

NEW COMPLETE TALE BY S. CLARKE HOOK.

# PETE IN CANADA



3d.

J.  
FLEMING  
CUMMING



# Four Penny Stamps

Sent to **THE PUBLISHER,**  
**THE AMALGAMATED PRESS,**  
**2, CARMELITE HOUSE,**  
**LONDON, E.C.,**

will bring any of the following volumes of **THE BOYS' FRIEND 3d. LIBRARY** to you by Post, or they can be obtained, price **3d.**, from any Newsagent.

**No. 7—SHUNNED BY THE SCHOOL.**  
A Tale of School Life. By HENRY ST. JOHN.

**No. 8—THE ROAD TO FAME.**  
A Tale of the Great City of London. By HAMILTON EDWARDS.

**No. 9—PETE AT EIGHTEEN.**  
By S. CLARKE HOOK.

**No. 10—SEXTON BLAKE'S HONOUR.**  
A Tale of this Celebrated Detective.

**No. 11—THE PRIDE OF THE SCHOOL.**  
A Tale of School Life. By HENRY ST. JOHN.

**No. 12—GUY PRESCOT'S TRUST.**  
A Tale of Adventure on Land and Sea. By CRAVEN GOWER.

**No. 13—ONLY A PIT-BOY.**  
A Tale of Colliery Life. By HAMILTON EDWARDS.

**No. 14—CARRINGTON'S LAST CHANCE.**  
A Tale of School Life. By HENRY ST. JOHN.

**No. 15—THE DRUDGE OF DRAYCOTT SCHOOL.**

**No. 16—THE SILVER DWARF.**  
A Tale of Nelson Lee, Detective. By MAXWELL SCOTT.

*Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are out of print.*



# PETE IN CANADA.

A New Tale of the Famous Comrades, JACK, SAM and PETE.

By S. Clarke Hook.

## CHAPTER 1.

**Pete and the Lobster—A Strange Weapon—Rory's Accident—Pete's Grief—He Seeks a Doctor For His Favourite—How Pete Overcomes All Difficulties—Rory is Left in Safe Hands.**

"SO dis is 'Frisco," observed Pete, as he, Jack, Sam, and Rory wandered through the streets of the ill-fated city. The day had been wet, and there was plenty of mud, especially where building operations were going on, where earthquake and fire had wrought sad havoc. "Well, I'm sorry for dis place, and I'm mighty sorry for de people. Still, I suppose dese little tings make men sort ob smart, and learn how to get ober dinculties. Den, I suppose some people benefit—f'rinstance, boot-cleaners, and de gentlemen who clear up mud; dough I must say dat I tink de professional mud-men ain't been doing deir duty lately. Just look at Rory! You'm in de most disgraceful state, boy! I dunno what de proprietor ob de hotel will say to you when you sit on his sofa. Oh, it ain't no good your wagging your tail at me like dat, and pretending you neber sit on sofas when you'm muddy, 'cos I know mighty well you do!"

"Well, suppose we get back to the hotel?" suggested Jack. "It is getting on for six o'clock, and dinner is due in half an hour. Then, it is cold, as you have noticed; it is muddy; and it is raining."

"I hab noticed dat also, Jack," observed Pete. "In fact, it seems to me dat it has been raining eber since we hab been in San Francisco. Dat's de worst ob dese Yankee places. If dey start raining, dey want to lick creation, de same as dey do when dey start earthquakes, or fires, or railway accidents. A Yank is a man who wants a lot ob watching, and dat's de reason I always hab to keep my eye on Sammy. You neber know what dat man is going to do, except dat it is bound to be something stupid."

"Well, I reckon I sha'n't go to a nigger to get common-sense!" exclaimed Sam. "With a nigger, you have got the certainty that the next thing he does will be stupider than the last."

"Say all dat again, Sammy, 'cos I wasn't paying any attention to it."

"I'm not going to do anything so stupid."

"Well, I quite admit de remark must hab been stupid, seeing dat a poor, feeble-minded Yank made it. Now, Jack, seeing dat Sammy has done saying all de stupid tings he can tink ob, perhaps you will lead us back to some part ob de town dat hasn't been earthquaked. I want to look at some shops where you can buy tings."

"What do you want to buy?"

"Well, dat is a silly question, Jack! How can I tell what I want to buy until I see de shops? I should say a muzzle for Sammy, and some brains to put in your brain-box, would be useful tings. If dere is a shop where dey sell common-sense, I might buy some ob dat for you. And I dunno dat an



umbrella wouldn't come in useful for me. M'yes! Dat's de bery ting I want—a good-sized gamp! I neber hab carried a gamp; all de same, I ain't too old to commence wid one."

Jack had his doubts concerning the wisdom of letting Pete carry an umbrella; however, as that worthy appeared to have made up his mind that he required one, Jack knew that it would be useless to argue the point; so he stopped at a shop where they sold them.

Then the difficulties commenced. Pete was most frightfully particular about the handle. He examined every umbrella in the shop, and made the man mad; then he selected the one that had been shown him first. Jack fondly imagined that their difficulties were over now; but he was mistaken. Pete carried that umbrella held low over his head, and Jack and Sam refused to walk beside him, because they got the drippings. An old gentleman who was looking into a shop window got his hat knocked into the mire by that umbrella, and he used such forcible language that Pete hurried on.

"I was tinkin', boys," exclaimed Pete, stopping at a fried-fish shop, where a big, surly-looking man was purchasing some fish, "dat we might buy a codfish for supper!"

"That isn't cod. It is salmon," answered Jack.

"Well, what could be nicer dan——"

"Get your umbrella out of the way, you clumsy brute of a nigger!" cried the stranger, giving it a violent bang with his fist. "You are sending the drippings all down my neck!"

"Here, steady, old hoss!" cried Pete. "Dat's a new umbrella, and I don't want it spoilt on de first day ob its life. I suppose de whole world doesn't belong to you? Golly! Look at all dese lobsters! De poor tings ain't been boiled yet! I always feel sorry for lobsters, and——"

"Fury!" yelled the stranger; for as Pete turned round to explain to Jack and Sam how sorry he felt for lobsters, his gamp knocked off the stranger's hat, and it made him so cross that, clenching his fist, he caught Pete one in the chest that caused him to sit on those lobsters.

There was a crackling sound of shells, then suddenly Pete uttered a yell that might have been heard half a mile away, and he leapt to his feet, with an enormous lobster dangling from his leg, for one of its claws had not been tied, and it had fastened that claw into Pete's flesh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the stranger, as the lobster dropped to the pavement with a rattle. "I hope it has hurt you!"

"Golly! It has done all dat, old hoss!" growled Pete.

"Well, I'm glad!"

"Den I ain't! I'm mighty sorry! I neber knew a lobster could bite so hard!"

"Pick it up and put it on the tray again."

"I ain't going to do anyting ob de sort," declared Pete. "I'm habing nuffin more to do wid de lobster. And I tell you what it is, old hoss—I hab a mighty good mind to sit you on dose lobsters, just to see how you like it!"

"I guess I won't stand that impertinence from a nigger!" cried the stranger, lashing Pete's back with his stick.

"And I ain't standing dat little lot!" declared Pete, seizing a huge salmon by the tail and catching the angry man a whack over the head with it that sent him flying on the fishmonger's tray.

It was lucky for him that the remainder of the lobsters had their claws tied, for he was so dazed by the blow that he lay where he had fallen for several moments.

Pete pitched the great fish on the marble slab. Then the most appalling yelps burst forth.

The fact is, the unfortunate Rory had been investigating that lobster, and



he shifted it a little with his paw, then smelt it to see if it was any good for eating purposes, and the lobster resented this treatment by fastening his claw on Rory's paw, and poor Rory had a terrible time of it.

Pete seized the stranger's stick and made a blow at the lobster that stopped its biting for all time, while the stick was smashed in half.

"Golly! I'm 'most afraid dat dog's leg is broken!" exclaimed Pete, picking up his favourite.

"I hope not," said Jack. "I should hardly think it would be as bad as that."

"I dunno, Jack!" exclaimed Pete, looking very grave. "Dat lobster bit mighty hard, I can tell you! I must get him to de nearest doctor's. You see, it caught him just in de joint. Come along, boys!"

"Here, you will pay for that lobster!" cried the fishmonger.

"Get out ob my way!" growled Pete, shoving him aside, and striding on, while Rory whined with the pain he suffered.

Pete stopped at the house of the first doctor he came to. He read the name, "Dr. James," on the plate, and violently rung the bell; while Jack and Sam had grave doubts whether the medico would undertake such a case.

They were shown into a room, and as Pete informed the page that the case was a very urgent one, the doctor was not long making his appearance. He was a tall, thin man, with a harsh face, and appeared to be rather short-tempered.

"Well, what is the matter?" he inquired, glancing from one to the other.

"My dog has hurt his leg, and I want you to examine it, and make it well again, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete.

"Why, I never heard such impertinence!" cried the indignant doctor. "Do you take me for a veterinary surgeon, fellow?"

"Nunno! Dat dog has got to hab de best attention, and I will pay de same fees as if it was myself."

"Well, take it to a veterinary surgeon, then. I don't know where there is one, but you will be able to find out. You had better make sure that you get a qualified man."

"I ain't chancing de poor dog wid unmedicated men," declared Pete. "You can charge what fees you like. Dere are five pounds on account."

"But how can I attend a dog? I am sorry for him, but——"

"Den attend to him. I suppose if a drunken scoundrel was brought to you, you would attend to him. Now, Rory ain't got any faults; he's a good dog. I don't suppose de money is much object to you, but——"

"Well, it so happens that it is; it is of the greatest use to me just now. Do I understand that if I cure the dog's leg I may keep these five sovereigns?"

"It won't end at dat," said Pete. "I couldn't bear anyting to go wrong wid Rory. I would rader it was myself, 'cos dat dog don't deserve to suffer pain. Do your best for him, old hoss. Gib him de same attention you would gib a human being, who was a mighty rich patient, and you will find Rory de best paying customer you eber had in your life."

"Do you pledge your word that you will mention nothing about the matter—I mean, you will not tell people that I am attending your dog?"

"Golly! Yes! Only, put dat leg right!"

"I suppose he is likely to bite me if I give him any pain?"

"Well, he's a mighty sensible dog, and I tink he will understand dat you are trying to do him good. I hope he won't hab to suffer."

"Well, how did it happen?"



"You tell 'bout it, Jack. I don't like to tink ob it. I feel as if I should start yowling."

Then Pete placed his favourite on the doctor's couch, and stepped to the window, while Jack explained what had happened.

"Ah," exclaimed the doctor, "the strength in a lobster's claw is very great! I have seen a stick broken by one. I will chloroform Rory, and then he will feel no pain at all."

Poor Rory was in great pain, but he bore it very bravely, and licked his master's hand as the doctor sent him to sleep. Pete became frightened that he would never wake again; but the doctor soon reassured him on this point, and he made a careful examination of the limb, which he put in a splint.

"Yah, yah, yah! Dat's splendid, Rory!" cried Pete, as he regained consciousness.

"He will have to remain here for several days," said the doctor.

"I can sit up and nurse him," said Pete.

"No; I can't have you fooling about here," said the doctor. "You would be more trouble than the dog. Besides, you would only excite him, and I want him to lie as still as possible until the bone is set. He seems to have taken a fancy to me, and I shall do all that I can. You must leave him here, and you can come back in about a week."

Rory seemed to understand that he had to remain still, but when his master left he badly wanted to follow. However, he obeyed his orders all right. Then Pete went to the nearest butcher's, where he ordered half a dozen mutton-chops. He next went to a confectioner's, and purchased a number of tarts. It amused Jack and Sam, but they knew it was perfectly useless for them to point out the folly of the thing. Next he purchased half a gallon of milk, and paid for the can, in which he carried it through the streets.

"I tink dat will do for dis ebening," observed Pete, ringing the doctor's night-bell so violently that the unfortunate doctor, who little knew what he had taken on his hands, rushed to the door himself, under the impression that it was a very urgent case.

"I hab brought a few tings for Rory," observed Pete, landing the chops in the doctor's hands, and putting the milk on the floor. "He likes dese pies, and he is also fond ob chops. Do you tink he is any better?"

"Oh, bother you!" growled the doctor. "I shall not give him meat for several days. Besides, there is no necessity for you to fool about like this!"

"Well, gib him what he requires, and you can eat de chops yourself. Dey are de best de butcher had got. And do you tink he is better, old hoss?"

"Of course he is not! You need not come for a week, and then I hope to tell you that he is going on all right. Here, take these away!"

"Dey ain't any good to me. You yaffle dem up, if you tink de dog ought not to hab dem. I will come and make inquiries from time to time."

"I don't require you to do anything of the sort. Come in a week's time. And now be off with you! I tell you the dog will be well looked after."

Then the doctor slammed his door, and Jack and Sam got Pete back to the hotel. They were an hour late for dinner, and when it was served up, Pete never touched a mouthful.

Jack and Sam felt so sorry for him that they did not even chaff him, and when he declared he would go and inquire how Rory was getting on, after they had finished their meal, they did not try to dissuade him.

The doctor was savage, and vowed that he would have nothing more to do with the case if Pete came bothering again.

"But I want to know if de poor dog is better."

"You silly nigger. He can't get better in a few minutes! Be off with you,

and don't you dare to come here again till I send for you! I am not going to be fooled about like this over a dog!"

Then the angry man slammed his door.

"I tink de man is skilful," growled Pete, "only I wish he wasn't so bad-tempered. I'm afraid he won't treat Rory kindly, and he is a dog dat has been used to a good deal ob kindness, one way and anoder."

"He will be all right, Pete," said Jack. "I feel sure that Dr. James is really a good-hearted fellow; besides, it is to his interest to cure poor Rory. Come back and have some supper."

"I ain't hungry just now. I wonder if dere is anyting I could send for dat dog. He's mighty fond ob tripe. I tink I will send him a dish ob tripe, cos dat's nice and light. M'yes! Dey will be able to get some at de hotel. Dis way, boys!"

"It's no good talking, Sam," whispered Jack, as they followed Pete to the hotel. "He has made up his mind that Rory needs tripe, and you can bet he will have it."

"I reckon so; and if Pete does not drive that doctor out of his mind before many days are up, I shall be surprised. Come on!"

When they got back to the hotel the waiter informed them that a Mr. Spence, and Grell, the fishmonger, were waiting to see them.

"Well, Tom," exclaimed Pete, "tell dose men dey can keep on waiting. And see here, I want a large dish ob tripe and onions. How long will dat take to cook?"

"Why, it so happens that we have got it on for supper to-night, sir," answered Tom, the waiter. "I can serve it up to you in ten minutes."

"Bring up a big dish wid a cover on," ordered Pete. "Mind, de best parts ob de animal must be in. I dunno weder it is de best part is de sirloin or de haunch, only bring up de best de cook can serve. What are you guffawing at? Dis ain't a laughing matter. Don't you know Rory is mighty ill?"

"Sorry, sir. Remarkable dog, and talks like a human being. But I never hears of tripe having a sirloin or a haunch. However, you will find it the most astonishing tripe; and seeing that you haven't eaten any dinner, it will suit you down to the ground for supper."

"Oh, go away!" growled Pete. "You make me ill, always talking about feeding. Boys, ain't dis mighty sad? I hope dat dog ain't suffering."

"He won't be suffering now the limb is set," answered Jack. "You know he did not feel any pain while the doctor was doing that. Of course, he may have a twinge or two."

"You tink Rory will bite him, den?"

"No. I mean Rory may have a twinge or two."

"But dat's just what I don't want him to hab, Jack."

"Of course! But, you know, it can't be helped. He is getting the very best attention."

"It ain't like a human being. Ob course, dey know dat dey hab got to bear it, and so dey just make up deir minds to it; and den again, I tink dey often deserve it; but I can't see dat Rory deserves any sort ob pain. I wouldn't care a bit if it was myself, and you know what a fuss I make when I get a kink ob rheumatism."

"But you never do get it, Pete."

"Eh? Well, when I tink I'm going to get it. Just fancy how I should yowl if I really got it. And den again—"

"This is the tripe, sir," exclaimed the waiter, entering the room at that moment with a huge covered dish; "and those two parties say if you don't come to see them immediate, they will come and see you."



"Tell dem I hab gone out, Tom, and dat you don't know what time I shall come back," said Pete, seizing the dish, and suiting the action to the words.

It was now pouring in torrents; but this did not trouble Pete, nor did he even bother to put on a hat. The doctor's place was not very far, and he gave a peal at the bell that again brought the doctor to the door in person.

"I hab brought a little dish for de poor dog, sah, dat I——"

"Here, I'll give you in custody!" roared an angry voice at his back; and, turning, he saw Spence, the stranger whose head Pete had clumped with the fish, and with him was Grell, the irate fishmonger. They were noisy, too, and this so enraged the doctor that he gave the big dish a kick that sent it flying into the air. Pete dodged that falling dish, but Spence did not. He received its contents full in the chest, and it made him in the most frightful mess, while the doctor slammed his door with a violence that caused Rory to bark. At any other time Pete would have laughed, but he was too unhappy now to do anything of the sort. Picking up the dish-cover, he returned to the hotel, while the two men came after him, howling at the top of their voices, and threatening him with all the terrors of the law.

"Well, you are soon back, Pete!" exclaimed Jack. "How did you get on?"

"Oh, do stop your row!" growled Pete, as the two men followed him into the room. "Here, bring me a whip, Tom. If I can't get rid ob dese men one way, I will anoder. I didn't get on at all well, Jack. De doctor ain't de best-tempered man I eber met. He kicked de dish ob tripe into Spence's face; you can see what a mess he has made de man in if you look."

"Ha, ha, ha! I thought you would vex that doctor," exclaimed Jack.

"He may be a good medicated man, but I'm mighty certain he ain't a good-tempered one. Oh, is dis de whip, Tom? Now, buzz off home, you two!"

"You insolent brute of a nigger! I'll——"

"Hum off to your hives!" roared Pete, using the whip with a freedom that enforced obedience to his order. "I hab got enough troubles widout your adding to dem. If you dare to come back here again, I'll make you tink you hab been sitting on red-hot gas-stoves. Ain't it disgusting de way some people behave, boys? Now, what do you tink is de best ting to be done?"

"I reckon you had better have a good supper and go to sleep," answered Sam.

"I was tinking dat if you were to call on de doctor, Jack, he——"

"No, thank you. You have enraged him quite enough."

"But, you see, Jack, de patient must be inquired after."

"You don't need to inquire after him every five minutes of the day and night."

"It's much more dan five minutes since I found out how he was. I get nervous if I don't know. I say, Tom, just look at de telephone machine and see if Dr. James is on it."

"Poor wretched doctor!" murmured Jack. "It is to be hoped, for his sake, that he is not on it."

But he was on it. Tom returned with the information that his number was 1,395. Pete was not accustomed to telephoning, and he gazed dubiously at the machine. For the doctor's sake, Jack thought it better not to give him any information.

Pete took the receiver off, and held the wrong end to his ear, while he

turned the handle violently. Of course, nothing came of it; so Tom explained that he must ring up before taking off the receiver, which he was holding upside down.

"M'yes, I tought dere was someting wrong wid de instrument. Now we shall soon manage de matter."

"Coming, sir!" bawled Tom, in answer to his master's call; and away he went, while Pete whizzed the handle round for about forty times.

"Don't you think you have rung loudly enough?" inquired Jack.

"Dat's where it is, Jack," exclaimed Pete, continuing his frightful ringing. "I'm waiting for de bell. He said it would make de bell ring, and I can't hear it."

"I reckon the girl at the exchange can," observed Sam.

"Oh, I see; she's de one dat has to hear de bell! Tought I was de party to do dat. Now let's hear what she's got to say. Are you dere?" howled Pete into the receiver. "What, my dear? Nunno, I ain't shouting at you. Eh? Ring so violently? Why, you see, it was like dis— Eh? What number do I want? Sorry, my dear—3,195. And what do I do next? Hallo, you dere? What? I ain't howling at you. How's de patient? Golly! I tought you weren't allowed to use bad language frough de phone. You'll set de wires on fire, old hoss, directly. I ain't howling in your ear. You are not a doctor? Nunno; your language reminds me more ob a Billingsgate fishdealer. I tink de man has gone. I tink Tom must hab made a mistake in dat number. Still, we will hab anoder ring at de young lady. Got to put de receiver on. Now, den. She says I ain't to ring so violently, so I will do it sort ob slower. Seems to me de inventor ob dese machines couldn't hab been teetotal, else he would hab made dem on a different cistern. I wonder if she has heard dat? M'yes! Golly! Well, don't get vexed, my dear, 'cos— 3,195. So it was, but he said it was de wrong number. Eh? Well, try him wid 9,513. Guessing? Look at— Well, ain't I trying to get de right number? I tell you what it is, Jack, dis girl wants smacking. Oh, golly, she's heard dat little lot! I neber tought she would hear such a low voice as dat. Are you dere? Hi, hi, hi! Are you dere? I believe she has gone away," exclaimed Pete, replacing the receiver and trying a little more ringing. Nothing came of it, and when his arm got tired he desisted.

"I neber came across such a stupid machine in all my life," he growled, pulling out his pipe. "First ob all de girl bullies me for howling at her; den she says I hab no right to ring so loudly, den— Woohoo!" yelled Pete, as the bell gave a sudden and violent ring. "I know dere was someting wrong wid dis machine. Hellup! Dere it goes again! What do you tink is de matter wid it, Jack? I wonder if I was to hold de little woggly ting if dat would stop de noise. M'yes, dat stops it right enough!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Someone is calling up the hotel," exclaimed Jack.

"May be de doctor," observed Pete. "I spects dat number was right after— Golly! Dere goes de bell again, directly I leave go ob it. Let's hab anoder listen. Are you dere? Funny ting, dey all say I'm howling at dem. Yes? Dat's right. How's de patient? I'd like to hab de kicking ob dis man, Jack. Why, he must hab heard dat! I will say de hearing powers ob de machine are all right. I suppose you can hab a bed, but how's de patient? What? Are you Dr. James? Well, tell him I want to speak to him. Oh, shut up! I don't care what you want; I want de doctor. Ain't dis mighty awful? You would tink dere were funderstorms in de machine. I believe de man is habing fits. I shall cut off de cistern and gib anoder ring."



Pete replaced the receiver and rang violently, and by the expression on his face it was pretty evident that he was getting severely reprimanded.

"She says I'm to go away 'cos someone wants to speak to de hotel. Seems to me she wants someone to speak to her. You had better go round and gib her a kiss, Jack, and see if dat—— Golly! She can hear ebery word I say! She's going to box your ears, Jack, if you dare to kiss her. I dunno 'bout dis at all. It seems to me we ain't any nearer de doctor dan when I started, and dat girl is in such a bad temper dat—— Why, she's calling me names now! I hope she is a good distance off. It looks as if de girl's moder had spared de slipper too much."

"Ha, ha, ha! She can hear you," roared Jack.

"Dat's what I'm noticing, Jack. You can tell she hears 'cos she's so mighty angry. She's talking at me in a voice like a full-blown penny whistle. I want de doctor, my dear. Yah, yah, yah! She says I want a lunatic asylum. I didn't shout in your ear, my dear—she ought to hab it boxed—dat was only my gentle guffaw. Nunno, I ain't boxing your ears. You had better go round and do dat, Jack. Someone ought to. De baggage wants correcting. Eh? I didn't mean you to hear dat, my dear. He's a nice-looking young man. I'm sure you would like Jack, my dear. Nearly all de girls do; and he likes dem, too."

"Here, that will do, you beauty!" exclaimed Jack, wrenching the receiver out of Pete's hand and replacing it. Then he rang off, and the bell commenced to ring again with such violence that Pete wedged a piece of paper in so that it could not ring at all.

"Dey are de most sickening machines I eber came across!" he declared. "I shall hab to call on de doctor, after all, unless I get Tom to try to ring him up. I'll consider de matter. It's mighty certain I hab got to know how Rory is before I go to sleep."

## CHAPTER 2.

**Pete's Anxiety for Rory Causes the Doctor Serious Trouble—Pete Makes An Attempt to Use the Telephone—How He Caused Trouble in Several Directions—A Midnight Visit—Pete Is Arrested—A Night With the Constable.**

PETE went round to the doctor, and was informed by the page that he was out, and would not be in till two minutes past one in the morning.

"Whose hat and coat is dat, my lad?" inquired Pete, pointing to the articles which were hanging in the hall.

"Those belong to a German gentleman lately come over from France," answered the unblushing youth. "Good-night!"

Then Pete found the door slammed in his face; and when he rang again no notice was taken of it, so Pete went back to the hotel in a very unhappy state of mind.

"I hab got to sit up, boys," exclaimed Pete. "De medicated man wants to see me at one minute past two. Golly! I most forget weder it was one minute past two or two minutes past one. Still, I can go bof times. I must find out how dat poor dog is before I go to bed."

"He will be perfectly right," declared Jack. "You had better get to bed. You will only make the doctor savage, and do no good to Rory."

"I don't mind about making de man savage, so long as I find out about Rory."

Both Jack and Sam argued the matter, but Pete was far too concerned about his favourite to take any heed of what they said; so they went to bed, and Tom did the same, after Pete had made him give the doctor's correct number.

At a little before one o'clock Pete went out again, leaving the front door open, which was, to say the least of it, rather risky. He kept ringing the night-bell until the unfortunate doctor flung his window up, and hurled a lump of coal at Pete's head. Pete had another go at the bell, and he kept on for about a quarter of an hour, but nothing came of it, so he went back to the hotel and had a turn at the telephone. It was a lad on duty this time, as Pete judged by the voice.

"I want you to put me on to 1395!" bawled Pete. "You will hab to ring bery hard. You had best keep on at it till you get de answer!"

Then Pete dropped the receiver on the cord, and commenced to fill his pipe. How the miserable man was to speak to him did not enter into his calculations. However, when he had got his pipe alight, he picked up the receiver again, and listened; but by that time the doctor had got into bed again. It was not a nice night to turn out, and perhaps he hoped the patient had got better, or changed his mind about calling him up. Pete rang up the exchange again.

"See here, my lad, if you come round to de hotel in de morning, I'll gib you half-a-sovereign if you make dat doctor hear!"

"He did hear. He has been shouting through his 'phone at you."

"Funny ting I neber heard de man. Howeber, you get on to him again. Ring mighty loud, 'cos it is an urgent case!"

"I say, you ain't fooling him, are you?"

"Nuino! And I won't fool you if you come round for dat half-sovereign. If I can get on to de man I may make it a sovereign. Ring away!"

"Well, keep the receiver to your ear, and I'll see what I can do!"

Now, although the lad did not feel at all sure of his sovereign, he had an eye to business, and meant to leave no stone unturned to earn it. Being on night-duty, he had nothing particular to do, and, turning the handle of the bell was not much trouble. He turned it for several minutes, and Dr. James leapt out of bed in a state of fury. The next moment Pete heard a very angry voice:

"What's the matter?"

"Am I to call on you at one or two o'clock dis morning, old hoss? I called at one, and someone frew a chunk ob coal at my noddle!"

"See here, you villain, if you dare to call on me again I'll brain you!"

Then there was absolute silence, and Pete wound away at the handle in the hope of getting some further information, but in this he was, of course, quite unsuccessful; so he went upstairs with a view to lugging Tom out of his bed, and making him work the machine. He did not know which was Tom's room, so he banged at various doors, and got some very rough answers, until at last someone told him to go on the top floor.

"Seems to me I'm getting sent to several places dis journey!" growled Pete. "Howeber, I don't mind trouble when Rory is concerned. Funny ting, in de dead ob night like dis, how danger seems to be all de greater. It seems a drefful ting to remember dat dat poor dog may be suffering, while we are all peaceeful in dis hotel!"

They were not so very peaceful either, for by this time Pete had woke up nearly everyone in the hotel, and they were making a frightful bother over it. He found Tom's room at last.

"Get up, old hoss—quick!" cried Pete, entering the room. "I want you to come and work de telephone for me!"

"Unfortunately, the wire broke, and we sha'n't be able to use it till nine o'clock to-morrow morning, sir!" growled Tom.

"I don't want to use de wire. All I want is to use de instrument, and——"



"You just ring the bell, and they will attend to you."

"But dat's just what dey won't do. I got put on to de doctor. Den all ob a sudden dere was a dead silence, and I hab been ringing for eber so long widout getting a reply. Here, come out ob it! You'm going to sleep!"

Tom did not like getting up at all; but Pete was such a liberal patron that he had no intention of offending him. Going downstairs, he rang up the exchange, and learnt from the lad that he could get no further reply from the doctor, who appeared to have left his receiver off.

"It's a mighty funny ting dat a medicated man neglects his business like dis!" growled Pete.

"Well, don't you see, sir, they don't like being disturbed at night, unless the case is urgent."

"But dis is urgent."

"I've got some excellent pills, as they will cure 'most anything."

"Tink dey would cure a broken leg?"

"Well, according to the advertisement, I should say they would. I know they cure consumption and gout, and they are also good for scarlet-fever and things like that. There are lots of other things they cure, only I can't recollect the names of them."

"If I tought dey would cure bad temper, I would gib two-free boxes to de doctor, and a few more to de telephone-girl. I should say, if you were to stuff a boxful down de telephone-receiver, it might do it good. De instrument wants someting to cure it, and if it gets playing de fool wid me much more, I shall take de poker to it. I must see dat doctor, and when I ring at his bell he opens his window and chucks coal at me. I wonder if— Golly! Dat's a good idea! Hab you got such a ting as a ladder?"

"Well, there's the steps. Think they would do?"

"M'yes! I should say dey would be high enough. Just fetch me de steps. I'm getting into such a nervous state 'bout dat patient dat—"

"Well, if he's only broken his leg there's nothing in that. I knew a man who broke both his legs, and he said it was the happiest time in his life."

"Golly!"

"Well, you see, he went into the hospital, and they fed him on the fat of the land."

"Did he suffer much pain?"

"Only when the doctors thought he was cured, and directly he put his legs to the ground he used to shriek with agony. They couldn't make the case out at all, because he did not tell them he was drawing three quid a week from the accident insurance company."

"But dis patient ain't insured."

"Oh, well, he will get well a lot quicker! There's nothing like accident insurance to throw a man back, especially if he is out of a berth. I've known men out of a berth have accidents to their spines that have puzzled the best doctors. You see, it all rests with whether you tell the doctors if you are insured against accidents; and men who get accidents like that are generally too fly to let on that they are insured. They come mouching into the hospitals regular wrecks, and keep like that for weeks and weeks, 'cos, don't you see, it don't do to have too many of them accidents, else the insurance companies gets suspicious, and their doctors will swear there ain't anything the matter with you if you are dying; and if you happen to die, he will swear it was national debility or some of those complaints, and hadn't got anything to do with doctors."

"Get me dose steps!" ordered Pete. "You'm a worse liar dan de doctor's page, and dat's saying a good lot!"

"He ain't as simple as I took him for, either," mused Tom, as he went for the steps. "He's only half-cracked."

When Tom saw Pete carry those steps out into the pouring rain, he changed his mind again, and came to the conclusion that he was really quite mad; while, as a matter of fact, he was only worried concerning Rory, who at that moment was fast asleep and perfectly comfortable in his bed.

Pete, however, could not know this, so he got his steps beneath the miserable doctor's window, and, by standing on the top of them, Pete could just reach that window. Then he commenced to tap; but as nothing came of it, the doctor being a heavy sleeper, Pete used his fist, and smashed a pane of fifteen-ounce glass, which will not bear much banging on.

"I won't stand this sort of thing!" roared Dr. James, flinging up the window. "You mad villain, how dare you come and disturb me in this manner?"

"But, my dear old hoss, I can't sleep a wink——"

"Neither can I, you ruffian! That telephone-bell has driven me nearly mad, and I daren't take the receiver off in case a patient calls me up. They always do on a wet and stormy night, if they happen to be on the telephone, or know a friend who is. I wish the things had never been invented!"

"You hab my sympathy, my dear old hoss; but——"

"Oh, hang your sympathy! How can I have your sympathy, when you behave in this disgraceful manner?"

"I couldn't bear to lose dat dog. I dunno what I should do widout him. Hab you eber lost anyone you lubed, old hoss?"

"Now, look here, Pete," exclaimed the doctor, in a kinder voice, "I do believe you are troubled about the dog. At first I thought you were only playing the fool with me; but—well, I have changed my mind. Your dog is going on all right. It will take time for the bone to set, but I am certain he will get as right as ever he was."

"Will he be lame, or anything like dat?"

"Certainly not. His leg will be just as strong as ever it was, and I must say he is a grateful patient. He does not give me half the trouble that you do. If you come to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock you shall see him."

Then the kind-hearted doctor shut his window down.

"Have I ever lost anyone whom I loved?" he murmured. "Ah, what man of my time of life could answer that question in the negative? Still—well, the parting is but short!"

"I wish dat man hadn't been in such a hurry," mused Pete, still standing on the top of the steps in the pouring rain. "Dere are several questions I would like to ask him 'bout Rory. I wonder if he took his pulse and temperature, like de up-to-date doctors do? I hope he is a proper medicated man. Seemed to be bery gentle in his treatment ob poor—— Golly! What's all dis, and where am I going to?"

Pete could balance himself perfectly. He could have stood on a tight-rope, as he had often done in his circus life, at ten times that height; thus he was standing on the top of those steps as carelessly as he would have stood on the ground, and he never would have fallen under ordinary circumstances. But a constable had noiselessly approached him in rubber-shoes, and, imagining that he was trying to effect an entry into the doctor's house, had grabbed him by the ankle without any challenge. It gave Pete a start, but nothing to be compared to the start it gave the enterprising



bobby; for as Pete slewed round and tried to jerk his ankle free, the constable gave him a violent tug, and Pete knew that it meant a fall. He dropped right on the top of the over-zealous constable, and the next moment they both rolled into the mire.

Pete had got decidedly the best of it. Not only was his fall softer, because he dropped on the top of the man of law, but from a muddy aspect of the view Pete had decidedly the best of it, for the reason that the constable placed his back in a few inches of slop, while Pete only got the sleeves of his coat made muddy.

Anyone who has tumbled down a depth will know how quickly thoughts flash through the brain. Why, they are almost as rapid as in a dream, and far quicker than the telephone when the young lady happens to be discussing the weather with a young gentleman who takes her out for walks sometimes. At any rate, Pete thought a lot in a very little time, and he had an idea that it would be far better to let Dr. James explain the situation than himself; and so, in one instant, Pete was on his feet, and in two instants he was going down the street at a pace that did him credit. He reached the hotel half an hour before you could have got a trunk-call on the telephone, and within ten minutes after that he was in bed, with his pipe in his mouth.

The doctor's words had comforted him, and now he remembered that he was frightfully hungry. This elevation and depression of spirits come to us all when one we are fond of is ill. It is just about two o'clock in the morning when we think they are going to die, and after breakfast we think they are getting well. It is only a matter of human nature. At any rate, Pete cared deeply for Rory, but he felt so happy now that he dozed off. Then he dreamt he heard the telephone-bell, followed by fearful crashes of thunder, and at last he woke up to the fact that someone was banging at his door, which he had taken the precaution of locking.

"Who's dere?" growled Pete.

"A constable. I am going to arrest you."

"I'm a-resting myself, old hoss. Buzz off home! How dare you enter a private hotel?"

"The front door was open, and I have occasion to believe you are a burglar, and that you don't belong to this hotel at all!"

"You ain't got de right to enter a private building widout a ticket."

"I know all about my rights, without a burglar telling me what they are. I guess you have attempted to enter a gentleman's house, and you have assaulted me, and that's good enough for me!"

"Well, so long as you are satisfied wid it, I'm content. Buzz off home, and start guessing again, 'cos you ain't anything like right dis journey!"

"If you don't open this door, I shall burst it open!"

"You can please yourself 'bout dat, my dear old hoss, only you can make up your mind dat I ain't getting out ob bed again to-night for a man or a constable!"

The lock was of no strength to speak of. The constable put his shoulder against the door, and with a sharp click it flew open. Then the man of law flashed on his lantern, and, striding up to Pete, gripped him by the arm, and made an effort to pull him out of bed. This was quite out of the question, and when the constable drew his baton, Pete wrenched it out of his hand, flung it across the room, and lugged the bobby on to the bed. It made the sheets frightfully muddy, but a little thing like that was not going to trouble Pete.

"See here, old hoss," he exclaimed, "I'm mighty tired, one way and anoder. I'm going to sleep, and you can do de same if you like. At any

rate, you hab got to stop your struggling and noise, and if you continue dem I shall gib you a smack ober de napper like so!"

"I guess I will make you pay for this!" cried the angry constable. "Are you going to let me go?"

"Stop your noise! I tell you I am going to sleep, and if you ain't going to do de same, I shall clump you like—so!"

"You silly worm! You can't escape me."

"I don't want to escape you. So long as Rory is getting on all right I'm happy. You can gib me years ob imprisonment for all I care."

"So your pal Rory has got the swag, and you think he's the one I ought to have gone——"

"Say, old hoss, ain't dis de first case you hab eber had where a burglar named Rory goes round wid a nigger named Pete wid a step-ladder, robs a house, den comes to an hotel, and don't knock de bobby sillier dan he really is, and escapes? If you like to buzz off home you can, and I sha'n't persecute you for wrongfull detection and distrust, heretofore, hereafter, and oderwise aforesaid. You see, I hab a vast knowledge ob de legal language, and I ain't allowing a man to come into my bed-room and arrest me before I hab committed de burglary aforesaid, heretofore, and its heirs, administrators, executors, and assigns. I hab studied law books, and find dem mighty interesting, so go to sleep, and after due notice giben on dis day ob de week, month, and year to wit, heretofore, oderwise, and hereinafter, if you dare to try to keep me awake, I'll clump you worse dan an angry housemaid clumps her mistress's favourite kitten after de housemaid aforesaid and hereinafter has had a month's notice for smashing de vase she told dat mistress de kitten had smashed."

The constable resented this sort of treatment, and he made a desperate effort to free himself, but he found it quite impossible and extremely painful. He was not at all a wise man, but he was wise enough to know that his strength was of no earthly use against Pete's, and so he remained where he was, which was really the only thing he could possibly do.

When Pete commenced snoring the constable tried to get away, but his slightest movement awoke Pete, who administered some slaps that hurt, and so the constable resigned himself to the inevitable. The bed was against the wall, and as he was on the inside, escape against an infinitely stronger foe was a matter of absolute impossibility. For which reason he remained where he was till Pete awoke at daybreak. Even then he would not release the unfortunate constable, who was puzzling his brains as to what sort of report to make to his superior officer when the time came.

Pete sat up in bed and smoked, while the constable was so furious that he did not even ask him any questions concerning the mysterious affair.

"Now, see here, bobby," exclaimed Pete, at a little before eight o'clock, "we hab got to hab breakfast, and p'r'aps you had better take it wid us. I sha'n't be long finishing my dressing."

"You will have to come to the station with me."

"Well, dat's just one ob de tings I ain't doing. You hab arrested me on a charge ob burglary you say. Well, I ain't committed it."

"But your pal Rory has."

"I ain't responsible for Rory's actions. If I had been, I don't tink he would hab hurt his leg. All de same, you can act as you like, and I'm going to act as I like, and if we bof like de same ting, I sha'n't interfere wid you. In de first place you hab got to like to come to breakfast, and if you don't like dat, you hab got to sit in a chair and see me eat it."

"You forget that I can easily get help."

"I'm inclined to tink dat you will need it, if you want to take me to de



station; all de same, dat is a ting ob de future, and we ain't got de right to trouble ourselves ober dat."

The constable tried to argue the matter, but Pete did not listen to him, and when they entered the breakfast-room—for Pete simply refused to allow the constable to go—they found Jack and Sam waiting for them.

Pete explained what had happened in his own way, and remembering his promise to the doctor, with regard to the strange patient, he absolutely refused to give any information concerning Rory, while Jack and Sam were equally reticent, with the result that the constable was completely fogged. He would have liked to join that breakfast, but had the idea that it might come out in evidence, and look like bribery, so he absolutely refused to eat anything. Pete, who felt far easier concerning Rory, made up for lost time, and the breakfast he consumed astonished the constable, who began to doubt whether he had been wise in refusing to join them. However, it was too late now, so he looked as dignified, as an extremely muddy constable who had been captured by his prisoner could possibly look.

"Now, den, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, when the meal was finished. "De best ting for you to do is to buzz off to de station and tell dem exactly what has happened."

"I am going to take you to the station."

"I tink not. You would need a lot ob help, and if you are determined on dat cistern, why, I ain't allowing you to leabe dis room to get de necessary help. I 'spect dat is how you would act in my place, supposing you were two-free times stronger dan me, which ain't de case. If you take my advice you will buzz off to de doctor's and learn from him what has happened. You might tell him at de same time dat you suspect a man named Rory ob habing committed a burglary."

"You can think yourself smart, but you will find yourself in the wrong box with me, you nigger. I don't see why we have all these niggers in the city giving the police extra trouble. The gaols are half full of them already, and we have to keep the respectable inhabitants from lynching the brutes!"

"Don't you think you are an idiot, Ninety-five?" inquired Jack, taking the constable's number. "Here you try to arrest a man for no earthly reason, and because he proves what an utter idiot you are, you—"

"So those are the lines you take, young fellow," interposed the constable. "Well, I guess I'm going to prove to you that you are in the wrong shop this time. I suppose that if I see a man in the dead of night on the top of steps trying to get into a gentleman's house, I have the right to arrest him?"

"Well, did you first of all ask him what he was doing?" inquired Jack, laughing, because he guessed what Pete was doing, and he knew to a certainty that he would not be trying to commit a robbery.

"Do you take me for a fool?" snarled the constable.

"I should not like to be personal. We will merely call you a constable," answered Jack; "and perhaps we will put you down as one who does not know his duties. That does not matter to my friend Pete."

"So you admit he is your friend?"

"Certainly! And I am proud of his friendship. Now, what you ought to have done was to inquire at the doctor's house how it was that Pete was speaking to him at that hour of the night. Surely you should have known that no sane burglar would walk through the streets with a step-ladder under his arm. Ha, ha! It's such a silly idea. I don't know what happened, except that the waiter has told me that my friend Pete went out in the dead of night with a step-ladder to talk to a doctor because that doctor would not open his door to him, and I am only guessing the rest."

"Well, he threw me in the mud."

"Pete would not do that intentionally, unless you had struck him, or something like that."

"I never touched him, except to take hold of his ankle."

"And then he fell, I suppose," laughed Jack; "and by the look of your uniform, he must have dropped on you."

