

£500 Reward!

By CECIL FANSHAW



in this rousing story of African adventure the pluck and resource of young Jerry Mason prove more than a match for two "wanted" diamond thieves!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Jerry Acts Swiftly!

"HOLD hard, Bart!" cried Jerry Mason excitedly. "What's that up there?"

At his young pal's shout, Bart Simmonds twisted in his seat at the wheel of the small motor-lorry, and stared up at the blue South African sky. He shaded his eyes with his hand, staring over the tin roof of the little trading-store, to see a black speck that grew rapidly larger and larger.

"It's not a vulture!" burst out Jerry.

"It's a 'plane, man," Bart drawled, with a laugh. "But what the deuce can it want out here, I wonder?"

Lean, sunburnt, and not easily excited, Bart was South African born, and called everyone "man"—colonial fashion. Red-cheeked Jerry, with whom Bart ran his

Kafir store and transport-riding business in this remote part of Cape Colony, was not long from England, and was always going off like a box of fireworks. Chockful of life and energy was Jerry.

There was reason, however, for Jerry's excitement, for the 'plane was suddenly seen to dip, then come roaring down straight for the store and its thatched out-buildings.

"It will get wrecked!" Jerry cried. "I bet the pilot takes that green swamp down there for sound turf."

"Man, you're right!" gasped Bart.

"Come on, then!" Jerry yelled. "We must signal the fellow, or he'll crash!"

Switching off, Bart leapt out of the lorry, and both lads raced down towards the treacherous, marshy "vlei," stared at by a group of stolid, ox-eyed Kafirs. They

yelled, whooped, and wildly brandished their hats, for they saw the 'plane prepare to land.

They could see the helmeted pilot, who plainly took the treacherous patch of green, surrounded by thorn scrub and boulders, for the best landing-ground. But their voices were drowned by the deafening roar of the 'plane's engine, and it seemed they were not observed.

"Crumbs! He'll crash!" Jerry yelled, in horror. "Not there! Not there! Land at the sheds!" he shouted, and frantically pointed towards the store sheds.

Both lads were aghast, for disaster seemed imminent. But abruptly Jerry stooped, snatched up a large rock, and hurled it with all his strength at the swamp.

Splash! Up shot a fountain of green ooze; then the lads were relieved to see the pilot wave his hand, to see him zoom up once more. A moment later he banked and planed down just in front of the store, and taxied, bumping over the stony ground, to a standstill.

"That was a very bright notion, my lad!" The pilot grinned, leaning down from his cockpit as Bart and Jerry raced up, panting. "I couldn't understand your antics, and sure took that swampy vlei for grass until you buzzed that rock in."

He was a smart-looking fellow, with a close-clipped moustache, and revealed a pair of shrewd grey eyes as he thrust his goggles up.

"Man, you nearly dived into ten foot o' duck weed!" said long Bart.

"I see that now, and I'm mighty grateful to your smart young pal," said the pilot. "But there's no time to lose. I'm Nichols—John Nichols, of the S.A. Police."

"Phew! We haven't pinched anything!" Jerry grinned cheekily.

"Ha, ha! I never said you had," laughed Nichols. "It's Joe Roberts I'm after—Diamond Joe, the boss of a gang o' diamond thieves, from the Namaqualand diggings. Joe and a pal lit out with about ten thousand pounds' worth of rough stones. They're believed to be afoot, and thought to be heading this way. Have any

suspicious-looking characters passed your store, fellows?"

"Only Kafirs," replied Bart, shaking his head.

"We've seen no white chaps for a week," added Jerry. "But what does Diamond Joe look like?"

"Tough, strong as an ox, and wears a black beard," replied Nichols crisply. "Since you've not seen him, I'll fly back over the bush and scour the country for him. There's a five hundred pounds reward offered for Joe and his pal, but don't try to tackle them, for they'll shoot without hesitation. If you get wind that they're about, take the news to the nearest police post as quick as blazes!"

"Right-ho!" cried Bart.

Bart and Jerry swung the 'plane's propeller, and a few minutes later they were staring after the machine as it rapidly dwindled to a black speck in the blinding blue sky, the pilot flying back in the direction whence he had come.

"We shall have to keep our eyes open for Diamond Joe, Bart," said Jerry.

