

# LET'S HOLIDAY



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# PETE'S HOLIDAY.

A NEW TALE DEALING WITH THE ADVENTURES OF  
JACK, SAM AND PETE.

By S. Clarke Hook.

## CHAPTER 1.

The Brighton Empress—"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"—Robin Redbreast, and How Pete Found a Nest For Him—Fun on the Pier—In the Range of Fire.

JACK, Sam, and Pete were standing on the deck of the Brighton Empress, as she glided slowly up to the Brighton West Pier.

The murmur of the happy holiday-makers' voices was broken by the sharp tinkle of the bell over the speed-indicator in the engine-room, and, in obedience to the captain's signal, the huge pleasure-steamer came almost to a standstill. Another single tone from the bell, as the indicator needle swung round to "Stop!" and under the skilful guidance of her skipper, the Brighton Empress drifted on the tide, and gently sidled to her moorings.

The long line of daintily-dressed girls and tanned-faced young men leaning over the rails of the pier, waved handkerchiefs and chaffed expected friends on the deck below.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo—er!"

The owner of a thin, piping voice pointed directly at one of the prettiest girls.

"It's a different boy aga— Ouch!"

The old familiar ditty broke off suddenly and ended in a dismal grunt, for as the girl edged back from the rails, a vigorous elbow prodded the singer in the ribs, and sent him staggering among the crowd lined up to the gangway. But he was not wanted there, for he came back with a rush, and the force with which he was propelled sent him into violent collision with a certain stalwart gentleman, who calmly went on filling his pipe, immovable, and apparently unconscious of the shock.

"Dis child hab heard ob old buffers, Sammy," said a familiar voice; "but neber tought dat I should become a ting ob dat sort. Gib me a match, Sammy—nunno, Jack—to light dis baccy ob Sammy's!"

Jack and Sam burst out laughing, for all this time a pair of angry eyes had, from the level of their chum's top waistcoat button, been glaring up into his smiling face.

Presently Pete, after lighting his pipe to his satisfaction, glanced down. His smile gradually broadened.

"Yah, yah, yah! What's de matter wid you, old hoss?" he cried, bending down and carefully examining the youth who had so forcibly collided with him.

"How dare you? I shall report this matter to the captain!" spluttered the young man, pushing his panama back on his head and throwing out his chest. "How dare you, I say? You have brutally assaulted me, and I won't have it—I say that I wo—"



"Make way, there! Come on, now, stir your stumps!" growled a sailor, trailing a stout hawser along the deck. "Gerrout of it, Cock-robin!"

"Golly, dat's de name!" chuckled Pete. "Just fits de waistcoat. Come 'long, Mr. Cock-sparrer; out ob de Must try and find you a nice, comfy little corner."

The next moment the youth with the piping voice and red waistcoat was hoisted in Pete's brawny arms, above the heads of the crowd, who roared with laughter, as Pete gradually and gently lowered the struggling burden head-first into a huge, neatly-coiled pile of rope.

"Serve him right!" cried one of the spectators. "He's been making himself a nuisance the whole time!"

"Dat's better!" murmured Pete. "You'm much better off dere, out ob harm's way, and don't tink you'm likely to cheek pretty ladies wid dat lubly song ob yours. Now den, Jack and Sammy," he added, as he returned through the laughing crowd to his comrades, "let's get out ob dis on de terra-cotta 'fore dat little Robin comes out ob his nest. 'Fraid he'm berry angry."

Leaving Robin to extricate himself in the best way he could, Jack, Sam and Pete, who carried Rory under his arm, passed over the gangway and up the stairs leading to the top of the pier.

Among that crowd of happy maids and well-built young Britishers there were not many of them far below the average height, but curious and admiring pairs of eyes were turned in the three comrades' direction, for our friend Pete is well over six feet, and more than proportionately broad, while Jack and Sam, though somewhat lighter in weight, are finer specimens of healthy, vigorous manhood than are generally encountered in a day's march.

Burnt to a deep tan by tropical suns, hardened by exposure to all sorts of weather, Jack and Sam appeared older than they were, and some of the languid young dandies from town, promenading about the shady side of the pavilion, showed quite pale and anæmic by contrast. As for Pete—well, one cannot, on account of the dusky hue of his complexion, say if the sun had had any effect at all on his delicate skin.

"I reckon we'd better send our traps to an hotel," said Sam; "then we'll get something to eat. I guess Pete's just as hungry as ever."

"What—after the way he wolfed up his dinner? I bet the next time he wants a half-crown luncheon on the Empress that the steward will refuse to serve him!" interrupted Jack.

"Golly! You tink so, do you? Why, dey said we could hab as much as eber we could eat! Didn't dey? And if you and Sammy hab only good appetites like chickens, dere's no reason why dis pore child should starve him dinner. Must hab something more to eat just directly, for dere's a funny, faint sort ob feeling coming ober me. 'Specs it am de Brighton air, an'— Hi! Hellup! Stop dat—dat—dat—idiot!"

As he uttered this exclamation, Pete leaped about, six feet to one side, and, stumbling over a chair, came to the ground with a crash. Then scrambling to his feet, he made a dash for an inoffensive-looking, mild old gentleman, who was carefully sighting an electric-rifle, working on a pivot fixed to an iron standard. The target was about ten or twelve feet away, and Pete had been standing close to the range of "fire," when he had suddenly become aware of a gun being, as he thought, trained directly in the region of his waistbelt.

The old gentleman was of portly build, but Pete grabbed him round the waist, and whisked him away from the gun as if he had been a child, and deposited him on a seat.



"Here, you stupid fool!" panted the man. "What are you up to? Are you mad, or what? I shall lose my penny! Explain yourself—explain the meaning of this atrocious assault!"

The old gentleman made a move to get off the seat, but Pete pressed one hand on his chest, and he sat down again rather suddenly.

"Nunno, my dear old hoss! You'm not safe! Playing wid a gun like dat, and pointing it at people when dey ain't looking. Golly! What's all dis? What's de matter, ma'am?"

"I'll show you what's the matter, you—you great, hulking fellow!" yelled a shrill voice.

"Golly—gol——,"  
 "Don't you talk to me like that, you wicked man!" cried the irate lady; for it was a thin-visaged member of the gentler sex who had planted herself between Pete and his temporary prisoner.

Pete stared at her, aghast.  
 "Dunno how I'm to talk to you, my dear. 'Specs——"

"Charles," screamed the woman, brandishing her parasol perilously near to Pete's nose, "do you hear the terms in which this vulgar man is addressing me? M-e, your lawful wife! Charles, you swore to cherish and protect me. Will you stand by and hear me put to shame? Oh, o-o-o——"

"What's he been doing to you, missis?" inquired one of the bystanders.

"Don't—don't ask me! I have been insulted by this person here, and I demand an apology!"

"Calm yourself, my dear Maria," said Charles, releasing his wife's arms from his neck. "I consider, my angel, that if any apology is due, it is due to me."

"Golly!" muttered Pete. "Dat's something to do wid prisons, ain't it, Sammy? Black Maria! Oh——"

"I fear that my comrade has made an unfortunate mistake," said Sam, disregarding Pete's remarks; "and I am sure that you, madam, and you, sir, will forgive his impulsiveness, when I explain to you the reason for his action in removing this gentleman from the rifle."

"How dare you treat my husband in this fashion? I'll have you locked up! I'll call the police! Take that, and that!"

"Hellup!" yelled Pete, springing back into the crowd, and treading on half a dozen tender corns at once. "Must get away from this rampagious young lady. Golly! Don't do dat, my dear, or dat pretty gamp ob yours will get a kink in him spine."

Sam pushed his way in front of Pete, and, raising his hat and bowing to the irate lady, said:

"Pardon me, madam, but it is a warm afternoon, and, really, I think if you will listen to me, you will be spared much undue exertion. You see, my friend here, Pete, has not been in England for some time, and electric-guns were not in fashion when we left these shores, and in the place where we come from the pointing of a gun at another person is generally the cause of—er—er—some little unpleasantness. I trust, madam, that my comrade's ignorance of the harmlessness of these toy weapons will induce your forgiveness of his somewhat impetuous action. And now, if you are agreeable, we will have tea in the pavilion."

Sam paused, quite out of breath with his long speech, which he had rushed out at full speed, in fear that he would be interrupted, and now waited deferentially while Charles and his better half exchanged a whispered consultation.

"Golly!" muttered Pete. "You'm better wid dat tongue ob yours, Sammy, dan a grammerphone. Sort ob libe talking-machine! Mind dat



Charles's wife don't clump you ober de napper, 'cos it hurts above a bit, and de worst ob it am dat you'm got to put up wid de smites, an' grin all de time, as if dat sort ob ting was a mighty pleasant sort of manifestashun ob de lady's affeeshun!"

"Stop it, you beauty!" whispered Sam. "You'll rile her again, and if she begins with that parasol of hers again, I shall leave you to fight your own battles."

Sam's threat had the desired effect, and Pete kept as quiet as a mouse.

"Young man," said Maria, addressing Sam, "I have decided to forgive this friend of yours for his unseemly conduct and— Now, Charles, be quiet. Leave me to explain the matter to these gentlemen. You always interfere. It's all your fault. If you had remained with me, instead of wandering about and wasting your money in playing with a toy gun, for all the world like an overgrown baby, you would not have caused all this trouble. Now, young man, as I was saying, I accept your apology, and—your invitation to take tea."

Sam bowed, and Pete gave a deep groan.

"What's the matter with that black companion of yours?" demanded Maria suspiciously.

"Nothing."

"Nunno; nutting—nutting!" whispered Pete eagerly. "Tell her nutting, Sammy. A pain in de paralerogramme!"

"The effects of the heat, madam, that's all. Come, we will go and secure a table!" explained Sam discreetly.

"Present this gentleman with your card, Charles. It is not good form that we should take tea with them without a formal introduction."

Charles fumbled in his waistcoat, and, after some search, produced a very crumpled card.

"Pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Charles Montgomery!" said Sam, as he scanned the slip of pasteboard. "We do not carry card-cases, but this is Pete, this is Jack—Jack Owen, and I am Sam Grant!"

"Ah, pleased, I am sure," returned Charles; "but I did not quite catch your friend's surname."

"Ah——" Sam paused, in perplexity. "Well—er—you see, we are generally known as Jack, Sam, and Pete, and—— What's that?"

Pete muttered a few words in Sam's ear.

"Tell de old chap dis child's name am Nosmo—Nosmo—— Golly! Let me see." Pete turned and glanced at an open pair of folding-doors, and added, "King."

"Nosmo King!" murmured Sam. "Ah, yes; let me see, what was it you said, Mr. Montgomery?"

"Your friend's name—king of where?" inquired Charles, with visions of a dusky potentate.

"Nowhere that I know of. King's his name," replied Sam.

"Oh, yes; sorry, I am sure. King—Pete Nosmo King is his full name."

"I'm sure he's quite distinguished," whispered Maria. "Charles, I believe he is a black prince, or something like that, in disguise."

Charles opened his pale-blue eyes very wide, gazed fixedly at Pete, and held out a fat, chubby hand.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Nosmo King," he murmured.

Pete shook hands very gingerly, and let that hand drop limply to its owner's side.

"Golly," he muttered, "dat man's got a fist like a bit ob jelly-fish!"

By this time the crowd had dispersed, and Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery led the way to the pavilion.



The place was dotted with little tables—tables too small to accommodate the whole party; and Maria contrived that the prince, as she firmly believed Pete to be, was seated at her table. Jack occupied the third seat, and Charles and Sam shared the table adjoining.

## CHAPTER 2.

**A Prince of Royal Blood—Maria Makes Herself a Nuisance—Rory's Intervention—A Surprise for the Manageress—No Smoking.**

"TEA for five, my dear!" cried Pete to the waitress. "Five at dis table, two at de odder. Better surbe dis table first; must not keep de lady waiting."

"Of noble aspect," murmured Maria, bending towards Jack. "but rather—er—rather eeccentric, is he not? Ah, well, those of noble birth have their privileges!"

Jack nearly exploded with suppressed laughter as he realised that the good lady, having a great admiration for the aristocratic, had made up her mind that Pete was one of the elect, and her attitude towards Pete during tea was one of mingled awe and reverence, which contrasted very funnily with her behaviour but a few minutes earlier.

Tea and bread-and-butter were presently brought by the waitress.

"Would you like anything else, sir?" she inquired.

"Eh?"

"I said would you like anything else, sir—strawberries and cream, shrimps, jam, or watercress, or perhaps some eggs? We have some nice new-laid eggs."

"Tink we had better hab something else, don't you, Jack?" cried Pete, as he surveyed the half a dozen thin slices of bread-and-butter. "Don't tink derees enough to go round dere. Might make a start wid some strawberries and cream, den some shrimps, with two-free ices frown in. Hab you any ice-creams, my dear?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" replied the waitress, with a smile. "We have vanilla, coffee, chocolate, or plain water-ices."

"Vanilla! Coffee! Chocolate! My dear, we don't want all dose tings 'sides tea to drink!"

The waitress looked rather puzzled, for Pete's knowledge of ices was rather mixed, and Jack hastened to explain.

"Dat's funny!" cried Pete. "Must sample some ob dose ices presently; but de question is, what am we going to hab for a start? Dunno at all. What do you tink about it, Sammy? Shall we start off with the ices or with the shrimps?"

"Might I suggest to your Royal Highness that the proper thing would be to first——"

"What's dat?"

"This lady is under the impression that you are a prince of Royal blood," chuckled Jack.

"Eh?" gasped Pete, edging his chair back. "Must s'plain dis matter; must make it clear to dis Mrs. Montgomerymercy dat dis child am nutting but a poor black man ob colour."

"Now," said Maria, shaking her finger coyly at him, "I know how modest and unassuming those of blue blood are. You can't deceive me. I thought from the very first time I set eyes on you . . . at you came of Royal blood."

Pete gazed at Maria in silent astonishment, and his comical predicament sent Jack and Sam, who had heard the good lady's remarks, into fits of laughter.



The situation, strangely enough, was saved by Maria herself, for she took the comrades' laughter and Pete's disconcerted air for evidence that he wished to travel without revealing his true position in life. A brilliant idea flashed across her mind. She remembered a passage she had seen in a newspaper.

"Ah, I see," she observed, "you wish to travel incog."

At this remark Pete's expression became more despairing than ever, but Jack and Sam, who fully realised what the good lady meant to convey, managed to suppress their laughter and assume an attitude of gratification.

Maria beamed.

"I think we may as well have some boiled eggs," said Sam, anxious that Maria should not yet have another opportunity of tackling Pete, who looked ready to fly any moment.

"You may be sure," said Maria, leaning across the table and speaking in a very mysterious air, "that your secret is quite safe with me. I would not divulge it for the world. Charles, my dear," she went on, in a loud whisper, "I trust that you understand that his Royal Highness wishes to travel—er—well—er—unknown."

Now, Maria's whisper was something formidable, and Pete fidgeted uneasily as the couples seated at the adjoining tables turned round and eyed him curiously.

Maria continued in this strain, and conversation flagged somewhat while the eggs were being cooked, for she persisted in addressing Pete as if he were some superior being.

In sheer desperation, Pete at last began to talk of the days when he had been fearfully hard up. But his endeavours to lower himself in the eyes of Maria were an utter failure, for she merely raised her hands in amazement.

"Wonderful!" she cried. "How could you do it all? Did you hear that, Charles? What was it you said you had to eat?"

"Weevily bisquits," my dear.

"Good gracious! Nothing else? Only dry biscuits——"

"An' de little weevils."

Maria gasped.

Luckily at this juncture Rory took a hand, and created a diversion. The pailion cat had just strolled in the door of the tea-room, when Rory spotted her, and a fine to-do followed.

The waitresses screamed, and Maria added her shrill treble to the rumpus.

Pussy leaped on a table covered with neatly-arranged cups and saucers, and off again, leaving everything intact. Rory followed; but he was neither so light or so expert in the matter of jumping on tea-tables, and disaster followed. Over went the lot! The screams redoubled at this moment, and Pete, inwardly pleased at the occurrence, which seemed likely to put a stop to Maria's chattering tongue, sprang to his feet and gave pursuit.

"Rory," he bawled, "stop it! Come here at once!" But Rory was too deeply engrossed in the chase to take any notice of Pete's shouts; and it was not until pussy took refuge on a high shelf that he managed to secure him by the tail. "You'm a berry bad dog!" he muttered, as he knotted his handkerchief in Rory's collar. "Dere was bery nearly a catastrophe over dat little lot, and you am got to behave yourself, and remember dat you am in a most disrespectable place."

Rory felt his disgrace very keenly, and he looked the picture of misery as Pete led him back to their table by the handkerchief.

Sam was in deep conversation with the manageress.



"So you've got him, have you?" said Sam. "Who do you think's going to pay for all the damage?"

"Dunno, Sammy. But 'spose you take dat, my dear," he went on, turning to the manageress, "and put the change in de gravy-box."

The manageress looked rather offended at Pete's familiar mode of speaking. "I don't think," she said, "that the damage your dog has caused will amount to anything like five pounds."

"Golly, my dear, don't tink dat Rory broke eberyting. 'Spects dat pussy did a bit. But dat don't matter. Put de change in de gravy-box for de young ladies who hab had shocks to dere cisterns."

"That's all right, miss," cried Sam. "He wants you to take for the damage out of that five-pound note, and put the change in the gratuity box."

The manageress smiled slightly and departed, followed by the envious eyes of Maria, who had calculated within a few pence the actual amount of the damage.

"Charles," she whispered, "I'm sure those cups and saucers are not worth more than ninepence. Why, I saw the same thing last Saturday in the corner shop at fivepence halfpenny. Why, fivepence halfpenny, elevenpence, one-and-ten, three-and-eight, seven-and-fourpence—— Goodness gracious, the man's given that manageress about four pounds ten too much! She ought to be ashamed of herself!"

"Sh, my dear!" whispered Charles.

Maria sniffed, but turned to Pete with a smile. But directly that worthy caught her eye he started a most earnest conversation with Sam. He couldn't on the spur of the moment think of anything to say, but this is what followed:

"Knit tad dlo namow ma a tib bo a loof tnod uoy ymmas?"

Sam looked puzzled.

"Spell it back forwards," whispered Pete.

For a few seconds Sam wrinkled his brows in deep thought.

"Pots taht uoy diputs lwo," he muttered.

"Onnun, stad thgira!"

"It's not all right," growled Sam, in a low but fierce whisper. "She's got her eye on you now."

True, Maria had; but Sam's fears were groundless, for the strange dialect that greeted her ears impressed her more than ever with the idea that Pete was some high and dusky potentate. Maria telegraphed with her eyes a triumphant glance to Charles.

"Yllog! Hsiw esod sgge dluow emoc gnol!" exclaimed Pete.

"Scissors," gasped Sam, who saw that Maria had pulled out a stump of pencil, and was endeavouring to write down what she heard, "so do I! Ah, here they come!"

"One, two, free, four, five!" cried Pete. "Golly, dat's not enough! Why, dat Sammy dere could yaffle up de whole lot! Let's hab some more, my dear."

"How many more would you like, sir?" inquired the waitress, in an anxious voice. She had heard of that five pound note.

"Don't order any more for me, pray!" cried Maria, determined not to be left out. "I couldn't possibly eat more than one egg."

"All right, my dear," said Pete to the waitress; "we won't hab any more eggs. Best get dis ober quick," he muttered to Sam, "den we'll hab anoder tea far from de madding Black Maria."



By dint of a good deal of strategy Sam succeeded in keeping Maria quiet, and, the meal over, they left the tea-room.

"Oh, golly!" muttered Pete. "Hope dat Maria don't notice dat little lot!"

"Dat little lot" happened to be the folding-doors that had suggested the name of Nosmo King to Pete. They were now shut, and boldly labelled "No Smoking."

The whole company proceeded along the pier, and parted with many protestations and pressing invitations from Maria.

"We shall be only too delighted to see you and the dear prince at any time," she murmured, with a smirk that made Pete shudder.

"Good-bye, good-bye!"

### CHAPTER 3.

#### A Hot Afternoon—Pete is Disturbed, and so is Robin—The Comrades Find a Haven and a Good Dinner—Pete's "Cistern."

"TANK goodness!" murmured Pete. "Come 'long, Rory! Tought we were neber going to get rid ob dat drefful Black Maria!"

"So did I," answered Sam. "I hope we never run up against the sweet creature again."

"Nor I," cried Jack; "though I reckon Charles is as big an old woman as Maria. If we should ever have tea together again, I'll go for a walk. Phew! ain't it hot!"

Accustomed as the comrades were to tropical suns, they found the broiling sun which beat down that afternoon upon the Brighton parade nearly as much as they could bear, and both Jack and Sam were pleased when Pete suggested they should take a rest.

"Dunno 'bout dis little lot, Sammy; don't look bery strong in de back-bone, but still, we'll hab to take our chance."

Without waiting for any reply Pete plumped himself down into one of the long line of deck-chairs equipped with awnings that faced the front near the west pier.

Jack and Sam occupied the chairs nearest to him on his left. On the right of Pete was seated a loudly-dressed youth, and beside this particular young dandy reposed a lady of his acquaintance. The pair were conversing pleasantly until:

"Groo—ach!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the youth seated next to Pete. "What the dickens was that? By Jove, it must be that beastly fellow! I saw him on the boat! Haw, fancy sitting here snoring at this time of day! Here, I say, wake up will you?"

No notice was taken of this demand.

"Here you fellow, don't you hear what I say? We can't put up with that horrible noise, you know!"

"Groo—ach!"

At this juncture a leg, clad in flannels nicely creased down the centre, shot out and caught Pete somewhere in the region of his calf.

"Scissors!" exclaimed Sam, who saw Pete's foot jerk up about half an inch. "There'll be trouble in a minute, if that silly johnny doesn't keep his legs to himself! Why, it's Robin Redbreast!"

"Yes, and there will be some more trouble in a minute," murmured Jack,

"when that chap in the peak cap comes along to collect the fares!"

"Fares!" exclaimed Sam. "What are you talking about?"



"Oh, well, you know what I mean—the money for these chairs. And——"

"Groo—ach, groo—erh!"

This last outburst of Pete's attracted the attention of several passers-by, and the effect not only ended here, but it had its effect on Robin.

Seeing that the public were aware of what he pleased to term his annoyance, he sprang to his feet, and, with the courage born of affronted dignity, seized Pete by the collar.

"Oh, Alfred! Oh, Alfred, don't hurt him!" cried the youth's companion.

"No, no, Susan! It's all right—I won't hurt him!"

"Oh, but do be careful!"

"Groo—ach!"

Robin tugged and pulled and strained at that collar. It was a warm afternoon and Pete's tormentor had on rather a high collar, and whether by reason of this, or by his exertions, we need not say, but his efforts tinged his cheeks with a colour that showed bright against the surrounding paleness of his face and rivalled his red waistcoat. Jack and Sam were quietly enjoying this little exhibition, and they had more than a suspicion that Pete was pretending to be sounder asleep than he was.

"Well, I don't know what you think about it," murmured Jack, "but I think the antics of that johnny will not do much credit to his companion!"

"Neither should I," answered Sam. "Especially as I don't believe that silly owl is asleep."

"Groo—ach!"

Jack gave an appreciative grin.

"Well," he said, "if this is Pete's idea of a holiday—— Goodness!"

Jack's exclamation was fully justified, for there was a fearful crash in their vicinity. Robin had tugged too hard at Pete's collar, and displaced some of the contrivances which supported his chair, and promptly did a dive under the railings into the gutter.

"Oh, Alfred!"

"Golly! What's all dis?" exclaimed Pete, sitting up amidst the wreckage of his chair.

"Twopence, please, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sam.

"Ho, ho, ho!" echoed Jack.

"Dat's all bery fine!" cried Pete. "What—what's all dis? Here I have been upsided, and dis chap wants me to pay for it! What's all de matter? Now laugh—go on!"

Jack and Sam did—they couldn't do otherwise—for there was not only Pete to laugh at, but there was Alfred picking himself up out of the gutter. Each, in their own peculiar way, formed an example of the ludicrous.

"Oh, Alfred, Alfred! Come away, do! Don't take any notice of that wretched man!"

Alfred was only too glad of an excuse to get away, and he promptly joined the fair Susan, who cast a withering glance of indignation at Pete, who still sat amidst the ruins of his chair.

"Don't see why dat pretty lady wants to look at dis child like dat," he mumbled.

"Well, you can't wonder at it," replied Sam, "considering that you upset her young man."

"Golly! I neber upsided him!" grumbled Pete, scrambling to his feet. "Shall hab to find dat Robin anoder nest! Oh, he'm gone! Golly! Don't look as if dat chair would be much use as a chair any longer! How much is dat little lot?"



"Scissors!" gasped Sam. "We shall be ruined if he goes on at this rate! It strikes me that this holiday is going to cost us a bit!"

"You ought to be very thankful dat de pavement didn't strike you on de back ob de noddle, like it did dis child! How much did you say dat was, old hoss? Twopence for sitting in de chair, and five shillings for de damage? Now, I don't tink dat am at all fair, an'——"

"Here, take this!" exclaimed Sam, thrusting some coins into the ticket-collector's hand. "Let's get him away from this," he whispered to Jack; "there's a bobbie coming, and if Pete starts to argue the point with him there will be trouble."

After some considerable difficulty, Jack and Sam succeeded in getting Pete away, and they made straight for an hotel.

"I reckon we'll have to keep you locked up in your bedroom, if you can't behave yourself better than this!" growled Sam, as they entered the hall.

"Can we have some tea? I suppose you can put us up for a few days?" inquired Jack of the proprietor, who came forward.

"Oh, yes, you can have some tea, but I don't know about what rooms we've got. You see, it's our busy time. Wait a bit, though; I'll just inquire. Miss Marshall!"

The young lady clerk looked out of the little office-window, and smiled slightly as she caught sight of Pete.

"Yes, Mr. Howard?"

"Oh, these gentlemen wish to stay here for a time. I believe you have No.'s 16 and 17 vacant—17, I believe, is a single room, but I suppose you don't object to that?" he said, turning to Sam.

"No, fear—that's all right! Pete can have that room, and we'll share the other. Now we'll have a brush and wash-up, then we'll have some tea, please. What was that you said, miss?"

"What names, sir?"

"Oh," Sam laughed, "put us down as Jack, Sam, and Pete!" he said.

Miss Marshall looked rather doubtful at this, and the comrades smiled broadly, and, as they went on their way upstairs, Pete laid a couple of five-pound notes on the desk.

"Put dat little lot down to dis child's account," he murmured. "But you had better keep one ob dose pretty eyes ob yours on Jack and Sammy, case dey run away widout paying dere bill!"

Miss Marshall came as near chuckling as a young lady ever does, and she gravely entered the amount to the credit of the three comrades.

"How much did he give you?" inquired Mr. Howard.

"Ten pounds on account, sir."

"H'm! I wish they would all do that!"

When Jack and Sam came down refreshed, they found tea laid for them in a little private room.

"Now dis is something like!" cried Pete, as he surveyed the well-spread table. "Now, don't talk to me, dis am dis child's busy day!"

Judging by the way those good things disappeared, it certainly did seem as if Pete was in real earnest, and Mr. Howard looked rather alarmed when he came in to see if his new guests were going on all right.

"What!" he cried. "Didn't they bring you any cake, or bread-and-butter?"

"Oh, yes," replied Jack. "There was plenty here a little while ago, but you see our friend Pete has rather a big appetite!"

"Well, I must go and order some more, I suppose!" said Mr. Howard, with a laugh.



"Nunno!" cried Pete. "Mustn't spoil Jack and Sammy's infernal cisterns! 'Sides, dis child am going to hab some dinner presently!"

The proprietor looked rather surprised at Pete's language.

"Infernal cisterns?" he murmured, half aloud. "What?"

Jenkins, the head waiter, stuffed his napkin in his mouth.

"Internal systems, is what he means," explained Sam.

"Don't see what you want to interfere for in dis child's language," grumbled Pete.

"Well, you see, some people not used to your strange expressions might describe it as bad language!" retorted Sam.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Den shall hab to mind my peas and potatoes! Now, den, old hoss, what 'bout dat dinner? Can we hab it by seben o'clock? 'Cos Jack and Sammy are rader delicate, and require feeding regular wid beef-steaks, roast beef, gravy and potatoes, and as a rule dey finish up wid fromage ally brem-cheese!"

"Here, that'll do!" exclaimed Jack. "Let's have a stroll round!"

#### CHAPTER 4.

#### Mr. Symes Gives His Opinion of Jack, Sam and Pete—Pete's Joy and Some Ventriloquism—A Deferred Account—Peace.

PUNCTUALLY at seven, Pete came bounding up the steps of the hotel.

"Hi! Got dat dinner ready?" he called, as he caught sight of Mr. Howard. "Golly! But dis Brighton air does obeite de appetite! An' Jack an' Sammy can hardly crawl along, dey are so faint wid starvation!"

This latter statement was rather discounted by the robust appearance of Jack and Sam, as they passed Mr. Howard into the dining-room.

"Dis little lot'll just put us right for supper," mumbled Pet, as he attacked a huge sirloin of beef. "Feel better, Sammy?"

"Never felt better in my life!" replied Sam. "I shouldn't think you would like to board this chap under ten pounds a week, would you, Mr. Howard?" he inquired, as the landlord entered the room and gazed in amazement at the havoc wrought by Pete.

"Well, I don't know about that. Perhaps he doesn't eat as much every day!"

"Oh, you try, and see!" exclaimed Jack.

"Don't you be so mighty impersonal wid dose remarks ob yours! Hab some fromage ally brem-cheese!"

"If you gentlemen would like to have a quiet smoke after dinner," exclaimed Mr. Howard, hurrying from the room, "you will find the coffee-room just across the hall there—just by the stairs!"

When, a few minutes later, the three comrades entered the coffee-room, a shrill, high-pitched voice attracted Pete's notice to a far corner of the room.

"Golly," he muttered to Sam, "did you hear that?"

"No," replied Sam, "I did not. What was it?"

Pete did not answer for a moment, but flung himself into a huge leather armchair.

"Just you keep dose flappers of yours open, Sammy. I believe dat chap was talking about de old hoss."

"What old hoss?" inquired Jack.



"Our biographer, ob course."

For a few minutes the comrades listened to that shrill voice in silence, and it must be said that they were not listening to anything that the speaker intended they should not hear, for every word that passed his lips could be heard in every corner of that room, large as it was.

"Mustn't disinterrupt de gentleman at present," said Pete, in a low tone, "but wish de old hoss, our biographer, was in dis room to hear what dat silly old fossil am saying about him. Jest listen to dat."

"That" was certainly, from the comrades' point of view, worth listening to, and Pete hugged the arms of his chair with delight.

"I tell you," cried the object of their attentions, addressing himself to the little party sitting at his table—"I tell you," he repeated, smacking his clenched fist into the open palm of the other—"I tell you that if any boy of mine were to read such rubbish as is written about those three chaps, Jack, Sam, and Pete, I would ram the paper down his throat, and—"

"But, I say, Symes," interrupted rather a genial-looking chap, who had been sitting quietly smoking and listening with a slightly amused expression on his face to the other's outburst, "you don't look like a family man. Have you any children?"

"I haven't," snapped the other; "but that is quite beside the point. I was merely trying to illustrate my argument. It seems to me, Hall, that you are rather inclined to champion stories of the kind of which I have been speaking."

Symes shut his mouth with a snap, and glared across the table at the unruffled Hall.

"I don't know that I have anything to say for or against what you are pleased to term abominable rubbish," replied Hall, blowing out a huge cloud of smoke, "but I do think that it is a matter of congratulation that a man of your violent views does not happen to be the father of a family, for I should say that, despite the appetite of the average boy, he would find it difficult to assimilate by means of his throat what is only intended to feed the brain. In fact, I think your tongue has rather belied you, for I have always considered you to be a humane rather than a violent man; but your threat to ram several yards of paper down a boy's throat savours of the brutal."

"Look here, Hall," cried Symes, banging his fist down on the table, "you're quibbling. You must have known that was merely using a metaphorical term, and I should have thought a man of your sense," he added heatedly, "would have so understood me."

Here Symes again raised his fist, with a view of pinning down what he had to say. It was unfortunate for the company seated near him that he did not stay to look before he brought down his fist, and they showed their knowledge that his action was unfortunate by a series of yells and growls of resentment.

Symes's fist had plumped smack into the middle of a cup of steaming coffee that had been placed at his side by a silent-footed waiter, and the contents of that cup was squirted with disastrous effects upon all within range of the scalding spray.

"Ow, ow, ow!" yelled Symes, leaping to his feet and hugging to himself his scalded hand. "Who—who—who did that? You—you—you fool of a waiter! What the dickens did you want to stick that beastly thing there for? Can't you see?"

"It's pretty evident," cried Hall, "that you couldn't see. I'd much rather listen to your arguments than be bathed in coffee; and I think I



have good grounds for my preference," he chuckled. "The next time you——"

"Yah, yah, yah!"

Hall broke off suddenly, turned in amazement, and stared across the room. Symes stood motionless, with glaring eyes and mouth widely opened.

"Yah, yah, yah! Golly, you'm de funniest old hoss dat hab eber extinguished himself! You'm certainly the first-class hand at giving people beans. Yah, yah, yah! Must explain dat joke—coffee-beans, I mean."

For a few seconds Symes gaped at Pete with open mouth; then his anger blazed forth, and he drew himself up. He was something under five feet, but to Symes he presented a very dignified appearance. A man's inches are measured by his amount of dignity or bumptiousness, and Symes had certainly more than his share of this latter qualification.

"You impertinent fellow! You—you dare to speak to me in that fashion! I will have you turned out of this place!"

"Oh, sit down," cried Hall; "we don't want any fuss about the matter!"

"I refuse to sit in the presence of a nigger," cried Symes.

"Strikes me, then," put in Sam, "that you'll have to stand up."

Two or three of the visitors present chuckled audibly at this, which naturally made Symes more angry than ever.

"I can't make out how you gentlemen," he cried, turning to Jack and Sam, "can associate with a black man."

"Yet gentlemen generally understand one another's motive," said Sam softly.

"Well, I don't!" snapped Symes.

"Naturally you would not," retorted Sam.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Symes, very red in the face. He felt he was being chipped by Sam, yet he was not quite sure how.

"Yah, yah, yah!" bellowed Pete close to the fiery-tempered little man's ear. "Look out, Sammy; de gentleman an getting cross!"

"How dare you make that horrible row in my ear?" hooted Symes.

"Golly! Dat your ear, old hoss?" exclaimed Pete. "Tought it was a fan sticking out. Must hab been my fancy, dough. Fancy dat, now!"

"I will give you in custody!" shrieked Symes, getting more and more angry.

"Shut up!"

Symes broke off abruptly, swung round, and glared at the smiling faces of the rest of the company.

"Who made that remark?" he cried, his small eyes twinkling with rage. "It's abominable I——"

"You are a silly chump!"

The voice caused Symes to swerve round as if he was fixed to a pivot, and he stared amazedly at an art-pot.

"Poor old stupid Symes!"

The voice this time was a gruff one, not the least like Pete's, and it sounded in Symes left ear. The irate man stamped his foot with baffled rage.

"Who said that?" he roared.

"Silly old Symes!"

"Symes is a gentleman."

"I don't think!"

"Symes is a Welshman."

"Symes came to my house and stole a leg of beef."

All these cries came from different parts of the room, in voices pitched in



different keys; but the company roared with laughter at the last remark, which was uttered in a deep, rumbling bass.

The unfortunate man fairly spluttered with rage.

"I won't stand it!" he shrieked.

"Don't, then!"

"I will not put up with this——"

"Don't, then!"

"I will fetch the landlord!"

To the chorus of everyone's laughter Symes dashed from the room and clattered down the stairs. He missed his footing about six steps from the bottom, and landed on a mat bearing the word "Welcome."

"Hallo, Mr. Symes!" exclaimed the landlord. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"How dare you laugh at me?" snarled Symes, as he picked himself up. "There, I have been insulted by that wretched black man you allow to remain in your house; I come to report the matter to you, and you—you, the landlord of this establishment, laugh!"

"Sorry, Mr. Symes," said Mr. Howard, with difficulty pulling a serious face, "but you must admit your—er—arrival was rather funny."

"I admit nothing of the kind, sir. Give me my bill at once—at once, I say!"

Here was a proposition that succeeded in immediately bringing the landlord to a serious state of mind, though it was in quite a different way to what Symes expected.

"Certainly, sir!" he cried, darting into his office. "Here, Miss Marshall, make out Mr. Symes's bill, will you? Good job, too," he muttered, in a low voice. "He's a cantankerous beggar, and I was not so certain of getting my money; he's been here over a fortnight."

When Symes saw the landlord vanish into his office, and heard that order given about his bill, he cooled down in remarkably quick time. He had expected abject apologies, but things had turned out very differently.

"Miss Marshall," he said to the young lady accountant, "I—er—have decided to remain here a few days longer. It is not—er—convenient for me to change my address just at present."

"Our terms are——"

"Oh, that's all right!" interrupted Symes, waving his hand. "And, I say, you might change my room for one on the first floor, will you? I can't stand the abominable row that black man kicks up every night."

"That will be ten shillings extra."

"All right. Tell Mr. Howard I've changed my mind about leaving his hotel."

"But look here, Mr. Symes," said the landlord, coming from the little room partitioned off at the back of the office, "I shall be glad——"

"Don't mention it, my dear fellow!" interrupted Symes. "I beg of you not to mention it. I see now the humour of the position."

