

D^{R.} PETE

(HEADMASTER)

SCHOOL FOR
UNRULY BOYS

EUCLID



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"DR. PETE."

A NEW Complete Tale of Pete's School
for Unruly Boys.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

CHAPTER 1.

A Nasty Fall.

PETE'S idea of starting a school to reform unruly boys by kindness was doubtless a good idea. The boys liked the idea exceedingly, because they had such a splendid time of it. Jack and Sam did not mind it, because they simply refused to interfere when one of the many difficulties arose.

As for Pete, well, he discovered that his school was bringing him more trouble than he had bargained for, because those boys could be so remarkably unruly when they liked, and they generally seemed to like; knowing full well that Pete's punishments were not worth consideration.

The school, which was a large one, with fine grounds, was situated on Storm Head, on the coast of British Columbia, and as the previous proprietor had made a failure of it for ruly boys, Pete had purchased the establishment and the furniture, and was trying to make a moral success of it for unruly boys. Seeing that he fed and clothed the boys, and made no charge of any description, he could not make a financial success of it, but that mattered nothing to him, for money was no object.

The magistrates were only too glad to send unruly boys there instead of to prison, knowing that it saved the taxpayers' money, and did those boys all sorts of good.

On the present occasion Pete wore a gown and college cap; but his scholastic appearance was somewhat deteriorated from by the fact that his heels were on the mantelpiece of his study, and a short clay pipe was between his teeth, while he was balancing his chair on its hind legs.

At that moment, Jack and Sam, accompanied by Pete's dog, Rory, entered the study.

They were rather muddy, having just returned from a long walk across country.

"Hallo, you image!" exclaimed Sam. "You look troubled."

"What's the matter?"

"It's de fault ob Euclid, Sammy," growled Pete. "You see, as head-master ob dis college, I'm supposed to know someting 'bout Euclid, and I hab been best part ob de ebening trying to learn."

"Ha, ha, ha! Haven't you mastered it yet, Pete?" inquired Jack.

"Nunno, Jack. I tink de man tries to mix tings. I dunno weder de two sides ob a sausage triangle are equal to its apex, or weder de base is free times greater dan de diameter ob its circumference. I hab certainly learnt dat two straight lines cannot enclose a space, but I knew dat before

I started. Besides, I never wanted dem to enclose a space. If I ever wanted to enclose a space, I should take a full-sized fence, and not two straight lines. It seems to me dat I shall be enclosed in a lunatic asylum if I take in much more Euclid. His wife ought to hab burnt de whole lot ob de books he wrote, instead ob de few she did learn."

"Well, put it down," laughed Jack. "Euclid is an acquired taste. Have your unruly boys been behaving themselves?"

"Well, dey hab, Jack; but it ain't been in a manner dat's pleasing to de inhabitants. Dere's one old gentleman has called, and says if I don't stop de noise he will shoot dem. Now, how does de old hoss suppose dat I'm going to stop de noise ob half a hundred unruly boys?"

"What did you say to him?"

"Asked him how he would like me to start stopping dem, and den he got calling me all de names he could tink ob. If I'm anything like dat man calls me, den I ain't at all fit to improve unruly boys. In fact, I should say dey would be more fit to improve me. Still, dey are perfectly quiet now, and as I can hear Potts de porter bringing up de supper tray, dat's anoder all right. I hab ordered curried fowls for supper, wid plenty ob rice, and— Golly!"

Pete's next remark exactly described the situation.

"Dere's a lot happening in a short space ob time!"

Pete's very worst scholar was a meek-looking boy named Lamb, and he was the cause of the catastrophe. Amongst his many bad habits was that of sliding downstairs on the balusters. Unless a master happened to be there he never by any chance went down in a proper manner. His modus operandi was to fling one leg over the balusters, go down face first, then land in the hall with a leap.

This system had the advantage of speed, although it was utterly devoid of safety. On the present occasion it happened to be deadly dangerous. For as Lamb was coming down Potts was coming up. He had just turned the corner at the foot of the stairs, when the frisky Lamb took his leap. He landed fair and square on Potts' starboard side, and brought him down supper tray and all, and the next moment Potts was so disguised with curry, gravy, bits of fowl, and rice and mashed potatoes that he was scarcely recognisable, except by his portly form.

Now, it is quite impossible to smash up a supper tray of crockery without making a fearful noise. Potts added to it by howling at the top of his voice. That curry was both organically and inorganically hot, and he had got a full-sized mouthful of it, to say nothing of a bad bump at the side of his head.

Lamb had not hurt himself at all. He had merely sat on Potts' head, and he was up in a second. There is not a doubt that he would have fled, had not Mr. Carton, the master, come rushing along the hall to see what that awful crash was.

Lamb stepped into Pete's study, and he saw his headmaster's legs waving in the air, while his head was on the floor.

The fact is that terrific crash had so startled Pete that he lost his balance and toppled backwards, and, as he fell the back of his chair grazed Jack's shins. Jack appeared to be trying the two-step movement and rub his shins at the same time.

"I believe dere must hab been an explosion ob all de Euclid dat I hab been learning," growled Pete, struggling to his feet, and gazing at Lamb's calm face. "What has happened, Lamb?"

"If you please," murmured Lamb, bowing politely, "Potts has had a fall."

"Should say it was a mighty bad one, too," observed Pete.

"I'm scalt, and my skull is fractured!" howled Potts, dashing into the room, followed by Mr. Carton. "It's that varmint of a boy! I believe my back is 'broke!"

"How did he manage dat little lot, Potts?" inquired Pete, knowing perfectly well that he would not get the truth from Lamb, but that he might do so from Potts, seeing that no amount of exaggeration could make matters much worse than they were.

"Bust him! He's slopped a quart of scalding curry down my throat, and jest look at the awful mess he's made me in."

"He ain't improved my feelings eider, old hoss," observed Pete. "And I don't believe he's done much good to Jack. De only one he appears to hab amused is Sammy, and if dat man would kindly stop his guffawing de headmaster ob dis college would feel sort ob obliged. Now den, Potts, proceed. How did it all happen?"

"Why, he was a-sliding down the balusters, and he bashed into me, knocked me——"

"M'yes! I know de rest ob it."

"Haven't I told you a dozen times not to slide down the balusters, boy?" demanded Carton fiercely.

"If you say so, sir, I will not dispute your word," murmured Lamb, as calmly as though nothing unusual had transpired.

"You know that I have told you!"

"Then pardon me, sir; but I fail to see the utility of your question."

"You impertinent, stupid boy! How dare you answer me like dat! You deserve to be soundly thrashed for your gross misbehaviour."

"Eh?"

Mr. Carton did not deign to repeat his observation, knowing that Pete had heard his words, and only said "Eh" because he did not know what answer to make.

"I can plainly see de boy needs some correction," observed Pete.

"And I can plainly see that he needs more correction than he will ever get at this college," snarled Carton. "You had far better let me take him in hand for a month or so."

"Bery well, my dear old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, with a sigh of relief.

"You try your hand wid him for a bit."

"Of course, I shall reserve to myself the right to thrash him when I consider that he deserves it."

"Eh?"

"I say I shall flog him when he deserves it."

"Dat's against de cistern in dis college," said Pete. "I'm de only master dat is allowed to hit a boy."

"And you never do so."

"Well, I ain't started yet; but you see, when I do start I hit mighty hard. Lamb neber knows when I am going to begin, and he naturally stands in awe ob de flogging he may get any day."

"Nothing of the sort. He knows perfectly well that you will not strike him whatever he does."

"Den dat must be a great comfort to de boy, 'cos he knows dat I'm sort ob strong, and it follows dat a strong man hits harder dan a weak one. I wish you would stop your laughter, Jack. How do you suppose de boy is going to be frightened if you laugh at de headmaster?"

"I admit the beauty does not look very frightened," answered Jack.

"He will find dat my bark is worse dan my bite one ob dese days."

"I fancy he has found that out already, Pete. I suppose you want to say that your bite is worse than your bark."

"Eh?"

"All right. Go on with your chastisement. Don't keep Lamb in suspense. You are only keeping him in dread."

"Just you express my opinion ob him, Jack."

"Not I. You will do that best."

"You see de error ob your ways, Lamb?"

"Quite so."

"You might have hurt Potts——"

"Bust it, he has hurt me!" hooted Potts.

"Oh, you hab hurt him, and look what a frightful mess you'm made him in! Den dere is a good lot ob damage done to de crockery, and dat comes expensive."

"You ought to stop his pocket-money until it is paid for," said Carton.

"But de boy won't like dat, and——"

"Do you want him to like the punishment you are about to administer?"

"Eh?"

"He knocked you over."

"Well, I ain't sure dat dat part ob de business wasn't my fault, 'cos I was balancing myself wid my feet against de mantelpiece, and I ain't sure dat dat is de correct position for a headmaster—I'm mighty sure dat de one dat followed it wasn't de correct position. All de same, I don't want de boy to be punished too severely, and it is a mighty punishment to stop a boy's pocket-money. Besides, I dunno dat I can legally do dat, seeing dat I hab promised to gib him dat pocket-money ebery week. Nunno, I tink we will make a different sort ob punishment to dat."

"Why not ask him what punishment he would like, while you are about it?" sneered Carton.

"Well, dat ain't a bad idea, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, glad to get out of it so easily. "What punishment do you tink you would like, Lamb?"

"Thank you, on the present occasion I fancy the justice of the case will be met if you order Potts to swab up the slop, and stop his supper for getting into my way. He should have looked where I was coming to."

"Bery well, on dis occasion we will oberlook de matter, and—don't let it occur again, else de punishment will be much more severe."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Lamb, bolting from the room, and leaping the wreckage as he went.

"Well, I'm glad dat little matter is settled," exclaimed Pete. "It's no good——"

"But where do I come in?" demanded Potts, who never by any chance treated his employer with the slightest respect. "I won't submit to this shameful treatment, and so I tell you."

"Eh?"

"I say as it's perfectly scandalous."

"But see, boys will be boys, old hoss."

"That's jest what I want 'em to be. The boys at this show are perfect young fiends. They never give me a moment's peace. Here's all my uniform spoilt."

"Well, I will buy you anoder livery. I will design one myself. Light green, picked out wid yellow, and trimmed wid blue wouldn't look bad. I'll tink out de colours."

"Do you take me for a blessed monkey, as has got to be dressed up like that 'ere?"

"I don't wish to say anything rude to monkeys, old hoss. I like monkeys,

and I ain't going to insult dem by comparing you to one ob dem. But you leave it to me, and I will make you look as nice as possible under de painful circumstances. I shall dress you in a light blue velvet coat, wid a large white collar turned ober it—an Eton coat, you know. Den I tink yellow, tight-fitting silk trousers, fastened wid green bows round de knees, and wid two violet bows at de back——”

“Ha, ha, ha!” howled Jack. “You would really make him look supreme.”

“Shut up, Jack. You ain't got any taste. A white straw hat wid a turned-up brim, and yellow streamers at de back to match de bows on de trousers, and some large white buttons down de back ob de coat—— Golly! I believe I was intended for a livery designer. Run away, Potts. I must make a note ob dese ideas, in case I forgot any of dem. I tink I shall call you Algernon, or else Millicent. You want a softer name dan Potts. Potts ain't at all a pretty name.”

“See you here——?”

“Run away, Potts. I'm busy wid de arrangements for your new livery.”

“I won't wear it, and that's flat. If you think you are going to dress me up like some blessed doll, you are mistook. I'm not a slave. I'm a man, and I've got my rights.”

“A light-blue sash round de waist would be rader impressive, don't you tink so, Jack?”

“Ha, ha, ha! Exceedingly. Why not give him white socks and bare legs?”

“You'm a genius, Jack. I will, and I will get Bridget to do his hair in curls. Yah, yah, yah! We'm got rid ob de man at last. I don't tink he liked your last suggestion, Jack. But here comes Carton again. Oh, golly! More trouble for de headmaster, I can see.”

“This boy has been fighting again,” cried Carton, leading a sturdy-looking lad into the room. “I have forbidden him to fight a dozen times, but he does not take the slightest heed of my words. Just look at his face.”

The lad's name was Droog, and he was one in whom Pete took a great interest. In the first place Droog was Pete's first pupil, and he had certainly improved under the peculiar treatment he had received at that school.

“What did you fight about dis time, Droog?” inquired Pete, gazing at the dilapidated object, whose eyes were blackened, and whose clothes were torn considerably.

“'Cos Lamb insulted you. Said he knocked you over, and hoped he hurt you.”

“Seems to me I'm de proper one to fight about dat.”

“Well, he's not going to brag about a thing like that. I know he can lick me, but I've hurt him, and he tore my clothes out of revenge.”

“How many fights hab you had wid Lamb?”

“I ain't kept count, but I would say about a dozen.”

“Well, dere's only one way to stop your fighting in future,” said Pete. “I shall adopt that cistern. It's all right, Carton. Don't you boder yourself 'bout de future. Dey will hab one more fight, and dat will be de last. De last fight they hab will be wid gloves, so dey won't hurt each oder much. 'Nuff said.”

“But surely you are going to punish that boy for——”

“Why should I punish him for taking my part?”

“I don't believe a word of it.”

“Well, I believe ebery word, and Droog will know who is right. But dat doesn't matter a bit. Droog has told me de troof many a time when it might had got him into trouble. It ain't likely dat he's going to be a coward now, and speak falsely, when he knows perfectly well dat he won't get into trouble. He knows dat Lamb can beat him at boxing, and he wouldn't fight Lamb if

There was not a good cause. Bery well, Lamb is always trying to fight him, 'cos he knows he can win. I am going to show him de error ob his ways next time. I am going to engage a boxing and fencing master. I hab spoken to one about de matter, and he shall start to-morrow. 'Nuff said."

"You mean to tell me that you are not going to punish that boy——"

"De oder boy is de one who deserves de punishment, my dear old hoss; but as I'm mighty certain no amount ob punishment will eber stop him fighting wid Droog, I'm going to stop him anoder road. Now, if you will kindly buzz off we will try to get anoder little supper up, and you may as well stay to it, Droog, 'cos I want to hab a talk wid you 'bout my stop-fighting cistern."

Carton left the room, shutting the door far harder than was necessary, and Pete ordered up another supper, after which he had a chat with Droog concerning his 'cistern.'

"You see, de idea is for you to learn to box, and it's only fair dat your opponent should hab the same advantages. De instructor will be here to-morrow, 'cos I shall fetch him."

"I'd a lot rather you taught me," said Droog, who had absolute faith in Pete's prowess as a boxer.

"But I'm going to teach you. De instructor is going to teach Lamb, and den you are going to put on de givces wid him, and we are going to see fair play. If you once prove to dat boy dat you can whack him, he will neber fight wid you again, and I shall rely on you to prevent him bullying any boy in de school. I shall make you captain ob dis college directly you can beat him, 'cos I can always rely on your telling me de troof. You see, Droog, if a boy does dat—and owns up his own faults—you can trust him. I don't 'spect you to be perfect; in fact, it ain't possible for you to be anyting like dat, seeing what a mighty bad start you had. Dere's lots ob room for improvement in you, just de same as dere is in ebery oder boy; but it doesn't matter how bad a boy is—and you'm nuffin' like dat eider—still, if a boy sticks hard and fast to de troof, let come what may, dat boy is brave, and he'll soon get good. Good-night. Don't you take any notice ob Lamb. I shall tell de instructor to take Lamb in hand specially, and I shall do de same to you, and den we will see what de result will be. 'Nuff said."

CHAPTER 2.

Pete and the Boxer.

SERGEANT MOSS was the name of the instructor that Pete had in mind, and the following morning Pete called on him.

He was a finely-built young fellow, and a heavy-weight.

Pete's terms were liberal, and were at once accepted. The pair returned to the college together, and Lamb took his first lesson that afternoon. He was inclined to think that he knew rather more than Moss, but that worthy soon undeceived him.

"You will make a fine boxer, my lad," exclaimed Moss, when the lesson was over. "Pete tells me that he's going to let you box with a lad named Droog."

"I can knock him silly every time I like."

"But you won't be able to do it if I have the handling of him."

"You are not going to do anything of the sort. Pete is going to teach him. He's told me so."

"Then he won't have a chance against you. That chap can't box."

"I've heard he can."

"Well, you could box, but you have improved already. If you only bear in mind what I tell you, you will improve a lot more. Look here, I'll take you on whenever you get a bit of spare time."

"Right you are. Droog sha'n't beat me. I've thrashed him often enough so far. I gave him a pair of black eyes last night; in fact, he's generally had black eyes since I've been here. Mind you this, if Pete has made up his mind for Droog to win, he will teach him all he knows."

"Maybe I'll teach Pete a bit before I have done with him," said Moss. "But I don't expect he would dare to put on the gloves with me."

"Don't you make so jolly sure of that. He's a beast, and is always trying to make me look a fool; but I will say he doesn't know what fear is. Then, he's awfully strong."

"So am I. He's frightened of me. I could tell that by the way he shirked having a few rounds with me."

"All right. If you think so, I don't. Besides, how could he be frightened of you when you are only his paid servant."

"Look here, young shaver," growled Moss, who was not only a very dignified man, but was a very bad-tempered one, too. He could be amiable enough when matters went all right, but directly anything went as he did not wish then his temper broke loose, and he forgot all the discipline he had learnt in the Army.

On the present occasion it was Lamb's amiable intention to enrage him against Pete as much as he could. Lamb owed a great deal to Pete, and had always been treated with the greatest consideration and kindness, but he had received one or two moral lessons, and although knowing how thoroughly well he deserved them, it had made him take a hatred to Pete, who had a knack of making him appear small in the eyes of his fellow scholars.

Meantime Pete was taking Droog in hand. That worthy was absolutely plucky, and he was also strong, but he had not the slightest idea of boxing, and the result of this was that Lamb could knock him about as he chose.

"You'm getting on bery nicely, Droog," exclaimed Pete. "I don't want to teach you too much for de start, 'cos you might forget some ob what you hab learnt, and dat's always a pity. Dere's a lot in de position. Always point your right toe towards your opponent, and when you lead off wid de left, be sure you hit straight from de shoulder, keeping your knuckles outwards, and your thumb at the top ob de fist."

"I reckon he would have a difficulty in keeping his thumb at the bottom of the fist if he kept his knuckles outwards," observed Sam, winking at Jack.

"You shut up, Sammy. You always keep your left toe in front, and de right one behind it, resting on de toes. De heel ob de left foot pointing to about de centre ob de back foot. So. Now, Sammy, just stand up in front ob me, while I hit you in de eye wid my fist to show him how to lead off wid de left."

"I reckon not."

"But I must teach him."

"Well, get Potts for your punching-ball. I am not going to lend my head for the purpose."

"I call dat rather selfish. All de same, I dare say we shall be able to manage widout Potts."

Droog really liked the lessons, and he paid the greatest attention to them. Pete soon discovered that he had a very apt pupil.

"Now, listen to me, Droog," exclaimed Pete, one day, when his lesson was

finished. "You ain't to fight wid Lamb under any consideration. Eben if he hits you, you ain't to hit him back. Tink you can promise me dat?"

"Yes."

"Dat's right, 'cos he will beat you yet. You'm got to remember dat he knew a lot before Moss began to teach him. You'm coming on nicely, and I don't want you to get beaten. For dat reason, I don't want you to fight till I hab finished de preliminary lessons."

"Moss has been boasting that he could knock you out of time whenever he liked."

"Well, I dunno dat he could, but I ain't engaged de man to knock me out ob time. He's here to teach boxing and fencing, and dat's what he's got to do, 'cos it is what he is paid for. Moss ain't de boss ob de show, and he will soon find dat out if I hab any ob his nonsense."

"He offered to give me some lessons."

"Yah, yah, yah! He wants to see how much you know, and dat is exactly what we ain't going to let him know. All you'm got to do is to follow my instructions, and you will soon see dat Lamb can't do all he likes wid you. He could beat you now because he has had a lot more learning, but he won't be able to beat you when I send you up to face him wid de gloves."

"He has tried to get up a fight lots of times, and he's hit me more than once."

"All right! We sha'n't be so mighty long now before we show him dat bullying doesn't pay. My belief is dat when you hab once giben him a frashing he will neber stand up to you for anoder, and I am relying on you not to bully him, and, in fact, to stop his bullying orders."

"I'll do that right enough, if you only teach me how to whack him!"

"It's going to be a tough bout, 'cos, if I ain't mistaken, Lamb is plucky enough, and he won't gib in so mighty soon."

"I sha'n't give in, neither, not till you tell me to stop."

"In dat case, I shall tell you to stop when you'm won. Now, you buzz off, and we will hab anoder turn to-morrow morning before breakfast. Bear in mind all de tings I hab taught you, 'specially dat cross-counter wid de right, knuckles upwards dat time, you know—"

"And catch him on the point!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Dat's it! One on de chin is as good as one on de mark. Bof ob dem are bound to take effect."

At last Pete was satisfied with his pupil, and he invited Moss to supper, also his two masters, Mr. Lindly and Carton.

Moss had taken a lesson from Potts. He noticed that the porter said what he chose to Pete, and so Moss decided on doing the same. He treated both the masters as though he were their equal, and he treated Pete as though he were very much his inferior.

"How's your pupil coming on, old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"All right, my man! That lad Droog will find him rather too much all right when you get the lad to pluck up courage to meet him."

"Suppose we say to-morrow afternoon in de gymnasium?"

"I've been ready for days past. You would do well to let me take Droog in hand for a bit, though. I don't mind the trouble. In fact, I'll give you a few lessons as well, if you like."

"Bery well, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "We will put on de gloves togeder for free rounds, just to gib de lads an object lesson, before dey start deir bout."

"He won't do much in three rounds, will he, Lindly?" exclaimed Moss, addressing the head-master, who was quite a young man.

"I expect he will do considerably more than you care for, my good man," answered Lindly coldly. He did not appreciate Moss's impertinence to Pete. "You see, Pete is not a man to boast of his knowledge."

"Do I understand you to say that I am?"

"I should imagine not. I do not see how you could understand a thing like that, for I certainly never said it. All the same, I consider you are over boastful, and if you desire my whole opinion, I would add that I consider the manner in which you address our employer is impertinent and vulgar in the extreme."

"Would you like to put on the gloves with me?"

"I have no intention of doing so. It is my duty to teach the boys, and not to take lessons from you!"

"I could teach you more than ever you have learnt in your life in boxing."

"That would not be difficult. I fear I should have a more difficult task were I to strive to teach you manners!"

"Yah, yah, yah! He's got you dere, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "But don't get vexed, Moss; you can't help being a bit ignorant concerning manners. Potts is just de same, but I don't take any notice ob you. Hab some more to eat, and p'r'aps dat will be sort ob soothing to you!"

Moss climbed down a little after that, but he made a mental vow to take it out of Pete the following day.

Pete was desirous of letting the boys benefit by his object lesson, and so he gave them all a half-holiday, much to Mr. Carton's disgust, for that worthy never liked the boys to have a holiday unless suggested by him, and he always chose such days as suited his own private arrangements.

When all were assembled in the gymnasium, which was a very large building, Moss put on the gloves.

"I hab decided to let our bout come last, old hoss," said Pete. "We will let de two lads see who is best man first."

"It's all the same to me," answered Moss.

"Well, dat's quite all right, 'cos you would hab had to alter your requirements to agree wid mine. You will notice dat you always hab to do dat, when I hab trained you a bit more. Potts will tell you dat he always does what he likes here, but den you must not believe all dat Potts tells you, 'cos he ain't de most trooful man on de face ob de earth. Now den, my lads, just go ahead and fight fairly till I tell you to stop, and dat will be when one ob you is beaten!"

"I hope you won't tell us to stop too soon," said Lamb. "I don't want to have to hurt him at the start!"

"You weren't so particular 'bout hurting him when you had no gloves on. I will act as timekeeper. Jack can be referee, and Sammy judge. I will also look after Droog. Moss will look after you, and coach you as he tinks fit. 'Nuff said!"

"I thought——"

"Don't try to do dat, Moss!" interposed Pete. "You'm here to teach boxing and fencing, and not for tinkin' purposes. When I want any tinkin' done I employ Jack and Sammy and de two masters, and den I ask deir advice——"

"And don't take it," said Jack.

"I frequently take it, Jack."

"So you do—if it happens to agree with your own opinion. But never mind, Pete; get on with the boxing."

Now, Lamb had had so many fights with Droog, and had always proved

victorious, that he was over confident now. His invariable plan was to suddenly spring in, and land his adversary a blow in the face, follow it up with a few more, and finish up with a couple or so on the mark. After that treatment Droog generally became so demoralised that his chances were practically gone.

"Remember, you'm only boxing, lads," said Pete. "A good boxer neber gets vicious or loses his temper. If dere is anything like unfair play dere will be trouble in de world for de one who tries it on, and de one who wins de contest will be presented wid a silver watch and chain as a prize. Time!"

Lamb commenced to spar for an opening, then he made his sudden spring, and led off at Droog's face, and cross-counter at the mark, but neither blow was a hit. Droog ducked to the right, and caught Lamb full in the face with his left before the cross-counter got home, even then it only caught him on the elbow.

Lamb had not expected anything like that. The improvement in his adversary's style was extraordinary, and quite unexpected. The blow in the face angered Lamb, and he went in with a rush, while they went at it hammer and tongs until the call of time.

"Don't try in-fighting," said Moss. "He can stand being knocked about better than you can. Try him with science, although he boxes a lot better than you led me to expect."

"The pudden-headed brute has improved a lot!"

"So have you. Go in and win. Upper-cut him, or land on the mark. He's not quite as quick as you are, though I'm inclined to think that he is a harder hitter. Remember the prize!"

Lamb did remember it. He had never yet possessed a watch and chain, and he knew perfectly well that Pete would give a good one; besides, Lamb wanted to maintain his prestige. So far, Droog was the only boy in that school who had dared to stand up to him. To let him conquer now was not to be thought of.

This time it was Droog who made the attack. Pete had given him no instructions, being desirous that he should win the bout entirely by himself; but Droog was so elated with his successful start that he thought he would get a little of his own back for the numerous black eyes Lamb had favoured him with.

Once or twice Lamb got past Droog's guard, but even in those cases Droog invariably countered, and towards the end of the round he led off with his left, and in guarding the blow Lamb raised his right elbow just a trifle too high.

In a second Droog's cross-counter came in, and, landing on the mark, sent Lamb reeling backwards; then Droog was on him, and getting in an uppercut with his right, sent him backwards to the floor.

Now Pete called "Time!" and Moss commenced to bully Lamb for what he could not possibly help.

"Here, you stop dat, old hoss!" cried Pete. "De lad is boxing bery well. If you'm any instructions to gib him, gib dem by all means, only you ain't going to blame him for your fault in not teaching him better!"

"I know how to attend to my man without your assistance!" snarled Moss.

"Den you had better attend to him properly, else you are likely to get my assistance on de job, and you may find dat painful!"

"I'll finish the fight without gloves!" cried Lamb.

"You would do a lot worse widout gloves, my lad," said Pete. "De fight

would hab gone no farder dan dis if Droog had not worn gloves. You will finish dis fight boxing, and if you want anoder widout gloves it will hab to be when none ob your masters are looking on. 'Nuff said! Time!"

"The minute isn't up yet. You are favouring Droog!"

"Bery well, you say when de minute is up. I can see you are winded, and you may take as long as you like to recover, 'cos I wouldn't like it said dat I favoured Droog."

"You are telling him what to do."

"I hab a perfect right to do dat, but I ain't spoken a word to him yet. De boy knows what to do, and dat is to win fairly if he can, and if not gib de fight to you. You come up to scratch when you feel ready!"

"I don't want any advantage, only you called 'Time!' before the minute was up!"

"Funny ting dat! My watch must hab gone wrong."

"Not it," said Jack. "I was checking the time. It was the full minute."

"I don't believe it!" cried Lamb.

"Well, my lad," exclaimed Pete, "I hab noticed dat you ain't so trooful yourself, so no doubt you 'spect oder people to speak falsely!"

"I expect a school-master to be able to speak English, and that's more than you can!"

"Well, neber mind 'bout de speaking part ob de business! You'm got to finish de bout, and I may tell you dat, so far, Droog is leading easily wid marks!"

"Because you score them."

"Well, I tink anyone who has watched the boxing must say de same. You can refer to de sergeant if you like."

"Of course he leads," growled Moss; "but he won't do at the finish!"

"Well, dat I don't know, 'cos I can't see into de future; and when dat mighty long minute has transpired to Lamb's satisfaction, p'r'aps we shall be able to see who is leading in points."

Suddenly Lamb rushed in, and landed heavily in Droog's face before he had got up his guard, but he suffered for it.

Droog went in in earnest, and Lamb gave way; then Droog did almost what he liked with him, and ended up the round by knocking him down.

The next round finished the fight. At the very commencement of it Droog landed on the mark, then an upper-cut on the jaw sent Lamb down again, and he was counted out; while, finding he had got the worst of it, he pretended to be seriously injured.

Pete, however, was too experienced to be deceived.

"It's all right, my lad!" exclaimed Pete. "You won't come to any harm lying dere, and as you are easily beaten—why, dere's no sense in getting up just yet. Just go and fetch a pail ob water, Potts, and dash it into his face. I fancy dat will fetch him up. Dere's nuffin' like cold water for dat purpose."

Potts was only too ready to go. He hated Lamb rather worse than he hated any other boy in the school, and that was saying a good deal. But long ere he returned with the bucket of water Lamb was on his feet, and he flung off the gloves, while he challenged Droog to fight with fists.

"Well, so I will!" cried Droog. "I'll fight you now!"

"It's for me to name the day," said Lamb, catching hold of the bottom of the pail while Potts was holding the handle, then Lamb gave it a violent jerk, and sent the whole of its contents down Potts's legs. After that the meek boy bolted from the place, while Potts hurled the now empty pail after him, but it only hit the door.

"Bust it!" hooted Potts. "I'm drenched to the skin!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Dat boy reminds me ob a pug-dog. If someone hurts him, he gets in his bite, and doesn't care a bit weder dat bite is giben to de offending party or anyone else."

"Here! You promised to box the sergeant," said Potts, desirous of seeing his employer get knocked about. "You can't back out of that."

"Dunno! 'Spect I can if I say I ain't going to box."

"I should call you a coward if you did."

"Eh?"

"Well, if we didn't tell you so to your face, we should think it all the same."

"All right, Potts! I don't mind what you tink. De fact ob de matter is you ain't got a capacity for tinkin'; but you can't help that, my poor dear old hoss. You were born widout it, and it ain't grown since."

"Of course he's going to box with me!" exclaimed Moss, putting on the gloves. "I won't hurt you, Pete. I won't hit you much harder than that. Don't be frightened!"

And to illustrate his meaning he caught Pete a light blow in the face.

"It won't be much good my boxing wid you, old hoss, if you ain't going to hit harder dan dat," observed Pete, winking at Jack. "I'm most afraid I should hit too hard for your liking."

"Well, if you want it, I can hit harder—like so! Come on, now—no shirking!"

"Oh, I dunno dat I want to do anything like dat, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, pulling on the gloves.

"You needn't put on the gloves unless you like," said Moss. "You would have a better chance against me without them. I will wear gloves, and you can use your fists."

"Well, I 'spect dat would gib me a good advantage," said Pete. "At de same time, it wouldn't gib you one. Nunno! I tink you will find matters sort ob pleasanter if I wear boxing-gloves. Now, den! Fire ahead, and be mighty careful you don't hurt me! You had better hit as hard as you can, 'cos I shall put some steam behind de blows."

Moss opened the attack in a most scientific manner, but he failed to get past Pete's guard. That worthy acted on the defensive. He invariably did this until he found out sufficient of his opponent's style to suit his purpose.

Moss began to lose his temper, and became a little reckless. Thinking he saw an opening at Pete's jaw, he struck backwards with his right with all his strength; but Pete jerked his head backwards, landed full in Moss's face with his left, and almost at the same moment delivered his right on the mark, and to the surprise of all the spectators Moss went heavily to the floor.

"You should keep your right elbow down, old hoss," said Pete. "I hab taught Droog dat, and it is a ting a boxer should not forget, 'cos a blow on de mark hurts."

Moss was on his feet immediately, and he went in with a rush, which was just the very worst thing he could have done. Pete had the longer reach, and he was by far the harder hitter.

Jack called time, but Moss was in such a state of fury that he took no heed of the call. Then Pete got in another on the mark, and sent him to the floor again.

"I dunno weder you are going to call dat one round or two, old hoss," he said. "Seems to me dat you had better call it two."

"We box for twenty rounds."

"Golly! I'm going to do nuffin' ob de sort!" growled Pete. "You won't come up for anything like dat. If I can't knock you out in free rounds, dere's an end ob de matter. You can tell de boys dat you hab beaten me, if you like; dough weder dey believe it or not is anoder matter."

"You needn't think you can box me," snarled Moss. "I'll soon show you who's master. I suppose you want the minute rest?"

"Well, I ain't at all particular in dat direction."

"I would advise you to take it, Moss," laughed Jack.

"Why?"

"Because you look as though you need it. At any rate, you have had it now. Time is up."

It was Moss's idea to open the round by sparring, but Pete did not give him the choice. He made the attack, drove Moss backwards, then delivered a blow on the point that took all the fight out of him, and he went down before the call of time.

"Last round," cried Jack—"four minutes! Time!"

Pete ducked to avoid his opponent's lead-off, countered with his left in Moss's face, then got in his right on the mark with a force that sent Moss head over heels, and he lay on the floor gasping for breath. He was completely winded, and although he made an effort to rise when Jack counted off the seconds, he found it impossible to do so.

"We seem to hab won de double event, Droog," said Pete, pulling off the gloves, when he saw that there was no more fight in his opponent. "You ain't a bad boxer, Moss, if you would only keep your temper, but you ain't much ob a hitter, and you ain't nearly as quick as I should like to see you. Howeber, you will do all right to teach de boys, so dat you can consider your engagement as a permanent one. 'Nuff said! Don't get up before you feel quite fit. Come 'long, boys! You can come wid me, Droog, and I will buy you dat watch and chain."

And it was late that night before Pete and his pupil returned, while Droog was the proud owner of a very handsome silver watch and chain, and Pete made him the captain of the college.

CHAPTER 3.

The Paper-Chase.

"WHAT ever have you got there, Pete?" inquired Jack, entering the study one morning.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Ain't dis a splendid machine? It is made for cancelling bonds. You see, you turn dis wheel, and de punch comes down and punches holes frough dem as big as a frepenny-piece. Well, what could be nicer dan dis for making scent for de great paper-chase. All you hab got to do is to turn de wheel, and keep your fingers out ob de way ob de punch. You see it goes frough 'bout forty thicknesses ob paper. I tink it would be sort ob safer if you were to ram de paper in while I turn de wheel, Sammy. I don't want to get my fingers too close to de punching part ob de business."

"I reckon I am not going to get mine close to it at all. But look what a frightful mess you are making on the floor!"

"Well, dat's where de scent is accumulatings, Sammy. Potts can collect dat in bags later on. I rader like dis part ob a schoolmaster's life. Taken altogeder, dere's a lot ob trials in it, but a paper-chase is one ob its pleasures, and——"

"I've chosen you for one of the hares, Pete!" cried Droog, entering the room with a suddenness that was rather alarming.

"Eh?"

"We hope you will be able to cover about eighty miles in the day."

"Oh, golly! Golly! Paper-chases ain't all honey, after all. I 'spected to be de starter——"

"You are going to be—as one of the hares."

"I don't mean dat sort ob starter. I mean, to be de man who says 'Go!'"

"Well, someone else can do that."

"But I would rader someone else ran de eighty miles."

"We want a good runner."

"Jack and Sammy are mighty good runners——"

"I reckon I'm doing no running," said Sam.

"I have got a nail in my foot," said Jack.

"All right, Jack! I 'spect you'm got ten nails in your foot, but dey won't prevent you from running. Don't be so mighty lazy! It's your duty to help to amuse de boys."

"If you think I am going to prance over ploughed fields and through dismal swamps to amuse the boys, you are mistaken, because I am going to do nothing of the sort."

"Who suggested dat I should be one ob de hares, Droog?" inquired Pete.

"Lamb."

"Dat boy has got his knife into me. I can see dat quite plainly. Who's de oder hare?"

"He wants me to be. You see, he knows jolly well that he can run faster than me, and it doesn't matter a bit one of the hares running fast if the other one runs slow. He's thumping artful. There's only one thing—I know the country! There ain't a part round about here that I don't know."

"Well, I suppose it has got to be!" sighed Pete. "I tought if I provided de scent and did de starting, dat would be 'bout as much as could be 'spected ob me, but it seems dat dey expect more. See here, Droog! You can tell all de hounds dat I will agree, and dat each ob dem will be presented wid half-a-crown, 'cos if it's a long run dey will need some food on de way. I ain't covering anything like eighty miles in de day, dough, and I ain't covering half dat distance widout something to eat on de way. I will leabe de course to you. And be sure you don't tell Lamb which way you are going, 'cos dat boy is quite capable ob cutting us off."

