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# PETE DETECTIVE.

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# PETE, DETECTIVE.

*A Splendid NEW Tale of the Three Famous Comrades,  
JACK, SAM, and PETE.*

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

## CHAPTER 1.

**Jack, Sam, and Pete Arrive at the Hotel—Rory Comes With Them—Pete Causes Trouble Straight Away—Rory Causes More Trouble—The Combined Trouble Results in Pathos and Bathos; the Latter Predominating.**

JAMES, the waiter at a private hotel off the Strand, was in a bad temper. There was nothing particular about this, because he very often was in a bad temper, as Tom, the page-boy noticed to his cost. James had a face like a fiddle, and he never smiled. Tom grinned at everything, and his jolly face had often brought him a tip that James considered should have gone to him.

"I don't know what's coming to things," growled James. "There isn't a shilling in the hotel."

"What price Mr. Richards?" inquired Tom.

"He's not worth fourpence!"

"You said he was a millionaire."

"You empty-headed, stupid boy. Ain't you got a bit of sense. He isn't worth fourpence to me, and that's all I care for."

"We may get some more guests presently."

"No, we sha'n't. People are all away now, and when they come back they will go away for Christmas again. Life ain't worth living."

"We ain't far from the river."

"I'll give you a clump over the head if you talk to me like that. Do you think I'm going into the water this time of year?"

"Well, here comes a cab with three gents in it. It has stopped here, too."

"Two gents and a nigger, you mean. They are no good. I can tell by the look of them."

"Hello, dere, old lively!" bawled a voice. It belonged to Pete, the negro, and his comrades, Jack and Sam, were with him, so was his dog, Rory. "Come and carry in dis luggage, and try to look a little happier. We'm going to stay at dis hotel, and we hope it is a quiet one, cos we don't like noisy people. What's your name, old hoss?"

"James is my name, and I'm head waiter here. I shall be obliged if you call me by my name."

"I tink I will call you Lively for short. And what's your name, lad?"



"Tom, sir."

"Well, dere's half-a-crown for you for looking happy. Yah, yah, yah! Dat's brought a good-sized grin to his face all at once. Must see dat grin again. Dere's anoder half-crown for you. Yah, yah, yah! Fetched it again."

"Thanky sir. I don't mind you fetching 'em all day long under those circumstances."

"Golly! What's de oder man trying to do. Hab you got a spasm, Lively?"

"I was only smiling at your liberality, sir!" exclaimed James.

"Golly! Don't you try to smile like dat, else you will hab something happen to your face. It would be a mighty awful ting if it got fixed like dat. We want free bedrooms, and a private sitting-room for occasional use. Must be pen and ink and writing materials in it. And be particular 'bout de quietness. Now carry de luggage in, and just you keep your eye on Jack and Sammy, and if you hear dem making a noise, stop them at once. Dere's your fare, cabby. You can keep de change. We shall find our way about all right."

Pete found his way into the coffee-room for a start, and here he found a middle-aged gentleman of portly dimensions and surly aspect. He glared at Pete for nearly half a minute, and then he rang the bell. He was Mr. Richards, the millionaire, and he seemed to think that the hotel belonged to him.

"What is that nigger doing in this room, waiter?"

"I believe, sir, that——"

"Turn him out!"

"Look at dat, now!" exclaimed Pete. "I hab got to be turned out. My dear old hoss, ain't you got any pity for a poor homeless nigger?"

"Turn the insolent scoundrel out of the place, waiter!"

"Would you come to your private room, gentlemen?" inquired James. Then he added in a lower voice: "This gentleman is Mr. Richards, a very wealthy gentleman."

"Oh; so you'm Richards, are you, my dear old hoss?" exclaimed Pete.

"Well, I dunno dat dere are any particular points about you. You'm rader fat, but p'r'aps dat is because you eat too much. It's all right, Lively, you can leave him in de room. I don't mind him. I tink he is quite harmless, and his stupidity may afford us a little amusement. I notice Jack is guffawing at him already. Shall I make him dance, Jack? He wants a little exercise to take down some ob his blubber. Come and hab a little dance, my dear old bag ob lubliness. Yah, yah, yah! I neber came across such a bad-tempered old hoss in all my life. Gib him a kiss, Lively, and see if dat will make him happy."

The great man strode from the room, and shut the door with a tremendous slam.

"Funny ting how difficult it is to please some men. Ain't it, Lively?"

"I should be glad if you would call me by my proper name," snarled James.

"But you look so mighty awful when you are glad, dat I would rader hab your serious face. Are you a married man, Lively?"

"No, I ain't!"

"Well, dat's lucky for your wife. You ain't lost sixpence, or anyone you care for?"

"No. There isn't anyone I care for."

"Well, dat is as it should be, cos I'm mighty certain dere can't be anyone who cares for you. Dis case upsets all my calculations, boys. I dunno



what's de matter wid de man. He can't hab anything on his mind, cos he ain't got one. I know! I can detect de matter, first time. I hab got de right clue. Ain't it strange how some people can detect tings. I knew a bobby, once, who detected a duck-pond when I chucked him into it. De case wid you, Lively, is dat you ain't well. You need a medicated man. You are ill."

"Never had a day's illness in my life."

"Ha, ha, ha! You are no good as Sherlock Holmes, Pete!" declared Jack. "You had better turn your mind to opening oysters, or something like that. You are no jolly good as a detective."

"You shut up, Jack. You know nothing about de matter. I tell you dat dere are a lot ob crimes committed dat ought to be detected. But de police ain't de slightest use in de matter, and I'm going to show dem how de work ought to be done. What's de good ob our coming all de way to England for me to show dem how dey ought to detect, and den not proving to de world dat I'm de finest libing detector?"

"But James says he is not ill. You appear to have got on the wrong tack there, for a start."

"I'm mighty certain de man is ill, widout knowing it. Still, I shall prove to you dat I'm correct. Got a telephone here, Lively?"

"Yes! In the hall."

Pete found the telephone all right; and having screwed the handle round for about a score of times, he took the receiver off and listened.

"Eh? I don't want any number, my dear. Communicate me to a medicated man. What? I dunno. Anyone will do. I'm Pete. Make haste, my dear. De matter is. Eh? What dress? Well, I'm wearing a sort ob all ober de place pattern suit; rader light, wid— Oh, I see. You want my address. I thought you said dress. Just shout de name and address ob dis hotel frough, Jack. I dunno what it is."

Jack gave the required information, then handed the receiver to Pete, who kept howling out: "Are you dere?"

"Oh, all right, old hoss. Are you de medicated man? Eh? Oh, tell de medicated man to come to de address I'm going to gib, immediately. Tell him de matter is important. Got dat? I ain't shouting. Just you— Eh? What sort ob turn do you want me to hab. Sort ob dance, my dear. I wish dat girl would shut up. Golly. Be quiet, my dear. What? You'm waiting for de address. Shout it frough, Jack. I hab forgotten it."

Again Jack gave the information. He thought there would be some fun, and he wanted to see Pete's face when he had to fork out the doctor's fee. James did not understand the matter at all, and Tom grinned his hardest.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "I must say I like your grin, Tom. It's always best to go frough de world laughing, if you can. Dere's anoder half-crown for dat guffaw."

"He's making a fool of you, boy!" snarled James.

"I rader like being made a fool of. Ha, ha, ha! He can make as big a fool of me as ever he likes."

"He's not really giving you the money. He will make you give it back."

"The gentleman will have to be the smartest chap on the face of the earth if he succeeds in doing that!" declared Tom. "It's not often that I get tips, but I've never yet given one back again."

"Yah, yah, yah! Dat boy is going to get on in life. Now, we get to de next case. I shall make some substractions concerning him."

"I rader fancy you mean deductions," observed Jack.

"Same ting. If you deduct, it stands to reason dat you substra You'm seventeen years ob age. Your fader and moder lib nice and c



fortably, and you hab got free brudders and four sisters. You clean de plate at dis hotel, and you ain't got much ob an opinion ob Lively. You were educated at—at a school, when you were young, and you'm fond of apple-dumplings."

"Wonderful correct, sir," grinned Tom. "I can eat apple-dumplings to further orders. I haven't got a father and mother, or any brothers and sisters; and I'm thankful to say I don't clean the plate at this hotel. But you was wonderfully correct about my age, because I'm fifteen, and as for the apple-dumplings—why, you hit the mark exactly."

"I wonder how I could hab made a mistake 'bout de family?" exclaimed Pete, shaking his head. "Still, de cleverest detective can't be always right, and I shall prove right about Lively. I'm going to get de opinion confirmed. Why, here comes dat dear old hoss, Richards. Come in, my poor old bloater! Now, you take a case like dat, Jack. Can deduct him straight away. He's a married man wid seven children, and his wife is remarkably careful, cos he's got all his buttons sewn on. He's been in de War Office. You can tell dat by de stupid expression on his face, and de slow manner in which he moves. His favourite drink is port wine, and plenty ob it, and he neber drinks anyting stronger dan brandy. You can tell dat by de colour ob his nose. I wonder what de old hoss is yowling about."

"I have never been so grossly insulted in all my life!" roared the indignant Richards. "I will not permit a nigger, or any other man to talk to me like this; and if you dare to do it again, I will fling you through that window!"

"I can plainly see dat dere is considerable risk in dis detective business. Still, I suppose dere are risks in all trades. Making matches, frinstance, or eben de army in time ob war. Yah, yah, yah! I tink I can detect signs ob insanity in de old hoss, now. You'm rader rocky on de crumpet, ain't you, Richards?"

"This gentleman is Dr. Starky!" said James, showing in a tall, stern-looking gentleman.

"You'm just in time, old hoss. Dis poor old chap has gone off his napper. He's gone suddenly mad. Do you tink he ought to be undressed and put to bed?"

"You insolent hound of a nigger!" yelled Richards, making a wild rush at Pete, and hammering at his head in a manner that certainly gave the impression that he was not quite sane.

"Here. Keep yourself calm, old hoss!" cried Pete, grabbing him round the body, and seating him on his knee, where he held him in spite of his struggles. "Did you eber see such an unruly maniac in all your life?"

"Keep calm, my dear sir!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Do you tink it is only ordinary madness, or is he habing fits?"

"Have you been exciting him?"

"Nunno! De man has been exciting me. Hark at him raving now!"

"Did the symptoms come on suddenly?"

"Villain!" howled Richards, shaking his fist in the doctor's face. "How dare you insinuate that I am mad? I am a great deal saner than you are. Get out of this room, or I will kick you out of it!"

"Poor, dear old hoss; dere's anoder fit coming on. I'm 'most afraid he's badly fermented. Would you like to feel his pulse, doctor?"

The doctor did not look as though he would like to do anything of the sort.



"Hold him firmly," he said. "Be sure you do not let him go. This is a case where we must get help."

"Don't you tink you would like to take him home wid you and introduce him to your wife and family?"

"You are exciting him all the more by talking like that. Try to calm yourself, my good man. We shall have you all right directly. I will make him up a composing draught; then you had better have him taken to an asylum."

"Golly! I ain't taking all dat trouble wid de old hoss," said Pete, releasing him. "He can hab de rest ob his fits by himself."

Then the infuriated man turned his rage on the unfortunate doctor. Among other things, he told him that he was a fool, and an incompetent ass.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Go it, old hoss! You'm de funniest maniac I eber came across; dough I must say you ain't de most amiable one I eber met."

"Is there anything the matter with him?" queried the astonished doctor, turning towards Jack, who was convulsed with laughter.

"Nothing whatever. He is as sane as you or I. Ha, ha, ha!"

"What did the silly rascal send for me for?"

"Well, you see, Pete has made up his mind to become an amateur detective, and he thought he detected madness in Richards. Ha, ha, ha! It is Pete's first detective case."

"I should strongly advise him to let it be his last. My fee will be five guineas."

"Eh?" growled Pete.

"Five guineas, if you please."

"Well, I can't say dat I do please 'bout dat," grumbled Pete, pulling out the money. "I didn't take into consideration dat dere would be a fee."

"Ah, well, you will know better in future, my man."

"I wanted you to tell me what's de matter wid Lively, dere. Would dat be anoder five guineas?"

"Yes."

"Well, he ain't worf it, and I tink I will stop at de first medicated examination. I don't mind paying a shilling for Lively's medicated examination, but de man ain't really worf more dan dat."

"It is useless blaming me," said the doctor, turning to Richards, who was still raving at him. "You should have behaved like a sensible man instead of raving in that manner. I naturally thought that you had lost your reason. Well, I haven't time to listen to all that," added the doctor, leaving the room, and re-entering his carriage, which was rapidly driven away.

"I will punish you for this, you scoundrel of a nigger!" hooted Richards.

"Seems to me dat I'm going to get punished all round," observed Pete. "Here's dat doctor has punished me to de extent ob five pounds, wid five shillings frown in. I dunno what he wanted to charge de extra five shillings for. Seems to me de five pounds would be quite plenty just telling a man he ain't mad. But neber mind, old hoss, it will be a lesson to you not to get so excited in de future. Let's hab someting to eat, Lively. I told you when we came here dat dis hotel would hab to be kept quiet, and I must say dat I don't consider you hab made much ob a start in a quiet direction."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, young man," cried Richards.

## CHAPTER 2.

**How Pete Arrested the Suicide, and Bore Him through the Streets—A Quite Unexpected Meeting—Pete Engages a Secretary—The First Day's Work—The Secretary Coins Money.**

"WHAT do you say, boys, to taking a stroll?" inquired Pete, when they had finished the meal.

"I'm ready," answered Jack. "Suppose we go along the Embankment."

"Do you tink dat dere will be sufficient scope for my detective work dere, Jack?"

"Certainly! You will be able to detect all the fish in the River, and when you have got tired of detecting them, you can detect all the would-be suicides, and people like that. Afterwards, you will be able to detect Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. You may even detect a smart member of Parliament. Several of them dress exceedingly well."

"I wish I could detect a little commonsense in Richards," growled Pete. "Here's de old hoss going on about dat leg ob his, and I'm mighty certain dat Rory neber hurt it. Funny ting what a fuss some people make ober a little bite. Now den, boys, dis way to London! Hold your row, old hoss; I don't want to hear anything more 'bout dat leg. Shove a red-hot poker on it if you are frightened ob hydrophobia; only, I may tell you, dat Rory ain't half so mad as you are!"

Pete appeared to be lost in thought as they strolled along the Embankment, and presently he stopped, and gazed at a tall, thin man, who came down one of the turnings. He wore a frock-coat and a tall hat, and, judging by their appearance, he had worn that coat and hat for a good many years. His boots also required renewing. In fact, they gave the impression that they were about done. He had reached the corner of the street when he stopped and placed his hand to his head.

"Sad case dat," murmured Pete. "Large family and small income. Case ob suicide. De man is going to drown himself."

"Rats!" growled Jack, who had an idea that there would be trouble if Pete took that extraordinary idea into his head. He's thinking of something he had forgotten."

"Dat man is wondering if de water will be cold. I shall collar him as he makes de rush for de cruel, silent waters of de Thames."

"Well, so long as you don't collar him before he makes that rush, I reckon no harm will be done," said Sam.

"I tell you he is going to commit suicide," persisted Pete. "I can deduct dat by a glance at his face. You can see de grief and de tiredness ob life— Hi, golly! Dere he goes!"

The stranger suddenly darted across the Embankment, and made a rush towards the water. Pete grabbed him as he reached the pathway, and lifted him in his arms as though he had been a little child, although he must have stood six feet at least.

"My poor old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "you come along wid me——"

"Help! Help! Let me go!"

"Nunno! I ain't letting you go. You come dis way. I knew I was making my deductions dat time all right."

Jack and Sam simply yelled with laughter, so did the spectators. As Pete carried the struggling man towards the hotel he got a fine crowd of followers, and a constable came up.

"What's all this?" demanded the man of law.

"You go away, Robert," cried Pete, hurrying on. "You ain't wanted



to interfere. Be quiet, old hoss. What you want is kind treatment, and dat's what you are going to hab. Get out ob my way, Robert! Golly! Ain't dis detection work causing a crowd. Go away, people! I'm attending to dis man."

Then Pete bolted at a pace that was really surprising, considering the weight he carried, and all the way his prisoner yelled at the top of his voice.

Pete got him into the hotel and shoved him into an easy-chair. "Now, see here, my dear old hoss," exclaimed Pete. "You'm only a young man, and you ain't got de right to act like dis. Hold your row, Richards, else I shall gib you a smack ober de mouf."

"Villain!" hooted Richards. "That man is Frederick Hall, my clerk, and I have sent him on a most important errand!"

"Funny ting dat!" exclaimed Pete. "Is he in regular employment?"

"I dismissed him this evening—but how dare you prevent him going on my business?"

"Well, I must say dat I don't wonder at any man who is your clerk wanting to drown himself. All de same, it would be more to de point if he were to drown you, 'cos you ain't a bit ob good in de world!"

"There's a constable called to see you," said James.

"Tell him I'm engaged, Lively. Now, see here, Freddy, don't you see de error ob your ways? You'm comparatively young—don't suppose you are above thirty-five—and you wouldn't be a bad-looking fellow if you were fed up a bit. Tink ob your wife and children!"

"I haven't got a wife and children!" gasped the astounded man.

"Well, tink ob dem if you had," said Pete. "You ain't got de right to behave in dis foolish manner. When trouble comes to you, you hab got to meet it bravely, and if dat old bag ob blubber has dismissed you, dere are plenty ob oder places."

"You dare to address me in that insolent manner, and before my clerk, too!" roared Richards.

"Shut up, you unmelted grease spot!" cried Pete. "If I was Freddy, I should just gib you what you deserve. But, see here, Freddy, dis little trouble ob yours ain't anything."

"Did Mr. Richards send you after me?"

"Nunno. We'm staying at dis hotel, and I just caught you in de nick ob time. You ain't got de right to take your own life in dat manner."

"Take what?"

"You ain't got de right to frow yourself into de water."

"Whoever thought of doing such a thing?"

"Golly! Weren't you going to jump into de water?"

"What? I was only running to catch the boat. You have made me miss it, and I can't possibly get to Lambeth in time now!"

"What made you stop at de corner ob de street, and look as dough you had lost your rasher ob bacon for breakfast?"

"I was only wondering whether it would be of any use to ask Mr. Richards not to discharge me; then I saw the boat coming, so ran for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack. "I must say your deductions don't always hit the mark, Pete. Still, there is a chance of your detecting something before you have done."

"You be quiet, Jack, and don't laugh at a little mistake like dat. Wid a big business like mine, dere must be some little mistakes."

"Yes—Ha, ha, ha! I've noticed that."

"I reckon if you go picking up every one you see running for a boat or a train under the impression that they are going to commit suicide," ex-

claimed, Sam, "you will get into trouble before you have finished your detective work."

"Be quiet, Sammy! Don't you see I'm attending to dis case?"

"Ha, ha, ha! And a pretty mess you have made of it. I hope Fred Richards will bring an action for damages against you!"

"Well," exclaimed Fred; "personally, it doesn't matter to me, but it's a serious matter for Mr. Richards!"

"I don't mind him at all," declared Pete, with absolute truth. "He's a one——"

"The constable says he must see you immejiate!" declared James.

"Tell de man to wait," answered Pete. "You buzz off, Lively. I'm sure, Freddy, dat you were going to commit suicide. You ought to hab told me dat you weren't."

"Well, you see, I was in a hurry to catch a boat, and when you suddenly seized me, and bore me through the streets—ha, ha, ha!—I really didn't know what you were going to do. I was under the impression that I was going to be murdered, or something like that; and as I don't want to die at thirty-one——"

"You see, Pete," laughed Jack, "you were wrong with his age for start. You deducted four years too much."

"De man wants feeding up. You ought to be ashamed ob yourself, Richards, for feeding your clerk like dat!"

"You silly vagabond; I don't feed him! I pay him his weekly salary!"

"How much do you pay him?"

"What has that got to do with you?"

"'Spect it has got someting to do wid him. How much does he pay you, Freddy?"

"Well, I am dismissed, so that I don't see that it matters!" exclaimed Freddy. "I have been in Mr. Richards' employment for two years, and he has always paid me fifteen shillings a week, but as I have my mother and young sister to support, why, it is not much."

"Golly! You mean to say de man pays you fifteen shillings a week, weder you want it or not?" exclaimed Pete.

"I wasn't complaining. Only it frightened me when I was thrown out of a berth. It is so hard for a man like myself, who knows absolutely nothing to get a situation. I thought, Mr. Richards, that perhaps you might consider your decision. I don't care for myself, but my mother is old, and we are very poor."

"Funny ting dat, when you get fifteen shillings ebery week," observed Pete. "I can detect extravagance somewhere. Don't you tink, Richards, you could keep him on, suppose he was to take a little less—say thirteen shillings and sixpence ebery week; and de weeks he did not want it, he would tell you so."

"I have dismissed the young man, and that is the end of it. I never alter my decision—in fact, I have engaged a boy to take his place."

"Well, dat's mighty sad!" exclaimed Pete. "It's an awful loss, 'cos he gets de money regularly—weder he wants it or not, and dat's a great consideration. Now den, Freddy, you see I hab started as an amateur detective and I want an assistant. Do you tink you can detect?"

"Why, really, I don't know. I—I have never tried."

"Tink you could detect any good in Richards?"

"I hope so, after the years I have served that gentleman."

"Den I tell you what it is, Freddy—you'm de finest detective on de face of dis earth, and I engage you to act as my clerk on de understanding dat you



ain't going to gib me a character from Richards. De work will be bery hard—"

"I don't mind that."

"De hours will commence from now, and dey will continue at periodical intervals. De work will consist in doing all we'm got to do during de day, and doing what we ain't got to do during de night."

"That does not sound hard," said Fred, smiling rather sadly.

"What's de lowest salary you can accept?"

"Could you give me fifteen shillings a week?"

"Nunno! Dat's fatal, and—"

"Say fourteen shillings a week. I think I could— At any rate, something is better than nothing, and—"

"Can't give anything like dat. You must be at your daily toil ebry morning, not later dan twelve o'clock, and you ain't to leabe off till we'm finished de day's work, which will be 'bout half-past twelve."

"Yes. I could manage that. That is to say about twelve hours a day, which is the time I work now."

"Den I tell you what it is, Freddy; Richards has simply been frowning his money at your head. I ain't working twelve hours a day. Twelve minutes is more my mark. What will you take to drink?"

"Well, I never take anything in the way of intoxicants, but a cup of coffee—"

"We will manage dat if I can arrange de salary wid you. Now, let me see; you can come at once?"

"Mr. Richards has given me a week's notice."

"You can go at once, as far as I am concerned; only, of course, if you do, you will forfeit your week's salary—I mean the week I hold in hand."

"Dat's settled, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "I dunno when I came across a man to equal you in kindness. You don't mind working for a nigger, Freddy?"

"Why should I? What difference could it make to me whether the man is black or white?"

"Bery well. De engagement commences forthwith, and it terminates when it ends. De commencing salary will be five pounds a week, and—"

"If you think it kind-hearted to play tricks on a poor man, I do not," said Fred.

"What's de man talking about?" gasped Pete.

"Well, perhaps it's all right, only I can't appreciate a practical joke under my present circumstances!" exclaimed Fred. "I'm thinking of my mother's face when I have to tell her what has happened. Fifteen shillings may seem little to you, but— Well, it is the wages of a fool, and my inheritance, Heaven help me!"

"Ain't it mighty awful to hear a man talk like dat?" exclaimed Pete. "You see, if a man tinks he is worf nuffin, it's about what he will get. Do you refuse to take five pounds a week?"

"You are not offering me such a sum in earnest? I am not worth it!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Dat's a fine way to get a situation, I must say! See here, Freddy, dere are de first week's wages. All de oder weeks will be paid in advance."

"But I—I really don't know what to say! You can't mean it!"

"Ain't it enough?"

"It—it—"

"Dere, dat will do, Freddy. You'm engaged."

"I think Mr. Richards will be able to tell you that I am honest, but—"

"I refuse to give a character!" snarled Richards, who was furious at an extraordinary transaction.

"Golly! I wouldn't take a character from dat man!" declared Pete.

"If he said you were honest, I should be afraid you were going to rob me."

"You will have to make that call to-night, Hall!" cried Mr. Richards.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Nunno, he won't!" declared Pete. "Freddy is my private secretary and you said he could go at once if he forfeited his wages dat you keep a week in hand. I pay mine in advance. Now, see here, Freddy. You and your moder and sister expect you home to-night. Well, you can't go, 'cos dere's a lot ob work to be done. Put dose five sovereigns into your pocket for to start. Now send dis telegram. Paper and ink here. Hurry up, Live! Oh, is dat you, Tom? Well, you'm got some sense in your noddle, and do more dan I can say for some people—including Jack and Sammy. Telegram form! Pen and ink!"

They came with surprising rapidity; and Pete ordered his new secretary to send the following message:

"'Got a new situation, wid a salary of five pounds a week; commenced from to-night. I dunno weder de man who has employed me is good or not for many weeks; but he says dat I can consider de engagement lasts for a year. De work disentails a good deal ob brain power, but he has mental powers. I examined me, and he says dat I suit the situation.' Got dat little message, Freddy?"

"Ha, ha! Yes; but this telegram will cost a lot of money," answered Freddy, who was writing at Pete's dictation.

"Can't help dat; business must be attended to, regardless ob cost."

"De nigger says dat he can't let me come home to-night, 'cos dere's a fearful amount ob work to be done; but in dis telegram he sends five pounds for your separate and joint use. As a rule, I shall finish work at five o'clock in de afternoon, but dis first night is an exception, and I must stay wid de nigger at his hotel, 'cos dere's important business to be transacted. De nigger has got some friends, who are gentlemen.—Yes, truly and affectionately, Freddy."

"But this telegram will cost fourteen or fifteen shillings!" gasped Freddy, and you could send one for a shilling, even if I telegraphed for five pounds, which is not necessary."

"Bery well! We will send de five pounds by a special messenger. You scribble off a letter dat you tink will suit de circumstances ob de case and put dat five pound note inside it. Now den, Tom; get dat telegram off at once. Dere's a sovereign for de cost. Dey may charge extra as you hab used so many forms. But you can pay de difference, and keep de change. Go to de hospital and get de messenger-boy. I dunno weder dey keep dem at de hospitals, but I should say so, seeing all de motor-cars dat are knocking about. Hurry up, Tom!"

Within a quarter of an hour Tom came back with a messenger-boy, and he informed Pete that the telegram had been sent off—which was the case.

The messenger-boy received a tip from Pete that brought his grin equal Tom's, and away he went.

"Now den, Freddy!" exclaimed Pete. "Our first job will be to catch him dis way. We shall be back at nine o'clock, Jack. You gib de necessary orders."

Fred was simply astounded. Pete had already spent ten pounds—five on account of his salary, and the five he had spent sending to Mrs. Hall. This seemed to the unfortunate Fred a very large sum. He tried to express his gratitude, but Pete shut him up straight away, and they met the constable outside the hotel.



"Now, what's the meaning of this?" demanded the man of law. "You have assaulted this party, and if he likes to make a charge against you why, we must come to the station. I saw the assault, so there can be no doubt about it."

"He has befriended me!" exclaimed Fred. "Ah! I cannot tell you all he has done for me, and—"

"You ain't going to charge the nigger?"

"I am going to strive to show by deeds the gratitude I feel," said Fred. "I shall never succeed, nor could I succeed, if I tried to do so by words."

"Well, you are a fool. That's all I've got to say for you."

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, as the constable strode away. "Dere's two sorts ob fools, Freddy. De one who knows it, and de oder who does not know it. Now, I want to get some ready-made clothes. What's de best place?"

"In Holborn. I can show you. You will be able to get almost anything to fit you."

"Den come along, Freddy. What is Richards?"

"A money-lender. I suppose they are all right; but I've seen some cruel work. I would not like my people to know what sort of situation I have had. But what are you to do when you can't get work?"

"Dat's just where you make your big mistake, Freddy. I'm most afraid dat you are one ob dose men who is afraid. P'r'aps not for yourself, but for your moder. Now, in dis life you must push onwards. De man who stays in one place because he is getting bread, ain't de man who will succeed in life. Nunno! A man says: 'Here I am—a rolling stone gathers no moss.' Dat's all right. But dat man can keep stationary as long as he likes; dough while he is doing it, he's got to hab his eyes open for something better. He's got to watch, and he's got to grasp de situation. A safety match is all right in its way, but it ain't much good in a gale ob wind, when you hab lost de outside portion ob dat box. You tink you can't do de work I shall require. Bery well; tink it all along, as much as you please, only don't be so mighty soft as to let me know you tink it. Dere's many a man getting two-free thousand a year in dis country, who ain't worf two hundred. Bery well! Dey ain't honest, you say. What's dat got to do wid de matter? Dey get dat money because dey hab convinced demselves dat dey are worf double; and den dey hab convinced deir employers dat dey are worf what dey are getting. If you'm got bloaters to sell, it ain't de slightest use to shout out 'Rotten fish!' Dat ain't one ob mine. I tink it is one ob Wagglepeare's, or one ob de old writers. Dis de place, eh? Well, dey seem to be large enough to fit de biggest-sized man. Dis way to London, old hoss!"

"Dis gentleman wants a nice suit," observed Pete. "He prefers something ob a check form, else wid strokes running along it. You might just show me a few while you are running him ober."

"Certainly! This way please."

Pete seated himself on a stool, and several suits were placed before him. He shook his head gravely at them.

"De gentleman wants something business-like," observed Pete. "Something wid a distinctive pattern in it, dat looks like a flash ob lightning running about. De man wants brightening up. He ain't got enough bounce about him. He wants a bouncing sort ob suit. De sort of ting a man wears when he has backed de winner ob de Derby, and bought dat suit after he has got drunk on champagne. He wants a suit dat will show oder people dat dey are sitting on a back seat, and dat de first seats are all reserved for him. I want a suit dat will tone him up. Why, dere you are!"

Mighty beautiful suit, dat. Golly! Why didn't you show me dat suit a de start? Tink it will fit him?"

"It is the gentleman's exact measure."

"Seems 'bout de exact pattern, too," mused Pete. "Tink you like dat pattern, old hoss?"

"Why, really—I—I generally wear something quieter."

"Well, dat's de mistake you make, Freddy. Now, I will show you how you ought to treat de world. You'm got to grip him by de froat, and say: 'See here, old hoss; if you won't gib me what I want, I'm going to take it. It ain't no good going to a man and saying: 'Yes, sir, and no, sir; and you'm right, sir.' De man who appreciates you is de one who tinks you know more dan he does; and wid a suit like dat I should say you could convince a man you knew 'most anyting. Put dat suit up, and we want a pair of patent leather boots."

Pete got all he wanted, even to his particular style of hat. Then he told Fred to go to the dressing-room and put the clothes on. When he emerged no one on the face of this earth would have taken him for a city clerk. Pete said he looked splendid, and took him back to the hotel in a hansom.

"What do you tink ob dat little lot, Richards?" inquired Pete, showing Freddy forwards.

"You silly maniac of a nigger!"

"Look here, flop-ears!" came a voice, apparently from Freddy—and it was exactly like his voice, too. "I'll land you a smack in your eye!"

"Fellow!" howled Richards. "You dare to——"

"Go for de old hoss, Freddy!" exclaimed Pete in his natural voice. "Should like to see you knock him ober. Yah, yah, yah! Neber mind Richards. You can't help being an old scoundrel, because you neber try to be anyting else. Be quiet, now. I ain't got time to argue de matter wid you. Freddy and I are a lot too busy to-night. We hab got free solid hours ob work before us. Order anoder room, Lively! Now let me see. De first part ob de work will be supper. Bring up de best supper dat can be put on de table, Tom. You can bring Richards a dog biscuit, if he's hungry. We want supper for four, and you hab got to make de supper fit de appetite ob about forty. Buzz off, if you want any more tips."

An excellent supper was brought up, and Pete insisted on Freddy eating about twice as much as he wanted to eat. Then he ordered up coffee and cigars, and played a game of billiards with Jack. He wanted to play for a hundred thousand pounds, but Jack, who knew that he would get hopelessly beaten, said he would prefer smaller stakes, though it would have made no difference, seeing that they pooled their money and never kept separate accounts. Next, Pete wanted to make the loser punch Richards' head; and this suggestion made Richards very angry.

"Tell you what, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "I'll back my gold watch against your trousers dat I beat Jack!"

"You insolent beast!"

"Well, I'll bet you Jack beats me. Nunno! Come on, Jack! A hundred up!"

Jack was by no means a bad player; but Pete was an expert. On this occasion, however, Jack forged ahead, until, with a break of twenty-eight, he ran up his score to ninety-five, while Pete had only scored nine.

Richards, who was very fond of billiards, and had sunk his indignity so far as to watch the game, could not resist the chance of making money.

"If you wish to bet," he said, "I will bet you five pounds that your friend beats you."



"Don't seem to care much for betting on dis game," observed Pete. "I seem to be rader too far behind."

"You have an easy cannon there."

"M'yes! Dat's so. But what is going to follow dat cannon?"

"I'll bet you ten pounds to five, he beats you."

"Don't care for a chance like dat."

"Well, I will bet you thirty pounds to ten, that he beats you, provided you stake your money with the marker."

"All right, old hoss. Ten pounds ain't so mighty much to lose. Dere are my notes."

"Well, gentlemen, betting is not allowed, but——"

"P'r'aps dat half-sovereign will make it allowed, and we can keep it silent," said Pete. "Now let's hab a little chalk, cos if I don't run out dis time, Jack is 'most bound to next."

"I presume you will try to win," said Richards, turning to Jack.

"Of course I shall. Do you take me for a rogue?" retorted Jack. "Go on Pete!"

Pete was gravely shaking his head at the balls, and carefully chalking the wrong end of his cue; then he chalked his hair a little as he wiped his hand on it. He got the cannon, which was a comparatively easy one, and he left the balls in a splendid position. Then he went ahead, and when he had made a break of ten, and still had the balls in an easy position, Richards began to get very anxious.

"You see, Freddy," exclaimed Pete, "if I win dese thirty pounds I am going to gib dem to you, and that will be a little off de money Richard owes for your two years' service."

"Go on with your play!" snarled Richards.

"Dere wasn't any stipulation dat I had to hurry," said Pete, feeling for the chalk, and rubbing it on the back of Richards' coat, though he did it so gently that the anxious man did not notice it. "I'm going to take my time ober dis game, cos Jack is a mighty good player, and he will do his best. Now we go on wid de break, and I tink a nice, gentle touch, like so, will work about it. M'yes! I tought it would."

Pete seemed to be able to do what he liked with the balls, and what he liked to keep them close together, so that he could get easy cannons. Then he got on the spot stroke, and his play was really grand. Time after time the red went down, while his ball just ran nicely past the spot, ready for the next stroke, until at last the marker called the score 93-95.

Richards was desperate now. He got behind Pete, who was about to pot the red again, and as he appeared to be making the stroke, Richards jogged his arm.

Pete winked at Sam as he stopped his stroke in time, and bringing his cue backwards, he caught Richards an awful bang in the nose with the butt end. Then he potted the red again.

"Ha, ha, ha! Go-bye!" shouted the marker. "96—95!"

"Den I tink I hab got a bit ob a chance," observed Pete, pretending not to notice the thump Richards had got on the nose. "Once more de red goes in. Bery well, dat makes ninety-nine, which ain't so mighty far off a hundred. Try dis little lot. M'yes! De white has gone in as well as de red; so dat makes de game. Yah, yah, yah! Dis way to London wid de stakes. Golly! Yah, yah, yah! Was 'most afraid I wouldn't win dat money for you, Freddy; and seeing dat de old hoss owes you about ten times as much, dat would hab been a pity. Like to hab anoder bet, Richards? Yah, yah, yoh! Just hark at de man; and I hab only won

a game at billiards. Put de money in your pocket, Freddy, and don't look at it as dough it was going to bite your noddle off!"

"But really, sir, I—it is——"

"Golly! De man is calling a nigger 'sah' now! You ain't to call dose names. I'm Pete, and if you call me anyting else, I'll carry you back to de river and finish de unpremeditated suicide. Yah, yah, yah! I'm mighty glad I finished dat game first best. I tought you were making a good start, Jack. You know perfectly well dat a good start means a finish."

"You are a couple of sharpers," roared Richards; "and unless that money is returned to me, I shall put the matter into the hands of the police!"

"Yah, yah, yah! You make me laugh, old hoss. See here, Freddy, didn't tink I should make dat break. I tought I would hab lost de thirty pounds to Richards, and I would rader hab burnt a hundred pound note dan hab let him win. Jack would hab done his best to win, but you notice he neber played anoder stroke. Now, you ain't to return dat money. I consider dat Richards has been robbing you all dese years, and de thirty pounds won't nearly pay you for what dat man ought to hab paid. All de same, I will be someting towards it, and I order you not to return it. I want your promise on dat point."

"Why, I shall certainly obey you," said Freddy; "but I don't want you to run any risk."

"Yah, yah, yah! Neber you mind about my risks, old hoss. Richards ain't going to consult any bobbies, and if he does I shall gib de man in custody as a rogue and vagabond. I happen to know he is bof ob dose."

"You black scoundrel of a nigger, I will be level with you yet!" roared Richards, striding from the room, while he left Pete shouting with laughter and Freddy rather anxious. The way Pete was piling money on him took his breath away. He even offered Pete the thirty pounds, and made that worthy laugh louder than ever.

"Golly! I ain't taking de old hoss's money! Wid you, it is a different matter, 'cos he ought to be ashamed ob habing paid you fifteen shillings a week for de past two years!"

"Shall we commence work now?"

"Golly! What's de man tinkin' ob? Seems to want to work his employer to death! Nunno! It's a lot too late to commence work!"

The following morning when Freddy asked if they should commence work when they had finished a very sumptuous breakfast, Pete said that it was much too early, and at twelve o'clock he said it was too near lunch-time. Freddy tried him again in the afternoon, but he said he never worked in the afternoon, and after dinner he told Freddy that he had better go home else his mother would be getting anxious.

"You see, Freddy, I don't want to oberwork you," explained Pete.

"But I haven't done any work at all yet."

"You wait till we start, and den de rush will come."

"But look here," exclaimed Freddy, smiling. "If you find the morning too early to commence work, and you never work in the afternoon, while you consider the evening too late to work, and won't work at night, when do you work?"

"Eh?"

"I mean what are your favourite hours for working?"

"I ain't got any, Freddy. All hours are de same to me for work. As Wagglespeare says, 'Neber do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow.'"

"Ha, ha, ha! I vow that is a misquotation!" laughed Jack. "But, come along! We will go for a walk up West End!"



Pete was quite agreeable to this. He thought he might be able to do a little detective work, and he was perfectly right, because during the course of the evening he saw a man moving somewhat mysteriously amongst the crowd.

"Now den," murmured Pete, "here's a case straight away. Don't you say a word. Look at dat, now!"

The man in question was pushing against a woman who was looking at a shop window, then he stepped up to a well-dressed gentleman who had stopped to light a cigar, and deliberately put his hand into that gentleman's tail coat pocket. The next moment that mysterious man darted across the road, and Pete nearly met his death beneath the wheels of a motor-bus, while the man escaped. The woman rushed to a policeman with the information that she had lost her purse.

"De bobby will look after her interests," observed Pete. "Let's come and tell de old hoss dat he has had his pocket picked, and see if it surprises him. Just look at him mouching along just as dough nuffin had happened. I can't tink how people can be so stupid. It gibes a lot ob work to skilful amateur detectives. Hallo! De old hoss appears to be thirsty!"

The stranger entered a restaurant, and Pete followed him in.

"Say, old hoss, do you know dat you hab been robbed?"

"Robbed!"

"My yes. I saw de thief put his hand into your tail coat pocket, but I couldn't catch him. I'm mighty certain dat he robbed you, 'cos he's robbed anoder old woman."

"This is awful!" gasped the stranger. "It is too dreadful! Robbed! Why, I am ruined! All my money gone! I can't even pay for the refreshments I was about to order! My pocket-book gone!"

"Had you much in it?"

"Over three hundred pounds. It was all the money I had in the world, and I was going to put it into the bank to-morrow morning. This is too cruel. It is very good of you to have taken the trouble to tell me, but I am absolutely unable to offer you a reward. I must go without the little supper I had intended to have. I will come in again later on," added the perturbed gentleman, mopping his brow with his handkerchief.