"But I——"

"Not a word. I accept your excuses. No doubt under the same circumstances, I should have done the same. He, he, he!"

Symes giggled somewhat falsely and promptly went upstairs.

"I'm not at all sure about that chap's money, Miss Marshall," grumbled the landlord. "What do you think about it. He's never stopped here before, has he?"

"I don't think so, Mr. Howard. He does seem a funny sort of man. I thought that he was in an awful temper."

"Oh, well——" muttered her employer. "Let's see, to-day's Thursday."



Well, we'll let him slide till Saturday, then I shall demand a settlement. Have you got his bill up to date?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much is it?"

"Eight pounds fourteen-and-sixpence."

"Umph! A tidy sum to lose. Well, no matter; we'll do the best we can. Remind me to see him Saturday morning."

"Yes, sir."

Symes did not put in another appearance in the coffee-room that evening and the comrades spent a very enjoyable evening until bedtime.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Pete's Treat—"De Gub'ner's Cart"—A Visit to the Dyke—A Downfall.

"DON'T know 'bout dis at all!" said Pete, shaking his head. "Some-how dis holiday am not working out at all to dis child's liking. How much money hab you got, Sammy?"

Sam turned out the contents of his pocket on the breakfast-table.

"Hum! Two, free, four, five, six, seven, eight! And how much hab you got, Jack?"

Jack obediently followed Sam's example.

"Nine, ten, eleven, twelve! How much is dat axtogeder?"

"Why, you silly coon, you've just counted it!"

"Why, so I hab! Well, neber mind, dat don't matter."

"Here, stop it," exclaimed Sam; "that's all the money we've got!"

"Don't you be so mean, Sammy," replied Pete, calmly clearing the table and sweeping each coin into his own pocket. "Dis child am going to take you out for a treat."

"Well, I can't see why you can't take us out for a treat, and let us keep our own money," retorted Sam.

"Don't you see? Golly, but you must be stupid! Now, I'll just 'splain de matter. It stands to reason dat if you came out wid dis child wid all dat money in your pockets, you wouldn't be able to spend it."

"That's a fine sort of argument!" grumbled Jack.

"You wait a bit, and don't disinterrupt. Now, not habing any money, you will appreciate the holiday all de more, 'cos you won't be put to any expense, for dis child will pay for eberyting." Pete leaned back in his chair and beamed pleasantly at Jack and Sam. "Now, don't you tink dat am a very good idea?"

"No, I don't."

"Neither do I," repeated Jack.

"Well, dat am settled, den," replied Pete. "It habing been put to de vote and carried wid animosity, you two can go and put your hats on, and we will go for a walk."

"What the thump does the silly owl mean by it?" cried Sam. "I suppose you mean unanimously, though I should say there would be a deal of animosity if you had collared anyone else's money."

"Look here," said Pete, "dis little lot am supposed to be our holiday time, and I don't see de sense ob doing anyting at all. So don't you worry. As Wagglespeare says, if you hab nutting to do, do it with a will; and dis child hab de greatest will in de world to do nutting. Now, what shall we do dis morning?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack. "In one breath, you say——"



"Now den, Jack, you'm not to get into dat bad habit ob laughing at your superiors! Don't you know dat what dis child says and Wagglespeare says am de truth?"

"Don't know about that, mate," said Sam. "I reckon that there's a play on in London that you, at least, ought to go and see."

"What's dat, Sammy?"

"Why, 'The Liars,' of course!"

"You're mighty cheeky, Sammy! Tink dere must be someting in de Brighton air dat affects de brainbox ob some people. Now, let's return to de question under discussion—dat is, what we'm going to do dis morning?"

"But, look here, Pete," cried Jack, "you said just now you were not going to do anything."

"Golly! But dere's reason in all tings——"

"Except a certain gentleman of colour that I know!" interrupted Sam. "Here! Stop it, you image!"

"Sorry, Sammy!" cried Pete, who had been trying to strike a match down the back of Sam's neck, "Tought it was a brick-wall by de colour ob it!"

"You silly owl!" growled Sam, edging his chair away.

"Neber mind, Sammy," said Pete, pretending to stroke his chum's back. "Don't get waxy! Yah, yah, yah! Dat's de first joke ob de morning. See if you can match dat lot."

"Strike a light!" growled Jack. "'Pun my word, if he gets on to that track, we sha'n't finish before dinner-time!"

Sam got up in disgust.

"From what I can see of it," he grumbled, "you are doing your level best to match Pete's stupid punning. Now, what are you laughing at?"

For an instant Sam stood looking at his comrades; then he, too, as he realised his involuntary pun, burst into a roar of laughter.

In the middle of their merriment the head-waiter entered the room, and it was some little time before they became aware of his presence. Jenkins gave a diffident little cough, but he might just as well have fired a pop-gun in a raging gale for all the difference it made. Seeing this, he advanced and, clearing his throat, gave vent to what he considered a mighty cough.

"Golly! What's dat? Dat's a funny sort ob noise!" cried Pete. "Tink dere's an excaped chicken or someting or oder under de table. Nunno! Dere's nutting dere. Ha, good-morning, old hoss! How'm you dis fine morning?"

Jenkins gave a nervous little laugh, and shook his head at the black hand outstretched to him. He was a wise man, and did not by any means feel inclined to trust his hand in that huge black paw.

"Good-morning, gentlemen!" he murmured, rubbing his hands together. Jenkins always went through a mimic hand-washing when he felt nervous. "I was about to suggest," he added, as he looked from one to the other, "a drive."

"De bery ting," yelled Pete, springing to his feet, and giving the waiter a thump on the back that made his teeth chatter—"de bery ting! Dat 'zactly fills de programme, so's dis child can take Jack and Sammy for a treat."

"Where shall we drive to?" inquired Jack.

"Well, I was about to suggest the Dyke," answered Jenkins.

"On a bike, old hoss?"

"Now, none of that!" growled Sam. "We have had quite enough of your attempts at punning this morning; we don't want any more, er rhyming, either!"



"Oh, you are a briny chap!" chuckled Pete. "See?"

"I see—well, never mind what. Now, Jenkins," continued Sam, "what sort of conveyance have you?"

"Well, we have an open brougham, or governess-cart."

"What's dat, old hoss?" said Pete.

"A governess-cart," replied Jenkins.

"Golly! Dat's a funny sort ob ting to go 'bout in! Do we hab to take de governess 'long wid us?"

"Oh, no, of course! That's only the name of the vehicle," replied Jenkins, quite seriously.

"Dat so, old hoss? Eh? Well, you don't tink de people would tink I was de guberness, or Sammy, or Jack, do you? 'cos dat would be rader awkward. Habn't you a gub'nor's-cart?"

This was even a little too much for the unsophisticated Jenkins, and his eyes twinkled suspiciously behind his gold-rimmed glasses, and he rubbed his hands softly together.

"Well, look here," said Sam, "we won't waste your time any longer; we'll take the governess-cart. When will it be ready?"

"It's ready now. Mr. Howard ordered it specially for you."

"Good! Now then, you lazy beggar, out of it!"

"Steady on, Sammy!" cried Pete. "Can't go like dis; must put my riding-breeches on!"

"Oh, scissors!" answered Jack. "You're not going for a ride; you are going for a drive. If you want to change anything, go and change that face!"

"Golly!" cried Pete, rushing to the looking-glass. "What am de matter wid my face? Don't see anyting de matter! Do you, Jack?"

"No, mate; it's the same as ever."

"Well, that's bad enough!" answered Sam. "No; you don't, you beauty!"

Pete had made a grab at Sam, but that worthy dodged, and, making a dash for the door, presently emerged on the steps of the hotel, in front of which was waiting a smart little turnout.

"We shall be back to dinner, old hoss!" cried Pete to Mr. Howard, who had just come to the door to see them off. "Ta-ta! Gee-up!"

"Better call it luncheon while you're about it, considering you'll have another dinner at seven o'clock."

"Dat so, Sammy? Golly! 'Specs dese African billionaires hab two-free lunches an' dinners an' suppers an' teaseses ebery day. Gee-up! Whoa! Dat's all right, my dear!" cried Pete, as he pulled up to allow an old lady to cross the road. "We am not in a hurry, so long as we are back in time for dat big luncheon."

Jack and Sam chaffed Pete unmercifully all the time during the drive up the hills to the Dyke.

"Hi," cried Pete, as they drew up at an hotel near the top—"hi! Jus take care ob dis guberness, will you? Shall be back in two-free minutes. Jus going to show dese two de Debil's Dyke. What am you grinning at?"

"Beg pardon, sir!" replied the hostler, pulling a long face. "I sort of had a pain in my innerds!"

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete, as he jumped out of the cart and threw the reins to the man. "Hope dat pain ain't catching. Dere's half-a-crown for you! Get a muster-plaster and put it on de seat ob it!"

"Magnificent!" exclaimed Jack, as they stood on the top of the tremendous hill, and gazed over the country spread out before them like a panorama. "I believe one can see seven counties from here."



"M'yes!" said Pete. "I'd rader see a bit ob bread-and-cheese! Wish I was a cow, den I could hab some ob dose buttercups! Oh, hellup! Put on de brake, Sammy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack and Sam, as Pete slipped on the smooth hillside, and went sprawling over.

"I reckon it's hilldown, not hellup!" cried Sam. "Ah, he's pulled up at last!"

"I'm down on de downs!" cried Pete. "Come an' gib your lubing comrade a hand!"

"I'll give you my boot if you don't buck up!" cried Jack. "Hallo! Sam, there's a gipsy coming up behind him. Evidently he doesn't know she's coming. Let's go down and hear what she has to say."

## CHAPTER 6.

**Pete's Fortune—De Downs wid de Prickles—A Race—Jack and Sam Get Soft—A Walk in the Sunshine—Pete's Philosophy and Treat—A Quick Lunch.**

"ROSS my palm with silver coin, sir, and I will tell you your fortune."

Now, Pete is not a particularly nervous sort of chap, but the sound of that low voice, coming so unexpectedly, caused him to turn abruptly.

The large, lustrous eyes of a young gipsy met his gaze calmly, even haughtily, for, although poorly clad, the girl showed in her bearing all the dignity of the pure-blooded nomadic race.

The folds of the grey, tattered shawl, drawn tightly across her breast, concealed, but the outlines of its folds revealed the fact that she was carrying a baby.

"Don't you tink, my dear, dat what you am going to do am a bit difficult? Suppose you hab a go at Jack first, 'cause dough I don't tink his hand am bery clean, I 'spects de lines on dem am a bit clearer dan dis child's. What's your name?"

"Nance."

"And you tink you can tell our fortunes? Now den, Jack, hold out dat paw for de young lady to tell us what a bad character you are! Eh? What's dat, my dear? Cross your palm? Golly! I forgot!"

Pete slipped a coin into the brown, slender hand. For a moment Nance gazed at that coin in amazement; then she seized Pete's black paw.

"Golly!" he cried. "What's de matter? Don't you tink dat de charm will work just as well wid gold as wid silver?"

"Oh, yes, sir! It's not that," cried Nance; "but—but——"

"Oh, neber mind 'bout dat! Tell us how much ob a fortune we am got."

"I'll tell you your fortune, and these kind gentlemen as well. You have——"

"How much?"

"You have good fortune and hap——"

"Nunno—nunno! You am got to tell us our fortune, my dear!"

"But I am."

"Nunno; you'm not! You'm got to say how much money we am got—dat's our fortune."

"Oh, but I can't do that!"

"Den, you am a bery bad fortune-teller!"

The sound of Pete's voice was gruff, and her eyes filled with tears. Nance let his hand drop, and held out the coin Pete had just given her:



"Nunno, my dear! Dat was only my fun. You see, neither Jack nor Sammy or dis child hab much belief in de telling ob fortunes."

Nance tried hard to conceal her emotion. The lines on her young face had been carved by her life of hardship. She was no stranger to want and positive hunger, and the desire to retain the coin Pete had given her, and at the same time preserve her dignity by earning it, according to her lights, caused her mouth to harden, as she hugged her small charge closer.

"I thank you!" she said simply.

Pete's quick eye had noticed practically all that had passed in Nance's mind, and his jolly face showed his disappointment at having given pain with his gift.

"Look here, my dear," he cried, "we'm got a lot ob dose little yellow coins, and two-free, more or less, don't make any difference. But if you want to tell somebody's fortune, tell us de fortune ob dat little beggar you am hugging so closely."

"I fear he has but a mother's love," answered Nance.

"And a bery good fortune, too!" exclaimed Pete. "S'pose you gib him dese to play wid? Nunno!" he went on, as Nance drew back. "We am not gibing dese tings to you; dey are for de little one. De only ting dat you am got to do is to see dat he don't swallow dem. Golly, Sammy," he yelled, "what's dat ober dere? Must be a house on fire. Come on, boys; let's fro' some water on it!"

Pete, followed by Jack and Sam, darted away at full speed, and Nance was left standing alone. In her hand was held the money Pete had given her, and in her heart an unspoken blessing that the comrades' sudden departure had prevented her from putting into words.

Directly they were out of sight of the gipsy, Pete pulled up with a suddenness that caused Jack and Sam to flounder into him, and they all three rolled amongst the gorse.

"Hi, hellup! Prickly!" yelled Pete, leaping to his feet and mopping his brow. "Golly! But dat was a narrow shave! Twice down de downs in one day!"

"I don't think it was a shave at all," said Sam, tenderly rubbing that portion of him which had sampled the prickles. "I feel more as if I had collided with a motor-bus than missed it."

"Must take de bumps wid de downs, an' get up wid de prickles, ob course!" said Pete, getting slightly mixed. "Golly! But it was awful! Thought dat Nance was going to cry ebery minute. Don't you tink dat I ought to be an ambassador, or someting ob dat kind? Dere's not de slightest doubt dat diplomatics am de sort ob ting dis child am cut out for."

"Scissors!" gasped Sam. "Diplomacy, I suppose you mean? That 'cistern' of yours won't hold water!"

"No," added Jack, with a laugh; "but that stroke of genius about the house on fire decidedly proves that Pete has, at least, one of the qualifications necessary to a diplomatist."

"What's dat, Jack?"

"A capacity for telling unlimited lies! You might better have found some excuse, by saying there was a bird flying or a sheep nibbling the grass, for there's certainly not a brick in sight, let alone a house on fire."

"Dat don't matter, Jack. You see, you am not born to be a diplomaticks. You see, if dere had been a house on fire dere would hab been no diplomacy 'bout de matter."

"I see," said Jack. "What about lunch?"

"That's done it!" panted Sam, as the pair raced after Pete, who had



darted off like a terrier after a rat at the word lunch. "Now, we sha'n't be long!"

Sam little thought how true his words would prove. But it was not long before they both realised that Jack's remarks had done it in more senses than one. Pete was a good couple of hundred yards ahead.

"How that beauty can run like that after the breakfast he put away I can't make out. Scissors! What the thump's he up to now? Come on, Jack! Hi! Don't let him go! The silly owl!"

Jack and Sam put on a mighty spurt, but by the time they had covered half the distance between them and Pete, they saw him jump into the governess-cart and drive off.

The ostler grinned pleasantly as they came up, and spat with evident enjoyment on the coin Pete had thrust into his hand as he had gathered up the reins.

"This is carrying things a bit too far!" grumbled Sam.

"I wish he'd carry us a bit further," replied Jack, mopping his brow.

The ostler grinned unsympathetically, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Well, gents, I'll bid you good-morning!"

"Self-satisfied beggar!" grumbled Sam, as he watched the man disappear into the hotel. "I wonder how we're going to get back?"

"There's a station somewhere about here," said Jack.

"Oh, good! That'll do!"

"But——"

Jack thrust his hands into his trouser-pockets and looked at Sam. Sam stared at him wonderingly, then he, too, plunged his hands into his pockets. They were empty!

Jack and Sam stared at each other for some time in silence. The situation was too awful for words.

"Seven miles!"

"And hot enough to bake potatoes!"

"What shall we do?"

"I don't know."

"We can't ride."

Without another word, Jack and Sam turned, and started off down the long, dusty road.

"Another six miles!" groaned Sam, after a quarter of an hour's steady walking. "I'll get even with the beauty when I catch him!"

"Look! What's that?" cried Jack, after an interval of another five minutes.

"Looks to me like a motor-car," replied Sam. "Wish it was going the other way, then we might get a lift."

"It's not a motor-car; it's a— it's a trap!" cried Jack.

"I've had about enough of Pete's traps!" answered Sam.

"But it is Pete!" yelled Jack, as he saw Pete's jolly face come out of the cloud of dust.

"Hallo, boys!" cried Pete. "Jump up, or we shall be late for luncheon! Yah, yah, yah! What's de matter wid you, Sammy? Oh, golly, I hab had a drefful time! Tought I had lost you. Yah, yah—— Eh? Dat's better!"

Pete broke off in the middle of his laugh. He was now in high good-humour, for Jack and Sam were laughing heartily.

"All the same, though," said Jack, as Pete turned the trap round and started for their hotel, "I think that that treat you promised us has been a bit of a failure."

"I'm mighty sure it has!" replied Sam.



"Yah, yah, yah! Den you'm bof mighty wrong."

"How do you make that out?" demanded Sam.

"Golly! De explanation am bery simple. When you two were left standing outside de hotel, you found dat you hadn't, either ob you, any money, and, ob course, you had to start wid your trilbies, and you tought dat if you could only get a ride it would be a treat. Ain't dat so?"

"Go on!" growled Sam.

"Den dis good-natured child comes 'long an' gibs you de treat. Ain't dat right?"

"That's all very fine," replied Jack. "But if you hadn't collared all our money we could have come back by train."

"An' dat's got nuffin to do wid de argument. You'm indebted to dis child for a treat, an' you can't say dat you habn't had it! Gee-up!"

Pete's method of reasoning was quite unanswerable, according to himself; and the three reached the hotel still arguing.

"You boys want some money!" he cried, in a loud voice, as they entered the hotel. "Now, be mighty careful wid it! Dey am mighty extrabagant, old hoss," he informed the landlord. "M'yes! We'm had a bery nice dribe, tank you!"

"It's only another of his jokes," said Sam. "You'll get used to him presently."

"Say," cried Pete, in the middle of lunch, "let's be quick ober dis little lot, an' take de boat to de Isle ob Wight!"

"Not unless you promise to behave yourself," declared Sam.

"Golly! Dis child neber misbehaves himself!" cried Pete. "Come 'long! Dere's only anoder ten minutes."

"But there's the pudding to come!" cried Jenkins.

"Dat don't matter. You can hab it."

Jack and Sam followed Pete at full speed.

"We daren't trust him alone," gasped Sam, flinging his napkin aside.

## CHAPTER 7.

### Pete's Great Jump—The Three Comrades in the Isle of Wight.

**A**LWAYS rush when you'm on a holiday!" cried Pete, as they ran down the pier. "Gibes you something to do! Jump, Sammy!"

Sam did, followed by Jack, and by the time it came to Pete's turn, the boat was a good ten feet from the end of the pier.

"Keep back—keep back!" roared the captain.

"Golly! Can't lose dis little lot!" muttered Pete, backing a few feet and taking a sharp run. "I'm coming!" he yelled in mid-air. There was a sharp scramble on board the lower deck of that boat as Pete's form showed black against the sky, and the next instant he landed as lightly as a feather-weight, and beamed pleasantly at the astonished passengers. "Gib my lub to de captain," he cried to one of the sailors, "an' say dat I hab arribed safely!"

Jack and Sam were rather anxious about their comrade, and they descended to the lower deck, but not a sign of him could they see.

"Are you looking for that there chap wot jumped aboard when we was about thirty feet from the pier?" inquired a sailor, who had seen the three board the boat.

"Yes," replied Sam. "Have you seen him?"

"Can't say as I 'ave," replied the man—"leastways, not since he came aboard."



"Then you can't tell us anything?" replied Sam impatiently. "Here, come on, Jack; let's have a look round! We can't have him running loose like this."

They spent nearly the whole of the journey out in searching for Pete. "Listen!" cried Jack, as they passed down a narrow passage by the engine-room.

"Gro-ach!"

"That's him, right enough!" cried Sam. "But where is he—in here? Yes; there he is, sure enough!"

Sam had pulled open a little door leading to a store-room, and comfortably stretched out on sacks was Pete, snoring away as serenely as if he was in his own bed. Sam bent over him, and shook him vigorously.

"Gurr— Golly! What's de matter? Time for brekfus?"

"No, you sleepy-headed owl! Come on, wake up!"

"Eh?" muttered Pete, sitting up and gazing sleepily at Sam. "What's de time?"

"Time you were up on deck. We shall be landing in a minute."

"Golly!" yelled Pete, springing to his feet. "I wanted to see dat island from a distance! Why didn't you wake me before, Sammy?"

"Why didn't you let us know where you were going?" exclaimed Jack, as they went up on deck. "You've wasted all our afternoon. We've been looking for you all over the shop. Keep off my feet!"

The boat had bumped up against the little wooden pier, and the shock sent Pete, who was only half-awake, stumbling on to Jack's foot.

"Golly! Dat your foot? Funny ting how some people can't keep deir tootsies to demselbes!"

"Never mind about that now," said Sam. "Let's get on!"

"Off, you mean, Sammy!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Sam. "The boat only stops here for an hour, and we sha'n't see much of the island unless we buck up!"

"Can't we hab someting to eat first ob all, Sammy?"

"No! Here, come back, you silly owl!"

But before Sam had finished speaking Pete had vanished down the stairs leading to the saloon; but in a moment or two he reappeared with his hands full of ham-sandwiches.

"Dere!"

He had made a move to deposit them in Sam's pocket, much to the amusement of their fellow-passengers.

"No; you don't, you beauty!" growled Sam. "The best thing you can do with those things is to carry them yourself. Either eat them or put them in your own pockets."

"But dey am greasy, Sammy!"

"Well, suppose they are, it's all the more reason why you should carry them yourself. I'm not going to have the things stuffed in my pocket!"

"You ham not—eh?"

"No; and I tell you——"

"Pass along there, please—pass along!"

Further discussion was put to an end, and Jack, Sam, and Pete lined up with the rest of the passengers as the gangway was pushed ashore. After five minutes of very slow progression along the stairs of the pier, Jack, Sam, and Pete at last reached a turnstile.

"Twopence each to land here!" cried a rough voice.

"What's dat?" ejaculated Pete. "What's de twopence for?"



"To land, of course! If you haven't got any money, go home and borrow it!"

"Now den, old hoss——"

"Now, I ain't got no time to argue with you. Get on or get off! You are blocking up the gangway!"

Murmurs of anger came from the crowd of people behind the comrades. They wanted to land, but their angry murmurs were not so much directed against the comrades, as by reason of the unreasonable demand for a twopenny landing-fee.

"You'm a bery cheeky old hoss!" said Pete, grabbing the official by the collar of his coat and gently shaking him. "Don't s'pose it am altogeder your fault, but can't understand why de landing-fee is not charged for when we buy our tickets. Dere's no sense in bringing people all de way from Brighton for two-free shillings, den making dem pay anoder twopence just to land. Shall hab to write to de Lord Mayor ob London or somebody 'bout dis. No; can't stop to listen to you any more. Take dat, and keep de change for being de good serbant ob a bad cistern!"

How ever much the man may have felt disinclined to listen to Pete's lecture, his resentment vanished like snow before a tropical sun, as the golden coin Pete had flung down on the metal top of the turnstile tinkled pleasantly in his ear. In fact, his amazement was so great that passenger after passenger landing from that boat passed him without the usual demand for twopence.

"Reckon that this works out at a bob a shake," thought the man aloud, as he remembered Pete's little grip; "and I reckon that ain't so bad. Let 'em all come, that's what I say, if they like to pay a quid a time!"

When the comrades reached the second turnstile at the shore-end of the pier, Pete gravely produced twopence, and slammed it down in front of the little window.

"What's this for?" demanded the man in the box.

"Twopence, old hoss—two coppers, and better ones, too, dan you see walking 'bout de streets."

"Here, who are you getting at? What do you want? Want picture-postcards?"

"Nunno—nunno! Dat twopence am for de benefit ob de owners ob dis rotten old pier. If dey don't want it to build a new pavilion wid, tell dem to erect a park or build a bandstand for de benefit ob dis twopenny island!"

As Jack, Sam, and Pete passed the turnstile, the man in the box shook his head gravely.

"Here, Bill," he cried, as the keeper who had received Pete's sovereign poked his head in the doorway, "do you know anything about them coves? Are they lunatics or millionaires? One of them chucked twopence at me! What's that?"

The man's eyes fairly bulged out of his head as they fastened on the coin snugly reposing in Bill's hand.

"I should say," answered Bill, "that them 'ere chaps are hexentric millionaires; you take my word for it. And if I was you, I should be mighty perlite to them three when they come to this 'ere turnstile on their way back again. Now, old son, come and 'ave a glass ov beer."

"Can't, mate," replied the other sorrowfully; "duty's first, you know. But," he added hopefully, "I will jine you in a glass this evening."

"What have you done with those sandwiches?" inquired Sam, as they walked along the edge of the sunlit bay towards the Chine.



Pete woke from his reverie over the injustice of charging people twopence for landing on an island with a start.

"Dunno, Sammy," he answered, patting himself all over. "I habn't got dose sandwiches!"

The truth of this statement was speedily proved to the satisfaction, or, rather, dissatisfaction, of Jack and Sam. With one accord they plunged their hands into their own pockets.

"You beggar!" cried Sam, holding up his hand, to which was suspended a greasy, sticky mass, speckled with tobacco dust. "I've a great mind to make you eat it!" he added, as he flung it far into the sea.

"Now, dat's a funny ting!" cried Pete. "Must hab forgot all about dose sandwiches. What, hab you got one, too, Jack? I shall hab to gib you in charge for frowning stones if you do dat."

Jack had flung his portion of Pete's sandwiches at its owner's head; but Pete promptly ducked, and the unsavoury lump of undistinguishable stickiness followed Sam's contribution towards feeding the fishes of Shanklin.

Luckily both Jack and Sam had their pockets lined with an accumulation of loose tobacco, and very little grease adhered to the lining.

"Golly, I am hungry!" muttered Pete.

"Serve you right," replied Sam; "you should put your sandwiches in the proper place. Here, Jack, let's wash our hands in the boundless ocean!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Sammy, dat's de sort ob ting! Water wonderful funny old hoss you am!"

When Jack and Sam rejoined their comrade, they found him examining his money with a very serious expression on his usually smiling face.

"How much is dis little lot?" he mumbled, holding out a handful of gold, silver, and copper coins. "Tink dere's nuff dere to pay for getting off dis island?"

"I should say so, mate," replied Sam. "You've got over five pounds there, and I shouldn't think it would cost you more than fivepence, at the most."

"Don't know 'bout dat, Sammy; p'r'aps dey will put de prices up now dat dey hab got de people on de island. Don't want to swim all de way back to Brighton, dough we might take off our boots and socks and wade out to the ship. Don't seem to be bery much water 'bout here. Can't——"

"Here," interrupted Sam, "Stow your chatter for a time, and let's get on our way; we shall never be able to see the famous Chine at this rate of progress."

In a very short time they reached the little winding path leading to the Chine.

"Golly," cried Pete, "what's dis? Pay here! Dey am a funny lot on dis island! Dey seem to charge you for—— Now den, Sammy, pay up!"

Pete can argue the point with a man, but the sight of the girl who looked out of the little box at the entrance to the Chine caused him to shut up promptly.

Sam gave the girl a shilling, and the three passed through the little gate.

"Dis am bery lubly!" murmured Pete. "But, golly, what's dat?"

The harsh sound of a steam syren had sounded in the bay.

"That's the boat for Brighton," said the girl, "just going off."

"Oh, golly, golly!" cried Pete, as he scrambled through the gate.

"Your change, sir!" cried the girl.

"Oh, bodder de change! Here, come on!"



## CHAPTER 8.

## Pete's Strange Behaviour—The Waiter's Harvest.

WHEN the three reached the little sandy front, Pete pulled up abruptly.

"Dose people don't seem in such a drefle hurry," he cried, pointing to a stream of people moving leisurely along the pier. "Look here, dis child am not going to pay any more for getting off dis island!"

Pete lurked about the end of the pier and watched Jack and Sam pay their pennies. He waited until they had gone half-way along the pier.

"Seems as if it was 'bout time dis child made a move," he muttered. "Nunno; dere's anoder little lot going on de embarkation trip."

Pete pretended to be deeply engaged in clearing out his pipe as an old lady and gentleman walked slowly from the lift running up the side of the cliff towards the pier.

"Should tink dat I could keep up wid dat little lot," he thought. "Oh, golly, dey am not going by de boat!"

Pete rammed his pipe in his pocket, and darting round the side of the wall, sprang over the turnstile and tore madly down the pier.

"Golly," he muttered, "mustn't lose dat boat! Hi! Hellup!" "Why don't you look where you're coming to?" yelled an official, as Pete blundered down the gangway on to the boat.

"Tought I had lost it!" gasped Pete. "Well, if you have lost it," cried the man, naturally thinking Pete was referring to his ticket, "you'll have to pay again, that's all."

"De boat, old hoss." The man in the gold-braided cap stared at Pete and shook his head slowly. "You've been in the sun," he murmured. "Come on, let's have your ticket!"

"Ob course I've been in de sun!" declared Pete, looking round for Sam, who, luckily for Pete, came up at this moment and presented his ticket. "Just going down to get something to eat," whispered Pete.

Sam Grant guessed what was up, and he pretended to appear very unconcerned as he watched the turnstile keeper coming along the pier.

Gradually that figure drew closer, but long before the angry man came within hailing distance, greatly to Sam's relief, the hawsers were cast off and a bell tinkled in the engine-room.

"That's a good job!" thought Sam, with a sigh of relief, as he crossed the deck and joined Jack, who was leaning over the deck-rail. "We're well out of that," he whispered to Jack as they gazed at the foam coming from the paddle-wheels. "Hallo, just look at it!"

A black head and face projected from the porthole just beneath them. "Hab we gone, Sammy?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!" roared Jack and Sam.

"Yes, we have gone, as you call it," cried Sam at last; "you can come up."

When Pete appeared on deck he calmly ignored all attempts at an explanation.

"We am now," he announced calmly, "going to hab some tea, den we can come up on deck and view de island from de distance. Read 'bout dat in a book somewhere, and want to see how it works out."

"We don't want to go down into that stuffy place," said Sam.

"Oh, don't we?" cried Pete, seizing him by the arm. "Bery well, den, let's hab a dance."



"Here, stop it!" cried Sam. "All right, we may as well get it over."

"Dunno 'bout getting it ober," exclaimed Pete, "but don't see de sense ob habing a holiday if you can't do as you like."

"Well, I reckon, mate, that the sooner you get back to work the better it will be," retorted Sam. "You're a bit too lively for a quiet life."

"Perhaps if we let him have something to eat," said Jack, "he'll tone down a bit. You know the poor chap must be starving."

"Dere's somebody else dat ought to get back to work," muttered Pete, "and dat's dis cheeky Jack. Golly, it's a bit warm down here! Reminds me ob de tropicals."

Pete's remark was perfectly true, for the dining-saloon was crowded to suffocation; but by the magic of a liberal tip to a perspiring steward, he secured seats for the three of them in a corner under the electric fan.

As soon as they were settled the head steward came bustling up.

"What will you have, gents? Fish—fowl—cold roast beef—salt beef—cold roast mutton—cold— Coming, sir!"

Before either could reply the steward had darted away, in answer to a call from an opposite table.

"Golly, dat man rattles de billyfare mighty quick!" remarked Pete. "But dat don't stop dat empty kind ob feeling dis child am suffering from. Here he comes again!"

"Now, gents, have you decided what you will have? Cold roast beef—cold roast mutton—chicken— Coming, mum!"

"What the thumps is he up to?" growled Sam. "How does the idiot expect us to give our orders when he rushes about like that?"

"Strikes me we look like being better waiters than he is," chuckled Jack. "Grab him the next time he comes along, and don't leave go till we've given our orders."

Pete showed his impatience by banging on a glass with a fork till the glass broke, then he started on a decanter of water.

"Waiter!" he bawled, in a voice that caused one nervous passenger to get a fish-bone in his throat. "Waiter!"

"Coming, sir!"

"Waiter!"

"Coming, sir!"

The flurried steward came sailing up the saloon with a tray loaded with plates of cold meat.

Pete kept a watchful eye on him, and, leaning over the table:

"Hi!" he yelled, springing to his feet. "No, you don't, old hoss! Come back. Whoa! Now, don't get excited!"

"This is not for you," cried the waiter; "that gentleman over there ordered—"

"Neber you mind 'bout dat," exclaimed Pete, pulling the man back by the tails of his coat. "You plank dat little lot down on dis table. We'm been waiting here while you'm been waiting at some oder place, and we'm not waiting any longer. Seems to me dere's a mighty lot ob waiters 'bout dis place, and nutting to wait for."

Jack and Sam speedily took some plates of beef off the tray, and set to work. Pete had both his hands engaged in holding the struggling waiter back to the table.

"Golly," he cried, "you'm a greedy lot! Take mine off, too."

"What's that, mate?" mumbled Sam, with his mouth full, and winking at Jack. "You can let him go now."

This suggestion was not at all to Pete's liking.

"Dat's a bery fne ting, Sammy!" he grumbled. "Here, I catch de



waiter, and you two go and yaffle up your plates ob beef without helping yourselves for dis child. Nunno, dat won't do!" Pete finished with a groan. He was in an awful predicament. If he let go the waiter would rush off, and it was impossible for him to reach that tray of eatables without clambering over the table. Jack and Sam ate as fast as they could, but their laughter threatened to choke them every moment.

Things began to look rather serious for Pete; for although all the diners were laughing at the position he was in, he felt ravenously hungry, and yet did not want to give way.

"Have some more beef, Jack?" inquired Sam, leaning back and taking another plate off the captive waiter's tray, and at the same time placing half-a-crown in its place. "Don't kick up a row," he whispered; "let him hold you till he gets tired."

"Tanks, Sammy! Yah, yah, yah!"

"You beauty!" growled Sam.

With incredible swiftness Pete had released his hold on the waiter's coat-tails, and grabbed that plate of beef as Sam was passing it to Jack.

The waiter grinned appreciatively as he darted off; he was richer by half-a-crown, and he saw a means of getting a few more if he turned a deaf ear for a time to Sam's calls.

Jack and Sam gazed sadly at their empty plates and across at Pete's grinning black face.

"Tought you were doing dat bery nicely, didn't you, Sammy? Oh, golly! Yah, yah, yah! Hab some more beef, Jack?" he mimicked. "Yah, yah, yah! Must hab some more ob dis ribs. Here, waiter, dis child hab finished!"

"Right, sir!" cried the steward, bustling up. "That will be two shillings, sir, please."

"Eh?"

"Two shillings, sir; tea ad lib."

"Golly, dis child can't lib on dat little lot!"

"Beg pardon, sir; thought you said you had finished."

"Only de first instalment."

"Here," explained Sam, slipping a coin into the man's hand, "bring him some more, for goodness' sake, or we shall never get him out of here before we reach Brighton."

The rush of passengers for tea had now fallen off, and Pete soon had all the waiters in the place hovering round him, eager to attend to his wants.

"Dat's better!" he cried at last. "Now den, you two images, when you am finished we will go up on deck. How much is dat little lot?"

"Altogether, sir?"

"Golly, ob cos! Do you take it on de instalment plan?"

"Your two friends, sir? Are you going to pay for them?"

"Dunno 'bout dem. Yes, I tink so, 'cos dey habn't got bery much money."

With a lordly air Pete put his hand in his pocket and pulled out three-halfpence. Jack and Sam rose quickly to their feet and made for the door.

"Here! Hi! Golly! Come back!"

"What's the matter?" inquired Sam.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack. "What's the matter? I thought you were going to pay for our teas?"

"Only got freehalfpence," muttered Pete. "Shall hab to borrow de money from de waiter. Lend me ten pounds, old hoss, and I'll leabe you dis as security."



The astonished waiter gazed in amazement at the battered old briar pipe that Pete held out to him.

"Golly, de man don't seem bery anxious to take de security!"

"No, I shouldn't think so, either," cried Sam, "considering you only paid a shilling for the rotten old thing."

"Wouldn't lose dat pipe for more dan ten pounds," exclaimed Pete. "S'pose you keep Sammy in de larder as security, den, instead?"

"I reckon it wouldn't do if they were to lock you up in the larder," retorted Sam. "How much is that?" he went on, turning to the waiter, who had begun to look rather doubtful.

"Six shillings, sir, altogether."

"There you are, then. No, that's all right; you can keep the change."

"You am bery extravagant wid our money," cried Pete. "Golly, what's all dis? Well, I neber knew I had all dis. Must hab been in de oder pocket. Dere you are, waiter," he went on, mimicking Sam's voice, and flinging down half-a-crown; "you can keep de change."

Joking of this kind was decidedly to the waiter's liking, and he grinned delightedly as the three comrades left the room.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Howard's Anxiety Regarding Symes.

"GOLLY," cried Pete, as they stood on the platform projecting from the side of the boat near the paddle-box, "where's dat island gone to? Why, dose must be de lights ob London!"

It was now quite dark, and innumerable lights twinkled along the shore.

"You see that little bunch over there, you beauty?" said Sam.

"M'yes."

"Well, that's Brighton pier."

"An' what's dat funny little light dat goes popping in an' out in de darkness beyond dere?"

"That's Beachy Head, sir," explained an old gentleman who had overheard Pete's remark. "Beachy Head lighthouse occupies a prominent position on our coast; it is the guiding star of the shipwrecked mariners, and— Bless me, the man's gone!"