Now, Lamb had not chosen wisely; but then, he did not know that Pete was a splendid runner.

On the other hand, Droog was by no means fast, but he had good staying power, and as Pete was giving some good prizes to the participants of the race he would certainly do his best.

"What does the clod say, old pudden-head?" inquired Lamb, when Droog came out.

"See here, you sleepy-eyed kid! You can call me what you like, 'cos I don't care twopence; but I'm captain of this college, and I'm not going to listen to your insulting Pete. If you ain't careful what you say about him, I'll clout your head!"

"So you think you are a match for me, do you, just because you got the best of it with the gloves? You had better be careful how you speak to me, else I'll start on you with my fists, and then you know what will happen."

"No, you won't!" grinned Droog. "Things are changed with us now. It's you who are frightened of me—and I never was that of you! I'll admit you used to whack me, but you can't do it now! And you know it—else you

would have tried half a dozen times. Pete says you will never fight me again, and I believe he's right. At any rate, he's given me orders to stop your bullying, and that's what I'm going to do, else you are going to lick me with your fists. I don't mind having a try at any moment you care to start it. Now you know what to expect! These chaps can hear what I'm a-saying of. If you bully any of 'em, they have only to come to me, and I'll give you a thrashing that you will remember—else you shall knock me silly. Well, Pete is going to run with me, and as we shall be on the job all day, he's going to give every boy half-a-crown for his refreshments on the journey."

"What's the good of half-a-crown? He's going to spend more than that with you, I know," said Lamb.

"Well, I sha'n't mind that at all," answered Droog, grinning. "He can spend as much as ever he likes on me. All the same, I consider the half-crown for you downright liberal, and it's a sight more than you deserve."

For the next two days it rained almost incessantly, but the third day, which was the one of the great chase, was brilliantly fine. This satisfied the boys entirely. They cared nothing about the ground being heavy, and after a very substantial breakfast the start was made.

The hares were allowed ten minutes' grace, and, starting off at a leisurely trot, they made their way to the seashore, which was reached by a gully.

"Mind, I don't want de hounds to run into any sort ob danger, Droog," said Pete. "I'm leaving de course to you."

"There's no danger this road," declared Droog. "I want to keep out of sight as much as possible. Don't you think we had better run a bit faster?"

"Not at de start."

"Lamb will, and he's not the only one as can run faster than me."

"You leabe me to make de pace," answered Pete. "You see, I'm used to long runs—hab often had to run away from savages, and dat's bound to mean a long run."

"Wish I'd been with you! But, don't you see, I've come this way 'cos the ground is so awfully heavy. We have to go over a mile or so of slippery rocks, and then climb the cliff. Then we keep along by the river, and it will be awfully swampy there. I shouldn't wonder if we sink up to our knees in mud. That's where I hope we will gain on the hounds. I'm no good at a fast run, but I'm a pretty good stayer. I wouldn't like you to get caught through me."

Pete was rather pleased to see that Droog took such a deep interest in the matter. Carton had told him a score of times that the lad was thoroughly bad at heart, and Pete had never believed anything of the sort. According to what Pete called his "cistern," if he could only get Droog to take an interest in sports, he would find no difficulty in weaning him from his late evil associations, but he had never expected him to take so much interest in that paper-chase."

Droog was right when he said the rocks were slippery. The tide was falling, and the seaweed with which the rocks were covered was still wet, and so slippery that it was impossible to go at anything but a walking pace.

They had not proceeded very far when a shout caused them to turn, and they caught sight of their pursuers.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Droog, as Lamb, in his excitement, went sprawling on the slippery rocks. Judging by Droog's silver watch and chain, Lamb

had very little doubt that the prizes Pete would award would be handsome ones, and he wanted to get the best. Therefore, directly he caught sight of the hares, he dashed forwards at a reckless pace, and, slipping on a bunch of seaweed, went sprawling on the rocks.

"He won't be best pleased at that, especially if he's grazed himself. I say, we really ought to go faster. It's a long way to the part where we can climb the cliff."

"Dis is rader anxious work, Droog," observed Pete. "You see, I don't want you to fall, and I don't want to fall myself, 'cos it might hurt me, and spoil my temper."

"It won't do that, and you will soon get over the pain."

"M'yes! Dat's true enough. But den you soon get ober de pain ob habing a toof out; all de same, it ain't nice while it lasts, and if you can guard against dat pain coming on so much de better. Dis way to London!"

On they went, scrambling over the slippery rocks. Droog fell several times, but he did not mind that at all. Pete managed to keep his feet, although he appeared to be far from cautious.

At last they reached the spot where Droog declared it was quite easy to climb. It looked far from easy, but as it was not particularly dangerous, they made the ascent, and had reached the summit by the time Lamb, who was leading, reached the bottom.

"Come on, Lambkin!" bawled Droog. "You are as slow as a maggot, and as stupid as an owl. Ha, ha, ha! You have grazed your nose!"

"I will graze yours a bit more before I have done with you!" shouted Lamb. "I suppose you think you have got Pete to protect you now."

"It's all right, Lamb. Keep your wool on. I don't need his protection against you any longer. Good-bye! We are off, and we sha'n't meet again for some time. We are going through a wood; I don't mind telling you that."

There was a large copse within sight of the cliff, and Droog made straight for it; then their progress became very slow, for the undergrowth was so dense that it was no easy matter to make their way through it.

"I want to keep straight through the wood," said Droog, when they had proceeded some little distance. "I'm not quite sure that I'm getting in the right direction."

"Den let me go first. I'm used to travelling in de African forests, and it doesn't do to lose your way dere," said Pete. "I shall be able to keep straight enough for our purpose."

For about a mile the wood continued, and then they once more reached the open country.

Now, Droog proved that he knew his way across country very well. Sometimes they came to high hedges, but he generally seemed to know where to find gaps to get through.

The pursuers were no longer in sight, but they would have no difficulty in following the "scent," which Droog threw out with a liberal hand. Pete was carrying more than they would be likely to require, and he wanted Droog to get rid of his burden first, so that his running should not be impeded.

At last they reached an enormous ploughed field.

"Golly! Ain't dis mighty dirty travelling!" growled Pete, who began to think that the cares of a headmaster's life were innumerable. "I hab got 'bout seventeen pounds ob clay on one foot and twenty-nine and a half on de oder."

"But isn't it jolly!" exclaimed Droog, who really thought so.

"Eh?"

"Jolly, isn't it? You see, I've planned to run over all the hardest ground we can find, and we are getting to some of it, though this ain't nothing to what we are coming to."

"Golly! Are dere many miles ob dis sort ob ground to get ober?"

"Well, a pretty good few. You see, ploughed land is all to my advantage."

"I dunno dat dis little lot is much to my advantage. I was tinkin' weder you wouldn't like to stop at some inn and hab a feed."

"But they would catch us if we did."

"Well, dey would certainly do dat," admitted Pete, "but I dunno dat I wouldn't rader be caught dan plod frough dis little lot. I hab got enough clay on my boots to supply a full sized brick-yard. I 'spect de farmer will bring an action against us for stealing his soil. Golly! Here comes de farmer man, too!"

"You can easily knock him down. He's a lot too fat to make a good fighter. It won't take you long to knock him out of time."

Pete sighed. He began to see that, although his "cistern" might have effected a considerable improvement in Droog, there was still further room for more improvement.

"Now, you vagabonds," howled the indignant farmer, "how dare you trespass on my land?"

"Sorry, old hoss, but——"

"My name is Mr. Jenkins, you insolent, igerant brute, and jest you call me by it, else I'll break this 'ere stick over your back."

"My dear old Jenkins, I'm sorry for de trespass, but, you see, we'm habing a paper-chase, and, as a sporting man, you will understand dat you ain't got de right to object to de hares running across your land, 'cos we ain't doing any harm 'scept to our boots."

"Well, jest you go back the road you came."

"But, don't you see, my dear old hoss, we'm more dan half across your field, and if we go back we shall get caught by de hounds."

"You sha'n't cross my fields, and—— Bust!"

It was quite an accident, but Droog was trying to kick the clay off his boots, and in doing so he sent a good half-pound full into Farmer Jenkins's mouth. It hit him on the lips with a sounding smack, and scattered over his features, and Droog howled with laughter, while Pete found it quite impossible to remain serious as the farmer commenced to splutter.

"Yah, yah yah! Sorry, old hoss, but—— Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at you, but——"

Jenkins was going to do nothing of the sort. Having scooped the clay out of his mouth, he brought his stick down on the top of Pete's head with a sounding crack, and then he sprang upon him with a suddenness that caused Pete to fall backwards, with Jenkins's sixteen stone or so on the top of him.

Jenkins was not satisfied. He appeared to be determined to hammer Pete's head into the soft clay with his fist, but Pete found one blow quite as much as he required, and, rolling over, he reversed their positions, much to the detriment of Jenkins's clothing.

"I tink we will proceed, Droog!" exclaimed Pete, struggling to his feet; and they did, with Jenkins coming after them in hot pursuit, and howling at the top of his voice.

In reality, they were not doing the slightest harm to his ground; but he

had a great horror of trespass in any shape or form; besides, he wanted a little vengeance on Pete for what was entirely his own fault.

"Well, dis is rader better!" exclaimed Pete, when they got on to grass-land. "Dat farmer man ain't going to catch us. I can plainly see dat. De question is, will he stop de hounds."

"Not him! You can bet they will dodge him. I don't think Jenkins likes us throwing out the scent."

"Well, de man can't hab everyting he likes in dis world. Here comes the hounds, too. If dey are anyting like wise dey will miss dat ploughed field, 'cos dey are bound to be able to see us."

"Yes, and that's just what I didn't want them to do. I thought that field would take a lot out of Lamb; all the same, that's nothing to what I'm going to lead him through, and he must follow."

Pete groaned a little, and wondered why he had been so idiotic as to start on that paper-chase.

However, having once started, he did not want to spoil the boys' sport, so he jogged on, and before they had proceeded very far Jenkins gave up the chase as hopeless, while Lamb had very wisely led the way round that field, and the hares had no need to throw out "scent," for they were covering flat country, and were now in full view of their pursuers.

"I'm 'most inclined to tink dat we shall hab to quicken de speed, now, Droog!" exclaimed Pete, glancing back at the pursuers, many of whom were certainly gaining on them.

"Right you are!" panted Droog. "I'm not going to get caught if I can help it, so you go as fast as you can, and I will keep up the best road I can manage."

Presently they came to another wood, and this one was far larger than the first. Pete went ahead, so as to make a sort of pathway, but they found travelling very hard, not only by reason of the denseness of the bushes, but also because the ground was so sodden that they sank ankle deep in it.

"Look here," exclaimed Pete at last, "I dunno dat you'm chosen de most comfortable route, Droog."

"No. I knew it would be swampy here, but only you wait till we get to the withy beds."

"Eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha! We shall sink about waist deep in the black slop. And, mind you, I've chosen a route where it won't be possible for the hounds to get any grub."

"Golly! But de same remarks will apply to us."

"I know, but that doesn't matter. Lamb is the chap I want to get at. He's awfully fond of good feeding, and he was boasting how he would lay out his half-crown. I jest listened to him. I worked out the run so as he will save his half-crown, and that won't please him, I can promise you."

"At de same time I dunno dat it's going to please me so mighty much!" growled Pete.

"You might have saved all those half-crowns."

"M'yes! But I dunno dat dere will be much saving on de boys' clothes."

"Ha, ha, ha! They will look funny when we've finished this run."

"Judging by your little lot, I should say dey would begin to look funny already."

"Well, I'm nothing to what you are. You are all elay where you rolled in that field. You could—ha, ha, ha!—scrape it off with a shovel at the back."

"I don't want to lose any ob dose boys, you know, Droog."

"There ain't the slightest fear of that. You treat 'em too well at the school, and give us too good grub. No, they won't run away. I expect some of the littler ones will turn into the nearest village and spend their money, and they will make their way straight back, so as to save their legs; at any rate, they will all turn up before night. You see if I'm not right. If we can only keep on for another two miles or so we ain't at all likely to be caught. Hark, I can hear their voices now! Hurry up, I say!"

Pete was almost inclined to allow the hounds to catch him. He did not relish wading through swamped withy beds; however, Droog was so keen on winning, that Pete had not the heart to disappoint him, and so he quickened his pace.

CHAPTER 4.

After the Paper-Chase.

THE sun was setting, and a haze hung over the country.

Pete and Droog looked tired, and they were fearfully hungry. They had quenched their thirst at the river, and were now entering the withy beds. They were hard pressed, for the hounds were visible through the mist, and they were so close that their shouts were distinctly audible.

Pete could have run away from them with the greatest ease, but he had to suit his pace to Droog's, and Droog was a slow runner. Lamb was the leading hound, whose numbers had diminished to about a dozen, for the run had been a very long one. He was sprinting now, and if those withy beds had been half a mile distant there is no doubt that he would have captured Droog.

But now he plunged into the sloppy mire, sending black spurts all over Pete, though that did not matter much, for Pete was already in such a state of mire that a little more did not count.

"That will check his pace," panted Droog. "My eyes, it is squelchy, too!"

"Dat's what I'm noticing," growled Pete. "I tink I shall let Carton take part in de next paper-chase. Golly, dey ain't so far behind, eider!"

"No, but this will take it out of Lamb more than me. He can easily beat me in pace, but I've got more staying powers. Ha, ha, ha! What are you bleating at, Lamb?"

He was so close that they could distinctly hear what he said.

"You can't get through that swamp!" he shouted. "You will have to turn back. I'm going round it."

"Well, go!" retorted Droog. "But if we do get through it we shall get home about an hour before you. Ha, ha, ha! I thought you were going to catch me in the first mile. I'm jolly certain we've covered about thirty miles, and you haven't caught me yet. You ain't at all likely to get first prize, Lamb."

"You pudden-headed brute, I'll catch you. I'll come on, if I'm smothered."

"It's what you ought to be done to," declared Droog, ploughing onwards.

"I say, ain't dis mighty sloppy!" exclaimed Pete, as they continued their slow progress.

"It will get worse in the centre," answered Droog cheerfully. "This is just the sort of ground to suit me, 'cos I can't run fast."

"Should say no one else would eider frough dis little lot."

That was a terrible journey. At times they almost stuck fast, and, on such occasions, Lamb made frantic efforts to catch them, but he always just failed.

"We've got to gain ten minutes on them now," exclaimed Droog, "and I believe we shall do it!"

"Seems to me dat if we ober get across dis dismal swamp we shall be able to gain as much as we like, 'cos I don't believe de hounds will get across it; still we shall see dat presently."

They did succeed in struggling across the swampy beds, but when they had gained the other side, Lamb's shouts could no longer be heard, and now Droog made a spurt that surprised and pleased Pete; for it showed that he was possessed of a considerable amount of determination.

When they came in sight of the college, the clock was chiming a quarter to six, and it struck just as they passed through the gates.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete, entering the lodge, which was empty, although the table was laid for tea, while a dish of sausages was being kept hot in front of a big fire. "Seems to me dat we'm arrived in de nick ob time!" exclaimed Pete, shutting the door, and taking his seat at the table. "I dunno weder dis little tea was intended for our requirements, probably not. At de same time, we'm so mighty famished dat I feel sure Potts will see dat we'm got de right to commandeer it, especially as I hab paid for de food, and he will hab already had a good dinner. Get out de extra utensils. He's got eight sausages for his tea, I notice, so dat's four a-piece. Fire ahead, Droog!"

That worthy needed no second bidding. Pete cut the loaf in half, and, having divided the sausages, they commenced operations.

"Nice strong tea, I see," observed Pete, pouring out two cupfuls. "Pass me de mustard, please. New bread ain't at all unpleasant, dough I know de cook won't allow Potts to hab it, 'cos she says it's extravagant. All the same, he seems to get it somehow."

They were going ahead in fine style, when Potts entered the room.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he gasped. "Why, you are wolfing my tea!"

"You see, old hoss, it's like this——"

"You are a-wolfing my tea."

"But don't you see——"

"Of course, I see, and if there's a law in the land I'll punish this robbery. It's a cold-blooded robbery, that's what it is."

"We'm hungry, Potts, and——"

"So am I hungry, and I ain't at all well. I fancied a little someting tasty, and you are a-wolfing it. If this 'ere ain't beyond all bounds."

"But you can get some more tea, and——"

"Oh, yes! I can get some more tea, of course. I can wait for my tea till I'm fainting for want of food, while others come and rob me."

"You see, we ain't had any dinner."

"What's that got to do with me? If you choose to go without your dinner, it don't follow that I'm going to choose to go without my tea."

"Well, dere's certainly someting in dat, old hoss——"

"Yes! And there's something in your mouth that don't belong to you. I'd rather die in a gutter than rob; but then I ain't a schoolmaster who's supposed to set an example to the boys. A pretty example, I don't think, to go and rob a poor porter of his tea. It's worse than highway robbery with violence. It's one of the most sinful actions that has ever come to my knowledge. I tell you straight, I don't choose to go without my tea."

"Well, dat's right enough, old hoss," said Pete, cutting some more bread, and winking at Droog, who was laughing. "I neber tought you did choose to go widout it; but don't you see, you ain't got any choice in de matter. You should hab started your tea earlier, and I must say it's a nice little tea, too. Here you'm got about a pound and a half ob sausages, a loaf

ob new bread, and about a pound ob best fresh butter. I dunno where you got dat little lot from, but I 'spect out ob de larder when de cook wasn't looking. Ob course, if you bought de articles wid your own money, den I shall hab to refund it."

"Yes! That's jest like you, to expect me to buy food out of my own pocket, when I'm engaged with board. You would see me starve in the gutter for all you cared."

"But I told de cook to fatten you up, Potts, 'cos I like a nice fat porter. You were engaged for your fatness, and I gabe her orders to try to increase it. I'm inclined to tink dat she has put a few extra stone on you already. Now, what you had best do is to go down to Mary, and explain dat we were so hungry dat we ate your tea, and dat you want some more. Dere ain't a doubt dat she will gib it to you."

"Yes! Give me dry bread-and-butter, or a bit of cold meat what a cat wouldn't eat. I know her."

"But she gabe you dese sausages."

"No, she didn't. I took 'em while she was upstairs. Now you've been and stole it. I call it downright greedy gluttony. It's worse than that, 'cos it's sinful, and you are making that boy a bigger thief than Nature has made him."

"All right, Potts!" exclaimed Pete. "According to your own showing, we hab commandeered dem from you. De food certainly belongs to me, and so dere can't be any stealing 'bout de matter."

"You didn't know whether I'd bought it or not."

"Yah, yah, yah! Dere ain't much in de food line dat you buy at dis college. Just you ring de bell. I'll tell Mary to gib you anoder tea."

"I don't want no tea. I'm ill, and——"

"Well, ring that bell."

"I sha'n't, so there! I won't be treated in this shameful manner!"

Pete got over the difficulty by ringing the bell himself, and Mary, furious to think that Potts should have dared to ring for her, entered the lodge in a very angry frame of mind, but she smiled when she caught sight of Pete, and laughed outright when she saw what a frightful mess he was in.

"We'm been paper-chasing, my dear," explained Pete. "Rader muddy, and——"

"Very muddy, I should say. You aren't making Potts' carpet in much mess, either."

"Well, I 'spect he will be able to brush dat all up; but we'm eaten his tea. Sausages and new bread, and——"

"Now, look here, Potts!" cried Mary. "What do you mean by stealing those sausages? You told me you knew nothing about them, and said you saw the cat coming out of the pantry."

"So I did."

"I wanted those sausages to go with some fowls for to-morrow. You are a greedy monster, that's what you are, Potts, and you are a thief, too. How dare you come stealing like that? All right, I'll pay you out for it!"

"I'm not well, Mary, and I fancied a sausage."

"That's no reason why you need steal eight, you great glutton."

"Pete and that boy has eaten the lot. I ain't had one of them."

"Pete has a right to eat what he likes, but you haven't. I'll pay you out for this. Just you remember that there's only bread and cheese for your supper to-night."

"I won't eat it, Mary. Don't you make no mistake about that. I won't eat bread and cheese for supper. It don't agree with me."

"Then you can eat dry bread, for you shall have no more. You've

been taking the best butter, too. I never came across such a thief in all my life; but you will steal no more. I shall keep the larder locked in future."

"I want my tea."

"Very well! There's bread-and-butter there for you—a new loaf, too. You want looking after, I can see that."

"You said you would make a steak pudding for supper."

"I know I did, and it's made, but you sha'n't taste it, for your thieving ways. We will have it down in the kitchen. I've got a rare supper for you, Pete, when the boys come in. You said you wanted a good supper for all. Well, you have got it."

"All right, my dear!" exclaimed Pete, seating himself in Potts' easy-chair, for he had now finished Potts' tea. "We shall be ready for it; but p'r'aps you had better let Potts hab some more sausages for his tea, and you might let him hab dat steak pudding for his supper."

"Then I shall do nothing of the sort," declared Mary.

"You are bound to obey your master," declared Potts.

"Am I, really? Well, I'm not going to do it in this case. You shall be punished for your gluttony."

"But I haven't had a mouthful yet."

"And don't deserve it, you mean thief, to go and steal the provisions like that, and if Pete hadn't called me up, I would have blamed the cat, though I thought, by the look of you, you were lying. But I'll make you sorry for it yet. Just you see if I don't!"

"Well, I'm blowed," growled Potts. "You've not only stolen my tea, but you have robbed me of my supper. You ought to make that woman mind you, that's what you ought to do. When you give an order like that she ought to obey it, and it's your dooty to make her mind."

"Yah, yah, yah! You'm an interested party in dat obedience, Potts; but p'r'aps Mary will sort ob relent, and let you hab some tea and supper."

"Then you don't know her as well as I do, that's all I've got to say, if you think anythink like that. But you ought to pay for this tea that you've stole."

"But de provisions were mine, old hoss. I hab paid for dem once, and I don't feel like paying for dem a second time, specially as you stole dem from me. You see, if I was to pay you it would be encouraging you in theft, and I wouldn't like to do anything to damage a character like yours."

"Look at the thundering mess you are a-making my chair in."

"I 'spect dat will all come off."

"So do I. It will come off on my clothes."

"Well, dese little tings will happen, Potts. I would advise you to pour a little more water into de pot, and hab some brem-butter."

"You've eaten all the new bread. Such beastly greediness I never saw. I must have some supper, too. I've invited the sergeant to supper, and now there will be nothing for me and him but bread-and-cheese!"

"P'r'aps if you go and tell Mary dat you are sorry she will forgive you dis time, and let you hab de steak pudding aforesaid."

"Not her! I don't believe she would if you was to order it. She don't care twopence for you, and she cares a sight less than that for me. It's a rotten place; that's what's the matter with it. I wish I had never set eyes on it!"

"Well, old hoss, I dunno what you had better do next, unless you go down to de seashore and drown yourself in de noisy waves as dey break, break,

break on deir cold, grey stones. Here comes de hounds—and I rader tink dey will be famished hounds dis journey. Hello, Lamb! You didn't catch us quite, but you ran bery well."

"You haven't been in ten minutes. We have won!" declared Lamb. "You had ten minutes' start, so you ought to havè been in ten minutes; and you haven't been in anything like it."

"How do you know that 'ere?" demanded Droog.

"Never you mind how I know it. I do know it, and that's good enough for you!"

"No it ain't, 'cos we got in here as it was striking six, and it's more than half past now."

"You didn't get in here at six! You have only just come in. You are out of breath now!"

"Pr'aps you would be a bit out of breath if you had eaten four sausages, half a loaf of new bread, and drunk a pint or so of tea. But I'm jolly certain it would take you more than two minutes to do it in."

"I claim the race!"

"Go and claim your grandmother! Pete gives away the prizes, so you can jolly well claim what you like, but I know you won't get it."

"Dat's right enough, Lamb," said Pete. "We'm been in more dan half an hour."

"I don't believe it."

"Well, dat doesn't matter in de slightest."

"We haven't had a mouthful to eat all day."

"Neider did we till we got in, and den we ate Potts's tea, and de man is as cross as he can be 'bout de matter. Now buzz off and clean yourselves a bit, and I will do de same; den we will hab a mighty fine supper. Dere ain't de slightest use in getting savage 'cos you ain't beaten Droog."

All the same, Lamb was savage, and he followed Droog into the dormitory in a most menacing manner.

"I have a good mind to punch your stupid head for lying like that!" he said.

"That's all right!" exclaimed Droog. "I don't think you will ever punch my head again. You can try whenever you like, and you will find me quite ready for you; and I'll just tell you something else, Lamb—the next time you threaten to punch my head, I'll jolly well make you either do it or get your own punched. Understand that! If you think you are going to threaten me every time you get into a rage, you are jolly well mistaken, and the sooner you understand that the better it will be for you. Now, you have only got to say the word, and we will settle matters straight away. Do you want to punch my head?"

"No, I don't!" snarled Lamb. It was not at all true. He would have dearly liked to do so, but he felt absolutely confident that he could not, and so he climbed down. "All the same, I say you haven't won fairly."

"Ha, ha, ha! You say it!" cried Droog. "Who cares what you say? You don't believe it yourself, and it's quite certain that no one else will believe it. I don't believe there's a chap in this place soft enough to believe what you say. You never speak the truth, unless it happens to suit your purpose to do so. Now, if you want any supper you had better hurry up, or you ain't likely to get it. You think you are too jolly clever by half, that's what the matter with you. But other people don't think so, and Pete is one of them."

"Everyone knows how you sneak around to Pete, so that you can get all the advantages out of him."

"I bet the chap who did that wouldn't get so mighty many advantages out of him, either. He's pretty smart at summing up a fellow, and so I can tell you. Maybe you think you have fooled him, but you are wrong on that point, and you will find it out to your cost, too, one of these days."

Then Droog turned away in disgust, and Lamb made all the nasty remarks he could think of, but he took particular care to say no more about punching Droog's head, because he had the idea that he might get his own punched if he referred to the matter again.

CHAPTER 5.

Lamb Upsets the School.

NOW, it might have been imagined that Lamb, after his disastrous previous experience, would have gone down the stairs to supper like an ordinary human being, and not like a monkey; but the fact of the matter was that he was in a very defiant mood, and he felt as though he wanted to have some sort of vengeance on Pete.

As a matter of fact, Lamb could not possibly have it by sliding down the balusters, because he was far more likely to hurt himself than to hurt Pete.

"Watch me go, you fellows!" exclaimed Lamb, cocking his leg over with a view to going down face first.

"Look out!" murmured Droog. "Someone's coming!"

"Miserable, fat-headed funk!" snarled Lamb. "Think I care!"

Then down he whizzed.

The someone coming was Mr. Carton, who had been invited to supper. As he came along the hall Lamb's boot caught him a frightful whack on the side, sent him flying across the hall, and caused him to bang the other side of his head on the skirting on the opposite side, while his nose took the floor with a nasty bump.

The impact caused Lamb to lose his balance, but he fortunately fell the stair side, and beyond hurting his back slightly and his head somewhat severely, he came to no particular harm, although he went down the remainder of the stairs with some nasty bumps.

Pete was in the supper-room with his comrades.

"Golly!" he exclaimed. "Must be thunderbolts, else de tail ob de comet has struck us. Let's see what all dis is happening about."

"Hoo! I'm hurt!" blubbered Lamb.

"You utter young villain!" hooted Carton, struggling to his feet. "So am I!"

"Oh, my head!" hooted Lamb. "I don't care about you bub—being hurt. I'm gug—glad!"

"Golly! Look at de boy being glad!" exclaimed Pete. "He's de first boy I eber knew to show his gladness by yowling."

"The young rascal has nearly murdered me!" cried Carton, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief.

"Sorry, my poor old hoss," murmured Pete. He was desirous of taking Lamb's part as much as he could, because he did not want to give him the punishment he knew perfectly well he deserved. "I don't 'spect de matter was intentional. It was a sort ob accident."

"Ridiculous nonsense! The boy was ordered not to slide down the balusters only a few days ago."

"M'yes! Dat's de worst ob boys. Dey forget tings. Hope you ain't hurt."

"Of course I am hurt! He has made my nose bleed, and kicked me on the ear!"

A spluttering sound reached Pete's ears. He knew that it was Jack, trying not to laugh, and it very nearly set Pete off. He tried to look fierce and think of sad things, but just at that critical moment Rory approached the injured man with a huge sponge in his mouth.

It was the window-cleaning sponge, and Potts had left it in the hall by mistake. Probably Rory imagined that the unfortunate master had dropped it, and that he was obliging him by retrieving it for him, but, seeing how badly Mr. Carton's nose was bleeding, it seemed to Pete such an appropriate offering that he burst into roars of laughter.

"You mean to tell me that you laugh at me—at the evil deeds of that——" fumed Carton.

"Nunno, old hoss!" cried Pete. "I was laughing at dat dog. Yah, yah, yah! He's the funniest dog on de face ob de earth."

"It is scandalous—positively scandalous! That boy ought to be severely thrashed."

"I am badly hurt," cried Lamb.

"I sincerely hope you are!" snarled Carton.

"It was you who knocked me over," declared Lamb. "I shouldn't have fallen if it hadn't been for you. It's tut—too bad. I believe you have fractured my skull. You have no right to knock me over like that. I believe you dud-did it on purpose!"

"I ain't going to believe anyting ob de sort, Lamb," said Pete, making another fruitless effort to look stern. "No man in his senses would frow himself about like dat. You'm only got yourself to blame for de little accident, and I feel quite sure under all de painful circumstances ob de case dat Mr. Carton will oberlook it on dis occasion."

"I shall do nothing of the sort! I insist on that boy being punished. Are you willing to let me deal with him?"

"I tink I should be able to punish him better, 'cos, you see, I am not an interested party. I can sort ob enter de complaint in my book."

Carton would agree to nothing of the sort. He knew it meant simply nothing. Pete had got hundreds of complaints of faults against the boys already entered in that book, and nothing more came of it. Indeed, it would have puzzled Pete to have found any specific entry, and it would have puzzled him a lot more to read his own fearful scrawl, especially as he had a bad habit of shutting up the book after he had made an entry without the preliminary of blotting it.

"I claim my right to punish that boy!" cried Carton.

"Bery well, old hoss. Ob course, dere must be no sergeant punishment."

"I fail to comprehend your remark. I shall not ask Moss to punish him, if that is what you mean."

"Nunno! I mean dere mustn't be sergeant punishment."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack. "I think he means corporal punishment."

"A pretty schoolmaster!" muttered Carton. "Lamb!"

"What?"

"That is not the way to speak to me, boy!"

"I don't care! You have no right to knock me off the bannisters. You ought to have told me to get down, and not knocked me over like that."

"Go to bed immediately!"

"I haven't had anything to eat since breakfast."

"Go to bed at once!"

"I am going to have supper with Pete."

"You are going to do nothing of the sort. You should learn to behave yourself. Come! I will stand no nonsense with you!"

Lamb darted into the supper-room, and when he saw how the table was laid the sight was too much for him.

Every sort of dainty was upon it. There were fowls, hams, meats, tarts, custards, and jellies, and all things imaginable. The sight was more than he could bear, and when Mr. Carton seized him by the arm, and dragged him out of the room, he started howling at the top of his voice, while Droog made him still more furious by laughing at him.

"I'm rader sorry for de boy," murmured Pete.

"Ha, ha, ha! Quite so," exclaimed Jack. "But you know, Pete, he ought to be punished."

"I 'spect so. At de same time, tink how mighty hungry he must be! I shall sneak out during supper, and take him up something, unless I can induce Carton to let him down."

Carton, however, was obdurate. He not only saw Lamb into bed, but took away his clothes, and when Lamb ventured to rebel, he caught him a slap across the face that convinced him it would not do to go too far.

"I'm hungry. I haven't had anything to eat since breakfast," said Lamb, as Carton was about to leave the room with Lamb's clothes.

"You shall have bread and water, and nothing more. You are the worst boy in this school, and that is saying a great deal," snarled the angry master, leaving him in the dark. "If you think to defy me, you make a great mistake."

"Do I, you beast?" muttered Lamb. "I'll show you!"

"What is that you said, boy?"

"I said I was hungry."

"I don't believe you said any such thing. If you dare to be impertinent to me I shall flog you!"

"You daren't. Pete would sack you if you did!"

Carton must have heard that, but, under the circumstances, he thought it judicious to pretend not to hear. Having hidden Lamb's clothes in his own room, and locked the door, he descended to the supper-room.

"P'r'aps you will carve dose cold fowls, Mr. Carton," said Pete. "Dose boys who would like to begin on roast beef, say so, and we will soon make de beginning."

Carton had cut up one of the fowls, and was commencing on a second one, when a white form glided into the room. Carton's back was towards the door, so he did not see that form. Droog and some of the other boys did, and they recognised Lamb in his pyjamas. It made them laugh, and Carton glanced up sternly.

"Silence there, boys!" he commanded. He was a very strict master, and always liked to take as much ordering on his shoulders as possible.

Lamb slipped his arm round him, grabbed a fowl by its legs, and was out of the room like a flash.

Then a roar of laughter burst forth as Carton gazed at the dish. He had not seen the fowl go, but knew that it had gone. He looked fiercely at the boys at either side of him, then towards the door. But Lamb had disappeared.

Possibly the shouts of laughter convinced him of the reality of the affair. He continued his carving without a word, while Lamb, having purloined a piece of bread and some butter from Potts' lodge, returned to the dormitory to enjoy himself.

But by the time he had consumed that fowl, and put the bones into Droog's bed, he felt a yearning for some of the more tasty things, and he determined to make another raid, although he knew it was far more risky than the first one.

On gaining the hall, he found the door ajar, and he could hear by the noise that the boys were enjoying themselves. He felt greatly injured that he was not with them, but meant to have as much enjoyment as he possibly could.

Suddenly he darted into the room, and grabbed a jelly with one hand and an apple-tart with the other, then away he sped.

The apple-tart was all right, but the jelly was a failure. He only got a handful of it, while the remainder dropped to the floor; and, as Carton gave chase, he placed his heel on that jelly, slid for about a yard, then dropped on his back with a bang that shook the room.

The boys' roars of laughter at his fall increased his fury, and, springing to his feet, he rushed into the hall, and, seizing the first stick he could find, which happened to be a thick one and quite unsuitable for his evident intention, he dashed up the stairs.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Oh, don't laugh, boys! We ought to be—yah, yah, yah!—mighty sorry at de fall."

"I hope he will not injure that lad," said Mr. Lindly anxiously.

"Nunno!" answered Pete, with confidence. "He won't hurt him in de slightest; in fact, he won't touch him."

"I hope you are right, Pete," exclaimed Lindly, "but Mr. Carton is very angry, and I fear in the heat of passion he may strike him with that stick."

"Nunno! He won't do anything like dat."

"I feel quite sure he will."

"I'm mighty certain he won't!" said Pete, taking his seat once more at the supper table. "Come on, boys! We had better get on wid de important part ob de business."

Mr. Lindly was not at all satisfied. He had no cause to like Lamb, who was invariably impertinent to him. At the same time, he had an idea that Carton would strike him in passion, and if he did so with such a thick stick the lad would be seriously hurt.

This fear upset Lindly's appetite, and he kept listening.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, when he noticed that Lindly was not eating. "What are you listening for, old hoss?"

"To tell you the truth, I was listening for that lad's cries."

"Den you won't hear dem. He's enjoying apple-tart. He left de jelly for Carton to enjoy."

"But I feel sure Mr. Carton will flog him."

"Nunno, he won't."

"What makes you think that?"

"'Cos Lamb will be in anoder place. Carton won't come across him till he has quite cooled down. Lamb has got a good many faults—I dare say you hab noticed a few ob dem—but carelessness when his own safety is concerned is not one ob dem."

"You think the lad will hide?"

"I'm mighty certain he's hiding now—possibly in Carton's study, 'cos dat would be de last place he would look for him. At any rate, Lamb is hiding in a place where Carton won't find him. You see if I ain't right."

For the next ten minutes there was very little talking, and a good deal of clatter from knives and forks. Then Carton entered the room; he looked very cross, but he no longer carried the thick stick.

"I hope you'm corrected dat boy in de fitting manner, my dear old hoss."

"I have not corrected him at all."

"Well, I 'spect we must put dat down to your lenient nature, my dear old hoss, and I must say dat it does you credit, 'cos——"

"You are talking preposterous nonsense."

"Eh?"

"I say you are talking——"

"M'yes! I heard what you said, my dear old hoss, but——"

"Then why did you ask me?"

"Eh?"

"Pshaw! Can't you say anything else but 'eh'?"

"I 'spect I could, but don't you see, when I'm carrying on an argument like dis dat little word gibbs me time to consider de answers I'm going to gib to de categorical questions."

"You are talking nonsense, and I wonder you like to do so in the presence of the boys. I must say, and you must excuse me for saying it, but you set a very bad example to the boys."

