

"JAKE DIAMOND'S FOES!" Thrilling new series
starts this week.

NELSON LEE

2¢



"GANGSTERS!"

The cheery chums of St. Frank's clash with gangsters—first amazing yarn inside.
New Series No. 48. OUT ON WEDNESDAY December 20th, 1930.

JAKE DIAMOND'S FOES

By EDWY S. BROOKS.



CHAPTER 1. The Gunmen!

"**H**ERE we are!" said Edward Oswald Handforth gaily.

The burly, good-natured leader of Study D at St. Frank's halted in front of the dazzling foyer of the Emperor Theatre in the West End of London. The various boards announced that the pantomime, "Jack and the Beanstalk," was being presented. Handforth was rather partial to pantomimes, and Church and McClure, his faithful chums, were every bit as keen.

The holidays were nearing an end, and almost before they knew it they would be back at St. Frank's for the new term. So they were making hay, as it were, while the sun shone.

"We've come to the wrong entrance," remarked Church, as he looked at the crowds of fashionable people in evening dress who thronged the foyer. "We don't get into the pit this way, Handy."

"Who's looking for the pit entrance?" retorted Handforth, as he flourished three tickets. "I've got stalls, my sons—three stalls at twelve and sixpence a time! We're doing this show properly."

"My only hat!" ejaculated McClure, who, being Scottish, was startled. "It would have been better to go to the talkies for a bob each! I can't afford—"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth, grinning. "This is my treat—or, to be more exact, the pater's. He wangled these tickets for me. This is the best panto in London, and the theatre's booked up solid for weeks. You don't realise how lucky we are. Come on!"

First Yarn In Amazing New Thrill Series.



But Church and McClure were hanging back.

"You didn't tell us we were going in the stalls," objected Church. "You're all toggled up, but Mac and I are not. Besides, you're such a clumsy bounder, Handy. I hope you won't barge into people and make a disturbance. I mean, when you are in the stalls——"

Handforth's smile vanished.

"What are you getting at?" he demanded.

It was an awkward

moment. Church and McClure hated being frank with their leader, but it was an undeniable fact that he was noisy, thoughtless, and clumsy.

"Well, I hope you'll behave yourself, that's all," said Church earnestly.

"Behave myself?" roared Handforth.

"I—I mean, don't roar like that, or tread on people's toes, or make noisy comments," said Church with haste. "Don't misunderstand me, old man——"

"I don't misunderstand you!" snapped

"HANDS UP, BOYS!"

Jake Diamond, the notorious New York gunman, is knocking around. Excitement for the Boys of St. Frank's ; thrills for you

Handforth. "You think I'm out of place in the stalls, don't you? Out with it!"

"Of course you're not out of place," replied Church. "You'd be all right if—if— Oh, dash it, Handy, you know jolly well that you always make an exhibition of yourself when you get excited."

"Who said I'm going to get excited?" demanded Handforth coldly.

"Perhaps it'll be all right," put in McClure, attempting to smooth the troubled waters. "He can sit between us, Churchy, and that'll prevent him from annoying other people too much."

"It might work," admitted Church dubiously.

Handforth regarded them with rising indignation.

"By George!" he ejaculated. "So that's the spirit you show when I treat you to twelve-and-sixpenny stalls! You're going to let me sit between you! Jolly good! Just so that I can't annoy other people! I've never heard of such nerve in all my life!"

"But look here——"

"Just for that, I'll go in without you!" went on Handforth fiercely. "Do you think I'm going to let you come in—to look after me? Not likely! You can buzz off to that crowd at Pitt's place."

"Don't get ratty, old son——"

"I'm not ratty—I'm as cool as ice," said Handforth frigidly. "What's more, I'm going to teach you fatheads a lesson. Pitt invited you to that party of his, didn't he?"

"Yes, but we told him we were going to the panto——"

"Then you can go along, Walter Church, and tell him that you haven't gone to the panto," interrupted Handforth. "You'll find Nipper and K. K. and Archie and all the other fellows there. I hope you enjoy yourselves! So-long!"

He stalked into the foyer with a determined tread, barged into two or three people, and caused more than one caustic comment.

"He can't get a yard inside the door without bumping into somebody," growled Church. "The silly ass takes offence too quickly. We didn't mean to upset him."

Handforth was just passing the box office, and he couldn't help looking in that direction because a remarkably pretty young girl was applying for a ticket.

"Sorry, but there's not a seat left in the house," the box office clerk was saying. "But if you care to wait, madam, there's just a chance that one or two tickets may have been returned to the agencies."

Handforth was not great on brilliant ideas, but he had one now. This topping girl wanted a ticket; and he had two he didn't want in his hand.

"Can you make use of these?" he asked, pushing the two stall tickets through the box office aperture. "Two friends of mine aren't coming, and it seems a pity to waste the seats."

"Two stalls for to-night's performance—Row F," said the clerk quickly. "Yes, I

shall be glad to take them, sir, and refund the money."

He whacked out twenty-five shillings before Handforth could realise it.

"I wasn't expecting the money back," he protested.

"The management could not think of accepting them in any other way, sir," said the clerk politely. "Madam," he added in a louder voice, "I am glad to tell you that two tickets have just come in——"

Handforth drifted away, hardly daring to look at the girl, who had now gone back to the box office. He surrendered his own ticket, found his seat in the middle of Row F, and was stricken with remorse as he beheld the two vacant seats next to him. All the other seats were occupied.

"Well, it was their own silly fault," he muttered in self-defence.

He bitterly chided himself for having so hastily sold back those tickets. He hadn't really meant to do anything of the sort; his only idea had been to leave his chums flat for a few minutes in order to give them a scare. If it hadn't been for that pretty girl——

He looked round and could see no sign of her. Perhaps some other tickets had come in—grand circle seats, probably—and she had taken one of those. He rose hastily, pushed his way down the row, to the discomfort and annoyance of everybody in it, and hurried back to the foyer.

"I made a mistake just now," he said to the box office clerk. "I didn't really mean to sell you those tickets——"

"I am very sorry, sir, but they have been resold," said the clerk politely.

"Then I'll have two others."

"I'm afraid there are no others, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" said Handforth miserably. "Why the dickens are you people so beastly quick? You don't give a chap a chance to alter his mind!"

More remorseful than ever, he went outside to look for Church and McClure. They were not there.

"Funny," muttered Handforth, frowning. "I wonder where they can have got to?" He turned to the big commissionaire. "Did you see two St. Frank's chaps hanging about here?" he asked. "I left them here——"

"That's right, young gent—I saw you together," said the commissionaire. "They've gone. Got on a bus two or three minutes ago."

"Oh!" ejaculated Handforth blankly. "Thanks."

He went in again, his feelings undergoing another complete change. He bubbled with indignation. The rotters! Clearing off like that without even giving him a chance to square himself!

It is to be feared that Handforth was somewhat unreasonable. Church and McClure had distinctly seen him go to the box office, they had seen him accept the money for those tickets, and, very sensibly, they had departed. And they weren't altogether sorry. The

pantomime might be good, but the responsibility of looking after Handforth would have been a serious handicap to their enjoyment.

"By George!" murmured Handforth, his heart jumping.

He was back in the auditorium, and, to his joy, he saw that the pretty girl was sitting in the seat next to his own! So she had bought one of those two, after all! Good egg!

He pushed his way back along the row, and people hastily leapt to their feet, grabbed their handbags, clutched their boxes of chocolates, and gave this blundering school-boy all the room he needed.

"Excuse me!" said Handforth breathlessly.

The girl in the seat next to his own did not leap up—she hadn't had experience of him as the others had—and she merely smiled when Handforth barged past. But her smile quickly vanished when he trod on one of her dainty feet.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, in pain.

Handforth fell into his seat, filled with consternation.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry," he apologised.

"That's all right, big boy," said the girl, smiling. "You didn't hurt me much. I guess you're the fellow who gave those tickets in at the box office, aren't you? Thanks a lot!"

"Oh, rather!" said Handforth. "That's all right. Only too pleased."

Her voice was charming, and the fact that she was an American gave Handforth an added thrill. Here was a stranger within the gates, so to speak, and it was up to him to do the polite thing.

"This is sure a fine theatre," the girl went on, apparently glad enough to have somebody to talk to. "Gee! I believe I'm going to enjoy this show. I've never seen a real English pantomime. We have nothing like this in New York."

"It's the best show in town," said Handforth enthusiastically.

If there was one thing he liked about the Americans more than another it was their free-and-easy ways. No fooling about because they hadn't been introduced.

"Your London has certainly given me an eyeful," went on the girl, in a tone of admiration. "First time I've been over—only got in yesterday. Listen, big boy! Why don't you English boost London a bit more? Over in the States folks mostly believe that London is half dead, and that you can't walk a block without running into fog. Say, this city is real dandy."

"Glad you like it," said Handforth happily.

He was rather puzzled by the look in her dark eyes. She was talking brightly enough, but it seemed to him that she was merely making conversation. Behind her smile there was a lurking look of something akin to fear; almost a hunted look—Handforth called himself an ass. His imagination was getting the better of him. How could this charming young American girl be in any fear?

A look of sudden relief came into her eyes—a look of quick recognition. A tall, clean-built man in blue serge was entering the row, with the obvious intention of occupying the vacant seat next to the girl. But Handforth saw nothing of this.

His attention was attracted by three men who suddenly stood up in the front row of the circle. He could not help noticing them, because they leaned over, and because they were evil-featured, brutal-looking specimens of humanity.

To Handforth's amazement, he saw the three men pull automatic pistols from their pockets. They fired point-blank at the tall, clean-limbed newcomer in the stalls!

Important Announcement

Owing to the Christmas holidays, next week's issue of the NELSON LEE will be on sale on

Monday, December 22nd.

CHAPTER 2.

Handforth the Gallant!

A MOMENT before the three sharp reports rang out, the tall man in blue serge ducked like lightning. Some instinct had warned him, it seemed.

Something hummed past Handforth's ear, and in a dazed, bewildered way he realised that it must have been a bullet. A lady two seats away from him shrieked wildly as her handbag was plucked out of her grip by another flying bullet. The American girl gave a queer little choking cry, and sagged into Handforth's arms, to his further bewilderment and consternation.

Pandemonium reigned in the theatre.

The man in blue serge had escaped as by a miracle. Not one of the bullets had hit him. His hand went to his own hip pocket, and something flashed.

Crack!

A spurt of orange fire leapt from the muzzle of his automatic, and one of the men in the circle gave a wild shout. Three times the tall man fired, and the confusion became intensified.

Handforth, only realising that the pretty American girl had fainted in his arms, vaguely suspected that these gunmen were American, too. Gangsters in a London theatre!

When Handforth looked round again, the man in blue serge had vanished. Pandemonium had broken out afresh. Ladies were fainting, some were in hysterics; attendants

were dashing about frantically. It was very exciting, very sensational.

Luckily nobody had been hit by the flying bullets.

"Take me home, please."

Handforth started violently. The voice had come to him in a whisper. He realised, with something of a shock, that it was the fainting girl who had uttered them. He looked down at her with breathless interest. Her eyelids were just fluttering, and the look she gave him electrified him into action.

"Oh, rather!" he gasped. "Anything you like! I say, I hope you're feeling better now, miss! It's a lucky thing——"

He realised that he was talking to the thin air. She had gone off again, and was a limp burden in his arms. Without hesitation, he gathered the girl more firmly into his arms, stood up, and commenced pushing his way out.

"Gangway, please!" he said sharply. "This young lady has fainted."

The other people in the row were only too ready to give him space, and he found himself in the aisle, where people were pressing excitedly. He managed to force his way through. Two attendants asked him if he wanted any help, but he rejected the offers. The girl wasn't very heavy. Handforth carried her quite easily, for he was a powerfully-built youngster.

He forgot the pantomime, he forgot the intensely dramatic episode that had just taken place in the theatre. All he knew was that this girl had fainted, that she wanted to be taken home. She was a stranger in London, and it was up to him to do the gallant thing.

He hardly remembered getting through the foyer. Somebody must have called him a taxicab—no doubt the commissionaire—for he found himself gently depositing the girl in the back of the vehicle.

"Where to, guv'nor?" asked the taxi-man.

"I don't know yet," replied Handforth hurriedly. "Just drive off out of this confusion. I'll tell you later."

"Good enough for me, sir," said the man promptly.

He drove off, and Handforth experienced a feeling of intense relief as the cab glided away. His mind was still in a whirl. He was glad to get away from that theatre. The excitement had spread to the exterior, and crowds were pressing round the entrance, and police officers were much in evidence.

It was lucky, indeed, that Handforth had succeeded in getting away so quickly with his fair companion. Only his speed of action—his usual direct-action methods—had brought about this result. For once they had stood him in good stead.

He turned his attentions to the motionless girl.

"I say, you know, buck up!" he urged awkwardly. "I don't know where to drive to, miss. Where's your hotel? Oh, my hat! What the dickens shall I do?"

The girl was still in a fainting condition, and Handforth had an idea that it would be better to tell the driver to pull up at a chemist's. What the girl needed was a restorative.

She stirred slightly, and opened her eyes again.

"Gee! You're swell!" she breathed. "I guess you're taking me home, aren't you?"

"Rather!" said Handforth. "If you'll tell me your hotel——"

"Just take me home!" she murmured faintly.

"But I don't know——"

He broke off helplessly. She was "off" again. And Handforth, taking a quick glance through the window, saw that the taxi was pottering slowly along Piccadilly. An inspiration came to him. He banged on the glass partition.

"Grosvenor Avenue—No. 8!" he shouted. "Buck up!"

Idiot! Why hadn't he thought of that before? His own home wasn't two minutes away; he would take her there. Ellen, the parlourmaid, was a good sort, and she'd rally round with smelling-bottles and things.

It never occurred to Handforth that the household might be surprised to see him arrive home with a girl in his arms—a perfect stranger, too. But then, Handforth was that kind of fellow. He never paused to think.

Yet he might not have been so ready to take the girl home if his parents had been in residence. Nobody was there at all except the servants. Sir Edward and Lady Handforth were abroad, their married daughter was with them; Ena was staying with some of her girl friends, and Willy was down at Chubby Heath's place, in Derbyshire, enjoying the winter sports. So Edward Oswald felt that he had a free hand.

The taxi pulled up outside the big Handforth mansion in Grosvenor Avenue.

"Lend a hand, guv'nor?" asked the driver willingly.

"No, thanks, I can manage," replied Handforth. "Poor kid, she's still bad. Fainted in the theatre, you know—there was a lot of shooting."

"Then them rumours was right?" asked the driver, as he pushed open the gate. "I heard there was some wild shootin' in the Emperor, but I didn't believe it. Blowed if London ain't gettin' as bad as Chicago."

He ran to the front door in advance of Handforth, and hammered on the door. It was opened by the butler just as Handforth arrived.

"Good gracious, Master Edward!" ejaculated the butler.

"Don't gape there, Wheezer," said Handforth. "Let me come in. This young lady has fainted."

The butler, pained, stood aside. It was bad enough to know that Master Edward disrespectfully referred to him as "Wheezer," but it was hard to be called

that name to his face—and in front of a taxi-driver.

Handforth carried the girl straight to a big, comfortable settee in a nook of the dining-room, where there was a big fire, and where supper was all laid out in readiness for Handforth and Church and McClure, against their late arrival.

"Thank goodness I've got her home," muttered Handforth, hurrying out.

He paid the taxi man, closed the door, and turned to the startled and scandalised butler, whose real name was Barton.

"It's all right, Wheezer—you needn't stare!" said Handforth. "There was a beastly shooting affair in the theatre, and this young lady fainted, and I didn't know where to take her. So I brought her home. Ask Ellen to buzz in with something to bring her round. Oh, and bring some brandy!"

"Brandy, Master Edward?" said the butler, aghast.

"Isn't brandy good for people who've fainted?" demanded Handforth. "My only hat! What's the matter with you?"

"I'm not sure that your father or mother would approve, Master Edward."

"Rot!" snorted Handforth. "How could they do anything else but approve? There's no harm in doing somebody a good turn, is there? Don't be such a big ass!"

Barton retired, freshly hurt. It was one of the bugbears of his job that the sons of the house consistently refused to treat him with that dignity which was his due. On many occasions he had been on the point of handing in his notice, only to remember that the boys were away from home throughout most of the year.



Handforth blundered through the gangway, leaving havoc in his wake, and then had to apologise profusely as he succeeded in treading on the toes of a pretty girl. "That's all right, big boy," she replied.

He sent for Ellen, the parlourmaid, and Ellen, being one of Handforth's special pals, quickly rallied round. A drop of brandy, some smelling salts, and a sprinkling of cold water worked wonders. The American girl was soon sitting up, and when she learned where she was she recovered with great rapidity.

"Say, this is good of you, but I can't stay here," she protested.

"You'll have to stay until you're well enough to go, anyhow," declared Handforth. "Thanks, Ellen, you're a sport."

The maid appreciated that this was her dismissal, and she quietly retired.

"You can stay here as long as you like," went on Handforth, intensely glad that the girl was looking better. "This is my own home, you know. My pater lives here—Sir Edward Handforth."

"You sure are cute, big boy," said the girl. "So your father is one of those titled guys, is he? I've fallen pretty!"

"Eh?"

"But poppa and mamma will maybe raise the roof when they come home and find me here," went on the girl, shaking her head. "It's wonderful of you, cutie, but I guess I'll be on my way."

"My people aren't home—they're abroad," explained Handforth. "Don't I keep telling you that you can stay as long as you like? By George, why not regard yourself as my guest?" he added enthusiastically. "There are heaps of spare rooms upstairs."

"You sure are sweet," she said softly.

It seemed to him that she was thinking deeply, and a far-away, troubled look had come into her eyes. He was so fascinated by her very presence that it did not strike him as strange that she should still withhold the name of her hotel.

"You really mean it?" she asked suddenly.

"Mean that you can stay here?" he said.

"Of course!"

"You're certainly a great little kid," said the girl gratefully. "I think I will stay. And, if you don't mind, I'd like to rest."

"I don't wonder at it, after what you've been through," said Handforth, jumping up. "Come on, I'll take you upstairs. If there isn't a room ready, I'll tell Ellen, and she'll have one prepared in two shakes."

But there were plenty of rooms, and everything in readiness for unexpected guests. Handforth eagerly escorted his fair guest into the best spare room he could find, and there he left her.

He went downstairs with a dreamy look in his eyes, little realising what the outcome of this astonishing episode was to be.

CHAPTER 3.

Sensational News!

"IF he thinks he can mess us about like that, he's wrong!" said Church grumpily.

"We've done the best thing," said McClure. "Before the show's half over he'll be as sorry as the dickens, and it'll serve him right! Blow him!"

Handforth's disappointed chums were on the top deck of a bus, in the neighbourhood of Russell Square. Having seen their leader sell those tickets back to the box office—and having seen somebody else buy them—they knew that their own chance of seeing "Jack and the Beanstalk" had gone.

They were now on their way to Reggie Pitt's party.

They left the bus at Duncan Square and, walking to the other side of that quiet residential spot, were soon being admitted into Reggie Pitt's home. The genial leader of the West House juniors greeted them warmly.

"Well, this is good!" said Reggie, as he slapped them on the backs. "Thought you said you couldn't come? Where's Handy?"

"At the pantomime—alone," replied Church bitterly.

They were taken into the big drawing-room, which had been entirely given over to Reggie Pitt and his guests—these including such celebrities of the St. Frank's Remove as Kirby Keeble Parkington, Archie Glen-thorne, Vivian Travers, Fatty Little, and quite a charming sprinkling of Moor View girls, these latter having been invited by Winnie Pitt, their own schoolfellow.

Church and McClure explained the situation, and there were many grins.

"Rough on you chaps, but perhaps it's all for the best," said Nipper, the Remove captain, who was also there. "I don't suppose you would have lasted through the first act, anyhow."

"Handy's too exhausting," agreed Church, shaking his head. "Looking after him is like looking after a Mills' bomb! As long as you treat him gently, he's safe. But at any moment he's likely to explode."

"I don't think you understand him," said Irene Manners coldly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Irene was Handforth's special chum, and she coloured when she heard that laugh. If Church and McClure, who were his study mates, did not understand the impulsive Edward Oswald, nobody on earth did.

"When he gets in a mood like that, the best thing is to let him work it off alone," said Church. "He'll be as sorry as the dickens when we see him later on. In fact, I shouldn't be surprised if he turned up here before long."

"What about that dance music, Reggie?" put in one of the girls. "Aren't we going to get any this evening?"

"There's plenty on the wireless, and it's nearly due," replied Reggie cheerfully. "So let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we go back to St. Frank's!"

There were many grimaces.

"Why remind us of that?" asked Travers sadly.

This party was indeed a sort of final "bust up." To-morrow the school would re-assemble.

Pitt busied himself with the big radio, and a loud, clear voice was soon announcing the weather forecast.