"Well, what did he run away for?"

"Perhaps he was frightened of you," laughed Jack, who thought such a thing highly improbable. "At any rate, what you ought to have done was to make inquiries at this hotel, and subsequently have made inquiries at the doctor's house. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that had you done either of these things you would have known, just as surely as I know, that Pete's motives were absolutely harmless. Now, suppose you go and make those inquiries? Of course, if you choose you can place other constables outside this hotel to make sure that we do not leave it. As a matter of fact we are not going out till— When are you calling on the doctor, Pete?"

"Eleven o'clock is de time named for dat appointment."

"Very well," exclaimed Jack. "We shall not be leaving this hotel until ten minutes to eleven, so you have plenty of time to satisfy yourself about the matter."

The constable took this advice and left the hotel.

"I dunno weder dat man is going to bring some more bobbies," observed Pete. "But I know dis, boys, I ain't going wid dem till I hab seen Rory at eleven o'clock. I don't want you to get into a boder about helping me, but—"

"We shall certainly help you, old chap," laughed Jack; "but I don't think that there will be any need for that. You will find it is all right, after that constable has made his inquiries. Mind, Pete, I don't blame him. If you will play the fool in the dead of night by mounting to a man's window on a step-ladder, you must expect to take the consequences."

"But I don't mind de consequences so long as Rory gets all right. De bobby tinks he is a burglar, and has got all de swag, as he calls it. I couldn't tell him exactly how de case stands, because I promised de doctor to keep it secret; at de same time—"

"Rats!" exclaimed Sam. "You wanted to humbug the fellow, and as far as I can see, you have succeeded in doing so. But we shall hear what he has to say when he returns."

Now, when that constable did return he did not say much. He merely remarked that in doing his duty he had been mistaken in his man; so Pete shook hands with him, and the constable found a couple of sovereigns in his hand after that friendly grip. Then having given the telephone lad, who did not forget to call, another sovereign, they proceeded towards the doctor's, and Jack began to wonder how much Rory's mishap would cost, from first to last, at the rate that Pete was starting.

### CHAPTER 3.

**Pete Distracts the Doctor, Who Prescribes a Sea Voyage for Him—  
Trouble in the Shipping-Office—A Strange Dance—Sears Seeks Ven-  
geance—How His Plot Failed—Shipping Aboard the Vesta.**

**D**R. JAMES conducted them to the patient, and there was trouble at once, because Rory sprang to his feet and uttered a howl of delight, which Pete took for a yelp of pain.

"Now, you ain't to move, Rory, boy," said Pete, stroking his head. "Keep de paw nice and comfortable. Dat's a good dog! You tink



he is getting on all right, doctor? Shoo! Don't talk too loudly, 'specially if you hab got any bad news, 'cos dat dog understands most eberyting."

"Of course he is getting on all right; but I warn you that you are not making him much better by letting him jump up like that. There's one thing, I have got the splints so that they can't very well shift. Do you think I am treating your dog unkindly?"

"Nunno, old hoss."

"Well, act like a sensible man, and don't come playing the fool like you did last night."

"I was worried."

"So was I, hang it! I want to do the best I can for Rory, but I really cannot stand the way you are going on. It is bad enough to have a sick patient call you up in the middle of the night, especially when there is no need for it. If there is the need they coolly tell you that they did not like to disturb you; and when there is no need, they don't care how they disturb a wretched doctor's rest; the worst of it is that they always seem to think they are worse on a stormy night. If a storm wakes a patient, that patient is nearly sure to wake the doctor."

"Well," exclaimed Pete. "We know Rory is getting good attention, and he is so patient dat it makes you doubly sorry for him. All de same dere ain't any sense in my calling too often, specially in de night time. Now, let me see, it's just eleven o'clock. Do you tink if I was to call again at half-past eleven, just to see how matters were going? Dere might be an improvement, you know, by dat time, den I could call again more frequently and learn de latest particulars concerning de dog."

"Just step this way," exclaimed the doctor, leading Jack and Sam from the room. "You keep with your dog for a few moments, my man."

Pete was quite ready to do this, and the doctor led the comrades into another room.

"Now, look here," he exclaimed. "I am not going to stand this. You will have to get that silly rascal away. That dog's leg will take six weeks before it is as right as ever, and if you fondly imagine that I am going to have that nigger calling here every half hour of the day, and I don't know how many times in the night, why, you are mistaken. He can take his five pounds and his dog away first. Besides, suppose people got to know that I was attending a dog for money, I'd look well, wouldn't I? Can't you make him see the thing in a proper light?"

"It is utterly impossible, Dr. James," answered Jack. "I knew the fearful consequences that would attend this affair. You can't argue with Pete. If he thinks it is necessary or advantageous that he should see the dog every half hour, he will worry your life out. He would keep you three hours trying to convince you that thirty-five minutes would be too long between his visits."

"He is doing the dog harm. Suppose I convince him of that? You see, every time Rory leaps up he is doing himself harm. Do you think I could convince Pete that he is doing the dog harm?"

"Yes, and then he would keep calling to ask you whether there was any improvement in the patient. Ha, ha, ha! You have taken on an awful case, and at the end he will hand you a fee that will take your breath away."

"Is he rich?"

"Very!"

"Well, look here, suppose you take him for a sea-voyage. Take him to Australia, or Alaska. Tell him that I won't be answerable for Rory unless he is left alone; and that if he will come back here at the end of a couple of

months I will have that dog as right as ever he was in his life. Do you think you could manage that?"

"Yes. Look here, you have a talk to Pete. Explain matters in your own way. You think Rory will get all right?"

"I know he will, if he is left to my charge, and that silly rascal does not come disturbing him."

"Well, have a five minutes' chat with Pete, and then tell him to follow us to the hotel. We will go for a bit of a voyage."

"There is a steamer starting for Skaguay to-morrow. Take him there, and then on to Dawson City. Give him a bit of the Alaska climate. I will write to you at Skaguay if you give me all particulars. It will be all the better for Rory and for Pete. You know, the way he is acting now is beyond all bounds."

"Right, doctor! Suppose you have the talk with him, and then come and dine with us at the hotel at six-thirty?"

"Thanks! I will, with pleasure. You see, the fellow will worry your lives out as well as my own if you don't get him away; and if you are fond of travelling and adventures, and money is no particular object to you, why, you can't do better than go to Alaska. Perhaps it will be as well not to mention anything about the cold, you know. He won't like that."

"Oh, Pete is used to all sorts of weather!" laughed Jack. "Just you convince him that Rory will benefit by his absence, and we will start to-morrow. Don't forget, half-past six to-night."

Then Jack and Sam took their leave, and the doctor sent for Pete, who came in with an expression on his face such as that doctor had seen on many a parent's while waiting for the verdict.

"What is it, old hoss?" demanded Pete, stepping to the window and gazing out. He had made up his mind that there were some serious symptoms with Rory. "Tell me quick, 'cos I'm in a hurry!"

"I am going to tell you this, Pete," said Dr. James—"Rory is getting on splendidly, and——"

"Yoorooh!" yelled Pete, rushing at the doctor and seizing his hand.

"Ah! Murder! Oh, you stupid rascal! Let go! Let go, will you?"

"I'm so mighty glad, old hoss!"

"Phew! I am not! You have nearly crushed my hand!"

"Dat was de pleasure ob de ting."

"Then all I can say is that it was on your side. Now, look here, I want to speak seriously to you. I am assuming that you care for your dog, and I can cure him. But if you won't obey my orders, I intend to hand you back those five sovereigns, and you can take Rory to a veterinary surgeon, who, no doubt, will cure him just as well."

"I'll obey de orders, sah."

"Rory needs two months' rest. If he gets fooling about before that he may go lame. I can cure him, but I can't, and won't, try to cure him with you humbugging about. You have got to decide. Here are your five pounds. You know where your dog is. Take both away, if you choose, or leave both with me, and I will effect the cure, on the condition that you take yourself away for two months or more. Go for a little sea-voyage. Land in Alaska. I will write to you and let you know exactly how Rory is getting on. But unless you agree to this I shall throw up the case."

"Suppose I was to call, say, each hour in de day-time, and, say, ebery free hours ob de night. Dat wouldn't gib you any trouble to speak ob."

"I am not going to argue the point with you. You can take your choice. If you are going to remain here, you will have to get another man to attend to Rory. On the other hand, if you choose to go for this voyage, and return here two months hence, Rory will be as right as ever he was, and you



may depend on it that he will have the very kindest treatment. I like the dog, and I think he likes me. Now then, decide straight away, because I am busy this morning, for a wonder."

"Old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "I'm going to do what you say, provided Jack and Sammy agree!"

"Well, Jack has invited me to dine with him to-night, so we shall be able to find that out. Mind, it has got to be one thing or the other; I will have no half-measures. A steamer sails to-morrow. If you choose to go in her, all well and good. If you do not, then you can take Rory, and the money you paid for him, away, because I will have nothing to do with either."

"Eh?"

"I think you heard what I said. It is exactly what I mean."

"But, see here, old hoss——"

"I won't argue the matter with you. You can please yourself."

"Suppose Rory should be taken bad while I am away?"

"There is not the slightest chance of such a thing happening. I shall look after him just as conscientiously as though he belonged to me. As a matter of fact, he will not be allowed to go out, except for a run in the garden, and that won't be for some time. Now be off with you, and think over what I say. You have got to decide between now and to-night."

Pete was inclined to be gloomy that day. He did not like the idea of leaving Rory for so long; all the same, he began to think that the doctor was right, and he talked the matter over with Jack and Sam, who both strongly advised him to do as the doctor wished. And the result of this was that Pete decided on making the trip. While, when Dr. James turned up that evening he promised to write to Skaguay to tell him exactly how Rory was.

"As a matter of fact, he will be perfectly well," said Dr. James. "But you will find my letter awaiting you on your arrival."

"You don't tink it necessary to consult wid anoder physician?"

"Absurd! Physicians don't attend dogs!"

"Den dey ought to. I'd make an Act ob Parliament where dey are bound to do so under pain ob a severe flogging if dey refused."

"Well, it is certain they won't do so until your precious Act is passed; and then I rather think some of them will take the flogging instead."

The dinner passed off all right. Pete did not speak much, and whenever he did so it was about Rory. The doctor had to hurry off, as he had some patients to attend to; but he left them instructions as to where they would find the shipping-agent's office.

"You will find the office open to-night until, say, nine o'clock, as they are busy with the vessel's cargo; and I expect they will be glad enough to get passengers, so you had better be off at once."

The shipping agent—whose name was Sears—was in his office. He was an extremely haughty sort of individual, with a clean-shaven face, which always wore an austere expression. He was one of those men who always pretend to be too busy to attend to anyone. At the present moment he was bullying a clerk and smoking a big cigar. The fact is, he was generally bullying someone. Perhaps that was because he was such a big man, for he stood well over six feet, and was proportionately broad. His age would have been about thirty.

"Is your name Sears, old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"My name is Mr. Sears, fellow!" cried the indignant man. "And I guess a nigger is going to address me in the proper manner! What do you want?"

"Well, in de first place, I want Rory to get well. Den I 'spect dere are

two-free oder tings I want, only I ain't got time to tink ob dem. What do you want?"

"Why, I don't want you, and——"

"I ain't asking you what you don't want, old hoss—I'm asking you what you do want; and dere's one ting you want, to my knowledge."

"I suppose you reckon you are mighty smart?"

"Nunno! I tink I'm mighty stupid; but I don't tink I'm such an idiotic, bleared-eyed donkey as you are!"

Pete said this without the slightest signs of anger, and it made the clerks laugh, though they did not dare to let the great man see them.

"See here," cried Sears, "you can go out of this office the road you came in, unless you want to go out of the window! You wouldn't be the first insolent brute I've thrown through that window!"

"Eber taken a header frough it yourself, old hoss?"

"I'm too busy to talk to a pack of niggers! If you want a job, you won't get one! I don't know what you have come here for."

"I believe your masters own a vessel called de Vesta? I hab seen dat vessel, and she somewhat resembles you."

"What do you mean, you utter idiot?"

"Why, she ain't much to look at. Seems to want some paint, de same as you seem to want some manners. Still, her inside may be better dan de outside, de same as we hab got de consolation ob knowing your inside can't be worse dan your outside."

"Do you want me to throw you out of this office?"

"Nunno, old hoss!"

"Then you had better go, or you will certainly get thrown out!"

"Look at dat, now! Should you be de one to do de frowing?"

"Yes, I would!"

"I hope you wouldn't frow Jack and Sammy out at de same time."

"I would kick any man out of my office who was insulting!"

"Well, dat's de proper spirit. Been a nice day, don't you tink so, old hoss?"

"What do you want here, at any rate?"

"Dat's just what I hab come to tell you, only you seem 'most too busy to listen."

"At any rate, I am engaged."

"Poor, wretched woman, she will hab an awful life when she marries you; unless, of course, she happens to be one ob de heavyweights, and knocks you about wid de poker! What's her name? Why, what's de man trying to do? Yah, yah, yah! Mind you don't ober exert yourself, old hoss!"

Sears was trying to turn Pete out of the office, and it was one of the most hopeless tasks he had ever undertaken in his life.

"I must say dis is mighty funny, boys!" exclaimed Pete, who did not appear to be exerting himself at all; and yet Sears could not shift him. "I dunno weder de man is trying to dance, or trying to fight. I tink he must be trying to dance; so we will see if we can oblige him."

Then Pete danced the great man round and round the office, and the convulsed clerks nearly smothered themselves in their efforts to suppress their laughter. Sears could not strike Pete in the face, for the simple reason that his arms were pinioned to his sides by Pete's, and every time he tried to kick he was jumped up in the most comical manner imaginable, while Pete would give him a playful hug that made him roar; and all the time Pete sang sweetly, making up the words as he went:





lascar when he's got his pay! I don't know what they pay you, but I'd say if it's twenty-five dollars a week, it's twenty dollars more than you are worth! If you were my man I would pay you with a rope-end, and I'd feel it a pity that keel-hauling has gone out of fashion!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Dat's a slap in de mouf, Sears. Should advise you to let it rest at dat. You won't go much better, one way and anoder."

"Dog of a nigger!" snarled Sears. "I am not a man to bark; but I can bite. That silly scoundrel Lamb appears to forget that his time expired last voyage. Ha, ha, ha! We require a fresh contract for this one. The Vesta sails to-morrow, but—well, I will show you. I have much pleasure in dismissing you, captain. Ha, ha, ha! Captain Lamb. Perhaps when you become a sheep you may get wiser. The man who laughs last wins. You are not the only living skipper, although you appear to think that you are. Try to make your arrangements with my clerks. I am going out to make my own. I told you that we closed at nine to-night," added Sears, turning towards the unfortunate clerks. "You will now wait until I return, which may be ten, or later. But you will all of you wait, under pain of dismissal."

Then Sears strode from the office.

"Nice sort ob man dat, Captain Lamb," observed Pete.

"Yes, I've met his sort many a time, and I can't kow-tow to them. They are all right if you do that, but it isn't in my nature. I'm rather interested to see how this ends, so shall stop here till he comes back."

"We'm interested too, old hoss," said Pete, "'cos we want to sail aboard your vessel as passengers—to what's de name ob de place, Jack?"

"Skaguay."

"Dat's it. Tink we could go as far as dat, old hoss?"

"Well, you see, it isn't for me to decide. The owner has got the last word, and I haven't a doubt Sears will steer his course clear. Most likely he will say I was drunk, and insulted him. At any rate, he will pitch a yarn, and the chances are that the old swell will believe him. Not that I care. I can get a ship, though I've got a sort of affection for the old Vesta. She ain't much to look at, but she's a rare sea boat. I'm going to wait."

"Tink we had better do de same, boys. I know dat doctor won't let me see Rory to-night, so I don't see much use in going back."

Jack and Sam were quite agreeable to this arrangement, so the comrades chatted with the skipper, who appeared to be a downright good fellow. He smoked Jack's cigars, which he vowed were grand, and he told them several tales of the sea, while in the middle of one of them Sears entered, followed by a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, with a very stern face, and large dark eyes, which he fixed on Captain Lamb in a manner that was almost insolent, but the sturdy skipper met his gaze unflinchingly, then he glanced at the comrades.

"I believe you are Captain Lamb, the skipper of the Vesta?" said the stranger, turning his piercing gaze once more on the captain.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"I am Mr. Vance, the owner of the vessel."

"Pleased to meet you, sir."

"And I am glad that I have met you, Captain Lamb," said Mr. Vance; "and for this reason. As you may be aware, I place full power in Mr. Sears's hands. He informed me this evening that he had dismissed you, and he wished me to engage another captain, who, I have every reason to believe, is a thoroughly competent man. His credentials are excellent. But so are yours. Since you have commanded my vessel, I have never heard a word against you, and as a just man, a thing I strive to be, I could not confirm



such action without personally satisfying myself that there was sufficient cause for it. Now I know that sailors, whose lives are very hard, occasionally overstep the bounds when they come ashore."

"I've noticed the same thing myself, sir," answered Lamb calmly.

"Mr. Sears!" exclaimed Mr. Vance. "You asserted that Captain Lamb came into this office drunk, and insulted you in the grossest manner possible. Drunkenness in a captain I could not overlook. It would be endangering the lives of the crew, apart from risking the vessel's safety. Neither in Captain Lamb's appearance, nor in his speech now, do I see the slightest signs of intoxication. Will you please explain your very grave charge?"

"I have noticed it on several occasions, sir," declared Sears, who looked very uncomfortable under that steadfast gaze. "He has certainly pulled himself together since I saw him."

"It was your duty to have reported it to me on the previous occasions. Why did you not do so?"

"I wished to give the man every chance."

"Knowing that if he were a drunkard he was risking the lives of his crew?"

"He was certainly drunk to-night."

"You saw him half an hour ago?"

"More than that, sir."

"No! Not if you came straight from the office, as you told me was the case. I took the time, and had my reasons for doing so. I doubted your assertion. Now I know it was false. Captain Lamb is as sober as I am, or as sober as these gentlemen here. In other words, he is perfectly sober, and certainly was not intoxicated half an hour ago."

"I say that Lamb has come into this office in a state of intoxication on many occasions."

"Captain Lamb might assert that I had been intoxicated on many occasions; but I should expect him to prove his words. I say that Captain Lamb is perfectly sober, and I say that it is a wicked thing to assert he was intoxicated half an hour ago. Captain Lamb sails my vessel, and I have absolute confidence in him. It is not for me to dictate to him as to what he should take in the way of drink; I will only remark that his appearance gives me the impression that he is an abstemious man. That he is a clever, and an experienced captain, I know from past experience. I am thankful, Mr. Sears, that I came here to-night. You know the horror I have of drink in anything but moderation."

"Of course, sir, if you take the interested party's word before mine, there is an end of the matter."

"I take the evidence of my own eyes. Captain Lamb has never given me his word concerning the matter, nor do I wish him to do so. It would be quite unnecessary. You have told me a deliberate falsehood. Of that I am convinced in my own mind; but I will confirm it. May I ask, sir, if you saw the slightest signs of intoxication in Captain Lamb since you have been in this office?" inquired Mr. Vance, turning to Jack.

"Certainly not, sir. I was in this office before the captain entered, and have been here ever since. I never met him before, so have no interest in the matter; but it is untrue to say that he was intoxicated. There was not the slightest foundation for such a charge. I consider it a most cruel and wicked insinuation."

"I thank you, sir," exclaimed Lamb. "If a man wants to make me wild he's only got to take too much to drink when he goes ashore. Of course, some of them will, and I should say if a captain set them the example he ought to be kicked out of it. It so happens that I haven't had a drop of

intoxica  
never d  
Skagua

"Ver  
quire,  
trust yo  
to call  
very ser

Then  
left the  
had fai  
dismiss

"Now  
dis ebe  
we will  
appetit  
will get  
"Rig  
night."

Pete L  
App  
Nig  
the

"N

"Der  
meat fi  
"Wh  
He w  
seeing  
"Jus  
extensi  
"We  
Americ

"We  
it ain't

"Wh  
"Go  
"Do  
themse

"I d  
one, bu  
telling

Do you  
de but  
"Do

"Ye  
"We

"All  
more p  
keep as

intoxicating liquor to-day. As for getting drunk—well, that's a thing I never do. Now, these gentlemen want to sail with me as passengers to Skaguay, and they are ready to pay their passage-money."

"Very well, captain. Order in what additional provisions you will require, and you shall take the passage-money. I wish you good-bye, and trust you will have a very pleasant voyage. Mr. Sears, you will be pleased to call at my house to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, when I shall have a very serious matter to mention to you."

Then Mr. Vance shook hands with the captain and the three comrades, and left the office, while Sears looked remarkably uncomfortable. His little plot had failed, and it looked to him very much as though he would receive his dismissal on the morrow.

"Now den, captain," exclaimed Pete; "if you happen to be disengaged dis evening p'r'aps you will come and help us make a few purchases, den we will hab supper at de hotel, and see you on board. You see, Jack's appetite is about as large as Sammy's, and dese boys like good tings, so we will get dem."

"Right you are, mates," exclaimed the captain. "I'm free till midnight."

#### CHAPTER 4.

**Pete Lays in Stores—A Bad Start—Pete Recovers His Spirits and His Appetite—The Waiter Receives His Tip and His Orders—Perils in the Night—Pete's Gallant Action—The Arrival in Skaguay—News From the Doctor—Pete's Grip:**

"NOW, de first ting to be considered is how long will dis voyage last?" inquired Pete, stopping at a large store where they sold almost everything, and where they had a fine show of prime meat. "I reckon we shall do it within the week," answered Lamb.

"Den dat makes tings simple. Come in here, boys! We will start on de meat first. Some meat, please!"

"What sort?" inquired the salesman. He was just closing, and did not care for customers at that time of night, seeing that he only worked for weekly wages.

"Just de ordinary sort," answered Pete, whose knowledge of meat was not extensive. "It must be real English meat."

"Well, how do you suppose you are going to get English meat in America?"

"Well, it ain't got to come from Chicago in tins, or anyting like dat, and it ain't got to be frozen."

"What do you want?"

"Golly! Ain't de man dense! We want some meat!" howled Pete.

"Don't you get shouting at me like that! We expect niggers to behave themselves in this establishment!"

"I dunno weder de man is a perfect fool or weder he only pretends to be one, but if he's pretending, I must say he succeeds remarkably well. I keep telling him we want some meat, and den he keeps asking me what I want. Do you suppose I come to a butcher's shop to buy nose-gays, or to purchase de butcher?"

"Do you want beef, mutton, pork, veal——"

"Yes."

"Well—which?"

"All ob dem; and while you are putting dem up I will be making some more purchases. Put up enough to last for a week. Tink your meat will keep as long as dat?"



"Do you want a leg of mutton?"

"Golly! I can eat de best part ob dat myself at one meal. I will chase dat rabbit hanging up dere."

"Well, of all the idiots I ever came across, you take the cake. That's sheep!"

"Made sure it was a rabbit," observed Pete, winking at Jack. "Look just like a large rabbit. Are you quite sure it ain't a rabbit?"

"Did you ever see a rabbit that size?"

"Well, I must say it is rader a large one. Still, de sheep will do to on wid. You tink dat will keep for a week in cold regions?"

"Yes, it was only killed to-day."

"Den let's hab an ox to go wid it, and get dem done up in a parcel to take on de vessel wid me. Jack shall carry de ox, and Sammy de sheep. I shall hab some tea and sugar to carry, and I can't carry eberyting."

The butcher thought Pete was chaffing him, and he called the manager the stores. That worthy got a commission on sales, and he did not care how late he kept open, provided he was making sales. He just convinced himself that Pete not only meant business, but had got the money to pay for the things, and then he went ahead. He was a pleasant young fellow, and remarkably polite. Pete explained matters to him, which saved a lot of trouble.

He sold a couple of sides of bacon besides the meat, and for about an hour he sold every other article that his ready brain could think of. It needed his recommendation and Pete bought at once. The assistants were very surly at being kept, but the manager's amiability made up for it.

"See here, mate," exclaimed Captain Lamb at last. "The Vesta isn't man-o'-war. You've got enough to keep all the crew going with fresh meat to say nothing of the other things, and I tell you straight it is going to cost you something."

"Dat's de worst ob human beings. Dey can't lib widout eating. I tink if you frow in dose ducks and fowls it will be about as much as we shall want. You are quite sure you hab put in all de ingredients for de puddings? must hab plum-puddings."

"Quite sure," answered the manager. "Now, what time shall I send the to your vessel, captain? I can send to-night, if you like."

"We sail to-morrow at a little after twelve."

"Good! Then everything shall be aboard before eight o'clock to-morrow morning. My men shall be down at seven, sharp."

The captain gasped when he saw the amount of the bill, but Pete paid without a murmur, then they went to the hotel and had a sumptuous supper and Lamb bid them good-night with the conviction that they were going to have a very jolly voyage, while he told his men they were in for a good thing.

The following morning Pete was up at break of day, and he paid a farewell visit to Rory, while the doctor seemed delighted to get rid of him. As a matter of fact, he had not yet got rid of him, for Pete called three times afterwards to give him final instructions, and he left an order at the store to send two pound of mutton-chops and steaks each day alternately, and so that Rory might get the very best he told the manager that were for an invalid patient staying at the doctor's.

"I guess that invalid is getting better, isn't he?" inquired the manager smiling.

"Yes, he's much better dan he was."

"Appetite improving, isn't it?"

"Yes. But how did you know dat?"

"Well  
was men  
regularly  
"Well  
spent I  
tell de d  
And D  
unfortun  
exactly I  
like teleg  
"All r  
when you  
"And  
"Oh,  
slamming  
It was  
every sh  
ordered s  
"Look  
the vesse  
"Nunn  
destructi  
I shall g  
"Eh?  
"Well  
dem all t  
"It is  
Pete pu  
They wen  
like a wis  
to sail, s  
Pete w  
the vesse  
vessel, an  
tobacco,  
mate in c  
"You  
can possi  
"That'  
fellow in  
You don't  
"And  
look of th  
his positi  
and it wi  
"Yes, s  
but he wi  
Jack w  
lunch, an  
"I sha  
sense, you  
silly coon  
"This pr  
they went  
crew appe



"Well, if he is going to eat two pounds of meat a day, it looks as if he was mending!" laughed the manager. "However, I will see that it goes regularly."

"Well, dere's five pounds for de cost, for de present, and when dat is spent I can let you hab some more. Good-bye, old hoss! I'll just go and tell de doctor dat it's coming."

And Dr. James received Pete's final visit, while that worthy kept the unfortunate doctor talking for upwards of a quarter of an hour explaining exactly how Rory liked his chops and steaks cooked. He said he would like telegrams sent every day besides letters.

"All right; but do go. You will notice how often I telegraph and write when you get there."

"And see here, doctor, I should like dat dog to——"

"Oh, clear out of it!" roared Dr. James, shoving him outside and slamming the door.

It was fearfully slow work getting Pete aboard, because he would stop at every shop where he thought there was anything Rory might fancy. He ordered several things to be sent in, then he stopped at a stationer's shop.

"Look here, Pete," exclaimed Jack, "we have only just time to get to the vessel, and Rory can't possibly write letters to you."

"Nunno, Jack; but I shall hab to write daily to de doctor to gib him destructions, and as dey will be long letters, I shall want a lot ob paper. I shall get you to do de writing while I do de dictation."

"Eh? How are you going to post the letters while we are aboard?"

"Well, you see, I shall write de letters while we are aboard, and post dem all togeder when we get to Skaguay. Dis way to London!"

"It is not the way to Skaguay!" growled Jack.

Pete purchased his stationery, and they got him down to the vessel at last. They were ten minutes beyond the limit the skipper had given them, but, like a wise man, he had named a time half an hour before he really intended to sail, so that was all right.

Pete went aft, leant his arms on the bulwarks, and gazed at the water, as the vessel steamed slowly out of port. Jack and Sam had a look round the vessel, and chatted with the crew, whom they supplied with plenty of tobacco, for Pete had laid in an unlimited store. Then the captain put his mate in charge, and came to chat with them concerning arrangements.

"You see, boys," he exclaimed, "Pete has got more provisions than we can possibly get through, unless the crew help us!"

"That's what he will insist on," laughed Jack. "He is the best-hearted fellow in the world. He will feed up your crew till they get fat and lazy, if you don't take care!"

"And he won't be able to tackle it himself for two or three days, by the look of things," said the skipper, glancing towards Pete, who had not shifted his position, but was still gazing at the water. "There is a bit of a roll on, and it will be worse as we get out. You are accustomed to it?"

"Yes, and so is he," laughed Jack. "He is moping about his dog Rory; but he will soon get all right."

Jack was a little too sanguine. Pete absolutely refused to go down to lunch, and when the comrades went on deck again they found him missing.

"I shall have to give him a talking to!" exclaimed Jack. "It's nonsense, you know, because Rory is perfectly all right. Let's come and find the silly coon!"

This proved no easy task. The mate said that he missed him soon after they went below, and imagined that Pete had followed, while none of the crew appeared to have seen him since lunch.



"I say," exclaimed Jack, "I hope he has not gone overboard!"

"What," gasped the captain, "committed suicide over a dog!"

"Oh, no!" laughed Jack. "But he may have dived over and swum ashore. That would be an easy matter for Pete, and he would do it, if he felt the parting with Rory too hard. He is certainly nowhere to be found."

"Have you looked in the engine-room?" inquired the captain. "Passengers often like to get down there to see the engines."

"I reckon that's where we shall find the nigger," said Sam. "Come along!"

They found Pete in the stokehole. He was shovelling on coal for him, and he was worth, and the stokers were sitting down, smoking their pipes and taking life easy.

"Hallo, boys!" exclaimed Pete. "I'm just taking a little exercise to give me an appetite for dinner. Get out ob my way. Dese furnaces require a mighty lot ob coal, one way and anoder!"

"I reckon you have taken a fancy to hard work very quickly," laughed Sam. "But stick to it. It will do you all the good in the world, and you will find it nice and cool down here, after you have shovelled on a bit or so!"

Pete did stick to it, and he came down to dinner with a wonderful appetite. There were no signs of moping about him now; but he spoke about Rory the whole time, and if they spoke about anything else he did not take the slightest interest in the conversation.

When Jack and Sam went to their cabin that night they found Pete there. He had taken off his coat and waistcoat, and his shirt-sleeves were rolled up. A wet towel was wound round his head. He had made a frightful mess with the ink, and had spoilt sheets of paper.

"How do you tink dat letter reads, Jack?" he inquired, handing five or six sheets of scrawl to Jack. At the best of times Pete's writing was illegible. He had written that little lot while the vessel was rolling considerably. "Read it out loud, Jack!" he said.

"Eh?"

"Can't you read, Jack?"

"A little; but——"

"Well, read my letter den."

"Ahem! 'Silly snipe Buster——'"

"What's de man reading? I neber wrote dat!"

"It looks like it."

"Golly! Dat's 'Steam ship Vesta.'"

"Oh, I beg your pardon! I took it for 'Silly snipe Buster.' You have certainly spelt Vesta Buster, unless the second letter is meant for an 'u.' It certainly looks more like 'u.'"

"I suppose you mean it looks more like me because it is black; but I'm too busy to laugh at dat joke. Go on, and neber mind de address."

"My dear old boss, James——" What's this—Bomps?

"Nunno, Jack! Dose are de letters doctors always put after deir names. Dat's B.A., M.P. Go on!"

"I am hopping on Rory's paw. Being much better, I hop on your paw. Being de same, I hop on chops and steaks."

"I reckon if he does all that hopping he will make the doctor dance while he tries to get at the drift of that letter!" cried Sam.

"You ain't reading it a bit right, Jack!" declared Pete.

"I wish you would write a bit better," retorted Jack. "What is it, then? I'm certain I have read what you have written."

"You  
"We  
capitals  
"It  
on Ro  
on de  
hope  
dere."  
"We  
only yo  
trying  
"I f  
I'm mi  
"We  
"Can  
"Be  
"I k  
Jack!"  
"We  
said Ja  
This o  
read."  
"See  
him ou  
"But  
"I d  
de sens  
"We  
appear  
"Den  
I forge  
"I d  
man we  
You co  
Then, a  
fully il  
Of cour  
your li  
was ha  
"I n  
same, v  
writing  
"I sh  
"I'll  
tink ob  
little lo  
to read  
doctor,  
arrange  
and I  
only se  
at de s  
why, it  
make d  
mornin

"You ain't putting de stops in de right places."

"Well, you haven't put in any at all. I am simply going by your capitals."

"It reads dis way," said Pete, glancing at the letter: "'I am hoping on Rory's paw being much better. I hope on you being de same. I hope on de chops and steaks arrival habing occurred wid due regularity. I hope—' M'yes! Dat is, I hope—I 'most forget what I was hoping dere."

"Well, you have got it before you," said Jack. "Read what you hoped, only you ought to have spelt it with a final 'e,' else he will think you are trying to perform the skirt-dance."

"I forget what dat fourth hope was about. It was someting 'bout Rory, I'm mighty certain. Can't you read what's on de paper, Jack?"

"Well, there's a good-sized blot just at that spot."

"Can you read it, Sammy?"

"Be shot if I can! It looks like 'time, gentlemen.'"

"I know!" cried Pete. "'I hope de temperature ob Rory—' Go on, Jack!"

"Well, you see, that has brought you to the bottom of the first page," said Jack, "and I don't quite know which page you have continued on. This one has nothing on it, and this one has a few words that I can't read."

"Seems to me it ain't much good sending a boy to Oxford if dey turn him out unable to read an ordinary letter."

"But which is the second page?"

"I dunno, Jack. I didn't number dem as I went on. Can't you tell by de sense how de pages come?"

"Well, I might be able to do so when I come to the sense; but I don't appear to have got as far as the sense yet."

"Dere's a lot ob important points in dat letter for de doctor to attend to. I forget what dey were, and I neber like reading my own writing!"

"I don't wonder at it, Pete!" exclaimed Jack. "I do not believe any living man would like reading your writing. You see, you blot it so frightfully. You consume more ink with making blots than you do with making letters. Then, again, even if big blots are not over the letters, they are so frightfully illegible that you cannot tell an 'e' from a 'y' or an 'a' from a 'q.' Of course, the rolling of the vessel is not conducive to clear writing, but your little lot looks as if it had been written in an express train when it was having railway accidents!"

"I must say, you ain't so complimentary to my handwriting! All de same, what do you tink de best thing to do would be so as to improve de writing?"

"I should advise your buying a twenty-guinea typewriter."

"I'll tink de matter ober, Jack; and in de meantime, when you come to tink ob it, dere's no sense in gibing ourselves de trouble ob reading dat little lot. De destructions are for de doctor, so he is de properest party to read dem. We ain't supposed to do his work. Just address dat to de doctor, Jack, while I go and interview de cook. I am going to make arrangements wid dat man to serve up de sort ob meals dat we require, and I want to gib him a good tip, wid a promise ob a better one, if he only sends up meals to our satisfaction. Dey hab got to be large, while at de same time dey must be good, and as we hab plenty ob food aboard—why, it stands to reason we ought to get exactly what we require. I shall make de man out a list ob articles dat we require for breakfast to-morrow morning."



Pete spent a considerable time in the galley, and he came back looking perfectly satisfied with his interview.

"Dat cook is a mighty sensible man, and he don't mind going to de man to be able to trouble. I dunno dat you can believe quite all de man tells you, but be a pity, used to cook for de Tsar ob Russia, and de Tsar was so delighted wid de man to be a p'ty cooking dat he recommended him to de Emperor ob Germany, and he us'ry much to hab fifteen oxes roasted whole. He says de German Emperor kiss de man away, mat eat oxes de whole day long, beginning at free o'clock in de morning, and need not I dat he drank gallons ob ale each day. He says de German Emperor kiss won't die him on bof cheeks when he left his service, and dat he wept like a wat' finished, s cart.

"He also says dat ebery time his vessel puts into port at Berlin, there's no German Emperor rushes on board, and, after kissing him on bof cheek, feed like t takes him all round de city in a carriage drawn by six horses, while gets to my de bands play 'God Save de King.' At any rate, if he ain't absolute his breakf trooful—and I'm inclined to tink he ain't, 'cos I can't understand The Vest emperor wanting to kiss Bill's stubby beard, especially as he chews tobacco skipper ex all day long—all de same, de man appears to be a good cook, and their cours concerns us more dan de kissing part ob de business. I hab ordered stand out breakfast dat will do your hearts good!" threatened powerful o

The comrades were up the following morning at break of day, for a simple reason that Pete got up at that time, and he declared that they were bound to get up early, or they would never have appetites worthy of pudding coffee as a such a meal as he had ordered.

Thus it was, when they sat down to breakfast with the captain, all was in excellent form for the meal. First of all, eggs and bacon were served up; then a joint of hot roast beef with Yorkshire pudding came on table. Next they had some entrees. Pete ate everything, but the captain stopped after the roast beef.

"Shiver my timbers!" he gasped, as an enormous plum-pudding was brought on. "You don't mean to say that you are going to eat plum-pudding for breakfast after the little lot you have stowed away?"

"Plum-pudding is a most nourishing ting," declared Pete. "If delicate people were to eat more ob it dey would get as strong as horses. I dun try dat little slice for de start. Dere you are, Jack and Sammy. And sunshine, I dainty piece will do for me. I'll hab a little more coffee, please. Gol in de storn Ain't dat pudding prime? I always tink plum-pudding is nice at a meal. You see, it is nice and light after a good meal. You don't w be nervous anything heavy, else it might gib you indigestion, or some ob dose co something. plaints. I will try anoder delicate little piece."

Considering the breakfast that Pete had already made, the amount of plum-pudding he consumed was really extraordinary; but when that was taken away and a roly-poly jam-pudding was brought up, he seemed astounded the captain by making another start.

"Haw, haw, haw! I must say, for a man with a delicate appetite, you have p get through a good lot. Do you always have two sorts of pudding for the sim at all like your breakfast?"

"Nunno, old hoss!" answered Pete, trying in vain to tempt Jack when, if you Sam. "We had a discussion in de galley as to which pudding was why write nicer, and so I decided on habing bof, so dat I might make a proper t 'I'm inc After all, I ain't at all sure which is de best. I tink you require dem where Rory de gib a proper finish to a breakfast. I dunno weder it is de rolling write a lett de vessel, or weder I ain't quite as well as usual, but I'm 'most afraid "Yes, an sha'n't be able to get frough any more dis morning. However, p'r'aps "I'd rad shall do better at lunch, 'cos he's going to serve up a big one. I hab gillow people

de man to understand dat dere must be plenty ob food, and he says he will be able to gauge our appetites by what we consume dis morning, so it would be a pity to leabe a lot ob tings, and make him tink dat we did not require bery much!"

"There's no fear of him doing that, after the little lot you have stowed away, mate," exclaimed the captain. "If he works on the breakfast lines you need not have the slightest fear that he will starve you. I'll go bail you won't die of hunger while you are aboard this vessel. Now, if you have finished, suppose we have a turn on deck. It's blowing great guns, but as there's no rain coming down, why a little fresh air won't hurt us after a feed like that. I'm not so young as you; and don't you see, when a man gets to my time of life he doesn't require two or three pounds of meat for his breakfast."

The Vesta was off a lee shore, and a very heavy wind was blowing; but the skipper explained that the further they got out to sea the further out of their course they went. However, on this occasion he deemed it advisable to stand out a little further, for the glass was falling with a rapidity that threatened a heavy storm, and although the Vesta's engines were very powerful ones for her size, they were not as new as they might have been.

That evening another large dinner was served up, and they had two sorts of puddings to finish up with; then Pete ended off with cheese, with black coffee as a finale.

The captain went on deck again, as he was a little anxious concerning matters, for now a heavy gale was blowing, and as the Vesta was driven through the heavy seas she plunged with a violence that was far from comfortable. The comrades were well accustomed to rough weather, but having no duties aboard they did not feel disposed to turn out on such a stormy night. Pete got on the subject of Rory's accident. It seemed as though the storm made him more anxious concerning his favourite, while Jack and Sam found it difficult to convince him that Rory would be perfectly right in the doctor's hands.

"I dunno why it is, boys," exclaimed Pete, "but in de daytime and in de sunshine, I always tink Rory is all right; den directly de night comes, and in de storm, I get nervous 'bout dat dog."

"Well, you are a silly coon," declared Sam, "because there is nothing to be nervous about. Light a pipe, and put your mind—if you have got one—on something else."

"I wonder if I ought to write de doctor anoder letter. De man ought to hab full destructions concerning Rory's likes and dislikes. You know dat dog is a rader particular one. Do you tink I had better write anoder letter, Sammy?"

"What's the good. You can't post that one for a week, and even after you have posted it I'm absolutely certain the doctor won't read a word of it, for the simple reason that he couldn't even if he wanted to, and it is not at all likely that he will want to do so. What you had better do is to wait till we get to Skaguay. There you will learn that Rory is all right, and when, if you want to give the doctor some 'destructions,' as you call them, why write to him."

"I'm inclined to tink you are right, Sammy. I don't mind trouble a bit where Rory is concerned; at de same time, it is a mighty hard task for me to write a letter."

"Yes, and it is a hard task for the recipient to read it, I should say." "I'd rader stoke a furnace dan write letters," growled Pete. "I dunno how people can keep on doing it day after day widout sending demselves into



a lunatic asylum. I'm mighty certain it would drive me dere if I had ma letters to write."

"Then it is a lucky thing you haven't," exclaimed Jack. "There would be a large increase in madness, because it would certainly drive the people who had to decipher your letters, raving mad. Now suppose you give us a song or two."

Pete consented, and the captain came down to listen to Pete's wonderful voice; and, notwithstanding the storm, which was now raging with terrific fury, they passed a very enjoyable evening.

Pete did not trouble himself about the storm. He said it would all clear up on the morrow; at the same time, the comrades only partially undressed that night in case of accidents.

They had got into their berths, and were just dozing off, when a terrific crash shook the vessel, and it was followed by others so quickly, that it sounded as though she were being smashed to pieces by some terrible force.

"All hands on deck!" bawled a voice between the dreadful crashes.

"I tink we must be on de rocks, boys," exclaimed Pete, groping about in the dark for his boots, which he could not find.

"Come on!" exclaimed Jack. "Not a moment is to be lost!"

"I'm searching for my boots, Jack."

"Never mind about them. Come on deck, quick! Whatever can it be?"

The crashes still continued, and as they rushed on deck they heard one of the men shout to the captain, who was on duty, that there was something wrong in the engine-room, though what it was he did not know.