"That ain't true!" cried Droog.

"Don't you dare to speak to me like that, boy!"

"Well, don't you tell lies of Pete, then!"

"You insolent young rascal, I'll——"

"I don't care what you'll do, but you ain't going to tell lies of Pete in my presence without my telling you they are lies. He don't set a bad example to anyone. A kinder-hearted chap never lived, and if he was to take the heaviest whip he's got and lay it on me with all his strength—which he never would do—but if he was to do it, I'd say the same of him. He's done me more good than you will ever do a boy in your lifetime."

"Of course, if he encourages you in your impertinence——"

"There you go again! He's not encouraging me at all, and he don't like what I'm saying. I ain't got any intention of being impertinent to you, 'cos Pete has asked me to treat the masters properly, and I believe you know I've improved in that direction, but——"

"It is a great pity you do not improve in the direction of your grammar, which is about as atrocious as it could possibly be; or, to put it more correctly, it is not grammar at all."

"Well, that takes time, and I'm trying to copy Pete's grammar, but——"

"I would strongly advise you to do nothing of the sort. If you try to copy Mr. Lindly's grammar, or my own, you may in time learn to speak correctly. You will never do so if you copy Pete."

"Yah, yah, yah! I rader tink you'm right dere, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "But you get on wid your supper, and don't boder 'bout de boys just now. You'm made a mighty bad start, but dere's no telling what sort ob a finish you may make. It wouldn't do to tink dat Lamb had had a better supper dan you. Try some of dat jelly. It goes mighty well wid dis cold plum-pudding."

Mr. Carton declined the mixture, although Pete was speaking from experience. He had a habit of trying odd mixtures with his food, and was trying one of them now.

Carton, however, took the advice about going on with supper, and Pete kept trying to turn his thoughts from the boy.

"I was tinkin', Carton, my dear old hoss, dat we might get up a fishing contest," observed Pete. "Are you much ob a fisher?"

"No."

"Rader fond ob it—eh?"

"No."

"Dere's some fine woods 'bout dis part. I 'spect you'm rader fond ob hunting?"

"No."

"Ah, dat's a pity!"

"I consider shooting cruel."

"Well, I dunno dat it is particularly kind; but when you come to tink ob it, you'm bound to be rader cruel in some tings. Now, look at lamb, f'rinstance. You ain't kind to dat."

"If you think your remarks are funny, I do not!" snarled Carton.

"Golly! I wasn't trying to be funny dat time at all. What are you guffawing at, Jack?"

"Your remarks."

"Well, just stop guffawing at dem, den, 'cos you'm making Carton tink you'm laughing at him, and I dunno how you 'spect me to smooth de poor old hoss down de right way while you keep grinning at him. I was going to observe dat you ain't too kind to de poor little lamb when you hab him wid mint sauce."

"If you desire to insult me, I shall have pleasure in leaving the room."

"But how am I insulting you?"

"I think that boy has been impertinent enough without your mentioning him."

"Golly! I neber tought ob de boy! Yah, yah, yah! I forgot all 'bout his name being Lamb."

"I don't believe you."

"Look at dat, now! All de same, it's quite true. It is really, Carton! I wanted to put you in a better temper, and tought while you were taking an internal application ob soothing tings, a little stroking down de back would help you externally. I was going to praise you 'bout shooting a little, and make you tink you were a sort ob sportsman. Ob course, I don't suppose you are one for a moment, 'cos you don't look like it; but people who couldn't hit a barn-door, and would be frightened to fire off a gun, like to be tought keen sportsmen. We could take you for a day's shooting, and would be quite willing to take de risk ob your shooting one ob us. Sammy would look after you. Why, de man is getting more savage dan eber! I fancy he must hab taken too much cold clamminess internally."

Carton had strode from the room, and Pete seemed to be relieved, for he became merrier after that, and when the supper was finished he adjourned to the drawing-room with the boys, and gave them a number of comic songs. Then he gave them a few sentimental ones, and Lindly was evidently charmed at Pete's beautiful voice, for he listened intently to those songs, and asked for more.

After the singing was over, Pete gave them a ventriloquial entertainment, and surprised the boys greatly. Altogether, they spent a very enjoyable evening, and they were all sorry when bedtime came.

CHAPTER 6.

The Missing Money.

THE following morning the boys were all in class, and Mr. Carton was demanding silence. Lamb and Droog were having a heated altercation over Pete. Lamb knew that the only safe place to talk against Pete was in class, and he was now calling him all sorts of names for having allowed Carton to send him to bed, and lose the supper and the subsequent entertainment.

"You sleepy-eyed idiot!" growled Droog. "I tell you it was all your fault, and that Pete tried to get old Carton to forgive you."

"What it that you called me, boy?" demanded Carton, who was very quick at hearing what he was not wanted to hear.

"I only mentioned your name."

"Is that true, Lamb?"

"I'd rather not say, sir."

"I insist on your telling me what he called me."

"He only referred to you as that silly old idiot Carton. I don't think he meant anything by it, because the boys often refer to you like that. I have often pointed out to them that you can't help it, and that they have no right to refer to you like that; but I suppose it comes natural to them, and that they do it without thinking. It is just the same with Potts the porter. It sounded rude when he said the other day that he would like to knock your old pudden-head off your shoulders because you wanted him to clean your boots. And when I told him that he had no right to speak of a gentleman like that, he declared that you were nothing like a gentleman, and that you had been dragged up in the gutter, and not dragged up at all well at that!"

"You young rascal, I don't believe there is a word of truth in what you are saying."

"Why, that's nothing to some of the things Potts say to you, and I get no thanks for taking your part. When he called you a fat-headed old idiot last night, and I rowed him for his insolence, he said that Pete was a gentleman to you. Of course, I knew that he was right, although Pete is bad enough, but I took your part, and——"

"You'd best shut up now," cried Droog, with a fierceness that Lamb would have laughed at a few weeks previously, but of which he now stood in awe. "If you start talking against Pete, I'll go for you, and I don't care who is in the room."

Lamb had an idea that he had better take this advice. After what had occurred the previous night, Mr. Carton might have allowed Droog to chastise him for a considerable time before he intervened.

Lamb was about to reply when Pete entered the room.

"Glad to see de silence and signs ob hard work," observed Pete. The silence and apparent hard work were only obtained as he opened the door. "I want to know, Mr. Carton, if you can spare a boy to run an errand for me, 'cos——"

"I'll go," shouted Lamb, springing to his feet, while every other boy in the class said the same, or words to that effect. In the first place they knew that it meant half a day's holiday, and in the second that it was a safe half-crown.

"I only want one boy for de job," observed Pete. "Mr. Carton could not spare you all, besides, I only want de boy to go to de bank to get some money for me. I find I ain't got any money in de safe, and dere's lot's ob tings dat hab got to be paid."

Pete invariably paid the expenses of the school in gold. Drawing cheques was too much trouble to him, and he spoilt so many forms, while sometimes he drew them in such a slovenly manner that the bankers refused to pay them. For this reason he generally drew several hundred pounds, and kept it in the safe, dipping into the amount as required, until it was all gone.

"Which boy do you want to take?" demanded Carton. He liked to make a favour of the matter, although, in reality, he would have been heartily glad if Pete had taken them all, and kept them.

"I'll go," cried Lamb, stepping forward.

"I'd rather go," said Droog.

"You would steal the money," said Lamb. "You would never come back again—not if Pete is going to draw enough to make it worth your stealing."

"I'm no more likely to steal it than you," cried Droog.

"Yes, you are. You were a thief before you came here, and will always

remain one. If Pete trusts you with twopence it will be because he doesn't mind losing it."

Droog sat down after that. He did not want to have his past life dragged up, and although Lamb did not know much about it, he had a nasty trick of bringing accusations against him of such an abstract nature that there was frequently some truth in them.

"I shall send Droog," said Pete. "He's de captain ob dis college, and seeing dat he wants to go I 'spect he's got de first choice. Dis way to London, Droog."

"You will get robbed," snarled Lamb, "and it will be your own fault for trusting a thief. Droog know's he's a thief—and so do I."

"I'm most afraid, Lamb, dat you ain't improving under my cistern," observed Pete.

"Well, I'm a lot better than Droog."

"Dat's your opinion—least, you say it is—but it don't follow dat it is mine."

"Mr. Carton knows that Droog is a thief."

"Mr. Carton don't know anything ob de sort, for de simple reason dat it ain't true; and de sooner you begin to learn to speak de troof, de better it will be for you. I notice you ain't started yet wid most ob the tings you tell me. 'Nuff said."

Then Pete left the room, and Droog turned and shook his fist at Lamb.

"He's shaking his fist at you now, sir," declared the disappointed Lamb. "He was shaking at the back of your head, wasn't he, you chaps?"

And most of them replied in the affirmative, not that they wanted to get Droog into trouble, but because they were afraid of Lamb.

Droog did not trouble to deny the accusation. He was too elated at Pete's offer, and that worthy gave him half a crown, and told him that he need not come back until dinner time, while he entrusted him with a cheque for three hundred pounds.

"What are you grinning at now, Jack?" inquired Pete, as Droog hurried off.

"Only that you have drawn that cheque for a rather large amount, and I think you would have been wiser to have cashed it yourself."

"I ain't got time. Don't you see I'm busy wid de accounts. Besides, you surely don't tink Droog would steal it?"

"Well, I would not like to think that, but you have got to recollect that it is placing a great temptation in his way. Besides, he might lose it, especially as you have told him that he need not come back until one o'clock."

"I said dinner-time."

"Well, what time do the boys have dinner?"

"One o'clock, Jack. You know dat."

"What is the difference, then?"

"Eh?"

"What's the—difference!" howled Jack.

"I do wish you wouldn't yowl like dat, Jack. You gib me such a shock to de cistern dat I can't add up dese accounts. When you'm repeating what I say you ought to repeat it correctly. I told Droog to come back at dinner-time, and not one o'clock."

"It comes to exactly the same thing, seeing that one o'clock is dinner-time."

"Nunno, it doesn't, 'cos if Droog didn't turn up till seven, he could still say dat was dinner-time. It's our dinner-time."

"On those lines he might argue that one o'clock to-morrow was dinner-time."

"Oh, shut up, Jack. You'm de most obstinate creature on de face ob de earth, 'scept it's dat oder donkey, Sammy. How do you suppose I am going to do dese accounts when you keep bodering me 'bout——"

"The butcher has called, Pete," exclaimed Bridget, the housemaid, entering the room. "You told me to make him wait, because you wanted to pay his bill."

"So I do, my dear. Tell him he will hab to wait till one o'clock, 'cos I sha'n't hab de money from de bank till den."

"He won't like waiting all that time."

"He can't hab all he likes."

"Shall I tell him to come back—or suppose you pay him to-morrow morning."

"Nunno! He's got to be paid to-day. It's de general rule, and we can't hab any exceptions to it. Tell him dat he must eider wait, or come back."

One o'clock arrived, but Droog did not. They had lunch, and Pete had his afternoon nap, but when he awoke Droog had not returned. The butcher had, but only to receive orders that he was to wait. He waited for an hour, and then said he would come back at six, which he did, and waited another hour. It so happened that neither Jack nor Sam had sufficient to pay the bill, for like Pete, they invariably obtained their supplies by dipping into the general fund.

How Pete was going to make his accounts balance at the end of the year never troubled them. They knew there would be a frightful deficit, anyhow, but that made no difference because they always pooled their money.

"I'm inclined to tink dat boy must hab counted on de late dinner-time," observed Pete, when eight o'clock arrived, and the unfortunate butcher, at Pete's command, was still waiting. He did not want the money, but Pete was so peremptory about paying that the man did not like to go.

"But he has not come back to our dinner-time," said Jack. "We have nearly finished dinner."

"I 'spect dat watch I gabe him must hab stopped. It might hab stopped at a quarter to one, or someting like dat."

"What a convenient watch," laughed Jack. "But you are surely not going to assert that a boy does not know the difference between one o'clock in the day, and eight o'clock at night?"

"I said a quarter to one, Jack."

"Don't argue with the beauty, Jack," exclaimed Sam. "It is not the slightest use. You will bowl him out in the end, but he will only keep on saying 'Eh?' till he thinks of another argument to start again."

"You shut up, Sammy. You'm worse dan all de unruly boys put togeder. Now, de question is, how to find Droog. I'm 'most afraid dat someting must hab happened to de poor lad."

"And something has happened to your three hundred pounds," observed Jack, winking at Sam.

"You surely don't tink dat de boy would steal it, Jack?"

"No, I don't believe that. Of course, Droog had a bad past before he came here; but then, he was dragged up by his ruffianly step-father, Juke, and there is little wonder that a lad should turn out badly under such circumstances. All the same, I think we ought to go and make inquiries. It is absolutely certain that he would have returned before this, unless something had happened to him."

"But what could happen to him, Jack?"

"Lots of things. He might have met with an accident, or, what is far more likely, he might have lost the money, and fears to return."

"What is dere to be frightened ob?"

"Not you," laughed Jack. "But Droog might fear that you would think he had stolen it. At any rate, Lamb and the rest of the boys would declare he had done so."

"M'yes! I 'spect dey would. But what is best to be done, Jack?"

"We had better go to the bank first, and see if he has drawn the money. How was he going to get it?"

"Ober de counter, I 'spect. He would present the cheque, and, if I happen to hab drawn it properly, de cashier——"

"I know all about that, but——"

"Den what did you ask for, Jack?"

"Oh, shut up! I mean to say, is he going to get the money in gold?"

"Den why don't you say what you mean? I 'spect he will get it in gold."

"I don't suppose for a moment dat de tradesmen would like to be paid in brass, or Britannia metal."

"Did you tell him to get notes, stupid?"

"Nunno! I told him to get gold."

"Then why can't you say so?"

"Gold, gold, gold, from de coffers ob de bank
And I would dat de gold was wid me,
So dat de bank I might den tank."

"P'r'aps, as you can't understand prose, you will comprehend poetry, Jack."

"Such doggerel as that is incomprehensible."

"Then you must blame Tennydaughter, Jack, 'cos de poem belongs to him, only I hab slightly altered it."

"You have very much altered it, Pete," laughed Jack. "But suppose we come to the bank for a start, and then we shall learn whether the lad drew the money. Of course it will be closed, but the manager lives in the building, and he will give us the information."

Pete was quite agreeable, and the three started off. It was not at all a pleasant night, for it was raining hard, and a heavy wind was driving it from the sea, but the comrades did not trouble themselves much about the weather.

Arrived at the bank, a small building in the centre of the town, Pete started vigorously at the bell, and worked away for quite five minutes without any result. After that, he started on the knocker, which was a large one, and Jones the butcher—he was not Pete's butcher—came out to see what all the noise was about. Pete had sacked him, and consequently he did not love Pete, nor treat him with the slightest respect.

"You ain't making much thundering row," quoth Jones.

"I'm glad to hear dat, old hoss."

"Well, you are making a row."

"Don't you like it?"

"No, I don't; and what's more, I won't stand it. I ain't going to have my rest disturbed."

"You ought not to be resting at nine o'clock at night, my dear old hoss. It's mighty lazy ob you."

"P'r'aps if you was up, working hard, at four o'clock, you would want some rest."

"People can't get all dey want in dis world. Eben de sheep dat fall into your hands don't get all dey want, and a good deal more dan dey do want," said Pete, hammering away all the time he was discussing the matter.

"How long are you going to kick up that row?"

"Till de manager comes down. De man must be asleep. Still, I'm bound to wake him sooner or later, and I'm determined to keep up de knocking till he comes."

"You are, are you? Well, I hope as you will get drenched to the skin, and I hope you will smash your knuckles under the knocker."

And with this amiable wish Jones went in and slammed his door, while Pete kept up the knocking and ringing.

There were very few passers by, by reason of the wet night, and in about a quarter of an hour's time the butcher came out again.

"Been enjoying yourself, ain't you?" he sneered.

"Nunno!"

"Well, what are you kicking up that row for?"

"To make the manager hear, naturally. I ain't doing it for my pleasure."

"No, and you ain't doing it for my pleasure. The manager is out, and he won't be back till closing time."

"Golly! Why didn't you tell us dat at first, instead ob letting us waste all dis time?"

"'Cos I didn't choose. Now stow it."

"Nunno! I ain't at all sure dat de manager is out. You hab kept us knocking for a quarter ob an hour for your amusement; now I'm going to knock till closing time for my own amusement. 'Nuff said. Good-night, Jones. I hope you will sleep well."

"How the thunder can I sleep with that row?"

"I tink you had better ask Sammy dat one, 'cos I don't know de answer to it."

Jones had a rough time of it. He tried to fling water over Pete from his bed-room window, but he slopped a large portion of it down his own chest as he lifted the bucket out of the window.

Jack and Sam had an expression that there would be trouble presently, and so no doubt there would had not the manager made his appearance, and Pete was so glad to see him that he gave him a grip of the hand that caused him to dance about and howl.

"What's de matter wid you, my dear old hoss? Ain't you feeling well? Hurt your hand? Well, neber mind 'bout dat. It will soon get well. Now, look here, my dear old hoss, did a lad come from my school to draw some money to-day?"

"Yes! Three hundred pounds in gold. I hope it was all right, but really your cheques—"

"M'yes! Dat was quite right. What time did he come?"

"What time—let me see. Why, about half past twelve."

"All right, old hoss. Good-night!"

"Did you get the money?"

But Pete hurried away without making any reply.

"I don't want him spreading de report all ober de place dat Droog has robbed me ob free hundred pounds, 'specially as de lad has done nuffin' ob de sort. You see, boys, if Droog had wanted to steal dat money, and he ain't at all de sort ob boy to do it—but naturally he would hab cashed dat cheque as soon as he could, and bolted wid de money. Instead ob dat he waited till half past twelve, and dat would hab giben him nice time to get back to dinner by one. He didn't want to run de risk ob losing de money."

"Do you think he may have been waylaid?" inquired Jack.

"I dunno what to tink 'bout de matter, Jack; but I don't believe de boy would rob me. I wouldn't like to tink anytink like dat. Now, it seems

to me dat de best ting we can do is to get back at once, den start all de boys making a search. Don't you tink so, Sammy?"

"No, I don't!"

"Eh?"

"I say I don't consider that would be the best thing to do at all."

"Why not?"

"There are lots of reasons, and one of them is that I believe if you let the youngsters loose on the unfortunate inhabitants, there would be trouble."

"But I don't want dem to interfere wid de inhabitants, Sammy."

"Neither will the inhabitants want it; but it is what you and the inhabitants will get if you think the boys are the most likely party to find Droog."

"Dat may be. Dey would certainly know his haunts. At any rate, we can try dem, and if de inhabitants are annoyed dey can easily come and tell me so, and den I shall be able to tell dem dat it ain't at all likely to occur again, and all dat sort ob ting. You see, it ain't an important matter weder de inhabitants are annoyed or not, and it is an important matter to us dat Droog is found. Dere's no telling what may hab happened to dat lad. Come on. I hope we shall find him safe at home when we arrive."

And when Pete arrived at the college he went straight to Potts's lodge. He found that worthy fast asleep in his armchair, and, judging by the appearance of the supper table, he seemed to have been making a very hearty meal.

"Hallo, old hoss!" howled Pete, in a voice that caused Potts to leap from his chair, smash his long clay pipe into small pieces, and gaze around the room in dismay.

"Is the college a-fire?" he hooted.

"Nunno, don't be frightened. I hab only come to ask you weder Droog has returned."

"See you here," growled Potts, gazing at the wreckage of his pipe. "I'm accustomed to being spoken to in a respectful manner, and not howled at as though I was a dorg."

"Well, has he——"

"You've broke my pipe, and it ain't the way to treat a gentleman. When I took service with you—'cos you was in a fix for a porter—I expected to be treated in a proper manner, and——"

"Has Droog come in?" howled Pete.

"I won't be howled at! I won't be treated as though I was a little child, and——"

"See here, Potts, if you don't answer my question I'll stuff you up de chimbley, and den you will wish dat you had answered my question."

"I'm not going to be brow-beat."

"Golly, de man will get beaten in anoder place if he doesn't answer me mighty sharp!" growled Pete.

"Droog has not come in; and I don't see how you could expect him to come, after what has happened."

"What has happened to him?"

"I'm not at liberty to say. I know how to preserve my honour."

"If de man ain't enough to drive anyone mad, I dunno who is!" exclaimed Pete. "Are you going to tell me where Droog is?"

"No, I ain't. I would rather you killed me first."

"Why ain't you going to tell me?" demanded Pete menacingly.

"'Cos I don't know."

"Golly! He's as stupid as a German sausage. Well, what has happened?"

"You ought to know that best!" exclaimed Potts, producing another pipe.

"Why should I know?"

"Didn't you send him to cash a cheque for three hundred pounds?"

"M'yes!"

"Then if you know what has happened, what the thunder is the sense of asking me? I can quite believe you don't know what has happened to your money, 'cos it would take a clever man to tell that, and you ain't nothink like that."

Potts knew that it was quite safe to abuse Pete, and to be as insolent as he liked, and Potts gloried in insolence to his employers, when he dared to show it. But he overlooked the fact that it cost him dearly in Pete's case, for he lost a vast amount of tips, which he would have secured had he behaved like a sensible man.

"I don't tink it is any good questioning dis noodle funder, boys," observed Pete. "De man is most too stupid to lib."

"You need not vent your spite on me, jest because you have been robbed of three hundred pounds. What I want to know is, whether my weekly money is safe after a loss like that? I ain't going to work for nothink, and so I tell you."

"How do you know I hab been robbed?"

"Every boy in the school knows it. Here's Lamb dancing about in his pure joy, hollering it all over the place."

"But how did you know de exact amount?"

"Looked in your cheque-book, as was my dooty to myself. What I want to find out is, whether you have got any more money at the back of you, so as to make it worth my while to stay on."

"You wouldn't stay on if I were your master, you insolent rascal!" cried Jack. "How dare you speak to your master in such a shameful fashion?"

"I ain't got a master, sir."

"Hang you! Don't call me sir, when you speak to my friend like that. You deserve a good flogging, and then you ought to be kicked out of the place, you ungrateful hound. Now, don't you answer me, fellow, or you may find what you ought to receive and what you do receive are one and the same thing."

Potts shut up after that. He had an idea that he had gone a little too far with Pete, and determined that the next time he felt like speaking his mind he would do it when Pete was by himself. The fact is, Potts had been very angered at being so suddenly awoken, and, like a good many other people when suddenly aroused from their sleep, his temper was not in the best condition.

The boys were still up in the large class-room, and when Pete and the comrades entered it, it was obvious that those boys were in a very excited state.

"You ain't seen anything ob Droog, Lamb?" inquired Pete.

"No. Not I, and the chances are we shall never see him again. It's a mercy to get rid of the brute, but I must say it is rather an expensive way of doing it. Ha, ha, ha! Cost you three hundred pounds, didn't it?"

"Who gabe you dat amount?"

"Potts."

"Well, de amount is all right, but Droog has no more stolen it dan you hab. In fact, from what I know ob your two natures, I should say he ain't nearly as likely."

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating. If he hasn't stolen it, where is he?"

"Dat's exactly what I want to find out. I want to make a search for him, and I want to know if you boys tink you could help me to do it?"

"Why, certainly!" exclaimed Lamb, delighted with the suggestion. "We shall be most pleased to assist you in any way in our power."

"You won't get up to any mischief, if I let you all out to-night? It has stopped raining now."

"We will be as quiet as dead mice. There are no larks we could possibly get up to at this time of night."

"Den come along, and we will all search in different directions. Get on your hats and coats."

CHAPTER 7.

A Night of Disaster.

JACK, Sam, and Pete commenced their search along the seashore, on the chance that Droog had gone that way, and been cut off by the tide.

Lamb led some of his more intimate friends inland, not that he expected to find the missing lad there, but because he wanted to go in the opposite direction to Pete, with a view to what he considered a little fun in the shape of any mischief that might turn up.

"Look here, you chaps!" exclaimed Lamb, when he had proceeded some distance in the direction of a neighbouring college for gentlemen's sons, kept by Professor Hawke. "You know how those snobs attacked us once, and how old Hawke took their part? Well, let's go and get our own back."

"How?"

"Oh, there are lots of ways! You come with me, and I'll show you. He keeps a lot of fowls; well, suppose we collar the lot of them?"

"It 'ud be stealing, and Pete wouldn't like that."

"Rot! What do we care for what Pete likes, and what he doesn't like. We shall not tell him a word about it. We can cook the fowls, and have a glorious feast. You may just as well argue that the fowls won't like that; but, as in the case of Pete and Hawke, we are not going to ask them. Come on! I'll show you some fun before I have done. There may be some eggs. He keeps an awful lot of fowls, I know."

Lamb found his followers quite ready for any lark, however daring it might be. They pushed through the hedge that surrounded Professor Hawke's grounds, and made their way to his fowl-run.

The fowl-shed was of considerable size. It was secured with a padlock, but Lamb wrenched out the staples, and, entering the place, directed the remainder of the grinning lads to shut the door.

"I've brought my lantern," he observed, so we shall be able to light up when I find the matches. Bother it! Murder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared one of the boys.

Lamb had knocked against a perch, and about half a dozen fowls, rudely awakened from their sleep, commenced to flap about the place, then Lamb, as he danced about with fowls flapping in his face, lunched against another perch, and that one he brought to the ground, fowls and all.

One of the boys flung the door open, and bolted—so did the fowls. The night was fairly dark, but it was far lighter than in the shed, and they went for the light, but one of them gave Lamb a claw down the face, and flapped him in the eye.

"Oh—hooh! I'm blinded!" declared Lamb, who could never bear pain with anything like bravery. "I believe my eye is knocked out."

"Never mind, Lamb, you will be able to see with the other."

"What little fool said that?"

But the boy was not such a fool as to tell.

"There's sure to be some eggs in the nests, Lamb. Light up, and we will have a search."

"Oh, my eye!"

"Oh, bother your eye! You do make a fuss about the beastly thing. I thought you wanted some fowls."

"I don't want them in my eye, you silly idiot!"

"I'd say you were the silly one for getting them there. I haven't got any fowls in my eye—though I believe old Hawke has got a good many in his kitchen garden. Light up, and let's have some eggs, if we can't have any fowls."

Lamb got his lantern lighted.

"Grove in the nests, Ginger," he said to one of the boys who was known by that name.

"My eyes!" exclaimed Ginger, feeling in one of the nests. "There's about a dozen here!"

He was quite right. A hen had been sitting on them for about a fortnight—only Ginger did not know that, for the hen had fled to quieter quarters, which was a lucky thing for her, because Lamb would certainly have wrung her neck. He was not a lad who studied the feelings of others.

"Hand 'em to me," he said. "I'll shove 'em in my pocket. See if you can find some more."

Ginger found another sitting, and one or two nest-eggs made of china. He fondly imagined that they were real eggs. So did Lamb, and he stuffed them all into his pockets, while Ginger filled his also.

"I say!" exclaimed Ginger. "We have got enough now."

"Look out! Here comes old Hawke with a lantern!" cried one of the boys outside, and then he fled wildly, for Hawke was carrying a thick stick as well as a lantern.

All the other boys, with the exception of Lamb and Ginger, bolted as hard as they could go; but those two were hemmed in by the professor, who was coming towards them at a run.

Lamb had turned off his lantern, and, being a resourceful lad in times of danger, he hurled one of the addled eggs full in the master's face.

It was a lucky thing for him that it was not one of the china ones, for it was sent with a force that would certainly have damaged Hawke. As it was, that rotten egg merely burst into his mouth and trickled down his waistcoat. This was bad enough, in all conscience, but worse was to follow.

Hawke's rush was effectually checked, and he turned to avoid a second rotten egg in his face. He was quite successful. The second egg smashed at the back of his neck, and the third one, which happened to be one of the china ones, caught him a sounding crack at the back of the head, causing him to drop his lantern, clasp his head, and howl a little, while he appeared to be trying to mark time.

Lamb waited no longer. He bolted, and Ginger, who was howling with laughter, followed him.

Ginger blessed his stars that he did follow, and not precede, the gentle Lamb, because that worthy made a bee-line across the professor's kitchen-garden, quite regardless of cabbages and things like that; but he was going too fast, for he suddenly came upon the cucumber-frame. The lower

edge of it caught him on the shins, and he pitched through the glass light, smashing the framework, and, needless to say, the glass.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Ginger, pulling up in time. "You will spoil his cucumbers now."

"Fury! I've spoilt my face."

"Ho, ho, ho! You couldn't do that!"

"You silly beast! I'm cut all over!"

"You will be hit as well if you don't come out of that. Here comes Hawke!"

That brought Lamb out. He was on his feet in a moment, and in a few moments more he was outside that kitchen-garden. So was Ginger, but Ginger was the only one who was laughing.

"I say, Lamb," he panted, "you do whistle!"

"You stupid brute!"

"Well, we can't all be as clever as you, Lamb, but I believe you have smashed those beastly eggs, and, what's more, I believe they are all rotten. They smell like it. Feel if you are clammy about the pockets."

"Fury! I've smashed about forty eggs in my pockets. I shall be in a jolly mess, too! I'm cut all over. I believe I'm bub-bleeding to death!"

"You smell as if you ought to be buried, at any rate."

"Look here, Ginger! If you laugh at me, I'll punch your head!"

"Oh, if you are going to talk like that, I'm off!"

"You mean to say you will leave me in this state?"

"Well, I'm not going to have my head punched if I can help it."

"You needn't get nasty!"

"It's you who's nasty. You smell downright nasty, too! You smell bad enough to choke a Chocktaw savage!"

"I'll make Hawke pay for this!" cried Lamb. He did not feel happy enough to quarrel with Ginger. He felt injured, and needed one friend in the cold, wide world. Lamb was rather prone to pity himself, and never took into consideration that his sufferings were caused by his own misdoings; but, then, there are a good many grown people in this world like that. "I'll have vengeance!" he declared.

"You can bet Hawke will be the same road fixed if he catches us. I say, I hope he didn't recognise us, else there will be a jolly row."

"Is my face much cut?"

"I can't see. Why not go and ask Hawke to lend you his lantern, and then I will be able to see?"

"You are a stupid brute, Ginger! I'm fearfully cut!"

"Suppose we come to the doctor, then, and let him stitch you up. I've often wanted to see how it is done. And I should be able to hold you. I don't believe it's very painful."

"I'll about drown the beast!" declared Lamb. "Look here! We will raise the floodgates, and that will swamp his ground."

"But it will also start the water-wheel!"

"What do we care?"

"Anson will."

Anson was the owner of the snuff-mill, and the water power was used for grinding the tobacco into snuff. The stream that flowed from the mill ran through Hawke's grounds, and sometimes flooded them when there had been much rain, especially if the wheel was going, because then the water all came that way, instead of flowing over the weir, and finding an exit down the other stream, which was a much broader one.

That it was likely to flood the ground of other people never entered into Lamb's calculations, and it would have been all the same if it had, for he would not have cared a bit.

The fact is, Pete's kindly system of tuition was not of much use in Lamb's case, because he had no feelings to appeal to. With Droog it was quite different. He had a tender heart, and Pete could always touch it.

The cane would have suited Lamb's case much better, whereas Droog had been so accustomed to brutality for most of his life that floggings would have made him ten times worse.

"Now, if we cross the lower stream here, Ginger," observed Lamb, we can climb to the upper stream and reach the sluice. See?"

"Not much; It's so beastly dark."

"All the better for our purpose. There isn't much water in the lower stream yet, but there will be just directly. There are some stones to cross by, so we sha'n't get wet."

Lamb shone his lantern on those stones, and then commenced to cross; but he had not got half-way when his feet slipped on the slippery boulders, and he fell flat into the water.

It was only about a couple of feet deep, but had it been ten feet he could not have got wetter.

Ginger was nearly convulsed with laughter. He really detested Lamb for his bullying ways, and would have punched his head with pleasure had not Lamb been such a skilful boxer.

"Ha, ha, ha! One of us is getting jolly wet in the crossing!" roared Ginger. "I say, Lamb, you ain't improving that blessed suit, and it was nearly new."

"Fury! I'm wet!"

"I believe you. There's no doubt about that! No chap could go flopping into the water in that manner without getting wet. Ha, ha, ha! What did you want to do it for?"

"Oh, you stupid brute! Do you think I wanted to do it?"

"I don't know. It looked just as though you wanted to. I say, I'm not going to cross."

"You miserable funk!"

"Be hanged! There's nothing dangerous in getting wet! I say, I can smell those eggs across the river. You are perfumy—you are, really! I would drink a painful of scent if I was you. The smell of one bad egg is nasty enough, but you smell like forty thousand!"

"Are you coming across, you stupid brute?"

"Well, shine the light!"

Now, Ginger was not a clever boy by any manner of means, but he knew perfectly well that, although Lamb was now shining the light on the stones, he would shift it off them directly the crossing was commenced. So Ginger noted the position of those stones with care, and pretended to be frightened to cross them. Then he made a sudden rush, and got across in about a second, while he refused Lamb's kind offer to help him up the opposite bank, knowing full well that he would drop him in the water if he possibly could.

By these little manoeuvres, Ginger escaped a ducking, a fact that did not improve Lamb's temper.

"I am in a beastly state!" he grumbled.

"P'r'aps the water will take off the smell. If it doesn't, I hope you won't leave those clothes in our dormitory—if we get back to-night!"

"Oh, shut up, you stupid brute, and come this way! I'll have a jolly big vengeance for this! I'll make old Hawke suffer!"

"Seems to me you have made him suffer a bit already," observed Ginger, whose ideas of fairness were more pronounced than Lamb's. "A man

couldn't help suffering when he had one of those rotten eggs smashed in his mouth; besides, he got a crack on the head with something jolly hard. It sounded like a stone, and you can bet it was a nest-egg."

"I'm glad!"

"I don't doubt that for a moment; but he won't be, and when you come to think of it, he didn't do so much to us to give us cause for vengeance. He only stopped us wringing the necks of his fowls. I don't know much about the law, but it seems to me a man has got the right to do a thing like that."

"He's going to suffer for it! They keep the bar here; yes, here it is!"

Lamb placed the iron bar in the winch, and wound up the flood-gate; then the great wheel commenced to revolve.

"You see, Anson ought to be pleased, because we are grinding his beastly tobacco," observed Lamb.

"He's bound to be pleased," said Ginger—"especially if we are smashing up all his machinery. And it sounds very much as though we were! I say, you do smell!"

"Oh, shut up, you pudden-headed brute! What's the good of keep telling me that?"

"Not much, because you must know it—unless you've got a jolly bad cold! If you haven't, you are likely to get one after that ducking! But if it stops you smelling, I would say it would be a sort of mercy. My eyes! Here comes old Hawke! Hark at him shouting!"

"Climb this tree!" exclaimed Lamb, pitching the bar into the water, so that it would be impossible for Hawke to stop the flood. "We can get on the roof of the mill from it, and then descend the other side. I've done it before."

Ginger thought it would be safer to go home, or, at any rate, to get as distant from Hawke as possible; but he was easily led, and Lamb pointed out that they could watch the fun in perfect safety from the top of the mill. So they climbed the tree, and, having gained the sloping roof, ascended to the apex.

"Here he comes!" whispered Lamb, although, had he spoken aloud, his voice could not have been heard above the roar of the waters. "He won't be able to see us up here, though we can easily see him down there. Hark at him!"

Professor Hawke was not a good-tempered man; in fact, his scholars considered that he was an abominably bad-tempered one. But on the present occasion he certainly had good cause for rage.

"I can see you!" he howled.

It seemed impossible in the darkness, but Lamb imagined he must have seen them climb the tree, and was guessing the rest.

"Let me deal with him," he murmured. "I'll drive him mad." Then, altering his voice to gruffer tones, and speaking more ungrammatically than usual, he shouted: "How did you like them rotten eggs, you beast?"

"I know you, boy. I will put you in prison for this! You ought to be there with that vagabond Pete."

"Well, I don't care. I'm Droog right enough, and I ain't ashamed of anyone knowing me."

"You young scoundrel! You ought to be flogged within an inch of your life!"

"Did you like the taste of that rotten egg as I shoved into your mouth?"

"I'll catch you if I stay here all night!"

"You can bet your socks you won't, you long-nosed idiot!"

"Where is the rod to stop this water, you utter young scoundrel?"

"Where you won't get it, old beast. I've chucked it into the water. I'm going to flood you out, and you can go and tell Pete as Droog done it, if you like. I don't care for him, 'cos I've run away with three hundred pounds of his. Haw, haw, haw! But first of all, I've had revenge on you."

Now, Hawke was not venturesome enough to climb on that sloping roof. He came to the conclusion that it would be quite useless to argue with the young rascals, and so, after having expressed his feelings as well as his passion would allow him, he went for help to stop the water; and Lamb chaffed him until he was out of hearing.

"You see, I have killed two birds with one stone that time, Ginger. I've had vengeance on Hawke and Droog. He will go and tell that beast Pete that Droog robbed his hen-roost."

