

NELSON LEE

2d



"K, K," comes a cropper! One of the many amusing incidents in this week's sidesplitting long complete school yarn featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's,

New Series No. 39.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

October 18th, 1930.

CHAPTER 1.**K. K.'s Fortune!**

"**M**^{E S S Y} things, but jolly good, for all that!" commented Mr. Wilkes, reaching across the table in Study D and helping himself to another chocolate eclair.

"Go ahead, sir!" invited Handforth. "Have the lot."

The Housemaster sank into the easy-chair, poised the eclair between his finger and thumb, and took a bite. A blob of cream fell upon his trousers.

"Told you so," he remarked. "Infernally messy things, aren't they? But I can never resist 'em."

Handforth and Church and McClure, the normal occupants of Study D, grinned with appreciation. It was tea-time, and it was rather a special spread because K. K. & Co. had been invited. It wasn't often that any of the Old-Timers entertained the Red-Hots to tea; and even on this occasion there were many youthful prophets who expected that party to end in a fight.

Mr. Alington Wilkes had dropped in casually. It was a habit of his—and it was noticeable that he frequently dropped in at about tea-time. If any other Housemaster had made such a practice, the fellows wouldn't have liked it. With "Old Wilkey" it was different. He made himself one of the boys.

"Jolly good, old sons!" he remarked, as he demolished the last scrap of eclair. "No, I won't have another, thanks."

"Do, sir!" urged Church.

"You've only got to press me a bit more, and I'll have it," warned Mr. Wilkes. "You young ass, take them away! What's Mrs. Wilkes going to say to me when I arrive for tea with no appetite?"

He jumped to his feet, deftly pulled Handforth's tie out of position, and vanished with a chuckle.

"There's no knowing what Old Wilkey will do next," grinned Handforth, as he replaced his tie. "We're one eclair short now, but that doesn't

K.K. K-Nabs



matter much. You fellows will have to have half a one each."

"What's wrong with you missing yours altogether?" asked Church coldly.

"We're not going to have a row over a giddy chocolate eclair, I suppose?" retorted Handforth. "If you chaps can't give yours up for Old Wilkey—— Hallo, here they are! Better stop all this arguing."

The new arrivals were not the guests; they were Vivian Travers, Jimmy Potts, and Fullwood. Handforth regarded them in dismay.

"Here, what's this?" he asked. "Nobody invited you chaps!"

"Keep your hair on, dear old fellow—we haven't come to tea!" explained Travers. "Somebody told us that K. K. was here."

"He ought to be, but he's late," said Handforth. "What do you want him for, anyhow? I can't have you chaps interfering with my guests——"

"We only want to ask him a question," interrupted Fullwood, looking round. "By Jove! That table looks good! What's the idea of having those Red-Hots in?"

"I believe in keeping up a friendly

**A FORTUNE FOR K. K.
PROVES
HIS MISFORTUNE!**

—Rollicking, Extra-Long, complete Yarn!

the Kudos!



spirit," replied Handforth, while the others burst into chuckles. "The Red-Hots may be our rivals, but that's no reason why we shouldn't be pleasant."

"Some of the chaps are making bets outside," said Travers. "I was tempted to take odds myself. They're betting that K. K. & Co will come out of this study on their necks before the tea is half-way through. Other chaps are betting that you'll be the first to come out on your necks."

"Idiot!" scoffed Handforth. "There'll be no row as long as our guests behave themselves. Hadn't you better clear off? What did you want to see K. K. about, anyhow?"

"Only this," said Travers, producing an evening paper. "I understand that the same report is in two or three other papers, too. We were wondering if the budding millionaire could be our own little K. K."

"Budding millionaire?" said Handforth, staring.

He took the newspaper, and he started as he read the headline at the top of one of the principal

columns: "FOR-TUNE FOR SCHOOLBOY."

"What's this?" he asked excitedly.

He read the paragraph without waiting for anybody to reply:

"The late Sir Roger Parkington's will has now been proved, and it is reported that he has left his entire fortune to a schoolboy relative. This lucky youngster, it is understood, is a junior in one of England's best known Public Schools."

"My only hat!" said Handforth, taking a deep breath.

"It may be K. K. or it may not," said Travers. "The other papers are just as vague—they don't say what school it is, and they don't give the boy's name."

"It can't be K. K.," said Church, shaking his head. "Must be some other chap named Parkington. If it was K. K., we

should have heard about it before this. He's never even mentioned a relative of his named Sir Roger."

The tramping of feet sounded in the corridor, and the door opened.

"Hallo, hallo! Quite a big party," said Kirby Keeble Parkington, his big frame filling the entire doorway. "How do we squash in?"

"These three asses aren't here to tea," explained Handforth. "But look here, K. K. What do you know about this?"

He thrust the newspaper towards Parkington, pointing to the paragraph.

"Looks interesting," commented K. K., nodding. "I've seen it."

"Then it's not you?"

"As a matter of fact, I believe it is," said K. K. apologetically.

"What!"

"Well, Sir Roger Parkington was my grand-uncle, and, as far as I know, he had no other schoolboy relative, so it must be me," said K. K. "Why all this fuss?"

By

EDWY

SEARLES BROOKS.

"The paper says you're coming into a fortune!" yelled McClure.

"What of it?"

"What of it?" gasped Handforth. "Isn't it worth making a fuss about?"

"Not that I can see," said K. K. calmly. "If you want to know the truth, I am the chap. It's official. My pater told me about it in his last letter."

"And you never said anything?" asked McClure, aghast. "You knew that you'd come into a fortune, and you didn't even tell anybody?"

"You're Scottish, sweetheart, and you wouldn't understand," replied Parkington gently.

"You silly English ass——"

"As a guest in this study, I can't very well retort in the approved fashion," said K. K. admonishingly. "I'm not altogether sure that it's in good taste for a host to call his guest an ass."

"Sorry!" said Mac thickly. "I'd forgotten."

"As for the fortune, I'm hardly interested," continued Parkington. "Now what about some tea? We've all got first-class thirsts——"

"Just a minute before we start tea!" interrupted Handforth. "You say that you're not interested in this fortune? Why, you ass, think of the things you could do! With pots of money, you could buy anything you liked. You've got a motor-bike now, but you could have a car!"

"My poor chap, it's plain that you don't know much about wills," said K. K. sadly. "Wills are funny things—and, according to my grand-uncle's record, his will will be the funniest document ever exhibited. It's funny enough that he should leave his money to me to start with. I hardly knew him."

"But it's yours, all the same."

"It will be—when I'm of age," explained Parkington.

"Oh!"

"There, you see, is the snag," said the red-headed junior. "Even if I wanted to, I couldn't touch any of that fortune now."

"Why, it's a swindle!" said Handforth indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can never trust these silly newspapers!" went on Edward Oswald with a snort. "They say that you've come into a fortune, and now it turns out that you won't get it until you're a man! What rot!"

"I've got it—but I can't touch it yet," said K. K. kindly. "That's the only difference. And as my pater is fairly well off—which means that I shan't want for anything when I'm of age—Uncle Roger's will leaves me pretty cold. I thought so little of it, in fact, that I didn't even mention it. How was I to know that the newspapers would trot out the story?"

The other Removites were now feeling pretty cold, too. A fortune that didn't materialise in their own time was too much in the abstract.

"Why the old boy should have left me his money, I can't imagine," continued K. K.

thoughtfully. "The only reason I can think of is that I'm not married."

"Not married!" yelled Handforth.

"Sir Roger was a woman-hater," explained Parkington. "My hat! How he hated women! Wouldn't have one in his house—servant or guest. He never forgave my pater for marrying, or I dare say my pater would have had the fortune. The old chap was a vegetarian, too. Oh, yes, and a Quaker!"

"Eat plenty of oats, I suppose?" asked Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He lived practically alone, and was even a bit of a miser," said K. K. "I only visited him once or twice, and the funny thing is, I used to get on first-class with him. I expect that's because I humoured him. Pretended I was as keen as mustard on raw vegetables and things. I've known him to chuckle with absolute glee upon finding me gnawing a raw carrot."

"Such is life," sighed Travers. "Just because you eat raw carrots, he leaves you his fortune. I'll bet that's the very reason why he left you in his will. I wish I had a grand-uncle who liked to see me eating raw carrots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He was a decent old boy, in his way, but, as I have said, I didn't know him particularly well," observed K. K. "Over a year ago since I last saw him. Well, what about this tea?"

"Let's get on with it," said Handforth promptly. "That fortune of yours is too much of a wash-out for us to waste any further time on."

The subject, by general consent, was dismissed; but if the juniors thought that this was the last they would hear of Sir Roger Parkington's will, they were mistaken.

CHAPTER 2.

An Interesting Visitor!

TEDDY LONG, who made a point of minding everybody else's business as well as his own, watched the stranger calculatingly as the latter moved slowly across the Triangle in a hesitating, uncertain fashion. Here was a possible source of income. Even if it only meant sixpence, it was nevertheless income. The stranger obviously didn't know which way to go.

It was three days later, and St. Frank's was rather quiet on this chilly October afternoon. Lessons were over, and most of the juniors were putting in a good hour at sport of some kind. Teddy Long, however, was not interested in sport, unless the baiting of strangers could be called sport. He advanced upon the new arrival with alacrity.

"Anything I can do, sir?" he asked, raising his cap.

The stranger paused and looked at Teddy benevolently. He was a prim-looking man,

precise in his manner and bearing, very neat in appearance, and his rimless pince-nez were set at such an angle that he could peer over their tops.

"Yes, young man, there is something that you can do for me," he said, his voice as precise as the rest of him. "There is, I believe, a boy in this school named Parkington? To be exact, Kirby Keeble Parkington."

"That's right, sir," said Teddy eagerly. "He's on Little Side now, but I'll soon fetch him if——"

"No, no! I don't want him fetched," interrupted the stranger. "I merely want to know which is the House he belongs to. In other words, where is the Ancient House?"

"This one, sir," said Teddy, pointing.

"If you can direct me to the Housemaster's private quarters I will make it worth your while," said the stranger briskly. "Oh, and by the way. If you happen to see Parkington, do not tell him that anyone has been inquiring about him."

"I wouldn't dream of it, sir!" said Teddy stoutly.

The stranger nodded approvingly. He didn't know Teddy. Teddy was about the last fellow to keep a secret of any kind—and the arrival of this prim-looking man excited him tremendously. For Teddy Long had not forgotten that recent paragraph in the newspapers, and he wondered if there could be any connection between it and this gentleman's visit.

"This way, sir!" he said. "I know for a fact that Wilkey is in. I saw him going into his study ten minutes ago."

"Wilkey?"

"Our Housemaster, sir; I'm in the Ancient House, too."

"Ah, quite so!" nodded the stranger. "I appear to be very fortunate."

They went indoors, and Teddy Long waited expectantly when, at length, they stood outside Mr. Alington Wilkes' study door. The stranger was feeling suggestively in his pocket. Then he hesitated, and Teddy's hopes were dashed to the ground.

"I was about to present you with a shilling, my boy," the stranger said kindly, "but on seconds thoughts I shall reserve that ceremony until later."

"Later, sir?" repeated Teddy in dismay.

"I particularly desire that Parkington shall know nothing of my visit—until I am ready," said the other. "I do not distrust you, but boys, as a class, are talkative. If I find that you have kept your own counsel, I will make it half-a-crown. So I will see you later."

He beamed, tapped on Mr. Wilkes' door, and entered. He had very effectively placed a seal upon Teddy Long's tongue.

"Good-afternoon, sir," said the stranger, as he found the Housemaster eyeing him inquiringly. "Mr. Wilkey, I believe?"

"Mr. Wilkes," corrected the Housemaster. "Mr. Alington Wilkes, to be exact. I

believe, however, that I am known amongst the boys as Old Wilkey."

"My own name is Norton, sir—Walter Norton, of Messrs. Norton, Griggs and Norton, Lincoln's Inn, London," said the stranger precisely, as he advanced and extended his hand. "I trust, Mr. Wilkes, that I have not intruded at an inopportune moment?"

"You haven't intruded at all, old chap," replied Mr. Wilkes cheerfully. "Take a pew. A lawyer, I imagine? If you've come to tell me that I have been left in somebody's will, I shall be everlastingly grateful. A novel experience for me, I can assure you. For some reason people don't leave me in their wills."

Mr. Norton eyed his companion dubiously. Certainly Mr. Alington Wilkes wasn't the average man's idea of a schoolmaster. He was tall, loose-jointed, with a straggly moustache, humorous eyes, and an air of supreme inconsequence. He was dressed in an old Norfolk jacket and baggy flannel trousers; and when Mr. Norton had entered he had been sprawling in his chair with his legs on the desk.

"Ahem!" said the visitor. "It is a fact, is it not, Mr. Wilkes, that you are the—er—Housemaster of this House?"

"Well, yes," admitted Mr. Wilkes. "If I don't look the part, I'm sorry. I'm always trying to give myself a severe appearance, but it won't work. Nature, Mr. Norton, is inexorable. Well, what about that legacy of mine?"

"My dear sir, I haven't come with any such news for you," protested Mr. Norton hastily.

"I didn't think you had," said Mr. Wilkes sadly.

"My mission concerns a boy named Parkington, who, I understand, is in your care," said the visitor, producing some important-looking documents. "Kirby Keeble Parkington is the name."

"One of my brightest and best," nodded Mr. Wilkes. "A spirited youth, and not averse to an occasional fling. Takes a swishing like a man."

"I am glad, indeed, to hear that he is spirited, for he will need all his spirit from now onwards," said Mr. Norton with conviction. "Now, Mr. Wilkey—I beg your pardon, Mr. Wilkes—I must tell you that this boy has inherited a considerable fortune from his grand-uncle, the late Sir Roger Parkington. You may have seen some such report in the newspapers?"

"As a matter of fact, I have," admitted the Housemaster.

"Now, my errand is a peculiar one," said the visitor mysteriously. "I have purposely come to you first, Mr. Wilkes, because I am not at all sure that I shall even find it necessary to approach my youthful client. Much will depend upon your own decision. Young Parkington only inherits this money upon coming of age if he complies with

certain extraordinary conditions which come into force at once."

"Oh, I see!" said Mr. Wilkes, with a whistle. "So there are some strings attached to Sir Roger's will?"

"Very apt, sir—very apt indeed," said the other. "You are quite right. These—er—strings are both difficult and, in fact, bizarre. I am not at all sure that the school authorities will permit the boy to follow out the directions of the will. A boy cannot, after all, do exactly as he likes at school."

Mr. Wilkes made himself more comfortable.

"This is getting frightfully interesting, old man," he remarked. "Go ahead! I'm intrigued."

"You must permit me to remark, Mr. Wilkes, that you are making this interview singularly easy, and for that I thank you," said Mr. Norton gratefully. "I had expected something very different. However— It is very doubtful if Parkington himself will submit to these bizarre conditions, even if the school authorities permit them. It is still more doubtful if he will be able to carry them out if he does submit."

"I hate to say it, Mr. Norton, but you're talking in riddles."

"Perhaps I am, and you must forgive me," said the lawyer hastily. "I have merely made this preamble as a means of preparing you for the extraordinary disclosure which I must make. Sir Roger Parkington was a bachelor, and an eccentric of the most pronounced type. Without going into any exact details, I believe that he was cruelly deceived by a woman in his youth, and from that moment onwards he became a harsh, embittered woman-hater."

"Still I don't quite see——"

"But you will, sir—you will," said Mr. Norton. "Sir Roger had no immediate relatives, and being a man of meagre habits and hermit-like existence, his modest fortune of early life grew to immense proportions before he died. He had selected young Parkington's father, I believe, as his heir; but when Mr. Parkington married, the old man was so furious that he immediately changed his will and left everything to charity."

"When he met young Parkington, however, it seems that Sir Roger relented," proceeded the lawyer. "Here was an heir he could safely leave his money to. The boy is at the right age for the experiment, for I can only conclude that Sir Roger's idea was to use him as an experiment. According to the directions of the will, the boy is to be instructed in the conditions on his sixteenth birthday, or upon Sir Roger's death. As Sir Roger has died before the boy has reached sixteen, the disclosure must be made now."

"Sounds more mysterious than ever," commented the Housemaster. "Am I permitted to know what these peculiar conditions are?"

"That is the very reason I am here," said Mr. Norton. "It is essential that you, as the boy's Housemaster, should know the facts. I have come to you rather than to the headmaster because you are in closer personal touch with the boy himself. If in your opinion the school cannot allow young Parkington to carry out the late Sir Roger's directions, the only alternative is for the boy to leave St. Frank's altogether—unless, of course, he wishes to sacrifice the fortune."

"We will see what we can do, Mr. Norton," promised Mr. Wilkes.

"I must remind you that Sir Roger was eccentric, and I hope you are therefore prepared for some fantastic conditions," said the lawyer gravely. "In the first place, Sir Roger was a Quaker, and he always wore the strict Quaker costume—which, as you know, has now practically become obsolete. I am sorry to tell you, Mr. Wilkes, that young Parkington must adopt the Quaker costume forthwith."

"It ought to suit him well," said Mr. Wilkes, nodding.

"I—er—beg your pardon?"

"The Quaker costume is both picturesque and comfortable," said the Housemaster stoutly. "The other boys, no doubt, would chip him for a time, but there are far worse troubles in life that the wearing of a Quaker costume. If this is one of your fantastic conditions, Mr. Norton, I am not at all dismayed."

"Unfortunately, there are other considerations," continued Mr. Norton. "I am not well acquainted with your school cuisine, but I do know that vegetarianism is not practised, or approved of, at Public Schools."

"There you are wrong," said Mr. Wilkes promptly. "Perhaps you don't know that we have our own pet vegetarian at St. Frank's? Mr. Barnaby Goole, who presides over the East House, is an even more strict vegetarian than a caterpillar. And whenever he can get a boy over on to his side, he cuts a big notch in his mantelpiece. You'd be surprised to see how many notches there are already. The mantelpiece is becoming quite ornamental—and he'll soon have to start on the window-frame."

Mr. Norton gave his companion a straight look. He had the impression that Mr. Wilkes was gently pulling his leg. The Housemaster remained as grave as an image.

"I am glad to hear this," said the lawyer. "Even so, I cannot believe that Mr. Poolo——"

"Goole."

"I cannot believe that Mr. Goole is such a crank as Sir Roger was," said Mr. Norton. "He carried vegetarianism to an extreme—and unfortunately his heir must live in the same way if he is to qualify for the fortune. From now until he is twenty-one, in effect, young Parkington must be on probation."

"Practically six years," nodded Mr. Wilkes. "By the end of that time he will be so thoroughly hardened that he'll never want to live in any other way. He'll be so accustomed to eggs and milk——"



"Are you the fellow that's been left a fortune?" asked Handforth as he thrust the newspaper under Parkington's nose. "I am!" agreed K. K. calmly.

"No, no! Eggs and milk are strictly forbidden," broke in the other. "In Sir Roger's view, eggs and milk are harmful. He was a vegetarian of the most extreme kind. This boy must live on an absolutely Spartan diet—and from to-day onwards. If he fails in any one single respect, Sir Roger's fortune goes to charity."

"It seems that the poor kid will have to earn it."

"He will, indeed!" declared the other. "I shall give you a list of the things he may eat, before I leave. It will probably surprise you, Mr. Wilkes."

"After what you've told me, it probably won't."

"He must live on practically nothing else but uncooked vegetables and fruit—and raw carrots, I may say, are a daily item," said Mr. Norton. "He must eat no bread which has been made with yeast or other leaven. Tea, coffee, cocoa, and such beverages, are absolutely forbidden."

"That's rough," said Mr. Wilkes. "Ginger beer or lemonade are poor consolations at that hour of the afternoon when one needs a bracer."

"The boy must not even touch ginger-beer or lemonade," declared the lawyer. "He must drink nothing else but water—plain, cold water. I can assure you, Mr. Wilkes, these conditions are very hard on the boy. Sir Roger was a cold water crank, in addition to his other eccentricities. It is laid down in the will that young Parkington must go for a swim in the river every

morning—summer and winter alike. He must become hardened."

"I wonder if the fortune is worth all this?" asked Mr. Wilkes dryly.

"It all depends upon the boy, of course," said the other. "The fortune, I may tell you, is considerable—running into very big figures, indeed. In order to inherit it, Parkington must fulfil other conditions, too. He must have no association whatever with the feminine sex, and if he has any friendships with girls or women other than his own immediate relatives—his mother and sisters, to be exact—they must be broken."

"That's beastly hard lines," said Mr. Wilkes. "It so happens that K. K.—we call him K. K. for short—is pretty chummy with my own daughter."

"That's very unfortunate," said Mr. Norton, with concern. "I can only hope that your daughter will accept the thing in the right spirit. Old Sir Roger hated all games, and the boy must drop them."

"Drop football?" asked Mr. Wilkes, with a whistle.

