanted to snare the master trap-robber—the wolverine.

Two hundred yards deep in the pine wood Pete laid his first trap, baiting it with a piece of highly-flavoured dried fish. It was a delicacy that would be relished by any of the flesh-eaters, and the smell of it would carry a long way.

He covered it over, sifting snow over it through the webbing of his snow shoes. When he stood back the fish

iron arrangement turn over into the air. The jaws of the trap snapped shut with a vicious click.

With that trap harmless, Kencha made short work of the other one. She had eaten the piece of meat only two minutes from the time Pete Morrow had disappeared from sight. It was only a mouthful, however, and Kencha, after licking her lips, struck out on Pete's trail, hurrying so that she would be in time to watch the setting of the other traps.

She had a little bit more than the cunning of all wolverines.

The wind was blowing from the trapper to the wolverine. Neither Pete nor Kencha caught sight, smell, or sound

PETE HAD TO REFEREE!
With his foot caught in his own trap, Pete was helpless. He watched the grim battle between Kencha and the killer bear. If the bear won, Pete knew he would be the next victim!



seemed to lie on a bed of untrodden snow.

Grimacing to himself, Pete laid another trap. He knew that the wolverine would not be taken in by the easy meat. It would creep up and pay away at the snow until it had uncovered the trap. It was because of this that Pete reckoned to catch it on the hop.

He set another trap that would have no bait, a trap that would lie hidden in the snow right where the wolverine would stand to scrape clear the baited trap. He chuckled to himself as he rose from his task. Then, taking the bottle of musk oil, he sprinkled his second trap with one or two drops, the powerfully-scented liquid completely destroying the scent of man.

Then he picked up his gun, the little bundle of extra traps, and his hand axe. Farther into the wood he set more wolverine traps.

If a wolverine could have laughed, Kencha would have been hid in knots—for she had waited all through the night for the coming of the man. She had watched with wise eyes the precautions he had taken, and had marked the spot where the unbaited trap had been hidden.

Moving forward with the litheness of a cat, Kencha wriggled into the snow and got her lame forefoot under the first trap. She gave a quick twitch and had the satisfaction of seeing the

of the fierce-eyed killer bear, scrawney-necked and lean of flank, that was following the movements of both with the light of a terrible hunger shining from red-rimmed eyes.

The bear was so hungry that it was afraid to attack until it could be certain that there would be no chance of a blunder robbing it of food.

The killer slid cautiously from tree to tree, hiding his bulk with a desperate cunning, masking every moment so that neither the man nor the wolverine should get even an inkling that another animal was near. He was famished, and must get food.

◆◆◆◆◆
KENCHA PAYS.
◆◆◆◆◆

THE fourth trap was a teaser, and Kencha spent a time understanding it. All the time the black shadow hesitated, wanting to attack, but knowing that if it made one false move the wolverine would get away.

While Kencha scraped and pawed around, with swift death watching her from the shadow of a clump of pines fifty yards away, Pete Morrow was preparing his best trap, his ace of aces, his trap that never failed. As he set it a smile wreathed his tanned face.

Choosing a little glade, he set down three Whitinghouse wolf traps, strong and dangerous. They were capable of

holding almost anything, and their action was like the action of lightning. Pete set them in triangular formation. In the centre of the triangle he tossed a piece of squirrel meat. Squirrel meat is a delicacy of the wild, and few animals can resist its lure.

Using his snow-shoes again as a drifter, Pete shook snow over the traps. Then he took a long piece of white catgut from his pack and threaded it through the chain holes on each trap. He took it round the triangle so that the squirrel-meat bait was encircled by a white cord, lying flat and invisible on top of the snow.

Pete took the two ends of the catgut to a tree near at hand, and knotted them together. Then he brought out his ace—a trusty old Colt .45. This he fastened to the trunk of the tree, fixing the catgut to the trigger.

Any animal after the squirrel meat would have to take four risks. It might miss the three traps, but it was a thousand to one that one of the thief's legs would trip the catgut and press the trigger of the revolver.

The trap had never failed. As he collected his gear Pete was still grinning.

"Now, wolverine," he chuckled, "jes' step along an' I'll be skinning your hide by noon to-morrow!"

