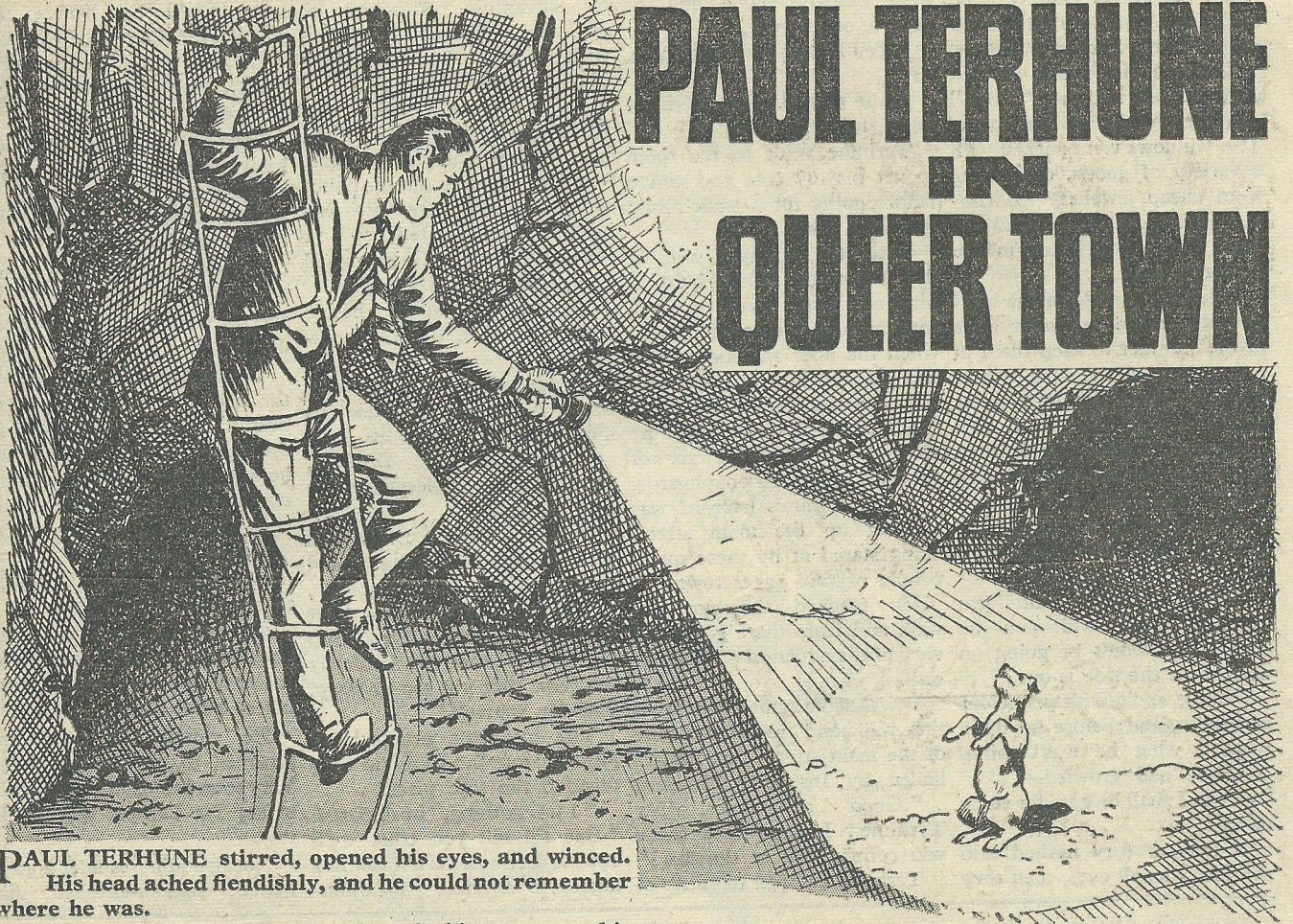


A whimpering dog led Paul Terhune from a hotel bedroom into an amazing series of secret caves!

PAUL TERHUNE IN QUEER TOWN



PAUL TERHUNE stirred, opened his eyes, and winced. His head ached fiendishly, and he could not remember where he was.

A movement across the room made him turn on his side, though it caused him considerable suffering. A boy was opening the shutters over the window and letting in a pale, cold light.

Terhune glanced down at himself. He was in pyjamas, and his dressing-gown lay neatly folded on a nearby chair, just as he would have put it himself, yet he knew he had not put himself to bed.

He had been standing on that window-seat when someone had clubbed him from behind. He raised his hand to his head. There was an almost imperceptible lump at the base of his skull.

The blow had been carefully struck, and with something that had not injured the scalp. Possibly a bag of sand had been used.

All these memories surged back to Terhune's brain as the shutters were being opened and he forced himself upright in bed.

Just then a hearty voice demanded—

"Did you want anything, sir?"

It was the landlord, Jim Windle himself, all smiles and beams. He was a huge man with a bulbous nose, and must have weighed twenty stone.

Terhune scowled.

"Yes, Windle, I want an explanation about last night."

The landlord's little eyes nearly vanished as he wrinkled his fat face.

"Last night, sir? You mean when I told you there was no room here?"

"I'm not referring to then, but to later. Why was I locked in my room, and why was the door fastened on the outside?"

The man's mouth opened. He gaped in astonishment.

"Bless you, sir, the door wouldn't be locked except on your side. It's a bit stiff, an' sometimes a board moves up an' wedges it. Why didn't you ring?"

"I did," snapped Terhune.

"I nearly rang the building

down, but I got no reply."

"What time was that, sir?"

Paul Terhune was getting more and more irritated.

"Just after midnight," he declared curtly.

"Then I can understand it, sir. My friends went away about then an' I walked down the street a way with them.

"Dobby was in alone, an', of course, he's deaf an' doesn't understand a thing. I'm very sorry indeed if you wanted something, but I thought you were safely asleep."

"And the shutters? Why were they padlocked?"

"Because it was windy, an' that's the only way to stop them from flapping. When the tide comes in it gets awful windy on this side of the hotel."

Terhune drew a deep breath.

"Then perhaps you have an explanation for why I was

struck on the head from behind whilst I was trying to open those windows, and why I was put to bed whilst unconscious? Can you explain that?"

The man's small eyes searched his face intently, then Jim Windle grinned broadly.

"You've imagined it, sir. How could that be possible? One moment you say you were locked in your room, an' the next you were hit on the head. Maybe you fell an'—"

"I didn't fall!" roared Terhune. "I was struck unconscious by someone who entered this room by some secret means, and when I awakened I was in bed. I want to know why it was done, and who did it."

Windle shook his head doggedly.

"I still say you were dreaming, sir. Nobody could get into this room if the door was locked."

FOR NEW READERS.

Paul Terhune, the famous private detective, on a late holiday in Norfolk had arrived at the isolated town of Holdenwall.

The town was joined to the mainland by a causeway which was covered at high tide. The buildings were hundreds of years old.

Terhune soon realised he was not welcome at the inn and when he was refused accommodation by the landlord, Jim Windle, he went to the local police station to complain.

The police inspector, Thacker, became helpful only after he was told of Terhune's friends at Scotland Yard. Terhune discovered that Thacker secretly carried a pistol.

That night, Terhune found that he was locked in his hotel bedroom with the windows shuttered and padlocked. When he tried to pick the lock he was knocked out by an intruder inside the locked room.

The Conspirators

THROUGH the window, as he had his breakfast, Paul Terhune had a good view of the town. A cold wind from the east had dried the air.