

ANOTHER EXTRA-LARGE NUMBER THIS WEEK!

The GEM ^{2^D}

EVERY WEDNESDAY.



GRUNDY, THE IDIOT! GRUNDY, THE FOOL! BUT THIS TIME—

The Tyrant of Urudor!

CHAPTER 1.
In Santa Paz!

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD

"PHEW!"

Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, gasped.

"Phew!" George Herries, also of the Fourth, gasped, too, and mopped his brow. "Oh, my hat! It's hot!"

"Tell us something we don't know!" groaned Robert Arthur Digby, the third member of the famous "Co."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, pushed back his elegant panama hat, wiped his aristocratic brow with a silk handkerchief, and agreed that the heat was "weally frightful!"

The four chums were strolling along the Avenida del Rio Manuelito, the main street of Santa Paz, the sun-scorched little capital of the South American Republic of Urudor.

Together with the rest of the St. Jim's party that was touring the world in the S 1000, the great airship belonging to Sir Napier Wynter, an uncle of Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, Blake & Co. had arrived in Urudor two days previously.

They had flown down from Canada, by way of the United States and Mexico. After the snows of Canada, the heat of Santa Paz was no joke to the St. Jim's party!

Urudor seemed to be having a heat-wave. And Santa Paz, in particular, shut in by jagged hills that kept out any possible breath of wind, was a veritable oven.

The little Republic, situated between the mighty mountain range of the Andes and the Pacific, was a picturesque country, and quite well known for the excessive frequency of its revolutions.

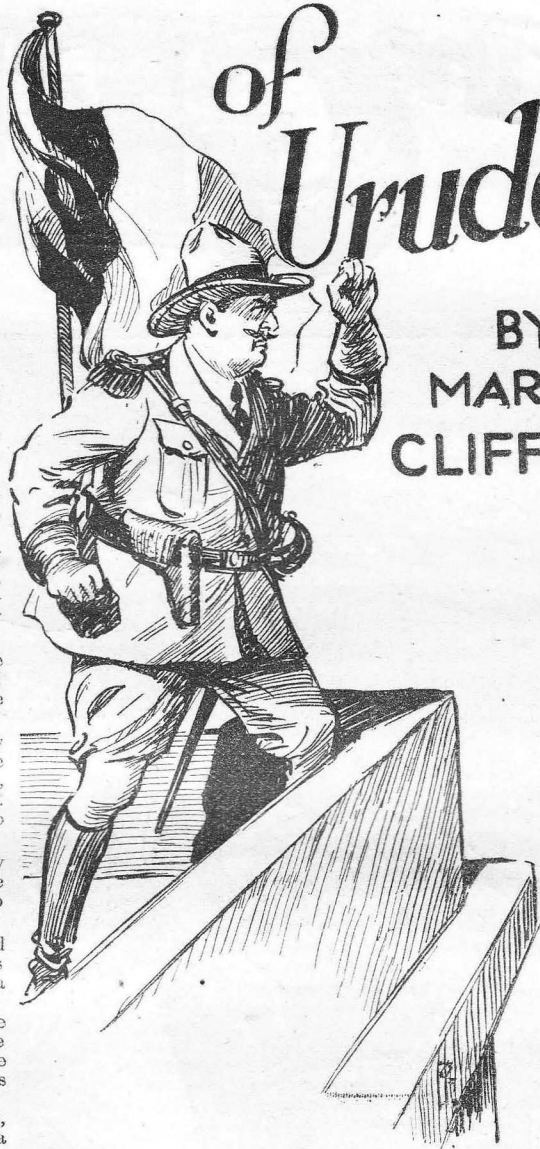
As Monty Lowther, the humorist of the Shell, had remarked, Urudor usually went in for a couple of revolutions before lunch, and three or four in the evening, after its inhabitants had enjoyed their afternoon siesta. Lowther might have been exaggerating a little; had his statement been quite accurate, it was doubtful whether Sir Napier Wynter and Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House at St. Jim's, who was travelling with the schoolboy globe-trotters, would have allowed the party to visit Santa Paz at all! But Urudor was certainly a stormy little country, as a good number of assassinated Presidents could have vouched for, had they been alive to tell the tale!

At present, Blake & Co. had heard, the country was supposed to be fairly settled under the Presidency of a gentleman named Senor Enrico Estramadura del Zoro.

As Blake had pointed out, any country should have been satisfied with a President with a name like that.

But whether Urudor was perfectly satisfied with Senor Enrico Estramadura del Zoro, or whether it was held in tight control by that gentleman's rascally army, was a question which only the inhabitants of the little Republic could have answered. Sir Napier Wynter, who knew South America well, and understood a little of the politics of Urudor, was inclined to believe that Del Zoro was an evil scoundrel, from whose tyranny the citizens of Urudor would have been glad to be released—had they dared try to get free from it.

"Phew!" Blake gasped again, and glared almost



resentfully at the throngs of sallow-complexioned South Americans who were strolling along the pavement, looking quite cool despite the appalling heat, with their flowing moustaches, their inevitable cigarettes, their pointed boots, and elegant—though somewhat flashy—summer suits.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Herries. "How on earth do all these Urudorians, or what ever they call 'emselves, stick this giddy heat?"

"It's amazin'!" panted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Weally, deah boys, I'm meltin'!"

"You look rather like a grease-spot, old chap!" nodded Blake.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Blake—"

"Let's get an iced drink," cut in Digby, in a thirsty tone.

"Good egg!"

Blake & Co. brightened at the suggestion, had turned towards a cafe that had a number of little tables and chairs standing on the pavement under a gaily striped awning.

The four chums of the Fourth sank down at one of the vacant tables, gasping. A waiter hurried up. Blake, struggling with his small knowledge of Spanish, succeeded in ordering iced drinks for four, and two minutes later repeated the order. When they had imbibed a good deal of their second round, Blake & Co. began to feel a little better.

—GRUNDY'S STUPID BLUNDER HELPS TO WIN A REVOLUTION!

"Hallo, you chaps!"

A booming voice broke in upon their thirsty thoughts. They glanced round.

A big, rugged figure was crossing towards them, looking very hot and breathless. It was George Alfred Grundy of the Shell.

"Hallo, Grundy!" grinned Blake. "My hat, you look hot!"

"Oh crumbs!" Grundy sank down at the table in a vacant chair, panting. "Phew! My giddy aunt! I say, it's hot!"

"Go hon!"

"I'll order an iced drink, I think!" gasped George Grundy. "Now, you just watch me shoot Spanish at those blessed dagoos. I'm a dab at Spanish, you know!"

"I bet you are!" nodded Blake gravely, with a wink at the other three which the great George Alfred failed to notice. "Let's hear you, old chap!"

Grundy always believed himself to be a "dab" at pretty well everything and anything, from football to foreign languages. His own opinion of his amazing abilities were seldom shared by his school-fellows, however!

"Lemme see!" murmured Grundy. "What's Spanish for waiter? 'Roze,' or something, ain't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!" Blake chuckled. "You're thinking of the name of the blessed President, you ass!"

"Well, it's something like that!" growled Grundy.

Herries, about to inform Grundy that "mozo" was the word he wanted, checked himself at another wink from Jack Blake.

"What about 'loco,' Grundy, old chap?" said Blake gravely.

"Of course, that's it," nodded Grundy. "Funny I forgot. I'm a dab at Spanish, really!"

Blake, Herries, and Dig suppressed their mirth with difficulty.

The Spanish word "loco" meant, as they knew, an idiot!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared from Grundy to Blake in surprise.

"Suahly, Blake, deah boy, loco means a lun—" began the swell of St. Jim's. But he got no farther.

Blake kicked out warningly under the table. His shoe caught Arthur Augustus on the ankle, and the swell of St. Jim's gave a wild yell, and crashed over backwards in his chair.

"Yow! Yawooop!"

"What the dickens is the matter with Gussy?" ejaculated Grundy, as the swell of St. Jim's staggered up.

"Wow! Somebody kicked me!" gasped Arthur Augustus, clasping his injured ankle. "Blake, you wottah, I'll—"

"Shut up!" muttered Blake. "You're getting everyone staring at you!"

The South Americans at the neighbouring tables were glancing across at the gasping swell of St. Jim's curiously. Arthur Augustus turned crimson, and glared round at his chums.

"Look heah, somebody kicked me!" he snorted. "If we were not in a public place, I should pwoceed to administah a feahful thwashin' to whoevah it was! I considah—"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Grundy. "Now, you chaps, listen to me talking the lingo! There's a waiter. I'll call him over."

"Look heah—"

"Sit down, ass!"

Snorting, Arthur Augustus righted his chair and sat down, glaring at his chums.

"Hi! Loco!"

The effect of his words was instantaneous. Every citizen of Santa Paz within earshot turned with a start and stared at George Alfred Grundy in wondering astonishment.

The waiter, too, was staring across at Grundy as if he could not believe his ears.

Grundy glanced at Blake & Co. proudly.

"See that?" he murmured. "It's my pure accent that has caused that sensation, you know. I'll bet they're amazed to hear an English chap speaking Spanish like a giddy native!"

"Oh, rather!" gasped Herries.

Grundy beckoned to the waiter in a lordly way.

"Loco!" he shouted again. "Aqui, loco!"

Grundy fondly imagined he was saying in the beautiful Spanish tongue: "Come here, waiter!" But from the look on the face of the waiter there was something wrong, as even Grundy began to realise a moment later.

The waiter, a tall Spaniard in a greasy black coat, with a tremendous, curled moustache adorning his olive countenance, was glaring at the great George Alfred as a man-eating tiger might have done. He seemed to be gasping with rage.

It was scarcely surprising that he resented being addressed as "idiot." But, then, Grundy did not know that he had made that little mistake!

"Hi, loco!" Grundy was getting impatient and puzzled. "Come here, you blessed stuffed dummy—I mean, Aqui, loco!"

The waiter gave a wild, furious bellow of rage.

Whiz!

"Oh! Yaroooh!"

The waiter, enraged at Grundy's insistence upon calling him an idiot, had snatched up a plate of pastries from a table where two olive-faced citizens of Santa Paz were enjoying their tea and hurled them at George Alfred Grundy, a torrent of Spanish pouring from him as he fairly danced in his fury.

The pastries shot through the air and landed for the most part in Grundy's face; hence Grundy's yell.

Most of the pastries were of the soft and sticky variety, and in a moment Grundy's rugged countenance was hidden beneath a mixture of chocolate, jam, and cream, from which his eyes stared, white and rolling.

"Grooooooh!" gasped Grundy feebly. "Oh crumbs! Yow! He's mad!"

He staggered to his feet, just in time to catch a well-aimed custard, that the waiter had been carrying, on his already plastered features.

"Wharoooooh!"

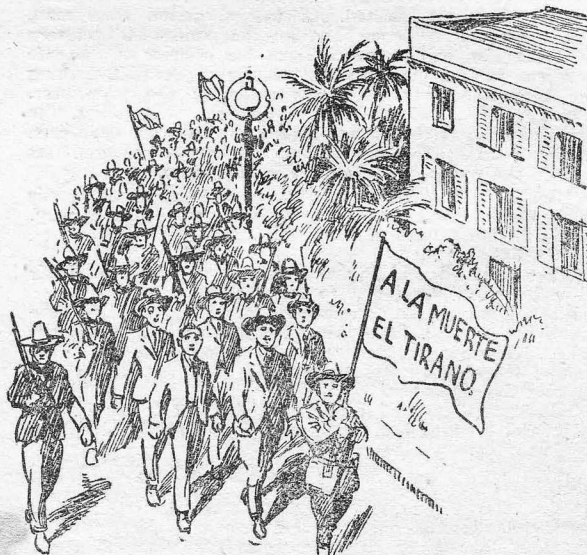
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake & Co. yelled with mirth. They could not help it. They had not expected this surprising turn of events when Blake had suggested the word "loco" for Grundy's use, not having realised the explosive character of the South American temperament. But the sight of Grundy's plastered countenance and the enraged features of the indignant waiter struck them as funny—decidedly funny. In fact, a perfect scream!

"Grooooooh!" panted Grundy. "Oh!"

The waiter had rushed across to him and was shaking a furious fist under his nose, while a torrent of angry Spanish

"Down with the Tyrant!" is the cry of Santa Paz. British schoolboys mixed up in a South American revolution, in this fine long complete yarn of St. Jim's on a world tour!



poured from his lips. Grundy stared at the man as if he had gone mad—which, in Grundy's opinion, the waiter had!

Otherwise, how could one possibly account for the man's fury at being addressed as "Here, waiter!"

"Keep him off!" gasped Grundy. "He's off his rocker!" He side-stepped hastily, and in so doing trod on the waiter's foot. There was a wild yell from the latter. The next moment the waiter's fist had shot out and landed on Grundy's nose.

"Take zat!" hooted the waiter, who apparently knew a little English. "I punch you on ze nose, I do! Soon I keep you where a keek belong!"

He rushed excitedly round Grundy to administer the promised kick "where a keek belong." But Grundy, with a gasp of alarm, clasping his injured nose with one hand, turned quickly and hit out, with a roar of rage.

His knotted fist caught the excited waiter on the ear, and the man collapsed against a near-by table, with a rich and flowery Spanish ejaculation which it was very probable Blake & Co. were lucky not to have been able to understand.

"There!" gasped Grundy, flourishing his fists. "I'll teach you! You—you crazy lunatic! Punch me on the nose, would you? I'll teach you! Come on and have some more, you blessed bull-fighting macaroni merchant!"

"Oh, my hat!" Blake leapt to his feet and caught Grundy by the arm. "Chuck it, you ass!"

"Rats!" bellowed Grundy. "He hit me on the nose! I won't have a Spanish onion like him hit me on the nose and get away with it!"

"Gwunday, deah boy—" But George Alfred Grundy, dancing with rage and brandishing knotted fists, heeded not.

Why the waiter had so savagely attacked him was still a mystery to Grundy. But he meant to avenge that punch on the nose ten-fold. And the waiter, for his part, all his southern blood surging within him, was out for Grundy's gore.

"Caramba! I keel you!" gasped the waiter.

Another waiter, appearing from the interior of the cafe with a tray of coffee-cups, had halted in blank amazement at the scene. Grundy's infuriated foe, his black moustache fairly waving with rage, seized the tray from his astonished colleague's hands and hurled it, coffee-cups and all, at Grundy. Grundy ducked, and there were wild yells from half a dozen citizens of Santa Paz as flying cups and steaming coffee landed all over them after passing harmlessly above Grundy's head.

"Oh! Caramba! Yarooop!" yelled a portly South American, as the tray crashed against his prominent waistcoat, doubling him up with a yell. "Diablo!"

The cafe was now in an uproar.

Excitedly gesticulating South Americans were scrambling over overturned chairs to hurl themselves at the waiter who had flung the coffee-cups. The fact that the man had intended them for Grundy did not matter. The unlucky citizens who had been drenched with coffee were acting on results, not intentions. From all sides other excited individuals were rushing up to find what the trouble was at the Cafe del Avenida del Rio Manuelito, of which name the establishment boasted. A wildly excited little man, with a moustache bigger than any the juniors had yet seen in Santa Paz, had appeared from the interior of the cafe and was waving his arms and yelling in Spanish, joining the general uproar. He was evidently the proprietor. Grundy yelled back at him in English. Altogether, the peaceful quiet of the drowsy afternoon could not have been shattered more effectively had an earthquake occurred just then in the sunny Avenida del Rio Manuelito.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his celebrated monocle and surveyed the scene with dismay. "We'd better get out of this, deah boys!"

"My hat, yes!" Blake, Herries, and Dig were no longer grinning. Their little joke had developed to uncontrollable proportions.

Blake glimpsed the blue caps of four "vigilantes," as the police of the Spanish-speaking South American States are called. The vigilantes were racing across from the other side of the street, excitedly waving their truncheons and blowing their whistles.

"Come on!" panted Blake. "We've got to scoot!" He and Herries hurled themselves at Grundy, dragging him away through the crowd.

"Leggo!" gasped Grundy. "I'm going to wallop that blessed waiter! I—"

"You're not!" snapped Blake. "Come on, ass, or you'll get arrested! And once you get into a South American gaol they'll keep you there for ever, pretty well!"

"Run, you chaps!" cried Herries breathlessly.

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Grundy did not argue any more. He seemed suddenly to realise that to get arrested by the police of Santa Paz would probably be no joke. He fought his way out of the excited crowd with Blake & Co., and the five St. Jim's juniors tore away down the street.

Spanish yells followed them. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his eyeglass jammed in his aristocratic eye, holding on his elegant panama as he sprinted along the pavement, flung a nervous glance over his shoulder.

"Oh, cwumbs! Look out! They're chasin' us!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

The little proprietor of the cafe was dancing in the middle of the street, a stream of shrill Spanish pouring from his lips as he pointed after the retreating English youngsters.

He was evidently telling the vigilantes that they had been the cause of all the trouble; and the vigilantes were already sprinting after Blake & Co. and Grundy with very determined expressions on their swarthy faces.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" groaned Herries.

"Run, you chaps!"

"Oh deah! I considah—"

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy changed his mind about informing his chums what he considered. He decided to save his breath.

He looked like needing it! With set faces, Blake & Co. and George Alfred Grundy of the Shell tore down the Avenida del Rio Manuelito, heedless of where they were going, their one desire to outdistance pursuit.

And behind them came tearing the police!

CHAPTER 2.

The President's Palace!

"THIS way!" panted Blake.

A narrow side-turning opening from the Avenida between two high buildings seemed to offer a chance of throwing their pursuers off their track. Blake plunged into it, followed by the others.

They found themselves in a maze of narrow streets that were almost deserted. Most of the inhabitants of Santa Paz were enjoying their afternoon siesta apparently.

"Keep going!" gasped Grundy. They shot round another corner and raced along a winding alley. But before they came to the end of it, the pursuing vigilantes had come within sight behind them, shouting excitedly to them to stop.

"I don't think!" mumbled Herries, as he pounded on with the others.

They turned another twist in the maze of narrow streets. The blue-uniformed figure of a vigilante was strolling along the pavement towards them, swinging his club. He was still some distance away, and before they reached him, their pursuers had rushed into sight.

"Look out!" yelled Blake.

The Urudorian policeman ahead of them had jumped with excitement on realising that the five youngsters running up the street for all they were worth towards him were being pursued by the arm of the law.

A breathless exclamation broke from him, and he snatched a heavy automatic pistol from the holster of his belt, brandishing it menacingly, shouting to them to stop.

The juniors faltered in their stride with dismayed faces. An automatic in the hands of a South American policeman was a very doubtful proposition, as they all realised!

If they disobeyed the order to stop the man would probably shoot.

But unless they were to give in tamely, they had to take a chance.

The juniors rushed on in a body, and before the startled vigilante had time to make up his mind what to do, he had been sent flying, bowled over by the athletic Fourth-Formers and the big figure of George Alfred Grundy. The automatic went off with an echoing report, and the bullet whistled past Grundy's head, to bury itself in the wall of a building opposite.

"Caraquo!" gasped the policeman, as he struggled up dazedly in the gutter, to find that his assailants had already vanished round the corner behind him. "Ow! Por la Madre—"

He scrambled up, twirled his moustache fiercely, and joined in the chase, breathing vengeance and all kinds of dire threats in Spanish.

In the usual way, the fugitive juniors would have had little difficulty in throwing off the pursuit of the breathless vigilantes. But the South Americans were used to the heat, whereas it was affecting the juniors a good deal. They were puffing and gasping painfully as they kept on, in and out of the bewildering, twisting alleys of Santa Paz.

If they were caught they were in for lots of trouble—lots of trouble!

Of that there was no possible doubt, no possible doubt whatever!

Grundy glanced round.

Their pursuers seemed to be gaining on them gradually. He gave a gasp of dismay; the next moment he had missed his footing on the rough cobbles, and went sprawling headlong.

He scrambled up breathlessly.

Blake & Co., who had been a few paces in front of him, failed to notice his fall, and had kept on. Grundy rose to his feet to find that the four chums of the Fourth had vanished already round the next bend.

There was a narrow cross roads at that point, with alleys opening to right and left. Grundy pounded round the left-hand corner. But there was no sign of Blake & Co. ahead of him, and he realised that they must have taken the other turning.

He flung a swift glance down the other alley. Blake & Co. were racing away down it, and George Alfred, with a grunt of chagrin, paused and turned. But the footsteps of the police officers were approaching swiftly, and he realised that if he bolted across to the other alley to follow Blake & Co. he might easily be cut off.

There was only one thing for it—to keep on the way he had chosen, by himself.

"Oh lor!" gasped Grundy.

Now that he was alone he felt distinctly scared. Grundy was no coward; but to be alone in a little South American city, chased by the police, was no joke.

Grundy ran for all he was worth.

Fortune seemed to be with Blake & Co., not with Grundy! The vigilantes did not seem to have noticed that the fugitive schoolboys had separated, and it was on Grundy's heels that they came chasing, still shouting lustily to him to stop.

That was a thing which Grundy had no intention at all of doing, however!

But the pace was beginning to tell on him. His eyes were almost popping from his face with exertion, as he tore on, searching desperately for a hiding-place into which he could dive unseen by his pursuers.

At last he found what he was seeking.

Round the next corner, a little sunlit square, with half a dozen palms growing round a stone fountain in the centre, came into view. Along one side of the little "plaza" ran a high, yellow wall, surmounted with murderous-looking spikes. There was a small door set in the wall—and it was standing ajar!

What lay beyond the mysterious spiked wall, Grundy could not know. But he did not pause to wonder. He dived for the door and crashed through, closing it hastily behind him.

He was in a shady garden with the white walls of a house glistening through distant trees. But all Grundy's attentions at the moment were riveted upon the sound of the footsteps of the vigilantes on the other side of the door!

He heard them come pounding round the corner; and a breathless chuckle escaped him as they went rushing past on the other side of the wall, to die away in the distance.

"Good egg!" grinned Grundy. "My hat—what a narrow shave!"

He glanced down to find the handle of the door to creep out into the plaza again. An exclamation of dismay escaped him.

"Oh crumbs!"