The loquacious old gentleman gazed around, and found himself the sole occupant of that platform.

The three comrades had stolen silently away.

"You don't seem very anxious to improve your knowledge," said Sam, when they reached a secluded position behind the funnel.

"Dunno 'bout dat, Sammy, but can't stand does cyclopedlo maniacs. Wonder if dat Howard hab got supper ready?"

"Scissors!" exclaimed Sam. "I can see you being laid up, if you go on at this rate. Why, you've already eaten enough for ten men!"

"It seems to me," answered Pete, "dat dere's nutting else to do wheet you am on a holiday. 'Sides, dere's nutting like de sea air to gib you an appetite."

"Fat lot of sea air you've had! Why you've only been on deck about half an hour the whole time!" exclaimed Jack.

Half an hour later the comrades had had their supper, and were comfortably seated in the smoking-room of their hotel.

"I reckon," said Jack, as he stretched himself out lazily, "that holiday



making is a jolly sight more tiring than hard work. Rory is the most sensible of the lot of us."

As a special privilege, Rory was curled up beside them, sound asleep on a leather couch.

"Hallo," exclaimed Sam, "there's the boss!"

"Good-evening, gentlemen! I hope you are enjoying your stay?"

Mr. Howard drew up a chair and patted Rory's shaggy head.

"Hab a cup of coffee, old hoss?"

"Thanks, I will."

Pete's order was soon carried out, and the landlord sat silently stirring his coffee. He was usually a talkative man, and his lack of talk surprised the comrades. They waited patiently for him to speak.

"I want to ask you gentlemen a favour," he said at last, glancing round the room, which was vacant except for themselves. "I—well, you know that chap Symes?"

"Rather!" said Sam, with a laugh. "I should think we know a bit too much about him."

"Then you can help me!"

"Eh?"

"Do you think he is all right financially?" said the landlord, turning to Pete.

"Golly! Dunno anyting 'bout de old josser's money-box, if dat's what you mean!"

A troubled look came over the landlord's face.

"You think, then," he said, "that he has no money."

"Not so fast, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You'm taking a bit too much for granted. 'Cos we say we don't know, don't mean dat what we don't know am bad."

"The bounder has more cheek than money," growled Sam. "I should not care to trust the beggar, neither would Pete, for that matter. We've travelled about a bit, and I reckon we know a rotter when we see one."

The landlord gazed sadly into his cup of coffee.

"Close on ten pounds," he murmured regretfully.

"Cheer up, old hoss!" cried Pete, giving him a thump on the back. "Dere's worse tings den dat in life. Stick it on Sammy's bill, and make him pay."

"Not if I know it!" cried Sam. "I'm not going to pay for a bounder like Symes."

"Of course not, Mr. Grant; I should not expect such a thing. I suppose I must make the best of a bad job."

"Now look here, Mr. Howard," said Sam, bending over the table, "just you drop that mister business. We're Jack, Sam, and Pete to all our friends, and I don't reckon you as an enemy."

"Oh, all right, Mr.—Sam."

"That's all right, then. Now, about this Symes. I should think the four of us can get the best of him."

Four heads came close together over that table, and after ten minutes' whispered conversation Mr. Howard rose, looking much more cheerful as he left the chums than when he had entered the smoking-room twenty minutes earlier.



## CHAPTER 10.

## [Rory Holds Symes a Prisoner.]

**A**BOUT five o'clock the following morning Symes sat up in bed and yawned sleepily.

Seen by the clear morning light, he was not a pretty-looking object. His sallow complexion looked yellower than ever.

"Ugh!" he mumbled. "Beastly having to get up in the middle of the night. Ugh!"

Symes thrust one foot out of bed, but changed his mind, and rolled himself in the bed-clothes again. But he did not remain quiet long.

"I must be looking slippy," he grumbled; "or I sha'n't get away from this beastly hole before Howard is about. Let's see, there's a train at 5.45. That's the one I must catch." Symes looked at his watch, a showy gold affair. "Ten past! Ugh! Oh dear!"

Making a determined effort to overcome his sluggishness, he floundered out of bed, and taking his false teeth from a glass on the washstand, spent some seconds in adjusting them. He grinned at himself in the glass. To Symes, Symes was quite a good-looking chap.

"Wonder if that dentist chap is worrying about me?" he thought aloud. "Ah, ah, ah!" he went on, chuckling with delight. "Did him down fine over this little row of ivories. Forty quid! Don't he wish he may get it."

Symes pattered about the floor in his bare feet. He was very silent in his preparations, and he felt in a decidedly good humour. He was so absorbed in his toilet and his thoughts of how he was going to "best" the landlord, that his ears failed to catch a faint sniffing sound at the crack at the bottom of his bed-room door.

Symes would not have been quite so happy had he done so; but, for the time, his ignorance was bliss, and he proceeded to dress himself, humming the air of a popular comic song.

With commendable caution Symes attired himself completely before putting on his boots.

"No," he muttered, as he drew off one boot, "these won't do; old Howard might be about. I'll put these on. I shall have to leave the others, in settlement of my account." Again Symes chuckled, and he drew on a pair of white tennis shoes. "These look all right! Nobody will tumble to the fact that I'm going far away. Now, I think this is all. Wait, though; I must lock that bag of mine. Pity I've got to leave it behind; there's quite a quid's worth of clothes there, though old Howard 'll be lucky if he gets half-a-crown for the lot. Well, well, I ain't done so badly. A fortnight's holiday, free gratis, for nothing. Now for a dip in the briny, I don't think!"

Flinging a towel gracefully over his arm, he opened his bed-room door.

A pair of quick ears had been listening intently to his every movement, and a shaggy head was held knowingly on one side as that door opened.

Symes gave a yelp of surprise; a low growl greeted him as he stood on the threshold of his bed-room.

"Hallo!" he muttered. "What are you doing here? There! Good dog! Ugh! You beast! There, there, good——" Symes faltered and retreated a few steps and stared at Rory, who stood watching him from the mat. "How am I to pass that brute?" muttered the man. "Ugh!"

Rory seemed to lose interest in Symes, and sat on the mat and gave a prolonged yawn. Again Symes advanced and essayed the cajoling tactics. Again Rory stood up and growled.

Symes backed hastily. He could not face those rows of gleaming business-



like teeth. He tried a side movement, but Rory merely followed him with his bright eyes and growled.

Symes sat on his bed and scowled.

"Best not raise an alarm," he muttered. "I don't want to. Old Howard might offer to come to the beach with me. Oh, hang! Here, old boy, fetch it!" Symes took his soap from the washstand and pretended to throw it. "Fetch it! Good dog!"

Rory half shut his eyes and sat down again.

"Confound the brute!" muttered Symes. "I wonder if this is a plant? No, it can't be. I suppose the wretched beast has wandered up here of his own accord. The question is, though, what am I to do? I can't stop here and— Oh, hang, I'll have another go!"

Symes stood up and then walked straight to the door. He hoped that Rory would let him pass; and, in fact, he felt sure that he would. "I'll pretend not to notice him," he murmured.

Symes got as far as the mat, but there he stopped abruptly. His face went a sickly sort of green, and cold shivers chased each other up and down his spine. He scarcely dared to breathe, let alone advance another step, for Rory's muzzle was pressed close against his right calf, and the unfortunate man looked down into the whites of a pair of very watchful eyes. His ears tingled to the noise of an unmistakable snarl. He swayed slightly, and then stiffened rigidly as he felt Rory's nose press closer.

To an ordinary brave man the situation would have been trying. It was absolutely terrifying to Symes, who was by no means possessed of much pluck, and he broke out in a cold sweat.

"Good dog!" he whispered, in a trembling tone. "Good— Ugh! You beast, I'll—I'll—"

Suddenly Rory gave a sharp bark and bounded into the bed-room.

Symes had leaped backwards and scrambled frantically on to the bed, where he sat huddled up in a heap. He armed himself with the bolster and glanced at Rory, who stood on his hind legs, with his head cocked on one side.

Symes prayed that the dog would not leap up, and he shuddered at the very thought. But Rory had no such intention; all he had to do was to prevent Symes from quitting the room, and he sat down by the side of the bed, licking his chops.

After a short silence Symes peered cautiously over the edge of his retreat. He drew back hastily, and bumped his head against the wall.

Rory again stood up and surveyed the trembling man; then he disappeared, and Symes gave a shiver and a start as his bed-room door was slammed to.

Rory had shut the door!

It was an old trick of his, but the uncanniness of it sent Symes in a fresh state of abject terror.

"The brute must be human," he thought. "Oh, I wish I had never come to this wretched place! I believe that brute of a nigger must have placed that savage beast to watch my door."

Dog and man watched each other across the room. Rory was now squatting on his haunches close to the door. Symes was cowering on the bed.

Minutes passed, and he stared, fascinated, at the dog. Suddenly a horrible pain began to creep over Symes's leg. All the muscles drew themselves up into a hard knot, and he felt as if he were being seared with a hot iron.

Minutes seemed like hours. Symes groaned. Rory growled.

At last Symes could stand it no longer. Slowly and cautiously he slid



his leg out from beneath him. The pain lessened a little, and he ventured to rub his calf softly, keeping an eye on Rory all the time.

Although Rory kept on growling at each movement, he did not stir, and as the cramp left the cornered man, he began to think of some plan.

Generally speaking, Symes had a resourceful brain. He had been in many tight corners during his chequered career and—escaped; but he had never been held prisoner by a dog before.

New ills require new treatment, and he racked his brain in order to discover some way of getting out of his difficulty and—out of the hotel.

Something tickled his ear, and he glanced behind him nervously. The tassel of the bell-rope caught him in the eye. He seized it and tugged viciously.

"Here goes!" he muttered. "Well, I'm blessed, the wretched thing has given way! What shall I do now?"

He sat there, the picture of misery, the bell-rope coiled round his neck.

"Another hour!" he muttered. "Goodness! Another two hours nearly before the girl comes with the hot water! I know. I'll wake that nigger, and demand that he take his beastly dog away. Why didn't I think of that before?"

Symes tore off the bed-clothes, and, with the two pillows and the bolster made a barricade round him. Rory watched from the door.

"Yes; you can look, you beauty!" said Symes, under his breath. "I'm not going to take any chances with you. Now, then!" Symes pressed his ear to the wall. "I can hear the wretch snoring. I'll wake him!"

Rap, rap, rap!

Not a sound came from the adjoining room, except the dull murmur of Pete's snoring.

Rap, rap, rap!

Symes rapped at the wall until his knuckles were sore. Then he took to thumping with his clenched fist.

All the reply he got was a muffled "Groo-oo ach!"

"Beast, brute!" yelled Symes, forgetting Rory in his rage. "Wake up and take this—this dog of yours away!"

His voice ended in a wail. Then he remembered his enemy, and looked over the barricade. He sighed with relief when he saw that Rory had not budged, and renewed his hammering and shouting. But it was all to no purpose.

He nearly cried with rage. At last he grew calmer, and a new idea struck him. He crawled cautiously along, nearly falling between the bed and the wall. When he reached the top he was hidden from Rory, and he stealthily unscrewed one of the heavy brass knobs surmounting the bed-posts.

Armed with this he pounded at the wall. The paper peeled off under this repeated onslaught. Then bits of plaster came away. But Symes's blood was up.

"I don't care if I break through!" he hissed, between his clenched teeth.

"Ah! What's that?"

He heard the sound of a voice, but could not distinguish the words uttered.

"At last I've woke the brute! Here, come and take this dog away! Lie down, you brute!"

Rory had heard the sound of Pete's voice, and he was now under the bed, barking at the wall.

Symes shrieked at the top of his voice, but he was a bad second when it came to making a noise, for Rory kicked up such a din that Symes gave it up at last, and started with the brass knob again.



He was beside himself with rage, and he pounded away till the perspiration ran down his face.

Bang, bang!

"Come"—bang—"and"—bang—"take this dog of yours out of my"—bang—"room!"

At the last furious bang Symes's hand and arm went clean through the wall.

He gasped as he saw the damage that his blind fury had led him into.

"You fool, you insensate idiot!" he hooted, as he glared through the hole in the wall into Pete's face.

Pete was sitting up in bed, and grinned at the other.

"What's de matter wid you, old hoss? Am you coming in? Should say dat de landlord will hab someting to say to you 'bout dis little lot. Golly! What do you mean by breaking into my room in dis way? Shall gib you in charge for attempted burglary! Nunno! You'm a bit too excited! Had a bad dream, old hoss?"

"Take your dog away!" bawled Symes.

"Dog! What's de man talking 'bout?"

"You know very well what I mean. Take him away!"

"Dat's a fine ting. What do you mean by habing my dog in your room?"

"I don't want your dog! I say——"

Symes ended with a shriek, for Rory, hearing Pete's voice more clearly, had bounded on to the bed, and, scrambling over Symes's shoulders, thrust his head through the hole in the wall.

Symes saw his chance, and he was off that bed and out of the door like a shot. He slammed the door to and bolted down the passage.

As he descended the stairs to the hall he endeavoured to calm himself, and with considerable difficulty brought himself to a more dignified means of progression.

"It won't do for old Howard to see me running," he thought to himself. "I must— Hang it!"

Symes put on an engaging smile as he nodded to the landlord, who had just come out of the office.

That smile was a broken-down sort of affair from the start, and it collapsed altogether when Symes saw what Mr. Howard held in his hand.

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Howard!" said Symes weakly. All his usual sangfroid had deserted him, and he gave another ghastly grin.

"Good-morning!" replied the landlord. "Going out?"

"Ah—er—yes; just for a dip, you know!"

"Rather funny to start now, isn't it?" inquired the landlord quietly.

"On the last day of your stay in Brighton."

"Well—er— you see, it's such a fine morning! So hot, you know, that I feel like it!"

"Humph!"

Symes glared suspiciously at the calm face of the landlord.

"I fail to see, Mr. Howard," he said stiffly, "why you should take such an interest in my proceedings!"

"I always like to look after my guests!" rejoined the landlord.

There was a peculiar emphasis in his voice that Symes did not fail to notice.

"Besides," went on Mr. Howard, "perhaps you have not noticed, but it is raining heavily, and I'm sure the sea would be too rough for bathing!"

The events of the past hour or so had so thrown him right off his balance.



He licked his dry lips, and glanced out of the corner of his shifty eyes at the landlord.

"You!" he cried, with an assumption of gaiety. "I must be dreaming! Of course, it would be quite impossible to bathe on a morning like this. I think I will return to my——"

"Just a minute! Here is your bill!" said Mr. Howard, handing Symes the slip of paper that the latter had seen when he came into the hall.

"Er—oh, yes, of course! Thanks! You might order my breakfast, will you? I want to catch the 8.30 to London. Let me see, how much is this? Nine pounds twelve!"

Pretending to be deeply engrossed in the items on the bill, Symes flung his towel on a chair, and strolled into the breakfast-room.

"Confound the man!" he growled, as he flung himself into a chair. "I must get away somehow. I wonder if he really does suspect anything? That hole in the wall, too! Confound everything! If it hadn't been for that beast of a dog and his fool of a master, I should have been in London by now."

Symes sat and scowled and gnawed his nails.

"I wonder if that dog's still there? I'll go up and see!"

He went boldly upstairs, but when he reached his own door his steps flagged. He summoned all his courage and tried the handle of the door. He turned it gently, half an inch at a time, and peeped cautiously in.

There was no sign of Rory, and he could hear Pete splashing away in the bath-room. He entered softly, and closed the door. A minute passed, and then he flung open the door again, and tore down the passage.

## CHAPTER 11.

### Pete Has a Fall—Symes's Dash for Freedom.

"HELP! Thieves! I've been robbed!" yelled Symes. "Help!"  
A frightened chamber-maid came running along the passage.  
"Oh, what's the matter, sir?"  
"Matter," roared Symes—"matter? I've been robbed! Go, tell your master! I'll have the police on this job! All my——"

Mr. Howard came bounding up the stairs.

"What's all this row about?" he demanded.

"I've been robbed!" howled Symes.

"Robbed! Nonsense!"

"It's not nonsense! How dare you say such a thing?" spluttered Symes. "Come; I'll show you how the thief got into my room!"

Symes dragged the landlord to the door of his room, and pointed dramatically to the hole in the wall.

"You see that?" he demanded.

"Yes, I see; but—— Be quiet, girl! Go downstairs, and get on with your work! There's no need to be alarmed!"

Glad to be the bearer of such exciting news, the girl promptly departed.

"You see," cried Symes, "I have been robbed! Look at the disorder of the room. All my money gone! You will have to make the loss good!"

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" retorted Mr. Howard, advancing into the room, and bending over the bed to examine the wall. "You scoundrel! Now I know what you were looking so red about when you came down this morning! How do you expect a thief to get through a hole like that? Besides, Pete sleeps in the next room."



Symes began to realise that his trick was not working as well as it should, but he put a bold front on things.

"I tell you," he bellowed, "I've been robbed! I don't care how the thief got in, I've been robbed. I——"

"Golly! What's all dis?" cried Pete, emerging from the bath-room, clad in a voluminous bath-robe. "You'm looking bery excited, old hoss! Am you going to pay for de damage you'm done to de landlord's property?" Pete winked at Mr. Howard and grinned at Symes. "Yah, yah, yah!" he roared.

"Look here," cried the landlord, "I'm going to have this matter settled, and at once!"

"But—but," stammered Symes, "I did not intend to pay you——"

"Golly! Ain't he a trooful old hoss?" interrupted Pete.

"How dare you interfere with me?" snarled Symes. "I protest against this fellow's insolence!" he shouted.

"There's many a true word spoken in jest," said Mr. Howard. "You say you've been robbed. Where did you keep your valuables?"

"In my bag."

"Hum! And—er—did you lock your bag before you left your room?"

"Yes, of course!" snapped Symes.

"Rather a peculiar thing to lock it again after you had discovered you had been robbed, wasn't it?"

Now Symes, like the generality of liars, suffered from a bad memory, and he saw his mistake.

"Oh, well," he exclaimed, "we will dismiss that matter! The articles that are missing are of a sentimental rather than intrinsic value. Of course, I am sorry to have lost them; but, as I was about to observe before this fellow interrupted me, I am waiting for a remittance, and shall be only too glad to settle your account directly it arrives."

"May I ask from whom you expect this remittance?" asked Mr. Howard mildly.

"Certainly. My solicitors—er—Messrs. Dobson & Wright."

"Oh! Would you mind waiting here a minute?" exclaimed Mr. Howard. "I shall be back in a minute."

"Dat's all right!" cried Pete.

"I refuse to allow this fellow to occupy my room!" cried Symes.

"He won't occupy it for long," said Mr. Howard, as he went out; "and I'm thinking that you won't, either!" he added to himself as he went down the stairs.

"Look up Messrs. Dobson & Wright's number, Miss Marshall!" he cried, as he entered his office. "That chap Symes tells me he is expecting a remittance from them, and I rather fancy it is a fairy-tale."

Two minutes later Mr. Howard had "got through" to the solicitors.

"Hallo—hallo!" he cried. "My name's Howard—I say my name's Howard! Yes—yes! Yes; that's all right! Oh, you're the managing-clerk! That'll do. Well, look here, I have a guest staying here by the name of Symes. He's run up a big bill, and tells me that you are sending him on a remittance. Eh? Oh! Algernon—Algernon Symes. Thanks very much! Good-bye!"

Mr. Howard replaced the receiver, and looked at Miss Marshall grimly.

"All they know about him," he said, as he darted out of the office, "is that he is no good. Owes them twenty pounds!"



During this time an interesting little scene had been going on in Symes's bed-room.

"Look here," snarled Symes, after Mr. Howard had closed the door behind him, "what do you mean by letting that beastly dog of yours sleep on my mat?"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Am you fond of dat mat for mentisental reasons, or for trinsic reasons?"

"Don't stand there talking that rubbish to me," hooted Symes.

"Bery well, sar; shall hab to take a seat, den. Make yourself at home, and let's hab a nice convesationony chat. 'Spose we take for de subject how to lib widout paying rent. You seem a mighty intelligent sort of chap, and perhaps you can lighten dis child's intellect."

Pete had taken up a comfortable if not a graceful position, and he turned his head sideways and grinned pleasantly at Symes as he tilted his chair and placed his feet one on each panel of the bed-room door.

The discussion was not destined to be brought to a conclusion, for just at that moment Mr. Howard returned. He was not in a very amiable mood, and he flung open that door with a vigour that had a disastrous effect upon Pete and Symes. But this is by the way, for it was quite by chance that as Pete was hurled backwards, his big toe caught Symes affectionately in the eye.

"Oh, my eye!" yelled Pete, sitting up and gazing at the astounded landlord.

"It's not your eye!" yelled Symes. "I won't put up with this abominable treatment any more"

"All right; keep your old eye," muttered Pete, tenderly rubbing his toe. "Dis am toe bad! Hab you brought a bobbie wid you, old hoss?"

"No, I haven't yet," replied Mr. Howard sternly, but with difficulty restraining a laugh; "but I've found out all about this chap, and——"

"Golly, what a lot ob tings you must hab discubered!" said Pete, rising to his feet and drawing his bath robe around him.

"Yes, I've found out more than this chap bargains for," replied Mr. Howard. "I telephoned to his solicitors, and—well, you can judge what happened by his face. Look at it!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, as he looked closely into the discomfited Symes's face. "M'yes, him complexion hab changed a bit more to de greeny bluey shade dan before. What am you going to do 'bout your money, old hoss?"

"I really don't know," answered the landlord. "It's pretty evident he's not got any, and it'll not do me any good if I give him in charge."

"Let's hab a tink," exclaimed Pete. "You sit down dere, old hoss—like so. Now, dat's better!"

Pete had deposited Symes on the floor, and he calmly took his place on the bed.

Mr. Howard gazed at him rather anxiously. He knew from experience that behind all Pete's fooling was hidden a pretty shrewd knowledge of the world, and he waited patiently, while Pete sat and frowned at Symes.

"Dat's rader a pretty ring," he murmured at last. "Wonder if it am a good one?"

Symes looked as dignified as his position would allow him to.

"You will be sorry for this, both of you," he snarled, "one of these days. But there, I have an important engagement in town, and I don't mind leaving you this ring as security."



Symes removed the massive circle from his finger and handed it to Mr. Howard, who surveyed it critically.

"Let's hab a look, old hoss," cried Pete. "M'yes, there's certainly some sort ob a mark on it, but don't do to trust to dose sort ob tings. Wonder if it am de same colour all de way frew? Oh, golly!"

There was a sharp metallic snap, and the landlord gazed at the two halves of the ring that Pete held in his muscular palm.

"Yah, yah, yah! It am a different sort ob colour inside; sort ob tinny—eh? Hi, golly, quick! Stop dat man—stop him!"

Mr. Howard made a frantic dash for the door, but Pete leaped in front of him.

"Here, come back," yelled the landlord; "you can't go after him in that state!"

"Oh, golly," muttered Pete, as he gazed at his bare legs, "forgot all 'bout dat! But after him, quick!"

"Miss Marshall—Miss Marshall!" gasped the landlord, a few seconds later. "Have you seen anyone pass through the hall?"

"Yes; but I couldn't say exactly who it was, sir. It looked rather like Mr.—"

"Symes?" cried the landlord.

"But he hasn't paid his bill!"

"No; and not likely to now," growled Mr. Howard. "Oh, well, we must make the best of a bad job; but I should like to meet him in a nice quiet spot," he muttered as he went off.

A few minutes later Pete came out of his room fully dressed, and banged at Jack and Sam's door.

"Come on, you lazy beggars!" he cried. "There's been a teef in dis place, an' you am got to catch him."

"I bet it's old Symes!" exclaimed Sam, as he opened the door.

"Yes; an' it am a pity dat you an' Jack am not better at waking up, 'cos den he wouldn't hab buzzed off like he hab."

"What, did he get past Rory, then?" inquired Jack.

While the comrades finished dressing Pete gave them a short account of what had taken place.

"But why didn't you run after him?" asked Sam.

"Dat's a fine sort ob ting!" replied Pete, in an injured tone. "Can't 'spect dis child to go galloping frew de streets ob Brighton in a bath-towel, can you?"

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Jack and Sam.

As a matter of fact, Pete was rather ashamed of having let Symes get away, and he speedily changed the subject to the question of breakfast.

"All de same, dat chap wouldn't hab got away if it hadn't been for dat buff-towel," he muttered to himself as he went downstairs. "Shall hab to take my morning bath after I am dressed for de future."

"I'm afraid he's gone for good, bad luck to him!" cried Mr. Howard as the three entered the breakfast-room.

"Neber mind—neber mind! Cheer up, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete.

"Put de amount down to Sammy's bill; he am a sort ob bloated millionaire, an' two-free pounds won't make any difference to him, an' Jack can pay for de hole in de bed-room wall."

"And what'll you pay for?" inquired Jack.

"Eh? Can't hear dat. Believe dis child am getting deaf," replied Pete, helping himself to about six rashers.



## CHAPTER 12.

**Jenkins does not Understand Pete's Strange Order.**

"**T**HERE'S a gent as wants to see you," said the waiter a few minutes later, as he hustled into the room and flicked imaginary specks of dust off the sideboard.

"Who does he want to see?" inquired Sam, glancing at Pete suspiciously.

It was an early hour for visitors, and Sam began to wonder if Pete had been getting into any more scrapes.

"Im!" replied Jenkins, jerking his thumb in Pete's direction. "He said you'd know his name."

"Golly!" cried Pete. "What am it?"

"Oh," muttered Jenkins, darting from the room, "I've been an' left his card downstairs. Sha'n't be a minute, gents."

"What have you been up to, Pete?" demanded Sam.

"Nutting, Sammy," answered Pete, in an aggrieved tone. "You'm too mighty anxious to tink ebil ob dis child."

"Here you are, sir!" cried Jenkins, as he returned with a visiting-card placed on a tea-tray.

"Why, it's Montgomery!" cried Sam. "I wonder what the old gentleman wants with you?"

"Dunno, Sammy. 'Spose I must see de ole buffer? Tell Charlie to wait in de insulting-room, Fred."

"Beg pardon, sir," spluttered Jenkins nervously; "I—I did not quite

"Tell him to wait in de insulting-room. Dis child hab not finished brekfus yet."

"Scissors!" gasped Sam. "What have you got hold of now?"

"Eh?" demanded Pete, gazing calmly at the wondering Fred. "What's dat you am talking 'bout? Now den, Jenkins, hurry off! Don't stand dere like a pig half turned into bacon."

"Beg pardon, sir," sp'uttered Jenkins nervously; "I—I did not quite catch what you said."

"Golly! You'm not deaf, am you?"

"No, sir."

"Well, den, show de man into de—de insulting-room."

The waiter gazed at Pete helplessly. He did his best to try and discover the meaning of Pete's strange order. He had no desire to offend so generous a customer, yet for the life of him he could not solve the meaning of what Pete meant.

Sam gave a low whistle and glanced knowingly at Jack.

"I reckon, in any case, mate, that you're a bit out in that 'cistern' of yours. I know what you mean, but you seem to forget that this is not a dentist's."

"What's dat got to do wid it?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Sam loftily; "but they don't as a rule have consulting-rooms in a hotel. Oh, oh, oh!"

"M'yes!" muttered Pete. "You'm making a lot ob fuss 'bout nutting. Now den, Jenkins, don't keep de gentleman waitin'! Show him into de kitchen or de pantry, an' tell him dat I'm coming in two-free minutes."

Pete leisurely helped himself to some strawberry jam and shook his head solemnly.

"Wonder if de old buffer wants to borrow some money?" he murmured.

"Dere's someting tricky 'bout dis. Golly, what's de matter wid dis jam?" Jack and Sam roared with laughter.



"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jack. "I should say that the stuff you're getting down you is a sight fishy. Strawberry jam and sardines! What the shrimp's the matter with you? Ho, ho, ho!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" mimicked Pete, trying to look unconcerned at his absent-minded mixture of jam and sardines. "Go on—larf!"

Needless to say, both Jack and Sam did their best in this direction, and it was some seconds before Jenkins, who had returned to their breakfast-room, could make himself heard.

"I've shown the gentleman into the front drawing-room," he shouted.

"Eh? Mind de old hoss don't walk off wid de piano or de coal-scuttle."

Jenkins looked alarmed.

"That's all right, Jenkins," cried Sam; "don't you worry about that. Go on, mate, and see what he wants."

Pete grumbled a good deal as he rose from the table and followed the waiter.

Jenkins flung open the drawing-room door with a flourish of his napkin.

"How do you do, my dear sir?" cried Montgomery, advancing with outstretched hand. "I have called——"

"Dat so, old hoss?"

"Yes, I have called——"

"Neber heard you. Must shout a bit louder next time."

Mr. Montgomery looked rather annoyed as Pete flung himself into an armchair.

"He, he, he!" he cackled. "Very good—very good indeed! You are a humorist, sir."

"What's dat, sah?" cried Pete, sitting bolt upright and glaring at Charles.

"No offence intended, I'm sure," cried Charles. "I appreciated your humour, and——"

"Dere's seberal sorts ob humour, old hoss. Dere's good humour and dere's bad humour, an' dis child am feeling rader bad-humoured dis morn'ing."

"Ah! Not feeling very well, eh?"

"Eh?"

"Not feeling up to the mark?"

"Golly! Dis child neber felt better in him life," cried Pete. "What am you dribing at?"

"I thought," ejaculated Charles, "that you said you were not feeling very well. I noticed the fact that you were rather pa——"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "You'm a funny old hoss, Charlie. You were going to say pale, but de colour ob dis child's complexion would want a bit ob changing—eh?"

"Exactly, my dear sir. My joke, my joke; that's all. But as I was saying——"

"You hab called. M'yes?"

"As I was saying," went on Mr. Montgomery firmly, "I have called to see if I can insure your life."

At the conclusion of this little speech, that Charles had rushed out at top speed before Pete could stop him, there was silence, and the little man fidgeted uncomfortably as Pete leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes.

At last Montgomery pulled a bundle of booklets and leaflets out of his coat-tail pockets and laid them carefully on the table.

"Excuse me," he murmured, "but if you would just cast your eye over these books, you will find that the terms of our company are liberal, and compare favourably with those of other institutions."



"See here, my poor old hoss," said Pete, "I don't want to insure my life. An'—"

"But surely you have someone dear to you who would benefit by your death?" interrupted Charles.

"Now, dat's a funny way ob looking at tings," cried Pete. "I am very sure dat I don't want Jack and Sam to pop off, even if it meant that your company would hab to hand ober two-free million pounds."

"Goodness!" cried Charles. "I am not suggesting anything of the kind. I merely consider that you would be wise to peruse my leaflets. The terms are—"

"Who told you to come to me?"

"Well, oh—er—you see, being a business man, I—er—thought—"

"You'd do as Maria tells you—eh?" exclaimed Pete, making a random but true guess at the prime mover in the plot. "Nunno, old hoss, no good you saying dat I'm wrong, 'cos I can see dat it am de troof. Now, I'm not saying anyting 'bout your wife as a wife, but dis child don't believe in ladies bodering deir husbands to try and insure people who don't mean to insure. Don't want to, an' if dey did, habn't anybody to leabe de insurance money to."

"But our premiums are so low," murmured Charles, who, like a true Britisher and insurance agent, never knew when he was beaten.

"Golly!" cried Pete, springing to his feet. "Dat'll do! Dis child don't care weder de primroses am cheap or dear—'nuff to say dey'm out ob season, an'— Nunno! Take it 'way! Look here, my dear old hoss, dis child am bery busy! Hab got to see a dentist dis morning 'bout a new suit ob clothes! Ta-ta! Gib my lub—nunno, my best disrespects—to Maria!"

Before Charles Montgomery could stop him, Pete had bolted from the room. But Charles had an unwitting revenge on Pete, for he met Mr. Howard in the hall, and informed him that Pete was an enormously rich prince in disguise, and that Jack and Sam were his attendants.

### CHAPTER 13.

#### Pete Suddenly Becomes a High Person, and is Treated as Such.

"**W**HO was it?" inquired Jack, as Pete returned.

"Oh, dat silly old buffer ob a Charles!" replied Pete.

"What did he want, then—to borrow some money?"

"Nunno! Worse dan dat! Wanted to insure dis child's death! Dat's it, larf!"

In the middle of their merriment, Mr. Howard came into the room. He was looking rather solemn, and even a little nervous.

"Hallo, old hoss!" cried Pete. "Got ober de excitement ob dis morning?"

"Oh, yes, your lordship! Here, Jenkins, clear the table for his lordship!"

Jenkins came forward obsequiously, and bowed solemnly to the astonished Pete.

"Golly! What's de matter wid you, old hoss?" he cried, rapping him on his bald head with his knuckles. "Got a kink in your little mary, or what? An', see here," he went on to the landlord gravely, "what do you mean by speaking to dis child in dat fashion?"

"I am sorry," replied the landlord; "but, you see, I was not aware that I had the honour of entertaining a prince, and—" Mr. Howard retreated a step as he saw the wild expression in Pete's eyes. "I—I—I hope I haven't offended. I'm sure your attendants will bear witness that I have treated you with all possible respect."



Pete brought his fist down with a bang on the table that made Jenkins skip out of the room as if he had been shot.

"Stop dat larfing, Sammy!" he roared. "Now, who told you, Mr. Howard, dat dis child am a prince?"

"The gentleman who called to see you this morning."

"Golly!" yelled Pete. "I'll—I'll— Now, you am got to understand dat dis child am nobody."

"Oh, well, of course, if you wish it," replied the landlord deferentially, "I will respect your secret."

"It am not a secret!" yelled Pete. "Now, Sammy," he went on in such an imperious tone that the landlord was more than ever convinced that he was a person of Royal parentage, "just tell dis man de truth. Say I am not a prince."

"I am not a prince," repeated Sam meekly.

Pete glared at him, and turned to Jack.

"I am not a prince," murmured Jack.

Pete sprang across the room, and Mr. Howard promptly retired. He had read of the terrible fits of passion which dusky monarchs sometimes give vent to, and for the rest of the morning he locked himself in his office.

"You must be very careful with that dark gentleman," he told Miss Marshall later. "He is—well, never mind; but his slightest wish must be obeyed!"

The worthy landlord had nearly divulged Pete's supposed rank, but he had quite overlooked the fact that Jenkins had been present at the greater part of the interview in the breakfast-room. And before five minutes had elapsed after Pete's final outburst, the news that the hotel sheltered a prince of Royal blood was common knowledge from the bootboy to the guests.

After Mr. Howard had gone Pete's excitement subsided, and he sat down at the table, and buried his head in his hands.

"Dis am all bery fine for you, boys; but I don't tink it am playing de game!"

Jack and Sam pretended not to take any notice of it.

"Just look at him, Jack," whispered Sam.

"I wonder what's the matter with him?"

"I don't know. It appears to me as if this idea of a holiday is not working out quite as he expected it to."

For a little while Jack and Sam sat silently smoking and casting covert glances at Pete, who still sat with his head between his hands, moodily sucking at an empty pipe. Every now and again he fidgeted uneasily in his chair, and from time to time emitted a deep groan.

"Scissors!" exclaimed Sam at last. "What's the matter with you?"

Pete groaned. Sam knocked the ash out of his pipe and winked at Jack.

"Look here," he went on, leaning across the table and joggng Pete's elbow, "don't sit there looking as miserable as if you had committed some crime. What's the matter with you?"

"Don't disinterrupt, Sammy; you know bery well!" muttered Pete. "I am tinkin'!"

"Well, I don't see why, if you are thinking, you should be so miserable about it."

"Golly!" cried Pete, sitting up suddenly and pushing his chair back from the table. "I hab got it!"

"Got what?"

"De solution ob de entanglement."



"Entanglement?" ejaculated Sam. "What are you talking about?"

"De awkwardness ob dis child's position. What do you tink? Suppose eberybody made up deir minds dat you were a prince, and s'pose dat you didn't want to be a prince, what would you do? Neither you nor Jack had de slightest idea ob de responsibilities ob de position. Dere would be just as much sense in calling you Queen Bess, and Jack dere Queen Eliza, as trying to make out dat dis child am a descendant ob a king."

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Sam. "You are making a lot of fuss about nothing. Anyhow, what is it you have got hold of?"

"Hahn't got hold ob anything," grumbled Pete, brightening up a little. "Where's dat baccy?"

Sam handed over his pouch, and both he and Jack waited patiently for their comrade to speak. They knew from his demeanour that he had some brilliant suggestion to make; but they were far from prepared for what was coming.

At last Pete, having filled his pipe and lighted it to his satisfaction, leaned back in his chair, and through dense clouds of smoke surveyed his comrades with a self-gratified air.

"Well?" said Sam at last.

"Don't you be so mighty impatient, Sammy! What did you say prince did when dey wanted to trabel unrec'ognised, Jack?"

"Well, they assume a different name."

"Hum! Dat so?"

"Yes, of course!"

"But, den, s'pose dey do change deir names, dey am de same people all de time?"

"Naturally."

"Oh, yes; but dat's all bery fine to say naturally! Tink dat I hab got a much better idea. What am you laffing at, Sammy? Nunno! You am not to laff. Dis am a bery serious matter, and de only way out ob de entanglement am to be somebody else. Dis child am going to wear him hair parted in de centre, and some ob your old clothes!"

"Steady on!" exclaimed Sam. "Surely you can wear some of your own old clothes, can't you?"

"Nunno!"

"Why not? You've got plenty."

"Yes; but, don't you see, Sammy, de fact must be plain to a man wid only half an eye dat, if dis child wears him own clothes, howeber old dey may be, he will be reco'nised."