"If he has been in the habit of playing football, he must cease to do so," insisted the lawyer. "He can, however, become adept at horse-riding, swimming, and such-like athletics. It is one of the strict conditions of the will that he must take up horse-riding at once. He must learn to be generous, and must spend his pocket-money upon others rather than upon himself."

"I fancy he does a good deal of that already," murmured the Housemaster. "At

all events, I've noticed that Vera has a lot more chocolates than she used to have, to say nothing of occasional bottles of perfume."

"That is all to the good, my dear sir."

"I hope we've reached the end of the list by now?" asked Mr. Wilkes. "Surely the boy hasn't to suffer further?"

"I fear he has," said Mr. Norton, consulting his papers. "The will directs that he must learn to be stoic and patient; therefore he must spend two hours each day apart from all other human society. Instead of a bed, he must sleep on a bare board, and sheets are absolutely forbidden. He may have blankets, but only blankets of the roughest kind. In short, during these next few years, before he reaches manhood, he must become hardened."

"If he lives through them, he'll be a hero," declared Mr. Wilkes, with conviction.

CHAPTER 3.

Putting it to K. K.!

FOR some moments Mr. Alington Wilkes sat regarding his visitor with thoughtful, contemplative eyes. Mr. Norton, for his part, sorted out his papers, and finally produced a neatly-type-written sheet.

"This is for your own personal use, Mr. Wilkes," he said, looking up. "I desire you to have it so that you may keep a check on the boy. He will have a similar sheet, since we cannot expect him to remember all these arduous conditions."

"H'm! You don't want me constantly to watch him, do you?" asked Mr. Wilkes dubiously.

"No, no, of course not," said the other. "But you, as his Housemaster, will naturally be better able than anyone else to see if he carries out the conditions of the will. Of course, there may be no need for any supervision at all, since I think it is highly probable that the boy himself will abandon the fortune."

"I hope he doesn't," said Mr. Wilkes slowly. "Such a thing would be weak—lamentably weak. In a way, this affair will be a test of Parkington's character, and for that reason, alone, I shall consent to the experiment. Anything that puts a boy on his mettle is to be commended."

Mr. Norton beamed.

"I am glad, indeed, to hear you express such sensible views, Mr. Wilkes," he said eagerly. "I may say that I regarded you as the one stumbling-block—for, of course, it would have been useless going to the boy unless you had previously given your sanction to the change of diet which the will imposes. The other matters, I think, are for the boy himself to deal with."

Again Mr. Wilkes looked contemplatively at his visitor.

"I wonder if Parkington will have sufficient strength of will?" he mused. "It's asking a lot of him, you know, Mr. Norton."

"Where there's a will, there's a way," replied Mr. Norton promptly. "And that applies in more senses than one in this case. Sir Roger's will is unique; but the stake is a big one, and well worth striving for."

He rose to his feet and thrust out his hand.

"I am grateful, Mr. Wilkes, for your broadminded and generous attitude," he went on warmly. "It is now entirely up to the boy himself. With your permission, I will go to him at once."

"Splendid," said Mr. Wilkes. "I shall be curious to know how he takes it. You'll probably find him somewhere in the junior quarters."

"If you will kindly direct me——"

"Certainly," said Mr. Wilkes, going to the door, and pointing. "You go down this corridor, and—— But wouldn't it be better to have the boy here, in my study? The junior quarters are not particularly restful."

"I would prefer to speak to him in his own element, if you don't mind," replied the lawyer. "Indeed, it will be all the better if some of his companions are with him at the time. Forgive me, Mr. Wilkes, but I fear that your presence might have too restraining an influence upon him."

"Sensible man!" chuckled Mr. Wilkes. "You're quite right. Well, go ahead—and good luck!"

He gave the necessary directions, and Mr. Norton shook hands again, and departed. Round the angle of the passage he ran into Teddy Long. Teddy was brimming with excitement and anticipation.

"If you want Parkington, sir, he's in his study," he said eagerly. "Just came in with Deeks and Goffin. I haven't breathed a word, sir."

"That's excellent," said Mr. Norton, moving on.

"You said something about half-a-crown, sir——"

"You shall have your half-crown later—it I find that your statement is true," replied Mr. Norton cautiously. "In the meantime, you may direct me to Parkington's study."

Teddy fumed inwardly, but he dared not protest. Why was it people always distrusted him? Even strangers did! Perhaps there was something in Long's crafty, cunning expression which gave him away. At all events, Mr. Norton had formed a very accurate estimation of his character.

When he arrived at Study K, he found the leaders of the Red-Hots preparing for tea. Kirby Keeble Parkington was cheery and smiling, and Deeks and Goffin were in a good humour, too. Funds were plentiful, and a special feed was on the board.

"Hallo, sir!" said K. K., eyeing the visitor curiously. "Looking for somebody? I'm afraid you've come to the wrong part of the House——"

"I think not," interrupted Mr. Norton gently. "I am looking for a boy named Parkington."

"Then you've found him, sir," replied K. K. "Deeks, shove that chair forward. Goffin,

shut the door. I'm Parkington, sir. What can we do for you?"

Mr. Norton sat down in his precise way.

"I must inform you, firstly, that the matter upon which I have called is of some gravity," he said. "I trust, therefore, that you will listen carefully and attentively. My name is Mr. Walter Norton, of Norton, Griggs, & Norton, Lincoln's Inn, London. I am, in fact, a lawyer."

"Oh!" said K. K., rather startled.

Deeks and Goffin stood open-mouthed. It wasn't often that lawyers visited the junior studies at St. Frank's. Moreover, the mention of their visitor's profession immediately reminded them of the newspaper paragraph they had seen three days earlier.

"A lawyer, eh?" went on Parkington. "Does this mean, sir, that you've come to see me about my grand-uncle's will?"

"It does," replied Mr. Norton solemnly. "Young man, this inheritance is a big one—an immense one—but I must tell you at once that you can only come into it if you agree to certain drastic conditions."

K. K. sighed.

"I thought there was a catch in it somewhere," he said sadly.

"An apt remark—for there is, in fact, a very decided catch," replied Mr. Norton. "And it is for you to decide, Parkington, whether or not you will strive to obey the directions of Sir Roger's will. Now kindly listen with great care."

KIRBY KEEBLE PARKINGTON took a deep, deep breath.

He had heard the conditions, and Mr. Norton had repeated them so emphatically that they had sunk deeply into K. K.'s mind. Harvey Deeks and Clement Goffin had looked startled at first, but now they were grinning.

"Well, I hardly know what to say, sir," said Parkington at length. "I knew that Sir Roger was a bit of an eccentric, but this will of his fairly takes the cake!"

"It certainly beats any other will I have ever handled," agreed Mr. Norton. "The great question is, are you agreeable to comply with the conditions?"

"Even if I am, sir, I don't see how they can be imposed," replied K. K., shaking his head. "What about the school authorities? They wouldn't agree. I mean, raw carrots! And all those other food rules——"

"I have omitted to mention," interrupted Mr. Norton, "that I have already interviewed your Housemaster, Mr. Wilkes. He is leaving the matter to you, Parkington. He is a kindly man, and a broadminded man. He is willing to grant you all the necessary facilities."

"Well, that's jolly decent of Old Wilkey!" said K. K. with a glance at his chums. "But, hang it all, it's a bit thick! After to-day, no bed—only a plank! And a plank for the next six years!"

"By the end of which time you will probably desire nothing but a plank," murmured Mr. Norton. "I have heard it said, on the

best medical authority, that sleeping on a plank is conducive to long life."

"I dare say I could survive the plank, sir," admitted K. K. dubiously, "but what about all the rest? What did my grand-uncle think I am? A rabbit? How can I live on raw vegetables and water?"

"I will admit there are difficulties," said Mr. Norton gently.

"Taking a dip in the river every morning isn't so bad," continued K. K., "but why horse-riding? Why chuck up footer? I'm as keen as mustard on footer."

"It will mean many sacrifices," said the lawyer. "I can only conclude that Sir Roger desired to put you on your mettle—to make you prove your worth. If you are to have his fortune, you must earn it."

K. K. grunted.

"Well, between you and me and the fire-irons, sir, I don't think the fortune's worth it," he said candidly. "Blow Uncle Roger and his silly conditions! After all, charity's a good cause."

Mr. Norton adjusted his pince-nez and looked at K. K. very steadily.

"Dear me!" he said with regret. "I was afraid of this. I feared that you would be scared by the conditions. Yet I do not think that you have given the matter sufficient thought."

"Yes, I have, Mr. Norton," replied Parkington lightly. "When I become of age I shall go into my pater's business—and he's got plenty of money, anyhow. Besides, I want to work for my living when I'm a man. I don't see why I should live like a lunatic for the next six years because of an old man's cranky ideas. Blow Uncle Roger and his fortune!"

Mr. Norton compressed his lips.

"I see," he said coldly. "You are—funking it!"

"Eh?"

"You are not man enough to shoulder these stringent conditions," proceeded Mr. Norton with thinly-veiled contempt. "I am not altogether surprised—and yet I am disappointed. Mr. Wilkes had a better opinion of you."

K. K. flushed.

"Look here, sir!" he burst out. "You know jolly well that my Uncle Roger was so eccentric that he was half-dotty! I'm not keen on this fortune, anyhow. Why should I——"

"That is not the point," interrupted the lawyer stiffly as he rose to his feet. "As I have already told you, Sir Roger worded his will as he did in order to put you on your mettle. Make no mistake, Parkington, the old man was not so cranky as you seem to believe. There was a reason behind his crankiness. However, you have made your decision, and it is for me to arrange that the fortune shall be transferred to the various charities which Sir Roger nominated."

Parkington stood there, hot and angry.

"I don't like your calling me a funk, sir," he said bluntly.

"Chuck it, K. K.!" put in Deeks. "You know jolly well that you could never keep to those conditions."

"Couldn't I?" shouted Parkington.

"It's not a question of funking," went on Deeks. "Imagine yourself in Quaker dress; imagine eating nothing but vegetables and fruit for every meal! You simply couldn't do it—and you know it!"

"Of course you know it," said Goffin.

Mr. Norton allowed a slight twinkle to enter his eyes. K. K.'s chums were unconsciously doing the very thing which would force him to agree. Even at the outset—before any of the conditions were imposed—he was being put on his mettle.

"I couldn't do it, couldn't I?" said Parkington stubbornly. "You all think the same, do you?"

"Well, my dear boy——" began Mr. Norton mildly.

"You thought all along, didn't you, sir, that I'd refuse?"

"To be quite frank, I did," admitted the

lawyer. "And I don't blame you. These conditions are severe——"

"Well, you're wrong!" interrupted K. K., squaring his jaw. "If you think I haven't got enough determination, sir, you'd better think again! I'll do it! I'll go through with it! I'm no weakling!"

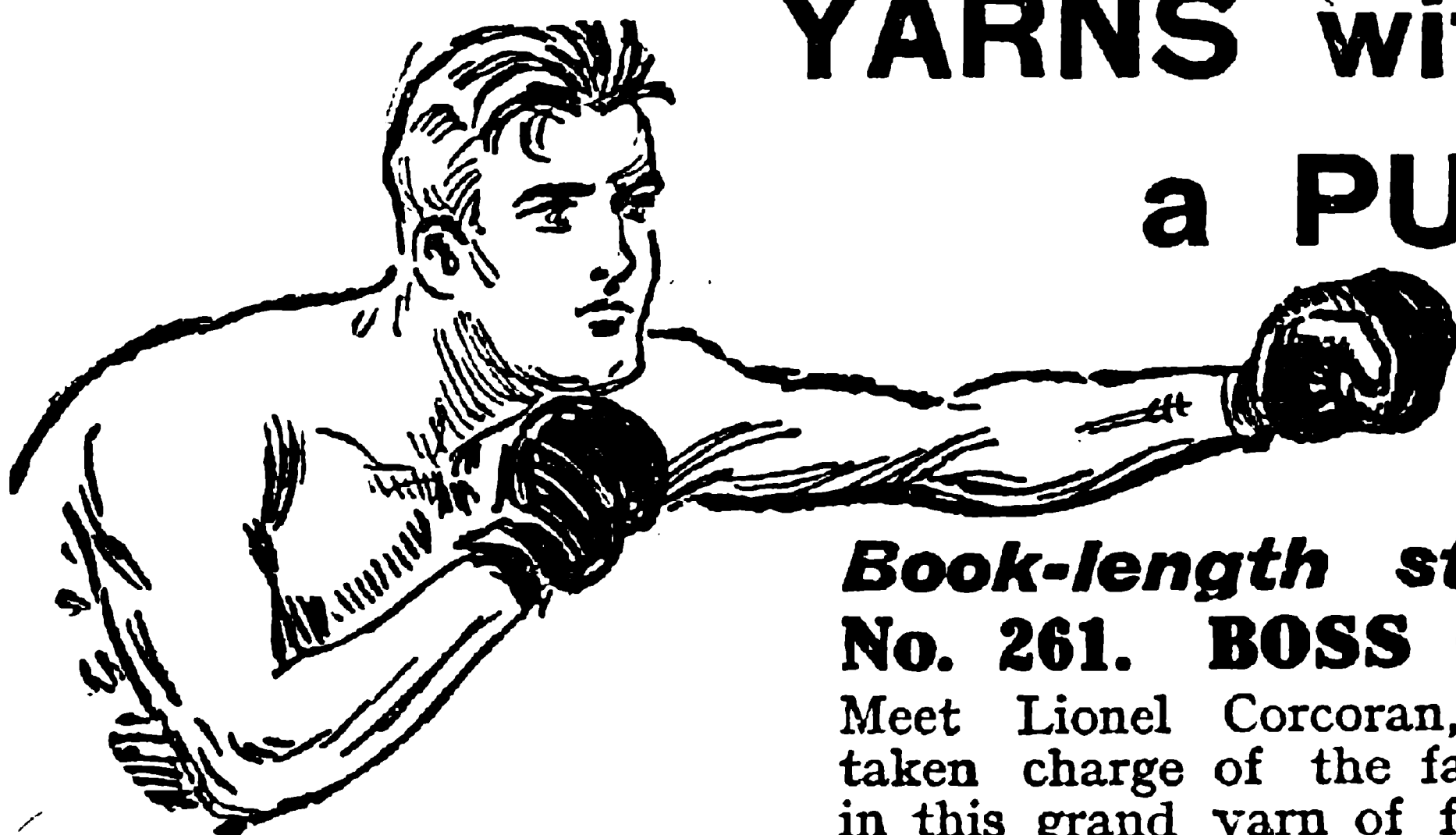
Mr. Norton chirruped with delight.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "Bravo, my boy! Bravo! I congratulate you upon your strength of will! Your father, I am sure, will be overjoyed!"

"My father?" asked K. K., staring.

"I might as well tell you now that even he believed that my visit to St. Frank's would be futile," said Mr. Norton promptly. "It is gratifying to know that the only one who had faith in you is your own Housemaster. Mr. Wilkes had half an idea, I am sure, that you would consent."

"Then I won't let him down, sir," said Parkington, squaring his shoulders. "Mind you, I'm not doing this for the sake of the fortune, but to prove that I can do it."



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CHAPTER 4.

Chipping K. K.!

DEEKS and Goffin made a grab at their leader as soon as Mr. Norton had taken his departure. They forced him into a chair, and they stood over him.

"You're mad, K. K.!" ejaculated Deeks. "You can't do it!"

"It's impossible!" declared Goffin. "You jilly ass! We didn't mean to goad you! Why did you take any notice——"

"When you've done mauling me about, sweethearts, perhaps you'll cool down!" broke in K. K. "There's nothing to get excited about. After all, the Norton bird was right. It would be weak to let that fortune go without even making a bid for it."

"But—but you'll be the laughing-stock of the school!"

"The school's always laughing at something."

"You'll lead a dog's life!"

"I should rather call it a rabbit's life, darling."

"And you'll have to wear Quaker dress."

"I've heard it's quite comfortable," said K. K., nodding. "Wide, open collar, knee-breeches, and all the rest of it. The school may laugh, but this is a case of 'he laughs best who laughs last.' And it seems to me that I shall do all the laughing at the end."

His chums regarded him admiringly.

"Well, I must say you've got pluck!" declared Deeks. "And a nerve, too!"

"A nerve, yes, but it doesn't require any pluck for a thing like this," replied K. K. "It's simply a matter of will-power."

The door burst open, and a crowd of juniors poured in, led by Edward Oswald Handforth, of Study D. Travers and Archie Glenthorne and Potts and Gresham were prominent.

"What's this silly yarn we've heard?" demanded Handforth abruptly. "Teddy Long's been saying that you've had a lawyer to see you, K. K.!"

"That's not a silly yarn—it's the truth."

"By George! Did he come about your uncle's fortune?"

"Something like that," replied Parkington. "There are some strings tied to that fortune, and before I come into it I've got to go through the mill. You'll hear all the details in good time."

The crowd heard the details at once.

Deeks and Goffin found it impossible to contain themselves. With considerable relish they told of all the things that Kirby Keeble Parkington would be required to do. The affair developed into a first-class sensation.

The news spread like wildfire, and before the evening had advanced far, fellows were coming over from the other Houses in excited batches to give their opinions. It was generally agreed that Parkington was off his chump.

"He'll never do it!" said Handforth. "I admire his spirit, but it's too much of a good thing."

The rest of the fellows agreed, and this, of course, only strengthened K. K.'s determination. It was a bit of a shock for him to find out that the entire Junior School accepted it as a foregone conclusion that he would soon knuckle under. He set his jaw, and vowed to himself that he wouldn't.

DURING the rest of the evening the chief item of conversation throughout St. Frank's was Parkington's coming ordeal. Even the seniors had got hold of the story, and were chuckling over it in their own quarters. There wasn't a fellow in the school who believed that K. K. would stick to his guns.

When Biggleswade came to see lights out in the Junior dormitories he grinned humorously at the big red-headed Removite.

"I'll give you a week—at the most!" he commented.

"Oh, chuck it!" protested K. K.

"Don't forget you'll be on your honour," continued the prefect, wagging a finger. "No scoffing of pork pies and things on the quiet, my lad!"

"Can't you give it a rest?" asked K. K. wearily. "You all think I'm riding for a fall—but I'm not."

"Talking about riding, isn't it one of the conditions that you've got to take it up?" asked Biggy. "Ever done much riding, young 'un?"

"No," growled K. K.

"Well, it'll be quite an experience," grinned the prefect. "Horseback riding is first-class when you get used to it, but for the first three or four days you'll have no use whatever for chairs. Well, good-night. Hope you have a good sleep. It'll be the last time, don't forget—you'll have a plank in here to-morrow night."

And chuckling hugely Biggleswade retired.

"Silly ass!" grunted K. K., as he sat down on his bed. "Silly, hulking, cackling ass!"

Deeks and Goffin eyed him warily.

"It's not improving your temper, old man," remarked Deeks.

"How the dickens can a chap keep his temper when everybody's chipping him?" retorted Parkington. "Even the seniors can't talk of anything else. Why, I passed a couple of masters this evening, and they suddenly stopped short in their jabber and looked at me as though I were a new kind of freak."

"That's the penalty of notoriety," said Goffin. "And, after all, K. K., Biggy was right. This is the last time you'll sleep on a decent bed. A plank won't give you much comfort."

"Are you starting now?" roared K. K., exasperated.

He got into bed in a disgruntled mood. The fact of the matter was, he knew only too well that the fellows were right. The more

he thought of it, the more dismayed he felt at the prospect. It was easy enough to talk, but now that he was lying in his comfortable bed he knew how much he would miss it.

"A plank!" he muttered. "Help!"

Sleep failed to come. Apprehensively, he thought of the morrow. Breakfast— He gave a start as he remembered breakfast. The other fellows would have eggs or bacon, perhaps both, while he would be munching a chunk of carrot or turnip or something similarly awful.

After all, was it worth it? The chaps would only laugh at him for a bit if he chucked the whole thing up; in their hearts they would know that he had done the right thing. Why go through with this idiotic nonsense?

"Asleep, K. K.?" came a drowsy voice through the darkness.

"Not yet!" growled Parkington.

"How are we going to get on for tea in the study?" asked Deeks' voice. "I've been wondering, you know. Goffin and I will be a bit uncomfortable scoffing meat pies and sardines and pastries, while you sit there eating carrots and drinking water. Why not chuck the whole thing up before it's too late?"

It was just what K. K. needed to strengthen him.

"Go to sleep!" he snapped. "I'm not chucking anything up."

He rolled over and resolutely closed his eyes. If this was, indeed, his last night in a decent bed, he was going to make the most of it.

Kirby Keeble Parkington, after all, was a determined fellow, a youngster of decided will-power. He went to sleep within five minutes, and he dreamed of a monstrous ogre, bearing a close resemblance to his late Uncle Roger, sitting at a vast table eating pailfuls of carrots and turnips.

CHAPTER 5.

The Simple Life!

"HALLO!" said Harvey Deeks, blinking. He was sitting up in bed, and the rising bell was ringing. Deeks was looking at K. K.'s empty bed.