"What's your name, old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"Mr. James. Here is my card, and if you will call at the address in, say, a week's time, I hope to be able to reward you for the interest you have taken in the matter. It is a disastrous one to me—more disastrous than words can tell. It does seem hard, when a man strives to lead a good and honest life, that—"

"Well, neber mind 'bout dat, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "I'm mighty sorry for you, and only wish I could hab caught de thief. All de same, seeing dat we are wanting supper, why, we may as well hab it togeder. Sit down dere!"

"But how can I allow you to pay for me?"

"Dat's all right. Bring up de best supper you can, waiter, and dere's half-a-crown for yourself. If de supper is to my liking, you shall hab anoder half-sovereign. Hurry up, now!"

The supper was to Pete's liking, and he made James eat a very hearty meal.

"It's no good crying-ober lost pocket-books, you know, old hoss. Much worse tings dan dat might happen, and I shall try to detect dat thief. I should know de man anywhere."

"I scarcely know how to thank you for your kindness, my dear fellow. It is certainly a large loss to me, under special circumstances. You see, I

have one of my little ones in a delicate state of health, and my wife is so upset about it that she, too, is making herself ill. I was relying on that money to give them a change of air, and now—now I shall have to tell her—”

“See here, old hoss, put dat five-pound note in your pocket!” exclaimed Pete. “Gib it to your wife wid my compliments. P'r'aps we shall recover some ob de money, but neber carry your pocket-book in your tail coat pocket.”

“Rest assured I never shall again, but I generally carry it there for safety. You see, a thief does not think a man would carry his valuables there, and I always keep my handkerchief over it, so that if he merely wanted to steal a handkerchief, why, the loss would not be great, and he would not get hold of the pocket-book. In this case I omitted to put my handkerchief there.”

“Poor old hoss! You'm mighty soft, I must say; still, you ain't a private detective, or anyting like dat. I'm practising de art, and am going to catch all de thieves in London.”

“This munificent loan is— I really don't see how I can accept it. Stay! I insist on giving you an I.O.U. for it. I will get pen and ink.”

“Neber mind 'bout dat, old hoss!” exclaimed Pete.

“I really must!” cried James, passing through the inner doorway.

### CHAPTER 3.

**Mr. James Proves How Grateful He Was—Jack and Sam Have Laughing Fits—Pete Goes to Catch a Thief, and Catches a Full-Sized Tigress—“A Little More Money, Please”—Pete Pays, and Gets Paid.**

“**N**OW you see, boys, how I excel in dis detecting business!” observed Pete, as he waited for James to return.

“Yes,” answered Jack. “You detected the robbed party, and very nearly detected the thief. Ha, ha, ha!”

“What are you guffawing at, Jack?”

“Ha, ha, ha! You! You're the smartest detective I ever came across! Scissors! Ha, ha, ha! Funny James doesn't come back, isn't it?”

“Eh? He's gone for de pen and ink.”

“Why didn't he send the waiter?”

“I dunno, Jack. I can't detect what de man is tinkin' about!”

“Ha, ha, ha! Waiter! Can you get out of this building by that side door?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I thought so! I have the idea that if you had put your hand into James's tail coat pocket, you would have found that woman's purse. You see, Pete, I believe the fellow was the accomplice of the pickpocket. If the ruffian got caught, he naturally did not want to have the purse found on him, so he slipped it into the pocket of his accomplice. I believe you have stood the thief a grand supper, and have given him a five-pound note! Ha, ha, ha! Do you know what makes me think all this?”

“You ain't no good as a detective, Jack!” growled Pete.

“We can't all be as smart as you, dear boy. But what makes me think it is because the fellow has stolen your gold watch, and the best part of your gold chain. Ha, ha, ha!”

“Golly!” gasped Pete, feeling in his watch-pocket, and gazing at the portion of his gold chain, which was all that remained. “You don't tink dat was true 'bout his wife and little child?”



"Ha, ha, ha! No. Oh, dear no! I don't think it was at all true!"

"Well, I reckon when I have an important case in the detection line, I shall employ Pete," said Sam. "I must say his deductions are remarkably correct. You will make a young fortune as a detective, Pete. I don't suppose that watch and chain cost much more than fifty guineas!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Then there are the five pounds Pete kindly gave the detected one," said Jack. "We must add the cost of this supper. Suppose you pay for it, Pete?"

"I ain't got any objection to dat, and— Golly! How did I cut de side ob my coat like dat, now?"

"Ha, ha, ha! It is lucky you have not lost your pocket-book—the one you took the five-pound note from, you know!"

"But I hab lost it, Jack!"

"Ha, ha, ha! How much was there in it?"

"I tink 'bout a hundred, or 'bout two hundred pounds."

"Ha, ha, ha! It's lucky you hadn't much in it!"

"He hasn't improved your coat either in cutting it out!" said Sam.

"I wish you wouldn't guffaw like dat, Sammy. It upsets my nerves. Besides, dere's nuffin at all to laugh at. I can't tink how people can be so stupid as to laugh at nuffin!"

"I reckon there are few detectives with an experience much longer than yours who could have worked a case more cleverly," said Sam. "It is true the thief gave you every facility to detect him. I wonder if they take detectives in the British Museum? If so, Pete ought certainly to go as one of the finest specimens in the world!"

"I was just wondering how much his out-of-pocket expenses will come to in the year," said Jack. "So far they have only come to about three hundred pounds, but perhaps that is only because he has been at it a couple of days. Ha, ha, ha! If his profits are anything like his expenditure, they ought to be enormous!"

"You pay de supper bill, Jack, and shut up. I suppose I hab got to hear 'bout dat man's dishonesty for de next six months? I shall detect dat man yet, and when I do, I shall gib him such a mighty clump dat he will wish himself into de middle ob next week. But, see here, boys, we hab got his address. Is dat far from here, Jack?"

"Oh, no! Quite close. Do you think you will be able to detect him there?"

"Suttinly! Why not, Jack?"

"Well, you mentioned to him that you were an amateur detective, and he would scarcely give his correct address to such a keen man. Ha, ha, ha! He might think you would come and detect him!"

"I do wish you would stop dat guffaw, Jack. You can see quite well dat de people in dis place don't like it."

"I reckon there's one person who does not like it," said Sam. "I think you would do better if you started detecting haystacks, or something that could not move about. He has made a fool of your coat, too!"

"I neber cared much for dat coat, Sammy."

"I reckon you will care less for it now. It looks as though he had been trying to cut your heart out. Fancy the daring of the man, actually robbing such a keen detective. I don't know how much you deducted concerning him, but he appears to have deducted a good lot from you. It's a mighty great consolation that he did not make up his mind to steal your hat and boots, and it would have been sadder still if he had stolen your head without your knowing it. You see, it would have been rather startling if you had

gone roaming through the streets without a head; not that a head like you is any good, all the same it makes a sort of finish to the body."

"Wish I had come out alone to-night," growled Pete. "All de same, let come to dat man's address, and if I lay hands on him I'll get some ob my own back."

The address was a narrow back street, and their knocking was answered by a big, muscular-looking woman.

"I hab called to see my friend, Mr. James, my dear," said Pete.

"Will you kindly step in, gentlemen," answered the lady, showing them into a small back sitting-room; and then she locked the door, placed the key in her pocket, and went for Pete like a tornado.

"Hi, golly!" he yelled, as she kicked at his shins, and tore at his face. "What's all dis happening! I'm getting hung now! You will make me turn black in the face, my dear, if you squeeze my froat like dat! Ain't dis mighty awful?"

Jack and Sam were too convulsed with laughter to make any reply.

"I wish you were a man for about five minutes, my dear; all de same, can't fight raging lady-tigers dat hab lost deir reason. 'Scuse me for holding you, my dear. Dere's nuffin else to be done under de circumstance. When you hab quite done shrieking, p'r'aps you will tell me why you are so mighty anxious to tear me to pieces."

"I'll teach the whole gang of you!" she yelled. "To come and take lodgings at my house, then make me feed him for over a fortnight, and without paying his bill. Seven pounds fifteen shillings you pay me before you leave this room. Let me go, you varmint, or I'll be the death of you!"

"Dat's where it comes in, my dear. What I'm frightened ob is dat you will be de death ob me if I do let you go. See here, I ain't really a friend ob James. I'm detecting de man, and it's de most expensive work one was and anoder. Now, suppose I pay dat money, and let you go, will you let me go?"

"Yes! Of course I will. But I mean to be paid, and if ever I come across that man James, I'll wipe the floor with him!"

"Pay de lady, Jack. Neber mind de change, my dear. Good-morning—mean ebening. Tank you!"

Pete was out of that house like a shot, and he stood in the street filling his pipe, and shaking his head gravely as he waited for Jack and Sam.

The gentle creature had torn his collar and coat, to say nothing of his face, and he looked very much rumped. Jack and Sam emerged from the house laughing heartily, but there was nothing like a smile on Pete's face, only a frightened look.

"Wasn't dat too mighty awful!" groaned Pete. "I dunno when I ever had my cistern so upset before. I really didn't know what was happening."

"She speaks of you having addressed her in affectionate terms," said Jack. "I rather fancy that she contemplates bringing an action for breach of promise of marriage against you. You see, Pete, she asked us for the address where we were living, and I gave it to her. Then she spoke about calling on you. Of course, we should have to give evidence, and that would be a little awkward."

"Golly!"

"She imagines, correctly, that you are very wealthy, and she does not appear to be certain that you are not really a friend of James. Now, you quite see our awkward position. We should have to tell the court that we saw her clasped to your breast. A skilful detective like you will be able to deduct the rest. I wonder, Sam, whether the judge has power to force him to marry the lady?"



"I reckon there's no doubt about that; and, after all, she's not bad-looking. I don't believe she is much more than fifteen years older than Pete, and I feel perfectly certain that he would make her a kind husband."

"Young man!" exclaimed a woman's voice at Pete's back. "Can——"

"Woo-hoo!" yelled Pete, bolting down the street at sprinting pace.

"Can you tell me where I can get a 'bus for Hammersmith?" added the inquirer of Jack, who gave her the necessary information.

"Ha, ha, ha! I hope she calls as she said she would," exclaimed Jack. "It will put Pete off his idiotic idea of detecting crimes. We have frightened him, Sam, this time. He will fool away thousands, if we don't stop him somehow. I'll just go back and ask her to breakfast, and mention casually that Pete is a millionaire."

And this is exactly what Jack did, then he and Sam made their way to the hotel, and Tom informed them that Pete had not come in, and that he was not coming in that night."

This last information caused Jack and Sam to try Pete's door. It was locked. Tom explained that bed-room doors were always kept locked, but, unfortunately for Pete, they heard Rory sniffing beneath that door, and they formed their own conclusions.

"Ha, ha, ha! Let the beauty be," exclaimed Jack. "He will have to face the music to-morrow morning at breakfast. If I know anything of Mrs. Sarah Burns"—this was the name of the violent lady—"she will turn up to-morrow morning to see if she can get any more money out of Pete."

As a rule, when Pete went to bed, he lighted his pipe, shut his eyes, and went to sleep well within five minutes; but that night he smoked three pipes, and burnt a hole in the bedclothes with a match, before he succeeded in dropping off. However, he slept till the morning, and then the weight of care fell upon him with all its force.

"I wish I had ordered my secretary to come here early," growled Pete. "I hab de feeling dat Jack and Sammy hab landed me wid a nice ting dis time. I wish dey wouldn't play deir practical jokes. If dere any practical jokes required I am quite competent to play dem. I feel like de man must feel who is going to be arrested for debt, and it's mighty awful. Wonder if I could sneak out, and—— Woo-hoo! What's dat?"

"It's me, sir—Tom. There's an old geyser called to see you. I told her you would not be back for three weeks."

"Yah, yah, yah! Dat's a smart lad. What did she say?"

"That she would wait the three weeks."

"Golly! Ain't dis mighty awful. What did she do, den?"

"Started waiting her three weeks, sir. She's done about ten minutes of them, and she wants to know the number of your room."

"I dunno what I hab done to deserve all dis. What's de number ob Jack's room?"

"Twenty-four."

"Gib her dat number."

"Ha, ha, ha! No you don't, you beauty, came a voice that Pete had no difficulty in recognising as Jack's. Twenty-one is the number she wants, and that is the number that she is going to get."

"Well, tell her dat I hab a bad attack ob melancholia maximiferous, and dat it's frightfully catching, den come and tell me if she's gone."

Pete waited for about three minutes in anxiety, then he gave a spasmodic start.

"Pete, my dear, I am so sorry that you are ill. I am accustomed to nursing. I nursed my dear husband for——"

"Go and continue nursing him, my dear."

"The dear man has been dead for years, and——"

"Should go and put some flowers on his grave."

"We will go together, when you are better. I will nurse you back to health. Open the door."

Pete noiselessly got out of bed, then dragged his bedstead in front of the door. Next he lifted a chest of drawers on that bed, and in trying to push the washstand on the top of that, he dropped the jug and basin to the floor with a frightful crash.

"Have you hurt yourself, my dear Pete?"

"Ain't dis too awful for spoken words," murmured Pete. "De principle damage seems to be to de washbasin."

"I am sure you have cut yourself. Let your Sarah come in to bind up the wound."

"Dat's Jack. I can spell Jack and Sammy 'bout dat little lot. Dey hab convinced Sarah dat she is my dear, and dey hab convinced de woman dat I hab a fortune. She's going for dat fortune, and doesn't mind a nigger frown into de bargain. It ain't at all difficult to deduct dat little lot. Wonder if she would go and drown herself if I gabe her ten pounds."

"Do let me in, Pete!"

"I'd rader let in free cobras, four pythons, and forty tigresses," growled Pete. Then a brilliant idea seized him, and a smile came over his face.

"Sarah, my dear!"

"Yes, my own!"

Pete gave another convulsive start, and the smile vanished from his features, while he mopped his brow with the burnt pillow.

"I tink I will come down, Sarah. Just you go and hab breakfast wid Jack and Sam. Don't wait for me. Are you dere, Tom?"

"Yes, sir."

"See dat de bery best breakfast is served up. Eberyting you hab got to de house. Sarah must hab a mighty good breakfast, and I also want Jack and Sammy to enjoy demselves as much as dey deserve. Sarah likes broiled salmon for de start, and den you can bring up all de entrees for de fine finish. Let de breakfast be served up at once. Sarah, my dear!"

"Yes, dear Pete."

"Jack and Sammy are rader bashful. But it is my wish dat dey take breakfast wid you, and I shall expect you to see dat dey do. Good-bye, my dear. I know you will see dat all dis occurs. If Jack and Sammy pretend dey don't want any breakfast, you collar dose men, and tell dem dat dey hab got to eat it."

Pete listened, and the words he heard caused him to murmur, "A little bit ob silent—yah, yah, yah!—here, please. I rader tink Jack and Sammy will enjoy dat breakfast in some sort ob way. I'll teach dem to upspill my detective arrangements. I'll gib dem ten minutes, and den we shall see what de yah, yah, yah, comes in."

Jack and Sam were landed with that fearful woman. She ate a most enormous breakfast, then, finding Pete did not turn up, she sent Tom to make inquiries.

"He's gorn out, ma'am," answered Tom. "He's been gorn some time—soon after you started breakfast. He's had a telegram that has taken him away on important business, and he isn't coming back for three months."

"Well, you two will be meeting him," said Sarah, turning to Jack. "I shall come with you!"

"That I'm hanged if you shall!" gasped Jack. "Here, you be off, my good woman! This joke has gone quite far enough!"



"I shall follow you all over London, but what I will find that nigger!"  
 "Will you? Well, we will see about that. Has Pete really gone out,

Tom?"  
 "He has so, sir. I thought he would have brought the house down the way he laughed at you."

Jack led Tom out of the room.

"Do you know where he is going, Tom?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir. British Museum."

"All right. Just order a hansom, and tell the driver to take us there. Tell him that I will pay him double fare if he drives quickly, then come into the room and nod to me. I shall understand. Keep Rory for the day. He will be all right with you, and there are five shillings for your trouble."

Then Jack re-entered the room, and Sarah sat herself in an easy-chair and looked more determined than ever, while Richards looked furious because such company was in the room, for however much of a lady Sarah might have been, she did not impress her listeners with the fact by continually mentioning it.

In a few minutes Tom returned, nodding and grinning.

"Come along, Sam! We will spend the day looking about; and it is not at all improbable that we shall meet Pete."

"Then I will follow you!" declared Sarah, springing up, and striding after them to the door; but when she saw the cab she looked rather blank. She certainly had no intention of spending money in cab fares, but she had a last string to her bow. "Where are you going, cabman?" she demanded.

"To the north-east of Paris," answered the driver, winking at Jack. "The gentlemen want to see Frenchmen eat frogs. If you sit on the step I'll drive you in the same direction."

And the last they saw of Sarah was striding along the muddy street, for it was raining hard.

"Well, I reckon we have got rid of her," exclaimed Sam. "But the worst of it is Pete will have the laugh at us. I wish she had forced her way into his bed-room to do a little sick nursing."

"She's too awful," laughed Jack. "I shall not forget that breakfast in a hurry. And I tell you what it is, Sam, I am not going to play any more of those practical jokes on Pete. He has turned the tables on us this time with a vengeance."

They had scarcely entered the Museum when they heard Pete's shout of laughter.

"Yah, yah, yah! How did you enjoy your breakfast, boys? You do make me laugh wid your silly ways, I must say."

"You will get turned out, if you make that row here," said Sam.

"If dey don't allow laughing in de building we ain't got to talk about Sarah—yah, yah, yah!—'cos I know I shall laugh if I tink 'bout dat woman and your breakfast."

"Disgraceful noise that nigger is making," exclaimed an elderly gentleman to his wife. They looked like a couple up from the country for the day. "If he does not stop it, I shall complain to the officials."

"Ha, ha, ha! Haw, haw, haw! Hurrah!" came a howling voice, apparently from the complaining gentleman.

"Joseph, my dear," exclaimed the lady, "I am surprised."

"So am I, my dear," exclaimed Pete. "You ain't got de right to guffaw like dat, Joseph. And here comes an official to tell you— Hurrah! Hurrah! Old King Cole was a merry old soul. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You must not make that noise here," cried the outraged official.

"I'm not making any noise. And——"

"Yes, you are. And if you do it again you will be turned out," answered the official, striding away in a most indignant manner.

"I thought you were making too much noise, Joseph," said Pete.

"I will not stand this insolence, Mary!" declared Joseph. "I will get the black scoundrel in custody! How dare a nigger talk to a gentleman that road?"

"It's downright shameful as a lady can't come to a public place of amusement without being insulted by a parcel of niggers. They ought to allow the creatures in the place!" declared Mary.

"Here, you come along," laughed Jack, dragging him away. "Joseph will get angry directly."

Pete did not take much interest in the things. He had been there before and had only come there that morning because he knew the place. He was on the look out for Joseph, feeling confident that he would go to look at the mummies, and that there would be a good opportunity to have a little to do with his ventriloquism.

Presently Joseph came up to the mummy, close to where Pete had taken his position, and apparently Joseph did not notice his late enemy, because he was so intent on the mummy.

"Ain't it wonderful?" exclaimed Mary. "To think that was a human being, and that it has been dead for thousands of years!"

"It's been dead longer than that," said Joseph, who liked to correct his wife whenever there was an opportunity, although he did not explain to her the mummy could have been dead more than thousands of years. "The wonderful part about it is to think that you and me will be like that one day."

"You are too fat ever to be like me," came a voice, apparently from the mummy.

"Woohoo!" yelled Joseph.

"My word!" shrieked Mary. "It's talking to you, Joseph!"

"Well, don't you talk to Joseph sometimes, old lady? Don't be jealous. I'm dead!"

Mary uttered another scream, and fairly bolted. Joseph rushed after her, telling her not to be silly, but there could not be a doubt that he was glad to get away from the place.

"Yah, yah, yah! I tink I startled him dat time, boys!" exclaimed Pete.

"Golly! He's telling de bobby about it!"

Jack and Sam had an idea that the sooner they got Pete away from that place the better it would be, and when they reminded him that his secret would be waiting to commence work, Pete was quite willing to go. The only cab they saw was a four-wheeler, and as it was now raining harder than ever, they all jumped into it, and Jack gave the driver the address.

They had not proceeded very far when Pete uttered a sudden yell, which considerably startled his comrades, and before they knew what was the matter, he leapt from the cab, dashed through the traffic at considerable risk, and seized James round the body. Pete had caught sight of the man sheltering in a doorway, and now he lifted him in his arms, and bore him towards the cab. James's tall hat fell into the mire street, and was trampled beneath the horses' hoofs in no time. A little thing like this would not trouble Pete, neither did the language of the drivers as he stopped the course. He bore his struggling burden to the cab, gave the driver a nod in direction, then jumped in, and away they rattled.

"Now wasn't that a strange and lucky meeting, old hoss?" exclaimed Pete. "You see, I detected you directly dat time!"

"I don't understand this conduct, sir!"



"Nunno! You wouldn't!"

"I have an appointment to keep!"

"Yes. Dat's what I noticed. We'm going to keep it. Nice day, ain't it?"

"I will trouble you to explain your conduct. You have evidently made some mistake."

"Dat's so. I made a mighty big mistake last night, one way and anoder."

"I assure you that you are making a mistake now. It would appear from your extraordinary conduct that you are mistaking me for someone else. It is a very strange thing, but this is not the first time that I have been mistaken for another man lately. It appears that I have a double in the West End. It is not very pleasant, either. However, as I firmly believe that it is a pure mistake, why, I am ready to overlook it."

"Now, dat's mighty kind ob you, old hoss! My friends here will be able to tell you how like you are to a man named James!"

"My name is Jackson. Here is my card. I have letters in my pocket showing who I am. See here!"

"Look at dat now!" exclaimed Pete, handing an envelope to Jack.

"Tink you know dat address, Jack?"

"Yes. It is not far from Bedford Square."

"Well, I may as well keep de envelope, and I shall be able to call one ob dese days, and tell you how sorry I am dat de mistake has occurred. In de mean time, as you ain't in any hurry, why, we may as well hab a nice little drive togeder."

"Where are you going?"

"Nice sort ob day, ain't it?"

"This is really extraordinary behaviour! I never met you before in my life!"

"Well, dat couldn't well be!" exclaimed Pete. "You see, de man you are so like is named James, and while I was trying to detect a thief, I lost one or two little objects."

"You have caused me to lose my hat, and——"

"I don't tink dat will matter. Yah, yah, yah! After what is going to happen dis morning, I dont' tink your hat would hab been ob de slightest use to you. Yah, yah, yah! Makes me laugh when I tink ob it. You'm a good-tempered man, old hoss, else you would hab called de police to——"

"I don't want to get you into trouble, and——"

"Kiss him, Jack, for being so kind-hearted. De dear old hoss don't want to get me into trouble. Yah, yah, yah! Dat's de best one on de face ob de earth! Nunno, Jackson. Don't you worry 'bout dat. Dere ain't de slightest chance ob getting me into trouble. I wouldn't like you to worry yourself 'bout dat. Oh, here we are! I rader fancy de jolting has made you feel seasick, Jackson. You see, it is dis way. A lady friend ob mine libs here. Her name is Sarah Burns. We hab travelled a bit, and you can always read in travels dat when you are attacked by wolves, or tings like dat, de best ting to do is to frow out people you don't want to de wolves, and dey eat dem instead ob you. Now, I hab been attacked by a tigress, and I'm going to frow you to her, and let her devour you instead ob dis child. Simple little arrangement dat!"

"I suppose you have kidnapped me!" gasped the now terrified man. "I will give you ten pounds to let me go—a hundred! I will give you three hundred pounds to let me go, and——"

"Wait here, cabby," said Pete, picking James up in his arms. "I shall gib you five pounds for your job, and it will take you best part ob de day."

Gib him half-a-sobereign, Jack, to show him dat we are honest, 'cos I don't tink we'm going into such a mighty honest house. I'm going to work on de homeopathic cistern, dat like cures like, and I'm going to let Sarah cure anoder thief who has de misfortune to look like James. Dis way to London, old hoss!"

Sarah opened the door, and she started back as Pete carried his burden into her back sitting-room.

"Come in, boys," exclaimed Pete; "and shut and lock de door, Sarah, me dear! Dis gentleman's name is Jackson, and he libs somewhere about Bedford Square. He has de misfortune to be someting like James, and I tought p'r'aps you might hab a word to say to him. I know how you argued de point wid a nigger, who you tought was James's friend, and it seems to me dat it is only fair dat you should argue it wid a man who so closely resembles James!"

"Madam! I understand nothing of this! I assure you that I never met a man named James in my life! I—I——"

"I am James's landlady!" said Sarah, and her nostrils expanded, and got whiter, while her lips got straight enough for Euclid to have declared them a straight line.

"I never had the pleasure of meeting his landlady, ma'am, and——"

"You have got the pleasure of meeting her now!" yelled Sarah, and then she let herself go, and she went for Jackson, who was so like James.

"Yah, yah, yah!" howled Pete. "I'm tinkin' ob anoder fight! Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at you, Jackson. Still, you hab got de consolation ob knowing dat you are saving James such a lot ob pain by being so much like him! Yah, yah, yah! I'm ashamed ob you, laughing at de man, Jack and Sammy! Yah, yah, yah! Dis is no laughing matter, is it Jackson?"

An author has the privilege of making his characters make coarse remarks, if he pleases, but he has no right to say coarse things himself. Yet, in our endeavour to fully describe what was happening to Jackson, we must beg to be excused.

Sarah literally wiped the floor with him!

He was not exactly struck—except, perhaps, with Sarah's determination of character—but he was scratched and torn all over. His face was scratched and torn, and his clothes were also torn. Sarah appeared to be determined to rip him up, and she seemed to be succeeding very well. Within three minutes Jackson was lying on the floor, yelling murder at the top of his voice, and Sarah was sitting on him. No metaphor is intended here. We are not going to lose our reputation by making use of two coarse expressions in one page. She was actually sitting on that man, and where the pathos of the thing arose was that his name was Jackson. But then, you see, he resembled James, and James certainly deserved all he got.

He looked as though he would require a square foot of plaster, a pound of lint, a pint of lotion, and a new suit of clothes.

And Pete said, "Yah, yah, yah!" He repeated the observation several times. So did Jack and Sam, only they called it, "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nuff said, my dear!" exclaimed Pete. "As de frush said, after he had cracked fifteen snails for his breakfast, 'Enough is as good as a feast!' I tink Wagglespeare makes de same remark, only I ain't certain weder he cracked de snails or not. Still, I tink poor Mr. Jackson, who has de misfortune to be like James, will admit dat he has had enough, eben if he ain't had de feast. So we will consider dis meeting adjourned!"

"No we won't!" panted Sarah. "That man pays me ten pounds as he owes me, or I will go for him again!"



Jackson said nothing, but he ceased howling murder, sat up, and handed the infuriated Sarah two of Pete's five-pound notes, and Pete said:

"Where does de detective come in?"

"Git!" said Sarah.

Would not Jackson have loved to "git." He would undoubtedly have got immediately had not Pete seized him round the waist and got him under his left arm, where he lay absolutely helpless.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "De man looks like a blackbird dat has been fighting a cat in de rain! Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at you, my poor old hoss, but you really look mighty dilapidated. You 'pear to want a wash and brush up, and I tink you had better get Sarah to mend your clothes. Good-bye, my dear. You ain't made such a bad ting out ob James Jackson, who don't know each oder. You trot along wid me, Jackson, and I will take you to your peaceful home!"

Jackson said he was quite willing to let the matter end there, and although he had been brutally treated and robbed of ten pounds, that he would not prosecute Pete if he let him go. Pete said that he rather liked being prosecuted, and he stuffed the damaged man into the cab, then got in, while his comrades followed him.

#### CHAPTER 4.

#### Pete Detects a Little—How He Tracked the Thief—Pete Works His Cistern—A Fight With a Finish.

PETE had given the grinning driver the address he wished him to go to, and away they rattled, the captive protesting all the time.

"You still go on waiting, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "And you come wid me, Jackson! I will carry you under my arm, in case you feel like running away!"

"Is that man hurt?" demanded a constable, striding up.

"Now ain't dat a silly question to ask, Robert?" exclaimed Pete. "Does he look as dough he was hurt? Can't you see his nice, tidy state?"

"What are you doing with him?"

"De man must be blind, as well as stupid!" exclaimed Pete. "Can't you see dat I'm carrying him? I'm detecting de man, and I suppose dis is de proper way to do it. Now, you buzz off, and see if you can detect cooky and de meat pie!"

"I'll run you in if you talk to me like that!"

"Yah, yah, yah! You'm a funny old hoss, too! Go and kiss cooky, gib her my lub, and tell her she's to gib you a nice, solid pie, wid plenty ob crust and gravy! Dis way to London!"

The door of the house, which was let off in tenements, was open, and Pete carried his burden in, then slammed the door in the constable's face.

"Now den, Jackson, which is your room?"

On the top floor. Let me walk."

"Nunno! You ain't going to walk till I hab taken you to your kennel! I don't know dat you are staying here to begin wid. Come on, boys! De staircase ain't as broad as it might be. Knocked your head, did I? Well, dat doesn't matter!"

Pete carried his prisoner to the top of the building. The door of the room was locked, but he opened it with his shoulder.

The apartment was small, and miserably furnished as a bed and sitting-room combined.

"Shut de door, Jack," exclaimed Pete, "and put your back against it! I want to hab a little conversation wid Jackson, James, and Company. Sit

on de bed, old hoss, and I will hold your hand, 'cos I'm a bit of a tough reader, besides being an amateur detective. Now, we'm got to deduct case between us. In de first place, I was robbed by a man named James a gold watch, a piece ob chain, and a lot ob bank-notes. I hab an idea de watch is here, and de same remarks apply to de bank-notes. What's y opinion on de matter?"

James felt the grip on his hand slowly tightening, until it became uncomfortable; and the worst of it was, that it still continued to tighten.

"I know nothing about the matter!" declared James. "I—woohoh—woohoh—Fury!"

"Ain't you feeling well, my dear old hoss?"

"You have nearly crushed my hand!"

"Look at dat, now!"

"I tell you that I know nothing concern— Yow—wah! Oh, y demon. I'll—Woohoh!"

"He's going to woohoh!" observed Pete. "And I tell you what it boys. Dat man is going to hand ober all de money he stole from me. I see, it is dis way. I don't care to hear your guffaws 'bout my detective work for de next two months; and if I get de money back, you won't be able to guffaw so loudly: specially—yah, yah, yah!—as you had to do breakfast wid Sarah. I say, James, John Jackson Smiff, Brown, Steal ain't dat woman a mighty caution? Oh, it ain't any good wow-wow at me. You'm got to fork out dat money. I shall consider dat you had your punishment at Sarah's hands. Maybe you will get a little punishment at my hand. But dat hand doesn't let go ob yours till I get dat watch back; wid all de money dat man James stole from me. You my poor old hoss, ob course, I know you ain't got anyting to do wid James because you say so; and it stands to reason dat a trooful man like you couldn't speak anyting but de troof."

"Fury! Look here! What will you settle the thing for?" yelled James as Pete gave him another grip.

"I want to consider dis question bery closely," observed Pete. "I ain't in de slightest hurry for my answer; so you ain't got de cause to hurry. So long as you gib me de answer before ten o'clock to-night, dat will do. Now, you'm going to return de watch, de piece ob chain, so as I can have it mended, and all de money dat James stole. I dunno how much it was, but you'm going to hand de whole ob it ober to me, and you'm going to remain here till you do. Do you agree to dat bargain?"

"Yes!"

"Den I disrelease your hand—so. Are you in any hurry, boys?"

"Not for a week or so," answered Jack, who was rather interested to see if Pete would get his property back. He knew that he had made up his mind to do so, and had the conviction that James would have a very rough time of it if he did not hand over the money.

"Berry well, den. Seeing dat it is about one o'clock now," exclaimed Pete, "dere's no sense in keeping dat cabby waiting till ten. Just you hand down and hand him de five pounds I promised him, Jack, and see if dere is any sort ob an attendant in dis place. If dere is, send de object up. Now, den, what are you grinning at?"

"The five pounds You have omitted to give it to me."

"Use one ob your own five pound notes, Jack," answered Pete.

"Eh?"

"Use your own five pounds!" howled Pete. "You seem to hab become mighty deaf all ob a sudden."

"No, I am not deaf. I was only thinking——"



"Don't try to do it, Jack. Wid a brain like yours, de strain would be too much on it. You would go and addle de ting, or else do it some oder injury; dough I ain't at all certain dat you could do any harm to a brain like yours."

"Well, it would scarcely be equal to yours for detective work," laughed Jack, leaving the room. And presently he returned with a sharp-looking lad, who informed Pete that his name was Jim.

"See here, Jim!" exclaimed Pete. "We are going to stay here for some little time, and we are mighty hungry. Tink you could hab dinner sent across?"

"Sure I can—if you pay for it in advance. They used to send it across on credit, but they've had enough of that."

"Yah, yah, yah! M'yes! We will pay in advance. Now what sort ob dinner do you tink—"

"It's boiled beef, to-day. Taters in their skins, carrots, bread, and suety pluggers. If you have a big plate, that will cost you a bob—small plate, tenpence. If it will run to a big plate, I would advise you to have it; 'cos you get more for your money."

"Would you like a plate, yourself, Jim?"

"I should so."

"Den order ten big plates, free small bottles ob ale, and a bottle ob ginger-beer—for yourself, dat last is. Dere's a sovereign to pay for it, and you can keep de change. Hurry up, 'cos we'm hungry!"

"Do you want the ten plates sent all at once?"

"Dey can send dem in two lots if dey like. It doesn't matter, so long as dey keep dem hot. Don't forget de dumplings. Buzz off!"

"Well, you are a brick!" exclaimed Jim.

In about five minutes' time Jim brought up three plates, and said he would bring up the rest.

"Keep dem hot till I ring de bell, Jim, and you start on your little lot. Now den, boys, start away!"

"Where is mine?" growled James. That dinner looked and smelt good, and he was very hungry.

"You don't want any, old hoss," answered Pete. "Golly! Dis is prime beef, too!"

"Yes, I do!" declared James. "And what is more, I intend to have some, even if I have to pay for it myself!"

"You ain't going to hab anyting to eat, I tell you. Jim, order—"

"You ain't going to order him anyting, Jim," said Pete.

"That's good enough for me!" exclaimed Jim. "Jest you ring when you want the next up."

"We will use your bed for de seating part ob de business!" exclaimed Pete. "You stand in dat corner, and don't you dare to move, else you will get a clump ober de napper dat will remind you ob Sarah."

"I must have food."

"You won't hab any for days and days. I am going to starve you into submission. You can get de aid ob de police, if you like, and den you know perfectly well what will happen. Now take your choice."

"If I give you a hundred pounds—"

"I ain't transacting any business till I hab finished dis little snack!" declared Pete, who soon ordered up three more plates. Jack and Sam could manage no more, so Pete ordered Jim to help himself to a second plate, and bring up the other two, and as he finished them off, James made some nasty remarks concerning his appetite. He pointed out that Pete could not possibly have required all that, and that he was nothing more than a

glutton to have eaten it, knowing that he—James—was exceedingly hungry.

“You ain’t so hungry as you will be in two-free days’ time, old hoss,” observed Pete, lighting his pipe. “Nunno! You stand where you are.”

“I will give you a hundred pounds in notes to——”

“It ain’t accepted.”

“Well, how much do you want?”

“All de money dat James stole from a gentleman ob colour, named Pete.”

“The great amateur detective,” added Jack.

“You shut up, Jack; else I will make you hab breakfast wid Mary again.”

“How much were you robbed of?” demanded James.

“Dat ain’t de question. You’m got to hab second sight, and guess. I shall soon tell you if it ain’t de right amount.”

“Perdition! Take it!” yelled James, flinging Pete’s pocket-book at him.

Pete caught it, and examined its contents. He smiled, and tried to look very knowing, though it would have puzzled him to say whether all the notes were in it.

“Dis is all right, as far as it goes; but I require a gold watch.”

“You can’t have it. That is impossible.”

“Nuff said. If I can’t hab dat watch, why dere’s an end ob de matter. But seeing dat I value dat watch at more dan is in dis pocket-book, why de loss comes heavy. Jack gave me dat watch on my birfday, and Sammy gave me de chain. Well, Jack and Sammy ain’t got much detective intellect, poor tings. Still, I allow dose men to be my friends, and it follows dat I put a big value on anyting dey gib me. Besides dat, dey were mighty valuable of demselves. Now, you say I ain’t going to get dem back. I’ll bet you de contents ob dis pocket-book against one ob your shirt-buttons—if Sarah has left any on—dat I do get dat watch and portion ob de chain back. You must admit dat James deserves punishment for de manner he treated me. You hab got to consider dat I was sort ob kind to him, and dat I gabe him a five-pound note, because I was sorry ’bout his little child. Bery well! You hab de misfortune to be so like James, dat I am going to suppose you are de same man, and I am going to punish you a little more dan Sarah did. See here, Jackson-Smiff-Brown-Jones and Co. You neider eat nor drink until dat watch is in my possession, and de piece ob chain has got to be wid it.”

“I tell you I cannot give them to you.”

“Den dere will be anoder mummy at de British Museum.”

“Now you are talking like a fool!” exclaimed James. “I cannot do impossibilities. I have not got the watch and chain, and——”

“Den you will die ob inundation, old hoss. You don’t leabe my sight till I get dat watch.”

“Fool! How can I give you what I have not got?”

“Better ask Jack or Sammy dat question. I ain’t trying to detect. All I mean to do is to detect de watch.”

“It was sold.”

“Den so was de man who bought it.”

“It is impossible——”

“Dere’s nuffin’ in dis life impossible, ’scept gunpowder ashes; and I ain’t at all sure dat dey ain’t impossible. Nuff said!”

“I tell you——”

“Nuff said!”

“Now listen to reas——”

“Nuff said!”



"Fury! Will you listen to——"

"Nuff said!"

"Sir, I appeal to you!" exclaimed James, turning to Jack. "This nigger——"

"Well," interposed Jack, "it is perfectly useless for you to appeal to me. My friend Pete has fully made up his mind to recover the watch and chain. It amuses me considerably, and I am interested to see whether he will succeed. I have my doubts; but of this I have no doubt: you will either go to prison for a long term, or you will restore his property, unless you choose to starve. Pete is a determined man, when he makes up his mind, and I am absolutely certain that he has made it up now. Finish the argument with him. I have nothing to do with the matter. And even if I thought you had been sufficiently punished, which I do not, I could no more influence that calm black beauty than could Sam, or you, or the policeman.

"Listen to me, Pete," exclaimed James. "I vow——"

"Nuff said!"

"But do be reasonable. I——"

"Nuff said!"

"Well, I will go out and try——"

"Nuff said!"

Argument with Pete under these circumstances was absolutely out of the question. He only had one answer, and that was, "Nuff said!"

James tried him till seven o'clock that night, and he got the same answer. It got frightfully monotonous to Jack and Sam, but they wanted to see if Pete would gain his end. Pete ordered up tea, but he would not allow James to have a mouthful. Then there was a slight diversion. The man whom Pete had seen steal the old lady's purse entered the room, accompanied by three ruffianly-looking fellows.

"Now, then, you demon!" cried James, springing to their side. "We are five to three, and we mean to make a fight of it. You hand me back that money, or it will be the worse for you!"

"Ain't dose frightful odds, now?" exclaimed Pete. "Still, I dare say we shall be able to manage someting wid dem. Come on, old hosses, 'cos I ain't going to hand back anything."

The comrades went in with a rush. Pete caught James one between the eyes that put him out of the fight, for he had no intention of rising with the chance of receiving a second blow like that. The others fought for a few minutes, but both Jack and Sam floored their men, and then the rest gave in, refusing to fight any more.

"In dat case, all ob you will buzz off wid de exception ob James. I hab some work for dat man to do. You see, he has stolen my watch and chain, and he's got to gib dem back to me, else dere will be trouble in dis world."

The gang slunk away, and James made an effort to follow them, but Pete seized him.

"I want dat watch back before you leave my sight," said Pete. "I don't see de good ob all dis detective work if I hab got to lose my property ober it. Yah, yah, yah! I tink you'm going to get some black eyes."

"Demon! Don't I tell you that you cannot have your watch back? I have sold it."

"Bery well. We'm going to de man you sold it to, or else we are going to de police-station."

"If I give you his name and address, will you let me go?"