"Oh, all right!" exclaimed Sam. "Have it your own way. But I'd like to know how you are going to part that mop of yours."

"You'm too mighty inquisitibe, Sammy!" replied Pete complacently. "All you hab got to do—dat is, you and Jack, hab to hand ober dose old clothes, and say nutting more 'bout de matter!"

Pete did not wait for any reply, but darted out of the room and up the stairs. For a few minutes he rummaged about unceremoniously in their room, and then came out and locked himself in his own bed-room.

"Don't know 'bout de hair part," he muttered, as he finished dressing in his borrowed clothes. "Seems to be sort ob kinky and won't lay down. But at last, with the aid of a piece of soap, he managed to flatten down his curly mop a bit. "Now to try de effect ob de disguise," he murmured, as he opened his door. "Golly! Dat went off bery well!" he thought to himself, as he went out into the street unchallenged.

The reason for this, had he known, would have somewhat dashed his gloom for no one had seen him come out.



## CHAPTER 14.

## Pete Travels Incog., and is taken for a Beggar.

“WONDER what that silly owl is up to?” said Sam, some time after Pete had vanished from the breakfast-room. “We had better go and have a look. Scissors!” he exclaimed, as he opened their room door. “Just look at the mess he has made of our things. Here, see if he is in his own room!”

Jack opened Pete’s door, but the only signs of him was the frightful state of disorder.

“Surely he can’t have gone out!” groaned Sam.

Inquiry among the staff of the hotel naturally failed to give them any result, and at last the two went out to search for their missing comrade.

Meanwhile, Pete was hugely enjoying himself. He tramped about the streets of Brighton blissfully unconscious that he looked certainly now more like a tramp than a prince.

“Tink I’ll go and hab some ginger-beer,” he muttered, as he caught sight of a place which he had previously been into in company with Jack and Sam. “Wonder if dey will reco’nise me?”

The doorkeeper eyed him rather suspiciously as he entered, and it was not to be wondered at, for Pete’s appearance in his borrowed clothes was certainly not likely to pass unnoticed, at least, not in such an establishment as this.

“Wonder if dat chap Sammy hab left any money in him pockets?” he thought, as he made his way to the far end of a big saloon. “None in dis one!” he muttered; nor were there in the others, for that matter. So Pete had to furrage in his own waistcoat-pockets, and here he was fortunate to discover half-a-sovereign, wrapped up in a five-pound note. He approached the counter.

“Not this side, please!” cried a voice.

“Eh?”

“Not this side, please!” cried a florid young man angrily.

“Golly! Dat’s a funny ting!” replied Pete. “What’s de matter wid you, old hoss?”

“I said not this side! Can’t you understand that?”

“Can understand most tings,” replied Pete; “and can understand dat dere’s a mighty lot too much side ’bout you!”

“Look here, I’m not going to have any of your cheek!” retorted the other angrily. “We can’t have your sort hanging about the place; and if you don’t go, I shall call a policeman, and have you put out!”

“What’s dat?”

“I said I should call a policeman.”

“You can call two-free policemen, for all I care!” exclaimed Pete. “And I sha’n’t go round to de oder side! Don’t see why you can’t serbe me dis side as well as de oder.”

“It’s not a question of which side it is, so just you clear off, or else there’ll be trouble!”

“See here, old hoss,” cried Pete, “dere’s going to be trouble in dis place if you don’t serbe me wid what I require! Neber heard ob such a ting. I want—”

“I don’t care what you want! Just do as I tell you. We don’t want any of your sort hanging around here!”

Pete looked thoroughly mystified at this onslaught. He had quite forgotten he was travelling incog., and he had also forgotten his strange get-up, and was naturally as indignant as his genial spirit would allow him to be.

Towards the end the altercation had been carried on in a somewhat loud



tone of voice, and the attention of most of the people in the place was fixed upon Pete.

"What's the meaning of all this?" said the manager of the place, coming up. "What's the trouble? Ha, I see! What's this fellow doing here?"

"I told him to go, sir, but he won't!" replied the florid young man.

"Ha, he won't—eh? Just tell—er—Bob I want him!"

The manager glared at Pete aggressively, and eyed him up and down. Within a few seconds Bob, who turned out to be the doorkeeper, arrived.

"Turn this man out!" cried the manager.

Bob looked at Pete, and Pete looked at Bob. Bob was a big man, Pete was a bigger. Bob rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said; "but—"

"I said turn this man out! Don't stand gaping there!"

Pete grinned at Bob. Certainly the coat that he wore was somewhat narrow across the shoulders, but the set of those shoulders was not at all to Bob's liking, and—he hesitated.

"Beg pardon, sir; but shall I call a policeman?"

The manager glared at poor Bob, who had a family to keep on twenty-five shillings a week.

"Oh, go for a policeman," he cried, "if you are not man enough to put him out yourself!"

"It's not that, sir; but—"

"Don't stand there like a stuck pig!"

"But, sir—" exclaimed the unfortunate Bob.

"Here, get off with you at once! I'll see you suffer for this, my man!" stormed the manager. "You're here to keep order, and you know it is against the rules of this establishment to allow beggars to enter!"

"Eh, what's dat you say, old hoss?" cried Pete, who had been leaning on the counter, listening to the conversation. "Can't understand dis at all. I came in here to hab a glass ob ginger-beer. S'pose you sell ginger-beer, and yet you refuse to serbe me!"

"You never asked for anything!" exclaimed the florid youth.

"Nunno! Dat's quite right!" exclaimed Pete. "You'm much too impetuous, and dis man"—and Pete tapped him on the chest—"am a bit tempestuous. Directly I came in you told me to go round to de oder side, and den you said I was to go out, and den you said you would send for a policeman." Pete unwrapped his half-sovereign and flung it down on the counter. "Two ginger-beers!" he demanded. "All dis talking hab made me bery dry; and I tink dat de manager ought to pay for one ob dem. Golly! Where's de man gone to?"

#### CHAPTER 15.

**Pete proves Himself a little sharper than the "Sharper."**

"EXCUSE me, sir," said a voice at Pete's elbow, "but I consider you were treated abominably. If I were you I should bring an action for damages. Here is my card."

Pete glanced at the stranger and then at the visiting-card.

"Dat's bery kind ob you, Mr. Robinson-Brown. Shake hands, Brown-Robinson."

The dark face of the stranger flushed slightly, but whether it was at Pete's method of address or his hearty grip is difficult to say.

"I presume you are just having a walk round?" observed Robinson-Brown, as they came out into the street.

"Dat's for the youngest," said Pete.



"What did you— Oh, sorry!"

Bob was standing at the door as they emerged, and Pete pressed a collection of coins into his hand.

"Thanks, sir!"

"Dat's all right, old hoss! Now, Mr. Bobbinson-Rown, I tink I shall hab to say good-night. It am getting late."

"But, my dear fellow," cried Mr. Robinson-Brown, "if you have nothing better to do, I suggest that we have a game of billiards. Do you play?"

"My yes, Wobbinson-Drown."

"I say, old chap," cried Robinson-Brown, getting very familiar, "you're a bit mixed over my name; but I don't mind. Shall we go in here. I'm not much of a player, but I shall be delighted to while away an hour."

Now, Mr. Robinson was immaculately clad, and it is not to be wondered that the contrast between him and Pete caused some attention as they passed into the billiard-room.

But Mr. Robinson gave a surreptitious wink to one or two cronies, and flattered himself that he had got hold of a mug, as he elegantly expressed it in his own mind, that he could pluck at his leisure.

Robinson-Brown was by profession a gentleman of leisure and a sharper. But he did not know that the genial black stranger he had in tow was, although far from being a sharper, nevertheless considerably sharper than he. This knowledge was to come.

"Will you play spot or plain?"

"Eh?" inquired Pete, chalking the wrong end of his cue. "Tink I would rader play wid de red ball."

"My dear fellow!" cried Robinson.

"My dear old chappie!" mimicked Pete.

"But you are joking, of course!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Ob course!"

"I'll break, shall I?" inquired Robinson.

"Eh? Golly, what am you going to break?"

Robinson-Brown looked rather doubtful.

"My dear fellow, I mean—well, you know what I mean. Shall I play first? I'll give you twenty in a hundred."

"Nunno, tank you, Bobby!" answered Pete gravely. "Where's de marker. Here, come on, old hoss, an' keep de scores. Oh, golly, how many does dat count?"

"Ah, ah, ah!" cried Robinson. "That counts three to me. You've potted your own ball. You haven't got your hand in yet."

"Golly, habn't I, my dear old Bobby!" cried Pete. "Tink dat I hab, dough, an' can't get it out again."

Pete had his hand in the pocket and had seized his ball, but his hand was large, and the pocket of the regulation size, and he was in the position of the monkey who tried to get a handful of nuts out of a narrow-necked bottle.

"Pull it out of the bottom, sir!"

"Eh?"

"Let me do it."

The marker came to Pete's assistance, and passed the ball through the hole in the net intended for that purpose.

"Tanks!"

Robinson scored off the red, and Pete stood watching his next shot.

"I say, sir," whispered the marker, who bore no friendly feeling to Robinson, who never tipped him, "he's a sharper. Don't you play for money!"



"Your shot!" cried Robinson. "Ah, hard lines!"

Pete had missed an easy cannon, and pretended to look very sad.

Robinson played about as badly as he could, but soon the scores stood at 91 to 1, the 1 being the miss Robinson had given at the commencement of the game.

It was now Pete's turn to play, and he selected another cue.

"Dunno 'bout dis; tink I shall hab to gib you de game. Oh, golly, what hab I done dis time?"

"Three away," announced the marker. "94—1."

The red was right over the bottom pocket, and Robinson could not help scoring, and the game finished with a six shot.

"Let's have another game," he cried. "Look here, I'll give you fifty in a hundred, and bet you a sovereign I beat you."

Robinson had seen that five-pound note Pete had pulled out of his waist-coat pocket.

"A sovereign?"

"Yes."

"Golly, dat's a lot of money!"

"Oh, but my dear fellow, you stand a very good chance of winning. Look here, I'll make it two to one if you like."

"M'yes?"

"Are you going to take it?"

Pete shook his head.

"Don't know 'bout dis at all," he muttered uncertainly.

"Oh, well, just as you like!" said Robinson-Brown, stifling a yawn and pretending to be completely indifferent to the matter. "You are losing a jolly good chance, though."

"Tink so, old hoss?" cried Pete, winking at the marker, who had been making him frantic signals not to take on the bet. "You tink I am losing a bery good chance?"

"Of course I do," retorted Robinson.

"Bery well, den, we'll deposit de stakes wid de marker."

Robinson willingly agreed with this, and became quite jaunty again.

"After all," he thought to himself, "I sha'n't do so badly. You'd better break this time," he went on aloud.

Greatly to Robinson's surprise, and, it must be confessed, also the waiter's, Pete played off the right-hand cushion, and his ball slowly dropped off the red into the pocket.

Robinson gasped.

"Surely that couldn't have been a fluke?" he muttered. "Oh crumbs!"

Pete had again played off the red into the pocket.

"Six, love!" cried the marker.

The red ball had now gone into an awkward position, and Pete could very well have given a miss in perfect safety, but he had caught sight of Robinson-Brown's chagrined expression, and the temptation to go one better was too much for him.

"How's dat?" he cried, as the red and white balls followed each other across the table back on to the cushion, and then drifted slowly into bank.

Robinson did not say a word, but savagely chalked the end of his cue. There was nothing for him to do but give a miss. This he accomplished, but he was so upset in the sudden change of Pete's play that he placed his own ball within two inches of the middle pocket.

Pete stopped in the middle of lighting his pipe, and without apparently looking at the shot, pocketed the red.

"Three!" A grin of understanding stole over the marker's face.



"Golly," cried Pete, as he prepared for his next shot, "dis child am feeling in grand form to-night! Almost believe dat I can keep on scoring all de time. S'pose you put dat cue away, Brobinson-Brown, and call again in de morning?"

"Get on with the game," growled Robinson. "You've not finished yet."

"Don't you'm be so mighty impatient; sha'n't be two-free minutes. Now, marker, you just watch dis game bery carefully, 'cos if dis child finishes dis game in ten minutes, you shall keep de stakes."

After that things began to hum, and Pete's score mounted up steadily and rapidly to over ninety.

"How many's dat, old hoss?"

"Ninety-five!"

Pete grinned at the scowling Robinson.

"Getting 'long bery nicely, ain't we, old hoss?"

Robinson grunted some unintelligible reply, and beckoned to a man who had just come into the saloon.

"You've only got another two minutes!" cried the marker, who was in an agony of suspense lest Pete should fail to finish within the ten minutes.

"Give me de matches, dis pipe am gone out!"

The marker darted across the room like mad; he was not going to lose those stakes if he could possibly help it.

"The brute'll be mighty clever if he gets this shot!" muttered Robinson to the man sitting beside him. "I've been fairly done brown, absoblessedly!"

As it happened, "the brute," as Robinson had been complimentary enough to term Pete, finished a good thirty seconds under the ten minutes with a magnificent six shot.

"Game!" cried the marker, bringing down the rest with a bang.

"I suppose you think you are mighty clever?" snarled Robinson, glaring across the table at Pete.

"Nunno! But dere's a certain silly old hoss not a thousand miles from here who tinks that he can play at billiards."

"Are you referring to me?" shouted Robinson. "I say, are you referring to me?"

Pete took not the slightest notice of Robinson.

"How much is dat? How much do I owe you?" he inquired of the marker.

"Nothing, sir."

"But, golly, I lost de first game!"

"Oh, you need not trouble about that, sir," exclaimed the man. "Why, you've just given me a matter of hree quid."

"Dat's nutting to do wid it," answered Pete.

"Oh, well, sir, the charge is one shilling a hundred."

Pete handed the man half-a-crown, and turned to go.

Robinson and his companion prepared to follow him.

"Hab you paid for dat last game, Bobbie?" said Pete, as he pushed open the swing doors.

"What's that to do with you?" snapped Robinson. "Get out of my way. Here, Price!"

Robinson's companion pushed himself forward and thrust his broken nose into Pete's face.

"What do you mean by insulting my friend?" he demanded. "If you don't get out of here sharp I'll knock your ugly head off!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," called the marker, thrusting himself between Pete and the fellow called Price, "don't let's have any quarrelling!"

"Dat's all right, old hoss!" replied Pete. "Dere's not going to be any



quarrelling, so far as I can see, unless dese two don't agree wid one anoder."

Pete's method certainly put a stop to all signs of a row—at least, as far as he was concerned, for he grabbed Robinson by the scruff of his neck with his left hand, and Price by the same gentle method with his right, and without any apparent effort banged their heads together.

"Let me go!" gurgled Robinson.

"Release me!" howled Price.

"Yes, yes, I'll release you in a minute. What price dis little lot?" Pete had swung the unfortunate Price round, and sent him staggering across the billiard-room. He ended his career in the fireplace. "Now," cried Pete, shaking Robinson until his teeth chattered, "since you am so bery friendly wid dat Price, you can join him in de same comfy corner. There!"

Pete had picked Robinson up bodily and, walking half-way across the room, flung him none too gently on top of his friend the bruiser.

"Shouldn't be at all surprised," said he to the astonished marker, as he made to quit the room, "if dat Price habn't got a few more bruises dan he hab eber given anyone else in all his life." Then Pete strolled slowly out of the building. And it may be mentioned the marker did not stop to help either Robinson or Price out of the fireplace.

Indeed, judging by the sounds that fell on his ear as he left the billiard-room, they seemed to be arguing the matter pretty forcibly.

#### CHAPTER 16.

##### Pete Decides on a Change of Rooms—Mrs. Moore.

"**A** LLO, you beauty, we've got you at last, have we? Where have you been? What have you been doing? We've been hunting for you all over the place."

Jack and Sam had been wandering all over Brighton looking for Pete, expecting every moment to see him come along surrounded with twenty or thirty policemen, and they were immensely relieved when they caught sight of him coming out of the place where he had had his little game of billiards.

Pete grinned pleasantly into Sam's face.

"It's all very well to put on that look," declared Sam. "I believe you've been up to some mischief," he added suspiciously.

"What's this?" demanded Jack, pointing to Pete's sleeve.

"Dunno, I'm sure!" replied Pete innocently. "It looks like a bit ob white ob some kind."

"Kind of billiard-chalk—eh?" exclaimed Sam. "Now, then, out with it! Let's know what you've been up to!"

After some considerable difficulty, Pete told them the story of his adventures.

"Don't you'm wish you had been dere—eh?"

Sam chuckled to himself, but looked very solemn.

"This sort of thing is all very fine, and I've no doubt that those two beauties got all they deserved; but you must remember that you are not out in Africa now, and that it's not the usual thing to take the law into your own hands in this country."

"Only banged deir heads togeder!" muttered Pete. "Couldn't let dem go scot free, and couldn't gib dem to de bobbies, 'cos dat would hab meant us stopping here for two-free months to gib ebidence 'gainst dem."

This argument was, from the comrades' point of view, unanswerable; and



Pete gave a shy glance at Jack and Sam as they walked along on either side of him.

"Say, Sammy," he demanded, after a while, "don't you'm tink dis am a bery good disguise?"

"No, I don't," retorted Sam; "and if you've got an ounce of sense in that woolly pate of yours you wouldn't ask such a question, seeing that we recognised you about a quarter of a mile away! Come on; let's get back to the hotel!"

"Nunno, Sammy!" exclaimed Pete, shaking his head. "Dis child am not going back dere to be scraped and bowed! Let's go to some nice, quite little house, where we can lib in pribate!"

Jack and Sam argued the matter for some little time, but they might just as well have talked to a block of wood, for Pete, once he had made up his mind, absolutely refused to change it.

"But what about our traps and the bill?" cried Sam.

"Oh, dat don't matter! Pay de bill, and tell de old hoss you'll send for de tings to-morrow. I'll wait here for you. Don't forget to bring Rory wid you!"

Jack and Sam soon returned, and the three wandered about for some time, looking for an establishment that would take Pete's fancy.

At last they turned into a quiet street, not very far from the front.

"Dis looks like de sort ob ting we read 'bout in de newspapers!" exclaimed Pete. "'Nice comfortable home away from home; terms strictly moderate.'"

"I don't know about the moderate part of the business," exclaimed Jack; "but you are right as far as the 'strict' is concerned."

"Let's have a look at that place over there!" exclaimed Sam. "No; you stay where you are, Pete. I'll see to this; perhaps your face will frighten de lady."

"How do you know dat de lady will open de door?" demanded Pete.

"Pretty certain to," declared Sam; "nearly all these lodging-houses are kept by widows in altered circumstances. Don't you remember the last place we stopped at, the lady kept on referring to her poor husband, was alone, and how she had come down in the world?"

Sam did not wait for Pete's reply, but crossed the narrow little road, and made for No. 9. The brightness of the little brass figure had attracted his eye, for there was no reason why he should have made for one house more than another, for there was a row of about twenty of them about as like as peas in a pod.

Sam raised his hand to the knocker, but, before he could seize it, the door of No. 7 opened suddenly, and a tremendously fat and red-faced woman came hustling out.

"Young man," she called—"I say, young man!"

Sam looked round in amazement, and stared at the woman, who now stood at his elbow.

"Did you call me, madam?"

The lady ignored Sam's question.

"Are you looking for lodgings?" she demanded.

"Well, yes, we are," cried Sam, after a slight pause.

"Well, you come along with me, then! 'Tain't no manner of use you 'ammering at that door, 'cos she's full up. How many rooms do yer want?"

"Three."

"Three—eh? Well—Married?"



"Oh, no," said Sam, with a laugh; "I'm not married! There are my two friends on the other side of the road."

The lady's portly figure swung round ponderously, and she stared at Jack and Pete.

"Why, one of them's a nigger!" she cried, glaring at Sam, and sticking her red, fat hands on her hips. "I can't take niggers in my 'ouse! I'm a respectable woman, I am!"

"I don't see what that's got to do with it," retorted Sam. "If you can't put us up, I'll try somewheré else, that's all. Good-day!"

"Stop a minute, young man!" cried the woman, waddling after him. "I don't say as I won't make an exception for once. You seem a respectable sort of young man," she went on, muttering her thoughts aloud. "You can come and have a look at the rooms, if you like."

Sam beckoned to his comrades, who crossed over, followed by Rory.

"You can't do better in the whole street!" declared Mrs. Moore, for such was the good lady's name. "I keep my rooms as clean as a new pin. Who does that dog belong to?"

"My friend with the dark complexion," answered Sam.

"Oh, I can't 'ave no dogs in 'ere tramping about and muddying the place with their dirty paws! Why, when my pore 'usband was alive, he always said——"

What words of wisdom had descended to Mrs. Moore from her departed husband will never be known, for Sam could not help smiling as the truth of his statement concerning "pore husbands" was confirmed.

Mrs. Moore bridled slightly, but she mentally weighed up the appearance of the three, and her cupidity got the better of her sense of dignity.

"If that dog comes inside my door," she declared, "'e's got to be a extra!"

"Well, I suppose he will," said Sam. "We are three, and one more makes four."

"Look 'ere, young man," said Mrs. Moore, "don't yer come poking fun on me! You know what I meant; you'll have to pay five shillings a week if I takes yer dog."

"And how much for de rooms, my dear?" inquired Pete meekly.

The amiable lady's red face took on a purple hue. Somehow or other disagreeable members of the fair sex always took umbrage at Pete's method of addressing them, the amiable ones never did, for, being of a kindly nature, they instinctively recognised the kindness of Pete's character.

"Don't you 'my dear' me!" snapped Mrs. Moore. "I don't allow no one to treat me with anything but respect!"

"Golly! My dear——"

"Don't you 'my dear' me!" cried Mrs. Moore, in a higher key. "I won't 'ave it!"

"Suppose we have a look at your rooms, Mrs. Moore?" interrupted Sam. "You mustn't take any notice of what my friend says; it's merely a habit of his."

"A bad habit!" snapped Mrs. Moore, as she led the way into the house.

The procession of four travelled slowly to the second floor. Mrs. Moore was fat, and when at last they stood on the landing, she wheezed and puffed so that she could not speak.

"Is this one of the rooms?" said Sam, pointing to thè door.

The landlady nodded her head.



Sam opened the door, and the three entered and gazed around.

"I ain't 'ad time to clear up yet," panted Mrs. Moore. "You see, the last gentleman that had this room only left this morning, and what with one thing and another, I 'ave been worried out of my life. The other bed-room is the back of this," went on the landlady, opening a door, and revealing another apartment in a worse state of dirtiness and disorder than the first. "And the third bed-room is on the top floor."

The comrades looked at one another. They were tired, and they wanted to get settled for the night; but the unsavoury condition of those rooms was a little too much even for them, accustomed as they were to roughing it. But there is a good deal of difference between roughing it in a dirty lodging-house and roughing it in the wild, clean woods.

Mrs. Moore had now quite recovered her breath, and she surveyed the comrades with a critical eye.

"My terms for these rooms is three guineas, paid in advance," she added, none too amiably. "I generally lets 'em for four, but I don't mind taking a little less, seeing as perhaps you can't afford very much. I'm sure if I 'adn't stopped you, young man," she went on, speaking to Sam, "when you were going to knock at that next-door woman's door, she would 'ave made you pay at least five guineas, seeing as it's the height of the season."

The cool cheek of the landlady put Sam on his mettle.

"I understood you to say," he replied calmly, "that the lady next door, at No. 9, had no accommodation."

"I never said she 'ad!" said Mrs. Moore hastily. "As for 'er being a lady——"

Mrs. Moore broke off here and sniffed. Pete would have described it as a snort, but we will let it pass at that.

"I don't think we need discuss that matter!" replied Sam, as he glanced at Pete.

"I'm sure I don't want to have nothing to say about the woman next door!" rapped out Mrs. Moore. "If you'll come downstairs, I'll see if I can get you some tea."

Pete nudged Sam with his elbow.

"I'm not going to stop here, Sammy!" he muttered. "You brought us into dis, now you must get us out ob it!"

"I don't think we'll have any tea," exclaimed Sam hastily. "You see, we don't very much—er—er—er—care for your rooms!"

"You don't like my rooms?" snorted Mrs. Moore. "Why, I never heard of such impudence! What do you mean by bringing me up all these stairs, and wasting my time like this? I don't believe you want any rooms at all!"

"Should say dat little lot would want a bit ob carrying upstairs!" murmured Pete. "Come 'long! Good-aftertea, Mrs. Moore! You'm a bit more dan we hab been 'customed to put up wid!"

Jack, Sam, and Pete waited no longer, but descended the stairs, and emerged into the street, glad to be rid of Mrs. Moore.

"Golly!" muttered Pete, as he took a deep breath. "A bit more ob Mrs. Moore, and dis child would hab bursted! What a drefful woman! Should tink dat poor old Mr. Moore am habing de happiest time ob his life."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack. "You are getting a bit mixed, Pete. Old Moore is under the daisies, and, what's more—— Oh, Christopher!"

The comrades were standing just outside Mrs. Moore's house, but they speedily shifted off when they heard her ponderous tread coming down the passage.



## CHAPTER 17.

## Pete Sets to Work in Earnest

"BOTHERED if I don't knock here!" cried Sam, as they passed No. 9.  
 "You go on!"

Sam rapped gently at the shining little brass knocker, and the door was opened by a good-looking, but worn, little woman in a large white apron.

"You have some rooms to let?" inquired Sam.

"Yes; will you step in, sir?"

The door closed on Sam just as Mrs. Moore came out on her doorstep.

"I thought the old woman was telling me a lie," mused Sam, as he followed his prospective landlady into a small, but scrupulously tidy and clean, sitting-room.

"We want three bed-rooms and the use of a sitting-room, Mrs.—"

"Lacey," put in the little lady. "Won't you be seated, sir?"

Sam could not help contrasting the difference between the tenants of No. 9 and No. 7, and he smiled inwardly.

"Can you accommodate us, Mrs. Lacey?" he inquired. "I have two friends and another."

"Another, sir?"

"Yes," laughed Sam; "a dog. I hope you don't object to dogs?"

"Oh, no; I don't. I'm very fond of animals. There's a kennel in the backyard where you could keep him. I shouldn't mind him staying in the house if he does not bark and frighten my little girl."

"Rory's all right," said Sam. "He won't make a sound if he's told not to, and, of course, we are willing to pay for his lodging."

"I never heard of such a thing!" protested Mrs. Lacey. "But hadn't you better look over the rooms? You may not like them. They are very moderate."

Sam soon satisfied himself about the rooms, and when they returned to the sitting-room he inquired the price.

"Well, would two guineas be too much?" said Mrs. Lacey, rather nervously.

"Two guineas!" cried Sam. "Look here, Mrs. Lacey, what do you generally let these rooms for?"

The little woman looked ready to burst into tears.

"Well," she said nervously, "I could let you have them for less, as they've been empty so long, but last year I got three guineas for them."

"We will pay you four, then!" said Sam. "Now, I will go and fetch my two companions."

Sam left hastily. He saw the landlady was on the point of giving way, and he had no desire to witness her distress.

"Poor little woman," he muttered, "she's had a rough time! I expect that wretch next door to her leads her a bit of a life. Hallo! Come on! No. 9's all right."

"What about Rory?" demanded Pete.

"Oh, he'll be all right! He can have the run of the place, so long as he doesn't kick up a row."

The front door of No. 9 was still open, and Sam led the way into the sitting-room. Mrs. Lacey greeted him with a smile; she seemed ten years younger.

"You have not been long," she said. "I see you have brought your—  
 Oh—"

Pete roared with laughter, for he saw that the little woman's surprise was caused by himself.



"This is Rory," said Sam, endeavouring to hide Mrs. Lacey's confusion.

Rory sat up, and offered his paw.

"How do you do, my dear?"

Mrs. Lacey started back with a cry of surprise, for Rory, at a signal from Pete, moved his jaws as if he was really talking.

"Oh, what a dear old dog! I suppose one of you gentlemen is a ventriloquist?"

"This is the culprit," said Jack, indicating Pete.

"Well, I can't say how do you do," said Mrs. Lacey, "for I don't know your names; in fact, I don't know any of your names."

"Golly!" cried Pete, shaking hands rather gingerly. "What do you mean by dis, Sammy? You'm de master ob ceremonies; just you introduce us."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Lacey," exclaimed Sam; "but we can dispense with a good deal of formality. This is Pete. I don't think you will have any difficulty in remembering him. This is Jack, and——"

"Dat's Sammy," mimicked Pete. "Now we'm getting along very nicely. Suppose we hab some tea, wid two-free muffins frown in?"

Mrs. Lacey made for the door.

"I'll get you some in a very few moments," she replied. "I sha'n't be long."

"Wait a minute, my dear," said Pete. "Can we smoke?"

"Oh, yes, of course, if you like!"

"Now, dat's what I call a sensible sort of woman!" murmured Pete when the woman had gone. "Golly, what's she up to now?"

They could hear the sound of someone chopping wood, and Pete went to the door of the sitting-room and looked into the kitchen.

"Can't hab dis!" he muttered; and in about three strides he was in that kitchen, and had taken the chopper from Mrs. Lacey's hands.

The little woman looked rather alarmed at first, but the grin on Pete's jolly, black face reassured her.

"Oh, but you mustn't!" she faltered.

"Dat's just where you'm making a mistake."

"But I can chop the wood."

"Nunno, you can't; not while dis child holds de chopper. You put de cups and saucers and tings on de table. I'll see to de fire."

Mrs. Lacey saw that it was useless to protest, and so proceeded to load a large tray.

"Hi, Jack," bawled Pete, "come 'long and carry dis little lot!"

Jack and Sam appeared in the kitchen, and Jack promptly annexed the tea-tray.

"Now, den, you Sammy," cried Pete, hacking away as if he was hacking a big tree, "just you make yourself useful. Where's de coals, my dear?"

"Oh, don't you bother about——"

"We'm not bodering, we'm getting de tea; all you'm got to do am to direct de operations. Got de coal, Sammy?"

Sam could be heard scraping about in the coal-cellar beneath the stairs.

"I'm afraid there's not very much there," faltered Mrs. Lacey. "I've got another box outside; we can boil the kettle on wood."

"You'm bery extragavant," said Pete severely. "Golly, is dat all you can find, Sammy? Dere's only 'bout nuff dere to fill a pipe wid; must use wood, I s'pose. After tea you will hab to go round and get two-free tons ob coal, Sammy. Where's dat Jack gone to?"

There was a great clattering of cups and saucers in the sitting-room.



"Goodness," cried Mrs. Lacey as she entered, "you haven't put the table-cloth on!"

"Does it matter?" cried Jack, rather ruefully.

"Oh, yes; you can't have tea like that."

While Mrs. Lacey cleared the table and laid it afresh, Pete and Sam were having a little confab in the kitchen.

"Seems to me, Sammy," said Pete, in a low voice—"seems to me dis landlady of ours am a bit hard up; must do our best to put tings square."

"I'm afraid she is," announced Sam. "I wish I had thought of paying her in advance."

"Neber mind 'bout dat now, Sammy," said Pete, who had chopped enough wood to last about a week, and had started a huge fire, which roared and crackled beneath the kettle. "Just you keep dis little lot going while I go round to de shops. Ah, I tought so!"

Pete will be forgiven for his inquisitiveness in inspecting Mrs. Lacey's kitchen cupboard, for, like a certain cupboard belonging to Mother Hubbard of nursery fame, it was very bare.

Pete looked in the sitting-room as he passed the door.

"Shall be home to tea," he cried; "just going to get two or free little tings. Hab you got any change, my dear?" he went on, holding out a five-pound note. "You habn't? Well, dat doesn't matter. You take dis, and gib me de change when you hab taken our first week's rent out ob it. Don't forget, now; you'm to gib dat change to me, and not to Jack and Sam, 'cause dey are bery forgetful sort ob chaps, and might tink it belong to dem."

Before Mrs. Lacey could reply Pete had gone.

"He's a funny sort of chap," said Jack; "but Pete's one of the best-hearted men in the world, and you mustn't take any notice of his playful little ways."

"I'm sure he is," replied Mrs. Lacey, with a tremor in her voice. "He's the most noble——"

"Here," cried Jack, "don't you let Pete hear you talk like that, or there'll be trouble! Now, Sam and I, if you don't mind, will have a quiet smoke until Pete returns."

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## CHAPTER 18.

### Pete makes a few Purchases—His Present to Tom.

PETE went to the end of the quiet little street and turned into the main road.

"Golly," he murmured to himself. "Wish I had tought to make out a list ob de tings dat we want! But we must do widout now."

"What can we show you, sir?" asked a tall, black-coated shopwalker, as Pete wandered in.

"Dunno, I'm sure, old hoss; tink I want some eggs."

"I think you have made a mistake; this is not a——"

"Nunno, I habn't made a mistake; I want some—— Golly, dis am de wrong shop!"

While he had been pondering over what he should get, Pete had absently walked into a draper's shop, greatly to the disgust of the haughty shopwalker, and somewhat to the amusement of the young ladies.

Directly Pete got outside that shop he walked straight up to a policeman.

"Say, old hoss," he cried, "I want a grocer's shop."

"Oh, you do, do you?" replied the constable sarcastically. "I suppose



you wouldn't care to have two or three butchers' and one or two others thrown in as well, would you?"

"See here, old hoss," cried Pete, with forced calmness, as he looked down at the policeman, who was by no means a little man, "I don't want any of your back answers. I want a grocer's shop."

The policeman puffed out his chest and glared at Pete angrily.

"You've got eyes in your head, haven't you?"

"Golly, yes; and you'm got a nose on your face!"

Now, the policeman's nose showed decided signs of acquaintance with a pewter pot, and Pete's reference to his nasal organ made him more angry than ever. He made a step towards Pete, and it is likely that the little party waiting for their tea at No. 9 would have waited a long time if at that moment Pete had not discovered that he was standing right in front of the very shop wanted.

"Can't stop to talk to you now; some oder time, perhaps!"

The policeman marched up and down fuming with rage, but another fortunate circumstance was that he was relieved from duty long before Pete had completed his purchases.

"I want some tea," said Pete when he entered the shop.

"Yes, sir; what price? One-and-two, one-and-four, one-and-six, one-and-eight, one-and-ten, or we have a very special blend at two-and-sixpence a pound."

"Dat'll do."

"How much would you like, sir?"

"'Bout two-free pounds."

"Three pounds," cried the shopman, quick to seize the opportunity.

"Anything else, sir?"

"Golly, yes! Don't you'm be in such a mighty hurry, old hoss; I habn't half finished yet. I want some sugar; can't hab tea widout sugar."

"Loaf sugar, sir? Yes; how much would you like?"

"Eh?"

"How much would you like, sir?"

"I don't want a loaf ob sugar. I want some cut up into little lumps."

"Yes, I understand; but how much do you want?"

"'Bout two-free pounds."

"Right, sir; anything else?"

"What a bery impatient man you are! Have you any eggs?"

"Yes, sir."

"Am dey new-laid? Eggs, you know, old hoss, not chickens."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the assistant, who saw what a good customer he had. "Good joke! No, sir, our poultry department is on the other side. Ha, ha, ha! How many would you like? New-laid are eighteenpence the dozen."

"'Bout two-free——"

"Dozen, sir? Yes, sir. Anything——"

"Yes, bacon—rashers, fick ones."

"Gammon, sir?"

"What's dat?"

"Gammon."

"Look here, young man," said Pete severely, "dat's not de way to talk to a customer. I said dat I wanted some bacon; don't see anyting funny in dat. What do you mean by saying gammon?"

The assistant saw the drift of Pete's thoughts, and hastened to explain.

"Dat's all right," said Pete; "tought you had some game on. Yah,



yah, yah! Now, den, let's see, where were we? Oh, yes, bacon, dat's nice, tender cut from a good-tempered pig."

The assistant grinned but looked rather mystified at the last remark.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, with a laugh that brought the owner of the establishment on the scene. "You don't see what I mean by dat, do you, old hoss? Good-tempered pig means mild bacon."

"Are you getting all you require, sir?" asked the owner of the shop politely.

"Tink so, old hoss," answered Pete. "We're getting along bery nicely. What do you want?"

"Oh, I—er—merely—er, er——"

"When you'm finished," observed Pete calmly, "we'll get on wid ordering de provisions."

The proprietor beat a rapid retreat; he did not want to offend so good a customer, but the young assistant looked rather nervous.

"Boder de man!" grumbled Pete. "What did he want to come disinterrupting for? Where were we?"

"You asked for some bacon, sir."

"Dat's it! I'll hab two-free pounds ob de best."

"Three pounds of bacon for this gentleman!" cried the youth who was serving Pete. "Now, is there anything else I can get for you this side, sir?"

"Must hab some milk."

"Large or small size, sir? And how many tins would you like—three?"

"Yes, dat'll do. Now, 'bout jam. Put in two-free pots of jam, pickles, sardines——"

"Any tinned meats, sir?"

"Eh?"

"Tinned beef, corned beef, mul——"

"Nunno, nunno; don't want anyting like dat. I should tink dat's 'bout all now, isn't it? Wait a bit, dough; frow in some cakes and biscuits, and—— Golly, I don't tink dere's anyting else! How much is dat little lot?"

"One pound nineteen and elevenpence-halfpenny!" exclaimed the assistant, as he rapidly totalled up the bill. "I'll send this for you now, sir. What is the address?"

"Pete——"

"Yessir?"

"Pete—— Oh, golly, I hab disremembered de address! Just put dem in a basket, and I'll take dem myself. You can send for de basket in de morning."

The assistant paused in the middle of packing the basket.

