

Merry Christmas! It's Yours if You get this Extra-Large Number!

THE GEM 2^d

GRAND XMAS NUMBER



S 1000 CRASHES IN THE SNOWBOUND ROCKIES! ST. JIM'S PARTY IN—

The RED-MAN'S

By Martin



CHAPTER 1. Disaster!

"MY giddy aunt!" Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, gave that muttered exclamation.

Blake was at work, under the eagle eye of Mr. Lathom, in the junior "Form-room," on board the S 1000, the giant airship in which forty or so St. Jim's juniors were touring the globe, as guests of Sir Napier Wynter, the uncle of Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

On board the giant dirigible classes were held just as if the schoolboy world-fliers were still at St. Jim's in far-off Sussex.

That fact was the only fly in the ointment with regard to their trip. For Mr. Lathom, the somewhat acid-tempered little Fourth Form master, had shown that he could be just as irascible when thousands of feet in the sky as on terra firma.

But it was not Mr. Lathom's irascibility that had been the cause of Jack Blake's muttered words, though the master of the Fourth seemed to be in a particularly acid mood just at the moment—with the result that lines had been falling thickly in the big lounge that served as a classroom for the Fourth Form fellows, Shell juniors, and the five fags who were in the airship's party.

"My giddy aunt!" muttered Blake again. "She's a bit rocky to-day!"

Though the S 1000 had met with all kinds of weather—good, bad, and indifferent—since leaving England, Blake could not remember that the giant dirigible had ever plunged and staggered in its flight as it was doing that afternoon. They were high over the Canadian prairies, nearing the mighty Rocky Mountains which they had to cross to reach Vancouver and the Pacific Coast, which was their present destination. And

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it looked as though they were running into some very dirty weather!

That the barometer had been falling steadily he knew. He remembered, too, that Commander Dawson, the experienced airman whom Sir Napier Wynter had employed as captain of the dirigible, had looked grave, almost anxious, at dinner-time when he had spoken of the falling glass.

Crash!

The airship had lurched steeply with a sudden staggering movement. A dozen inkwells went flying noisily, and books flew off the little cane tables at which the juniors were seated on to the floor.

"Yawwoogop!"

There was a wild yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's.

One of the flying inkwells had landed on Arthur Augustus' elegant trousers. The swell of St. Jim's leapt to his feet with a howl of dismay.

"Oh, bai Jove! My bags! Oh deah—"

"D'Arcy, resume your seat!" snapped Mr. Lathom.

"Weally, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "My bags are ruined! I should like to go and change my twousahs at once, sir! I considah that a fellow's twousahs—"

"Nonsense, D'Arcy! I— Oh! Good gracious! Wowps!"

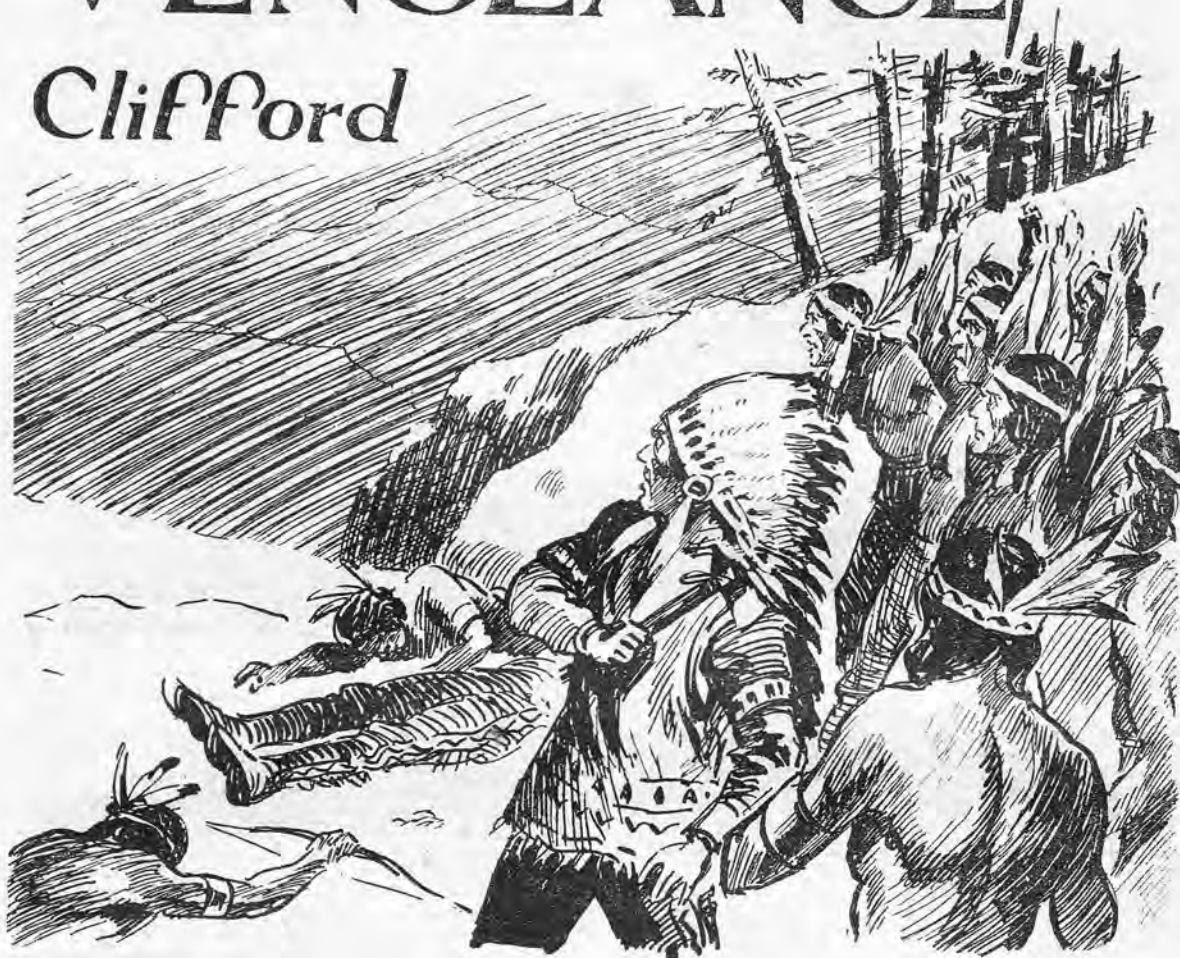
Mr. Lathom broke off with a yell, as another staggering motion of the airship, worse than any that had been felt before, pitched the Fourth Form master clean out of his chair. He went flying backwards, and landed in a struggling heap on the floor, gasping and breathless. His inkwell followed him. There were chuckles from the juniors. Mr. Lathom sat up dazedly. His mortar-board was tilted over one eye, and his face was streaked with blue-black ink. The inkwell had upset over him in falling, and Mr. Lathom, as he blinked round, looked more like a nigger minstrel than a scholarly schoolmaster.

Here's Wishing
You All
a
Happy Xmas
Your Editor.

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—TERRIFIC FIGHT WITH RED INDIANS! AND IT'S CHRISTMAS!

VENGEANCE/ Clifford



"Oh, b-bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Lathom feebly, as he struggled up. He passed a hand hastily across his face, smearing the trickling ink still more plentifully over his dismayed countenance. "Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of laughter from the juniors. They could not help it. Mr. Lathom, goggling at them with inky countenance, his eyes staring white, struck them as being decidedly funny.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lathom went purple with rage beneath his blue-black complexion.

"Silence!" he panted.

"How—how dare you display this unseemly hilarity! The whole Form will take a hundred lines each!"

"Oh crumbs!" muttered Grundy of the Shell.

The laughter died away instantly. Mr. Lathom righted his chair and sat down, wiping the ink from his face with a handkerchief. He glared round with glittering eyes.

"Merry!" he barked.

"Sir?" ejaculated Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell.

"Continue construing where Figgins left off!"

Tom Merry rose to his feet, stifling his smiles with difficulty. Around him the juniors were gathering up their books from the floor. Baggy Trimble, the Falstaff of the

Fourth, alone had failed to pick up his fallen books and inkwell.

"Groooooh!" gasped Trimble feebly. "Ow! Moopooch!"

Mr. Lathom turned a gimlet eye upon him.

"Trimble! Was it you who made those absurd noises?"

"Yoooh! Ow! I—I—I'm ill, sir!" groaned Baggy.

"Nonsense!"

"I am, sir!" gasped Baggy, with a gulp. "Ooooo-er! The motion's upsetting me, sir! I—I— Oh crumbs!"

The airship had lurched heavily, and Baggy's green countenance turned to a weird and wonderful shade of mauve. He snatched out a handkerchief and crammed it into his mouth and jumped hastily to his feet.

"Grooooooh!"

Baggy made a wild dive for the door.

"Trimble! Come back!" barked Mr. Lathom.

Had Mr. Lathom been in a less irascible mood, he would have realised that Baggy was

not shamming, but really was feeling decidedly air-sick. Baggy was a fat and flabby fellow, who always over ate, and consequently he was a bad sailor, whether on the sea or in the air. The present rolling and pitching of the S 1000 was more than Baggy could stand.

But Mr. Lathom felt convinced that Baggy was trying to escape classes; he was a little short-sighted, and had

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Tom Merry & Co., the Chums of St. Jim's, have a real Christmas! Snow and ice abound! But many thrilling adventures befall them before they get their Christmas dinner!

failed to notice the weird and wonderful hue of Baggy's fleshy countenance!

"Trimble! Return to your seat!" thundered Mr. Lathom.

"Yooop! Oh lor! R-r-really, sir, I c-c-c-can't! I—I—grooooo! I—oh, mum-mum-mum-mmmmm—"

"Return to your seat instantly, or I shall cane you!" cried Mr. Lathom fiercely.

Baggy glanced round wildly. But however he felt he dared not disobey the Form master's angry command. He rolled back towards his chair, cramming his handkerchief into his mouth, looking as sickly as a fag after a Christmas dinner—as Monty Lowther, the humorist of the Shell, whispered, with a grin, to Tom Merry.

But Baggy did not reach his desk.

A heavy roll of the airship came just then. It was altogether too much for Baggy!

With a stifled howl, he rushed to the big windows at the side of the room and flung one open. An icy blast of air swept in, scattering papers from the little tables in all directions.

"Trimble!" shrieked Mr. Lathom, clutching at his mortar-board as it was nearly whisked from his head by the wind. "How—how dare you! Close that window instantly, and take three hundred lines! I—I—"

But Trimble did not heed Mr. Lathom. He was not, at the moment, in a condition to heed anyone. His head was out of the window, his fat back was heaving convulsively, and it was quite evident to the juniors that horrid things were happening to the Falstaff of the Fourth.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Monty Lowther, gasping with merriment. "Poor old Baggy!"

Even Mr. Lathom was beginning to realise that he had been a little rash in refusing to allow Baggy to leave the class-room!

Baggy's back ceased to quake at last. He turned, a yellow countenance towards the master of the Fourth, closing the window and staggering feebly to the nearest chair. He plopped down upon it, rolling his eyes,

"Oh! Groooo!"

"Feelin' bettah, Baggy?" inquired Arthur Augustus.

"Owl! Mum-mmm! Y-yes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were scrambling round gathering up their scattered papers. Baggy sat groaning and gasping, his face gradually regaining a more normal hue. Mr. Lathom sat glaring at him speechlessly.

But before he could find his voice, the S 1000, battling on against the gale, took a plunge as though it intended to dive clean to the prairie beneath!

Crash, crash, crash!

"My giddy aunt—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Yarooooooop!"

Yells and gasps filled the lounge as the juniors were one and all flung off their feet. Tables and chairs went sliding across the floor with them, and in another moment the furniture and the juniors, books, papers, inkwells, and Mr. Lathom himself were all in a fighting, struggling heap at one end of the big apartment.

"B-bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Lathom faintly. "I—oh, heavens! Groooooiff!"

The Form master gave a howl as the big figure of George Alfred Grundy collapsed on his chest.

Grundy was no light-weight, and his big, muscular frame fairly knocked every ounce of wind from Mr. Lathom's body. Figgins of the New House came sprawling across Grundy, and Monty Lowther, and Herries of the Fourth, Herbert Skimpole, the freak of the Shell, and Wally D'Arcy of the Third landed on top of Figgins. Mr. Lathom, at the bottom of the whole pile, was completely lost to sight, except for one wildly kicking leg.

"Yarooooough!"

Arthur Augustus howled as Mr. Lathom's foot connected with his aristocratic nose, and the swell of St. Jim's clasped his injured nasal organ despairingly. The floor beneath tilted steeply in the other direction, and there were more yells and crashes as the struggling figures mixed up with the cane tables and chairs went slithering across the sloping floor in a helpless mass.

There was no doubt that the S 1000 was having a rough passage.

Tom Merry was the first to regain his feet.

He staggered up, clutching at the wall for support, and shot a swift glance towards the long windows.

They were dimmed now by swirling snowflakes that were driving past at a dizzy pace. The wind could be heard shrieking round the airship shrilly. It staggered and lurched like a leaf in the wind.

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Tom's face had set in rather startled lines.

That the S 1000 was in the grip of a blizzard was clear enough. He knew that there was nowhere to land and shelter—they would have to fight on through the storm as best they could across the jagged heights of the snow-clad Rockies, defying the fury of the elements.

He felt sure that a giant dirigible could outlive any storm. But that there was danger—possibly grave danger—could not be denied!

Keeping his feet with difficulty, Tom staggered across to where Mr. Lathom was trying to struggle to his feet, and helped him up. The master of the Fourth was looking a little scared.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Lathom in dismayed tones. "This—is this most unpleasant! I fear we have run into a serious storm! I—I trust that all will be well?"

"Oh, we'll be all right, sir," nodded Tom.

He turned to the windows and clung to the bar beneath them, staring out. There was nothing to be seen but the white mist of driven flakes that raced past the mica, thickening upon it every moment.

That the weight of the snow that was bound to collect on the top of the airship would be a dangerous factor in an emergency, Tom realised well enough. It was going to be no joke crossing the Rockies in those conditions! There was a wild night ahead for the St. Jim's party in the giant dirigible!

Of that there was no doubt at all—no possible, probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever!

"Phew! Listen to it!"

Jack Blake, lying in the bunk in the little sleeping cubicle he shared with Herries and Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy muttered the words in a rueful tone.

Darkness had fallen with the S 1000 battling on doggedly through the blizzard. Bed-time had come with a number of juniors badly airsick. Those who were feeling all right, however, were one and all unable to sleep.

The howling of the storm and the reeling of the airship made sleep impossible.

Blake glanced at his watch. The luminous dial showed that it was past midnight.

By now, he knew, they were well over the foothills of the Rockies. And the storm, instead of decreasing in fury, was increasing.

"This is wathah wotten!" muttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in one of the other bunks, as he clung to the edge of it to prevent himself being pitched out. "We are havin' a wuff passage, deah boys, I considah!"

"Go hon!" grunted Herries. "Think we haven't noticed that, ass?" he chuckled. "Well, it was fun in class!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Hewwies, I considah it is wathah a gwave mattah to be flyin' over the Wockies in a blizzard! Anythin' might happen!"

"Well, if we have to chuck something overboard to lighten the giddy airship, we could lighten it by half if we chucked most of your fancy waistcoats overboard," put in Digby thoughtfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Dig, I should uttably wefuse to allow a single article of my appawal to be thwown overboard!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Blake scrambled out of his bunk and made his way to the electric light switch. He snapped on the light, clinging to his bunk with one hand as the airship rolled heavily.

"We can't sleep, so we may as well have a light on the subject!" he grunted. He peered out of the little circular window. "Still snowing! Can't see a thing."

"It's good Christmas weather, anyway!" grinned Herries. "Christmas is only about a couple of weeks off now, you know!"

"Bai Jove, yaas!" Arthur Augustus peered anxiously towards the window. "I say, I twust that we are keepin' high! It would be wotten if we hit the mountains, deah boys."

"Oh, we shan't hit any giddy mountains, ass," exclaimed Blake impatiently. "They've got instruments to tell the altitude—they know just how high we are, and old Dawson will keep us up high."

"Yaas, but—"

"Oh, dry up!" groaned Herries. "Don't be such a rotten Jeremiah!"

"I wefuse to be called a Jewemiah!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I considah that wemark meaningless, Hewwies."

Before Herries could retort a grinding crash made the reeling dirigible shudder from stem to stern. Blake & Co.



Through the hole protruded the muzzle of a double-barrelled revolver. Singleton ducked as two shots rang out!

were flung to the floor in a heap of bedclothes, and the mica window beside them was driven in a moment later by a broken tree-branch. At sight of it Blake's cry of consternation froze in his throat.

The great airship lurched and lay still, the howling wind beating in through the broken window as the four juniors fought free of the entangling bedclothes and staggered white-faced to their feet.

"G-wheat Scott!" panted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We—we've cwashed!"

Blake leapt across the slanting floor to the window.

Through the swirling snow he could just make out the tops of giant fir-trees, ghostly in the moonlight. In a flash he understood.

Beaten down by the blizzard and the weight of the snow upon it, the S 1000 had crashed among the trees of a lonely mountainside in the Rockies! He did not know then that the altimeter of the airship had been damaged hours before, so that those in command of the dirigible had been unaware how low the great airship had been flying—lower and lower, as they now knew, till at last it had struck the mountains.

Had the S 1000 not been filled with non-inflammable helium gas a ghastly tragedy might have been the result.

As it was, the giant dirigible was now lying like an injured monster of the sky in the comparative shelter of a deep gorge, the precipitous sides of which protected it from the storm. Wallowing on the tree-tops, badly damaged, but without a soul on board injured, the S 1000 lurched over to a steeper angle, the fir branches grinding beneath its vast bulk.

The St. Jim's party had met with disaster at last—were stranded on board the injured giant of the sky amid the lonely wilds of the Canadian Rockies!

CHAPTER 2. The Railroad Men!

"LOOK!"
Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, flung out a pointing hand.

It was the following morning.

Bright, wintry sunlight was bathing the huge shape of the S 1000, where the damaged dirigible lay between the

high, rocky cliffs of the gorge into which it had crashed. The blizzard had died down at dawn, and with it the snow had ceased.

At the time of the crash, some of the fellows, such as Baggy Trimble and Percy Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth, had been panic-stricken; but it had soon been discovered that there was no danger. And as soon as it had become light, and it had been possible to leave the airship, all those on board had done so. A number of tents had been carried on board for just such an emergency as this, and already a camp had been pitched at the foot of one of the cliffs. For it was quite certain that it would be a long time—several weeks, at least—before the S 1000 could be ready for the air again!

The St. Jim's party, whether they liked it or not, would have to spend Christmas encamped in the Canadian wilds; and most of the juniors, at any rate, were rather thrilled than otherwise at the prospect.

They would not have to suffer very much discomfort. All on board had heavy winter outfits with them, and there was plenty of food for their present needs. Already wireless communication had been established with Vancouver, and fresh supplies were being rushed to them, together with a party of engineers to help in the repair work to the nose of the dirigible, which was otherwise surprisingly little damaged.

"Gad! Look!"

Kildare was standing outside one of the tents of the emergency camp at his uncle's side. They had been staring across towards the inert hulk of the stranded dirigible, discussing the problem of repairing it, when suddenly something high on the summit of the opposite cliff had caught the captain of St. Jim's keen eyes.

Sir Napier Wynter turned his head, staring up in the direction of Kildare's pointing hand.

A sharp exclamation escaped him.

Outlined against the pale blue of the Canadian sky, a lithe, motionless figure could be seen. Even at that distance the feathered head-dress and the blanket in which the figure

was draped, displayed the fact that the solitary watcher was a Red Indian—a chief!

"Indians!" barked Sir Napier.

He stared up at the motionless figure on the opposite crags, and shrugged.

"A Cree, unless I am very much mistaken," he went on. "There is a reservation near here, I know, if I have judged our position with any accuracy."

"The Crees?" murmured Kildare. "They used to be a pretty fierce crowd, didn't they?"

Sir Napier nodded, with a grim smile.

"You're right. In the old days they were one of the fiercest of the Indian tribes. But, of course, they are pretty tame now, though I've been told that some of them have never followed the example of most of the Red Indians and become civilised. Only a few years ago the Canadian Government had trouble with them. Hallo, he's coming down!"

The figure on the crags had turned and disappeared among the trees that clothed the hillside, evidently with the intention of descending into the gorge.

There was a sudden, excited scuttle behind Kildare and his uncle. Baggy Trimble, his face thoroughly dismayed, had come hurrying across towards them from where a crowd of juniors were standing by some of the other tents.

"I—I say!" gasped Baggy. "Figgins says he saw a Red Indian, sir! Ow! He's coming this way, too! I—I say, is it all right, sir? Indians always scalp you, don't they? I—I—I think we ought to shoot him, sir, as soon as he shows himself again—"

Sir Napier burst into a laugh.