"Suttinly not! How am I to tell dat name and address are correct? Nunno! You hab taken me in once, but you won't find it so mighty easy

to do it a second time. Lead de way, now, and if you don't lead it in a right direction, I shall lead you straight to de police-station."

James saw that Pete meant what he said, and after a little hesitation he descended the stairs, while Pete held him by the arm.

"We cannot walk through the streets like this," said James. "Release my arm, and I promise not to attempt to escape."

"I ain't taking your promise. You are coming like dis, and I don't hosh leabe go ob you till I take hold ob dat watch and chain—least, if I do I shall get Jack or Sammy to hold you. What's de man's name to whom me you sold de watch and chain?"

"Alfred Rich. It is not far from here, but I tell you that you will never get it back again."

"We shall see about dat. I ain't been an amateur detective for two-free days widout learning someting."

"I reckon you have done remarkably well for a start," said Sam. "You have detected that your watch has been stolen."

"You shut up, Sammy, and don't you be jealous just because you ain't a detective!"

"I reckon I don't want to be if the poor brutes get robbed like you have been."

"This is the place," said James, stopping at a small second-hand clothes shop. "But as I tell you, Rich will never give it up. He will naturally think it is a plant between us."

Rich certainly did not look like a man who would give up anything. He was a powerfully-built man of about thirty, and no one could have mistaken the expression on his face for an honest one. He nodded at James, and looked keenly at the comrades.

"Well, what is it?" he demanded.

"You bought a gold watch wid part ob a chain from dis man, old hoss," said Pete.

"That's a lie!" cried Rich.

"And dat watch and chain which you bought from dis man belonged to me."

"I tell you I bought nothing of the sort, and if you think to fool me, you have come—"

"I dunno what you paid him for de aforesaid watch and chain, but dat doesn't matter at all, 'cos I ain't going to pay you anyting. I'm going to hab that property back before I leabe dis shop!"

"You are, are you?" cried Rich, levelling a revolver at Pete's head.

"Dat's exactly what I am going to hab," said Pete, without flinching, for he knew the ruffian would never dare to fire. Sam did not feel so certain concerning the matter, and, drawing a revolver, he levelled it at Rich.

"I reckon you had better put that weapon down," cried Sam. "I shall not tell you twice. One, two— Just in time!"

"What's this game you are playing, James?" demanded Rich. "Do you think you are going to best me?"

"It's not my fault. I couldn't help myself. The nigger will give you ten pounds for the swag."

"Well, that alters the case," said Rich. "Are you prepared to pay me ten pounds if I return to you certain property which I have honestly bought?"

"I ain't paying you one penny," said Pete. "You knew what dat watch was worf, and I suppose you gabe dis creature five pounds for it, and rader dan go to prison you would be satisfied wid five pounds profit; but you ain't getting fivence from me."



"Then you will not get the watch from me," declared Rich.

"I'll bet you a dollar I do!" said Pete.

"I have had enough of this fooling. Leave my shop!"

"I ain't leaving it till I get my watch and chain."

"Then I shall send for the police, and give you into custody."

"Yah, yah, yah! Dat's rader amusing! Start shouting for a bobby, old

hoss!"

"And so I will!" cried Rich, striding to the door, as though he really

meant it.

"Here, you come back! I ain't letting you out ob my sight," said Pete,

seizing him by the collar, and wrenching him back.

"Take that, you beast of a nigger!" cried Rich, dealing a fierce blow at

Pete's face. But he received it on the top of his head.

"And you take dis little lot!" exclaimed Pete, seizing him round the

body, and hurling him over the counter.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete, starting back. "Nuff said, Alfred Rich!

Bery well. Something is going to happen 'bout dis little matter. Yah, yah,

yah! All right, Sammy. I'll show you who has got de laugh here! Now

see here, Rich. If you don't hand me dat watch wid de piece ob chain

attached, I shall take you out into de street, and flog you wid Jack's cane

till your howls bring a bobby on de scene, den I shall gib you in custody.

I'm saying no more."

Jack handed Pete his cane, and that worthy gripped Rich by the collar,

and forced him towards the door of the shop.

"You shall have the watch!" cried Rich.

"Fetch dem out. You ain't leabing my sight. I shall come wid you."

"They are in this safe. Let go my collar. Someone might enter the

shop."

"Don't care 'bout dat! I ain't releasing your collar till I get my

property!"

"You will return the five pounds I paid to James?"

"You must tink I'm a soft amateur detective. You knew perfectly well

de property had been stolen. De bery fact dat de chain was cut in half

would hab shown dat. Nunno! You can get de five pounds from James, if

you are lucky; but if you ask me I don't tink you will be so mighty

lucky. Now, den, are you going to hand dem ober?"

Rich made no reply, but, opening the safe, he handed Pete his property.

"Well, dat's all right, as far as it goes; but just you take care dat it don't

go a bit farder, 'cos I'm rader inclined to tink dat it will. Now come 'long,

boys. I can easy get dis chain mended, so dere's no harm done, except to

Rich, who won't be so rich ober de transaction. You can put de transaction

down to de loss side ob de profit and loss account; but, mind, I ain't

saying dat it will end here."

"Ah!"

"It ain't at all unlikely dat I may make you and dose belonging to you

say 'Oh!' as well as 'Ah!' old hoss. You will be wise to keep out ob my

way, James. Nuff said!"

Then Pete left the shop, and the comrades had lunch out, only returning

to their hotel in time for dinner.

Fred Hall was in the dining-room waiting for Pete, but he was not seated

at the table. Richards was at the head of it, and he had several friends

with him. He was just commencing his soup, and to the astonishment of

all in the room, Pete walked up to him, seized him by the back of the neck,

and forced his face in the soup, then he raised the plate, and deliberately

emptied it over Richards' head, and, giving him a shove that caused him to sit in the fireplace, flung the plate on the top of him, and took his seat.

"Sit down, Freddy," said Pete, as calmly as though nothing out of the common had happened. "Come 'long, boys, sit down. We'm just in time to commence de dinner. Now, den, Lively, try to look a little less miserable. If you don't stop that howling, Richards, I'll stuff you up de chimbley!"

"Fellow!" howled Richards. "As I'm a living man, I will punish you for this infamous conduct! You black beast, how dare you assault me in this shameful manner?"

"You see, old hoss, I'm sort ob detective. Freddy tink's you are a money-lender; so you may be, but dat ain't your only trade, Alfred Rich."

"I believe, gentlemen, this negro is a maniac, and is not accountable for his actions. It is extremely difficult to deal with such an utter scoundrel."

"You ain't going to deal at all wid me, Alfred Rich. I'm going to deal wid you, and you will find dat when I hab finished dealing, you ain't as comfortable as you were before I started. You may be a money-lender all right, but you are also a receiver ob stolen property. Now buzz off, 'cos we are you make me tired. You ain't sitting down to dinner wid me, 'cos we are not going to dine wid a man who is worse dan a thief."

"I reckon the silly coon's detective work is going to get us into trouble," remarked Sam, as Richards strode from the room, and his friends followed him. "Look here, Pete, how do you know what you say is true?"

"Why, it is as easy as anything to detect de man, Sammy," answered Pete, going on with his dinner quite unconcernedly. "You see, de name ob Rich is mighty like Richards, and I should say dat would be quite sufficient to convict him in de eyes ob such a keen detective as I am. I wish you wouldn't laugh, Sammy."

"I was only thinking of the thief who stole your watch and chain, while you were helping him to escape."

"We ain't speaking ob dat man, Sammy. We'm speaking ob dis one, and I ain't got time to speak ob two men at once. Pass me some more bread, Lively, and do smarten up a bit. You are as slow as drowned snails. At any rate, Sammy, I got de clue, and when I puddled Richards' noddle in de soup, I could tell by his manner dat he was guilty. You see, I was getting funder evidence den."

"Scissors!" gasped Jack. "Do you mean to say that you are going to 'puddle' every man's head in soup if his name happens to be somewhat similar to a guilty man's?"

"You must get your evidence somehow, Jack, and my cistern is to get it de quickest way possible!"

"Bother it! You must alter you cistern, Pete," declared Jack; "you must really. It is altogether too drastic."

"Ob course, I can frow de suspected persons 'bout de room, if you tink dey would like dat cistern better; at the same time, I consider de puddling treatment mighty efficacious."

"But supposing Richards is perfectly innocent?"

"Den I shall apologise to him, and tell him I'm sorry, and I will pay de money for a shampoo for de old hoss."

"Well, it may be all right; but surely you had some further evidence?"

"Well, you see, Jack, Richards was in de shop parlour all de time we was in de shop."

"How do you know that?"

"'Cos when I was habing de row wid de shopman, Richards came and looked frough de glass door from de inner room, and, putting two and free togeder, and knowing dat dey make six, I got my clue."



"Well, that certainly looks very suspicious," said Jack. "If you are certain you saw him there it would prove that he has some transactions with Rich; but you must remember that Richards is a money-lender, and he might have gone there to lend Rich money, not knowing he was a receiver of stolen property."

"Yah, yah, yah! You do make me laugh, Jack! Do you suppose a money-lender is going to lend money to a man and not know anything about his business? And do you suppose dat a receiver ob stolen property is going to borrow money at eighty per cent. or so? Nunno! Dat business belongs to Richards right enough, and I will bet you dere is a back way out ob dat shop, so dat he can go dere widout anyone knowing. What do you tink 'bout de matter, Freddy?"

"Why, that Richards is mixed up with some very shady transactions. I knew that for a long time, but I certainly did not know that he was a receiver of stolen property. But that woman—Sarah Burns—has been here nearly all day. She came soon after you went out, and absolutely refused to go. I thought she would get hungry, and so did not ask her to have any refreshment, but it was no use. She had brought some sandwiches in her basket."

"Well, she has gone now, so that's a mercy."

"Yes; but she is coming to-morrow morning at eight o'clock, and she says she must see you, even if she has to take rooms at the hotel."

"Golly! Ain't dis mighty awful? Now, den, Lively, what's de matter wid you?"

"The proprietor of this hotel has requested me to tell you that you must leave the hotel forthwith. He says that he will be pleased for the other gentlemen to remain, but he will not have you at any price."

"Look at dat now! I knew you were making too much noise, Jack and Sammy. You tell de dear man dat we will all go to-morrow morning, and I shall carry out my detecting work in de country. Dere are more thieves in de country dan in London, I should say, 'cos de country is bigger. You come 'long wid me, Freddy. I want to buy a cheap motor-car, and we will go into de country to-morrow morning. Tink dat would suit our complexions, boys."

Jack and Sam were only too glad to get Pete away. They foresaw trouble if he remained in London, and insisted on doing detective work. He went out with Freddy, and when they returned Pete was the owner of a motor-car that cost him a thousand pounds.

"It's a mighty cheap machine, too, boys," declared Pete. "You will be astonished how cheap dat machine is when you see it to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. Just make out our bill, Lively, and we will settle up."

"There's no necessity for your friends to go."

"Nunno! Only it ain't likely dey are letting me go by myself. We'm all going, and you hab lost free or four pounds in tips, which you would hab got if you had been anything like a sensible waiter. As it is, I shall gib dose tips to Tom, and just you remember in making out de bill, you will charge it at de ordinary rates. I ain't paying anything extra, scept damage done, by Jack and Sammy."

Pete got his bill, which included breakfast for the following morning. This he struck out, informing Lively that they were going to have breakfast somewhere else. Then Pete, who had bought a map of the country, started to study it with Freddy, and he kept him up till three o'clock in the morning, with the result that they were not up the next morning till half-past eight.

The motor-car was standing outside, and Pete uttered a dismal groan

when he saw Sarah Burns seated beside the chauffeur, who had brought the car round.

"Just go and chuck dat woman out, Jack!" groaned Pete.

"Thank you, I would much rather be excused."

"Den you go, Sammy."

"I reckon not. I saw her pitch into you once."

"Tink you would like to go, Freddy?"

"From what I know of the lady I would very much rather not."

"Well, someone must do it. We can't cart dat woman all ober de country. Wonder if a little gentle persuasion would work de trick. Dis way to London, dough I must say I don't like de task at all."

Pete approached the lady in a very meek manner.

"Good-morning, ma'am!" he murmured, raising his hat.

"Oh, my dear Pete! I am so delighted to see you! And now we will go for a pleasant drive into the country! I love motor-cars, and feel quite sure you are an experienced driver."

"Dat's so. I ain't had more dan two-free smashes-up in de two-free drives I hab been, but pr'aps dat's because I neber go more dan a hundred miles an hour or so. Still, if anything should happen, I will hab some nice funeral-cards printed for you!"

"How kind and considerate you are, Pete! We will die together!"

"If it's all de same to you, my dear, I would rader die alone!"

"No, Pete, I will soothe you in your last moments!"

"I would much rader you soothed Jack or Sammy!" groaned Pete.

"It is no good, Pete," whispered Jack. "She has made up her mind that you shall be her husband, and, from what I can see of the lady, she has determination of character in a remarkably pronounced degree. It is true that she is many years older than you, but you would have a few years of married happiness."

"Golly! A few years! I don't tink dere would be a few moments, let alone a few years. I'm going to tell her dat you hab got all de money, and dat I ain't got a pennypiece. Pr'aps dat will change her affections. Stop a bit, dough! I will see if I can use a little detective skill here. Well, my dear, I tink we will hab a pleasant drive togeder, but before we start just come inside and take a little refreshment."

"You dear, kind Pete, you shall bring it out to me! Just a cup of black coffee, with a dash of brandy in it, if you please!"

"Oh, cart it up, Lively! Dis is too mighty awful! Would you like to sit next to Jack, my dear?"

"Oh, Pete, how can you ask such a thing? I would like to sit next to you, of course, and that is where I intend to sit. Now, waiter, hurry up with that coffee, you stupid-looking creature!"

"Get out, my dear, and scratch his face!" suggested Pete, tipping the chauffeur a sovereign for his trouble in bringing the car round, and giving the delighted Tom three sovereigns, so that Lively should see.

Sarah drank her coffee, and then they started off, while Jack and Sam were nearly convulsed with laughter, and they encouraged Sarah all they could, while they spoke of her marriage with Pete as though it were a settled thing. Freddy felt sorry for his employer, and thought Jack and Sam were treating him too roughly; however, he said nothing.

Now, Pete was a very skilful driver. He had a licence, so had Jack, so there should have been no difficulties; nor would there have been had Pete gone at a moderate pace; but directly he got into the country and saw that there would be no danger to others he opened out, with a view of inducing Sarah to get out and walk, and, further, he pretended to have some narrow



shaves of accidents ; but he quite mistook Sarah's nerve. She told him that she liked going fast, and as for accidents, she was not a bit afraid of them when he was by her side. She had made up her mind to get possession of his fortune, and did not care twopence about him being a negro. What she wanted was his money, and that was what she was quite determined to have.

Pete hoped to get rid of her through hunger, and he continued his journey without a stop; but Sarah had come prepared, and she brought out enough sandwiches to have satisfied the hunger of a good many ladies. She pointed out to Pete that it would not be safe for him to eat while he was driving, and so she ate while he drove, and he did not like the arrangement at all.

It was not till the afternoon that a bright idea occurred to him. He let his hat blow off, then brought up the car.

"Half a minute, my dear," he exclaimed. "I must go for dat hat."

Fred was not silly enough to offer to fetch it. He had an idea that hat was dropped purposely, and his comrades were of the same opinion. There is not the slightest doubt that Sarah would have seen through the ruse, but fortune favoured Pete. Some sportsmen were in the adjoining field, and just as he approached the hat one of them fired at a rabbit.

Pete uttered the most awful shriek, clasped his hand to his heart, and dropped in the lane, struggling convulsively.

"The villains, have shot him!" yelled Sarah, leaping out of the car.

"Oh, won't I pay them for robbing me like this!"

As she rushed to the spot one of the sportsmen pushed through the hedge. "I don't know how I could have hit the fellow," he exclaimed. "Still, it's only a nigger, and you can't kill them with a shot-gun. Here, get up! You are not hurt."

"You villain!" shrieked Sarah, rushing at the astonished man, and wrenching the gun from his grasp, then she gave him a clump over the head with the butt that nearly knocked him down. "I'll teach you to rob me of the nigger's fortune! Take that, you slug, and——"

The sportsman only took one more, then he bolted, so did Pete. He leapt to his feet, and raced for the motor-car, while Sarah came after him like a thing demented.

"I'm much better now, my dear!" bawled Pete. "Go and pick up my hat, and we will make a fresh start."

Sarah did nothing of the sort. She kept up the chase, and she could run remarkably fast, but nothing to be compared with Pete. He reached the car yards ahead of her, and, leaping in, started at a pace that no woman could have commanded.

"Look here, my dear," exclaimed Pete, slackening down, but taking particular care that Sarah did not overtake him. "I'm mighty sorry to leabe you in de middle ob de country, but dere's a villiage a few miles ahead, and I'm going to gib you a sovereign for your train-fare back. You see, Jack and Sammy are bashful in a lady's presence, and de poor fellows want to be alone, so dey would be mighty much obliged if you would kindly continue de journey by yourself."

"Oh, you sinful creature to treat the woman you have asked to be your wife in this wicked and cruel manner. Stop that car, or it will be the worse for you!"

"Ain't dis mighty shocking?" groaned Pete. "I know dat woman will swear in a court ob law dat I hab asked her to marry me."

"You certainly have shown her marked attentions, taking her for drives and all that," observed Jack, looking very serious.

"Jack, I hab a mighty good mind to pitch you out to her. She's worse dan a tigress dat has lost its favourite cub. I dunno how all dis is going to end; at de same time, I wouldn't stop for a king's ransom. I dunno when I felt so frightened and miserable in all my life. Do you tink dere will be a lawsuit ober dis, Jack?"

"There isn't the slightest doubt about the matter," declared Jack. "I should not be surprised if the judge orders you to marry Sarah."

"Golly! Ain't dis awful? Tink you would like a nice wife, Freddy, and say two-free hundred a year?"

"Not that woman," laughed Freddy. "I wouldn't marry her for all the money in the world."

"Sarah, my dear," cried Pete, "you must really buzz off. I can't get anyone to marry you; but dere's a sovereign for your train-fare back."

Pete threw the coin out, and then he let the car go. They went at a mad and reckless pace. A local constable took their number, and was quite prepared to swear that they were going at eighty miles an hour. He would have had plenty of miles to spare. The way that car whizzed over the ground was positively dangerous to its occupants, but when Pete drew up at a wayside inn he declared that he was perfectly satisfied with his bargain.

Joe was the landlord's name, and he was a jovial host. Pete revealed his secret to him, and he promised that if Sarah called that he would tell her they had called there, and gone on to the next inn.

"You leave her to me. I managed two wives for close on forty years."

"You belong to de Mormons, den, old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"Haw, haw, haw! No. I buried the fust before I married the second, then I buried the second, and I'm taking particular care as there ain't no third. Two of the sort as I've been blessed with is enough for me. The first one used to bully me from morning to night for keeping a public house. You see, she was a staunch teetotaler, and I'm not. If ever I took a glass of ale she used to call me a drunkard. Though she didn't mind spending the money as others spent on drink. Well, when the poor thing was took I made up my mind as the second one shouldn't be teetotal. She worn't. No, she wasn't teetotal by long chalks."

Joe shook his head and sighed at the remembrance of his second. "Never no more," he said.

"I've a sort of feeling for you, young chap, and if that woman dares to show her face here I'll soon send her to the right about. You leave her to me. If I can't manage a woman no man can."

"I hab my doubts 'bout dat," observed Pete, as Joe went to tell his housekeeper to prepare the best dinner she could. "Joe may hab managed number one and number two, but dere ain't a libing man who could manage Sarah."

The dinner consisted of game, and it was really very good. There was a fine rabbit-pie for the start, and various other good things, all nicely cooked and when they had finished the meal they went for a stroll across the country. They had scarcely proceeded half a mile when they met a young fellow in a small copse. He carried a gun, and had a dog with him, whom Rory at once made friends, as it was considerably too large for him to fight; besides, it was a lady, and Rory was far too well bred to quarrel with ladies.

"I hope we are not trespassing," said Jack politely.

"Well, as a matter of fact, you are," answered the stranger. "My name is Tom Barton, and I'm a freehold farmer. This is my land, so I suppose you are trespassing. All the same you are quite welcome to go where you like, so you need not bother yourself about that."

"You hab a nice lot ob game here?" observed Pete.



"Yes. You see, I sometimes allow people to shoot over it; of course, I charge them a bit. But I'm worried out of my life with poachers. You would scarcely believe the trouble I have with them. In fact, I'm on the look-out for them now. The scoundrels know that I don't keep a game-keeper, for the simple reason that I can't afford it, so they coolly come and bag my game. There's one chap in particular I want to catch. I know he's on the ground this afternoon, 'cos I heard his gun—at least, I heard a gun which I don't doubt is his, because I happen to know he is in the neighbourhood."

"What sort ob looking man is he?" inquired Pete, with a view to some detective work.

"A strong, thick-set chap, with a red beard. Hark! There goes his gun again! I must be off, and see if I can nab him. If I do I'll lock him up as sure as houses."

"Shall we come and help you, Tom?" inquired Pete.

"Now that's very good of you," exclaimed Tom Barton. "I'll go round this way, and I'll be pretty certain to drive him from cover. If you do collar him, lock him in yonder barn. You will find some rope to tie him up with, and I will meet you at the inn. Do you know the inn?"

"Yes. We'm staying dere."

"Good! Well, if you are lucky enough to catch him, it will be as well to say nothing about it at the inn, because some of his friends go there, and Joe is a rare one to talk. They might go and release him before we could get the constable. You must be careful, because the ruffian carries a gun, and he would not be above using it, and mind you tie him up so that he cannot possibly escape. You can fasten the door on the outside as well, 'cos he's a rare one for getting away. Mind, he's got a lot of strength, and he's nearly sure to show fight."

"You leabe dat man to me," said Pete. "I'm an amateur detective, and if I can't detect him, why, I shall be surprised."

"You can't mistake the fellow. You will know him by his red beard; besides, he has a scar on his brow. I'll drive him out. You keep on the outskirts of the copse, and if he doesn't break cover I shall be surprised. There goes his gun again. Of course, you will confiscate any game he has. Bring it to the inn, and we will have it cooked for supper."

Then Tom hurried away, and the comrades followed his directions by keeping along the outskirts of the coppice.

They had not proceeded far when a rustling in the bushes caused them to stop, and a few moments later the very man they were in search of made his appearance.

Pete leaped upon him, and they both fell to the ground, where they fought in a most desperate manner. Pete wrenched the poacher's gun away, then he got him down.

"It's all right, boys," cried Pete. "I hab got him securely. You catch hold ob his legs, Jack and Sammy, while I catch hold ob his noddle."

"You vagabonds!" roared the angry man. "I'll put you in prison for this!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Hark at him talking! Still, we ain't got time to listen to dat. Mind he doesn't kick you, Jack."

"He has kicked me," growled Jack.

"Well, mind he doesn't do it again, den. Dis way to London. Now hold your row, else I shall gib you a clump ober de head!"

That poacher was not to be intimidated. He struggled fiercely, but he had no chance in the comrades' grip. They carried him to the barn, and secured him with some old halters; then, having locked the door, they made

their way towards the inn, to tell Tom Barton the good news, and they overtook him when they had traversed about half the distance.

"That is splendid!" he exclaimed. "He will come to no harm in the barn, and the bobby is sure to pay a visit to the inn to-night as he passes it at about nine o'clock. We can give him into custody then. It will save us the trouble of going to the village, and that poaching blackguard will come to no harm in the barn. I see he had some of my rabbits and pheasants. Well, we will have them for supper."

"De man is safe in de barn. He can't possibly get loose, unless someone goes and releases him," said Pete.

"No one is likely to go there," said Tom. "We won't tell Joe anything about it, otherwise he would be sure to blab, and then, as I say, some of the ruffian's chums would set him at liberty. We will keep it dark till the bobby comes on the scene. You haven't done half badly for an amateur detective, Pete."

#### CHAPTER 5.

**The Landlord's Explanation—How Pete Released the Prisoner—Paying Damages—Sarah—The Fresh Claim—Pete's Ruse—A Ducking—A Bad Start—Fleeing From the Foe.**

IN due course the supper was served, and as it was excellently cooked the comrades enjoyed it. Tom smoked one of Jack's cigars, had a glass of grog, and then said that he would go for the constable.

"So you've got rid of him, gentlemen," exclaimed Joe.

"He has gone for a policeman," observed Pete.

"Haw, haw, haw! He would do. I can see Tom going for a bobby. They are the last sort of gents as he wants to see."

"How's dat, den?"

"Why, he's one of the worst poachers we have in the neighbourhood," answered Joe. "How he manages never to get caught I can't think."

"Golly! But see here, Joe, he set us to catch anoder poacher."

"Haw, haw, haw! He's sent you on a fool's errand. Tom wouldn't help you to catch a poacher. I've heard him argue by the hour that every man has a right to game of any sort, no matter on whose premises it is. I asked him if he considered as he had a right to my fowls, and he says fowls ain't birds of the air, and couldn't fly. Mine flew away that night, and chance it, and Tom turns up the next evening as bold as brass, and offered to help me catch the man as stole 'em. I knowed all the time it was him, but then it was my fault for putting him up to the notion."

"But see here, Joe. We captured de oder poacher. We'm got him bound and locked up in de barn across de fields."

"What sort of looking man was he?"

"Thick-set and strong, wid a red beard and a scar ober his forehead."

"Haw, haw, haw! Bust me! Haw, haw, haw!"

"Tom described de man to us, and—"

"Haw, haw, haw! Well, I'm blowed! Haw, haw, haw! You've been and captured Mr. Barton!"

"But Tom told us he was Tom Barton."

"Haw, haw, haw! Mr. Barton—and you've described him—is the squire and the owner of all this land. Haw, haw, haw! Tied him up, have you? Well, it serves him right, for he's a beast; all the same, there will be trouble over it. Haw, haw, haw! If that Tom ain't a fair caution, I don't know who is! He told me he was going to get his own back one day, 'cos Mr.



Barton sent the cops after him, but I didn't think as he would manage it like that. Haw, haw, haw!"

"But Tom said he was a farmer, and the ground belonged to him."

"He never owned an acre in his life, and, what's more, never will. He ain't got no use for ground, 'cos he shoots and snares over other people's. Haw, haw, haw! He has worked it a treat this time!"

"Say, Joe, do you tink you would like to go and release dat man?" inquired Pete.

"No fear! He will be like a raging lion."

"Well, someone must release him, 'cos he's tied up mighty tight."

"I should say you would be the proper party."

"I don't seem to care much for de job. Yah, yah, yah! I tought dat man was getting mighty vexed when we tied him up. Still, we were detecting poachers on his land, so he ain't got de right to blame us 'cos we happened to detect de wrong man. Don't you tink, Jack, you would like to go and disrelease de man, and tell him in your nice way dat——"

"I feel quite sure that I wouldn't like to do anything of the sort," laughed Jack.

"I don't see how we can leabe de man dere for ever. He would get hungry; besides, I know I tied him mighty tight."

"Well, suppose we all go?"

"M'yes! Dat's de best ting. I'll follow you up in a minute."

"We will wait for you, I reckon," exclaimed Sam.

"But you see, Sammy, I want to go and see if de motor-car is all right. I shall easily obertake you."

"Look here, you beauty, you detected the man, and you will have to release him," said Sam. "If you think you are going to land Jack and me with the row you are mistaken. We don't mind coming with you, but we are not going alone."

"Dat's what I keep saying, Sammy. I'll follow you up. Can't you uuderstand plain language?"

"Perfectly! But you are coming with us. We are having no following up."

"Funny ting how obstinate some people are," growled Pete. "Still, if you are determined to hab your own way, why, dere's an end ob de matter. Dis way to London!"

Now, when the comrades reached the barn they found Barton in about as great a fury as a man could possibly be. Pete tried argument with him before releasing him.

"See here, my dear old hoss," he exclaimed. "Dere's been a slight mistake wid you. We tought you were a poacher, and so we caught you 'cos we didn't want to see you robbed."

"You raving maniac, let me loose, and I'll break your nigger's head!"

"Well, dat's just where it comes in. I don't want de head broken. I prefer to keep it like it is. Still, if you want to be disreleased, why, I suppose it is de best ting to do. Now, I will just cut your bonds so, and dere you are!"

"Allow me to give you a word of advice, Mr. Barton," exclaimed Jack. "We made a mistake, but you will be very ill-advised in touching my friend Pete. He has been a strong man in a circus, and he is a professional boxer. I do not suppose for a moment that he would harm you, but you are bound to get the worst of it."

This advice had the desired effect. Barton glared at Pete for some moments without speaking, then he came to the conclusion that discretion was the better part of valour.

"I'll put you all in prison for this!" howled the infuriated man. "You dare to trespass on my ground! You dare to violently assault and rob me!"

"Nunno! We didn't rob you," said Pete.

"Where's my game? Where is the game you stole, you dastardly villain?"

"We hab eaten dat, old hoss!"

"Then I'll send you to prison! As sure as I am a living man, I will lodge you all in gaol!"

"Funny ting, you neber do find gratitude in some people," observed Pete.

"Gratitude, you maniac! Do you suppose I am going to be grateful to you for assaulting and robbing me?"

"You see, you don't view de matter in de right light, my poor fermented old hoss! I tink you are rader balmy on de crumpet! Sort ob off your rocker! Eber had delirium tremens, or any ob dose complaints?"

"If I did not intend to punish you through the law I would give you the worst thrashing that you have ever had in your life!"

"Den it is a mighty lucky ting dat you are going to punish me frough de law. Still, de matter was a mistake. I took you for a poacher. You ain't unlike a poacher, you know, wid dat fierce-looking beard. Den again, you carried a gun, and had shot some game, which we ate by mistake, 'cos de man who set us on to you said it was his. But look here, I will pay for dat game, and compensate you for habing taken you for a poacher."

"I wouldn't take five pounds."

"P'raps you would take ten?" suggested Pete.

"No, I won't. I won't take a penny less than twenty, and I offer that without prejudice."

"Well, dat's all right. We don't want de prejudice. Here are your twenty pounds. Oh, de notes are all right; you need not be frightened ob dem."

"They appear to be all right. Get off my ground, you vagabonds, and if ever I catch you on it again, I will shoot you! Where are you staying?"

"At de inn ober dere."

"Well, be off with you!"

"Of course, we can do all dat. Come 'long, boys! De old hoss ain't as grateful as I should like to see him, and he's got one ob de shockingest tempers I eber came across. I'm afraid his moder did not flog him sufficiently when he was young. I wonder his wife does not take him in hand now. Dis way to London!"

Another little surprise awaited the comrades when they reached the inn. When they entered the sitting-room Pete uttered a sort of dismal howl, for Sarah was seated there, and she looked about as amiable as an angry rattlesnake.

"How dare you treat me in this shameful manner, after all my kindness to you, Pete? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, trying to trifle with the affections of a poor lone widow!" she cried.

"Ain't dis mighty awful?" groaned Pete. "I can't see anyting to guffaw at, Jack and Sammy. Look here, my dear, you can't possibly stay here."

"I will not be treated in this cruel manner!" sobbed Sarah. "I shall go where you go! You shall not cast me off, after all the things you have promised me!"

"Golly! I ain't promised de woman anyting at all. Say, Joe, do you tink you would like to take on number free?"

"No fear! I've had enough of 'em! I told her distinctly that you wasn't here, but she would not believe a word I said, and I don't like people to be so disbelieving. It shows a want of confidence."



"How do you suppose I'm going to believe you when you told me lie after lie?" demanded Sarah. "Every word you uttered was a lie!"

"Well, you wasn't to know that, ma'am," growled Joe, "and you ought to have believed me till you found out I wasn't speaking the truth. But see here, you can't sleep in this house. My rooms are all full."

"I shall stop here as long as Pete does, even if I have to sleep on the sofa."

It was quite useless arguing with Sarah. As a matter of fact, she slept in the room that had been assigned to Pete, and he slept on the sofa, then after breakfast the following morning another disagreeable surprise awaited them; because Barton, accompanied by a lawyer, who informed them that his name was Sharp, and who looked his name, entered the room, while three constables remained outside.

"My client, Mr. Barton, informs me that you have assaulted and robbed him," said the man of law. "He intends to give you in custody, unless you are prepared to compensate him for the shameful treatment he has received at your hands."

"Why, we hab compensated de man, old hoss," said Pete. "I gabe him twenty pounds last night."

"I do not know whether you wish a judge to believe that story. At any rate, even had you given compensation to the extent you say—mind, I admit nothing of the kind—I can only say that it would be absurdly inadequate. The only compensation that my client would consider for a moment would be a hundred pounds, and I make this offer without prejudice. Beyond the hundred pounds you would have to pay my costs, which would amount to ten pounds. Are you prepared to settle the matter, or do you wish to be given into custody?"

"You can try dat one, old hoss," answered Pete. "I ain't agreeing to de oder."

"Then I shall call the constables in, and give you in custody."

"All right, call dem in, and I'll fling dem out again. I tell you dis, Sharp, you are a bigger rogue dan your employer, and dat's saying a good lot for you."

"Abuse will not avail you."

"P'r'aps not; at de same time, I ain't going to try it. All I'm going to do is to tell you de exact troof, and dat is dat you are a rogue and a vagabond, and Barton is just as bad. But you'm got to consider dis. You ain't going to rob me. Dat's one ob de tings you hab got to consider; and de oder one is—and dis isat is a lot more important to you—dere is a duckpond at de bottom ob dis garden."

"Fellow! What do you mean by that impertinent remark?"

"Dat I shall frow you into it if you don't buzz off."

"You must not imagine, fellow, that your impertinent threats will stop me from doing my duty."

"Den I suppose you consider it your duty to swindle people out ob a hundred pounds in de interests ob your customer? Tell you what it is, boys; dis lawyer thief would not want much detecting!"

"I assure you that this will not help your case!" cried Sharp. "The question is, Are you going to pay the money?"

"De answer to dat is, No."

"Are you prepared to make me any offer before I give you in custody?"

"Same answer applies dere."

"I might be able to induce my client to accept something slightly smaller."

"Well, name de price, den."

Sharp consulted with Barton for some moments, and then the lawyer returned to the attack.

"It is an absurdly small sum, considering the injury my client has suffered, but we are willing to accept ninety pounds."

"I ain't willing to pay it."

"That would include my fees."

"I ain't willing to pay it."

"Will you pay eighty pounds, if I can induce my client to——"

"No."

"Well, you had better make an offer, and I will submit it to my client."

"Twenty pounds, including eberyting," answered Pete.

"Absurd! I could not submit such an offer!"

"Den buzz off home, old hoss."

"If you like to offer fifty pounds——"

"I don't like to offer anyting ob de sort, and what's more, I ain't going to do it!"

"Well, make a reasonable offer."

"Twenty pounds."

"That is not reasonable."

"It's de only one I'm making."

"You do not appear to comprehend the consequences."

"Don't you boder yourself about dem. I can take de consequences."

"Well, say thirty pounds, and my fees."

"Twenty pounds is de amount you hab to say, and I ain't got anything to do wid your fees. I didn't employ you. If I was to employ a lawyer at all, I should choose an honest one, and no one could mistake you for dat. I can see you are going to settle de matter for twenty pounds, so here is de money. But mind you dis. I shall want a receipt in full discharge, and Jack will draw it up. Don't forget to stick a penny stamp on it, Jack, and make de ting legal in ebery way."

"We shall not accept it," said Sharp.

"Draw up de receipt, Jack, for twenty pounds. I can see dey are going to accept dat sum in settlement. I sha'n't agree to a penny more!"

Pete carefully counted out fifteen sovereigns, and wrapped them in a five-pound note, then Jack handed the receipt across to Sharp, who held another whispered conversation with his client.

"Well, it will do me no good putting the vagabond in prison," said Barton, putting his signature to the receipt. "The sooner we are rid of the vagabond the better."

"Dat's right, old hoss," said Pete, reaching across the table and getting possession of the receipt, while he coolly put the twenty pounds back in his pocket. "You had de twenty pounds last night, so dat settles de matter!"

"You thief!" roared Barton, springing to his feet. "Give me that paper, or else pay the twenty pounds!"

"I hab paid de twenty pounds. You had dem last night, only I didn't take a receipt for dem."

"Are you going to hand my client twenty pounds?"

"I hab handed dem to him, and he took dem. I'm not going to hand him forty pounds, if dat's what you mean. You see, old hoss, when a person is dealing wid rogues and vagabonds like you two, why, he has to keep his eyes open, and seeing dis matter was settled last night, it stands to reason dat it don't want settling again dis morning. Barton agreed to take twenty pounds for de inconvenience he suffered, such sum to include de cost ob de game we ate by mistake. Bery well, he won't get anoder



penny out ob me, and if he chooses to employ a solicitor to help him try to steal, it stands to reason dat he will hab to pay dat solicitor aforesaid. I hope you will make him pay ten pounds, dough I must say you don't deserve ten pence, 'cos you'm almost as big a swindler as he is."

"If you do not hand my client twenty pounds, I shall call in the police!" declared Sharp; while Jack stepped outside, and had a little private conversation with the constables, and, as he returned, the constables were grinning in a manner that gave the impression they were quite happy—at any rate, each one of them was the richer by one sovereign for Jack's little explanation of the case. He thought it better to get the constables on his side, because he knew perfectly well that if they attempted to arrest Pete, he would pitch into them.

Sharp was still arguing about the matter. He might as well have argued with the pig in the backyard—or even with Sarah, when she had once made up her mind.

"Dere ain't de slightest use in your arguing de matter, old hoss," said Pete. "I dunno weder you would wid your obstinacy convince a judge and jury dat wrong is right, but you won't convince me. I hab paid twenty pounds, and got my receipt for dat amount."

"Pay the other twenty pounds, and we will give you a further receipt!" cried Sharp.

"Dere ain't no oder twenty pounds. I neber intended to pay any furdur twenty pounds."

"You led us to believe that you would do so."

"Well, you see, I was dealing wid a couple ob sharpers, so I had to be a bit sharp myself. You hab got your money, old hoss, and I hab got my receipt. De ting was a mistake, and I detected de wrong man. Detectives must make mistakes sometimes."

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Sam. "I have noticed you make one or two."

"You shut up, Sammy; and don't you take my detective character away! Now den, are you going to send for your police, old hoss?"

"Yes, I am," cried Sharp, calling the constables in.

"Leave me to deal with them, Pete," whispered Jack.

"I give that negro in custody!" cried Sharp.

"On what charge, sir?"

"Trespass and assault. He has assaulted my client, Mr. Barton."

"Are you wounded in any way, sir?" inquired the constable.

"Of course I am not," snarled Barton. "What do you want to ask those foolish questions for?"

"Then no doubt you have witnesses to the assault?"

"No, I haven't."

"In that case it would be necessary for you to take out a summons. I cannot take him into custody unless you have some proof of the assault."

"He admits it."

"We are admitting nothing," said Jack. "If there were a technical assault, we maintain that it has been condoned by the payment of twenty pounds, for which we hold the receipt."

"They robbed my client of some game," said Sharp. "You will take them in custody."

"We admit taking some game by mistake," said Jack; "but the twenty pounds my friend paid as compensation covered that. You will see it is stated on the receipt, constable."

"This appears to be quite in order, Mr. Sharp!" exclaimed the constable, reading the receipt which Jack had drawn up, while Jack stood in front of him, in case he should try to get that receipt. "As a solicitor,

you will know that I cannot take him into custody on such a charge, an under all the circumstances."

"That receipt was gained by a trick!" declared Sharp.

"Is this your signature, Mr. Barton?"

"Of course it is."

"Well, you received the twenty pounds?"

"That receipt refers to another twenty pounds he should have paid me."

"Well, that is a matter that would have to be settled in a court of law. It is very certain that I cannot take him into custody for an assault on which you have no witnesses, and for which, according to your own showing he has compensated you."

"Do you think I am going to allow a nigger to bind me hand and foot and lock me in a barn for several hours?"

"I don't know, sir. I only know I would not mind him doing it to me at twenty pounds a time. I'd be glad if he would do it two or three times a day. I cannot take the charge."

Then the constables walked away, and Sharp gave his views concerning the matter. He vowed that he would put Pete in prison, and told him plainly that he was the greatest scoundrel unhung. Pete listened to all with a smile upon his face.