"But we sha'n't know where to send to!"

"Oh, boder dat!" cried Pete. "How much for de basket?"

The assistant did not quite know what to make of this, so he went and consulted his boss.

"That's all right, sir!" he said, when he returned. "The governor says he'll send the boy round with you, and he can bring the basket back. Here, Tom, take these goods round to this gentleman's house; he'll show you where it is."

Pete looked at the basket of goods, then he looked at Tom.

"Nunno!" he said, shaking his head gravely. "Tink de best ting would be if Tom got in de basket, and dis child carry de little lot. Should like to hab a talk wid the gobnor 'bout dis. Don't 'spect he could carry dat basket himself, even. Come 'long, Tom!"



Pete picked up the heavy basket as if it were a mere trifle, and the diminutive Tom followed him admiringly. The pair soon arrived at No. 9 without any difficulty, and Pete rapped at the door.

"Tink dat I hab better take dis right frough to de kitchen," he cried, as Mrs. Lacey opened the door. "These pots of jam and tings weigh above a bit. Am de kettle boiling?"

"Oh, yes!" cried the little landlady. "We've filled it about three times since you've been gone; we thought you were never coming back. Goodness, whatever have you got here?"

"Only two-free little tings for tea," chuckled Pete, as he piled up the stuff on the little kitchen table until it would hold no more, and deposited the last packages on the floor. "Where's dat Tom?"

"Now, what am you going to do wid dat?" inquired Pete, as he gave the expectant Tom half-a-crown.

Tom looked at the large silver coin with round eyes, and gazed up at Pete.

"I shall give it to my mother," he said, after some hesitation.

"Eh—all ob it?"

"Yes, sir; but I expect she'll give me twopence for myself."

"How much does your governor pay you?" said Pete.

"Four shillings a week, sir."

"Golly! Dat's a lot ob money!"

"It is, sir!" replied Tom proudly.

"And what do you do wid it all?"

"Give it to my mother, sir."

"And how many hours a day do you work?"

"From seven in the morning, sir, to eight at night; eleven o'clock on Saturdays."

"Tea's ready!" called Mrs. Lacey.

"All right, my dear! Coming directly; just habing a little talk! Now den, Tom, do you eber hab any holidays?"

"No, sir; not since I left school. I have half an hour for dinner, though, and twenty minutes for tea."

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete. "Sort ob holiday on de instalment system!"

Tom grinned appreciatively.

"Now, look here, Tom," he said, in a gruff voice, as he fumbled in his pocket, "you neber tell lies, do you?"

"Not me, sir!" retorted Tom indignantly.

"Do you tink your governor would gib you a holiday?"

"If I forfeits a week's wages."

"Hum! Rader a pleasant sort ob chap dat. What does your fader do?"

"Haven't got one, sir."

"So you help to keep your mother?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tom, rather hesitatingly.

"Well, you can keep dat half-a-crown." Tom looked rather surprised at this; he couldn't understand the giving of a thing twice over. "And," continued Pete, "you are to gib dis to your moder wid my best respects."

Tom had never handled a five-pound note before, though he had seen a good many in his governor's shop, and he gazed at the crackly bit of paper Pete thrust into his hand as if he did not know what to do with it.

"Now den, Tom," cried Pete, "I want to hab my tea! You put dat half-a-crown in your left pocket. Habn't got a hole in it, hab you? Must always be careful wid half-crowns! No. Den, dat's all right! Dat bit ob paper put in your right-hand pocket, and when you get home tell your



moder dat Pete says you am to hab a holiday, and she is to spend de rest on a new bonnet. Now, buzz off!"

When Pete entered the kitchen, tea was ready, and, for that matter, had been ready for some little time.

It was a very merry little tea-party that sat round Mrs. Lacey's table that evening. Pete had quite forgotten his annoyance at the greatness thrust upon him in the morning, and he kept the whole table in roars of laughter.

For the next few days the comrades had a most enjoyable time, and not a little of this was due to the fact that Pete kept out of mischief.

But one evening when Jack and Sam came into their bed-room they found Pete sitting on the edge of his bed, looking very thoughtful.

"I wonder what bit of mischief he's concocting now?" whispered Jack.

"I don't know," answered Sam.

"Well, let's be quick and get into bed," murmured Jack.

"I'm afraid there's not much chance of our getting to sleep before he starts snoring. Are you ready to put out the light, Jack?"

"Yes; I'm all right!"

Pouf!

"Hi!" bawled Pete. "Light dat candle!"

"You get to bed!" growled Sam, scrambling into his own bed as fast as ever he could.

"You light dat candle!"

Bump! Bang!

"Scissors!" muttered Sam, pulling the bed-clothes over his head.

"What's he done now, I wonder? Ouch! Gerroff! Ouch!"

"I'll gib you ouch!" cried Pete, who was sitting on Sam's chest. "What do you mean by putting out dat candle before dis child hab unrobed himself?"

Jack, who was sitting up in bed, laughed unfeelingly at Sam's grunts.

"Look here, Jack," cried Pete, "it am not at all nice ob you to laf at poor old Sammy, and if you don't light dat candle, I shall come and pull you out ob dat mighty quick!"

Jack wanted to get to sleep, so he promptly groped about for the matches.

"Now, perhaps, you are satisfied!" he grumbled.

"Dat's better!" exclaimed Pete, getting off Sam's chest and seating himself on a chair. "Now we can hab a little talk."

Sam sat up in bed and stared at Pete.

"Why can't you talk in the dark if you want to? Although I can't see what you've got to talk about that's so mighty important."

"You don't see a lot ob tings!" retorted Pete. "And dis child can't see to talk in de dark."

"Oh, well, then," exclaimed Sam, "have it your own way! I suppose we're in for it, in any case. Now, then, what is it you have got to talk about?"

Pete was deeply occupied in unlacing one of his boots, and did not reply.

"Oh, look here," said Sam, in disgust, "I'm going to sleep! Do you think I'm going to sit up all night?"

"Nunno! You'm not going to sleep!" yelled Pete, jumping up, with his boot half on and half off, to the washstand. "Nunno!"

Sam heard the sound of the water-bottle being removed, and he promptly sat up again.

"Yah, yab, yah!" yelled Pete. "You'm like a jack-in-de-box! Now, we just place dat little lot down dere—like so!"



Pete seated himself again, and placed the water-bottle on the floor within easy reach.

Jack and Sam sat bolt upright, regarding him watchfully. Pete helped himself from Sam's tobacco-pouch, and was soon puffing away vigorously.

"What's de proper ting to gib a lady?" he cried, with a suddenness that made Jack and Sam jump.

"It all depends what sort of a lady," replied Jack.

"What do you tink 'bout it?" demanded Pete.

"I think it's time we went to sleep," replied Jack drowsily. "No, no; I don't!" he cried hastily, as he saw Pete's hand slide towards the water-bottle.

"Don't what?" demanded Pete.

"I don't—I don't think it's time we went to bed, then!"

"Tought you would come round to a better frame ob opinion!" exclaimed Pete, putting down the water-bottle again. "Now, let's hear what you hab to say 'bout a lady for a present! Nunno! Got de cart before de hoss. A present for a lady."

"Well, I say the same as Sam—it all depends who she is. Is she pretty?"

"I'm not going to answer dat question!" replied Pete, with an air of mystery. "Don't see what dat's got to do wid it at all!"

"How would a bouquet do?" suggested Sam.

"Nunno! Dat wouldn't do at all."

"Well, a bottle of scent, then?" suggested Jack, not to be outdone.

"Nunno! Why don't you suggest a pound ob tripe or a bottle ob pickles?" grumbled Pete. "Can't you tink ob anyting better dan dat?"

"Well, look here," exclaimed Sam, "if you won't tell us who she is, or what she is, perhaps you'll tell us about how much you want to pay for the present?"

"Dat all depends on what de present is," exclaimed Pete. "Tink I shall hab to gib her a tarara!"

"Scissors!" gasped Sam, glancing at Jack. "What the thump's that?"

"Tarara, ob course!" replied Pete. "Should hab tought dat a man ob your experience would hab known what a ting like dat is!"

"Describe it, then."

"Um! Golly! It's a sort ob ting wid diamonds in it dat dey wear on deir noddles!"

"A tiara!" shouted Jack and Sam together, now fully awake, and, despite themselves, fully interested in Pete's mysterious problem.

"Don't see dat it matters what you call de ting, and——"

"It's a married lady, then, you are intending to honour with your present?" exclaimed Jack, winking at Sam.

"What's dat got to do wid it?" demanded Pete severely.

"A good deal, since tiaras are only worn by married women, and pretty wealthy ones at that."

Pete's faith in his "tarara" became rather shaken, and he shook his head dolefully.

"Look here," cried Sam at last, "let's drop this beating about the bush! I, and I reckon Jack, too, can make a pretty shrewd guess at the name of the lady you want to make a present to."

"Who am it?"

"Mrs. Lacey."

Jack and Sam laughed heartily at Pete's discomfiture.

"I neber said it was Mrs. Lacey!" he mumbled.

"No need for that, mate," exclaimed Sam. "And I don't see what would



be the good of giving that little lady a tiara. She would never wear it, and I doubt if she would accept it."

"Shoo, Sammy! Don't talk so loud!" cried Pete. "Now you hab let de cat out ob de bag, what shall I gib her? You and Sammy can gib her a present ob your own. Dis child wants to gib her a separate one."

"Well," said Sam, "it's like this, mate. You see, Mrs. Lacey is a lady, and—er—and you can't very well give her a very expensive present, because she would only think you were doing it out of charity. Besides, anything at all approaching the value of a tiara would be quite useless to her. I tell you what we had better do. When we leave here, you can send her a little banknote for her little girl, and— Now, don't interrupt me. To-morrow morning you can buy her a pair of gloves. I am sure she would like that better than some expensive article."

Pete eyed Sam by the flickering candle light rather doubtfully, and sat and nursed his knee.

"You'm a bery good talker, Sammy!" he observed at last. "Don't know weder you'm right or wrong 'bout de matter; but dat banknote has got to be a thumping big one!"

"All right!" said Sam. "You shall send it off to her yourself."

"An' you an' Jack," declared Pete, "hab got to subscribe to it!"

Now, as is perhaps known, the comrades have a common fund, the whole of their vast fortune being at the disposal of either one of them. But if Pete has a little weakness, it is that of trying to make Jack and Sam spend what he calls their own money, not that he thinks either of them backward in doing this, but—well, it's just one of his little ways.

"Having settled the matter to the satisfaction of your lordship, you silly, thumping, blinking, wide-awake owl you, perhaps you'll allow us to go to sleep now?" cried Sam. "No; here, you leave that candle alone. You are not going to take it your side of the room. We don't want to be burnt out!"

Pete pulled off his last boot, and rose to his feet, yawning. In about two minutes he was in bed, and Sam promptly blew out the candle.

"Thank goodness!" he murmured to himself, as he turned over.

For a little while there was silence in the room, and Jack and Sam were just on the point of dropping off to sleep.

"Sammy, Sammy!" came a hoarse whisper. Sam pretended to be asleep. "Sammy," cried Pete—"Sammy, Sammy! Shall hab to get dat water! Dat's better!"

"What is it?" growled Sam.

"Don't you tink a pair ob boots would be better dan glubs, Sammy?"

A suppressed chuckle came from Sam's bed.

"Oh, for goodness' sake——" cried Sam. "No, no, no; you cannot give a lady a pair of boots."

"Why not, Sammy?"

But Sam refused to answer any more, and at last Pete went off to sleep.

## CHAPTER 19.

### A Costly Pair of Gloves—Off to Hampstead Meath.

THE following morning at breakfast Pete was rather preoccupied, but his silence did not take much effect on his appetite.

After he had consumed four eggs and as many substantial rashers of bacon, he looked up suddenly and gazed gravely at Mrs. Lacey.

"Oh, goodness," cried the little lady, "don't look at me like that! What have I done?"



"Nutting, my dear," said Pete, "'cept dese eggs and bacon, and dey am done bery nicely. Do you like tara—"

Sam gave Jack a nudge in the ribs that made that worthy nearly choke, and caused Pete to glance severely in their direction.

"You musn't take any notice ob dese two, my dear; dey hab been bery badly brought up, and dey don't know how to behave demselves."

Mrs. Lacey cast a glance of amusement at Jack and Sam. The worried look which her face had habitually worn before the three comrades had taken up their stay at her house had completely vanished under their genial influence, and it must be confessed that a very large share of this happy circumstance was due to Pete's fooling.

His irrepressible gaiety and goodness of heart had thoroughly won over the little landlady, and care seemed to at last have left her free.

"What was that you wanted to ask me, Pete?"

"I wanted to know if you am fond of taradiddles."

"Taradiddles?" echoed Mrs. Lacey. "Why, what does that mean?"

"He means tiaras," explained Sam, with difficulty containing his mirth.

"Oh, well, I don't know, I'm sure. They are very pretty, but—well, you see, I don't think I care particularly about them, since I should never wear one."

Sam shot an amused glance at Pete, who looked rather crestfallen at the downfall of his pet idea for a present.

"But why do you ask, Pete?"

"I dunno, my dear; just wanted to know, dat's all."

"But you must have had some object," persisted Mrs. Lacey.

Pete looked rather uncomfortable; and Jack, considering the torture he had been put to the night before, came gallantly to the rescue.

"You see, Mrs. Lacey," he said, "we were having a little discussion about the matter last night, and Pete maintained that you—er—" Jack began to flounder a little. "I mean," he went on hastily, "that Pete would have it that tiaras were suitable presents to give to ladies. Hallo! Where are you off to, Pete?"

"Just going for a little walk, boys. Sha'n't be long. Dunno 'bout dis at all," he muttered as he left No. 9. "Must get dose glubs, I s'pose, but should hab liked to get someting much better."

The shops were only just opening, and Pete wandered some distance along the Western Road until he reached an establishment to his liking.

"Good-morning, sir!" said a polite shopwalker as he entered. "What can I show you this morning?"

"I want some glubs, old hoss!"

"Yes, sir; this way, please."

Pete followed the frock-coated figure through several departments.

"Gloves for this gentleman!" cried the shopwalker. "Forward, Mr. Adams!"

A dapper little assistant came bustling forward.

"Gloves, sir? Yes, sir. What kind would you like? Brown or——"

"Let's hab a look at some," cried Pete.

"Yes, sir." The assistant whisked off, and returned with a huge pile of glove-boxes. "Here's a nice article," he declared; "real suede!"

Pete eyed the gloves rather doubtfully.

"Don't care for dose bery much."

"Kid, sir?" inquired the little assistant, gazing up into Pete's face.

"Eh?"

"Kid, sir?"



Pete looked rather doubtful, but he remembered his experience with the grocer.

"Let's hab a look at de kids, den."

The shop assistant soon brought another lot of boxes.

"Dat's better!" exclaimed Pete, as he eyed a pair of very brilliant yellow gloves. "Like de shade ob dose bery much."

"What size do you take, sir?" asked the assistant, with a very gratified smile.

"Eh?"

"What size, sir?"

"Oh, golly, dose glubs are not for me! I want a pair ob lady's glubs."

The little shop assistant muttered something rather uncomplimentary.

"Lady's gloves? Upstairs, sir," he said.

"Can't you serve me wid dem? I'm bery sorry, old hoss, I quite forgot. Neber tought dat you would tink dis child wanted glubs to wear."

"No, sir, it's against our rule; but it's only just upstairs in the ladies' department."

Pete gave a prodigious sigh and walked slowly upstairs.

There was a good deal of twittering among the young ladies as they saw a huge black man walk up to the counter.

"I want a pair ob glubs, my dear—lady's glubs," he said, determined that there should be no mistake about the matter.

"Yes. What kind of gloves would you like?" said the young lady, trying to repress her smiles. "Kid, suede, silk, cotton?"

"Kid."

"And what size?"

Pete became the picture of despair, and he gazed solemnly at his own huge black paw.

"About de quarter de size ob dat," he said, holding it out. "Yah, yah, yah! What am you laughin' at?"

The girl looked rather alarmed at Pete's guffaw.

It was a very select and proper establishment, and she promptly brought forward a box of goods.

"Dose'll do—dose yellowy ones!"

"These are rather an expensive kind, sir; the price is six-and-elevenpence three farthings."

"Bery cheap, too!" declared Pete. "Wrap dem up, my dear."

"Shall I send them for you, sir?"

"Eh?"

"Can't I send them for you?"

Pete started to laugh again, but stopped abruptly as he saw the expression on the girl's face; and seizing the little parcel, rammed it in his pocket and darted off.

"Your change, sir!" cried the girl.

But Pete had gone, and there was a great deal of discussion in that department as to what should be done with the odd three shillings and a farthing; and it may here be mentioned that the matter was settled by the owner of the shop debiting it to his profit account.

Pete burst triumphantly into the little sitting-room.

"I've got dem!" he cried. "Hallo, what hab you got dere?"

Jack and Sam were studying the time-table.

"Mrs. Lacey has gone away for a few days," said Sam, as he looked up, "so your little present will have to keep for a time."

Pete looked rather disappointed.

"What am you studying dat ting for?" he demanded.



"We were just looking out a train," replied Jack.

"Golly! Were you and Sammy going to elope before dis child came back, den?"

"No, you silly coon! Next Monday is Bank Holiday, and we thought of going to Hampstead for the day."

"Golly," cried Pete, skipping about the room like a boy, "dat's a top-hole idea! Hadn't we better start now?"

"No. I reckon you've got a few plates and dishes to wash up before we go. We've got to keep house ourselves until Mrs. Lacey comes back."

During the two days Pete was all excitement, and he nearly drove Jack and Sam off their heads with his continual questioning about the Bank Holiday on the Heath.

On the Monday morning Jack woke up and gazed sleepily in the direction of Pete's bed.

"Funny I should wake up," he muttered; "I suppose I missed Pete's snoring. I wonder where he's got to? Sam!"

There was no answer from Sam Grant's bed.

"Sam!"

Still no answer.

"Sam! What the policeman's the matter with you? Where's Pete got to?"

"I don't know," grumbled Sam. "What's the time?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter about the time!" answered Jack. "But what I want to know, and what you will want to know presently when you can wake up to realise it is, what's become of that Pete of ours?"

"What," answered Sam, sitting up in bed, "has he gone?"

"Gone? Well, I suppose he has, since he isn't in bed."

"Oh—er," grumbled Sam—"well, I suppose we will have to find out what the silly chump is doing, or else we shall have trouble later on."

"I suppose so," replied Jack. "So far as I can see, Pete's idea of a holiday is likely to prove a bit of a hardship. What's the time?"

"Half-past six," answered Sam, as he scrambled into his pants.

"Look here," exclaimed Jack, who was trying to fit himself back frontwards into Sam's vest, "I thought we were going to have a holiday, but as far as I can see it mainly consists in getting Pete out of scrapes and rising early in the morning."

"Oh, he's been very quiet lately!" muttered Sam. "I hope it's not the lull before the storm."

Although Jack and Sam grumbled, they were nevertheless anxious about their old friend and chum; and it must be said that although they were in probably a most civilised quarter of the world, they were more anxious about him by reason of the "bobbies" than they would have been had they been situated in the wilds of America or the depths of the African forest. The customs which obtain in England are not those which hold good in countries less populated or less civilised, and Jack and Sam, without bragging about their comrade's good qualities, fully realised that he was not equal to some of the strange distinctions which exist in towns.

"Scissors!" exclaimed Sam, as they descended the stairs. "I don't believe he's gone out after all. I believe he's in the kitchen."

"Hallo, boys!" cried Pete, who had got the fire lighted and the breakfast ready laid. "I was just coming to lug you out ob it. Mustn't lose dat train, you know."

"Silly owl!" grumbled Sam. "There's another couple of hours yet; and besides, we must wait until Mrs. Lacey gets back."

"Well, I suppose we may as well have breakfast now we're up," said Jack.



After the meal was over, Pete insisted that the plates and dishes should all be washed up and everything left in apple-pie order. By the time this was finished it was getting on for eight o'clock, and Pete spent the next half-hour in running to and fro to the front door.

"Golly!" he cried, for the twentieth time. "We shall lose dat nasturtion train. Hope Mrs. Lacey habn't got a fit of laziness this morning. Oh, golly! Neber heard you coming, my dear."

Jack and Sam chuckled at Pete's expression of dismay.

"Why, what's the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Lacey. "Are you going away?" she added, with a note of regret in her voice.

"Nunno, my dear. We am only going for de day to see de Bank Holiday at Hampstead, by the eight forty-five nasturtion."

"His memory cistern gets more flowery than ever," said Sam. "Good-bye, Mrs. Lacey; don't sit up for us."

## CHAPTER 20.

### Colonel Badger threatens to give Pete in Charge.

"COME along!" cried Jack, as he left the booking-office. "We must make a rush for it. The train is just starting!"

The three rushed past the astonished ticket-collector, and tore along the platform.

"Hi! Golly!" yelled Pete. "Stop de cab! Whoa! In you go, Sammy. Mind de step, Jack. Take de oder leg wid you."

Jack and Sam flung themselves into a compartment, and Pete followed them with a flying leap.

"Ta-ta, old hoss!" he yelled, as he shut the carriage door, and grinned pleasantly at an angry porter who had tried to stop him. "Ta-ta! Mind you take dat face home bery carefully. Hallo! What's all dis? Hab you—hab you engaged de whole carriage, old hoss? 'Cos, if you hab, we free shall hab to get out and walk. Any eggs in dis little lot?"

Besides the three comrades, there was only one other occupant of the carriage, which, according to the little printed notice, was intended to accommodate ten persons.

But if there was only one other, he had certainly contrived to spread his belongings most effectively.

Jack and Sam had managed to squeeze themselves in between a miscellaneous assortment of bags and parcels, but Pete did not see the fun of being imposed upon, and he started to clear one side of that carriage with remarkable promptitude.

A hat-box went rolling beneath the seat, followed by a portmanteau, travelling-rug, a bundle of golf-sticks, a luncheon-basket.

The owner of these various articles sprang to his feet.

"Leave those things alone!" he roared, his fat face purple with anger. "I'll give you in custody for this. Do you know who I am, fellow? How dare you take such liberties!"

"You hurry off, old hoss. You'm a bit too fond ob taking liberties wid oder people's seats, and de best ting you can do am to go in de corner and turn dat face to de window. Dis child am rader particular 'bout him eyesight," retorted Pete, as he made himself comfortable in his corner.

"You won't smile so much when we get to town," exploded the furious man, as he saw Jack and Sam exchange a glance of amusement. "You needn't think that I can be made a fool of for nothing. I'll——"

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete. "Should hab tought dat came quite natural like. Seems as if dere's no need to try bery hard in dat direction. Most ob



de boder would be in stopping you from making an idjit ob yourself. Now, do as you'm told, and buzz off!"

"I won't—I won't! I——"  
"Oh, golly! Stop dat funny noise. What's your name?"

"I am Colonel Badgers," hooted the man; "and I'll make you suffer for this! You—you scoundrel!"

"Badger," said Pete quietly, "sit down in dat corner, and don't badger me. We'm on a holiday, and if Jack and Sammy like to be badgered dat's nothing to do wid dis child, so long as de badgering operashuns am carried on in whispers. Dough if you want to relieve your feeling, dis child gibes you full sanction to clump Sammy's napper. Dat's de kernel ob de whole matter. Buzz off!"

Now Colonel Badgers, as he called himself, had a far from military appearance. "Hab you eber been engaged, my dear old hoss?" inquired Pete, as he filled his pipe.

"Don't address your impertinent remarks to me," snarled the colonel. "I'll make you smart for your impudence. How dare you inquire into what does not concern you!"

"Scissors!" whispered Sam. "The silly old idiot doesn't understand Pete's 'cistern.' I reckon he's trying to find out if Badgers has ever been in an engagement."

"People like you ought not to be allowed in first-class carriages," muttered the colonel, as he flung himself into his seat. "You ought to travel——"

"Golly!" cried Pete. "Dis am a first-class compartment, Sammy."

"Well, and what about it? I have taken——"

Sam stopped abruptly as Pete, unseen by Badgers, gave him a portentous wink.

"Dis is a funny ting," went on Pete, in a loud voice. "Most strange dat it should be a first-class carriage."

A gleam of satisfaction lighted the colonel's eyes.

"All right, my fine fellow," he snarled, "you will have to settle with the ticket-collector at Grosvenor Road. He'll understand and know how to manage you, I'll warrant."

"Dis child don't want managing," cried Pete, in affected dismay. "Most awful ting dis. Do you tink de ticket-collector will be very fierce, my dear old hoss?"

"I told you not to address any further remarks to me!" snapped Badgers. "And you may be sure that I shall fulfil my duty to the railway company, and see that you do not evade the law. People who travel with third-class tickets in first-class carriages are liable to a severe fine or imprisonment."

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "What a rebengeful old jossor you are! Surely you won't gib us all into de bobby's hand?"

Badgers refused to be drawn any more.

"You'll find out when we reach town," he growled, as he buried himself behind his newspaper. "And I shall lodge a complaint to the manager about your outrageous conduct."

Jack and Sam chuckled silently, and they nearly exploded with mirth as they saw Pete stoop silently down and pick up a ticket from the floor.

Badgers rustled his paper savagely, but kept his face hidden, which was well for Pete's next action, which otherwise could not have passed the colonel's notice.



Pete had deftly passed his find to Sam, and Jack leaned over his comrade's shoulder, and grinned appreciatively as he saw what Pete had found.

"Must take care ob dis little lot," whispered Pete. "Funny how careless some people am," he observed, as he placed the ticket in his pocket.

The three smoked in silence for some little time, and station after station flashed by.

Badgers fidgeted considerably, and presently started coughing. He glared over the top of his newspaper at the three comrades.

Each occupied a corner seat, and Badgers, who sat facing Pete and the engine, savagely lowered the window.

"Ugh!" he growled. "Beastly, vile, common tobacco. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Dis am a smoking compartment, old hoss, not a shower-baf. You leabe dat window alone. Dis child don't care for bafs wid him clothes on."

Pete seized the window-strap and pulled it up with a jerk.

Badger was unwise enough to try to lower that window.

"Hi! You—stop you—let go my hand!"

"Leabe dat strap alone."

"I protest! I won't stand this abominable smoke!"

But whether he liked it or not Badgers had to put up with it until the train stopped at Grosvenor Road.

"All tickets, please!"

"Oh, golly!" exclaimed Pete. "Let's get under the seat, boys."

A glitter of triumph shone in Colonel Badger's little eyes as the ticket-collector unlocked the carriage door.

"All tickets, please!"

"Collector, these men are travelling with third-class tickets," snapped Badgers.

"Are they, sir. We'll soon see to that. May I have your ticket, please?"

Badgers fumbled first in one pocket then in another; his red face got more purple than ever.

"Take these men's first," he mumbled. "Confound the thing! What have I done with it?"

The ticket-collector began to look rather annoyed.

"I can't stand here all day," he grumbled. "Let me have your tickets."

"Certainly, old hoss," cried Pete, handing the man three first-class tickets and a coin. "Am dey all right?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

"Den de old buffer hab brought a wrongful accusation against free innocent travellers. Shall hab to bring a libel 'gainst de old hoss. Buck up, de man am waiting for your ticket."

"Come along, sir!" cried the ticket-collector. "If you haven't got a ticket you must pay again, that's all."

"But I have got a ticket!" howled Badgers, who was now in a state of perspiration.

"Perhaps you'll be good enough to let me have it, then," replied the collector. "The company happen to be rather particular about these little matters."

"Don't be insolent!" snapped Badgers.

The ticket-collector looked rather angry.

"Look here," he cried, "I'm not going to——"

"Hi, golly! What's dis?" cried Pete, pretending to pick up a ticket from the floor.

"That's my ticket!" roared Badgers.



"Tank goodness!" exclaimed Pete, slapping it on Badgers's bald head. "Now, perhaps, we shall be able to get 'long!"

"Don't you grin at me!" he roared, as the smiling ticket-collector slammed the door. "I'll—I'll——"

Badgers sank back on his seat, speechless. He was in a towering rage, but he had sufficient sense to know that he was entirely in the wrong; and he only snorted when Pete asked him if he was going to give him in charge when they got to the terminus.

"Benk, Benk!" yelled a 'bus-conductor, as they came out of the station.

"All the way to the Benk, a penny!"

"Hi!" yelled Pete, running after the 'bus. "Stop!"

The vehicle pulled up.

"Do you go to Hampstead, old hoss?"

"No; this is a Broad Street 'bus."

"But you said Bank!"

"Well, the Benk ain't 'Ampstead!"

"Oh, golly! Tought you meant Bank Holiday! Here, who are you pushing, Sammy?"

"Oh, go on! Get up; this'll do! We can get the train from Broad Street."

## CHAPTER 21.

### Pete boxes the "Beauty of Bath."

"SO dis am Hampstead?" cried Pete, about an hour later, as they came out of Hampstead Heath Station. "Golly! Where hab all de people sprung from? Hi! Hellup! What's all dis?"

A merry, laughing, dark-eyed factory-girl used her tickler to such good effect that Pete was forced to shut his eyes, and make wild grabs at the quivering feather. When at last he opened his eyes, feather and girl had disappeared in the crowd of merry holiday-makers.

Jack and Sam roared with laughter.

"Worse than skeeters, ain't they?" cried Sam. "Mind your—— Ugh!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Am you thirsty, Sammy? Mind your mouf! Yah, yah, yah!"

Sam spluttered and grimaced.

"It's all very fine for you to guffaw, my beauty!" he growled. "But I'd a sight rather have a tickler shoved down my throat than the contents of a squirter. I reckon they're nasty. Go away!" he roared.

"Gib it to him, my dear!" cried Pete.

Sam fled. He could face most things, but the deadly little indiarubber ball loaded with not over-clean water was not to his taste.

"Oh, golly!" yelled Pete. "Look at dat babe, Sammy! Ugh! Groo! Bizz!"

The light-hearted band of girls tormented Pete, and giggled and chuckled with laughter at his antics. Finally he, too, took refuge in flight, and Jack followed close on his heels.

Condemned to work from early morning till late every night for a bare living wage, the London factory-girl fairly lets her high spirits get the best of her on Bank Holidays.

She and her attendant young man are out to enjoy themselves, and it is safe to say that they crowd more innocent, if somewhat noisy and vigorous, enjoyment into the few brief hours of their holiday than some of the sober-minded, highly respectable inhabitants of the trim, sedate suburban villas



manage to get out of the whole of their three weeks' annual sojourn at some equally sedate seaside resort.

By the jolly, laughing crowd—men, women, girls, and boys—dull care is sent flying with a right goodwill, and all give themselves up to the full enjoyment of the moment.

Cocoonut-shies, merry-go-rounds, swings, rifle-ranges, boxing-booths, wild-beast shows, animated-photograph shows, all find their patrons among the tens of thousands that make a raid on Hampstead Heath from the overcrowded, grey streets of the most densely populated parts of London.

Keeping a wary eye on possessors of ticklers and squirters, Jack, Sam, and Pete slowly made their way through the crowd up the hill leading from the station, and, turning to the right, crossed the Heath to the Vale of Health.

As they followed the sandy path running by the side of the pond, a shrill steam-whistle went off with a screech that could have been heard a mile away.

"Golly!" cried Pete. "What's all dat noise for? Look! Dere's a fire, Sammy!"

"No, you image; you know better than that! It's that steam round-about letting off a little pressure."

"Come on, den, boys; let's hab a ride!"

"Here, you stupid," cried Sam; "there's no hurry! Wait a bit! Let's have a look at that show over there!"

The three branched off, and approached a boxing-booth.

"'Ere yer are, gents," cried the wiry little showman, making enough noise for ten men—"ere yer are! The Pentonville Pug., Brixton Bob, champion light-weight, and—Tom Squire, the Beauty from Bath!"

The boss paused for a moment to let this sally sink home.

"Now, then," he continued, "any gent wot stands up to the Beauty of Bath fer three rounds takes five bob! Now, come erlong! If yer don't like the looks of Beauty—well, you can take on any other you like! You pays yer money and takes yer choice!"

There were no offers from the crowd at the conclusion of the showman's challenge.

"Reckon that Beauty of Bath isn't much to the liking of them," said Sam. "S'pose you have a go, Pete? It's about time you took a little exercise; you're getting quite flabby!"

"Dunno 'bout dat flabbiness, Sammy," answered Pete, tenderly feeling his biceps; "but I do know dat I hab seen some beauties a bit above de style ob dat chap's face; and I tink dat he must hab won most ob his fights by gibing his opponent fits. Golly! Hope I don't dream 'bout dat counting-house to-night!"

During this little conversation, the band, consisting of a battered big-drum and a dented cornet, played vigorously, and the noise they made attracted such a crowd that Jack, Sam, and Pete, who had but a few minutes earlier occupied the edge of the crowd, now found themselves well in the centre, and being pressed closer to the steps leading to the "ring."

Suddenly the band ceased playing, and the boss of the show dangled a pair of boxing-gloves invitingly over the heads of the closely-packed throng.

"Now, then, gents," he yelled, "come on! Who's on fer a bit of sport? 'Ere, you! You look a likely sort of chap!" he went on, addressing a brawny, great labourer. "You scale well over 'leven stun. Take 'em!"

"Not me," growled the man, flinging back the gloves that the showman had thrown at him—"not me! Wot would my missis say if I went 'ome wiv a tooth missing, or the front of me face round the back? No, old son; you get some other chap to make a cockshy of! I ain't 'aving any! Try



that chap over there. He's got a head that'll stand some knocking about!"

Several of the crowd tittered at the banter, and more than one youth there would have liked to accept the challenge, but hadn't the pluck to mount the staircase in full view of the crowd.

"Go on, Bill," whispered a freckled-faced youth about eighteen—"go on! Don't be a fool!"

"I ain't!" replied his companion. "If you're so mighty anxious, why don't you take it on yourself?"

"I sprained my wrist jist now with that there punching-machine or else I would!" retorted the other indignantly.

"Oh, all right! Keep yer wool on, and I'll wait until that wrist of yours gets better! I thought as you would have taken on the little 'un, wrist or no wrist!"

"Look 'ere, Bill," cried the other, raising his voice, "if I have any more of your—"

"'Ere yer are, guv'nor!" cried a man, standing behind the pair. "'Ere's a likely pair spoiling fer a— 'Ere, who're yer shoving of—eh?"

Finding all eyes turned upon them, the two youths promptly elbowed their way out of the crowd.

Their retreat opened a little lane in the throng, and the showman caught sight of Pete.

"Hallo!" he cried. "That's my man! Coffee-cooler number two! Catch!"

"Say, guv'nor," muttered the Beauty of Bath, "wot sort ov a gime d'ye all this? D'you reckon I'm going to stand up ter that chap fer third share of the takings? Not me! Why, he's getting on fer fourteen stun, if he's an ounce!"

"Chuck it, you fool!" growled the boss. "Don't matter how big he is. He can't stand up to that upper-cut of yours!"

This wily bit of flattery got the better of Beauty, and he retired somewhat sulkily to his position by the rail, where he stood with folded arms, and a prodigious scowl on his battered face.

"M'yes!" muttered Pete, lighting his pipe. "I'm sure to dream ob dat lubly face! Must— Golly! What am you yowling at, old hoss?"

"You!" bawled the showman. "You've got the gloves; come an' put 'em on! Come on! D'yer think I want yer ter take 'em 'ome as a keepsake?"

The boss was getting frantic now. He had harangued the crowd for close on twenty minutes, and if he did not succeed in getting up a fight, all his time would be wasted, the usual confederate having gone off to the local hostelry to refresh himself.

"What are you going to do, Pete?" asked Sam. "We're the centre of attraction just now, and if you're not going to take any exercise, sling those gloves back, and we'll be off."

Utterly oblivious of the shouting of the showman or the jeers of the crowd, who hoped to force matters by uncomplimentary remarks, Pete gazed sadly at his comrades.

"Sammy," he said sorrowfully, "hab you no sort ob consideration fer dis pore child? Hab you'm lost all sense ob de decency ob tings dat you should excite—golly, no, encite, dat's it—dis undefenceless nigger to brawl wid dat Beauty?"

Sam groaned. He knew Pete's moods well enough to know that nothing could move him from his purpose, and he also knew that they would get



into trouble with the numerous special constables that had been drafted to the Heath, if the matter ended in a general, all-round scrimmage.

Suddenly a howl rose from the crowd. Pete had made one move towards the steps. Boos and hisses filled the air as he stopped and fumbled in his pockets.

"Hab you got a match, Sammy?"

"'Ere you are, guv'nor!" cried a man, striking a match, and lighting Pete's pipe for him. "For goodness' sake, get a move on you now!"

"Tanks! What for?"

"Well, you're going to takè that boxer chap on, ain't yer?"

"Who told you dat?" inquired Pete mildly.

"Nobody; but you've got the gloves, and——"

"Golly! Dat's a funny ting!" cried Pete, holding up the pair of gloves, and turning them from side to side. "Must hab forgot all 'bout dese tings! What are dey?"

"Come on, guv'nor!" urged the showman. "You'll lose me my show if you go on like this!"

"Oh, golly! I coming!" cried Pete, who did not want to spoil the man's chance of getting a full house.

"Look 'ere," whispered the Beauty of Bath, as Pete took off his coat in the corner of the tent, "you're a bit erbove my weight, you know! Ever done any boxing?"

Further inquiries were cut short by the call of:

"Time!"

The tent was packed.

"Shake hands, boys!" cried the boss gleefully. "Three rounds; thirty seconds' interval!"