"Soon find dat out," exclaimed Pete, springing down the steps into a dimly-lighted place, which was now filled with steam, while the crashes were deafening.

A connecting-rod had broken, and it was lashing about in a manner that rendered it almost impossible for the engineer to get past to shut off steam.

"It's death to go, mate!" he exclaimed, as Pete prepared to make a dash for it.

"It's death for all not to go," answered Pete, darting past.

He felt a rush of air, as the great steel rod swept past his head, and close to it that it almost touched his hair, then it fell upon the floor with a crash that splintered the woodwork in every direction.

"Near ting, dat," exclaimed Pete, shutting off the steam. "Still, as it is as good as a mile. All right, old hoss. Dere's a little less noise and danger now. I 'spect de next best ting to do is to start repairing de damage 'cos we'm likely to be on de rocks if we can't put her under steam. How do you tink it will take to put dat right?"

"Well, it's only the bolts given way. You see, there was a big strain on them, and they ain't as new as they might be. I should say we can get the job done in an hour. All the same, you have done the best part of it. See how it has smashed up the floor boards. It would have lashed a hole through the bottom of the vessel before many minutes. I made sure it caught you, too. Never saw such a shave in all my life."

"Nunno! I must say it was closer dan I cared for. All de same, I will go and tell de old hoss all about it, and tell him you won't be more dan an hour."

Pete went on deck, and the skipper listened attentively to his version of what had occurred.

"Who shut off the steam?" he inquired.

"Golly, mighty, I de great an hour?"

"I will advice, y She will I was

near that say much very grat

For the cared for Skaguay and crew for a tim

The fol the post- nothing t Jack and

the officia "Sam t "That' "Right

Sam re of the cl Skaguay.

The co would ha But there very old

Sam to shoulders There v Pete gave completel

"Wood hands. Jack an hands. F good whil

"Say, p you've ha Pete im "Hi— and then

"What down like "Sto—s "Golly

"Bery ple tired. No Pete re owner's le

"Golly! You couldn't see anything in de place, old hoss. Dere was a mighty lot ob steam hissing 'bout. Still, dere's no damage done, and dat's de great ting. Now, de question is, can you keep de vessel off de rocks for an hour?"

"I will manage that," answered the skipper. "Now, if you take my advice, you will turn in, for it isn't a pleasant sort of night to be on deck. She will roll a bit, but I dare say you won't mind that."

It was not until the following morning that Lamb learnt from the engineer that it was Pete who had saved the vessel, and although he did not say much about it, he gripped Pete's hand in a manner that showed he was very grateful.

For the remainder of that voyage Pete was rather more popular than he cared for; however, they all passed a very pleasant time, and reached Skaguay without further mishap; then, having taken leave of the captain and crew, they went in search of an inn where they would be able to remain for a time.

The following morning Pete was up about five, and insisted on going to the post-office. But as that place did not open until ten, and there was nothing to do, he had to go to bed again. But at 9.30 he was ready, and Jack and Sam waited with him outside the closed doors of the office. At last the official started to call out the names:

"Sam Owen?"

"That's me."

"Right. One dollar, please."

Sam received his letter, and Jack and Pete followed him out of the crush of the clamouring crowd assembled to receive their letters just arrived at Skaguay.

The comrades were very serious, and the expression on Pete's jolly face would have surprised anyone, who knew him under ordinary circumstances. But there was good reason for this change, for that letter held news of the very old comrade of Jack, Sam, and Pete's.

Sam tore open the envelope, and Jack and Pete peered eagerly over his shoulders.

There were only a few lines, but they were very much to the point, and Pete gave a whoop of delight as he read: "Progressing favourably. Will be completely cured after anoder free months' rest. . . ."

"Woorooh! Shake! Shake, boys!" yelled Pete, gripping his comrades' hands.

Jack and Sam grinned rather painfully as that black paw closed over their hands. Pete's grip when he is excited is a thing to be remembered for a good while.

"Say, pards!" drawled a burly stranger, standing near. "I kind of guess you've had some mighty good news—kind of thing ter hev a drink on?"

Pete immediately grabbed the stranger's hand and shook it vigorously.

"Hi—ere—hand! Hurting!" yelled the man, standing first on one leg and then the other as if the ground burnt his feet.

"What did you say, old hoss!" cried Pete, working the man's arm up and down like a pump-handle.

"Sto—stop it! You, you, you——"

"Golly! Dere's a mighty lot ob you, you, you's 'bout!" cried Pete.

"Bery pleased to hab met you. Shake wid de oder hand now, if you are tired. No!"

Pete released the man's hand, which was promptly tucked under its owner's left armpit.



"Sure as my name Perkins I've a great mind to punch your thick head that!" growled the flushed and angry man.

"Ere, come on Perkins, let's go an hev a drink."

Perkins swung round in an instant and gazed around in astonishment.

"Sure," he growled, "I heard old Bill's voice! It warn't either of playing a joke, was it?" he inquired, looking at Jack and Sam suspiciously.

"No mate," replied Sam. "You must have made——"

"Come on, Perkins! Come on!"

Perkins's face sent Jack and Sam into roars of laughter. The bewilderment was fixed in his eyes on Pete, but that worthy went on calmly filling his pipe.

"What's de matter, old hoss? Got a match? Thanks!"

Perkins mechanically handed over a box of matches. His hand trembled slightly, and it was clear to Sam's keen eyes that the fellow, although well built, did not possess much nerve. This was most likely due to Perkins's constant habit of taking drinks with all who would pay for them, and would not have spoken to the comrades had he not thought that the news they had evidently received would make them generously inclined.

Now, although Perkins was upset by the mysterious voice, he was very much determined to get a free drink of the vile whisky sold at the saloon on the landing-stage.

"Sure," he said, after a while and looking rather sheepish, "I'm mighty glad to hear that you've had good noose."

"Sure?" replied Pete, winking at Jack and Sam.

"Corse!" growled Perkins. "So would any decent sort of a fellow wouldn't he?"

"Dat's so, old hoss," cried Pete. "Well, you'm a bery nice man. Dere's someone in San Francisco dat was bery ill, but am getting better now."

"Ah! Mother of this gent, p'r'aps?"—pointing to Sam.

"Nunno!"

"Brother?"

"Nunno!"

"Sister?"

"Nunno!"

Perkins got rather red in the face, for he saw that Jack and Sam were laughing at him. He half-turned to go, but changed his mind.

"Was it an aunt?"

"Nunno!"

"Grandmother, uncle, father, cousin, mother-in-law, grandfather?"

"Nunno, nunno, nunno, nunno!" rattled out Pete. "You'm a most intelligent man. Tought you would hab guessed first go off."

"How could I?"

"Dunno dat you should want to know anyting 'bout it at all. Why you so anxious to find out de identrifice ob de one who was ill?"

"The what?" gasped Perkins.

"I expect he means identity," exclaimed Sam, with a laugh.

"Dat's it, Sammy. Dere's someting wrong with dat 'cistern' again. I don't know de exact relationship we free bear to de one in San Francisco dat was ill, but I am now getting better. Dat's what you'm got to discover, Perkins. You're a old hoss; and if I was you I should trot off home, and after a cold baf I should come back here again and wait until we free am passing again in two or three weeks' time, den you can tell us de relation—— Sh—— Golly! De mate is gone! Hi! Come back and have anoder guess!"

The Chal  
the W  
Count

T  
tr  
"

an

The thr

"Who a

"Not y

Attract

gathered

a dog-figh

"See he

ragged, un

of scowlin

He fancie

to plank o

if he is m

Some of

conclusion

"I don't

replied Sa

"Oh, he

his legs w

since you

direction-

"Yah, y

Sammy!

lose all da

The mat

Both Ja

forward at

"See he

to touchin

tongue be

hiding you

"The's

'un ain't s

Dan gla

brought up

But inst

who had o

the critica

"Fury!"

you down!

"Hold n

de pretty

Now, Da

relish the

never been

way than

he had not

his reputat

A swift c



## CHAPTER 5.

**The Challenge—A Wager—Dan Is Done—Some Juicy Beef-Steaks—Tim, the Waiter, Has a Rough Time But Is Not Timid—A Walk in the Country.**

THE comrades laughed heartily as they gazed at Perkins's rapidly retreating figure.

"I s'pose you reckon that you can grip pretty hard?" roared an angry voice.

The three turned to the new-comer in amazement.

"Who are you addressing?" demanded Sam.

"Not you! That there nigger!" shouted the man.

Attracted by the noise, a little group of curious prospectors had now gathered round. There was not much to do in Skaguay, and anything from a dog-fight to a slanging match always drew an audience of idlers.

"See here!" again shouted the miner, a tall, powerfully-built man, with ragged, unkempt beard and shaggy eyebrows, beneath which twinkled a pair of scowling eyes. "I reckon to take that there nigger down a peg or two! He fancies himself a bit too much for this one-horse show. An' I am willing to plank down any money that I make him cry 'Cave!' afore I do—thet is, if he is man enough to come to handgrips!"

Some of the toughs standing round gave a low murmur of applause at the conclusion of this bragging rigmarole.

"I don't see why our friend should have anything to do with you at all," replied Sam.

"Oh, he's a friend of yours, is he?" said the man, planting himself with his legs wide apart, and looking at Sam with a sneer on his face. "Well, since you ain't ashamed of owning that"—and he jerked a thumb in Pete's direction—"p'r'aps you'll back him for five pounds?"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "De pore old hoss wants to shake hands, Sammy! Yah, yah, yah! Consider dat bet off, 'cos dis child don't want to lose all dat money!"

The man gave a contemptuous snort.

Both Jack and Sam felt like thrashing him on the spot, and Sam strode forward and laid one hand heavily on the braggart's shoulder.

"See here, you bully," he said sternly, "I don't wonder that Pete objects to touching your dirty paw! But I tell you this: Just you keep a civil tongue between that ugly potato-trap of yours, or I'll give you the biggest hiding you ever had in your life!"

"Thet's straight fur yew, Dan!" cried one of the onlookers. "The young 'un ain't standing any of your lip!"

Dan glared furiously at Sam, and then, without the slightest warning, brought up his left and lunged out.

But instead of that blow reaching Sam, it landed on the top of Pete's head, who had quietly placed himself behind Sam, and whisked him aside just at the critical moment.

"Fury!" yelled the infuriated man. "Get out of my road, or I will knock you down!"

"Hold me up, Sammy," said Pete, still smiling, "while de gentleman wid de pretty whiskers does the knocking-down business!"

Now, Dan was a bully, and a bit of a fighter, but, somehow, he did not relish the attitude of Pete. Dan's strength lay in his grip; at that he had never been beaten, and he felt more confident of taking it out of Pete than in any other way than any other. He badly wanted to win five pounds; and although he had not fivence, he knew that he could find backers for that amount on his reputation, which was well known in Skaguay.

A swift change came over his attitude.



"Say, mate," he cried, in a friendly tone of voice, "I'm a mighty quick tempered sort of chap, and I apologise fur that little slip of mine." Pete eyed the man coldly, and ignored the proffered hand.

"If I don't give you the thrashing you deserve," he said, "it is because my friend Pete is going to accept your challenge. You deserve all you'll get for your cowardly action!"

"Right!" cried Dan gleefully, overjoyed at the unexpected turn of events. He felt certain of winning—he who had never met his equal!

"Golly!" cried Pete, in pretended dismay. "Dis child am going to take him right hand in him pocket! Tink you could take on dat grip, Jack? Dis child hab got de toofache."

"Not me!" retorted Jack. "I'll leave the pressure business to you." The money was soon forthcoming for Dan, and immediately he got the coin he shouted to Sam:

"Ere you are—there's my money! Now let's see the colour of your face! Ere's a gent as'll hold the stakes!"

"Thanks!" drawled Sam. "I prefer to hold my own stakes!"

"Oh, but that ain't fair!" howled Dan. "How do I know—?"

"You're not supposed to know anything," retorted Sam. "Will you have the money?" he went on, addressing a red-faced, jolly-looking man.

"Certainly!"

"Right! Here, you bragging Dan, hand the money to the stake-holder. As it happened, the man Sam had selected was well known and respected among the population of that little town, and cries of "Right!" "He's a man!" compelled Dan to hand over his backer's money.

"Seems to me," grumbled Pete, "you'm managing dis affair bery quick. S'pose we go and hab some breakfus' first? An', after, dis child can have go at some ob the grip machines. Golly! De man am ready! Must have my pipe first. Nunno! You'm got to wait."

A circle of interested spectators now surrounded Pete and Dan, and a general humoured laugh went up as Pete leisurely borrowed Sam's pouch and slowly filled his pipe.

"Now a match, Sammy. Dat's better! Now we'll go and hab some steak to eat. I feel as if I could yaffle up two-free pounds of steak, two-free Golly! What's de matter wid de man?"

Dan's ugly face was convulsed with rage, and it was all he could do to keep himself from landing out at Pete's smiling countenance.

"Come!" he snarled. "Are you going to start, or do you wish to forfeit the stakes?"

"Forfeit de what?" yelled Pete. "Forfeit dose nice juicy beefsteaks we'm going to hab? Nunno, old—"

"The money, fool—that's what I mean!" hooted Dan.

"Golly! Why don't you 'splain de matter more clearly dan dat, den?"

The spectators were getting rather impatient, but they could not help smiling at Dan's fury.

Pete was gazing at the furious man, much as a cow might look at a buttercup.

"Can't shake hands wid you, my pore old hoss," he murmured.

"Why?" hooted Dan.

"Dirty. Wash dem first," said Pete, in a sad sort of voice.

"You're trying to get out of it!" howled Dan. "Look at your hands—they're black enough, ain't they?"

"De sort ob black dat don't come off on oder people's hands," retorted Pete. "Dose hands ob yours were once, many years ago, when your man used to look after you, nice and white; now dey are—well, don't know



rightly quick sort ob tint 'xactly—should say rader—er—mud-colour. You must wash  
 "Reckon I should let him off that, mate. You can wash your own hands  
 afterwards, since you're so mighty particular!"

Pete gave a prodigious sigh.  
 "Golly!" he murmured. "Must soap for de best. Come 'long, Danny!"

Dan gripped the hand Pete held out with a quick movement, and started  
 squeezing for all he was worth. The veins stood out in bunches on his  
 forehead as he put forth all his strength.

But Pete merely smiled.  
 "When am you going to start? Hab to take two hands to dat job 'fore  
 dis child shonts 'Cave!'"

Dan tried his best, and although there was not a man in the surrounding  
 crowd who would not have succumbed to his powerful grip, Pete still  
 smoked and grinned.

Gradually he put on the pressure. Up to now he had allowed the brag-  
 ging Dan to do all the squeezing. But that worthy's face showed what  
 was happening. From fierce fury, his expression changed to one of sur-  
 prise, and then to barely-concealed pain.

Still that strong black hand closed, and the tips of Dan's fingers felt as  
 if they would burst with the quantity of the blood that was being forced  
 into them.

"Dere's a little more pressure for dat blow you aimed at Sammy!" cried  
 Pete.

The spectators started at the fearful howl that now left the contorted  
 lips of Dan.

"Tink dat's 'bout 'nuff!" exclaimed Pete. "Now we'll go and hab dose  
 beefsteaks."

The comrades forced their way through the excited crowd surrounding  
 the defeated Dan.

"You can hand that five pounds to this braggart!" cried Sam to the  
 stakeholder. "Reckon he won't be able to use that fist of his for a week  
 or two!"

"Dat's a nice-looking place!" cried Pete, as they passed down the main  
 street. "Let's see if we can get dose steaks dere. Golly! Dis child could  
 eat tinned Chicago meat!"

"You must be hungry, then!" replied Sam. "Looks a likely sort of  
 place, though."

The three entered a little restaurant and seated themselves at a table.  
 The proprietor, a diminutive little man, greeted them with a smile.

"What would you like, gentlemen?"

"Let's hab breakfast and dinner for six, old hoss!" cried Pete. "Dese  
 two—Jack and Sammy—eat a terrible lot!"

"Tim!"

Tim, the waiter, came forward at his master's call and took Pete's  
 order.

A fat man at the opposite table, who had been busily engaged in swallow-  
 ing some soup, looked up as the steaming liquid arrived.

"Order that ugly nigger out of the room!" he roared.

Now, Pete is not an ugly man—in fact, he is rather good-looking, and  
 his black face certainly compared favourably with the flabby, pasty,  
 mottled countenance of the greedy individual seated opposite.

"I am in the habit of dining with gentlemen!" roared Smiler.

"You surprise me!" exclaimed Sam. "I should have thought it was  
 quite an exceptional thing, considering that you have the manners of a  
 hooligan!"



"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, as he gazed at the face of the perfectly furious man. "You'm de funniest sort ob Smiler I hab eber seen. Tink dere must be a mistake somewhere. Scowler would hab been ob de sort ob name!"

"I won't have such unheard-of insolence!" hooted Smiler, rising, and flinging his plate of soup at Pete's head. "Take that, you black beast!"

Pete ducked his head, and that plate of hot soup landed fair and square in the neck of the waiter.

"Fury! I'm scalt! You senseless idiot! How dare you chuck soup at me, ye spalpeen?"

Now, that waiter happened to be an Irishman, and although he had a fair share of his countrymen's appreciation of humour, he certainly had to see any fun in having half a pint of hot soup poured down his neck.

"Funny ting how tings dat are funny," roared Pete, "are generally tings dat mean somebody am getting hurt! Yah, yah, yah! Now, Smiler, but I bet dat Smiler don't see de fun ob it at all."

Tim had rushed across the room, and seizing a tureen of stew, had emptied it over the bald head of Smiler, and then bonneted him with the tureen.

The whole place was in a tumult of yells and laughter. The yells from Smiler—who was on the verge of exploding with wrath—and the laughter from nearly everyone in the place.

It's a funny thing is humour—when it's not you that's providing amusement.

"What's all this?" cried the proprietor, coming forward.

"Sure, sorr," exclaimed Tim, "that spalpeen there flung his plate of soup at me for no raison whatever!"

"Look at me!" bawled Smiler. "Look at me, I say—"

"You'll have to pay for this!" cried the proprietor.

"You—you—you dare to insult me, too!" roared Smiler, wiping his eyes on the tablecloth, and sending everything to the floor.

He thought it was his napkin he had hold of, and he gazed in dismay at the wreckage.

"You'll have to pay for this!" cried the proprietor.

"You insulted me!" roared Smiler.

"I never spoke!"

"Yes, you did!"

"That I certainly didn't! And even if I had, you have no right to throw plates of soup at my waiter!"

"I never threw soup at your waiter!" screeched Smiler, who was a pitiable-looking object, with bits of stew and dumpling smeared all over his face and clothes.

"Now, I appeal to you," cried the proprietor, turning to Sam. "I have this man—you shut up, Tim! I'll talk to you presently—did this waiter throw the soup at Tim?"

"Nunno!" interposed Pete. "Dat Smiler frew de soup-plate at a child's napper; but as dat napper bobbed out ob de line ob fire, Tim stopped it instead."

"There you are!" howled Smiler. "I told you I never threw the soup at your beastly waiter!"

This was too much for Tim, who immediately made a rush at Smiler. "Stop it!" roared the proprietor, grabbing Tim by his coat-tails.

"Bless the man, I shall be ruined!"

Tim had left his coat-tails in his master's hands, but the sudden parting of the cloth sent him sprawling over Smiler's table, and the pair rolled on the floor, fighting like mad.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, separate them, I beg of you!"

Nearly cho  
that sho  
and Pete eac  
"Altogetdd  
"You're pu  
"Scoundrel  
Suddenly t  
Jack, Sam, a  
Crash! Cr  
Three table  
reigned, and  
"You're pu  
Tim's fighti  
"Let me g  
him for a r  
"No, you w  
boss, have yo  
the Emerald I  
The proprie  
room, and Sam  
The door of  
protests, Sam  
Meanwhile,  
vanished. Li  
No doubt he ti  
The propriet  
he had really  
"Who's goin  
you gaping lo  
had carefully  
mess at once!  
Jack, Sam,  
evidently hard  
"Look here,  
pleasantness a  
"No, no!"  
quite understa  
waiter of mine  
have made Mr.  
"Dat's a ber  
Sammy hab go  
"How much  
"About fift  
just started bu  
"Sort ob tal  
"long!"  
"We will pa  
"Oh, of cours  
had soup. Tha  
"Never mind  
want to settle?  
"Eh?"  
"There you a  
astonished prop

Nearly choking with laughter, Sam caught hold of a pair of squirming legs that shot out from beneath the dismantled dining-table, while Jack and Pete each secured one of Smiler's pedal extremities.

"Altogedder, boys!" yelled Pete.

"You're pulling me leg off!" yelled Tim.

"Scoundrels!" bawled Smiler. "Leggo!"

Suddenly the combatants, like Tim's coat-tails, parted unexpectedly, and Jack, Sam, and Pete staggered back.

Crash! Crash! Bang!

Three tables laden with crockery went to the ground, and pandemonium reigned, and over the battlefield danced the owner of the establishment, waving and nearly shedding tears.

Tim's fighting-blood was up, and, although not a very big man, Sam had all his work out out to hold him.

"Let me get at him!" roared the bedraggled waiter. "Just let me get at him for a minute! I'll——"

"No, you won't!" cried Sam, picking himself from the wreckage. "Here, boss, have you got a refrigerator or something where I can put this son of the Emerald Isle?"

The proprietor pointed feebly towards a door at the end of the dining-room, and Sam picked his struggling captive up bodily.

The door opened into a small store-room, and, despite the Irishman's protests, Sam plumped him inside and locked the door.

Meanwhile, Smiler had been rushed out into the street, and had promptly vanished. Like a wise man, Smiler's wrath was tempered with discretion. No doubt he thought he would be called upon to pay for the damage.

The proprietor had been eager for him to be ejected, but when he found he had really gone he thought of the damage.

"Who's going to pay me for all this?" he cried. "I am ruined. Here, you gaping lot of idiots," he went on, addressing the other waiters, who had carefully kept out of harm's way during the fracas, "clear up this mess at once!"

Jack, Sam, and Pete exchanged glances. The little proprietor was evidently hard hit.

"Look here," drawled Sam, "if you think we were the cause of the unpleasantness and the dam——"

"No, no!" interrupted the landlord. "It was not your fault. I can quite understand that that fool of a fat man started it, and that hot-headed waiter of mine can hardly be blamed for losing his temper. I wish I could have made Mr. Smiler pay, though," he added regretfully.

"Dat's a very fair view ob de affair, old hoss!" cried Pete. "'Specs dat Sammy hab got someting to say in de matter."

"How much do you place the damage at?" inquired Sam.

"About fifteen pounds. It's a fearful loss to me! You see, I've only just started business."

"Sort ob takes de cake off de gingerbread. Now den, Sammy, come long!"

"We will pay for——"

"Oh, of course, your dinner!" interrupted the proprietor. "But you only had soup. That will be—— Any bread?"

"Never mind about our bill just now," laughed Sam. "It's your bill we want to settle!"

"Eh?"

"There you are!" cried Sam, laying a little heap of gold in front of the astonished proprietor.



"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, thumping him on the back. "D stare at dose sobereigns like dat. Let's hab some dinner now!"

"Gentlemen, I cannot accept this. This is not fair. I——"

"Don't you be silly!" exclaimed Sam. "We had some fun out of Sm Besides, Pete's face had a good deal to do with it. I don't wonder at man throwing plates at it. We'll go on with our dinner now."

The proprietor showed his gratitude by bustling round, and setting best the establishment could provide in front of the comrades, who ma hearty meal.

"Golly!" cried Pete, when they had finished. "What 'bout dat Tim

"Goodness!" cried the proprietor, who had been waiting on the comra "I forgot all about him."

He threw open the store cupboard-door.

Tim was fast asleep!

"Wake up, Tim!" cried Pete.

Tim gave a grunt, but showed no signs of leaving his couch, that he made with some old sacks.

"Here's Smiler!" roared Pete.

The effect was magical. Tim bounded to his feet in an instant, and g around.

"You beastly waiter!" came a voice from behind him, exactly Smiler's.

Tim flew round like a flash, but only his master met his eyes. The looked at one another blankly.

"Did you speak, sir?" inquired Tim.

"No," answered the proprietor, who was just as astonished as the wa "I certainly thought I heard that rascal's voice, though."

"So did I!" growled Tim.

"Yah, yah, yah! Haw, haw, haw!" roared Jack, Sam, and Pete.

Tim looked at them in amazement, and then a knowing expression da in his eyes.

"I know!" he cried. "It was one of you gents! Sure, an' it's mesill once heard a ventriloquist in Dublin city! Ah, ah, ah!"

"Dat's for de coat-tails!" cried Pete. "Catch!"

Tim deftly caught the coin.

"Thankee, yer honour. Sure, an' it's gowld!"

Followed by the good wishes of the proprietor, who absolutely refus take any payment at all for their dinners, the comrades then left.

"You seem to have created a good deal of excitement since we've here!" growled Sam. "I reckon we may as well get back to the inn now

This, however, did not meet with Pete's approval. He suggeste walk, and as it seemed the most likely thing to keep him out of mis Jack and Sam, after some argument, agreed.

They wandered out of Skaguay, and evening found them some miles their hotel.

"You're a pretty beauty!" said Sam, as they started on their journey. "We're in for a storm now, and—— Scissors!"

Sam's exclamation was caused by the sudden rising of the wind. E thing was blotted out by hovering clouds, and a cold, icy rain descende Pete cleared

For some time the three bent their heads to the tempest, and forced way onwards.

"Let's seek shelter!" cried Jack. "There's a light over there!"

A POOR W

THE  
re  
wa  
thestranger, I  
get—unless  
disposed toJust now  
tation, and  
blast of rhoarse voic  
ance of JacThe thre  
rough gree  
strangers r

rades.

Should  
tackle any  
seated facilooking gla  
Bill remo"Guess s  
nothing in pBill did n  
in the early  
more thansufficient to  
broken-spiri  
of the worldtheir fellow  
The comrwooden ben  
proprietor tThe man  
big man sea"Cawfee!  
he added, jHaw, haw, h  
Big Jakeglared at hi  
of rage as th"Oh!" he  
his chair craLook you 'er  
shaking his  
skunk inter tsignificantly—  
Jake's hand  
Pete clearedThere was  
glaring feroci  
his good hum

## CHAPTER 6.

A Poor Welcome—Big Jake's Threats—Pete Wants to Go to Bed, and Does—"Chuck Him Out!"—The Panic.

THE wind howled, and the half-frozen rain dashed and beat on the rough, log-built store, situated on the outskirts of Skaguay. It was not a pleasant sort of crowd that was gathered within; and the faint light that shone from its windows would, if seen by any stranger, have led him to expect a greater welcome than he was likely to get—unless, indeed, he had plenty of money in his pockets, and was disposed to spend it in liberally treating the crowd assembled.

Just now the miners and roughs were engaged in keeping up their reputation, and were singing and yelling at the top of their voices. A sudden blast of rain-laden wind, sweeping through them, brought the roar of hoarse voices to a stop, and cries of "Shut that door!" greeted the appearance of Jack, Sam, and Pete.

The three pushed their way towards the counter, and more than one rough greeting was silenced as those inclined to resent the intrusion of strangers ran their eyes over the stalwart appearance of the three comrades.

"Should calkerlate that Big Jake'll hev his 'ands full of he tries ter tackle any of them chaps, Bill," muttered a quiet-looking miner to a man seated facing him at a dirty table littered with tobacco-ash and dirtier-looking glasses.

Bill removed his pipe.

"Guess so, Tom!" he grunted; and relapsed into a contemplation of nothing in particular.

Bill did not as a rule take much notice of anything. He had come out in the early days of the gold rush—had roughed it for years; but never more than enough of the precious dust had come his way than barely sufficient to keep him from starving, and he was gradually becoming a broken-spirited man—one of the human derelicts who drift from one end of the world to the other, bitter with thwarted ambitions, and outcast by their fellows.

The comrades succeeded, after some difficulty, in reaching the rough wooden bench that served for a counter, and Sam asked the surly-looking proprietor to serve some coffee.

The man gave an unpleasant sort of grin, and addressed his reply to a big man seated in the bunch surrounding the stove.

"Cawfee! Say, Jake, got any beans in yer pocket? These 'ere gents," he added, jerking a thumb in the comrades' direction, "wants cawfee. Haw, haw, haw!"

Big Jake turned slowly, after the manner of heavily-built men, and glared at the comrades. His expression of surly indifference changed to one of rage as his eyes lighted on Pete.

"Oh!" he bellowed, rising to his feet, and with a vicious kick sending his chair crashing to the ground. "What's this 'ere nigger doin' 'ere? Look you 'ere, boss," he raved, turning to the man behind the counter, and shaking his clenched fist, "wot d'yer mean by letting that there black skunk inter this 'ere respectable 'ouse? You chuck him out, or"—he paused significantly—"you know what'll happen!"

Jake's hand slid to his hip, and the men between him and Jack, Sam, and Pete cleared rapidly.

There was a lane between the chairs and tables now, and Jake stood glaring ferociously at Pete, who grinned at him as if nothing could disturb his good humour.



"Air yer goin'?" thundered Big Jake, slowly advancing, his hand on his hip. "Yer had best be mighty sharp erbout it, or—"

The crowd of miners, silently watching the little scene, gave vent to a gasp of astonishment. They knew Big Jake, and they knew that a man he had threatened but had given in or been carried out feet most.

"I guess," drawled a slow voice, "that yew air just going ter remove that hand from that handy little pocket, and hold it up over that thick of yours!"

All eyes were turned to Sam, and the company realised what had brought Big Jake to a stop, and what still held him motionless. His red, bloated face changed to a dull, mottled grey.

Sam was standing just behind Pete, and he rested on his comrade's shoulder the shining barrel of a big, businesslike-looking revolver. Jake stared as if fascinated into the calm grey eyes he could just see the barrel of that revolver, and his arm twitched slightly.

"None of that, now!" Sam cried sharply. "Up with 'em both—sh—"  
There was an unmistakable ring in his voice, and, moreover, his pressure of Sam's fingers would be followed by a bullet.

Slowly the bully's hand came from behind him, and he stood with arms upraised, swaying slightly, and glaring with fierce, bloodshot eyes the three.

"Now, mates," cried Sam, keeping a careful watch on Jake, "I reckon we can come to some understanding. If you want a row—well, I dare say we can oblige. Jack here has a couple of six-shooters, Pete a couple of yours truly the same. A little mental arithmetic will convince you there's enough to go round. But I reckon we ain't got to quarrel with a lot of you. There's a good many that haven't any call to back up a man of Jake's kidney!"

A murmur of voices followed Sam's little speech. Presently the calm-looking miner, whose remark when Jack, Sam, and Pete had entered had so soon come true, advanced, and, standing by the comrades, addressed the crowd.

"Boys," he cried, "I reckon we're a rough lot, but I allus calkerled back up real grit, an' I fer one don't see any cause fer promiscuous fighting! This 'ere affray, which don't really amount ter anything, can be settled, an' I guess we'll at the same time 'ave a bit of sport. Back three fights last week, and Jake's scrap up last night, things 'ave been very quiet-like of late, an' I reckon we can 'ave a little innocent entertainment without anyone getting hurt—that is," he added, "if this 'ere gent can use his dooks!"

A roar of delight greeted Tom's remarks.  
"That's the ticket, Tom!" cried several, as they rapidly and effectively cleared the centre of the store by flinging tables and chairs in heaps against the walls.

"Just a minute!" cried Sam. "What's this to be—a fair fight with weapons, and the loser to clear out?"

"Right—right! You've hit it, stranger!"  
Sam was about to remove his revolver, and allow Jake to lower his hand when Tom quietly touched him on the arm.

"I reckon if I was yew I'd have his shooters first," he whispered.  
Big Jake glared at Tom, but although he might have guessed at the words that passed he could not hear.

"That's the sort he is, is it?" muttered Sam. "All right; the

Jack, I guess  
way of weapo

"Golly!"  
You know dis

coffee first.  
Big Jake g

"Don't rec  
fanks it!"

"You go  
your arms a

boys," he ad  
and I recko

having our c  
selves, but w  
you will join

There was  
statement pl  
with shouts  
coffee.

This took  
pared.

They did t  
and some ro

these matter  
the company

But they d  
coming encou

tremendous b  
the comrades  
be.

"Time!"  
Big Jake a

faced each ot  
"Look her  
How's dat?"

The hiss o  
were motion

dealt his adv  
lay motionles

"Stand ba  
but Big Jake

"Reckon a  
crowded roun

Under the  
head, Big Jak

then slowly r  
room. Never

place wante  
"Nunno, o

The storeke  
them to a dil  
house.

Pete was in

Jack, I guess you can just relieve that smiling gentleman of anything in the way of weapons. You can take charge of both his and Pete's."

"Golly!" cried Pete. "You'm gibing a lot ob orders, Sammy. How do you know dis child wants to fight wid a big man like dat? Must hab dat coffee first."

Big Jake gave a sneering laugh.

"Don't reckon there's going ter be a fight ter-night, mates. The nigger fanks it!"

"You go and sit down," interrupted Sam's stern voice. "Go and rub your arms a bit; you'll want them pretty badly in a minute or so. Now, boys," he added, raising his voice, "we came in here to have some coffee, and I reckon we'll have that before the fun commences. While we're having our coffee you can all have a drink. We don't care for spirits ourselves, but we don't quarrel with those who do. We shall be pleased if you will join us."

There was a moment of silence after Sam's remarks, but the courage of his statement pleased those men, rough as they were, and the place was filled with shouts for drinks, Tom and one or two others giving orders for coffee.

This took some time in preparing, and meanwhile the "ring" was prepared.

They did things in style, and a timekeeper and referee were appointed, and some rough sand was sprinkled over the dirty, greasy floor. While these matters were going forward, and drinks were discussed, several of the company joined the comrades, and tried to make bets on the result.

But they did not succeed. Neither Jack nor Sam would take a bet on the coming encounter, for most of the miners, although impressed with Pete's tremendous breadth of shoulder, would have backed against him winning, and the comrades knew very well, big man that Jake was, what the result would be.

"Time!"

Big Jake advanced into the ring, a nasty grin on his face, and the two faced each other, feinting for an opening.

"Look here!" cried Pete. "Dis child am tired and ready for by-by. How's dat?"

The hiss of indrawn breath sounded through the store. The spectators were motionless with surprise. With one single lightning blow Pete had dealt his adversary one between the eyes, and Big Jake, bully and fighter, lay motionless on the floor.

"Stand back!" roared the timekeeper. Slowly the seconds were counted, but Big Jake gave no signs of movement. Pete calmly put on his coat.

"Reckon a little cold water may come in useful," observed Sam, as the men crowded round.

Under the influence of a pail or so of dirty water slapped over his face and head, Big Jake gradually revived. He gazed around in a dazed sort of way, then slowly rose to his feet, and without a single word staggered from the room. Never had such a thing been known before, and every man in the place wanted Pete to have a drink.

"Nunno, old hosses, dis child am going to bed. Hab you free beds?"

The storekeeper agreed to put the comrades up for the night, and showed them to a dilapidated apartment, which he described as the best room in the house.

Pete was in bed before Jack and Sam got their boots off



"Reckon we had better be slippy and get to sleep before that beauty starts his snoring," muttered Sam.

"It'll be a mighty lucky thing if we do," answered Jack.

Pete was evidently dozing off, and the two pulled off their things in double-quick time. Muffled thumps from the next room told of boots being thrown on the floor, and presently all was silent.

Jack and Sam covered their heads with the bedclothes and tried to comfort themselves by believing they would be asleep before Pete's snoring started. They were fairly used to his nocturnal rumblings, but when possible, endeavored to be soundly slumbering before Pete dropped off.

"Groo—groo—arch! G-r-r-r——!" Pete slept.

Jack and Sam turned over, and groaned. They knew they were in for an extra strong bout. The walls of the bed-room positively vibrated with a fearful noise.

"I reckon there's someone in the next room that's not used to Pete's solos," muttered Sam, as a bang came on the wall just over Pete's head which would have wakened any ordinary sleeper. More bangs, followed by a very indignant language. But Pete snored peacefully on. Up and down scale. Now bass. Now shrill.

"Thunder and lightning, stop that row!"

Bang, bang, bang!

The men in the next room now commenced shouting and yelling like mad.

"Scissors!" gasped Sam. "Now we're in for it!"

"Chuck him out!"

"Shove a muzzle on him!"

Bang! Crash!

"Drown him!"

"Stuff a pillow down his throat!"

"Stop"—bang!—"that"—bang!—"thundering"—crash!—"row!"

Bang, bang, bang!

The store fairly rocked with the din. Yells and bangs shook the building from top to bottom, but still Pete slept, and snored. Everybody in the building was awake, and the men upstairs came down and thumped at the next door, and Jack and Sam grinned as they heard angry demands as to the meaning of the noise.

A slanging match started that completely quenched the sounds of Pete's snoring, and the occupants of the adjoining room omitted to explain matters to the angry men from upstairs, who naturally thought the noise was intended to annoy them.

In the middle of the racket Pete sat up in bed.

"Golly! What's all dat noise, Sammy—Jack? Am you awake?"

"Reckon so, mate; and I reckon you'll have a pretty warm time!"

"What for?"

"Why, your gentle snore has woke everybody in the place, and now they're having a row about——"

"Must stop dis!" grumbled Pete. "Can't go to sleep wid all dis noise."

Grumbling to himself, Pete got out of bed, and after some fumbling with his clothes, opened the door. He was only just in time, for the exasperated miners from the upper rooms were about to force the door of the next room, and a lively time for some would have ensued.

"Hi!" yelled Pete, with a screech that stopped the noise for an instant and brought all eyes to bear upon him. "Send for de doctor! De doctor! De doctor—quick!"

Now, a fever had

on the 1

Not on

for the t

adjoining the stree

"Fetel

Sammy o

"Ha, l

"You di

doctor.

"Make

getting l

"I don

"All d

up in be

tought d

"Reck

they've

somebod

"Goll

"Am I j

"Don

say that

Now, l

ghosts, a

"Ha,

"Dis

Mike you

Bob dots

"Oh,

"Dun

Pinfeeling

ago to sle

If Pet

snoring

Sam.

"Tink

up."

"How

"Paid

The co

the stor

attitude

"Goll

mighty

and tell

"Not

quietly v

Witho

our's s

Now, as it happened, although Pete was not aware of the fact, malignant fever had been prevalent in the neighbourhood, and as the crowd of miners on the landing heard the blood-curdling series of groans and moans coming from the room behind Pete, they fled in dismay.

Not one of them guessed that Pete's ventriloquial powers were responsible for the terrifying groans, and as the last of them vanished, the door of the adjoining room was flung open and the occupants fled helter-skelter out into the street.

"Fetch de doctor, quick!" yelled Pete. "Somebody bring a rope to tie Sammy down wid, he'm raging mad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sam, as Pete returned and carefully shut the door. "You did the trick that time, mate; but supposing they come back with a doctor. What will you do then?"

"Make you take de physic, ob course! You'm de patient," replied Pete, getting back into bed.

"I don't believe there's a doctor in the place," exclaimed Jack.

"All de better for Sammy, den. But look here," went on Pete, sitting up in bed. "What made dose oder chaps clear off like dat? Should hab thought dey might hab been a bit scared, but not so mighty frantic."

"Reckon it's no good worrying about that now, mate," answered Sam; "they've gone, and there's an end of the matter. I expect the truth is that somebody who slept in this room had the fever, and those chaps——"

"Golly!" yelled Pete, springing out of bed and lighting the candle. "Am I pale, Sammy? Do you tink dat fever would catch a black feller?"

"Don't know about that, mate," replied Sam, winking at Jack. "Should say that you're just as likely to catch it as anybody else."

Now, Pete fears neither man nor beast, but he has no liking for fevers or ghosts, and he looked the picture of woe as he sat on the edge of his bed.

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

"Dis am no laughing matter," said Pete seriously. "How would you like your lubing comrade to get his beautiful complexion spoilt wid a lot ob dots or tings like dat?"

"Oh, get to sleep!" growled Sam.

"Dunno 'bout dis, at all," muttered Pete to himself. "You'm a bery unfeeling sort ob customer, Sammy. Oh, golly! 'Spose de best ting am to go to sleep. Can't sit up all de night tinkin ob spots and tings."

If Pete was alarmed it could not have been very much, for he was soon snoring away in fine style. At dawn he awoke and gently roused Jack and Sam.

"Tink we hab better get back to Skaguay, boys, 'fore dose chaps wake up."

"How about paying for our beds?"

"Paid for dose last night. Come 'long!"

The comrades dressed hurriedly, and cautiously made their way down to the store. Here they found the disturbed sleepers, slumbering in various abling attitudes.

"Golly!" whispered Pete, as he stepped over a pair of legs. "Dey're mighty 'fraid ob catching dat fever ob yours, Sammy. Shall I wake dem and tell dem you'm here?"

"Not unless you want a most horrible row," growled Sam. "Now go quietly with that door."

Without waking a single soul, the three left the store, and after an hour's sharp walking entered their inn at Skaguay.



## CHAPTER ..

Pete Gets Tired of Adventure—The Agent—A Broken-Down Lawyer  
 a Warm Time—Sam's Bargaining—Jones's Misgivings.

PETE was very silent during breakfast, but his appetite showed signs of being affected, and Jack and Sam had filled and lighted their pipes long before he leant back in his chair and gave a sigh of intense satisfaction.

"Sammy!" he cried. "I've been thinking."

"Hope it hasn't hurt you much, mate," retorted Sam. "Mustn't strain that black noddle of yours too much, you know. It may be all right as a battering-ram or a punching-ball, but don't upset it's internals, mate."

"As I remarked just dis minute, Sammy," went on Pete, disdainingly taking notice of Sam's effort at chipping him. "Dis child hab been tinkin' and if you will gib your attention as to what am de result ob de process—"

"Suppose you cut all de cackle and come to de point," interrupted Jack.

"Golly! You'm bery impatient!" grumbled Pete. "'Sides, dis child ain't a hen, so how can I cut de cackle. Dere's no reason for all dis—"

"Scissors!" cried Sam. "Let him have his say, Jack, for goodness sake or he will keep on jawing about nothing till bedtime. Now then, Pete, with it!"

"You a bery naughty boy," said Pete gravely, helping himself from Sam's tobacco-pouch, which that worthy had foolishly left lying on the table. "How can you expect mighty thoughts to be spoken if you disinterrupt de flow ob de organism. De monecules ob de brain ob dis child hab been free into disconfusion, and a period ob rest am now required for de effesperence to subside. Nunno, don't go till de matter hab been fully dealt with. First ting dis child hab thought am dat he'm tired ob adventures."