"We want some music!" complained somebody.

"This isn't a gramophone—I can't shove on anything I want," protested Reggie. "Jack Payne's orchestra will give us heaps of dance music immediately the news is over. And we want to hear the weather forecast, don't we?"

"By jingo, yes!"

They learned, to their satisfaction, that in spite of a depression which was filling up somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Azores, a ridge of high pressure was practically stationary off the north of Scotland. The weather over the south-eastern section of England was to be fine and sunny, with only an occasional risk of showers.

"Which means that it'll pour all to-morrow," said Travers dubiously.

"Why not turn the gramophone on while the news is being broadcast?" asked Parkinson. "I've spotted some ripping records—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Pitt sharply. "What's that the announcer said about the Emperor Theatre?"

"Emperor Theatre!" echoed Church. "That's the place we—"

He broke off as a general "shssssh!" went round.

"—very sensational," were the first words that the hushed crowd of boys and girls clearly caught. "Jake Diamond, it seems, has been in this country for less than twenty-four hours. He is well known in New York as a gang leader and a power in the underworld. It is even said that Diamond is the most feared gunman in that great city, his reputation being hardly less than that of the notorious Scarneck Al Kapone of Chicago. It is believed that Diamond came to England to escape the attentions of Kapone's gang."

"We don't want to hear all this," murmured Jimmy Potts.

"Wait!" urged Pitt.

"The incident in the Emperor Theatre was sensational in the extreme," continued the announcer. "Jake Diamond, it seems, was accompanied by a Follies girl named Trixie Foster, and she had already reached her seat before Diamond himself sought to join her in the stalls. It was while he was making for his seat that the three gunmen arose in the circle and fired at him point-blank."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Church, startled.

"The most miraculous feature of the affair is that nobody seems to have been hurt," continued the announcer. "Several people in the stalls complained that bullets hissed past them, but nobody was hit. In the confusion Diamond and his assailants escaped from the theatre, and they had completely vanished when the police arrived. The three men are believed to be members of Al Kapone's Chicago rival gang. Kapone has more than once stated his intention of running the New York 'racket,' and putting Diamond out of 'business.' This transference of an American gang war to London is an unexpected and disturbing development, and Scotland Yard wishes us to assure our listeners that they have the situation well in hand."

"Handy must have seen the whole giddy show!" said McClure enviously. "I say, what chumps we were to go! It must have been better than the pantomime."

"How did we know?" grumbled Church.

"The management at the Emperor Theatre declare that the two stalls bought by Diamond and his companion were not available until five minutes before the curtain was due to rise," went on the announcer.

"They were two tickets, it seems, which were returned by a patron at the last moment."

"Our giddy seats!" yelled Church excitedly.

"That doesn't follow," said Nipper. "There might have been others—"

"Even the girl mysteriously vanished," said the B.B.C. announcer. "Immediately following the shooting, when the whole theatre was in a state of confusion, Miss Foster was carried out of the theatre in a fainting condition. It is said that she was in the arms of a burly schoolboy."

"Wha-a-at?" gurgled McClure faintly.

"This schoolboy happened to be sitting next to the Follies girl, and she had apparently fainted in his arms when the first shots were fired," concluded the announcer. "She was last seen being bundled into a taxi by her schoolboy escort, who probably knew nothing of her association with Jake Diamond. The performance at the Emperor Theatre is now proceeding as usual, and Scotland Yard's Flying Squad is rigorously hunting the American crooks."

No sooner had the announcer started on some other subject than Pitt switched off the wireless. Everybody started talking at once.

"Handy!" ejaculated Nipper, aghast. "It must have been Handy who took that girl out of the theatre!"

"Just like him!" said Travers, with a grin.

"But can't we do something?" cried Irene. "Oh, you know how impulsive Ted is! Unless he's watched he'll get himself mixed up with these dreadful gangsters!"

"He's mixed up with 'em already, by the look of it," said K. K., with a whistle. "Trust old Handy to blunder into trouble. He's got two seats to sell, and he must sell them to New York gangsters!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Where is he now—what's he doing?"

"He might have taken that girl home!" said Church.

"Home! To his own place?" asked Pitt incredulously.

"Why not?" went on Church. "His people are away—even including Ena and Willy. If he had taken this girl to her hotel she would have been traced, but the announcer distinctly said that she had mysteriously disappeared. I'll bet anything you like that Handy took her home."

"Oh, my only hat!"

Reggie Pitt and his guests were thoroughly excited. There wasn't the slightest doubt that Edward Oswald Handforth was the schoolboy in the case. That reference to his burliness, and the fact that Jake Diamond and his companion had bought two "returned" seats, spoke volumes. It was impossible that there could be any coincidence here.

And, knowing Handforth as they did, the schoolboys and schoolgirls were afraid for him. Perhaps the rival gunmen had watched his movements and had followed him.

He might be in awful trouble at this very moment!

"Let's all go over to Grosvenor Avenue!" suggested Pitt eagerly. "What do you say,

you girls and chaps? We can carry on with the party after we've rescued Handy."

The girls and chaps said "Yes."

CHAPTER 4.

Handy, the Knight Errant!

RAT-TAT! Rat-tat-tat!

Handforth, striding up and down the big lounge hall at his home, halted in his tracks as he heard the urgent tattoo on the door knocker. He had been thinking of that girl upstairs; congratulating himself upon the way in which he had dashed to her assistance.

Who the dickens could this be, butting in at this hour?

He did not give the servants a chance to answer the door. He strode towards it himself, frowning. Whoever it was, he would send them away quickly enough. He opened the door.

"Great Scott!" he gurgled.

The entire front drive, it seemed was filled with humanity. Church and McClure were on the doorstep, with Nipper, Pitt, K. K. and others pressing behind. In the rear he could see Irene Manners, Doris Berkeley, Fatty Little, Archie Glenthorne and a host of others.

"Thank goodness he's safe!" yelled somebody.

Handforth was swept indoors as though a tidal wave had struck him. The crowd surged round him, and everybody was shouting at once. Edward Oswald was bewildered and confused. It was impossible that these St. Frank's fellows and Moor View girls could know anything about Trixie, or that incident at the theatre.

"I say!" he protested. "Whoa! Can't you give a chap a chance? What's all this about, anyhow?"

"You weren't shot, Handy, were you?" asked Church eagerly.

Handforth jumped.

A TIP-TOP BOOK FOR BOYS!



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"Shot!" he ejaculated.

"And what have you done with the girl?"

"Girl!" repeated Handforth, realising with dismay that his secret was indeed public property. "What girl? What are you gassing about?"

"You know what girl!" shouted McClure. "The girl you carried out of the theatre! Where is she?"

Handforth froze up.

"I'll trouble you to mind your own business," he said icily.

"It's no good adopting that tone, old man," put in Nipper, with gentle tact. "We've come here to help you——"

"I don't want to be helped."

"I don't think you understand the exact position——"

"I understand that you butted in without being invited!"

"We only came to warn you——"

"Well, I don't want any warnings!" interrupted Handforth. "I hate talking like this to you chaps and girls—particularly as I know you so well—but I don't remember having invited you here this evening. So if you don't mind buzzing off, I shall be obliged. You're making a disturbance, and I'm not going to have my visitor annoyed like this!"

"Your visitor?"

"She's upstairs now—— I—I mean, what the dickens are you trying to do?" demanded Handforth, turning red. "You needn't think you can trap me into saying things I don't want to say!"

"But you've said it!" exclaimed Nipper. "That girl's here, isn't she?"

"Oh, Ted!" said Irene, in a shocked voice. Handforth jumped again.

"Well, what about it?" he demanded defiantly. "The poor girl was scared out of her wits—she fainted—couldn't remember the name of her hotel—so what else could I do but bring her home? She's resting now, and I've told her that she's welcome to stay as my guest as long as she likes."

"Good old Handy!" grinned K. K. "Always the knight errant!"

"But, dash it, isn't this going it a trifle swift?" asked Archie Glenthorne dubiously.

"I mean to say, this girl isn't absolutely the type that mother would be pleased with!"

"What do you mean?" roared Handforth. "She's a ripping girl! I'd like to know how you knew anything about it, anyhow."

"It's not so mysterious as it seems, old man," explained Nipper. "We heard about it over the wireless."

"Oh!"

"It was in the news—all about that gun fight at the Emperor, and all the rest of it," said Nipper. "You must have had a pretty exciting time."

"Never mind that," said Handforth. "How did you know that I should be at home, instead of still in the theatre?"

"My poor ass, you don't think you got out of that theatre without being seen, do you?" asked Church. "We heard that the girl had been carried out by a burly schoolboy and

put into a taxicab. Well, two and two make four."

"We needn't do arithmetic!" said Handforth coldly. "It's a pity the B.B.C. can't mind its own giddy business! What right had it to broadcast a lot of jaw about me? That girl wasn't connected with the shooting, anyhow."

"I knew it!" said Nipper. "The innocent ass is as unsuspicious as a babe!"

"What do you mean?" asked Handforth, staring.

"You think that girl was just an ordinary playgoer, don't you?"

"No, I don't," retorted Handforth. "She's not ordinary at all. She's—she's—— What does it matter to you what she is? She only arrived in London yesterday; she's American. Came to see the pantomime, and was scared out of her wits when that shooting started. What else could I do but lend a hand? Why make all this fuss over a perfectly harmless happening?"

"That's just the point, old man," said Nipper. "It may not be as harmless as you think. You don't know, do you, that those men in the circle were members of Al Kapone's Chicago gang of gunmen?"

"I don't know—and I don't care!"

"And that the man in the stalls was the notorious Jake Diamond?"

"It doesn't matter to me if his name's Tom Tit, or Humpty Dumpty!" retorted Handforth gruffly. "I'm not interested in gangsters!"

"You see?" said Nipper, appealing to the others.

"Poor chap!" said K. K., eyeing Handforth sympathetically.

"What's the game?" roared Handforth, completely mystified.

"I'm only trying to break it gently, Handy," said Nipper. "This girl—the one you rescued so gallantly—didn't go to that theatre alone, as you imagine. She went with Jake Diamond."

Handforth stared in blank amazement.

"She—went with Jake Diamond?" he repeated.

"She came over to England with Jake Diamond."

"I don't believe it!" burst out Handforth indignantly. "Are you trying to tell me that that ripping girl is an—an associate of crooks?"

"We're only trying to tell you the truth," said Nipper. "She's a Follies girl—which is another way of saying that she's a New York chorus girl."

"That's nothing against her!"

"Quite right," agreed Nipper. "But chorus girls who come over to England with desperate gunmen are in a class by themselves. Handy, old son, why can't you see the common-sense of this? You mustn't mix yourself up with this business. So far you've acted innocently—but now you know the truth. And with your eyes open you can't carry on——"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Handforth, his brain in a whirl. "I believe that girl is

an actress, now you come to mention it. She looks it. But I know jolly well that she isn't connected with Jake Diamond. You're all wrong there. Why, she was as startled as I was when that shooting started."

"Naturally—because she was afraid that Diamond was going to be killed," said Parkington. "Finding out that he had bolted, she naturally wanted to get out of the theatre herself—and she used you as a means. Why didn't she tell you the name of her hotel?"

"She couldn't remember it."

"Rats! She didn't want to go to her hotel because she was afraid that those rival gangsters would follow," said K. K. shrewdly. "She felt that she'd be a lot safer in a house like this. The best thing you can do, Handy, is to ring up the police."

"Have her arrested?" asked Handforth, with contempt. "You're mad!"

"The police can protect her—that's all I mean," said K. K.

"She'll get all the protection she needs here," replied Handforth curtly. "I'm not going to have the police messing about; and I'm still not convinced that this girl and Jake Diamond know each other."

"Let us have patience!" sighed Nipper. "Handy, you've told us that that girl arrived in London yesterday. It is known that Diamond arrived in London yesterday. Is that merely a coincidence?"

"It must be!" said Handforth stubbornly.

"The girl was recognised—she was known to be Trixie Foster, of the Follies," continued Nipper. "And Trixie Foster, of the Follies, is this gunman's girl. My dear ass, you haven't a leg to stand on! For goodness sake be sensible."

Handforth was certainly startled. But the other fellows were worried about him; he had that obstinate look in his eyes which they knew so well—that look which meant that he was determined to go ahead in spite of all their warnings.

"All right, I'll give you best," said Handforth at length.

"I knew you'd be sensible, Ted," murmured Irene.

"I don't suppose there's any doubt that this girl is Trixie Foster, and that she came over with Diamond," went on Handforth. "But you needn't think that I'm going to give her the order of the boot on that account."

"But look here——"

"I invited her here as my guest, and she's remaining as my guest as long as she likes,"

said Edward Oswald firmly. "I don't go back on my word like that!"

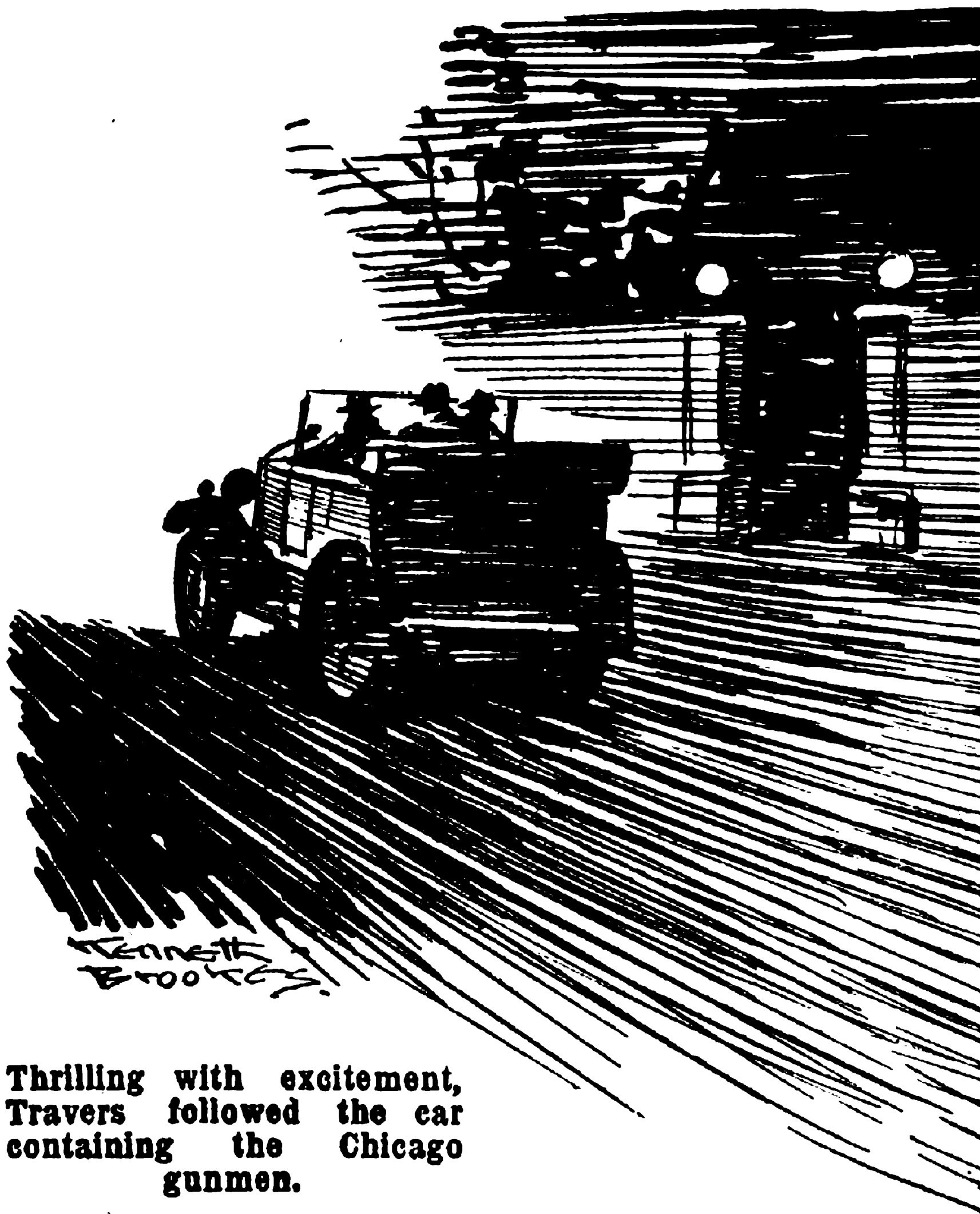
"Circumstances alter cases, Handy," urged Church.

"It's no good trotting out proverbs at a time like this," growled Handforth. "Can't you see that it's more than ever necessary for me to keep her here? I did think about persuading her to go, but now I won't."

His listeners were thunderstruck by this bombshell.

"We can always trust Handy to spring the gentle surprise," murmured K. K. approvingly.

"It's quite clear to me that this girl is



Thrilling with excitement, Travers followed the car containing the Chicago gunmen.

Jake Diamond's victim," said Handforth coolly.

"What!"

"He must have hypnotised her, or something," went on Handforth. "You know what these crooks are—as cunning as foxes. This Diamond fellow got the girl into his clutches, and she needs protection."

"Oh, my hat!"

"She's not only in danger from that rival gang, but from Diamond himself," proceeded Handforth calmly. "Well, here she'll be safe. You needn't stare at me like that. I've seen this girl, and you haven't. And the first one who says that she's a crook will get my fist in his eye."

"Of course she's a crook," said Irene promptly.

"Eh? You know jolly well I can't punch you in the eye, Renie," growled Handforth. "I tell you I've done the right thing. Awfully decent of you to come along and warn me and all that, and I appreciate it. Thanks! There are plenty of buses going yet, so you can easily get home. Good-night!"

"What the dickens are we to do?" asked Church helplessly. "We can't very well bump him in his own house—and it wouldn't be much good if we did. We can't even tell his people. He's got us all tied up."

Handforth grinned round and nodded.

"Exactly," he said serenely. "You can't

Most of the boys and girls experienced something of a shock. In their minds' eye they had pictured Trixie as a painted, "hard-boiled," New York woman of the underworld, of the type they had become familiar with in the American talkies.

The girl herself was so utterly different from this picture that they could only stare. She was small, dainty, dressed with quiet distinction, and it was difficult to believe that she was more than seventeen or eighteen. Nipper and K. K. and most of the others realised that they had been doing Handforth an injustice. He was a chump, of course, but not such a chump as they had imagined.

"It's time I took part in this conference," said the girl, as she descended the rest of the stairs. "Gee! I seem to be causing my boy friend a heap of trouble. Say, I think that most of you have got me wrong."

They were silent.

"You are Miss Trixie Foster, aren't you?" asked Handforth.

"Surely."

"Well, I don't care whether you are—"

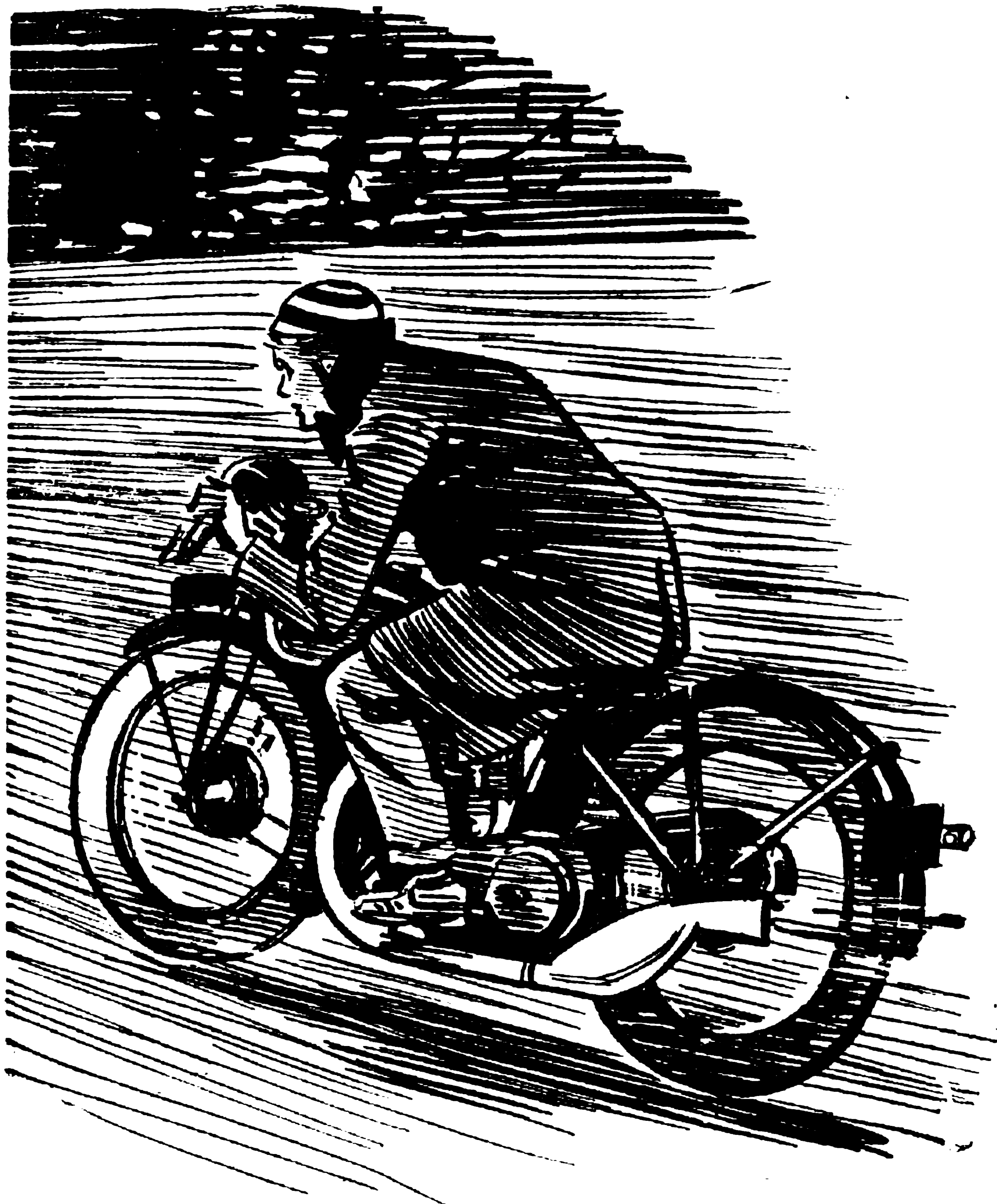
"You're sure sweet," interrupted Trixie, giving him a quick smile. "But I guess I'm in the way here, big boy. These friends of yours are right. It wouldn't be fair to you for me to stay. So I'm quitting right now."