Pete and the Beauty shook hands, and then started sparring. The spectators were treated to some very pretty play. But Pete saw through the Beauty's tactics, and before they retired to their corners, after the first round, he contrived to whisper a few words in that worthy's ear.

"You am got to hit a bit harder dan dat! Don't be 'fraid; dis child can stand it! Dey won't tink dey are getting deir money's worth."

The Beauty took Pete at his word, and pounded away for all he was worth. Most of the blows Pete received on the top of his head, and at the same time he put up a very good show of defending himself.

Towards the end of the third round, the Beauty, who was in high good-humour, although he put on a ferocious expression, winked at Pete as he launched out with a terrific left-hander.

"Blow me if you ain't a good sort!" he muttered, beneath his breath. "This ain't the first time you've been in the ring, I know. Now put it on a bit."

The end of the last round roused the crowd of spectators to a high pitch of excitement. Apparently the men were slogging each other for all they were worth, and indeed their condition when they shook hands looked as if they had been fighting for a purse, for the Beauty was as red as a turkey cock, and Pete was puffing and blowing like a grampus.

"If that black friend of yours ever wants a job," said the showman, who was standing next to Jack and Sam, and who was fully aware of Pete's knowledge of ringcraft, "you send him to me. Why, I'd make his fortune in no time! The Beauty wouldn't have been anywhere if he had liked to strike out!"

Another couple now occupied the ring, and Pete came up to the little group looking remarkably cool and smiling.



"S'pose we get 'long?" he said. "And jest gib dat to de Beauty in two-five minutes!"

Before the showman had recovered from the shock Pete had given him—for it was a sovereign that lay in his hand—the comrades had gone.

After leaving the boxing-booth, the comrades passed up the hill, and reached the patch of sandy ground covered with side shows running parallel with the Spaniards Road.

## CHAPTER 22.

### Pete Plays a Game of Skittles and Causes a Little Damage.

THE dull clang of a bell caused Pete to raise his head. "Golly, dat's a funny sort ob ting, Sammy! What's de idea? Must inquire into dis. Let's hab a look!"

Now, Pete knew very well what this machine was, but he pretended ignorance.

"Ere you are, sir!" cried the owner of the machine, thrusting the handle of a heavy iron-bound wooden mallet into Pete's hand. "Try yer strength! See if you can make the bell ring!"

Pete eyed the mallet doubtfully, and glanced up at the scoring-board, which towered a good twenty to thirty feet in the air.

"Hab I got to frow dis hammer at de bell, old hoss?"

"No, no! You just bring it down on this plug, and that sends— 'Ere, let's show you wot I mean!"

The owner of the try-your-strength machine seized the mallet with a cry of "Mind yer 'ead!" and brought it down with a playful tap that sent the indicator flying nearly to the top.

"That's the way ter do it! Penny a go!"

Pete balanced the hammer in one hand. "You hab fust go, Sammy. Golly! What's de matter?"

"Clench it, you silly owl!" growled Sam, hopping about on one leg.

"That's my toe when you've done with it!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Made de bell ring dat time. S'pose you hab a go, Jack. No?"

"No—no fear!" cried Jack, dodging away.

"Specs dis child hab got to show de way, den!" said Pete, with a prodigious sigh. "Lemme see, how do you catch hold ob dis ting?"

"No, not like that, you— Bless me! 'Ere, you'll knock somebody's head off if you go on like that! 'Ere, let's have it!"

Pete had whirled the hammer round his head like an Indian club, and had scattered the people in no time.

"Some of yer are like babies!" grumbled the man. "Now, you jest watch this!"

In true professional style the owner planted himself in front of the machine, and with an easy swing brought the hammer down square on the plug.

Ting!

"Dat's looks mighty easy!" cried Pete. "How much did you say?"

"Penny a go!"

"Does it matter if I break de machine?"

"No, mate; I'll risk that!" answered the man, winking at the crowd.

Pete drew himself up to his full height, and swung the hammer round.

"One, two, free, four——"

"Hit it, mate! Crumbs! How much longer are you going to swing the blessed thing? Hit it! Ha, ha, ha!"



Pete had brought the hammer down with a mighty thump; but it had missed the plug altogether, and descended with a dull thump on the ground. "Golly! Dere's someting wrong wid de bell!" he cried, eyeing the little crowd gravely. "Must hab anoder go!"

Again Pete swung the hammer, but this time he did not miss. Whack!

"Dat bell gabe a funny sort ob ring dat time!"

"You've broke my blessed machine!" howled the man. "What did you want to hit it like that for?"

The force of Pete's blow had sent the indicator whizzing up the pole and clean past the bell. It came out at the top, and describing a little curve, dropped on the owner's head.

"Ow! Yow!"

The crowd roared with laughter. Everyone seemed to think it a fine joke, except the one who had received the lump of metal on the top of his head.

"Bery sorry, old hoss; but it am not dis child's fault. You said hit him hard, an'— Golly, what's de matter?" The angry man seized the hammer from Pete's hand and swore softly. "You'm a bery—"

"Go away!" hooted the man. "You've been and gone and broke my machine. Get out of my sight!"

"Golly! Dis child habn't been and gone! Habn't moved from dis spot. Now, my dear old hoss, let's see if we can't put dis ting to-rights. Dere's your penny!"

"Ugh! That's a nice sort of thing. I like your style. 'Ere, you smash up my machine, and give a chap a mouldy copper."

"Nunno, old hoss, dat's not a mouldy copper. You'm too mighty impetuous. Just hab—"

"Wot about my wife and kids? How d'you s'pose I'm going to— Oh, get out; I'm sick of the sight of you!"

Pete gazed at the man sadly and shook his head slowly.

As a matter of fact, beneath the bronze coin Pete had given him was a gold one, but the man had shoved it in his pocket without troubling to look.

"Come 'long, boys!" said Pete at last. "Can't do anything wid dis rambigious man."

The comrades strolled off.

"You might have given the poor wretch a bit extra," said Sam.

"I did!"

"What?" cried Jack and Sam.

"I did!"

"But—"

"Dose butts of yours am empty. Gabe dat man a sobereign, and de silly put it in his pocket. Don't matter, dough; 'specs he'll find it presently."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sam.

"Dere's nuffing to laf at!"

"No; oh, no—of course not! It's only another of your little schemes gone wrong, that's all. Ha, ha, ha! Why didn't you tell him to turn out his pockets?"

"Nebber tought ob dat," grumbled Pete. "But still, 'specs he would hab tought I was habing a game wid him."

"Here," cried Sam, "I want to see a bit more of this! Let's stand here and watch that merchant."

They pulled up beneath a little clump of fir-trees. The disconsolate owner of the machine was sitting at the foot of it moodily smoking. Jack, Sam, and Pete lounged on the grass and watched him for some time.



"Look here!" cried Sam at last. "If that silly chump don't— Scissors! Look!"

The man had now risen and mechanically thrust his hands into his pockets. Slowly he brought out a handful of coppers, his takings for the day, and, shaking his head, began to count them.

The comrades could not hear his muttered words of disgust, but they heard the yell he gave when he found that sovereign.

"Yah, yah, yah!" chuckled Pete. "Dis am a mighty sight better dan habing told dat man all 'bout it! Oh, golly, look at de 'spicious old hoss! He'm biting it!"

The three laughed heartily at the machine man's amazement.

"Scissors! That's put new heart into him," cried Sam. "See, he's gone to borrow a ladder to mend the bell with. Come, I reckon we may as well get on. Let's go and have some dinner; I'm mighty hungry."

Pete promptly scrambled to his feet.

"Golly!" he exclaimed. "Couldn't make out quite what was de matter. Knew dere was someting wrong wid de internal cistern. Where shall we go?"

"I reckon we may as well go there as anywhere," said Jack, pointing across the heath.

Five minutes later, making a bee-line across the hills, the three entered a quiet little hotel. A tremendously fat man met them in the hall.

"Golly!" cried Pete. "Hope you'm not yaffled up all de beef-steak and potatoes!"

"No," answered the fat man good-humouredly, "I have left some for you. Do you want dinner, gentlemen? Come this way!"

"Mighty good-tempered sort this!" whispered Jack.

The comrades followed the landlord into a large pleasantly-situated dining-room.

After dinner they strolled round the garden at the back of the hotel.

"What's dat funny noise?" said Pete, as they approached a long wooden building at the end of the grounds.

"Skittles!" cried Sam.

Pete looked at him solemnly.

"Dat's bery unpolite ob you, Sammy," he exclaimed. "I ask you a simple question, and you say skittles."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack. "So it is. Don't you see, you stupid, that it is a skittle-alley?"

"What's dat?"

"Oh, don't ask questions!" replied Sam. "Let's go and have a look instead."

When the three entered the skittle-alley, they found a man in his shirt-sleeves swinging a heavy flat piece of wood shaped like a dutch cheese. He stopped when he saw the comrades, and dropped the cheese back into the rack.

"Do you want a game, gentlemen?"

"We don't want to disinterrupt you, old hoss."

"Oh, you are not interrupting me," said the man, with a laugh. "I'm the sticker-up."

"De what?" gasped Pete.

"The sticker-up. You knocks 'em down, and I sticks 'em up again. Have a try and see what you can do. There's a nice cheese over there; about your mark, I should say—weighs about fourteen pounds."

Pete looked more mystified than ever.



"Golly," he cried, "we hab only just had our dinner! Don't want any cheese!"

Jack and Sam roared with laughter at Pete's mistake.

"That's what they call those chunks of wood," said Sam. "Let's see if you can knock those pins down with it."

Pete took the flat, rounded piece of wood in his hand and eyed it curiously.

"How many do you hab to knock down wid one go?"

"As many as you can," replied the sticker-up. "Some of 'em gets one; some of 'em gets more; some of 'em bowls over the whole lot."

"Golly! In one frow?"

"Yes."

"Here goes, den!"

Now, as we know, Pete is a very powerful man, and a fourteen-pound cheese to him would be nothing so far as the weight is concerned, and he flung that cheese at the pins—or, at least, he intended to—as if he meant to smash up the whole lot.

Jack and Sam and the sticker-up roared with laughter as they saw the comical expression of dismay on Pete's face.

The nine pins were standing untouched, while the cheese which he had delivered with such good intention reposed in the net.

"Better let Bob show you how to do it."

"Hallo, you dere?" cried Pete.

"There was plenty of stuff behind that throw of yours," said the landlord, who had entered the alley unnoticed, "but you have got to know a bit about the game before you can hit them in the right place. It's not near so easy as it looks. Now, you just watch Bob."

With true professional style, Bob picked up a cheese from the rack and moistened his fingers on the sponge. Then he gently twirled the cheese until he got it in the right position.

"Now, you see that spot of light on the first pin?" he observed.

"M'yes."

"Well, that's the spot to hit it."

Bob's arm swung back as he leaned forward, and then, as he straightened himself, his arm swung forward, and the cheese went spinning through the air.

"Bravo!" cried the landlord. "A floorer!"

Pete eyed the scattered pins in surprise.

"Golly! Must hab anoder go."

"Stick them up, Bob," cried the landlord.

Pete got ready for another throw, while Bob discreetly retired to a safe distance.

"Can't see dat spot," he grumbled. "Which side am it? De left or de right?"

"It doesn't matter which," said Bob. "So long as you hit that centre pin in the correct place. Wait a bit, I'll mark it for you."

Bob chalked a little white spot on the top right-hand side of the first pin.

Crash!

Jack and Sam retreated hurriedly, and the landlord fled into the garden.

"Golly! Who frew dat pea?" cried Pete.

"He ain't safe," muttered Bob to himself, as he gazed dismayed at the pane of glass through which Pete had hurled the cheese.

"Oh, crumbs! What'll the governor say?"

Bob's fears on this score were groundless, for the landlord knew that all damage would be paid for.



"Now dat's a funny ting," murmured Pete to himself. "Dat cheese must hab slipped somehow or oder. Golly! Where hab dey all gone to?"

"Wait a minute!" yelled Bob. "Stop a bit! I think the governor wants me. Finding that his audience had deserted him, Pete flung down the cheese he had taken up in disgust.

"Tnk dis am all skittles," he muttered, as he went out into the garden.

"Hab you paid for dat game ob skittles, Sammy?"

"Well, we've settled for the damage you've done, if that's what you mean," replied Sam.

"Den s'pose we get 'long. We habn't got much more time. Must hab a go on de roundabouts 'fore we depart."

## CHAPTER 23.

### Pete's Heroic Action.

WHEN the comrades reached the collection of booths again, the sky had become very overcast.

"Golly!" cried Pete, as a big drop of rain splashed on the tip of his nose. "Where's dis little lot coming from? Strikes me we are going to hab some rain." A minute later it came down in torrents.

Crowds of people fled helter-skelter for the booths. "Let's hab a look at de raging lions," cried Pete.

"All right," replied Sam. "Anything for a quiet life, and to get out of de wet."

"Well," exclaimed Jack, with a laugh, "you may be right so far as the wet is concerned, but I have been in a sight quieter place, than this."

"Oh, you know what I mean," rejoined Sam. "Anything to keep Pete out of mischief."

"Don't you be so mighty impersonal, Sammy," muttered Pete. "How much is dat, my dear?" he went on to the woman who stood at the door taking the money.

"Twopence each, sir. Thank you."

"Mind de step, Sammy," shouted Pete, as he slipped down the last three on to the ground that formed the "floor" of the wild-beast show. "Golly! Dose cages don't look bery strong. Should say dat a bery angry lion could crumple up dat little lot. Let's hab a two-er ob suspicions."

"I wonder where the lion-taming business takes place," remarked Sam, as they slowly made the round of the show.

"Ober dere, I 'spects," replied Pete, pointing to a larger cage facing the entrance. "Let's have a look at de gentleman from de wilds." The three paused in front of the lion's cage, and Pete gave a low whistle. "Should say dat chap am a bit bad tempered at times," he said, as he watched the big animal critically. "African lion. M'yes, and a mighty tough handful."

"How'd you like to put him through his paces?" inquired Jack. "Feel at all inclined to resume your lion-taming?"

"Eh? Nunno! Dis child am a bit out ob practice. 'Sides, dis am a holiday."

"But surely you don't call taming lions hard work, do you?" said Sam, with a laugh. "Why, I should have thought it would come as easy as eating pie to you. Sort of recreation."

"Lubly sort ob recreation dat," declared Pete. "But s'pose de lion thought I was a bit ob pie, and—"

"Oh, well, you'd have to turn crusty, or else get in a dark corner where he couldn't see you."



"M'yes. What's dis little lot?"

A short, dark complexioned man in a scarlet coat passed close to Pete, and mounted the steps in front of the cage door.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he cried, slapping his leggings with a short, stout whip. "Here you see Nero, the largest and fiercest of his kind in England. Nero has been judged by experts to be without rival, and I am now about to enter his cage and demonstrate how the fiercest of animals is held under control. After I have made him perform, the young lady, whom you have seen dancing on the platform, will enter Nero's cage and do her skirt-dance."

During this announcement the crowd had closed round the cage, waiting expectantly.

Nero had drawn himself slowly to his feet, and stood close to the little iron door, his yellow eyes fixed steadily on the trainer's back.

With a quick movement the trainer turned on the narrow steps and thrust his whip between the bars.

"Get back!" he commanded. "Get back!"

Nero showed his teeth, and snarled.

"Get back—get back!" cried the trainer. "Get——"

Nero retreated a pace or two out of reach of that whip, and the next instant the trainer had released the door, and was standing within the cage facing the lion.

It was done so quickly that many of the spectators could scarcely believe their eyes.

"Come on!" cried the trainer, cracking his whip. "Over!"

Nero snarled, and showed his teeth as the thong of the whip curled round his ears. But, beyond the lashing of his tail, he refused to budge.

Shouting and cracking his whip the trainer circled slowly round the cage. Still the lion refused to go on with his tricks.

"Dat man will hab trubble wid dat lion, if he'm not careful," observed Pete, as the trainer advanced on his stubborn animal and lashed him over the head and nose.

"The chap's got some pluck," muttered Sam. "But I reckon he's not much of a lion-tamer. He's only making that lion perform by sheer brutality."

Such was indeed the case; and as Nero was forced to go through his series of tricks his temper became worse.

At last, at a given signal, the trainer drove him into a far corner, and stood between him and the cage door.

"Seems dat it would be best if dey left out dis part ob de performance," muttered Pete, as a girl, clad in a bespangled costume and with long folds of some flimsy material flung over her shoulders, mounted the steps and entered the cage.

"Some of 'em wouldn't think they'd had their money's-worth," replied Sam. "Scissors! I hope that chap will be able to keep that brute in check."

The band now struck up, and the girl danced and whirled her skirt in bewildering folds.

Nero thrust his head forward, and gave a low growl.

The trainer brought down his whip with vicious force, but Nero's huge paw caught it as it descended, and the weapon clattered to the floor.

Slowly Nero rose to his feet.

A woman in the crowd gave a stifled scream.

A tawny mass leaped across the cage, and the scarlet coat of the trainer



disappeared from view beneath the huge body. In an instant the whole place was in a state of panic.

Nero crouched across the body of the trainer, and the terrified girl shrank into a corner. Not a sound escaped her lips.

Attendants came rushing through the crowd, but before one of them had got half-way through the throng, Pete had wrenched open the iron door and bounded into the cage. Mingled cries burst from the audience.

"The fool!" cried one man.

"He'll be killed!" cried another.

Sam Grant mounted an overturned tub.

"Please keep silent," he cried. "There is no need to alarm yourselves. My friend is an experienced lion-tamer, and if you only keep quiet, I've no doubt he will be able to save the girl."

A white-faced attendant came rushing forward with a red-hot iron rod, which he placed between the bars of the cage.

"Nunno!" cried Pete. "You take dat away. Quick now, or I won't answer for de consequences."

The man hesitated for a moment, but Sam laid hold of his coat-tails and hauled him away.

The crowd watched Pete with intense anxiety.

Nero was crouched, immovable, over the prostrate form of the trainer, but he slowly turned his enormous head, and gave a low, deep growl as he gazed fixedly at Pete.

"Dat's all right, old hoss," muttered Pete. "You stop like dat for two-free minutes. Now den, my dear," he went on to the girl, "you'm got to stop where you are for free seconds, and den—— Golly! Dat's better."

While he was making this last remark Pete stepped lightly over the back of the lion, and, bending down calmly, picked up the lost whip.

"Now, den," he cried, "let's hab a little music."

But a few seconds elapsed, and then the band struck up.

Audience and assistants seemed to realise that the whole matter rested with Pete, who was gaily whistling an accompaniment to the music.

Without apparently taking any notice of Nero, he approached the trembling girl.

"Must get you out ob dis first," he murmured. "Like so!"

He picked the girl up in his arms, and, passing round the back of the cage, reached the little iron door.

"Now!" he cried sharply.

The attendant understood, and in an instant the door was flung opened and Pete's burden landed in safety.

"Now shut dat door till I tell you'm to open it again; and get a bit ob rope wid a noose ready."

A low murmur of applause rumbled through the tent at the quiet daring shown by Pete, but it was instantly quelled as Sam held his arm up.

Pete was now standing facing Nero, gently flicking his leg with the whip. He was carefully weighing the position. A mistake at this stage might mean the injury, if not the death, of the man pinned beneath the lion, whose terrified eyes fixed themselves in despairing gaze on Pete's face.

For some seconds, which to the audience seemed interminable, Pete stared into Nero's yellow eyes, meanwhile whistling softly.

"Dat's better," he muttered, as at last the lion's eyes flickered and he turned his head uneasily. "Now I tink we can do someting. Don't you move," he went on, looking at the trainer, "and don't speak."

Pete dragged a small platform forward and tapped it with his whip.



"Come 'long, old hoss. Come and sit down here. Nunno! I'm not going to hit you. Come 'long!"

Nero drew back his lips and snarled.

"M'yes," said Pete; and then his marvellous control over animals of all kinds came into play. Without the slightest hesitation he strode across the cage and seized the lion by his shaggy mane.

At the first touch of his hand Nero gave a deep, rumbling roar, which sent a shudder of terror through more than one of the audience. But Pete tried gently to urge the animal to rise, talking to him all the while as if it had been Rory he was trying to coax.

"Come 'long, now, or I shall hab to get dat bit ob string round your neck. Don't want to hab to do dat, for— Golly! Neber noticed dat before."

While Pete had been talking, his eyes caught sight of a groove running across the floor of the cage, and as he glanced at the low roof he saw a corresponding one.

Still patting the lion's head, he turned to the attendants standing close to the bars of the cage.

"Get dat partition," he muttered—"quick! Dat will be better dan de rope."

This was quickly done, and the iron screen was fitted into the front of the cage, and held ready by half a dozen willing hands to thrust home.

"I'm going to ask you a question," said Pete, fixing his eyes on the trainer, whose head projected from beneath the iron, "but you am not to answer me. I want to know if you'm injured. If you'm not, and tisk you can jump up in de wink of an eye, just shut your eyes and listen to what you am got to do."

The trainer gave the required signal.

"Good!" muttered Pete. "Am you listening, Sammy?"

"Yes."

"Well, den, dis am de plan ob action. Dere's no way ob getting dis lion away widout a struggle 'cept dis. Now, you give de word wid dose men wid de partition when you see dis child catch hold ob Nero's leg, den you am got to be ready, and when you hear me shout 'Go!' you am got to be mighty quick in shutting de old gentleman up, for I 'spees he am going to be mighty angry. Now let's hab some more music."

Now, Pete does not fear man nor beast, but his experience of wild animals showed him that he would never succeed in getting that lion away from his prey by the usual methods without some considerable risk. The animal's temper had been thoroughly spoilt.

Still whistling gently, he softly placed his whip on the ground; then, placing his feet firmly, he suddenly with his left hand took a firm grip of the lion's mane, and simultaneously his right hand shot out and caught the brute's hind leg. The action was so quick that none could realise what had happened until they saw Pete with a mighty heave lift the lion's hind quarters clean into the air and send him crashing over on to his back.

"Go!" roared Pete, springing backwards and hauling the staggering trainer with him.

Then came the clash of iron, as the iron barrier shot home.

A roar, a snarl, as the lion, roused to the fullest pitch of savage fury, flung himself again and again at the iron bars, until the whole cage shook and trembled beneath the terrible force of the impact. Then—a wild burst of cheering.

Pete was standing smiling at the door of the cage, and he helped the



trembling but uninjured trainer to descend, as if throwing lions about was a pastime he was quite accustomed to.

His expression of pleasure changed to one of dismay as the delighted spectators swarmed down upon him.

"Oh, golly," he yelled, "dis am worse dan raging lions! Come on, Jack! Come on, Sammy! Let's hab a bref ob fresh air!"

With some considerable difficulty the three comrades managed to escape from that tent.

"Now," exclaimed Sam, "I think we had better be getting back."

"But we must hab a go on de roundabouts first!" declared Pete. "Come 'long!"

After he had spent about half-a-crown on the steam roundabouts, Pete insisted on having a swing.

"We shall never get him away from here," grumbled Sam. "Here, I know! It's Mrs. Lacey's birthday to-morrow!" he cried in a loud voice as Pete came along.

"Eh?"

"Hallo! I didn't know you were there!"

"What's dat you say, Sammy?"

"Time we were getting home."

"Nunno; you said someting 'bout birthdays."

"Oh, yes; it's Mrs. Lacey's birthday, I believe, to-morrow," said Sam,

lighting his pipe.

"Golly! Mustn't lose dat train. Come 'long; can't stop here all night!"

Jack and Sam grinned to themselves at the little ruse as they followed Pete.

"Thought that would fetch him," muttered Sam. "Here, not that way! We sha'n't get a train from the Heath station to-night; let's take the Tube to Charing Cross."

## CHAPTER 24.

### Pete's Amusing, but Expensive Little Joke.

"SHOO! Golly, dere's a policeman!" muttered Pete, as the three comrades turned up the quiet little thoroughfare leading to No. 9. "Come on, Jack and Sammy!" he added, in sufficiently loud tones for the constable to hear him. "Golly, I believe de man hab spotted us!"

"Here, stop your fooling!" growled Sam, as Pete pulled his hat well down over his eyes and slunk along in the shadow close to the wall. "Haven't you had enough excitement for one day?"

"Shoo!"

Sure enough Pete succeeded in rousing that constable's suspicion, and he followed the three with silent tread in his rubber-soled boots.

"Dat's de house!" murmured Pete, stopping in front of No. 9 and pretending that he had not seen the constable, who had now slunk into a doorway within hearing. "Dat's de house! How am we going to get in?"

Jack and Sam could not resist the temptation of falling in with Pete's little joke, and they stood for some time holding a whispered conversation.

"Shoo! Don't talk so loud. Mustn't wake all de bobbies in de neighbourhood. Hab you brought dose skeleton keys wid you?"

"No," whispered Sam, nearly choking with suppressed laughter, as out of the corner of his eye he caught sight of the constable's head sticking out of the doorway. "No, I forgot them."

"Golly, dat's berry bad! How are we going to get in, den?"



Neither Jack nor Sam could trust themselves to answer, and Pete stole across the road on tiptoe.

"Come on, boys!" he muttered. "Shall hab to break dat door in. There's no sign ob any bobbies 'bout, am dere?"

At this remark the policeman's head popped out of sight, and Jack and Sam gazed earnestly up and down the side of the street.

"Nobody 'bout?"

"No, not a soul."

In the deep shadows of the doorway the constable stood as still as a mouse, but he was thrilling with excitement, and it must be confessed that his hand trembled ever so slightly as he stealthily released his truncheon.

"I'll wait until they get inside," he murmured, "then if I don't nab the three of them I'll——" He leaned forward eagerly. The door of No. 9 was slowly opening.

Pete had silently inserted his latch-key in the lock, and was now bent down with his shoulder pressed against the door. He held the door-knob in his hand, and pretended to be forcing it open with his shoulder. He succeeded so well that the wood creaked slightly under the double strain.

"Ugh, ugh, ugh!" he grunted. "Golly, but dis does want some forcing! Shoo! That's done it at last!" he hissed. "You stay outside, Sammy, and give free whistles if you see one ob dose bobbies coming."

Pete sat down on the doorstep and started to unlace his boots; Jack and Sam were standing in front of him, and the constable hidden in the opposite doorway had to go down on his hands and knees in order to see what was going on.

"Take dose boots off, Jack! Can't hab you fumping all ober de place. Take dem off!"

Jack demurred a good deal at this, but at last sat down on the doorstep beside Pete, and he, too, removed his boots.

"Now we are ready!" whispered Pete at last. "Got de dark-lantern ready?"

Slowly and stealthily Pete rose to his feet and crept into the house; but he had not gone further than the doormat when the constable darted across the road.

It must be said that if he was easily imposed upon, that constable did not add lack of pluck to his gullibility. It was a case of three to one, but he dashed past Jack and Sam and hauled Pete into the roadway.

This was just exactly what Pete was hoping he would do, for he did not want to give Mrs. Lacey a fright, and he allowed the constable to achieve his purpose with an astonishing ease.

"Now I've got you, you come along with me!" cried the policeman, tightening his grip of Pete. "Caught red-handed in the act!"

Jack and Sam were convulsed with laughter.

"My dear old hoss," said Pete, "what's de matter wid you?"

"Ere, don't you come none of those games with me!" retorted the constable.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sam.

"Stop dat cackling, Sammy," cried Pete, "an' pull dat door to. Don't want to wake Mrs. Lacey, do you? Golly, don't you be so mighty fond of squeezing!" he added, shaking his arm free from the constable's grip. "Got a match, old hoss? Nunno, you keep dose hands ob yours to yourself."

The constable had made a wild attempt to regain his grip on Pete, but that worthy brushed him aside as easily as if he had been a child.

"You black thief!" cried the constable, feeling for his whistle.

"See here, old hoss," cried Pete, laying his hand on the constable's arm.



"dis chld may be black, but he am honest, an' I don't tink you hab de right to pull a man out ob him own house on to de stones when he'm taken him boots off."

The calmness of Pete's attitude, and the fact that Jack and Sam had made no attempt to get away, somewhat damped the policeman's ardour. A dim suspicion that he had been made a fool of dawned on his official mind.

"What did you mean by behaving in that suspicious manner? If you live there, as you say you do, why didn't you open the door in a proper manner? Here, I'm going to see if you're not telling me a pack of lies!"

The angry constable made a move towards the door, but Pete planted himself in front of it.

"What am you going to do, old hoss?"

"I am going to knock and ask the landlady if you really do live here."

"Nunno, you are not, old hoss. We free are rather fond ob our landlady, and we are not going to let you spoil her beauty sleep."

"Oh, we'll see about that!" cried the constable, pulling up his belt and advancing on Pete.

Jack and Sam looked rather serious at this.

"If that bobby goes for him," replied Sam, "there'll be trouble over this little joke. Oh, scissors, here's another of them!"

"Hallo, old hoss!" cried Pete, grinning at the new-comer.

"Good-evening, sirs!" replied the constable, as he gazed from one to the other in surprise. "But what's all this? What's the matter, Jones?"

"Never you mind what's the matter," growled the other. "Does this chap live here, then?"

"Yes; the three of them been living here for the last fortnight, as far as I know."

The second constable had very good reason for remembering this fact, for he lived next door to Tom's mother, and had heard all about Pete's five-pound note; and seeing that his brother officer was evidently in a bad temper, he endeavoured to smooth matters over.

After some little conversation, which was carried on in a whisper, Jones granted and started to move off. For more than one reason he felt it best to let the matter drop, and perhaps the strongest of these reasons was the ridicule he knew he would be subjected to if he forced matters so far as the police-court.

"Just a minute!" cried Sam. "I dare say you can find some use for this." He thrust a coin into each of the constable's hands. "Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Oil on troubled waters was as nothing compared to the genial influence of Sam's practical balm to the offended Jones, and the two constables walked off highly pleased.

"Now you black beauty," growled Sam, "perhaps this will be a lesson to you on playing jokes on policemen. Come on, now; there's nothing to grin at; let's get in."

## CHAPTER 25.

### Mrs. Lacey's Good Fortune—Plans for the Future.

"S HOO! You hab got to take dose boots off, Sammy," whispered Pete, as they softly entered No. 9, and closed the door. "Can't hab you clattering up de stairs and waking Mrs. Lacey wid your gentle boot-falls."

Sam knew that it was useless to argue the matter, so he silently obeyed:



and presently the three proceeded in Indian file along the passage to the foot of the stairs. They got about half-way up, when Pete suddenly stopped,

"Shoo! Hab you got dis child's boots?" he whispered.

"No," answered Jack. "Don't know if Sam's got them."

"I haven't got them; he must have left them on the doorstep."

"Can't leab dese boots out dere all night," muttered Pete, as he turned round on the dark, narrow staircase. "Why didn't you tink to remember dem. Go and fetch— Hi, golly! What's all dis?"

In turning round Pete had planted his foot on the business end of a tin-tack, and the next instant there came a series of dull bumps.

First Pete pitched into Jack, then Jack into Sam, and the three of them rolled down the stairs into the passage. A faint scream came from the kitchen, followed by the opening of the door, and a stream of light was cast upon the heaving, struggling mass of legs and arms.

"Good gracious me!" cried Mrs. Lacey, in a voice of alarm. "Who is it? What ever is the matter?"

"Dat's all right, my dear," cried Pete. "Somehow or oder dese two sillies upspilt demselves."

"So I should think," said Mrs. Lacey, coming forward with a lamp and surveying the three on the floor with laughing eyes. "Why, where are your boots?"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "We tought you were in bed, sound asleep; and if it habn't been for dat tin-tack dese two would hab been snoring by dis time."

"I'm sorry we have disturbed you," said Sam, tenderly rubbing those corners of anatomy that had come in contact with the stairs.

"Here, you silly owl, go and get those boots, and let's go to bed; we can't keep Mrs. Lacey up any longer."

"Why, whatever is all dat illumination for? Are you expecting friends to-night?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Lacey. "I've been expecting them a long time; and when you three have got your boots on, perhaps you will follow me into the kitchen."

Pete got his boots from the doorstep, and the three sat down on the stairs to lace them up.

"Golly!" muttered Pete. "Tink dat upset down de stairs hab caused someting to go wrong wid de works ob dis child's cistern. Feel most awful hungry."

"Well, I reckon you had better ask Mrs. Lacey to give you a dog-biscuit," growled Sam. "You can chew that when you get to bed."

"Tink dis child's teef am—— We are coming, my dear; just waiting for Jack and Sammy, dat's all."

"Scissors!" exclaimed Sam, when they entered the kitchen and found Mrs. Lacey sitting at the head of the table, which was loaded with good things. "It's rather late for your friends to come."

"That's just what I was thinking," replied Mrs. Lacey, smiling. "But won't you sit down?"

The three comrades complied in silence, and Pete gazed solemnly at a large plump, cold roast chicken, while Jack endeavoured to ignore the presence of a large dish of salad at his elbow.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Lacey at last, "aren't you going to carve that chicken up, Pete?"

"Eh?"

"But your friends?" interrupted Sam. "They are——"



"Jack, Sam, and Pete!" cried Mrs. Lacey delightedly.

The comrades felt somewhat astonished at this reception and the sumptuous spread before them.

During their stay with Mrs. Lacey they had more than once had occasion to be grateful to her for her thoughtfulness, but this entirely put in the shade the little lady's previous actions.

Sam glanced at her rather curiously.

"No," cried Mrs. Lacey, as she caught his eye. "No. You are not to ask any questions until we've finished supper, then I will tell you the reason for this celebration."

Without further to do, supper was started, and very little was said until that chicken had been reduced to bare bones.

There was something peculiar in the air, and neither Jack, nor Sam, nor Pete could quite fathom the matter.

"Must gib dese bones to Rory," said Pete at last. "Don't 'spose you'm going to make any bother 'bout it, my dear."

"Oh, no. He's been a dear good dog since you've been away, and I'm sure he deserves a little treat."

"Mustn't gib dat dog too much meat," observed Pete, as he picked up the remnants of the chicken.

"I don't think the meat he gets off those will hurt him," cried Mrs. Lacey. "Be quick. When you come back I've got some news for you."

Jack and Sam looked rather puzzled as Pete went to give Rory his supper.

"I know what dat news am," cried Pete, when he returned. "You'm going to get married!"

"Oh," cried Mrs. Lacey, "I'm sure I'm not. Whatever made you think that?"

"Dunno, my dear; 'cept by dat lubly smile you hab since we'm returned from de Bank Holiday. Sure you hab not fallen in lub wid Jack?" he added, in so serious a tone, that Mrs. Lacey went into a fit of laughter.

Jack looked rather uncomfortable at this remark of Pete's, and changed the subject.

"Now, Mrs. Lacey," he said, "we have had quite enough of Pete's wild guesses, suppose you tell us your piece of news. What's the matter with you now, Pete?"

"Dat bobbie," muttered Pete.

Mrs. Lacey, who, of course, knew nothing of their little adventure with the constable, gazed in astonishment at Pete.

"Well, what about him?" cried Sam.

"Dunno much 'bout him," replied Pete. "But can I hab dat?" he went on, pointing to an unopened bottle of stout.

"Yes, of course," answered Mrs. Lacey. "You can have it, if you like. But aren't you going to listen to my news?"

"In two-free minutes, my dear," cried Pete, grabbing the bottle. "Hab got rader a dry subject to get ober first."

Without any further explanation Pete left the kitchen, and they heard the click of the latch as he opened the front door. Two minutes later he turned the corner of the street, and, fortunately, ran into Jones.

"Dat's for de benefit ob de force," he exclaimed, without waiting for the astonished constable's reply. "Night-night, old hoss. Now for dat bit ob news," he muttered to himself, as he sped back again to No. 9.

During his absence Pete's little joke had been explained to Mrs. Lacey.

"I see," she cried, as he re-entered the kitchen, "I shall have to keep you under control. Now just you sit down there."



Three pairs of eyes were fixed on Mrs. Lacey, and she bent forward over the table and rather nervously arranged some flowers.

"I've come into a hundred thousand pounds," she murmured softly.

"Scissors!" exclaimed Sam.

"Jingo!" cried Jack.

"Golly! Dat's quite a lot ob money," exclaimed Pete. "Wonder what you'm going to do wid it all?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Mrs. Lacey. "I wish," she went on—and there crept into her voice a tone of sadness—"that Harry—— But there, it's no good wishing."

Memories of the past robbed the little lady of half her pleasure at this unexpected windfall, but under the comrades skilful questioning as to what she would do with all her money, she gradually forgot the past, and was soon laughing merrily over future plans and prospects.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete. "But you will hab to lib in a big mansion, with horses and carriages and motor-cars, and all dose sort ob tings dat bery rich people go in for."

"I sha'n't do anything of the kind," returned Mrs. Lacey. "I don't like a lot of show and extravagance."

"But you'll hab to, my dear. You'll hab to keep up your position."

"Well, I sha'n't do it like that," cried Mrs. Lacey, looking very determined. "You don't live in a big house with a lot of servants, and all that kind of thing?"

"Eh?"

Pete gazed at Mrs. Lacey in astonishment.

"S'pose dat Jack and Sammy hab told you we got two-free pounds?"

"Oh, no, we haven't!" cried Sam. "We——"

"That's quite right," interrupted Mrs. Lacey. "They have never yet told me anything of the kind, or that you and and your comrades are possessed of a fortune of over a million. Oh, it's no use pretending any longer; and you needn't think that I'm going to make any more show of my money than you do. Now I'll tell you how I happen to know all this. My solicitor told me. Besides, poor people, you know, don't give five-pound notes away to little boys."

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete, anxious to change the subject. "Got any 'baccy, Sammy?"