"Hab you quite finished, old hoss?"

"No, fellow; I have not! I have not yet begun! By the time that I have finished, you will be in gaol!"

"Well, by de time I hab finished, you will be in some oder place too. Now, look here, old hoss. You'm a mighty big thief, but as you know dat it ain't any good my telling you. I only mention it 'cos your thieving propensities hab got to be corrected, and I'm going to correct dem. You should always try to keep honest, but I dare say you know dat also. Now I am going to gib you a slight punishment for your misdeeds. Come dat way!"

Pete picked him up in his arms, holding him with the greatest ease although he struggled furiously, for he was really frightened concerning what was going to happen.

Pete bore him from the house across the yard, and stopped at the duck pond.

"Now den, old hoss," he exclaimed. "I am going to frow you in dere. De water ain't at all deep, but dere's plenty ob nice soft black mud, so dat you won't hurt yourself in any way. One-two-free—in you go!"

And the yelling man plunged right into the middle of the miry pond. For a few moments he disappeared beneath the surface of the black water, then he rose, while Jack and Sam, who had followed, shouted with laughter. Sharp was in a shocking state of mire. It streamed from his hair right down his body, and he spluttered it out of his mouth.

"Yah, yah, yah! Ain't de man made himself in a frightful mess? An I don't believe he has improved his clothes! I don't want him to lose money ober de transaction, so I will pay him for a new suit. How much do you tink his clothes were worf, Jack?"

"Well, they were not 'up to much."

"Nunno, and dey ain't up to much now. Did you eber see such a disgusting object? I dunno how he is going to walk frough de streets like dat; still, I 'spect he will manage it. What do you tink de clothes were worf?"

"Three pounds ought to cover it."

"Well, dere are your free pounds, old hoss. I will leabe dem on de ground here. Come 'long, boys. I tink it is 'bout time we were off."



rader tink we hab got rid ob Sarah, 'cos I ain't seen her for some time. Let's settle up de bill, and get into de car. I ought to frow you in as well, Barton; but seeing dat we tied you up, and caused you some inconvenience dat way, why, I will let you off dis time!"

The bill was soon settled, and then they went to the coach-house, where the motor-car was.

"Golly!" gasped Pete. "Here's dat woman sitting in de car like some old broody hen. Look here, Sarah! You ain't coming wid us."

"I am. I'll never leave you."

"Bery well, my dear. If you hab made up your mind on dat point, I suppose dere is no help for it. Dere's just one ting I should like to point out. I believe it is going to rain."

"I don't care if it thunders and lightens as well. It can hail in the bargain. I don't move from this seat. You shall not desert me. You made me an offer of marriage."

"I believe she has convinced herself dat she is speaking de troof," groaned Pete, running the car into the lane; then he jammed the brakes on hard, and brought it up with a frightful jerk.

"Someting appears to hab gone wrong wid de works dat time," observed Pete, getting down, and pretending to examine the machinery. Then he got out a spanner, and commenced tinkering, while every now and then he gazed at the black clouds that were gathering.

This lasted for about half an hour, but Sarah sat there with a fixed expression on her face, and now rain commenced to fall. This was just what Pete was hoping for. He suggested the shelter of the inn for Sarah, and she treated the suggestion with supreme contempt; and at last, in despair, he took one of the front wheels off.

"Nasty job here," he observed. "Shouldn't wonder if it takes me two-free hours to get dis car into working order again."

"I am getting drenched, you cruel creature," cried Sarah.

"Well, my dear, it ain't my fault!" exclaimed Pete. "I hab advised you to take shelter at de inn."

"And you will run away."

"How do you suppose I am going to do dat wid de wheel off?"

This seemed to convince Sarah. She entered the inn, and kept watch through the window, while Pete went on with his work.

"I dunno how I'm going to get dis wheel on in time," growled Pete. "It ain't a long job; at the same time it won't be a long job for Sarah to come rushing out, and dere's no telling what dat woman may do if we try to bolt and don't succeed. I can't tink why she doesn't want to marry you or Sammy, Jack. It's mighty hard on a poor nigger. Keep your eye on her and tell me what she is doing, boys."

"She has just rung the bell," said Jack. "I think she is going to order some refreshments."

"Den while she is guzzling I shall be able to get off."

"She's watching you again."

"I tink de woman is a little bit barmy in her geranium," growled Pete.

"All de same, I'm determined to escape her. Look here, boys, you two go and stand in front ob de window as dough you were sheltering from de rain, den I will get de wheel on, and you make a rush for it. You'm bound to run faster dan she can, and I'll slow down for you to obertake me. You see, you will stop her view if you get in front ob de window."

"I really think you will have to marry her sooner or later, Pete," said Sam, looking very serious.

"Den I'm going to marry dat woman later, Sammy, and it will be as

much later as eber I can make it. You go and shelter in front ob de window."

They did so as naturally as possible, but both felt convinced that Sarah would see through their ruse. For some time she kept watch, then Joe brought her some refreshments, and Pete commenced to get the wheel on. He had soon completed his task, and was about to spring into the car, when Sarah came rushing out, shrieking at the top of her voice. Pete leaped into the car and whizzed off, but Sarah was a resourceful woman. Instead of rushing after it, she grabbed Jack by the collar.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, slowing down, while Jack struggled in vain to get free. "Come on, Jack! Can't you run faster dan dat?"

"Not with sixteen stone or so hanging on to me," growled Jack, giving a desperate wrench.

His coat was ripped right down the centre seam, but he got free, leaving a shred of cloth in Sarah's hands, and the way he pelted down the lane proved clearly that he did not want to get caught again.

"Come on, Jack!" roared Pete. "Yah, yah, yah! I know you will make me laugh directly. I shall hab to sacrifice you to de enemy if she catches you. Yah, yah, yah! Nearly got you dat time. De woman can run too."

Pete ran the car at a good pace, but Jack caught it up, and scrambled in while it was going. Then they sped off at a pace that was quite beyond Sarah, who yelled out all sorts of threats as to what she would do when she caught him.

"Well, we hab excaped dis time," sighed Pete, "and I will take good care neber to meet dat woman again. If you eber see her, Freddy, you must tell her dat I ain't anywhere near de part."

"All right," laughed Fred. "But the worst of it is she won't believe a word I say. As you say, you have escaped, unless you happen to meet any vehicle in this narrow lane. I do not see how it would be possible for you to pass it."

"Golly! I neber tought ob dat. Still, we ain't at all likely to meet anyting, else dey wouldn't make de lanes so narrow. Besides, dere are places where you can pass. F'rinstance, by dis gate here. Den again de lane is going to get much broader just directly."

"It doesn't appear to do so according to our map."

"I wish, Freddy, you wouldn't keep taking de pessimistic view ob tings. It is one ob your worst faults."

"Well, I will try to look on the bright side; but really, as a matter of fact, I believe the lane is getting narrower."

"Eh? Lanes often do get narrower before dey get broader; but dat don't matter, 'cos we ain't going to meet anyone. People who want to drive always choose de broad ways. It's a habit dey hab got. I tink it is called de rule ob de road."

"Then I reckon there's an exception to that rule," said Sam. "For here comes a motor-car."

"And here comes Sarah!" cried Jack. "I can see her in the distance. She looks like a little speck."

Pete. "Golly! She must be mighty distant to look anyting like dat," groaned Pete. "Why, Barton, his solicitor, and anoder man are in de car! Go back dere! Get out ob my way!"

"Stop, you dastardly villain!" howled Sharp, who was in a most excited state. "I have a warrant for your apprehension. I have sworn information against you, and you must consider yourself in custody."

It was absolutely impossible for the cars to pass each other in the narrow



lane, at any rate at that part, so the drivers pulled them up, and Barton, who was driving his car, howled at Pete to go back.

"Seems to me dat we are between a certain person and de deep sea," growled Pete, "and, if you ask my private opinion, I prefer de deep sea in de shape ob a lawyer, a blackguard, and a process-server. You go back like good dogs."

"I sha'n't go back!" roared Barton. "There is an opening by yonder gate, where we can pass you."

"I know all 'bout dat, old hoss. But dere's a speck in de road dat is gradually getting larger, and if I back to dat opening I ain't got de assurance dat you won't hem me in and serve me wid all sorts ob notices. I don't mind dose much, but I do mind dat gradually increasing speck, which keeps growing larger. You see, I know its correct size when it ain't in perspective, and I ain't taking any. Go back!"

"I sha'n't!"

"Oh, you won't, won't you? Well, dey say dis car is eighty-horse power, and, ob course, if yours is more dan dat I shall hab to go back. We will try a little gentle persuasion."

"I say, Pete," exclaimed Freddy, "you will damage the cars!"

"Don't care twopence if I smash dem bof up, so long as I escape dat woman," Pete retorted, putting his car forwards, and grinding the front against that of Barton, who commenced to utter threats that ought to have frightened Pete.

Barton had a licence; but then a good many people have those who can't drive, hence the accidents that occur. At any rate, he could drive a car forwards, but he was not much good at going backwards, and, feeling convinced that he would be shoved into the ditch, he went ahead. Barton's car was not nearly so powerful as his opponent's, but he had the advantage of coming down hill, while, of course, Pete was going up. At first Pete lost ground, while the perfume from those two cars was not pleasant, and there was some splashing of mud as the wheels skidded. Then Pete opened her out, and a change came over the scene.

Barton's car went backwards up the hill—it went at a good pace, too, and it looked very much like going into the ditch at times. At others, it looked like going into the opposite hedge, but, as Pete remarked, it was going, and it was bound to go somewhere.

To say that Barton was excited would not be giving an adequate impression of his state of mind. He was simply raving, and the language he uttered would certainly have shocked him if repeated in a court of law. All the same, he went backwards, and the front of his car suffered considerably; so did Pete's for that matter, but about that he cared nothing. All that frightened Pete was the "speck"—that speck that was gradually growing into sixteen stone of humanity. Pete gave three-quarters of his attention to the speck, and the other quarter to the motor-cars.

"Mind how you steer, old hoss!" cried Pete. "You'm got to go backwards, but dere ain't no necessity to run into de ditch. I tink you'm in it dat time. Nunno! Still, I rader fancy you will be in it before you go forty miles like dis. Yah, yah, yah! What's de man trying to do? I believe he's steering as dough he was going forwards!"

"You will have it into the ditch!" laughed Jack.

"Dat's what I'm trying to do, Jack. I ain't risking a meeting wid dat woman for all de world. Directly I can get de man at an angle I'm going to topple him ober."

"You villain! If you do I will make you pay for it!" howled Barton, who could distinctly hear Pete's words.

"Dat's all right, old hoss!" cried Pete, cleverly manœuvring his car and driving Barton towards the ditch, which he made frantic efforts to avoid. "I don't mind paying for it a bit, so long as I escape de pursuer."

"You silly scoundrel!" roared Sharp. "I will not allow her to touch you."

"Yah, yah, yah! Look what is going to protect me from dat woman! I ain't seen her fight, but I hab felt her fighting, and I know her power. You would be no more use wid her dan a sparrow is wid a cat. Now den, tink I hab got you. Into de ditch you go."

Once more Pete opened his throttle to the full. There was a whirring sound, followed by a crash, and that was followed by some yells as the enemy's car toppled backwards into the ditch.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "I tink you hab giben me room to pass dis time. I'm glad you ain't hurt yourselves in any way. Golly! Ain't Sarah mighty close. Sally, my dear! You see dat little man wid de whiskers and de eyes like a ferret? Well, he says he's going to protect me from you. Tink ob dat! He's going to show you your position, and sort of gib you beans."

Then Pete went on a little, and stopped again to watch results.

Now, Sarah knew perfectly well that it would be worse than useless to chase Pete's car. She was hot and tired, and fearfully angry. She needed someone to vent her rage upon, and the lawyer would answer her purpose as well as anyone else. As he clambered from the toppling car she went for him like a fury.

"You little worm!" she yelled. "I'll teach you to insult a helpless woman. "Take that! and that!"

And Sharp took them. She smashed his tall-hat flat, then she hammered him on the nose. Next she tore his face a little, and then she tore his clothes considerably.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Go it, my dear! Gib it to him; he deserved it all. You might gib Barton a turn, when you hab finished wid de little man. Look here! I am going to drop dese four sovereigns into de lane, and you can pick dem up for yourself. Good-bye, my dear! I sha'n't be seeing you for some time to come; at least, I hope not," added Pete beneath his voice.

Then he started the car, and Sarah left the victim of her vengeance, picking the money up, and shook her fist at Pete, while she yelled out something, but he was too far away to hear it.

## CHAPTER 6.

**How Pete Descended the Hill—A Nasty Smash—The Claim for Compensation—Pete Does Some Detective Work—A Tangled Plot—Confusion—Pete Really Detects Something.**

"YOU can slow down now, Pete," said Jack. "You have got rid of the sweet creature for the present."

"Golly! Don't you tink I hab got rid ob her for always, Jack?" inquired Pete.

"That's not at all likely," laughed Jack. "I think she means to stick to you till you marry her."

"I ain't doing anything ob de sort."

"Ah, then she will bring action for breach of promise of marriage."

"But, Jack, I ain't promised her marriage."



"What does that matter. She will swear you have, and the jury are sure to believe a lady in preference to you."

"Seems to me dis is a mighty awful country to lib in," growled Pete. "Dey make you muzzle your dogs at certain times; but it would seem to me dey ought to make women be muzzled all de year round. A woman like dat ain't at all safe."

"Well, Pete, if you will flirt with the ladies you must expect to get into trouble. Both Sam and I could see you were going too far with Sarah, and, of course, in a court of law we should have to give our views of the matter. I should not be surprised if the judge orders you to marry her forthwith."

"I'll wring de man's neck if he does!" declared Pete. "I'll set Sarah on him, and make her tear him to pieces. Still, I ain't going to stop again till it gets dark, and by dat time we ought to be a mighty long way from here, at de pace I'm going."

Pete was so anxious concerning Sarah, that he refused to stop even for refreshments.

"I'm mighty hungry, Jack," he admitted. "But it ain't at all safe to stop here. That woman might hab collared Barton's motor-car. There's no telling what she wouldn't do. Fancy, just as we are sitting down to dinner, how mighty awful it would be if she came upon de scene. Are we nearing a town, Freddy?"

"I believe there is one about fifteen or twenty miles further on," answered Freddy.

"Well, it won't take us long to do dat, and den we can hab a mighty fine dinner at de hotel."

As Pete covered mile after mile, his fears concerning Sarah began to diminish, and at last, on reaching a high hill, they saw a good-sized town lying in the valley.

The hill they had to descend was a very steep one, and when they got half-way down it, Jack and Sam commenced to get anxious at the pace Pete was going.

"Put on your brakes, man!" cried Jack. "You are going a lot too fast."

"Yes, Jack," answered Pete calmly. "I hab noticed dat myself; but, you see, dis brake won't act. Seems as dough dere was something wrong wid it. Still, I dare say we shall stop when we reach de bottom ob de hill."

There could be little doubt about this, because they would come to the High Street of the town, and no car could possibly have gone through it without coming to a pretty sudden stop. However, Pete hoped for the best, and finding it utterly impossible to check the pace of the car, merely kept it in the centre of the road, in the hope that they would meet nothing.

In that respect fortune favoured them, but at the bottom of the road there was a sharp turn where the shops commenced. Pete saw a grocer's shop facing him, and he did his best to turn, but it was without avail. The car dashed straight through the plate-glass window of that grocer's shop, and the comrades were hurled amongst the goods, while some customers in the shop commenced to scream, under the erroneous impression that the end of the world had come.

Pete feared the worst, for he was hurled on the counter, and he sat in a huge mound of salt butter, while he surveyed the grocer with a calmness that nearly drove him mad.

Pete just glanced round to make sure that his comrades were not hurt, then he addressed the grocer.

"Good ebening, my dear old hoss. You might put me up half an ounce ob your sixpenny tea, and mind it's strong. Been a nice sort ob day, ain't it? Mind you don't knock ober some ob dose tins, Jack. You'm nearly

sure to upspill someting de careless manner in which you are tumbling about amongst dem."

"You varmint!" hooted the grocer. "I'll make you pay for this!"

Pete, still seated on the butter, picked up one of the angry man's bill-heads, and read that his name was Brown.

"Ob course I shall pay for de tea, my dear Brown," said Pete. "Make haste and do it up, 'cos I ain't got much time to waste; and see here, my dear old hoss, if any ob your customers start robbing you, just you put me on deir track, 'cos I'm an amateur detective. You notice I detected your shop directly I came into de town."

"Get off my butter, you great black beast!" howled Brown. "Why, you've done more than twenty pounds damage! Bust me if I don't pay you!"

And seizing a butter-pat, the infuriated man made a rush at Pete, and commenced to belabour him over the head.

"Here, steady Brown!" exclaimed Pete, getting possession of the butter-pat, and giving Brown a rap over the head with it. "Don't you be so mighty impulsive, else you will hurt yourself."

"What right have you to smash my shop up?"

"What right hab you to put dat shop at de exact spot where I wanted to come. You ought to hab got it out ob de way when you saw me coming. I blame you entirely for de accident, and I hope it will be a lesson to you to be more careful in de future. I'm quite disgusted wid you, Brown. Don't laugh at him, Jack and Sammy. You only encourage him in his stupid behaviour."

"The black scoundrel must be a raving maniac!" howled Brown. "Here he comes smashing into my shop then wants to throw the blame on me. Here, go for the police! I'll soon see who is in the right. I'll give you all in custody!"

One of the assistants went for the man of law, who soon made his appearance. First of all he gazed at the fearful wreckage, then he took out his note-book, and made an entry. Then he gazed at the comrades and made another entry. Next he asked for their names and addresses, which Jack supplied.

"There's a considerable amount of damage done here," observed the constable.

"Is that all you have been able to discover," sneered Brown. "P'raps you would like to make a note in your book that you are the biggest fool that ever walked in shoe leather, though I don't think as it's necessary to make a note like that, because everyone must know it."

Now, this was a remarkably silly thing to have said, because it naturally made the constable savage with Brown, and thereby rendered him more inclined to take the comrades' parts than the grocer's.

"It ain't necessary for you to get abusive," said the constable. "Of course, we all know that you are the worst tempered man in the town, but you ain't got the right to insult the police, and if I have any more of your impudence, I shall run you in for obstructing the police in the execution of their duty."

This was rather too much for the unfortunate Brown's temper. To have his shop smashed up with a motor-car was bad enough, but to have a constable threaten him with arrest was too much. He let himself go, and the way he abused the police in general, and that one constable made Pete laugh.

"You'd better get some of your disinfectants and wash your mouth out," observed the constable. "Your language ain't fit for a pig to listen to. You



ought to be ashamed of yourself, and if I was to take you in custody you would get a month's hard labour, and serve you right, too. Who was driving?"

"I was," answered Pete.

"Got a license?"

"Yes. Here it is."

"Well, this is a clean one," observed the constable. "It hasn't been indorsed. Were you going fast?"

"Something above two-free miles an hour."

"Well, that ain't fast," declared the constable, who did not take into consideration that something over two or three miles an hour, might have been eighty miles an hour.

"They were going at fifty miles an hour," declared Brown.

"Are you prepared to swear that in a court of law?"

"Yes, I am."

"Why didn't you warn them when you saw them coming?"

"You stupid blockhead! I never saw them till they were through my shop window, and that brute of a nigger was sitting on my butter, while the others were kicking over my goods. Just look at the damage they have done."

"See here!" cried the constable, who knew that he had caught him. "If you never saw them till they were through your window, how can you swear that they were going fifty miles an hour?"

"I'm ready to swear they were going sixty miles an hour."

"It seems to me that you are ready to swear anything but what is the truth; and if you get swearing like that in a court of law the chances are you will get five years' penal servitude. All you can do is to summon them for any damage done."

"I'll make them pay! I'll have the law on them!" howled Brown.

"But, look here, my dear old hoss," exclaimed Pete. "What is de good ob going to law about de matter. De ting was an accident, 'cos de brakes wouldn't act. Bery well, I'm quite prepared to pay for de damage widout going to law 'bout it."

"You haven't got the money."

"Den what would be de good ob going to law. All de same, I hab got de money, and de only ting you hab got to do is to name de amount ob damage done, and I shall pay for it."

"Fifty pounds!" cried Brown, who knew that would cover it two or three times over, seeing that his plate-glass window was insured."

"Dere are your fifty pounds," exclaimed Pete, handing him the notes.

"Now, den, just help us get dis motor-car out ob de wreckage, constable."

"Stop a bit," exclaimed Jack. "We require a receipt for that money."

Brown did not want to give one, but Jack insisted, and at last he wrote it out to Jack's dictation; then having got the motor-car out, and having tipped the constable a sovereign for his trouble, they made their way to the best hotel, where they engaged rooms.

"Now, see here, boys," exclaimed Pete, after breakfast the following morning. "I don't tink dere's any chance ob Sarah finding me here, and it stands to reason dat we must wait till de motor-car is repaired. De man says it will take him free-four days for de job. So it seems to me dat we ought to see if Brown is going to make de insurance company pay for his window. You say he is sure to be insured, Jack; and it ain't fair dat Brown should get his money twice ober."

"Rather not!" exclaimed Jack. "He has made a nice little thing out

of it already, and I will guarantee that he would like to have his shop run into every day of his life at a similar price."

"What do you tink de plate-glass window would be worf?"

"Well, say twenty pounds. Twenty-five would cover it easily."

"Den here is a little detection work already to hand. De first ting to consider is what company he is insured in. I will make inquiries ob de landlord to see if he knows. Sha'n't mention what I want to know for."

Now, the landlord had already made up his mind that the comrades would be remarkably good customers, and he was quite ready to oblige them. Brown sometimes dropped into the bar for a little refreshment; in fact, he did so every day, and the landlord said that it would be an easy thing for him to find out.

"I don't want de man to know dat I'm making inquiries," explained Pete. "He sha'n't know anything about it," answered the landlord. "I shall speak of the accident, and shall not even let him know you are staying here; then I shall ask him if he's insured in the same company as I am, see. He's sure to mention what company it is; in fact, I shall ask him just casually. You leave him to me. He is an impudent beast! Told me my liquor was not fit to drink, once, though he often comes to drink it. Besides, he sells wines and spirits, which is a cruel shame on hotelkeepers. I'll find out right enough."

The result of this conversation was that Brown informed the landlord that he was insured in the Safeguard Insurance Company, and that he expected the agent down that very day, as he had written the previous night.

"You see how a skilled detective works, Jack," observed Pete, when they were about to commence lunch. Here I get de clues like— Golly! Here comes a stranger. Now, you notice dat man. He has a bag. He is thirty-five years ob age—well dressed, and he is an insurance agent."

"I'll bet you twopence you are wrong on every point," laughed Sam.

"Why is dat, Sammy?"

"Because you always are wrong. However, he is engaging a room. You will be able to ask him, if he comes into this room."

The stranger did enter that room, and Pete went out for a moment, then he returned, and bowed politely to the stranger.

"I tink you are staying here for a night or so?" inquired Pete.

"Yes. I shall remain for perhaps two nights."

"Now, see here, old hoss, Sammy wants to make out dat I'm always wrong in my deductions. You see, I am doing a little amateur detective work, and I say dat you are thirty-five years of age."

"Funny thing that. I was thirty-five yesterday."

"Dat's so, Mr. Jenkins."

"Why, you know my name!"

"Yes. Can generally tell people's names, and specially if de waiter mentions 'em to me for de start. Now, I say dat you are an insurance agent."

"That is truly wonderful! How did you know that?"

"Well, I will tell you. We smashed into Brown de grocer's shop, and we paid for de damage. Gabe him fifty pounds. Dat covered de cost ob de glass, ob course. Bery well, dat man is insured in your company. Yours is de Safeguard Insurance Company, isn't it?"

"Yes. I have represented the Safeguard Insurance Company for upwards of ten years. But it is really wonderful how you found all this out."

"Yes. Most ob de tings I do are surprising," observed Pete. "You see, I discovered dat dat was de company Brown was insured in, and I know dat he is expecting you to call to-day. Well, if he claims for de damage done you just tell him dat Jack, Sam, and Pete hab paid for de window."



"Now, this is really very good of you," exclaimed Jenkins. "It will save my company a lot of money. How did the accident occur?"

"You had better come and hab lunch wid us, and we will tell you all about it," said Pete.

And Jenkins accepted the invitation with thanks, then directly the meal was finished he called on Brown, while Jack lent him the receipt.

"It is quite a question whether my company will not prosecute him for attempted fraud. He has certainly made a claim upon them for the glass. But you leave me to settle the matter. You have mentioned the glass in this receipt, so that he cannot honestly claim on us. I will go and see him at once. Suppose you follow me. Come in, say in a quarter of an hour's time, and he will have shown his hand by then."

Pete agreed to this, and Jenkins hurried away. When the comrades called Brown looked very uncomfortable. He merely said that he had settled the matter with Mr. Jenkins; but Pete wanted to know some of the details of the settlement.

"I have explained to Mr. Jenkins that there will be no claim for the glass," growled Brown. "It is all settled, and you need not bother yourself further about the matter."

"Seems to me to be a little beyond my detecting work," observed Pete.

"All de same, if you are satisfied, Jenkins, why dere's an end ob de matter."

"Yes, I am perfectly satisfied," said Jenkins. "I shall let the matter rest. Mr. Brown informs me that he has received compensation, so we will say no more about it. Shall we return to the hotel?"

They did, and Jenkins explained to Pete that Brown was too sharp for him. That he appeared to have received some sort of information concerning the matter.

"The fact is, Pete," exclaimed Jenkins, who had followed Pete into the bed-room, where that worthy was preparing for dinner, "I believe the waiter, or someone at this hotel, must have overheard our conversation, and repeated it to Brown. He made an excuse for sending for me—it was rather a lame one, but as he made no claim, I thought it better in the interests of my company to let the matter drop."

"Well, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "I'm quite satisfied. You had better dine wid us. Where's my coat got to?"

"Here it is, I think," exclaimed Jenkins, handing it to him. By the way, you won't mind me dining like I am? I just want to run out to send a telegram to my company about the matter, but I will be back by seven."

"Right you are, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, lighting his pipe.

"Tought I had got a case dat time," murmured Pete. "Jack and Sammy are sure to hab a laugh at me ober dis matter; still, we can't help dat."

It was only about five o'clock, but Pete spent the time chatting with Jack and Sam, and giving some extraordinary instructions to Freddy, who had come to the conclusion that his salary would be earned without any work. Seven o'clock arrived, but Jenkins did not. They waited for him for half an hour, and then as he did not put in an appearance, they commenced dinner without him.

In the evening the comrades took a stroll, thinking they would meet him, but in this they were disappointed, and when they returned to the hotel a big surprise awaited them.

An elderly gentleman was in the room, and he at once rose and stepped towards them.

"I am glad you are returned, gentlemen," he exclaimed. "My name is Stanton, and I am the manager of the Safeguard Insurance Company. I thought it well to see you before calling on this man Brown."

"Hab you seen Jenkins?" inquired Pete.

"Yes, he called at the office, and I came down immediately. In these cases we are very strict to take proceedings, as it would be a very serious matter to the company if such frauds were allowed to pass unnoticed. Jenkins gave me the receipt. He required me to pay his expenses, loss of time, and such like, but I did not hesitate to do that in exchange for the receipt. You see, it is not so much a matter of money, but attempted fraud must be exposed."

"Golly! You surely don't pay your own agent for gibing you information concerning de business ob de company?" exclaimed Pete.

"Our own agent? I don't quite understand. Jenkins is not our agent. I never saw the young man before in my life."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack. "More detective work for you, Pete."

"Eh?"

"You appear to have detected the wrong man again, and your deductions that he was an agent of the company appear to have been a little at fault."

"But he admitted he was de agent, Jack."

"I rather fancy he would have admitted a good deal more if it had suited his purpose to do so. That man had no right to sell the receipt to you, Mr. Stanton. I lent it to him to tackle Brown with, as Pete found, according to his detective work, that Jenkins was your agent. You would have been quite welcome to the paper without paying a penny, and I have now come to the conclusion that Jenkins is nothing more than a thief, and a very clever one at that. May I ask what he made you pay?"

"Ten pounds."

"Golly! De man has swindled you, old hoss, and I blame you for being so soft. Can't tink how people can be taken in in dat—— Eh? What's all dis? Golly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack, as Pete commenced to rummage in his pockets.

"Why, I hab mislaid my pocket-book wid free or four hundred pounds in it!" growled Pete. "De man came into my bed-room, and he was most kind in handing me my coat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish you wouldn't guffaw like dat, Jack."

"I blame you for being so soft," repeated Jack. "I can't think how people can be taken in in that manner."

"Do be quiet, Jack. Here, waiter, just go into my bed-room and see if you can find a pocket-book wid free or four hundred pounds in it."

"Do you know how much there was in it?" inquired Mr. Stanton.

"Not to a hundred pound or so."

"Then don't you think it is rather risky to send the waiter up?"

"I don't think there is the slightest risk," laughed Jack. "Even if that waiter were not honest, he will never find Pete's pocket-book, for the simple reason that he is not looking in the right place for it. May I look at the receipt the rascal sold to you, Mr. Stanton?"

"Certainly, my dear sir. I have it here."

"Well, this is not my handwriting, nor is it anything like it. This is a forgery! Ha, ha, ha! You have made a mess of it this time, Pete. You may be a born detective, but I really think you want a little practice. You see, it will come expensive if you detect the criminals, and let them rob you of a few hundred pounds each time. You won't find that your business is very remunerative."

"I wish you would not make a joke ob de ting, Jack. If dat ain't de original receipt, where is it?"



"Why, you know he called on Brown. Very well, I will bet a cigar against one of your old pipes that he had frightened Brown into paying him a little bit more for that original receipt. Suppose we come and interview the fellow?"

Stanton thought this the best thing to do, so they all went, and found Brown just locking up his shop. He looked considerably startled at seeing Jack, Sam, and Pete, for Jenkins had told him they were in Liverpool, and going across to New York by the next vessel.

Stanton did not let him know who he was, but left it to the great detective to deal with the matter.

"I rader fancy you hab been had, old hoss," exclaimed Pete. You must know dat Jenkins is de biggest thief dat eber walked in shoeleather. All de money you hab paid for de receipt won't help you at all, 'cos we hab got de receipt here. Yah, yah, yah! Jenkins forged a receipt!"

"What?" howled Brown. "Why, the swindling vagabond made me give him ten pounds for it!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Jenkins won't do so badly over this affair by the time you have done detecting him, Pete," cried Jack. "He has robbed Mr. Stanton of ten pounds, he has rushed Brown for another ten, and he has had you to the tune of a few hundred. The man will make his fortune if he goes on in this way."

"You shut up, Jack. I'm detecting dis case. Now, see here, Brown, you'm in a mighty awkward position. We paid you for dat window, and you hab sent in a claim to de insurance company to try and get de money a second time."

"No I haven't. I'm a straightforward man."

"Yah, yah, yah! Den why are you so mighty anxious to get de receipt?"

"It can't matter to you. If I pay my insurance for the glass, I have a right to claim."

"Not if you hab been paid by de party who broke it. De question is, In what company are you insured?"

"That has nothing to do with you. I have not sent in a claim, and what is more, I do not intend to send in one."

"Did Jenkins tell you dat he was an agent ob de company?"

"Bust him! No! He told me he was sent by you to see if you could settle the matter with me. He said that you were going abroad, and that he would let me have the receipt for fifteen pounds, and the dirty thief swindled me out of ten pounds!"

"Did you leabe him alone in de room?"

"Only while I went upstairs to get the money. I had not enough in my till."

"How much had you in de till?"

"Seven pounds in gold, and some silver."

"Sure it's all safe?"

"What!" howled Brown, leaping to his feet. "Why, of course, it is safe. It was at the back of the till, and——"

"Yah, yah, yah! I'll bet it ain't at de back ob de till now, if Jenkins watched you frough dat window, 'specially if he would hab had time to lighten dat till while you were upstairs."

"Fury!" howled Brown, rushing into the shop, and opening the till with a wrench that scattered all the silver on the ground. There was no gold to scatter. "Woohoo! I'm ruined! He's taken a cheque for twenty pounds, and it wasn't crossed!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "It serves you right for trying to swindle de insurance company. Funny ting dat in looking for one thief I

always seem to catch anoder. Must be de excellent cistern ob detectiveness. I don't quite see what you are going to do wid de insurance company, seeing dat you hab sent in your claim."

"I have done nothing of the sort."

"But you have!" exclaimed Mr. Stanton sternly. "I may now tell you that I am the manager of the Safeguard Insurance Company, and that I have come here specially on your business. You sent a telegram, and also a letter claiming the full amount of thirty pounds for which the window is insured. Now, you did that after you had been handsomely compensated for the damage by these gentlemen, and that is fraud. Put it in which way you like, it is fraud."

"I sent the claim in before these villains paid me any money. Besides, they only paid me for the damage done to the goods in the shop."

"You said just now that you had sent in no claim to the company."

"Because I have withdrawn it. I wrote to-night."

"I do not believe that statement. You state that you were only paid for damage done; then why did you withdraw your claim?"

"Well, look here, you can go and hang yourself, you old fool!" snarled Brown. "I wasn't going to make you pay, but I will now, for your impertinence in coming here and bullying me. Who are you, I should like to know? If you don't clear out of my shop, I'll kick you out!"

"Well, that is talking ridiculously," said Stanton quietly. "If you intend to assault me, although I am an old man, I dare say I shall be able to defend myself. Now, I may tell you this. My company will prosecute you for attempted fraud."

"You can't, you old idiot! You have nothing in writing. I happen to know that you have not got the receipt!"

"I have three witnesses here. I will say no more at present, but I rather think you will find that your sharp practice costs you very dearly. I am the manager of the company, and one of the directors, and I shall certainly prosecute you!"

"Here, clear out of this!" roared Brown, making a rush at him, and smashing his tall hat over his eyes; then he caught him a round hand blow over the ear; but then the old gentleman squared up in a manner that Pete admired very much. His left shot into Brown's nose, then he guarded another round hand blow with his right and landed again with his left, this time in Brown's chest, and the force of that blow was such that it sent Brown flying against a small table in front of the window, on which were several flower-pots. Brown, the table, and the plants, went to the floor with a crash. Brown was badly bruised, while the table and the flower-pots were badly broken, and the mess of mould upon the floor was considerable.

"You varmint!" howled Brown. "I'll be the death of you!"

"Then come on!" cried Stanton, whose blood was warmed. "Come on! I'm a grandfather, but I haven't forgotten that I was once a Rugby boy! Come on!"

Brown did no such thing. He had had several degrees more than enough, so far as fighting went. He determined to take the rest out in abuse, and he could easily beat Stanton in this direction. Amongst other things, he called him a bloated old beast, although he was certainly not so stout as Brown, and he looked an abstemious man, whereas Brown did not. Brown said he would put him in prison for assault, and this made Pete roar with laughter.

"Do hab anoder round, Brown!" cried Pete. "I'll gib you a sovereign if you hab a second round, and Stanton will promise to do his best! Golly!



Dey must learn to box at Rugby, and dey don't seem to forget de art! Yours was a fair knock-down blow, wasn't it, old hoss? Yah, yah, yah! You ain't made much mess on de floor, eider!

“Dere lay Brown,  
Upside down,  
Smashing all de flower-pots wid his crown!”

“Dear me!” exclaimed Mr. Stanton. “You have a most remarkable voice, my friend!”

“Now, see here, old hoss!” cried Pete. “I’m downright proud ob you. Come dis way. You’m got to knuckle under to me, ’cos I hab fought in many a ring, and I was once a professional boxer. You wouldn’t hab such a mighty easy task if I was going for you, don’t you see, and if you don’t obey my orders down to de ground, dere’s no telling dat I mayn’t go for you!”

“Then I think I had better obey you, Pete!” exclaimed Mr. Stanton, smiling. “All the same, I do not believe you would strike a man of my age.”

“He’s the kindest-hearted fellow you ever met!” whispered Jack, as they followed Pete from the shop. “Let him have his own way. I don’t know what he is going to do—no one ever does—but I can safely assure you that what he does will be out of kindness of heart. He will show us some fun, if you let him have his own way!”

“My dear sir, I certainly will!” exclaimed Stanton. “I shall remain at the hotel for the night!”

“Well, just treat him as you would one of your grandchildren. He is quite as harmless. He may say and do things that would offend some men, but I rather fancy you won’t mind. You have got to remember that he is enormously wealthy, so that you need have no compunctions in that respect. His fun is quite harmless. He never takes drink, except in the strictest moderation, and I will guarantee that if you will only let him have his own way, you will have a most enjoyable evening.”

“My dear friend, I’m delighted to have met you!” exclaimed Mr. Stanton. “Whatever Pete does, it won’t offend me. I like a little quiet fun—often have it with my grandchildren. Bless us, you should see me going round my room on my hands and knees with some of the youngsters on my back, and the butler, pretending to be a bear, chasing us! Why, those are the happiest times of my life. That rascal of a butler bit me once, and had the cheek to ask for a rise in his wages the next morning!”

“Here we are!” cried Pete, stopping at a hatters, where an assistant was just putting up the shutters. “Dis is de shop. Come in, old hoss! I want a tall hat for dis gentleman. Dat brim is rader too straight, and de crown ain’t straight enough!”

The assistant took the measurement, then he brought forth a hat, and Stanton, who fully entered into the fun of the thing, allowed Pete to try it on.

“Nunno!” exclaimed Pete, tossing the hat on the counter, whence it rolled on the floor, and, in stepping back, Pete put his foot on it. “I want a younger hat dan dat. Dis man ain’t more dan five-and-twenty—least, if you had seen him fight, you would hab said so. I want a hat wid a mighty big curl. Right up to de fashion.”

“I fear I shall have to charge you with the hat you have trodden on, sir!”

"Oh, dat's all right!" exclaimed Pete, handing him a five-pound note. And then the master of the shop, whose name was Thorn, and who looked a jovial sort of man, came on the scene. He knew that he had got a good customer. He brought out every style of hat that he had in the shop; but Pete was fearfully hard to please, and, as he stepped back to view the effect of one of the hats, he stumbled over a stool, and sat on a cardboard box that contained another hat.

"Funny ting where all dese hats are coming from!" growled Pete, rescuing the wreckage. "Still, so long as we get what we want, dere is an end ob de matter. I rader like de curl ob dat one. We will hab dat one!"

"It is a guinea, sir," said the hatter, "and I shall have to charge you seven-and-sixpence for the one you have sat on."

"Well, dat's only fair. I'll hab dat curly one. Now I want some for us."

The hatter was quite willing. Pete insisted on choosing a hat for Jack that he could have pulled over his ears. He bought a white one for Sam, and the one he chose for himself was quite three sizes too small, but he got over that difficulty by sticking his knife through the brim, and passing a piece of string through, which he tied under his chin. Then he bought a broad-brimmed felt hat for Mr. Stanton. He wanted one with a blue riband, but failing this he had a black one.

"I'm afraid I shall not have much change for you, sir," observed the hatter. "You see—well, let me see. I'll do the best I can. They were cheap hats he smashed, weren't they, Tom?"

"Yes, sir! Seven-and-six's!"

"Well, suppose we say——"

"Oh, boder it! You'm got de fiver? Bery well, dere's anoder for you; and dere's a sobereign for you, Tom! I like honest men! Say, old hoss, do you know Brown, de grocer?"

"I do. I deal of him."

"Well, just you tell dat man how we deal wid honest tradespeople. 'Nuff said. Come on, boys! We shall be in time for supper!"

And Pete went through the street, with his small tall hat tied on with string, while Stanton followed, wondering what his wife would say when she saw him in his masher hat, and also what she would think of the brigand-looking one. However, he made up his mind that it would be nice and cool for the garden, and he was a man who did not care what others thought of him.

Arrived at the hotel, Pete ordered up the best supper that could be served, then they all adjourned to the drawing-room, where there was a piano, and Pete awoke the echoes. One old gentleman sent down word to say that if the abominable row did not stop immediately, he would come down and kick them all out of the place.

"Look here," exclaimed Pete, when the grinning waiter had delivered the polite message. "You go and tell de old hoss dat dis is a musical entertainment, and dat if he don't like it, he ain't compelled to listen to it. An' you may add dat if de old glowworm sends down any more messages like dat, Mr. Pete, a gentleman wid a dark complexion and beautiful curly hair, will come up to his room, stuff his nose into his mouf, and make him bite de end off!"

