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# **Standish Gets His Man**

**BY**

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"Contraband" &c.

*Illustrated by W. Edward Wigfull*

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# Standish Gets his Man

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# CHAPTER I

## "Get Busy!"

"Mornin', Standish!"

"Good morning, sir!"

Inspector Colin Standish, of the Royal Air Constabulary, knew better than to add, "You sent for me, sir!" when summoned into Colonel Robartes' presence.

The superintendent tapped his finger on a map of England spread upon his desk, and held down by four leaden weights.

"They've arrived!" he announced. "And, worse luck, they've started work already!"

In spite of the ambiguity of his chief's statement, Standish laboured under no delusions as to what he meant.

Mike Doran and Toni Pergelli, high-lights of the American gangsters, experts in the use of the submachine-gun, stickers at nothing, had publicly stated their intention to cross the Herring Pond and to give Britishers a practical demonstration of certain methods favoured by the hard-boiled tough of New York and Chicago.

Few people had taken the threat seriously, although New Scotland Yard, having no need to sit up, had taken notice. Detectives had kept close watch upon ports, large and small. At the air-ports vigilance had been redoubled; machines of the Royal Air Constabulary had maintained ceaseless patrol around the coasts of the British Isles.

Without the knowledge of the general members of the British public, the cost of these precautions had reached alarming figures, about which the taxpayer would certainly ask questions in the near future. The authorities had made up their minds to take no chances. They realized that a couple of American gangsters at work in this country were as dangerous as a tsetse fly let loose in a South African racing-stable, where thousands of pounds of damage would be done before the insect was swatted.

"Started work already, sir?"

"Yes; but not in the North-Eastern area," explained Colonel Robartes. "They got to work yesterday afternoon at a place called Brackley. Here it is"—pointing to the map—"midway between Northampton and Oxford, and a matter of about sixty miles from London. Know the place, by any chance?"

"Yes, sir; I've motored through the town more than once."

"H'm, no need for me to have given you its position, then," remarked the superintendent. "What matters is that Doran and Pergelli have raided a bank there, plugged the cashier, and have got away with £3000 in notes."

Colin drew a mental picture of the scene—the broad highway intersected towards the south end of the town by a pillared and venerable town hall.

"How do they know Doran carried out the raid, sir?" asked Standish.

"He telegraphed the information to Scotland Yard half an hour later," replied Colonel Robartes. "He's that sort of boaster. The message was handed in at Northampton, twenty miles away, in less than half an hour after the robbers left the bank at Brackley."

"They used a car, of course?"

"A high-powered one. She was doing eighty in the main street. Spectators declared that a man on the rear seat was holding a machine-gun. That may be pure imagination; on the other hand it's quite possible. We're up against a tough proposition, Standish!"

Colin agreed, although for the present he failed to see how the Royal Air Constabulary was to be brought into the affair other than by aerial co-operation with the mobile and local police. There seemed very little chance of the "air cops" being brought into direct contact with the alien gangsters—a surmise that subsequently proved that Inspector Colin

Standish was by no means infallible.

"Is there any information as to how the gangsters arrived here, sir?" he asked.

"Absolutely none! They carried out the raid on the very day of their self-advertised date of arrival! In spite of the net spread for them they have eluded the cordon. It's my belief they've come by air."

"Direct from the States, sir?"

Colonel Robartes shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps—why not? Nowadays flying the Atlantic from west to east isn't a remarkable feat. What is remarkable, however, is that they succeeded in evading our air patrols. I should not be surprised to learn that they flew *via* the Azores, refuelled somewhere in Spain or Portugal, and then entered this country by way of the south or east coasts."

Colin smiled wryly. If the gangsters had flown inland over the Yorkshire or Lincolnshire coasts the responsibility was partly his. He had been on patrol between Flamborough Head and Cromer on the night preceding the Brackley raid. His wireless operator had been constantly in communication with the chain of listening posts, and every inbound aircraft had been detected and identified.

If it were true that the gangsters were employing a 'plane as well as a car, then the situation was one that would vitally affect the Royal Air Constabulary. Their duties were of a civil nature, and their methods of bringing down offending aircraft were limited to the use of the anti-magneto rays. If the air bandits resorted to the use of firearms, which seemed likely, then either the Royal Air Force would be asked to cooperate—a step that would be regarded by the Royal Air Constabulary as a slur upon their capabilities—or else the air police would have to be armed with more effective weapons than their revolvers and automatic pistols. In effect, until the menace was removed, the air police would be auxiliaries to the military Royal Air Force.

"You'd better stand by with your flight for instant action, Standish," continued his chief. "Anyone on leave?"

"No, sir."

"Good! Of course you'll warn all officers and men in your flight that leave is suspended. We can't have——"

The telephone bell trilled shrilly.

"Yes, this is North-Eastern area headquarters," replied Colonel Robartes. "Yes ... At twelve-fifteen? ... I see ... You're 'phoning further details in a few minutes.... Right, I'll see to it."

He replaced the receiver.

"News has just come through that another bank raid has taken place; this time in York. The bandits made off in the direction of Bridlington, though that may have been a blind. You'd better get a move on, Standish. Patrol the whole of section E and keep me informed. You will also be in touch with the local police at York, Driffeld, Beverley, Selby and York. Get busy!"

---

## CHAPTER II

### In Pursuit

Standish got busy, although he had very little information on which to work.

After less than three years at Hawkscar Aerodrome he was now fourth in point of seniority amongst the flying staff. Promotion was rapid in the Royal Air Constabulary, deaths, injuries, transfers and resignations being contributory factors to Colin's advancement, apart from his good record. He was now in command of D flight, which was one of the four held in readiness to proceed at short notice to any part of the British Isles.

"Thank goodness the men have had dinner!" he said to himself, as he hurried across the parade ground to the orderly office.

The constable on duty at the entrance saluted.

"Turn out D flight, please!" ordered Standish, as he hurried into the room to report to the officer of the day.

Turning out D flight was a comparatively simple business.

The siren blared out a "dash" followed by two "dots".

A turn out of a crack fire-brigade could hardly have been executed in quicker time.

The last sound of the siren had barely died away when the officers and men of the summoned flight came out of their respective quarters—seven sub-inspectors and forty-two constables. Fifteen seconds later they had fallen in in military formation awaiting the arrival of Inspector Colin Standish.

Meanwhile the mechanically operated doors of D section's hangars had opened and seven huge monoplanes, each towed by a small but efficient motor-tractor, emerged almost simultaneously. They were then wheeled into line facing the wind, while the men of the ground staff stood by until their crews "took over".

These monoplanes were a great advance even upon the hitherto superb machines with which the Royal Air Constabulary had been originally equipped.

They were of the all-metal type, with totally enclosed fuselage, retractor landing-wheels and streamlined to the highest degree of efficiency. Each was propelled by four motors, the airscrews being in pairs—one of the tractor and the other of the "pusher" type. Included in the equipment was the improved magneto-arrester device, capable of putting the ignition of a suspicious aircraft out of action at a range of two thousand yards. Each machine carried two of these devices, one mounted in a retractable cupola above the fuselage, the other in a similar housing that when in use was lowered through the floor. This enabled an uninterrupted arc of magnetic action, so that a suspect flying immediately above or below the air police machine could be effectively arrested in more senses than one.

The engines were of the latest type of light Diesels, thereby minimizing the risk of fire and capable of attaining a maximum speed of 360 miles an hour, with a cruising radius of 2000 miles without having to refuel.

Although the fuselage was not armoured, the case-hardened duralium sheathing was supposed to be capable of stopping a high-velocity rifle bullet, while it was claimed that the wings could be riddled by machine-gun fire without seriously impairing the air-worthiness of the 'plane. Another innovation was the fact that the machine was amphibious, and therefore capable of alighting and taking off from the surface of the sea even in rough weather.

Each machine was equipped with a wireless outfit of the "portable" type. This not only did away with the undoubted inconvenience of having to pay out and wind in a trailing aerial, but enabled the operator to take wireless bearings from recognized transmitting stations should the machine encounter fog or snow.

Standish came hurrying over the tarmac. His subordinates stood to attention.

"The American gangsters are busy in the York district," he announced. "Our orders are to patrol section E and keep in touch with the local constabulary. York will wireless a description of the wanted car directly they receive an accurate



report. If needs be we must stop every car in the area, but I don't think that will be necessary."

Some of the officers and men smiled at this. It recalled a certain incident when all the motor traffic on the York to Scarborough road had been held up by anti-magnetic rays from Royal Air Constabulary machines. The resulting "jam", although it attained its object, had brought forth a chorus of indignant protests from law-abiding road users. Questions upon the subject had been raised in Parliament, where an undertaking had been given that such drastic measures would not again be employed except in very special cases.

This was one of them. It was better to stop several thousand innocent motorists than to let two criminals escape, since it was realized that gunmen would quickly increase in number if the introducers of this method of crime into the United Kingdom were not promptly laid by the heels.

"That's all, I think, for the present," continued Standish. "All aboard!"

The various crews made a hurried though orderly dash for their respective machines. Hardly had the last sub-inspector climbed on board—the crews did so in order of seniority, those of inferior rank going first—than the auto-actuated motor leaped into a state of subdued activity.

D 1, with Standish as senior officer of the flight, and Don Grey as his second in command, was the first to take off, followed at five-second intervals by the remaining six machines. Within eighteen minutes of the alarm being received at Hawkscar Aerodrome the Royal Air Constabulary machines were speeding to the area in which the redoubtable Mike Doran and his accomplice were believed to be trying to make their get-away.

Rising to a height of one thousand feet—an altitude giving sufficient clearance for the highest part of the Yorkshire wolds—the flight spread fanwise in order to make a rapid though comprehensive combing-out of the whole of the expansive district officially referred to as sector E.

"Another spot of bother, Don," remarked Colin. "Don't be surprised if the blighters get busy with sub-machine-guns."

"I won't be so surprised as when those brigands in Bakhistan started to take pot-shots at us," declared Grey. "I don't mind admitting that put the wind up me properly; only, I was a civil aviation pilot in those days."

"And now you are an air policeman and therefore fair game for any criminal who has the determination and the foolishness to use firearms," rejoined Standish. "Personally I think we're lucky to be up. It's those unfortunate foot-slogging police who will have to face the music if Doran is brought to bay. Ah! We're over Sledmire already."

"Message from Pocklington police, sir," announced the wireless operator. "Car answering description given has been seen proceeding in direction of Rudstone."

"Right! I say, Don, if that's correct the fools are heading towards Hawkscar! Surely they know our depot's there! But we haven't had the description of the wanted car yet."

"Awkward! No matter. Swing her round and call up D 4. We may have to jam every car between here and Rudstone. What's that, Curtis?"

The operator handed Standish a slip of buff paper. On it was scrawled the words: "Car, grey saloon, index number, TK 771."

"Don't see that the index number will help us," observed Don Grey. "More than likely they've changed it already."

D 1's course was altered to the desired direction and speed reduced to a bare eighty miles an hour. In obedience to a wireless order D 4 also swung round and assumed a position about eight hundred yards from her leader's starboard quarter.

Standish rapped out another order. A constable entered the lower cupola in which the magneto-arresting apparatus was placed. The contrivance and its occupant were then let down until the upper edge of the streamlined cupola was flush with the floor of the fuselage.

Meanwhile observers armed with powerful binoculars were scanning the black ribbons across the sward that indicated the comparatively scanty roads across the wild wind-swept wolds.

About half a dozen cars were sighted but they bore no resemblance to the wanted one. Mostly they were old tourers conveying farmers to one of the market-towns.

Presently a grey saloon was spotted making towards Rudstone. It appeared to be moving at a furious pace, and although in the relative positions of 'plane and car the observers in the former were able to catch a brief glimpse at the rear number plate, the angle it presented, coupled with the fact that the numbers were caked with dust, prevented them from deciphering them.

"We'll risk it," decided Standish. "Call up all police stations within ten miles and warn them to get busy. Give the map reference, and tell them we're stopping a suspicious car."

The D 1 swooped down, keeping almost immediately above the quickly moving car.

Then Standish gave the word to switch on.

At that range—barely three hundred feet—the ray operator got on the target almost at once.

The car, with the ignition cut off, ran by its own impetus for nearly two hundred yards, finally coming to a stop close to a large plantation.

The two occupants alighted to discover what was wrong with the engine. Only then they heard the subdued roar of D 1's well-silenced motors.

Abandoning the car they fled like hares into the adjacent cover.

"Confound them!" muttered Standish.

He realized that he had made a mistake. He should have held his hand until the car was well clear of possible cover for the suspects.

It was too late now.

Signalling to D 4 to cruise round, Colin ordered his 'plane to descend. Instead of waiting for the local police to arrive to comb the wood, he was resolved to take the initiative. To effect the arrest of the two gangsters would indeed be a feather in the caps of the Royal Air Constabulary!

Cowlings and landing wheels were lowered and the ray operator raised until the cupola was properly housed. Then, turning into the wind, the monoplane began her descent to earth.

With a good knowledge of the district, Standish knew that it abounded with tolerably fair emergency landing grounds. Sheep had cropped the grass on the gently undulating wolds until the ground was almost as smooth as a cricket pitch.

The machine made a perfect landing, coming to rest within two hundred yards of the nearest edge of the plantation. Here, unless the bandits had taken their sub-machine-guns with them—their hurried flight seemed to have precluded such a possibility—she was perfectly safe from long-range destructive action on their part.

Leaving the operator and another constable on guard in the 'plane, Standish marshalled his men and cautioned them of the dangerous reputation of the suspects, who were quite likely to put up a desperate resistance and were not likely to spare their opponents in any circumstances.

Then, detailing Sub-Inspector Grey to search the abandoned car, he led the remaining four constables towards the plantation.

At six paces interval they advanced, holding their automatics ready for instant action and not knowing whether a rapid fire would greet them from the shelter of the fir trees.

They were still some distance off when to their surprise the two fugitives emerged and held their hands above their heads.

Standish felt a pang of disappointment. This tame and speedy ending to the chase had robbed it of any sense of excitement.

But had it?



# CHAPTER III

## The Abandoned Car

A constable went up to each of the captured men, ordered them to lower their arms, and deftly snapped on the bracelets.

"I charge you with robbery with violence on certain premises in the city of York!" announced Colin, adding the customary warning that anything the accused might say would, if necessary, be taken as evidence against them.

If the bandits did make any reply, Standish quite expected to hear them speak with a strong American accent. To his utter surprise one of the men protested in broad Yorkshire:

"Robbery wi' violence, sitha? Happen, lad, thou't made mistake. 'Twur but a few conies we'd a-taken!"

Without replying, Standish swung round and hurried to the abandoned car.

Don Grey met him with his customary cheerful grin.

"Ever hear of gangsters holding up a bank to get hold of a brace of hares and a dozen rabbits?" was his greeting.

"Nothing else in the car?"

"Nothing! We've been barking up the wrong tree, old son!"

"And not the first time," rejoined Colin.

"Why did those two fellows do a bunk?"

"Conscience, my lad, conscience! One admitted to me that they had been poaching, and the sight of two R.A.C. 'planes scared 'em stiff."

The idea of two units of the Royal Air Constabulary being engaged upon the task of apprehending a pair of poachers was too much for Don Grey's gravity. He roared with merriment, until Standish reminded him that all this time the bandits were on the move—unless the other machines had succeeded in spotting them.

"What about the fellows you arrested?" he asked, after a moment's pause.

"Not worth wasting a pair of bracelets apiece on," decided Standish. "Especially as it would mean leaving one of the men in charge of them. I've taken the number of their car. Come along!"

Accompanied by his subordinate, Standish at once hurried back to where the two manacled men were standing.

"Cuse me, sir," reported Sergeant Heswall, "but one of these men has made an important statement. He declares that a grey saloon with the rear number-plate hidden, overtook them about eight miles back. It nearly forced them on to the verge and then swung left with two wheels in the air and disappeared in the direction of Sledmire."

"He volunteered this statement? You didn't suggest that we were looking for a car of that description?"

"No, sir!"

"Good! Remove the handcuffs from these men, Sergeant! I charged them with robbery with violence, not with poaching!... Look here, you men! It's quite possible I'll forget all about you, especially if your information comes in useful. You'll find your car will run all right now."

Leading his baffled crew back to D 1, Standish ordered the operator to wireless to the other 'plane requesting her to switch off the magneto-arresting rays.

Quickly D 1 took off and, followed by her consort, set off in the direction of Sledmire. Wireless communication with the other units of the flight resulted in negative information. No sign of the fugitive bandits had been seen, and no further information had been received from any of the ground police in the district.

For the next two hours D flight carried out its pre-arranged patrol. From north to south and then from east to west the seven machines flew in line abreast, with a four hundred yards interval between each. In this manner the whole of the area under suspicion was systematically combed from the air, but still without results.

Reports from the ground came in with remarkable frequency, only to be cancelled a few minutes later. Hundreds of cars, not only on the main roads but in some of the most remote lanes of the wolds, had been stopped by the members of the East Riding Constabulary, but in no case was there any reason to suppose that the gangsters were in any one of the vehicles challenged. The cost of these operations to the state was, however, partly compensated by the big haul made by the police of motorists who had unknowingly transgressed against some of the numerous petty regulations laid down for their benefit or discomfiture!

"Another morning wasted!" declared Colin. "Our recall signal will be coming through in another few minutes!"

"Four hundred gallons of fuel wasted," added Don. "Nothing to show for it, absolutely nothing! I say, though! What's that? Just beyond that clump. Looks to me as if it might be a car. If it is, what's it doing there?"

In obedience to an order D 1 commenced to circle over the suspicious object. The other machines, receiving no instructions, carried on.

Through their binoculars the observers brought the abandoned car within a few feet of them. Obviously it had been left only recently, for steam was issuing from the radiator, indicating that it had been driven remorselessly up the steep gradients that flank the western and southern boundaries of the wold. There was no building within a radius of a quarter of a mile; the lane by which the car had come seemed to lose itself a mile farther on. These facts pointed to the probability that the late occupants of the car were not making for anywhere in particular.

Standish decided to descend and investigate. Before doing so he circled again to try to detect the fugitives, and also to send a wireless message announcing his discovery.

A reference to the map informed him that the car had been abandoned almost midway between the villages of Leppington and Leavening. A wireless message to the police station in the latter elicited the information that, with the exception of the operator, the constables were on their way to the suspected vehicle.

"That's of no use," thought Colin. "They should be rounding up suspects, not concentrating upon one abandoned car."

Choosing the nearest possible landing-ground, and that was quite half a mile from the car, Standish brought D 1 to earth. Then, leaving two men in charge, since there was the probability of the gangsters attempting to seize the R.A.C. machine, Standish and the rest of the crew trudged up the steep, rough-surfaced lane along which the suspects had preceded them.

Taking into consideration the sparsely populated district it was surprising how in an incredibly short space of time a small crowd had collected. The local police had spread the news of the bank robbery at York and were now good-naturedly engaged in keeping the interested spectators from helping themselves to souvenirs!

The sergeant, recognizing the Royal Air Constabulary, saluted Standish stiffly. He was feeling rather peeved that these air police should butt in when he was handling the situation in traditional manner.

It was the car right enough. The bandits had painted out part of the aluminium number-plate so that the original TK 771 had become K 77. No doubt it had been stolen for the purpose of the raid, but the significant fact was the discovery of a rectangular piece of steel that fitted the back of the saloon and was provided with a slit corresponding with part of the rear window. Obviously the sheet of metal was intended as a protection against bullets, while the slit was to be employed as an aperture through which one of the gunmen could direct a hail of machine-gun bullets against pursuers.

As far as finger-prints were concerned, Colin quickly realized that so many of the crowd had handled the abandoned car and its fitments that it would be a waste of time to concentrate upon these. The only satisfaction he got was the fact that he had seen the bandits' car and was able to reassure himself that the police were up against a type of criminal happily hitherto unknown within the limits of the British Isles—the killer who shoots not only to evade capture but through sheer brutal lust for the shedding of human blood. More than ever, Colin realized not only the difficulty of his task, but its supreme importance.

"No sign of the men, sergeant?"

"None, sir."

"Footprints?"

The sergeant pointed to the sun-baked turf, rough and trampled.

"Not much use, sir. Now if there had only been rain——"

It was useless to remain longer. Standish and his men returned to the machine, accompanied by the greater part of the crowd, whose interest in an aeroplane taking off completely eclipsed their curiosity in the abandoned car.

Fifteen minutes later D flight returned to Hawkscar, where Standish had to report to Colonel Robartes that airmanship had so far failed in the contest with the alien law-breakers. It was an interview for which he had little relish!

"Don't take it to heart, Standish," said his chief. "You've evidently put the wind up the blighters. That's something to be going on with; but better luck next time!"

"I hope so, sir," rejoined Inspector Standish fervently.

---

# CHAPTER IV

## Introducing Mike Doran

What motives had induced Mike Doran and Toni Pergelli to forsake the Land of the Almighty Dollar and to seek fresh pastures in Great Britain?

Actually it was a combination of circumstances. Primarily the G-men had made Chicago too hot for this enterprising couple even though they had aimed to become amongst the first half dozen of America's public enemies.

A weird sense of vanity prompted them to try their luck in England, where, according to what they had heard, transgressors against the law were poor stuff compared with the toughs on the other side of the Herring Pond. The British policeman, in their opinion, was "easy meat", relying upon measures very mild compared with the shoot-at-sight methods of the American cops. And, of course, the British public did not know how to defend itself since the civil population do not go about with automatics in their hip-pockets.

Mike and Toni imagined that they could handle a bunch of British civilians like a flock of sheep.

Doran was in his late twenties. He had graduated at Princetown University, but quickly drifted into the underworld. It was somewhat remarkable that although he had an American accent his speech differed widely from the mongrel English as spoken by the gunmen of Chicago. Nevertheless he had acquired a reputation as a daring and cold-blooded killer and had already eight murders to his record.

In appearance he was of middle height and of slim build. There was nothing remarkable about his features except that his eyes were set rather closely together. Beneath a commonplace exterior Doran concealed an astonishing alertness of body and mind. In tight corners he kept remarkably cool and collected and it was this fact that enabled him to extricate himself from many a difficult situation.

Toni Pergelli was built on a different mould. The son of an Italian father and a Polish mother—like many another citizen of the United States claiming to be one hundred per cent American—he had started upon his career of crime when only fifteen years of age. That was five years ago.

In appearance he was short, heavily built and swarthy; temperamentally he was quick and excitable. Thus the two bandits acted as foils to each other in many respects, although when they "got busy" they were admirably suited to undertake the cold-blooded and often sordid crimes that had already gained them a sinister reputation.

Obviously two American gangsters working alone in a strange country would be heavily handicapped. Accomplices were necessary; and since Doran and Pergelli were well equipped with funds, these were easy to obtain.

Three months before the gunmen's departure from the States, a self-styled Canadian—actually a native of Detroit—arrived at Liverpool accompanied by his wife and three hefty sons. They had with them two men servants and a chauffeur.

Mr. Ambrose Montgomery—for that was the name he had assumed—was a big burly man with engaging manners. His story that he had made his pile in wheat and had come across the Atlantic to settle in the Old Country was accepted on its face value.

For a mere song he purchased a derelict mansion in an out-of-the-way part of Cannock Chase. Geographically it was not far from the accepted centre of England. It was within seven or eight hours' car distance from Berwick, Dover and Penzance, and only a matter of an hour or so by air from either of these towns.

Once installed in Backdarley Manor, Mr. Ambrose Montgomery got busy in anticipation of the time when his employers, Doran and Pergelli, should arrive to embark upon the business of shooting their way through England and getting away with a goodly pile.

One of the first of Ambrose Montgomery's improvements was to convert a spacious barn into a hangar. Since Backdarley Manor lies in a hollow surrounded by tree-clad hills it served admirably as a secret barn for aeroplanes. Unless the homing machine was spotted from the air it would appear, through the eyes of an observer on the ground, to be passing

over the house, owing to the interception of the surrounding hills.

Dead on time, Doran and his accomplice arrived at Backdarley Manor by air.

Their monoplane was of unique design. Built by a well-known American firm ostensibly to the order of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for service in the North-West territories, it possessed a flying radius of three thousand miles at a cruising speed of two hundred and twenty miles an hour. It was not a large machine, but it was remarkable for its narrow wing-span, the wings being disproportionately broad and acutely set in relation to the centre line of the fuselage. It was propelled by two engines, placed one on each side of the fuselage and almost amidships. Each motor was provided with a long shaft and was pivoted at right angles to the fore and aft centre line. Thus, in a few seconds, the machine could be converted into a full-powered helicopter capable of being brought almost vertically to earth and landing safely in a space no larger than a tennis court. Once it was on the ground the wings could be removed in a very little time, by merely unlocking two intercepted threads on each.

In this machine Doran and Pergelli left the state of Michigan. They were provided with false passports and other documents that purported they were John Blenkinsop and Dexter van Huyler, citizens of the United States, and engaged upon a leisurely aerial world tour. Amongst their baggage was nothing that would excite the suspicions of the most alert Customs officer.