"Don't be alarmed, Trimble!" he said dryly. "I don't think you need worry very much. Red Indians are fairly peaceful individuals nowadays, you know. Hallo, here he is!"

The tall figure of the Redskin had come into sight from the trees at the foot of the cliff, and was striding across towards the encampment.

At sight of him, Baggy Trimble gave a squeal of terror.

"Yow! Oh lor! Help!"

"Don't be such a young ass!" grinned Kildare. "He won't hurt you!"

But Baggy was evidently not so sure. He scuttled hastily away towards the group of juniors, and dived behind Tom Merry's stalwart figure, peering over Tom's shoulder at the approaching Indian with a very nervous expression on his fat face.

The juniors watched curiously as the tall Redskin strode across to where Sir Napier Wynter was standing, and halted before him.

That the Indian was decidedly puzzled at finding the crowd of white youngsters and men in the gorge, and even more so by the great bulk of the damaged airship, they could judge well enough from the expression on his handsome, aquiline face. He was a tall, striking-looking man, with glittering black eyes that roamed round fiercely as he took in the encampment.

The juniors could not hear what he was saying, as he talked to Sir Napier. But that he was asking many questions was obvious.

At last the Indian turned and strode away, vanishing into the trees.

"Come on, you chaps! Let's find out what he wanted!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"What-ho!"

The juniors crowded forward, surrounding Sir Napier and Kildare, and plying them with eager questions.

There was surprising news for them.

The Cree had told Sir Napier that there was a big white man's camp a few miles away among the mountains, where a big number of railroad engineers and workmen were pushing a new line through the Rockies. The Indian—whose name, it seemed, was Chief Pawssannee—had gone to send two of his tribe to Sir Napier to act as guides, so that the airship party could get in touch at once with the railroad camp.

"Oh, good egg!" exclaimed Blake eagerly.

Knowing, as they did, that they would have to spend a long time in the mountains while the airship was being repaired, it was good news to all that they were not the only white people in those frozen wilds.

"That's wippin' news, sir!" beamed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's was looking very elegant indeed in his present outfit—a heavy fur coat that would have defied even the rigors of the North Pole. That, and a fur cap, combined with his spats and monocle, made a picture at which the St. Jim's chums had been chuckling loudly—though Arthur Augustus was in blissful ignorance of the

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fact that his appearance struck them as being anything other than natty in the extreme.

"Yes, it is good news, certainly!" smiled Sir Napier. "The Cree tells me that the man in charge of the railroad construction is named Singleton, by the way. I can hardly hope for such wonderful luck—but an old friend of mine named Singleton is engaged on railway work somewhere in Canada. If it should actually prove to be he, I could ask for nothing better!"

Some hours later, led by two blanket-clad Indians, Sir Napier Wynter, Eric Kildare, Tom Merry, and Blake and Reginald Talbot of the Shell, whom the baronet had invited to accompany him, arrived in the big railroad camp.

It was quite a little town of wooden huts, situated in a valley to the north of the gorge where the \$1000 lay. A husky Canadian foreman conducted them to the chief engineer's hut, which stood close by the edge of a deep ravine, over which a great trestle bridge was being flung by an army of workmen, to carry the gleaming double line of rails on its way into the depth of the Rockies.

The big foreman crashed a knotted fist on the door.

"Come in!" shouted a deep, pleasant voice, and Sir Napier stepped over the threshold, followed by Eric Kildare. Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot, following the captain of St. Jim's heard a sudden breathless exclamation in an unknown voice.

"Wynter, by all that's wonderful!"

"Singleton!"

"My hat!" breathed Blake excitedly. "It's his pal all right!"

They entered the hut in time to see a big-built, hard-bitten Canadian, in khaki breeches, who had been busy with some engineering blue-prints on a rough deal table, spring eagerly to his feet and grasp Kildare's uncle by the hand, and shake it as if he wanted to break the baronet's arm. A pair of penetrating blue eyes were gleaming delightedly into those of Sir Napier.

"How the dickens did you land here?" cried the big engineer in a wondering voice.

"By mistake, as a matter of fact, Singleton," answered Sir Napier, with a dry smile. "Crashed in the storm last night—airship; no one hurt, by a miracle—and here we are! And from the look of things we'll be here quite a while."

Briefly he explained what had happened. Singleton, the big Canadian, listened with eager interest. At the finish of Sir Napier's laconic account of the accident, he gave a deep laugh and clapped his old friend on the back.

"Of all the luck!" he ejaculated. "Not seen you for years—and you drop out of the sky like this! Just like you, though, Wynter! So you've got some engineers coming over from Vancouver?"

"Yes; but it will take a few weeks to get the airship fit for the air," nodded Sir Napier. "We'll see a lot of each other!"

"You bet we will! Why, you must all come and hitch up in the camp here!" grinned Singleton. "It'll be great to have you! We'll be dug in here till well after Christmas—that bridge over there"—he nodded towards the window, through which the beginnings of the great trestle bridge could be seen—"that's going to keep us here a while!"

He glanced at the foreman.

"Get some of the men to empty some of the huts of supplies and make 'em ready for guests!"

"O.K.," grinned the foreman. "I'll fix it!"

He jerked a thumb over his shoulder, to where the two Cree Indians who had guided Sir Napier Wynter and the others to the camp were standing outside the hut, their eyes fixed on the bridge-builders in rather a curious way.

"Them Injuns don't like it, eh?" he said in a lower tone, with another grin.

"What did he mean by that, Singleton?" queried Sir Napier Wynter curiously, as the foreman turned on his heel and left the hut.

Singleton frowned.

"That ravine that we are bridging is the Whitesnake Ravine," he answered quietly. "It is considered sacred by the Crees around here. When they found we intended to throw a bridge across it they showed a good deal of resentment. It offends their religion, you see. But what can we do? The ravine has to be bridged, Wynter, whether the Indians like it or not. The only trouble is—"

"Yes?" cut in Sir Napier curiously, as the engineer paused.

"The only trouble is that the Crees may try some funny business to prevent the bridge being built!"

Singleton's face was grim as he spoke. But a moment later it broke into a smile. He shrugged his broad shoulders and laughed.

"Well, no good looking for trouble half-way!" he went on. "I don't expect the Indians will try anything really, though Pawssannee, their big chief, is pretty wild with us, I know."

And the Crees are a tough bunch to get up against, if they loose their wool! But, as I say, I'm not going to meet trouble half-way. I don't think they'll dare do anything, so I'm not taking any notice of their grouch. I don't like hurting anybody's religious susceptibilities, of course, but it can't be helped, and that's all there is to it!"

Tom Merry glanced out of the half-open door. The two Indians without were watching the proceedings at the edge of the ravine, where great wooden struts were being swung out into place by steam-derricks, with anything but approving faces, he could see.

Their eyes were glittering with quite a malignant light, in fact—and it suddenly flashed into Tom's mind that perhaps Singleton, the engineer, was mistaken in not worrying rather more about Chief Pawssanne and his Crees!

"Suppose the Indians took it into their heads to do something—what would they do, do you think?" asked Tom abruptly.

Singleton glanced at him.

"What would they do? Goodness knows! I don't see that they could do anything, unless they lost their heads completely and attacked the camp in full war-paint—"

He broke off suddenly, as a shadow fell over the threshold and the door was pushed open. A man stepped into the room—a lean-built, saw-toothed individual in a red-checked shirt, with a thin black moustache and quick eyes that struck Tom Merry as being a little shifty. At sight of Singleton's visitors the man halted in surprise, his eyes shooting from one to another of the five.

"Come in, Marot," said Singleton rather curtly. "Want anything?"

"I'll wait," answered the man named Marot, with a shrug and sauntered out.

Singleton glanced at Sir Napier.

"That's my second-in-command here," he explained. "A smart engineer, too."

"Half-breed, isn't he?" queried Sir Napier, and his friend nodded.

"Yes—half French, half Indian. The men call him the Red man, I've heard, because of his Indian blood. His mother was a Sioux squaw." He shrugged. "A good engineer!"

From the tone of his voice, the three juniors in the hut could guess that Singleton did not like his second engineer particularly. They felt no surprise at that. Marot had struck Blake and Talbot, as he struck Tom Merry, as a shifty, unpleasant-looking individual.

But they little dreamed, as through the window they saw the half-breed saunter away from the hut with a cigarette drooping from between his thin lips, that Marot the half-breed was to cause their Christmas in the Canadian Rockies to be the most exciting of their lives!

CHAPTER 3.

A Shot in the Dark!

"I'VE been thinkin'—"

"What with, old chap?"

"Bai Jove! If you are twyin' to be funnay, Blake—"

"Perish the thought!" yawned Blake, glancing at his watch. "I say, what about turning in, you chaps?"

"Look heah, I was talkin', and I considah it wude to interwupt a fellow who is talkin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus severely. "I considah—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I do not considah that an intelligible remark, Hewwies!"

The juniors chuckled.

A dozen of them were gathered round the big wood fire

in one of the two roomy bunkhouses that had been provided for their use during their stay in the railroad camp; it was a large pine-log building with rough bunks lining the walls in two tiers, and with the fire crackling in the big grate it made as cosy a dormitory as any juniors could have wished.

A week had elapsed since the \$1000 had crashed in the blizzard. Since then, the St. Jim's party had been having the time of their lives with the railroad engineers and enjoying true Canadian hospitality.

Though the engineers had arrived on the scene from Vancouver, and work had begun on the damaged nose of the airship, it would still be a long time before the "flying school" could continue on its travels. But the juniors had no particular regrets on that score—they were quite happy where they were for the time being.

It was dark outside their bunkhouse at the moment, and snow was falling. But within it was warm and cheery.

Arthur Augustus, with a sniff, and a glare at Blake and Herries, adjusted his celebrated eyeglass and glanced round the ring of faces gathered round the fire.

Tom Merry & Co., Blake & Co., and Talbot, Skimpole, Grundy, and Baggy Trimble were sharing that bunkhouse, while Figgins and the New House juniors, together with Levison, Clive, and Cardew, Kit Wildrake, Mellish and Crooke and Burkett, the bully of the Shell, occupied the other, next door. But Levison & Co. and Wildrake had looked in for a chat before turning in for the night, and there was quite a crowd round the fire—a crowd which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy apparently considered should listen in appreciative silence while he talked!

Apparently his should-be listeners thought otherwise, however.

"I have been thinkin'—"

"Impossible!" yawned Ralph Reekness Cardew, the slacker of the Fourth.

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Still snowing, you chaps," remarked Talbot. He grinned. "I'll bet they aren't having a Christmas like this in England!"

"Look heah, Talbot, I was talkin'!" hooted Arthur Augustus hotly. "As I was sayin', I have been thinkin'! About that half-breed Marot!"

"Marot?" echoed Tom Merry, glancing at Arthur Augustus in quick surprise. "What about him?"

"I don't like the wottah!" said the swell of St. Jim's firmly. "I considah that he is wathah an outsidah!"

"Go hon!" grinned Blake. "Tell us something we don't know!"

During their week at the railroad camp, the juniors had had one and all come to the conclusion that they did not like the half-breed.

"I considah he is a dangewous customah!" went on Arthur Augustus, ignoring Blake's interruption.

"Dangerous?" ejaculated Ernest Levison. "What the dickens do you mean, Gussy?"

"I have been noticin' the fellow wathah particulahly," continued the swell of St. Jim's, in an impressive tone. "I have noticed that he looks at Sir Napiah's friend Singleton in a queeah, unpleasant mannah. It is my impresson that he stwongly dislikes Singleton, and is jealous of him because he is chief engineeah on this stwetch of the new railwoad!"

"Well?" cut in Tom Merry quietly. "So you've noticed that, too, Gussy? And come to the same conclusion that I have?"

"Bai Jove! Have you weally thought the same thing, Tom Mewwy, deah boy?"

Tom nodded.

"I wouldn't trust that chap Marot an inch! I didn't mention it to anyone—didn't see any point in it. But he

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hates Singleton, I'm sure. He'd like to have his job, of course."

"Phew!" Manners whistled. "I say, do you really think—"

"Aren't you gettin' a little imaginative, dear man?" drawled Cardew, with a sleepy grin. "I know we are out in the wild and woolly West, an' all that, but if you're picturin' Singleton gettin' shot or somethin' by Marot, to get his job as engineer-in-chief, it seems to me that you're bein' rather too melodramatic!"

Tom Merry flushed.

"Rats! I—"

He broke off. The door of the bunkhouse had swung open, and a stalwart figure, wrapped in snow-caked furs, had come striding in. It was Singleton, the chief engineer.

"Hallo, youngsters!" he sang out cheerily, as he kicked the snow from his heavy boots and crossed towards the fire. "Saw the firelight, and it looked so durned cosy, I thought I'd look in on you, and get warm!"

The juniors had all jumped to their feet. They made way for the big Canadian eagerly—they all liked the bluff, blue-eyed engineer.

"You're always welcome in here, sir!" grinned Blake.

"Rather!"

"Just been out on the bridge," explained Singleton, dropping into one of the rough wooden chairs and stretching out his boots to the blaze. "There's a wind beating up, and I wanted to make sure that all the tackle had been left secure in case it gets rough."

He took out a big briar pipe and filled it, his eyes dancing as he glanced round the ring of juniors.

"Well, how do you like Canada?" he queried.



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"Ripping!" chuckled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!" grinned the Canadian. "It's a great country! One of the best! And—"

Singleton got no farther.

A sudden shattering of glass had echoed through the bunkhouse. Tom Merry swung round in time to see a heavy gloved fist withdrawn from a jagged hole in one of the little windows behind the group—the fist that had evidently smashed in the pane deliberately. The next moment two sinister black circles had protruded through the hole—the muzzle of a double-barrelled revolver.

"Look out!" yelled Tom Merry.

The warning came in the nick of time.

Instinctively Singleton ducked—as in rapid succession two murderous flashes leapt from the twin barrels levelled through the broken pane. The bullets thudded into the log wall harmlessly a few inches above his head. Had he not ducked, the Canadian would have been a dead man.

There was a stifled cry from outside—a cry of chagrin from the would-be murderer on seeing that he had failed. The hand and the revolver vanished.

But for a moment Tom Merry could make out two black evil eyes gazing into the bunkhouse—eyes that he knew!

"Marot!" he panted, and raced to the door.

CHAPTER 4.

Caught!

WITH the exception of Tom Merry, those in the bunkhouse seemed too dazed with astonishment to move for a few moments after the echo of the two shots had died away.

Tom's excited shout had told them who the man had been who had fired those shots, however—the very man whom they had been discussing a few minutes before!

Even Tom Merry had never dreamt how swiftly his suspicions of the 'breed would be proved only too well founded when he had agreed with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that he suspected Marot of bearing enmity towards the chief engineer. And it had only been by a chance in a hundred that the scoundrel had been detected in his reckless attempt upon the life of the man whose position he coveted.

Even as the juniors sprang to life a moment later, they realised everything—how Marot, eager to succeed to the chief engineer's position, had planned to get rid of Singleton by recklessly attempting to murder him in cold blood and avoid detection as his slayer.

But in both points he had failed! Though Tom Merry had seen no more than the man's eyes, it had been enough to tell him for certain who it was that had fired those shots!

"Marot!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"After him!" panted Talbot.

"Bai Jove! Quick, deah boys!"

Tom Merry had reached the door. He flung it open, and raced out into the lightly falling snow, a dozen juniors hot on his heels.

A faint moon was gleaming down from among the snow-clouds; it was sufficient to lighten the scene enough for him to make out a shadowy figure racing away among the huts.

"There he goes!"

Tom pounded in pursuit, the others racing after him.

From the darkness ahead there came the sudden crack of a revolver. A bullet whined past Tom Merry's ear. Marot had turned as he ran, and fired back desperately at his pursuers.

"Oh, bai Jove! Look out!" panted Arthur Augustus.

"Come on!" roared Blake.

The big figure of Singleton, the Canadian, had caught up with them now. The railroad engineer held a heavy automatic clenched in his fist. His face was grim, his eyes gleaming with a cold, fierce light as he raced over the snow with the juniors.

"There he goes!" cried Monty Lowther excitedly.

Lowther's keen eyes had glimpsed a shadowy figure doubling aside toward the shelter of some trees that grew at the edge of the encampment. Singleton whipped up his weapon and sent a bullet zipping through the icy air.

The bullet missed its mark, and Marot vanished into the trees.

But he had some of the finest runners of the junior school at St. Jim's on his heels.

If he expected to throw his pursuers off the track easily, he was doomed to bitter disappointment. Glancing back, as he ran out beyond the belt of snowclad trees, he gave a snarling gasp to see half a dozen athletic figures already close behind him.

He swung up his weapon once more. But he did not fire! A writhing tree-root, half hidden in the thick snow, lay across his path. He caught his foot against it as he turned his head; and the next moment the half-breed had gone sprawling in the snow, his revolver flying from his grasp.

"Collar him!"
 "What-ho!"

Marot struggled up. But he had no chance to get away! Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, Handcock, and Blake and Reginald Talbot were already on him. They had surrounded him in a moment, seizing him with anything but gentle hands and dragging him down. Marot collapsed in a fighting heap, and there was a sudden gleam of steel in the dim light.

"Look out!" gasped Blake. "He's got a knife!"
 There was a breathless cry from Handcock. The half-breed's knife had slashed his shoulder, and the American junior staggered back with blood pouring down his arm. But Tom Merry's well-aimed boot crashed home on the breed's wrist an instant later, and the knife went spinning away into the snow from the man's deadened fingers.

George Alfred Grundy came pounding up.
 "Collar him!" boomed Grundy excitedly. "Where is he? Have you got him? Don't let him go, you asses!"
 "Keep off!" panted Talbot. "We've got him—"

He broke off with a breathless gasp as Grundy swept him clean off his feet, thrusting him aside to hurl himself at the struggling half-breed. Tom Merry was sent staggering, too, by Grundy's charge. But even though Grundy's interference was perhaps a little unnecessary, since Tom, Talbot, Blake, and Monty Lowther had already captured the 'breed, the great George Alfred apparently considered that he—and he alone—was capable of taking the man captive!

With a furious snort, Grundy grasped the 'breed round the waist and hurled him to the ground. There was a gasping cry from Marot as he collapsed in a fighting heap, with Grundy on top of him.

"Got him!" yelled Grundy. "I've got him! I—
 Oh! Oh crumbs!"

Grundy's attempts to collar the half-breed were perhaps a little more enthusiastic than skilful. He was a muscular individual, and he was no funk, and at the moment he was burning with a righteous wrath against the villainous

scoundrel. But he had bitten off rather more than he could chew in Marot!

Grundy gave a yell as the 'breed's knee shot up, catching him in the stomach and doubling him up, with a gasp. He relaxed his hold of the man, and in an instant Marot had leapt to his feet.

It was fortunate that Grundy was not the only fellow on hand!

As Marot sprang up and turned to race away, Tom Merry jumped forward, his fist drawn back. It flashed forward, straight from the shoulder.

Crash!

Tom's fist had landed on the 'breed's jaw, lifting him clean off his feet. He fell with a groan into the deep snow, and lay writhing feebly, almost knocked out. Tom, Talbot, Blake, and Lowther dropped on him, pinning him to the ground as Singleton and the rest of the excited juniors raced up.

"We've got him!" yelled Grundy.

"No thanks to you, ass!" gasped Talbot. "Keep Grundy off, somebody!"

"My hat!" roared Grundy indignantly. "Look here, Talbot, you dummy—"

Grundy broke off as Singleton, grim-faced, halted by the little group, staring down with gleaming eyes at the dazed captive.

"Good work, young 'uns!" snapped the Canadian. "You can let him go now. I've got him covered."

Tom and his companions released Marot, and rose to their feet. The half-breed lay groaning dazedly. Tom Merry's fist had shaken him.

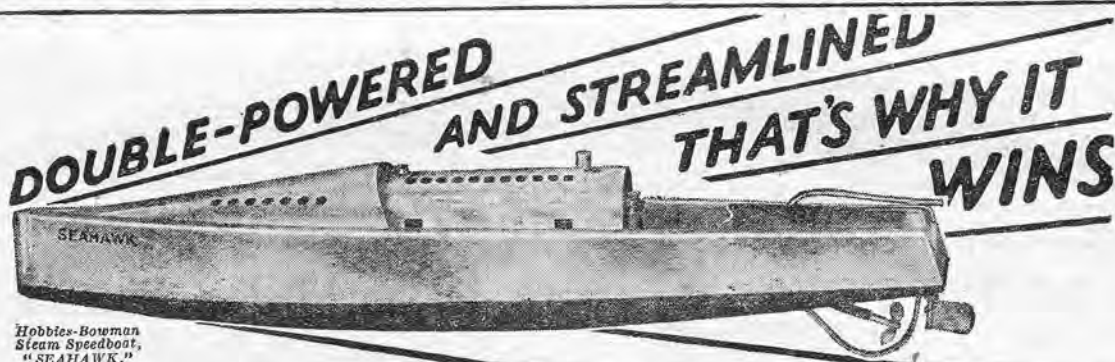
"Get up, you skunk!" snapped Singleton.