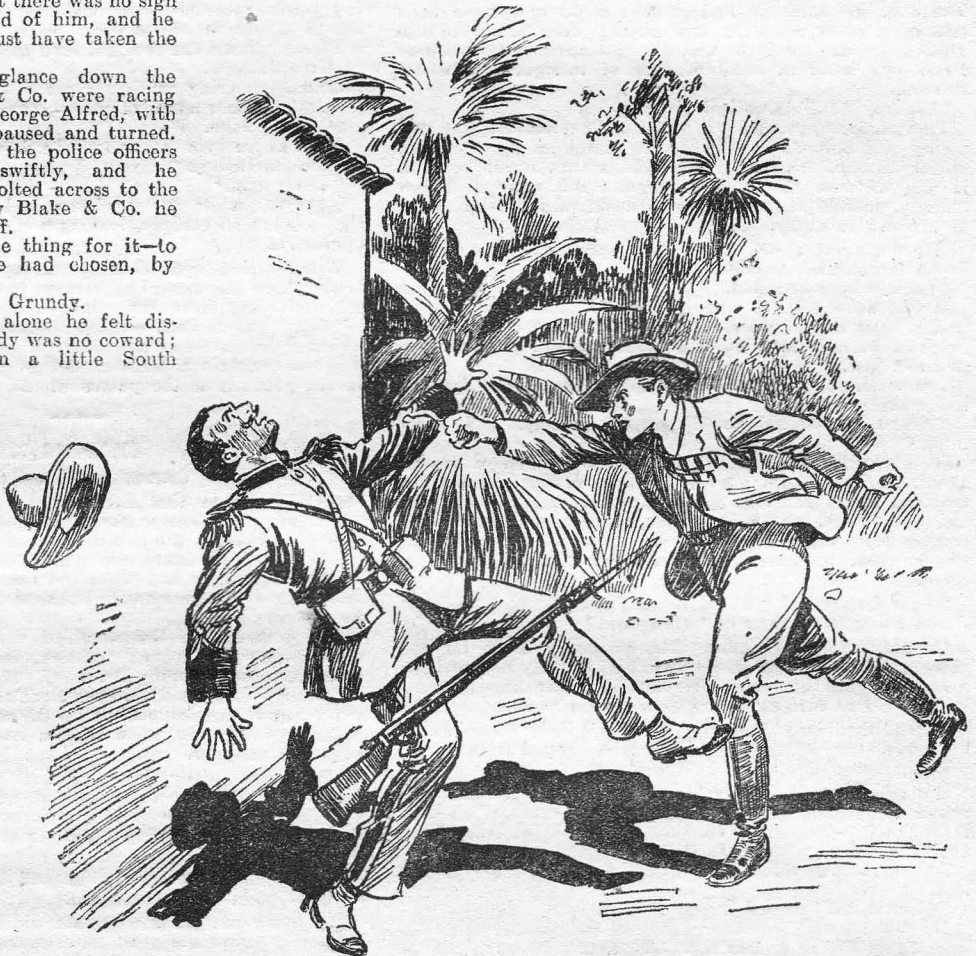
There was a handle to the door. It was fitted, as he saw now, with a spring lock, so that it could only be opened from either side with a key. There was no way out for George Alfred Grundy unless he climbed the wall—and even Grundy did not feel capable of surmounting that smooth, high barrier with the ugly spikes on its lofty summit!

Wherever he was, he was trapped.

"Blow!" gasped Grundy.

The next moment his heart leapt.

From behind had come a loud challenge in Spanish. Swinging round Grundy found himself face to face with a



Grundy's big fist flashed out, crashing home on the soldier's jaw. He dropped without a sound!

sallow-complexioned soldier in the gorgeous uniform of the Urudorian Presidential Guard—though Grundy, naturally, did not recognise it as that.

And the guard was pointing a rifle, fitted with a glittering bayonet, full at his chest, his black eyes glittering fiercely into Grundy's.

"M-my hat!" gasped Grundy. "What the dickens—"

Hastily he raised his hands above his head.

"Quien es Usted?" demanded the guard fiercely.

Grundy eyed the glittering bayonet, wavering against his chest, with a decidedly nervous look.

"No comprendo!" mumbled Grundy. "I'm English—Ingles, you know. I—I say, old chap, you'll be careful with that giddy bayonet, won't you? I—I—"

The guard glared at him suspiciously. He was an unsavoury-looking individual who looked as though a wash would not have done him any harm.

"Ingles?" he growled. "Usted no habla Castellano?"

"Oh lor!" groaned Grundy. "I wish I knew what he was talking about!"

"You are Engleesh!" The guard, it seemed, knew a little of the language, luckily. "You no speak Spanceesh?"

"No," grunted Grundy. "At least, I jolly well can't understand you, though I'm a dab at Spanish really. Look here, put that blessed toothpick down, and open this door for me! I'm going!"

The guard's eyes glittered. He laughed harshly. "You weesh to go? You cannot! You are under arrest!"

"What?" howled Grundy. "You are under arrest!" snarled the soldier. "Comprenda? These are the grounds of the palace of the President of Urudor. You can be here for no good thing! You are under arrest."

Grundy goggled at him. The grounds of the Presidential palace! Now he understood why an armed soldier came to be on sentry-duty there. The door by which he had entered could only have been left open by a mistake; and having been found in the grounds he was likely to arouse suspicion in a land where Presidents lived in constant fear of intrigue and assassination.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Grundy. The guard rapped out an order in Spanish. It was evidently a command to Grundy to march along the path ahead of him, towards the buildings that could be seen in the distance through the trees. But George Alfred Grundy, in his present desperate mood, did not intend to be arrested so easily.

He flung out a sudden pointing hand, staring over the South American's shoulder.

"Look!" he ejaculated. It was an old trick, but it worked. The man glanced hastily over his shoulder. The next moment Grundy's big fist had flashed out, crashing home on the point of the soldier's jaw.

The soldier of the Presidential Guard of Urudor dropped like a sack of coals.

"Arrest me, would you?" gasped Grundy. "I don't think!"

He glanced round hastily. There was no sign of anyone about. Grundy, with a grim chuckle, dropped beside the senseless figure and tied the man's arms behind him with his belt. To be on the safe side, since the soldier might recover from the knock-out at any moment, he stuffed his handkerchief between the guard's teeth, and fastened it there.

"That fixes you," growled Grundy resentfully. "Blowed if I'm going to be arrested by anyone!"

He glanced round again. There seemed to be no one about at all; but to be on the safe side Grundy dragged the senseless figure of the soldier out of sight among some bushes, before turning to the door in the wall.

A good shoulder charge from Grundy's hefty frame would be sufficient to smash the lock. Grundy hoped so, anyway.

He gathered himself for the attempt. But before he could fling his weight against the door the sound of a motor-car in the plaza outside came to his ears. It stopped immediately on the other side of the door, and Grundy's face went startled.

He heard low voices, and a key being inserted in the lock.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Grundy. He dived hastily into the shelter of the bushes, where the inert figure of the soldier lay. The next moment he heard the little door swing open.

Peering out through the bushes Grundy caught his breath in blank astonishment.

Three men had hurried in through the little doorway. They were dark-skinned South Americans, moving softly and furtively, and two of them were bearing between them a fourth figure, bound hand and foot; the figure of a handsome youngster of sixteen or so, whose head was roughly bandaged, his face smeared with blood. He was tightly gagged.

He was writhing fiercely, helplessly, as he was borne swiftly away along the path, his captors vanishing with him into the trees.

Grundy heard the motor-car on the other side of the wall, in which the wounded prisoner had evidently been carried to the palace, drive hastily away, leaving the silence of the hot, drowsy afternoon once more unbroken, except for Grundy's own excited breathing.

What had he seen? That it was unusual for furtive men with motor-cars to bear wounded youngsters captive into the grounds of the President, even in Urudor, Grundy realised! That there was some strange mystery behind it was obvious.

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"My giddy aunt!" breathed George Alfred Grundy.

"What the dickens—" That he was running a risk in remaining where he was an instant longer than he could help, he knew.

But somehow Grundy felt that he could not make his escape without knowing more! Something in the face of the wounded youngster had appealed to him strongly—he felt he wanted to lend him a hand!

"I'm jolly well going to look into this!" muttered Grundy. "Blessed if I don't!"

The next moment George Alfred Grundy was hurrying cautiously through the trees on the trail of the mysterious prisoner and his sinister-looking captors.

For several hundred yards the path wound through tall palms and eucalyptus trees, through which the burning sunlight splashed golden. But at last the path led out into the open again, by the edge of a small lake. Beyond the flashing water rose the white walls of the President's palace, where a couple of soldiers, with rifles, could be seen lounging. From the roof fluttered the black and yellow flag of Urudor.

Grundy, peering cautiously out of the trees, noticed that a small summer-house of white stone stood on the nearer side of the lake.

Even as his eyes fell upon it he drew in his breath with a sudden startled gasp.

"M-my hat!" From the white summer-house had come a faint scream that was cut off sharply, leaving a silence that was strangely oppressive.

With staring eyes Grundy surveyed the summer-house from which the unnerving scream had come, a cold shiver still quivering down his spine.

"What the dickens—" Grundy's heart was pounding.

What mysterious, sinister doings had he chanced upon in the grounds of the palace of the President of Urudor?

CHAPTER 3.

Grundy Lends a Hand!

THE scream that had cut the drowsy silence like a knife was not repeated.

Whether the two soldiers on the terrace across the lake had heard the sound, Grundy could not tell. If they had, they had taken no notice of it. But that it had come from the summer-house at the edge of the water he was convinced.

And that it was the wounded youngster whom he had seen carried in through the door in the wall, bound and helpless, he was equally sure.

Grundy's face set. His eyes gleamed. Whatever was happening in the summer-house, George Alfred Grundy meant to take a hand, on behalf of the helpless youngster.

He turned swiftly, hurrying back to the spot where he had left the soldier whom he had knocked out. The man had not yet recovered consciousness—the blow from Grundy's fist that had put him to sleep had been a hefty one!

Grundy took the long rifle and bayonet, and hurried away through the trees again.

He came out at the farther side, and made his way cautiously across the grass towards the white summer-house, careful to keep it between him and the soldiers on the distant terrace, so that he was invisible to them if they should chance to glance across the lake. He came at last to the ring of ornamental bushes that encircled the little building, and crouched down, listening.

He could hear low voices talking in Spanish, but he could not understand a word.

Grundy had insisted to Blake & Co. that he was a "dab" at Spanish; but somehow he had to admit that the Spanish spoken by the people of Santa Paz seemed different from the Spanish he had swotted up purposely in view of the visit of the St. Jim's party to Urudor. It sounded like so much double Dutch to Grundy.

Clutching his rifle, Grundy crept through the encircling bushes to the shelter of the pillared doorway. Keeping in cover of one of the pillars, he peered round it into the summer-house.

"Great pip!" The interior of the summer-house was furnished with a number of light cane chairs. Huddled in one of them was the pale-faced youngster whom Grundy had seen carried in through the door in the wall. He was still bound, though the gag had been removed from his mouth. His dark eyes were fastened defiantly upon a man seated in a chair opposite him.

The latter Grundy recognised instantly, from a photograph he had seen that morning, as the President of Urudor.

President Enrico Estramadura del Zoro was a fat, sallow-faced, evil-looking gentleman, with bloodshot eyes and flabby hands, one of which now held a big cigar. He looked as though he needed a shave badly.

There was a smooth grin on his olive countenance as he surveyed the captive youngster in the chair opposite him.

The three men whom Grundy had seen before were standing behind the President's chair, smiling cruelly.

Senor Enrico Estramadura del Zoro was talking softly in liquid Spanish, taking long draws at his expensive cigar from time to time as he did so. His eyes never left the face of the wounded youngster for a moment.

Grundy would have given a good deal to know what the evil-looking President was saying; but, unfortunately, he could not understand more than an occasional word or two. He could understand, however, the captive youngster's reply—a defiant shake of the head, more than once repeated.

Whether his English was intelligible to them or not, his meaning was apparently plain, at least. President Enrico Estramadura del Zoro and his three companions raised their arms very promptly above their heads as a startled Spanish oath burst from the fleshy lips of the President.

"Dios!" he ejaculated thickly, staggering to his feet.

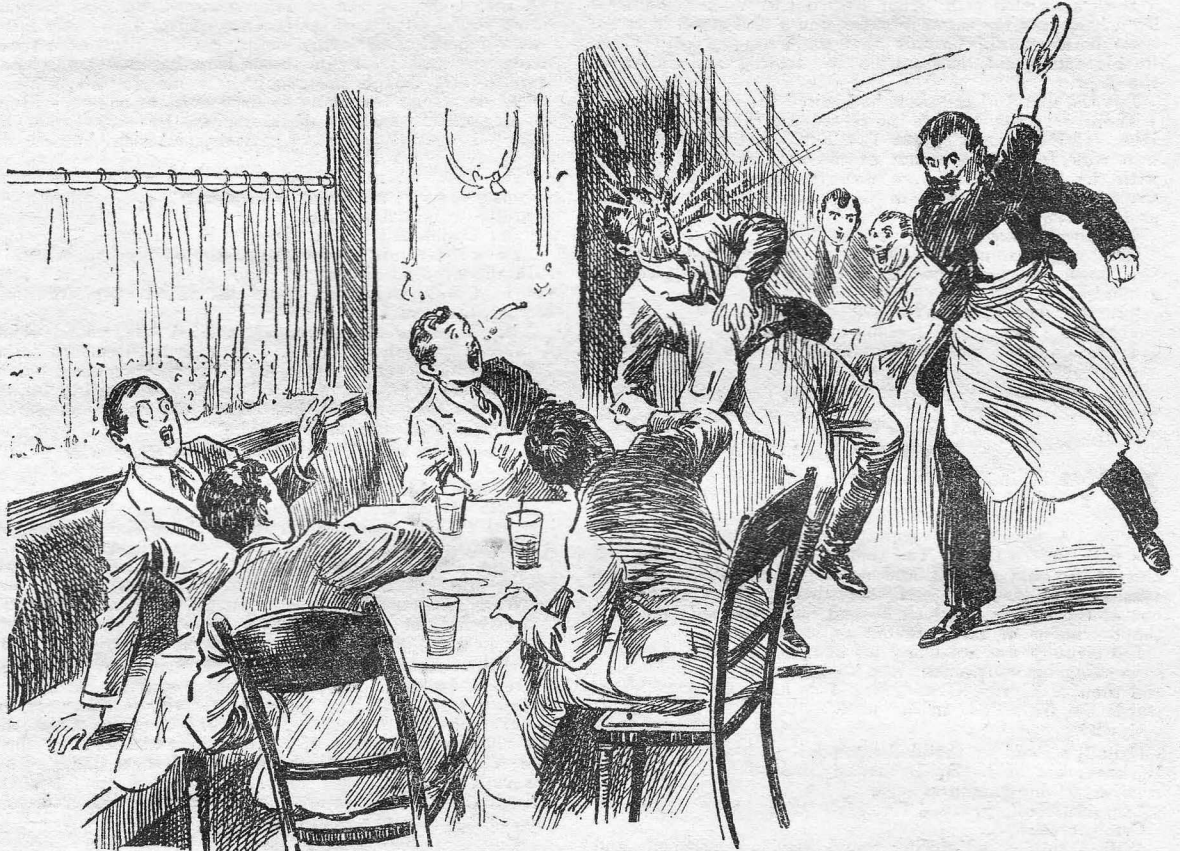
"You—you blessed rotters!" hooted Grundy. "I dunno if any of you understand English, but in case you do, I'll tell you what I think of you! You're the rottenest lot of cowardly sougs I've ever struck!"

There was a breathless cry from the bound youngster in the chair.

A look of wild hope had leapt into his eyes, as he stared across at Grundy.

"Save me!" he breathed, in almost perfect English. "Please—"

"Hallo! You talk English?" ejaculated Grundy. "You bet I'll save you!" He glared at the President and his companions, who were still standing with upraised arms, not daring to disregard the threat of the levelled rifle.



Grundy staggered to his feet—just in time to catch a well-aimed custard with his face.

A sudden look of ugly rage swept over the fleshy face of Del Zoro.

Suddenly he raised his right hand, and Grundy saw that he wore on it a huge leather gauntlet, reaching almost to the elbow. And in the gloved hand he held a snake! There was a sudden cry of fear from the white-faced boy, as the President pushed the writhing snake to within an inch of the boy's face, and Grundy understood the sudden cry that had come to his ears from the summer-house before.

"Great Scott!" panted Grundy. "The hound!"

He leapt out of his hiding-place.

Despite the risk he realised he was running in interfering with so powerful a gentleman as the President of Urudor, George Alfred Grundy did not mean to stand idly by while a helpless youngster suffered torture at the hands of that evil scoundrel.

With a breathless shout, Grundy pounded into the summer-house.

The sudden appearance of a mad elephant could not have caused greater surprise and consternation to the group of South Americans than did the sight of George Alfred Grundy, rifle and bayonet held at the ready, as the rugged Shell fellow came to a breathless halt in the centre of the floor, glaring round.

"Hands up, the lot of you!" gasped Grundy.

"If any of you bounders make a sound, I'll pot him! See?"

Except for the President's heavy breathing, there was no sound from the South Americans.

Grundy nodded towards the bound youngster.

"Let him go!" he commanded. "Quick!"

The command was apparently understood, for one of the men took a faltering step towards the prisoner. But he halted again. Grundy, with a snort, took a step forward, his hand on the trigger of the rifle.

"Buck up!" he growled. "I mean business!"

The man did not hesitate further. With trembling fingers, his face filled with baffled rage, he untied the cords that had fastened the unknown youngster's arms and legs. The boy staggered to his feet.

"Come on!" muttered Grundy. "Outside!"

He backed slowly towards the door. The youngster staggered out past him. Inside the summer-house, President Enrico Estramadura del Zoro and his companions watched them go with glittering eyes.

The President was panting with baffled fury. Grundy glared at him.

"You—you measly rotter, you!" snorted George Alfred Grundy to Senor Enrico Estramadura del Zoro. "You

don't know what that means, p'r'aps, but it's what you are, all the same!"

With which parting shot, Grundy sprang out backwards through the doorway, and grasped the youngster with the bandaged head by the arm.

"Come on!" he panted. "Run like blazes!"

The pair of them tore off towards the trees. From the summer-house there burst a furious shout, and the fat figure of the President rushed into view. He held an automatic in his hand—a weapon which he had not dared attempt to draw when covered by Grundy's rifle.

He raised it now, and pressed the trigger.

Crack!

The bullet sang between Grundy and his companion as they plunged into the shelter of the trees. Grundy, with a snort of rage, turned and raised his rifle. He sent a bullet zipping across towards the summer-house, by way of warning. It thudded against the stonework of the doorway, close beside the President—nearer to him by far than Grundy had really intended.

With a startled yelp, Senor Enrico Estramadura del Zoro leapt back into the summer-house, and a dull crash from the little building told Grundy that the President of Urudor, in his excitement, had missed his footing and fallen on the floor.

But the sound of the shots had raised the alarm!

There were shouts from the terrace on the far side of the lake. Half a dozen of the Presidential Guard had raced into view round the corner of the building, and together with the two sentries were now racing across the bridge spanning the lake, rifles in their hands, yelling excitedly as they came.

Grundy did not stop to watch!

Grasping his companion by the arm once more, he dragged him down the path towards the wall that bordered the grounds.

"Bunk!" roared Grundy.

Together Grundy and the mysterious youngster whom he had rescued from the hands of the President raced on!

CHAPTER 4.

The Rebel's Son!

FROM behind them came the yells of the President's guard.

They burst out of the trees into view of the wall. A painfully wriggling figure was writhing along the path before them. The soldier whom Grundy had left trussed up and gagged and senseless had recovered consciousness at last, and had succeeded in dragging himself out of the bushes in which he had found himself—much to the detriment of his gorgeous uniform.

But Grundy was not worrying about him. With one arm supporting his companion, who staggered weakly every now and then as he ran, Grundy raced as hard as he could towards the little door in the wall.

Crash!

Grundy's shoulder thudded against it with a hefty charge. It shook, but held. Again Grundy hurled himself against it with all his strength.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Grundy.

Crash, crash!

With a sudden splintering sound, the lock smashed, and the door flew open, sending Grundy staggering out into the deserted little plaza beyond. The youngster with the bandaged head followed him swiftly.

"This way!" he gasped. "Follow me now!"

He turned and sped towards one of the narrow alleys opening from the plaza. With Grundy at his heels, he vanished down it before their pursuers had come into sight in the doorway. Round a corner, along another twisting street, that was utterly deserted, and through a low doorway into a shadowy little courtyard, the mysterious youngster led his rescuer.

"Quick!" he panted. "In here!"

He pushed open a door, and thrust Grundy through it, following hastily and closing the door. A shaken laugh broke from him.

"Bueno! We are safe now!"

"Phew!" gasped Grundy. "Oh, my giddy aunt—"

He glanced round. They were in a large apartment dimly lit with small windows that opened on to the patio outside. It was poorly furnished with a few chairs and a table; the stone floor was bare.

"They will not find us here, my friend," muttered the South American youngster. He held out his hand. "I have to thank you!"

"That's all right," growled Grundy. "I jolly well

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couldn't stick seeing that beast torturing you like he did. But I say—what the dickens was it all about?"

He sank down in one of the chairs, watching his companion curiously.

The other's eyes flashed. For a moment or two he did not answer. His pale, handsome face was drawn and stained. He passed a trembling hand over his head and down his blood-stained cheek.

A faint smile appeared on his lips—a mirthless smile, as he glanced again at Grundy.

"Let me tell you who I am," he muttered. "My name is Andreas—Ricardo Andreas!"

Again he smiled faintly.

"I see that the name means nothing to you, my friend. Of course, I should have known it would not. You have never heard of Iago Andreas, either?"

"Can't say I have," said Grundy. "Who's he?"

"My father!"

There was a note of pride in the youngster's voice. He drew himself to his full height, and his eyes flashed fiercely.

"Yes, I am the son of Iago Andreas, the man who has sworn to rid Urudor of the tyranny of Del Zoro! My father was a general of the army, before his hostility to the tyrant made it necessary for him to flee from Santa Paz. Del Zoro is powerful; though the people hate him for his infamies, he is too strong for many to dare even to hope to rid my country of his loathed dictatorship. But my father has gathered together a band of patriots, and soon the time will be ripe when we shall strike!"