They flew to Europe via the Azores and alighted on the outskirts of Liège. Here, since the restrictions on the sale of arms in Belgium are lax, they bought a dozen sub-machine-guns, half a dozen automatics, and two thousand rounds of ammunition. Also they had no difficulty in getting hold of a number of tear-gas bombs. Such crude articles as sticks of gelignite they left severely alone; they were out-and-out gunmen, not safe cracksmen.

That night they alighted, the tide being out, on one of the numerous sandbanks between the Friesian Islands and the mainland. Here they repainted the machine with quick-drying paint until, devoid of identification marks, it was cleverly camouflaged so as to be invisible from the air when resting on the ground.

Next they had to run the gauntlet of the patrolling machines of the Royal Air Constabulary. This they did by crossing over the east coast between Harwich and Lowestoft at an altitude of nineteen thousand feet. Favoured by a following wind, they shut off both engines and glided with very little loss of altitude until they were over Ely.

Thanks to recent regulations issued by the Air Ministry, to the effect that all towns in Great Britain with a population of ten thousand persons and more must display a large illuminated sign bearing the name of the place, the gunmen had no difficulty in finding their way.

An hour before sunrise, guided by pre-arranged signals from Backdarley Manor, Doran and Pergelli arrived at this base of operations.

They had no intention of using the 'plane except as a means of effecting a quick get-away. A swift car—and there were plenty to be had owing to the happy-go-lucky habits of a vast section of the British motoring public—would be their chief ally. It took them two days' practice to enable the gunmen to accustom themselves to the insular prejudices of Britishers, who in contrast to the practice in almost every other country, drive on the left-hand side of the road. Traffic signals they learnt with a view to ignoring when they commenced operations.

Next day came the Brackley affair—a typical example of the brutal and callous methods of gangsterdom.

Doran and his accomplice drew up outside the bank during the lunch hour. The cashier, thinking that the levelled automatics were toy weapons, attempted to hurl a paper-weight at Doran's head. Before he could raise his arm the gangster fired, seriously wounding the devoted official. The junior clerk, ignoring Toni's warning, rushed to the cashier's aid, only to be felled by the gunman's knuckleduster.

Coins the bandits ignored. They were too bulky and too heavy to risk removing. Helping themselves to all the notes on which they could lay their hands, they got away without molestation. A few minutes later, Doran vaingloriously telegraphed to Scotland Yard from Northampton—entrusting the message to a chance errand boy—announcing the disturbing fact that American gunmen had commenced operations on British soil.

To a certain extent Doran's telegram assisted him in his "get-away". The authorities at Scotland Yard regarded the message as a hoax, never thinking that the American gangster would have the colossal nerve to advertise his initial crime



on this side of the Herring Pond.

Consequently, when a message arrived from the Brackley police—if acted upon promptly the net would have been cast with excellent prospects of success—too much precious time was wasted in deciding whether this wire was also in the nature of a practical joke.

When at length "The Yard" did get busy, Doran and his accomplice were for the time being safe from pursuit.

Then came the astounding bank robbery at York, an attempt that, though successful, very nearly put a final stopper to the nefarious activities of Mike Doran and Co.



# CHAPTER V

## The Gunmen's Second Coup

At about eleven o'clock in the morning—it was market-day—Doran and Pergelli arrived by train at York station.

They had travelled from Derby in separate compartments, Doran carrying a cricket-bag in which reposed a machine-gun, while his companion held a large, flat, brown-paper-covered package under his arm.

A casual observer would have taken Pergelli for an artist with a couple of canvases packed back to back. Actually the weight of his burden would have surprised anyone not in the secret, for in the paper wrappings was a piece of steel plate slotted to take the muzzle of a sub-machine-gun.

The American-Italian set down his burden on Ouse Bridge and rested his arms on the parapet while Doran, leaving his bag in the other's charge, went off to investigate.

Originally the gunmen had intended to raid one of the principal banks of the city, situated in the market-place. For the time at least Doran thought better of it. A glance at the double doors, the grille and the numerous staff, to say nothing of the swarm of customers, decided him to tackle less important premises.

Finally he selected a branch bank situated at the corner of one of the narrow streets of Old York, running between the market-place and the Minster. It was just one of those old-fashioned banks where the rich long-established merchants of the city were likely to entrust their money.

Entering, the gunman presented a cheque on another bank and apologized profusely when the cashier pointed out that he had made a slight mistake, and that the establishment in question was a couple of streets away.

Having noted the internal arrangements Doran returned to his companion. Five minutes later they coolly annexed an unattended car and drove to the scene of operations, having first satisfied themselves that there was sufficient petrol in the tank for at least three hours' running.

It took about a minute for the annexed car to traverse the distance between the parking ground and the scene of the proposed operations. During that time Toni had fixed the armour plate into position, and had assembled one of the machine-guns ready for action should necessity arise.

Stopping the car opposite the entrance, Doran and his companion leisurely alighted. Toni pushed open the swing-doors and saw that there were no customers. He nodded to his accomplice. Both men hastily slipped vizards under their hats, so that the upper part of their faces was hidden. Then—

"Put 'em up snappy!" exclaimed Doran menacingly.

The elderly manager, who had heard of the Brackley robbery, complied promptly. The cashier, taking his cue from his chief, did the same.

"Over there!" ordered Doran, waving the two agitated men towards a corner.

Then Toni vaulted over the counter and began to gather up wads of bank notes. He was still engaged upon this lucrative operation when a diversion occurred.

A junior clerk, hitherto hidden behind a frosted-glass partition, decided that now was the occasion to earn the notice of the directors. Jumping up he hurled a pair of scales at Doran's head.

The cumbersome missile hit the bandit on the side of his face and then, with his automatic, clattered noisily to the floor. Uttering a yell of rage Doran stooped to recover the weapon. Toni, alarmed by the crash, began to scramble over the counter.

Instantly the manager and the cashier threw themselves upon the affrighted bandit. One of them gripped him by the back of his neck while the other hung on to Pergelli's legs with might and main.

Then Doran acted with his usual cold-blooded deliberation. Levelling his automatic he fired twice. There were two spurts of flame but the two reports were hardly audible. The weapon was an effectually silenced one.

Almost immediately the bank manager collapsed, groaning loudly. The cashier, though his right shoulder had been pierced by a .230 bullet, still clung to the wildly struggling Toni until a third bullet brought him writhing to the ground.

Meanwhile the junior clerk, appalled by the consequences of his intervention, had dived under his desk.

Vindictively Doran fired three shots in his direction, the bullets shattering glass and splintering woodwork, but fortunately missing their target.

Then Pergelli, retaining a considerable part of the booty but shedding a trail of notes, slithered over the counter, and without waiting for his companion made a bee-line for the door.

Doran retreated in good order, stopping in the vestibule to remove his mask. Then he re-entered the car, in which Toni was already seated at the wheel.

"Don't step on it!" he ordered. "We don't want to excite the cops yet.... That durned kid's mucked things up for us! I hope he's swallowed a slug or two!"

Still muttering similar amiable sentiments, Doran climbed over the front seat to the back of the car, whence he could see if the vehicle was being pursued.

In a leisurely manner Toni drove under Walmgate Bar, and after a detour began to speed along the Stamford Bridge road.

"Turn left here," ordered Doran, when, once the River Derwent was crossed, the car commenced the steep ascent to the wolds.

Consulting a road map as the car sped on, the bandit made up a revised plan, since his previous intentions had been upset by the unexpected trend of events. His idea was to make a circuitous trip on the fairly deserted wolds and then double back to within a few miles of York, in the belief that when the pursuit developed the police would naturally think the bandits were putting as many miles as they could between them and the scene of their latest exploit.

"That'll do!" he exclaimed. "Stop right now. I'll take the wheel."

Toni changed places. The car then sped westwards through Sledmire, North Grimstone, and thence by Birdsall and Leavening.

Undoubtedly the police were already active. The bandits met three cars each containing uniformed representatives of the law; but since the former were proceeding in the direction of York, the police made no attempt to stop and question them. Perhaps it was as well, as Toni's fingers were itching to set the rapid mechanism of the sub-machine-gun in action.

Then Doran drove about two miles along a deserted road and brought the car to a stop.

"Listen!" he said. "If we meet anyone don't open your mouth. You're deaf and dumb, see? Now dump the gun out of it!"

They hid the machine-gun in a hedge after carefully noting the spot. Then they turned the car round and began to retrace their way until a few miles from Leppington. Doran drove the vehicle off the road on to the turf.

"We'll leave the auto for the cops to collect," he grinned. "We'll foot it. I know of a snug crib where we can adjust our bearings."

"You gonna walk?" asked Toni distastefully.

"Yep!"

"Gonna quit without that?" persisted Pergelli, pointing to the bullet-proof shield.

"Yep! Plenty more where that come from. I reckon it'll leave the cops guessing some."

They struck across the open country, heading in a westerly direction.

Doran had again shown considerable astuteness in his latest move. It might be hours before the abandoned car was discovered, and since it was pointing in a direction away from the scene of the crime their pursuers would certainly come to the conclusion that the bandits were making for the coast. It was equally certain that the police would not expect to find the suspects making their way on foot in the opposite direction. Invariably they connected criminals of this type with fast cars, and would pay no attention to a pair of pedestrians apparently touring the wolds for their pleasure and amusement.

Toni hobbled painfully, trying to keep pace with his athletic companion. He was one of these products of hectic conditions prevailing in the cities of the United States, relying upon automobiles and elevators to save his feet at the expense of muscular development.

Suddenly he gripped Doran's arm.

"Airplanes!" he exclaimed.

Doran uttered an oath, and at the same time paid an unwilling compliment to the efficiency of the Royal Air Constabulary.

"Slick work that!" he declared. "Under that bush!"

The bandits threw themselves at full length under a clump of gorse. Doran glanced at his watch. Only forty-five minutes had elapsed since the bank robbery and already the air cops were out.

One machine passed almost overhead with three spread out on either side of it. There was a distinct agitation in the sultry air as the seven monoplanes in line abreast swept over the comparatively bare plateau. Fifteen seconds later the flight swung round with absolute precision and disappeared in a southerly direction.

A mile or so farther on the gunmen called at a village inn and bought two bottles of beer, a loaf, cheese and a tin of beef.

"You seem quiet in these parts," observed Doran to the landlord.

"Quiet sitha? Happen you're a Yankee?"

Doran emphatically denied the country of his birth.

"Nope; I'm a Canadian, my folk came from Yorkshire, and I'm in these parts to see the old home. My chum here; he's deaf and dumb."

"Quiet, eh?" reiterated the innkeeper. "Hast tha' not heard of robbery York way? One man in t' bank killed an' one badly wounded."

"When was that?"

"Happen a couple of hours or more ago."

"How did you hear? Are you on the 'phone?"

"Nay: ah've nobbut to do wi' new-fangled ideas. 'Twur Sergeant Holmroyd telled me. He's away up on t' wolds wi' every policeman as can be spared lookin' for the men as did it."

"I hope they'll find them there," rejoined Doran, and having paid his score he guided his supposed deaf and dumb companion into the open.

Half an hour later found them descending into the valley of the Derwent at Kirkham Abbey. On the parking ground outside the venerable ruins were dozens of cars seemingly unattended while their occupants were sightseeing.

Toni gazed at the "autos" longingly. Doran turned his face resolutely away. For the present it was safer to steer clear of mechanical transport.

On the narrow bridge spanning the river they waited, watching the animated scene. Beyond the bridge and within a hundred yards of the river bank was a railway-station. With several more on the North Eastern Railway Company's

system it had been closed to passenger traffic, dealing only with goods trains.

Excursion trains to and from Scarborough thundered along the valley, affording the passengers a sight of some of the most picturesque river scenery in the whole of Yorkshire.

On each north-bound train to the seaside resorts of Whitby and Scarborough at least half a dozen plain-clothes policemen were unostentatiously mingling with the holiday makers, walking along the corridors and pausing to ask commonplace questions of any suspicious character. Any person with an American accent, if thus addressed, would be likely to find himself in an awkward position until able to furnish undoubted proofs of his lawful occasions.

More than one plain-clothes officer, looking out of his carriage window at the picturesque scene, might have noticed two men leaning on the parapet of the bridge, little thinking that the two desperate criminals were within a few yards more than the length of a cricket-pitch from the passing train.

Unconcernedly Doran gave a sidelong look at the busy line and then resumed his careless attitude of watching the silently flowing river. There were numerous camping parties on the banks, while several pleasure boats were in evidence. A notice "Tents for hire" attracted Doran's attention. Amongst the herd of campers the gunmen would be as safe as if they were lying hidden in the heart of the criminal section of Chicago.

"Buddy!" he said in a low voice, to his companion, "I guess it's a cinch! We'll go camping!"

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# CHAPTER VI

## Standish Visits Doran

At four o'clock the same afternoon, D flight having returned to Hawkscar Aerodrome, Inspector Colin Standish made his confession of failure to his chief.

"Don't take it to heart, Standish," said Colonel Robartes cheerfully. "After all you tracked down the car in which the miscreants were attempting their get-away. You must remember that the function of the Royal Air Constabulary is primarily to deal with breeches of the flying regulations. After that comes co-operation with the ground police force, although they are responsible for the tracking down of law-breakers on *terra firma*. So far these gunmen have escaped capture. The mobile police are very active and in addition the public have been asked to assist, although only a very meagre description of the two men is available."

"I'm ready to take D flight out again, sir, directly we've refuelled."

The superintendent shook his head.

"No, you've done your whack for to-day, Standish. I've ordered B flight to patrol the area, and of course E flight is undertaking the normal coast patrol."

So that was that.

Colin went back to his quarters, wishing B flight the best of luck, and yet half hoping that their quest would prove no more successful than his had been. If by good fortune his own flight was able to track down the bandits it would be a feather in their caps. Their second chance, however, would not come until the morrow.

Meanwhile the chase continued. Special editions of the papers, followed by wireless announcements, had roused the British public to a high pitch of excitement. American gunmen had introduced their brutal methods into the United Kingdom. They must be stamped out! Indignant correspondents wrote to the press inquiring what Scotland Yard was doing, why the Royal Air Constabulary, the coast watchers and the customs authorities had allowed this menace to society to enter the country. A reward of one hundred pounds offered for the apprehension of the criminals in the Brackley affair was increased to one thousand pounds.

Motoring tourists were having a rather harassing time, although, as a general rule, they accepted this variety of police persecution quite cheerfully. On every main road it was quite a common sight to see anything up to a hundred cars held up while now thoroughly bored constables demanded licences and other documents from the drivers and addressed pertinent questions to the passengers.

At seven that evening, just as the officers of the Hawkscar Aerodrome were proceeding to mess, Colonel Robartes drew Colin aside.

"They've arrested Doran," he announced.

"Good heavens, sir! Did B flight pull it off?"

"No; he's detained at Flamborough Head signal station, though what he's doing there passes my comprehension. But the strange thing, according to a telephone message just received, he's asked to see you!"

"Me, sir?"

"I have no knowledge that there are two Inspector Colin Standishes in the Royal Air Constabulary," observed the superintendent drily. "I certainly didn't think you were pally with Yankee gunmen!"

Standish smiled. He knew his chief well enough to attempt to deny the facetious impeachment.

"The naval authorities at Flamborough Head have 'phoned to the Bridlington police and Doran will cool his heels in a cell there to-night," continued Colonel Robartes. "It occurred to me that you might like to run over to Bridlington and speak words of comfort to your acquaintance, Mike Doran!"

Colin did not hesitate, even though it meant sacrificing a good dinner. He was curious to know why the gangster had made a point of asking for him.

"Right, sir! Do you wish me to proceed by 'plane or by car?"

It was the chief's turn to smile. He knew that Standish was tremendously keen to be up in the air on every possible occasion. Motoring he detested.

"By car," decided Colonel Robartes. "It's only fifteen miles and by the time you've got the 'bus out ... besides, think of the expense to the public funds! Economy, my lad, economy is the watchword in these piping days of peace and taxation!"

As Colin went through the ante-room he caught Don Grey's eye and beckoned to him.

"Care to cut mess and come along with me, old son?"

"Rather? What's up?"

It was characteristic of Don Grey to accept his chum's invitation first and to ask the reason afterwards.

"They've nabbed Doran."

"Sure?"

"It's been officially reported. He's been taken to Bridlington; but the funny part about it is that he asked to see me."

"Got a grudge against you?"

"Not that I know. At any rate he can't do me any harm now. Robartes insists that I'm to take a car, worse luck."

Standish gazed wistfully at the line of hangars. Those of B flight were open, so the patrol had not returned. No doubt they had been wirelessly the news of the gunman's capture and would soon be returning to the aerodrome.

"Driving yourself, sir?" inquired the sergeant in charge of the garage.

"Yes," replied Standish, giving his destination and initialling the log book. "We'll be back at about nine."

Although Colin wasn't keen on motoring he was on speed. A skilful driver, he used a car merely as a means of conveyance between two points in the shortest possible time.

His arrival was expected by the station officers at Bridlington.

"Can't calm the fellow," explained the latter. "It beats me why Doran used a gun. He'd gas a crowd with his talk."

"How was he caught?" asked Colin.

"He was mooching round the naval signal station, though goodness knows what for! They challenged him and he admitted that he was Doran. We've searched him and he hasn't a firearm in his possession."

"Did he offer resistance?"

"No."

"That's remarkable," rejoined Standish, knowing the desperate character borne by the bandit. "All right, we'll see him."

The station officer led the way along a corridor and stopped outside cell No. 3.

"Mind he doesn't slug you with the stool, sir," he cautioned, as he proceeded to unlock the door.

Colin and Don stepped over the threshold.

"You wish to see me, Doran!" said Standish.

"Say, I'm right glad you've come!" exclaimed the arrested man. "I'm looking to you to get me out of this fool place!"

Colin studied the man's features. Somehow they looked familiar; at the same time they agreed with the photographs sent from Chicago by the U.S. police. In his comparatively brief career the youthful inspector had come into contact with hundreds of people, both law-abiding and law-breaking. As a rule he had a good memory for faces; but in this instance he was baffled.

"Where have I met you before?" he demanded.

"Way back when you were a pilot in Far Eastern Airways," was the reply. "I flew with you from Genoa to Alex in '34. Remember the cigar I handed you?"

"I do," admitted Standish. "I didn't know I had a notorious gunman as a passenger."

"Huh! I ain't no gunman though my name's Doran. Your police made a big mistake. Directly I'd told 'em my name's Doran, that did it. I told them I'd been staying at the Crescent at Filey for three days past, but they wouldn't let me 'phone there. My auto's standing in the village and my papers are there too. As a citizen of the United States, I protest at these high-flown proceedings."

"But I can't do anything," said Standish. "There were sound reasons for your arrest."

"You recognize me?"

"Yes, as a former passenger, but I can't swear that you're not Doran the gunman."

"You're as mule-headed as the rest of them!" declared the accused explosively.

"Sorry! I'm afraid I can't do anything," rejoined Colin. "You'll have to put up with present conditions for to-night, at least."

"But you can make inquiries at Filey to prove my statement."

"I'll do that," promised Standish. "But I can't accept the responsibility of declaring you're not the man we're after. Where's Pergelli, by the by?"

"Who's that guy?"

By the American's tone and blank expression, Colin realized that his ignorance of the gunman's accomplice was not feigned. He enlightened him upon the character and activities of the absent Toni.

"Gee!" exclaimed the accused man, "I'll have a good story when I get back to the States! Senator Hugh G. Doran mistaken for Public Enemy Doran of Chicago! Bye-bye, Mr. Standish! I guess I figure your position and mine."

Standish went out of the cell followed by Don, who throughout the interview had not spoken a word. Not until they were in the charge room did they exchange opinions as to the possibility of mistaken zeal upon the part of the East Riding police. But it did seem as if a mistake had been made.

There the matter ended as far as Colin was concerned, after he had expressed his intention to the chief inspector of running over to Flamborough and Filey to make inquiries, an offer that the Bridlington police authorities flatly declined on the score that it was their business to investigate the claims of an arrested man.

Next morning Hawkscar Aerodrome received information that Senator Doran had been released from custody, following information received from the American ambassador in London. The senator had given an interview to several press representatives, in which he declared that in the circumstances he was not going to press a claim for wrongful arrest.

But of Mike Doran there was no sign. From all quarters police reports gave negative results. Somehow the desperado and his companion had eluded the far-flung cordon; but it was significant, in view of his impudent gesture after the Brackley robbery, that he had refrained from telegraphing to Scotland Yard!

Evidently he and his companions were beginning to realize the efficiency of the British police and were lying low.

Would he again startle the country with yet another brutal crime? If so, where was the next attempt to be made?





## CHAPTER VII

### To the Rendezvous

"When we gonna shift outa here?" inquired Toni, peering through the tent flap at a tree-clad hill across the river.

"When I think fit," snapped Doran. "Do you want to muck things up by getting busy again on the thirteenth?"

This appeal to the American-Italian's superstitions achieved its object. Pergelli relapsed into silence and moodily rolled a cigarette.

They had been nearly twenty-four hours in their retreat, a tent hired for the period of a week from an enterprising individual who catered for holiday-makers and hikers in this part of the Derwent valley.

In this colony under canvas the two gunmen were safe from suspicion. Their fellow campers were either demonstratively "pally" or else decidedly reserved. No one worried about anyone else's business, because they were making holiday. Like amateur yachtsmen, pleasure campers are taken at their face value and very rarely do they attract the attention of the police.

As night fell and the discordant blare of gramophones and loud speakers disturbed the stillness of the air, Doran and his companion stole away and made for the spot where they had hidden the sub-machine-gun. This they retrieved, stowing it in a cricket bag and boldly returning to the tent.

At two o'clock in the morning, when silence had at last fallen upon the camp, Doran produced what at first sight looked like a folding camera. Actually it was a compact radio telephone, capable of a range, during the hours of darkness, of three hundred miles.

"We're quit of the thirteenth till next month," he observed. "I'm getting busy."

With that he called up Backdarley Manor, although he did not mention the place by name. Receiving an equally guarded reply, he then sent the following cryptic message: 15.2.AGEK, to which Ambrose Montgomery responded by a brief O.K.

The Royal Air Constabulary would have been delighted to intercept this radio message, especially if they had been provided with a key to the gunmen's code. Actually it meant that Doran's monoplane, piloted by one of Montgomery's sons, was to pick up the two gangsters at 2 a.m. on the 15th at a rendezvous seven miles north-west of the village of Muker, situated at the head of Swaledale.

"How far?" asked Toni.

"Fifty miles some."

"Huh! Gonna get a lift?"

"Leave that to me!"

At nine o'clock Doran went to the owner of the hired tent and told him they were leaving earlier than they had planned and were making for Scarborough. Then, travelling light and taking turns to carry the bag containing the machine-gun, they set off along the left bank of the river.

This mode of travel exasperated Pergelli, but he held Doran so much in awe that he did not voice his complaints. Nor was Doran particularly pleased with himself. Had they pulled off the bank robbery at York, as they had hoped, they should have netted at least £3000. As it was, thanks to the junior bank clerk's interference and Toni's hurried exit, they had got away with only between fifty and sixty pounds. It was too risky to go part of their journey to the rendezvous by train for by this time every police station in Great Britain was placarded with photographs of the two gunmen which had been telegraphed from Chicago. Naturally a good deal was lost in the method of transmission and in the reproduction of the photographs, and it would have taken a very astute and suspicious policeman to connect the two supposed hikers with the wanted men. Nevertheless Doran deemed it advisable to keep clear of what he termed the "railroad deepes".

A few miles above Kirkham Abbey they went over the river by means of an unattended chain ferry; then, crossing the main York-Scarborough road, took a highway leading in a westerly direction.

Presently Doran called a halt and produced a pair of powerful binoculars. With these he could command a lengthy stretch of the road in both directions.

In a quarter of an hour only two cars passed. The gangsters let them pass unchallenged; but presently a high-powered car with only one occupant came into view.

At a sign from his companion Toni stepped into the road and commenced reeling in the same direction as the approaching car. When the latter was fifty yards off the driver gave a peremptory hoot. Toni promptly collapsed apparently in a faint.

With a fierce application of brakes the car pulled up. The driver alighted. He was a big, flabby faced man whom Doran judged to be "easy meat" and this was borne out by the hesitating way in which he approached the shamming Pergelli.

In a trice Toni sprang to his feet and levelled his automatic at the thoroughly startled man.

"Stick 'em up!"

The motorist obeyed with alacrity, probably because he had heard of the gunmen being active in the district.

Doran, pistol in hand, hurried up.

"Get in an' keep 'em up," he ordered.

Fear had deprived the victim of speech. Meekly he re-entered his own car, while Toni sat behind him with the muzzle of his automatic pressed against the back of the other's neck. Doran slipped into the driver's seat, glanced at the petrol gauge and set the car in motion.

"Where were you making for?" he demanded.

"Easingwold," quavered the trembling man.