"What?" gasped Jack. "Tired of ad—"

"Don't disinterrupt. If you do dat den I shall hab to commence all ob again, and as dere's seberal tings to come out, de court will hab to sit dis night like de fossils do at de Houses ob Parliament, when dey are 'frayed go home to deir missus's. But as I was saying, dis child am tired ob adventures."

Pete looked at Jack and Sam as if expecting them to make some further remarks. But they knew better, and went on stolidly smoking.

"Habing stated dat fact," went on Pete, "dere remains for me to a dat dat remark am subjeck to certain qualificashuns. Dese am, dat constant worry ob habing to wander ober de face ob de earth widout a place to lay him weary head am beginning to tell on de constitution. 'Side dere's no sense in habing to look for a lodging ebery night. And it starts to reason, if we had a sort ob headquarters, we should be sabled ob trouble, and we could just hab two-free adventures and den return to headquarters in time for supper. Under dese circumstances de speaker is prepared to reconsider de statement as to being tired ob adventure. What am you larfing at?"

The idea of Pete being tired of adventure tickled Jack and Sam immensely and the room rang with their laughter.

"Golly!" cried Pete, as the landlord of the inn entered with the bill in his hand. "Dat joker hab been waiting till you were in a good temper before bringing his little account in, and now you will hab to pay for your stupid nonsense!"

It really did not matter who paid, for the comrades have a common fund and the huge fortune brought them by the Eagle of Death is likely to be

them for  
 to pay, the  
 tion of his

The inn  
 face. He s

"Ze bill  
 under Pete

"Take o  
 friend wid

Miguel,  
 for both J

spoil his c  
 to the wro

"Vitch  
 vid de mo

right?"

Tired of  
 from his p

front of h  
 The cha

single item  
 "Scissor

Miguel  
 seen it be

"Vitch  
 "Not th

mean by c  
 top of tha

for the air  
 "Aha,

is it not,  
 hour, and

"No; I  
 "Look he

room, and  
 our break

Sam flu  
 Miguel

Sam poi  
 "If you

gentleman  
 this time.

Miguel  
 "Money

"Don't  
 by Samm

roared, sp  
 Miguel, w

"But—  
 "No hu

Miguel  
 door with  
 "I van  
 slammed

them for ever. But Pete likes to pretend that when Sam and Jack have to pay, that they are spending their own, and not, as is the case, a proportion of his third share in their mutual capital.

The innkeeper now came forward, a greasy leer on his dark swarthy face. He spoke in broken Canadian-English.

"Ze bill, gentlemens," he announced, thrusting the dirty slip of paper under Pete's nose.

"Take dat ting away," said Pete, with a lordly wave of his hand. "My friend wid de pipe will see to all affairs ob finance."

Miguel, for such was the name of this half-breed, looked slightly puzzled, for both Jack and Sam had pipes in their mouths, and he did not want to spoil his chance of having his extortionate charges paid by giving the bill to the wrong man.

"Vitch von? Derr is two pipes, two brave gentlemens. Vitch is de von wid de money? De von zat is to settle zee bill going? Isn't zat not so right?"

Tired of the presence of the greasy fellow, Sam pulled a handful of gold from his pocket and glanced at the sheet of paper that was promptly laid in front of him.

The charges were ridiculous, but these would have passed had not one single item caught his eye.

"Scissors!" he cried. "What the thump's this?"

Miguel bent diffidently forward, and examined the bill as if he had never seen it before.

"Vitch thump?" he asked.

"Not thump, you rascally old thief!" cried Sam. "This! What do you mean by charging us top prices for your rotten beds and breakfasts, and on top of that five dollars for hire of breakfast-room. Why don't you charge for the air we breathe?"

"Aha, ze senior vill understand not zat zis charming apartment is let, is it not, by zee hour? It has been occupy two hours, at five dollars zee hour, and zat is, is it not, ten dollars? I not ask for teep!"

"No; I should jolly well think you wouldn't ask for a tip!" cried Sam.

"Look here, you rapsallion, I'm not going to pay you for the use of this room, and you can think yourself mighty lucky that you get the money for our breakfasts and lodging. There you are!"

Sam flung a couple of sovereigns down on the none too clean tablecloth.

Miguel grabbed them first, and then started to expostulate.

Sam pointed to Pete.

"If you want those ten dollars," he said, "just you apply to that gentleman with the dark complexion. He's the one that's kept us here all this time."

Miguel put on his greasy look again, and held out his hand to Pete.

"Money for ze hire ov zee room, please, zank you!"

"Don't tank me, old hoss!" growled Pete. "You'm been bery well paid by Sammy, who don't mind how he frows our money about. Go!" he roared, springing to his feet, and putting on such a ferocious look that Miguel, who was a small man, backed hastily.

"But—but—" he expostulated feebly.

"No buts!" roared Pete. "Go!"

Miguel went; he could not do otherwise very well, for he reached the door with slight assistance from Pete.

"I vant zee ten dollars for zee hire ov zee room!" he yelled, as Pete slammed the door.



"Now den, boys," whispered Pete, "let's get out ob dis quick. Dis wa to London!"

Jack and Sam followed Pete through the window of the breakfast-room which was only a few feet from the ground; but before he left Pete placed a ten-dollar bill on the table.

Pete led the way to an isolated shanty not far distant.

"What's the silly owl up to now, I wonder?" muttered Sam, as he read the inscription scrawled on a rough deal board nailed over the doorway:

"FRANKLIN K. JONES,  
Mining Expert and Estate Agent."

"Headquarters, Sammy," murmured Pete, whose sharp ears had caught Sam's remark.

"Reckon you want a new headpiece!" grumbled Sam, as all three entered the so-called office.

"Am you Jones, K. Franklin?" bawled Pete, addressing a tall, powerfully-built, unmistakable Yankee, who sat with his long legs resting on the table, his chair tilted back, and a long black cigar stuck in his mouth.

"Guess so. I'm F. K. Jones, if that's what you mean!"

"Don't want any guessing 'bout dis job," said Pete, sitting on the end of the table, and sending the agent's legs up in the air, which caused the gentleman to go crashing to the floor.

One lanky leg went through the window, while the office ink-pot deposited itself on F. K. Jones's chest.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

A red-faced person, more like a bailiff than anything else in appearance, stood in the doorway.

"Haw, haw, haw! What are you—haw, haw haw!—doing there, Jones?"

"I'll show you what I'm doing!" yelled Jones, springing to his feet. "You broken-down lawyer you, I'll teach you to laugh at me! That!"

Jones rushed at the lawyer, and bashed his hat down over his eyes, and then, gripping him round the body, flung him across the small room.

Pete dodged the staggering man, which was rather unfortunate, for the man of law came to a stop against a red-hot stove.

"Wooroh!" he howled. "I'm burnt, you villain you! I'll have you put in prison for this assault! I'll tell all your customers about——"

What the angry man had to tell may be guessed at presently, but he certainly gave nothing away just then, for Jones darted across the room and whispered in his ear.

"Golly!" cried Pete. "Yah, yah, yah! De mortal foes am kissing each other. Yah, yah, yah!"

Sam's suspicions were roused by the strange behaviour of J. K. Jones, and he might have heard what Jones had to say to the lawyer had not Pete's outburst of mirth effectually drowned the words of the whispered confabulation.

"You seem very amused at your stupid action!" growled Jones, as he picked up his chair and endeavoured to mop up the ink. "What do you want here, anyway?"

"Nutting much, old hoss!" answered Pete. "Just came in to say hello, dat's all!"

"Then get out of my office sharp, you confounded nuisance! Do you think I'm here to say how do to anybody who likes to stroll in? This is an estate office, and if you don't want to do business, get out!" roared Jones.

"Hab you  
"Do you  
regarding P

"Dunno!

"We want  
"Headqua

"Suttinly

"What d

cottage, or

"What do

"Well, I

a shanty son

"I've got

half a dozen

best offer to

hundred dol

you," he r

Perched on

extensive vi

two recepti

a truthful m

but it's a sp

"Talks li

burnt feller

"Go outs

smell from

bargain?"

"How far

"Not far-

see, a trifle

"Waal,"

describe it t

quarters, an

price?"

"Two tho

ences to his

"I'll give

Jones snif

"Of all t

The lawyer

"What do

"Rampart

seriousness.

"There yo

stretch a po

hundred!"

"Come al

"Stop a l

than that!"

"Now, ju

just now of

You wouldn

make you an

posed. I wa

"Sure, stu



"Hab you any estates for sale, my poor old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"Do you want to purchase?" demanded the agent, slightly mollified, but regarding Pete with an air of suspicion.

"Dunno! It depends weder you'm got de ting we want," replied Pete.

"We want some headquarters."

"Headquarters?"

"Suttinly."

"What do you mean by that? Do you want a house, a mansion, a cottage, or what do you want?"

"What do we want, Sammy?" inquired Pete, turning to Sam.

"Well, I reckon, since you're so bent on getting a place, we'd better get a shanty somewhere in the Rockies."

"I've got the very thing!" cried Jones eagerly. "Dirt cheap. There's half a dozen parties been after that place, and I reckon to close with the best offer to-day. But, of course, if you gentlemen will spring another hundred dollars—well, you can have it. I can't describe the place to you," he rattled on, "but it's the loveliest situation in the world. Perched on a western slope of the Rocky Mountains, it commands an extensive view of the surrounding country. Has three large bed-rooms, two reception-rooms, kitchen, bath, hot and cold water, gas— No; I'm a truthful man. That's a mistake. They haven't laid on the pipes yet; but it's a splendid bargain, and you can have it cheap!"

"Talks like a gramophone!" gasped Pete. "Golly! What a smell ob burnt fadders!"

"Go outside!" commanded Jones to the broken-down lawyer. "The smell from your burnt clothing annoys the gentlemen. Shall we close the bargain?"

"How far is the place?" inquired Sam.

"Not far—at least, not to travellers like yourselves. About—er—let me see, a trifle under a hundred miles."

"Waal," drawled Sam, "I'm mighty sure that place is not what you describe it to be, but as my partner here is mad enough to want headquarters, and as we may as well go there as anywhere else, what's the price?"

"Two thousand dollars," replied Jones promptly, ignoring Sam's references to his truthfulness.

"I'll give you fifteen hundred."

Jones sniffed contemptuously.

"Of all the— Here! Binns!" he cried.

The lawyer appeared in the doorway.

"What do you reckon the place is worth?" demanded Jones.

"Rampart House—eh?" inquired Binns, with an expression of great seriousness. "I should say five thousand dollars."

"There you are!" cried Jones. "You hear that? Well, look here, I'll stretch a point to oblige you. I'll let you have the deeds for eighteen hundred!"

"Come along!" exclaimed Sam, catching hold of Pete's arm.

"Stop a bit! Here, I'll say seventeen hundred. You can't say fairer than that!"

"Now, just you listen to this!" exclaimed Sam. "I made you an offer just now of fifteen hundred dollars for this place you call Rampart House. You wouldn't take it. That offer is off now. If you mean business, I'll make you another. You can either take it or leave it, just as you feel disposed. I warn you, I sha'n't make the same offer again!"

"Sure, stranger," cried Jones, "I mean business right enough!"



"Then I offer you one thousand dollars for the whole bag of tricks, not red cent more. Taking it or not?"

Jones's jaw dropped, and he gazed hard at Sam's resolute face.

"Done!" he cried quickly. "Here, Binns, make out the transfer Sharp, now!"

The recent encounter between the agent and the lawyer seemed quite forgotten, and now the transaction was being concluded they were very friendly.

Binns handed a large document to Sam, who stuffed it into Pete's pocket.

"Reckon you can have that to play with," he said; and then flung the required amount in notes down on the table in front of Jones.

"Good-day, gentlemen—good——"

"Not so much soft-soap," interrupted Sam. "We know we've been done and it just depends whether you've overdone the mark if we come back. See here!"

Sam's revolver cracked, and Jones started as a bullet whistled over his head, and drove a tinctack bang through the wooden wall.

"We may come back and do some more tricks. Twiggy vous?"

The comrades walked off, and the two beauties—Jones and Binns—chucked as they divided their spoil. But although Jones fingered the notes lovingly he did not feel altogether easy in his mind. The Rocky Mountains district is a pretty lawless one, and—well, the strangers might come back, and then— Jones saw the daylight coming through the hole made by Sam's bullet, and a cold shiver ran up and down his spine.

Binns was grinning cheerfully.

"You can grin," snarled Jones, "but don't forget you're in this deal much as I am!"

### CHAPTER 8.

#### Among the Rockies—On the Edge of the Chasm—The Arrival—Pete's a Lazy Time, and Finds a New Pet.

PETE was bent on hurrying to Rampart House, and, after some difficulty, they managed to purchase three horses and provisions from Miguel, who, having found the ten-dollar bill, was all smiles when they returned from the agent's.

It took Sam half an hour to beat the grasping innkeeper down to price about double what the horses were worth; but at last they came to terms, and started for what Sam insisted on calling Pete's purchase.

They journeyed along the base of the Rockies for some days, camping out each night, until they reached the pass Miguel had described to them as leading towards their destination.

"Reckon we will tackle that in the morning!" exclaimed Sam, as he gazed up the precipitous height.

Jack and Pete readily agreed to Sam's proposal, and, after a hearty supper of toasted deer's meat, they rolled themselves in their blankets, and were soon sound asleep.

No watch was kept, as of late no signs of Indians had been seen in the wild, unfrequented region.

For hours the three comrades slumbered peacefully on. Except for Pete snoring and the occasional rattle of the halters on the three tired horses, a sound disturbed the silence of the night.

Presently Jack stirred uneasily in his sleep, and, raising himself on his elbow, blinked at the camp-fire, which was now burning low. With

waking his comrades, and

"Reckon a himself in his

But that lot of keen black

watching the that when Ja

his gaze had face had disap

a shadow up The intent himself discov

At sunrise their climb. the line of pe

air with chill Pete's teeth

"Do—do— he gasped, "I always

sort of laugh terer now. I

"Yes," reply and the cold

Pete flung his ordinary

"Wish I w We'd joll

tough nut, w bit looks a b

They had n snow-covered cealed by a s

"Golly!" n a donkey inst

"Having a Duck up!"

The head o close on Sam.

"Sammy's in a very gre Sam pulled

"Here's a "No; and I

"We shall to spare, and

"Golly!" s fearful chasm

Hugging th three at leng

halt again.

"Hold on a

"Mind you



waking his comrades, he rose, and threw some pine logs on the glowing embers, and then stood for an instant gazing on the lonely scene around.

"Reckon all good people are in bed by now," he muttered, as he rolled himself in his blanket again.

But that lonely region was not quite so uninhabited as usual, for a pair of keen black eyes, set in a scowling, swarthy face, had for some time been watching the little camp from behind a huge boulder. And it so happened that when Jack had stood looking round, after replenishing the fire, that his gaze had rested for a minute on that particular boulder. Instantly that face had disappeared, and the form of an Indian had vanished as silently as a shadow up the pass.

The intentness of Jack's gaze had deceived the interloper, and thinking himself discovered, had departed without delay.

At sunrise the comrades rose, and immediately after breakfast started their climb. Progress at first was comparatively easy, but as they neared the line of perpetual snow, difficulties increased, and a cold wind filled the air with chilling flakes of hard snow.

Pete's teeth chattered with the cold.

"Do—do—don't know—no—know-er how you two am get-get-getting on," he gasped, "but dis-dis-dish ch-child am mi-mi-mighty co-co-co-cold!"

"I always knew you were fond of jawing," exclaimed Sam, with a shivery sort of laugh that he did his best to conceal, "but you're a regular chatterer now. Isn't he, Jack!"

"Ye-s," replied Jack, with an effort, for they were not very warmly clad, and the cold had grown more intense.

Pete flung his arms about like a cabman, and presently spoke more in his ordinary way.

"Wish I was a baked chestnut," he growled.

"We'd jolly soon skin you, then," exclaimed Sam. "You're a bit of a tough nut, we know; but still— Here, be careful how you go! This bit looks a bit tricky. Follow me!"

They had now reached a narrow ledge. On one side towered the mighty snow-covered rocks; on the other side was an abyss, whose depth was concealed by a swirling, floating vapour.

"Golly!" muttered Pete, as his horse slipped slightly. "Wish you were a donkey instead of—"

"Having a donkey on his back, I expect he would say," laughed Jack. Buck up!"

The head of Jack's horse was nearly touching Pete's leg, who followed close on Sam.

"Sammy's in de way," answered Pete. "Can go round, dough, if you'm in a bery great hurry."

Sam pulled up.

"Here's a pretty thing!" he growled. "Can you turn back, Jack?"

"No; and I don't think this beggar will back, either. Can you go on?"

"We shall have to," replied Sam grimly. "But there's only a few inches to spare, and—"

"Golly!" said Pete, bending from his saddle and glancing down the fearful chasm.

Hugging the side of the mountain and proceeding slowly in Indian file, the three at length reached a bend in the narrow path that brought Sam to a halt again.

"Hold on a minute, you two. I'm going to get off."

"Mind you don't get off de mountain," growled Pete.



Sam slid cautiously from his saddle, and, taking the bridle, led his horse round the bend.

This greatly simplified matters, for the width of a man's leg between the body of the horse and the side of the mountain—so narrow was the path—made all the difference.

"Get off, you two!" he shouted to Jack and Pete. "And be careful as you come round."

Jack had little difficulty, but Pete's horse trembled so violently that his body was covered with sweat as he came round the awful bend, but Pete's firm grasp on the bridle and gently spoken words seemed to calm the animal.

"Now," exclaimed Sam, "we've got to look sharp if we want to reach 'Pete's Purchase' before nightfall."

The process of descending was, more or less, of a slide, and they had to lead their horses until they reached the foot of the mountain. The sun had gone down and twilight was turning into night as the three, riding northwards, sighted their headquarters.

Sam's keen eye was the first to sight "Pete's Purchase," and he burst into a roar of laughter as he panted out the object of their journey to Pete and Jack.

Pete looked at the ramshackle building in dismay.

"Hold me up!" gasped Sam, rolling in his saddle with laughter.

"Golly! Dere ain't no words for it!"

"What about adventures now!" roared Jack. "I should say this is the worst we've ever had. There's one thing," he added, with a chuckle, "it's not my purchase."

"Reckon we must make the best of a bad job," said Sam. "Let's hobble the horses and get to bed."

"Dunno 'bout beds!" exclaimed Pete. "Don't 'spec dey hab warm de sheets."

"Not likely, mate," retorted Sam. "We'll have to camp in the best sitting-room."

During supper Jack and Sam chaffed Pete unmercifully, and he took his revenge the following morning by refusing to help them to repair the broken-down shanty.

"Reckon we'll go and get some fresh meat," said Sam about midday. "Are you coming, you lazy beggar?"

"Nunno!" answered Pete seriously, lolling on his back by the fire in front of the shanty. "Must stop to keep guard ober our property. Be pity if savages come 'long and took it, after all de trouble dat you and Jack hab taken."

"We'll leave him, then," said Sam. "It's not a bit of good trying to move him now. I bet he goes to sleep, though."

Sure enough before Jack and Sam had been gone ten minutes he was sound asleep. About three hours later a playful mosquito alighted on his nose, and Pete woke up.

"Sammy! Jack!" he loudly bawled. "Sammy! Jack!" came the echoes from the towering rocks. "Golly!" muttered Pete. "Dere's mighty lot ob voice frowning 'bout dese rockies. Tiuk we ought to take a chunk or two home wid us. Can't sleep here any longer. Must hab a stroll."

Pete wandered off in an aimless sort of fashion, and presently spied a rough cavity high up on the mountain's side.

"Must hab a look inside dat hole," he murmured. "P'r'aps dere's another treasure hidden in dere. Diamonds and all dat sort ob ting."

Whenever Pete came across a likely looking spot he always thought of the

treasure that was to ine

"Whoa! side of the Sammy wi

stupid. N a candle!"

Pete was the hole in darkness.

"Anybo sure. Goll With a fi

before Pete him a fear

"Dat wa from tumb do now, ol

The voi deep grunt self in a se

"De only ob dat clu 'bout de re

The bear viciously. reared on l

"Golly! huggd by for de liki

A fearful by surpris Pete swu

the animal she clawed

"Dat's d huge brute crevase.

we'll go h time. Goll

A brown little cub t

"Mind o mudder ha yourself."

The littl itself to be

"Poor li start in li With con cub, who w plateau. rummaged he watched



treasure that they had discovered near the Andes, and his great ambition was to unearth another million pounds worth or so of gold and jewels.

"Whoa!" he growled, as he nearly lost his footing and rolled down the side of the mountain. "Be careful, you stupid nigger, or poor Jack and Sammy will lose dere lubing comrade, and dat would be awful for dose stupid. Now, den! Ah, dat's better! Golly! Wish I had tought to bring a candle!"

Pete was now standing on a sort of narrow ledge immediately in front of the hole in the mountain side, and try as he would he could not pierce the darkness.

"Anybody at home?" he shouted. "Dis is Pete come to collect de treasure. Golly! What's all dis! Hi! Wooproop!"

With a fierce growl a huge bear had suddenly emerged from the cave, and before Pete could realised what had happened the brute's forepaw caught him a fearful clump on the side of his head and sent him reeling.

"Dat was a nasty one!" growled Pete, as he just managed to save himself from tumbling headlong to the plateau far below. "What am you going to do now, old hoss? Golly! Wish dis child had him gun! Not eben a revolver, or an axe! Steady!"

The voice came from behind the bear, and she turned her head with a deep grunt. This dodge gave Pete the chance he wanted, and he placed himself in a securer position.

"De only ting to do to you, my pore old hoss, am to return de compliment ob dat clump you gabe me on de napper, only ober de heart. Somewhere 'bout de region ob de fifth rib."

The bear gave a deep rumbling growl, and its cunning little eyes twinkled viciously. She advanced on Pete until a couple of yards distant, and then reared on her hind legs.

"Golly!" muttered Pete, as he saw what was coming. "Don't want to be hugged by you, my dear. You'm inclined to put on de pressure bit too high for de liking ob dis child. Must try dat voice frowning again.

A fearful yell came from behind the bear, and the brute, taken completely by surprise again, slightly turned its head.

Pete swung himself round and drove his right fist with all his force into the animal's ribs. The bear's jaws snapped together like a huge steel trap, she clawed wildly at the air, then rolled over the precipice.

"Dat's de worst ob being so mighty affectionate," said Pete, as he saw the huge brute go bounding from rock to rock till she finally vanished down a crevasse. "You'm not de sort ob treasure dis child expected to find. Tink we'll go home now and hab some supper. See about dat treasure anoder time. Golly! What's dis?"

A brown fluffy head peeped round the corner of the cave at Pete, and a little cub tottered perilously near the edge.

"Mind de step!" cried Pete. "Here, you come along wid me! Your mudder hab gone on a long visit, and you will get mighty hungry all by yourself."

The little animal showed no signs of fear as Pete approached and allowed itself to be picked up and tucked beneath Pete's left arm.

"Poor little bear," muttered Pete. "Must see if we can't gib you a fair start in life."

With considerable risk of breaking his neck, hampered as he was by the cub, who would persist in licking his face, Pete at last landed safely on the plateau. A few minutes later he deposited the cub in the shanty and rummaged about for some meat. But a troubled look came over his face as he watched the little animal sniff at it but make no attempt to eat it.



"Hab a little bit, brownie. Golly! No?" Pete wrapped the little cub up in Sam's rug, and stood eyeing it in perplexity.

"Wish dose two would come back," he thought. "'Spec dat Sammy would say feed de little beggar on milk. Den"—he went on, muttering aloud—"can't pour it down him froat. Must hab a feeding-bottle. Wonder if dere's any babies down at dat camp we saw de odder day? Must hab a try—can't let de little ting die ob want ob food!"

Pete went to the door of the shanty.

"Two-free miles, dat's all. Just leab a note for Jack and Sammy."

After much grunting and hard labour, Pete managed to scribble the note and then, carefully placing the now sleeping cub in a corner of the shanty, went out, and softly closed the door.

"Nutting like a snooze for de paungs ob dissatisfied hunger. Now for de feeding-bottle!"

Pete's calculation of "two-free miles" was a little bit out, for the distance to the camp was a good five miles, and pretty rough going. But well under the hour he entered the store.

It was now nearly dark, and the few miners of that isolated little camp had gathered together to discuss the probabilities of "striking it rich" to-morrow.

"Reckon we'll have some luck pre— Shucks! Who's this?"

The assembled miners stared in surprise at Pete as he entered. The comrades had never visited the camp during their stay at Rampart House, and none were aware of the proximity of the strangers.

"Say, where do you come from?" cried the storekeeper.

"Neber mind bout dat, old hoss," answered Pete. "Hab you got a feeding-bottle?"

"A wh-a-t?"

"Feeding-bottle!"

"Are you mad, or having a joke?" gasped the man.

"Nunno, dis am a serious matter!" cried Pete. "Hab you got a feeding-bottle?"

"Say, where do you come from?"

"Hab you got a feeding—"

"No!"

"Golly, dat's a pity! Still, dis will do!" Pete seized a bottle of whisky and emptied the contents on the floor. "How much, old hoss?"

The storekeeper had opened his mouth to yell to the men to seize Pete, but no sound came forth as he saw a handful of gold in Pete's black fist.

"Two—two pounds!" he gasped.

"What a waste of good stuff," growled one of the miners, as he gazed regretfully at the spirit soaking into the floor.

"Pull up the floor, mate," suggested another, "and suck the boards!"

"There was Brown, upside down,

Mopping up the whisky off the floor."

A rich tenor voice came from the dark patch of soddened floor-boards. The men gazed at one another in amazement.

"Good-night, old hosses," cried Pete, in his natural voice. "You can each hab a chip ob dat floor to take to bed wid you!"

Pete hurried along in the gloom, and he soon covered a good half of the distance.

"Sha'n't be long now before dat little beggar has him supper. Golly! I've forgot de milk! Golly, dis am awful!"

Pete mopped his shining brow, for he had travelled fast, and then turned in his tracks.

"Ob all de de silliest and Sammy!"

"Come for hour after bi"

"Oh, don't miners. "J"

"Nunno!"

I want. Ho densed milk.

"What, th "

"Dunno 'l want?"

"A what?"

"Golly!"

does a cub w

The men g mad when he

ing to their

expense in or

But the s of Pete's mo

since a man his money in

"Come to these tins ev

cubs; that m

"Golly!"

"Yes; not crowd, who v

Not if you added, handi

Bill!"

Such gener wink as he r

"This is t portion into

"He's a artf Meanwhile

"How man "Fifty!"

"Golly!"

ing. How n

"No, mate a dollar apie

A subdued "Say, Jim

The storel wasn't havin

"Dat's tw dese tins out

One by on was handed

from Bill:

"You're a



"Ob all de silly owls," he muttered, as he stumbled along, "dis child am de silliest! Fancy getting de bottle widout de milk! Sha'n't tell Jack and Sammy 'bout dis!"

"Come for another bottle, mate?" shouted the storekeeper, as, about an hour after his first visit, Pete again entered the store.

"Oh, don't you chuck good stuff away again, mate!" yelled one of the miners. "Just you fill our glasses with it. We'll take care of it for you!"

"Nunno! Don't want nodder bottle," answered Pete. "Dis is what I want. How much dat little lot?" he went on, pointing to a pile of condensed milk.

"What, the lot?"

"Dunno 'bout dat. No; two-free tins, p'r'aps. How much does a cub want?"

"A what?"

"Golly! Old hoss, you'm mighty hard ob hearing. I said, how much does a cub want?"

The men glanced at one another and winked. If they had thought Pete mad when he first came in, they were sure of it now. No sane man, according to their way of thinking, would dream of going to this trouble and expense in order to feed a bear cub.

But the storekeeper put on a serious look. He wanted some more of Pete's money, and he argued that he might as well have it as not, since a man who threw whisky away would be quite capable of chucking his money in the river.

"Come to think, now," he said, "an ordinary baby would want one of these tins every half an hour. Well, say a bear is equal to four human cubs; that makes—let me see—well, about 108 tins a day."

"Golly!" cried Pete. "All dat?"

"Yes; not a tin less," answered the storekeeper, frowning at the delighted crowd, who were ready to shout with suppressed laughter—"not a tin less. Not if you want to do the thing proper like. Help yourself, boys," he added, handing a bottle of whisky over. "Drink my health. Catch hold, Bill!"

Such generosity nearly took Bill's breath away; but he gave a prodigious wink as he realised the reason.

"This is to stop our mouths," he whispered, as he poured a liberal portion into the ring of empty glasses that were thrust in front of him, "He's a artful cove is Jim!"

Meanwhile, Pete was busily packing his pockets with tins of milk.

"How many's dat, now?"

"Fifty!"

"Golly! Got to get four more in. Must come for de odders in de morning. How much for dis little lot? Don't 'specs it am as dear as whisky!"

"No, mate; you're right. I'll let you have those fifty-four tins for 'arf a dollar apiece!"

A subdued gasp of surprise came from Bill.

"Say, Jim," he cried, "we've finished that bottle!"

The storekeeper scowled, but promptly handed over another one. He wasn't having his sale spoil if he could help it.

"Dat's twenty-nine dollars! Golly!" grumbled Pete. "Got to get all dese tins out again to get at de money!"

One by one, out came six of the tins from Pete's pocket, and the money was handed over. As the last tin was returned to his pocket, a voice came from Bill:

"You're a thief, Jim!"



"What!" roared Jim.

"You're a thief!"

Jim flung himself over the counter, and gave the astonished Bill one of the chest that sent him sprawling.

"Night, night, boys!" said Pete, chuckling at the success of his wile-triloquism, and taking no notice of the uproar.

The store-door slammed, and Pete once more started on his journey.

"Must hab a talk to dat Jim nodder day!" he growled. "Couldn't waste time 'bout bargaining to-night, wid dat little beggar wanting his supper!"

That evening, when Jack and Sam returned from their hunting expedition, they found the place in darkness.

"Wonder if that silly owl is up to any of his tricks again?" muttered Sam. "Let's do a bit of scouting first."

The two crept round to the back of the shanty, and listened intently for any sounds from within.

Five, ten minutes they waited in absolute silence; still not a sound came from inside.

"Stop here a minute, Jack," whispered Sam. "I'll go round to the front."

Before Jack could reply his comrade had vanished round the corner. The darkness was now intense, and it was impossible to distinguish anything with any clearness at a greater distance than four or five yards.

Suddenly an idea occurred to Jack, and, drawing his hunter's clasp-knife he inserted it between the rough beams comprising the wall of the shanty. The cracks between the rough baulks of timber were filled with mud, and it was an easy job to silently remove sufficient to make a good-sized peephole.

Jack applied his eye to the crack, but all was dark and silent. He could see nothing.

He happened to have chosen a spot exactly facing the door of the shanty, and he drew in his breath sharply as he saw a dim, faint crack of light gradually widen beyond the pitch-black darkness of the hut.

For a moment his hand fingered the butt of his revolver, and then he gave a low chuckle as he saw the figure of Sam outlined in the now open doorway. Then came the splutter of a match, and Jack laughed silently as he saw his comrade peer anxiously to the right and to the left in the light of the feeble illumination.

Sam advanced into the hut, looking prepared for a sudden spring from Pete, and stood for a moment close to Jack's peephole. Only for a minute for Jack gently pushed the blade of his knife through, and Sam leapt into the air with a yell.

"You—you black beauty!" he cried. "I thought you were up to your tricks again!"

Sam came flying round the shanty, just as Jack closed and pocketed his knife, and ran full tilt into his comrade.

"I've got him, Jack!" cried Sam, deceived by the intense darkness. "What the— Well, I'm blessed!" he added, as he peered into Jack's face. "Where's that beauty gone to?"

"I don't know," said Jack, with a laugh.

"Who shoved the point of that knife into me, then?" demanded Sam.

"Was—was  
though?" h  
savages!"

"Are y  
shanty.

"Don't t  
Sam light  
to hear, Pe

They now  
"Hallo!

the table.  
"It's sign  
scrawl; "a

"What's  
"No, 'G,  
then—"

"Gone!"  
"What's  
an inkbottle  
to—" He

Jack held  
"Gone t  
"What e  
a feed! w  
nut! Fairl

"So I she  
and then se  
Sam gasp  
interpretati

In silenc  
"Well, I  
"Well, I

Had Pete  
seemed the  
"A feedi  
"A feedi  
Then the  
Suddenly

room. The  
pair to spr  
Sam grab  
small, brow

"A brow  
The comm  
message.

by its size,  
feeding-bot

For some  
he heard t  
and clatter

Sam flun  
"What e



"Was—was it you? Why, you're as bad as Pete! I wonder where he is, though?" he went on seriously. "I hope the stupid hasn't got collared by savages!"

"Are you sure he's not inside?" asked Jack, as they both entered the shanty.

"Don't think so; anyhow, let's get a light on the subject."

Sam lighted a candle, and every moment the two expected, even hoped to hear, Pete's uproarious "Yah, yah, yah!"

They now looked round in dismay.

"Hallo! What's this?" exclaimed Jack, seizing a piece of paper from the table.

"It's signed Pete," cried Sam, as they both examined the terrible-looking scrawl; "and that's about all I can make out."

"What's this first letter," said Jack—"S"?"

"No, 'G,'" replied Sam. "That's it. The next is an 'o,' then an 'n,' then—"

"Gone!" cried Jack.

"What's the next word? My word, it's just as if a spider had fallen in an inkbottle, and then crawled all over the paper," went on Sam. "'Gone to—' Here, let's look at it from a distance!"

Jack held the paper at arm's length, and they certainly got on better.

"Gone to get a feed—"

"What ever does he mean, the stupid?" exclaimed Sam. "Gone to get a feed! Why, there's plenty of food in the place. He must be off his nut! Fairly gone stark, staring ma—"

"So I should think!" cried Jack. "This is what I make of it! Listen, and then see what you make of it! 'Gone to get a feeding-bottle!'"

Sam gasped with astonishment, as he clearly saw that such was the correct interpretation of the message.

In silence the two gazed at one another.

"Well, I'm blessed!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

Had Pete taken leave of his senses, or was this one of his jokes? It seemed the only solution.

"A feeding-bottle?" gasped Sam.

"A feeding-bottle," repeated Jack.

Then they were silent again.

Suddenly Sam swung round quickly, and glared into a dark corner of the room. There was something stirring, and a faint whimpering caused the pair to spring forward.

Sam grabbed the candle, and they both gazed with astonished eyes at a small, brown, fluffy object curled up on a rug.

"A brown cub!" cried Sam.

The comrades roared with laughter as they realised the meaning of Pete's message. He had evidently found this little cub, for it was only, judging by its size, a few days old, and, in his impetuous way, had gone off for a feeding-bottle to save it from starvation.

For some time Pete kept at a steady pace on his return journey; but as he neared the shanty he broke into a trot, and pulled up at the door rattling and clattering like a milk-cart.

Sam flung open the door, and stared at his comrade in speechless surprise.

"What ever have you got there?" he cried at last.



"Milk!"

"Scissors! There's enough there to feed a regiment!" he exclaimed, as Pete flung tin after tin on to the floor.

Crash!

Pete gave an awful yell, that woke the cub, who immediately started howling for its supper.

"Dis is awful!" hooted Pete, the picture of misery. "I've been and broken de bottle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sam and Jack, the comic side of the affair overlooking every other consideration. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all very fine for you to laugh," cried Pete, "but how would you like to go widout your supper?"

Sam and Jack stifled their mirth and looked serious.

"I know!" cried Sam.

"What do you know?"

"Why, here's my water-flask; that and a tube will do a treat."

"Golly!" yelled Pete. "De very ting!"

"That's all very fine!" exclaimed Jack. "But where are you going to get your tube from? Tell me that!"

"Tell you nothing!" growled Pete, who was getting sick of being baulked at every step. "Golly, dis child's hair am turning grey! First de journey for de bottle; den I forgot de——"

"What's that?" cried Sam.

"Nutting!"

"But you said you'd forgot!"

"I meant I broke de bottle," said Pete, who had nearly given himself away. "What am we going to do for a tube? Hie! Hellup! What's all dis? Augh!"

Pete had put his heel on one of those condensed milk cans, and went sprawling into Sam, who cannoned into Jack.

The little cub, terrified by the noise and clatter, scampered over Pete's face and darted through the open door. Pete dashed out, and succeeded in capturing him.

"Golly! Can't let you go widout your supper!" he cried.

After some discussion, the problem of feeding the cub was solved by Sam, who, with his water-bottle and a piece of rag stuffed into its mouth, contrived a fairly successful imitation of the regulation feeding apparatus.

Pete was delighted as he gazed at the little animal's evident content with the plentiful supply of warm milk; and he insisted on renewing the supply until the cub dozed off with the comfort caused by a hearty meal.

For the next few days Pete refused to leave his new pet, and under his care the cub got fat and very lively.

"I'm not sorry he found that bear," remarked Sam, as he and Jack left the shanty one morning to shoot something for dinner. "It will keep him from worrying about Rory. He hasn't said much about him lately, but I know the poor old chap is wondering all the time how our chum is getting on!"

"It's a good job we came away, though," replied Jack. "He would have driven that doctor off his head if we had stayed in 'Frisco. Hallo' What's that?" he added, in a low voice.

The comrades had been silently making their way through some dense undergrowth, and their natural hunters' instinct had led them to hold their conversation in a cautious manner, so that their voices would not carry far,

A Stran

OU

J AC

o

d

Sam

mysteri

Preser

in war-

distingu

fully pu

vanishes

another

trail.

"Loo

that las

A fier

appear

"Che

"Bot

"The

The t

hawks

The

fierce

strange

upon th

The o

with to

"I r

level th

"Sur

Draw

of bush

They st

the end

The

coward

Slow

recent

"I a

nation.

You ca

"Re

to one

it been

"Ye

"In

and pe

"W

and fo

shall r

Rais

## CHAPTER 9.

**A Strange Meeting—Jack and Sam to the Rescue—White Wing Sleeps Out—Barricading the Shanty—The Departure of White Wing.**

**J**ACK parted the bushes and looked carefully through. The dim shape of a human figure was visible, moving at a short distance, and then disappeared.

"Sam!"

Sam carefully joined his comrade, and together they watched the mysterious stranger.

Presently they heard a faint rustling of bushes to the left, and an Indian in war-paint appeared. Though invisible themselves, Jack and Sam could distinguish his features. The new-comer was of great height, and beautifully proportioned. This is all the comrades had time to see, for he, too, vanished in the wake of the first-comer. He had scarcely disappeared when another, a third, Indian crossed the open space and followed the same trail.

"Looks as if there's going to be trouble!" exclaimed Sam. "See how that last chap was gripping his tomahawk?"

A fierce whoop resounded through the pine-forest, and the last two to appear on the scene bounded back again into the open.

"Chetwyn and Chippeway!" said Sam.

"Both chiefs, too," exclaimed Jack, "judging by their dress!"

"They're at it!" cried Sam, in a cautious tone. "Look!"

The two warriors rushed at one another with terrible fury, and their tomahawks met with a metallic clash.

The taller of the two—the Chetwyn—drove his opponent back by the fierceness of his onslaught. But as the Chippeway retreated, he uttered a strange cry, and four savages sprang from the bushes and threw themselves upon the Chetwyn chief.

The odds were five to one, but the tall chief showed no signs of fear, and with tomahawk and knife he kept his foes at bay.

"I reckon it's no affair of ours," exclaimed Sam, "but I'm going to level things up a bit!"

"Sure!" replied Jack. "Come on!"

Drawing their axes, the comrades sprang through the intervening mass of bushes, and dashed to the assistance of the now sorely-pressed chief. They struck such fierce blows, and their appearance was so unexpected, that the enemy fled in all directions.

The Chetwyn felled one to the earth, and made for another, but the cowardly savage fled before him.

Slowly the tall chief retraced his steps, his immobile face as calm as if the recent conflict had been mere make-believe.

"I am White Wing," he said, in deep tones, "once chief of the Chetwyn nation, now an outcast, banned and turned upon by friend and foe alike. You came to my assistance—why?"

"Reckon we like to see fairplay, White Wing," answered Sam. "Five to one is a little too much for the strongest and most valiant warrior. Had it been man to man we should not have interfered."

"Yet the white man is an enemy of the red," replied the Indian.

"In the past, yes," replied Sam. "But we believe hostilities have ceased, and peace is between the red man and his white brother."

"White brother," exclaimed White Wing, "you have saved a chief's life, and for that I am grateful! We may meet again, and the Chetwyn outcast shall repay. Farewell!"

Raising his right arm above his head, the Indian strode away.



"Strange how noble some of these fellows are!" exclaimed Sam, "and how treacherous are others!"

"I suppose he was tracking the first man," said Jack. "If so, it was a case of the watcher being watched. Let's get back now, and see if that lazy Pete has cooked any supper. I'm mighty hungry."

Both were hungry and tired, and they made tracks for Rampart House. Suddenly Jack, who was a little in advance of his comrade, uttered a cry of dismay, and sprang forward.

They had reached an exposed part of the mountain, and Sam hurried to the spot.

Pete lay calmly sleeping in the snow!

Jack bent over the still form. Strange to say, Pete was not snoring, and it was with difficulty that they convinced themselves that he still lived. Sam shook him vigorously.

"You silly chump!" he shouted.

Pete opened his eyes and grunted sleepily.

"Golly! Dat you, Sammy? Time for breakfas' yet? Must hab 'noder dose first."

"No, you don't!" declared Sam. "Here, Jack, haul him to his feet. If we hadn't come along, the stupid owl would have slept for ever!"

Between the two of them Pete got all the effects of the cold shaken out of him.

"What the thump do you mean by going to sleep in the snow?" demanded Sam.

"Nothing!" declared Pete. "Just felt a bit tired ob waiting for you so come to find you. Den felt a bit more tired, and sat down to hab a rest. Yah, yah, yah!"

"There's nothing to laugh at, mate," said Sam. "It would have gone hard with you if we had not come along. How long had you lain there?"

"Bout two-free minutes."

"Two-free hours, you mean!" exclaimed Jack.

"Nunno; two-free minutes! Yah, yah, yah! Sold again!"

Jack and Sam glanced suspiciously at Pete's smiling face.

"We've been sold!" growled Sam.

"Dat's so!" roared Pete. "Golly, dough, you can shake hard! Saw me coming up de mountain, and jest laid down in de path. Golly! Must hab someting to liben tings up a bit! Dere's not much to see 'bout dese parts. Tink we'd better leabe dis neighbourhood."