"It's Mr. Hall, sir—the gent you had unpleasantness with at dinner—and he's a caution. If I was to deliver a message like that, it's ten to one he would come down and go for you. He's a rare one for quiet!"



"Well, tell Hall he can get de quiet in between de songs. I'm going to gib him 'Schneider How You Vas,' and dat's 'bout de quietest song you eber heard, if properly sung, de same as I am going to sing it!"

It was too much for the unfortunate Mr. Hall. He simply raved as that song burst forth; but when they all joined in the chorus, he leapt out of bed, hurried on a few clothes, and rushed into the hall—seizing a riding-whip by way of expressing his meaning.

"You black scoundrel of a nigger!" he roared, rushing into the room in a most excited state. "How dare you make this row in the middle of the night!"

"But my dear old hoss," exclaimed Pete; "we ain't reached de middle ob de night yet. By de time dat arrives, I dare say I shall hab tapered off a bit. I will get frough all de noisy songs dis side ob two o'clock, and only howl out de quiet ones after dat!"

"You vagabond! If you don't stop this noise immediately, I'll flog you within an inch of your life!" roared the angry man.

"Now, see here, Hall, my dear old bag ob bones"—Hall weighed about eighteen stone. "You ain't got de right to call my beautiful singing a noise. If you were to call it a sweet sound, it wouldn't be so likely to hurt my feelings. According to de law ob Nature, dere's bound to be a proper ending to a concert, de same as dere is bound to be a proper beginning, and de time ob de ending ain't quite arrived. Dere must be two-free more songs, and after dat we shall hab a few glees. You'll notice dose, 'cos when Sammy begins singing it sounds like sharpening a good-sized saw—someting between dat and de shriek ob an ungreased cartwheel. Howeber, after we hab sung forty or fifty songs, you will get quite used to it!"

"I'll not have it!" howled Hall. "I came here for quiet, and the vagabond of a waiter told me it was a very quiet hotel!"

"So it is, my dear old catastrophe! De hotel will go on for years, and neber make a sound. It is one ob de quietest hotels in de country. Sometimes de people who stay here make a noise, but de hotel keeps quiet enough, and I wish you would follow its example, and go to bed. You ain't wanted here. We'm a merry party, and we don't want a sour-faced chunk ob blubber kicking up a row, and making himself look more ridiculous dan nature has already done for him!"

"Once more. Are you going to stop this row?"

"But, see here, my dear old hoss. I can't admit dat it is a row. Dere's a difference between sweet music and a row; but I tell you what I will do wid you, now. I will stop de singing till you hab had time to get to sleep, and den we will warble in quite a gentle strain. I will show de company a few conjuring tricks. Dose can't disturb you."

Now, Hall did not really want to strike Pete. He merely wanted to frighten him. Pete was far too big and strong for any man to desire to strike him. Hall thought that offer a good compromise, and he would be able to leave the room without loss of dignity.

"Let there be no more noise," he cried, "or it will be the worse for you! I am accustomed to controlling niggers, as I am the owner of a large sugar plantation, where I employ a large number of negroes, and I will soon show you that I can control you!"

Then the great man left the room, and Pete shook his head and sighed. "We'm got to be quite quiet, boys," he exclaimed, "so I will show you a few innocent and silent little tricks wid Rory!"

## CHAPTER 7.

**Pete's Idea of a Quiet Night—Protests—Pete's Snoring Causes a Calamity—The Lost Clothes—Why the Locksmith Did Not Come—Attacked By Gipsies—Pete Settles the Matter.**

PETE'S first trick with Rory was to hide his gloves in Mr. Stanton's pocket, where Rory, who had been turned out of the room, found them.

"It is really very clever!" exclaimed that gentleman, who was really enjoying the evening. "And, as you say, that is quite quiet. The angry gentleman could not possibly object to that!"

"Nunno! Now my next trick wid Rory will be what I call de fox-hunt. I ain't shown you dat one, Jack and Sammy—in fact, I only taught it to him some little time back. De chairs want placing so, face downwards on de floor. Dose are de hedges. Now, Rory is de pack ob hounds, and I'm de horseman and de fox. You see, he knows what's coming. Go out ob de room, Rory. You ain't to come in till you hear de tally-ho, and de 'Yoiks, yoiks,' and de general features ob a fox-hunt."

"But will this be quite quiet?" inquired Mr. Stanton.

"Well, so long as you don't laugh—and dere's really nuffin to laugh at—dere oughtn't to be any noise to speak 'bout. Still, should dere be any noise to disturb Fatty, he's sure to let us know. Now, I supply de baying ob de hounds. If you listen, you will hear it in de distance drawing gradually closer."

Stanton was really astounded at Pete's ventriloquism. He watched his lips closely, but never saw them move once; then he watched Jack and Sam, thinking that they must be the ventriloquists, for that it was done that way he at once guessed. At first it was all right as regards noise, but as the baying drew nearer, and Rory got so excited that he joined in, the noise was pretty considerable, though nothing like the hunt that followed.

"Tally-ho!" howled Pete, going down on his hands and knees. "Yoiks! Tally-ho!"

Then he went round the room at a wonderful pace, considering that he was on his hands and knees, and he jumped over the overturned chairs in fine style, only smashing one of them to pieces as he inadvertently fell upon it. Rory, barking and howling at his loudest, moderated his pace to suit his master's, but he thoroughly enjoyed the game; and it would be hard to say who made the most noise, Pete or Rory, while Jack and Sam roared with laughter, for Rory kept pretending to snap at his master's back.

The waiter rushed into the room to implore Pete to desist, but his voice was quite inaudible above the uproar, and as Pete tried to dodge him he smashed another chair.

Mr. Stanton laughed, it is true, but he was really alarmed as to what would be the consequences. The most amiable and easy-going guest could scarcely have appreciated that frightful din, and Hall was nothing like that.

He rushed into the room with his whip once more, and this time he used it on Pete, but he did not stop the fox; then he gave Rory a vicious cut.

Now, this was altogether unfair. Rory was only obeying orders, and although a remarkably clever dog, he could not possibly know that the noise he was making annoyed Hall. He was not going to be hit for nothing, so he flew at Hall's leg, and bit the fattest part; then he went on with



the hunt, and having caught his master behind the curtains, pretended to kill him.

It was really most realistic, and beyond tearing the curtains in several places, and knocking over a small table on which there were several china ornaments, they did no damage.

"Dat's de fox hunt," panted Pete. "I will show you de man and dog fight when Hall gets to sleep, 'cos dat makes a noise."

"Ha, ha, ha! I reckon if it makes more noise than the fox hunt he won't sleep for so long," cried Sam.

"Here, old hoss," cried Pete, turning on Hall, who was howling at his bite, "you ain't got de right to make all dis noise at dis time ob night. Waiter, just you take dat man to bed, and lock his door. I won't hab him coming to make all dese yowls. My dog bitten you, has he? Well, he must hab taken you for de fox, or someting like dat. Buzz off! I want to show a few more tricks."

"Really, Pete," exclaimed Mr. Stanton, "I think it is time we went to bed. It is past one o'clock, and I must be in London early to-morrow."

"Well, look here, old hoss, I'm going to de bank to stop dose notes, so I will run you up in de motor-car. We will start early. See here, waiter, we must hab breakfast at seven o'clock. I hab got de car in proper running order, and we sha'n't be so mighty long getting dere, not at de rate we shall go. Well, Fatty, you can go to bed now, 'cos dere won't be any more noise."

Pete was utterly wrong. His room was next to Hall's, and long before that angry man had fallen asleep Pete's snoring commenced. Hall could hear it distinctly through the partition, and for some time he breathed to the time of those awful bursts. He could not help himself. He covered his head with the bedclothes, but that did not keep out the snore, and he found himself counting the bursts at last, and waiting for a fresh one.

People declare that if you count imaginary sheep leaping over a hedge it sends you to sleep, but no one counting Pete's snores could possibly go to sleep. Hall leapt from his bed in his night gear, and, flinging his door open, went and hammered at Pete's. There was a window open somewhere, and a wind had sprung up in the night. A big gust swept along the passage and caught Hall's door, which shut with a bang. This appeared to him to be of no consequence whatever. He thumped at Pete's door till he awoke him.

"You vagabond of a nigger!" he howled. "If you don't stop that row I'll smash your door down, and brain you with the pieces!"

"Why, I'm as quiet as a mouse, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "I ain't uttered a sound. In fact, I was asleep when you woke me up."

"I know you were, you brutal beast; but your snoring is enough to drive a man into a lunatic asylum."

"Well, I should say dat was de best place for you. Go back to bed, and if you come waking me up again, I'll come out to you and stuff you up de chimbley."

"If you make that row again——"

"Oh, go to bed! You ain't fit to be in an hotel. What you want is a good sized pigsty. I neber came across such a noisy rascal in all my life. Get to bed wid you!"

Pete hurled one of his boots at the door, just to show Hall that he was in earnest, and that worthy thought perhaps it would be advisable to obey the order, so as to save further trouble. He went to his door and fumbled about in the dark, not being quite certain which was the hinge and which the handle. However, he at last discovered it, and then he also discovered

that the door shut with a catch. It could be opened from the inside very easily by the little knob, but it could only be opened from the outside with a key.

Hall hurled himself against the door with a crash, and had it opened inwards there is not the slightest doubt that his weight would have opened it. But as it opened outwards the impact had no effect, except to make a noise. Hall made three or four more attempts, but he only bruised his shoulder, and this made him fearfully angry.

"I say, old hoss," bawled Pete, "you ain't making much noise dere!"

"You stupid rascal, my door is shut!"

"Well, open it wid a little less noise. How do you suppose dat I am going to get a proper night's rest wid you making all dis row? Go to bed wid you!"

Didn't Hall wish he could do so; but that locked door rendered the thing utterly impossible. He charged at the door again.

"Do go to bed!" howled Pete.

"You empty-headed brute, I tell you my door is locked, and I can't get into my room!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Den sleep on de mat outside my door, and hold your row. If you make dat noise much longer I shall chuck a jug ob water ober you."

"In what room does that villain of a waiter sleep?" howled Hall.

"In a bed-room, old hoss."

"I know that, you empty-headed brute, but——"

"Den what did you ask for, old hoss? Go to sleep!"

"In which bed-room, idiot?"

Now, Pete knew no more than did Hall, but he guessed.

"Top floor, No. 26."

"Lend me a light."

"I don't care to get out ob bed in de dark. Dere might be ghosts or tintacks. You can easy see your way. Good-night!"

"I'd like to break the villain's neck!" growled Hall, groping his way along the passage; and Pete roared with laughter as he heard him stumble over Jack's boots, which that worthy had flung into the passage rather carelessly.

Hall commenced to roar for a light, but Pete heard no answer from Jack's room. Probably he did not care to get out of bed to find the angry man a light, and considered that sort of work was more suited to the waiter, at any rate, he did not get a light. He had to grope his way up the narrow staircase in the dark, and it was an exceedingly dark night. As for seeing the numbers on the doors, that was an utter impossibility. But that would not have mattered, because Pete's guess was far from the mark.

It happened that the waiter slept in the basement of the house. The cook slept at the top of the house, and when she heard Hall groping about she became alarmed. A burglary had been committed at that hotel in her time, and she had ever since stood in awe of another one taking place.

She hurried on a few clothes, seized the water-jug, which was the only available weapon in her room, then she opened her door, and, seeing a dim white form, hurled that jug at it, then slammed and locked her door, and shrieked on her top note. Hall received the jug in his chest, and the water splashed all over him, while the jug dropped on his toes, and smashed to atoms.

Hall thought it better to retreat, and when he reached the lower floor he had not the slightest idea which room his was; but it would have been all the same if he had known, for he could not possibly have got in without



the key. However, fortune favoured him now, for he found one of the doors unfastened, and entering that room, he got off his drenched garments, and wrapping himself in a blanket, went to sleep.

He was awoke at break of day by Pete thundering at Jack's door.

"Listen to me!" cried Hall, slightly opening his door. "Send the waiter up to me immediately."

"Why, de old hoss has changed his room!"

"Tell the waiter to bring my clothes from my room."

"Yah, yah, yah! I 'spect it will be advisable to let you hab your clothes, my poor old hoss. You wait two-free minutes. Oh, here comes de waiter! Look here, William, Hall wants his clothes, and he's got dem locked in his room. Just bring up your keys, and I'll fetch dem for him."

"I've got them here, sir," answered William: "That's the key, but I can fetch them for him."

"Nunno! You get on wid our breakfast. I'll soon get dose clothes."

Pete really intended to do so, and there is not the slightest doubt that he would have succeeded, had not William, quite inadvertently, shown him the wrong key. It went into the lock all right, but Pete could not turn it, and instead of trying another key, as most men would have done, Pete used what he called a little gentle pressure.

"Tought it was bound to turn. Must be rusty, I 'spect. Golly, dis is mighty strange, too! De key goes round and round, but the door doesn't come unlocked. Look at dat, now!" added Pete, pulling out the key. "De business end ob de key has come unstuck. I wonder how dey are going to get dat door open now? Tink I'd better ask Hall. P'r'aps he will know better dan I do. At any rate, he can't know much worse. Hie, old hoss! Are you dere? Oh, you are, are you? Well, you needn't howl at me like dat, when I'm doing you a good turn. You know dat lock on your door? M'yes! Just hark at de man yowling, Jack."

Jack had opened his door to see what was the matter, and he found Pete with the broken key in his hand.

"Dere's someting wrong wid de lock ob de door, Hall. De end ob de key has come off in it, and I don't see how you are going to unfasten it. Do you know de way?"

"You insensate fool!" yelled Hall, slightly opening his door. "Do you mean to say that you have broken the key in the lock?"

"Well, I blame de key. I don't blame dis child in any way. I merely put a little gentle pressure wid my fumb and finger, and de key kept turning round and round, and when I pulled out de top, I found dere was no bottom to it."

"Why, you stupid villain, if you have broken the key in the lock, how are they going to get in to get my clothes?"

"Dat's what I hab come to ask you, old hoss. I tought you might be able to answer dat one. Nunno, you can't? Well, p'r'aps Jack can."

"The only way I can suggest is to send for a locksmith, and let him pick the lock," said Jack. "It is very certain that if the wards of a key are broken in it that you will not be able to unlock it in the ordinary way."

"Jack tinks a locksmith would be de usefullest ting to get, my dear old hoss. He says dat dey won't be able to unlock de door widout dat man, and I rader tink he is right. It's a mighty strong door, and I don't tink anything short ob a good sized axe would open it."

"You stupid ruffian, I have no clothes!"

"Den it seems to me dat you are de stupid one 'bout dat matter. However, if you like I will order a locksmith. In fact, I will go out and find

one, 'cos I can't spare de waiter for de purpose. He's busy getting our breakfast."

"Make haste, then, you born idiot!"

Pete went out, and he walked through the town; but he failed to find what he wanted, and so he went for a walk into the country, and returned to the hotel just in time for breakfast.

"Well, did you find the locksmith, Pete?" inquired Jack.

"Nunno, Jack; I don't tink dey keep dem in dis town. I went down de street, and as dere wasn't one dere I went for a country walk. Now let's hab breakfast."

"But what about Hall? He says he has only got a drenched nightshirt to put on."

"Should advise de man to hab it dried," observed Pete.

"But, bother it, he can't go about in a nightshirt, you know."

"I don't see why not, Jack. It's just as easy to walk in a nightshirt as it is in a pair ob trousers."

"But look here, Pete, the man has been howling himself hoarse. He says he has to catch a train, or something."

"Should say he would be more likely to catch a cold."

"Hadn't you better tell him you cannot find a locksmith. William keeps telling him that the man will be there in two minutes. He told him that an hour ago, to my knowledge, and Hall has been howling ever since."

"De man must tink he is a hungry wolf," observed Pete. "Seems to me dat he's gibing us a lot ob trouble. Ob course, I can go and tell him de locksmith ain't coming; but I don't see de good ob it, 'cos if he doesn't come, Hall is bound to know he ain't coming. Still, I will just go and hab a talk to de man, and try and soothe him a little."

Jack and Sam followed upstairs, as they were rather interested to know how Pete would set about soothing the infuriated man.

"I reckon he will need a lot of soothing when he learns that he is as near getting his clothes as he was before Pete started," murmured Sam. "But we shall see how he gets on."

Pete stepped noiselessly to the door, and listened a little. Hall was howling for the waiter at the top of his voice, and the fact that no one took the slightest heed of him rendered him still more furious. He had already smashed his bell; therefore it was impossible to communicate with William except by shouting, as, of course, Hall could not leave the room without his clothes. William had got tired of running up and downstairs telling the angry man that the locksmith was just coming, and that he would be there in about a couple of minutes, so he let him shout.

"Are you dere?" demanded Pete, tapping at the door.

"You know I am, you hound of a nigger!"

"Well, old hoss, I'm only asking a civil question. I wanted information on de point as to weder you were dere or not. Dere would be no sense in my howling to a man who wasn't dere. I tought p'r'aps you might hab gone out for a walk to buy some more clothes, or something like dat. Howeber, seeing dat you are dere, I hab come to tell you all about de locksmith."

"Is he here?"

"Must break de news to him gently," murmured Pete. "It's no good vexing de man. I was just going to tell you 'bout dat locksmith, my dear old hoss. I went out to find him."

"Well, is he here?"

"I walked down de town, but I rader tink he must be up de town."

"Did you find him?"

"I'm just going to tell you 'bout dat man. Well, when I got to de bottom



ob de town I didn't find him, so den I tought, as it was getting rader late, and I knew you would be waiting—"

"Did you find de ruffian?"

"Look here, Hall, you ain't got de right to be so impatient as all dat. You know, I'm an amateur detective, and can find most anyting. Well, a locksmith ain't a difficult ting to find, when you start looking for him, and it stands to reason dat a detective would hab no trouble 'bout de matter. As I tell you, I found dat he wasn't dat end ob de town, so I at once knew dat he must be at de oder end. A deduction like dat is a simple matter for a skilful detective, and I made de deduction."

"When is de villain coming?"

"Well, you see, as I had located de man, and wanted to go for a walk in de country before breakfast, I didn't tink it would be any good bodering furder 'bout de locksmith, so I went for de walk, and den came back to breakfast; but I ain't got de least doubt dat if my deduction is right, and de locksmith libs at dis end ob de town, dat he will be able to be found easy nuff. Now, just hark at dat man! Ain't he going on in a sickening manner?"

"Send de waiter for him, you empty-headed lout of a nigger!"

"Now, see here, Hall; I don't mind you calling me all sorts ob names, and doing tings like dat, but I ain't going to allow me to go widout breakfast. William is getting dat breakfast aforesaid, and I ain't going to allow you to make him spoil my breakfast. I would rader you went widout clothes for de next fortnight."

"You shall send him. I insist on him going immediately. Do you tink I am going to be kept a prisoner in this room all day?"

"I dunno anyting 'bout dat, but I know I'm not going to be kept widout my breakfast while de waiter fetches you your clothes. What you had better do is to go to sleep. You can't hab much rest de way you were fooling 'bout de house last night, and now is a good time to take it. Go to sleep for two-free hours, and I dare say by dat time your clothes will turn up."

"I won't, you insolent villain!"

"Well, then, keep awake, and sing sweet little songs to yourself; only don't make too much noise, 'cos we don't want to be disturbed while we are eating our breakfast. Come on, boys! It's no good listening to him any more. I know what he is going to say next time, and it is exactly as he has been saying eber since he awoke dis morning—'Get me my clothes! Should say he had better borrow one ob de cook's dresses.'"

Pete did not even trouble to tell William that Hall had ordered him to go in search of a locksmith, and it would have been all de same if he had, because William knew that de comrades were going to start immediately after breakfast, and he was not such an idiot as to lose his chance of tips while he searched for locksmiths.

From William's point of view, matters were perfectly satisfactory. He received far more liberal tips than he had ever anticipated, and when de comrades started off they could still hear Hall howling for his clothes, but William said he thought he would get them about lunch time, provided he made it worth de locksmith's while to work in his dinner hour.

They covered de first ten miles or so at a speed that somewhat alarmed Mr. Stanton; but, as Pete put it, de quicker they went de sooner they would reach their destination.

"I am thinking of de danger, Pete," exclaimed Stanton.

"Dere ain't de slightest danger in going fast. De only danger is in stopping suddenly; besides, I should say you would be insured."

"I certainly am, but I have the feeling that my wife would not like me to be killed, and, to tell you the truth, I would not like it myself."

"I don't tink we shall kill you, old hoss," said Pete cheerfully; "and eben if we do we will gib you a slab-up funeral, wid a nice slab of marble to cover you ober. But what's all dis in our way?"

They were coming to a splash—that is to say, a little stream running across the narrow lane. It was only a few inches deep, but a gipsy caravan had drawn up on the other side of the stream, and while the women were washing their clothes in the water, the men were lolling in the grass, smoking their pipes. The caravan was drawn across the lane, and the horses were browsing off the grass at the side, while a little further along was another caravan.

"Now, den, you dere," exclaimed Pete, pulling up, for there was not room for him to pass, "do you want all de lane to yourself?"

"All right, Snowball!" growled a ruffianly-looking fellow. "Don't you be in such a hurry. If you want to get by in a hurry you will have to pay toll. A sovereign won't hurt your lot."

"See here, we ain't paying any toll."

"Then you will have to wait till we are ready to go on."

"If you don't shift dat caravan out ob de way I shall come and shift it for you!"

"You'll do which?"

"Now, ain't dose men annoying, Jack?" exclaimed Pete. "I rader tink dey want to get up a row, so dat dey can hab de excuse for attacking us. If dat's de case dey shall hab deir desire. You guard de car."

Pete sprang out, and was about to cross the splash by the little footboard at the side, when a burly ruffian stepped on the planks, which were about six feet above the water, and grasping a heavy stick, he stood menacingly in front of Pete, while some more of the gang crossed through the water, and made their way to the motor-car.

As Pete continued to advance the gipsy dealt him a murderous blow at his head with the stick, but, dodging it, Pete struck him between the eyes with a force that sent him into the water, then, springing across the planks, Pete drew the caravan into the ditch, and, running on ahead, he served the second one in a similar manner.

Uttering the most abominable language, the gipsy, who had gone into the water, made a rush at him. He had dropped his stick, but he knew how to use his fists, and the way he went for Pete looked as though he meant it, but he soon learnt that Pete also knew how to use his fists, and he received some blows that staggered him.

"I'll teach you to shove my caravans into the ditch," he roared.

"All right, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You go on teaching me. I shall gib you a few like dat during de lesson. Nasty one dat, wasn't it? And here comes de car."

Jack had an idea that the gang were going to attack the car, so directly Pete shifted the caravans he went ahead, and the gipsies had to get out of his way, but as soon as they saw that the leader of their gang was getting very much the worst of it at Pete's hands they rushed to his rescue.

"We're a-coming, Bill!" bawled one of them. "Knock the nigger's head off his shoulders!"

"Sort ob so!" exclaimed Pete, dealing the ruffian a blow in the jaw that, big though he was, caused him to stagger backwards. Then Pete seized him round the body, flung him into the front of the car, and, springing in himself, whizzed along the lane.



A shower of stones came after them, but no damage was done, and the car was very soon out of range.

"Now you see, Bill, you ain't in at all a pleasant position," exclaimed Pete, keeping him down with his feet. "Nunno! You lie where you are. If you tink to stop people and make dem pay toll, it seems to me dat de safest place for you is away from your people. I will take you for a little journey, and you will hab one ob de finest walks back dat you eber had in your life!"

"See here, jest you let me get out, or it will be the worse for you!" growled Bill, struggling to get up. But the rap over the head Pete caught him with his knuckles induced him to keep still.

"Can't help weder it is de worse for me or not; you ain't going to get up till I gib you permission. I am going to take you for a mighty nice drive, and den I shall decide weder I hand you ober to de police; at the same time, it would be a boder to hab to prosecute you."

"Well, let me get back to the caravans. They won't be able to get them out of the ditch without my help."

"Dey will hab to do widout your help for a long time, my poor old hoss! You see, we are going to London, and, as I dare say you know, dat is a long way from here. Bery well, I shall take you dere, and chuck you out at some convenient spot, and you will hab to walk back if you want to join your people again. I dunno how many miles you will walk an hour, but we ain't going much furdur dan fifty. It won't take us long at dis pace, but it is likely to take you a little longer to walk back. Howeber, we ain't got anything to do wid dat, as dat's all your fault for trying to rob us."

"See here!" growled Bill. "You are a-taking me away from my honest work—"

"Yah, yah, yah! We'm taking you away from robbing people, and, as you will notice, you'm going mighty fast."

"The least you can do is to give me a sovereign for my loss of time, and set me down at some inn."

"Golly! De man expects us to reward him for having tried to rob us, but you will be rader disappointed 'bout dat matter, old hoss! I'm going to set you down 'bout forty miles from here!"

"How the thunder do you suppose I am going to get back?"

"You can find out a station, and take a train for all I care!"

"I haven't got the price of a drink on me."

"Well, if you had told us dat in de first case, and asked for help in a proper manner, you would hab got it. As it is, you won't get anything, beyond de two black eyes I hab already giben you. Next time you feel like robbing anyone, you had better make sure dat you are stronger dan dey are, else you may get into worse trouble dan you are going to get into ober dis little affair. For your punishment I shall let you walk back forty miles, widout de price of a drink on you, and p'r'aps dat will be a lesson to you for future occasions."

Finding that Pete was obdurate, Bill appealed to Jack and Sam, and even to Stanton and Freddy, but they felt that the punishment would do the ruffian good, and told him so. Then he tried threats and abuse, but this had even less effect than his pleading.

"See here!" exclaimed Pete at last, giving him another rap over the head. "Just you stop dat noise, else you will get hurt. You know de distances, Freddy, better dan I do. Just you tell me when you tink I hab taken de man forty miles from his caravans, and den I'll frow him out."

Bill decided on remaining quiet after this, except occasionally as they whizzed onwards, he declared that they had come at least fifty miles. At

last Freddy gave it as his opinion that they had covered the distance, and Pete pulled up the car.

"Now, den, Bill, you can scoot, and if you try to stone us I shall run back and gib you de worst frashing you hab eber had in your life. I dunno how bad de oder ones were, but I hab de feeling dat de one I should gib you would be considerably worse. Buzz off!"

"Give me something to get back with."  
 "I ain't gibing you anything. You will reach dem easily by to-night, 'cos forty miles ain't too much for a great strong man like you to do in a day. Out you get!"

"I'll have a vengeance for this that you won't get over in a hurry, and so I tell you! I'll track you down——"

"Get out ob it!" cried Pete, giving him a shove that sent him sprawling into the lane, then he ran the car onwards, and when they reached London Pete decided to put up at the same hotel at which they had previously stayed.

Pete's idea was to get to the bank as quickly as possible, so Jack and Sam offered to accompany him, as they had an idea that he might get into difficulties, and they left Rory in Freddy's care, while they took leave of Mr. Stanton.

### CHAPTER 3.

**Pete Cannot Get His Case Taken Up—How He Carried the Big Man into the Board-Room—Turning the Tables—Pete Does a Little More Detective Work—Smashed—The Arrest.**

**A**RRIVED at the bank, they were shown into a room where an elderly and particularly pompous gentleman was seated.

"Well, what can I do for you?" he demanded.

"Why, it's dis way, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, seating himself in a chair. I hab been robbed of free-four hundred pounds, and I want you to catch de thief, and stop all de notes."

"How do you suppose I can catch the thief. I am not a detective."

"Nunno! I'm de detective in de job, and I ain't allowing any interference. Tink you can stop de notes?"

"What are their numbers?"

"Eh?"

"What are their numbers?"

"Dat's where it comes in. I don't know how many dere were, but I should say dere were 'bout fifty five pound and ten pound notes. Dere might hab been twenty or so among dem."

"Well, what were their numbers?"

"I tink de old hoss is a bit dotty on de crumpet," observed Pete, in a voice that was distinctly audible to the great man."

"I haven't time to waste with you," said the indignant official.

"Well, send for your master, den, and try not to look so stupid. Dis is a Government institution, and I expect de clerks to do deir duty. You ain't put here to gib yourself airs, and pretend dat you are a sort ob lord, or one ob dose insecks. You get your wages for doing your work, or pretending to do it, and not for sitting in dat chair and trying to make yourself look twice as big as you are."

"I never heard such gross impertinence in all my life! How dare you speak to me like that, fellow? If you cannot behave yourself in a proper manner, I will have you turned out of the place. Do you know what numbers were on the notes?"



"I ain't got de slightest idea."

"Then, of course, they can't be stopped. How do you suppose I am going to stop them when you neither know the amount or the numbers?"

"Should say de best way would be to stop all de notes dat come in, and I will call here each morning to tell you if dey are mine; or I tink it would save me trouble if you were to come round to our hotel and bring all de notes. Dis would save my time, and I should not hab to come out on wet days."

"You must be out of your mind. I do not suppose you have lost any notes at all. Good-morning!"

"I marked dose notes wid a pin-prick frough dem. I always mark my notes dat road; it savs de trouble ob taking de numbers. All you hab got to do is to watch all de notes dat come in, and if you see a pin-prick frough any ob dem just by de amount, why, dose notes belong to me."

"Good-morning!"

"Ain't he an exasperating old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "He doesn't seem to take a bit ob interest in his duties."

"If I had to watch every note that came into the bank to see if it had a pin-prick through it, I should have rather more to do than a thousand men could perform. You don't understand. Leave the room!"

"I ain't going to do anything ob de sort till I get my notes," declared Pete. "If you won't attend to de matter, I'll send for one ob de directors, and see if he will; and if he won't, I'll shake his teef down his froat. Where's de bell? Oh, here it is! Well, dis must be de footman. See here, old hoss, just you buzz off to one ob your directors, and tell him Jack, Sam, and Pete want to see him in dis room immediately."

"Turn that man out of my room," ordered the official; and the porter actually made an attempt to do so. He was a young man, possessed of no particular strength, and the first thing that he realised was that he was seated on Pete's knee, while that worthy was jogging him up and down.

"Now, just you behave yourself, my dear old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "It ain't your fault, I know, 'cos you'm bound to obey orders. Put dose two sovereigns in your pocket; and look here, Massah Bigpot, if de directors won't come to me, I must go to de directors, and teach dem better manners."

Then Jack gave a gasp of horror, for Pete dropped the porter, and, picking up the great man in his arms, just as a nurse carries a little child, he bore him struggling from the room. All the struggling in the world would not have enabled him to escape, and Pete carried him along the passage until he came to a door marked "Board Room." Opening this with one hand, he carried his extremely large and heavy burden into the room.

A number of serious-looking gentlemen were seated round a table. The one at the head of it was a sedate-looking party, but when he saw the ludicrous scene he smothered his face with his handkerchief, and his portly sides shook, while a roar of laughter burst forth.

"Gentlemen," cried Pete's victim, "I protest against this outrageous conduct."

"Scandalous—scandalous!" exclaimed the fat gentleman. "Ha!—ahem! How do you do, Mr. Owen? How are you, Mr. Grant? Pete, you rascal, will you put that gentleman down? Only his fun. Ha, ha!—er—most shameful! Always playing tricks."

"I did not know you were acquainted with them, sir," stammered the official, as Pete put him on his feet and patted his head.

"Yes, yes! I have met them before on several occasions. But you ought not to behave like this, Pete."

"But, my dear old hoss, de man wouldn't attend to my business."

"They have a very large account here," explained the stout gentleman. "We have securities to a vast amount of theirs. Now, Pete, what is it you want?"

"I hab been robbed ob two-free hundred pounds, and——"

"Do you know the numbers of the notes?"

"Nunno, but dey hab all got a pin-prick frough dem."

"So have a few million more notes that come here."

"I want you to watch for de pin-prick."

"I see. Well, we will consider the matter, but I can't give you much hope of finding them."

"Den what would you advise me to do?"

"Be more careful next time. Good-bye! Mind you don't get up to mischief."

"It's dis way——"

"Certainly, certainly! Good-morning, my dear fellow! Look after him, Jack and Sam. Good-bye!"

"Golly, ain't he got a businesslike way about him!" exclaimed Pete, when he found himself in the passage, for the stout gentleman had politely led him out of the room, shaking hands with him in a most friendly manner. "Still, I don't quite like de promise he has made. It don't seem definite enough. Tell you what it is, boys. It stands to reason dat Jenkins will come to de bank to get gold for dose notes, and it ain't at all likely dat he will leave it long before he comes, 'cos I might stop dem, if I had taken de precaution to take de numbers. Now, I'm going to keep watch on all de people who go into de Bank. I'll stand ober here by dis big building, and if Jenkins comes, as I 'spect he will, he won't be likely to notice me."

"Bother!" exclaimed Jack. "There is not the slightest chance of getting the money back."

"I don't care 'bout dat, Jack; but it ain't no good my being a detective if I leave a dangerous man like dat roaming about robbing people right and left."

"He won't come to the Bank himself. He would be afraid to do so."

"He ain't at all de sort ob man to be afraid ob anyting. De man has got to be detected, and dat's what I am going to do wid him."

Now, it was not at all a nice morning; in fact, it was raining heavily. Jack and Sam did not want to leave Pete, and as they did not want to get drenched to the skin, they sheltered under the Royal Exchange. Pete stood out in the open, and he remained there for at least a couple of hours, by which time he was about as wet as he could be. Suddenly he darted across the street, and Jack and Sam went after him, though they felt convinced that the man he was following was not Jenkins. The young fellow looked like a bank clerk, and he carried a bag fastened to his waist with a chain, while on that bag were some initials they could not see in the distance. He wore a tall hat and frock coat, and was very well dressed, while his appearance was decidedly good. Pete followed him up to the counter to the left, standing a little way behind.

The stranger carefully placed his bag on the counter, unlocked it, and took out a bundle of notes.

"Sovereigns, please," he said. "Three hundred and fifty pounds."

The clerk counted the notes quickly, glanced at a list by his side, then placed some bags of gold in the scales, weighed them quickly, and pushed them across the counter to the young fellow, who carelessly dropped them into his bag. He just counted them over once more, then locked his bag. Then Pete's hand was raised, and he brought it down on the top of the young fellow's tall hat with a force that smashed it flat, and sent the



proprietor of it on the floor. In an instant a couple of porters seized Pete, who seized the young man with one hand, and the bag with the other.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Got him first time! All right, old hosses, you can hold on as hard as you like; still, I hab got de man and de money. Dose notes are mine, and dis man has stolen dem from me. His name is Jenkins."

"My name is Hudson," declared the stranger, "and that money is wanted for wages for my firm."

"Sort ob long firm, dat," exclaimed Pete. "I dunno weder your name is Hudson or Sniff, and I don't care, but I know you if I don't know your name. You robbed me ob dat money last night. You hab shaved off your moustache since den, but I would know your walk anywhere. Same ting I would know dose notes anywhere. I suppose you bought dat frock-coat and tall hat for de occasion; same remarks apply to dis bag."

"Had you the numbers of the notes?" inquired the cashier, considerably impressed by Pete's manner."

"Nunno; but I know dem, same as I know him. You look at dose notes, and you will find a pin-prick frough dem all. It's by de five in de five-pound ones, or de ten in de ten-pound ones. Find dat, old hoss?"

"It is certainly so!" exclaimed the clerk. "Release him. Be pleased to step into this room." Then he motioned for a detective to follow.

"You come along dis way, Jenkins or Hudson, as de case may be. I don't leabe go of you, and so I tell you." Another gentleman was in the room, and Jack and Sam also entered.

"You say these notes were stolen from you?" inquired the gentleman, after the cashier had explained matters in a whisper.

"Dat's so, old hoss."

"How did you become possessed of them?"

"Frough Jack dere; dat one wid de grin on his countenance."

"That is so," explained Jack. "I drew a cheque against our account here some—stay, it was last Saturday. The cheque was for a thousand pounds. We three have a joint account, but we sign cheques separately. That one was signed by me. These notes were in part payment of it. I have some more in my pocket. My friend Sam will have some more, because he and I do not lose our notes, as a rule. Pete does. Ha, ha, ha! These are not the first he has lost, and I will guarantee they are not the last. However, he is right this time in his detective work. That is the man who robbed him, although he has altered his appearance so much that I did not recognise him at first. I could swear to him now."

"Sit down, gentlemen. Just check the notes given for the cheque in question, Hamlin."

"One moment!" exclaimed Jack. "Here are some more, given for the same cheque. You will probably find the numbers are consecutive."

"And I reckon you had better take these," exclaimed Sam, pulling out his pocket-book.

"Spect dere will be a few ob de notes missing, 'cos we hab spent a bit," said Pete. "Had to pay for some damage, and so on."

"Perhaps while the cashier is checking the numbers you will explain what has happened, gentlemen," said the official. "It is necessary to investigate the matter thoroughly, and perhaps this gentleman may be able to give an explanation later on."

"I must inform you that I am a detective," exclaimed that worthy, and anything that is said may be used in evidence against anyone."

"Why, old hoss," cried Pete, "gib us your hand! I'm an amateur detective myself. Funny ting, but, so far, de people I hab detected always

seem to rob me, and it comes mighty costly one way and anoder. I ain't made a halfpenny profit out ob de business yet, and I hab lost more money dan I care to tink ob. Don't you find dis detective work makes you rader poor? Nunno? Well, I tink I shall hab to get some ideas from you as to how it is done. Tell de gentleman what happened, Jack, and don't guffaw so much ober de matter. Jenkins Hudson ain't guffawing."

Very succinctly Jack explained matters, and the detective watched Jenkins's face all the time.

"Do you wish to make any statement?" he inquired, when Jack had explained the whole matter.

"No, except that it is a got-up affair, and that I am perfectly innocent. That money is mine, and I shall prosecute these three ruffians."

"Bery well!" exclaimed Pete. "In dat case, I shall gib you in custody. Send for de bobby. I ain't listening to anoder word."

"I would like a few words in private with you. This negro does not understand what a serious thing he is doing, but I can point out to him the error of his ways," said Jenkins, smiling at the detective.

"I can look after my own errors, widout your assistance, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "Shouldn't go to a downright low swindler for any improvement in my character. You see, de man is a forger, as well as a common thief. Now, I don't care 'bout dat money dere, but I don't consider it right to let a dangerous criminal like dat man to be at large. De man is smart, and he has got a way wid him dat is convincing. All he has to do now is to convince a judge and jury dat he's a nice, good-hearted man, and dat I'm a scoundrel and a thief—den he will be all right. Take him off. He's habing no private conversation wid me!"

"You will regret this all your life!" declared Jenkins. "In a few words I can explain matters to you, and show you the seriousness of your position!"

"Neber did mind serious positions, old hoss. You look after yourself, and don't you trouble 'bout me. Come 'long, boys!"

"I think it would be better to leave the money in the possession of the bank for the present," said the detective.

"Dat's all right, old hoss. You deal wid de matter as you tink fit. Jenkins is a mighty smart man, but I tink he will find he's got a smarter one to deal wid in you!"

"Well, you see, the credit of catching him is to your account," answered the detective, smiling. "I must say you've done very well for an amateur detective!"

"I dunno!" growled Pete. "I ain't quite satisfied wid de business, and I ain't at all sure dat I sha'n't retire on a pension. I dunno weder de Government will grant one. Still, we will tink 'bout dat later on."

When Pete returned to the hotel, he was received in a very cool manner by Lively. That worthy had an idea that no tips were in store for him. It was a stupid idea to get into his head, but he judged by past experience. All he would have had to do to get tipped was to be a little more amiable and civil, but he got surly instead, and so he got fearfully chaffed. Tom, the page-boy, on the other hand, did his utmost to give satisfaction, and Pete kept tipping him before Lively.

"You see, Tom, I want to annoy dat man for his grumpiness!"

"You can annoy him all day long this road," grinned Tom. "I must say, you are the kindest-hearted gentleman as ever stopped at this hotel!"

"Well, it ain't kind-heartedness exactly, Tom. I want to punish Lively, and ebry time I gib you a tip it makes his face go yellow. Watch him now. He's coming wid a cup ob coffee. I'll try him wid an old joke.



Waiter, is dis coffee or tea?" demanded Pete, smelling it, and shaking his head gravely. There was nothing the matter with the coffee.

"Corfee, of course—the same as you ordered!"

"You'm sure it's coffee?"

"Yus."