His automatic was covering the man's heart unwaveringly.

Marot stared up at him, and his pale lips drew back in a snarl like that of a cornered animal. He struggled up, and stood panting, his clothes caked with snow, his eyes blazing into Singleton's. There was terror in them and bitter hate.

"So you tried to murder me, Marot?" said the big Canadian quietly. "Thought you could get me out of the way and collar my job? And get away with it? Well, you haven't, I guess!"

(Continued on next page.)



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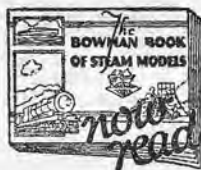
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The 'breed's panting breath was like steam on the air. But he did not speak.

Instead, in a desperation born of terror, he flung himself at the man he hated.

That Marot imagined Singleton intended to revenge himself by shooting him down there and then in cold blood was evident.

His clawing hands leapt towards Singleton's weapon in a wild attempt to save himself from what he expected to be his fate. But he had no chance of getting possession of it. Singleton drove his fist full between the man's eyes, and the Red man, as Marot was known among the railroad men, dropped in a heap at his feet, struggling dazedly in the snow.

Singleton stooped and grasped him by the collar of his jacket, jerking him to his feet.

"See here, Marot!" he said quietly. "I'm not going to kill you—I don't kill men in cold blood. Not even when they deserve it. I'm not even going to pull you in! If I did, as soon as the boys got to know of this, they'd lynch you, sure—and there are going to be no lynchings in this camp. You can clear out, Marot; but if ever you show your face here again, you won't get a second chance!"

He flung the man from him, and Marot staggered and all but fell.

"You'd better go while the going's good, Marot!"

The Red man did not need Singleton's grim advice.

With ashen lips he turned and stumbled away into the swirling snow.

CHAPTER 5.

The War-Dance of the Crees!

"YOU rotten slacker!"

"You lazy dummy!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew yawned and smiled.

The slacker of the Fourth was seated before the fire in one of the bunkhouses. He had made himself very comfortable, with a warm rug over his knees and a pillow behind his head. Cardew liked being comfortable. But the sight of his comfort did not seem to please his two chums, Ernest Levison and Sidney Clive, at all!

"Come on, slacker!" snorted Sidney Clive, the South African junior, in a disgusted tone. "Get up and come along!"

It was after breakfast on the following morning, and a moose-hunt had been arranged for the St. Jim's party by their Canadian hosts. There were several fine moose known to be in the vicinity of the camp, and the St. Jim's fellows, both seniors and juniors, were almost all eager to enjoy the sport.

Not so Ralph Reckness Cardew!

The prospect of trekking through the snow on snowshoes, however warmly wrapped up against the keen wintry air, in pursuit of moose, did not appeal to Cardew half as much as the idea of sitting all day in front of the bunk-house fire!

"Stir your giddy self!" ejaculated Levison impatiently.

Cardew yawned, and shook his head.

"Sorry, dear man! I'm not huntin' any blessed moose to-day."

"Look here——"

"I know we're in the wild and woolly West, an' all that," grinned Cardew, with another yawn, "but that's no reason why I should behave like a cowboy, or a trapper, or somethin' horribly energetic like that! Gad, no! I'm spendin' the day right here——"

"You blessed slacker!" gasped Clive.

"Bring me back a pair of antlers, or somethin', as a souvenir, dear man!" grinned Cardew sleepily, closing his eyes. "Shut the door behind you! Don't want any blessed cold air blowin' in, y'know. I—— Oh, gad! Hands off!"

Cardew's languid manner changed abruptly as he felt himself seized by two pairs of energetic hands. Levison and Clive, tired of argument, had seized their slacking chum forcibly and whirled him from his chair. Cardew landed on the wooden floor of the bunkhouse with a gasp and a yell.

"Oh gad! Yow! Oh, you asses!"

"Coming with us?" demanded Levison.

"No! I tell you——"

"Collar him!" snapped Clive.

There was another yell from Cardew as he was seized again and rushed to the door. Levison, grinning, swung open the door with one hand, and Cardew gave a wild howl as he was borne out into the gleaming snow that lay thick without.

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"Oh gad! You blessed dummies, I—— Yaroooop!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew gave a yell of dismay as his grinning chums swung him into the air and released their hold. The elegant slacker of the Fourth dropped with a gasp into a glittering snowdrift, and again a wild yell rent the air.

"Yoooooh! Grooooh! Oh, my hat——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a chorus of chuckles from near by. Tom Merry & Co. Blake & Co., Figgins & Co. of the New House, and a number of other juniors, all in hunting kit, with long guns over their shoulders or tucked under their arms, had rounded the corner of the log hut in time to see Cardew vanish head-first into the snow.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "What's the trouble?"

"Getting Cardew acclimated to Christmas weather!" explained Levison, with a grin. "He didn't want to come with the crowd—but he's coming!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cardew raised a snow-covered head from the drift gasping and spluttering. He glared at his grinning chums and the crowd of chuckling juniors with a crimson countenance.

"Oh gad——"

"Ready to come hunting, slacker?" demanded Clive.

"No!" gasped Cardew. "Oh gad, no! I——"

He got no farther. Clive had scooped up a huge snowball and hurled it with unerring aim as Cardew began to struggle to his feet. The snowball caught the slacker of the Fourth full in the face, and exploded like a bomb, smothering him. He collapsed backwards with a choking yell.

"Snowball the slacker!" chortled Levison. "On the ball!"

"What-ho!"

The chuckling juniors did not need a second bidding. A moment later snowballs were flying through the air thick and fast, and nearly all of them found their mark on Ralph Reckness Cardew!

"Yaroooop! Oh, my aunt! Oh gad! Yoooooops——"

Whizz, whizz, whizz!

Cardew tried to struggle up, but as soon as he gained his feet he was knocked flying again. It was not long before he had had enough. Covered with snow, blinded, and half choked, he gasped out a wild surrender.

"Pax, you asses! I—I'll go huntin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Good!"

"Oh gad!" Cardew wiped the snow from his face, and ruefully fished more snow out of the back of his collar. "You burbling idiots! Why can't you leave a chap in peace, you energetic lunatics?"

"Rats! Buck up and get ready!" grinned Levison.

A quarter of an hour later the hunting-party set out—and Ralph Reckness Cardew was among them!

The hunters had been split into four sections, led respectively by Sir Napier Wynter, Mr. Railton, the popular young Housemaster of the School House, Singleton, and another of the Canadian engineers named Buchanan.

Levison & Co. were with Singleton's party, together with Blake & Co., and Dick Redfern & Co. of the New House. They were lucky in finding the tracks of a big moose in a very short time, and after a long trek through the snow-bound woods of a mountainside overlooking the Whitesnake Ravine, they came up with their quarry, nibbling some frosty leaves in a valley on the farther side of the great shoulder of mountain over which they had tracked it.

To windward of it as they were, the moose had no idea of their presence, until Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his excitement, got his snowshoes entangled, and went sprawling, with a yell.

The moose swung round on the instant, and the next moment was vanishing among the trees at a furious gallop, the snow flying from beneath its great hoofs.

"Oh, you dummy!" gasped Blake.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Blake, I——"

Crack!

Dick Redfern had whipped up his rifle, and pressed the trigger. The bullet flew on its way, a fraction of a second before Singleton fired. There was a queer coughing grunt from the great elk, and it dropped in its tracks and lay still.

"Good shot, young 'un!" grinned Singleton, as Redfern lowered his smoking weapon. "He's yours! A fourteen-pointer, too! You're lucky!"

"Good old New House!" chuckled Lawrence. "My hat, those antlers'll look fine in our study, old son!"

"Trust old Gussy to nearly scare it off before anybody got it!" sniffed Herries, in a disgusted tone. "I was just going to pot it myself!"

"Look heah, Hewwies——"

"Br-r-r!"

"I do not considah that an intelligible wemark, Hewwies!" Singleton, with his hunting-knife, skilfully removed the splendid antlers, weighing over fifty pounds, and Redfern & Co. proudly took possession of them. It was, they felt, distinctly a score for the New House!

It was soon after that, as the party scouted round in search of further tracks, that the snow began to fall again, in heavy, blinding clouds.

Cardew groaned.

"Oh gad! And to think I might have been cosy at the camp, you asses!"

"Rats!" snorted Levison. "That is fine! And we've got to bag a set of moose antlers for Study No. 9, and show those New House bouncers they aren't the only ones who can bag a moose! My hat, look!"

His keen eyes had fallen on a set of tracks running through the trees near where he and Cardew and Clive were standing. They were moose tracks, leading away at right angles across the little valley. Cardew's eyes suddenly lost their lazy gleam.

"Jove! He must be a big fellow, judgin' from the size of his footprints—eh, what? I'll tell you what, you men—he's our meat! We don't want Blake & Co. to bag him, or those New House bouncers. We want his antlers for Study No. 9! Come on, we'll track the jolly old moose down to its giddy lair!"

"Without telling the others?" grinned Clive.

"That's the idea!" nodded Cardew, with a chuckle. "Come on!"

"What about getting back to the camp afterwards?" cut in Levison doubtfully. "It's pretty easy to get lost in these wilds!"

"Rats! We can follow the tracks back!"

"All right, then!" nodded Levison. "The tracks look fresh. He ought not to be far away."

With eagerly gleaming eyes the three chums hurried off along the moose trail, through the swirling snowflakes. The rest of the party were out of sight.

But in their eagerness to get a bag, Levison & Co. had done a rash thing in pushing on alone! It had not occurred to them that the snow would have blotted out their tracks by the time they wanted to retrace their steps. That fact only came home to them some hours later, when they still failed to come up with their quarry, and had lost the trail at a shallow river that swept down the mountain-side.

Faced with the problem of finding their way back to the camp before the early winter darkness fell, they soon realised that they were in an awkward fix.

Darkness gripped the snow-bound hills and woods with startling suddenness, with Levison, Clive, and Ralph Reckness Cardew hopelessly lost!

"This is awkward, dear men," drawled Cardew laconically, as they came out on a little darkening plateau in the lightly falling snow, and stared round at the great white-gleaming hills that rose on all sides—each exactly like the others. "Thunderin' awkward! I dunno the way!"

"Neither do I!" growled Levison.

His face was uneasy.

There was a sudden exclamation from Sidney Clive. He flung out a pointing hand.

"See that? A fire! There must be someone down there!"

He was pointing down the snowy slopes to a twinkling eye of flame that danced through the gloom from somewhere in the valley beneath. It winked up at them intermittently, as though figures were passing to and fro before it.

"Good egg!" exclaimed Levison. "Perhaps it's some trappers, or somebody! If necessary we could spend the night with them; they'll tell us the way back to the camp, anyhow."

They set off down the snow-clad slopes, their snowshoes falling soundlessly on the gleaming, untrodden stretches. A belt of woods lay between them and the mysterious fire, and they came out on the farther side, to find themselves only a few hundred yards from a number of conical tents pitched in the shelter of a jutting shoulder of hill. Dim figures were gathered round a blazing fire in the centre, where the ground had been cleared of snow—huddled, blanket-clad figures, with feathered headdresses and mahogany faces revealed in the dancing glow of the flames.

"Indians!" breathed Clive. "And— My hat! Look!"

"Marot!" muttered Levison, with a sudden sharp intake of his breath. "It's the 'breed!"

Standing by the fire, talking in energetic tones, was Marot—the Red man! He was haranguing the Indians in a voice that trembled with excitement, waving his arms, his eyes darting round the listening circle of Crees with a burning gleam.

(Continued on page 12.)

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THE RED-MAN'S VENGEANCE!

(Continued from page 10.)

Neither the half-breed nor any of the Indians round the great roaring fire had noticed the dim figures of the three St. Jim's juniors in the black shadow of the snow-clad firs. And the voice of the 'breed came to the ears of Levison & Co. clearly through the chill air.

"O Crees, will you permit this evil deed? Are the warriors of this tribe children or squaws that they will allow their age-old gods to be insulted by the palefaces and heed not? The blood of your nation runs in my veins. That is why I have turned my back upon the palefaces and come to you, to urge you to action! If the sacred ravine, the Whitesnake, is humiliated with the yoke of steel and wood that the palefaces plan to cast across it, the gods of your people will rise in fury that you have lifted no finger against the palefaces for their wickedness! They will smite the Crees with their wrath!"

There were angry, guttural mutters of assent from the listening Redskins.

Marot threw back his head with a taunting laugh.

"Are you children, or squaws?" he repeated. "Will you allow the bridge to be built? Will you permit the Whitesnake to be humbled by the palefaces, yoked with their yoke, that the Iron Horse may thunder over the sacred places? Shame upon you!"

Wild, angry cries broke out from the Indians. Chief Pawssannee rose to his feet, with flashing eyes. He swept an arm round the muttering circle.

"He is right, O Crees!" he cried, in passionate tones. "We must not permit this thing. Our nation is the guardian of the Whitesnake, the sacred ravine, the home of our gods. We shall protect it with our lives, lest the gods smite us with their wrath and wipe us out. I, Chief Pawssannee, have spoken!"

Again a chorus of wild, angry shouts rang out among the wigwams. Marot's face lit up with an exultant smile.

"It is well, O Crees!" he purred, in a soft, silky tone that barely reached the ears of the three startled School House juniors hidden among the trees. "It is well! Sharpen your tomahawks, gather your arrows, oil your guns. We will fall upon the camp of the palefaces and destroy them—every man!—and their scalps shall hang in your wigwams ere another moon waxes and wanes!"

One of the old braves by the fire rose slowly to his feet. "Wait!" he said, in guttural accents. "What of the wrath of the palefaces? If we destroy them, and hang their scalps in the wigwams, the soldiers of the great White Chief will come and smite us, and take our lands from us, and slay many!"

Marot turned a snarling face towards him.

"Silence, dog! You have the heart of a woman. Are not the gods of the Crees greater than the palefaces? I tell you—"

He got no farther. The old Indian's face had blazed with fury. He snatched a tomahawk from beneath his blanket and sprang forward.

"No man calls Chocawanta dog and lives!" he panted, swinging the tomahawk high above his feathered head. "By the bones of my father—"

Crack, crack!

Marot's hand had leapt to his holster with such speed that his movement could scarcely be followed by human

eye. His heavy automatic spoke, barked twice from the hip. The old Indian gave a blood-curdling shriek, and tossed up his arms before pitching face down at the feet of Pawssannee.

Marot stood with his smoking weapon in his fist, a mocking smile on his evil face. He glanced round the crowd of Indians, and shrugged.

"He was an old fool!" he muttered. "One so chicken-hearted is not worthy of the name of Cree. He is better dead, when there is grim work to be done by the warriors!"

There were murmurs of assent. It was quite evident that the wise old brave's words of caution had been anything but popular.

The dead Indian was dragged out of the circle. Levison, Clive, and Cardew, peering out from the shelter of the trees, their eyes gleaming with startled dismay, saw the band of Crees begin a wild war-dance round the great fire, tossing their arms and waving guns and tomahawks, chanting a wild chorus in their own tongue.

That Marot had worked upon their religious feelings till they were now in a fanatical frenzy was evident enough. The 'breed, burning to be avenged upon Singleton, had hit upon the scheme of inciting the Crees to attack the bridge-builders who sought to fling the railroad over their sacred ravine. And it seemed that he had succeeded in rousing them only too well.

In their present mood, the Redskins were ready to cast aside all caution and all their fear of the white men's power. Their one thought was to destroy the half-built bridge that was being flung across the yawning depths of the sacred ravine.

Levison gripped Cardew's arm.

"My heavens! They mean to attack the camp! What on earth are we to do?"

"We've got to find our way there and warn them before these crazy Indians get there!" snapped Cardew incisively. "Not a minute to waste!"

"But how can we find our way to it?" groaned Clive.

From the mob of wildly dancing Indians prancing round the blazing fire Marot's voice came to their ears in a sudden hoarse shout.

"Spies!" he shrieked. "See! Spies of the palefaces!"

"They've seen us!" panted Levison.

The dance round the fire had ceased abruptly. A tumult of shouting arose as the Redskins stared across towards the trees in the direction of Marot's outflung hand and saw the shadowy figures of the three white youngsters.

Cardew's face set in desperate lines.

"Run!" he snapped. "Run for your lives!"

CHAPTER 6.

In the Hands of the Redskins!

WILD shrieks rang out behind the three chums of the Fourth as they turned to run.

The snow was not very thick among the trees.

Kicking off their snowshoes, Levison, Clive, and Cardew tore off through the shadow of the mighty firs—trees as they had never run in their lives before.

But already the Crees were hot on their heels.

The juniors' one hope was that they could elude their pursuers in the gloom and hide until the search for them had been given up as a bad job. But it was a forlorn hope.

Shots came singing past them as they ran; but they were wildly fired by the excited Indians, and missed their mark,

Potts, The Office Boy



though one bullet tore through the cloth of Clive's breeches and thudded into the trunk of a tree in front of him.

Breathless and panting, the three fugitives scrambled round a jutting shoulder of rock that gave them temporary shelter from their pursuers, and raced on up a narrow gorge towards the denser woods beyond. From behind came the yells of the pursuing Indians.

"We'll beat 'em yet!" gasped Levison, white-lipped.

But luck was against them.

Clive missed his footing on a snow-covered boulder and pitched headlong. The others paused in their stride, glancing back. The South African junior tried to struggle up, but he sank down again with a groan.

"Twisted my ankle!" he gasped. His face was deathly pale. "I'm finished! Leave me, you asses! Get on!"

"Rats!" snapped Cardew.

He stooped over his fallen chum, and with Levison's help they dragged Clive to his feet. Cardew glanced round wildly. The Indians had not yet come into sight. There was a dark cave near them, piercing the pile of rocks that lined the little gorge.

"We can hide in there!" gasped Levison.

Between them they dragged Clive into the dark opening and laid him down, crouching beside him. They heard the Indians come pounding up the gorge. A few moments later a moccasined figure leapt past the opening of the cave, followed by another and another.

Cardew drew a long breath. The Crees were racing past without dreaming of their presence there. If their luck held now, they might escape capture even yet.

But fortune was not on their side that night.

One of the Indians happened to glance into the cave as he ran past. He came to a sudden stop, and sent a wild, triumphant yell ringing through the gorge. There were excited answering cries, and in a few moments a crowd of excited Crees was swarming at the cave-mouth, glaring in with malignant eyes at the trapped trio.

To make any show of resistance would have been utter madness. Levison and Cardew allowed themselves to be dragged out into the open, unresisting. Clive was seized also and jerked to his feet and borne out of the cave, his face twisted with pain.

The evil figure of Marot came pushing through the throng of yelling Redskins. His eyes gleamed malevolently as they rested on the three captured youngsters.

"So!" he grinned mockingly. "We have caught you, eh?"

"Looks like it!" drawled Cardew laconically. "What are you goin' to do with us?"

The half-breed's eyes flickered with an evil light.

Marot had by no means forgotten that it was the St. Jim's juniors who had detected him on the occasion of his attempted murder of the engineer-in-chief, and who had captured him that night. Now that fortune had provided him with a chance of venting his feelings upon some of them, he was not likely to miss the chance.

"What shall I do with you?" he echoed silkily. "I must think! Some pleasant little punishment suitable for spies—"

"We were not spying," exclaimed Levison hotly. "We saw the fire, and—"

"Whether you were spying deliberately or not, you know too much, my young friends!" grinned Marot. "You heard, I doubt not, of the attack that is to be made on the railroad camp. No one from the camp shall live to tell the tale of

that attack, my young friends—it would be dangerous! So you, too, who know of it, must die!"

Levison caught his breath. Marot laughed, and glanced at Chief Pawssannee.

"Those youngsters must die," he snarled, and the Cree nodded. "But before they die we will have fun with them! I have a pretty little plan—"

There was something in his tone, as he broke off smilingly, that caused the blood of the three helpless juniors, held by the strong hands of half a dozen stalwart Indians, to run cold.

"They are friends of the paleface slaves of the Iron Horse. Let them die by the Iron Horse!"

"What do you mean?" panted Levison thickly.

"Why," jibed Marot, "the train bringing supplies from Vancouver for the repair of your airship is arriving at the railhead to-night in an hour or so. The track runs through the next valley to this, my young friends. When it thunders through on its way to Whitesnake Ravine, you will be tied to the rails! See, the snow is falling thicker once more. The men on the locomotive will never see you lying there in their path, you understand?"

