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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOTOR MATT'S DARING RESCUE; OR, THE STRANGE CASE OF HELEN BRADY ***



MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING ADVENTURE	MOTOR FICTION
NO. 11 MAY 8, 1909.	FIVE CENTS
MOTOR MATT'S DARING RESCUE	OR THE STRANGE CASE OF HELEN BRADY
STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS,	

MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING ADVENTURE MOTOR FICTION

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NEW YORK, May 8, 1909.

Price Five Cents.

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OR,

THE STRANGE CASE OF HELEN BRADY.

By the author of "MOTOR MATT."

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CHARACTERS THAT APPEAR IN THIS STORY.

Matt King, concerning whom there has always been a mystery—a lad of splendid athletic abilities, and never-failing nerve, who has won for himself, among the boys of the Western town, the popular name of "Mile-a-minute Matt."

Carl Pretzel, a cheerful and rollicking German lad, who is led by a fortunate accident to hook up with Motor Matt in double harness.

Dick Ferral, a Canadian boy who has served his time in the King's navy, and bobs up in the States where he falls into plots and counter-plots, and comes near losing his life.

Hector Brady, a convict who breaks prison to wreak vengeance upon two members of his former band.

Helen Brady, Hector Brady's daughter, who helps Motor Matt.

Whipple and Pete, two members of Hector Brady's old band of air-ship thieves who are engineering a treacherous plot aimed at Brady. It is against them that Brady has vowed vengeance—and a queer twist of circumstances causes Brady to ask aid of Motor Matt in order that the scoundrels may be captured and Helen rescued.

Hooligan and his wife, scoundrelly caretakers in charge of a mansion in River Forest.

Harris, a policeman of South Chicago who aids Motor Matt in his work against the Bradys.

CHAPTER I.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HELEN BRADY.

"Your name King?"

"Yes."

"You de feller dey calls Motor Matt?"

"You've struck it."

"Chee! I seen yer mug in de poipers an' I t'ought yous must be de feller. I'm de kid wot woiks f'r Hagenmyer, an' here's a letter dat he told me t' give t' yous."

Motor Matt and Dick Ferral had been sunning themselves in front of the balloon house, a little way out of the town of South Chicago. A youngster of ten or eleven had climbed the roadside fence and made his way toward the big, shed-like building in the centre of the swampy meadow. Of the two boys, the youngster had instinctively picked out Matt, had halted in front of him, and had started the foregoing colloquy. He finished by taking a letter out of his pocket and passing it over to the young motorist.

"Yous has been doin' a lot o' t'ings here in dis little ole burg," grinned the youngster, as he started back toward the road, "an' I wants t' go on record as sayin' yous is Class A, an' all t' de good."

"Much obliged," laughed Matt.

The kid from Hagenmyer's waved his hand, then turned around and made his way briskly toward the fence.

"Who's this Hagenmyer, mate?" queried Ferral, drawing closer to his chum and looking at the latter curiously.

"He's the fellow that bought this balloon house from Brady," explained Matt. "That was before the police found out that Brady was a thief, but Brady knew the discovery was coming, so he got rid of everything he owned in South Chicago."

"What business has Hagenmyer got with you?"

"We'll know in a minute, Dick."

Matt tore off the end of the envelope and pulled out the enclosed sheet. He gave a low whistle as he read; then, after he had finished, he passed the letter over to Ferral. The communication ran as follows:

"**MOTOR MATT:** My workmen will begin tearing down the balloon house to-morrow morning. It will be necessary, therefore, for you to remove your air ship sometime this afternoon or to-night.

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"**ISIDORE HAGENMYER.**"

A look of satisfaction crossed Ferral's face.

"That means we've got to trip anchor and bear away," said he. "I'm not sorry. We've been hung up here for two weeks, old ship, and what good has it done us?"

"Not much, that's a fact," answered Matt discontentedly. "Hagenmyer has held off on tearing down the balloon house for that length of time, just to give us a safe place to keep the Hawk. We can't blame him for getting busy on the old shed to-morrow morning."

"Well, our movable canvas shelter is ready, and stowed in the car. We can use that, now that the shed is to be taken away from us."

"The canvas is not a safe shelter, by any means, Dick."

"It's the only one we can use on our fly from here to New York. You won't try to stay here any longer, will you?"

"I hate to leave without learning something about Helen Brady. That girl has done a lot for us, pard, and it looks kind of heartless for us to pull out without doing what we can to settle the mystery of her disappearance."

"But what can we do, mate, if the detectives are all aback and not able to find a trace of her? Miss Brady went to visit friends on Archer Avenue, Chicago; she was there three days while her father, Hector Brady, was being tried and railroaded to the penitentiary; then, the fourth day after Miss Brady goes to Archer Avenue, she suddenly vanishes, and not a trace of her can be found. No matter how you overhaul the situation, it's queer, and I'm inclined to think that the girl's brother, Hector Brady, Jr., has spirited her away. Either that, or else the girl went away with her brother of her own free will. If Brady, Jr., is mixed up in this, matey, what right have we

got to interfere? Looks like a family affair."

Although Matt's brow wrinkled perplexedly, yet his eyes gleamed resolutely, as he replied:

"We know young Brady is a crook, just like his father, Dick, and if there wasn't something wrong, Helen would not have left her friends without giving some explanation. I don't care whether Brady, Jr., is mixed up in the affair or not, I intend to discover what's happened, and to give the girl help if she needs it. If it hadn't been for Helen, you and I would never have been able to chase Brady, Sr., over into Michigan, capture him, and get our air ship back. We mustn't forget what we owe Helen Brady, and that she's entitled to our aid if she needs it."

"Right-o, messmate!" returned Ferral heartily. "The girl helped us get back the Hawk, but that's the least of what she did. If it hadn't been for her, the pair of us would have gone to Davy Jones, right here in this old balloon house.^[A] I'm for doing everything we can for her, but if the police can't do anything, I don't see where we come in."

[A] See MOTOR MATT WEEKLY No. 10, "Motor Matt's Hard Luck; or, The Balloon-house Plot."

Matt was gloomily silent for a little while, turning his helplessness over and over in his mind.

"Well, Dick," he finally answered, "something may turn up."

"But we can't wait for it. Hagenmyer will be jerking the old shed down over our heads if we don't slant away sometime between this and morning."

"I'm hoping that telegram from the Lestrangle people may result in something. That letter they have for me may be from Helen Brady."

Matt took the message from his pocket and read it over again. It was from the people for whom he had been driving a racing automobile, and had been received about eleven o'clock that morning. It merely stated that they had received a letter for Matt, that it was marked "important," and that they would hold it until Matt told them what to do with it. The young motorist had immediately sent his Dutch pard, Carl Pretzel, to Chicago after the letter.

"Perhaps you're right, matey," said Ferral. "Anyhow, we'll know as soon as Carl gets back. He ought to be here by eight bells of the afternoon watch. Hello!" and here Ferral's eyes wandered to the road, "who's that steering this way? He's coming full and by, and seems to be in a hurry."

Matt stared in the direction indicated by his chum. Carl had not had time to get to Chicago and back, so he knew it could not be him.

As the hurrying figure drew closer, and became more distinct, it resolved itself into the form of a man in blue and brass buttons.

"Harris!" exclaimed Matt.

"That's right!" agreed Ferral excitedly; "Harris, or I'm a Fiji! He's got something mighty important stowed away in his locker, or he wouldn't be bearing down on us at that gait."

Harris was a member of the South Chicago police force, and was a good friend of Motor Matt.

"Perhaps he's got something to tell us about Helen Brady!" cried Matt, starting up. "If he has, then the news couldn't come at a better time."

While Harris was climbing the fence, both boys started across the swampy ground to meet him.

"Howdy, Matt!" called the officer, jerking a handkerchief from his pocket and wiping his perspiring face. "Hello, Ferral. Pretty hot day for a fast walk, and I didn't let any grass grow under me."

"What's the trouble, Harris?" queried Matt.

"There's plenty, I'm telling you. I guess we'll have to put another detail of officers on guard at this balloon house; if we don't, you lads are liable to get done up and lose the Hawk."

"How's that?" demanded Ferral.

"Why, that pesky Brady has escaped from the 'pen' at Joliet, and——"

"Escaped?" echoed Matt.

"Well, sink me!" exclaimed Ferral. "Why, he made his brags that the 'pen' couldn't hold him."

"That fellow's as slippery as an eel," went on Harris. "He's been at large for two days, and the prison authorities have kept it quiet, hoping they'd be able to bag him; but they failed to catch him, and now it's got into the papers. I wonder if you understand what that means to you, Matt?" and here the officer fixed a significant look on the young motorist.

"Brady swore he'd get even with Matt," spoke up Ferral.

"That's it," said Harris, "and he's the sort of fellow that don't say things just to hear himself talk. He's been out of the 'pen' two days, and I'd like to bet something handsome he's been thinking of Motor Matt and the air ship ever since he got clear of the stone walls and the iron bars. I rushed out here as soon as I could, to warn you boys to look out for yourselves, and for the Hawk."

"Brady will have enough to do keeping his liberty," remarked Matt; "he won't have any time to bother with me."

"That's where you're wrong, Matt, according to my notion. You know how anxious Brady has been, every time the law got after him, to get hold of the air ship. With the Hawk, he can snap his fingers at all the detectives and police officers, and it's a cinch he'll come this way. Some of the

rest of the gang may be helping him. You know Pete, Whipple, Grove, and Brady, Jr., are still at large. You don't want to have another balloon-house plot worked on you, so I think you lads had better pull out, and go east, if that's where you're headed for."

"But I don't want to leave until I can learn something about Helen Brady!" protested Matt.

"You can't help the girl any," continued Harris. "Who knows but some of her father's gang are mixed up in her disappearance? If it comes to that, who knows but the girl is with her father now? You can't afford to have any more dealings with that gang, Matt. Besides, you owe it to the authorities to take the Hawk where there won't be any possibility of Brady's getting hands on her. If he gets the Hawk, he'll never be captured; if he doesn't get the air ship, he can't possibly keep from getting laid by the heels."

The officer's position was logical. Matt's disappointment on Helen Brady's account was keen, but events seemed to be shaping themselves so that he and his friends would have to leave South Chicago that afternoon, whether they wanted to or not.

CHAPTER II.

THE IMPORTANT LETTER.

"It looks as though we'd have to get away from here this afternoon, Harris," said Matt. "Hagenmyer just sent us word he's going to begin tearing down the balloon house in the morning."

"Good!" exclaimed the officer, with satisfaction. "This old roost can't be knocked to pieces any too quick. It has witnessed many a lawless act on the part of Brady and his gang, and if these old walls could speak they'd tell us of many a crime. Are you and your chums going to try to get to New York with the Hawk, Matt?"

"Yes."

"It's quite a long trip. I know, from experience, that the Hawk will do well on a short voyage, but will she hold out for such a long journey as that?"

"I don't see why she won't, if she's carefully handled."

"But in bad weather? You can't figure on having sunshine and mild breezes all the way, you know, Matt. I've never seen the Hawk tried out in a stiff gale."

"If the gale was too strong, we'd have to come down, anchor, and put up our canvas shelter."

"If anyone could make a success of such a flight, I guess you're the boy. Will you help out the authorities by taking the Hawk so far away that Brady can't have any designs on her?"

"Of course, Harris," said Matt, "we'll do whatever you think is right, but before we leave I think we ought to do something for Helen Brady."

"The Chicago police are hard at work on her case, and you can trust them to do whatever can be done."

"Well," went on Matt, "we'll have to stay here until Carl gets back from the city. He's gone there after an important letter, and I've a hunch it may be from Miss Brady."

Harris opened his eyes at this, and Matt explained about the telegram from the Lestrangle people. The officer shook his head.

"There's not much ground for thinking that letter is from Miss Brady," said he. "Probably it's some one who has heard about your air-ship work, and wants to hire the Hawk, or to charter her. What you've been doing in the aeronautical line, Matt, has aroused a good deal of interest all over the country. It's the first time, so far as I know, that an air ship has ever been used practically. First, Brady used the Hawk in his thieving operations, and next you used her to bring two of the gang and some of their booty from Willoughby's swamp. Your last exploit, in which you made an air-ship trip across Lake Michigan in Jerrold's machine, the Eagle, captured the Hawk and returned safely with her, seems to have caused more talk than anything else you have done. No, you can take my word for it, that important letter is from some enthusiast who wants to buy the Hawk, or to hire her. If you lads wanted to sell the air ship, you could realize at least four times what you paid for the craft. Not a bad 'spec,' eh?"

"She ain't for sale, messmate," spoke up Ferral. "She may be for sale, after awhile, but we want to have a little fun with her first. Eh, Matt?"

"That's right, Dick," answered Matt. "Aside from the fun, too, I want to learn all I can about the air-ship business. You never can tell when knowledge of that kind will come handy."

"There you are!" laughed Harris. "You never saw a boy with such a grasping disposition whenever there's anything to be learned. I'm going to stay right here with you and make myself comfortable until Carl gets back from Chicago. You've got me all worked up about that letter, and I'll have to see what it amounts to."

The officer peeled off his long coat and made himself at ease on a box in the shade of the balloon house.

"It beats all," he remarked, after a pause, "how Brady ever succeeded in getting out of the 'pen.'"

"Haven't you heard how he accomplished that?" queried Matt.

"The details haven't been given out—even the newspapers haven't got them. If Brady ever got another chance at you, Matt, he wouldn't halt at any halfway measures. He's right in laying his capture, and most of his troubles, to you, and we all know that he has a disposition like a rattlesnake. You've got to look out for him."

Matt would have given a good deal to know just how much Harris was thinking of his safety, and just how much he was considering the help the authorities would receive by having the Hawk removed from that part of the country. He put the question point-blank, and the officer averred that he was thinking entirely of the recapture of Brady.

"Is the Hawk in shape for a get-away?" he asked.

"She's been ready for a week," replied the young motorist. "There's enough gasoline in the tank to carry her at least three hundred miles, and we have a reserve supply stowed in the car that will carry her that much farther. The bag is full of gas, and Mr. Jerrold has equipped us with a balloonet, or inner bag, that will keep the buoyancy the same in any temperature. The balloonet is filled with something of his own invention—a vapor of some sort that contracts as the gas in the outer bag expands, and that expands as the gas contracts. Not only that, but Mr. Jerrold gave the bag a coat of some sort of varnish which makes it almost proof against leakage, and we figure that we could travel some thousands of miles before it would be necessary to visit a gas plant."

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"Jerrold is a mighty good friend of yours, Matt," observed Harris. "It's not everybody he'd give the benefit of his own inventions."

"He's one of the greatest men of the age," declared the young motorist, with enthusiasm, "and he's doing more to put aeronautics on a commercial and practical basis than any other inventor in the country."

For an hour or two Harris and Matt talked on technical points connected with air ships, and the two finally went into the balloon house so that Matt could point out the improvements which his friend, Jerrold, had helped make in the Hawk.

Most of all this was worse than Greek to Ferral, and he yawned as he listened, and remained behind when his chum and the officer went inside the huge shed. Leaning against the board wall behind him, Ferral dozed, and it was only when a shout reached him from the road that he realized that Carl was coming.

When Ferral turned his gaze in the direction from which the shout had come, Carl was just clambering over the fence.

"Ahoy, Matt!" yelled Ferral, starting to his feet, and wide awake on the instant. "Here's our Dutch raggie! It's hard on the stroke of eight bells and he's made the round trip just as I thought he would."

In response to the hail, Matt and Harris came hurrying out of the shed. By that time Carl was half way between the road and the balloon house.

"Did you get the letter all right, Carl?" asked Matt, as soon as the Dutch boy had come close.

"You bed my life!" whooped Carl. "Don'd I chenerally ged vatefer I go afder, Matt?"

"It isn't often you fall down, and that's a fact."

"It wasn't much of a job, anyhow," laughed Ferral, "going after something that was waiting for you."

"I vent so kevick as I got pack," continued Carl, drawing the letter from his pocket, "und dot's vere I shine. Motor Matt say for me to do somet'ing, und I do him like chain lighdings. Dere you vas. He's atressed to Misder Motor Matt, care oof der Lestrangle Garage, und down in vone gorner iss der vort 'imbortant.' My nerfs vas all in some flutters to know vat iss on der insite."

Matt took the letter and tore it open; then, for the benefit of Harris and Ferral and Carl, he read it aloud.

"MOTOR MATT: You are a friend of Helen Brady's, and the writer knows that she is in grave peril. She can be rescued, but it can only be by means of your air ship, the Hawk, and the work will have to be done quietly. I am one of the detectives from headquarters, and my attention is so completely taken up with the case that I can't leave where I am to call and see you personally, but if you want to help rescue the girl, you will follow these instructions:

"Between La Grange and the town of Gary, not many miles from South Chicago, there's an abandoned stone quarry. You can't miss it, as it is on the Drainage Canal, and the limestone in the bottom of the quarry will look like a white patch on the earth from the air ship. Bring the Hawk to the quarry at ten o'clock to-night, descending on the edge of the Canal. I will be there to meet you. Don't come before night, for, if the Hawk is seen, we will have all our trouble for our pains. And keep mum about what you are doing, for if you were to talk, the information might reach those who have the girl in charge and thus prevent our success. Can I count on you? I am figuring that you will receive this letter Tuesday, and come to the quarry Tuesday night; but, if you don't receive this until Wednesday, come Wednesday night.

"Egol!" muttered Harris. "That's a peculiar letter, and no mistake. But it rings true. Besides, I know Glennie, and he's the best detective at the city headquarters."

"I had hoped that this might be from Miss Brady herself," said Matt.

"The girl is probably where she can't write. Glennie knows what he's about. He has asked you to come and told you how to get to the place, so if you want to help Miss Brady, Matt, you'll go."

"Will you come along with us, Harris?"

Harris shook his head.

"It wouldn't do for me to butt in on a bit of work that Glennie's pulling off—it would look too much as though I was trying to 'hog' some of the honor. Glennie would resent it, and he'd be perfectly right in doing so. He has laid his plans and the thing for you to do is to help carry them out."

"But you know the country better than any the rest of us. We'll be able to find the quarry, all right, when we get over it, but it may bother us some to find La Grange. You see, we'll have to work at night, and——"

"That will be easy, Matt," interrupted Harris, "if you find the canal and then follow it until you get to the quarry. I'll show you how to reach the canal, and after that you will have plain sailing."

The officer gave the instructions. After he was through, the finding of the quarry seemed a simple enough matter.

It was eight o'clock in the evening before the boys got the Hawk out of the shed for the start. Harris had stayed with them up to that time. He watched while the young motorist and his chums got into the car and glided upward to a humming accompaniment of the motor's cylinders.

"Good-by and good luck!" yelled Harris, in answer to the parting hail that came to him from the dusky blot overhead.

Harris, after he had returned to headquarters to report, called up the Chicago police department. It was merely by an afterthought and not because he anticipated finding anything wrong.