"Yes; but I can't waste time hanging about here on the chance of Diamond Joe showing up," Bart said to Jerry. "I've got to pick up Pete Merwe's mealies and run 'em to the dorp. Then Evans wants stores up at his farm, so I'll make my return trip round through Springbok Drift. I guess I'll pass through that Drift on the way to Evans' place at about three o'clock, and be back here about dusk."

"O.K.," replied Jerry. "Leave the store to me. If Diamond Joe blows along, I'll sell the boulder some beads and blankets."

A few minutes later Bart clattered off in the shabby little lorry to convey Pete Merwe's mealies to a distant little town and from there to take a load of stores to the Evans farm, passing through a gap, known as Springbok Drift, in the hills on his roundabout return journey.

Bart did all the transport riding, while Jerry's job mainly was to run the store, selling Kafir truck to natives from the local villages.

"A mighty dull job this is sometimes,"

the high-spirited lad said to himself as he unlocked the tin-roofed building, before which a dozen Kafirs had squatted on their haunches. "What for you to-day, Candle? A pound o' copper wire? Here you are! No, Sixpence, I don't sell cartridges, guns, or dynamite, but here's a corking fine line in glass beads. No? Well, try our tinned fish and coloured blankets."

The business of the store proceeded, the cheery Jerry talking himself hoarse as he bargained with the Kafirs. He heartily wished, however, that something exciting would happen for a change. He little guessed how his wish was to materialise, and what unpleasant excitement was awaiting him!

Jerry paused for breath, and mopped his brow when his last batch of ebony customers had shambled off; and at that moment he heard the thud of hoofbeats.

Glancing up, Jerry saw two men riding up the dusty trail through the thorn bushes. Both wore the khaki uniform of the South African Police, and had rifles handy across their saddles; and while one, who wore a sergeant's stripes, was burly and jolly-look-



Bang! There was a flash from the window of the store, and Jerry's pony suddenly collapsed. Through the air shot Jerry like a catapulted stone, to strike the hard ground with a dull thud, and lie motionless.

ing, his companion was short, thick-set, and looked somewhat grim.

"Crumbs! More coppers!" murmured Jerry to himself, coming out of the store. "Who are you chasing, sergeant?" he asked.

"Diamond Joe, my lad," smiled the sergeant, twisting his long black moustache as he reined up. "Have you got any news of him? He's the scoundrel who——"

"Diamond Joe! I know all about him," replied Jerry. "One of your pals hunting

for Joe in a 'plane landed here about an hour ago. Nothing doing, so he pushed off. Say, sergeant, don't go on without buying a few glass beads or something!" the lad added cheekily.

"We sure need a rest," growled the thick-set trooper, "and a drink o' water."

"Come on in," Jerry invited.

"I guess I'll search your store and sheds," said the big sergeant. "Maybe Diamond Joe reached here and hid up without your knowin'."

With keen eyes Jerry watched the two policemen as they dismounted from their dust-grimed horses, which they hitched to the veranda rails. What a top-hole life the S.A.P. must be, the lad told himself, looking very hard at the two policemen.

"What the thump are you gaping at, kid?" growled the trooper harshly.

"You and the sergeant," said Jerry. "Crumbs! D'you reckon I could be a trooper?"

The big sergeant laughed, and both clumped into the little store, carrying their rifles, which they propped against the counter, while Jerry nipped behind some big packing-cases to get the troopers a drink of water. In a moment he was beside them with a couple of glasses and a brimming jug.

"Thanks, lad!" smiled the sergeant; then abruptly: "Shut the door, Milton—quick! Ouch! Gosh! What the——"

The sergeant ended with a roar of rage, for quick as lightning Jerry hurled half the contents of the jug in his face. It was done without warning, and the rush of cold water down his throat sent the sergeant staggering, to cannon up against the thick-set trooper.

"Blazes!" howled the latter as his foot struck both rifles and sent them clattering to the ground.

He tried to grab Jerry, but got the rest of the water in his face and the jug as well.

Instantly the store was in chaos, resounding with the roars and stamps of the raging men. Then:

Thud! Thud! Crash! Out of the store Jerry had hurled both rifles, to follow him-

self in one bound, slamming and locking the stout door behind him.

"I've nabbed both you stiff!" the lad hooted triumphantly. "You don't kid me, sergeant! Sergeant my eye! You're Diamond Joe himself!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Tables Turned I

BELLOWS of wrath came from inside the store. Then there sounded a thunderous drumming as the two captured men flung themselves against the strong door, hammering and kicking the panels in vain.