"Funny!" went on Deeks. "Hi, Goffin! K. K.'s gone!"

Goffin sat up in bed.

"Bolted, I expect," he said sleepily. "I'll bet he had a restless night and couldn't pluck up enough courage to face the music this morning. I don't altogether blame him."

"But what about us?" asked Deeks in dismay. "If K. K.'s bunked, how do the Red-Hots get on? I don't think much of him!" he added with a sniff. "Dash it, he might have waited—"

The door opened, and in strode Parkington. He was looking fresh and cheerful; his hair was tousled, and he had a big towel

over his shoulder. He was dressed in running shorts and sweater.

"Oh!" said Deeks. "You haven't bolted, then?"

"I'm beginning to think that my grand-uncle knew a thing or two," said K. K. briskly. "I've just had a dip in the river. Obeying the first condition, you know."

Goffin drew the blankets more closely round him and gazed out at the bleak October sky.

"Ugh!" he shivered. "Horribly cold, wasn't it?"

"Only for the first minute, and then I enjoyed it," replied Parkington. "I feel like pushing a 'bus over now. Get up, you lazy blighters!"

Biggleswade looked in.

"Hallo! You're up, then?" he said with a chuckle. "Have you kissed good-bye to your bed?"

"If you weren't a prefect I'd slaughter you!" replied K. K. darkly.

"Then at last I've discovered that being a prefect has its advantages," said Biggleswade, grinning. "Here you are, my poor fellow. Old Wilkey asked me to give you this. I don't know what it contains, but I can guess. You have my sympathy."

He handed over a big cardboard box and vanished.

"Don't open it," advised Goffin. "Somebody's having a lark with you."

Parkington eyed the box warily, then he jumped to the truth. The box bore the name of a famous London firm of theatrical costumiers.

"My only sainted aunt!" said K. K., in an awed voice. "I didn't think it would begin this morning. I was counting on a week at least before I went into fancy dress!"

"Fancy dress!" yelled Deeks, leaping out of bed. "Do you mean to say that this is the Quaker costume?"

It was. When the box was opened it was found to contain a suit of sombre brown cloth. There were knee breeches, a long, voluminous coat, and a quaint-looking waistcoat with endless buttons. There were thick woollen stockings, a great wide-brimmed hat, a curious-looking cravat, and a pair of square-toed black shoes with big iron buckles.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" breathed K. K., horrified.

"You can't wear 'em!" gasped Deeks. "You simply can't, K. K.!"

"I've got to!" snapped K. K. fiercely. "And if you want a black eye, Deeks, say that again!"

There was some underclothing, too, and the unfortunate K. K. shuddered as he looked at it. It was pure wool, but very coarse, and it so happened that Parkington, in spite of his sturdiness, possessed a very sensitive skin. He barred wool next to his person, and habitually wore cotton.

He got into the things somehow, and the irritation set up as they touched his skin was torture. K. K. bore it stoically. His



Dressed in his Quaker's costume, Parkington walked out of the dormitory to be greeted by a great roar of laughter from the crowd of juniors.

chums hardly dared to speak to him as he dressed. They watched, fascinated. The Quaker suit fitted admirably, almost as though he had been measured for it.

"I can't understand it," said Deeks, after a while. "How did Mr. Wilkes get hold of that suit by this morning?"

"I'll bet it came by post—Mr. Norton's doing," said K. K., with conviction. "He probably arranged to have it sent on spec, even before he came here. You see, once I agreed with the conditions of that will I had to start straight away."

He surveyed himself in the mirror, which wasn't easy. The Junior dormitories were only supplied with small mirrors, and K. K. had to jump on the bed and examine himself in sections. He wasn't very pleased.

"Well, it's not so bad," said Goffin kindly.

"Might have been a lot worse," commented Deeks.

"You can keep all that politeness to yourselves," said K. K. "I know what I look like, you asses. I look awful!"

"Well, as long as you know it——" began Deeks.

"I do know it, so don't rub it in!" roared Parkington. "You're thinking that I daren't go out, aren't you? Watch me!"

He strode to the door, flung it open, and marched out. Then he halted. The passage

was filled with waiting juniors. Biggleswade had lost no time in sending the word round that that there would soon be a free show, and half the Remove had collected in the corridor, waiting.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my only hat!"

"What is it?"

Yells of laughter went up, and everybody had some special quip or comment to offer. Parkington stood there, very red, very hot, and very uncomfortable. But the more the juniors laughed the more he steeled himself.

"When you jackasses have finished your morning cackle perhaps you'll let me go by?" he asked deliberately. "If you want to know the truth, these clothes are a lot more comfortable than they look."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

He pushed his way out, forced his way to the stairs and marched down. To his dismay crowds of Third-Formers, Removites and Fourth-Formers were waiting for him in the lobby and out in the Triangle. But his back was up now, and he almost began to enjoy himself. After all, there was something rather attractive in being the centre of all eyes. Unfortunately, he was too fully aware of his own extraordinary appearance to enjoy himself wholeheartedly.

The biggest ordeal came when he got into the Triangle. For, as luck would have it, Vera Wilkes was crossing over from the West House. She paused in her stride, a look of utter dismay on her face. The girl only hesitated for a moment, and then she ran impulsively forward.

"Oh, K. K., this is too awful!" she burst out. "I—I mean, those clothes aren't so bad after all, are they?" she added with an effort. "I—I expect you'll get used to them in time."

"I hope so," said Parkington, grinning feebly. "And perhaps the rest of the chaps will get used to them, too. Did you ever see such an ill-mannered lot? All they can do is to cackle!"

"They ought to be ashamed of themselves," said Vera indignantly.

K. K. looked at her warmly. He knew very well that she was only saying all this to comfort him. Then he suddenly started.

"I say!" he ejaculated. "I'd forgotten for the moment, old girl. I mustn't speak to you. If I break any one of the conditions I forfeit my inheritance!"

"Oh, but—but—"

"I mustn't have any friendships with girls," continued K. K. "It's all rot, really, and nothing will ever break *our* friendship. Still, for the sake of appearances— Well, you know what I mean."

He paused awkwardly, and Vera nodded.

"It's my fault," she said contritely. "Awfully sorry, K. K. I'll remember in future." She bent nearer. "Stick it!" she murmured. "You've got the strength to do it, old chap. Don't let these others have the laugh over you!"

She ran off, and K. K. swallowed hard.

"Yes, I'll stick it!" he vowed, under his breath. "But, by Jove, it's going to be a tough business."

THE Quaker suit soon lost its effect.

It proved very mirth-provoking at first and all the fellows had their laugh, but Parkington found, to his relief, that once the novelty had worn off there was nothing particular to laugh at. In fact, before an hour had passed, the fellows had grown accustomed to seeing the red-haired Removite going about in his bizarre costume.

By the time the breakfast-bell was due to ring the only fellows who laughed when K. K. appeared were small fry such as the fags. The Removites and Fourth-Formers discovered, to their disappointment, that chipping K. K. had lost its attraction. Incidentally, the rank and file held K. K. in greater esteem than ever.

"Well, you've got to admit that he's plucky," declared Handforth. "Going about in that awful suit is enough to make anybody weaken. Jolly good luck to him!"

"If that suit has weakened anybody, it's Archie," grinned Church. "He only took one look at K. K., and he reeled off to his

study, bleating for Phipps. It'll probably take him half the day to recover."

"Archie's funny about clothes," said Handforth with a sniff. "He even had the nerve to criticise my bags this morning. What's wrong with 'em?"

Church and McClure thought it wiser not to say.

"Wait until poor old K. K. starts his breakfast," said McClure, changing the subject. "Does anybody know what's on the menu this morning?"

"Well, there's the bell, so we shall soon know," said Church.

There was generally a rush for the dining-hall, but this morning there was a greater rush than ever. Everybody wanted to see Kirby Keeble Parkington at breakfast. There was general disappointment when it was discovered that nothing unusual stood in front of his plate.

"Now, boys, not so much noise," admonished Mr. Crowell, from the top of the Remove table. "Why are you making all this commotion? Can't Parkington have a special diet without a fuss?"

The Remove was duly silenced.

"I hope, Parkington, that your lawyers are taking this matter up," continued the Form-master, with some asperity.

"Taking it up, sir?"

"I have heard a good deal of talk about your grand-uncle's extraordinary will," said Mr. Crowell. "Surely the Courts will not allow such a document to stand? It ought to be easy to have all these ridiculous conditions set aside."

"By Jove, sir, I hadn't thought of that," said K. K. brightly. "But I don't think it's any good," he added, his face suddenly falling. "If there was any hope, Mr. Norton would have told me."

Food began to arrive for the Remove table—porridge, bacon, coffee, and so forth. Bread was passed round, and pats of butter were distributed. None of these things came to Kirby Keeble Parkington. Then Biggleswade, of the Sixth, gravely approached. There was a hush, and it was seen that he carried a large enamel bowl. K. K. watched him apprehensively.

"Go ahead, young 'un—and I hope you have a good tuck in!" said Biggy kindly.

He placed the bowl in front of Parkington, and retired as gravely as he had come.

"My only hat!" ejaculated K. K., aghast.

The bowl contained a bunch of big carrots and several huge Spanish onions. Some of them were grubby with dirt. Everybody else looked on in astonishment for a moment, and then burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old K. K.!"

"They might just as well have brought him a nosebag!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All right—laugh!" said K. K. feebly. "Funny, isn't it?" He drew the enamel bowl nearer, and gazed distastefully at the

contents. "They might at least have peeled 'em!" he grumbled. "What do they think I am—a horse? How the dickens do I deal with these things?"

Decks edged away.

"If you're going to have stuff like that to eat at every meal, I'm going to change places with somebody," he said. "Those onions are a bit niffy! Goodness only knows what they'll be like when you start peeling 'em! My breakfast's going to be ruined!"

"What about my breakfast?" roared K. K. "How would you like to eat this cattle fodder?"

"Really, Parkington, you mustn't shout like that," protested Mr. Crowell sharply.

"But look here, sir," protested K. K. "Look what's been given me!"

"I can see—and I confess I am astonished," replied Mr. Crowell. "I really thought that Mr. Wilkes would have made some different arrangement. I cannot believe that your grand-uncle's will imposes such dietetic conditions upon you."

"But it does, sir!" declared half a dozen enthusiastic voices.

"Don't you think you'd better give K. K. a table to himself, sir?" suggested somebody. "A table all by itself somewhere."

"Preferably enclosed in a glass case," murmured Travers, as he caught a whiff of the onions. "By Samson! How can I eat this porridge in this atmosphere?"

K. K. felt considerably piqued.

"I'll jolly soon give you something to grumble about!" he said, seizing one of the onions and peeling it. "It's like your nerve to grouse! I'm the fellow who's having to suffer."

The reek from the raw onion floated down the table devastatingly. Onions are splendid things when everybody else is eating them, but their odour certainly does not mix kindly with hot porridge or fried bacon. Fully half the Removites lost their appetites for breakfast on the spot.

"Good gad!" gurgled Archie Glenthorne, shuddering as he caught the full blast. "Heave-o, laddies! The bally old ship is sinking! Gangway, steward!"

He reeled out of his chair, and drifted away.

"This isn't going as it should!" grumbled Travers. "We thought we were going to laugh at K. K.—and I'm blessed if he isn't grinning at us! What's the matter with you, Handy? You look green!"

"That's nothing!" said Handforth. "I feel green!"

Mr. Wilkes came striding up, his eyes unusually keen.

"I think," he said gently, "there is some little mistake here. Do you know who brought this enamel bowl, Mr. Crowell?"

"It was Biggleswade," replied the Form-master. "And I hope you will permit me to say, Mr. Wilkes, that my table is utterly and absolutely demoralised. I know the peculiar circumstances regarding Parkington, but at the same time——"

"Keep your hair on, Mr. Crowell," interrupted the Housemaster. "Biggleswade has been having a little joke at Parkington's expense. I gave no instructions that this crude diet should be put in front of the boy."

A loud and prolonged roar of laughter came from the Sixth-Form table, and the Fifth-Formers joined in just as heartily. Mr. Crowell was shocked.

"I am amazed!" he said coldly. "I thought the boys of the Sixth had a greater sense of their dignity."

"Boys will be boys, no matter what their age," said Mr. Wilkes, seizing the enamel bowl, and holding it well away from him. "It's all right, Parkington, old scout. This isn't your diet at all. I'm afraid you've had a bit of a shock."

"It was nearly a fit, sir," confessed K. K.

"Your breakfast will be along in a minute," said the Housemaster. "I strongly suspect that it was purposely delayed. I always thought that Biggleswade was a bit of a wag."

The Remove table settled down again, and the odour of onions dispersed.

"Hallo! Here comes K. K.'s brekker!" sang out somebody.

A special tray was brought in, and the eyes of the Removites opened wide as the tray was set immediately in front of Kirby Keeble Parkington. And the eyes that opened the widest were K. K.'s. He could hardly believe them.

"Well I'm blessed!" he said breathlessly.

The contents of the tray were totally different from what he had expected. One dish contained an appetising-looking salad, and close investigation proved that it consisted of grated carrot, sliced onion, delicate scraps of cabbage, and luscious slices of tomato. It was surrounded by a tasty-looking sauce.

In another dish there was a choice collection of fruits—apples, oranges, bananas, grapes. Still another dish was filled with large square biscuits—evidently a special kind of unleavened bread, which the cook had prepared for K. K.'s consumption.

"What ho!" said Parkington heartily, as he helped himself to the salad. "My Uncle Roger wasn't such a crank, after all!"

CHAPTER 6.

Doing K. K. a Good Turn!

THE Remove was frankly disappointed—particularly the Old-Timers.

They had been looking forward to expressing their heartfelt sympathy to K. K. Parkington on the subject of that breakfast, and at first it had seemed that they would have their peculiar enjoyment. The arrival of the special dishes confounded them.

"Why, I wouldn't mind having that for my own breakfast!" said Handforth

enviously, as he bent over the table and inspected the tempting-looking salad. "What's it like, K. K.?"

"Too delicious for words," replied Parkington, as he piled in.

"Doesn't it taste horribly raw?" asked Deeks.

"Unless I had known it in advance, I should never have guessed that this was carrot and cabbage," said K. K. with enthusiasm. "As for the sauce, it's something special—and you fellows needn't look at it greedily, because you won't get any. I'm jiggered if this isn't better than the ordinary brekker!"

"Apples and bananas, too!" said Gollin longingly. "We don't get luxuries like that!"

"I'm afraid our laugh is scotched, you chaps," said Nipper, with a sad shake of his head.

A figure came bustling up to the Remove table, and some interest was aroused when the newcomer was recognised as Mr. Barnaby Goole, the Housemaster of the East House. He was a remarkably thin gentleman, with shoulders so narrow that he was almost as big sideways as he was broadside. His face was clean-shaven, and his cheeks were sunken into hollows. His long thin nose was ruddy at the tip.

"Ah, Parkington!" he exclaimed, as he pounced upon K. K.. "I am glad I have arrived while you are at your meal. I

hurried over my own breakfast purposely. How do you like my menu?"

"Your menu, sir?" asked K. K.

"Of course," said Mr. Goole. "I thought you knew, Parkington, that I am an enthusiastic vegetarian. Mr. Wilkes very wisely—very brilliantly—sought my advice. He even placed you entirely in my hands. Your meals, in future, will be sent over from the East House."

"Oh, I see, sir," said K. K., with growing respect.

"Thus there will be no disorganisation in the cuisine of this House," continued Mr. Goole. "I regret that my own boys do not participate in these simple life food-stuffs—these health-giving vitamins—to anything like the extent I should prefer. It will be some satisfaction for you to know that all your meals in future will actually come from my own table. You are a very lucky boy, Parkington. Your—er—deceased relative, I may say, was a man of sound common-sense."

Mr. Goole stood over his latest convert, rubbing his long, thin hands together with gleeful satisfaction. K. K. now understood the better, and he was quite frank about it.

"I owe you an apology, sir," he said.

"Indeed? How is that?"

"I've always agreed with the other chaps about the food you have over in the East House, sir," said Parkington. "I've regarded it as rabbit fodder. It just shows you how



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know of a good rib tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to "Smiler," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

SAFETY FIRST!

Tommy (on unpleasant errand for mother): "Twopen'orth of castor oil, please, and gimme short weight."

Chemist (surprised): "Short weight? That's unusual. Why?"

Tommy: "'Cos it's for myself."

(C. Gilbert, 2, Rose Hill Terrace, St. Blazey, Cornwall, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

THE VITAL POINT!

One night a man in a trap was run down at a level crossing. Consequently the old signalman in charge had to appear in court. After a gruelling cross-examination, he was still un-

shaken. He said he had waved his lantern frantically, but all to no avail. The following day the superintendent of the line called him into his office.

"You did wonderfully well yesterday, Tom," he said. "I was afraid at first that you might waver."

"No, sir," replied Tom. "But I was afraid that the old lawyer was going to ask me whether my lantern was lit."

(L. Connell, 11, Raymond Street, W. Preston, Melbourne, Australia, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

AGREED!

Teacher: "To excavate means to hollow out. Give me a sentence using the word."

Pupil: "When I have been caned, I excavate."

(E. Aspinell, 88, Harbut Road, Battersea, S.W.11, has been awarded a penknife.)

GO HON!

Members of the Naval Board were examining young applicants for appointment to a naval college.

"Well," said the Admiral to Williams, "and what must an officer be before he can have a funeral with full naval honours?"

"Dead," was the bright answer.

(Merwar Naporie, 89, Sannomiya cho, I. Chome, Kobe, Japan, has been awarded a penknife.)

silly it is to judge things without really knowing."

Mr. Goole beamed with joy.

"As long as you are converted, Parkington, that is all I require," he said pleasantly. "Splendid! I am almost tempted to write an article for the 'Vegetarian Chronicle,' giving the peculiar details of this case. Thank you, Mr. Crowell, for allowing me to interrupt your breakfast. I am very gratified."

He bustled out, still washing his hands in the air.

"You've got to hand it to Old Wilkey—he's brainy," said K. K. "Always does the practical thing. With a tame vegetarian on the premises, why puzzle his head about my giddy diet? He's simply handed me over to Goole."

It was certainly an astute move on the part of Mr. Alington Wilkes—a move which upset the Old-Timers considerably. Their big laugh was a fizzle. If it hadn't been for the humorous propensities of Biggleswade, there wouldn't even have been a chuckle over K. K.'s new diet.

AFTER breakfast the Old-Timers had another chance.

"What are you going to do about the other conditions of Sir Roger's will?" asked Nipper casually, as he stood with K. K. and a number of others on the Ancient House steps. "Horseback riding, for example?"

"I suppose I shall have to go to a riding-school," replied K. K.

"There isn't one nearer than Bannington."

"Well, I shall have to go there."

"Why not have a few simple lessons to start with?" asked Nipper generously. "A chap looks an awful chump at a riding-school unless he's had some experience. And when you present yourself in that Quaker get-up, you'll frighten every horse in the place!"

K. K. looked down at his queer attire.

"I'd almost forgotten my get-up," he said. "And the funny thing is, this woolly under-clothing doesn't worry me a bit now. It's astonishing what you can get used to—when you have to."

"Never mind your clobber," said Nipper. "Why don't you do a bit of riding on Bud?"

"Bud?" repeated Parkington. "Who's he?"

"Jerry Dodd's pony, of course," said Handforth. "Great Scott! Do you mean to say you've never seen Bud? I say, Doddy! How about giving K. K. a few riding lessons on your giddy pony?"

Jerry Dodd, the Australian junior, strolled over. If K. K. had been more on the alert he would have noticed that Jerry had been standing suspiciously handy. The Old-Timers, in fact, were taking advantage of K. K.'s ignorance concerning Bud, the pony. Parkington, after all, was comparatively a newcomer; and it so happened that Bud had been away from the school for some weeks. Parkington didn't even know that Dodd

CARRYING OUT ORDERS!

Mother: "Jimmy, that was very greedy of you to eat your sister's share of the birthday cake."

Jimmy: "Well, mum, you told me always to take her part."

(W. Rosel, 486, Neerim Road, Murrumbena, Victoria, Australia, has been awarded a penknife.)

AWKWARD!

Stage Hand: "Shall I lower the curtain, sir?"

Manager: "Whatever for?"

Stage Hand: "One of the statues has got hiccups."

(B. Mitchell, 34, Pinderfields Road, Wakefield, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A TOOTHsome DAINTY!

Pursuing his beat down a wet and muddy side-street one evening, P.c. X. discovered a man on his knees feeling about in the mud and water of the gutter.

"Can I help you, sir?" asked the constable.

"You can. I've lost a piece of toffee."

"But surely you can let that go?" said the constable, in surprise.

"Let it go!" replied the other indignantly. "Why, it's got my teeth in it!"



(Ng Peng Hong, 143, J. Ayer Molck, Johore Bahru, Johore, Malaya, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

HIS DILEMMA!