"No, we won't!" declared Sam. "You were so mighty eager to hab some headquarters a little while ago, so we'll just stop here, for a time, at any rate."

After supper they brought the horses within the barricade, and took every precaution against an attack from the Indians. The presence of the Chippeways in the neighbourhood boded ill for any white men taken by surprise.

"Tink dis child had better keep watch, Sammy?" asked Pete.

"Not you!" declared Sam. "We know what your method of keeping watch is—a ten-horse-power snore, which is bad enough to frighten lions and tigers and keep us awake, but of mighty little use in scaring Indians."

Jack and Sam shared the watch between them, but morning broke without the slightest signs for alarm.

"I tink we ought to go down to the camp," said Sam, after breakfast, "and warn those chaps that the Indians are about."

Fully armed, they mounted their horses and descended the trail.

"De lazy beggars!" cried Pete, as they looked down on the little camp. "Dev'm not up yet! Dere's not a whiff ob smoke anywhere."

"Surely  
cried Sam  
night. H

The can  
"They

having be  
would hav

"Dis a  
dis child's

"Serves  
"P'r'aps  
half-a-doll

They di  
"Not so  
deserted s

"I exp  
leave whi  
We shall

a few bu  
The ide  
behind, a

The sun  
in the ext  
wind had

hollows sp  
"This i  
"Might

"Well,  
you'd say

"Sam  
in all tin  
de coldest

"Well,  
want is a  
southward

As Sam  
"What  
"Hab

in the dis  
saw dose  
Sam pr

evident d  
"That  
They d

over the  
muffed h  
"Golly

The he  
among it  
charging  
"Dat's  
distance

as the hu  
"Strik  
Sam, rein  
The tw

"Surely those skunks have not attacked the place during the night!" cried Sam, leading the way at a trot. "I wish we had come down last night. Hallo! This is curious!"

The camp was deserted. "They've cleared off!" cried Jack. "There's no signs of the Indians having been here. Besides, there would have been plenty of smoke, for they would have burnt the place to the ground!"

"Dis am too bad!" grumbled Pete. "Dat chap had some dollars ob dis child's, and now he'm gone off!"

"Serves you right for being so free!" retorted Sam, with a laugh. "P'raps you won't be so mighty anxious to purchase condensed milk at half-a-dollar a tin!"

They dismounted, and searched every hut in the place. "Not so much as a bit ob baccy!" growled Pete, as he looked round the deserted store. "Wonder if dey drank all de whisky?"

"I expect so, mate!" laughed Sam. "They're not the sort of chaps to leave whisky laying round. I vote we take a gallop across the open now. We shall want some fresh meat, and we may have the luck to drop across a few buffaloes."

The idea was at once agreed to, and soon the deserted camp was left far behind, and from the forest they emerged on the open plains.

The sun was now shining from a cloudless sky, and the scene was beautiful in the extreme. Patches of green appeared on the rolling plain, where the wind had swept the snow from the rising ground, and the snow in the hollows sparkled and glittered beneath the golden sunlight.

"This looks promising," said Sam.

"Mighty cold wind, dough!"

"Well, you can't have everything, you contrary beggar! If it was hot, you'd say the sun was too strong."

"Sammy," said Pete, shaking his finger reprovingly, "dere's a medium in all tings, and de hottest day am best tempered wid a bit ob wind, and de coldest day wid a chunk ob sunlight."

"Well, I reckon we don't care if it rains or snows!" cried Sam. "All we want is a herd of buffaloes, and this is just the sort of day to bring them southwards, where they can graze."

As Sam spoke Pete gave a low chuckle.

"What's that?" demanded Sam sharply.

"Hab a look, Sammy!" cried Pete, pointing to some dark, moving specks in the distance. "Yah, yah, yah! Got de mighty hunter dat time! Who saw dose lumps ob steak fust, Sammy?"

Sam prided himself on his keen sight, but he laughed heartily at Pete's evident delight.

"That's one to you! I reckon this is a rare bit of luck!"

They darted off at a smart hand-gallop across the plains, now thundering over the bright greensward, now scattering the snow in the hollows with muffled hoofs.

"Golly!" cried Pete. "Dere's a bit ob an argument going on."

The herd was not a very large one, but it numbered a couple of bulls among it, and as the comrades drew nearer they saw that these two were charging at each other with maddened fury.

"Dat's one for him napper!" yelled Pete, as, even at the considerable distance which still separated them from the herd, they heard the report as the huge beasts met with terrific force.

"Strikes me those chaps' heads are even harder than Pete's!" exclaimed Sam, reining in to watch the duel.

The two savage brutes turned their bloodshot eyes on the horsemen.



"Get ready!" cried Sam.

The cows stampeded and thundered away, but the bulls came charging straight at the comrades with lowered heads.

"Try and stop them with your noddle, mate!" shouted Sam.

Pete did not take the advice, but fired at the forehead of the bull that was almost upon him. The bullet flattened itself against the thick skull, and merely served to infuriate the brute still more.

Pete looked like being bowled over, as his horse refused to budge. But Sam's rifle rang out, the bullet landed just behind the buffalo's shoulder, and, with a crash, the snorting, maddened animal came to its knees.

Jack pulled his horse round just in time to dodge the second bull; but the frightened animal reared, and both rider and horse floundered in a snow-drift.

Pete's horse now galloped across the plain, with the bull that had made for Jack in hot pursuit.

Sam pulled Jack out of his uncomfortable position, and despatched the wounded bull with a single shot at close range. The two then galloped hard after Pete.

"Dis child seems to be getting a lot ob attention," muttered Pete, as he strained at the bridle, endeavouring to pull his horse round. "Golly Dat's done it!"

The leather had snapped, and now his mount was absolutely beyond his control. He gave up all hopes of stopping his horse, and dashed on, shouting and yelling, at a furious speed.

The only thing to be done now was to endeavour to outdistance the bull that was thundering perilously near his horse's hind-legs.

From time to time Pete turned in his saddle and discharged his revolver. But the heavy bullets had no more effect on that tough hide than green peas discharged from a tin peashooter.

"Wonder when dis am going to stop? Reckon dere's going to be a bust up in two-free minutes! Woo-hoop!"

The horse had floundered into a huge snowdrift, and Pete shot over his head and vanished.

A moment later Jack and Sam arrived on the scene, and roared with laughter as Pete's black face slowly appeared above the snow.

The first thing he saw was that buffalo, standing on the side of the drift pawing the ground fiercely. The animal had pulled up in time, but he looked as if at any moment he would flounder over on top of Pete.

Doubtless Pete realised this, for his black face promptly disappeared, and the movement of the snow showed that he was trying to crawl away beneath it.

The bull turned his head and bellowed at Jack and Sam, who had taken up a position on the other side of the drift; then he gazed at the distant herd, and with another bellow, thundered after them.

"Shoot him, Sammy!" came a muffled voice.

"No need to do that, mate," said Sam, with a laugh. "One's enough for us for some time. How much longer are you going to stay down there?"

"Hab he gone, den?" inquired Pete, popping up his head again and looking round.

"Gone? Hours ago!" cried Jack, as he helped Pete out of the drift.

"You're a pretty sort of horseman, you are!" exclaimed Sam. "Why didn't you pull him up? Ha, ha, ha! That's one to me, you black beauty!"

"Am it? Look at dat, Sammy!"

Jack and Sam stared at the broken bridle.

"Yah,  
"Thou  
"Here, l  
Loaded  
returned  
their vio  
door.

A dark  
his keen  
journey l

"Who  
"A fri  
"Ah,  
don't do

"The  
voice, "  
sworn to

"Wha  
The Ch  
"Who

"Pete  
comrade  
White

"My v  
to Pete.

"No la  
Sam k  
painful o

Pete g  
"You  
released  
Do you t

"The  
colours,"

Pete r  
"Goll  
Sabes de

"Do y  
"Most

the day  
more of  
aid. As

they wor  
Chetwyn

"Let'  
us, Whit  
The cl

all snug  
soon bec

Very  
busily e

"If y  
remaind  
smoke f  
week."

"Yah, yah, yah! Made a mistake dat time, Sammy!"

"Thought you could ride better than that, somehow!" growled Sam.

"Here, let's get back and cut up that bull!"

Loaded with as much of the buffalo meat as they could carry, they returned slowly back to Rampart House. The horses were tired out after their violent exercise, and it was quite dark when they pulled up at their door.

A dark form barred their way. Sam's rifle leaped to his shoulder, for his keen hearing and sight had been on the alert during the whole of the journey home.

"Who's that?" he demanded.

"A friend! White Wing would warn his brothers of danger!"

"Ah, White Wing," exclaimed Sam, "I thought it was you! But it don't do to take risks just now. What is the danger?"

"The peril I have to warn you against," said the Indian, in a low, deep voice, "is that the Chippeways are going to attack this fort. They have sworn to take your scalps!"

"What 'bout black man's scalp?" inquired Pete.

The Chetwyn chief stared somewhat haughtily at Pete.

"Who is this stranger?" he demanded.

"Pete!" answered Sam, with a laugh. "Pete, our friend, the truest comrade man ever had!"

White Wing touched his head with dignity.

"My white brothers' friends are mine," he said, as he extended his hand to Pete.

"No larks, now!" whispered Sam. "Don't get squeezing his hand off!"

Sam knew Pete's grip of old, and his friendly handshake was often a painful one.

Pete gravely shook the Indian's hand.

"You needn't talk 'bout dis child's grip!" he exclaimed, as the redskin released his hand. "Dis White Feder am quite strong 'nuff in him fist. Do you tink dey collect black scalps, White Wing?"

"The scalps that hang from the belts of the Chippeways are of all colours," replied the chief.

Pete rubbed his hand over his woolly mop.

"Golly!" he murmured. "Wonder how it feels to be widout any wool? Sabes de trouble ob combing it ebery morning!"

"Do you know when they are going to attack?" inquired Sam.

"Most likely to-morrow night, before moonrise. They would attack in the daytime, but they fear your rifles, and they are also waiting for more of their tribe to join them. I am powerless to bring help to your aid. As you know, my people have cast me off. Had they not done so they would have followed me, as the Chippeways are the deadly foes of the Chetwyns!"

"Let's get in and have some supper," suggested Jack. "Will you join us, White Wing?"

The chief readily agreed, and, while Pete saw to the horses, and made all snug for the night, Jack and Sam kindled a huge fire, and the room soon became filled with the appetising odour of roasted buffalo meat.

Very little was said during supper, the little party of four being too busily engaged.

"If you don't eat too much, Pete," exclaimed Sam, as he cut the remainder of the hide into long strips, and fixed them up to dry in the smoke from the pine logs, "I reckon we've got enough to last us for a week."



"Why did your people cast you out?" inquired Jack of the chief, who was sitting silent and grave smoking his tomahawk pipe.

"That I cannot now tell you. One day, perhaps, they may want my help. They have never found me fail them in leading them to the attack against the Chippeways. But will my brothers accept the help of one warrior in defending this fort?"

"Reckon we'll be mighty glad!" exclaimed Sam. "But it's hardly fair to drag you into our quarrel."

White Wing rose, and, drawing his tall form to its full height, said, in a voice which rang with passion:

"Day after day, night after night, my foes have pursued and hunted me. Therefore, if my friends will accept, is it not fitting that I should strike a blow against our enemies?"

"In that case, we accept!" cried Sam. "Now let's turn in. Do you think, chief, that we ought to keep guard to-night?"

"No; they will not attack before to-morrow," answered White Wing.

Then all four wrapped themselves in their blankets, and prepared to get a good night's rest.

Jack, Sam, and Pete soon dropped off to sleep, but for some time White Wing lay with his dark eyes fixed on the fire. A melancholy expression on his face showed that he was thinking of the people who had cast him from them. Presently, however, he slept.

"Groo—groo—arch!"

White Wing woke instantly. He was not used to Pete's snoring. Jack and Sam slumbered on. Surprise showed itself on the Indian's usually impassive face.

"The dark one has a slumber-song of thunder!" he murmured, as he sank down again and tried to get to sleep.

Pete snored away merrily, up and down the scale. At last White Wing could stand it no longer. He rose, and passed silently from the room.

"The howling of wolves is as nothing compared to the dark one's song!" he murmured.

"Hallo!" cried Pete, as he awoke the following morning at the first streak of dawn. "Sammy—Jack! Where hab dat chief got to? He'm buzzed off like a beautiful dream. Golly! Dere he is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sam. "I think I can guess where he has been. Found Pete's snoring too much for you—eh, chief?"

The chief was standing in the doorway. The natural courtesy of the Indian prevented him from admitting that such was the case, and he passed over Sam's question with a wave of his hand towards the palisade surrounding the fort.

"Chippeways creep through there to-night," he said.

"We'll make some repairs after breakfast," answered Sam. "Now then, you black beauty, get some wood for this fire!"

All day the four laboured at the barricade, and the forest rang with the sound of Pete's axe as he felled tree after tree.

These were sawn into lengths by Jack and Sam, while the Indian contributed his share of the work by covering the roof of the shanty with earth to prevent the place taking fire in the event of the savages using flaming arrows.

"There," exclaimed Sam, as the last pile was driven against the old stockade, "I guess that about finishes it. Now for a smoke!"

The rest of the time was spent in lounging about and cleaning and overhauling their weapons.

"Do you tink dere will be many ob dose sabages?" inquired Pete.

"Y  
that b  
The  
Sam v  
"D  
"N  
showin  
may v  
Pete  
never  
But  
bonfir  
the fa  
Just  
"M  
Chipp  
have  
"G  
all di  
"N  
go."  
"W  
India  
away.  
Aft  
time,  
  
Pete's  
  
T  
  
away.  
"T  
"D  
"W  
"D  
saw."  
"I  
"A  
doubt  
if a  
on yo  
"R  
if the  
"Y  
"Y  
Sam.  
real  
"I  
I sam  
concl  
'nuff

"Yes," replied White Wing. "But they will not find it easy to pass that barricade; and they have few or no rifles."

The little party ate their supper in darkness, and Pete grumbled because Sam would not allow him to smoke.

"Don't see why two-free sabages should stop us from habing a pipe!" "No, mate, p'r'aps you don't. But we ain't running risks of having you showing yourself as a mark for every arrow," retorted Sam. "Besides, we may want you to frighten them away!"

Pete pretended to be very much upset, though it is certain that he would never have endangered all their lives by lighting a pipe.

But, as it turned out, it would not have mattered if they had lighted a bonfire, for, although they watched and waited the whole night long, not the faintest sound was heard.

Just before dawn White Wing went scouting.

"My brothers can sleep in peace," he said, on his return. "The Chippeways will not attack, for the number they expected to join them have not come."

"Golly!" cried Pete. "Must hab dat pipe now. Fancy going widout all dis time for nuffin!"

"Now," said the chief, "there is no danger for the present, and I must go."

"Won't you stay and——" cried Sam. "Funny sort of chaps, these Indians!" he continued, for the chief, with a wave of his arm, had strode away.

After a few hours' sleep, the comrades decided to abandon the shanty for a time, and camp on the mountain slope.

#### CHAPTER 10.

#### Pete's Little Joke, and What It Led To "King Ob De Castle"—Jack Plays a Gallant Part—Pete's Chaff—An Indian's Request.

THE three, accompanied by the little cub, had not proceeded far before there was a terrible outcry from Pete.

"Yooroop! Thieves! Fire!" he yelled, in a voice that might have been heard a mile or so away, as he leaped about. "Take it away, Sammy!"

"Take what?"

"De skeeter!"

"What skeeter?"

"Dunno, Sammy; neber asked his name. 'Specs he was de same one you saw."

"I never saw one, you silly owl, so what are you screeching about?"

"Am you sure 'bout dat, Sammy—sure?" inquired Pete, gazing at Sam doubtfully, and endeavouring to get a view of his own back in order to see if a skeeter was crawling up it. "I tought, from de sorter pleased look on your face, dat a skeeter was on de warpath!"

"Rubbish!" retorted Sam. "There's no skeeters about here, and, even if there were, I don't see how you could tell by looking at my face!"

"You'm got a truful sort ob counting-house," observed Pete.

"You've got a pretty vivid sort of imagination, I must say," retorted Sam. "I should like to know what sort of a row you would kick up if a real skeeter came along!"

"Don't feel bery anxious to try a real one, tanks all de same, Sammy. I sampled one ob dose skeeters not so bery long ago, and hab come to de conclusion dat one ob dose gentlemen in de span ob a lifetime am quite 'nuff for dis child!"



"That's so," muttered Sam. "Well, anyhow, stop fooling now, and let's get along."

Pete followed slowly along the trail, but he was by no means easy in his mind, the cause of his uneasiness being the knowledge that one night a mosquito had crawled up his nose, and one such an experience was quite enough for Pete, who at the best of times had a horror of creeping things.

But by the time they had reached the spot where they had determined to camp he was ripe for mischief.

"In de shade ob de old apple tree,  
Dere's Jack, Sam, and Pete,  
Ta-ra-ra! Ra-ra-ra! La-la-la!"

"Can't make de next line fit in, somehow!" cried Pete. "You hab a go, Sammy!"

"Not me—I'm no poet."

"You, Jack. You'm well versed in verses."

"Not a bit of it, mate. Like Sammy, I don't go in for poetry!"

"Golly, dat's not po'try! Wagglespear is de sort ob chap dat turns out po'try!"

"In de shade ob de old apple tree,  
Brabely we stand, all hand in hand,  
Tra-ra-ra! Loo-roo-roo! Roon—e!"

"Golly!" cried Pete, giving it up in disgust. "If you can't sing it, Sammy, you'm got to dance it. Now den, one, two, free!"

"Chuck it!" yelled Sam. "I won't!"

"You will!" mimicked Pete, holding his comrade round the waist, while he whirled him round and round, humming and whistling. Suddenly he released Sam and sank down, as if exhausted.

"Golly! De exertion ob de dance am too much for de delicate con-stewshun ob dis child! Light de fire you two! Come 'long, brownie!"

"Reckon you just thought there might be some work to do," said Sam drily.

Cuddling the little cub, Pete pretended to go to sleep, and only answered his comrade's remarks with a snore. Jack and Sam busied themselves in getting a lot of dry underwood together. In their search, they wandered some little distance away.

Pete opened one eye, and, gathering the little supply of stores together, crept away, leaving the cub asleep.

"Where's that beauty got to?" cried Sam, as he flung down an armful of fuel. "Scissors! Look, Jack!"

The pair stared towards a high rock, not far distant.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, as he looked down and grinned delightedly at his comrades' upturned faces. "You'm did dis time, boys. How do you'm like you'm taters done? Coats on, or coats off?"

"It strikes me very forcibly," growled Sam, "that we are just about done brown!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Jack. "That beauty slept with one eye open, and must have watched us hide the stuff. I'm as hungry as a hunter!"

"So am I!"

"What shall we do?"

"I don't know," replied Sam dolefully. "It's mighty certain we can't climb up there, for he will begin pelting us if we do. See that pile of fir-cones he's collected?"

"I'm king ob de castle!" warbled Pete, dancing a jig on the top of the

rock. I  
other.  
"Scis  
"Not  
Sam &  
"This  
chunk o  
"Nun  
gibing r  
"Let'  
"Don  
They  
his pipe  
"Go  
perry roo  
Sam s  
another  
"I'm  
mystific  
He bent  
Sam wit  
backwan  
The t  
slipped  
"Get  
Tears  
Sudden  
bound.  
"You  
"Whe  
During  
the grou  
despair.  
Pete v  
the hear  
about by  
"I'll  
at the co  
"Mind  
his gun,  
Half a  
in turn,  
a faint r  
shadow.  
For a  
passed c  
While  
disting  
form wa  
"This  
body."  
Scarce  
caused h  
A tall,  
the moti

rock. He had a chunk of meat in one hand and Sam's tobacco-pouch in the other.

"Scissors! He's got my pouch as well! Have you got any baccy, Jack?"

"Not a bit!"

Sam groaned.

"This is a pretty pickle. Nothing to eat, nothing to smoke. Here, you chunk of darkness, you've had your joke, now come down!"

"Nunno! Got to hab some grub fust, boys, den two-free pipes 'fore gibing up de castle!"

"Let's try an' rush him, anyway," whispered Jack.

"Don't think it's much good," muttered Sam. "Still, we'll have a go!"

They retired some little distance, and when Pete was engaged in lighting his pipe, dashed for the slope at full speed.

"Go it, Sam!" gasped Jack, as they crawled and scrambled up the slippery rocks. "Hi, hand!"

Sam slipped, and his heel came down on Jack's fingers. Then he made another frantic effort, and succeeded in nearly reaching the top.

"I'm king ob de castle! Get off!" yelled Pete, who, much to the chums' mystification, had made no effort to prevent the climbing up. "Get off!" He bent down, and, grasping a long pole he had carefully prepared, prodded Sam with it until that worthy was forced to retreat, or go rolling backwards.

The two were compelled to slowly retreat, and, near the bottom, Sam slipped again, and rolling on top of Jack, the pair sprawled on the grass.

"Get off!" gasped Jack, who was underneath. "Ger—rr off!"

Tears of laughter ran down Pete's cheeks.

Suddenly his laughter ceased, and he leaped from the height with one bound.

"You'll break your silly neck!" cried Sam. "What's the——"

"Where's dat brownie gone?" howled Pete.

During the fun, the cub had vanished, and, although the three searched the ground for some considerable distance around, they had to give up in despair.

Pete was very silent during the midday meal, and Jack and Sam had not the heart to chaff him about the loss of the cub, which was really brought about by his little king of the castle business.

"I'll go and have a look at the traps we set the other day," said Jack, at the conclusion of the meal.

"Mind dose savages don't trap you, den!" called out Pete, as, shouldering his gun, Jack strode away.

Half an hour's walk brought him to the spot, and he visited all the traps in turn, but found each one empty. As he rose from the last one, he heard a faint rustling in the bushes, and quickly crouched back again in the deep shadow.

For a moment or two all was silent, then the form of an Indian girl passed close to his hiding-place, and stopped a few paces off.

While Jack watched from his hiding-place, the moon rose, and he could distinguish the strikingly beautiful face of the girl, whose lithe, graceful form was clad in furs. She carried a spear.

"This is very curious," he thought; "evidently, she is waiting for somebody."

Scarcely had the thought crossed his mind, when another faint rustling caused him to turn his head.

A tall, powerfully-built savage was steadily drawing closer and closer to the motionless girl. So silent was his tread, that she did not hear him



until he was close upon her. She uttered a cry of terror as the man bore her spear and wrenched it from her grasp, and then, raising her in his arms, bore her into the forest.

"This is evidently not a friendly meeting," muttered Jack, sprang from cover and giving chase.

He caught the running Indian without difficulty, and brought him to a stop by grasping his black hair, which was plaited in a short tail.

The chief—for such he was, judging by his plume—uttered a mingled cry of rage and pain, and, releasing his burden, sprang at Jack, brandishing his tomahawk. Not a word was spoken, and Jack met the downward rush of the tomahawk with his axe. The chief gave a low, guttural grunt, and sprang back, and then rushed in again.

Jack refrained from using his revolver, which would have ended the combat at once, by reason of his not knowing the actual circumstances, which the girl had been carried off.

Blow after blow he guarded, and then, after several minutes, he was struck by the sharp, steel blade of his axe on the forehead of the Indian, and cut it clean in half.

Without giving his foe time to draw his knife, Jack sprang at him, gripped him round the body, pinning his arms to his side. The chief was the taller of the two, but Jack had the advantage in the knowledge of wrestling. Fury lent the chief additional strength; but, strive as he did, he could not gain the advantage.

Then came a swift feint on Jack's part. He got his adversary across the shoulder, and gave him the flying mace. The redskin described a circle in the air, and came down with a crash on his head. The force of the fall partially stunned him, and Jack quickly removed his weapons.

Stepping back from the prostrate form, Jack drew his revolver, and waited for him to rise.

"Dog of a paleface!" cried the savage, as he rose slowly to his feet.

"Glad you can speak English, at any rate," said Jack. "Now clear up."

"Shoot!" cried the chief.

"I sha'n't shoot you, unless you attempt further violence," answered Jack. "You are beaten, and without weapons. Go!"

"I will return, and the Chippeway warriors shall avenge this insult."

"Oh, get off!" retorted Jack. "You can frighten a helpless girl, but you will not cause me to fear you, or your threats!"

"Hear!" cried the chief, turning to the girl. "You came here to see this dog of a paleface!"

"That's a lie!" cried Jack. "I've had about enough of this! I dealt the Indian a blow in the chest that sent him staggering back. At that moment the savage crouched, as if to spring, and then, with a fiercer look, turned and vanished among the trees.

"You must go, and quickly!" cried the beautiful Indian girl, stepping to Jack's side.

"What, you can speak English too?" said Jack in surprise.

"Yes, and I am very thankful to you, but you are in deadly peril. Black Eagle has gone for his warriors, and will return!"

"But you? Will he not harm you?"

"No. I can seek safety among my own people."

"But you belong to the same tribe?"

"Yes, but I can get protection."

"Why did Black Eagle try to carry you off?"

"He would force me to be his wife."

"But you did not come here to meet him—you expected someone else."

That is so," sighed the girl.  
 Well, cannot he—the one you love—protect you?"  
 No, he is not a Chippeway. What can one do against a whole tribe?  
 go!"  
 Before Jack could reply, the girl darted away.  
 "Reckon I'd better do as the lady says, and get back," muttered Jack.  
 "Hallo!"  
 A spear whizzed past his head, and he had only just time to dart away,  
 half a dozen yelling wretches bounded towards him.  
 Rushing madly along, Jack gained the bank of a river, and jumped  
 right into the water. The river-bank at that point was some five feet high,  
 and the water was shallow. Thus Jack was behind a natural ambuscade,  
 with both his revolvers, could command the open space that would have  
 been crossed before the savages could come to close quarters.  
 "The beggars will be chary of showing themselves," said Jack, as he saw  
 that his weapons were in good order.  
 True enough, the wily savages knew, and they hurled their spears from  
 and the shelter of the trees and bushes.  
 Jack easily avoided their missiles by crouching beneath the bank, and  
 reserved his fire for the rush that was bound to come.  
 Presently the redskins became more daring, and ventured into the open  
 space, and, as still no shots were fired, they charged.  
 When Jack used his revolvers, and three savages fell. The rest drew  
 back, and returned to cover.  
 Taking advantage of the temporary lull in hostilities, Jack refilled his  
 revolvers, and, keeping below the top of the bank, made his way swiftly  
 along the bed of the river.  
 He reached a large tree, whose branches hung low over the water, and he  
 crouched along another branch, that reached over a dense clump of bushes,  
 and dropped noiselessly into the middle of them.  
 He hoped that he had effectually concealed his tracks, and he crouched  
 there, silently congratulating himself.  
 For some time, all was quiet. Then a cry of baffled rage rang out. The  
 redskins had discovered that he had left his station by the river bank.  
 Striving through the dense undergrowth, he could see their dusky forms, as  
 they dashed wildly to and fro.  
 The party crossed the river to search for his tracks, but the main body  
 straggled about, close to the tree.  
 Suddenly he heard a low, guttural exclamation. Two savages were closely  
 examining the branch overhanging the water. Others came running up,  
 and they jabbered eagerly. After a while, a couple of the redskins walked  
 slowly and cautiously round, prodding the bushes with spears; but, luckily,  
 Jack was well in the centre, and, when they tried his hiding-place, the  
 savages failed to reach him.  
 A new discovery came from an unexpected direction. While Jack had been  
 engaged in watching the two savages prowling round, another of the cun-  
 ning wretches had crawled along the branch Jack had dropped from, and  
 promptly threw his spear.  
 The weapon glanced off Jack's shoulder. Seeing that he had missed, the  
 savage leaped clean over the bushes, and rejoined his wildly excited  
 companions.  
 The flights of arrows now tore their way through Jack's retreat, but he lay  
 on the ground, untouched.  
 He retaliated with effect by firing his revolvers; but, although he drove



them back for a time, he knew that he was completely surrounded, and death—or, what was worse, capture and subsequent torture—could no longer be delayed.

Then suddenly all signs of the savages ceased, and he lay for upward of a quarter of an hour speculating, and keenly alert for the move which was expected to come every second.

"That's the dodge, is it?" he murmured, as he caught sight of a flicker of light through the bushes.

The savages had fired the forest!

The choice of two things now remained for Jack—either to remain where he was, and be burnt like a rat in its hole, or to meet equally certain death by dashing out and confronting his foes.

The forest had been fired right facing the river, and the wind, blowing across the water, rapidly drove the flames onward. The heat was unbearable.

"Here goes!" He sprang to his feet, and a couple of rifle-shots were heard. "Thank Heaven!" he murmured, as he realised that his captors had come to his rescue.

Nevertheless, spears and arrows rained around him as he forced his way out.

"Here, this way!" yelled Sam. "Bend low, so that we can get under the cover."

Jack darted from bush to bush, and Sam and Pete poured in a hail of bullets at the yelling, disappointed redskins.

"You were only just in time!" gasped Jack. "How did you get away?"

"We waited some time for your return," answered Sam, "then we fired the traps, and when we reached the last one, of course, we heard your tracks. Let's give those skunks a final volley!"

The three blazed away, and the savages beat a conclusive retreat.

On the way back to the camp Jack related what had happened to the others.

"Funny ting," growled Pete, "how it is dat Jack always has de tures wid pretty ladies in sore distress! Must look into de matter. I am 'bout de fifth damsel dat Jack hab sabled from terrible danger. You nor dis child eber sabe anybody ob de gentler sex!"

"No," replied Sam, with a laugh. "I expect it's because Jack's got de lovely eyes!"

"Or teef!"

"Or hair!"

"Or dose lubly ears! Must be something to do wid him personal appearance. Don't you tink so, Sammy?"

"All right, you beauties!" exclaimed Jack. "The next time across a fair maid in distress I'll send her on to you, Pete!"

"Golly! Nunno!" cried Pete. "Dis child don't want anything to do dose sort ob tings. Can't talk pretty like you!"

"All right; Sam shall have the pleasure, then."

"Not me. Pete and I have quite enough to do to watch over the retorted Sam. "You wouldn't have got nearly cooked alive if it hadn't been for your dark-eyed beauty!"

All the way to the camp Jack was chipped about his leaning for damsels from danger. But he bore it all good-humouredly, for he knew that both Pete and Sam would have risked their lives—as, indeed, he had—to protect the weak from the strong, the innocent from the cruel.

The comrades found their camp untouched, and the slips of deer

to cook slowly by Sam before they started out to look for Jack were done  
turn.

in the middle of supper an angry growl came from the bushes behind  
causing that worthy to spring to his feet. Pete had finished, and  
while the time the hunter's back was turned helped himself to a slice of  
his meal.

"Be shot if I know when it's you or not!" grumbled Sam. "One of  
these days I shall hear a voice or a cry and not take any notice of it!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, as Sam eyed the remnants of his repast.  
"What's de matter, Sammy? Lost anything?"

"You old thief!" declared Sam. "I believe you've been helping your-  
self to my supper! Serves you right if you get nightmare! A chap like  
me ain't safe! As soon as you've done stuffing we'll make things a bit  
square for the night!"

There was not much to do, as Sam had chosen their camping-place with  
a view of repelling an attack from enemies, and three sides of the camp  
were well protected; but as a precautionary measure they decided to make a  
vicade of branches on the unprotected side.

A couple of stakes were driven into the ground, and a serviceable wall  
soon built of branches and saplings, bound together with tough  
kinds of creeper. Pete smoked and passed remarks while this was being  
ried out.

"Not so bad," he declared, when the work was completed. "You'm  
ing on bery nicely, Sammy. Might as well rig up a roof now, den we  
get it be nice and comfortable!"

"You do your own rigging, then!" cried Sam, flinging himself down by  
fire. "Hand over that tobacco-pouch of mine!"

"Golly!" answered Pete, in affected surprise. "Strange how dat 'baccy-  
h got in my pocket! Must hab put it dere by mistake!"

"I know all about your mistakes. Now let's get to sleep!"

Jack and Sam divided the watch between them, and the night passed  
quietly. The following morning, however, they had an early visitor.

"Golly!" whispered Pete. "Here's dat sabled young lady ob Jack's!  
him up, Sammy; p'r'aps she'm come to propose to him!"

The young Indian girl came silently forward.

"I have come to ask help from the young paleface," she said, speaking  
back. "I do not know if you will grant my request; but I have no one  
to go to. Yet if you help me it will be at the risk of your life."

"Neither I nor my comrades will mind that very much," replied Jack,  
with a smile. "What is it you want us to do?"

"One who is dear to me is in danger of his life. He has been captured  
by people, and if you refuse to grant your aid will perish to-night!"

"We will do what we can. Er—what is your name?" exclaimed Sam.

"Thea. Oh, do—do help me!"

There were no tears in Thea's eyes as she spoke, only an expression of  
misery, and her beautifully-formed mouth quivered as she uttered  
the words, while her bosom rose and fell with her deep emotion.

"I promise to do all in my power to save your lover's life," said Jack  
calmly.

A sob shook the young girl's graceful form, and the tears gathered  
under her long, dark lashes, while the rich bronze of her cheeks paled with her  
emotion.

The beautiful girl stepped forward, and, taking Jack's strong hand,  
pressed her lips to it.

"I reckon there'll be two others to help him," said Sam.



"Dat's so, my dear," said Pete. "Dis child am bery nervous begins fighting, den he's all right."

"How brave you all are!" murmured Thea.

"Well, we don't reckon to be particularly brave," said Sam. "I would like to help a defenceless girl. Who is the lucky warrior who won your love, Thea?"

"White Wing."

"Ah, that settles it! White Wing is our friend. He fought for us now we will fight for him. Do you belong to the Chippeways?"

"Yes. He was chief of the Chetwyns, and his people cast him out because of his love for me. Our tribes are deadly enemies, and the Chetwyns would not have an Ojibway maiden for their great bride."

"All I can say is the beggars haven't got such good taste as to marry White Wing!" exclaimed Sam.

"My people have made a raid upon the Chetwyns, and slaughtered their women and children. It is terrible! And they will complete their deeds of blood by putting White Wing to the most horrible death!"

"Have you no father, Thea?" inquired Jack.

"No. He died when I was a little child. My mother is also dead. I am alone, and if White Wing is killed I shall be forced to marry an Eagle, whom I hate. White Wing is a prisoner in the Ojibways' camp. Their encampment is in a dell some miles from here, and he is in one of the huts, which I will show you."

Thea led them through the forest, explaining to them her plan of effecting White Wing's release. As they neared the encampment they proceeded more cautiously, and at last they reached a deep ravine, whose walls were densely covered with bushes, and were so steep that a descent was absolutely impossible.

"There is a way down at the further side," she said; "but it is strictly watched. You would have to make your escape up here. Do you think it possible?"

"Well," exclaimed Sam, glancing down the height, "it would be a very easy task, but it would be as difficult for them to follow. At any rate, they will have a try."

"The question is, how can you escape?" said Jack. "It will not be easy for you to remain here, Thea."

"I can climb this height," she answered. "I have done so often when I was a little girl. You see that hut a little apart from the others, White Wing is there. I shall find means of setting him free; but there will be some savages guarding the hut, and he will need your help to escape."

"What time shall we be there?" inquired Jack.

"Directly you see the large fire lighted. It is that one in the centre of the encampment."

"Very well, Thea!" exclaimed Jack. "You can rely upon us to do our utmost!"

Expressing her gratitude in a few earnest words, the beautiful girl took leave of her friends, who passed the remainder of the day in the forest.

Towards night the heavens grew overcast. As soon as it was dark the comrades proceeded to the ravine, and here they kept watch. They saw several camp-fires blazing, but the great one in the centre had not been lighted.

At last flames shot up from it, and now the three comrades commenced the dangerous descent. A heavy wind was blowing, and this

settling in the bushes which concealed the noise the comrades made. They could see half a dozen savages pacing to and fro in front of the hut, and presently Thea approached the spot. For some moments she remained speaking to the sentries, who allowed her to enter the hut.

"Now's our time, mates!" exclaimed Sam.

"Suppose I give a wolf's growl?" suggested Pete.

"I doubt if you would deceive a savage."

"Golly! But I make him come from anoder direction. Hark at dis!"

The savages were evidently deceived by the sound, for two of their number strode towards the bottom of the ravine.

"Don't fire if you can help it!" cried Sam. "Come on!"

Down the height they leapt. Pete reached the bottom first. One of the savages hurled a spear at him, and it grazed his shoulder. The next moment he was in their midst, and the savage fell beneath a blow from Pete's axe.

Jack and Sam sprang to his side, and as they fought White Wing darted into the hut.

The savages uttered their war-cry. A hundred fierce warriors came sweeping across the ravine. With the agility of a young fawn, Thea darted

also the steep side of the ravine. She knew the others would follow her, and she had no intention of hindering their flight, for the savages were upon them.

As a hundred spears rushed into the bushes; but those weapons were hurled in random. The night was too dark for the redskins to see their foes, who were dragging themselves up by the bushes.

At that moment, Pete uttered some cries which seemed to come from a distant part of the ravine, and this confused the pursuers, who were yelling too loudly to hear the rustling amongst the bushes.

At incredible speed Thea ascended, and she gained the summit ere the pursuers had time to reach the spot by the ordinary exit from the dell.

Although many of them had taken that course. The rest of the fugitives stood beside her, and now the little party fled into the forest, trusting to the falling snow and the darkness to conceal their trail from their pursuers.

"We need run no further," said White Wing at last. "I owe more to my life to you, my white friends."

"Hie, golly, what about dis child? Call him white?"

"No," answered White Wing, placing his hand upon Pete's shoulder; "but you are as true a friend. You have saved Thea from worse than death, and I am very grateful. Words are light, but if the need arises I will me to strike a blow for my friends, such blow will be heavy. But let us hurry on, for our foes cannot be far behind."

Through the night they continued their journey, and just as day was breaking they came in sight of a large camp-fire.

White Wing stood watching it for some moments in silence, then a scout emerged from the bushes and stood before the young chief with lowered head.

"Will the great chief and his friends advance?" he inquired in English. "No harm shall come to them."

White Wing strode boldly forward, and stood gazing round the encampment.

The aged warrior stepped forward. He, too, spoke in English, evidently wishing that Jack and his comrades should understand.

The great chief's future bride is very welcome to his people. White Wing is noble-hearted, and can forgive the past. The Chetwyns did not



like their chief to marry a daughter of their foes. Now that is changed. One of our prisoners has confessed that Thea was stolen from our people when a little child. Now we are on the warpath against the Ojibways, and we beg of White Wing to forgive the past, and once more be our chief.

Then White Wing spoke in his native dialect, and it was evident, from the murmur of applause, that he acceded to their request.

"We are going to avenge our wrongs," he said, turning to Jack and his comrades.

"I reckon we'll strike a blow for you!" exclaimed Sam.

"They have slain many of our women and children, and the time of vengeance has arrived."

He raised his hand, and for some moments there was a breathless silence. Then he uttered his terrible war-cry. Every warrior repeated it until the forest echoed with the fierce voices.

That cry was answered by another equally as furious. The Chippewas had followed on their trail, and now charged at their foes.

In an instant every warrior was engaged in a deadly conflict. The clash of tomahawks mingled with the shrieks of wounded men. The Chetwyns were outnumbered, and at the first surprise were forced back. But White Wing quickly rallied them, and, dashing into the enemies' midst, mowed them down with furious blows.

Meanwhile Sam and his comrades poured in a steady fire, both with their rifles and revolvers.

For a moment there was a slight lull in the uproar, then White Wing's voice rang out, and, in response to his command, his warriors hurled themselves upon their foes, who were beaten back by the furious rush.

Before they could rally, the Chetwyns dashed into their midst once more, and they scattered in all directions as the gleaming tomahawks dealt death amongst their ranks.

And now White Wing's warriors chased the fleeing enemy through the pine forest. The lives of the slaughtered women and children were thereby avenged that day. Amongst the slain lay Black Eagle, the Chippewas' chief.

The comrades went to the Chetwyns' encampment, where they remained until Thea and White Wing were made man and wife according to the redskin's marital rites; then, having bid their friends farewell, they proceeded towards the shanty, as, although they had left their horses and provided with food and water for several days, they were rather anxious concerning their safety.

However, they found everything as they had left it.

#### CHAPTER 11.

**Getting a Move on Pete—The Borders of the Yukon—Attacked by Wolves—A Change of Plans—At the Mercy of the Torrent.**

"LOOK here," whispered Sam to Jack the next morning, "we had better get a move on us, or Pete will be making tracks for Skaguay, and then we shall have our work cut out to keep him from returning to San Francisco. We had better strike off towards the north and make for Dawson City."

"Right-ho!" replied Jack. "Here, Pete, are you ready to start?"

"Ready to what?" gasped Pete.

"Ready to make a move. It's no good sticking here," answered Jack.

"Let's go to—"

"Skaguay!" yelled Pete.

"No, you don't!" retorted Sam. "You're not going back there; at least not just yet."

"But dis child wants to settle wid de agent who sold you dis place."  
 "Never mind about him, mate. We will give him a call later on in the season."

After some considerable difficulty they persuaded Pete to consent to make for Dawson, and preparations for the journey were rushed forward by Jack and Sam.

"Don't want to give him a chance to change his mind," growled Sam. The three mounted on horseback, passed safely through the region occupied by the savages, and a week later struck one of the tributaries of the Yukon.

"This is where we take to the water," said Sam, as they drew rein close to the bank.

"Golly! Hab we got to swim?" cried Pete.

"No, stupid! We are going to build a raft. We sha'n't want these horses any more, so we'll turn them loose."

Before nightfall a fairly large and strong raft had been constructed, and was safely launched and moored at the water's edge.

"We'll have to put off starting till the morning, so eat as much as you can, mates."

"I'm dat cold," mumbled Pete after supper, "dat I believe dat if I was to sit on an ice-cream I should freeze it hard. Golly! Tink dat I shall hab to sit in de middle ob de fire. What's dat? Am it you yowling, Sammy?"

"No," muttered Sam, "it's not; and if I'm not greatly mistaken, it's a mighty hungry pack of wolves making tracks for us as fast as they can. Listen! The howling is getting nearer. Those brutes travel like the wind when they're driven by hunger."

Jack rapidly gathered a huge armful of fuel and flung it on their camp-fire.

"That will serve to keep them off for a while. Come on, Pete; get that gun of yours ready, unless you want to be chewed up into little bits."