"Kick away, you bounders!" Jerry hooted as he nipped out of the veranda and unhitched the two horses. "That door was made to keep out Kafir thieves, and you won't break it down in a hurry. Likewise the window's well barred! Ho, ho!"

"Open up, you young scoundrel!" sounded the booming voice of the sergeant. "You've made a mistake that'll cost you somethin' if you don't open this door!"

"It's you who's made the bloomer!" shouted Jerry. "You put your kit on wrong!"

"Open up! Open up!" There came more bellows, together with a deafening racket of fists and boots hammering on the door.

"No fear!" Jerry laughed gleefully. "You didn't guess I spotted anything when I was staring at you, eh? Where did you pinch your kit and the horses? We'll soon know, for I'm off to the police post in two shakes!"

Even as he finished, Jerry dashed for the thatched shed in which he stabled his Basuto pony. Guessing that his damp prisoners would escape sooner or later, he was leading the two horses, so that the men should not have any mounts when they did escape. Nor would they have rifles, for cute Jerry had bagged their weapons, too, and slung them over his shoulder.

Now the most blood-curdling threats rang forth from the store. Next followed promises of wealth; a bribe of a handful of rough diamonds was offered Jerry, to induce him to return and open the door; for, in

fact, the sergeant and the trooper were bogus policemen.

They were none other than Diamond Joe himself and a scamp named Milton. They had bolted from the Nam-aqualand Government diggings with thousands of pounds' worth of stolen diamonds, seizing their kit and horses by ambushing a genuine sergeant and trooper, as Jerry had guessed.

Despite their disguise, and the fact that Joe had shaved off his beard, cute Jerry saw through them when he studied their stolen uniforms, incorrectly worn.

"I fairly fooled the bounders!" Jerry chuckled as he saddled up swiftly. "Nabbed Diamond Joe and his pal with a jug of water! Won't that 'plane pilot and Bart laugh when they hear!"

In a few minutes Jerry was galloping from the stable-shed, mounted on his own pony, and leading a troop-horse on each side of him.

Aloud the lad yelled gleefully as he thundered past the brick-built store which contained his prisoners. It would take



"Stop, Bart—stop!" yelled Jerry frantically through cupped hands. But to Jerry's dismay the lorry ploughed on, churning up clouds of dust; and it was plain that Bart could hear nothing above the thunder of the engine.

them a good time to break out, and then they would be horseless! The two desperate ruffians had been outwitted by a mere lad.

Jerry was laughing in reply to the threats, for he could see the furious faces and clenched fists of the bogus sergeant and trooper at the strongly-barred window.

"A hatful of pinched diamonds, Joe?" he cried, thrilling with triumph at his success. "No, thanks! You can dry yourselves on the blank—"

Jerry broke off with a shout of anger.

He had glimpsed Diamond Joe's

hand flying to his tunic pocket, then appear again, holding a revolver.

Bang! There was a flash from the barred window, and down fell Jerry's pony like a pole-axed ox.

Through the air shot Jerry like a catapulted stone, to strike the hard ground with a dull thud. He landed on his head, and lay stunned and motionless.

Jerry returned to consciousness, to find he was unable to stir. His limbs seemed

paralysed, and a thousand painful hammers seemed to be throbbing in his brain.

Slowly the lad opened his eyes. It was to see Diamond Joe and the thick-set Milton, in their stolen and wet uniforms, leering at him. In a flash he recovered his scattered wits, and discovered that he was back in the store, tightly bound in a wooden chair.

Diamond Joe, the bogus sergeant, no longer smiled pleasantly. His eyes held a baleful glitter.

"Not so mighty smart, after all, cub!" he leered. "You ought to ha' reckoned on the mauser pistol in my pocket."

The tables were turned with a vengeance, and, spellbound with wrath, Jerry glared at his captors, while thoughts rioted through his brain.

What a chump he had been to gallop past the store within range of the barred window! Why on earth hadn't he reckoned on a pistol? Of course, after bringing him down, Diamond Joe and Milton had burst their way out, to recover their weapons and horses, then to pick him up, senseless.

A missing sheet of iron from the roof told Jerry how the ruffians had escaped. Fiercely the lad's eyes blazed at sight of Bart's safe in a corner, overturned, broken open, and cleaned out. Then he remembered his Basuto pony, his dearest possession.

"You shot Ginger, my pony!" he barked hoarsely.