A horrible gloating laugh broke from him.

"It will be a swift death," he whispered. "A better, kinder death than if I allowed the Crees to torture you lingeringly! I am kind, am I not?"

Levison reeled, and would have fallen, but for the hands that held his arms. His face had gone ashen grey.

It was in a daze of horror that the three juniors were dragged by their captors away up the hillside and over the windswept summit. The snow was falling thickly; but the moonlight was sufficient to show them the double line of glittering steel rails that curved through the valley on the farther side.

Marot and a score of Crees were surrounding them as they were marched down the road towards the railroad track below. Pawssannee and the rest of the warriors had returned to their wigwams to prepare for the attack on the railroad camp by the Whitesnake Ravine.

Levison's eyes could not leave the gleaming ribbons of steel as he and his chums were dragged towards them.

"Here we are," grinned the half-breed. "The train will soon be here. A heavy freight train, my young friends, that will arrive at Whitesnake with blood upon its wheels!"

"You fiend!" Levison heard Cardew cry.

Some of the Indians had brought thick leather thongs, and it was the work of a minute only, despite their struggles, to lash the three white youngsters across the railroad track. The half-breed watched with malignant eyes as the Indians finished their fiendish task.

"Good!" he purred. "It will not be long now!"

The Crees were grinning evilly. Roused as they had been to a fanatical hatred of the palefaces, they were fairly gloating over their captives as they stepped back and surveyed the three writhing victims lashed to the rails.

Marot stooped over them, examining their bonds. He nodded with satisfaction. There was no chance of Levison & Co. breaking loose.

"I regret that I shall not be here to say good-bye to you, and wish you a pleasant journey into what my friends the Crees call the happy hunting grounds!" he purred mockingly. He glanced at the Indians. "We must go!"

(Continued on next page.)

.....Christmas Box!



The 'breed and a party of Redskins turned and hurried away up the hillside on their way back to the Indian camp. They vanished among the tall trees—leaving Levison, Clive, and Cardew writhing helplessly across the cold, steel rails, the snow falling noiselessly around them.

CHAPTER 7. A Race for Life!

"MY heavens!"

The despairing cry broke from Clive's lips in utter horror as though he had suddenly realised to the full the ghastly helplessness of their situation.

Clive was tied at the end of the three; it was he whom the locomotive that they knew to be shortly due along that stretch of line would strike first.

"Can either of you chaps get free?"

Cardew's voice was amazingly cool. But even he had a tremor in his voice that told of the horror that racked him.

"I can't!" groaned Levison. His voice was almost incoherent. "They've tied me up too well. I can't get free—I can't—"

His voice rose almost to a shriek. He fought to get control of himself; but a strangled sob escaped him a moment later.

"It'll not be so bad as we think," muttered Cardew thickly. "It'll be over quick—quite quick!"

But he, too, felt that he was fighting to keep hold of his sanity.

There was a moan from Sidney Clive.

"The fiends!" he cried wildly. "The fiends!"

"Perhaps they'll see us!" breathed Levison in a sudden desperate hope. "If the driver sees us—"

But he broke off with a groan.

In his heart he knew that in the snow swirling thickly around them, covering them as with a blanket, they would be all but invisible to any man's eyes. By the time that they were seen, even if they were seen at all, it would be too late for the locomotive to stop.

"Listen!"

Clive's voice broke out weirdly.

"Listen!" he panted. "Can you hear it? It's coming! The train's coming—"

Far away, strangely muffled by the falling snow, the distant rumble of an approaching train had come to the ears of the South African junior. A gust of wind drowned it; then it came to their ears again.

They could feel the steel rails trembling.

"It's coming—"

Louder now, the roar of the oncoming freight train rumbled through the valley as it came thundering on its way towards the spot where the three helpless schoolboys lay writhing vainly against the thongs that bound them to the line. Their faces were as white as the snow itself, their eyes glazed with horror, their breath steaming on the air as they fought madly for an impossible freedom.

The steel rails quivered and hummed beneath them.

There was a little moan from Sidney Clive. Clive—luckier than the others—had fainted.

And then, just as Cardew felt his senses leaving him, a dark shadow came running across the snow from the nearby trees. The slacker of the Fourth turned glazed eyes towards it—and a cry of hope burst from his frozen lips.

It was a single Indian, a long hunting-knife in his hand, who was racing towards them.

Why he had come Cardew and Levison could not dream. But they realised his purpose as he stooped over Clive and began slashing in desperate haste at the leather thongs that fastened his wrists and legs to the rails.

Help had come! But had it come in time?

The roar of the approaching train seemed deafening to Cardew now.

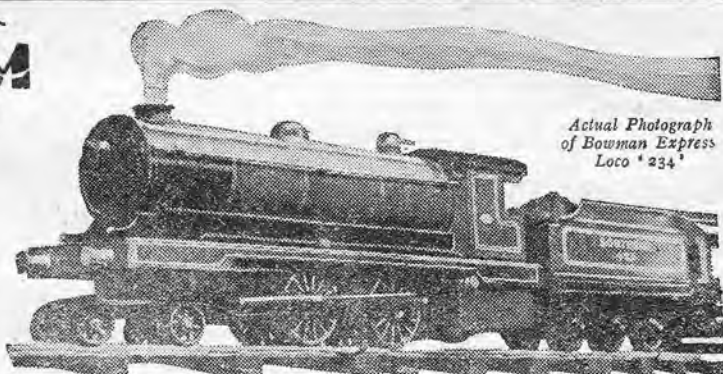
"Quick!" he panted.

He saw the Redskin drag Clive's senseless form from the line, and stoop over Levison, cutting through his bonds. It seemed an eternity to Cardew, watching, before the Indian succeeded in freeing his chum and dragging him clear.

That the train was very near now as it thundered on up the valley he realised. He twisted his head round, staring up the line. He fancied he could make out a gleaming point of light from the headlamp of a great Canadian locomotive, shining dimly through the swirling snowflakes. The rails to which he lay tied were alive beneath him, dancing and shaking beneath the weight of the onrushing train.

(Continued on next page.)

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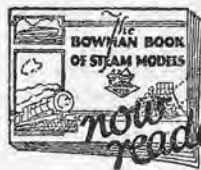
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Novelty Suppers!

HERE'S an idea for your Christmas party, you fellows. Have you ever tried Novelty Suppers? Our champion ass, Gussy, had an elaborate affair at Eastwood House one year; but there is no need to go to much expense.

All the materials you want can be purchased at one of the average cheap stores. Here's a few suggestions for you. Brainy readers will be able to think of others. The dodge is, you see, to ornament the supper-room in an appropriate style for a novel meal.

The Switzerland Supper Table!

This is cheap, and very pretty if done properly. First of all, cover the supper-table with thin cotton-wool, representing snow. Then sprinkle over the cotton-wool a quantity of imitation frost. This glittering powder can be bought at any toy shop for a penny or twopence a packet. Don't put it on too thick. Quite a little is enough to make the cotton-wool sparkle like snow.

The table is now covered with a smooth, snowy plain. You must now make your mountains and valleys in proper Swiss style. A few books or boxes put under the cotton-wool will raise it sufficiently to make it look hilly. Be careful not to make your mountains where your guests' plates will be laid. A big mountain in the middle of the table, and a few smaller hills round about are all that is necessary.

You can now ornament your snowy mountains with small houses, chalets, cabins, and fir-trees—all of which can be bought very cheaply at the sixpenny stores. Or you can make your little huts out of matchboxes if you are clever. You have all seen pictures of Switzerland, so you know what the fir-trees look like when growing on the mountains.

A piece of a broken mirror, or a small looking-glass, may be placed at the foot of your mountain, and the edges con-

By Tom Merry.

(Captain of the Shell.)

cealed with cotton-wool and frost. This will look like a snowy, ice-bound lake.

Now lay the supper on the table in the usual way, ornamenting the dishes with cotton-wool. Little candles and shades on the table add to the charm. Be careful not to get any "frost" on the food, as it doesn't taste very nice. That



ass Lowther spilled about half a pound of it on the turkey one year, and we couldn't eat the beastly stuff.

If you have done your work well, spring it on your guests as a surprise. The sight rarely fails to evoke cries of delight and admiration when the snowy supper-table first bursts on the view.

Ye Olde Manor House Supper.

This is a good dodge for fellows who—like myself—live in houses which are fairly modern. Get several rolls of black crepe paper—it is only three-halfpence a roll—and cut it into strips about nine inches wide, and long enough to stretch from the ceiling to the floor.

Tack the paper from ceiling to floor by means of drawing-pins—it won't hurt the wall at all—and put each strip about two feet apart. This gives the effect of old oak beams. A similar number of strips can be tacked across the ceiling—one drawing-pin at each end is sufficient to keep it up. A few shorter strips should be fastened horizontally between the beams.

Now spend sixpence on a lamp-shade fashioned like an ancient lantern—You can see them at the stores. Put the lantern-shade over your lamp, and have a couple of old wooden candlesticks and shades on the table—coloured candles add to the effect.

In the dimmed light, the room will look quaint and charming, and if there is a roaring fire in the grate it would be hard to find a prettier setting for a supper-table.

Museum Supper.

This was an invention of Lowther's. It was a scream. We rigged out the supper-room like a museum, and put printed labels on every object. The fun of the thing, of course, consists in the labels.

Over the door was a placard "EGYPTIAN ROOM." The Christmas pudding we called "Head of a Mummy—probably a mulatto." The turkey was "The Sacred Oofle-Bird. Only specimen in existence. Do not touch." The mince-pies were "eggs of an extinct dinosaur," and the tarts were "Cleopatra's beauty-spots."

But the cream of the fun, from our point of view, was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who, without knowing it, was walking about with a label on his back—"Mummy of King Rummy-Dummy!"

Try it. Put a label on everything in the room. Your guests won't be able to eat for laughing, so you can save food in this manner!

THE RED-MAN'S VENGEANCE!

(Continued from previous page.)

The moments that followed seemed like a dream to Cardew.

He felt the thongs binding his legs drop asunder as the mysterious Indian's knife slashed through them. He felt cold steel touch his wrists as the Redskin sawed through his bonds in wild haste. Already the slacker of the Fourth could make out the dim bulk of the locomotive, the red glare from the firebox beating against the falling snow as it rushed towards him. And then he had been dragged aside from the humming rails—and with a thunderous roar the train went pounding over the spot where only a few seconds before he had been lying helplessly.

A cracked laugh broke from his lips; a wild, hysterical laugh.

It was with difficulty that Cardew got control of himself. "Thanks!" he said hoarsely, fighting to keep his voice steady and normal. "You—you saved our bacon that time!"

Oliver had opened his eyes now, with a little moan. Cardew and Levison dropped beside him.

"All right now, old chap," breathed Levison thickly. "You're safe!"

They raised their chum with difficulty. The South African junior stood trembling, his face as white as death, supporting himself by grasping Levison's shoulder. His injured ankle was agonising now.

"But—but—" he stammered. "This fellow freed us and saved our lives," said Cardew quietly, glancing towards the silent figure of the young

Cree. He held out his hand. "Will you shake? I dunno why you did it—"

The Redskin's eyes flashed.

"My father was Chocawanta, he whom the dog Marot slew this night," he explained simply. "Had I been there then I would have slain Marot. When I came to the camp I found my father dead and heard all. You are enemies of Marot, and are, therefore, friends of mine. I, Chocaja, have spoken!"

Again his eyes flashed.

"For to-night's work will I kill Marot!" he went on in guttural accents. "Ay, and Pawssannee, the chief, shall die, too! I go now to slay them."

Cardew grasped his arm.

"Listen!" he breathed. "First you must show us the way to the camp of the palefaces. You say you are our friend, Chocaja! Then you must do this for us—"

"The way is easy," answered the Cree. "Follow the trail of the Iron Horse, and it will lead you straight to the Whitesnake Ravine where your friends are." He pointed up the line. "Back yonder will you find a machine of the palefaces that will bear you swiftly on your way. Follow me—I will show you."

Wonderingly, the juniors followed him. His meaning was soon plain.

Farther up the line there were some store-huts, with a short siding running off the main line. A light-hand-propelled truck, such as railwaymen use, was standing on the rails, banked with snow.

"Oh, fine!" breathed Levison. "We'll get to Whitesnake in no time on that, you chaps! We'll beat Marot and Pawssannee yet!"

Between them they hastily ran the truck out on to the main line and scrambled on. The Indian swung up beside them.

"I will come with you till we reach the creek," he muttered. "Then I go to slay my father's enemies!"

Cardew threw off the brake, and he and Levison seized the propelling arms, working them up and down with gathering speed as the truck rolled along the gleaming rails. In a few hundred yards the track began a gentle downward slope, and they stopped working the arms. The truck gathered speed, till it was careering down the line at breakneck pace, the snow-laden air shrieking past them.

There was a sudden shout from Clive.

"Look!"

They had run out of the snow into clear moonlight; and a startling sight had met their eyes.

Marching up the valley, across the line, were scores of Crees, led by Marot and Pawssannee. They were evidently on their way at last to Whitesnake Ravine, to attack the railroad camp.

At sight of the careering truck and its riders, the Indians gave yells of surprise and rage.

How the three white youngsters came to be free must have been a mystery to them—by now, they had imagined, Levison & Co. were no more than mangled remains!

The sight of Chocaja crouching with the three juniors on the truck, as it came thundering down the line towards them, must soon have solved the mystery for Pawssannee and his warriors, however.

"Down!" yelled Cardew.

The three juniors and their Redskin companion ducked low as they saw a dozen or so of the Crees drop to their knees in the snow and level their rifles.

Bullets came whining past them and over their heads, some of them striking the flying truck. By now they were almost on the strung-out line of Indians, and those who had halted on the line leapt aside with yells of fright only just in time.

Those few seconds were like an eternity to Levison & Co. The air seemed filled with flying bullets. On either side of them, as their thundering vehicle hurtled through the band of Redskins, flashes of fire leapt from levelled muzzles, and savage faces yelled and shrieked.

There was a sudden wild cry from Chocaja.

Cardew glanced round swiftly, and his heart sickened. Their Indian friend had staggered to his feet on the flying truck, clutching at his throat, blood foaming round his fingers, where a bullet had pierced his neck.

The next moment the young Cree had toppled backwards, dead. He crashed on to the gleaming rails—and the truck flew on down the long, straight track between the glittering snowdrifts, leaping and bounding like a living thing. It swept round a wide curve at nearly fifty miles an hour, the three St. Jim's juniors clinging on for dear life. The shouts of the Indians were left behind.

"Poor old Chocaja!" muttered Levison, through icy-cold lips. "He saved us, poor chap—then got killed himself!"

A few hundred yards farther on the track took an upward slope, and the truck's speed decreased gradually. After a while Levison and Cardew grasped the propelling arms once more, working fiercely to keep up the speed.

Every second of time counted.

The Crees were on their way to the railroad camp in overwhelming force. Unless they could get to the Whitesnake Ravine in time to warn Singleton and his men, and their own party from the airship, the Redskins would take the camp by surprise and massacre everyone there before the latter had a chance to defend themselves.

If that happened the vengeance of Marot, the Red man, would be complete!

He could easily make himself scarce afterwards, and even though Pawssannee and the Crees suffered justice for their reckless deeds, the half-breed would escape for a certainty.

That much the three juniors realised fully; but Levison, Cardew, and Sidney Clive did not intend that the railroad camp should be attacked before warning had reached its occupants of the coming of Pawssannee and his warriors. The lives of their friends at Whitesnake lay in their hands!

The icy air streaming past them, numbing their hands and faces, whipping their skin to a burning glow, the three chums of Study No. 9 flew on down the glittering rails, on towards the distant camp.

CHAPTER 8.

Attacked by Crees!

"HERE they come!"

A big crowd of St. Jim's fellows were gathered in the main "street" of the railroad camp, near the chief engineer's hut. The snow had stopped falling some time before, and moonlight, glittering on the

deep snowdrifts, filled the scene with a light almost like that of day.

The hunting parties had all returned from their day's sport, with the exception of Singleton's. But a group of fur-clad figures had come into sight at last at the end of the street of log-huts, with the big figure of the Canadian engineer at their head.

There was a sudden exclamation from Tom Merry.

"Hallo! They're not all there! Weren't Levison & Co. with them?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Funny!" ejaculated Smith of the Fifth, who was standing near the juniors. "I wonder where——"



Figgins and Kerr, very white faced, picked up t

He broke off as Singleton, Blake & Co., and Redfern & Co., the latter bearing a huge pair of moose antlers, came up to them. There was a faint frown on the face of the big Canadian.

"Did those three youngsters—young Cardew and his two pals—get back all right?" he demanded. "We lost 'em. I suppose they joined up with one of the other parties, eh?"

Sir Napier Wynter and Mr. Railton had appeared from their hut. Their faces went quickly startled.

"Gad!" ejaculated the baronet sharply. "What's that, Singleton? No, we haven't seen anything of them!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his monocle and stared round the startled group with consternation in his face. "I say, this is wotten! We thought that——"

"This is serious!" Mr. Railton cut in, his voice holding a note of dismay. "Levison, Cardew, and Clive missing? Good heavens, Singleton! What's to be done?"

"Search parties!" snapped the Canadian grimly. "And no time to waste! If the youngsters are lost in the mountains in this snow——"

He broke off, staring across the snow to where the newly built railroad came curving past the camp from the end of the valley, and on towards the edge of the great Whitesnake

Ravine, where the half-finished bridge was flung out high across the foaming rapids that thundered below.

Far up the line, careering towards the camp at smashing speed, a hand-truck bearing three crouching figures had flashed into view from behind a belt of dark fir-trees.

"Hallo! What in thunder—"

From Tom Merry there burst an excited shout.

"It's they!"

"Bai Jove! What the mewwy dickens—"

There was a jovial laugh from Singleton.

"Yep, it's the youngsters all right! So they found that truck and trekked home on it? Bit of luck for them!"

There was an excited cheer from the juniors as the flying



conscious Wynn and carried him towards the huts!

truck came speeding towards the huts. It slowed down with screeching wheels as Levison and Cardew jammed on the brakes. The crowd of St. Jim's fellows hurried across the snow towards the rails, surrounding the three juniors as the truck ran to a standstill near the end of the half-built bridge spanning the ravine.

"Where the dickens have you asses been?" grinned Redfern cheerily. "Hallo, what's up?" he added suddenly, as he caught sight of the expression on the faces of Levison & Co.

That something was wrong was evident enough from the grim countenances of the three chums of the Fourth, as Levison and Cardew sprang off on to the snow, and helped Clive off. The South African's injured ankle was swollen and agonising now, making it impossible for him to walk without assistance.

Cardew turned a set face to the crowd.

"For Heaven's sake—get everybody armed!" he panted breathlessly. "The Crees are coming—they're going to attack—they'll be here in half an hour—"

He broke off, fighting for breath. His lips were blue with cold.

"The Crees?" echoed Sir Napier Wynter hoarsely. "What do you mean?"

Cardew flung out a pointing hand towards the bridge.

"Marot has gone to them—he's worked them into a religious frenzy," he explained jerkily. "They're coming to destroy the bridge and murder the lot of us! We heard their plans—"

"G-great Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

There were excited, scared gasps from Wally D'Arcy & Co. The five fags had just come up in time to hear Cardew's startling words. Eric Kildare gripped the slacker of the Fourth by the shoulder.

"You mean this?" he panted. "This isn't a joke?"

There was a mirthless laugh from Levison.

"It's no joke!" he said fiercely. "Pawssannee and his Indians are on their way now! They tried to kill us, but we got away—"

"My heavens!" breathed Cutts of the Fifth. His face had gone deathly pale.

Mr. Lathom, the whiskered little master of the Fourth, looking thoroughly portly in the heavy furs he was wearing, gave a dismayed ejaculation.

"B-bless my soul!" he panted. "This is terrible news! Mr. Railton—Sir Napier—what ever are we to do? I thought that nowadays the Indians were peaceful people? Oh dear!"

"They're peaceful as a rule, all right," growled Singleton. "But if that coyote Marot has been inflaming them, there's no knowing what madness they won't be up to! There's a big crowd of them, too, by thunder! They've got us outnumbered three to one at least!"

There was a moan of fright from Baggy Trimble. He clutched Tom Merry excitedly by the arm.

"Ow!" gasped Baggy, his fat face working with terror. "Oh lor! Help! I—I say, Tom, old chap, stick by me, won't you? I'm an old pal! You wouldn't let your old pal be scalped by those blessed yelling Indians, would you? I—"

"Oh, shut up, you fat funk!" exclaimed Tom, impatiently throwing off Baggy's clawing fingers. "You haven't been scalped yet, anyway!"

Already Sir Napier Wynter and Singleton were conferring hastily together. The chief engineer rapped out sharp orders to a number of his men who had come on the scene.