"No, you're not," said Handforth urgently. "Don't take any notice of these chaps—they don't understand."

She shook her head.

"I couldn't help overhearing most of what was said," she replied. "It's awful nice of you to stick up for me, and I'm saying that you're dead right. But if I stay here I shall bring danger on you. I guess I'll be taking the air."

"We're awfully sorry, Miss Foster, if we said anything uncomplimentary about you," put in K. K. "But we hadn't seen you then. Handy was right all the time, and he only acted sensibly by bringing you here."



do a giddy thing, and you well know it."

"But I guess I can," said an unexpected voice.

CHAPTER 5.

Gang Warfare!

EVERYBODY turned and looked at the stairs. There, standing midway between the landing and the hall, was Trixie Foster.

"He sure knows his stuff," agreed Trixie, with a grateful glance at Handforth. "He's white all through—and for that reason I'm quitting. I wouldn't have that kid hurt for anything."

"I'm not much more of a kid than you are," growled Handforth, hurt.

"You don't get me, boy friend," said Trixie softly. "The less you can have to do with these tough gunmen, the better. I'm in this thing up to my neck, and I've got to stand the racket. I guess I was nutty to come here at all. By this time Jake may have been bumped off."

"He may have been which?" asked Handforth blankly.

"Taken for a ride—shot up!" said the girl. "That rat, Kapone, packs a nifty rod, and when he shoots, he shoots to kill."

"Packs a nifty rod!" repeated Handforth, in wonder.

"She means he carries a gun," murmured Nipper.

"But, oh boy, is Jake quick on the draw?" went on Trixie. "I'll say he is! His own gat was out before those Chicago rats could draw a line on him. I guess their first shots were wild."

"One of them nearly got me," said Handforth feelingly.

"Sure! They don't give a bean," said Trixie. "It doesn't matter to them if they bump off a few innocent bystanders. They're tough all right."

"I'll tell the cockeyed world," murmured K. K.

"Yeah, they're so tough that your London cops will need to watch their step," said the girl earnestly. "And if they can plug me as well as Jake, they'll call it a day."

"But they wouldn't shoot a girl!" protested Handforth.

"They sure would!" retorted Trixie. "By bumping me off they'll get one in on Jake. That's why I've got to quit."

"That's why you've got to stay," retorted Handforth. "Do you think I'm going to let you go out of here and get murdered? What should I think of myself afterwards? As long as you stay here, you're safe."

"Safe nothing!" said Trixie. "Listen, boys! A big automobile has been moving up and down this road, and I guess Kapone's crowd is wise. They've got on to us. I sure wouldn't like any gun play to happen in this house. It wouldn't be giving you an even break, big boy."

She made for the door, and then happened to notice that two of the windows overlooked the road, and that the blinds were fully up.

"Gee! I didn't see that those shades were up," she said quickly. "Have you a garden outside?"

Without waiting for anyone to reply, she ran to one of the windows and pulled the curtain aside. She was just in time to see a big car glide slowly past along the quiet thoroughfare. She distinguished two shadowy figures in the back of the vehicle—and, instinctively, she ducked.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Handforth.

"I knew it!" she panted, terror-stricken. "It's Kapone and his Chicago rats! How do you get these shades down? For land's sake be quick!"

"Oh, rot! You're scared over nothing," protested Handforth. "We're not in Chicago, or in New York, either. Gunmen don't fire through people's windows here. There's nothing to be afraid of."

"Good gad, no," supported Archie. "Of all the ridiculous ideas——"

"Down—all of you!" cried Trixie frantically, as she glanced through the window again.

She herself fell flat to the floor, and at the same instant a shattering roar broke out from the road. The windows splintered and crashed, and there were a number of sharp "thud-thuds" on the opposite wall.

The schoolboys and schoolgirls dropped quickly enough now, really frightened. Something had hissed past Reggie Pitt's ear, and Doris Berkeley had felt a pluck at her sleeve. Later, she discovered that the cloth had been furrowed by one of the flying bullets.

Outside, the deadly machine-gun continued to send a hail of bullets along the entire front of the Handforth house.

Zurrrrh! Crack-crack-crack-crack!

It was a nightmare whilst it lasted. Every window of the lounge hall was reduced to splinters, and bullets flew in dozens. But for Trixie's warning, many of the boys and girls might easily have been killed.

Outside, the big open car was moving slowly. The two men at the rear were operating the machine-gun with practised hands. They did not cease their efforts until the whole front of the house had been swept by the devastating fire. Several people passing along the road had halted in their track and were staring in dazed amazement.

Then suddenly the car speeded up. With a roar it sped out of sight in the direction of Piccadilly, to merge, a few moments later, with the stream of ordinary traffic.

From first to last the whole incident had not occupied more than forty seconds, and Grosvenor Avenue was now as quiet and as select as ever. It seemed incredible that this dignified residential thoroughfare had been the scene of such a desperate act of gang war.

People were opening their front doors and staring out. Butlers, maidservants, footmen, were running to the gates, mystified and frightened. They were too late to see any trace of the gunmen.

In the lounge hall of Handforth's home the startled boys and girls slowly rose to their feet.

"Is anybody hurt?" cried Trixie anxiously.

"I don't think so—we ducked in time, thanks to you," gasped Handforth.

"Gee, I'm sure glad," said the girl, her eyes full of relief. "I guess you'll believe me now! They tried to plug me just then."

"They nearly got the lot of us," said Nipper, breathing hard.

"Aw, they don't care!" said Trixie. "If you others were killed, too, it wouldn't matter a dime to them. I guess I'll be on my way. Is it far to the Green Park Hotel?"

"Not far," said Handforth. "So that's where you're staying, is it? You must let us take you round—"

"Not on your life!" interrupted Trixie. "No, sir! This baby has brought enough trouble on you already, and from now on she's standing the racket alone. I've got to get to Jake! I didn't figure on these guys concentrating so much on me, and it makes me kind of worried. I guess they must have got Jake already."

Her distress was real. There was no acting about this. And the schoolboys and school-girls felt sorry for her. She was obviously hand-in-glove with Jake Diamond, the gunman, but she was very human.

"You can't go!" insisted Handforth. "They'll—er—bump you off if you do! They wouldn't dare come back here again, so you'll be safe."

CHAPTER 6.

Travers on the Trail!

THERE was one St. Frank's fellow who knew more about the movements of Al Kapone and his gang than any of the others. And his knowledge had been acquired by a fortunate chance, supplemented by quick thinking and decisive action.

Vivian Travers was the particular hero. It was just the sort of cool daring that appealed to his adventurous temperament.

He had intended going with Nipper and K. K. and the others to Handforth's home; but, remembering that he had gone to Duncan Square on his motor-cycle, he decided to use the machine to convey him to Grosvenor Avenue.

He might have got there first but for the fact that he experienced considerable trouble in starting the engine. He didn't know where the fault was, and he spent some little time in searching for it, thoroughly exasperated by this piece of bad luck—which was making him last instead of first.

When he finally got the engine started, the rest had been gone for some considerable time; and thus it came about that Travers arrived in Grosvenor Avenue at almost the exact moment when the gunmen started their spectacular machine-gun play.

Travers nearly fell off his machine with amazement. At first he had a wild idea that the whole thing was a fake, but when he saw the vivid spurts of flame, heard the vicious crackling of the gun, he changed his mind—particularly as he saw the windows of Handforth's home being shattered before his eyes.

The whole affair was over almost before he could realise that it had happened; but he had a quick brain, and he acted with

commendable speed. His first impulse was to dash into Handforth's place and ascertain if any of his friends had been harmed. But that would have meant forsaking this chance to follow the rats to their burrow.

So, instead of jumping from his machine, he deliberately switched off his headlight and followed. He could well run the risk of being pulled up by a policeman for riding without lights—and if those gunmen glanced back along the dark thoroughfare they would not know that they were being trailed.

Travers was thrilled.

He guessed that these crooks belonged to Soarneck Al Kapone's gang. He had heard that broadcast; he had guessed, like the other fellows, that Handforth had taken that girl to his own home. Kapone must have known it—and that was the reason for this shooting outrage. If only he could keep track of that car, he might be instrumental in bringing off a sensational arrest.

In Piccadilly he could see the vehicle some distance ahead, with two or three taxis and a bus in between. The car was driving in the direction of Knightsbridge, and it had now settled down to a smooth, easy speed.

"Cunning blighters!" murmured Travers. "Less chance of attracting attention by going slowly. All the better for me, too. By Samson! What ought I to do?"

He thought about speeding up, passing the car, and warning the police ahead. But he remembered that machine-gun; and he remembered, too, that these gunmen were desperate, and that they all carried automatic pistols. If any attempt was made to hold up the car, they would certainly open fire. Far better to await developments and then act accordingly.

The car turned sedately into the Park. Travers allowed it to get so far ahead that he could only just glimpse its red tail light, then followed on. He noticed a policeman give him a quick look, but he speeded up and avoided any stoppage. His quarry was now well into the Park, and it seemed to him that the car had come to a standstill in a quiet spot under some trees.

His next move was to get off his own machine, and leave it propped against the kerb. He left it there, risking the consequences. Dodging on to the grass, and keeping behind the trees, he ran swiftly. When he ventured to take another look at the stationary car he had the satisfaction of seeing three men walking casually away from it.

"Abandoned!" he breathed. "I thought as much!"

The car had evidently been "borrowed" from some parking place. It had been used by the crooks for this one special purpose, and then left here. One of the men was carrying a longish bag; Travers did not doubt that it contained the machine-gun.

Trailing them with caution, he was soon satisfied that they were unaware of his atten-

tions. They walked easily, as though out for an ordinary stroll, and presently, leaving the Park, they entered one of the big modern hotels which have recently sprung up in that region. It was the great Empire Hotel, a blaze of a thousand lights, and Travers had fresh satisfaction when he saw the three men lingering in conversation on the wide steps. All their actions proved that they were deliberately creating a false impression.

The schoolboy took advantage of the situation. Strolling coolly up the steps, he entered the imposing vestibule, and took a seat on one of the soft lounges, as though waiting for a friend. From here he could see the three men as they chatted on the steps, and he could take good stock of them.

They were obviously Americans—well-dressed, well-groomed, and well-to-do. If Travers had not seen them leave that car with his own eyes he would have thought it impossible that they could be the men who had poured that hail of deadly machine-gun fire into Handforth's home.

He had little doubt that the eldest and biggest of the three was Al Kapone himself—a tall, thick-set man, with a round, clean-shaven face. It was difficult to tell whether he had a scar on his neck, but it was a point which Travers did not forget. The other men were younger, and might easily have been mistaken for American business men.

They came into the hotel after a few minutes, and strolled towards one of the big lifts.

"Room 205—fourth floor," said the big man, biting the end off a cigar. "Yep this is surely some Park, boys. We kind of fancy Central Park in New York, but this has got us beaten."

Travers was already on the stairs. Once out of sight of the lift, he ran for all he was worth. He had noted, with satisfaction, that the lift attendant had paused before closing the door so that some ladies who had just come in could take advantage of the ascending lift.

It gave Travers the chance he needed. By the time he reached the fourth floor, the lift had not yet arrived. He raced along the carpeted corridors, eagerly looking at the room numbers as he went. He located No. 205 with ease, to find the door half open. He took a quick look inside. One of the hotel valets was just entering the adjoining bath-room with towels. In Travers' rear he heard the lift doors slide open, although the lift itself was out of sight round an angle.

It was a moment for quick action. Travers tiptoed into the room, and dived under the bed. Two seconds later the valet returned from the bath-room. He went to the door, and came face to face with the three Americans who had just come up.



SMILERS



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know a good rib-tickler, send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

PERFECTLY CLEAR.

A small pupil was being reprovod by his teacher for saying "I ain't going."

"Now listen," said the teacher. "I am not going, you are not going, we are not going, they are not going. Do you understand?"

"Yes, teacher," replied the pupil bright "There ain't nobody going."

(B. Fryar, 8, Downpatrick Street, Bathfriland, Ireland, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

EFFICIENCY

Maggs: "How are you getting along at home since your wife's been away?"

Baggs: "Fine! I've reached the highest point of efficiency."

Maggs: "How?"

Baggs: "I can put my socks on from either end now."

(G. Lucas, 77, Somerset Road, Coventry, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

ON THE SAFE SIDE.

Bobby: "Daddy, a boy at school told me that I looked just like you."

Dad: "And what did you say?"

Bobby: "Nothing. He was bigger'n me!"

(J. Jackson, 68, John Street, Alexandria, Scotland, has been awarded a penknife.)

DOGGED!

Tom: "What kind of dog have you got there?"

Harry: "Why, that's a police dog."

Tom: "Well, he doesn't look like one."

Harry: "Oh—er—he's disguised!"

(E. Lerner, c/o Anglo-Palestine Co., Ltd., Beirut, Syria, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

LUCKY.

Indignant Pedestrian (to workman who has just dropped a hod of bricks from scaffolding):

"You dangerous idiot! One of those bricks hit me on the head!"

Workman: "You're lucky. Look at all the bricks that didn't?"

Miss Annie Jackson, 11, Southey Walk, Tilbury, has been awarded a penknife.)

"Say, just the fellow I want," said the big man. "Have some whisky sent up here, and make it snappy."

"Yes, sir; I've just put some fresh towels in your bath-room, sir," said the valet. "I'll have the whisky sent up straight away."

He vanished, and the men closed the door. Travers heard the key turn.

"Listen, Al!" said one of the men earnestly. "You can't get away with this racket in London. That machine-gun dope is too risky here. Scotland Yard is not so sleepy as you think. And there's no graft in this town."

"Scotland Yard nothing!" snapped the big man. "Those birds make me tired. I'm running this show, Ed, and if you don't like my ways you can quit."

"We don't know if we got that dame even now," growled the third man. "We sure plugged that swell house, but that may not mean a thing. Ed's right. It's too risky, Al."

"I've crossed the Atlantic to get Jake—and I'll get him," said Scarneck Al Kapone grimly. "I'll get that dame of his, too, if she's not bumped off already. I'll show these English guys something they've never seen before."

"You're plum crazy, Al," said one of the others. "That theatre racket was risky enough—Jake nearly got me—but this machine-gun stunt is all wet. It'll land us where we don't want to go."

"Listen to me, you cheap skate!" snapped Kapone harshly. "Jake's been on the run ever since we butted in on his game in New York. He thought he'd given us the run around by making for London. Before to-night's out I mean to get him, and you two fish are going to help me. Get that, and get it good! I've no use for quitters in my gang."

Travers, under the bed, felt his heart thudding against his ribs. He was thrilled with excitement, but at the same time he realised the full danger of his position. If his presence here were discovered he knew he could expect little mercy from these ruthless gangsters.

Tap-tap!

Somebody was at the door, and Al waved a hand.

"The whisky," he said. "Let that guy in."

One of the others opened the door, and then glanced quickly round.

"Say, Chief, it's Pietro," he announced.

Another man entered—a thin, dark man, with jet black hair. At the same time the drinks arrived, and except for a few jovial pleasantries from Kapone nothing was said until the waiter had gone.

"Well, Pietro, what do you know?" asked the gang leader as soon as they were alone.

"I guess I've located that sewer-rat," said the newcomer eagerly. "I got in touch with the taxi-driver who picked him up at the

PROOF

"I hear that Bob's had an accident. Is that right?"

"Yes. Someone gave him a bear cub, and said it would eat off his hand."

"Well?"

"It did!"

(D. Skeates, 7, Castle Road, Ipswich, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

HOW IT WAS DONE

Wilson: "I once ran a mile to keep two fellows from fighting."

Jones: "Did you succeed in preventing the fight?"

Wilson: "Oh, yes—he couldn't catch me!"

(R. Freer, 1a, Regent Gardens, Teignmouth, Devon, has been awarded a pen-knife.)

TALE OF A PILL

Doctor: "And did you keep the pill on your stomach, as I advised?"

Patient: "I tried to, doctor, but every time I breathed it rolled off."

(T. Holland, 40, Lowther Street, Coventry, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)



STUNG.

Sergeant-Major: "You're slack, Atkins. What were you before you joined the Army?"

Private Atkins: "Clerk, sir."

Sergeant-Major: "Hub! Washing out ink-pots, I suppose?"

Private Atkins: "No, sir. We employed an old sergeant-major for that sort of work."

(R. Malloy, 4, W. Adam Street, Edinburgh, has been awarded a penknife.)

SAFETY FIRST.

First Navy: "Why doesn't old Joe come down from the steam-roller and have his grub with us?"

Second Navy: "Oh, he says with all these car thieves about he's not taking any chances."

(J. Sheeran, 16, Scott Street, Pendleton, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

DISGRACEFUL.

Mr. Twenty-tun (seeing open coal-hole on pavement): "Disgraceful, leaving that coal-hole open! Why, I might have fallen down it!"

(J. Mapleson, 83, Malden Road, Kentish Town, N.W.5, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

theatre. He's skulking down in a third-rate hotel somewhere up-town. A district they call Bloomsbury, I figure."

"Jake's there now?"

"Sure—waiting for that dame of his, I guess."

"Boys, we've got to work fast," said Kapone grimly. "What's this hotel, Pietro?"

"A dump called the Bedmont," said Pietro. "Say, you'd best go easy, Chief. The cops are racing around good and plenty after what's happened to-night. Best not croak Jake until——"

"Where do you get that stuff?" interrupted Kapone harshly. "Nix on this 'go easy' dope. That job's got to be put through to-night! Get me? You're a bunch of bonehead suckers! Can't you understand that we've got a break to-night? If we leave it till to-morrow Jake will have quit!"

Travers prayed that the men would refer again to the name of the obscure hotel. He hadn't caught the word—it was difficult for him to understand the nasal, slangy talk these men were using. He believed the word was "Bedmont," but he wasn't sure.

Unfortunately, no further reference was made to the hotel's name. The men were preparing to make an immediate departure. Travers, venturing to peep from under the bed, saw Kapone pull out his automatic and test it.

"Well, boys, we'll be on our way," he said briskly. "This time we'll fill that gorilla so full of lead that it'll need four men to lift him into his coffin! Ready? Let's go!"

"Guess we shan't need this, Chief," said Ed, indicating the long bag.

"Nix on it," replied Kapone. "We can settle this job with our rods. I guess I'm sick of hanging around waiting for action."

They all moved out, and Travers was in a dilemma. He knew that they were setting out to murder Jake Diamond, but he did not know their destination. Again he thought of having the men stopped, but hesitated.

Diamond, no doubt, was a dangerous crook, and possibly the world would be better after he had been "bumped off." But all Travers' instincts were against allowing this thing to happen. He was horrified at the thought of these four men bursting in upon their victim and shooting him down in cold blood. Crook though he was, he didn't deserve that.

But if Travers attempted to stop them himself he would be dealt with as callously as though he were a mere fly. There was a telephone in the room, and the men had now gone. He might get in touch with the reception clerk, but what good would that be? If the hotel porters tried to stop the gunmen they would bring out their weapons, and that would mean needless slaughter.

Then another idea came to Travers, and his eyes shone with a sudden hope as he leapt for the telephone.