Binks: "Hallo, old man! You look worried. Anything the matter?"

Smith: "I should say so. I've lost my glasses and I can't look for them until I've found them."

(F. Cozens, 84, James Lane, Leyton, E.10. has been awarded a penknife.)

A SLIGHT SLIP!

"Iceland," said the teacher, "is about as big as Siam."

"Iceland," wrote Tommy Jones, "is about as big as our teacher."

(D. Buttrick, 18, Petrie Street, Sheffield, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

YE ANCIENT NAG!

The absent-minded drawing-master came out of the village station and hailed a cab.

The cab drew up in front of him, and he stared at the horse for some moments.

"What is that?" he asked the cabby.

"A horse, sir," was the reply.

"Then," said the master, "rub it out and do it again."

(R. Bywater, 45, Ridgeway Road, Fishponds, Bristol, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

owned the animal. Bud, as the Old-Timers were aware, was a pony of some distinction—a pony of unusual qualifications.

"Well, I don't know," said Parkington slowly. "It might be better for me to go to a regular riding-school."

"You can have a trot round the paddock on my pony if you like," said Dodd obligingly. "Only too pleased, old man. I'll go and saddle him."

And Jerry went off before K. K. could protest.

"Bud's a nice little chap," said Nipper, "and there's nothing like having a preliminary lesson or two. Come on—let's get to the paddock!"

Fatty Little, of the West House, came dashing up, full of energy and enthusiasm.

"What about it, K. K.?" he puffed. "Going to treat us?"

"Treat you?" asked K. K. "How do you mean?"

"Mrs. Hake's got a fresh supply of beef pies and pastry in this morning," said Fatty, licking his lips. "Didn't your uncle's will specify that you've got to be generous, and spend your pocket-money on other people rather than yourself?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Fatty!"

"Well, it's only an idea," said Fatty Little defensively. "And if K. K.'s got to spend his money on somebody, it might as well be us."

"A jolly good idea!" said Handforth. "Come on, K. K.! Rally round, you chaps! This is his first day, and he might as well start it properly."

"Hear, hear!"

Kirby Keeble Parkington was whirled away to the school shop by the crowd, and the rapidity with which he spent his money on others was astonishing. Everybody ordered something, and it was rather hard lines on K. K. that he couldn't join in. All he could do was to pay the bill.

"That's thirty bob gone!" he remarked, as they came out. "I'm only too pleased, of course, but if I'm supposed to spend thirty bob every time you chaps lug me into the tuck-shop, I shall jolly well need that fortune!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perhaps those lawyers will give you an extra supply of pocket-money?" suggested Fatty Little hopefully. "You can't expect to carry out the conditions of the will unless you've got the money to do it with, can you?"

K. K. was now swept off into the paddock. That visit to the tuck-shop had been well timed. Again there was a suggestion of some prearranged plan by the Old-Timers. For in the confusion of settling up the bill, Parkington had had no time to think of Bud, much less talk of him.

The pony was now harnessed ready. K. K. was introduced to him very proudly by Jerry Dodd, and the red-headed junior was certainly favourably impressed. A meeker looking animal had never crossed his path.

Bud was sleek and well-groomed. He had a soft, kindly eye, and he looked so tame

and well-bred that it hardly seemed possible for him to be impolite enough to swish the flies away with his tail.

"Pretty docile, anyhow," remarked K. K., as he patted Bud on the neck. "I wouldn't mind owning a pony like this, Dodd."

"He's my best cobber," said the Australian junior affectionately.

There were plenty of fellows ready to give Parkington a leg-up—although he scorned all such help. He had had no experience of riding, but it looked simple enough. On Bud, indeed, it would be mere child's play.

The pony stood so quietly that he seemed to be half-asleep. He gave K. K. a gentle, inquiring glance, and then looked at Jerry. Handforth was ready to swear that Bud actually winked. But then, Handforth's imagination was vivid.

The Old-Timer's were waiting expectantly, although they pretended to be only mildly interested. They knew Bud of old. The Red-Hots didn't. Bud was by way of being a surprise-package.

"Well, jump on," said Jerry invitingly. "Steady, Bud, old boy!"

K. K. climbed into the saddle, and loud chuckles went round. The red-headed junior certainly looked picturesque on the pony's back, with his long coat trailing in folds over Bud's flanks, and with his wide-brimmed hat on the back of his head.

"Looks as if he's strayed out of a pageant," grinned Decks.

"Gee up!" invited K. K., giving Bud a gentle nudge. "How do you start these giddy things? I'm all right on a motor-bike, but I'm blessed if I know what to do here!"

"You can't very well use the kick-starter, can you?" chuckled Nipper.

"There's no need to kick Bud to start him," said Jerry. "He's a good scout, but he's a bit lazy at times. I dare say he'll start when he feels in the mood."

"Well, I hope he soon gets into the mood," said Parkington with some impatience. "He's been standing like a statue ever since I saw him. Gee up, you image! Get a move on!"

Bud merely cocked his eye at Jerry and remained stationary.

"I can't even get him into low gear!" complained K. K.

"The fact is, I've trained him pretty thoroughly," explained Jerry Dodd, "and I'm afraid he won't obey anybody except me. All right, Bud! You can go now. Take him round the paddock."

Bud, to K. K.'s astonishment, trotted off on the instant. He obeyed the instructions to the letter. Gently, leisurely, he trotted round the paddock, and when he arrived back at his starting point he stood still, waiting for further orders.

"Like it?" asked Jerry.

"Pretty tame," said K. K. disparagingly. "After my motor-bike this seems wishy-washy! Horseback riding is easy enough. What's wrong with the animal? I kept on trying to make him speed-up, but he wouldn't take any notice."

"Oh, you want more speed, do you?" asked Jerry.

"I'd like it, but there doesn't seem much hope," replied K. K. "I'd like to get a kick out of this ride—a thrill."

"Why didn't you tell me at first?" said Jerry in a tone of surprise. "Bud will do anything you like. If it's a thrill you want, he'll give you one. Go ahead, Bud! Gallop, old son! Give him the works!"

Bud snorted, quivered all over, and let fly.

"Great Scott!" gasped Parkington wildly.

The pony shot off with such unexpected speed that he nearly toppled his rider off backwards. Somehow or other, K. K. managed to cling on, and the next moment he was being taken round the paddock at a mad gallop.

CHAPTER 7.

Bucking Bronco Bud!

"**H**A, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter went up from the Old-Timers. This was the moment they had been waiting for; and K. K.'s expression of astonishment and alarm as the pony shot off was genuinely funny.

Bud was really a remarkable animal. He understood every word his master uttered; what was more, he obeyed. K. K. was now careering round like mad, and it was as much as he could do to keep himself in the saddle. He clung desperately to Bud's neck, and the more he yelled the faster Bud went.

"Hi! Whoa!" he howled. "Go easy, you cyclone!"

Bud tore on, his ears back, his sleek limbs flashing. He was like a prairie mustang running wild.

"Stick it, K.K.!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bud came tearing round, and Parkington nearly toppled off as the little animal took the corner.

"Whoa! Not so dashed fast!" yelled K. K. "Hi, Dodd! How do you stop this firebrand? I can't find a brake anywhere!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you want to stop?" shouted Jerry.

"Yes!" roared the victim.

The Australian junior suddenly raised a hand.

"Whoa, Bud!" he ordered.

Bud whoa-ed as readily as he did everything else. His master's voice acted like magic upon him. He simply thrust his forefeet into the turf and came to an abrupt standstill as suddenly as though he had collided with a brick wall.

Kirby Keeble Parkington had desired to stop, but not quite in this fashion. He sailed over Bud's head, arms and legs flying, a shoe going in one direction, his hat in another. He turned about three somersaults, and landed with a thud.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

K. K. sat up dazedly. Bud was standing a foot or two away from him, meek and

calm. K. K. blinked. It was difficult to realise that this docile creature was the one which had so recently thrown him over his head.

"My only sainted aunt!" gurgled K. K. dizzily.

"Well, how did you like it?" asked Jerry, strolling up. "Sorry he stopped so abruptly, but you wanted him to stop, didn't you?"

"He's not an animal; he's a cyclone!" said Parkington, rubbing himself.

"Bud, old boy, you've upset your rider," said Jerry severely. "Look what you've done to his shoe and his hat. Collect them up and give them back."

Bud cocked his ears, trotted over to the wide-brimmed Quaker hat, got his teeth into it, and trotted back. K. K. was still sitting on the ground, and Bud deftly dropped the hat on his head.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said K. K. blankly.

Bud wheeled round, fetched the missing shoe in the same way, and dropped it at his late rider's feet. Then he cocked his eye at Jerry, whinnied, and resolved himself once more into a statue. The Old-Timers grinned appreciatively. They had known of Bud's qualifications all along.

"Here endeth the first lesson," said Handforth dryly.

"No fear!" said Jerry. "It's only just begun. I'm sure K. K. hasn't had enough yet. One gallop round isn't——"

"I think I'll go to a real riding school," interrupted K. K. ruefully.

"But, my dear chap, Bud hasn't shown you half his tricks yet," urged the Australian junior. "You said you wanted some thrills, didn't you?"

"Yes, but——"

"Then get into the saddle again and Bud will show you just how thrilling he can really be," said Jerry enthusiastically. "You're not going to be scared of him, are you? He won't pull up suddenly like that again."

Parkington picked himself up, and eyed the pony warily.

"Well, I'm not afraid of him, blow you!" he said grimly. "I'm beginning to think that you Old-Timers planned all this deliberately. You thought I'd fall off long before I did, eh?"

"You gave a good show, K. K.," said Nipper generously. "But I'll bet you couldn't ride him round the paddock again. You did it once, but——"

"Couldn't ride him round again?" interrupted K. K., jumping into the saddle. "I'll show you whether I can or not! Gee up, you exaggerated electric hare! Go as fast as you like. I don't care. Gee up, blow you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bud took not the slightest notice, but merely turned his head and looked at his master. He quivered slightly, as though he was steeling himself for an effort. Obviously he expected the word.

"Right!" shouted Jerry suddenly. "Throw him off, Bud!"

Bud started off like a sailplane suddenly released from its catapult. He shot clean through the air for the first yard or two, and then dashed off even faster than before. The crowd watched joyously.

For Bud now varied his programme. He did not content himself with galloping round the paddock, but he suddenly paused, swerved, and then bunched himself into a heap, and K. K. shot out of the saddle over Bud's head. He hit the ground flat, most of the wind knocked out of him. Bud, having done his duty, trotted gently back to Jerry Dodd, and gave a satisfied swish of his tail.

"I thought, somehow, you wouldn't ride him round the paddock again," said Nipper gently. "Poor old K. K. You didn't know what Bud could do, did you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Old-Timers howled with merriment. K. K., staggering to his feet, realised the full truth. The whole thing was a jape—on him. The other Red-Hots breathed fury. Not that they could do anything. The Old-Timers were in force.

"We might have known it!" said Deeks, with a snort. "We ought to have suspected something as soon as these bounders suggested giving K. K. a ride!"

"Well, it's your laugh," said K. K., with a feeble grin. "My respect for Bud is one hundred per cent. I know when I'm whacked!"

"Good old K. K.!" said Nipper heartily. "We knew you'd take it in the right spirit."

"I think I've taken it somewhere else, too," groaned Parkington, as he rubbed three or four tender spots in succession. "I don't think so much of my grand-uncle as I did. Horseback riding is overrated!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cave, you chaps!" went up a sudden shout. "Here's old Wilkey!"

Nobody moved. Mr. Alington Wilkes seldom caused a panic, as any other master might have done. In any case, there was nothing to be scared of now, for the juniors were breaking no rules.

"Good man!" said Mr. Wilkes, coming up and patting K. K. on the back. "I'm glad to see that you're sticking to the conditions of the will, old son. Been doing a bit of riding, eh?"

"Not exactly riding, sir. I've been practising a few falls," explained K. K.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Falls?" repeated Mr. Wilkes, as he glanced at Bud. "Not off this animal, surely? I'm afraid you must be very inexperienced indeed, K. K. I've never seen a more gentle-looking creature."

Jerry Dodd winked at the others.

"Do you ride, sir?" he asked politely.

"I have ridden," admitted Mr. Wilkes with caution.

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"Would you care for a trot round the paddock, sir?"

"Why not?" said the Housemaster. "I haven't been in the saddle for many months, and it'll be a change for me. Yes, I think I will, Dodd. A gentle trot round the paddock will be most pleasant."

The juniors held their breath. Would Jerry have nerve enough to tell Bud to "do his stuff"? Jerry probably would. It was fortunate that Mr. Wilkes had not arrived on the scene during the recent operations, for he apparently knew nothing of Bud's real capabilities. Like K. K., he accepted Bud at his face value.

"You'd better go easy, sir," said K. K., with a glare at the Old-Timers. "Bud isn't so docile as he looks. I thought I'd better warn you——"

"There is a difference between us, old man," said Mr. Wilkes gently. "You are a raw recruit, and I, at least, have had some experience. I don't think Bud will throw me so easily."

"You don't, sir?" asked K. K., nettled. "All right—go ahead!"

"You ought to be very proud, Dodd, of owning such a splendid animal," continued Mr. Wilkes, patting the pony on the flank. "So gentle—so quiet. I can see that you have trained him well."

"I have, sir," replied Jerry promptly. "I've trained him very well."

A few chuckles went round as Mr. Wilkes eased his long, loose figure over the animal's back. He looked rather incongruous as he sat perched there in the saddle.

"Come along, Bud," he said, with a gentle tug at the reins. "Gee up, old boy!"

"He won't go until I tell him, sir," explained Dodd. "I've trained him like that."

"Splendid!" beamed Mr. Wilkes. "Go ahead, then. Give him the word."

Jerry Dodd gave it, but not loudly. He was standing close to Bud's head, and he leaned very close.

"Right away, old son!" he breathed. "Throw him off! Do your worst!"

He stood aside, and there was an immediate scattering of fellows from the area in front of Bud. The pony repeated his earlier performance. He leapt into the air, shot off, and broke into a wild gallop.

"Good gracious!" gasped Mr. Wilkes, clutching at the saddle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stick it, sir!"

"Ride him, cowboy!"

"Well, I've done it!" grinned Jerry Dodd. "I hope he doesn't come too much of a cropper, but I couldn't resist the temptation."

"Wilkey's a sport—he won't cut up rusty, even if he does land with a wallop," said Handforth. "By George! Look at him! He's still in the saddle! Go it, sir! You're winning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bud, instructed by his young master, was giving Mr. Wilkes "the works." But Bud

received a bit of a surprise, for Mr. Wilkes not only kept his seat, but he kept it easily.

Bud spun round, rocketed into the air, and kicked out his hind legs high in the air. He dashed off, pulled up short, reared, and did everything else that he knew, but his rider stuck in the saddle like a clam.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Jerry Dodd, staring.

Mr. Wilkes was giving a marvellous performance. He was proving, in fact, that he was as adept at bronco-busting as he was at most other sports. He sat that saddle with the ease and grace of a cowboy.

"Bravo, sir!"

"Hurrah!"

"You've won, sir!"

Bud bucked desperately now, for something told him that he was beaten, and that he had met his master. Jerry Dodd had told him to throw his rider, and he had done his best; but his best was not good enough.

"Easy, old man, easy!" murmured Mr. Wilkes. "Come along, now, that's enough of this. Take it gently."

Whether it was his voice, or his instinctive command over animals, the pony immediately obeyed. He ceased his mad bucking, and settled down into a gentle trot. The performance was over, and Mr. Wilkes was in command.

"Well I'm dashed!" said Jerry Dodd blankly. "And I didn't give Bud any further orders! Old Wilkey's as much his master as I am."

"Why look so surprised?" asked Nipper. "It's about time you fellows knew that old Wilkey has always got something up his sleeve. There's absolutely nothing he can't do!"

CHAPTER 8.

K. K. the Spartan!

KIRBY KEEBLE PARKINGTON groaned.

"This is awful!" he said dismally.

The day had passed, and he was sitting alone in an isolated box-room on the second floor of the Ancient House. He was, in fact, doing his two hours of "solitary confinement," as the other fellows called it.

The first half hour had not been so bad, but the second half hour was dragging out interminably. When K. K. looked at his watch, he could hardly believe his eyes.

"The rotten thing must have stopped!" he muttered. "I know jolly well I've been here two hours. I know——"

He broke off, for the big school clock was chiming. He listened, and groaned again. It was a fact. He had only been alone for one hour as yet. This communion, so to speak, at least gave him the opportunity of reviewing the events of the day. There had been a good deal of laughter over Bud, the pony. K. K. knew that he could not congratulate himself much over that incident.

Mr. Wilkes had come through with flying colours, but he—K. K.—had merely provided amusement for the Old-Timers.

Then there was the food. Dinner hadn't been so bad, although it consisted of the same uncooked ingredients as breakfast. Palatable for a change, but K. K. could see that he would soon loathe the sight of it. Tea had hit him hardest of all. For Parkington loved his tea, and it was, in fact, his favourite meal of the day. It was the one free-and-easy meal, partaken of in the cheery atmosphere of his own study. He generally "splashed" over tea; there was always ham, or meat pies, or sausages, followed by plenty of cake and pastries.

Those days, apparently, were over. To-day K. K. had had to content himself with raw vegetables again, helped down by a few hard, dry biscuits. His palate began to revolt against carrots and onions and lettuce and cabbage. And total abstinence from tea itself was even worse. A glass of cold water was no proper substitute for a steaming cup of tea. He shuddered as he thought of that meal.

"I shall go to bed without any supper," he told himself glumly. "What's the good of supper? What's the good of living, anyway? I've a dashed good mind to chuck the whole thing up!"

He was feeling despondent. This was only the first day, and he had to look forward to years of it. And all because his grand-uncle had put those idiotic directions in his will.

"Blow the money!" he said, getting to his feet and pacing up and down. "Money isn't everything! I'd rather be poor and enjoy myself than be a millionaire and live miserably!"

He squirmed. His Quaker clothing was beginning to jar on him, too. He wasn't chipped any longer by the other fellows—they had extracted all the possible fun out of that suit already—but K. K. hated it.

As for this daily two hours of penance, to prove his stoicism, it was torture. Every day, without fail, week in and week out! K. K. could not bear to think of the prospect. He wandered to the window and opened it.

Jerry Dodd's pony, bucked and jumped and kicked and did his utmost to throw Mr. Wilkes, but the Housemaster kept his seat in true cowboy style. "Bravo, sir!" applauded the watching juniors.



He could dimly see the Triangle below, and one or two figures were standing near the steps, talking. Voices floated up to him.

"Stick it?" came the words. "Of course he won't! Nobody ever expected he would. Two days of this will crumple him up."

"I don't give him more than three, anyhow," came Nipper's voice. "But, by Jove, he's sticking it like a good 'un so far!"

"It's easy enough to stick it on the first day," said somebody else. "It's the monotony of it that will wear him down."



And don't forget he hasn't slept on his plank bed yet! By this time to-morrow he'll be an absolute wreck—and then we shall get our laugh over him."

"And won't we laugh!" came a chuckle. "Poor old K. K.!"

The figures drifted indoors. Parkington gritted his teeth, and closed the window. His jaw was squarely set.

"So I shall crumple up by this time to-morrow evening, shall I?" he muttered. "I'll be an absolute wreck, will I? I'll show them what I'm made of! Those silly Old-Timers won't get any laugh out of me!"

He seethed with indignation. So they thought he was going to give it best. It came as a bit of a shock when he remembered his own thoughts of a few minutes earlier. He now steeled himself, and sat down composedly. What was an hour, anyhow? It would soon pass, and then he would be able to go down to the Common Room and join the rest. His determination helped matters considerably, and the second hour seemed to

pass rapidly. He became so lost in his thoughts, in fact, that he gave a start when he heard the clock chime.

"Well I'm jiggered!" he muttered, in astonishment.

It came upon him with almost a shock that an ordeal of this kind depended largely upon the state of mind. During the first hour he had chafed—he had been in a state of uncertainty—but during the second hour he had been resigned. His mind, thus freed from worry, busied itself in useful directions. He felt cheered. During morning lessons he had been worrying about certain mathematical problems that would be dealt with during prep. Those problems were now clear—he had had time to think and work them out. Prep, instead of being difficult, would be easy.

"This solitary communion business is a good stunt, after all," he told himself warmly.

IN the Common Room there was a lot of discussion on the subject of K. K.

"He ought to be coming in soon," said Travers, looking at his watch. "Poor old chap, I expect he'll be like a washed-out rag. I'm wondering if it isn't a bit too thick, dear old fellows."

"Of course it's too thick!" growled Deeks. "Dash it, there's no need to stick so closely to the conditions, is there? Surely K. K. could have sneaked a book up with him? He might even have done his prep."

"That wouldn't be playing the game," protested Nipper. "What would Mr. Norton say?"

"Blow Mr. Norton!"