"Sure, kid, clean through the head!" Diamond Joe grinned. "It was smart shooting, too!"

Jerry writhed in his bonds.

"You cur!" he forced out.

"Cur, am I?"

"Yes, a low-down, thieving——"

"Maybe this'll gag you, then!"

With the words, Diamond Joe viciously punched the lad in the mouth, drawing blood. Then he swiftly tore up a blanket, pieces of which he crammed between Jerry's teeth, drawing them round his head.

"That'll stop you hollering to Kafirs." He laughed evilly. "Not but what," he muttered, drawing out his mauser pistol again, "it mightn't be safer to blow your

head off! A kid like you is too smart to live——"

"Here, none o' that, Joe!" growled the stocky Milton. "The kid can't hurt us now."

"Umph! He might."

"I'm not out for a swinging job, anyway," Milton growled. "Lock the cub in here, gagged and bound, and any passing Kafir'll think the store's shut up."

"All right," snarled Diamond Joe. "Come on—quick, then! Thanks to this young rip, we've lost a heap o' time, and that 'plane he talked about may come back."

"Not it!" said Milton. "The kid himself told the pilot there was no news of us this way."

"Sure! But we'll get away right now in case," said Diamond Joe. "By the time the S.A.P. find our trail, we'll be away in the hills and the bush belt. We'll soon reach the sea, and make a clean getaway with the best haul o' diamonds I ever lifted."

Despite the quantity of rough diamonds they had on them, however, the two scoundrels took all the ready cash in the store, as well as what they had taken from the safe, reckoning they might need it. Then they saw to Jerry's bonds and gag, after which they departed, locking the lad in the store.

Writhing in helpless fury, Jerry heard the horses' hoofbeats fade in the distance.

Again and again he called himself a chump. Plain it was that Diamond Joe and Milton merely came to the store intending to loot it for cash and food, as they had done. They had willingly entered the store quietly, not wanting any scrimmage outside, which strolling Kafirs might witness.

Jerry had seen through their disguises, and had cleverly captured both, only to lose them through over-confidence. He was now a fast prisoner. And his pony had been killed. The thoughts were maddening.

In vain Jerry fought with his bonds; nor could he shout. No one would hear him if he did. No more Kafirs were likely to come along until dusk. The chances of

the police 'plane returning were very slender. In any case, at sight of the locked, silent store visitors would depart.

"But I'll beat 'em somehow! Diamond Joe's not going to escape scot free if I can stop him!" Jerry gritted as he struggled furiously. "If only Bart was due back before dusk!"

Thought of his pal Bart, however, suddenly sent a scheme flashing into Jerry's brain.

Lanky Bart would pass through Springbok Drift about three o'clock, on his way to the Evans farm, with a load of stores from the dorp. If Jerry could get to that drift in time to turn Bart, then by swift pursuit in the light motor-lorry Diamond Joe and Milton might yet be captured.

At his thoughts, Jerry struggled even more vigorously. Suddenly he found that by thrusting at the floor with his toes he set the chair swaying.

Securely bound was Jerry in the chair, but he had hit on a scheme for escaping.

"I hope it works," he said to himself, and thrust harder and harder.

At every shove the chair tilted farther backwards, to swing forward again as he relaxed his pushing. Jerry's arms were pinioned, and his knees and ankles were lashed to the chair-legs, but he got good purchase on the floor with his toes. Backwards and forwards he swung, looking very determined, and at last lad and chair went clean over backwards.

Crash! The back of the chair landed among some empty jam jars, to smash them to pieces. A joyous exclamation escaped him, for the heavy fall had smashed the chair-back, just as Jerry had hoped it would. The wooden spokes of the chair-back were now broken, so that the cords binding Jerry's arms hung in loose coils.

"Done it!" the lad cried triumphantly. "Now to stop Bart at the Drift, then to get after Diamond Joe!"

It took Jerry only a few minutes to get free of his loosened bonds, then he wrenched the gag from his mouth. But that moment his eyes fell on a clock, jammed between bales of blankets on a shelf, and he noted the time was a quarter to three.

"Fifteen minutes to reach Springbok Drift—more than two miles across rough country!" he gasped. "Can I do it? I must—I will!"

He leapt on to the store counter, and then to the gaping hole in the iron roof, torn by Diamond Joe and Milton.