"Pawssannee won't find us unprepared for him!" he exclaimed fiercely. "We may be outnumbered, but we'll give them a fight, if that's what they want!"

"You bet we will!" nodded Kildare grimly.

The snow-bound camp, which a few minutes before had been so silent and peaceful, was already alive with energy! The St. Jim's party plunged into the work of flinging up hasty barricades, working side by side with husky great Canadian railroad men who were growling and grimly joking as they laboured in the snow. All round the big log-camp, an encircling ring of defence works, built of logs and snow, seemed to spring up as if by magic.

"What about you youngsters?"

Singleton asked that question twenty minutes later, when the long barricades had been constructed, still without there being any sign of the attacking Crees. He had crossed towards the spot where most of the juniors, both School House and New House, were gathered, excitedly discussing the situation.

"What about us?" queried Tom Merry quietly.

"Are you gonna fight?" jerked out Singleton bluntly. "We shall need every hand that can hold a gun, but you're all young, and if you like to get into the huts, I shan't blame you, of course—"

Tom Merry broke in with a grim laugh.

"We'll fight with the men, thanks," he said briefly. "Eh, you chaps?"

He glanced round the group. Baggy Trimble, Percy Mellish, Crooke, Burkett and Skimpole were not there. They had already sought the shelter of one of the huts. But the rest were there to a man.

"You bet we'll fight," nodded Cyrus K. Handcock laconically. "Sure!"

"Wathah, bai Jove!"

"Trust us," nodded Talbot of the Shell, and there was a chorus of assent from Figgins & Co., Redfern & Co., Grundy, Wildrake, and several more.

"We were just wondering where we shall get guns," cut in Manners.

"Follow me," said Singleton, with a grin. "You kids are good plucked 'uns!"

Five minutes later the juniors, armed with rifles and belts of ammunition, were taking their places at the barricades with the seniors and the railroad men. And they had not long to wait before there was an excited shout from one of the Canadians.

His keen eyes had detected a furtive shadowy figure

slipping along the edge of the trees that grew some distance away from one end of the main "street," where the strongest defences had been raised and manned. Another and another—the woods were alive with Indians.

"Here they are!" yelled the Canadian.

Tom Merry & Co., Talbot and Wildrake, Figgins & Co., and Lefevre & Co. of the Fifth, who were crouching, guns in hand, near the Canadian from whom the shout had come, grasped their weapons tightly, and peered with gleaming eyes over the top of the barricade.

As they stared out across the glittering moonlit snow, a chorus of wild, unearthly yells broke from the hidden Indians. They burst into view, racing across towards the camp, brandishing tomahawks and rifles, their feathered headresses flying in the wind.

The Crees had come!

CHAPTER 9.

At Grips with Redskins!

FROM the line of defences, a score of spurting flames stabbed the night.

Crack, crack, crack!

Bullets whined out across the snow, and several of the attacking Indians dropped in their tracks. But the majority came on, yelling and shrieking, pausing now and then as they ran to fire at the heads of those crouching behind the snowy barricades.

One of the railroad men near where Tom Merry was kneeling, rifle to shoulder, reeled back with upflung arms and collapsed without a sound. There was a snort of bitter rage from a grizzled old Canadian on Tom's other side.

"Poor old Joe's done!" he snarled. He squinted along the sights of his rifle, and pressed the trigger. The bullet flew with unerring aim, and one of the oncoming Crees spun round on his heel and dropped face down. "That pays off a bit of the debt!"

That the Indians were attacking on three sides was clear from the rattle of gun-fire that came from either flank of the camp. The ravine protected one side of it securely enough; but the other three sides were exposed, and with the moonlight streaming brightly down, the heads of the defenders made dangerously good targets for the Crees.

Fortunately, however, they seemed to be too excited to

shoot with very much accuracy, as they rushed, leaping and yelling, towards the barricades.

There was a little groan from Fatty Wynn, of the New House, as a bullet grazed past his temple. He toppled sideways, senseless, and Figgins and Kerr, their faces very white, dragged him away to the safety of one of the huts.

Something dropped in the snow a yard or so only behind Tom Merry. It was an arrow, tipped with grey feathers—long and evil-looking as it quivered in a baulk of timber that lay behind the barricade.

Evidently the Indians, though mostly armed with rifles, were also using their age-old weapon as well! It looked like being a useful one to them; for arrows, fired high, dropping on to the defenders, could do deadly work where bullets would have been of little avail.

Tom Merry sighted his rifle on the heart of one of the foremost Indians—a wild figure with three feathers in his black hair, waving a tomahawk as he rushed at the defences. But he failed to reach them! The bullet buried itself in the man's shoulder, and the tomahawk flew from his hand as he staggered with a blood-curdling shriek.

There was another shriek from nearer at hand. An arrow had sunk into the shoulder of one of the Canadians, dropping steeply. The man dragged it out—and fainted.

Already a handful of the Crees had reached the barricades. Tomahawks were flashing in the moonlight. But though their will! frenzy had taken them so far, it could not carry them through the line of defenders.

Redskins were falling on all sides, lying in crumpled attitudes across the top of the barricades, as they were shot down at close range. And they seemed to realise, after a desperate minute of struggle, that they had bitten off more than they could chew just then! They fell back, breaking for the shelter of the trees, and there was a wild cheer from the defenders of the camp.

The first attack had been driven off, with heavy losses to the Crees!

"Great pip!"

Tom Merry wiped his forehead with a burning hand. His brow was wet with perspiration. He felt himself trembling oddly. A shudder ran through him. For a moment he closed his eyes.

Those still, crumpled figures in the snow were those of Crees—men who would have slain him in cold blood. But

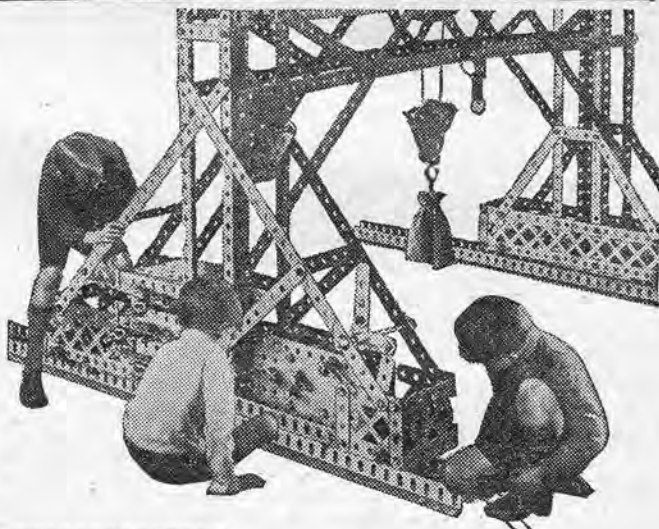
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Christmas Present Hints!

By Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

(The Swell of the Fourth.)

BEFORE we begin, dear boys, I must wish you one and all a Right Merry Christmas. I hope you will each have a ripping time, by Jove, and I also trust that some time during Christmas Day you will spare a moment to think kindly of your old friend "Gussy," who entertains you through the year. Rest assured, dear boys, I shall be thinking of you, and drinking to you—in ginger-pop, of course.

Now as regards Christmas presents. I want to speak about presents in clothes and dress more especially. I am an authority on that subject, dear boys. Apart from a short period a few weeks ago, when the crotchets at St. Jim's succeeded in pulling my leg to such an extent that I became positively slovenly—where am I? Oh, yes! Apart from that event I have always been the best-dressed fellow at St. Jim's, and I expect I always shall be.

Presents of clothing sundries are always acceptable. A fellow can never have too many socks and ties. BUT—if you are making presents of socks or ties this year, do heed my advice. Yes, rather!

Ties should never be loud in colour or pattern. As regards colour, it would be well to bear in mind that there are three primary colours—red, blue, and

yellow—and each one of these agrees with each other one. As regards secondary, or compound colours, the matter becomes more complicated. No one of the primary colours agrees with a compound of the other two; but each one agrees with a compound of itself and one other. Do you understand that? By Jove! No, I thought not.

It is very simple. Red, being a primary colour, will not agree with green—which is a mixture of the other

two primary colours. But it will agree with orange, which is a mixture of itself and one other primary colour. Always bear this rule in mind, and your clothes will not clash. I wish the tie-makers themselves would master this simple fact—but they won't. By the way, though, a green tie is generally regarded as unlucky—don't give green.

Patterns in socks and ties must be small and neat, following another very simple and elementary rule. The human eye—so Latham says—is so constructed that a mosaic pattern always attracts it. The eye cannot bear a smooth, unbroken stretch of anything—there is no spot on which it can rest. The ancient Romans understood this law, and always built their floors of mosaic pattern to attract the eye.

Small, neat patterns in socks and ties are always sure to please. Don't choose anything loud or unwieldy, dear boys.

Gloves are of two kinds—those for ornament and those for wear. Ornamental gloves can be of suede, nappa, or plain kid, and should be thin and unlined. Gloves for wear, on the other hand, should be lined with wool or fur.

There are many other points I should like to discuss, but the Editor wants to cut down my space—bother him! So this will be all for the present, dear boys! Perhaps next Christmas I—
(Nuff said! Your time is up—Ed.)



(Continued from previous page.)

to Tom, as to the rest of the juniors, now that the thrill and excitement of the onslaught had passed, there was horror in the sight—and in the knowledge that there were still figures lying within the barricade as well—cheery Canadian railroad men who had died fighting.

Whether any of the St. Jim's party had been killed or badly wounded, Tom Merry did not know—or care to try to find out. That his own personal chums were still safe he knew. He dreaded to learn that others of his friends had been less lucky.

Though the first attack had been driven off, the Indians were in great numbers, without a doubt. They would soon attack again, with more caution—and if they broke through the line of defence, anything might happen.

Tom crammed a fresh clip of cartridges into his rifle, and glanced at the man beside him.

"How long will it be before they attack again?" he asked in a strained voice.

"Pretty soon, I guess!" grunted the Canadian. "They'll be more foxy this time. I guess they didn't figure out to get such a hot welcome—we surprised 'em that time!"

"Look!" breathed Tom.

Out of the opposite trees a dozen flaming shafts of arrows came curving down towards the log buildings.

"Fire arrows!" gasped the man at Tom's side. "By thunder—look!"

Most of the arrows had dropped harmlessly into the snow. But several of them had landed on the walls of the huts, and remained there, flaming merrily.

There were warning shouts from all sides, and several of the railroad men rushed across to knock the burning arrows down before they could ignite the wooden walls. But to do so they had to reveal themselves to the keen eyes watching from the trees, and instantly a hail of bullets came whining across towards them. One of the Canadians dropped with a groan.

Again a shower of flaming arrows came streaking through the air.

The woodwork of the huts was dry and ready to burn! One of the arrows had struck a door and stuck there; in a moment or two the door was alight.

A couple of Singleton's men ran towards it, despite the bullets that instantly whistled round them. But they could not beat out the flames of the now merrily crackling door. They fell back, and Tom Merry, staring across towards it, saw the roof of the hut catch fire, and heard a roar of flame burst out.

In what seemed no time at all, the hut was blazing fiercely, sending a pillar of coiling smoke whirling high

into the air, and casting lurid shadows on the encircling snow.

At a point along the barricades, a lighted arrow had set fire to the great baulks of timber that had been erected in a rough pile for defence. They were already burning too fiercely for there to be any hope of putting them out, and Kildare, Darrell, North, and several other Sixth-Formers, who had been defending that section, fell back before the fury of the flames.

"Bai Jove! This is wotten!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in dismay, as another shower of the burning arrows came dropping into the camp, setting fire to another of the huts and to another stretch of the barricade. "If they burn down the bawwicade, bai Jove, we're done!"

"That's their game!" growled Blake.

"I can hardly wegard that as a vewy sportin' way of fightin', you know," complained the swell of St. Jim's, shaking his aristocratic head. "I considah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Despite the gravity of the situation, Blake, Herries, and Digby, who were kneeling beside their noble chum not far from where Tom Merry & Co. were posted, burst into a laugh.

"Ass!" grinned Digby. "You don't expect them to use Marquis of Queensberry rules, I s'pose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It's no laughin' mattah—"

"We know it!" grunted Blake, his face going grim.

"Look out! They're coming!"

Encouraged by the sight of the barricade burning in several places now, and a number of the huts burning brightly behind it, outlining the defenders against the lurid glare to the eyes of the attackers, the Creses had burst into view again from the edge of the woods.

Crouching as they ran, taking advantage this time of every scrap of available cover, the Indians came tearing across the uneven ground towards the camp.

CHAPTER 10.

The Ghost!

THE rattle of firing burst out fiercely, and bullets flew through the icy air.

The first wild frenzy of the Indians had been replaced by a cold, cruel determination to fight their way into the camp, past that line of flying lead. If once they could pass the barricades, and scatter the defenders, the chances were that their superior numbers

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would enable them to gain a fairly easy victory; in hand-to-hand fighting they would be more than a match for the whites!

With the blazing huts and the dancing flames from the burning stretches of the barricade casting blood-red shadows over the glistening drifts of snow, the Indians poured across towards the defence-works in savage swarms. Many of them staggered and fell, to lie still or writhing in their tracks. But the majority came on, firing as they came.

And this time they could not be driven back!

The fire arrows had done their work well. Blinded by smoke as the wind beat it into their faces, the defenders had to fall back from the flaming gaps; and it was through these that the Crees came pouring, heedless of burns, yelling and leaping like madmen as they fell upon the dismayed white men and youngsters.

Tom Merry, falling back with the others, firing as he went, felt his heart turned sick with despair.

Were the Indians to triumph, after all? Would he and all his companions be murdered by ruthless, savage hands?

It certainly looked as though that might happen. With the Indians outnumbering them heavily, now that the barricades had been passed, the defenders were in a tight corner if ever there was one.

They retreated hastily to the line of the log buildings, the Crees pouring in pursuit.

The huts were their only hope!

From the shelter of the huts the desperate defenders of the camp could fire through the windows and doorways at the surrounding swarms of Indians in comparative safety for a time. But some of the huts were on fire, and it was not likely that the Crees would be slow to try to set fire to the others, once their enemies had taken refuge within them.

Tom Merry, turning in the doorway of a long bunkhouse in which he had taken refuge, together with Manners and Lowther and Hancock, Kildare and Darrell, and several Fifth-Formers and a couple of the railroad men, pressed the trigger of his rifle as a Cree came racing up and flung a tomahawk full at his head. The Indian collapsed; and the tomahawk flew above Tom's head as he ducked, and bit deep into the side of the doorway.

Kildare snatched it out.

The captain of St. Jim's had used his last cartridge! But the tomahawk was a terrible weapon in the hands of the stalwart Sixth-Former—as a couple of Indians learnt a moment later as they leapt at him where he stood in the doorway, covering the retreat of the others into the bunkhouse.

With a sweep of his arm Kildare struck senseless the foremost Cree with the gleaming axe. The second went sprawling before a tremendous punch on the jaw that would have felled a heavy-weight. The next instant Kildare had leaped back into the hut and slammed the door.

A bullet thudded against it from without, and the captain of St. Jim's gave a grim, breathless exclamation as the lead splintered through the woodwork, narrowly missing his head. He dropped the heavy wooden bar into place, fastening the door securely.

"It'll take 'em time to smash that in!" he panted.

Tom Merry ran to one of the little windows, and peered out.

By now, so far as he could judge, all the defenders had barricaded themselves in the huts, and the Indians, baffled and furious for the moment, were swarming down the lane between the huts, firing indiscriminately at doors and windows.

The crashing of breaking glass could be heard above the rattle of rifle-fire.

It was a wild, weird scene!

The moon had vanished behind a bank of heavy drifting cloud, and the only light was the lurid glare from three or four blazing cabins. The ruddy, flickering light glowed on the dark faces of the Crees and on the still forms that lay crumpled in the snow. At the hut opposite, Tom Merry glimpsed the faces of Sir Napier Wynter and George Figgins, of the New House, behind two smoking rifle-barrels.

One of the Redskins, running past the hut, caught sight of Tom staring out, and hurled a tomahawk. It crashed through the glass, and Tom sprang back with a shout.

"Look out!"

The tomahawk dropped inside the hut, narrowly missing Smith major of the Fifth. Lefevre and Monty Lowther both fired together, and the Redskin leapt to safety out of their view.

"My heavens!" panted Kildare. "They've got us all like rats in a trap!"

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The captain of St. Jim's was no coward; but his face, as he spoke, was as white as paper.

"We'll fight to a finish, anyway!" cut in Darrell hoarsely.

"Sure, we will!" growled one of the two Canadians. "These pesky Injuns shan't see us show the white feather!"

Thud, thud!

The heavy blows of an axe reverberated through the bunkhouse as the Indians outside attacked the door. A splintered crack appeared.

Hancock jumped forward, and thrust the muzzle of his rifle through the crack, pressing the trigger. There was a scream from outside, and almost instantly a couple of bullets came whining into the hut. Lee, of the Fifth, gave a cry, and dropped with a bullet in his leg.

"I'm all right!" he gasped. "Stopped one, that's all!" he grinned ruefully. "Don't worry about me!"

Lefevre and Smith major and Kildare bent over him anxiously. The bullet had failed to hit a bone, fortunately, but there was an ugly flesh wound. The captain of St. Jim's stripped a sheet from one of the bunks, and tore from it cloth for a bandage. Lee's wound was hastily bound up, while Tom Merry & Co., Darrell, and the two Canadians, kept up a hot fire from the little windows, and through the cracks in the splintered door.

From the other huts the rattle of rifles mingled with the yells of the Indians in sinister chorus.

What would be the end of it? That was the question that hammered in Tom Merry's mind.

There seemed only one possible answer. The Indians had them like rats in a trap, as Kildare had said. Though the whites were still putting up an energetic, desperate defence, the swarms of Crees now had complete mastery of the situation. Once they set to work to fire the huts in which the whites had taken shelter they would drive the defenders out helplessly to their doom.

Even as the thought crossed Tom Merry's mind he saw half a dozen Indians appear among the opposite huts with flaming brands in their hands. Slithering cautiously along the walls, where they could not be fired upon from the windows by those within, they held the dancing flames to the wide wooden eaves. The woodwork caught readily, and flames began to lick along the edge of the roof of the hut in which Tom Merry knew Sir Napier Wynter and George Figgins, among others, to be sheltering.

A despairing groan rose to his lips.

One of the Indians with a torch reeled and collapsed in the snow, picked off by the rifle of a Canadian who was standing at Tom's side, peering out through the broken window. But it was impossible to prevent the firing of the huts—and already the air was heavy with smoke and the crackle of flames.

That their own hut had been fired they realised a minute later, as acrid fumes began pouring in upon them, down through the cracks where the sloping roof rested on the top of the rough log walls. A tongue of crimson flame appeared, flickering evilly in the dim light within the bunkhouse.

"The hounds!" burst from Kildare hoarsely.

It was the end—there could be no doubt about that.

With the bunkhouse in flames, they would be forced to sally out into the arms of their foes; and there would be no mercy for them at the hands of the Crees.

Whether the Redskins had already started their work of destruction upon the bridge over the ravine, which had been the cause of their attack upon the camp—thanks to the evil machinations of Marot, the 'breed—Tom Merry and his companions could not know. From the windows of the bunkhouse they could not see the sacred Whitesnake gorge, with the half-built bridge spanning the abyss.

One corner of the roof above them was burning merrily now.

Clouds of suffocating smoke were beating down upon them inside the bunkhouse.

Coughing and fighting for breath, blinded, the little party of defenders knew that the game was up!

From outside, the blood-curdling, triumphant yells of the Crees rang out above the crackle of the flames.

"Got to get out of here!" gasped Darrell. "The roof will drop in on us!"

"Better die out there than be burnt alive in here!" growled one of the Canadians, his voice choked and broken by fits of coughing. "Come on! I'm gonna get out o' this!"

He stumbled for the door, and groped for the wooden bar that held it. The others staggered after him. They heard the bar dragged aside—and their burning lungs fought for the cold, fresh air that came steaming in as the man swung the door wide open.

That they were one and all going out to their death, Tom Merry implicitly believed. But better to die out there at the hands of the Crees than be burnt alive when the flaming roof collapsed upon them, as the Canadian had said.

Already the roof was a mass of roaring flame. Flying sparks stung Tom Merry's cheek as he stumbled blindly for the open door.

The yells of the triumphant Indians rang in his ears as he reeled out into the snow at Monty Lowther's heels.

The icy air beat upon his face. His streaming eyes were blinded still, and he could see nothing; but at any moment he expected to be seized and dragged away to death.

But, suddenly, as he stood reeling on the threshold of the blazing bunkhouse, the yells of the Indians died away. An uncanny hush fell in a moment, broken only by the crackle of the leaping flames around him. Something had happened!