"Poor old Jack!" said Pete, as he got closer to the now blazing fire. "He'm getting nervous in his old age. Anybody would tink dis was de first time ob his existence dat he'm heard de playful call ob hungry wolves. Hand ober dat baccy-pouch, Sammy; p'r'aps dat baccy ob yours will make dose wolves sneeze derè nappers off."

Still the howling of those wolves grew nearer, and Pete puffed away contentedly.

Jack and Sam carefully loaded their repeating-rifles, and presently Sam chuckled as he saw Pete loosen his axe and run his thumb carefully along its edge.

"That black beauty is getting ready at last," he whispered to Jack. "Don't take any notice of him."

Jack nodded, and flung some more pine-needles on the fire, which now blazed up and cast a crimson glow over a considerable expanse of the gleaming snow.

Short, sharp yelps had now succeeded the long howls, and the pattering sound of many feet told the comrades that the pack were now close at hand.

Sam's keen eye caught sight of a shadowy, slinking form beyond the range of the circle of light. In an instant he brought his rifle to his shoulder, and the sharp report was followed by a deafening chorus of fierce yelps and growls, as the rest of the pack flung themselves upon the wolf Sam's sure aim had brought to earth.

An awful growl at Sam's back caused him to swing round.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, springing to his feet. "S'pose I must



leab dis nice comfy fire. Golly, what a lot ob larsing dere am 'bout dis country!"

"Well, I'm blest!" gasped Sam, as the laughter appeared to come from every side, now near, now from far away.

A gaunt, grey wolf leaped into the circle of light, and uttered a dismal long-drawn howl, which gradually changed to a human voice. The snarling brute stealthily approached, and as it drew nearer seemed to be addressing Sam.

"Fool!" came a snarling voice. "I will rend you to atoms. Ha, ha, that's not a bad shot!"

These words were uttered as Sam's rifle flashed, and the wolf rolled over the rest of the pack darted forward.

"Now, Pete, stop fooling!" yelled Sam. "We've got all we can do now to keep these brutes back. Besides, the fire is dying down. Now, then aim straight, boys!"

Jack and Sam fired repeatedly, and Pete emptied his revolvers into the writhing, struggling pack of savage brutes.

For some few minutes this deadly, devastating fire had its effect, and the drove the pack back into the darkness. But it was not long before they came on again, in what seemed to be an ever-increasing numbers.

The three fired their last shots, and then, back to back, kept the enemy at bay with their axes, hewing, slashing, until a low rampart was formed of brown and grey shaggy bodies.

But still the savage brutes came on, and death in its most horrid form threatened the comrades.

The terrible, inevitable conclusion formed itself in their minds. Each knew that they could not hold out against such unequal odds for much longer. Pete was fighting with undiminished vigour.

"Dis am a silly way ob going on," he murmured. "Dis am de rou where we all get snuffed out. Must do someting. Here, come on, you brutes, hab a bit ob dis child's axe!"

The snarling animals went down before Pete's axe like blades of grass. Those sweeping blows were irresistible. His huge axe was but a feather in his grasp, and as he swept it from right to left panic seized and got the better of the brutes.

Still, however, Pete did not diminish his furious attack, but fought on without cessation, darting here, there, everywhere after them, until he was distanced by the fear-stricken brutes. He followed them for some distance shouting at the top of his voice.

"Come back, you brutes—come back!"

"Come back, come back!" roared Jack and Sam.

Luckily Pete heard his comrades' voices, and pulled up.

"S'pose dat am de best ting to do," he muttered breathlessly.

"You silly coon!" cried Sam. "What did you want to do that for? You surely don't want to be chewed up just yet, do you?"

"Nunno! Feel more like chewing a chunk ob rump-steak dan making de mistake ob providing supper for dose wolveses."

"You've had one supper already, mate," exclaimed Sam. "The best thing we can do is to chance it and get away from here on the raft."

This was agreed to, although Pete grumbled at leaving the camp-fire.

"Hold tight, there!" roared Sammy. "Ready?"

"Golly! Yes, we'm more dan ready—we'm 'bout frizzled up wid de cold," mumbled Pete, with his fingers stuffed into his mouth.

"Well, hang on, then!" cried Sam, as he prepared to push off into the roaring, swirling torrent.

"Wait a tick, Sammy; must unfreeze dis little finger first. Tink de temperament ob de first joint am a bit above or below de temperature ob de aberage cold chicken. Can't hab fowl tings ob dat kind. Just back-pedal two-free minutes while I lights a fire for de unfreezing ob de first joint ob dis joint's little finger ob de right hand. Golly! Woorhoop! Stop de cab, Sammy! Dat you, Jack?"

"Get up, you silly coon!" gasped Jack, who had received Pete full in the chest. "Get—off—my— Ugh!"

With a single bound Pete sprang to his feet, and notwithstanding the pitching, twisting motion of the raft, leaped across towards Sam, and grabbing a heavy pole, prepared to meet the danger that now threatened them.

While Pete had been joking about his frozen little finger, Sam had pushed off, and it was the shock of the raging torrent of water against the raft that had sent him flying on to Jack.

Now it had become a question of real danger.

The raft was being carried like a straw on the deep, swirling waters straight towards a rock jutting up in the middle of the narrow waterway between the borders of ice.

It loomed grim and threatening in the dim light, not more than fifty or sixty yards away, and the black waters parted and dashed and roared to left and right.

"Which side am we going to take, Sammy?" muttered Pete, as he grasped his pole and planted his feet firmly and wide apart.

"The left!"

"Right!"

"No, the left!" cried Sam.

"Right!" yelled Pete.

There was no time for Sam to question whether his comrade understood that they were to guide their raft to the left or right; so, without turning his head, he plunged his pole into the water, and using a crevice between the logs as a rowlock, worked the beam of wood frantically as an oar.

Jack had equipped himself likewise, and had stationed himself at the near end of their frail craft.

Each knew that should the raft collide with a rock it would be smashed to matchwood, and death would inevitably follow, for it would be impossible for the strongest swimmer to fight the current, even if he did not succumb to the icy cold.

Pete did not plunge his pole into the water, but stood firmly planted in the centre of the raft, holding the twenty-foot pole, something like a gigantic bayonet.

Jack and Sam worked for their lives, and their efforts had a perceptible influence on the raft, for it veered towards the left.

But the two set their teeth with the grim determination with which brave men prepare to face death. For now it became obvious that the raft would not clear the rock!

Another five yards—four, three, and then—crash!

"Move 'long, dere!"

Like a battering-ram, Pete had dashed forward. His pole, and not the raft, had caught the rock, and fending it off, the raft was shot into the middle of the current, and before the comrades had time to draw breath, they were flashing swiftly by in comparative safety in the united streams of water below and beyond the obstruction.

"How's dat for a bullseye?" yelled Pete, flinging down the splintered pole. "Dat was one in the eye for the sentinel ob the riber!"



"It was, mate," replied Sam gravely. "I reckon you just saved our——"  
 "Golly! Dat will do, Sammy. We'm not going to talk about sabin, or anything ob that kind. Must hab a smoke now. P'r'aps dat will keep just de end ob my smeller at a respectable temperature."

Sam glanced over at Jack, and nodded. They knew that now all danger was over for the time, Pete would refuse to enter into any serious conversation. So all three lighted their pipes, and Sam steered by means of his pole.

The three were silent for a while, and Pete was contentedly puffing away and sending on the frozen air huge clouds of smoke.

Presently the raft swept through a canyon, and the dim outlines of the surrounding land were hidden from their view by towering rocks, that echoed the roar of the torrent.

"Look at that silly chunk of blacking!" yelled Sam.

Jack understood Sam's gestures, rather than from his comrade's words, for his voice was drowned by the roaring of the waves.

"He'll be over in a minute!" replied Jack, grabbing hold of Pete's leg and lugging him to the centre of the raft.

Pete had calmly dozed off, and his comrades would have been well aware of this fact had not his snores been silenced by the thunder of the waters. It takes a good deal to overcome Pete's gentle slumber, but this time he was certainly outdone.

"What's de matter?" he grumbled, in a sleepy voice. "You'm not to pull my leg like dat!"

"You'll fall in the water if you don't look out!" bawled Sam. "Come on, now! We've quite enough to do without keeping watch over sleepy niggers!"

"You'm bery excited, Sammy!" roared Pete. "Golly! Ten thousand gollies! Where am dat pipe? Stop de car, Sammy. Must have dropped it oberboard!"

"All right!" shouted Sam. "I reckon you'd better walk back and get it. I dare say you'll find it at the bottom of the river about a mile or so back."

Pete gazed solemnly at Sam, and fumbled in his pockets with an air of sadness.

"Hab you such a thing as a pipe to spare?" he inquired, after an apparently futile search.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sam. "I've got—at least——" he added doubtfully, as he shifted one hand from the steering-pole and felt in his pocket.

"Scissors! I've lost it!"

"He, he, he!" mimicked Pete, bringing a pipe out. "Dat your pipe, Sammy?"

"No, of course it's not!"

"Well, den——"

"Well?"

"Yah, yah, yah!"

"What's the silly owl laughing at?" exclaimed Sam.

"Oh, golly, dis am de funniest ting ob all! Dis pipe am not yours, and you'm not got yours. Well, den, dat pipe dat fell out ob dis child's mouf 'bout two-free miles, six yards, and seven inches back am de property of Sammy Grant. Sammy, get out and walk back. But leabe dat baccy-pouch wid us, 'cos it might get wet."

"You—you rascal!" gasped Sam. "You mean to say you've been and lost my pipe?"

"Nunno!"

"What do you mean by 'nunno'? I reckon that's carrying a joke too far!" he growled.

"Golly! Ain't carrying anyting, Sammy. Now, let's hold a sort ob inquiry into de matter."

"All the inquiry in the world won't bring that pipe back!"

"Now, don't you be so mighty impestious, Sammy! Do you remember what sort ob pipe it was? Can you bring a witness to swear to de identity ob dat pipe?"

"Oh, chuck it!"

"Nunno, Sammy; dis matter hab got to be properly investigated. Jack."

"Yes."

"What's dat?"

"A pipe—Sam's, or I'm mighty mistaken!"

"Here, chuck it over!" roared Sam, who could not leave his position of steersman.

"Catch, den!"

Pete tossed the beloved briar in Sam's direction, and that worthy caught it deftly, despite the rocking of the raft.

"You'm too mighty impulsive for a young man ob your social position in life!" observed Pete severely.

"But you said that you'd dropped it overboard!" exclaimed Jack.

"Dat was a dream. Dat pipe flew out ob Sammy's pocket when we charged de rock, and tinkin dat he might want it some time or oder, dis child put it in him pocket. See?"

"I see a silly nigger sitting in a pool of water!" retorted Jack.

"Golly!" yelled Pete, scrambling to his feet. "Why didn't you tell me before? Here, what's all dat noise? Should tink dere's two-free claps ob tunder rolled into one habing a bit ob disagreeablement ober someting or oder!"

"I reckon that's nothing more nor less than a mighty big waterfall!" roared Sam, casting an anxious glance ahead.

A thin mist had now descended over the river, and to the discomfort of the cold, raw wind was added the terrible disadvantage of travelling over perilous ways in utter darkness.

But, as danger increased, Pete laughed and joked the more, and occupied his time in tightening the ropes binding the logs of the raft; and when morning came they were still being swept on by the swift current of water.

"We shall reach Dawson pretty soon at this rate," said Sam. "This is faster travelling than we could ever have made by land."

Some few days later, towards nightfall, they grounded their craft on the edge of a vast forest.

"Reckon we're not so far from Dawson now," said Sam.

"Golly!" cried Pete, as they passed beneath the huge trees. "Should tink dis am above a bit bigger dan Hyde Park. What?"

"Just a little!" laughed Sam. "I reckon you could get a few hundred Hyde Parks out of this forest, and they wouldn't be missed! But there's not much resemblance. You don't get trees like this in London."

"You'm wrong dere, Sammy," answered Pete.

"How do you mean?"

"Bout de resemblance."

"Get away with you!"

"Golly! Dis child am not getting away; might get lost. But let's stick to de point ob discussion. Tink you could hide in dis place?"

"Yes, of course, if I was as silly as you are!" retorted Sam.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Den de argument am proved up to de hilt!"



"I don't see that at all. What's the silly chump trying to get at, Jack?"

"You!"

"Dunno; but you'm hit de insect on de napper first go!" cried Pete. "You go and play bo-peep wid yourself, Sammy, behind dat tree, den dis will be Hyde Park—H—i—d—e Park. Yah, yah, yah! Got you dat time, Sammy! You'm a bery cleber old hoss, but you'm not in de same street as dis gentleman ob colour!"

#### CHAPTER 12.

#### A Strange Cry, and a Stranger Explanation—Held Up!—Pete's Persuasion—Sam Recognises An Old Enemy.

PETE calmly seated himself on a soft, mossy bank, and filled his pipe. "Nunno, you an' Jack get de sticks, Sammy. Dere's a menial sort ob suggestion 'bout being sent to pick up sticks. 'Sides, dis child am tired. Tell you what, dough. You collect de fuel, an' dis poor, hardworked nigger will start de confargashun."

"Scissors!" exclaimed Sam. "I reckon that 'cistern' of yours, for remembering words, won't hold water! I suppose you mean conflagration?"

"Neber mind two-free extra letters frown in, Sammy," mumbled Pete, in a sleepy voice; "get dose—groo—ach!"

"The lazy old beggar's only pretending," said Jack; "but it's all the same, for wild horses won't move him, now he's made up his mind. But he wants a rest. Let's set to, and——"

Jack's prophecy was proved to be wrong, for a long-drawn wail of agony echoed through the silent depths of the forest, and Pete sprang to his feet, with anything but an air of sleepiness about him.

The three comrades stared about them in amazement, not unmingled with a feeling of impending danger.

"That wasn't any of your ventriloquial tricks, was it?" whispered Sam, after a while.

"Nunno."

"Let's wait here a moment," muttered Jack. "Perhaps we shall hear it again, and be able to discover the direction from whence it comes."

Sure enough, after a short silence, during which the comrades stood motionless, but ready, that awful cry was repeated.

Simultaneously, they dashed through the undergrowth. Clearly, the human being was in terrible danger, or pain.

"Come on, boys!" yelled Sam, as they dashed and forced their way deeper and further into the forest.

"Ah!"

Suddenly they found themselves in a small, natural glade, and the scene that met their eyes brought an involuntary cry of horror from Jack's lips.

Three—four figures were visible in the gloom, and, as they sprang aside, there came a gleam of white flesh. A figure, bare to the waist, was bound to a tree, and the cause of that fearful cry was revealed.

Standing close by was a man with a dog-team whip. A low growl of rage and fierce indignation came from Pete, and, as that whip was raised again, to inflict further torture, he flung himself forward, and literally bore the man to the ground.

At the same instant, Jack and Sam levelled their rifles, and covered the other men.

"Reckon this is where you put 'em up!" rapped out Sam sternly. "Up with 'em, and keep them up, or——"

Meanwhile, Pete had his man fairly pinned to the ground, face downwards.

"Take their weapons, Jack!" cried Sam; and, while he kept the ruffians covered with his repeating-rifle, Jack quickly relieved them of their revolvers and knives.

Now the moon rose over the tops of the trees, and faintly illumined the strange scene, so that the comrades could see the faces of the cowardly miscreants.

The three disarmed men, standing sulkily together, eyeing the steady barrel of Sam's rifle, were evidently rough, uncouth ruffians, of the lowest type—dregs of the outcasts, who, failing to find the gold they had come to seek, wander over the land to pillage and steal what they are too lazy to work for.

"Pretty looking beauties!" muttered Sam. "Let's have a look at your little lot, Pete!"

As Pete was seated on his prisoner's back, it was not easy to see the man's face; but, at Sam's words, the prostrate man struggled fiercely, and contrived to turn his scowling face.

"Same style ob beauty, Sammy," cried Pete; "only two-free times more so!"

Sam started as he looked at the man.

"Paralysing!" he answered; "but let's cut that other chap free!"

Jack cut the rope, which was wound several times round the man and tree, and the body slid helpless and inert to the ground.

"Brutes!" growled Sam.

"Golly!" cried Pete, springing to his feet. "Must spoil some ob dese chap's beauty for dis!"

Heedless of the man he had been sitting on, Pete lashed out right and left at the others.

"Don't fire, Sammy!" he cried. "Dis little lot will hurt more dan a kullet!"

Pete knocked the three ruffians down, and, as fast as they came up, down they went again, until they lay where they had fallen.

During the conflict, the fourth man had slipped away. But he had left the whip, and his three companions had good cause to regret that he had been so forgetful.

Powerless to resist, they were lashed to their feet, and Pete flogged them till they howled for mercy.

"Tink dat will do, Sammy?" he inquired at last. "Am you ready to shoot dem now?"

"Yes," replied Sam. "Release them, and let them run for it. It's not likely that I shall miss my aim, though!" he added grimly.

The three wretched, terrified men darted away, and three howls of terror followed the successive reports from Sam's rifle.

Of course, he had no intention of shooting them, but that was not to be known by the cowardly assailants of the man lying senseless at Jack's feet; and long after they had disappeared from sight Sam's keen ears could hear the sounds of their flight as they plunged headlong through the forest.

Jack now raised the stranger's head, and forced water between his teeth. Slowly the man came back to consciousness, and presently struggled to his feet. He was evidently in a very weak state, and it was some moments before he could speak.

"Friends," he whispered at last, "I owe you my life. You have saved me



from a terrible fate. Those men would have tortured me to death. I was the means of stopping them from stealing a few ounces of dust and nuggets from a pal of mine in Dawson, and they followed me out here, and set upon me unawares. It was the tightness of the rope that caused me to lose consciousness, rather than the pain."

"Should tink dat was quite 'nuff," said Pete. "Golly! I've a good mind to go after dose fellows again, an' gib dem anoder thrashing!"

The stranger held out his hand to Pete.

"I wish I could have seen you finish them off," he said gratefully. "By the way, my name is Harris—Bert Harris."

"And ours is Jack, Sam and Pete," said Sam. "This is Jack, and this grinning black beauty is Pete. Now I reckon we know one another, and the next thing is supper."

"Are we far from Dawson?" inquired Sam, as they sat round the camp-fire chatting.

"No," replied Harris; "only ten or twelve miles."

"What did you come out here for alone?" inquired Jack.

"Prospecting."

"Reckon you'd better come back to Dawson with us," drawled Sam.

"Sure, mate, I'll be glad. I've had about enough of this country," replied Harris.

A few minutes later, the four made themselves comfortable for the night.

"Good-night all," said Sam. "Dawson in the morning."

As soon as Pete and Harris were asleep, Sam nudged Jack, who was next to him, with his elbow.

"What's the matter?"

"Sh!" murmured Sam. "Do you know who that chap was with the whip?"

"No."

"Jake! It's a mighty good job Pete did not see his face, or he would have half killed him!"

"You're right," answered Jack. "I hope we don't meet the brute in Dawson, or there'll be trouble! Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

About seven o'clock the following morning, the four entered Dawson City, and Harris bade them a grateful farewell at the door of an inn, where the comrades intended to breakfast.

"I'm going to rejoin my pal," he said, as he shook hands. "But I hope I shall meet you again when I can repay you the service you have rendered me."

Harris did meet the comrades again, but in a different part of the world, and the account of how he repaid his debt will be told in the future. For the present, he passes out of this story.

After a hearty meal that made the innkeeper pale with dread for his profit until Sam settled his extortionate bill, the three sauntered slowly down Dawson's main street. This thoroughfare could hardly be compared with Piccadilly, or, for that matter, with the dirtiest country road in England, for—barring the side-walk, which was composed of rough-hewn logs—the whole centre of the road was a mass of liquid mud.

In parts, the depth of this slimy mass was sufficient to reach to the hubs of the carts that now and again had to plough their way through, and the chief care of pedestrians was to see that they did not slip from the side-walk into the veritable lake of mud.

A big, burly man came swaggering along in an opposite direction, and, although Jack and Sam stepped aside to let him pass, he chose to plant himself in front of Pete, and glare at him in silence for a moment, as if he expected that worthy to touch his hat and vanish.

Needless to say this did not come off exactly as the great man expected, and, while he glared and worked himself into a passion, Pete calmly returned his gaze and filled his pipe.

"Got a match, old hoss? Nice morning for de time ob year!"

"Out—out of my way, fellow!" spluttered the gigantic stranger. "How dare you obstruct my passage?"

"Golly, old hoss!" said Pete, in a diffident voice. "Bery sorry, Mister Man, but dis child am rader struck wid de view ob de place from dis point ob view, but dere's plenty ob passage-way to de left or to de right!"

"Do you know who I am, fellow?" roared the big man.

"Nunno!" replied Pete, lighting his pipe, but keeping a watchful eye on the stranger at the same time.

"You don't!"

"Nunno!"

"Well, take that; and the next time you will be more careful——"

"Funny ting, dat!" murmured Pete, glancing round at the crowd, and giving a quiet wink to Jack and Sam. "Funny ting, tought dere was a funny man standing on dis bery spot two-free minutes ago. Now he's gone—vamoosed!"

The surrounding crowd of miners roared with joy, for the bully who had tackled Pete was no favourite, and the blow that he had aimed at Pete with the words "Take that!" had not been accepted; instead, he had received one of Pete's specials in the chest that had sent him reeling into the mud, where he was now floundering and swearing.

"My dear old hoss," cried Pete, pretending that he had become suddenly aware of his late antagonist's position, "am you trying a special cure for pains in de back or swollen napper?"

The big man was a sorry spectacle, and he hooted with rage; but the sympathies of the crowd were with Pete, and the bully's ravings were rendered inaudible by the roars of laughter from the crowd.

"Ef I was you, mate," said one of the bystanders, "I should jest let thet cuss get out of it himself; he deserved all he got!"

"That so, mate?" returned Pete. "Well, I'm inclined to agree wid you. Come 'long, boys; let's continue our little walk!"

Jack, Sam, and Pete strolled off, followed by the wild threats of the infuriated man, who was vainly struggling to escape from the deep expanse of sticky mud.

#### CHAPTER 13.

##### The Comedian (?) Tries to Take a Rise Out of Pete.

PRESENTLY Pete stopped in front of a wooden building. A huge board displayed the following announcements:

"THREE SHOWS A DAY—

MORNING, NOON and NIGHT!

THE ELDORADO COMBINATION HALL of ENTERTAINMENT.  
WALK IN!"

"Come 'long, boys!" exclaimed Pete.

"Come along, where?" asked Jack. "We don't want to go in there."

"Yes, we do," replied Pete. "Now, come along, boys."



A roar of applause burst forth as Jack and Sam followed Pete into the closely-packed building.

"Hi! You come back!" roared an angry voice.

"What's de matter, old hoss?" inquired Pete, as a small, dark-complexioned man caught hold of his arm.

"You have not pay!" spluttered the man, waving his arms frantically.

"You no pay, you no see zis entertainment!"

"Wonder what country this customer hails from?" muttered Sam.

"Looks to me like a cross between a Portuguese and a barn-door!"

The doorkeeper turned to Sam and held out his hand.

"You pay or you go out!" he said angrily.

"Dat's all right, old hoss!" interrupted Pete. "How much is it? If you had stopped at de door you would have had your money."

"Tree dollars."

Pete pulled out a handful of gold, and handed the man a sovereign.

The doorkeeper's eyes sparkled as he caught the gleam of gold; but, nevertheless, although he was visibly impressed, he placed the coin between his teeth and bit it energetically.

"Tink dat's a bad one?" asked Pete.

"No, 'tis goot; an' if you vill come dis way, I vill show you to seats where you can view de entertainment in comfort."

With great ceremony he ushered the comrades to the front seats.

"I vill bring you de change."

And with that the doorkeeper vanished.

"Reckon you will have to whistle for your money," said Sam, as they seated themselves on the rough wooden bench forming the "stalls."

"Golly! How much change ought there to be, Sammy?"

"Two Mexican dollars."

"Tink I ought to whistle for it now or presently?" asked Pete.

"Reckon it won't matter much whether you do it now or later on; you won't find that man in a hurry!"

Pete half rose from his seat, intending to get on the track of his dollars; but the entry of a strange-looking object attracted his attention.

The comedian—for such he appeared to be—advanced to the edge of the platform and commenced to sing some ditty.

The words of the song were indistinguishable, but the audience seemed to enjoy it, and applauded vigorously.

"Now, will any gentleman kindly step up here," shouted the entertainer, at the conclusion of his song, "as I have a few tricks to show you? Will you oblige, sir? No! You?"

He bent his paint-bedaubed face towards Pete.

"Certainly, sah!"

Several of the audience burst out laughing, as Pete slowly mounted the platform steps. They knew their man of old, and looked forward to seeing him take a rise out of Pete.

"I want you to assist me in the carrying out of a few conjuring tricks. Kindly be seated."

"On dat chair?"

"On that chair."

"Tink it am quite safe?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, must put it to test. Nunno! Don't you run away, little man. Come 'long!"

The audience shrieked with laughter, for most of them were aware that the chair had a very sharp and pointed tintack hidden in the seat, and it was the conjuror's gentle mode of humour to persuade some simpleton from the audience to sit upon it.

This time the laughter was not at the usual victim, for Pete had the conjuror by the elbows, and, raising him from the ground, plunged him into the chair.

The man did not stop there an instant, but leaped in the air with a yell that delighted the crowd.

"Don't tink dat chair am bery comfy—am it, old hoss?" inquired Pete gravely.

"You stupid black!" yelled the man, hopping about the stage like a cat on hot bricks. "Get off the stage; you are a fool!"

"Not such a fool as you think," came a voice from the back of the hall.

The entertainer glared in the direction from which the voice had come. He had thought that it was really one of the audience who had shouted; but, needless to say, it was Pete.

Shouts of derision now filled the air, and the man realised that, unless he could gain the laugh on his side, he would not continue long to perform at the Eldorado show.

"See here," he yelled, "I will give this man"—pointing to Pete—"five dollars if he can blow this tube harder than I can!"

He handed a hollow tube six inches long to Pete, who examined it with a very innocent expression on his face.

"How'm we to know who blows de hardest?" he inquired.

"That's a whistle," rapped out the entertainer, "and the audience shall judge who blows the loudest."

"Do you tink dat you hab more wind dan dis child?" said Pete, to the delight of the audience, who roared again with laughter as he drew himself to the full extent of his magnificent height, and gazed down at the small man by his side.

"Never you mind about that. Will you accept? See, I will hand the money to this gentleman to hold!"

"Golly, dat's Sammy!" exclaimed Pete. "S'p'ose he runs off wid de stakes?"

"Oh, I will trust him!" said the man magnanimously. "Will you accept my challenge?"

"Who'm to blow de first blast?" inquired Pete.

"You!"

"Nunno!"

"Very well, then, I will."

Now, this whistle was a fake article, and the entertainer was quite willing to forfeit his five dollars if only he could take a rise out of Pete.

But while that worthy had held the whistle in his hands he had not been idle.

In appearance it was exactly alike at both ends; but Pete's keen eye had noticed a small mark at one end, and had, unnoticed, removed it, and placed it at the other end.

The performer took the whistle, and, with a casual glance at the mark, placed the end in his mouth.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, above the yells and screams of the crowd. "Yow'm de funniest old hoss ob a monkeybrand dat hab eber been seen!"



The furious performer was covered with a mixture of soot and flour, specially placed there for the benefit of his victim; but changing the mark had done the trick, and the crowd howled and rocked in their seats, as the furious man hooted and raved, and rubbed the blinding mess into the grease-paint on his face.

The more he raved the more they laughed.

"Tink de gentleman hab got de spike again!" shouted Pete.

At this sally the laughter redoubled, and the furious entertainer darted through the door at the back of the platform.

The audience howled for his return, but that entertainer had had enough. Pete jumped down from the platform, and rejoined his comrades.

The hall was now in a riot. The audience was only too pleased of the chance of creating a row.

"We'll get out of this," muttered Sam. "Come along, Pete; never mind about your change!"

The three, after some difficulty, emerged once more into the street, and spent the remainder of the day in inspecting the city. In the evening they returned to their inn.

"I was just tinkin', boys, 'bout dis Dawson City," observed Pete, shaking his head, as they entered and sat down. "Dis inn is comfortable, and de food ain't de worst I hab eber tasted; all de same, it seems dere's a deal ob sameness 'bout de place."

"I reckon there is sameness in every place when you have stopped there long enough to discover that fact," answered Sam.

"Dat's just it, Sammy. Seems to me dat if we stay for de rest ob our natural lives we sha'n't be able to discover any more sameeness; so how would it be to go to some place where we shall be able to discover some different sameness? What do you tink 'bout it, Jack?"

"Why, I am ready to start to-morrow morning," answered Jack. "I would like to get into the wilds again, where we can have a bit of excitement in keeping ourselves warm."

"Eh? Don't you tink it would be better to go to some place where we could get de excitement aforesaid in keeping ourselves cool?"

"We should have a difficulty in finding it up here. But the cold won't hurt you; in fact, it is healthy. We want to spend a little time before returning to San Francisco, and we know that Rory is all right. We might do a little hunting in Alaska; at any rate, I'm tired of the place, and as you two appear to be in the same state of mind, why, let us go on, by all means."

"Den we will consider dat arrangement definitely settled. Now, de next ting for me to do is to——"

Pete never told them what the next thing was that he was going to do. He simply did it by pitching head over heels, while a man dropped on the top of him, and another man who had pitched him through the doorway stood there, vowing that he would break every bone in the fallen man's body.

"Well, I ain't got anything to say concerning dat," exclaimed Pete, sitting up and gazing at the man in the doorway. "Golly, it's Jake! Got ober dat knockout yet, old hoss?"

"That was an accident, and I'll thundering quick show you what my nature is like, if I have any more of your lip. If a man knocks over my drink, I'll knock him over, unless he fills it again."

"See here!" cried the fallen man, picking himself up. "You are a bigger man than me, and it was an accident, but——"

"Why, it is Bob!" exclaimed Pete. "I tink we met you in dat store in Skaguay?"

"Right!" growled Bob. "But this 'ere treatment ain't right, by long chalks, and, what's more, I'm not going to stand it. I could no more help knocking over his drink than I could help not filling his glass, seeing that I hadn't got a cent. on me. And mind you this, the hulking, great beast picked me up without the slightest warning, and flung me across the room. If you call that 'ere fair fighting, I don't."

"Nunno, Bob, dat ain't fair fighting at all; but I dare say we can manage to show Jake what fair fighting is."

"You are going to show me?" roared Jake. "I'm not known at this place, else you wouldn't have passed a remark like that, you silly chunk of black stuff."

"Now, see here, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You'm a fine man, dough I must say you'm got de face ob a blackguard; still, you may be all right; but what I want to point out to you is dat dere's no necessity for you to lose your temper. Seems to me I'm de properest party to do dat, and it is a ting I ain't going to do, 'cos I know your object was not to hurt me."

"I didn't care a hang whether I hurt you or not," roared Jake; "but I do care now, 'cos you are either going down on your nigger's knees to beg my pardon for insulting your superiors, or I'm going to give you the worst hiding that you've ever had in your nigger's life. And if that other chap don't fill my tankard agin, I'll pay him fust."

"De man seems to be going to do a good bit, one way and anoder," observed Pete. "But see here, Jake. Suppose your tankard is filled, dat will finish de matter, from your point ob view, so far as Bob is concerned; den all you will hab to do is to gib me dat hiding, or I shall hab to go down on my knees and beg your pardon for habing frown a man at my head. Is dat about de size ob de question?"

"He will have to beg my pardon as well," said Jake.

"I'll see you hung fust!" declared Bob. "Big as you are, I'd sooner fight you."

"Haw, haw, haw! I should murder you, you rat."

"I ain't got de slightest doubt dat you would be quite capable ob murdering any man if it suited your purpose to do so," said Pete. "But look here, dere's half an hour before supper will be ready, and dat's plenty long enough for me to do de kneeling part ob de business. Same remarks apply to receiving de hiding. I don't tink you will be half an hour hiding me. Howeber, if so, you will hab to do de rest after I hab had my supper. De question is, which should I decide to do. I tink I'll take de hiding, if you ain't got any objection. How much did de man hab in his tankard, old hoss?"

"About a quarter of a pint," answered the barman, to whom the inquiry was addressed.

"Put just as much again in it, and no more. Hold my weapons, Sammy. Now, den, Jake, place your revolver on de table."

Sam leaned over to Jack.

"There's no need to tell Pete that this is the chap we caught flogging Harris, eh, Jack? I reckon he'll get quite enough punishment as it is."

"You're right, mate!" replied Jack.

"Haw, haw, haw! You don't surely think as a man like me wants to use weapons against a nigger when I've got these 'ere fists?" cried Jake, pulling his revolver and knife from his belt. "You had best get your friends to



help you in this fight. Come, I'll take any two of you. You won't play that trick on me again. I wasn't ready for you that evening."

"You have already acted like a bad-tempered fool," said Jack, "and now you are talking like one. When Pete asks for mercy I will hand you this gold. See, I have about twenty sovereigns here!"

"What! You——"

"You heard my offer," interposed Jack; "there is no necessity for me to repeat it."

"Why, I shall wipe the floor with the silly nigger; and if——"

"There, that will do. We don't want to hear what you are going to do, but want to see you do it—or, rather, I should say, try to do it."

There was a certain confidence in Jack's manner that had its effect, and, besides, he had sampled Pete's fist before. Pete was again seated on a stool, and it was difficult to judge if he was ready. Jake well knew from experience that the first blow counts a lot.

"Well, that's the way I will serve him!" he roared, making a furious rush at Pete and dealing a terrific blow at the side of his head; that is to say, the side of Pete's head was where Jake intended the blow to land, but Pete, who appeared to be taking no notice of his adversary, leapt aside with an agility that would have done credit to a bullfighter, and, sprawling over the stool, Jake rubbed his face along the sanded floor. Pete picked up the stool in an instant, and once more seated himself upon it, while he winked at Jack and Sam. His back was towards his foe now, for he had seated himself the reverse way, and appeared to be extremely busy lighting his pipe.

The spectators in the bar, who could see into the room, howled with laughter; but Pete looked perfectly serious. He did not seem to be taking the slightest interest in the combat.

Jake leapt to his feet with a roar of fury. His nose was considerably scraped, and he was in such a state of rage that Sam took possession of the knife and revolver on the table, in case the ruffian should decide to use those weapons.

Stepping towards Pete's back, he raised his ponderous fist, and brought it down with all his great strength on the top of his adversary's head.

"Come in, dere!" exclaimed Pete, winking at the spectators, as Jake uttered a yell of pain.

"Are you going to fight me or are you not?" hooted Jake.

"I neber understood dis was to be a fight, old hoss," answered Pete. "I tought you were to gib me a hiding, and I'm waiting for you to commence."

"I'll break your nigger's head!"

"I'm sorry for dat, because it is de only one I hab got. Still, if it is part ob de hiding, I suppose I shall hab to put up wid it."

Jake got round to the front of Pete this time, and, watching his opportunity, sprang forward and lashed out with his left. Pete bobbed forwards, and as Jake went sprawling over his back Pete grabbed him by the legs, one of which was over either shoulder; then Pete rose, and went waltzing round the room, while Jake hung head downwards over his back, and as Pete danced round and round he sang:

"Poor Jake came down like a wolf on de fold,  
 And his temper was rocky, his attitude bold,  
 And de tone ob his yowls was like wolves on de lee,  
 And de nigger danced round in his joy and his glee.  
 For de nigger had canted de foe upside down,  
 And poor Jake was done most remarkably brown;  
 And de rage ob dat man could be gauged by his hoots,  
 For his nose was quite close to de heels ob Pete's boots;  
 And de breath ob dat warrior came like a blast  
 As on to de floor on his head he was cast."

"Dat's as far as we hab got wid de incidents ob de poem," observed Pete, dropping his adversary on his head. "I dunno what de next verse will be like."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack. "If it's anything like the first, it ought to make Byron turn in his grave. I never heard such a shocking parody on a beautiful poem in all my life."

"I'm glad you tink my poem is beautiful, Jack," said Pete, puffing at his pipe.

"I was referring to Byron. You must have read one of his poems, at any rate."

"I ain't got time to attend to Byron just now. You don't seem to hab de slightest feelings for a poor helpless nigger who is being frashed. I'm ashamed ob you, Jack. You ought to be weeping great tears ob woe, instead ob guffawing like an hysterical hyena. Dere's nuffin to laugh at 'bout dis matter, is dere, Jake? But I do wish, old hoss, you would hurry up and get dis frashing done wid. You don't seem to consider my sufferings in de matter at all. It reminds me ob a man going to a quack dentist and letting him hab half a dozen pulls at your favourite molar. It is not only de pain you are making me suffer, but I also hab to bear de agony ob mind in tinkin about what de subsequent suffering may be like."

"You black hound!" howled Jake, springing to his feet. "You won't stand up to me like a man and fight."

"I keep telling you dis ain't an ordinary fight. I neber knew dat I had got de right to do de fighting part ob de business. Still, if you say I must do it, I suppose it has got to be, seeing dat you imagine ebery man has got de right to obey what you say, and dat he ain't got any rights beyond dat. Where am I to hit you?"

"I'm going to hit you in de jaw like——"

"Want me to hit you in de jaw like so? I can easy do dat. Yah, yah, yah! I must say I neber saw such a man for tumbling about as you are."

The blow Pete had delivered sent Jake to the floor, and he lay there for several moments without making the slightest attempt to rise. That blow must have been a revelation to him. However, the shouts of laughter of the spectators raised his fury to such a pitch that he was determined to carry matters to the end now. Springing to his feet, he went in with a rush, and it was difficult to see exactly what happened. Pete retreated a little, then his left shot out again, and his fist landed between Jake's eyes, and down he went with a thud.

Every man in the room must have known that Jake had no chance; but he himself did not appear to think so. He knew how great his strength was, and fondly imagined that if he could get in one fair blow he would knock his adversary out of time. It was a very stupid error; besides, he could not even get in that one blow, and while he was trying to do so he



got badly punished. Pete was not striking hard now; at least, he imagined that he was not doing so. Jake was not of the same opinion, and Pete kept jobbing him in the face until it looked as though it would take Jake's face some days to get right again.

"Supper is ready, gents!" exclaimed the waiter, hoping thus to end the fight; not that he minded it, but he thought there might be trouble with the police.

"Supper ready, is it?" exclaimed Pete. "Den I tell you what it is, Jake, old hoss, we'm got to postpone dis fight."

"Bust you! We are going to finish it!" roared Jake.

"Look at dat, now! Bery well, if you are determined to finish it, I shall land you wid dat one in de chest, and dis one in de jaw, and I call 'check-mate!' If you fight after dat little lot I shall be surprised."

Pete glanced sideways at his man; then he said:

"Come 'long, boys! De fight is finished for de present, at any rate, and I hab de feeling dat Jake won't be ready to go on wid it till we hab finished our supper. You had best chuck a little water ober him. Dat upper-cut has taken away de few senses he eber had. I'll just hab a wash, den we will commence de second fight wid our supper. Come on, Bob!"

"I ain't got any money!" growled Bob.

"You ain't supposed to pay for supper when a man invites you to it. It ain't good manners. Come dis way, and don't look as dough you had lost sixpence and found fourpence!"

"I'm down on my luck!" growled Bob.

"In dat case, all you hab got to do is to get up on it."

"I wouldn't care if it wasn't for my little daughter over in England."

"M'yes! She ain't broken her leg, Bob?" inquired Pete, whose mind was running on Rory again. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm a-going to Klondike to see if I can find some gold. Though how I'm going to get there without any money I don't know. I expect I shall starve on the way. And what will become of the little one then?"

"Should say dat's a question dat had better be decided when you start de starving part ob de operation. It ain't wise to get ober too many difficulties at once. You should take dem in regular rotation. You see, if a man has got to shift a ton ob coal, he will find it easier moving a sack at de time dan if he lifted de whole ton at once. It's de same ting wid troubles. If you take dem all at once dey are apt to frighten you so badly dat you can't get ober de first trouble, so you gib it up as a bad job; and you hab neber got to take de first trouble till it comes. Now, we hab a comfortable little supper here, so de best ting to do is to eat it; and after we hab done dat we will decide on what is best to be done."

Pete was a long time over his supper—they all finished long before him—but at last he pushed his plate away; and then, having lighted his pipe, he drew his chair close to the fire.

"What's to prevent us going to Klondike wid Bob, boys?" he said suddenly.

"It's all right, Bob," laughed Jack. "We shall come with you. I can see plainly that Pete has made up his mind, so that settles the matter."

"Well, dere are two-free tings to be considered," observed Pete, shifting his chair nearer to the fire.

"Woorooh!" yelled Jack. "I wish you would consider them with the leg of your chair off my toe!"

"Oh, is dat your toe, Jack? I tought dere was something under de leg ob de chair."

"I felt quite positive that there was!" groaned Jack.

"Well, neber mind, Jack. It ain't as if I was a heavyweight. De principal ting to consider is de cold. Now, I don't like de cold in any shape or form. However, I tink we will go to Klondike, and just find a few tons ob gold for Bob's purposes, den we can go back to 'Frisco for Rory. From de correspondence, dat dog is getting on all right. De only objection to de doctor's correspondence is dat he don't answer my questions, and he writes such a frightful hand dat I can't read above two-free words what he is talking about. Hallo! Here comes Jake. Yah yah, yah! You hab made your face in a mess, old hoss! Hab you come to complete my frashing?"

"I've come to tell you this: I'm going de same road as you. Now, you don't know me. I'm a man as would follow another all over de world to have vengeance, and I'm going to have it on that worm Bob!"

"But he didn't do anyting to you, old hoss! De properest person for you to hab de vengeance on is dis child. Suppose you start and take a little now. You see, if you are coming de same road as us, you can take a bit ob vengeance each day, and den it won't come so painful to me. Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at your face! It will take two-free days to get rid ob dose beauty-bumps!"

"You may think yourself mighty smart, but you will soon find out who's master! I ain't the sort of man to be trifled with! I've shot many a man for less cheek than I've took from you!"

"Did dey damage your face as badly as dat?"

"Give me my revolver, bust you!"

"Nunno, old hoss! You ain't habing dat revolver yet! You see, widout weapons you are as harmless as a Gila Monster, and about as pretty; but if I was to let you hab your revolver you would be as dangerous as a python. It would be a sad ting for de world at large if you compelled me to shoot you; and as I don't want anyting like dat to happen—why, I will keep possession ob your revolver until we leave dis place, and dat will be some time to-morrow, when we hab purchased a sledge and de few tings we shall require on de journey, and on de arrival. Now buzz off home, 'cos you'm making me tired!"