"This is Harris, of South Chicago, talking," said he, as soon as his call was answered. "Where's Dave Glennie?"

"Right here in the office, Harris. If you——"

Harris staggered back and almost dropped the receiver.

"What!" he demanded.

"Glennie's here in the office," repeated the man at the other end of the line. "If you want to talk to him I'll call him."

"You bet I do want to talk to him! Tell him to hustle to the phone."

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Glennie must have "hustled," for in less than a minute he was at the phone, saying hello, and asking what was wanted.

"Did you write a letter to Motor Matt and send it to him in care of the Lestrangle Garage, there in Chicago?"

"What would I want to write a letter to Motor Matt for?" demanded the detective.

"I'll keep it quiet, if you did. All I want's to get at the truth."

"I've given you the truth, Harris."

"You've been working on that Helen Brady case, haven't you?"

"Sure, but my hands are in the air. Everybody's hands are in the air. It's the strangest case you ever heard of, and there's absolutely no trace——"

Harris tossed the receiver onto the hooks and staggered away from the phone. What sort of underhand work was going on? Motor Matt and his chums were running right into trouble, and Harris realized that he had helped to start them on the way.

"An automobile!" he muttered, hurrying out of the headquarters' building. "I've got to have a fast one and get to that old quarry before ten o'clock. Egol, this is the worst thing I ever went up against!"

CHAPTER III.

BY THE OLD QUARRY.

Traveling by night in the Hawk was not a new experience for Motor Matt and his chums. When they had crossed the lake from Grand Haven, after the capture of Hector Brady, they had come by night. At that time they had had the moon to light their course, but on this trip to the old quarry the moon was new and they had to depend upon the stars.

As the night advanced, the stars grew brighter and they were able to distinguish the different

features of the landscape below them. All was in shadow, more or less, but groves of trees were darker than the open stretches, and the highways were whitish lines dividing the country in squares. A cluster of lights marked the situation of a village, and stray gleams from below showed where the farm houses were located.

"I'd radder travel mit a air ship," remarked Carl, "dan any odder vay vat I know. It vas fine, und dot's all about it."

"Right-o, matey," answered Ferral. "I used to think there was nothing like a good ship and a skipper's breeze to make a fellow in love with life, but strike me lucky if there's anything on the seas to compare with this. We can not only shift our course by putting the helm down or up, but we can dive through the air like a porpoise in the water, and then we can climb up like a blooming whale that wants to spout. I'm an air sailor from this on, as long as the Hawk's afloat. Sell her? Not for Joseph! not if some lubber was to offer us four times what we paid for her. Eh, Matt?"

"It's all right to hang onto the craft until we get at all the ins and outs of this air-ship business," replied the king of the motor boys from his place among the levers, "but if we can't make some money out of the Hawk after that, I'll have to unload my interest in her, Dick, and get busy with something more profitable. Carl and I, you know, haven't any rich uncles to stand behind us. We have to work like Sam Hill for all we get."

"Dot's right," agreed Carl. "I haf vorked all my life like Sam Hill, but I don'd got sooch a derriple sighdt now. Oof I shday hooked oop mit Matt, dough, I bed you someding for nodding I come outd on der dop."

"Aye, aye," cried Ferral heartily, "Motor Matt's the boy to win. But I'm not going to let my rich uncle do everything for me. When we get through with the Hawk I'm going to Quebec and get back in the King's service. Nothing like the navy. My uncle wants to see me amount to something in the service, and he stands ready to give me a boost, but I told him to let me alone and watch me work my way up. I was captain of the after gun crew on the old *Billy Ruffian*, and——"

Ferral broke off suddenly, leaned over the rail and peered downward.

"I'm a Fiji, Matt," he went on, "if I don't think we're close to the canal. Cock your eye over the side, Carl, and take a look."

"Vell," said Carl, after a careful survey, "it vas a mighty shstraight rifer oof it vasn't der canal."

"Put your helm over, Matt," went on Ferral, "for here's where we take a fresh tack."

Matt took a look for himself, then shifted the steering rudder so as to turn the Hawk to the left, and at right angles with the course she had been following.

"Now then, fellows," said he, "keep your eyes skinned for the old quarry. They're all limestone quarries, in this part of the country, and the one we're looking for ought to show as white as a strip of macadam road."

For half an hour they whirred along, a moving blot against the stars. It was Carl who first discovered the quarry.

"I t'ink I haf seen der blace, Verral," said he. "Look, vonce, off der on der rightd."

Ferral stared in the direction indicated.

"You've hit it, mate," averred Ferral. "There's the old quarry, Matt, and it lies to the right of the canal. There's a railroad track in between."

"Well, we'll get down by the canal, opposite the quarry," said Matt. "If the detective, Glennie, is anywhere around, he'll be on the lookout for us and won't be slow reaching the place where we land."

"I can see a couple of trees close to the bank of the canal, Matt," announced Ferral, "and if we could drop in between them it would be a good berth, and give us a fine place in which to moor the Hawk."

"Guide me to the place," returned Matt, "and be sure you don't land us in the top of one of the trees."

"Turn her about two points to port," went on Ferral, keeping his keen eyes below as he gave the direction. "There you are—steady as she is. Now tilt her—gently, gently!"

Matt depressed the steering rudder, keeping the vertical planes rigid as they were. When the Hawk had attained the proper slant to bring her to an even keel between the two trees, Ferral gave the word. Matt slowed the propeller and they glided easily downward.

"Now then," called Ferral, "straighten her out."

The nose of the air ship immediately swung upward, and she glided in between the trees. Matt cut off the power, and Carl jumped out on one side and Ferral on the other, each with a rope.

The trees stood about forty feet apart, with cleared ground in between, and the propeller had hardly come to a standstill before Carl and Ferral had the mooring ropes securely fastened to the tree trunks.

Matt leaped over the rail and began looking about him through the semi-gloom.

"There's some one bearing this way from the direction of the railroad track," said Ferral, in a low tone. "He's coming in a hurry, too."

Matt turned his eyes in the direction of Ferral's pointing finger. A dark figure could be seen rapidly approaching. As the man drew nearer, the starlight struck a vague flash from buttons on the front of his coat.

"Looks like a man in uniform," remarked Matt, stepping out from under the shadow of the trees. "Hello!" he cried. "Is that you, Glennie?"

"That's who it is, King," came a husky answer. "Glad you got that letter in time to get here to-night. If you hadn't come before to-morrow night it might have been too late."

"Sink me!" muttered Ferral. "Seems like I'd heard that voice before."

"Me, too," seconded Carl; "dere vas some familiar rings mit it."

Matt likewise had a vague notion that he had heard the voice before, although he could not tell where. The man came steadily onward and, when he halted within a few feet of the boys, they could see that he was in uniform, and wore a cap with gold braid. There was lettering on the cap, but it was too dark to read it. The collar of the man's coat was turned up about his ears, and the cap was pulled down over his forehead.

"You're Dave Glennie, are you?" queried Matt.

"Sure," was the answer, but there was a shifty undertone in the voice which still further aroused Matt's suspicions. "Who did you think I was? I've been watching by this old quarry for two or three days, and when I sent that letter to you I had to get a boy to post it in La Grange. Didn't dare to leave here myself. If you—Thunder! What's the matter with you?"

Matt, with a quick move, had leaped at the man and jerked off his cap.

"Brady!" he shouted. "Help here, boys!"

He grabbed Brady by the shoulders, and both of them fell to the ground.

"Prady!" gasped Carl. "Vell, vat do you t'ink oof dot! Prady! Und ve t'ought all der time he vas a tedectif! Ach, plazes, vat a surprise!"

Ferral, appreciating the necessity of quick action, did not stop to say anything. Running to Matt, he helped him hold Brady on the ground. Presently, Carl came, and the three boys soon had the escaped convict helpless.

Brady's fall had caused his coat to come open. Under it Matt saw a lighter suit of prison stripes.

"Brady put the uniform on over the prison clothes," panted Matt.

"He's clever as ever," returned Ferral, "but what's his dodge?"

"Look a leedle oudt for some oof der odder members oof der gang!" fluttered Carl. "Meppy dis is anoder drap."

"Trap nothing!" protested Brady. "Get off of me, you fellows, and give me a chance to talk. I've got something to say that will open your eyes. If you want to help my girl, now's your chance—but I've got to go with you."

CHAPTER IV.

A QUEER SITUATION.

Brady had made no resistance. When attacked by Matt, he had allowed himself to be overborne without a struggle. The young motorist, however, was well acquainted with Brady's treacherous nature and thought he was playing a part. Paying no attention to his request to be left free for a talk, Matt continued to keep tight hold of him.

"Get a rope, Carl," said he.

"On der chump!" answered Carl, starting at once for the car.

"I'm not putting up any fight, King," spoke up Brady; "you can see that, and it ought to be proof that I haven't any hostile intentions. Do you suppose I'd have come here alone if I'd wanted to rough things with you?"

"There's never any telling what you'll do," answered Matt. "You're full of tricks, Brady; not only that, but you're an escaped convict. You're playing some kind of a game, but you're not going to catch us, I can tell you that."

Brady fell silent. When Carl got back with the rope he allowed himself to be tied.

"Now," said he, as he lay helpless on the ground, "if you're satisfied, we can talk."

Considering the temper he had, he showed a most remarkable command of himself.

"I haven't any objections to talking with you," returned Matt, "but nothing you can say is going to keep us from handing you over to the police. Carl," and here he turned to his Dutch chum, "you go to the other side of the trees and keep a sharp watch for some of the rest of the gang. And you, Dick," he added to Ferral, "keep your eyes skinned on this side. It won't do to let Pete or Whipple sneak up on us while Brady is holding our attention."

"Ve fool him vonce oof he dries dot," said Carl, moving away to the position assigned him.

"Right-o," agreed Ferral. "We know too much about Brady to let him pull the wool over our eyes."

As Brady lay bound, Matt went through his pockets, looking for a weapon. His search was unsuccessful. Brady laughed harshly as the lad drew away with empty hands.

"You'll not find any shooting irons about me, King," said he. "Why, I haven't so much as a pocket knife in my clothes. That's more proof that I didn't come here with any hostile intentions against you and your friends."

"Where did you get that uniform?" asked Matt sternly.

"It belongs to one of the guards at the prison."

"He gave it to you and helped you get away?"

"Not much he didn't. I knocked him over the head, got into his uniform and walked out of the 'pen.' That's how I made my get-away."

"When you were sent up you said you'd get clear and play even with me."

"I've made up my mind to play even with somebody else, and want you to help me with the Hawk."

The audacity of this proposition staggered Matt.

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"You must be crazy, Brady," said he, "if you think I'd help you in any of your underhand schemes. You came here and wrote that forged letter?"

"I came directly here from the prison," replied Brady, with the utmost frankness, "and have been hiding in that deserted stone quarry. Just as I told you, I wrote that letter and ran the risk of discovery by getting a boy to bring me an envelope and a sheet of paper, and then to take the letter to La Grange and mail it."

"Why did you use Dave Glennie's name?"

"Because I thought it would bring you, and I didn't think of anything else that would fetch you this way."

"Well, you overreached yourself. Instead of making us your prisoners, we have turned the tables on you; and we're going to get you away from here before the rest of your gang show up."

"They'll not show up," declared Brady, "and I didn't get you and your friends here to make any trouble for you."

It was a queer condition of affairs—so queer, in fact, that Matt would not take any stock in it.

"What did you bring us here for?" he asked incredulously.

"To help my girl," replied Brady, in a voice that seemed perfectly sincere. "She has helped you a good many times, King, and I supposed you would be willing to do something for her."

"I would do anything for Miss Brady, but I don't think that you, even though you are her father, have her best interests at heart. When you were captured, over in Michigan, you swore you would get even with your daughter, just as you would with me."

"A few days have made a different man of me, King. I got a letter while I was in prison, telling how the girl had been spirited away from the home of her friends, in Chicago. I know who did that, and I know why it was done. Helen needs help—she must have it soon—and if you won't come with me and help me with the Hawk, there's no telling what will happen to the girl. It was to do what I could for her that I escaped from the 'pen,' that I have been hiding and starving in that old quarry, and that I wrote that letter and got you here. Good heavens, boys, do you think I'd have taken all these chances unless there was the biggest kind of a demand on me?"

Brady was terribly in earnest, but he was so shifty and full of tricks that Matt could not have any confidence in him.

"Your change of heart is too sudden to be sincere," said he. "You've played fast and loose with me ever since I first met you, Brady."

"I know that what I have done is against me," went on Brady, with an odd, pleading note in his voice, "but just now I have hazarded everything on a single throw, and if you refuse to trust me you'll regret it—on Helen's account. I tell you she's in danger. Of course you can load me into the Hawk and take me back to South Chicago, but when the worst happens to the girl you're going to be sorry."

Matt pondered the subject for a few moments. There was nothing he wouldn't have done for Helen Brady, but her reprobate father was not the one to show him his duty in that direction.

"Where are Pete and Whipple?" he asked.

"They're hiding in La Grange, but they don't know anything about where I am. It's those black-hearted scoundrels who are making all the trouble for Helen." The old fierceness crept into Brady's voice. "I'll get even with the whelps if I hang for it!" he cried. "They can't turn against me without footing the bill! They ought to be in the 'pen' and I'll land them there before I go back myself. We can do this, King, and we can save the girl—if you will only help me. Don't take me back to South Chicago until we have captured Pete and Whipple and saved Helen! I know I have been tricky with you, and that you have just cause to suspect my motives now, but I declare to you solemnly that all I ask is a chance to get even with Pete and Whipple and to take Helen out of their hands."

"Miss Brady was spirited away by Pete and Whipple?" asked Matt, his nerves quivering at the very thought.

"Yes, and they're keeping her a prisoner now. If you——"

Just here Carl came running out from the shadow of the trees.

"Dere vas two fellers coming dis vay from der canal," he cried excitedly, "und dey vas coming on der run. Ve haf got to do somet'ing un do it kevick!"

"It's a trap, after all!" exclaimed Matt. "Ferral, you and Carl pick up Brady and hustle him over to the car. Get ready to cast off and make a swift start from here. Look alive, now, or we'll be head over heels in the trouble Harris was afraid would come our way."

As Matt spoke, he ran toward the trees and the air ship, intending to cast off the mooring ropes himself. His foot struck against something, which he found to be a piece of a dead branch from one of the trees. He possessed himself of the club, with the intention of using it if he was interfered with in his work.

Carl and Ferral realized the necessity of quick action. Grabbing up Brady by the feet and shoulders, they hustled him toward the Hawk. When they dumped him into the car, Matt had already cast off one rope and was working frantically with the other.

"Here's the Hawk, by thunder!" bellowed an exulting voice from the gloom. "What do you think of this for luck? We got ter capture the air ship, Pete! It won't do to let such a chance get away from us."

The hoarse voice came closer and closer, and Matt heard a scramble of running feet.

"Dere dey are!" cried Carl. "It vas Pete und Vipple! Vat a luck, und——"

There came the impact of a blow. Among the shadows under the trees Matt saw Carl, who had been standing by the rail of the car, suddenly hurled backward. He had been struck down by one of the two scoundrels—Pete or Whipple—it was impossible to tell which.

"Pipe to quarters!" came the voice of Ferral as he leaped to Carl's assistance. "All hands repel boarders! Look out for yourself, Matt!"

Just then Matt had his own hands full and could not pay any more attention to what was going on by the car.

One of the two ruffians, seeing him in the gloom, leaped in his direction. There was a bluish flash, followed by a sudden report. Matt dropped backward.

"I've got King, Pete!" jubilated the voice of Whipple. "We'll have everythin' our own way, now! Don't let them others git the best o' ye afore I git there."

Whipple, however, was mistaken. He had not "got" Matt. His bullet had sped wide, and Matt had merely tumbled backward to pick up the club which he had dropped while working at the rope.

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As Whipple continued to rush forward, the young motorist sprang up, whirled the bludgeon, and let it drop on the scoundrel's head with all his strength.

Whipple gave a howl of pain, threw up his hands, and staggered back. Matt pressed the robber hard, and another blow felled him where he stood. Whirling away, Matt rushed back to help his two chums.

Carl had not yet recovered himself sufficiently to be of any use, and Ferral was having a little more than he could manage.

"Take him from behind, Whipple!" panted Pete, thinking Matt was his confederate.

The next moment Pete saw his mistake.

Rightly surmising that something had happened to his pal, and not caring to run the risk of being captured, Pete whirled and took to his heels.

"Keelhaul me, mate," cried Ferral, "but that was a tight squeak. Where's the other swab?"

"I was lucky enough to bowl him over, and——"

"My heart was in my throat when I heard that shot! I thought sure you had got your gruel."

"Never mind that, now. Get into the car and turn over the engine. I'll finish casting off that other rope and we'll get out of here. There's more of the gang at large and they may be skulking around in this vicinity. Hurry up, Dick!"

Matt rushed back to where he had had his encounter with Whipple. The scoundrel had vanished, having probably recovered his wits, and made off after Pete. This made the situation more critical for Matt and his friends. The two scoundrels were armed, and it would be only a matter of a few minutes before they rejoined each other and renewed the attack.

Working swiftly, Matt released the rope from the tree, threw it into the car, and bounded after it. Everything was ready, and all he had to do was to jump into the car, switch the power into the propeller, and lift the steering rudder.

In another moment, the Hawk had glided upward and away into the night.

CHAPTER V.

PETE AND WHIPPLE MAKE A CAPTURE.

"Consarn it!" cried Whipple, overtaking Pete as he was legging it for the canal, "what ye runnin' fer?"

"Fer the same reason you are, I reckon," replied Pete. "Them three kids was too much fer us. I thought I heerd ye yell that ye'd put King down an' out?"

"I thought I had," and Whipple exploded a savage oath and fondled the side of his head, "but the cub come back at me with a sand bag, or somethin', an' I seen more stars than what ye can find overhead. Fer about half a minit I was clean knocked out. When I come ter myself ye had made a run of it, an' I trailed after ye. We got a chance yet, d'ye hear? Purty idee if two huskies like us can't git the best o' three kids like them."

"That King is more kinds of an eel than I know how ter mention," replied Pete. "The way he wriggles around an' gits out o' tight corners is some surprisin'. Had we better go back there, Whipple? It wouldn't do fer us ter git captured; an' then, considerin' what we're workin' fer in La Grange, it would be foolish ter take any chances."

"Chances!" growled Whipple. "We've got guns an' them kids haven't. Where do the chances come in? Pull yer six-shooter an' come on. I'm going ter git even for that whack King give me on the head. An' we want that air ship. It's jest the thing we need. Don't be a fool, Pete."

With this final adjuration, Whipple, weapon in hand, started back toward the trees. Pete, likewise prepared for emergencies, hurried after him.

Before they had covered half the distance that separated them from the trees, however, they saw the black shape of the air ship shoot upward and vanish in the darkness toward the north.