Tom dashed the water from his eyes, and stared round wonderingly, in the strange quiet that had fallen.

CHAPTER 11.

A Happy Christmas!

THAT something unlooked-for had happened was clear enough!

Tom stared round in wondering astonishment.

The Crees all seemed struck to stone. Their eyes were all staring past the huts towards the dim outline of the great bridge that, still half-finished, spanned the Whitesnake Ravine, the great ravine which the Crees held sacred.

"What on earth—" breathed Tom.

The next instant he caught his breath sharply.

He knew now what had startled the Redskins to dumb dismay.

Gliding across the half-built railway bridge, towards the huts, was a spectral figure—the figure of an Indian chief it appeared to be; but it glowed with a strange, unearthly silvery light, as of another world!

Like a ghost, the mysterious figure came slowly on across the spidery trestles, its splendid headdress phosphorescent in the gloom. The face was hidden, the blanket of the apparent spirit being held across its face with one upraised hand. Nearer and nearer to the edge of the gorge, where the dumbfounded Indians stood motionless, silent, watching with staring eyes.

Tom Merry's heart leapt.

He did not believe in ghosts. That the spectral shape crossing the bridge was one of flesh and blood, he realised. But there was no doubt that it looked like a visitant from another world—and to the superstitious Indians there was no doubt at all that it was so.

From one of them there burst a sudden wild, terrified scream.

The figure on the bridge halted, and raised its arms high above its head. As it did so, a queer, moaning chant came from it, rising and falling weirdly on the night air.

It was the last straw, as far as the Crees were concerned. They broke and fled.

Without a single glance at any of the whites, they poured away between the huts, leaving their rifles and tomahawks strewn in the snow. Out across the glistening whiteness beyond the camp they fled, and vanished into the darkness of the trees.

An unearthly silence followed their retreat. It was broken suddenly by the drawling voice of Cyrus K. Handcock.

"I dunno who the spook is; but I guess it's been a lucky old ghost for us!"

All eyes were still fastened on the spectral figure of the "ghost" Indian.

"What ever is it?" squeaked the frightened voice of Curly Gibson of the Third.

The mysterious figure suddenly came striding along the gleaming railroad line towards the huts. It drew off its gleaming headdress, and from Jack Blake there broke a breathless shout of utter amazement:

"Cardew!"

"G-g-gweat Scott!" stammered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"It—it's Cardew, deah boys!"

Cardew strolled up with a faint grin on his handsome face.

"Yes, it's little me," he nodded laconically. "Amazin' what a little luminous paint will do, isn't it—what?"

He grinned round at the breathless crowd. Singleton and the railroad men were as dumbfounded as the St. Jim's party.

From the big chief engineer there broke a sudden, thunderous laugh. He strode forward and smacked the slacker of the Fourth on the back with such force that Cardew gasped.

"Ow! Oh gad!"

"Young 'un," cried the Canadian, "you've saved our lives!"

"A lucky idea, wasn't it?" murmured Cardew. "It was remembering about that luminous paint among the stores that gave me the idea. I managed to get it without being spotted by the Indians, and I collared the blanket and headdress from Pawssannee. He was killed in the second attack—"

"Pawssannee—killed?" breathed Sir Napier.

"Yes," nodded Cardew grimly. "He was shot down by a poor chap who was killed by an arrow a jiffy later. I saw it all happen. Well, I took his headdress and blanket, and crossed the bridge with 'em, and the luminous paint. The Indians were too busy yelling round the huts to see me. I soaked the togs in the paint, as you can see, and came back wearing 'em. I guessed the Crees would take me for a sign of some sort, seeing the ravine is sacred to them. They did! They must have thought I was the spirit of some great chief come to warn them off, I suppose. Anyway, they cleared off!"

Cardew grinned cheerfully.

"And I fancy they won't come back, either!" he finished, in a grim tone.

He glanced round at the huddled shapes of a couple of dead Indians lying in the snow in the shadow of one of the burning huts, and shuddered. The next moment he reeled, and would have fallen had not Mr. Railton caught him.

"Stopped a bullet—in the shoulder—lost a good deal of blood!" muttered Cardew.

Then he fainted.

It was two days later that a big party of the famous North West Mounted Police rode into the railroad men's camp at Whitesnake Ravine. They had been summoned by wireless, from the radio-room of the S 1000, and had come to arrest the ringleaders of the Crees who had taken part in the attack on the camp.

But the two leaders of that attack were beyond the reach of even the Mounties.

Pawssannee was dead, with a bullet in his heart; and Marot, the Red man, whose vengeance had so nearly succeeded, was also dead. The 'breed was found with a knife in his throat in the woods not far from the camp, and no one doubted but that the knife had been placed there by the hand of some friend or relative of Chocawanta, the Cree whom the half-breed had shot down in cold blood when urging the Redskins to attack.

The rough justice of the West had overtaken Marot!

Though six of the railroad men had died in the fight with the Indians, none of the St. Jim's party had been killed, though several had been badly wounded. But there was not one of them so badly hurt that he could not take part in the huge Christmas dinner that was held on Christmas Day, some little time later, at the new Sioux camp.

It was a wonderful Christmas dinner—as all the juniors agreed. Even Fatty Wynn and Baggy Trimble had enough to eat! And it was given to the St. Jim's party and Singleton and the rest of the Canadians, by a crowd of Indians—friendly Sioux, who had come to take over the Cree Reservation, which had been confiscated by the authorities for the Crees' murderous attack on the camp—come over to join with their "Paleface brothers," as they called them, in their festive feast.

It was a gay, picturesque scene, with the Sioux in their native dress, their fine faces lit by the firelight.

A week later, the repairs to the S 1000 were completed at last.

But it was with a sense of real regret that the St. Jim's juniors, staring down from the great dirigible as it hovered high over Whitesnake before turning westward for the continuation of its interrupted flight, waved good-bye to the cheering crowd of husky Canadians below.

Their Christmas in the Rockies had been an exciting one—almost a tragic one. But they were sorry to be saying good-bye, nevertheless!

But the great airship had to go on its way. From Vancouver they were to fly down the Pacific coast to South America, and as the mighty peaks of the snowclad Rockies faded at last from sight, the juniors had, at any rate, the consolation of telling themselves that, for all they knew, another adventure would come their way in the earthquake-ridden regions of Spanish America!

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the next exciting yarn in this thrilling series, entitled: "THE TYRANT OF URUDOR!" It's the best yet!)



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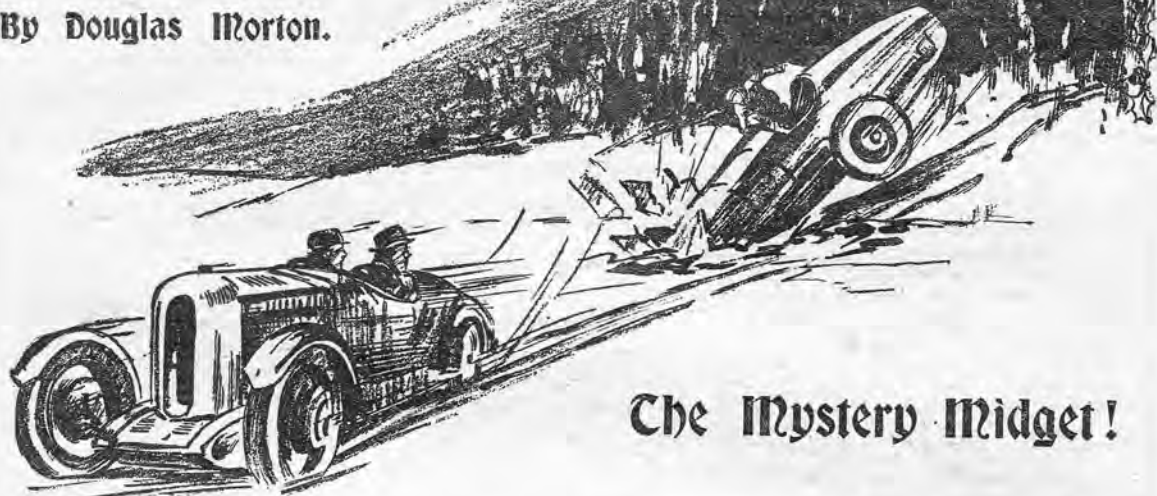
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A RED-HOT YARN OF A FROZEN CHRISTMAS!

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By Douglas Morton.



The Mystery Midget!

CHAPTER 1. On Flying Skis!

DICK STANFORD flung his sledge down on the brow of the hill preparatory to another glorious rush down the dizzy slope. As he whistled joyously his breath hung on the frosty air like a small cloud. "Thank the gods," he grinned to himself, "that the shoot down is worth all the fag of climbing up."

He stretched himself flat on the sledge and gave a mighty kick-off.

"Yoicks!" he shouted. "Off we go!"

Under Dick's mighty push the polished runners began to slide smoothly over the crisp, hard snow. Quicker and quicker the light racing-sledge tore along, and Dick yelled with delight as the runners sang their song of speed.

This certainly was the life! His first Christmas since leaving school, Dick, at the age of seventeen, was revelling in the joys of freedom. The festive season had been started with ripping wintry weather, and Arkville, his employer, had given him the run of the hills on Benton Park.

Across the snowy expanse could be seen the towers of Benton Manor, "the little shack," as the American millionaire, Cyrus J. Arkville, called his English home near the Thames. The latest automobile invention from Arkville's super-brain was now completed, and a halt had been called on the feverish activities of the past few weeks.

All was peace—but that peace was to be very rudely broken into, though the boy at that moment did not know it. For the Wrecker, Arkville's ruthless and unknown enemy, was soon to show his hand.

Dick thought but little of trouble as he rushed down the slope, but, suddenly, halfway down, he tore at the sledge in a frantic effort to stay its headlong rush. For right across his path had appeared, with terrifying quickness, a huge baulk of timber. A masked figure was rushing away from it to the shelter of the big oak-trees which lined the run that Dick's sledge had cut off for itself.

Wrenching and tearing with his hands and feet as hard as he could, Dick could not stay his headlong flight.

Crash!

The sledge hit the log with a terrific smash, and Dick described a clear arc as he sailed through the air. The next moment he was up to his ears in a soft snowdrift. In a flash he was struggling to his feet, but froze on the instant as the sound of a curt voice cut the keen air like a knife.

"Hands up!"

There was nothing to do but to obey. He was captured by the Wrecker.

He guessed what the gang were after. The Mystery Midget, that wonderful new invention of Arkville's lay closely guarded in one of his many garages, and that would be their objective. The Mystery Midget was a car that would startle the motor world when it was revealed to the public. It would be the tiniest car on record—a "bus" which would have all the gadgets of a great roadster and the speed that was so dear to the modern world.

Thoughts of the car raced through Dick's mind as he felt himself being rapidly pushed along through the snow—an automatic pressed into the middle of his spine. Those blackguards would hold him to ransom, and once they had laid their hands on the Mystery Midget that super-car would be worth thousands to them.

He must think, and think rapidly, to get out of the trap that had been laid for him.

It was difficult work floundering along under the trees. Not a word had been uttered by his captor since he had received peremptory orders to march. Surely something—

Crack, crack!

The roar of an automatic resounded from the ridge above them and awoke the stillness of the frosty world. The boy's thoughts flew in a flash to its cause. Arkville! That must be his tall, slim employer out to rescue him, and those shots in the distance were a vivid warning

to his captor. Dick turned his head to look behind him.

"Stop that!"

A voice had snarled the words in his ears. He felt himself being pushed on faster than ever.

"Keep moving, Stanford!"

Those were the orders. Dick knew that the villain was bent on reaching the vast woods which covered a large part of Benton Park. Once there—but Dick resolutely kept his thoughts from that possibility.

Crack, crack!

The roar of the automatic was nearer now. Then to his astonished ears came the purr of a small electric motor. Great Caesar! Whatever could that be moving over the white wastes of snow? Nothing on wheels, of that he could be sure. It must be some new invention from the magnetic brain of his employer, some fresh idea being put to the use of his rescue.

Nearer and nearer came the noise. It was now proceeding from the boy's left, up on the snowclad ridge which hung

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Attacked by a Tank!

Dick and Arkville trapped in a cottage, with
a tank lurching ominously towards them!

above them. He managed to squint out of the corner of his eye, and a wonderful sight met his gaze.

Racing along a small patch which crested the ridge was Cyrus J. Arkville. On the American's feet were a pair of skis. But the wonder of it was that those skis were mechanical. Tiny runners played their part in forcing the millionaire inventor along at a great rate; on his back was a portable electric motor from which he derived his power.

In an instant Dick realised his employer's intention. The American would turn very soon and then come charging down to cut them off at the little bridge spanning a small ravine which now came into Dick's range of vision just ahead of them.

His captor must have realised this at the same moment, for an angry snarl broke from his lips.

Would Arkville do it—would he get there in time? It would be touch and go, for on the other side of the bridge lay the dark and thickly-treed woods, in which it would be difficult for anyone to follow. Dick hastily judged the distance with his eye. The American was turning now, poised for his leap.

In one terrific flash Dick realised that the distance was too great. He himself must do something, even with that automatic wedged in his ribs.

They were at the bridge now, and Arkville, like a roaring bullet, was still fifty yards away from them. A few seconds' respite must be got, thought Dick. Suddenly he stopped dead in his tracks. For just the split second that was necessary, his captor was thrown off his guard by the boy's movement, and Dick dropped like a stone.

With a roar of rage the man threw himself on the boy.

Quickly Dick struggled to his feet and closed with him. To and fro they swayed in a crushing embrace. The man in his anger had apparently forgotten his weapon, for he made no effort to use it. But Dick felt himself being forced nearer and nearer the frail rail of the bridge.

Crash!

The rail gave way under their swaying bodies. For one awful moment Dick hung over the ravine in a sickening attitude.

But there was a rush of tearing wind and flying snow as Arkville took the bridge. A snatch—and Dick felt himself flung down on to the boards in safety. His head hung over the edge of the bridge and his astonished eyes saw the figure of his captor twisting and turning in the air, till it disappeared with a shivering smash into the icy, tumbling waters below.

CHAPTER 2.

The Terrifying Magnets!

"**S**AY, sonny, that was a cute thing to have done, tackling that guy. Couldn't have made the get-away if you hadn't!"

They were sitting in Arkville's library, gratefully sipping hot drinks after their adventure at the bridge, and the American was commenting on the matter.

"But you did all the work, sir!" Dick answered. "Those skis fairly shot along under you."

"Not a bad pair of shoes, I reckon!" was the millionaire's smiling comment.

"It's going to be a real merry Christmas, sir," the boy grinned, "with the Wrecker as our visitor."

"Sure thing! That big tough is certainly some trier!"

Arkville spoke in his characteristically clipped tones, twisting and turning his cigar in his mouth all the time. Both of them knew that their implacable enemy would leave no stone unturned to lay his hands on the Mystery Midget.

"Yes, sir," the inventor went on, "that big boy's a swift mover! Any grass that grows under his feet must be made of asbestos!"

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"And you still don't know who he is, sir?" the boy queried.

"Have never got a line on him at all, sonny—I reckon he doesn't even cast a shadow."

"We'll give him a merry Christmas if he keeps near us!" the boy laughed, in answer.

"That goes well with me, sonny! Guess we'll go right around and have a look at the Mystery Midget he's so keen on. If he only knew the secret of her little engine he'd go plumb crazy with delight."

As they made to leave the library, Hoult, Arkville's American butler, entered the room. Dick felt the man's eyes boring him through and through like gimlets. He was a mystery to the boy—a nut which Dick meant to crack one day.

"Nickerson would like to speak to you, sir!" the butler said, addressing Arkville.

"Nickerson? What's worrying him?" queried the millionaire.

"He wants Christmas leave, I think, sir," came the reply, in the butler's usual calm tones.

"Right, I'll see him!" Arkville answered. Then, turning to Dick, he continued: "Get ahead, sonny! I'll be right around soon."

Dick went down the long corridor and through to the garages.

"I wonder why Nickerson wants to go away so suddenly?" he pondered to himself. "He was one of the mechanics who volunteered to stay here for Christmas. My hat!" The boy suddenly smacked his left fist into his right palm. "He's one of the guard on the Mystery Midget!"

The short winter's afternoon had faded away, but a glorious moon lit the countryside.

"It's going to be a topping Christmas!" thought Dick, as he stepped into the shadow of the big garage which housed the wonder car.

Whee-ee-ee!

Dick instinctively threw himself on the ground and hugged the snow as he heard the strange sound. There was a terrific thud on the doors overhead. Cautiously he looked up. Stuck in the wood of the doors, still shivering from its murderous flight, was a whacking great knife!

"Thundering stars!" thought Dick. "The Wrecker

is certainly 'some mover.'"

Slowly the boy crawled through the shadows and carefully tried the door. It was unlocked. Had the villains attained their object? Treading like a cat, Dick quickly slipped through the small gap he made as he gently prised open the portals.

Inside was complete darkness. Something was radically wrong, for the garage should have been ablaze with light.

"H'm!" Dick mused. "This is going to be a great time. Pulling chestnuts out of the fire will be a kid's game to this!" He grinned quietly to himself. "Well, here goes! It's all in the game!"

Feeling his way across the black interior, his hands spread out in front of him, Dick held his breath in trembling excitement. At every other step he halted and listened intently, every nerve strung to concert-pitch.

But not a sound could be heard save the low hum of the dynamo in the workshop next door. That dynamo supplied the power to many lathes and machines, and also provided the light, which should have been full on at that moment.

His keen senses told him that no one was there, but, nevertheless, there was danger—terrible danger—all around him. From what direction it would come he could not tell, but the very air about him seemed laden with unseen menace.

The garage was as dark as a tomb, the closely clamped shutters allowing not a chink for the moonlight outside

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to filter through. Another step—then another. With one foot poised, Dick suddenly halted dead in his tracks.

It was here! The danger was absolutely close at hand, waiting with terrible impassiveness for him to step into the trap. His eyes tried vainly to pierce the darkness. Suddenly he spotted a dim little light, and his quick brain took in its import in a flash. The light came from the tell-tales on the switchboard of the dynamo! The door connecting the garage with the workshop must be open, and whoever had hooded the switchboard had not been quite effective in his work.

It was from that dynamo that danger would come to the Mystery Midget!

Quick as lightning, Dick dashed to the electric-light switches by the inner doors. He must see what he was doing. In a second both the garage and the workshop were as bright as day. The boy's eyes flew to where the super-car should stand. It was safe, thank goodness!

But his gaze was drawn instinctively to something over his head, as a guttural snarl came to his ears from outside. And what he saw nearly froze his heart.

For running along from the workshop to a spot above where the Mystery Midget stood, was a row of bright solid magnets.

Just underneath, and at that moment passing through the open connecting doors was a heavy iron weight, suspended as if by magic in the air.

It was Arkville's new magnetic-control being put to terrible and evil work. Dick had to act, and act quickly. There were no wires to cut, no visible means of staying that thunderbolt in its slow and inevitable career. In a few seconds it would be poised over the Mystery Midget. A snap of the switch controlling the electric current by the miscreant outside, and the magnets would give up their power.

Down would come that weight on to the super-car, destroying at one devastating blow the arduous labour of months and all hopes of another great invention benefiting the world.

The dynamo! He must stop it before that weight reached its destiny. Quick as a flash Dick had caught up a heavy spanner. Straight and true the tool, from the strong, supple wrist, flew to its goal. Would it fall helplessly on to the heavy flywheel of the engine, or would it—

Crash!

Like an avenging arrow the heavy weapon smashed home true; and the delicate machinery stopped on the instant.

Dick leapt for his life as the weight above his head, by pure force of gravity, crashed down on the concrete floor. But the Mystery Midget was safe.

Like a greyhound released, the boy sprang for the door. He was through it in a second as a masked figure outside raised its arm. Dick flung himself on the snow, and the murderous blow that struck him missed a vital part; but even as he fell to the ground he grinned faintly and murmured:

"Well, that's the second cracker out of the fire, anyway!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Paralysing Ray!

A LONG the hard, frostbitten road, the next day, Dick pushed along the racing Bentley at top speed. It was Christmas Eve, and Arkville and he were on a desperate mission. For the Mystery Midget had gone! How and where, neither of them knew. The Wrecker had changed his plans once more. Dick was

soon to learn why the villain had thrown aside his efforts at the destruction of the super-car.

"He must have got wind of that letter I got yesterday p.m.," said the American, as he twisted and turned his unlit cigar round and round in his mouth. "And that guy Nickerson is one of the gang," continued the inventor, clipping his words more fiercely than ever as he watched the road ahead with set lips.

"What was the letter, sir?" Dick queried.

"I've been officially asked to allow the Mystery Midget to represent this country in the International Junior," was the reply.

The International Junior! The greatest race of the year for small cars, and one which every country in the world strove to win.