"Den bring me a cup ob tea! Tom, just fetch me dat paper, dere, and dere's half-a-sobereign for your trouble!"

Lively muttered language that no waiter should have used, and stormed out of the room.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Did you see how vexed he got?"

"He, he, he! I did so. But am I really to keep this, sir?"

"Ob course you are! I'll try him again."

Lively entered the room with the tea, then Pete gave him another order.

"Just go upstairs, Lively, and fetch my pipe off de dressing-table! I don't tink he will obey dat order," observed Pete, "unless dat half-crown I placed on dis table acts as a bait. You see, he may tink he's going to get it!"

Lively did obey the order. He did not want any complaints to the proprietor of the hotel, who would be sure to take Pete's part, because he was such an excellent customer. He brought the pipe down, and Pete ordered Tom to fetch the matches off the mantelpiece—he might have reached them from where he sat. Tom only had to move his right arm for the purpose.

"Dere's half-a-crown for your trouble, my lad!" said Pete, handing him the coin.

"If you think this 'ere is fair, I don't!" growled Lively. "Here you keep me running all over the place, and never give me so much as two-pence, while you tip that beast of a boy gold and silver all day long!"

"I'll consider de matter, Lively. Run away, I'm busy wid dis pipe. Just go and fetch me a halfpenny paper, Tom, and you can keep de change out ob dat half-crown for your trouble!"

This made Lively mad, but he had his vengeance by not giving Pete all the information he might have done.

"He's making a rod for his own back!" growled Lively.

"It will need a thick one to hurt him," observed Tom. "He's rolling in gold. I know that by the amounts he's given me. He thinks nothing of tipping a sovereign!"

"You ain't got the right to waste all your time over the black brute, and leave me to do your work, and I won't have it, so I tell you—not unless you give me half the tips."

"No fear! He has made me promise not to give up any of them, and I am not going to tell an untruth to a gentleman who behaves so liberal!"

"Do you call the black brute a gentleman? You don't know a gentleman when you see him!"

"Pr'aps not! I only wish all the gentlemen who come to this hotel were like him. I'd soon make my fortune, then!"

"I shall complain to the master!"

"So you can, for all I care. The master has told me to give the very best attention to the three comrades. He says I am to leave everything else, and wait on them, and that you can attend to the others."

Then Tom redoubled his energies—not that he wanted to get more tips, but because he was really a willing lad, and would have done his best to please anyone who treated him kindly, whether he got any tips or not. He was just one of those lads who are bound to succeed in life; for any lad who strives his hardest to please even a surly master is bound to get on. All he has to do is to make himself useful, and not be frightened of work,

and he is sure to become comfortably off, whatever his calling may be, because he can always change that for a better one.

The following afternoon Jack was trying to induce Pete to go out, when a card was handed to Pete, and on that card appeared the name of Jabez Nugent, solicitor, of Lincoln's Inn.

"Well, dis is from de prisoner," said Pete. "Show de gentleman in."

Mr. Nugent was a portly gentleman, with a florid complexion and jovial-looking face.

"Sit down, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "Gib him a cigar, Jack! Help yourself to wine!"

"Thanks!" exclaimed Mr. Nugent. "I do not often take wine in the middle of the day; still, I will not decline your kind offer. Nice day after the rain!"

"Yes. Dis sort ob weather is good for de London crops," observed Pete. "Yesterday was all right for de sewers. Dey must be flushed now and den. Now, do you tink dis case should proceed?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, that is what I have called about. It is not for me to dictate to you, but you will know best how to act. Capital wine that!"

"Help yourself, old hoss!"

"I don't remember smoking a nicer cigar than this!"

"Nunno. Jack is rader extravagant wid his cigars—ain't you, Jack?"

"Very, when you get hold of the case!"

"Shut up! Dis is a business matter, and we can't allow any silly observations to be made. Now, dis gentleman is full ob de law, and I want to ask his opinion concerning de case. Is it going to cost me much?"

"Well, that depends on what you call much. Of course, there is no concealing the fact that legal expenses are heavy. That is the—er—little document in connection with the case."

"M'yes! Dis seems all right," said Pete, shoving it in his pocket.

"Of course, you would have to appear in court," observed Nugent, blowing a cloud from his cigar, and helping himself to the third glass of wine. He appeared to do so in an absent-minded sort of way. "Appearing in court is annoying. Then, again, there would be all the fees."

"Shall I hab to pay dose?"

"Undoubtedly!"

"I don't seem to care for dat, and de question is weder it wouldn't be better to stop de case. What is your opinion concerning de matter?"

"My dear sir," exclaimed Nugent, helping himself to the fourth glass, and taking a slight sip—then he took a second sip that emptied the glass—

"I will advise you just as though the case were my own—in fact, between you, me, and the gatepost, I once had a similar case. I compromised."

"What, sort ob settled de matter out ob court? What are you guffawing at, Jack?"

"Nothing. Go on, Pete. You say the gentleman is full of law."

"M'yes, and de man will be full ob wine, too, if he goes on at dis rate!" observed Pete, taking up the decanter and coolly emptying its contents into the fender—for Nugent had helped himself to a fifth glass. "I want de best legal advice, and a man who swamps down port at a glass a minute or so, won't be in a fit state to gib it. You'm welcome to lunch at my expense, old hoss, but you ain't going to get drunk at it!"

"Well, you are extremely kind, my friend!" exclaimed Nugent, not at all put out at Pete's personal remark. "Perhaps it is wiser not to take too much before lunch. I will take a snack if you will kindly order it. Just the usual course, thank you!"



Pete ordered up a lunch, and Nugent ordered a bottle of champagne, but Pete altered that to soda-water.

"You ain't going to spoil your appetite, old hoss, and you ain't habing any more wine to drink in dis show. Now, fire ahead; when you hab finished lunching we will finish de business!"

Nugent did not mind. He had two plates of soup, one of fish, and then he went on in a manner that would have done credit to Pete. That worthy did not mind that. He told Nugent to order what he liked, but when he ordered wine Pete countermanded the order and substituted mineral waters.

"Now den, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, when the rather lengthy meal was finished. "You tink I had better stop de case?"

"I do," answered the jovial Nugent, helping himself to another of Jack's cigars. "I would strongly recommend it!"

"And let de man escape?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Very good. Yes, let the man escape!"

"You don't tink he will go and do de same ting again?"

"Well, you must look after that. Still, you can afford it!"

"I don't care for losing free hundred pounds."

"A couple of thousand, you mean!"

"I ain't lost dat."

"Well, roughly, that is what it will cost you. I think my client will accept two thousand, and you would have to pay my fees."

"Golly! Ain't you acting for me in dis case?" gasped Pete.

"Certainly not, my dear fellow. I am acting for Mrs. Sarah Barnes."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Jack. "Ha, ha, ha! I thought you were making a mistake, Pete; but, knowing what a skilful detective you are, I did not like to interfere!"

"Golly!"

"I am acting for the lady in a breach of promise case," observed Mr. Nugent. "I believe I could induce her to settle the matter out of court for two thousand pounds and my fees, which would come to two hundred pounds."

"Golly! And I hab been consulting de enemy's solicitor, and feeding him, and wining him! I thought you came 'bout Jenkins' case. Dat's de one I was discussing!"

"Sorry to hear that there is a second case with Mrs. Jenkins," said Nugent, making a note of the name. "I do not know that lady. Well, are you prepared to pay two thousand pounds damages, and my fees of two hundred pounds?"

Pete stepped to the window and opened it, then he stepped to Mr. Nugent, seized him by the back of the neck and the back of the trousers, carried him to the window, and dropped him on the pavement. It was only a fall of a few feet, so it did not hurt him. He rose to his feet, picked up his hat, brushed it with his sleeve, and walked away. Pete sat in a chair and gazed into futurity. Jack and Sam howled with laughter.

"Ain't dis mighty awful!" groaned Pete. "De woman wants to rogue me out of two thousand pounds! I don't mind de money so much, but a detective ain't got to be bested in dis manner. I ain't going to compromise de case. I ain't habing anything to do wid lawyers in de matter. What I'm going to do is to defend de case myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha! All right, Pete!" laughed Jack. "I suppose you will call Sam and me as witnesses?"

"You ain't going to put me into a hole, Jack?"

"Couldn't if I wanted to do so. I shall have to speak the truth, you know."

"I ain't habing anyting to do wid lawyers. Freddy, you will hab to help me wid dis matter."

"Engage a good lawyer," advised Freddy.

"I won't! We'm got to work matters out. You come along wid me."

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. At seven o'clock Jack went to their private room, and found the door locked. Pete said they did not require dinner, but a little later Tom took them up refreshments. At ten o'clock he took up more. At midnight Jack went again, but Pete told him to go away, because they were busy. The fact is, Freddy knew a little about the law, and he was delighted to have some work to do, because he was a conscientious young man, and felt that he had been receiving his salary without earning it. Of course, he knew that the whole thing was a fraud, and he did his very utmost on behalf of his patron.

Pete was very quick to grasp the points, and Freddy impressed them upon him until he had a very good idea of what he ought to do, and what he ought not to do. There was one thing Pete also learnt, and that was that Freddy was an indefatigable worker. He stuck to it all through the night; and when at last Pete went to sleep on the sofa, he awoke to find Freddy still working at that case.

In the morning Nugent called again, and Pete directed that he should be shown into the room, where he and Freddy were still at it.

"Give him no information, Pete," were Freddy's last words. "From what you tell me, I should not be surprised if he makes something out of Jenkins's case. He appears to think it is a similar one, and if we can only let him think this, you ought to make him look stupid in court. He will take every advantage of you, so you must not hesitate to take it of him. Here he comes."

Nugent entered the room smiling, and he offered to shake hands with Pete in the most friendly manner. That worthy gave him a grip that made him howl and dance.

"Yes, it is a nice sort ob morning, old hoss," answered Pete, working his hand up and down. "What's dat? Hurting? Must be a kink ob gout. You should be careful wid dat gout. Port wine ain't good for de gout, you know. Eh? Crushing your hand? Look at dat, now! Sit down, my dear old hoss. Nice morning, as you say. Was dat what you came to tell me?"

"Can we have a few minutes' private conversation?"

"Suttinly! I can gib you half an hour. Like a glass ob wine. M'yes? Bery well, we will ring for it. Now, den, fire away wid your private conversation."

"But this gentleman?"

"Is my private secretary, and listens to all private conversation. Fire away! Let me see!"

Pete opened the window and looked out. It was about forty feet from the ground. Then he gazed at Nugent, and gravely shook his head.

"Are you insured against accidents, old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"Now, let's discuss this in a friendly manner," said Nugent, edging his chair a little closer to the door. "It is not for me to suggest anything to you, but, I understand, this is not the only case. There is Miss—Stay, was it Mrs. Jenkins? Let me see. Ah, I appear to have left my papers in my office! However, it does not matter. We will refer to the lady as Jenkins."

"I don't tink dat case need be brought up," observed Pete, sighing profoundly.



"Well, I should have to do my best for my client; and if you are so ill advised as to let the case go into court, why, I fear it would all transpire."

"Now, I don't want dat case mentioned," said Pete. "It ain't got anyting to do wid dis one."

"You understand that my client claims two thousand pounds damages?"

"Look at dat, now!"

"Of course, with your vast fortune that is a small sum to you."

"You tink so?"

"Well, I feel sure of it. You will never feel the loss."

"I'm glad you tink dat, my dear old hoss."

"Suppose you write a letter to me making an offer, and I will submit it to my client?"

"Don't care for writing letters."

"Would you like to write direct to Mrs. Barnes?"

"Don't seem to hab any yearning dat way."

"You must see, Pete, that you have treated the lady in a very heartless manner."

"You tink so?"

"There can be no doubt about the matter."

"Look at dat, now!"

"Would you like to make me an offer?"

"Why, you ain't an old woman in disguise, are you?"

"I mean an offer to settle the matter."

"Tought you meant an offer ob marriage. Do you tink we could make any use ob de old hoss if I made an offer for him, Freddy? I shouldn't care to gib more dan a couple ob shillings for him. We might use him as a sort ob doorkeeper, but den, you see, we ain't got a door dat wants keeping. Nunno, old hoss, I don't tink I will make an offer for you; but if you were to go to some old rag and bone man, I shouldn't wonder if he would gib someting for you as you stand. Dere would be a good lot ob blubber for melting purposes."

"You will find this no joking matter."

"Nunno! You ain't much ob a joke, I must say. Now, what is de object ob your visit?"

"My only reason for coming here is to save you expense."

"Dat's mighty kind ob you. I dunno when I eber heard anyting kinder. Just make a note ob dat, Freddy. I shall tell dat kindness in court."

"I have made a note of it," said Freddy.

"Are you a solicitor, sir?"

"Nunno; he's my secretary," interposed Pete. "He's a sort ob un-legalised legal adviser. You see, I dunno weder all lawyers are as honest as you; but eben if dey are, I wouldn't hab one who swamped down wine like you do. Ob course, it doesn't make any difference in your case, 'cos you habn't got any brain to muddle; but if you had, I'm mighty certain all de wine you consume wouldn't be good for it."

"Your remarks are very personal. If you have no offer to make, why, there is an end of the matter."

"Oh, you'm going to decide not to take de case into court, den?"

"Certainly not; the whole matter will be shown up. I may tell you that I have succeeded in finding out all about the case with Jenkins, and your appearance in a court of law will not redound to your credit."

"Look at dat, now! Anyting more to say?"

"Only that there can be no doubt that you have behaved in a very shameful manner."

"Look at dat, now!"

"I think the least you can do is to write a letter to her."

"I dunno what to say. Suppose you write de letter for me, and I can put my signature to it?"

"Well, I would suggest something like this," said Nugent, in an offhand manner. Then he wrote the following. He knew that his case was weak, because there was nothing in writing.

"My dear Mrs. Barnes,—Although deeply regretting any sorrow my action may have given you, I feel sure you will see that it is far better I should not enter into a marriage which I feel sure would lead to unhappiness, and I therefore ask you to further consider the matter, and to release me from my promise.—Yours very truly."

"Why, dat's a capital letter!" exclaimed Pete, picking it up and reading it carefully. I suppose if I sign my name to dis it will be all right?"

"Well, it would be better if you were to copy the letter out in your own handwriting."

"What do you tink 'bout dat letter, Freddy?"

"Capital! Nothing could be clearer," answered Freddy, slightly winking his off eye. "Perhaps you would like to keep it for a day or so, and then you could consider whether you could improve it in any way."

"I don't tink I can, Freddy; still, I shall follow your advice in de matter. M'yes, we will sleep on dis letter," added Pete, putting it into his pocket.

Nugent's face slightly twitched. He imagined Pete and Freddy far more simple than was the case; but he was not the style of man to show his hand.

"Very well," he exclaimed. "It may possibly save a lawsuit, and I feel sure you wish to avoid that. I am acting in a friendly way towards you."

"Dat's mighty kind ob you, old hoss. I tink dis letter would quite settle de matter; but, you see, I would like to consider it furder wid Freddy, 'cos it is just possible I may not tink it advisable to sign it."

"Well, of course, you can please yourself about that," said Nugent, in his offhand manner. "By the way, there is just one slight alteration I would suggest. Allow me."

"I don't want dat letter spoilt," observed Pete, pulling out his pipe, but not the letter. "You see, old hoss, I rader tink you might alter your mind, and tear de letter up, and I wouldn't like a good letter like dat spoilt. Shall show dat letter to de judge and jury, and ask dem if dey don't tink it a good letter."

"That letter is my property, and I must request you to return it."

"Bery good. I will consider dat matter at de same time I consider de advisability ob signing it. Yah, yah, yah! I'm mighty certain de judge will tink dat is a good letter, and I can't see dat it will do much harm to our side ob de question. Ob course, it will show how anxious you were to get someting in writing. Now, dere ain't been anyting in speaking, so it ain't at all likely dat I'm going to put anyting in writing. Good-morning!"

"I am not going to submit to this sort of treatment, and——"

"Open dat window a little higher, Freddy. Do you tink de fall will hurt him in any way?"

"The height is not great," answered Freddy, with perfect seriousness. "I don't think it is above forty or fifty feet, and there is the pavement to drop on."

"Are you going to return my property?" demanded Nugent.

"Nunno!"

"Then I shall call in a policeman."

"You can call in two-free if you like," answered Pete cheerfully. "De



more de merrier. I rader like bobbies, 'cos dey are so amusing. Good-morning!"

"Look here! I want fair play, and——"

"Good-morning!"

"I shall not go until you return——"

"Good-morning!"

Nugent commenced to speak again, but as Pete walked towards him he gradually retreated towards the door, which Pete slammed and locked. Then he looked at Freddy, and they both grinned, although they did not speak, for they had an idea the man of law would be listening outside. Pete waited several minutes, then he suddenly opened the door, and brought the flat of his hand down on the lawyer's head with a force that caused him to sit on the floor and groan. After that he deemed it advisable to go.

"We will subpoena him as a witness," cried Freddy. "Ha, ha, ha! I'll bet you turn him inside out in court, Pete. You've got him. Of course, the whole thing is a fraud. The woman is nothing more than an adventuress. Look here, I used to have to ferret out things concerning the lives of Richard's clients. You leave me to deal with this matter. They are trying to find out all about us, so we will see what we can do in the same direction concerning them."

"Den you buzz off, Freddy, and do your best."

"Mind, I still advise you to employ a good lawyer."

"I ain't got time to find him."

"I know of many."

"Den, if dey are so good dey will be too busy to attend to my case. Nunno; if you and I get beaten, we will pay de costs ob de trial. De only fear I hab is about Jack and Sammy. You see, dey may make it go wrong just to hab de laugh at me."

"They won't do that. Stop! I believe we can manage it. Make your friends promise that they won't play the fool, and I believe we shall come off all right. We have settled everything. Now, if you will give me leave of absence for a couple of days, I believe I shall be able to find out something. You can be sure there is something in that woman's past that will not bear the light of day."

"I don't want to take an unfair advantage, Freddy."

"No, we won't do that. Still, we must have the truth; and perhaps I shall be able to find it out."

"Put dat ten-pound note in your pocket, and go ahead."

"Really, you are far too liberal, Pete; I cannot take——"

"Yes, you can. You will hab expenses. Go ahead, and spend as much ob dat as you like, and keep de rest. Nuff said! I ain't speaking any more 'bout de trial till it comes off."

Pete went downstairs, and having learnt that Jack and Sam had gone to the Zoo, he followed them there, and after a considerable search, he found them in the monkey-house. For some moments the two gazed at Pete without speaking, then they burst into roars of laughter, which caused an austere-looking lady, who was showing her school pupils round the place, to fix her glasses more firmly, and gaze at Jack and Sam as though they had done her a personal injury. Perhaps it was because some of her schoolgirls laughed too, although they had no more idea at what Jack and Sam were laughing than had Pete himself.

"Mabel!" exclaimed the mistress. "I am astounded!"

"You look it, Miss Smithers," murmured Mabel, who was one of the laughing ones.

"Unless your unseemly hilarity ceases, I shall take you all back to the school, and there will be double lessons!"

"Don't punish de girls, my dear!" said Pete. "I like to see dem happy. I tink dey must be laughing at de monkeys and Jack and Sammy, unless dey are laughing at me!"

For some moments Miss Smithers was speechless. At last she spoke, and her words ought to have withered the tail off a monkey.

"Did I hear aright?" she cried. "Can I believe my ears? A negro to address me—to address me in that insolent manner!"

"But, my dear, I didn't address you in any insolent manner," groaned Pete, who had not bargained for bringing down the austere lady's wrath on his own head.

"You dare to address me as your dear—fellow!"

This was too much for Mabel. She shrieked with laughter, and there were very few of the young ladies who did not join her.

"Begone! You insolent creature, leave my presence!" cried Miss Smithers, advancing towards Pete.

"Woohooh!" yelled Pete, bolting behind Jack and Sam. "Steady, my dear! You whack in at Jack and Sammy. I'm most afraid you hab too much practice for dis child. Ain't I mighty glad I ain't one ob your schoolgirls. It's all your fault, Jack and Sammy, for starting de guffaw!"

"Well, come and have a look at the monkeys!" said Jack.

"What's de good, when I can see you and Sammy any day ob de week?" inquired Pete. And this made the girls laugh again. The fact is they had come out for a day's enjoyment, and were ready to laugh at anything; but Miss Smithers did not allow such vulgarity in public. The most her young ladies were expected to do was to smile, and they sometimes got reprimanded for that.

Mabel appeared to be the liveliest of the lot. She was a pretty little girl, and found amusement in almost everything. She was not a favourite with her mistress because of this "levity," and she received a lecture from her mistress; but she was paying more attention to the old baboon, who kept rattling the rails for biscuits.

"It's a dear!" exclaimed Mabel. "I never saw such a clever monkey! I do believe the old thing can talk!"

"It is a great pity, Mabel, that you, who have been gifted with speech, should not use your great gift by passing sensible remarks!" declared Miss Smithers.

"But, really, Miss Smithers, it looks just as though it could talk!"

"So I can, my dear," came a voice from that baboon. "I can talk as well as your mistress, and I'm a lot more sensible!"

The baboon was seated, waving its paw through the bars of the cage, and blinking its eyes, and that voice really sounded as though it came from it.

Miss Smithers uttered a suppressed cry, and the expression on her face made Mabel shriek with laughter again. Jack thought it advisable to get Pete away, before his ventriloquism caused further trouble.

"What were you guffawing at, Jack and Sammy?" inquired Pete, when they got to the further side.

"No matter," laughed Jack. "What made you come here?"

"Well, I tought de monkey-house was de most appropriate place to find you!"

"Rats! Why did you come to the Zoo, of all places?"

"Because Tom told me dat you had come here!"

"Ha, ha, ha! All right!" exclaimed Sam. "You will see presently!"



Pete tried hard to discover where the joke came in, but they simply refused to tell him, so he made a few more animals talk to people, and then decided to have some lunch; but, as they were on their way to get it, they saw Mabel by herself, evidently lost.

"Have you lost your party?" inquired Jack, raising his hat.

"Oh, yes! That is exactly what I have done. Do you know where they are?"

"Well, I do not, but we can easily find them for you!"

"I went back to look at that baboon again, because Miss Smithers was lecturing on birds, and I made sure she would be quite half an hour. I don't think I was away ten minutes, and when I got back they were gone!"

"I hope you won't get into any trouble, my dear!" exclaimed Pete.

"Well, I am afraid I shall; but that cannot be helped. I am always getting into trouble!"

"Well, you know de address; so eben if we can't find de mistress, we can find de school. Now, let's come and hab a look!"

Fortune did not favour them. They searched in vain, but Mabel did not appear to be frightened now. She chatted with the comrades as though she had known them for months, and they told her about some of the animals they had seen in their wild state.

"Well, look here, my dear!" exclaimed Pete at last. "We don't appear to be able to find de old lady, so I really tink de best ting for you to do is to hab someting to eat. You must be hungry by dis time, and dere can't be any harm in habing someting to eat!"

"But I haven't brought my purse. I knew Miss Smithers would not allow us to buy anything, and——"

"Dat makes no difference," interposed Pete. "We will come to some refreshment place, and we can hab someting to eat sitting out ob doors. Den if we can't find de lady, we will see you safely back to de school."

"I would rather you saw me home. My father will not be cross. He never is with me."

"I don't wonder at dat, my dear! We will see you to your home. We will hab a cab. You don't lib at de school?"

"No. I am a day boarder."

"Bery well. Dat will be de arrangement. We will see you safely to your fader's home, and explain to him exactly how you got lost, den we will take a message to de school for you. P'r'aps we shall find de lady——"

"I hope we sha'n't!" cried Mabel. "I really don't know what she will say!"

Now, Pete ordered exactly the sort of lunch he thought the little girl would like, and she seemed to be quite happy; though when a high-pitched voice sounded close to her, she gave a violent start. So did Pete, for, looking up, he saw Sarah Barnes, and he would rather have seen—well, say a lawyer.

"Such a wicked scoundrel I have never met in all my days, Mrs. Miggins!" exclaimed Sarah, stopping in front of Pete and addressing her friend. "I call him a thief and a villain of the deepest dye. He is too wicked to live, and he ought to be hanged. Oh, you sinful wretch!"

"I don't believe he is wicked at all!" cried Mabel. "He has been very good to me, and so have his friends! How dare a common woman like you speak to them in such a manner? Go away!"

"Do you know who I am?"

"No, and I don't want to know, you insolent creature!" cried Mabel.

"Now, what is the matter?" demanded one of the keepers, coming up.

"That negro is an insulting vagabond!"

"What has he said to you?"

"Do you think I would allow the creature to speak to me? I am bringing an action against him——"

"Oh, well, you move on! You mustn't make a row here!"

"I shall please myself, you insolent vagabond!"

"It seems to me, old lady, you've been having too much to drink, and what you had best do is to keep quiet, unless you want to get locked up!"

"Jack," murmured Pete, "I believe dat man is de brabest on de face ob de earth. Should say he was braber dan Nelson or Napoleon, wid Wellington frown in. I'm going to reward dat man. Wait a minute!"

Pete saw the keeper get rid of the two ladies, then he approached him.

"Golly! I dunno how you dared do it, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete.

"She's been having more than is good for her. I've had my eye on them, and they go and look at a few animals, then one of 'em says she feels faint, and off they go to get a drink. Does she know you?"

"Golly! Yes. She is bringing an action for breach ob promise ob marriage against me, and I would as soon hab tought ob making lub to your fiercest tigress. Put dose five pounds in your pocket. It's worf ten to hab got rid ob dat woman!"

"Five pounds!" gasped the astonished man, gazing at the coins. "You can't mean it?"

"Shove dem in your pocket, old hoss!"

"But——"

"Well, I ain't taking dem back, and chance it. I rader tink I know what Jack and Sammy were laughing at now. Dey must hab seen dat woman earlier in de day. Well, it doesn't matter; only I ain't at all sure dose boys won't play de fool wid me in court. If de judge makes an order dat I am to marry dat woman, I shall bolt!"

This idea of Pete's was due to Jack and Sam, who had spoken several times concerning the matter, and remarked that they hoped the judge would not make such an order. Pete had got the idea that he had the power to do so, and it worried him exceedingly.

The comrades saw nothing of Miss Smithers in the afternoon, but Mabel had a splendid time of it. They told her all they knew about the beasts in their wild state, and how they had hunted them in various countries; then early in the afternoon they left the gardens, hailed a four-wheeler, and drove to her father's house, where they found that gentleman, in the company of Miss Smithers, in a very anxious frame of mind.

"Oh, father dear!" cried Mabel, flinging her arms round his neck and kissing him. "We have had such a lovely time! You see, Miss Smithers lost me—at least, we lost each other—and these gentlemen found me, and brought me home. They told me all about the wild beasts—they have hunted them, you know—and Pete made me have lunch with them——"

"Lunch with the wild beasts?" exclaimed her father, laughing at her happy young face.

"Of course not. I had lunch with Jack, Sam, and Pete. That is Jack, and that Sam. They were so kind. Pete is more amusing than the baboon, and you would not believe how funny that is!"

"You astound me, Mabel!" exclaimed Miss Smithers. It was a favourite expression of hers. "I assure you, Mr. Harding, that it was through no fault of mine that your daughter was lost. I searched for her everywhere, and——"

"I expect we were having lunch, Miss Smithers."

"This is very kind of you, gentlemen!" exclaimed Mr. Harding, shaking hands with all. "I am afraid Mabel was at fault, but——"



"Nunno, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "De child did her best to find her governess, and we helped her all we could; den, when we all got hungry, ob course, we had to hab someting to eat!"

"And do you know, father, Pete has tamed lions! Jack told me so. They have been all over the world!"

"Now, you run up to your mother, and tell her you have returned. I will order a cab, Miss Smithers. These accidents will occur, but on this occasion it is very evident that Mabel has fallen into friendly hands!"

"Do you wish me to correct her for her delinquency?"

"Well, perhaps on this occasion you will leave that to her mother and me," said Mr. Harding, glancing at his daughter, who was making signs to him behind her governess's back. "If you will wait one moment, Mrs. Harding will be down, and when you have had a cup of tea, I will order a conveyance. Will you step this way, gentlemen? Mabel will wait with——"

"Yes; I will bring mother down immediately!" cried Mabel, rushing from the room. She had no intention of waiting with her governess. She knew that there would be at least half an hour's lecture the following day before all the girls, and she considered that would be enough.

"An only child, Miss Smithers!" murmured Harding. "Perhaps her mother spoils her a little!"

"Excuse me! I fear that fault is also with her father. Mabel is a child possessed of wonderful ability. She is very quick at all studies, but this is not everything. I assure you she causes me great anxiety!"

"Dat child is all right, my dear!" said Pete. "Don't you worry 'bout her!"

"Ah, here comes my wife!" exclaimed Harding, getting Pete from the room before Miss Smithers could frame her reply.

He led the comrades into the library, and then he looked rather comical.

"You mustn't scold Mabel, old hoss!" said Pete. "It wasn't her fault!"

"I'm afraid if it was, neither her mother nor I would scold her," answered Mr. Harding, smiling. Miss Smithers is a worthy soul, but—well, she appears to forget that she was a little girl once. Mabel is a wonderfully good child—a little wild, perhaps; but then, we should not care for children so much if they were like ourselves. I owe you a debt of gratitude, gentlemen!"

"Don't imagine such a thing!" exclaimed Jack. "I assure you that we have spent a most enjoyable afternoon. We would have brought Mabel back earlier, but expected to meet her governess, and the little girl seemed to be so happy in the gardens, that we were tempted to stay longer. You see, Mr. Harding, we have travelled almost all over the world, and Pete was able to tell her a lot concerning wild beasts and their habits that she would scarcely learn from her mistress."

"You will stay to dinner?" exclaimed Mr. Harding.

"Now, don't refuse, Pete. You can tell me something about your travels, and my wife will be really pleased to meet you. She will not forgive me if I let you go away without seeing her, after all your kindness to Mabel."

"Tink we must get back."

"Don't say that. I really want you to stay. I would very much like a chat with you."

"Bery well, old hoss, but you must let Mabel come down to dinner."

"Yes. That is agreed. We will have a pleasant evening together."

They did. Pete was at his best. He gave them several songs, and then he performed a good many tricks, and they parted the very best of friends, little thinking under what strange circumstances they would meet again.

## CHAPTER 9.

**The Trial—How Pete Conducted His Case—A Bad Opening—Sarah Holds Her Own—The Solicitor in the Witness Box—Pete Asks Some Awkward Questions—Under Fire.**

PETE saw nothing of Freddy for several days, but sometimes he received letters from him, although there was not much in them, but he returned on the eve of the trial. Jack and Sam were out, and when they returned they found Pete and Freddy locked up in the private room, and were told to buzz off.

The fact is, Pete was keeping matters to himself. Jack and Sam chaffed him so mercilessly that he had the idea they would make fun of him in court. Probably, if it had not been for their chaff he would have paid the two thousand pounds damages claimed, and thus have ended the matter; as it was, he meant to go through with it, knowing that he was in the right; though whether he would be able to make a judge and jury believe such to be the case, remained to be seen.

Jack and Sam questioned Freddy a little concerning the matter, but he had received his instructions from Pete.

He shook his head, looked very grave, and sighed.

"Well, cheer up, Freddy," laughed Jack. "Two thousand pounds are as nothing to Pete."

"It's not the money. Think of the publicity."

"Ha, ha, ha! We may be in Africa or India a few weeks hence. What do we care about that. I mean, so long as we don't do anything disreputable."

"But this would appear disreputable."

"Rats!" growled Sam. "Pete never did anything disreputable in his life, and until he does it, which he never will, he has no cause to care about what people think of him. No, Freddy, don't you bother which way the thing goes. I know which way it will go, though not to the extent of two thousand pounds, or anything like it."

"You think he will lose the case?"

"I'm certain of it. You ought to have employed a lawyer. The man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client, you know."

"I know it, but he won't listen to reason. I tell you that if he loses, after all his goodness to me—I shall never forget it to my dying day—it would cause me deep grief. However, we shall see."

The day of the trial arrived, and Pete was more mysterious than ever. He had made Jack and Sam promise to act as witnesses, but that was all they knew about the matter. They were only just up to time as they entered the court, for the previous case had been disposed of in a very short space of time, and theirs was the second on the list.

The judge fixed his eyes on Pete, as he entered the court, and every other eye was also fixed upon him, but Pete was all there—so was Sarah. She had got Mrs. Miggins with her. Sarah was dressed in black, and she wore quite a youthful-looking hat, while she slowly wiped her eyes with her handkerchief.

"I defend dis action myself, my lord," exclaimed Pete.

The judge fixed a stony stare upon him, and then the foreman of the jury rose. He was Mr. Harding!

"My lord," he exclaimed, "I think it my duty to tell you that the defendant is a friend of mine. I did not know it until he entered the court."

"I presume you would not let that friendship bias your verdict? You are on your oath."

"No, my lord. I shall do my duty as a iuror, and the foreman of this



jury, but I thought it right to inform you of the fact. I have reason to believe that he is a thoroughly honourable and good-hearted man."

"Any objection to the jury?"

"None whatever, my lord," answered Nugent. "The case is so clear that no honourable man could so perjure himself. However, in a few words I can lay the facts of the case before the gentlemen of the jury."

"The plaintiff in this action is a widow lady, left in her youth to battle with the world. By her energy she was able to work up a boarding establishment, and it was here that she met the defendant. It is true that he is a negro, but he is a man of considerable ability, and, unfortunately for my client, one who might well win the heart of a lady. At any rate, in this case, there is not the slightest doubt that he did so, and as, I think, you will presently see, he has treated her in a manner that is utterly heartless. Indeed, she has suffered through his cruel conduct so gravely that she has been unable to attend to her business, which has suffered in consequence. On the fifth instant he called upon her, and arranged everything for the wedding; on the sixth instant, he refused to see this poor lady. Now, this after she had expended a considerable sum of money on her trousseau. She called at his hotel, and implored him to give some explanation. He dared not. The explanation was that he was engaged to be married to another lady named Jenkins, whom he has treated in the same manner, and who is now bringing an action against him for damages. This was wicked enough, but his subsequent conduct is so shameful that it is simply incredible. I shall presently prove it. He induced the unhappy lady to enter his motor-car, and he drove her some forty miles into the country, then he left her stranded by the roadside, and, driving on, jeered at her misery and deep grief."

"Golly! Ain't de man a mighty liar!" murmured Pete.

Nugent's voice shook a little, and he appeared to have a difficulty in swallowing. His harrowing tale had so affected him.

"I will now call my client. Step aside there, please. Thank you."

Mrs. Barnes was called and sworn. She answered the questions remarkably well, and she bore out everything her solicitor had said, while she improved on it considerably. In fact, she was a capital witness, and she ended up by bringing a ring from her purse which she swore Pete had given her. This was a little agreeable surprise to her lawyer, although he pretended to know all about it. It was a surprise also to Pete, for he had certainly done nothing of the sort. But he was on his mettle, and he meant to make the best of his case.

"Can I ask my witnesses some questions, my lord?" inquired Pete. "Dis way, Jack."

Jack was sworn, and he appeared to be making a big attempt to look serious.

"Stop your guffawing, Jack! Do you know de plaintiff lady?"

"I have seen her."

"Answer de question. Do you know her?"

"Well, I suppose so. I have met the lady on one or two occasions."

"Where?"

"After I met you at the monkey-house in the Zoo."

"Do I know her?"

"Yes."

"Do you know when I first met her?"

"At her house."

"What happened?"

"She went for you—tore you about a little."

"Why?"

"Because she thought you were a friend of a late lodger who had not paid her."

"What did I do?"

"Howled!"

There was some laughter, which was suppressed.

"Did she hurt me?"

"You ought to know that best. I should say distinctly that she did."

"Did I ask her to marry me?"

"I didn't hear anything like that."

"What happened next?"

"You bolted. Then you caught the defaulting lodger, took him there, and left them together."

"What happened den?"

"I did not see; but the defaulting lodger looked rocky when he came out. He looked like a scarecrow that has weathered a myriad storms."

Jack got called to order, and tried to look sorry.

"Did de lady aforesaid come in my car?"

"She did."

"Did I invite her?"

"No."

"How do you know dat?"

"Because you uttered a sort of horrific howl when you saw her there."

"What did I say to her?"

"Tried to get her out."

"Did I succeed?"

"No. You found she wouldn't shift, and then you went ahead. You got rid of her in the country, and threw a sovereign for her train fare back. She caught you up at the inn, and you had to sleep on the sofa, while she had your room. The next day you gave her the slip."

"Did I gib her dat ring?"

"I don't know. I should say not."

Pete thought this was all right, and he would not risk calling Sam.

"De solicitor for de plaintiff has now to gib some evidence," said Pete. "We hab subpoenaed him as a witness, my lord. You see, dere are some matters dat he has to answer concerning a letter which I did not write to de plaintiff."

"I shall be very pleased to give evidence in this extremely sad case," declared Nugent, although he looked far from pleased.

"You ain't got any choice in de matter," murmured Pete. "You called on me on two occasions?"

"I did."

"What did you come for?"

"To serve you with the notice."

"Did you mention dat I ought to compromise de case?"

"I did not."

"Will you swear dat?"

"Certainly! I am on my oath now."

"You neber hinted or suggested dat I should compromise it?"

"Never."

"Neider on de first or second occasion?"

"No."

"On de second occasion did you suggest dat I should write a letter to your client?"

"You asked me to draft one for you."

"Den you were acting for me as well as your client?"



"No such thing!"

"You swear dat de suggestion dat I should write de lady a letter was not made by you?"

"Yes."

"Did anyting unusual happen at eider ob dose meetings?"

"You were violent on the first occasion, and threatened me with death on the second. I do not know whether such conduct is unusual with you."

"Did you take any refreshment on de first occasion?"

"You asked me to take a glass of wine, and I took it."

"Your client had neber received a letter from me?"

"I believe they were destroyed."

"Will you swear dey were destroyed?"

"How can I swear that?"

"Should say you would find it easy, seeing de tings you hab been swearing to. I don't want to ask you any funder questions. I neber wrote de lady a letter, so it could not hab been destroyed. I will call my next witness."

This was Freddy, and he looked remarkably meek when he entered the box.

"Were you present at de two interviews wid de solicitor?"

"I was."

"What occurred?"

"He drank five glasses of wine on the first occasion, and then you emptied the decanter into the fender. He suggested that you should make a compromise, and suggested that you should pay his client two thousand pounds, and he said that his costs would come to two hundred pounds."

"You are on your oath."

"I swear that is what occurred. He tried hard to make you agree, and the interview ended by you dropping him out of window."

"Did he make a similar suggestion on de second occasion?"

"Yes. And suggested that you should write a letter to his client. He drafted out what he wanted you to write."

"Is dis de letter?"

"It is. It is in his own handwriting."

"Pr'aps de judge and de jury would like to see dat letter," said Pete, handing it across. "Did de plaintiff call on me at de hotel?"

"She did, and remained there all day, refusing to go. You bought a motor-car to escape her, and found her seated in that car. She refused to get out, and you drove into the country, leaving her at an inn, and giving her five pounds to get back."

"Dat will do, Freddy. I should like to ask de lady a few questions."

Sarah looked vindictive when she entered the box.

"What is your age, if you please, my dear?"

"What has that got to do——"

"You must answer the question, madam."

"Thirty-five."

"I will just remind you dat you are on your oath, and I tink you hab made a slight mistake in de age."

"I shall be thirty-six next birthday, if I live so long after the cruel way in which you have treated me."

"You say I offered you marriage?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"The night you came to my house."

"Dat was de first time I eber saw you in my life, and when you nearly

tore me to pieces. Did I offer you marriage before de little burst up, or after it?"

"You offered me marriage."

"But I want to know when?"

"On two occasions."

"Was anyone present?"

"No."

"Did you accept me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I considered it would be a happy marriage."

"You knew I had plenty ob money?"

"I did not consider money."

"Den you were mighty fond ob a nigger?"

"Who can judge a woman's heart?"

"You had better ask de judge dat, my dear. I ain't had any experience in dat direction. Well, dere's only one more question I want to ask you. You say dat I hab asked you to marry me, and den refused to marry you. Is dat true?"

"Yes."

"You hab suffered great grief frough de loss ob dis lubly nigger?"

"I shall not answer your insolent questions, you black beast!" yelled Sarah, losing her temper.

"You lub me?"

"I hate you!"