"See here, I'm a desperate man, and——"

"Well, buzz off home, and try to convince your kitchen cat ob dat, 'cos you won't convince me until you gib me dat frashing you hab been talking so much about."

"If you don't give me that 'ere revolver I'll knock your nigger's head off your stupid body!"

"I don't mind your trying to do dat a bit; but I do object to your shooting me."

"See here, if you don't hand over that weapon, as sure as I'm a living man I'll get another one, and blow your brains out!"

"Bery well, buzz off and do it! You shouldn't tell your opponent what you are going to do, 'cos, don't you see, it gibs him a chance ob doing de same ting, or doing one better. F'rinstance, I might draw a brace ob revolvers—so—and start firing at you—so; and den—— Where's dat man got to? Oh, dere he goes!"

Directly Pete started firing, Jake rushed from the room, yelling at the top of his voice, and making a very bad impression on the spectators as regards his boasted bravery. Pete followed him into the street, and blazed away there.



"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, re-entering the inn. "Dat man ain't so brave as he would like us to believe. It's a lucky ting for him dat I aimed ober his head, else he might hab got hurt. Now, boys, to resume de thread ob our observations concerning de journey. It ain't anything ob a distance; but what we hab got to guard against is hunger and cold. Especially against hunger after we get dere, 'cos dey say dey are short ob provisions. Well, we ain't going to be short ob provisions. We'm going to be 'long ob dem. It means dat we shall hab a mighty weight to drag. But you can manage dat while I ride on' de sledge. Now, to-morrow morning I will go out and make de necessary purchases. Dere's a lot for me to tink about, so I will go to bed and calmly tink it ober, while you are spending de night in sleep. Dere's a second bed in my room, Bob, so if you are sure you don't snore, you can sleep dere to-night, and to-morrow we will start for our gold-mine. Good-night, boys!"

When the comrades went up a little later they found Pete, with his pipe on the pillow, fast asleep, and snoring in a manner that gave Bob the impression it would be a rather difficult thing for him to sleep that night.

The following morning Pete was missing, and he did not make his appearance till the afternoon, when he came up dragging a huge fully-loaded sledge through the snow.

Jack and Sam would have preferred starting on the morrow, especially as it was snowing thickly, and it looked very much as though a lot more was to come down; but Pete appeared to have set his heart on starting at once, and so they raised no objections.

They had waited dinner for him; and after making a hearty meal the start was made, while Jake was amongst the spectators who watched the start.

Pete simply would not tell them a word concerning his plans. Each time Jack questioned him he merely said that they had to get the ton of gold for Bob, because of his little daughter; and that the sooner they got to Klondike the sooner they would get the gold.

So they toiled on, working by compass instead of following the Klondike River, because Pete declared that it was no good going out of their way to follow the windings of a river.

"Now, boys," exclaimed Pete, when they were in the depths of the country—which at this time of the year was dreary in the extreme—"dis seems to be a nice, comfortable place to camp!"

"Yes," answered Jack, "the howling of those wolves is very cheerful, and these snowy boulders will form a nice soft bed. I don't know anything about your plans, Pete, except that you are going to get a ton of gold, but it seems to me we should have had a better chance of reaching Klondike, where you say that gold is waiting for Bob, if we had started, say, in July."

"You know nuffin' 'bout de matter, Jack. De winter is de properest time to visit a very cold country, 'cos, don't you see, you den know exactly how cold it gets. And if it gets anything colder dan dis little lot—why, I ain't paying anoder visit to de place. Now, just you smoke your pipes while I arrange matters. Half an hour is de time I'm going to gib myself for camping purposes, so you can buzz around and see if you can shoot a Polar bear for supper. I dunno de exact sort ob animals dat lib in dis country, but if I was one ob dem I should emigrate to Central Africa, where dere would be less ice and more heat."

Sam had his doubts whether it would be possible to shoot any game that

night, but, accompanied by Jack and Bob, he made his way towards a clump of pines.

For over half an hour they searched in vain for game; for although the moonlight was hidden, the deep snow on the ground rendered the country light, and it would have been easy to see any game. However, beyond sighting a few gaunt and half-starved wolves, Sam saw nothing worth powder and shot.

"I tell you what it is, Sam," exclaimed Jack, at last, "I shall be frozen into a block of ice if we continue fooling about here any longer!"

"Well, I reckon that's how I'm feeling!" growled Sam. "That nigger has sent us on a fool's errand. We shall get nothing to eat to-night, and it looks remarkably as though we should also get frozen to death. How do you feel, Bob?"

"Cold, hungry; lost all pluck. I don't want to die. Wouldn't care if I was insured. But what is to become of that little one? If she was twenty, instead of half that age, it would be better; but——"

"Now then, Bob," interposed Jack, "don't you remember Pete's advice to take troubles as they come. You are going too far ahead. Never look at the worst side. You are not dead yet, and don't look like dying. Pete has got some good ideas, though I will admit he puts them in a strange way; however, his advice concerning trouble is correct. Let's get back, and take a little of his advice again. He is a resourceful sort of man, so we will have recourse to him."

So they retraced their trail, and soon came in sight of the spot where they had left Pete. And now three exclamations of surprise mingled with the howling of the wolves.

A tent was pitched at the spot. It was not very high, but it was of considerable size; and as there was a light inside, the comrades entered, to find Pete busily engaged frying eggs and bacon over an oil-stove.

"Hab you brought in de elephant, Sammy?" inquired Pete, who was seated on a camp-stool, and had got an enormous tin dish crowded with eggs and bacon on the side of the stove.

"No. I haven't shot anything."

"Just what I expected, Sammy; and dat's why I cooked dis little lot. Dere's a pot ob tea dere, and dere's de condensed milk. Sugar in one ob dose bags. Spoons and knives and forks in dat tray. Free more camp-stools in dat corner, on de top ob four sleeping-bags. Snow all cleared away from de bottom ob de tent and piled up outside to keep us warm. I dunno how snow manages to do dat, but dey say it does, dough my impression is dat it ain't been keeping us so mighty warm. Biscuits in dat sack dere. Mustard already mixed. Now, suppose we mix de bacon wid de eggs, and de eggs wid de biscuits, and if de result don't take my hunger away I shall die ob inundation, or one ob dose complaints people suffer from when dey need food."

"Pete, you are a treasure!" declared Jack.

"Dat's what all de girls tink, Jack, only dey don't tell me so, because de fashion in dese times is in something ob light colours. Still, if you won't start on dis little meal, I'm going to, 'cos eggs and bacon ain't at all bad!"

They started on the meal, and found it remarkably good and refreshing. The atmosphere in the tent appeared comparatively warm in contrast with the piercing cold outside, and if ever men enjoyed their supper it was the comrades. They could have had many a meal at the best hotels in the world, had they so chosen, but it is very doubtful if they would have



enjoyed such meals, with the champagne to follow, as they enjoyed that meal in those snowy depths, with Pete's brew of tea to follow.

"Don't you like eggs and bacon, Jack?" inquired Pete, helping himself to some of the grease with a spoon.

"It looks as though I did!" laughed Jack. "This is my third rasher!"

"You shouldn't count bacon by rashers, Jack. You see, a rasher ob bacon differs in size. A little rasher like dis one I can put into my mouf in one go, like so. You should call dem mouffuls, 'cos den if people ask you if you hab had your breakfast, you can say, 'Well, I did hab seven or eight mouffuls,' and it makes dem so sorry for you dat dey at once ask you to hab lunch. Pass your plate, Bob. If you hab got to die ob hunger and cold, it's no good commencing to do it yet!"

Pete was gratified to see how greatly his meal was appreciated. He had certainly cooked enough for six, but they managed to get through it, and then he produced a tin of biscuits and some pots of strawberry jam.

"It's good for de indigestion, boys!" he declared. "Dere's no pudding to follow de bacon, so we must make shift wid dis little lot. I'm rader partial to strawberry jam. Reminds me ob my early days, when I used to hab brem-treacle, when I was lucky. Biscuits and jam go all right—don't you tink so, Sammy?"

"Yes. But I reckon you have got jam and biscuits there. I vow the jam is thicker than the biscuit. Here, don't wipe your sticky fingers down my coat, you silly coon!"

"Now, I ask you, Sammy, if you don't tink I would hab been a sillier coon to wipe my sticky fingers down my own coat. I tink we will hab a little more tea, 'cos I ain't got any spirits, and you want something in dis climate to keep out de cold. Hi, golly! Where's all dis coming from?" exclaimed Pete, as a bullet cut through his hat, and they heard the crack of a pistol outside the tent.

"Duck down, Pete!" whispered Sam. "Someone is firing at your noddle. They can see its shadow on the side of the tent."

Pete whipped the frying-pan off the stove, balanced his hat on it, then held the pipe he was just lighting in front, so that the shadow thrown by the lamp made it look exactly like a man's head. It evidently deceived the marksman, for the next moment they heard the ping of a bullet against the frying-pan.

"Right you are, Pete," murmured Sam. "Keep them firing at that. I reckon I will shift the scoundrels!"

Then he crept out, and in a few moments they heard the crack of his rifle.

"Who was he, Sammy?"

"Jake; and the skunk scuttled off at the first shot!"

"M'yes! Dat man can't stand fire!" exclaimed Pete. "But ain't it a lucky ting he hasn't spoilt our frying-pan? Yah, yah, yah! Makes me laugh to tink ob him blazing away at dat frying-pan. Still, I prefer him doing dat to blazing away at my head. I tell you what it is, boys. Dat stove is better for cooking purposes dan for heating purposes, and I'm going to pass de rest ob de evening in my sleeping-bag. Should advise you to do de same."

"I reckon that means that you are going to sleep!" exclaimed Sam.

"Nunno, Sammy! I'm just going to hab a smoke, and plan out dat mine, so dat we can strike de gold at de earliest opportunity."

Pete got into the bag, which he found nice and warm, and in a very few minutes he began to doze. Then his head disappeared, and they only knew that he was awake by seeing clouds of smoke issue from the sleeping-bag.

"I tell you what it is, boys!" exclaimed Sam. "That nigger will smother himself. Here, come out of it, you silly coon! You will be as dead as a smoked herring by to-morrow morning, if you don't put that pipe out!"

"I don't tink so, Sammy. It's nice and warm in dese bags, and I advise you to get into yours. I hab got one for each ob us."

"Well, if you are going to smoke, you will have to keep your head out of that bag."

"De face and noddle get cold, Sammy."

"Shove 'em into the stove to warm then, then!"

Pete did not follow this advice, but he brought his head out of the bag, and in less than five minutes the pipe dropped from his teeth, and he commenced to snore, while the other three kept watch through the night by turns, while the wolves came howling round the little encampment.

Early the following morning the journey was continued, and, thanks to Pete's ample supply of stores, the comrades suffered no great hardships. The sleeping accommodation was quite comfortable, and as they kept their stove going all night, they did not suffer from the cold at night; while, although the days were piercingly cold, the hard work of dragging the sledge over the rugged ground kept the comrades fairly warm. Then at last they came in sight of the mining encampment.

Their first thought was to purchase a hut from the storekeeper. They did not feel at all sure that it belonged to him; but he declared it did, and so he took their money, while they took possession of the little hut, which, although in a secluded part, was handy for the mines, and would certainly be quiet enough for any man.

The comrades soon got the place in order, and at night all made their way to the stores.

#### CHAPTER 14.

**The Arrival at the Diggings—Making Friends—Bulk Elects to Be a Fool—Pete Stakes Out His Claim Under Difficulties—Bulk Claims the Earth, and Nearly Gets Buried.**

THE place was crowded with all sorts and conditions of men. The news of the fresh arrivals had brought them to the place, as there was a chance of a little entertainment.

Mining operations had been abandoned, because of the bitter cold, for the iron grip of the winter frost had sunk deeply into the ground, and had they tried to wash gold-dust it would have frozen in the pans.

A bony-looking man, with the most sad-looking face, Pete thought, he had ever seen, gazed into an empty glass, then sighed deeply, and wiped his right eye with the back of his hand.

"Ain't you well, Job?" inquired another.

"Toddy," exclaimed the cheerful-looking Job (most of them had nick-names there), "I'm downright ill; I'm poor, I'm starving, and Grice, the storekeeper, is that hard-hearted that he would let me starve. Bury me by the pines, where the wintry waters flow, and the cold winds blow. Let my pall be a mantle of snow, and let me go from all my woe. Heigho!"



"Ain't it wonderful what a eddication at Oxford will do for a man!" observed one of the others, draining a glass that he had drained five minutes ago. "Here's Job can't talk unless poetry flows out of his mug. Now, I ain't poetical, and if it makes a bloke as unhappy as Job—why, I ain't exactly sorry. Greet the strangers, Job! You are the representative of eddication in this 'ere show!"

"Let the silly beggars go and drown theirselves in the Klondike!" growled a burly-looking ruffian, who had got his glass full. "We don't want niggers and other monkeys in these 'ere diggings! There ain't enough food for us as it stands, without——"

"Bulk, you grieve me," sighed Job. "Gentlemen, believe me, I am delighted to receive thee——"

"Ain't it downright wonderful!" growled Toddy. "Only cut it short, mate, 'cos I'm thirsty, and I know your poetry goes on like that thumping brook when it ain't froze!"

"Gentlemen all, both big and small, though ill and sad, I'm extremely glad to make your acquaintance! Though a member of this federation, drink to me's an abomination, and I hope I know my station sufficient to refrain from insinuation; and, being a Oxford man, I refrains all I can from making unwelcome remarks to you gay young sparks, but I'm inclined to think these 'ere men want a drink. The happiness of others and their gladness only enhances my sadness. They would never think of looting, but want you to pay your footing!"

Then Job sat down, licked the edge of his glass, and wiped his left eye.

"Drinks all round, Grice!" roared Toddy. "I ain't got poetry in my soul, but I've got common-sense, to say nothing of a burning thirst as ain't been quenched for the last half-hour, 'cos Bulk ain't the man to stand a chap down on his luck, and Grice ain't a man to chalk up, bust the maggots!"

"I don't chalk up to a man as never works or pays," observed Grice. "And it follers from that that I don't chalk up to you nor Job, with all his poetry. He'd say to me, 'Your glass of beer ain't dear,' and I'd have to answer, 'No, and your thundering money ain't here!' I'm filling glasses round if these new-comers give me the order, but I ain't filling 'em on your orders, and so I tell you, Toddy. If I was to fill 'em on your orders, the tap would never be turned off, and I'd be buried a pauper, the same road as you will!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, as Job wiped both his eyes, licked his glass again, and gazed at Pete with the most pathetic expression he could command, which is saying a good deal. "Yah, yah, yah! Dere seems to be a lot ob poetry knocking 'bout dis place. But fill all deir glasses, Grice!"

"Here," growled Bulk, "you don't fill mine! I don't drink with a nigger!"

"All right, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "We will leabe you out ob de question. But be sure you put dat poet in. I'm a bit ob a poet myself, dough I wasn't educated at Oxford; and Jack, who was, tells me my poetry is meedeoker, or one ob dose names. I dunno de name he will gib your poetry, Job!"

"Comrade!" cried Job, springing to his feet, and seizing Bob by the hand. "Stay, I mistake; it is your hand I'll take. Who would have thought in life's short span that I should meet an Oxford man?"

"I'm not an Oxford man!" growled Sam, as Job shifted a fearfully grimy paw to him. "That's Jack."

Then Jack felt that extremely dirty and flabby hand thrust into his, while Job kept shaking his arm up and down, until Jack began to think he was holding a freshly-caught flat fish.

The drink was served, and Pete sought information from Job, while Teddy helped the information out, and they drank Pete's health on several occasions.

"You see, old hosses," exclaimed Pete, "we'm come here to get some gold, and we want to get it straight away. Could you tell us de best place to pick up de first lot?"

"My dear fellow," sighed Job, "the shining yellow can be found all over the ground."

"Eh? Den how is it you don't find a ton or so?"

"I have the will, but I am ill. All day long, as you are strong, you'll find the gold amongst the mould. Look at poor Teddy! Ain't it odd he blinks his eyes and heaves those sighs? I really think he wants more drink. Bring them in a trice, my good friend Grice, and be perfectly certain those drinks are nice!"

"See here, old hoss," growled Pete, "I ain't going to make you any more poetical to-night. Toddy has had quite enough, and de man is habing no more at my expense. Come on, boys! We hab to be up early to-morrow morning to stake out our claim."

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bulk, draining his glass, and striding from the store.

A brawny-looking man, with a shaggy beard of sandy colour, stepped towards the comrades, and Job caught him by the sleeve, as he said:

"Now, look here, Mac, you come back!"

"Take your thieving hand off my sleeve!" cried Mac. "Mon, dinna do it! Hoots, lads, it's a weary game, and I'm speaking from experience. Just you pack up, and gang the road you came. I'm old enough to be your father, and I dinna like to see brawny lads wasting their lives in this place. Good-night, my lads, and think aboon my words!"

Then Mac gave vent to a solemn nod, and left the store, while they went to their hut.

Jack, Sam, and Bob did not wake the following morning till nearly nine o'clock, though Pete had been up since five, in the gloom of the Klondike winter. The hut was nice and warm, for he had not only got the oil-stove going, but he had a roaring wood fire in the old ship's stove with which the hut was fitted. Better than this, breakfast was all ready, and the comrades enjoyed the meal. Jack endeavoured to discover what Pete had been doing, when he admitted that he had been up for five hours; but on this point he gave them no information.

"Now, boys," exclaimed Pete, when the meal was finished, "we'm going for Bob's ton of gold."

"After what Mac said last night?" inquired Bob, who was a bit of a pessimist, otherwise probably he would have made a better mark in the world, at his time of life, having lived over the half of his allotted span.

"Bob, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, grabbing one of the picks and spades which he had purchased for mining operations, "man was meant to find out tings in dis life for himself, and not to rely on what oder people tell him. It don't follow dat because one man ain't succeeded in getting gold dat his advice is any good to men who hab made up deir minds to get it."



It don't matter to us weder we find gold or not, but it matters to you, 'cos ob dat little girl. I ain't got a little girl, so don't know what it means parting from her, but I hab parted from Rory, and I know what dat means, so it follows dat we are going to get dis ton ob gold, so dat you can meet your little girl again."

"Bob did not know what to say, so he said nothing, but followed Pete from his hut, while a number of their overnight acquaintances came from the store to watch their operations. Needless to say, amongst them was Bulk, and he had a rifle under his arm, and a brace of revolvers stuck in his belt.

"I'd shoot a man as jumped my claims as soon as look at him," he observed to Job, and in a voice that was perfectly audible to the comrades, as he intended it should be, although it did not have the desired effect on Pete. That worthy strode on, looking very wise, and at last he stopped at a certain spot.

"What's de matter wid dis claim?" he inquired.

"It's mine," growled Bulk. "There's my stakes."

"Oh, dat's yours, is it, old hoss? Bery well, we will proceed a little funder. Seems to be rader more snow dan gold about dis part, and I wish it was a bit hotter. Now, den, we come to anoder place. What do you tink——"

"That's my claim!" growled Bulk, cocking his rifle, by way of a hint.

"Oh, dat's yours too, is it, old hoss? Let's try anoder direction. We strike dis way by de tree on de riber bank. Now 'bout dis claim——"

"That's my claim!" declared Bulk.

"Golly, de man seems to hold de whole ob Klondike!" observed Pete. "Bery well. We step a yard each time, and take free hundred ob dem from dis tree on de riber bank. Just step dese yards wid me, Jack and Sammy. I tink I can smell de gold at de end ob dem. Tink dose are 'bout yards. M'yes! Bery well, on we come. Dis way to London. Golly, ain't de snow mighty cold! Seems to hab frozen Job's poetry. Now, den, we hab de number ob yards dere, and what I want to know is what is de matter wid dis place?"

Here Pete glanced at Bulk, who was grinning. However, as he said nothing, Pete raised his pickaxe above his head and struck ground that sounded like rock. This would have convinced most men that operations were useless; but when Pete makes up his mind to a thing, he requires a fearful lot of convincing. So it was on the present occasion. He toiled away, while his comrades helped him with the picks they had brought. They did so to keep themselves warm, not because they ever expected to find any gold.

Bulk returned to the store, where he spent the day. It was not until late in the afternoon that he, accompanied by a number of grinning miners, returned to the spot, where Pete and his comrades were toiling away, and considering the state of the ground, Bulk was astounded at the amount of work that they had got through; for they had chipped away the frozen stuff until they were upon comparatively soft soil.

Pete's idea was to dig the shaft so deep that the frost of that night would not get down to the bottom, and the way he worked on his hopeless task for another man's benefit struck the comrades as so good-hearted that they were determined not to be the first to give in.

Pete was working just as vigorously as when he commenced, and they found no difficulty in throwing up the earth, for they had got to no

appreciable depth yet. For nearly an hour Bulk watched and grinned, by which time he was so frozen that he felt another visit to the stores was imperative.

"Well," he exclaimed, "it seems to me you've made yourselves mighty busy on my claim. Now p'r'aps you will have the kindness to shovel that earth back, unless you want to get shot, 'cos I'd shoot any man as tampered with a claim of mine."

"But look here, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, flinging down his pick and climbing from the hole—it was not much of a climb—"why didn't you tell us dis was your claim before we commenced operations?"

"'Cos I didn't choose!"

"Well, I don't see de reason ob dat. I suppose you hab struck gold, and tink all men who ain't done so ain't got de right to do it."

"Fill that 'ere hole up, or I'll shoot you."

"'Spect I'd rader fill de hole up," observed Pete; "and as I'm mighty sure I would rader not be shot, why, I'll borrow your rifle, and gib it a kink—like so—across my knee. Yah, yah, yah! Tink de barrel must hab been made ob lead. It bends mighty easy. Nunno, you don't! I'll hab de revolvers at de same time. Yah, yah, yah! Was a bit too quick for you dat journey," added Pete, getting possession of the weapons. Now, den, you want dat hole filled up, do you? Bery well, I will start filling it wid your body."

Pete gripped the bully round the waist, and there was a short struggle, and Bulk found himself pitched into the hole, while Pete commenced to shovel mould upon his head.

"Here, keep where you are, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, sending a shovel-ful into his face. "How do you expect me to fill de hole when de principal ingredients keep crawling out ob it?"

Bulk's rage as he leapt from the opening was something to be remembered.

"Will you fight me?" he roared.

"Nunno, old hoss," answered Pete calmly.

"Why not?"

"'Cos you'm afraid to fight. I know your sort, habing met dem on several occasions. You'm got some gold, I take it, and for dat reason, and because you'm de biggest man in de place, you crow ober de rest. But you ain't crowing ober me, my poor old hoss. A man like you wants to be shown where he is, and de men he has got to deal wid. Now, I don't believe it would be any use trying to teach a man like you any manners except frough personal experience. I'm going to teach you dat I ain't afraid ob you, and I'm going to teach dese men dat you ain't so formidable as you would like to make out. For dese reasons, and because I know you would neber fight your superior in strength, I'm going to slap your face. Mind, I hab giben you notice. You can put up your fists. I'm only going to strike you once on de cheek, and dat will be wid my open hand. If I eber hab to strike you again I shall be surprised. But we shall see about dat later on. M'yes! I can see dat you understand how to use your fists, but you will notice by de way I'm guarding your blows dat I'm possessed ob de same knowledge."

Bulk, who could certainly box, seemed to know that he had got a dangerous opponent in Pete, and not crediting that he really only intended to use his open hand, the bully did not dare to go in with a rush, but sparred for an opening, while Pete guarded his blows with the greatest ease. Suddenly Bulk thought he saw his opening, and lashed out with his left, while Pete ducked, and Bulk received a slap on the cheek that sounded like a pistol-



shot. It sent him flying headlong into the hole again; and he lay there for several moments before making any attempt to rise. Even when he did struggle to his feet he reeled from side to side.

"What do you tink would be de best way to prevent dat ground freezing again, Jack?" inquired Pete, pulling out his pipe.

"Ha ha, ha!"

"What are you guffawing at, Jack? I'm ashamed ob you for laughing at a man's troubles."

"I was laughing at my thoughts."

"Den turn dose toughts on de subject ob de mine, and stop your genial guffaw, 'cos I want to know de best road to prevent de bottom ob de shaft feezing."

"Shove some snow into it. It will not freeze then."

"Should hab tought dat would hab made it colder. Howeber, seeing dat you hab been to Oxford, like Job, I suppose you know best. Get out ob de way, Bulk, else you will get some ob dis snow on your napper. Dere, what did I tell you? Yah, yah, yah! You'm got de second shovelful in your face."

Bulk did not wait for any more snow, because Pete was so frightfully energetic. The bully scrambled from the hole, and then he approached Pete in such a threatening manner that most men would have dropped the spade and turned their attention to the foe. Pete did nothing of the sort; he kept shovelling in the snow, and treated the infuriated bully with the most supreme contempt.

Bulk uttered threats for several minutes, and Pete continued his work, although the furious man clenched his fists, and actually drew them back, as though about to strike.

"Tink dat will be enough, Jack?" he inquired at last.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, yes; the ground won't freeze now."

"Well, dat's all we want it not to do. Now, den, Bulk, what's dat you are saying? You had better say it all ober again, 'cos I wasn't listening. Why, de man is going! Must want someting more to drink."

"That 'ere is my claim," roared Bulk, turning and glaring at Pete in the most alarming manner.

"I must say dat I tink de man is rightly named," observed Pete, "'cos, according to his account, he appears to hold de bulk ob de country. All de same, we are going to stake out dis little lot, 'cos I bought de claim in Dawson City. I hab got de tittle deeds and de plan. Dey were expensive; but, as de man pointed out, dat a mine wid a ton ob gold in it is worf a bit. He could hab sold me anoder one, only he said he could not guarantee dere would be anyting like dat amount ob gold in it."

"Ha, ha, ha! You don't mean to say the villain guaranteed that there was a ton of gold in this mine?" cried Jack.

"He did, Jack; but den, you see, he was a Yank. He said all we had got to do was to work southwards, and we could go right through the world, for all he cared. We would be bound to find the gold sooner or later. I tought I would try some oder start higher up, 'cos it seemed a pity to lose all de gold dat is between de river and dis claim. Howeber, Bulk says he owns dat; and as I knew mighty well he didn't own dis, why, I started here."

Pete's idea of mining was primitive in the extreme. He rigged up his tackle, which he purchased from Grice, and sank his shaft to what he considered sufficient depth, then he commenced tunnelling, shoring up his work

as he went. The comrades helped him all they could, but he was so frightfully energetic that he worked far longer than they did. There was no telling at what unearthly hour he would start in the morning, nor when he would knock off at night, but it was always when his comrades were deadily tired.

Old Mac, who was a very decent fellow, frequently came to have a chat with them, and he gave them some very good advice, although Pete did not always take it.

One night when Jack, Sam, and Bob were in the mine, Mac came in for a smoke and chat.

"Where's the lad, Bob?" he inquired.

"Down the mine," growled Bob. "We couldn't get him to knock off, and he's been at it for over twelve solid hours. Just takes food down with him, and keeps on working."

"Weel, he's a hard worker, I must say; but we've got a new-comer at the store, and I'm not liking the mon. His name is Jake, and he's as thick as thieves wi' Bulk."

"Then I tell you what it is," exclaimed Jack; "we shall have to keep our eyes open, for we know Jake. Pete gave him a thrashing, and he shot at Pete as we were on the way here. If Bulk can have vengeance without running any risk himself, he would be only too pleased to employ Jake for the work, and my impression of the man is that he would do anything to get gold, especially if he got vengeance at the same time. But here comes Pete, and as supper is all ready, you had better have a snack with us, Mac."

Mac knew what these snacks meant, and they all made very hearty suppers; then pipes were lighted, and they sat round the wood fire.

"It's a mighty strange ting 'bout dat ton ob gold," observed Pete. "I hab been looking for it eberywhere; and, you see, a ton ob gold is a good size, so you ought to be able to see it!"

"Mon, you should wash the dirt, and see if there are any specks of gold in it," said Mac.

"But I don't want specs ob gold. I hab promised Bob a ton ob it, and it wouldn't be right to disappoint de man, 'cos ob dat little girl ob his. I did find a bit ob gold to-day, but it's so small dat it doesn't count."

"Let's have a look at it!" cried Bob.

Pete rummaged in his pockets.

"I most forget where I put it," he said. "I know it was in one ob de— Oh, here it is!"

"A nugget of pure gold!" shouted Bob. "Why, there are a dozen ounces there!"

"Well, dat ain't nearly a ton."

"That nugget is worth a good forty pounds!" gasped Bob.

"As much as dat? Bery well, if we find de remainder ob de ton, dat will be all right, only I hope it ain't going to take us long to find de remainder."

"You've found in one day more than I have found in a year, lad!" exclaimed Mac; "and I'm verra glad of your luck, for I think you deserve it!"

"I was tinkin', Mac, dat Bob can't work dis mine all by himself, and, at de rate we hab started getting a few ounces ob gold, I'm inclined to tink dat we sha'n't be able to stay here till we find de ton. Now, as you ain't got a mine ob your own, if Bob sees no objection, I should say dat it would be a good ting for bof if you went into partnership and shared alike, and if you



two are ob de same opinion, why, you can consider dat de matter is settled. We don't want anyting to do wid de mine when we hab once started it, 'ccs, don't you see, we hab got more gold dan we shall eber be likely to want."

"You mean to say you are going to give us a gold-mine, out of which you've got a nugget like that 'ere?" gasped Bob.

"Dat's de idea."

"Well, there can only be one answer to that, and I can't see why you should be so good to chaps as you scarcely know. All the same, I think we ought to give you a share of the gold we get."

"Nunno. We don't want anyting like dat," exclaimed Pete. "We came here to help you, and for de sake ob a little adventure. Bery well, we hab got what we came for, least, we shall, when we hab found some more gold, and——"

Pete stopped, and glanced through the little window.

"Dat man, Bulk, seems to be taking an interest in our conversation," exclaimed Pete. "Saw his face at de window, and I tink he was trying to learn what sort ob arrangements we are making. Well, I dunno dat it matters."

"I reckon it does matter, though," said Sam. "Jake is at the diggings, and the two are already as thick as thieves, so Mac tells us. However, if we five men can't tackle the two ruffians, I shall be surprised."

#### CHAPTER 15.

#### The Plot Against Pete's Life—The Wreck in the Mine—What Happened outside Pete's Shanty, and What Happened Inside It—Pete Can't Help Laughing, Neither Can Jack and Sam.

PETE had not been mistaken. Bulk had been listening at the hut, for he had an idea that no man would work as hard as Pete unless he had struck gold, and Bulk particularly wanted to know if such were the case, for reasons of his own.

As he made his way to his own hut, which was at a considerable distance, his face grew very fierce, for, although his mine was turning out some rich earth, he had never found a nugget of that size in it, and it filled his evil breast with envy. Not only that, but he was determined to have vengeance on Pete, who had so lowered his prestige at the diggings.

Bulk was quick to notice that the men, who had previously knuckled under to him, now treated him with a considerable amount of contempt. They did not actually insult him, but they refused to knuckle under to him as they had done previously, and, being an abominable bully, this enraged him all the more against Pete.

Jake was in his hut, piling logs of wood upon the fire, and getting supper ready, for Bulk had offered to supply him with food for a few days on condition that he performed these duties.

"See here, Jake," exclaimed Bulk, seating himself on a stool close to the fire. "I want to have a talk with you. We two understand each other?"

"We do so, mate," answered Jake. "There ain't a man in the diggings knows as ever we met afore I came here, and there ain't one going to know if you do the right thing!"

"We ain't going to bother about the past," growled Bulk, looking rather uneasy, and glancing at his confederate out of the corners of his eyes.

"Of course we ain't, mate. I'm dead down on my luck, and, seeing you are in clover, it ain't likely you are going to give the cold shoulder to an old pal. So long as you do the right thing, my mouth is closed concerning the past."

"Now, see here," cried Bulk, bringing his fist down on the table with a bang that made the other start. "I ain't having none of that. Your precious mug is closed 'cos you daren't open it. You can't say nothink against me without saying a good lot against yourself. All the same, there's no reason for us to quarrel. I've got a mine that is doing fair, and I've jest struck a rich piece of earth; but, see you here, I ain't got a mine anything like the one the nigger has struck. I believe he is right on the vein, and, if that's so, it's what I never can be, 'cos my mine ain't in the right position. Now, what's to prevent you and me having their mine?"

"Why, I should say they would."

"They wouldn't if they was dead."

Jake watched his accomplice in silence for some moments, then he nodded.

"See what I mean, mate?"

"Yus."

"You say as you've got your knife into that nigger; very well, so have I, and, now he's struck gold, I've got it in deeper than ever. I take it we ain't the sort of men to let a nigger fool about with us, without paying him?"

"That's all right. You are wasting your breath," growled Jake. "I don't need any talk like that. What I need is this. I take it you want me to do the job? Well, I'm ready, only I must see my road clear."

"We'll halve his mine. That's fair enough."

"Yus, that's as it should be; but, look here, mate, from what I can make out, those comrades are sort of popular here, and these chaps ain't particular about lynch law. You see, I'm game to take certain risks, but I ain't game to take certain death, and that's about what it would mean, specially if you've got a paying mine to jump; 'cos, although I might do—you understand—it would be sure to come out, one way or another, that you was the principal."

"I don't need any threats, Jake. You and me have worked certain business together. You and me knows all about it, and no one else. Well, we ain't such fools as to take 'em into our confidence. Now, we parted friends, and you've come here down on your luck; well, I've took you in as a friend, and I'm putting another good thing—there's a fortune in that mine, which we share—in your way. What can you ask more? We both want vengeance—we get that, and the mine thrown in."

"With the risk on top of it."

"There ain't no risk."

"P'raps not, for you, but there will be for me—I know the men."

"I repeat, there ain't no risk—not the way I shall work it."

"When?"

"To-night."

"Let's hear the plan."

"Let's have a bite while we are talking it over. It won't take me long to put matters in the right light. I'm taking a bit more risk than you. Sit down, mate, and wire in. Here's a bottle of whisky. I ain't got no water, but I dessay we can manage without that. There's two tins. Now, here's luck to you, mate!"

"Same to you, and to the job!"



"Listen, mate. That nigger—may he rot—has found a nugget that they put down at forty pounds. I put it down at sixty, or more. No matter. It's there, in their hut, and it might be found. Still, that ain't the question. If we can get it, so much the better; if we can't, we can get more down the mine, 'cos there's bound to be more there—and what I don't know about mining ain't worth learning. Well, as you say, those blessed comrades are the ones to stop our little scheme. If they are shifted off the face of the earth we could jump their mine, and no one would be the wiser. No one but me knows that they have struck gold yet, 'cos they only struck it to-night. The chances are they will tell that beast, Mac, to-morrow."

"Sure they won't tell him to-night?"

"No, he wasn't in the hut. I glanced through the winder—besides, I didn't hear his voice. Still, that's not an important matter, only it's better that no one knows. Now, if anything was to happen to those chaps, I would be the first one suspected. No one here, except myself, knows that you have met 'em before, and they all know that I hate 'em. Ah, I hate that nigger like——"

"So do I; but never mind about that. Go on."

"Their mine has got a bit rocky, and they want to shift those rocks. To do that, they get some blasting charges."

"How do you know that?"

"I'm telling you what will happen, that's all; but I happen to know that that nigger did buy some from Grice. Grice suggested he should, 'cos, he said, they would always come in handy. Fill up, and pass me the bottle. Well, blasting cartridges go off unexpected sometimes. I had one of Grice's do it last fall. What's to prevent those cartridges going off unexpected to-night?"

"Nothing; but, let's get at it. What's to make 'em?"

Bulk opened the door of his shanty, and gazed around. Snow was falling thickly, and it was evident that a lot more would fall, for the heavens were black with clouds.

"Jest you come with me, mate, and have another sup before we start. It's a awful night, but the snow will help us, 'cos it will hide our footprints almost as fast as we make 'em. I've got a lantern here, and we will need it down my mine."

"Is this straight between you and me, Bulk. I'm giving you that name, 'cos——"

"Right! We are fly!"

"I know we are, mate. The only question is, are you a bit too fly for me? You see, if I was to die, you'd be in a safer sort of position, that——"

"Not me. I ain't got a revolver, and you have. Besides, if I was up to games like that, I could easy have poisoned you to-night."

"Thunder! You ain't done it, have you?"

"Well, I must say, Jake, you take a dainty care of yourself, and you ain't got as much sense of honour between gentlemen as I should like to see. Do you think if I had poisoned, or even wanted to poison you, that I would be such a fool as to tell you? Give us your fist, mate. Let's understand each other perfect. A friend in need is always a handy thing to have. You've got one in me. I dunno that I loved my own father better."

"You ain't a bad sort, mate," mumbled Jake, grasping the ruffian's hand. The fact is, the spirit the two had consumed was taking its effect, and they were just about ready for any vile deed. They really began to imagine that they liked one another.

Bulk led the way to the mine, and they lowered themselves in the tub to the bottom of the shaft, which was not a deep one, the tackle being adjusted so that they could lower and raise themselves without assistance from the top. Bulk led the way along the tunnel, and stopped at a working, then he placed the lantern on a ledge, and seated himself on a piece of sandstone.

"Now, mate," he exclaimed. "This is the safest place in all the world for us to discuss the plot, 'cos, don't you see, there is no chance of us being overheard. There's no one down this mine, and there's no one as would care to follow us. All the same, it ain't sensible to talk too loud, 'cos you never know what's going to happen. Sit you down beside me, and listen to this little lot."

Bulk had dropped his voice to a hoarse whisper, although he knew they were alone.

"You see these blasting cartridges?" he said, taking half a dozen from a niche in the rocks. "Well, they would blow this mine to pieces. They would blow that hut to little splinters, and anyone who happened to be inside it would be turned to cremated ashes. We put this little lot outside that nigger's hut, light the fuses, then we have got a good three minutes. Give us a match, mate, only keep it away from them charges."

Jake obeyed, and for some seconds the two utter miscreants puffed at their pipes in silence. They had planned vile deeds before, and understood each other. They were men who would probably have made comfortable incomes had they been honest. But no man could have called them anything like that.

"Well?" exclaimed Bulk, at last.

"Yus, there's a certain amount of risk; but are you sure those bits of things will work the trick?"

Bulk nodded.

"Put them ten yards from that hut, and no funeral will be needed," he murmured. "We are going to put them agin the hut."

"You mean, I am."

"Well, mate, I'll act fair with you. I'll come. We will both go together."

"Think they keep watch of nights?"

"I know they don't. I've watched them before now. Mate, it's a fair go this time."

"What about the mine? Is it worth it, say, without the vengeance thrown in?"

"I washed some of the dirt that nigger has been throwing away, and got nigh on ten shillings out of five panfuls. They have struck it rich. Mind, I know—they don't, which is all the better for us. It's the old story—the chap as don't need gold gets it. And, mind you, that nigger is one of them."

"I'd like to send him in pieces!"

"We shall send him into powder if we fire that little lot! A good three minutes, mind you, we have got. Well, we are in my hut and fast asleep by that time. We rush out on hearing the explosion. There's nearer huts than mine, so we sha'n't be the first there. And then we shall jest say that we are sorry for those poor blokes. I shall say as I didn't like 'em, but would never wish a man— You understand. We've only got to do it natural. And if you and me can't do that—why, bust it—bust it all up, as we are going to do to-night! Shove them things in your pocket, and come along!"



"What?"

"Shove 'em in your pocket. I'll show you how to work it."

"I'd a sight rather you shoved 'em in your pocket!"

"Why, you silly, timid beast? What are you frightened of?" demanded Bulk, putting two or three of the cartridges into his side-pocket. "There you are. If you are frightened of an unlighted fuse, I ain't. I've handled 'em for years and years, and they are as safe as houses, except when they are lighted. Jest pick up the rest, and foller me."

Jake appeared to make a forward dive, and steadied himself with his hand against the rocks. The spirit was taking considerable effect on him; but, then, he had drunk it neat, and spirit is apt to take effect on a man when he drinks it that way.

At any rate, Jake had no intention of showing his cowardice, and, as a matter of fact, he did a very brave thing, for as he groped his way along the tunnel he stuffed his lighted pipe into his pocket where the cartridges were; and, seeing that he also had a box of matches in that same pocket, the action, to say the least of it, was dangerous.

Needless to say, Bulk did not know the peril he was walking in front of. Had he known anything of the sort, he would have been walking several hundred yards in front of it. He went on at a slow pace in his ignorance until they reached a working, and here he stopped to further discuss matters.

"You see, mate, we are in excellent time," he said, glancing at Jake's face, which showed signs of the spirit he had consumed—so much so, that Bulk began to think that he had been a little too lavish. He had intended to give him some Dutch courage, but did not know the amount of courage the ruffian had been imbibing during the course of the day. "You feel all right, don't you?"

"As ri' tas rain! Why? What the thunder do you mean?"

"I was only wondering if we are not a bit too early. Still, it is nearly midnight; and I know for a fact that those demons turn in early. You see, the nigger gets up in the middle of the night very often, and goes down that mine and works. However, if we get there now, we are bound to catch them.

"Now, we shall just approach the nearest side of their hut—I'll lead the way—then we shall place these cartridges close to the woodwork, light the fuses, and make a bolt for my cottage, tumble in as soon as we can, and wait for the explosion. It will give a good three minutes, so we shall just have comfortable time."

Jake listened, and nodded. He did not care to trust himself to speak, because he knew he would have a difficulty in getting his tongue round the long words.

At that moment his lighted pipe fired the box of matches, which he had not quite shut, and he heard the fuses of the three cartridges he had in his pocket commence to hiss.

No doubt Bulk's calculation was right, and that the fuses would have given them three minutes to get away had they been lighted at the ends; but the flaring matches had lighted them all over, and they were hissing away in fine style.

Jake no sooner heard the hissing than he uttered the most unearthly yells, and wrenching off his coat, made a rush along the tunnel, knocking his companion over in his haste and falling on top of him. The two were up in an instant, when at that critical moment a blast of flame shot along the tunnel.

They were not many yards from the shaft, and they covered the distance almost instantaneously. If they had been shot out of a cannon they could not have done it much quicker.

"Oh, I'm murdered!" groaned Jake.

"You silly viper, you!" yelled Bulk. "You've blowed me to hatoms!"

"That's right!" growled Jake, sitting up. "Blame me!"

"Blame you, bust it! I'd like to do suthing more than blame you! Do you hear that thundering row?"