"But it's jolly rough on Droog."

"Bosh! Do him good. He ought to have his neck broken. Now, stop talking rot, and come this way! It's safer to get down the other side of the roof, because there is a lean-to shed, and you can get to the ground without shinning along the branch of the tree. Don't go falling now. Come down backwards!"

Lamb knew the roof well, but there was one very essential thing that he forgot; and that was that there was a skylight in the roof to light that portion of the mill.

As he was crawling down backwards, he did not see this skylight, and the next moment he went crashing through it, while the yells he uttered gave Ginger the impression that he was not only being frightened, but also badly hurt.

Did this worry Ginger? It did not. He howled with laughter.

"Haw, haw, haw! If that's the safe way of descending, I'm jolly well going to try the dangerous one!"

"Woohoo! I'm dying!" came a smothered voice; and then there was some choking and sneezing that would have alarmed an imaginative lad. But Ginger was nothing like that, and past experience taught him that when Lamb hurt himself he invariably made the most of it.

On this occasion, however, he was not injured at all. Having gone clean through the skylight he pitched into an enormous mound of snuff which was piled up on the floor beneath; and beyond being nearly choked, he escaped without damage.

But he was in total darkness, and whichever way he went, he seemed to be stumbling into more snuff, which made him sneeze and choke in a most alarming manner.

"Haw, haw, haw! You are making a rummy row," roared Ginger. "It's something like a choking chicken, or an old sow with its throat cut!"

"You silly beast, I'm choking—aytishoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm buried in—aytishoo!—snuff."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My lantern has gone out. Oh, I'm blinded!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Then I wouldn't bother about the lantern if I was you. It wouldn't be any good if you are blinded."

"Oh, you hard-hearted beast, I'm dying fast! Fetch a doctor—aytishoo!"

"I'd say as you've got the floo. Ha, ha, ha! You are sneezing a treat."

"Fetch a doctor!"

"Not me! You will have to get well without one. I'm hanged if I'm going to run three miles for a doctor! Besides, if you are dying, what's the use of a doctor? What you want is an undertaker. Ha, ha, ha! We will shove a tombstone over you saying as you died of too much snuff!"

"Wretch, you have no feeling!"

"What the thump should I have feeling for when it's you who is hurt? I'm not hurt a bit. No doubt I would have feeling if I was. Ha, ha, ha! You are sneezing against time. I'm coming down!"

Lamb was weeping now. He never showed the slightest signs of sorrow at the sufferings of others, but he expected a little sympathy now. All the same, he did not get it from Ginger. The only way to appeal to his feelings was to hurt him.

Lamb found his way out of the mill with considerable difficulty, and then he made his way towards the college, coughing and choking and sneezing nearly all the way; while Ginger followed, shouting with laughter.

They got in without being seen, and made their way to their dormitory; then, when a light was thrown on the scene, Ginger sat on his bed and howled with laughter, while Lamb was too miserable to retaliate.

"Ha, ha, ha! My eyes and limbs! You are in a thumping mess. You are really! The snuff has stuck to your wet clothes, and you stink worse than a polecat!"

"Do you think you are funny?"

"I don't know! But I'm jolly certain you are. Just look at the eggs streaming down you! That little wheeze of yours about Droog won't come off. Pete will see what a jolly mess you are in."

"Will he? I'll jolly well show you! Look here, Ginger. If you dare to utter a word about what has happened I'll break your stupid head! Not that I care for Pete, but I mean to make it hot for Droog."

"Oh, I don't care! Droog is no pal of mine, I can tell you."

"All right. I'm going to put on his best clothes, and leave these in their place. I'll stuff 'em under his bed and mattress, and they are bound to be found there sooner or later."

"I'd say it was sooner, judging by the manner in which they are smelling."

"Well, I'm going to have a hot bath; then I'll shove his clothes on. They will think he came back here to change his clothes, after having attacked old Hawke, and then bolted with the money."

"I say, Lamb!" exclaimed Ginger, opening his blue eyes wide. "I know we are all unruly sort of boys, and some of us are scamps, while we've all been that; but for downright rascality, blest if you don't take the biscuit!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, you are a shocking cad; you are really. Of course, it has nothing to do with me, but Pete will never make anything out of you but the scoundrel Nature has made you, and——"

"Take that, you empty-headed lout!" cried Lamb, striking him a blow in the mouth that knocked him backwards over a chair; and as he fell to the floor Lamb made his way to the bath-room, and locked himself in.

"I'll pay him for that!" muttered Ginger, picking himself up. "What right had he to hit me, when I only told him what he was? And he must have known it before I told him. Just you wait a bit, you measly little brute! If I can't fight you, I can pay you out, and without sneaking, too!"

CHAPTER 8.

Ginger's Vengeance.

GINGER got a piece of box-cord, and softly tied it round the handle of the bath-room door, making the other end fast to the knob of the opposite door; then he put the back of a chair to the door.

Now, over that door was an open fanlight to carry off the steam, and by standing on the back of the chair, Ginger knew that he would be able to see through it.

The rest of his little plot was quite easy. He got out the fire-hose, and then he brought one of the little boys from the upper dormitory, who had not accompanied them in their search.

"Now, look here, Jimmy!" exclaimed Ginger. "When I say, 'Go,' you are to turn this wheel. See?"

"But what's it going to do?"

"Never you mind what it is going to do. You obey my orders, and you won't come to no harm."

And Jimmy, not being very particular, agreed. He was in his nightshirt, and wanted to get back to bed, so that he did not want to waste time with argument, especially as he knew Ginger would make him obey in the long run.

Dragging the branch along the floor, Ginger mounted the back of the chair, and gazed at Lamb, who was undressed, and waiting till his bath was sufficiently full of hot water.

"Hallo, Lamb!" exclaimed Ginger. "Have you done crying?"

"Do you want your head punched again?"

"You had a lot of snuff to-night, didn't you? I think I shall call you 'Snuffles' in future. Look here! Why don't you have cold water instead of hot? It's a lot more refreshing."

"If I come out to you I'll break your stupid head!"

"You can't come out, Snuffles. I've fixed you in. Ha, ha, ha! I'm determined that you shall have cold water instead of hot. I've got the fire-hose here. You can see the end of it if you look."

"Look here, Ginger! Just you stop humbugging!" exclaimed Lamb, rather started; for he saw that Ginger was not romancing. "You know what a frightful thrashing I would give you if you squirted at me; besides, you would do a shocking lot of damage."

"Oh, yes! You are so jolly careful never to do any damage, aren't you? I'm going to risk the damage. You are in what you might call a tight corner."

"We were always good friends, Ginger, and I happen to have got a lot of my half-crown left. I want you to come out with me to-morrow."

"Well, I'll see about that, Snuffles. But I'm going to squirt at you first. Let her go!"

There was a terrific rush of water, as Jimmy spun the wheel round, and the current caught Lamb full on the bare breast, knocking him backwards against the side of the bath-room. Then his yells were drowned by a rush of water in the mouth, and in his desperation he leapt into the bath.

It was no good. Ginger showed him no pity. Probably he did not realise what that rush of icy water felt like; but Lamb did. He howled for mercy, and declared that all the flesh was being torn off his body. He got out of the bath, because it was icy cold now, and as the rush of water caught him as he climbed over the side he was bowled head over heels on the floor.

Then Ginger gave orders for the water to be stopped, and Jimmy, having done so, bolted back to bed.

"Ha, ha, ha! Jolly refreshing, wasn't it, Snuffles?" exclaimed Ginger.

"You bub-beast! You have nearly murdered me!"

"Don't cry, my dear child. Wouldn't you like to punch my head again? I'll teach you to hit me, you worm!"

"I shall die of cold! I'm not strong. This will be my death!" declared Lamb, wiping his eyes with a towel.

"Ha, ha, ha! Serve you jolly well right, you beast! I meant to pay you, and I have done it. The best of it is you can't get out until I let

you, and I am rather inclined to keep you there all night, just to give you a lesson."

"I won't touch you if you let me out."

"Won't you, really? Well, next time you do touch me, I'm going to give you a worse lesson than that, Snuffles. Hadn't you better get dressed? I expect Droog's clothes are splashed a little, but you will find some sort of warmth in them. Ha, ha, ha! You do look blue!"

"It was a shameful trick to play a chum."

"What about that smack you gave me in the jaw?"

"I didn't mean to hurt you."

"Well, if you clump a fellow on the jaw with all your strength and knock him down, you are bound to hurt him."

"It was a fair fight."

"It wasn't a fight at all. You hit me without the slightest warning, like the cowardly bully you are. I've a jolly good mind to squirt at you till you are half drowned!"

"Look here, Ginger! It's awfully stupid for us to quarrel."

"You will find it thumping stupid if you quarrel with me now. I've got the whip-hand of you, and mean to keep it!"

"If you let me out, I won't hit you."

"Well, if you do hit me I'll hurt you. I may not be able to fight as well—in fact, I know I can't, but I can hurt you, all the same; and that's exactly what I shall do. I'm going to let you out now, because I think you have had enough."

Lamb thought this was not a favourable opportunity for retaliation, but he was quite determined to have vengeance at a later date. So, going to the dormitory, he dressed in Droog's best clothes.

"We will tell the other fellows to say nothing about what has happened," exclaimed Lamb. "You leave me to deal with the matter, and it will be all right. Hark! There's a jolly row about something. I do believe it is Hawke. Shot if I don't go down and interview him! Come on, we will have some fun! He's rowing Potts, and Potts is sure to be insolent."

Lamb was perfectly right. It was Hawke, and Potts was giving him a piece of his mind.

"What right have you to come here this time of night, kicking up this 'ere row?"

"I insist on seeing your master. I won't go till I have seen him. Look at the state those young rascals have made me in!"

"Don't laugh, Ginger," murmured Lamb. "I'll comfort him. It's lucky Potts did not see us come in. This way."

Lamb entered the porter's lodge, and it did him credit that he did not laugh, for Professor Hawke was in a truly frightful state.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" exclaimed Lamb, bowing most meekly. "I was not aware that you were here."

"Where is that man who calls himself Pete, boy?"

"He is out with some of the boys searching for one of them who has robbed him of three hundred pounds, sir."

"Do you see the state I am in, boy?"

"Indeed I do, sir, and I was wondering how it could have happened."

"A lot of young scoundrels from this disgraceful place committed a burglary at my place, and pelted me with rotten eggs. One of them threw a china egg at me, and very nearly stunned me."

"I trust, sir, you don't think that I had anything to do with such shameful conduct. I have always been taught to treat my superiors with

respect, sir, and I can assure you that I wouldn't mix myself up with such ruffians."

"No; I do not suppose for a moment that you are implicated."

"Pretty thick, that," mused Ginger, "when it was him as did it all, and nearly split the old jossers's head open with a china egg."

"I thank you, sir," said Lamb. "In a case like this I don't consider that it is a matter of sneaking. I assure you, sir, that if I can assist you to discover the vicious young rascals who committed such an action, I will do all in my power. I am supposing that there was more than one in it?"

"Yes; I should say there were half a dozen."

Then Lamb listened to the remainder of the story—which he knew perfectly well.

"But Droog is the very boy who has stolen the money and disappeared, sir. Are you sure he said his name was Droog?"

"Certain."

"He talks in rather a gruff voice, and is very ungrammatical?"

"That is the boy."

"He is the worst character in this school for unruly boys, and that's saying a good deal. Of course, I don't profess to be anything like ruly, but some of the things they get up to are simply shameful. They deserve imprisonment for what they have done to-night."

"I shall take very serious action in this matter."

"I don't wonder at that, sir. Droog certainly deserves imprisonment for his theft, and he ought to be horsewhipped for assaulting you. The worst of it is that he is a great favourite with Pete, and I don't believe for a moment Pete will have him punished as he deserves—unless, of course, you compel him to do so."

"Which I certainly shall do."

"It only shows you, sir, how insolent the fellow is to have admitted to you that he was Droog. My impression of him is that he will become a burglar; the only thing is that he can't become much worse than he is already. I don't want to make myself out better than I am—in fact, I'm not particularly steady, as Ginger will tell you—"

"Haw, haw, haw! Are you?—rats!" roared Ginger, who did not understand that he was expected to mention that Lamb was a charming lad. "If you are one of the good ones, I wouldn't like to come across a bad one."

The contemptuous gaze that Lamb favoured Ginger with had not the slightest effect on that worthy. He only grinned. Ginger's veracity might have been symbolised with x , but he was not such a frightful liar as to assert that Lamb was good, or anything like it.

"I say that I'm not perfect," continued Lamb, glaring at Ginger out of the corners of his eyes.

"You ain't," said Ginger; "not by long chalks."

"You are an ungrammatical idiot!" snarled Lamb. "But I assure you, sir, that at times I am ashamed to be at this college for unruly boys, for some of them are frightfully unruly."

"They are so," assented Ginger; "and I know the worst of the whole lot."

"I do not expect boys to be perfect," observed Hawke.

"You'd be jolly well disappointed if you thought Lamb was anything like that," said Ginger. "But here comes Pete."

And that worthy, accompanied by Jack and Sam, returned from their

fruitless search. When he saw who was there, he bolted into his study, but Hawke followed him up, so did the two boys.

Pete struggled into his gown, shoved on his gold-rimmed spectacles—he had smashed the glasses out because he could not see through them—then he seated himself in his easy-chair, and gave a dignified wave of his arm as an intimation that his unwelcome guest might be seated.

“Fellow, do you see the state in which your boys have made me?” howled Hawke.

“Golly! You are in an egotistical state, too, old hoss. Which boy did all dat little lot.”

“A young villain named Droog, accompanied by others.”

“Well, I’m mighty glad to hear dat!” exclaimed Pete.

“Glad! You are glad! Why, you ruffian—”

“I don’t mean I’m glad at de state you are in. I’m mighty sorry ’bout dat, but— Yah, yah yah! Just look at de man, Jack! Yah, yah, yah! He looks as dough he had been fighting hen ostriches!”

“Do you think this is a joke?” howled Hawke.

“Should say it wasn’t much ob a joke for you, my poor old hoss. All de same, dese little tings will occur in de best-regulated families, and I ain’t saying my boys are anyting like dat.”

“They are the most infamous young rascals that it has ever been my misfortune to meet. I will send that boy Droog to prison.”

“But are you sure it was him?”

“Of course I am.”

“Did you see him?”

“No. It was too dark, but he admitted that his name was Droog.”

“Dat ain’t evidence, old hoss,” said Pete, sighing. “I wish it had been Droog, ’cos den I would hab known de boy was safe, but de bery fact ob a boy telling you he was Droog makes me tink he wasn’t Droog at all. Don’t you see, my dear old hoss—”

“Don’t you dare to address me in that disrespectful manner!”

“Sorry, old hoss, but don’t you see, it ain’t at all likely dat de guilty boy would go and blurt out who he was; and de boy who did it would pretty safe in saying dat he was Droog, ’cos he would know dat Droog was missing. Sit down, Hawke, and we will take de matter ober calmly. Just you tell me what has happened, and I will see if I can help you in any way.”

Hawke did not sit down, neither was he anything like calm; but he gave Pete a vivid description of what had happened.

“Ain’t it mighty wonderful what a lot ob mischief boys can get up to in a short space ob time,” observed Pete. “We schoolmasters hab a lot to contend wid, don’t we, old hoss?”

“I request you not to class yourself with me.”

“Well, I dare say you are a bit more learned,” admitted Pete. “Do stop your laughter, Jack. You ain’t got de right to laugh at a poor old hoss who has got himself into dis disgusting mess. He smells ob rotten eggs, too. Go out ob de room, boys—and de same remark applies to you, Potts, and don’t you stop listening at de door, else you are likely to get hurt.”

“Who’s a-going to listen at your door?”

“Not you, dis time, ’cos I’m going to make sure on de point. Buzz off!”

Potts left the room, and Pete waited for about a minute, then stepping noiselessly to the inner door, he suddenly opened it, and, seizing Potts by the ear, led him into the room.

"Just you buzz off to your lodge, old hoss," said Pete, shoving him into the hall, "and don't you dare to come here again!"

"I was only going——"

"M'yes! Dat's it; and you are only going again!" said Pete, watching him do it. Then he closed the door.

"Now, look here, old hoss!" he exclaimed. "Dis is clearly a case for compensation. Dere's no doubt dat I shall find out de guilty party, dough dat won't much matter to you. Taking into consideration all de damage dat has been done, and de annoyance you hab suffered, I am willing to hand you de sum of fifty pounds to square de matter."

Hawke was a poor man. It is true that he was in a towering passion at the present moment, but he was not so foolish as to refuse an offer like that. Fifty pounds to Pete was nothing. To Hawke it was a large sum.

"Very well," he said. "Under all the circumstances, I am prepared to accept your offer—provided the money is paid at once."

"Jack will draw you a cheque now for de amount, and you can cash it to-morrow morning at de bank."

"That will be quite satisfactory."

"Den draw de cheque, Jack, 'cos dey don't seem to like my signatures."

"Do you wish for a receipt?" inquired Hawke, as he took the cheque.

"Nunno! Buzz off! You won't ask for de money again, and if you do I sha'n't pay you, so it comes to exactly de same ting."

"I hope there will be no recurrence of this disgraceful behaviour."

"So do I, old hoss, 'cos it comes mighty expensive; but my impression ob you is dat you would hab it happen ebbery day ob your life at de same price, 'cos it would be a lot more profitable dan keeping a school. Good-night! I would advise you to go and change your clothes, 'cos you don't smell too sweet."

Then Hawke stormed out of the place, muttering something about insolent scoundrels."

"You have not pleased him, Pete," laughed Jack.

"Maybe, Jack, but den he ain't pleased me. De fact ob de matter is dat de man neber does please me ebbery time I see him. He's always complaining about someting."

"But you see, if boys break into his place, and fling rotten eggs at him——"

"Boys will be boys."

"Quite correct, but don't you consider that your precious boys go a little too far?"

"Eh?"

"I am not going to say all that again."

"Dere was no sense in it, Jack. Boys must amuse demselves. I 'spect you used to amuse yourself when you were a boy."

"I expect so, but I do not recollect flinging rotten eggs at a master's head, and nearly braining him with a chalk one."

"P'r'aps your master had a thicker head dan Hawke."

"It may be. I won't argue de point, but I don't believe I ever tested its thickness with a chalk egg."

"Boys forget dose tings when dey grow up. All de same, I ain't bodering myself about Hawke."

"So I notice."

"What worries me is dat Droog doesn't turn up. What can hab become ob de boy?"

"I'll give it up. Ask Sam."

"I reckon I don't know," said Sam; "but it is pretty certain that he will turn up sooner or later. I don't suppose for a moment that he has come to any harm. If I were in your place, Pete, I wouldn't bother myself about him. I should not be a bit surprised to see him come in to-morrow morning, and then he will pitch you some yarn about having lost the money, and you will believe him or not, as you think fit; but as he will be perfectly sure you will not punish him, he won't mind confessing in the least."

"You don't tink he has stolen de money, Sammy?"

"Well, I reckon I don't know, but if you ask my private opinion, I must say it looks remarkably as though he had done so."

"What would you do under all de circumstances ob de case? I don't mind about de money, but I don't like to tink dat Droog is a thief. I don't believe de boy is one; and I never will believe it till he tells me so himself."

"Then I reckon you will never believe it, because he is not so simple as to tell you a thing like that. All the same, if it were my case, I should try to find his stepfather, Juke, and perhaps you would gain some information from him."

"Golly! Sammy, dat's a good idea, and I don't believe you are as thick-headed as your conduct generally leads people to imagine. I'll go and find de man at once, and if he won't tell me all he knows 'bout de matter—well, he will feel sort ob sorry."

"Here, come back, you silly owl. It is about one o'clock in the morning, and you cannot possibly find the man now. Just you go to bed, and you can start out to-morrow morning as early as you think fit, but you may be certain that it will not be the slightest use to start before five or six. It is useless going now, at any rate."

"Well, p'r'aps you are right, Sammy, so we will all go to bed, and den we will go and interview dat scamp Juke. What's de matter now, Potts?"

"I've got a complaint to make, and——"

"Well, go and make it to de front-door knob. Didn't I tell you to go out ob de room?"

"Yus, but you didn't tell me not to come into it ag'in."

"Well, if I had wanted you in it, I wouldn't hab told you to go out ob it."

"I don't always do what I'm told."

"I hab noticed dat, old hoss; but what's de size ob your complaint. I hope it ain't catching."

"I'm not engaged to do dooty day and night. Here I have to be up at six, and it's now past one——"

"Well, go to bed, and you will be nice and fresh to get up at six."

"I shall only get four hours' sleep, and that ain't enough for any man."

"You'm bound to get two-free hours in de aftern'oon on de top of it, and as I ain't got de slightest doubt you got dose two-free hours dis aftern'oon."

"I expect extra pay for extra work."

"When you do any extra work I shall be so mighty surprised dat I shall faint. You start doing your usual work, and don't boder your head about extra work, old hoss, 'cos I'm mighty certain dat you will neber do anything like dat."

"Those dratted boys have been having baths, and they've swamped the place. It's all pouring through the ceiling."

"Eh?"

"I say as they have swamped the bath-room. And there's a lot of clothes tuck'd into Droog's bed as is covered with rotten eggs."

"Eh?"

"Bust it, can't you hear what I'm a-saying?"

"Dat ain't de way to address your master, old hoss."

"I ain't got a master, and never had one."

"Seems to me you will tell a different story on Saturday morning, when you want to draw your wages. Still, just go and clear dose clothes out, and I will examine dem in de morning. Look here, Potts, would you like to earn a shilling?"

"Yus, if I don't have to work for it."

"Well, fetch dose clothes out, and if you can convince me who dey belong to I will gib you a shilling."

Then Potts hurried away, because that was a job after his own heart, and Pete went to bed.

CHAPTER 9.

Under Cross-Examination.

IT was scarcely light the following morning when Pete got up, and he spent the morning till breakfast time in making inquiries for Juke, but nothing came of such inquiries, and he returned to breakfast knowing no more than when he left, while neither Jack nor Sam took quite as much interest in the matter as he considered they should take.

The fact is, Jack and Sam had no faith in Pete's school. They did not believe his extraordinary treatment of the boys would do the slightest good.

They were in the middle of breakfast when Potts came into the room, holding his nose with one hand, and Lamb's ruined clothes with the other.

"Get out ob it," bawled Pete. "You are too perfumy for breakfast time. Buzz off."

"Buzz off be hanged! I've found——"

"Will you clear out ob de room wid dose odoriferous clothes?" bawled Pete.

"I tell you I've discovered the owner, and——"

"Buzz off," bawled Pete, aiming a roll at his head, and catching him on the ear. "Here, Rory. Drive de man out, and if he dares to bring dose clothes into our presence again you bit him gently."

Potts bolted before Rory had a chance of obeying his master's orders, and Pete opened the window, for those clothes were remarkably unpleasant.

"Ain't dat man enough to drive a poor child mad," exclaimed Pete, proceeding with his breakfast. "Oh, don't laugh at him, Jack. He's too mighty disgusting to laugh at. All I can say is dat if Hawke's hens lay dose eggs I'd go in for anoder breed ob fowl. I wonder whose clothes dey can be. I hab de idea dat dey ain't Droog's, but you see we ain't at all likely to find out, 'cos I don't 'spect de boy dey belong to is going to claim dem."

"Potts says he has found out," observed Sam.

"M'yes, I know dat, but den he would say it is de boy dat he hates most. You can't rely on a word Potts says, 'scept when he tells you he wants more money."

Potts did not venture into the room until they had finished breakfast, and even then he did not bring in the offensive clothes.

"Well, old hoss, who do dey belong to?"

"I've been treated shameful, and you ain't got the right to heave loaves at my head."

"It was only one roll."

"I want compensation for the injury to my ear."

"You oughtn't to hab such big ears, old hoss, and den dey would not be in de way ob de roll; but who's de owner ob dose pretty clothes?"

"Lamb!"

"Just as I expected. You don't like Lamb."

"Like him? I have got a precious lot of reason to like him. I don't like any boy in the college, and I hate him worse than all the others put together. All the same, if you send for him, I'll prove it was him right enough."

"I'm rader doubtful 'bout dat, Potts. Still, dere's your shilling for de roll compensation, and if you prove de oder, you shall hab two shillings more instead ob one. Buzz off, and fetch the boy."

Potts was quite ready to obey that order. "Getting a boy into trouble always delighted him, and if that boy could be Lamb he was all the better pleased.

In about five minutes he returned with the culprit, to whom Potts had obviously been romancing.

"Potts tells me that you wish me to continue the search," observed Lamb.

"I only told you that 'ere to get you here," said Potts. "A pretty search you have been making, breaking into Hawke's premises, and pelting him with rotten eggs, then smashing into the snuff-mill."

"Who told you that lie?"

"Never you mind who told me. I know it, and that's good enough for me. You wait a minute."

Now, Lamb would have done nothing of the sort had not Pete been there. He knew if he bolted it would raise suspicions, and he felt quite confident of being able to bowl Potts out; and so he waited until the clothes were brought in, while Pete shifted to windward of them, and commenced to smoke vigorously. A night's rest had not improved the odour of those rotten eggs.

"Do you deny the ownership of these 'ere clothes?" demanded Potts. "Now, be careful, 'cos you are on your oath—not that that would make much difference to you."

"Of course I deny it. I fear you have softening of the brain."

"I don't tink dat, Lamb," observed Pete. "De man ain't got any brain to soften. How do you know dey are his clothes, Potts?"

"Whose knife is this with 'Lamb' scratched on it?" demanded Potts.

"If it has a broken blade it is the one I lent to Droog a couple of days ago," answered Lamb, without the slightest change of countenance.

"I thought he would be too many for you, Potts," murmured Pete.

"You did, did you? Well, I'll soon show you as he ain't nearly enough for me. I suppose you lent him your handkerchief, too, 'cos it's in this pocket, all stained with hegg, and your name in the corner of it."

"This isn't the first time that Droog has collared my handkerchiefs. Probably he did so on this occasion thinking to throw the blame on me."

"You didn't have a bath last night, I suppose?"

"Can't say as I did."

"No, you can't say you did, 'cos you won't say you did; but, you see, I happen to know. Now, whose clothes have you got on now?"

"My own, of course."

"Well, I say they are Droog's, and I am going to prove they are Droog's. What's that tear in the coat?"

"I did that last Sunday."

"How?"

"Climbing a tree."

"Oh, you did, did you? Well, where is that tear?"

Lamb had not the slightest idea, and commenced to search.

"Haw, haw haw! Funny thing about that tear, ain't it. Got you. There's no tear in them clothes."

"I remember now, it was my other suit."

"On Sunday?"

"No, it was Saturday. I was thinking it was Sunday."

"Oh, you was, was you? Very well. I'm going to prove you've got Droog's clothes on now, and that you changed into them last night. Just you turn out all your pockets, and you will find as Droog has lent you some of the things. Then, if that ain't evidence enough, jest let Pete ask Ginger all about it."

"You can't believe a word Ginger says."

"You would be thundering stupid to believe one as you said. All the same, there is a tear in them clothes, if you only knew where to look for it. I happen to know, 'cos I saw Droog taking 'em down to Bridget, and I heard him ask her to mend the tear, and that was Monday morning. She mended it, and it's at the back of the coat, and she will tell you the same if you send for her. Now, I don't know what's in the pockets, but I'll guarantee there will be something belonging to Droog, and if you are going to get round that 'ere evidence, I'll forgive you."

"It only shows what a miserable, mean scamp you are to encourage Ginger in sneaking," snarled Lamb.

"You shouldn't get up to them games, and then he wouldn't have nothink to tell of you."

"He was just as bad," cried Lamb. "He was with me the whole time. In fact, it was him who suggested us going."

Lamb became a little ungrammatical in his excitement, and, as a rule, he rather prided himself on his correct grammar. Pete, however, did not notice the slip.

"Haw, haw, haw! I've caught you, fly as you think yourself," cried Potts. "Ginger never told me a word, but, seeing you together when Hawke called, I guessed the rest. I'll take two shillings, Pete."

"Ain't dis lying mighty awful?" groaned Pete, flinging the coin on the table. "Seems to me, Lamb, dat you get worse and worse, instead ob better. Now, look here, Lamb, you are a naughty little boy, dat's what's de matter wid you. You ain't got de slightest idea ob de troof, and, what I ought to do to you is to take you into de school-room, put you across my knee, and gib you a good beating."

"I suppose you think that funny."

"I don't fancy you would tink it funny. We shall find dat out presently."

"You need not think that you are going to treat me like a child."

"But you are a child, my poor little boy. You don't know any better, 'cos you ain't been taught. Now, it stands to reason dat it is my duty to teach you, and if I make you cry before all de boys, you will hab only yourself to blame. Don't you see, I can't allow a little boy to tell falsehoods like you do. You notice Potts is grinning at you, and if he doesn't get more troof, I am not at all sure dat I sha'n't hab to punish him in a similar manner."

"I wouldn't allow any one to hit me," cried Lamb.

"Not if you had de choice, but, you see, you would be quite powerless to help yourself. Do you understand dat your naughtiness has cost me fifty pounds compensation to Hawke."

"Fifty pounds! Why I didn't do fifty shillings worth of damage."

"Dat's what I paid him, but dat ain't de question. What annoys me is your cowardice in telling falsehoods 'bout de matter. You ain't anyting

like a brave boy. In fact, I consider you a little coward, and, if I can't cure you any oder way, I shall hab to adopt de one I suggest."

"I would run away if you did."

"Dat would be your look-out, but I fancy you are too timid to do any-ting ob de sort. Come wid me, Lamb."

Pete caught him by the arm, and Lamb commenced to snivel.

"I won't do it again!" he sobbed.

"If I only knew dat you would keep your word, I would pardon you dis time, 'cos I don't want to punish you before all de boys; but I must say you hab done a mighty mean ting. You hab tried to frow de blame on Droog, when all de time you were de guilty party. I'm quite ashamed ob you, and feel sure you ought to be beaten."

"I'll never do it again!"

"Well, I will gib you anoder chance, but you know what to expect if you speak falsely to me again, and act in dat deceitful manner. Go away, Potts! You ain't wanted any more."

And Potts went, while Lamb, now that he saw all danger was over, looked fierce, as he heard Potts' shouts of laughter along the passage.

Pete gave the culprit another lecture, then ordered him out of the room.

"Dat's de only way to appeal to his feelings," observed Pete, when they were alone. "You see, he don't like being treated like a little child, especially before de boys. If dat threat ain't cured him ob lying, I shall hab to try de efficacy of its execution. I'm mighty certain he won't like being punished like dat before all de boys."

"It is a pity," exclaimed Jack, "for he is a smart lad."

"I was tinkin', Jack, weder I wouldn't let you take him in hand for a bit."

"No, you don't," laughed Jack. "I am not interfering with your precious 'cistern,' as you call it."

"You might hab more control ober him dan I hab got."

"In that case he will have to do with a little less control. I have not the slightest intention of interfering in the matter."

"I shouldn't consider it interfering, Jack."

"Perhaps not; but I should."

"You are an obstinate mule, Jack."

"I think I would rather be that than a master at a school for unruly boys. I don't know whether mules are happy animals, but I am quite confident masters are not. I am not going to allow myself to be turned into one of the latter."

"Would you like to try your hand, Sammy?"

"No, I wouldn't. You can deal with those boys yourself. They are too many for me, and I tell you plainly, Pete, I don't believe you could have found a rowdier lot if you had tried."

"I begin to tink dere's someting in what you say, Sammy. I tought a schoolmaster had rader a nice life ob it one road and anoder, but seems to me now dat he has got a mighty nasty time ob it all roads. If I don't become a doddering old idiot before so mighty long I shall be surprised. Now, look here, boys. I'm going to hab a long day's hunt for Juke, and I dunno what time I shall be back, so don't you expect me till I come. You had better get some money from de bank, Jack, 'cos we shall need it for de school expenses. I'm inclined to tink dat it won't do to wait for dose free hundred pounds."

"It would be a remarkably stupid thing to do."

"Bery well. You get some more, and don't expect me back till you see

me. Dere will be a lot ob complaints from de masters, but all you hab to do wid dem is to enter dem in de complaint-book. It seems to gib entire satisfaction to all parties, and doesn't do de boys any harm. 'Nuff said! Look after Rory."

Then Pete went out, and made his way to the village, where he obtained a hundred pounds from the bank. He knew that the likeliest place to find Droog's stepfather would be in some low public-house, and, passing through the town, he went along a country lane in which he knew that there was a roadside inn, about three miles distant.

The outside appearance of this place was not at all to his liking, but when he entered it, he found the inside far worse. No one was in the bar, but he heard voices in the parlour, and, entering it, he found three ruffianly men seated there drinking and smoking.

"Here, what the thunder do you mean coming into the place like this?" demanded one of them, glaring fiercely at him.

"I tought dis was a sort ob public room, old hoss," answered Pete. "You see, I'm rader tired, and am going to rest for a bit. You go on wid your talk and I'll do a bit ob listening."

"Blessed if ever I came across such cheek in all my life!" growled the first speaker.

"Chuck him out, Bill!" exclaimed another. "You are big enough, and chance it!"

"I wouldn't try to do anyting like dat, Bill," observed Pete, eyeing the three ruffians.

"Why not?" demanded Bill, springing to his feet.

"'Cos, don't you see, it might cause trouble in dis world, and some ob dat trouble might fall on your shoulders."

"What do you think of that, Silas and Grimy?" demanded Bill, addressing his companions. Grimy was remarkably well nicknamed. He looked it.

"Why, I think this 'ere!" exclaimed Grimy. "If he don't pay his footing liberal we will give him the soundest thrashing as he's ever had in his life."

"Them's my sentiments," said Silas. "You'd best ask us what we are a-going to have."

"But, don't you see, I know exactly what you are going to hab, old hosses, so it wouldn't be a bit of good my asking you. Den again, I know exactly what you'm not going to hab."

"What's that?" demanded Bill menacingly.

"You ain't going to hab a drop ob drink at my expense. I hab as much right in dis place as you hab, and I ain't going to leabe it except ob my own accord. If you free ruffians tink you'm going to bully me into paying for you to get drunk, you'm making de worst mistake dat free scoundrels eber made in deir lives."

"So that's your little game, is it?" cried Bill, stepping up to him with clenched fists. "I've given you fair warning as we won't be browbeat. Now, I'm going to give you one more chance. Jest you go down on your knees and tell us you are sorry, then order in drinks, and we won't punish you this time for your insolence; else I'll knock your head off your shoulders."

"I can see dat dis is a case where dere's going to be trouble," said Pete, placing his back against the wall. "Start ahead, Bill, and let me down as lightly as you possibly can, 'cos you'm got to remember dat you are free to one."

CHAPTER 10.

Pete Against Long Odds.

BILL hesitated a moment. There was something about Pete's calmness that was rather disconcerting to him.

It is true that Pete had not placed himself in fighting attitude, and that he was smiling at his ruffianly adversary, but for all that he looked rather an awkward customer, and he was far bigger than Bill had at first imagined.

"You've asked for it," he cried. "Now take it!"

And Bill let fly with his left at Pete's face. He struck straight from the shoulder, and the blow was both swift and heavy. Pete became convinced that Bill was no novice at the art. He countered between Bill's eyes, then cross-countered on the mark, and Bill went down with a crash, while the blow he had tried to deliver at Pete's face landed on the wall, much to the detriment of Bill's knuckles.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "What are you trying to do, Bill? I can plainly see dat you ain't much good at fighting. You had best get de oder two to help you."

They needed no bidding, for they both sprang at Pete, with the result that Grimy went sprawling over Bill; then Pete gripped Silas round the body, and dexterously flung him on the top of the other two.

"Get up dere," cried Pete. "You ain't a lot ob maggots, to crawl on de floor like dat. You should always stand up when you want to fight, and not roll on de floor. Yah, yah, yah! You are a funny lot, too. Come on, Bill, and finish frowning me out ob de place. It's a pity to waste time like dis."

"If I don't knife you for this 'ere it's a caution!" cried Bill, struggling to his feet.

"Should advise you to take the caution first, old hoss," said Pete. "Still, if you like to use a knife you'm welcome."

"Ain't you got no fear?"

"Yah, yah, yah! Fear ob you! Golly, de man is joking now, and dis ain't at all a matter to joke about. I'm a most timid man, sometimes, Bill, but you surely don't 'spect me to be afraid ob free creatures like you! Pull out your knife, and come at me, den you will see what will happen."

"I suppose as you are armed!" growled Bill, drawing a formidable-looking knife.

"Nunno! I'm only armed wid my fists, but you will find dose quite plenty to go on wid. Dere's just one ting I would like to point out, and dat is dat I sha'n't allow de oders to draw a weapon. If I see dem doing dat I shall go for you straight away, so you had better be prepared for an attack dat is sure to be sudden, and possibly may be painful."