"Here you are," cried Sam, laughing heartily at the way Pete had been cornered. "I reckon you had better make haste and fill that pipe, then we'll get to bed. I'm sure," he added, turning to Mrs. Lacey, "that we heartily congratulate you on your good fortune."

"You mind dat man don't want to borrow fifty pounds on de hire system," mumbled Pete.

"I don't think that's very likely," said Mrs. Lacey, with a laugh. "But if he did I should let him have it."

"And Jack too?"

"Yes, and you too."

"Um, dat's bery bad," said Pete, shaking his head gravely. "We shall hab to look after you, I can see. Dat's de worse ob women habing a lot ob money, dey always want to frow it 'bout. We shall hab to go 'bout wid you eberywhere and see you don't gib it all away. Golly! What's dat?"

"Two o'clock!" exclaimed Sam, rising, and knocking the ashes from his pipe. "Come along, we've kept Mrs. Lacey up long enough."

"Oh, but I've enjoyed our talk," cried Mrs. Lacey; "and I shall be so pleased if you will help me to arrange for the future."

"Of course we will," said Jack. "Sam's a regular chap for planning



things, and Pete can act as a sort of private bodyguard. Shall we post Rory as sentinel to-night?"

"That won't be necessary," said the little landlady, laughing. "You see, I haven't got my money yet. The solicitor's clerk is coming down to-morrow with a lot of papers for me to sign before I can touch a penny. Now I want you to drink my health before you go. I know how abstemious you all are. But just for once you must make an exception."

Standing round the homely little kitchen table, the three comrades raised their glasses on high and drank to their hostess. And so—to bed.

## CHAPTER 26.

### Pete Makes an Early Morning Purchase—His Present to Mrs. Lacey.

AT six o'clock the following morning Pete was up and dressed.

"Sha'n't be long," he murmured, as he passed out of the door, after carefully dropping a wet sponge on Sam's face.

Sam sat up in bed spluttering.

"You beauty!" he growled, gazing round the bed-room. But all he saw was Jack soundly sleeping and Pete's empty bed. "I suppose the beggar's gone out," he grumbled. "Anyhow, I'm not going to be the only man that's awake."

Splosh!

"Br-r-r-ish! What's— Ugh!" spluttered Jack, as that sponge landed smack on his face.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sam, sitting up and grinning across the room at Jack. "How do you like 'em done?"

"Not like this, anyhow," grumbled Jack, wiping his streaming face, and flinging the sponge on to the floor. "But where's he gone to?"

"Who?"

"Why, Pete, of course."

"I don't know. When I woke up with that sponge over my mouth, he was not in the room. I reckon he's gone out."

"Well, I'm not going after him, at any rate!" exclaimed Jack, making himself comfortable again. "Up at six yesterday morning, and not in bed till past two this morning, is a bit more than I care to tackle. Besides, Mrs. Lacey won't be up for another couple of hours. Now, no more silly tricks! I'm going to sleep again!"

"I wonder what that silly owl wanted to get up for?" murmured Sam, as he, too, snuggled down again. "Anyhow, I'm not going to get up!" And presently the pair were sound asleep again. About a quarter of an hour later the bed-room door softly opened, and a black, grinning face peered cautiously at Jack and Sam.

"Lazy beggars!" muttered Pete to himself, as he crept in. "Fancy dat Sammy going off like dat again! Shall hab to teach dese two to get up wid dis child!"

Pete held in his hand a coil of fairly stout string, and while he had been surveying his two sleeping comrades, he made a couple of slip-knots at either end.

"Dat'll do! Just lay dem down—like so!"

The cord extended from the foot of one bed to the other; then, very cautiously, Pete removed the bed-clothes from beneath the mattress.



"Mustn't stop him circulation," he muttered, as he softly and gently dropped the slip-knot over Sam's big toe, and as cautiously replaced the bed-clothes. "Now, for de oder lazy beggar!"

Blissfully unconscious of what was going on, Jack slumbered soundly on while Pete treated him in the same way as he had served Sam.

"Got dem boff on a bit ob string dis time!" he chuckled to himself, as he went silently out of the room and closed the door. "Now for de bucket!"

Ten minutes later Pete was hammering at the shop door of a florist. While he stood waiting a milkman came up, and hung a can on the bell-knob.

"Rather early, ain't you?" he observed.

"Dunno 'bout dat, old hoss!" retorted Pete, removing the milk-can with one hand, and tugging at the bell with the other. "But seems to me dat dere am a mighty lot ob sleepy heads in dis place! Ha, good-morning, old hoss!"

The shop door had suddenly opened, and a trowsled-headed man stood looking at Pete.

"Did you ring that bell?" he demanded.

"Ob course, old hoss! What am bells for, if dey am not to be pulled?"

"What did you do it for?"

"'Cos I wanted it to ring, ob course!" replied Pete, with irritating calmness.

"But—but what do you mean by ringing that bell at this unearthy hour for?"

"See here, old hoss," said Pete, stepping through the little door in the shop shutter before the man could stop him, and thrusting the milk-can into his hand, "dere's your milk! Now, gib me a bucket!"

Pete pulled out a handful of coins and jingled them into the man's hand.

"What do you mean by a bucket?" demanded the shopman. "This is not an ironmonger's!"

"Neber said it was! It am not a pail dis child wants, but a bucket! Golly! Don't de man understand French?"

"I suppose you mean a bouquet?" said the florist loftily.

"Ho, haw! Bery well, old hoss, you can call it bubbling-squeak if you like; but don't let's hab too much squeak 'bout it, or de bubble will burst, den you'll lose de early bird, and dis child won't get him bucket!"

By this time the florist had somewhat woke up, and lost his bad temper, and he began to realise that in all probability he was running the risk of losing a big order.

"What sort of bouquet do you want, sir? About how much do you wish to run to?"

"'Bout two-free pounds."

In less than no time the florist pushed up the shutters of the shop, and busied himself in placing before Pete all the flowers he could lay his hands on.

"These are all I have at present, sir; but I shall have some more in by the early train, if you will wait?"



"Nunno! Can't wait for dat train! Must hab dat bucket for brekfus. Tie dat little lot up!"

Pete indicated a big bowl full of magnificent roses.

"All of them, sir?"

"Yes; ob course!"

There were about a hundred and fifty choice specimens in that bowl, but the astonished shopkeeper silently carried out Pete's order.

"Golly!" muttered Pete, as he left the shop carrying the huge bunch of flowers. "Mustn't tell dat Mrs. Lacey what dis little lot cost, 'cos it might put 'stravagant ideas into her noddle!"

When Mrs. Lacey opened the front door, Pete's head and shoulders were hidden behind the flowers.

"Not to-day; thank you!" she said, as she shut the door.

"Eh?" muttered Pete, gazing at the door in astonishment. "Dat's a funny sort ob ting to do! Must hab anoder go!"

Pete rang the bell again, and after a short interval the door was opened, this time rather sharply.

Now, as we know, Mrs. Lacey is not of a bad-tempered disposition, but the persistence of what she thought was a flower-seller was a little too much even for her calm disposition.

"I said 'Not to-day, thank you!' And if you keep on—— Oh-o-o-o!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Tought dere was someting wrong somewhere! How's de brekfus getting on?"

"Oh, I'm so sorry I made that stupid mistake!" cried Mrs. Lacey, as Pete followed her into the kitchen. "But what lovely flowers!"

"M'yes!" said Pete, gazing at them, with his head on one side. "Dey are not bad for sixpence, am dey? I got dat little lot for you, my dear! Must go and wake dat lazy Jack and Sammy now!"

Pete went off before Mrs. Lacey could thank him.

"I know he didn't buy these for—— Goodness, what a lot they must have cost!"

Long acquaintance with poverty had made the little landlady very careful to get the utmost out of every farthing, and during the time that she arranged those flowers she quite forgot that she was now a wealthy woman.

But presently she hummed a happy little song, while, with deft fingers, she arranged the beautiful flowers.

Suddenly she paused. A most fearful din and clatter came from upstairs.

Here, for a moment, we will leave Mrs. Lacey, and follow Pete.

"Hi! Hellup! Wake up! Fire! Tiebes! Boo-ooh!" he yelled, bursting into the bed-room.

Jack and Sam sat up in their beds, as if they worked on springs.

"Woo-ooh!" yelled Sam.

"Ow-whow!" yelled Jack.



"To—to—toe!" cried Sam, making a most awful face. "What's the matter with you, Jack?"

"To—to—toe!" answered Jack. "I've got a most horrible pain in my big toe! Hi!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Oh, golly! What am you making dose funny faces for? Yah, yah, yah!"

Sam tried to get out of bed, but he soon gave it up. That slip-knot tightened, and caused another yell to burst from both of them.

"Don't pull like that!" he cried.

"Don't you, then!" replied Jack.

"Ow!"

"Stop it!"

"You'll pull my toe off!"

Pete simply howled with laughter. Both Jack and Sam were fumbling at the slip-knot on their toes, and each kept pulling against the other.

"Go it, Sammy! Now den, Jack, gib anoder tug! Oh, golly! Yah, yah, yah!"

The string had parted in the centre, and Jack and Sam rolled out of their beds, and made for Pete.

"Can't stop, boys!" he yelled, dashing from the room. "Meet you again presently at de brekfus-table!"

"The silly owl!" grumbled Sam, gently loosening the cord round his toe. "What did you want to pull like that for, Jack? You've nearly cut my blessed toe off!"

"What about mine, then?" retorted Jack. "It was you started pulling! Ho, ho, ho! We'll have to get even with the beggar for this!"

The funny side of the situation appeared to both of them, now the cord was removed, and they laughed till the sound of their mirth reached the kitchen.

"What have you been up to?" said Mrs. Lacey, as Pete entered.

"Yah, yah, yah! Just a little bit ob string, my dear, dat's all. Hark at dose two boys!"

"Well, they don't seem to be very much hurt," replied the landlady, "though, judging from the noise they were making a little while ago, I thought there was something the matter."

"So dere was, my dear! Golly! You ought to hab seen dem sitting up and making faces at one anoder! Wish dey would make haste, dough. Dat bacon smells bery nice. Can't we make a start?"

"No; you must wait!"

"Golly! But dis child am hungry."

"I can't help that!" replied Mrs. Lacey. "You're not going to start before Jack and Sam come down!"

Pete pretended to be very cross, and picked up the morning paper. But his glum looks had no effect on the little lady, who busied herself in preparing breakfast.

"What are you chuckling about now?" she demanded presently.



Some most curious sounds were coming from behind the paper Pete held in front of him.

"Nutting, my dear, 'cept dis little lot."

"What's that?"

Pete laid the paper down on the table, and pointed to a passage headed "Windfall for a Brighton Lady!"

Mrs. Lacey read the announcement through with amazement.

"However did they find out?" she gasped. "I never told anyone except you."

"And Jack and Sammy."

"Yes, of course; but they wouldn't have reported it."

"Nunno! 'Spect some porter did it!"

"A porter? Why, I'm not in the habit of discussing my private affairs with porters!" declared Mrs. Lacey.

"Yah, yah, yah! Nunno! Dere's someting wrong wid de cistern! What am dose chaps dat find out eberyting for de old hosses de editors?"

"Oh, you mean a reporter?"

"Dat's it! Oh, golly! You'll hab to go 'bout disguised incog., like dis child did when dey tried to make out dat he was a prince. Don't you remember when we free first came to dis place dat dis child was disguised?"

"I remember that you looked more like a tramp than anything," replied Mrs. Lacey.

"Dat's just what you'll hab to do, den!" cried Pete. "You'll hab to be a trampess!"

"A what?"

"A trampess, my dear!"

"Oh, be quiet! There comes the others! Now, we'll have breakfast!"

"'Bout time, too!" said Pete. "Come 'long, boys; we'm been waiting eber so long! Mrs. Lacey wanted to start brekfus widout you, but—What am you grinning at?"

"You're such a lovely liar!" cried Sam, seating himself. "Hallo! What fine flowers!"

"Don't you pass remarks, Sammy!" cried Pete. "It am bery infra dig!"

"What's that?" exclaimed Jack.

"Golly! What an ignorant chap you are!" answered Pete, who had just seen the phrase in the morning paper. "Should hab tought dat a chap wid a 'Varsity educashun would hab known better dan dat! Shall hab to gib you some lessons in ticket now you am de guest ob a windfall lady. Hab some more bacon, Pete? Yes; tanks!"

Pete helped himself to some more bacon, and passed the dish to Mrs. Lacey.

During the whole of the meal he kept up an incessant chatter.

"When you've quite finished," exclaimed Sam at last, "perhaps you'll pass the marmalade. Not that way, you silly chump!"

Pete balanced the marmalade on the point of a knife, and sent the dish spinning round and round.



"Got it, Sammy?" he cried, holding his tea with one hand and balancing the marmalade with the other. "Mind, be careful!"

Sam managed to secure the dish without mishap, and Mrs. Lacey gave a sigh of relief.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete, looking at her very seriously. "Don't you feel well, my dear? Shall I fetch de doctor?"

"I reckon the best thing you can do," said Jack, "is to spare Mrs. Lacey's feelings, and not play the fool!"

"There's not much play about it!" growled Sam. "It comes quite natural to him."

"What's dat you'm mumbling 'bout?"

"Nice morning, isn't it?"

"Weder it's de weder or weder it isn't you'm talking 'bout, seems to me rader doubtful. Don't be so infra jig—nunno, dig! Golly! Which am it, dig or jig? Hab some marmy, my dear?"

"No; thank you!" cried Mrs. Lacey hastily. "No, I don't want any; thank you!"

She had seen Pete's method of passing the dish, and she did not want it repeated.

"Now, if you've all finished, I must get on with my work."

"Eh? Work?"

"Yes, of course!" replied Mrs. Lacey, laughing. "The work has to be done just the same, and I want to make things tidy before the solicitor's clerk comes."

"Should hab tought you would gib up work," cried Pete. "What's de good ob habing a lot ob money if you don't do nothing at all?"

"Strikes me you're getting a bit mixed," cried Sam. "Come along out! We're in the way here. You take up such a lot of room."

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack a few minutes later. "Where are you going to?"

"Back to de hotel," answered Pete. "Going to hab a few words wid dat old hoss, Howard."

"Well, you are a changeable sort of chap!" declared Sam.

"Golly, can't always be ob de same mind! 'Sides, I am going to tell de old hoss de facts ob de case, an'—well, neber mind de rest. See 'bout dat later on."

"It's a pity you didn't think of all that before," said Sam, "instead of rushing us off looking for apartments."

"Golly! You talk like a penny book, Sammy. We can't all be so mighty cleber. Come 'long, Rory!"

Pete strolled into the hotel as if he had never left.

"Good-morning, Miss Marshall!"

"Oh, good-morning!" replied the young lady, smiling.

"Where's de old hoss?"

"Mr. Howard?"



"Yes; you'm guessed it fust time."

"I'll send for him. Will you go into the coffee-room?"

Mr. Howard entered the room rather hurriedly.

"Good-morning, gentlemen! This is an unexpected pleasure. I——"

"Neber tought we should come back again—eh, old hoss?"

"Well—er—you see, I—er——"

"Now, see here, old hoss," cried Pete, "we'm got to hab a clear misunderstanding. Eh? Oh, bery well, Sammy, we'll drop de mis part an' get on wid de washing. Dat is, you'm got to understand dat if we free come back to dis hotel dat dere's to be no more ob dat prince business. You'm got to get into dat noddle ob yours de fact dat dis child am just an eberyday sort ob nigger. An' you'm got to get dat silly notion out dat dis child am ob blue blood. Soon probe to you dat it am red."

"Oh, no; I'll believe you!" cried Mr. Howard. You see, I fully believed that you were a prince, and——"

"Well, we'll accept de evidence as being giben, old hoss. Only don't do it again, or dere'll be trubble in dis hotel. Now, can we hab de same rooms? M'yes? Bery well, den; an' we want two-free rooms for a lady windfall. Golly, dat's money! A windfall lady! Come into a lot ob money, 'bout two-free million pounds."

"I don't quite understand," exclaimed the landlord.

"Golly! Dere's a lady wid a windfall dat am going to stay in dis hotel."

"What, Mrs. Lacey?" cried Mr. Howard.

"Dat's de pusson! But how did you know her name?"

"It was in the pa——"

"Golly, ob course!" interrupted Pete. "Den you understand de position ob affairs, an' so dere's nutting more to be said 'bout de matter, 'cept for you to hab dose rooms nicely done up an' got ready. We will take dem from to-day, an' come in when we'm ready."

"My word," exclaimed Sam, "you are doing things in style! Suppose Mrs. Lacey won't come?"

"We'll soon see 'bout dat!" muttered Pete darkly. "Dere's more ways ob making a move dan in a pantehnicon. Eber seen anyting more ob old Symes, old hoss?" he went on, turning to the landlord.

"No; and I don't wish to."

"Golly! Should hab tought dat you would hab been bery fond ob dat man, seeing dat he left you wid a dissettled bill."

"Well, I don't expect he would pay up even if I did run across him."

"Nunno! P'r'aps you'm right; but should bery much hab liked to put de pressure on dat man. Pity dat dis child had de barf-towel on instead ob de full out-ob-door costume. Good-morning, old hoss! See you again soon. Sammy here will gib you something on account."

"Oh, that's all right!" exclaimed Mr. Howard. "I don't want anything of the kind. I am very pleased that you are coming back. Good-morning, gentlemen!"

"Ta-ta, old hoss!"



## CHAPTER 27.

## Pete Tries to Lose some Property.

"WHAT do you think you're up to now?" demanded Sam, as the three left the hotel.

"Not up to anyting, Sammy. Just making arrangements for the good ob you an' Jack an' Mrs. Lacey."

"Of course, you'll stand out!" cried Jack. "You're not doing all this for your own little benefit, are you? Oh, no, of course not!"

"What shall we do now?" said Sam.

"Go back to de house, ob course. Can't leab Mrs. Lacey wid all dat windfall alone. Shall hab to see dat nobody tries to borrow money from her. 'Specs she will find dat she hab got quite a lot ob friends now she'm a millionairess. Must see 'bout her incog."

"Oh, no, you won't!" cried Sam. "You're not going to put that little lady up to any of your mad schemes."

"Dat's a bery infra pig remark ob yours, Sammy. You ought to know better dan to talk like dat. How d'you suppose dis child am to command de respect ob bobbies and all dose sort ob people if you're so infra fig?"

"Well, you'll get that right presently," said Sam. "But the question just now is, what are we going to do next?"

"Just told you, Sammy, we am going back to No. 9. Golly! What's all dis little lot?" Pete had been fumbling in his pocket for his pipe, and had pulled out a pair of very bedraggled yellow gloves. "Can't gib dese to Mrs. Lacey now!" he muttered, as he screwed them up in the piece of paper and threw them in the gutter. "Come on! I shall hab to see 'bout dat tarara, after all!"

The comrades had not proceeded five yards before a little boy came running after them.

"Hi, mister, you've dropped something!" he cried, holding out the discarded gloves.

"M'yes!" muttered Pete. "Dere's a shilling for you, my little man."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" cried the boy, scampering off in great glee.

Pete rolled his returned property up into a little ball, and once more screwed them up in paper, and when he thought he was unobserved, quietly dropped them into the gutter again.

"Hi, guv'nor, this your parcel?"

Jack and Sam burst out laughing, and Pete eyed the man sorrowfully.

"M'yes," he muttered, gazing at the man sorrowfully. "Dere's a shilling for you."

The labourer, for such he appeared to be, raised a dirty finger to his forehead and slouched off.

"Don't see anything to laff at in dis," mumbled Pete.

"I reckon you'll have to take those gloves out on a dark night and bury them," exclaimed Sam.



"Or burn them, or throw them in the sea," suggested Jack.

The three walked some little distance, and presently Pete began to whistle softly to himself.

"Hallo!" said Sam to Jack. "Believe he's dropped them again. Let's get on before we have anyone else running after us. Scissors! What's all this?" he exclaimed.

Not ten yards from the comrades was quite a little procession, and marching at its head was a policeman carrying a small paper parcel.

Pete looked inclined to make a bolt for it.

"That's him!" cried one of the crowd. "Him with the black face."

"No, it ain't!" retorted another.

"What do you know about it?"

"Well, you know a fat lot, don't you?"

"Look here, I don't want none of your lip!"

"Here, you clear off, the lot of you!" replied the constable, marching up to Pete. "I picked this up just down the road, sir. Is it your property?"

Pete shook his head doubtfully.

"Dunno, I'm sure. What's inside de paper?"

The constable looked rather surprised at this.

"Look here," he cried, "if this package is your property, you're the one that ought to know what's inside it."

"Dat so, old hoss?"

Some of the crowd tittered at this, and the policeman got rather red.

"Look here," he cried, "if you want this parcel, you've got to tell me what's inside it."

"But, my dear old hoss, I don't want it!" exclaimed Pete. "Gib it to Jack or Sammy."

The astonished policeman, who did not know what to make of this, slowly undid the paper.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete. "Dat's a pair ob glubs!"

"Yes; it certainly don't look like a hat or pair of shoes," returned the constable. "Anyhow, I'm going to take them to the station, and you'll have to prove your claim before you can have them now."

Pete sighed and drew out another shilling, which he cleverly slipped into the policeman's hand without anyone else noticing it.

"Just you take dose glubs," he muttered, "and lock dem up in a cell. Ta-ta, old hoss!"

"Well, this is a rummy go!" murmured the policeman, as the comrades went off. "I'd have taken my affidavit that that chap dropped these gloves. If he didn't, what would he have given me a bob for? If he did——"

At this stage the constable gave up the problem, and turned his attention to other matters less puzzling.

"Scissors!" exclaimed Sam, as they drew near to No. 9. "Why, there's that woman from next door! I wonder what she wants?"

"Hallo, my dear!" exclaimed Pete, as he pulled out his latch-key.



"Good-morning, gentlemen!" exclaimed Mrs. Moore, smiling and smirking. "I was just about to knock when you came up."

"Dat so?" inquired Pete. "Would you like to knock now?" he added meekly.

Mrs. Moore stared at his smiling face rather doubtfully.

"No, young man," she replied. "Seeing as you're going in, you can give Mrs. Lacey my best respects, and tell her that I 'opes as she'll be 'appy."

"Eh?"

"Look here, young man," cried Mrs. Moore, "if you can't remember a little message like that, just you tell Mrs. Lacey that Mrs. Moore wants to speak to her; and——"

"Borrow some money," came a voice from behind the landlady from No. 7.

Mrs. Moore swung round with a very red face.

"Did you make that remark?" she cried, glaring at Jack.

Now, as a matter of fact, Pete's little bit of ventriloquism had exactly hit the mark, for such had been the amiable lady's sole reason for calling on her neighbour.

Jack and Sam could hardly conceal their smiles.

"It's a mighty good job we came along in time," observed Sam, as Mrs. Moore retreated to her own domain and slammed the door after her, "or that disagreeable old hypocrite would have pestered the life out of Mrs. Lacey. I suppose she's seen the notice in the morning paper."

As the three passed the sitting-room door, they heard the sound of voices.

"Will you come here a minute, please?" cried Mrs. Lacey, coming into the passage. "There's a gentleman from my solicitor here, and I want you to witness some of the deeds."

A dapper little old gentleman was busily sorting out a lot of very legal-looking documents that were scattered over the table.

"Sha'n't keep you a minute! Sit down!" he murmured, without looking up. "Why—— Bless, my soul, I beg your pardon; I—well, you see——"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, who knew that the old gentleman's astonishment was caused by his own unexpected appearance.

"Most extraordinary thing," muttered the old gentleman, half aloud, taking off his glasses and polishing them on a red silk handkerchief. "Dear, dear, why the man's black! Dear me; but—— Well, let's get to business."

The old gentleman, it must be mentioned, was very deaf, and had the habit, which is common with very deaf people, of muttering his thoughts aloud. But he was not so deaf he could not hear the outburst of laughter which followed his words, and he gazed from one to the other in mild astonishment.

"Dear, dear, what are they all laughing at?"

Then he recollected the business in hand, and laid a huge sheet of parchment before Mrs. Lacey.



"Kindly sign here, madam."

After many documents had been signed and witnessed by either Jack or Sam, the little gentleman collected the papers methodically, and bowed to the comrades.

"I thank you gentlemen. I think that is all."

Sam took the hint and led the way into the kitchen.

Immediately they had gone, the lawyer's clerk stepped softly across the room and shut the door.

"Hum!" he muttered aloud. "Rich, pretty widow. Hum! Must inquire into this."

Mrs. Lacey gazed at him with a smile as he came to a stop and stood peering at her over his glasses.

"My dear lady," he commenced, "you are now a very rich woman, and I trust that you will not take offence at a few words of advice from one old enough to be your father.

"Oh, no; of course not," replied Mrs. Lacey. "But what is it?"

"Well, those young men, my dear, are they staying here?"

"Yes."

"Hum! Must be very careful, you know. Do they owe you any money? Ever tried to borrow any since you inherited your uncle's fortune?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Lacey. "Why, they're richer than I am. They only came to stay here because a report was spread about at their hotel that Pete was a prince in disguise."

"Hum! Very strange. Well, my dear lady, I suppose you know best. I must now be off. Here is your cheque-book, an account has been opened for you, as you instructed my principal. Good-bye, good-bye!"

The old gentleman bowed himself out, and Mrs. Lacey returned to the kitchen, where they all laughed heartily over her account of his suspicion.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete. "Wish I hab tought to ask you for fifty pounds while he was here. Should like to hab seen de obpression ob him face."

"I'm very glad you didn't," cried Mrs. Lacey. "Now I'll get the dinner."

A sudden loud knocking on the front door was then heard.

"Don't you trouble, my dear," cried Pete. "Dis child will answer de door."

"Is Mrs. Lacey at home?" inquired a shabby-looking stranger, as Pete opened the door.

"She am in de kitchen getting de dinner."

"Can I see her?"

"Nunno!"

"But I won't detain her more than a few minutes."

"Can't help dat, old hoss. She am getting de dinner."

The shabby-looking stranger looked rather irritated at this.

"Well," he cried, "perhaps you wouldn't mind giving her my card. I am a superintendent for the home for lost and stray cats."



"Miow!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "S'pose you find dat pussy."

The superintendent of the cats' home glanced all around him, but, of course, there were no signs of a cat.

"Golly!" cried Pete. "'Spects if you can find dat cat, Mrs. Lacey will gib you fifty pounds. When you am found him, call again. Ta-ta, old hoss."

Pete shut the front door, and left he man gazing at the door-knob.

He had not reached the kitchen before there was another banging at the front door.

"Golly! Shall neber get any dinner at dis rate. Shall hab to take de knocker off dat door."

"Is Mrs. Lacey in, please?" inquired a man with a black bag.

"Yes."

"Can I see her?"

"Nunno! She'm getting de dinner."

"Will you give her my card?"

"No!" roared Pete, shutting the door and stamping down the passage.

"What was it?" inquired Mrs. Lacey, when Pete returned.

"Nothing, my dear. Golly! Dere's dat knocker again! Get me dat stick, Sammy."

Pete seized a rolling-pin, and rushing back to the front door brandished it in the face of an astounded lady.

She did not wait to ask any questions, but simply turned and fled.

"Wonder what she wanted," grumbled Pete. "Golly! S'pose it was someting important. Can't help dat, dough, must put a stop to dis. Hab you a screwdriver, my dear?" he inquired, when he once more returned to the kitchen.

"Yes. What do you want it for? Who was that?"

"Golly! Not so many questions at a time, my dear, or you'll muddle dis child's noddle. Hab you a screwdriver?"

"In that drawer there. Go out and see what he's up to do."

Sam followed Pete to the front door and found him unscrewing the little brass number.

"What are you up to now, you beauty?" demanded Sam.

"Can't you see, Sammy?"

"I can see some mischief being done. It's no good taking the number off. Scissors! Ha, ha, ha!"

Pete had turned the brass figure upside down.

"I reckon you've got some brains, after all," declared Sam.

"Tank you, Sammy. Now we sha'n't be boddered wid people calling to see de windfall lady."

After dinner they all went for a walk on the cliffs, and towards tea-time Pete so arranged matters that they found themselves close to their hotel.

"Dis looks rather a nice sort ob establishment," he remarked; "let's hab



tea dere. Got everyting ready, old hoss?" he whispered, as he passed Mr. Howard.

"Yes."

"But surely this must be a private room," exclaimed Mrs. Lacey, as they entered the suite of apartments that they had engaged for her.

"It am, my dear."

"But these flowers!"

The whole place was one mass of flowers Pete had ordered without mentioning the matter to anyone.

"Dese are for de celebrashum ob de windfall lady."

"For me!" cried Mrs. Lacey, in bewilderment.

"Dat's so, my dear. You hab got to stay here now. You leabe all de rest to dis child and Jack and Sammy. We'm on a holiday, and now you hab got to hab one too. Nunno! It am not de slightest use you shaking dat head ob yours like dat. Dese rooms hab been specially engaged, and dey will only stop empty if you don't lib in dem. Now, Jack and Sammy, 'spose we go and hab a wash."

Mrs. Lacey spent the next few minutes in wandering up and down her new abode.

"What a good-hearted chap he is," she murmured. "How good they all are. Just fancy, only a few days ago I was a poor, struggling landlady of a lodging-house, and now— Ah, I suppose this is the bed-room," she remarked, as she opened the door leading off the drawing-room. "And what's this?"

The opening of another door revealed a cosy little bed-room, in which stood a little white and gold bed.

This last discovery almost reduced the little lady to tears. "For little Barbara," she murmured. "Oh, I wish she was here! Just fancy them remembering her. Now I suppose I must tidy myself up, or those boys will be waiting for me. Oh, dear," she went on, as she surveyed herself in the glass, "I don't seem at all suitably dressed for this place. I must get some new dresses at once."

During tea, which was served in Mrs. Lacey's drawing-room, Pete was full of plans for the future.

"It seems to me, my dear," he said, after a long discussion, "dat since you habn't got any friends, you hab got to leab eberyting to Jack, Sam, and Pete. You see, we am habing a holiday, and it's time dese lazy beggars— Jack and Sammy—did someting for a libing."

And so it was arranged.

About a week later everything had been settled, and Mrs. Lacey was standing on the platform at Brighton Station waiting for the London train.

"Now don't you get into any mischief," she exclaimed, "while I'm away. I shall be back by the eight o'clock train, and I'm sure Barbara will be eager to see you all"

"Sure you hab got eberyting?" replied Pete. "You wouldn't like a boot-warmer, or anyting like dat, would you? Hi, guard!"



Pete held a whispered conversation with the guard, which apparently was very satisfactory to that worthy, for he touched his cap respectfully.

"I'll look after her," he said. "I'll see that she's all right. Step in, please."

"Hi, golly!" exclaimed Pete, as the train started to move slowly out of the station. "Must gib her someting to read."

Grabbing an armful of papers and magazines from a newsboy's tray, he created quite a commotion by tearing along the platform at full speed. He just succeeded in flinging his books in the window of the carriage.

"Good-bye!" he yelled. "Mind de motor-'buses. Hallo! What do you want?"

The little newsboy had capered after Pete as fast as his legs could carry him, and he looked a trifle indignant as he stared up into Pete's face.

"The money for them papers!" he gasped.

"How much, sonny?"

The boy looked over his stock.

"Two and ninepence, sir, please."

"Hum! Two and ninepence and two and freepence, am five shillings. Keep de change."

Many curious glances were cast at Pete as he passed down the platform and rejoined his comrades. But that is not to be wondered at, for his impetuous behaviour never failed to attract the attention of the staid and conventional class.

"Now," said Sam, as they came out into the Queen's Road, "what shall we do with ourselves? Here, here, don't grip my arm like that! What's the matter with you?"

"Shoo!" muttered Pete, darting down a side road and dragging Jack and Sam after him. "Didn't you see who dat was?"

"No!" growled Sam. "Who?"

"Why, dat's Charles."

"Well, I don't see what that matters," exclaimed Jack. "He won't bite you."

"Nunno! But dat man am dangerous, all de same. Dis child don't want to be worried wid obsurann agents. Here, let's hab a bref ob fresh air."

Pete calmly stepped into the driver's seat of a magnificent motor-car standing outside a garage.

"S'pose we hab a run into de country. What's dat you say, old hoss?"

"You get out of that car," cried a man, clad in blue overalls, who had rushed out of the motor works. "What do you mean by it?"

"Dis am a berry nice car," observed Pete. "How much do you want for dis little lot for de day? S'pose we could hab it for ninepence an hour?"

"The hire of that car will cost you ten pounds, and you must leave a deposit."

"Eh?"

"I said you must leave a deposit."

"Golly! What's dat?"



"How much do you want?" inquired Sam, pulling out a roll of bank-notes.

"Well, at least a hundred pounds, sir. You see, we don't as a rule let out cars without references."

"And we don't as a rule trouble 'bout dose sort of tings," cried Pete. "Come on, boys, jump in!"

"Here, wait a minute!" cried the man. "Have you got a licence? If you haven't you must have a chauffeur. Here, Jones!"

A driver came running out and went round the front of the car and started it going.

"Tanks, old hoss," cried Pete, pulling the lever. "Nunno! Dere's no room for you in dis car. You stop at home wid mudder and mind de baby."

Now Pete knows all about motor-cars, and is really a capital driver, and before the astonished chauffeur had recovered from the gentle lift Pete had given him off the car, they were well beyond reach. Past Preston Park and up over the downs they went at a rattling pace.

Parp, parp!

"Golly!" cried Pete, turning round. "Dat car am trabelling too fast. Can't hab dat sort ob ting. Can't hab it by no means. Look at dat, now!"

"Regular road-hog!" exclaimed Sam. "The beggar nearly ran over that girl! Look at that, now! Look at what he's done. The bounder's done for that chicken!"

Parp, parp!

Pete turned his steering-wheel ever so slightly to the left, and deliberately ran the car in front of the one that was approaching.

There was a harsh sound of brakes being applied.

"Hi, you! Get out of the road, will you!"

None of the occupants of the first car took the slightest notice of this proceeding.

"Get out of the road, will you!"

"How fast am we trabelling, Sammy?" inquired Pete, without turning round.

"A good twenty."

"Umph! Dat's quite fast 'nuff. What a lubly voice!"

"Get out of the way, will you? Get out of the way, I say!" roared the occupant of the second car.

Still Pete took not the slightest notice, but steered right for the middle of the road all the time.

Parp, parp!

"Dat's right, old hoss!" muttered Pete. "You keep on making dat pretty noise, an' p'r'aps presently you'll break the ting up. Den we shall hab some peace."

"Hi, you!" yelled the enraged driver of the second car, driving his head-lamps right under the rear of the comrades' motor. "Will you get out of my way?"



Pete turned his head and gazed at the man.

"Paid for dat fowl, old hoss?" he inquired.

"What's that to do with you?"

"Nutting; but tink dat was rader a fowl ting to do, dat's all."

The man started abusing Pete for all he was worth, and things went on in this way for the next five miles.

At last, however, the driver of the second car managed to slip alongside. The road had widened considerably, and as he passed he flung a dirty oil-rag in Pete's face.

"So dat's it, am it?" cried Pete. "There, Sammy, take de wheel, an' get 'longside ob dat johnnie."

The comrades' car was a powerful one, and in less than three minutes they were alongside the car that had passed them.

"Little more. Dat's it!" cried Pete, as he leaped from the step on to the other car. "Must teach dis road-hog dat if he'm a pig he'm got to stop in him sty."

The stranger turned and glared at Pete.

"Get off my car," he roared, "or I'll break your neck!"

"Eh!"

As Pete uttered this simple little exclamation he clambered over the seats and grabbed the man by the collar.

"Dat's better—dat's de talk! Shut off de speed—like so—an' yank you out—like so!"

Despite the man's frantic struggles, Pete stopped the car, and then, tucking the frantic stranger under one arm, walked towards a shallow pool of water. At least, it looked shallow, for it was covered with green slime, and odds-and-ends of rubbish showed above its surface.

"Paid for dat chicken?"

"No!"

"Well, den, hab a baff!"

Without the slightest effort Pete slung his burden far into the pond and calmly walked off.

"Dis way to London, boys!" he cried. "Mind you don't get wet," he added, as they started off at a good pace. "Golly! De man don't seem best pleased."

"I reckon it serves him jolly well right!" exclaimed Jack. "I suppose some poor beggar's got to suffer for his wilful—in fact, his criminal—carelessness."

Without further hindrance the comrades reached the outskirts of the city, and shortly after left their car at London Bridge.

"That ideā of yours about meeting Mrs. Lacey is all right," said Sam; "but what are we going to do meanwhile?"

"Oh, we'll find something to do!" exclaimed Pete. "Let's go an' hab something to eat first."

After lunch the comrades strolled about London until late in the afternoon.



## CHAPTER 28.

### An Interrupted Conversation.

"ALLO!" cried Sam. "Let's go in here."

"What is it?" inquired Jack. "A waxwork show? Oh, all right! We may as well."

"Do dey talk, old hoss?" inquired Pete, as the three passed through the entrance-hall.

"No, not exactly. What do you expect for your money?" replied the attendant.

"Dunno 'bout de expectation part ob de business," muttered Pete, "but dere don't seem to be much to see here in the way of figgers 'cept a bobby."

Jack nudged Sam in the ribs.

"Now we're going to see some fun!" he whispered. "Just look at him—he's going up to that bobby! It's a wax one!"

Pete tapped the model on the shoulder.

"Say, old hoss, which out of that lot am Queen ob Scots an' which am King ob Eliza?"