CHAPTER 7.

The Show-down!

WITHIN two minutes Travers had got the number he wanted.

"Hallo! Hallo!" he said urgently.

"By Samson! Is that you, Handy?"

"It's Travers, isn't it?" came Handforth's voice.

"Yes. Are you all right?"

"Of course I'm all right," replied Handforth. "How did you know——"

"I was outside when that car fired at your place with a machine-gun," interrupted Travers. "I followed it. Those men in it were American gunmen—Kapone's gang from Chicago!"

"That's stale news," said Handforth. "We've had a hot time here, Travers. It was only by a miracle that some of us weren't hit. It was Miss Foster's doing, really; she warned us to duck."

"Is Miss Foster there still?"

"Yes; and I want to get her away," replied Handforth anxiously. "We're expecting the police any minute—the marvel is they haven't come already—and we don't want a lot of awkward inquiries."

"I should think not, with that girl in your house," replied Travers. "Listen to me, Handy. It's important. I trailed those men to the Empire Hotel, and I'm speaking from their room now."

"From their room! What the dickens——"

"Can't explain now," interrupted Travers. "Look here, Handy, they've just cleared off to shoot Jake Diamond. They've located him, and they mean to 'get' him at once."

"My only sainted aunt!" gasped Handforth. "Where is he? That's what Miss Foster's worrying about."

"That's just the point—I don't know the name of the hotel!" exclaimed Travers earnestly. "I didn't quite catch it. But it's in Bloomsbury, and I believe the name is Bedmont. I want you to ask that girl——"

"Hold on a jiffy!"

Handforth, at the other end, turned excitedly from the telephone. Nipper and K. K. and all the others were listening intently. Trixie Foster had a worried look on her face.

"What it is?" she asked anxiously.

"A friend of mine says that he followed that car," explained Handforth. "Kapone and his gang have just gone off to shoot Diamond! He's in some hotel in Bloomsbury, but Travers—that's my friend—didn't hear the name of it."

"Gee! They'll get Jake!" cried Trixie, in agony.

"But the hotel——"

"It's the Bedmont."

"Travers, it's the Bedmont!" said Handforth, turning back to the 'phone. "You'd better rush here as quickly as you can—or go straight to the Bedmont."

He was so excited that he hung up without waiting for Travers to make any reply.

The others were all flushed with excitement, too.

"Oh, tell me what you know!" urged Trixie desperately.

"Only that Kapone and his men have gone to the Bedmont Hotel to shoot Jake Diamond," said Handforth. "I thought you said that you were staying at the Green Park Hotel? I understood that Diamond was there, too."

"Sure," said the girl. "But Jake took a room at the Bedmont to use as a hide-out, in case there was trouble with Kapone's lot. Jake must have gone there from the theatre, and those rats trailed him. Oh, gee! It's sure 'outs' for poor Jake!"

"Not likely!" roared Handforth. "Hi, Mac, dash out and get hold of a couple of taxis. We're a lot nearer to Bloomsbury than the Empire Hotel, and if we dash off at once we might get there first."

"Why not ring up the Bedmont?" suggested Nipper.

"It wouldn't be any good," cried Trixie. "Jake wouldn't answer the 'phone—he wouldn't be put through. He'd suspect that it was a trick of Al Kapone's. He thinks he's safe there, and those dirty crooks will break in on him and shoot him up! I guess it's too late to do anything!"

"We'll have a shot at it, anyhow!" declared Handforth excitedly. "Come on! Those brutes may not go direct—they think they've got plenty of time. Why, they may delay an hour before they actually break in to do the shooting."

"Gee, big boy, you think of everything!" said the girl. "Maybe you're right. You're sure an honest-to-goodness kid! But listen! It's kind of mean to drag you in on this show-down. You might get hurt."

"We'll see the giddy thing through now we've started," growled Handforth stubbornly.

He hurried out, almost dragging Trixie with him, and a number of the other St. Frank's fellows went with them. Fatty Little, much as he wanted to go, was persuaded by Nipper to stay behind with Irene & Co. Nipper himself was at the telephone.

He did not feel inclined to leave this matter to Handforth. At first he had thought about ringing up Scotland Yard. Then he had remembered that Nelson Lee was almost certainly at his chambers in Gray's Inn Road, and Gray's Inn Road was within five minutes of Bloomsbury.

"That you, guv'nor?" he said quickly, when the connection was made. "Nipper speaking."

"You young beggar, where are you?" came Nelson Lee's voice, in an exasperated tone. "I've been inquiring all over the town for you. I expected to find you at Mr. Pitt's place, but when I rang up—"

"Guv'nor, there is no time to talk!" interrupted Nipper. "I suppose you've heard about that affair at the Emperor Theatre?"

"I have, and I gather that some St. Frank's boys—"

"I'll tell you all about it when I see you, guv'nor," broke in Nipper. "I want you to dash straight to the Bedmont Hotel, in Bloomsbury. I want you to warn the manager that a gang of gunmen is coming over to shoot Jake Diamond! Get him away if you can, sir. He's a crook, but he doesn't deserve a death like that."

"If I get him I'll place him under police protection—and I hope he'll be promptly deported," came Nelson Lee's grim voice.

WHILE Nipper was talking to Nelson Lee, Handforth and Trixie Foster were speeding to the Bedmont Hotel in Bloomsbury, with Church and McClure and K. K. and Deeks and Goffin also crowded in the taxi. Luckily they had got hold of a fast driver, and a man, moreover, who was not too particular about the speed limit regulations. Perhaps the two pound-notes which Trixie had thrust into his hand had dulled his scruples. The hotel was reached in record time. It proved to be a quiet, dingy place, tucked away in a back-water; one of a row of high, ugly buildings.

"Listen, boys," said Trixie, as they tumbled out of the cab. "Don't ask for Jake by his real name. He'll use another here. Foster, most likely. He used my name once before when he had to lie low."

Handforth was already barging into the ill-lit lobby. A quick glance round showed him that nothing untoward had yet happened. A sleepy-looking pageboy was leaning over the desk reading the evening paper. There was every indication of peace and tranquillity. The desk clerk was absent.

"Have you got a man named Foster staying here?" asked Handforth bluntly.

The pageboy looked up from his paper in some surprise.

"The American gent who came in this evening?" he asked. "Yes, Mr. Foster's in, if you want him. I'll send up a message—"

"Nix on that, kid!" broke in Trixie, pushing forward. "I guess we'll go straight up. We want to see Mr. Foster urgently. What's his room number?"

"No. 16—second floor, miss," replied the page, startled out of his sleepiness. "I'd better let the manager know."

"We don't want any fuss," said Handforth, pushing a ten-shilling note into the pageboy's hand. "We'll go straight up. No need to tell anybody—see? Just a surprise party."

"I understand," grinned the pageboy, without understanding at all.

There was no lift, but it was easy enough to get to the second floor, and the juniors could see how relieved Trixie was looking. They were here before "Scarneck" and his men had shown up. They would be able to get Jake Diamond away into safety.

Arriving at Room No. 16, Handforth blunderingly hammered on the door and tried the knob.

"Say, boy friend, do you want to make Jake dive out of the window?" asked Trixie quickly, as she tapped on the panel. "Jake,

open the door! It's all right, honey. I guess you know who it is."

There was a quick step inside the room, and the key was turned in the lock. Handforth and the others waited with suppressed excitement. It was a novel experience to come face to face with a genuine, "honest-to-goodness" New York gunman.

The door opened, and the tall, clean-built man Handforth had seen in the theatre stood revealed. At close quarters he was prepossessing enough, but there was a quick shiftiness in his eyes which betrayed his character. Like lightning he looked at the boys, his glance shooting from one to another. One hand was on his hip—on the butt of his automatic.

"Say," he ejaculated, "what's the game?"

The juniors were surprised more than scared. They had pictured a real gunman as a low, brutal type of ruffian. Jake Diamond, in actuality, was a well-dressed fellow, who looked like the average successful business man.

"Pipe down, Jake!" said Trixie, as she stepped quickly into the room. "Don't get these kids wrong. They're sure crackerjacks. They've helped me plenty this evening."

"You'd best all come in," said Diamond suspiciously.

The boys crowded in. They were more thrilled than ever. They all knew Jake Diamond to be a bootlegger, a racketeer, and probably a dozen other unlawful things, but

the fact that he was being hunted like an animal, hounded from pillar to post by his enemies, rendered them sympathetic.

"Spill it!" he said briefly.

Trixie spilled it.

"For the love of Mike!" ejaculated Jake Diamond, at length. "These kids are sure nifty, honey, I'll say they are! So they've been giving Al the run-around? Gee, what do you know about that?"

"You've got to quit, Jake," said the girl earnestly. "Those rats are on their way here now, and they mean to bump you off. I guess there's no time for long explanations——"

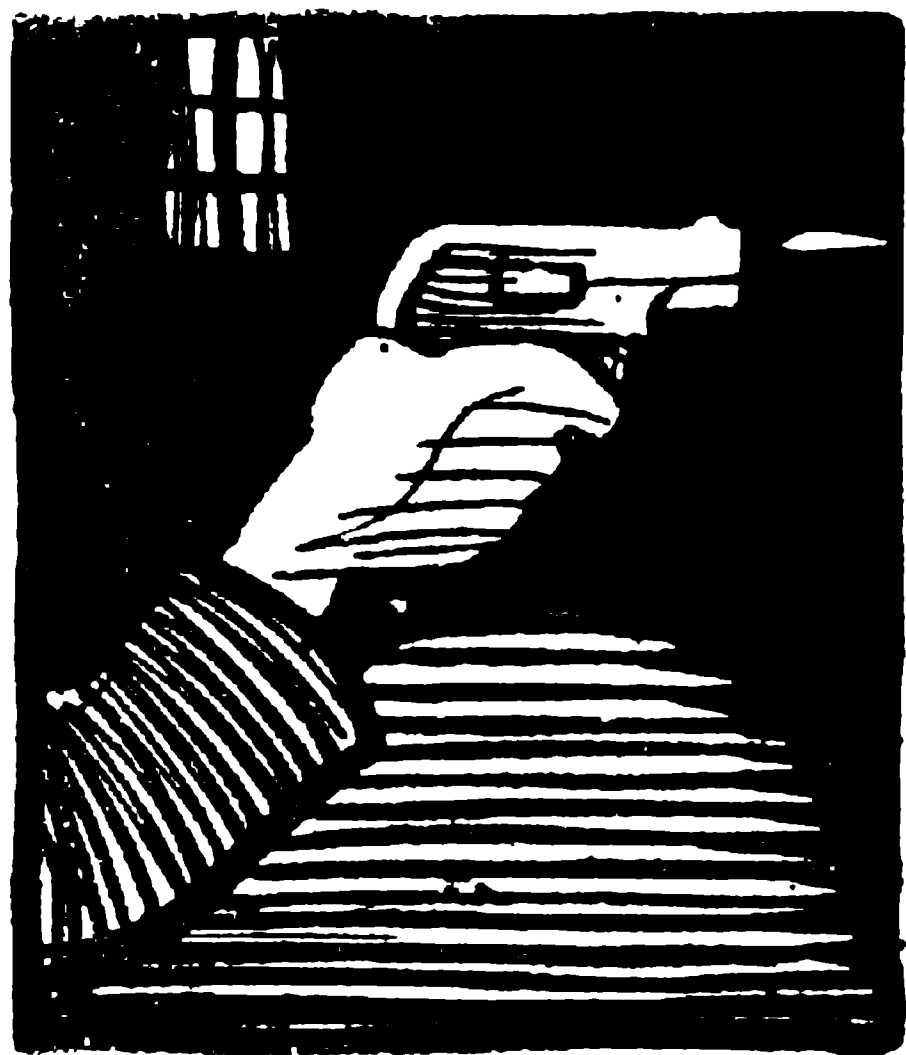
"I can't get it!" interrupted Jake, frowning. "How did those stiff know I was here? I ain't so sure that these kids are right, baby. Anyway, I'm not quitting until I'm satisfied."

At this moment Travers himself arrived. Everybody in the room was startled when they heard the knock on the door, and Diamond's hand flew to his automatic. The vicious, ugly look which came into his face transformed his entire expression, and the schoolboys could well understand that he was indeed a dangerous man.

"It's all right—only me," came Travers' voice.

"Let him in," urged Handforth. "He's the chap who followed Kapone's lot."

Travers was admitted, and quite coolly he described his own exciting adventure. There



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"Come on," he said. "We'd better get her."

"Sorry, Lennard, that we are too late," said Lee. "I was afraid of it. Nipper did not 'phone me the warning until those men were on their way. It's an ugly business."

He took the manager by the arm after Lennard had gone.

"You got my 'phone message?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes, Mr. Lee."

"And you sent the boys away?"

"They hadn't been gone half a minute before you arrived," replied the other. "Thank heaven it was so! Things are bad enough now without having an added scandal."

The manager's desperate energy in getting the boys out of the hotel was now explained. It was owing to Nelson Lee's instructions that St. Frank's was not to be mixed up in this sordid crime. Lee was intensely relieved, but he drew a deep breath when he realised the narrowness of the boys' escape.

Uniformed police were now hurrying in, fetched by Robbins, the pageboy. The affair was developing into a first-class sensation. People were crowding in from the street, and the excitement was intense. In some mysterious way a newspaper reporter had got wind of the shooting, and was already on the spot. Yet scarcely four minutes had elapsed since the actual shooting.

"What a pity we weren't in time, gov'nor," said Nipper regretfully. "I expect Diamond was a scoundrel, but I hate to think of his being mown down like that. It's—it's horrible!"

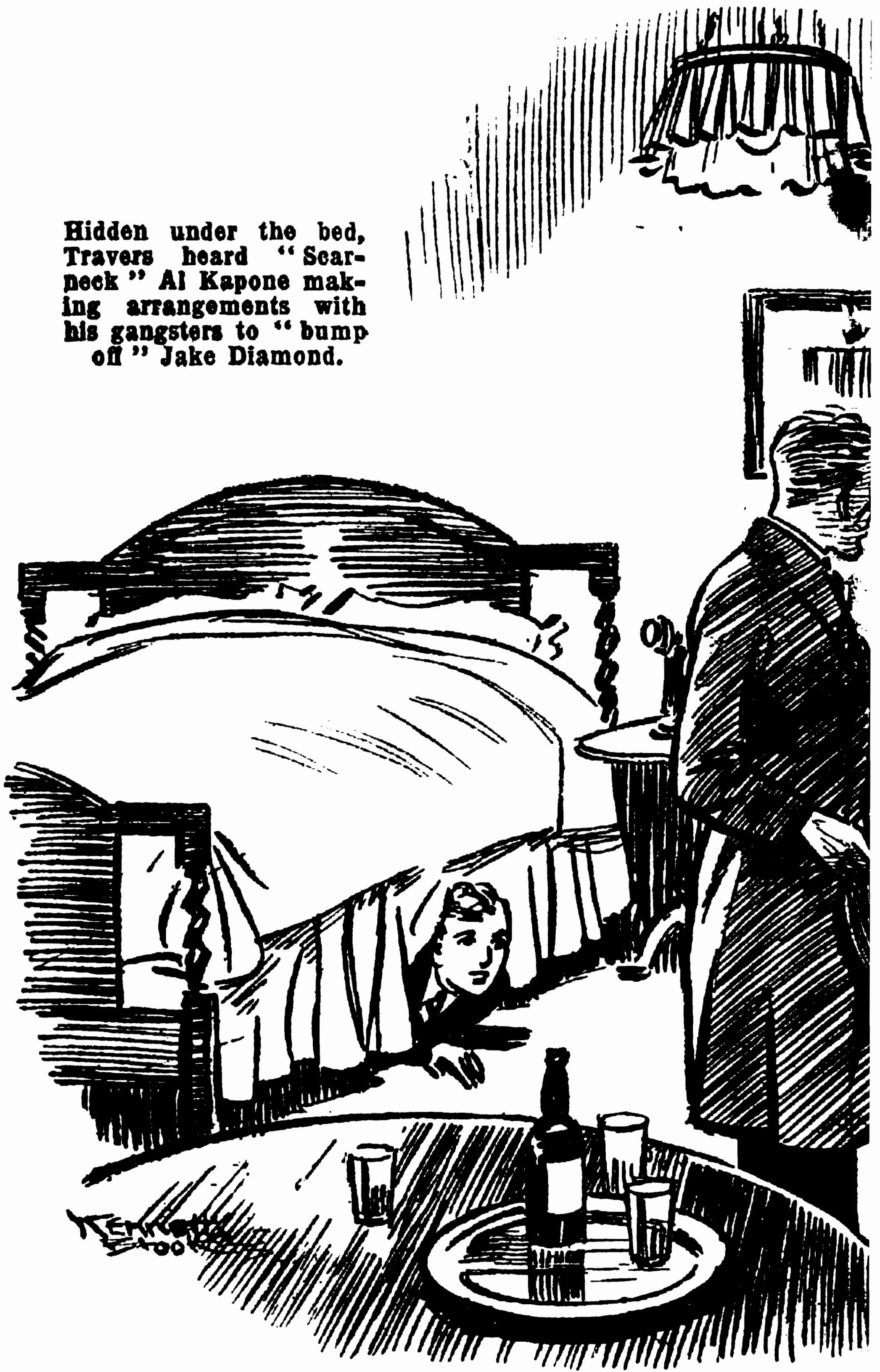
"There is no mercy in gang warfare, Nipper," said Lee quietly. "Since these men choose to live such lives, they must be prepared to meet such deaths."

There was a fresh excitement at this moment, for Chief Inspector Lennard came tearing down the stairs.

"Where's the manager?" he was demanding. "We want a key to that room. That infernal girl has locked herself in, and she won't open the door or give any answer!"

He hurried up again accompanied by the manager. The uniformed police had difficulty in keeping the people back. Nelson Lee and Nipper were permitted to go up. Trixie Foster's surprising behaviour was intriguing. Lee almost suspected a double tragedy. The Follics girl, finding her "man" dead, had taken her own life.

Hidden under the bed, Travers heard "Sear-neck" Al Kapone making arrangements with his gangsters to "bump off" Jake Diamond.



The manager opened the door of the room with a master key.

"What's this?" exclaimed Lennard as he reached the centre of the room and spun round. "The girl's not here. Quick—the window!"

He himself leapt to the window as Nelson Lee and Nipper followed him into the room. The window was the only way out of this apartment with the exception of the door. Lennard, at the open sash, swore forcibly. There was a fire-escape running down the wall, with a confusion of yards and back-gardens just visible in the dark.

"The girl has tricked us!" exclaimed the Yard man, turning back into the room. "While we were hammering on that



door she must have gone down the fire-escape."

"There's something else, Lennard—something you have apparently overlooked," said Lee grimly. "Jake Diamond isn't here!"

Lennard stared round blankly.

"The body's gone!" he ejaculated. "What on earth—"

He broke off, and looked under the bed—in the wardrobe—in the cupboard. But the only reminder that Jake Diamond had been in the room was a grim wet stain which showed ruddily on the faded carpet.

"How in the name of all that's marvellous did that girl get the body down the fire-escape?" demanded Lennard, removing his bowler and scratching his head. "You're

sure that the man was dead?" he went on, looking at the manager.

"I should say that he was very dead," replied the manager firmly. "He had at least six shots fired into him at point-blank range, and when I saw him he was a huddled heap on the floor. And look at these blood stains."

"I don't know what to make of it, Lennard," said Lee thoughtfully. "There seems no doubt that Diamond was dead. In some way that girl took advantage of the brief delay— But one minute. There must be some other explanation."

"You mean—the murderers. guv'nor?" asked Nipper quickly.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Lennard. "That's it!"

"They did the shooting, and then came back for the girl," said Nelson Lee. "That's a possible explanation. They couldn't come back in the ordinary way, but they knew of the fire-escape. These American gangsters have peculiar customs, and they no doubt have some excellent motive for getting their victim's body away. And they took the girl, too. It's a job for you, Lennard."

"If I lay my hands on those scoundrels I'll see that they get their deserts," growled the Yard man. "We'll teach these cheap American crooks to play their games over here!"

THE mystery was complete. An examination of the grounds at the back of the hotel yielded little result. One or two bloodstains were seen, but there were no footprints on the hard concrete. Jake Diamond's body had been successfully smuggled away.

If Nelson Lee's theory was correct—and he was by no means sure it was—the murderers must have taken a big risk in returning. But the very audacity of the thing had insured success. Their spectacular dash through the lobby, their escape by the front entrance might have been a blind. It was always possible, too, that other members of the gang had been lurking outside the window, ready to do their part immediately Kapone and his two companions had done theirs.

"Well, Nipper, there's nothing further we can do here," remarked Nelson Lee, after a while. "We'd better be getting back home. It isn't late yet, but the evening is so far advanced that it's hardly worth your while returning to the party at Pitt's place."