The other two ruffians, however, were not quite so reckless as Bill, and they knew that using knives would probably mean murder. They made no attempt to draw their weapons.

On the other hand, Bill was in such a towering passion that he did not consider the consequences. He was only waiting for a favourable opportunity to rush in, and at last he thought he saw it.

Raising the knife, he sprang forward; but so did Pete, and he was far quicker in his movements.

Probably Bill had expected him to dart aside, but springing straight forward, he struck upwards with his right, catching Bill on the jaw, and sending him down with an impact that shook the room.

"You might be so kind as to lie dere for a bit, old hoss, while I light

my pipe," said Pete, pulling it out. "Dere's no need for us to hurry wid dis fight. You can keep your knife, 'cos I don't mind fighting you wid dat a bit."

"He's broke my jaw!" groaned Bill.

"Well, dere's a five-barred gate outside, and we can use de bars ob dat to make splints for de broken jaw. I dare say de landlord will be able to lend us some rope to fasten de splints on wid. Yah, yah, yah! You do make me laugh wid your groaning!"

"I'm hurt! Oh, I'm badly hurt!"

"Funny ting dat, my poor old hoss! How did you manage to do it. 'Spect you must hab knocked your head when you fell. Look here, Bill, I hab had a bit ob experience in fighting, and I would advise you neber to go tumbling on de ground. You see, if you do dat, it doesn't gib your adversary a fair chance of knocking you down."

Bill sat up, and gazed round the room, although not quite sure where he was. Pete had struck him severely, and the blow had partially stunned him, but his idea that his jaw was broken was pure imagination.

"Why don't you two go for him?" growled Bill.

"What's the good of fighting?" demanded Grimy. "The chap is going to stand us drinks. All you've got to do is treat him properly."

"Dat's all," answered Pete. "You will find me quite kind to you if you treat me gently. All de same, I ain't standing you anything to drink. You don't need it. You see, I hab tamed wild beasts, and know deir ways exactly. You want to take de upper hand wid dem. Spirit ain't de slightest use to wild beasts, so I ain't going to gib you any ob it."

"We ain't wild beasts."

"I know dat, old hoss. You'm a lot worse and more dangerous, and you want treating more carefully. Now, you can go on smoking your pipes, and if you want any more to drink you will hab to pay for it, 'cos it is mighty certain dat I sha'n't, and I don't 'spect de landlord ob dis place would be so stupid as to gib you credit. You see, why I came here is 'cos I want to meet a man on a little business matter, and as dat man is a great scoundrel, I consider dat de most likely place to find him is in some low drinking den. When I mention his name to you, you will find dat you know him quite well."

"What's the chap's name?" demanded Grimy.

"Dat's just where it comes in. If you come to de conclusion dat I want him for friendly purposes you will tell me dat you know him, and if you consider dat I'm going to hammer him you will say dat you'm neber heard his name. You see, de man ain't ob good character; in fact he ain't ob any character at all, and——"

"You mean Juke," came a voice, apparently from Grimy. It was some of Pete's ventriloquism, but it deceived Bill, who, having now recovered from the blow, leapt to his feet, and glared at his confederate.

"You silly brute!" he cried. "What did you want to mention his name for?"

"I never met such a murderous brute as you, Bill!"

Pete supplied the remainder of Grimy's sentence, and it was more than Bill's temper could bear. He did not argue the matter further, but leapt upon Grimy, and the next moment they were rolling on the ground, hammering away in fine style.

The landlord came to see what was the matter, and, finding that it was only a fight, went away again. Fights were of very frequent occurrence in his house, and he did not mind them at all, for the combatants generally settled their disputes by ordering in more drink.

On the present occasion, Bill and Grimy soon had enough of it, and, rising to their feet, they commenced slanging one another, while Pete was shouting with laughter.

"Yah, yah; yah! You chip in a bit, Silas! Gib Bill a smack in de eye!" "I never mentioned Juke's name!" declared Grimy, feeling his eye where he had received Bill's fist.

"I heard you!"

"No, you didn't. I never mentioned his name, and I never called you nothink. I didn't speak!"

"Then who did?"

"How should I know? But why the thunder didn't you find that out afore you commenced on me?"

"Didn't you hear him talk, Silas?"

"Couldn't say. I heard someone talk."

"Yah, yah, yah! Go for Silas on de chance dat it was him!" suggested Pete.

"I believe it was you!" growled Bill.

"Den go for me, my dear old hoss. I ain't a bit particular. And we ought to hab a bit ob fun while we are waiting for Juke."

"Who told you as he was coming here?" demanded Bill.

"Now, you'm trying to get Juke into trouble. I can see dat quite plainly."

"No, I aint! He's a pal of mine."

"I neber said he wasn't. But it don't follow dat you don't want to get him into trouble. Look how you served Grimy!"

"'Cos he called me names!"

"No, I didn't."

"Well, I thought you did, and it comes to the same thing."

"Dat's right enough, Bill. Don't you be sat on!" said Pete.

"See you here! It's all your doing!"

"Bery well, den; set on me," said Pete obligingly. "What's de good ob hitting de wrong man?"

"'Cos I'm thundering well not going to hit the right one."

"Yah, yah, yah! I sha'n't hurt you much."

"You ain't going to hurt me at all—not if I know it."

"Bery well! Please yourself, old hoss. I ain't a bit particular. Here, landlord! I'm going to wait for Juke, so you can serve up some food for me. I'm getting mighty hungry, and it's getting lunch-time. What hab you got?"

"Cold roast beef and pickles."

"Dat will do to go on wid. Dere's half-a-sovereign for de accommodation, and remember dat I'm going to eat as much as I want."

"Are these others going to eat it as well?"

"Nunno! If dey want anything, dey will hab to pay for it. Dey can go if dey like, or stay. Dey won't boder me in any way, and if dey feel like fighting again I shall be quite ready for dem. I'm always willing to oblige."

A joint of beef was brought up, and Pete commenced his meal; but he refused to supply the others, feeling convinced that they did not deserve it. As a matter of fact, they would have been perfectly satisfied if he had supplied them with drink, and they told him so; but he absolutely refused to do anything of the sort.

As soon as he had finished his meal he lighted his pipe, and spent the afternoon dozing and smoking, while they showed no signs of going.

They spent the afternoon playing dominoes for drink, but as they had

no money the landlord had to trust them, although he did not appear to care for the job.

Just as it was growing dusk, Juke entered the place, and Pete was not at all surprised to see him.

"It's all right, old hoss," exclaimed Pete. "Don't be frightened ob me."

"You! Frightened of you! Haw, haw, haw! That's a good one. Why should I be frightened of you? Here, bring us in some whisky, Nick! This fellow is too funny to live."

"Seen anyting ob your stepson, old hoss?" inquired Pete, as the landlord hurried away to obey the order.

"No, and don't want to! You've took charge of him, and you will have to keep him now. I wish you joy of the job. He's the worst young ruffian as ever I set eyes on."

"Well, I can't say dat. All de same, he's disappeared."

"He has—has he! Well, you are answerable for him, and if you have done anything agin that boy, I shall make you pay. Don't you make no error over that!"

"I was just wondering weder you knew anyting about him. You see, I called here on chance, and found out from certain conversation— Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at de manner in which I found out you were expected."

"See you here!" cried Juke. "We ain't going to stand any of your nonsense. We shall pay you what we owe if you ain't so thundering careful. That's right—isn't it, Bill?"

"We don't want no fighting," growled Billy.

"Why not?"

"'Cos we've had some."

"Are you frightened of him?"

"No, I ain't. All the same, I ain't fighting him. You can if you like, but I ain't."

"You surely don't think as he could tackle the four of us?"

"P'r'aps not; but what's the sense of fighting? After all, he ain't done nothink to you, and if he's keeping your dead wife's kid what more do you want?"

"Well, I ain't partic'lar," growled Juke. He had no intention of trying conclusions with Pete unaided. "He's answerable for the boy's safety, and if anything has happened to the kid, I shall come down heavy on you, Pete, and so I tell you."

"Well, you can do all dat, old hoss. You see, I wanted to hab a talk wid you, 'cos I tought you might know someting 'bout de boy."

"Then you was mistook, and the sooner you clear out of this 'ere show the better I shall be pleased."

"But don't you see, old hoss, I don't care weder you are pleased or not, and I 'spect I hab as much right here as you hab. I dunno weder you want to make some plans or not, but if you do, you will eider hab to go and make dem elsewhere, or else wait till it suits me to go."

"We are a-going to have a game of dominocès," declared Juke. "That's all I came here for, and you can wait and watch us as long as you like."

"Dat's mighty kind ob you, old hoss; but as you see, it wouldn't be bery interesting for me to watch you, so I 'spect I shall hab to go. You are sure you don't know anything ob de boy?"

"Of course I am! Don't I keep telling you so?"

"M'yes! But, den, you'm such a mighty liar dat dere is no believing a word you say."

"You had better be careful what you are saying to me, else you may have cause to regret it later on."

"Well, I will bear de matter in mind; but, you see, I tought you might hab met de boy."

"Well, I ain't."

"Dat's what I dunno."

"What should I want to meet the young cub for?"

"He had some money in his possession, and I tought you might hab robbed him."

"I never come across such a stupid brute as you are in all my days. How should I have known he had money on him?"

"Well, it was my custom to send him to de bank, and you might hab kept watch. Den, again, you might hab got hold ob Potts, who is an utter idiot, and would gib you any information you required, 'specially if you stood him a few drinks."

"I don't know who Potts is."

"Well, I happen to know dat you do, 'cos on one occasion I saw you in his company, and dat ain't so mighty long ago."

"It stands to reason that if the boy had money he's bolted with it."

"No, it don't."

"I tell you it does. I told you when I brought him to you that he was a thief."

"M'yes! And you didn't tell me dat you were de greatest scoundrel unhung. I might hab been more ready to believe dat dan de oder, and it would hab been a lot nearer de troof."

"Go and drown yourself! Who cares what you think? You are taking a sight too much on your shoulders. That's what's the matter with you. We don't want you here."

"You can't hab all you want, old hoss. All de same, I ain't going to stay here much longer. I was just doubting weder I hadn't better take you wid me and hand you ober to de police. Howeber, I shall decide not to do dat on dis occasion, and we will assume dat you'm speaking de troof for once in your life, and dat you ain't seen de boy, and don't know anything 'bout him. Dat being de case, we will sort ob take our departure, and make a few more inquiries on our own account; but we ain't got de slightest intention ob drowning ourselves. 'Nuff said on dat point."

"You can think yourself mighty clever," exclaimed Juke, "but if you try any of your tricks on me, you will soon find that you are dealing with the wrong man. You won't frighten me, and so I tell you."

"I don't want to frighten you, old hoss; but if I find dat you hab injured dat boy in any manner, I shall follow you up, and see dat you get what you deserve. Remember dat, Juke."

"That's a threat."

"M'yes! And you will find dat it is a threat I shall execute before so mighty long if anyting has happened to de boy for which you are answerable. You'm done him enough harm to last him his lifetime, you low-down scoundrel! I don't want to lose my temper wid you in any way, but I tell you, Juke, when I tink ob de shameful manner in which you hab treated dat boy you ain't safe in my presence. Stop! You will be wise not to answer me."

"Why?"

"'Cos I could strike you senseless wid one blow ob my fist, and you know it. I could do more dan dat, Juke. If I was to strike you wid my full strength, dere would be an end ob matters for you. Now, don't you see de danger you are running wid your villainy?"

"You are making false accusations against me. That's what you are a-doing."

"Nunno, I ain't. I don't know weder you are innocent or guilty 'bout dat boy, but I do know dat if I was to strike you wid my full strength dat it would not be sufficient punishment for all de villainy you hab committed in your life."

"You talk like a fool."

"And you act like a fool when you tink you'm going to defy me. How-eber, you will find dat out later on. 'Nuff said!"

For a few moments Pete fixed his eyes on the miscreant, and then left the inn, and they watched him disappear in the darkness.

CHAPTER 11.

How the Lamb Was Caught.

THAT day the boys in Pete's school were allowed to do as they liked, for Pete had decided on letting them have a day's holiday, in the hope that some of them might find Droog.

Lamb had already made his arrangements. He meant to have vengeance on Ginger and Potts for having sneaked.

Of course, Potts was guilty, and, from Lamb's point of view, thoroughly deserved the very worst trick he could play; but as Ginger was perfectly innocent, it came very hard on him.

"Look here, Ginger!" exclaimed Lamb, early that morning. "It's our duty to give Potts a lesson for sneaking. He must be broken of sneaking, you know."

"Well, I don't mind breaking him, so long as we don't get into a row."

"Bother the row! Who cares for that?"

Ginger had an idea that Lamb would care very much, but did not say so, as he did not want to have trouble, and he fondly imagined that Lamb had forgiven him for the little trick played the previous night.

"So long as we don't get caught, I don't mind."

"All right!" exclaimed Lamb. "Get up sharp, and we will give him a little dose for the start. What you have got to do is to ring Pete's bell, and Potts will have to answer it; then you leave me to deal with Potts, and if I don't make him feel sorry, it won't be for the want of trying. We are not going to stand his shameful behaviour any longer."

"Ha, ha, ha! I suppose we'll have to teach him to behave as well as we do."

"What's our behaviour got to do with him? Hurry up! Then go to Pete's room, and ring the bell violently. After that, bolt to the lodge, and you will find me there; only go the front way, else you are likely to meet Potts."

From the boys' point of view, nothing could have suited their purpose better, for Potts was just about to commence breakfast, when there was a violent ringing at his bell.

He said a few things far from complimentary to Pete, but as he had not yet commenced breakfast, he decided on answering the bell, and, directly he had left the porter's lodge, Lamb entered it, while a moment later Ginger came in.

"It's all right," exclaimed Lamb; "he has left his breakfast in the fender to warm! I'll keep it hot enough for him. Lend me his tall hat. He rather prides himself on that hat, but I won't damage it."

Lamb emptied the dish of eggs and bacon into the hat, then emptied the teapot on the top of that, filling it up with milk, butter, and sugar, and placed the result on the hob to boil.

"My eyes! He's coming back!" exclaimed Ginger, hearing a hurried footstep along the passage. "He will see us as we bolt."

"Get 'nto his bed-room. Quick! He will never look there for us."

It was not really Potts' bed-room, but there was a bed in it, and he often went to sleep there in the afternoon. He used it as a dressing-room as a rule, and kept his best clothes there. Both boys darted in, and got under the bed. It was, of course, rather risky, but it was far safer than darting out of the front door, for, had they done that, Potts must have seen them, and he would probably have caught them as well.

"Bust the brute!" growled Potts, entering his room. "Always a-ringing for me from morning to night. Not to wait till I get there neither, and—Well, I'm blowed. Oh, the young varmints! Biling my breakfast in my best 'at. Why, it's ruined! Completely ruined!"

He picked the well-filled hat up by the brim in order to fling the contents out of the window, but before he got half-way across the room, the top of the hat fell out, and tea, and eggs and bacon streamed down Potts' legs, and they were so hot that it made him howl.

"Varmints! Fury! I'm scalt! Bust me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ginger.

That gave the show away, and as the two worthies scrambled from beneath the bed Potts rushed into the room.

"Come on, old fatty!" exclaimed Lamb, squaring up to him. "We will fight you. Come on, Ginger, let's knock the stuffing out of him!"

There is not a doubt that they would have been as good as the threat had Potts assaulted them, but he was not so foolish. He preferred expressing his indignation by words.

"You jail-birds! Oh, you young scamps! Look at the mess you have made me in!"

"That's nothing to what we will do to you next time you go sneaking on us, you ugly fat brute. Suppose I were to tell Pete all I know about you, where would you be then?"

"Why, where I am now," declared Potts, although he looked rather startled.

"You know a jolly sight better than that."

"You don't know nothink about me except what's good."

"Hold me up, someone. Ha, ha, ha! Good about you, you inflamed-looking beauty!"

"You had best be careful how far you go with me."

"It's for you to be careful, Quart Potts. We don't care twopence, and you care about thirty bob a week. See! We've got the whip hand of you, and we mean to use that whip. When a man does me a bad turn, I always get my own back. I'm going to get it off old Hawke before so long. I'll teach him to get me insulted by Pete. As a matter of fact, Pete would not dare to do what he threatened. He knows I would hurt him if he did."

"Don't you make any mistake about that, you young varmint. There ain't a thing as Pete would fear to do if he wanted to. Haw, haw, haw! I've been telling the boys that he was going to bring you into the school-room, and put you across his knee, and didn't they laugh jest. You will get it hot one of these days, you young beauty, and, all I can say is that it will serve you right. I'll report your conduct directly Pete comes in. You've spoilt my hat and trousers, and I hope he will stop your pocket-money till they are paid for. It's what I am going to ask him to do."

"All right! Just you report it, and see what will happen to you, you miserable sneak. You are dishonest, that's what you are. All you try to do is to get boys into trouble."

"Bust, if one wouldn't think he was in the right to hear him talk!" gasped Potts. "I suppose you think I ought to let you come into my place and do all this damage to my property, and then turn round and say, 'Thank you. I won't tell no one, 'cos I wouldn't like to get you poor dear boys into trouble.'"

"You can say what you jolly well please. I don't care twopence for you and Pete put together. I don't know which is the bigger idiot, but you are about equal in brain power."

"I'll tell him every word you are saying."

"And I'll tell him what a liar you are."

"You mark my words, I'll come and see you spanked. Haw, haw, haw! It will be some consolation to hear you sobbing. It don't take you long to

turn on the watercart. You are only a miserable, cowardly little worm. You ain't a boy. Ginger is bad enough, but he's worth a dozen of you, you mean-spirited little beast."

"You take care what you are saying, else we will go for you and double you up."

"Don't you think as you will frighten me, you sleepy-eyed kid. I'll serve you the same as Pete is going to if I have any of your nonsense. But I'll be level with you before I've done. Just you see if I won't. If Pete won't give you what you deserve, you shall get it all the same. What you want is a good thrashing, and that's what you are going to get if I ain't mistook. Now, clear out of this, else I'll kick you out."

"Come on, Ginger! It is no use talking to the old blockhead. We will pay him out later on. The chances are Pete won't be home till late, and as we have got the day before us we will settle scores in another quarter."

Then they left the room, and Potts went into the kitchen to see if he could get a second breakfast, although he did not feel at all sure on the point, for the cook and he were at daggers drawn, and she might not believe that his first breakfast had been spoilt.

Lamb spent the morning by himself, but he felt that he wanted a little vengeance on Hawke, although why he should have blamed the professor was rather extraordinary. The fact is that Pete's threat rankled in Lamb's breast, and now that all the boys knew of it, he was determined to upset Professor Hawke once more, and equally determined to get Ginger to accompany him.

After dinner he went into the gymnasium, and Potts, who had been on the watch all day, crept after them, and listened at the half-closed door. He thought it would be just as well to hear all their plans, so that he might act accordingly. Potts could be just as revengeful as Lamb, and, on this occasion he certainly had more cause for vengeance.

"We will wait till it's dark, and then pay the old beast a visit," said Lamb. "At least, we will get into his grounds, and pull up every flower in the place. He thinks a lot of his garden; but he won't think so jolly much of it after we've done with it."

"But suppose he catches us?" objected Ginger.

"There's not the slightest fear of that. We won't get too close to the school. You see, he doesn't know who chucked the eggs at his stupid head. He thinks we are good, quiet boys; and so we are in a sense——"

"Funny sense that," mused Potts.

"All the same, we intend to have our rights."

"Well, he didn't do anything to me, you know."

"That's just like you, Ginger. You only think of yourself. You ought to think a bit of me."

"It don't seem necessary, 'cos you are always thinking such a jolly lot of yourself. All the same, I don't mind coming with you, only I don't want to make Pete pay any more money."

"He doesn't mind. He's rolling in it."

"So he may be, but he won't be rolling in it after he has run this school

a year or so, not if we land him in fifty pounds a day damages, and the other chaps to the same. But what time shall we start?"

"Directly it gets dark. We will keep along the bank of the stream, and enter his grounds that way. You see, if he happens to be fooling around, we will pretend that we have come with some message from Pete. He's as soft as putty, and will believe almost anything. Now let's come and stir up old Potts. He's sure to be asleep now, and he hates being woke up. I'll have my own out of him before so very long, you see if I don't. If a chap does me a bad turn he has got to answer for it."

Ginger did not feel quite comfortable. He was thinking of the ducking he had given Lamb, and was wondering whether he meant to have vengeance for that. He determined to try to keep in his good books, and so raised no objection to accompanying him on his venturesome exploit.

They did not find Potts in his lodge asleep, nor could they find him in the college, and Lamb seemed to be considerably disappointed; however, he succeeded in enjoying himself during the afternoon by spending all the money Ginger had in his possession in the tuck shop, and then the two made their way to the stream, and when it was quite dark they followed its bank until they reached Professor Hawke's grounds.

"We've got to get into his front garden," whispered Lamb, "because that is where his best rose-trees are. We will wrench the hanged things up, and plant some of them upside-down, then I'll smash the stems of the others. It will serve him right for behaving in the disgraceful manner in which he has towards me."

Ginger considered that the justice of the case would be met by somewhat less drastic measures; but he said nothing, because, in the first place, he knew that it would offend Lamb, and in the second, because he knew perfectly well it would not have the slightest effect.

The conspirators gained the front garden, and Lamb seized a standard rose-tree, and smashed its stem in half, then someone seized him, and he uttered a cry of terror, for he could not shake off that grip upon his collar.

"What are you doing here?" demanded a stern voice, which he recognised as Professor Hawke's.

"I—I was only coming to ask you, sir, if——"

"Well, suppose you come into the school-room and ask me there?"

"Unfortunately I stumbled against that rose-tree, and——"

"I've got him, sir!" exclaimed another voice. It was the gardener's, and the "him" referred to was Ginger.

"Bring him into the school-room," ordered Hawke. "We will hear what they have got to say. That rose-tree is ruined, and it is one of the best in the garden."

"The very best, sir."

"I believe it is, James."

"The care I've took of that tree, and now it's done for."

"Yes. Come this way, Lamb. I know that you are a nicely-spoken boy, and I want you to see my scholars."

"I don't want to see them, thank you, sir."

"Ah, but I prefer your doing so. This way, boy. The rule here is far different to that you have been accustomed to, but you will notice that from the conduct of my scholars. You see, they are the sons of gentlemen, and are expected to behave themselves as gentlemen."

There was no help for it. Lamb would have got away if he could, but Professor Hawke was a strong man, and he was holding him with a grip that there was no shaking off. Lamb seemed to understand this, and he made no attempt to struggle.

He was led into the large hall where all the boys were assembled, but even then Professor Hawke did not release him.

"Boys," he exclaimed, "I wish to tell you that these two lads have come into my grounds, and smashed down one of my rose-trees! Now, Lamb, perhaps you will explain your conduct to these young gentlemen."

"It was an unfortunate accident, sir," declared Lamb. "You see, we did not know our way about the place, and Pete told us to come here to ask if you had heard anything of that young rascal who threw the rotten eggs at you?"

"Yes! I have heard of him this afternoon."

"I am very glad, sir."

"Indeed?"

"I hope you don't think that I wilfully damaged your rose-tree?"

"When I see a boy seize a rose-tree by the stem, and deliberately smash it down, what else am I to think?"

"I stumbled against it."

"I am sorry to find that you are a little coward, as well as a very bad boy," said Hawke. "Don't you know that it is very sinful to tell a lie, little boy? Are you not ashamed to do so before all these young gentlemen? Of course, you are not in their station of life, and have not had their advantages, and, therefore, I hope they will try to make some excuse for you. It is very sad to think that a boy should be so degraded, and I am extremely sorry for you. I take into consideration your evil bringing-up, but that is not wholly an excuse for you."

"I'm as good as they are."

"That is far from the truth. That you are in a different station of life really has nothing to do with the matter, but you should strive to treat your superiors with respect."

"You don't suppose that I'm going to respect those idiots!" cried Lamb. He found Hawke's words very galling, and that was exactly Hawke intended they should be. "Why, I would fight the biggest one of them!"

"Young gentlemen do not fight like young roughs."

"No, because they are jolly well frightened to do so!"

"Your language is far from elegant; but, of course, you know no better, having been dragged up in the gutter, as it were. I understand that you were once a little page-boy to a lady, and am rather surprised that she did not teach you better; but I suppose she had no time, as she had to dismiss you for theft."

"I know one thing about you, Professor Hawke," cried Lamb, white with passion. "You are not a gentleman, or you would not speak as you are doing. I tell you to your face, and before all your precious boys, that you are a snob and a cad, and that Pete is a gentleman to you!"

"Perhaps so, from your point of view. But I scarcely consider that a poor little gutter lad is able to judge a gentleman."

"I suppose you think it gentlemanly to take fifty pounds from Pete for a few pounds of damage done? You may call that gentlemanly. I call it blackmail!"

"It is quite obvious that you are an evil little boy, and——"

"Leave that out of the question! Let these fellows judge you. If there is one of them who dare stand up and say he considers that you acted in a gentlemanly manner, and that your sarcasm concerning me is gentlemanly now, and I'll tell that boy what he is."

"I do not allow my scholars to judge their master."

"Which is a thundering lucky thing for you, for you would either learn the truth or teach them to be liars!"

"Such a truthful little boy to speak of lying!"

"You want to shift out of it, but you can't. You can put me down as what you like; but you can't get over what you are."

"I have no wish to do so, my poor, misguided child."

"Perhaps not; but it would be a lot better for your scholars if you could."

Hawke was making a great mistake in arguing publicly with Lamb. He had fondly imagined that he would make him look ridiculous in the eyes of his scholars, but in an argument Lamb could generally hold his own. Hawke began to realise this, but he scarcely knew how to get out of it.

He was in a towering passion, and it needed a good deal of will-power to hide this fact from Lamb. This put him at a further disadvantage.

"It is inconceivable," he exclaimed, "that even a little boy with such a bad bringing-up dare to try to defend such atrocious misconduct."

"I am trying to do nothing of the sort. I am only accusing you of caddishness and snobbishness. Your own words have convicted you, and I should say these fellows must know it. I'll guarantee their parents would, if told of the lines you take."

"I can quite see that there is only one way to appeal to such a misguided little ruffian as you are, Lamb. I am sorry to have to punish you——"

"Such a truthful man!" sneered Lamb, who felt pretty confident that Hawke would not take the law into his own hands, and that the worst he would do would be to hand him over to Pete for punishment, which Lamb considered meant nothing.

"Very sorry, because, although you are naturally of an evil temperament, I have the feeling that you might have been a better boy had you been brought up in a proper manner. As it is, your senses of right and wrong are so blunted that I have no alternative but to punish you."

"If you think you are going to frighten me, you make a great mistake."

"I should be sorry to frighten any boy. It is evident to me that you are a very evil little boy, and I can only hope that the punishment I am about

to administer will act as a lesson to you, and do you some good. As for your accomplice, I have the feeling that he has been led into his rascally behaviour by you. I happen to have been informed of all your misconduct. I shall not deal with that other boy, but wish him to witness your punishment, in order that he may take warning by it. Jones, fetch my cane!"

And one of the boys rose with alacrity to obey the order.

"You dare not strike me!" cried Lamb. "If you did I would summon you for assault. If you have any complaint to make you can do so to Pete—or even to the police—but you have no right to take the law into your own hands."

"In some cases it is necessary to do so. This is one of them. I am going to punish you very severely, in the hope that it will do you good."

Then Lamb's yells awoke the echoes. Hawke caned him just about as severely as he dared, and the worst of it was that Ginger was not at all sorry.

"My eyes! I don't believe you are doing him a bit of good!" he exclaimed. "I say, Snuffles, is he hurting you?"

The question was so utterly superfluous that it provoked a roar of laughter. And now Lamb's shrieks ceased, for Hawke released him. He was not a lad who could stand pain. Ginger would have borne that thrashing far better, for Lamb was sobbing like a little child.

"I always cane a boy a second time if he is impertinent after the first chastisement," observed Hawke, by way of a warning. "It is to be hoped you will not give me cause to do so on this occasion, Lamb."

This had the desired effect. Lamb was smarting too sorely to risk a second dose, and for some time he only sobbed; while the boys tittered. Nor did Hawke attempt to stop their laughter.

"When you have done crying, my misguided lad, you will apologise to me before all these boys for your gross misconduct, and for your impertinence to your superiors," said Hawke. "I cannot allow vulgar little boys to come here and say impertinent things in the presence of young gentlemen. Now, express your regret in a proper manner, otherwise, I shall cane you again, though far more severely."

Hawke lowered his voice as he muttered the last words. Lamb knew that he would have to obey, for the angry man still held him by the arm, and kept his cane upraised.

"I am extremely sorry that I stumbled against your rose-tree, and broke it by accident."

"How dare you tell such an abominable falsehood, boy?" cried Hawke, bringing down the cane with a force that caused the culprit to howl again. "I am determined that you shall speak the truth."

"I am in your power, and am compelled to say anything you put into my mouth."

"That is not the way to address me. Are you going to speak properly? I can see I shall have to cane you again."

"Stop! I am extremely sorry."

"Address me as 'sir!' Don't dare to speak in that insolent manner to me again, otherwise I shall cane you without any further warning."

"I apologise, sir."

"Do you admit that you deserve the chastisement I have administered? Take care, boy!"

"Yes, sir. I am in your power at present."

"Explain your meaning."

"I can only express my regret at what has happened, sir."

"Do you promise me that nothing like it shall occur again?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you are sorry for your scandalous behaviour?"

"Yes, sir."

"You see what a naughty little boy you have been?"

Lamb did not answer.

"Answer my question, boy!"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you promise me to strive to be a good little boy in future?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well! On this occasion I shall pardon you, but should there be a recurrence I shall chastise you with far greater severity. Proceed with your studies, young gentlemen. Bring that other boy along, Jackson! I intend to see them off the premises. I fear the misguided lads are so utterly untrustworthy that it would not really be safe to allow them to go alone."

"Go home immediately!" ordered Hawke, when they reached the gate;

Lamb was led away in silence. Hawke still carried his cane, and there is not a doubt that he would have been quite ready to use it again on the slightest provocation; and Lamb was still smarting too severely from the flogging he had received to risk another one.

"Go home immediately!" ordered Hawke, when they reached the gate; and he spoke much as he would have done if addressing a dog. "If you ever dare to show your faces here again, I shall flog you both in a manner that you are likely to remember for the remainder of your lives!"

Lamb strode onwards in silence. Ginger kept behind him, grinning, and not daring to speak, although at last he got tired of the silence.

"I say, Lamb!" he exclaimed. "Did he hurt you much?"

"If you had had the slightest pluck you would have come to my rescue."

"How was I to do that, when that beast of a gardener was holding me? Besides, Hawke isn't the sort of fellow I'd care to rescue you from."

"You saw the brutal manner in which he was hitting me?"

"Rather! He whacked away like some old carpet-beater!"

"You mark my words, I'll have vengeance!"

"He will mark your back if you try."

"You are a silly ass!"

"Maybe! I'm jolly glad he didn't go for me!"

"No! That's just you all the world over. You haven't got any pluck!"

"I don't know about that. But you didn't seem to have so jolly much when he was laying into you."

"And what sort of a howling would you have kicked up?"

"Blest if I know; but I'm jolly certain I couldn't have howled worse than you. Ha, ha, ha! You did kick up a thumping row, Snuffles!"

"If I have any of your impertinence I'll punch your head!"

"Well, you needn't get savage with me."

"Then don't you laugh at me!"

"I wasn't. It was the other chaps who were laughing. But what's the good of bothering about it now it's all over?"

"I'm suffering!"

"Well, you will feel all right in a day or two. I've been whacked before now often enough, but I never worried myself about it after it was all over. The best thing for us to do is to get back as quickly as we can."

"I have been struck in a most brutal manner, and I will have a terrible vengeance for it. Hawke shall live to regret the day that he ever struck me, and so I tell him!"

"Well, it won't matter telling him behind his back; but if you take my tip, you won't tell him to his face, because it's my impression if you do that he will jolly well strike you again in another brutal manner. Ha, ha, ha! He can use the cane. I'll bet he has had a lot of practice at it."

The probabilities are that at any other time Lamb would have resented this, but he was broken-spirited just then, and he did not feel like fighting anyone. He knew that he could easily beat Ginger at a fight, but he also knew that Ginger got vicious when he was hurt, and Lamb did not feel as though he would be able to stand any more pain that night. For which reason he wisely let the matter drop.

He sulked all the way back to the college, and, on reaching it, went straight to bed, although he first made Ginger declare that he would not mention a word of what had happened to anyone.

"It was Potts who told that beast I threw the rotten eggs at him," said Lamb; "but Potts shall answer for it!"

CHAPTER 12. The Burglary.

MEANTIME Pete had made a circuit, and returned to the inn, and he took up his position behind a hedge, knowing that he would see Juke and his confederates leave the inn.

Hours passed by, and Pete got terribly tired of waiting, but he had an idea that by following Juke he would discover Droog's whereabouts.

It was not until eleven that the party emerged. They made their way along the lane, and Pete followed, keeping some distance behind them, and walking on the grass so that there should not be any possibility of their hearing his footsteps.

Presently they turned across the country, and he lost sight of them in the darkness, but he was still able to follow by the sound of their voices.

They were going towards a wood that lay at the side of his school, so that in any event they were leading him in the direction he wanted to go. As game was abundant in that wood, Pete's first idea was that they were bent on a poaching expedition.

To follow them through the wood in the darkness was no easy matter. He was only guided by the sound they made, while he feared that they would hear him; and before they had crossed the wood all sound ceased.

Now he stopped to listen, and again he heard their voices, although they were speaking too low for him to be able to catch the words.

It seemed to Pete that upwards of an hour must have passed by, when again he heard them moving through the bushes; then they reached the open ground.

They were walking straight towards the college, and it now occurred to Pete that they were intent on committing a burglary. Probably they would have learnt that he generally kept a considerable amount there. It would have been a very easy matter to pump Potts, and it was quite likely that Juke had done so.

The money was always kept in the iron safe in one of the lower rooms, and a burglar would not have found very much difficulty in forcing that safe. Rory would be sleeping in the bed-room of one of the comrades, and as these were on the first floor, and at a considerable distance from the room where the safe was, there was very little chance of Rory hearing.

The four men were now out of sight, but Pete felt so confident that they were going to the school, that he did not trouble himself much about the matter. His idea was to surprise them in the middle of their work, and to capture as many as he could. He did not take into consideration that Juke would probably be armed with a revolver, and the ruffian was just the sort of man to make use of it if hard pressed.

A quarter of an hour's walk brought Pete to the building, but instead of entering by the gate, which probably they had done, he scaled the college wall, and made his way round to the back of the building.

Now he saw a light in his study. It was a dim light, and it at once confirmed his suspicions, for that light would not have been left for him.

It was a bullseye lantern, and as it moved about he caught sight of the three men busy at the safe. Juke was kneeling down tampering with the lock, and one of the other miscreants was standing at the French window on the veranda, evidently keeping watch in case of an alarm.

Now what Pete really should have done would be to have got into the college by the back door, and given the alarm to his comrades, for it was a desperate thing to attack four men, all of whom might be armed for all he knew to the contrary; but he was so anxious to capture Juke that he would not risk losing sight of him.

Suddenly he darted forwards, and he was on the man standing outside just as he turned.

Pete caught him a blow between the eyes that knocked him through the glass of the open window, and smashed the frame; then Pete leapt

into the room, and Juke, who had leapt to his feet, thrust the muzzle of a revolver into his face.

Pete actually felt the barrel against his flesh, but he jerked his head aside just in time; for the next instant there was a red flash, and a loud report. Then, without waiting to see the effects of his shot, Juke sprang through the open window, and fled in the direction of a gully that led to the sea shore, and he dropped his lantern in the room.

The others all fled in different directions, not one of them showing fight. Probably they had recognised Pete, and knew that they would have no chance against his strength.

Picking up the lantern, Pete gave chase to Juke. He felt confident that his comrades would have heard the shot, and so he did not mind leaving the window unfastened.

Pete was able to keep the fugitive in sight. He would have been able to overtake him had he chosen, but, considering that Juke carried a revolver, and would probably have five shots remaining in it, Pete very wisely kept at a considerable distance behind him.

The miscreant sped down the gully, and, having gained the foreshore, hurried along it over the slippery rocks. It was impossible to run now, and as he tried to do so he stumbled more than once.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Mind you don't hurt yourself, old hoss!"

"I'll hurt you if you come nigh me!" snarled Juke.

"Den I 'spect I'll be hurt before so long. Rader slippery dese rocks, don't you tink so?"

"Mind! I'm a desperate man!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Golly! I know de man will make me laugh just directly. You call yourself desperate, do you, Juke? Well, I'm rader glad to hear dat, 'cos I would hab called you an idiot."

"If you come a step nearer I'll shoot you!"

"But I don't want to be shot, old hoss."

"Then don't you come no nearer!"