There was no reply, and a few bystanders, glad of anything that would liven things up a bit, gathered round.

"Say, old hoss," cried Pete, "you'm not carrying out your duties. Which am de Sleeping Beauty?"

"The Sleeping Beauty is over there, sir," replied the model, in a perfectly natural voice.

"Tanks, old hoss!"

"Now, then, move along there! Don't block up the gangway!" went on the dummy.

Jack and Sam nearly exploded with laughter, for the very people who had gathered round expecting to see Pete's discomfiture edged off.

"Well, I'm blessed!" muttered one. "I made sure that that was a dummy!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" chuckled Pete, as they passed on. "Some ob dese dummies am not so dumb as people tink dem."

"Not while you're around," muttered Sam. "You be careful with your voice-throwing tricks, or we shall get into trouble."

"Dat's all right, Sammy. Leave dat to me. Don't get waxy. Golly! What's dis?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," answered Sam. "Looks to me more like an escaped lunatic than anything."

"Mustn't touch the exhibits, sir!" exclaimed an attendant, in an excited tone.

"Golly! How you made me jump!" exclaimed Pete. "Don't want to touch your rabbits! Golly! Dis am silk!"

Pete absent-mindedly fingered a little bit of fringe hanging from the coat of the model of a long-forgotten king.



"I said you mustn't touch the exhibits!" repeated the attendant, glaring at Pete.

"Varlet, go hence—go hence, I say, or by my halidom I will have thee beheaded!"

The attendant darted round the back of the platform, expecting to find some joker hidden there, and by the time he had completed his search the comrades were the other side of the hall.

"Look here," muttered Sam, "you stop your fooling!"

"Golly! Don't call dat fooling, Sammy. Dat am a bery cleber bit ob voice-frowning. It am only fooling when de people find out where de voice comes from."

The comrades sat down behind a couple of old ladies. The worthy couple apparently took no interest in the waxworks, and were deep in conversation.

Pete absent-mindedly pulled out his pipe.

"Here, none of that!" exclaimed Sam. "You're not allowed to smoke in here."

"Funny ting, dat!" grumbled Pete. "Can't do anything here. S'pose dey'm 'fraid dat de smoke will set all de dummies sneezing."

"As I was saying," came the voice of one of the old ladies in front, "I consider it a very wicked thing that her husband should only allow her ten shillings a week."

"It is. Most disgraceful!"

The old ladies stared all around, and then looked at the figures in front of them.

"Did you hear someone speak?" cried one.

"Yes, I did," replied the other. "I'm almost sure. But it couldn't have been. Why, there's no one here except those three young men at the back of us," she went on, as she turned round and eyed the comrades through her lorgnette.

"Well, to be sure, it's very strange!" exclaimed the first one. "Well, we must have been mistaken. As I was saying——"

"Don't say it again, for goodness' sake!"

The old ladies gasped, and stared in amazement at a model of a very fierce-looking Spanish nobleman.

"Gracious! There must be some horrible person hidden there!" cried the one with the lorgnette, rising to her feet and prodding between the legs of the dummies with her umbrella.

"Be careful, Sophie!"

"Oh, but I am determined to find out the person who dares to play this trick upon us! My dear Alice, it's preposterous—preposterous! I never heard of such a thing!"

"You mustn't touch the models!" cried an attendant, coming along. "Madam, I must ask you to——"

Sophy—that was the name of the lady—glared at the attendant through her lorgnette.



"I am not touching the models!" she cried. "There is someone hidden in the middle of that stand, and we have been grossly insulted! I demand an immediate search to be made!"

"But, my dear madam——"

"Don't talk to me! I say I have been horribly insulted, and so has my friend here! I demand——"

"But, madam, you must be mistaken. There cannot possibly be anyone hidden there."

"But I say there is!"

"Oh, well, of course, if you say so——"

"I do say so!"

The attendant made a gesture of despair.

"Well, what is it that you have to complain of?" he said at last.

"There is certainly a person concealed amongst those models who has insulted us."

"The old lady is gifted with imagination," whispered Sam.

"What did he say?" inquired the attendant.

"Say? Why, the most awful things!"

"But what, madam?"

"Why, I was talking to my friend here, wasn't I, dear?"

"Yes, Sophy, you were," replied the other.

"There you are! I was talking to my friend here about some most private matters, and—and——"

"Yes, madam."

"Don't interrupt me! I tell you I was talking to my friend here, and I was most grossly insulted!"

"But what do you actually complain of? What did the person you say is concealed on this stand say to you?"

"It is most disgraceful!"

"Yes, perhaps it is; but, my dear madam, I was asking you what was said to you."

"Why, I've just told you!" said the old lady, getting more angry than ever. "It is most disgraceful!"

"But, my dear madam, pray be calm. I am asking you what was said to you. Will you kindly tell me?"

"But, man alive, I have told you! I said 'it's most disgraceful.' That's what was said."

The attendant sighed.

"Don't you see?" went on the old lady. "Dear me, I never came across such a stupid man!"

"Pardon me, madam, but perhaps the best thing you can do is to lay a complaint before the manager," he said stiffly.

"Oh, certainly!" cried Sophy, tossing her head. "And I shall report you for gross incivility."

"It is most disgraceful!"

For an instant the two old ladies and the attendant stared at the stand in amazement.



"There you are!" cried Sophy. "Now perhaps you'll believe me. Search that stand this instant!"

The attendant bent down and peered beneath the legs of the models; then he drew himself erect and glanced round the hall.

Jack, Sam, and Pete had now risen from their seats and were standing apparently deeply interested in some wax models at the far side of the building.

"Well, I can't make this out, mum!" exclaimed the attendant. "It's very certain that there's no one there. Oh, be careful!"

But the mischief was done. In her excitement Sophy had knocked off the nose of the Spanish grandee with the handle of her umbrella.

"Oh, whatever have I done?" she cried. "It was quite an accident!"

## CHAPTER 29.

### A Shopping Expedition.

THE sound of the old lady's voice, raised in tones of dismay, caught Sam's ear.

"See what your fooling has done," he muttered. "We can't allow that old lady to get into trouble over you. Let's see what's the matter."

The three comrades strolled up to the excited little group.

"Golly!" cried Pete, picking up the gentleman's nose. "Poor old chap! Shall hab to stick dis little lot on again!"

Before the attendant could stop him, Pete jabbed the fractured organ on to the dummy's face, with the result that his nose disappeared into the hollow cast.

"Dere now," exclaimed Pete, "dat's a funny ting! Why don't dey put some stuffing in dem? Why, what's de matter wid you, old hoss?"

"You stupid fool!" cried the man. "Look at the damage you have done!"

"M'yes!" exclaimed Pete. "De place where de nose used to be do look rader lonely, sort ob empty like! How much do you tink a new nose would cost, dough I don't see what he wants a nose for; he can't blow it?"

"A new nose!" hooted the attendant. "Why, you've spoiled the whole face!"

"Golly! On de face ob tings, dat looks rader like de troof!" exclaimed Pete. "S'pose dis child had better pay for de dum-dummy's new face?"

"Oh, but I'll pay for his nose!" cried Sophy, who, though rather an irritable old lady, was decidedly a just one. "I couldn't think of allowing you to pay for the damage I did."

The old lady's attitude appealed to Pete, and he glanced over at Sam. Sam understood, and while Pete settled matters with the attendant, Sam made a diplomatic explanation to the two ladies.



Perhaps it was the relief of not having to pay for the damage, or perhaps it was the old lady's sense of humour; but, whatever it may have been, she took Sam's explanation in very good part, and she even went so far as to compliment Pete.

"What a clever man you must be!" she exclaimed. "I wish I could persuade you to give an exhibition at our charity bazaar next week."

"'Fraid I can't do dat, my dear," replied Pete. "But s'pose you gib dat to de charity instead! Come 'long, you two!"

Raising their hats, the three comrades hurriedly departed.

"Golly!" cried Pete, as he dragged Jack and Sam along. "Must get out ob dis quick! Hab tought ob someting!"

"Hope it's something sensible, at any rate!" growled Sam. "Breaking up wax models at three and four pounds a time ain't a very sensible sort of proceeding!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Makes de money melt like wax!" roared Pete. "But come 'long! Must find a shop."

"What sort of a shop?" inquired Jack, as they hurried after Pete along the brilliantly-illuminated street.

"Shop where dey sell dolls and tings like dat. Dere's one ober dere!" Regardless of the traffic, Pete darted across the road, and entered a large toy shop. Jack and Sam speedily followed him.

"Can't trust him there alone," said Sam. "He'll want to buy the whole shop up. I suppose he's after something for Barbara."

"How do you like dis one?" cried Pete, when they entered.

Pete held a large doll at arm's length.

"Well, it's rather a big one," replied Sam.

"Oh, dat don't matter! Am her nose strong?" inquired Pete, turning to the shop-assistant.

"Beg pardon, sir."

"Am her nose strong?"

The assistant gazed at Pete in astonishment.

"You don't seem to understand, old hoss!"

"Well, you see, it's rather a funny question. I—er—well, you see, it's only wax."

"Golly! Hahn't you got a doll wid an iron nose? Dese waxy ones hab a way ob falling off!"

"Well, of course, they won't stand knocking about. We have some rag dolls, though."

"Nunno!" cried Pete, in high disdain. "Don't want any rag dolls. What do you tink 'bout it, Sammy?"

"Oh, I should have that one! You see, little girls are more gentle than you are."

"Bery well, den, we'll hab dis one. How much is dat little lot?"

"That, sir? Let me see." The shopman carefully examined the little green ticket. "Seven pounds ten, sir!"



"Golly! Is dat de weight?"

"No, sir; that is the price."

"Hum! Dat's rader a lot!"

"Well, sir, that's a very good article, you know. She shuts and opens her eyes."

"M'yes! So I should tink!" muttered Pete. "Sort ob dolly dat has de sense to shut her eyes to a lot ob tings! But she am a bery nice figure!"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the shopman eagerly. "She is really cheap at the price, you know."

"Eh?"

"I said she's cheap, sir."

"Golly! I wasn't talking 'bout de price," exclaimed Pete, examining the doll's large pink sash. "Dis child was talking ob anoder sort ob figure. But dat don't matter; we'll hab dis one. Pack her up nicely, and gib her to Sammy!"

"See here," growled Sam, as they came out of the shop, "why don't you carry your own parcels?"

"Dere's a silly sort ob question to ask! Don't like carrying parcels. 'Sides, parcels suit your style ob complexion, Sammy. Let's go in here! 'Spects dat little girl am fond ob sugar-sticks."

Before either Jack or Sam could reply, Pete had entered a large and very swell confectioner's. A stylish and somewhat haughty young lady came forward to attend to him.

"Hab you got any brandy balls, my dear?"

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"Golly! Dat's all right! Nutting to polly for. Hab you any brandy-balls?"

"No, sir; I'm afraid we don't keep them."

"Eh?"

"I'm afraid we don't keep them."

"Dat's a funny ting. You'm 'fraid you don't keep dem. Don't see anything to be 'fraid ob dere. Perhaps you hab some stick-jaw, den? Used to be bery fond ob stick-jaw myself. Eh? No. Oh, bery well, must hab anoder guess. What are dese?"

"Those are chocolate pralines; the very best quality."

"M'yes! What do you tink 'bout it, Sammy?"

"I reckon it's a pity you didn't ask my advice before," declared Sam. "You had better look sharp about it, or we shall never get to London Bridge in time for the eight o'clock train."

"Sure you am quite finished, Sammy?" inquired Pete.

"Oh, get on with it!" muttered Sam. "Have those if you like!"

"But I don't like!" cried Pete. "Now, what do you tink 'bout it, Jack? Most inclined to tink dat dose tings am 'bove a bit too highly coloured for little girls. Shouldn't tink dat dey would agree wid deir cisterns. Hahn't you any toffee, my dear?"



The young lady pointed to a large glass jar straight in front of Pete.

"Now, you mustn't get angry, my dear!" he observed, as he bent down and eyed the large brown slabs. "Don't much like de look ob dose. Little girls hab little teef, and dat stuff looks mighty strong. Habn't you anyting a little finer. Golly! I know—chocolate creams! Dat's what little girls like."

"These are two-and-six the pound," said the assistant. "How much would you like?"

"Can I hab de box?"

"Oh, yes, of course!"

"Thank you! Wrap dat little lot up, an' gib dem to Sammy!"

"I'm blessed if I'm going to carry that lot!" growled Sam.

"Miss," cried Pete, "Sammy won't hab dem, so gib dem to Jack! How much is dat?"

"Ten shillings, sir."

"Tanks! Now den, Sammy, don't stand dere! Got de box, Jack? Dat's all right! Come 'long!"

Pete strolled leisurely out of the establishment, with his hands in his pockets. Jack and Sam followed him. But neither of them looked quite so pleased, and immediately they got outside Sam hailed a hansom.

## CHAPTER 30.

### Pete Makes Many Inquiries on a Vague Subject.

"HERE, what am you up to?" exclaimed Pete.

"I'm up into this cab!" declared Sam, as the vehicle drew up to the kerb. "You're not going to do any more shopping to-night, not if I know it! Here, look where you're coming to!" he added, as Pete clambered into the cab after Jack. "That's my toe when you're done with it! Scissors! Mind the doll, you silly chump!"

"Golly!" yelled Pete, springing to his feet, and banging his head on the top of the cab. "Golly! Wish dey'd make dese cabs wid de ceilings a bit higher! Where am we going to dribe to?"

"London Bridge," replied Sam.

Just before they arrived at London Bridge, Pete bawled to the cabman to stop, and he floundered out of the cab.

"Sha'n't be two-free minutes, Sammy! Get de car ready!"

"It's no good going after him, Jack!" exclaimed Sam. "The best thing we can do is to go on to the station, or we shall miss Mrs. Lacey."

"I suppose not," replied Jack. "There's one thing about it, I don't think he's likely to get into any trouble now, for I know he's anxious to see her little girl."

"I want a tarara, old hoss!" cried Pete, bursting into a little jeweller's shop he had seen from the cab.

The little old watchmaker blinked at Pete through a big pair of spectacles.



"What was that you said, sir?"

"Tarara, old hoss! Come 'long, be quick! Got to catch a lady wid a little girl!"

The old jeweller rubbed his hands nervously together, and brought forward a case of second-hand watches.

"Do you like any of these, sir?"

"Golly! Dose are not tararas!" exclaimed Pete. "Neber seen a lady wid a watch on her head, hab you?"

The little man skipped to the end of the counter, and triumphantly brought forward a case of combs.

"Oh, golly!" groaned Pete. "Tarara—t-a-r-a-r-a, old hoss! Shall hab to say ta-ta rader in a moment!"

The watchmaker looked round his shop blankly, and racked his brain for some solution to the mystery.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said at last; "but I'm afraid I can't suit you. You see——"

"Oh, well, neber mind, old hoss! Can't stop now! Shall lose dat appointment!"

The little old man looked so disappointed that Pete grabbed a watch from the counter and stuffed it in his pocket.

"How much?" he inquired. "Nunno! I'm not going to run 'way wid it! Quick now!"

"Seven-and-six, sir," gasped the man.

Pete thrust half-a-sovereign into the man's hand and bolted. But when he got outside he moderated his pace.

"Why, it am only half-past seven!" he muttered to himself. "Must hab anoder try to get dat tarara!"

"Paper, sir!"

"Eh?"

"Paper, sir! All the winners! Six o'clock late edition!"

Pete looked down at the eager newsboy solemnly.

"I want a tarara," he said gravely.

"Sorry, sir," replied the boy, who had not quite heard what Pete had said; "I've only got 'Special News'!"

"See here, sonny," exclaimed Pete, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder, "I want a shop where dey sell tararas!"

"'Ere, guv'nor, chuck it! Who d'yer think ye're getting at? Think I'm a blessed comic-song chap?"

"Nunno! But I want a shop where dey sell—— A jeweller's shop."

"There yer are, guv'nor! Straight over there! Can't yer see?"

The boy pointed straight at the shop Pete had just left.

"Golly! Dat won't do!" he muttered.

"Well, that ain't my fault, is it, guv'nor?"

Pete shook his head.

"No; s'pose not," he muttered. "Shall hab to get dat tarara anoder time. Let's hab a paper!"



The newsboy whisked out a "News," and Pete thrust his hand into his waistcoat-pocket, and went off.

"Hi, gov'nor!" cried the astounded lad. "'Ere! Well, I'll be jiggered, he's gone an' given me his watch!"

As a matter of fact, Pete was perfectly aware he had given the boy a watch, and he did not stop when he heard him shouting after him.

When he was some distance away from the station, he caught sight of the motor-car.

"Hallo!" cried Sam, when he came up. "Where have you been to?"

"Oh, only for a little stroll, dat's all!"

"Been buying anything?"

"Nunno; habn't got anything!" declared Pete. "At least, not now," he muttered to himself. "Hab you seen Mrs. Lacey?"

"No; it's early yet. But tell us what you've been up to."

"Nutting, Sammy."

"Oh, that's all very fine! We saw you go into that jeweller's shop."

"Did you?"

"Yes, we did; we saw you go in."

"M'yes?"

"What happened then?"

"Came out again, ob course."

"It's no good, Sam," cried Jack; "he's in one of his stubborn moods to-night."

"Don't see anyting stubborn," cried Pete, gazing round anxiously. "S'pose you two get out ob dat car an' hab a look for Mrs. Lacey?"

"There's no need to do that," said Sam. "She's bound to come this way, and we're bound to see her unless you start getting into trouble."

A few minutes past eight Pete began to fidget.

"Say, old hoss," he cried, grabbing a porter who was pushing a heavy trolley-load of luggage, "hab you seen a lady wid a little girl?"

"Get out of my way!" cried the man, who was in rather a bad temper.

"Golly, I'm not in your way!" exclaimed Pete. "Hab you seen a little girl wid a lady? Nunno; a lady wid a little girl—dat's de proper way round."

"Yes, I have!" snapped the man.

"Golly!" yelled Pete. "Where?"

"Oh, everywhere! Let go of my arm!"

"Nunno; must know more 'bout dis first."

"Let go of my arm, I say!"

"You'm got to say where you saw dat lady wid de little girl first," exclaimed Pete.

"Oh, bother you, I haven't seen a lady with a little girl!"

"Golly, you said just now dat you had; you said you'd seen dem in two-free places!"

"No, I never!"



"But you did."

"No, I didn't."

"Look here, old hoss, you'm not going till you tell de troof. Hab you seen a lady wid a little girl?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Everywhere—hundreds of them."

"Lubly ones?"

"No."

"Golly, den you habn't seen de lady wid a little girl dat we want, 'cos dere's only one lady dat we'm looking for, an' she am pretty. Now, you—"

"Why, it's Pete!" cried a voice at Pete's elbow. "Why, whatever are you doing here?"

Pete released his captive suddenly and turned and gazed delightedly at Mrs. Lacey and her little daughter.

"So dis am Barbara!" he cried.

The little girl looked at him shyly, but she held out her hand confidently. Pete has a wonderful attraction for children, and in less than two minutes

the little maid was quite at home with him.

"But where are the others?" inquired Mrs. Lacey. "How did you get here?"

"In a car, my dear."

"A car?"

"Yes, a motor-car. Let's go an' find Jack and Sammy."

Carrying Barbara, Pete led the way to where the car was waiting, and he placed the little girl in the front seat.

"But we shall lose our train!" exclaimed Mrs. Lacey.

"M'yes."

"Oh, it's no good you talking like that!" she cried.

"I'm not talking, my dear; jump in."

"Where?"

"Why, in de car, ob cos."

Pete cut all argument short by mounting to his seat and seizing the steering-wheel.

"Oh, well, I suppose you'll have your own way, as usual!" said Mrs. Lacey. "Do you always let him have his own way?" she went on, turning to Jack and Sam.

"Well, it pays best in the end," murmured Sam.

The huge car, under Pete's skilful guidance, swung out of the station yard and threaded its way through the dense traffic.

"Now we can buzz along a bit!" exclaimed Pete, when at last they reached the main road. "How do you like trabelling in a motor, my dear? Golly, she's asleep!" he murmured.

During their progress out of London conversation had languished, and unnoticed by Pete the little girl had smuggled up to him and gone fast asleep. He pulled the rug over her and drove on in silence.



"Shoo!" he said, turning round. "Don't wake de baby. Golly, she'm asleep, too!"

Mrs. Lacey had indeed dropped off, and Jack and Sam were nodding drowsily.

"Golly, dis am a fine sort ob ting," grumbled Pete to himself; "ebery-body gone off like dis!"

Mile after mile was covered in silence, and Pete grinned to himself as the car hummed past the pond where he had a few hours earlier deposited the obnoxious stranger.

"Spects he hab washed de barnacles off him by dis time," he muttered. "All de same, it am a pity we didn't make him pay for dat fowl."

Pete now glanced behind him again, and saw that all the occupants of the tonneau were sound asleep, and without waking them he drove straight to the hotel, and with scarcely a sound brought the car to a standstill.

"Now, den, Sammy," he whispered, leaning over and pulling Sam's nose, "all change here for de Howard's Hotel! Don't forget de dolly an' de choos!"

Sam woke Mrs. Lacey, and they followed Pete, who was carrying Barbara, still sound asleep in his arms, into the hotel.

"Thank you so much!" whispered Mrs. Lacey, as Pete deposited the sleeping child in her arms. "It was very nice of you to think of meeting me. Oh, but I do feel so sleepy!" she added. "Good-night!"

"Good-night, my dear!" said Pete, as he ascended the stairs. "S'pose dat lazy Jack and Sammy hab gone to bed. Golly! What, not in bed yet, old hoss?"

"No," said Mr. Howard, coming out of his office, and pretending to be very wide awake. "Why, you're not going out again, are you?"

"Got to take dat car back," grumbled Pete.

"What car?" exclaimed the landlord.

"Dat one, ob cos!" said Pete, pointing at the silent monster standing outside the hotel.

"Oh, but you needn't take that back to-night! Put it in our stables for to-night, and I'll send round to the garage in the morning."

Pete readily agreed to this arrangement, and promptly went upstairs.

"I say, old hoss," he cried when he got half-way up, "Rory all right?"

"Yes, he's all right," replied Mr. Howard. "Good-night!"

"Night night, old hoss!"

There was great jubilation next day when Barbara received the doll that shut its eyes; but Mrs. Lacey promptly commandeered the box of chocolates.

Pete was rather sad about this.

"Now, look here!" said Mrs. Lacey. "It's no good putting on that face. I'm not going to have my little girl killed with kindness; but you can take her out if you like."

This proposal exactly suited Pete, and for the next few days he and Barbara had a royal time. In fact, Pete and his little charge became quite familiar figures in and about Brighton.



One evening when Jack, Sam, and Pete came into the large drawing-room, they found a curious-looking little man talking to Mrs. Lacey.

"I wonder who dat is?" murmured Pete.

"I don't know," replied Sam; "I haven't seen him before."

"I say, Howard," said Jack, as the landlord passed by, "who is that little chap over there?"

"Where?"

"There, talking to Mrs. Lacey."

"Oh, that's—eh—— Oh, I don't know who he is! Forget his name. Came in this afternoon."

During the whole of the evening the stranger hung round Mrs. Lacey, and at last Pete's impatience got the better of him.

"Can't help wheder it am not de ting or not, Sammy," he declared. "Dis child am going ober to hab a look at dat man."

"Why, you've quite deserted me!" Mrs. Lacey cried when he came up to her. "Allow me to introduce you. This is a friend of my solicitors—Mr. Evans."

Pete regarded the stranger rather curiously. He was a little man, with whiskers and a huge moustache, and something so attracted Pete that he forgot to release the man's hand.

"Nice ebbing for de time ob year, old hoss," he muttered absently.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" said Mrs. Lacey. "Aren't you going to let Mr. Evans have his hand again this evening?"

"Oh, bery sorry, my dear!" cried Pete, dropping that hand as if it had burnt him. "Was tinking ob someting else."

"What was that?" said Mrs. Lacey, with a smile.

"Why, dat nasartion, ob cos!"

Mr. Evans gave an audible sniff. Mrs. Lacey looked rather alarmed, for she knew that Pete was the last man in the world to put up with any nonsense.

"But we will talk 'bout dat to-morrow, my dear," said Pete. "Must go and see after Jack and Sammy; dey are looking rader lonely."

When he rejoined his comrades Pete was very silent.

"I wonder what's the matter with him?" said Sam, as he and Jack turned into bed that night. "Did you notice that he hardly spoke a word all the evening after he had left Mrs. Lacey?"

"Yes, I did."

"I wonder if that little chap she was talking to upset him?"

"No, I shouldn't think so. Pete's not the sort of chap to be upset by a little bunch of whiskers like that."

"I suppose not," agreed Sam.

"I reckon he's got something he's turning over in that woolly noddle of his," replied Jack, as he tumbled into bed. "Good-night!"

"Good-night!"



## CHAPTER 31.

## Fare Thee Well!

THE following morning Pete was still very uncommunicative. "What's the matter with you?" exclaimed Sam while they were having breakfast.

"Nutting, Sammy. Why?"

"Oh, only that you're a mighty sight quieter than usual, that's all."

Pete mumbled something to himself.

"Don't do that," said Jack. "We want to know what little game you're up to."

"Golly, dis child am not up to any games, big or little!" cried Pete.

"Here, let's hab a stroll round! Morning, my dear," said Pete, as he

encountered Mrs. Lacey. "Coming for a row on de briny? 'Member dat pointment?"

"Oh, yes, I remember!" exclaimed Mrs. Lacey. "Of course, it's a lovely morning. What did you say?"

Mr. Evans, who had been strolling up and down with the rich little widow, whispered a few words in her ear.

"What an absurd idea!" she cried. Then, as she caught sight of Pete's eyes fixed upon her, she gave rather a nervous little laugh, and pretended to scrutinise a picture on the wall.

Mr. Evans tugged at his huge moustache as Mrs. Lacey and Pete walked down the steps of the hotel.

"What was so absurd, my dear?" inquired Pete, as they crossed the front.

"Oh, nothing!"

"Sometimes dere's a lot in nutting," observed Pete.

"What do you mean?" inquired Mrs. Lacey.

"Well, you see, dere's nutting in dat chap Evans, but dere's a lot in him, all de same. Who did you say he was?"

"I don't know who he is, but he had a lettér of introduction from my solicitors. That's all I know."

"M'yes!"

"Oh, I wish you wouldn't say that!" cried Mrs. Lacey. "You're most exasperating!"

"M'yes! Oh, golly! Sorry, my dear, but hab dat chap tried to get you to lend him some money? 'Spose he hab not asked you to marry him, hab he?"

"Goodness, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Lacey.

"Goodness no what?"

"He's never asked me to marry him."

"Dat's a good job."

"Who for?"

"For you, ob course. But what 'bout de money part?"

Now, Mrs. Lacey was a nice little lady, but she made the mistake of trying to fence the question with Pete. But he would not be denied, and he returned to the question again and again.

"Well," admitted Mrs. Lacey at last, "he has suggested that I should invest a few hundred pounds in some shares."



"M'yes! You habn't dofe so yet?"

"Oh, no!"

"Golly! Dat's all right, den. Now we'll embark on de ocean."

During the whole of their little excursion Pete made no further reference to Mr. Evans; but he beamed on his companion and chatted incessantly.

When they returned to the hotel, about twelve, he left Mrs. Lacey and went in search of Mr. Howard.

"See here, old hoss!" he cried. "Just want to hab two-free words wid you."

"I'm at your service," replied the landlord.

"Well, dat's good. Now, our holiday am coming to its tail-end, an' don't you tink you could get up some sort ob parting send-off?"

"I—I—well, I really don't know."

"You don't underkunstumble, old hoss!" said Pete. "Dis little lot am not going to cost you anyting. But," he added mysteriously, "it may bring you back what you'm lost."

"But I don't understand!" exclaimed Mr. Howard.

"Dat don't matter. All you'm got to do am to announce dat dere will be a sort ob entertainment by dis old hoss—a one-hoss show—in de drawing-room dis ebening. See?"

"Yes, I see. But who's going to give the entertainment?"

"Dis child, ob course! Golly! You didn't know dis child was a conjurer, a strong man, an' all dat sort ob ting?"

"Oh, I know you're at least one of those!" exclaimed the landlord, laughing.

"Well, dat'll do. Just stick dat notice up somewhere so's eberybody can see it."

"Now for a bit ob detecting work," murmured Pete to himself, as he ascended the stairs. A grim little smile played about the corners of his mouth when he came down. "Thought I was right," he murmured.

"Scissors!" exclaimed Sam when they had got half-way through dinner. "I thought you had lost your appetite, Pete, judging by the last few days."

"Neber lost him, Sammy," mumbled Pete, with his mouth full. "Only, dis child hab been tinkin', and de process ob tinkin' upsets de working ob de juices ob de infernal cistern. Now let's hab a nice, quiet afternoon."

For the rest of the day Pete refused to stir from the hotel, and punctually at seven o'clock he entered the room assigned for the entertainment.

"Golly!" he murmured as he passed through the assembled guests. "For a one-horse show dis am not so bad. Don't like dese starchy fronts. Dis wish dey would hab flannel shirts for ebening wear."

"Ladies and gentlemen," commenced Pete, mounting the platform. "You see before you a gentleman ob colour, an' dis afore and after mentioned gentleman am going to do him best to entertain you. De proceeds ob de entertainment will be devoted to orphan sailors, an' p'r'aps someone present



am also going to benefit by receiving dat which he don't expect, an' somebody else not getting dat which dey do expect."

At the conclusion of this little speech he made such a comical face that the company roared, though none could quite make out what he had meant.

"When you'm done larfing dis child will dance a song—nunno, sing a dance! Strike up de 'companiment!"

The audience had come prepared to laugh at Pete's antics, but they listened with varying expressions of delight to his magnificent rendering of "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep."

"Scissors!" murmured Sam. "I have never heard the beggar sing better. But I wonder what he is up to? There's something behind all this."

At the conclusion of his song Pete bowed gracefully, and gradually bent lower and lower till his head touched the ground. Then, without the slightest warning he turned a complete somersault, and stood calmly smiling at the astonished people.

"Now, wid your kind permission, we will proceed wid de next item on de programme. Get ready wid de hat, Sammy. Nunno! Don't go, you people. It's all right. Sammy am not coming round just yet."

For the next half-hour Pete kept his audience in shrieks of laughter; then he finished up with a cake-walk with Rory.

"Bravo!"

"What a wonderful dog!"

"Now you go an' talk to Barbara!" cried Pete. "Up!"

Walking on his hind-legs, Rory trotted sedately round the room to where Mrs. Lacey and her little girl were seated, next to Jack and Sam. On the other side of her was Mr. Evans.

"Hab any gentleman a gold watch he could lend me for two-free minutes?" cried Pete, bringing forward a huge slogging-hammer. "Just want to test de strength ob dis little tintack-knocker, dat's all."

No one offered to oblige.

"What foolery, to be sure!" whispered Mr. Evans in Mrs. Lacey's ear. "I never could stand these stupid conjuring tricks."

"I don't think it is foolery at all," declared Mrs. Lacey. "He's awfully clever."

Evans shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing.

"Golly!" cried Pete, swinging his hammer to and fro. "Hahn't nobody got a ticker? Shall hab to go to uncle, den. Hahn't you got one?" he went on, pointing the hammer at Evans.

"Yes, I have; but you're not going to play about with it."

"Sha'n't hurt him works, old hoss!"

"That's what you say."

"Golly!" cried Pete, pretending to get very angry. "Do you dare to doubt de cleberness ob dis child?"

Now, as everyone knows, Pete is a most modest sort of chap, but the way he carried on at Evans would have convinced his best friend that he was quite the contrary.



"I have no doubt you may be clever in some things," retorted Evans, tugging at his moustache. "But you're not going to experiment with my watch."

"Shall hab to convince you dat I am cleber in eberyting," cried Pete. "Catch!"

Pete whirled the huge iron hammer round his head, and a gasp of astonishment came from all as they saw the hammer fly over their heads straight at Evans.

That worthy gave a yell, and went on his hands and knees on the floor.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Neber seen dat trick done before, hab you? Tought I was going to hammer de convincing part into dat frizzy noddle ob yours dat time."

Evans scrambled to his feet and stared around him in amazement. All eyes were turned upon him, and everybody was laughing.

It had been no trick of imagination on Evans's part; but he had ducked so quickly that he had not seen the length of fine steel wire attached to that hammer, and consequently had not witnessed the skill with which Pete had yanked it back again.

"Sit down, do!" murmured Mrs. Lacey. "It was only a trick."

"Those sort of tricks won't pay with me," snarled Evans, resuming his seat with very bad grace. "Stupid idiots!" he murmured beneath his breath. "They will laugh at anything!"

Every now and then someone tittered, and Evans scowled.

"Now, den, ladies and gentlemen," exclaimed Pete, "we'm finished wid de hammer part ob de show, an' we will now proceed with de last and final turn. Now, watch bery carefully. You see dere's nothing on dis platform 'cept dis child an' a chair. Now, we'm going to hab a marvellous metamorphysical act."

"Whatevèr's that?" inquired Mr. Howard, who stood close to Pete.

"Ah, most wonderful ting! But can't tell you more 'bout it till it am done and ober. Will some gentleman kindly oblige by coming up here an'——"

"I'll come!" whispered Mr. Howard.

"Nunno!" returned Pete, bending down so that his voice could not be heard. "You'm taking an active part in dis demonstration, but you do not come up here. Now," he went on, turning to the audience, "I see ober dere a lady wid a little girl. To one side ob dat lady am two bery nice-looking young men. Rader sunburnt, but, still, dat don't matter. Dose two am Jack and Sammy. So if I hab eider ob dem you would tink dey were conspirators, or someting like dat; so must choose de gentleman wid de whiskers—nunno, sorry, wid de moustache—on de oder side. He'm bery extinguished looking, an' I don't tink dat you will tink dat he'm likely to be a secret sort ob friend ob dis child."

"Don't you ask——"

"Nunno, old hoss, dis child am not going to do anyting ob de kind. Dese



things must be conducted wid proper ceremoniosity. My dear," he went on, looking at Mrs. Lacey, "would you kindly ask de gentleman wid de moustache to step up here?"

"Do go!" murmured Mrs. Lacey. "It's only a bit of fun."

"I won't!" declared Evans. "I——"

At a click of the fingers, a secret signal from Pete, Rory had started growling, and Evans edged off a bit.

"Yah, yah, yah!" cried Pete, pretending not to hear the dog. "Thought dat you would be likely to 'blige a lady, eben if you wouldn't do it for dis child. Please let de gentleman pass. Come long, old hoss; de company am waiting for de last act."

Now it may seem strange that the man should, after what had passed, comply with Pete's request, but none of the company knew that he had previously experienced Rory's gentle method of persuasion, and the reader will presently learn how a little growl from Rory worked the wonder.

Pete gave a profound bow as Evans slowly came up. He seemed ill at ease, and his blustering manner had gone.

"Hab a chair, old hoss?"

Evans sat down and faced the audience.

"Come 'long, Rory," cried Pete; "come 'long an' complete de picture! Dat's better!"

Rory squatted beside Evans, with his tongue lolling out and looking the picture of innocence.

"Now for de next item on de programme!" exclaimed Pete.

Everyone expected that the next item had to do with Evans, but to their surprise Pete started on a recitation. He got through the first half-a-dozen lines when he was interrupted.

"Pete!"

Pete stopped short and gazed in pretended anger at Mr. Howard.

"You'm interrupting, old hoss!"

"Yes; but—haven't you forgotten Mr. Evans?"

"Golly! No!" exclaimed Pete. "Can't perform de trick while dat man am hot wid bad anger. But let's see." Pete walked over to Evans, and calmly seizing his wrist felt his pulse with great deliberation. "Dat's all right!" he cried presently. "De man hab cooled down, so we will discontinue de recitation business and get on wid de metamorphisical act!"

Evans fidgeted, and muttered something between his breath. Mr. Howard watched the proceedings uneasily. Pete's treatment of Evans amounted to an insult, but matters had gone too far now, so he sighed and seated himself facing the little platform.

Pete was now moving rapidly about. First he lifted Evans, chair and all, to the centre of the stage. Then he took a large red silk handkerchief from his pocket and held it up, turning it this way and that.

"You obserbe dat dis am only a simple bit ob silk. Like to hab a look, old hoss?"

Mr. Howard took the handkerchief, and Pete winked at him.



"Don't be silly!" cried Mrs. Lacey. "You know what I mean. I hope that you will all come and see me when you want another holiday. I'm sure you must need one occasionally," she added, glancing at Pete out of the corner of her eyes.

"That's one for you!" laughed Sam.

"No; don't let's joke!" exclaimed Mrs. Lacey. "I want you to promise that you'll all come and see me. You have all been very good friends to me, and I am deeply——"

"Golly!" cried Pete, who detected a slight tremor in her voice. "Dat's settled, my dear! We will come and stay wid you next Christmas!"

And here for a time we bid farewell to our comrades, leaving our readers with the wish that they, too, have, or will, enjoy their holiday to the same extent as Jack, Sam and Pete.

THE END.

Readers should look out for the two next issues of "The Boys' Friend" Library which will be announced shortly in "The Boys' Friend," "The Boys' Realm," "The Boys' Herald," "Pluck," "Marvel," "Union Jack" and "The Gem" Library. Meanwhile, do not fail to get "Sporting Life," No. 22 of "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library, and you should also note that long, complete tales of Jack, Sam, and Pete are appearing every Wednesday in the "Marvel." Price One Penny.