"My hat!" breathed Grundy. "You mean your father is going to start a blessed revolution?"

Andreas nodded fiercely.

"My father will be the saviour of his country!"

"Phew!" Grundy drew a deep, excited breath. A sudden grin appeared on his rugged countenance. "Well, all I can say is, I jolly well wish him luck! That chap Zoro is a blessed outsider, I can see that!"

"He is a foul oppressor," nodded the young South American hoarsely. "But if fortune is with us, my father will save the country from his tyranny at a single blow! The rebels are gathering in the mountains, waiting for the time when they shall strike! When the hour comes, they will attack the city, and then—"

Suddenly he reeled, and sank into a chair with a little groan.

He buried his face in his hands.

It was clear that he was in a very weak state. Grundy jumped up and crossed anxiously towards him. The South American glanced up at him, white-faced, smiling wryly.

"I am all right," he muttered. "I am weak, that is all. I have lost blood."

"What happened?" queried Grundy eagerly. "How did they get hold of you—and why? I—"

"They wanted to force me to tell the secret place in the mountains where my father and his men are gathering," muttered Andreas. "How they discovered my identity, I cannot tell. I have been living in the city working for my father, unknown to anyone, so I had thought. But this afternoon, in the Plaza Vespero, I was attacked by three men—I nearly escaped them, but they shot me down. That was rash of them; they might have killed me. But the bullet only grazed my head, and when I recovered consciousness I was in a motor-car, tied hand and foot—"

"And they took you straight to the palace?" put in Grundy, with gleaming eyes.

"Yes. They would have tortured me to make me speak—though I would never have spoken!"

Grundy, watching the pale, set face, believed that!

"Well, what's this place, anyway?" he inquired, glancing round the bare room curiously.

"A retreat used by our men," explained Andreas. "There are many about Santa Paz." He leaned towards Grundy with sudden eagerness. "My friend, you have done much for me to-day! I can never thank you as I should. But would you be willing to do something more?"

"What is it?" asked Grundy cautiously.

Though he sympathised heartily with the South American, he certainly did not want to land himself in a South American prison for aiding the revolutionaries!

Ricardo Andreas took from his pocket a sealed letter.

"This letter," he explained in a low voice, "has to be delivered at once to a member of the revolutionary party, living in a house on the outskirts of the city. It is of vital importance. I was on my way to deliver it to-day when captured by Del Zoro's scoundrels. It is evident that they suspect that one of my father's friends lives in that quarter."

"Well?" breathed Grundy.

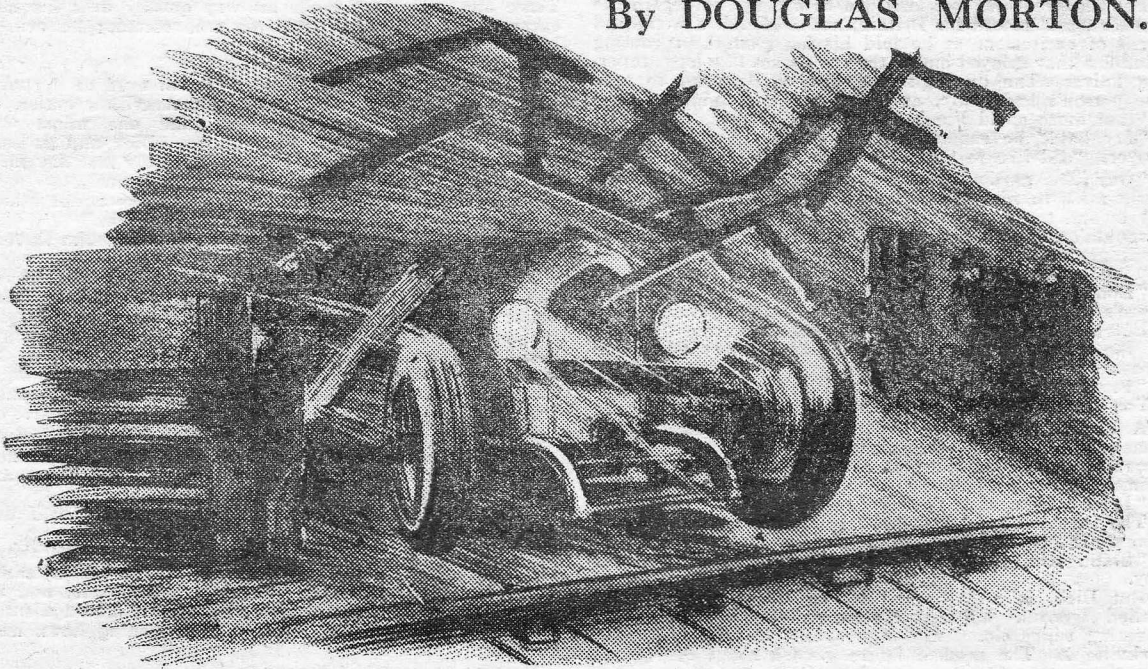
"If I attempt to deliver this letter to-night the spies will see me. They will either capture me, or watch to see to which house I go, in order to learn the identity of

(Continued on page 10.)

ANOTHER SMASHING SPEED YARN!

KINGS O' SPEED!

By DOUGLAS MORTON.



CHAPTER 1.

The Deadly Runaway!

LOOK out, sir!" Like lightning Dick Stanford whipped round on his heel as the warning shout struck his ears. For the voice of Mold, his employer's stocky Yorkshire foreman, had contained such a note of urgent warning that the boy could not disregard it.

Then he sprang for his life. Charging down upon him from one of the concrete slopes which led from his employer's many garages was a great catapulting mass of metal—a racing Bugatti entirely out of control! His flying leap had been instinctive, for it had landed him on the centre turntable.

It was his only chance of escape from death, for he was directly in the way of the enormous car, and nothing but a miracle could save him from being crushed to death under its wheels.

With a crash that knocked the breath completely out of his body he hit the turntable fair and square. Round the great plate shot under the impetus of his leap, for its delicate machinery would act upon the slightest touch.

Zipp-p-p-p!

The tearing wheels shot past Dick's head, missing him by the fraction of an inch as the runaway continued its mad career, and the boy turned over and over like a football as the turntable whizzed him along the ground.

The old courtyard which lay behind his employer's Thames-side residence, Benton Manor, now rang with shouts and cries, and there was a terrific crash as the great Bugatti hit a far wall and turned over, its massive wheels still racing round in impotent fury.

Dick gasped as his body finally came to a standstill, and then he looked up with a grin as a familiar voice snapped out:

"Say, who's the plumb crazy guy who pulled that stunt?" It was his boss, Cyrus J. Arkville, the famous millionaire inventor of motor-cars, speaking, and the inevitable cigar was twisting and turning in his mouth as the characteristically clipped tones cut the air like a knife.

"I'd like to meet the gentleman myself, sir," Dick called out in reply to Arkville, who was now striding across the courtyard towards him.

"Guess he wouldn't pull that funny stuff twice if I got my mitts on him," the American snapped out as he neared his seventeen-year-old assistant. "Are you hurt at all, sonny?" he continued.

"No, sir," Dick laughed, as he jumped to his feet. "But I thought I had given up long-jumping when I left school," he added, as he glanced at the still-spinning turntable.

Then the boy suddenly became serious, for his thoughts jumped immediately to his employer's latest invention, the Arkville Z. By Jove! That runaway car was no accident—it had been a deliberate attempt on his life.

"What's the big idea, boy?" Arkville asked, as he glanced keenly at Dick's face.

In reply the boy inclined his head towards the garage from whence the Bugatti had come. In a second the millionaire was racing up the concrete slope, quickly followed by Dick. But the garage was empty of any human presence.

"Someone wanted me out of the way," Dick said grimly. "There's the Arkville Z," he added, as he pointed to the great super-car as it stood on its special stand in the middle of the garage, "and I've a shrewd suspicion that—"

"Not—"

"Yes, sir. The Wrecker is

on the trail once more!"

The millionaire's jaw set in a hard line as he heard the boy's words.

"By heck! You're right, sonny!" was his crisp comment. Suddenly Dick stooped and picked up two heavy, shaped blocks of wood which lay near his feet.

"The Bugatti didn't move on her own accord, sir. Look!" He held the blocks up as he spoke. "These chocks were under her front wheels! We're for it again, sir, but we'll beat the Wrecker, as we have done before."

"That's the surest thing you've said this a.m., sonny!" the inventor said as he turned his eyes towards his beloved Arkville Z. "But I guess we'll have to be stepping lively from this day on. The Wrecker's a slick mover, and he'll be after blood this time, I reckon!"

"Shall we look the car over, sir, and see if she's been tampered with?" the boy suggested.

Without wasting a word in reply Arkville stepped up to the wondrous super-car as it stood, a silent testimony, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,191.

VICTORY AT LAST!

The "Wrecker" is out—for good and all!
Dick and Arkville have got him!

to the inventor's magnetic brain, all set and ready for its tremendous task, on its special stand. Painted a bright green, and shaped like a torpedo, its long tapering lines picked out in cream and gold, it was a sight for the gods, and the acme of inventive genius. Under its low, tapering bonnet lay its secret engine—a marvellous power-producing unit that would sing its song of terrific speed such as had never before been heard on dry land.

For the great car was destined to attempt to regain the world's speed record for Britain, and Dick felt a wonderful thrill of excitement as he laid his hand on the sprouting wind-fins that splayed out of the car's sides like long, tapering knives. The driving-seat had been designed to take one person's body only, and that person was himself!

What more could life hold for him, he thought? "My hat!" he suddenly exclaimed, turning to his employer. "I'd like to try her out, sir."

"Our little garden path"—and thus did Arkville humorously refer to his three-mile-long oval racing track which lay behind the manor in the vast extent of Benton Park—"wouldn't hold her for a minute, sonny," the millionaire smilingly remarked.

"But, sir—" began Dick. "Don't get impatient, boy. Guess across the Channel there's a good stretch of sand for a try-out. France—"

But he never completed the sentence, for from the back of the garage came a crash of glass as a window was smashed in by an unseen hand.

"France!" a strange, harsh voice snarled in anger. "You'll never drive the Arkville Z in France!"

A masked figure suddenly leapt through the broken panes, and a soft hiss accompanied his action. To Dick's horrified gaze he saw creeping along the floor a slow-moving, thin, grey cloud. Then he leapt to action on the instant.

"It's cutting-gas, sir!" he yelled to Arkville. The inventor stood transfixed as he saw one of his own inventions being turned against him.

"Stand still, Stanford!" the strange voice ordered the boy.

But Dick, in a flash, had sprung to a lever and had pulled it down. Up from the floor shot a protecting steel covering which closed with a snap and completely hid the Arkville Z. The masked figure gave a shout of rage as his plans were for the moment balked; but it was only for an instant, for the cutting-gas would go through steel like a knife through cheese.

"The tanks, sir!" yelled Dick, as the vicious snarl of a bullet sang past his ears.

The man sprang at the boy, but as Dick went down before the onslaught of his powerful foe he knew that Arkville had grasped his meaning. The next moment he was floundering up to his knees in water. The inventor, with one smashing pull, had released the fire-protecting tanks which were housed in the roof of the garage. The villain who held the boy threw him off with a powerful thrust and fled, but as Dick's head came up crash against the wall he knew that the deadly cutting-gas had disappeared as if by magic, and that the attack on the super-car had failed.

CHAPTER 2.

The Den of Spies!

"WELL, sonny, I guess the Wrecker's lost the first trick!"

Arkville and Dick were sitting in the former's library the day after the attack on the Arkville Z, and the boy ruefully rubbed his head as his employer spoke.

"He has certainly raised a bump," Dick replied. Then he grinned suddenly. "But it was worth it. And now that the car is on its way to Southampton, we might be out of the wood," he added.

"Wish I could get a line on him," said the inventor, gripping his cigar between his teeth. "He's just like a flash of lightning to me. But he certainly has all the inside dope about my little affairs. Yes, sir, I'll tell the world."

The millionaire sat in grim silence for a few moments. "Guess we ain't quite out of that wood yet, sonny," he exclaimed suddenly. "If that big tough knows that you're crossing the water to try out the car—" He paused as he noticed Dick sit up in his chair. "See any daylight, sonny?" he continued.

Dick had been thinking rapidly. There must be someone in this very house that knew all their plans. He realised how his employer's heart was set on regaining the speed record for Britain, and every nerve must be strained to prevent anything happening.

"I'm not sure, sir," he answered to the millionaire's query. "Can I just work on my own for a bit?"

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"Sure thing!" came the quick response. "Get right ahead!"

Dick left the library and closed the door softly behind him. He stood for a second or two looking intently down the long corridor. It was here in the manor itself that the deadly menace was supreme. Of that he was sure. Even as he stood outside the door a faint noise came to his ears.

Where did it come from? From the side corridor? Tense and taut, Dick made his way quickly over the soft carpets. As he turned into the side corridor he nearly bumped into someone.

"I beg your pardon, sir!"

The smooth voice sounded very formal even as it spoke its apology. The speaker was Houl, Arkville's butler, a fellow-countryman of the inventor, and one whom the millionaire had helped in former days. Dick and he had been mutual, though silent, enemies since the first day they had met, for the boy distrusted the man intently.

"Is Mr. Arkville in the library, sir?" the butler asked in respectful tones. "I have a message for him."

"Yes," answered Dick shortly. "You'll find him there."

"Thank you, sir!"

The man proceeded on his way with his cat-like tread. But Dick, as he walked down the side corridor, felt as if the butler's eyes were boring his back through and through. Suddenly he stopped dead in his tracks and spun on his heel. The corridor behind him was absolutely empty. It must have been his imagination, but he could have sworn that, quite near him, someone had moved. His sixth sense told him that the clue he wanted was near—very near.

He let his eyes roam about him, seeking for some tangible result. His gaze fell on a suit of armour, and the lance which the impassive mailed figure held in its hand seemed to Dick's sensitive brain a magnetic point.

"I'll just examine you a bit, me old buck," said the boy to himself.

Suiting the action to the word, he raised his hand above his head and touched the lance lightly. To his astonishment, the figure moved immediately to one side, and at the same time a panel in the wall behind it moved silently to the left, disclosing a flight of steps leading down into darkness.

Without a moment's hesitation Dick entered the tunnel. At his second step he heard behind him a faint click. The panel had shut! Quickly he ran his hands over it, but no secret spring could be found. He was trapped there in the darkness, and there was nothing for it but to go on.

Letting his weight drop gingerly each time, he made his way cautiously down each step. His thoughts raced through his brain with lightning rapidity. Was this Houl's work or not? He knew that Arkville trusted the butler implicitly, and, after all, he himself had nothing to go on save his instinctive dislike.

Suddenly he stood stock-still. Someone was breathing softly and slowly in the dense blackness beyond him.

"That you, guv'nor?"

The guttural whisper came to him out of the darkness. Quickly Dick stepped down the few remaining steps till he found solid earth. He heard the question repeated anxiously.

Then came a flash of light full in the boy's face as a torch in the hand of the questioner was switched on. Dick hurled himself directly at it, and body struck body in a sickening impact.

Dick hung on to his opponent like grim death. Over and over they rolled as they crashed to the floor, the boy fighting tooth and nail to get the uppermost hand. But a jagged bit of the uneven floor was his undoing, and as his elbow hit against it, his arm for one moment went dead.

Quick as a flash his opponent had gone. Feeling the torch under his hand, Dick rapidly switched it on. In the blaze of its light he saw what made him cry out with anger. For a great steel door was slowly descending over a gap in the wall. Soon it reached the ground.

Silence!

He was alone in the bowels of the earth, and the Arkville Z would leave Southampton without him. The Wrecker had won the second trick!

CHAPTER 3.

The Cutting Gas!

DICK, switching off his torch to save the battery, set his teeth in grim determination. He didn't intend to remain in that den, trapped like a rat, whilst the Wrecker worked his will on the Arkville Z. Nor was he going to be done out of his trials on the hard sands of the French shore.

Cautiously he felt his way around the subterranean room,

to you, you silly ass? We thought perhaps you'd been caught!"

"Me?" sniffed Grundy. "Rather not!"

Blake & Co. eyed him curiously.

"What's up?" demanded Herries.

That something was "up" was evident from Grundy's mysterious expression.

George Alfred Grundy was fairly bursting with importance!

"I dunno that I ought to tell you asses!" he grunted, with a lofty glance at the four chums of the Fourth. "It's a matter of national importance, as a matter of fact, and if the President's crowd got to hear of it—"

"What?" yelled Herries.

"What the dickens is he burbling about?" broke in Blake. "Do you chaps think he's potty? Maybe it's the heat. We'd better get him back to the aerodrome, and get him safe on board the airship—"

"Look here, Blake, you ass," snorted Grundy. "I jolly well—"

He got no further.

From somewhere along the street there had come an excited yell in a voice that was vaguely familiar. Grundy glanced round and gave a gasp:

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors had not realised that they were quite close to the cafe where they had got into trouble! But they realised it now—too late!

The little proprietor with the huge moustachios had caught sight of them, and had let forth an excited torrent of Spanish as he rushed out on to the pavement, gesticulating wildly, apparently screaming for the police.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake. "Look out!"

"Bunk for it!" panted Herries.

But at that moment a taxicab came crawling past. Grundy rushed up to it and dragged open the door.

"Plaza Vespero!" he ejaculated breathlessly.

Blake & Co. piled in after Grundy, and Herries slammed the door. The taxi sped away, leaving the proprietor of the Cafe del Avenida de Rio Manuelito dancing with impotent rage farther up the street.

"Bai Jove, that was a wippin' ideah of yours, Gwunday, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he sank down on one of the seats. "I weally did not ccredit you with havin' so much bwain—"

"Rather not!" chuckled Blake. "Ha, ha, ha! Good old Grundy!"

Grundy glared at the grinning chums of the Fourth.

"Oh rats!" A mysterious, excited expression came once more into his rugged countenance. "Listen, you asses! I'm going to tell you something! You'll have to swear not to breathe a word of it!"

Blake stared at him.

"What the dickens—"

But Grundy did not wait for their promise of secrecy. He was fairly bursting to tell what had happened to him, and he plunged into his story breathlessly. Blake & Co. listened in dumb amazement.

When he had finished, Grundy glanced round at the faces of his companions to see the effect he had created. That they could not fail to be impressed, he felt certain.

"What do you think of that, eh?" he muttered.

Blake & Co. stared at Grundy, then they stared at one another. Blake shook his head.

"Gammon!" he said.

"What?" yelled Grundy.

"Trying to pull our legs, I suppose?" murmured Digby.

"You can't expect us to believe anyone would be such an ass as to entrust you with an important letter like that, old chap!" grinned Herries.

Grundy gasped speechlessly. His rugged countenance went crimson.

"Why, you—silly jays!" he roared. "Of course it's true!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus incredulously.

"You—you—blessed doubting Thomases!" gasped Grundy. "Here's the letter, if you don't believe me!"

He took out the sealed missive that Ricardo Andreas had given him to deliver to "Senor X" at the house in the Plaza Vespero. At sight of it Blake & Co. jumped.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass and stared at the letter in blank astonishment. Blake, Herries, and Digby were fairly goggling at it, too.

That Grundy had really been telling the truth they had to believe now!

"My only Sunday chapeau!" breathed Blake. "You mean to say—"

"Yes, I jolly well do!" hooted Grundy. "And didn't you hear me tell the taxi chap to drive to the Plaza Vespero? Of course it's true!"

"M-my hat!" gasped Herries.

The faces of the chums of the Fourth had gone pale with excitement.

"A giddy revolution!" muttered Blake. "And you've got mixed up in it, Grundy, you ass! Phew!"

"I—I say, deah boys," broke in Arthur Augustus nervously, "this is wathah a wisky business, I considah! For Gwunday, I mean. Gettin' mixed up in an affiaiah like this is no joke, I considah!"

"I'm all right, you idiot!" sniffed Grundy, swelling with importance. "I can look after myself!"

"Bai Jove! I wufuse to be called an idiot, Gwunday—"

"If you chaps are funky, we'll stop the taxi, and you can get out and leave me to go to the house in the Plaza Vespero alone," said Grundy. "I know you kids are too young to be mixed up in matters like this, anyway."

"Why, you cheeky ass!" gasped Blake.

"Of course we'll come with you—to look after you," growled Herries.

"Wathah! It's up to us to see that Gwunday doesn't get himself into a wegulah mess ovah this," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with an uneasy shake of his noble head.

"Hear, hear!" nodded Blake.

"Oh, rats!" growled George Alfred Grundy.

But Grundy might have looked as uneasy as did Blake & Co.—or even more so—had he known that he had been followed by two furtive figures from the house at which he had left Ricardo Andreas, the son of the rebel leader, and that the men on his trail had hailed a second taxicab in the Avenida del Rio Manuelito, and were following close behind the juniors' taxi as it sped on towards the Plaza Vespero and the house of Senor X—whoever that mysterious gentleman might be!

CHAPTER 6.

Senor X.

THE Plaza Vespero proved to be a handsome square of tall white houses surrounding a little public garden of palm-trees and fountains. The taxi drew up by the kerb, and the juniors piled out.

They did not take any notice of another taxi that turned into the plaza a moment or two later, and came to a standstill on the opposite side, half hidden by the intervening palm-trees.


Neither did they take any notice of one or two loungers on the benches in the garden in the centre of the plaza—or of a group of men, apparently workmen, who seemed to be busy repairing the pavement.

Though Grundy knew from Ricardo Andreas that the Plaza Vespero was being watched, it did not occur to him for a moment that any of these might be Del Zoro's spies!

Grundy paid the taxi-driver, and glanced at the number of the house immediately opposite. It was No. 17. No. 5 was evidently farther along towards the other corner.

"Come on, you chaps!" muttered Grundy. "This way!"

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The five juniors moved off along the pavement.

No. 5 proved to be one of the corner houses. It was a large building, with a flight of steps leading up to the handsome front door. Grundy halted at the foot of them with a glance at Blake & Co.

"You chaps had better wait here!"

"Rats! We're coming in with you."

"Look here, Blake—"

"Don't argue!" grinned Blake. "I tell you we're all in this now!"

Grundy glared, but did not argue any further. He mounted the steps, with the chums of the Fourth at his heels, staring up at the mysterious house curiously. Its windows were all shuttered against the sun, though it would soon be dusk now. Grundy halted on the top step, his heart beating a little fast, and, remembering his instructions, knocked three times with the big knocker.