Two minutes later Jerry was legging it across country, running as fast as he could. His eyes flashed grimly, for Diamond Joe had shot his pony, besides stealing all the cash in the store. That cash represented the profits of months of hard work, and the robbery would break Bart and Jerry, who ran the store on a half-share basis.

Hard ran Jerry. Overhead the sun was like a ball of brass in the cobalt sky, and its rays smote down on him relentlessly. Moreover, the veldt was rugged and stony, and dotted with clumps of thorn bush, which hindered progress.

There was small chance of Bart being late at the Drift either. Lanky Bart was always on time with his light motor-lorry.

Gasping, sweating, Jerry ran on, bursting through thorny thickets, stumbling over stones. At last he crested a ridge, then shouted delightedly, for below him he saw the banks of a long dry "donga," with a dusty wagon trail running through what was once a ford.

"Springbok Drift!" Jerry cried hoarsely at sight of the dusty defile. "And there's Bart's lorry!"

It was Bart's laden lorry, chugging and clattering through the Drift. It seemed that Jerry had arrived just in time, but the tail of the lorry was towards him.

"Stop, Bart—stop!" he yelled frantically.

Faster and faster ploughed the lorry through the Drift, churning up clouds of dust. To Jerry's dismay, it was gaining speed, and it was plain that Bart could hear nothing above the thunder of his engine.

THE THIRD CHAPTER A Dash for Life I

"STOP, Bart! Stop!"

Again Jerry roared with all the strength of his lungs. But all seemed in

vain, and in desperation Jerry snatched up a lump of rock, to send it hurtling after Bart.

Crack! The stone struck the tailboard, but still the lorry went on. Jerry hurled another stone, and this time his aim was good. Struck on his left shoulder by the hurtling missile, Bart jerked round abruptly, to see Jerry away behind him, torn, dust-grimed, and wildly waving his arms.

"Great Scott!" gasped Bart, and promptly pulled up.

"Man, what's happened?" he cried as Jerry dashed up to the lorry, gasping for breath and reeling.

"Diamond Joe!" yelled Jerry. "He and a pal turned up in stolen police rig—looted the store—shot Ginger! I nearly nabbed the bounders, but——"

Jerry's tale was soon told—how he had got the better of Diamond Joe and Milton by sousing them with water, then locking them in the store; how Joe had turned the tables by shooting Jerry's pony. Briefly Jerry told how he had been left bound in the store, but had contrived his escape.

"They pinched all our cash, besides a pile of grub!" the lad added fiercely. "And they've got thousands o' quids'—worth of stolen diamonds—just as that police pilot said."

"Man!" barked Long Bart. "Which way did they go?"

"Heading for the sea," said Jerry. "They'll be in that thick bush belt to westward by dusk, and will never be seen again!"

"We'll catch 'em!" Bart gritted. "Out with this junk, Jerry! Your rifle's under the seat, as well as mine!"

Quick as lightning, both lads heaved the heaviest cases out of the one-ton lorry, then Bart leapt to the wheel, and Jerry scrambled up beside him. Fortunately, both lads' rifles were in the lorry, for they often got a shot at duiker or other buck when running a load together.

Grimly Jerry loaded the rifles' magazines as Bart switched on and the little lorry's engine roared to life.

"Step on it, Bart!" Jerry bawled above

the din. "We'll have a job to catch those bounders in time."

Bart stamped on the accelerator after he whirled the lorry round, and it went thundering back through Springbok Drift.

Followed a desperate dash back to the store to pick up their quarry's tracks. From patches of tall yellow grass or scrub there leapt forth bushbuck and duiker as the lorry thundered past, but neither lad heeded the animals.

At last the tin-roofed store was reached, and the tracks of Diamond Joe and Milton were soon picked up, heading to westward.

"The tracks of two horses!" Jerry cried, pointing to fresh hoof-prints in the dust. "It's our sham policemen all right!"

"And they won't reckon on a motor chasing 'em!" Bart said grimly.

Forward again rushed the light lorry, Bart gripping the wheel and glaring at the trail, Jerry holding both loaded rifles between his knees.

Past a Kafir village thundered the lorry, bumping and swaying, dust billowing in its wake. The lads heard startled yells from the natives as they left the village, then again they were roaring across wild veldt, which stretched away on each side of them. They saw miles of rolling grassy plains, broken in places by rugged ranges of stony kopjes, with here and there deep bush-grown dongas.

Crash! Bart smashed his way through a thorny thicket.

Thud! He dropped his near wheel into an ant-bear hole, to clatter out again and roar on at full speed.