"The directions of that will are very exact," said Nipper solemnly. "K. K. has got to spend that daily two hours in absolute seclusion—with his thoughts. No books and no other distractions. If he can't stick it, he loses the fortune."

"Here he comes!" murmured somebody, as footsteps sounded in the corridor. "Don't chip him too much—he's bound to be fed up to the teeth."

K. K. came in, bright and cheery.

"Hallo, you chaps," he said. "Why all the stares? Haven't you got used to my suit yet?"

"It's not your suit we're staring at, old man, but you," said Nipper.

"Well, of course, I can't blame you for staring at me," admitted Parkington. "There aren't many handsome fellows of my stamp about."

"Ass! We can't understand why you're looking so happy."

"That's an easy one," said K. K. cheerfully. "When a chap's happy he naturally looks happy."

"But haven't you just finished your two hours of solitary confinement?" asked Travers curiously.

"Yes, and it's a jolly good idea."

"Wha-a-at?"

"My grand-uncle was a brainy lad," nodded K. K. "During these two hours I've been free from the idle, incessant chatter of you fellows, and I've thought out my prep. so that I can finish it off within ten minutes. There's nothing like squatting alone, with your own thoughts, for getting things sorted out."

"Well I'm blessed!" said Nipper. "You're a fine bounder, K. K.! What's the good of us extending our sympathy towards you, and pitying you in your plight? It's wasted!"

Parkington chuckled.

"You fellows are all telling yourselves that I'm going to knuckle under, aren't you?" he said calmly. "You're whispering it to one another every time my back's turned. Well, I don't happen to possess a jellified spine."

Nipper slapped him on the shoulder.

"I must say, K. K., that you're made of stern stuff—and good luck to you!" he said heartily. "Keep it up, old scout!"

"I can keep it up much easier if you fellows forget all about it and treat me as usual," replied Parkington. "What about your prep., Deeks? Where's Goffin?"

"In the study, doing his," replied Harvey Deeks. "I haven't done mine yet—I was waiting for you."

"Then come along; let's go and get it over," said K. K. briskly.

They strolled out, and the Old-Timers gave one another somewhat helpless looks.

"Our laughs, dear old fellows," murmured Travers, "aren't exactly coming off."

THERE were plenty of laughs at bed-time, however, and the Old-Timers spent a most enjoyable period. They all wanted to have a look in K. K.'s dormitory, so that they could inspect his new bed.

It had arrived during the evening, and when K. K. himself first saw it he had a bit of a shock. He had expected something startling, but when he came face to face with the reality he could only stand and stare.

"Ye gods!" he breathed. "Have I got to sleep on that?"

Deeks and Goffin, who were with him, were almost speechless. They gazed at the thing fascinatedly. It wasn't a bed at all. It was a specially-constructed bench, about six feet long by four feet wide.

It was made of stained deal, with four squat legs, and a perfectly flat surface of hard, unfriendly wood. The "pillow" was a fixture, and consisted of a raised piece of wood at the head. There were a couple of heavy, coarse blankets lying folded at the bottom of the bench.

"But—but this is idiotic!" protested Deeks at length. "You can't do it, K. K.! You won't get a wink of sleep on that ghastly horror!"

Goffin sat down on it, and it felt like a solid stone step.

"Why submit to it?" he asked in a low voice.

"What else can I do?" asked K. K. gruffly. "They've taken my own bed away, and if I complain Wilkey will know and he's bound to report to old Norton——"

"Why say anything about it to anybody?" interrupted Goffin. "Dash it, K. K., you can't sleep on this thing! Feel it! It's—it's like a chunk of Portland cement! You wouldn't get a wink!"

"There's only the floor if I don't, and the floor's just as bad!"

"After lights-out you can slip into my bed," invited Goffin generously. "Deeks and I can take it in turn to have you. As long as you nip out as soon as the rising-bell goes, who'll ever know?"

Parkington shook his head.

"Jolly decent of you, but I don't do things like that," he replied bluntly. "If I take a thing on, I go through with it. A fine kind of swindler I should feel if I dodged the conditions like that. No, sweetheart, it wouldn't be playing the game. I sleep on that bench from to-night onwards!"

His chums eyed him admiringly.

"I suppose you're right, old man," said Goffin, with reluctance. "By Jove, you're a Spartan all right."

Further discussion was rendered difficult by the fact that visitors arrived. A crowd of Old-Timers barged in, and the inspection of the new bed was quite a business. Sympathy was showered upon K. K.'s head by all and sundry.

"Well, K. K., if you stick this you'll deserve a row of medals as well as that fortune," said Nipper. "What's the good of being at school? You might just as well be in prison!"

"They give you better beds than this in prison," said Handforth.

"The more you fellows pity me, the easier it will be for me to stand it," said K. K. composedly. "Rats to the lot of you!"

"That's a nice way to talk, after we've sympathised——"

"You can't spoof me!" interrupted K. K., with a sniff. "You're not really sympathising! You're all as bucked as the dickens! And when you clear out of here you'll ask one another what I shall look like in the morning—how stiff I shall be—how many

cricks I shall have! Well, you can buzz off! And I can tell you now that you won't get any laughs out of me in the morning."

The Old-Timers were abashed. Parkington had hit the nail on the head; and as they retired, they again felt that K. K.'s ordeal was not providing them with the laughs they were rightfully entitled to.

"What!"

The Old-Timers were so startled that they refused to believe the statement. They crept over to Parkington's "bed"; and Deeks and Goffin slipped out and joined them. They all stood looking down like so many specialists in consultation over a critical case. K. K.

Parkington was lying flat on his back, breathing evenly, with an expression of blissful repose on his good-natured face.

"Is he fooling us, dear old fellows?" murmured Travers.

"I don't think so," replied Nipper, grinning. "Well, I'm dashed! What's the good of expecting this chap to amuse us? He gets a wooden bench instead of a bed, and he goes to sleep more soundly than usual!"

"I think we'd better quit," murmured Travers sadly.

They quitted, and Deeks and Goffin got back into their own beds.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Goffin, with a sniff. "All day long we've been worrying about that giddy bench—and he's sleeping like a top!"

"He'd sleep on the top of a wall, I believe—even one of those walls covered with broken glass!" growled Deeks. "Blow him! I'm going to sleep myself!"

WHEN the rising bell rang Parkington was the last to arouse himself.

Deeks and Goffin sat up at once and stared across at their leader. He was only just beginning to stir.

"Morning, K. K.," said Deeks kindly. "Better go easy. I expect you're as stiff as a ramrod."

"Hallo, you chaps!" said Parkington, sitting up and pushing the blankets aside. "Jolly nice morning, by the look of it!"

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CHAPTER 9.

Enter

Mr. Parkington!

HARVEY DEEKS turned gently round in bed, raised his head, and stared across the dark dormitory. He could dimly see the outline of Kirby Keeble Parkington's form as it lay on the hard wooden bench, covered by the rough blankets.

"K. K.!" whispered Deeks softly.

No reply.

"He can't be asleep," came Goffin's voice from the other bed. "He's trying to kid us. It's only ten minutes since lights-out."

K. K.'s chums were not inclined for sleep. They were worrying about their leader.

"I say, K. K.," called Deeks, in a louder voice.

Still there was no reply.

"Well, I'm jiggered! I believe he is asleep!" murmured Deeks wonderingly.

The door softly opened, and two heads appeared. Vivian Travers and Nipper were peeping in. Deeks and Goffin sat up suspiciously.

"Look here—no larks," protested Deeks.

"My dear chap, we're not dreaming of any larks," said Nipper. "We only came in to see how K. K.'s getting on. I'm afraid the poor chap won't get much sleep—"

"Then you can go back to bed," interrupted Goffin tartly. "K. K.'s fast asleep already."

Sun's shining, and—" He broke off, startled. "Great Scott!" he gasped. "What's the time?"

"You're not deaf," said Deeks. "Can't you hear the rising-bell?"

"I ought to have been up an hour ago!" ejaculated K. K., gazing at the little alarm clock by his bed. "It went off all right. It's the first time it's failed to waken me. I shall have to buzz like the dickens to get my bathe!"

His chums felt rather weak.

"But didn't you keep waking up during the night?" asked Goffin, as he watched his leader dashing into his clothes with as much energy as ever. "Aren't you stiff all over, old man?"

K. K. paused in his efforts.

"Now you come to mention it, I do feel a bit stiff," he admitted. "But what else do you expect after Bud threw me like that? Besides, horse-riding always makes a fellow a bit stiff until he's used to it."

"Horse-riding!" gasped Deeks. "What about your bed?"

K. K. started.

"That's funny!" he said, staring at the wooden bench. "I'd completely forgotten about it. I've never slept more soundly in my life—and I've never had a better sleep."

The door had opened, and a crowd of Old-Timers had heard the words. It was clear that K. K. had not uttered them for their benefit, for his back was to the door, and he did not even know of their presence. They gazed at one another with rather sickly expressions. Obviously, they had come to laugh, but, as usual, there wasn't one.

"Yes," went on K. K., as he laced his shoes. "The more I think of my grand-uncle, the more I respect him! Who wants to sleep on a silly spring mattress, anyhow? Hallo, you chaps! I didn't see you there!"

"It's all right—we're going," said Nipper sadly.

The other Old-Timers had nothing to say. They retired and closed the door. Deeks and Goffin were grinning appreciatively.

"You've dished them again, K. K.," said Deeks. "Jolly smart of you! But, just between ourselves, hadn't you better use some embrocation?"

Parkington stared.

"Dished them?" he echoed. "Embrocation? Why, you silly cuckoos, I was speaking the truth! What's the matter with you? Don't you believe me? I tell you, I've never slept better in all my life!"

He bustled out, leaving his chums speechless.

The fact of the matter was, K. K. was a healthy, robust youngster. The anticipation of sleeping on a bench was far worse than the realisation. He had had a tiring day, and it was natural that he should sleep soundly.

The Old-Timers, who had been confidently expecting some more amusement at K. K.'s expense, were "done." And instead of jibbing at his early morning dip, K. K. seemed to be enjoying it. He came back

from the river this morning ruddy-faced, his hair tousled, his eyes sparkling with health. Even his stiffness had gone.

"Now for more of old Goole's vegetarian concoctions!" he said briskly, as he came downstairs after changing. "I've got an appetite like a horse, and I could eat grass!"

"Wouldn't you rather have eggs and bacon?" asked Handforth.

"With an appetite like mine, any kind of food is acceptable," replied Parkington coolly. "I thought I wasn't going to like this new diet, but it's growing on me. I'm looking forward to it."

"My only hat!"

"And this Quaker suit is a sight more comfortable than my ordinary togs," said K. K. "I've never had such topping pockets!"

"What's the use?" asked Nipper helplessly. "He likes his new grub, he likes his funny suit, he likes his solitary confinement, he likes his cold-water dip, and he even likes sleeping on a plank! The fellow's hopeless!"

"Might as well try to get a laugh out of a catacomb!" said Travers, shaking his head. "Dear old fellows, hadn't we better admit —"

"There's only one thing I don't like," interrupted Parkington thoughtfully.

"Oh! What's that?"

"I don't like being forced to cut Vera," said K. K. "I passed her this morning and I couldn't even speak to her. It's the one rule I feel like ignoring. I can't see any sense in it. The old boy was pretty brainy in his other stunts, but that one beats me."

At breakfast, however, when partaking of his weird and wonderful diet, K. K. had a moment of reaction. The odour of fried bacon and hot coffee was stupefying. Something seemed to snap within him, and a great longing came over him to throw his breakfast aside and make a grab for the nearest coffee cup.

It was in this moment, indeed, that the truth came upon him. It was like a blow between the eyes. He had only been fooling himself! It was just his strength of will which had induced his self-deception.

He knew, in a flash, that he hated this food—he hated his Quaker suit—he hated his new bed. An overpowering desire came upon him to throw over the whole thing. His face became drawn, his eyes sombre; and he sat like a statue, his filled fork idle.

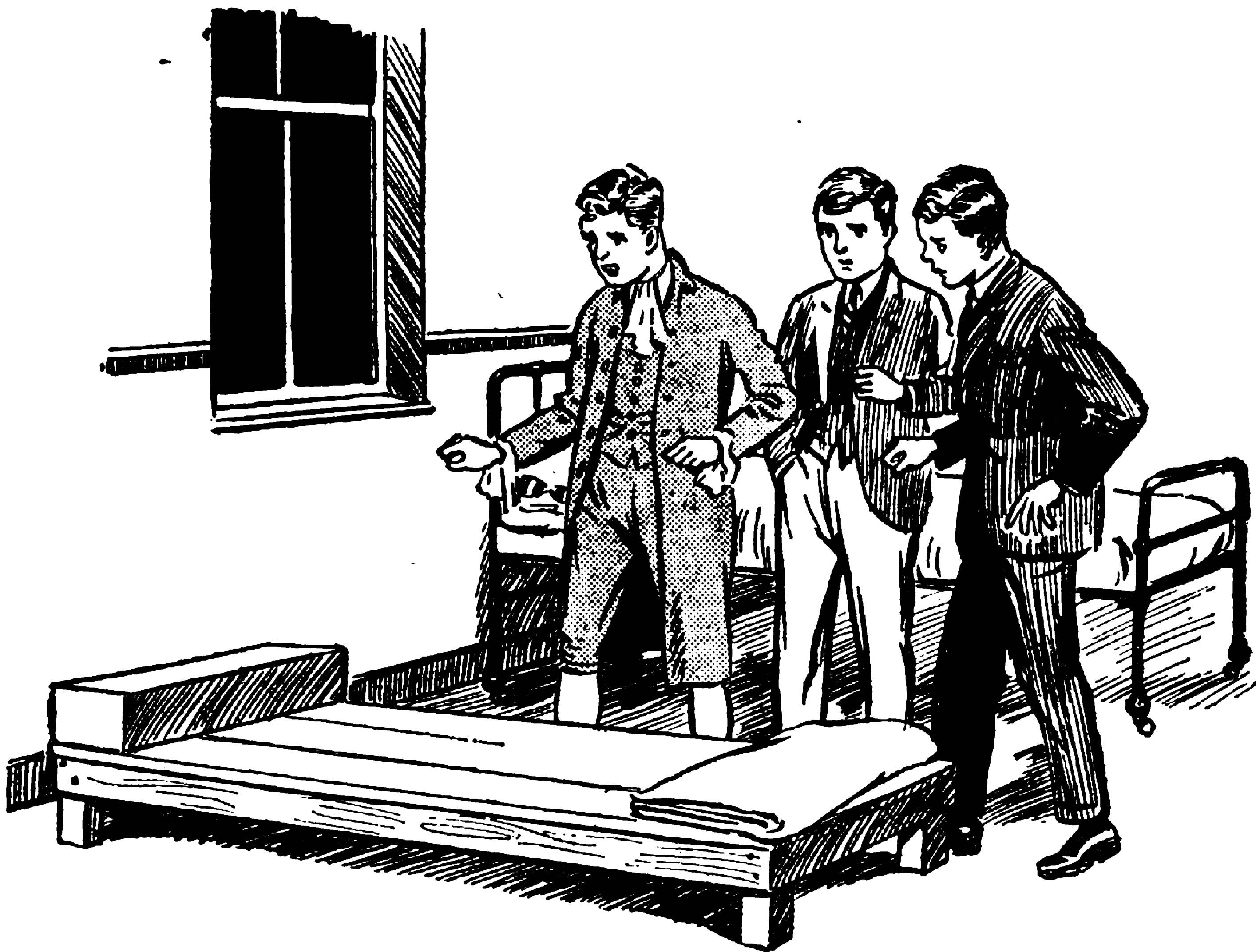
"Anything wrong, K. K.?" came a whisper from Deeks, next to him.

Parkington started. His moment of weakness passed. He grinned in his usual sunny way.

"Wrong?" he repeated. "What should be wrong?"

He went on eating, and although the next mouthfuls made him feel positively sick, he carried on. Within a minute he had got himself firmly under control again—even to the extent of convincing himself that he really liked this food.

"Well done, K. K.," said Mr. Wilkes gently, as the juniors were piling out of the dining-hall.



Parkington regarded the hard wooden bed in dismay. If he was to inherit his uncle's fortune he would have to sleep on that "bed" for the next six years!

"I—I don't know what you mean, sir," said K. K.

"No?" smiled the Housemaster. "Whether you know it or not, old man, I repeat it—well done!"

He passed on and left Parkington rather puzzled, but the big, red-headed junior had no opportunity of thinking it out, for as soon as he got into the lobby he met a tall, broad, jovial-looking gentleman in plus-fours.

"Pater!" ejaculated K. K. delightedly.

"Hallo, Kirby!" said Mr. Parkington, striding up. "I was just looking for you. Thought I'd give you a little surprise."

"You have, too, pater," said K. K. "I suppose you came down to see how I am getting on, eh?"

"I'm always interested to know how you are getting on, old man," said his father.

"I don't mean generally, but about Uncle Roger's will," replied K. K. "Well, I'm sticking it, and I mean to stick it. How do you think I look in my Quaker clothes?"

Mr. Parkington chuckled.

"I've been wondering ever since I saw you what the idea was," he replied. "Even now I don't understand. I thought you were dressed up for some rehearsal or other. I am glad you told me it's a Quaker suit, because I shouldn't have known it otherwise."

K. K. stared.

"But it's one of the conditions of Uncle Roger's will, pater," he said. "You knew that, surely?"

"A condition of your Uncle Roger's will?" asked Mr. Parkington in amazement. "That you should wear these clothes? What on earth are you talking about, Kirby? Who put such an idea into your head?"

"But you must know about the will and its conditions, pater," said K. K. "Mr. Norton, the solicitor, came down and gave me all the details. I'm a vegetarian——"

"Wait a minute—wait a minute!" interrupted his father desperately. "There are no such preposterous conditions in your uncle's will, and there is no such lawyer as Mr. Norton! Somebody's been fooling you, Kirby!"

CHAPTER 10.

Something of a Fizzle!

KIRBY KEEBLE PARKINGTON had the shock of his life. He stared at his father with dumbfounded astonishment.

"Fooling me!" he managed to say at last. "You—you mean, pater, that there isn't really a lawyer named Mr. Norton?"

"I dare say there are plenty of lawyers named Norton, but not one connected with your grand-uncle's will," said his father gently. "It's high time I arrived, I think! You'll have to tell me exactly——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crowds of Old-Timers, standing about in the offing, could contain themselves no longer. They burst into roars of laughter.

"Poor old K. K.!"

"Spoofed up to the eyes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you like being a vegetarian, K. K.?"

"And what price sleeping on a plank?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Parkington went red, swallowed hard, and then turned pale. He gazed at the yelling Old-Timers with complete understanding.

"You—you blighters!" he ejaculated.

"Then—then it was a jape?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Old-Timers yelled harder than ever, and K. K. turned to his father.

"Kick me, pater—kick me hard!" he said fiercely. "Here have I been obeying all these fatheaded conditions for the last two or three days, and these lunatics have been laughing up their sleeves all the time!"

"They appear to be glad to give their sleeves a rest," said Mr. Parkington dryly. "But don't look so annoyed, Kirby. You must learn to laugh at yourself; it's the best way of preserving your sense of humour. Tell me more about this extraordinary practical joke."

K. K. lost his expression of ferocity, and suddenly grinned.

"You're right, pater," he said ruefully. "But what an absolute chump I've been! Even now I can't understand it, because old Wilkey must have been fooled, too!"

The Removities poured out into the Triangle, still shouting with laughter; but only the Old-Timers saw the humour of the situation. The Red-Hots were all looking flustered and infuriated.

"This spoof lawyer went to Mr. Wilkes first and fixed up the whole thing," said K. K. "He must have been one of the Old-Timers in disguise. Nipper, I expect. Yet I don't seem to recognise——"

"It wasn't Nipper, old man," said Travers, as he passed. "Nipper and I worked up the wheeze, and we took Browne of the Fifth into the game. Browne induced Stevens to make up as the lawyer."

"Stevens!" breathed K. K. "Why, you bounder—— Oh, all right! Have your laugh," he added, as Travers walked off. "Stevens is the finest amateur actor in the school, pater, a regular genius at make-up and impersonation."

"He must be if he hoodwinked your Housemaster," said Mr. Parkington. "I think I'd better go and have a word with Mr. Wilkes straight away."

MR. ALINGTON WILKES listened whimsically as Mr. Parkington gave him a few of the details.

"The astonishing thing is," concluded the visitor, "that you were so completely taken in by this boy."

"It so happens, Mr. Parkington, that my eyes were wide open from the first."

announced Mr. Wilkes with a smile. "I'm not saying that I recognised Stevens when he first introduced himself, but before he had been in this room five minutes I was 'on' to him."

"And you let him leave, thinking that he had succeeded?" asked Mr. Parkington in amazement.

"It was a case of the spoofer being spoofed," replied the Housemaster. "I gave Stevens his head, just to see what his exact game was. I soon gathered that there was a big practical joke afoot—a joke against your son—and by the time I had heard all I decided to let it proceed."