"Huh! Go easy and you'll get there some time.... Go through his pockets, pard!"

Still keeping the pistol in its menacing position, Toni dexterously extracted the victim's purse and pocket-book from his pockets. The former contained nearly a pound's worth of silver, while the latter disgorged a thick wad of banknotes. It was decidedly unfortunate that the motorist had cashed a cheque at a bank in Malton only forty minutes earlier.

Having memorized his proposed route, which avoided the more frequented roads, Doran drove without hesitation, striking the Great North Road and branching off near Catterick in the direction of Richmond. Near the camp they passed hundreds of soldiers and airmen, and several village policemen gave the sumptuous car casual glances. An R.A.C. scout saluted Doran, who returned the salutation with a magnificent gesture, while the real owner sat rigid, afraid to shout for aid lest his voice were stilled for ever by a bullet.

The car was now ascending Swaledale, but for once Doran's judgment was at fault. He had imagined the district to be unfrequented. Actually there were quite a number of cars in both directions.

He pulled up and consulted his map, then swung sharp to the left at the first turning. This was a desolate moorland road, rising to one thousand feet before it dropped down into Wensleydale.

Again he stopped, and ordered his prisoner to alight and to remove his boots.

"Now, look here!" ordered the gunman. "I'm borrowing this car to run into Leyburn. I'll send someone back with it; but if you stop any other car—I'm leaving my friend a little way along the road just to keep an eye on you—you'll be filled with lead; see?"

Doran had no intention of leaving Toni for this or any other purpose. Instead, after pulling up again in order to convey the impression that his companion had alighted, he drove on for another mile until he came to the acute turning to the right. Then a mere cart track rejoined the Richmond-Muker road higher up the valley.

Reasonably they could hope for several hours before their latest exploit was reported. The owner of the car was too terrified to disobey his instructions; and since he had admitted that he would not be expected home before five in the afternoon there was no chance of his people making inquiries. To improve the situation as far as the gunmen were concerned, they had doubled back along a road that in ordinary circumstances was unfit for motor traffic, so that when the hue and cry was raised it would be concluded that they were escaping in a southerly direction.

Above Muker the bandits took the mountainous Kirkby Stephen road. A few miles from the isolated village they alighted, helped themselves to a whisky flask and the owner's licence; then, putting the engine into bottom gear allowed the expensive car to plunge into a steep ravine.

They were now only half a mile from the rendezvous—almost the only level patch of sward for miles around and surrounded by gaunt hills that effectually concealed it from the little-used road. Here, under the lee of one of those rough stone walls which in the dales serve as hedges, they waited for the arrival of the monoplane that was to take them back to their base of operations in Cannock Chase.

After nightfall all traffic, never frequent, had ceased on that desolate mountain road. Even the boldest motorist would hesitate to take that rough, winding, unfenced track after sunset. The hardy Dalesmen had long gone to their scattered homes and only the bleating of sheep disturbed the solitude.

Just before two o'clock Doran's quick ear caught the faint sounds of a well-silenced aero engine. Directing his electric torch skywards he flashed the recognition signal, and then kept the beam playing on the closely cropped grass.

Then, punctual to the minute, the monoplane, using her propellers helicopter-wise, descended steadily and unswervingly until her landing wheels rebounded lightly from the ground within twenty yards of the waiting gunmen.

"Good for you, Pete!" exclaimed Doran, recognizing the pilot as Montgomery's eldest son.

"There ain't no good about it," growled the pilot. "The darned air cops are out!"

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## CHAPTER VIII

### Doran Scores Heavily

"Thank goodness I've a whole night in!" thought Colin Standish. "I can do with it!"

He could! For the last week he had been called upon to do an extra turn of night duty. He was now free to have an uninterrupted night's rest, since the "special relief duty" for the next seven days would fall to the lot of Inspector Harrison.

He passed Harrison in the ante-room on his way to his quarters and gave the inspector a playful slap on the back.

"Have you taken Thomson's Tablets for Tired Travellers, Ralph?" he inquired facetiously. "I don't mind betting you a quid you'll be routed out of your bed before daybreak."

"And I'm not going to take you on," replied Harrison. "Confound this Doran!"

"Anything heard about him since six?"

"Not a murmur! That means he'll break out again at any moment. Well, cheerio, Colin! Sleep well!"

Always of a methodical disposition, Standish made his usual preparations before turning in; that is to say he left his discarded clothes laid out in the order in which he took them off, paying particular attention to his boots by unlacing them so that he could thrust his feet into them without difficulty. His leggings, too, were placed side by side in their right order. On one occasion during his early days at Hawkscar he had been unexpectedly summoned for extra night patrol. The electric light in his cabin had failed. He dressed in the dark—quite an easy task as far as he was concerned—but it was not until the flight returned after dawn and the airmen paraded before being dismissed that he suddenly realized to his intense confusion that he had his leggings on the wrong legs!

Having undressed he placed his automatic, ammunition, wrist watch, electric torch and whistle on the dressing-table, opened the window to its fullest extent and then got into bed.

The noise of the midnight patrol setting out did not disturb his slumbers. Routine matters of that sort never did. Nor would the return of the seven machines at 4 a.m. disturb him, for the same reason.

Suddenly Colin awoke in full possession of his senses. His trained hearing caught the sound of a machine returning singly. That, in itself, was not unusual, but what was peculiar about it were the erratic beats of the engines. Instead of all four motors running rhythmically, only two were firing and of these one was missing badly.

Standish leapt out of bed and glanced at the luminous dial of his watch. It was a quarter to four—fifteen minutes earlier than the normal time for the night patrol flight's return.

He went to the window whence he could command only a limited expanse of the landing-ground. The Neon light had been switched on and the duty groundsmen were standing by. Most of them were craning their necks and gazing skywards. Evidently the homing machine was circling preparatory to landing and behaving in a hesitating manner contrary to the usual tactics employed by the pilots of the Royal Air Constabulary.

"That's given Harrison something to do," mused Colin. "I wonder what I've missed."

Just then the telephone bell by his bedside rang shrilly and insistently.

"What's wrong now?" thought Standish, as he picked up the receiver. The call, whoever it might come from, had been put through to the orderly room and the night operator would in ordinary circumstances take down the message and hand it to Colin in the morning. This rule was never broken, so as not to disturb the rest of the officers off duty, unless the message was of vital importance.

"Hello! Hello!"

"Will you come down to the landing-ground, sir?" asked the orderly operator. "G 4's in trouble."

"Where's Inspector Harrison?"

"He's been badly injured, sir!"

Colin did not stop to inquire details. The information, bald as it was, was sufficient.

"Right!"

He hooked up the receiver and commenced dressing. In exactly two minutes, booted and gaitered, Standish appeared in the landing-ground.

The sergeant in charge of the ground party saluted.

"G 4's hesitating to land, sir," he reported. "She's been flying around for the last ten minutes."

"No wireless from her?"

"No, sir!"

"What's happened to Inspector Harrison?"

The sergeant paused before replying. He had the materials ready for a dramatic story, but his sense of discipline prevailed.

"Struck on the left shoulder by some object dropped from G 4, sir. He has been taken to the hospital and Doctor Anderson has been sent for."

"Any more stuff likely to come down, Sergeant?" asked Standish, gazing up at the starlit sky, where G 4 was describing erratic curves like a moth with slightly singed wings. She was in utter darkness, displaying neither navigation lights nor internal illumination. Not only had she failed to communicate with the aerodrome by radio; she had not even employed visual signalling to inform the ground staff of the difficulties under which she was undoubtedly labouring.

"Let's hope not, sir," replied the sergeant. "It was quite a small fragment of metal that struck Inspector Harrison, but it cut his shoulder to the bone. And didn't he bleed! Why——"

"Stand clear there!" roared Standish to a group of slightly bewildered groundsmen—bewildered because operations were not shaping themselves according to the usual procedure. "Fire party ready?"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The monoplane, which had descended to within two hundred feet, was now regaining altitude and having great difficulty in so doing. Apparently the pilot was afraid to reduce speed to that normally required for the machine to land, which in the case of Royal Air Constabulary machines was in the neighbourhood of forty miles an hour.

As she banked and put her nose up the monoplane revealed part of the injuries she had received. One of her wing-tips was trailing in shreds, while ominous holes showed in the other wing against the starlight.

Spots of moisture fell upon the upturned faces of the spectators. It was not raining; the distressed machine was shedding her oil fuel and distributing it over such a comparatively wide area that there could be no doubt that willy-nilly she must soon descend.

Up to now Colin had hesitated to send a messenger to inform Colonel Robartes. The brusque and somewhat peppery commandant was apt to be incensed when his sleep was broken. A disabled 'plane coming home was hardly sufficient cause judging by Colonel Robartes' standards; but this——

"What's all this bother, Harrison?"

Standish swung round and smartly saluted.

Colonel Robartes, wearing his uniform overcoat over his pyjamas and his gold-lined cap set at a jaunty angle, had appeared upon the scene.

"Sorry, Standish; thought you were Harrison. Where's Harrison?"

"Injured—removed to hospital, sir. G 4's in trouble. Apparently part of one of her cowlings broke adrift and caught him on the shoulder."

"G 4? No report from her?"

"No, sir."

"And the rest of the flight? They're due back at any moment."

"We must hold them off, sir!" declared Colin earnestly. "G 4's shedding her fuel. She can't have much left. There'll be an awful mess if they attempt to land while she's hopping round."

"See to it, then!" snapped the superintendent.

Dispatching Sub-Inspector Amble to the radio control room to send a warning to the rest of G flight, Standish waited for the inevitable result. The monoplane must descend in a very short time, but would her pilot succeed in bringing her down without a disastrous crash?

Back came Amble to report that G 1 had just sent through a message that G 4 had failed to keep contact and that his radio to the flight leader was the first intimation the other had had of the as yet unexplained mishap.

"They're standing off till further orders, sir," concluded Amble. "What do you think has happened—explosion on board?"

"If you ask me I think Doran and Co. are to blame," replied Colin. "Ha! Now she's making a good effort!"

The partly crippled monoplane was coming down this time. Owing to the stillness of the air she was deprived of the advantage of landing up-wind. Colin judged her glide to be not far short of sixty miles an hour—far too great for a machine partly deprived of the normal lift of her wings.

Experienced airman though he was, and accustomed to seeing mishaps in the air, Colin involuntarily shut his eyes just as the moment of impact was imminent.

There was a loud crash.

The monoplane, with one of her cowlings already torn away and one wheel jammed in the retractor housing, had struck the tarmac with considerable force. The one landing wheel still in operation caused her to spin round, skidding on the jagged base of the cowlings.

Three times she described a complete turn, fortunately without capsizing, and finally came to rest with her nose partly telescoped against the shattered doors of a hangar nearly a hundred yards from the spot where she had first touched the tarmac.

Instantly there was a rush on the part of the ground staff. Men with fire extinguishers, others with stretchers jostled with the others in their race to be the first on the scene.

There was no fire, thanks to the fact that this type of Royal Air Constabulary machine does not use petrol as fuel; but when the sounds of rending metal had died away, cries and groans from within the enclosed fuselage warned the helpers that the disaster had not been confined to the machine but to the crew as well.

Both doors had jammed. It required axes and crowbars before the luckless crew could be reached. Even as the men toiled at their task Standish realized the primary cause of the disaster. The metal body and wings had been scored and in several places perforated. These perforations could have been caused only by machine-gun bullets!

The underslung cupola, housing the anti-magneto projector, had fortunately been retracted, but the upper one still projected above the streamlined roof. It too had been penetrated by bullets that on making their exit had ripped the metal and had thus prevented the crew from lowering the cupola into its usual place when not required to be brought into action.

The first man to be extricated was removed from the pilot's bucket-seat. Standish recognized him as a constable of less

than three months' seniority; he had qualified as a pilot only a week previously. Why had he been at the controls in such desperate straits as G 4 had been on her homeward flight?

The pilot was unconscious, suffering from concussion. Of the remaining six members of the crew, two were dead and were subsequently found to have died from gunshot wounds; the wireless operator had been shot through both hands; the sergeant and a constable had also been hit, in addition to having been stunned by the forced landing, while the sub-inspector, a youth of nineteen, had come off comparatively lightly with a simple fracture of the left leg, and a bullet through the fleshy part of his left arm.

As quickly as possible the injured were removed to the aerodrome sick-quarters, and since it was absolutely imperative that the Royal Air Constabulary should obtain details of the sinister occurrence, Colin was detailed to take down the unfortunate sub-inspector's statement while the latter was undergoing treatment in the hands of the divisional surgeon.

Colin's surmise was correct.

G 4 had been ordered to patrol over Swaledale, the rest of the flight acting in conjunction at twenty-mile intervals. Soon after two a.m. a mysterious aeroplane, showing no lights and displaying no recognition signs, was sighted as it was moving in a southerly direction.

Sub-Inspector George Richmond, in command of G 4, gave orders for pursuit and warned the operators of the anti-magneto projectors to stand by. Unfortunately he omitted to inform the other Royal Air Constabulary machines by radio of his intentions.

The night was clear and starlit; there were no clouds into which the suspect monoplane could plunge and then, by abruptly altering course, baffle her pursuers.

It was a stern chase in which the police monoplane had a decided advantage of speed, although that of the suspect was well above the average for private aircraft.

Thinking the other aircraft was "easy meat", Richmond was almost sitting on her tail when he gave orders for the anti-magneto ray to be operated. In ordinary circumstances this would have resulted in the cutting-out of the monoplane's engines. She would have to come down, while her pursuer, still making use of the ray, would also descend. Her crew would then arrest the suspects.

That had often happened before; this time it did not.

The mysterious aeroplane continued its flight, unaffected by the usually numbing effect of the rays from the anti-magneto projector. She was "getting away with it" to Richmond's chagrin.

The police machine was not provided with machine-guns, but the sub-inspector fired a couple of rounds with his revolver, purposely aiming wide, as a stern reminder that the Royal Air Constabulary's commands must be promptly obeyed.

Immediately the suspect banked steeply. Before G 4 could alter course a rapid succession of flashes leapt from the mysterious monoplane. There were no reports, or if there were, they were inaudible to the pursuers; but a terrific hail of machine-gun bullets raked the luckless G 4 from nose to tail.

The hardened aluminium alloy, capable of stopping a bullet from an automatic pistol, was insufficient to protect the crew.

The operator was shot through both wrists and his instrument put out of action. Others of the crew dropped dead or wounded upon the floor. Splinters flew from the wings and propellers; one engine stopped almost at once; a second spluttered and gave out, while the two remaining ones began coughing.

Uncontrolled, for the pilot had collapsed over the instrument board, G 4 began to plunge earthward—she was only two thousand feet up when the encounter took place—and it seemed as if she, with her almost helpless crew, would crash upon the black mountain side.

Meanwhile the mysterious monoplane, having effectually settled with her pursuer, was ascending almost vertically at stupendous speed and gaining a high altitude.



It was during G 4's earthward plunge that Constable Peters, the youngest member of the crew, proved himself worthy of the traditions of the force even in its relatively brief existence.

Pushing aside the body of the unconscious pilot, he slid into the bucket-seat. Slowly and deliberately, lest the abnormal strain would complete the destruction of the crippled monoplane, he brought the machine to a more or less even keel.

A glance at the indicator showed that the speed had fallen to a bare eighty miles an hour. The supply of fuel was low; either the feed pipes or the tank had been perforated—perhaps both. Only two propellers were whirring and these without the usual reassuring hum.

There he was, with a cargo of his dead and wounded comrades, eighty miles from Hawkscar and with no clear knowledge of how to get there.

Somehow he did, only to find that the monoplane was unable to keep under control under normal gliding conditions. To avoid "pancaking" he must maintain speed far in excess of that necessary for a safe landing.

It had to be done.

There was a terrific crash that jolted his spine with excruciating pain. After that he remembered nothing until he was being lifted out of the now stationary and crippled machine.

"Do you think that Doran was responsible for this, sir?" asked Standish, when he made his report to his chief.

"In my own mind, I have no doubts," replied Colonel Robartes. "The fellow seems to have the latest devices of Science to aid him in his dirty work—I use that word advisedly, Standish! But we'll get him yet."

"I hope so, sir."

"And it won't be an easy business."

"It won't, sir!" agreed the inspector.

Colonel Robartes looked up sharply. He had a suspicion that Standish, by his ready replies, was taking the line of least resistance.

"It will be your business, too, Standish!" he continued. "Any suggestions?"

"Well, sir, since it seems that Doran is using an armoured 'plane immune from our anti-magneto rays and is employing a machine-gun we'll have to meet him on more or less equal terms."

"Yes, but will the Great British Public stand for that?" countered the superintendent. "We're a Civil Force distinct from the armed forces of the Crown. Some sections of the community would lodge protests on the ground that it's the thin end of the wedge to turn policemen into soldiers! Between ourselves, it's a darned silly attitude to take up, but there it is!"

"And so our men are to remain more or less at the mercy of an armed gangster, sir?"

"Unfortunately, yes," agreed Colonel Robartes. "But it is one of the traditions of the Force, including all its branches, that, armed or unarmed, you have to get your man!"

Standish nodded. He too realized that the Royal Air Constabulary was up against a big proposition—one of the biggest problems it had yet had to face.

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# CHAPTER IX

## Standish on the Trail

Doran's get-away, following his partly successful raid, caused a wave of indignation to surge across the country. His aerial combat had further results, for at the little Yorkshire town of Settle the sleeping inhabitants were aroused not by the sound of the rival aeroplanes nor the rattle of a machine-gun, but by a sudden hail of bullets falling from an almost silent sky.

Fortunately the houses were mostly roofed with thick stone slabs which protected the inmates from the leaden hail; but several windows over a wide area were broken. The only casualty amongst the inhabitants was a man who incautiously had gone to a window to see what the noise was about, but in a pasture beyond the Castleberg four sheep fell victims to the gunman's bullets.

Although there was as yet no definite evidence in support of the declaration, it was generally conceded that the American gangsters were responsible for the outrage.

In Parliament several members proposed that the co-operation of the Royal Air Force should be invited to cope with the aerial menace; but the Home Secretary, mindful of the repercussions of the Sidney Street affair, when the Guards were brought up to fire upon the anarchists, declared that the resources of the Royal Air Constabulary were thoroughly capable of mastering the situation. He also added the information that immediate steps would be taken to equip the air police with machine-guns, and to protect the machines with light armour sufficiently thick to stop high-velocity bullets.

A week passed but national vigilance did not relax. Day and night every square mile of England was patrolled by land and air; coast watchers were increased; fast motor-boats kept watch upon all craft leaving the smaller ports. At Liverpool, Southampton and other large seaports, officers, crew and passengers were closely scrutinized.

Civilian airmen and motorists were unable to obtain petrol except on presentation of their licences; retailers of other oil-fuels were subjected to strict supervision by the police. In short, every precaution and regulation likely to cripple the activities of Doran and his gang—it was now recognized that the two gunmen must be working in conjunction with others—had been put into operation; yet a week went by without anything being either heard or seen of these alien disturbers of the nation's internal affairs.

On the eighth day following G 4's reverse, news came by cable from New York announcing on excellent authority that Doran and Pergelli were back in the States, and had been concerned in a daring hold-up of an express train near Pittsburg.

This report was hailed with relief by the vast majority of the people of the British Isles. Rail hold-ups in the United States did not interest them to any great extent; but they were thankful that the redoubtable Doran had transferred his activities to the country of his birth. There were exceptions, particularly amongst the Royal Air Constabulary. They had been deprived of the opportunity to live up to their reputation and to "get their men".

The publicity given to the gunmen's activities in the United Kingdom had its disadvantages as far as New Scotland Yard and the associated police, both air, urban and country, were concerned.

Messages by telegraph and telephone were continually pouring in, some possibly helpful, or intended to be so, some scathing or sarcastic, but there were also announcements purporting to come from Doran himself.

The gunman had boasted to New Scotland Yard of his successful raid at Brackley. That was genuine, but out of the numerous messages supposed to have been sent by him was even one genuine? If so, then the report that Doran and Pergelli were back in the States was false and had probably been sent out by his accomplices on that side of the Atlantic.

"I believe he's lying doggo somewhere in the country," opined Standish, while he and Don Grey were watching the final touches to D 1.

Within the space of four days, every monoplane of D flight had been additionally equipped to combat the latest menace of the air as far as the Royal Air Constabulary were concerned.

With the co-operation of the Royal Air Force, who provided the necessary equipment, the machines were armour-plated in order to protect the crew and all vulnerable parts from machine-gun fire. Since the anti-magneto apparatus had failed to bring down the gangsters' machine—from which it was correctly concluded that it depended on some form of ignition other than electro-magnetic—these devices were removed and in their stead improved Lewis guns were mounted in the two cupolas.

These alterations were confined to D and G flights of the North-Eastern area and to a similar number of machines in the other air police areas of the United Kingdom. These were specially detailed for service against machines of a type used by Doran, leaving the other service 'planes with the original equipment to cope with comparatively harmless transgressors in the air.

"Do you really think he is?" rejoined Don. "For some reasons I hope you're right. It will give us a chance to meet him on equal terms, which is more than George Richmond had in G 4."

"It looks as if it will be the other way round, if we do fall in with Doran," declared Colin. "Two machine-guns and a crew of seven in each of our 'buses does seem as if we're taking an unfair advantage over the blighters!"

"Well, he asked for it, anyway!" said Grey cheerfully. "And pests must be exterminated. Yes, the old 'bus looks quite workmanlike. I wonder how the additional weight will affect her."

"We'll soon find that out," rejoined Standish. "I'm taking the flight up for a practice spin this afternoon."

He did not; instead came a telephone message, official this time, that caused Inspector Colin Standish to hurry to the superintendent's office.

"Our friend Doran's been busy again," began Colonel Robartes briskly. "An hour ago he held up the staff of a big jeweller's in Brighton, of all places. Contrary to his previous practice—he seemed to specialize in bank notes—he and the Dago-American got away with a quantity of gold plate. That's heavy stuff, Standish!"

"In a car, sir?"

"Yes, a stolen car, of course. He made off in the direction of the Downs, and some minutes later a black or dark grey monoplane, which might be an autogyro or a helicopter, was seen rising steeply and at a terrific speed."

"In what direction, sir? If she headed across the Channel things look pretty hopeless."

"There's no evidence that she did," continued the superintendent. "What's more to the point is that Colonel Bolderwood, commanding the South-Eastern area, has asked me to send two armoured 'planes. The reason for this request is that the R.A.C. machines in that area have not completed the necessary alterations. Until this has been done Doran would have them at his mercy if it came to a scrap."

"I agree, sir!"

"You would!" rejoined Colonel Robartes. "You would because you've guessed what's coming! Go south as fast as you know how. What other machine would you like to go with you?"

"D 4, sir," replied Colin promptly.

"D 4—that's Amble's bus. Yes, I don't think there's much wrong with Amble. Well, cheerio, and good hunting!"

By the time Standish reached the flying ground the automatic signals had already warned Don Grey and Sub-Inspector Amble and their respective crews for duty.

The two junior officers saluted stiffly, because they were on duty. Colin punctiliously returned the greeting and briefly explained the situation.

D 1 and D 4, already refuelled and with a full load of provisions, stores and ammunition, were towed out of their hangars by means of small tractors and swung round head to wind.

It was a "turn out" that would have done credit to the London Fire Brigade. Within eight minutes of the warning signals, the two big monoplanes had taken off and were soaring in a southerly direction.

Standish was taking no unnecessary risks; certainly he was not going to fall into the error made by the luckless Richmond, who by neglecting to use his wireless had met with disaster and had destroyed the chances of the other machines. By virtue of their superior speed they could have held on to the gunmen's monoplane, without coming within machine-gun range. Co-operating with the ground police they could then shadow Doran's movements until lack of fuel compelled him to descend.

He therefore ordered D 4 to take up a position five miles to the eastward and keep in constant touch with his superior officer. If by sheer good luck Doran had made inland there might be a chance of intercepting him on his way back to his base, though where that base was situated remained a mystery as far as the intelligence service of the Royal Air Constabulary was concerned.

Even if the gunmen's monoplane was sighted—and identified in spite of any attempts at disguise—Standish would still be hampered by official restrictions.

Since the aerial combat over the town of Settle, instructions had been issued that on no account must a Royal Air Constabulary machine open fire when falling bullets were liable to cause damage to persons and property in cities, towns and villages. This cut down the limit of action, since the extreme range of a modern machine-gun was six thousand yards, while in the south, the Midlands and the greater part of Lancashire and Yorkshire, populated areas are fairly close together.

If by any chance Doran had heard of this regulation his safest cruising ground would be over Greater London. There he would be immune from gunfire and at the same time he could, with a brutal disregard of humanitarian principles, use his sub-machine-guns regardless of the danger of the hail of fallen bullets to the densely populated and extensive district.