The wind whistled in the lads' ears; it made their eyes smart and water, for they had no glass windscreen. Ever in their ears was the throbbing thunder of their engine.

"Faster!" cried Jerry. "Those stiffes got a long start. If they reach those hills yonder, they'll slip us!"

He pointed to a shadowy line of bush-clad cliffs right ahead.

"Man, if I go any faster she'll bust!" Bart shouted. "She's boiling already!"

But on they roared, easily following the

distinct tracks of two horses in the white dust.

At last a yell of triumph burst from Jerry.

"There they are!" he shouted. "We'll catch 'em, after all!"

Sure enough, Bart also saw two khaki-clad horsemen away ahead of them, and he echoed Jerry's shout of glee. There could be no doubt who the two horsemen were.

They were, in fact, Diamond Joe and Milton, who had just reined in, hearing the thunderous clatter away behind them. From under their stolen police hats, the two scoundrels glared back, seeing a column of dust, with the on-rushing vehicle just in front of it.

"A motor!" Diamond Joe shouted in fury.

"And that darned kid's in it—the kid we left locked in that store!" bawled the thick-set Milton.

"How the deuce——" Diamond Joe gasped in amazement. "I told you we ought to shoot him, Milton. He's a sight too smart to live! Gosh! Who's the fellow with him?"

For a moment both scoundrels glared at the pursuing vehicle in dumb fury, knowing that escape on horseback was impossible, for the range of bush-clad hills was yet some miles ahead. Then Milton whipped up his rifle.

"We'll ha' to start shootin', after all!"



"We'll just get round——"
Crash! A sound like a thunderclap drowned Jerry's words; both lads felt a jarring shock and found themselves flying through the air as the lorry, having struck a boulder, crashed over on its side.

roared the thick-set scoundrel. "I'll plug the driver!"

"Stop! I know a better trick than that!" Diamond Joe shouted. "And we'll run no risk of getting plugged ourselves."

Grinning evilly, he swung to the ground. That very moment Jerry, craning forward in the lorry, had his rifle half raised, ready to shoot if scrapping was started. He saw Diamond Joe dismount, then:

"Crumbs, Bart," he cried, "the boulder's firing the grass!"

Bart, too, saw a puff of smoke billow up close to Diamond Joe, saw a gush of flame, then he got a brief glimpse of the two khaki-clad scoundrels galloping off.

"You're right, man!" he said to Jerry. "By thunder, we must beat that blaze or we'll roast to death!"

"Not going back?" yelled Jerry.

"No fear, man! I'll drive round it. We'll catch those stiffies yet!"

Diamond Joe's vile trick to cover their flight was plain. He had fired the tough yellow grass, dry as tinder, and, fanned by the wind, the flames were sweeping rapidly across the veldt, setting light to thickets.

But no intention had either Bart or Jerry of giving up. Bart drove on at full speed, determined to race round the spearhead of the blaze, which was now roaring half a mile ahead.

Fast thundered the light lorry, bumping, bounding, swaying dangerously, but faster spread the flames.

In a moment a thick yellow pall of smoke was sweeping across the blue sky, and the sun became a red ball, dim-seen through the dun cloud. Fiercer crackled the rushing flames, and now both lads heard a dull, devouring roar above the thunder of their engine.

Thickets burst into sheets of fire, thorn-trees seemed to explode and hurl gushing flames skyward. The heat became terrific, and the smell of burning foliage came down the hot wind.

"We'll do it!" Bart gritted, but he gasped for breath as he bent over his steering-wheel.

"Faster! Farther to your left, Bart!" Jerry shouted, his voice faint above the crackling din.

Bart was sweeping round in a big half-circle already, to escape the blaze, but he was forced to bear even farther to his left for the flames were rushing, as though to head the lorry off.

Somewhere behind that crimson curtain, Diamond Joe and Milton were galloping off for the safety of the hills, doubtless

laughing at their pursuers' awkward plight.

Now the heat was like a furnace-blast; half the horizon seemed to be a sheet of flame. Bright tongues of fire gushed skyward in all directions. But Jerry judged the distance with his eye and uttered a whoop.

"We'll do it!" he roared, clinging to his seat. "We'll just get round——"

Crash! A sound like a thunderclap drowned Jerry's voice; both lads felt a jarring shock, then found themselves flying through the air, to land with a thudding impact on the ground and roll over and over.