"Wasn't that an unusual thing for a man in your position to sanction?"

"I'm an unusual man, Mr. Parkington."

"By Jove, I believe you!" said the other.

"But even so——"

"I did not give it my official sanction, either," explained Mr. Wilkes. "By pretending to be fooled, I allowed the jape to proceed without incurring the slightest responsibility. A schoolmaster, my dear sir, has to be an adept in the art of winking, and, after all, what harm is there in a perfectly good jape?"

"My son was made to suffer all this ridicule!" pointed out Mr. Parkington, with some impatience.

"Did he suffer?" said Mr. Wilkes dryly.

"It was intended that he should be made to look ridiculous, just as it was intended that he should provide the jokers with many a laugh, but between you and me and this inkpot, Mr. Parkington, I don't think the young rascals have had all the laughs they anticipated."

"They were laughing loud enough when I last heard them," said Mr. Parkington gruffly.

"We must permit them that one, which, after all, was poor payment for all the trouble they had taken," replied Old Wilkey.

"You see, I reviewed the situation while the faked lawyer was talking to me. I not only allowed the jape to proceed, but I even helped the jokers. I had faith in your son, and I wanted to see what he would do when he was put on his mettle."

"Oh!"

"If your boy was fooled—which seemed highly probable—he would have to submit to a great deal of discomfort," explained Mr. Wilkes gently. "Only a boy of strong character could have come through with flying colours. It was a test for your son. I don't think one boy in twenty would have 'stuck it' as K. K. has done. I've kept my eye on him pretty closely, and more than once he has been on the point of knuckling under. But he didn't do that. He just set his teeth, gripped himself hard, and straightened his back. I'm proud of him."

Mr. Parkington broke into a loud chuckle.

"Upon my word, Mr. Wilkes, you are a most refreshing man," he said, laughing outright. "And now that you have explained

things I am glad that you acted as you did. It certainly was a test for Kirby. I need hardly tell you that Sir Roger Parkington's will is a simple, straightforward document, with no strings attached to it whatsoever."

A few minutes later Mr. Parkington strolled into the Triangle and gathered the Old-Timers round him.

"There's one thing I want to tell you boys," he said genially. "You've got an exceptionally fine Housemaster."

"That's not news to us, sir," grinned Nipper. "We've known it ever since he came."

"He's a sportsman, a man of unique understanding," continued Mr. Parkington. "I won't say any more, or you might know too much. But if you think that you scored in this practical joke, I'm afraid you're deluding yourselves."

"We're not so simple, sir," said Nipper, as he slapped K. K. on the back. "If anybody scored it was your son. We put the

joke over, but it didn't pan out as we reckoned. Your son was too jolly strong for us."

"Good old K. K.!" sang out the Old-Timers heartily.

"We expected him to crumple up after the first day, sir," added Nipper, "but the boulder didn't. In fact, from our point of view, the jape was a fizzle, and between ourselves, we owe old Wilkey one for pretending to be spoofed when he wasn't!"

But Kirby Keeble Parkington hadn't been pretending, and his strength of character had triumphed. The Old-Timers had forced the pace, but K. K. had nabbed the kudos!

THE END.

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 Whee-ee-ee!"
 Bang!

Into the little cow town of Mesquite, sweltering under the full heat of the brazen Arizona sunshine, came the strangest procession that had ever startled the inhabitants of that hard-bitten, gun-slinging hamlet.

It was a tiny place, consisting of a double line of shacks and adobe huts, and its only claim to importance was that it was the nearest town to the Californian border mountains possessing a telegraph. A sun-baked quietness brooded over the town, for the citizens, as usual, were asleep during the hottest part of the day.

From the direction of a long, dusty freight-train that had just clanked to a halt beside the solitary railroad shed, the procession wended its way—four big men and two lean, hefty grinning boys.

One of the men, the leader of the party, was grinning, too. He was also firing two six-shooters into the copper sky as fast as he could go, and howling like a wolf between shots. The other three slouched silently behind through the choking white dust of Mesquite's one street, with scowls on their battered faces. Their arms were bound tightly to their sides. From the looks of all three, they appeared to have been wrestling with playful, but hard-hitting, grizzly bears.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

In front of the town's one saloon and store, the Kicking Horse, the weird procession halted. The leader, a burly Californian dressed in railroad dunagarees and a gun belt, raised his voice once more.

"Whow-oo-h-oo! Rouse out! Rouse out, yuh-all wolves inside thar, an' see what poppa's brought home!"

Bang! Bang!

Mesquite woke up. Disturbed from their afternoon siesta, the citizens came stampeding from all twelve houses in the place, guns



in their hands and peevishness in their hearts. Most of them were of the same stamp: wiry, bowlegged gentlemen dressed in flannel shirts, brilliant scarves, huge sombreros and flapping leather "chaps." Cow punchers to a man. As they gathered in a bunch round the chuckling, revolver-banging railroad man, two little Mexicans sauntered out of a small 'dobe hut away from the street, to stand quietly on the fringe of the crowd, and scowl with the sullen hatred of their race when in the presence of cheerful white men.

"Whow-oo-h-oo."

Again the Californian's coyote wail rang out. This time it brought a storm of protests.

"Say, you locoed idjit——"

"What the——"

"Hey, there. Can it!?"

Into the midst of the throng, a huge man wearing two guns and on whose shirt gleamed a star, shoved his way and held up a hand.

"Say, what's this? I'm the sheriff heah. Who be yuh, stranger?"

He stopped short

Red-Hot Smashing Adventure:

IN WILDEST ARIZONA!

and his jaw sagged as the other smilingly pulled back his overall top and displayed a similar star pinned to his shirt.

"Pleased to meet yuh, sheriff. Now, if yuh-all mavericks hev got the sleep outa yore eyes and I kin get a word in edge-wise, I'll explain this yere festival!"

Still grinning, he sent a quick searching look round the assembled cowmen.

"My name's Brady; an' I'm a United States officer, as yuh see. I'm travellin' on thet freighter back yonder; thar's another officer thar, too, with a shot-gun. I reckon yuh-all know what thet means, huh?"

The crowd did; their eyes turned quickly to the distant locomotive. Even the meanest Indian in that wild desert range, of which Mesquite was the key-town, knew that trains carrying armed U.S. guards must be carrying treasure of some sort as well. The Californian grinned as he read the cattlemen's thoughts.

"Yore right!" he nodded. "She's an



ornery ole train to look at. But she's carryin' gold to Phoenix!"

"An'," continued the officer placidly, wheeling on his prisoners, "not to make too long a story, these three polecats with their arms tied are three misguided hombres who tried to lift thet gold. In fact, boys, they're the leadin' members of—the Al. Bronson gang!"

A fierce babel of voices shook the air. The cowpunchers made a rush.

"Lemme get at 'em!"

"The dirty thieves!"

"The mail-stealin', gold-rustling rattle-snakes!"

And then, like the mutter of a storm:

"Lynch 'em!"

In a flash, the sheriff of Mesquite stood beside Officer Brady with both guns out.

"Thet'll do!" he rapped. "I'll plug the next fool who talks of lynchin'. Brady, you oughtn't tuh have brought them heah. This district, fer two hundred miles round heah, has lost all its mail twice in the last month and every dollar of gold sent or brought in through the mountains—dust or coin!"

Brady grinned.

"Shore; that's why I came. Keep calm, boys. I had tuh stap heah fer a lot o' reasons!"

Calmly holstering his guns, he faced the angry crowd again.

"First, I want to telegraph the news back tuh 'Frisco. Next I want tuh clap these coyotes in yore jail till I kin take 'em back on the next train myself. An' the next——"

"Yeah?"

"An' the next, gents," cried Brady triumphantly, his tanned face splitting in a jubilant grin, "I want tuh interdooce Mesquite town to the boys who captured the Bronson gang!"

Before anyone could move he had whipped round, seized Peter Graham and Red by the neck, and flung those embarrassed six-footers into the arms of the sheriff.

"Thar they be, boys. Look at 'em!"

'Mid Friends—and Foes!

MESQUITE looked. The cow men took one one good stare at the wandering pair, with their bruised faces and helplessly tattered clothes, and surged forward. Peter felt strong arms grab his shoulders, rough hands grip his until they were numb. A solid roar went up, followed by a high-spirited volley of shots and ear-splitting howls. It was

the English boy's first experience of Western enthusiasm—and it took his breath away. The sheriff rescued them finally, and hugged them close.

"Lay off, you Injuns!" he bellowed. "Want tuh eat 'em? Go on, Brady; spin the yarn!"

"An' how!" chortled that officer. "Fellers, they ain't nothin' but a couple of

kids. The redhead's from Texas and t'other's English. From li'l ole played-out England. He says 'no, thanks' and 'thaa-anks awf'llay' as perlite as milk, but he's the wildest, scrappin'est bear-cat that ever shoved his fist through another guy's jaw!"

He gasped for breath.

"An' this is what they did. First they ditched three members o' the gang back in the Coast hills. Then they took my own gun away from me and knocked me cold, fer which I've forgiven 'em. Then they laid out the leader o' the gang, and final, they crawled along the train at full speed, dropped on the necks o' these two snakes when they held us up in Lone Wolf gulch, and knocked the eternal stuffin' out o' them both. That's what they did, fellers. Now cheer!"

Which is just what the cattlemen did. First Red was hoisted into the air, then Peter, and last, the smiling Brady. In a body, heralded by spurting guns and piercing yells, Mesquite whirled and went storming into the Kicking Horse store, with someone dragging in the prisoners, and the two Mexicans, who had been looking on from the fringe of the crowd, sidling up in the rear.

"Whoopee. Yip-yip-yi. Cowboys acomin'!"

Planting the gasping Peter on the wide counter, the sheriff pushed back the throng and held out his hand.

"Son, yuh and yore pard are welcome. We're proud to meet yuh. Mesquite's yore's to the limit!"

Before Peter could get sufficient wind to reply the exuberant Brady struck in quickly.

"Sheriff, thet's fine! Jest what I want. 'Cos these boys are broke; and believe me, if any guys hev need of real, honest-to-goodness cow-country outfits, these two are them. Shut up!" he roared ferociously as Peter started to protest.

The sheriff was frowning in thought.

"Why, say, ain't thar no reward for 'em, then? Seems to me that fellers who stamp out the Bronson gang ought tuh have somethin' han'some!"

Brady banged an exasperated fist on the counter.

"You said it, sheriff. Thar is a reward; five hundred dollars. But because it'll take a week or two tuh collect, these locoed kids won't wait. Fur as I kin make out, they're burning the trail plumb through Arizona and Texas into northern Mex. An' they've owned up tuh havin' the terrific fortune o' twelve dollars between 'em and the sumptuous clothes they're wearin' now. Can yuh beat it?"

"Gee!"

With the barrel of his gun the genial train-guard commanded silence.

"Now, gents, what about it?" he cried expectantly. "This is the main reason I stopped the train at this yere saloobrious mee-tropolis. This district's suffered more'n anybody from these Bronson snakes. Hev the two boys who trod on 'em got tuh hike

across the plains on foot? Or are yuh guys gonna do somethin'?" He raised his voice.

"Gents, and them two greasers over thar——"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"What about it?"

Tilting his hat truculently over his eyes the sheriff barged forward.

"What about it?" he repeated, amid indignant snorts. "Say, we don't want no ornery train-guard tellin' us our dooty! You say these boys hev done this district a right good turn, and they don't want to wait for no measly Gov'ment department to shell out rewards? Waal, that's right. This is whar Mesquite City takes a hand and does itself proud!"

Once again Peter tried hard to get a word in, but the sheriff, scowling hideously, pushed a long Colt's barrel almost into his face.

"Son," he warned, "lay off! Mesquite's lost a lot more'n five hundred dollars this last month, and so hev other towns from heah to Phoenix. Now we can't offer you much money, 'cos thar ain't much in town. But are yuh goin' to let us fit yuh out like law-abidin' citizens 'stead o' scarecrows, or do I hev to blow yore fool head off and scatter yore bones to the coyotes?"

Peter knew, of course, that the sheriff was joking; but he knew, too, from the faces around him, that these cattlemen would be seriously hurt if their offer was refused. He nodded and slid off the counter.

"Well, gentlemen, seeing you speak so nicely and aren't forcing anything on us, we'll accept. Thanks awfully!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

Next moment the store was full of laughing, jostling men, calling for orders over the counter. Everyone seemed anxious to contribute something; the sheriff had gone stamping off to the horse corral, and Brady was whispering quietly in Red Potter's ready ear. It was under cover of all the confusion that the two Mexicans, exchanging a brief look, slid softly out into the hot street. In the shelter of their adobe hut they looked at each other long and hard. Then one spoke in soft sibilant Spanish.

"An English boy and a red-haired Americano. Travelling together to Mexico. Is that not what the Message said?"

The other nodded violently.

"Si. The Message said also, one thousand dollars for them—alive or dead!"

Their eyes, shaded by their huge straw sombreros, glinted wolfishly as they met. The first speaker's teeth flashed whitely.

"Fortune smiles on us, Antonio, I think. Now while those Americano dogs are busy in the store we will take our horses and ride." His smile deepened viciously. "And to-night, I think, we earn those thousand dollars. Let us go!"

Knives in the Darkness!

*"Oh, bury me not
On the lone prairie.
Oh, bury me not——"*



Peter galloped up and dragged Red from under the horns of a maddened steer as it stampeded past.

"DRY up, you wailin' chump!" Red Potter, rudely interrupted in the twenty-seventh chorus of the "Cowboy's Lament," leaned back in his high Texan saddle and beamed.

"Awright. Say, Peter, ain't this great? Ain't it grand to feel a hoss under me ag'in and a gun bumpin' ag'in my leg? Even ridin' across this ornery desert is good. Yes, sir!"

Peter chuckled. The partners were riding alone across the flat sunbaked plain, dotted with stunted chaparral and stretching as far as the eye could see in every direction. Beneath them loped two wiry, slim-legged ponies, and in place of their former rags both youngsters wore the stout and picturesque garb of the country. As Red said, grinning at Peter in leather "chaps" and tall "four-gallon" hat, they looked "dyed-in-the-wool punchers."

The citizens of Mesquite had certainly been lavish in their gifts. The outfits they had fairly forced on the boys were complete even to walnut-handled guns and rawhide lariats swinging at the saddle-bow, while behind the horses, surveying the trail with

patient amber eyes, a pack-mule trotted under a heavy load. The rousing send-off the town had given them neither Peter nor Red would ever forget.

The Texan chuckled again.

"You ride like a 'shore-nough' Englishman, Peter, awright. How yuh feelin'?" he jeered.

"Rats!" snorted Peter. "I'll get used to this saddle soon." He laughed grimly. "Well, we're getting on, Red. I bet Manuel Garcia or Juan-of-the-Scar would get nasty shocks to know we're on their trail out here, what?"

His thoughts, as usual, were in far-off Mexico where, somewhere in Zareda City, lived the man who had killed his father. The end of Vengeance Trail was drawing nearer. Peter's eyes shone bleakly.

For some reason, however, Red did not reply at once. A faint shadow crossed his face at the words, and turning in his saddle, he sent an uneasy glance around the plain.

"Waal, I wonder!" he said absently at length.

Peter stared at him.

"You wonder what?" he asked shortly.

Red shrugged.

"Aw, nuthin'," and he shrugged again.

The subject was dropped. Deeper into the chaparral waste the partners rode, eating up the miles steadily, until at sunset camp was pitched beside the trail and Red cooked supper. When the fire burnt low and the great Western stars blazed in the sky, both boys took to their blankets and in a few minutes were asleep.

Two hours later Peter woke with a start. Something had disturbed him. He did not know what exactly, but a sharp, uncanny sense of danger lurking somewhere close had crept into his dreams.

He lay motionless, listening. There was a faint breeze in the chaparral, and far away in the west came a strange ominous rumbling, like a growl of distant thunder. Yet the stars were undimmed by clouds.

Without stirring a muscle he looked round warily. Red was sound asleep and the horses were cropping at their pickets. Everything seemed O.K. Yet the feeling of peril grew stronger. And at that moment he saw something move, beside a bush.

Tense as a hairspring, he waited. Yes, there it was again. From the shadow of the bush a dark blur crawled. Then another. His eyes narrowed. What were they? Prowling coyotes? Or were they—

Next instant he knew. Soundless, and at lightning speed, the two dim shapes leapt from the ground, glided towards the camp. And the starlight gleamed on two naked blades. Peter left his blankets in a flash.

"Red!" he bellowed. "Look out!" Then in a headlong charge he closed with the two armed men. A knife-blade flashed above his head; he let go his left and a body hurtled into the sand. Then the second man seized him and down they went together in a writhing, panting heap.

Over and over into the bushes they rolled, fighting like fiends in the darkness. By sheer luck and instinct Peter had found his opponent's knife-hand straight away, and gripping the slender wrist with all his strength, he bashed and drove his free fist at the dark face boring into him.

By a tremendous effort, Peter forced his enemy's head down, caught his arm in a Japanese shoulder-lock, and wrenched it with a sudden, deadly twist. There was a shriek of pain; a whirlwind struggle that ended quickly in a sigh and a long, shuddering moan. Without another sound his opponent crumpled slowly into the sand and lay quiet. A warm, sticky flood gushed swiftly over Peter's hand.

Dazed and shaken, he staggered away, still clutching the stained knife. The first thing he saw was Red leaping towards him, gun in hand, while on the ground lay the second man. The distant thunder had grown more distinct and was coming nearer. Yet neither boy noticed it.

A Big Discovery!

"PETE! You O.K.?"
"Y-yes. But I think I—I've killed—"

His voice shook, and, after a single keen glance at him, Red looked at the fallen assassin.

"Yep. He's plumb defunct. Good boy!"

He gripped Peter's arm hard and dragged him towards the other man.

"This guy's still living, though. Yuh only knocked him flat!"

Striking a match, he bent warily and held it to the man's evil face. Two dull black eyes stared back dizzily. Peter's drive had been a heavy one.

"Greasers!" Red whistled. Quickly and deftly he disarmed the man. "Greasers!" he repeated. "Gee! Somehow I guessed as much!"

"What d'you mean? What is it, Red?"

Peter spoke anxiously, for his chum's voice was harsh and strained.

"Tell you soon. Light the lantern—quick! Now, Greaser"—as Peter set the lamp so that its light shone on the Mexican's dark features—"speak up! Who sent yuh?"

A viperish sneer answered him.

"No wan send us. We come for rob—"

"Liar!" Red bent closer, and Peter gasped to see the fierce ruthlessness in his friend's cheery face. "Skunks like yuh ain't got sand enough to tackle white men, even sleepin' ones, jest for loot. Now speak up! Who sent yuh?"

"I—not—tell!"

A diabolical smile twisted Red's grim mouth.

"Won't yuh?" he gritted. "Yuh will, though. I'm from Texas, amigo. I'll make yuh talk!"

Turning, he dived for his kit and was back again in a moment with a loop of cord and a tin spoon. A terrified look lit the Mexican's eyes when he saw it, but before he could move or whimper, Red had the loop round his forehead and was twisting it tight with the spoon.

"Now, Greaser, talk! Who sent yuh?"

"Ah, dios! I—not—tell!"

Red's strong hands turned swiftly, and the Mexican screamed. Peter stiffened.

"Red! Chuck it!"

"Dry up, Pete. We're up against it, and this bird's goin' to talk if I twist his head off! Now kim on!"

The cord, tightened by the twisted spoon, pressed deep into the Mexican's forehead. Relentlessly Red went on with his work, while Peter watched, speechless. At last—

"Stop! I tell—I tell! No more!"

"I tho'ght you would. Now then, pronto!"

"We come—keel Ingliz boy!" the Mexican panted. "We 'ave message—you sabe? Ingliz boy travel wit' red Americano. All Mexican men and Indians watch for them. Keel!" Released from the devilish cord, he glared at the two white lads with smouldering eyes. "You cleaire, maybe, but you not reach Mexico alive—no!"

"Who sent the message?"

"Fin' out! No, I not know—I not know!" as Red lifted the cord again. "I swear! Ze message come—who knows? Offer one t'ousand dollars. Zat all I know!"

Red sank back on his heels grim-eyed.

"Gosh, an' I tho'ght I was bein' clever!" he mused bitterly. "Why——"

"Look out!"

Peter shouted and plunged forward. Too late. Like a rattlesnake, the Mexican writhed swiftly out of reach, leapt to his feet, and was off.

"Keep still!" roared Red harshly.

His hand streaked to his hip, a crimson tongue spat in the darkness—once. Uttering a little choking cry, the flying Mexican dropped to earth, kicked for a moment, and was still.

"An' that's that!" muttered Red grimly.

"Stampede!"

PETER rubbed his jaw ruefully.

"Gosh, what a night! What is this message, Red? Does it mean Garcia has tracked us?"

"Yuh bet it does."