"Thunder, ain't it?"

"Thunder, be hung! It's my mine a-falling in! Oh, bust it! Just hark at the earth a-falling! You've been and blowed the whole mine up—regular wrecked the whole place! It will take me months and months to clear away that little lot! And then, as likely as not, I shall lose the lead!"

"Well, it's all your fault for making me carry the thundering things! You said as they wouldn't go off. How was I to know they was going to bust up like that? Still, we ain't killed."

"I'm scorched frightful, specially about the head. The back of my neck feels as though someone had been beating it with stinging-nettles! And just think of the wreckage to my mine! It means starting the whole thundering thing afresh!"

"Well, we shall have the other mine to work at. And if they get chunks of gold out of it, what do you want more than that?"

"I believe as I'm seriously injured!" growled Bulk. "The blast caught me right at the back of the head, and it has scorched me a treat!"

"Well, I'm in the same fix, mate. The thing was a pure accident. You said the things went off of their own accord at times, and this must have been one of them."

"Where's your pipe?"

"Why, I put it in my pocket."

"Of course you did!" sneered Bulk. "You put that lighted pipe in your pocket along of dynamite cartridges, and if you don't call that a thundering silly trick, why, I do! The only marvel to me is that you didn't blow us both up!"

"Well, I was blowed quite as far as I wanted to be!"—grumbled Jake. "I'm hurt worse than you, and chance it!"

"How do you know that 'ere?"

"I can tell by my feelings."

"You don't know what my feelings is like, you stupid rat! I feel as if I had shoved the back of my head in boiling lead, and I believe my whiskers are all burnt off! That my head ain't blown off is no thanks to you!"

"Well, I suppose these 'ere accidents will occur in mining operations," observed Jake. "I wonder if that explosion was heard by anyone? 'Cos, if so, we had better wait a bit before we send that nigger to his doom."

"That's where it comes in!" growled Bulk. "It seems to me an explosion like that would be heard a couple of miles away. All the same, it was in the depths of the mine, so I don't suppose it would have been heard by the nigger's lot."

"Then, there's no harm done, mate?"

"No harm done, be hanged! There's my mine blown to pieces!"

"Well, you won't want your mine when we have got the other. What's the good of bothering yourself about the mine when you say it only brought



you a bare living? We've got the other one, as will bring us a fortune. And I suppose that's good enough for us."

Bulk did not appear to think that it was at all good enough. Perhaps he went on the lines that "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." At any rate, he was very much exercised over his wrecked mine. And perhaps if he had known the entire extent of the damage he would have been still more vexed, for the whole place was a complete wreck with the exception of the shaft.

Like some of our English colliery proprietors, he did not believe in using too many brattices in his mine; and the result was that, when the explosion occurred, it brought down the whole place; while he and Jake would certainly have been buried alive had they not been blown into the shaft.

For some time Bulk continued bemoaning his fate; then the pair of miscreants ascended the shaft, more determined than ever to have vengeance on the man who had thrashed them and made them look ridiculous.

The snow was still falling, and it had concealed their previous footprints. Bulk made a circuit to Pete's hut, so that the fresh footprints should not be traced to his place. Besides, he wanted to have a look round, to see if the explosion had aroused the sleeping miners.

The whole place was in darkness; nor was there a sign of anyone being about.

Now the pair approached the hut, and as they remained listening for some moments they could hear Pete's snoring.

Making a sign for silence, Bulk placed some cartridges close to the hut, and he knew that they would blow the frail building to pieces. He was just about to light a match to complete his horrible work, when Jake came floundering on the top of him, and the two ruffians were hurled face forwards into the snow, while each of them felt a terrible grip on the back of his neck.

"Say, old hosses," exclaimed a voice that they had no difficulty in recognising, "what are you trying to do at dis time ob night?"

"Bust you, let me go!" gasped Jake. "You are throttlng me!"

"Well, dat's one ob de dangers you hab got to run," retorted Pete. "If you come in de dead ob night to blow people up, you must take de consequences! I ain't letting you go. You see, it is dis way: I was rader doubtful what you were prowling about dis shanty for, Bulk, so I followed you to your hut, and listened to most ob your conversation. I didn't know you were up to quite such a vile deed as you hab just attempted, but tought you wanted watching; so I disconcealed myself in dese bushes, and presently saw you coming towards dem. Oh, it ain't de slightest use your struggling, 'cos I ain't got any idea ob letting you go.

"I dunno weder you are trying to draw a revolver, Jake; but you would not be able to take much aim wid it, seeing de position you are in. Besides, if you were to try to shoot me, I should so tighten dis grip dat you wouldn't know where you were— Oh, is dat you, boys? Well, I hab caught dem first journey! Dey were only trying to blow us to pieces! But, you see, it didn't come off!"

"How did you manage to catch them, Pete?" inquired Jack, hurrying up, followed by Sam and Bob.

"Hid in de bushes. It was quite an easy ting to do. And when dey listened, to make sure we were all asleep, I gabe dem a little ob my snoring, and made it come from de hut. Yah, yah, yah! I should say dese men are in a tight corner—dat is, ob course, if dey don't get away from me. Suppose

you bind deir arms behind deir backs, Jack and Sammy; and at de same time it would be advisable to take away any weapons dey may hab."

This was quickly done, and the two ruffians were dragged into the hut. Then Jack lighted a lamp, and the comrades burst into roars of laughter.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Why, de men look like bald-headed vultures! Yah, yah, yah! Seem to be tattooed, too. Golly! I know I shall laugh just directly! Oh, 'scuse me, old hosses! If you could only look at yourselves! Yah, yah, yah! Just hand down dat bit ob a looking-glass, Sammy. I must show dem deir pretty faces! Yah, yah, yah!"

The ruffians certainly presented a most extraordinary appearance. Neither had got any hair or beard to speak of, and the little that was left to them was all singed black. Their faces and back of their necks were blackened by the blast, and there could not be much doubt that a lot of that black was permanent. Every time Pete looked at them he burst into roars of laughter; and this did not tend to lessen the fury of the two men.

---

#### CHAPTER 16.

**The Prisoners Come in for Some of Pete's Chaff—They Receive Their Sentence—Pete Wants to See Rory—His Strange Disappearance—The Comrades' Meeting—A Great Surprise For All—Pete's Kind Heart.**

"**N**OW, look here, you image," exclaimed Sam at last, "just you stop that guffawing, and let us decide what we are to do with the scoundrels."

"Yah, yah, yah! I dunno, Sammy. I should say keep dem and show dem to Job. If dey don't make dat man forget his poetry and burst into roars ob laughter, I should say de man hasn't got a smile in his cistern. Yah, yah, yah! Scuse me laughing at you. Wid dat scowl on your brow you look downright fetching, Bulk, specially as all your eyebrows are blown off. I rader tink, boys, dey must hab had an explosion on deir own account before dey came here to hab one on ours. I heard a distant rumble, but tought it must be earthquakes, or some ob dose foreign complaints. Yah, yah, yah! Depend on it, it was an explosion. You want to know what to do wid dem, Sammy? Why, keep dem as natural curiosities. I dunno which one looks de better, but we can send dem to some beauty-show, and see which one takes de prize."

"I suppose you think as you are mighty funny?" snarled Jake.

"Yah, yah, yah! I wasn't tinkin' 'bout how funny I was. I was tinkin' 'bout your funniness. I don't tink I could possibly be as funny as you look. Nunno! If I was running a show on funny principles, I should put you two on as star turns. Yah, yah, yah! You would bring de house down. Den, after de people had done screaming at you, I should hab a pathetic scene, and bring you on as two poor colliers who had met wid an explosion down a coalmine. Dis would be bound to take wid de people; and if dey could possibly help howling wid laughter at your personal appearance, dey would start weeping big-sized tears ob pity. I'm most afraid, dough, de pathos ob de scene would be spoilt wid howls ob laughter, 'cos de appearance you present is chunks past extraordinary. Yah, yah, yah! You mustn't tink dat I'm a fool, laughing at my own folly. Nunno! I'm laughing at your folly dis journey. I dunno, Bob, how I shall be able to do any work dis morning down de mine. Ebery time I tink ob dose objects I feel sure it will make me guffaw; and de funniest part ob de business is dat dey are bound to remain like dat for two-free weeks to come."



"Set us at liberty!" growled Bulk. "We ain't going to run away. We was only going to give you a scare. There wasn't any charge in them cartridges."

"Nunno! It ain't likely dat dere would be anything like dat in dem. I dunno where de scare is going to come in, but since you appear to hab made up your minds to gib us one, why, we will keep you here for de present. I'm inclined to tink, boys, dat if we keep dem here, and let de miners see dem at twopence a turn, we shall hab anoder little goldmine. Or we might take dem back to 'Frisco, and show dem to de public dere."

"We've got a perfect answer to the charge," declared Jake.

"But we ain't making any charge against you, my poor old hoss."

"Then set us at liberty. If my hands wasn't tied I would pay you for this work."

"M'yes! I must say I deserve some sort ob punishment for habing stopped you blowing our hut up; all de same, I will consider de matter, and see if it will be best to set you at liberty and let you punish me. I remember once before when you tried to punish me dat you didn't quite finish de job, so I might let you finish it now, and after dat you could punish me for de oder matter. Yah, yah, yah! Look at Jake trying to rub de back ob his neck."

"Let me loose, bust you! I'm in pain, I tell you."

"You ain't in anything like de pain you will be in just directly. I tell you what we had better do wid dem, boys. Keep dem until break ob day, den let de miners decide what is de properest course. We hab plenty ob rope at de diggings, and dere are one or two handy trees. You see, I shall point out to de men dat it ain't quite safe to hab creatures about like dis. I know dey don't like you, Bulk, and dere ain't de slightest possibility dat dey could like a man like Jake. Nunno! Dose miners won't gib you such a mighty easy time of it, and I shouldn't wonder if dey tell you to go to Dawson City, or some oder place, unless dey hang you straight away and put you out ob your misery. Yah, yah, yah! I wish I could stop dis guffaw. It is gibing me a stitch in de side. Do stop your laughter, Jack! You keep starting me. P'r'aps I shall stop when I begin to tink ob de sad side ob de question."

At first the two ruffians were frightened at their position, but presently Pete's chaff drove them into a state of fury, and they uttered all sorts of threats. Pete sat gazing at them and smoking his pipe, while every now and then he burst into roars of laughter.

"All right, old hosses, go on! You make me rader timid about what you are going to do; but, at de same time, I can't help laughing at you when I catch sight ob your bald noddles. Yah, yah, yah! You might take a situation wid a hair restorer. Sit in de window all day, and let de people see your hair grow under de wonderful properties ob de hair restorer. Dere's one ting you hab to be thankful for, and dat is dat you won't need to use a comb and brush for some weeks to come. Should say an explosion like dat must almost hab blown de hair out by de roots. Dere's a regular pattern up de back ob your noddle, Bulk. Come here and let's hab a look at it."

"Get away, you hound of a nigger, or I will be the death of you!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Must hab an examination ob de back ob de noddle," declared Pete, grabbing him by the arm and forcing him on the floor; then, holding him by the shoulders, he sat at his back, and shook his head slowly from side to side.

"Did you eber see such a beautiful picture, boys?" exclaimed Pete.

"Lovely!" exclaimed Jack. "Almost reminds you of one of Whistler's—London in a fog, or something like that."

"I reckon it ain't unlike Turner's 'Rain, Mist, and Speed,'" said Sam. "That little black patch looks like the engine coming through the bridge."

"M'yes! Dere's bold outline here, and plenty ob colour," observed Pete. "I should call it a study in black and white, only it has got a bluish tinge to it. I was tinkin', boys, weder I could improve dat picture at all wid a little tattoo work. I hab a nice sharp knife here; den we hab plenty ob gunpowder. I tink I could turn dat little blotch into a house, or a chicken, or some ob dose animals. Might almost turn it into a nigger's face. Dat wouldn't be at all a bad idea. You see, people would tink dat a nigger was trying to walk backwards from dem, and when dey got in front it would gib dem a sort ob surprise. Dey would know de man's character, and not trust him, 'cos dey would naturally say he was double faced. Can you laugh at dat joke, Sammy?"

"No, I can't."

"Den fix your eyes on dis object, and I'll bet you will laugh den. Look here, boys, it can't be far off morning now, so suppose we get up."

"Well, I reckon we are up," said Sam.

"So we are, Sammy. I neber tought ob dat. What I mean to say, suppose we consider dat breakfast-time has arrived, and commence getting it ready. Dere's a nice fire going, and it ain't at all cold in dis hut. It will be warmer still when our cooking-stove is going, wid de bacon going. Nuffin like bacon to warm you up."

The comrades knew that there would not be the slightest chance of getting any more sleep, because Pete would keep shouting with laughter; besides, he was in a very wakeful mood, and it was always hard to get to sleep when he was like that; so they lighted the oil-stove, and commenced to prepare their meal.

The prisoners made one or two attempts to leave the place, but Pete brought them back so roughly that they at last gave the matter up as a bad job, and resigned themselves to their fate.

"Now, look here, boys," exclaimed Pete, when he had finished an enormous breakfast, "I tink de best ting we can do is to take de prisoners to de stores, and let de miners decide what is best to be done wid dem."

"Right you are!" exclaimed Sam. "Bring the brutes this way. We will leave the cartridges where they are as evidence, although I think we hab got enough evidence without that."

Now many of those miners were very rough, but they were not men who would countenance an abominable act like the culprits had premeditated, and so nearly carried out. They went to have a look at Bulk's mine, which they found a complete wreck, and they brought the cartridges away from the hut; then they consulted with the comrades as to how they should act, and at Pete's instigation they warned the two ruffians from the place, giving them clearly to understand that if ever they showed their faces there again, they would be shot. Bulk pleaded hard to be allowed to remain, and pointed out the loss he had suffered, but they would not listen to it. Their arms were set at liberty, and Pete gave them a good supply of food, though he refused to allow them to have any weapons. Then they were started off in the direction of Dawson City, and armed men watched them out of sight.

Pete only worked at the mine until all doubts as to it's proving a rich one were at an end, then he suddenly turned lazy.

"I tink I hab got plumbago dis morning, and, from de feel ob it, dat plumbago is going to last from now till next summer. I tink a walking-



tour back to Dawson City, and den on to Skaguay, would do me all de good in de world."

"It's all right, comrades," exclaimed Jack. "Pete has made up his mind to go, so there's an end of the matter. We shall have to bid you farewell. What time do you want to start, Pete?"

"Oh, dere ain't any hurry 'bout de matter," answered Pete. "It's eight o'clock, now; well I tink if we start at half-past eight dat will be soon enough."

They did not start so soon as that, because Bob wanted to write a letter to his little daughter, and he arranged that Pete should enclose some money in it. Then Pete did a little writing. It did not take him long, because there were only a few words on the sheet of paper, which he carefully sealed up, then handed to Bob as he said farewell.

"Good-bye, old hoss! You can open dat in free weeks' time, and I will see dat your letter is duly posted. You ain't to open dat before free weeks under any consideration, and you are supposed to obey de orders contained in it. You'm got de tittle-deeds for your mine, and I hope you and Mac may hab good luck!"

Not being men of many words, they merely gripped Pete's hand. And as the comrades started on their journey a great cheer rang out, for they had made themselves very popular at the diggings.

The journey was not at all a pleasant one, but they encountered no perils, and Pete was in a happy frame of mind, because he knew that he was going to see Rory once more; and when at last they got to the inn at Skaguay, and Pete found a letter awaiting him, he was in such a state of excitement that his hands actually trembled when he opened it.

"I'm most afraid dere's not de best— Still, dere must be. I wonder what he says?"

"Why don't you read it?" inquired Jack.

"I can't. I'm dead."

"You are what?"

"I'm dead, Jack. De doctor says so, for de start, and doctors are bound to know. See here. He begins, 'Dead Pete.' Golly! I hope——"

"You silly coon, that is 'Dear Pete'!" exclaimed Sam.

"Yooroo! I frightened myself dat time. Now, let's go on. I must say, de doctor's writing is enough to frighten me again. 'Robgree eo appledore curee nak eo so mell so oner.' Golly! De man is writing in Latin, I tink! Can you read Latin, Jack?"

"A little."

"I tink dis will require a man who can read a lot. But read it, Jack."

"Ha, ha, ha! This is not Latin, though I must confess the man does not write very distinctly. 'Rory is perfectly cured, and is as well as ever.'"

Pete gazed at his chums in silence. The news was good—so good, that words were not needed; and, without referring to Rory's recovery, the chums ordered supper.

After the meal was finished, pipes were brought out, and all prepared to enjoy a good smoke.

"Got any baccy, Sammy?"

"Not a scrap!"

"Neither have I!" exclaimed Jack. "Not a crumb! Wait a bit, though; I'll go and get some!"

Without waiting for a reply, Jack grabbed his hat and vanished. He was gone some time, and Pete at last rose, and went to look for him.

"Can't hab dat young man trapesing de streets dis time ob night!" he muttered.

Jack left the inn, and walked rapidly towards the main street, where he had been accustomed to buy their tobacco. Suddenly his quiet walk changed to a run, and he dashed across the street.

"Now, then, you cad!" he cried. "Can't you behave yourself in a decent sort of fashion?"

The big, burly ruffian to whom Jack addressed his remarks gave a lurch, and raised his huge fist.

"I'll teach you to respect a lady!" cried Jack. "You great, hulking brute, you! Isn't the path wide enough for you, without pushing a defenceless girl into the gutter?"

"Don't! Oh, don't!" exclaimed the young girl, who had been hustled by the half-tipsy man. "It is very kind of you, but I don't——"

The girl paused for an instant, as she gazed at Jack's comparatively slim build.

But, if she did not realise from his square jaw what he would be capable of doing, the besotted man was sufficiently sane to do so; and, with a surly growl as to what he would do presently, he lurched off.

"You will allow me to see you home?" said Jack, turning to the girl, and raising his hat.

"Oh, no! I don't live far. You—you are very kind, but really——"

"Never mind about that," interrupted Jack. "I'm just going to see you home. "You've no business to be out so late in this place. If you were a sister of mine, I'd not allow it!"

Jack did not wait for any further argument, but gently took the girl's arm.

"Now then, miss; where do you live?"

"Just along here. The second turning."

The pair walked along in silence for a short distance, and presently threaded their way through a crowd, collected at the corner of the street where the girl lived.

Jack was busily engaged in protecting his young companion from the hustling crowd, and did not perceive Pete, who had sighted him, and was vainly trying to force his way through.

It is not often that men stand in Pete's way; but by the time he had managed to force his way through that crowd Jack had vanished.

"Dis am awful!" he muttered, gazing around. "Must get back and tell Sammy dat Jack am not safe!"

As a matter of fact, Pete's alarm was needless, for Jack left the girl at her door, and, making a slight detour, returned to the main street to purchase his tobacco.

"Sammy, Sammy, Sammy!" cried Pete, rushing into the sitting-room the three comrades shared at their inn. "Dis am de awfullest discovery dis child hab eber made! Dere's nuthing to be done! Dere's an end ob we free coming! Free will only be two, den; an' Sam an' Pete will be left to wander ober de world all by demselves!"

Pete mopped his shining black forehead with a brilliant, crimson-coloured



silk handkerchief, and flung his eighteen stone or so of brawn and muscle on to a faded, decrepit-looking armchair. This article of luxury quivered and creaked beneath the shock, but luckily withstood the unusual strain.

Sam, who was used to these wild outbursts on the part of his comrade, calmly went on cleaning his rifle, which lay in sections before him, and it was only after several dismal groans and huge sighs had proceeded from Pete that he spoke.

"I reckon a quiet life ain't much in your line, mate. Unless your woolly brain-box is kept busy, fighting Indians or b'ars, or some such thing or another, your nerves get weak, or else it's your brain—I don't know which. Anyhow, what's this tommy-rot you're talking about? Wandering over the world by ourselves? I guess it's you who's doing the wandering, mate! Better pull yourself together, or I shall call in a doctor, and have you safely locked up in a nice, comfortable, padded cell!"

Pete sat bolt upright, and gazed at Sam with such a solemn expression on his usually jolly, smiling face that that worthy went off into roars of laughter.

"You'm got to stop dat, Sammy!" roared Pete, bringing his huge fist down with a bang on the arm of his chair.

But Pete's protest had anything but the desired effect on Sam, for he howled louder than ever.

"Hellup! What's all dis? De hotel am falling down! Hi! Help! Man de lifeboat! A-tishoc!"

A cloud of fine dust arose, and Pete subsided, struggling frantically to save himself, amidst a quantity of rusty springs and dirty flock. That blow had broken the arm-chair's last means of holding together.

"A-tis-hoo! A-tis-hoo! A-tis-hoo! A-tis-hoo!"

Pete sneezed between his groans and growls.

Sam followed suit as well as he could for laughing.

"I can't stand this any longer!" gasped Sam at last, grabbing a syphon of soda-water from the sideboard. "Must lay this dust somehow!"

He did. But, judging by the howls from Pete, who alternately stopped that stream of soda-water with an eye or an ear, it could not have been a very pleasant operation.

"I reckon that's about done it!" muttered Sam, as the syphon emptied itself with a final hiss and a spurt. "I guess I'll go and brush my auburn locks now!"

Sam Grant made tracks for the door, and left Pete to get himself out of his trouble.

"Was dere eber such a mess before?" mumbled Pete, as he slowly scrambled to his feet. "Dere's Jack fallen in lub, Sammy gone and lost him head, and dis child fallen frough de chair!"

Pete's black face and clothes were covered with dust, turned into mud by the admixture of soda-water, bits of the chair's springs were entangled in his hair, and altogether he presented a sorry spectacle. But neither the discomfort or his appearance seemed to make any difference to his train of thought.

"Must stop dat Jack's lub-making somehow. Wonder if de police would lock him up if dis child gabe infamashon 'gainst him for stealing de affecshuns ob a young lady?"

Pete absent-mindedly scraped some dust out of his left eye, and scratched his head.

This latter operation proved a painful one, for his fingers caught in a curly bit of wire, and he pulled and tugged till it came away with a bunch of hair.

"Golly! Dis won't do. Must be more careful, or I shall hab a bald patch on de cranium. Dat won't suit dis child's style ob beauty at all!" he muttered. "What's all dis, now? Golly, it's de boss!"

"Here, you scoundrel of a black, what do you mean by breaking up my furniture?" roared the innkeeper, who stood in the doorway, glaring at Pete and pointing at the wrecked armchair.

The inn had changed hands about five times since the comrades had previously stayed there, and consequently the proprietor did not know his customers.

"Dunno, old hoss!"

"Don't know, you clumsy wretch? You don't know?"

"Nunno, old hoss! Dunno!"

"Who does, then, I should like to know? What is the meaning of all this mess? What is that mass of rubbish?"

"Should tink you'm most likely to know more about it dan dis pusson," observed Pete.

"Me? How should I know what it means?"

"I don't mean anyting, my pore old hoss! Broken chairs hab not de power ob meaning. 'Spec's de spring's got too strong for it, and—and it busted. Dat's about de troof ob de matter. And Jack's fallen in lub, and dis child am full ob springs in him hair!"

"What do I care about your Jack or you? Who's going to pay for the damage? Who is going to replace my furniture? That's what I want to know!"

Now, the new landlord of the inn was a big man, and he prided himself not only on his flow of language, but also on his strength; but he made a foolish mistake in not sticking to the former, instead of resorting to the latter.

"Look 'ere, my fine fellow," he bellowed, advancing and seizing Pete by the shoulder, "I'm not going to stand any more——"

"Dat's de troof, old hoss!" interrupted Pete, twisting his shoulder free, and with a deft stroke of his leg sending the landlord's heels into the air. "You'm not standing now!"

Which statement was true, for the furious man lay on his back among the wreckage of the armchair.

"Now, see here, old naughty hoss, you'm a bery tempestuous sort ob man, and you'm got to understand dat it ain't lawful to lay hands on one ob your guests. Nunno! You'm not to get up just yet; you'm got to stop dere until you'm recobered from your nasty temper and begin to smile. Stop dere!"

Pete gave the man a shove as he tried to regain his feet.

"Nunno, Lucas, old hoss, you'm to do as you'm told. You can exsblain de meaning ob your rampagous conduct while you'm among de springs."

"See here," hooted the angry landlord, "you've no right to go smashing my property. Who do you think's going to pay for the damage?"

"Dunno, old hoss. Don't tink 'bout such matters," replied Pete, who was in one of his exasperating moods.

"I'll have the law on you. I'll have you locked up. I'll make you pay for the damage. I'll——"



"Scuse me, old hoss," interrupted Pete, "but which am you goin to do first ob all—de locking up or de paying up?"

"Never you mind which I'm going to do first," roared Lucas, squirming, for he did not find chair-springs at all comfortable to sit upon. "I'm going to make you pay for the damage."

"Me, old hoss?"

"Yes, you—you!"

"How much is de old chair worf?"

"Five pounds."

"Golly, dat's a lot ob money!"

Now, the landlord did not expect that Pete would, or even could, afford to pay for the chair, but he meant to try and get as much out of him as possible. He little knew the extent of the wealth of his guests, Jack, Sam, and Pete, and his eyes fairly bulged out of his head when he saw Pete bring out a fist full of gold.

"Of course," went on Lucas hurriedly, and in a mollified tone of voice, "I am only charging you the secondhand price of the chair. It was a bit worn out, but when it was new it cost me near upon fifteen pounds. Then there's the damage to the carpet, which is utterly spoilt with the wet. Call it ten pounds altogether, and I won't charge you for the syphon of soda."

Pete put on an expression of gratitude and held out his hand.

"You'm a bery good sort ob chap, Lucas. How much did you say? Ten pounds, and nothing for de soda-water? Shake!"

A grin stole over the landlord's face as he took the hand held out for his assistance. But as the strong black fingers closed round his own his expression changed, first to a look of mild surprise, then to one of pain. His mouth opened, and he let fly a screech that would have done credit to a rusty cart-wheel, and he danced round Pete as if the floor hurt his feet.

"Hi, hi, ow! Hurting!" he yelled. "Let go—go—I say!"

"Golly! What's de matter, old hoss?" said Pete calmly, as he slowly turned on his heels as the landlord squirmed around. "How much did you say, old hoss? Ten pounds?"

"No; f— Oh! Fi—fi—fi—"

"Golly! Don't be shy, Lucas. How much was it?"

"Fi—fi—five pounds. Let go my han—hand!"

But Pete still held on, though he relaxed his grip a little.

"Anything for the wetting ob de carpet?"

"No. Let go my hand!"

"Dat all, old hoss? Why didn't you say dat's what you wanted be— Yah, yah, yah! You'm got it dat time, Sammy."

Sam had; for just as Pete released the landlord's hand, that worthy went staggering back into the chest of Sam, who was just entering the room. The shock came so unexpectedly that for an instant Sam staggered, then fell, with the landlord on top of him.

Pete darted forward and heaved the now struggling Lucas back into the room.

"Up you get, Sammy! Dis little joke hab reached de end ob its tether. See here, Lucas, old hoss, here's enuff to pay for all de damage."

Lucas was angry—very angry. But he was fond of money, and he grabbed the handful of sovereigns Pete thrust into his hand, and promptly consigned them to his pockets.

"Now shake hands, old hoss, and hab a clean-up!"

Lucas, however, had had enough of hand-shaking with Pete, and promptly

vanished from the room; and the jingle of those gold coins helped considerably to soothe his ruffled feelings by the time he reached the kitchen.

"How much did you give that chap, Pete?" asked Sam, who knew how reckless his comrade was with money.

"Dunno, Sammy. Two-free pounds, p'r'aps."

"You are a beauty!" growled Sam. "What's become of Jack?"

"Dat's what I want to talk 'bout. Most serious!" exclaimed Pete.

"Serious! What do you mean?" cried Sam. "He's not hurt, is he?"

"Nunno! But he'm going to be bery badly hurt. What do people get when dey'm crossed in love, Sammy?"

"Crossed in love! What the thump are you talking about?"

"Lub, Sammy."

"Stuff and nonsense! Have you had sunstroke, or what's the matter with you?"

"Look here, Sammy," said Pete, speaking very seriously, "dat Jack am in trouble again, and we'm got to gib him a broken heart 'cos we'm going to cross him in lub!"

"Here, chuck it!" cried Sam, filling his pipe. "I know jolly well that Jack's not such a fool as to fall in love, or any nonsense of that kind. If he did—well, if he did—well, I don't know. We'd have to elope with him, or—"

"Lock him up, and frow de key in de ribber!" interposed Pete.

Sam gazed at his chum until the match he was holding in readiness to light his pipe burnt his fingers, and he dropped it with a howl.

For once Pete did not laugh, and the fact that his jolly face still wore its expression of gloom served to convince Sam, more than anything else could have done, that whatever might be the truth of the case, Pete was not up to any of his jokes.

"Well, explain yourself!" cried Sam. "I can't, for the life of me, make out what you've got on to! Jack went to buy tobacco. You went to look for him. What I want to know is, where is he?"

"Dunno!"

"Well, what's alarmed you?"

"Dis. Dat Jack hab— Golly! Dere he is!"

At this moment Jack entered the room, smiling, and looking very pleased with himself.

"Hallo! What's the matter, Pete?" he exclaimed, as he saw that worthy's sad expression.

"Hab you fallen in lub?"

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Jack. "At it again, you silly coon, you! I s'pose you saw me taking that girl home, and because of that, you think I've fallen in love. Ho, ho, ho!"

In a few words Jack explained the matter to Sam, and at last Pete regained his wonted composure, and filled his pipe.

After a comfortable smoke the three retired to bed, and no reference was made to Rory.

But the following morning Pete startled his chums by an unusual announcement.

"I'm going for a stroll, boys. Sha'n't be long, I 'spect. Let you know." And, without a word of explanation, Pete left the inn.

"Poor old Pete!" exclaimed Jack. "I believe he has been pining for



Rory all the time. My fancied love affair took him off for a bit. He's upset, though; still, that doesn't matter, seeing that it is good news that has upset him."

Jack and Sam were a trifle upset that day, too, for they received one of Pete's letters, delivered by a boy who looked very happy. There was not much in the letter:

"I will meet you widout fail at de same hotel we stayed at in 'Frisco. You wait for me, and I will wait for you."

"Just look at that, now," growled Jack. "He has gone on to see Rory, but he might have waited for us to come with him. Talk about impulsive fellows! I wonder how he has gone?"

"I reckon a boat must have sailed to-night," said Sam. "Perhaps there was not time for us to catch it. Suppose we go and make inquiries?"

They did so, but learned that the Vesta was not expected there for a fortnight.

Jack and Sam, after a consultation, determined to wait for the boat, and so they amused themselves as best they could in Skaguay; but, somehow, it seemed very dull without Pete. They went to the agent's office, but Jones had moved. He had remembered Sam's threat.

At last the boat came in, and they had a very friendly greeting from the captain, who seemed to be a little concerned at Pete's mysterious disappearance; but Jack and Sam, who knew his ways better, felt no uneasiness.

As luck would have it, the Vesta was not only detained at starting, but she had a fearfully rough passage, and this made her later still. When at last they reached the hotel at which they had previously stayed they found Pete awaiting them, and, to their surprise, Bob was also there. He had arrived that night, and before he could explain the reason of his presence, Pete told them to follow him. He was so mysterious, and so solemn, that Jack and Sam feared, after all, something had happened to Rory, especially as Pete strode on in front of them to the doctor's house, and kept looking back to make sure they were following him.

"Shoo!" he exclaimed, stepping into the street, and gazing at the doctor's blinds. "Shoo! Don't make a sound!" Then Pete gently rang the bell, and the page opened the door. "Shoo!" exclaimed Pete, slipping half-a-crown into his hand. "Any better?" he whispered.

"About the same, sir. Convoculus magiwaxterum con differous, slightly impecuniated," whispered that lad, who had summed Pete up, and liked his half-crowns.

"How's de temperature?"

"Formal?"

"Oh, come in, you silly nigger!" cried the doctor, bustling from his room.

"Shoo!" exclaimed Pete, clapping his black hand over Dr. James's mouth, and nearly convulsing the boy. "I'm learning from de boy how de patient is!"

"Get out of it, you owl!" growled the doctor. "Do you suppose I tell my page-boy how my patients are?—though I don't agree with him when he says they are formal. They are most informal when it comes to the time for paying my bills. Come in here, and do stop your fooling. You fellows had better wait in this room for a minute."

"What ever is the silly coon driving at?" exclaimed Sam. "Rory can't be as bad as all that. I hope he is not lame."

"There's no fear of that," answered Jack. "Dr. James told me he would

get absolutely right; besides, he wrote to Pete that he was as well as ever. Here the image comes, I think."

Jack was right. Pete's magnificent form appeared in the doorway. He was leading a remarkable pretty little girl by the hand, and Rory came bounding in, yelping with delight as he caught sight of Jack and Sam.

The little girl uttered a cry of joy, and rushed into Bob's arms.

"Father!"

"Why—little—Bella!" gasped Bob. He was not an emotional man, but that unexpected meeting nearly knocked him over. His voice was very husky as he clasped his little daughter in his brawny arms.

As for Pete, he went to the window, and, wetting his thumb, tried to rub a scratch off the glass. He did not succeed in doing that, but he succeeded in shoving his great thumb through the window.

"Shoo!" he exclaimed, as the glass clattered down.

"Is she ill?" gasped Bob, as the doctor entered the room.

"Certainly not, and never has been," laughed Dr. James. "That silly nigger went over to England to bring her here, and, because she was a little bad on the voyage, owing to the rough weather, he has made up his mind that she isn't well. He insisted on her remaining here as a 'patient,' though I told the rascal there was nothing the matter with her. However, Bella and I are great friends, and we have had a jolly time with Rory."

"You've been over to England to fetch my little one?" growled Bob, glancing at Pete.

"Tought it might save expense living togeder; or you could send her to a school here," answered Pete. "But, look here, Bob; I had to convince dat school lady it was by your orders dat she came, and I couldn't do it for a long time—for a long time. We had to go to de bankers, and de lawyers, and all sorts ob tings. Den I don't tink she would hab let Bella go, if I hadn't giben her a little ointment."

"Did you smack a pot of grease in her face?" inquired Sam.

"You shut up, Sammy! I mean a sort ob present."

"Ha, ha, ha! You mean emolument!" exclaimed Jack.

"Dat's de word, Jack. I dunno how you remember dem all. I tink your remembering cistern must be better dan mine. You see, I remembered dat word frough greasing de palm and pomatum, and I got on to ointment. Still, dey bof end in ment, so dere ain't much difference, all said and done. De stewardess on de vessel couldn't gib de attention to Bella dat I required, so I got a lady from de steerage part, who had got a little girl ob her own, to look after her, and, as de passengers didn't care for a nigger at meals, we used to hab our meals first. Yah, yah, yah! I dunno dat we came off worst!"

"Fancy! The passengers thought they were better men than Pete!" whispered Jack in Sam's ear, and Sam grinned.

"Dat woman has gone to join her husband, and I tink dey will get on all right," observed Pete. "But de patient must not be too excited. Hab you taken de temperature to-day, doctor?"

"We will call it a hundred and seven," laughed the doctor, winking at Jack.

"Well, dat seems fairly satisfactory, dough I should hab tought you could hab brought it up to more dan dat."

"If the temperature doesn't increase each day, Pete isn't satisfied, so I have been increasing it a degree each day. We shall get it up to two hundred if we go on at this rate."



"I dunno. Still, I tink Bella looks all right. Now, let me see, I hab made arrangements wid de waitress to take charge ob Bella, and her room is already prepared at de hotel, so I tink we had better go dere. I tink Bella would like to go to a nice school here, Bob; 'cos, you see, Klondike ain't de place for her, and you can run ober to see her easy. Mac will look after de mine, as I told you in de letter in which I destructed you to meet me here. Still, you can decide dat matter later on. Yah, yah, yah! You'm glad to meet your fader, my dear? Well, dat's right, and I'm mighty certain he's glad to see you. Yah, yah, yah! Wanted to gib you a little surprise. Got it bof dis time. But, golly, didn't dat school-mistress frighten me! I'm glad I ain't a girl at her school. She doesn't like niggers for de start, and, mind you, Bob, dat lady hadn't been as kind to Bella as she should hab been."

"That's because I was behind with my money," growled Bob. "I guessed how it would be, and it made me that miserable, that I didn't know how to speak a civil word to any man. I ain't a man of many words, and p'raps wanted to eddicate Bella above her station; but, don't you see, she's all I've got. As I say, I ain't a man of words, and when you made Mac and me a present of that gold-mine, I thought it was the kindest action a man could do another for Bella's sake. I was mistook. Bringing Bella and me together in this unexpected manner is a kinder action, mate. I don't know if there's words to express what I feel about it, but I don't know them."

"Don't excite de patient, Bob!" exclaimed Pete. "Don't you let him excite you, my dear. You are sure de temperature is all right, doctor?"

"Quite."

"And dere ain't any sign ob lameness?"

"Why should there be a sign of lameness, you great, big-hearted donkey?"

"I was tinkin, as Rory was lame after his illness, dat Bella might suffer in de same disrespect."

"Oh, be off with you!" laughed the doctor. "Bella wasn't bitten by a lobster, was she?"

"Dat schoolmistress was a regular old crab, but I dunno weder she bit her. I don't tink she would be able to do much biting, 'cos her teef used to wobble when she spoke, 'specially when she got excited."

This made Bella scream with laughter. She had evidently noticed the movement of those teeth; but, then, children are very observant in such respects.

Bella took a very friendly leave of the doctor, who had made a great pet of her, while Pete had spoiled her with his kindness—or, at least, he had done his best in that direction.

"Now, see here, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, hanging back a little. "We are going to hab dinner at five o'clock to-morrow, and you hab got to dine wid us. Dat right?"

"Yes, Pete. I shall be very pleased."

"Five, to a minute, mind, because ob de child. She must not sit up too late, and dat dinner will be a long affair, 'cos I hab a few entertainments to gib afterwards. You can explain to your patients dat dey ain't got to be ill between five and ten."

"I'll see what can be done. Good-night!"

"You tink de child's tempera—"

"Perfectly correct. Good-night!"

"And I should like you to see her again dis evening, and first ting to-morrow—"

"Oh, go on! Good-night!"

"You don't tink——"

"I don't think anything, except that you are an owl!"

"Well, I don't mind what you tink about me, so long as de patient is going——"

"I wish you would follow her example. Good-night!"

"Well, dat's de fee for de two cases!" exclaimed Pete, placing twenty five-pound notes in the astonished doctor's hand. "If dere's any extras, you——"

"You must be mad! I can't take this!"

"Oh, beg pardon. Tought dat would cover it. But we hab some more."

"Look here, Pete. This is a ridiculous fee, considering my position."

"What's your position got to do wid de case, old hoss? Keep dem. I ain't taking dem back. You hab cured de patients."

"There was nothing the matter wid Bella. I told you so all along."

"I know you did, old hoss, and dat's where I doubted your medicated powers a little. Still, it seems dat you were right. Howeber, dere was someting wrong wid Rory, and I would gladly hab giben a thousand pounds to cure dat dog. You hab cured him for a hundred pounds."

"A hundred guineas are what you have paid me."

"Well, de guineas don't count. What counts is dat you hab cured him. So it stands to reason dat I hab sated, let's see—I make dat ten hundred pounds, wid one hundred pounds cut off. M'yes. I must hab sated nine hundred pounds, wid de guineas frown in. I forget which way dey were frown, but I suppose dey refer to de five pounds on account ob Rory. Good-night, old hoss. Don't forget—five o'clock to-morrow. I hab got a lot ob tings to do, and you are quite sure 'bout de temperature? Funny ting, dat de man is always in a hurry," added Pete, as Dr. James closed his door. "I suppose it must be de medicated profession dat makes dem sort ob nervous. Sorry I broke his window, too. I wonder if de money will cover de expense ob dat. I'll send a glass-man to him to-morrow. Might as well send one to-night, while I'm about it. Dere's a frightful lot ob preparations to be made for dat dinner. All right, boys, I sha'n't be in till late. Look after Bella, Bob, and send her to bed not later dan—dan 'bout eleven, but I may be in before dat."

Then Pete bolted, and they saw no more of him till midnight. He had been making his preparations for the great dinner, and the entertainment that was to follow it.

Bob was rather silent that evening. It looked as though he could not realise his happiness, but he joined in a game of blind man's buff, and Bella lamented Pete's absence. However, Rory helped them with the game to the best of his ability, and they had a very happy evening, though nothing to be compared with the one they spent the following night.

As a rule, Pete was always the last at eating; but on this occasion he had the courses cleared away so quickly that his guests had to miss several. Directly he saw that Bella wanted no more he told the waiter to clear away. The fact is, he knew that a dinner-party must be a dull affair for a little girl, and Pete's charming disregard for his other guests was really amusing.



The pastry was soon brought on, and an enormous dish was placed before Bella. There was a sugar-crust over it, and he helped her to open it. Then she uttered a cry of delight, for there lay in all its glory a doll that had cost Pete five pounds, to say nothing of the crust.

But Pete's conjuring-tricks, his songs, and his tricks with Rory not only amused Bella, but they made the company shout with laughter, while the servants of the hotel were invited to see the fun; and the happiest man amongst them was Pete, because he knew that all the others were happy.

Well, we must take leave of the comrades now, but as we take leave of them in their happiness it does not matter. There is no sadness about it, and, rest assured, their earnest wish is that all the readers of this story could be as happy; for Jack, Sam, and Pete are good-hearted fellows, as all who have met them will know. There is no more vice about them than there is with Rory.

"Rory's paw is quite well, tank you.—PETE."

THE END.

*(Another Fine Story, "Pete's Holiday," is in course of preparation by S. Clarke Hook; but meanwhile get "The Missing Heir," a tale of Nelson Lee, Detective, now on sale, and also be on the look out for the two next additions to "The Boys' Friend" Library as announced below.)*

LOOK OUT FOR

*Nos. 19 and 20*

OF

"The Boys' Friend" Library.

"NELSON LEE'S PUPIL,"

*A Thrilling Detective Story, by MAXWELL SCOTT,*

AND

"THREE BRITISH BOYS,"

*A Splendid School Tale, by MAURICE MERRIMAN,*

Price 3d.

# 'THE BOYS' FRIEND' LIBRARY



**No. 17**



## The Missing Heir.

*A Tale of  
Nelson Lee,  
Detective.*

*By  
Maxwell Scott.*



Now  
on  
Sale.

Get  
it  
To-day

## A Grand Adventure Story.

**ON SALE EVERYWHERE.**