Whipple's rage and disappointment were so keen that he gave way to a torrent of piratical language, storming around until Pete called him to a halt with a show of temper.

"What good does that do? King an' his pals have hiked out, an' mebby it's a good thing fer us that they did. Stop yer swearin' an' let's go on to the ole quarry an' take a look fer Brady."

Stifling his anger, Whipple strode on to the trees and peered over the scene of the recent encounter.

"Yes," he growled, "King has showed us his heels ag'in, but it ain't a good thing fer us noways that he got clear. What d'ye s'pose he was doin' here?"

"I pass. I ain't no mind reader, Whipple."

"No, I reckon ye ain't; an' ye ain't got any too much good, common sense, neither. Mebby King's got a tip that the girl's at La Grange, an' he's come over in this direction lookin' fer us. Did ye ever think o' that? If our game's been tipped off, we're li'ble ter find ourselves in a hard row o' stumps."

"Who's goin' ter tip off our game?" demanded Pete. "Them Chicago detectives ain't been able ter find out a thing."

"Mebby they have, but that confounded Matt King is the sort o' cat we never know which way he's goin' ter jump. If that kid wasn't stringin' us, I'll bet money the feller that got him ter git writin' material, an' then ter take a letter to the La Grange postoffice, addressed ter King, was Brady."

"Why should Brady be writin' ter King? He hates him down ter the ground."

"Brady would do anythin' ter beat our game."

"Then, if ye're so sure Brady's in the ole quarry, let's find him an' have it out with him, right here."

"That's the thing fer us ter do—only thing we *can* do, now."

The two men started out of the shadow of the trees in the direction of the railroad track and the quarry. A wagon road followed the track, and before they had reached the road, the *chugetty-chug* of an automobile, rapidly approaching, struck on their ears.

"Get back ter the trees!" muttered Whipple. "Here comes an automobile, an' it won't do fer us ter be seen."

They scrambled back into the dark shadows of the trees. Crouching there, they waited and watched.

The automobile was coming at a good clip along the road, and could be seen to contain two men. To the surprise and consternation of Pete and Whipple, the machine slowed to a halt just between the trees and the track.

"Thunder!" gasped Pete; "that move don't mean any good ter us. I don't like the way things is movin' ternight. What d'ye think them dubs is up to?"

"Shut up an' listen!" whispered Whipple. "They're talkin', an' mebby we can find out what their game is."

"There's the old quarry, on the right, Graydon," one of the men was saying, "and there's the canal on the left. Right around in here is where that air ship ought to be."

"Maybe we're too late, Harris," answered the man addressed as Graydon, "and that the game has been pulled off."

"I hope not. If anything has gone wrong with King and his friends, I'm to blame. Get out and cross the track to the quarry. Look around there and see if you can find anything of the boys. If you can't, my hands will be in the air, and I won't know the first thing to do. While you're nosing around the quarry, I'll walk over toward the canal. If anything has gone wrong with Motor Matt, I'll bet Hector Brady is back of it."

All this, which was plainly heard by Whipple and Pete, rendered them anything but easy in their minds. They knew Harris, the energetic officer from South Chicago, and his activities while helping Motor Matt had left memories anything but pleasant. And then, too, the mention of Brady had set the two scoundrels to guessing.

"We'd better duck while we've got time," whispered Pete.

"Wait!" returned Whipple roughly. "We've got ter find out what's up—it may mean success or failure fer that game we're workin' at La Grange."

"How ye goin' ter find out anythin' more? Them fellers have quit talkin'."

"They've quit talkin'," answered Whipple darkly, "but they haven't got away from here yet. Stick right where ye are, Pete, an' watch."

Graydon had got out of the automobile and started across the railroad track. It was only a moment or two before he was blotted out of sight. Harris had likewise climbed out of the car and was starting slowly in the direction of the canal.

As the officer advanced, Whipple pulled Pete behind one of the trees.

"Leave it ter me," he whispered savagely. "Harris is comin' this way an' I'll take care o' him. We've got a score ter settle with that dub, anyway."

"I won't stand fer no desperate work, Whipple," warned Pete. "We're tangled up a-plenty as it is."

"You stand by an' keep yer mouth shut!" ordered Whipple. "We got ter nab Harris an' make him do some more talkin'. Hist, now! He's comin' close."

The officer, greatly worried on account of Matt and his friends, and utterly unconscious of lurking danger, was making straight toward the trees, evidently intending to pass between them on his way to the canal.

As he drew nearer, he kept his head moving from side to side, plainly hoping to discover something.

Scarcely breathing, the two fugitives waited for him. Whipple, catching his revolver by the barrel, leaped out from behind the tree just as Harris came abreast of him. At that instant the officer's head was turned away. He heard the noise of the spring and whirled—but too late. Whipple brought the butt of his revolver down on the officer's head with stunning force.

Harris, without a word, flung up his hands and crumpled in an insensible heap to the ground.

"Look here, Whipple," cried the exasperated Pete, "if ye've done fer him I'm goin' ter quit ye, right here."

"I haven't done fer him," scoffed Whipple, "only jest laid him out so'st we can handle him."

"What ye goin' ter do?"

"Take him ter La Grange an' find out what he knows. We'll use the automobile."

"That's plumb foolish! He'll git next ter the whole game, then he'll have us dead ter rights."

"If I'm figgerin' this thing right, some 'un's next ter our game as it is, an' we've got ter take the girl an' move. The automobile'll come in handy fer us, an' when we pull out we can leave Harris behind. I've run the engine in the Hawk, an' I know enough about motor cars ter run that machine. Hurry up! We want ter git away from here afore that other dub comes back from the quarry."

Harris, breathing heavily and still unconscious, was picked up neck and heels and rushed to the car.

"You git in behind with him," said Whipple, as the officer was placed in the tonneau, "an' I'll git in the driver's seat. We'll pass up lookin' fer Brady in the quarry fer now. I reckon Harris can tell us all we want ter know."

The two scoundrels got into the car, Whipple pausing first to crank up the engine.

Turning the car around the other way, he headed along the back track, gradually speeding up the motor. The rascals had had one backset, but this move seemed likely to more than make up for it.

CHAPTER VI.

BRADY'S PROPOSITION.

"How do you feel, Carl?" asked Matt, when the Hawk was safely clear of the ground and swinging

easily along through the night.

"I feel like my headt vas as pig as a parrel," answered Carl. "Py shiminy, dot vas a svipt vat I got. I see pooty ret lights aroundt me, und I don'd know somet'ing ondil lader."

"It's a cinch, matey," spoke up Ferral, "that Brady laid that trap, and that we only got out of it by the skin of our teeth."

"What do you say to that, Brady?" asked Matt.

"It's mighty unfortunate—for me," replied Brady, from the bottom of the car. "I laid a trap, King, but not that kind. What I wanted, was to talk you into helping me rescue Helen. I don't know yet how Whipple and Pete managed to show up there when they did. They didn't see me, and they don't know now that you've captured me."

"As soon as we can get to South Chicago," said Matt, "we'll tell Harris those fellows are here. This is the first clue the police have had as to where they are."

"A good night's work, mate," said Ferral, "strike me lucky if it ain't. Harris will be all ahoo when we tell him that it was Brady who wrote that letter."

"Don't take me back to South Chicago just yet," pleaded Brady, struggling to a sitting posture and leaning against the rail at the side of the car. "If Pete and Whipple are away from that shanty in La Grange, this will be a good time to get Helen."

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"He talks mit two tongues vorse as any feller vat I know," remarked Carl.

"He thinks he can keep on fooling us," scoffed Ferral.

"Listen to me, that's all I ask," pursued Brady, desperately earnest. "Pete and Whipple, helped by a man named Hooligan, got the girl away from her friends in Chicago, and——"

"How did they do it?" interrupted Matt.

"Hooligan met Helen on the street, and told her that her brother, Hector Brady, Jr., was sick and wanted her to come to him at once. Helen knew the police were looking for my son, just as they were for the other members of my gang who had escaped the officers, and she did not dare to go back to her friends and tell them where she was going. Hooligan told her it wouldn't be necessary for her to say anything, as she could get back to Archer Avenue in the afternoon. Hooligan took Helen by train to River Forest, a suburb of Chicago, and not far from La Grange. He's care-taker during the summer for a house in River Forest, Hooligan is, and he took the girl there. The moment the girl reached the house, Whipple and Pete made a prisoner of her, and turned her over to Mrs. Hooligan. When it became night, Helen was taken to a house owned by the Hooligans in La Grange—and Helen has been there ever since. Last night I was in La Grange and I spotted the house, but the gang were too many for me and I didn't dare try to rescue Helen alone. I had already thought of you and the Hawk, King, and I knew we could turn the trick if I could only get you to help."

The facts were surprising—providing they were the facts—and Brady's knowledge of them was equally mystifying.

"How did you learn all this, Brady?" demanded Matt.

"Grove got the news to me while I was in prison. Whipple and Pete tried to ring him in on the deal, but Grove wouldn't stand for it. A pretty decent sort of a grafter, Grove is, but he's done with crooked work and has gone to California to lead a different life. My son, at last accounts, was in New York. By this time he's off for foreign parts. It is due to you, King, that my gang has been scattered like this, and there was a time, not many days ago, when all I asked was to be free just long enough to settle my score with you. But this strange affair of Helen's has changed all that. I'm thinking more of getting even with Whipple and Pete than I am of getting even with you. As for Helen, I can see now that the girl meant well, although what she has done has made a convict of me."

The convict was always a well-spoken man, and plainly a man of education. This, perhaps, had made him a more dangerous criminal than he would otherwise have been.

Somehow, Matt was deeply impressed by his words. The young motorist's desire to help Helen Brady probably influenced him to pay some attention to his prisoner's words.

"You're right in saying this is a strange case, Brady," said Matt. "The strangest part of it is why Whipple and Pete should go to all this trouble. What are they trying to do?"

"I've made up my mind to tell you the whole of it, King," returned Brady. "During my thieving operations around South Chicago I picked up quite a lot of valuable property. You got some of it back, but not the biggest part. I hid that away, to a place known only to me, and wrote down instructions for finding the place, and stowed the memorandum under a loose brick in the house at Lake Station, where Helen stayed for awhile after you got the Hawk away from me in Willoughby's swamp. If anything happened to me, I intended to tell Hector, Jr., where the instructions were hidden, have him get the plunder, turn it into cash, and hire lawyers to get me out of trouble. While I was waiting for my trial, there in South Chicago, I sent the letter to Hector, Jr. He had left town and the letter fell into Helen's hands. She opened it, went to Lake Station and got the memorandum. In some way, Whipple and Pete found out about it, and they engineered the abduction before Helen could turn the paper over to the police—as I know she intended doing."

A great rage welled up in Brady as he went on.

"Those two treacherous hounds want to get the plunder, and they will keep Helen a prisoner until they can make her tell where the stuff is concealed, for I imagine she destroyed the paper after reading it. That's why I want to play even with them! It was for that alone that I struck down the prison guard, got into his uniform, and escaped from the 'pen.' If you'll help me, King, I've got a proposition to make to you—and you'll find that I stand by it."

"What's your proposition?" asked Matt.

Where Brady had put the spoil of his many robberies had long been a mystery to the authorities, and Brady's recital, although one of the strangest Matt had ever heard, was logical, and bore the stamp of truth.

"It's this," went on Brady, visibly gratified because the young motorist seemed inclined to fall in with his plans; "help me rescue Helen and place Whipple and Pete in the 'pen.' If you will do that, I will go back to Joliet and finish my term, and you can rely on Helen to tell where the plunder is cached. But if anything has happened to those written instructions, and Helen can't tell, I'll give the information to you and you can have the stuff dug up and returned to the people from whom it was taken. I can't say anything fairer than that."

This was queer talk for Hector Brady. Motor Matt could hardly believe his ears. And yet, he was offering little. He had already been recaptured, so his return to Joliet was a foregone conclusion; and Helen, it was almost certain, knew the location of the caché, and it might be considered that the stolen property would be returned without any of Brady's help. That Whipple and Pete could wrest the location of the caché from Helen, Matt could not believe. He knew the girl's determination too well.

"He iss trying to make some fools oudt oof us," remarked Carl. "Don'd listen to him, Matt."

"That's the sizing I give his talk, mate," seconded Ferral. "He's a bad one, and couldn't tell the truth on a bet."

"Haven't you any gratitude for what Helen did for you?" demanded Brady. "If it hadn't been for her, you would have lost this air ship."

"That's the least of it," said Matt gravely. "Miss Brady saved Ferral's life and mine, at the time of that balloon-house plot of yours, Brady. You want to take the Hawk to the place in La Grange where Hooligan and his wife live?"

"To the place where they live when they're at home," answered Brady. "They only stay there in the winter. During the summer they're taking care of that house in River Forest."

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"They're making fine use of that River Forest house!" exclaimed Matt. "But they can't be there now, if they've got Helen at the place in La Grange."

"Mrs. Hooligan has charge of Helen, and Whipple and Pete are there with her. Hooligan himself is at River Forest."

"What sort of a two-faced scoundrel is this Hooligan, that he helps criminals in such work?"

"He happens to be Pete's brother."

"That doesn't excuse him."

"Probably he's figuring on getting a share of the stuff Pete and Whipple are hoping to find. There's enough of the loot to make them all pretty comfortable. If you hadn't butted into my affairs, King, I could have sailed away in the Hawk and taken life easy for the rest of my days."

"The proper way to work this," said Matt, after a moment's reflection, "is to take you to South Chicago, Brady, leave you there, and pick up Harris and two other officers. Then you can tell us where to go and we'll have Whipple, Pete and the two Hooligans behind the bars before daylight. And Miss Brady will be safely rescued."

"That won't do at all," protested Brady. "In the first place, that will make too much of a delay at a time when every moment may count; and, in the next place, I'll have to be along to tell you where to moor the air ship and point out the house."

"He has got somet'ing oop his sleeve more as he lets oudt," answered Carl. "Go shlow a leedle, Matt; dot's der way vat I feel aboutt it."

"Right-o," agreed Ferral. "Even though there is a little delay, Matt, it's better to go to South Chicago and pick up Harris than to let Brady lead us into a mare's nest."

Brady showed signs of exasperation.

"I don't believe you want to do anything for Helen!" he growled.

"Yes, we do," said Matt, "and we're going to La Grange at once; but we're going to leave those ropes on you all the time, Brady, and I'll reconnoitre Hooligan's house and find out if your yarn is straight goods before we sail in there and get ourselves into possible trouble."

"That suits me," and Brady floundered to his knees and looked over the rail. For a long time he peered downward, evidently getting his bearings. "Make a half turn to the left," said he, "and speed up the engine. I'll stay right here and tell you exactly where to go. You'll never regret making this move, King. All I have to gain is the satisfaction of rescuing Helen Brady and getting the stripes on Whipple and Pete."

Matt, full of wonder at the way events were falling out, turned the air ship in the direction indicated by Brady and increased the speed of the propeller.

CHAPTER VII.

A SURPRISE AT HOOLIGAN'S.

Instructed by Brady, who knelt on the floor of the car and watched keenly as they traveled through the air, Matt brought the Hawk down in a vacant lot back of a high billboard.

The houses in the neighborhood were dark, as it was after midnight, and the vague bulk of the gas bag, looming over the top of the billboard, would hardly have claimed the attention of any chance passerby on the sidewalk. At that hour, too, there were not liable to be any travelers in the street. The Hawk carried no lights, and the only noise she made in descending was caused by the low murmur of the cylinders.

The craft was moored to the supports of the billboard, on one side, and to a heavy wagon on the other. The wagon was a truck, and it was evidently the owner's custom to leave it over night in the lot.

"I got the lay of the land when I came in here from the quarry," explained Brady, in a low voice, "and I had just such an emergency as this in mind. Directly across the alley is Hooligan's house. If you want to reconnoitre, King, go ahead, but I'd advise you to be careful, for Whipple would be quick to use a knife or a revolver on you if he got the chance."

"I'll look out for Whipple," answered Matt confidently. "The chances are, you know, that they're not there. We left them out by the canal, and I don't think they have had time to get here yet, if they walked out to the old quarry."

"We don't want to take any chance, Matt," said Ferral, "of those two swabs getting next to us here. There'd be a pretty kettle of fish if they find us, use their guns, and then make off with the air ship—and Brady."

"While I'm gone," returned Matt, impressed with Ferral's reasoning, "you and Carl will have to be on your guard. You'd better go to the end of the billboard, Carl, and watch the street. You can keep your eye on the alley, Dick. If Pete and Whipple happen to show up before I get back, and you think the Hawk is in any danger, cut loose and sail away—never mind me. You can hover around and pick me up later."

"I don'd like dot, Matt," said Carl. "Meppy I pedder go mit you, hey? You vill be in more tanger as der air ship, I bed you."

"I'm not going to get into any danger, and it's the Hawk we've got to be sure of beyond everything else. You remember how anxious Harris was to keep her out of the hands of any of Brady's gang? Well, we don't want to lose the Hawk, and we don't want to cheat justice by letting Pete and Whipple get hold of her. I don't think there's much chance of the scoundrels showing up, but it's well to be on the safe side. If Mrs. Hooligan is alone there, when I come back I'll have Miss Brady; then we can get a policeman or two and have them lie in wait for Pete and Whipple when they come. I see how, if luck is with us, we can wind this whole matter up, right here. Brady's advice was good in having us come directly here without losing any time. Now, I'm——"

Matt paused. To his ears there came the popping of a motor just getting into action. The noise was followed by a steady hum of cylinders, getting down to work. The hum grew low in the distance and finally died out.

"Dere's a pubble!" muttered Carl.

"In the street on the other side of Hooligan's," said Matt. "It's getting so you can hear automobiles at any time of the day or night."

"But Hooligan's house faces a street where no one lives that's able to own an automobile," spoke up Brady.

"Somebody else who doesn't live on the street is going through."

"The machine had stopped. When we heard it it was just starting. Besides, it's a poor street, and no machine would come that way unless the driver blundered into the thoroughfare. I don't like it. Hurry up, King, and find out what's going on, if you can."

Matt lost no more time, but gained the alley, climbed a rickety fence on the other side, and stood in the back yard of the Hooligan home.

The house was a small, one-story affair, shabby even in that faint light, and the back yard was waist high with weeds. It was quite plain that Hooligan's being away in summer was a bad thing for his home place.

Matt approached the house cautiously and went completely around it. There was no light anywhere, and no sounds came from within.

"Mrs. Hooligan has probably gone to bed," he thought. "If I was absolutely sure that Pete and Whipple had not got back, I'd rap on the door and try to get in in that way."

While it seemed reasonable to suppose that the two rascals were still absent from the place, yet Matt did not want to run the risk of trouble by pounding on the door for Mrs. Hooligan.

To get a policeman might have been the best plan, but Matt was none too sure of his ground, inclined though he was to put implicit faith in Brady's information.

"I'll get in, if I can, and look around," he finally concluded. "The Hooligans might have a case against me for house-breaking, but I'll take a chance. Besides, if what Brady says is true, we've got a bigger case against the Hooligans than they can possibly get against me."