"Bery well. Rader a dark night, ain't it?"

"What's your game?"

"I ain't playing one at present, but if you like I don't mind a game at leap-frog."

"See you here, the tide is coming in."

"Eh?"

"I say the tide is coming in."

"Well, I dunno dat it is my duty to stop it. You see, de tide has got a playful habit ob coming in; but as it always goes out again, I dunno dat we can blame it entirely. You must make some excuses for de tide."

"We shall be drowned."

"Dere's a lot ob oder deaths more painful dan dat."

"You silly raving maniac! I can easily take your life, if I choose."

"But dere won't be any need to do dat, if de tide is going to drown me."

"It will drown me, too, bust you!"

"Ah, now we are coming to de point! I can plainly see dat it ain't my danger you are tinkin' about, but your own. You see, Juke, I'm going to capture you."

"Not you!"

"I dunno weder dere will be any danger 'bout de operation, but I ain't lettin' you out ob my sight to-night."

"I am armed."

"Dat's true enough; all de same, I am going to capture you. I ain't in de slightest hurry."

"Don't I tell you the tide will be up soon."

"M'yes! And I'm inclined to believe you; but weder de tide comes up or not, I'm going to stop here as long as you. I ain't going to make a rush at you, 'cos I ain't got any weapons, an' I know you hab, and I don't want to get shot, 'cos dat would be rader painful to Jack's feelings—and mine. Sammy wouldn't like me to get shot eider, and as I'm ob de same opinion, it stands to reason dat I ain't going to get shot unless I can help it."

"You ain't coming forward."

"Bery well, old hoss."

"I'm coming back."

"I'm quite agreeable to dat. You can plainly see dat I want to accommodate you in ebery possible way."

"I shall shoot you."

"Now, what could be nicer dan dat? Yah, yah, yah! Don't get angry when I'm trying to oblige you all I can. De case is as simple as eating opened oysters. I'm going to stop here. If you go on, I shall follow."

"You stupid brute! If I go on the tide will come up, and we shall both be drowned."

"Dat isn't what's troubling you, old hoss. You don't mind my getting drowned a bit. De only one you are frightened about is yourself, and dat's the party dat I ain't troubling 'bout a bit."

"What are you going to do?"

"Follow you, if you go on. I hab just told you so."

"And if I come back?"

"Well, dat will depend on circumstances. If you don't shoot me, I shall get you by de froat, den you will hab a few minutes ob a choky sensation, and after dat you will forget all your troubles for about five minutes; 'cos if I put my grip on your froat you are nearly sure to lose consciousness."

Juke was in a very awkward position. He knew that if he went further he would eventually be caught by the tide.

On the other hand, if he returned he would have to face Pete. Now, although the ruffian was armed, he held Pete in such awe that he really feared to attack him.

Had they been on level ground, and had it been light, he would probably have risked it; but while he was clambering over those slippery rocks, Pete would have an opportunity of springing upon him, and if he missed one shot

in the darkness, his foe would probably succeed in gaining possession of the weapon before Juke could fire a second shot.

Thus he hesitated, and as he did so the tide came rolling in. The wind was blowing heavily from the sea, and the tide promised to be a very high one; at any rate, it would certainly rise twenty feet or more up the face of the cliff, and this would be quite fatal to Juke, for he could not swim.

Pete shifted his position to the face of the cliff, keeping behind a projection of rock, in case the miscreant should fire.

"Wid your kind permission, I am going to hab a pipe."

"See here, I ain't done you no harm."

"Nunno!"

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"I don't want you to do anything."

"I tell you I don't know where the boy is."

"Did I say you did know?"

"I suppose that's what you want?"

"Well, dat may be; and dere's anoder ting I don't want, dat is my school broken into."

"I ain't took nothing."

"Yah, yah, yah! How was dat?"

"Bust you! You know you come on the scene."

"Well, dat's why you didn't take anyting, Juke. You ain't safe, old hoss. You see, if I was to let you loose, you would go and burgle someone else's house."

"There's no fear of that."

"Well, dat's true enough, 'cos I ain't goin to let you loose."

"You can't catch me. If I was to shoot you, no one would know but what you hadn't been drowned by the sea and carried away. Now, I don't want to hurt you, 'cos you have been kind to Droog."

"Yah, yah, yah! Dat's de latest! I should say if dere was one ting above all oders dat would make you hate me, it would be my kindness to your stepson, 'cos you'm always treated de lad in de most brutal manner possible."

"Well, I ain't arguing the matter. I'm coming past."

"All right, old hoss! Come along! If you succeed in passing me, I'll let you go, and won't put you in prison till I catch you next time."

For some time Juke muttered to himself, then he levelled his weapon at Pete and fired.

The bullet struck the rocks, and Pete laughed scornfully, then Juke fired two more shots, but neither of them took effect. The night was so dark that it was impossible for him to take accurate aim. He could scarcely see Pete against the rocks.

Not daring closer, he now kept along the foreshore, and Pete still followed. Juke knew that if he could round a point about a couple of miles along, he would be able to climb to the summit of the cliff; and he determined to make the venture, although he was not at all sure that he would reach the point before the tide had risen too high to enable him to pass it.

The wind, too, was increasing in force, and the roar of the waves, bursting on the rocks grew fiercer.

Pete was far more active than the fugitive, and although he slipped several times on the rocks, he always succeeded in saving himself.

Juke on the other hand had several tumbles.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "You are frowning yourself 'bout, old hoss. You will bruise dose rocks if you ain't careful."

"You silly beast!" snarled Juke, firing another shot, which grazed Pete's ear.

"Must be careful ob dose shots," murmured Pete. "De man can fire straighter dan I 'spected. I'll try him wid a little ventriloquism. I don't tink he can see me against de rocks."

Then, when Pete spoke again, he made his voice appear to come several yards away from the spot where he really was.

"Rader rough travelling, ain't it, old hoss? And dere's a splashiness 'bout de water. I dunno weder you are going to round dat point, but if you do, I'm mighty certain dat you will hab to swim."

Juke must have seen that he had undertaken an impossible task now. He stopped, and gazed in blank dismay at the stormy scene.

Pete was creeping up to him, but still his voice appeared to be at a considerable distance, and the roar of the waves completely drowned the sound of his steps upon the rocks. Now he saw Juke's form close to him, and with a sudden bound he leapt upon him.

"Got you dis time, old hoss!" cried Pete, grabbing his wrist as they fell.

Juke fired again, but Pete took particular care that the weapon was not pointing in his direction; and now he wrenched it from his hand, and flung it far into the waves.

"You had a nasty fall dat time, didn't you, old hoss?"

"My skull is fractured, and——"

"Well, I wouldn't boder myself 'bout a trifle like dat."

"We shall be drowned."

"Dat's all de more reason why you needn't boder 'bout a cracked skull. It's just as pleasant to be drowned wid a cracked skull as wid a sound one. All de same, I don't mind telling you dat we'm in considerable danger."

"I tell you we are facing certain death."

"I ain't at all sure dat you ain't right. I 'spect de only ting will be to try to reach de gully by swimming. You see, de tide will be running dat way for some considerable time, and if you take my advice, you will take to de water before de waves reach de face ob de cliff."

"Fool! I can't swim!"

"Dat makes it mighty awkward for you, 'cos you won't be able to learn in time. It just shows you how stupid it was ob you not to learn to swim when you were a boy. You might hab been drowned when you were learning, and tink what a mercy dat would hab been for de world at large."

"What are you going to do?"

"I ain't in de slightest danger, 'cos I can swim a dozen miles wid de greatest ease."

"You won't leave me here to die."

"Eh?"

"Surely you won't be so heartless as to leave me to my fate!"

"Yah, yah, yah! If dis man ain't too funny for words, I shall be surprised. Here he's been firing at me as dough I was a cock pheasant, and now he wants me to be kind to him and sort ob gentle! Well, Juke, ob course you may find me all dat—and den again, you mayn't. I dunno weder de mays or de mayn'ts hab it, but I'm rader inclined to back de latter. 'Nuff said!"

CHAPTER 13.

Pete Traps His Foe.

AND while they waited the tide came rolling up. Pete appeared to have made up his mind how to act, and he smoked his pipe with exasperating coolness; but he did not tell the trembling wretch by his side what his plans were.

As for Juke, he was almost in a state of collapse. The waves were now washing round his feet; nor could he get further from them, because he was standing against the face of the cliff.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded at last.

"Well, it looks almost as dough I would hab to swim, old hoss."

"No man could swim to the gully in this sea."

"Shall hab to try."

"We have just one chance of life. We must climb these cliffs."

"Looks rader difficult, too, seeing dat dey are quite perpendicular. I ain't a fly."

"A little farther back there is a place where we might climb."

"How was it you didn't tink ob dat before?"

"Come on! It's death to remain here."

"All right, old hoss. Just you lead de way, and I will follow you. Dere ain't de slightest fear ob your escaping, 'cos I can run a lot faster dan you, and 'cos our retreat to de gully was cut off long ago. Lead on!"

Juke hurried along the base of the cliff, stumbling over the slippery rocks. Once he sprawled into the water, and Pete burst into roars of laughter. He knew that the ruffian deserved far more punishment than he was getting.

At last Juke reached a spot where it would be possible to climb the rocks to some little height, and now, to Pete's surprise, he hesitated, while he peered through the darkness ahead.

"We could get up there, but I don't believe as we would be beyond the reach of the tide."

"Well, we had better go up and try, old hoss."

"There's another place further along as would be better."

"Bery well! Den we will try dat."

"I ain't sure whether this will be beyond reach of the tide."

"Are you sure de oder one will?"

"Yes."

"Den why not take it?"

"'Cos—'cos I ain't certain we can reach it."

"We can try, and if we don't reach it we can come back here. See?"

"This might be beyond reach of the tide. I ain't at all sure."

"Golly! Should say de one you are certain 'bout would be de best."

Juke still appeared to be very undecided. Pete treated the matter with perfect indifference. An extra large wave decided Juke. It swept him from his feet, and he slipped from the rock on which he was standing into a pool of water.

"Yah, yah, yah!" howled Pete. "De man must tink he's a tumbler pigeon. You will bump yourself if you sit on de rocks wid dat emphasis. Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me for laughing at you. Ain't you getting damp, sitting in dat sea water? Oh, don't blame me! I didn't do it, and I didn't eben push you. Dat's better, my poor old hoss. You will find it much drier standing up dan sitting down in de water."

Pete's chaff infuriated the man. He almost looked like coming to blows; but he had tested Pete's strength on a previous occasion, and now wisely refrained from testing it again.

He clambered up the rocks until he reached a narrow ledge, and now it was utterly impossible to ascend higher.

Pete followed him closely, and sat on the ledge beside him. It was so narrow that it would have been difficult to stand upright, especially in the heavy wind that was blowing.

"Now, all we hab got to do is to wait for de turn ob de tide," observed Pete.

"It's got two hours to run yet—more!"

"In dat case we will hope dat it won't run bery fast. P'raps it will walk to oblige us. All de same, you can't 'spect tides to do exactly what you require ob dem."

Juke passed the time expressing his fears. Pete chaffed him, and smoked his pipe. He did not show the slightest fear, and, in fact, he did not feel any. He took it for granted that the tide would not reach them, and even if it did he meant to try swimming.

But before very long he came to the conclusion that it would reach them, and, what was more serious, there could not be the slightest doubt that the huge seas now bursting against the base of the cliff would sweep those two men from the narrow ledge. Even now the spray was dashing into their faces.

"It's certain death," groaned Juke.

"Well, I must say it looks rader serious," admitted Pete. "And eben if it ain't certain death dere's a mighty good chance ob getting wet."

"What are we to do?"

"Wait till de tide rolls by, Jukey—wait till de tide rolls by," sang Pete.

"You raving maniac!" growled Juke. "I don't believe as you care for anythink."

"Well, I must say dat I don't care for you, Juke. You see, you ain't at all de style ob ting anyone could care for, unless it was a hungry tiger or p'r'aps a crocodile, 'cos dose animals ain't at all particular what dey eat."

"Are you going to sit here and die?"

"If you tink I'm going to stand on dat narrow ledge, you make a great mistake. It wouldn't be at all comfortable in dis wind; and if you'm got to die at all, you may as well do it comfortably as uncomfotably. Dere was a wise man who said a fever was as bad on a feather-bed as a straw mattress; but den, you see, de man hadn't tried dem bof, else he would hab known de difference. I prefer getting as much comfort out ob bof life and death as you conveniently can, and seeing dat you'm got to die, you may as well do it now as a few years later. It comes to de same ting in de long run."

Pete's philosophy brought no comfort to the terrified man, and that terror made Pete laugh. He did not consider that Juke was worthy of pity, and Juke did not get it.

"Bery well, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, when he had listened to the terrified wretch's ravings for about five minutes longer. "I hab been paying particular attention to de manner you hab been describing de way we'm got to die, and I must say I don't seem to care about it. Being bashed against de rocks and torn to pieces, like you hab described it, don't seem at all comforting. Now, suppose you listen to de way in which I propose we should lib."

"There ain't no escape."

"Well, dat's what you tink; but, you see, I ain't ob de same opinion. I can easily swim de gully, 'specially as de tide ain't done rising, 'cos it will be in my favour all de way if it keeps on flowing till I reach my destination."

"You ain't thinking of me."

"Eh?"

"Bust it! What's the good of keeping on saying 'eh!' when you can hear what I say distinct?"

"Yah, yah, yah! Funny ting, but Jack and Sammy often ask a similar question in dissimilar words."

"Well, it's downright heartless de way you are behaving."

"Dere wasn't much heart work 'bout de manner in which you tried to pot me not so mighty long ago. Still, as two wrongs don't make one right, we will consider de matter ob saving your life. Mind, I ain't admitting dat it will do any good, 'cos I can't see what use you are in de world. How-eber, as it is my intension to put you into prison, it stands to reason dat I can't be able to do so if I let you drown now. I neber will drown a rat, 'cos de poor brutes like to lib as well as we do. I shall take you wid me."

"How can you swim with me?"

"Dat would be easy enough if you didn't struggle, and I ain't going to let you struggle. You see, Juke, it ain't any good asking a man not to struggle in a rough sea, 'cos if he can't swim he's most bound to it—'specially as I shall hab to fling you in first. I would neber be able to leap far enough wid you in my arms, and I'm mighty certain you wouldn't

hab de pluck to leap after me. Nunno! I'm going to frow you out as far as I can, oderwise dese waves would beat you against de face ob de cliff, and you wouldn't know de time ob day after dat little lot. Just lend me your wrists. I hab got some cord in my pocket. Tank you! Nunno! Why, de man is beginning to struggle before we start on our voyage!"

Pete knew perfectly well that if he left Juke's arms free there would be very great difficulty in saving him. He was just the sort of man to lose his head and struggle furiously, and Pete's task was quite serious enough without that.

He bound the miscreant's arms in front of his breast, and all the time Juke howled for help.

"Dere's no sense in making dat noise, old hoss," said Pete. "I ain't going to hurt you."

"You are going to murder me."

"No, I ain't. I'm going to save your life if I can. A surgeon has to bind a man before he starts operating, and it is just de same in your case, 'cept dat I ain't going to hurt you, while de surgeon is most bound to hurt his patient, if he ain't got any chloroform handy."

"Mercy! Don't you drown me!"

"Nunno! I ain't got de slightest intention ob doing anything ob de sort. If I wanted to do dat I would leave you here, and de waves would attend to de rest ob de matter. But don't you see, what I want to do is to save your life, and I wouldn't be able to do dat if I was to leabe your arms free. Dere, I tink you will find yourself nice and comfortable. Now, all you hab go to do is nuffin'. You are going to be frown into de sea, and you are to do nuffin', and you are to keep on doing it till I pull you out."

"Suppose you don't pull me out," howled Juke.

"Eh?"

"Oh, bust it! Suppose you can't pull me out?"

"In dat case, old hoss, you will hab to keep on doing nuffin' for all time; but I tink I shall be able to pull you out."

"You only think."

"Well, it's de only chance you hab got ob life."

"I'd rather stop here. P'r'aps the tide won't wash me off."

He completed the words with a howl, for a huge sea burst over him as he uttered them, and there is not a doubt that he would have been washed off then and there if Pete had not grabbed him and held him firmly.

"Golly! De man must tink he's Canute, and dat he will be able to stop de waves by yowling at dem. You will get your feet wet in spite ob your yowls, like de oder joker did. Keep still while I rise, 'cos dis is rader ticklish work, and if I fell it wouldn't be good for your constitution. Dere we are."

Pete had slowly risen on the narrow ledge, and, gripping the trembling man by the collar, drew him slowly up, till they stood side by side.

Juke would scarcely have been able to stand there alone, but Pete's nerves were perfect.

"Now, dere ain't de slightest cause to fear," said Pete. "All you hab to do is to remain perfectly still, and de probabilities are dat I shall be able to save your life. I'm going to raise you above my head, and frow you as far as I can into de sea, den I shall dive after you, and we shall bof go under together; after dat, I shall swim wid you to de gully."

"You can't do it. You are a dangerous maniac."

"I ain't got de slightest doubt dat I shall be able to do it, if you obey my orders, and do exactly what I hab told you to do."

"Bust! You ain't told me to do nothing."

"Well, dat's exactly what I want you to do, and to keep on doing it till we reach de gully; after dat, you will do what I require laier on, and, as I dunno what dat will be, I ain't going to tell you now. 'Nuff said."

Juke had sufficient sense not to struggle, but he raved at the top of his voice for Pete not to fling him into the sea, and that worthy made no reply.

He had an idea that he would never be able to induce the coward to take the leap, and, if they jumped together, they would have fallen so close to the face of the cliff that the next wave would inevitably have hurled them against it, a thing that would have meant almost certain death in such a sea as was running.

Exerting all his marvellous strength, Pete, having gripped the ruffian round the body, raised him slowly above his head. His yells of terror ceased now, but Pete felt him trembling. For several moments Pete held him poised above his head. A huge wave with foam-capped crest, rolled in, to burst with a thunderous roar upon the cliff; then Pete's form bent down, and, with all his strength, he hurled the trembling wretch far away from the face of the cliff, and a shriek of terror rang out on the night air.

Before Juke's body touched the water, Pete leapt feet-first, and he had gripped the terrified man as he was sinking, then both disappeared beneath the surface.

With all his strength, Pete struck out, and he swam beneath the surface for as long as he dared. Had he been by himself, he would have kept beneath for a couple of minutes, so as to escape the full fury of the waves, but he knew this might render Juke unconscious, and he would not take that risk.

As it was, when they rose to the surface they were some little distance from the face of the cliff, and Pete swam out to sea, towing the terrified man with him.

Juke struggled furiously, and howled at the top of his voice, and now Pete felt very glad that he had bound his arms; otherwise, he would have had far greater difficulty.

"All right, old hoss," shouted Pete, "don't you get nervous!"

"I'm choking!"

"Nunno, you ain't; only you must expect to swallow a little sea water in a sea like dis. I should be sorry to hab to let you go, but you must see quite plainly dat I sha'n't be able to hold you if you struggle. If dese

struggles don't cease straight away, you will go under again. It will remind you ob your childhood days when de old bathing woman used to duck you, dat is if you eber bathed, and I hab my doubts about dat matter. Now, dese struggles must cease to occur, else de chances are you will cease to lib, and commence to die."

Pete's threat had the desired effect. He was so remarkably buoyant in the water that Juke commenced to feel confident, and he was now assured that Pete intended to save his life, if he possibly could.

The terrified wretch had the presence of mind to remain perfectly still, but as the huge seas rolled at them, his agony of mind became such that he nearly lost his senses.

On and on Pete struggled, taking long powerful strokes, and keeping far away from the dangerous cliff.

The tide was running swiftly, and it swept him in the right direction. His chief difficulty lay in keeping away from the cliffs, as the wind was blowing straight from the sea, and both that and the rolling waves had a tendency to bear Pete towards the cliffs.

Fortunately, Juke now gave very little trouble, and at last Pete reached the gully, then a huge sea flung them on the shore; and he dragged his almost unconscious burden up the gully beyond the reach of the waves.

CHAPTER 14.

Pete's Prisoner.

"NOW den, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "dat's a sort ob object lesson to you. Neber say die. You see, you did not tink you would see de light ob day again, whereas you are likely to pick oakum for years and years."

"I've suffered enough. You'll let me go."

"Ah! Dat's where you are quite wrong."

"I never stole nothink."

"Neber said you did!" exclaimed Pete, seating himself on the rocks, for even his vast strength was exhausted with the struggle.

"Then what's the sense of giving me in custody?"

"Dere ain't much, I'll admit, 'scept I consider dat you ought to be punished."

"Why?"

"'Cos dere are good points about Droog."

"What's that got to do with me?"

"Nuffin whateber; but all de bad points dat poor lad hab got, hab to do wid you, and you shall be punished for dem. I say dis, Juke, and I'm speaking in earnest now—"

"I don't need your lecturing."

"I ain't going to lecture you, 'cos it wouldn't do a bit ob good; but I want to show you dat I am perfectly justified in my action. Droog went wrong, and became an unruly boy. Now, I'm mighty certain dat, if dat

boy had been properly brought up he would hab been a credit to himself. You are answerable for what has happened. You are a low-down scoundrel, and I hab no pity for such a man. It is bad enough when a man's vice brings himself down; but when his vice and brutality brings down an innocent lad, and makes him what you tried hard to make poor Droog, den dat is de limit, and miles past it. I ain't got de slightest pity for you, eben supposing you ain't done worse to Droog dan I know is de case. If you hab done worse—den, Juke, dere will be a reckoning for it between you and me. If I am mistaken, and you are innocent ob de crime I fear you hab committed on dat boy, den I shall merely leabe de law to punish you for your attempted burglary, and I shall consider what you hab gone frough, and your subsequent imprisonment sufficient punishment for what you hab done."

"Well, you are talking rot. That's what you are doing. I ain't had nothing to do with Droog's disappearance."

"I dunno."

"But I do, you stupid blundering brute. Jest you release my hands."

"I ain't going to release your hands. When dey are released it will be to hab manacles placed upon dem. Come!"

"Where to?"

"You will see when we get dere."

"I ain't coming nowhere."

"You'm mistaken 'bout dat matter. If you want to make me use force, all right. I don't mind flogging you, knowing how well you deserve it."

"I won't go unless you tell me where you are taking me to."

"But you'm got to go, my poor old hoss. You see, you ain't got de slightest choice in de matter. If you won't go ob your own free will, I shall make you go wid a handy-sized stick."

"I'd be the death of you if you touched me."

"Yah, yah, yah! I don't fancy dat your threats will frighten me; still, if you fink differently, you can try."

"I'm going to stop here."

Pete grabbed him by the back of his collar, wrenched him on his feet, then forced him up the gully, and, when they reached the top, Pete cut a switch."

"Now then, old hoss," he exclaimed, "I fancy we shall get along a bit faster now, oderwise you are likely to feel a little pain! Quick, march!"

"I won't! You shall carry me, if——"

Pete gave him a couple of cuts that caused him to howl.

"Dat's right!" exclaimed Pete. "I tought I would be able to convince you one way or anoder. On you go. I will guide you wid dis stick. Be sure you tell me if I hurt you, 'cos——"

"Bust you! You are hurting."

"Well, dat's quite right to tell me," said Pete, giving him another cut, for he showed considerable reluctance in moving. "Tell me each time, 'cos dere will be a lot ob times if you don't obey my orders."

"Who are you to give me orders?" growled Juke, moving on nevertheless, for he did not want another cut.

"Well, I'm generally known as Pete. I lib at de school, and we are hof going dere now. Don't you see what a lot ob trouble you would hab saved me if you had gone straight away, widout all dis hesitation?"

Juke made no reply; and Pete drove him to the school, and through the window, which was still open. It was evident that Jack and Sam had not heard the pistol shot.

"Well, de burglars don't seem to hab come back," observed Pete, glancing around the room. "I rader 'spect dey were startled by my entrance. Still, dat ain't at all an important matter. Now, look here, Juke, I am going to take de liberty ob keeping you here for de night."

"Well, jest release my arms. I sha'n't try to escape."

"Eh?"

"I say I sha'n't try to escape."

"Nunno! I know you won't do anything like dat—'cos I sha'n't gib you de chance. Stop a bit while I get a light, 'cos den we shall be able to see rader better dan in de darkness. M'yes, here we are! Now, just you come dis way, and I will show you de room where you'll hab to sleep. Tank you!"

Pete led him down the kitchen-stairs; then pushed him into a cellar.

"You won't be able to burst dat door open, 'specially as I ain't going to disrelease your arms, and——"

"I can't stop here, I tell——"

"You mean you can't help stopping here," interposed Pete, trying the key. "Good-night!"

"Don't leave me here!" cried Juke stepping into the doorway. "See, here——"

"Good-night!" exclaimed Pete, pushing him back, and closing the door. Then he made his way to his bed-room, and got to bed.

He was the first to enter the breakfast-room the following morning; but Jack and Sam shortly made their appearance.

"So you got back!" exclaimed Jack. "We knew you had the key, so we didn't sit up for you."

"Nice beauties you are, I must say!" observed Pete. "One would tink you were a couple ob dormice, de rate you sleep at!"

"We have only slept at the ordinary rate."

"Did you hear de storm?"

"No."

"Well, p'raps dat was because dere wasn't one. Did you hear de burglar?"

"No; but the same reason applies there. There wasn't one."

"No; but dere were free—four."

"Nonsense!"

"It ain't my fault, Jack, if you talk nonsense."

"You know there were no burglars!"

"All right, Jack! I 'spect you know best, seeing dat you were fast asleep and snoring. At de same time, dey looked remarkably like burglars."

"Did they steal anything?" inquired Sam.

"Nunno!"

"Then I reckon it's no good bothering about them. What would be the good of police if there were no burglars?"

"I dunno what's de good ob dem wid de burglars, Sammy, so I don't 'spect dey would be any more good widout, unless it is to help elderly ladies across de road. Did I eber tell you 'bout dat lady——"

"Never mind about the lady!" exclaimed Jack. "Tell us about the burglars."

"But you say dere were not any, Jack. How can I tell you 'bout what was'n't dere?"

"Oh, dry up! What burglars were there?"

"Well, dere was Juke——"

"Are you sure it was he?"

"You mean it was him, I tink, Jack."

"No, I don't you beauty. A pretty schoolmaster you are, not to know 't was he' is correct!"

"Eh?"

"Oh, go on! What makes you think it was he?"

"'Cos I saw he."

"Saw him, you mean."

"You just now said him ought to be called he."

"Ha, ha, ha! Call him what you like. I am not going to start teaching you grammar. You are a lot too wooden-headed."

"Eh?"

"Are you sure you saw him?"

"It looked mighty like him."

"What did he do?"

"Fired his revolver at me, and den he fled."

"Did you let him go?"

"He neber asked my permission. He went ob his own accord—and I went after him."

"Which way did he go?"

"Along de shore. But here comes breakfast. I'm mighty hungry, too, so I can't talk 'bout burglars till my appetite is quenched. 'Nuff said!"

Jack made several attempts to gain information, but it was rather a hopeless task.

"You are sure that they intended to break into the house?"

"Should say so. De appearances were in dat direction. Pass me de rolls, and——"

"Were they prowling about the place?"

"M'yes!"

"Looking in at the windows?"

"I dunno. I 'spect so."

"They didn't actually break in?"

"I am glad to hear dat, Jack."

"I am asking you."

"I tought you were stating what occurred while you were asleep."⁴

"You exasperating beauty! What did occur while I was asleep?"

"I 'spect you snored."

"But look here, you owl——"

"Pass me de mustard, Sammy, and don't get calling me all de birds you can tink ob!"

"Did they break in?"

"Oh, yes, dey did all dat!"

"Did they steal anything?"

"I dunno. I ain't troubled to look yet."

"Did you ever meet his equal?" gasped Sam. "Do you mean to say that you don't know whether the safe was burst open?"

"Pass me de butter, Sammy!"

"You don't need butter with bacon."

"Yes, I do, Sammy. It takes off de biliousness ob de bacon. You should always take butter wid bacon—when you can get it. Now, you and Jack go on talking, while I go on eating."

And they could get nothing further from Pete until he had finished his breakfast, which was some time after they had finished theirs.

Now he filled his pipe from Sam's pouch, and, having borrowed Jack's matches, commenced to smoke.

"What are you going to do about the matter, Pete?" inquired Jack.

"Why, Jack, directly I hab smoked dis pipe I am going to attend to my prisoner's requirements."

"What prisoner?"

"Juke. Didn't I tell you I had taken him prisoner?"

"Of course you did not."

"Well, I must hab oberlooked dat fact."

"Where is he, you image?"

"In de cellar down below."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's nuffin' to laugh at! You ought to be sorry for de man."

"I was laughing at you."

"Well, don't do it, 'cos it makes you look so mighty ridiculous. Can't tink what you are always guffawing at, just 'cos a man gets himself into trouble. Now, suppose we get a light and interview de prisoner."

"I'm agreeable."

"Den, as Sammy looks de same, come along, and we will just discuss matters wid de prisoner."

"Suppose you go and feed him, and then bring him up here?" suggested Jack. "In the meantime, we will go and have a look at the safe, and see if the miscreants have stolen anything."

Pete agreed to this, and Jack and Sam made their way to what Pete called his study.

They found everything right, with the exception of the damaged window.

"I reckon Pete has been through a good lot last night," said Sam.

"Yes. We may be able to learn from Juke what happened, but it is quite certain we shall not do so from Pete."

"He always tells things in such an upside-down fashion. I expect he will be some little time looking after his prisoner. You see, he will expect him to eat a certain amount, and if I know anything of Pete, Juke will have to eat it, whether he wants it or not."

Nearly half an hour elapsed before Pete came up with his prisoner. He had unbound Juke's arms, but had secured him with a piece of rope round his ankle, the other end of the rope being tied round Pete's waist.

"I ain't going to stand this 'ere shameful treatment!" roared Juke, who was in a towering passion. "He's been feeding me on bread-and-water!"

"I reckon you will have to get used to that sort of diet," said Sam. "Do you expect us to feed you on the fat of the land after having attempted Pete's life?"

"It's a lie! I didn't attempt his life. I only fired to frighten him!"

"Then I feel perfectly certain that you did not succeed," laughed Jack.

"What are you going to do with the miscreant, Pete?"

"Well, I don't see dat I can do anything else dan hand him ober to de police. In de meantime, I shall keep him a prisoner here."

"What good will that do you?"

"None at all," answered Pete; "but it will do you some good, by keeping you out ob harm's way."

"If you make it worth my while, I can give you some information as would be useful to you."

This was exactly what Pete had been expecting, but he was careful not to show his feelings.

"Dat's mighty kind ob you, old hoss, but, don't you see, I don't require any information. If I want anyting like dat I should go to Jack, and as he wouldn't be able to gib it, I should ask Sammy, who would gaze at me like some old owl, and say he didn't know."

"I could give you some information as would be valuable to you, for a consideration."

"Don't you boder yourself, old hoss," answered Pete.

"See here, if you promise to let me go free, and take no further action agin me, and give me a hundred pounds, I'll tell you what has become of Droog."

"Seems to me dat is mighty cheap; but I ain't accepting de offer."

"Well, make it fifty. I ain't particular to a pound or so."

"Nunno; I notice dat, when it happens to be someone else's money. But dat little arrangement won't come off, old hoss, so don't you boder yourself about it. I hab an idea dat you hab robbed me ob free hundred pounds already, and, wid your kind permission, you ain't going to rob me ob any more. You sit down dere, till we decide what to do wid you."

"Look here! It ain't fair towards me, but if you will let me go, I'll give you such information as will let you get possession of the kid."

"You are mighty kind, when you come to consider all de circumstances ob de case," exclaimed Pete, fixing his eyes on the ruffian; "but you hab

got to consider dis. De lad is your stepson, and you are bound to support him, according to de law. You'm also got to educate him. Bery well, you can't dispute dat little lot."

"Who wants to dispute it?"

"Dunno! Now you kindly tell me dat you will show me where de lad is, and will allow me to feed him and clothe him, to say nuffin' ob his education, if I allow you to go unpunished for your attempted murder and burglary. What I would like Sammy to tell me is, where do I come in?"

"I reckon I don't know," answered Sam.

"You see, Sammy doesn't know, and unfortunately it ain't de only ting he don't know. What Sammy doesn't know would fill full-sized libraries wid de largest books made."

"You dry up, Pete!" growled Sam. "You can't expect me to know impossible things."

"Nunno, Sammy! I don't expect much from you, which is a mighty lucky ting, 'cos it prevents me getting disappointed. But, don't you see, Juke, you are rader off your horse. It stands to reason dat if I keep de lad it will cost me money. Tink what a lot I'm saving now dat he has left de school!"

"I suppose you didn't save so mighty much out of that three hundred pound as he stole?"

"You know de amount, do you?"

"Of course I do. He told me the amount."

"Well, I'm rader surprised dat he should do dat. Still, as you know exactly where de boy is, it stands to reason dat he won't come to any harm if I keep you a prisoner here for a week or so till I find him."

"You won't never find him without my help."

"Yah, yah, yah! Suppose I tell you dat I hab found him?"

"Then I would tell you that you was a liar, 'cos I know you ain't."

"Well, we won't discuss dat matter; but, don't you see, as de boy has got all dat money, he won't come to any harm."

"Won't he?"

"Nunno! De matter can lie ober for a week or so."

"All right! Then you will murder him, that's all. If you expect a boy to live a week or so without food and water—why, you are expecting more than is going to happen."

"Yah, yah, yah!"

"There's nothing to laugh at, you great fool!"

"I dunno 'bout dat. Yah, yah, yah! Sit down, and let me explain matters to you. I fancy you will rader like what I am going to tell you. Jack and Sammy, you had better listen, 'cos den you will partially realise what a wonderful intellect a certain man named Pete has got."

"That's the limit!" gasped Sam.

"Do you know where dat boy is, Sammy?"

"No."

"Yah, yah, yah! Listen to what I hab got to say, den, and p'r'aps you will find out."

CHAPTER 15.

How Pete Found Droog.

"NOW, before I start telling you what I hab got in my mind, Juke," began Pete, fixing his eyes on him, "you hab got to bear in mind dat dere are certain men in dis world who can read de thoughts ob oders. How would you like me to try to read yours?"

"If you think you are going to fool me with that rot, you won't succeed, and so I tell you."

"Well, I dunno dat I believe in anyting sort ob supernatural, old hoss; but don't you see, I neber would believe dat people could talk across de sea till I knew it was a fact. Now, if dey can talk across de sea, what is to prevent a voice coming from de sea, 'cos——"

"Help! Help! I'm starving!"

"Wohoo!" yelled Pete, rushing to the window, from which the voice appeared to come. It was only his ventriloquism, but he had to pretend to be frightened, and in remembering that he quite forgot that the cord which was round Juke's ankle was also round his own waist.

The result was most disastrous. Juke was wrenched from the chair, and as he sat on the floor the back of his head took the chair with a big bump.

"Hold up, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, winking at Jack. "I quite forgot 'bout you being tied to me in my fright. Where did dat voice come from—dat's what I want to know?"

"You great, stupid clod!" howled Juke, struggling to his feet and rubbing the back of his head. "Why ain't you careful what you are doing?"

"Seems to me dat you are de one who ought to be careful. I'm mighty sorry dat you'm had a fall, but you'm got de consolation ob knowing dat better men dan you hab had falls, and I made sure dat I heard a voice. I 'spect it was de——"

"Help! Help!"

"Wow-yow!" howled Pete, in well-feigned terror. "I must be going dotty on de crumpet. Put me into a lunatic asylum someone! Take me away from de voice, and—— Wow-yow! Dere it goes again!"

The voice did not sound that time, but Pete went prancing round the room, and Juke went hopping after him in a manner that caused Jack and Sam to howl with laughter. The miscreant looked so utterly ridiculous.

Pete flung himself in his easy-chair and mopped his brow, while he gazed at the infuriated Juke in a blank sort of manner.

"Must be wireless telegraphy or second hearing. It stands to reason dat de voicé ob a boy can't speak widout de boy's body. I can understand de body not being able to speak widout de voice, if it happens to be dead, or eben dumb, but when you come to de voice being able to speak widout de body, why——"

"I'm starving! I'm dying!"

"Golly! Ain't dis shocking supernatural? I wonder if de voice would answer a few questions. Let's try! Where are you?"

"In a cave."

"Who put you dere?"

"Juke!"

"Look at dat, now!" exclaimed Pete, in his natural voice. "De boy says he's in a cave."

All the time Pete's eyes were fixed on Juke, and he knew by the startled expression of his face that the guess was not very far from the mark.

"Now, see here, Juke!" exclaimed Pete. "I remember last night when we got cut off by de tide dat you said dere was anoder place where we could climb up, and where we should be safe from de waves. Bery well! I also remember dat you did not want to go to dat second place, where you had some reason for not wanting to go. And I'm wondering weder dat reason was 'cos you knew if we went dere dat I would discover where you had put Droog. Ain't it wonderful, Jack and Sammy, how I hab put two and two togeder?"