Already Standish had made up his mind as to what course to pursue if Doran adopted these tactics. He would counter them with others of a desperate nature that would not fail to achieve the destruction of the air gangsters even if——

At an altitude of three thousand feet D 1 tore southwards with a speed of 230 miles an hour. On the right an extensive pall of black smoke indicated the Potteries and the factories and blast furnaces in the Birmingham district. Otherwise, except for extensive banks of high clouds, the sky was clear, although visibility ahead was poor owing to the sun's present position, which was nearly due south.

These facts rendered D 1's quest difficult. If Doran's monoplane were approaching, the gunmen would spot the larger Royal Air Constabulary machine before the gangster was sighted. That would give the gunman a chance to ascend above the clouds and then the rivals would be in a position similar to two tube trains passing, each unseen and unheard by the other in their respective tunnels.

Above Bedford, Standish wirelessed Sub-Inspector Amble, ordering him to make a detour to the east of the Metropolis, while D 1 would avoid London by keeping well to the westward and crossing the Thames in the vicinity of Windsor.

Meanwhile numerous radio reports had been received from the ground all to the same effect—that nothing had been seen of the black monoplane since it had vanished into the clouds above the South Downs.

"It's my opinion the blighter's doubled back and is making for the Continent," declared Don.

"If so, Croydon and Lymne would have picked up signals from aircraft over the Channel reporting the wanted bus," rejoined Colin. "What I'm afraid of is that he's passed high overhead. Why didn't the Midland area send up every available machine? They needn't have looked for trouble, but they could have scouted for us. Look! No wonder the Tommies in the Great War referred to London as 'Good Old Smoke'!"

Viewed from that altitude the atmosphere over the Metropolis seemed as thick as that too often seen over the Black Country; only it was a curious blend of grey and yellow compared with the coal smoke of the Midlands.

"Yard message, sir," reported the operator. "Suspect hovering over Westminster."

"Acknowledge!" ordered Standish.

This bald announcement caused Colin to think deeply. Scotland Yard had merely given the sinister information and had, apparently, left the Royal Air Constabulary machines to take whatever action their commanding officer thought necessary

to meet the occasion.

"We've been given almost a free hand, Don," he declared. "I'm going to seize the chance of settling the blighters for good and all."

"Good business!" exclaimed Don.

"Is it?" rejoined Standish grimly. "You wait till I've told you what I intend to do. First, I'm giving all hands the opportunity to go while the going's good and jump with their parachutes."

"But they won't do that!"

"They'll be given the chance, anyway. Then I'm going to look for Doran after I've wirelessly Scotland Yard to put air raid precautions into operation without delay."

"And then?"

"If needs must, I'll ram Doran's 'plane amidships and trust to luck that we'll be able to jump clear before there's a most almighty crash!"

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# CHAPTER X

## Calling his Bluff

Having given orders to reduce speed and alter course Standish went about his next preparations.

Calling up the Yard he received assurances that all open spaces within the Metropolitan area would be cleared of people, then got in touch with Sub-Inspector Amble and ordered him to steer a course over the lower Thames and keep a keen look-out for the aerial gunmen reputed to be over Westminster.

Meanwhile Don Grey had conveyed Colin's plans to the rest of the crew. They received the news of Standish's desperate resolve without enthusiasm, but with looks of grim determination.

Although every man knew that there was a great risk of violent death no one took advantage of the loop-hole left open by their commander. They would take to their parachutes after the deliberate collision, certainly not before, and trust to providence to enable them to get clear of the interlocked machines as they hurtled earthwards.

"Good fellows!" exclaimed Standish, when their decision was made known to him. "Amble acknowledge our signal? Splendid! Now I'm going to wireless Scotland Yard and let them know what I propose to do, and after that the radio will be out of action. Do you follow?"

Don nodded. It was merely another version of the incident when Nelson put his telescope to his blind eye.

Steadily D 1 climbed to an altitude of ten thousand feet. As she approached her objective the pall of fog was found to be less dense than it had appeared to be when viewed from a distance. Actually it was a patchwork of haze through which most of the landmarks of London could be identified with comparative ease.

Over Central London the air was stiff with aeroplanes. Almost every available Royal Air Constabulary machine in the South-Eastern area had arrived. Nearly a hundred of them at a respectable distance were circling round the black monoplane that had been marked down as a pirate of the air. Outside this inner circle were quite an equal number of Royal Air Force bombers and chasers, their crews eager to dash in and quickly to put paid to Doran's account, but for two regulations.

The first was that Royal Air Force machines were not to usurp the duties carried out by the Royal Air Constabulary; the second, that on no account must gunfire be carried out by aircraft over the Metropolis.

Consequently although the heavily armoured and heavily armed Royal Air Force machines were more or less on the spot, they had perforce to remain idle though interested spectators of what appeared to be a deadlock.

Meanwhile Doran and Pergelli were much in the position of a pair of cornered rats. It had been their intention to take shelter in the haze and clouds over London, confident of their immunity from gunfire. They had not reckoned upon the fact that the morning fog had practically dispersed and that visibility was good up to a thousand yards. Nor had they expected to find themselves surrounded by aircraft, many of which they knew to be those of the Royal Air Force.

If they tried to make a dash through the cordon they would be pursued and shot down directly they were over open country. Through their binoculars they could see the machine-gunners, their faces concealed by gas masks, crouching behind their weapons that would outrange the pair of sub-machine-guns which had served them in good stead in their duel with Richmond's luckless G 4.

They were aware of the regulation that the service machines were not to open fire over populous areas, but they did not know that the Royal Air Force aircraft were debarred from taking action against civil offenders against the Air Ministry regulations.

Then Doran picked up Standish's radio message to New Scotland Yard.

That made him realize that the Royal Air Constabulary did mean business, and that an attempt was to be made to down him by means of a deliberate collision.

One chance remained to ward off the impending disaster. He must bluff!

Ordering the now quivering Toni to keep the machine going as she was, Doran turned on his portable transmitting and receiving set to New Scotland Yard.

He delivered his ultimatum.

"Clear the air of those machines or I will drop a canister containing a hundred pounds of gelignite upon your Parliament House!"

Actually he hadn't any explosives on board apart from the small arms ammunition; but he did have about a dozen tear-gas and smoke bombs which if dropped would do little damage except at the point of direct impact, but must have a moral effect, perhaps, he thought, enough for his purpose. And he pinned his faith upon the great concern on the part of the British nation for the safety of the Houses of Parliament and the adjacent Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall.

There was no reply. Doran hardly expected one until the responsible officials had been communicated with.

Then he gave a gasp of relief.

An open section appeared in the vast double circle of aircraft. It looked as if, in response from an order, this display of winged might was withdrawing.

A moment later he realized that his bluff had been called.

Swooping through the aerial lane came a huge monoplane bearing the device of the Royal Air Constabulary and the distinctive marking 'D 1'.



# CHAPTER XI

## In the Fog over London

"Confound the fog!" muttered Standish. "This, I suppose, is one of 'London's Particulars'! It's getting thicker."

Viewed from an altitude of two thousand feet, the veil of watery mist presented a remarkable appearance. Its upper surface seemed to be almost level with the mound-like projections to indicate the unhidden, rising ground beneath. Here and there this bank of fog was pierced by several of the taller buildings, rising like half-tide rocks above the brown, grey and yellow tinged layers of vapour. The vertical height of the fog-bank averaged about two hundred feet; above that altitude the sun shone through gaps in the fleecy clouds.

Above the fog belt and surrounded by scores of impotent aircraft was Doran's black monoplane, its wings glistening in the sunshine as it circled round and round like a fish attempting to find a gap in the net.

The atmospheric conditions over London had scared the gunmen stiff. Even Doran, cold-blooded though reckless desperado, was afraid to take advantage of the one chance that remained—to dive into the fog and trust to supreme good luck to avoid collision with one of the thousands of buildings that lay concealed.

Warned of the Royal Air Constabulary's monoplane's approach, the other machines on the sector nearest to D 1 obligingly opened out. Through the lane, Colin, at the controls, steered his 'bus in an attempt to head his opponent off into a favourable position.

It was too much to hope that Doran would break through the cordon. If so, D 1 could sit on his tail until the gunman was well clear of Greater London and then the superior armament of the police monoplane would quickly settle the argument. If Standish were to succeed then it looked as if he must adhere to his desperate resolve to jockey his rival into a favourable position and then execute a deliberate collision. In this fog, however, how was Standish or any other airman to make out where the open spaces of the Metropolis were?

Every man on board D 1 realized that his chances of survival were decidedly limited. They might survive the actual impact, since, owing to the enormously greater weight of the R.A.C. machine, the brunt would be borne by his opponent; but would there be time for the eight members of the crew to jump clear before the interlocked machines crashed to earth?

Forgetting all else but the business on hand, Standish made straight for the black monoplane. It was not his intention to ram his opponent yet, but merely to engage in a stern chase until both machines were beyond the area of the fog belt. \

Doran dived, with Standish on his tail, into the upper layers of the mist, where there was just sufficient light and range of visibility for the pursuer to retain a distorted view of his rival.

Round swung the black monoplane, banking so steeply that the wings were almost vertical. Equally quickly D 1 spun round.

A huge dark mass on Standish's left, so close that he imagined for a brief instant that one wing-tip would hit it—gave the pilot just sufficient time to recognize the building as the Victoria Tower of the Houses of Parliament.

An instant later pursued and pursuer emerged into a glade of sunshine between walls of fog. Less than two hundred feet below was the Thames, which by some freak of nature was clear of the veil that enveloped the greater part of the city.

Up-stream and now at an altitude of barely 150 feet the black monoplane tore. To right and left was cover—cover that was also fraught with danger—while right ahead was the more open valley over which D 1 could use her machine-guns with great effect.

Suddenly a stream of bullets issued from the pursued monoplane. Toni Pergelli, knowing that the air police were not allowed to open fire, was attempting to repeat the feat by which he had crippled G 4.

Behind the armoured nose of D 1 and peering through a narrow slit, Standish heard nothing of the characteristic stutter of the American's sub-machine-gun; but he distinctly heard the rapid tattoo of the bullets as they glanced from the



streamlined bows of the fuselage.

The burst of firing ceased. Pergelli had used up one drum of ammunition. The damage he had done by it was negligible. D 1's four propellers were whirring as smoothly as before. Her wings had escaped damage except for a few scores upon the specially hardened metal.

Standish had been sorely tempted to retaliate. It wanted but a sign from him and the machine-gunner in the upper cupola would have released a leaden hail that would have crumpled the black monoplane almost in the twinkling of an eye. Surely the Thames below Richmond seemed sufficiently deserted to justify the order being given to open fire with little or no risk to life other than that of the fugitive gunmen?

Discipline told. Although Colin was risking his life and that of his companions, he was not taking any chance over his career in the Royal Air Constabulary, provided he came through this encounter, by deliberately breaking one of the most important regulations issued by the Home Office.

The bandits might spray the greater part of London with bullets, but the air police would not be allowed to retaliate by similar means.

Evidently Doran realized that he would be nearing the end of his tether if he carried on much farther. His one chance was to double back and elude his pursuers in the fog that persisted over the Metropolis.

Banking he dived until the black monoplane's under-carriage almost touched the surface of the river; then, rapidly regaining altitude, he headed once more towards the heart of the city. Before the four-engined police machine could follow, Doran had gained a useful lead and was swallowed up in the fog.

Even then his position was far from enviable. Unless he could cruise over London in the fog—provided it persisted—until nightfall, he stood little chance of evading the wide cordon of powerful aircraft awaiting him above the bank of mist. Although, with the exception of D 1 and D 4, the air-police machines were practically unarmed they would hang on to him until shortage of fuel compelled him to come down. In any case he could not return to his base in Cannock Chase until it was dark.

To make matters worse, Doran had heard the noise of Toni's sub-machine-gun. He knew that his companion was a skilled mechanic with that type of weapon, that the range was so short that most of the bullets would strike their objective. Yet in spite of this his pursuer had come through almost if not quite unscathed. It dawned upon him that these Britishers were slicker than he had imagined them to be. They had armoured the police aircraft and had rendered them practically immune.

For about a minute Doran flew blind, maintaining an altitude which, he judged, would take him above all but the highest buildings, and at the same time keep him hidden from the prying eyes of the airmen cruising above the fog belt.

Presently, with the caution of a submarine commander who takes a brief glance through the momentarily exposed periscope, Doran put the nose of his machine up. Darkness gave place to a dim light, then to relative brightness.

Just above the billowy clouds he caught a brief sight of the dome of St. Paul's. Another two hundred yards and he would have crashed head-on against Wren's masterpiece.

Again he dived until partly enveloped in the upper layers of the fog and swung hard to his left. His latest plan was to go north or north-west then turn eastward over the low-lying shores of the Thames estuary and make a desperate effort to reach the Continent. This plan promised some measure of success. The deafening roar of the aircraft overhead would blanket the sound of the black monoplane's twin engines, and if she passed underneath the eastern section of the cordon she would establish a useful lead on her bid for safety.

Raising the voice-tube to his mouth Doran shouted: "Say! Take over right now, Toni. I figure my arms are tired some!"

There was no reply.

"Say, the boob ain't got himself filled with lead?" thought Doran.

If such had been the case with Toni he would not have worried himself unduly. He never had thought very much of Pergelli as an accomplice. Toni was all right up to a certain point. Usually he would carry out orders but he was too

fond of destructive criticism. If Doran made a suggestion the American-Italian generally put forward some objection. This was easily overcome by the former telling Pergelli to "quit arguing an' get on with it!"

Pergelli might be a bit of a nuisance but there were times when he could be useful. This seemed to be one of them.

"Say, you OK?" inquired Doran by voice-tube.

Still no answer.

Doran gave a shudder. Although not so superstitious as the American-Italian, one of his greatest antipathies was flying in the company of a corpse.

Perhaps Toni was lying on the floor, riddled with bullets.

The pilot glanced back and peered through the translucent interior. He was alone. The open door clearly indicated the means of Pergelli's sudden and unexpected exit.

"The skunk's double-crossed me!" muttered Doran savagely.

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## CHAPTER XII

### Toni's Bid for Freedom

The disconcerting discovery that his hitherto highly successful work with the sub-machine-gun had failed to bring down or even hinder the progress of the armoured air-police machine had jolted Toni Pergelli's nerves considerably. When, a few minutes later, Doran steered the black monoplane into the heart of the fog, the American-Italian crumpled up, metaphorically and physically.

Not being acquainted with the Metropolis, he was under the impression that most of the buildings were of the skyscraper type. He had agonizing visions of a head-on crash into the side of a twenty-storey building, with all its attendant horrors.

Once, in New York, he had seen such a catastrophe in broad daylight, when a demented airman chose this means of making a deliberate exit. Unfortunately the madman survived the crash and clung to the wreckage that had been entangled in the side of the skyscraper nearly six hundred feet above the sidewalk. There he hung uttering pitiful cries until the debris collapsed and hurled him to the death he had courted and later had tried to stave off.

It was this recollection that spurred Pergelli to make a despairing effort to save himself. He'd finished with Doran; if the notorious gunman smashed himself up that was his affair. Like most of his type, Toni would not hesitate to "squeal" provided he was not likely to be "put on the spot" by pals of the man he had betrayed.

Fear gave him courage—of sorts.

Furtively, lest his companion should detect his action in the gloom, Pergelli strapped on his parachute equipment, thrust his ten-shot automatic into his hip pocket, slung the straps of his gas mask over his arm, and then clambered out on the wing. There he lay at full length, gripping the leading-edge and trying ineffectually to peer through the whirling greyish-brown vapour.

A delayed drop, he knew, would be fatal. He would crash, probably in a crowded street, before the envelop would open and check his descent.

Retaining his grip with one hand, Toni pulled the release cord with the other.

For a few seconds nothing happened beyond a slight tug on the harness as the as yet undistended silk envelope trailed horizontally about ten feet beyond, though well clear of, the tail of the 'plane.

The tension increased. The envelope was extending. Had the pilot not been flying blind he would have noticed that the machine had a decided tendency to swing to the right.

At length—it was a matter of seconds only—the deserter could hang on no longer.

He had a momentary vision of the black monoplane disappearing into the pea-soup coloured mist, and of his own body swaying like a pendulum.

He was descending relatively slowly. He had often practised parachute descent and had revelled in the exhilaration of gliding gently to earth. This time there was no sense of exhilaration; he was dropping through increasing darkness towards an unseen and menacing adventure.

Suddenly a slender grey and black mass seemed to shoot skywards within ten feet of him. He was falling faster than he imagined yet there was time for him to recognize the object to be the slender tower of a building—a church, more than likely.

Pergelli gave a shriek of fear. In that moment of terror the power of reason still remained. He knew that, although he had fallen clear of the tapering tower, the envelope of his parachute would not.

There was a painfully disconcerting jerk on his harness. In spite of having held out his hands in an attempt to ward off the blow he was flung against the stonework with a thud that almost drove the breath from his body.

Dazed and breathless he remained suspended, unable either to act or think, and unconscious of the passing of time.

Gradually he became aware of a terrific din—the roar of traffic in the streets below and the lesser noise of aero-engines far above the bank of fog.

Sensation returned to his benumbed body. A warm trickle down one side of his face told him that he was bleeding from a contusion on his forehead. His knuckles, too, had been barked and were shedding blood.

The fog was so thick that his range of vision was limited to about twenty feet. Beneath him was what seemed a dark void; above the same. On three sides nothing was visible, but in front of him he could see a fairly large part of the structure with which he had collided.

He was dangling in the harness in front of an arch of Doric design flanked by grey stone circular pillars. Across the opening were two rusty iron bars set horizontally, the uppermost being about four feet above the sill. Through the aperture Pergelli could faintly discern the shape of a large bell, probably one of eight.

He had alighted alongside the tower of one of the old city churches. A considerable portion of the envelope had become hitched over the gilt ball on the summit, leaving the parachute and its burden ignominiously suspended more than a hundred feet from the ground and half that distance from the leads of the nave.

Cautiously Pergelli extended his arm in an attempt to grip one of the iron bars. His hand failed to touch it by more than a yard.

Giving another apprehensive glance at the veiled drop beneath him, the gangster began to swing at the end of his harness. At each complete oscillation the distance between himself and the old ironwork decreased. It was almost within his grasp when some of the cords of the parachute gear parted.

He dropped two or three feet before the remaining ropes checked his descent. His eyes were now level with the lowermost bar.

There he hung, terrified to move lest the remainder of the cordage should give way and send him hurtling through space. His eyes almost bulged from their sockets; an icy sensation gripped about his spine.

The gunman was an arrant coward except when he knew there was a predominant probability of success in the enterprise he had undertaken. He had shot to kill in cold blood and he never felt the slightest remorse. Now he was suffering the torments of the damned, tortured mentally and physically before the seemingly inevitable end.

That end would not even be a spectacular one. Had he been cornered by the armed police of the Greatest Republic on Earth he would have put up a fight in the knowledge that his final and desperate stand would win acclamation from his pards of the underworld, and provide columns of sensational news in the Yellow Press; but now he was faced with death in solitude, caught like a rat in a trap.

At length, finding that the remaining cords still held, Toni attempted another bid, either for freedom or failure.

Cautiously he commenced to swing himself again until he was able to grasp the lowermost bar. Then, summoning his failing strength, he heaved himself inwards until his knees rested on the sill.

Struggling to his feet he disengaged the quick-release clip of the harness and then clambered over the metal bars into the belfry.

Here he threw himself down to rest and think. For the present he was free up to a certain point, but how was he to descend and mingle with the crowds in the street without exciting unenviable attention? Obviously he could not remain where he was, without food and drink, for long. Directly the fog lifted, the sight of the collapsed envelope of the parachute draping the top of the tower would clamour for investigation. A hundred police would be in the building and a ring of onlookers surround it, within five minutes of the alarm being raised. And then——?

With an effort that sent shoots of pain through his frame Toni drew his automatic from his hip-pocket—his trusty weapon that could be fired with hardly any report, thanks to its efficient silencer.

He detached the magazine, counted the cartridges, and then tested the mechanism. Satisfied on that score he reloaded and then replaced the pistol until it was required. Something seemed to tell him that would be before very long.

Above the din of the street he thought he heard men's voices from the room below. Were the sleuths of the law already on his trail? If only he could pull some of the cordage of the parachute clear he could make up a rope of sufficient length to reach the ground; but such a means of escape was now unattainable.

Moving softly Pergelli began a tour of the belfry. Around were eight bronze monsters of varying sizes, each ready at a pull on a rope round a grooved wheel to send out its clamorous voice.

The gunman paid scant attention to these. What he was looking for was an exit as a means of escape. He found it after considerable difficulty owing to the bad light.

In one corner of the roughly laid oaken floor was a trap hatch, so weather-worn that there was a deep crack through the thick wood.

Peering through Toni could discern another room lighted by slatted windows. It was unoccupied except by numerous pigeons. The bell ropes passed through it to yet another storey beneath.

In any case it was twelve or fifteen feet nearer the ground.

Stooping, the gunman gripped the edge of the trap hatch. It refused to budge. He exerted more strength, until the blood again oozed from his battered knuckles, but all to no purpose. The cover was bolted on the underside—it hadn't occurred to him that in ordinary circumstances there was no object in securing it from the bell chamber—and therefore his retreat was cut off.

Foiled in this direction Pergelli examined the four open windows. Looking downward he could see nothing but fog; but a closer inspection revealed the presence of a strip of copper tape, one of the lightning conductors of the structure.

Had he been in fair condition Toni would not have hesitated to use the conductor as a means of descent. In his present state it was out of the question. His fingers had lost most of their supple strength; his legs, owing to his knees having been bruised against the stonework, were stiff and painful. Once, when apparently trapped, he had effected his escape by crossing a gap twenty yards wide by means of a telegraph wire ninety feet above the ground. That feat remained vividly in his memory; but now it was a case not of what he had done but what he could or could not do in the present crisis.

He was still examining the trap hatch when a grating sound behind him made him regain his feet. Then he ducked hurriedly, heedless of his bruises, as the nearest bell swung on its axis and gave out a deafening crash!

In quick succession the remaining bells of the octave joined in the stupendous clamour, completely outvoicing the din in the air and in the streets, and indeed every other sound.

Members of a guild of City bell-ringers had commenced operations in the tower in which the gunman had found temporary refuge.

It was now four o'clock in the afternoon. It wanted four more hours to sunset, and before darkness set in Pergelli dare not descend even if he found means of forcing the bolted trap hatch.

All he could do was to lean his back against the reverberating stone wall and watch the ponderous movements of those clanging bells.

Presently he became aware of the fact that it was growing lighter. The hitherto persistent fog was lifting. The slanting rays of the afternoon sun were penetrating the steadily dissolving bank of vapour. Already, for all he knew, people in the streets had seen the unusual spectacle of the old church tower swathed in a silken mantle.

The din of the bells ceased as quickly as it had started. The resulting silence was as disconcerting to the fugitive as the brazen clamour had been. The aeroplanes had departed. Even the noise of the traffic in the streets seemed to have been hushed.

Leaning out of one of the archways, Toni had a fairly clear view of one of the City's busiest thoroughfares. All traffic along it had ceased. Temporary barricades had been thrown across it behind which dense crowds were kept in check by

the police. In the relatively empty space between the barriers more police and plain-clothes detectives were waiting while the bell-ringers left the building before attempting operations. Farther down the street were two fire-engines, a water-tower and an escape, with the firemen standing by and gazing, like most of the crowd, at the collapsed parachute fluttering in the now light breeze.

The roofs and windows of buildings in the vicinity were black with spectators. Happen what might, Toni Pergelli would not be lacking a gallery!

Then an object met his gaze that made him tremble violently. Superstitious to a degree he saw in it an omen.

Silhouetted against the sunlit sky and apparently standing on the roof of a tall building was the figure of a woman holding a pair of scales in one hand and a drawn sword in the other—the statue of Justice surmounting the dome of the Old Bailey. The dome itself was not visible, with the result that the statue seemed nearer than it actually was; an accusing figure symbolizing the vengeance of the Law against transgressors.

Despairingly Toni sank to the floor. Once again, realizing all too clearly that he was a beaten man, he collapsed just as footsteps could be heard ascending the ladder.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### At Bay

The rusty bolt on the underside of the trap-door was shot back. Slowly and cautiously the heavy wooden lid was raised a few inches.

"He's there!" declared a deep voice. "About done in, I should say. Got the darbies handy, Giles?... Lookout! He's——"

The police inspector's words were cut short by a spurt of flame from Pergelli's automatic. He ducked—it would have been too late had the gunman's aim been up to its usual standard—and slammed the trap-door.

It had been a near thing. But for Toni's shaken nerves the bullet from the pistol would have crashed through the inspector's brain. As it was, it drilled a neat hole diagonally through two inches of solid oak and mushroomed itself against the stone wall.

Shooting back the bolt the inspector descended the ladder and conferred with his colleagues as to the next course of action to pursue.

"Thought you said he was about done in, sir?" observed a burly police sergeant.

"I did," admitted the inspector grimly. "I was mistaken; it was I who was! That bit of lead must have missed my head by a bare inch. He's using a silencer on the pistol, too!"