Softly he tried the front door. As he had imagined, it was locked. Then he tried the kitchen door, but with no better result. After that he passed completely around the building endeavoring to raise one of the windows. The windows, like the doors, were secured. This seemed strange, inasmuch as it was a warm night and just the time windows should be open to admit the air.

With his pocket knife Matt succeeded in pushing aside the fastening between the upper and lower sash of a window at the side of the house. He listened for a moment to see if his work had been detected by anyone in the building. Hearing nothing to arouse his apprehension, he pushed up the window and climbed into the dark room beyond.

Silence reigned all around him. Taking a match from his pocket, he struck it and surveyed the room.

It was a bedroom. The bed was not disturbed, although the coverlet and pillow bore the imprint of a human form, as though some one had lain down on it for a few minutes' rest.

From a nail in the wall hung an article which at once attracted Matt's attention. It was a small gray shawl, and he at once recalled it as a shawl which he had seen Helen Brady wear.

Here was fresh proof that Hector Brady had told the truth. Undoubtedly the girl had been in that house, and that that was the room set aside for her use. But where was she?

Softly Matt opened a door and stepped through into the kitchen. There was a pile of dirty dishes on a table, and other evidences that the kitchen had been recently used. But there was no one there, and no sounds came to Matt to tell him that there was anyone, apart from himself, in the house. An open door admitted him into what was undoubtedly the main living room. There was some disorder apparent, as though those who had been in the house had left hastily.

A heavy disappointment ran through the young motorist. Helen Brady had been there, but she had been taken away! He was too late.

While he stood in the centre of the living room, a flickering match in his fingers, he heard something that sent his pulses to a faster beat. A faint sound as of stifled breathing came to him. There was one more room he had not examined, and it opened off the one in which he was standing. The choking respiration apparently reached him from this unseen chamber.

What lay beyond the closed door he did not know, but he had gone too far to retreat. If Pete and Whipple were there, and if they were waiting for him—

But that thought did not dismay him. He was thinking of Helen Brady, and hoping against hope that she was still in the house.

He let the match flicker out and, in the darkness, stepped to the door and pushed it open. The breathing was more distinct, but, apart from the person who caused the sound, there was no one else in the room. Matt lighted another match, and started back with an astounded exclamation.

On the floor, almost at his feet, lay Harris! He was bound, wrist and ankle, and a handkerchief gag was twisted between his jaws. The policeman's wide-open eyes were rolling, and he was doing his utmost to talk.

As soon as he had recovered himself somewhat, Matt stepped to a washstand and lighted a lamp that stood there; then, going down on his knees, he proceeded to free the officer of his bonds and the gag.

"Great Scott!" were the officer's first gasping words as he sat up and raised both hands to his head, "how, in the name of all that's good, do *you* happen to be here?"

"I was just going to ask you the same question," answered the bewildered Matt.

"Never had such a big surprise in my life!"

"Nor I, either. I came here looking for Helen Brady, but I thought there was no one at home, and I got through a window. How did you come here?"

"I was brought here by Pete and Whipple," was the astonishing reply.

"Brought here by Pete and Whipple?" echoed Matt. "Why, we left them out by the canal and the old quarry."

"Left them there, eh? What happened to you, Matt? I was scared stiff, on your account, back there in South Chicago. After you left, I called up police headquarters in the city and asked after Dave Glennie—just thought I'd make sure I hadn't sent you into trouble. Glennie himself answered the phone. He hadn't written you any letter and didn't know a thing about that proposed meeting. I got Graydon, another officer, and we hustled off in an automobile. Couldn't find you at the quarry, and while Graydon was looking for you in one direction, and I was nosing around in another, I was keeled over by Whipple. The two scoundrels stole the automobile and brought me here. I don't know what the nation Graydon will think, or— Ouch, my head! There's a lump on it as big as my fist, and it feels as though it had been hit with a sledge hammer. But it's good for sore eyes to see you, Matt, and to find out that you didn't get into trouble. If you—"

A wild shout came muffled from the distance. It was Carl's voice, and evidently something was going wrong at the air ship.

"That's Carl!" exclaimed Matt. "Come on, Harris. I've got to get out of here and see what's up. I [Pg 13]

left Carl and Dick with the Hawk in a vacant lot on the other side of the alley."

Without waiting to explain further, Matt whirled and dashed from the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TROUBLE AT THE AIR SHIP.

When Carl and Ferral went on guard duty, Brady, still bound, was left in the car of the Hawk. From the deep gloom of the billboard, Carl watched both ways—kept his eye on the street for possible signs of Pete and Whipple, and looked occasionally toward the car to make sure that Brady was keeping quiet.

Carl always claimed to have "hunches" when anything was going wrong. He had a good many "hunches" when nothing ever went wrong, but rarely had anything to say when his dismal forebodings failed to make good. However, when his "hunch" struck him shortly before a bit of hard luck, he was sure to brag about it.

One of the shivery feelings which Carl supposed to be a "hunch" had been on him ever since they had started from the balloon house. Instead of finding Dave Glennie, the city detective, by the old quarry, the chums had run into Hector Brady; and, right after that, they had had an encounter with Pete and Whipple, and had got away by a narrow margin.

This amount of trouble ought to have been sufficient for any ordinary "hunch," but it did not satisfy Carl's. The shivery feeling still held him in its grip, and he was looking for something else to strike Matt, and Ferral, and himself.

Ferral, finding everything quiet in the alley, strolled around by the end of the billboard. Carl was so busy looking for trouble that he did not see his chum coming. When he heard his step, close behind him, Carl jumped about ten feet.

"Ach, vat a cholt!" he murmured, recognizing the low laugh that greeted him when he turned around. "You hatn't ought to do dot, Verral," he went on reproachfully. "You come pooty near shcarin' me oudt oof a year's growt'."

"What ails you, old ship?" queried Ferral. "I never saw you in such a taking before. There must be something wrong with your top hamper."

"I don't know abudt dot," said Carl, "aber I bed my life somet'ing pooty bad iss going to habben mit us. I got der feeling in my pones—leettle didicums valkin' all droo me—leettle spookishness feelings like vat I can't tell hop, shkip and chumping oop my shpine. Yah, himmelblitzen, dot's der t'ing vat I feels, und it makes me vant to yell righdt oudt. You efer haf dot, Verral?"

"From your description," chuckled Ferral, "I don't think anything of that kind ever crossed my hawse. It must be an awful feeling, Carl."

"Ach, vorse as dot! I vas a rekular drouple parometer. Schust vatch me und you can always tell schust ven hardt luck is going to shdrike Modor Matt und his bards. Now, ve vill ged some more do-nighdt, I tell you dose."

"What sort of trouble will it be?"

"I don'd know dot, aber I bed you Matt is mixed oop in it. I ditn't pelieve dot he ought to haf svalloved all dot talk Prady gif him. Anyvay, you see how Matt dook it down, und here ve are, und dere iss Matt ofer der alley—and der teufel knows vat vill habben because oof it, I don'd."

"That old raggie of ours, Carl, generally knows what he's about. It ain't often that he gets fooled."

"Don'd I know dot? He iss der greadest feller dot efer vas, aber der pest oof dem vill make a misblay vonce und oggasionally. Matt ought to haf let me go along mit him. He has been gone a goot vile now, und he may be in drouble alretty for all dot ve know."

"Matt can keep out of trouble easier than any fellow you ever saw," answered Ferral.

"Sure! Aber I vish dot you vould go ofer py der alley und lisdens pehindt der house. See oof you can hear anyt'ing vat lisdens like drouple."

"I'll go you, Carl," said Ferral, "not because I don't think Matt's not able to take care of himself, but just to ease up a bit on your nerves. I never saw a fellow that liked to fight better than you do, and it's main queer you'll let a foreboding of trouble get you on the mat like that."

"Der forepoding iss der whole drouple; oof der fightd vould come on mitoudt dot, I vouldt be habby. Yah, so. It's der uncerdainty oof vat iss coming vat hurts."

With an amused laugh, Ferral strolled off toward the alley. Carl watched him vanish into the deeper shadows cast by the sheds and other buildings, and then allowed his eyes to swerve toward the car of the air ship.

The Dutch boy had cast an apprehensive look toward the car a score of times without seeing anything. This time, however, he saw something, and that was the figure of a man jumping over the rail. With a wild yell he rushed toward the car. The man, running like a deer, came directly toward him, and Carl planted himself firmly and made ready to use his fists.

As the running form came closer, Carl made it out to be Brady.

The escaping prisoner lurched to one side in order to give Carl a wide berth.

"No, you don't!" cried Carl, and threw himself in front of Brady. The latter, by a dexterous move, put out a foot and tripped the Dutch boy, sending him heels over head. While Carl was getting up, he saw Brady disappearing around one end of the billboard.

"What's run afoul of you, mate?" demanded Ferral, hurrying to the scene.

"Prady!" answered Carl excitedly. "He has proken loose mit himseluf und run away!"

Carl at once started on the trail, darting around the end of the billboard and plunging into the street. Once in the thoroughfare, he was puzzled to know which way Brady had gone. The fellow was out of sight and hearing, and all Carl could do was to make a guess and plunge away.

He guessed wrong, and after he had run two blocks he made up his mind that he would go the other way and raced back. In front of the billboard he was stopped by Matt, Ferral and some one else. It was too dark for Carl to see who the third man was.

"Hold up, Carl!" called Matt, grabbing him, "there's no use whaling around like that."

"Prady has got away!" cried Carl.

"So Dick was telling us. It's hard luck, and I can't understand it."

"Did you have Brady?" demanded the third member of the party.

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"Vell, oof it ain'd Harris!" murmured Carl. "Vere dit you come from?"

Harris had no time, just then, for useless talk.

"Yes," said Matt, "we had Brady. He was a prisoner in the air ship, and he loosened his ropes and made a break for his freedom. I'm all at sea and can't make head or tail of it."

"If he's in this town," proceeded Harris, "he can be captured, but we'll have to call on the police authorities here. However, now that Brady's got away, that can wait a few minutes. Tell me all about how you found him."

Matt went over the event of Brady's capture at some length, telling briefly what Brady had told him and how he and his chums had come to bring the Hawk to the vacant lot near Hooligan's.

It was the first chance since Matt had found Harris in the house that the two had had to talk. Harris, as might be supposed, was amazed.

"A queer move for Brady to make," muttered the officer. "A big change must have come over him since he went to the 'pen.' The last thing he said to me, when he started for Joliet, was that he'd get even with Motor Matt if it was the last thing he ever did. Either he's playing some deep game, or else he's experienced a remarkable change of heart."

"It's a deep game he's playing, I guess," said Matt ruefully. "If not, why did he try to get away?"

"Well, he gave you a lot of information, and gave it to you pretty straight. That don't tally very well with his desire to make you trouble. There's something about all this I can't understand."

"Brady was quite a little worked up over that automobile we heard, in front of Hooligan's, mate," put in Ferral, with a sudden thought.

"That was the automobile that brought Graydon and me from South Chicago," explained Harris. "Pete and Whipple ran off with it. They used the machine to bring me to Hooligan's, and then loaded the old woman and the girl into it, got in themselves, and tore away."

"Do you know where they went?" asked Matt.

"No. Whipple told me, just before he left the house, that I could stay where I was and starve to death, for all he cared. And I guess that might have happened if it hadn't been for you, Matt. All this tallies with what Brady told you, and makes the whole affair look as though he was playing on the square."

"But he bolted!" exclaimed Matt. "That goes to show that he had something up his sleeve that we don't know anything about."

The puzzled officer rubbed his bruised head thoughtfully.

"Well, you've got me," he observed finally. "I can't explain it. It will be a good scheme for you boys to get away from here as soon as you can. If Pete and Whipple should show up and lay hands on the Hawk—"

"How can they do that if they went off in the automobile?"

"That's right, too. I'm reasoning like a crazy man, which shows how badly rattled this thing has made me. Suppose you go back to those two trees near the quarry and wait there for me? They say that lightning never strikes twice in the same place, so probably the Hawk will be safer there than anywhere else. While you're there you might keep an eye out for Graydon. I'm going to call on the police authorities here and get men out hunting for Brady. No matter what his game is, he has got to be located. And that automobile has got to be recovered. Graydon and I borrowed it, and I'd hate to have to put up three thousand for it in case it's wrecked or got away with for good. You might go along with me, Carl. I may have use for you."

At such a time the Dutch boy would rather have stayed with Matt and Ferral. However, a word from Matt decided him, and he and the officer hurried off together.

The other two boys, very much disheartened over the way events had fallen out at Hooligan's,

unmoored the Hawk and started back toward the quarry. Well beyond the edge of town, Ferral, who was on the lookout in the forward part of the car, saw something to which he called Matt's attention.

The object was a light, almost directly underneath them, waving back and forth as though to attract their attention.

"Hello, down there!" called Matt. "Who are you?"

"Graydon," came the answer. "Is that you, King?"

"Yes."

"Well, come down and take me aboard. I've had a deuce of a time. There's a whole lot been going on that's got me queered."

"He's not the only one that's queered," muttered Ferral as Matt turned the nose of the Hawk earthward.

"Watch sharp, Dick," said Matt. "If there's more than one man there, tell me before it's too late for us to get away. I'm looking for trouble everywhere to-night."

CHAPTER IX.

BACK TO THE CANAL.

"There's only one man down there, mate, so far as I can see," announced Ferral presently. "He's waving a bunch of burning grass on the end of a stick."

"Is he an officer?"

"He's got on a policeman's uniform."

"Then I guess it will be safe for us to go down."

The descent continued, and the Hawk hovered above the place where Graydon was standing.

"Don't bring that fire near the air ship, Graydon!" Matt called. "Put it out and then come alongside and we'll help you into the car."

The officer did as directed, and was soon in the air ship with Matt and Ferral. The young motorist started on again toward the canal.

"It was a big surprise to me to see this air ship," said Graydon. "Harris was scared to death thinking something had happened to it, and to you boys. We rushed out here from South Chicago in an automobile, and——"

"We know all about that, Graydon," interposed Matt.

"You do?" cried Graydon. "Who told you?"

"Harris."

"Now where in the blazes did you see Harris? He halted the automobile in the road and asked me to get out and take a look through the old quarry. When I got back to the road again the car was gone, and so was Harris. I've been at sixes and sevens ever since. Why did Harris pull out and leave me?"

"He didn't go of his own free will, Graydon. He was knocked down and carried in an unconscious condition to a house in La Grange," and Matt briefly explained what had happened.

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Graydon's amazement was keen.

"Well, what do you think of that!" he exclaimed. "Here I've been pottering around in the vicinity of that old quarry for two hours, wondering where Harris was, and why he didn't show up. I got the notion that maybe he had seen some one and had given chase, and that perhaps he'd come back. After two hours of waiting and looking, I gave up and started for La Grange. Then I saw the air ship, and now you tell me the automobile has been stolen, and that Harris is scurrying around La Grange, hunting for the machine and for Hector Brady! I suppose I ought to be there with him."

"You might just as well go on with us, Graydon," said Matt. "We're going back to the quarry and Harris is coming there as soon as he finishes his work. You'll probably find him a whole lot quicker if you go with us than if you keep on to La Grange."

"I'm willing enough to go with you," answered Graydon, "because I'm tired out. I've had footwork enough to-night to last me for a week."

"What did you find in the old quarry? Anything?"

"I found a place where somebody had camped—a sort of a den under an overhang of limestone. But there wasn't any one in the quarry."

"That must have been the place where Brady has been hanging out."

"So you captured him and he got away from you! Well, he's about as slippery a crook as you'll find in eleven states."

The two trees by the canal were soon reached, and the Hawk was moored just as she had been the other time. Graydon, after turning over his revolver to Matt, stretched out in the bottom of the car with his rolled-up coat under his head and was quickly snoring.

But there was not to be much sleep for Matt or Ferral that night. It might be, as Harris had said, that "lightning never struck twice in the same place," but the two lads were not taking any chances. Armed with Graydon's revolver they felt equal to any emergency that might confront them, but to close their eyes seemed out of the question. They patrolled the ground in the vicinity of the two trees. This was more as a precaution to keep themselves awake than anything else.

"Too blooming bad we just missed getting Miss Brady away from that outfit," muttered Ferral. "If we'd got to Hooligan's half an hour sooner, we might have rescued the girl."

"We can't tell what would have happened," returned Matt. "Those scoundrels had the automobile—don't forget that—and they didn't stop at Hooligans very long after they got there from the quarry."

"Long enough, anyhow, so that we could have grabbed the machine if we had known about it. Now there's no telling where Pete and Whipple have taken the girl. With that automobile, they may be thirty miles from here, by now."

"It will be easier to find them with the automobile than if they had got away without it. They'll have to keep to the best roads, and Harris can telegraph all over this part of the country. Every automobile will be closely scanned, and if Pete and Whipple get away they'll be a whole lot more clever than I think they are."

"They'll only use the old flugee by night, mate. During the daytime they will hide away somewhere."

"Well, I think the chances are good for the whole party being captured. Helen Brady has done so much for us, though, that I would like to have had a hand in rescuing her."

"I'm tagged onto the same rope, old ship! But I guess it don't make much difference how Helen Brady gets away from Pete and Whipple, just so she *does* get away. That guff about the memorandum in the Lake Station house, and the buried treasure, was a fine yarn for the marines. I'm a Fiji if that Brady hasn't got a keen imagination."

"I'm taking a whole lot of stock in that yarn myself, Dick."

"Oh, my eye! Say, matey, where's your head? Why, Brady just threw that treasure business into the story to make it more catchy."

"I don't think so. We know that Pete and Whipple lured Helen Brady away. Why should they do it if it wasn't to get hold of that buried loot? Brady's explanation is the only reasonable one, and it rings true, to me."

"Why did he get up and dust if he was playing square with us? Didn't he say he'd give himself up if you'd head the Hawk for La Grange and help rescue the girl? Nice way he's got of giving himself up! Why, he tripped anchor the minute he got a chance, knocked Carl over and took a slant for the open. He's got a good offing by now, and I'm betting we never see him again. According to my notion, he stands a better chance of steering clear of the law than do Pete and Whipple. Brady can give any the rest of his old gang cards and spades when it comes to headwork."

"I don't know why it is, Dick," said Matt, "but somehow I've got a lot of confidence in Brady's doing as he said he would. He's hungry to revenge himself on Pete and Whipple for their attempt to steal the buried plunder, and making the girl help them. Brady, if I know him, will go a long way to get even with a man."

"He's tried jolly hard to get even with you, but you've just naturally boxed the compass all around him."

"Well, he's let up on me now."

"Don't be so cocksure of that, my hearty. He let up on you while he could use you and the Hawk. After he accomplishes what he set out to do, if he ever does, there may be a different story."