The Texan scowled.

"An' me thinkin' I'm too clever to live!"

"But—but it's impossible! Hang it, we're miles out of 'Frisco! How could he or Juan have tracked us here?"

"Aw, you're English! You don't understand!"

interrupted Red impatiently. "This ain't

civilisation; this is the cow country an' the desert. Injuns. Greasers. These native guys kin send a message all through the wilds in no time; and white men don't savvy how!"

"My hat! Sort of bush telegraphy, you mean? Like the niggers in Africa?"

"Shore, that's it! But, say, this Garcia yo're up ag'inst, and his pal Juan, must be real big guys. 'Tain't everyone who kin send out a message!"

Peter set his teeth.

"They'll be dead guys if I get near 'em!" he said softly.

In the tense silence that followed, the deep, sullen uproar, growing louder all at once across the plain, made Red look up suddenly and spring to his feet. Absorbed with the Mexicans up to now, he seemed to notice the rolling din for the first time. His eyes peered keenly into the west.

"I've heard that for some time!" said Peter innocently. "Storm coming up, isn't it?"

"Storm? I dunno. Sounds a'most like——"

Red stopped. The oncoming racket had become suddenly terrible, its note swelling to a deafening, blood-stirring thunder that shook the ground like an earthquake. Peter stared to see the horses plunging at their ropes, mad with fear. Then Red had him by the arm and was screaming in his ear:

"Cattle stampede! Look!"

Following his pointed arm, it seemed to Peter that the whole desert was moving towards them. As far as he could see, a great dark mass, heaving and swaying, was crashing through the chaparral less than three furlongs away, and in the starlight he caught a faint glimpse of tossing horned heads. Next moment he and Red were racing for their horses.

A whirl of mad, nightmare activity then. They had barely time to saddle up and cut the pack-mule loose when, in a frenzy of thundering hoofs and clashing, rattling horns the terrified cattle were on them, trampling everything flat beneath their grinding heels. The moment Peter hurled himself into the saddle, his horse was off like a bullet, racing blindly ahead, keeping its feet as only a cow pony can. Peter, his face flayed by the flowing mane, bent low and slackened his bridle. But the cattle came closer at every stride.

"Pull to th' right! Get outside!"

It was Red, hurtling alongside, screeching like an Apache. Peter touched his bridle, and the little horse swerved in a flash, pelt-ing across the avalanche in an effort to reach the flank. A slip, a single false step, and rider and horse would be mown down by the fear-crazed steers, trampled into shapeless horrors as the herd passed over.

For an eternity the gallant pony struggled to win clear. Once a long, sharp horn slid alongside and raked Peter's leather "chap" viciously; the stampede nearly caught them, and only a heart-breaking spurt saved them from death. Then, somehow, they were running free, and Peter saw the flash of Red's gun ahead. He drew abreast. The Texan was whooping his coyote howls and firing as he flew.

"Yi, yi, yi! Yee-ee-ow! Turn 'em, Pete! Make 'em turn!"

A mighty steer charged him; he fired past its muzzle, and the brute surged back into the rush.

"Ee-ee-ee-yow! Run, you dogies! Run, you ornery fools! Whoo-pee!" He turned to Peter, and shrieked: "Gotta turn their flank, Pete. Get 'em millin'—in a circle! Atta, boy!"

Getting the idea, Peter flung his pony against a maddened cow, fired at her, and sent her staggering against two others. The three fell, piled up the others. The herd swerved aside, and Red came howling into action, both guns aflame.

"Yi, yi, yi! Yip-hi! Yow-ow-ow! Keep 'em millin'!"

Out of the darkness suddenly came other riders, gaunt men, spurring and flogging their dusk-caked ponies. With a fresh burst of howls, they swept to the head of the rush, turning it, driving it into the centre, riding

GUNMAN PETE!

Peter Graham turns gunman next week and—gee, lads!—isn't he just great! Look out for this roaring, crashing, smashing yarn!

their twisting, swerving horses into the maelstrom without thought of fear.

Gun-shots boomed, steers roared and snorted as they went down. But presently, even to Peter's eyes, it was obvious the cow-boys were winning now. The pace was still terrific, but the stampede was gradually slowing down and storming round in an enormous circle, the outside guarded by hard-riding, bawling punchers. They were "milling" the herd—the only way to tire and stop them.

And then, with victory in sight, Red's pony slipped in front of a dozen steers, screaming as its foreleg snapped like a carrot. Sick with horror, Peter saw the Texan catapult into the air, give a cat-like twist, and land on his feet like the horseman he was. But the herd was on him.

"Red!"

With a screech that cracked his throat, Peter literally hurled his horse to the rescue, swinging low and wide in his saddle. By the barest fraction he scraped past the van of the stampede, plucked Red from under the very horns of a maddened steer by a single swoop of his powerful arm, and jabbed his spurs home to the hilt. Cool as ever, Red slung his right arm across the cantle of the saddle and drew himself up. Peter jerked the bridle and the pony swerved and streaked away at right angles—into the night and safety.

"Thanky, Pete!" was all Red said.

It was enough.

And the cattle swept on through the night.

"BOYS, we're right obliged! If yuh two hadn't headed thet stampede and started it millin' we'd ha' been chasin' the darn steers yet!"

In the greyness of early dawn, Buck Rogers, trail-boss of the Lazy K. Ranch, held out his hand. The weary-eyed men behind him pressed closer. Peter and Red grinned.

"Shucks! 'f'wasn't nuthin', pardner!" said the Texan cheerfully.

"It cost yuh a hoss and all yore outfit!" growled Rogers. "Yuh're shore good guys. Where yuh headin' for?"

"Texas. Mexican border."

There was a little cheer, and the foreman smiled.

"Good enough. We're takin' these lococo cattle to El Paso. Trail along with us, boys, an' we'll be proud!"

"Pardner, yuh bet we will!" Red whooped. "Pete, yuh're a real cow-waddy at last!"

Peter only smiled absently. He was thinking of the two dead assassins back in the chaparral. So Manuel Garcia knew he was on Vengeance Trail for certain! When would he strike again? And where?

THE END.

(On, on, the end of Vengeance Trail looms nearer. Peter and Red in a whirl of thrills next week!)

Smashing Story of the Footer Field



**100%
Sporting
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our companion paper, "The Magnet." In the fortunes and misfortunes of the Railton Rovers, the sole property of Jimmy Brennan, you will revel in a welter of thrills, hairbreadth escapes, and closely-contested footer matches. You will be intrigued and yet appalled at the villainous plot to ruin young Jimmy. But Jimmy is made of stern stuff. With stout heart and bunched fists he fights back Read the opening chapters of this super-yarn in this week's issue of

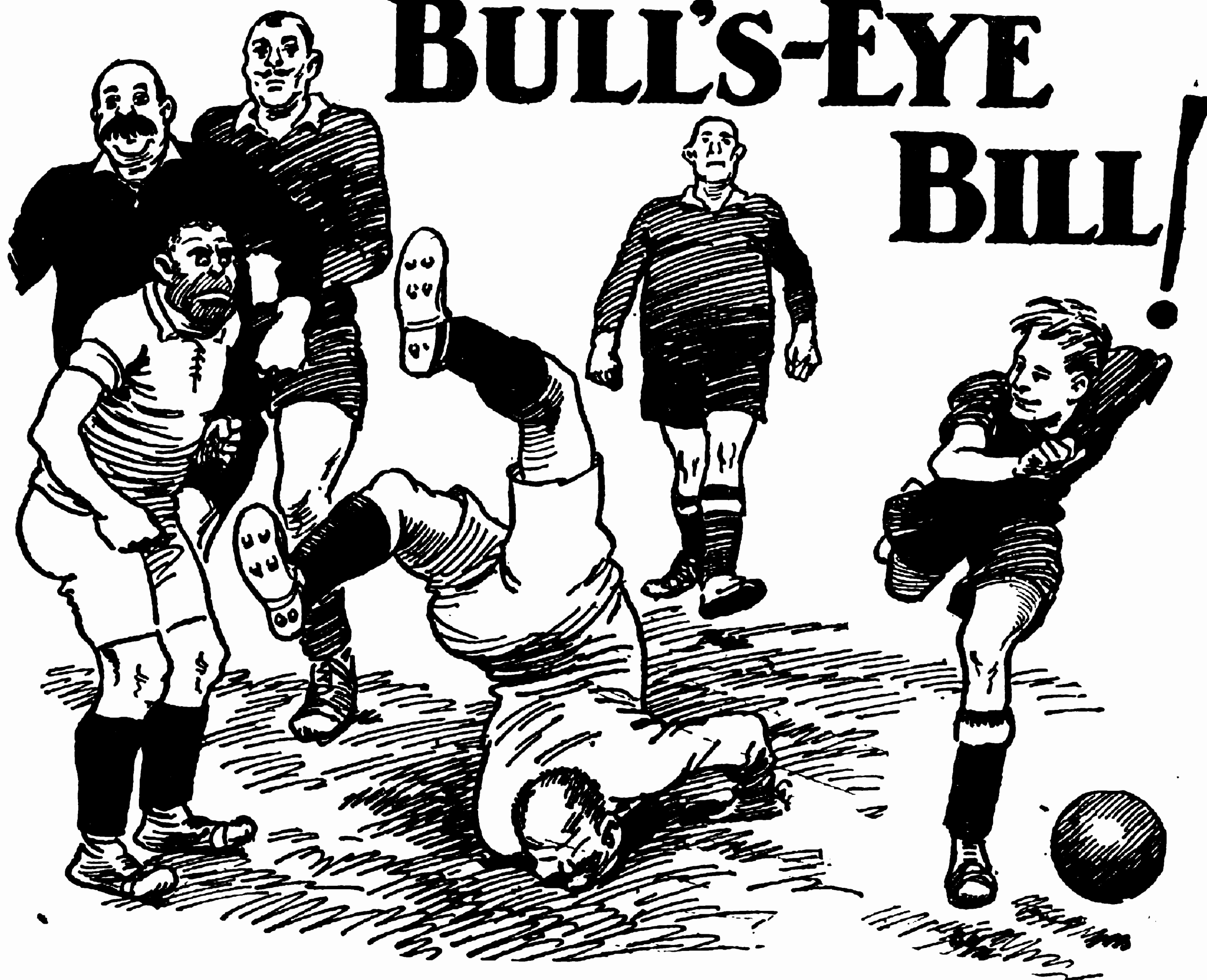
THE MAGNET

Out On Monday

Price Twopence.

Line Up Here For Laughs and Football Thrills!

BULL'S-EYE BILL!



Horse-play!

IT was Saturday afternoon and the Mud-bank Flats echoed to the roar of thousands of voices and the thud of football boot on football.

Twenty matches were being played at the same time, and each game was patronised by an excited crowd of enthusiasts. But for once in a way Bull's-Eye Bill was not playing the game he loved. The Spiders had not got a match, and Bull's-Eye's famous scoring boots were stored away in a padlocked locker in Gipsy Dick's caravan.

Instead of playing, Bull's-Eye was helping Gipsy Dick to sell his sweets to the crowd from the stall Gipsy had set up at the back of the caravan. And they were some sweets! Dick had made them all on his little travelling stove, or kitchen as he called it; brandy balls and brandy snaps, bull's-eyes and humbugs, butter balls and different kinds of toffee. The crowd bought freely and came back for more.

"You're doing well off this pitch, Gipsy," said Bull's-Eye when Dick's big store had nearly gone.

"The best pitch I've ever had," answered Gipsy with a drawl, "and I owe my good luck to you, Bull's-Eye."

"G'arn!" answered Bull's-Eye. "I owe my good luck to you, you mean. Didn't you take me in when One Punch Pete—my step-father—kicked me out of home? And didn't you make me my goal scoring, football boots?"

"I did. But you're a mascot, Bull's-Eye. I've never made and sold so many sweets since I started travelling round. And, of course, Buttercup, my yellow horse, has something to do with it. When Grab, the

fishmonger, got me summoned for cruelty he gave me the finest advertisement I've ever had. That's why I've nearly sold out to-day, Bull's-Eye."

Bull's-Eye cocked an eye at the yellow horse which, tied to a wheel of the caravan, was lazily sampling the contents of a well-filled nose-bag. Buttercup's ribs stood right out as if it were starved, its hoofs were draped with long whiskers, it had only a stump of a tail, and its nose was of the pronounced Roman order.

GOALS for Bull's-Eye Bill—and his opponents come from GAOLS!

Crab, the fishmonger, Bull's-Eye's late employer, had tried to get Gipsy Dick convicted of cruelty to the horse, but had failed miserably, and had been fined for selling bad fish instead.

As he looked at the horse Bull's-Eye began to think that Gipsy Dick must be right, for he himself had had plenty of good luck since he joined the caravan, and Gipsy Dick's luck stood good all the time.

They sold their last bag of brandy balls; Gipsy Dick folded up and stored away the stall. The games on the Flats finished one after the other in rapid succession, and players and spectators flocked in a mighty moving army past the caravan on their way back to the town.

"Good-night, Bull's-Eye," they called out. "Good-night, Dick."

They were nearly all friendly like that, for Dick had won their sympathy over the police court case, and Bull's-Eye their admiration because he could score more goals than any player they had ever heard of.

But there were some who were different, notably Ginger Hackem, Bull's-Eye's enemy, and all the hooligans who played football for the Wasps. The Wasps had won a hard game that afternoon, mostly through foul tactics, and they came along in a bunch with about fifty loud-mouthed supporters hanging on.

"I say," said Ginger Hackem, "'ere's a lark. Let's cut Gipsy Dick's horse loose, give it a dose of the stick and chivvy it all over the Flats. There are plenty of us, an' if Gipsy Dick and Bull's-Eye give us any lip and come after us, we'll seperate 'em and tan 'em till they'll feel sorry they're alive."

Ginger Hackem's plan was just the sort of thing to appeal to the hooligan supporters of the Wasps, and they hailed it with a roar of approval.

"And I tell yer what, Ginger," said a tough who was as big as a lifeguardsman, "if Gipsy Dick gives us the chance let's tip his van over."

They swarmed up to the caravan in a mob, Ginger Hackem in front.

"Got any of your rotten sweets left, Dick?" jeered Ginger.

"None rotten enough for you," Gipsy Dick replied, taking a pull at his pipe and grinning at Hackem.

"Yah! You think too much of yourself," snarled Hackem, but he let it go at that, for there was something in the gleam of Dick's eyes from under the broad brim of his hat that made Ginger feel sub-conscious. Dick's eyes were magnetic. As Ginger edged away the others followed him.

"I wonder what dirty game Ginger Hackem's up to now, Bull's-Eye?" said Dick.

Before Bull's-Eye could answer Ginger Hackem had cut the rope which tethered Buttercup to the wheel of the caravan. At the same time he gave the yellow horse a punch in the ribs, then seized it by its straggly mane and swung himself on to

Buttercup's bony back. With loud shouts his pals swarmed round the horse.

"Use yer sticks, some of yer!" cried Ginger. "Let 'im 'ave it!"

One of the brutes struck the horse across the flank with a club-like stick, and with a snort of pain Buttercup started across the Flats at a mad gallop, the scattering crowd urging it on with savage cries.

Bull's-Eye leapt down from the caravan angrily.

"I'm going to paste 'em, Gipsy," he cried, but Gipsy Dick caught him by the arm and dragged him back.

"Steady, kid," he said. "You can't undo what's done. That's the first cruel stroke Buttercup's ever had in his life I reckon. If you were to go amongst that mob of toughs they'd very likely give you the boot, Bull's-Eye. Stay where you are."

"What about Buttercup?"

"He'll be all right now."

The crowd had ceased to chase the horse, which had left them far behind. Buttercup was tearing down the Flats at racing speed, and for the first time Bull's-Eye saw him really go. It took Ginger all his time to keep on his back. Taking a whistle from his pocket, Gipsy Dick blew on it a shrill prolonged pining note, followed by a short one. Gipsy had trained his horse to obey signals.

This one it readily understood, and, turning, came back at a furious gallop. Racing past the caravan it swerved, dashed up the steep incline which led to the canal bank and sprang from the towing path into the muddy water.

Gipsy Dick whistled again, sharply this time, and the yellow horse appeared, dripping water, but without Ginger Hackem on his back. Ginger Hackem was swimming in the canal with all his clothes on; he was also shouting furiously, for a bath was one of Ginger's pet aversions.

"I'm glad I taught Buttercup that signal to make him swim," said Gipsy as the horse came up.

Very nimbly Dick leapt down from the caravan to the ground. As the yellow horse slowed, the gang of hooligans began to close round it again with their sticks held ready.

Gipsy ducked under the caravan, seized a pail he had hidden there, and set it down between the horse and the oncoming gang of toughs. He pulled at Buttercup's halter and drew the horse round. He backed it into position, and, satisfied, whistled.

Instantly Buttercup lashed out with his hind legs and his hoofs, landing smack on the bucket, lifted it and hurled it up in the air and over the heads of Hackem's pals.

The whitewash with which it was filled to the brim dropped over them in a spreading spray, the bucket itself striking the tough who was built like a lifeguardsman bang on the head and laying him flat.

Gipsy Dick quietly tethered Buttercup to the wheel of the caravan.

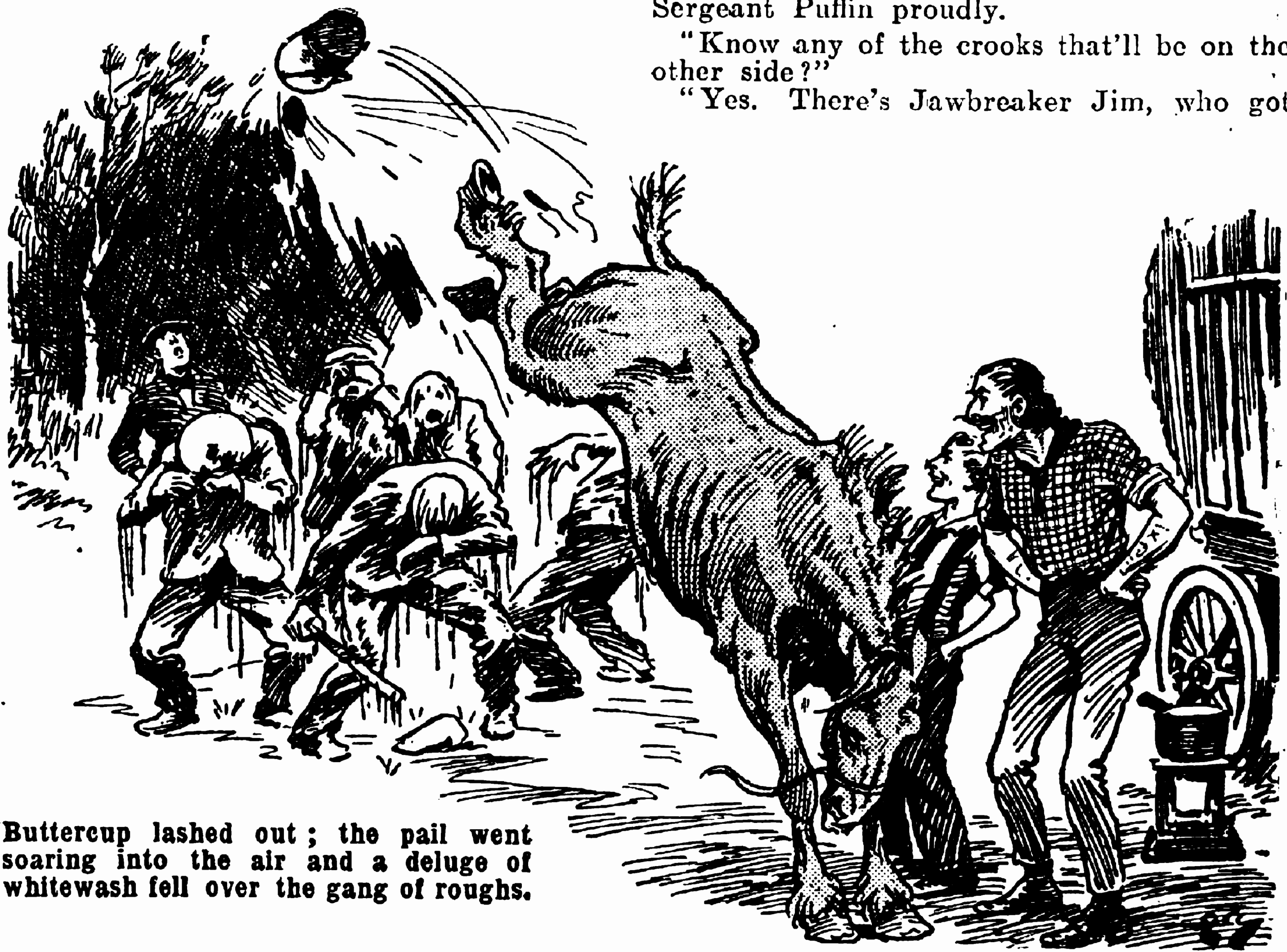
"That trick is what I call kicking the bucket, Bull's-Eye," observed Gipsy.