Almost instantly a tiny panel at the level of his head slid open, and Grundy jumped as he saw two glittering eyes peering out at him keenly.

"Oh!" gasped Grundy.

The eyes vanished, and the next moment the big door swung open, as if the man on the other side had satisfied himself that it was safe to do so. Grundy and Blake & Co. found themselves being surveyed inquiringly by a liveried manservant of very Spanish type.

"Senores?" murmured the man.

Grundy gulped.

"I—I want to see Senor X!"

A quick, flashing gleam came into the man's eyes, and vanished.

"Si, senores!" he murmured, stepping aside for the juniors to enter.

Blake & Co. and George Alfred Grundy stepped across the threshold, and the door closed softly behind them.

After the hot sunlight outside, the cool interior of the big hall was so shadowy as to make it difficult at first for the St. Jim's youngsters to see very much. But they made out a wide stairway leading up from the hall, and the door had scarcely closed before footsteps came to their ears from somewhere above. A tall figure appeared on the stairs.

The manservant hurried towards the foot of them, and spoke rapidly in Spanish. The shadowy figure in the gloom answered briefly, and strode down into the hall.

It was an upright, elderly man, with the face of an aristocrat. A pair of very penetrating, dark eyes staring out from beneath bushy brows, fastened upon the juniors. The man came towards them and bowed courteously.

"Good-afternoon," he murmured in a voice that had very little foreign accent. "I understand that you wish to see Senor X?"

"Yaas, wathah!" answered Arthur Augustus. "I—"

"Dry up!" snapped Grundy under his breath. "This is my bizney, ain't it?"

He turned to the handsome old South American.

"Are you Senor X?" demanded Grundy.

"Yes."

"Well, I've got something for you," answered Grundy, taking out the sealed letter and holding it out.

"I thank you."

Quite unperturbed by the curious looks of the juniors, the mysterious individual accepted the letter and thrust it into his pocket without a glance at it.

"I thank you," he repeated. "I am greatly in your debt,

I can assure you—a debt which it would, indeed, be difficult for me to repay—"

He broke off sharply, his eyes shooting past the juniors to the big front door behind them.

Hurrying footsteps could be heard coming up the steps outside. The next moment a thunderous knocking rang out on the door, echoing through the big, dim hall. And a voice cried in Spanish—which Blake, at any rate, understood sufficiently to deduce the import of the words:

"Open—in the name of the President!"

Blake's face went suddenly white.

In a flash he realised what had happened.

The spies of the tyrant of Urudor had seen them come to the house—had somehow known their mission! And now the scoundrelly President's men were at the door demanding entry.

"Oh my hat!" he breathed.

The eyes of the old revolutionary were blazing beneath their shaggy brows.

"Open—in the name of the President!"

The words came again, harsh and menacing. But the next moment a shot rang out as the men outside fired into the lock of the great door, shattering it. The door swung open, and four swarthy-looking individuals, with drawn automatics in their hands, rushed into the hall. They halted in a group on the threshold, surveying the English youngsters and the elderly South American with sneering triumph. Blake, with a shock, recognised two at least of them as men who had apparently been repairing the pavement on the other side of the plaza some minutes before.

So they had been Del Zoro's spies!

George Alfred Grundy was staring at the intruders with blank dismay.

"B-by George!" stuttered Grundy. "Oh crumbs!"

He glanced wildly round. The tall South American beside him had been standing motionless, his eyes blazing across the hall at the President's men. Now, with a sudden movement, he stepped towards the foot of the stairs and pressed a knob of the ornamenta' woodwork of the banisters.

There was a breathless cry from D'gby.

Worked by some secret spring, a section of the floor within the front door had dropped clean away beneath the feet of the four intruders! They cried out hoarsely, and dropped from sight without even the opportunity of firing, leaving the astounded juniors staring dazedly at the spot where they had been.

They could hear the men cursing fluently in Spanish somewhere below the floor. Evidently they were not hurt—but they were certainly out of the way! There was a soft, grim laugh from Senor X.

"Quick, my young friends!" he said coolly. "Others of the scoundrels will be here in a moment! For your own safety, follow me!"

He turned and hurried away along a shadowy passage that led out of the hall. The juniors followed after a brief moment of hesitation. As they left the hall they heard running footsteps pounding up the steps outside.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a gasp of consternation and seized Grundy by the arm.

"Oh, you uttah ass, Gwunday!" panted the swell of St. Jim's. "I knew you would land us in a wotten mess ovah this wotten revolution!"

"Rats!" snorted Grundy. "Dry up, dummy!"

"Bai Jove! I considah—"

Potts, The Office Boy!



"This way!"

The incisive voice of Senor X cut in on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's complaints. The old revolutionary had halted by the panelled wall and pressed some hidden spring. A section of the wall slid back, revealing a dark opening, through which he motioned the five startled youngsters.

But there was no time to ask questions. Already the agents of the tyrant of Urudor were entering the house.

Blake stepped swiftly through into the darkness, the others following. Senor X came last, and in the darkness the English youngsters heard the panel close.

A light flashed out in the gloom. The South American had an electric torch in his hand. Its vivid beam lit up a flight of steep stone steps leading down into the darkness.

"Follow me!" he muttered.

"Look here, sir," breathed Blake, "what's the programme? Although we came along with that letter, we're not revolutionaries! We're English, and—"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We don't want to get mixed up in the revolution, you know. Of course, we sympathise with you, sir, since we know that wottah Del Zowo to be an outsiders and a tywant and all that; but—"

"I am afraid," said the mysterious South American quietly, "that it is too late! Whether you like it or not—and no one regrets more than I that you have become involved in this unfortunate affair—you have allied yourselves with the revolutionaries in the eyes of the President's agents. If you are caught now, you will be flung into gaol, my young friends, and even the efforts of the British Consul will take many weeks to rescue you from the horrors of the Santa Paz Prison!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Grundy.

"You may take your choice," went on the South American. "If you care to give yourselves into the hands of Del Zoro's scoundrelly agents and risk the consequences, well and good. But I fear that the consequences will prove unpleasant! On the other hand, if you leave yourselves in my hands, I will get you out of this house by a secret way, and the chances are that you can then go freely where you will."

Blake glanced round at the others.

"I vote we go with you, then, sir!"

"Heah, heah!"

"All right!" muttered Grundy. "I'm game!"

"Listen!" breathed Digby.

They could hear faint, muffled shouts from within the house. The South American smiled dryly.

"They are searching for me!" he rasped. "I fear they will not find me, nor any of the servants, who by now will be escaping by another secret way."

He drew from his pocket the sealed letter that Grundy had given him and ripped it open.

"Now that we are safe from Del Zoro's rascals, pardon me while I read this letter from my son!" he muttered. "It is most important—"

"Your son!" gasped Blake. "Then—then you—"

"I am General Andreas," came the quiet answer—"the sworn foe of the villain who rules my unhappy country from the President's palace!"

"General Andreas!" breathed Grundy. "M-my hat!"

With shining eyes he stared through the gloom at the leader of the rebels of Urudor.

The identity of Senor X was a mystery no longer!

The rebel leader hastily scanned the letter by the light of the torch. He drew a deep, hissing breath.

"Bueno!" the juniors heard him mutter.

His flashing eyes turned to them, flaming strangely.

"This is good news, my young friends—good news for the revolution; bad news for President Del Zoro! Some aid I have been seeking has been promised me! All is now ready for us to strike—for the banner of revolt to be raised in Urudor!"

He laughed. It was a grim sound, despite its softness—a sound that sent a thrill through each of the listening juniors.

"To-night," said General Andreas in level tones—"to-night the revolutionary army marches upon Santa Paz!"

CHAPTER 7.

On the Mountain Road!

"COME!" muttered General Andreas.

He turned towards the stone stairway, leading the way down it, followed by the St. Jim's juniors.

They soon came to a dark tunnel, lined with great balks of wood, reeking of damp earth. The rebel leader strode along it, his shoulders stooped under the low roof. Blake & Co. and Grundy hurried at his heels.

The underground tunnel seemed interminable. But at last they came to some steps of beaten earth that led upwards. A minute later they had emerged through a secret doorway into a dim, bare room, the floor of which was deep in dust.

"We are now in an empty house in the Calle Rosario," explained General Andreas. "That is a street some little distance from the Plaza Vespero. Follow me!"

He crossed towards the door, and out into the passage beyond. He had snapped out the electric torch, and through the dusty windows they could see that dusk had fallen on Santa Paz with the suddenness of the semi-tropics.

"I keep a motor-car here," muttered the general, as they followed him through the kitchen quarters to a little door opening on to a deserted yard. "I have to drive now to the mountains to join the rebel army. They are waiting for me. I will take you a little way, then leave you at some safe spot from which you may easily return to the city."

"That'll be fine!" nodded Blake. "Thank you, sir!"

"This way!"

They crossed the darkening yard to the doors of a garage. General Andreas produced a key, and flung the doors open. A powerful open car stood within—a lean, black monster of speed!

The engines started promptly in response to the self-starter, and the juniors jumped in, with the South American at the driving-wheel. As they did so, the hum of a car in the street came to their ears, racing towards the entrance of the yard.

A look of swift uneasiness leapt into the face of the rebel general.

He engaged the gears, and the car swung out across the yard, with roaring engine. An instant later, a pair of powerful motor-cars passed the gateway that opened on to the street, slowing down. Each was packed with swarthy South Americans, who were already leaping out as their cars stopped just past the entrance.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Look!"

The general's face had set in sudden desperate lines. He pressed down the accelerator, and his roaring machine leapt for the street like a live thing—just as a dozen men with automatics came racing into the yard.

Getting the Sack!



"Great Scott!" panted Blake hoarsely.

In a flash the juniors understood. In some way, the President's men had learnt at the last minute of the secret way of escape from the house in the Plaza Vespero, and had come just in time to cut off the rebel leader's retreat. Whether it was that one of the general's servants had betrayed him treacherously, or had been captured before being able to escape from the house in the Plaza, and forced to speak, they could not know; but one thing was certain—General Andreas was not going to set off for the mountains to join the revolutionary army without a fight for his freedom!

Crack! Crack!

Two of the men in the gateway had already whipped up their automatics. Two sinister circles spat fire.

There was a cry from Grundy.

The big Shell fellow had been standing in the back seat as the car leapt for the gateway, and one of the bullets had struck him in the shoulder. He reeled, and before the other juniors could grasp him, he had fallen out over the side of the car, to crash to the cobbles and lie still.

Blake gave a hoarse cry.

"My heavens—"

The next moment the flying car had hurled out through the gateway, scattering the men there, flinging one of them aside against the pillar of the gateway; he collapsed with a groan, and lay writhing.

"Grundy!" panted Herries. "Stop—"

But General Andreas was still in ignorance of Grundy's fate. With his foot hard down on the accelerator, he swung out into the street. The car took the curve on its outside wheels, and for a moment it seemed as though it must overturn.

But the inner wheels took the road again, and with thunderous exhaust the lean machine leapt away down the street, through the gathering gloom. Two or three bullets whined after it harmlessly.

Jack Blake, his face as white as paper, stared back.

"My heavens!" he breathed again. "Grundy—"

But it was clearly impossible to rescue Grundy from their enemies. To have stopped now would have meant that all of them would have fallen into the hands of Del Zoro's men.

"Poor old Grundy!" muttered Herries.

"We couldn't do any good going back," groaned Digby.

General Andreas shook his head. He realised now what had happened, and his handsome face had gone suddenly haggard. He clearly felt what had happened to Grundy keenly—but as Digby had said, it was impossible to go back. They all realised that.

Blake, staring back down the street as their car swept on, caught his breath.

"They're coming after us!" he panted.

The majority of the men who had so nearly prevented their escape from the yard had piled back into the two cars, which had turned and were now racing in pursuit.

"A race, eh?" muttered General Andreas fiercely. "They will find it hard to catch us!"

The hot air flew past in their faces as they thundered on down the long, straight road. It was one of the main thoroughfares out of the city. Away ahead could be seen the purple hills, with the mighty peaks of the Andes rising jagged against the evening sky.

Before long they had left the outskirts of Santa Paz behind them—were rushing on towards the mountains with their pursuers tearing after them, a quarter of a mile away.

What had happened to Grundy?

That was the question that haunted Blake & Co. But it was a question that no one could answer for them just then.

And with Del Zoro's men hot on their heels, the chums of the Fourth could certainly not be put down from the car, as had been planned. They would have to stick with the rebel leader now!

Blake stared back through the gloom.

It seemed to him that the glaring headlamps of the foremost of the pursuing cars was nearer, creeping up!

He saw a stab of jagged flame pierce the darkness above the twin headlamps, and ducked instinctively. The bullet flew wide. But it was followed by a second that cut past them dangerously near.

At all costs, their pursuers were determined to prevent General Andreas from getting to the rebel army waiting for him in the mountains, it was clear.

They swept round a dark shoulder of rock that jutted out of the roadside. Beyond, a long winding climb led up into the hills. They tore up it, and soon the headlights of their pursuers swung into view, racing in pursuit.

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "They're catchin' us up!"

CHAPTER 8.

With the Rebel Army!

ON up the dark mountainside, their headlamps raking far through the gloom, the three cars raced—pursuers and pursued!

The face of General Andreas was set in fierce lines. His hand went to his pocket, and he drew out a heavy revolver, laying it on the seat beside him without a word.

"How far are they behind us?" he asked a minute or two later, with savage abruptness.

"Two hundred yards," Blake told him hoarsely.

"Do you think you could stop them—with this?"

"I—I'll try!"

The leader of Study No. 6 picked up the big revolver and turned in his seat, staring back.

There was no doubt that their pursuers were overhauling them steadily.

Though the rebel general was at the wheel of a fast, powerful car, the two in which Del Zoro's men were following them were evidently more powerful still.

For some time, no more bullets had whizzed after them. It flashed through Blake's mind that perhaps the men in pursuit wanted to capture Andreas alive if possible, and knowing that they were overtaking their quarry, were satisfied to hold their hands.

Slowly Blake raised the heavy weapon.

His finger quivered on the trigger, but relaxed again. A cold shudder had run through him, checking him just as he had been about to fire.

"I—I can't!" he breathed hoarsely.

If his shot were a lucky one, he knew that it must spell death for some, at least, of their pursuers. The resulting wreck of the flying car behind could not help but bring to some of its occupants a terrible death, for which he would be directly responsible.

And even though he knew that their enemies would not hesitate to kill him and his companions in a similar way if it suited their purpose, the St. Jim's youngster could not bring himself to press the trigger.

He lowered the revolver with a helpless gesture.

"I can't!" he repeated. "I can't!"

Even as he spoke, there was a sudden breathless shout from Herries.

"Great Scott!"

What had happened to cause the disaster the chums of the Fourth never knew. But suddenly the foremost of the pursuing cars had swung sideways in the road, spinning over in a flying smash. For some reason it had skidded—and above the roar of their own exhaust the juniors could hear the sickening crash as the rear car, unable to check its mad speed, hurtled into the overturned wreck. The two pairs of blazing headlamps were snuffed out like candles at the same second.

And the sound that came to their ears was one which Blake & Co. could never forget as long as they lived.

An incoherent cry burst from Blake's lips. His eyes were wide with horror as he stared back.

Nothing to be seen. The darkness of the mountain road hid its grim secret from their staring eyes. The chums of the Fourth turned their heads at last, without a word, their faces as white as death, as they gazed ahead to where the wild outline of the mountains of Urudor lay before them.

Hidden somewhere among those grim peaks was the rebel army that General Andreas had gathered secretly for the day when the time should be ripe for the revolutionaries to strike at the power of the evil scoundrel who occupied the President's palace in Santa Paz!

And the time to strike had come, so the leader of the rebels had told them. The army that had lain hidden in the mountains awaiting his command was to attack at last!

The hot air streamed past their blanched faces, as the car roared on, deeper and deeper into the mountain fastnesses, on their way to that hidden army—bearing with them the news that the rebels were to march upon the capital that very night.

For an hour they sped on at breakneck speed, higher and higher into the hills, past yawning precipices, over narrow bridges that spanned deep gorges where rapids thundered, along dark valleys, and high over starlit mountain ridges. At last General Andreas slowed down, and soon they were driving through a narrow cleft in the mountains where there seemed to be no road at all.

"We are nearly there!"

The rebel general brought the car to a standstill. He took an electric-torch from his pocket, and flashed a brief series of dots and dashes ahead. Almost instantly a far-off winking light answered from the mountainside.

"Buono!" muttered the rebel leader. "All is well!"

He started the car again, and they bumped on down the narrow ravine. Before long, the juniors saw motion—

less figures standing here and there among the rocks—armed men. They glimpsed rows of field guns, and heard the jingle of horses' harness. Glimmering lights appeared ahead.

They had arrived at last at the hidden camp of the rebel army!

An hour later the moon appeared above the ragged peaks of the Andes. In its pale light, marching men and moving horses, one or two hurrying motor-cars, and slowly crawling guns bumping over the rocky ground, could have been seen winding down the mountainside towards the road below—the road to Santa Paz.

The rebels were marching!
And with them went Jack Blake, Herries and Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 9.

The Storm Breaks!

PRESIDENT ENRICO ESTRAMADURA DEL ZORO chewed the end of his cigar sullenly, his bloodshot eyes fastened the while on Senor Fransesco Sol Botta, his Secretary of State, with an angry gleam. "You're a fool!" he snarled.

"I am sorry, Excellency, but I can assure you I have done my best!" grunted Senor Fransesco Sol Botta peevishly. He was a thin, stringy-necked gentleman with yellow teeth and shifty eyes. "I can assure you—"

The President of Urudor waved his cigar angrily. "Silence!" he roared. "I am tired of your assurances! Once I have time, as soon as this business of that hound Andreas' revolution is finished with, I shall take care to appoint a new Secretary of State! Understand?"

Senor Botta grunted that he did, in a tone which seemed to imply that he did not care, either.

The pair of scoundrels—for the Secretary of State was as rascally an individual as his master—were in the President's private sanctum, a handsome apartment overlooking the courtyard in front of the palace, and down the long vista of the Avenida de Rio Manuelito. The President

of Urudor was sprawled in a big chair, his minister standing before him, shifting uneasily from one foot to another.

"If we could find where this villain Andreas is gathering his confounded army, we could send troops at once and shell them to pieces!" growled the President, flinging away his half-chewed cigar and selecting another from the box at his elbow. "You promised me to find where they have hidden themselves in the mountains, weeks ago—and you haven't!"

"I can assure you, Excellency—"
His Excellency said something in Spanish which was equivalent to "Rats!"

"That boy that they caught yesterday evening, when Andreas slipped through their fingers again!" went on the President of Urudor angrily. "He must know something! But you haven't been able to get a word out of him!"

"He is English!" growled Senor Fransesco Sol Botta. "And—"

"What if he is?" roared the President. "He must know something, all the same. It's clear he is hand in glove with the rebels, somehow or other. Look here, I'll question him myself! Have him brought to me!"

Five minutes later, George Alfred Grundy, of St. Jim's, was standing before Del Zoro, a couple of soldiers beside him, glaring defiantly down at the sprawling figure of the President.

Grundy's face was pale and drawn, and his head was bandaged. But there was no trace of the white feather in his rugged countenance.

"Now," growled Del Zoro fiercely, in very broken English, "you are going to tell me something, my young friend, or it will be the worse for you!"

"I don't think!" growled Grundy.

"You know a lot—you must!" muttered the President, eyeing him keenly. "You know, I am sure, where these dogs of rebels are hiding, eh?"

"I've already said I don't!" roared Grundy. "So what's the good of keeping on asking me?"

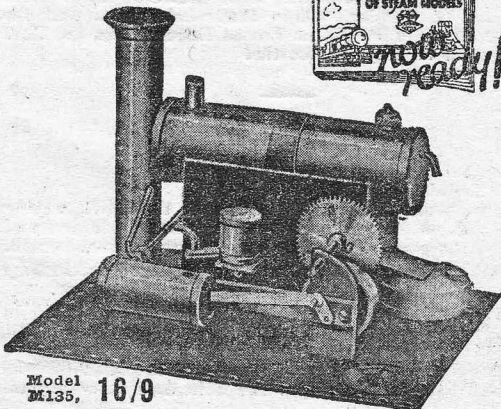
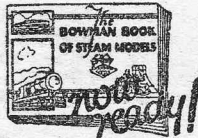
"You lie!" bellowed Del Zoro.

(Continued on next page.)

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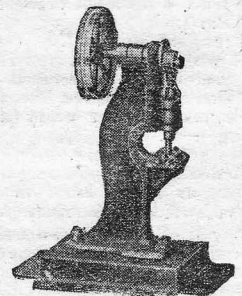


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Grundy went crimson.

"Why, you—your blessed Spanish onion!" he gasped. "I don't tell whoppers!"

"Well, what do you know?" demanded Del Zoro savagely. "Do you know when the rebels mean to attack?"

Grundy did not answer. He did know that! But he certainly did not mean to tell.

It was late afternoon now—nearly twenty-four hours since he had been wounded in Andreas' dash from the courtyard of the house in the Calle Rosario, and captured by Del Zoro's men. At any hour now, he felt sure, the rebel army would arrive at Santa Paz.

"You won't tell, eh?" grinned the President evilly. "Caramba! Perhaps I make you, eh?"

"You can try," said Grundy grimly. "But don't forget that you'll have to answer to the British Consul for all this. You're in for trouble already—lots of trouble! You'd better let me go quick, and make things as easy as you can for yourself—"

"Silence!" bellowed the President.

But an uneasy look had passed for a moment across his sallow, fleshy countenance. He glanced at his Secretary of State, who was standing near his chair.

"Bring the other one here," he grunted in Spanish.

In a few minutes the door of the room opened again and two soldiers entered; marching between them was a youngster with a pale, handsome face, at sight of whom Grundy gave a startled gasp.

It was Ricardo Andreas, the son of the rebel leader.

Grundy had not known that the general's son had been captured again soon after he had left him on the previous day, and brought to the President's palace. The discovery was a shock.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

The rebel's son glanced at him and smiled faintly as he halted defiantly before President Enrico Estramadura del Zoro, who was glaring at him with bitter hatred in his bloodshot eyes.