"I've got a good deal of confidence in him," insisted Matt. "Everything's quiet around here, Dick," he added, "and you might as well turn in and catch your forty winks. I'll stand guard alone. If anything goes wrong—which I haven't the least idea will be the case—you'll hear this gun begin to talk and can flock to the place where you're needed."

"I guess I will do a caulk, mate, for I'm mighty dozy; but I'll only take the nap on one condition."

"What's that?"

"Why, that you go below yourself after I do my own stretch off the land. I'll wake up in time to give you a chance before sunrise."

"I'll agree," laughed Matt, "providing you wake up."

Ferral selected a spot under one of the trees and spread the canvas shelter Matt had stowed in the car for the protection of the air ship. With his coat for a pillow, and the canvas between him and the ground, he was off to the Land of Nod in record time.

From that on, Matt had a lonely and fruitless vigil. A passenger train went past on the railroad, but that was the only event that came to relieve the monotony of two hours' sentry duty.

At the end of the two hours, when, as Matt judged, it was nearly four o'clock, Ferral stirred himself and arose.

"It's my turn-to, mate," said he. "Give me the revolver and below with you."

"How did you manage to wake up?" queried Matt, as he passed over the weapon.

"Practice, I guess. If a fellow fixes it in his mind that he's going to wake up at a certain time, he can usually do it. Anyhow, that's the case with me. But ease off on your jaw tackle, matey. You're wasting valuable time. We've been through a lot of excitement and you must be tired. Harris and Carl will probably be here before you have the chance to get as much of a snooze as I had."

Matt walked over to the improvised bed under the tree and dropped down. He was hardly flat on his back before he was sound asleep; and it didn't seem to him that he had more than closed his eyes before a yell from Ferral brought him to his feet.

But some time had passed since Matt had laid down. The sun had risen, and it was broad day. There was the roar of an approaching train in Matt's ears, and Ferral was pointing excitedly toward the cars and shouting:

"Look there, mate! What do you think of that? Brady, or I'm a Fiji!"

CHAPTER X.

BRADY RETURNS—WITH HOT NEWS.

"That's right! Blamed if it ain't Brady!"

This from Graydon, who had also been aroused by Ferral's alarm. Crowding close to the two boys, the officer stood gazing with them toward the train.

It was a freight train and was coming from Chicago. Just opposite the old quarry there was a stiff up-grade, and the freight had slackened speed.

Hanging to an iron ladder on the side of one of the box cars, still wearing his stolen uniform, was Hector Brady. He was looking toward the three by the tree, and when he saw he had caught their eye he waved his hand.

"Give me that revolver!" cried Graydon. "I'll guarantee to pick him off that ladder with a single shot."

The policeman reached to take the weapon from Ferral's hand, but Matt caught it away before Graydon could get his hands on it.

"Wait," said Matt coolly. "You don't want to kill Brady, Graydon. He's liable to be useful to us."

"Useful?" scoffed the officer excitedly. "Why, the scoundrel is defying us. He's planning to ride past and——"

"You're wrong," interrupted Matt. "Brady is a good ways from being a fool. If he had wanted to get past us he wouldn't have shown himself like he's doing. Ah! What did I tell you?"

While Matt was talking, Brady had suddenly thrown himself from the train at a point where the ground was almost on a level with the rails. He kept his footing like a cat, faced around and started coolly in the direction of Matt, Carl and Graydon.

"Talk about surprises," mumbled Graydon, "why, that fellow is full of 'em. What's he up to now, I wonder? It don't make any difference what his game is, right here is where he gets into a pair of darbies. Keep that revolver handy, King."

Graydon drew a pair of handcuffs from his pocket. Brady gave them a contemptuous glance as he halted within a few feet of Matt.

"You don't need to put those things on me," said he. "I could have got away if I had wanted to—but I didn't want to. I made a bargain with King, and there's too much at stake for me to break it. That's why I'm here."

"Now that you're here," returned Graydon brusquely, "you'll consider yourself my prisoner."

"Not your prisoner, officer, but King's. He's the one who captured me."

"You got away from King and——"

"No, I didn't. I was on parole." A cool smile wreathed itself about Brady's lips. "That's all it amounted to, King," he added to Matt. "When I slipped away from the air ship, last night, I was intending all the time to come back to you. I've found out something, and if you make the most of my information it must be acted upon at once."

"What have you found out?" asked Matt.

"I've discovered where Pete and Whipple went with Helen."

"Well, strike me lucky!" muttered Ferral. "You're a queer combination of crook and honest man, Brady, douse me if you're not! You come back and give yourself up, when you know it means the 'pen' for you."

"When the warden finds out what I've done," said Brady, "it will mean favorable mention, and

several months of good time. They'll forget, at the prison, the way I knocked over the guard and borrowed his uniform. But to come back to our mutton, as the English say, when I heard that automobile in front of Hooligan's, last night, I got the notion that those two members of my old gang had made a getaway. I was about as sure of it as I was that I was lying on the bottom of the air-ship car, with my ropes so loose that all I'd have to do to get clear was to pull out my hands. After you started for the house, King, I watched my chance, freed my hands and then took the rope from my ankles. I couldn't explain where I was going, because you wouldn't believe me, and I knew that Dutch pard of yours, or the sailor, either, wouldn't believe me. So I just hiked out. I had an idea where Pete and Whipple had gone, but I wanted to make sure of it. That's what I've done."

"Where are they?" inquired Matt.

"River Forest."

Then it began to dawn on Matt that the schemers had fallen back on Hooligan.

"They've gone——"

"You're quick at a guess, now I've dropped the hint," interrupted Brady. "Yes, they've gone to the house where Hooligan is acting as caretaker. The family's away for the summer, and Hooligan is able to do about as he pleases there. It's a mansion, and a fine one, but it's a safe bet that the Hooligans won't be taking care of the place another year. The family's abroad, I understand, and they wouldn't feel very easy if they knew what sort of a gang was staying in the place."

"Where's the house?" went on Matt, his excitement growing.

"It's a big, flat-topped mansion close to the river, just below the town. It's owned by a man named Caspar——"

"I know the place!" exclaimed Graydon. "I've seen it a dozen times. It stands at a good distance from any other house, and is one of the show places of River Forest. You're right, Brady. Mr. Caspar would be mightily put out if he knew how his home was being used."

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"Well, that's where Pete and Whipple, two of my old gang, have taken my daughter," went on Brady. "They're there now, and so are the Hooligans. But there's no telling how long they'll be there. It's up to you officers to get busy and make the most of my tip. I want you to capture those two traitors who have been trying to cheat me out of the stuff I stole, and have cached away—and who are trying to make my daughter help them. I want you to rescue the girl. That's your part of the bargain, Matt," he added, turning to the young motorist. "I don't care what's done with the Hooligans, for they don't concern me, but I want to see Pete and Whipple at hard labor alongside of me in the 'pen,' and every time they look at me I want them to remember that it was Brady who put them where they are!"

A look of demoniacal hate convulsed Brady's face. If any one had doubted the genuineness of his desire for revenge upon Pete and Whipple, that look would have settled it.

"We'll get them," averred Graydon, "but first we'll make sure of you."

He stepped forward with the handcuffs, and Brady put out his wrists.

"I'm King's prisoner, not yours, remember," said he, with a hard laugh, "and you'll put it in your report that I helped you capture Pete and Whipple. Now don't lose any more time. Those two men are pretty clever, and you'll have to nab them quick if you want to be sure of them."

By a most opportune circumstance, a two-seated carriage containing Harris and two other officers, and Carl, came whipping along the road at that moment. Carl and Harris stared in open-mouthed amazement when they saw Brady. Then they tumbled from the carriage and raced for the little group by the trees.

"Where did you capture Brady?" demanded Harris.

"He captured himself," replied Matt. "Dropped off a freight train and gave himself up."

"The dickens he did!"

"Vell, donnervetter!" put in Carl. "For vy you knock me ofer to ged away den, oof you come pack?"

"I had pressing business, Dutchy," said Brady, rattling the gyves, "and didn't want you to interfere with me. You'd better let Graydon take me to La Grange in that carriage, Harris, and then on to South Chicago. I've done about all I can, and you officers are to do the rest. You can go to River Forest in the air ship, along with Matt, and those other two officers can sail along with you. You may need even more help, for Pete and Whipple are strongly entrenched."

"Pete and Whipple?" echoed Harris blankly.

"I've located them, and told Matt and the rest where to go. Caspar's house, in River Forest——"

"You know the house, don't you, Harris?" queried Graydon.

"Like a book," replied Harris. "But tell me more about this before I——"

"You've got to hurry, I tell you!" cried Brady, with angry impatience. "The scoundrels are all there, and my girl is there with them. King can explain to you as you travel along."

"Is that automobile there?" asked Harris.

"I didn't see it, but it must be there if the rest are in the house. Hurry up and get started. Your nearest course is to follow the railroad track. Better land in the timber and surround the house

before you let Pete and Whipple know you're anywhere in the neighborhood. If you have to shoot, shoot straight."

There was a deadly menace in the last words which did not escape those who heard them.

"You're a bloodthirsty scoundrel!" muttered Harris.

"My word's as good as my bond, though," laughed Brady cynically, "in a case like this."

"You'd better take him to La Grange, Graydon," said Harris, "and then on to South Chicago. Can you manage the team and Brady, too, as far as the town?"

"Sure," replied Graydon confidently. "Hand me that gun, King."

Matt returned the weapon to its owner, and Harris, Graydon and Brady walked toward the carriage and the two waiting officers. While Harris and Graydon were explaining the work ahead to the men in the carriage, Matt and his chums hurried to the air ship and began making the craft ready for the task before her.

There was still plenty of gasoline in the receptacle, but Matt, out of his reserve supply, filled the tank full up.

By the time Harris and the other two officers reached the air ship, everything was in readiness. The La Grange men were somewhat fearful of trusting their lives in the craft, but Harris laughed away their fears and they took the places in the car to which Matt assigned them. The burden now placed upon the Hawk was about as great as she could carry. The car was somewhat crowded, but Matt succeeded in making a neat ascension, and at one hundred feet from the ground he turned the craft to an even keel and steered her along a line parallel with the railroad track.

"First time I ever went after a couple o' thieves in an air ship," observed Burton, one of the La Grange men.

"And it'll be the last time, for me," added Sanders, the other one, with a frightened gasp as the car careened. "The ground is good enough for Sanders, any old day."

CHAPTER XI.

THE MANSION ON THE RIVER.

The Hawk, flying low over a populous country, attracted a good deal of attention. People—men, women and children—came out of their houses to stare and wonder. Probably most of them had read, in their daily papers, of the exploits of Motor Matt and his air ship, so the dirigible gas bag did not take them wholly by surprise. Some of those on the ground started to follow the craft, looking up and shouting as they ran.

"We don't want a gang of curious people trailing us clear to River Forest," growled Harris. "Speed her up, Matt."

"This is fast enough for me," observed Sanders. "I guess I'd be a lot easier in my mind, too, if you'd keep her close enough to the ground so I could tumble out if anything slips a cog."

"No cog ever slips," replied Harris, "with King in charge of the engine. He knows what he's doing, every time and all the time."

"Vell, you bed my life!" cried Carl. "He iss my bard, too, und I mightd schust as vell haf peen mit him und der Hawk, Harris, as running aroundt mit you in La Grange. Vat ve dit vasn't nodding. Ve hat to come pack py Modor Matt to findt oudt vat vas going on."

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"No dream about that, either," said Harris grimly. "We did a lot of telegraphing, in La Grange, but even that was lost time if Brady has given us a proper steer."

Matt had thrown more power into the propeller. In spite of her heavy load the Hawk was making about twenty miles an hour. The wind was behind her, what little there was, and that helped.

"Now that we're going in good shape, Matt," said Harris, "tell me what Brady said."

"Dick will do that, Harris," answered Matt. "I want to give my whole attention to the engine."

Ferral gave the three officers and Carl the gist of Brady's information.

"First time on record, I guess," commented Burton, "that a crook like Brady ever walked right back into the 'pen.'"

"It's a cinch that he wouldn't have walked back, either," observed Harris, "if he hadn't been so hungry to land Pete and Whipple in the same place. We're coming close to River Forest now, Matt," the officer added, taking their bearings with a critical eye, "and we've got to be careful not to arouse the curiosity of the townspeople. That line of timber, over there, marks the course of the river. Caspar's house is about a mile to the right. You'd better turn from the railroad and strike across country. And you'd better keep as low as you can, so the woods will screen our approach to the house. If Whipple, or Pete, should see us, they might try to clear out in that automobile."

The turn at right angles to their course carried the Hawk across farming land and toward a point of the woods near which, Harris stated, the Caspar mansion was located. In order to keep the

timber between the air ship and the house, Matt dropped so low that the bottom of the car only safely cleared the fences.

"Blamed if you can't do about whatever you want to with this machine!" exclaimed Burton enthusiastically. "I've read about the Hawk, and about Jerrold's air ship, the Eagle, but I hadn't no idee they'd been figured down to such a fine point."

"The time is coming," said Matt, "when people will own air ships just as they own automobiles now."

"Not me," averred Sanders. "The time'll never come when I trust my neck to a few cubic feet of gas and a motor. The solid ground'll do me for quite a spell yet."

"Better come down at the edge of the timber, Matt," counseled Harris, indicating a favorable spot. "There's a place where you can moor her to a fence post on one side and to a telephone pole on the other. You'll have to look out for the wires."

"You can't pass under 'em!" cried Sanders, in trepidation.

"Then we'll jump over them," said Matt coolly, and the slant he gave the car in making the "jump" caused all hands to hang on for dear life to keep from being spilled out.

The manœuvre, however, was effected in the neatest kind of style, the Hawk skimming over the topmost wire, and changing her course during the descent so that, when Matt brought her to an even keel on the surface of the ground, she was parallel with the telephone line and just between the farm fence and one of the poles.

Sanders scrambled out with an exclamation of thankfulness.

"If we go back with any prisoners," said he, "we'll not travel by air ship."

"Not by *this* air ship, anyhow, Mr. Sanders," laughed Matt, "for her passenger capacity is limited."

Harris helped put the mooring ropes in place.

"It won't do to leave the car unguarded, Matt," said he, when the air ship was safely fastened. "I don't think there's anything to be feared from those in the house, for we're going to keep them busy, but some one might happen along and get to tampering with the machinery."

"I'll leave Ferral and Carl to look after the craft," returned Matt. "As for me, though, I want to go along with you and see if everything at the house is as we expect to find it. If Helen Brady is going to be rescued, I want to have a share in the work."

"Come along, then," said Harris, starting off through the woods.

"Oof you findt anyone vat iss spoiling for a fight," Carl called after them, "send him dis vay, oof you please. I t'ink I vas spoiling for vone meinseluf."

"Never mind him, mates," laughed Ferral; "just let him spoil. Carl's too full of fight for his own good, anyhow."

Only a short stretch of timber lay between the advancing party and the house. When they came upon the premises, they approached from the rear.

The house was large and had an old-fashioned mansard roof. The main part of the structure was three stories in height. There was an addition at the back that terminated at the lower part of the second story. The grounds were extensive, and entirely surrounded by an iron fence. A large stable filled in the back part of the yard.

Most of the windows of the house were boarded up, although here and there was one that had not been closed. There was no barricade at the rear door.

"Post yourself at the kitchen door, Sanders," said Harris, "and watch the rear of the house and give some attention to the side. I'll place Burton at a front corner, so he can watch the other side and the front. Matt isn't armed, so he can come with me while I try to rout out the gang, but keeping well behind and looking out for trouble."

Sanders placed himself at the kitchen door, revolver in hand, and the other three moved off around the house to the front. Burton, as already indicated by Harris, was placed at a front corner, where he could not only command the entrance but the side Sanders had not been instructed to look after.

"The lower windows are all boarded up on the first floor, so I guess there won't be any getaways through them," commented Harris. "About the only points it is absolutely necessary to watch are the doors at front and rear. Neither of those has been boarded over."

Harris, as he finished, started up the broad front steps. When he was halfway up, the front door suddenly opened and a tall man showed himself. The man was neither Pete nor Whipple, although his face slightly resembled Pete's. The moment the man saw Harris, climbing upward with his drawn revolver, he started back. The policeman made a dash upward, but the door was slammed in his face.

"They know what we want," muttered Harris, "and it looks like they were going to fight. That fellow must have been Hooligan. Well, I don't want to smash in Mr. Caspar's front door, so we'll try persuasion. We've got the rascals bottled up, and it won't do them any good to resist. If—"

The crack of a revolver rang out, and a whiff of smoke eddied upward from one of the barricaded front windows. The bullet whistled uncomfortably close to Harris' head, and even Matt heard the

sing of it, although it must have missed him by a foot or more.

"Down, Matt!" shouted Harris, throwing himself over the rail at the side of the steps and dropping under the protection of the foundation of the veranda. "Get into safer quarters, my lad," he went on, as the young motorist landed beside him. "The rascals have loopholes in those window barricades. I wonder what they hope to gain by such work?"

"Hello, you!" called an angry voice, muffled in tone, from behind the boards where the shot had been fired.

"Hello, yourself!" shouted Harris, peering out from his place of concealment. "What do you mean by firing at us?"

"Ye're trespassin' on Mr. Caspar's ground," went on the man in the house, "an' I'm here to protect the property. Clear out!"

"We're officers of the law," cried Harris, "and you're giving refuge to a couple of fugitives from justice. Is your name Hooligan?"

"What of it?" came the defiant response.

"Well, if you are," proceeded Harris, "I'll give you just five minutes to open that front door and shove your brother, Pete, and his pal, Whipple, out onto the veranda. After we have taken care of them, we'll have you send the girl. I guess you know what we want. The quicker you obey me, Hooligan, the better it will be for you."

"I know my business," continued the angry voice, "an' if ye don't git off these grounds ye'll never live to git off."

"That's a game two can play at, Hooligan," answered Harris coolly. "We're going to get the people we've come for if we have to batter in the door."

"Yes, ye will!" whooped another voice, which Matt plainly recognized as Whipple's. "Ye'll never git us alive."

"That's Whipple, Harris," whispered Matt.

"Glad to know you're there, Whipple," shouted Harris grimly. "Now we know we're on the right track. You and Pete have got five minutes to come out and give yourselves up."

"Ye got a picter of us comin' out!" taunted the voice. "We can shoot—ye'll find that out—but, if ye press us too close, it's goin' to be worse for the girl. If ye'll clear out an' let us go, we'll let her go; if ye won't clear out, then it'll be a case o' up-sticks with Helen Brady."

Matt's heart sank like lead. The scoundrels had the girl with them, and they were seeking to make her safety their protection. How far would they carry their murderous threats? The young motorist's blood ran cold as he thought of Helen Brady's danger.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIGHT.

Harris had looked at his watch when he called out to Whipple that five minutes would be allowed him and Pete to give themselves up.

"While we're waiting to see what they do, inside there," the officer said to Matt, "you go around and tell Sanders the fellows are showing fight, and warn him to be on his guard."