"Dat will do, my dear. You can't hab suffered much in dat case. But 'bout dat ring. Why don't you wear it?"

"Because I don't choose."

"You used to wear it?"

"Yes."

"When did I gib it to you?"

"When we first met."

"Dat was 'bout a fortnight ago. I bought de ring new for you?"

"Yes."

"I say de ring ain't new, and what's more you couldn't hab got on a ring dat size, as far as I could judge. I neber saw de ring before dis morning; and if you hand it to de jury, I think dey will find not only dat it wouldn't go on your little finger, but dat de ring is 'bout five or six years old."

"This is merely wasting the time of the court," exclaimed Nugent.

"I want de jury to see dat ring. De lady has sworn dat she used to wear it. Now, I'm mighty certain she neber could hab got it on her finger; and a ring like dat wasn't made two-free weeks ago."

Pete got his way. The ring was minus a stone, and it had an extremely ancient appearance, while it was obvious to all that it never would have gone on Sarah's finger.

"You can step down, my dear. I dunno, my lord, weder dere's any case to go before de jury, but I hab one more witness to call. I don't want to cause de lady annoyance, and would rader not call dat witness, but as dere ain't a single word ob troof in what has been said against me, and as I neber asked a woman to marry me in my life, I must make dis case clear, 'cos I ain't going to pay two tousand pounds for nuffin."

"You had better call your witness."

"Den I call James Barnes."



Sarah gave a shriek as a bronzed man, who looked like a sailor, entered the box.

"Your name?" inquired Pete.

"James Barnes."

"What's your age?"

"Fifty."

"Do you know de plaintiff in dis case?"

"Yes. I am her husband, worst luck!"

"When were you married?"

"Thirty years ago."

"When did you die?"

"She thought I died some ten years ago. I was wrecked, and I let her think I was dead. I have always sent her money, but I sent it as though it came from one of her relatives."

"Do you admit dat man is your husband, my dear?" inquired Pete.

"The villain has deserted and deceived me!" cried Sarah. "But I'll make it hot for him now!"

"Dat's where I finish," said Pete.

But it was not where Nugent finished. He saw difficulties in the way of costs, and he pointed out that even though his client's husband was living, it made no difference to the promise of marriage. He grew quite pathetic about the matter, and it was left to the jury to decide whether there had been any promise of marriage. They decided that there had not, so the case was dismissed with costs against the defendant.

Barnes accepted the comrades' invitation to go to their hotel, and here they were followed by Sarah and her solicitor, for she had an idea that truant husband had some money, and her solicitor did not know where the costs were coming from, if Pete did not pay them, unless it was out of his own pocket.

Strange to say, Sarah remained perfectly calm at first, and she allowed Nugent to do the speaking.

"I feel quite sure, Pete, that you will not let this poor lady be saddled with the costs," said Nugent.

"She won't be saddled wid dem, old hoss," answered Pete. "She's a married woman, you know, and ain't got any property in her own right. You can't send her to prison."

"I have paid large sums of money out of my own pocket, and——"

"Yah, yah, yah! Serves you right for having taken up such a swindling case. I hope it will be a lesson to you."

"Well, unless you are prepared to pay, Mr. Barnes, I shall issue a writ, and put in a dstraint on the furniture."

"No, you won't," said Sarah.

"We shall see, madam. I think I know the law."

"I know something about it, too," snapped Sarah. "I know what I'm about when dealing with lawyers. James, let the past be forgotten. Come back to your own wife."

"No fear," growled Barnes. "I've had enough of you, and I'm having no more. I shall continue to send you that money, but I'm off."

"You are, are you? Well, I say you sha'n't go, you villain!"

"I'd rather live with a wild beast, and that's the honest truth. You've spoilt a good many years of my life, but you'll spoil no more."

"Can I give him in custody?" demanded Sarah, turning to her solicitor.

"No. But he will have to pay the costs of that action. At least, either you or he will, unless Pete agrees to do so."

"Golly! I ain't agreeing to anything ob de sort," declared Pete. "Yah,

yah, yah! Serves you mighty well right, old hoss. I rader tink dis has been an expensive action for you, one way and anoder."

"I shall distrain on the furniture."

"No, you won't," exclaimed Sarah. "I took precautions in case the action should go against me, and I have a bill of sale on my furniture. Richards, the moneylender, has advanced me money on it. It was registered yesterday. Now what are you going to do, you bloodsucker!"

"Bloodsucker be hanged!" hooted Nugent. "Why, I am hundreds out of pocket."

"Serve you right. You ought to have gained the case."

"How could I gain the case, woman, when you had a husband living. You told me he was dead and buried."

"Well, I thought the villain was dead, and I went to the cost of putting up a tombstone for him."

"It will do for you!" growled James. "You can shove Mrs. in front of the name. I'm not being buried in the same grave."

"You wicked wretch to turn up now, after I have believed you to be dead all these years. Not only that, but you ruined my case, and robbed me of two thousand pounds."

"Seems to me you were trying to rob Pete of that amount. I know you, Sarah. I've known you for years. Mind, there may be some good in you, but I only know that I've never been able to discover any, sink me if I have."

"You brute! I will follow you all over the world. I'll give up my home. I don't care. I've got Richards' money, and he isn't likely to get my furniture, because directly the landlord finds there is a bill of sale he will distrain. I owe him threequarters' rent, so that thief Richards will lose. He thinks he's very clever, but he made a mistake this time, and——"

"I'll see the thief of a woman!" howled a voice. "I know she is here. They told me so. Ah, here you are! Woman, you are a thief!" howled Richards, rushing into the room in a very excited state. "You have gained a hundred and fifty pounds from me by fraud! I have called on your landlord, and learnt that you owe him threequarters' rent, and you told me that you had just paid your rent."

"I refer you to my husband here," said Sarah, with a wave of her arm towards the unfortunate James.

"What!" hooted Richards. "You told me you were a widow."

"So I thought I was. I find I'm not. That is my husband, and he is answerable for my debts."

"I'll give you in custody. You gained that money under false pretences. You told me that you had just paid your rent, and showed me the amount in the counterfoil of your cheque-book."

"No, I didn't."

"It is a gross swindle!"

"Say, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "don't you tink you would hab been wiser to hab seen de receipt?"

"The swindling creature said she had not got the receipt yet, because she only sent the cheque the previous day. Directly I began to question the landlord, he went into his office, and I found he has distrained this morning."

"Yah, yah, yah! Seems to me dat man didn't waste any time," exclaimed Pete. "I rader tink, old hoss, dat Sarah has been one too many for you."

"Unless you return that money I shall give you in custody, woman!" declared Richards.

"You cannot," said Nugent, who had an idea he might be able to get



some of that hundred and fifty from Sarah; but then he did not know her. "The lady is my client, and she does not admit that she told you her rent was paid."

"She showed me the counterfoil in her cheque-book."

"Prove it."

"My banking account has been closed three months or more," declared Sarah.

"Fury! Then you showed me an old cheque-book."

"Nonsense! You are dreaming. I can't help it if my landlord will distrain. There's no money due on the bill of sale yet. Wait till the first payment comes due, and then see if you will get it. The landlord has got the furniture, but you've got my signature, and my husband will have to pay."

"Will he, though!" growled James. "Your husband will be somewhere else, if I know anything of that man's nature. You've been swindled, Richards, and you ain't the only man who has been taken in by her. All you've got to do is to chuck the bill of sale into the fire, and write it off as a bad debt. I don't know how much furniture she's got, but I don't suppose there will be anything for you after the landlord has got his threequarters."

"There's another quarter due to-morrow," said Sarah calmly.

"You leave the matter to me to deal with," exclaimed Nugent.

"You can deal with it how you like," retorted Sarah. "I don't care. I'm going with my husband. He's my lawful husband, and I will stick to the beast like a glue-pot."

"Yah, yah, yah! You'm in for a good ting dis time, James," exclaimed Pete. "All de same, you helped me out ob a difficulty, so p'r'aps I shall be able to do de same for you. Now den, Richards, buzz off! We don't want you any more. You ain't been swindled out ob as much as you hab swindled oder people."

"I won't leave this room till that woman hands me over the hundred and fifty pounds she has robbed me of."

"My client refutes your slanderous accusation," said Nugent. "She will find herself perfectly safe in my hands, and she will not hand you one penny. If you will kindly place the money in my possessions, Mrs. Barnes, I will see that you keep possession of it."

"Well," exclaimed Sarah, "you must think me stupid! Trust money with you? Not me! I'd as soon trust it with that old thief."

"She calls me a thief, after she has robbed me of a hundred and fifty pounds! Why——"

"Alfred Richards," cried an inspector of the police, entering the room, "I arrest you on the charge of receiving stolen goods. Anything you say I may use in evidence against you."

"I do not understand. You must be mad."

"Do you deny that that is your name?"

"Of course it is my name."

"You will have to come with me."

"I am a registered money-lender."

"And the owner of a shop under the name of Alfred Rich."

"I know nothing about it. I never heard of it."

"I may tell you that your manager or partner, who trades under the name of Alfred Rich, was arrested this morning, and that he has incriminated you. You must come with me."

"Now, wasn't it lucky I got that money in time!" murmured Sarah. "James, I will never leave you. We will spend the rest of our lives together. All my old love has returned."

"Then see here, you can turn on the stream in another direction, old lady. I've had a bit above enough of your old love, and it's time you gave some other poor brute a taste of it."

"Come!" ordered the inspector, taking Richards by the coat cuff.

"We must go to my solicitors, and——"

"You can see your solicitors in prison," said the inspector sternly. "I shall take you there. The charges against you are very serious, and they extend over a great many years. This way!"

Then Richards, the money-lender, the man who had ruined hundreds, was led to his doom. As we shall have nothing more to do with him, it may here be mentioned that he received a sentence of five years' penal servitude, and his accomplice suffered three years. Nugent tried to induce Sarah to go to his office, as he said he would see that she suffered no harm; but Sarah preferred to look after herself.

"I've lost a house of furniture," she said. "But I've got a hundred and fifty pounds hard cash, and that will carry me on, especially as my husband will have to keep me for the rest of my life. I'm not taking his paltry fifty pounds a year in the future. No. He shall keep me, and pay all my bills, as a husband ought to do. I'll never let him out of my sight again as long as he lives."

"Cheer up, Jimmy!" exclaimed Pete, as Sarah took possession in an easy-chair. "You see, old hoss," added Pete, in a whisper, "it's true dat Freddy traced you out; but den Freddy is a mighty smart chap, and he knew de way to set about it. Now, Sarah won't. I'll see if I can settle de matter wid her. You smoke your pipe in dat chair, and leabe me to deal wid de woman."

Then Pete stepped across to the amiable lady, and seated himself beside her.

"Now, see here, my dear!" he exclaimed. "James says he won't lib wid you, and I don't see dat you want to make him do so. I hab found out all about de man, and I gib you my word dat de sovereign a week he had been allowing you is all he can afford. It don't leabe him much. You know by de past he ain't de sort ob man to leabe you to look after yourself. He tells me dat he has sent you fifty-two pounds ebery year, and ain't let you know it comes from him. Now, don't you see, if you drive dat man away, and he don't know your address, he won't be able to send you dat money any more."

"I'll stick to him, and chance it!" said Sarah, with decision.

"But, don't you see, my dear, de man won't stick to you."

"Won't he? He doesn't know what he will do till I tell him."

"If you won't leave him your address, it stands to reason dat you won't get your weekly money."

"I'll make his life a misery to him. If he likes to give me three thousand pounds down, I'll take it."

"Shouldn't be surprised if you would, but I would be mighty surprised if he gabe you anything like dat, 'cos, don't you see, eben if de man had got it, you might keep on worrying his life out ob him. All de same, if you won't listen to reason, dere's an end ob de matter; but you must not blame James if he bolts."

"See here," cried James, pulling a card from his pocket and flinging it on the table, "I shall send a letter to that address, and it will contain your money. If you like to call for it you can have it; if you don't, there's the finish. You can go and live by yourself; you ain't living with me."

"Well, suppose we hab someting to eat?" suggested Pete. "You buzz off, my dear. Ladies ain't wanted here."



"I don't care whether they are wanted or not," snarled Sarah. "Here I stick till my lawful husband goes, and then I'm going to follow him; and if he don't like it he can lump it. I'm his wife, and his home is my home."

"It is, is it?" growled James.

"Yes, it is, you cruel brute!" retorted Sarah. "Mind, I'm going to make it all the worse for you over this. You will be sorry all your life that you have treated me in this shameful manner."

"Oh, sheer off!" growled James. "It ain't a bit of good talking to you. I'm sick of you. You want drowning."

Pete ordered up dinner; but although Sarah received no invitation to it, she seated herself at the table, and made an excellent meal, while all the time she abused her unfortunate husband.

"Ain't it downright awful!" groaned James, pushing his plate away. "That's how she used to go on year in and year out, till she nearly drove me silly; and when I used to have to get out of the house, she used to follow me, and hoot after me along the street, till all the neighbours thought as I was a regular ruffian, and the minister used to come and talk to me by the hour, telling me to mend my ways. He once told me that I had got a good dear wife."

"Yah, yah, yah! What did you tell him, James?" inquired Pete.

"Why, that he was the worst liar I'd ever met. I sheered off after that, and never saw her since till I met her in court."

"No, you despicable villain!" cried Sarah, helping herself to some more jam pudding. "You deserted me for all these years, but I'll be even with you yet. I'll have vengeance on you. According to the laws of this country you are bound to live with me till your brutal conduct causes me to sink into my tomb, and——"

"Bust you, I wish you would make haste and do it! What's to be done with her, Pete?"

"Eh?"

"You must get rid of her somehow for me."

"I was just tinkering what would be de best road to do dat."

"Couldn't you hold her while I bolt?"

"Well, you see, Jack or Sam might be able to do dat."

"I reckon not!" laughed Sam. "This is your case, and you will have to settle it."

"Bery well! Now, look here, Sarah, my dear," exclaimed Pete, "Jack, Sam, and dis child are going out wid James. We are going to leabe Freddy to take care ob Rory, and you can stay here or buzz off home."

"My home is with my husband, and I'm going there."

"Well, I ain't discussing de matter furdur. Come 'long, boys! I dunno when we shall be back, Freddy, but it won't be much more dan two-free days. I'll gib you some money to pay de bill, and you stay here on and off till we return. Dis way to London."

It was raining heavily, and there was some fog, but when they reached Ludgate Circus they discovered that it would take something more than rain and fog to turn Sarah from her purpose. She clung to them like the proverbial leech, and made some nasty remarks. Pete was the only one who did not care. He had the feeling that James was in the right, and that it would be absolutely hopeless for a man to attempt to live with such a wife.

They tried to dodge her several times, but she knew her way about London rather better than they did, and when they hailed a cab she was the first to get into it. Pete shook his head, and gave the cabby half-a-crown, then continued their way eastward on foot, and every now and then Sarah told

James what she thought of him. At last she declared that she was tired, and seized his arm. He offered her ten pounds to go away, but she indignantly refused it; then he offered her fifteen, which she took, but she caught his arm again, and swore she would never leave him. She said that she loved him, and that he was a cruel brute to rob her of his affections.

"What about my fifteen quid?" hooted James. "Ain't you robbed me of that?"

"My home is the same as yours, and you can't alter that."

"Oh, husband, husband, I've de ring  
Dis night thou gavest to me;  
And I'm to thee for eber wed,  
As thou art wed to me."

quoted Pete. "All de same, you'm got someting worse dan a statue, old hoss. I hope dis will be a lesson to you, Jack."

"It seems to me that you are more in need of the lesson," observed Jack. "You know how nearly you were caught in the toils."

"Well, you come along with me, mates!" exclaimed James. "I'm going to a place where they don't admit females. She can't follow us there."

As a matter of fact, James went to a sailors' home, where he was well known, and here they had a hand at cards; but every time they looked out of window they saw Sarah. It had ceased raining now, but James felt that it would have taken more than rain to drive her away.

At last he uttered a cry of joy as he looked out of the window.

"She's gorn! Bless my heart, she's gorn! Now I'm safe. Funny thing, this was the place where that young chap found me. You see, I always stop here when I come up to London. I'm master of a tug; you know, and this is a nice quiet place to spend a few evenings. But see here, boys, how would you like a run down the river? I'm pretty comfortable aboard, though, of course, it is a bit rough. I've got in a stock of provisions, and we can get some more, if you like. I'm going to run down Channel, and if you like a bit of a cruise, why, I shall be glad of your company."

"In de first place, dere are de fifteen pounds dat lady got out ob you," said Pete, handing him the notes. "Nunno! You'm got to take dem. You hab been on our business. Now, you must take dese fifty pounds, which will be a year's payment to Sarah. You hab done a lot for me, James, and I'm going to do a little for you. Shove dem in your pocket, I tell you. Let me see, now; we will buy a side ob bacon, for de start. Dat's always a nice comforting ting to hab on board. Den we will get a sack ob potatoes. Sammy can carry dose, while Jack carries de bacon."

Pete laid in a fine stock of provisions, and as they carried them all to the docks, they were rather late when they went aboard.

"What cheer, Bill!" exclaimed the skipper, as a burly-looking seaman met them on the deck of a small tug.

"We've got steam up, captain. You will want to start to-night?"

"Why, that's the fact, mate. I want to get off as soon as ever I can."

"Well, we can go out in half an hour's time. She's aboard all right."

"What?" howled Jim. "What's aboard?"

"Your missus."

"You silly, wooden-headed swab!" howled Jim. "How dare you let women come aboard this craft?"

"Why, how was I to stop her when she said she was your wife? Of course, I didn't know that you worn't married, but——"

"Sink you, but I am married to her!"



"Well, I don't see as you ought to blame me, captain. No doubt you'll be pleased to have her aboard with you."

"Yah, yah, yah! Look at de pleasure depicted on his countenance. Seems to me, Jimmy, you might as well try to get rid ob your shadow as to get rid ob dat woman. Now, look here, old hoss! What can't be cured must be endured, as Wagglespeare says. All de same, you saw me frough, so I will see you frough. Where's de lady?"

"In the old man's cabin," answered Bill. "I thought I was doing him a good turn to let her come aboard. Still, there's no pleasing some skippers."

"Yah, yah, yah! You won't please him dat road. See here, Bill, you ain't done your duty on dis occasion. Just go below, take dat lady by de arm, and lead her on to de wharf."

"Shiver my timbers if I do!" growled Bill. "From what I know of women, she strikes me as she's one who ain't easy led; and I'm certain as I'm one who ain't going to try to lead her. No; if there's any leading to be done, the skipper is the right party to do it. She's his property, and he's the one to tow her. I ain't got any craft in tow, and I ain't taking away the rights of my own skipper. Haw, haw, haw!"

"You pudden-headed swab!" hooted Jim. "What did you want to let her come aboard for?"

"She never asked me. She jest come; and it worn't for me to refuse to receive the skipper's property. She's been asking a lot of questions about your goings on, I can tell you. I told her that by day and night you talked about her, and that I'd heard you say as she was the pumpkin of your eye."

"You must be a fearful liar, then," growled Jim. "You've never heard me mention her."

"Still, I wanted to do you a good turn. I said as I heard you call her your own little ducky-wucky of a wife. Oh, I did it natural, I can tell you. She was smart, too, but she didn't catch me. I believe she's a bit jealous, 'cos she says: 'Are you sure he called me Molly?'"

"That's the name he always mentioned you by," says I. "Sure he didn't address me as Jane or Sarah, or any name like that?" "I'll swear he never did," says I.

"Why, you fender-headed swab," howled James, "her name is Sarah!" "Then I tell you what it is, captain; there's going to be rough water when you go below. I was doing you a good turn, and I told her how you used to go on about your darling Molly till it made us tired, and I said as you wanted to alter the name of this tug to Molly, and I mentioned as how you used to cry over her portrait when she was younger, and call her your darling Molly till it made us weep salt tears."

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Dat's what you might call mistaken kindness, Jimmy. Bill has rader oberdone it." "What did the silly swab want to go and lie about me. I never met a woman named Molly in my life, as far as I can recollect. You will have to get her off this craft, Bill."

"Couldn't be done. We ain't got enough hands for that. You'd have to use the steam-crane on the sharf. There's one as will lift ten tons, and that ought to bear her weight."

"What am I to do?" groaned the unfortunate James.

"Take her to sea, old hoss!" roared Pete. "Dat woman says dat her home is your home, and dat your home is her home. Bery well, take her to de Nore, and let her find out what sort ob a home she has got to expect. Does she like de sea?"

"She's never been on it as far as I know."

"All de better. Treat her kindly."

"Do you think as she's going to treat me kindly after what that silly swab has told her?"

"I should say not, Jimmy. All de same, I don't see how you are going to help it now, unless you send Bill down to say dat he made a mistake in de name, and dat it ought to hab been Sarah."

"She won't believe that yarn," growled Jim. "The rough part about it is that I've scarcely spoken a civil word to any woman since I left that one. I've never had a likeness of one in my life, 'cept hers."

"Suppose I tell her that I find Molly was a craft you were the skipper of?" suggested Bill.

"You are a brainy idiot, ain't you?" growled Jim. "Do you think she would believe that yarn? You have stuffed her brain with your lies, and there they will stick to her dying day. No, I'll take Pete's advice. We shall reach the Nore at daybreak, and then she shall have a taste of the sea. Get her under way, Bill. I shall have to go below and give the woman a chance of going ashore, and try to convince her that you have been lying, like the silly swab you are."

Jim slowly went down the steps into his cabin, and he came up about five minutes later, but he looked a different man. He was clawed all down the face, and his coat was torn, while he had a frightful bump on his forehead. Bill gazed at him and grinned. He never asked a question, but kept a good three yards clear of his skipper, who took charge of the tug, and ran her down the river, while all through the night the comrades watched the lights on the shore. Pete said he did not care to go below, while Jack and Sam were of the same turn of mind.

Fortunately, there was no rain during the night, so that they were not so uncomfortable as might have been the case. What had happened below Jim never mentioned, and Pete asked no questions. He felt sorry for Jim, who really seemed to be a very decent fellow.

## CHAPTER 10.

**Sarah's First Experience of the Sea—Jim Has a Very Rough Voyage—Sarah Overboard—How Jim Acted—Thoughts of the Past—Pete acts as Peacemaker.**

**A**S day broke an heavy wind met them from the sea. They were still in the river, but the waves frequently burst over the tug, as she ploughed her way against the tide. Pete now approached Jim, who looked very gloomy.

"Cheer up, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "Dere's better days in store."

"Pete," exclaimed Jim, "there will be better days in store, perhaps, for Sarah and me when one of us is dead. To tell you the truth, I don't care if I'm the one. Mind you, lad, I have never struck that woman in my life. I've never wronged her in any way, except in leaving her, because she drove me to it. She led me a cruel life. It was nag, nag, nag, from morning to night. If I had stood it much longer I should have been driven into a lunatic asylum. Mind you, I'm a man who likes peace. I don't ask for much, but to be jawed at from morning to night, and half through the night was a bit too thick, and so I bolted. Well, I may have been in the wrong. I don't know. She swears I was, and now she's got that Molly on her brain. It makes her like a raving maniac. Why it should I can't think."



"Dat almost looks as if she liked you still."

"Yes. She showed me some signs of her affection last night," growled Jim.

"Neber mind, Jimmy! You'm got de consolation dat you didn't strike her back."

"No fear! I never struck a woman in my life, and never shall; but I tell you, Pete, I nearly struck that silly swab Bill for yarning to her like that. I don't want any lies told about me. Well, she's going to roll directly. I can see that. We shall have a gale before we are much older."

Jim was right. By the time they passed Sheerness the tug was rolling as only tugs can roll. Her engines throbbled as they forced her through the heavy sea, and wave after wave dashed over her.

"Mind how you shift about, mates," exclaimed Jim. "To go overboard in a sea like this means death."

"We'm used to it, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "I'll go into de fo'castle and get dem to cook some breakfast."

They all had their breakfast there, and Pete sent some to Sarah, but that unfortunate lady was not in a state to take breakfast, and as she threatened to fling the coffee at the sailor's head if he didn't go away, he promptly retreated. They had scarcely finished breakfast, when they heard her voice yelling for help, and Jim induced Pete to accompany him below to see what was the matter.

The unfortunate Sarah was lying on her husband's berth, looking more dead than alive.

"Oh, you cruel wretch to bring me here against my will!" she moaned. "I'm dying fast! I feel my life ebbing away! Put me ashore this instant!"

"You are talking ridiculously," growled Jim. "You can't go ashore. We are out at sea, and I couldn't possibly land you. I told you not to come, but you wouldn't listen to reason."

"I insist on being put on shore! Oh, I'm dreadful! Have you no pity?" "Now, see dere, my dear," exclaimed Pete. "Jimmy can't do impossibilities. You wouldn't like him to run de vessel on de rocks and shipwreck it."

"Yes, I would! If you won't put me ashore, throw me overboard, and let me die right away, then you can marry your Molly!"

"Dere ain't any Molly, my dear," said Pete. "She was only in Bill's imagination. I'm quite sure Jimmy will land you at de first opportunity."

"Unless I am landed in two minutes from now I shall die!" wailed the lady.

"Nonsense!" growled her husband. "When I was a nipper I was just the same as you are, and they fetched me up with a rope's end."

"Well, give me one, and see if it will do me any good."

"I'm inclined to tink it might," murmured Pete.

"They flogged me up on deck," exclaimed Jim.

"You brutal creature to threaten to flog me when I am in this dying condition!"

"Now, be reasonable, Sarah," exclaimed Jim. "I was only telling you what they did to me, not what I'm going to do to you. You have got to bear it. I can't land you till this gale goes down, and by the look of things I believe we shall get it worse, before it gets better. It may be days before I can land you."

"Then you are a wicked murderer! Go away, and leave me to die!"

"Will you have a little brandy?"

"No, I won't, you monster! You are trying to make me worse. I believe you would like to poison me. But I'm your wife; you cannot alter that!"

"No!" groaned Jim. "I cannot alter that, and I would not have wanted to alter it if— Well, it's no good talking. You are ill, but I can do nothing. It is just what I expected, only you would come."

"Get from my sight, you monster! Let me die in peace!"

"It's no good," growled Jim, going on deck. "If I was to tell her that she isn't in the slightest danger of dying she would make out that I didn't care about her being ill. I don't like to see anyone like that, least of all a woman; but what can I do? It's not my fault. I begged of her not to come, but she would."

"She will get better presently, old hoss," exclaimed Pete. "De best ting to do is to leabe her alone."

"She may have three or four days of it."

"In dat case I'm inclined to tink dis will be de last voyage she will eber come wid you. Golly! We'm going to get it rough, too."

They did. The wind shifted, and as they ran down the Channel they faced a south-westerly gale. The tug dashed through the waves, which burst upon her deck with a roar like thunder.

Jim kept well out in the Channel, for to venture near the shore was a peril that he was too good a seaman to face. He stuck to his post, and occasionally got Pete to go below to see how the unfortunate Sarah was getting on, and each time Pete had to report that she was getting on about as badly as was possible.

"Well, it can't be helped," exclaimed Jim. "She never has taken my advice all through her life, and never will. I begged her not to come, but she wouldn't listen to it. I even told her she would be ill, and she said that if it didn't make me ill it wouldn't make her. Did you ever hear anything so silly? However, there isn't the slightest chance of landing her, so she will have to get over it the same as other people do. I can't help it. She has caused me misery enough; now she has got a bit of suffering on her own account."

"May make her a bit better, Jimmy."

"I'm downright sure it can't make her worse. Starboard there a bit! We are in for a scorcher. Now, isn't this downright awful?" howled Jim, as the unfortunate Sarah staggered on deck, and seated herself in the stern.

"Take her below, someone!" roared the skipper.

"You monster!" wailed his better half. "Do you want me to be suffocated?"

"It's enough to drive a man mad!" groaned Jim. "Here I've got this craft to look after, and that woman comes fooling around like this! She will get washed overboard to a certainty. Ah, hold on for your lives!"

The skipper had scarcely uttered the warning when a mighty sea struck the little vessel. For some moments her deck was deep with water, while blinding spray swept in the sailors' eyes. Then a cry rang out, for that great wave caught Sarah in its deathlike embrace, and she was swept into the raging sea.

"Ease—stop her—easy astern!" roared the skipper in a breath; and then he sprang aft.

"You silly swab!" roared Bill, seizing him by the collar. "It's death to go; you said it."

"Still, she's my wife, all said and done, and I'm a man. Good-bye, boys all!"

The skipper's coat was in Bill's hands. The skipper was in the raging sea, for he had plunged in to save the woman who had rendered his life a misery.



"Clear the boat there!" roared Bill. "Steady there, mate! Two lives are gone."

"He has got her!" exclaimed Pete, standing in readiness to plunge in. "Make haste wid dat boat. Leabe it at dat, Jack and Sammy. He's got her, and I rader tink by de way de man swims dat he will save her. Steady, dere; I'm going in de boat. You look after de tug, Bill; we will look after de boat. Dat's quick work, my boys! We'm got to save dem!"

Had the sea been calm, there is little doubt that James would have been able to keep his wife afloat till the boat reached them; but in such a sea as was running, his task was a very difficult one.

Although he was a powerful swimmer, he was hampered with his heavy sea-boots, and wave after wave burst over him and his terrified burden. Still, he stuck to her bravely. He was giving his life for the woman who had wrecked it, and rendered his best years miserable.

The comrades were at the oars, with one other man, and they made the boat fly through the water. Waves burst into her, threatening each moment to swamp her, but they took no heed of their own peril in their anxiety to save the skipper and his wife; and at last they ran alongside, and the two were hauled into the boat in an exhausted condition, and thus they were brought back to the tug.

Jim had suffered the most. For some time he could not speak. Sarah sat bolt upright, with her eyes fixed on her husband. She never spoke a word, and when they reached the vessel she immediately went into the captain's cabin, while the next moment Pete followed her with a glass of brandy and water.

"Jim says you are to drink dis, my dear," he said.

"Take it away!"

"I shall hab to force you to drink it."

"I'd like to see you try," retorted Sarah, snatching the glass from his hand and flinging it across the cabin.

"Golly!" gasped Pete. "Well, de captain says you will find some blankets dere, and no one will enter dis cabin till you call for dem, den he will come. He orders you to get your wet clothes off immediately, and to lie down and try to get to sleep."

"Get out of it, you stupid nigger, and don't you dare to come here again!"

"I dunno 'bout dat woman, Jack," exclaimed Pete, as he went on deck. "I was in hopes de skipper's action would hab touched her heart, but I'm most 'fraid she hasn't got a heart to touch."

"Well, I expect she feels bad," exclaimed Jack. "You see, she was suffering from sea-sickness before she went overboard, and I don't suppose the fright and ducking has done her any good."

"It ain't taken away her temper," observed Pete. "She flung de glass ob brandy across de cabin, and ordered me out ob de place in a manner dat made me bery glad to go."

"Well, I reckon you ought to be very thankful that she did not fling the glass at your head," said Sam. "No doubt she feels injured at your having jilted her."

"Do shut up 'bout dat, Sammy! You know perfectly well I won de case, and dere's de end ob it. I don't want to hab dat woman frown at my head for de next two-free months."

For the whole of that day and far into the night the storm raged, but towards the following morning the wind decreased, and the sea went down as the tide turned. Then the sun came out, and matters became far more pleasant.

## PETE THE DETECTIVE.

The comrades were smoking their pipes on the deck, chatting with Jim, when Pete gave a violent start, for Sarah was calling to him.

"I tink she wants you, Jim."

"No fear; she is calling you."

"I know dere will be anoder breach ob promise case, and dat would 'bout frow me into a consumption, or one ob dose complaints. Still, spect I'll hab to see what de lady wants. Nice morning, my dear, sort—"

"Do you think I want to talk about the weather, you stupid creature? You are all to come into the cabin—you three friends—and I want you to bring Jim with you."

"I tink we are rader too busy just now, my dear."

"You are only smoking your pipes. I want to say something. Will you come? I don't want to speak before the crew."

"M'yes, we will come all right. You go below, my dear. You ain't looking as well as you ought to do."

"I'm all right. Ask Jim to come; I want to see him particularly." Jim did not care for the job; however, Pete induced him to go, and they all descended.

Sarah fixed her eyes on her husband, and for some moments she did not speak; then she took him by surprise.

"Jim," she exclaimed, "do you remember that lane we used to walk along when we were young? It was down by the river, under the trees. It was the place where you asked me to be your wife."

"Yes, I remember it; I was there not long ago."

"I have got a bad temper, Jim."

"You have so."

"I've wrecked your life."

"What's the sense of going all over this 'ere?" growled Jim. "We wasn't suited to each other. We made a mistake, and have got to put up with it for the rest of our lives."

"What did you want to save my life for?"

"Did you want to die?"

"No; but I should have thought that you wanted to let me die. You would have been free then."

"That's it! If you think I'm that sort of man, nothing will alter your opinion. Now, see here, Sarah; I will increase your allowance, and—"

"Jim, forgive the past. Forget all the time from when you asked me to be your wife in that lane. Take every penny I have got in the world."

"No fear! That money isn't honest."

"I'll return it. Try me once again, and if ever I say an unkind word to you, turn me out of your house. I have always been in the wrong, Jim. I can see it all now. I can see that you are a good and brave man, and that I've been cruel to you. I did not really mean it. It was my nature. Jim, forgive it all. You risked your life to save mine, when you could have been free to marry Molly."

"There's no such woman," growled Jim. "It's all Bill's foolery. He wanted to make you believe that I was desperately fond of her, which wasn't anything like the truth. I have never spoken a word of affection to any woman. I'm not at all sure that I haven't hated the sight of them."

"Try me once again, Jim. It isn't easy for me to talk like this before these three, but I wanted them to hear, because I have wronged Pete. He will forgive me, I know. He is too easy-going to bear malice. I don't care how you treat me, but I'll never forget what you have done—never as long as I live; and if I can bring you happiness in the future, I'll do it. You know I am a determined woman."



"You are so."

"Well, Jim, I am determined to be a good wife to you, if you will only let me. I don't ask you for money. I'll live in any little cottage, and I'll work for my living. Only say, 'Sally, I forgive you all the years of nagging, and all the unhappiness you've caused me,' and I'll be the best wife to you that man ever had. I'll live where you tell me to, and I'll obey you. I'll do whatever you order, and I'll never speak an unkind word to you again."

"Then I tell you what it is, lass," exclaimed Jim, "I'm glad you went overboard. I wasn't anything like glad at the time, but I'm glad now. We will see what we can do in the future. We will just try and be like we were in that lane you've spoke about. See! I don't want all my orders obeyed, or anything like that. If we are to finish our days as man and wife should, why, there must be some give and take on both sides. We shall be able to live comfortable on my earnings, and I'll take a nice little place for you in the country; and p'r'aps when you get used to the sea, why, you will come for a trip or so. But see here, Sally, I won't have that money. You may have got it from a thief, but it has got to go back. We are going to start with a clean bill of health. All the money we get is going to be honestly earned. Promise that, and we will start afresh."

"I'll send it back to Richards."

"Why, that's sensible, lassie!" exclaimed Jim, kissing her for the first time for many a long year. "If you get riled with me, jest tell me straight out what is the matter, and we will see if we can alter it. I don't drink, or anything like that, so there ought to be no difficulty in the matter. In making this 'ere fresh start, we have got to forget all the past. You won my heart once, so it won't be difficult to be as we were in the years gone by. Why, Sally, lassie, we used to get on well enough when we were first married."

"Because I was kind to you, Jim. Well, I'm going to be kind to you again. I was very near to death, and I don't forget the sacrifice you made for me. I shall never forget that to my dying day. I wasn't worth it, Jim; at least, you had got good cause to believe I wasn't worth it. Now, I'm not going to make a sacrifice for you. I'm going to try to get your love back. I don't want to die thinking that no one on earth ever cared for me. Now, Pete, do you think you can do what Jim has done, and forgive me?"

"Golly, I ain't got anything much to forgive, my dear!" exclaimed Pete. "Spect you were in difficulties, and wanted to get some money. It's true you didn't set about de right way to get it; all de same, we'm bound to make mistakes in dis life. Now, Sarah, my dear, I want to gib you a word ob advice, and dat is dis. You'm got a mighty brave husband dere. You hab been shown dat he is a good man, and an honourable one. Dere's only one ting dat you hab got to remember in dis life to make de rest ob your married life happy, and dat is dis—it takes two to make a quarrel. De same remarks apply to Jim. A woman gets her trials. Someting goes wrong in de house, and it makes her feel cross. She's inclined to lay de blame on someone, and she lays it on her husband. Just take notice ob dese remarks, Jack, for your future guidance. All women feel like dat sometimes; so do all men. De danger ob trouble is when a person gets vexed. Bery well; we'm all bound to get vexed, and den is de time to say to ourselves, it was no one's fault. I'll laugh. It will be all de same free days hence. I'll laugh, and let no one libing know dat I'm vexed. I won't be vexed! Yah, yah, yah! I'll do a guffaw. If Jim is in de wrong, according to your notion, go and kiss him, and tell him he's a sea cook, and

dat you'm a good mind to roast him for dinner, 'cos he's such a nice duck, or someting like dat. Ebery time he vexes you, tink ob how he plunged into dat raging sea, and tink ob dat country lane, where kind words were spoken. Den, if you still feel bad, go to de pantry and cut off a huge slice ob plum-pudding, if you hab got it; if you ain't, cut off a slice ob bread-butter, take it out into de lane, and gib it to de first hungry little child you meet. Dat will cure you. Watch de child's eyes, and remember dat your little vexation ain't nearly so serious as de hunger ob dat little child. It's surprising how pleased it makes a person wid demselves if dey do a kind action to a little child."

"Pete," exclaimed Sarah, actually smiling at him, "I believe you are a clever man. Now, I know you are a rich one. Take this money, and send it back to Richards, or do what you think best with it."

"Well, my dear," exclaimed Pete, after a pause, "I'm inclined to tink dat de money won't be ob any use to Richards, and I'm also ob de opinion dat he got it by swindling oder people. If I had de free handling ob dat money, I should go to Freddy, and ask him to name some person who had been ruined by Richards. I'm mighty certain dere are many. Bery well; I should choose a case ob a widow wid young children, if Freddy knows ob one, and seeing he was Richards's clerk, he is nearly sure to do so. Den I should go to dat poor woman, and I should hand her dose hundred and fifty pounds, and tell her neber to go to a money-lender again."

"I'll do it, Jim!" cried Sarah. "Take the money, Pete."

"Nunno, my dear!" exclaimed Pete. "You say you will do it, and so you shall. You shall do it yourself. I will find out de most deserving case, and, if you don't change your mind, we will all go togeder, and we will let you hand de money to de poor woman. Dat's de bargain. Just you remember what I hab said about de vexation—and Jim has got to remember it, too—den I tink dere will be a lot more walks along dat lane you spoke about. When you land, Jim, I should advise you to go along dat bery lane and tink ob de past all de time. 'Nuff said! Come 'long, boys. De skipper has got a wife, and I tink she is going to be a good one. Come 'long, Jim, you'm got work to do on deck."

"That's true. But, see, Sally lassie, I'll bring you a cup of coffee and a dry biscuit; then when the sea goes down a bit I'll get you on deck. Nothing like fresh air. You will soon get right now; and, don't you see, a skipper's wife must get used to the sea. Just you lie down on the berth."

"I don't want anything in the coffee but milk and sugar, Jim."

"Well, I would recommend a dash of brandy."

"Only milk and sugar, Jim. Don't make me take anything else."

"I'll never make you do anything you don't want to," said Jim. "Don't tink I could, Sally—eh?"

"Yes, you could now, Jim. You saved my life—it's yours for the rest of it, if you will have it. I'm going to do what you order. It's what I promised in church, and it's what I'm going to do. I'm going to be to you like I was when we were engaged; and if I don't succeed, you can cast me off, and I'll never complain. You know, Jim, that I am a very determined woman. Well, I know that my nagging made you very miserable, and I know that I'll never nag again. You see, I am only promising this. But it is what I mean. And if I don't keep that promise, whatever you do to me I shall deserve."

"I never did understand women," growled Jim, as he went to see that the coffee was made to his liking.