"I suppose we couldn't get the fire brigade to run up a hose outside and flood him out?" suggested the sergeant hopefully.

"Wouldn't work," decided his superior briskly. "It wouldn't give the firemen a dog's chance. He'd shoot them down one by one as they ascended the ladder. I'll summon him to surrender. If he refuses, then we'll have to rush him and trust to luck not to get shot."

"Then I hope he surrenders, sir," rejoined the sergeant.

He spoke with deep sincerity. It was part of his work to run risks in the execution of his duty, but he was a married man with a young and numerous family. Responsibilities of this sort quite reasonably made the man cautious.

"Surrender, in the King's name!" shouted the inspector.

Toni was on the point of replying with a contemptuous refusal when he thought better of it. He decided to lie doggo in the hope that his antagonists would conclude that he was incapable of further resistance. He had nine cartridges remaining in the magazine. If his luck were in it would mean letting daylight into eight of his natural enemies and then one bullet for himself.

Regaining his feet he shifted his position, lying down between two of the bells. From this point of vantage he could command a direct view of the trap hatch and at the same time derive some measure of protection from the domed metal sides of the two bells.

Leaving half a dozen armed constables to guard against a sortie on the part of the desperado, the inspector went down to hold a conference with his superintendent.

The latter was dubious of the idea of rushing the gunman. He wasn't quite sure whether the tower was a part of the "sacred edifice". If it were then he supposed a faculty would have to be obtained from the Bishop before the police were justified in shooting the desperado if he refused to surrender. If on the other hand—and the superintendent's knowledge of ecclesiastical law fell far short of his legal knowledge in connexion with his duties—the tower was a secular building then there was nothing to prevent the police having a free hand in their efforts to take their man, dead or alive.

"Why not try to smoke him out?" suggested the inspector.

The superintendent gazed up at the smoke-grimed tower.

"Might," he admitted. "Only there's a breeze sprung up. There's too much wind blowing through those openings for the

gas to be effective. If only we could get the fire brigade to go up on the outside and block those windows ... That's too risky with an armed man ... But, hang it all! we can't let the fellow get away with it!"

"I don't see that he can get away," interposed the inspector.

"You never know what these American gunmen are up to next," continued his superior officer. "All we have to go on are reports from the other side of the Atlantic. We're dealing with a new aspect over here—the gunman who shoots to kill. And goodness knows what's happened to the other one."

"Doran?"

"Either he or Pergelli. You didn't recognize the fellow?"

The inspector grinned.

"There wasn't time! I skipped quick enough. All I did see was the muzzle of his automatic."

"We'll have to starve him out, then."

"That doesn't say much for the efficiency of the city police, sir. Decisive action is wanted, if only to serve as a warning to any of this man's imitators. If this fellow gets away with it there will be a regular epidemic of this sort of crime. It must be stopped—now!"

It was obviously a difficult problem. It was impracticable to station armed police on the roof of adjacent buildings to open a brisk fire under cover of which other constables could ascend the tower from the roof of the nave and lob smoke bombs into the bell-chamber.

At length a plan of campaign was decided upon and put into action. A quantity of lethal gas under pressure was taken to the room underneath the storey in which Pergelli had taken a dubious refuge. Lengths of flexible pipe were connected with the container and directed upwards through the apertures in the ceiling by which the bell ropes led to the ringers' room below.

Half a dozen men wearing gas masks were detailed to conduct operations and at the signal the gas was liberated.

Toni's reply to this menace was prompt, although it would have been more effective had he been able to lift the trap-door. Fortunately for the attackers it had been rebolted.

Thrusting the muzzle of his automatic through one of the circular holes in the door he fired four precious shots at random. Two of these took effect, one man being hit on the top of his skull, and killed instantly; another was struck by a bullet on his right shoulder, the missile lodging in the unfortunate policeman's lung. The rest of the gas party ran down to the lower room, taking their dead and wounded comrades along with them.

Of the other two bullets one embedded itself in a massive beam, but the last penetrated the gas container.

With a loud hiss the asphyxiating vapour poured out and being heavier than air commenced to descend into the lower and ill-ventilated part of the tower. It then spread across the street, driving those of the police unprovided with gas-masks in a somewhat disorderly manner. Many of them were coughing painfully. Some were gripping their throats in their efforts to breathe. Half a dozen discarded helmets remained in the deserted section of what in usual circumstances was one of the city's principal streets.

Toni Pergelli, his face hidden by his hideous gas-mask, remained temporary master of the situation with four cartridges remaining in the magazine of his automatic and one in the breech.

In the moments of his brief triumph his sense of caution was overcome by a vainglorious wish to see the result of the fiasco on the part of his attackers.

He went to the tall, arched window, and steadying himself by the bars, leant outward to gaze into the street below.

If only he had his sub-machine-gun with him he might have fought his way out!

He could not refrain from making a derisive gesture at the crowd behind the barricades.



Then a police sergeant on the roof of a building across the street saw his chance and took it, even though it was a breach of regulations.

He was an ex-soldier with, amongst other decorations, the Mons Star, and was the champion revolver shot of his division. He was sixty yards from the gunman—a long range for a revolver to be used with any degree of accuracy.

Behind the bandit was the thick stone wall of the aperture in which he was standing. If the bullet missed its objective it would ricochet against the stonework and splay against the opposite wall of the bell chamber. There was no risk of it flying far and possibly hitting some unfortunate individual a hundred yards or more away.

Resting the barrel of the weapon in the crook of his arm and taking careful and steady aim the constable pressed the trigger.

For perhaps five seconds Toni remained rigid, grasping the iron bar with both hands; but there was a small circular hole in the centre of his forehead. Then his knees sagged and he fell forward, his body doubled over the rail that alone kept the dead gunman from falling into the street below.

At least Police-Sergeant Jones had saved the country from the great expense of the legal formality of indicting Toni Pergelli for offences of which he was obviously guilty and for which he must satisfy the law.

Deliberately he extracted his spent cartridge, replaced the weapon in his holster and went down to report to his inspector, and to receive either praise or censure—perhaps both—for his act that had put paid to the gunman's account.



# CHAPTER XIV

## A Long Vigil

When Doran doubled back on his course he had established a most useful lead over the Royal Air Constabulary monoplane piloted by Standish; and when the gunman swung left and dived into the canyon-like bank of fog, Colin knew that for the present he had been baulked.

It was all very well to argue that where the black monoplane went the police machine could follow. Although Standish had been quite prepared to ram his quarry in mid-air, he drew the line at wrecking his bus without achieving any useful purpose whatever. A collision with any object in the prevailing fog would also inevitably result in the death of each of the crew and possibly cause considerable loss of life, injury and damage to property.

"We've lost her, Don!" he declared.

"Seems like it," agreed Grey. "Our previous good luck seems to have deserted us."

"We haven't finished yet," rejoined Colin. "I'm taking her up clear of this muck. Then we'll see if we can obtain information by radio."

In a couple of minutes D 1 was above the relatively low-lying pall of fog, but still a thousand feet under what Don Grey described as the inner and outer circles of the air circus.

It was a remarkable sight to see hundreds of machines, some bearing the distinctive blue, white and red rings of the Royal Air Force and others the almost as familiar black and white chequered device of the Royal Air Constabulary circling at high speed over the greater part of London with St. Paul's dome as the conspicuous centre of the gigantic evolution.

Somewhere beneath them, unseen and probably unheard, was Doran's black monoplane, risking instant destruction amongst the spires and monuments of the city.

In vain the operator of D 1 tried to get in touch with "the Yard". There were too many aeroplanes using their radio, jamming each other in their efforts to gain information as to what might be happening in the fog belt.

Standish could have sent out a peremptory "get off the ether" signal—the priority call of Royal Air Constabulary machines in cases of urgency. He refrained, thinking that Doran would be able to intercept the conversation with Scotland Yard to his own advantage.

Did Colin but know it the gunman was unable to use his wireless since Pergelli was no longer with him. Doran was still "flying blind" and much at a loss as to what he should or could do.

Suddenly Standish's attention was called to the fact that his fuel supply was running low. To descend for petrol was forbidden; only the practically non-inflammable fuel, non-explosive except when under compression, was allowed to be used in police service aircraft and to obtain this he must make for the nearest Royal Air Constabulary aerodrome, which was at Billericay.

"Anything to report?" he asked, when D 1 alighted.

"Nothing of importance," was the reply. "You picked up D 4's message?"

"I didn't," admitted Standish. "Too much of a jam up there!"

"Inspector Amble had the air cleared," explained the officer in charge of the aerodrome. "He sent out your number five minutes ago. He is now over Romford and Barking. He has seen nothing of Doran and wants to know whether he is to carry on or proceed to another sector."

"Call him up, please, and tell him to hold on as long as he can. Directly I've refuelled I'll relieve him. It's more than likely Doran will make a dash to the eastward. What are the machines of your division doing?"

"They have been instructed to patrol in relays in conjunction with the South-Eastern and South-Western areas patrols. Personally I can't see how the blighter can possibly break through without being spotted."

Colin agreed and added it was a great pity that more police machines had not been armoured and equipped with means of engaging the bandits on equal terms.

"And our trouble is that while the fog persists, Doran is comparatively safe unless he butts into the Monument, Nelson's Column, or some such structure. He's flown the Atlantic, so if he started from his base, wherever that is, with full tanks he'll be able to keep up until next morning.... Ours full? Good!"

Once again D 1 soared into the blue and then headed in the direction where Amble in D 4 was last reported.

Weather reports gave the information that the fog was lifting in North and Central London, but persisted south of the Thames almost as far as Croydon. Over Barking it hung about in patches, rolling westwards before the faint easterly breeze that had recently sprung up.

D 4 was still on her station. In response to radio inquiries Amble informed Standish that he had seen nothing of a suspicious nature, and asked permission to proceed to the R.A.C. aerodrome at Sittingbourne in order to refuel.

So D 1 was left alone, some fifteen miles from the nearest arc of the outer circle of aerial observation machines.

The afternoon wore on with hardly anything to break the monotony of D 1's patrol; but just before eight o'clock her wireless operator picked up a general signal:

"Pergelli captured (stop) Dangerously wounded (stop) Has given information (stop) Locality of Doran's base revealed (stop)."

"That's splendid," exclaimed Grey. "Now to sit on Doran's roost and wait till he comes. I wonder if they'll put us on to that job?"

"Doubt it," replied Colin briefly.

A minute later came a message in the code intended for D 4 only. It said: "Remain on present patrol."

"Where is Doran's base?"

"I don't know," admitted Standish. "It wasn't given out in the radio message. In fact it strikes me as remarkably queer that the Powers-that-Be have divulged so much. It will put the wind up Doran all right."

"He'll try to fly across the Channel."

Colin shook his head.

"I don't think he'll be such a fool. He knows the English Channel is too well patrolled. It's my belief if he does make for the Continent he'll come down the Thames estuary and make for Holland. If he tries that we'll sit on his tail, my festive!"

The fact remained that Colin Standish was puzzled. Why had the general message announcing the discovery of Doran's secret base been sent out *en clair*?

It was a most unusual step to take, unless the authorities were under the impression that the gangster's machine was not equipped with wireless. In that case Doran might fly there, only to find police officers ready to arrest him the moment he landed.

This idea wounded Colin's professional pride; not on his own account but on that of the Royal Air Constabulary as a whole. It seemed hard lines, after the part the R.A.C. had taken to head off the bandits, they should not be "in at the kill", as it were.

For once, at least, Colin allowed his zeal to get the better of his judgment, and ordered his wireless operator to send out a code message requesting that the position of Doran's secret base be given in order that D 1 could intercept the gunman's machine making for that spot.

Quickly came the reply: one that made Colin smart for his indiscretion. Decoded it read:

"Previous orders stand. O.C., D 1 is referred to Section 4, para. 1 of R.A.C. Regulations!"

Colin knew that by heart. There was no need for him to refer to the order quoted, even if the book in question happened to be on board.

"I'll be 'for it' when I get back," he thought. "This comes of butting-in against hide-bound, red tape regulations!"

But Standish was mistaken. He had not probed the inner workings of an astute and up-to-date official mind!

The sun set over London although, four thousand feet above sea-level, D 1 was still bathed in golden light. Then she too was enveloped in darkness.

To the westward a bright glare indicated the position of the Metropolis. To the north-east the lights of Southend greeted those of Sheerness across the estuary dotted with the glimmer of navigation lamps and the blinking, unsleeping eyes of the guardians of the approaches to the Nore.

Over London machines still circled. To aid them in their task the anti-aircraft defences had been mobilized. Although the guns were not manned a triple circle of searchlights threw their powerful beams into the sky.

It seemed impossible for the gunman's monoplane either to remain over London or else to make a dash through that cordon of brilliant illumination. Yet of Doran there was neither sight nor sound.

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# CHAPTER XV

## Down in the Sea

Having made the discovery that Toni had deserted him in this hour of peril, Doran, after tersely expressing his opinion of the deserter, gritted his teeth and devoted all his attention to his present task.

He was practically flying blind. The dim light from without almost failed to penetrate the glass of the pilot's office. He had switched on the light under the instrument board and upon altimeter and clinometer he chiefly concentrated.

The speed of the monoplane was now decreased to a bare seventy miles an hour. There was no cause for anxiety on account of the fuel supply. There was sufficient for another nine hours at cruising speed or six hours "all out". The noise of the engines would be hardly distinguishable from the ground above the roar of the traffic and the din of the aircraft overhead.

What did matter was the possibility of collision. Next to that the lifting of the fog. If he could hide in this far-flung low-lying bank of vapour until darkness fell he was confident that he could break through the cordon.

Without means of checking his position, Doran adopted the plan of flying north for five minutes, east, south and west respectively for similar periods. He was thus describing a quadrilateral course with little risk of emerging from the fog unless it lifted or an imperceptible air current caused the monoplane to drift out of her natural screen.

Suddenly, but only for about fifteen seconds, the monoplane emerged into a clear patch. There was not time to run back. Ahead the fog was thicker than ever.

In the brief glimpse allowed him, Doran got his bearings. He had crossed the Thames, passing between the Tower on his right and the Tower Bridge on his left. He wondered whether his presence had been sighted. He dared not retrace his course, since by some freak of atmospheric conditions the river, contrary to usual foggy conditions, was still almost unobscured.

Until nightfall, providing the fog held, he must needs cruise over the Surrey side of the Metropolis. Here another peril had to be guarded against—the high ground where once stood the Crystal Palace. Obviously he must increase altitude, hoping that the height of the fog bank would conform to the contours of the ground.

Hold it did, although north of the Thames there was a clear and beautiful sunset.

Night fell and the illumination of the streets enabled Doran to gauge his height, apart from a study of his altimeter.

Although desperately hungry and thirsty the gunman steeled himself for his dash through the net that encircled him. The combination of night and thick mist was in his favour. He gave the motors more throttle and put the nose of his plane up.

Soon he was above the loom of the city lights and heading in a south-easterly direction. At nine hundred feet he again saw the ground illuminations. He was nearing the southern limit of the fog.

Suddenly the monoplane emerged into a clear, starlit sky, but to Doran's consternation he was making straight for a group of searchlights whose accusing beams were slowly traversing the heavens. These were not the only ones. There were some to right and left, more in the distance and still more.

Raising the twin propeller shafts to maximum elevation, Doran gained vertical altitude under the helicopter effect of the powerful airscrews.

As far as he could see there were no other aircraft in the vicinity. Either he had flown beyond the outer ring, or else the persistently inquisitive air police had gone home.

At fifteen thousand feet he shut off both engines and commenced a long glide. Whether he was above the limit of observation from the ground he knew not, but he was unpleasantly aware that the beams, each looking almost parallel when viewed from low altitudes, seemed to cover an enormous area.

Then as luck would have it, the beams became stationary. Perhaps the operators fancied they saw something of a suspicious nature.

The black monoplane, her engines silent, glided between two giant beams, and approached the second line of anti-aircraft defences before the brilliant shafts of light resumed their searching movement.

By this time the monoplane had lost altitude and was now ten thousand feet above sea-level. Whatever her other capabilities might be, she was not an efficient glider.

At the risk of being heard from the ground the gunman restarted both motors and climbed until he was now eighteen thousand feet up. In spite of the enclosed fuselage he felt the intense cold acutely, and also the resulting loss of oxygen—conditions that, with others, forcibly reminded him that the gangster's life is not altogether a happy one!

The ground lights vanished as if the whole of South-East England was experiencing a "black-out" in anticipation of a hostile air-raid.

Doran simply could not understand it. Was it the result of some extraordinary device upon the part of his pursuers to lure him into a well-baited trap? Not only that: the stars, so clearly visible only a few seconds before, had also disappeared from sight.

Then he tumbled to it.

Ice had formed upon the windows. It had also in all probability been deposited on the roof and wings, adding enormously to the weight of the machine and perhaps jamming the exterior mechanism of the controls.

He switched on the automatic wiper. In ordinary circumstances whirring blades rotated by hot fumes from the exhausts should remove the frosted deposit and give the pilot a clear view.

The wiper remained immovable.

Doran knew that he must descend to a lesser altitude and the sooner he did so the better.

Flying blind, he dropped till the altimeter registered nine thousand feet.

Then, to the gunman's relief, the screen-wiper did rotate and once again he could see beyond the limits of the enclosed cabin.

He was beyond the outer circle of searchlights and seemingly free to make a dash across Channel. His logic was different from that of Colin Standish. The latter had expressed an opinion that the gunman would avoid the well-guarded Channel; Doran decided to attempt it on the score that audacity pays, and that since the Kent and Sussex coasts were well patrolled he would not be expected to make an attempt over these localities.

Now he could see the waters of the Channel covered with a starry sheen. He could even discern the powerful flashes from the lighthouse on Cap Gris-nez. Twenty minutes more and he would be flying over French soil.

But would he?

Both motors started to cough almost simultaneously—a most ominous warning.

Glancing at the fuel gauge, Doran made an appalling discovery. Although the monoplane was equipped with two petrol tanks, these were connected by a pipe to ensure an equal distribution of weight. Each tank had its own direct supply to the carburettors. Through some unexplained cause the indicator on the gauge had dropped to zero.

Hastily the gunman switched over to the reserve tank that normally carried fuel for an hour's flight.

Both engines picked up for a few moments and then stuttered again. Either the tank was almost empty or else there was a choke in the feed pipe.

The unpleasant fact remained that Doran was now about four miles from land and somewhere between the North and South Forelands. The distance to the French coast was too much for a glide and, unless the monoplane was to drop into the sea, the only thing to be done was to turn and chance a safe landing on Kentish soil.

Doran had plenty of accomplishments in connexion with his career of crime, but the art of swimming was not one of them.

Rather than send out distress flares and risk being picked up out of the sea by a passing vessel, Doran chose to return to the country that had failed to be up to his sanguine expectations.

Another disconcerting discovery added to his fears. The normal gliding distance to land was not great; but, coupled with the known fact that the black monoplane couldn't put up a good performance when deprived of motive power, came the knowledge that a stiff off-shore wind was blowing.

Straining every nerve and using every trick of airmanship at his command Doran headed shorewards. The machine was steadily losing height without the desired gain in horizontal distance.

It was evident that she would come down in the sea.

That prospect alarmed Doran far more than the danger of diving head on against a building during the fog. He was not prepared for such a probability, for he was wearing his bullet-proof waistcoat. The one he had used during his flight across the Atlantic—also a type of life-saving device, but one which, instead of being made of tough steel interlocked rings, was capable of being air-inflated—reposed in a locker at the after end of the saloon.

Even if the gunman could leave the controls there was not time to exchange the two garments.

Up rose the sea to meet him. It did not look rough, nor was it, thanks to the off-shore wind.

Doran shut his eyes.

There was a tremendous bump that jerked him out of the bucket-seat to the full extent of the safety belt. Another of less intensity and then water began to pour into the enclosed fuselage.

The terrified gunman was faced with two possibilities; he might be drowned like a rat in a trap or drowned under the starlit sky.

He chose the latter alternative.

Frantically he unfastened the quick-release buckle and wrenched at the door.

It resisted all his efforts. The pressure of water from without was too great for his utmost strength.

Even his choice of death was denied him.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### "What Next?"

The monoplane was sinking by the head. The sea poured into the cabin through a dozen apertures, gurgling loudly as the jets mingled with the agitated water rising over the floor.

Yet the flooding of the enclosed fuselage was a prolonged business, although the level of the surface without was perhaps three feet higher when Doran vainly attempted to wrench open the door.

Now it was up to his waist, leaving only thirty inches of space between the level and the underside of the coach-roof.

In frantic desperation the gunman drew his automatic. Better a quick death with a bullet through his head than a protracted one ending in asphyxiation.

The weapon slipped from his wet, benumbed fingers and dropped into the water. He stooped to retrieve it, but found that owing to the list of the machine it had slid into a corner.

Even as he groped—he had to immerse his body to the shoulder in order to do so—he became aware of a distinct shock. The wrecked monoplane partly righted itself and remained almost immovable.

Then Doran realized that his luck had changed, perhaps only as a temporary respite, but the fact remained that it had done so.

The sinking monoplane had "sounded". Her under-carriage was resting on the bed of the sea, which at this spot was about seven feet in depth.

Doran heaved a great sigh of relief; but he was by no means out of the marine equivalent of the wood. There were such things as tides, he recollected. Whether it was high or low water, whether the tide was flowing or ebbing he did not know. If the water was still rising and had to make as little as four feet before reaching its maximum height, he would again run the risk of being drowned by inches.

Sitting on the back of the bucket-seat with the now practically still water reaching to his waist Doran waited to regain his breath. If only he could get to the tool locker he could cut a way through the coach roof to another spell of freedom; but the necessary instruments were well beyond his reach. With his bare hands he could make no impression upon the double-skinned roof.

During the ten minutes following the grounding of the monoplane, the water had risen slightly, owing to the under-carriage settling in the mud and sand. Now the level was definitely getting less.

The tide was falling.

Again the gunman tried to open the door. Greatly to his surprise it swung back with very little resistance, because the pressure of water was now equal on both sides of it.

Outside the tidal stream was running strongly. Although he was now standing in thirty inches of water in the cabin he knew that the depth outside would be at least five feet—too much for him to attempt to get ashore against the current.

He peered through the darkness. Away to the north he saw low-lying ground, backed by the loom of the lamps of some town invisible to him. The land seemed to be a long way off. In the other direction he could discern the red or green side lights of passing vessels and the occulting gleams of the lightships guarding the dreaded Goodwin Sands.

"Here I am like a darned chicken in a trap an' waiting for the next coon to come along and nab him!" muttered the gunman. "What would I give to be 'way back in Chicago!"

It was no use repining.

The tide was now falling with considerable rapidity. In forty minutes the water had almost drained out of the cabin and Doran took advantage of this to collect some of his belongings.



He found his pistol and, since it was one of his most cherished possessions and one upon which his life and freedom might depend, he carefully dried the mechanism and oiled it with oil drained from an airtight container. Then he threw off the harness of the parachute and replaced his saturated coat, in the pockets of which was his wallet containing two hundred pounds in bank notes—part of his ill-gotten booty. Next he got rid of his incriminating ammunition belt, transferring the fifty "shells" to his side pockets.

Owing to the fact that both his watch and the clock on the instrument board had stopped after having been immersed in salt water, the gunman had no means of telling the time. He guessed it was now about one in the morning. In three hours it would be dawn and by then, if he was to avoid capture, he must be miles away from the derelict monoplane.

The machine had come down soon after high water on the submerged flats of Pegwell Bay, through which, when the tide is out, the River Stour meanders to join the English Channel.

Climbing down from the doorway, Doran sounded the depth with his foot. There was barely eighteen inches of water over comparatively hard sand.

Without a pang of regret for the black monoplane that had served him so faithfully the gunman set out to wade shorewards. It looked as if he had not far to go before he reached dry land, for a vast track of sand, uncovered by the receding tide, stretched for quite half a mile from the low-lying ground he had previously seen.

Shallower and shallower became the water until it hardly covered his shoes. He quickened his pace, knowing how much depended upon time and distance before the dawn.

Then suddenly he pitched forward into three or four feet of water.

He let out a loud yell as his head emerged. Had anyone been within three hundred yards he must have heard that terrific shout.

Struggling frantically Doran managed to regain his feet. He had fallen into one of the numerous gullies traversing the flats and draining into the estuary of the river. Had he struggled on he would have reached shallow water again in a few yards, but panic gripped him, his fear of drowning magnified by the dread of the darkness.

Wading carefully Doran followed the course of the gully for nearly a quarter of a mile before it degenerated into a mere trickle. All the while he had been moving diagonally towards the land.

Then, finding dry sand, he increased his pace and finally found himself on a beach under the lee of a low cliff. There were huts and tents on the beach and several boats drawn up above high-water mark. Fortunately the huts appeared to be deserted. As for the boats any desperate man having a knowledge of how to handle one would not have hesitated to drag one to the nearest gully, and, once afloat, make a bid to cross the Dover Straits. Since Doran's seamindedness was in inverse proportion to his air-mindedness he ignored an instrument lying ready to his hand and struck inland.