"If you don't mind, guv'nor, I'll just run along and see Handy," said Nipper. "I ex-

pect most of the fellows have gone along to his house to pick up Irene and Mary and the other girls. I'll buzz home later."

CHAPTER 9.

The Midnight Marauders!

VIVIAN TRAVERS was puzzled.

"Those rotters must have planned that additional stunt after they'd left their hotel," said Travers. "They didn't mention the possibility of smuggling Diamond's body away."

"Or kidnapping that girl?" asked Handforth eagerly. "Think! Are you sure you didn't hear—"

"Of course I'm sure," said Travers. "But the explanation is simple enough, I expect. There must have been some other members of Kapone's gang on the watch, and that other wheeze was thought of later. Perhaps they didn't want the police to find the body."

"Why not?"

"Without a body, there's practically no evidence," put in Kirby Keeble Parkington. "We might tell the police we saw the murder committed, and the police might find all sorts of bloodstains, but where's the proof? You can't prove a murder without a body."

"The cunning brutes!" growled Handforth. "That's it, of course! Taking Diamond away was a master stroke. They've probably dumped him in the river, or whirled him off in a high-speed car—"

"What does it matter?" put in Church wearily.

He was not the only one who was showing the effects of the hectic evening. That final episode had left its mark. The stark horror of that tragedy enacted before their very eyes had made a deep impression. At Handforth's place there had been fresh excitement. The police had been and gone. Inquiries had been made about the machine-gun incident, and Barton, the butler, was in a rare state of apprehension and worry.

"Well, we'll be getting along," said Travers casually, with a glance at Nipper and the others. "It's getting late—"

"Rats!" interrupted Reggie Pitt. "Plenty of time for you to come back to my place. What about supper? My mater's had everything prepared, and we can't let her down."

Nobody was feeling much like supper or continuing the party at Pitt's home, but they realised it might help to rid them of their depression.

Church and McClure elected to stay with Handy.

"We should have been coming home from the theatre at about now, anyhow," said Church. "Supper's all ready for us, and we'd better stick to the old ass. I believe he's really cut up about that girl."

"The sooner he forgets her the better," murmured Nipper.

Very soon all the boys and girls had gone with the exception of Church and McClure.

They sat down in the big dining-room to the cold supper that had been laid out some hours before.

"Buck up, Handy!" said Mac gently. "Aren't you going to eat that ham and tongue?"

"I can't eat anything—it would choke me," growled Handforth.

"I felt just the same, but after the first mouthful or two it's all right," put in Church. "Come on, old man, pull yourself together. Your pater won't be wild because of these broken windows—"

"Wild? My pater?" broke in Handforth, staring. "I don't care if he is wild. He's unreasonable enough for anything sometimes. But I didn't break the windows, did I? Dash it, you chaps, I'm worried!"

"You did the best you could, Handy," said McClure. "You acted like a brick. You protected that girl, you tried to save Jake Diamond, and it wasn't your fault that he was 'bumped off,' as they call it. You've got nothing to fret about."

"Oh, it's no good talking to you," said Handforth, as he pushed his chair back and rose impatiently. "How do you think I can sit here, eating my supper, when I know that that ripping girl is in the hands of Kapone and his men? They've got her. Don't you realise that?"

"But—but we can't help it," protested Church.

"I don't know how you can sit at that table, filling yourselves up with veal and ham pie!" went on Handforth bitterly. "If only I had some clue to work on, I'd go off on the trail!"

"Thank goodness there isn't a clue!" whispered Mac fervently.

"I don't see why you should take it to heart so much, old man," observed Church. "That girl, after all, is a crook herself—"

"She's not!" roared Handforth.

"Eh?" gasped Church. "Dash it, Handy—"

"She's not a crook!" went on Handforth fiercely. "If you say that again, Walter Church, I'll black both your eyes!"

Church and McClure stared at their leader, aghast. Evidently he was "smitten" as much as ever, in spite of what had happened.

"Have it your own way," said Church, who had no desire to have his face decorated. "I wouldn't argue with a chap in his own home. Guests, when all is said and done, are expected to be polite. But if you're trying to tell me that this chorus girl, who is an associate of gangsters and gunmen, is not crooked, then I'll eat the rest of this pie in one mouthful!"

"She's in danger—and that ought to be enough," said Handforth tensely. "She's been kidnapped by Kapone's lot, and goodness only knows what's happened to her by now! I don't care what you say, it's a rotten, unsatisfactory end to the adventure."

"We're well out of it, anyhow," said Church. "I've had enough of American gunmen to last me for the rest of my days. After this, I'll be content with the talkie variety."

Handforth's chums took their departure soon afterwards. They had suggested sleeping with Handforth—as they had a private idea that he might do something rash in the night—but he wouldn't hear of it.

"Oh, don't worry!" he said, as he saw their anxious looks. "I'm not going to start off on any trail, if that's what you're afraid of. I'm going straight to bed."

"Best thing you can do," said Church.

As they were departing they heard the distant cries of a late newsboy—for the evening's shooting had caused a big sensation throughout London. Many extra editions of the evening papers had been rushed through the presses.

"Dash and get a paper!" exclaimed Handforth eagerly. "There might be something fresh."

But when the paper was brought—after a breathless chase by Church—the only news item was connected with the mysterious disappearance of Jake Diamond's body and the equally mysterious vanishing of Trixie Foster. The police, it seemed, were baffled. No further reports of any outrage had come in, and the newspaper suggested that London had seen the first and last of the gunmen.

It was merely a case of a gang war being fought to a finish, and the finish happened to be in London. Jake Diamond had lost, and it was doubtful if his gang would take any steps. There was no indication that any members of his gang were over here.

The newspaper commented on the wild nature of these happenings, and concluded by saying that the sooner Al Kapone and his men were placed under lock and key, the better for society at large.

"They're all the same—make a lot out of nothing," growled Handforth. "Well, so long, you chaps. You'd better be going."

He spoke in a tired voice. The reaction was acute after the intense excitement. All Handforth wanted to do just then was to get into bed and sleep. He was utterly weary. And in his mind's eye he kept seeing those gunmen firing their deadly pistols at Jake Diamond. He shuddered and clapped his chums on the back.

"Awful business!" he muttered. "Well, cheerio! Don't let it give you any nightmares."

"What about to-morrow?" asked Church pointedly.

"To-morrow?"

"First day of term, old man," said Church gently.

"What! First day of term! By George, I'd forgotten!" said Handforth with a start. "Oh, my hat! We've got to go down to St. Frank's to-morrow, haven't we?"

"I rather think we shall be expected," murmured McClure. "And we couldn't dream of disappointing the beaks, could we?"

"Oh, rats!" said Handforth, frowning. "I'd made all sorts of plans to go to that Bedmont Hotel to-morrow and pick up the trail!"

Church and McClure were thankful that their leader would not be able to carry out this programme. It was far better that they should all get

away from London, back to the fresh breeziness of St. Frank's, where they would quickly forget this unhappy episode.

"All right, then—if we must go, we must," said Handforth. "You chaps had better buzz round here immediately after breakfast—say, about half-past nine. We'll go down in my Morris Minor."

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"Good egg!" said McClure. "We'll be here on time, Handy."

HE got rid of them at last. When he went back into the dining-room he read the newspaper through again, and failed to find anything fresh. Barton came in during his cogitations, and the cough he gave was significant.

"Well, what is it, old son?" asked Handforth, looking up. "Whenever you cough like that, Wheezer—sorry, I mean, Barton—it means that you're going to say something beastly unpleasant. What's on your mind?"

"A great deal is on my mind, Master Edward," said the butler gloomily. "I'm sure I don't know what the master will say when he comes home and finds all this destruction and disorder."

"Don't make a fuss over a few broken windows," said Handforth. "They're insured, anyhow."

"It's not the windows, Master Edward," protested the butler. "Surely you've seen the damage to the pictures in the hall and in the drawing-room? Those two antique mirrors are shattered. There must have been hundreds and hundreds of pounds' worth of damage done. Those bullets came right into the house, Master Edward. The wonder is that any of us escaped with our lives."

Handforth was not in the mood to discuss these points with Barton. The police had been, and a number of workmen had temporarily boarded up the windows that were shattered. There was nothing further to be done to-night.

"I shall be gone in the morning, Barton, so you won't have any more of these worries on your mind," said Handforth. "But don't blame me for what's happened, and don't worry about the pater."

Ten minutes later he was snuggling down into bed, assuring himself that he would sleep like a top. But sleep would not come. After the first ten minutes Handforth dimly realised that his mind was too active for slumber. He heard a neighbouring church chime the half-hours and quarters. He tossed about in bed, weary of mind, but unable to compose himself for sleep. He could think of nothing but the dreadful affair at the Bedmont Hotel.

He fell to wondering what had happened to Trixie Foster. It was all very well to say that she had been kidnapped, but why hadn't she screamed? Why hadn't somebody seen those gangsters getting into the window, or getting out again? How could they have carried the girl down that fire-escape without being noticed? It wasn't likely that she had gone passively.

"My only nat!" breathed Handforth, as a sudden thought came to him. "Perhaps they killed her, too! That's why she didn't scream——"

He caught his breath in with a gasp. Was it his imagination, or was there something shadowy moving just outside his bedroom window?

CHAPTER 10.

Handforth to the Rescue!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH sat up in bed, his nerves tensed, his muscles rigid. It was a dark night, but the darkness of the room was more intense, and the window stood out clearly. The blind was not down.

"Oh, rot!" breathed Handforth. "I'm seeing things. I must be getting nervous. I expect it's because of——"

Again he saw that shadowy outline—the vague shape of a man's head just outside the window, above the level of the sill. Then Handforth got a fresh shock. He spotted a second shadowy figure outside the window! A real fear leapt into his heart—and it took a good deal to scare Handforth.

"Al Kapone's gang!" he gurgled. "Oh, my only Aunt Sophie! They've finished off Jake and Trixie, and now they're after me!"

It wasn't such an exaggerated suspicion at that. Handforth had been instrumental in hindering the Chicago gunmen, and it was quite likely that they would seek to revenge themselves upon him. Perhaps something had happened of which he knew nothing—something which made their desire for revenge all the stronger. Perhaps Trixie had escaped, after all.

These thoughts flashed through his mind like lightning. There wasn't time to think clearly. He only knew that these two figures were outside his window, and that it was up to him to do something rapidly.

And Handforth, who never dreamed of running from a fight, took the bull by the horns. Leaping out of bed, he dashed to the window, flung it wide, and stared into the face of the person who was just outside.

"No! You haven't caught me napping!" he said fiercely. "You can jolly well clear off from this house! I'll yell for the police——"

"Say, big boy, pipe down!" came a tense, agonised whisper. "Do you want the whole block to hear you?"

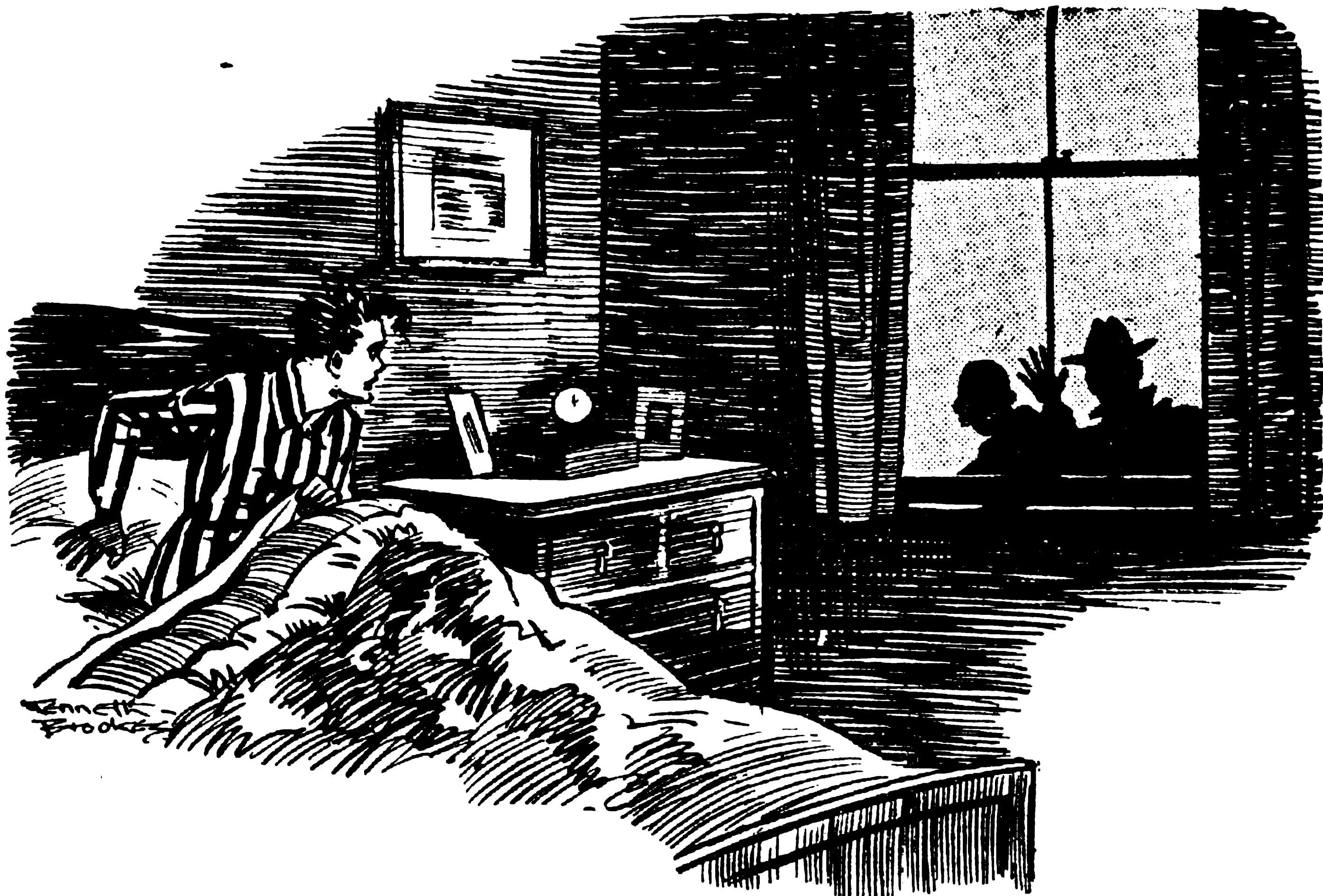
"Miss—Miss Foster!" babbled Handforth dazedly.

"Sorry to butt in on you like this, boy friend, but it's urgent," said Trixie. "I must speak to you. And, for land's sake, keep the soft pedal on. We don't want anybody else in the house to know we're here."

"You'd—you'd better come in!" said Handforth hastily.

He dodged back, grabbed his dressing-gown and put it on. Then he experienced a further shock. Handforth saw a second figure creeping after her. Evidently they had used a gardener's ladder to get up to the window, and just outside there was a wide ledge, which had made their task the easier.

"If you pull those curtains right over I can put the light on," said Handforth. "Not that it matters about anybody seeing the light. I've as much right to switch on my bedroom lights as anybody."



Handforth sat up in bed. Outside his room lurked two shadowy figures. "Kapone's gang—and they're after me!" muttered Handy, in alarm.

"We'll be on the safe side, kid," said Trixie.

The curtains were pulled, and Handforth turned on the switch. Then, as the light flooded the room, he nearly uttered a yell of amazement. For there, standing next to Trixie, was—Jake Diamond himself!

"Say, for the love of Mike!" breathed Diamond. "We're counting on you, kid! Don't let that yell out!"

Handforth swallowed hard.

"But you're dead!" he whispered hoarsely.

"I guess it takes more than a dirty Chicago rat to bump me off!" retorted Diamond contemptuously.

Handforth, blinking, continued to stare. The thing was incredible—preposterous. He had seen Jake Diamond fall, riddled with bullets. Yet here he was, with nothing to hint at the shooting except a big bandage round his left arm, just above the wrist.

"Jake's put it over on those Chicago buzzards," explained Trixie. "Say, Jake, show the boy friend how you escaped."

"Aw, we've no time——"

"Don't be a crab! Show him!"

"Just as you say, sister!" growled Diamond.

He quickly unbuttoned his overcoat, jacket and waistcoat. Handforth beheld a curious undergarment, fashioned like a sweater, which entirely covered Jake Diamond's chest. Bending nearer, Handforth could see that it was made of fine steel mesh, and apparently padded on the inner side.

"My hat! A coat of mail!" ejaculated Handforth.

"Something like that," agreed Diamond. "We take chances, so we need a certain amount of protection. If those boneheads had aimed at my face I shouldn't be here now."

"But surely you must be horribly hurt?" asked Handforth, staring. "Even this protection couldn't save you from the terrific impact of those bullets!"

"Listen, kid! I'm not the guy to make a fuss over a few bruises," said Diamond. "I guess my chest feels like a raw tee-bone steak. And there's daylight through my left arm. But I'm tough—see?"

"I'll say you're tough, Jake," said Trixie admiringly.

"You'd best do the talking, sister," continued Diamond, glancing at her. "You say this young guy can pass the helping mitt, and it's up to you to show the goods. Personally, I'm not so sure."

"That's twice you've said it!" breathed Handforth. "Is she really your sister?"

"Aw, nix on that!" said Diamond impatiently. "She's my wife."

"Wife!" gasped Handforth.

"Ain't you never heard of folks getting married?"

"But—but—— That explains it, then!" said Handforth, looking at Trixie with mingled disappointment and relief. "I—I mean, I've been wondering about you two. Somehow it didn't seem right——"

"Say, youngster, we're not interested in what you thought," broke in Diamond. "I'm being trailed by Kapone's gang, and for all I know they might be on my track

now. If only I had some of my own boys here I wouldn't come to you. Get me? But I guess Trixie and I are in London on our own—and that gives Al the advantage."

"Can you help us, kid?" asked Trixie, clutching at Handforth's arm. "You know how Jake escaped—he's shown you. After you'd all quit that room at the hotel Jake sat up and gave me the shock of my life."

"Then you didn't know he was dead?"

"I sure thought they'd plugged him," said Trixie. "But when Jake gets into action his feet have got pep behind them. We greased out of that window, and were down the fire-escape in two shakes. Since then we've been playing a waiting game. It was my idea that we should come here."

"But why here? What can I do?" asked Handforth helplessly.

"We've fooled Kapone for the time being, but he's a wise guy and he'll soon be on to us," continued Trixie. "There's no good beating about the bush, big boy. We're in a fix. We've got Kapone on us, and the police. This town isn't exactly healthy for either of us."

"Why not go straight to the police and ask for protection?" suggested Handforth. "You'll be safe enough——"

"Aw, didn't I tell you, sister?" broke in Diamond impatiently. "The kid's no good. When I go to the police for protection it'll be time to put me in the crazy house."

He turned towards the window with a scowl on his face, and Trixie drew nearer to Handforth.

"Help us—for my sake!" she whispered. "Gee, boy, I'm scared stiff. Jake's my husband. Say, you must help!"

Handforth was thrilled. There was something in her tone which told of her fear. She was appealing to him for her own sake—not for Diamond's.

"You—you mean you want me to hide you here?" he asked. "I don't mind, but there are the servants——"

"We thought you might be able to suggest something," interrupted Trixie. "Jake and I are kind of strange around this town. You know the ropes—and you're the only person in London we could come to. Can't you think of something?"

"But how long do you want to stay?"

"Two days—three—four—we don't know," said Diamond, suddenly wheeling. "We're figuring that Al will run up against your Scotland Yard before he's many days older. He's broken your law already, which is more than I have. He framed that machine-gun stunt, and that alone is enough to get him sent up the river."

"Sent up the river?" repeated Handforth.

"Put in prison," explained Trixie. "We say 'up the river' in New York, because Sing Sing is up the Hudson. Well, kid, what about it? As soon as Al is arrested, we shall be safe."

Handforth thought quickly. For her sake he was ready to help, and it pleased his vanity that these people, crooks though they might be, should come to him for aid.

But, much as he wanted to help, how could he keep them here? It would be impossible to conceal them from the servants, and more than impossible to prevent the servants from talking.

"I don't know what to do!" he confessed, worried. "You see, I've got to go back to school to-morrow. The new term starts, and—— Whoa! Hold on! Why not——"

He broke off, staring excitedly. An inspiration had just come to him—an idea of dazzling brilliance.

"Take your time, honey," murmured Trixie.

"Look here, why don't you come down to St. Frank's?" asked Handforth. "That's my school—it's tucked away in a quiet corner of Sussex, where there's only one policeman to about ten square miles of country."

"Sounds good to me," said Diamond, nodding.

"A place where gunmen have never even been heard of," continued Handforth. "Kapone would never dream of looking for you there. You'd be as safe as houses."

"Forget it!" said Trixie, shaking her head. "Safe? In a big boys' school? Say, are you crazy?"