"Great bohunkus!" exclaimed Dick, his eyes shining with admiration.

"Sure! Great honour! The Wrecker's a go-getter! He'll get a pack of dough for that little auto if he can ship it abroad! And I've got to close on that offer by to-morrow!"

Christmas Day! Dick set his teeth as he drove. He'd get that little super-car back at all costs.



Crash! The sledge hit the log with a terrific smash, and Dick went sailing through the air!

"And we've nothing else to work on, sir?" asked the boy.

"No; only what I've put you wise to," was the short response. "When that little runt Nickerson tried to slug me in the library after you'd gone—"

The American paused as Dick neatly swung round a laden cart, which was being pushed along the road by cheery holly-gatherers. Not much festivities for them if they didn't get the Mystery Midget back in time.

"Nickerson spilt some beans about Sendersham backwater," the millionaire continued. "That's all I got, save the seat of his pants as he shot out of the window," he added, with a grim smile.

They were making for the Thames at that moment. Some clue must be found in that backwater. As that was all they had to work on they were smashing along to the river as fast as the Bentley would carry them.

Dick drew up in fine style at Arkville's private boathouse. Stepping inside eagerly, he ran his eye along the trim lines of the swift motor-boat, which, under the able supervision of Mold, the millionaire's stocky Yorkshire foreman, was already waiting for them in its little dock.

The boy blew on his fingers as he surveyed the ice which Mold had had to break to get the boat ready for the river.

"It's a jolly good job it's a sunny afternoon, sir!" he grinned to Arkville.

That taciturn man nodded in reply as they both sprang aboard. Dick carefully steered the boat out through the broken ice into mid-stream. Running bank-high as it was in this wintry weather, the Thames was still navigable in

the middle of its course, though its edges were thick with ice coverings.

"This ain't going to be a cinch, I guess!" the inventor remarked as he surveyed the swift waters.

Dick laughed in reply, for the clean swiftness of the motor-boat thrilled him through and through as they laid their course for Sendersham backwater. The river and its banks were deserted at this time of the year, and as the keen wind sang round his ears, he opened out, and the prow of the powerful boat cut the water like a knife.

What sort of clue would be held by the strip of water they were now on their way to visit? And would the Wrecker ever let them get there? The boy was pondering over this when he felt a touch on his arm.

"Someone's on our trail!" came the tense whisper from Arkville. "Just give that boat behind the once-over, will you, sonny?"

Dick cast a rapid glance over his shoulder. Coming up in their wake was another powerful craft, and, crouched in the bows, he could just discern a figure humped over the wheel.

The Wrecker! And he must have guessed that they would take this course. Rapidly Dick notched over the controls, but soon brought them back, for in this narrow

As Dick back-fired his engine purposely, a shout of exultation came from his pursuer, which increased as Dick's engine suddenly stopped and the motor-boat began to lose way.

Near to the entrance to the short canal which led to the lock, Dick started up again, and, instead of heading straight on, suddenly shot out into the weir channel. The enemy boat, which was just behind them, swung round as the masked figure in it gave its wheel an angry twist, and smashed along in their wake.

Dead at the weir Dick headed his boat. In that maelstrom of waters he had to judge his distance to an inch. Out of the corner of his eye he saw their pursuer lift up his hand. But the devilish weapon in it never exploded, for Arkville, pointing his mysterious black case straight at the villain, switched on his wonderful Paralyzing Ray.

There was a scream of rage from the man, and the weapon dropped from his nerveless fingers as the magnetic ray came into full action. But he was, as the millionaire had always said, "a tough guy." Dropping into the bottom of the boat out of their range of vision, he still steered with his other hand.

Round the boats tore in that flurry of waters by the weir. "That block, sir!" yelled Dick.

School Ghosts!

By Bernard Glyn.

(The Inventor of the Shell.)

ST. JIM'S has no ghost. There have been many stories about the alleged ghost at St. Jim's; but on the authority of Dr. Holmes I understand there is no real truth in them. Compared with Greyfriars or Rookwood, St. Jim's is quite a modern building, and there is no ghostly monk or prior to flit about the corridors.

Whether or not there really are such things as ghosts is a matter of opinion. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy," as Shakespeare says. Personally I do not see why there shouldn't be ghosts as well as any other marvellous things in Nature.

Schools, all over the country, seem the happy hunting-ground of ghosts. The great majority of our big Public schools have ghosts connected with them.

Oxford and Cambridge have quite a bunch of spooks between them. Queen's College, Oxford, was supposed to be haunted by one of its scholars who died suddenly one night—a fellow named John Bonnell. At Oxford, also, a horrible monstrosity is supposed to walk about the courts at night—a human being without eyes, nose, or mouth, who appears only every seventy years. I don't know of anyone who has seen the thing.

Cambridge has a child ghost—a little

boy who wanders aimlessly about moaning gently—though I believe he is seen only in Trinity College. There are quite a number of other ghosts at the Universities. Maybe they are aristocratic ghosts, who feel they ought to have a University education.

Eton has a ghost, of course. It is a soldier, who is supposed to wander about the playing-fields. There is a story connected with him. He made a promise, when alive, to return after

death to Eton and visit another Army officer, who was a friend of his. Perhaps he is still looking for him.

Westminster School is haunted by the leader of a band of Puritans who attacked the school in 1642 and was killed by a missile hurled by a school-boy there. This merchant—they call him "Wiseman, a Knight of Kent"—seems to be a frightful boulder.

Marlborough is situated close to Littlecote Hall, the scene of well-known tragic legend. Darrell, the chief figure in the legend, is reputed to gallop madly round and round Marlborough College, pursued by a baby in flaming fire. Not a nice sight, one imagines.

Many other school ghosts occur to me; but space forbids mentioning them. At Canterbury King's School, for instance, there is the ghost of Nell Cook, and Guildford Grammar School has its phantom horseman. I expect your school has its ghost. Have you ever seen it?

Tom Merry & Co. are going to see the St. Jim's ghost in the dormitory on the night we break up. Oh, I know I said there isn't a ghost at St. Jim's—but there's going to be. I know where it is. It's under my bed, and it looks like a frame of wire gauze and a pot of phosphorus paint. The Shell are booked for a good old shock very soon.



fairway speed could hardly be increased. It was no use trying to visit Sendersham backwater with the Wrecker on his track. He must get rid of him somehow.

"Can't get away from him on this little ocean," said Arkville. "But just keep showing your tail. And get your brain busy, sonny," he smiled.

Then Dick had a great idea. Quickly he turned to his employer.

"I'm going to slow down gradually, sir, to lure him on," he informed his companion.

"Yes?" came the clipped question.

"That case you have in your pocket, sir," Dick continued.

Without a word Arkville whipped out a small black case from his pocket.

"Good for you, boy—make for port," was his only comment.

Dick acknowledged his instructions with a grin. "Port" meant the lock ahead, and that was shooting towards them from out of the distance.

"I'll get him near the weirs, sir, and then perhaps we can crash him. I'm going to stall now," the boy said.

"Right, sonny," the inventor replied. "This little gadget," and he tapped the case he held in his hand, "will stop any funny business, I hope."

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They must stop their tenacious pursuer somehow.

Instantly Arkville understood. On one of the seats lay a large piece of timber. Quickly he lifted it up in his strong hands.

All depended on Dick now. The other boat was very near to them, its helmsman peering over the coaming from time to time to keep direction. If the boy was one inch out of his reckoning the terrific pull of the racing waters would land them with a sickening crash on the ironwork of the massive weir gates, and they would be lucky to escape with their lives.

The enemy boat suddenly made a flying leap towards them as it increased its speed.

"Now, sir!"

Dick put all the force of his youthful lungs into that shout.

Over went his wheel, and the boat strained at the terrifying pull of the stream as it bore them remorselessly nearer and nearer to the weir.

It was touch and go. He saw Arkville fling the timber with all his might, saw the other helmsman tear madly at his wheel, and felt rather than heard the shock as the bows of the enemy craft caved in as they hit the timber full and square.

Inch by inch Dick forced the boat away to safety, fighting hard against the strong current. The last sight of their pursuer was of him clinging to the ironwork of the weir, whilst his boat, upturned in the rushing waters, lay helpless—and the pursuit was over.

CHAPTER 4.

The Mechanical Monster!

DICK'S keen eyes, as they negotiated Sundersham Creek, soon spotted a path that lay concealed in the undergrowth of the bank. He quickly brought the motor-boat to the bank, and the ice cracked and split as he forced the bows in as far as he could.

Soon they were ashore and pushing their way into the woods, the branches of the trees, stiff and laden with snow, impeding their progress at every step. Suddenly the boy stopped.

"Why, sir," he exclaimed in astonishment, "this wood is in Benton Park. We must be on the right track."

Heartened by their discovery, they pushed along at a faster rate. The trail must be leading them near home.

A touch on his arm brought Dick to a halt. Arkville was leaning forward, listening intently.

"Thought I heard someone about!" he whispered to Dick.

Eerie and quiet, the woods stretched all around them under their cover of snow. Their feet snapped the dry sticks at each tread, and Dick felt his breath come quicker and quicker. They were near to their enemy's haunt now, of that they felt quite sure.

It was all too quiet for the boy's liking, for he felt that from each step must spring some hidden trap. For instance, this little clearing, as it stretched to their right and left, looked too mechanical. Suddenly he yelled with all his might:

"Jump, sir!"

For Arkville's foot had that moment struck the hidden spring which Dick had been dreading. Crashing down on to them was a large tree. It came at them like a thunderbolt released, and—steel-covered, as they later found out—it crashed to the ground on the very spot where a second previously their bodies had stood.

Nothing could have saved them if that terrible engine of destruction, coming silently out of the quiet world, had caught them unawares.

The Wrecker's silent sentries kept his secret haunts well guarded, thought Dick grimly. But they must be on the right track now!

Then things really happened, and they made Dick remember that Christmas Eve for many a long day to come. As he tore along the track deeper into the woods, following his employer's footsteps, a terrific roar came to his ears. They had reached a little clearing, in which stood a small cottage.

It was from the back of that cottage that the deafening sound was coming; and from round the corner of it appeared an enormous mass of moving machinery, bearing down upon them at an uncanny rate. It was a tank—a tank in the heart of Benton Park!

Dick and his employer remained rooted to the spot, fascinated by the awe-inspiring sight which met their eyes. From a small door by the driving-seat of the tank came the vicious snap of a gun.

"The cottage, sir!" shouted Dick.

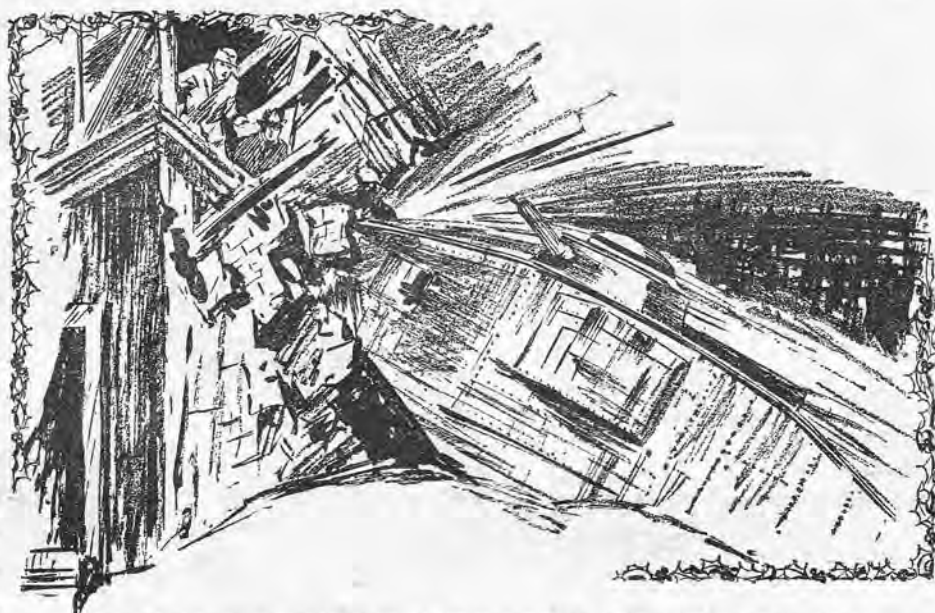
It was their only chance. Like hares they streaked towards it. They ran with all their might, for, with marvellous precision, the roaring monster curved in its tracks, flattening trees and bushes as if they were pancakes.

Only by the skin of their teeth did the two reach the open door of the building. The tank slewed round, but they heard it turning once more for the attack.

"Up the stairs, sir!" yelled the boy.

"What the—!" began Arkville.

"Your little black case, sir," Dick interrupted breathlessly, as they raced up the short flight of stairs. "Have you got it?"



Below Dick and Arkville the tank hit the corner of the cottage with a terrific thud!

"Yes. What's the big idea, sonny?" came the clipped words in eager response.

"Window—get on top of tank—paralyse driver's arm if we can!" gasped Dick in answer, unconsciously imitating his employer's well-known manner.

Arkville's eyes gleamed with admiration, but there was no time for speech. They ripped back the first window they came to in desperate haste, for the roar of those mighty engines was practically upon them.

Crash!

Like the charge of a herd of elephants the tank hit the corner of the cottage below them with a terrific thud. Showers of bricks and woodwork fell all around their ears, but without hesitation they both leapt. Clutching and tearing at the cold steel of the top of the monster they both hung on like grim death.

Using finger-nails and toes like an aborigine, Dick, with Arkville's black case gripped in his hand, clambered forward along the swaying roof.

There was a terrified scream as, the driver leaning out to fire, received the full force of the ray, which paralysed every nerve and sinew in his arm. A terrible lurch came from the mass of steel beneath them, and the next instant they were flying through the air to the ground.

They saw the tank, its mighty engines now no longer under control, crash into the cottage and smash it to smithereens; and, lurching and swaying, continue its mad career until it disappeared from their sight into the depths of the snow-covered forest.

CHAPTER 5.

The Frozen Lake!

"GUESS we're having a fine Christmas, sonny—a regular old-fashioned one!" said Arkville wryly, as he rose from the ground.

"I have known quieter ones, sir," grinned Dick in reply. "I'd rather have that tank on my side in a scum than as it was to-day," he added, with a laugh, as he shook off the snow of the drift into which they had fortunately fallen.

They gazed at the wreckage of the cottage, and then opened their eyes wide. Beside the building, behind two doors once solid and impregnable, but now hanging smashed and broken on their hinges, stood the Mystery Midget, unharmed and untouched. Tiny and compact, its brilliant lines gleaming in the evening light, it was the very embodiment of grace and perfection—a super-speed car in miniature, and the secret of which any foreign competitor would give his eyes and ears to possess.

"Got to get her home. Set my heart on having her corralled safe and sound before Christmas Day," remarked Arkville. "I guess the tank was used to make tracks for the Wrecker to stage his get-away with the little auto," he added, as he gazed with pride upon his marvellous invention.

"That was Nickerson in the tank, sir," the boy informed

Some Christmas Games!

By Monty Lowther

(The Humorist of the Shell.)

HUNT THE SLIPPERER.

THIS is a very amusing pastime. It is played as follows: One member of the party—unknown to the others—hides himself in a very dark corner of the passage—the darker the better. Sooner or later another guest will come that way, and the fellow waiting behind the corner must hit him right on top of the nose with a slipper.

The game of "Hunt the Slipperer" now starts in real earnest so far as the slipped one is concerned, and the one who did the slipping should make himself as scarce as possible—for his own sake. If he is caught, he bags a hiding, and he can reckon that he has lost the game.

FOUR-FITS.

This is a good game when the party is becoming bored. The player must procure an exceedingly loud-banging toy pistol, and must sneak up behind the other guests and fire the pistol just by their ears. If he can do this to four consecutive fellows without being caught, he has won the game. It would be as well, however, if he made himself as scarce as possible afterwards.

POSTMAN'S SHOCK.

This is also very good. The guest

taking the part of the postman must find a large stick and creep cautiously out of the house. He then gives an imitation of a postman's knock on the door. As soon as the person inside answers the door, the player must hit him a dull thud on the boko with his stick. It is very amusing to watch the shock that ensues.

However—to eliminate any rowdy element in the game—the hitter should

make himself as scarce as possible afterwards.

BLIND MAN'S BLUFF.

This is very amusing indeed, and always causes roars of laughter. A player is blindfolded in the usual way, and another player—who is called the "Informer"—takes him by the hand and, leading him to the pantry, locks him in.

The Informer now goes to the owner of the house and informs him that "old so-and-so is in the pantry, pinching the mince-pies." This makes the householder angry, and he immediately repairs to the pantry.

The fun begins when the blind man tries to bluff the angry gentleman into believing that he is entirely innocent. It is very laughable to hear his lame excuses; but it would be as well if the Informer made himself as scarce as possible afterwards.

These are all very good games; but it must be distinctly understood that I don't want to take part in them this Christmas. I warn you that, if I get a slipper on my nose or a pistol behind my ear, I have several other original games, all equally good, and I shall proceed to play them on my own. 'Nuff said.



THE MYSTERY MIDGET!

(Continued from previous page.)

the millionaire. "I recognised him as he leant out. I wonder where he is now?"

"Swimming Sendersham backwater, I guess. But those guys are tough, and a bath wouldn't do any of them any harm," replied Arkville, with sardonic humour.

"Shall we get her home, sir?" Dick asked. "The moon's all right, and there must be a track by which they brought her up."

"That goes big with me, boy," the inventor replied. "And if the Wrecker tries to stop us he'll get what's coming to him!"

Dick was soon sitting at the wheel of the little car and viewing with admiration the numerous gadgets on her dashboard. The marvellous engine, of a new type known only to Arkville, awoke to life under his touch, and Dick laid her on the path for home at a moderate speed.

To his astonishment, a mile or two farther on he struck

the inventor's private racing-track, which led to Benton Manor.

As the three-mile-long, oval stretch of prepared surface suddenly appeared under his wheels, he gave a whoop of joy; and under the now brilliant moonlight, notched over the throttle to give the little car its head.

"Guess this is where the Wrecker may put up his final funny stuff, sonny!" Arkville's crisp words reminded him.

Setting his teeth grimly, the boy swung the Mystery Midget into the straight for home. Away in the distance lay Benton Manor, but in that fateful mile that lay between them and it anything might happen.

And happen it did! For from the edge of the track ahead of them came the roar of a super-racing car. Straight as an arrow it zoomed down the track, hurtling its massive weight dead at them. The Wrecker was playing his final card!

But Dick held his ground. It was no use trying to turn. Speed! That was what he wanted—speed for manoeuvring. He opened the throttle of the little super-car to its fullest extent, and that wonderful new engine responded as no "baby" car had ever done before.

By the merest coat of paint he adroitly avoided the head-on crash, but realised he could not hold his own in speed against that racer as it turned round and continued the pursuit. His thoughts chased each other through his brain like lightning. He must shake off his pursuers.

The lake! That was it!

The car behind them was practically on their heels as Dick, with a sharp swing of his wheel, suddenly left the track and plunged along a gravelled drive. Bumping and roaring along the narrow path, the two cars charged.

The lake lay ahead. Would the ice on it bear the weight of even his little car, thought the boy? Before he had time to work out the problem the Mystery Midget was sliding and slipping along the ice. He felt the surface dip and sway under him, but it held, and that was all he wanted.

From behind him came a roar of rage as the heavy racer crashed through the ice as if it were a wafer.

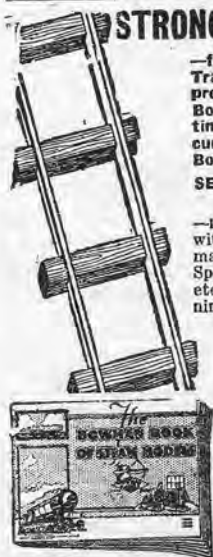
"The Wrecker'll have you yet!" came the snarl to their ears as they shot across the lake to the safety of the other side.

"A real Christmas, sir!" laughed Dick, as he joyously slapped the sides of the marvellous little car. "And some skating to-morrow!" he added, with another grin.

"Guess you're happy, eh, sonny?" queried his employer. "Surest thing you know, boss!" the boy replied, as they set out for home.

THE END.

(In addition to the usual programme next week, there will be a snappy complete story, entitled "Red Pepper. It's hot!")