Dawn found him a good eight miles from the coast, where he struck the Canterbury road.

By this time brisk walking had resulted in drying his clothes and increasing his hunger and fatigue. He passed a wayside café with the sign "Pull in for Transport Drivers. Open all night".

It looked inviting to the famished fugitive, but his sense of caution prevailed. He went on, making a detour to avoid being seen by the proprietor and helping himself to some apples in an orchard as he did so.

Half a mile farther on he came across an isolated bungalow standing well back from the road. It looked promising.

Doran fingered his automatic. For food and drink he would not hesitate to shoot and kill if his burglarious entry were detected.

It was a matter of a few seconds to insert the blade of his knife and lift the flimsy window latch. He entered the room and listened intently. Except for the loud ticking of a clock, all was silent.

He went out into the passage between the living-room and one of the bedrooms. On the mat behind the front door were three folded newspapers and about a dozen envelopes—silent evidence that the bungalow had been unoccupied for at least two days, but that the owner intended to return at an early date; otherwise he would have given instructions for his

mail to be redirected.

More at ease the gunman proceeded to make himself at home. In the pantry he found some cold ham, butter and a stale loaf. He lighted the oil stove and made himself some tea. Then he shaved, removing his moustache in the process, and "borrowed" a cloth cap from his absent host. His one regret was that the owner of the bungalow was evidently a Pussyfoot, since a careful search failed to result in the finding of any spirits.

Again Doran's luck was in, for in the passage close to the back door was a bicycle. Although it was not in new condition the tyres were good and did not require inflating; and although "push-biking" was a form of locomotion the gunman ordinarily despised, it was far preferable to "padding the hoof".

He wasn't in form for cycling, but, keeping clear of Canterbury, he struck westwards, avoiding the arterial road leading Londonwards. At noon he wheeled the cycle into a wood, where he slept until nearly five in the afternoon.

In a village shop some miles farther on he bought some food, a map of the district and a London morning paper—the evening edition he was told would not be in until seven.

The paper "put him wise" on several points. It described in detail the work of the air police in their partly successful efforts to capture the gangsters. Inspector Colin Standish of the Royal Air Constabulary, was, he learnt, primarily responsible for pursuing the bandits over London and finally heading them off somewhere over Richmond. Then Pergelli's descent by parachute was set forth with much journalistic embroidery. His stand in the tower of one of the old city churches was given full prominence as well as the measures taken by the police to effect his capture.

Toni, according to the report, had, apart from his desertion, resisted in the accepted gunman's style. That is to say that, once cornered, he fought until he was shot down.

Doran accepted this part of the newspaper report with satisfaction. Pergelli dead couldn't "squeal".

When it went on to say that the bandit, though dangerously wounded, had revealed to the police the locality of gunman Mike Doran's secret base of operations, the fugitive broke into furious curses.

"To save his yaller hide the skunk's double-crossed me!" he thought. "If I could get him and that Standish guy I'd risk the short jump on the hot seat! I bet Montgomery's vamoosed—if the cops haven't fixed him already—and that's sure left me in the air!"

And so it seemed. With Backdarley Manor raided by the police Doran was deprived of a *pied à terre* on this side of the Atlantic. From now onwards, while he remained within the limits of Great Britain, he would be like a ship without an anchor, liable to be wrecked before the first gale that assailed her.

No wonder, then, that as he ate his solitary meal, Doran asked himself "What next?"

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## CHAPTER XVII

### Rounding Up the Gang

As a matter of fact Toni Pergelli had been shot dead. He hadn't been taken alive; he hadn't revealed the existence of Doran's base at Backdarley Manor in Cannock Chase. Neither did Scotland Yard or any other police authority know where it was.

It was one of the biggest hoaxes perpetrated by a government department in collusion with the press; a deception with a definite purpose for the good of the community.

Representatives of the leading press agencies were requested to attend a hurriedly convened conference at New Scotland Yard. There the Commissioner placed the true facts concerning the dead gunman before them, and then asked them for reports to be issued simultaneously by the press to the effect that Pergelli had revealed his accomplice's secret base.

This was for two reasons: the unknown base would be abandoned, with the probable result that Doran's men would be spotted and arrested should they attempt to leave the country. Doran would also be likely to see the report and he, too, would know that he was cut off from assistance from his accomplices.

There still remained the possibility that the notorious gunman had succeeded in getting through the cordon and escaping to the Continent.

The inspired press report appeared in the evening papers on the same day that Pergelli had been shot, and again in the morning and provincial papers on the following day; but it was not until nine o'clock in the forenoon that the waterlogged wreck of a monoplane discovered in Pegwell Bay was identified as that belonging to Mike Doran.

For several days the discovery was a matter for speculation. The gunman had vanished without a trace. The accepted theory was that he had survived the crash, but had been drowned in an attempt to get ashore. The fact that he had broken into a bungalow and had taken away a bicycle had not come to light owing to the continued absence of the owner.

Meanwhile Backdarley Manor was in the limelight.

Ambrose Montgomery and his accomplices had read the report in the papers and, taking alarm, had hurriedly abandoned the premises. Unfortunately in their haste they had omitted to cancel the morning delivery of milk which was brought by a boy of fourteen from a farm about two miles away.

On the second morning this youth found the previous consignment still standing on the back door step. Contrary to instructions he hammered with the knocker. Receiving no reply he went back to his farm and reported what he had found.

The farmer, who had so far received no payment, and was not likely to, promptly saddled a horse and rode over to Backdarley Manor. The house was bolted and barred and had all the blinds drawn. The garage was empty. It struck him as suspicious that Mr. Montgomery should go away with the whole of his fairly numerous staff.

Hurrying to the nearest village he telephoned to the police at Stafford with the result that an inspector and two constables were sent to Backdarley Manor, having first obtained duplicate keys from the agents' office.

Quickly the police discovered that the farmer's suspicions were well-founded. Except for three or four rooms the place was unfurnished. Afterwards it transpired that what furniture there was had been purchased on the hire system at Manchester. A quantity of charred paper was found in one of the fireplaces, from which the police were able to find out that some of Mr. Montgomery's correspondence came from New York and Chicago and contained veiled references to certain notorious gangsters.

On the floor of the garage several empty cartridge cases were found stamped with the name of a well-known firm of American ammunition makers; but the most important discoveries of all were evidences of an aeroplane having recently taken off from a small patch of turf almost surrounded by trees. Obviously only a machine of a helicopter or modified helicopter type could have done so in these conditions.

Quickly Scotland Yard was called in. Detectives, arriving by air, found themselves confronted by two baffling problems. Had the aeroplane that had been at Backdarley Manor been used to take Ambrose Montgomery and his party away from his base, or was it the same one that had crashed, presumably with Doran on board, into the sea at Pegwell Bay? There was also another possibility, that Doran had returned to Backdarley Manor and had fled with Montgomery and the rest of the gang.

What had actually happened was that Montgomery, scared stiff by the report in the press that Pergelli had made a confession, had gone off by car with his two sons, while the rest of the gang had also taken their departure in another "automobile".

Resisting the impulse to make for some seaport and book passages for Montreal—it will be remembered the gangster posed as a Canadian—they made for Nottingham where the cars were abandoned. Later the gang dispersed; but a few hours later two men in a car excited a Lutterworth garage owner's suspicions when they asked for "gas" and brought the word "auto" into their conversation.

Just outside of Rugby the car was stopped and challenged by two traffic policemen, who did not know the risk they were running. Probably the men's nerves failed them, for they were arrested after admitting that the car had been stolen by them at West Bridgeford.

When searched at Rugby police station the arrested men were found to be in possession of loaded automatics. They had been afraid to use them; in fact they were so scared that they voluntarily made statements concerning those of the gang still at large.

Within two hours of these arrests the police were hot and strong on the trail. Montgomery and his sons were rounded up at a Nottingham railway station, where they had booked for London. Before nightfall every member of the gang was under lock and key, and although each was in the possession of firearms not a shot had been fired.

The gunmen had learnt that conditions in the British Isles differ considerably from those in the States. They had expected a gallery—a number of ill-balanced people who would take a favourable interest in their misdeeds. Instead they soon discovered that every man's hand was against them and especially that the British policeman, although normally going about his duties unarmed, was not daunted by this new phase of crime on this side of the Atlantic.

Although in the States Montgomery and his gang were known to be killers, they had not used their guns against anyone in this country. When arrested they declared that they were not responsible for the crimes committed by Doran and Pergelli and that, since they were guiltless of the offence of murder, they had refrained from offering armed resistance when arrested.

Their venture had failed. They had not gained much as the result of the bank hold-up; their greatest fear was that they would be extradited to America on charges of murder. They looked obviously relieved when they were committed to the Assizes upon counts that, although formidable, did not include the capital charge.

Doran's fate still remained a mystery.

For eight days following the death of Toni Pergelli, the two Royal Air Constabulary machines lent by the North-Eastern area remained on patrol in the London district. They were to be returned to Hawkscar Aerodrome as soon as service aircraft of the South-Eastern area could be converted into bullet-proof machines armed with machine-guns, capable of carrying out the duties temporarily performed by D 1 and D 4.

Although he would not admit it to anyone—not even to his chum Don Grey—Standish was "fed up to the back teeth" with the comparative inaction following Doran's disappearance.

During those eight days D 1 had remained on the tarmac at Billericay Royal Air Constabulary Aerodrome, never once taking off, though her engines were run regularly. Her crew were practically prisoners, all but chained to the spot, ready to go up at a few minutes' notice should anything be heard or seen of the elusive gunman.

At Sittingbourne Sub-Inspector Amble was existing under similar conditions in charge of D 4, and he too chafed under the restraint.

The intensive search for Mike Doran had died down. Outside almost every police station between Land's End and John

O' Groats pictures and descriptions of the wanted gunman were posted, but these no longer excited public interest. Motorists were not subjected to police hold-ups, and in some cases lengthy interrogation. Yet although vigilance appeared to have been relaxed, Scotland Yard still had hopes that the far-flung net would eventually close upon the notorious Mike Doran.

At length came the welcome order for D 1 and D 4 to return to Hawkscar. Amble rejoined Standish at Billericay and in company the two machines hurried northwards.

Little did Colin Standish think as he followed the Great North Road, that somewhere between Stamford and Grantham he had overtaken Doran, who was also making for Hawkscar.

The gunman had abandoned all present intentions of continuing his series of crimes against society. Obsessed with lust for revenge he was heading northwards with the avowed object of "getting" the man who had been mainly instrumental in the frustration of his efforts.

That man was Inspector Colin Standish.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### On the Track of his Enemy

On the third day of his journey from the shore of Pegwell Bay, Doran reached the north side of the Thames by way of the Woolwich free ferry.

He still retained the stolen bicycle, since cycles do not carry registration plates and are difficult to recognize when their loss is reported to the police.

His self-confidence was returning. No longer did his heart miss a beat or two at the sight of a uniformed constable. He felt safer in a crowd than on a little-frequented country road.

He had plenty of money left over from the result of the two bank raids, sufficient to last him for a couple of years. He had bought himself a touring outfit similar to those carried by cyclists on pleasure bent, while as an additional disguise he wore a pair of tinted sun-glasses.

Obviously these were a mistake, and it was strange that an alert policeman should not have taken notice of a cyclist going northwards with the sun behind him, wearing glasses to protect him from the glare that in this case did not exist!

Keeping in a general north-westerly direction the gunman struck the Great North Road at Potter's Bar. By this time his leg muscles had become more accustomed to the unusual exercise, although the relatively slow progress by cycle made him cast envious glances at the thousands of cars speeding northwards. He simply hadn't the courage to steal another unattended car—it was strange how comparatively few there were in the days immediately following the "gunmen scare"!—but plodded steadily on with one single purpose: to get even with the man who had frustrated his plans.

Once again Doran's luck held.

At Norman Cross a north-bound lorry skidding on a greasy patch completely demolished his stolen cycle, which the gunman had left against the kerb while he was making a roadside meal.

The driver, a burly Yorkshireman, stopped and apologized to the supposed owner, gave him the name of his employer and promised that his insurance company would promptly pay for the damage.

Doran saw his chance and took it.

He explained that he was an out-of-work mechanic who had been offered a job at the railway works at Retford. He hadn't enough money for his fare, so he was cycling to that place. The cycle wasn't worth a great deal, so if the lorry driver would give him a lift as far as Retford—he was bound for Leeds—then there would be no need to say anything about the accident.

With the typical caution of a Yorkshireman, the lorry driver pondered over the proposition. If he reported the accident to his boss there would be trouble—he'd lose his good-driving bonus. If he took Doran as a passenger he would be liable to prosecution by the police. Then a brilliant solution occurred to him.

"Right tha' art, maister! Hop oop! Happen this trip thou'rt my mate, tha' knows!"

Since lorry drivers are often accompanied by a "mate", the suggested arrangement would satisfy the law; so abandoning the wreckage of the cycle, Doran climbed into the cab beside the good-natured Yorkshireman.

Although the speed of the heavy vehicle was restricted to twenty miles an hour, this mode of locomotion was delightful to the travel-worn gunman after pedalling miles and miles over traffic-congested roads. He very soon regretted that he hadn't given his supposed destination as somewhere within easier distance of Hawkscar, especially as the lorry would be within fifty miles of it.

However, rather than revise his tale of woe and run the risk of arousing suspicion, Doran alighted at Retford and thanked his benefactor profusely. He did not, however, mention that he was now in possession of the Yorkshireman's driving licence and insurance card, both of which Doran had deftly extracted from the driver's pocket. It was quite likely that the driver would not miss them until the end of the week, when he would hardly suspect the cyclist whom he had befriended.

At Retford he harboured thoughts of "borrowing" another cycle, but again his nerve failed him. He was quite ready to admit to himself that such was the case. He hesitated to do anything for the present that would bring him within the grip of the law as administered in the United Kingdom. By this time he was ready to pay tribute to the efficiency of the British police. Somehow they inspired in him a fear that the American cops did not. Beyond all this he was looking forward with savage interest to the time when he could "get even" with Inspector Colin Standish.

Instead of "lifting" a bicycle he bought one, and again thanked his lucky stars that there were no formalities to be observed as in the case of purchasing a car. Once again he posed as a Canadian born in Yorkshire and over here on a holiday to revisit the scenes of his childhood.

He reached the village of Bawtry just before sunset, and put up at a small inn. After several nights of "sleeping rough" he fully appreciated the luxury of a bed. There were several people staying there as guests, and to his great satisfaction they accepted his story quite naturally. He was not required to register or to make any formal declaration, a circumstance that made him wonder whether the authorities were so efficient as he had thought them to be.

The evening papers were full of the capture of Ambrose Montgomery and his accomplices, so, on the face of it, Toni Pergelli had "squealed". The news did not trouble Doran overmuch. Days ago he had decided that Backdarley Manor was now no place for him, and now he metaphorically patted himself on the back for his acumen. He'd done with Montgomery; let him stew in his own juice!

Next was a reference to himself. The authorities had come to the conclusion that, after expert examination of the monoplane that had been salvaged at Pegwell Bay, it was the one in which the notorious Mike Doran had attempted to fly to the Continent after being headed off by Inspector Standish and his crew. The report went on to say that although there was no direct evidence that the gunman had perished in the crash, it was probable that he had been drowned while attempting to swim to shore. It also added that the police were still making inquiries in the district; but that the two Royal Air Constabulary monoplanes detached from the North-Eastern area for special duties in connexion with the Doran affair had returned to Hawkscar Aerodrome.

Next morning Doran resumed his way. He was still convinced that the nearer he was to Hawkscar the less was the risk of his being recognized. He would endeavour to obtain employment in the district and await his opportunity to settle his account with Inspector Standish.

Late in the afternoon, when only a few miles from his destination, the chain of Doran's bicycle snapped. It was only a short distance to the next village, where, on inquiry, he was informed that there was a small garage owned by a Mr. Jack Metcalfe who might—there was an emphasis on the "might"—undertake the necessary repair.

Business with Mr. Metcalfe was at the moment slack. He agreed to repair the broken chain and as he did so he yarned with the stranded cyclist.

Doran pitched his usual yarn and finding the Yorkshireman communicative, although he had considerable difficulty in understanding his broad dialect, added that since things were bad in Manitoba he wouldn't mind taking up some job in England.

Presently, just as the work was almost completed, the gunman led up the conversation to the hold-ups by American gangsters in the country, expressed his abhorrence of this form of criminal activity, and added that it was unfortunate that Inspector Standish had failed to force Doran's machine down.

At Colin Standish's name Jack Metcalfe's face beamed.

"He's a gradely lad, sitha, maister!" he exclaimed. "Me an' Mr. Standish are great chums."

It took Doran some seconds to understand that the Yorkshireman's pronunciation "chooms" meant what it did.

"You know Inspector Standish?"

"Ba gum, Ah do that! Often he'll drop in here, come evenin', and have a crack ower owd times! Me and him were wi' Far Eastern Airways afore Ah set up for mysen, tha' knows. We went to fetch Amir's Ruby from Bakhistan for Sir Rugglestone Corton, ower at Haxthorpe Hall which isn't so far from here. Sir Rugglestone he did us in the eye proper, but Mr. Standish rounded up the gang all right. And now they say up at Hawkscar as Inspector Standish always gets his

man, sooner or later."

"That's cute of him," observed Doran. "I guess I read about it somewhere."

"And then him and me flew to Egypt," continued Metcalfe, ignoring the interruption. "Lord Francis Westow, ower Cottingworth way, sent us on that lay. That didn't pan out as Ah'd thought, but Mr. Standish brought that off too. After that Mr. Standish joined the air police an' sin' Ah'd made a bit ower th' Westow business, Ah chucked in ma hand wi' Far Eastern Airways an' set up here on ma own."

They went on talking long after the repair was effected. They were on common ground where Standish was concerned—at least Jack Metcalfe thought so!

"Sitha, maister!" he exclaimed. "If thou'rt looking for job—you say as how you can drive lorry—Holmroyd's o' Bridlington an' Hull are advertising for drivers. Why not put up wi' me—my missus has a room to spare an' it'll cost you nobbut much? Then you can slip into Brid. come marnin', and see for yoursen what job's like."

Doran feigned hesitation. Metcalfe's proposition seemed too good to be true, since Standish was a frequent visitor to his place; but it would not do for the gunman to appear too enthusiastic over the invitation.

"I reckon it'll suit me," he replied, after finding out what weekly sum Mrs. Metcalfe wanted for the room.

So the stranger was shown into the living-room, where Jack Metcalfe pointed with honest pride to a framed photographic enlargement of Colin Standish in the uniform of a Far Eastern Airways pilot.

"Yon's t'man!" he announced.

Doran nodded. He hadn't seen that picture before, but he had seen dozens of the young airman in the papers. He hadn't the very slightest doubt that when he met his enemy in the flesh he would make no mistake!

And Jack Metcalfe, beaming alternately at his new "paying guest" and at the photo of his former "boss", little knew that he was nursing a serpent in his bosom—the "killer" Mike Doran.

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# CHAPTER XIX

## Forced Down in the Hills

"Glad to see you back again, Standish," was Colonel Robartes' greeting. "Sorry, though, you didn't pull it off, though I know perfectly well it wasn't for want of trying."

"The fog certainly was a bit thick, sir."

"I can well understand that. It would have scared me stiff. Doran must have, or must have had, a wonderful nerve. What's your opinion; do you think he's still alive?"

"Alive, perhaps, sir; but certainly not kicking," replied Colin. "Until his body's been identified without any suspicion of doubt, I, for one, won't regard him as dead."

"At any rate we've finished with him for the present," rejoined the superintendent. "So there's no reason why you shouldn't take a spot of leave. It's September and the summer will be over before you take your annual leave unless you're fairly smart about it! Grey and Amble can take theirs too."

Before Standish could express his thanks, and he wanted a holiday badly, the telephone bell rang.

"One minute!" exclaimed Colonel Robartes, picking up the receiver. "Yes, Hawkscar, who is it?... Yes.... Yes.... Map-reference G 16?... Right!... Certainly, inside of half an hour.... One moment: in future bear in mind that messages of this sort should be sent to the officer of the day and not to the superintendent.... Yes, thank you!"

He rang off and turned to his subordinate.

"Had to tick the fellow off, Standish," he observed. "He should have known better. However, the report may interest you. A holiday-maker has been missing for the last twelve hours somewhere in the neighbourhood of Shunner Fell. I suppose you know where that is?"

"Yes, sir."

Standish had no need to elaborate his reply. His chief knew perfectly well that when Standish said "yes" he meant "yes".

"Although you wouldn't think so, judging by the weather we're having here," continued the superintendent, "there's been a blizzard raging over the dales for the last few hours and snow's lying more than a foot deep on the high ground. Exceptional but not unusual, I am given to understand. The dalesmen have organized a search but so far without success, so the local police have sent us a request for an aeroplane to be sent to assist them."

"You wish me to go, sir?"

Colonel Robartes gave him one of his characteristic sidelong glances.

"Still a perfect whale for work, Standish! It will mean deferring your leave for a day or so. All the same I value your offer since you know that district better than anyone here. I promised a machine would be on the spot within half an hour. Carry on and good luck!"

The superintendent had not exaggerated when he declared that Standish had a more than general knowledge of the district around Shunner Fell which lies between Upper Swaledale and Upper Wensleydale, with Stag Fell, its neighbour, both rising above two thousand feet above sea level. The country is wild in the extreme, almost treeless, with the mountain sides cut by "scars" or cliffs. The villages, intersected by long walls of rough stone in place of hedges, are almost trackless, human habitations being few and far between.

Not only had Colin flown frequently over this locality; he had spent several week-end leaves in tramping over the fells and dales, revelling in their solitude. He knew both the charms and the perils of this unfrequented corner of the North Riding.

However delightful it might be from a motorist's or a hiker's standpoint, Swaledale was regarded as a dangerous area as

far as aviation was concerned.

The narrow valley with deep ravines running at right angles to it, the precipitous sides of the mountains that seemed to crowd in upon it, the presence of numerous "outcrops"—all combined to make a safe landing a most difficult operation.

And now, the ground being snow-bound, the danger was increased tenfold.

Within ten minutes of the receipt of the appeal for aid, Standish was "up" and heading towards the scene of action at a speed of not far short of two hundred miles an hour.

This time he was flying in D 3, since there was no object in making use of the armoured D 1, which was also due for overhaul after her strenuous period of service in the London area. The machine carried a total crew of six, including the assistant divisional surgeon, who, although supposed to be off duty, claimed a place on the ground that, having been done out of his usual holiday in Spitzbergen, he could do the next best thing by going to the snow-bound part of England.

In addition to her crew the monoplane had taken on board a stretcher, ropes, snow-shoes and ice axes, just in case they might be needed.

She left Hawkscar in bright sunshine. A quarter of an hour later she was flying "blind" in one of the heaviest snowstorms Colin had ever remembered.

Reducing speed and maintaining a safe altitude of three thousand feet—Standish knew from experience how an altimeter is apt to err on the danger side under these climatic conditions—D 3 cruised round at her minimum flying speed while her wireless operator kept in touch with those of the police engaged in the search who were equipped with portable transmitting and receiving sets.

Again and again came negative reports from men ploughing knee-deep through the drifts and running the risk of disappearing into fathomless potholes hidden under a treacherous mantle of snow. Their tracks were obliterated within a few minutes, so there seemed little chance of finding traces of the unfortunate holiday-maker who had set out so blithely from the little village of Muker only a few hours before.

The airmen, although they could hear much of what was going on below, could see nothing but a blur of snowflakes, apparently driving almost horizontally—the optical effect of speed through the air—that limited the range of vision to a useless twenty or thirty yards. Electric screen wipers kept small arcs of the triplex glass of the pilot's office clean; elsewhere the nose of the machine, the leading edges of the wings and the after end of the upper side of the fuselage were thick and heavy with congealed snow.

In expectation of having to land upon snow-covered ground should a wireless message give the news that the missing person had been found in an otherwise almost inaccessible spot, the retracting landing wheels had been housed. D 3 was thus much the same as a flying-boat. Without projections below her fuselage she could alight on soft snow almost in the same way as she could come down on the water, while when it came to taking-off she could glissade, increasing speed sufficiently for her to lift into her natural element once more.

Not only did the additional weight of the frozen snow affect the monoplane; constantly she was buffeted by vicious and almost vertical air currents that frequently lifted her five hundred feet and then forced her down through twice that distance.

Over the Syrian Desert Standish had experienced the effect of these disturbances that in the early days of flying were known as air pockets. Then he could see what was happening; now there was nothing but the needle of the altimeter and the disconcertingly jerky motion of the monoplane to indicate the movements of these erratic air currents.

Then, so unexpectedly that Colin was shot out of his bucket-seat and everyone on board was either flung to the floor or against the forward bulkhead of the saloon, the monoplane hit the ground. Lurching acutely to the left, she smashed both port propellers, and commenced to circle with one wing-tip acting as a sort of pivot until the mechanic, with admirable presence of mind, switched off the two remaining motors.