The lorry had struck a hidden boulder, and such was the violence of the collision that the lorry had crashed over on its side.

Dazed by the shock, Jerry staggered to his feet, to see Bart rising from the ground, also, apparently unhurt. The light lorry was lying on its side, and a shout of dismay and anger burst from Jerry's lips.

"We're done, Bart!" he cried. "We can't catch those bouncers now!"

"No; and it was my fault, man," Bart said. "I ought to ha' seen——"

"You couldn't!" interrupted Jerry; then: "Come on! We've got to run for our lives! The fire will be on us in a second!"

There was nothing else for it. It seemed that the lads had not only lost their quarry; they were in peril of the most awful of deaths, for the red wall of flame was sweeping down on them at express speed. They made a desperate dash to recover their dropped rifles, but the fearful heat drove them back. It scorched their faces, forced them to whirl round and run for their lives.

But fast as they ran the blaze drove after them. Hissing tongues of fire raced across the ground and licked at their boot-heels. Searing bits of grass blew down on them, to singe their clothes. They dashed on, staggering, stumbling, breath whistling through raw lungs.

It seemed there was no escape. A deafening explosion in their rear told that the petrol tank of their lorry had blown up. A choking curtain of smoke rushed over





Down swooped the 'plane to the ground, to bar the way of Diamond Joe and Milton; and out sprang Bart and Jerry, firing pistols as they advanced, followed by Nichols with a magazine rifle.

them, and they got a brief vision of flights of terrified birds wheeling skywards. Past them dashed buck and jackals, in headlong, panic-stricken flight.

From close behind the lads now red flames were spouting skyward with a dreadful roar. The whole world seemed a red, raging inferno.

Still Bart and Jerry staggered on gamely, racing side by side, hoping to reach the safety of some deep donga. It seemed impossible, however.

But all at once, above the savage thunder of the blaze, there came to Jerry's ears a steady, roaring sound. He looked up, to see an aeroplane swooping down towards them.

"There's a 'plane!" he shouted, in amazement. "I hope the pilot sees us!"

For a second of horror the two lads wondered if the 'plane's pilot had really seen them. Then they saw that he had, as they shouted and waved their arms; and eagerly they dashed forward as the 'plane swooped to the ground and landed. It was to find that the pilot was Nichols, of the S.A.P.,

who had previously visited the lads' store in search of Diamond Joe.

"What the deuce are you two fellows doing out here?" Nichols shouted above the roar of his engine.

"Chasing Diamond Joe!" yelled Jerry, as both lads wildly clambered to the second cockpit.

"Chasing Joe! Where the deuce is he? I was heading for your store to tell you —" shouted Nichols.

"He's there—with Milton—just beyond the fire!" Jerry broke in, his voice thrilling with excitement. "After the bounders—quick! They'll escape in the hills yonder! You can't land in the scrub and kopjes up there."

"Well, I'm darned!" gasped Nichols, and he yanked fiercely on the accelerator.

The 'plane taxied across the grass, and a pull on the joy-stick saw it rise from the ground like a bird.

Up the 'plane sailed, in a breathless climbing turn. Then it was thrumming through the air, high above the seething inferno of flame.

Five minutes later a yell of delight burst from Bart and Jerry, for they saw their quarry away below them, galloping in desperate flight.

Diamond Joe and Milton had almost reached the safety of the scrub-clad range or hills when down swooped the 'plane to bar their way. Out sprang Bart and Jerry, armed with pistols loaned them by Nichols, who followed with a magazine rifle.

Followed a brisk fight at close range, in which Jerry received a flesh wound, Bart had his hat riddled, and Nichols had his cheek gashed by a ricochet. But Milton was shot dead. Diamond Joe's horse crashed down in a hidden hole, and a few seconds later the notorious scoundrel was secured.

"I told Milton that young cur was too smart to be left alive!" snarled Diamond Joe, glaring furiously at Jerry.

"Eh—what's that?" exclaimed Nichols, turning. "I was racing back to your store, my lads, to tell you I'd learnt that Joe and his pal had secured police kit, and were last seen making for your place. That's how I happened to spot you behind that blaze. But it seems you saw through the stiffs' disguise for yourselves."

"'Twas Jerry did, man," said lanky Bart. "If it hadn't been for Jerry, you'd never ha' set eyes on Diamond Joe again!"