"Well?" said the President between his teeth. "Have you decided to be sensible, my young rebel, and tell me where your father's army of rebel dogs is skulking?"

"I have decided," nodded Ricardo Andreas contemptuously.

"You mean—"

"I have decided, as before, to tell you nothing!" snapped young Andreas.

The President's eyes bulged. He looked for a moment as though he would have an apopleptic fit.

"Young fool!" he snarled. "I will make you speak! I'll torture you—"

"That won't make me tell what I know," answered the young South American coolly. "But one thing I will tell you here and now—a time is near when you and your evil tyrannies will be swept away—"

He broke off. The door of the room had been flung violently open, and a uniformed officer of the Presidential Guard, with a flowing moustache adorning his rather blotched countenance, came in almost at a run.

"Your Excellency!" he panted. "The rebels—"

"What?" roared the President, jerking the cigar from his mouth and gaping at him. "Well, speak you fool—"

"The rebels are coming!" gasped the officer. "They are marching on the city! News has just come! Their guns are trained upon the defences—"

"Por Dios!"

President Enrico Estramadura del Zoro lumbered to his feet with ashen face, and stood quivering, his eyes fastened on the officer. He seemed to fight for breath.

"Don't stand there like a fool!" he burst out. "Get to your post! Order every man to his position! Do something—"

He got no farther.

A deafening explosion had crashed out at the back of the palace as a shell burst on one of the terraces. It was followed swiftly by another—and another!

A yell of terror broke from the President of Urudor. He stared round wildly, gasping and deathly pale. The next moment he had rushed from the room.

From Ricardo Andreas there broke an exultant shout.

"They are coming!" he cried. "They are coming!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Grundy. "You're right! They're shelling the palace—and we're in it!"

But Ricardo Andreas seemed to have no realisation of personal danger in the ironical situation. All he was thinking of, clearly, was that the revolution was under way at last—that his father's troops were at grips with those of the tyrant of Urudor, locking together for the great life-and-death struggle!

He stared out of the tall windows, across the courtyard to the now deserted Avenida del Rio Manuelito. A troop of

Del Zoro's cavalry came thundering into the Avenida, and away down it.

Ricardo Andreas drew a long, deep breath.

"It's come!" he whispered hoarsely. "The hour has come!"

And then from George Alfred Grundy there broke a sudden excited shout.

"Look!"

He flung out a pointing finger, staring out of the window, upwards.

High above the roofs of Santa Paz a huge silver shape had come droning into view, mounting to the deep blue of the burning South American sky.



One of the bullets caught Grundy in the shoulder.

It was the S 1000, the Flying School, circling high above the capital of Urudor, where the rebel troops and the Federal soldiers of President Enrico Estramadura del Zoro were engaged in desperate battle!

CHAPTER 10.

Surrender!

"MY giddy aunt!"

Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell, staring down from one of the long promenade decks of the great dirigible, drew a long, excited breath.

A crowd of juniors were thronging the windows, looking down with thrilled faces at the amazing scene below.

The city lay spread out beneath them like a map, in which tiny moving figures could plainly be discerned. The troops of the rival factions could be seen—the attacking rebels fighting their way slowly but surely into the city from the eastern side, driving back the defenders at almost all points of their line.

And beyond the combating troops, the spurt of smoke from the guns, and the flash of bursting shell, could all be seen as if in a toy game. It was hard for the excited juniors high above it all to realise that it was in actual fact the grimmest reality.

"I'll say we've got the ringside seats all right!" ejaculated Cyrus K. Hancock, the American junior, laconically. "It sure was a swell idea of old Wynter's, to unhitch moorings when the fun started, and take a peep from up here!"

"Ass!" grinned Ernest Levison of the Fourth. "It wasn't to get a look at things that we cleared off from the aerodrome. It was for safety's sake."

"I—I hope we are safe up here, you chaps!" squeaked



the car leapt forward he crashed to the cobbles!

Baggy Trimble, the Falstaff of the Fourth, nervously.

"Suppose a blessed shell came up here, you know—"
"Oh, dry up, you fat ass! Of course it wouldn't!" growled Figgins of the New House impatiently.

"Look!" breathed Manners. "The rebels are winning!"
It was true enough, as could be plainly seen from the bird's-eye view the juniors were enjoying of the whole thing.

They could see that the defenders were falling back, apparently in a good deal of disorder, on the centre of the city, where the Presidential palace rose like a little island of white stone from the smaller buildings encircling its grounds. The rebels were almost surrounding the heart of the city already, it seemed.

There was a deep shadow on the face of Tom Merry as he stared down.

"I wonder—" he broke out suddenly, and paused.
"Blake & Co. and Grundy—"

"Let's hope they're safe," muttered Kit Wildrake, the boy from British Columbia.

Ever since the disappearance of Blake & Co. and George

Alfred Grundy the previous evening, when the five juniors in question had failed to return to the aerodrome from Santa Paz, the gravest anxiety had prevailed on board the S 1000 for their safety.

Sir Napier Wynter and Mr. Railton had informed both the police and the British Consul of their disappearance, but without result.

The fighting in the streets of Santa Paz seemed to be increasing in intensity.

The juniors could hear the rattle of rifle-fire and machine-guns more insistently than ever.

"I say, you know, this is giddy exciting!" breathed Dick Redfern of the New House.

"I'd sooner be up here than down there, anyway, dear man," yawned Ralph Cardew, the slacker of the Fourth.

"Not so sure that I would," retorted Redfern, with gleaming eyes. "They say that the President, Zoro, or whatever his giddy name is, is an awful hound. I wouldn't mind lending a hand at kicking him out!"

For an hour the fighting raged on in the narrow streets around the President's palace. At the end of that time the seniors on board the S 1000 had come down to the juniors' deck, from which a better view of things could be obtained. Mr. Railton, the young master at the School House at St Jim's, Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, and Sir Napier Wynter had joined the throng, too.

From Talbot of the Shell there broke a sudden eager shout.

"Look!" he ejaculated. "On the palace roof!"

Talbot had a pair of field-glasses, through which he was staring down. At his sudden shout all eyes were turned towards the roof of the palace.

"The flag!" yelled Talbot excitedly. "They're hauling it down!"

"Great pip, so they are!" breathed Tom Merry. "What the dickens does that mean?"

The black-and-yellow national flag of Urudor was being hauled down, without a doubt. Half a minute after it had disappeared another flag rose fluttering to the mast-head—a white flag.

"The President's surrendered!" cried Sir Napier Wynter. "Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Lathom.

"So the revolution has been successful already!" Mr. Railton smiled dryly. "Looks as if the President's troops didn't put up much of a fight for it. I expect most of them went over to the rebels for the latter to have won the scrap so quickly!"

"I should think that must have been it, Railton," agreed Sir Napier Wynter. "Well, it's a good thing, I imagine, that Del Zoro is ousted at last! He was an evil ruffian, I understand. Ought to have been kicked out long ago!" His face darkened into an anxious frown.

"If only we knew where those missing youngsters are—" he began, and broke off with a helpless shrug.

"It's rotten!" nodded Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, quietly. "However, we must hope they are safe enough somewhere—"

"Hear, hear!" broke in Tom Merry in rather a strained voice.

But there was certainly nothing farther from the minds of those staring down from the S 1000 at the white flag of surrender that now fluttered over the President's palace, than that the five missing juniors had played an important part in bringing it there that day!

CHAPTER 11.

Homeward Bound!

"COME on, Grundy!"

"Speech, speech!"

"Stand up and let's have a look at you, Grundy, old hoss!"

"What-ho! Up, up!"

George Alfred Grundy rose to his feet, blushing modestly.

It was not often that the great George Alfred found himself the centre of popular applause among his school-fellows. As a rule, when they paid concerted attention to Grundy it was to tell him in no uncertain terms that he was an ass. But for once in a way things were very different.

Grundy was a hero!

Blake & Co. were by way of being considered heroes, too. But Grundy was the hero of the hour.

"Speech!" grinned Monty Lowthar.

"Yaas, wathah! Speech, deah boy!"

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"Oh, chuck rotting, you asses!" mumbled Grundy, quite confused at the warmth of his reception.

As a rule Grundy was inclined to be full of brag and self-importance. But for once in a way, now that he had actually done something to be proud of, he was displaying a modest side to his nature which none of the juniors could remember ever having encountered before in all their long experience of the great George Alfred.

"Speech, speech!" insisted the juniors noisily. "There's nothing to make a speech about, really," grunted Grundy, still very red. "All I did was to take a letter to General Andreas—you know, the new President, as he is now—from his son, and it happened that the letter gave the general the information he needed to launch his giddy attack on that rotter, Del Zoro. All the rest that happened I couldn't jolly well help happening to me, or I'd have got out of it!"

Grundy glanced across the lounge to the windows. Far below, as the S 1000 sped on through the clouds, could be seen the green forests of Brazil.

"In fact," went on Grundy candidly, "I'm not half sorry to be saying good-bye to South America, you chaps. It's a bit exciting for a long stay, if you ask me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Bai Jove, wathah!"
"Tell us about what happened to you at the President's palace, Grundy," cut in the voice of Sidney Clive, the South African junior. "We never heard any details of that."

"Oh, they carted me there, you know," explained Grundy, "and I was there when the fighting happened, as you know. That's all. When the President's crowd surrendered, and old Del Zoro was captured by General Andreas' chaps, I was rescued, of course. That's all."

And George Alfred Grundy, in his fit of amazing and unusual modesty, sat down again, with a dogged expression on his rugged countenance that showed quite plainly he did not intend to say any more about his thrilling experiences in the stormy little Republic of Urudor.

It was several days later, and the cheery tea that was taking place in the juniors' lounge on board the giant airship had been given specially in Grundy's honour; and Grundy felt that a guest of honour surely had privileges—as of not talking when he did not feel like it.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose gracefully to his feet and beamed round through his gleaming monocle.

The swell of St. Jim's, together with Blake, Herries, and Dig, had been in the enviable position of seeing a lot of the fighting from fairly close quarters, since they had been with General Andreas behind the lines during the attack on Santa Paz. Arthur Augustus had told his story a good deal since then, and at sight of him rising to his feet most of the juniors jumped to the conclusion that he wanted to tell it again. Consequently he was greeted with groans.

"Dry up, Gussy!"
"Shurrup!"
"I wefuse to shut up!" hooted the swell of St. Jim's. "I have wisen to pwopose a toast—Gwunday's vevy good health."

"Oh!" gasped Redfern. "I thought you wanted to jaw about yourself!"

Arthur Augustus glared at Redfern, but remembered the reason why he had risen to his feet, and his glare turned to a beaming smile as he proposed Grundy's health.

And the toast was drunk with a will by the cheery crowd of St. Jim's juniors as the S 1000 swept on eastward high over South America, homeward bound!

The giant airship's Atlantic crossing from Brazil to England was a record-breaker—and so was the cheer from the St. Jim's fellows on board, both seniors and juniors, when at last the white cliffs of England came up over the horizon after their long weeks of globe-trotting in foreign lands.

When last they had seen those famous cliffs they had certainly not dreamed for a moment of what strange thrills and adventures their world flight held in store for them.

But now that they were back, though they had enjoyed themselves to the limit, they could not help but feel glad to get home again.

The school Christmas holidays were still in progress; so when they landed on English soil once more it would be to scatter to their various homes for the time being. But before long the new term would be beginning at St. Jim's.

And it was to that, perhaps, more than anything else, that the schoolboy world fliers were looking forward, now that their great trip in the S 1000 was over at last!

THE END.

(Boys there will be another ripping story of Tom Merry & Co. in next week's GEM, entitled: "GEORGE WASHINGTON, JUNIOR!" It's a treat not to be missed!)

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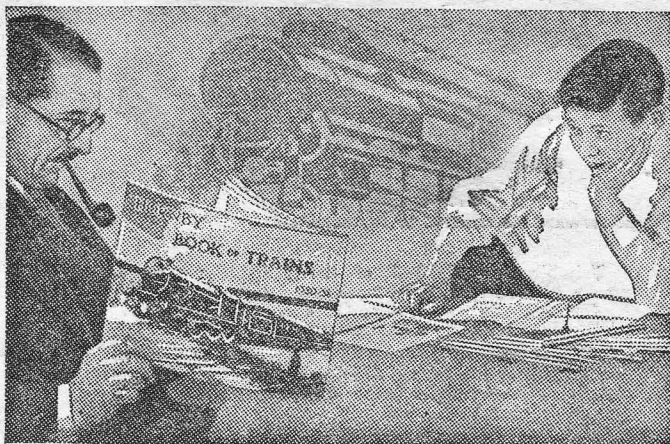
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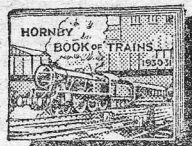
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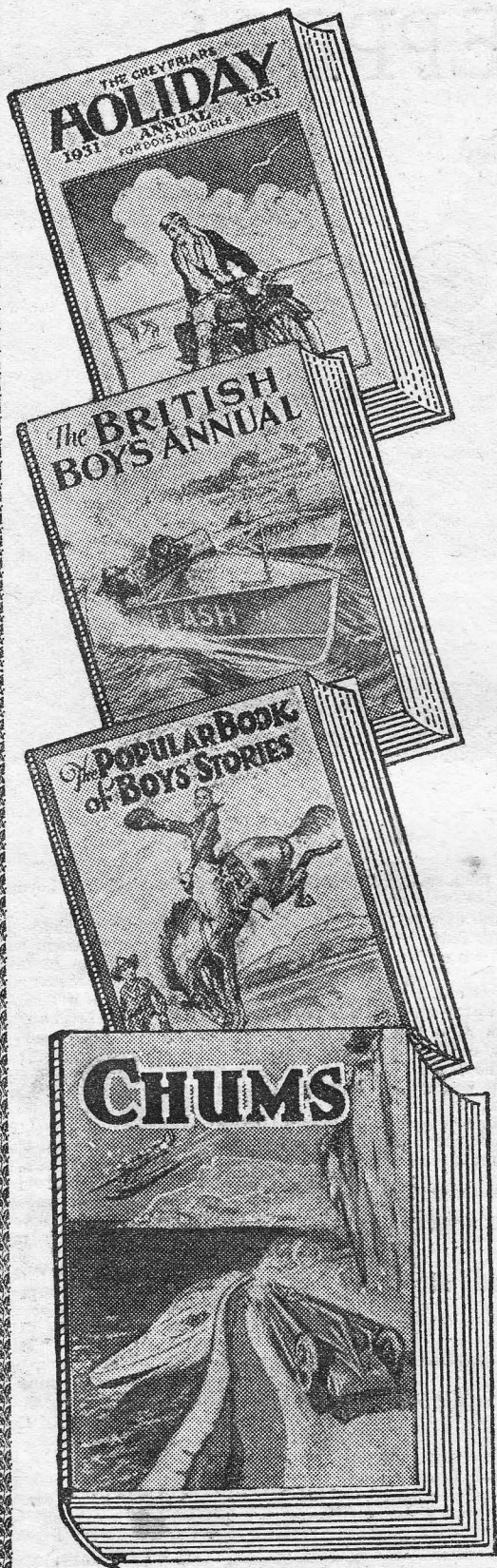
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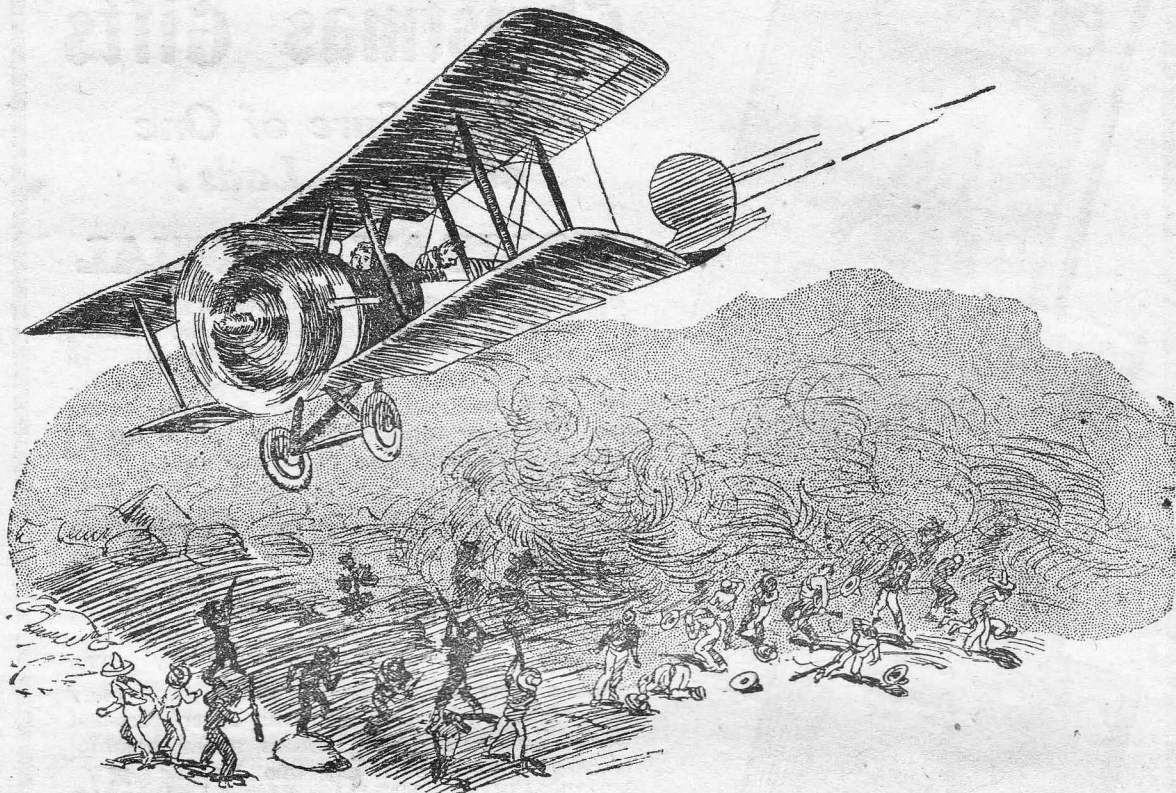
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Trapped!

SAN CRISTOBAL is a little, comic-opera South American republic, where there is a revolution on an average once every twelve months.

There is only one railway, and the roads are mostly just mule-tracks, which was why the San Cristobal Fruit Syndicate had hired Barry Flynn to fly a Moth biplane for them and act as courier between their various plantations. In addition, he was expected to dust the crops. That is to say, he would fly low over the fruit trees affected with blight, and, from a specially constructed hopper, or sieve, scatter insecticide. In this way hundreds of fruit trees could be cleared of blight in next to no time.

One night Barry was flying to Chihuahatec, where the syndicate had one of its most valuable plantations. He was carrying three sacks of the coarse red pepper which the native labourers always take with their food.

Engine trouble had delayed Barry, and it was dark when he sighted a tiny cluster of lights which he knew must be Chihuahatec. The company's plantations were a matter of ten or twelve miles from the town, and Barry pushed the joystick forward and dived earthwards. At the same time he looked out for the ground lights which Johnson, the superintendent of the plantations, would switch on when he heard the drone of the Moth's engine.

Almost at once a sheet of white light spread out below and shone on the plantation buildings. Barry throttled his motor and glided down in a spiral. He landed in the big field that had been fitted with floodlights as a landing-ground for the plane.

The Moth bumped twice and taxied to a halt close to the yard around which the plantation buildings were grouped. Barry unbuckled his safety-strap and climbed out of the cockpit. Then he became aware of a crowd of ragged, bare-

foot men, who came running out of the darkness beyond the glare of the floodlights.

They carried rifles, and their skins were every shade of brown, from lemon yellow to chocolate. Leading them was a hook-nosed man, dressed in a gorgeous uniform of blue and red, trimmed with gold braid. A long white scar on the left cheek gave him the appearance of always grinning, and Barry recognised him at once as Don Alva Esteban.

Don Alva had been dictator of San Cristobal for several years, until even his easy-going countrymen got tired of the way he robbed them and suppressed every popular liberty. There was a rising under General Cortez, and Don Alva bolted.

That was a month ago, and Barry guessed that Don Alva was heading a counter-revolution. Even as he thought this the creole made him a bow worthy of a grandee of Spain.

"Senor," he said in Spanish, "I have a proposal to place before you. Will you honour me by entering my headquarters?"

He waved a rather dirty hand towards the superintendent's office.

Barry grinned coolly.

"Sure," he said. "But suppose you tell the troops to slope arms or something?"

One of those guns might accidentally go off."

Don Alva snapped an order and his soldados lowered the rifles which they had been pointing at Barry's head.

Then the dictator took Barry's arm as though he were a long-lost brother, and they marched across to the office. The ragged soldiers padded behind, and Barry had a nasty feeling that a dozen rifles were aimed at his back. But he never turned a hair; for nothing ever flurried Barry Flynn.

They entered the office together, after a polite argument as to who should go first, and Don Alva offered a cigarette.

Barry refused, and sat down on the superintendent's table and swung his long legs and waited for Don Alva to speak.

MEET BARRY FLYNN—

The Boy who sneezed away a Revolution!

The creole blew a wisp of smoke through his nose and fixed his yellowed eyes on Barry's face.

"Amigo," he said gently, "I am attacking Chihuahua at daybreak. Afterwards I shall advance upon San Remo, and when I have captured the capital the whole country will submit.

"Now, senior, your aeroplane would be of enormous service to me, for with a machine-gun mounted in the cockpit you could fly low over the Government troops and scatter them. With your help we could carry the fortifications of San Remo quite easily!

"Now, senior"—in his excitement he placed a dirty paw on Barry's arm—"help me in this way and you shall be minister for the interior in my new Government. In twelve months you can make your fortune out of the bribes which concession-hunters will give you. What do you say?"

"That I'll be hanged before I'll help make you dictator again!" Barry said, and grinned coolly.

Don Alva snarled and choked for words, then cried: "Matre de Dios! Is that so? Then I give you till morning to change your mind! Unless you then give me your word to do as I require you shall be shot! You understand?"

Barry whipped his hands out of the pockets of his leather jacket, and made a jump for the creole. But half a dozen dirty soldiers grabbed him.

Don Alva grinned down one side of his scarred face, and snapped an order or two. Then, in spite of his struggles, the soldados frog-marched Barry away to a shed where a dozen or more of them were smoking and gambling.