"But you don't understand," went on Handforth. "There are plenty of places where you could hide—and where I could look after you, too. See? I could get you down there in secret, hide you up, and look after you until you're free to come out. Nobody would suspect."

"Gee! Could it be done?" asked the girl, catching some of his excitement.

Handforth, in his enthusiasm, was already planning the whole thing out. He never gave a thought to the possible consequences. Yet, in a more sober moment, he might have hesitated before taking a dangerous gunman down to a place like St. Frank's.

"There's a ripping place," he went on. "A sort of vault, beneath some old ruins, where nobody ever goes. You could hide there for months without a soul guessing. And I could soon nip down with grub occasionally, so that you'd be all right."

"But how do we get there?" demanded Diamond. "I guess we can't walk, can we? And it's no good going to-morrow—in daylight."

"I've got a car in the garage," replied Handforth triumphantly. "My Morris Minor. We can creep down now, push it out so that the servants won't be disturbed by the noise of the engine, and we can be down at St. Frank's within a couple of hours. What's the time now?"

"Close on midnight."

"Then it's all right," said Handforth. "I can be back here before five, get the car back in the garage, and nobody will even know that I've been out. Then, to-morrow, when I come down to the school, I'll bring you food and anything else that you need."

The gunman and the Follies girl looked at one another.

"Well, sister, what do you say?" asked Diamond.

"Let's go," said Trixie briefly.

WITHIN twenty minutes they were off, taking nothing with them. Handforth had suggested blankets and sheets, and had hinted at raiding the larder. But Jake Diamond pointed out that these things might be missed, and then there would be inquiries.

Besides, there was no room in the small car for much luggage. The main thing was to get to the "hide-out." They could put up with discomfort for to-night, and matters could be arranged later.

So, having pushed the little car out, they started the engine in a side street, and were soon gliding away. Jake Diamond, the gunman, was slipping out of London without a soul knowing except Handforth. And Handforth had pledged himself to help, knowing in his heart that he was doing it solely for Trixie's sake.

St. Frank's was reached. The place was cloaked in complete darkness; not a soul was to be seen. Leaving the Morris Minor in a shadow-enshrouded corner of the Triangle, the three alighted, and Handforth led the way to the old ruins behind St. Frank's.

Silhouetted against the night sky, they rose gaunt and eerie-looking. Trixie gave an involuntary shudder.

"Say, big boy, this dump sure gives one the creeps," she whispered.

Handforth smiled encouragingly in the darkness.

"You'll soon get used to it, Miss Foster," he said cheerily. "And don't you think I was right? Isn't this just the ideal place for a hide-out?"

"I'll sure say that you know your stuff, boy friend," agreed Trixie gratefully. She turned to glance at Jake Diamond, striding alongside her. "What say you, Jake?"

"O.K., baby," nodded the gunman. "I guess the kid is dead right."

Five minutes later he and Trixie were safely installed in the dark, cold vault under the ruins. There, after promising to see them again on the morrow as soon as he could, and to bring with him a supply of food and things. Handforth left them. Another five minutes and he was speeding on his way back to London.

Edward Oswald had kept his word. He was hiding Jake Diamond and his wife at the old school. The new term at St. Frank's was booked for plenty of thrills.

THE END.

(Next week's thrilling story: "GUNMEN AT ST. FRANK'S!" And it's the real goods! Don't miss reading it, lads. Make sure by ordering your copy now.)

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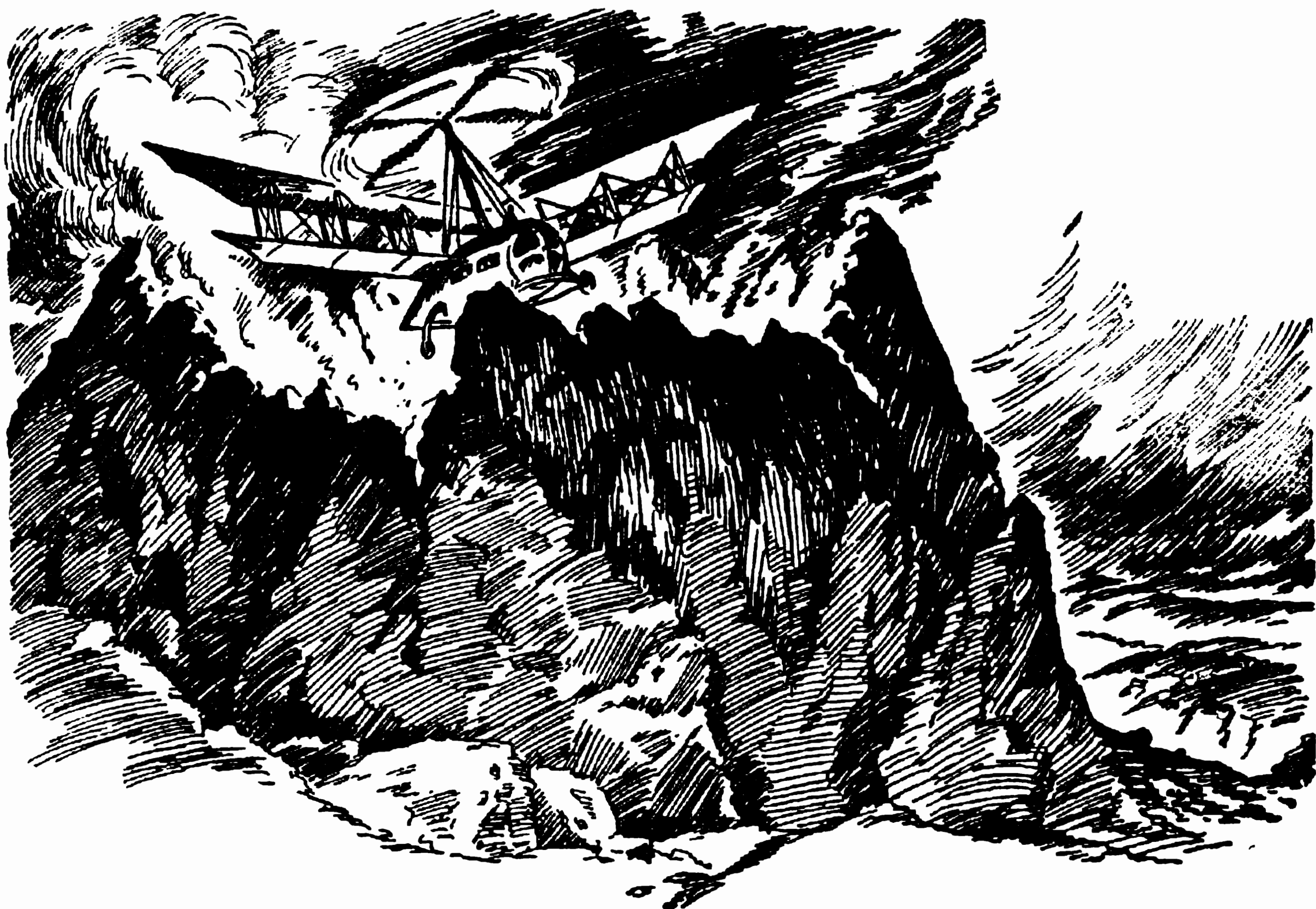
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Roddy Patterson & Co. Return to Earth In Amazing Circumstances.



SUBTERRANEAN CASTAWAYS!

The Death Ray!

THEIR escape cut off by the Troglodytes—those strange dwellers in the centre of the earth! Roddy Patterson, Spud Thompson, and Professor Patterson, Roddy's uncle, looked at each other in dismay. A moment before it had seemed that they would be able to get to the helicopter which stood on the ledge of the roaring volcano. Above them stretched a great funnel-like opening in the vast rock cave, through which the subterranean castaways had hoped to make their escape back to civilisation in the weird-looking helicopter.

"Quick!" yelled Roddy. "We mustn't let the Troggs see us!"

The cave in which they stood was lighted by the glow of the volcano beneath them, and as Roddy looked around he saw a fairly large crevice in the rocks, near where the main passage from the City of the Troglodytes entered the cavern.

In a flash he had dragged his two com-

panions towards the crevice, and they had just time to squeeze themselves between the walls of rock before the main passage disgorged a scurrying crowd of the Troglodytes. Among them was Jefferson Jetby, the deadly enemy of the three intrepid adventurers, and the man who planned to use the Troglodytes to make himself master of the earth above.

"What's the game?" gasped Roddy, as he and his companions gazed cautiously out of their hiding-place. "It looked as though they were being pursued!"

"And that's just what is happening!" answered the professor. "Look! They're making a stand! And they've got some sort of death-dealing weapon!"

Even as he spoke, the Troglodytes who had accompanied Jetby hurried to where the helicopter stood and grouped themselves around it. Then, working feverishly, they rigged up

three or four gun-like instruments, which consisted of long, tapering barrels projecting from a metallic box.

This week's amazing adventure:

INVADERS OF THE EARTH!

No sooner had they done this than another group of Troggs rushed forward from the passage—only to halt in fear when they saw the tapering weapons pointing at them. Roddy gave a gasp as he recognised the leader of this second band of Troggs, for it was the Trog who had judged him and his companions and condemned them to death!

This Trog, showing not the slightest trace of fear, walked out in front of his supporters, and, halting to face the Troggs who were grouped about Jetby, began to speak in his guttural language. What he said was unknown to Roddy and his companions, but from his gestures they gathered the gist of his speech.

He was calling upon them to surrender. Instantly the significance of this flashed upon the three adventurers. Jefferson Jetby, with his customary guile, had succeeded in winning over a number of the Troggs to his side, and had deliberately fomented a revolution in the ranks of the cave dwellers.

Jetby, his face scowling with rage, turned and harangued the Troggs who stood near him.

"Shoot, you fools!" he cried.

In his rage he had forgotten that the Troggs could not understand his language. They looked at him helplessly. Jetby, seeing that if he allowed the Trog chief to talk further there would be signs of wavering amongst his own men, leaped towards one of the weapons.

The Troggs who stood by it stepped back a pace. Jetby, his face transfigured with rage, fumbled at a switch on the side of the box.

A cry of alarm rang out from the Troggs who were still loyal to their chief, and several of them ran forward and tried to drag him away to safety.

But Jetby was too quick for them.

Suddenly there came a sizzling sound, and a blinding, violet-coloured ray of light shot out from the tapering barrel of the weapon. Jetby's aim was good. The ray fell direct on the chief and the men who were gathered around him.

Everything happened so quickly that Roddy could hardly believe his eyes. A moment before, the chief had been standing there, haranguing the crowd. Now he and the men who had leaped to his aid were no more!

The violet ray, shooting from the mysterious weapon, had obliterated them, burning them practically to nothing in an instant. Only a smouldering heap showed where the little group had stood.

"A radium gun!" gasped the professor. "Why, with such weapons Jetby could decimate the earth!"

Jetby obviously intended to decimate the Troggs who had not thrown in their lot with him. He swung the radium gun round, and the ray fell upon a group of Troggs who were running as fast as their feet would carry them back to the shelter of the passage which led to the city.

Sizz!

The group vanished—burned to cinders by the terrible secret weapon.

Jetby was now acting like a madman; yelling with triumph, he urged on his rebel Troggs to greater destruction. The other guns sprang into action, and the violet rays shot here and there around the cavern, while the Troggs fled for the safety of the passages.

Even there Jetby and the rebels pursued them, rushing up the radium guns to the end of the passage, and then shooting the death rays down into the darkness.

Roddy looked at his uncle grimly.

"Jetby has wasted no time," he said. "He's got a helicopter and a number of radium guns. If he reaches the earth above, he can hold the whole world to ransom!"

The professor's face was deadly serious as he replied:

"Yes, and we—we can do nothing to stop him!"

Roddy's jaw stuck out pugnaciously.

"Can't we!" he said. "We'll see about that! Jetby thinks we're dead—but Jetby's going to get the biggest surprise of his life before long!"

Out of the Abyss!

THE professor and Spud looked at Roddy in amazement.

"Why, what can we do, Roddy?" asked Spud.

For answer Roddy pointed over in the direction of the waiting helicopter.

"Jetby's too busy fighting the Troggs," he said. "The chief's men won't allow him to escape with impunity. They'll come back—and they will bring radium guns with them. There'll be a battle royal in that passage before long, and Jetby will have his work cut out to keep them back. Why shouldn't we watch our chance, then make a dash for the helicopter. Perhaps we will be able to work it, and then——"

"Gosh, there's a chance!" said Spud. "I'm with you!"

They had not long to wait. A sudden outbreak of sound told them that the counter-attack had commenced, and, as Roddy had anticipated, Jetby and his followers advanced a little way down the passage to take advantage of the cover afforded by jutting portions of rock.

"Now for it!" cried Roddy, and slipping from their hiding-place, he and the others tore across the floor of the cavern in the direction of the helicopter.

They clambered into the interior, to find themselves surrounded by mysterious machinery of a type entirely unknown to them. There were numerous switches, and the adventurers gazed at them helplessly. They did not know the use of the switches, and they realised instantly that to interfere with them meant the possible destruction of the craft—and the end of their hopes of reaching the surface of the earth again!

At that moment an outburst of cheering and the scuffling of footfalls brought them back to a realisation of their position.

Roddy peeped quickly out of the door of the helicopter, and then swung upon the others.

"They're coming here!" he gasped. "Jetby and his Troggs! They'll find us unless—we've got to hide quickly!"

Eagerly they peered around the curious engine-room of the helicopter. There seemed no place to hide until, by chance, Roddy stumbled over a grating in the deck of the machine. Instantly he pulled up the grating and looked below.

"There's a sort of a ballast chamber here!" he cried. "Perhaps we can get down here. Come on! It's the only way."

It was, indeed, a ballast chamber upon which Roddy had stumbled. The helicopter was capable of tremendous lifting powers, and had been used by the Troggs only to get from one level to another of their mysterious country of caves.

Of what was above, beyond the rim of the volcano, the Troggs knew nothing, and therefore their helicopters were ballasted to prevent them ascending too high. Jetby, however, had caused the ballast to be removed, in order that the helicopter would be able to whiz up the funnel of the volcano and reach the outer earth above.

Luck was with Roddy and his companions, for they could not have chosen a better hiding-place. They scrambled through into the ballast chamber, and the grating clanged down on top of them.

Just in time. The sound of footsteps above them told them that Jetby and his rebel Troggs had entered the machine.

The trio lay there motionless, almost afraid to breathe. From above came the click of a switch, followed by a tremendous whirring sound, and with a jerk the helicopter began to rise.

Roddy and the others could see nothing; nor could they hear anything save the whirring of the powerful radium engines, which lifted the helicopter as though it had been a feather. But they knew well enough that the machine was ascending the funnel of the volcano at a tremendous speed. And when it reached the outer earth, Jetby, with the aid of his secret radium guns, would commence to wage war upon the world!

The helicopter rocked and swayed, and twisted and turned. Hours seemed to pass, but the whirring sound showed no sign of decreasing intensity.

They could picture to themselves Jetby keeping a watch for the first signs of the crater of the volcano, out of which the helicopter would shoot like a bullet from a gun. Then the radium engines would be eased down, allowing the helicopter to drop, finally to land on the outer side of the volcanic crater.

They had no means of calculating the speed at which the helicopter rose, and therefore could not guess the time it would take for the machine to rise from the depths. They could only wait—and hope for the best.

All Your Favourite Authors Write for—

Suddenly the professor gripped Roddy's arm.

"It's easing down!" he cried, his lips close to Roddy's lips, so that he would be heard above the noise of the engines. "That means we are out of the crater!"

Roddy nodded, and unconsciously he gripped his fists. Before long they would be back to earth, and then—

Then would come the reckoning with Jefferson Jetby.

But if they failed, what would happen? Roddy gritted his teeth. They could not fail. They must not fail! To do so meant to leave the world at the mercy of Jetby.

The change in the velocity of the engines made itself evident to the adventurers now. No longer was the machine ascending. The motion had changed, and it was coming down. A moment or two later there came a slight jar, and then the motors were stilled.

They had come out of the abyss, and had reached the earth once more!

The Doom that Threatened

FOR a few moments the three explorers looked at each other, wondering what their next move was to be. The professor was thinking deeply.

"We are probably in Iceland," he said. "That is the nearest place where there are numbers of extinct volcanoes, and would be quite easy of access from where we started. We could not possibly have come out of Etna, Vesuvius, or Stromboli."

"Iceland would suit Jetby's book, wouldn't it?" asked Spud.

"Admirably," answered the professor. "He could conquer the island in a few days with the use of his radium guns. Boys, somehow or other we've got to stop him—even if it means killing him like a mad dog. Humanity is at stake, and no risk is too great to take!"

"Then come on!" cried Roddy. "The sooner we act, the better."

He sprang towards the grating and threw it back. In a moment, followed by the professor and Spud, he had clambered into the interior of the helicopter. One glance showed that Jetby had opened the door of the machine and had descended to the ground. But the machine was full of Troglodytes, who, at that moment, were unloading the radium guns.

They turned as Roddy and his companions appeared, but they were too taken by surprise to stop the adventurers. In a flash the three had gained the door of the helicopter, and had sprung out on to the firm earth once more.

A figure wheeled around as he heard the noise. It was Jefferson Jetby! For a moment he gazed at them as though they were ghosts; then his hand shot to his belt, and he whipped out an automatic.

"So you escaped, eh?" he growled. "Well, it won't be for long!"



Roddy's fist crashed into Jefferson Jetby just as he fired, and next moment the lad found himself seized by the Troglodytes.

Roddy leaped at him. Jetby's automatic spoke, but the shot went wide. The next moment Roddy's fist had caught the scoundrel on the point of the jaw, and Jetby reeled back. At the same moment, talons, like hands gripped at Roddy as a number of Troggs flung themselves upon him.

"Run for it, Roddy!" yelled Spud. "We can't fight the whole lot of them. Make for the rocks!"

Roddy realised the sense of Spud's advice. The Troggs were streaming out of the helicopter and making for the adventurers. Roddy, tearing himself free from the talons which held him, darted away in the wake of his companions. Some distance from them they could see a line of rocks rising out of the barren ground, and they made for this shelter.

But they were soon to realise the futility of any attempt to escape. For Jetby, recovering himself, sent a shout after them.

"Fools!" he yelled harshly. "Fools! Have you forgotten the radium guns? I'll have you all burned to a frazzle before you know where you are!"

Even as they gained the shelter of the rocks their hearts sank. They had, indeed, forgotten the radium guns. Now they realised that as soon as Jetby landed them from the helicopter, the death ray would be turned on the rocks, searching, searching, until it found them.

Jetby had sprung back to the helicopter.

One of the radium guns had been brought out, and he set it up in the doorway of the helicopter. Roddy saw this, and dropped like a stone into a fissure of the rocks. The professor and Spud had already sought shelter.

Zizz-zz-zz!

The violet beam shot out right above Roddy's head, playing on the very spot where, a moment ago, he had been standing. To his relief, he discovered that the ray could not penetrate the rocks. So long as he remained there he was safe.

But how long would Jetby allow him to remain there? Jetby would bring the gun closer and closer, until at last he found a spot where he could dominate the crevice in which Roddy lay. Then—in a flash—all would be over.

Roddy shivered. But it was not a shiver of fright. A chill, freezing breeze had made itself felt, and for the first time Roddy remembered that they were in Iceland, and that it was winter. He looked upwards to the sky, and saw there ominous black clouds. He knew what those clouds betokened.

Snow!

He was correct. The chilling breeze was the forerunner of a snowstorm. Gradually the sky became clouded over, and snow began to fall, slowly at first, but then with increasing rapidity, until at last it was coming down like a white blanket.

(Continued on page 44.)

Corking Footer Yarn: Meet The Boy Who's Always On The Target—

BULL'S-EYE BILL



Ginger Hackem takes on more than he can chew—in more senses than one.

The Challenge!

MUDBANK Flats were under water to the depth of a foot or more. The canal which ran alongside had overflowed its banks owing to the recent heavy rain. All Saturday's football matches had been cancelled, and Gipsy Dick had been forced to draw his caravan to higher ground.

Dick had rigged up his travelling kitchen, and was making a fresh supply of sweets against the time when the weather should break.

Buttercup, his yellow horse with the whiskered feet and the Roman nose, a thoroughbred with two Derby winners in its pedigree in spite of its grotesque appearance, was browsing on an island the size of a pocket-handkerchief. Bull's-Eye Bill, who lived with Dick, was sitting on the steps of the caravan. He looked as if he had got the pip.

"You'll be lost without your football on Saturday, Bill," remarked Dick, as he gave a pot a stir. "What you gonna do?"

Bull's-Eye didn't know, and said so with a heartfelt sigh. Then, as he looked towards the gate which led from a reasonably well-paved road on to the Flats, he brightened up. His deadly rival, Ginger Hackem, was

coming along at a rare lick on the delivery tricycle from the Town Stores. Ginger played for the Wasps, who were sworn rivals of the Spiders, Bill's team.