"We're down, lads!" exclaimed Sergeant Heswall, as if imparting some exclusive piece of information.

The startled and shaken men picked themselves up and looked to Standish for orders.

"Anyone hurt?" was the inspector's first question.

Everyone was. Nothing else was to be expected after such a terrific bump; but injuries were of a very minor character and of a type familiar to members of the Royal Air Constabulary.

There was a general laugh at Colin's question and a chorus of "nothing much, sir!"

"You look as if you'd copped it worse, sir," said Heswall; and Standish putting his hand to his cheek found that it was bleeding from a superficial cut.

"If that's all there is I'm not complaining," rejoined Standish. "Wireless in order?"

The operator made a few tests and then reported that he was sorry it wasn't. While flying through the blizzard, which incidentally was afterwards described in the well-worn phrase "the worst within living memory", the monoplane had become heavily charged with static electricity. The violent discharge of the current, for the aerial had been trailing when the machine hit the snow-covered ground, had evidently burnt out the valves in addition to other damage.

"Dead as mutton, sir!" reported the operator.

"It's a pity, but it can't be helped. Let's see if we can find out where we are!"

The shock had jammed both doors. One resisted the efforts of the crew, but the other, which happened to be on the windward side, was forced open. Instantly the relatively warm cabin was filled with blasts of bitterly cold air, bringing in with it flurries of snow that, melting, soon threatened to turn the floor into a quagmire. Once open, the stubborn door would not close tightly, so that the crew had to look forward to existing in a cold draughty abode until they were able to find more comfortable quarters.

Taking his prismatic compass, Standish, accompanied by four of the crew, alighted. They found themselves in snow up to the knees, so they promptly went on board again to put on their unaccustomed snow-shoes.

The next attempt fared with better success, although before he had taken more than three paces Sergeant Heswall executed a movement commonly known as the splits and finished up face downwards in the snow until he was rescued by his companions.

Visibility was now limited to about ten yards, but it was quite possible to form some idea of the damage to the unfortunate D 3. Two of her propellers, as Standish had suspected, had been smashed close to the boss, while of the port wing only about seven feet of warped metal remained. The monoplane was slightly down by the head and with a "list to port". Already the heat from partly embedded motors had melted the snow around them into pools of oily water, while on the windward side a drift was rapidly accumulating, threatening to blockade the only available door.

Accompanied by his men, Standish proceeded to examine the ground in the vicinity. He had not gone more than twenty yards when he stopped just in time to prevent himself slipping over the edge of a "scar"—a sheer drop of anything between eighty and a hundred feet.

In the other direction a cliff rose steeply until it was lost to sight in the blinding, whirling snowflakes. The monoplane had come down on a relatively narrow natural terrace about half way up the mountain side. By sheer good fortune D 3 had come down on the only level patch on the side of the fell. A few feet more and she would have crashed head on against the gaunt face of the cliff; a few feet less and she would have toppled backwards into the abyss.

By now Standish had gained a fairly comprehensive idea of the situation. It was bad enough having to make a forced landing. It would have meant remaining there until the weather moderated; as it was, with wing and two propellers gone she was there until spare parts could be brought up and repairs effected.

"You're a dalesman, Holmroyd," said Colin addressing one of the constables. "Tell me: how long do these storms last as a rule?"

"I've not known one in September to last more than a few hours, sir. In mid-winter maybe they'll last a week. Our trouble will be when the snow starts to melt. There'll be hundreds of tons of mush—thawing snow that is—sliding down from the mountain."

"How pleasant! It strikes me our troubles have not only begun but look as if they'll last for a time. How much food have we on board?"

Before anyone could reply the faint blasts of a police whistle cut through the snow-laden air.

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# CHAPTER XX

## Marooned

"It can't be one of the North Riding men?" declared Heswall. "If it is, then all I can say is he's a long way from home!"

"Asking for trouble, that's what he is," added Holmroyd. "I'd like to know how he managed to climb nearly a thousand feet in this! I'd think twice before I did, missing hiker or no missing hiker!"

"Perhaps he's beating up for promotion," suggested another constable.

"He'll get it," rejoined Heswall grimly. "Unless we find him he'll be stiff come morning!"

The sergeant blew his whistle. The shrill sound re-echoed from the cliff, but before the reverberations had completely died away an answering call could be faintly heard. Not one of the party was in agreement as to the direction whence it came. Snow, like fog, is apt to play queer acoustic tricks.

"If he's up there we can't get to him," declared Standish. "If he's below then we might be able to lower a rope. Let's hope he's somewhere on this ledge. We'll go back and get ropes."

They returned to the stranded monoplane, where Davis, the police surgeon on board, was warned that his services might be required.

"In that case I'm coming along too," he announced.

The five men roped themselves together so that the one on the extreme left was close to the base of the cliff, while the one on the right was within a few yards of the edge of the lower scar. In this way they could search the natural terrace pretty thoroughly.

As they progressed the answering whistle to Heswall's shrill blasts grew fainter.

"We're on the wrong track, lads," exclaimed Standish. "Let's see if we have better luck in the other direction. I don't think he can be up the cliff, and I hope he isn't half way down the lower one."

They repassed the stranded D 3 and resuming open order proceeded in the new direction. This time it seemed as if their efforts would meet with success, for the blast of the whistle grew louder.

A hundred yards or so farther on, the ledge contracted until it was barely twenty feet wide. As far as their limited range of vision permitted, it looked as if the terrace was coming to a dead end, until the beetling cliffs on the right continued almost unbrokenly with the sheer wall of rock below.

A few more steps and Heswall almost stumbled over a man lying huddled in a shallow depression in the face of the cliff. Drifting snow had covered him to the waist. He was hatless and his long damp hair hung over his pallid face. Clearly he was no policeman. By a rare stroke of luck the rescuers had found the missing hiker.

Even as Standish approached, the exhausted man rolled sideways in a dead faint.

The doctor bent over him and lifted each leg in turn clear of the snow; then he felt his arms.

"Limbs whole apparently," declared Dr. Davis. "The sooner we get him back the better.... Yes, drag him along. That won't do him any harm."

Slipping a bowline under the arms of the unconscious man his rescuers, stumbling in their unaccustomed snow-shoes, hauled him over the soft snow to their temporary shelter.

Inside the cabin they stripped off his sodden clothing and rubbed his chilled limbs with spirits. Since D 3 was not fitted like an air-liner and had no bunks, they laid him on the floor, each of the crew giving up his great-coat to afford warmth to the patient.

It was an hour before he regained consciousness, by which time darkness was setting in. The electric lamps that had

survived the impact were switched on and preparations made for a belated tea. Outside the blizzard raged unabated.

"Well, we've found the cause of all the trouble," remarked Colin to the doctor. "Unfortunately we have no means of letting the other search-parties know."

"They will have packed up and gone home by this time," opined Davis. "Think what a lot of trouble that young fool has caused."

"If I know anything about the dalesmen they won't give up the search because it's dark," protested Standish. "And as for that fellow, he's been doing what thousands are doing during the holidays, only he's been unlucky."

"And decidedly lucky, if you ask me," continued the doctor. "Quite possibly it was fine when he set out, but it beats me why he didn't make for some farmhouse when he saw the storm approaching. He must have had a rotten time; hatless, no mack, and thinly clad. All he had to eat was a bar of chocolate."

"Poor blighter!"

"It'll teach him a lesson. There's one thing; he won't be asked to foot the bill for damage to our old bus or the expenses of the police and others engaged in the search."

"It's all in a day's work as far as the police are concerned," rejoined Standish. "After all's said and done there's much in common between the air and the ground police. And, incidentally, it doesn't look as if I'm going on leave to-morrow!"

By this time the enclosed fuselage was almost buried in snow. One result of this was to raise the temperature of the cabin, so there was little or no discomfort to the occupants. They had sufficient food—their own rations supplemented by the emergency provisions—light and shelter, even if the sleeping accommodation was rough.

Soon after dawn the storm abated, but no pale daylight filtered through the snow-caked observation scuttles. D 3 was buried under a thick white covering, while the pressure on the only serviceable door resisted all efforts on the part of the crew. Until the drift melted sufficiently, these representatives of the Royal Air Constabulary were not only incapable of flight; they were prisoners as effectually as if they were behind iron bars.

By nine o'clock there were distinct indications that a thaw had set in. The temperature within the cabin was appreciably higher, and although the air within was becoming impure for the first time, the men's breath was exhaled in clouds of visible vapour. From without came the sound of dropping water that steadily increased in volume. The limestone cliff above was gushing in innumerable places.

Suddenly there was an ominous roar. Tons of snow, bearing stones and rocks in its wild career, were hurtling down the mountain side.

Unable to lift a finger to save themselves, the crew stood taut and anxious. They knew what was happening and that the now almost buried monoplane was only a few yards from the base of the cliff over which the avalanche was tumbling.

Then, with a sickening, side-slipping motion the machine began to move. Under the relentless pressure of falling debris she was being forced towards the brink of the scar. There seemed nothing to prevent her from being hurled, together with thousands of tons of melting snow, over the brink into the valley below.

A violent jerk sent the trapped men across the floor to fall in various attitudes against the steeply inclined wall of the cabin. There came a quick succession of metallic creaks, and the floor of the pilot's office was forced upwards in an ominous bulge. As it did so the panel of the instrument board was shattered, while two of the stout panes of the observation windows caved in, admitting several cubic feet of snow.

Then, except for a few tremors, the body of the monoplane remained still.

Hardly daring to move, the crew slowly and cautiously picked themselves up and waited for the next and perhaps final onslaught that would hurl them over the edge of the cliff. Long-drawn-out minutes passed but nothing happened. Outside they could hear masses of snow and debris falling at varying intervals.

At last daylight began to be visible through the thinning layer of snow against the scuttles. The light increased. Not only was it day, but the sun was now shining brightly.

In another hour or so the level of the snow had dropped sufficiently for the imprisoned men to look out. In perfectly clear atmosphere they could realize the perilous situation that hitherto had been mercifully hidden.

Dotted in the melting snow all over the ledge were dozens of rocks, large and small, that had been hurled from the heights above. Although the nearest was within a few feet of the damaged monoplane not one had struck her. One "direct hit" from any of these Nature's projectiles would have shattered the metal roof and would have killed or numbed everyone on board.

That was not the worst of the situation.

D 3 had been forced sideways by the moving mass of snow for a distance of about twenty yards until her previously damaged wing actually overhung the drop over which her crew had expected to topple to instant destruction. But for a projection of solid rock this would have happened, and even now, looking through the scuttles on that side, it seemed as if the fuselage itself was precariously balanced on the brink. The nearest ground to be seen was the valley some two hundred feet below.

"We'll abandon her if we can, lads," declared Standish. "We'll have to tackle the jammed door, but we'll have to go slow or——"

There was no need to complete the sentence.

Everyone knew that any excessive vibration might set the snow in motion again, and the rock that had so far saved the situation might not do so next time.

With drills and hack-saws the men set to work to cut through the tough metal panel. Half an hour's hard but cautious work was crowned with success. The door fell outward upon the half-melted snow.

One by one the crew left the monoplane and sought refuge close to the base of the cliff; the rescued hiker was taken out as soon as possible, Standish being the last to leave and, like the captain of a ship, taking the log book with him.

Then, high above their heads, they heard the characteristic drone of a Royal Air Constabulary machine. Emerging into view over the edge of the cliff appeared D 2. She had sighted her wrecked consort and was descending to investigate.

"They surely won't attempt to land here!" exclaimed Dr. Davis.

"They mustn't!" rejoined Standish, and running into the open he morsed a warning to keep off, adding that his crew were for the present all right.

The monoplane checked her descent and began to circle. Then, in default of other means of communication, she commenced to signal with an Aldis lamp, the flashes from which are clearly visible even in bright sunshine.

"Glad you're O.K. You'll have to make your way down!"

To which Standish replied that he was sorry they couldn't until the snow had disappeared.

"If you can let us have some grub we'll be obliged!" he added. "And you might wireless Hawkscar that we've found the missing man."

D 2 then flew off at high speed. Not content with using her wireless, she was making for Hawkscar to pick up a substantial hot meal for the stranded air police.

She had hardly disappeared from sight when there was another deafening rumble. Standish and his companions, with their backs against the cliff, saw hundreds of tons of snow and stones falling at terrific speed over the edge of the cliff above them. Thanks to the projecting face of the cliff they were safe from the falling debris, but when the cloud of powdery snow had subsided, they saw that the damaged monoplane was no longer there!

She had been swept over the brink to crash, a shapeless mass, upon the rock in the valley below.

As soon as the fall of debris had subsided, the men cautiously approached the edge of the scar and gazed downwards.

"That'll be another Service machine written off as a total loss, I reckon," observed Sergeant Heswall.

"And we might have been with it," added Standish. "Now we'll have to make the best of things for a bit. There doesn't seem any chance of finding our way down until the snow disappears."

The sun's rays were now gathering strength and in consequence the trapped men felt little discomfort, even though most of them were without their great-coats. They were hungry, and the last of the meagre provisions had gone with the wrecked machine. Not that that fact caused them any anxiety. They pinned their faith on the speedy return of D 2.

Thanks to a fair night's rest, the rescued hiker seemed little the worse for his adventures except that he was considerably bruised and stiff. He had set out from Muker with the intention of making for Hawes; but, instead of keeping to the recognized route over the Butterlub Pass—and that had been blocked by snow—he had attempted a direct way over the mountains because, as he explained, he always tried to avoid beaten tracks as much as possible. Fortunately he had told his intentions to the landlord of the inn where he had stayed the night previously.

When the blizzard assumed serious proportions the innkeeper became anxious concerning his former guest's safety, and as belated travellers arriving by way of the pass had seen nothing of the man and had experienced great difficulty in getting over the summit, the alarm was raised and parties of police and dalesmen set out on a fruitless search.

Meanwhile the over-daring hiker had encountered the full force of the storm. With visibility limited to a few yards he must have gone round in wide circles. The intense cold began to have its effects upon the thinly clad man. Several times he stumbled until he was almost exhausted, and unaware of the fact, he reached the natural terrace about half way up the mountain side. Had he attempted to struggle on, he would almost certainly have fallen over the cliff; but, too done up to continue the unequal struggle against the forces of Nature, he sought a precarious shelter in a hollow in the cliff face. For some time he blew his whistle in the hope that someone would hear, then gave up the attempt. He must have dozed for the next few hours until he heard the noise of D 3's engine. Yet, curiously enough, no sound of her crash reached his ears, and he had come to the conclusion that the aeroplane had flown off when he heard the blast of a whistle in answer to his resumed call for help.

His narrative was hardly finished when D 2 came in sight. Finding that her disabled sister had altered her position and was several hundred feet lower, she began to descend with the intention of landing in the valley. Observing that D 3 was a total wreck, Sub-Inspector Don Grey, who was in command, jumped to the conclusion that Colin had attempted to take off and had crashed. Apparently, then, all her crew had perished.

Frantically waving, the trapped men tried to attract attention; but so absorbed were the newcomers in the wrecked machine that it was only by chance one of D 2's crew caught sight of them.

She checked her descent and, regaining altitude, hovered over the ledge at a height of five hundred feet. At a lesser height she herself would be in danger of crashing into the summit of the mountain.

"We are dropping provisions to you," signalled Grey. "We have been advised that it is too hazardous for you to attempt the descent. Men are coming to guide you down directly it is practicable."

A weighted parachute was released. It looked as if it was dropping fairly and squarely upon the ledge, when a wind-eddy caught it and whirled it away to fall close to the wrecked monoplane.

D 2 again manœuvred for position.

"If she hasn't better luck it looks as if we'll have to tighten our belts, lads," observed Standish.

Another parachute was released.

That too dropped wide, but part of its collapsed envelope caught in a projection on the edge of the cliff. Some of the men were about to make their way to the brink, but Standish restrained them.

"It's too risky!" he objected. "If we'd saved one of the ropes ... Knot your scarves together. If anyone's to make the attempt it will be me!"

The improvised rope was made and one end bent round Colin's waist. Slowly he approached the fluttering silk. It was almost within his grasp when the hitched-up parachute released itself and disappeared taking the second case of food with it.



"Hard lines!" signalled Grey. "Stand by for a third shot. If that fails you will have to go without for a while!"

The third attempt was successful. The case of provisions, weighing nearly half a hundredweight, alighted gently within half a dozen yards of the now hungry men.

The first act was to secure and stow the silken envelope of the parachute. Then, having waved their thanks to their departing benefactors, they went to work to find out how generous the Hawkscar air police canteen board had been.

There were eight Thermos flasks each holding a quart of hot coffee; tins of condensed milk, others of bully beef; loaves, butter, cheese and a double-skinned metal box containing cooked vegetables. These were now stone cold, but provision had been made for heating them up quickly. Between the outer and inner skins of the container was a quantity of unslaked lime. All that was required to be done was to soak the lime with water and wait for ten minutes.

"There's enough grub to last us a week, sir," observed Sergeant Heswall. "I hope we aren't cooped up here all that time."

By now a considerable space of the ledge had not only been freed from slush and snow, but had dried under the influence of the sun's rays. Here the crew congregated to commence their meal, only to find that knives and forks had not been provided! The canteen steward had taken it for granted that these articles were available, not knowing that the monoplane had been destroyed with all her equipment.

Luckily most of the men had pocket-knives, and fingers were tolerable substitutes for forks; and since the tins of provisions were provided with openers there was no difficulty in that direction.

During the rest of the forenoon the crew had little to do beyond watching the snow disappear from the higher ground, and the "becks" or mountain streams increased until they became foaming torrents.

Soon after the midday meal the guides suddenly appeared, gaining the ledge by a series of natural steps of whose existence the trapped men were in ignorance.

The new arrivals were huge bearded dalesmen wearing breeches of skins, woollen shirts and moleskin waistcoats. Round their feet from the knees downwards were wound strips of cloth, something like puttees, and they were wearing the largest and heaviest kind of iron-shod boots that Standish had ever seen.

The giants grinned, each displaying a perfect set of large teeth.

"Happen thou'rt lucky, maister!" declared one.

"I believe we are," agreed Standish cheerfully.

"Has't gotten head for heights?" were the wild-looking dalesman's next words.

Speaking on behalf of his crew and himself Colin replied in the affirmative. He could not answer for the rescued hiker.

The guide who had spoken—his companion maintained silence—gave the hiker a brief, comprehensive glance.

"So yon's t' lad as caused t' bother," he observed. "Jake'll see to him. Ready, maister?"

Standish pointed out that they had some gear to take away with them; Thermos flasks and a folded parachute. The vegetable-cooker was too cumbersome for removal while its value was of little consequence.

"Ah'll tak that!" declared the guide, gathering the envelope under his arm. "A can apiece is nowt to carry."

He led the way, followed by Standish and his crew, with the stalwart Jake bringing up the rear, with the hiker slung across his back.

Although used to looking down upon land and sea from altitudes up to twenty thousand feet, Colin did not feel any too happy as he commenced the descent. It was an experience to hear his guide advise: "Put foot there, maister, and pass word to next man!" when it came to a tricky part of the steeply inclined way.

The crew of the wrecked monoplane, like the rest of the Royal Air Constabulary personnel, were of necessity in constant training. They prided themselves upon their agility of mind and body, but it was a revelation to see their massive guide

leap nimbly to a projecting crag to give a warning to those under his charge. They could not but admire—when they were able to look behind them—the prowess of the equally gigantic Jake, who, although carrying the rescued hiker, made his way down from ledge to ledge with the agility of a chamois, hardly ever using his free hand even to steady himself against the face of the cliff.

It took the party twenty minutes to reach the valley, when after a farewell look at the twisted and bent mass of metal that was D 3, they set off for the town of Hawes. It was six o'clock in the evening before they arrived there, and nearly midnight by the time they had completed their tedious journey to Hawkscar Aerodrome—roughly eight hours to cover a distance that had taken them no more than twenty-five minutes by air.

Next morning, instead of proceeding on leave, Standish had to write his report and attend a court of inquiry. Exonerated of all blame he was then allowed to commence his deferred holiday.

At ten o'clock that same evening, as Colin was "turning in" at a remote little country hotel fully ninety miles from Hawkscar, he remembered that he had not "dropped in" to see Jack Metcalfe before going on leave.

Although he was not aware of the fact it was a most fortunate thing that he had omitted to do so!

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# CHAPTER XXI

## Checkmate

Mike Doran had no difficulty in obtaining a job as a lorry-driver with "Holmroyd's o' Bridlington and Hull". The stolen driving licence stood him in good stead, especially as it was "clean" as far as endorsement went, although grubby in appearance.

It did not take him long to fall in with the ways of his fellow employees, although the dialect presented something in the nature of a difficulty. Amongst other things he discovered that he was not a lorry driver but a lurry driver.

What struck Doran most in his new experience of British commercial life was the unexpected personal freedom compared with that in the States. There was his automatic—his "gun" as he called it. He had no firearms certificate for it. Apparently these were obtained only by law-abiding citizens, whose weapons reposed from one year's end to another in a locked drawer. In the States he was liable at any moment to be stopped and searched by a cop. In most of the provinces of the Dominion of Canada the carrying of a pistol is strictly forbidden. He well remembered having to surrender his gun when crossing the frontier between Spokane and Nelson.

A powerful automatic fitted with a silencer and with a fully charged magazine had been his constant companion ever since he left the United States to try his luck in armed hold-ups in England. He was through with that sort of excitement. The pistol was to be used for one purpose only—to settle his account with the Royal Air Constabulary and particularly the unsuspecting Colin Standish.

Amongst their various activities the firm of Holmroyds were contractors to the North-Eastern area of the Royal Air Constabulary and weekly a consignment of lubricating oil was dispatched from the depot at Hull to Hawkscar. This gave Doran the opportunity to enter the closely guarded establishment, but he quickly discovered that, once within the unclimbable fence, he had no opportunity to do anything but carry out his duty.

The idea occurred to him that he could do a most useful bit of sabotage by broaching the steel barrels while on his way from Hull and inserting a generous proportion of metal filings. He drew a mental picture of the engines of a whole flight of air-cop machines seizing up in mid-air.

He soon had to abandon that plan. The air police were taking no unnecessary risks. Not only were the steel drums sealed—should the wax impression be broken delivery was not accepted—but the oil was subjected to severe chemical tests before being issued for use in the machines.

Doran had been lodging with Jack Metcalfe for a week, during which time he had proved himself to be a quiet and well-behaved paying guest. In his spare time he would give Metcalfe a hand with various breakdown and other jobs. Since the day of his arrival he had never mentioned Inspector Standish's name; but he eagerly anticipated his intended victim's visit. If needs must, he would not hesitate to shoot down not only Standish, but the genial Yorkshireman with whom he had broken bread.

Neither by word nor deed did the self-styled Bill Smith—that being the name on the stolen driving licence and insurance card—give Metcalfe any inkling of the fell designs that were constantly in the gunman's thoughts.

One evening Doran arrived after his day's work and "shifted" into his ordinary clothes, taking care to transfer the automatic to the hip pocket of his natty blue suit.

"Ah've been fair worried about Mr. Standish, lad!" began Metcalfe when he met his guest for the evening meal. "Ah thought as how he'd been flummoxed ower summat—accident maybe—although Ah'd a' heard on it come now. Ah've just had letter from him. He's away on month's holiday and says how sorry he is not to have called on me afore he went. Happen it'll be well on through October afore Ah see him again."

Doran merely nodded and then buried his face in a basin of tea. The idea that he would be obliged to exist for another month before consummating his plan gave him a pang of disappointment; but neither by word nor gesture did he betray his thoughts. There seemed no good reason why he shouldn't "chuck" his job and get on Standish's trail. Since the inspector was on holiday the business of "getting him" would be simplified.

"Where's he gone—abroad?"

Metcalfé shook his head and going to the fireplace reached out his massive hand for a number of envelopes stuffed behind the clock on his mantelpiece.

"Not abroad; somewhere in Wales," replied Metcalfé fumbling with the envelope. "T' address wur a fair twister! Ah have it here; you can see for yoursen. Dang ma butter-fingers!"

The envelope containing the letter giving Standish's temporary address had slipped from his hand. He made an ineffectual attempt to catch it, but the draught into the fireplace whirled it into the midst of the flames.

"No great harm done!" he remarked philosophically. "Ah don't suppose you'd be aught t' wiser if Ah had telled you t' address. Happen Ah'll write to Hawkscar and they'll send letter on. Sit tha down, lad, an' get on wi' thy supper. By gum! Thou'st a rale poor appetite; no more'n a jockey afore Doncaster races!"

Later that evening, after the garage had closed, Jack Metcalfé, with a crossed nib and a penny bottle of watered ink, sat down and laboriously wrote to his former comrade of the air.

For some reason the missive never reached Standish, and consequently Metcalfé never had a reply. October was well advanced and Doran, chafing under the inaction, was beginning to think that Metcalfé was deliberately hoodwinking him—although there were no indications that he was in any way suspicious of "Bill Smith's" bona fides—and that Colin Standish had been transferred to another district.