Johnson lay in one corner with his hands roped together, and having tied up Barry in the same way, and robbed him of everything worth taking, the revolutionaries pitched him down beside the superintendent with as much ceremony as though he had been a bag of old rags. Then they joined in a game of cards.

Barry's Ruse!

JOHNSON had been roped up by Don Alva's ragged followers for having tried to defend the plantation buildings against them. But he didn't seem to feel much ill-feeling on that score. His main grievance was that he couldn't get a smoke.

"Those chunks of chocolate-coloured wickedness took every cigarette I possessed," he explained mournfully. "Over a thousand best Virginians, Barry. Say, what do they want with you?"

Flynn gave up tugging at his bonds because all he did was to chafe the skin from his wrists. He explained Don Alva's offer.

Johnson nodded gloomily.

"Pedro told 'em how to switch on the flood-lights," he said, "after they had threatened to stick him up against a dove wall and shoot him. Say, Barry, look at that fellow! He's started on the cheroots now."

He jerked an indignant head in the direction of a lemon-coloured gentleman who had just helped himself to a cheroot.

"Can you beat it?" Johnson demanded "Jumping Jehoshaphat! Locusts are a pleasure compared to these fellows."

"Never mind the cigarettes," Barry told him, in a low voice. "You can always get more cigarettes, but not being a cat you've only one life to lose. If we don't get away from here before daybreak we'll be growing wings and a halo. Have a shot at loosening this rope, Johnny."

The guards were getting excited over their game of cards, and none of them took much notice of the prisoners. Johnson tried to untie Barry, but he was too securely roped up himself. In the end they gave up the attempt in despair.

"This," Barry declared—"this is a situation in which a really brainy chap like myself comes out strong. Lemme think."

He thought and thought, but for a long time he couldn't think of a way of getting loose. Presently there was a deuce of a commotion in the yard, and some of the guards got up and trooped outside, leaving only four men behind. A little later Barry and Johnson heard the pad-pad of bare feet marching away, and they guessed the rebels were setting out to attack Chihuahua.

"Suffering Moses!" Johnson groaned. "That's the fourth cheroot he's smoked, Barry. At this rate there won't be one left, and me gasping for a smoke."

This remark gave Barry a sudden brainwave. He nudged Johnson with his elbow.

"Listen," he said, and spoke in a whisper for a few moments.

Johnson nodded his head.

"It may work," he agreed sadly.

"Hey!" Flynn kicked one of the guards, and the man turned with a curse.

"Give me a cheroot," Barry said; but the rascal only grinned and shook his head.

"Listen," Barry said to him, "I mean to join Don Alva when he asks me again, and then I shall be one of the big noises in this business. The first thing I shall do will be to have you shot for insubordination."

"Senior," the man stammered in sudden terror. He became full of apologies, and hastened to give Barry a cheroot and light it for him. In fact, all the four guards were so impressed that Barry began to think he might induce them to set him free. But though they were courteous enough now, they said Don Alva had given strict orders that Barry was to be kept prisoner till he sent for him. So Flynn fell back upon his original idea.

He waited till the guards were quarrelling again over the cards, and then set the glowing tip of the cheroot to his bonds. He puffed at it to keep it bright, and in a short while the rope had smouldered nearly through. Then with a jerk he got his hands free. The guards were still too busy gambling to pay any heed to their prisoners, and Barry soon had Johnson untied. Then he nodded to the four men, and Johnson winked in reply.

A moment later Flynn had two of the guards by the nape of the neck and had cracked their heads together twice. When he dropped them they sprawled half-dazed on the floor.

Meanwhile, the superintendent had hurled himself at a third man, and landed his bony fist in the guard's face. The rebel let out a yell and went backwards, chair and all. The fourth man bounded to his feet with a "Matre de Dios!" and grabbed for his rifle. But Barry was on him before he could get the weapon, and kicking his feet from under him, tossed him across the shed. The man hit the table and sent it flying, knocking over the lamp and extinguishing it.

Then Barry and Johnson bolted for the biplane, leaving the guards struggling and yelling on the floor. The yard was deserted, but an armed guard stood beside the Moth,



A moment later Barry seized two of the guards by the nape of the neck, and cracked their heads together!

which was still in the big field. He threw up his gun as the two Britishers ran out through the gates, but Barry was on him, tackling low as though he were on the Rugger field. The rifle went off in the air, and the man came down with a thump that winded him. Barry was up almost at once, and had dived into the rear cockpit. Johnson grabbed the rifle and scrambled into the fore 'pit. Barry pressed the self-starter and the 80 h.p. motor roared. Just as the four guards came racing across the yard it taxied away, bounced into the air, and went climbing steeply.

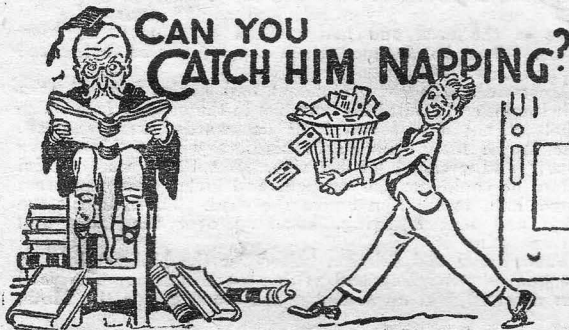
They climbed to several thousand feet before Barry throttled the motor and glided so that he could talk to Johnson without being deafened by the roar of the engine. "Look here," Barry said, "I've got an idea for putting the kybosh on Don Alva. Listen."

Johnson listened, with his face as long and solemn as a horse's. Then he nodded.

"It may work," he agreed dismally. "Anyhow, blackguards who snaffle a man's cigarettes like those fellows did deserve anything that comes to 'em."

So Barry flew the biplane towards Chihuahua, whilst Johnson opened the lid of the hopper which was built inside the fuselage, and emptied in the three sacks of red pepper. Three hundred pounds of the stuff.

Dawn was breaking when they swooped down on the rebels, who were just attacking the town and blazing away like mad though there was little resistance from the Government troops. Barry shut off his motor and they glided



Christmas is coming, and the Oracle's getting fat-headed! So please put a question under Whiskers' hat that he CAN'T answer!

WERE having stirring times at home, chums, stirring the jolly old Christmas pudding and throwing the raisins through the keyhole; every now and again one of the raisins drops into the pudding. But, of course, we can't help these little accidents, can we? The great thing is not to let the pudding get too rich; and that reminds me of something the Editor said to me this morning: "Whiskers," said he, "if our readers don't catch you napping soon and let me knock a bob or two off your salary you'll be getting too rich." "The only time," said I—"the only time, Ed., that the jolly 'Gemites' will catch me napping will be on Christmas Day, about four pip emma."

Now, chums, believe me, our old Ed. has got a fine brain-box—it's so fine you can hardly see it! But he couldn't grasp what four pip emma was; he looked abso-jolly-lutely flabbergasted, and roared out: "What d'you mean, Whiskers? Who's Pip Emma, when she's at home?" "Pip Emma, sir," I explained, "is a term used among Signallers in the Army for P.M., meaning past meridian, or afternoon. Pip means 'P,' and Emma means 'M.' In the signallers' alphabet certain letters are distinguished from others in this way. F'instance, A is called Ack, B is called Beer, D is called Don. You see, sir—"

At this point the old Ed. cut me short. "Talking of letters," he snorted, "what about all these readers' letters

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above the enemy about twenty feet up. There was a rattle of musketry fire, but none of the bullets hit them.

Then Barry pulled the lever that opened the bottom of the hopper, and a cloud of pepper poured out. To and fro above Don Alva's followers he flew, with a red fog of pepper streaming below. In next to no time the revolutionaries were helpless, half blinded, and sneezing their heads off.

"I speak severely to my boy,
I beat him when he sneezes,
For he can thoroughly enjoy,
The pepper when he pleases,"

Barry quoted.

Then he added: "Exit Don Alva, I think."

He was right. The rebels were incapable of fighting, and those who could bolted. The rest found themselves surrounded by the Government troops when the fog of pepper cleared, and tamely surrendered. Don Alva was among the prisoners, and he was shot first and tried afterwards, in accordance with the best traditions of San Cristobal.

General Cortez wanted Barry Flynn to become the official air force of the republic. But Barry refused. He liked a regular job with a sure wage, he said, and went on dusting fruit trees and acting as courier for the Fruit Syndicate.

Quietness reigns supreme once more in San Cristobal, but for how long is a matter of speculation.

THE END.

waiting for your attention. Jump to it, my lad, and pull yourself to pieces. George Hart, a Wisbech reader, wants to know the best way to make a snow-man?"

"Easy," said I. "Tell George, first of all, to get a lot of snow. That's essential. Then he must get an uncle or somebody to stand as a model. If he can find an uncle who will freeze on to the idea, as you might say, and you see, sir, I've been through it, so I know, believe me! When I was—"

"I don't want to know what happened when you was anything!" roared the Editor. "I don't believe you ever have been anything, as a matter of fact, except a nuisance! Can you tell a Pevensy reader what frost-bite is exactly, and how it can be cured?"

"Yes, sir; frost-bite is caused by the blood supply being cut off from a certain part of the body—the fingers, toes, ears, and so on. The only way to restore the circulation in cases of frost-bite is to apply snow or ice-water to the affected member. If a person suffering from frost-bite in, say, the toes were to put his feet in front of a fire, the feet would become inflamed. You can tell our Pevensy friend that it is very unwise to hold a chilled part of the body in front of a fire at any time. The correct way of restoring circulation is by rubbing. In severe cases of frost-bite the affected member has to be cut off."

"Dear me!" said the Ed., shivering slightly. "You make me feel all of a doo-dah. Talking of frost, what is hoar-frost exactly?"

"Hoar-frost, sir," I replied promptly, "is supposed by many people to be frozen dew. Actually, it is caused by

the moisture in the air freezing and settling on to objects near by. Frosts do a great deal of harm to vegetation, because the moisture of the plants themselves freezes, and that stops their growth." While I was telling the Ed. all this I was getting colder and colder, so I edged nearer and nearer the fire. "Look out!" shouted the Ed. "Your whiskers are on fire!" I looked down, and, sure enough, chums, the tip of my whiskers was blazing right merrily. While I was admiring the effect there was a terrific bang, and a cracker that one of my nephews had secreted in the depths of my hairy appendage ever since Guy Fawkes' Night went off with a loud report. Naturally, we were both a bit startled. "If you do that again," shouted the Ed., "I'll make you join our football team! D'you know anything about Rugger, Whiskers?"

"Yes, sir," said I; "but if you don't mind I'd rather not."

"Tell me," said the Ed, "how many ways are there in Rugger of kicking the ball?"

"Three, sir. There's the place kick, the drop kick, and what is called the punt. The place kick is just a straight-forward kick—like that, you see, sir." I put my toe through the old Ed.'s waste-paper basket just to show him the idea. "In the drop kick, the ball is thrown to the ground and kicked just as it rebounds. A goal may be scored from a drop kick at any time during play. The punt is a kick at the ball before it touches the ground. This kick is used for putting the ball into touch. At one time, in Rugger, a deliberate kick into touch was considered bad play, but nowadays it's reckoned to be in order. Times change, don't they?"

"Yes," responded the Editor, "they do. But time doesn't seem to change you much; you're still the same bewhiskered bundle of bounce you were fifty years ago. In fact, my lad, your presence is beginning to annoy me somewhat!" "And talking of presents, sir," I chipped in, "what are you thinking of giving us this Christmas?"

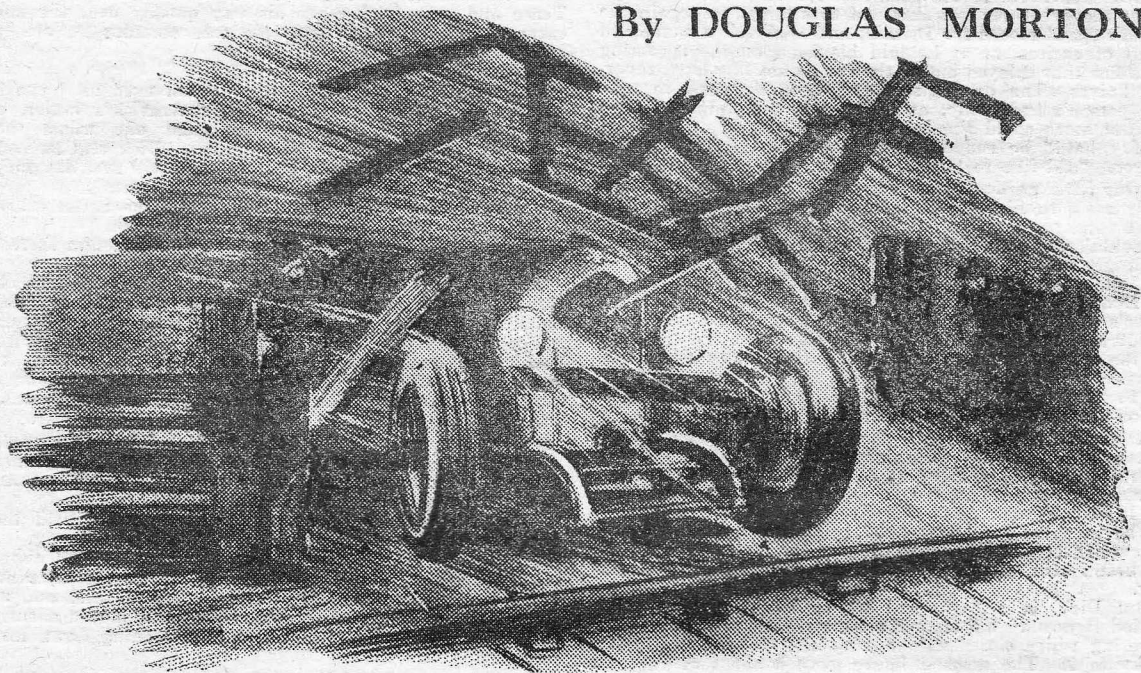
"The sack!" snapped the Ed. "The sack—that's what I'll give you if you don't wake up a bit! I've a letter here from a reader in Dalston; he wants to know whether the tiger is a native of India or of Africa. Know anything about that, Whiskers?"

(Continued on page 31.)

ANOTHER SMASHING SPEED YARN!

KINGS O' SPEED!

By DOUGLAS MORTON.



CHAPTER 1.

'The Deadly Runaway!'

LOOK out, sir!" Like lightning Dick Stanford whipped round on his heel as the warning shout struck his ears. For the voice of Mold, his employer's stocky Yorkshire foreman, had contained such a note of urgent warning that the boy could not disregard it.

Then he sprang for his life. Charging down upon him from one of the concrete slopes which led from his employer's many garages was a great catapulting mass of metal—a racing Bugatti entirely out of control! His flying leap had been instinctive, for it had landed him on the centre turntable.

It was his only chance of escape from death, for he was directly in the way of the enormous car, and nothing but a miracle could save him from being crushed to death under its wheels.

With a crash that knocked the breath completely out of his body he hit the turntable fair and square. Round the great plate shot under the impetus of his leap, for its delicate machinery would act upon the slightest touch.

Zipp-p-p!

The tearing wheels shot past Dick's head, missing him by the fraction of an inch as the runaway continued its mad career, and the boy turned over and over like a football as the turntable whizzed him along the ground.

The old courtyard which lay behind his employer's Thames-side residence, Benton Manor, now rang with shouts and cries, and there was a terrific crash as the great Bugatti hit a far wall and turned over, its massive wheels still racing round in impotent fury.

Dick gasped as his body finally came to a standstill, and then he looked up with a grin as a familiar voice snapped out:

"Say, who's the plumb crazy guy who pulled that stunt?"

It was his boss, Cyrus J. Arkville, the famous millionaire inventor of motor-cars, speaking, and the inevitable cigar was twisting and turning in his mouth as the characteristically clipped tones cut the air like a knife.

"I'd like to meet the gentleman myself, sir," Dick called out in reply to Arkville, who was now striding across the courtyard towards him.

"Guess he wouldn't pull that funny stuff twice if I got my mitts on him," the American snapped out as he neared his seventeen-year-old assistant. "Are you hurt at all, sonny?" he continued.

"No, sir," Dick laughed, as he jumped to his feet. "But I thought I had given up long-jumping when I left school," he added, as he glanced at the still-spinning turntable.

Then the boy suddenly became serious, for his thoughts jumped immediately to his employer's latest invention, the Arkville Z. By Jove! That runaway car was no accident—it had been a deliberate attempt on his life.

"What's the big idea, boy?" Arkville asked, as he glanced keenly at Dick's face.

In reply the boy inclined his head towards the garage from whence the Bugatti had come. In a second the millionaire was racing up the concrete slope, quickly followed by Dick. But the garage was empty of any human presence.

"Someone wanted me out of the way," Dick said grimly. "There's the Arkville Z," he added, as he pointed to the great super-car as it stood on its special stand in the middle of the garage, "and I've a shrewd suspicion that—"

"Not—"

"Yes, sir. The Wrecker is

on the trail once more!"

The millionaire's jaw set in a hard line as he heard the boy's words.

"By heck! You're right, sonny!" was his crisp comment. Suddenly Dick stooped and picked up two heavy, shaped blocks of wood which lay near his feet.

"The Bugatti didn't move on her own accord, sir. Look!" He held the blocks up as he spoke. "These chocks were under her front wheels! We're for it again, sir, but we'll beat the Wrecker, as we have done before."

"That's the surest thing you've said this a.m., sonny!" the inventor said as he turned his eyes towards his beloved Arkville Z. "But I guess we'll have to be stepping lively from this day on. The Wrecker's a slick mover, and he'll be after blood this time, I reckon!"

"Shall we look the car over, sir, and see if she's been tampered with?" the boy suggested.

Without wasting a word in reply Arkville stepped up to the wondrous super-car as it stood, a silent testimony.

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VICTORY AT LAST!

The "Wrecker" is out—for good and all!
Dick and Arkville have got him!

to the inventor's magnetic brain, all set and ready for its tremendous task, on its special stand. Painted a bright green, and shaped like a torpedo, its long tapering lines picked out in cream and gold, it was a sight for the gods, and the acme of inventive genius. Under its low, tapering bonnet lay its secret engine—a marvellous power-producing unit that would sing its song of terrific speed such as had never before been heard on dry land.

For the great car was destined to attempt to regain the world's speed record for Britain, and Dick felt a wonderful thrill of excitement as he laid his hand on the sprouting wind-fins that splayed out of the car's sides like long, tapering knives. The driving-seat had been designed to take one person's body only, and that person was himself!

What more could life hold for him, he thought?

"My hat!" he suddenly exclaimed, turning to his employer. "I'd like to try her out, sir."

"Our little garden path"—and thus did Arkville humorously refer to his three-mile-long oval racing track which lay behind the manor in the vast extent of Benton Park—"wouldn't hold her for a minute, sonny," the millionaire smilingly remarked.

"But, sir—" began Dick.

"Don't get impatient, boy. Guess across the Channel there's a good stretch of sand for a try-out. France—"

But he never completed the sentence, for from the back of the garage came a crash of glass as a window was smashed in by an unseen hand.

"France!" a strange, harsh voice snarled in anger. "You'll never drive the Arkville Z in France!"

A masked figure suddenly leapt through the broken panes, and a soft hiss accompanied his action. To Dick's horrified gaze he saw creeping along the floor a slow-moving, thin, grey cloud. Then he leapt to action on the instant.

"It's cutting-gas, sir!" he yelled to Arkville.

The inventor stood transfixed as he saw one of his own inventions being turned against him.

"Stand still, Stanford!" the strange voice ordered the boy.

But Dick, in a flash, had sprung to a lever and had pulled it down. Up from the floor shot a protecting steel covering which closed with a snap and completely hid the Arkville Z. The masked figure gave a shout of rage as his plans were for the moment balked; but it was only for an instant, for the cutting-gas would go through steel like a knife through cheese.

"The tanks, sir!" yelled Dick, as the vicious snarl of a bullet sang past his ears.

The man sprang at the boy, but as Dick went down before the onslaught of his powerful foe he knew that Arkville had grasped his meaning. The next moment he was floundering up to his knees in water. The inventor, with one smashing pull, had released the fire-protecting tanks which were housed in the roof of the garage. The villain who held the boy threw him off with a powerful thrust and fled, but as Dick's head came up crash against the wall he knew that the deadly cutting-gas had disappeared as if by magic, and that the attack on the super-car had failed.

CHAPTER 2.

The Den of Spies!

"WELL, sonny, I guess the Wrecker's lost the first trick!"

Arkville and Dick were sitting in the former's library the day after the attack on the Arkville Z, and the boy ruefully rubbed his head as his employer spoke.

"He has certainly raised a bump," Dick replied. Then he grinned suddenly. "But it was worth it. And now that the car is on its way to Southampton, we might be out of the wood," he added.

"Wish I could get a line on him," said the inventor, gripping his cigar between his teeth. "He's just like a flash of lightning to me. But he certainly has all the inside dope about my little affairs. Yes, sir, I'll tell the world."

The millionaire sat in grim silence for a few moments.

"Guess we ain't quite out of that wood yet, sonny," he exclaimed suddenly. "If that big tough knows that you're crossing the water to try out the car—" He paused as he noticed Dick sit up in his chair. "See any daylight, sonny?" he continued.

Dick had been thinking rapidly. There must be someone in this very house that knew all their plans. He realised how his employer's heart was set on regaining the speed record for Britain, and every nerve must be strained to prevent anything happening.

"I'm not sure, sir," he answered to the millionaire's query. "Can I just work on my own for a bit?"

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"Sure thing!" came the quick response. "Get right ahead!"

Dick left the library and closed the door softly behind him. He stood for a second or two looking intently down the long corridor. It was here in the manor itself that the deadly menace was supreme. Of that he was sure. Even as he stood outside the door a faint noise came to his ears.

Where did it come from? From the side corridor? Tense and taut, Dick made his way quickly over the soft carpets. As he turned into the side corridor he nearly bumped into someone.

"I beg your pardon, sir!"

The smooth voice sounded very formal even as it spoke its apology. The speaker was Houlst, Arkville's butler, a fellow-countryman of the inventor, and one whom the millionaire had helped in former days. Dick and he had been mutual, though silent, enemies since the first day they had met, for the boy distrusted the man intently.