P-c. Puffin's Appeal!

THE Hackem gang had scarcely disappeared when Bull's-Eye saw the imposing figure of Sergeant Puffin, of the town police, footing it over the Flats. The sergeant was in uniform, but without his armlet.

"Don't say that he's bringing me another summons, Bull's-Eye," said Gipsy Dick in dismay.

The sergeant looked very solemn when he joined them, and his voice was solemn when he wished them good-evening and said he thought it would be fine to-morrow. As he thrust his hand into his breast pocket Gipsy Dick shivered, and when Sergeant Puffin pulled out a blue paper he went positively white.



Buttercup lashed out; the pail went soaring into the air and a deluge of whitewash fell over the gang of roughs.

"That's for you, Gipsy," said Puffin. Gipsy Dick groaned.

"What am I wanted for this time?" he asked.

Then the sergeant beamed.

"Nothing," he cried. "Ha, ha, ha! Did you think it was another summons? Not this time, Dick. It's a notice about a nice friendly little football match that's gonna be played on the Town Ground next Wednesday afternoon, at 3 o'clock, for the benefit of the 'Ospitals and Hinfirmaries, and the police would like you to bring your yellow horse and your caravan along."

"I'm sure I'm much obliged," said Dick, looking rather bewildered.

The sergeant removed his helmet and mopped his forehead.

"The charity match is between," he began, making the announcement after the manner of an M.C. introducing two boxers in the ring, "the Town Polico A. Team and a team of gaolbirds, and 'as been horganised by the Society For the Promotion of Welfare Among 'Ardened Criminals. In other words, Gipsy, the police are gonna play a team o' crooks. The police are gonna turn out the biggest and strongest eleven they can find, and the gaolbirds are gonna select their team from among the crooks with the worst records that happen to be at the moment hout o' gaol."

Gipsy Dick grinned.

"Sounds as if it's gonna be some match," he said. "You gonna play in it, sarge?"

"I'm playing at right-back," said Sergeant Puffin proudly.

"Know any of the crooks that'll be on the other side?"

"Yes. There's Jawbreaker Jim, who got

six months for assaulting the perlice. It took six of us to get him to the station, and he's only been out a month. Then there's Darkey Dan—six months for bag snatching and nine months for burglary. The gaolbirds will 'ave Tiny Martin in goal—six feet four, weight 16 stone 4 lbs., ten convictions. We 'ad to rope 'im up the last time we arrested 'im, Gipsy."

"And have you got your life insured, sarge?"

"No. But there won't be any trouble. The society have got these gaolbirds so that they feed outter their hands. They've all reformed. The society say it'll be a pleasure to play 'em. And who do you think they've got to play centre-forward?"

As neither Gipsy Dick nor Bull's-Eye Bill

answered, the police sergeant proffered the information.

"It's one Punch Pete, Bull's-Eye Bill's stepfather. He's qualified to play for the gaolbirds for he's twice been jugged for violently assaulting the police in the hexecution of their dooty."

One Punch Pete—his hooligan stepfather—playing for the gaolbirds against the police! Bull's-Eye blinked. From what he knew of One Punch Peter Doyle, it would be like thrusting a torch into a barrel of gunpowder to have him in the team. The game would probably end in a riot.

"And that brings me to what I came 'ere for," said the sergeant, twisting his helmet round in his fingers. "We're gonna field a hefty team, and there won't be one of us weighing under 14 stone, but the trouble is we haven't got a forward who's likely to score and we want to lick the gaolbirds, see. It wouldn't do the police any good for the crooks to lick 'em, even in a charity match."

"That sounds reasonable, sarge," said Dick.

"And so I've come to ask Bull's-Eye Bill to lead the forward line. We all know what he can do. Everybody's talking about his red, white and blue boots and how he can't keep the ball out of the net. Bull's-Eye can leave it to the police to hold the gaolbirds up, and while we do that he can nip in and bung on a lotta goals and win the game."

"I'd like to play, Sergeant Puffin," said Bull's-Eye Bill, his eyes glistening at the very thought of taking part in such a match. "But, of course, I can't. I don't belong to the town police. And it wouldn't be fair for the police to go outside their own ranks to find a player. You must have plenty of your own."

"Not goal scorers, Bull's-Eye. We've only scored three goals in eleven games this season and had thirty-nine scored against us. That's why we want you. And listen—you're qualified. Your father was a sergeant in the town police, and the rules have it that the son of any townsman who has served full-time in the town police can represent 'em in team matches, cricket, football or anything else."

"That so?" said Gipsy Dick, surprised.

"That is so. Here are the rules. Let Bull's-Eye read 'em."

Bull's-Eye read the rules and found that what sergeant Puffin had said was true.

"Well, what's your answer, Bull's-Eye?" asked the sergeant.

"Yes, I'll play," answered Bull's-Eye Bill.

The Charity Match!

THE Town Ground was the biggest and the finest football ground to be found within fifty miles, but even if it had been twice the size it would have been packed for the Charity Match—Town Police v. Gaolbirds. It was a match that touched the imagination. People came miles and miles to see it. Before the teams

turned out the gates had to be closed and thousands were left shouting in the streets.

Gipsy Dick sold out his stock of sweets for the second time within a week, and, having charged double prices, he gave half the proceeds to help the charity fund.

The stand was packed with well-dressed men and smart women. The banks opposite were loaded with the ugliest gang of toughs that had ever collected together in the history of the town.

The superintendent of police, keen on figures, informed the mayor that he himself had seen 173 criminals pass the gate, and they had all come to cheer on the gaolbirds. Among this mob was Ginger Hackem—birds of a feather!

When Bull's-Eye entered the dressing-room to change he found himself surrounded by giants of men standing over six feet tall and weighing over fourteen stone. And when they marched out on to the field, Bull's-Eye, walking among the big men, was smothered from sight until they spread out.

Then, as the crowd gave him a cheer all to himself, screaming "Good old Bull's-Eye!" a hand dropped on the youngster's shoulder and yanked him round. Bull's-Eye found himself staring into the rage-filled eyes of his stepfather, One Punch Pete.

"So you've oozed inter this game, 'ave yer?" snarled One Punch Pete. "All right. This is the last game of football you'll play for years. I'll give you chucking up your job with Crab the fishmonger. I'll give you not 'anding me your wages every week as you uster do. You keep outer my way, for if I get near yer you're for it, see!"

A burly policeman, grabbing One Punch Pete, hurled him aside.

"What's the big idea?" he asked.

Pete made a right arm swing at the bobby's head, who ducked and sent an upper-cut whizzing half an inch from One Punch Pete's chin.

The referee, a skeleton of a man who wore horn-rimmed glasses, a member of the Society for the Promotion of Welfare Among Hardened Criminals, dashed between them.

"Naughty, naughty!" he cried, holding up an admonishing palm. "But this is only a bit of show—a little make-believe, eh?"

"Just so," said the burly bobby, glaring at Peter Doyle.

"Yus," growled One Punch Peter, giving the red and white striped police a vicious glance, and as each turned away he vowed to himself that he would get his own back on the other before that game was over.

Amid a roar of applause the game began. And what a game! The moment they started the gaolbirds dashed at the town police. Their great idea was to take the man and not the ball. One Punch Pete hurled himself at Bull's-Eye, heaving all his weight and strength into a wild charge. Bull's-Eye swerved. Pete could not stop his rush, and, overbalancing, took a headlong dive at the turf and stood on his ear as he went down.

(Continued on page 44.)

Our Popular Adventure Serial Continues In Thrilling Style!

Knights of the Road!



**A Romance
of Olden
Times.**

**By
DAVID
GOODWIN.**

Fears!

THE news spread like wild fire. Every boy in the two lower Forms appeared from every corner as if by magic.

A crowd accompanied Ralph to the little town, where there was a choice of excellent tuck-shops. Ralph had to hire a pony-trap in which to carry the food back.

A few light snacks, such as pastry, pork-pies, and fruit were consumed in the shops by way of appetisers, but the bulk of the feast—sausages, pastries, hams, brawn, puffs and tarts by the bushel, game-pies, currant-wine, and a barrel of old English ginger-ale—were carted back to the school.

Feasts were not objected to at St. Anstell's and it was a half-holiday. Quite forty boys sat down to the tuck-in.

"Cheers for Fernhall, the fox-hunter and feaster!" shouted Morton. "Come on, boys, walk into the grub!"

They put Ralph at the place of honour, and the banquet proceeded with gusto. It was a tight fit; but St. Anstell's boys are hard to beat, and they managed to get through the provender to the last tart.

"You're a brick, Fernhall," said Conyers, loosening his waistcoat. "You must be rolling in money! My pocket-money for the term wouldn't pay for what we've walked down."

"Had a bit of luck this morning," said

Nobody at St. Anstell's knows that Ralph is the brother of a notorious highwayman—except the sneak of the School!

Ralph. Nearly cleaned out now, though." He pulled out all his money, and was surprised to find there was a guinea and some silver left.

"Fernhall, lend me that guinea, will you?" said Dirkley, looking at the coins with a strange gleam in his eyes. "Pay you back next week."

"Shove it in your pocket, Fernhall. Don't you lend that sneak anything," said Conyers.

"Come on, there's a good chap," pleaded Dirkley. "I'm in a real tight fix for want of a guinea."

"Here you are," said Ralph, tossing the coin across to him.

He rather disliked Dirkley, who bullied the younger boys and cringed to the seniors. He had tried it on Ralph, but soon found he had caught a Tartar. Ralph, however, had a generous nature.

"You're a young fool, Fernhall," said Morton, as the successful borrower hurried away, muttering his thanks. "Lending a chap a whole guinea! You'll never see it again. That chap is the biggest sneak and hound in the school."

"We're rid of him, anyhow," said Ralph, who was in high spirits. "Cheap at a guinea. Come on, you fellows. Trot out the

The Story in Brief on page 42.

ginger-ale—there's plenty left! Here, young Brown, wash my glass out, and do it properly, or I'll rub your nose in it."

"Hi, you chaps!" cried Conyers. "Do you know there's a highwayman in the parish?"

Ralph, who was just about to draw a mug of ginger-ale, stopped short and glanced at Conyers. Was the secret discovered, and was Conyers going to betray it?

The Plotters!

CONYERS, with a perfectly innocent face, hauled a printed bill out of his pocket and flourished it.

"The most noted highway robber—Richard Forrester," he announced. "Last seen near St. Anstell's School. And they're offering a reward for him. Listen to this!"

He read out the description.

"Good luck to him!" shouted two or three voices. "May he hold up old Trelawney, and lift the price of next term's birches off him!"

"Wish he'd put a ball through old Borley's head!" said Morton. "The fellow's getting too handy with his cane!"

A cunning look spread over Dirkley's face as he listened to the description that Conyers read out. He made a sign to two or three of his cronies, and withdrew to an empty class-room.

Unpopular as Dirkley was with the bulk of the school, he had a small following of boys of his own kidney, and if anything shady was done at St. Anstell's, they were generally at the bottom of it. Dirkley was their recognised leader, and when he called a council there was usually something in the wind.

"What is it, Dirk?" said Matby, one of the chosen, as soon as they were alone.

"Something out of the common," said Dirkley mysteriously. "We're in luck, my young friends. I've been keeping my eyes open lately, and there's something wrong about the new kid, Fernhall. You heard the description of the highwayman, Dick Forrester, that that fool Conyers read out?"

"Yes!" said the others attentively.

"Well, it tallies to a hair with the fellow that brought young Fernhall here on the night the doctor's silver was stolen."

"Why, that was the chap that brought the silver back," said Matby. "He took it from the thieves."

"I know that," said Dirkley. "But it looks to me like a plant. Who's this chap Fernhall? Why is he shoved into the school just at the end of the term? I was mooching about the plantation this afternoon, and I saw that very chap ride up and walk his horse about as if he was waiting for somebody. I lay low and watched him."

"Did he see you?"

"No, he didn't. But I got a jolly good look at him. Here's one of those bills, the same as Conyers has. I got it from old Tom, the bailiff. It describes the chap exactly, and he was riding a tall black horse. I waited some time, when up came young Fernhall. He talked to the chap on the horse for about ten minutes, and then I saw the fellow give Fernhall some money—several guineas—and ride off."

"Gave young Fernhall that money he's been spending?" exclaimed Matby excitedly. "Are you sure?"

"If you'd half an eye, Matby, you'd see Fernhall must be his brother. He certainly can't be his son. Forrester—I'm sure it's he—is only two or three years older, if that. I'll wager Fernhall isn't the new kid's name at all. It's Forrester."

"Can't be!" said Binstead, another of Dirkley's cronies. "The doctor makes inquiries about new chaps. He wouldn't let in a highwayman."

"Why not?" said Dirkley. "How should he know? This chap Forrester brought the silver back. That put him right with the doctor. Why shouldn't a rogue like Forrester fool old Trelawney?"

Dirkley read out from the printed notice:

"Whereas, the last misdeed committed by the said outlaw, Richard Forrester, was to present his pistol at John Gorst Esquire, of Welton, and deliver him of his purse." (This was the gambling sharp of whom Dick had spoken). "Be it known that the said purse contained eighty Jacobus pieces of the reign of James I. And these pieces, not being very commonly circulated at the present time, it is commanded that any person receiving one in exchange for goods may give instant information, by which it is

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

DICK FORRESTER learns upon the death of his father that all the vast estates and fortune, with the exception of a hundred guineas, have passed into the hands of his rascally uncle, **VANE FORRESTER**. The latter refuses to give the boy his money, and, appointing himself guardian, states his intention of sending Dick and his brother,

RALPH FORRESTER, to Duncansby School—a notorious place in the north of England. Travelling by coach, Vane and the two boys are held up by

DICK TURPIN, the famous highwayman. Dick joins forces with Turpin, and, after bidding Ralph to be of stout heart and promising to fetch him soon, the two ride away. They have many stirring adventures together until Dick leaves his companion and rides north to see how his brother is faring. In the meantime, Ralph has reached Duncansby School, a dreary, desolate place on the wild moorlands. Unknown to him, Vane has arranged with the headmaster that the boy shall "not live long." Ralph is rescued by his brother, who takes him to St. Anstell's College, where he is known as Fernhall. Later, Dick visits Ralph and gives him five guineas—part of the proceeds of a recent hold-up. Ralph invites all his Form-fellows to a feed.

(Now read on.)

hoped the said perilous outlaw be traced and brought to justice."

"You hear that?" said Dirkley, folding the bill up. "Now take a look at this."

He pulled out the gold coin he had borrowed from Ralph. It was not a George II guinea, but an old-fashioned Jacobus, with James I's head on it.

"By Jupiter, you've hit the mark!" said Matby.

"I borrowed that on purpose to get a look at it," said Dirkley. "I've a grudge against Fernhall. I kicked him the other day, as every new kid needs kicking. You fellows saw what he did to me. He's no fool with his fists. But I'm a chap who pays his debts—and I'll pay young Fernhall-Forrester!"

"But if he spends his brother's guineas on feeds for the lot of us," said Binstead, stroking his waistcoat thoughtfully, "it might be as well to keep dark about it for a bit. We could make him pay us for keeping our mouths shut. Eh?"

"You ass!" said Dirkley. "When there's two hundred and fifty guineas in a lump offered for his brother!"

"Gosh!" said the others. "Two-fifty? Worth getting, Dirk! Why not try for it?"

"Don't much fancy tackling a chap like that," said Matby doubtfully; "a fellow with a couple of pistols always handy!"

"I'll find a way to take him without any risk to ourselves at all," said Dirkley quietly.

"Wait a bit," said Lindsay, a new boy that term, who had only lately fallen under the influence of Dirkley. "Isn't it rather a queer thing to do, after the way Fernhall's treated us?"

"Oh, drop that milk-and-water stuff!" said Dirkley. "Besides, it's an honest chap's duty to help nab a highwayman if he gets half a chance!"

"I suppose you're right!" said Lindsay. "Especially when there's two hundred and fifty reward on him."

"Come on out, then, you chaps," said Dirkley. "I'll show you how to set a trap for this highwayman!"

The Trap!

TAKING care that their movements were unseen, the plotters left St. Anstell's and crept away to the plantation.

Darkness had fallen, and it was cold. A thick frost gleamed on the ground.

"Here's the place where I hid, and there's where the chap on the black horse met young Fernhall—" began Dirkley, when he was suddenly interrupted.

"Look out! Somebody coming!" warned out of the boys. "A horseman!"

The whisper had hardly left his lips when Dick Forrester himself appeared, riding Black Satan. His eyes fell on the watchers.

"Hallo!" he said. "You're from St. Anstell's, aren't you?"

"We are," answered Dirkley.

"Is Ralph Fernhall with you?"

"No," said Dirkley readily. "Got the toothache, and he's away at Hulton, at the tooth-drawer's. At least, I believe so."

"Plague on it!" muttered Dick to himself. "I wanted to let him know he must see me without fail on Saturday." He turned to Dirkley. "Will you be seeing him when he returns?"

"Sure to!" said Dirkley. "I'm a great chum of his."

"Glad to meet you," said Dick. "Will you take him a note from me, then?"

"Like a shot."

Dick scribbled a few words on a pad of paper, folded it, and gave it to Dirkley.

"Give that to Fernhall," said Dick. "You needn't hand it over before all the school, you understand; it's private. And don't lose it."

"I'll see he gets it," said Dirkley.

"Much obliged," said Dick. "Here's a guinea for you. Stand your chums a feed, eh? Good-night."

He nodded cheerfully and cantered away. The boys watched him out of sight, and then crowded round Dirkley, who grinned at them knowingly.

"Another Jacobus!" he said, showing the coin and spinning it up in the air. "Now do you doubt it's Forrester?"

"You're a smart chap, Dirk," said Matby admiringly.

"There's few can show me the way," said Dirkley complacently. "Now let's see what this note says."

He unfolded the message and was able to read it by aid of the moon which shone fitfully from a cloudy sky.

"Meet me same place, Saturday, four o'clock Important."

"Dick."

"We've got him!" cried Dirkley.

"How?" asked Binstead doubtfully.

"Catch me tackling a fellow like that! He'd finish the lot of us in two shakes!"

"You're a thickheaded crew!" said Dirkley. "See that old oak-tree with the overhanging branch?"

"What about it?"

"That branch sticks right out over the bridle-path, just where Forrester met his young brother this morning. They'll very likely meet in the same spot. Anyhow, this highwayman chap is bound to pass under it on his way."

"What then?"

"The branch is as thick as a man's body and smothered in ivy. A chap could lie out along it and drop a slip-noose over any horseman who passed underneath. He could make certain of it, for he'd only be about three feet over the rider's head, and the ivy would keep him hidden. I tell you, lads, we'll capture this Forrester as easy as winking!"

(Will Dick fall into the trap? See next week's exciting instalment, lads.)

BULL'S-EYE BILL!

(Continued from page 40.)

He got up looking dazed and shaken, to see the police and the gaolbirds at a deadlock, man taking man, whilst Bull's-Eye, snapping up a real smart pass, dashed with twinkling feet towards the gaolbirds goal to open the scoring in the first minute by slamming the ball past Tiny Martin before the sixteen stone crook with ten convictions had time to raise a hand.

When the game was resumed half the players on both sides were limping. During the next ten minutes Jawbreaker Jim gave Sergeant Puffin a sly jab below the belt with his right, and the half-crooked sergeant retaliated with a neat uppercut as they met in a charge two minutes later. Then Darkey Dan wiped P.e. Longman's feet from under him just as Longman was going to play the ball. It was only their fun, explained the society's secretary to the mayor as the referee mildly intervened.

Then One Punch Pete tried to grab Bull's-Eye as he went by, and when Sergeant Puffin spoke to him about it he socked the sergeant on the chin. Puffin replied with a full-blooded wallop on the nose just as Bull's-Eye beat Tiny Martin for the third time.

Out of goal came Tiny.

"Call yourself a referee?" he shouted at the quaking official. "You wipe that goal out, see."

"But it was a good goal," protested the referee, blowing his whistle and pointing to the centre.

Tiny Martin's left and right fists swiped out and flattened the referee like a pancake. Up came a fourteen stone policeman—P.e. Dykes—who measured Tiny with his left and floored him with his right.

One Punch Pete took a running kick at Bull's-Eye but Sergeant Puffin, catching him by the heels, turned him on to his back and sat on him. In a moment the football field became a battlefield.

Police whistles shrilled. The gaolbirds on the bank started a dozen free fights with plain clothes men, Ginger Hacken joining in.

Long files of uniformed police invaded the pitch. The next few minutes were hectic. The birds soon had all the fight taken out of them, and when the motor police van bore them away from the Town Ground there was only one player missing from the eleven—One Punch Pete, who had managed to make off in a stolen overcoat.

(Bull's-Eye Bill's at the top of his form next week—don't miss this corking yarn.)

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