Steadily Doran's obsession grew. Whether he was driving the powerful lorry or helping Metcalfé in the garage, there was always present the insane desire to get even with the man who had so effectually thwarted his plans.

By this time both the British and the American police had come to the conclusion that Doran had perished in Pegwell Bay. The chief of police in Chicago had stated his opinion in an interview with representatives of the press, that if the notorious gunman were alive, his vainglorious egotism would have made him reveal the fact. A gunman deprived of the chances of self-advertisement was, he declared, a back number. The man who had broken out of three penitentiaries and had boasted of his powers to their respective governors, would not keep silent on this side of the grave!

Doran, reading this account in a Sunday paper, smiled sardonically.

He'd show them he could say a mouthful and a lot more, after he had "got" his man. There were twelve notches on the butt of the gunman's automatic. Each nick represented a human life. The thirteenth would be very unlucky—for Colin Standish.



## CHAPTER XXII

### The Helicopter

"It's a hoodoo bus; that's what it is," declared Sub-Inspector Andrews. "You fellows know that I'm considered a tolerable pilot, but the beastly thing scares me stiff."

"But she passed her tests successfully before she was taken over from the contractors," remarked Don Grey.

"That may be. All I know is that she's been a perfect brute ever since she's been at Hawkscar," rejoined Andrews, sticking to his guns. "You had her up, Amble; what did you make of her?"

"She nearly made my next of kin draw my insurance money," replied that worthy. "I was jolly glad to find myself down, sound in limb and wind."

"What's happened, then?" asked another of the mess.

"Happened? Everything that oughtn't! At cruising speed she is all out of hand—fifteen degrees right and left before I could swing her back. All out—my word! the vibration nearly loosened all my back teeth."

"That's much the same as I found her," added Andrews. "I reported it to Robartes and he ordered a thorough overhaul. The mechanics could find nothing wrong, so the chief sent for the contractors' head tester. Winslow went up with him, and the old cow behaved like a perfect lady. That's so, isn't it, Winslow?"

The pilot addressed nodded in agreement.

"But when I took her up solo she started her tricks again," he added. "I'd sooner risk my neck in the Grand National, although I've never ridden a horse in my life."

"Brought into the Service as an experimental type of Air Traffic Control Machine," quoted Andrews. "She'd control all right—control the poor blighter whose misfortune it is to fly her."

It was very rarely that any of the officers of the Royal Air Constabulary adversely criticised the machines supplied to them. Generally it was the other way about, for they fully appreciated their powerful monoplanes. These, incidentally, excited as much admiration amongst the air-minded population as did the magnificent animals of the Metropolitan Mounted Police amongst horse lovers.

M 1, as this machine was designated, was the first of a new type of helicopters intended primarily for the control of crowds from the air. By means of amplified loudspeakers the observer could give directions to the congested traffic and also assist the police on point duty.

Theoretically she was perfection. She was supposed to rise and descend with the ease and docility of a lift and to attain a maximum speed of 210 miles an hour. In practice she would do neither. Under the influence of her helicopters she rocked like a pendulum, threatening to fling her crew out. She would have done, but for their safety belts. As for speed, no one yet, except the contractor's test-pilot, had succeeded in getting more than a hundred and fifty miles an hour out of her.

"I tried her out on the hovering stunt," continued Andrews. "The old cow was bucking like a broncho."

"She was," corroborated Amble. "She looked like one of those empty egg shells on the top of a jet of water in shooting galleries. I felt tempted to take a pot shot at her myself, only I remembered you were on board, old son! Ha! Here comes Standish. Let's see what he has to say about it."

Colin, fit and cheerful after his month's leave, was coming across the parade-ground towards the mess-room. He had reported for duty that morning.

The rest of the mess greeted him warmly, and there were many inquiries concerning his holiday.

"We've been discussing something, sir," explained Andrews. "We'd be glad of your opinion."

"Any catch in it?"

"A good many, I should say," replied the sub-inspector. "It's about this confounded M 1."

"Why 'confounded'?"

"That's for someone to explain, sir. We hope you'll be able to enlighten us. All we know is that she's a perfect pig."

He went on to emphasize the apparent intractable behaviour of the helicopter—the first of its type.

"And what has Colonel Robartes to say?" asked Standish.

"He simply told us to get used to her," replied Amble.

Colin smiled. It was just the sort of thing the superintendent would say. To him an aeroplane was a machine and nothing else. Its vagaries, if any, he attributed not to design, but to the failure of the human element to conquer its peculiarities. All a pilot had to do was to go on trying until he had mastered his particular job. The possibility of such an attempt ending in loss of life never entered into his calculations. Fatal accidents had occurred to officers and men of the division, but these had been always attributable to outside influences encountered in the course of their duties.

"And so you're taking her up again, Andrews?"

"I suppose so," replied the sub-inspector, without his usual display of enthusiasm. On the contrary, he seemed quite glum about it.

"All right then," rejoined Colin. "I'll take her for a trial run with you as observer. How will that do?"

"I don't mind that, sir," replied Andrews. "In fact I'd rather like it!"

Which was rather a clumsy way of paying Standish a compliment!

"Right. I'll have to attend at the orderly room at eleven. The chief wants me with reference to the Dunholt case; but I think I'll be free by half-past. I'll meet you at M 1's hangar.... Well, anything exciting since I went on leave?"

Apparently nothing of consequence had occurred to disturb the even tenor of the routine at Hawkscar.

"No more news of Doran?" continued Colin. "I haven't looked at a paper for the last month. That's one way of deriving enjoyment from one's holiday, although I don't suppose all of you'll agree with me."

"Not a word," replied Grey. "Montgomery's been to the Assizes."

"Good! I was half afraid they'd want me as a witness. What did he get?"

"Seven years, and he seemed jolly pleased about it when he heard that Washington waived its claim to extradition. Doran's faded away, unhonoured and unsung; but what's more, there hasn't been even a mild epidemic amongst young shallow-brained fools to imitate his methods. There would have been if he had succeeded."

"So we're spared from the importation of yet another form of American culture," added Winslow.

"What's that?" asked Colin.

"Sticking the muzzle of an automatic against a fellow's ribs," explained the sub-inspector. "Low-down trick! Thank goodness we over here use our fists when we have no option but to settle an argument by physical means. That reminds me, sir; the East Riding Secondary Schools are having a boxing tournament at Bridlington this evening. Any objection to my going off duty at six? I'd like to see the show."

Colin Standish, once winner of the Middleweight Championship of the Southern Counties and still no mean exponent of the noble art, replied:

"Certainly; and if you've no objection I'll come along too!"

At half-past eleven Colin, in full flying kit—for M 1 was of the open-cockpit type—arrived at the hangar. The helicopter

was already wheeled out and was surrounded by a critical crowd. Almost every officer and man not on duty or otherwise engaged had come along to see how the redoubtable Standish would tackle his self-imposed task.

Andrews, now feeling none too confident in spite of his declaration to his superior officer, stepped forward and saluted.

"Everything all correct, sir!"

"Good! If you don't mind I'll test the controls."

M 1, like the rest of the Royal Air Constabulary machines, was not petrol driven, but relied upon her propulsion by means of a spirit non-inflammable except under high pressure, ignition being made by the electrical heating of platinum rods projecting into each of the cylinder heads. Theoretically the motors were fool-proof. Provided the induction of fuel was maintained the engines must continue to fire automatically.

Climbing into the pilot's bucket-seat Standish set the electric self-starter into operation. The motors fired without hesitation. Slowly the single propeller revolved while Colin listened with practised ear to the regular pulsations. Then he tried the "windmill"—the four blades of the helicopter overhead—revving up until the machine was almost on the point of overcoming the force of gravity. Other controls he manipulated, saw that the needles of the various gauges were responding, and then, satisfied, signed to his companion to come on board.

There was no occasion to wave the crowd aside to ensure a clear take-off over the tarmac. Colin had decided to make a vertical ascent under full pressure action of the helicopter planes. There would be no half-measures about the way in which he tackled the testing of the machine with the bad reputation. If she had any real and not apparent defects he would detect them!

To the accompaniment of a deep bass roar and a cloud of smoky expanse M 1 parted company with Mother Earth. With hardly any vibration she leapt skywards, ascending at a speed that exceeded the pilot's expectation.

At eight thousand feet the tractor propeller was brought into action. Vertical direction gave place to horizontal flight. Steadily the needle of the speed-gauge rose until it hovered round the 210 m.p.h. mark. There certainly was vibration, but nothing abnormal.

The open cockpit, protected only by a wind-screen, gave Colin the sensation of speed—a sensation he rarely experienced during his service with the Royal Air Constabulary, since most of his flights had been made in machines with totally enclosed cockpits.

"How now?" he inquired, speaking to his companion through the voice tube. "Not much wrong with her, is there?"

"It doesn't seem like it," replied Andrews. "She's behaving differently from her previous performances.... Why, she's well above two hundred!"

"And she'll do better before I've done with her," declared Standish, now in the grip of a lust of speed. "Wait till her engine's properly run in."

Within half an hour from the time of taking off, M 1 was over Lowestoft. Aided by a strong breeze from a northerly point, she had covered seventy miles in twenty-eight minutes, and that notwithstanding the fact that Standish was not running the motor all out. The level of the fuel-gauge indicated that the consumption was very economical and that, at the present rate, the machine could remain up for twelve hours without having to land in order to refill tanks.

"If I hadn't decided to see the boxing tournament this evening, I'd take this little bus to North Africa and back," thought the now enthusiastic pilot. "Stand Andrews dinner at Algiers and then get back soon after midnight.... Another time, perhaps."

He swung the machine seawards and through the voice tube informed his companion that he intended stunting.

"Right!" replied Andrews, who, however, instinctively felt the straps of his parachute harness.

Standish had delayed carrying out these tests until over the sea. If anything happened and the machine crashed it would not fall upon any buildings. Andrews, on the other hand, knew that if he had to jump he would come down in the sea with small chance of rescue from a passing vessel.

Again M 1 proved herself to be all and more than her designers and constructors had claimed for her. Under Standish's skilled touch she behaved like a perfect lady. Even Andrews began to wonder at the metamorphosis.

Then, after having given the helicopter planes a thorough test, during which M 1 descended and ascended with the ease and smoothness of a well-regulated lift, Standish headed for home. For the first time he brought the automatic pilot device into action.

"Come and take her!" he invited his companion.

They exchanged seats, each crawling along the deck from one cockpit to the other simultaneously, and then at Colin's bidding Andrews switched over to direct control.

The sub-inspector's confidence was restored. Evidently Standish had banished the "hoodoo" from the formerly irresponsible machine.

For the most part they followed the coast line, crossing the Wash between Hunstanton and Skegness. At Kilnsea the helicopter altered course and stood inland in the direction of her base.

A few minutes later the supposedly fool-proof motor gave a few ominous coughs and stopped.

Gliding was out of the question, since M 1 had no wings other than those of her helicopter device. She began to lose altitude, not with dangerous speed, but on the other hand threatening to land with more haste than was desirable.

Andrews looked back over his shoulder. Colin grinned reassuringly, although in his own mind he wasn't feeling particularly happy. He glanced at the pressure gauge to the feed tank. It registered zero. A few hurried strokes with the force pump produced no favourable result.

"Turn on the tap of the emergency tank," shouted Standish.

Andrews did so. Powerfully built and abnormally strong with his hands, he put too much vim into the task. The tap was stiff. Instead of turning it he wrenched it from its seating.

The helicopter was gathering speed.

"Jump!" ordered Standish sharply. "No! As you were!"

It was now too late to make a parachute descent. They would inevitably crash before the envelope opened.

Up rose the ground to meet them.

Although he realized the awful and imminent danger Colin felt no sensation of fear—merely a sort of detached interest in what was going to happen. He'd be lucky to get off with a broken limb. And dash it! he wouldn't be at the boys' boxing tournament to-night! Thank goodness the risk of being burnt alive—so frequent in the case of petrol-engined machines—was eliminated.

Then—*whump!*

The floor of the fuselage was forced up by the impact. Standish had a brief glimpse of his companion being flung out and a feeling of intense pain as his own safety belt seemed to bite deeply into his waist.

Next an uncanny silence.

Unfastening the quick-release clip of his safety belt, Colin extricated himself from the now motionless wreck. Gingerly he drew his feet clear of the telescoped deck of the fuselage, and was surprised to find that his legs were not broken.

He had survived the crash, apparently unhurt, but what of his companion?

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### Covered!

Hurrying to his injured friend, who had been hurled for a distance of about twenty feet from the crashed machine, Colin found that Andrews was unconscious. In spite of the protection afforded by his flying-helmet his face was bleeding from half a dozen superficial cuts and grazes, though fortunately his eyes had escaped injury. Nor could Standish discover any signs of broken bones. Apparently, though Colin could not be sure, Andrews was suffering from concussion.

In the circumstances he could do little beyond going for assistance, since the ambulance box, similar to those carried by all R.A.C. machines, was hopelessly jammed in the wreckage; so, having placed his folded flying coat under the injured man's head, Standish set off to obtain aid.

Generally a crash, even in the more remote parts of the country, results in the arrival of a number of helpers apparently from nowhere. There was no one in sight. Although aircraft were frequently in the vicinity not one was in sight on this occasion.

The hoodoo helicopter had come down on the edge of the ground sloping from the Wolds to the sea, and had fallen in a fairly wide depression that limited Colin's outlook to a bare hundred yards in any direction.

He set off towards the nearest crest and was considerably surprised and delighted to find that he was for the present still fit in limb and wind. Later, probably, he would feel stiff all over and would feel the reaction.

When he gained the summit of the low ridge he was disappointed. Not a house was visible. Away to the eastward there were clumps of trees and a thin trail of smoke that looked promising; while further away and hardly discernible against the wooded ground was a line of telegraph or telephone posts.

Taking his bearings so that he could find the wrecked machine again when he returned with assistance, Standish, alternately running and walking, hurried towards what he took to be a high road.

In little over a quarter of an hour his hopes were realized. It was the main road between Great Driffield and Bridlington and about seven miles from the village of Wetwang, where, he remembered only too well, he had made a "bloomer" in his career as an air police officer.

Several cars and commercial vehicles passed along the road before he reached it, but when he did there was nothing in sight. A short distance away were two stone cottages.

Going to the first Colin knocked. There was no reply. At the second the door was opened by an old woman who gave an exclamation of horrified surprise at the sight of his blood-streaked face.

"Eh, lad! What's matter with thee?" she asked.

"There's been an aeroplane accident. Is there anyone here who can give assistance? Is there a doctor anywhere handy?"

"Nobbut a man in t' place. My husband is away up to farm. There's a doctor up Driffield way, but it's a tidy step."

The noise of an approaching motor vehicle caused Colin hastily to break off the conversation. Clearly there was no useful purpose to be served by continuing it. The driver might and probably would be able to help things on.

Stepping out into the middle of the road Standish held up his hand. Having taken off his leather flying coat, he was in his uniform except for the peaked cap. If he had been in mufti the chances would have been that his appeal would have been ignored, since motorists are chary of giving lifts to casual wayfarers.

It was a large covered lorry that was approaching. The driver, who was not accompanied by his mate, at first made no attempt to slacken speed. Instead he seemed to be increasing speed with the object of making the hatless pedestrian jump out of his way.

Then, probably noticing the uniform for the first time, he jammed on his brakes and brought the vehicle to a standstill.

"I'm a police officer," announced Standish. "There's been an accident to a 'plane and one of the crew is injured. Can you go to his assistance?"

"Where is he?"

"About a mile over there."

The driver looked in the direction indicated and appeared to consider the matter.

"I just can't leave my lorry," he objected. "You fellows would run me in, like as not, for leaving it unattended! Tell you what, boss; there's a telephone box half a mile along the road. Hop in and I'll soon get you there."

"Good idea!" rejoined Standish. "Thanks very much."

He climbed in beside the driver, who let in the clutch and set the lorry in motion again.

"You're Inspector Standish?"

"Yes," admitted Colin. "How did you know?"

"Most folk about here know that; and I've seen your picture in the papers."

"Then it must be a good likeness," added Standish, not altogether displeased at the driver's blunt tribute to his popularity.

The other made no reply, but began to slow down.

"There's the telephone box," he announced.

It was an A.A. kiosk, standing back a short distance from the road. The time was now half-past one and in consequence the uniformed patrol man had gone to dinner. Probably for the same reason the stream of commercial vehicles had ceased, while for the present the road was deserted except for Standish and the lorry driver.

"Gotta key?"

Colin had. Not only was he a member of the A.A., but as a police officer he was furnished with the necessary means of opening the unattended telephone box.

He alighted. So did the driver.

Standish walked to the booth and unlocked the door, unaware that the driver, after glancing up and down the road, had followed him.

Before Colin could lift the receiver, a voice behind him exclaimed:

"Hands up, Standish!"

Turning he found himself face to face with the man who seemingly had befriended him. He was standing only about three yards away and in his right hand he held an automatic, the muzzle of which was pointing at the pit of the other's stomach.

In an instant Standish took in the situation. Undoubtedly the man meant business although his motive seemed obscure. More than once Standish had been threatened by the friends or relatives of criminals whom he had brought to justice; but like the majority of officials thus threatened he had ignored the luridly written missives. Obviously robbery could not be the motive, while the fact that the fellow knew him by name pointed to an attempted act of revenge.

Colin's practised eye told him that the weapon was not a dummy one. The ominous ring in the fellow's voice made it clear that he would make use of the pistol.

His assailant judged the distance, too, with deliberate advantage—sufficiently close to make a miss a physical impossibility, and yet far enough away to guard himself against a desperate leap on Colin's part.

It wasn't a case of a police officer going for his man in the execution of his duty. Standish would have been shot down without being able to serve any practical purpose.

Slowly he raised both arms.

"Aha! So I've got you, Standish! D'you know who I am? I'm Doran! I've sworn to get you, but if there's time we'll have a little talk before I fill you with lead!"

Colin did not now doubt the notorious gunman's identity and purpose. Doran was known to be a killer and now he was seeking to shoot the man who, in the course of his duty, had been mainly instrumental in heading him off his course of ruthless robbery and murder.

"What's the idea?" asked Standish, playing for time, although he hardly recognized the sound of his own voice. "Shooting me won't help you to get away."

"Mebbe not. There are twelve notches on this gun. Each notch means one guy gone to Kingdom Come. There'll be thirteen——"

"You're adding too fast," interrupted Colin, glancing at some imaginary object behind his would-be assassin. "Isn't he, Sergeant?"

Taken off his guard, Doran threw a quick glance over his shoulder.

That was enough and it was what Standish hoped for.

The gunman, completely deceived by his would-be victim's question addressed to an unseen third person, allowed the sinister muzzle of his automatic to swerve an inch—perhaps only half an inch—to his left.

It gave Standish the opportunity he had hardly dared to hope for, to take advantage of the split second between life and death.

He acted.

More than once his prowess as a boxer had helped him out of a difficult, and even desperate, situation. It did now.

With the agility of a panther he leapt across the intervening space between him and the gunman.

Doran's automatic spat viciously though silently. Before he could press the trigger again, Colin's left had delivered a devastating blow on the bandit's solar plexus.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### Standish Gets his Man

Colin had put such force behind the perfectly timed blow that he lifted the gunman completely off his feet. Doran struck the ground with a thud at a distance of five or six yards from where he had been standing so confidently a few seconds before.

Even Standish had to pull himself together from the effects of his "follow through", and as he did so he had a blurred vision of his would-be assassin's heels kicking a tattoo on the dusty ground.

Doran was down and out without the possibility of a doubt; but Standish was taking no chances. He retrieved the gunman's automatic, which had fallen from his hand as he dropped unconscious. Then, without compunction, he turned the bandit over on his face, brought his arms behind him, and bound his wrists together with his scarf. Having partly unlaced Doran's boots his vanquisher then tied the laces together so that his legs were firmly secured.

Then and not till then did Colin discover that the bullet from the automatic had ripped his tunic and had grazed his right arm above the elbow.

"Better than being plugged through the tummy," thought Standish, who, from experience, had a horror of stomach wounds. "Well, he gave me his name, so there seems no mistake about it this time. We've got Mike Doran safe at last."

It was characteristic of Standish to ascribe the merits of the capture not to himself alone, but to the force to which he belonged.

He had hardly finished a hasty examination of his slight, superficial wound, when the A.A. man arrived upon the scene on his cycle.

"Accident, sir?" he asked, saluting.

"Yes, of sorts," replied Standish.

"Shall I 'phone for the ambulance?"

"Yes, but not for this gentleman. Help me to remove him from the public gaze.... Thanks; he'll do. If you'll stand by a minute or so, I'll 'phone!"

To the A.A. man's surprise he could hear the Royal Air Constabulary inspector calling up Hawkscar.

"M 1's crashed one and a half miles north of a point five miles from Great Driffield on the Bridlington Road. This is Standish speaking. Andrews is injured, suffering from concussion. Also send Sub-Inspector Grey with four men to A.A. box on the Great Driffield road.... Yes, as quickly as possible. We have Mike Doran.... Yes, Mike Doran, I said.... D-O-R-A-N—got that?... He's under arrest here."

Colin replaced the receiver and returned to his prisoner.

The A.A. scout, who could not very well comment on the message, remained silent, gazing from the unconscious man to the decidedly dishevelled police inspector. His interest was divided between the notorious gunman and the doughty Colin Standish, both of whom he knew by repute. If his interest were divided his admiration was not. He would have given much to be able to address the inspector by name.

Within five minutes of the receipt of Standish's telephone message an ambulance biplane left the Hawkscar aerodrome to locate the wreck of the hoodoo M 1 and to remove the unlucky Andrews to the Royal Air Constabulary hospital.

The biplane was followed thirty seconds later by one of the D class of monoplanes, skippered by a rather excited sub-inspector, who made no secret of his enthusiasm for his chum and superior officer Colin Standish.

The two machines followed the same course for some distance; then the biplane, sighting her objective, swung to the right while the monoplane headed straight for the cross-roads marked by a conspicuous black and yellow telephone

kiosk.

Grey, knowing the district intimately, made a splendid landing on a meadow adjoining the road; then temporarily abandoning the machine, he hurried with his men to the spot where Doran lay guarded by his victor.

"Heartiest congrats., old man!" he exclaimed, forgetting official formalities in his enthusiasm. "Gosh! You haven't killed him?"

"It wouldn't worry me if I had," admitted Standish. "He did almost his best to plug me. Look! Nice little weapon, isn't it? See those notches. Every one represents the loss of a human life."

"Why; how do you know?"

"He told me so. Also he volunteered the information that he was Mike Doran. Otherwise I would never have known."

"What on earth made him do that?"

"Vanity and cold-blooded cruelty. He wanted to let me know his identity before he fired."

"Did he?"

"Did he what?"

"Fire."

"He did, only he just missed," explained Standish. "I was lucky, and got one in before he could fire another shot. As a matter of fact it was a near thing, for the bullet tickled my arm."

"You're wounded?" asked Don anxiously.

Standish smiled.

"It's not enough for me to swing the lead. Besides, I've just had my leave. Well, Don, you'd better take charge of that beauty. He looks like coming round, so put the bracelets on him. Don't take any chances with a rat like that."

By this time a crowd had collected. Lorries, vans, cars and motor-cycles blocked the road, while their drivers and passengers stood in a ring round the bound bandit. The A.A. scout, unable to keep his knowledge to himself, had passed the word that the notorious Mike Doran had been knocked out in single combat with the well-known Inspector Standish, and the news had spread like wildfire amongst the spectators.

At length a way was cleared and the gunman, carried by four air police, was taken to the waiting 'plane; but when Standish attempted to follow, the crowd, cheering vociferously, bore him shoulder-high in spite of his protests.

Half an hour later Mike Doran was securely under lock and key in the cells at Hawkscar, by which time the news of his capture had been flashed round the world.

"By the way," concluded Colonel Robartes, after he had congratulated Standish upon his single-handed capture of Britain's only Enemy No. 1, "by the way, the Commissioner is dining with me to-night. I'd like you to meet him."

Colin, who positively dreaded social functions, felt almost as much apprehension at the invitation as he had when he was facing the gunman's automatic.

"Do you mind if I cry off, sir? I've a previous engagement."

"Really?"

The superintendent lifted one eyebrow in his typically quizzical way.

"Yes, sir; the Secondary Schools Boxing Tournament."

Colonel Robartes smiled understandingly.

"Then get on with it, Standish. Between ourselves, the Commissioner is somewhat of the nature of an infliction. I'd far

rather see a good boxing bout. Get on with it."

And Colin Standish did.

### **Transcriber's Note**

Punctuation errors have been corrected.

The following suspected printer's errors have been addressed.

Page 19. suprised changed to surprised (I won't be so surprised)

Page 72. Constabluary changed to Constabulary (Royal Air Constabulary)

[End of *Standish Gets His Man*, by by Percy F. Westerman]