"I reckon it is smart!" answered Sam, who really thought so.

"And I believe, judging by Juke's face, Pete, that you are not very far from the truth," said Jack.

"Bery well!" exclaimed Pete, ringing the bell. "It stands to reason dat we'm got to go to dat second place. I dunno where it is, but I dare say we shall be able to find it. Oh, is dat you, Bridget? I tink we hab found Droog, and I want some provisions and a bottle ob water for de boy, as quick as you can, my dear."

Bridget hurried away to obey the order, and Pete kept his eyes fixed on his prisoner, who looked remarkably uncomfortable under the steadfast gaze.

"I rader fancy you are going to get yourself into trouble ober dis little matter, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete.

"I have told you as I will show you where the boy is."

"Well, we will see if we can find him widout your assistance."

"That ain't straight! You said as you would let me go if I told you, and now I'm ready to tell you——"

"I don't remember habing said anyting ob de sort, old hoss, but I'm mighty certain if I did say it it must hab been during my paroxysm ob madness. You noticed de madness, Sammy?"

"No. I reckon you were no madder than usual."

"Golly! What's de man talking 'bout? But here comes Bridget wid de food. Now, boys, all we hab got to do is to find Droog, and I hab an idea dat dat won't be such a difficult task as you might imagine. Dis way to London, Juke!"

"I ain't coming!" declared Juke.

"Bery well, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, starting off. "In dat case you can remain where you are till I return."

And as Pete strode from the room, Juke was compelled to go hopping after him, while Jack and Sam were greatly amused at his ridiculous action.

"Will you stop, you lout?" howled Juke, when he had followed for a hundred yards or so.

"Nunno! I ain't going to stop till I hab found Droog, and de same remarks apply to you. It's a strange ting dat, alough you hab always

treated dat boy wid de greatest brutality, directly you are put to a little inconvenience you commence to yowl like a whipped cur. You'm got to come along, 'cos if you don't you will get dragged."

Juke only waited until they were on the grass, and then he flung himself to the ground.

It was about the most stupid thing he could have done, for Pete went on, dragging him along, and he would not stop.

"Bust you! You are a-hurting me!" howled Juke, struggling to rise.

"Why, I ain't touching you!" exclaimed Pete, going on without looking round. "I wish you would be quiet wid your yowlings. You'm making more noise dan Jack and Sammy put togeder, and dey are doing deir share wid deir loud guffaws."

Juke succeeded in gaining his feet, and then he wisely followed without further trouble, for he found that trouble all devolved on him.

"You see, boys," explained Pete, in a voice too low to reach Juke, "I put two and two togeder. It struck me as mighty strange dat de man should refuse to take refuge in a safe place when he knew he could reach it all right. I tought it ober in de dead ob de night——"

"I reckon you did," laughed Sam. "You were snoring far too loudly to think of anything."

"Well, I tought it ober in de dead ob night dis morning, and I came to de disconclusion dat de reason de man did not want to go to dis second refuge place was because he had kept Droog a prisoner dere. Wid a little ventriloquism I proved my case. I dunno where de place is, 'scept it is between where we took refuge and de gully, but it will be mighty easy to find, 'cos it is 'bout de only place where it is possible to ascend."

"I reckon we shall find it all right," exclaimed Sam. "Whether we find Droog there or not is another matter."

"Golly! I wish you wouldn't talk like dat, Sammy. Dere's points 'bout dat boy, and I wouldn't like anyting to happen to him."

"Neither would I. All the same, it is no good getting too sanguine."

"But you could see by Juke's manner dat he was dere."

"I certainly thought so: I believe we shall find him all right. The only thing is if that villain has left him there without food or water, and probably bound, he will be half dead."

"Den we must hurry up, Sammy. Let's come at a run. I wish I had started sooner."

Juke was compelled to run also. He did not like it at all, but protest was quite useless.

They made their way along the shore, and now Pete went at a walking pace because of the rocks, and because he was so anxious not to pass the place. The tide was receding, and there was sufficient space for them to walk along the shore, but the rocks were so slippery that it was impossible for the comrades to proceed quickly.

At last Pete stopped at a part where it would be possible to ascend.

"Keep dat man here, boys!" exclaimed Pete, cutting the tow-ropes, and

fastening Juke's arms behind his back. "I hab got a lot more to say to him presently. I believe dis is de correct spot."

Pete could see no cave in the face of the cliff, but he knew that there might be one high up, and he at once commenced the ascent. He did not find so much difficulty in doing so as he had anticipated, and when he reached the high-water mark he came upon a small opening. This he entered, and then he saw that that filled him with fury.

In a small cavern lay Droog, bound hand and foot, and gagged. Not only were the poor lad's limbs bound, but he was also tied to a piece of projecting rock. To leave a lad like that for days was such utter brutality that it filled Pete with fury.

Kneeling beside him, he cut the gag away and quickly severed his bonds.

"You ain't to speak a word, Droog. I shall get furious if you utter a sound. Don't drink too much at once. Hold de water in your mouf, 'cos I can't let you hab much."

"That's good!" murmured Droog, as Pete took the bottle from his lips.

"Shoo! Didn't I tell you dat you weren't to speak? Do you want to make me furious, and start knocking you about?"

"I ain't afraid of that."

"I tell you dat you ain't to talk. I won't hab it! I'm de head-master ob de school, and I will be obeyed. Now, just a little more water, but we hab to be careful. Well, dat's better—much better, I 'spect! Now for a little food. You see, we must manage dis by degrees. Eat slowly! Yah, yah, yah! We'm getting on nicely."

There was not the usual joyous ring about Pete's laugh, but when his comrades heard it they guessed that all was well.

Pete sat the lad up, and supported him with his arm, while he gave him some of the food that he had brought.

"I'm all right——"

"Shoo! I can't allow talking! What you need is careful treatment, and dat's what you are going to get. I shall hab to look after you for de next week or so."

"Have you got the money——"

"Shoo! All dis talking won't do at all. We ain't discussing business for a long——"

"Pete, I'm bound——"

"Shoo!"

"I can't help it. I swear as I never stole that money."

"Golly! I wonder why it is people won't obey my orders?"

"I'd rather die straight away——"

"What are you talking 'bout? You ain't anything like dying, and——"

"I don't care! I never took it. It was Juke!"

"I knew dat all along, and——"

"Then I don't care for what's happened, nor what's going to happen, so

long as you say dat, 'cos I know you won't tell a lie. I don't care for all the rest. I'm all right, and happy."

And to prove his words, Droog tried to struggle to his feet, but he found that an impossibility. His limbs were so numbed with the bonds that he found it quite impossible to stand, and he would have fallen had not Pete caught him in his arms.

"Dis way to London, Droog! I 'spect I can carry you down de height."

And just as Pete emerged from the cave with his burden, he heard a shout, then he saw Juke dart away; while, as Sam gave chase, he slipped on the rocks, and fell into a pool of water.

"All right, Sammy," bawled Pete. "Let him go. I shall catch him when I want him. Yah, yah, yah! What are you trying to do? Bathing ain't allowed here."

With his arms still bound behind his back, Juke darted up the gully, and Sam did not trouble to give chase. When Pete made his appearance, Sam's attention had been taken off his prisoner for a moment, and Juke, who was watching his opportunity, darted away.

"Back to de college, boys," exclaimed Pete, on reaching the foreshore in safety. "Droog is getting on nicely now. You might hurry on, Jack, and tell de cook to make some broth. I 'spect she will hab some ready made. Dat's de best ting in a case like dis. And you might go for de doctor, Sammy."

"I don't need no doctor," declared Droog.

"You'm under my orders, and hab got to obey dem."

"Suppose Juke should attack you?" suggested Sam.

"I rader 'spect it would be bad—for de coo. Buzz off, Sammy. I don't tink Juke is coming near me—at least, I'm afraid not. Someting is going to happen when we do meet. I don't mind him habing robbed me a bit; but I do mind his brutal treatment ob dis lad, and dat is someting dat he will hab to answer for."

Droog wanted to walk, but Pete insisted on carrying him all the way to the college.

"Now, you sit in dat easy-chair," exclaimed Pete, "and den I shall get a few tings dat I consider you ought to hab."

"But about that money——"

"Neber you boder about dat money, 'cos I ain't going to boder about it, and I'm mighty certain dat Juke won't boder himself. I'm mighty glad I came in time. I shall get you some hot-house grapes, and a few oder tings, and if dere's anyting you fancy, you let me know, and you shall hab it, provided de doctor says it won't hurt you."

It looked as though Droog were going to have a good time of it. He did not object to this at all, but he was very concerned about the missing three hundred pounds.

The doctor ordered him beef-tea, and then a rest; after that he said he could have the ordinary food, and Pete decided that Droog should have his meals with them for a few days.

CHAPTER 16.

Droog's Desperate Plot.

"CALL it simply disgusting," declared Lamb, when he heard from Potts what had happened, and what was likely to happen to Droog for the next few days.

"He's feeding him like a blessed heppicure," growled Potts.

"Why should he be favoured just because he has stolen three hundred pounds."

"Of course not. It ain't just towards you. You never get favoured when you start stealing, do you?"

"You silly brute. I don't steal."

"Not when you think you will get found out. Haw, haw! You are all a set of young thieves, and you ought to be drowned; but you and Ginger are the worst of the gang."

"You are so thumping honest yourself, I don't think," observed Ginger, who was with Lamb.

"Don't you dare to take away my character!"

"It would be a jolly good thing for you if you could lose it," said Lamb. "There's just one thing I may tell you, Potts; Pete won't give you a character when he sacks you."

"He better had, else I'll know the reason why."

"I can tell you the reason. It's because you are about the biggest thief and liar that ever walked this earth. No one but a fool would believe a word you said."

"You clear out of my room, else I'll throw you out."

"You couldn't do it, pudden-head. Ginger and I would give you socks."

"I'm going to have my bit of dinner."

"His bit of dinner. He knows he eats a pailful. I'll bet he eats more than that other old hog outside."

"Bust me if I'll stand this impurence," roared Potts, seizing his stick, which was a heavy one.

Lamb knew perfectly well that he would use that stick, but he was a daring lad, and knew Potts' vulnerable part.

Watching his opportunity, he darted in, without waiting for Potts to take the initiative, and he landed him one in the wind that doubled him up; then Lamb darted round the table, which was laid for dinner, and Potts made a blow at his head with the stick that would certainly have stunned him, had he not ducked.

The result of this was that the stick came down on the table, and smashed a couple of dishes and a glass.

This maddened Potts, and he went for the daring Lamb with such fury that Ginger thought it judicious to get out of the room. He stood outside, urging Lamb on, and inwardly hoping that he would receive the thrashing he deserved.

"Don't you be bullied, Lamb," he shouted. "Ha, ha, ha! He's no right to hit you like that. Ha, ha, ha! I hope it didn't hurt."

Lamb received an awful crack over the back. It made him howl with pain, and the worst of it was that Potts looked very like getting in another.

To avoid such a calamity, Lamb seized a large piece of butter that was on the table, and hurled it with his full force at Potts's head. It struck him in the face, and scattered all over it, and as Potts made another swipe with his stick he missed his objective, and swept the ornaments off the mantelpiece.

Most of them were broken, but Lamb took the precaution of dancing on the clock in case it was not already sufficiently damaged, then he seized the stick, and there was a tug of war.

Under ordinary circumstances, Lamb would not have had a chance here, for although he was fearfully active, his weight was as nothing compared to Potts's. He waited until Potts gave a violent tug, then Lamb let go, and charged at his opponent.

This action, which was quite unexpected, sent the unfortunate Potts to the floor.

Such success would have satisfied most lads, but it did not nearly satisfy Lamb. The crack he had received on his back was still causing him intense pain.

He seized the coal-scuttle, which was nearly full, and shot its contents all over Potts; then, picking up the pint jug of beer that was on the table, Lamb sent its contents into the fallen man's face.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Ginger. "You've warmed him up this time."

"Yes!" snarled Lamb, "and it's like your sneakish cowardice not to have come to help me."

"My eyes! You didn't look as though you needed any help," gasped Ginger. "I thought you was getting on all right alone. Ha, ha, ha! Hark at him gurgling. I'd say if any one wanted my help, it would have been Potts. Look out! Here comes Pete. We'd better be off."

And Lamb thought the same.

"Hello, Potts," bawled Pete, entering the room. "Where's dat man— Oh, dere you are. Golly! Yah, yah, yah! What hab you been trying to do, Potts."

"Bust it!" howled Potts, struggling to his feet, and spluttering out coal-dust and beer. "Oh, the varmints! Only let me get at 'em! I won't stand this 'ere behaviour. I'll give notice fust—unless I get compensation. It's downright disgraceful."

"Yah, yah, yah! But what has happened, my poor old hoss?"

"Your poor old hoss be blowed!" growled Potts, gazing at his wrecked room. Jest look at what those young varmints Lamb and Ginger has been and done. Lamb was the worst. I'll 'lamb' him."

"What's he done dis time, old hoss?"

"What ain't he done I'd like to know. He's been and heaved a scuttle of coals over me, after he's knocked me down; then he has turned the jug of ale all over my face, and he's smashed all my crocks and ornaments."

These belonged to Pete, but Potts called them his, because they happened to be in his room.

"Well, dis is rader unfortunate," observed Pete. "At de same time, I 'spect dese little accidents will happen wid a schoolful ob unruly boys. Dey must hab some sort ob recreation."

"Recreation be blowed! Do you call this 'ere recreation?"

"Nunno. Not from your point ob view, at any rate. Dis must be looked into. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go back to my study, and enter a complaint in my complaint book."

"Here, that be blowed," growled Potts, as Pete was about to leave the room. "I know what that means. You will make a thumping entry which neither you nor no one else can read, and there the matter will end. I tell you I want compensation for this outrageous treatment, and that's what I'm going to have. It ain't honest."

"Do you tink a sovereign would sort ob calm your feelings?"

"Two would calm 'em better."

"Well, dere's a sovereign, and you can keep de feelings partially ruffled, 'cos I ain't going to gib you any more. Dere's no telling what furdur compensation I mayn't hab to gib before de day is out."

"What about these 'ere broken ornaments?"

"Well, dey belong to me, so you ain't got de right to boder yourself 'bout dem. Now, look here, Potts, what I want you to do is to go to de doctor and ask him not to call to-morrow morning, 'cos Droog wants to go out. You see, I don't want to bring de medicated man all dis way on a fool's errand. 'Nuff said, and mind you are back in time to lock up, else dere will be trouble in dis world."

This satisfied Potts entirely, as Pete knew would be the case. It would not have taken him an hour to get to the doctor's and back, and, as it was now only one o'clock, it meant an afternoon and evening off for him.

That night Droog had an excellent dinner with the comrades, but he could not get Pete to speak about the missing money, and he made a mental vow to recover it at any cost; or rather, such portion of it as Juke had not spent.

"Why, here comes the thief!" exclaimed Lamb, when Droog entered the dormitory that night.

"All right," growled Droog. "That's what I knew you would say, and I don't blame you for it. I'd think the same of you under similar circumstances. There's one thing, Lamb, you won't think none the worse of me for being a thief, whatever you say to the contrary."

"Why, he's got almost smart. Are you going to divide the money with us, thief?"

"No, Snuffles, I ain't." Droog had heard that name from one of the little boys, and he had also heard how Lamb came by it. "All the same, I want your services, and I'm willing to pay you for 'em."

"Well, you should have plenty of money left out of the three hundred pounds. What do you want me to do?"

"Never you mind what I want you to do, mate. You leave that to me. I want you and Ginger to come along with me to-night, and, if you come I'll promise to show you a bit of fun."

"Suppose we won't come?"

"Then I'll get some one else as will."

"What are you going to give us for coming?"

"A sovereign each."

"Well, if you make it five in my case, I'll come."

"You ain't worth five sovereigns, you worm," said Droog. "I don't care to make use of a chap like you, 'cos you are what you call me, and a liar on the top of it."

"Take care, you empty-headed lout, or I'll knock your head off your shoulders."

"Try it on, you sleepy-eyed idiot. Haw, haw, haw! You know you daren't try it on now, 'cos I can lick you hands down; but that ain't got nothing to do with this little affair. If you want a lot of excitement, and a sovereign, you can come; if you don't, you can stay away. You will get no more from me, and I wouldn't take you at all, except it was because you are pretty plucky."

"You cheeky lout, I am not at all sure that I shall come."

"Then stay away, and be hung to you!"

"You are a lot more likely to get hanged than I, Droog. You have already stolen three hundred pounds, and that would mean imprisonment if Pete wasn't so soft. Of course, I shall not come with you unless you tell me exactly what you are going to do."

"Then you can stay away, 'cos I ain't going to tell you. Will you come, Ginger?"

"I will so, if you promise a sovereign."

"Yes, I'll promise that. We will see if we can manage the job alone."

"Of course, I'll come all right!" exclaimed Lamb, who would have gone for nothing, if there was a chance of fun and excitement to be got out of it. "But I shall want my sovereign in advance."

"Then you ain't going to get it. I asked Pete to give me two sovereigns for something I wanted, and he never even asked me what it was for. Well, those two sovereigns were for you two, because I didn't think you would come without them. I've got a scheme on, and whether it comes off or not, you shall have the coin; but I ain't going to pay in advance, 'cos you wouldn't come if I did."

"Don't you judge me by yourself, you thief," snarled Lamb. "All the same, I'll come. When are we going to start?"

"Directly we can get a chance of slipping out."

"Then we'd better go now—at least, directly after the master has been up to see lights out. Get to bed with your clothes on; and if you other kids are not in bed in three minutes I'll flog the lot of you. Now then, Droog, what's the joke?"

"You will learn that when we've started, and if you don't like it you can turn back. I dare say Ginger will come on with me; and if he won't, I'll go alone, and get some outside chaps to help me. That will be easy if they know they are going to get a couple of sovereigns for their trouble."

The youngsters hurried into bed, knowing from past experience that Lamb

would be as good as his word, and presently Mr. Carton came up to see that lights were out.

He was rather surprised at the silence in the place. As a rule, that dormitory was a very noisy one, but he merely glanced around to make sure all were there, and then he put out the lights, and left the dormitory.

"It's all right!" exclaimed Lamb. "Come along, you chaps! I'll lead the way!"

He always liked to be the leader, and Droog had not the slightest objection, provided they succeeded in what was in reality a very desperate enterprise. He had great faith in Lamb's cunning; but he did not want to tell him what their purpose was until they were outside the college grounds."

Potts had not yet returned, so that they had not the slightest difficulty in getting out.

"Now then, Droog!" exclaimed Lamb, as they made their way along the lane. "You had better tell me exactly what you want done, because I shall be able to plan it better than you will."

"It's a man hunt," said Droog. "I know you won't believe what I'm going to tell you, but that doesn't matter. I've told Pete, and he believes it. That's good enough for me; only don't you see, I'm not going to let him lose three hundred pounds if I can help it. I drew the money from the bank, and was coming to the college with it. I took the short cut across the fields, and a chap named Juke stopped me. He knocked me on the head, and, the next thing as I can remember is, finding myself in the copse bound hand and foot, and gagged. Well, I lay there till it was dark, then this chap come along and carried me down the gully and along the shore. After that, he carried me up the rocks into a cave, and left me there. That's where Pete found me, but he didn't find the money."

"That's not a bad yarn, Droog," said Lamb. "If you had taken me into your confidence before you nicked the money, I could have made up a better one."

"Yes; only then you would have had the money instead of Juke, and it would be a sight harder to have got it from you than from him."

"Because you are a thief, you must not imagine that everyone else is."

"I don't. Only I know you happen to be one who is. Still, that's got nothing to do with me. What we've got to do to-night is to collar Juke."

"But he's a man!"

"Yes; and a strong one, too. We've got to collar him all the same, and if you ain't game, you'd best go back at once. There's bound to be some fighting on the job."

"Will he be armed?"

"I don't think so. He wouldn't have had time to get weapons. Pete caught him last night, and took his weapons away, and he only got away this morning."

"Well, if he's not armed I think we can manage it, only you chaps will have to stick by me. He's a strong man, and will need a lot of tackling. Ginger hasn't got much pluck."

"I'll be all right," declared Ginger. "When I start fighting it takes a lot to stop me."

"Do you know the fellow's haunts, Droog?" inquired Lamb, who rather liked the adventure. Whatever his failings were, and he had a good many, he was not wanting in courage.

"Yes. He's certain to spend the day drinking, and I know the likeliest inn for him to be at. It's a quiet place, and respectable people don't go there. You come this way, and I'll show you. He won't turn out till eleven o'clock, and we shall have to keep watch for him, and follow him for the attack."

"Well, that will be easy enough. Are you afraid, Ginger?"

"Not me. I'll fight as much as you like for a sovereign."

"Well, what we shall have to do will be to take up our position outside the inn, and I'll do a little scouting and find out if he's there, because it's no good wasting our time if the brute isn't there."

Droog did not care how the arrangements were made so long as he caught the miscreant. He was very anxious to regain Pete's money; at the same time, he felt confident that Pete did not suspect him, and that was a great consolation to Droog. Whether Lamb suspected him or not, he did not care at all.

Arrived at the inn, Droog and Ginger hid behind the hedge which ran along the opposite side of the lane; while Lamb commenced his scouting.

It was just the sort of work that he gloried in, and, creeping up to the back window where there was a light, he peeped in.

Juke was in the room smoking and drinking with the landlord, and Lamb waited to see no more.

"It's all right," he exclaimed, on joining his companions, "he's there right enough!"

"Has he got any friends with him?"

"Only the landlord."

"Then we've got him right enough. But you've got to mind this. He'll fight like a demon, and one of his blows is enough to knock any of us out of time."

"I don't suppose any of us will be so simple as to receive one of his blows," said Lamb. "It all depends on whether he is armed. If he is, we shall have to bolt."

"I'm not going to bolt," declared Droog. "I'm going to collar him—or have a good try. He won't frighten me with weapons. He's not going to rob Pete if I know it."

"I don't see that that matters to you a bit. You have got to look after yourself in this world, and, if you don't, you can be jolly certain no one else will. I wonder what time that landlord will shut up shop."

"Eleven o'clock."

"It seems to me it's just past that now."

"He mayn't be particular to half an hour or so, seeing no one is likely to come this way. At any rate, I'm going to wait here till he comes out."

CHAPTER 17.

The Capture.

THE time passed by, but Juke showed no signs of coming out. Lamb began to get impatient.

"We can't fool about here all the night!" he exclaimed at last.

"Why not?" retorted Droog. "I suppose you are not beginning to funk?"

"Look here, I'm not going to stand any of your cheek, Droog, and so I tell you."

"Oh, shut up! I've whacked you once, and I can easily whack you again, if I want to. You won't frighten me now, and so I tell you. It ain't much of a hardship if you have to wait an hour or so, seeing that you are going to get a sovereign for your trouble."

"I wouldn't be surprised if the brute is going to stay there all night."

"I don't believe he will do that for a moment, 'cos it's one of the first places Pete would look for him. You can bet he will sleep in the woods to-night, and get away to-morrow; at least, that's what he will try to do, and it's what I am going to stop him doing."

"Here he comes," murmured Ginger. "We shall have to keep on this side of the hedge when we follow him."

"Let me go first," whispered Lamb, leading the way.

The heavens were cloudy, but there was sufficient light for the lads to see Juke through the hedge.

He looked both ways as the inn door was closed upon him. No one was in sight, and he walked quickly along the lane, occasionally turning to make sure that he was not being followed.

At the end of the field the lads had to climb a five-barred gate, and then they entered a very large field. Now, at the end of that field there was a stile, and Droog mentioned the fact to Lamb.

"It ain't at all unlikely that he will get over the stile, and come along the footpath. If he does, we can collar him at the stile."

"That is exactly what I intend to do," retorted Lamb. "I shall seize his leg as he comes over. That will make him fall, and you can jump on him. Mind he will want some holding, but, if we once get him down, he won't be able to get up so jolly easily. It's a pity we haven't got any rope to bind him with."

"I have," said Droog. "I've thought of all that."

"Don't you work your brain too hard," sneered Lamb. He did not like to think that Droog was taking the lead. "A brain like yours won't stand too much. You ought to treat the beastly thing gently."

"All right! Just you catch him—or help me to do it, and you can say what you like about me. It don't make no odds. I wouldn't care to have the good opinion of a chap like you. But that don't matter."

"Hold your row, you silly lout, else he will hear your grating voice! It's like an old unrolled door."

Droog made no reply. He was quite accustomed to Lamb's insults, and never minded them at all when applied to himself; but he would never

hear a word against Pete, and Lamb would not have been so unwise now as to speak one.

They were drawing close to the stile now, and Lamb crept forward, followed by the two others.

Ginger felt a little nervous; all the same he was determined to earn his sovereign, and he knew that directly he started fighting that nervousness would leave him.

Some anxious moments passed by, and then they saw Juke climbing the stile. He had just got one leg over when Lamb sprang forwards and seized it, then giving it a violent wrench, he sent Juke sprawling face forwards to the ground, while Droog and Ginger leapt upon him.

Lamb was sent flying by a kick, but he sprang to the miscreant's head and knelt on it.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed. "Truss him up! I've got him! Ha, ha, ha! He thinks he's strong, but he won't get loose! That's right, Ginger, you sit on his back!"

Droog had already made a noose in the end of his cord, and, watching his opportunity, he slipped it over Juke's fist, and drew it tight, then he got the cord round the ruffian's other arm, and, in a few minutes Juke was helpless, so far as his arms were concerned.

"What the thunder are you up to?" he growled.

"Can you hold him a bit longer?" panted Droog.

"Rather! We could hold him for half an hour if need be. What are you going to do?"

"Tie his legs."

"How can he walk if you tie his legs, stupid?"

"I'm going to hobble him. Oh, it ain't any good your kicking! We've jolly well got you, and we mean to keep you. I tell you straight you won't get away again."

"See, here, Droog. I'll be the death of you for this!" cried Juke, recognising the lad's voice. "I tell you straight I'll have your life, and Pete's on top of it."

"Will you! Well, I ain't going to give you the chance. Ha, ha, ha! You didn't expect us, did you? Oh, it ain't the slightest use your kicking, 'cos you've got to be bound!"

"What do you want?"

"You, and that's what we are going to have."

"Of course," exclaimed Lamb, "we might consider the matter of letting you go if you handed over the three hundred pounds!"

"No, we mightn't," said Droog. "He ain't going under any circumstances. And, what's more, you ain't going to touch any money that's on him. He's coming back to the college, and then Pete is going to search him there, but I'm not having you interfering in the matter. You will get your quid, and that's all you can expect, but it ain't at all bad pay for the work you have done."

"You couldn't have caught him without me."

"I don't care anything about that, but I would have had a good try all

the same. As he is caught, he's my prisoner, and you ain't interfering in the matter."

"See here, young gent!" exclaimed Juke, finding himself in a very awkward corner, for Droog had got the cord round his legs now, and was tying it so that he could only take short steps. "If you help me to escape, I'll make it worth your while."

"What's the good of my capturing you if I let you go?"

"Suppose I was to give you ten pound!"

Lamb sighed. There is not the slightest doubt that he would have accepted such an offer as that, but he saw no way of overcoming Droog. Perhaps if Ginger had joined him he might have managed it, but he did not like to ask Ginger the question, nor did he feel at all sure what the answer would be.

"He can promise you what he likes," said Droog, "but you ain't going to get loose; neither is he going to touch the money that's on you."

"That ain't the way to speak to the young gent," exclaimed Juke, who guessed that he would have a chance with Lamb. "There's two to one agin you, and rather than I should be robbed of my hard-earned money I'm willing to give 'em fifty pounds to let me go. There you are! Fifty golden sovereigns. You will find 'em on me, and they are your'n if you cut these 'ere bonds."

"I really think, Droog, that is a very fair offer," said Lamb. "Don't you, Ginger?"

"I don't care what you and Ginger think," retorted Droog. "It's two to one, but——"

"Look here!" exclaimed Ginger. "If Juke has stole the money—and there ain't a doubt about that—why, it stands to reason that we would be stealing, and I ain't going to do anything like that."

"Who wants you to, you stupid wooden-headed brute?"

"All right, Snuffles! Keep your hair on!"

"If you call me that again, I'll knock your hair off with your head."

"No, you won't!" exclaimed Droog. "Ginger is a lot honester than you are, though that ain't saying much for him. You ain't going to play any of your tricks with me."

"At any rate, we had better search the ruffian."

"You won't do anything of the sort! Pete is going to search him, and I hope as he will get his money back, or, at any rate, the best part of it. That's all I care about."

"Pete doesn't require the money, and we do."

"A hundred pounds!" cried Juke. "Think of that, lads! Why, you would be rich for years to come, and you would be free to do what you liked."

"If you don't get up and walk to the school, you will get a taste of this rope's-end!" cried Droog.

"So you would hit your own father!"

"You are not my own father, you ruffian! You've hit me often enough, and if I don't hit you now, I dare say Ginger will do it for me."

"Rather! I'll whack him as much as ever you like, and a sight more than he will like," said the obliging Ginger. "In fact, I'd rather like the job. Here! Cut off a bit of the rope, and if I can't shift him, I shall hurt him!"

Ginger got his rope's-end, and he commenced to use it with a vigour that Juke did not relish. He uttered the most appalling threats; then, finding that they had not the slightest effect on his castigator, he offered to go quietly provided they helped him up.

This they did, and then drove him along towards the school, and all the way Lamb tried to think of some means of getting the money for himself. He knew that it would be perfectly useless to speak to Droog, but he made an effort to bring Ginger to his way of thinking.

This, however, he found to be a 'hopeless task, and ere they reached the school Juke first of all offered them two hundred pounds to set him at liberty, and then three hundred pounds.

"You are a senseless idiot, Droog!" gasped Lamb. "Fancy three hundred pounds! That's a hundred each, and no one would be any the wiser."

"No wonder you thought I was a thief!" exclaimed Droog. "You judged me by yourself! Pete trusted me with that money, and he would have got it right enough if this scamp hadn't stopped me."

"Fancy the disgrace to you if he's put in prison."

"There's no disgrace to me. He's no real relative of mine; and even if he was, I ain't got anything to do with his actions. He made me what I was before Pete took me in hand. Pete has made me honest, and that scoundrel isn't making me dishonest again. I've told Pete I'll be straight, and that's what I'm going to be. He trusted me, and he sha'n't find that I've swindled him. It ain't the slightest use your arguing about the matter, 'cos it won't alter me. And if you want to come to blows—why, I'm ready for you!"

"You have got Ginger as well."

"No, I ain't. Ginger is having nothing to do with it. He's said so once, and that ought to be enough for you. If it isn't, try your worst! I'm ready for you! And you needn't think as you will take me by surprise, 'cos you won't."

Lamb saw that it was quite hopeless, so he made a virtue of necessity.

"I am glad to see you are honest, Droog!" he exclaimed. "Candidly, I did not believe you were, and I was only trying you. However, I see you are quite honest, and I shall tell Pete so."

"Then you can save your breath. Pete knows more about me than ever you will learn, and he don't need you to tell him anything. All the same, you have helped me, and you will get your sovereign, and you needn't be afraid that I am going to tell Pete that you are a thief as well as a liar, 'cos I don't believe in sneaking. Then there's another thing. Pete knows your character down to the ground. He knows that you are a thief and a liar, 'cos I heard him say he feared he would never cure you of it."

"Pete's a fool!"

"Ha. ha, ha! Is he? Don't you make no error! Pete knows a sight

more than you will ever learn. One of these fine days, if you ain't a little more careful, he will give you the thrashing you deserve. He was saying he feared it was his duty to flog you, and wanted to get Jack to do it, 'cos he don't like hitting a boy. Ha, ha, ha! They have got you down to the ground, and don't you make no error. Now, then, Juke! There are the college gates. In you go! It's no good making any more offers, 'cos they won't be accepted."

"It can't do you no good to take me. You can have the money if you only let me go."

"I ain't letting you go. If you have got the money on you, Pete will get it right enough; then he will be able to put you in prison, or deal with you as he thinks fit. I happen to know what he means doing with you, but I ain't going to tell you, and you won't like it at all when you hear it. You can make your mind easy on that point."

The college was in darkness, but Droog rang the bell, and after a delay of about a quarter of an hour Potts came down.

He was in a towering passion at being dragged out of his bed at that time of night, but when he recognised Juke he appeared to be rather frightened, for he recognised him as a pothouse acquaintance.

"What the thunder are you a-doing of?" he demanded.

"All right, Potts!" exclaimed Droog. "You can go to bed again. We are going into your lodge. Just light up, Ginger! In you go, Juke, or Ginger will touch you up again."

"Here, that ain't the way for a young thief to talk to a honest man!" cried Potts.

"You set me at liberty, Potts!" exclaimed Juke. "You won't be a party to me being assaulted in this shameful manner? Just you set me at liberty, and I shall reward you with five sovereigns."

"You had better go upstairs and fetch Pete, Droog!" exclaimed Lamb. "Ginger can go with you."

"No, he won't!" cried Droog, picking up the poker. "And what's more, it won't be safe for you two to get closer to me than you are now. I know you are a big rascal, Potts, but it won't pay you to run cunning on this occasion. Now, I'll hurt you if you ain't careful!"

"I don't understand your meaning at all," growled Potts. "You've no right to play the fool with this man—especially as he's your step-father."

"I don't know how you learnt that, and I don't care!" exclaimed Droog. "But the chap as tries to release him will understand my meaning pretty quick."

"I'm standing by you, Droog!" cried Ginger. "But look here! I'll rouse 'em, and I won't be so fur off, in case you want me."

Then Ginger went into the passage, and commenced to ring the fire-bell with a violence that was nearly certain to awake everyone in the house.

It was a big bell, and it sounded all over the place, while the worst of it was everyone knew what that bell was for. It not only caused Pete to

leap from his bed, but also his comrades, the masters, and all the boys, to say nothing of the servants.

To make matters doubly certain, Ginger bawled "Fire!" at the top of his voice.

Pete was the first one down. He was only partially dressed, and he looked startled. He could distinctly hear Ginger's voice, and he rushed towards the lodge.

"It's all right!" exclaimed Ginger.

"Where's de fire?" inquired Pete, gazing around.

"There ain't no fire. I only shouted that to wake you."

"Golly! I ain't de only one you'm woke, too! Here dey all come—servants and all! Golly! Dey ain't waited to finish deir toilets eider. Go back to bed, my dears; dere ain't no fire. It's only a little ob Ginger's playfulness. Boys will be boys, you know. I shall enter a complaint in my complaint-book to-morrow, if I don't oberlock de matter."

"We've caught him!" cried Ginger.

"Eh?"

"Copped him!"

"Caught who?"

"Juke! And I believe he's got your money on him."

"Golly! Where is de man?"

"In the lodge. Droog caught him, 'cos he wanted to prove he hadn't bagged the brass."

"Neber tought he had," growled Pete, entering the lodge, and fixing his eyes on Juke.

"So you are caught again, are you?" exclaimed Pete. "Well, I don't tink you will 'scape me dis time; but we shall see 'bout dat later on. How did you catch him, Droog? Tell me all 'bout it while I'm listening!"

Droog soon told the story, but he said nothing concerning Lamb's suspicious behaviour.

"Now, I want you to search him, Pete," exclaimed Droog. "He offered us three hundred pounds to let him go, and I'm mighty certain that money is yourn."

"I'm not sure dat de police ain't de proper parties to search him."

"You would be months before you got your money that road. Search him now, and take possession. The police can keep all the rest they find on him; but if I was you, I wouldn't let 'em keep those three hundred pounds. Besides, it would clear my name!"

"I don't see dat your name wants any clearing, Droog."

"Well, there's lots thinks I'm a thief. Lamb does, for a start; so does Potts."

"In dat case, we will soon prove dat you ain't. Come here, you beauty! I'm going to hab free hundred pounds off you, or as much ob it as you hab got left."

Pete found more than the sum in his possession, but he took three hundred pounds from him, leaving the remainder.

"Now, den, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "dis is all satisfactory. Just you come to your prison once again."

"I told these two chaps I would give them a sovereign each if they helped me capture him. That's what I wanted the two pounds for," said Droog.

"Quite right, my lad!" exclaimed Pete. "You hand dem de coins while I'm locking dis man up. Den de next best ting for you to do is to get to bed, and we will discuss de matter to-morrow morning."

Then Pete led his captive into the cellar, where he had previously confined him.

CHAPTER 18.

The False Alarm.

"UNDO these 'ere bonds!" pleaded Juke, when Pete had got him into the cellar.

"Eh?"

"I say undo this 'ere cord!"

"I ain't going to do anything ob de sort. You are a lot too slippery for dat."

"How can I escape from this cellar?"

"I don't want you to 'scape from it."

"Well, I can't!"