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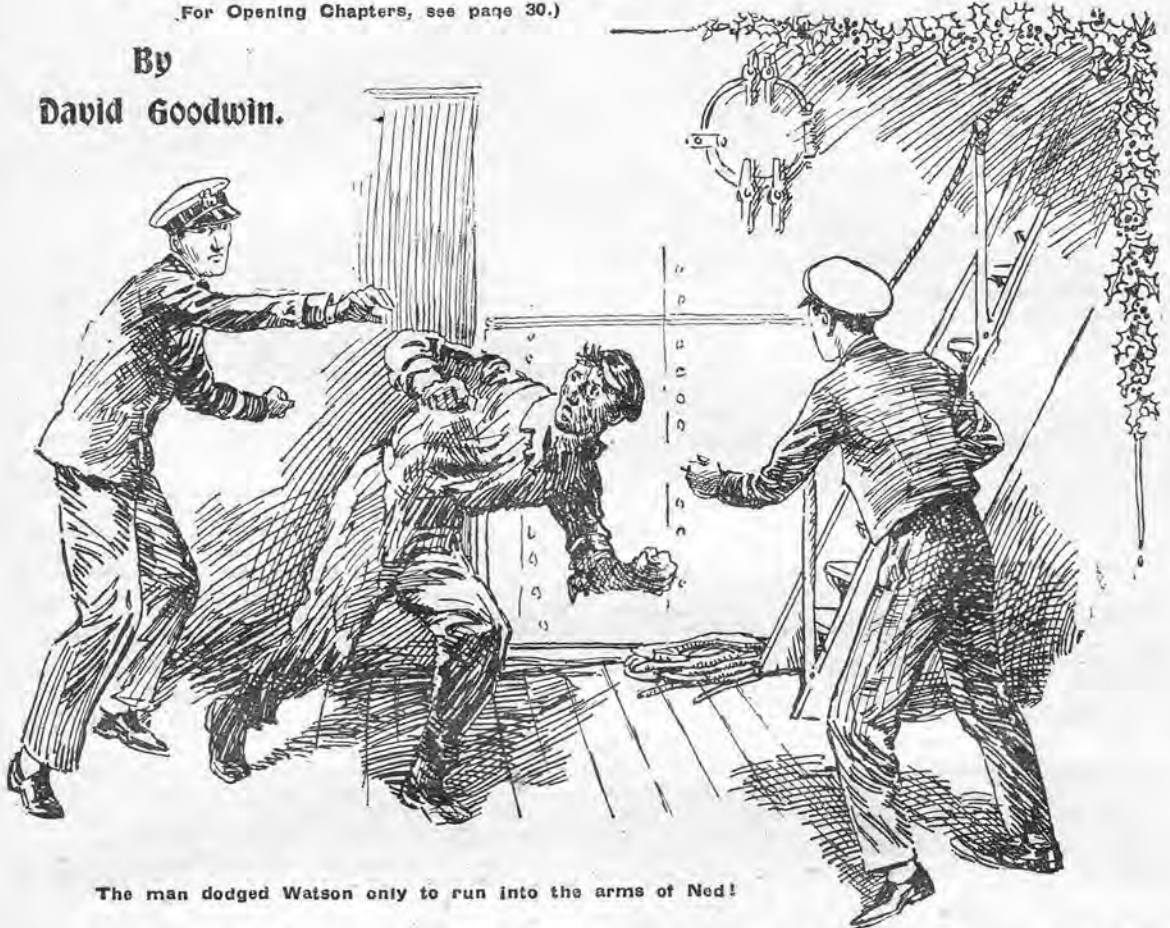
OUR SPLENDID YARN OF THE ROYAL NAVY!

The Fighting Middy!

(For Opening Chapters, see page 30.)

By

David Goodwin.



The man dodged Watson only to run into the arms of Ned!

The Only Occupant!

NED, now that the strain and stress was over, and the danger past, felt a great nausea come over him; the scene seemed to swim in front of his eyes, and he swayed where he stood. He clutched a stanchion for support. As the dinghy came up rapidly, however, a hail from the officer in charge of it reached Ned and roused him. He pulled himself together.

"There's one of them left on the yacht! Look out for him!" cried a voice from the dinghy, and then an astonished cry came from the speaker as he noticed Ned's uniform. "Why, it's a snottie! What are you doing there?"

"I'm in charge!" called out Ned. "All the beggars have scuttled."

"Are you all right there?" "Right as rain!" said Ned.

"Sit tight, then!" was the reply. "We've got to go after those chaps. Give way there, men! Pull for the spit!"

The dinghy was a collapsible one of the largest type, and carried six men beside her officer, and she ran straight for the nearest landing-place. The bluejackets tumbled out and ran up the long spit of mud, led by their officer. Ned saw two of them stop to examine the fallen Dimitri and the yacht's skipper; but the rest held on at full speed and disappeared inland in search of the fugitives. They were gone a long time, and at last four of them came back with their leader, bringing in the dinghy the bodies of the skipper and Dimitri. The officer, who was a young sub-lieutenant commanding the torpedo-boat, quickly boarded the stranded yacht with two of his men, leaving the boat alongside.

"The others have got away for the present, but it seems we've got the most important ones. The yacht's ours, anyhow," said the sub-lieutenant, and he stared wonderingly at Ned. "Who on earth are you?"

"Midshipman Hardy of the Victorious."

"The dickens you are. But what are you doing here? That's what I want to know."

The sub's tone was peremptory, and Ned, who now felt himself to be on his own quarter-deck instead of a gun-room junior, drew himself up.

"I beg your pardon," he said stiffly. "This vessel is my prize, and er—in the name of the Fleet, I hand her over to your charge to be taken to port."

He was not quite sure if he had said the right thing, but the torpedo-boat's commander stared at him with suddenly increased respect, and then laughed.

"Cheer-ho, Snottie! You're quite right," he said. "I'll take charge of your prize—officially. I didn't know you were in command, but, of course, I'm your senior, you know. Sub-Lieutenant Watson is my name, commanding torpedo-boat No. 009. How did you get aboard her?"

"I was in the Victorious picket-boat when they cut us down, and I got hold of their gear. They took me aboard and were going to sorag me; they'd have done it, only you turned up and they had to beach her. They shut me up below, but I got out by good luck. I'm jolly grateful to you for being pulled out of the mess, I can tell you!"

"By jove, you're a young marvel," said the surprised

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Ned Hardy Captures a Prize-Packet!

Destroyer Arrives in Time. Head of Spy-gang captured!

sub-lieutenant. "It must have been hot work aboard with that set of brutes, and you were lucky to have come out of it with a whole skin."

"Are those men dead in the boat?" asked Ned, with a sudden qualm, for death had never before come in his way. "One is the spy, Dimitri."

"The man in the skipper's cap is. I had orders to stop them at any risk, and after he'd shot the other fellow I ordered my bowman to fire. You say the other's a spy? He's got a pistol-bullet in his head, but he's alive, though unconscious. I'm no surgeon, but I should say he'll live. You look a bit white, youngster. It was an ugly thing to see, but you need waste no pity on that ruffian after the way he shot the other chap down. By what I can see they're all scoundrels together."

"There's no doubt about that," said Ned grimly. "Yes, he asked for what he got. And I'd have been food for fishes by the morning if you hadn't turned up. Any chance of catching the others?"

"They've made their escape for the present, I'm afraid. Who were the men that got away?"

Ned told him all he could. The sub-lieutenant whistled.

"We've got the most important ones, it seems," he said. "The others must have been only the yacht's crew, and as it's no use my men chasing them about the country all night, I've given warning to the flotilla, and the police will be after the other beggars, too. I've got to get back with this pair and the yacht. She'll float soon; the tide's rising fast, and I'll take her in tow. We'd better look over her."

Ned went below at once with Watson. He had quite pulled himself together again, and was eager to learn something of the sinister vessel that had so nearly put a finish to his career. They descended the companion-way, and Ned's fellow-officer entered the port door just in front. Suddenly there was a rush, a scuffle, and a cry.

"Look out!" shouted the sub-lieutenant. "Stop him!" A man came darting out of the door, dodging Watson's clutch by a sharp dive under his arm, but ran straight into Ned's grip, who closed with him at once and hung on like grim death. Watson dashed to his aid, and they pinned the man, panting, against the companion-stairs and secured him.

The Fireman!

"**H**AVE a care with him," exclaimed the torpedo-boat lieutenant, as the prisoner struggled frantically, and then suddenly collapsed. "The chap's as slippery as an eel! Shove the hatch-slide farther back, Hardy, and let's have a good look at him."

Ned did so, greatly surprised at finding anybody left on the yacht, which he had thought was quite deserted. They had a good look at their captive, who was now in a dismal state of fright.

"Why, he's a stoker!" said Ned. "He's had a rare old welt over the head, by the look of him."

The man was dressed in blackened dungaree clothes such as ships' firemen wear, and the perspiration of the struggle had cut rivers through the coal dust that lay on his face. The whites of his eyes shone in uncanny contrast to it as he stood panting in the sub-lieutenant's capable grip.

"Who are you?" said Watson. "Russian by your voice. Another Bolshie spy, I'll bet. What were you doing below there?"

The man made no answer, but looked from one to the other furtively. Watson, who was a good hand at Russian, repeated his question in that language, but the captive would not reply. He kept his blackened lips shut, and remained obstinately dumb, seeming not to understand.

"Go in and see if he's been up to any mischief in there," said Watson to Ned. "Look into the engine-room and see if steam's been blown off."

Ned did so, but found nothing to report except that the valves were open and that there was no steam available.

Still the man refused to give an account of himself. He was obviously one of the yacht's company, and they could not understand why he had been left behind.

"Bring him up on deck," said Watson, surrendering the

captive to Ned's charge, and leading the way up the companion ladder.

The Russian, offering no further resistance, limply allowed himself to be taken with them. He reached the deck and looked round him like a hunted animal.

The captive's eyes fell on Watson's bluejackets armed with rifles, and he saw the two quiet figures that lay in the dinghy alongside. He turned as white as the coal dust would let him, and, with a shriek of mercy, fell on his knees on the deck-planks and grovelled before Watson. He evidently thought he was going to be executed forthwith, and that the torpedo men were the firing party.

"Poor beggar," said Ned, and hoisted the man to his feet. "He's off his head with funk. Stand up, man! Nobody's going to hurt you, unless you've already earned a noose."

"I make no harm—I make no harm!" shrieked the prisoner. "Let me go."

"You had better answer up and explain yourself quickly," said Lieutenant Watson. "Speak up, man! Where do you come from? You can talk English, so don't sham stupid!"

"I tell you," gulped the prisoner. "I tell you all I know! It isn't much! You will spare my life, mister! I am only a fireman on this ship, and I wish I never seen her. I got on her at Rotterdam!"

"Where?" said Watson sharply.

"At Rotterdam, mister—it is the truth! I belong to Kronstad in Russia, and was at Rotterdam without money or a job. The mate of this ship, he offered me a fireman's berth at forty guilders a week—"

"Forty guilders! Four pounds a week for a fireman!" said Watson incredulously, for he knew six pounds a month is the ordinary pay. "You'd better tell the truth, man, for your own sake!"

"It is the truth, mister. I was to get that pay to keep my mouth shut and to do whatever I was bid. They say there might be risk. I did not care. I was starving. I was to ask no questions; they told me nothing. They were short of a fireman, and I have had to work very hard. They took me aboard her, and we sailed the same night. That was two days ago."

"Go on!" said Watson abruptly, as the man paused.

"I know nothing more of what we did, mister. They not allow me on deck, and I could not tell where we were. I only know that we sink a vessel last night. Then we had to steam very hard, and there was firing, and the skipper, he ran the yacht ashore. There was word passed round that when she was beached we must all leave her quick and escape—run away!"

"Why didn't you leave with the others?"

"When the ship struck the ground I got knock on head, and rolled under the fore-gratings. I knew no more than that there was some firing outside and noises of men fighting. Then I came to just now and went to cabin, thinking I would have to pay for what the crew had done, who had all run away. I tried to escape when you came. They did not know I was there. They were bad men, mister, and I wish I had never seen this ship. I get no pay, either. That is all I know, so true as I live!"

Ned looked at the man with something like pity. He was probably only a fool in the hands of worse men.

Lieutenant Watson heard him out.

"Take charge of this prisoner!" he said to two of his men. "Search him for weapons, and keep him under arrest. If he gives any trouble, bind him till we get back aboard!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"You will not shoot me, mister?" gasped the prisoner wildly as the brawny bluejackets took charge of him.

"Shoot you—no!" said Watson impatiently. "Come along, Hardy, let's finish our search over this vessel, and then we'll get out of this as quickly as we can. It's some Bolshie devilry, of course."

They made a rapid tour over the yacht, but found nothing of any importance. She seemed to have no papers. The only clue to her identity was the name—"Adler, Rotterdam"—in very small gold letters under her stern, which Ned knew meant "Eagle."

The search was soon ended, and they came on deck again.

"She's nearly afloat," said Watson, with satisfaction; for

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

MIDSHIPMAN NED HARDY, son of a line of sea captains, is appointed to the *Victorious*, the same ship from which his brother Ralph has been cashiered in connection with a robbery. Misfortune soon befalls the new snotty, for he is made the scapegoat of a plot to wreck the *British Navy*. Thanks to a warning note from Ralph, Ned succeeds in establishing his innocence. Shortly after this the young midshipman is put in charge of the first pinnace and ordered to proceed to Portsmouth to collect Dimitri, the spy who had so nearly ruined him. On the return journey, however, the pinnace is run down by a yacht manned by Dimitri's friends, and Ned is hauled aboard and made prisoner. Chased by a British torpedo-boat, the skipper runs the yacht ashore in the hope that he and his rascally crew will make good their escape overland. Dimitri, however, is trapped in the quicksand. Fearing he may squeal, the skipper fires point-blank at the spy, only to be brought down himself a moment later by one of the bluejackets from the destroyer.

(Now read on.)

the tide had risen rapidly, and the spit of mud was nearly covered. "There'll be water enough for my craft to come close in now, and we'll pull this bag of tricks off the ground and tow her home."

The other seamen had returned from their fruitless chase ashore, and were taken off the beach by the dinghy, after having given warning to the coastguard for the pursuit of the fugitives.

Ned was left in charge of the yacht with three seamen; and Watson, with his prisoner and the two fallen men, returned to the torpedo-boat, which had been left in charge of a warrant-officer.

The moon had risen now! There was plenty of light. The torpedo-boat steamed in slowly, heaving the lead to make sure of her water, and stopped close astern of the yacht, while a hawser was passed, by means of the dinghy close astern of the yacht, and made fast. With a little trouble the yacht was hauled off the mudbank and the hawser passed forward to her bows.

A prize crew of three men were left aboard the yacht, and she was taken in tow. Ned joined Watson on the torpedo-boat, and away they steamed for the Solent, the prize towing astern.

"A very nice little night's work," said Watson. "It'll do me good, though it's the queerest stunt I ever saw in my life, and it beats me yet."

"You knew you were after Dimitri then?"

"Never heard of him in my natural. I know nothing except what the signals told me, and what I've learned from you."

"The signals! How was it you came to my rescue then?"

"That's soon told. I was coming up the Solent, bound for Southampton. I saw there was something up. Pinnaces and launches were cutting about, and the Victorious was signalling for all she was worth. She wanted a torpedo-boat out from Portsmouth, it seemed."

"Well, there was I, the only one with steam up and ready, and the Victorious signalled me to clap on all speed and go after a black, two-masted steam-yacht that was trying to leave the Solent, and bring her back."

"I was off like one o'clock, and the battle cruiser signalled after me that I was to fire on the yacht if necessary; she must be stopped at any cost, and I must take particular care to nab her skipper and an escaped prisoner who was aboard her."

"Well, that was enough for me. My tiffles gingered up the engines, and we went along like a blue streak."

"We passed a pinnace farther on that had been sent in chase, but she hadn't speed enough to catch the runaway by long chalks. The sub in charge shouted out to me as we went by that the yacht was somewhere ahead, going hard. He said she'd cut down the Victorious picket-boat, and that one of the crew had just been picked up, and given the alarm."

"Ah!" exclaimed Ned. "You don't know if any of the rest of the crew were saved, do you?"

"Can't say. There was no time to hear any more, and we scooted ahead at a tremendous lick. The rest you know."

"Good enough!" said Ned. "The Navy's always on deck when it's wanted, and no mistake! I'm jolly glad things have turned out so well, because, you see, I was in charge of that spy, and I'd hate to have lost him, especially as there are no excuses taken on the Victorious. I suppose the poor brute is done for, and I'm rather sorry, though I've not much reason to grieve for him, seeing that he was going to make cold meat of me, when they got to sea. He'd got a down on me, you know, because I got him arrested."

"Yes, it looks as if those beasts meant to finish you off."

"I believe the idea was to tie a sinker on to my left leg and drop me gently overboard in forty fathoms, or something of that kind," said Ned; "but as it's missed fire there's no need to bother about it now. We've got three of them, including that scared person with the dirty face. I don't know what good he is."

"No. His story may be true, or it may not. If it isn't there doesn't seem much chance of learning a lot about this precious yacht and her errand, unless they catch some of those fellows who scooted ashore, and get it out of them. But three and the yacht isn't a bad bag for the evening."

"Ripping good! I only wish I knew—Hallo! There's a man-o'-war's launch coming down to meet us full pelt!" Ned added, as a large, smart-looking craft showed up in the moonlight from the direction of Spithead. "She's signalling us."

"It's the Victorious' launch, and she's got Captain Raglan aboard!" exclaimed the torpedo-lieutenant. "He's come down to take the job in hand and look into it. There are two destroyers behind, too, coming along like smoke. Well, they won't be wanted. We've done the work, Hardy, and the honours are ours! Slow down there, coxswain! Stop her and stand by for the launch!"

(For the concluding chapters of this powerful yarn see next week's GEM.)

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Happy Days Are Here Again! Let the Oracle have a Happy Christmas! He just loves answering questions. Try him with a few.

DIRECTLY I burst into the sanctum the other morning the old Editor burst into song. It was an old tune I used to know as a lad, and went somehow like this:

"Whiskers, whiskers, give me your answers do!
I've got queries, sent in just for you!
I can't afford to pay you.
In fact, now any day you
Might be in the street, out in the street,
In a packing-case labelled
"ZOO!"

When the old Ed. had sung that few a through times—I mean through a few times—I suggested that Adolph, our office-boy, might come in and play the band parts on the comb.

"That's quite enough of that, my lad!" snapped the Ed. "Get down to work, and answer these questions—if you can!" At this the Ed. pulled towards him a pile of letters and began to fire off questions at me. "What's Long Fives, Whiskers?" he snapped.

The old Ed. looked up with a gloating grin on his face, as much as to say: "That's caught you!" Much to his astonishment I proceeded to translate the postcard for him.

"That, sir," said I, "is from a Welsh reader. He says: 'I hope your health is good. Give an answer if you can to this question: "What do you know about the explosion at Llangwn?" Best remembrances, Reynold and Harold.'" "Well," said the Ed., "what about this explosion at—this place? Do you know anything about it?"

"Now I must confess that I was a bit baffled.

"Wait a minute, sir," said I. "That looks like a gas explosion to me. Llangwn, that's in Wales—no doubt there was a leak somewhere at the time."

"What sort of a leak?" growled the Ed.—"a gas leak?"

"Well, sir, I wasn't there," I answered, trembling slightly and clutching my whiskers and false teeth firmly between forefinger and thumb, "but

I thought for a moment.

"Long Fives, sir," I replied, "is a game played on a tennis court. The game is usually for eight points. The server gives three points to the striker-out. Perhaps I could give you a demonstration."

"And perhaps you couldn't!" shouted the Ed. "Let me see what you can make of this one: 'A wyl Oracle, Gobieth bod rech rechyd yn da!'"

It looks like a leak to me. You see, sir, the leak is very popular in Wales." I could see that I had awakened the Editor's interest, so I drew a deep breath, took one of his cigarettes, and continued: "The leak is a vegetable popular in Wales, and is allied to the onion. In Wales the expression 'to eat the leak' means to swallow some offensive remark, like you calling me a hairy old fossil, and so on."

"Look here," said the Ed., "do you know anything about this explosion at Llan—what's the place?—or don't you?"

"Of course I know something about it!" I retorted hotly, "but I'm not making a noise about it—that's been done already!"

"What type of engine do they use in motor-boats, Whiskers?" asked the Ed.

"Usually engines operating on petrol—the same, in general design, to the engines found on motor-cars. Sometimes paraffin engines are used, and for large yachts engines known as Diesel engines. But the motor of a motor-boat differs from that of a motor-car in one way—the speed is lower."

"Know anything about hedgehogs?" inquired the Editor suddenly.

"I should say I do, Ed.," I told him. "The hedgehog is covered in prickles, and if you sit on one it tickles. It's nice if it's roast, or served up on toast, with some gunpowder, pepper, and pickles."

"Do you know anything else about hedgehogs?" he bellowed.

"The hedgehog, sir," I said, "has four muscles beneath its skin which enable it to roll itself into a ball and erect the prickles on its body. It will eat mice, frogs, snakes, eggs—in fact, any old thing that comes along."

"Right, Whiskers," said the Editor; "that'll do for to-day!"

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