"Is Mr. Arkville in the library, sir?" the butler asked in respectful tones. "I have a message for him."

"Yes," answered Dick shortly. "You'll find him there."

"Thank you, sir!"

The man proceeded on his way with his cat-like tread. But Dick, as he walked down the side corridor, felt as if the butler's eyes were boring his back through and through. Suddenly he stopped dead in his tracks and spun on his heel. The corridor behind him was absolutely empty. It must have been his imagination, but he could have sworn that, quite near him, someone had moved. His sixth sense told him that the clue he wanted was near—very near.

He let his eyes roam about him, seeking for some tangible result. His gaze fell on a suit of armour, and the lance which the impassive mailed figure held in its hand seemed to Dick's sensitive brain a magnetic point.

"I'll just examine you a bit, me old buck," said the boy to himself.

Suiting the action to the word, he raised his hand above his head and touched the lance lightly. To his astonishment, the figure moved immediately to one side, and at the same time a panel in the wall behind it moved silently to the left, disclosing a flight of steps leading down into darkness.

Without a moment's hesitation Dick entered the tunnel. At his second step he heard behind him a faint click. The panel had shut! Quickly he ran his hands over it, but no secret spring could be found. He was trapped there in the darkness, and there was nothing for it but to go on.

Letting his weight drop gingerly each time, he made his way cautiously down each step. His thoughts raced through his brain with lightning rapidity. Was this Houlst's work or not? He knew that Arkville trusted the butler implicitly, and, after all, he himself had nothing to go on save his instinctive dislike.

Suddenly he stood stock-still. Someone was breathing softly and slowly in the dense blackness beyond him.

"That you, guv'nor?"

The guttural whisper came to him out of the darkness. Quickly Dick stepped down the few remaining steps till he found solid earth. He heard the question repeated anxiously.

Then came a flash of light full in the boy's face as a torch in the hand of the questioner was switched on. Dick hurled himself directly at it, and body struck body in a sickening impact.

Dick hung on to his opponent like grim death. Over and over they rolled as they crashed to the floor, the boy fighting tooth and nail to get the uppermost hand. But a jagged bit of the uneven floor was his undoing, and as his elbow hit against it, his arm for one moment went dead.

Quick as a flash his opponent had gone. Feeling the torch under his hand, Dick rapidly switched it on. In the blaze of its light he saw what made him cry out with anger. For a great steel door was slowly descending over a gap in the wall. Soon it reached the ground.

Silence!

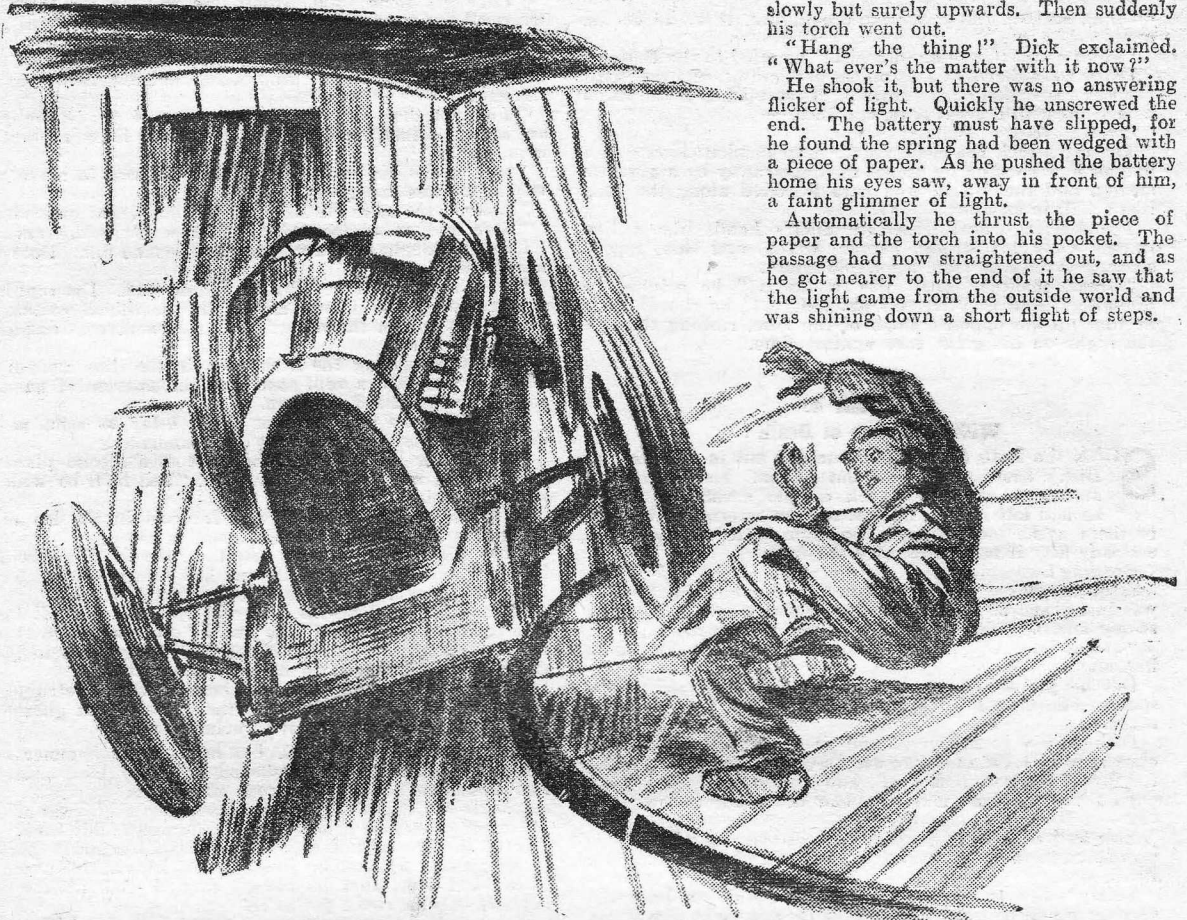
He was alone in the bowels of the earth, and the Arkville Z would leave Southampton without him. The Wrecker had won the second trick!

CHAPTER 3.

The Cutting Gas!

DICK, switching off his torch to save the battery, set his teeth in grim determination. He didn't intend to remain in that den, trapped like a rat, whilst the Wrecker worked his will on the Arkville Z. Nor was he going to be done out of his trials on the hard sands of the French shore.

Cautiously he felt his way around the subterranean room,



The tearing wheels shot past Dick's head, missing him by an inch. Then the huge car hurtled onwards!

for there must be a way out somewhere. Suddenly his hand touched a switch, and he heard a crisp, familiar voice so near to him that he jumped.

"Tell Mr. Stanford I've left for London, Hoult. Guess he's busy around somewhere."

"Right, sir!"

Then silence. Had the situation not been so serious, Dick would have laughed. For an ordinary sound-detector to be tapping into the library in the house of the world-famous inventor certainly would in other circumstances call for mirth.

"No wonder the Wrecker knows all about our plans!" the boy muttered to himself. "And Arkville is off to town on the business about the new car."

It was up to him, as his boss would say. Quickly he flashed the torch again. Great Scott! His heart nearly jumped into his mouth, for he saw, creeping along the floor towards him, a thin, grey cloud. The cutting gas again, evidently released on him by the blackguard outside. It was approaching him with deadly earnestness. Soon it would expand, fill the room, and then—

Rapidly Dick took himself in hand, and even as he did so a breath of wind from some hidden ventilating shaft deflected the deadly, creeping menace from its course. He watched that thin grey cloud with eager eyes, for it was now slowly approaching that great steel door which barred his way to freedom.

Nearer and nearer it crept, and then it poised, like a snake ready to strike. Another breath of wind like the last, and the deadly gas might miss the steel door—and beyond that massive plate lay safety.

Then Dick's wide-opened eyes saw the great steel barrier dissolve as if it had been wiped out of existence by a magic hand. It was there, solid and impregnable, one moment, and in the next second of time Dick was leaping for his life over glowing masses of molten metal. He crashed through the aperture like the shot out of a gun.

Rapidly he made his way up the sloping passage which opened out before him in the light of his torch. It wound first this way, and then that, but all the time it worked

slowly but surely upwards. Then suddenly his torch went out.

"Hang the thing!" Dick exclaimed. "What ever's the matter with it now?"

He shook it, but there was no answering flicker of light. Quickly he unscrewed the end. The battery must have slipped, for he found the spring had been wedged with a piece of paper. As he pushed the battery home his eyes saw, away in front of him, a faint glimmer of light.

Automatically he thrust the piece of paper and the torch into his pocket. The passage had now straightened out, and as he got nearer to the end of it he saw that the light came from the outside world and was shining down a short flight of steps.

A moment later, and the boy stood by an open trapdoor, and gazed with wonderment at the wall that surrounded the garages and workshops of Benton Manor.

"The Wrecker is certainly a downy bird!" Dick mused, as he thrust his hands in his pockets.

Then he remembered the piece of paper from the torch.

"Great snakes!" he murmured, as he read it.

For it contained full information of the movement of the Arkville Z to Southampton!

No time now for investigations about Hoult or anyone else, the boy decided. Mold, the foreman, had gone on with the steel-covered lorry which housed the secret super-car, and would cross the water with it that night. His plans for following the next day must go by the board. He must catch that boat, for the villains would certainly make an attempt to smash up the Arkville Z while it was on the steamer.

Dick tore out his watch and examined it in the last rays of the setting sun. Just over an hour and a half before the boat sailed, and the ship lay seventy miles away!

To think with Dick was to act. His flying feet soon brought him to the old courtyard.

"The Bentley! Get a move on!" he shouted to the nearest mechanic.

Like frenzied ants men fell on to the great racing car. She was whipped out of her garage and on the turntable in a trice. Petrol, oil, and water disappeared into her like magic.

In less time than it takes to tell, Dick, a crash-helmet on his head, was letting in the clutch and tearing along the well-kept drives, heading for the Bath Road.

But the Wrecker was not beaten yet, for ahead of the boy, in a straight stretch of country lane, lay a level crossing—a narrow gate affair over a little used branch line.

As Dick approached it he switched on his headlights. To his horror, he saw that one gate was closing, and at the side of the line he discerned the gate-keeper struggling in the arms of two men.

There was no time for hesitation. Let that gate close on him, and, in this narrow thoroughfare, it would be the end.

"Here goes! Come on, old girl!" he cried to the Bentley. Down went the boy's foot on the accelerator, and the great Bentley responded on the instant. It seemed as if she lifted herself up with a great roar, and then—

Crash!
The car struck the closing gate a tremendous blow. The barrier flew back on its hinges as if shot away by a gigantic spring, and the villain who held it rolled along the rails like a ball in an alley.

The steering-wheel jerked in Dick's hands like a live thing. Only his strong, supple wrists and his superb steering saved him from a terrible smash.

"Great snakes! That was a bump!" he grinned to himself. "And they haven't got me yet!" he chuckled, as he tore up the opposite slope of the lane, rushing through the night on his great race against time.

CHAPTER 4.

Within an inch of Death!

SOON the Bath Road was stretching out in the glare of Dick's headlights like a flat ribbon. He had set his automatic map and clock on the dashboard before he had left Benton Manor, and he referred constantly to them as he tore through the night. He must average a steady fifty if he was to catch the boat.

Reading!
A quick glance at his instruments showed him that he was just ahead of time. He slowed down through the town, swung left, and then opened the throttle once more.

"Might have bought some biscuits here!" he grinned to himself.

But he put aside his youthful hunger and watched the speedometer-needle creep up and up. Fifty—sixty—seventy!

Dick was a born driver, and at every little stretch of open road he let the massive car have her head. He shouted for joy at the power of it all, and the throb of the mighty engine was the best music he had heard for a very long time.

Now he was slowing through Basingstoke and winding his way through the busy streets, heading for the Southampton Road.

Thirty miles to go, and in just over half an hour the steamer would be leaving the docks for her night trip across to the shores of France. Dick set his teeth and hunched himself down over the wheel.

Suddenly ahead of him he saw an obstruction. But nothing was going to stop him that night. On and on was his motto. He took the grass verge at the side of the road with a bound. A heap of stones scattered like hail under his tearing wheels, and a savage shout came to his ears as the rocking car hit the road again and continued its mad drive onward.

"The jolly old Wrecker has still got his tail up!" Dick laughed to himself; for he had caught a quick glimpse of masked figures crouching by the barrier which had hastily been thrown up on the road.

Winchester came and went in a flash, and very soon the lights of the shipping port came into view. Dick tore his eyes away from his recording instruments on the dashboard. It was neck or nothing now!

As he neared the ship's side he heard a sound which spurred him on to the last great effort.

Whoo-oo-oo!

It was the steamer's siren! She was just sailing!
Dick brought his wonderful car to a standstill with a terrific grind of brakes. He was over her side in a flash. Excited officials started forward to stop him, but Dick meant to get on board by hook or by crook.

The ship's gangway was just being pulled in. The boy took one flying leap and clutched desperately at the end of it. His weight brought it down in a sickening sway, and he saw the narrow gap between the steamer's side and the dock yawning below him. One slip, and he would be crushed to death in that little strip of black, oily water which lay beneath him!

But a shout came from the deck.
"Hold on, sir!"

It was Mold yelling at the top of his voice. The boy felt the gangway steady its terrible fall, and with a mighty heave, calling on all his muscles for one huge effort, he dragged himself aboard.

That many explanations had to be given to the ship's officers troubled the boy not a whit. He was on board with his employer's beloved mystery car, heading for France, and that was all that mattered for the moment.

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"Let's get some tood, Mold," he said to the foreman, when all the formalities were finished with. "I could just about look a steak full in the face!"

But even when they were seated in the saloon Dick was too excited to eat much. And Mold was anxious to hear all the news.

"I expect that the Wrecker or some of his bosom pals are aboard, Mold," said Dick to the stocky little Yorkshireman.

"He'll have his hands full, sir, if he tries to make any mischief," was the grim reply.

"Where's the Arkville Z?" was the boy's next question.

"Safe and sound forrard, sir," came the ready answer. "I never thought that our plans had leaked out. Does the boss know?"

"No," replied Dick. "But he will do soon. I've sent him a wireless. You know, Mold," he continued earnestly, "there's a spy in the manor, and I've a shrewd suspicion as to who it is."

They were pacing the deck now, in the dim moonlight. The sea was like a mill-pond and an uneventful passage seemed to be ahead of them.

"Bet the boss will be over right away as soon as he hears," was the foreman's next dry comment.

"I can hear him ordering the pilot of a special plane to 'Step on it, sonny!'" Dick laughed, "and he'll be with us in the morning."

They were now standing well forward in the lee of a deckhouse, and Dick spoke his thoughts aloud.

"The Wrecker must know that the Arkville Z is specially built for me to drive, and it's me he's after—"

"It is!" snarled a hoarse voice behind him.

Dick spun round on his heel, but received the full force of a terrific blow on the face and he dropped like a stone. But his hard training and strong body stood him in good stead, and he bounded to his feet like a cat.

Dimly in the gloom of the deck he could discern struggling forms and he threw himself at them. Silent as ghosts he and Mold fought against overwhelming odds.

It was no kid-glove fight, but hard at it, hammer and tongs, till Dick became weakened by many blows. Arms like the limbs of an ape closed round him in a steel-like grip. He felt himself being raised and carried till the ship's rail came in sudden contact with the small of his back.

As it did so, he felt a hard object in his jacket pocket being pressed against his side. Then he remembered the little black case that he always carried—Arkville's secret ray. If only he could get at it!

He struggled desperately to get one arm free, but with no success. Below him he could see the calm waters of the Channel and even at this juncture noticed a swift-moving motor-boat, evidently one of the enemy's craft, cleaving the water on its way to the ship.

Slowly he felt himself being forced overboard. Suddenly, to his horror, he knew that only space was under him. Desperately he threw out one hand. His grasping fingers touched and held the lower rail, his feet dangling helplessly against the side of the fast moving steamer.

Rapidly he tore the black case from his pocket with his free hand. At the level of his eyes was a confused jumble of feet, for Mold was fighting hard against his attackers.

Like a flash Dick flung the secret paralysing ray straight at the feet of the nearest enemy, who had at that moment got one foot in the air.

There was a scream of rage as the ray bit home and the man's foot was held rigid and immovable. The jerk threw him and his companion against the rail.

The next moment there was a mighty heave from the foreman, and Dick had a flying view of his two enemies, arms and legs asprawl in the air, describing an arc to the rushing waters beneath, a terrific splash—and he knew only oblivion as the strong hands of Mold drew him up on to the safety of the deck.

CHAPTER 5.

The Final Battle!

IT was on the long stretch of hard sand at Nanefleur that the Wrecker threw all his resources into the last bout of the age-long war of hate he had carried on against Arkville. Jealousy of the millionaire's triumphant successes, inordinate greed, and the desire to be recognised as someone in the world had been the force that had driven that implacable man on.

He put away from him the fact that in the past the great inventor had helped him when he was down—he did not wish to be reminded of it.

As he lay now in the old fort which stood at the end of the long stretch of sand, he ground his teeth in cold fury at the thought of Dick Stanford, the one person who had always stood in his way.

But little did Dick realise that his enemy was cursing him, miles away. For the early morning sun was shining brilliantly, and the Arkville Z was ready for her first trial run.

"It's a great life, sir," he said to Arkville as they made their way to the wonderful super-car as she lay on the sands.

"Sure thing, sonny. You'll enjoy the run. Guess you've earned it," was the smiling reply.

The inventor gazed at the gleaming lines of the car as she lay on the glistening sands—her wonderful torpedo body gleaming in the morning light.

"Yes, sir!" the millionaire went on. "I'll say she's some car—I got grey hairs panning out her engine. Guess we can consider that little record in our pocket when the time comes to surprise those foreign guys."

Soon Dick was seated in the little driving-seat. A quick look round and then:

"All set, sonny?" Arkville asked.

"All set, sir!"

"Right! Then let her go!"

There was a roar as the inventor's secret starting device came into action, and with eager hands Dick slid in the gears. Although he would not attain anything like the speed he would when the great test came, he felt an enormous thrill as the great car leapt forward.

Up and up crept the speedometer needle.

One hundred and fifty! My hat! What a wonderful speed, thought the boy, as he watched the sands ahead with keen eyes. The wind tore past his ears with a shriek like that of an express train.

On and on the great car sped till Dick felt that he was flying through the air instead of moving along the sands.

"Yoicks!" he yelled in delight. "This certainly is speed!"

Then the bolt from the blue came with hardly a second's warning, for from round a boulder to the left of his course came a little ship with sail set.

A sand-yacht! And it was shooting straight across his path. He could not miss it at this terrific speed. He must hit it, and as Dick said to himself with a grim smile, the harder he hit it the better. Down went his foot, and the Arkville Z fairly leapt forward as her massive engines opened out.

Crash!

The flimsy little ship disappeared like magic as the hurtling torpedo bonnet caught it fair and square in the bows. The great car staggered for a moment under the impact, but she stuck to her course and Dick's fears that she would go smashing right over proved groundless.

The figure which had jumped out of the land vessel before the crash shook its fist at the retreating car in impotent rage. But to a certain extent the damage had been done, for that extra turn of speed had brought the old fort at the end of the run practically on to Dick's bonnet.

He could not stop in time. The terrific monster at whose wheel he sat would never check before those deadly concrete walls were reached.

Dick had to make his momentous decision in the flick of an eyelid. Just at the right of the fort and between it and the sea was a strip of sand barely a dozen yards wide. He must put the car at that narrow belt, using all his experience to get it through.

He was approaching it at a terrific speed when the Wrecker shot his last bolt. Rushing across the sand from the fort to the middle of the fateful narrow strip was a thin train of fire.

A land-mine!

Dick's quick senses told him all. But would he get through in time, or would the terrible explosion blow him and the wonderful car he was driving, high into the blue above?

Holding the steering-wheel of the terrific monster in a firm grip, Dick was determined to win through. The Wrecker was not going to get the better of him if he could possibly help it. His bulldog pluck had carried him through so far, and it was not going to fail him now.

Crash!

A spout of wicked flame shot up into the skies, but the Arkville Z had shot the eye of that needle and had crossed the fateful spot but a split second of time before!

Safe!

Soon his friends were dashing up in the mechanic's car. "I guess that put paid to the Wrecker for good and all, sonny," said Arkville.

"It was Hoults, was it?" asked the boy.

"It sure was," came the reply. "In the fort—I've kicked him good and hard in the pants. Guess he had me for the boob all right. But I'll tell the world that you're the bright boy of this outfit. Yes, sir!"

"Now for the record, sir! But things will be a bit quiet, I think," Dick laughed.