Bill saw Ginger unlatch the big five-barred gate, remount and drive the tricycle splashing through the water till it reached the caravan. Then Ginger got down, yanked open the door of the carrier with a savage jerk and pulled out a huge parcel.

"For you, Gipsy Dick," he cried, as he handed it over, "and may it burn yer! The next time I drive down here bringing stuff for you I'll eat my blinkin' 'ead. I believe you gave the Stores the order just because you wanted me to drive down through this muck."

Gipsy grinned.

"I gave the Stores the order for the stuff I want for making sweets because they're cheap," he countered.

"Why couldn't they have sent one of the other chaps?" flared Ginger, staring down sourly at his muddied boots.

"Because the moment I saw the flood water top the canal bank I asked them to send you," said Dick, with a broadening grin.

"Clever, ain'tcher?" Ginger watched Dick stirring his sweet mixture and saw a

tray loaded with peppermint lumps near the stove. He took one of the lumps and sucked it. It tasted so nice that he took some more. Whereat Dick removed the tray.

"Not bad sweets for an amateur," admitted Ginger grudgingly; "but you'll be lucky if you sell 'em with this bad weather due to last."

"I'll drive the caravan to one of the big football grounds on Saturday. They like my sweets. I'll sell 'em all right," said Dick.

"Well, if it's a match you're wanting, Smudge Green have a date to fill in on Saturday. I've brought a challenge from their secretary for Bull's-Eye Bill."

Bull's-Eye brightened up.

"For me?" he ejaculated.

"Yuss. I'm pally with the Smudge Green secretary, yer see, an' I told him that the Spiders were washed out of their Saturday game, an' he said he'd like Smudge Green to play your team. If you like, you can snap up the challenge. It's up to you, Bull's-Eye."

Smudge Green fielded a pretty good side and always charged a gate.

Bull's-Eye Bill hesitated, knowing full well what a treacherous fellow Ginger was. Why had Ginger brought the challenge? There was a catch in it somewhere.

"Ring 'im up on the 'phone if you doubt my word," said Ginger, sucking at another sweet. "Smudge Green 8912. Then call me a liar."

"You going to play for Smudge Green, Ginger?" asked Bull's-Eye.

"Yuss. What of it? They're all better men than me—and that's saying a lot. If the Spiders play 'em, Smudge Green'll wipe 'em off the map!"

Bull's-Eye Bill reckoned that he had only got half the story, but he did not mind.

"All right, I'll ring the secretary up," said Bill. "If he says O.K., the Spiders will play Smudge Green, and Dick can bring his van over."

Ginger Hackem brightened up perceptibly.

"Fine," he said, jerking his thumb at busy Gipsy Dick. "Then he can pack a vanload of his rotten sweets and get rid of them among the Smudge Green mugs while the boys show you an' your bunch of Spiders 'ow football should be played!"

Gipsy Dick was paying no attention whatever to the conversation. With his broad-brimmed hat stuck on the back of his head, he was watching the bubbling and aromatic contents of a saucepan.

Ginger saw him place some choice-looking sweets with satin-like covers in many colours on a box just behind him. These sweets looked something extra, and with a spring Ginger collared a handful. He pushed a bright green one into his mouth.

"See you Saturday, Dick, if you're still outa gaol," he hawled as he walked away, munching.

He was in the act of setting his leg over the saddle of his motor delivery tricycle when his mouth was suddenly flooded with

a white and very aggressive froth. It bubbled up so quickly that it filled his nose as well as his mouth. He tried to blow it off, but the wind blew it back on to his clothes; and when he tried to brush it away it stuck on his fingers and bubbled there.

Turning furiously, he began to shout at Gipsy Dick, but all Dick could hear was:

"Mmm—bbb—rrrrr—zzzzzz!" or something like that.

"If we had any gas laid on in the caravan, I should think there was an escape of gas, Bull's-Eye," said Dick, without looking round.

"It's Ginger Hackem," explained Bull's-Eye, with a laugh.

Round swung Gipsy Dick, still stirring the saucepan.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he exclaimed, as he saw white froth bubbling all over Ginger's face, and Ginger himself doing a wild war dance of rage. "Hi, Ginger, why don't you shave at home?"

"Brrr—grrrrr!" howled Ginger through the froth, then into the seat of the motor-tricycle he hurled himself, jerked the thing into action and whirled himself away. But his eyes were blanketed by the white foam, and without knowing it he turned a half circle and went speeding off along the Flats at about twenty m.p.h.

"Look out, Ginger!" yelled Gipsy Dick, hand to mouth, his voice ringing like a trumpet. "Not that way! You'll be in the canal!"

Ginger stopped the engine, stroked the froth away, blinked and turned round. But he was in the thick of the flood water, the wheels throwing it up in a regular fountain as he drove back again. He was half-way across the Wasps' pitch—Ginger played centre-half for the Wasps—when the offside wheel bumped into some wood blocks set to brace the goalposts. Over he went—splash! headfirst into the muddy water.

Spluttering furiously, he picked himself up, dripping and shivering. He went to move forward and slipped on the muddy ground. Once again he floundered into the water, while Bill and Gipsy Dick laughed uproariously.

It was a very chastened Ginger Hackem who drove the retrieved motor delivery tricycle across the Flats to the gate. He shook his fist at Dick.

"I'll get my own back on you one of these days, Gipsy Dick!" he shouted.

"What for?" asked Dick, simulating surprise.

"Shoving that frothy sucker onter me."

"I did?" Dick seemed amazed. "Oh, come, now! You must have taken it yourself."

"Dick, however did you make that extraordinary sweet?" asked Bull's-Eye Bill, as the muddy figure of Ginger Hackem on his tricycle disappeared along the road.

"I knew he'd fall for it, Bill," explained Gipsy, with a wink. "I made it while he was here. Just added a little something to

the brew I'd got, and it was warm when he ate it; they make more froth when they're warm."

"Dick, you're a genius!" exclaimed Bull's-Eye, and then he started off for the nearest telephone box. A quarter of an hour later he had spoken to the secretary of the Smudge Green Football Club, had discovered that Ginger had told the truth, and had agreed to bring the Spiders over to the Smudge Green ground and play the team on Saturday.

"Bring your best team, for we're strong," said the secretary. "And bring all the followers you can. We've a big ground."

"Charge any gate money?" asked Bull's-Eye, with an eye to a percentage of the proceeds for the Spiders.

"Shan't for that match. All free. So-long! See you on Saturday. Don't forget your shooting boots," replied the secretary.

Gaolbirds at the Gates!

BULL'S-EYE Bill's big pal, Chip Rogers, was delighted when he heard the news.

"That's grand," he cried. "I've always wanted to play against Smudge Green. Only thing is, I wish Ginger Hackem weren't going to play for 'em. There's trouble wherever he goes."

"The secretary seemed nice, Chip," remarked Bull's-Eye.

"Yeah! The secretary may be all right—but Hackem brought the challenge." Chip frowned thoughtfully. "I wish I didn't think there's something behind it, Bill."

"What's it matter? Gipsy will be there, and all the boys, and we shall have four or five hundred followers going over."

"So will Ginger have. Don't forget he's a Wasp, Bill—and wasps are known to sting."

"Not if you draw the sting, Chip."

"All right. See you on Saturday. So-long, Bill."

On Saturday Gipsy Dick shut up and stowed away safely his travelling kitchen, and with a load of sweets of all kinds—bagged and packeted—in his caravan, drove over with Bull's-Eye Bill to Smudge Green.

He sat with his legs dangling on one side, gently stroking with his whip the bony back of his yellow horse as Buttercup drew the creaking van along. Bull's-Eye was sitting on the steps at the back.

Gipsy had painted the caravan all the colours of the rainbow, and had added plenty of gold. His broad-brimmed hat and sort of cowboy get-up amused the crowd, and cat-calls and gibes accompanied them as they went. Gipsy apparently didn't hear, and Bull's-Eye didn't mind.

Right in the middle of the town they ran into a traffic block, and Bull's-Eye Bill found himself bang outside the shop of old Crab, the fishmonger, for whom he used to work as errand boy before he ran into Gipsy Dick and left home. Old Crab stood at the door with his apron on, all covered with fish-scales, and his arms set on his hips.

Crab glared. He owed Bull's-Eye Bill more than one, and Gipsy Dick as many, too, for when he had tried to prosecute Dick for cruelty to his yellow horse, Dick had scored all along the line and made Crab the laughing stock of the town. This he remembered as he saw the apparently half-starved horse—actually there was no better-fed horse in the kingdom—nodding between the shafts as it waited for the traffic to move on.

"Yah!" snarled old Crab, pointing. "What a horse! Bah! It isn't a horse; it's a skinful of cat's meat. That man ought to be sent to prison. It's a public disgrace."

Gipsy Dick cocked a mild eye on Mr. Crab, while a crowd began to gather as crowds will. Dick drew a cube-shaped sweet from his pocket and removed the paper wrapping.

"Hallo, Crab!" he cried. "Stock any fresh fish yet?"

The goad hurt, and Crab advanced, still pointing.

"That man ill-treats, beats and starves his horse, and they let him get away with it!" he shouted. "I say it's a disgrace to the town. I say that it should be stopped. It ain't right that a man should——"

At that moment the traffic moved on, and Buttercup ambled into motion.

"Try a nice sweet, Crab," said Dick, and he flung the cube clean into the fishmonger's open mouth.

It hit him somewhere about the uvula, and Crab's teeth came together with a snap. When he opened his mouth to shout after Dick, no words came—only a strangled gurgle—but froth bubbled from between his widened lips. The caravan creaked on.

Smudge Green Ground was situated down a leafy lane. It was walled in on all sides; it possessed a stand and enclosure and spacious terracing. There were pay-boxes at all the entrances, and the tops of the fences were tarred and protected with barbed wire, so that they were unclimbable.

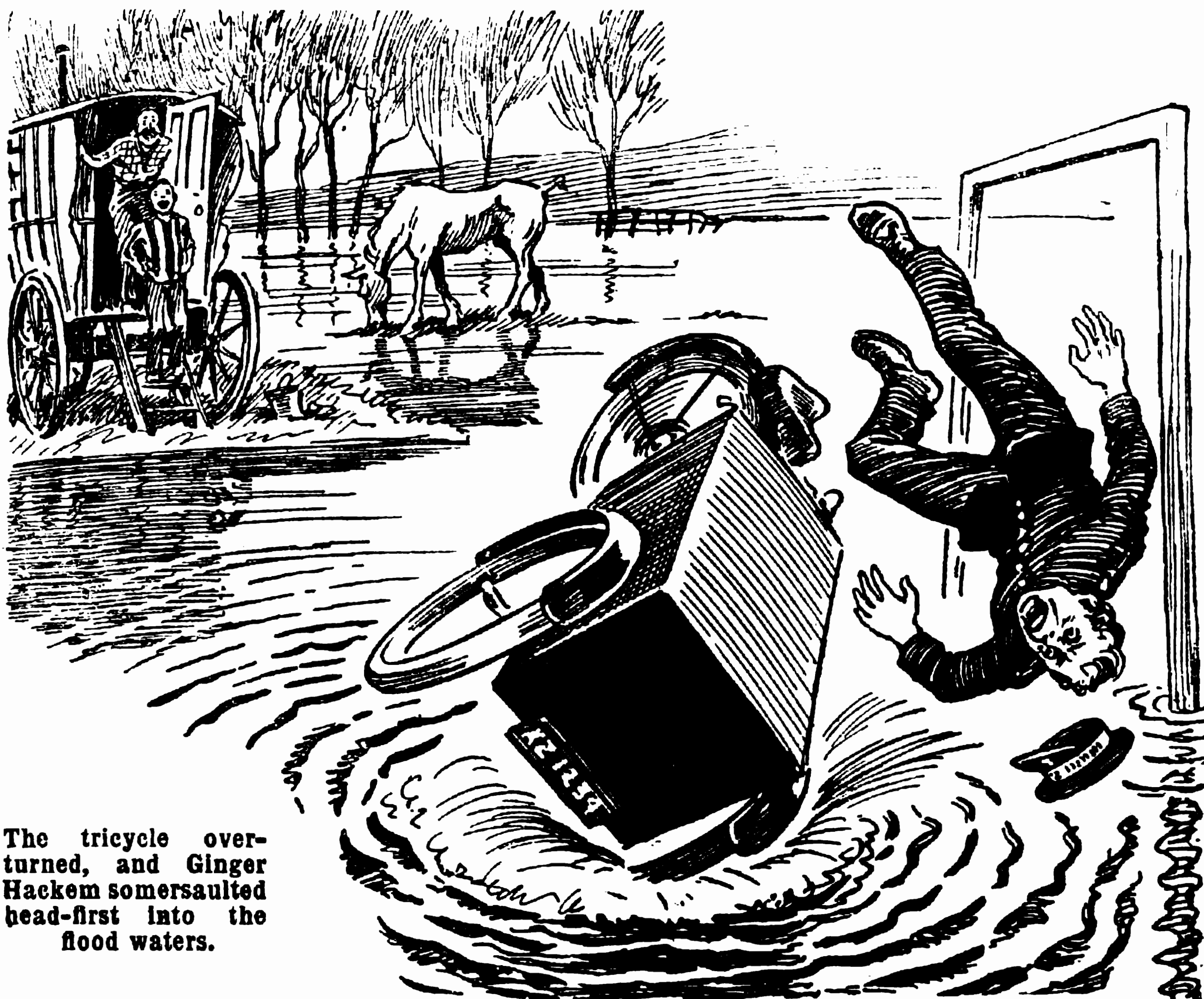
Gipsy Dick had taken his time in going over, and when they arrived they found the gates open. Queues ran in long tails from the pay-boxes, and to Bull's-Eye's surprise he heard money tinkling on the iron counters and the turnstiles clicking merrily.

While Gipsy Smith started an argument with a ground official as to whether or not he was to be allowed to bring his caravan inside, Bull's-Eye Bill routed out the secretary.

"You said no gate money would be charged for this match," Bull's-Eye challenged angrily, "and yet here are your men taking sixpences at the gate. Chip Rogers and I told our fans that they'd get in free. It's not playing the game."

The secretary did not deny the charge; he merely groaned.

"I know, but I didn't do it. I gave all our regular gatemen a holiday. But a minute after we arrived at the ground a gang of toughs swarmed in and took possession of the gates. They're in charge of



The tricycle overturned, and Ginger Hackem somersaulted head-first into the flood waters.

my office. They won't let me go in. They've taken possession of the telephone. They're a gang of crooks who mean to pinch the gate money. I don't know what I'm going to do about it." And the secretary began to wring his hands in despair.

Smoked Out!

BULL'S-EYE immediately smelt a rat. Ginger Hackem had been the prime mover in this racket. Ginger had some queer pals. Supposing he meant to share in the gate? Racing down to the turnstiles, Bull's-Eye took a peep at the men who were taking the money. And he had a shock.

At the first turnstile he found One-Punch Pete Doyle, his stepfather who had turned him away from home. At another he found Jawbreaker Jim, at a third Darky Dan, at a fourth Tiny Martin, the crook with over ten convictions. The turnstiles were in the hands of gaolbirds, who had seized the office and the telephone, and they would get away with the loot before the game began if nothing was done to stop them.

Jawbreaker Jim was in his element.

"Now, come along, bung in your tanners!" he bawled out of his pigeon-hole. "A tanner to see the greatest game o' football seen in the town for generations. Come along, gents!"

Bull's-Eye Bill did some quick thinking. He would have to go to the dressing-room and change in a few minutes' time. There was not a single policeman on duty or stationed inside the ground. None of the unsuspecting victims who paid their sixpences to see the Spiders play Smudge Green dreamt there was anything wrong.

Bull's-Eye heard Gipsy Dick's high-pitched and penetrating voice recommending his famous sweets, and he knew Dick was inside the ground.

He found Dick handing out bags of sweets as fast as he could take the money. He told him what had happened.

Gipsy whistled sharply.

"You don't say, Bull's-Eye," he cried. "Well, well, that's it, is it? Ginger Hackem's working in with the gaolbirds and One-Punch Pete, and later on to-night, I suppose, there'll be a swell share-out down in the town."

Dick stopped selling sweets. Stowing all his trays and boxes away, Bull's-Eye helping him, he locked up the caravan and then hurried towards the stand with his young pal. Bull's-Eye knew that Dick had formed a plan, and he wondered what it might be. He had seen Dick pull a tin out of a drawer inside the van, and from this Gipsy drew some pellets, one of which he gave to Bill.

"Some of the gang are in the office, you say? Right! You go there, light the end of that cone, Bill, and when it's burning properly, open the door and fling it in. The moment you see a chance, dive through the smoke, open the windows, and use the telephone as soon as you can breathe. I advise tying a pocket-handkerchief over your mouth, Bull's-Eye. I'll deal with the others."

The crowd at the turnstiles was dwindling. In five minutes the gaolbirds would get away with the cash. Bull's-Eye ran to the office, tied a handkerchief over his mouth, lit the end of the cone which Gipsy Dick had given him, opened the office door and flung in the pellet. It bounced on the floor, fizzing like a firework.

The smoke it emitted gave out an indescribable stench, and Bull's-Eye had to throw himself down to escape it. And as he lay on the ground the door opened. The two crooks who had seized the office came tearing out, spluttering and choking. They both tripped over the boy where he lay.

Bull's-Eye sprang up, dashed into the office and opened the windows. Then he whipped the receiver off the telephone.

"City 9956!" he choked. "Police——"

"Hallo!" bawled a well-known voice at the other end of the wire. "Sergeant Puffin speakin' What's that—eh? You're Bull's-Eye Bill talking from the Smudge Green Ground? Gaolbirds pinching the gate money? Rightey-ho! I'll bring the flying squad right along."

Bull's-Eye rushed out and raced for the turnstiles again. He was just in time to see the end of the comedy. One-Punch Pete came reeling out of his turnstile box with his mouth wide open and his eyes staring. He was clutching at his throat.

"Er!" he kept on saying, as he swayed dizzily. "Er—er—er!"

Out came Jawbreaker Jim, making a similar noise and doing the same. Then followed Tiny Martin, the sixteen-stone crook with ten convictions, only he had got it worse, for he kept on saying, "Haw—haw—haw!" and chasing himself round and round in circles. Darkey Dan was the last, and he simply flopped into Gipsy Dick's arms gurgling, "Oo—oo—oo!"

"He's got the gate money in his side pockets, Bull's-Eye, so lend a hand," said Gipsy Dick. "It'll all help in the cause of charity."

Bull's-Eye didn't pause to ask questions. He emptied handfuls of sixpences from Darkey Dan's pockets into his own, then did the same with Pete while Dick held him. Tiny Martin and Jawbreaker Jim were skinned clean with the aid of the Smudge Green secretary. By the time the Flying Squad car arrived, Bull's-Eye had donned his football things and the gaolbirds were beginning to recover.

"Hallo, Gipsy!" greeted Sergeant Puffin, as he came in with chest expanded and duty band displayed, bent on business. "You got the crooks, eh? Right! It'll mean six

months' hard this time, if not more. I've got the car outside, and we'll give 'em a swift ride to chokey!"

Then Gipsy Dick butted in.

"Listen, sergeant," he cried. "The crooks haven't got any of the money. I've heard that the Police Orphanage is short of funds, see, so suppose we give all this money which the gaolbirds collected to the Charity Fund, and let 'em off with a caution."

Sergeant Puffin pulled thoughtfully at his chin.

"All right," he agreed at last. "Get out of this quick—do you hear, you gang o' thieves? And let me warn yer, the next time won't be so easy."

The gaolbirds needed no second bidding, but went racing to the gates. The Flying Squad stayed behind to watch the game.

When Bull's-Eye Bill went out on to the field with the Spiders he carried a megaphone.

"Boys," he shouted, "the gate this afternoon will be given to the Police Orphanage, and I have much pleasure in informing you that it amounts to close upon £200. A vote of thanks has been passed to the gaolbirds for collecting it."

"You would, would yer?" snarled Ginger Hackem, the first time he met Bull's-Eye Bill in the hurly-burly of the game. With his elbow he tried to dig Bull's-Eye in the ribs, and with a sweep of his right foot he tried to trip him up. But Bill ducked his head, and, wriggling like an eel, sped on, punting the ball ahead of him, while Ginger, losing his balance, sprawled full length on the grass.

From twenty yards out Bill, who was wearing his famous goal-getting football boots, scored the first goal with a peach of a drive. A minute later he was through again, giving the Smudge Green goalie no chance as he banged the ball home with a hot rising shot. At the end of twenty minutes he got his head to a bouncing ball following a corner kick, and twisted it into the net.

All the time Ginger Hackem kept on trying to lame him. That third goal maddened Ginger, and the next time he saw Bull's-Eye coming towards him, he charged up like a young elephant.