Matt made his way to the corner of the house under the protection of the veranda. Burton, at the first shot from inside, had got behind a tree from which he could command the front entrance and the side of the building he had been instructed to watch.

The young motorist, without being fired at, gained the rear door and told Sanders what had happened around in front. Sanders had heaped up a little pile of stove wood in the form of a breastwork, and was crouching behind it.

"I heard that shot," said he, "and made up my mind we was goin' to have brisk work. There ain't no trees handy, around here, so I did the next best thing an' fortified my position with stove wood. You bet I'll be on the lookout, King! If any man tries to come through that door, I'll drop him in his tracks. I don't know what them skunks think they can do, actin' in this way. We could keep 'em boxed up in there fer a week, if we wanted to, and they're bound to lose out in the end."

Leaving Sanders to watch and wait for developments, Matt started back toward the front of the house. Seeing a garage that Caspar had built for his car, the idea struck him to move over in that direction and look for the stolen automobile. He found the door of the garage locked. As he turned away from it, he saw a square framework of oak planks leaning against the barn. Probably the framework was four feet square. What it had been used for Matt could not guess, but his quick brain instantly devised an idea.

Dragging the framework along with him, he reached the front of the house and found Harris just snapping his watch and returning it to his pocket. The South Chicago man was standing near the tree with Burton.

"The five minutes are up," he remarked, "and here's where we've got to do something. What are

you bringing there, Matt?" he asked.

"A portable fort," replied Matt. "You've got to get to the front door, Harris, and you don't want Pete and Whipple making a target of you while you're doing it. After you get close up to the door they won't be able to reach you with their bullets."

"Egol, that's a bright idea! But how's one man going to manage the thing?"

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"I'll go along with you. Between the two of us I guess we can handle it."

Holding the framework on edge, Matt and Harris crouched behind it; then, keeping it upright and hauling it along with them, they started across the front of the house toward the steps.

Weapons cracked from the boarded-up windows, and leaden missiles *chugged* into the stout oak planks. The bullets could not penetrate the heavy oak, and consequently they did no damage. Reaching the steps, Matt and Harris lifted the framework upward a step at a time and finally gained the recess containing the front door. Here they stepped from behind the barricade, and the officer laid hands on the knob and shook the door violently.

"Open!" he cried; "open in the name of the law!"

A taunting laugh from within was his only answer.

"I hate to do any damage to this fine building," said Harris, "but we've got to get in if the scoundrels won't come out. I'll try to smash the lock."

Placing the muzzle of his revolver against the key-hole, he pulled the trigger. The bullet tore its way through the lock, and once again the officer essayed to open the door. But it defied his efforts.

"There must be a bolt in addition to the lock," said he, disappointed. "If we smash in here we'll have to use a battering-ram, and I don't want to do that except as a last resort. We'll look for a ladder and make an attack on one of the windows."

When he and Matt started down the steps with their movable framework, they came nearly getting caught by a drop fire. The shooting was done from the second-story windows, and the bullets came over the top of the oak shield. Fortunately no harm was done, and Matt and Harris tilted the screen so as to cover the tops of their heads.

Just as they reached the bottom of the steps, a fierce yell came from the rear of the house, followed by sounds of firing.

"Sanders is in trouble!" cried Burton, starting to run around the side of the building. "While some of those inside were holding our attention at the front door, an attempt was made to get out at the back."

"You stay here, Burton!" shouted Harris. "They may be trying to draw all of us around behind while they get through the front entrance. Watch the door like a hawk, and I'll go around and help Sanders."

Matt trailed after Harris as he hotfooted it for the back yard. They found Sanders leaning over the top of his woodpile, covering the rear door with his revolver.

"What's the matter?" demanded Harris.

"Nothin' now," Sanders answered grimly. "It's all over. One of 'em pulled the kitchen door open an' was plannin' to make a break. I discouraged the attempt an' the man jumped back and slammed the door."

Harris leaped to the door, put a bullet into the lock and then tried to push into the house. But this door, like the one in front, had other fastenings than the lock, and the attempt was fruitless. Harris beat a retreat as soon as he found out the effort could not succeed. Several bullets followed his retreat, coming from the windows, and one of them pierced his helmet and flung the head-piece to the ground.

"They're getting real savage," remarked Sanders grimly. "If they don't look out they'll hurt somebody."

"It will make it all the worse for them, if they do," snapped Harris, his temper rising with each succeeding failure to get into the house. "We'll get a stick of cordwood and smash in this back door."

There was a pile of cordwood near the garage, and Harris ran and got a heavy, four-foot section of elm. Matt jumped to help him.

"You'd better take Sanders' gun and stay behind the woodpile, Matt," said Harris, "and let Sanders and me do this. There'll be more shooting and——"

"Sanders will watch the door better than I can," broke in Matt, laying hold of one end of the heavy stick.

"All right," acquiesced Harris, and they ran at the door.

The shooting continued, but it was plain that the men in the house were not in good range, for their ammunition was wasted.

The end of the stick of wood crashed into the door and set it to shaking. A second blow still further loosened it, and a third sent it smashing inward.

The giving 'way of the door under the impact threw both Harris and Matt from their feet, and the

two of them, with the stick, tumbled into the kitchen.

Matt, quick as a cat to regain his feet, saw Whipple and Pete bearing down on Harris with clubs. The officer lay on the floor, half stunned. Grabbing him by the feet, Matt jerked him back to safety, followed by a torrent of oaths from the two fugitives.

The door slammed. While Harris was getting to his feet, Pete and Whipple could be heard piling things against the door on the inside.

"Wow, this head!" exclaimed Harris, lifting one hand to his temples. "It hasn't got over that first jolt, yet, and here it gets another. And we didn't gain much, at that."

"We haven't got a strong enough force to rush into the house," said Sanders. "If it hadn't been for King, Harris, you'd have been captured by those fellows, and then Burton and I would have had to send for help before we could do anything more. You've got to be more careful, or the gang will escape in spite of us."

"I'm beginning to see that, myself. But we can't lay around here with our hands in our pockets. If ___"

"Hist!" interrupted Matt, in an excited whisper.

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"Don't look up, Harris. Miss Brady is on the roof and just looked over and waved her hand."

"Great Scott!" muttered Harris. "What do you think that means?"

"It means that she has been able to free herself, in some way, and get to the top of the house. Now's our chance to rescue her and get her out of this fighting."

"How's it to be done? There ain't ladders enough to reach to the roof, and Pete and Whipple wouldn't give us a chance to use them even if there were."

"We can't use ladders, and we can't let any of those in the house know by our actions that there's anyone on the roof. The instant they think Miss Brady is up there, they'll make a rush for the top of the house and drag her back inside. Don't look up, whatever you do."

"But we've got to get the girl off the roof, in some way."

"I'll use the air ship—"

"That's a scheme for your life!" exclaimed Harris.

"But while I'm using the Hawk," went on Matt, speaking quickly, "you and Sanders and Burton must contrive to keep everyone in the house occupied on the lower floor."

"We can do that. We'll blaze away at the boards at the windows. That will keep their attention below."

"You'd better go and tell Burton what our plan is. If he should see Miss Brady he'd be liable to yell to us, and that would let Pete and Whipple know what's up."

"They'll probably suspect something when they see the air ship coming."

"I don't think so. Besides, if you keep them busy enough, the chances are that the Hawk won't be seen."

"If you *are* seen, Matt, you'll surely be shot at—and the Hawk's a pretty big target. If a bullet is put into the gas bag, or if one smashes into the motor, you and the girl may be killed."

"I think I can make it," said Matt resolutely. "Anyhow, I'm going to try."

"Good luck to you!" returned Harris warmly. "I'll go at once and put Burton next."

While the officer moved toward the front of the house, Matt started for the rear of the yard on his way back to the air ship.

CHAPTER XIII.

DARING WORK.

When Matt had got outside the iron fence and just within the screen of timber, he turned. Helen Brady, bareheaded and plainly just from the interior of the house, stood at the edge of the roof, following Matt with her eyes.

Matt waved his cap to her, and this was the first intimation the girl had had that she was seen. She fluttered her hand in response and then stretched out both arms appealingly.

Matt nodded his head vigorously, to signify that her appeal was understood, and that it would be answered; then he pointed through the woods in the direction of the air ship. Helen turned her head to look in the direction indicated.

From her elevated position she must have been able to see the gas bag of the Hawk over or through the tops of the trees. Looking back to Matt, she waved one hand and nodded.

Matt placed a finger on his lips and waved toward the house in an endeavor to make the girl understand that she must be very careful, so as not to let her captors know where she was.

Again Helen nodded her head, and accompanied the movement with a gesture that plainly

requested him to hurry. He replied in pantomime that he would be as quick as possible, then whirled and dashed through the timber.

Carl and Ferral were walking about and talking impatiently. At sight of Matt they both started toward him.

"What happened, matey?" cried Ferral. "Carl and I have been all ahoop, over here, listening to the shooting and trying to guess what was going on. Have you captured the——"

"No time to talk, pards," cried Matt, running to the air ship and beginning to make her ready. "Dick, you jump in here with me. Carl, I can't take you along. There's brisk work ahead and the Hawk must not carry any more passengers than will be necessary. Cast off one of the ropes. You cast off the other, Dick."

It was easy to tell, from Matt's manner and words, that something of vital importance was in prospect.

"I von't be in der vay, Matt," pleaded Carl, hustling with one of the mooring ropes. "I vill make meinseluf so shmall as bossiple und——"

"Two are all that can go," broke in Matt decidedly.

The engine was popping and sputtering as Carl and Ferral threw in the ropes.

"Vat's der madder, anyvay?" asked Carl, swallowing his disappointment with a wry face.

"Helen Brady is on the roof of the house. The scoundrels are below, fighting with the officers, and don't know she is on the roof. If we hurry, we can get there and rescue her."

While Matt was talking, Ferral had got into the car. Matt switched the power into the propeller shaft and the Hawk glided upward. When the car cleared the tops of the trees, Matt brought the air ship to a level.

"Look sharp, Dick," called Matt, his face set and determined. "We've got to win out, this time. If we don't, there's no telling what will happen to the girl. Whipple has already threatened her, in case the officers don't leave the house. Can you see Miss Brady?"

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Matt's position, in the rear of the car, rendered it impossible for him to see much of what lay ahead.

"There she is, matey!" cried Ferral. "She sees us coming. There's an open skylight in the roof which shows how she got to the top of the house."

"Any of the men on the roof?"

"No."

"Good! How are we headed?"

"Just right. Hold to the course as you are."

"Are we high enough?"

"Plenty."

"It won't do to hit the edge of the roof, you know, and if we're too high, we may skim clear over the house before we can drop down."

"Just as you are now, Matt, you'll come over the building three or four feet in the clear. There's a chimney, and if you can drop beside that, I'll stand ready to take a twist of the mooring rope about it. The wind's freshening, and if there isn't something to hold to we're liable to be blown off the roof before we can get the girl aboard."

"You take care of that part of it. Steer me so as to come onto the roof close to the chimney."

It was necessary for Matt to hurry, yet he could not drive the Hawk ahead swiftly because of the necessity of making a quick halt on the comparatively small space of the roof top.

Harris, Burton, and Sanders had been keeping up a brisk fire ever since Matt had left to go for the air ship. None of them seemed to be looking up or paying any attention to what Matt and Ferral were doing. This, of course, was for the purpose of keeping the presence of the air ship a secret from those in the house.

But, in some way, the secret got out. Abruptly the fire from the house slackened, and then ceased altogether. As Matt shut off the power and glided over the edge of the roof, he caught a glimpse of Whipple's astounded face in a second-story window which had not been boarded up. When the air ship vanished over the edge of the house top, Whipple disappeared from the window.

"They're onto you, Matt!" roared Harris, from below. "You'll have to hurry, if you win. From the sounds we hear, everybody is climbing for the roof."

Matt and Ferral remained perfectly cool. The situation was a ticklish one, and if their labors were crowned with success they would have to keep their heads and not make any misplays.

Ferral stood at the edge of the car, holding a loop of one of the mooring ropes in his hands.

"Turn her, mate!" he cried.

The power having already been shut off, the Hawk was proceeding only under the headway given by the now dormant motor.

This was sufficient not only to turn her, but also to carry her downward so that the bottom of the

car swept the roof.

As they passed one of the chimneys, Ferral dropped the loop of the rope over its top, and laid back. His pull halted the air ship.

In a twinkling, Matt was over the rail and standing beside the car. He held out his hand to the girl, and she ran toward him, with a cry of joy and thankfulness.

At that precise moment, Matt, out of the tails of his eyes, saw a head appearing through the open skylight. Grasping Helen's arm, he hurried her toward the air ship.

"Step lively, mate!" cried Dick, as Matt assisted the girl into the car.

No matter how swiftly Matt hurried, it was certain that the man coming through the skylight would reach the roof in time to interfere with the two boys before they could get away.

Matt realized that, and so did Ferral. The man, who was now head-and-shoulders above the roof top, was Whipple, the most desperate member of the gang.

Whipple, who was undoubtedly amazed to see Helen all but rescued when, quite likely, he supposed her safe in some room below, gave a bellow of rage and fury.

"That'll do you, King!" he roared. "Ye're not goin' ter hike off with the girl in any such way as this!"

Leaning against the side of the opening, Whipple rested his elbows on the roof and took careful aim at Motor Matt with his revolver. Others were flocking toward the roof on the stairway below Whipple, but he blocked the way.

Matt and Helen were in the car, and it seemed certain that Whipple's shot was to be effective, he was taking so much care to get a good aim.

But the shot was not fired, principally because Ferral became suddenly active.

Seizing a loosened brick from the top of the chimney, the young sailor hurled it with all his force. Whipple was struck in the shoulder, and the impact of the missile hurled him from his foothold and down upon those under him. As he vanished from the skylight, a clamor of startled voices came back through the opening, accompanied by a clatter of men falling down the stairs.

"That's something I owe you, Dick," remarked Matt, settling into his chair among the levers.

"You don't owe me anything, old ship," answered Ferral. "I'll have to do something like that several times before you and I come on anything like an easy bow-line. But take care of the ship, or she'll founder."

In order to grab the brick from the chimney, and throw it, Ferral, had to let go of the rope by means of which he was holding the Hawk against the wind. With the rope loosened, the uncontrolled air ship drifted off the roof and was bobbing around, some fifty feet above ground, the sport of the breeze. There was imminent danger of her coming to grief, either against the cupola of the stable, or in the tops of the trees.

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Swiftly Matt got the motor to going, and as the Hawk took the push of the propeller, she once more became manageable. This was in the nick of time, too, for as the craft glided upward the bottom of the car rustled through the branches of one of the trees.

"Hurrah!" cheered Harris, from below. "Well done, Motor Matt!"

"Bully boy!" applauded Sanders.

"Never saw anything neater!" whooped Burton.

"Go back to where you were before," called Harris, his voice faint in the distance, "and wait till we finish this job. It won't be long, now, till we get the scoundrels."

"Sink me," muttered Ferral, breathing hard, "those officers don't know how well we did. They couldn't see the top of the house from the ground, and they didn't know Whipple was looking at us over the end of a gun."

"Matt," said Helen, in a quivering voice, "I don't know how I ever can repay you for what you've done, or——"

"Repay us!" cried Ferral. "Why, Miss Brady, I guess you're forgetting what you've done for Matt and me."

"It's a big relief, Helen," said Matt, "to get you out of the clutches of that gang. It's the best stroke of work the Hawk ever did."

"Right-o," agreed Ferral enthusiastically, "and it was right and proper that the craft, manned by us, should save Miss Brady. If it hadn't been for her, we wouldn't have had the Hawk. Oh, this is a pretty square old world, after all. Don't you think so, old ship?"

CHAPTER XIV.

HELEN'S ORDEAL.

Inside of half an hour after Matt and Ferral had left Carl with the Hawk, they had the air ship

back in her old moorings.

Carl had hurried through the woods and watched proceedings from the ground as well as he could. When he saw the Hawk returning to her old berth, he followed her back, bursting into sight from the timber just as Matt and Ferral had finished securing the mooring ropes.

"Shake hants mit me!" bellowed Carl, rushing to grip Matt's hand, then passing to Ferral, and then to Helen Brady. "Dot vas der pootiest t'ing vat I efer saw done, yah, so helup me! Air ships can do t'ings vat nodding else vas aple, und der strangeness oof it fills me mit vonder and surprises. Miss Prady, you vas a lucky girl! Und Matt vas lucky, und so vas Verral. I'm der only unlucky feller in der punch, because I don'd vas along to helup in der rescue. Matt cut me oudt oof der game. Anyvay, I'm glad dot everyt'ing come oudt like vat it dit. Dell us aboutt vat habbened mit you, Miss Prady."

Helen, seated in Matt's chair in the car, was leaning back, her eyes on the faces of the three lads. Ferral climbed up on the fence and sat down on the top board, and Matt leaned against the telephone pole. Carl sat down on the ground near the car.

"That's a good notion our Dutch raggie has just overhauled, Miss Brady," seconded Ferral. "We'd all like to hear that yarn. There's nothing better we can do, just now, as we haven't any guns and can't help Harris and the officers."

"Go on, Helen," said Matt. "We know something about what happened to you, but not all."

"Where did you find out anything?" queried the girl. "I was never more surprised in my life than when I saw you with the officers near the house."

"We'll tell you that later," answered Matt. "Your experiences first."

"Well," began the girl, "after I went to visit my friends in Archer Avenue, a letter came for my brother. I have been worried about my brother for a long time, for he would be honest if it was not for my father's evil influence." The girl's lip quivered, but she fought down her rising emotion and went on. "I opened the letter. It was from my father and asked Hector to go to the house at Lake Station, where I lived for a while, and get a paper which he would find under a loosened brick in the basement wall. The brick was marked with a cross.

"Hector, as I knew, had left the city, so I concluded to go to Lake Station and get the paper myself. I was wondering what it was all about. I found the paper, and it gave the location of a spot in Willoughby's swamp where some of the goods stolen by my father had been concealed. Father wanted the plunder turned into cash so that the best lawyers could be hired to keep him out of the penitentiary. I decided at once that I would turn the paper over the chief of police in South Chicago, and I had left my friends' house to start for there when a man stopped me on the street.

"The man's name was Hooligan, and he told me that my brother had not gone to New York at all, but had given it out that he was going merely as a 'blind' for the police. My brother, Hooligan told me, was lying very ill in a house in River Forest, and wanted to see me. I concluded to put off going to South Chicago until next day, and to go and see Hector.

"Hooligan took me to that house, from which you just rescued me, and there I was made a captive by Pete and Whipple, and turned over to the care of Mrs. Hooligan. I surmised, at once, why I had been spirited away. Pete and Whipple had found out about the paper I had secured, and they wanted to get the stolen property for themselves. And there I was with the paper! You see, I had started for South Chicago with it, and had it in my pocket. I remembered the instructions, and I tore the paper into little bits, when Mrs. Hooligan wasn't looking, and threw the pieces down a register into one of the furnace pipes.