"Den I'm quite satisfied."

"But I ain't!"

"Nunno! You wouldn't be; and you are not at all likely to be satisfied to-morrow. Still, when a man behaves like you hab, it stands to reason dat he ain't likely to hab a happy time ob it, 'specially when he gets found out. I'm going to leabe you here for de night, and to-morrow morning I shall consider your case."

"You can't prove nothink agin me, and if you was to hand me over to the police it would only bring disgrace on Droog."

"I hab tought ob all dat, old hoss. I shall make oder arrangements for you, but you will hab nuffin' to do wid dose arrangements, 'scept dat I shall gib you a certain sort ob choice. If you don't want to do what I want you to do, I shall make you do what you don't want to do, and dat will be to pick oakum for de next five years or so. 'Nuff said! Go to sleep, and be prepared for my decision in de morning."

Then Pete left the cellar, locking and bolting the door. He just explained matters to Jack and Sam, and then went to bed, for the servants were quieted.

"Dere's points about dat boy," mused Pete, "and I'm mighty proud ob him. Ginger has behaved well, too. I ain't quite sure weder Lamb is improving, but it is mighty certain dat a lot ob de oder boys are. Lindley says so, and he's bound to know, considering dat he teaches dem. Carton ain't so certain; but den he's rader strict, and would be stricter still if I was to allow him. Yes, dere's an improvement, and it stands to reason dat de improvement is bound to go on. Well, I am satisfied. If I had only improved one boy it would hab been worf de trial, and I hab de feeling

dat we'm done more dan dat. I'm most afraid wid all dis excitement dat I sha'n't be able to sleep to-night."

Pete was quite mistaken in the latter respect. He was asleep in a very few moments, and it is a question whether he was not the first in the building to fall asleep.

Jack lay awake for upwards of an hour, and then he heard another violent ring at the gate bell.

He went to Pete's room, which was in the front, and awoke him.

"There's someone else ringing at the bell, Pete."

"Eh?"

"I say there's——"

"Groo—ah—grooh!"

"Oh, wake up, you noisy rascal!" laughed Jack. "There's someone at the gate."

"I dunno why you can't tell dem to go away widout waking me, Jack."

"You tell them. You can howl at them out of the window."

"Hullo, you dere!" bawled Pete, shoving his head out of window. He always slept with his window open. "What are you trying to do?"

"We are the fire-engine!" shouted a voice.

"Oh, you'm de fire-engine, are you?" exclaimed Pete. "Well, I must say you are a mighty noisy fire-engine. Go away! We don't want you!"

"Why, you silly vagabond——"

"Eh?"

"Where's your master?"

"You will hab to ask Sammy dat one. I dunno de answer to it."

"What do you mean by ringing your fire-bell?"

"Eh?"

"Where's the fire?"

"I 'spect dere's one in de kitchen grate. If not, dere will be to-morrow morning. Good-night! Nice night, ain't it?"

"Why, we've come all the way from the town, and we've turned out of our beds!"

"Look at dat, now! I would advise you to go all de way back to de town, and get into your beds again, 'cos you ain't de slightest use here."

"If you think I'm going to be fooled like this, you are mistaken!"

"Well, it was a sort ob mistake. One ob de boys rang de bell, 'cos he wanted to wake me, and he succeeded. Den you hab succeeded in waking me again, and at de rate I'm going on I can plainly see dat I ain't going to hab a good night's rest. I ain't best pleased wid you."

"Best pleased with us be hanged! I'm not best pleased with you!"

"P'raps dat's because you don't know me, old hoss. I'll ring you up each night for a couple ob weeks, and den you will get to know me perfectly, and p'raps like me sort ob better. Did I eber tell you 'bout dat man who knew—— Golly! He don't seem to want to know 'bout de man. Oh, don't laugh at him, Jack! You ought to feel sorry for de poor brute, getting up in de middle ob de night like dis. I'm trying to please him, and he's using language at me which is quite parliamentary, according to up-to-date times."

"You senseless vagabond, you will have to pay for this!"

"Now, dat ain't at all fair, old hoss," said Pete. "Seems to me I hab to pay all roads. First ob all I hab to pay 'cos I ain't got a fire; den again, I should hab to pay if I had got a fire, 'specially if it was a full-sized one. It ain't de slightest use to go on like dis. You ought to be mighty pleased dat dere ain't a fire, and not get savage."

"I don't want to get dragged out of bed in the middle of the night when there's no fire!"

"But you don't look at de ting de right way. It would be much worse to get dragged out ob bed when dere was a fire. Look at all de work you would hab to do! I tell you what I'll do. I'll set fire to one ob de sheds, and den you can put it out. Nunno! You don't want dat. Well, you just stop dere for half an hour or so, and I will try to convince you dat you are in de wrong, and I am in de right. He doesn't care for dat, eider. I must say he's a bery difficult man to please."

"I'm not going to be fooled like this!"

"Well, suppose you stop dere for de remainder ob de night, and in de morning I'll stand you a cup of coffee?"

"I want five pounds for the trouble we have been put to!"

"Bery well! If you call in de morning, you shall hab it."

"I'd rather have it now," said the fireman, becoming more amiable.

"Just go down and pay him, Jack."

"I'll see him blowed first!" answered Jack. "I'm not going down like this!"

"You can easily dress, Jack."

"So can you."

"Funny ting, I neber tought ob dat. I certainly might do dat. Let's come to Sammy's room, and see if he would like to go down. You hold on a bit, fiery man, and you shall hab your five pounds; only I would rader gib it to you by proxy."

The fireman never expected to get it, but he thought it would be worth waiting for, and Pete made his way to Sam's room, and shook that worthy roughly. Sam was wide awake, but he pretended to be asleep.

"What's the matter now?" he growled.

"Dere ain't a fire, Sammy."

"Well, have you woke me up in the middle of the night to give me that information?"

"Nunno! But de fireman was under de impression dat dere was a fire, and he's come to put it out. Now, I want you to go down and gib de man five pounds for his trouble in not putting dat fire out. I dunno what he would charge if dere really was a fire."

"If you think I'm going to roam about this establishment in the middle of the night just because someone wants five pounds, you are completely mistaken. I am going to do nothing of the sort. Clear out of my room, you owl, or I'll fling my boots at your head!"

"I neber came across such a lazy man," growled Pète. "I 'spect I shall

hab to go down, 'cos it wouldn't do to disappoint dat man. Wonder if I can find my way in de dark?"

Pete groped his way down the stairs; then they heard a fearful crash. The servant had left the supper things on the butler's tray, and Pete had banged into it, knocking over the whole stand, and sprawling over the result.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack, from the top of the stairs. "Are you trying to play leap-frog with the crockery, Pete?"

"Golly! Someone is frowning vegetable-dishes at me. If dis ain't worse dan fire, it's quite bad enough!"

"Why didn't you take a light? And then you would have been able to see where the supper-tray was."

"I can feel where it is widout a light, Jack. It's on de floor—so'm I."

"Then get up, stupid!"

"Golly! Dere's someting cool and clammy beneaf me."

"Perhaps it is the butter."

"I dunno, Jack," growled Pete, struggling to his feet. "It's mighty soft and slippery. Wow-yow!"

"Don't howl at it, man!"

"I ain't, Jack. I'm yowling at a spike ob broken china dat is penetrating my bare foot!"

"Why didn't you put your slippers on?"

"What's de good ob asking me 'bout tings I didn't do? I dunno why I came down at all."

"Are you going to sit on the butter all night?"

"Nunno! I'm standing on it now. Do be quiet wid your laughter, Jack. You don't hear me guffawing. I dunno how you can do it in de dead ob night, when I feel so mighty unhappy."

"You will feel better when you have opened the front door."

"I dunno dat paying five pounds for ringing a bell will make me feel so mighty happy, eider," growled Pete, fumbling with the bolts. "Oh, here you are, my dear old hoss! Nice night, ain't it? Let's see, you want five pounds. Well, here you are— Nunno, you ain't! Golly! I hab come down widout my money now. You will hab to wait a bit longer."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack, who was listening from the top of the stairs. "You had better come up for it."

"I won't come up for it, Jack. Look here. Just you go into my room, and you will find a bag ob gold on de dressing-table. Chuck it ober de banisters."

Jack went into the room, and Pete, having an idea that Jack might aim the bag of gold at his head, groped his way into the corner of the hall.

Now, Jack had no such intention. His idea was that by flinging the gold—there must have been at least twenty pounds in the bag—into the corner of the hall, he would miss all windows, and Pete, while Pete would know where to find it. It is true that Jack could not see the corner, but he judged its exact position by the light that was coming through the door-way, and he let fly.

The next moment there was a wild howl, followed by the jingle of a shower of gold.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack. "What are you doing, Pete?"

"Golly! I'm yelling. Thunderbolts are falling in my head, and it has started raining gold!"

"Why, you stupid owl," laughed Jack, "it must have been a paper bag, and it has burst."

"I don't see dat I'm responsible for dat, Jack."

"You ought to have told me it was a paper bag."

"How was I to remember it? You ought to hab noticed it, and not land me on de noddle wid dat weight ob gold. Still, we'm got enough here to pay de man; de only ting is dat it is rader scattered. Ah, dat's better!"

The fireman shone his light on the floor, and Pete picked up five sovereigns, which he handed to him.

"Good-night, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "And in future I wouldn't take any notice ob dat fire-bell, 'cos boys will be boys, and dey tink it rader funny ringing it."

"But suppose there is a fire?"

"Eh?"

"Suppose the building catches on fire?"

"Well, if de bell seems to be going rader excitedly, den you can hum round; only don't come more dan once a week, 'cos it will come expensive."

"Ain't you going to pick up that gold?" gasped the astonished man.

"Eh?"

"You are surely not going to leave it there?"

"I ain't going to grope about de floor for gold at dis time ob night. One ob de servants can pick it up in de morning. If Potts happens to be down first, he's bound to pick it up, and I dare say he will gib me some ob it. Good-night!"

Then Pete shut the door, and the firemen went away; while Pete groped his way back to bed, and howled a little more when he came in contact with the broken crockery.

CHAPTER 19.

Juke Receives His Punishment.

THE following morning Droog was up early. He was anxious concerning the prisoner, and was determined to go down to make sure the cellar door was intact; but when he reached the hall he saw the smash, and also the gold lying on the floor, and he at once imagined that Juke had escaped.

Droog's first thought was to collect the gold, and then he went to Pete's room, to find that worthy snoring.

"Wake up, Pete!" he cried, shaking him.

"Seems to me ebery one wants me to wake up. What's de matter now, Droog?"

"I'm afraid Juke has escaped."

"Golly! Your life ain't at all safe while dat man is at large. I must catch him."

"I found all this gold in the hall, and there's an awful smash."

"Oh, dat's all right, Droog. I did dat going down in de dark. Shove de gold on dat table, and I won't be long coming down."

"Jest count it to see if it's all right."

"Dere ain't no fear 'bout dat, and I dunno how much dere was. I 'spect it's all dere, and, if it ain't, de rest will be on de floor. Don't you boder about it, Droog; but you might just run down to see if Juke is all safe. I 'spect he is, 'cos I don't see how it is at all possible dat he could hab broken loose."

Before Pete had finished dressing, Droog returned to say that the prisoner was safe, then Pete paid a visit to the cellar, and gave Juke his breakfast, while he released him from his bonds, but he refused to give him any information as to what he intended doing.

"I can't stop here in the dark," declared the ruffian.

"Well, dat's a bery small punishment to what you are going to receive, old hoss," said Pete. "You will discover before so mighty long dat it is de easiest ting possible for you to remain here in de dark, and dat it is quite impossible for you to do anything else. You must know, Juke, dat I ain't going to allow you to behave as you hab been doing."

"Well, let me loose, and I'll do better."

"I dunno 'bout doing better. You'm got to be punished for what you hab done, and den I shall try to reform you a bit."

"It's like your thundering cheek to talk of reforming me."

"Oh, I don't mean dat I'm going to personally improve you, old hoss. Dat would be too much trouble, to begin wid, and I should hab to flog you 'bout free times a day, 'cos my kind cistern treatment would not hab de slightest effect on a scoundrel like you. Nunno, you won't improve wid kindness. What you need is periodical floggings at mighty short intervals, and if dat didn't improve you, den I tink nuffin short ob hanging would work de trick. Now, just you stop here till I hab had my breakfast, and den I shall make arrangements concerning your future. Dere's just one ting you'm got to consider, and dat is dat I ain't going to leabe you loose here, 'cos I'm mighty certain dat you would hab your revenge on Droog for habing caught you."

"P'r'aps there's someone else as I'd have vengeance on."

"Well, if you mean on me, you would find taking dat vengeance 'bout as unpleasant as it could be. Yah, yah, yah! You would certainly hurt yourself ober it. I ain't going to tie you up again; but you will hab to remain in de dark, and I sha'n't be far away."

"I tell you I can't stop here. I've got matters to attend to——"

"Yah, yah, yah! Dey will hab to rest for de remainder ob your natural life. You will find under my cistern ob treatment dat you won't be able to attend to your private business again."

"What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I'm saying, and it's what you will learn later on."

"Well, I want to know now."

"I don't see how you will manage to do dat, considering dat I ain't going to tell you."

"I'll tell you straight whether I agree to what you want or not."

"Yah, yah, yah!"

"What are you guffawing at?"

"You! At least, at what you say. I can tell you straight away dat you won't agree to what I want to do. 'Nuff said."

"Then if I don't agree to it I won't do it."

"Dat's where you make your mistake, old hoss. You'm got to do it weder you like it or not. I ain't going to ask your opinion at all; so dat de best ting for you to do will be to fall in wid my ideas, 'cos I shall make you do what I want, weder you agree or not."

Then Pete shut the door, and he gave Droog instructions to keep a watch over the place, and to call Jack or Sam if the prisoner showed signs of attempting to break from his prison.

Pete did not discuss the matter with his comrades that day, but directly he had finished breakfast he went out, and he did not return until the afternoon.

"Did you forget your prisoner, Pete?" inquired Jack.

"Nunno, but I was detained on important business, and I guessed dat you would feed de man."

"We did, and he made an attempt to escape."

"Well, I know Sammy ain't got much intellect, poor fellow; at de same time, I don't consider he would be so stupid as to allow de man to escape again. We will hab someting to eat, and den I want you to come for a little journey wid me."

"What are you going to do?"

"Eh?"

"It's all right, Jack," exclaimed Sam. "It is no use asking the image any more. When he says 'Eh?' like that, he is only thinking of some answer that will put you off the scent."

Pete ordered up some food, and when they had finished their meal he went below for his prisoner, while the comrades accompanied him, under the impression that there was going to be some trouble.

Pete got a lantern in the kitchen, and when he entered the cellar, he found Juke standing in one corner, evidently in no very amiable frame of mind.

"Well, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "got on all right widout your uncle?"

"You've no right to take the law into your own hands."

"Nunno, and you didn't hab de right to rob Droog ob free hundred pounds ob my money."

"I ain't going to stand this treatment."

"You dunno what is in store for you, Juke. I'm most afraid you will say dat you won't stand dat; but the question is, how can you help it?"

"You ain't going to keep me a prisoner no longer."

"Well, ob course, you are at liberty to your own opinions, but it don't at all follow dat dey are correct ones. My impression is dat dey are wrong. Come along. You must excuse me for binding your arms again, 'cos I

ain't going to release you for some time to come, and you are going for a journey wid me. You won't hab any walking to do, 'cos I hab ordered a carriage for you; but we'm got rader a long journey, so if you want any food before we start, you are welcome to it."

"I protest agin this 'ere treatment."

"You'm at liberty to do dat just as much as eber you like," exclaimed Pete, binding his arms behind his back. He offered very little resistance, because he knew that it would be useless.

Pete ordered him into his study, and then he offered him food, which he refused. Jack and Sam had kept him so well supplied with provisions that he really required nothing.

"All right, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, lighting his pipe. "You can sit down dere until I am ready to take you for your journey. Now, I am going to tell you dat you are not likely to see Droog again. Ah, here comes de lad, so it stands to reason dat you will see him again. Droog, I consider it for your benefit to part you from your stepfather."

"I'll be thankful to see the last of him," declared Droog.

"You ungrateful young hound!" cried Juke, glaring fiercely at the lad although he failed to frighten him. "Is this your gratitude. Ain't I fed and clothed you since you was a baby. I wish you had died when you was a child!"

"I know you do," cried Droog. "If you have fed and clothed me, you did it with the bit ob money my mother had. You killed her with your brutality; and you would have killed me if I had given you the chance, only I was one too many for you, you brute! You laid it on pretty thick, too, but you couldn't quell me. I hurt you when I got the chance. Wasn't it you as drove me to stealing, 'cos you starved me?"

"Who is going to believe that story?"

"Why, Pete is, so's these other gentlemen. Whatever I was before I come here was due to you, and you know it; so do I."

"What right has this man to keep me a prisoner?"

"I don't know, and I don't care; but I know Pete won't punish you as much as you deserve. If he did that, he'd put an end to your worthless life straight away."

"You always was an insolent young hound, and this 'ere chap encourages you in it."

"He's been a true friend to me," declared Droog. "I've learnt more good from him in a few week's than I've learnt harm from you in my life-time, and that's saying a good lot. If it hadn't been for Pete, I would have growed up into a scoundrel like you, and I'd rather be dead than that. No, I don't believe I would ever have become such a brute as you; but I would have been a lot different to what I'm going to try to be."

"Well, dat's right, Droog," exclaimed Pete, eyeing his prisoner in no friendly manner. "I'm rader glad you hab seen dis man, 'cos it will be for de last time."

"What are you going to do?" demanded Juke, looking rather startled.

"I ain't telling you, but I hab made arrangements for you, and if you do

what I want you will escape going to prison. You see, I don't want to send you to prison, 'cos it would only bring in Droog's name, and dat wouldn't do him any good. At de same time, I am going to put you out ob harm's way."

"Well, I will tell you straight off that I won't do what you tell me."

"I rader fancy you will."

"Why should I?"

"Because I am going to make you."

"You can't!"

"Well, dat remains to be seen. My impression is dat I can."

"You two young chaps will know that he will get himself into trouble if he acts in this manner," said Juke, appealing to Jack and Sam.

"I reckon that won't stop Pete," said Sam; "and from what I know of him, he is far more likely to get you into trouble."

"I don't move from here unless he tells me where I'm going to."

"Well, old hoss, I hab a handy little riding whip here, and if dat won't shift you, I shall let Jack and Sammy carry you," said Pete. "At de same time, I feel quite sure dat dis whip, judiciously used, will do de business. Come dis way, Jack, and let me try it on you, den I shall be able to tell exactly what it feels like—so will you."

"There's a cab come with two horses in it," said Potts, entering the room at that moment. "Well, I'm blowed," he added, as he caught sight of Juke.

"Look here, Potts," cried Juke. "I want you to go for a policeman. I'm going to give this chap in custody. If you don't go, I'll make it hot for you."

"Why don't you let him go?" demanded Potts, turning on Pete. He never treated him as his master, and was frequently most impertinent to him.

"I ain't going to let him go," answered Pete.

"You ain't got no right to keep a man prisoner."

"Eh?"

"You will have to let him go sooner or later, and you'd best let him go now."

"How much do you charge for your advice, Potts?"

"Nothing, but——"

"Well, I must say dat's about its value. Just bear in mind dat you'm employed here as an ordinary porter, and not general adviser to the establishment."

"If you don't choose to take good advice when given——"

"I don't need your advice, my poor, fermented old hoss. Your duties are to eat and sleep, and frow in a little general work. I must say dat you gib full satisfaction in de first two duties, dough I would like to see a considerable improvement in de last. Just you buzz off 'bout dose duties. I dunno weder de next one is eating or sleeping, but it's free to one dat it is one ob dose two, and de sooner you start on it, de better you will please me."

"Who wants to please you?"

"Not you, old hoss. At least, if you do, you don't succeed so mighty well. Go away!"

Potts went, slamming the door as hard as he dared. He knew that he would be brought back if he slammed it too hard; but on the present occasion Pete was too exercised concerning his prisoner to trouble much concerning the porter.

"Come dis way, Juke," exclaimed Pete, taking him by the arm.

"I tell you I ain't coming."

"Where's my whip? Oh, here it is. Come along, if you please. Tank you. Dat's de way I want you to go, only I would be glad if you could do it wid a little less noise."

They found Potts talking to the driver, and trying to discover his destination; but, although that driver knew it, he had been directed to keep that information to himself under promise of a substantial tip; and, as he had received a tip in advance, he was not so silly as to give Potts the information he required.

Pete forced his prisoner into the cab, and, as it was a wet night, the two comrades followed him in. Then the driver whipped up his pair of horses, and away they rattled.

It was so dark that it was impossible for Juke to see which direction they were taking, and when about an hour had elapsed, the rain was coming down in torrents, while the wind was howling fiercely.

Jack and Sam asked no questions. They knew that Pete rather liked to be mysterious sometimes, and when he got like that questioning was worse than useless. Juke at last got tired of protesting, and the comrades smoked and chatted about all sorts of things.

It must have been considerably past midnight when the driver pulled in his steaming horses, and now Pete waited a little while the man got down and spoke to another one. Then the door was opened, and Pete led his prisoner out, keeping a firm grip on his arm.

"Follow me, boys! Ten o'clock to-morrow, driver. Dis way to London, Juke! Dere's a boat at the bottom ob dese steps dat you are going into. Nunno! It ain't de slightest use to struggle, 'cos if you do I shall carry you—so!"

Pete picked the ruffian up in his arms, and lifted him, struggling, into a boat that was waiting for them. Then they were rowed aboard a sailing-vessel.

Juke gave a little more trouble, but Pete got him aboard, and then took him below, and they all entered the skipper's cabin, where a broadly built, swarthy-looking man was seated, smoking and studying a chart.

"Dis is Captain Miller, boys!" exclaimed Pete. "Dese two are Jack and Sammy. Dat one wid his arms bound is Juke."

"Sit down, my lads!" exclaimed the skipper. "We will have a bit of supper. I've had it kept hot, because I thought you would like something after your long drive, and we can talk while we are eating. You are right up to time. I've got your cabin ready when you feel like turning in. There's three berths in it, and you will be all comfortable for the night."

"See here, Captain Miller!" cried Juke. "I'm being brought aboard this vessel against my will, and——"

"I know all about that, you swab; and you have got to recollect that you will have to behave yourself while you are aboard, else you won't please me. I shall work him, Pete."

"M'yes! Dat is understood. You can work him as hard as you like, 'cos I 'spect it will be 'bout de first work he has eber done in his life."

"Well, he will have to take his turn with the other men. He will soon get into my ways, and if he behaves himself he won't have a bad time of it till we reach Australia."

"Australia!" gasped Juke.

"Dat's where I am sending you, old hoss," said Pete. "You see, you ain't de slightest use dis side ob de world; in fact, you are a perfect nuisance, so I'm sending you to de oder side, to see if you can do any better dere. I hab made all arrangements wid de skipper, and he will instruct you what to do when he lands you dere."

"I won't go! I tell you I won't be treated in this manner! Do you take me for a blessed child?"

"Nunno! You ain't anyting like a child—much less a blessed one! You'm more like a mighty great scoundrel, and you ought to be punished severely, only I ain't going to do dat in your case, 'cos ob poor Droog. I'm going to send you right away, and to keep you dere."

"You can't! You ain't got the power!"

"I rader fancy you will find I hab."

"You cut these bonds!"

"Nunno! You ain't going to be released till dis vessel sails, and dat won't be till to-morrow morning."

"Look here, captain! You ain't got the right to take the law into your own hands like this!" cried Juke fiercely.

"De captain ain't got anyting to do wid de matter. I hab arranged it, and I'm taking all de responsibility," interposed Pete. "You can bring all de actions you like against me, and when you bring de first one I shall send you to prison. I'm treating you a lot too lightly."

"You silly brute! I tell you I won't go! I'm not going to leave this country! How do you suppose I'm going to earn my living in a foreign country?"

"It ain't a foreign country."

"Well, a strange country. It's all the same."

"I don't 'spect you would be able to earn your libing anywhere. I tought ob all dat; and when you arrive at Sydney, which is your destination, de captain will gib you de address ob de agents, and if you go to dem each Saturday morning dey will hand you ten shillings for de rest ob your natural life. Should say you would be able to earn de rest ob your requirements. At any rate, dat's all you will get, and it's exactly ten shillings a week more dan you deserve; but I ain't planting a man in a strange country widout resources. Ob course, if you find enough money to leabe de country, you will lose your ten shillings a week; but if you come back here again, and

I catch you, it won't go well wid you. At any rate, it will take you a mighty long time to get dere and back, and Droog will get rid ob you for dat aforesaid time."

"What the thunder is the use of ten shillings a week to me? If you make it ten pounds a week, I will go."

"I ain't making it a penny more, and, as I tell you, dat's a lot too much, 'cos you'm such a precious scoundrel dat you don't deserve it."

"Then I won't sail on this vessel!"

"Tink not?"

"Bust you! I know I won't!"

"Well, if you know all dat, old hoss, dere's not de slightest sense in arguing de point, 'cos I'm mighty sure you will sail on it! And what is more, you will hab to work while you are aboard! You will find all dat will do you no end of good, and de harder de captain makes you work, de more good it will do you. Bery well, den! When de voyage is finished, you will be landed in Australia, and as you will hab ten shillings a week, you won't starve. If you don't choose to work, den it will be your own look-out; but you'm got to recollect dat if a man ain't got any money, and won't work, he stands an excellent chance ob smiling. Now, you know exactly what you hab got to expect. You can't possibly get off dis vessel, so dat I shall disrelease your arms, and I dare say de captain will let you take supper wid us, seeing dat you ought to be hungry by dis time."

"Certainly," exclaimed the skipper, "he can join us; and as here comes the supper, we will make a start."

CHAPTER 20.

Pete's Decision.

THE supper was a very good one, and Juke ate his share, but when it was finished he commenced to protest and threaten again.

"Now, look here, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "I'm 'bout tired ob your nonsense!"

"I won't go!"

"You are like some little child. You will hab to do what you are told. I'm going to tell you to come to bed now, and dat is exactly what you will hab to do. De captain sails on de tide to-morrow, and dat is when I shall hab de pleasure ob saying good-bye to you for eber. Dis way to London! You will hab to sleep on de floor in a blanket for to-night; and I must request you not to make a noise wid your snoring in de night, 'cos I don't like snoring."

Juke was compelled to obey, and he fell asleep almost immediately.

"Golly!" gasped Pete, as Juke commenced to snore. "Ain't dis a mighty awful row to listen to?"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's a feeble snore compared to yours," laughed Jack.

"Do I snore as loudly as dat, Jack?"

"Well, of all the silly questions I ever heard, that is the silliest!" exclaimed Sam. "Juke's is a gentle bleat to the awful row you make."

"Eh?"

"Go to sleep!"

"Here! You wake up, Juke!"

"What the thunder are you doing of?"

"Waking you up, old hoss. I'm sleepy."

"Then go to sleep, you stupid brute!"

"I can't while you'm making dat awful row. Just you sit up for half an hour while I get to sleep."

Juke certainly would have done no such thing; but there was really no necessity to do so, for Pete was asleep in something under five minutes.

"Bust me!" gasped Juke, sitting up, as Pete's awful snore burst forth. "And he complains of my snoring after that little lot! It ain't nothing to laugh at! A chap as snores like that ought to have his throat cut! It's too awful to talk about!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You will get accustomed to it in a few months' time," laughed Jack. "Go to sleep!"

Juke only wished he could. Pete's snoring was a trifle too much for him. Like most men with a guilty conscience, he was never a very heavy sleeper, and day was breaking before he succeeded in falling asleep.

"Now den, you dere!" cried Pete, springing off his bed with a suddenness that always startled Jack and Sam. It seemed to them that he was dead asleep one moment and dressing the next. "It's time to get up, Juke!"

"Bust you! I've only just fallen asleep."

"Den you ought to have got to sleep sooner."

"How the thunder could I when you were making enough row to shake all the bolts out of the vessel?"

"I dunno, but I'm mighty certain dat you will wake up now, 'cos it is time to tink 'bout going ashore, and de skipper won't expect you to sleep de whole day frough. Besides, I'm going to gib you a few words ob advice before we part, and to point out to you dat if you don't behave yourself when you are landed in Australia de agents hab orders to stop your allowance."

Juke did not like the words of advice at all, and he made several attempts to induce the skipper to put him ashore; but this that worthy absolutely refused to do. Pete had paid liberally for Juke's food and accommodation aboard, and he had no intention of losing such a profitable passenger.

The tug came alongside, and then the comrades went ashore, while the skipper kept Juke in the cabin until the vessel was out at sea.

Jack, Sam, and Pete waited until her sails were set; then, as the tug came steaming back, they entered the fly, and were driven swiftly back to the school.

There was trouble there that morning, and Potts was the cause of it. He had given Lamb, whom he caught in his lodge, a sound thrashing, and Mr. Lindly had severely reproved him for it. The head-master had ordered

Potts into Pete's study, after Lamb had made his complaint, and was lecturing him.

"You had no right to strike a boy at all. To hit one in that brutal manner was shameful."

"You be hanged!" growled Potts. "A boy like you ain't going to teach me what I ought to do, and what I ought not to do! You ain't my master, and I ain't putting up with any of your impudence. Mr. Carton never speaks to me like that; but then, he's a gentleman—and that's a lot more than I can say for some people."

"I certainly think the boy deserved chastisement," said Carton, who was in the room. "I——"

"But I don't allow de boys to be struck!" exclaimed Pete, who had arrived in time to hear Potts's shouting voice and Mr. Carton's remark. "All right, Potts! Don't you go just yet. I shall hab a few remarks to make to you."

"I ain't going to be insulted by that man!"

"I dunno what Mr. Lindly said to you, but I heard what you said to him, and dat is quite sufficient for my purpose. I'm mighty certain Mr. Lindly neber insulted you."

"I reprimanded him for striking a boy in what I consider was a brutal manner. He has marked the lad's back. I must agree with Mr. Carton, Pete, that your system is somewhat too lenient. At the same time, I do not consider that a porter has any right to take the law into his own hands."

"Look here, Potts!" exclaimed Pete. "It doesn't much matter your being insolent to me, 'cos I don't mind it a bit; and if you went too far, I should just bundle you out ob de place. But wid de masters ob dis college it is quite anoder matter. Mr. Lindly is your master——"

"No, he aint!"

"Well, I say dat he is, and I 'spect I ought to know best. Mr. Lindly is going to get just de same power as I hab got, 'cos, as I once promised him, I am going to hand over de school to him to govern just as he considers fit. I hope he will see his way to deal with de boys widout corporal punishment; but, seeing dat de school and all dat is in it will be absolutely his own property, he has de right to act as he tinks best for de pupils' good, and I hab come to de conclusion dat he knows much more 'bout de matter dan I do. If you want to keep your place, I would advise you to treat dat gentleman wid due respect, 'cos if you don't he will naturally tell you to take a week's notice.

"Habing handed ober de school to Mr. Lindly, I ain't got de power to gib you notice now; but I would advise you to treat Mr. Lindly as a servant should treat his master, 'cos it is my special wish dat he sacks you if you don't. It is also my express wish dat no boy shall be punished except by Mr. Lindly, and dat if dat wish ain't respected, Mr. Lindly will dismiss de party at fault, whoeber he happens to be. I ain't got de power to make Mr. Lindly gib me such a promise, but——"

"I hope you know me sufficiently, my dear fellow, to feel assured that all your wishes will be implicitly complied with!" exclaimed Lindly.

"Well, dat's all right. I tink you would be wise to express your regret for de manner in which you hab spoken to your master, Potts. Ob course, at de time you didn't know he was your master, but now dat you do know it, and dat you will hab to look to him for your wages, why it makes a sort ob difference. You can please yourself 'bout de matter. I'm only gibing you a little advice."

Potts gazed from Pete to Lindly with gaping jaws.

"I'm sorry I spoke as I did, sir," he mumbled.

"Think no more about the matter, Potts!" exclaimed Lindly. "It is quite overlooked."

"What could be nicer dan dat, now!" exclaimed Pete. "You can buzz off, Potts. I ain't got de right to gib you dat order, but p'r'aps under all de circumstances ob de case it would be as well if you were to obey it."

Potts hesitated for a moment; then he left the room, and when he got into the passage he said he was "blowed." At any rate, he was certainly surprised. So was Mr. Carton.

"What is the meaning of this, Pete?" demanded Carton.

"De change won't make any difference to you, old hoss."

"Only the difference of my appointment, unless, of course, you express a wish to the contrary."

"I ain't interfering in de matter. Mr. Lindly will manage his own school as he tink fit."

"In that case, Mr. Carton, I trust that I shall have your valuable assistance."

"Am I to understand that I shall have a free hand?"

"Exactly the same as it is now," said Lindly. "I believe I know what Pete would wish. It shall be my earnest endeavour to follow in his footsteps——"

"Golly! What's the man talking about?" growled Pete. "And he could teach me 'bout free thousand tings——"

"I could not teach you kindness of heart, Pete. That comes naturally to you. Your action when we first met has brought happiness and peace of mind to me, and that is a thing I never shall forget. I trust that my earnest endeavour to act according to your wishes in all things may be successful. There is just one important matter I shall alter, and that is the extraordinary expenditure in this establishment. I shall take particular care that there is no change that will affect the comfort of the boys; at the same time, there is not the slightest doubt that there will be a saving of some hundreds of pounds."

"I fancy I comprehend the trend of one of your economies," said Carton.

"There will be many."

"Seeing that I am an interested party——"

"I assure you that you are in error, Mr. Carton!" exclaimed Lindly.

"I am about to suggest to Pete that your salary should be increased."

"Certainly! I ain't got de slightest objection to dat, and, mind you, Carton, I ain't at all sure dat you ain't right in respect to caning at

necessary intervals, and in some cases—say Lamb's, for instance. But don't you see, my dear old boss, dese boys hab had such hard lives for de start dat I want dem to be quite happy here. I know Lindly won't err on de side ob strictness, besides, he says he will go on my cistern, so dat's all right from de boys' point ob view."

"I would suggest that Mr. Carton's salary is increased by a hundred pounds a year, Pete."

"Den I resolve de amendment wid unanimity. I wish you wouldn't laugh at de speaker, Jack. Now, seeing dat eberyting is settled, I furdur hereinafter propose dat I gib a mighty big dinner to de whole school, and Jack shall make de final speech. We free hab been talking matters ober, Lindly, and we'm decided to found dis school on a proper foundation. We'm going to invest a sum ob money sufficient for all expenses, and you'm de trustee. Jack is going to work it out, and de margin ob interest you will take as additional salary for yourself. If dere's a deficiency any year, we shall make it up, and, as de school increases in size, we shall invest furdur sums so that each year dere will be a surplus."

"We shall watch de boys' future careers, and I ain't got a doubt dat dey will turn out a credit to de school, and to de masters. Dere's just one more ting, Lindly, and den we'm done wid business. It is my special wish dat you keep Potts in his place; and if you hab any nonsense wid him, gib him de sack straight away, 'cos I ain't best pleased wid de behaviour ob dat man; and, when you are saying anyting in private, be sure you look outside de door to make sure dat Potts ain't listening, like he is at de present moment."

Pete had opened the door, and Potts was getting along the passage as fast as he could without running.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Don't you go too fast, old boss. You might hab a nasty fall, and you wouldn't like anyting like dat."

"I had an idea dat man was listening," observed Pete, grinning as he closed the door. "At de same time I was determined dat he shouldn't hear anyting to his advantage."

"When is the great feast to come off, Pete?" inquired Jack.

"Well, I should say in two-free days' time, 'cos dere will be a mighty lot ob tings to buy. I shall consult de cook, and let her make the purchases. She's a sensible woman, and will know exactly de sort ob tings dat boys will like best. P'r'aps Mr. Lindly will gib dem a day's holiday."

"Are you going to have another picnic?" inquired Jack.

"Well, I dunno dat we hadn't better hab de picnic indoors, 'cos you see it might rain, and, den again, de last picnic we gabe them caused a lot ob trouble to de neighbouring farmer. Nunno, under all de circumstances ob de case, I fancy it will be advisable to hab de picnic indoors dis time, and we can hab a band in de grounds, so as to gib them plenty ob music. I can plainly see dat dere will be a lot ob tings to consider, but I shall frow all de hardest part ob de business on your shoulders, so dat I sha'n't be troubled wid it."

"Will you really?" laughed Jack. "Well, I will see if you cannot make a better arrangement than that. However, I dare say it will all turn out all right."

Jack was perfectly correct. It did turn out all right. There was an abundance of good things, and an abundance of noise. Pete gave them a special performance, and delighted the boys with his tricks and his ventriloquism, and altogether they had a jolly day of it.

Pete was called on to make a speech at the last, and the words he uttered were likely to be remembered by those boys, for there was not one amongst them who did not really like Pete.

THE END.

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