"I'll stop you this time!" he said through clenched teeth, and made to kick out savagely—then gave a howl as Bill booted the ball and Ginger stopped it with his face. Angrily he jumped to his feet, kicked again; but Bill was away, and Ginger brought down the referee instead with as foul a hook as ever a footballer could play. Down flopped the referee, only to jump up again like a jack-in-the-box.

"Leave the field!" he ordered, and after a hot argument Ginger went, passing the gate just as the Spiders and Bull's-Eye Bill popped on the fourth goal.

THE END.

(Another breezy footer yarn introducing Bull's-Eye Bill coming. Look out for it next Monday.)

Popular DAVID GOODWIN'S Magnificent Serial Continues in Thrilling Style !

Knights of the Road!



(Introduction on page 41.)

The Trapping of Turpin!

DICK and Turpin galloped back to the gravel-pit and ransacked the place thoroughly, but with no more result than the first time. Then they scoured the entire neighbourhood industriously, but Vane could not be found.

"It is a miracle!" said Turpin, when they were forced by night-fall to give up the search.

"I must ride to Basing House and see Sir Henry," said Dick. "There are matters here that he can help me in. Then, when I have news of Ralph again. I'll spend the night at the shepherd's cottage at Longford."

"There is but room for one guest there," said Turpin, "so I will quarter myself again with the charcoal-burner in Quern Woods, where I am well enough housed, though I am not very sure of my host. To-morrow we will find news of Vane, and ride him down."

Turpin receives a tempting offer from Vane Forrester to betray Dick into his hands. What happens?

The two parted with a warm "Good-night!" and while Dick went off on his errand, Turpin betook himself to the charcoal-burner's cottage.

Next day, for the first time since they rode together, Dick Forrester failed Turpin at the trysting-place; nor was the highwayman able to discover what had become of his young friend. Turpin rode the bridle-paths round Longford all the forenoon, and at last returned to his quarters in Quern Woods.

"'Tis strange he failed me," muttered Turpin, stabling Black Bess in the charcoal-burner's shed, and entering the cottage. "I trust no ill news has reached him."

The small parlour was cosy and the fire bright. Turpin sat half-dozing by the hearth, nodding from time to time, for he was weary. Presently he rose, and the charcoal-burner, Sam Legatt, entered the room.

"Good-morrow, Sam!" greeted Turpin,

yawning. "Was it you flitting about the room half an hour since, or did I dream it?"

"Nay, your honour," denied Sam cringing. "I have but now returned from work."

"Well, get me a meal," said Turpin. "Have I paid your score of late?"

A most welcome guest to a poor man was the highwayman, who lavished his money freely for such fare as an honest cottager could give him. Turpin put his hand to his pocket for a couple of guineas, when suddenly his face changed and his eyes flashed sternly.

His pistols were gone. He had taken them from the holster and placed them in his pockets—a thing he never failed to do—when he stabled Black Bess.

He knew they were in their places in his wide side-pockets when he first seated himself by the fire.

In an instant he had Sam Legatt by the throat.

"You treacherous dog!"

he cried. "Where are my pistols?"

Even as he spoke he heard a step outside the house.

"I have not touched them, sir!" cried the charcoal-burner, who was looking very pale.

"That we shall see," said Turpin between his teeth. "There's treachery afoot, and Heaven help you if you're at the bottom of it! For the present stay you there."

He flung open the door of a cupboard in the wall, swung Sam Legatt bodily into it, locked him in, and looked round for a weapon, in case there were enemies afoot.

There was nothing that would serve. He was about to make a dash for the door and the stable, when a tall figure suddenly stepped into the room from without.

"Od's death! You!" exclaimed Turpin. "What is this?"

And, in spite of himself, he stepped back a pace in dismay.

The newcomer was Vane Forrester.

Turpin subsided into the chair, his eyes still fixed on Vane's face.

"You seem surprised to see me," continued Vane. "'Tis little wonder. I doubt not you and that nephew of mine have been cudgelling your brains to know what became of me when the chaise fell into the pit, eh, Master Turpin?"

The highwayman continued to stare at him blankly.

"'Twas simple enough, in truth. When I saw the chaise was bound to go over the edge I flung open the door to throw myself out. I was a moment too late, and when I leaped out, the carriage was already plunging downwards. Lucky for me, nevertheless, for I was better out of the chaise than in it, and I fell into a juniper-bush, escaping with no more than some bruises and scratches, and a shaking.

"Then, knowing you and that whelp would

be down to look for me, I crawled into a bush, beneath which I found a deep cranny in the ground. Into that I wedged myself, and lay there while you and young Forrester were searching the pit. His infernal sword thrust through the bush and spiked the ground within six inches of my body, but he never found me. I consider, sir, I tricked the pair of you very pluckily!"

Turpin sprang up from his chair.

"One moment!" said the squire of Fernhall. "Attempt no violence, sir, till you have heard what I have to say. I come not as an enemy, but in peace. I have an offer to make you."

Turpin paused a moment. He saw there was something in the wind, and he knew well that Vane would never dare show that confident air before him unless he were sure of his ground. So, too shrewd to run blindfold into a pit, Turpin determined to find out how the land lay before he laid hands on

Vane.

"Come to the point, and shortly," he said, "for I am choice as to my companions, and like not your company!"

Vane flushed darkly.

"You are passing nice for a road-robber!" he said, with a stifled oath. "However, let that pass. My offer is this. You know a nephew of mine—Dick Forrester?"

"I have some knowledge of him," agreed Turpin.

"You know where he is?"

"I might indeed find him, if I chose," returned the highwayman.

"Do you take me?" said Vane. "I greatly desire to see my nephew, and this is the place, of all others, where I would have him come. I do not, however, wish him to know what is in store for him. So, if you will bring him hither, under any plea you may choose, there is a thousand guineas waiting for you."

"All this merely for the pleasure of seeing him?" said Turpin.

"I wish him to be my guest," said Vane quietly. "When I am quite certain he will not refuse my hospitality, the thousand guineas will be paid to you."

"In other words," said Turpin, "I am to decoy him here without arousing his suspicions, when you will arrange to have him captured unawares; and when he is bound I am to receive my thousand guineas. That I take to be your meaning."

"You have a coarse way of putting things," said Vane, "but you are fairly near the truth."

He rubbed his hands together as he spoke. He did not note the dangerous gleam that was glowing in Turpin's eyes as the outlaw looked at him from under half-closed lids.

"It is necessary, of course," said Vane, "that he should have no inkling of what is in the wind, for he is a dangerous rogue.

COMING SHORTLY

Corking new adventure serial
by a popular boys' author.
Watch out for details next week.

Indeed, if you can contrive to coax his weapons away from him on the way, it would be a great service, and I will give you another hundred guineas."

"You seem very certain of my accepting," said Turpin. "What if I refuse?"

Vane spread out his fat, white hands and shrugged his shoulders.

"That would be very regrettable," he said. "The house is surrounded by armed men, I may inform you. Every exit is guarded. Escape is impossible!"

"Do you mean to threaten me?" said Turpin fiercely, starting up from his chair. "Have a care, you misfavoured dog! I am not to be forced by man or devil!"

"Tut-tut!" said Vane, raising his hand. "I did not mean to offend you, sir. Pray be seated! I only wish to point out to you that you are unarmed, and that before you could do me any injury your brains would be blown out!"

Turpin saw that Vane was right. He had no weapon, and his life was in the visitor's hands. Vane would never show the coolness he did unless his own life were perfectly safe.

"Let us consider the matter quietly," said the highwayman, seating himself again. "How am I to get the money if I fulfil the conditions?"

"That is better!" said Vane, slapping his knees. "Now we are on a business footing again. I reply, sir, that I have the money about me, and to show you my good faith I will give you a hundred guineas of it when you start forth, and the rest when young Forrester is a bound captive."

"That is fair and above board," said Turpin, his eyes gleaming, and he hitched his chair a little closer to Vane's. "It will, as I know, be worth many thousands to you to get the cub out of the way. Fifteen hundred is not too much for such a piece of work."

"Oh, come, sir!" cried Vane. "My offer is liberal; I cannot go beyond it. One thousand, and another hundred if the cub is disarmed. I have a dozen men outside, ready to enter at the slightest call from me; but I know the young knave fights like a tiger, and might account for one or two of them with those accursed double pistols of his!"

"All the more reason why I should be well paid," said the highwayman. "Hang it, sir, if he were to get any inkling of the matter he would shot me like a dog!"

"Pooh!" said Vane. "An old stager like you? Come, man, I will give you twelve hundred, and not a penny more. The best afternoon's work ever you did in your life!"

"And by the rood I'll make the most of it, now I've got the chance!" cried Turpin, hitching his chair forward excitedly again. "I'll have fifteen hundred, or you may go hang, sir!"

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed Vane. "Listen—fourteen hundred, and that's my last word."

"Mr. Vane Forrester," said Turpin, edging a little closer so that he could tap Vane on the knee as he said the words, "I don't want to press you too hard. One thousand four hundred and fifty guineas, and I'm your man!"

"Very good!" said Vane, with an oath. "But keep your distance; you are coming over close—ah!"

The last word was a shriek, for Turpin, having edged by degrees within easy distance as the bargain was struck, made a quick bound and seized Vane by the throat in a vice-like grip.

The Ride of Death.

"**H**ELP!" screamed Vane. "To me—to me!"

Half a dozen ruffians burst into the room, armed to the teeth, and the foremost clapped his blunderbuss to his shoulder. But he paused, with his finger on the trigger, for to fire would have been to slay his master as well as the highwayman.

With one wrench Turpin had plucked Vane from the chair, and, folding his powerful left arm round him so that Vane's arms were pinned to his sides and his body held in front of Turpin's, the highwayman whipped a short dagger from inside his riding-boot and brought its point against Vane's breast just as the serving-men were rushing to rescue their master.

"Back!" roared Turpin, in a voice of thunder. "One step more, and your master dies! Order your men to halt, you bribing

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

DICK FORRESTER learns upon the death of his father that all the vast estates and fortune, with the exception of a hundred guineas, have passed into the hands of his rascally uncle, **VANE FORRESTER**. The latter refuses to give the boy his money, and, appointing himself guardian, states his intention of sending Dick and his brother, **RALPH FORRESTER**, to **Duncansby School**—a notorious place in the north of England. Travelling by coach, Vane and the two boys are held up by **DICK TURPIN**, the famous highwayman. Dick joins forces with Turpin, while Ralph goes on to **Duncansby**. He has a terrible time there, but is eventually rescued by his brother—now a notorious highwayman with a price on his head—who takes him to **St. Anstell's College**, where he is known as **Fernhall**. Dr. **Trelawney**, the headmaster, discovers the secret, but because he is indebted to Dick for a service he takes no action. Sir **Henry Stanhope**, chief governor of **St. Anstell's**, invites Dick to a banquet. Vane Forrester is also a guest, and tries to have Dick arrested, but fails. Later, Vane kidnaps Ralph and flees in a post-chaise, which crashes into a disused quarry. Dick and Turpin, who have given chase, discover Ralph to be badly injured; but of Vane there is no sign.

(Now read on.)

traitor, or I'll bury this in your black heart!"

Vane shrieked as he felt the keen point prick him, and his face turned pale.

"Keep off! Leave him!" he cried wildly to his men.

In the midst of a ring of enemies, unarmed himself save for the little dagger, the grim knight of the road was yet master of the situation.

The ruffians halted, aghast. To shoot was impossible. If they attempted to lay hands on Turpin, one turn of his wrist would silence their pay-master for ever.

"Out of the way there, knaves!" shouted Turpin, marching Vane forward, still holding him tight with the dagger at his breast. "Walk before me, all of you, and let me see no man pass behind me or raise his weapon. Tell your men to throw down their arms, Vane Forrester."

Vane gave the order in a trembling voice. The men hesitated, but a warning prick from the dagger set Vane cursing them at the top of his voice and commanding them to obey. The blunderbusses and bludgeons were thrown down.

"Stand fast, there!" ordered Turpin.

Still holding Vane, he went to the shed where Black Bess was stabled, a sudden fear seizing him.

"If the mare has been harmed you will pay for it with your life!" said Turpin between his teeth to the trembling Vane.

But the mare was unharmed. She came trotting out as the shed door was thrown open, and muzzled her master's breast. Turpin threw a glance at the men and stood to her shoulder.

With a quick movement he loosed one hand from his captive, jumped on Black Bess's back, and jerked Vane across the saddle-bow in front of him. The mare galloped off like the wind.

The moment Turpin mounted, the men sprang to their dropped weapons, and though the outlaw and his yelling captive were eighty yards away by the time they reached them, they let fly a raking volley.

Turpin laughed defiantly and waved his hat. The bullets came whistling past his ears, one grazing his bridle-arm sharply, but none did him any serious hurt, and in a few more bounds Black Bess had darted into the depths of the woods and was out of reach of harm.

"I would there had been time to teach the charcoal-burner a lesson," said Turpin to himself, chuckling, "but it is to be hoped the rogues will not find him, that he may fast for long in the cupboard where I put him, and think over his sins. I am well out of a ticklish situation. But now to find Dick, and place this treacherous hound in his hands."

He cantered onward steadily, holding Vane down upon the saddle-bow. He paid no more attention to his prisoner, who was now strangely quiet.

On through the woods they went, till they came to the shepherd's hut whence Dick had

sallied out in the morning, and where Turpin had already failed to find him once. But the young highwayman had returned, for at the sounds of approaching hoofs he came quickly out of the cottage.

"Turpin!" he cried. "What have you there?"

"A prisoner you'll be blithe to see," said Turpin, dismounting and lifting Vane from the saddle-bow. "It seems we are much of a price, Dick, you and I, for while Malmaison offered you a thousand guineas to entrap me, this gentleman bid the same sum for your carcase. Dear at the price, I call it."

"What—Vane himself!" exclaimed Dick. "Well done, comrade!"

"Ay, you can settle the long account with him now."

"There is blood on his doublet!" exclaimed Dick. "He is wounded!"

"I am dying!" said Vane in a hoarse voice, and his eyes met those of the young kinsman he had wronged in a ghastly stare.

Turpin, with a face of amazement, laid him gently upon the turf and bent over him. He realised now why Vane had been so quiet during the ride. The man had been hit as they rode away from the charcoal-burner's house—hit by a bullet fired by one of his own hired ruffians!

"I have but a little time longer," said the Squire of Fernhall hoarsely. "The life ebbs from me fast, and my sins are black upon me. I cannot go like this. Dick, lift me into the house and send for a clergyman, that I may ease my soul to him."

"Raise him gently," said Dick in a low voice.

They carried the prostrate form into the cottage and laid Vane on the truckle-bed.

"Turpin, as a comrade, I ask you to ride to Parson Graham, at the vicarage, and bring him back with all speed!"

Turpin swung himself upon Black Bess and galloped away without a word, leaving his young friend with the dying man. Vane beckoned to Dick and motioned him to bend down. The man was deadly pale, and his eyes were growing dim.

"Stoop low, Dick Forrester," he whispered. "My time is short; the parson may come too late. I must unburden my soul to you."

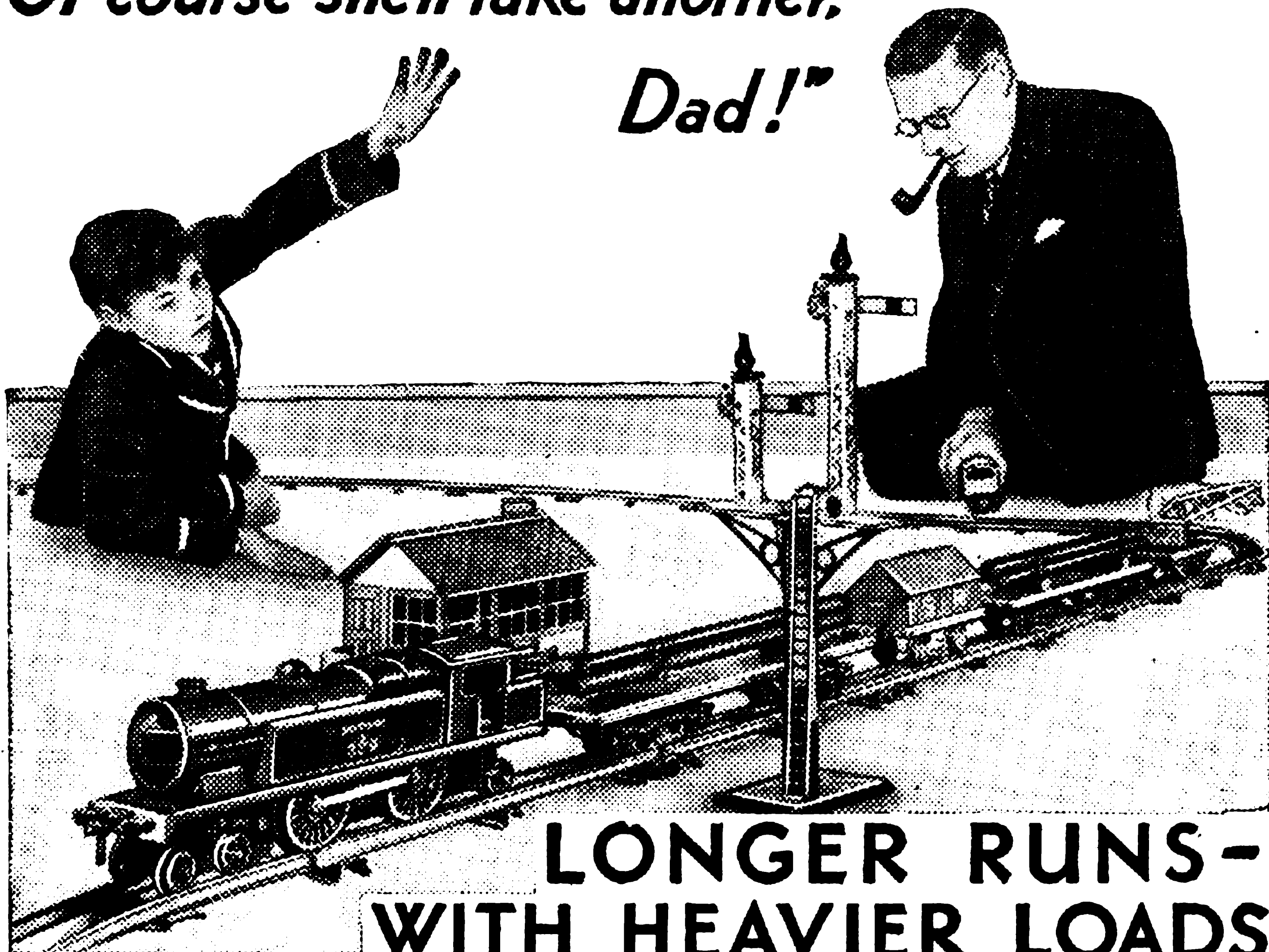
"Nay, lay quiet," said Dick gently. "I bear no grudge to a dying man. There is naught to say, except to make your peace."

"Naught to say?" echoed Vane. "I have hounded you to the death, you and your brother. I have taken all that was yours by felony, and I must tell the truth ere I go before my Judge. Listen!"

He fought a moment for breath, and then, turning his eyes upon Dick he made his confession.

(Don't on any account miss reading the dramatic concluding chapters of this popular serial next week, lads)

*"Of course she'll take another,
Dad!"*



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(Continued from page 33.)

Suddenly the violet ray, which had continued to play above his hiding-place, was shut off. Roddy wondered what had happened. Was it a trick? He peered over the rocks.

The Troggs were in the utmost disorder. Some of them were scurrying back to the helicopter as fast as they could run. Others were lying on the ground, giving vent to cries of terrible pain.

Even as Roddy watched, he saw the Troggs who were still capable of action bend and pick up their fallen companions, carrying them back to the helicopter. Before long every one of them was inside.

Jetby, fuming with rage, sprang into the helicopter, storming at the Troggs. His clenched fist went up to strike one of them—but it never fell. Another Trogg, stealing up behind Jetby, crashed a heavy bar on his head, and Jetby fell inside the helicopter.

The next moment, with a clang, the door of the helicopter closed; there came a whirring of the engines, and the machine rose.

It drifted over the crater of the volcano,

hung there a moment, and then, like lightning, dropped into the crater.

THE professor and the two boys, shivering with cold, tramped on through the snowstorm to where a light on the hillside promised them the comfort of a peasant's cottage.

"I can't understand it," said Roddy. "Why did the Troggs crack up like that?"

"You find it cold, Roddy?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Roddy.

"Then don't you think the Troglodytes, who have always been used to the intense heat of their own home, found it colder?" asked the professor. "It was the coming of that snowstorm that saved us. Jetby had forgotten that such creatures as the Troglodytes could never live in the more rarified atmosphere of this world."

"I wonder what will happen to Jetby?" said Roddy quietly. "Do you think we will ever see him again?"

"I wonder?" answered the professor.

THE END.

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