"When Whipple and Pete came and demanded the paper, I told them truthfully that I didn't have it. They said that, even if I didn't have the paper, they knew I could remember the instructions for finding the buried spoil, and ordered me to repeat them. I refused, and for two days they gave me nothing to eat, and only a little water to drink. Whipple said he would starve me to death if I didn't tell."

"The scoundrel!" muttered Matt darkly.

"Vorse as dot!" wheezed Carl wrathfully, "ach, mooch vorse!"

"The whole lot ought to be lashed to a grating and flogged with the cat," growled Ferral.

"I was at Mrs. Hooligan's house in La Grange at that time," continued Helen. "Pete and Whipple had taken Mrs. Hooligan and me to La Grange on the night of the day I was captured. We went in a closed carriage.

"Mrs. Hooligan was with me all the time, and there never was a moment when she wasn't watching. Sometimes she treated me kindly, and sometimes she was cross and violent. She drank a good deal, and whenever she was under the influence of liquor she was always quarrelsome and hard to get along with.

"I got so weak and sick without food that Pete and Whipple must have become afraid I would die without telling them what they wanted to know. Anyhow, they began to give me something to eat, but kept me tied to a chair nearly all the time, coming to see me two or three times a day and threatening what they would do if I continued obstinate. But I made up my mind that I would let them kill me before I would say anything about where that plunder had been buried. That, I had decided, should go back to its rightful owners."

"You were a brave girl to hang out for your principles like that," put in Matt.

"It does take a little courage, sometimes, to do what is right," returned the girl, "but when your conscience approves, that makes it easy. I lost track of the time, while I was at Mrs. Hooligan's house, in La Grange, and it seemed as though months must have passed; then, suddenly, I heard an automobile stop in front of the place, last night, and Mrs. Hooligan and I were bundled into it and taken away.

"I was brought back here, and early this morning Whipple told me that they were tired of bothering with me, and that if I didn't tell them what they wanted to know before night I should never leave the house alive.

"Mrs. Hooligan had been keeping me in a room on the top floor. She had been drinking more or less all night, and she acted so savage toward me that I began to believe Pete and Whipple had told her to put me out of the way. Mrs. Hooligan, I imagined, was drinking to get up her courage. If that was the reason, though, she went too far, for she drank so much that she became stupefied and fell asleep with her head on a table.

"I was bound to a chair, but I succeeded in freeing myself of the cords. At about that time I heard a commotion downstairs, and a sound of shooting. Hope arose in me, and I made my way to the roof of the building, with the intention of letting those below know where I was. I can't tell you how surprised I was when I saw Motor Matt and Mr. Harris. I did not dare call out, for fear my voice would be heard by Whipple and Pete, but it was not long before I knew that Matt had seen me and had made his plans for a rescue. The rest, you know. I have had a terrible experience, but it is a satisfaction to think that the plans of Pete and Whipple failed, and that they did not find out what they wanted to know. Now, Matt," and Helen fixed her gaze on the young motorist, "you can tell me how you were able to discover where I was."

All the chums had a hand in the telling. Helen was amazed when she learned how her father had been instrumental in bringing Matt and his friends to her aid—amazed as well as overjoyed. To her, it indicated a change of heart in her father, as pleasant to her as it was unexpected.

Barely had the three boys finished their part of the explanation, when the pounding of a motor came to them from the direction of the road that followed the railway track.

"Vat's dot?" cried Carl, as all became suddenly attentive.

"Only an automobile," replied Matt, smiling. "You've heard them before, Carl."

"Vell, I bed you," answered Carl, "aber my nerfs vas on edge, schust now, und I peen imachining all sorts oof t'ings. Meppy dot vas—"

At that point, Carl was interrupted by Harris and Burton, bursting into sight from the edge of the timber.

"That air ship, Matt!" cried Harris, "we want to use her in a hurry."

"Eferyt'ing goes mit a rush, seems like," said Carl curiously. "Vat's oop, now, Harris?"

"Pete and Whipple have got away in the automobile, and we must follow them."

"The Hawk is fast for an air ship," said Matt, "but she's not fast enough to catch an automobile."

"She's the only thing we have to give chase with," spoke up Burton, "and we've got to do our best with her, or let Whipple and Pete get away."

"And we've got to get the automobile back," stormed Harris. "Hustle up, Matt! The automobile may break down, or something else may happen to give us a chance to overhaul her. We'll try, anyway. Miss Brady had better stay here—one of the boys can remain to look after her."

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"That's your job, Dick," said Matt, busily unmooring. "We'll come back here for you after we see how the chase comes out."

"Hoop-a-la!" tuned up Carl, fluttering around the car. "Here's ver I ged a shance ad some oxcidement."

Helen got out of the car as soon as the ropes were cast off, and Matt, Carl, Harris, and Burton jumped in.

A twist of the right hand got the machinery to going, and a jerk of the left gave the steering rudder the proper angle.

Rising swiftly, the Hawk turned her nose toward the wagon road. From their high elevation, Harris, Burton, and Carl were able to see the automobile, far in the distance and making along the La Grange road.

"Turn her to the right, Matt!" cried Harris, "and we'll bear away in the direction of La Grange. It may be a hopeless chase, but we've got to do what we can."

"Tough luck if those scoundrels get away, after all the trouble they've caused," muttered Burton.

"And it will be tough on me," said Harris, "if I can't get back that automobile!"

CHAPTER XV.

There was one big advantage the Hawk had over the automobile, and it was presently to make itself manifest to all in the air ship. The road which the fleeing robbers had taken was a very rough one, and a few moments after they had been sighted by those in the Hawk, Whipple and Pete turned into another road, which ran at right angles with the one along which they had first started.

"They're not headed for La Grange, that's a cinch," commented Burton.

"They're looking for better going," said Harris, "but that road they've taken is rougher than the one they just left."

"When they get to the end of the second road," went on Burton, "they'll be on a turnpike, with a bed like asphalt. Then, if something about the automobile doesn't break, it will be good-by to our hopes of—"

"What are you doing, Matt?" asked Harris suddenly.

Matt had shifted the course of the Hawk.

"I've just realized what an advantage we have over the automobile," laughed the young motorist. "Roads don't bother us any, and fences, hills, and swamps don't exist for us. I'm cutting off a corner, Harris. If the going on that cross road is as rough as I think it is, we'll overhaul the automobile."

"Fine!" cried Harris, clapping his hands.

"Nodding can shtop a air ship ven it vants to go some blace," grinned Carl.

"Nothing but the wind," said Matt. "We've got a good, smart breeze right behind us, and we're making every bit of thirty miles an hour. Hear the motor! It runs as sweet as any machine I ever heard. But how did those fellows come to give you the slip like they did, Harris? They must have had to leave the house and get to the garage before they could make a run with the automobile."

"Well," grunted Harris, "they did all of that. We made a bobble, that's all. After you got away with the girl, Burton and I concluded to rush things to a finish. With that end in view, we carried that stick of cordwood around in front and smashed in the front door. Then we rushed into the house. We heard some one running up the stairs, so we chased after, and finally found ourselves in the top story. There was no one there, except a hag of a woman, stupefied with drink, in one of the rooms.

"The skylight was open, and Burton and I bounded up, thinking our men had taken to the roof. But there was only one man on the roof, and that was Hooligan. He had made all that noise just to get us to follow him. He surrendered, and while he was doing it, Burton and I looked down and saw Pete and Whipple hopping around and getting that automobile out of the garage. They were out of pistol range, and it didn't take Burton and me more than a minute to understand that we had been lured to the roof in order to give Whipple and Pete a chance to save their bacon.

"We ran down and out at the kitchen door. There we stumbled over Sanders, tied hand and foot and lying on his woodpile. The two scoundrels had paid him their respects to that extent. Leaving Sanders, we rushed around the house, and saw the automobile spinning through the gate. Then we went after the Hawk, on the run. We're coming close to that other road, Matt," Harris added excitedly, "and Pete and Whipple haven't seen us, yet. They're pounding the life out of that car! I hope to thunder they don't wreck it. The road is awful."

The crossroad was rifled with ruts and "thank-ye-ma'ms." Over these the automobile was lurching and swaying, and not making more than fifteen or twenty miles an hour.

The Hawk came over the road almost directly above the motor car.

"Halt!" roared Harris, leaning from the rail and aiming his revolver downward. "You're at the end of your rope, Whipple, you and Pete, and you might as well surrender. If you don't, we'll shoot."

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Both scoundrels looked upward, and both, as might be expected, began to swear. Pete continued looking up, but Whipple recklessly threw on more speed.

The automobile jumped forward like a horse suddenly lashed. At the same moment the wheels on one side went down into a deep rut, and Pete, whose eyes were still aloft, was hurled over the side as though from a catapult. He landed on head and shoulders close to the roadside fence, and, instead of getting up, he straightened out and lay quiet.

"He's killed!" cried Burton.

"Don't you believe it," answered Harris. "He's too tough to be killed by a fall like that. Drop lower, Matt," the officer added to the young motorist, "and let Burton get out and take care of Pete. After that, we'll go on in pursuit of Whipple."

It took about two minutes to land Burton. Pete was still lying prone and silent as the La Grange man rushed toward him. While the Hawk was rising and forging onward after the automobile, those aboard her saw Burton raise himself upon completing a swift examination of Pete. Burton waved a hand reassuringly, then dropped the hand into his pocket and pulled out a pair of handcuffs.

"I was sure Pete was all right," said Harris, turning his eyes ahead. "That was an easy capture for Burton—an easier one than I think we'll have."

"Vell," observed Carl, "I don'd know aboutt dot. Der pubble is acting oop mit itseluf. It has

shtopped, und Vipple iss like some crazy mans, drying to make it go."

What Carl had said was the truth. Directly ahead, the automobile was at a complete standstill, with Whipple pulling and hauling frantically at the levers.

"Now we'll land him!" exulted Harris. "Straight ahead, Matt."

Whipple, despairing of getting the car into usable condition, suddenly sprang into the road and started for the fence. He was climbing the fence, when Matt shut off the power and halted about twenty feet over his head. Harris' revolver was trained full on the fugitive.

"Now, then," yelled the officer, "either give up or take the consequences."

"It's your play," answered Whipple, turning around and sitting on the top board.

"Throw your six-shooter into the road!" ordered Harris.

Whipple jerked the gun from his pocket and cast it from him, with a hoarse laugh.

"It ain't any good," said he. "There ain't a loaded shell in the cylinder, an' no more ter put in. If it hadn't been fer that, Harris, I wouldn't have come so easy. I could have slammed a bullet inter the machinery o' that air ship an' put it out o' the runnin'."

"I thought it was queer," remarked Harris, "that Pete or Whipple didn't use their revolvers. Get down closer to the ground, Matt. Better tie up to the fence, for I'd like to have you take a look at the automobile and see what's the matter with it."

Carl helped in the landing so that Harris could give his entire attention to Whipple. All of them breathed easier when they heard a pair of handcuffs snap around Whipple's wrists.

The air ship was moored so the wind could not drive the gas bag against anything in the road, and Matt went forward to the automobile. After a few moments' examination, he turned away with a laugh.

"She's badly shaken up, isn't she?" inquired Harris anxiously.

"Doesn't seem to be, Harris," replied Matt. "She has stood the rough handling she has had remarkably well."

"I don't know much about drivin' a car," admitted Whipple, "an' ye can bet I was puttin' her through fer all she was worth. I was certain nothin' had busted, an' I couldn't understand what made her stop."

"The gasoline tank was empty," said Matt. "You can't run a motor without fuel."

"Hang it all!" snorted Whipple, "an' there was a bar'l o' the stuff right there in Caspar's garage!"

"You were in too big a hurry to get away to make any use of the gasoline supply," said Harris.

"It wasn't that. I jest didn't know enough, that's all, an' this is how I'm payin' fer my ignorance."

"We'd have captured you, anyway, Whipple," declared Harris.

"Well, ye wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been fer King an' the Hawk. He's busted up Brady an' all his gang, an' it's a good thing fer him the darbies are on my hands this minute."

"I'll take Whipple back to where we left Burton and Pete, Matt," said Harris, "and if we can get a supply of gasoline from some farmhouse, we'll hike for South Chicago in the automobile."

"I can help you out, Harris," answered Matt. "I've an extra supply of gasoline in the air ship. Wait a minute and I'll get you ready for the trip home."

In a few moments Matt had strained enough gasoline into the motor car's tank to carry her a hundred miles. After that, he and Carl waited for Harris to get into the car with his prisoner and start back toward the place where Burton and Pete had been left. The automobile moved off with everything working perfectly.

"I'll see you in South Chicago, Matt," Harris called over his shoulder. "We mustn't forget poor Sanders, either."

"We haven't any balloon house to go to now," Matt answered, "so we can't stay in South Chicago very long."

"Dot vinds oop der whole game, bard," remarked Carl. "Vipple und Pete vas der vorst oof der olt gang, nexdt to Prady, und dey vas now down und oudt. Miss Prady has likewise peen rescued, und eferyt'ing iss lofely und ve can now go on mit ourselufs py New York."

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"We'll have to go somewhere," said Matt. "An air ship is something of a white elephant when you haven't a proper place in which to keep it. This wind is increasing, and the sky is clouding up. Looks like a storm, to me, and we'd better hurry and pick up Carl and Miss Brady and make a run for South Chicago."

The sky certainly looked threatening, and the boys made haste to get the Hawk in the air and to head her back toward the Caspar mansion. They had a hard struggle, for the wind was dead against them, and they could make scarcely more than five miles an hour. Getting Ferral and Helen aboard the car was ticklish business, because of the increasing wind, but it was finally accomplished and the Hawk scooted away toward South Chicago.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

"Scoot" is the only word that would fittingly describe the Hawk's return to her home port. A thirty-mile wind was directly behind her, and the propeller—which it was necessary to keep going in order to make the air ship fairly manageable—still further helped her along. Part of the time, as the three chums figured it, they were dashing through space at the rate of a mile a minute.

Overhead the skies had become black and threatening, and an occasional flash of lightning and roll of distant thunder told the boys what they were presently to expect.

That was the first time they had ever been in such a wind with the Hawk, and the first time a storm had ever threatened them while aloft. Even Matt, stout hearted as he was, felt a qualm of dread as he saw how the air craft flung onward by sheer force of the wind.

It was not more than twenty minutes from the time they left River Forest until they sighted the grimy chimneys of South Chicago.

"What're we going to do with the Hawk, mate?" shouted Ferral.

"If the balloon house hasn't been too badly dismantled," Matt answered, "we'll put the Hawk in there until the storm blows over."

By the time Matt had finished speaking, they were hard upon the big shed. But Hagenmyer's men were even then at work. The roof of the structure was gone, and its usefulness as a shelter, of course, went with roof.

"Py shinks," bellowed Carl, "I don'd like der looks oof t'ings! Ve got to do somet'ing mit der air ship, but vat it iss? Dell me, somepody!"

"We'll try Jerrold!" said Matt. "He keeps the Eagle in that big back yard of us, and perhaps he can help us out with the Hawk."

"Drop down in the yard, anyhow," suggested Ferral, "and take chances."

Dropping down in such a gale was hazardous business.

How Matt ever executed the manoeuvre as safely as he did he could not have told, for a good many things had to be done, and done quickly.

He flung the Hawk downward full fifty feet before he reached the confines of Jerrold's big back yard. The air ship had to slide sixty feet down the void, and in sliding those sixty feet the wind carried her over more than the fifty feet necessary to clear Jerrold's high board fence.

The bottom of the car struck the ground with a jolt that tipped Carl out heels over head. Carl had been standing ready with one of the mooring ropes, and he still clung to it. Ferral went out on the other side with another rope.

Meanwhile, the Hawk was lurching sideways and bounding up and down in a most terrific manner, lifting the car at each leap and pounding it on the surface of the ground.

Fortunately for Matt and his friends, Jerrold and his assistant, Payne, were close by, making the fastenings of their own air ship secure. They rushed to the assistance of Carl and Ferral, and succeeded, between all four of them, in getting the mooring ropes in place.

Jerrold thereupon brought four more ropes from his workshop, and the Hawk was likewise lashed with these. Matt's canvas shelter was then brought out, unfolded and put in place over the gas bag.

This task had no sooner been completed than the rain began to come down in torrents. Thankful that they had reached a safe haven in the very nick of time, Helen, Brady and Matt and his friends went into Jerrold's house and watched the rain pouring from the windows.

It was not until the day after their difficult landing in Jerrold's yard that Matt and his friends, accompanied by Helen Brady, paid a visit to the office of the chief of police.

Brady had already been taken back to Joliet, and Pete and Whipple were penned up in cells, awaiting trial.

"They'll go up, all right," said the chief, "and Brady will have the pleasure of seeing the two members of his old gang in the same institution where he is at hard labor."

"What about the Hooligans, chief?" queried Matt.

"Harris, Burton, and Sanders had their hands full with Pete and Whipple," replied the chief, "and they were not able to look after the caretaker and his wife. They telephoned the River Forest authorities, though, and some officers went there. They found the place deserted. Hooligan and his wife, fearing to be called to account for their rascality, had fled, and left the mansion to take care of itself. The River Forest police put some one else in charge of the place, and have cabled to the Caspars, in Paris. The La Grange officers are watching the Hooligan house in that town, and when the caretaker shows up there he will be captured."

Justice seemed to have failed in the matter of the Hooligans, but possibly it was only deferred. Their home was still in La Grange, and, sooner or later, one or both of them would return there.

"I just received a telegram from the detail I sent to Willoughby's swamp," went on the chief.

"To look for the loot?" asked Matt, turning his eyes on Helen.

"Yes."

"I didn't know Helen had told you where the stuff was hidden."

"She wrote out the instructions on the back of an old letter I had in my pocket, matey," spoke up Ferral, "while she and I were waiting for you and Carl to come back with the Hawk. She gave the instructions to Sanders, and he turned them over to Harris when he and Burton, with their prisoners, came after him in the automobile."

"That was the way of it," continued the chief. "The detail went out last night, in the rain, because we did not think it well to have any delay in such an important matter. Here's what the telegram says."

Opening a yellow slip, which had been lying on his desk, the chief read aloud the following:

"Plunder found. There's a raft of it. Will bring it in by train, under guard."

"Dot's fine!" cried Carl. "Und der peoble vat geds der shtuff pack vill haf to t'ank Miss Prady for dot."

"They have already had to thank my father for losing the property, in the first place," said Helen sadly, "so they won't feel very grateful to me. And it's not right they should," she added.

"Yes, it is," said the chief kindly. "You've played a noble part all through these troubles which the law has had with your father, Miss Brady, and your faithfulness in standing firmly for what you thought was right, has won universal recognition and gained you many friends. What will you do now?"

"I think I shall go to my mother's sister, who lives in New York," replied Helen. "She has always wanted me to come and live with her. She is alone in the world and needs somebody for a companion."