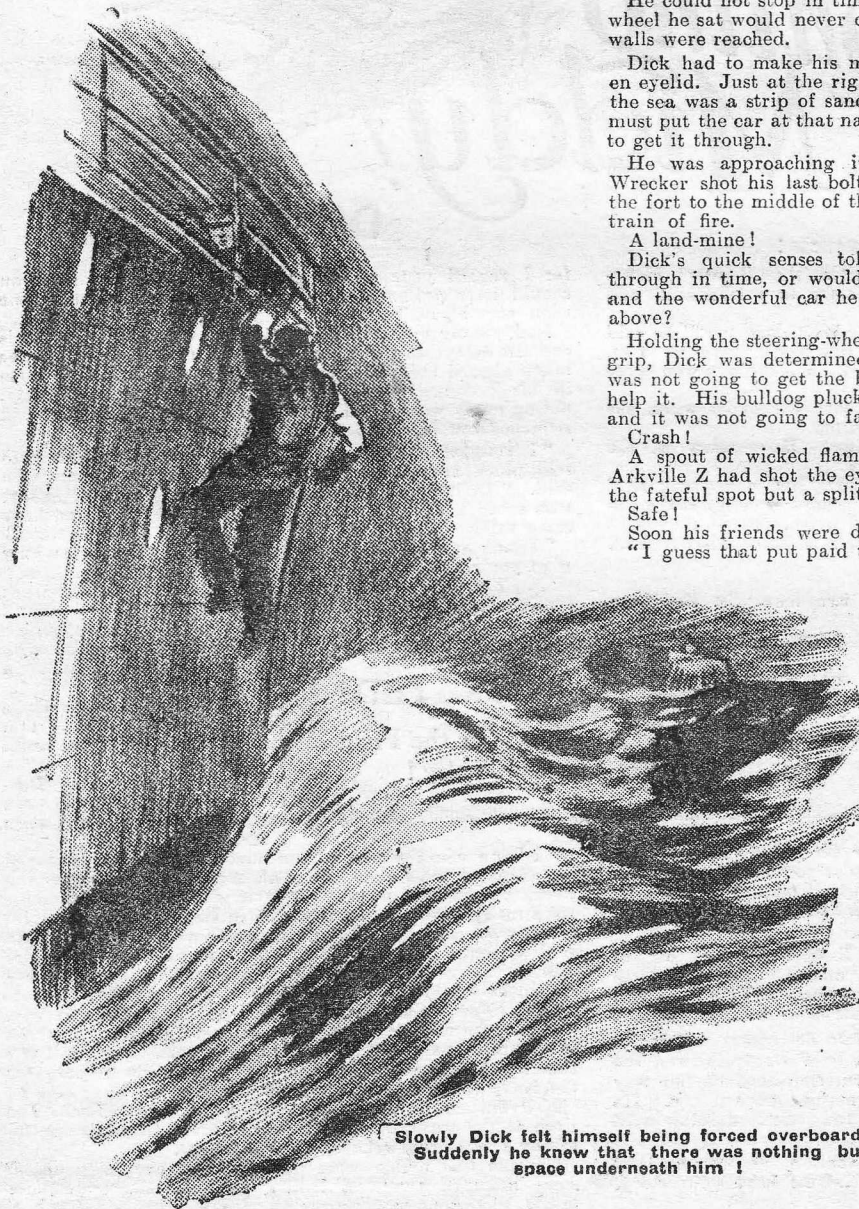
"Guess you won't mind that for a spell, eh, sonny?" the inventor smiled in reply.

"Surest thing you know, boss," grinned the boy, as he joyfully headed the Arkville Z once more for home.

THE END.

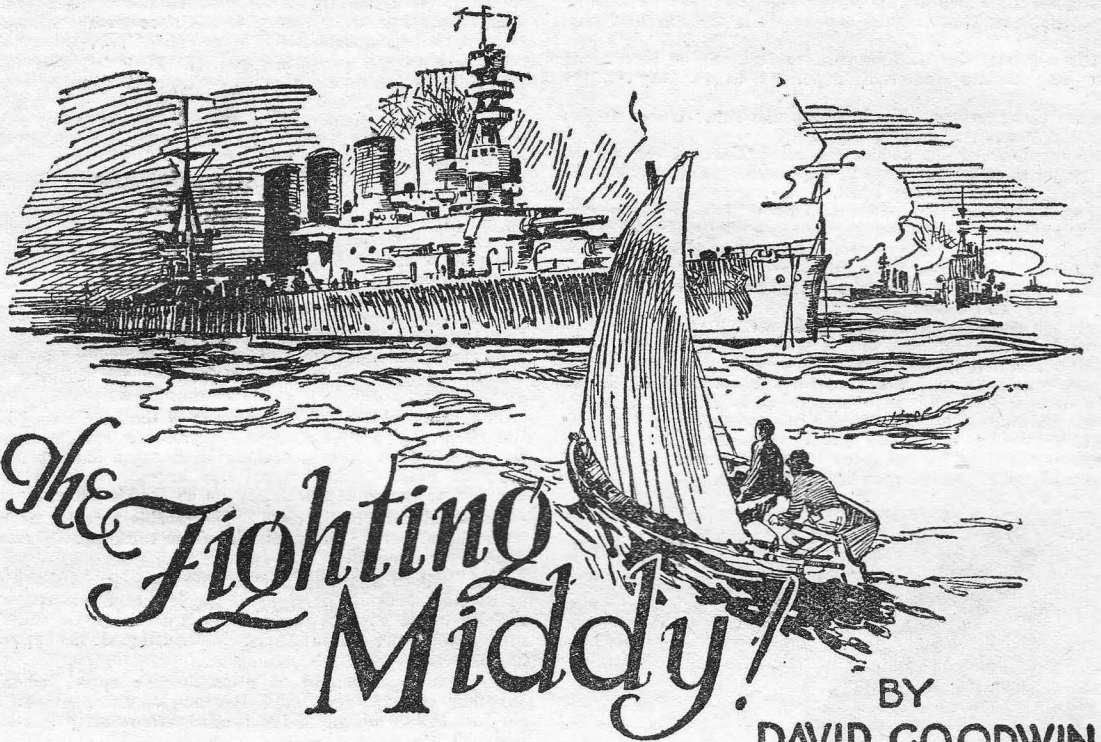
(Dick and Arkville have won through at last! Next week we are starting a new football and flying series, under the title of: "Young Thunderbolt!" by Arthur S. Hardy. Don't Miss It! It's the Goods!)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,191.



Slowly Dick felt himself being forced overboard. Suddenly he knew that there was nothing but space underneath him!

CLOSING CHAPTERS OF OUR GREAT SERIAL!



The Fighting Middy!

BY
DAVID GOODWIN

Back to the Victorious!

A MINUTE later Captain Raglan's craft swept alongside as the torpedo-boat came to a standstill, and he jumped aboard.

"You've got her, then? Well done, sir!" he said to Watson, and he started as he saw Ned. "What! You, Hardy! This is good news indeed. We thought you were drowned, my lad!"

"A near thing, sir. I was aboard the yacht when she was chased," explained Ned, saluting.

"What! Well, this is amazing! How many of the scoundrels have you got, Watson?"

"The escaped prisoner, the skipper, and a fireman, sir," said Watson; "the others escaped ashore; I've set the coast-guards and police after them. The skipper of the yacht is dead, and I believe the prisoner is, too. They're both below, sir."

"Take me to them at once!"

Captain Raglan inspected the two men who had been placed in the berths below. The yacht's captain was, of course, lifeless long since. Dimitri was still unconscious. The torpedo-lieutenant reported the circumstances of their capture, and explained how the skipper came by his end.

"You were quite justified in doing what you did," said Captain Raglan. "I wish the man were not dead, but his escape would have been deplorable, and after the attempted murder you were right to fire on him to prevent his getting away. I consider it unlikely we should ever have seen him again had he gained the shore, police or no police."

Captain Raglan then saw the Russian fireman, out of whom very little was to be got, and he wasted no time over the man. Watson's report was only a brief one, for, in truth, he knew nothing beyond the capture of the yacht.

The launch was sent back; the two destroyers which had raced up were signalled to return to Portsmouth, and the torpedo-boat, with the yacht astern, continued on her way to Spithead. Captain Raglan remained aboard her. He left Watson in command on deck, and took Ned below with him.

"Now, Mr. Hardy," said the captain, as soon as they found themselves in the cabin, "let me have your story, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,191.

for I regard your escape as almost miraculous, and you should have gathered more real information by this time than any of us."

Ned, simply and briefly, but leaving out nothing, told his captain everything that had happened to him since he was taken aboard the yacht, and all that had been said or done in his presence there. Captain Raglan listened intently, noting every word; and when Ned had finished he rose and stretched out his hand to the midshipman.

"I congratulate you, Hardy, on having behaved with real pluck and resource in a most difficult situation," he said. "There is not an officer in the Fleet, I am free to say, who could have done more. I am extremely glad you have come safely out of such an ugly corner."

"Thank you, sir!" said Ned, blushing. "I—I'm awfully glad you're pleased. I was afraid I'd make rather a mess of it. The man's brought back who was put in my charge; that's what I was worried about. I'm sorry he was shot."

"Well, you couldn't help that," said the captain, with a grim smile. "He is a dangerous spy, and it is a little loss to any of us if he has paid the penalty. You are sure the mate of the vessel was a Russian?"

"Yes, sir; he spoke Russian, at any rate. I can't speak any, but I know it when I hear it."

"I know who the man is, and now that you have captured the chief of the rascals, we shall soon lay the rest by the heels. They matter very little in comparison with those we already have. The yacht was in the pay of a powerful secret organisation, to which the spy Dimitri also belonged," said Captain Raglan, "and they made this desperate attempt to rescue him partly, I believe, because they were afraid he would betray the secrets of his comrades. This is all the information I ought to give you at present, Hardy, though you will doubtless learn a great deal more about it very soon, particularly if Dimitri recovers. I will tell you this much. Young as you are, you have done more for the Navy to-night than you ever dreamed of!"

Ned flushed to his eyes, and his heart beat fast. The siren of the torpedo-boat cut into Captain Raglan's speech, giving a blast that echoed over the Solent.

Captain and middy were nearing their own ship again. They mounted the steel ladder, and saw the huge hulk of the Victorious looming up just ahead.

NED HARDY DECORATED!

Midshipman's Great Work for the Fleet rewarded by the Admiralty!

"Past midnight—nearly four bells," said the captain. "You must be nearly dead-beat, Hardy."

"I'm all right, sir," said Ned, though he was very white, and the strain of all he had gone through made even his tough frame ache all over.

"You don't look it. You've plenty of grit, youngster, but you want a rest as badly as ever a man did. Get the steward to give you something piping hot, and turn into your hammock. You'll be excused duty to-morrow. I shan't forget this night's work of yours, Hardy."

How Ned took his leave of Watson, who bade him a warm au-revoir—and got on board the Victorious again, he could not have told. As the captain had said, he was dead-beat.

He had a vague remembrance of the prisoners being passed aboard out of a boat—two of them on stretchers—and then he found his way to the gun-room, oblivious of the eager curiosity of the night-watchers to know what had happened to him.

He swallowed a mug of steaming hot cocoa that somebody gave him—and, making his way to the middies' flat, undressed and climbed into his hammock.

"I say, Ned," came an amazed whisper from the next hammock, "is it you? Great Scott, man, I thought you were drowned! I've been jolly miserable, I couldn't sleep!"

Jinks tumbled out and satisfied himself that Ned was alive and in the flesh. He had spent the most wretched four hours of his life since the report arrived that the picket-boat had been run down, and that Ned was missing.

"Thank Heaven you're safe, old boy! This is the best news I've ever had in my natural! How in the world did you get back? Were you picked up?"

"Was I!" said Ned, remembering the way he had been dragged on board the yacht by his captors. "Snatched up is the word, and I'm uncommon glad to see you, old boy; I didn't think I should have a dog's chance to set eyes on that freckled phiz of yours again."

Tired as Ned was, the meeting with his chum woke him up enough to give a brief account of his adventures, which Jinks was dying to hear, and as the returned midddy settled down in his hammock he related, as shortly as possible, what had happened.

"Great guns!" said Jinks in an amazed whisper, after he had listened breathlessly to the yarn. "You lucky beast! I could throttle you! Fancy all that sport coming your way now we're partners, and me being out of it!"

"I wished myself out of it more than once," said Ned drowsily. "It got rather too hot, I can tell you! You can call it sport, but I wish you'd been in the— Ugh! I'll tell you the rest in the morning."

Ned's voice died away and ended in a snore. Jinks, seeing there was no more to be got out of him, lay awake for some time, pondering over what he had heard, and, feeling very ill-used to think he had not the luck to be half drowned, imprisoned in a sail-room, and nearly shot. Finally he fell asleep, to dream of a wild rush through the night sea, the faces of spies on the black steamer, and the rattle of machine-guns.

The Admiral Sends for Ned Hardy!

IT was late the next morning, just after breakfast, in fact, that Sub-Lieutenant Grimshaw, who had been on special duty, came into the gun-room with a black frown on his face.

"Where's that young shirker Hardy?" he cried. "They tell me he hasn't turned up yet!"

The gun-room mess began to grin.

"I understand, Mr Grimshaw," said Hart stiffly, but with a twinkle in his eye, "that Hardy is still in his hammock."

"In his hammock!" roared Grimshaw; and he licked his lips to think of the scabarding he would give Ned. "If this isn't the limit! Or is it some impertinent joke on your part, Mr. Hart?" he added, turning fiercely upon his junior.

"I never joke with senior officers," said Hart, who was enjoying himself vastly. "The commander sent down word that Hardy was not to be disturbed."

"The commander!" gasped Grimshaw. "Not to be disturbed! Are you mad?"

"And it's my private opinion, Mr. Grimshaw," added Hart dryly, "that the 'young shirker' in question is in for rather a good thing, and that some of us would like to be in his shoes. If what I hear is true, he has done a piece of uncommonly smart work for the Fleet—more than some of us have done in the whole of our service—and that the admiral himself knows about it. We shall get the report pretty soon."

Sub-Lieutenant Grimshaw turned sea-green with rage. He could hardly get his breath. He made instant inquiries, and, learning that it was true that Ned had been left in his hammock by special orders, Grimshaw stamped out of the gun-room in a black fury.

As for Ned, he slept like the dead; not even the morning bugle—which generally brought him out of his hammock with a bound—awakened him. He did not open his eyes till six bells in the forenoon watch, and was horrified when he found what the time was. But Jinks, who came in just then, quickly reassured him.

"It's all right, old bean!" cried Jinks. "You've got special leave to do as you please. You're the giddy high admiral, it seems to me! Anyhow, the Owner sent word you were to have your sleep out, which is a thing that beats all my going to sea. I say," he added, slapping Ned on the back, as his chum sprang to the deck, "is it straight goods, that yarn you told me last night? I've been thinking I must have dreamt it!"

"It's just the cold truth," said Ned, seizing his towel and sponge. "But look here, old boy, it was only for your own giddy ear, at present. Not a word of it in the mess, as yet. Don't forget. I reckon I ought to have kept my mouth shut. But, of course, a pal like you—"

"I'll be close as an oyster," said Jinks. "But I hope it won't be for long, or I shall bust! Grimshaw's as sick as a cat already!"

Ned bathed and dressed in record time. No sooner was he among his comrades than the whole mob of middies besieged him, imploring to hear what the news was. They nearly tore him to pieces. But Ned was firm.

"It won't do, dear boys," was all he said. "There was a little jape on last night, but nothing to make a fuss about, and I'm bound to say nothing about it as yet. No, I didn't do anything special. I don't suppose we shall hear any more of it. But I was told to keep mum."

"Easy to do that when there's nothing to tell!" sneered Wexton under his breath; and he went out with Mayne, who said he was disgusted at the fuss they were making over that little ass Hardy. But neither of them said it aloud.

For three whole days nothing more was heard about the affair, though news was eagerly awaited, and Ned went about his duties as usual. Both he and Jinks were intensely anxious to know whether the spy Dimitri had died of the wound the skipper gave him, or not. Ned could not help hoping the man's life was safe, in spite of all.

It was on the morning of the fourth day that Jinks came to his chum with the news.

"I say, Ned," he said, "I've heard—I don't know whether it's true—that the spy of yours isn't dead at all!"

"Not dead?"

"No. He's dotty, or something."

"Dotty! What d'you mean?"

"Well, 'he dunno where he are,' as the song says. He was shot in the head. They've got the bullet out, and he's likely to be quite well and sound again. But it's affected his brain, and his memory's gone. I heard the Fleet surgeon saying so. It often happens after a wound like that. They've got him in the prison infirmary ashore, and, of course, he'll stay there for good."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Ned. "A bit of luck for him!" He paused, and was silent. "Well, I should say it's a good thing, don't you? He'll never be able to do any more mischief, nor tell what he's found out, if he recovers. I—I'm rather glad the poor beast isn't dead. When a chap's had a close shave himself he doesn't enjoy seeing another fellow wiped right off the slate—even if he's an enemy. It seems to me nothing better could have happened."

"There's an end to that business, anyhow," said Jinks, "and you've come off with flying colours, my buck! Hallo! What now?"

An orderly came into the gun-room with a message for Ned.

"Mr. Hardy to get into full-dress uniform, and present himself in the captain's cabin in twenty minutes' time!"

Jinks gave a long whistle. Ned, after an instant's astonished pause, fled headlong to the sleeping-flat, and, with intense haste and care, stripped off his drills and jacket, and got into his smart gold-laced shell-jacket and trousers, and in twenty minutes was in full rig. He hurried off to the Owner's cabin.

Captain Raglan received him, and returned the midshipman's salute.

"You are to accompany me to the flagship, Mr. Hardy," he said abruptly, but with a kindly twinkle in his eyes. "The admiral wants you immediately."

Something very like a cold shiver passed down Ned's spine; but in a minute or two he found himself in the captain's galley, sitting beside his chief, and a knot of amazed middies saw the galley pull away smartly for the flagship.

Captain Raglan and Ned went up the gangway, the latter wondering what was going to happen, and wishing himself well out of it. They went straight to the admiral's cabin, past the Marine sentry at the door, and there they found

that grand old sea-dog Sir Charles Knollys, Admiral of the Home Fleet, awaiting them. And beside him, to Ned's astonishment, stood his old shore friend, Mr. Elking. "I have brought Mr. Hardy to see you, sir," said Captain Raglan.

The admiral, from the full height of his six-foot-three, looked keenly at Ned, and acknowledged the boy's salute.

"Mr. Hardy," said the admiral, in a clear, steady voice, "I have had you brought here that I may express my appreciation—not only for myself, but on behalf of the Fleet—of your plucky and skilful action in the matter of the steamship Adler, which deliberately and treacherously ran down your cutter, and which you afterwards boarded."

Ned flushed to the roots of his hair, and his heart beat fast.

"Nine out of ten, I am bound to say, would have fallen a victim to these scoundrels," continued Sir Charles. "You, however, not only saved yourself, but turned the tables on them. Their vessel was captured, the prisoner retaken, and a valuable secret saved to the Navy. What might

in the midst of a whirlwind, found himself transported to the gun-room where everyone but Grimshaw, Weston, and Mayne—who slunk away, and were seen no more that day—congratulated him over and over again, and cheered themselves hoarse.

"A snottie with the D.S.C.!" yelled Jinks, executing his tenth war dance. "The first given since the War!"

"It makes ours the cock gun-room in the Fleet!" shouted Keppel. "Shake again, Hardy! Give him another whoop, boys!"

The row had hardly subsided when word came down from the commander that Mr. Hardy was to go to his cabin. Ned went, and came back with the news that a month's leave was at his immediate disposal.

"By gum!" exclaimed Jinks. "I've four weeks due to me soon—wonder if I can get it now, an' come with you?"

To his surprise, he got it. Next morning he and Ned started for the shore with their kits in the first cutter, and after a sumptuous dinner—which all their comrades who could get shore leave insisted upon standing them—they

NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAMME!

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"CAN YOU CATCH HIM NAPPING?"

have been a serious disaster was turned into a complete success, and I acknowledge before your captain that this was largely due to your courage and commonsense."

The admiral paused, and turned slightly to Mr. Elking. "I should like to say, sir," said Mr. Elking, "that in all my career as chief agent for the Secret Service, this man Dimitri is the most slippery and dangerous spy with whom I have had to deal. He has baffled me more than once, and it was by the aid of this young officer that he was first brought to book, and finally laid by the heels."

The admiral bowed, and turned to Ned again. "Your services, Mr. Hardy, in connection both with the arrest and the chase, have been valued so highly that it has been decided to recognise them by an honour seldom conferred except in time of war. His Majesty, on my recommendation to the Admiralty, has conferred on you the Distinguished Service Cross, and we consider you have well deserved it. The honour is announced to-day in the 'Gazette,'" said Sir Charles, with a smile. "Let me be the first to congratulate you."

Ned could scarcely believe his ears. The Distinguished Service Cross! His head swam. He received the congratulations of his three seniors as if in a dream; the admiral shook him by the hand, as did his captain and Mr. Elking.

Ned stammered out his thanks, and, still feeling as if

started for home. Just as they were leaving the hotel a wire came for Ned.

"It's from Ralph!" he exclaimed, tearing it open. "It's the only thing now that I wanted!"

The wire was brief, but it made Ned gladder even than when receiving the D.S.C.

"Well done, young un!" it ran. "You've spiked their guns. Your troubles are over now—and mine, too!—RALPH."

Ten minutes later Ned and Jinks, in Mr. Elking's motor-car, were speeding northwards towards Briars Hall and home. As they soared up the hill beyond Portsmouth, Ned Hardy took one long look back at the mighty steel hulk of the Victorious, riding far below at her anchors in the blue Solent, the white ensign fluttering proudly over the ship where the youngest officer in the Fleet had won his place among brave men, and made his name honoured throughout the Navy.

Captain Hardy received his son at Briars Hall with such pride as the old sea dog had never felt in all his service, and Ned and Jinks had the time of their lives for four clear weeks, till duty called them to the Victorious once more.

THE END.

(Now look out for our great sporting serial: "THE RANGERS' RECRUIT!" the opening chapters of which will appear in next week's GEM.)

CAN YOU CATCH HIM NAPPING?

(Continued from page 22.)

"Yes, sir; but it'll tiger few minutes for me to explain the facts. The real home of the tiger is believed by naturalists to be neither India nor Africa. The jolly old tiger had its first home in China. That may seem a bit queer, because parts of China are extremely cold; but it is a fact that tigers dislike extreme heat, and if they are compelled to travel over open ground in hot weather the pads on their feet will become blistered. It seems pretty certain that the tigers came from China in comparatively recent times to India and Africa."

"What other animals are there in China?" asked the Ed.
 "In the mountains of North China," I told him, "you find wild sheep. At least, you would if you were there. Then there's the leopard, the rhinoceros, the gaur, and the takin."
 "Wait a minute!" interrupted the Ed. "What's a gaur?"
 "A large and very fierce ox. I haven't one on me at the moment."
 "And what's a takin?"
 "A takin, sir, is a—well, sir, a bit of a take in, as a matter of fact. It's got curiously curved horns, like a gnu—"

"Like a new what?"
 "I said a gnu, sir. I thought you knew what that was."
 "Look here," growled the Ed., "you're not going to take me in with that sort of thing. I asked what a takin was like."
 "It's a bit like an antelope, sir, and a bit like a goat, and, as I said, between me an' you, it's like a gnu; only, you see, sir, the jolly old gnu—"
 By this time the Editor had come to the conclusion that I was pulling his leg. "How can you have an old new?" he roared. "Get out of my office!"

Meet you all again soon.—
 THE ORACLE.

Dear Dad

Please thank Mother for her last letter. I hope you are quite well. Last week I was second in maths. Not long now to Christmas. I wonder

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