"Dey want a lot ob understanding, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "Some



women lub a man who flogs dem; oders lub one who is kind to dem. Nunno, you can't understand a woman, 'cos she don't show what she feels. All de same, I'm rader inclined to tink dat Sarah says what she means, and I'm almost certain dat she will stick to it. She has got strength ob character. Bery well, dat's a good ting for you; turn it into de right channel. I tink your plunge into de sea turned it; but you will see all about dat. Mind, she is parting wid one hundred and fifty pounds ob her own free will. She might keep dat money, and Richards could not harm her. It looks to me as dough she will keep her promise to you; but you will see about dat."

"Sink me, if this ain't a queer world, too!" growled Bill later that day. "I know the old man couldn't stand his wife, yet he goes and saves her life at risk of his own."

"Well, ain't dat natural, Bill?" exclaimed Pete.

"Can't say as it is," grumbled Bill. "But the worst of it is this 'ere: the old man never thought as this vessel could be sailed unless he was sailing her. Time after time he's told me I'm a silly swab, and not fit to steer a perambulator, yet here he goes taking corfee and what not to his wife, who come aboard against his will. He's a-hanging round her like a twenty-year-old boy hangs round the only girl in the world for him, and finds she worn't anything like that when he ships to Peru, or some of them ports."

"Well, you ain't got any cause to complain, Bill," observed Pete.

"Swamp me! No cause to complain. Why, the old man is hugging alongside his craft; he's letting me do all his duties. I'm taking his duty and mine thrown in. And every time I mention the matter to him he says 'Be patient, Bill. A man is a fool to get vexed in this life. Take a piece of cake and give it to the first poor, hungry little child as you meet.'"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete.

"Oh, it's nothing to guffaw about. I believe the old man has gone fair dotty. He's off his compass, and wants putting in irons. How am I going to find cake aboard this craft? And where does the little child come in? It's fair sickening! I like a nap in the afternoon."

"Well, go and get it, Bill," laughed Jack. "I will take command. It's all right—we understand it."

"You will bear the racket with the old man?"

"Yes. He won't mind, so long as I steer a proper course."

"I believe you are right there. Well, keep her at that, and if it comes on to blow, jest send for me."

It did not come on to blow; and even if such had been the case, Jack was perfectly competent to handle the vessel. As for Jim, he remained below. In the evening he brought his wife on deck. She still looked very ill, but she was smiling, and Jim gave her his arm. Then, later on, in the cabin, Pete gave a series of comic and sensational songs, and all was happiness aboard the tug.

Sarah had really changed into a model wife, and she seemed to take a pleasure in obeying her husband's wishes. She even took some soup he had made specially for her. And after that she found her sea-legs, as he called it.

"Never saw such a change in any woman in all my life," he confided to the comrades a little later. "She's jest like she used to be in the old days. I believe, from what she says, it will last, too. I was saying as I would find her a home ashore till I could take a nice little house, and she said that she was very happy aboard, and hoped I would not send her away yet. Didn't want to be away from me. She's never spoken a cross word. And,

jest for a bit of fun, I ordered her to clear up the cabin—ordered her, mind you! Without a word, she starts on the job, and I had a difficulty to stop her, till I told her I was only in fun, jest to see if she would do it, and that she would vex me if she didn't stop. However, she has got used to the sea, so I'm inclined to let her stay aboard till we run up-Channel. I'm on the look-out for a sailer that wants towing, and with this east wind we are sure to find one."

Jim was right, for the following morning a vessel signalled to them, and then they ran back to London with the ship in tow.

Arrived in London, Jim took apartments for himself and wife, for he said he meant to have a week's holiday, and they were going to enjoy themselves.

The comrades went back to the hotel, where they found Freddy anxiously awaiting them, and Rory went half mad with delight at meeting his master. Lively was the only one who did not appear to be pleased. But, then, nothing ever pleased him.

Pete had a chat with Freddy concerning the money, and he said he knew of a very hard case where Richards had sold a widow lady up and turned her and her children from their home.

"Well, dat's all right!" exclaimed Pete. "We will go and see dat lady. De captain and his wife are coming here to-morrow. Any fresh people at de hotel?"

"Yes, there's one tremendous swell," answered Freddy. "He won't condescend to talk to me, and he leads Lively a nice dance. Gives his orders from morning to night, and storms if they are not obeyed immediately."

"Yah, yah, yah! Should say dat would do Lively good. But what is de man's name, Freddy?"

"Newman. He has a few friends here, and he talks about his estates, his horses, and his motor-cars till he makes me tired."

"Let's come and hab a look at de object!" exclaimed Pete. "P'r'aps we shall be able to get a little fun out ob him."

Mr. Newman was a man of about forty, although he looked younger, because he dressed in such a youthful manner. He was a tall, powerfully-built man, with a very big moustache, and the airs he gave himself were extraordinary. He was talking to two other gentlemen, and was evidently doing his utmost to impress them. He had invited them to dinner, and so they did not mind being impressed in return for an excellent meal; for Newman was not the style of man to stint matters.

"What are you doing here, fellow?" he demanded, sticking an eyeglass in his eye and gazing fixedly at Pete.

"Why, dat's my old friend Newman, to be sure!" exclaimed Pete. "My dear old hoss, how are you?"

"You insolent dog, I never met you before, and am not in the habit of making friends of niggers!"

"Why, Newman, my dear old hoss, surely you remember your old friend Pete? Don't you recollect how we used to go round wid a potato-tin on winter nights and sell potatoes at a penny a time wid a dab ob butter frown in?"

"Waiter, how dare you let this ruffian enter my presence?" roared Newman. "What is he doing at this hotel?"

"He's staying here, sir, and I wish he wasn't, for he's more trouble than enough."

"How dare the proprietor expect gentlemen to associate with common



niggers! I shall make a serious complaint. You had better get out of the room, you insolent black dog, before I kick you out!"

"Look at dat, now! Tink I'd better go widout de kicking. Come dis way, boys. I can see de poor old hoss don't want anyting 'bout dat baked-potato-can to be knoe. Well, p'r'aps it's better not, Newman, 'specially if you are getting credit at dis hotel, and ain't got de money to pay for it."

Newman sprang to his feet, and actually strode towards Pete; but that worthy bolted up the stairs to his bed-room.

"Ha, ha, ha! He is going to do all sorts of things to you when you come down!" exclaimed Jack, entering Pete's room.

"Wonder what has upset de man's temper!" exclaimed Pete. "It's a most stupid ting to gib way to temper like dat, because it will make his friends tink he really did go round wid a baked-potato can. Well, I dunno dat we need boder ourselves 'bout de man's temper. I dare say he will get ober it by de time he has had a good feed. Now, boys, are you ready, 'cos I'm getting mighty hungry? Tom is going to attend to our dinner. Lively can wait on Newman. Now, Jack, I will bet you a cigar dat I go downstairs quicker dan you. We ain't to touch each oder—merely get downstairs as quickly as we can widout hindering each oder. Nunno! Keep your foot on de top stair. You'm got to tow de line, and when I say 'Go!' we bof go togeder. One—two—free—go!"

Pete howled out the words in a voice that caused Newman to come to the door. Jack made a start, but Pete flung one leg over the balusters, then whizzed down face-foremost. Jack had no chance of winning that race—in fact, he did not try, for he saw that a collision was inevitable.

The fact is, Lively was bringing up a large tray, on which was Newman's dinner, and he turned the corner just at the wrong moment.

Pete could not stop himself. He landed on Lively's shoulders, hurling him and the tray against Newman with a force that flung them all to the ground, while Pete sat on them.

Now, that was a hot dinner, and Newman received the greater portion of it on his chest. He received a dish of greens and a tureen of gravy in his face, and Lively's chest smashed those greens upon the fallen man's countenance. Broken crockery lay strewn around, and one of the fowls was spread-eagled, for it was between Newman and Lively, while Pete was sitting on the back of the latter.

"Well, look at dat, now!" exclaimed Pete, rising, and gazing at the fallen men. "I can't understand de stupidity ob some waiters, always placing demselves at de exact spot where dey ain't wanted. Still, dere's no harm done. It ain't a bit as dough someone was hurt. Why don't you get off Newman's chest, Lively? I'm mighty certain de man don't want you sprawling on his diagram like dat. You ought to be more careful when you are bringing up de dinner. You should look to make sure I ain't coming down de stairs. Do stop your laughter, Jack and Sammy! I always notice dat if any little upspill occurs you start laughing at it. You ought to be sorry for Newman, and not start guffawing at him. Look here, Rory, dat fowl wasn't meant for your consumption. You'm been and collared Newman's dinner!"

"Woohoo! I'm injured!" howled Lively. "All the wind has been knocked out of my body!"

"Den de best ting for you to do is to take a few more breaths and fetch it back again. Do get up, Newman. Look what a mighty mess you hab made on de floor. I'm ashamed ob you behaving like dat in a first-class hotel. You will hab Lively complaining ob your bad conduct if you ain't careful."

"You viper!" howled Newman, struggling to his feet. "Oh, wait till I get at you! I'll make you suffer for this!"

"Dat's right. Blame me. You ain't got de slightest consideration for a poor nigger. You don't seem to bear in mind dat I might hab hurt myself in a serious fall like dat. Dat's de worst ob some people, dey are so mighty selfish."

Newman could not stand this. Scooping the greens out of his eyes, he seized a chair, and hurled it at Pete's head. Fortunately it struck the door as well, and one of its legs was smashed, while Pete received an awful crack on the head. Next, Newman seized a decanter of wine, and hurled that after the chair, but Pete took particular care that it did not strike his head at all. He ducked, and the decanter was shivered against the wall, which it damaged considerably. Then Newman seized a carving-knife, while Pete seized his wrist, for the angry man looked dangerous.

"My dear old hoss," exclaimed Pete, placing a grip upon his wrist that caused him to writhe. "You must modulate your passions. It ain't etiquette for a guest at de hotel to stick knives into de oders. Drop de knife, den come along wid me, and I will gib you a brush down."

Newman obeyed both of these orders, because that grip caused him to howl, while Pete dragged him into the hall, and still holding him by the wrist, picked up a clothes-brush, and commenced to brush him violently. A clothes-brush, however, is not a good thing to get off gravy and mashed-potatoes mingled with bits of chicken, and Pete brushed so vigorously that he caught him several cracks over the knuckles.

Newman struggled to get way, but that was quite out of the question, and when Pete considered he had brushed him sufficiently, he dragged him back into the sitting-room, and, seizing a serviette, he scrubbed at his face.

"Dere you are, my dear old hoss," he exclaimed. "I tink I hab cleaned you down pretty well. We will let de rest dry before we brush it off. Why, Lively, you hab made yourself in a mess, to be sure. I should go and roll on de front mat if I was you."

"I believe the black beast is a dangerous maniac!" hooted Lively. "Jest look at the awful mess you have made me in. Bust you! If this was my house I'd kick you out of it!"

"Well, you attend to Newman's party, old hoss, and don't gib way to anger, 'cos dat won't do you de slightest use. All you hab got to do is to serve up anoder dinner. Here comes Tom wid ours. Dis way, Tom. Mind you don't slip on Newman's dinner, 'cos Lively has placed it on de floor."

"Whatever did he want to do that for?" gasped Tom, stepping over the wreckage.

"Dere's no telling why dat man does tings he ought not to do," said Pete, seating himself at the table, and glancing at Newman out of the corners of his eyes. He did not feel at all sure there would not be a second attack, and he wanted to be prepared for it. "Sit down, boys! I'll take a cigar from you, Jack, for winning dat race. I was down de stairs a long time before you. Do be quiet, Newman. Don't you see dat I'm busy wid my dinner."

"Send for the proprietor of this hotel at once!" howled Newman, who did not care to make a second attack on such a strong man as Pete. "I insist on seeing him this instant! I will have compensation for this shameful treatment! He is responsible, and he shall pay for it!"

Lively wanted nothing better than this. The proprietor of the hotel, whose name was Thorn, was an elderly stout party, with extremely polite and quiet manners. It took a great deal to upset his equilibrium. Break-ages with Pete he was quite accustomed to, and he did not mind them at all,



because Pete never disputed the bills, and there were always breakages charged on them.

"Has an accident happened, sir?" he inquired politely of Newman.

He had already learnt from Lively what had happened, but considered it advisable to know nothing.

"That dastardly nigger has slid down the balusters!" howled Newman. "He has hurled the waiter upon me, and—and—— Look at the mess he has made me in!"

"I trust you were not hurt, sir?"

"But I was hurt. I was hurt very severely."

"It is a most unfortunate accident, and one that I deplore exceedingly. I see a chair is broken and a decanter, while the wallpaper is considerably damaged. May I ask how that came about?"

"Yes, you may. I hurled them at that black beast's head!"

"Well, we will say thirty shillings for the damage to the chair. Ten shillings for the decanter—I presume the wine was paid for. Then there will be five shillings for the paper. Two-pounds-five, if you please, sir. No doubt you would like to settle that little matter now."

"May I be hanged if I'll pay you a single penny, you insolent rascal! Do you think I am paying two-pounds-five for having a dinner hurled at my head, and for being nearly murdered?"

"Certainly not, sir. I should be the last to make such a charge. But according to your own showing, you caused the damage, and consequently you will have to pay for it. You see, if an accident occurs I am always extremely sorry. They will occur at times. But because one should occur, for which we are all extremely sorry, there is no justification in smashing up my property by acts of violence. That can do no possible good, and it stands to reason that the gentleman who causes such damage must pay for it. I shall not think of charging you with the other breakage. The other gentleman will pay for that. I believe I speak correctly, sir?"

"Spect I shall hab to pay for it," observed Pete, who was paying more attention to his dinner than to the conversation. "You can put it on Newman's bill, if you like, and see if he will pay it; but my impression ob dat man is dat he won't pay twice. You see, a man who wants to get credit generally boasts about his wealth, but you neber heard a man who wanted to pay his bill when it became due, impress on you how rich he was, 'cos it might make you stick a bit."

"Quite against my practice, sir. Quite. Fixed charges, you know."

"Yah, yah, yah! Yes, I know. Dey are about as fixed as a shooting-star. Still, if any damage has been caused——"

"I really don't think there is any doubt about that," observed Thorn.

"Well, de fairest ting to do is for you to charge me wid my portion ob it, and charge Newman wid his two-pounds-five, only don't you clump dat little lot on my bill, 'cos I don't like paying for habing chairs and bottles ob wine frown at my head any more dan he likes paying for habing dinners and waiters frown at his chest."

"I won't pay a single penny!" declared Newman. "Who is going to pay for my clothes?"

"I'll pay for dose," said Pete. "Dat is to say, if you hab paid your tailor for dem. I ain't paying for dem in de second place if you ain't paid for dem in de first. You will hab to convince me dat dey are paid for."

"You insolent scoundrel, I will put you in a court of law over this! I claim twenty pounds compensation for what I have suffered, and if you don't pay it will make the landlord do so."

"I think not, sir. I really think not," exclaimed Thorn. "I deny all legal responsibility."

"Then I leave your hotel."

"I extremely regret your decision, sir. You shall have your bill up in a few moments."

"Hang my bill! I won't pay you a penny! You owe me money for the shameful manner in which I have been treated!"

"That would be a matter that would have to be decided in a court of law, if you were so ill-advised as to try. My bill is a matter that must be settled straight away. It is a serious matter to obtain board and lodging and go away without paying the bill, so serious indeed, that I could not allow you to do so. You see, it is serious both for the defaulter, because the law considers it fraud, and it is serious both for the proprietor of a hotel, because he would be quite sure to lose his money. I have lost some that way, as a matter of fact, but I am quite determined to lose no more."

"You are talking like an utter idiot, now!" exclaimed Newman, not liking the turn events had taken. "Of course, I intend to pay my bill; at the same time I consider that I have been shamefully treated, and I cannot understand the proprietor of a hotel taking in such a dastardly nigger as that one! I shall make him pay for a new suit of clothes. It will be a punishment for him—that is to say, if he has got the money, which I very much doubt."

"Not the slightest doubt about that, sir. I will have another dinner sent up to you, and think it will be fair to charge the spoilt one to Mr. Pete's account. I know he will not mind that."

"Look here, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "you can charge all de damage on de top ob it to my account also. I dunno what you pay for your suits, Newman, and I don't feel at all sure dat you hab paid for dat one; still, if de tailor is such a mug as to trust you, why dat's his look out, and I rader 'spect if you don't pay he will divide de loss amongst his oder customers, de same as if you bolt widout paying your bill here. Thorn will romp de amount on to us as extras. Still, dere is a fiver for you."

"Your insolence exceeds all bounds, fellow!" cried Newman, though he took possession of the note. "You appear to forget our relative positions, and think that because you have got some money through robbing other people, that gentlemen are thieves and vagabonds like yourself. You have heard that the fellow say he will pay the two-pounds'-five damages, Thorn. Very well! You have taken his part, and you have treated me in the most shameful manner. I shall not remain at your hotel. Bring me my bill up to date, and order my portmanteau to be brought down. Also order a cab—a four-wheeler. My friends will come with me. I shall go to some hotel where I can get proper treatment."

Thorn was not many minutes making out the bill. He had it by the time the cab arrived, and he made it come to four pounds nineteen shillings.

"Well, you have charged exorbitantly," said Newman. "But this nigger's note will cover it. You can give the odd shilling to the waiter, and you can send the receipt to that address. Come, my friends!"

"Well," exclaimed Thorn, holding the note in his hand, as the cab drove away, "I have got the amount of my bill, so I am quite satisfied."

"De only question to my mind is, Why did de man change my note for one ob his?" observed Pete. "Ob course, you looked to see if dat one was good."

"I knew it was yours, and——"



"I certainly saw him change it wid one in his pocket, and——"

"Why, the beastly thing is a duffer!" exclaimed Thorn.

"Now, see how quickly I detected dat man, Jack," observed Pete.

"He detected you when you were coming downstairs, too, didn't he?" laughed Jack. "But don't you think it would have been better if you had detected him before the theft was commenced? You would have saved Thorn five pounds."

"I quite agree with you, sir," growled Thorn, gazing at the worthless note. "All the same, I feel quite sure that Pete would not let me be a loser. Consider, my dear sir, what a nice little memento of your great detective work this worthless note would make, if you were to give me a good one for it."

"Eh?"

"You could keep this as a memento."

"Don't seem to hab a yearning for mementoes," observed Pete.

"It would be a pleasant little reminiscence. Every time you looked at the note it would remind you of the clever manner in which you detected the scoundrel."

"But it might also remind me dat I hab giben a good five-pound note for a bad one," said Pete. "You can keep it, and den it will remind you to look at a note before you take it. In dat way you will save say a hundred pounds, so dat if you hand me ninety-five pounds now, dat will make matters right. You see, you hab lost five pounds, but you will save a hundred frough my detective instrumentality, so dat all you hab got to do is to hand me de balance ob ninety-five pounds, and dat will be quite satisfactory to me."

"I shall have to deduct the amount from the waiter's wages for having been such a pudding-head as to admit a thief."

"I'm having no deductions," growled Lively. "And if you will remember, sir, you owe me a shilling out of that note. He told you to give me the change."

"Take it all, dear fellow. You shall have the five pounds. Keep it with my best wishes, for I'm hanged if I'm going to give you a good shilling change out of a bad five-pound note. How I could have been so stupid, I cannot think. Anyone could see that this is a bad note, but then I made sure it was the one you gave him, Pete; and I knew, of course, that your notes would be good. Well, it can't be helped. I must strive to make up the loss."

"See here, old hoss!" growled Pete. "Don't you get making up dat loss by sticking it on our bill."

"Oh, dear, no. I would never think of doing anything like that."

"I don't mind your tinkering 'bout doing it, old hoss. My chief fear is dat you will go and do it. I hab got de feeling dat if I don't get de memento, I'll hab to pay for it."

"Never think such a thing, my dear sir," said Thorn. "I want you to be happy and comfortable while you are here."

"You can bet I will be all dat, old hoss," answered Pete; "but I sha'n't be so mighty happy and comfortable when I go if I hab to pay dat five-pound note."

"Pooh! A trifle like that would never worry you," exclaimed Thorn.

"Why, it doesn't worry me."

"Dat's de worst ob it, old hoss," growled Pete. "If you were to start raving a little, I would feel more comfortable; but you take de matter so mighty calmly, dat I hab de certain feeling you are going to romp de fiver

on my bill. However, I shall arrange de matter by knocking off five pounds when I leabe."

"You shouldn't have told him that," murmured Tom, a little later. "He will romp on ten pounds now, and make it balance that road."

"All right!" Pete exclaimed. "I'll detect dat man. You see how I will manage it, and if I find he ain't anyting like honest, I'll neber come here again. Now, boys, Sarah and her husband are coming to lunch wid us to-morrow, and den we are going to gib dose hundred and fifty pounds to de poor woman wid her orphan children. But, see here, boys! Sarah has acted in a straightforward manner, and I would like to make her a present. You see, she lost her home and all her furniture, and dat would be a great grief to her. It's true she got de hundred and fifty, but you can bet her goods were worf a lot more dan dat, or Richards would neber had lent all dat money on dem. Now let's talk de matter ober."

They did, and they came to a decision that was worthy of them, then Pete gave certain orders concerning the lunch for the following morning.

## CHAPTER 11.

### Sarah Leeps Her Promise—Pete's Great Scheme—The Surprise Visit—A Little Rough-and-Tumble Work in Which Pete is All There—The Landlord—A Stormy Meeting, and a Painful Parting.

A T a little before one o'clock the following morning, Jim and Sarah made their appearance. They both looked remarkably happy.

"Well, you need not stare at me like that, Pete," exclaimed Sarah. "I have kept my promise, and haven't spoken an unkind word to him. Have I, Jim?"

"No, lassie; but you have spoken a good many kind ones. Why, it's jest like old times. We are making a holiday of it. I'm taking Sally to all the places I think she would like to see. She will go over the docks, but I believe that's because she knows I like it."

"Well, dat's right. Was admiring de dress, my dear, and not thinking 'bout de promise, 'cos I had de opinion dat you are not de sort ob girl to make a promise you are not going to keep."

"Girl, indeed! Why, I owned to thirty-five, and that wasn't the whole of it by a long way."

"Must be de dress, and de happy expression on de face. Now for lunch." They went into a private room, and then Sarah exclaimed, for the table was decorated with flowers, while the lunch that was served up was quite regardless of cost. No one could help enjoying such a meal, unless they happened to be ill, which none of the company were.

"Now, Pete," exclaimed Sarah, when they had finished dessert. "I want to get rid of this money."

"Right, my dear! We will pay a visit in about an hour's time. But, first ob all, we free want to make you and Jim a little wedding present. You see, we weren't present at your wedding, but we are going to consider dat you hab just started in married life. We want you bof to be happy for de rest ob your days, and we hab talked de matter ober, and are all agreed on de best present to make you. Jim has succeeded in life; and as he told



me dat tug is all paid for wid de exception ob free hundred pounds, for which she is still mortgaged, but dat in time he hopes to hab her for his absolute property. Now we hab come to de conclusion dat it would be much nicer and better for you bof to hab dat vessel for your own property, widout any boder 'bout paying de free hundred pounds, which might keep you short ob money for many a year to come, and so we hab decided dat de form our little present shall take will be to pay dose free hundred pounds, and clear off de whole account, and we are going first ob all to de mortgage people and are going to pay dat amount. Den we are going to see dat poor lady. You understand, Jim, dat you ain't got de right to refuse a wedding present. You couldn't do it in justice to Sarah, and she couldn't do it in justice to you. For dat reason de matter is all settled."

Jim sat in silence, gazing at the comrades. He looked much as he did when hauled out of the water in an exhausted condition.

"Tell them what you think, Sally," he exclaimed at last.

"I wish I could, Jim. I don't deserve this."

"Neither do I, lassie."

"Still, you hab got it; and if it is all de same to you, we would much rader you did not say so much as tank you," exclaimed Pete. "All we want is to see you remain happy, and you will know by de last few days' you hab spent, dat it is much nicer to remain happy, dan to be unkind to each oder."

"Jim was never unkind to me," said Sarah.

"There was faults on both sides," said Jim. "I can see it all now; and how I might have altered it. A skipper's life is a rough one, and when he gives an order he expects it to be obeyed. Well, he ain't got the right to carry that into his own house. But we are going from the bargain. We've got some years to miss, and that's what we will do, lassie. That's what we will do. We will think of olden times and that lane."

"Well, dat's all right," exclaimed Pete. "Now I tell you what we will do. We will go to dis poor woman's address in de motor-car. She's libing in de East End, and we can call to arrange de oder matter on de way. Now, lively, show de lady to her room, so dat she can put on de outside garments—what Jim would call de top hamper. Where are your cigars, Jack?"

Pete drove. He was a most expert driver, and he caused considerable annoyance because he always would pull up sharp when anyone wanted to cross. He did not believe in annoying pedestrians by making them wait for his car. And once when a lady and her two daughters wanted to cross, but did not dare to go in front of a motor-car, although they would have had plenty of time, Pete pulled up with a jerk, that caused the driver behind him to say nasty things, but he had to stop.

"After you, ma'am," exclaimed Pete, jumping out. "Dis way, please." Then he pulled up a 'bus coming in the opposite direction, and held the horses while the lady and her charges got across the street, and the 'bus driver caught him a slash over the face for his pains. Pete merely glanced up at the angry driver, then he re-entered his car,

and ran on. The cut across the face must have hurt, for it raised a wale, but Pete had succeeded in doing what he intended; and although he could have had that driver off his box, had he so chosen, he took no notice of him.

"Neber could see why people who drive motor-cars ought to forget dat oder people ain't got de same right to de use ob de road. Dere ain't de slightest danger in a motor-car if you drive it properly."

They called at the office, and found no difficulty in clearing the tug from the mortgage, then they went to the East, and it was evident that Pete knew his way well.

They pulled up at a miserable-looking building, though in times gone past it had probably been the home of well-to-do people. Now many families were crowded into it; and Mrs. Green, the woman whom they sought, occupied a room at the very top of the tall building.

The room was clean, and that is all that could be said in its favour, for the walls were tumbling away with damp and decay, while the best part of the ceiling had already fallen.

Mrs. Green was thirty-five years of age, but she looked considerably older. Her two little daughters were in the room with her, and she was hard at work with some sewing.

"Mrs. Green, ma'am?" inquired Pete.

"Ye—yes! That is my name."

"I suppose you can't make much money at dat work?"

"Enough to keep my two children from starvation."

"And what about yourself?"

"Ah, I do the best I can."

"Well, you don't look so mighty well on it, my dear. Now, see here. Dis lady had some money from de moneylender, Richards. I see you know him. Bery well. She is going to gib dat money to you, and as it is a hundred and fifty pounds, we hab been considering what would be de best ting for you to do wid it. We hab come to de conclusion dat if you were to take a nice little house at de seaside, you would be able to let apartments, and get a comfortable living, specially if you had no rent to pay for de first year. You see, we free would come dere for a start, and we should spend a lot ob money one way and anoder, 'cos Jack is inclined to be extravagant. Bery well, den again we shall put in some advertisements for you, and all dat, besides recommending you to our friends, and if you choose a likely place, why you ought to be able to make a good living."

"But why should you do all this for me?" exclaimed Mrs. Green, putting down her work, and shading her eyes with her hand, gone so thin through want.

"'Cos we happen to know dat you are one ob Richards' victims; and if it is any consolation to you to know it, dat man is in prison, and likely to remain dere for some time to come. Now de question is, would you like dat arrangement. You see, your little girls would hab de sands to play on, and de work for you would not be so hard as dis."

"It seems too good to be true."



"Dat means you like it," said Pete. "Come 'long, my dear, we will commence de arrangements forthwith. Dis ain't at all de sort ob place you ought to be at. Tink she could get apartments at de place you are staying, Sarah?"

"Yes, I am sure she could. You come along, my dear. My husband and I will see that you are comfortable with your little ones. Here is the money. Pete is the kindest-hearted man that ever lived, and I owe him a deep debt of gratitude. You need have no fear that he will go from his promise."

"But I must finish this work. I promised to let them have it this week."

"I'll go and explain matters to de man," said Pete. "How much do you make a week?"

"It is impossible to make more than nine shillings, working nearly day and night; and I have to pay five shillings for this room."

"Golly! De man must get some rent for de house at dat rate!" exclaimed Pete. "Should say he would get two-free hundred a year, considering de number ob families in it, and de place ain't worf twenty."

"I should have to give him a week's notice, and——"

"You leabe all dat to me. See, I will leabe my card here, and he is sure to come to de hotel. Just write on it to tell him to do so, Jack. I should like to hab a chat wid dat man. Now, my dear, come along. You'm got de hundred and fifty pounds, so you know we mean what we say."

"You need not have the slightest fear, Mrs. Green," said Jack, as he saw her hesitate.

"I have no fear; and even if I had I should conquer it, for the sake of my little children. But the people I am working for are terribly strict, and I am always getting fined. I don't know what they will say."

"You leave Pete to answer them. We have our motor-car outside. And I assure you that your future will be brighter, at any rate so far as money matters are concerned."

Pete pulled up at the first decent restaurant he came to, and leaving Sam to look after the car, he took Mrs. Green and her little ones into the place, then ordered a good meal. This finished, he drove to the shop for which she worked, and entered it with her, while he carried the half-finished shirts in a bundle under his arm.

"Now den, old hoss," he exclaimed, as a portly, well-to-do man approached him, "are you Grindstead?"

"I am Mr. Grindstead. What do you want, fellow?"

"Why, I want de pay for de work put in dese shirts. Dey are 'bout half done, and you'm going to pay four shillings and sixpence. Mrs. Green isn't going to work any more for you; you oberpay her too much."

"You mind your own business, and go out of my shop!"

"You pay de four-and-sixpence."

"For work undone? Not I!"

"How long have you been working for de old scoundrel, ma'am?" inquired Pete.

"A year."

"And he has paid you nearly nine shillings a week, weder you want it or not."

"I seldom earn as much as that. And then there are the fines."

"Well, I reckon he owes you more dan de value ob dese shirts. Now, see here, you griping old scoundrel, if you don't pay dat four-and-sixpence I'll make you sorry!"

"Get out of my shop, and let that woman finish her work!"

"De work ain't going to be finished; and if you don't pay de money I shall unfinish it worse dan it is!"

"I won't pay one halfpenny, you nigger scoundrel!"

"Den I shall unstitch dem!" exclaimed Pete, ripping up the seams, and sometimes ripping the shirts across.

Grindstead shouted to his assistants, and they made a rush at Pete, while the proprietor tried to snatch the shirts from his hands, with the result that he tore them worse than ever. Then Pete picked him up and dropped him behind the counter, and flung some pieces of stuff on him.

"You go and get into de car, my dear!" exclaimed Pete. "De man is vexed 'bout someting. Can't stand people who make money out ob sweating poor people. Sha'n't be long. You hear! His assistants hab got to seize me, and dey seem trying to do it. Bery well, dey will also go ober de counter after deir employer. Yah, yah, yah! Reminds you ob football, doesn't it—Rugby cistern?"

Mrs. Green was frightened, and she ran outside to tell Jack what was happening. But that worthy only laughed.

"Jump in, Mrs. Green!" he exclaimed. "Pete won't need any assistance, and I don't expect they will keep him long. Ha, ha, ha! He's pelting them with their own goods!"

Pete had got long odds against him, for there were a good many assistants in the shop, and what handicapped him more was that he did not want to hurt anyone. He picked up a roll of some material and knocked those assistants down with it like ninepins; then he pelted them with collar-boxes and all sorts of things. One of them rushed out for a constable, and by the time that worthy came the shop was in a state of confusion. The man of law made a rush at Pete, who seized him round the body and dropped him over the counter, then darted into the motor-car and whizzed away. By the time the constable recovered from his astonishment Pete was out of sight; while Grindstead was howling with fury and abusing the police for allowing such conduct, though it really was not the constable's fault in any way.

First of all, Pete drove Mrs. Green to Jim's apartments, and made arrangements with the landlady for them to remain there; then he went back to the hotel, and gave Freddy instructions to select a suitable house at some seaside resort for letting purposes.

"De rent ain't to be too high, Freddy, and it ain't to be too low. You will know by dose destructions exactly what is required. And, look here, Freddy, you can take your moder wid you. It will be a change for her, and



she will know de likeliest place better dan I shall. Den when you hab done dat, I want her to choose de furniture for de house. You can take Mrs. Green and de children wid you, 'cos dat will make a change for dem as well. I'll gib you some money for de expenses."

"How much are we to pay for the furniture, Pete?"

"Eh? I dunno. You had better ask your moder. Spend what is necessary. It's no good spoiling de ship for a ha'p'orth ob tar. I should say two-free hundred pounds. Den you can pay a year's rent in advance. Dat will gib de poor woman a good start. She deserves it for de nice way she has kept her children. Mind you buy dem spades and pails for de sands. Now buzz off! Dere's just one oder ting, Freddy. We shall be roaming 'bout England for a bit, and we shall need an agent to look after our affairs. We hab decided to appoint you at de same salary I'm paying you now. You had better take an office, and in your spare time we tink you might work up a sort ob commission business. Ob course, we pay de rent ob de office and de furniture, and all dat. You must hab de telephone put on, so dat if we want to talk to you from anywhere we can do it. Now den, fire away! And, see here, Freddy, if you start some sort ob business, it ain't to be in de detective line. Dere's no profit in dat. I hab been able to detect dat in de course ob my experience. If you want any guarantee giben in your business I will do dat. And I will lend you what capital you require to start wid."

Needless to say, Freddy was delighted with this generous offer. Being an honest young fellow, he determined to make a strenuous effort to work up a business, for he felt that Pete would never give him sufficient work, and he did not like to take his salary without it. So far, he felt that he had not earned a quarter of what he had been paid; but Pete was perfectly satisfied.

A few days later the comrades found Pete in a state of cogitation. He had been very quiet the previous day, but now there was evidently something on his mind.

"What's the matter, you image?" inquired Sam. "Have you lost some more money?"

"Sammy, I am going to gib up de detective work for eber!" growled Pete.

"Very wise, too. It wants a man with some sort of intellect."

"You shut up, Sammy, and don't be impersonal. You ain't as muscular as I should like to see you, and Jack needs training. As for dis child, I'm wasting in de muscles. Dis must be altered. When we go abroad again we shall be so weak dat we sha'n't be able to cope wid a skunk. M'yes! Dat's de idea. Yah, yah, yah! We'm been working too hard wid our brains—dat's what's de matter wid us. We need medicinal culture."

"What?" gasped Jack. "Do you want us to become doctors?"

"Ain't medicinal culture de ting dat makes you strong?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Do you mean physical culture?"

"Well, what's de difference between physic and medicine? I must hab remembered de word by medicine, and got——"

"Mr. Johnson wants to see you!" exclaimed Lively, entering the room at that moment.

"Who's he?" inquired Pete.

"Don't know, and I don't care."

"Poor old Lively! You will die ob 'don't care' one ob dese days. Show de man in. I rader 'spect it must be de bobby."

It was a man of about thirty years of age, tall, and of wiry build. He was dressed in the height of fashion, and wore a massive gold watchchain. Pete knew his business by the first words he uttered.

"Are you the man who left a card in the room of a woman named Green?"

"Yes, old hoss," answered Pete, jerking the chair aside as Johnson went to sit down. He sat on the floor with a bang that shook the room, and it seemed also to shake him. "What are you trying to do, my dear old hoss? You will hurt yourself if you tumble about like dat!"

"You insolent vagabond, I'll——"

"Sit down, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, ramming him into a chair. "Are you de agent, or what?"

"I am the owner of the property."

"Where's your fader?"

"Dead, and——"

"Poor old hoss! I'm mighty sorry for him."

"Where is the woman's furniture?"

"I gabe it away to de oder tenants."

"You removed it?"

"Well, I told dem to do so."

"The woman owed me a week's rent. She has illegally removed her furniture when rent was owing. She is liable for double the rent, and unless she pays I shall prosecute her for fraud!"

"But I removed de furniture."

"Then I shall prosecute you as well, unless you pay me ten pounds damages."

"Den you had better start de prosecution straight away. Now, Johnson, I am going to tell you dat you are a thief. Do you see, dat is my opinion concerning you."

"You insolent scoundrel, I'll break your head if you talk to me like that!"

"Sit down. You can do that presently. You are a thief to charge five shillings a week for a miserable room like dat, and you ought to be stopped. I suppose you hab got plenty ob money; well, ain't you ashamed to take five shillings ob a starving woman's earnings? She neber could make more dan nine shillings——"

"What do I care what the creature made, so long as she made enough to pay my rent. If my tenants don't pay me they go. I trusted her three days over her week, and that's more than I would do for most of them. She ought to be very grateful."



"Bery well. You say she owes you five shillings rent, and I suppose she has to gib you a week's notice. Dat's ten shillings. Here is de money."

"I won't take it! She——"

"All right, Johnson. I hab tendered dat money, and you hab refused to take it. Now den, do your worst. You sha'n't hab de ten shillings now."

"Then I will take it out of you! I'll put you in prison, and——"

"Yes. You are bound to do all dat. I am going to gib dose ten shillings away in charity. Here's de bery ting."

Pete flung the window up. He saw a paper boy outside, and called him up.

"Paper, sir?"

"No, my lad. Dere are ten shillings for yourself. I shall want de paper to-night. Dat's a little present for you. You see, Johnson, I don't want to benefit by money dat ain't mine. Now den, if you are going to flog me, I shall bear it as well as I can."

"You tendered me two weeks," said Johnson, who appeared to think that he had not acted wisely. "She was three days' over her time, so that I am entitled to a further week's notice. Besides——"

"Buzz off home! I ain't tendering any more," interposed Pete. "I offered you two weeks' rent, and you would not take it."

"I'll sue you, you ruffian! I shall claim heavy damages!"

"All right, old hoss, start away; only, don't worry me wid your nonsense, 'cos you ain't at all likely to frighten me, unless, ob course, you resort to personal violence, den I shall ask dese two men to help me."

"We shall do nothing of the sort," said Jack. He wanted to see Johnson try to thrash Pete, because he felt that Johnson would deserve it. "Why don't you pay the gentleman his money! If I were you, Johnson—— At least, I hope you will give him the thrashing he deserves."

"Are you going to pay me that money?" roared Johnson.

He prided himself on his knowledge of boxing, and he carried a cane.

"Now, see here, Johnson," exclaimed Pete, "I ain't going—— Stop! Don't hit me!"

"I'll give you the worst thrashing you have ever had, if you don't pay me!"

"Well, I shall hab to take de flogging if you gentlemen won't help me," said Pete, crouching, as Johnson upraised his cane. "Will you help me, sah?"

"I will not," answered Sam. "I would like to see him flog you."

"Well, I won't pay!" yelled Pete, making a rush to the door.

Johnson grabbed him by the collar, and got in a few cuts that really hurt, then Pete got possession of the cane, and, placing Johnson across the table, flogged him till he howled for mercy.

"Now den," exclaimed Pete, "I rader tink dat is some ob what you deserve. It's no good crying. If you want to fight, say so."

But he was far too badly hurt to want to fight. He opened the window and called a constable in.

"I give that nigger in custody for assaulting me!" he groaned. "He has nearly murdered me! These gentlemen will act as my witnesses."

"Well," exclaimed Jack, "you struck him repeatedly. He never touched you till you had struck him, and then he certainly did so."

"I reckon that's right," said Sam.

"It seems to me your witnesses ain't much good to you," said the constable. "Are you staying at this hotel?"

"No. But——"

"Are you gentlemen staying here?"

"Yes," answered Jack. "Pete is a friend of ours; and we have been here for some time."

"Well, that's pretty good. This man comes in and assaults one of you, and because he retaliates he wants to give him in custody. I'm not taking that charge. If it was the other way about, I might."

"Well, I rader tink de man has learnt better manners," observed Pete, pulling out his pipe, and winking at the constable. "Buzz off home, Johnson."

"You black scoundrel, I'll go out of window!"

"So you shall," said Pete, seizing him by the collar and the back of the trousers, and dropping him on the pavement.

"Well," gasped the constable, "I don't think he can be all there, saying he would go out of window!"

As a matter of fact, Johnson, of course, had said nothing of the sort; it was merely a little bit of Pete's ventriloquism, but it quite deceived the constable.

"I think I will keep my eye on him, gents," exclaimed the constable.

"Dat's right—do!" exclaimed Pete. "And just you put dat sovereign in your pocket. It ain't a bribe, 'cos we were in de right, and it's quite between ourselves. Good-bye, old hoss! Dat man makes me feel ill. Well, boys, it won't be so long before we go in for de fizzical culture."

THE END.

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