"You couldn't do better," said the chief approvingly. "By the way," and here he whirled to his desk and drew a yellow envelope from one of the pigeonholes, "here's another message, and it's for you, Matt. It came yesterday, and, as you know, this is the first chance I have had since then to deliver it."

Wondering who the telegram could be from, Matt opened it, read it over to himself, laughed, and then read it aloud.

"Will guarantee you one thousand dollars a week to come here and give exhibitions with your air ship. Deflate it and forward by express, and come by train. Wire me if you accept."

"Well, what do you think of that!" exclaimed the chief.

"Vone t'ousant tollars a veek!" jubilated Carl. "Py shinks, ve vill haf Morgan und Rockefeller backed off der map! Vone t'ousant a veek! Binch me, somepody."

"Where's it from, matey?" asked Ferral, with suppressed excitement.

"From Atlantic City, New Jersey," answered Matt.

"Big summer resort," observed the chief. "The people who go there can afford to have what they want, and pay well for it. What name's signed to the message, Matt?"

"Kitson Steel Pier Company."

"Well, it must be all right," said the chief. "Anyhow, the Kitson Steel Pier Company show a whole lot of sense in advising you to deflate the gas bag and ship the air ship by express. That's a whole lot better than trying to fly there, and butting into such storms as we had last night. What message are you going to send to Atlantic City, Matt?"

"Terms accepted; start at once."

Ferral tossed up his hat delightedly, and Carl floundered to his feet and began shaking hands all around.

"We'll go to Atlantic City by way of New York," Matt went on, with a glance toward the girl, "and see Miss Brady safely in the hands of her aunt."

"Good idea!" approved the chief heartily.

Helen lifted her eyes to Matt's, and then reached out impulsively and caught his hand.

THE END.

THE NEXT NUMBER (12) WILL CONTAIN

MOTOR MATT'S PERIL;

OR,

Cast Away in the Bahamas.

Carl as Buttinsky—The Moving-picture Man Makes a Queer Move—Warm Work at the "Inlet"—Prisoners On a Submarine—Through the Torpedo Tube—The Cape Town Mystery—Off for the Bahamas—An Accident—Matt and His Chums Go it Alone—The Air Ship Springs a Leak—Wrecked—Luck, or Ill-luck—A Move and a Countermove—Motor Matt's Success—A Few Surprises—Matt Takes Townsend's Advice.

MOTOR STORIES THRILLING ADVENTURE MOTOR FICTION

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NEW YORK, May 8, 1909.

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A FALL TO FORTUNE.

"I say, mother, Mr. Carey's going to take me to the balloon ascent. Isn't it good of him?"

Mrs. Keen turned to the kindly faced, bearded man who had followed her son into the cottage kitchen. "It is most kind of you, Mr. Carey. Clifford has been longing to go ever since he heard about Professor Starley. But"—sadly—"I couldn't even find the necessary quarter for admission."

"Won't you come, too, Mrs. Keen?" said Carey cheerily. "Do you no end of good."

She shook her head. "No, I won't come," she said gently. "But perhaps you will come back to tea with us afterward."

Carey said he would gladly do so, and he and Clifford started for the fair ground, from which the famous aeronaut, Professor Starley, was going to make an ascent by balloon and a drop by parachute.

"Wish your mother had come, Cliff," said Mr. Carey, as they walked up the street.

"Wish she had, too," echoed the boy. "But she never goes anywhere now. Tell you the truth," he went on, lowering his voice, "I believe she's afraid of any of our old friends recognizing her. You're the only one we keep up with."

"Oh, but that's foolishness!"

"I've told her so lots of times," declared Clifford. "But you know it's pretty hard to come down from a nice house to a cottage like that. Not that I care," he hastened to add. "But it's tough for mother. Fancy her having to do all the cooking! And she's got no nice clothes like she used to have before dad was drowned."

Mr. Carey shook his head gravely. "She's always fretting about him," he said. "I don't wonder. It was a terrible business altogether. And what made it worse was leaving her almost penniless."

He paused. "Cliff, do you know I've always suspected that that fellow Moise didn't treat your mother squarely?"

"Have you, Mr. Carey?" cried the boy eagerly. "D'you know, I've often thought the same thing myself. Seems a bit queer, after dad had always had lots of money, that old Moise should swear there was nothing left except about five hundred dollars. Don't you think there's something

awfully queer about Moise's face? He never looks at you straight."

"I've noticed that myself," said the other dryly. "But here we are. We'll talk about this again some other time."

The crowd was tremendous. All Dunthorne seemed to have turned out. As they worked their way through the masses of people Clifford Keen could see over their heads the great varnished globe swaying in the breeze.

Clifford was not the sort to be content with a back seat. He wormed his way through the packed throng till he reached the very front row, where a number of volunteers were holding the mooring ropes. The breeze was brisking, and the balloon tugged and leaped like a live thing.

"Here, sonny, catch a hold!" came a quick voice as a powerfully built man in tights and spangles caught sight of the boy's eager face. "Don't let go till I tell you. Mind!"

Clifford seized the rope delightedly.

Starley sprang back into the open space underneath the balloon. The balloon had no car, only a trapeze. On this Starley seated himself, holding the side ropes tight with both hands. The parachute, Clifford noticed, was fastened up against the side of the balloon.

"Now, gentlemen, when I give the word I want you all to release the cords at the same instant. The wind makes——"

At that very moment came such a gust that Starley's speech was cut short. The balloon came whirling over almost on top of Clifford, and two men who had hold of the same rope let go and sprang out of the way with shouts of alarm.

"Cowards!" muttered Clifford, holding on tighter than ever.

He knew nothing whatever of the lifting power of a balloon. Next instant as the gust passed the balloon came back with a jerk to the perpendicular, and Clifford was swung completely off his feet.

Before he could realize what had happened or make up his mind to let go he was far above the heads of the crowd.

From the whole fair ground rose an extraordinary sound—a deep groan. It was this that first made the boy realize the extreme peril of his position.

Nineteen boys out of twenty finding themselves dangling at the end of a rope in mid-air would have let go at once, and, of course, been smashed to atoms. Clifford happened to be the twentieth. The first thing he did was to crook his right leg in the rope, the second to shut his eyes in order to arrest the horrible dizziness which made his head swim like seasickness.

The next thing he was conscious of was a quiet voice from above.

"Say, sonny, can you climb up here?"

Clifford looked up. The aëronaut, seated on the crossbar about ten feet above him, was looking down with a cool expression, which helped to restore Clifford's confidence.

"I'll try," he answered.

"Come right along, then. Don't get flustered. It's just as easy as climbing a tree. And say, you keep looking at me. Don't look down."

"All right," replied Clifford briefly, and started to swarm up the rope. He was rather indignant at Starley's suggestion as to his getting flustered. Up to the time of his father's death he had always meant to be a sailor. He prided himself he could climb and stand heights as well as most chaps.

All the same, he wished the rope wouldn't swing so. To climb a cord that is describing great arcs in mid-air is rather different from swarming one in a school playground.

"That's first class," said Starley encouragingly. "Keep a good grip with your legs. Come on."

He held out an encouraging hand. Clifford found time to marvel at the airy ease with which the aëronaut balanced on the thin bar of the trapeze, holding by one hand only.

Another yard, and strong fingers clutched his collar. Next moment he was seated beside Starley on the trapeze.

At first this was almost worse than the rope. For the life of him the boy couldn't help looking down, and it gave him a curious shock to see men like black insects crawling among toy buildings, and little carriages moving down streets no wider than a window sill.

For a moment his head reeled, and he felt that horrible impulse to let go and fling himself down.

Starley's strong arm was round him. "All right, sonny, you'll get over that in a jiffy. When you feel fit again we must hold a council of war."

"I'm all right," declared Clifford, half angrily. He was savage with himself for giving way. "What are we going to do now?"

"That's just the trouble," replied the American with a dry smile. "It beats me to know how we're going to get back to the solid."

"Can't we both go down in your parachute?"

Starley shook his head. "She'll take my weight, and not ten pounds more. If we both hung on to her we'd rip the stuffing out of her, and there'd just be a splash to show where we hit the floor."

Clifford glanced at his companion with startled eyes.

"There's worse than that, sonny," went on the other. "You see, this isn't like a balloon that'll come down just when you like by pulling a valve cord. She's just an old thing I use for these descents, and trust to pick up wherever she happens to fall."

"Then you and I can't go down together?" said Clifford sharply.

Starley shook his head.

"What'll happen, then?"

"We'll go on up till we freeze and can't hold on any longer and drop off, or else the balloon'll bust, and we'll both come down a bit too quick for the good of our health."

"Is there nothing else we can do?" cried the boy.

"There's just one other chance," replied the aëronaut. "If you've got the pluck to take the parachute, I'll climb up in the netting and put my knife through the cover of the balloon. If I rip her enough she'll come down all right."

"That wouldn't be fair," returned Clifford sharply. "You take the parachute. I'll stick to the balloon."

Starley hesitated a moment. "Have you got the nerve to climb up there"—pointing aloft—"and cut the cover?"

"Yes," said Clifford firmly.

"Reckon he'd be safer that way," muttered the man to himself. Then, aloud: "If you can do it you'll be safe enough, sonny. Safer by chalks than if you take the parachute. It's an ugly job, anyway you look at it, but the parachute's the worst for a beginner. The jerk when she opens pretty near takes the arms out of you, and we're up all of three thousand already."

He pulled out a big clasp knife, and handed it to Clifford. "Let's see you up on the ring before I let loose," he said. "You'll feel a bit safer so long as you haven't got to climb it alone. But look sharp. We're still rising, and the wind's carrying us pretty sharp."

Clifford took the knife, slipped it into his coat pocket, and, clutching the side rope of the trapeze, set his teeth and began to climb.

For a horrid moment the ghastly dizziness clutched him again. But he set his teeth, and swore he would not give way to it.

Starley's weight kept the rope taut, and it was easier to climb than the other had been.

At last he was clinging to the iron ring of the parachute, with the great globe of varnished silk immediately above him.

"Are you right, sonny?" cried the aëronaut, looking up.

"Yes," called back Clifford with a cheeriness he was far from feeling.

Then as he swung a leg over the ring and pulled himself up sitting, both hands clutching the netting, he saw Starley lean over and grasp the rope of the parachute.

"Rip her well, and as high up as you can. And hang on till she reaches the ground," were Starley's last words of advice.

Then he gave the parachute rope a sharp jerk, there was a slight ripping sound, and the man dropped like a plummet toward the distant earth.

The balloon, relieved of his weight, made an enormous bound upward.

For a full thirty seconds the boy clung there, unable to do anything but watch Starley shooting down into the awful depths below. He gave a gasp of relief as the parachute at last opened like an umbrella, and went sailing away earthward as gently as a feather.

Then he got out his knife. "Now for it," he muttered bravely.

By this time the balloon was nearly a mile above the earth, and the breeze had long ago carried it clear of the town. It was sailing over what looked to Clifford like a patchwork quilt of little fields and woods and farmsteads, with here and there the silver ribbon of a river.

The whole position was so amazing that Clifford found it sheerly impossible to believe that one brief half hour before he had been one of those ants that he now saw crawling at such an enormous depth beneath him.

Clinging here close to the side of the balloon envelope the boy felt safer. He had something more or less solid to hold on to. He was so interested and excited that for the moment he almost forgot about the knife.

It was the cold that brought him to himself again. Down below it had been a warm if breezy September afternoon. Up here Clifford, in thin summer clothes, was rapidly chilling to the bone. His fingers were already blue.

He looked at them blankly. "If I don't hurry up they'll be too stiff to use the knife," he said half aloud. He opened the knife with his teeth, and, taking a long breath, stabbed boldly at the silk.

The blade flashed through with a ripping sound, and gas gushed out in such volumes that Clifford, half suffocated, was forced to hastily abandon his position and clamber a little way round out of reach of the rush.

Learning by experience, he reached as high as he could stretch, and made a long, sideways gash, then dropped hastily back to the ring.

"That's done it!" he cried delightedly. For the cut was followed by a long, hissing tear. The envelope had split for several feet, and the lower part was rapidly crumpling like a burst bladder.

He glanced down. It looked exactly as if fields and houses were rushing up to meet him. The balloon was dropping at tremendous speed.

At the same time Clifford noticed that the shadow of the balloon was swishing across the fields at almost the pace of an express train. He had dropped into a swift air current, and the rapidly deflating balloon was actually traveling at more than thirty miles an hour.

A small town loomed below, with a tall factory chimney sticking spike-like from its centre.

"If I hit that I'm a gone coon," muttered the boy, but the balloon passed far above its smoking summit, and swirled away over villas and gardens toward a wood.

Clifford saw people looking up, heard shouts of surprise and alarm, but he was past it all in a minute and swinging down toward the wood.

A fresh spasm of fright seized him as he saw the tall trees bending in the gale.

But the balloon scudded just above their leafy tops, and swooped toward a large square building, which lay in its own grounds surrounded by a high brick wall.

Even in the one flashing glance he caught of the place there was something sombre and forbidding about it. The tall gray walls, the barred windows, the dark elms, and the heavy shrubbery.

Now the balloon was flying straight for the outer wall.

With a shout of alarm Clifford scrambled wildly into the netting. Just in time. With a loud clang the iron ring struck the top of the wall. It caught a second, the whole envelope heeled over, the branches of a thick yew tore Clifford from his hold, and the last thing he remembered was the thump with which he reached the ground.

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A face was the first thing Clifford caught sight of when he opened his eyes again.

Such a face! Huge, dull, heavy, with deep, sunken eyes, which shone out with a lurid light from under cavernous eyebrows.

They were fixed upon the boy with such a beast-like glare that Clifford, sick and shaken with his heavy fall, could only lie and gaze and vaguely wonder whether he was awake or dreaming.

Gradually as his senses came back he realized that he was lying on a grassy path, and the owner of the eyes, a tall, powerfully built man, was sitting on a moss-grown log leaning over him.

But who and what he was, and why he glared in this ghastly fashion, never attempting to offer help, Clifford could not imagine.

The fixed stare was slowly hypnotizing him. He made an attempt to roll out of reach of the horrible eyes.

Instantly a long arm shot out, and fell on his shoulder with a grip painful in its vise-like strength.

"You'll do," said the owner of the eyes in a queer, hoarse voice.

"Do what?" muttered the boy faintly.

"To kill," replied the man in the coolest tone imaginable.

"Oh, I must be dreaming!" thought Clifford. But the painful grasp on his shoulder was good proof he was doing nothing of the sort.

"Nice and young and tender!" said the brute, licking his leathery lips. He let go of Clifford's shoulder, and suddenly produced from his pocket an ordinary table knife. Clifford saw with a shudder that its blade had been ground to razor-like keenness.

The man ran a finger along the sharp edge—ran it so carelessly that the thin steel ripped the skin, and blood dropped to the grass.

At the sight of the blood his dull face turned to a mask of fury, and he sprang to his feet with a howl resembling that of a wild beast hungry for its food.

The movement broke the spell. Clifford bounded to his feet, and, ducking just in time to escape a vicious stab, ran for dear life toward the house.

With a scream of balked fury the man was after him.

Bruised and shaken as he was, Clifford had never in his life before run so fast. At first he gained a little, but presently the long legs of his pursuer began to tell, and he heard the hot panting so close behind that each moment he expected to feel the sharp steel buried in his back.

The path ran right up under the blank windows of the silent house. Reaching the angle, Clifford swerved wildly to the right. A figure was standing by the door.

With a wild yell of "Help!" Clifford dashed toward it.

To his horror it vanished, slamming the door in his face.

Once more Clifford dodged, and reached an opening in the thick shrubbery which bordered the drive. As he dashed in among the trees his foot caught in a root, and down he came with a crash

that knocked the remaining breath out of him.

His pursuer was so close that he could not stop, and, tripping over the boy, went over on his head, burying his knife deep in the ground.

At the same moment a gaunt, middle-aged man with a gray beard and hair burst out of the thick bushes alongside, and hurled himself upon Clifford's assailant.

Clifford, scrambling wildly to his feet, saw the big man struggling to rise. He was howling with rage, and in his bull-like fury was throwing the other about like a feather.

Clifford glanced round. A dead branch lay close by. It was the work of an instant to snatch it up and bring it with all his force across the great head of his would-be murderer.

"Well done!" cried the gray-bearded man, as the other straightened out and lay still. "I've often told them that Prynne was dangerous. But how did you get here?"

He turned, and for the first time caught sight of Clifford's face.

For a moment the two stared at one another in an amazement beyond any description.

Then staggering back, with face white as chalk, the elder man muttered, "Clifford!"

"Father!" replied the boy, unable to believe his eyes.

At this moment footsteps crunched on the gravel of the drive.

The gray-bearded man recovered himself. "They're coming," he hissed in a tense whisper. "Don't let on you know me. Moise put me here. Tell Carey."

It was all he had time to say before a wandering man burst upon them.

"What's up here?" he cried gruffly. Then, catching sight of Clifford, "And what are you doing here?"

"Dropped in a balloon," retorted Clifford sharply. The man's tone was most offensive. "This brute"—pointing to the insensible man—"tried to kill me. He must be mad."

The warder burst into a hoarse guffaw. "Mad—of course he's mad. They're all mad here."

Then like a thunder clap the truth burst on Clifford. His scoundrelly partner had immured his father in this horrible place. The boy blazed with fury. It was all he could do to keep down the rage which consumed him.

But he did it. He turned to the warder. "The sooner I'm clear of the place, the better I shall be pleased," he said. "Perhaps you'll kindly show me the way out."

"The sooner you're out the better, my lad," returned the man with an ugly grin. He led the way to a tall iron-spiked gate, unlocked it, and, with a sigh of intense relief, Clifford found himself on the highroad.

That the first passer-by told him he was eighteen miles from home, every step of which he would have to tramp, hardly made the slightest impression on the eager excitement with which Clifford looked forward to the release of his father.

Three days later Mr. Keen and his wife met once more. As for Moise, when he found that his villainy was discovered, he took what ready cash he could lay hands on, and vanished with all speed. Clifford is never tired of hearing his father tell of the shipwreck and the injury to his head, which gave his ex-partner the opportunity to declare him mad, and imprison him under a false name in the private asylum from which he was so wonderfully rescued.

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Transcriber's Notes:

Added table of contents.

Images may be clicked to view larger versions.

Retained inconsistent/unusual spellings in dialect (e.g. "leettle" vs. "lettle").

Retained inconsistent hyphenation (e.g. "passerby" vs. "passer-by").

Page 2, added missing footnote reference (original text had footnote, but no matching asterisk). Changed ? to ! in "Howdy, Matt!"

Page 4, changed "techincal" to "technical" ("talked on technical points").

Page 5, changed "Mat" to "Matt" ("mit Matt, dough").

Page 28, changed comma to period at end of "Binch me, somepody."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOTOR MATT'S DARING RESCUE; OR, THE STRANGE CASE OF HELEN BRADY ***

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