Kencha was just coming along in time to see Pete collect his gear. The trapper almost brushed the wolverine as he took the trail back to his shack, heading straight into the arms of the killer bear waiting patiently on the back trail.

The wolverine slipped into the glade almost before the shuffling sound of the trapper's snow-shoes had died away. She hit the first trap immediately. Success had made her careless. With the bait three yards away she had slid up too far.

With a muffled click the spring was loosed, and the powerful jaws of the trap closed on Kencha's hind leg.

The pain forced a scream from her lips. There would be no biting free from this trap. Her leg was well and truly caught.

Pete Morrow was scarcely thirty yards away when he heard Kencha's scream. The trapper stopped, and it was well for him that he did so.

The killer bear, lips drawn back in a snarl, was about to strike.

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Pete's abrupt halt caused the downward swish of the great hairy paw to miss. Then Pete acted. No trapper can afford to be slow, and Pete was faster than many. He caught a sideways glimpse of the great black bear, mouth agape, eyes glaring. Pete dropped his pack, gun, knife and axe, and raced back on his tracks, with the bear hard on his heels.

None knew better than Pete what would be the outcome of it all if the bear caught up to him. With his thoughts racing madly as he tried to think of some way of escape, he crashed into the little glade where Kencha lay a prisoner. He had forgotten his traps for the moment, but remembered them an instant later.

His right foot depressed one of the trap-release pans, and with a vicious click the jaws closed over his foot and flung him to the ground.

A crowd of bright lights flashed through his brain. For the time being he ceased to worry about the killer bear.

The bear stood and swayed angrily on his feet, his near-sighted eyes trying to decide which way the man had gone. Then he spotted the wolverine straining madly at the trap jaws. With a grunt he jumped to attack, leaving Pete, about to sit up, mighty glad that he had escaped notice.

A terrific scurrying followed. The bear was desperate, so was Kencha. Kencha was a fighter from the toes up, though only half the size of the bear.

Screams and grunts made a hideous racket, and the snow began to be dyed red. Once the fighting animals crashed over on Pete as he strove to release himself. The half-open trap closed again, sending a shooting pain through Pete.

He lay down, trying to summon strength. The pain of his leg was making his head whirl. As he watched the fighters he realised that another minute would see the finish of the battle, and that he would be the next victim. Kencha, brave battler though she was, was handicapped by her leg, still fastened in the trap jaws.

Then the battle ended. Kencha, struggling madly, caught her lame paw in the catgut string. There was a sudden explosion, a spurting gout of orange flame, and a dull thud as the revolver bullet got home.

Pete, dazed with pain, watched in amazement while the two animals fell apart, the wolverine sprawled, exhausted, on the snow, the bear to roll over, lifeless. The bullet had pierced his heart.

Ten minutes later the trapper had recovered enough to prise loose his leg. Walking unsteadily across to where Kencha lay, he stuck one foot on the release handle and pressed the trap slowly down.

Kencha was badly wounded, but not so badly that she did not know when the trap was opening. She drew out her leg, and snarled up at Pete, who laughed shakily.

"All right, ol' gal," he chuckled. "You're a sure-enough fighter. I ain't ainin' to bump you off, though I guess I oughter. I'm gonna take all the choice bits off this ole b'ar, then leave the rest for you. Guess you kinda saved my hide when you tackled the b'ar, and pressed the trigger-string, even if it was an accident. I'm gonna give you another chance."

Kencha seemed to sense that the trapper could have killed her. When Pete returned next day to rebait his trap, limping along with the aid of a rough crutch, the wolverine had crawled away to nurse her injuries.

Pete never saw her again. She had gone further south, where hunting was not so hard, and where the rabbits were easier to get.

(You must look out for "Old Battering Ram!" next Monday, boys!)

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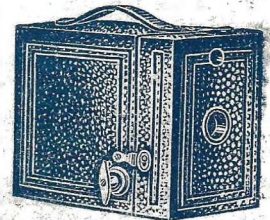
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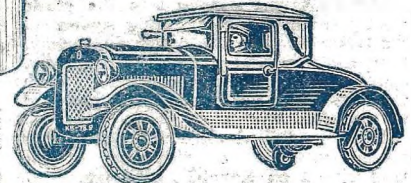
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