Nichols agreed when he heard the lad's story. Delightedly he laughed on hearing how Jerry had got the better of both scoundrels with a jug of water, how the lad had escaped from the store, and fortunately caught Bart with the lorry at Springbok Drift.

"You've jolly well earned the reward for Joe, my lad," he told Jerry. "For here are all the stolen diamonds in his saddle-bags!"

"And all our looted cash, too!" cried Jerry.

Shortly afterwards Jerry's pluck and smartness were rewarded with a fat cheque for Diamond Joe's capture.



This Time—

OUR IMAGINATIVE REPORTER!

WE have just appointed Kipps, of the Remove, as reporter for the "Greyfriars Herald." The news items brought in by him within a few hours are so sensational that we are unable to guarantee their absolute truth! However, here they are.

Rascal's Repentance

Harold Skinner, of the Remove, was seen under the Elms this morning, poring over a copy of "Eric; or, Little by Little." When he lifted up his face to our reporter it was noticed that tears were streaming down his face, and an honest light was shining in his eyes. Later he was observed thoughtfully making a bonfire of a packet of cigarettes and a roulette-board.

News from the Fag World

Dicky Nugent was reported yesterday to have been seen with only two ink-stains on his fingers. It is understood that when the fact was commented on derisively by some other Second Formers young Nugent blushed and hurriedly put matters right by sprinkling half a bottle of best blue-black over his hands and face.

High Life News

Billy Bunter received a postal-order by the first post last Wednesday. In delivering it, the postman apologised for the delay of several years, explaining that this was due to strikes, or the rotten system of local deliveries, or something. It is rumoured that later in the day several titled people, claiming to be relations of Bunter's, were shown into the Visitors' Room, and the distinguished party, with Bunter in their midst, afterwards proceeded to Bunter Court for a bun-fight.



Harold Skinner was observed thoughtfully making a bonfire of a packet of cigarettes and a roulette-board.

Change of Accent

Hurree Singh has just spent a week-end in Scotland with one of his fellow-princes from India. The effect on his pronunciation of the English language has been truly surprising.

"Hallo, Inky!" I called out, on spotting him in the Rag after his return.

"Hoots, mon, an' hoo are ye?" was his reply.

"Enjoyed your holiday?" I ventured.

"Aweel, aweel, the weether mi' hae been a leetle brighter-r-r, ye ken," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Glad to be back among us again, eh?"



Billy Bunter, with the intention of paying off a few old scores, gave Bolsover a dot on the eye.

"Ay; it's no' likely that up awa' in the Hielands I'd be forgetting the auld skule!" replied Inky, with a dusky smile.

If our esteemed Nabob returns to Bhani-pur and starts speaking like that to his native instructor, we can foresee that the ructionfulness will be terrific!

A Peaceful Pupilist

Percy Bolsover delivered a lecture last evening on the subject of "Peace in Public Schools." He stated that, in his opinion, the time had arrived when public schoolboys should abandon the practice of settling disputes by the old method of bashing each other. He was all in favour of peace at any price, and personally, if ever he were smitten on the cheek, he would turn the other one, and shame the silly ass who did it. (Sensation.) He believed in the Brotherhood of Boys and the sanctity of human bokes. At this juncture, Billy Bunter, with the intention of paying off a few old scores, gave the speaker a dot on the eye, and Bolsover, with a glassy but still benevolent look in his peepers, sat down amid wild applause.

Coker gets his Cap!

Wingate has decided to play Coker as centre-forward in the First XI. for their match with Rookwood. When asked the reason for his decision, he stated that he had never in his life seen anyone play football like Coker—a remark with which we all agree!

THE END

ANAGRAMS.

Here are eight teasers that will test your knowledge. Rearranged correctly, the letters in each sentence will form the solution. To help you to do this a clue is given to each sentence.

- | | |
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| 1.—Will rob—get a meringue.
(A famous character at Greyfriars.) | 5.—Unfed—I'm flaring.
(A celebrated character at Rookwood.) |
| 2.—Ye bright realm.
(A popular boys' paper.) | 6.—More shell-shock.
(Famous detective in fiction.) |
| 3.—I will shame a speaker.
(Famous English poet.) | 7.—Ogre—I fry scholars.
(A world-famous public school.) |
| 4.—Outdo a chum on bathing.
(The title of one of his plays.) | 8.—Yarns for all the year! I hug Dian.
(The best book for boys and girls) |

The answers to these Anagrams will be found on page 278.